

# TIBET DIGEST 2024

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



Tibet Digest 2024 offers a year-long compilation of key news and developments related to Tibet, Chinese politics, and Sino-Indian relations, as observed from January to December 2024. Curated monthly by the Foundation for Non-violent Alternatives (FNVA), this annual digest brings together the most critical events, policy shifts, and human rights concerns impacting the Tibetan plateau and its people. Drawing from open-source media, the 2024 edition provides a broad yet focused view of the ongoing challenges and geopolitical dynamics shaping the region.

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# TIBET DIGEST 2024

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



## CCP'S TIBET POLICIES

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## China claims its highly dangerous, world's biggest hydroelectric dam in Tibet will pose no serious threat to downstream India

28 December 2024, Tibetan Review

### CCP'S TIBET POLICIES

After reporting its approval of a plan to build “a dam” close to India’s border in occupied Tibet’s Yarlung Tsangpo, and it was later revealed by various news reports to be for the world’s largest hydroelectric project – or, in fact, the planet’s biggest infrastructure project ever – China has on Dec 27 sought to allay concerns that it posed serious threats to downstream countries India and Bangladesh. But neither country is likely to feel assuaged by mere words-of-mouth assurances.

China’s foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning has said the project aimed to speed up developing clean energy, and respond to climate change and extreme hydrological disasters.

“China has always been responsible for the development of cross-border rivers. China’s hydropower development in the lower reaches of the Yarlung Zangbo River aims to speed up developing clean energy, and respond to climate change and extreme hydrological disasters. The hydropower development there has been studied in an in-depth way for decades, and safeguard measures have been taken for the security of the project and ecological environment protection,” the timesofindia.com Dec 27 quoted Mao as saying.

“The project will not negatively affect the lower reaches. China will continue to maintain communication with countries at the lower reaches through existing channels, and step up cooperation on disaster prevention and relief for the benefit of the people by the river,” she has added.

China had previously agreed to share hydrological data with downstream India under a 2006 deal, but failed to do so after bilateral ties sored over cross-border issues.

The construction site is located at a significant gorge where the Yarlung Tsangpo forms a U-turn before flowing into India’s Arunachal Pradesh state as Siang and Brahmaputra rivers and eventually into Bangladesh. When completed it could generate three times the power of the Three Gorges Dam.

The project’s total investment is expected to exceed one trillion yuan (USD 137 billion), surpassing all other infrastructure projects globally, including China’s Three Gorges Dam, currently considered the world’s largest, as reported the South China Morning Post on Dec 26.



China's current biggest hydroelectric dam project in Tibet is the USD 1.5 billion Zam Hydropower Station, which commenced operations in 2015.

The latest project was incorporated into China's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) and National Economic and Social Development, along with Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035, adopted by the CPC Plenum in 2020.

India's concerns stem from China's potential to control the river's water flow, including its possible release of huge volumes during conflicts, given the dam's unprecedented scale.

Apart from that, the dam's construction faces significant engineering challenges due to its location on a tectonic plate boundary prone to earthquakes.

The report said the Trans-border river data sharing was discussed during talks between India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, serving as Special Representatives for border questions, on Dec 18.

### **China suppressed a rebellion in Tibet due to the construction of a dam, reveals the BBC**

27 December 2024, Vijesti

The planned construction of the dam sparked protests by hundreds of Tibetans at the beginning of the year, but they were arrested in a harsh crackdown on the rebellion, and some of them were beaten and seriously injured, the BBC learned from multiple sources and based on confirmed footage.

China has approved the construction of the world's largest hydroelectric dam, raising concerns about the displacement of communities in Tibet and environmental impacts downstream in India and Bangladesh.

The dam, which will be located in the lower reaches of the Jarlung Cangpo River, could produce three times more energy than the Three Gorges Dam, currently the largest hydroelectric plant in the world. The planned construction of the dam sparked protests by hundreds of Tibetans at the beginning of the year, but they were arrested in a harsh crackdown on the rebellion, and some of them were beaten and seriously injured, the BBC learned from multiple sources and based on confirmed footage.

Such protests are extremely rare in Tibet, which China has tightly controlled since annexing the region in the 1950s.

That they are still happening is illustrated by China's controversial insistence on building dams in a long-sensitive area.

Claims of arrests and beatings began to emerge shortly after the events in February.

In the following days, the authorities further tightened the restrictions, making it difficult for

anyone to verify this story, especially journalists who cannot freely travel to Tibet.

But the BBC spent months searching for Tibetan sources whose family and friends were detained and beaten.

The BBC's fact-finding team examined satellite images and verified leaked footage showing mass protests and monks begging the authorities for mercy.

Those sources live outside of China and are not affiliated with activist groups.

But they did not want to be named for security reasons.

In response to questions from the BBC, the Chinese embassy in the UK neither confirmed nor denied the protests or their subsequent crackdown.

"China is a country governed by the rule of law and strictly protects the rights of citizens to legally express their dissatisfaction and express their opinions or suggestions," they answered.

The protests, which were followed by their suppression, took place in the territory that is the home of the Tibetans in the province of Sichuan.

Chinese authorities have been planning for years to build the massive Gangtuo Dam and hydroelectric plant, also known as Kamtok in Tibetan, in the valley that includes Dege (Derge) and Jiangda (Jomda) counties.

Once built, the dam's lake will submerge an area that is culturally and religiously significant to Tibetans, and home to several houses and ancient monasteries containing sacred relics.

One of them, the 700-year-old Vangudi (Vonto) monastery, has concrete historical value because there are rare Buddhist murals on its walls.

Because of the Gangtuo dams, thousands of Tibetans will be displaced.

The BBC has had access to a public tender document for the relocation of 4.287 residents to make way for the dam.

The BBC contacted an official named in the tender documents as well as Huadian, the state-owned company that is said to be building the dam.

No one answered.

Plans to build the dam were first approved in 2012, according to the letter of the United Nations special rapporteurs to the Chinese government.

In a letter from July 2024, concerns are highlighted about the "irreparable consequences of the dam" for thousands of people and the environment.

From the outset, residents were not "consulted in any significant way" about the dam, according to the letter.

For example, they received information that was not adequate and was not in Tibetan.

The government also promised them that the project would only start if 80 percent of them agreed to it, but "there is no evidence that that agreement was

given," the letter said, adding that residents had tried to raise concerns about the dam multiple times. The Chinese authorities, however, denied this in their response to the UN.

"The resettlement of the villages in question was carried out only after full consultation with local residents," according to a September 2024 letter from the Office of the Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations.

It added: "The local government and project developers financed the construction of new homes and provided subsidies for grazing, keeping and raising livestock. As for the cultural relics, they have been completely relocated."

But the BBC heard from two Tibetans that in February officials told them they would be evicted quickly, giving them very little information about resettlement and compensation options.

This triggered such deep anxiety that the villagers and Buddhist monks decided to stage protests, despite knowing that the rebellion would be severely suppressed.

"They didn't know what was going to happen to them"

The largest protest gathered people in front of the government building in Dege.

In a video obtained by the BBC and verified as authentic, protesters can be heard calling on the authorities to stop evicting people and allow them to stay.

Separately, a group of residents addressed visiting officials and pleaded with them to cancel plans to build the dam.

The BBC obtained footage that apparently shows this incident and verified that it took place in the village of Siba.

The video shows red-robed monks and villagers kneeling on a dusty road and giving thumbs up, a traditional Tibetan way of begging for mercy.

In the past, the Chinese government has been quick to suppress any resistance to the authorities, especially in Tibetan territory, where it is sensitive to anything that could potentially increase separatist sentiment.

This time was no different.

Authorities moved quickly to crack down on the uprising, arresting hundreds of people at the protests while simultaneously raiding homes across the valley, according to one of our sources.

One unverified but widely shared insert appears to show Chinese police pushing a group of monks on the road in what is believed to be an arrest operation.

Many were detained for weeks and some severely beaten, according to our Tibetan sources whose families and friends were targeted in this repression.

A source shared fresh details from the hearing.

He told the BBC that his childhood friend was detained and interrogated over a period of several days.

"He was asked questions and from the beginning the treatment was kind. They asked him: 'Who asked you to participate, who is behind this'.

"Then, when he couldn't give them the answers they wanted, he was beaten by six or seven different security guards over the course of a few days."

His friend ended up suffering only minor injuries and was soon released.

But others were not so lucky. Another source told the BBC that more than 20 of his relatives and friends had been detained for taking part in the protests, including an elderly person who was over 70 years old. "Some of them suffered injuries all over their bodies, even on their ribs and kidneys, from kicking and beating...and some of them got sick from their injuries," he said.

Similar claims of physical abuse and beatings during arrests have appeared in foreign Tibetan media reports.

The UN letter also cited reports of arrests and the use of force on hundreds of protesters, noting that "they were severely beaten by Chinese police, resulting in injuries requiring hospital treatment."

After the suppression of the rebellion, the Tibetans in this area faced even stricter restrictions, the BBC learns.

Communication with the outside world was further restricted and there was increased surveillance.

Those who could still be contacted were reluctant to speak for fear of retribution, according to the sources.

The first source said that while some of the freed protesters were eventually allowed to travel within Tibetan territory, others were given a curfew.

This has created problems for those who have to go to the hospital for medical treatment and nomadic tribes who have to roam the pastures with their herds, he said.

Another source said that he last heard from relatives and friends at the end of February: "When I managed to reach them, they told me not to call again because they would be arrested." They were very scared, they kept hanging up on me.

"We used to talk through WeChat, but now it's no longer possible. I am completely blocked from contacting any of them," he said.

"The last person I spoke to was a younger cousin. She said: 'It's very dangerous, many of us were arrested, there is a lot of trouble, they hit many of us'... They didn't know what would happen to them next."

The BBC was unable to find any mention of the protests and crackdown in Chinese state media.

But shortly after the protests, Chinese Communist Party officials visited the area to "explain the need" for the dam construction and called for "measures to maintain stability," according to the report.

A few months later, a tender was awarded to build a "public security station" in Dege, according to documents posted online.

The letter from Chinese officials to the UN indicates that the villagers have already been resettled and the relics moved, but it is not clear how far the project has progressed.

The BBC has been monitoring the valley through satellite images for months.

For now, there are no signs of the construction of the dam or the demolition of the village and monastery.

The Chinese embassy told us that the authorities are still conducting geological investigations and specialized studies for the construction of the dam.

She added that the local authorities "actively and thoroughly understand the demands and aspirations" of the locals.

Construction or exploitation?

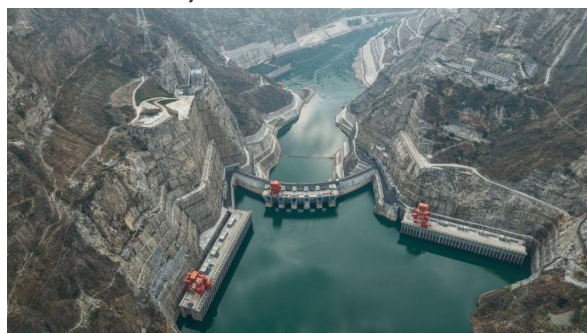
Controversy is nothing new in China when it comes to dams.

When the government built the world's largest dam in the 1990s - the Three Gorges on the Yangtze River - it sparked protests and criticism over the way it handled resettlement and compensation for thousands of villagers.

In recent years, as China has accelerated its transition from coal to clean energy sources, such moves have become particularly sensitive in Tibetan territories.

Beijing has eyed the steep valleys and mighty rivers there, in the rural west, to build mega-dams and hydroelectric plants that can keep powering China's energy-hungry metropolis.

President Xi Jinping personally led the initiative for this, a policy called "sidiandongsong" or "sending western electricity to the east".



Getty Images

Like Gangtuo, many of these dams are on the Jinsha (Dri Chu) River, which flows through Tibetan territories.

It forms the upper reaches of the Yangtze River and is part of what China calls the world's largest clean energy corridor.

Gangtuo is actually the last in a series of 13 dams planned for this valley, five of which are already operational or under construction.

The Chinese government and state media have presented these governments as a win-win that cuts pollution and generates clean energy, while improving the lives of rural Tibetans.

In a statement to the BBC, the Chinese embassy said the clean energy projects focus on "promoting high-quality economic development" and "enhancing feelings of progress and happiness among people of all ethnic groups".

But the Chinese government has long been accused of violating the rights of Tibetans.

Activists say the dams are the latest example of Beijing's exploitation of Tibetans and their land.

"What we are seeing is an accelerated destruction of Tibetan religious, cultural and linguistic heritage," said Tenzin Choekji, a researcher at the rights group Tibet Watch.

"These are 'high-quality development' and 'ecological civilization' that the Chinese government is implementing in Tibet."

One key issue is China's resettlement policy of evicting Tibetans from their homes to make way for construction, which has sparked protests by villagers and monks living near the Gangtuo Dam.

It is estimated that more than 2000 rural Tibetans have been resettled since 930,000, according to Human Rights Watch (HRV).

Beijing has always been claimed that these relocations are happening only with the consent of the Tibetans and that they receive housing, compensation and new job opportunities.

State media often that represent as an improvement their living conditions.



Getty Images

But rights groups present a different picture, with reports detailing evidence of coercion, complaints of inadequate compensation, cramped living conditions and job shortages.

They also point out that the resettlement breaks the deep, centuries-old connection that rural Tibet shares with its own land.

"These people will lose practically everything they have, their livelihood and community heritage," said Maya Wang, the interim China director of Human Rights Watch.

Government and environmental concerns over the submergence of Tibetan valleys famous for their biodiversity, and the possible dangers of building dams in an area rich in earthquake fault lines.

Some Chinese academics have discovered that the pressure from the accumulated water in the dam lakes can potentially increasing the risk of earthquakes, among them iu say Jinsha.

This could lead to catastrophic flooding and destruction, as seen in 2018, when rain-triggered landslides occurred in a village located between two dam construction sites on the Jinsha.

The Chinese embassy told us that the implementation of any clean energy project "goes through scientific planning and rigorous demonstration, and will be subject to proper supervision."

In recent years, China has passed laws to protect the environment around the Yangtze River and the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau.

President Xi Jinping has personally emphasized the need to protect the upper reaches of the Yangtze River.

About 424 million yuan has been spent on environmental conservation along the Jinsha, according to state media.

The report highlighted efforts to make dam projects earthquake-resistant.

A number of Tibetan rights groups, however, argue that any large-scale construction on Tibetan territory, including dams such as Gangtuo, must be stopped.

They have organized protests abroad and called for an international moratorium, arguing that companies participating in such projects would "allow the Chinese government to profit from the occupation and oppression of Tibetans."

"I really hope this dam building stops," one of the sources said.

"Our ancestors were here, our temples are here. We have been here for generations. It is very painful for us to move.

"What kind of life would we lead if we moved?"

### **Retired Party official exposes misuse of Quake-relief aid in Kyegudo**

20 December 2024, ICT

In a startling revelation 14 years after the devastating 2010 Kyegudo (Jyekundo) or Yulshul (Yushu) earthquake that left around 3000 dead, a former Tibetan member of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has accused local authorities in Yulshul Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in present-day Qinghai Province of misappropriating earthquake relief funds and causing environmental damage. The allegations were made in an undated video statement by Lobsang Dorjee on Chinese social media who holding his identity card identified himself

as a former government official and CCP member. The video statement was most probably posted around mid-December and first posted on the social media X on December 17, 2024 under the account name Sakar Tashi.

Dorjee's multiple accusations center around the aftermath of the devastating 7.1 magnitude earthquake that struck Kyegudo on April 14, 2010. In his statement, Dorjee declares that the funds intended for emergency aid and reconstruction were diverted for personal gain by local officials, leaving many residents without proper housing assistance. In the video statement, he also discusses the unresolved issues for nomadic workers following the closure of the Military Industrial Enterprise in his area, and wasteful use of reconstruction resources.

On the then suppression of Tibetan protestors and petitioners challenging the authorities abuse of power, Dorjee states that the public has the right to petition about their grievances. He emphasizes that while CCP regulations state that all party members should work for the benefit of the people, it is clear that Kyegudo local officials have abused their power for their own interests. He further asserts that Chinese authorities use police to intimidate protesters, view them like "terrorists", and that the abuse of power for personal gain severely impacts the lives of ordinary people.

The retired official also highlighted a controversial \$1.1 billion power plant project, which he states has significantly damaged the environment. "The environmental impact is severe, yet operations have not started," Dorjee stated in the video. Although not clearly specified, he also expresses his doubt over how the investment has been used, which could either mean who benefits from the power plant or how the funds meant for the plant have been used.

In mid-October this year, a 29-year-old Tibetan environmental defender, Tsongon Tsering, posted a video statement on Chinese social media, exposing illegal sand and gravel mining in his native Tsaruma hometown in Ngaba (Aba), Sichuan. After the exposé revealing the troubling situation of environmental neglect and the apparent governmental inaction in protecting a critical water source for Asia went viral, Tsering was arrested and sentenced to eight months detention which he is currently serving.

Reality far from propaganda

China had painted a picture of remarkable recovery in Kyegudo following the devastating earthquake urging Tibetans to be grateful to the CCP and the government. Then Chinese President Hu Jintao had vowed to help rebuilding when he visited the region on April 18, 2010 and was quoted by Chinese state media as asserting, "We must be more determined, act more swiftly, and adopt more scientific methods

to overcome any difficulties". However, reality is far from what the Chinese government claims. The International Campaign for Tibet reported in the past that Tibetans have been largely excluded from the reconstruction planning process. Protests have occurred over land confiscation and government policies. Some viewed the rebuilding as an opportunity for authorities to advance controversial resettlement programs.

While Chinese state media projected rapid progress and full recovery, Lobsang Dorjee's recent video statement reveal that reality is far from propaganda. A poignant quote in a May 2014 New York Times report four years after the earthquake still rings true a decade later. "The tragedy of the earthquake became an opportunity for the powerful and the greedy," told Kunchen Norbu, then a 52 year-old-trader, to the New York Times.

### **Video captures abuse of Tibetan student by Chinese principal**

19 December 2024, RFA

Incident at boarding school violates ethnic and children's rights, expert says.

A disturbing video has emerged showing a teacher slapping, pushing down and pulling the ear of a Tibetan student in front of other students gathered on what appears to be a sports field.

The video, which contains no sound, was contained in a report released by the Tibet Action Institute, an advocacy group based in North America, on Dec. 16. The incident was filmed on or before Nov. 18, according to sources of the rights group.

The institute identifies the teacher as Dang Qingfu, the school principal at a boarding school for Tibetan students called Tsokhyil Township Ethnic Boarding Primary School in Tsolho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, in China's Qinghai province.

Dang is also the local Communist Party secretary, the institute said.

The video footage of the incident was shared with the school's parents' association and was also posted online, where it went viral. However, Tibetans were later barred from sharing the footage.

China has many such boarding schools for Tibetan students, where they are instructed only in Mandarin, not in their native Tibetan language.

Tibetan advocates see these as part of broader government efforts to eradicate the use of Tibetan language and enforce "patriotic education," which mandates that love of China and of the ruling Communist Party be incorporated into work and study for all.

The school has claimed the principal is under investigation, but still remains in his position. The

Tibet Action Institute called for Dang to be immediately removed from his position and face legal charges.

Gyal Lo, an educational sociologist at Tibet Action Institute told Radio Free Asia, that the incident was a serious violation of human rights, ethnic rights and children's rights.

But he said that it's difficult to hold Chinese officials accountable in Tibetan areas as local governments consistently implement policies that contradict their own constitution.

"I don't think the Chinese government will consider this as racial discrimination against Tibetans, investigate and punish these kinds of school principals," he said.

In recent months, reports of abuse faced by Tibetan children at these state-administered boarding schools have come to light in recent months.

In September, Radio Free Asia reported that five young Tibetan former monks who were forced to attend a local government-run boarding school in Sichuan's Zungchu county attempted to take their own life saying they found it "unbearable" to stay in the school, where they said they were discriminated against, beaten and deprived of good food.

In October, RFA learned from sources that hundreds of young Tibetan Buddhist monks who had been forcibly transferred from a shuttered Buddhist monastery school to government-run boarding schools in Sichuan's Ngaba county were being held in 'prison-like conditions' in the schools.

### **Alarms raised over removal of Tibetan language in college entrance exams**

05 December 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

A Tibetan parents' association has voiced serious concerns on WeChat about the removal of the Tibetan language from China's college entrance examination framework, relegating it to an elective subject. The discussion was sparked by a warning from a teacher who cautioned parents about the potential exclusion of Tibetan language studies.

The issue gained traction after a video shared on WeChat was later circulated on X (formerly Twitter). In the video, an individual expressed fears about the gradual erosion of Tibetan language. Some local responses framed the change as an inevitable consequence of China's educational reforms, but these comments were reportedly removed shortly after being posted.





Screen grab of a Tibetan raising concerns over the removal of the Tibetan language from Chinese college entrance exam

The removal of Tibetan language instruction from the core curriculum aligns with the Chinese government's "Model 2" education policy, which prioritises Mandarin Chinese as the medium of instruction. Experts view this as part of a systematic effort to destroy the Tibetan language and culture.

In 2022, Chinese authorities began implementing this assimilationist policy in primary schools across Ngaba (Ch: Aba) Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province, within the Tibetan region of Amdo. The policy has faced widespread criticism from local Tibetans and activists. Among the prominent critics is Thupten Lodoe, a renowned Tibetan intellectual and writer, known by his pen name Sabuchey. He openly condemned the policy in a letter that led to his arrest and subsequent sentencing to four years and six months in prison.

### China's Rules through Ideologically Indoctrinating the Youth

06 December 2024, RTV

Education is often viewed as the bedrock of critical thinking and intellectual freedom. Yet, in China, schools and universities serve a different purpose: indoctrination into the ideology of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). From the earliest stages of education to the halls of higher learning, the Chinese education system has been understood to systematically mould students to align with state narratives, enabling compliance and discouraging dissent.

In China, the education system is weaponized by the CCP to inculcate unwavering loyalty to its ideology. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Party's narratives about Tibet, Xinjiang, and Taiwan. Through manipulating curriculums and state-controlled pedagogy, Chinese schools and universities have transformed classrooms into arenas of political indoctrination, aiming to distort histories and suppress alternative perspectives.

This systematic indoctrination has not only entrenched authoritarian control but has also perpetuated harmful stereotypes and fuelled divisions that has hindered China's relationship with the international community.

#### The CCP's Narratives: A Manufactured Reality

From the earliest stages of education, Chinese students are taught that Tibet and Xinjiang are 'inseparable parts' of China and that Taiwan's sovereignty is non-negotiable. School textbooks have known to whitewash histories of these regions, portraying them as historically Chinese territories and erasing the cultural and political autonomy they once held.

The CCP's narrative on Tibet emphasizes its "peaceful liberation" in 1951, a euphemism for military invasion. Students are taught that Tibet continues to be backward, yet a feudal society rescued by Chinese intervention. The realities of Tibetan resistance, the destruction of monasteries, and the suppression of Tibetan Buddhism are unsurprisingly absent from these discourses. By presenting Tibet as a grateful beneficiary of Chinese governance, the CCP's projection has attempted to reinforce its legitimacy while silencing the Tibetan struggle for self-determination.

Similarly, in the case of Xinjiang, elementary school textbooks have emphasized economic development and ethnic harmony, downplaying the harsh realities of mass detentions, cultural erosion, and systemic repression faced by the Uyghur population. These curriculums have projected narratives emphasising how Uyghurs have benefited from Beijing's policies, glossing over their lived experiences of surveillance and forced assimilation. Students are conditioned to see the CCP's actions in Xinjiang as necessary measures to combat 'extremism', showcasing a nationalistic justification for human rights abuses.

#### The Limits of a Controlled Narrative

The CCP's propaganda on Tibet, Xinjiang, and Taiwan, however also does more than distort history. It has for decades bred prejudice and suppressed critical inquiry, especially when it comes to the human rights abuses the Party has conducted in these regions. By teaching students to view these regions through the lens of state ideology, the education system has entrenched harmful stereotypes and perpetuates systemic inequality.

For instance, Chinese students are been conditioned to see Tibetans and Uyghurs as 'ungrateful' or 'backward' for resisting assimilation, reinforcing societal discrimination against these groups. Similarly, the vilification of Taiwan has bred undeniable hostility that has severely undermined the possibility of peaceful cross-strait dialogue.

However, perhaps the most concerning aspect of the CCP's educational indoctrination is its suppression of dissent. Schools and universities have been equipped with surveillance systems to monitor student behaviour, and classmates are encouraged to report those who express 'unpatriotic' views, similar to practices that were exercised during the fateful 'Cultural Revolution'. This has thus created an atmosphere of fear and conformity, where self-censorship has unfortunately become the norm.

The recent crackdown on students involved in labour movements and human rights advocacy illustrates the lengths to which the Party is prepared to go to silence dissent. These students, who dared to apply the Marxist principles they were taught to contemporary labour struggles, were met with arrests and expulsions, demonstrating the CCP's hypocrisy in promoting ideology only when it serves its own interests.

The indoctrination of Chinese students has far-reaching consequences beyond China's borders. As these individuals enter global academic and professional spaces, they will carry with them a worldview shaped by CCP propaganda and Party indoctrination of views. This complicates international dialogue on human rights, as many are unwilling, or unable, to critically engage with the realities of Tibet, Xinjiang, and Taiwan.

Moreover, the CCP's education model serves as a blueprint for authoritarian regimes worldwide, demonstrating how control over education can be weaponized to sustain power and suppress dissent. The global community must recognize this and push for academic freedom and truthful education as fundamental human rights, for if not, then it must prepare to decimate the state-propaganda machinery run by the Party and its Supremo, Xi Jinping.

## November

### Tibet Autonomous Region chairman reported to have resigned

29 November 2024, Tibetan Review

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

China usually appoints a Tibetan as the chairman of the TAR government, with concurrent position as a Deputy Party secretary. The regional Party Secretary,

who wields the real power, has always been an ethnic Chinese.

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

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

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

The report said both decisions would be submitted for the record of the 12th People's Congress of the TAR. Yan, 62, previously served as the Mayor of Lhasa City. Before that, he was vice governor of Qinghai from Jan 2013 to May 2017, when he became a member of the standing committee of the CPC Qinghai Provincial Committee, the province's top authority.

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

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

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

20 November 2024, Tibetan Review



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

The group said that in late October this year, the Chinese government ordered the relocation of half the total households of Yarka and Bitsang villages in

the City's Yadzi (Xunhua) County, located in the upper slopes and base of the sacred mountain Amnye Ratoe.

While Yarka village, one of the 22 semi-nomadic villages in Karing Township, has around 200 households, Bitsang has over 100.

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

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

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

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

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

## **Tibet Leads China In GDP Growth In 2024**

15 November 2024, The Rising Nepal

Last week, China's provinces released their economic performance data for the first three quarters of 2024. Preliminary calculations show that Tibet achieved a regional GDP of 250.5 billion yuan during this period. Calculated at comparable prices, Tibet's GDP grew by 6.2 per cent year-on-year, once again ranking first in the nation for economic growth. Notably, the per capita disposable income of all residents in Tibet has ranked first in China for eight consecutive years, and the first three quarters of this year were no exception. This figure reached \$3,055, reflecting an 8.1 per cent increase year-on-year, 2.9 per cent above the national average. Specifically, urban residents in Tibet enjoyed a per capita disposable income of \$6,000, up 6.5 per cent and 2 per cent higher than the national average. Meanwhile, rural residents in Tibet saw a per capita disposable income of \$1,900, growing by 8.2 per cent, 1.6 per cent higher than the national average. The main driver of this growth is Tibet's impressive performance in online retail. In the first three quarters of this year, Tibet's online retail sales reached \$2.297 billion, up 75.4 per cent year-on-year, the highest growth rate in the country. Online

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

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

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

For example, at a recent celebration in Hangzhou marking the 30th anniversary of Zhejiang Province's support for Tibet, Zhejiang's internet influencers hosted a livestream event to promote agricultural products from Naqu, Tibet. Five prominent internet personalities were appointed as "promotion ambassadors" to aid in Tibet's rural support initiatives. They partnered with local Tibetan livestreamers to sell products like yak meat, yellow mushrooms, and dairy items. This event not only achieved high sales but also provided valuable sales skills to the Tibetan livestreamers.

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

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



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

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

14 November 2024, Tibetan Review



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

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

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

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

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

As if to emphasize the sweep of the language-Sinicization drive, the contestants were stated to have been divided into five groups: farmers and

nomads, infants, school-age children, young adolescents, and adults.

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

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

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

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

This has seen China set up a region-wide network of boarding schools for Tibetan children where they are taught primarily in Mandarin. They are also subjected to political indoctrination while being separated from their parents and homes in a bid to reduce their contact with their native Tibetan language and culture, the report cited activists as saying.

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

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

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

09 November 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup

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

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

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



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

Most of those interviewed said they had been contacted by Chinese police, who pressured them to end their activities in Japan. Some reported receiving calls from authorities through their relatives back home, while others were approached at the Chinese embassy in Tokyo.

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

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

upon returning to Hong Kong for pro-democracy comments she made while studying in Japan.

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

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

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

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

## October

### China Tries to Blot out Tibetan Criticism of Mining Firm's Damage to the Environment

28 October 2024, The Diplomat, Duncan Barlett

Tsowo Tsering says sand mining is disrupting his community and endangers the international water supply. His supporters fear he risks jail for speaking out online.

Chinese censors are trying to prevent people from viewing posts that allege severe environmental damage in Tibet caused by sand mining.

A young Tibetan man named Tsowo Tsering initiated the online discussion with a video post, delivered in Mandarin. In it, he says he is speaking from Ngawa Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, in southwest China's Sichuan Province.

He shares video footage that he says proves the severe impact of activities by a Chinese mining company on his community. Tsowo Tsering claims

that “large amounts of sand have been recklessly mined, leading to serious soil erosion in the surrounding areas. This endangers the foundations of residents’ homes.”

Tsering alleges that Anhui Xianhe Construction Engineering Company has been conducting large-scale sand extraction in the region since May 2023, under the pretense of road construction. Tsering states that the local Ecological Protection Bureau acknowledged the illegality of the mining operations but imposed only token penalties, allowing the destructive activities to continue.

The video has now been purged from Chinese platforms, but has been translated and transcribed on the website of Free Tibet.

The video focuses on the Tsaruma River, a tributary of the sources of Yangtze and Yellow Rivers. Tsowo Tsering says: “We have lived and flourished on this land for generations. The quality of the ecological environment concerns the health and life safety of our descendants.”

He warns that over time, environmental damage will become increasingly severe. “The consequences will be beyond imagination. When environmental damage reaches a certain level, the collapse of the ecosystem will be an irreversible disaster,” says Tsering. Within days of its posting, Chinese authorities not only removed the video but also shut down Tsering’s account and blocked all search terms related to his name on WeChat.

Free Tibet’s Advocacy Officer Tenzin Kunga told The Diplomat that Tibetans, as stewards of their homeland, have a duty to raise urgent concerns over environmental destruction.

“Chinese construction companies, in collusion with local authorities, exploit Tibet’s land without accountability,” said Kunga

“Brave Tibetan environmentalists, like Tsowo Tsering, risk their safety in speaking out, as authorities often imprison them under the guise of ‘inciting separatism.’ I fear Tsering may face the same fate as Tibetan community leader A-Nya Sengdra, who is in prison for his activism.”

The Tibetan government-in-exile based in India is frequently critical of what it sees as China’s irresponsible attitude toward the environment.

There is particular concern over the process of the extraction of natural resources, which may cause water pollution. Tibet’s rivers and glaciers are internationally important. Water that originates on the Tibetan plateau supplies vast swathes of Asia, including many millions of people in China and India. Online protests by local people are extremely rare. They are also difficult to verify, as China strictly tries to control the narrative around its administration of Tibet.

Foreign reporters are rarely allowed into Tibet, least of all to cover sensitive environmental issues. The official Chinese media always present the development of Tibet as being a boon for local people, and associate it with a journey from feudalism to modernization, under the auspices of the Chinese Communist Party.

### Artificial Chinese Cordyceps Threaten Tibet’s Traditional Market, Livelihoods

22 October 2024, The Tibet Express

A growing crisis has been unfolding on the Tibetan Plateau, with the flooding of artificial cordyceps fungi, locally known as Yartsa Gunbu (summer grass, winter worm), from China severely impacting the livelihoods of Tibetan communities. According to various local media reports and commentaries online, this synthetic version of the precious medicinal fungus from China has been causing significant disruption to the traditional cordyceps market in Tibet and the lives of Tibetan households who depend on it.

While Chinese companies had been experimenting with cultivating artificial cordyceps in some places in Tibet for several years, it wasn’t until about three years ago that these products began aggressively entering the market. Initially, when only a few major Chinese enterprises were involved in production, they maintained prices comparable to natural cordyceps, minimising market disruption. However, the situation has changed dramatically.

Today, an estimated 200-300 Chinese companies selling artificial cordyceps in the market have driven prices to unprecedented lows. Whilst the natural harvest of the prized caterpillar fungus typically sells for 90,000 to 100,000 yuan per kilogram, the artificial version is being marketed for just 20,000 to 30,000 yuan. These companies aren’t just undercutting prices – they’re actively misleading consumers by marketing their products as authentic Tibetan cordyceps. Though produced by Chinese companies, some packages of the artificial fungus products carry fake labels claiming they have been sourced from premium cordyceps regions in Tibet like Nagchu, making it difficult for inexperienced buyers to distinguish the difference.

Despite the formation of a “Lhasa Tibetan Cordyceps Association,” local Tibetans report that the organisation has done little beyond making verbal promises. In April, authorities in Qinghai province issued warnings about the artificial cordyceps being an invasive species, threatening legal action against unauthorised cultivation. However, these warnings have had little practical effect.

The association even offered 2,000 yuan rewards for reporting fraudulent sales, but local Tibetans say that

the provided contact numbers are fake, and no actual steps were taken.

Though the 27 September meeting in Xiling brought together deputy party secretaries from five provinces and cordyceps association executives, observers note that the meeting focused on general topics like cordyceps benefits and environmental protection whilst completely avoiding the critical issue of market fraud. Local Tibetans say that the discussions failed to address the urgent need for legal intervention to protect the authentic cordyceps market.

The artificial cordyceps producers claim they're helping preserve natural cordyceps, which they say is nearing extinction. When some private Tibetan traders attempted legal action in China, highlighting how the price collapse was harming their communities, they were asked to provide individual proof of damages from all 70,000 affected people – an impossible ask that effectively blocked any legal remedy.

The crisis has left many Tibetans unable to sell their natural cordyceps at sustainable prices, forcing difficult choices between selling at a loss or facing severe financial hardship. Whilst the artificial product lacks the potency and flavour of natural cordyceps, it continues to evolve, making it all the more difficult to differentiate, easily deceiving inexperienced consumers.

The situation is particularly devastating because cordyceps harvesting has become a crucial source of income for many Tibetan households, especially following China's forced-urbanisation and resettlement policies that have displaced nomadic families from their traditional pastoralist lifestyles. These displaced communities often return to their native areas during cordyceps season but now face a market severely undermined by artificial alternatives. Combined with climate change's impacts on natural cordyceps growth, the flood of artificial products has created a perfect storm that threatens both the economic survival of Tibetan communities and the future of this traditional trade.

Yartsa Gunbu, *Ophiocordyceps sinensis* (scientific name), has been used in Chinese and Tibetan traditional medicine for centuries to treat various ailments including heart, liver, and lung problems, as well as asthma. It is also believed to boost libido, which has earned it the nickname 'Himalayan Viagra.' The highly valued medicinal fungus can be consumed directly, added to food or liquids, or ground up for use in traditional medicine production.

## **China identifies over 4000 new tourism sites in Tibet's capital Lhasa**

14 October 2024, Tibetan Review

In its relentless push to attract more, and ever more Chinese to visit western Tibet (or Tibet Autonomous Region, TAR), China has identified over 4,000 new tourism development sites in its capital Lhasa. However, there is so far little or no known study of tourism's impact on the territory's people, environment, society, and culture.

This bears relevance as the number of tourists visiting the region, who are overwhelmingly from China, exceeded 15 times the local population of 3.66 million as of last year.

Over 4,000 new tourism development sites have been identified in Lhasa since a survey began last October, reported China's official Xinhua news agency Oct 14, citing the city's culture and tourism bureau.

The report said most of these tourism resources are natural landscapes, which will attract more tourists and bring incomes to local residents.

The report noted that as an ancient city with a history of more than 1,300 years, Lhasa is among the cities in the People's Republic of China that have the most cultural relics and documents. From January to July, the autonomous region received over 42 million domestic and international tourists, up 16.65% year-on-year, the report said.

In 2023, TAR saw a record 55.17 million visitors throughout the year, a massive 83.7% increase compared to the previous years, reported China's state media. The region was stated to have earned a total tourism revenue of CNY 65.1 billion (\$9.4 billion), reflecting a 60% increase from 2022. Only around 20,000 of the visitors were reported to be from countries other than China.

This year, by mid-2024, over 20 million tourists had visited TAR, with the vast majority being Chinese nationals, reported China's state media.

## **China reports more archaeological discoveries in Tibet**

13 October 2024, Tibetan Review

Chinese archaeologists have discovered 301 immovable cultural relics, comprising sites of ancient culture, tombs, buildings, grotto temples, inscriptions and historical landmarks, in Shigatse city of Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), reported China's official chinadaily.com.cn Oct 11, citing the state Xinhua News Agency.

China is known to Sinicize even archaeological discoveries in Tibet and areas such as East Turkestan (Xinjiang) by falsely explaining them as belonging to



their contemporary Chinese dynasties in post facto justifications of its current rule over these territories. Its false narratives seek to “prove” that Tibet and East Turkestan had been parts of China since ancient times.

The report did not say what exact discoveries had been made, which may entail giving the false explanation. It only said the discovery work was carried out in 18 counties and districts in Shigatse over the past few months as part of the second phase of the fourth national cultural relics census in TAR.

The report cited the cultural and tourism bureau of Shigatse as saying that 1,088 cultural sites had been surveyed in the city thus far, and their related data has been collected.

Phuntsok Darje, deputy director of the cultural relics protection and archaeological research centre at the bureau, has “highlighted the profound significance of the city’s cultural heritage and the diversity of those immovable cultural resources.”

The report said the ongoing cultural relics census in TAR will include a comprehensive review of the 4,277 immovable cultural relics identified and registered during the third census.

The report added that simultaneous efforts were being made to investigate, identify and register immovable cultural relics that weren’t recorded in previous censuses, including those discovered since 2012.

### Chinese court rules in favor of Lhasa Public Security Bureau against Gonpo Kyi

08 October 2024, ITC

For more than two years, a Tibetan woman named Gonpo Kyi has been seeking the release of her falsely accused brother, Dorjee Tashi. Last month a Chinese court ruled against her, putting justice for her younger brother even further out of reach.

On September 24, 2024, Lhasa City’s Chengguan District Court dismissed all five counts of Gonpo Kyi’s complaint against the district’s public security bureau. Gonpo Kyi’s lawsuit, filed in March 2024, primarily claimed that the ten-day detention she endured for peacefully advocating for her brother’s release violated her rights.

Gonpo Kyi, also known as Gontey (Ch: Gongde), has been actively seeking justice since June 2022 for her younger brother Dorjee (Duoji Zhaxi), who received a life sentence in 2010 after being framed as a “secessionist” in the wake of the Chinese government’s crackdown on mass Tibetan protests in spring 2008 and is imprisoned in the notorious Drapchi Prison. Before Gonpo Kyi began openly advocating for her brother’s retrial in June 2022, she and other family members had exhausted all remedies to seek justice by appealing to

authorities in Beijing for over a decade. With no success through appeals, Gonpo Kyi began to demand justice publicly through sit-ins in front of the Tibet Autonomous Region Higher People’s Court in Lhasa.



Gonpo Kyi stood outside the Tibet Autonomous Region Higher People’s Court in Lhasa on January 31, 2023, holding a sign that read, “Tibet’s higher people’s court perverts the law.”

Gonpo’s complaint

ICT obtained a copy of the Chengguan District Court’s ruling, dated Sept. 24, 2024. It says a case was filed on March 25, 2024, after Gonpo filed a complaint alleging unlawful actions by Chengguan District Public Security Bureau (PSB) by detaining her and violating her right to express herself. Accordingly, the court held a public hearing on June 27, 2024.

In her complaint, Gonpo claimed that the district PSB had broken the law by detaining her, that the monetary penalty on her should be withdrawn, and that a compensation of 4,368 Yuan (436.80 per day for ten days) should be given to her. Gonpo also claimed that her A4 sign and white cloth banner advocacy materials should be returned to her, and all her court expenses should be reimbursed by the district PSB.

Gonpo stated that it is her right to ask for a retrial of her brother’s case and that the A4 sign and white cloth banner—demanding Dorjee Tashi’s lawyers have access to documents and a retrial of Dorjee’s case—are her personal property and the PSB’s confiscation of the materials was illegal.

Unfair verdict

The court, in its 16-page-long verdict, ruled that the PSB’s detention of Gonpo Kyi was in accordance with Chinese law, the PSB’s defense that Gonpo’s activism (in the form of prostration, meditation, pasting flyers, lying down on the street) hindered the work of Tibet Autonomous Region Higher People’s Court is valid, the PSB’s ten-day detention of Gonpo Kyi is lawful, return of confiscated materials (A4 sign and white cloth banner) is not required, and Gonpo’s claim for monetary compensation is dismissed. Overall, the Chengguan District Court dismissed all of plaintiff Gonpo’s allegations and supported the defenses provided by the district public security bureau against her.

The comprehensive dismissal of all of Gonpo's claims underscores the difficulties individuals face when challenging actions of state security organs in the Chinese legal system, particularly in Tibet. The court's support for the public security bureau's actions reveals a low tolerance for public displays of dissent or advocacy, even when conducted peacefully and a wide latitude given to the authorities in suppressing activism.

#### Gonpo Kyi's advocacy

Since June 2022, Gonpo Kyi has been at the forefront of persistent efforts to seek justice for her brother. Her approach evolved from appeals to authorities in Beijing over a decade to more public forms of protest, including sit-ins in front of the Tibet Autonomous Region Higher People's Court in Lhasa. Gonpo and her family members' public advocacy for Dorjee Tashi reveals a growing frustration with the lack of progress through official channels and a willingness to risk personal consequences to draw attention to her brother's case. During her public advocacy for the past several years, the PSB subjected her to beatings, detentions, forcible removal from protest site and blocking her protest from public view, and threatened multiple times with severe consequences. Gonpo's last activism was on May 28, 2024, during which she held an A4 sign demanding justice to Dorjee Tashi in front of the Higher People's Court of the Tibet Autonomous Region in Lhasa. In another video clip from the same day, she shows bruises on her arm presumably from beatings by the security officers on site.

Gonpo in her most recent video statement after the court's ruling is defiant of the authorities and pledges to persist in seeking justice for her younger brother.

Translation of Gonpo's statement

"I have petitioned the court in Lhasa for a retrial of Dorjee Tashi's case in accordance with the law of the country, but they have refused to do it. The police detained, dragged, and beat me multiple times. I'm currently in ill health due to these beatings. My right to ask for a retrial of my brother is powerless. Until the Lhasa Court addresses my appeal, I will persist."



Gonpo Kyi and her husband, Choekyong, were seen holding a sign that read "Dorjee Tashi is not guilty" in front of Dorjee Tashi's Yak Hotel in Lhasa in early 2023.

#### Background on Dorjee Tashi

Dorjee Tashi, a prominent former Tibetan businessman, is currently serving a life sentence in Lhasa's Drapchi Prison, a facility notorious for its harsh conditions and alleged human rights violations. The International Campaign for Tibet previously documented the case of Dorjee Tashi and the Chinese authorities use of torture on him during pretrial detention. Dorjee was arrested in the aftermath of widespread protests across Tibet in spring 2008 challenging Chinese rule. He was subsequently arrested on suspicion of providing clandestine support to Tibetan protesters and alleged connections with the Tibetan exile community. The investigation into Dorjee's perceived political loyalties was unusually led directly by China's Ministry of Public Security, which in Dorjee's testimony, and subjected him to torture in an attempt to extract confessions about supposed political affiliations and foreign connections.

Although the initial political accusations against Dorjee were eventually dropped, he was later charged with "loan fraud." The Lhasa Intermediate People's Court sentenced him to life imprisonment and permanent deprivation of political rights in May 2010. In related cases, Dorjee's family members also faced legal consequences. His elder brother, Dorjee Tseten, received a six-year prison sentence, while relatives Dhugkar Tsering and Tsultrim were sentenced to five and two years in prison, respectively.

#### Investigation of Tibetan officials in historical Dechen reveals rampant corruption in Chinese bureaucracy

02 October 2024, ITC

Several senior officials in Dechen (Ch: Diqing) prefecture in present-day Yunnan Province have been investigated in recent months by China's anti-graft agency, an indication of the high levels of corruption among Chinese officialdom – or, perhaps, of political instability.

The officials under investigation are ethnic Tibetans, one of whom had served as governor while at least three others had served at the level of deputy governor of Dechen Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, the only Tibetan prefecture in Yunnan province. Two of them even headed the United Front Work Department (UFWD) of Dechen and nearby Lijiang, a prefecture-level city. Chinese state media announced that they have undergone investigation "suspected of serious violations of discipline and laws," the standard reasoning cited for all such investigations.

Corruption is endemic in Tibet under Chinese rule. Since the beginning of Xi Jinping's rule, striking against corruption has been one of his signature

campaigns. Instead of effectively tackling the endemic socio-political problem, in the absence of real checks and balances or any form of transparency Xi's anti-graft campaign in fact serves the purpose of shoring up legitimacy for the Party and popular support for his indefinite rule.

Since April 2024, investigations have been started or actions taken against the following senior Tibetan officials from Dechen: Kalsang Namgyal (under investigation as of September 22, 2024), the head of the UFWD (as well as former deputy governor) of Dechen; Tashi Dhondup (under investigation as of August 30, 2024), member of the Standing Committee of Dechen and Secretary of the Political and Legal Committee; Feng Yuxiang (under investigation as of June 24, 2024), deputy secretary of the Lijiang City Party Committee and head of UFWD; Jangchup (Jiang Chu) (dismissed on May 19, 2024) executive vice governor of Dechen; and Qi Jianxin (dismissed on April 9, 2024), former governor of Dechen, who was dismissed from his then government position of Counselor in the prefecture after investigations were launched against him by the anti-corruption agency.

Namgyal spent all his professional career in Dechen, where he began working in 1991 in the finance bureau. Feng and Qi are both mentioned as being of Tibetan ethnicity despite using Chinese names; in the Kham and Amdo areas of eastern Tibet some Tibetans have been given Chinese names. Feng comes from Dechen and worked there before being transferred to Lijiang.



*Tibetan officials from Dechen Prefecture under anti-graft scrutiny: (From left) Qi Jianxin, Jangchup, Tashi Dhondup, Kalsang Namgyal, and Feng Yuxiang*

#### Historic Dechen

Dechen is in the southern part of Kham and covers an area of 9,189 square miles, making it larger than Israel and approximately the size of the American state of New Hampshire. It is currently divided into three administrative counties: Gyalthang (Xianggelila, formerly Zhongdian), Jol (Dechen), and Balung (Weixi). Until the formation of the prefecture in 1957, when it was renamed as Dechen, Gyalthang was the most well-known place in the region, and was part of the traditional trio of regions known in Tibetan as Baligyal (Bathang and Lithang, which are

in current Sichuan, and Gyalthang). It was an important stop in the historical "Ancient Tea Horse Trading Route" for the lucrative tea trade to the Tibetan capital Lhasa and beyond.

At the end of 2022, Dechen's total population was listed as 371,700 with Tibetans being the largest community with a population of 134,800, accounting for 36.26% of the total population, according to Yunnan Government statistics.

Among the present-day Tibetan areas, Dechen is less well known internationally. In an attempt to attract Chinese tourists, on December 17, 2001 the authorities in China renamed the prefecture capital Gyalthang as Shangri-La City (Xianggelila) after the fictional land of Shangri-La in the 1933 James Hilton novel *Lost Horizon*.

Even though Dechen is at a great distance from Lhasa, it had close political and spiritual connections to Tibet and Tibetan rulers of the past. The fifth Dalai Lama had established Gyalthang's most famous monastery of Gaden Sumtsenling. The 65th Gaden Tripa (1801-1807), head of the Gelug lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, Gedun Tsultrim, was from Gyalthang. Like many other Tibetan Buddhists of Gyalthang, he began his spiritual education first in Gaden Sumtsenling and then went to Lhasa to study at Sera Monastery.

When the Chinese People's Liberation Army started occupying eastern Tibet, including Gyalthang, the people "clearly identified and aligned themselves with the government in Lhasa under the Dalai Lama's administration," according to scholar Dawa Lokyitsang, whose grandfather is from Gyalthang.

In June 2003, envoys of the Dalai Lama, led by special envoy Lodi Gyari, visited Gyalthang as part of the rounds of talks between Tibetan and Chinese officials. In his statement, Gyari said, "We have been impressed by efforts to protect the beautiful environment of Gyalthang as well as the living conditions of some of the families that we visited. However, we emphasized to the officials the importance of maintaining Tibetan religious, cultural and linguistic identity along with the material development. Our visit was too short for us to assess in an adequate manner how effectively the Tibetan language, culture, religion and identity are being preserved, protected and promoted in this Tibetan area."

Among contemporary prominent Tibetans from Dechen include the former head of the Central Tibetan Administration, Samdhong Rinpoche, who was born in Jol. He began his spiritual study in the Gaden Dechenling Monastery in Jol and did his further studies in Drepung Monastery in Lhasa. In fact, there were reports in the media in 2017 that the Dalai Lama had sent him on "a discreet visit to Kunming" which is the capital of Yunnan, in

November of that year. Some other reports indicated that he had gone to Gyalthang, too. Within Tibet, Che Dalha (Qi Zhala), the former governor of the Tibet Autonomous Region, was born in Gyalthang and worked in the prefecture before being transferred to Lhasa in 2017.

Of particular interest is the fact that two of the officials being investigated were heading the UFWD. The UFWD is the key authority implementing policies aimed at controlling all aspects of Tibetan life under the People's Republic of China. Therefore, leadership of the UFWD at all levels is chosen through the utmost scrutiny and only the most trust-worthy individuals find a place in the organization. The current governor of Dechen Prefecture, Zhang Weidong, who is said to be a Tibetan, was also head of the UFWD in 2015.

In 2018, significant structural reforms were announced in the role of the UFWD and in 2022, Xi Jinping gave major guidelines during the UFWD conference.

The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), that oversees all such investigations against officials, including those in Dechen, is secretive at all levels. Only after charges have been levelled and sentencing finalized will we come to know the reasons for the investigations and dismissals of the Tibetan officials from Dechen.

### **Tibetan School Falls to China's Legal Pressure**

02 October 2024, Khabarhub, Manoj Ghimire

In July, 110 students graduated from Gangjong Sherig Norbu Lobling School on the Tibetan Plateau in Golog prefecture, Qinghai province. Despite the celebratory occasion, tears marked their faces.

For months, authorities had sought reasons to close the school, exploring various legal avenues. Until this summer, they had been unsuccessful.

Eventually, despite the school's legal victories, the regional administration ordered its closure. Gen Jigme Gyaltzen explained that the school was shut down for not meeting the Qinghai Provincial Party Committee's vague standards for vocational schools.



The gate of closed school adorned with khatags tied by teachers and students/PHoto: tchrd

No further details were provided.

Founded in 1994 in the Golog Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, the Tibetan school gained international acclaim for its rich curriculum in Tibetan cultural and linguistic studies. It attracted youth from Tibet, Mongolia, and Inner Mongolia.

The school emphasized preserving Tibetan language studies, medicine, and Buddhist philosophy, receiving support from Finland and the Netherlands. Its rigorous curriculum included computer science, engineering, medicine, filmmaking, and physical education.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights has similar terms, though China hasn't ratified it. While children under 18 were not present at Gangjong Sherig Norbu Lobling, former students face limited options for higher learning in Tibetan. Opportunities to study in Tibetan are dwindling from kindergarten to university.

At the Tibet Policy Institute's July roundtable, Shede Dawa of Tibet Watch highlighted the school's growth and its role in reconnecting students with their heritage, despite the region being referred to as an "open air prison."

The roundtable participants felt the impact of Dawa's upbringing in his sincere advocacy for peers facing academic repression.

Gazing at the scholars and locking eyes with the camera, he emphasized the school's founder's words: preserving the Tibetan language and script is vital for the Tibetan people's survival. Stories, cradled by linguistic exchange, ensure survival.

Dr. Lobsang Yangtso, from the International Tibet Network, admired the courage of alumni like Shede Dawa, who risk retaliation for speaking against the school's closure. "There are many others like him," she noted.

In recent years, human rights monitors have noted the gradual replacement of Tibetan textbooks with Chinese ones.



A 2010 cultural assimilation policy mandates that all schools in Tibet use Chinese as the primary language, starting from kindergarten. Dawa Tsering, director of the Tibet Policy Institute, explained the community's struggles:

"The Chinese government is closing monasteries and Tibetan schools as part of a broader strategy to eradicate Tibetan language and culture."

Tibetan activists argue that private schools are especially targeted in "patriotic education campaigns," making language instruction harder to monitor. Eight of the remaining 16 private Tibetan schools have been ordered to close, while the rest face allegations and administrative pressure.

The legal battle began with scrutiny of a logo used by the Pure Native Language Association, a student group at the school.

In 2018, Tibet Times reported that student leaders were sued for using images of a jewel and snow lion, symbols of refuge and unity. Allegations claimed the logo emulated the Tibetan national flag, banned in Tibet since the 1960s, providing grounds for an investigation.

For exiled Tibetans, the flag symbolizes freedom from oppression. To the Communist Party, it signifies separatism, leading to arrests and torture for possessing its image.

When initial suspicions yielded no results, the Communist Party adopted a new strategy to diminish the school's influence.

According to sources from the Central Tibetan Administration, Gangjong Sherig Norbu Lobling faced a series of legal challenges.

The Qinghai provincial government conducted a "search and interrogation" to find grounds for penalizing the school for hosting monks or nuns under 18, which is illegal under Chinese law.

If discovered, authorities reportedly forced these students to leave their monasteries and undergo "patriotic education."

Hundreds of Gangjong Sherig Norbu Lobling graduates have become researchers, government leaders, teachers, and entrepreneurs.

The school has been a source of Tibetan leadership since its inception. Founder Gen Jigme Gyaltzen, who left nomadic life to establish the school, was honored as a "Zhonghua Charity Worker" and received the "National People's Education Award."

Despite facing corruption allegations due to his roles in the Qinghai Tibetan Chamber of Commerce and Tibet Nomadic Management Office, he was cleared of all charges on June 28.

Editor-in-Chief of the Tibet Times, Pema Tso, noted that despite increasing challenges since the 2008 protests, the school community was "relieved" by a provincial court decision allowing its operation to continue.

However, the rule of law was ultimately subverted. On July 14, Gyaltzen announced the school's closure due to non-compliance with Qinghai Provincial Party Committee's vocational school standards, without specifying the violations.

The closure, revealed during the last graduation ceremony, created uncertainty for future scholars and professors. A former student's sister was arrested for allegedly spreading "misinformation" about the shutdown, and her whereabouts remain unknown.

Under international law, China must allow young Tibetans to pursue education in their preferred language. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), ratified by China in 1992, states that minority children have the right to use their own language.

When questioned about how states can show support for Tibetan youth deprived of their linguistic heritage, Tempa Gyaltzen Zamlha, Deputy Director of the Tibet Policy Institute, made a straightforward appeal: "Bring attention to the matter."

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights has similar terms, though China hasn't ratified it. While children under 18 were not present at Gangjong Sherig Norbu Lobling, former students face limited options for higher learning in Tibetan. Opportunities to study in Tibetan are dwindling from kindergarten to university.

Tibet Watch reports that Dzoge County recently ordered 300 young monks at Taktsang Lhamo Kirti Monastery to disrobe and become lay students at government schools. An undisclosed source indicated that Dzoge County authorities plan to close the monastic school this month.

Ironically, while China shuts down Tibetan schools, it claims that the lack of education opportunities necessitates sending Tibetan children to distant boarding schools.

In June, Xi Jinping visited such a school in Qinghai's provincial capital, which included 800 Tibetan students from the same area as Gangjong Sherig Norbu Lobling.

Lhadon Tethong, founder of Tibet Action Institute, criticized this hypocrisy: "Claiming Tibetan children must live in boarding schools due to remote geography, while closing an acclaimed school in a remote region, exposes China's justification as a lie." On July 29, 100 academics petitioned the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to pressure China to comply with international education standards.

When questioned about how states can show support for Tibetan youth deprived of their linguistic heritage, Tempa Gyaltzen Zamlha, Deputy Director of the Tibet Policy Institute, made a straightforward appeal: "Bring attention to the matter."

## In Tibet, China's plans to hike retirement age sparks concerns

24 September 2024, RFA, Sonam Lhamo and Khando Yangzom

Tibetan government workers fear the move will limit their ability to retire early.

Government workers in Tibet are voicing concern over a plan to raise China's retirement age, saying the measure will force them to work later in life and put off plans to pursue business ventures, according to sources.

China's government announced plans earlier this month to raise the country's retirement age as part of its response to falling births and a rapidly aging population – the first significant reform to China's retirement system since it was established in the 1950s.

China has one of the lowest statutory retirement ages in the world for workers to receive pensions, set at 60 for men, at 55 for women in white-collar jobs and at 50 for female blue-collar workers.

Starting on Jan. 1, the retirement age will be gradually increased over 15 years, raising it to 63, 58, and 55, respectively.

The measure has broad implications for ethnic minorities like Tibetans, who rely on retirement to transition into private business or traditional livelihoods.

"Since this is a policy of the Chinese government, it will be applied in Tibet as well," said a Tibetan official, who like others in this report declined to be named due to fear of reprisal.

"Our options will be limited," he said.

In the Tibetan Autonomous Region, many Tibetan workers aged 50 are waiting to retire early, largely due to dissatisfaction with the extensive political indoctrination they must undergo and restrictions in government offices put in place by Beijing, one of the sources said.

"These conditions have made it increasingly unpleasant for them to continue working, so many no longer wish to go to the office," he said.

'Already a bad situation'

Several Tibetans, including six who work in local government offices in Tibet, told Radio Free Asia that the policy change would likely delay their post-retirement plans, including pursuing personal business ventures and engaging in other activities.

Others complained that it could worsen corruption related to retirement benefits and raise youth unemployment in Tibet.

"There are already rampant attempts to bribe officials to secure an early retirement or a favorable retirement package," said a source familiar with the matter.

"It's already a bad situation, and this may worsen it," he said.

Another Tibetan source noted that many Tibetans have been leaving their jobs in recent years, citing poor health or mental illness due to work-related stress.

"This wave of mass resignations has led to an influx of Chinese officials from other parts of China" who are vying for the positions, he said.

Meanwhile, unemployment is on the rise in Tibet and many Tibetan graduates are already finding it difficult to land jobs, the same source said.

"The increasing presence of Chinese officials in Tibet raises concerns about future prospects for Tibetans, especially the youth seeking employment," he added.

According to the new policy, early retirement will be permitted in special cases, including for those who work in physically demanding jobs or hazardous environments.

Also, employees who have reached the minimum insurance contribution period can retire up to three years early, depending on their situation.

## China's Legal Warfare Closes a Beloved Tibetan School

18 September 2024, The Diplomat, Marie Miller

A private vocational school in Qinghai has been forced to close for unspecified violations. Critics see a continuation of Beijing's war on Tibetan language education.

Despite taking part in a momentous rite of passage, tears streaked the faces of the 110 students who graduated from Gangjong Sherig Norbu Lobling School, located on the Tibetan Plateau in Golog prefecture, Qinghai province, this July. For months, authorities had prodded any and all excuses to find violations, pursuing various legal avenues to shutter the school. Until this summer, they were unsuccessful.

Eventually, despite legal battles that ended in the school's acquittal, regional administration ordered the school's closure. In a speech before his students, Gen Jigme Gyaltsen indicated the school was closing because it was not in compliance with the Qinghai Provincial Party Committee's vague standards of vocational schools. Additional details were not disclosed. The 110 students that graduated in July will be the last the institution ever accredits.

The internationally acclaimed Tibetan school was first founded in 1994 inside the Golog Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Since then, its rich

curriculum in Tibetan cultural and linguistic studies has drawn youth from across Tibet, Mongolia, and Inner Mongolia. The school's emphasis on the preservation of specialized Tibetan language studies, medicine, and Buddhist philosophy has garnered both private and public extraterritorial support, such as from Finland and the Netherlands. The school's rigorous curriculum was supplemented with computer science, engineering, medicine, filmmaking, and physical education.

During his testimony at the Tibet Policy Institute's July roundtable on the closure, Shede Dawa of Tibet Watch, a research network based in the United Kingdom, gestured to a projected image of Gangjong Sherig Norbu Lobling, tucked into shaded mountain foothills and rich with pine saplings. He noted the lengths these trees had grown since his years as a student there, where he was encouraged by his instructors to celebrate the arduous process of reconnecting with his own heritage in a region some scholars refer to as an "open air prison."

The room of roundtable participants felt the reverberations this upbringing has had in the careful sincerity of Dawa, a steady advocate for peers facing systematic academic repression. He gazed out over the scholars in front of him, locking eyes with the camera lens before insisting, in the words of the school's founder, that the preservation of the Tibetan language and script is a crucial means for the survival of the Tibetan people. People survive through stories, which are in turn cradled by linguistic exchange.

Dr. Lobsang Yangtso, program and Environment Desk coordinator for the International Tibet Network, expressed her admiration for the courage of alumni like Shede Dawa, who might now face retaliation for speaking up against the school's closure. "There are many others like him," she said.

In recent years, human rights monitoring networks have observed the gradual swapping out of Tibetan textbooks for those in the Chinese language. A cultural assimilation policy, which was formulated in 2010, deems that all schools in Tibet must legally use Chinese as the primary language, beginning at the kindergarten level.

Dawa Tsering, director of the Tibet Policy Institute and longtime policymaker with the Tibetan government-in-exile, contextualized the school community's ordeals: "Presently, the Chinese government is closing monasteries and Tibetan schools... These measures are part of a broader strategy to eradicate the Tibetan language and culture."

Tibetan activists claim, in fact, that private schools are particularly targeted in "patriotic education campaigns," as it is more challenging for the prefecture to monitor language instruction. Eight of

the remaining 16 private Tibetan schools have been ordered to close by regional administrators, while those remaining are peppered by allegations and administrative pressure.

The legal warfare started small: scrutinization of a logo used by the Pure Native Language Association, a student organization that found its home in student leaders attending the school. In 2018, as reported by Dharamshala-based Tibet Times, these student leaders were sued and taken to court for using the images of a jewel and snow lion – would-be symbols of refuge, of a unified spiritual and secular life.

Allegations that the logo was meant to emulate emblems in the Tibetan national flag, which has been illegal in Tibet since the 1960s, offered fabricated evidence for an inquisition into the school. For the Tibetan community-in-exile, the flag represents a very simple notion: freedom from oppression, freedom of choice. To the Communist Party, the Tibetan flag is a sign of separatism – Tibetans have faced arrest and even torture in prison for simply keeping the flag's image on their mobile phones.

When the suspicions proved inconclusive, the Communist Party sought a different approach to scale back the institution's influence. The Central Tibetan Administration's sources noted the series of legal aggressions faced by Gangjong Sherig Norbu Lobling. The provincial government of Qinghai conducted a "search and interrogation" to determine whether they had grounds to punish the school for hosting monks or nuns under the age of 18, which is banned under Chinese law. If found out, multiple sources report authorities forcing these students to leave their monasteries and receive a "patriotic education."

Hundreds of graduates of Gangjong Sherig Norbu Lobling have gone on to work as researchers, government leaders, teachers, and entrepreneurs. The school, since its inception, has been a fount for Tibetan leadership – one that has now been tapped. In addition to the leaders the school has brought up, founder Gen Jigme Gyaltsen, himself having left nomadic life to found Gangjong Sherig Norbu Lobling, has received the title of "Zhonghua Charity Worker" at the National People's Political Consultative Conference. He was awarded by the state, a named recipient of the "National People's Education Award," and yet could not avoid the fire of corruption allegations on the pretext of his joint role as chairman of the Qinghai Tibetan Chamber of Commerce and Tibet Nomadic Management Office. On June 28, Gyaltsen published an article attesting that court proceedings had cleared him of all legal charges formally brought against him.

Editor-in-Chief of the Tibet Times Pema Tso observed that though the school had faced increasing challenges to its operation since the protests erupted

across Tibet in 2008, the school's community had been "relieved" by a provincial court decision that allowed its operation to continue.

In spite of years spent patiently responding to the inquisition, the rule of law was nonetheless subverted in the state's final spear. The notice came on July 14. In an official announcement, Gyaltsen indicated the school was closing because it was not in compliance with the Qinghai Provincial Party Committee's standards of vocational schools. He provided no details on what provisions, exactly, the school had violated.

Its forced closure, announced to the community during its last graduation ceremony, generated uncertainty for the fate of future scholars. Access to the campus remains restricted, and the professors who had for so many years volunteered their time also face an uncertain future.

At least one Tibetan individual, the sister of a former student at the school, has been arrested by the Nagchu County police for allegedly disseminating "misinformation" regarding the school's shutdown. Her whereabouts have since remained unknown.

Under international law, China is obligated to permit young Tibetans to pursue education in their preferred language. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which China ratified in 1992, states that "a child belonging to a ... minority ... shall not be denied the right ... to use his or her own language." The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights contains similar terms, although China has not expressly ratified its terms.

While children are generally considered to be people under 18, of which there were none at Gangjong Sherig Norbu Lobling, the former students face increasingly sparse options to engage in higher learning in their native tongue. The whittling of opportunities to engage in the Tibetan language extends from kindergarten to the university level.

Tibet Watch documents that the Dzoge County government recently ordered the disrobing of 300 young monks studying at the Taktsang Lhamo Kirti Monastery – requiring the group to become lay students at government-run schools. An undisclosed source of Tibet Watch reported that Dzongse County authorities expect to close the monastic school this month.

Ironically, China has been shutting down Tibetan schools while claiming that a lack of education opportunities necessitates sending Tibetan children to study at faraway boarding schools. Xi Jinping himself visited such a boarding school in Qinghai's provincial capital in June. The school Xi visited included "800 Tibetan students from the same area of Golog" where Gangjong Sherig Norbu Lobling was located.

Lhadon Tethong, founder and director of Tibet Action Institute, expressed his sentiments on this political hypocrisy: "Claiming that Tibetan children must live in boarding schools due to Tibet's remote geography, while simultaneously closing down an acclaimed school serving children in one of the most remote regions, exposes China's primary justification for its coercive boarding system in Tibet as a lie."

The Tibetan community-in-exile is heeding the supplication of colleagues in the Tibetan Autonomous Region. On July 29, 100 academics – whose names are redacted in the published version for their safety – submitted an official petition to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, urging that the high-level office increase pressure on the Chinese government to comply with international education standards outlined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

When asked how Tibetans would like to see states express their solidarity for Tibetan youth being barred from their own linguistic roots, Tibet Policy Institute Deputy Director Tempa Gyaltsen Zamlha expressed a simple yet clear request: "Raise the issue."

### **China orders harsh crackdown on Tibetans ahead of 75th PRC anniversary**

16 September 2024, Tibetan Review

Ahead of the country's national day on Oct 1, China's security chief has issued a call for tightening security in the Tibetan territories under Chinese rule during a four-day inspection tour last week.

Maintaining stability and guarding against independence activities are the top priorities for security personnel in Tibetan areas, the scmp.com Sep 16 cited Chen Wenqing, head of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission (CPLC), the ruling Communist Party's top security body, as saying.

The CPCL acts as the overseer and coordinator of all legal enforcement authorities, including the Ministries of State Security, Public Security and Justice, as well as the Supreme People's Court and Supreme People's Procuratorate. Chen has said the security forces must "resolutely crack down on separatist and destructive activities".

He has said the security authorities must also "resolutely manage religious affairs, while resolutely protecting normal religious activities", so as to "prevent risks, crack down on crimes, and maintain stability."

Chen has made these remarks during his trip that included stops in the Tibet autonomous region (TAR) as well as the Ganzi (Tibetan: Kardze) Tibetan autonomous prefecture in Sichuan province.

The four-day tour, which ended on Sep 13, was stated to be Chen's first regional inspection trip since the party's policymaking third plenum in July, coming in the lead-up to China's National Day on Oct 1.

This year China will mark the day as the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and security is being tightened in the sensitive Tibetan territories which include Tibet Autonomous Region, Qinghai province, and areas that now constitute parts of Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan provinces.

During his trip, Chen was stated to have visited security units in the Tibetan cities of Lhasa and Chamdo, getting updates on operations in the region, the report said, citing China's official Xinhua news agency.

In Ganzi, he was stated to have presided over a meeting on "anti-secession work", and to have given instructions on maintaining stability.

With nearly 80 % of the prefecture's 1.1 million residents being Tibetan, Ganzi is stated to be the second-largest such community in the PRC, after the TAR.

Chen has also ordered security personnel to carry out more propaganda and education campaigns to increase awareness of national identity among the people of all ethnic groups.

The report said Chen had cast the Tibetan security net wider in recent years to include more surrounding regions with large Tibetan populations.

It noted that China's top judges and prosecutors had also made their rounds of TAR.

Zhang Jun, the president of the Supreme People's Court, had visited Tibetan courts last week and said that it was necessary to hand down tough punishment to keep up the pressure on "violent terrorism, ethnic separatism and other serious criminal crimes", the report noted.

Also, Ying Yong, head of the Supreme People's Procuratorate, had inspected public prosecutors' offices in TAR earlier this month.

He too was stated to have stressed the need for prosecutors to "harshly crack down on all kinds of separatist infiltration, sabotage activities and crimes endangering national security in accordance with the law".

China deems as separatist not only people who call for or campaign for Tibet's independence but also virtually anyone who criticize its policy towards the Tibetan people, as shown by its record of their imprisonments.

## China's security chief convenes "anti-secession" meeting in Tibet

16 September 2024, ICT

China's top security official, Chen Wenqing, visited Tibet from September 10 to 13, 2024 during which he convened a meeting on "anti-secession and stability maintenance," indicating ongoing instability in Tibet and foreshadowing a possible increase in surveillance and restrictions.



China's top security official, Chen Wenqing, meeting security personnel in Lhasa, Tibet.

Chen, who is a member of Chinese Communist Party's powerful 24-member Politburo and Secretary of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission (CPLA), went to Lhasa, Chamdo (Chinese: Changdu) and Kandze (Ganzi), according to Chinese state media.

"In Kandze, Sichuan, Chen Wenqing presided over a meeting on anti-secession and stability maintenance in Tibet," state media reported, mentioning that the discussions covered not just the officially designated Tibet Autonomous Region, but also the Tibetan areas in Sichuan, Yunnan, Gansu, and Qinghai.

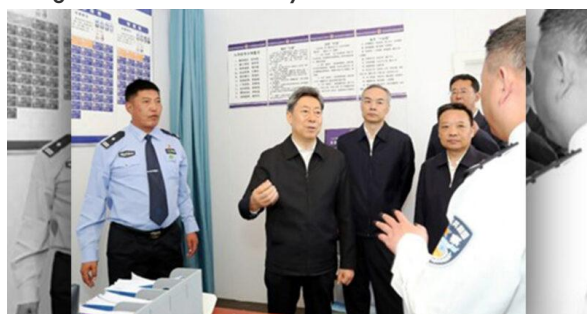
"Leniency and severity"

Political activism among Tibetan Buddhists appears to have been a major focus during the trip. In the meeting in Kandze, state media quoted Chen as saying, "We must resolutely crack down on separatist and sabotage activities in accordance with the law, resolutely manage religious affairs in accordance with the law, resolutely protect normal religious activities in accordance with the law, always adhere to the combination of leniency and severity, always adhere to the combination of punishment and prevention, and use the rule of law thinking and the rule of law to prevent risks, combat crime, and maintain stability."

Chen further "stressed that the political and legal organs must fully implement the important instructions of General Secretary Xi Jinping on Tibet work and the Party's strategy for governing Tibet in the new era, continue to make maintaining stability the top priority, adhere to the overall coordination of the two major domestic and international situations and the two major issues of development and security, do a



good job in anti-secession work, and effectively safeguard national security.”



Chen Wenqing visiting a police station of the Kandze County Public Security Bureau

#### Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission

The significance of this meeting is tied to the organization that Chen heads, the CPLA. According to political scientist Minxin Pei, CPLA “oversees the vast coercive apparatus of the party-state. Its main responsibilities include providing policy proposals on domestic security, supervising implementation of the party’s domestic security agenda, coordinating the actions of law enforcement and the judiciary, and ensuring the political loyalty of officials in law enforcement agencies.”

The CPLA’s importance can also be seen in its membership, which includes Wang Xiaohong, minister of public security; Zhang Jun, president of the Supreme People’s Court; and Ying Yong, procurator-general of the Supreme People’s Procuratorate.

Interestingly, both Zhang (Sept. 11 and 12) and Ying (Sept. 3 and 4) also visited Tibet around the time of Chen’s visit, highlighting the issue of security. Zhang told Chinese courts in Tibet that it is necessary to hand down tough punishment to keep up the pressure on “violent terrorism, ethnic separatism and other serious criminal crimes.”

Ying also stressed the need for prosecutors to “harshly crack down on all kinds of separatist infiltration, sabotage activities and crimes endangering national security in accordance with the law.”

In Lhasa and Chamdo, two other Tibetan towns he visited in addition to Kandze, Chen “inspected political and legal units and the frontline of duty to learn about maintaining security and stability, promoting the rule of law, and listened to reports on political and legal work in Tibet.”

#### Chen’s record

Chen, who is a former minister of State Security, is considered close to Xi Jinping and is part of a new team of national security leaders that was brought in after the 20th Party Congress in October 2022. He has assumed key role in advancing Xi’s security policies, making inspection trips to Tibet, Xinjiang (known to Uyghurs as East Turkestan). Chen has

publicly supported the implementation of the Hong Kong National Security Law. In January 2024, Chen conveyed Xi’s message to a central conference on judicial, procuratorial and public security work urging for “efforts to resolutely safeguard national security, improve political acumen and political discernment, prevent and resolve major security risks.”

In August 2023, Chen convened a similar meeting on Tibet in Kanlho (Gannan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Gansu Province. At the Kanlho meeting, Chen underscored the need for a comprehensive implementation of the party’s strategy for governing Tibet in the new era. He called for a forward-looking approach in work deployment, a concentrated focus on key tasks, diligent execution of work responsibilities, proactive risk prevention and control measures, and a firm commitment to sustaining long-term peace and stability in Tibet.”

At that time, Li Mingjiang, associate professor at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, told the Lianhe Zaobao newspaper that Chen’s visits (to Kanlho and before that to Xinjiang) were “a sign of [China’s] vigilance against new US policy trends regarding religion, education and other aspects of China’s ethnic minority regions, and they are worried that this may affect national unity and harmony.”

#### Reaction to the Resolve Tibet Act?

Chen’s visit to Tibet this time and the meeting on anti-secession could very well be connected to the latest law, popularly known as Resolve Tibet Act, passed in support of Tibet in the United States.

On July 12, 2024, the U.S. signed into law the “Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Disputes Act.” In its reaction the next day, China’s Foreign Ministry spokesperson mischaracterized the law as sending “a severely wrong signal to the ‘Tibet independence forces’” despite the law explicitly stating that the dispute between Tibet and China must be resolved peacefully through dialogue without preconditions, in accordance with international law.

China escalated its external propaganda efforts regarding Tibet, attempting to frame the law internationally as U.S. interference in “China’s internal affairs”. This stance directly contradicts the U.S. policy outlined in the law, which calls on China to “cease its propagation of disinformation about the history of Tibet, the Tibetan people, and Tibetan institutions, including that of the Dalai Lama”.

The law affirms Tibet’s unresolved status under international law and recognizes the Tibetan people’s right to self-determination; a universal collective human right provided for in both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

## Tibetan streamer faces censorship and detention by Chinese authorities

14 September 2024, Phayul, Tseing Dhundup



On 7 September, Gang Lhaja released his final video to date in Tibetan, expressing his frustration and disappointment regarding the situation (Screengrab/TCHRD)

A Tibetan language content creator and live-streamer Tashi Nyima, a.k.a Gang Lhaja, who was censored for his content, has reportedly been detained by local Chinese authorities.

On August 28, Gang Lhaja announced in a video posted on the Chinese social media platform KuaiShou that his live-streaming activities had been abruptly suspended following orders from local police. The restrictions primarily affected his series "Outdoor Livestream on The Plateau," which had gained significant popularity among Tibetan communities.

According to the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD), Gang Lhaja was arbitrarily detained from September 1 to 3 and reportedly beaten while in custody. On September 7, he released a video expressing his frustration and disappointment with the situation.

Gang Lhaja, who has over 75,000 followers on KuaiShou, is known for his efforts to promote the Tibetan language and culture through online games, quizzes, and educational activities. His content often draws from the "Chinese-Tibetan-English Dictionary of New Daily Vocabulary" by Khenpo Tsultrim Lodoe, a disciple of the renowned Nyingmapa master Khenchen Jigme Phuntsok.

Khenchen played a crucial role in reviving Tibetan Buddhism, culture and language in Tibet following China's Cultural Revolution, during which Mao Zedong attempted to eradicate remnants of traditional Tibetan culture. Under his guidance, numerous private Tibetan language schools were founded, including Sengdruk Taktse.

Before the police intervention, Gang Lhaja had planned an extensive tour across several regions of Tibet to promote the use of new Tibetan vocabulary. This tour has now been effectively cancelled due to the restrictions imposed on him. His censorship is part of a wider pattern of repression against Tibetan

language and culture in China. Recent years have seen increased restrictions on Tibetan activists, scholars, and cultural figures. Private Tibetan language schools have been shut down, and Chinese has been imposed as the primary language of instruction in many areas.

Live-streaming industry in China and Chinese-occupied countries like Tibet is subject to strict controls from regulators such as the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) and the Ministry of Public Security. Vague regulations prohibiting content that "undermines social stability" or is "harmful to ethnic and territorial unity" have led to increased censorship.

## China Launches Massive International Propaganda Effort on Tibet

13 September 2024, Bitter Winter, Lopsang Gurung

The ambitious "Xizang [Tibet] International Communication Center" started its work this month.

Wang Junzheng, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Secretary of the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region, announced earlier this month that a "Xizang [the Chinese name for Tibet] International Communication Center" has been established.

This is not the first "International Communication Center" created by the CCP. The policy started in 2018 and is becoming a key feature of Beijing's international propaganda, part of which is now subcontracted to regional or provincial organizations.

On September 2, a conference on "Building a More Effective International Communication System Related to Tibet" was held in Lhasa in connection with the opening ceremony of the Xizang International Communication Center.

Secretary Wang explained that the aim of the Center is to reestablish "Chinese hegemony" in the international discourse over Tibet. He said that unfortunately so far "the main media and platforms for international information dissemination about Xizang [Tibet] are basically in the hands of the United States and the West."

In the West, Wang explained, "communication is subject to various restrictions, which objectively makes it difficult for us to fully assert our right to speak. The richness of China-promoted development of Xizang [Tibet] is sometimes not conveyed; and it is sometimes difficult for us to effectively refute the dirty water thrown on China."

Zhang Taofu, dean of the School of Journalism and Communication at Fudan University, said that, "In the powerful Western discourse system about Xizang [Tibet], China is only allowed to respond passively and is often in the passive position of being demonized and stigmatized."



The launching conference of the Xizang [Tibet] International Communication Center, Lhasa, September 2. From Weibo.

These claims are somewhat paradoxical. The CCP, which systematically suffocates any voice of dissent in Tibet, claims that there are “restrictions” about how Tibetan news are reported in the West. The new Center is generously supported and funded by the central CCP Propaganda Department and is expected in a few years to “seize the power in the international discourse about Xizang [Tibet],” Secretary Wang said.

## August

### Cataract incidences in ‘Tibet’ 60% higher than in rest of PRC amid lack of medical facilities

31 August 2024, Tibetan Review



At 14.6%, the incidence of cataracts is 60% higher in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) vis-à-vis the rest of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) due to high latitude, long-term exposure to harmful ultraviolet rays, and a lack of medical facilities, reported shine.cn, the website of the official Shanghai Daily newspaper, Aug 30.

Citing a team of local Shanghai eye experts who conduct a medical aid programme in TAR, providing free diagnosis and treatment there, the report said the disease is also the leading cause of blindness in the region.

The report also said eye diseases are more common in TAR than elsewhere in the PRC.

A team of 14 medical professionals from Guangzheng Eye Hospital Group travelled to Shigatse city in southern TAR to provide free screening and eye surgery to special school students, Tibet-aiding volunteers, and residents, the report said.

It was stated to be the seventh time the hospital had organized doctors’ trips to TAR to provide medical care to the locals.

Dr Feng Fei, vice president of Shanghai Xinshijie Zhongxing Eye Hospital, which collaborated with the ZEISS company and the Shanghai Chenguang Charity Foundation on this mission, has said that overall eye health was a matter of concern among people living on the Tibetan Plateau and needed more social support and awareness.

The experts were stated to have screened teachers and children at Shigatse Special School. Ten children with vision disorders needed further examinations and assessments. Follow-up assistance will be provided to these children so that they can receive medical care in Shanghai or Chengdu, the group has said.

Dr Feng has also said: “During this mission, we performed 20 complex eye surgeries. The majority of patients were elderly and needed cataract or fundus surgery. They were unable to undergo early treatment for a variety of reasons and had to live with eye problems for a long time, which had a significant impact on their lives and jobs.”

### China’s top political advisor calls for ‘integration among all ethnic groups’ in Tibet

30 August 2024, Tibetan Review

Giving a fillip to President Xi Jinping’s Sinicization of ethnic minority regions drive, China’s top official on ethnic affairs has on Aug 27 called for the promotion of exchanges and “integration among all ethnic groups” and the strengthening of the “sense of identity with the motherland” while addressing a conference in Tibet’s capital Lhasa.

It is in this context that Wang Huning, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, has urged efforts to deliver solid paired-up assistance for Xizang Autonomous Region toward the goal of building a modern socialist new Xizang, using the Chinese name for Tibet.

“Efforts should be made to promote exchanges and integration among all ethnic groups, improve people’s livelihoods, rally people’s support, and strengthen the sense of identity with the motherland, the Chinese nation, the Chinese culture, the CPC, and



socialism with Chinese characteristics among officials and people of all ethnic groups," China's official Xinhua news agency Aug 29 quoted Wang as saying.

Addressing the fourth work conference on paired-up assistance for Xizang, and marking the programme's 30th anniversary, Wang has hailed "the notable achievements in the paired-up assistance work for Xizang over the past three decades," and "urged efforts to promote targeted, systematic and long-term assistance for the region, and elevate the comprehensive benefits yielded by the assistance work."

"Targeted, systematic and long-term assistance" obviously refers to reinforcing Beijing current renewed campaign and goal for the Sinicization of Tibet with regard to its ethnic, linguistic, and cultural identity.

For this purpose, Wang has emphasized, "It is imperative to improve the work regarding officials and talent dispatched to assist Xizang and strengthen the organization and leadership of the paired-up assistance work."

The conference was also stated to have awarded honorary titles to exemplary individuals who had participated in the paired-up assistance for Xizang, which totalled nearly 12,000 over the period of 1994 and 2022, dispatched in 10 batches at three-yearly intervals. The programme was stated to have involved the participation of 17 provinces and municipalities as well as dozens of ministries and state-owned enterprises of China, "bringing substantial investment, practical technology and essential talent to Xizang," said another Xinhua report Aug 28.

### **Xi demands all-out efforts to carry out reform tasks**

29 August 2024, The State Council

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Thursday demanded all-out efforts to ensure the implementation of the country's reform tasks.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks while presiding over the sixth meeting of the Central Commission for Deepening Overall Reform, which he heads.

Noting that the further comprehensive deepening of reform enjoys a solid foundation and favorable conditions, Xi urged making good use of the existing reform achievements and experience.

"We must free our minds, seek truth from facts, move with the times, and take a realistic and pragmatic approach," Xi said.

The meeting was attended by Li Qiang, Wang Huning and Cai Qi, all members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and deputy directors of the Central Commission for Deepening Overall Reform.

The meeting reviewed and adopted a plan for central Party and state departments to implement major reform measures set in a key resolution adopted last month at the third plenum of the 20th CPC Central Committee, and a guideline on upgrading pilot free trade zones.

The resolution put forward more than 300 reform measures spanning sectors such as the economy, culture and ecology, as the Party aims to further deepen reform comprehensively to advance Chinese modernization.

Thursday's meeting underscored the importance of upholding the CPC Central Committee's centralized, unified leadership over reform, and ensuring the proper order, pace and timing of reforms.

Efforts must be made to accelerate the implementation of landmark reform measures, enhance the consistency of reform policy orientation, and actively assess the impact of reform on economic and social development, according to the meeting.

It stressed enhancing investigation and research on major reform tasks, formulating implementation plans and strengthening the supervision, inspection and evaluation of work related to reform.

Highlighting the milestone and pioneering institutional innovations introduced by the country's 22 pilot free trade zones since the 18th CPC National Congress held in 2012, the meeting urged pursuing high-standard opening up and focusing on institutional innovations. It encouraged carrying out pilot reforms and conducting groundbreaking, integrated explorations in this regard.

The meeting also stressed fine-tuning policy mechanisms to facilitate trade, investment, capital flows, transportation and travel, as well as the secure and orderly flow of data.

Efforts are required to ensure both development and security and improve risk prevention and control capabilities, according to the meeting.

### **3 ways China is ratcheting up surveillance of Tibetans**

17 August 2024, RFA

Authorities are hiring food delivery workers as auxiliary police to monitor Tibetans.

Since early August, Chinese authorities have dramatically boosted surveillance of Tibetans in the Tibetan capital of Lhasa by putting more police on the streets, cracking down on social media users and – in a new wrinkle – hiring food delivery workers to

serve as auxiliary police officers, sources inside Tibet say.

The increased monitoring activities coincided with the start of a major annual festival, the Shoton Festival, on Aug. 4. Also known as a yogurt festival, it is observed when monks complete their annual religious retreats and involves the unveiling of a 500-square-meter thanka painting, performances of Tibetan opera and huge picnics.

"The government has been taking various measures to tighten its vigilance in response to sensitive situations in Tibet, but this August, it has suddenly taken even more drastic measures," said one source from inside Tibet.

Authorities are calling it a "summer public security crackdown and rectification operation," the sources said.

The precise reasons behind the stricter measures – which continue – are not known, but Beijing has steadily tightened surveillance in Tibet over many years. One source said the measures were to ensure stability for the government's commercial activities to stimulate economic growth.

That may be true on the surface, but comments from a senior security official point to a deeper motive. Zhang Hongbo, vice chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Region and director of the Public Security Department told state media that security forces would focus on national unity and fight separatism or secession.

Tibet was once an independent country, but Chinese forces invaded in 1950 and have controlled the territory ever since. The Dalai Lama fled into exile in India amid a failed 1959 uprising against Chinese rule. Since then, Beijing has sought to legitimize Chinese rule through the suppression of dissent and policies undermining Tibetan culture and language.

Authorities are hyper-sensitive to any hints of protest against Chinese rule or resistance to those efforts.

Here are three ways that authorities are boosting surveillance in Lhasa:

One: Greater police presence on the streets.

This includes plainclothes officers, and an increase in the number of traffic and police inspection points.

Lhasa's Public Security Bureau deployed more than 1,200 police officers, set up 65 inspection and traffic checkpoints and conducted inspections of more than 2,000 venues and 24,000 vehicles, according to a Chinese state media report on Aug. 5.

Two: Authorities have deployed civilians – mostly food delivery drivers – as auxiliary police officers.

Lhasa authorities launched a pilot program hiring delivery drivers from food delivery company Meituan to perform "voluntary patrol and prevention work," Chinese state media reported on Aug. 8 – although sources say the workers are essentially forced to do the work.

They are helping police to keep an eye on ordinary residents, including serving at night watchmen in certain areas.

The measure suggests China is using Tibet as a testing ground for its surveillance tactics because they are similar to civilian-police integration efforts China employs in border areas, said Sriparna Pathak, associate professor of China studies at the O.P. Jindal Global University in Haryana, India.

China has set up civilian-police integrated units in sensitive border areas of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and the Tibet Autonomous Region, both in the far western part of the country. The units comprise civilians, policemen, militiamen and government officials working with People's Liberation Army soldiers to ensure security.

"China's efforts to rope in delivery riders for surveillance is in line with the effort to further consolidate its grip in Tibet," said Kalpit Mankikar, an expert at the New Delhi-based think tank Observer Research Foundation.

Hiring Meituan delivery workers for surveillance also signals a link between the Chinese government and private enterprises, showing how the government drafts companies to fulfill certain national objectives, Mankikar said.

Three: Crackdown on social media use among Tibetans.

In the past, Tibetans could sign up for social media with only a phone number.

But at the end of July, the government announced that social media users had to re-open their accounts and provide personal details, the sources said.

Re-registering involves providing a password connected to one's personal cell phone or identity card that is accessible to the government, one of the Tibetans said.

"If you do not have proper social media account registration, you will receive a summons from the government to re-register, and your phone will be examined," one of the sources said.

Authorities also began stopping individual Tibetans in Lhasa to check for use of virtual private networks, or VPNs, that allow users to get around China's internet restrictions, often dubbed "China's Great Firewall," two sources from inside Tibet said.

In early August, authorities in Lhasa arrested three people for using a VPN but released them with an administrative punishment, the Municipal Public Security Bureau said on its website.

The government said the latest measure was meant to protect personal data information, properly manage internet society and prevent telecommunication network fraud.

Lhasa police said Tuesday that it was inspecting the entire internet network and city streets for two days and nights to ensure public safety and security.

This comes on top of authorities' strict monitoring of Tibetans' use of social media, including Douyin, China's version of TikTok.

Authorities have banned Tibetans from using the Tibetan language on social media sites – part of an effort to undermine their language and assimilate into Chinese culture.

### **China has impoverished Tibetan villagers by force-relocating them as 'border guardians'**

14 August 2024, Tibetan Review

China has moved thousands of people to new settlements on its frontiers, including in Tibet near the borders with India, Nepal and Bhutan, and elsewhere, calling them "border guardians." But their economic viability is highly questionable with the residents being dependent mostly on government subsidies and welfare, while some get paid a bit for border security-related jobs, according to a [nytimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com) report Aug 10.

China's leader, Xi Jinping, calls such people "border guardians" and the villagers are essentially sentries on the country's front line. And the villages set up along Tibet's border give China's sovereignty a new, undeniable permanence along boundaries contested by India, Bhutan and Nepal, the report noted.

The build-up is seen as the clearest sign that Mr Xi is using civilian settlements to quietly solidify China's control in far-flung frontiers, just as he has with fishing militias and islands in the disputed South China Sea. The report has worked with the artificial intelligence company RAIC Labs, which scanned satellite images of China's entire land border captured by Planet Labs, to arrive at its findings.

Mapping through use of satellite images and comparing them with historical records reveals that China has put at least one village near every accessible Himalayan pass that borders India, as well as on most of the passes bordering Bhutan and Nepal, the report said, citing Matthew Akester, an independent researcher on Tibet, and Robert Barnett, a professor from SOAS University of London. Both have studied Tibet's border villages for years.

While the outposts are civilian in nature, they also provide China's military with roads, access to the internet and power, should it want to move troops quickly to the border. Villagers serve as eyes and ears in remote areas, discouraging intruders or runaways, the report noted.

The build-up of settlements has fuelled anxiety in the region about Beijing's ambitions. The threat of conflict is ever present: Deadly clashes have broken out along the border between troops from India and China since 2020, and tens of thousands of soldiers from both sides remain on a war footing, the report noted.



China has moved thousands of people to new settlements on its frontiers, including in Tibet near the borders with India, Nepal and Bhutan, and elsewhere, calling them "border guardians."

Of the new villages the report has identified in Tibet, one is stated to be on land claimed by India, though within China's de facto border, and 11 other settlements are in areas contested by Bhutan. Some of those 11 villages are stated to be near the Doklam region, the site of a prolonged standoff between troops from India and China in 2017 over Chinese attempts to extend a road.

A local government document reviewed by the report was stated to indicate that some villagers may be receiving around 20,000 Chinese yuan a year for relocation, less than \$3,000. Besides, one resident reached by phone has said he earned an extra \$250 a month by patrolling the border.

Still, it remains unclear whether the villages make economic sense. The residents become dependent on the subsidies because there are few other ways to make a living, Mr Akester, the independent expert, has said. Over the years, the government has pushed many nomadic Tibetans to sell their yaks and sheep, leave the grasslands and move into houses, but often without clear ways for them to survive. Instead of herding, residents have to work for wages, the report noted.

"The major problem is they are moving them from one lifestyle to another," Barnett has said. "They end up with no capital, no usable skills, no sellable skills and no cultural familiarity."

Residents were thus seen to have been forced to relocate, to be reduced to living in poverty. A documentary aired by the state broadcaster, CCTV, showed how a Chinese official went to Dokha, a village in Tibet, to persuade residents to move to a new village called Duolonggang, 10 miles from Arunachal Pradesh.

He encountered some resistance. Tenzin, a lay Buddhist practitioner, insisted that Dokha's land was fertile, producing oranges and other fruit. "We can feed ourselves without government subsidies," he has said.

The official criticized Tenzin for "using his age and religious status to obstruct relocation," the report

said, citing a state media article cited by Human Rights Watch in a report.

In the end, all 143 residents of Dokha moved to the new settlement, the report added.

Brahma Chellaney, a strategic affairs analyst based in New Delhi, has said that in quietly building militarized villages in disputed borderlands, China is replicating on land an expansionist approach that it has used successfully in the South China Sea.

"What stands out is the speed and stealth with which China is redrawing facts on the ground, with little regard for the geopolitical fallout," Chellaney has said. "China has been planting settlers in whole new stretches of the Himalayan frontier with India and making them its first line of defence."

Also, the villages serve as propaganda: a display of Chinese strength and superiority in the region, Jing Qian, co-founder of the Center for China Analysis at the Asia Society, has said.

The relocation policy is also a form of social engineering, designed to assimilate minority groups like the Tibetans into the mainstream. Images from the villages suggest that religious life is largely absent. Buddhist monasteries and temples are seemingly nowhere to be found. Instead, national flags and portraits of Mr. Xi are everywhere, on light poles, living room walls and balcony railings, the report noted.

### **China's efforts to boost Tibet's economy benefit Han population, report says**

06 August 2024, RFA, Lobsang and Tenzin Pema

But Tibetans believe the resulting economic marginalization could increase tensions in the region.



A road marker displays the 4,000-kilometer milestone along National Highway 318 which travels through western China's Tibet Autonomous Region, Oct. 15, 2011.

A Chinese government measure to boost the economy and improve the business environment of the Tibet Autonomous Region will benefit the large and growing Han population there, while Tibetans face increased economic marginalization, according to a new think-tank report.

Chinese officials have doubled down on expanding existing economic and technology development zones, or ETDZs, in Tibet, says a July 26 report by the Jamestown Foundation, a Washington think tank.

The zones are in keeping with the government's focus on urbanization, cross-border trade and a strategy to shift the Tibetan economy away from traditional sectors, such as agriculture and herding, and into export-oriented industries.

As such, the zones focus on urban centers such as Lhasa, Lhokha, Shigatse, Nyingtri and Chamdo – cities with large and growing Han Chinese populations. This means the Han will reap the economic spoils from the zones, while Tibetans are excluded, possibly straining relations between the two ethnic groups even more, the report says.

"Heavy subsidization, Han control of the Tibetan economy (except for in the agriculture and livestock sectors), and the marginalization of ethnic Tibetans could cause problems for both the local economy's prospects and are likely to deepen social tensions," Devendra Kumar, associate fellow at the Centre of Excellence for Himalayan Studies at the Shiv Nadar Institution of Eminence in Delhi, India, wrote in the report.

"The government's more recent initiatives could simply exacerbate the problems, particularly as the new parks and zones are focused on pockets of the rising Han population," Kumar added.

The report came around the time that the Chinese government announced that the Tibet Autonomous Region recorded economic growth of 6.1 percent during the first half of 2024, compared to over 8% during the same period in 2023.

Tibetans say Beijing's measures to spur the autonomous region's economy, such as the tech zones, have left them out in the cold because of ongoing economic marginalization.

Assimilationist policies

Tibetans have long been shut out of government and construction jobs, dominated by Han migrants. They are also hurt by Beijing's assimilationist policies that disadvantages them when competing for urban employment opportunities.

Government restrictions on Tibetans banning them from travel inside and outside the region and onerous requirements for travel and business permits limit business opportunities, said several Tibetans from inside Tibet, including three businessmen.

"Major business opportunities are given to Chinese individuals, and Tibetans are only occasionally assigned minor and small businesses," one of the businessmen said.

Han Chinese accounted for more than 12% of the population of 3.7 million people in the Tibet Autonomous Region, according to China's 2020 census data.

But the Han constitute a majority or a near majority in certain urban centers. They make up about 39% of the population in Chagyib district of Nyingtri, a prefecture-level city known as Nyingchi in Chinese.

About 57% percent of the population in Gar county in Ngari prefecture, according to 2019 figures from China's National Bureau of Statistics.

In June, Wang Junzheng, party secretary for the Tibet Autonomous Region, reportedly instructed officials at the Lhasa economic-technological development zone to support Tibetan products to be traded globally.

But with China's ongoing border tensions with India and trade limited to Nepal, experts said this would be far from easy.

And traveling for business to neighboring Nepal, a pro-China nation, is difficult, Tibetans said.

"In reality, traveling from Lhasa is very difficult for Tibetans," said a Tibetan businessman from Lhasa. "If Tibetans were allowed to freely export and do business, it would be beneficial."

'Labor work if they are lucky'

Instead, Tibetan businessmen serve as mere middlemen, buying from local Tibetans and then selling to Han Chinese businessmen in Tibet who export these products, the same businessman said.

For the past 15 years, the Chinese government has been trying to reset Tibet's economy, which has until now been driven largely by massive subsidies from the central government, Kumar said.

But the subsidies and large investment opportunities, which Chinese officials say are meant to improve the livelihoods of Tibetans, are mostly doled out to Han Chinese who live in Tibet, another Tibetan businessman from Lhasa told Radio Free Asia on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal.

"If a business opportunity or plan involving a 100,000- yuan [US\$14,000] investment is in place, a Tibetan will never receive that investment," he said. "It will be given to Chinese individuals, and local Tibetans may only get employed for labor work if they are lucky."

In the meantime, it will take a while before the establishment of the ETDZs as an economic strategy bears fruit, Kumar wrote in the Jamestown Foundation report.

"ETDZs are designed in part to support exports, but the TAR's external trade is currently limited to Nepal," he said.

For the past 16 years, the Chinese government has focused on developing tourism, mining and construction industries in the Tibet Autonomous Region, "but their potential to help shift to indigenous growth remains limited," Kumar said.

This is why provincial officials have embarked on initiatives that replicate the growth model of inland provinces, he said.

While tourism in Tibet might bring some temporary income to Tibetans, the cost of economic development far outweighs any minor benefit they receive, Lhade Namlo, an Australia-based researcher on Tibet and China, told RFA.

The likely negative impact of industrial development and mining activities on the environment and the long-term dangers posed to neighboring Southeast Asian nations, including India, cannot be ignored, he added.

### **China's ethnic policy chief says minority artists must focus on common national identity**

05 August 2024, SCMP, Xinlu Liang

Pan Yue criticises one unnamed Tibetan-language film for not giving the Communist Party enough credit.

China's top ethnic policy official has criticised "self-centred" artworks about ethnic minorities and said that they should focus on the common national identity.

As an example, he criticised an unspecified Tibetan-language movie for only focusing on the spiritual world while not giving Communist Party credit for building the region's infrastructure.

Pan Yue, director of the National Ethnic Affairs Commission, made the remarks last month in a speech at a meeting of the Junma (or Steed) Ethnic Minority Literary Awards.

The speech was published on Friday at China Minzu News, an official outlet focused on Beijing's ethnic policies.

Pan, who is ethnically Han, said he had observed a "disconcerting trend" in recent years where ethnic minority artworks were swayed by "Western multicultural theories".

He said: "This is evident in narrative models that isolate individual social groups for development, in constructing a closed historical lineage for a single ethnic group, in the binary oppositions of urban versus rural, modern versus traditional, and centre versus periphery, as well as in cutting off the close connection with the historic progress of the entire country, and generate self-centred and exaggerated expressions." Pan criticised one film about a pilgrimage by Tibetan herders that illustrates how religious faith shapes their material and spiritual world.

"Did they not know that it is the Communist Party of China that has constructed the pilgrimage paths, repaired the Potala Palace and thousands of temples, as well as compiled the Tibetan Buddhist canon?" Pan said.

He did not name the film in question, but the content matches that of Zhang Yang's 2015 movie *Paths of the Soul*.



Although the director is ethnically Han, it is the highest grossing Tibetan-language movie ever released in China. It follows a group of Tibetan pilgrims on a monumental 2,000km (1,200-mile) journey to Mount Kailash, a sacred site in Tibetan Buddhism.

Pan also said: "The No 1 criterion for evaluating ethnic literature works is whether they contribute to strengthening the sense of community for the Chinese nation."

He also set out specific instructions on works related to different ethnic groups.

When writing about Tibet, it was acceptable to highlight its uniqueness, Pan said, but cautioned against portraying Tibet as an isolated "Himalayan cultural circle" adding that Tibetans had always "looked eastward".

Since 2014, policy towards ethnic minorities has been shaped around President Xi Jinping's slogan of the "community of the Chinese nation", which emphasises the wholeness of the nation rather than ethnic differences.

Beijing has been accused of widespread human rights abuses in regions such as Tibet and Xinjiang, but it says its policies there are designed to combat terrorism, separatism and extremism.

Pan said divisive narratives promoted by the West had introduced erroneous historical perspectives, creating false opposition and misrepresenting various ethnic groups and regions.

These included the deliberate creation of oppositions such as "Han versus non-Han", "nomadic versus agricultural", and "inner Asia versus China", he said. He criticised claims that groups such as the Manchus, Mongolians, Tibetans and Hui were not part of the Chinese nation, and criticised the portrayal of the southwestern provinces of Yunnan, Guizhou and Guangxi as "historically unclaimed lands" that "rebel against the country".

"It is vital to avoid narratives that stray too far from historical facts and the idea of unity," Pan said. "Importantly, it should be acknowledged that all ethnic minorities are co-creators of Chinese civilisation."

"Historical evidence shows that cultures fostering a sense of shared identity are well-maintained and developed, while those that undermine this unity tend to fade away over time."

Pan also said Western critics were twisting China's narrative of national unity into a notion of "ethnic assimilation".

He said efforts to modernise and improve areas inhabited by minorities had been mischaracterised as "resource exploitation", while attempts to preserve and safeguard folk culture were portrayed as "cultural eradication".

"If we fail to take action and develop alternative narratives, the true story of the Chinese nation may be forever overshadowed by these falsehoods," he said. He called on filmmakers and authors within minority communities to craft compelling stories that resonated with both personal histories and the collective national narrative promoted by the Communist Party.

### **Chinese Social media platform bans Tibetan language, Tibetans condemn decision**

04 August 2024, The Economic Times

The Tibetans living in Tibet and other parts of the world have expressed their concerns as the Chinese social media platform Douyin banned all content in the Tibetan language. The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) based in Dharamshala has strongly condemned this decision. Speaking to ANI, TCHRD Director, Tenzin Dawa, said that Douyin company's decision to ban content in the Tibetan language has made it impossible for Tibetan netizens who use these platforms to create content and make a living from these platforms.

Tenzin Dawa said, "Recently we came across several videos of Tibetan netizens inside Tibet expressing strong discontent over the recent ban by Chinese company Douyin in China. So, Douyin company has resorted to banning, removing and censoring all content that speaks in the Tibetan language and that relates to Tibetan culture in general because of the recent ban a lot of Tibetan netizens who use these platforms to create content, share their lifestyles or run businesses and make a living from these platforms are now completely made impossible to continue what they have been doing so far on this platform." She said that the Chinese constitution allows minority people to speak in their language and questioned the restrictions imposed against the language. Tenzin Dawa said, "The Chinese constitution guarantees the minority people to speak in their language but why it's suddenly restricted? Do they have an issue with us being Tibetan? We are even willing to pay the company some amount but want to continue in creating content in Tibetan language on its platform."

"So, these were some of the concerns that were being expressed through some videos that were shared among the Tibetan community. So, they are also saying if the company and the Chinese authorities don't allow Tibetans to speak in their language then they will collectively pool money and sue the company itself because the constitution itself guarantees Tibetan people speak their language and the actions that the company has carried out is

illegal," she added. Douyin is not the only platform in Chinese cyberspace that has imposed a ban on the Tibetan language. Several other platforms like Bilibili or Talkmate where people can learn different languages have even banned the Tibetan language for quite some years. During the past couple of years, several other companies have made it difficult for Tibetans to share videos to showcase the Tibetan language, culture and traditions.

Tenzin Dawa said, "It's not happening with online platforms only but it's something that the Chinese government has been systematically doing especially under the guidance of Xi Jinping since he came to power with his aim to assimilate the restrictions on the Tibetan language as well as to completely eradicate Tibetan language and culture so it shows both offline Tibetans are being forced to speak Chinese." She further said, "Private Tibetan institutions are closed down and then online where people want to speak in their language are being censored so it clearly shows that there is a shrinking space for Tibetans inside Tibet."

### **Tibet is only provincial-region where road building is fully funded by Beijing**

01 August 2024, Tibetan Review

Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) is the only provincial-level region in the People's Republic of China where road construction is fully funded by the central government, underlying Beijing's top priority in ensuring political stability and border security there. Given this reality, China's central government invested 325.1 billion yuan (about 45.6 billion US dollars) in road construction in TAR from 1953 to 2023, according to China's official Xinhua news agency Jul 31, citing the regional government's information office.

The total length of roads open to traffic in TAR currently stands at 123,300 km, with paved roads accessing 666 townships and 4,596 administrative villages, the report cited the information office as saying at a press conference.

TAR is the only provincial-level region in the PRC where road construction is fully funded by the central government, the report said.

"Over the past 10 years, Xizang has implemented 5,805 projects for rural road construction and built or renovated 58,700 km of rural roads," the report added, referring to the region by its pinyin name so as to give it a Chinese identity.

The report cited an official from the regional transportation department as saying the TAR will continue to promote the construction of the expressway network and accelerate the connectivity of all cities and key land ports.

## **July**

### **Tibetan parents forced to enroll children at state-run residential schools**

23 July 2024, RFA

Authorities shut down the monastery school they were attending in May.

Chinese authorities are requiring the parents of students who attend a Buddhist school in a Tibetan area of western China to enroll their children in state-administered residential schools, Tibetans with knowledge of the situation said.

Earlier this month, Radio Free Asia learned that Chinese authorities had closed down the Buddhist school of Lhamo Kirti Monastery in Dzoge county, Sichuan province, affecting about 600 students. Another school at Kirti Monastery in Ngaba county was also shut down, affecting 1,000 students.

Authorities said students at both schools had not attained the age at which they could receive monastic education — now set at 18 — though children as young as 5 or 6 years old previously were allowed to enroll in monastery schools, sources told RFA in the earlier report.

Now, more than 300 students, ages 6 to 14, at the Lhamo Kirti Monastery school must enroll in what critics of Chinese policies in Tibet call "colonial-style" boarding schools, where young Tibetans are separated from their families and taught a Chinese-language curriculum that promotes loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party, the sources said.

Efforts are being made to allow another 200 students, ages 15 to 18, to remain at and attend the Buddhist school, one of the sources said.

Tibetans and rights activists say dozens of such school closures in recent years are part of the Chinese government's systematic efforts to assimilate Tibetans by wiping out their culture, language and religion.

"Parents are currently required to send their children to state-administered residential schools and sign written agreements not to enroll them in any other schools or monasteries until they reach adulthood," said a Tibetan from Lhasa who declined to be identified so he could speak freely.

"This move was made under the guise of enforcing the compulsory education system established by the Chinese government," he said.

Tibetan as medium of instruction

Parents of Children at the Lhamo Kirti Monastery school must sign a document — a copy of which was obtained by RFA — confirming that their children are enrolled in a state-run boarding school in accordance

with Article 16 of China's Law on the Protection of Minors.

That article states that parents who work in other places and can't perform their guardianship duty with respect to minors shall entrust other adults who have the ability to act as guardians with such duty.

The document sent to parents also specifies that once they receive the notice, they must prepare their children to attend a residential school beginning in September.

Though Tibetans have argued that sending their children to Buddhist schools does not violate Chinese law, government authorities have accused them of brainwashing the children with the curriculum taught in the Buddhist schools, sources said.

Unlike state-run boarding schools, Buddhist schools teach Tibetan literature, English and Buddhist philosophy as subjects using the Tibetan language as the medium of instruction.

Founded in 1986, the school at Lhamo Kirti Monastery – known among locals as Taktsang Lhamo Kirti Monastery – initially offered three classes held in the monastery's hall and monks' residences.

In 1993, a separate school called Taktsang Lhamo Tibetan Culture school was established, but it faced interference from the Chinese government when officials ramped up restrictions on the study of the Tibetan language and Buddhist philosophy, ultimately leading to its closure.

The monastery's primary school later reopened and served novice monks under the age of 18 and children from nearby nomadic areas.

### **China Brings Official From Tibet to Lead Banker Crackdown**

23 July 2024, BNN

China relocated an official from Tibet to lead its crackdown on the financial sector, indicating no let-up in its unprecedented efforts to clean up the industry.

Wang Weidong was named chief of the Central Financial Discipline Inspection and Supervision Work Committee, according to an article published Monday by the top graft buster's official newspaper. It marks the first reference to the special committee, which was newly set up within the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, Caixin reported on Tuesday.

Wang pledged to strengthen political supervision and party building within the financial system as well "promptly discover deviations" and "vigorously implement rectification," according to the article.

Wang resigned in March from a supervisory post in Tibet. Prior to that, he held various roles at the

National Government Offices Administration as well as the CCDI.

China has tightened its grip on the \$66 trillion finance industry, labeling bankers as "hedonistic" and emphasizing the Communist Party's "centralized and unified leadership" of the sector. An anti-graft drive that was unleashed in 2021 has shocked the industry, bringing down more than 100 financial officials and executives last year alone.

The new financial corruption work committee suggests more permanent oversight of the industry. It follows an overhaul of China's financial regulatory regime last year that saw the creation of an enlarged regulator as well as two financial bodies that oversee the sector's development, ideology and discipline.

Authorities also pledged to improve its supervision mechanism for the financial sector at the Third Plenum last week, a twice-a-decade gathering where the top leaders map out long-term plans for the world's second largest economy. It will also formulate a financial law to strengthen regulatory responsibilities and accountability.

### **China shuts down 30-year-old Tibetan school in Amdo Golog**

15 July 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

Chinese authorities forcibly closed the renowned Ragya Gangjong Sherig Norbuling school in Golog Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Amdo (Ch. Qinghai) Province, according to multiple sources. The private institution, founded in 1994 by Ragya Jigme Gyalsten, was shut down ending a 30 year old Tibetan educational institution.

A video released on Saturday by the Dharamshala-based Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) showed the emotional closing ceremony of the school where students can be seen mourning and in tears during the closing ceremony held on Sunday morning.

According to a report by Tibet Times, a Tibetan-language media house based in Dharamshala, Chinese authorities concealed the true reasons for the closure of the school. They claimed that the search and interrogation were conducted to identify any monks or nuns under the age of 18, threatening severe punishment and fines if any were found.

On April 12, the school faced multiple lawsuits and pressures from the Communist Party Secretary of Golok and other officials who had been conspiring to close the school for many years. Additionally, a student association formed in 2018, dedicated to preserving the Tibetan language was sued for using the jewel and lion emblems from the banned Tibetan National Flag as their group's logo.





Screengrab of the closing ceremony of the Ragya Gangjong Sherab Norbuling school in Amdo Golog. The school's founder, Jigme Gyaltsen, faced false allegations of corruption and accepting bribes in his roles as chairman of the Snow Land Pastoral Association and the Qinghai-Tibet Trade Association. These charges were brought to trial, and on June 28, Jigme Gyaltsen was found not guilty of any crime. Observers say that the incident is part of a broader crackdown on Tibetan language and cultural education where Tibetan language is the medium of instruction. The closure of Ragya Gangjong Sherig Norbuling school follows a series of similar actions in recent years. In 2022, Chinese authorities in the so called Sershul County, Kardze (Ch. Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, mandated the closure of all Tibetan private schools. According to information obtained by the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD), the authorities ordered that students be enrolled in government schools, where the medium of instruction is Mandarin, by April 20, 2022.

### Tibetans express anguish over China's ban of Tibetan language on Douyin

09 July 2024, Phayul



Screengrab of Tibetans on social media criticising Chinese government's ban on Tibetan language and posts on Douyin

Tibetans in Tibet have voiced concerns and anguish over the Chinese government's decision to ban the Tibetan language and remove Tibetan language posts on Douyin, China's version of the popular social media platform TikTok. This decision has sparked widespread outrage among Tibetans,

highlighting the ongoing struggle for cultural and linguistic freedoms online.

In a widely circulated video on X (formerly Twitter), a Tibetan netizen vehemently expressed discontentment over the deliberate ban and removal of Tibetan language posts on Douyin. "I question whether Douyin holds more power and authority than the nation and the legal system. Is Douyin more powerful than the state? What is the reality here? To clarify, the state's policies explicitly grant protection for cultural preservation and language promotion, a mandate supported by both the legal system and the government," he stated.

In another video, a Tibetan woman is seen lamenting the removal of Tibetan language posts on TikTok in China. "I am a native Tibetan speaker and cannot speak perfect Chinese. Why am I not allowed to post in my native language?" she questioned.

In another widely circulated recent video, a Tibetan man can be seen criticising China's ban on the use of the Tibetan language in live broadcasts. "An anchor confirmed the ban after speaking a few words of Tibetan and getting banned. Despite China's Constitution protecting national languages, TikTok discriminates against the Tibetan language," he remarked.

The ban on the Tibetan language in Douyin is part of a wider pattern of suppression and delegitimisation of the native language in Tibet. Over the years, the Chinese government has implemented various policies aimed at diminishing Tibetan cultural practices, including restrictions on religious freedom, language and instead the promotion of Mandarin over Tibetan in schools. This latest move is seen as an extension of these policies into the digital realm.

The Dharamshala-based rights group, Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD), has condemned this move, calling it "a flagrant violation of provisions enshrined in Chinese constitution as well as Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law, which promised but rarely granted meaningful autonomous powers to ethnic minorities including Tibetans,"

### China clamps down on social media ahead of Dalai Lama's birthday

02 July 2024, RFA, Pelbar

Beijing sees the Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader as a 'splittist.'

The Chinese government is intensifying already stringent social media restrictions on Tibetans to keep them from celebrating the July 6 birthday of the Dalai Lama, two Tibetan sources said.

Authorities already ban the possession of photos of the Tibetan Buddhist leader, who turns 89, and

posting images of him or religious symbols on social media.

But during the past three weeks, authorities have more frequently and rigorously checked the cell phones of Tibetan travelers to ensure they have not downloaded any photos, said the sources who live inside the western region of China and who requested anonymity for safety reasons.

Police also have summoned individuals deemed suspicious to local offices to warn them not to contact family members living outside the Tibet Autonomous Region, they said.

Every year, authorities intensify their monitoring of Tibetans in the run-up to the birthday of the Dalai Lama, who has lived in exile in northern India since 1959 and is viewed by China as a “splittist” seeking independence for Tibet.

The Dalai Lama has maintained that he does not advocate independence but rather genuine autonomy to allow Tibetans to maintain their culture, religion and language under China’s rule, which has sought to Sinicize Tibetan-populated areas.

**Knee surgery in US**

This year, authorities are extra vigilant because Tibetans concerned about the Dalai Lama’s health following his recent knee replacement surgery in the United States may have downloaded his photo to their phones to pray for a speedy recovery, the sources said.

Chinese authorities turned down visa requests by some Tibetans who planned to travel to the U.S., after asking them if they were going to see the Dalai Lama there, sources in Tibet said.

Authorities have prohibited Tibetans inside the Tibet Autonomous Region and in Tibetan-populated areas of China’s western provinces from communicating with the outside world about the Dalai Lama’s birthday, the first source said.

The second Tibetan said whenever he travels from Lhasa to Shigatse, the region’s second-largest city, authorities now closely monitor his mobile phone.

“I am questioned about whether I possess a photo of the Dalai Lama or if I have been in contact with anyone,” he said.

In Golog Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in southeastern Qinghai province, Chinese officials and monastery heads have ramped up propaganda efforts, urging Tibetans to exercise caution and self-control on social media.

Despite the government’s strict measures, Tibetans in Tibet continue to celebrate the Dalai Lama’s birthday each year by posting poems and childhood photos of their spiritual leader.

Many also make traditional smoke offerings in the mountains and observe moments of silence.

## June

### TIBETAN MONK DETAINED AFTER WECHAT POST

28 June 2024, Free Tibet

A Tibetan monk was arrested a month ago in Chigdril County, Golok Prefecture, after criticising Chinese law on the social media platform WeChat.

According to a source, the 26-year-old monk, whose name has been kept confidential for security reasons, was arbitrarily detained on 26 or 27 May allegedly on charges of separatism. His location still remains unknown and his family was denied visits. The social media post for which he was arrested was a comment on WeChat against a county-level law, although it still is not clear which specific law he expressed criticism against.

The same source further stated that following his arrest, the Chigdril County Executive and the Head of the United Front Work Department visited his monastery and carried out a 10-day political education campaign for his estimated 100 fellow resident monks.

The monks, who were criticised by the visiting officials, were later notified by the Monastery Management Committee that they must refrain from posting any comments or likes on social media, or from sharing any information – in writing and voice message – that may go against the party-state and its political view of unity of nationalities. Their families and neighbours were also ordered to share this notification through social media.

The authorities are known to be currently carrying out more restrictions and investigations in the monastery with door-to-door visits to interrogate everyone.

### Tibetan political prisoner hospitalized following severe illness

28 June 2024, RFA, Pelbar

Thupten Lodoe’s jailing was part of a larger crackdown on Tibetan writers and intellectuals.

A Tibetan writer and advocate for the preservation of the Tibetan language who is serving a nearly 4.5-year jail sentence for engaging in separatist acts and social disorder, is being treated at a hospital for a serious illness, two Tibetan sources said.

Thupten Lodoe, also known by his pen name Sabuche, is in his 30s and hails from Seshul county, called Shiqu in Chinese, part of the Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan province.

He was arrested in October 2021 and detained for six months before being sentenced to four years and

five months in prison in June 2022 for writing articles deemed a threat to national security and unity.

Lodoe has been detained in a prison in Dartsedo, or Kangding in Chinese, where he has endured harsh conditions, including hard labor, inadequate food and poor living conditions, said the sources who requested anonymity for safety reasons.

Authorities said Lodoe is receiving medical treatment, but they did not disclose his illness or the hospital's location, the sources said.

Lodoe's arrest was part of a larger crackdown on Tibetan writers, intellectuals and cultural figures arbitrarily imprisoned in undisclosed locations, usually for long periods and with no disclosure of their whereabouts. Most were arrested after sharing their views or information about conditions in ethnic Tibetan areas under Chinese government rule.

Following his sentencing, his family was harassed by Chinese authorities, and his two children were barred from attending school.

Fluent in Tibetan, Chinese and English, Lodoe studied at a school established by the Panchen Lama, whose Buddhist spiritual authority is second only to that of the Dalai Lama, in Sichuan province.

Despite a job offer from the Chinese government, he chose to work independently as an author, writing extensively about the Tibetan language — which Beijing has sought to repress along with Tibetan religion and culture — and translating the American national anthem and poems by an ancient Persian poet into Tibetan.

Chinese police previously warned him to stop writing such articles, but he kept doing so, a friend of Lodoe told Radio Free Asia in an earlier report.

### **China Using 'Discriminatory Surveillance Technologies' To Target Muslim Minorities, Tibetans: US Report**

26 June 2024, News18

The report, titled "2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: China," released on Tuesday, has assigned China a Tier 3 ranking, the lowest rating, citing extensive evidence of forced labor and other human rights abuses

The US State Department has released a report on human trafficking, raising serious concerns about China's treatment of ethnic and religious minorities.

The report, titled "2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: China," released on Tuesday, has assigned China a Tier 3 ranking, the lowest rating, citing extensive evidence of forced labor and other human rights abuses.

"The Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making

significant efforts to do so; therefore the PRC remained on Tier 3," the report stated.

The report further highlights a systematic government policy of widespread forced labor, particularly targeting Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, ethnic Kyrgyz, and other minority groups in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Xinjiang).

### **DETENTION UNDER 'VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND DERADICALIZATION'**

These individuals are often detained under the pretext of 'vocational training' and 'deradicalization', the report stated.

"PRC authorities reportedly surveilled, harassed, threatened, attempted to discredit, and sought the extradition of Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and other forced-labor survivors seeking asylum abroad in retaliation for their contact with foreign media outlets," it stated.

Additionally, the report mentions that NGOs estimate that one in every 26 Uyghur and other ethnic minority individuals in Xinjiang is imprisoned under the Ministry of Justice's jurisdiction. This demographic makes up 33.7 percent of China's total formal prison population.

The US State Department's report underscores that the People's Republic of China's (PRC) "pervasive, state-sponsored labor trafficking" makes it less likely for the government to identify members of these minority groups as "trafficking victims."

### **OVER MILLION SUBJECTED TO MASS DETENTION AND POLITICAL INDOCTRINATION**

The report also highlighted that since 2017, over one million Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, ethnic Kyrgyz, and other minority groups have been subjected to mass detention and political indoctrination.

"The government continued to transfer thousands of detainees into forced labor in dozens of other provinces, according to NGO estimates and media reports," it added.

Citing PRC government documents, the US State Department report stated that local governments in China have at times arrested Muslims arbitrarily or based on spurious criminal charges and administrative violations, including violations of birth restrictions.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs continued to confiscate, cancel, or refuse to renew the PRC passports of Uyghurs and individuals from other mostly Muslim ethnic minority groups living abroad, including those with legal permanent resident status or citizenship in other countries, as a coercive measure to lure them back to Xinjiang and likely detain them within the camps," it added.

### **USING DISCRIMINATORY SURVEILLANCE TECHNOLOGIES**

Furthermore, the report points out the use of discriminatory surveillance technologies, such as

facial recognition and DNA sequencing, to monitor and detain predominantly Muslim Turkic minorities in Xinjiang. Similar technologies are reportedly used to collect DNA from ethnic Tibetans across Tibet.

According to the report, following their detention, many individuals are subjected to forced labor in factories producing a variety of goods, including garments, automotive components, footwear, and electronics, for both domestic consumption and international export.

"Despite phasing out of the internment camp system, forced labor in these industries likely continues under the auspices of former detainees who were transferred out of detention into forced labor at existing manufacturing facilities, and in the ongoing labor transfer program. Coercive conditions reportedly included threats of physical violence, confiscation of travel and identity documents, forcible drug intake, physical and sexual abuse, and torture, among others," it added.

### **China reiterates conditions for talks it does not want to hold with the Dalai Lama**

21 June 2024, Tibetan Review

In response to a meeting he had with a bipartisan delegation of US lawmakers at his home in Dharamshala, India, on Jun 19, China has reiterated its conditions for holding talks with the Dalai Lama, Tibet's exile spiritual leader. The delegation had called on China to resume talks with the exile Tibetan leadership as sought in a Resolve Tibet Act bill that now awaits President Joe Biden's signature for becoming law.

Responding to the bill and the Dharamshala events, the Chinese foreign ministry has said Jun 20 that the Dalai Lama must "thoroughly correct" his political views as a condition for contact with what it called China's central government to resume.

"With regard to contact and negotiations between the central government of China and the 14th Dalai Lama, our policy has been consistent and clear," Reuters Jun 20 quoted Lin Jian, a spokesman at China's foreign ministry, as saying.

"The key is that the 14th Dalai Lama must fundamentally reflect on and thoroughly correct his political views," Lin has said at a regular ministry news conference.

Also, responding to the US bill, Lin has said, "We urge the United States to fully recognise the importance and sensitivity of Tibet-related issues and earnestly respect China's core interests," Lin has said.

"We should abide by our commitment on the issue of obstacles, refrain from any form of contact with the Dalai clique, and stop sending wrong messages to the outside world."

A ten-year-long series of talks between envoys of the Dalai Lama and the Chinese government ended on a bitter note in late 2010, with the latter accusing the former of seeking independence with their demand for genuine or meaningful autonomy in exchange for accepting China's sovereignty over the Tibetan homeland. China also made it clear that the only talks they will hold with the Dalai Lama would be concerned with the conditions for his "return" to China, including his personal status under Chinese rule. For that, it requires him to "admit" that Tibet was part of China since ancient times and to give up all his activities in support of the Tibetan people.

But the Dalai Lama's position remains that the only talks he can hold with China would be over the well-being of the Tibetan people as a whole; that Tibet was historically an independent country but would be willing to accept genuine autonomy under Chinese rule through a negotiated settlement, and that there is nothing to discuss as far as his own well-being is concerned.

### **China says Dalai Lama must 'thoroughly correct' his political views**

20 June 2024, Reuters

The Chinese foreign ministry said on Thursday that exiled spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism the Dalai Lama must "thoroughly correct" his political views as a condition for contact with China's central government to resume.

Formal talks between China and the Dalai Lama, who fled to India in 1959 after a failed Tibetan uprising against Chinese rule, and his representatives have been stalled since 2010.

"With regard to contact and negotiations between the central government of China and the 14th Dalai Lama, our policy has been consistent and clear," said Lin Jian, a spokesman at China's foreign ministry.

"The key is that the 14th Dalai Lama must fundamentally reflect on and thoroughly correct his political views," Lin said at a regular ministry news conference. The Dalai Lama stepped down in 2011 as the political leader of the Tibetan government-in-exile, which Beijing does not recognise and views as a violation of China's constitution.

Yet China continues to chafe at any interaction he has with officials of other countries, including former U.S. presidents, even though the Dalai Lama says he is not seeking independence for Tibet.

The 88-year-old, whom China sees as a dangerous separatist in a monk's robes, remains the spiritual leader of the Tibetan people.

U.S. lawmakers are currently asking President Joe Biden to sign a bill aimed at pressing China to secure a negotiated and peaceful agreement on Tibet.



A group of U.S. lawmakers, who met the Dalai Lama in India on Wednesday, said they would not allow China to influence the choice of his successor. While Washington recognises Tibet as a part of China, the bill appears to question that position, analysts say. Beijing has rejected the Resolve Tibet Act, saying Tibet is part of China and brooks no interference from external forces.

"We urge the United States to fully recognise the importance and sensitivity of Tibet-related issues and earnestly respect China's core interests," Lin said.

"We should abide by our commitment on the issue of obstacles, refrain from any form of contact with the Dalai clique, and stop sending wrong messages to the outside world."

### **President Xi inspects Tibet Sinicization drive in Qinghai province**

20 June 2024, Tibetan Review

Assimilating Tibet through Sinicization of education and religion and ensuring proper settlement of Chinese immigrants while also talking about ecological conservation appear to have been the main foci of Chinese President Xi Jinping's two-day inspection tour of Qinghai province, the bulk of the traditional eastern Tibetan province of Amdo (or Domey), which ended on Jun 19.

Xi, the general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, visited a middle school for Golok Tibetans and a Tibetan Buddhist temple, both in Xining, the provincial capital, reported China's official Xinhua news agency Jun 19 and the scmp.com Jun 20.

The Xinhua report said Xi learned about the efforts being made by the Tibetan Buddhist circle in carrying forward the fine traditions of loving the country and the religion, and in promoting ethnic unity and progress. The Tibetan Buddhist Hongjue Temple (Tsongkha Monastery) inspected by Xi has been key to Beijing's communication with a Tibetan Buddhist leader since it affirmed sovereignty over Tibet in 1951, said the scmp.com report. Chinese Princess Wencheng was stated to have stayed at the original site of the temple for one month when she entered Tibet as a bride of Tibet's King Songten Gampo in the seventh century AD.

Although Hongjue Temple was not the biggest Tibetan Buddhist temple in the city, it was the site of one of the most significant meetings between Communist Party's leadership and a Tibetan Buddhist leader in 1951 (Dec 15), the report quoted Xie Maosong, a senior researcher at the National Institute of Strategic Studies at Tsinghua University, as saying.

Xi Jinping's father Xi Zhongxun, then the Communist Party's deputy secretary of the Northwest Bureau

and vice-chairman of the Northwest Military and Political Committee, was appointed by Mao Zedong to arrange the 10th Panchen Lama's return to Shigatse in Tibet, the report said, citing the Communist Party's archive.

"That was one of the most significant meetings that forged the friendship between Xi Zhongxun and the Panchen Lama that lasted for more than four decades," Xie has said.

The Xinhua report said Xi, who is also the chairman of the Central Military Commission, also learned about local efforts in advancing the education work through collaboration between the eastern and western regions and paired assistance, and in strengthening education on "forging a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation."

Focusing on Sinicizing the ethnic minority regions, especially in education by stressing mandarin Chinese learning and use and in religion, has been Xi's approach for homogenizing and strengthening the national unity of what constitutes the People's Republic of China.

Ethnic unity, a euphemism for encouraging the settlement of Chinese immigrants so as to Sinicize the demography of the Tibetan regions, has been a focus of Chinese government policy since the early days of the occupation rule.

President Xi sent a signal for ethnic unity as a plenary session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China – to unveil economic and social development strategies for the coming decade – was set to convene next month, said the scmp.com report.

Xi also stressed continued efforts to advance the ecological conservation of the Tibetan Plateau and called on the province to promote high-quality development, said a Xinhua report Jun 20.

He met provincial party and government representatives on Jun 19 and stressed the province's "great mission" to preserve ecological security, said the scmp.com report, citing Xinhua.

Qinghai province shares the Tibetan Plateau with the Tibet autonomous region and is rich in petroleum, natural gas, and lithium, besides yielding numerous other minerals such especially as gold for China.

### **Former top Tibet official under probe for corruption**

17 June 2024, RFA, Pelbar

Tibetans take to social media to welcome the move in a rare expression of public opinion.



*Wu Yingjie, Communist Party secretary of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, attends a group discussion session held on the sidelines of the annual meeting of China's National People's Congress in the Tibet Hall of the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, March 6, 2019.*

The Chinese Communist Party's former top boss in Tibet is being investigated for "severe violations of discipline and law," according to a statement from China's anti-corruption body, using a euphemism commonly used to describe corruption.

Wu Yingjie, former party secretary of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, is one of several top officials recently dismissed from the Chinese Communist Party amid a crackdown on officials past and present who have engaged in graft.

The move was praised by Tibetans on Chinese social media in a rare display of public opinion about such measures in China.

"It is very good that this man has been arrested," said one person. "This is good news for Tibetans," said another.

"This enemy of the Tibetans has been captured and it will eliminate harm from the Tibetan people," said a third.

In 2022, the U.S. Treasury Department imposed sanctions on Wu, 67, for his policies in Tibet that "involved serious human rights abuse, including extrajudicial killings, physical abuse, arbitrary arrests, and mass detentions" in the far-western region.

Additional abuses cited included forced sterilization, coerced abortion, restrictions on religious and political freedoms, and the torture of prisoners.

Wu, who now serves on the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, is the first former party secretary of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, or TAR, to be placed under investigation and the eighth ministerial-level official to face a probe since the Communist Party's National Congress in 2022.

The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and the National Supervisory Commission announced the investigation on June 16.

Other officials under investigation include Dong Yunhu, chief of the Shanghai legislature; Sun Zhigang, a former medical reform official; Han Yong,

former chairman of the Shaanxi Provincial Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference; Gou Zhongwen, former sports minister; Tang Yijun, former justice minister; Tang Renjian, agriculture minister; and Li Yuefeng, executive vice-chairman of the Central Committee of the Taiwan Democratic Self-Government League.

**Tibetans react**

Tibetans inside Tibet took to Chinese social media to express their scorn for Wu Yingjie, known for his crackdowns and repressive policies, a source inside Tibet told Radio Free Asia on the condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal.

More than 760 comments appeared on a WeChat channel in response to a story about Wu's investigation, all expressing support for the probe.



*Members of the Tibetan community in Belgium hold a demonstration to mark the celebration of the 57th Tibetan Uprising Day in front of the European Union headquarters in Brussels, March 10, 2016. (Emmanuel Dunand/AFP)*

But at least one activist predicted the investigation would do nothing to change the plight of Tibetans.

"Despite Chinese leader Xi Jinping's investigation of Wu Yingjie and other officials as part of the nation's anti-corruption campaign, there will be no positive impact on Tibet and its related issues," said Sangay Kyap, a Tibetan rights analyst.

Shortly after Wu was promoted to party secretary in 2016, he issued a statement stressing the need for officials to "expand positive propaganda" and to "thoroughly expose and criticize" the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism.

Wu also urged officials to "eliminate the negative influence" of the Dalai Lama's use of religion and to guide believers to treat religion rationally.

Under President Xi Jinping, Wu also intensified repressive measures in Tibet, including the establishment of Chinese-run boarding schools with a curriculum focused on the Chinese language that undermines Tibetan culture and language, said Bawa Kelsang Gyaltsen, representative of the Office of Tibet in Taiwan.

"Wu Yingjie had been the CCP party secretary for the region, implementing severe and oppressive

policies in Tibet for over 20 years," he said, referring to the Chinese Communist Party.

Another official, Jiang Jie, 58, a former senior political advisor in the TAR, was also indicted on charges of taking bribes by the Supreme People's Procuratorate following an investigation, the body announced on June 14.

Prosecutors in Tianjin allege that Jiang, who is also a former vice chairman of the TAR's Regional Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, misused his various positions, including serving as mayor of Dongying in Shandong province and deputy head of the regional government, to unlawfully gain advantages for others in exchange for significant sums of money and valuables.

**Xinjiang official expelled**

In a related development, Li Pengxin, a former deputy secretary of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, the region north of Tibet, has been expelled from the Communist Party and dismissed from public office for "serious violations of Party discipline and laws," official Chinese media reported Monday.

An investigation found that Li, 63, had lost his ideals and convictions, was dishonest about his problems, accepted money and valuables, took advantage of his former position to seek benefits for others, and was suspected of accepting bribes, according to a statement issued Monday by China's anti-corruption body and the National Commission of Supervision.

When Li was deputy secretary in Xinjiang from September 2016 to July 2021, he oversaw a crackdown on Uyghur educators, sending them to prison. At a meeting of party cadres in 2017, Li announced that prominent Uyghur scholar Tashpolat Teyip had been removed and replaced as president of Xinjiang University.

Afterwards, Teyip disappeared from public view, leading Uyghurs to believe he had been detained.

Uyghurs interviewed by RFA in 2018, after news about his disappearance came to light, said they believed Teyip was removed amid an unprecedented ideological purge in Xinjiang against so-called "two-faced" Uyghur officials. The term is used by authorities to describe Uyghurs who do not willingly follow directives and exhibit signs of disloyalty.

### **Chinese police arrest Tibetan for flying banned flag at his house consecration ceremony**

04 June 2024, Tibetan Review

For flying the Tibetan national flag atop his newly built home as a part of its consecration ceremony, Chinese police in Pashoe (Chinese: Basu, or Baxoi) County of eastern Tibet's Chamdo City have taken

away a Tibetan man last week, reported the Tibetan service of rfa.org Jun 3.

Rabgang Tenzin, a 51-year-old father of three, carried out the ceremony in the evening of May 28 and intended to take down the flag next morning. However, he forgot and failed to do it, the report cited three sources with knowledge of the situation as saying.

"The next day, the Chinese police arrested him, and his current whereabouts are unknown," one of the sources has said.

The yellow-bordered blue-and-red coloured Snowlion flag of Tibet with a rising sun in the centre is a ubiquitous presence at any Tibet protest event across the free world and is banned by China.

Following the arrest, Chinese police warned the local Tibetans against talking about the incident with "outside forces" or face arrest themselves, the report cited a second anonymous source as saying.

The report said Rabgang Tenzin is a farmer who occasionally engages in small-time business.

Local residents fear that Rabgang Tenzin's arrest could lead to his 10-year-old eldest son being expelled from the Pashoe County Elementary School, the report cited two other anonymous sources as saying.

Along with pictures of the Dalai Lama, Tibet's exiled spiritual leader, any display of the Tibetan national flag attracts swift crackdown and brutal punishment from Chinese authorities in Tibet.

## **May**

### **EXCLUSIVE: Teen Tibetan Monk Takes Own Life After Being Forced to Leave Monastery**

29 May 2024, RFA, Sonam Lhamo and Dorjee Damdul

A 17-year-old Tibetan Buddhist monk who was forced to leave his monastery and join a government-run school committed suicide after authorities said he could no longer wear his maroon robes, three sources with direct knowledge of the matter told Radio Free Asia.

Kunzang Longyang died in mid-April in Qinghai province's Drakkar County, the sources said on condition of anonymity, citing safety concerns.

The death comes as young Tibetan monks are facing immense pressure because of growing restrictions on practicing Buddhist religious and cultural traditions.

The restrictions include a requirement since 2018 that young monks below the age of 18 be removed from monasteries across the Tibetan region. Chinese authorities have said that young monks are too immature to think for themselves and should serve society instead.

Chinese authorities have long sought to restrict the size and influence of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, traditionally a focus of Tibetan cultural and national identity.

"Even during their school winter and summer break, the young monks are not allowed to return to their monasteries or go on visits," one of the sources told RFA.

"Government officials send people to monitor if monasteries are allowing young monks to visit or return, and monasteries are threatened of severe consequences if they allow the children to return," the source said.

Depressed at school

Three years ago, Longyang was removed from Yulung Monastery in Drakkar County after Chinese government officials enforced the under 18 rule, the three sources said.

Afterward, Longyang was made to join a local school where he was told he couldn't continue wearing his monk's robe and would have to wear regular clothing while attending class.

At the school, he became severely depressed, stopped eating for many days and became ill, the source said.

"This happened several times and each time, school authorities called his family to take him home," the source said.

Initially, school administrators made some exceptions. Longyang wasn't required to be present throughout the school year, and he was allowed to wear his robes when he was at the school for examinations and inspections run by government officials, the three sources said.

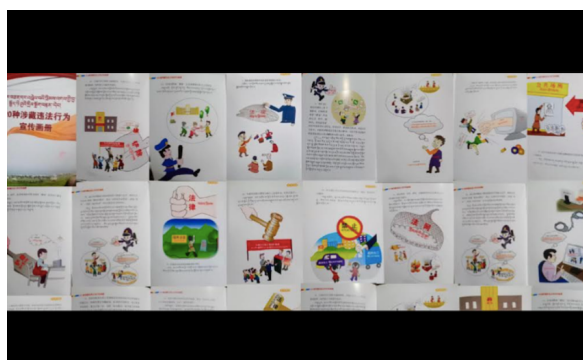
The exceptions ended a few months ago when school authorities again mandated that Longyang and other young monks disrobe and stay permanently in school. This caused much distress for Longyang, the sources said.

"He was adamant that he would not take off his monk's robes," one of the other sources said. "He had said that if he would be permanently stripped of his robes and required to go to school in his plainclothes, then he would kill himself."

Longyang was again sent home from school in April, shortly after falling into depression following the recent announcement. That's when he took his own life, the sources said.

## China issues manual banning activities related to Independence of Tibet

28 May 2024, Phayul



An image of the manual banning 20 activities that are deemed as advocating for independence of Tibet by China (Photo/Tibet Times)

The Chinese government has released a manual detailing 20 activities deemed illegal in connection with advocating for independence of Tibet. This directive marks a yet another incident of clampdown on expressions of Tibetan identity, cultural and religious practices inside Tibet.

According to a report by Tibet Times, the manual issued by the information department of Thinren County, is titled "A Picture Book of Information on 20 Illegal Actions Related to Tibet Independence." It outlines various activities considered illegal under Chinese law, including displaying the Dalai Lama's image and the act of self-immolation, a form of protest linked to Tibetan activism resorted by over 159 known cases of Tibetans who have self-immolated to protest against the Chinese illegal occupation of Tibet.

The manual also outlaws activities promoting the Tibetan language and environmental or protection of animals if it is perceived as an effort towards promoting separatism. It also prohibits entering other countries illegally and participating in religious activities in other countries.

The regulations extend to controlling information dissemination where Tibetans are prohibited from spreading, selling, or possessing books, images, videos, and soundtracks discussing Tibetan independence. The use of foreign media outlets, such as Voice of America, considered to encourage separatist sentiments by the Chinese government is also banned. Any online communication about Tibetan independence risks facing severe penalties, the new directives warned.

The manual targets religious practices and social gatherings, prohibiting Tibetans from participating in foreign religious activities or raising images of the Dalai Lama and Tibetan independence fighters. Traditional practices like incense offerings, setting animals free, and lighting butter lamps for self-



immolators or their families are banned. Even gathering to recite prayers during Tibetan auspicious events is forbidden if deemed supportive of independence.

The manual also includes prohibitions on believing Tibet is an independent country, and spreading or selling materials about Tibetan thoughts. It also bans collecting donations for what China deems separatist forces, discussing Tibet independence in schools, working with external so-called separatist forces, organising prayers for the Dalai Lama during Tibetan events, and inciting others under the guise of religious and traditional activities.

Observers and right groups have maintained that China's heavy-handedness is apparent through these vague and blanket laws that snubs any and all voices of dissent. Any activity that expresses the unique identity and voice are deemed as separatist activities and severely persecuted.

### **China to Punish Tibet Officials who Support Dalai Lama**

28 May 2024, Naharnet

China will severely punish officials in Tibet who support the Dalai Lama, the exiled spiritual leader and Nobel laureate, the region's top Communist leader said according to state media reports Wednesday.

Chen Quanguo, Tibet's Communist party chief, vowed to root out officials who support the Dalai Lama and to quash separatist activities in the region, according to a front-page report in the Tibet Daily, the ruling party's regional mouthpiece.

"Party members, especially leading cadres, at all levels must safeguard the unity of the motherland," Chen was cited as saying.

"Cadres who harbour fantasies about the 14th Dalai Group, follow the 14th Dalai Group, and participate in supporting separatist infiltration sabotage activities, will be strictly and severely punished according to the law and party disciplinary measures."

The current Dalai Lama is the 14th to hold the title.

Chen's comments came after the head of an anti-corruption inspection team from the Communist party's internal watchdog said officials in Tibet must concentrate on fighting separatism and maintaining social stability, according to the state-run Global Times.

The Dalai Lama, branded a terrorist by Beijing, fled Tibet in 1959 after a failed uprising against Chinese rule and has lived in exile ever since.

More than 130 Tibetans have set themselves on fire since 2009 in protest at what they describe as Beijing's religious and cultural repression, according

to Radio Free Asia, which is supported by the U.S. government.

China accuses the Dalai Lama of seeking to split Tibet from the rest of China and of fomenting unrest in the region.

The Dalai Lama won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, catapulting him into the global spotlight, and in the decade that followed he was courted by U.S. presidents and Hollywood stars alike as he crisscrossed the world campaigning for greater autonomy for his homeland.

But a quarter of a century later some Western leaders are turning their backs on the Tibetan spiritual leader – sometimes reluctantly – under pressure from China, a rising power and the world's second-largest economy.

A summit for Nobel peace prizewinners set to take place in South Africa was cancelled last month after he was denied a visa, and during a visit to Norway government officials declined to meet him so as not to offend Beijing.

### **Surveillance ramped up after anti-dam protests**

28 May 2024, Free Tibet

"Residents in Jomda county face patrols and house to house searches as CCP tries to "strengthen social control"

Our research partner Tibet Watch, has learned that two villages in Jomda County listed for relocation to make way for the Kamtok hydropower dam were subjected to house-to-house checks in March. The measures followed protests against the dam by residents of the neighbouring county of Dege in February.

According to a news report published on the official WeChat platform of Wopotoe Township, Dege County, between 13 and 14 March 2024, Huang Jun, Secretary of the Leading Party Group and Chamdo Municipal Bureau of Statistics, who also serves as the Deputy Director of Chamdo City, went to the villages of Chage and Zhouge of Wopotoe Township to oversee "the entry of thousands of cadres into thousands of villages, scrutinising the conflicts and potential security risks".

In February, a Tibet Watch source named both Chage and Zhouge among 12 villages that are set to be relocated to make way for Kamtok dam.

Information about all Tibetan farmers and nomads in Wopotoe Township – including the two villages Huang Jun visited – is expected to have been collected through door-to-door visits under the campaign of One household and One file (yī hù yī dǎng) – a household information management system that came into force in the Tibet Autonomous Region since last year.

The village-based party cadres conducted door-to-door "investigation, watching and interrogation" visits, which are also known to be used to extract opinion and political sentiments about the Chinese Communist Party and its policies from residents, and to coerce residents into complying with government orders.

The same news report added that in the name of "strengthening social control", the village-based cadres have been patrolling the villages, monasteries and other sensitive sites. This task has been carried out alongside members of the village-level party committees and the heads of the double-linked households in Wopotoe Township. The latter is a system of social control in which households are divided into groups of 10 to monitor each other's activities for the dual purpose of maintaining public security and ensuring poverty alleviation.

Informed supplied by Tibet Watch

### **China touts Tibet's tourism development, 'ethnic unity' on 73rd illegal annexation anniversary**

27 May 2024, Tibetan Review

While the anniversary of China's illegal annexation of Tibet went seemingly unnoticed among the Tibetan diaspora, in Beijing, a press conference was held to commemorate the occasion. The people of Xizang (China's new name for the western half of Tibet proper which it demarcated as Tibet autonomous Region (TAR), if only in name) broke free from the fetters of invading imperialism, embarking on a bright road of unity, progress and development with all the other ethnic groups in China, reported China's official globaltimes.cn May 23. China has to this day not named any "invading imperialist" power it claims to have saved Tibet from.

The press conference was reported to have been addressed by Yan Jinhai, chairman of the TAR government, and Xu Zhitao, its vice chairman, with focus especially on "ethnic unity", a frequently used official euphemism for the insidious dilution of the ethnographic identity of Tibet, and on the region's development in tourism and clean energy. The officials have clearly avoided any mention of China's massive, environmentally devastating mining industry in the Tibetan homeland.

Over the past 73 years, under the strong leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the region has strived to forge a new path for high-quality economic development, with people from different ethnic minorities living happily together. Tourism resources continue to attract visitors from both home and abroad, the report cited the TAR officials as saying at the press conference.

"Now, the various ethnic groups of Xizang residents are living in a favourable atmosphere of political

stability, ethnic unity, religious harmony with improving living conditions. All of this is closely related to the agreement signed 73 years ago," Xiong Kunxin, a professor at Minzu University of China in Beijing, has said.

China compelled a Tibetan government delegation to sign at gun-point on May 23, 1951 a 17-Point Agreement which promised a form of "one country two system" policy for Tibet. China trashed that agreement in 1959 after a popular Tibetan uprising that started in capital Lhasa on Mar 10. China then unleashed a violent policy of Sinicization of the region along with its economic modernization and development.

The region will work on enhancing the range of tourist offerings and improving the efficiency of processing documents for foreign visitors entering the region, the report cited the two TAR government officials as saying on Thursday (May 23), "the 73rd anniversary of the Xizang peaceful liberation".

Yan – said to be a Tibetan from Qinghai province with Chinese name – has said that in 2023, the number of trips paid to the region reached 55.17 million from home and abroad, and the tourism revenue reached 65.1 billion yuan (\$9 billion), up 83.7% and 60% respectively compared with the previous year, both reaching record highs. He has added that nearly 20,000 foreign tourists visited TAR in 2023 and the number of foreign visitors reached 4,300 in the first quarter of this year.

Referring to TAR as the "city of sunshine" where the annual sunshine time is 3,500 hours, Yan has said the region has a potential solar energy development capacity of 9.8 billion kilowatts, 1.7 billion kilowatts of hydropower resources, and 1.8 billion kilowatts of wind energy, excluding geothermal and pumped storage energy. The total installed capacity exceeds 10 billion kilowatts, all of which are clean energy sources, Yan has added.

The report cited Xu, an ethnic Chinese, as saying the region will enhance the range of tourist offerings and improve the efficiency of processing documents for foreign visitors entering TAR. He has said that initiatives focusing on language translation and e-payment systems will further enhance the appeal of TAR to international tourists.

He has also said TAR will open more direct flights to mainland cities and international markets, "which will attract more investment enterprises to enter the local cultural tourism market."

## China's United Front ensures CCP control over Tibet

26 May 2024, The Sunday Guardian, Khedroob Thondup

The United Front Work Department has been instrumental in implementing policies aimed at controlling the religious and cultural life of Tibet.

The legacy of the Dalai Lama and the issue of his reincarnation are pivotal to the future of the Tibetan movement. The Dalai Lama's role transcends spiritual leadership; it embodies the cultural and national identity of Tibet. As the current Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, advances in age, discussions about his succession have intensified, especially considering the geopolitical implications.

The Dalai Lama has historically been both a spiritual and political figure for Tibetans, and his reincarnation is a deeply religious process that is believed to be influenced by his own will and merit. However, the Chinese government has expressed its intent to control the reincarnation process, aiming to appoint a successor that aligns with its political interests and to assert sovereignty over Tibet. This has led to concerns that there could be two successors: one recognized by Tibetans and the other by the Chinese government.

The Dalai Lama's approach to his reincarnation and legacy is strategic, focusing on the sustainability of the Tibetan cause. He has emphasized the importance of democratic governance and the separation of the religious and political roles of the Dalai Lama, which was evident when he devolved political power to the elected Tibetan government-in-exile. This move was aimed at ensuring that the Tibetan struggle remains resilient and adaptable to future challenges.

The Dalai Lama's legacy is also preserved through his teachings and the values he promotes, such as non-violence, compassion, and dialogue, which continue to inspire and guide the Tibetan community and its supporters worldwide. His reincarnation will not only be a religious event but also a significant moment for the Tibetan struggle, potentially impacting the direction and nature of the movement.

The international community's response to the Dalai Lama's succession will also be crucial. The US has enacted the Tibet Policy and Support Act, which supports the right of Tibetans to choose their leaders without interference. This law, among other international stances, could play a role in legitimizing the Dalai Lama's successor and maintaining the momentum of the Tibetan movement.

In summary, the Dalai Lama's legacy and the circumstances of his reincarnation are indeed central to the Tibetan cause, influencing not only the spiritual continuity of Tibetan Buddhism but also the political

and cultural resilience of the Tibetan people.

The relationship between China and Tibet has been complex and contentious, with the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people often at the centre of this dynamic. The concept of "United Front" tactics refers to the range of strategies used by the Chinese government to integrate and manage different interest groups, especially those it considers potentially subversive or separatist.

In the context of Tibet, the United Front Work Department (UFWD) of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has been instrumental in implementing policies aimed at controlling the religious and cultural life of the region. This includes efforts to manage the succession process of the Dalai Lama, a central figure in Tibetan Buddhism and a symbol of Tibetan identity and autonomy aspirations.

Historically, the Chinese government has sought to undermine the Dalai Lama's influence by promoting alternative religious leaders and restricting his ability to communicate with the Tibetan people. The CCP's approach has evolved from outright suppression to more subtle methods of co-optation and control. For instance, the Chinese government has asserted its right to approve the reincarnation of Tibetan lamas, including the Dalai Lama, which is a deeply spiritual matter traditionally decided within the Tibetan Buddhist framework.

Furthermore, the UFWD has been involved in orchestrating dialogues with Tibetan representatives, although these talks have often been criticized as insincere and unproductive. The Chinese government's narrative portrays the Dalai Lama as a separatist, despite his repeated calls for genuine autonomy within the framework of the Chinese constitution, rather than full independence.

The use of United Front tactics extends beyond the religious sphere, encompassing economic and social policies designed to integrate Tibet more closely with the rest of China. This includes infrastructure development, the promotion of Mandarin Chinese language over Tibetan, and the encouragement of migration from other parts of China to Tibet, which some argue dilutes Tibetan cultural and demographic characteristics.

In summary, China's United Front tactics in Tibet are multifaceted, aiming to consolidate control over the region while attempting to diminish the influence of the Dalai Lama and the traditional Tibetan way of life. These tactics have significant implications for the preservation of Tibetan culture, the autonomy of the region, and the rights of the Tibetan people.

## Children Protest “Genocide Tourism” to Tibet

20 May 2024, Bitter Winter, Lopsang Gurung



A woman demonstrates the use of “urduo.” From Weibo.

When trains with tourists pass, the traditional stone-throwing ropes called “urduo” are used to express disapproval of the staged tours.

“Genocide tourism” is an expression used by the Uyghurs to oppose tours to Xinjiang where tourists visit villages where everybody smiles and dances under the watchful eye of the Chinese authorities. The reality is different, but tourists do not see it. It is the reality of concentration camp, repression, and physical and cultural genocide.

Tourism in Tibet is not much different. Domestic Chinese and some international visitors are only shown what the CCP wants to show. They may spend several days in Tibet, visit some monasteries, photograph some monks, and not understand at all that a cultural genocide is happening there, with Tibetan culture systematically denied and Buddhist religion allowed only if it accepts to serve as a propaganda mouthpiece of the regime and the Chinese occupation.

Protesting this state of affairs is difficult and exposes the protesters to long jail sentences. Or perhaps you will not go to jail if you are a child?

Children in the area around the prefecture-level city of Nagku, in Northern Tibet, have devised an original and moving form of protest. They use the traditional “urduo,” a rope or whip made of yak or goat hair. It is used by herdsmen to drive cattle but also to throw stones to show the road to the livestock or scare away wild animals.

The herdsmen’s children take the “urduo” when trains with tourists pass their area and whip the passing trains or throw small stones. They do not intend to hurt anybody; they just want to tell the tourists that staged tours are not welcome.

The CCP has now warned parents that they will be held responsible for the behavior of their children. It is a small incident, but it shows that even children share the indomitable spirit of the Tibetan resistance.

## ‘Tibet’ to supply clean electric power to 16 other provincial regions of PRC

19 May 2024, Tibetan Review

Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), which is roughly the western half of Tibet proper, will transmit two billion kWh of clean electricity to 16 other provincial-level regions of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) this year, reported China’s official Xinhua news agency May 19, citing the regional power company.

The report cited the State Grid Xizang Electric Power Company as saying clean energy is expected to help China’s central and eastern regions reduce the emission of carbon dioxide by 1.6 million tonnes and sulphur dioxide by 50,000 tonnes, respectively. “Xizang” or “Xizang Autonomous Region” is China’s name for TAR.

The report noted that the TAR boasts abundant solar, hydraulic and wind power resources, which enabled it to begin sending electricity to other provincial-level regions of the PRC for the first time in 2015.

As of 2023, the region had delivered more than 13.9 billion kWh of clean energy, reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 20.64 million tonnes, and creating economic benefits of about 3.7 billion yuan (about 520.8 million US dollars), the report added.

## China subjects Tibetans to political education for protesting, rejecting paltry compensation for their pastureland

17 May 2024, Tibetan Review

For protesting against their ouster from their grassland and the payment afterward of a laughably paltry compensation for it, Chinese authorities in Markham County of Chamdo City, Tibet Autonomous Region, have subjected the affected Tibetan herdsmen to a series of political education sessions, according to the Tibetan service of rfa.org May 16. They also remain under threats of criminal prosecution as the local authorities have labelled their protest as political opposition.

Besides, area officials were preventing the Tibetan herdsmen from petitioning higher authorities in Chamdo for a fair compensation for their land, the report said, citing two sources with knowledge of the situation, speaking on condition of anonymity due to fear of retaliation from the authorities.

One source has said local authorities had misrepresented the facts by painting the herdsmen’s protests and pleas for a fair compensation as political in nature in their reports to the city and TAR authorities. And they used that as their justification for subjecting the Tibetans to political education sessions.



The herdsmen's grassland had reportedly been sold illegally to business owners by county officials early last year. However, no one knew anything about it until last month when the new owners sent people to remove the Tibetans and take over their pastureland. It led to the affected families, numbering 25 Tibetan families in Taktsha village in the county's Luoni Township, to submit petitions and hold protests. Four of the protesters were taken into custody on Apr 10, subjected to beating, and then let out on Apr 16.

The release was made with the announcement of a paltry compensation of just 3,000 yuan (US\$415) per family, which the Tibetans rejected offhandedly.

The officials have reportedly branded the Tibetan herdsmen's actions as political opposition and subjected them to a series of political education sessions. More than 30 Chinese county officials from various departments at different levels of the county government conducted the political education over the past month, the report cited the sources as saying.

In addition, Chinese authorities are stated to have announced rewards for anyone providing information that could help them identify an individual who shared news of the land grab protest with outside parties. The political education sessions were stated to have begun on Apr 16 with the Luoni Township Party Committee organizing what was called a Chinese Communist Party discipline study and political education meeting before an array of over 30 Chinese officials. They were stated to include "members of the township party committee, all party members of directly affiliated branches, at-home cadres, temple management committees, police stations, health centres and school administrators."

After the meeting, members of what has been described as the "Chinese Working Affairs Committee" were stated to have visited each family to provide political education.

They were stated to have told the Tibetans that the Chinese government would address any problems they faced, but warned against committing the crime of sharing information with people living outside Tibet because it would compromise national dignity and reflect poorly on the Party.

But far from solving their problems, the local authorities have used what the report described as "political manoeuvres" to prevent the local Tibetans from appealing their case to the Chamdo city authorities.

The 1.5-km long, 1 sq-km land taken from the herdsmen is stated to be worth about 5 million yuan, (US\$692,000).

However, the authorities' compensation offer totals only 75,000 yuan (at 3000 yuan per family). And even this was stated to be denied, with the Tibetans

facing imprisonment, if they protested or refused to comply with the authorities' orders.

### **Tibetans undergo political education for protesting land grab**

16 May 2024, RFA

Tibetans who protested the seizure of their pasture land by Chinese authorities in Markham county in April have been subjected to a series of political education sessions after they were accused of protesting for political reasons, two sources with knowledge of the situation said.

Area officials are also preventing the Tibetans from petitioning higher authorities in Chamdo, a city in the eastern part of the Tibet Autonomous Region, for fair compensation for their land, said the sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation.

County officials have misled higher-ranking officials in Chamdo and in Tibet's capital Lhasa into thinking that the protest by Tibetan residents was political in nature, rather than an appeal against the land grab, said the first source.

"[They] have used that as an excuse to organize a series of political education sessions in the area," he said.

In early April, 25 Tibetan families from Taktsha village in Markham county learned their land had been sold without their knowledge to businessmen by county officials, when the new owners sent people to clear it.

Four Tibetans were arrested April 10 for protesting the land grab and later released on April 16, but they were beaten while in detention.

Chinese authorities in the Tibet Autonomous Region and in Tibetan-populated areas of nearby Chinese provinces often ignore residents' concerns about mining and land grabs by local officials, who routinely rely on force to subdue those who complain or protest, according to human rights groups.

Rejecting low compensation

In April, the Tibetans rejected 3,000 yuan (US\$415) in individual compensation that was belatedly offered to them by Chinese authorities, saying the amount was too low for the pasture land that had been sold by Chinese county officials to businessmen in 2023.

Since then, the Tibetans have had to attend a series of political education sessions, with more than 30 Chinese county officials from various departments visiting the area over the past month, said the two sources.

Chinese authorities in Markham county also announced a reward for information that could help them identify an individual who shared news of the

land grab protest with outside parties, the sources said.

"This is the first time we have seen such rigorous political education sessions and monitoring in the area, with so many levels of officials visiting the place to conduct group political education sessions and going door-to-door," said the second source.

On April 16, the Luoni Township Party Committee, where the village is located, organized a Chinese Communist Party discipline study and political education meeting with over 30 Chinese officials. They included members of the township party committee, all party members of directly affiliated branches, at-home cadres, temple management committees, police stations, health centers and school administrators.

"Following the meeting, members of the Chinese Working Affairs Committee visited each family in their homes to provide political education," the second source said.

They told the Tibetans that the Chinese government would address any problems they faced, but that they couldn't share information with people living outside Tibet because it would compromise national dignity and reflect poorly on the Chinese Communist Party, thereby constituting a criminal act, the second source said.

**Police monitoring**

Since the protest, around 10 policemen have been deployed to patrol the area day and night to monitor the Tibetans' activities, the sources said.

"Instead of addressing the core problem, Chinese authorities are using political maneuvers and have prevented local Tibetans from appealing their case in Chamdo," said the first source.

The first source said the land taken from the Tibetans is 1.5 kilometers (one mile) long and covers an area of 1 square kilometer (0.4 square miles), and is worth about 5 million yuan, or US\$692,000.

Officials told the residents to accept their offer of 3,000 Chinese yuan each without protest or face imprisonment for noncompliance.

The Chinese police and Markham county officials are now threatening the Tibetans by labeling the protests as political in nature and intimidating locals about likely consequences, given that protests of a political nature amount to a criminal offense, the sources said.

## Tibetan singer arrested for song lamenting Dalai Lama's absence

14 May 2024, RFA, Pelbar and Tenzin Dickyi



Tibetan singer Gyegjom Dorjee performs 'Tearful Deluge of a Sorrowful Song' at a concert in Khyungchu county, Ngaba Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, in southwest China's Sichuan Province, Jan. 15, 2024.

"In this land where the Victorious One is absent,  
Leaders exist, but false ones.  
The Tibetans are bereft of direction,  
Like a deer lost in the midst of a fog..."

A Tibetan performer who sang these lyrics, publicly yearning for the Dalai Lama and blasting Chinese leaders as "false," was arrested in early February in China's Sichuan province, two sources with knowledge of the situation said.

Gyegjom Dorjee, in his early 30s, sang "Tearful Deluge of a Sorrowful Song" alongside other artists at concert on Jan. 15, as part of pre-Losar, or Tibetan New Year, celebrations, said the sources on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal.

The song alludes to life under Chinese government rule, likening Tibetans to "birds confined in a cage." The use of "Victorious One" refers to the Dalai Lama, seen by Beijing as a separatist. Even carrying a picture of the leader of Tibetan Buddhism is considered a crime.

In a video of Dorjee's performance, an audience of more than 100 Tibetans can be seen clapping and cheering uproariously at the end of his two-minute song. But nearly a month later, Dorjee was summoned to a police station in Khyungchu county, or Hongyuan in Chinese, in Ngaba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, and subsequently arrested, the sources said.

Since then, his whereabouts remain unknown, they said. "The Chinese government said his song had political connotations and raised concerns about its lyrics," the first source told Radio Free Asia.

**Security threat**

Tibetan artists like Dorjee, who peacefully express disagreement or discontent with China's policies in the Tibetan Autonomous Region or Tibetan-populated areas of Chinese provinces, are branded by Chinese

authorities as dangers to “national security” or “social stability.”

In particular, Tibetan writers, artists and singers who advocate for Tibetan national identity and culture or voice criticism of China’s governance often face detention.

A nomad with a passion for singing and engaging in traditional Tibetan cultural performances, Dorjee often has been called upon to perform at local events and festivals, the first source said. Following his arrest, Dorjee’s family tried to get information about the charge and his whereabouts from the Khyungchu police station, but police turned them away without providing it, said the second source.

“They were told Dorjee was being interrogated because of the provocative nature of his lyrics and thoughts, and that there were ‘political problems’ with his song lyrics and ideology,” he said.

‘Red-faced ones’

Dorjee’s lyrics also made references to “this place of inequities/injustice” and the discrimination suffered by the “red-faced” ones, using an old epithet used to describe Tibetans.

“The song expresses the common grievances held by the Tibetans against Chinese rule and criticizes the repressive policies of the Chinese party-state,” the Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy said in a statement. “In the current climate of heightened repression, local Tibetans have little to no avenues to exercise basic human rights including the right to freedom of expression or peaceful dissent,” it said.

Some Tibetan artists have taken their protests against the Chinese government to an extreme.

In 2022, Tsewang Norbu, a well-known contemporary Tibetan singer, set himself on fire in front of the iconic Potala Palace in Lhasa to demonstrate his opposition to Chinese policies in Tibet.

Radio Free Asia later learned that Norbu’s act was an attempt to draw attention to his grievances, and that he succumbed to his injuries.

### **Students banned from speaking Tibetan in Sichuan schools**

08 May 2024, RFA, Pelbar and Tenzin Dickyi

Chinese authorities have banned students in schools in a Tibetan-populated area in China’s Sichuan province from speaking their native language when they communicate among themselves and with their teachers, two sources from inside Tibet said.

Students and teachers at elementary, middle and high schools in Nyagchu county, or Yajiang in Chinese, are required to use only Mandarin to communicate, they said, insisting they not be identified for fear of their personal safety.

The measure is another blow to Tibetan culture and language, which the Chinese government seems intent on wiping out and replacing with Mandarin and Han Chinese culture. Last year, a ban was imposed on Tibetan language classes in schools in another part of Sichuan province, in the Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

Since 2020, the Chinese government has further tightened its restrictions on language rights in Tibetan, forcing the closure of private Tibetan schools in Tibet and intensifying Chinese-language education in the schools in the name of promoting uniformity in the use of textbooks and instructional materials.

In 2021, Chinese authorities also began prohibiting Tibetan children from participating in informal Tibetan language classes or workshops during their winter breaks.

Activists fear the moves could lead to the extinction of the language in the region and endanger its viability across the country.

Limiting home visits

Authorities also have restricted the number of holidays the schoolchildren can take to limit interactions in their native tongue between them and their families, the sources said.

“Traditional breaks like spring and summer holidays, which allowed for family time, have been eliminated, forcing children to remain in boarding schools for extended periods,” the first Tibetan said.

“This separation has contributed to a decline in the number of young Tibetans proficient in the Tibetan language in Nyagchu,” he said. Tibetans make up about 90 percent of the prefecture’s 1 million inhabitants.

In the past, the Chinese government-run boarding schools allowed Tibetan children to return home on weekends and provided longer breaks during the April-June period so they could help their families with the harvesting of caterpillar fungus – a source of income for many.

But now, the children are not being sent home for these breaks, significantly limiting their contact with relatives and leading to a decline in Tibetan language fluency among the younger generation of Tibetans in Sichuan’s Kardze prefecture, said the sources.

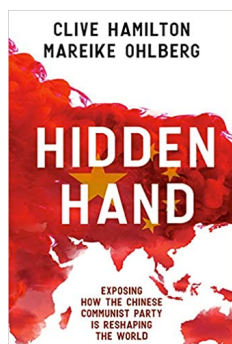
Tibetan parents previously sought out private schools where their children could learn the Tibetan language, but the imposition of the ban in Kardze has made finding such alternative options increasingly difficult, said the second Tibetan source.

Liu Pengyu, a spokesperson at the Chinese Embassy in Washington, told RFA he did not know the specifics of this development but added that the Chinese government protects the freedom of ethnic minorities. “In accordance with the law, the Chinese government protects the freedom of ethnic minorities to use and

develop their own spoken and written languages, and the freedom of religious belief of the people of all ethnic groups,” Liu said in an email.

#### School closures

And yet in 2021, the Chinese government closed several private Tibetan schools, including Phende School and Chaktsa Tevey Private Elementary School in Za-Sersul county, Sengdruk Taktse School in Darlak, or Golog, county, three schools in Machen county, one school in Gadhey county, two schools in Chikdril county, and the Gedhen Buddhist School in Drago Monastery.



Each of Nyagchu county’s six towns and 10 villages has an elementary school, but these are now all residential schools – which activists term “colonial-style” and where they say Tibetan children are forcefully separated from their families and taught a Chinese-language curriculum.

It is critically important to introduce children to the Tibetan language during their formative years, said Sangye Tandar Naga, editor and department head of the Cultural Research and Publication Department at Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamsala, India.

“This early exposure is crucial because it becomes significantly more challenging for adults to learn the language later in life,” Naga told RFA Tibetan at a May 2-4 event in Dharamsala where over 24 Tibetan educators, writers and cultural scholars convened to develop strategies to preserve the Tibetan language.

The 7th Ling Rinpoche, the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama’s principal tutor, told RFA in an interview that the role of parents in teaching their children about the significance of preserving the Tibetan language is crucial to the language’s survival.

### **Tibet to provide financial aid to Nepal’s northern border districts for five years**

03 May 2024, The Kathmandu Post

Ministry of Local Development is selecting projects needed in 15 districts bordering China.

China’s Tibet Autonomous Region is set to fund a five-year initiative in Nepal’s northern border districts, offering different kinds of logistical and material support, mostly for social and economic development projects.

Officials familiar with the development told the Post that the Tibetan government will provide 20 million

yuan or around Rs370 million each year under the initiative for the next five years.

To execute the initiative, the first preparatory meeting was held in Lhasa on April 23 and 24. It was co-chaired by Kamal Prasad Bhattarai, joint secretary of the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration of Nepal, and Baiman Yangzong, director general of the Foreign Affairs Office of China’s Tibet Autonomous Region, according to a statement issued by the Nepal’s Consulate General in Lhasa.

“The discussions were focused on the coordination mechanism of aid projects by the Tibet Autonomous Region, China to Nepal in terms of work schedule, selection modality of the projects, and the ways of implementation and monitoring,” said the statement. During his Nepal visit in November, Wang Junzheng, the CPC secretary for the Xizang (Tibet) Autonomous Region of China, had informed Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Narayan Kaji Shrestha that Tibet would provide Nepal 20 million yuan for administrative reform and development needs in Nepal.

The Chinese assistance will be used for building schools and health posts, installing solar electricity, and funding other small projects in the northern 15 districts of Nepal, said a Nepali official who attended the meeting in Lhasa last week.

The 15 districts are Taplejung, Solukhumbu, Sankhuwasabha, Dolakha, Sindhupalchok, Rasuwa, Dhading, Gorkha, Manang, Mustang, Bajhang, Dolpa, Mugu, Humla and Darchula.

During the meeting, both sides agreed to hold the meeting of aid projects twice in the first half of the year, so as to focus on the projects’ arrangements, and twice in the second half of the year for the implementation and review of the implemented projects.

Furthermore, the two sides discussed enhancing support for improving the livelihood of the people residing in the border districts through various projects, according to the statement.

The next meeting in Kathmandu that is supposed to take place in May-June will select projects, according to Nepali officials.

The Ministry of Local Development is currently compiling a list of projects needed in the 15 districts that share a border with Tibet. Xizang is the new name for Tibet that China started using from last year.

The ‘Second Meeting of the Aid Projects to Nepal’ will take place on a mutually convenient date in May 2024, said the statement by Nepal’s Consulate General in Lhasa.

China has been implementing small-scale aid projects in the northern border districts of Nepal.



In the past, the Chinese government had provided each of these districts Rs3 million for the development of village development committees (VDCs), then local administrative units, in the districts. In 2014, in a deal between the two countries, China had agreed to provide 10 million yuan (USD 1.63 million) annually from 2014 to 2018 through the Tibetan government in areas like health, education and road sectors to improve the livelihood of the residents in those districts.

Later in 2018, the China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA), China's external foreign aid agency, signed a cooperation agreement with Nepal's Ministry of Finance to provide development assistance in Nepal's northern district and agreement was signed in 2019 but no substantive progress has been made.

In April 2019, during the state visit of the then president Bidya Devi Bhandari to China, Nepal and China signed the Northern Area Infrastructure Development and Livelihood Improvement Project (NAIDLIP), where Beijing had pledged to provide funds for implementing the project, which was estimated to cost 20 million yuan.

According to the local development ministry, the project will support roads linking settlements, schools, health facilities, market centers within or among local units. The project also aimed to support agriculture and irrigation sector, surface or solar lifting irrigation, micro irrigation, commercial agro-veterinary, business promotion, solar dryer, dairy industry, cold storage and fruits or medical plant processing units, and solar energy. But the scheme was severely impacted by the Covid pandemic, said officials.

In October 2022, the Chinese government provided 14 excavators to 14 municipalities of 14 different districts bordering China. The Tibetan government also supported food supplies and other essentials worth over 200 million yuan to the 15 districts in the past five years.

## April

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

24 April 2024, Phayul

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

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

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

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

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

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

In December 2023, Gonpo Kyi and her husband, Choekyong filed a lawsuit against the police over their ill-treatment. The duo has said that they were treated harshly during a protest outside the Higher People's Court in Lhasa.

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

Gonpo Kyi spent a week in detention and became the focus of an international campaign calling for her release. In their lawsuit, the couple accused the

police of arbitrary detention and physical assault. They also claim they were denied access to medical treatment for Gonpo Kyi's injuries sustained during the detention.

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

22 April 2024, Bitter Winter

One year after the tragedy, the family of Tenzin Dorjee revealed what happened to the learned teacher from Shelkar Monastery. There are Tibetans who decide to die through self-immolation to protest the cultural genocide of their people. For others, suicide is not a form of protest but the consequence of torture and terror. Only on April 15, 2024, the parents of monk Tenzin Dorjee from Nubling township, Dingri county, Tibet, informed human rights organizations that their son had committed suicide last year, on May 25, 2023. A learned 50-year-old monk of Shelkar Monastery from Dingri county, Tenzin Dorjee

It's the latest example of land taken by Chinese authorities in Tibet and in Tibetan-populated areas of nearby Chinese provinces for mining, farming or other use. Local officials routinely use force to subdue those who complain or protest.

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

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

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

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

Authorities conveyed the details of the compensation plan at a meeting on April 16, requiring at least one representative of each of the affected families to attend.

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

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

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

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

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

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

17 April 2024, Pelbar, RFA



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

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

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

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

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

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

"Dhonyoe is a well-respected Tibetan teacher in the community," said the second source. "He taught students the importance of the Tibetan language and Tibetan history, which is why he was expelled. Many

students and their families were disappointed by his expulsion."

#### Heart-warming video

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Campaign Against "Cults" Launched in Lhasa—But What Is a "Cult" in Tibet? (Cyber News)

16 April 2024, Bitter Winter

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



The new regulation announced on Weibo.

On April 4, the Lhasa Public Security Bureau issued a strange document on repressing "xie jiao," a term that really means "heterodox teachings" and was originally used by Taoists in the Middle Ages to

slander Buddhism, but is today translated by the CCP in languages other than Mandarin as "cults."

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

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

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

A translation of the Lhasa Public Security Bureau regulation follows:

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

#### 1. Report content

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 2. Reporting method

(1) Dial the police hotline 110

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

(3) Report to the community police

## 3. Incentive measures

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

(1) If you discover clues about xie jiao activities, report to the police in a timely manner, and actively cooperate with the public security organs in carrying

out investigation work, if found to be true, you will be rewarded with RMB 100 to RMB 1,000 depending on the circumstances.

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

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

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

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

## 4. Report identification and non-reward situations

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

(2) If one person reports multiple reports, only one will be rewarded after verification.

(3) Multiple people report the same content. After verification, the first whistleblower will be selected to be rewarded (subject to the registration time of the accepting unit).

(4) No reward will be given if a criminal suspect surrenders before being reported.

(5) If the public security organs, People's Procuratorates, and People's Courts discover Un investigated criminal facts before the whistleblower during the case investigation, review, and trial, the whistleblower will not be rewarded.



(6) No reward will be given if the reported illegal and criminal acts have been already investigated and dealt with.

(7) These measures do not apply to staff of government agencies and administrative enterprises and institutions responsible for preventing and dealing with xie jiao.

#### 5. Precautions

(1) The whistleblower must leave his or her real name and contact information. When reporting, pay attention to methods and personal safety, and properly retain information and evidence for subsequent verification and redemption of rewards.

(2) The reporting unit and staff will strictly keep the whistleblower's information confidential and protect the whistleblower's personal and property safety in accordance with the law.

(3) Within 30 days from the date of receiving the reward notification, the informant must go to the designated location in the reward notification with his or her valid ID to collect the reward. Failure to collect within the time limit will be deemed as automatic abandonment.

(4) The reporters should truthfully report the clues they know about illegal and criminal activities involving xie jiao. If, in the name of reporting, you make false accusations and frame others, fraudulently seek rewards, blackmail the person being reported, fabricate and disseminate false information, lie about reporting information, etc., the public security organs will investigate the legal responsibility of the perpetrator in accordance with the law.

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

13 April 2024, Waging NonViolence



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

Under the cover of darkness, the monks were evicted. Amid the freezing temperatures of late February, they knelt, prostrated and wept before a

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group of Chinese police officers, their sacred red robes ablaze against the black state uniforms.

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

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

"I have known those mountains and those roads," he said through a translator. "I have known everything." About a week before the arrests in early February, just across the mountain from Wongpo Tok, some 300 people gathered outside the Derge County Seat – home to the Chinese Communist Party's provincial office – to protest the construction of the Kamtok Hydropower project. Slated to straddle the banks of the Drichu River, the headwaters of Asia's 3,915-mile Yangtze River, the hydropower dam will not only strangle the river's winding route but forcibly displace thousands of Tibetans. According to a 2019 report from the International Campaign for Tibet, the hydropower project is one of 25 dams set to carve through the Tibetan plateau and generate "clean" electricity.

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

"These huge dams are not for Tibetans," said Dr. Lobsang Yangtso, the programme and environment coordinator at International Tibet Network, a global coalition of Tibet-centered organizations based in Berkeley, California. "It's a colonial mentality where

these resources are to be consumed by mainland China.”

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

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

Globally, hydropower projects from Honduras to the Philippines have been a violent frontline for environmental defenders. According to a 2019 study drawing data from the Global Environmental Justice Atlas, resistance to hydropower projects is met with a similar pattern of violence as other extractive industries, including oil and mining. In 2009, six women in Tibet were shot during demonstrations against a hydropower project according to the Tibetan government in exile, now based in Dharamshala, India. In Derge, more recently, some of the charges enumerated by the Chinese government in the wake of these recent demonstrations include fines and imprisonment for protesting against government initiatives, distributing pamphlets and shouting slogans.

“When we think of environmental defenders, there is no more visceral scene than hundreds of Tibetans begging on their hands and knees to protect their environment knowing full well that they’re risking

arrest and imprisonment,” said Topjor Tsultrim, the communications coordinator at Students for a Free Tibet, an organization that works in solidarity with the Tibetan struggle. “It’s the same issue and the same mindset as defenders in the Amazon coming up against the impossibly large forces of government or corporations.”

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

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

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

Despite the repression that followed these protests, Tibetans – both in the occupied country and in exile – know what is at risk should the hydropower project continue. The Wongpo Tok of Drimey’s memory is one of summertime wildflowers, free-flowing rivers and peaks that stretch towards the sky. It is a place where the farmers cultivate their crops twice a year, where the nomads herd their cattle across the grasslands and where every family has more than a hundred yak and geese. Monasteries are centers of language, culture, religion and education. Lamas are venerated, mountains revered. The Drichu River is a source of life. For Drimey, the community of Wongpo Tok is pleasant, prosperous and alive. But relocation, Drimey said, will destroy the community, as well as knowledge of the land, mountains and waters passed down from one generation to the next.

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

For many communities across Tibet, everything has already been lost. In recent years, Chinese policies

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

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

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

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

At the heart of that identity is a way of life that for centuries has preserved the delicate balance of the Tibetan plateau and what is often known as the “Third Pole.” Glaciers in Tibet act as a water storage tower for Asia, holding the third-largest store of water ice in the world. This glacial melt then feeds some of south and southeast Asia’s largest rivers, including the Ganges and the Mekong, which around 1.5 billion people rely upon.

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

This investment in hydropower, as well as solar and wind, is part of China’s plan to transform itself from

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

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

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

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

While there is some uncertainty as to whether the Kamtok Hydropower Project will be constructed, organizations have continued their advocacy work through petition writing and lobbying Western governments to pressure China. Meanwhile, the videos captured in Tibet, which people knowingly risked personal safety to send outside of the country, have circulated on social media and in international news. It is this assertion of autonomy under occupation that has not only revealed the cost of protest under repression but served as a reminder that – despite the consequences – there remains power in dissent.

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



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

12 April 2024, Pelbar, Tenzin Pema and Gai Tho,  
RFA



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

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

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

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

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

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

However, many of the murals and surrounding stupas cannot be physically moved and so will be destroyed.

Tibetans also believe that the place is sacred: That it has been made holier over 135 years of prayers and practice by generations in the same venue.

Disregard for cultural heritage

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

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

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

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

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

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

Seizing land

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

11 April 2024, Tenzin Lhadon, The Tibet Post



Lhasa Norm Lhasa Normal School (ལྷ་ས་འཁྲུག་རྒྱུ་མཐོ་སྒྲིལ་སྡེ་སློང་སྐྱེད་སྡེ།), Lhasa, Capital of Tibet. (Photo:file)

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

Approximately 500 Tibetan students at Lhasa Normal School (ལྷ་ས་འཁྲུག་རྒྱུ་མཐོ་སྒྲིལ་སྡེ་སློང་སྐྱེད་སྡེ།), located approximately 7 km from the central city of Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, peacefully staged a sit-in in the school playground on March 16, 2024, to protest the school's closure for four months, the extreme controls imposed on students, and demand to see the principal, but they were met by hundreds of armed Chinese police, emerging sources said. Chinese police, with arms and truncheons, inhumanely tortured the peaceful student demonstrators for staging protests over their school closure for over two months; two students were killed on the spot; four students jumped from the building; and several other students were trampled as they tried to run among the students when chased by the police brutality of beatings, resulting in the total death of more than 20 students, the sources stressed.

This incident came after the closure of Tibetan colleges and universities in Tibet by the government of China, began on March 14, 2008, after thousands of Tibetans from all three traditional Provinces of Tibet staged peaceful protests against the Chinese repressive policies towards Tibetan people in Tibet, which were violently repressed by

armed police, causing the killing, injuring, and arrests of several hundred Tibetans, many of whom were facing heavy long-term imprisonments, said a source seeking to remain anonymous for fear of arrest and torture.

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

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

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

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

The New Tang Dynasty TV, run by the Falun Gong new religious movement, also reported in detail and stated that "some students tried to request the principal to reduce the closure time, but they were threatened, with the principal claiming that if they continued to protest, the police would be called in to arrest the students for "Anti-state Crime" or "espionage crime"."

"Following the events, more than thirty students were detained, allegedly linked to their use of the internet to access Gmail for university applications, escalated by the national mailbox's frequent failure to receive crucial correspondence, and monitored extensively by the school, employing CCTV cameras and forcing an app installation named "Canteen Map Net" on

their phones to track activities and movements, the report continued.

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

## China blocks popular Tibetan-language blog

08 April 2024, RFA

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

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

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

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



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

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

If restored, Luktsang Palyon will ensure the rights of writers are upheld, but if the request is declined, it

will "fully comply with the decision of the government," the administrator said in a statement.

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

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

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

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

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

ལུག་ཁྲོང་དཔལ་ཡོན་གྱི་ཁྱིམ་གནིམ། 羊兄乐园的家园 བོད་སྐད་ཡིག་ལམ་ནས་དེ་གོ་གོ་  
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美好的藏文网络生活



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

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

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

08 April 2024, TCHRD

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

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

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

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

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

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

March is considered a 'politically sensitive' month by Chinese authorities because of the 10 March anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising Day that led to the exile of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and thousands of Tibetans since 1959. The annual sessions of the National People's Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) are also held the same month, leading to heightened restrictions in all parts of Tibet. The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) is gravely concerned about Pema's fate and whereabouts. His current location remains a mystery, and we call for his immediate and unconditional release. Chinese authorities must also disclose Pema's whereabouts and condition to his family

members without delay and guarantee his physical and mental well-being.

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

08 April 2024, International Campaign For Tibet

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- More than a third (37%) of respondents said reporting trips or interviews already confirmed were



canceled last minute because of official pressure (2022: 31%).

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

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

07 April 2024, The State Council The People's Republic of China

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

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

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

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

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

06 April 2024, Tibetan Review

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

The monk is stated to be a student of Buddhist philosophy, while also teaching students at the

preliminary Buddhist study section, at the local Kirti Monastery, with the county's Suruma Village being his birthplace. The county police, when rung up for information, have denied any knowledge about the monk, even though at least two local Tibetans have confirmed his arrest, speaking on condition of anonymity for safety reasons. The report said that earlier, another Buddhist monk, Tenzin Khenrap, 29, was arrested in Jul 2023 in Nyagchu (Yajiang) county in the same prefecture after they found a photo of the Dalai Lama in his mobile phone, besides other books and documents published outside Tibet. His whereabouts have continued to remain unknown. Before that, in Jun 2023, Lobsang Thabkhey, 54, a librarian in the same monastery, was arrested, accused of republishing books brought out by exile Tibetan establishments, and for maintaining contact with people outside the region.

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

### **China-ruled Tibet is second least free country, territory in rights group's annual survey**

01 April 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Mar01'24) – With an abysmal -2 out of 40 for Political Rights and just 2 out of 60 for Civil Liberties, China-ruled Tibet has scored a total of zero out of 100 for "Freedom" in the international rights group Freedom House's latest annual survey of Freedom in the World released Feb 29. With a score like that, the group has ranked the occupied territory as "Not Free". In fact, it ranked just above the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh (-3) in this year's global ranking.

Nagorno-Karabakh has been in the news recently due to the violent conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over territorial sovereignty.

The "zero" rating is Tibet's worst in at last eight years. It had an overall score of 1 in Freedom House's 2023 survey report, noted Washington-based International Campaign for Tibet on its savetibet.org website Feb 29.

China itself has scored -2 for political rights and 11 for civil liberties, so that its overall score is 9; it is therefore also ranked as "Not Free."

Those that ranked above Tibet but with a total score of less than 10 are: Syria (1), South Sudan (1), Turkmenistan (2), Eastern Donbas (2), Crimea (2), North Korea (3), Eritrea (3), Western Sahara (4), Equatorial Guinea (5), Tajikistan (5), Sudan (5), Central African Republic (5), Afghanistan (6),

Azerbaijan (7), Somalia (8), Saudi Arabia (8), Myanmar (8), Belarus (8), Gaza Strip (8), Libya (9), and China (9).

The group's 2024 report has highlighted Hong Kong and Tibet as "among the least free places on earth" due to the "exercise of unchecked power."

Yana Gorokhovskaia, research director for strategy and design at Freedom House, has said: "In Tibet last year, the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) separated over a million children from their families and put them in state-run boarding schools, where ... Chinese language and culture was forcefully inculcated."

The rights group's 2024 survey covers the situation of freedom in 210 countries and territories.

The freest countries or territories in the Asia-Pacific region, in comparative terms, New Zealand (99), Japan (96), Australia (95) and Taiwan (94). And the worst in the region are China (9), Myanmar (8), North Korea (3) and Tibet (0).

Both Myanmar and Tibet have lost one point since last year's report.

The annual report gives each country – and many disputed territories – a score from 1 to 100 using 25 specific indicators based on the provisions of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and then declares them "free," or "partly free", or "not free." Globally, the report said, the "breadth and depth" of the decline in freedoms last year was significant, with political rights and civil liberties having diminished in a total of 52 countries and improved in only 21.

Adrian Shahbaz, the vice president of research and analysis at Freedom House, said at the launch of the report that it was the 18th straight year of declines, noted rfa.org Feb 29.

Freedom House noted that flawed elections and armed conflict contributed to the 18th year of democratic decline. However, by drawing strength from diversity, protecting dissent, and building international coalitions to support their own norms and values, democratic forces can still reverse the long decline in global freedom, it added.

## March

### Former Tibet official from China awaits sentence for decades-long corruption

22 March 2024, Tibetan Review

Ji Guogang, a Chinese official who has held various senior positions in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) since 2013, including as the former vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the Regional People's Congress, has pleaded guilty for corruption at a trial held in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, on Mar 21, and

will be sentenced later, reported China's official chinadaily.com.cn.

Ji, 61, has pleaded guilty to accepting bribery amounting to about 44 million yuan (\$6.11 million) and abuse of power in a trial held by the Intermediate People's Court of Chengdu, the report said.

The report cited prosecutors from the Chengdu People's Procuratorate as saying that from 2002 to 2022, Ji utilized his positions, including as deputy director of the Fixed Asset Investment Department of the National Development and Reform Commission and head of the Xizang Development and Reform Commission, to facilitate entities and individuals in obtaining project approvals and equity transfers. In exchange, he, either directly or through his relatives, has accepted money and property totalling more than 43.98 million yuan.

Also, from 2016 to 2021, while serving as the president and legal representative of the Xizang Development Investment Group, he engaged in favouritism, abuse of power and has caused particularly significant losses to State interests, the report said.

He has been tried for the crimes of bribery and abuse of power and the verdict will be announced later.

Ji was stated to have joined the Chinese government in 1983 and become a Communist Party of China member a year later.

The report further said he previously worked at the National Development and Reform Commission and its predecessor institute from 1983 to 2012. He became the head of the Xizang Development and Reform Commission in Jan 2013 and concurrently served as the vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the Xizang Regional People's Congress from Nov 2016 until Dec 2022.

He was placed under disciplinary and supervisory investigation in Nov 2022 and expelled from the Party and removed from his public posts in May 2023, the report added.

He was approved for arrest in Jun 2023 and prosecuted three months later.

### China's Tibet offers college exam takers a spot if their parents invest \$400,000

21 March 2024, Reuters

Tibet is luring investors from elsewhere in China with a promise to let their children take university entrance exams there in return for an investment of at least \$400,000, an unusual move to exploit what is considered an easier scoring system.

With a population that is 90% ethnic Tibetan, the region has one of China's lowest college entry

barriers, a key edge for the millions of students who take the competitive "gaokao" entrance exams each year, hoping to secure lucrative white-collar jobs.

The plan has sparked debate on Chinese social media, however, with some posters arguing it would be unfair to students from the mountainous region, while others supported it.

"What about the enrolment rate of kids born in Tibet?" asked one user on the popular Weibo platform.

Amid growing concern as the exam approaches in early June, the education ministry issued a notice on Wednesday vowing to crack down on "gaokao migrants", as students seeking to benefit from such a plan have been dubbed.

Reuters telephone calls to the Tibet government to seek comment went unanswered.

Finding jobs has become harder as the world's second-largest economy slows, with the jobless rate hitting a record 21.3% last June among those aged 16 to 24, which includes college students.

Tibet, with a gross domestic product that is less than 2% of the richest province, Guangdong in the south, said this week the qualifying investment of 3 million yuan (\$417,000) would have to stay untouched for five years.

China's differing college admission criteria can reflect preferential policies meant for ethnic minorities.

In 2023, a student in Tibet scoring at least 300 out of 750 on the entrance exam would have qualified for an undergraduate place at more than 1,200 universities nationwide.

By comparison, those taking the exam in Beijing would have needed a score of 448.

With qualifying scores partly linked to overall exam performance, an influx of exam takers from provinces with better education resources threatens to drive up Tibet's minimum scores and hurt regional candidates.

### **China promoting Mandarin in parts of Tibet: Report**

21 March 2024, Hindustan Times

The report added that Tibetans face restrictions not only on their right to freedom of assembly, but also on expressing opinions or criticism against the "repressive and unjust government policies, both online and offline"

"Even as China ended its draconian zero-Covid policy measures in 2023, Tibetans continue to face escalating crackdowns on freedom of expression, religion and belief," the Dharamshala-based Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy said in a report.

The annual report released on Wednesday stated that despite numerous calls from the international

community to halt its forced assimilation policy, Chinese authorities imposed Chinese-medium education in Tibetan schools and amended local regulations in Tibetan areas to promote Mandarin Chinese.

The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) is a registered non-profit human rights organisation based in Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh. The annual report was prepared by TCHRD's trilingual research team, working in Tibetan, Chinese and English. The team compiled and analysed information from a wide variety of sources on the human rights situation in Tibet in 2023.

The report added that Tibetans face restrictions not only on their right to freedom of assembly, but also on expressing opinions or criticism against the "repressive and unjust government policies, both online and offline". Under the guise of maintaining social stability, Chinese authorities exercise direct supervision and censorship over all online platforms.

"The right to freedom of religion and belief faced further restrictions as Chinese authorities introduced more repressive regulations to exercise total control over the establishment, management and activities of the religious activity sites. Despite the relaxation of zero-Covid restrictions, it made no difference to Tibetan Buddhists, who continued to face restrictions in undertaking religious pilgrimages," the report further.

According to the report, Tibetan detainees continue to face a litany of human rights violations. Those arbitrarily, preventatively or forcefully detained underwent unjust sentencing and torture, resulting in custodial deaths. Incommunicado detention in undisclosed locations without due process also remained a regular practice, leading to lasting health issues and premature deaths among political prisoners upon release.

Tenzin Dawa, executive director of TCHRD, said, "In 2023, China was re-elected to the UN Human Rights Council, the United Nation's premier rights body responsible for protecting and promoting human rights globally. This re-election demonstrates how authoritarian states like China manipulate, obstruct and exploit the international human rights system by waging systematic campaigns to weaken and eviscerate the UN's ability to enforce global compliance with international human rights standards."

"The injustices and human rights violations in Tibet underscore the urgent need to address the human rights abuses in Tibet perpetrated by Chinese authorities. The Chinese government must release all Tibetans detained for merely exercising their human rights and political freedoms in the political,



economic, social, cultural or any other areas of public life," she said.

## 2024 Two Sessions show China will continue plans to Sinicize Tibet

19 March 2024, International Campaign for Tibet

The just-concluded annual Chinese political meetings known as the Two Sessions have shown that President Xi Jinping and his administration are turning China into an increasingly ideological security state and continuing their plans to "Sinicize" Tibetan Buddhism, as well as all other aspects of Tibetan life.

National leaders' references to Tibet

This year's annual meetings of China's National People's Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), held between March 4 and March 11, 2024, saw the Chinese leaders unitedly supporting the approach that puts ideology above all other aspects of people's lives. On Tibet, there were some focus from the top leadership, both directly and indirectly, all furthering plans to change the Tibetan identity into that of a Chinese one.

The Chair of the CPPCC Wang Huning, in his report on March 4, 2024, made a direct reference to Tibet. In the fifth point of his report outlining the CPPCC work in the past year, Wang said, "Studied and implemented the Party's strategy for governing Tibet in the new era and the Party's strategy for governing Xinjiang in the new era, and carried out 10 research and inspections in Tibet, Xinjiang, and Tibet-related counties in Sichuan Province on promoting the sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism and promoting the sinicization of Islam in Xinjiang. Strengthened the exchanges, exchanges and integration of various ethnic groups, historical interpretation, publicity and education, and strengthen in-depth research on the awareness education of the Chinese nation community in colleges and universities." [1]

The reference to Tibetan Buddhism is consistent with the Chinese Communist Party's call for the Sinicization of all religions, including Tibetan Buddhism, at the 19th Party Congress in 2017 and the subsequent 2019 five-year plan to Sinicize Buddhism launched by the state-backed Chinese Buddhist Association. Sinicization refers to the process of forcing non-Chinese groups to assimilate into Chinese culture and become loyal to the CCP. Xi Jinping made structural changes in 2018 in the party-state system by putting the notorious United Front Work Department (UFW) in charge of overseeing the implementation of religious policy. Placing a mass organ of the CCP above the state administration has been a regular occurrence recently in several policy fields, especially in discipline inspection.

In his report to the NPC on March 8, 2024, Chair Zhao Leji mentioned the "Law on Ecological Conservation of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau" that was passed in 2023 that "provides legal guarantees for ecological conservation and sustainable development of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau." [2] Zhao added, "we pushed the parties concerned to overhaul relevant normative documents." Zhao also mentioned that this year they will hold a symposium to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy, which became effective on Oct. 1, 1984 and is the foundational legislation that purportedly provides rights to Tibetans and others considered "ethnic minorities."



Zhao Leji interacting with Tibetan delegates to the 13th NPC in Beijing in 2018

Chinese Premier Li Qiang did not make a direct reference to Tibet in his work report to NPC on March 5, 2024. [3] However, the report included plans that will have an impact on the Tibetan people. Li said, "We will support old revolutionary base areas and areas with large ethnic minority populations in accelerating development, strengthen development of border areas, and advance the program for boosting development and raising living standards in border areas." In Tibet, this program for boosting development had a political agenda and included rural revitalization initiatives that primarily meant intensifying the slaughter rate of yaks and sheep. A fast-spreading viral infection had started in 2018 in China and resulted in the deaths of almost half its hogs, either from disease or compulsory culling to contain the viral spread. As China urgently needed to boost meat supply, and with obvious sources of pork imports, including the USA, off the agenda for political reasons, yak meat from Tibet became a target. The process was put within the strategy for promoting rural revitalization.

Li added, "We will, with a focus on forging a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation, uphold and improve the system of regional ethnic autonomy, promote interaction, exchange, and integration among all ethnic groups, and speed up the modernization drive in ethnic minority regions."

Confirming the concerns about the CCP's intention to Sinicize Tibetan Buddhism, Li also said, "We will adhere to the Party's basic policy on religious affairs,

ensure that religions in China must be Chinese in orientation, and provide guidance to religions so that they can adapt themselves to our socialist society.”

President Xi Jinping did not address the plenary sessions of both the NPC and the CPPCC, but he did address meetings of delegations, though none of them were Tibetan. During the “Two Sessions” in 2021, Xi participated in the deliberations of the Qinghai delegation and even recalled his visit to Yushu after the earthquake of 2010.[4]

Spotlight on economic disparity in Tibet

Although not intended by the Chinese authorities, this year’s Two Sessions put the spotlight on the critical fact that Chinese policies on Tibet have failed even on non-political fields like the economy. Tibet has not become economically self-reliant even after more than six decades of Chinese claims of development.

Specifically, a statement by the Tibet Autonomous Region Governor Yan Jinhai reveals that TAR, which China claims has found the “the right path for economic growth,”[5] only survives economically even in 2024 because of Beijing’s subsidy. During the open group meeting of the Tibetan delegation to the NPC on March 6, Yan appeared proud of “high-quality economic development” but revealed the reality when he said, “central government fiscal subsidies to Tibet have cumulatively reached over 1.7 trillion yuan (\$236 billion), which makes up 90.3% of Tibet government finances.”[6]

Yan added, “Last year alone, the central government’s fiscal transfers to Tibet exceeded 250 billion yuan (\$34.7 billion), which per capita equals over 100,000 yuan (\$13,890). This is the highest out of all China’s 31 provinces, regions and municipalities.”

Previous Chinese official statements have confirmed this lamentable economic condition of the TAR. In 2015, they said that from 1952 to 2013, subsidies to the TAR reached 544.6 billion yuan, accounting for 95% of its finances.[7]

It is estimated that financial aid from the central budget totaled 1.24 trillion yuan from 1980 to 2018, making up 91 percent of its finances.[8]

In 2015, Tibet watcher Andrew M. Fischer wrote, “Analysts and scholars – including Chinese economists and social scientists – have long been critical of Beijing’s development strategy in Tibet. A heavy dependence on state subsidies to maintain high levels of economic growth cause economic inefficiencies and social inequalities.”[9] The fact that this situation continues even in 2024, nine years later, indicates that fundamentally the Chinese authorities have failed to provide stable economic development in TAR.

Fischer also states that Qinghai, which contains most of the Tibetan area of Amdo, is the next most

subsidized province under the People’s Republic of China.

Stability, development, ecology and strong borders as focus areas for 2024

While the Two Sessions were taking place, Wang Junzheng, the TAR party secretary, outlined the Chinese leadership’s plans for this year. Participating in People’s Daily Online’s “My Message to the Two Sessions” program, Wang said on March 6, “In 2024, we will adhere to Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era to govern the overall work in Tibet, fully and accurately implement the Party’s strategy for governing Tibet in the new era, focus on the ‘four major issues’ of stability, development, ecology, and strong borders, and strive to promote Tibet continues to take new steps towards long-term peace and stability and high-quality development.”[10]

Similarly, participating in the TAR delegation meeting on March 6, Wang emphasized implementation of the party’s decisions to achieve the party’s goals of “long-term stability and high-quality development”; the former a perennial goal and the later a goal since the 20th Party Congress in October 2022. Wang’s discourse, with keywords such as “grassroots governance,” “rural revitalization” and “people’s livelihood,” indicates the party’s continued focus on Tibet’s rural areas and tweaking the governance model.[11]

Beijing leaders at this year’s Tibet-related meetings

On March 6, the TAR delegation to the NPC held a plenary meeting, which was attended by Zhang Guoqing, a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and a vice premier. Zhang is, interestingly, a delegate to the 14th NPC assigned to the TAR and had also participated in the TAR delegation meeting in the 2023 Two Sessions, too.

State media also reported that Huang Runqiu, minister of Ecology and Environment, and Sun Yeli, minister of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, attended the TAR delegation meeting this year. However, there is no report that Pan Yue, vice minister of the Central United Front Work Department and director of the National Ethnic Affairs Commission, who attended last year’s TAR delegation meeting, did so this year.

Drinking death of a Tibetan party leader raised at Qinghai delegation meeting

Chinese state media reported that on March 6, at the open group meeting of the Qinghai delegation, Chen Gang, Qinghai party secretary, had to respond to queries concerning the revelation of a senior provincial Tibetan leader’s death due to excess drinking during a Chinese Communist Party-organized event in December 2022. As the International Campaign for Tibet reported in May 2023, in the evening of Dec. 11, 2022, Dorjee, the

party secretary of Tsojang prefecture and a member of the Qinghai Provincial Party Committee, died following a drinking stint with fellow cadres. The issue raised much public concern.[12] Chen is reported to have said, "This incident, which seriously violated the spirit of the central government's eight regulations, is a 'sore spot' and 'injured spot' for Qinghai cadres." [13]

Cai Qi, member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and secretary of the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee, attended the Qinghai delegation meeting on March 7, state media reported.

Increased surveillance of Tibetans expected

On Feb. 27, 2024, days before this year's Two Sessions, China's National People's Congress approved the revision to the Law on Guarding State Secrets, introducing a clause that gives officials the leeway to deem any information as a state secret. [14]

Article 64 of the amended law states, "Organs and units are to apply work secrets management measures and employ the necessary protective measures for matters generated or obtained by organs or units in the course of performing their functions that are not state secrets but would cause a definite adverse impact after leaking. Provisions on the management of work secrets are to be provided separately."

"Leaking state secrets" has been one of the spurious charges used by China to detain and control Tibetans. The amended law would only make it easier for the authorities to exploit it in their "stability management" of Tibetans. It is possible that the authorities will use this law against those Tibetans in Derge who are highlighting the negative impact of the hydropower dam project in their area, some information of which has been circulating in the international media. This law will take effect on May 1, 2024.

China still not confident in Tibet

Despite all their claims in meetings during this year's Two Sessions and all the coercive measures they've used to control the Tibetan people for the past several decades, the Chinese authorities still lack the confidence that the Tibetan people support their initiatives. Therefore, in the period before the Two Sessions, the timing of which also fell during the anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising, there was a noticeable escalation of security measures in areas of Tibetan residence.

In the Tibetan capital Lhasa, a virtual meeting was held by the Lhasa City Stability Maintenance Command on Feb. 26[15] "to do a good job of maintaining stability and security during the two sessions." County leaders, temple management

committees and various stability maintenance units were instructed to attend the security meeting.

This meeting appears to focus on suppressing dissent and tightening control rather than addressing genuine security concerns. There was emphasis on political vigilance with focus on "enhancing political position" and aligning thoughts with party directives. The officials were asked to investigate issues like submission of petitions and to nip them in the bud.

Similarly, on Feb. 29, Chen Yongqi, deputy secretary of the TAR Party Committee and executive vice chairman of the TAR government, addressed a meeting in Chushul (Qushui) county in Lhasa City, where he emphasized that everyone "must conscientiously implement the work arrangements of the autonomous region Party committee and the work requirements of the district stability maintenance headquarters, always regard maintaining stability as the first task, implement detailed work measures, and tighten the responsibilities, highlight key areas, strengthen emergency drills, implement operating procedures, resolutely ensure social harmony and stability during the national Two Sessions, and strive to create a good social environment for economic and social development." [16]

Interestingly, an article in the CCP theoretical journal Seeking Truth (Qishi) on March 16, 2024, attributed to the Tibet Autonomous Region Party Committee, says, "Casting a firm sense of Chinese national community is the main line of China's ethnic work, and also a strategic task of Tibet's work."

[17] The article continues, "The Party Committee of the Autonomous Region has firmly established the overall concept of national security, insisting on maintaining stability as its first task, keeping the alarm bells ringing and vigilance constant, and, by means of a scientific mechanism and the concepts of normalization and the rule of law, doing the work of maintaining stability on a daily basis and at the grass-roots level, so as to constantly make the cornerstone of security and development more stable and secure."

Even though independent foreign journalists are not given permission to report from Tibet, a report by a Japanese newspaper from Sichuan's capital Chengdu reveals how Tibetans there had to undergo tightened state control in the period before the Two Sessions. In the middle of February, the Japanese journalist visited the area in Chengdu where Tibetans reside and reported, "heavily armed police officers could be seen stationed at every corner of an intersection, keeping a watchful eye on Tibetan monks and residents." [18]

## Tibetan quarter in Chengdu under tight surveillance on uprising anniversary

16 March 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Mar16'24) — As Tibetans and supporters across the free world commemorated the 65th anniversary of their national uprising on Mar 10, there was total blackout on information from Tibet itself as China greatly tightens security ahead of the occasion each year. The security situation was the same in the Tibetan quarter of Chengdu, capital of China's Sichuan province, according to the japannews.yomiuri.co.jp Mar 16.

The report said: "In one area of Chengdu, Sichuan Province, a line of shops sells Tibetan Buddhist altar objects and Tibetan-language books. During a visit in mid-February, heavily armed police officers could be seen stationed at every corner of an intersection, keeping a watchful eye on Tibetan monks and residents."

It added that there were many surveillance cameras. The report found that upon entering a shop for Buddhist objects, there were noticeably more signs written in Chinese than in Tibetan, a result of China's ongoing Sinicization drive.

The report quoted a monk shopping in the store as saying in a low voice, "We have to preserve our religion and culture."

Chengdu is home to a large community of Tibetans, with at least 30,000 permanent Tibetan residents and up to 200,000 Tibetan floating population, according to a report by China's official Xinhua news agency back on Mar 14, 2012 cited in a wikipedia page on Sichuan.

Seen as a gateway to Tibet and located about 2.5 km south west of the city centre, two other Chengdu landmarks in the area appear to have been the reason for the growth of the Tibetan Quarter, said echinacities.com on its page on Chengdu's Tibetan Quarter – Gateway to Tibet. These are stated to be the Kangding Hotel and the South West University of Nationalities. The university offers courses delivered in Tibetan language, and many Tibetan students take advantage of this, it said.

## Tibetan prisoner released with disabled leg after forced labour.

14 March 2024, Free Tibet

A Tibetan prisoner named Ludup was released from prison last month with injuries after being made to carry out forced labour during his three-and-a-half-year prison sentence.

A source confirmed Tibet Watch: "Ludup's leg sustained serious damage from the re-education-through-forced labour transformation and his leg is

crippled these days. Ludup currently stays at home but he is regularly summoned, interrogated, and given political re-education by Meruma Township police authorities."

Ludup, 54, was arrested in Ngaba County in June 2020, 12 years after he carried out a protest in front of Kirti Monastery in Ngaba on 16 March in 2008, the year that saw unprecedented spate of freedom protests erupt across Tibet.

The same source told Tibet Watch that the authorities had neither informed his family where and which court oversaw his trial, nor were they given any notice about what he was charged with.

Ludup spent the years 2008 to 2020 hiding from the police, who resorted to publishing a public notice calling the townspeople of Meruma in Ngaba to inform them about Ludup and a few other Kirti monks. The notice described them as having participated in an "illegal protest movement."

Following his arrest and trial, he served his sentence in Deyang Prison in Huang Xu Town of Deyang City, Sichuan Province.



Ludup on a wanted order issued by the Public Security Bureau of Ngaba Prefecture

Having lost his identity card during his hiding and a new one not yet reissued, he currently faces difficulties in accessing medical care at hospitals. This is in addition to him being under surveillance and restricted from meeting families and friends even during the Tibetan new year.

54-year-old Ludup (ལུདུཔ།), known by lay name Rinchen Goedoe (རིན་ཆེན་དགེ་ལོ་འདོད།), was enrolled at Kirti Monastery at a very young age, and hails from Samsang family (བསམ་བཟང་ཆང་།) in village number four of Meruma Township (མེ་རུ་མ་རུ་ཆེན་གླི་པ།) in Ngaba County.

### Three years on, whereabouts of Tibetan poet is a mystery

14 March 2024, RFA

Gendun Lhundrub was arrested by Chinese police in December 2020.

More than three years after the arrest of a popular Tibetan writer and poet in northwestern China, police have not provided any details about his whereabouts, his sentence or his well-being, despite repeated appeals by his family for information, two sources told Radio Free Asia.

Gendun Lhundrub, a former monk at Rongwo Monastery in Rebgong county of Malho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in China's Qinghai province, was detained on Dec. 2, 2020.

Authorities did not cite any reasons for his arrest, which followed a long period when police monitored his activities for signs of dissent and opposition to Chinese policies, RFA learned at the time.

Chinese authorities frequently detain Tibetan writers, artists and singers who promote Tibetan national identity and culture or who have criticized China's rule of the western region.

They scrutinize their writings for content considered as "endangering national security" or constituting an "act of separatism," thereby deeming them threats to the ruling Chinese Communist Party.

Lhundrub's relatives have made repeated requests to authorities in Rebgong county to find out where he is and whether he has been sentenced, said one source from inside Tibet.

"However, they have not received any response to their queries," said the source, who declined to be identified for safety reasons.

Whenever the family wants to send items to Lhundrub, officials at the Chinese government's Rebgong county office tell them to leave the items with them, and they will forward them to Lhundrub, he said.

"His well-being is also unclear as no one has been allowed to meet him," the source added.

Additionally, officials have shared no details or documentation as proof of Lhundrub's sentence, both sources said.

Long list

Lhundrub is among those on a long list of well-known Tibetan writers and poets arrested by authorities. In 2016, Tibetan language advocate Tashi Wangchuk was arrested and tortured. He was released in 2021 after being held for two years in pre-trial detention and serving part of a five-year prison sentence.

Gendun Lhundrub was born in 1974 in Rebgong in the traditional Amdo region of Tibet in the northeastern part of the Tibetan Plateau.

He became a monk at a young age and enrolled in the Rebgong Dargye Monastery. He later studied at the Rebgong Rongpo Monastery, Labrang Tashi Kyil and Serta Labrang.

Starting in 1994, he wrote poetry. In October 2022, he released an anthology of poems called "Khorwa," and wrote on the website Waseng-drak that writers and artists require freedom to express their thoughts and emotions without restriction, RFA learned from sources that year.

Lhundrub's collection of poems, which include "Black Rosary," "Melody of Life" and "White Book," and his literary skills are highly regarded by Tibetans around the world.

### Tibet boarding schools: China accused of trying to silence language

10 March 2024, BBC News

Tibetan educational sociologist Gyal Lo can speak Mandarin Chinese fluently - but he would rather not.

He has spent the last few years telling the world about Beijing's sweeping educational reforms in Tibetan areas, and would prefer not to use the language of people he identifies as colonial oppressors.

China has expanded the use of boarding schools - for children as young as four - and replaced Tibetan as the main language of tuition with Chinese.

Beijing says these reforms give Tibetan children the best possible preparation for their adult lives, in a country where the main language of communication is Mandarin Chinese.

But Dr Gyal Lo disagrees - he believes Beijing's real aim is to undermine the Tibetan identity, by targeting the very youngest in society.

"They've designed the curriculum that produces a population that will not be able to practise their own language and culture in the future," he said.

"China is using education as a tool to minimise Tibetans' social capacity. No one will be able to resist their rule."

Overseas human rights organisations have for decades been highlighting alleged abuses carried out by China in Tibet - but not much over recent years.

The focus has shifted to Beijing's treatment of Muslim Uyghurs, in China's north-western region of Xinjiang, and the pro-democracy protest movement in Hong Kong.

But activists say Chinese officials have been busy in Tibet too.

Over recent years, the Chinese government has closed village schools - and private ones teaching Tibetan - and expanded the use of boarding schools. These have been in operation for many decades in a number of Chinese regions that are thinly populated -

but in Tibetan areas, they appear to have become the main means of education.

Campaigners estimate that 80% of Tibetan children - perhaps one million pupils - are now taught in boarding schools, from pre-school-age onwards.

In a statement to the BBC, the Chinese embassy in London said this policy was necessary.

"Due to a highly scattered population, children have to travel long distances to get to school, which is very inconvenient," it said.

"If schools were to be built in every place the students live, it would be very difficult to ensure adequate teachers and quality of teaching. That is why local governments set up boarding schools."

But opponents say this kind of schooling creates psychological trauma for children who are forcibly separated from their families, who are pressured to send their children away.

"The most challenging aspect of my life was missing my family," said one Tibetan teenager, who attended a boarding school for several years, until she was 10.

She has since fled Tibet and now lives in India. The BBC spoke to her after making contact through a campaign group.

"There were many other children who missed their families and cried too," she said. "Some of the younger ones often woke up in the middle of the night crying, and would run to the school gate."

The BBC spoke to other Tibetan exiles who had heard similar complaints from their relatives still living back home.

Dr Gyal Lo has his own story, about two of his grandnieces, who were sent away to boarding school when they were just four and six.

After observing them at a family dinner, he realised that they felt awkward speaking their mother tongue.

"The way they were sitting there made me think they weren't comfortable sharing the same identity as their family members. They were like guests," he said. It prompted the sociologist, who was then working at the Northwest University for Nationalities in Lanzhou, to visit 50 Tibetan boarding schools to see if other children were the same. They were.

Dr Gyal Lo compares these boarding schools to those that were once operated in the United States, Canada and Australia.

Native children were taken away from their families in a process of assimilation that has now been discredited.

"These kids are completely cut off from their cultural roots, and the emotional connection between their parents, their families and their community," he said. The second major change to the education system concerns the Tibetan language, a rich oral and written tradition going back more than one thousand years.

China has replaced Tibetan as the main language of tuition with Mandarin Chinese.

The Chinese embassy said ethnic minorities in China had "the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages".

But the student the BBC spoke to said only Chinese was encouraged at her school.

"All the classes were taught in Chinese, except for the Tibetan language class. Our school had a big library, but I didn't see any Tibetan books there," she said.

This policy appears to run contrary to international human rights law, according to Professor Alexandra Xanthaki, a UN special rapporteur on cultural rights.

She said parents had the right to send their children to a school that used the language of their choice.

"This means that just one or two hours where it's being taught as a foreign language is not enough," she said.

Just over a year ago, Prof Xanthaki and two other UN rapporteurs wrote a letter to China detailing a series of complaints about its educational reforms in Tibet.

The letter suggested China was trying to "homogenise" ethnic minorities, so they would become more Chinese, with Mandarin seen as the vehicle to achieve that goal.

Dr Gyal Lo remembers an argument he had with the vice-president of a university in Yunnan province, where he went to work after Lanzhou. It illustrates how Chinese is valued above other languages.

"He came to my office one day and said, 'you're producing Tibetan articles, but not Chinese articles'," recalled the sociologist.

"It made me uncomfortable and angry. I told him I don't want produce Chinese articles." The administrator turned red and stormed out.

Shortly after that incident, in 2020, Dr Gyal Lo fled China and now lives in Canada, from where he campaigns to highlight the educational changes taking place in Tibet.

Beijing is vigorously resisting the narrative put forward by activists like him. It has launched a propaganda campaign to convince the world that its reforms are beneficial.

It has also tried to discredit those who say otherwise. Prof Xanthaki was accused by China of spreading fake news. Dr Gyal Lo has been targeted too. His authority to speak on this issue has been questioned in Chinese state media.

Despite that, he remains undeterred, if pessimistic about the future for Tibetan language and culture, and the region's young people.

"Our children are becoming an alienated generation. Many will not be able to fit in either Chinese society or Tibetan society."



## China's continued crackdown targets Tibetans who might have sent out Dege dam protest videos

08 March 2024, Tibetan Review

While China released a few dozen Tibetans on Feb 27 after the arrest of more than 1,000 in Dege County of Kardze prefecture in Sichuan province some days earlier, the crackdown continues with those who may have sent out video clips of the hydroelectric power dam protest being especially targeted, said the Tibetan service of rfa.org Mar 7. The report said a monastery administrator and a village official had been transferred to a large, prefecture-level detention centre located in the county.

The Tibetans had protested peacefully and submitted petitions against the project, as it was going to submerge the ancestrally inhabited homes of around 2,000 of them, as well as centuries-old monasteries with priceless artefacts, including murals which would be destroyed. China has made it clear that the project will continue.

Tenzin, the senior administrator of the 13th century Wonto Monastery in Wangbuding township and a village official named Tamdrin were transferred to the larger detention centre on Mar 3, the report said. It said the two were among those severely beaten by the Chinese police after their arrest.

The report said around 40 Tibetans were released on Feb 27 with stipulations forbidding them from communicating with outsiders. Besides strict restrictions have been imposed on the entry and exit of people at the monasteries as well as at the villages on both sides of the Drichu (Chinese: Jinsha) river over which the dam will be built.

Meanwhile the authorities are continuing to arrest more people. In particular, the crackdown targets people who posted videos of the arrests and protests that took place in February, the report said.

"The police are regularly checking people's WeChat and TikTok accounts for any evidence of them having shared the videos and for communication with the outside world," one anonymous source has said. "There's severe restrictions on movement on either side of the river and no internet connection."

Widespread, daily searches and interrogations are reportedly being carried out in attempts to find people who might have posted the widely shared videos of black-uniformed Chinese police restraining petitioning monks, who could be seen kneeling and crying out, the report said.

The police are stated to be monitoring the monks and local Tibetans very closely, with the situation in the county resembling an "open prison as they are exercising extreme control," the report cited a second source as saying

"The monks and local people are very angry that they were arrested and subjected to beatings and torture for making peaceful appeals," the source has added. "They say that if the government really forces them to move, there may be violent protests."

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

## China's claim of no 'mass incidents' in 'Tibet' last year rejected

07 March 2024, Tibetan Review

China has claimed Mar 6 that there were no "mass incidents" last year in Tibet, a euphemism for protests. But it was obviously referring only to the situation in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), which is roughly the western half of the occupied Himalayan country. It has also vowed to continue the Sinicization of Tibet and its Buddhist religion.

There were no "mass incidents" last year, Reuters Mar 6 cited a senior Tibet official as saying at a briefing on the sidelines of China's annual parliamentary session being held in Beijing.

"Last year no serious mass incidents, political incidents, or violent terrorist acts occurred," the report quoted Yan Jinhai, the region's second-ranked official and government chairman, as saying during a scripted press conference where questions were selected in advance.

Washington-based International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) has rejected Yan's claim. "Yan's statement is inaccurate and misleading. He's forgetting the thousands of Tibetans who courageously attended a Tibetan Buddhist teaching in Tsoe (Hezuo City, presently under Gansu province) last September, despite a government ban. He's also ignoring the more than 1,000 Tibetans China arrested over peaceful protests in Derge (Dege County, presently under Sichuan province) just last month," ICT president Tencho Gyatso has said Mar 7.

She has also said: "Tibetans have resisted for over 65 years and will continue to resist to protect their religion, language and identity. China has failed to win over the Tibetan people. If China really wants no more protests in Tibet, it should respect Tibetans' basic freedoms."

Like other parts of Tibet, the TAR has a long history of protests against Chinese rule, including one which started in capital Lhasa in 2008 and which at once engulfed most of the Tibetan Plateau region. China's massive armed repression led to massacres of Tibetans and imposition of prison-like controls and

restrictions across the land. This in turn led to a spate of protest self-immolations across Tibet since 2009, with the exile Tibetan administration saying 157 of such reported protesters have been confirmed so far. The tight security measures, including a highly intrusive surveillance network, tight information control, and strict movement restrictions still remain in place.

"We have always regarded maintaining national unity and strengthening ethnic solidarity as the focal point of Tibet work," Reuters quoted Yan, an ethnic Tibetan with Chinese name who previously served in neighbouring Qinghai province before being transferred to Lhasa in 2020, as saying.

"We will always adhere to the principle of firmly ... curbing extremism, resisting infiltration and fighting criminality," Yan has said, adding that spoken and written Mandarin Chinese had become "comprehensively widespread" across Tibet, thanks obviously to the Sinicization drive.

He also vowed to "continue advancing the Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism" and stressed Tibet's "high-quality economic development" in recent years, which improved living standards for many of its 3.6 million residents, the report added.

### **Over 1,000 people, including monks, arrested for opposing Dege hydropower dam project in Tibet**

07 March 2024, Down to Earth

Experts claim monasteries have been put under lockdown; dam will be environmentally detrimental. Over 1,000 citizens and monks of Tibet have been arrested for protesting against a hydropower dam project on the Drichu river in eastern Tibet.

The arrests come in the backdrop of protests that began on February 14, 2024 when 300 Tibetans demonstrated at the Dege County Hall against the proposed hydropower project construction and seeking withdrawal of relocation from the vicinity.

On February 20, the authorities inspected Yena and Wonto monasteries during the preparation for their demolition. A video released by Radio Free Asia showed monks prostrating themselves before the visiting Chinese officials to plead with them to halt the construction of the dam, said a release from the International Tibet Network (ITN).

The Chinese authorities on February 22, arrested more than 100 Tibetans including monks. More arrests followed on February 23, when more than 1,000 people were held, the ITN noted.



*RTYC-Delhi organised protest in India's capital to oppose forced relocation of historic monasteries & households in Tibet for dam construction. Photo: Tibetan Youth Congress / X (formerly Twitter)*

Speaking with Down To Earth (DTE), Lobsang Yangtso, a senior environmental researcher from ITN, said, "At least six monasteries are under lockdown and monks and residents were physically assaulted."

Yangtso said that internet connectivity has been restored after a brief shut down.

The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD), a non-profit Tibetan human rights organisation based in Dharamshala, India, has alleged that the decision to announce relocation of Tibetans was strategically aligned with Tibetan New Year to divert public attention and minimise potential unrest. The organisation, in a media release on their website, have said that use of police force was done to intimidate, suppress and arrest Tibetans. The police used water bullets and electric weapons, causing injuries leading to hospitalisation of many, the organisation noted.

"Currently, at least 13 hydropower stations exist solely in the upper reaches of the Drichu on Tibetan land. Six of these are massive dams with a power generation capacity exceeding a million kilowatts," it observed.

TCHRD said the Chinese government is accelerating constructions of new dams on major rivers located in Tibet such as Drichu. The move is resulting in significant damage to the fragile natural environment and displacing thousands of Tibetans in the process, the statement said.

Two major landslides in recent years have affected the flow of Drichu river, it added.

"The Chinese government's construction of large dams in areas known to be ecologically vulnerable, driven by purely economic motives, demonstrates a complete disregard for the safety of both Tibet's

environment and its people," said Nyima Woesser, researcher at TCHRD, in the statement.

### **UN rights chief says China committing violations in Xinjiang, Tibet**

05 March 2024, Reuters

U.N. human rights chief Volker Turk on Monday called on China to implement recommendations to amend laws that violate fundamental rights, including in the Xinjiang and Tibet regions.

Rights groups accuse Beijing of widespread abuses of Uyghurs, a mainly Muslim ethnic minority that numbers around 10 million in the western region of Xinjiang, including the mass use of forced labour in camps. Beijing vigorously denies any abuses.

"I also call on the government to implement the recommendations made by my Office and other human rights bodies in relation to laws, policies and practises that violate fundamental rights, including in the Xinjiang and Tibet regions," Turk told the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva.

China's diplomatic mission in Geneva did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

China seized control of Tibet in 1950 in what it describes as a "peaceful liberation" from feudalistic serfdom. International human rights groups and exiles, however, have routinely condemned what they call China's oppressive rule in Tibetan areas.

Turk, who said his office was engaged in "dialogue" with Beijing, also called for the release of human rights defenders, lawyers and other people detained for "picking quarrels and making trouble".

A report released in August 2022 by Michelle Bachelet, then U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, hours before she ended her mandate, found that China's detention of Uyghurs and other Muslims may constitute crimes against humanity.

### **New report says Tibetans lack representation in China's leadership**

04 March 2024, ICT

As the Chinese government's all-important "Two Sessions" get underway, Tibetans will be largely missing from positions of power.

In a new report released today, March 4, the International Campaign for Tibet tracks Tibetan representation in leadership at China's national level, as well as the provincial and sub-provincial levels in Tibetan areas.

The report finds that Tibetans are mainly in token positions, while real power in Tibet remains in the hands of non-Tibetans.

These findings conflict with China's claim that Tibetans have become "masters of their own destiny" since China's takeover of Tibet.

The report, "Underrepresented: Tibetans kept out of most leadership positions," arrives as Tibetans prepare to mark the 65th anniversary of their March 10, 1959 National Uprising, followed by the Dalai Lama's flight into exile seven days later.

ICT says in the report: "The fact that the Communist Party excludes Tibetans from real leadership positions in Tibet gives reason to believe that the party leadership does not trust Tibetans to support CCP rule if they had the choice and, to the contrary, that Tibetans would choose to abolish CCP rule, if they could."

Read ICT's report.

National leadership

The "Two Sessions" began today in Beijing with the annual meeting of China's top advisory body, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. China's legislature, the National People's Congress, was scheduled to open its meeting on March 5.

The Chinese government has used the Two Sessions to boast about the rights given to Tibetans and other so-called "ethnic minorities." However, ICT's report finds that the Political Consultative Conference has only one Tibetan at the vice-presidential level, who has held the position on and off since the 1970s. Five other Tibetans are on the conference's Standing Committee, which has a total of 299 members.

In the National People's Congress, only one Tibetan is among the 14 vice chairs. The Congress' 159-member Standing Committee also has just one Tibetan.

Tibetans are also largely missing from other leadership bodies at the national level. China's 20th Party Congress has only one Tibetan in its 205 member-strong Party Central Committee, one fewer than in the 19th Party Congress. No Tibetan has ever served in the Politburo or its real-power-wielding Standing Committee.

Leadership in Tibet

While China denies Tibetans leadership opportunities in Beijing, it also largely keeps them locked out of power in their own homeland.

No Tibetan has ever served in the highest-ranking position of Communist Party secretary in the Tibet Autonomous Region, which spans most of western and central Tibet. Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu and Yunnan provinces, which include the rest of the territory of Tibet, also lack Tibetan party secretaries. There are some Tibetan party secretaries at the prefectural level in these areas, but the number has decreased since 2020.

Looking at the leadership of the security entities, including the public security bureaus—which are at the forefront of China's control and suppression of

the Tibetan people—almost all are non-Tibetans, both at the provincial as well as the prefectural level. Almost all heads of the military leadership at all levels in Tibet are also non-Tibetans.

“Looking at the situation of Tibetans in Tibet in 2024,” ICT’s report says, “rather than having their future in their own hands, they continue to be second-class citizens in their own homeland.”

Read ICT’s report, “Underrepresented: Tibetans kept out of most leadership positions.”

### **Authorities urge ‘stability’ amid restrictions on Tibetans due to dam protests**

04 March 2024, RFA

They tell residents and monastic heads that the building of the Gangtuo Dam will go ahead as planned.

Chinese officials have told local ethnic Tibetans and monastic leaders in Sichuan province to maintain stability following the arrest of more than 1,000 protesters over a hydropower dam, and made clear that the project would continue, two Tibetans with knowledge of the situation said.

If built, the Gangtuo Dam power station on the Driчу River could submerge several monasteries in Dege’s county’s Wangbuding township and force residents of at least two villages near the river to relocate, sources earlier told RFA.

“Chinese officials have held meetings in the Wonto village area where they ordered local Tibetans to comply with the government’s plans and regulations and called for the leaders of the local monasteries to mobilize the locals to toe the party line,” said one source who hails from Dege and now lives in exile.

On Feb. 25, Dege County Party Secretary Baima Zhaxi visited Wangbuding and neighboring townships to meet with Buddhist monastic leaders and village administrators, during which he called for “stability” and urged residents to comply with regulations or else be “dealt with in accordance with the law and regulations,” according to a local news report.

“As the stability maintenance period in March and the national Two Sessions approach, we must implement detailed stability maintenance measures to promote continued harmony and stability in the jurisdiction,” Zhaxi was quoted in the report as saying. The Two Sessions refers to China’s annual meetings of the National People’s Congress and of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, being held this week in Beijing.

“We must continue to carry out the investigation and resolution of conflicts, risks and hidden dangers, and effectively resolve conflicts and disputes at the grassroots level, and nip them in the bud,” Zhaxi said.

Zhaxi’s visit comes ahead of Tibetan Uprising Day on March 10, a politically sensitive date that commemorates the thousands of Tibetans who died in a 1959 uprising against China’s invasion and occupation of their homeland, and the flight of their spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, into exile in northern India.

Keep building

Zhaxi also visited the dam construction site and told the leaders of the coordination team to adhere to their work orders and make arrangements for “the next step of work,” according to a local Chinese government announcement.

Zhaxi told residents about “the great significance and necessity of the construction of hydropower stations” and indicated that the government would “protect the legitimate interests of the masses to the greatest extent.”

“Abide by the law, express your demands in a legal, civilized and rational manner, and do not exceed the bottom line,” Zhaxi told locals during the on-site visit, according to the same news report. “Otherwise, you will be dealt with in accordance with the law and regulations.”

On Feb. 23, police arrested more than 1,000 Tibetans, including monks and residents in the county in Sichuan’s Kardze Autonomous Tibetan Prefecture, who had been protesting the construction of the dam, meant to generate electricity.

Authorities continue to heighten security restrictions in Dege county on the east bank of the Driчу River, called Jinsha in Chinese, and in Jomda county of Qamdo city in the Tibet Autonomous Region on the west bank of the river, said the sources who both live in exile and requested anonymity for safety reasons.

Strict surveillance

Residents are forbidden from contacting anyone outside the area, the sources said. Chinese officials continue to impose strict digital surveillance and tight restrictions on movement in Wangbuding after rare video footage emerged from inside Tibet on Feb. 22 of Chinese police beating Tibetan monks, before arresting more than 100 of them, most of whom were from Wonto and Yena monasteries.

Since then, authorities have carried out wide-scale rigorous interrogations of the arrested Tibetans, even as information from inside Tibet has been harder to come by amid a crackdown on the use of mobile phones and social media and messaging platforms to restrict communication with the outside world, sources said.

The protests began on Feb. 14, when at least 300 Tibetans gathered outside Dege County Town Hall to protest the building of the Gangtuo Dam, part of a massive 13-tier hydropower complex with a total planned capacity of 13,920 megawatts.



Over the past two weeks, Tibetans in exile have been holding solidarity rallies in cities in the United States, Canada, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Australia and India.

Global leaders and Tibetan advocacy groups have condemned China's actions, calling for the immediate release of those detained. Last week, Chinese authorities released about 40 of the arrested monks on Feb. 26 and 27, RFA reported.

### **China imposes lockdown on seven monasteries in Kham Dege**

01 March 2024, Phayul

Chinese authorities have imposed lockdown on seven monasteries situated along the two banks of eastern Tibet's Driчу River in Kham Dege, reported Radio Free Asia, which cited a local Tibetan source from the region.

The seven monasteries restricted by the lockdown, include Wontod, Yena, and Khardho monasteries on the east bank of the river in Dege, and Rabten, Gonsar, Tashi, and Pharok monasteries on the west bank of the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). Entry and exit in these monasteries have been severely restricted, with clamp down on movement and communication channels in the county.

Over February 22-23, more than 1,000 monks and local Tibetans were reportedly arrested following petitions and protests since February 14, urging authorities to halt a proposed construction of a massive dam project. While approximately 40 monks were released on February 26 and 27, the majority remain under arrest, undergoing brutal treatment.

The released individuals were primarily from Wontod Monastery, as reported by local Tibetan sources. These individuals have reportedly been warned against communicating with exile Tibetans and giving out information on the incident. Sources suggest that international media coverage of the mass arrests played a significant role in prompting the release of some Tibetans. Monks who required hospitalisation due to severe interrogation beatings were allowed to return to their monastery.

The construction of the Chinese Gangtuo Hydropower Station, planned for the upper reaches of the Driчу River in Tibet, poses grave threat to numerous Tibetan monasteries and villages nearby. This cascade hydropower station, deemed a "leading" project, endangers at least six Tibetan monasteries and two villages inhabited by Tibetan communities. Among those at risk of complete submersion due to the project is Wontod Monastery, established in the 14th century and known for its

historical importance and remarkable Tibetan Buddhist murals and artworks.

### **China awards 12 top Tibetan Buddhist degrees in Tibet, compared to over 300 in India in last four years**

01 March 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Mar01'24) – China reported Feb 28 that 12 monks had been awarded the degree of Geshe Lharampa following a sutra debate that day in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), apparently to make the point that religious freedom is respected and thriving there under its occupation rule. But compare to this the fact that in January this year, the same degree was awarded to more than 300 candidates in India at a ceremony attended by Tibet's exiled spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, at Bodh Gaya, India.

Given the fact that less than 3% of Tibet's population live in exile, including around half of them in India, the difference becomes startling, even though those 300 awardees at Bodh Gaya represented the number of graduates over the past four years.

In contrast, in Chinese ruled Tibet, a total of 189 Tibetan Buddhist monks had been awarded the degree of Geshe Lharampa since 2004, according to China's official Xinhua news agency Feb 28.

Geshe Lharampa is the highest degree in the exoteric teachings of the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism, equivalent to a doctoral degree in modern education, the report said while reporting the award. Hailing from TAR and Yunnan Province, the 12 monks attended the debate and award ceremony held at the Jokhang Temple in Tibet's capital Lhasa, the report said.

Yunnan, it should be noted, includes Dechen (Chinese: Diqing) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, which is part of independent Tibet's historical province of Kham.

There is a host of reasons why the number of Geshe Lharampa awards in Tibet is miniscule compared to that in India, including China's imposition of severe limits and multitudes of restrictions on the enrolment of monks in monastic study centres; the requirement for monks to undergo patriotism tests and studies as part of their admission process, curriculum, and examination; and arrest of monks for perceived separatist activities that include calling for respect for Tibetan people's human, religious, linguistic, and cultural rights.

## Some Tibetans protesting against dam construction released after international coverage

01 March 2024, Phayul



Around 40 Tibetans have been released from among more than 1,000 people arrested by Chinese police for protesting against a dam project that threatens to submerge ancient monasteries and several villages, according to various sources.

Chinese authorities released about 20 monks each on Monday and Tuesday, said the sources who spoke on condition of anonymity for safety reasons. "One of the main reasons for the release of the Tibetans is the growing media coverage abroad of the mass arrests that have taken place," one source told RFA. International coverage including watch dog Human rights Watch has called for the release of those detained in the aftermath of the protests.

Some of the arrested Tibetans were beaten during the interrogations and later admitted to the hospital. They were also informed individually at the hospital that they would be allowed to return to the monasteries but authorities forbade them to communicate with outsiders, on Wednesday, the same source said. Chinese police have also imposed strict restrictions on the movement of monks to and from the various monasteries located on both sides of the Drichu River, the same person said.

"The Chinese authorities have long been hostile to public protests, but their response is especially brutal when the protests are by Tibetans and other ethnic groups," said Maya Wang, acting China director at Human Rights Watch. "Other governments should press Beijing to free these protesters, who have been wrongfully detained for exercising their basic rights." Reports say that at least 300 villagers travelled to Derge County in Sichuan province on February 14, to protest the building of the Kamtok (Tibetan: sKam thog, Chinese: Gangtuo) dam. Video footage shows villagers from the area of Wontoe protesting the dam's construction. The dam is the sixth in a proposed series of 13 on the Dri Chu River, known as Jinsha or the upper Yangtse River in Chinese.

Five major hydroelectric dams are already in operation or under construction along this stretch of the river, with an installed capacity of 8.6 gigawatts. By comparison, the world's most powerful hydro dam, the Three Gorges, lower down the Yangtse River, has a generating capacity of 22.5 gigawatts. All of this electricity is sent from Tibetan areas through the Ultra High Voltage "West to East" (xi dian dong song) transmission infrastructure, due to be completed by 2025.

Since 2017, Chinese authorities have relocated over 11,000 people from 7 townships in Gonjo and Markham counties bordering the Jinsha River for "poverty alleviation" reasons, according to official figures, for reckless state projects including the construction of dams.

The right to protection against forced eviction derives from the right to adequate housing as provided under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to which China is a state party. According to the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which monitors state compliance with the covenant, for evictions to be lawful they must be "solely to promote the general welfare in a democratic society," and carried out "in strict compliance with the relevant provisions of international human rights law and by general principles of reasonableness and proportionality."

These safeguards include, for example, that the government explores "all feasible alternatives" before eviction, and that it provides an opportunity for genuine consultation with those affected. Mass evictions carried out in Tibetan areas often have not met these basic standards, Human Rights Watch said.

## February

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

27 February 2024, RFA



Tibetans (L) opposed to the dam project plead with



Chinese officials in Dege county, southwestern China's Sichuan province, Feb. 21, 2024. At right, protesters in New York demonstrate against the project in New York City, Feb. 24, 2024.

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

Chinese authorities released about 20 monks each on Monday and Tuesday, said the sources who spoke on condition of anonymity for safety reasons. They were among a large group of monks arrested from Wonto Monastery, the sources said. However, after their release, authorities imposed strict restrictions on their contact with the outside world, the sources added.

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

Chinese authorities released about 20 monks each on Monday and Tuesday, said the sources who spoke on condition of anonymity for safety reasons. They were among a large group of monks arrested from Wonto Monastery, the sources said. However, after their release, authorities imposed strict restrictions on their contact with the outside world, the sources added.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### Monastery murals

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

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

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

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

#### Foreign outcry

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

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

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

A day earlier, Uzra Zeya, the U.S. under secretary for civilian security, democracy and human rights and U.S. special coordinator for Tibetan Issues, also

posted a message to X noting that the centuries-old monasteries “are home to hundreds of Tibetan Buddhist monks and contain irreplaceable cultural relics.”

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

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

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

### **Tibetans protesting against dam construction face violence and detention**

26 February 2024, Phayul

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

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

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

Many of the arrested Tibetans are being held in different locations throughout Dege County, including police stations in upper Dege and an old prison, as there is no single facility capable of accommodating more than 1,000 individuals who are currently detained.

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

Furthermore, detainees were instructed to bring their own bedding and tsampa or barley, a Tibetan staple, indicating that their release is not imminent. “Each of

the police units brought in from outside Dege have been tasked with controlling a community each and for carrying out strict surveillance and suppression of the people there,” a source told RFA.

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

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

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

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

26 February 2024, Asia News

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Beijing, however, seems unwilling to stop the project. The 2,240-megawatt Gangtuo (Kamtok) hydroelectric power plant is located along the upper Yangtze River (Drichu in Tibetan and Jinsha in Chinese).

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

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

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

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

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

## Buddhist monks among 100 held in China over dam protests

24 February 2024, Arunachal Times

Chinese security officials have arrested more than 100 Tibetan Buddhist monks and local people in the southwestern Sichuan province to quell protests against the construction of a massive dam that would submerge six Buddhist monasteries and force the relocation of two villages, a media report said.

In a rare act of defiance, residents have taken to the streets of Wangbuding township of Dege County in the Garze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture since 14 February to oppose the plan to build the 2,240-megawatt Gangtuo hydropower station on the Drichu river (Jinsha in Chinese).

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

The protests started on 14 February, when at least 300 Tibetans gathered outside the Dege county town hall to oppose the dam's construction, defying strict controls on public gatherings and extensive surveillance by authorities in Sichuan and Tibet regions.

The detentions reportedly occurred in the Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan, an area with a large population of ethnic Tibetans.

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

Police used water cannons, pepper spray and tasers to subdue the protesters.

Videos of protests showed monks prostrating before the officials, pleading with them not to resort to demolition when they inspected Yena and Wonto monasteries in preparation for their destruction.

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

The total installed capacity of the power station is expected to reach 2,240 megawatts after completion, with a maximum dam height of 217 metres. It is the tallest hyperbolic arch dam project under construction in China, according to the report.

The protesting locals were particularly distraught over the construction of the hydroelectric dam, as it would destroy six monasteries, including the Wonto monastery, which includes ancient murals that date to the 13th century, the RFA report said.

Videos by citizens on the protests show Chinese officials dressed in black forcibly restraining monks, who can be heard protesting against the dam.

The construction of the Gangtuo hydropower dam will force the resettlement of Upper Wonto and Shipa

villages, the Yena, Wonto and Khardho monasteries in Dege county, and the Rabten, Gonsar and Tashi monasteries in Chamdo township, the RFA report said.

The Wonto and Yena monasteries, located closest to the site of the planned project, together have about 300 monks and hold significant cultural and religious importance to the locals.

The Wonto monastery was severely damaged during China's Cultural Revolution. However, locals preserved its ancient murals and began rebuilding the monastery in 1983.

The number of monks who live and worship at the four other monasteries slated for destruction is not known, the report said.

About 2,000 people live in the two villages, and would be forced to relocate due to the dam project.

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

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

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

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

### ***China's biometric surveillance in Tibet matures to integration projects (Cyber News)***

23 February 2024, Rtv

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

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

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

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

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

According to the report, the government has made downloading the software a legal requirement. Officials allege that they are only trying to reduce internet fraud in a region with a 2022 gross domestic product of US\$29.7 billion.

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

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

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

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

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

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

### ***Gonpo Kyi stages sit-in outside court for justice for imprisoned brother***

21 February 2024, International Campaign For Tibet

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dorjee Tashi

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

Both the United States and the European Union have raised concerns about the arbitrary detention of Dorjee Tashi. Notably, the European Union called for his immediate and unconditional release, along with the release of others, during its statement on the occasion of International Human Rights Day, Dec. 10.

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

Read ICT's past coverage of Dorjee Tashi's imprisonment and his sister Gonpo Kyi's activism for justice.

## Unprecedented Tibetan Protest Against Hydropower Station in Sichuan

19 February 2024, Bitter Winter

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

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

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

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

China is building between Sichuan and Tibet the largest hydropower system in the People's Republic and one of the largest in the world. A key part of this project is Gangtuo Power Plant, part of a 25-dams system on the Dri Chu (Ch. Jingsa) River, i.e., the upper stretches of the Yangtze River.

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

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

Some villagers do not believe that the purposes of the dam project are simply about economy. In the words of one village leader that were reported to a "Bitter Winter" correspondent, "Of course it is about making money, and big money at that, but I am sure



there is more. Tibetans compelled to relocate are separated from their history, from homes where their families may have lived for decades or even centuries, from all their visible cultural and religious points of reference. It is yet another way of destroying Tibetan identity in Kham."

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

### **Report claims Chinese authorities spying on exiled Tibetans (Cyber News)**

18 February 2024, The Economic Times

The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRS) released a report, followed by an organisation based in the North Indian hill town of Dharamshala, revealing Chinese authorities' surveillance of exile Tibetans to collect personal information.

While speaking to ANI, TCHRD's spokesperson, Tenzin Dawa, remarked that the whole process of the report took about two years, and they have tried to get in touch with around one hundred Tibetan people.

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

"We also have another section of secondary data that is a compilation of all existing articles or information that is publicly available in the news or media outlets," she added.

"China uses the spying data to infiltrate and undermine diaspora networks, potentially through disinformation campaigns and even as a basis for blackmail," she said while speaking to ANI.

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

"In the international communities, there have been a lot of discussions on the kind of repression that's being faced transnationally by the so-called Chinese overseas, including the Uyghurs, Hongkongers, and Taiwanese, but there has been no sort of report dedicated to the kind of repression that the Tibetans in diaspora have been facing for so long," TCHRD's spokesperson added. As per the report, the TCHRD's spokesperson said, "TCHRD felt the need to first of all document these issues because transnational

repression, is not new to the Tibetan community. The CCP has targeted the Tibetan diaspora, using family members back inside Tibet to control and sort of undermine the legitimacy or functionality of the Tibetan overseas organisations."

Commenting further on this issue, Dawa said,

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

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

While speaking to ANI, Dolma Tsering, deputy speaker of the Tibetan parliament in exile, said, "When you do lots of wrong things, you take others in the same way... They are hiding lots of things about what's happening in Tibet and in mainland China as a whole from the world.

"Tibet is cut off from the rest of the world. Why? Because they have lots of things to hide... The violation of not only human rights in the name of conserving nature, but also national parks are coming up," she added

Additionally, the deputy speaker remarked, "The centuries-old nomads are relocated because they want to make Tibet into a slaughterhouse to raise consumption for the tourism that is inflowing into China so they're hiding all these things but what do we have in exile? We are as transparent as we can be. We just have the truth with us."

"His Holiness has always welcomed the Chinese leadership to come and investigate what we are doing here. We are an open file to the world. Whatever we say to the world, what we do in the office, everything is transparent because we have a democracy, a rule of law and the people's will being taken into consideration, which is just the reverse in China. so there is nothing to spy on the exile government." the statement added

Deputy speaker further said, "Many of the time, our computers are being hacked. Whenever we do any kind of activity, the people who are in charge of those core groups will find all our emails were hacked but they will find nothing because whatever we say, you will find on our computers. We have nothing to hide. So I am challenging China to open the Tibet and we invite you here to investigate what we are doing here."



## Journal retracts 18 papers from China due to Tibet and other human rights concerns

17 February 2024, Tibetan Review

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

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

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

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

Tellingly, several of the researchers were associated with public security authorities in the PRC, a fact that "voids any notion of free informed consent," Yves Moreau, a professor of engineering at the University of Leuven, in Belgium, who focuses on DNA analysis, has said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MGGM primarily publishes studies on the medical applications of genetics, such as a recent paper on genetic disorders linked to hearing loss. The sudden pivot towards publishing forensic genetics research from China came as other forensic genetics journals started facing more scrutiny for publishing research based on DNA samples from vulnerable minorities in the PRC. Moreau has said. He argues that may have pushed more controversial research towards mid-ranking journals such as MGGM that do not specialize in forensic genetics.

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

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

## Tibetans in Eastern Tibet Protest Hydropower Station and their relocation

16 February 2024, International Campaign for Tibet

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

Videos of the Tibetans' protest were being circulated in the social media. A large group of Tibetans are seen peacefully protesting in front of a government office building and officials (mostly in civilian clothes) can be seen stopping the crowd from moving forward. Voice of America Tibetan reported that the

Derge county officials informed the protesting Tibetans that nothing could be done on this at their level.

According to a source in exile, who is from Derge, the Tibetans who were protesting were from Wentuo town (Wentuo Zhen) in Derge county who were being asked to relocate to another place near Moshoe bridge in the same county. The exact location of Moshoe bridge could not be ascertained, but the source said some houses have already been built there to house the people.

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

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

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

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

Tibetan water security

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

The integrity of Tibet's ecology is critical to the Tibetan people's way of life and directly contributes

to the stability and economic wellbeing of downstream countries in South and Southeast Asia.

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

### Chinese nationals moving into hitherto vacant 'border defence village' buildings in occupied Tibet

15 February 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Feb15'24) –Chinese nationals have started occupying the double-storeyed spacious buildings in some of the model "Xiaokang" border defence villages that had come up in occupied Tibet across India's north-eastern borders along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) since 2019, reported the indianexpress.com Feb 15. While the existence of such new villages so-close to the border is itself a matter of concern to India, it is unclear whether the new residents are civilian or military, the report said. The report cited senior Indian officials familiar with the matter as saying the Chinese had started occupying a couple of these village buildings in the new villages on the Tibetan side of the LAC across from Lohit Valley and the Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh over the last few months.

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

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

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

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

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

development of Chinese infrastructure,” one official has said.

The official has added that the Chinese have consistently improved their existing infrastructure including improving their connectivity through passes, constructing roads and bridges and their model villages. China has also been seen constructing infrastructure, including border villages, in Bhutanese territory. India has decided to respond to these developments, including with Vibrant Villages programmes under which it plans to develop 663 border villages into modern villages with all amenities in the first phase. Of them, at least 17 such villages along the borders with occupied Tibet in Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, have been selected for development as a pilot project under the programme, the report noted.

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

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

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

### **China Increasing Digital Surveillance of Tibetans (Cyber News)**

10 February 2024, RTV

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

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

Secdev Group and one of the report’s authors, told VOA by phone.

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

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

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

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

The report said the broad scope of permissions could let authorities conduct highly invasive surveillance, which is in line with measures that Chinese authorities typically use in regions like Tibet and Xinjiang to maintain public order.

“Our analysis suggests that data controlled by the Anti-Fraud app could connect into wider systems operated by the Criminal Investigation Bureau [and] the mandatory installation of the app at police checkpoints could serve as a platform for harvesting a dataset used for monitoring and controlling the population, particularly in suppressing dissent and cultural expression,” the report wrote.

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

Their analysis of government procurement notices suggests the platform, which is developed on top of technology originating from American tech company Oracle, combines data from several Public Security Bureau systems in Tibet and is an instrumental part of Chinese authorities’ campaign to criminalize moderate cultural and religious expressions or language rights advocacy.

“The platform is presented as being designed to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of law enforcement in Tibet,” the report wrote, adding that the platform can only be accessed through the Public Security Bureau’s internal network and authorities

urge contractors to “replace the Oracle database” with a Chinese equivalent.

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

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

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

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

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

“The Chinese government is developing these more modern social control mechanisms that are supposed to make all aspects of society controllable,” Maya Wang, Interim China Director at Human Rights Watch, told VOA by phone.

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

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

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

As Beijing increases its control over Tibet through digital surveillance, the report said these efforts are changing the way that Tibetans communicate and are creating a society-wide chilling effect across the

region. “In many cases, this trend leads to a complete breakdown of contact,” the report said.

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

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

### **China could use anti-fraud app to monitor Tibetans – report (cyber News)**

07 February 2024, BBC

A Chinese app aimed at preventing fraud could be used to monitor Tibetans, according to a new report. The investigation by Tibet research groups found the app could monitor users’ texts, internet browser histories and access personal data.

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

Restrictions in Tibet have increased in recent years, say rights groups, tightening the screws on an already heavily controlled part of China.

Authorities have ramped up state surveillance and censorship in recent years, particularly during the pandemic.

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

The new report, by research network Turquoise Roof and rights group Tibet Watch, centres on the controversial National Anti-Fraud Centre app which was rolled out in 2021.

While the report did not present any evidence that the app was actively targeting Tibetans, it said the app “aligns with extensive surveillance practices” and could aid the Chinese government’s efforts in controlling them.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Activists say China limits Tibetans' freedom of travel by controlling their passports, and also heavily monitors their communications with the outside world. Tibet Watch has documented several cases of Tibetans detained for their messages on popular messaging platform WeChat, and instances where accounts and keywords deemed too politically sensitive were suspended or scrubbed.

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

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

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

## January

### Tibetan woman detained and beaten for social media posts critical of China

10 January 2024, [RFA](#), Palden Gyal and Lhuboom

Known for her online rights advocacy and for criticizing Chinese authorities for discriminating against Tibetans, has been detained twice in three years. She is seen here in a photo dated September 2023.

A Tibetan woman known for outspoken criticism of China on social media was detained and beaten by police in western China's Qinghai province, sources inside the country told Radio Free Asia.

Tsering Tso, 39, was subjected to "administrative detention" for 15 days from Oct. 26 to Nov. 10, 2023, in the Kyegudo (or Yushu in Chinese) city detention center, where she was interrogated and beaten by the police, said the sources, who asked not to be identified for safety reasons.

It was the second time in three years she had been detained.

In two official letters issued by the Yushu Public Security Bureau, which were seen by RFA, authorities accused Tso of "falsely accusing the government and officials and spreading misinformation via at least 17 videos posted on her personal TikTok account and private social media accounts" between Oct. 8 and Oct. 15, 2023.

While in detention, at least a dozen policemen interrogated and beat Tso and broke her mobile phone, while forcing her to "reform her behavior," she said in a social media post on Nov. 17, 2023, following her release.

Since then, Tso's personal social media accounts on various platforms, including TikTok and Kaishou, have been closed down and can no longer be accessed, one source inside the country told Radio Free Asia.

Tso did not immediately respond to RFA's queries and requests for comment.

Calls to speak up

Tso has drawn police attention in the past for her postings on social media platforms.

In Nov. 2020, she was taken into custody at her home in the provincial capital Xining and brought by 10 officers to a detention center in Trika county, where she was held for 10 days before being released under continuing surveillance.



In a video seen by RFA, Tso had earlier called on Tibetan intellectuals and influencers inside Tibet to speak up and voice their criticism of the Chinese government's human rights abuses against Tibetans.

"From 2015 until now, for over a decade, I have been speaking up for the rights of the Tibetan people in Lhasa and Qinghai," she said. "Is it only me who understands the rule of law? Everyone has gone to school and received the same education I have. Is it only me who knows how to speak up?"

"Why don't the educated and the intellectuals speak up?" she continued. "If you speak up, you will be arrested. But if I am the only one speaking up, the impact of it will be much less. However, if everyone speaks up, it will be harder for local authorities to practice racial or ethnic discrimination and human rights abuses against Tibetans."

Tso, who operates a travel company through which she organizes tours in various parts of the country, including Lhasa, has also spoken about the hardships Tibetans face in starting and running businesses in their homeland.

In two videos obtained by the Dharamsala-based Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy advocacy group on Oct. 16 and Oct. 19, 2023, Tso can be seen highlighting the difficulties in obtaining a license to run a small business and accusing local leaders of corruption and misusing their power for personal gains.

Speaking in Mandarin, Tso criticized the "feudalistic mindset" authorities and their determination to make it difficult for "hardworking and educated people from ordinary households to accomplish great deeds and realize their dreams."

Earlier in July 2023, Tso also shared a video taken inside the Lhasa railway station, where she said that when people left the building, authorities screened and questioned Tibetans and asked them to show additional documents, whereas the Chinese were allowed to pass through without scrutiny.

Tso pointed out that local Chinese authorities in Lhasa were violating national laws and discriminating against ethnic groups.

### **China in door-to-door drive to stop Tibetan children attending private lessons, practising religion**

11 January 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Jan11'24) – Chinese authorities are carrying out random checks in residential areas and commercial establishments in several parts of Tibet to ensure that Tibetan children don't attend private Tibetan classes denied in their regular schooling or engage in religious practices during their ongoing winter break, reported the Tibetan service of rfa.org Jan 9, citing local Tibetan sources.

The move followed a directive issued by what the report called Chinese Education Department earlier this month, ordering local authorities to intensify their supervision and investigation of people violating the rule that has been in force since 2021, banning Tibetan children from taking supplementary lessons (in Tibetan language and culture), and to carry out strict disciplinary action against violators.

The 2021 rules issued by authorities in various Tibetan-populated provinces are said to prohibit Tibetan children from attending informal Tibetan language classes or workshops during their winter holidays.

The directive issued to local authorities require investigations to be carried out in residential areas and commercial establishments at various times of day and night, report said, citing sources from Tibet's capital Lhasa, Labrang Monastery in Gansu province, and Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai province.

In Lhasa, the local notice, issued on Nov 30, is said to make it clear that parents "must make sure the children are completely free from the influence of religion." They also must ensure that children "voluntarily distance themselves from places of worship" and that they must not participate in any religious activities.

In Qinghai's Yushu, the source has said, "In addition to random door-to-door investigations, local authorities are also carrying out surveys of the Tibetan children to find out what subjects are being taught to them in their out-of-school courses and where."

Its local notice, while emphasizing the continued ban on participation in religious activities, is said to make it clear that Tibetan children could only participate in supplementary classes and workshops taught by government-authorized individuals and organizations and on subjects approved by the authorities.

In Gansu's Labrang Monastery, home to the largest number of monks outside Tibet (Xizang) Autonomous Region, the source has said, "In the past, there was a strong tradition of providing supplementary, private tuitions to Tibetan children in the fields of Tibetan grammar, religion, math, and storytelling during their winter break."

But now, "only a few Chinese government-authorized organizations and individuals who carry out political re-education programmes are allowed to give [lessons] to Tibetan students."

The source has confirmed that in Gansu too, there is a stricter enforcement of the ban on study of Tibetan language and on Tibetan children participating in religious activities.

Given this latest development across the Tibetan regions, another Tibetan source has said: "With the prohibition of the study of Tibetan language, both in



schools and in out-of-school programs, it has now become increasingly evident that young Tibetan children have lost touch with their native language and identity, a very alarming and concerning development.”

This is because under President Xi Jinping’s all-out Sinicization drive, schools across the Tibetan areas of what constitutes the People’s Republic of China have replaced Tibetan with Mandarin Chinese as the only language for teaching all subjects in all classes.

### **China sentences Tibetan man to 11 years for alleged spreading rumour**

01 January 2024, RTV

According to the report, in July 2016, Lhakdor intended to board a flight from Kardze to Lhasa. During this journey, Chinese authorities conducted a search of his phone and discovered videos related to Tibet’s independence. Subsequently, he was apprehended on allegations of disseminating information under a controversial new Chinese crime of spreading rumours over the internet. Following his arrest, Lhakdor was taken to a local court situated in Palyul County, where he received a sentence of 11 years in prison. Notably, this sentencing occurred in the presence of his family members, as stated in the report.

An anonymous source inside Tibet told TT, “Lhakdor is known to be a frequent traveller and holds a strong sense of patriotism towards his homeland. His family members have only been permitted to visit him on one occasion since his arrest. Presently, there is a lack of clarity regarding his current location and the specific detention centre where he is being held. Despite requests for visitation rights, officials have consistently denied these requests.

As per the report, Lhakdor’s family managed to visit him only once during the seven years following his initial arrest. As of now, there is no information on Lhakdor’s location and the state of his health.

# TIBET DIGEST 2024

FOUNDATION FOR  
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To inform and shape policy on Tibet and the region



# BUDDHISM

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## China deploys troops to enforce stringent new restrictions at biggest centre for Tibetan Buddhist study

27 December 2024, Tibetan Review

China has deployed hundreds of additional troops at the world's biggest centre for the study of Tibetan Buddhism located in Serthar (Chinese: Seda) County of Kardze (Ganzi) prefecture, Sichuan province, to enforce severe new restrictions in the coming new year, said the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) on its Tibet.net website Dec 27.

Some 400 Chinese troops from neighbouring Draggo (Luhuo) and other neighbouring counties arrived at the Larung Five Sciences Buddhist Academy on Dec 20. This was accompanied by a helicopter surveillance operation, signalling an intensification of monitoring activities at the academy, the report said. The report cited sources as saying the stringent new regulations will limit residency at the academy to a maximum of 15 years, required all monks and nuns studying in it to be officially registered, and drastically reduce the number of monks and nuns across the province to as low as 1,000.

The academy alone had around 10,000 officially registered residents before China launched a severe and massive crackdown on it in 2001, which continued over the following years, especially during 2016-17, forcibly evicting monks and nuns and destroying buildings, including residences.

The report said Chinese students are already reportedly being asked to leave the academy.

The academy and its monastery, founded in 1980 by Khenchen Jigme Phuntsok at his mountain retreat with support from the 10th Panchen Lama, sprawls over a mountainside in Serthar county.

The CTA report called the latest development an escalation in China's broader campaign to restrict religious freedom in Tibet, where traditional Buddhist institutions have faced increasing pressure under state policies aimed at controlling religious practice and education.

## BUDDHISM

## China's ideology tsar views Buddhism reincarnation exhibition in signal to Dalai Lama

25 December 2024, SCMP, Xinlu Liang

China's fourth senior official Wang Huning visits China Tibetology Research Centre, as officials vow national unity and ethnic solidarity

China's top political adviser has made a rare trip to view an exhibition about the reincarnation of Tibetan

Buddhas, a sign that Beijing is getting ready to face the Dalai Lama succession issue ahead of the exiled spiritual leader's 90th birthday next year, according to an analyst.

Wang Huning, China's fourth senior official and chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), the country's top advisory body, led a group of its members to visit the semi-official China Tibetology Research Centre in Beijing on Monday.

The South China Morning Post has learned Wang is the most senior Chinese official to visit an exhibition on the reincarnation of the Living Buddha, which opened at the centre in 2014 and details the historical origins, evolution, norms and current state of the reincarnation system within Tibetan Buddhism. The centre's Museum of Tibetan Culture said the exhibit "clarifies that the reincarnation of various dalai lamas and other significant living Buddhas have historically required approval from the central authorities, and illustrates that Tibet has been an inseparable part of China since ancient times".

The CPPCC members accompanying Wang vowed to maintain national unity and ethnic solidarity, with a focus on "cultivating a strong sense of identity among all ethnic groups concerning the great motherland, Chinese culture, the Communist Party and socialism with Chinese characteristics," said the People's Political Consultative Daily, the official paper of the CPPCC.

Wang's visit also comes only a few months before the 14th Dalai Lama – the exiled spiritual head of Tibetan Buddhism – is expected to announce his succession plan.

Barry Sautman, an specialist on China's ethnic minorities at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, said that since the CTCRC was China's largest institution for Tibetan studies and Wang was a social scientist, the function of his trip could be to "become acquainted" with the centre's latest research.

"There is likely to be extensive preparation under way within Tibet-related central government institutions to deal with the issue of the Dalai Lama's succession," he said.

According to Tibetan Buddhist tradition, the Dalai Lama will reincarnate as a child whose identification requires searches and rituals, but there are concerns that his death may lead to social tensions in Tibet because of his poor relations with Beijing.

He indicated he would address the issue of his reincarnation after turning 90 years old, which is next July.

Reuters reported on Monday that the Dalai Lama, who underwent knee surgery in New York in June, recently reassured followers about his health.

"According to my dream, I may live 110 years," he said, speaking from his residence in Dharamsala in northern India.

The Dalai Lama has suggested the possibility of discontinuing his reincarnation to avoid intervention by China's government, but "the [Beijing] government has indicated, however, that it will adhere to the traditional succession process that applies to all tulkus [reincarnated lamas]," Sautman said.

"Central government officials concerned with Tibet thus need to be thoroughly acquainted with the process," he said, referring to the purpose of Wang's trip.

Beijing has labelled the Dalai Lama, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, a "separatist" and alleges he incited unrest among Tibetans in the 1980s and during protests in 2008.

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) took control of Tibet in 1950. The Dalai Lama fled to India following a failed uprising in 1959 and has lived in exile since then.

On Monday, Wang viewed another exhibition that documents the CTCRC's contributions and research over the past nearly four decades, including establishing a "Chinese-characteristic Tibetan studies system" that explores aspects of Tibet and Tibetan regions in four other provinces, including politics, economics, culture and religion.

In June, a researcher at the centre said that although the Dalai Lama was outside China, his reincarnation remained under Chinese jurisdiction, and that it was "natural" for China's government to apply traditional principles to maintain control over Tibetan Buddhism. Efforts should be made to "promote the theoretical framework of the Chinese national community and tell the story of ethnic unity and progress in Tibet well. Political Consultative Conference members are urged to investigate and provide input on deep-seated issues affecting stability in Tibet, contributing to the creation of a harmonious and prosperous socialist modern Tibet," the CPPCC paper said.

Wang, who also leads the central working group on Tibetan works, has been "quite active" in visiting areas with a large Tibetan population, Sautman said, including trips to Garze and Aba in Sichuan with President Xi Jinping and a Tibet Aid Programme conference in August.

Serving as a key political theorist for China's leadership, Wang repeatedly emphasises developing theoretical frameworks to counter Western narratives on ethnic minority issues.

In Yunnan province in December last year, he advocated for a stronger theoretical system to foster a sense of a shared spiritual home among China's diverse ethnicities.

In May, he emphasised the use of archaeological artefacts and historical materials in Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region to deepen research on foundational issues concerning the Chinese national community.

### **Tibetan Buddhist scholar released from Chinese prison**

22 December 2024, ANI

Prominent Tibetan Buddhist scholar, Geshe Rachung Gendun was released from Chinese custody after serving three and a half years in prison, reported Tibet.net.

However, his health severely deteriorated during his imprisonment. Gendun's release comes amid deep sorrow for his family, as his mother passed away on June 10 this year at the age of 85. Due to ongoing harassment by Chinese authorities, she was unable to receive proper medical treatment and tragically died without having the chance to see her son one last time.

Gendun, a monk at Kirti Monastery in Ngaba County, was arrested on the night of April 1, 2021, under unclear circumstances, and his whereabouts remained unknown for months. His family was denied access to information and visitation.

It was later revealed in July 2022 that he had been sentenced to three and a half years in prison for allegedly sending money abroad as offerings to the Dalai Lama and Kirti Rinpoche, the abbot of Kirti Monastery in India.

This recent imprisonment is part of a broader history of confrontations between Gendun and Chinese authorities. In 1998, he was detained during protests against China's "Patriotic Education Campaign" at Kirti Monastery, which severely restricted religious practices and led to the forced removal of young monks. Before his arrest, Gendun was pursuing the prestigious Geshe degree, the highest academic achievement in Tibetan Buddhism. He had studied complex philosophical texts and participated in challenging debate tours at various monasteries.

Geshe Rachung Gendun, born to the late Rachung Kuye and Norpo from Meruma's Third Division in Ngaba County, Tibet, grew up in the traditional province of Amdo. From a young age, he joined Kirti Monastery's Geden Lekshay Ling, where he received teachings from esteemed spiritual masters, including Geshe Jorge Aku Chozin, Aku Loye (Rako's Lobsang Sonam), and Geshe Lobsang Tashi, specialising in monastery rituals and practices.

Gendun's release has raised concerns about the continued suppression of religious freedom and cultural identity in Tibet, as well as the impact of Chinese policies on Tibetan monks and scholars. (ANI)

## **November**

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

27 November 2024, Tibetan Review

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

22 November 2024, Daily Mirror

Mount Putuo, one of Buddhism's four sacred mountains, has undergone a dramatic transformation under the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), evolving from a revered spiritual sanctuary to a commercialized tourist attraction. Once a site of profound religious significance dating back to the Tang Dynasty, the island now symbolizes the commodification of faith. With over 10 million tourists generating billions in revenue annually, religious activities are closely monitored by the Buddhist Association for China (BAC), the CCP's religious overseer. The peak of commercialization came in 2018 when the CCP sought to list the Mount Putuo Tourism Development Company on the stock market. The attempt was halted only after widespread Buddhist protests.



The once-sacred spaces now feature luxury spas, gift shops offering mass-produced religious souvenirs, and a pilgrimage route designed solely to maximize tourist numbers. The island's origin story has been rewritten to align with nationalist propaganda, positioning China as the rightful center of Buddhism. The pilgrimage routes, once a journey of spiritual significance, are now replaced by mass transportation options to accommodate the growing tourist traffic. Even religious items are sold as cheap trinkets, including "Guanyin cake," reducing the sacredness of Buddhist legends to a marketing ploy. Even more concerning is the CCP's historical revisionism. The island's history has been altered to minimize its connections with Japan and present China as the true center of Buddhism. State media increasingly portrays Tibetan Buddhist practices as inferior to Chinese traditions. This strategy aims not only to strengthen Chinese influence but to undermine Tibetan cultural and religious identity by delegitimizing Tibetan Buddhism.

The commercialization of Mount Putuo has had a profound impact on authentic Buddhist practice. Monks and pilgrims now find themselves marginalized in a space dominated by tourists. Rising entry fees and the overwhelming commercialization hinder the contemplative spiritual practices that once

defined the mountain. This transformation is not an isolated incident but part of a broader CCP strategy to control Buddhist discourse and use religious heritage as a geopolitical tool. Despite being an officially atheist state, China now claims to be the global guardian of Buddhism.

China's recent announcement to host the "6th Buddhist Council" is a clear example of historical appropriation, attempting to align itself as the global custodian of Buddhism despite its atheist stance. Through strategic religious diplomacy, China strengthens ties with Buddhist-majority nations while whitewashing its human rights violations and undermining Tibetan Buddhism.

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

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

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

22 November 2024, News18, Manoj Gupta

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

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

According to a note from top intelligence agencies, the Lhamo Kirti Monastery school was completely shut down as part of China's broader initiative to control Tibetan education. Four Tibetan youths were



detained in Sichuan for resisting forced transfers from monastic schools to state-run schools. They then underwent political re-education before being compelled to enrol in a local government school.

"China aims to promote loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) through state-run education. Over 1 million Tibetan children have been placed in state-run schools promoting Mandarin and Chinese cultural values. China has intensified control over Tibetan Buddhism through stricter restrictions, increased surveillance, and forced assimilation policies. China's actions aim to assimilate Tibetan identity and limit family contact," read the note.

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

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

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

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

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

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

08 November 2024, ICT

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

China is implementing multiple laws and policies crafted over the years to forcibly convert Tibetans into so-called model Chinese citizens for the "Chinese nation." The sophisticated assimilation program is being rolled out gradually to avoid international

condemnation and to support the untrue argument that Tibetan assimilation into Chinese culture is a natural process.

Taktsang Lhamo Monastic School closed

Taktsang Lhamo monastic school, located in Dzoge (Chinese: Ruò'ěrgài) County in Ngaba Prefecture, Sichuan, has been targeted by Chinese authorities for at least two decades. It was forcibly shut down multiple times in the past but reemerged each time as the focus of Chinese political policies and priorities shifted. Under Xi Jinping's rule, the school's continued survival is in doubt.



Main entrance to Taktsang Lhamo Kirti Monastery

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

The Ngaba Plan

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

NEAC broadly dictates that the "sense of community of the Chinese nation" be instilled and "to comprehensively strengthen national unity and progress and national common language and writing education, actively and steadily promote the integration of schools, mixed classes and mixed accommodation for all ethnic groups". The Sichuan

provincial “14th Five-Year Plan” Education Development Plan states education is a major national and party strategy and the party’s education policy must be fully implemented for the overall development of the Party and country.

It further states that the CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping’s expositions on education should be fully implemented in all aspects of education development to serve the CCP’s governance and for the consolidation and development of the socialist system with Chinese characteristics.

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

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

#### Assimilation campaign

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

Prior to Xi Jinping’s rise to the General Secretary of the CCP in 2012, the Central Committee of the Communist Party in May 1985 decided to change the education system. The Law of the People’s Republic of China on Compulsory Education and the

Outline of China’s Education Reform and Development were promulgated in 1986 to implement the CCP central committee’s decision to universalize nine-year compulsory education. The compulsory education law was amended by the Standing Committee of China’s National People’s Congress in June 2006 making receiving the compulsory education an obligation in accordance with the law. The coercive education policy holds parents liable if they do not send their children to state-controlled schools and are subjected to legal regulation. In essence parents do not have the choice to send their children to an educational institution of their choice, which an emphasis on the preservation of Tibetan culture and the inclination of the children. While such education policy seems benign and fulfilling human rights obligations for the ethnic Chinese people. its implementation has had a different impact on the Tibetan people, especially given Tibet’s status as an occupied country. These coercive policies to “modernize education” and promote “national unity” have affected Tibetans’ traditional modes of learning and transmission of centuries-old knowledge, and most crucially denied parents and students the freedom to access culturally Tibetan education.

#### Effects of the Plan

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

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

In a disturbing video from early September 2024, some men who are presumably government employees forcibly shove a young monk into a white car to enroll him in a state boarding school. The young monk was one of the 140 monastic students from Muge monastic school in Muge, Ngaba. In another disturbing incident, three young monks from the same Muge monastic school, who were forced into a state boarding school, attempted suicide by jumping into a river to escape from the school. They

described the school as "prison-like," noting corporal punishment and insufficient food as reasons for their desperate action.

Will the school reemerge?

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

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

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

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

03 November 2024, The New Indian Express

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

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

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

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

"China, too, has absorbed elements of this epic, which not only left traces in Chinese (majority) Han

culture but was also reinterpreted and given new meaning in Chinese Xizang (Tibetan) culture," he said.

China officially refers to Tibet as Xizang.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Multifaceted Indian culture – both Buddhist and non-Buddhist – made its mark on Chinese soil," she added.

Jiang, in his speech also recalled how the famous seventh-century Chinese scholar Xuanzang who visited India, studied at Nalanda University and brought back a host of Buddhist scriptures providing detailed accounts of Ramayana stories he heard during his pilgrimage.

"However, due to the Hindu background of Ramayana and the predominance of Buddhism in

China, the text was neither fully translated nor widely circulated within Han culture," he said.

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

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

"Ji dedicated nearly a decade to translating this vast work of twenty-four thousand verses, and his version has become a cornerstone for the study of Ramayana in China," he said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

01 November 2024, UCA News

They are not permitted to leave the school grounds or meet their parents Tibetans have accused the pro-Beijing authorities in the region of housing hundreds of young Tibetan Buddhist monks in prison-like conditions at government-run boarding schools, says a report.

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



Young monks having a walk after classes at the Tibet Autonomous Region Buddhist College on May 31, 2021. (Photo: AFP)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## October

### China Escalates Crackdown on Tibetan Buddhism

11 October 2024, RTV

Beijing has intensified its campaign to assert control over Tibetan Buddhism, tightening religious and cultural restrictions. Recent high-profile visits by top Chinese officials signal a renewed crackdown, marked by harsher surveillance, school closures, and forced assimilation policies. Over one million Tibetan children have been separated from their families, while the Chinese Communist Party strengthens its grip on religious practices, including its controversial control over the Dalai Lama's reincarnation.

China's ongoing campaign to "sinicize" Tibetan Buddhism is deepening, with authorities pushing for greater control over religious and cultural practices in

Tibetan regions. The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom's 2024 report highlights a growing suppression of religious freedom in Tibet. Tibetan Buddhist monasteries face tighter scrutiny, while security measures have been ramped up. Monks and nuns are subjected to indoctrination sessions and harsher penalties, as seen in the recent crackdown on the Tengdro Monastery.

A key part of Beijing's strategy is to assimilate Tibetan identity into the broader Chinese society. More than one million Tibetan children have been removed from their families and placed in state-run boarding schools, where they are taught in Mandarin and exposed to Chinese cultural ideals, further eroding Tibetan language and traditions. This move coincides with the closure of Tibetan-language schools, including the Jigme Gyaltsen Nationalities Vocational School, which had been operating for over 30 years.

Chinese authorities are also expanding their influence over the appointment of Tibetan religious leaders, requiring that all reincarnated Tibetan Lamas, including the Dalai Lama, be approved by the state. This interference has drawn sharp criticism from Tibetan communities and international human rights groups, who see it as a direct attack on the region's religious autonomy. The government's decision to close schools, suppress cultural practices, and tightly regulate religious affairs is part of a broader policy to secure its political dominance over Tibet. Recent visits by senior Chinese officials to Tibet and other Tibetan-inhabited areas underscore the state's commitment to consolidating control. Top officials, including Chen Wenqing and Ying Yong, have emphasized the need to "crack down on separatist activities" and manage religious affairs in line with the law. These visits have coincided with the expansion of military infrastructure in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), raising concerns over China's intentions in the strategically significant region.

In another bold step, China launched the Tibet International Communication Center in Lhasa in September 2024, a propaganda hub aimed at shaping international views on Tibet. The center aligns with the government's push to dominate the narrative on Tibet ahead of the 6th World Buddhist Forum, scheduled for October 2024, where China plans to further promote its policies to international Buddhist communities.



## China detained Tibetan youngsters for resisting transfer from monastic to colonial boarding schools

09 October 2024, Tibetan Review

Chinese authorities in a Tibetan area of Sichuan province have detained and subjected to political education four Tibetan youngsters for resisting transfer from their monastic school to a secular one run by the Chinese government meant to Sinicize them, reported the Tibetan service of rfa.org Oct 8, citing local Tibetan sources.

The students, aged 15-18, had been attending a school run by the Lhamo Kirti Monastery in Dzoge (Chinese: Ruò'ěrgài) county in the province's Ngaba (or Ngawa, Chinese: Aba) prefecture before the Chinese government forced its closure in early Jul 2024. Parents were ordered to enrol their children in government-run schools. These "colonial style" schools teach all subjects in Chinese language with primary focus on studying the "Xi Jinping Thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era". This is meant to make Chinese of the Tibetan children under the Chinese president's Sinicization drive.

A total of 300 novice monk-students were transferred to such Chinese schools last month, and the remaining 300 on Oct 2.

The four boys were detained on Oct 2 and subjected to several days of "political re-education". They were then forced to attend a local government-run school after their release on Oct 6, the report said, citing two local sources who could not be named for safety reasons.

"Those who refuse to go to the government-run school are being detained," the report quoted another local Tibetan source as saying. "Many children were also forced to attend political education sessions", during which they are told of having been "negatively influenced by their parents and the monastery."

Monasteries have for centuries been the main centres of learning for the Tibetan people who enrol in them at as young as 5-6 years of age. China put an end to this practice with a new vigour from 2018 in a renewed campaign to Sinicize Tibet.

Not only do children learn everything only in Mandarin Chinese in these boarding schools but they are also reportedly denied contact with their families for long periods. As a result, they are said to find it difficult to communicate with their parents later on.

## China's Sixth World Buddhist Forum to be held 15–17 October at Xuedou Temple, Ningbo

04 October 2024, BDG

The Sixth World Buddhist Forum will be held in China from 15–17 October at Ningbo, Zhejiang, on the eastern coast of China. Delegates from over 80 countries will be participating, with the theme for the conference being titled, "Hand in Hand for Coexistence," which emphasizes the Chinese emphasis on multipolarity and non-interference.

The Sixth World Buddhist Forum is a cornerstone of Chinese Buddhist diplomacy. The conference is being organized by Wang Bangjin, party secretary of Ningbo, and Jin Liping, municipal party committee supervisor. The previous, fifth session of the World Buddhist Forum was held at the coastal city of Putian, in China's Fujian province. The Forum will hold a grand opening ceremony at Ningbo's Xuedou Temple, in the temple's Longhua Square.

Xuedou Temple is part of the Xuedou Maitreya Complex. It has seen over a millennium of prosperity and decline, and was destroyed and rebuilt five times. The most famous abbot of the temple in recent memory was Master Taixu (1890–1947), the great reform-minded monastic and forefather of Humanistic Buddhism. In 1933, proposed that Xuedou Mountain become one of China's five renowned Buddhist mountains. (China Daily)

Zhejiang as a heartland of Chinese Buddhism

Ningbo is in Zhejiang Province, with the capital being Hangzhou. The latter has long been touted as a core historical and contemporary hub of Chinese Buddhism. Ningbo also houses the famous Ayuwang Temple (阿育王寺), or the Temple of Ashoka the Great. According to the Princeton University Art Museum, the Ayuwang Monastery is the subject of several legends, including being established in 282 during the Western Jin Dynasty by the foreign monastic Huida (惠達). Its most important artifact is a parietal bone of the Buddha Shakyamuni, which is presently stored in a stupa shaped reliquary in the temple's Relic Hall (sheli dian 舍利殿). (Princeton University)

The broader province of Zhejiang is core to China's vision and strategy for Buddhist diplomacy. Former Chinese president Jiang Zemin (1926–2022) visited Ayuwang Monastery with Chinese leader Xi Jinping in 2002, while Xi was still the provincial governor of Zhejiang. Four years later in 2006, the First World Buddhist Forum was held in 2006, during Xi's tenure as governor and party secretary of Zhejiang.

Sharing "Maitreya Culture" with the world

Ningbo is also described as the hometown of Budai, who is known in Chinese Buddhism as an incarnation of Maitreya (known stereotypically in the West as the



fat laughing Buddha). The government of Ningbo Fenghua District has pushed Xuedou Mountain as the “distribution center” of “Maitreya culture”: a platform to explore the cultural essence of openness, tolerance, harmony and joy. The spirit of tolerance, kindness, wisdom, humor, and optimism contained in Maitreya culture shows a wealth of life wisdom that is closely connected with the traditional emphasis on harmony in Chinese culture and philosophy. “Maitreya culture is very helpful in solving people’s spiritual confusion and promoting social harmony,” said Wei Daoru, a researcher at the Institute of World Religions of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.



Xuedou Temple. Image from Niraj Kumar

The open-air Maitreya Buddha or Budai stature on Xuedou Mountain, Fenghua, is part of the Xuedou Maitreya Complex. It holds the record of highest sitting posture for a sculpture in the world. In December 2013, a smaller iteration of this stature was moved to Lumbini Chinese Temple at the site of Lumbini, Nepal. This smaller Buddha statue was escorted to the Chinese temple by the Fenghua Cultural Mission, and was an integral event during the 6th Nepal China Festival.

“This Buddha was carefully customized and built by Nepal in Lumbini, which highlights the importance both sides attach to cultural exchanges,” Jin Jianfan, vice chairman of the Chinese Culture Promotion Association, had said. Xuedou Temple has held 16 “Xuedou Mountain Maitreya Cultural Festival” in a row, providing believers with a wealth of Buddhist cultural activities.

The opening ceremony of one of the sessions of the China-South Korea-Japan Buddhist Friendly Interaction Conference was also held on Xuedou Mountain, in October 2016. The purpose of these trilateral exchanges is to reaffirm of the “golden bond” of Buddhism that contributes to a harmonious relationship the three countries, and to explore ways in which the three nations can contribute to regional stability and harmony in the Asia-Pacific region. The conference was first held in 1995, and by 2022 it had been held 22 times.

## Authorities transfer 200 Tibetan monastic students to state schools

02 October 2024, RFA

Tibetans oppose the measure, calling the new facilities ‘colonial-style’ boarding schools.

Chinese authorities on Wednesday transferred the remaining students at a shuttered Tibetan Buddhist monastery school in Sichuan province to state-administered residential schools, two Tibetans with knowledge of the situation said.

In early July, Radio Free Asia reported that authorities had closed down the Buddhist school of Lhamo Kirti Monastery in Dzoge county, known among locals as Taktsang Lhamo Kirti Monastery, affecting nearly 600 students. They also required parents to enroll their children in state-administered residential schools.

Chinese officials transferred about 300 of the students to state-run boarding schools in September, said the sources, who declined to be named so they could speak about a sensitive issue.

And on Wednesday, the remaining 200-some students, aged 15 to 18, were forcibly admitted to similar state-run institutions, leaving the monastery school completely unoccupied, they said.

The measure is part of the Chinese government’s efforts to control Tibetan Buddhist education and assimilate Tibetan youth, activists say.

Tibetans opposed the transfer, saying the new facilities are “colonial-style” boarding schools where children are separated from their families and taught a Chinese-language curriculum that promotes loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party.

Authorities previously summoned the students’ parents for patriotic re-education sessions and had them sign agreements not to enroll their children in monastic schools before the legal age of 18, the sources said.

Established in 1986, the Lhamo Kirti Monastery school initially provided foundational education to young monks before their advanced studies in Buddhist philosophy.

After being temporarily closed in 2003, the school reopened under the name Taktsang Lhamo Kirti Monastic School, focusing on educating novices.

Authorities also shut down another school at Kirti Monastery in Ngaba county, Sichuan province, affecting 1,000 students, RFA reported in July.

## September

### China jails monk for Tibetan uprising voice message, online display of Dalai Lama speech

24 September 2024, Tibetan Review



China has jailed a Tibetan Buddhist monk in Qinghai province for displaying a speech of His Holiness the Dalai Lama on the back of his WeChat social media voice message meant to commemorate the Tibetan national Uprising Day of Mar 10 this year, reported the Tibetan language tibettime.net Sep 24.

The monk, Jampa Choephel, from Rebgong (Chinese: Tongren) County in the province's Malho (Huangnan) prefecture, was arrested from his monastic living quarter in the middle of Mar 2024 and was held in the detention centre at Gurathang in Lower Rebgong from Mar 22 onwards.

He was tried and jailed for one and half years last month. Following his sentencing the monk was taken to a provincial prison in capital Ziling (Xining) on Sep 22 to serve the remaining one year of his term.

Throughout the period his incarceration, which began with his arrest by the Rebgong city police, continued when the city people's procuracy charged him, and when the city people's court tried and sentenced him, no notice of any kind was given about him to his family.

On the other hand, his close family members were warned that the monk could be severely punished, that their visits to the Chinese government offices to seek information about his situation were by themselves severe criminal violations.

The report cited its source as saying Jampa Choephel was already always under close surveillance from the Chinese government; that on every Tibetan festive occasion, they kept spying on him from rooftops, walls and other places.

Jampa Choephel had travelled to India as a refugee in 1986 and studied for 10 years at the Buddhist Dialectics Institute in Dharamshala. He then returned home in 1996. He devoted himself to meditating and religious practices at Penkarthang Monastery in Lower Rebgong. Occasionally, he took part in events during major religious occasions. He is known for his

skill in Tibetan script writing and is also conversant in English, both of which he would teach others, the report said.

### Prominent Tibetan Buddhist monk sentenced to 3 years in prison

13 September 2024, RFA

Lobsang Thabkhey was arrested in June 2023 for publishing books from Tibetans in exile.



Lobsang Thabkhey, a Tibetan Buddhist monk at Kirti Monastery in southwestern China's Sichuan province, is seen in an undated photo. (Citizen photo)

A Tibetan Buddhist monk who worked as a monastery librarian was sentenced to three years in prison during a "secret" trial, two sources from inside Tibet told Radio Free Asia.

Police arrested Lobsang Thabkhey, 55, in June 2023 for allegedly engaging in "separatist activities."

They accused him of possessing and republishing books from the exiled Tibetan community and for having contact with people outside the region when he was in charge of the library at Kirti Monastery in Ngaba county in southwest China's Sichuan province.

Chinese authorities consider it illegal for Tibetans inside Tibet to contact people outside the region and engage with the exiled Tibetan community or the Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, who China considers a "separatist."

While the specific charges leveled against Thabkhey are unknown, sources said they were likely related to previous charges of publishing "banned books" in Tibet and having contact with "external forces."

Thabkhey's family recently learned about the sentence, but authorities did not provide information about the date of the trial or the nature of the charges, said the sources.

According to China's Criminal Procedure Law, family members of those in custody must be notified within 24 hours of their arrest, except in crimes or cases deemed to be endangering national security where notification may obstruct the investigation.

Radio Free Asia contacted the Ngaba Public Security Bureau for confirmation, but an official there who did

not provide his name said the office had no information about Thabkhey.

Prior to Thabkhey's 2023 arrest, police repeatedly summoned and interrogated him about his alleged "separatist activities," the sources said.

Thabkhey hails from Ngaba's Meruma township, which has been the scene of many protests and pro-Tibet political activities since 2008.

### **EXCLUSIVE: Area where Buddhist monastery stood now under water**

12 September 2024, RFA, Tenzin Pema

Tibetans have decried the Chinese dam project as another example of disregard for their culture.

Rising waters from a new dam in central China have submerged the area where a 135-year-old Tibetan Buddhist monastery once stood, as well as a nearby village, according to experts who viewed satellite photos and two sources inside Tibet.

The Atsok Monastery, built in 1889, was demolished earlier this year to make way for the expansion of the Yangqu hydropower station in Qinghai province. Tibetans have decried the dam's construction, saying it is yet another example of the Chinese government's disregard for their culture, religion and environment.

After floodgates for the dam were closed around Aug. 10, reservoirs filled and water levels rose in upstream areas of the Machu River, or Yellow River in Chinese, experts who saw the satellite imagery said.

Satellite photos showed the complete submersion of the 18-hectare (44-acre) monastery area and nearby Chorten village and the partial submersion of adjacent farmlands of Yangchu village, said Y. Nithiyanandam, professor and head of the geospatial program at Takshashila Institution in Bengaluru, India.

"The water levels have risen by nearly 100 meters [328 feet] above the previous regular flow, submerging the villages. It is difficult to predict at this time whether the water storage has reached its threshold or may continue to rise," added Nithiyanandam.

Jacob Bogle, a private satellite imagery analyst, also said the images showed that water levels reached the elevation of the monastery on Aug. 16, and that by Aug. 31, the site was completely submerged.

The growing reservoir now reaches about 30 kilometers (19 miles) upstream, possibly flooding some of the farmland around the village of Thangnak town, Bogle said.

Spiritual place

Chinese authorities said they would fund the costs of dismantling and reconstructing parts of the

monastery, but many of the murals and surrounding stupas cannot be physically moved and so were destroyed.

Tibetans believe that the place where the monastery stood is sacred, and that it had been made holier over 135 years of prayers and practice by several generations.

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

The expansion was started in 2022 and was completed this year. China's National Development and Reform Commission, or NDRC, said it would force the relocation of more than 15,500 people — nearly all ethnic Tibetans — living in 24 towns and villages in Dragkar, Kawasumdo and Mangra counties.

Dragkar county sits in Tsolho, or Hainan in Chinese, Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in the historic Amdo region of Tibet.

State media reports said on Aug. 14 that the dam had officially lowered its gate to store water, indicating that the construction had entered "the sprint stage before it is put into production and power generation."

Local Tibetan sources, who requested anonymity for fear of reprisals, told RFA they fear that the dam could cause further flooding and destroy their homes and farmland in the nearby Yangqu village.

### **China-appointed Panchen urges firm upholding of final party say on reincarnation issue**

11 September 2024, Tibetan Review

The Chinese government Appointed "11th Panchen Lama reincarnation" Gyaincain Norbu has on Jul 18 called on the Tibetan people to firmly uphold the final say of the Communist Party of China (CPC) on the reincarnation issue while expressing strong opposition to secession.

Chairing a seminar on a themed exhibition of the reincarnation of Living Buddhas of Tibetan Buddhism, he stressed the need to firmly uphold the CPC Central Committee's final say on the reincarnation of Living Buddhas of Tibetan Buddhism and voiced strong opposition to secession, while calling for national unity, ethnic unity, and religious and social harmony, reported China's official Xinhua news agency Sep 10. It was stated to be one of several meetings he chaired during his ongoing months-long tour of the Tibetan areas of the People's Republic of China.

The report said that over the past few months, Gyaincain Norbu had performed his regular duties at the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) branch of the

Buddhist Association of China, and carried out a series of Buddhist and social activities in Tibet's capital Lhasa.

He was previously reported to have visited Golog Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai Province, and Nagchu and Nyingri prefecture-level cities in that order, setting out from Lhasa and returning to it each time.

On Sep 3, he was unanimously "elected" the president of the TAR branch of the Buddhist Association of China at the first council meeting of the branch's 12th council. This was his "re-election" after his first "election" in 2021,

The report said that on Sep 1, Gyaincain Norbu concluded his Buddhist and social activities in Lhasa and arrived by train in Xigaze (Shigatse), "where he will continue with a series of similar engagements."

Shigatse is home to Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, the historical seat of the successive Panchen Lama reincarnations, although the 10th Panchen Lama and his supposed successor Gyaincain Norbu have spent very little time in it as China required them to live in Beijing under close supervision and guidance of the party's United Front Work Department.

As regards the 11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, his fate has continued to remain unknown ever since he was abducted, with his family, by the Chinese government in 1995, just days after he was recognized and proclaimed by the Dalai Lama, Tibet's exiled spiritual leader.

Gyaincain Norbu is currently also a member of the Standing Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, China's top political advisory body, and a vice president of the Buddhist Association of China. The Panchen Lama is Tibet's second most prominent religious figure, although it cannot be said of Gyaincain Norbu.

### **China's World Buddhist Forum aimed at boosting soft power: experts**

09 September 2024, RFA, Dickey Kundol and Tenzin Dickyi

State media says the October conference will 'promote world peace,' but real goals are political, critics say.

China will host a global Buddhist conference in October that experts and rights activists outside the country say is aimed at boosting its soft power in Asia and build on its narrative that it has greater influence over Buddhist-majority nations than India, the birthplace of Buddhism.

Monks, experts, scholars and representatives from about 70 countries are expected to attend the sixth World Buddhist Forum in mid-October in the eastern city of Ningbo, Chinese state media reported.

However, the Dalai Lama, perhaps the most prominent Buddhist leader in the world, is not invited. Regarded by Beijing as separatist, the Tibetan spiritual leader hasn't been invited to any of the past forums since the first one organized by China in 2006.

The goal of the conference, according to the state-run China Daily, is to "promote world peace, improve the well-being of all individuals, and gather wisdom and strength for building a community with a shared future for humanity."

But in fact, China has little interest in promoting or protecting Buddhism, and instead is trying to use the conference to achieve its political goals, Sana Hashmi, a postdoctoral fellow at the policy think tank Taiwan-Asia Exchange Foundation, told Radio Free Asia.

"China has been trying to forge religious diplomacy with countries that have Buddhism as their main religion," she said.

"It also wants to show that instead of India, which is the birthplace of Buddhism, China has more influence when it comes to Buddhism."

By organizing the forum, China is misleading the international community by creating the illusion that the state supports Buddhism, though there is no genuine protection or support for Buddhists within the country, said Shartse Khensur Rinpoche Jangchup Choeden, secretary general of the International Buddhist Confederation.

#### **'Sinicizing' Tibetan Buddhism**

The conference comes at a time when Beijing is ramping up efforts to "Sinicize" Tibetan Buddhism to bring its religious doctrines into line with Chinese Communist Party, or CCP, ideology and emphasize loyalty to the party and the state.

Although China's constitution states that its citizens "enjoy freedom of religious belief," in practice this is not the case. Officials routinely clamp down on religious expression by Tibetan Buddhists, Uyghur Muslims and Christians across the country.

The government officially recognizes Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism and Catholicism, but requires clergy members to pledge allegiance to the CCP and socialism.

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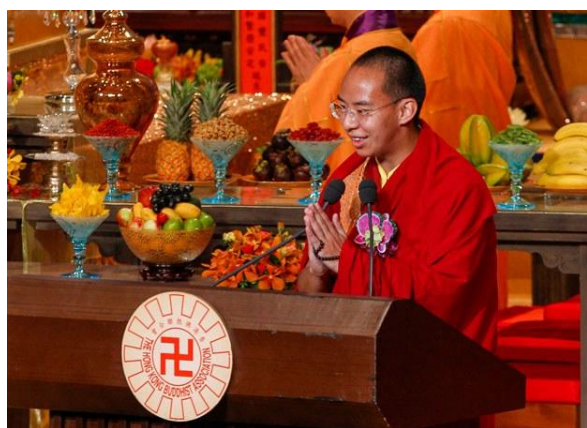
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Gyaltzen Norbu, the Chinese government-appointed 11th Panchen Lama, speaks during an opening ceremony of the third World Buddhist Forum in Hong Kong, April 26, 2012. (Kin Cheung/AP)

#### 'Sinicizing' Tibetan Buddhism

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The government officially recognizes Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism and Catholicism, but requires clergy members to pledge allegiance to the CCP and socialism.

Far from showing that China is preserving Tibetan Buddhism or the Buddhist religion in general, the conference will showcase Beijing's efforts to assimilate Tibetans and other minority groups and erase their distinctive features and cultures, activists and experts say.

Yan Jue, president of the Buddhist Association of China that's organizing the conference, seemed to acknowledge as much. He said the sixth forum will "adhere to the direction of Sinicization of Buddhism" in China and "fully publicize and display the status of religious freedom in China."

#### 'Key instrument'

The Buddhist Association of China is the official government body supervising Buddhist practice in China, which in turn is overseen by the United Front Work Department of the CCP's Central Committee.

The International Campaign for Tibet, a rights group, calls the association a "key instrument" in Beijing's strategy to assimilate and transform Tibetan Buddhism, especially when it comes to searching for and recognizing reincarnated lamas.

Beijing is using the association to "break down Tibetan Buddhism's unique characteristics and to change it into a tool of the Chinese state," the group says.

"Since 2020, under [President] Xi Jinping's leadership, the CCP has intensified efforts to Sinicize Tibetan Buddhism, assigning this task to the Buddhist Association of China, which organizes conferences and events that serve as tools of soft power manipulation," said Tenzin Dorjee, a Tibetan-American and Buddhist former commissioner at the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. Tibetan writer and activist Tenzin Tsundue said the conference must shed light on severe restrictions imposed on Buddhist practices, particularly in Tibet and Mongolia, and oppose the CCP's "manipulation of Buddhism and religion for political gain."

#### China hosts meeting on reincarnation of Tibetan Lamas to reinforce government control

06 September 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup



Chinese government's conference on the historical norms and policy laws of Tibetan Buddhist reincarnation system in Lanzhou, September 3, 2024 (Photo/Tibet.cn)

In what is seen as furthering the Chinese government's claim on authority over reincarnation of Tibetan religious figures, the Chinese government convened a meeting in Lanzhou about policies and regulations for the "reincarnation of living Buddhas in Tibetan Buddhism" on Tuesday, according to Tibet.cn, a Chinese mouth piece.

The gathering, attended by about 50 participants, included high-ranking Tibetan lamas and Chinese experts, including monks from the official Buddhist Association of China. According to the report, the Chinese authorities reiterated that the recognition of reincarnations must adhere to the regulations imposed by the government, stressing that the selection of Tibetan Buddhist Lamas should involve the golden urn method—a controversial system that requires Chinese government oversight and approval, which is much touted in the Chinese government narrative.

Observers and Tibetan exile authorities have condemned Beijing over its claim and raised doubts that the sinister aim of the move is to seek legitimacy over their authority over the next Dalai Lama, the central figure in Tibetan Buddhism. While the Chinese government has repeatedly pushed the idea that future reincarnations, especially that of the Dalai Lama, must be done under the Beijing's jurisdiction, the Dalai Lama himself, the Tibetan people and many governments have rubbished the claim.

The Tibetan spiritual leader His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, who has been living in exile since China annexed Tibet in 1959, has long denounced China's attempts to control the reincarnation process. In a 2011 statement, the Dalai Lama declared that "responsibility for doing so (His Holiness's reincarnation) will primarily rest on the concerned officers of the Dalai Lama's Gaden Phodrang Trust". He vowed to leave clear written instructions regarding the selection of his reincarnation and emphasized that any successor chosen by China for political purposes should not be recognized stating, "I shall leave clear written instructions about this. Bear in mind that, apart from the reincarnation

recognized through such legitimate methods, no recognition or acceptance should be given to a candidate chosen for political ends by anyone, including those in the People's Republic of China".

A day before the meeting in Lanzhou, on Tuesday the Chinese-appointed Panchen Lama, known widely as the "fake Panchen" was re-elected as president of the so-called Tibet branch of the Buddhist Association of China (BAC). Gyaincain Norbu was appointed as Panchen Lama by the Chinese government in 1995, six months after the abduction of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima who was recognised by the Dalai Lama.

The BAC, established in 1953, is a state-controlled body tasked with overseeing religious affairs, ensuring that Buddhist communities comply with state policies.

### **For Beijing, the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama must follow Chinese laws**

06 September 2024, Asia News

The concept was reiterated this week at a meeting attended by 50 monks recognised by China, but which Tibet's spiritual leader has always opposed. The Dalai Lama could end the line of succession next year on his 90th birthday, excluding Beijing from controlling Tibetan Buddhism.

The reincarnation of Tibetan Buddhists must also follow Chinese law, this according to Chinese authorities, a notion reiterated at a recent seminar in Lanzhou, Gansu province, attended by about 50 monks recognised by the Chinese government.

This event has sparked fresh tensions with the Dalai Lama, the leader of Tibetan Buddhists in exile in India, who is expected to announce plans for his succession next year.

A pro-Chinese website, Tibet.cn, has reported that the seminar last Wednesday reiterated that policies for the "reincarnation of living Buddhas in Tibetan Buddhism" must be "compatible with socialist society". According to the High-Level Tibetan Buddhism College of China, a Beijing-based school that trains officially recognised monks, which organised the meeting, historical customs, including government approval, are "an important principle to be followed in the reincarnation".

As with all religions recognised in the country, the Chinese government demands that the clergy swear allegiance to the Communist Party of China (CPC); in the case of Tibet, the issue of reincarnation is intertwined with that of sovereignty over the territory. China fears that the death of the current Dalai Lama, who has opposed Chinese intrusion since 1950, could generate social unrest in the region.

Tibet's spiritual leader and Nobel Peace Prize laureate had said that he would address the issue of



reincarnation at the age of 90, that is, in July next year.

According to Tibetan tradition, the Dalai Lama, upon his death, is reincarnated in a child. Over the centuries, the child was found through a series of searches and rituals. But Beijing now insists that reincarnation must follow Chinese rules.

To this end, Beijing has introduced the ritual of the Golden Urn, an ancient imperial practice taken up by the CPC and incorporated into official Chinese regulations since 2007.

With this method, in 1989 China identified a Panchem Lama, another important religious leader in Tibetan Buddhism who, according to tradition, approves the recognition of the next Dalai Lama.

But Tibet's current spiritual leader has stressed the illegitimacy of this process, and never recognised Beijing's Panchem Lama, hinting that he wants to end his line of reincarnation, to exclude Beijing from having a say in the matter.

For some time now, Chinese authorities have been organising meetings aimed at monks to "sinicise" Tibetan Buddhism and bring it under their control.

In March, a seminar like the one in Lanzhou was held in the capital, while in mid-October the World Buddhist Forum will meet in the eastern city of Ningbo. The Dalai Lama has not been invited to this event since its start in 2006.

Experts note that Beijing wants to show Asian countries that "instead of India, where Buddhism was born, it is China that has the most influence," said Sana Hashmi, a researcher at the Taiwan-Asia Exchange Foundation think tank, speaking to Radio Free Asia.

The goal is to convince the world that is preserving Tibetan Buddhism.

"Since 2020, under [President] Xi Jinping's leadership, the CCP has intensified efforts to Sinicize Tibetan Buddhism, assigning this task to the Buddhist Association of China, which organizes conferences and events that serve as tools of soft power manipulation," said Tenzin Dorjee, a Tibetan-American Buddhist, and a former commissioner at the US Commission on International Religious Freedom.

### **China's Panchen reappointed to head 'Tibet' branch of PRC's Buddhist authority**

04 September 2024, Tibetan Review

The "Tibet" branch of the Buddhist Association of China (BAC) has a new president, and he is the Chinese government-appointed 11th Panchen Lama Gyaincain Norbu again. He is being groomed and has been mandated by China to Sinicize Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism.

On Sep 3, "Panchen Erdeni Chos-kyi rGyal-po" was unanimously "elected" president of the "Xizang" branch of the BAC at the first council meeting of the branch's 12th council, reported China's official Xinhua news agency Sep 3.

The meeting began on Sep 2 in Tibet's capital Lhasa. The BCA is the official government supervisory organ of Buddhism in the People's Republic of China (PRC). It is overseen by the United Front Work Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

The report said that earlier, on Jun 22, 2019 too, Gyaincain Norbu was unanimously "elected" to the same post, for the first time.

China expects him to play a leading role in Sinicizing Tibetan Buddhism, in the tough task of winning Tibetan loyalty to the CPC-ruled PRC, and in China's selection and appointment of the reincarnation of the current, 14th Dalai Lama.

To make a point of legitimizing his credentials for that role, the Chinese government media report said "Panchen Erdeni" is one of the most influential Living Buddhas in Tibetan Buddhism. It noted that he was born on Feb 13, 1990 in Lhari County of Nagqu City in Tibet Autonomous Region.

"On Nov 29, 1995, he was approved and confirmed by the State Council as the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen after a lot-drawing from a golden urn. He was then enthroned as the 11th Panchen Erdeni," the report added.

The report said nothing about the 11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, who was abducted by the Chinese government in May 1995, just days after being recognized and proclaimed by the Dalai Lama, and whose fate has continued to remain one of China's best kept secrets to this day.

## **August**

### **Beijing-appointed Panchen Lama intensifies campaign against the Dalai Lama, promotes Xi's "rule of law"**

31 August 2024, Phayul

The Beijing-appointed 11th Panchen Lama, Gyaltsen Norbu (Ch. Gyaincain Norbu), widely criticised as the "fake Panchen," "Chinese puppet," and "Chinese Panchen," recently led a "Three Consciousness Symposium" in Nagchu (Ch. Naqu) Prefecture within the so called Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). This event, as reported by Bitter Winter, a magazine dedicated to religious liberty and human rights, marks another step in the Chinese government's efforts to assert control over Tibetan Buddhism.

While China's mainstream media covered his visit, they offered scant details on its true purpose. The symposium is part of the ongoing "Three Consciousness Campaign," initiated in Tibet in 2022. This campaign aims to re-educate Buddhist monks and nuns by promoting national consciousness, citizen consciousness, and the rule of law consciousness. In practice, these programs seek to enforce allegiance to Chinese rule in Tibet and to suppress "separatism" by compelling the monastic community to obey the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the Central Committee, and President Xi Jinping without question. During the symposium, Gyaltsen Norbu urged monks and nuns to distance themselves from His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Tibet's exiled spiritual leader of Tibet, and to reject "separatist thoughts." He emphasised the need to promote "national unity" and to adapt Tibetan Buddhism to fit within a socialist framework.

In his keynote address, Norbu called on Tibetan Buddhists to study and implement the resolutions of the 20th National Congress of the CCP. This directive implies that Tibetan religious practitioners must align their spiritual beliefs with the political ideologies of the state, study Buddhism in a way that aligns with contemporary political responsibilities, and accept the "strict governance of religion"—which translates to the United Front's supervision of religious activities. Additionally, Norbu stressed the importance of Tibetan Buddhism playing a supportive role in CCP-led campaigns.

During his visit to the "Rural Revitalization Nagqu Progress" exhibition, Norbu praised the rapid development achieved under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, attributing this success to the cooperation of people from all ethnic groups who support the Party's policies. He also called for even closer unity among various ethnic groups under the leadership of Xi Jinping and the Party's Central Committee.

Following his visit to Nagchu, Gyaltsen Norbu concluded his tour with a visit to Nyingtri City on August 22 before returning to Lhasa on August 28.

Gyaltsen Norbu's appointment as the 11th Panchen Lama by the Chinese government in 1995 has long been seen as an attempt to control the selection of high-ranking Tibetan religious figures and to diminish the influence of the Dalai Lama. Despite years of efforts by China to gain legitimacy for Norbu among Tibetans, he remains widely unaccepted, with many Tibetans viewing him as lacking true religious authority.

The true 11th Panchen Lama, Gendun Choekyi Nyima, was recognised by His Holiness the Dalai Lama on May 14, 1995. Days later, Chinese authorities abducted Gendun Choekyi Nyima, and he has not been seen since. For Tibetans, Gendun

Choekyi Nyima remains the legitimate Panchen Lama, while Gyaltsen Norbu is seen as merely a figurehead imposed by the CCP, of which he is a member.

### **Tibetan monks to visit Findlay**

30 August 2024, The Courier, Leah Alsept

Tibetan monks will stop in Northwest Ohio next week as a part of their national tour of the United States.

Four monks from the Gaden Shartse Monastery will visit Findlay, Bluffton and Carey to share Tibetan culture and heritage, Buddhist chants, rituals for healing and practices for inner peace and compassion. The tour also serves as a fundraising initiative to construct a dormitory, also called a "khangtsen," at the monastery.

The Gaden Shartse Monastery was founded in Tibet in 1409 by Tsongkhapa, creator of the Gelug school of thought in Tibetan Buddhism. Gaden is one of the three "Seats of Learning" Gelug monasteries of Tibet. The monastery was rebuilt in India after China's invasion of Tibet. The monastery is known for its study and practice of Buddhist Sutra and Tantra.

Phukhang Khangtsen, one of 11 dormitories in the Gaden Shartse Monastery, currently has 120 rooms for its 450 monks, requiring many monks to share limited space and facilities. The tour aims to raise awareness and funds to support the monks and ensure they have the necessary accommodations to continue their spiritual life. Funds raised during the tour will support building 60 new rooms to improve living conditions for the monks.

### **China to hold World Buddhist Forum in October**

30 August 2024, People's Daily Online

The sixth World Buddhist Forum is slated to take place in the city of Ningbo in east China's Zhejiang Province this October, with an aim to promote world peace, improve the well-being of all individuals, and gather wisdom and strength for building a community with a shared future for humanity.

First launched in 2006, the triennial forum has successfully organized five editions, and evolved into the largest and most influential multilateral platform for international Buddhist-related exchange and dialogue initiated by China.

The event will extend invitations to Buddhists, experts, scholars and delegates from about 70 countries and regions around the world.

The upcoming forum aims to delve into the essence of Buddhism, as well as its ideological connotations and practical values, in the meantime, promote communication and cooperation with various Buddhist communities, academic circles, cultural

sectors and individuals around the world, said Master Yanjue, head of the Buddhist Association of China.

### **China-appointed Panchen promoted 'Three Consciousnesses' Sinicization of Tibet drive during Nagchu visit**

28 August 2024, Tibetan Review

Although China's mainstream media gave little information on its 11th Panchen Lama Gyaincain Norbu's recent visit to the prefecture-level city of Nagchu (Chinese: Nagqu), Tibet Autonomous Region, it has now been reported that in one event, he presided over a symposium on China's so-called "Three Consciousnesses" campaign. The campaign is a tool for re-educating the Tibetan people, especially monks and nuns, to think and act like a party-loyal mainland Chinese.

The campaign, launched in Tibet in 2022, seeks to promotenational consciousness, citizen consciousness, and legal consciousness. In Tibet, these are used as euphemisms for supporting the Chinese rule, condemning "separatism," and laws designed to implement them under the rubric of the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC), its Central Committee, and General Secretary Xi Jinping.

Gyaincain Norbu toured Nagchu from Jul 31 to Aug 10, even as the fate of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the Dalai Lama-recognized 11th Panchen Lama abducted by Beijing and whom he replaced in 1995, continues to remain unknown to this day.

In his keynote speech, Gyaincain Norbu has stressed that Tibetan Buddhists should study and implement the documents of the 20th National Congress of the CPC. This meant that the Tibetan monastics should "align their religious beliefs with political beliefs," "study Buddhism to match contemporary responsibilities," accept the "strict governance of religion" programme (ie, the United Front supervision of their activities), and play a supportive role in the CPC campaigns, bitterwinter.org, the website of a magazine on religious liberty and human rights, Aug 28 cited Gyaincain Norbu as having explained.

What is more, the Chinese appointed Panchen was stated to have stressed that the "three consciousnesses" education should be linked with all daily religious activities at the monasteries.

And he has called on the Buddhist monks and nuns in Tibet to distance themselves from the Dalai Lama and oppose "separatist thoughts," promote "national unity," and "adapt Tibetan Buddhism to a socialist society."

Also, while visiting the "Rural Revitalization Nagqu Progress" exhibition, he was stated to have congratulated "the swift progress due to the

leadership of the Communist Party of China and the active efforts of people from all ethnic backgrounds who have chosen to support, appreciate, and follow the Party's direction."

He has "urged the various ethnic groups to unite even more closely around the Party's Central Committee, led by Comrade Xi Jinping."

The report, written under a pseudonym, did not cite a source for these information.

### **China misuses law to demolish historic Atsok Monastery for dam construction**

16 August 2024, ITC

Until the beginning of this year Atsok Monastery, which was founded in 1889 in Dragkar, Tibet, was home to 160 monks. It has now been completely leveled on the orders of the Chinese government.

The Chinese government has demolished the 135-year-old Atsok (Ch: A'cuohu) Monastery in the northern Tibetan region of Amdo to make way for the construction of a hydroelectric dam. The monastery had previously enjoyed protected status as a cultural heritage site, but this status was unilaterally revoked by Chinese authorities in order to push the demolition forward.

Despite opposition by local Tibetans, work crews began to destroy the monastery in April this year and have now finished.

"We are deeply concerned about the destruction of yet another precious Tibetan Buddhist monastery. Atsok's cultural heritage status reflected the history of the monastery and its importance to Tibetan Buddhists, and revoking that status in order to destroy it underscores what Tibetans have known all along: China's attitude towards their religion, history, and culture oscillates from indifference to hostility," said the International Campaign for Tibet.

From a protected site to a pile of rubble

The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) of China, which officially approved the construction of the Yangkhil (Yangqu) dam in 2021, noted in the approval statement that the project had been suspended earlier after learning that it had "started construction without approval." It is being constructed in Dragkar (Xinghai) county in Tsolho (Hainan) prefecture.

The dam is reportedly the largest robot-built 3D-printed project of its kind. Upon completion, the 1200 megawatt Yangkhyil Hydropower Plant will reach 150 meters in height. It will provide the distant Chinese province of Henan with about 5 billion kWh of electricity every year, with China's energy needs thus being fueled by the destruction of Tibet's religious heritage and the displacement of Tibetan communities.

Efforts by the monks of Atsok Monastery and local Tibetans to resist the dam construction have been dismissed by the authorities. RFA reported that the monastic community there “have petitioned authorities to rescind relocation orders” for the past two years. Similarly, Tibet Watch reported that a Tibetan whose identity and whereabouts still remain unknown was taken away by the police following his social media post about the demolition.

In April 2023, the Chinese government revoked Atsok Monastery’s status as a county level cultural relic protection site in order to allow the demolition to proceed. In the public notice (see ICT translation below), Dragkar county authorities cited the People’s Republic of China’s Law on Protection of Cultural Relics and related regulations, claiming that the monastery’s main assembly hall and Maitreya Temple were modern imitations and did not qualify as true cultural heritage sites.

ICT could not find any evidence of prior consultations with the monastery before the decision. To the contrary, the Beijing-based Tibetan writer Tsering Woesser, in her social media posts, said the religious community criticized the revocation as a pretextual maneuver to facilitate the demolition of the monastery.

Neither China’s Law on Protection of Cultural Relics nor the Interim Measures for the Management of Cultural Relics Identification have provisions to revoke protected status.

ICT translation from Tibetan of the Dragkar County revocation of Atsok Monastery’s cultural relic protection site status.

Public Notice by the Dragkar County Bureau of Culture, Tourism, Radio and TV in invalidating the Relic Protection Division of Atsok Monastery

As prescribed by the “Law of the People’s Republic of China on Protection of Cultural Relics” and “Interim Measures for the Management of Cultural Relics Identification”, through the process of inviting experts to investigate at the actual site, read the documents, to meet and interview monks, nuns, and the religious believing public, to seek views from the relevant offices, to convene investigation meetings, both the existing main Assembly building and the Jampa Temple are modern classic constructions and do not meet the requirements of being recognized as a definitive cultural heritage construction. The proposal has been made to invalidate the status enjoyed by Atsok Monastery as a county level cultural relic protection site.

The County Bureau of Culture, Tourism, Radio and TV investigated and reported to the 22nd standing committee meeting of the county government, and an agreement reached. The county level cultural relic protection site status of Atsok Monastery in Dragkar County is being invalidated. Now it is being

publicized to the society at large. The publicization period is from April 15, 2023 to April 21, 2023. During this publicization period, if there are differing opinions, please convey them in writing to the County Bureau of Culture, Tourism, Radio and TV.

Contact Telephone: 8582068

Displaced monks and communities

Starting in December 2021, Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and government officials began surveying the site for the “relocation” of the monastery and the displacement of Tibetan villages within the construction zone of the Yangkhil hydropower station. This station is being built at the junction of Dragkar County and Mangra (Guinan) County on the Machu (Yellow) River.

Alongside Atsok Monastery, 22 villages across seven towns in three counties—Dragkar, Beldzong (Tongde), and Mangra—are slated for complete displacement. According to the NDRC’s approval letter, dated November 29, 2021, the project will displace an estimated 7,573 people annually, clearing a total of 13,287 acres (80,691 mu) of land.

The plan dictates that Atsok Monastery will be relocated to a site approximately 3 to 4 kilometers away in the village of Khyokar Naklo. Despite the completion of the demolition, construction at the new site has not yet begun. Local Tibetans report that the monks are living in temporary shelters awaiting the monastery’s reconstruction at the new location, if it happens at all.

Atsok Monastery was by Atsok Choktrul Konchok, and it had previously faced Chinese government interference when the enrollment of minor novice monks was prohibited in 2021.

Following the heritage status revocation the Chinese government held a ceremony for the monastery’s “relocation” and warned local Tibetans against photographing or sharing images of the demolition and hydropower station construction online. Tibet Watch reported the detention of an unidentified Tibetan for sharing such images on WeChat, along with a photo of the Dalai Lama. A foreign tourist, Vera Hue, who visited the site to observe the developments was monitored and expelled by the police. In a letter to the Tibetan Review, Hue described the experience as “sad and disturbing,” highlighting the ongoing oppression and systematic silencing of Tibetan people under Chinese administration, which discourages foreign witnesses. Hue’s letter to Tibetan Review based in New Delhi, India, is reproduced in full here.

Witnessing the dismantling of dam-displaced Atsok Monastery in Tibet a sad, disturbing experience

I read your article (TibetanReview.net, Apr 13, 2024) about the relocation of Atsok Monastery in Dragkar Dzong (Ch. Xinhai), Amdo. I happened to be traveling around there in the area and it was easy

to go (unlike Wonto monastery in Dege where it is said to be inaccessible and in lockdown) so I went to see for myself what is happening.

I arrived in Atsok monastery without any problems. It is a beautiful, isolated, "antique" as it was described, monastery surrounded by red danxia landforms and snow-capped mountains. But just before getting there, one sees several blue tents (by "civil administration to rescue disaster") stationed alongside the road and there is a lot of litter everywhere. I walked all over Atsok; it is not a big place anyway, and took many pictures to treasure this site that is not going to be here any longer. A small shrine was open; however, the main temple was unfortunately closed. I asked the monks if they could please open the door for me since, given the relocation, revisiting the place would be literally impossible, but I was told that the key-keeper was away. How heartbreaking, really. When I asked the monks if they had pictures on their phones from the temple interiors that they could perhaps show me, their reply was "the temple has regulations", and that they are not allowed to take pictures from the monastery and share it. Somebody showed me an odd video (bad quality) with aerial views of the area and that was all. Is there any book I can buy to read about the monastery and its history? No. Is there a webpage where I can read more about the monastery? No.

The place looked and felt unkept and abandoned and in a state of mess as people were dismantling houses and temples and loading stuff onto vehicles to be taken away. So where are they relocating to, I asked. To nearby Hainan (Tibetan Tsholo), was the reply.

After I finished my walk and was about to leave, I was suddenly stopped by five policemen who appeared in front of me out of the blue suggesting to follow them to the police station – which I refused to do. A stern-looking lama then came over and asked me in English who told me about Atsok Monastery and why I am there. They took pictures of my passport and me and my driver's car plates, and then called their leader and, thankfully, she told them to let me go. The police car followed us all the way back to the main road.

Then, upon returning to my hotel in Dragkar Dzong, 2 policemen and 1 policewoman came to my hotel room to interrogate me, as friendly as they could, about my visit to Atsok monastery and why I took pictures, asking not just a few questions to know more details about me, my background, my work and the purpose of my visit to Atsok monastery and how do I even know this monastery – as it is not on the map. And what am I doing in Xinghai? It's such a small place, how do I

know it?

They stayed for over an hour writing a 3-page report while recording the whole discussion with two cameras.

Excuse me, but what is all this questioning about anyway, it is not a restricted area.

"We are relocating", said a policeman.

"Oh, really? Why?" I asked, but I got no reply.

When they were finally done, they even recommended me to befriend one of them on WeChat in case I needed further help – a common practice nowadays while traveling in Tibetan areas is that police staff may ask foreign visitors to befriend them on WeChat and unless one doesn't really mind doing so, one needs to find a polite way to decline it. Partial demolition of a structure of Atsok Monastery in Tibet. (Photo: Vera Hue)

When it was, at last, time for them to leave, they somehow tried to excuse themselves for taking up so much of my time and I smilingly showed them out saying "You are very welcome. See you later", because you see, foreigners staying in Dragkar Dzong must first register at the police station and afterwards go check in at a hotel, and then, later during the day, have the police staff pay them a visit in their hotel room for more paperwork and work-photos – at least that is my experience from all the times I've been to Dragkar Dzong.

Like in other Tibetan places, non-English speaking Tibetan and Chinese staff in police stations and hotels have hard time deciphering the details of my foreign passport and it takes them an awful lot of time to fill in a registration form. And so, here too, I filled in my registration form myself to save time.

My visit to Atsok monastery was a sad and disturbing experience. And yet another sobering and grounding eye-opener about the shocking reality Tibetan people are faced with on a daily basis in their own land under Chinese administration who doesn't really like foreigners anywhere near to witness it. To witness a normalised abuse, oppression and persecution that is systematically hushed, muted, dismissed out of hand altogether.

– Vera Hue, 2024

### **China coerces Kirti Monastery students into state-run boarding schools**

05 August 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

Chinese authorities in Ngaba (Ch. Aba) County, Sichuan Province, in the Tibetan region of Amdo, have reportedly seized Kirti Monastery School in July, following the closure of the Taksang Lhamo Kirti Monastery School, which had over 300 students enrolled in China's state-run boarding schools, according to Radio Free Asia (RFA). The authorities

have mandated that over 200 students out of 900, aged 6 to 14, enrol in state-run boarding schools. The remaining students, who were sent home, were also instructed to enrol in state-run schools instead of monastery schools. Since May, authorities have prohibited the reopening of Kirti Monastery School and Taktsang Lhamo Kirti Monastery School. Additionally, more than 300 students from Taktsang Lhamo Kirti Monastery School were forcibly enrolled in state-run boarding schools. A source inside Tibet told RFA that some parents, who avoid sending their children to monastery schools due to health issues, have been assured by officials that the state-run schools will provide assistance for their children's livelihoods and health problems. However, officials have also forcibly taken children from their parents, claiming they were only being taken for health check-ups.

On July 8, the Educational Development Conference was held in Bharkham, Ngaba, where local officials, including Shu Zhiwen, emphasised the necessity of reforming Ngaba's education system. They advocated for a strategic closure of more monastery schools to increase enrolment in state-run boarding schools. A message circulated in social media groups underscored this directive, highlighting that Tibetan children aged six and above must be enrolled in state-run boarding schools to comply with compulsory education laws. The message warned that parents who fail to fulfil their responsibilities under Article 16 of China's Law on the Protection of Minors would face punishment.

Since 1994, Kirti Monastery and Taktsang Lhamo Kirti Monastery School in Ngaba offered classes on Tibetan Buddhism. However, in 2003, these institutions faced interference from the Chinese government, which led to the closure of Tibetan Buddhist studies. Subsequently, the government introduced joint textbooks into the curriculum of monastery schools. As part of the current sinicisation of Buddhism initiative, officials have banned monks from enrolling in monastery schools. Additionally, officials frequently attend religious events to deliver political education, continuously creating obstacles during

## July

### China destroys monastery to expand world's tallest 3D-printed hydropower dam in Tibet

27 July 2024, Tibetan Review

After brushing aside heartbreaking pleas, protests and what not, Chinese authorities in Tsolho (Chinese: Hainan) Prefecture of Qinghai province have completed the demolition of a 135-year-old Tibetan

Buddhist monastery ahead of the planned completion later this year of an expansion of the world's tallest 3D-printed hydropower dam. Very little has been done to fulfil the promise to rebuild the monastery elsewhere while its 160 monks are yet to see the promised alternative housing, said the Tibetan service of rfa.org Jul 27, citing sources from Tibet and exile.

Local Tibetans had pleaded for the demolition or relocation of Atsok Gon Dechen Choekhorling Monastery in the prefecture's Dragkar county (Xinghai) to be scrapped and the dam expansion plan cancelled out of consideration for their veneration for its sanctity and antiquity. Nevertheless, in Apr 2023, China's Department of National Heritage declared that the artifacts and murals inside the monastery were of "no significant value or importance" and so began the work for its relocation.

The report said an early July video footage shows that nothing has remained of the religious structure, with the monastery's main prayer halls and the many stupas that surround it completely razed to the ground.

The work of the expansion of the Yangqu hydropower station on the Yellow River (Tibetan: Machu) was started in the province in 2022 and will be completed later this year. Filling it would submerge the 19th century monastery's site.

The report said Chinese authorities have spoken of taking two to three years to rebuild the monastery elsewhere. "However, only a few tens of thousands of Chinese yuan have been allocated for the reconstruction, with no additional funds planned," the report quoted one of the sources as saying.

Meanwhile, the monastery's 160 monks continue to live in makeshift tin huts. Nothing has materialised of the alternative housing for them in Khokar Naglo near the county's Palkha township promised by the authorities, the report cited several sources as saying.

Tibetan have been prohibited from taking pictures of the site where the monastery stood only months earlier.

The Chinese authorities' only concern is seen to be focused on a successful completion of the hydropower dam's expansion.

Lu Gang, secretary of the prefecture party committee, visited the site on Jul 25, called the expansion plan a major project for the prefecture to build a "national clean energy industry highland", and told local authorities to ensure its gate closed completely when built to store water as scheduled for power generation, the report said.



## **Tibetans forced to remove religious structures outside their homes**

25 July 2024, RFA

The measures come as Beijing intensifies efforts to assimilate Tibetans.

For the first time, Chinese authorities are forcing ordinary Tibetans to remove religious symbols and destroy such structures from the exteriors and roofs of their homes in several villages in a Tibetan area of Sichuan province, two sources with knowledge of the situation said.

Authorities also are prohibiting Tibetans in Sichuan province and elsewhere from organizing and participating in prayer sessions online, said the sources who requested anonymity for fear of reprisal. The measures come as Beijing intensifies efforts to assimilate Tibetans and adapt Tibetan Buddhism so that its tenets and practices conform with the ideology of China's Communist Party.

While authorities have demolished religious objects and structures at times at Buddhist monasteries in Tibet, this is the first instance of religious symbols at ordinary people's homes being destroyed.

Since the beginning of July, Chinese authorities have conducted searches of all homes in at least four villages in Ngaba county, said the sources, one of whom lives in exile and the other who is inside Tibet. They are forcing Tibetans to remove prayer flags hoisted on rooftops and to destroy religious objects, said the source from inside Tibet.

Among the objects being dismantled are concrete structures resembling chimneys outside homes where Tibetans perform Sang-sol, or incense offerings, to mark important religious and personal events in their lives, he said.

While authorities have not publicly disclosed the reason for their actions, Tibetans expect similar inspections in neighboring Tibetan areas, both sources said.

No online prayer sessions

Tibetans in Sichuan province and elsewhere are also prohibited from organizing any religious prayer sessions online in their social media messaging groups or chat groups, one of the sources said.

"Individuals who have initiated these prayer sessions have been summoned for interrogations by Chinese authorities," he said.

China has continued to restrict and control Tibetan religious practices and shown no willingness to resume formal negotiations about greater autonomy for the region with representatives of the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, according to the most recent annual report by the U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China.

Beijing also bans Tibetans from observing significant cultural, religious and historical events such as

Tibetan National Uprising Day and the Dalai Lama's birthday.

But Tibetans have defied these prohibitions, despite possible severe consequences.

During the Dalai Lama's birthday on July 6, monks from monasteries in the Ngaba area were confined to their compounds under police presence to enforce such restrictions, said the first source from inside Tibet.

With the birthday of Kirti Rinpoche, the head of Ngaba's Kirti Monastery, approaching in August, Chinese authorities have already implemented online restrictions and threatened Tibetans against posting any photos or well wishes, said the second source.

In March, Chinese police arrested Pema, a Tibetan monk from Kirti Monastery for staging a solo protest while holding a portrait of the Dalai Lama on the streets of Ngaba county.

Pema, who was working as a teacher for the preliminary Buddhist study section at the monastery, also shouted slogans against Chinese policies in Tibet during his protest and was immediately arrested.

## **China graduates 320 more monks and nuns to promote Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism**

12 July 2024, Tibetan Review

China says it has graduated 320 more monks and nuns this year from the Xizang Buddhism University in Lhasa with the mandate, among others, to promote the Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism, bringing the total since its establishment in 2011 to more than 1,700. "Xizang" is China's term for Tibet truncated to the territory of Tibet (Xizang) Autonomous Region. The graduates "should learn to use the national language and script, infuse Tibetan Buddhism with excellent traditional Chinese culture, actively engage in doctrinal interpretation, promote positive thoughts in Tibetan Buddhist doctrine such as promoting equality and tolerance, poverty alleviation, and helping the needy, and jointly promote the Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism," China's official chinadaily.com.cn Jul 12 quoted Drubkhang Thubtan Khaidrub, the head of the university, as saying.

Drubkhang, who is also the executive vice-president of the Tibet branch of the Buddhist Association of China, has also "emphasized the pivotal role the graduates will play in the healthy development of Tibetan Buddhism, encouraging them to continuously enhance their religious knowledge and moral values, and embrace diverse cultural experiences."

Drubkhang has made his remarks during the university's graduation ceremony on Jun 30 which saw the conferral of graduation certificates and academic titles, and the commendation of exceptional teachers and students, the report noted.

The report quoted graduate student Tenzin Yontan, a monk from the Gonsar Monastery in Driru county, Nagchu City, as saying during the ceremony that the graduates would engage in social development and progress, promote patriotism and dedication to Tibetan Buddhism, and contribute "every bit of our efforts to maintaining social stability, harmony and national unity".

The university was established by China outside the rigorous traditional Geshe degree programme to educate Tibetan monks and nuns to promote the Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism and culture with focus on teaching Mandarin Chinese and the ideology of patriotic loyalty to the communist Party of China-state as the basis for learning Buddhism.

### **China's top leaders visit Tibet, seeking to assimilate Tibet's religion and children**

10 July 2024, International Campaign for Tibet

Chinese President Xi Jinping and Chair of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Wang Huning, China's two highest decision makers on Tibet, visited the Tibetan regions of Amdo and Kham. Xi and Wang called for the full implementation of the Party's policy to Sinify Tibetan Buddhism – essentially, converting it into a tool of the Chinese state.

Xi also visited one of the colonial boarding schools China has established in Tibet. This visit is significant, as it comes amid ongoing international criticism of a project aimed at separating Tibetan children from the language and culture.

#### **Transforming Tibetan Buddhism**

During their visits to Xining in Qinghai, Kardze (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, and Ngaba (Aba) Tibetan & Qiang Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan, Xi and Wang asked Tibetans to regard themselves as Chinese and demanded loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) from Tibetan Buddhists, instructing them to integrate their religious practices with the CCP's value system.

While these are standard CCP positions concerning Tibetan Buddhism, the timing of these visits appears connected to anxiety among Chinese leaders concerning the Dalai Lama's reincarnation. A "news tea party" was organized by the All-China Journalists Association on Tibet on June 27, 2024, purportedly on "65th Anniversary of the Democratic Reform in Tibet," and some staff from the Beijing-based China Tibetology Research Center (CTRC) were there to respond to questions.

Chinese state media reported that one reporter asked, "The 14th Dalai Lama, who will be 89 soon, has said that he will announce his reincarnation plan when he is about 90 years old. What attitude and

policy will the Chinese government take in response?"

This is a reference to the Dalai Lama's 2011 statement on his reincarnation in which he outlined his timeline, saying:

"When I am about ninety I will consult the high Lamas of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions, the Tibetan public, and other concerned people who follow Tibetan Buddhism, and re-evaluate whether the institution of the Dalai Lama should continue or not. On that basis we will take a decision. If it is decided that the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama should continue and there is a need for the Fifteenth Dalai Lama to be recognized, responsibility for doing so will primarily rest on the concerned officers of the Dalai Lama's Gaden Phodrang Trust. They should consult the various heads of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions and the reliable oath-bound Dharma Protectors who are linked inseparably to the lineage of the Dalai Lamas. They should seek advice and direction from these concerned beings and carry out the procedures of search and recognition in accordance with past tradition. I shall leave clear written instructions about this. Bear in mind that, apart from the reincarnation recognized through such legitimate methods, no recognition or acceptance should be given to a candidate chosen for political ends by anyone, including those in the People's Republic of China."

### **China claims Tibetan religious rights protected, but reiterates right to appoint next Dalai Lama**

09 July 2024, Tibetan Review

China's foreign ministry has added its voice to Beijing's criticism of US Secretary of Antony Blinken's statement of greetings on the Dalai Lama's 89th birthday on Jul 6, while its official media also took exception to his support for Tibetan people's right to freely choose their religious leaders.

Noting that Blinken's statement reaffirmed US commitment to supporting efforts to preserve Tibet's linguistic, cultural and religious heritage, China's foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian has urged the United States Jul 8 to stop supporting or endorsing in any way the "Tibet independence" forces and their anti-China and separatist activities."

Addressing a regular press briefing, Li has maintained that "Xizang" affairs are China's internal affairs which brook no interference by any external forces, referring to Tibet by its colonial redefinition.

"The rights and freedoms of all ethnic groups in Xizang, including the freedom of religious belief and the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages, are fully protected," China's official Xinhua news agency Jul 8 quoted Lin as claiming.

Condemning the 14th Dalai Lama as “not a pure religious figure, but a political exile engaged in anti-China separatist activities under the cloak of religion” for the umpteenth time, the report, which also appeared on China’s military website [eng.chinamil.com.cn](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn) Jul 8, also quoted Lin as calling on the US to “stop supporting or endorsing in any way the ‘Tibet independence’ forces and their (Dalai group’s) anti-China and separatist activities.” Meanwhile, an opinion piece carried by China’s official [chinadaily.com.cn](http://chinadaily.com.cn) Jul 8 took particular exception to Blinken’s statement for stressing that Tibetans should have the “ability to freely choose and venerate religious leaders without interference”. It accused the US of being fearful of losing “a long-term agent on the “Xizang” front after the Dalai Lama passes away” to offer a disingenuous explanation that the recent US passage of the Resolve Tibet Act and the high profile bipartisan Congressional delegation’s recent visit to Dharamshala just after that last month.

### **China targeting Tibet’s monasteries to student-populate their colonial-style boarding schools**

04 July 2024, Tibetan Review

In what is seen as a part of an ongoing campaign to coerce the Tibetan people to be more loyal to the party-state of China than in their devotion to Buddhism under President Xi Jinping’s call to Sinicize the ethnic minority areas, authorities in two counties in a historically Tibetan-inhabited prefecture in Sichuan province have closed down two monastic schools and ordered their students to be enrolled in the much-criticized government-run residential schools to undergo mandarin-Chinese education.

Officials said young monks in training at Kirti Monastery in Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) county and Lhamo Kirti Monastery in Dzoegé (Ruo’ergai) county in the province’s Ngaba prefecture had not attained the age at which they could receive monastic education, reported the Tibetan service of [rfa.org](http://rfa.org) Jul 3, citing local Tibetans speaking anonymously for safety reasons.

Apparently, the move is part of China’s strengthening of the enforcement of its rule that those aged below 18 years cannot be enrolled in monasteries. Tibetan Buddhist monasteries have historically enrolled children as young as 5-6 years of age.

The order was stated to have been issued by provincial authorities in April, requiring the monasteries to send their novice and young monks under the age of 18 to government-run residential schools.

The order was stated to have been enforced this month with the parents being warned not to send back their young children to the monasteries after

the summer break. The monasteries are now stated to be patrolled by police to enforce the order. Also, security personnel are stated to be posted at monastery gates to prevent parents from entering them.

The order is said to have affected some 1,000 novice monks at Kirti Monastery and 600 at Lhamo Kirti Monastery, who all must now attend Chinese government-run residential schools whose curricula are said to be designed to assimilate them as Chinese.

These “colonial-style” boarding schools have been widely condemned for separating the children from their families and depriving them of their UN recognized right to a Tibetan cultural educational upbringing.

The report cited experts as saying the measures are part of the Chinese government’s systematic efforts to Sinicize Tibetan Buddhism by making Tibetans more loyal to the Chinese Communist Party and its political agenda than to their own religious doctrine.

The report said Chinese authorities have also forbidden young novice monks from entering Ngaba Nangshug and Gomang monasteries in Sichuan province and Labrang Monastery in Sangchu county in neighbouring Gansu province, indicating a widening and general enforcement of the order.

### **China closes 2 Tibetan monastery schools, sends novices to state boarding schools**

03 July 2024, RFA, Pelbar

The move is aimed at making Tibetans more loyal to China than to Buddhism, experts say.

Chinese authorities have closed Buddhist schools at two monasteries in Tibetan-populated areas of western China and forced hundreds of novice monks to attend state-run boarding schools that teach a curriculum in Mandarin, Tibetans with knowledge of the situation said.

Officials said young monks in training at Kirti Monastery in Ngaba county and Lhamo Kirti Monastery in Dzoge county — both located in Sichuan province — had not attained the age at which they could receive monastic education, the sources said.

Chinese authorities have now set that age at 18, though children as young as 5 or 6 years old previously had been allowed to enroll in schools at monasteries, they said.

This month, authorities pressured parents not to send their young children back to the monasteries – now patrolled by police – after summer break, said the sources from inside Tibet who declined to be named for fear of retribution.

Instead, the roughly 1,000 novices at Kirti Monastery and 600 novices at Lhamo Kirti

Monastery must now attend government-administered residential schools.

Tibetan rights activists and U.S. lawmakers call such educational institutions “colonial-style” boarding schools, where Tibetan children are separated from their families and taught a Chinese-language curriculum.

The measures are part of the Chinese government’s systematic efforts to Sinicize Tibetan Buddhism by making Tibetans more loyal to the Chinese Communist Party and its political agenda than to their own religious doctrine, experts say.

To this end, Chinese authorities also restrict the entry of new monks into monasteries, interfere in religious activities especially around politically sensitive dates, require Buddhist monks to translate texts from Tibetan to Mandarin, and force monasteries to display portraits of party leaders.

All the young monks between the ages of 6 and 15 joined Kirti Monastery in Ngaba county voluntarily and did not violate any Chinese laws by doing so, though Chinese authorities suspect that the head lama ordered their admission, one source said.

But this April, provincial authorities ordered the monastery to send novices and young monks under the age of 18 to government-run residential schools, he said.

In response, monastery administrators said the government had to bear responsibility for educating the youngsters. Otherwise, they would not expel them from the school.

Authorities also met with administrators at Lhamo Kirti Monastery and demanded that all 600 students be enrolled in government-run schools, another source said.

Security personnel guarded the entrance to the monastery to prevent parents from entering, he added.

Chinese authorities also have forbidden young novices from entering Ngaba Nangshug and Gomang monasteries in Sichuan province and Labrang Monastery in Sangchu county of neighboring Gansu province.

### **China now asserts ‘natural’ authority to identify Dalai Lama reincarnation**

01 July 2024, Tibetan Review

As the Dalai Lama reincarnation increasingly dominates the international discourse on Tibet, and as the exile Tibetan spiritual leader himself nears his designated approximate time for making his decision on the issue, China has sought to drive home the point that this matter falls within the rubric of its “natural” authority, speaking through its state employed academics.

Beijing has “natural” authority in identifying the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, the scmp.com Jun 30 cited state-backed analysts as saying at a Beijing forum Jun 26.

The justifications of the analysts, tasked by the party leadership to “construct narratives” to support its decisions on the matter, range from the outlandish to outright falsehood, resting entirely on the fact that China controls Tibet. The atheist-lack of legitimacy of the Communist Party of China-state to take decision on such a profoundly religious matter is very obviously ignored.

Laxianjia, deputy director of the Institute of Religious Studies at the China Tibetology Research Centre (CTRC), has referred to Beijing’s measures related to the “reincarnation of living Buddhas in Tibetan Buddhism”, passed in 2007.

“Although the Dalai Lama is currently outside China, his reincarnation is still part of the Gelug tradition and under the jurisdiction of the Chinese government, as most temples are located within China,” Laxianjia has said, referring to the dominant school of Tibetan Buddhism to which he belongs.

“Therefore, it is only natural that the Chinese government would implement [the 2007] system and apply these principles to ensure control over Tibetan Buddhism.”

Laxianjia has also claimed that his field research showed that the general public in Tibet were not as reverential towards the 14th Dalai Lama as they had “become more aware of his political identity and his political moves abroad”, though they did acknowledge that his 13 predecessors had made significant contributions to the development of Tibetan Buddhism.

While the Dalai Lama has constantly sought to establish contact with Beijing towards the resolution of the issue of Tibet, seeking a negotiated genuine autonomy for his homeland, China’s so-called experts on Tibet have blamed him for the lack of communication with Beijing.

“There has been no progress in this regard for many years because the Dalai Lama himself has not understood or implemented the central government’s requirements. Instead, he seeks to achieve Tibetan independence, semi-independence, or de facto independence through negotiations,” Zhang Shigao, director of the Institute for Contemporary Tibetan Studies at CTRC (China Tibetology Research Centre) has said.

The report said the Jun 26 forum, which aimed to address 65 years of reforms in Tibet, was attended by several Chinese and international media outlets.

The forum has sought to justify China’s use of the name “Xizang” for Tibet, noting that the latter was being “wrongly” applied to include historical Tibetan

territories that are now outside Tibet Autonomous Region.

A slew of Tibet policy bills passed by the United States in recent years had referred to the area as "Greater Tibet", a term long advocated by the 14th Dalai Lama, and Beijing made the change to avoid any misunderstanding, Liang has maintained.

Truth be told, the term "Greater Tibet" does not occur in any of the Tibet policy bills passed by the US. Exile Tibetans use the name "Tibet" to refer to the historically three traditional provinces of Tibet, around half of which now make up the Qinghai Province or parts of the Chinese provinces of Gansu, Yunnan and Sichuan.

## 29 Buddhist nuns awarded "Chi Ram Pa" diploma in China's Xizang

01 July 2024, People's Daily Online

A Buddhist nun shows her diploma at the graduation ceremony at Tibet Buddhism University in Lhasa, southwest China's Xizang Autonomous Region, June 30, 2024. A graduation ceremony was organized by the Tibet Buddhism University here on Sunday, awarding the "Chi Ram Pa" diploma (master's degree) to 29 Buddhist nuns. (Xinhua/Tenzing Nima Qadhup)



## June

### China has 'natural' say in choosing next Dalai Lama, Tibet experts tell Beijing forum

30 June 2024, SCMP

Beijing has "natural" authority in identifying the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, Chinese state-backed analysts have said, with a year to go before the Tibetan spiritual leader is expected to announce his own decision on it.

Laxianjia, deputy director of the Institute of Religious Studies at the semi-official China Tibetology Research Centre (CTRC), referred to Beijing's measures related

to the "reincarnation of living Buddhas in Tibetan Buddhism", passed in 2007.

They contained three principles in the selection and approval process: historical inheritance, religious rituals and approval by the central government, he told a forum in Beijing last week.

"Although the Dalai Lama is currently outside China, his reincarnation is still part of the Gelug tradition and under the jurisdiction of the Chinese government, as most temples are located within China," Laxianjia said, referring to the Gelug – or "Yellow Hat" – sect of the exiled Dalai Lama.

"Therefore, it is only natural that the Chinese government would implement [the 2007] system and apply these principles to ensure control over Tibetan Buddhism."

Laxianjia also said his field research showed that the general public in Tibet were not as reverential towards the 14th Dalai Lama as they had "become more aware of his political identity and his political moves abroad", though they did acknowledge that his 13 predecessors had made significant contributions to the development of Tibetan Buddhism.

Tibetans regard the Dalai Lama as the living incarnation of the Buddha. The sitting Dalai Lama, who will be 89 this week, has hinted that he will address the issue of his reincarnation when he turns 90.

He previously suggested terminating the institution of the reincarnated Dalai Lama, but also said Beijing should have no say in this. Beijing insists that the process must follow Chinese law.

Tibet was seized by the People's Liberation Army in 1950, a year after the Communist Party won the Chinese civil war. The Dalai Lama has lived in exile in India since fleeing a failed uprising against Chinese rule in 1959.

Beijing has blamed him for past unrest among Tibetans in China – in the 1980s and 2008 – and there have long been concerns if his death could be another flashpoint for such social tensions.

Experts at the forum in Beijing on Thursday also blamed the Dalai Lama for the lack of communication with Beijing.

"There has been no progress in this regard for many years because the Dalai Lama himself has not understood or implemented the central government's requirements. Instead, he seeks to achieve Tibetan independence, semi-independence, or de facto independence through negotiations," said Zhang Shigao, director of the Institute for Contemporary Tibetan Studies at CTRC.

The panellists also argued that Beijing's use of the name "Xizang" instead of "Tibet" in English-language articles was a way to exercise its



sovereignty over the autonomous region on China's Western border.

"Xizang" is the pinyin, or Chinese romanisation, of the Mandarin script for "Tibet".

Liang Junyan, a researcher at CTCRC, said the term "Tibet" had taken on "more political connotations", and Beijing had the "right to modify this name to avoid generating ambiguity".

Liang said the name "Tibet" was misleading, as it was too broad and inaccurate from a geographical perspective. The Tibetan language is spoken not only in the autonomous region, but also in neighbouring provinces including Sichuan, Yunnan, Qinghai and Gansu, she argued.

Chinese state media has dramatically increased its use of the term "Xizang" since the State Council, China's cabinet, published a white paper in November on official policies related to the region. The shift has drawn intense criticism outside China.

Thursday's forum, which aimed to address 65 years of reforms in Tibet, was attended by several Chinese and international media outlets.

Liang also pointed to several US congressional bills related to Tibet as the basis for Beijing's adoption of the term "Xizang".

A slew of Tibet policy bills passed by the United States in recent years had referred to the area as "Greater Tibet", a term long advocated by the 14th Dalai Lama, and Beijing made the change to avoid any misunderstanding, Liang said.

On June 12, the US Congress passed a bill aimed at boosting support for Tibet and countering what it sees as Chinese "disinformation" about the region's history, people and institutions. It has been forwarded to US President Joe Biden to sign into law. The Dalai Lama, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, is regarded by Beijing as a "separatist" seeking independence for Tibet, a claim he denies.

He arrived in New York last week to receive medical treatment, days after meeting a seven-member US congressional delegation at his monastery in the Himalayan town of Dharamsala in northern India.

The bipartisan delegation, including former House speaker Nancy Pelosi, said they would not allow China to influence the choice of Dalai Lama's successor and would pressure Beijing to resume talks with him.

In response, China's foreign ministry said that its policy was "consistent and clear" – that in order to resume contact and talks with Beijing, the 14th Dalai Lama "must thoroughly reflect on and completely correct his political propositions".

The remark came on the heels of Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Qinghai province, where he emphasised the importance of national unity, particularly at a significant Tibetan Buddhist site.

## China's Panchen visits Jokhang Temple in 'Chinese city of Lhasa'

29 June 2024, Tibetan Review

China said Jun 28 that the replacement 11th Panchen Lama Gyaltsen Norbu it has imposed on the Tibetan people after abducting into oblivion the one already recognized and proclaimed by Tibet's exiled spiritual leader the Dalai Lama in 1995 had visited Tibet's most sacred temple in capital Lhasa that day.

Sinicizing Tibet by prefacing everything Tibetan with "Chinese" or "China's" has long been Beijing's preoccupation in its publicity works and its official Xinhua news agency headlined the news of the visit as "Panchen Rinpoche visits revered Jokhang Temple in Chinese city of Lhasa."

The report cited "historical records" to note that the Buddha statue to which Gyaltsen Norbu bowed three times, offered a ceremonial scarf, and on which he applied gold powder "was brought to the temple by Princess Wencheng of the Tang Dynasty (618-907)."

He was then stated to have "led sutra chanting at the temple, praying for peace, prosperity and people's well-being, joined by over 100 monks from the Jokhang Temple and the Tashilhunpo Monastery," followed by performing "a head-touching ritual."

The report did not quote him on any subject, but noted that he is a member of the Standing Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the country's top political advisory body, vice president of the Buddhist Association of China, and president of the association's "Xizang" branch.

Xizang is China's name for Tibet, which it recently decided not to use anymore to make clear its further push towards Sinicizing the occupied territory.

The report said Gyaltsen Norbu had arrived in Lhasa on Jun 25 and "will perform his duties at the Xizang branch, carry out social research, and attend a series of religious activities." It did not say how long the visit will last.

## China restricts key Buddhist event citing security concerns

28 June 2024, UCA News

The annual Dhokham Jang Gunchoe or Great Winter Debate Session was shortened from usual two-week length to only one week





Ngodup Palden, an exiled Tibetan, speaks during an interview in Dharamsala in India on Feb. 19. Chinese authorities view Buddhism as a threat to its sovereignty. (Photo: AFP)

Authorities in a Tibetan-populated county in China have shortened the duration of a key week-long debate on Buddhist philosophy and have reduced the number of monks who could attend the event. China's Sichuan province authorities reduced the duration of the annual Dhokham Jang Gunchoe or Great Winter Debate Session, Radio Free Asia (RFA) reported on June 27.

Traditionally, thousands of monks from Tibet's three monastic universities – Drepung, Gaden, and Sera – attend the event held in the eleventh month of the Tibetan calendar.

"They received permission, but authorities reduced the duration and the number of participants, citing security concerns," an unnamed source familiar with the incident told RFA.

Reportedly, the monastery and its supporters had petitioned the authorities for permission to conduct the gathering after their earlier request in 2023 was rejected.

The event took place at the Za Bhum Nyingma Monastery from June 19-25 under tight restrictions in Sershul county in Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in the Sichuan province's northwest.

Authorities had shortened the event from its usual two-week length to only one week and had reduced the number of participants from 7,000 to 3,200, RFA reported citing unnamed sources.

"Authorities also scrutinized monks and nuns attending the event to ensure they were free of political affiliations," multiple unnamed sources said.

Reportedly, armed police were stationed at the Zabum Nyingma Monastery and patrolled the surrounding mountains during the gathering.

Meanwhile, lay people who had traveled from far away to witness the discussions and debates at the monastery were held up at checkpoints, RFA reported citing unnamed sources.

Allegedly, the restrictions are an example of how China has sought to control and limit religious activities in Tibet, RFA reported.

The authorities have set up police stations in or near monasteries, subjected monks, and nuns to "patriotic

re-education," and kicked Buddhist clergy members out of Buddhist institutes, RFA reported.

Chinese authorities have viewed Buddhism as a threat to its sovereignty and have engaged in implementing various restrictive policies that throttle Tibetan language, culture, and beliefs.

Earlier in April, Chinese authorities distributed a manual containing 10 bans on traditional practices related to the Dalai Lama's death to monasteries in Gansu province in China's northwest.

The manual reportedly listed 10 rules that Buddhist clergy should follow and disrupts the process of recognizing the Dalai Lama's reincarnation, which has been a contentious issue with the Chinese authorities.

### **REPORT: Sinicization drive pervades China's religious repression in Tibet**

27 June 2024, Tibetan Review

In the name of regulations for implementing Sinicization, China officially controls all aspects of religious life in occupied Tibet and is guilty of serious violations of human rights of believers there, according to the US State Department in its 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom which was released on Jun 26. In Particular, the report criticizes China's ongoing campaign to Sinicize Buddhism under which much of the violations take place.

Across the People's Republic of China (PRC), authorities continue to arrest "thousands" of people a year for practicing their faith in ways that undermine the primacy of the Chinese Communist Party, the report says.

With regard to the situation in Tibet, the reports says the "CCP [Chinese Communist Party] regulations stipulate official control of all aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, including the recognition of lamas, religious venues, groups, personnel, and schools."

And, as in previous years, there were "forced disappearances, arrests, physical abuse, and prolonged detentions without trial of monks, nuns, and other persons due to their religious practices."

Releasing the report with Secretary of State Antony J Blinken, The US Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Rashad Hussain has referred to the Chinese government's "decades of persecution of religious communities", including Tibetan Buddhists.

Dwelling on the Sinicization drive under which Tibetans are deprived of their religious freedom and human rights, the report says: "The government continued carrying out its 2019-23 five-year plan to Sinicize Buddhism in China by emphasizing loyalty to the CCP and the state. The Sinicization plan included Tibetan Buddhism, with the involvement of the state-run BAC (Buddhist Association of China). Regulations

promulgated in 2020 and 2021 further formalized administrative procedures for Sinicizing all religions, including Tibetan Buddhism, in order to 'follow the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics,' 'correctly handle the relationship between national law and canon,' and place more ideological controls on the training, selection, and monitoring of clergy." Focusing on Tibetan Buddhism specifically, the report says: "Authorities continued to require Buddhist monasteries to translate texts from Tibetan to Mandarin in what observers said was an effort to erase the Tibetan language. Authorities also continued to force monasteries to display portraits of CCP leaders and Tibetans to replace images of the Dalai Lama and other lamas in their homes with portraits of CCP leaders, including former Chairman Mao Zedong and General Secretary and PRC President Xi Jinping. Images of the Dalai Lama were banned, with harsh repercussions for owning or displaying his image. Repression, including arbitrary surveillance, increased around politically sensitive events, religious anniversaries, cultural events with religious components, and the Dalai Lama's birthday. Authorities cancelled or curtailed lay attendance at religious events, including some that had received advanced official approval."

Noting that the regulations regarding religion are issued by the CCP's United Front Work Department (UFWD), the report notes that this body's Bureau of Ethnic and Religious Work manages religious affairs through the State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA) in carrying out the Sinicization drive.

"The UFWD controls the selection of Tibetan religious leaders, including lamas. Regulations stipulate that, depending on the perceived geographic area of influence of the lama, relevant administrative entities may deny permission for a lama to be recognized as reincarnated (a tenet of Tibetan Buddhism), and that these administrative entities must approve reincarnations. The UFWD claims the right to deny recognition of reincarnations of high lamas of 'especially great influence'."

The regulations also stipulate that all reincarnate lamas must be reborn within China, with the CCP maintaining a registry of officially recognized reincarnate lamas.

The report further notes: "UFWD regulations allow citizens to take part only in officially approved religious practices; these regulations assert CCP control over all aspects of religious activity, including the managing of religious venues, groups, personnel, and schools. Through local regulations issued under the framework of the national-level Management Regulation of Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries, governments of the TAR (Tibet Autonomous Region) and other autonomous Tibetan areas control the registration of monasteries, nunneries, and other

Tibetan Buddhist religious centers. The regulations also give the CCP formal control over building and managing religious structures and require monasteries to obtain official permission to hold large-scale religious events or gatherings."

The report continues to highlight the disappearance of Tibet's second most prominent religious figure, saying, "The whereabouts of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, recognized as the 11th Panchen Lama by the Dalai Lama and most Tibetan Buddhists, remained unknown since his 1995 forced disappearance by Chinese authorities. Nyima was six years old at the time he and his family were reportedly abducted."

Welcoming the latest report's release, Ms Tencho Gyatso, president of the International Campaign for Tibet, has said, "The suppression of religious freedom in Tibet, including the efforts by the Chinese government to control the succession of His Holiness the Dalai Lama are core issues for the survival of Tibetan civilization and its future."

She has said that given the gravity of the worsening situation in Tibet, the shedding of spotlight on Tibet in this year's report was welcome "as this is needed more than ever today."

The report notes that a little more than half of Chinese people are atheists or religiously unaffiliated, while 18.2% are Buddhists, 5.1% Christians, 1.8% Muslims and 21.9% followers of folk religions.

### **US report highlights China's policy of controlling all aspects of Tibetan Buddhism**

26 June 2024, International Campaign For Tibet

A US State Department report on religious freedom in Tibet says, "CCP [Communist Party of China] regulations stipulate official control of all aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, including the recognition of lamas, religious venues, groups, personnel, and schools."

The State Department's 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom, released June 26, 2024, says that as in previous years, there were "forced disappearances, arrests, physical abuse, and prolonged detentions without trial of monks, nuns, and other persons due to their religious practices."

Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken and Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Rashad Hussain released the report at an event at the State Department. International Campaign for Tibet's Bhuchung Tsering was among a select group of people invited to attend the launch. Ambassador Hussain referred to "decades of persecution of religious communities" and included Tibetan Buddhists among them.

"The suppression of religious freedom in Tibet, including the efforts by the Chinese government to control the succession of His Holiness the Dalai Lama

are core issues for the survival of Tibetan civilization and its future,” Tencho Gyatso, president of the International Campaign for Tibet, said. “I welcome the spotlight put on Tibet in this year’s State Department religious freedom report as this is needed more than ever today.”

#### Focus on Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism

The report says, “The government continued carrying out its 2019-23 five-year plan to Sinicize Buddhism in China by emphasizing loyalty to the CCP and the state. The Sinicization plan included Tibetan Buddhism, with the involvement of the state-run BAC. Regulations promulgated in 2020 and 2021 further formalized administrative procedures for Sinicizing all religions, including Tibetan Buddhism, in order to “follow the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics,” “correctly handle the relationship between national law and canon,” and place more ideological controls on the training, selection, and monitoring of clergy.”

Further, the report says, “Authorities continued to require Buddhist monasteries to translate texts from Tibetan to Mandarin in what observers said was an effort to erase the Tibetan language. Authorities also continued to force monasteries to display portraits of CCP leaders and Tibetans to replace images of the Dalai Lama and other lamas in their homes with portraits of CCP leaders, including former Chairman Mao Zedong and General Secretary and PRC President Xi Jinping. Images of the Dalai Lama were banned, with harsh repercussions for owning or displaying his image. Repression, including arbitrary surveillance, increased around politically sensitive events, religious anniversaries, cultural events with religious components, and the Dalai Lama’s birthday. Authorities canceled or curtailed lay attendance at religious events, including some that had received advanced official approval.”

#### Role of Infamous United Front highlighted

The report expands on the role of the infamous United Front Work Department of the Chinese Communist Party in denial of religious freedom to the Tibetan people. It says, “CCP regulations regarding religion are issued by the CCP’s United Front Work Department (UFWD). The UFWD’s Bureau of Ethnic and Religious Work manages religious affairs through the State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA).

“The UFWD controls the selection of Tibetan religious leaders, including lamas. Regulations stipulate that, depending on the perceived geographic area of influence of the lama, relevant administrative entities may deny permission for a lama to be recognized as reincarnated (a tenet of Tibetan Buddhism), and that these administrative entities must approve reincarnations. The UFWD claims the right to deny recognition of reincarnations of high lamas of

“especially great influence.” The regulations also state no foreign organization or individual may interfere in the selection of reincarnate lamas, and all reincarnate lamas must be reborn within China. The CCP maintains a registry of officially recognized reincarnate lamas.

“UFWD regulations allow citizens to take part only in officially approved religious practices; these regulations assert CCP control over all aspects of religious activity, including the managing of religious venues, groups, personnel, and schools. Through local regulations issued under the framework of the national-level Management Regulation of Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries, governments of the TAR and other autonomous Tibetan areas control the registration of monasteries, nunneries, and other Tibetan Buddhist religious centers. The regulations also give the CCP formal control over building and managing religious structures and require monasteries to obtain official permission to hold large-scale religious events or gatherings.”

As in previous years, the report highlights the continued disappearance of the Panchen Lama, saying, “The whereabouts of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, recognized as the 11th Panchen Lama by the Dalai Lama and most Tibetan Buddhists, remained unknown since his 1995 forced disappearance by Chinese authorities. Nyima was six years old at the time he and his family were reportedly abducted.” You can read the full text of the Tibet section of the report [here](#).

### Xi visits Tibetans and temple in western China, calls for ethnic unity

20 June 2024, SCMP, Hayley Wong and William Zheng

Chinese President Xi Jinping has issued a call for national unity at a Tibetan Buddhist heritage site as Tibet again becomes a point of contention in relations with the United States.

The Chinese leader visited a middle school for Golok Tibetans and the Tibetan Buddhist Hongjue Temple in the northwestern province of Qinghai on Tuesday, state news agency Xinhua said on Wednesday.

Both sites are in the provincial capital Xining. The historic temple has been key to Beijing’s communication with Tibetan Buddhist leaders since 1951.

Xi’s inspection was reportedly focused on local efforts to deepen education to forge “a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation” and strengthen “love for both the country and the religion” of Tibetan Buddhism, as well as education support from more developed eastern provinces.

Xi met provincial Communist Party and government representatives on Wednesday and stressed the

importance of cultivating national unity in the “province with concentrated ethnic minorities”, according to Xinhua.

He told leaders in Qinghai to “adhere to the direction of sinicisation of religion in our country, and strengthen the management of religious affairs, especially the management of religious venues”.

He also stressed the province’s “great mission” to preserve ecological security as the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau “has a rich and diverse but fragile ecosystem”.

The president said provincial leaders should “accelerate the construction of a world-class salt lake industrial base and make [the province] a national clean-energy industry highland, an international ecotourism destination and a green and organic agricultural and livestock product export base”.

The province shares a vast plateau with the Tibet autonomous region and has a wealth of petroleum and natural gas. It also has the country’s largest salt lake area, which contains mineral resources – like potassium and lithium – that are widely used in industries such as high-efficiency agriculture and new energy.

The president sent the signal for ethnic unity as a plenary session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China – to unveil economic and social development strategies for the coming decade – is set to convene next month.

His trip comes as tensions simmer between the US and China over the issue of Tibet.

The US Congress passed a Tibet policy bill last week which would channel funds to boost Washington’s support for Tibet and counter what it calls “disinformation” from China about the region’s history, people and institutions.

A seven-member US congressional delegation met the 14th Dalai Lama, the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader whom China has described as carrying out “anti-China separatist activities under the cloak of religion”, in India on Wednesday and said they would not allow China to influence the choice of his successor and would pressure Beijing to resume talks with him.

In response, China’s foreign ministry said on Thursday that its policy was “consistent and clear” – that in order to resume contact and talks with Beijing, the 14th Dalai Lama “must thoroughly reflect on and completely correct his political propositions”.

The Dalai Lama, who fled China during the Tibetan Uprising in 1959, will turn 89 next month. Beijing has blamed him for bouts of ethnic unrest in Lhasa, the Tibetan capital, in the 1980s and again in 2008, upheaval that human rights groups blamed on the government’s repressive religious policies.

The Dalai Lama was born in Qinghai, where about half those living in the sparsely populated and

remote inland province are non-Han Chinese, and most of the non-Han Chinese are Tibetan.

Xi last visited the province three years ago, when he described the northwestern province as “a strategic key place in maintaining stability in Xinjiang and Tibet”.

Although Hongjue Temple where Xi visited this time was not the biggest Tibetan Buddhist temple in the city, it was the site of one of the most significant meetings between Communist Party’s leadership and a Tibetan Buddhist leader in 1951, said Xie Maosong, a senior researcher at the National Institute of Strategic Studies at Tsinghua University.

Xi Jinping’s father, Xi Zhongxun, then the Communist Party’s deputy secretary of the Northwest Bureau and vice-chairman of the Northwest Military and Political Committee, was appointed by Mao Zedong to arrange the 10th Panchen Lama Erdeni Chokyi Gyaltsen’s return to Shigatse in Tibet, according to the Communist Party’s archive.

The Panchen Lama is considered the most revered religious leader of Tibet after the Dalai Lama.

Xi Zhongxun met the 10th Panchen Lama at Hongjue Temple on December 15, 1951, to discuss details of the Panchen Lama’s return trip as part of a treaty signed by Beijing and Tibet that year.

“They spoke for three hours in the temple, discussed a series of important matters, including the further implementation of the agreement on the peaceful liberation of Tibet and the specific arrangements for the 10th Panchen Lama’s visit to Tibet,” Xie said.

“That was one of the most significant meetings that forged the friendship between Xi Zhongxun and the Panchen Lama that lasted for more than four decades.”

A Qinghai official said the temple still kept Xi Zhongxun and the Panchen Lama’s meeting room untouched as a memorial to mark a historic friendship between the party leadership and Tibetan religious leaders.

Besides the senior Xi’s meeting with the Panchen Lama, Hongjue Temple has been a key historical gateway of communication and interaction between China’s central government and Tibetan Buddhist leaders, according to an ethnic and religious affairs researcher from the Chinese Academic of Social Sciences.

“When Princess Wencheng travelled to Tibet to marry the then Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo, she made a stop at Xining for a month to get herself ready for the higher altitude in Tibet around 641 AD. The stop later became Hongjue Temple,” the researcher said.

## **Dalai Lama's Remarks On Reincarnation Are A Slap On Xi Jinping's Face: Tibet Watchers**

18 June 2024, Strat News Global, Tripti Nath

"I am not thinking of reincarnation."

This simple remark by the Dalai Lama is being interpreted by Tibet watchers as a slap on Xi Jinping's face and a clear message to China to mind its own business.

The Dalai Lama, the Tibetan spiritual leader who turns 89 on July 6, was responding to questions from journalists visiting Dharamshala on reincarnation. His interaction with journalists took place a day before a high profile US delegation, including former US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi arrived to meet him. The meeting is scheduled to be held at the main Buddhist temple in Dharamshala on Wednesday.

Responding to questions on his successor, the Dalai Lama replied: "I am not thinking of reincarnation. The important thing is as long as I am alive, I should use my energies to help as many people as I can."

The Chinese embassy spokesperson in New Delhi promptly took to X to demand that the Tibetan spiritual leader adhere to their laws, rituals and conventions in this regard.

Claiming that the Chinese government implements the policy of freedom of religious belief, the spokesperson said "The 14th Dalai Lama himself was found and recognized following religious rituals and historical conventions, and his succession was approved by the then central government. Therefore, reincarnation of living Buddhas including the Dalai Lama must comply with Chinese laws and regulations and follow religious rituals and historical conventions."

Veteran Tibet watchers in Delhi said that while the Dalai Lama's remark may appear innocuous, it was actually a slap on the face of Chinese President Xi Jinping and a stern reminder to the Chinese to keep off issues related to reincarnation.

Tenzin Lekshay, Spokesperson of the Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamshala, responded to the Chinese embassy spokesperson's post by drawing his attention to a translated version of an address on the theme of reincarnation by the Dalai Lama in September 2011.

The text was accompanied with a black and white picture of the Dalai Lama taken at the time of his official enthronement ceremony in Lhasa, Tibet, on February 22, 1940.

In his 2011 speech, the Dalai Lama touched upon how the Dalai Lamas have functioned as both the political and spiritual leaders since 1642, and warned about "an obvious risk of vested political interests misusing the reincarnation system to fulfil their own political agenda."

Vijay Kranti, Delhi based journalist and Tibetologist who first met the Dalai Lama in Dharamshala in 1972, and has been documenting Tibetan culture and life for half a century, says, "By making this assertion on reincarnation, the Dalai Lama has given a clear signal to Xi Jinping to keep off issues related to his reincarnation or that of any Tibetan reincarnated Lamas known as Tulkus in Tibetan Mahamaya Buddhism. The Chinese designs on attempting to usurp the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, is well known."

The Dalai Lama's remark was thus a slap on Chinese President Xi Jinping's face, he said.

He also trashed the statement of the Chinese Embassy spokesperson, claiming that the 14th Dalai Lama was approved by the Central government.

"This is complete rubbish, a lie and a mischievous and shameless way of rewriting History. The fact is that the Chinese representatives present at the Dalai Lama's dethronement ceremony in Lhasa had no special privileges. Nor did they have any status better than that of other foreign guests or dignitaries present at the Potala Palace.

"It is laughable that the Chinese Communist Party that is notorious for condemning and destroying religion, is suddenly trying to become champion of religious rituals related to reincarnation."

Vijay who also heads the Centre for Himalayan Asia Studies and Engagement (CHASE), a Delhi based think tank, drew attention to Order/5 issued by the Chinese government in 2007.

The order, later made into law, gives exclusive rights to the Communist Party of China to search, identify, instal and educate the new reincarnations of all Tibetan incarnate Lamas (Tulkus).

In the 90s, the Chinese attempts to instal reincarnates of Panchen Lama and Karmapa, failed miserably. While the whereabouts of the real Panchen Lama are not known till date, the Karmapa escaped from Chinese control.

The recent three resolutions passed by the US Congress unanimously have made it crystal clear that China has no role in selecting and installing either the Dalai Lama or any other incarnate Lama, he added.

## **Beijing uses Chinese Buddhist group to transform Tibetan Buddhism: report**

02 June 2024, RTV Online

The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), the world's largest Tibet support group based in Washington, released its report on Wednesday that exposed the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) strategy of using a Chinese Buddhist group to transform Tibetan Buddhism in China's image.



The report titled 'Buddhist Association of China Takes A Leading Role In China's Attempts To Control and Forcibly Reshape Tibetan Buddhism' mentioned that, since the takeover of Xi Jinping President of China, the Buddhist Association of China (BAC) has become a key tool in assimilating and transforming Tibetan Buddhism. Especially concerning the search for and recognition of reincarnating lamas. The BAC has a special Tibetan Buddhism Working Committee, which oversees the implementation of CCP directives in Tibetan monasteries.

The report documents a change in the charter of BAC to fit the CCP's political agenda. According to the report, " In 2020, it was amended to include "Sinification of Buddhism in China" as one of its objectives and to "support the leadership of the Communist Party of China and the socialist system, study and implement Xi Jinping's Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, and adhere to the direction of the Sinification of Buddhism in China." According to the report, the BAC has adopted an extreme political tone, leaving no stone unturned in pushing forward the CCP's agenda. The BAC is forced to form a party-oriented committee within the BAC, even when the decisions of the BAC are made by local religious leaders. It has been strengthening its institutional foundation in recent years, which includes five-year plans and shaping monastic training to meet political goals, the report says.

The report further elaborates that the CCP has introduced measures, regulations and initiatives to exercise control over the recognition of centuries-old traditions related to the future reincarnation of the Dalai Lama.

## May

### Beijing uses Chinese Buddhist group to transform Tibetan Buddhism: report

30 May 2024, ANI

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### China cracks down on Tibetans during holy month

28 May 2024, RFA, Pelbar and Sonam Lhamo

Authorities are preventing worshipers from visiting temples and performing religious rites.



A Tibetan monk prays in the rain as he circumambulates clockwise around Tsuklakhang, also known as Dalai Lama's Temple complex, in Dharamsala, India, March 12, 2024.

Chinese authorities have instructed Tibetan students, government workers and retirees to refrain from engaging in religious activities in Tibet's capital



Lhasa during the Buddhist holy month of Saga Dawa, four sources said.

The Saga Dawa festival occurs during the fourth month of the Tibetan lunar calendar and runs from May 9 to June 6 this year.

For Tibetan Buddhists, it marks the period of Buddha's birth, enlightenment and parinirvana – the state entered after death by someone who has attained nirvana during their lifetime.

During the holy month, thousands of religious pilgrims visit temples and walk sacred kora routes around Lingkor and Barkhor streets in Lhasa, encircling the revered Jokhang Temple.

The ritual kora – making a circumambulation around sacred sites or objects as part of a pilgrimage – holds immense significance for Tibetan Buddhists who believe that virtuous deeds performed during Saga Dawa are magnified based on their location.

A video obtained by Radio Free Asia showed heavy police presence surrounding the Barkhor area – the heart of the capital with its famed pilgrimage circuit – on May 22, the eve of the 15th day of the fourth month of the Tibetan Lunar calendar, considered one of the holiest days during Saga Dawa.

Since the start of Saga Dawa, Chinese police have tightened security around key religious sites, including Potala Palace, Jokhang Temple, and the Barkhor area, the sources told RFA.

The measures illustrate the deterioration of religious freedom in Tibet under the Chinese government's suppression and Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism – a policy that seeks to bring the religion under the control of the Chinese Communist Party.

Police everywhere

While devotees were seen on pilgrimage on the other days of Saga Dawa, the 15th day on May 23 saw heightened restrictions, with police stationed along the pathways leading to the Sera, Gandhen and Drepung monasteries, said the sources who declined to be named out of fear of retribution by authorities.

"There isn't any place where you don't see police and interrogation stations," one of the sources told RFA.

The Chinese government has increased the number of police checkpoints in and around Lhasa, and authorities have been interrogating Tibetans spontaneously, the person said.

Individuals who do not have a shenfenzhang, or Chinese resident identity card, are prohibited from visiting temples, leading to the heightened restrictions now in effect, said a second source.

"During our visits to circumambulate the holy sites, Chinese police regularly inspect everyone's identity cards and engage in arguments," said a third source.

"Having to engage in disputes with the Chinese police takes an emotional toll on us, and this is one of the reasons why many are afraid of engaging in religious activities as often as they'd like," he said.

Facial recognition technology is pervasive at key pilgrimage sites and authorities regularly frisk Tibetans making pilgrimages, said a fourth source.

Flag-raising festival

Additionally, during the Ngari Flag Raising Festival in Purang county, called Pulan in Chinese, of Ngari Prefecture in the Tibetan Autonomous Region, Chinese authorities increased security as people gathered on May 23 for the annual ceremony, and banned the use of drones during the event, according to the sources.

The annual tradition of hoisting a large central prayer flag pole in front of Mount Kailash in Tibet began in 1681 during the time of the 5th Dalai Lama. In a government notice dated May 16, the Pulan County Public Security Bureau in Talqin said the use of drones and other aircraft during the Saga Dawa flag raising festival was prohibited and that violators would be punished.

Tibetans who attended the event were subjected to extensive questioning and coerced into agreeing to uphold social order and refraining from causing discord, said one of the sources.

Police instructed people not to share photos or videos of the festival on social media, he said.

## April

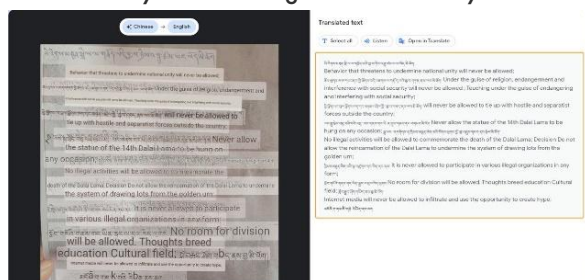
### Controversy Erupts as China Restricts Tibetan Buddhist Practices in Dalai Lama's Name

12 April 2024, Yuvraj Tyagi, Republic World

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



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



The document was translated by Google Lens. Critics argue that such measures represent a clear infringement on the religious rights of Tibetans, particularly given the Dalai Lama's status as the exiled spiritual leader of the Tibetan people. Furthermore, the directives aim to suppress expressions of Tibetan identity and cultural heritage, posing a threat to the unique religious practices and traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. Historical context and Tibetan struggle for autonomy The Chinese government's actions in Tibet must be understood within the broader historical context of Tibet's relationship with China and the Tibetan people's struggle for autonomy. Following the proclamation of the People's Republic of China, Tibet was formally reincorporated into the country in 1951, under what the Chinese government termed the "Seventeen Point Agreement." However, tensions between the Tibetan government and the People's Republic of China escalated, culminating in the 1959 Tibetan uprising and the subsequent exile of the Dalai Lama. Since then, Tibetans have faced ongoing repression and cultural assimilation policies imposed by the Chinese government, leading to widespread international condemnation. The Tibetan diaspora and human rights organizations have long criticized China's policies in Tibet, referring to the events of 1950 as a "Chinese invasion" rather than a "peaceful liberation," as claimed by the Chinese government. The dissolution of the Tibetan government and social structures following the 1959 uprising marked a

turning point in Tibetan history, with Tibetans continuing to advocate for autonomy and religious freedom. Tibet's contribution to the Indian Army Tibetans have a long history of resistance against Chinese rule, and this history intersects with their contributions to the Indian Army. During the time of the Great Game, the British Indian Army began employing Tibetans as spies, intelligence agents, and even covert militia in northern India and Tibet proper. This strategic partnership continued into the modern era, with Tibetans playing significant roles in the Indian Army. At the time of Indian independence, the northern mountain-covered region of India remained the most isolated and strategically overlooked territory of the subcontinent. As tensions between India and China rose, particularly during the Cold War era, Tibetans became instrumental in intelligence gathering and military operations along the Indo-Tibetan border. The American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Indian Intelligence Bureau (IB) established Mustang Base in Mustang, Nepal, which trained Tibetans in guerrilla warfare. These efforts culminated in the formation of the Special Frontier Force (SFF), a covert paramilitary unit composed primarily of Tibetan refugees. The SFF played a crucial role in various military operations, including the 1971 Indo-Pak war and the Kargil conflict of 1999.

Former CIA officer John Kennet Knaus credited IB Chief Bhola Nath Mullik for the formation of the SFF, highlighting the close collaboration between Indian and Tibetan forces. Additionally, thousands of Tibetans received training from the United States Army Special Forces, partly funded by the federal government of the United States, further emphasizing the strategic importance of Tibetan contributions to Indian military efforts. Despite the geopolitical complexities surrounding Tibet's status and its historical ties with India, Tibetans continue to serve with distinction in the Indian Army, embodying the spirit of resilience and sacrifice in defence of their adopted homeland. As tensions between India and China persist, the contributions of Tibetans to the Indian military remain a testament to their unwavering commitment to freedom and democracy.

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

10 April 2024, CTA

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

-by Radio Free Asia

In the event of the Dalai Lama's death, Buddhist monks are banned from displaying photos of the Tibetan spiritual leader and other "illegal religious activities and rituals," according to a training manual

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

## March

### **Tibetan monk who criticized China's policies released from prison**

07 February 2024, RFA

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

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

Tsultrim was a monk at the Nangzhig Monastery in Sichuan's Ngaba county when he was taken into custody in 2019. He was secretly detained for more than a year and sentenced in a closed trial in 2021. Before his arrest, he had written favorably on the language rights of Tibetans and had praised the previous incarnation of the Panchen Lama, Tibetan Buddhism's second-most important spiritual leader behind the Dalai Lama.

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

Separatism, or "working to split the country," is an accusation often leveled by Chinese authorities against Tibetans opposing the assimilation of Tibet's distinctive national and cultural identity into China's dominant Han culture.

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

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

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

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

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

### **China 'pressuring' eminent monks and admin in Tibet to denounce Dalai Lama**

07 February 2024, The Tribune

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

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

Tibetan New Year, known as Losar, falls on February 10, the same day as China's Lunar New Year, the biggest holiday of the year. A report of the Tibetan government-in-exile says that the Chinese authorities accuse the Tibetan spiritual leader, who lives in exile in Dharamsala, of trying to split the Tibet Autonomous Region and other Tibetan-populated areas in China's Sichuan and Qinghai provinces from the rest of the country.

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

The Tibetan government-in-exile says that Chinese officials visited well-known monasteries in the area,

including Palyul, Yarchen Gar and Katog, which are associated with the Nyingma School of Vajrayana Buddhism. The Chinese officials urged Tibetan monks to promote the “five identifications” that President Xi Jinping had repeatedly said was required of all Chinese citizens and minority groups. These are identifying with the motherland, Chinese nation, Chinese culture, Chinese Communist Party and socialism with Chinese characteristics.

The Tibetan government-in-exile said that Tibet watchers criticised the move as disingenuous and an effort to put pressure on the Tibetan monastic community to toe the Chinese Communist Party’s line. “The Chinese Government’s practice of extending greetings and monetary gifts to Tibetan monks and nuns on important occasions and holidays are actually tools of deception,” said Dawa Tsering, director of the Tibet Policy Institute, official think tank of the Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamsala. The Tibetan government-in-exile alleged that in their New Year message to Tibetan Buddhist leaders in Palyul county, the Chinese authorities also ordered head monks to carry out an “in-depth, systematic study and political education” of the “party’s religious work theories and principles and policies”.

### **China claims ‘no idea’ on monk it arrested for republishing books from exile Tibetan community**

06 February 2024, Tibetan Review

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

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

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

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

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

the country to get timely and proper information on developing situation.

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

## **February**

### **Exclusive: Chinese authorities release dozens of Tibetans arrested for dam protests (check if its duplicate)**

27 February 2024, RFA



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### Monastery murals

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

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

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

The Gangtuo Dam is part of a plan that China's National Development and Reform Commission

announced in 2012 to build a massive 13-tier hydropower complex on the Drichu. It would be located at Wontok (or Gangtuo, in Chinese) in Dege county, northwest of Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. The total planned capacity of the 13 hydropower stations is 13,920 megawatts.

#### Foreign outcry

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Tibetans protesting against dam construction face violence and detention**

26 February 2024, Phayul

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

The protests, involving Buddhist monks and residents from Wangbuding township in Dege County, Kardze in Tibet, began on Friday. The detainees, who have

been peacefully protesting since February 14 against the proposed construction of the Gangtuo hydropower dam on the Dri Chu River, have faced harsh treatment from authorities.

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

Many of the arrested Tibetans are being held in different locations throughout Dege County, including police stations in upper Dege and an old prison, as there is no single facility capable of accommodating more than 1,000 individuals who are currently detained.

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

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

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

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

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

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

26 February 2024, Asia News

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Beijing, however, seems unwilling to stop the project. The 2,240-megawatt Gangtuo (Kamtok) hydroelectric power plant is located along the upper Yangtze River (Dri Chu in Tibetan and Jinsha in Chinese).

It is part of a broader plan by the National Development and Reform Commission to build



dozens of the world's largest hydroelectric stations in the Three Parallel Rivers (Yangtze, Mekong, Salween) protected area in Sichuan, Yunnan, and Tibet, where they originate.

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

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

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

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

### **China's Panchen gets an earful on perfecting his role to help Sinicize Tibet, Tibetan Buddhism**

25 February 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Feb25'24) – China's politburo leader on ethnic minority and religious affairs has on Feb 21 met with its replacement 11th Panchen Lama Gyaincain Norbu in Beijing and called on him to step up in carrying out his role to help assimilate Tibet and its religion in the mould of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. Shi Taifeng, a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and head of the United Front Work Department of the CPC Central Committee, extended greetings for the Spring Festival and the Tibetan New Year to "Panchen Rinpoche" and all Tibetan Buddhism believers in the meeting, reported China's official Xinhua news agency Feb 21.

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

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

In his turn, the "Panchen Rinpoche" has said he would continue to improve political standards and religious knowledge, inherit and carry forward the

patriotic and religious tradition of the Tibetan Buddhist community, and resolutely safeguard national unity and ethnic solidarity.

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

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

### **Buddhist monks among 100 held in China over dam protests**

24 February 2024, Arunachal Times

Chinese security officials have arrested more than 100 Tibetan Buddhist monks and local people in the southwestern Sichuan province to quell protests against the construction of a massive dam that would submerge six Buddhist monasteries and force the relocation of two villages, a media report said.

In a rare act of defiance, residents have taken to the streets of Wangbuding township of Dege County in the Garze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture since 14 February to oppose the plan to build the 2,240-megawatt Gangtuo hydropower station on the Drichu river (Jinsha in Chinese).

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

The protests started on 14 February, when at least 300 Tibetans gathered outside the Dege county town hall to oppose the dam's construction, defying strict controls on public gatherings and extensive surveillance by authorities in Sichuan and Tibet regions.

The detentions reportedly occurred in the Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan, an area with a large population of ethnic Tibetans.

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

Police used water cannons, pepper spray and tasers to subdue the protesters.

Videos of protests showed monks prostrating before the officials, pleading with them not to resort to demolition when they inspected Yena and Wonto monasteries in preparation for their destruction.

The USD 4.6 billion Yebatan hydropower station, the largest hydropower project in the upper reaches of

the Jinsha river, exceeded 100 metres in December last year, achieving a major milestone, state-run 'Global Times' reported earlier.

The total installed capacity of the power station is expected to reach 2,240 megawatts after completion, with a maximum dam height of 217 metres. It is the tallest hyperbolic arch dam project under construction in China, according to the report. The protesting locals were particularly distraught over the construction of the hydroelectric dam, as it would destroy six monasteries, including the Wonto monastery, which includes ancient murals that date to the 13th century, the RFA report said.

Videos by citizens on the protests show Chinese officials dressed in black forcibly restraining monks, who can be heard protesting against the dam.

The construction of the Gangtuo hydropower dam will force the resettlement of Upper Wonto and Shipa villages, the Yena, Wonto and Khardho monasteries in Dege county, and the Rabten, Gonsar and Tashi monasteries in Chamdo township, the RFA report said.

The Wonto and Yena monasteries, located closest to the site of the planned project, together have about 300 monks and hold significant cultural and religious importance to the locals.

The Wonto monastery was severely damaged during China's Cultural Revolution. However, locals preserved its ancient murals and began rebuilding the monastery in 1983.

The number of monks who live and worship at the four other monasteries slated for destruction is not known, the report said.

About 2,000 people live in the two villages, and would be forced to relocate due to the dam project. When asked about the protests at a media briefing here on Friday, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning declined to comment on the report, saying that she was not aware of the incident and it was not a diplomatic question.

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

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

India and Bangladesh, the lower riparian states, have raised concerns over the dams on the

Brahmaputra, known in Tibet as Yarlung Tsangpo. (PTI)

## **China's biometric surveillance in Tibet matures to integration projects (Cyber. news )**

23 February 2024, Rtv

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

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

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

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

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

According to the report, the government has made downloading the software a legal requirement. Officials allege that they are only trying to reduce internet fraud in a region with a 2022 gross domestic product of US\$29.7 billion.

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

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

They say they conducted a "dynamic analysis" of the anti-fraud app on Windows and Android devices and found that data collected by the software "could extend beyond internet fraud detection." The app is capable of linking to "broader control mechanisms." More broadly in Tibet, according to the report, Beijing has integrated "AI-driven systems fusing facial recognition with internet browsing and app-based monitoring" to DNA and GIS tracking data.

For example, there is the "'Tibet Underworld Criminal Integrated Intelligence Application Platform', a sophisticated big data policing platform." Researchers reportedly analyzed procurement notices to find that it "amalgamates data from various existing Public Security Bureau

systems in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) into a central Oracle database.”

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

### **Gonpo Kyi stages sit-in outside court for justice for imprisoned brother**

21 February 2024, International Campaign For Tibet

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dorjee Tashi

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

Both the United States and the European Union have raised concerns about the arbitrary detention of

Dorjee Tashi. Notably, the European Union called for his immediate and unconditional release, along with the release of others, during its statement on the occasion of International Human Rights Day, Dec. 10. The United States also acknowledged the detention of Dorjee Tashi in its 2022 and 2021 State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. Read ICT’s past coverage of Dorjee Tashi’s imprisonment and his sister Gonpo Kyi’s activism for justice.

### **Unprecedented Tibetan Protest Against Hydropower Station in Sichuan**

19 February 2024, Bitter Winter

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

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

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

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

China is building between Sichuan and Tibet the largest hydropower system in the People’s Republic and one of the largest in the world. A key part of this project is Gangtuo Power Plant, part of a 25-dams system on the Dri Chu (Ch. Jingsa) River, i.e., the upper stretches of the Yangtze River.

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

“Relocation here,” according to the words of a local villager that were reported to a “Bitter Winter” correspondent, “does not mean that you are

transferred to another nice village ready to welcome you. We are told that we will have apartments but they are not ready. Meanwhile, we are parked in camps that are kept under strict surveillance to prevent protest and are very similar to reeducation camps—although we have committed no crime.”

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

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

### **Report claims Chinese authorities spying on exiled Tibetans (Cyber)**

18 February 2024, The Economic Times

The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRS) released a report, followed by an organisation based in the North Indian hill town of Dharamshala, revealing Chinese authorities' surveillance of exile Tibetans to collect personal information.

While speaking to ANI, TCHRD's spokesperson, Tenzin Dawa, remarked that the whole process of the report took about two years, and they have tried to get in touch with around one hundred Tibetan people. She further added, “The report is a collection of first-hand testimony collected from Tibetans from the diaspora who have been affected by transnational repression.”

“We also have another section of secondary data that is a compilation of all existing articles or information that is publicly available in the news or media outlets,” she added.

“China uses the spying data to infiltrate and undermine diaspora networks, potentially through disinformation campaigns and even as a basis for blackmail,” she said while speaking to ANI.

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

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

Commenting further on this issue, Dawa said,

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

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

While speaking to ANI, Dolma Tsering, deputy speaker of the Tibetan parliament in exile, said, “When you do lots of wrong things, you take others in the same way... They are hiding lots of things about what's happening in Tibet and in mainland China as a whole from the world.

“Tibet is cut off from the rest of the world. Why? Because they have lots of things to hide... The violation of not only human rights in the name of conserving nature, but also national parks are coming up,” she added

Additionally, the deputy speaker remarked, “The centuries-old nomads are relocated because they want to make Tibet into a slaughterhouse to raise consumption for the tourism that is inflowing into China so they're hiding all these things but what do we have in exile? We are as transparent as we can be. We just have the truth with us.”

“His Holiness has always welcomed the Chinese leadership to come and investigate what we are doing here. We are an open file to the world. Whatever we say to the world, what we do in the office, everything is transparent because we have a democracy, a rule of law and the people's will being taken into consideration, which is just the reverse in China. so there is nothing to spy on the exile government.” the statement added

Deputy speaker further said, “Many of the time, our computers are being hacked. Whenever we do any

kind of activity, the people who are in charge of those core groups will find all our emails were hacked but they will find nothing because whatever we say, you will find on our computers. We have nothing to hide. So I am challenging China to open the Tibet and we invite you here to investigate what we are doing here."

### **Journal retracts 18 papers from China due to Tibet and other human rights concerns (Repeat?)**

17 February 2024, Tibetan Review

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

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

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

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

Tellingly, several of the researchers were associated with public security authorities in the PRC, a fact that "voids any notion of free informed consent," Yves Moreau, a professor of engineering at the University of Leuven, in Belgium, who focuses on DNA analysis, has said.

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

One retracted paper has studied the DNA of Tibetans in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, using blood samples collected from 120 individuals. The research article was cited as saying "all individuals provided

written informed consent" and that work was approved by the Fudan University ethics committee. However, the retraction notice published on Feb 12 has stated that an ethical review "uncovered inconsistencies between the consent documentation and the research reported; the documentation was not sufficiently detailed to resolve the concerns raised."

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

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

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

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

MGGM primarily publishes studies on the medical applications of genetics, such as a recent paper on genetic disorders linked to hearing loss. The sudden pivot towards publishing forensic genetics research from China came as other forensic genetics journals started facing more scrutiny for publishing research based on DNA samples from vulnerable minorities in the PRC. Moreau has said. He argues that may have pushed more controversial research towards mid-ranking journals such as MGGM that do not specialize in forensic genetics.

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

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

### **Tibetans in Eastern Tibet Protest Hydropower Station and their relocation**

16 February 2024, International Campaign for Tibet

Hundreds of Tibetans staged protests outside the Derge (Chinese: Dege) county government's office in the Kardze (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan, on Feb. 14, 2024, calling for halt to a proposed hydropower station construction in their



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

According to a source in exile, who is from Derge, the Tibetans who were protesting were from Wentuo town (Wentuo Zhen) in Derge county who were being asked to relocate to another place near Moshoe bridge in the same county. The exact location of Moshoe bridge could not be ascertained, but the source said some houses have already been built there to house the people.

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

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

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

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

## Tibetan water security

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

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

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

## China arrests Tibetan monk for possession of Dalai Lama photo

15 February 2024, RFA



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

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

Chinese authorities arrested Tenzin Khenrap, 29, in July 2023 on a charge of having a portrait of the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader on his mobile phone, along with other books and documents published outside Tibet. Khenrap, whose pen name is Dhong Rangchak, is from Nyagchu county in Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

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

Authorities in China maintain a tight lockdown on the flow of information in and out of the country's



Tibetan regions, and it can often take weeks or months to learn of arrests and other incidents inside Tibet.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tulku Tenzin Delek was 65 when he died under mysterious circumstances on July 12, 2015, while serving a life sentence following what rights groups and supporters called a wrongful conviction on a charge of bombing a public square in Sichuan's provincial capital of Chengdu in April 2002.

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

Chinese authorities maintain a tight grip on Tibet, restricting Tibetans' political activities and peaceful expression of cultural and religious identity. Tibetans frequently complain of discrimination and human rights abuses by authorities and policies they say are aimed at eradicating their national and cultural identity.

In Feb. 2023, Chinese authorities arrested Tsultrim, a Tibetan from Tsaruma township in Ngaba's Kyungchu county, after they discovered pictures of the Dalai Lama on his mobile phone.

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

## Chinese nationals moving into hitherto vacant 'border defence village' buildings in occupied Tibet

15 February 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Feb15'24) –Chinese nationals have started occupying the double-storeyed spacious buildings in some of the model "Xiaokang" border defence villages that had come up in occupied Tibet across India's north-eastern borders along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) since 2019, reported the indianexpress.com Feb 15. While the existence of such new villages so-close to the border is itself a matter of concern to India, it is unclear whether the new residents are civilian or military, the report said. The report cited senior Indian officials familiar with the matter as saying the Chinese had started occupying a couple of these village buildings in the new villages on the Tibetan side of the LAC across from Lohit Valley and the Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh over the last few months.

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

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

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

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

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

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

infrastructure, including border villages, in Bhutanese territory.

India has decided to respond to these developments, including with Vibrant Villages programmes under which it plans to develop 663 border villages into modern villages with all amenities in the first phase. Of them, at least 17 such villages along the borders with occupied Tibet in Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, have been selected for development as a pilot project under the programme, the report noted.

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

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

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

### **China Increasing Digital Surveillance of Tibetans (Cyber)**

10 February 2024, RTV

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

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

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

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

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

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

The report said the broad scope of permissions could let authorities conduct highly invasive surveillance, which is in line with measures that Chinese authorities typically use in regions like Tibet and Xinjiang to maintain public order.

"Our analysis suggests that data controlled by the Anti-Fraud app could connect into wider systems operated by the Criminal Investigation Bureau [and] the mandatory installation of the app at police checkpoints could serve as a platform for harvesting a dataset used for monitoring and controlling the population, particularly in suppressing dissent and cultural expression," the report wrote.

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

Their analysis of government procurement notices suggests the platform, which is developed on top of technology originating from American tech company Oracle, combines data from several Public Security Bureau systems in Tibet and is an instrumental part of Chinese authorities' campaign to criminalize moderate cultural and religious expressions or language rights advocacy.

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

Walton from Secdev Group told VOA that the evidence suggests Chinese authorities' law enforcement measures in Tibet are "more invasive" than the measures used in other parts of China. "The big data systems use machine learning to track Tibetans' kinship networks or analyze their social

networks to surface what the Chinese party-state defines as organized crimes," he said.

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

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

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

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

"The Chinese government is developing these more modern social control mechanisms that are supposed to make all aspects of society controllable," Maya Wang, Interim China Director at Human Rights Watch, told VOA by phone.

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

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

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

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

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

"Tibetans will be even more careful with what they say or what they write on their phones," Tenzin

Choekyi, a senior researcher at Tibet Watch, told VOA by phone, adding that communication between Tibetans in China and the diaspora community will likely become more difficult to maintain.

### **China could use anti-fraud app to monitor Tibetans – report (Repeat)**

07 February 2024, BBC

A Chinese app aimed at preventing fraud could be used to monitor Tibetans, according to a new report. The investigation by Tibet research groups found the app could monitor users' texts, internet browser histories and access personal data.

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

Restrictions in Tibet have increased in recent years, say rights groups, tightening the screws on an already heavily controlled part of China.

Authorities have ramped up state surveillance and censorship in recent years, particularly during the pandemic.

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

The new report, by research network Turquoise Roof and rights group Tibet Watch, centres on the controversial National Anti-Fraud Centre app which was rolled out in 2021.

While the report did not present any evidence that the app was actively targeting Tibetans, it said the app "aligns with extensive surveillance practices" and could aid the Chinese government's efforts in controlling them.

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

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

The app can monitor incoming text messages, and access call logs and internet browser histories. It can also capture users' inputs such as passwords, and take photos which would allow it to gather visual data on users and surroundings.

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

One way is by forcing Tibetans to download the app. One refugee told Tibet Watch last year he was stopped at a police checkpoint while on his way

home from school, and told to install the app on his phone.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Tibetan monk who criticized China's policies released from prison**

07 February 2024, RFA

A Tibetan monk who criticized China's restrictive policies in Tibet and was convicted of "inciting

separatism" has been released after four and half years in prison.

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

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

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

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

Separatism, or "working to split the country," is an accusation often leveled by Chinese authorities against Tibetans opposing the assimilation of Tibet's distinctive national and cultural identity into China's dominant Han culture.

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

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

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

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

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

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

07 February 2024, The Tribune

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

Tibetan government-in-exile sources said that the Chinese authorities in Tibetan-populated areas of Tibet visited at least 35 Buddhist monasteries and urged eminent monks to "deeply expose and denounce" the Dalai Lama and safeguard the "unity of the motherland". They visited the monasteries in Kardze

Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture from January 11 to 17, according to a statement issued by the United Front Work Department, which oversees the Chinese Government's domestic and external influence operations.

Tibetan New Year, known as Losar, falls on February 10, the same day as China's Lunar New Year, the biggest holiday of the year. A report of the Tibetan government-in-exile says that the Chinese authorities accuse the Tibetan spiritual leader, who lives in exile in Dharamsala, of trying to split the Tibet Autonomous Region and other Tibetan-populated areas in China's Sichuan and Qinghai provinces from the rest of the country.

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

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

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

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

06 February 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Feb06'24) – Chinese authorities in the historically Tibetan region of Sichuan Province had arrested a Buddhist monk in Jun 2023 for having republished books from the exile Tibetan community and also for having contact with people outside the

country, reported the Tibetan service of rfa.org Feb 5, citing belated information from two unnamed local Tibetan sources.

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

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

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

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

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

## **January**

### **Blanket ban reported imposed on new admissions at a monastery in Tibet**

04 January 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Jan04'24) – China has forbidden the admission of new monks at a monastery in the prefecture-level City of Chamdo in Tibet Autonomous Region as it continues to tighten religious activities under its ongoing Sinicization campaign, reported the Tibetan service of rfa.org Jan 3.

The Gelug Tibetan Buddhist monastery of Khyungbum Lura in Markham County currently has more than 80 monks and local residents have expressed fears that the new restriction may render it extinct eventually.

China already has a decades-long policy that limits the number of resident-monks in each monastery across Tibet, with those to be enrolled being required to be above 18 years of age and certified by the local police and government religious authority as pro-Communist Party of China patriots.

This is the first time Chinese authorities have prohibited the enrolment of monks of all ages, though previously only minors, or those below the age of 18, were restricted from joining the monastic order in Tibet, the report said, citing a local source speaking on condition of anonymity for safety reasons.

The monastery was rebuilt by its former monks and local residents in early 1980's after it was destroyed by the invading Chinese People's Liberation Army at the turn of the second half of the last century.

The report cited two local sources as saying Chinese authorities had also installed a local administrator at the monastery to oversee its operations, replacing the senior monks who traditionally carried out that function. And they are said to have threatened to shut down the site if the monks failed to comply with the new rules and regulations on religious activities that are currently in operation.

"Without the regular intake of new monks, the move will lead to the eventual decline and closure of the monastery in the future, leaving local Tibetans with no nearby places of worship during important religious ceremonies and nobody to turn to carry out important prayers and rituals, particularly on the death of loved ones," the sources have been quoted as saying.

The rules and regulations include "Regulations on Religious Affairs", a set of rules on religious activities, personnel and sites updated in Nov 2017 and enforced by the National Religious Affairs Administration (NRAA).

There is also an "Administrative Measures for Religious Clergy", adopted by the State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA) in Jan 2021, which requires religious personnel to support President Xi Jinping's plans for the "Sinicization of religion," for "adaptation of religions to China's socialist society", and to work in accordance with the country's national interest and ideology.

The NRAA, formerly the SARA, is an external name used by the United Front Work Department (UFWD) of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. It was formerly an executive agency directly under the State Council of the People's Republic of China which oversaw religious affairs in the country. SARA was merged into the UFWD in 2018. The names of the former agency were retained by the UFWD as external names under the system called "one institution with two names"



# TIBET DIGEST 2024

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## TIBET'S ECOLOGY & RIVER WATERS

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## Nagchu champions glacier protection on plateau

23 December 2024, People's Daily Online



*Xu Qiangqiang, an assistant researcher at the China Academy of Sciences' Northwest Institute of Eco-Environment and Resources, measures the size of the Dongkemadi Glacier using a laser radar in Nagchu, Xizang autonomous region, in October. (Palden Nyima/China Daily)*

## TIBET'S ECOLOGY & RIVER WATERS

Nagchu city, in the northern part of the Xizang autonomous region, is the origin of many major rivers in Asia, including the Yangtze, the Nujiang and the Lancang rivers, making it a core area for building a water ecological security barrier in Xizang and a strategic guarantee base for water resources in China.

With joint efforts made by the government and the public in Nagchu, Xizang's largest and the country's second-largest prefecture-level area, the city reflects a beautiful picture of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature.

The Yangtze River's main source is the Jangchu Diruk Glacier in the Amdo section of the Three-River-Source National Park. To protect the ecological environment of the river source area, a regular working mechanism has been established by the local government and residents. Currently, the construction work in the Northern Tanggula Mountains area of the park, where the glacier is located, is 90 percent complete.

Nagchu has effectively shouldered the political responsibility for the ecological protection of the river park. It has promoted the construction of the Northern Tanggula Mountain area, implemented ecological protection and restoration in the source areas of rivers, and comprehensively established protective measures for river sources, among many other duties.

Hu Chunyu, deputy head of the Nagchu water conservancy bureau, said the primary measures Nagchu has taken to protect the river are the implementation of a strict water management system, controlling total water usage, and ensuring efficiency.

Hu said the city has also cracked down on activities that encroach on river and lake areas, including sand mining, garbage dumping, and unauthorized construction, and has widely promoted ecological protection through educational campaigns to raise public awareness.

"Through governance, illegal activities that harm water ecology have been effectively curbed, leading to a significant improvement in the water quality of rivers and lakes," said Hu, adding the city has laid a good foundation for creating an ecological civilization, but it still faces some difficulties and shortcomings.

Ecological civilization is a concept promoted by China's central leadership for balanced and sustainable development that features harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature.

"The water quality management system in Nagchu is not yet perfect. Soil erosion is severe, and effective wetland protection and restoration measures are lacking," Hu said.

"This year, the measures we have taken mainly focus on strengthening supervision and law enforcement, establishing a sound water environment monitoring system and intensifying the overall monitoring and evaluation of the water environment," he added.

According to the Xizang Department of Natural Resources, the glacier resources in Nagchu cover approximately 6,800 square kilometers, almost 2 percent of its administrative area.

The general volume of water in the glaciers stands at about 8.8 billion cubic meters.

#### Painstaking efforts

As central and regional authorities attach increasingly greater importance to the glaciers, Nagchu may realize a more improved ecological aquatic environment.

Over the past few decades, Chinese researchers have been strictly monitoring the changes in the glaciers on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, and they work together with the local government to resolve environmental issues such as glacier melting.

Since its establishment in 2005, researchers at the Tanggula Mountain Cryosphere and Environment Observation and Research Station of the Xizang Autonomous Region, part of the China Academy of Sciences' Northwest Institute of Eco-Environment and Resources, have been working hard in the icy environment, walking on glaciers and in snowfields at an altitude of over 5,500 meters.

They conduct long-term observations and make continuous recordings of the geological, hydrological, meteorological, and permafrost conditions in the source area of the Yangtze.

Xu Qiangqiang, an assistant researcher at the institute, said his team has regularly conducted comprehensive assessments and health checkups of

the glaciers in the area using advanced observation and mapping techniques in Nagchu over the past few years.

Xu said Nagchu is implementing an integrated protection strategy, adhering to the systematic management of mountains, waters, forests, fields, lakes, grasslands, sands, and ice.

"The approach of prioritizing natural restoration and combining natural recovery with artificial restoration in the system management has proved to be very effective. They are upholding ecological protection redlines, including large ice caps and small-scale glacier clusters, and designating them within the ecological protection red line," he said.

Xu also said for important snowcapped glaciers, they are implementing protection measures to curb human disturbances.

"Additionally, Nagchu is restricting tourism and mountaineering activities in certain glacier areas such as the Ganglung Changmar Glacier," he added.

"Aside from necessary scientific research and resource surveys, all tourism activities are prohibited, and checkpoints have been set up on roads leading to the glaciers to advise tourists to turn back."

According to Xu, there are about 200,000 glaciers worldwide, with the largest located on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, which has roughly 100,000 glaciers.

#### Knowledge to share

"The Qinghai-Tibet Plateau is known as the water tower of Asia, because the melting ice feeds the major rivers in South Asia and Southeast Asia. If these glaciers continue to shrink, the upstream regions will face water shortages," said Xu, adding this will have a significant impact on downstream areas, including water for hydroelectric power stations, residential use, and farm irrigation.

Xu noted that the methods used by the Chinese government to protect the nation's waters are worth sharing with the rest of the world, and he outlined four specific points.

First, China is a global leader in emissions reductions and green energy, and is committed to achieving carbon neutrality. Second, scientists and local agencies are collaborating to artificially increase snowfall to replenish glaciers and reduce losses. Third, China has been restoring grasslands for many years to improve the surrounding ecological environment of glaciers because grasslands reduce the impact of light-absorbing impurities as glaciers melt. Finally, the country is carefully managing the development of glacier tourism, recognizing the importance of water protection and implementing restrictions as needed.

In a move to protect glaciers in Xizang, the region's legislature adopted a law dedicated to the effort in late July.

The law, which took effect on Oct 1, provides specific guidelines for governments and relevant departments in glacier areas. It introduced a responsibility system and performance evaluation mechanism for glacier protection goals, and established punitive measures for violations.

"The regulation will effectively protect glacier resources, ensure the ecological safety of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, and contribute to the preservation of the plateau's flora, fauna, and landscapes," said Zhao Guiying, deputy director of the Legislative Affairs Commission of the Standing Committee of the People's Congress of Xizang.

## Tibet Adopts Clean Energy For Centralised Heating

13 December 2024, The Rising Nepal, Zhan Xun



Winter has arrived, and Tibet, China, has entered its coldest season of the year. In the past, due to Tibet's high altitude and cold weather, coal burning was commonly used to provide centralised heating for buildings. However, with advancements in technology, Tibet's clean energy power generation now accounts for 99 per cent of its total energy production, reducing the annual consumption of standard coal by approximately 4.73 million tons. This shift has significantly contributed to reducing carbon emissions. Tibet has now achieved nearly 100 per cent clean electricity supply, making it the province with the highest proportion of clean energy power generation in China.

This year, Tibet launched seven pilot projects for centralised heating using clean energy under a concessionary model. The Chinese government has invested \$521 million to construct and upgrade centralised heating facilities in Tibet, covering a total area of 6.22 million square meters. Once completed, these facilities will provide eco-friendly and cost-effective heating for 200,000 Tibetans. Moreover, pilot programmes for centralised heating have been initiated in areas over 5,000 meters above sea level. With further investments and technological advancements, more Tibetans are expected to benefit from convenient, comfortable, and affordable heating solutions.

The Chinese government has introduced a concessionary model in Tibet to support this initiative. This approach involves private capital in the

construction of urban centralised heating systems based on clean energy. To ensure the scalability and efficiency of this initiative, the Tibet Autonomous Region government selected seven counties and districts, including Lhasa, Nyingchi, Nagqu, and Ngari, as pilot locations. The clean energy centralised heating system adopts a "heating + domestic hot water" model, addressing both household heating and hot water needs. In Coqên County, Ngari Prefecture, the pilot program is already in full swing, and the remaining six counties and districts are expected to implement the system by January 2025, around the Chinese Lunar New Year.

A notable highlight is the implementation of centralised heating in regions above 5,000 meters, where the climate is especially harsh. For example, Shuanghu County and Nyima County in Nagqu Prefecture are such extreme high-altitude areas, where winter temperatures can drop as low as -40°C, and freezing conditions persist for up to nine months a year. Pumajiangtang Township, the highest-altitude township in China, located in Langkazi County of Shannan City and bordering Bhutan, has also begun a centralised heating pilot project this year. Covering an area of 13,914.38 square meters, the project is set to be completed by the end of this month. Heating equipment has already been installed for 723 households in 14 villages, providing residents with a warm and comfortable living environment. Meanwhile, 830 households in 11 other villages will benefit from an advanced heating system based on "solar photovoltaic + energy storage + heat pump air heaters."

These social developments and advancements in Tibet are underpinned by the rapid growth of clean energy, driven by the upgrading of the Tibetan power grid in recent years. As of September 2024, the Chinese government has invested nearly \$12.2 billion in upgrading Tibet's power grid. Tibet's total installed clean electricity capacity has reached 7.176 million kilowatts, nearly doubling in the past 12 years. A new comprehensive energy system has been established, dominated by hydropower and complemented by geothermal, wind, and solar energy.

Currently, Tibet's electricity supply serves over 3.5 million people, with power supply reliability reaching 99.48 per cent. Voltage compliance rates in rural areas stand at 97.50 per cent, and rural power supply reliability has reached 99.52 per cent. Even during the busiest harvest periods, electricity supply in rural areas is guaranteed.

Furthermore, after meeting its own electricity demand, Tibet has gradually established channels for transmitting surplus power during the abundant water season. Tibet not only possesses the world's most advanced ultra-high-altitude, ultra-high-voltage DC

transmission technology but also excels in large-scale renewable energy grid integration, thanks to the collective efforts of Chinese engineers and scientists. Feng Jianguo, Chief Engineer of the Housing and Urban-Rural Development Department of the Tibet Autonomous Region, stated that they would summarise experiences from the pilot projects to develop replicable and scalable project implementation models. Coupled with supportive policies in subsidies, taxes, pricing, land use, and financing, Tibet's centralised heating system is expected to achieve full coverage in the near future.

### **Himalayas: Arunachal government deploys central forces to counter dam protestors in Siang Valley**

10 December 2024, Down to Earth, Anupam Chakravartty



*The Siang, known as the Yarlung Tsangpo in Tibet, near Yingkiang town in Upper Siang district, Arunachal Pradesh. Photo: Anupam Chakravartty*

The Arunachal Pradesh government has deployed a team of Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) close to the proposed site of the 12.5 GW Siang Upper Multipurpose Project (SUMP), touted to be India's largest dam, according to an official document. The move, to conduct a survey for a pre-feasibility report (PFR) on SUMP, has angered locals opposed to the dam.

Several women from villages close to the proposed site on the Siang river, the transboundary main channel of the Brahmaputra, continue to guard the site, opposing the dam and any survey over the river. According to a letter issued to the Circle Officer, Redo-Perging subdivision on December 6 by Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Siang district, PN Thungon, a team of CAPF is expected to be stationed in Riew village, in the purview of conduct of a PFR regarding the SUMP.

"Therefore, you are requested to initiate necessary action for repair and maintenance of Government Primary School, on self-help basis," the DC stated in the letter. A source in Boleng confirmed the development but added that the CAPF is yet to be deployed.

Residents from Pareng and several other villages have been guarding a portion of the Siang, shouting slogans of 'No Survey, No Dam'.

Bhanu Tatak, legal advisor of the Siang Indigenous Farmers' Forum (SIFF), told Down To Earth that the deployment of the CAPF goes against a Gauhati High Court order that cancelled proposed dams on the Siang.

"The people of the Siang valley have been against dams on the river for over four decades. Our people have been peacefully protesting against the surveys by any government agency or a dam developer. People do have the right to protest against this decision in order to protect their homes and hearths," Tatak, whose organisation represents the interests of farmers from Arunachal's Adi community, added.

In 2022, the Gauhati High Court cancelled all 44 dams proposed on the Siang river. The petition had alleged that Arunachal Pradesh government took upfront payments by means of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) for over 230 dams across the Himalayan state and a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) enquiry against the MoA. In July 2022, even the Arunachal Government told the high court that all 44 dams had been cancelled by the state.

In 2017, however, central thinktank NITI Aayog floated a new plan for a 1 GW dam on the Siang, which went through several changes. Recently, Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister, Pema Khandu highlighted that a projected power generation capacity surpassing 13,500 megawatts with 26 per cent equity share, will receive 12 per cent free power. "The damming of the Siang river, known as Yarlung Tsangpo in its upper reaches by our neighbouring country [China] poses significant threats, including flash floods and water scarcity. These risks could have devastating consequences for downstream areas in the Siang region and beyond," he later stated in a social media post.

Although Khandu has maintained that there is unanimous support for the dam among the people in the Siang valley, SIFF and several students' organisations have accused the Arunachal government as well as the dam developers for not conducting any consultation.

### **Tibetan area in Sichuan hit by second forest fire in last 20 days**

09 December 2024, Tibetan Review

Forest fire is raging in a historically Tibetan area of Sichuan province again, making it the second such reported incident in the last 20 days and after a catastrophic one which continued for days in the middle of March last year, all at different places.

The latest fire started at around 3:20 pm Dec 9 in Chengxiang Village of Hekou (Tibetan: Chukha)



Township, located in Yajiang (Nyagchu) County of the Garze (Kardze) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, reported China's official Xinhuanews agency Dec 9, citing the headquarters of forest and grassland fire prevention and control of Yajiang.

The report said no casualties had been reported. Rescuers were stated to have rushed to the site for rescue operations.

Earlier, Xinhua reported Nov 18 that a fire broke out at around 6 pm Nov 17 in Angui Village, located in Yajiang County.

The report said the fire site had an average slope of 60 degrees and an altitude of 3,500 metres and that rescue and containment operations were ongoing.

Last year, a forest fire erupted in Petse (Baizi) Village in the same county in March and rapidly spread to other areas due to sudden increases in wind speed. While no casualties or damage to infrastructure were reported, a Xinhua report said Mar 17 that in the nearby Jiaonibao Village, 21 houses were burned.

A total of 5,908 villagers belonging to 1,360 families in two Towns and one Township were reported to have been evacuated as a safety measure.

The disaster was stated to have struck a severe blow on the livelihood of the local Tibetan people: destruction of the forests' prized matsutake mushrooms.

## November

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

19 November 2024, Global Times, Leng Shumei

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

The study was conducted by a team led by researcher Liang Eryuan from the State Key Laboratory of Tibetan Plateau Earth System, Environment and Resources, ITP, CAS. It was published online in *Nature Plants* on Monday, the Global Times learned from the ITP.

Understanding how climate change influences succession is fundamental to predicting future forest

composition. Global warming is expected to accelerate species succession at their cold thermal ranges, such as alpine tree lines. In the study, the team examined how interactions and successional strategies of the early-successional birch and the late-successional fir affected tree line dynamics by combining plot data with an individual-based tree line model at tree lines in the central Himalayas, read the study.

The team found that firs showed increasing recruitment and a higher upslope shift rate ( $1.1 \pm 0.2$  meter per decade) compared with birch ( $0.6 \pm 0.3$  meter per decade) over the last 200 years. Spatial analyses indicate strong interspecies competition when trees were young. Model outputs from various climatic scenarios indicate that firs will probably accelerate their upslope movement with global warming, while birch recruitment will decline drastically, forming stable or even retreating tree lines, according to the study.

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

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

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

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

"Birch is sensitive to moisture, and the water stress caused by warming limits its growth and regeneration. In contrast, firs are sensitive to temperature, and warming within a certain threshold



range is beneficial for their growth and regeneration. Therefore, against the backdrop of climate warming, firs demonstrate greater competitiveness than birch," said Liang Eryuan, the corresponding author of the study.

Liang emphasized that climate change is significantly accelerating the species succession process at the alpine tree line in the Himalayas.

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

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

17 November 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundop

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

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

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

The report provides new evidence of the displacement of entire Tibetan villages and the destruction of ancient monasteries to make way for dam projects. One notable example is the Yangkhil (Yangqu) hydropower station, where local Tibetans were forced to dismantle their own homes. An important monastery, previously designated as a protected heritage site, was removed from the list by Chinese authorities before being demolished. These actions have led to widespread social upheaval, disrupting the cultural and spiritual lives of Tibetan communities.

China has started large-scale fish farming in reservoirs created by the dams. Non-native rainbow trout, marketed as salmon, are bred in huge numbers for Chinese consumers. This practice, already criticized in China, threatens local ecosystems and risks the spread of invasive species, as noted by Chinese scientists.



Before demolition began, an aerial view of Kiosk Monastery, a 19th-century Buddhist monastery located at a bend of Machu river in the south region of the Tibetan plateau. Photo obtained in April 2020, from Tibet Watch

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

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

### **Regulations provide extra protection for glaciers**

11 November 2024, China Daily, Palden Nyima and Daqiong

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Based on the Second Chinese Glacier Inventory, China has 48,571 glaciers, with approximately 82 percent in a state of retreat, He said, adding that this poses challenges to water resource management and the health of ecosystems in the country. There are more than 21,800 glaciers in Xizang, representing 45 percent of glaciers distributed in China. They cover nearly 23,800 square kilometers, He added.

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

04 November 2024, Tibetan Review

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

efforts in Xizang," she has said, using the Sinicized name for TAR.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## October

### Lead pollution in a remote Tibetan glacier reveals far-reaching human activities

24 October 2024, U.S. National Science Foundation

The Tibetan Plateau's glaciers are among the world's most remote and untouched places. Researchers say these ice fields provide water for millions of people and play a vital environmental role.

Now, geoscientists funded by the U.S. National Science Foundation have tracked pollution in the form of lead in the glaciers. The findings are reported in the journal *Nature Communications Earth and Environment*.

The Tibetan Plateau is often called the "Roof of the World." It's the highest and largest plateau on Earth. In a study of the Guliya Ice Cap there, Franco Marcantonio of Texas A&M University and his colleagues discovered that significant lead pollution of the ice cap began in 1974, with the highest levels between 2000 and 2007.

The team measured lead isotopes in samples dating to 36,000 years ago. The ice serves as a historical record, giving scientists a way of comparing levels of modern lead contamination to those of pre-industrial times.

"Even though Pb [lead] has been used by ancient civilizations for millennia, it was not until the Industrial Revolution and later, when leaded gasoline was introduced ... in the 1920s, that the emission of Pb from human activities skyrocketed," state the scientists in their paper. "By the 1980s, emissions surpassed their natural and pre-industrial contribution by about two orders of magnitude."

The Tibetan Plateau "is considered to be a pristine place due to the very low industrial activity in the region," write the researchers. Nonetheless, lead found its way there, and its history of human use was captured in the Guliya Ice Cap.

"This study advances our understanding of the breadth and timing of environmental impacts from human activities," says Margaret Fraiser, a program director in the NSF Division of Earth Sciences.

### Researchers Catch Humans Living on the Tibetan Plateau Evolving in Real Time

23 October 2024, Extreme Tech, Adrianna Nine

Tibetan women who have most successfully delivered children appear to have cardiovascular traits that help their bodies utilize the plateau's scarce oxygen. Most discussions about evolution tend to focus on the past. But humans, like any other extant species, are engaged by default in a game of natural selection, in which the traits that help us thrive also help us produce offspring with those traits. In studying communities living on the Tibetan Plateau, researchers from the United States and Nepal have caught that process happening in real time.

Averaging 16,000 feet above sea level, Asia's 970,000-square-mile Tibetan Plateau is the definition of high elevation. Extreme altitudes like this can make it tough to breathe, thanks to the lower atmospheric pressure, thinner air, and weak oxygen levels. Every breath delivers less oxygen to the blood than one would find at sea level, making life on the Tibetan Plateau physiologically difficult.

But it appears that Tibetan communities are evolving to meet the challenge. In a paper for the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, researchers note that native ethnic Tibetan

women who have most successfully delivered children also possess unique cardiovascular traits that help their bodies take advantage of the plateau's scarce oxygen. The women's astonishing heart strength was accompanied by high saturations of oxygen in hemoglobin, or the red blood cell protein responsible for carrying oxygen from the lungs to other parts of the body.

The researchers spent time at the Tibetan Plateau—their "natural laboratory," as they call it—speaking with 417 women aged 46 to 86. All of these women lived at a minimum of 3,500 meters (11,483 feet) and consented to interviews and biological data-sharing related to their pregnancies, births, genetics, and personal health. Together, these 417 women reported 2,193 pregnancies, which resulted in 2,076 livebirths. Those who had higher rates of livebirths (compared with fewer or lost pregnancies) had higher concentrations of oxygen within the bloodstream, as well as higher rates of oxygen transport to and from bodily tissues.

Importantly, the women who'd experienced more successful births did not possess blood that was more viscous (thicker) than those with lower livebirth rates. As blood viscosity increases, so does strain on the heart, implying that the body is struggling to keep up with the region's low-oxygen conditions. Instead, the women's blood was of normal viscosity, supporting the notion that Tibetan populations are evolving to thrive in their high-altitude environment.

"This is a case of ongoing natural selection," Cynthia Beall, the study's corresponding author and a professor emerita at Case Western Reserve University, said. "Tibetan women have evolved in a way that balances the body's oxygen needs without overworking the heart."

### **Small areas of Tibetan Plateau may have outsize impact on East Asia's spring rains**

16 October 2024, SCMP, Zhang Tong

Up to a quarter of the heaviest rainfall may be the result of gravity waves created in small pockets of mountainous terrain

Small areas of the Tibetan Plateau may have an outsize influence on East Asia's climate by increasing spring rainfall by up to a quarter, researchers say.

The Tibetan Plateau, often referred to as the "Water Tower of Asia", is crucial to the hydrological cycle, feeding major Asian rivers such as the Yangtze, Yellow River, Indus, and Ganges.

Researchers have previously drawn a link between atmospheric conditions above the plateau and persistent springtime rainfall in East Asia, which occurs between March and May.

However, it is often hard to produce accurate forecasts and even advanced models systematically underestimate precipitation.

But a research team led by Professor Xu Xiangde, a member of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, has concluded that current climate models overlook the impact of small-scale mountain ranges covering an area ranging from a few to tens of kilometres.

These mountains are like wrinkles on the plateau but they play an important role in interacting with near-ground airflow and generating the gravity wave that is produced when airflow passes over mountainous terrain and creates ripples that trigger a chain reaction.

Thanks to advanced prediction tools, they are now known to have a number of effects on the climate around the plateau, but their influence on spring rains in East Asia is still poorly understood.

Beyond blocking and diversion, the southwesterly flow is influenced by a gravity wave generated by small areas of the plateau.

"Our research indicates that these gravity waves lead to an uplift in circulation on the southern side of the plateau," Xu said.

"This uplift reduces lower atmospheric pressure and intensifies the southwesterly monsoon, thereby increasing the moisture transport from the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal to downstream East Asia.

"The southwesterly monsoon acts like a high-speed highway, where an increase in vehicle speed (airflow) means more goods (moisture) are transported in the same amount of time."

Using the state-of-the-art Weather Research and Forecasting Model with data from 2000 to 2017, the team conducted simulations that found rainfall would drop by around a quarter without the influence of gravity waves.

This study was published in the peer-reviewed journal *Science China Earth Sciences* last October, marking the first international revelation of this effect, which is vital for climate modelling and forecasting the spring rains that can cause heavy flooding.

According to the paper, gravity waves are most pronounced in winter and early spring, while in summer the transport of moisture is primarily influenced by the plateau's thermal properties.

Xu Xin said the research team is still improving their research on gravity waves. "As the Tibetan Plateau warms at more than twice the rate of other regions at the same latitude, this warming weakens wind speeds and hinders long-term climate observations of gravity waves," he said.

"Moreover, the difficulty of parameterising gravity waves in models persists as researchers continue to develop theories and explore advanced technologies



for higher resolution characterisations of the plateau's small-scale terrain."

### **Warmer winters mean world's highest places may store less carbon**

14 October 2024, New Scientist, James Dinneen

At high altitudes, global warming is having its strongest effect on winter temperatures – and that might mean soils there store less carbon than we expected

Climate change is raising winter temperatures faster than those of summer, especially in high-altitude areas. This "asymmetric" warming could spell trouble for the vast amount of carbon stored in soils there by altering microbial activity more than expected.

The planet's soils store more carbon than any ecosystem other than the oceans, and could store much more if better managed. But soil carbon is threatened by climate change. Researchers expect warmer temperatures will boost the amount of soil carbon lost to the atmosphere as greenhouse gases, largely due to changes in the behaviour of soil microbes. However, the scale of this warming feedback remains uncertain.

Ning Ling at Lanzhou University in China and his colleagues heated soils in an experimental grassland on the Tibetan plateau to test how different patterns of warming might change microbial activity. Some of the soils were kept at ambient temperatures, while others were exposed to a "symmetric" warming of 2°C throughout the year. A third group was exposed to warming of 2.5 to 2.8°C during winter and 0.5 to 0.8°C during the rest of the year, a more realistic simulation of actual warming patterns.

After a decade of this treatment between 2011 and 2020, the researchers tested microbial activity of samples from the different soils. They focused on two measures in particular: growth rate and an indicator of how the organisms are using carbon, known as carbon use efficiency. This has been shown to be a major determinant of the amount of organic carbon stored in soils.

"When a microbe eats carbon, it can do one of two things with it: it can break it down for energy and breathe that carbon as CO<sub>2</sub>, or it can use it to make new body structures," says Daniel Rath at the Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental non-profit organisation based in New York. A higher growth rate means microbes are using more carbon, and higher carbon use efficiency means more of that carbon is being made into body structures, rather than respired as CO<sub>2</sub>, he says.

Ling and his colleagues found both warming patterns substantially reduced microbial activity. Soils under symmetric warming saw growth rate decline 31 per cent and carbon use efficiency decline 22 per cent

relative to soil exposed to ambient temperatures. Under asymmetric warming, this effect was even stronger, with growth rate lowered by 58 per cent and carbon use efficiency lowered by 81 per cent relative to soils exposed to ambient temperatures. They ascribed the differences to factors including a change in the nutrients available to the microbes.

"Their findings suggest that soil carbon storage likely will decrease, reducing the capacity of terrestrial ecosystems to sequester carbon and degrading the soil's efficacy for nature-based solutions to climate change," says Yiqi Luo at Cornell University in New York.

Rath says the fact that current models don't take asymmetric warming into account means we are probably underestimating soil carbon losses due to climate change. However, he says the findings may only apply to soils from frigid ecosystems, and more research is needed to understand exactly what these changes in microbial activity mean for carbon. For instance, despite the significant change in microbial activity, the total amount of carbon stored in the soil didn't change over the course of the experiment.

### **Geologist Tracks Lead Pollution In A Tibetan Glacier, Revealing Global Impact Of Human Activities**

10 October 2024, Texas A&M Today, Grant Hawkins

Researchers concluded that human activities have introduced the pollutant in some of the most remote and pristine regions of the world.

A collaborative research team involving Texas A&M University geologist Dr. Franco Marcantonio has examined the source of lead contamination in a Tibetan glacier, concluding that human activities have introduced the pollutant metal in some of the most remote regions of the world.

The team's findings, detailed in the paper titled "Source of lead in a Tibetan glacier since the Stone Age," were recently published in *Nature Communications Earth and Environment*, a high-impact journal in the field of earth and environmental sciences.

The Tibetan Plateau, a vast highland region in Asia, is often described as the "Roof of the World" because it's the highest and largest plateau on Earth, located mostly in southwestern China near the Himalayas and roughly four times the size of Texas. In their analysis of the Guliya Ice Cap within this region, Marcantonio and his colleagues – led by Dr. Roxana Sierra-Hernandez from The Ohio State University – discovered that significant lead pollution reached this area starting in 1974, with the highest

levels of contamination occurring between 2000 and 2007.

By analyzing lead isotope ratios within Texas A&M's Williams Radiogenic Isotope Facility, Marcantonio said they were able to trace the main source of this pollution to emissions from Chinese gasoline, which contained lead until its phasedown after 2007.

"Lead is a neurotoxin, and its presence in remote areas like the Tibetan Plateau shows the vast reach of human impact on the environment," explained Marcantonio, a professor in the Department of Geology and Geophysics and holder of the Jane and Ken R. Williams '45 Chair in Ocean Drilling Science, Technology and Education. "By studying lead contamination in glaciers, we not only learn about the pollution itself but also gain valuable insights into atmospheric circulation patterns and the timeline of environmental changes."

To reach these conclusions, the team measured lead isotope ratios in ice samples from layers that dated back as far as 36,000 years. These ice layers acted as a historical record, allowing the scientists to compare modern lead contamination to levels from pre-industrial times while providing a clear picture of how human activities have affected the environment on a global scale.

The work, funded by the National Science Foundation, emphasizes the importance of understanding pollution in remote ecosystems, which could have serious health implications for both humans and wildlife. As Marcantonio continues his research, he plans to trace the movement of contaminant lead across different environments, including the oceans and even the human body.

"There's still much we don't know about how lead and other contaminants move through our environment," Marcantonio said. "By following these pathways, we hope to better understand how pollution spreads and impacts different ecosystems, which can ultimately help us find solutions to reduce contamination and protect human health."

## September

### National park in E China enhances biodiversity protection

29 September 2024, People's Daily Online

At Qianjiangyuan National Park, technician Jiang Yongqing carefully collected fallen seeds using a magnifying glass and tweezers. By analyzing the contents of withered leaves, including small tree branches, flowers, and fruits, researchers can gather data to support the scientific protection of the forest.

Jiang is a member of the Zhejiang Qianjiangyuan Forest Biodiversity National Observation and Research Station. The station employs four technicians, including Jiang, who are responsible for collecting samples in the wild, recording data, and monitoring changes in data on vegetation throughout its life cycle.

Qianjiangyuan National Park, situated in Kaihua county, Quzhou city, east China's Zhejiang Province, covers an area of about 252 square kilometers. It consists of three protected areas and the ecological areas that connect them.

The park is situated in a mountainous region with lush forests and diverse wildlife, earning the nickname the "natural water tower" of the Yangtze River Delta. Its exceptional ecological significance is highlighted by the pristine and distinctive ecosystem, conserving a vast expanse of untouched subtropical low-altitude evergreen broad-leaved forest vegetation in its purest form.

According to the latest research data, Qianjiangyuan is home to 2,234 species of higher plants, 449 species of large fungi, and 2,427 species of animals. It is a globally concentrated distribution area for the black muntjac and the Elliot's pheasant, two endangered species endemic in China that are under first-class state protection.

According to Yu Jianping, a senior engineer at the management bureau of the Qianjiangyuan National Park, the park has established a comprehensive biodiversity monitoring system, an unmanned drone inspection system, and installed infrared cameras. Qianjiangyuan is divided into 267 grids, each measuring 1km×1km. In each grid, two to three infrared cameras are set up to monitor wildlife.

Kaihua county has taken significant steps to protect biodiversity by establishing an environment and resources mobile court, an ecology, environment and resources case center, an ecological police center and a joint operations workstation.

Through a comprehensive approach that includes integrated restoration of mountains, waters, forests, fields, lakes, and grasslands, and the rescue and protection of rare and endangered species, Kaihua county is continuously restoring its ecological resources, preserving the habitats for wildlife.

In 2022, the park launched an ecological smart governance system, utilizing digital technology to enhance ecological protection. This system includes eight perception systems, such as drone-based disaster prevention inspections and wildlife identification, as well as 25 sub-scenes.

Together, they create a comprehensive monitoring and early warning system covering sky, space, land, and human activities. This system allows for continuous monitoring of the entire park, key



ecological systems, and critical species, providing strong support for scientific research.

### **Artificial rain (snow) operations in Tibet fill the gap, and large drones fly over Shigatse**

27 September 2024, Passionate Geekz

Passionategeekz reported on September 27 that according to the China Meteorological Administration, on the afternoon of September 24, a large drone equipped with cloud precipitation detection and artificial weather modification equipment flew into the clouds from Shigatse, Tibet Autonomous Region, and successfully carried out artificial Increase rain (snow) operations. Large-scale drones have become regular in weather modification operations in plateau areas, filling the gap in aerial weather modification capabilities in Tibet. According to reports, due to the high altitude, complex terrain, and changeable weather environment of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, it has long been difficult to carry out artificial rain (snow) operations by aircraft.

With the rapid development of large civilian drones in recent years, the China Meteorological Administration responded to local needs and applied them in plateau areas. Tengdun "Twin-tailed Scorpion A" artificial weather modification type and other large UAVs carrying out scientific experiments on air-space-ground comprehensive detection and rain (snow) enhancement based on large drones in the "one river and two rivers (Passionategeekz Note: Yarlung Zangbo River, Nianchu River, and Lhasa River)" basin on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau (hereinafter referred to as the "Test"), promote the regular operation of large-scale drones to increase rain (snow) in the "One River and Two Rivers" basin. Since 2023, with the strong support of the projects of the Department of Science and Technology and the Department of Finance of the Tibet Autonomous Region, the Weather Modification Center of the China Meteorological Administration has organized experiments in conjunction with the Autonomous Region Meteorological Bureau and other units. Targeting typical cloud systems in the plateau area, based on cloud precipitation observations with airborne equipment, Combining special air- and ground-based observation methods such as satellites, radars, raindrop spectrometers, and microwave radiometers, up to now, A total of 22 cloud precipitation observations and rain (snow) enhancement experiments were carried out using large UAVs, with a total flight time of 67 hours and a catalytic time of more than 25 hours.

Officials from the China Meteorological Administration said that during operations, large

UAVs demonstrated characteristics such as high efficiency and flexibility, high flight ceilings, strong endurance and load capacity, and high safety. They were less restricted by terrain and responded quickly to mission needs; they were also equipped with high-precision sensors and equipment to enable precise positioning, monitoring and measurement of the work area. As of September this year, The meteorological department explored and initially established a normal operation service system for aircraft artificial weather modification on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.

### **750 meters! Chinese researchers set new record for environmental science drilling on Tibetan Plateau**

11 September 2024, Global Times, Leng Shumei

A team led by Chinese academician Fang Xiaomin from the Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research (ITP) under the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) has reached 750 meters, during their environmental science drilling in the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau, or the Tibetan Plateau, setting a new record, the Global Times learned from the ITP on Tuesday.

The project is currently ongoing in the Lunpola Basin with the goal of drilling beyond 1,000 meters, marking the first initiative of its kind on the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau, according to the ITP.

The Lunpola Basin is situated in the central part of the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau, with an average altitude of 4,600 meters. It contains the most continuous Cenozoic strata of the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau dating back to 55 million years and is the first oil-producing basin in the core area of the plateau.

Numerous fossils, such as tropical palm trees, camphor trees, golden rain trees, split-belly fish and climbing perch, as well as water spiders, have been unearthed, along with multiple layers of ancient soils and volcanic ash. These findings provide a detailed record of the uplift of the central Tibetan Plateau and the historical changes in climate and ecological environment, making it one of the key areas for studying the co-evolution of tectonics, climate, biology and ecology.

In previous research, scholars have reconstructed the ancient elevation history of the Lunpola Basin using various methods, including the analysis of fossils as well as the oxygen isotopes found in ancient soil carbonates. However, significant debate remains concerning when the basin reached its present elevation. The comprehensive understanding of the co-evolution of tectonic, climatic, biological, and ecological processes has yet to be fully established.

In the past 20 years, Fang and his team have utilized the absolute dating of volcanic ash to establish a high precision paleomagnetic chronological

sequence of the Cenozoic strata in the basin. They discovered that the Lunpola Basin has a distinct history of two phases of formation, evolution, and deformation: the early phase involved slow subsidence from approximately 42 million to 26 million years ago, while the later phase involved rapid uplift from about 26 million to 20 million years ago.

In the future, the research team plans to combine analyses from paleoclimate, paleobiology, and paleoecological environments, along with tectonics, sedimentology, and geochemistry, to reveal the history of the Asian monsoon's entry into the Tibetan Plateau over the past 40 million years, the co-evolution of climate, environment, and biodiversity in the heart of the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau, as well as the formation processes of hydrocarbon source rocks and arid salt lake deposits. This will provide important scientific evidence for simulating and predicting the impact of global warming across the plateau, in addition to protecting its ecological environment, and guiding the exploration and development of hydrocarbon and salt lake resources, according to the ITP.

### **Scientists find 1,700 viruses trapped in Tibetan Glacier**

15 September 2024, News Nine, Aditya Madanapalle

The genetic variations in the viruses track closely with historic climate change on Earth.

Scientists have identified 1,700 species of viruses after carefully reconstructing strands of DNA recovered from ice core samples in the far northwestern Tibetan Plateau. While dormant viruses trapped for millennia within glacier ice being released and reintroduced into the environment by human caused climate change is an existential threat looming over the citizens of Earth, this story is about the valuable information on the history of Earth's climate, gleaned by the genetic analysis of the uncovered viruses. About three-fourths of the viruses found in the ice core samples are new to science.

Most of the viruses likely infected dominant microbes as against animals or humans, with the genetic material preserving information on the adaptations necessary to survive in extreme conditions during the variations because of the climate cycles of the Earth. As global warming threatens the Himalayan Glaciers, the knowledge embedded within the ice only increases in scientific value. The ice core sample preserved snapshots of virus evolution and behaviour over the previous 41,000 years.

A connection between viruses and climate change

The researchers were able to identify a distinct viral community that emerged about 11,500 years ago, just when the Earth was transitioning from the last Ice Age to a warm Holocene period. The researchers used sophisticated genetic sequencing techniques to look for signatures in the DNA, and discovered that most of the viruses were unique to the Guliya Snow Cap, with some overlap with species found elsewhere, indicating that viruses from as far away as the Middle East or even the Arctic made it to Tibet.

A paper describing the findings has been published in *Nature Geoscience*. Lead author of the study, ZhiPing Zhong says, "Before this work, how viruses linked to large-scale changes in Earth's climate had remained largely uninvestigated". Apart from providing valuable insights on the relationship between climate shifts and viruses on Earth, the techniques used by the researchers can help find microbes in the ice fields on Mars, or beneath the kilometres thick ice shells of potentially habitable moons of the Gas Giants, such as Enceladus and Europa.

### **After millennia apart, these Tibetan lakes are now linked and could merge by 2030**

10 September 2024, SCMP, Zhang Tong

Tibet's largest inland lake, Siling, has spilled over into another nearby salt lake, Bange, for the first time in more than 4,000 years, after decades of rising water levels driven by climate change.

The Tibetan Plateau, known as "Asia's water tower", has more than 1,000 lakes and is the source of 10 major rivers in Asia that provide water resources to about 2 billion people in downstream countries.

Scientists monitoring the two lakes on the plateau – which are about 6km (4 miles) apart – say they could merge, and that might have significant implications for people living nearby.

A team from the Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research at the Chinese Academy of Sciences published their analysis of the changes at Siling lake in the peer-reviewed *Science Bulletin* in July.

Siling has significantly expanded in the past two decades. It covered an area of some 1,640 sq km (630 sq miles) in the 1970s, but by 2023 the lake had swollen to 2,445 sq km (945 sq miles), according to Lei Yanbin, a professor with the institute and lead author of the study.

Siling and nearby lake Bange – once a source of borax – have been part of separate watersheds with no hydrological connection for more than 4,000 years but potentially as far back as 8,200 years ago, when glaciers melted and sea levels rose.

"While Bange [lake's] water level decreased by about 1 metre [3 feet] over the last decade, Siling [lake's] rose by 4 metres [13 feet]," Lei wrote.

Siling spilled over into an ancient riverbed between the two lakes in September last year, breaking up a provincial road and forming a channel that was 200 metres at its widest and nearly 2 metres deep.

"The outburst flood ... will lead to the rapid expansion of Bange," Lei said in a statement released by the institute.

"Satellite data revealed that within a month of the overflow, Bange's area had increased by more than 10 per cent."

Lei said the immediate cause of the overflow was a continued rise in water levels over the past 20 years, noting that it had risen by more than 13 metres from 1998 to 2023. Increased rainfall in the area in August and September last year had pushed the water levels to the point where the lake spilled over.

He said rapid climate change on the Tibetan Plateau was driving the problem.

"From 1970 to 2014, the average annual temperature on the plateau rose at a rate of 0.35 degrees Celsius [32.63 Fahrenheit] per decade – twice the global average – accompanied by a marked unevenness in precipitation patterns, with increases in the plateau's interior and decreases on its southern and eastern edges," Lei said in a previous paper.

The impact of climate change is being seen across the Himalayan region. Song Chunqiao, a professor at the academy's Nanjing Institute of Geography and Limnology, has also studied watershed reorganisation on the Tibetan Plateau.

Song said there were 11 such events between 2000 and 2018, and the most severe one in 2011 had put the railway between Qinghai and Tibet at risk.

"Considering the ongoing trend of warming and moistening on the plateau, there is a pressing need for enhanced monitoring of potential watershed reorganisation areas – especially for sudden events like lake bursts and glacier collapses, which could lead to further geological disasters and ecological risks," Song said.

Lei's team also observed unprecedented expansion of lakes in the central Tibetan Plateau from 2017 to 2018, when the water levels of five lakes rose by between 1.4 metres and 2.8 metres.

Based on their modelling, the team expects Siling's water levels to continue rising – potentially by another 16.8 metres by 2100.

They said even under the most conservative scenario for emissions growth, the lake is predicted to expand and it could merge with Bange around 2030.

Lei said that change could affect people living near the lakes. He urged authorities to identify potential

hazards from the expansion of inland lakes on the Tibetan Plateau caused by climate change.

"Real-time monitoring and early warnings for critical lake water level changes are needed to protect surrounding roads, bridges and villages from emerging threats," he said in the statement.

### **Torrential rains, deadly flooding hit Tibetan areas of Qinghai province**

06 September 2024, RFA, Chakmo Tso and Dickey Kundol

Rights groups say the severe weather is the result of climate change.

Heavy rains in Tibetan areas of central China's Qinghai province have triggered severe flooding, destroying infrastructure and killing at least nine people and hundreds of livestock, three Tibetans from inside Tibet said.

The rains have drenched the area since Sept. 2, flooding roads, damaging bridges and causing landslides, they said. Chinese state media reported that heavy rains have inundated houses and swept away vehicles.

Tibet is experiencing heavier annual rainfalls and flooding than in the past, which some Tibetan rights groups say is due to climate change.

Six people died in Trelnag township of Serchen (Gonghe in Chinese) County in Tsolho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, the sources said, insisting on not being identified to avoid reprisals from authorities.

Five of them died while traveling in a vehicle when a bridge collapsed, one source said.

Three others died due to a landslide in Honaguk village in Minhe county of Tsoshar (Haidong in Chinese) prefecture.

Some areas experienced severe hailstorms, which shattered windows and glass panes in the homes of nomads, the sources said.

Livestock dies

The flooding killed livestock as well. Nearly 400 cattle and sheep died in Tsekhok (Zekog) county in the Malho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

Residents there needed help pulling dead cattle from the water and mud.

In Minhe district, houses were damaged, and highways and bridges were washed over, while grasslands were covered by mud.

As of Sept. 4, the Chinese government elevated the weather-damage alert for Qinghai from level 4 to level 3.

Chinese state media reported a level-one flood warning has been issued for Siling (Xining) city as well as Tathang, Kumbum and Tongkor counties. As a

result, officials suspended bus transportation from Siling to these areas.

Roads and bridges connecting Tongkor and Siling have been severely damaged by the flooding, the sources said.

Additionally, roads leading from Dashi (Haiyan) and Kangtsa (Gangcha) counties of Tsojang (Haibei) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, and Themchen (Tianjun) county of Tsonub (Haixi Mongolian and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture) to Siling (Xining) city have been cut off, making travel in and out of these areas impossible.

The areas have been hit by flooding before.

In 2022, five people died and over 2,000 head of livestock died due to flooding in parts of Qinghai province, including Mangra (Guinan), Serkog and Rebgong counties, as well as Labrang town in Sanchu (Xiahe) County of Kanlho (Gannan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Gansu province.

## August

### **Ghosts of the past: Global warming fears resurface as 41,000 years old viruses discovered in Tibetan glacier**

28 August 2024, Down to Earth

A team of American and Chinese scientists has discovered as many as 1,705 genomes of viruses beneath the ice sheets in Tibet's Guliya Glacier. Many of these viruses are novel (like novel coronavirus) which means that their existence hasn't been chronicled in science so far.

With the latest discovery of glacial viruses in Tibet, the known collection of ancient viruses has skyrocketed. "After years of persistence, we successfully extracted and sequenced approximately 1,700 genomes of species-level virus operational taxonomic units from the ice core, expanding the known collection of glacier-preserved ancient viruses more than 50-fold," the research article titled A Decade-Long Journey into Glacier-Archived Ancient Viruses and Their Paleoclimatic Connections noted.

Scientists have told the press that the viruses differed significantly between colder and warmer eras, noting that a distinct community of viruses formed during these climatic shifts, at the end of the last ice age some 11,500 years ago. "This at least indicates the potential connection between viruses and climate change," said ZhiPing Zhong of Ohio State University, lead author on the research.

Also, co-author Lonnie Thompson highlighted the importance of research, describing it as 'a new tool

that can answer basic climate questions that we couldn't have answered otherwise'.

The Guliya Glacier, which is located above 20,000 feet in the northwestern Tibetan Plateau, has historically been an active site for paleoclimate research.

Risks involved?

From a health perspective, excavating prehistoric ice sheets usually don't pose hazards for present-day human populations. This is because these long-dormant viruses mostly infected other microbes rather than animals.

However, researchers have found that the adaptations of these viruses could have compromised their hosts' ability to survive harsh weather conditions.

Also, these viruses haven't disintegrated biochemically even after major shifts in Earth's climate over millennia. Thus, in an adversely changing environment, it is widely believed that the melting of ice sheets can release viruses that can mutate and adapt to contemporary conditions.

Extreme weather risks rising as Tibetan Plateau gets hotter and wetter, scientists warn

23 August 2024, The Star

### **'Over half of Tibetan Plateau's glaciers may melt by 2100'**

20 August 2024, Tibetan Review

Scientists have warned that the Tibetan Plateau is becoming warmer and wetter, raising the risk of extreme weather events.

The plateau is sometimes described as the "Asian water tower", because it is the source of many of the continent's major rivers including the Indus, Ganges, Mekong, Yangtze and Yellow River.

The researchers, led by the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research, presented a summary of their findings from ongoing work on Sunday.

The plateau will enter a super warm and humid phase that will see more than half the glacier mass melting in some areas and lake water levels rising by more than

10 metres (33 feet) by the end of the century, according to the researchers.

They said global warming meant that the amount of grassland and forest had increased by 6 and 12 per cent respectively over the last 15 years – but warned that these changes also carried an increased risk of extreme weather events.

Although the increase in vegetation will help prevent desertification, in the long run it will cause a shift in monsoon circulation, resulting in more heavy rainfall during the summer. These changes "could lead to significant shifts in the Asian monsoon circulation,

potentially increasing the frequency of extreme weather events in China”, Yao Tandong, the leader of the research team, warned.

In a paper published in *Nature* in 2022, Yao warned that the rise in water levels was primarily occurring in the northern inland areas, but southern outflow regions – including the Indus and Ganges river basins, which are vital for agriculture in India and Pakistan – were experiencing a decline.

The researchers said these changes meant that more effective water resource management would be needed in downstream countries in future.

The China Meteorological Administration has previously warned that the total glacier area on the plateau may fall by 40 per cent by 2050, increasing the risk of severe storms and floods in downstream areas. The researchers have also mapped the distribution of active faults that could trigger major earthquakes along critical transport corridors and developed a disaster risk assessment system to support the construction of major infrastructure projects in the region.

The team has also discovered more than 3,000 new species and evidence that suggests the earliest human activity on the Tibetan Plateau may date back over 190,000 years, according to state news agency Xinhua.

Chinese scientists have warned that some low-elevation glaciers on the Tibetan Plateau may disappear permanently, which could significantly impact the plateau’s ecosystem. In fact, by the end of the current, 21st century, the loss of glacial mass in some regions of the Tibetan Plateau will exceed 50%, according to the scientists’ model predictions cited by China’s official Xinhua news agency Aug 20.

Over the past five decades, the plateau has witnessed rapid warming, with a temperature increase of about

0.4 degrees Celsius every 10 years, more than double the global average warming rate during the same period, the report noted.

Citing the example of Rongbuk Glacier at the foot of Mount Everest, Wu Guangjian, a researcher at the Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research, Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), has said, “the length and height of it are both shrinking.”

Wu has added that global warming has caused the rate of glacier evaporation to exceed precipitation, and that small glaciers at lower elevations on the plateau are melting more rapidly and are likely to disappear in the future.

The researchers, led by the Chinese Academy of Sciences’ Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research, have presented a summary of their findings from ongoing work on Aug 18.

The seriousness of the scientists’ warning lies in the fact that the Tibetan Plateau is the region with the most glaciers outside the polar regions. “Data shows that the glaciers on the plateau holds over 8 trillion cubic metres of water, providing essential water resources for more than 2 billion people downstream,” the report noted.

“The model shows that lake water levels in some areas of the plateau might rise by over 10 metres at the end of the century, which could enhance the plateau’s overall water supply capacity,” Yao Tandong, an academician at the CAS and the leader of China’s ongoing second scientific expedition and research project on the Tibetan Plateau has said.

“However,” Yao has added, “it also increases the risk of glacier collapses and glacial lake outburst floods.”

The scientists have noted that global warming meant that the amount of grassland and forest had increased by 6 and 12% respectively over the last 15 years. However, they have warned that these changes also carried an increased risk of extreme weather events. Although the increase in vegetation will help prevent desertification, in the long run it will cause a shift in monsoon circulation, resulting in more heavy rainfall during the summer.

These changes “could lead to significant shifts in the Asian monsoon circulation, potentially increasing the frequency of extreme weather events in China”, the *scmp.com* Aug 20 quoted Yao as saying.

In this project, Chinese scientists were stated to have used high-precision radar for the first time to obtain a continuous profile of snow and ice thickness at the summit of Mount Everest, as well as accurate measurements of its ice and snow depth.

Wu has warned that unless the world reaches a consensus on addressing climate warming and take action as soon as possible, “we will witness the disappearance of glaciers in more regions across the globe.”

Previously, the China Meteorological Administration had warned that the total glacier area on the Tibetan Plateau may fall by 40% by 2050, increasing the risk of severe storms and floods in downstream areas, noted the *scmp.com* report.

### **Scientists drill holes in world’s highest salt lake in Tibet for a glimpse into one million years of earth’s history**

12 August 2024, Tibetan Review

An international research team has successfully drilled record boreholes in the world’s highest saltwater lake located in northern Tibet over Jun-Jul 2024 to collect sediment cores to study the Earth’s history, including climate change, dating back about a million years. Studying these may help future



climate forecast efforts, reported uni-greifswald.de Aug 2 and China's official Xinhua news agency Jul 13.

Lake Namco (Tibetan: Namtso) is around 100 metres deep and lies at an altitude of nearly 4718 metres in Nagchu city-prefecture. Almost 1400 metres were drilled under the supervision of physical geographer Prof Dr Torsten Haberzettl from the University of Greifswald. The longest borehole reached a depth of over 500 metres.

The Xinhua report said the Namco drillingsurpassed the previous maximum depth of 153.44 metres in lake drilling on the Tibetan Plateau.

Namco is an enclosed lake that gathers information about rocks, soil, vegetation, rivers and human activities in the catchment, making the lake significant for environmental-changes research, it cited Wang Junbo, one of the leaders of the scientific expedition team, as saying.

The greifswald.de report said the sediments that are now available from these boreholes will be analysed and evaluated in detail by numerous international scientists over the coming years. The researchers from Greifswald hope to gain numerous insights into the climate of the past, the development of life in such a remote region and changes in the Earth's magnetic field.

Around 1400 metres of sediment cores were recovered from a floating drilling platform. These allow researchers to look back approximately one million years into Earth's history. In order to obtain such information, the sediment cores are divided into small slices, which are then analysed in the researchers' respective home laboratories - including in Greifswald, the report said.

The internationally funded drilling itself was stated to have mainly involved researchers from Germany, China, Switzerland and the UK, with the ideal drilling points determined in advance on the basis of seismic investigations funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation, DFG). The scientists hope that their research will help to improve forecasts of the future climate. "Global climate change will have a major impact on Southeast Asia and therefore also on the people who live here. It is thus important to understand the climate of the past in order to make models about the future development of the climate more reliable. The sediment cores reveal which climate changes occurred in this region in the past, how quickly they took place and whether they led to changes in the ecosystems," Prof Haberzettl has explained.

## **Fast multiplying Tibet-Himachal glacial lakes could threaten lives, infrastructure**

11 August 2024, Tibetan Review

Glacier sizes are rapidly reducing due to the impact of climate change in recent years, resulting in a gradual rise of moraine-dammed lakes in Himachal Pradesh in India and the Trans Himalayan Region of Tibet, posing a potential threat to human life and infrastructure further downstream, reported thehindu.com Aug 10, citing a recent study.

Moraine-dammed lakes are formed by the melting of retreating glaciers whose deposits of earth, rock etc, had fortified to prevent the water from flowing out. The number of glacial lakes in the Satluj river (Tibetan: Langchen Khabab) catchment area has almost doubled from 562 in 2019 to 1,048 in 2023, the report said, citing satellite data analysed in a recent study by the Centre on Climate Change of Himachal Pradesh Council for Science Technology-Environment (HIMCOSTE).

Of these 1,048 lakes, 900 are small, each spanning an area of less than five hectares, while 89 have an area between 5 hectares and ten hectares, and 59 are bigger than 10 hectares each, the report added. The catchment area of the Satluj basin was studied from upstream of Jhakri in Shimla district of Himachal Pradesh to the Mansarover Lake (Mapham Yutso) in Tibet in the Trans Himalayan Region from where the river originates.

"Over the years, the number of glacial lakes has been gradually increasing. In fact, as the frequency of small lakes with an area of less than five hectares has been rising, it indicates that the climate warming effects are more significant in the higher Himalayan region. The swift melting of glaciers and less snowfall during the winter could be reasons behind the rise in lakes," Mr SS Randhawa, a co-author of the study, and the principal scientific officer at HIMCOSTE, has said.

Randhawa has said it could be inferred from the basin-wise analysis that the number of lakes is much higher in the Tibetan Himalayan Region or the Upper Satluj basin, in comparison to the Spiti and Lower Satluj basins, indicating that the Upper Satluj basin is more susceptible to glacial lake formations.

The study, which analysed multi-spectral satellite images, suggests that the rise in glacial lakes in Himachal Pradesh's river basins can be disastrous downstream if the lakes burst their bounds for any reason, the report said. It was not clear from the news report whether similar danger existed on the Tibetan side of the Satluj basin where the number of such lakes is higher.

"Climate change has influenced the health of glaciers in the entire Himalayan region. As a result, the cryospheric cover over the Himalayan terrain is



reducing. One of the ramifications of this is the development of high-altitude glacial lakes," Sunil Dhar, Dean of the Department of Environmental Sciences at the Central University of Jammu, has said.

"The number of such lakes has increased over the years and these lakes have become unstable due to the increase in the volume of water or due to the calving effect of adjoining glaciers, [creating] avalanche either of snow or rocks. These lakes have a potential of bursting out, and depending on the volume of water, velocity and the outburst spread, it can pose a threat to habitations and infrastructure in the downstream region," he has added.

## **2 dead, 17 missing after flash flood, mudslide in Tibetan area of Sichuan province**

03 August 2024, Tibetan Review

Mudslide disasters have hit two nearby places in a Tibetan area of what is now part of China's Sichuan province over Aug 2-3, resulting in deaths and people missing, necessitating the dispatch of hundreds of people and equipment in rescue efforts. The first incident occurred on Oct 2 night in Ridi village in the province's Kangding City when "a sudden mountain torrent and landslide" destroyed homes, killing at least two people and leaving 12 missing, state

broadcaster CCTV reported, quoting the Ganzi (Tibetan: Kardze) prefecture government. The disaster swept away part of the village.

The second disaster happened nearby at around 3.30am on Aug 3, when a sudden mountain flood and mudslide hit the Kangding-Luding section of the Yakang expressway, leading to the collapse of an expressway bridge between two tunnels.

Kangding (Dartsedo) is Tibet's historical gateway to China while Luding (Chagzam) is within Tibet in Kardze prefecture.

The bridge disaster sent three vehicles carrying six passengers plunging down the mountainous terrain. One person was rescued while the remaining five were missing as of noon on Aug 3, state news agency Xinhua reported, citing the government publicity department of Sichuan Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

The Yakang expressway, connecting Ya'an in China in the east and Kangding in the west, opened in 2018. It shortens the car trip from provincial capital Chengdu to the resort city of Kangding by two hours, for a total journey of four hours. Bridges and tunnels make up 82% of the expressway.

While it remains to be determined whether poor quality of construction was responsible for the collapse of the Yakang expressway bridge, call for a

crackdown on such projects have been growing recently in China.

"Three tragedies in a row! I was so shocked," scmp.com Aug 3 quoted a user as writing on social media platform Weibo. "China should launch a crackdown on tofu-dreg projects."

In Chinese, a "tofu-dreg project" is a phrase used to describe poorly constructed infrastructure. Such projects came under the microscope in 2008, when hundreds of students died in shoddily built school buildings during the Wenchuan earthquake in Sichuan. The third tragedy referred to the death of 38 people from the Jul 19 partial collapse of a highway bridge that plunged 25 cars into a rushing river in Shannxi province.

China is the world's largest emitter of the greenhouse gases that scientists say drive climate change and make extreme weather more intense, noted the AFP Aug 3.

## **China begins observation experiment on land-atmosphere interactions in Mt Everest region**

03 August 2024, The Economic Times

China has begun an observation experiment on land-atmosphere interactions in the Mount Everest Region in Tibet to study the interaction between the land surface and the atmosphere, a crucial component of ecological and climate systems. A research team from the Aerospace Information Research Institute under the Chinese Academy of Sciences will conduct the observational experiment using unmanned aerial platforms at a site on the northern side of Mount Everest, called Qomolangma in Tibet, situated at an average altitude of approximately 4,200 metres (15,960 feet).

"In the Mount Qomolangma region, land-atmosphere interactions not only affect the climate of the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau and its surrounding areas but also have the potential to influence the global climate through complex climate feedback mechanisms and atmospheric circulation," said Jia Li, a researcher at the Institute.

Studying the Tibetan Plateau becomes imperative given the exponentially changing climatic conditions leading to faster melting glaciers and snow.

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), a regional intergovernmental organisation, brought out the 'Summary of the Hindu Kush Himalaya Assessment Report' in 2019 which stated there is ample evidence for elevation-dependent warming (EDW) in the HKH, especially in the Tibetan Plateau and its surrounding regions.

In 2023, ICIMOD also pointed out that 79 glaciers surrounding Everest have thinned by over 100 metres

in just six decades, and the thinning rate has nearly doubled since 2009.

The state-run Xinhua news agency reported on Friday that the researchers from the Aerospace Information Research Institute will collect spatial distribution data on, among other things, the radiation flux between the land surface and the atmosphere in the Tibetan Plateau.

They will also integrate ground-station and remote-sensing satellite data to conduct multi-temporal and multi-spatial comprehensive observations, the report said.

However, this is not the first time that China has sent out a research team to the roof of the world. The Second Tibetan Plateau Scientific Expedition and Research carried out a ground-penetrating radar survey of snow depth along the north slope of Mount Everest in May 2022.

## July

### Over-10,000-year-old stone tool site in Tibet a rare find

22 July 2024, Tibetan Review

Chinese scientists have discovered a microblade technology site on the south bank of the Serling Tso lake (in Amdo county of Nagchu City), Tibet autonomous region, reported China's official chinadaily.com.cn Jul 22. The discovery, named the Niadi Site, is the earliest of its kind, adding to the historical timeline of early human activity on the Tibetan Plateau, the report said, citing a research team from the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology.

Microblade technology is a period of technological microlith (tiny-blade-tool) development marked by the creation and use of small stone blades, which are produced by chipping silica-rich stones like chert, quartz, or obsidian. It was said to have come into widespread use over vast parts of northern Asia and northeastern Siberia in hunter-gatherer cultures during and after the Ice Age.

Migration to the Tibetan Plateau in that period may be closely linked to the long-term occupation of the region by humans and the formation of modern populations in Tibet, said China's official globaltimes.cn Jul 21, citing a report by the Science and Technology Daily.

This ground-breaking find fills a gap in the region's prehistoric cultural history and offers crucial insights into early human migration and adaptation on the plateau, the report said.

Significantly, the site has been dated to between 11,000 and 10,000 years ago. This time frame not only outlines the early activities of microblade technology groups in the heart of the plateau, but also provides an essential chronological marker for understanding the evolution of prehistoric human culture in the region.

In addition to the archaeological discoveries, the research team was stated to have integrated molecular biology findings, discovering that the migration of microblade technology groups into the Tibetan Plateau may be closely linked to the long-term occupation of the region by humans and the formation of modern populations in Tibet.

### Tibet rain: Floods and landslides leave hundreds stranded

10 July 2024, Hindustan Times

Over 472 people, including local residents and tourists from outside the area, were trapped outside Chentang Township in the Shigatse area, says state media.

Hundreds of people were trapped in rural Tibet in recent days after heavy rainfall caused floods and landslides, Chinese state media reported on Wednesday.

At least 472 people, including local residents and tourists from outside the area, were trapped outside Chentang Township in the Shigatse area, state broadcaster CCTV said.

China is battling extreme weather across the country this summer, with the national weather agency expecting extreme heat to persist for much of the season.

Swathes of northern China have already been baked by heat waves this summer, while unseasonably torrential rains have triggered deadly floods and landslides across much of the south.

Climate change driven by human-emitted greenhouse gases makes extreme weather events more frequent and intense, and China is the world's biggest emitter. Continuous rainfall since Saturday in Tibet had left roads damaged, and "power and communications in the area of Chentang Township was cut off", according to CCTV.

Footage published by the broadcaster showed murky water tumbling down rocky hillsides, and large groups of people trekking along crumbled roads.

Large parts of one road appeared to have fallen into a river, while another one was covered in debris from a landslide.

CCTV said rescuers had been working for four days, and had successfully relocated 342 of the stranded people to nearby urban areas.

"Additionally, more than 130 tourists from outside this area, migrant workers and merchants remain

temporarily stranded there due to road disruptions, rainy weather and insufficient physical ability to walk long distances," CCTV said.

An emergency communications network has now been set up in the area, according to the broadcaster.

### **Extinct humans survived on the Tibetan plateau for 160,000 years**

03 July 2024, Science Daily, University of Reading

Bone remains found in a Tibetan cave 3,280 m above sea level indicate an ancient group of humans survived here for many millennia, according to a new study published in Nature.

The Denisovans are an extinct species of ancient human that lived at the same time and in the same places as Neanderthals and Homo sapiens.

Only a handful Denisovan remains have ever been discovered by archaeologists.

Little is known about the group, including when they became extinct, but evidence exists to suggest they interbred with both Neanderthals and Homo sapiens.

A research team led by Lanzhou University, China, the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, the Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research, CAS, China, and involving the University of Reading studied more than 2,500 bones from the Baishiya Karst Cave on the high-altitude Tibetan Plateau, one of the only two places where Denisovans are known to have lived.

Their new analysis, published today (Wednesday, 3 July) in Nature, has identified a new Denisovan fossil and shed light on the species' ability to survive in fluctuating climatic conditions – including the ice age – on the Tibetan plateau from around 200,000 to 40,000 years ago.

Dr Geoff Smith, a zooarchaeologist at the University of Reading, is a co-author of the study.

He said: "We were able to identify that Denisovans hunted, butchered and ate a range of animal species. Our study reveals new information about the behaviour and adaptation of Denisovans both to high altitude conditions and shifting climates. We are only just beginning to understand the behaviour of this extraordinary human species."

#### **Dietary diversity**

Bone remains from Baishiya Karst Cave were broken into numerous fragments preventing identification.

The team used a novel scientific method that exploits differences in bone collagen between animals to determine which species the bone remains came from.

Dr Huan Xia, of Lanzhou University, said: "Zooarchaeology by Mass Spectrometry (ZooMS) allows us to extract valuable information from often overlooked bone fragments, providing deeper insight into human activities."

The research team determined that most of the bones were from blue sheep, known as the bharal, as well as wild yaks, equids, the extinct woolly rhino, and the spotted hyena.

The researchers also identified bone fragments from small mammals, such as marmots, and birds.

Dr Jian Wang, of Lanzhou University, said: "Current evidence suggests that it was Denisovans, not any other human groups, who occupied the cave and made efficient use of all the animal resources available to them throughout their occupation."

Detailed analysis of the fragmented bone surfaces shows the Denisovans removed meat and bone marrow from the bones, but also indicate the humans used them as raw material to produce tools.

#### **A new Denisovan fossil**

The scientists also identified one rib bone as belonging to a new Denisovan individual.

The layer where the rib was found was dated to between 48,000 and 32,000 years ago, implying that this Denisovan individual lived at a time when modern humans were dispersing across the Eurasian continent.

The results indicate that Denisovans lived through two cold periods, but also during a warmer interglacial period between the Middle and Late Pleistocene eras.

Dr Frido Welker, of the University of Copenhagen, said: "Together, the fossil and molecular evidence indicates that Ganjia Basin, where Baishiya Karst Cave is located, provided a relatively stable environment for Denisovans, despite its high-altitude.

"The question now arises when and why these Denisovans on the Tibetan Plateau went extinct."

### **Taming the Dri Chu: China's Derge Dam Threatens Tibetan Culture and Communities**

01 July 2024, International Campaign for Tibet

The people of Derge, a town in eastern Tibet, have risen up in opposition to the planned Kamtok (Ch: Gangtuo) hydropower project in their region. China's move to build the dam despite local opposition is indicative of the Chinese government's willingness to disregard negative impacts on Tibetan communities upstream in order to provide energy to the Chinese towns downstream.

This report expands on the Derge (Dege) situation and delves further into some of the systemic dangers of China's dam-building spree on the Dri Chu (Jinsha) [1] river. We hope to elucidate the stark contrast between the Tibetan people's deep-rooted connection to their ancestral lands and cultural heritage in Derge and beyond, and China's authoritarian approach that views the displacement of Tibetans and the erasure of their civilization as an

acceptable cost for serving the interests of the Chinese state.

Much has already been reported regarding the feared submergence of Wontö monastery and the displacement of upwards of 10,000 Tibetans due to the planned Kamtok Dam.[2] These fears reflect the familiar pattern of dislocation throughout Tibet, as recently reported by Human Rights Watch.[3]

Since 2016, the Chinese government has intensified its efforts to forcibly relocate Tibetan populations under the guise of policy initiatives euphemistically labeled as “extremely high-altitude ecological relocation” and “targeted poverty alleviation.” These programs are thinly veiled pretexts for the coercive displacement of Tibetans, facilitating the exploitation of Tibet’s abundant natural resources. The implementation of these policies has resulted in the involuntary resettlement of hundreds of thousands of Tibetans from their communities, paving the way for the unimpeded extraction and utilization of Tibet’s rich natural endowment, including minerals and water resources.

[Read more here.](#)

## June

### **Urgent action needed to save Hindu Kush Himalaya, the world’s ‘water tower’**

30 June 2024, SCMP, Shyam Saran

Heatwaves across Asia are underscoring the immediate and severe impact of climate change. My country India is grappling with record-breaking temperatures, with some parts of northern India exceeding 50 degrees Celsius. China is also bracing for an unusually hot summer, which follows 2022’s worst heatwave on record with abnormally high temperatures lasting over 70 days.

This extreme weather coincides with alarming findings from the annual Snow Update Report by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD). The report shows snow levels are almost a fifth below normal in the Hindu Kush Himalayan region this year, with experts advising water officials to initiate drought management and pre-emptive emergency water supply strategies.

The disastrous impact of climate change is seen first on mountains, and this puts downstream countries on the frontline of the crisis, particularly the eight that make up the Hindu Kush Himalaya – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan – which encompasses the highest mountain ranges in the world.

The Hindu Kush Himalaya, known as the world’s “water tower”, is a single ecological unit, divided by political boundaries but unified by natural assets such as mountains, rivers and biodiversity. Importantly, it is the source of 10 large Asian river systems – the Amu Darya, Indus, Ganges, Brahmaputra, Irrawaddy, Salween, Mekong, Yangtze, Yellow River and Tarim – serving two billion people.

Protecting these assets, such as by slowing glacier melt, is therefore critically important – but impossible without regional collaboration.

Another recent ICIMOD study confirms the region is undergoing unprecedented, and likely to be irreversible, change. Glaciers are melting at an alarming rate, and based on current projections, scientists predict that two-thirds may disappear by the end of the century. The 79 glaciers that surround Mount Everest, for example, have thinned by over 100m in just six decades, and the rate of thinning has nearly doubled since 2009.

Regional collaboration is imperative in dealing with this crisis. Natural disasters caused by climate change are increasing in frequency and intensity, and disproportionately affect populations suffering from poverty and deprivation. National boundaries cannot protect the countries of the Hindu Kush Himalaya from these, irrespective of where events may have originated.

If deforestation takes place in the upper reaches of the mountain ranges, the rivers which flow across several countries will be affected through higher siltation and increased run-off. Glacier melt affects not only the countries near the mountains but also the densely populated Indo-Gangetic Plain.

Moreover, natural disasters such as flooding or extended warm weather are often followed by the spread of water or airborne diseases.

Countries in South Asia previously made efforts to present a common position on climate change, at the Cop16 UN climate conference in 2010. Countries from the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) had adopted an action plan for climate change, which listed several measures to deal with the challenge. Despite this initial promise, many agreed measures remain unimplemented.

Nevertheless, initiatives such as adaptation research centres and regional technology innovation networks show a willingness to address shared challenges. Revitalising this collaborative spirit is more crucial than ever.

Net zero, the carbon ambition consuming the world’s attention, is at best a naive hope, and at worst, a clever deflection. Net zero by 2050 does not mean zero emissions by that date. It means that in 2050 whatever emissions are being generated are matched by expanded natural carbon sinks, like forests and oceans, and the technological

solutions that enable carbon to be sucked out of the atmosphere on a large scale, efficiently and economically.

Net zero therefore is a balance sheet concept that hides the uncertainties and even improbabilities of climate action. The largest natural carbon sinks are our forests and our oceans, both of which are being destroyed by rampant deforestation and waste dumping.

I do not see how in the next 25 years this will be reversed. Some countries in the region are doing all they can to reduce the impact of climate change. For example, Bhutan is the world's first "carbon negative" country, and conserving its rich forest lands is a feat for which it should be lauded. Others in our region should follow Bhutan's example, otherwise these efforts will be for nothing.

Political boundaries, territorial disputes and mutual suspicions are hindering regional cooperation. National security concerns often restrict vital data-sharing on water-induced disasters and glacial flood outbursts. But sharing such data can save lives and enhance regional cooperation.

Leaders and citizens must recognise that the fallout from the ecological crisis will far eclipse many of the divisive issues which currently demand our attention, while regional collaboration can yield significant environmental and economic benefits.

The region's ecological challenges necessitate an urgent call for regional collaboration. By working together, sharing knowledge and empowering institutions such as ICIMOD, countries can tackle climate change, protect shared natural assets and ensure a sustainable future for all. Embracing a unified approach to these transboundary issues is not just beneficial but essential for the region's survival and prosperity.

### **China's Climate Hegemony: Exploiting Tibet and Manipulating the Maldives**

26 June 2024, Khabarhub

In recent years, China's aggressive pursuit of natural resources and geopolitical influence has taken an alarming turn, with Tibet and the Maldives becoming key battlegrounds in Beijing's strategy of environmental exploitation and water politics.

This aggressive approach not only threatens delicate ecosystems but also poses significant risks to regional stability and the sovereignty of neighboring nations. Tibet, often referred to as the "Third Pole" due to its vast glacial reserves, stands as the largest repository of fresh water outside the Arctic and Antarctic.

This ecologically sensitive plateau serves as the source for 10 major Asian river systems, making it a critical resource for billions of people across the continent. However, China's relentless pursuit of

economic gain has led to unprecedented environmental degradation in this fragile region.

The Jiama copper-gold polymetallic mine, operated by China Gold International Resources, exemplifies the destructive impact of large-scale mining operations in Tibet.

Strengthening international legal frameworks to prevent the weaponization of water resources is also crucial. As China continues to leverage its control over Tibet's resources for geopolitical gain, the world must recognize the long-term consequences of these actions.

Despite a recent tailings dam failure in March 2023 that led to a year-long closure, the mine has resumed operations with plans for expansion.

This rapid return to business as usual, coupled with the construction of a new Phase III tailings dam, demonstrates China's prioritization of resource extraction over environmental concerns.

The environmental consequences of such mining activities are severe. Water contamination from heavy metals like copper, lead, and arsenic poses immediate threats to local populations and ecosystems.

The incident at the Guolanggou dam serves as a stark reminder of the ongoing risks, with the potential for future spills remaining a grave concern.

Beyond the immediate environmental impact, these mining operations are eroding Tibet's cultural and spiritual heritage.

The Jiama Valley, the birthplace of the first king of the Tibetan Empire, has been transformed from a sacred site into an industrial zone.

This desecration of holy lands prevents pilgrims from accessing sites of historical and religious importance, effectively severing Tibetans' connection to their ancestral heritage.

China's exploitation of Tibet's water resources extends beyond its borders, as evidenced by its recent "donation" of 3,000 metric tons of Tibetan glacial water to the Maldives.

This move, occurring simultaneously with the implementation of water conservation regulations in Tibet, reveals Beijing's cynical use of water as a geopolitical tool.

The timing of these water deliveries, coinciding with the Maldivian President's state visit to China and the signing of 20 agreements for financial and military assistance, underscores the transactional nature of China's "generosity."

This water diplomacy is part of a broader strategy to extend Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean region, leveraging the Maldives' vulnerability to climate change and its need for freshwater resources.

Meanwhile, Tibetans face increasing water scarcity due to Beijing's systematic water conservation campaigns.



The forced relocation of Tibetans from water-rich areas like Gangkar township to make way for Chinese water bottling facilities further illustrates the prioritization of commercial interests over the needs of local populations.

China's control over Tibet's water resources positions it as a potential "water hegemon" in Asia. With the capacity to influence eight major transboundary river systems, Beijing holds significant leverage over lower riparian states including Bangladesh, India, and Southeast Asian nations.

This control not only serves China's domestic economic interests but also provides a powerful tool for foreign policy manipulation.

Experts warn that China's dam-building spree, with numerous dams already constructed, poses an unprecedented threat to regional water security.

The potential for China to weaponize these water resources against neighboring countries cannot be overstated, as it could significantly impact agriculture, energy production, and overall economic stability in the region.

The environmental consequences of China's actions in Tibet extend far beyond its borders. The degradation of the Tibetan plateau, often called the "water tower of Asia," threatens the long-term water security of billions of people across the continent.

Climate change impacts, accelerated by China's damming and mineral extraction activities, are altering the delicate balance of this crucial ecosystem.

Moreover, the human cost of these policies is immense. Tibetans are being systematically marginalized in their own land, forced to relocate from ancestral territories, and denied access to their own water resources.

The cultural and spiritual erosion caused by these actions threatens the very identity of the Tibetan people.

China's exploitation of Tibet's resources and its water politics in the Maldives represent a dangerous form of environmental imperialism that demands urgent international attention.

The implications of these actions extend far beyond the immediate regions, threatening ecological balance, cultural heritage, and geopolitical stability across Asia.

The international community must demand transparency and environmental accountability for Chinese mining and damming operations in Tibet, support the rights of Tibetans to manage their own natural resources, and develop regional water-sharing agreements that ensure equitable access for all riparian states.

There is a pressing need to invest in alternative freshwater solutions for vulnerable nations like the

Maldives to reduce dependency on Chinese "water diplomacy."

Failure to act now could result in catastrophic consequences for the environment, regional stability, and the lives of billions who depend on the water flowing from the "Roof of the World."

Strengthening international legal frameworks to prevent the weaponization of water resources is also crucial. As China continues to leverage its control over Tibet's resources for geopolitical gain, the world must recognize the long-term consequences of these actions.

The exploitation of Tibet and the manipulation of vulnerable nations like the Maldives are not just regional issues but global concerns that require a coordinated international response.

Only through concerted effort can we hope to protect the fragile ecosystems of the "Third Pole" and ensure a sustainable, equitable future for all nations dependent on Asia's vital water resources.

The time for action is now, before irreversible damage is done to both the environment and the geopolitical landscape of the region.

The international community must unite to challenge China's environmental imperialism, protect the rights of Tibetans and other vulnerable populations, and ensure the sustainable management of Asia's critical water resources.

Failure to act now could result in catastrophic consequences for the environment, regional stability, and the lives of billions who depend on the water flowing from the "Roof of the World."

### **China sends glacial water from Tibet to the Maldives, raising concerns**

05 June 2024, RFA, Lobsang, Tenzin Pema and  
Tenzin Dickyi

Tibetans meanwhile are being told to save water as Beijing engages in water diplomacy.

China gifted 3,000 metric tons of Tibet's glacial water to the island nation of the Maldives in two separate batches in March and May – the same months it unveiled and implemented water conservation regulations at home.

The Water Conservation Regulations set limits on water usage within administrative regions and prioritizes water conservation work in Tibet and other parts of China.

They were issued by China's State Council on March 20, a week before it sent the first delivery of 1,500 metric tons of water in jugs to the Maldives, which is experiencing a scarcity of fresh water.

The regulations then went into effect on May 1, weeks before China donated the second batch of water jugs.





*Maldives residents carry jugs of water distributed by Red Crescent and security personnel after a fire at a desalination plant affected water supplies in Malé, capital of the Maldives, Dec. 5, 2014.*

China finalized the deal with the Maldives during a November 2023 visit by Yan Jinhai, chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Region, to the low-lying archipelago threatened by rising sea levels.

The Maldives has forged strong bilateral relations with China and is a beneficiary of the Belt and Road Initiative, under which it has borrowed more than US\$1 billion from Chinese banks in the past decade, according to Western think tanks.

Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu signed 20 agreements, including one for financial and military assistance, with Beijing during his inaugural state visit to China in January 2024.

The Maldives thanked the people of Tibet for their “generous donation,” which it expects will greatly support its island communities. Its freshwater resources are affected by erratic rainfall patterns and rising sea levels.

#### Water shortages in Tibet

But Tibetans inside Tibet said they face water shortages themselves because Chinese authorities have implemented systematic water conservation and management campaigns across various Tibetan villages and towns for over a decade.

This has occurred while authorities have restricted the availability of water and set limits on water usage at the local level.

“I have heard that China is donating bottled water from Tibet to other parts of the world for free for political gain,” said one source from the Tibet Autonomous Region, where Chinese authorities have carried out water conservation campaigns for over a decade.

“However, in Tibet, the local Tibetans do not have enough drinking water,” he said. “At times there isn’t enough water to even brush our teeth.”

On March 27, the same day the Maldives said it received the first batch of water, the Water Conservancy Bureau of Ngari Prefecture, or Ali in Chinese, the birthplace of key South Asian rivers,

began a series of year-long events for the general public to promote water conservation.

In Nyingtri city, or Linzhi in Chinese, authorities have implemented the strictest water resources management system over the past several years and boast of its effectiveness.

“The water used to wash rice and vegetables can be used to mop the floor and water the flowers. ... Nowadays, water-saving behaviors like this have become a conscious action of many citizens,” said a 2023 announcement by the city government.

Meanwhile, Tibetans who have grown up on their ancestral land in Gangkar township in Dingri county, called Tingri in Chinese, are being forced to relocate to make way for the expansion of China’s water bottling facilities and industry, two sources said.

“Gangkar is known for its fertile pastureland and significant water resources from glaciers with 15 water springs in the region, which the local Tibetans have always relied on for their livelihoods,” said the first source.

Chinese authorities plan to move about 430 residents to take control of the water resources from the land, he said.

#### Weaponizing water

China’s move signals it is engaging in “water politics” and playing the long game for geopolitical gains in South Asia, experts said.

The Chinese government has projects underway to extract clean, clear and mineral-rich water to support the expansion of its premium mineral bottled water industry, they said.

Beijing also wants to control water flows to lower riparian states such as India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, to further its own aspiration of regional dominance, experts said.

“The imperative to address the threat of China weaponizing water in Tibet cannot be overstated,” wrote scholars Neeraj Singh Manhas and Rahul Lad in a March report titled “China’s Weaponization of Water in Tibet A Lesson for the Lower Riparian States” in the *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*.

With approximately 87,000 dams built, China poses a historic threat, having already dammed most internal rivers, they add, while calling for proactive measures to implement enduring policies to protect these vital Tibet’s water resources.

Tibet is at the forefront of China’s “water wars” in the region, said Anushka Saxena, a research analyst at the Takshashila Institution, a public policy think tank in India.

Tibet’s eight major transboundary river systems have the capacity to turn China into “Asia’s water hegemon,” given that their water can be used for both domestic economic and foreign policy-related

interests, as well as can be weaponized to cause harm to lower riparian states, she said.

"In that light, China's moves vis-à-vis export of water to Maldives cannot be isolated from the larger approach China is adopting to using Tibet's water resources," she added.

### **Tibetan lakes are estimated to expand 50% by 2100: Chinese study**

03 June 2024, SCMP, Victoria Bela

By the end of the century, the surface area of some lakes in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau could increase by more than 50 per cent – while other lakes around the world shrink – a new study has found.

The water volume of the lakes in the plateau in southwest China is estimated to expand by more than 600 billion tonnes, largely due to increased rainfall caused by climate warming, as well as the melting of glaciers.

If these predictions are correct, the researchers said it could have a massive economic impact on China, running into the billions.

"Our results suggest that by 2100, even under a low-emissions scenario, the surface area of endorheic lakes on the Tibetan Plateau will increase by over 50 per cent (around 20,000 sq km [7,722 square miles]) and water levels will rise by around 10 metres [32 feet] relative to 2020," the scientists wrote in a paper published in the peer-reviewed journal *Nature Geoscience* on May 27. Endorheic lakes, also known as closed lakes, do not have an outlet to drain into. The team from China, Wales, Saudi Arabia, the United States and France said that this would correspond to a fourfold increase in water storage compared to what the area experienced over the last 50 years.

If steps are not taken to mitigate this, "more than 1,000 km of roads, approximately 500 settlements and around 10,000 sq km of ecological components such as grasslands, wetlands and croplands," will become submerged, the team said.

The Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, known as the "Water Tower of Asia", is the highest and largest plateau in the world and is home to more than 1,000 lakes with large reserves of water in both liquid and ice form.

"[It is] one of the regions that is most vulnerable to climate change, acting as an early warning signal for the wider effects of global warming," the researchers wrote.

While large lakes in other parts of the world have been experiencing a decline in water storage due to both rising temperatures and human activity, lakes in the plateau have actually been expanding in recent decades due to warmer and wetter conditions.

This has mostly been driven by increases in net precipitation. While melting glaciers also contribute

to this phenomenon, the researchers said the glaciers that remain have "limited storage".

As part of the study, the team developed a simulation model for the period of 2021 to 2100 incorporating climate drivers with field surveys and remote sensing, all set to different socioeconomic scenarios to examine the future impact of increasing water storage in the plateau.

In the northern part of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, a twofold increase in total lake area is expected – the largest increase across the plateau. Lakes in the southeast, northwest and central parts of the plateau will also see significant expansion.

In fact, even though the southern part of the plateau used to see a shrinking trend in lake changes, it also began expanding in 2021, the team found.

The largest lake in the Tibet autonomous region, Selin Co (Siling Lake), could see an increase in water volume of around 66 billion tonnes – about an 800 sq km increase in lake area.

Despite the northern parts of the plateau being projected to experience the largest increase in water storage, roads in the northeast – where there is more human activity and infrastructure – will be the most vulnerable to inundation.

Looking at the researchers' middle socioeconomic scenario, they estimated that inundated roads could directly lead to an economic loss of 20 billion yuan to 50 billion yuan (US\$2.7 billion to US\$6.9 billion) by the end of the century.

This "is a serious threat that should be considered in future rail and road planning," the team said.

Many villages and livestock pens are located next to lakes in the plateau, and by the end of the century, 615 human settlements could be inundated by water.

More than 500,000 livestock could also be disturbed, and the inundation of grassland could lead to less livestock production "severely affecting the livelihoods of local pastoralists and further exacerbating poverty levels," the researchers wrote.

The team pointed to an incident in 2011 where a lake in the plateau's Hoh Xil Nature Reserve "burst", leading to a blockage of the migration route for Tibetan antelope.

"Loss of cropland could disrupt food production, affecting both local food security and the regional agricultural economy," the paper said.

The team found that several lakes are also expected to merge together as their area expands, which could also threaten infrastructure and ecology.

Plus, as the lakes' area expands, the team said there is a "growing concern about increased emissions of greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide and methane, into the atmosphere".

This could create a feedback loop, as increased emissions would cause more warming, which would in turn cause further lake expansion in the plateau.

"The expanding lakes pose challenges to existing and planned infrastructure and communities and requires urgent implementation of effective adaptation and sustainable management strategies to mitigate socioeconomic repercussions," the team said.

"Our study serves as a scientific guide for future planning and provides valuable insights to avoid the devastating consequences of the impending lake expansion."

### **China Gold's Jiama mine in Tibet resumes operations**

02 June 2024, RTV

China Gold International Resources announced that the Phase II processing plant at its Jiama mine in Tibet, China, has resumed operations after being halted for over a year.

The copper-gold mine was suspended on March 27, 2023, due to a tailings overflow at the Guolanggou dam, which the company has since repaired and reinforced.

With approvals granted by Tibet government as well as relevant departments of the Chinese government, the Phase II processing plant is now operating with a daily processing capacity of 34,000 tonnes.

The Phase I plant, which has been running at a rate of 6,000 tonnes during the production ramp-up phase, will cease operations. The plant was allowed to resume in December following approval from the municipal government.

"We are proceeding cautiously in resuming operations and ramping up productions. The root causes of the overflow have been thoroughly reviewed and the lessons learned will be applied in future operations," stated Junhu Tong, China Gold's chairman and CEO.

Meanwhile, the company is actively advancing the construction of the Phase III tailings dam, which it expects to complete and put into operation during the first half of 2026.

As detailed in its year-end 2023 release, the Chinese miner has set a production guidance of 95-98 million lb. of copper and 42,439-45,333 oz. of gold for the Jiama mine this year once it returns to production. This is in addition to the 106,097-112,528 oz. of gold forecasted at its CSH mine in Inner Mongolia.

## **May**

### **Lakes on Qinghai-Tibet Plateau growing rapidly, study finds**

30 May 2024, China Daily, Palden Nyima and Daqiong

Chinese scientists have found that over the past three decades, the area of lakes on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau has expanded by over 10,000 square kilometers and is continuing to grow, the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences announced recently on its website.

The research carried out by the institute's environmental change and multisphere processes team, led by Zhang Guoqing, predicts that by the end of the 21st century, the lake area on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau will expand by approximately 50 percent, equivalent to about 20,000 square kilometers, under a low-emission scenario.

This expansion will increase water levels by an estimated 10 meters, resulting in a staggering increase in water volume of about 652 billion metric tons, which is four times the increase over the past 50 years.

The research is a pivotal advancement in the study of Qinghai-Tibet Plateau lakes. It was published in the esteemed international academic journal *Nature Geoscience* on Monday and is poised to provide crucial scientific guidance for future planning on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.

Described as the "Asian Water Tower," the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau boasts the world's highest and most extensive plateau lake group, accounting for over 50 percent of China's total lake area.

Xu Fenglin, one of the authors of the published research paper and a doctoral student at the institute, said that the research highlights that lakes in the northern plateau are experiencing the most significant expansion and will potentially double in area under high-emission scenarios.

"The lakes in the central region of the plateau are projected to expand by over 50 percent, while lakes in the southern region, previously in a state of shrinkage, are anticipated to transition to expansion in the near future," Xu said.

"The expansion of lakes on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau will increase lake-atmosphere exchanges, potentially leading to an increase in greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere, thereby exacerbating global warming."

## Warmer Climate Risks Societal, Ecological Impact on Tibet

28 May 2024, The Mirage

While recent reports have stated that more than half the world's largest lakes, including lakes in the Tibetan plateau, are drying up, a paper in *Nature Geoscience* today (27/5/24 DOI 10.1038/s41561-024-01446-w ) suggests that, by the end of this century, land-locked lakes on the Tibetan Plateau are set to increase exponentially, resulting in major land loss and related economic, environmental and climatic impacts.

Climate and weather predictions suggest that increased rainfall due to climate change will enlarge these lakes, and see water levels rise by up to 10 metres.

The volume of water caught in these land-locked lakes is estimated to increase fourfold by 2100 according to the research by Dr Iestyn Woolway of Bangor University (UK) and colleagues in China, Saudi Arabia, USA and France.

The increased lake surface area will also mean the loss of critical land area, for agriculture, human habitation, critical road and rail networks and economic disruption.

Dr Woolway commented,

"Climate change is making the Tibetan Plateau greener and more habitable, attracting more people to higher altitudes due to better access to water. However, rising lake levels require urgent planning and policies to mitigate impacts on the region's ecology and population."

The resultant land loss could also lead to a change in the landscape, as lakes merge and the course of the rivers which feed and inter-connect the lakes are altered.

This could lead to increased greenhouse gas emissions and a positive feedback loop, amplifying climate change. An increase in freshwater, and in flow between lakes could also cause a change in ecology and affect wildlife. As an example, when the Zonang Lake in Hoh Xil Nature Reserve burst its banks in 2011, the Tibetan Antelope found their migration route blocked.

## China sends second consignment of glacial water from Tibet to Maldives

25 May 2024, The Pioneer

China has gifted 1,500 tonnes of water from the Tibetan glaciers to Maldives, the second such donation in less than two months, a media report said on Friday.

This is the latest in the multiple grants and aid that China has promised the Maldives, especially since

pro-China Mohamed Muizzu took over as the President in November 2023.

China's Xizang Autonomous Region has gifted 1,500 tonnes of mineral water to the Maldives government on Thursday. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that the donated water will be distributed to island communities, for use during times of drinking shortage, news portal Sun.mv reported. Earlier on March 27, the Maldives government had announced that it had received a similar consignment of 1,500 tonnes of water from China.

Foreign Minister Moosa Zameer, while speaking at a ceremony where Wang Lixin, the Chinese Ambassador to the Maldives, handed over the donation, said that China continues to remain a "good friend to the Maldives," especially during the challenging times and crisis.

The minister also expressed his gratitude to the people of Xinjiang Autonomous Region for the kind gesture and to the government and people of China for their continued support and goodwill. "Grateful to receive 1,500 tonnes of mineral water from the people of Xizang Autonomous Region, PRC. This generous donation will greatly support our island communities during water shortages. Thank you for your support and friendship," Zameer said on his official X handle late on Friday and tagged Wang while posting photos from the ceremony.

The Maldives has 26 atolls and its 1,192 islands are mostly composed of coral reefs and sandbars, a combination that makes groundwater and freshwater extremely scarce, and the problems are exacerbated due to climate change.

The country has tried between 2011 and 2015, a UN-funded 'Increasing Climate Resilience through an Integrated Water Resources Management Programme' but with limited success.

In December 2014, India carried out 'Operation Neer' during one of its worst water crises following a massive fire in the Male Water and Sewerage Company complex on December 4, 2014.

While announcing the earlier consignment in March, the government had said that the decision to provide Maldives with drinking water was reached during the official visit in November 2023 of China's Tibet Autonomous Region's Chairman, Yan Jinhai to the Maldives, when he met President Muizzu.

At that time, it was deliberated to donate water that is produced out of frozen water procured from glacial regions which are highly clean, clear, and rich in minerals. Moreover, Tibet (Xizang in Chinese) Autonomous Region is known to produce high-cost premium brands of water, the Maldives Foreign Ministry said then.

Previously, China had been exclusively known for its assistance in the urban and economic development of the Maldives. But since Muizzu assumed office,



China has been helping the country with the supply of defence equipment too.

### **Ancient DNA Unveils Western Tibetan Plateau's Past**

23 May 2024, Mirage

Combining the recently sequenced data with previously published ancient genomic data, the evolutionary history of the populations in the western Tibetan Plateau over the past 3,500 years has now been reconstructed.

This study is a systematic, long-term genomic study of ancient populations in the western Tibetan Plateau. It is of great significance for the in-depth understanding of the history of interactions between ancient western plateau populations and ancient populations within the plateau and in neighboring South Asia and Central Asia, according to the researchers.

Genetic characteristics of ancient western plateau populations and their interactions with ancient populations within the plateau

Previously, the understanding of the genetic history of the ancient populations of the western plateau was extremely limited. Based on only one site dating back 2,300 years ago, researchers had speculated that genetic influence occurred between western plateau populations and Central Asians. However, the specific time, place, and extent of this influence were unknown. In this study, the researchers reconstructed the population evolutionary history in the western plateau over thousands of years using genetic information from various ancient Tibetan populations.

They showed that the ancient Ngari populations of 3,500 years ago had genetic components similar to the populations of the southern plateau and did not carry additional genetic components from Central Asia or South Asia.

This genetic composition has been stably maintained in northwestern Ngari Prefecture for more than a thousand years: The genetic composition of the late Gebusailu and Laga populations of 2,300 years ago is almost the same as that of the Gebusailu population of 3,500 years ago. In other words, the Ngari population during this period mainly carried the genetic components of ancient populations in the southern plateau, while genetic components from Central Asia and South Asia were introduced much later. After that, starting from 2,300 years ago, Central Asian components appeared in some sites in northwestern Ngari Prefecture, but until 150 years ago, the proportion of Central Asian components was still less than 15%. Overall, local Ngari genetic components remained dominant from 3,500 to 150 years ago.

The researchers also found complex population interactions and migrations within the plateau. The genetic components of ancient populations in the southern and western parts of the plateau 3,500 years ago were very similar, indicating that population migration and expansion from south to west may have occurred earlier.

In addition, compared with the population in northwestern Ngari, populations from 1,800 to 1,600 years ago from the Kongque River to the upper reaches of the Xiangquan River in southeast Ngari were further influenced by ancient populations from the southern plateau. This indicates that the southern plateau people may have begun to expand westward again before the Tubo Empire expanded westward in the early 7th century.

In summary, the interactions between the ancient populations of the southern and western plateau were far more complex than recorded in historical documents. As early as 1,800 years ago, multiple east-to-west human migrations between the two places had occurred, and a gradient of genetic components introduced by the expansions can be observed in these east-to-west populations.

Interactions between ancient populations in the western plateau and outside the plateau

Although Central Asian components began to affect some Ngari populations around 2,300 years ago, the proportion of Central Asian components in the genomes of these populations is low

Beginning 2,000 years ago, genetic components related to South Asia also affected the Ngari Prefecture region. Interestingly, the South Asian-related genetic components that affected the ancient Ngari populations came from mixed populations that settled in Central Asia. These populations are genetically related to Central Asians but are culturally typical South Asians. Previous research suggested that they were immigrants from the Indus Valley Civilization who settled in Central Asia.

This is the first identification of South Asian-related genetic components in ancient populations on the Tibetan Plateau, providing clues to the interactions between ancient populations on the plateau and those related to the Indus Valley Civilization.

In the 9th century AD, with the decline of the Tubo regime, descendants of the Tubo royal family established the Guge Kingdom in what is now Ngari Prefecture. It was not until the 17th century AD that the Guge Kingdom collapsed. As the continuation of the Tubo lineage, the Guge population is an important window into the genetic characteristics of the last Tubo people. An ancient human sample collected by the researchers from the Guge Cave showed the influence of Central Asian populations, and the proportion of Central Asian components was as high as 31%. This admixture event is estimated to

have occurred around 1,353 AD, coinciding with the prosperity of the Guge Kingdom. This new result shows that in addition to its historical connections with South Asian kingdoms, the Guge Kingdom also had population interactions with people from Central Asian kingdoms.

Kinship practices in early western plateau communities

The researchers also examined kinship among individuals from early western plateau sites. At the Gebusailu tomb dating back 2,300 years ago, a second-generation family structure consisting of a father and two sons was discovered. At the same time, individuals at this site and the 1,800-year-old Pulanduowa site were mainly male, and the diversity of Y-chromosome haplotypes is evidently lower than that of mitochondrial haplotypes, indicating that both may have been communities dominated by paternal inheritance.

The 1,600-year-old Qulong sazha tomb includes a family line in which the second- and third-generation descendants are related by maternal kinship, suggesting the role of maternal kinship in the family line. Combined with the sex ratio and paternal and maternal genetic diversity, this pattern reflects a relatively balanced paternal and maternal inheritance structure.

Nevertheless, this study is a preliminary exploration of the kinship practices at early plateau sites, and future research with more samples will shed more light on the details and diversity of the community structure of ancient Tibetans.

Due to the high altitude and harsh natural environment of the western Tibetan Plateau, anthropological and archaeological research in this region is relatively limited. In particular, large gaps exist in previous research on the evolutionary history of early ancient western Tibetan Plateau populations and their interaction with ancient populations in neighboring areas. Using a combination of genetics and archeology, the researchers thoroughly investigated the evolutionary history of ancient populations on the western plateau over the past 3,500 years. While the major genetic components of the ancient western plateau populations show continuity, those populations had complex and frequent interactions with the ancient populations in the adjacent southern plateau region, Central Asia, and South Asia off the plateau.

Since the Tibetan Plateau is a bridge between East, Central, and South Asia, the results of this study are important for understanding the genetics of ancient populations on the plateau and those populations' interactions with ancient Central and South Asians.

## **China targets Tibet to establish world's largest national park system**

23 May 2024, Tibetan Review

China will strive to establish the world's largest national park system by 2035, reported the official Xinhua news agency May 22. However, 70% of the candidate areas for achieving this goal are on the Tibetan Plateau, raising serious concerns about the plan's brutal implications for Tibetan farmers and nomads who are bound to be forced to relocate from their ancestral land.

The report said that in 2021, China established its first batch of national parks, spanning a protected land area of 230,000 square km. These included the Sanjiangyuan National Park, the Giant Panda National Park, the NCTLNP, Hainan Tropical Rainforest National Park and Wuyishan National Park.

Of them, the Sanjiangyuan National Park in Qinghai Province is fully within a Tibetan populated territory. Besides, a significant portion of the Giant Panda National Park is located in the historically Tibetan populated regions in Sichuan and Gansu provinces. These have entailed large-scale forced relocation and impoverishment of Tibetan farmers and nomads. And now, in order to achieve its 2035 goal, China has designated 49 candidate areas, covering around 1.1 million square km, as national park space, the report said, citing a spatial layout plan made public in 2022.

Notably, the Tibetan Plateau, which is the highest plateau in the world, has 13 candidate areas. They cover an area of about 770,000 square km and account for 70% of the total area of national park candidate areas, the report said.

One of these candidate areas is the Qiangtang Nature Reserve in Nagchu City, northern Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). A section of the relocation of Tibetans from this area to southern TAR has been covered recently by China's official media.

## **Study investigates extreme precipitation events across diverse regions of the Tibetan Plateau**

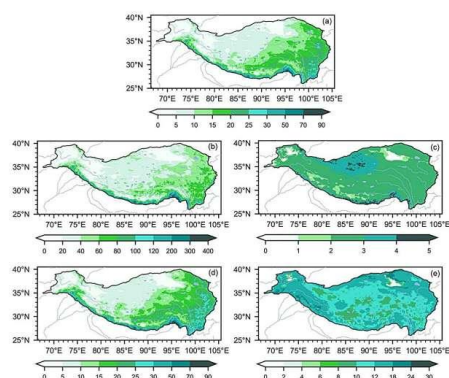
22 May 2024, Phys.org

Researchers have identified three distinct spatial types for summer extreme precipitation on the Tibetan Plateau: Northwest, Southeast, and Southern Himalayas types based on predefined thresholds for extreme precipitation. The study is published in the journal *Science China Earth Sciences*.

The Northwest and Southeast types are primarily influenced by anomalous signals in the mid-to-high latitude regions upstream of them, while their wave train shapes exhibit significant differences. The



precursor signals of the Northwest type propagate predominantly from west to east along the latitudinal 40°N, whereas those of the Southeast type occur at higher latitudes, with anomalous signals originating from the north polar region and propagating in a northwesterly-southeasterly direction.



*Spatial distribution of extreme precipitation thresholds and extreme precipitation indices in summer on the TP. Credit: Science China Earth Sciences (2024). DOI: 10.1007/s11430-023-1321-6*

On the other hand, the Southern Himalayas type is mainly governed by localized subtropical anomalous circulation anomalies and exhibits little association with wave train activity from mid-to-high latitudes.

The identification of significant disparities in the characteristics of extreme precipitation events, along with their associated influence on circulation patterns and precursor signals on the plateau, could offer a more robust foundation for accurately predicting extreme precipitation events during the summer season in this region.

This study was led by Ding Zhiyuan, Dr. Ha Yao, and Dr. Zhong Zhong from the College of Meteorology and Oceanography at the National University of Defense Technology.

## Occupying Tibet's Rivers

21 May 2024, Free Tibet

China's policy of constructing mega dams on Tibet's rivers and extracting its resources risks social and environmental catastrophe in Tibet and throughout Asia. This is according to a new report released today by Free Tibet's research partner Tibet Watch and research organisation Turquoise Roof.

Occupying Tibet's Rivers: China's hydropower 'battlefield' in Tibet is being released on the three-month anniversary of rare, large-scale protests in Dege County in eastern Tibet in February 2024.

That month, despite the risks to their safety, hundreds of Tibetans protested against the planned Kamtok hydroelectric dam. If it proceeds, the dam threatens the mass displacement of local residents and the

flooding of their homes. It also threatens at least six Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, some of which contain invaluable 14th century Buddhist frescoes that survived the Cultural Revolution but are now threatened with destruction.

In response to these protests, police detained hundreds of Tibetans and beat protesters so badly that they were hospitalised. The local area was subsequently put under lockdown with paramilitaries deployed and no further communications with the outside world possible. No photos or videos have emerged from the area since the end of February. The second part of the report details the wider context, noting that the huge Kamtok dam is itself only one of 13 dams planned on the upper reaches of the Drichu (Ch: Yangtse) River and that China is forcing through construction of dams on all of the rivers originating in Tibet. The dams are part of a long-term plan to provide key Chinese industrial hubs such as Chengdu and Chongqing with water and electricity at the expense of rural Tibetans, who have been forced from their pastures in their millions to make way for extraction and energy projects. Eight of the world's largest river systems flow from glaciers on the Tibetan plateau and are a critical resource for the densely populated nations surrounding it. This now faces a tipping point as what was once one of the most undisturbed environments on Earth is now strangled by dams and threatened by increased instances of landslides and food insecurity due to the mass displacement of rural Tibetans who have stewarded its pastures for generations. For the first time, China's dam-building is now reaching upriver to the sources of Asia's great wild rivers in landscapes that were previously among the least disturbed habitats on earth. The planned Kamtok dam in the upper reaches of the Yangtze (Drichu in Tibetan risks a cascade of adverse consequences both on the plateau and downstream in China. The policy of dam construction is being driven directly by the Chinese government and driven by giant Chinese Communist Party-controlled energy conglomerates, including Huaneng and Huadian. The report highlights that Huadian signed a cooperation agreement with German multinational company Siemens Energy in March 2024. The report draws from a wealth of resources, including Tibetan sources, Chinese government announcements and procurement documents, satellite imagery and the knowledge of researcher and Tibetan environmental expert Gabriel Lafitte. It is accompanied by a 3D satellite map pinpointing key locations related to the Kamtok dam and the protests by the residents of Dege County. Occupying Tibet's Rivers concludes with a detailed series of recommendations to actors at every level from international governments and the United Nations to environmental and cultural rights groups,

warning that due to China's extractive policies, "lives, livelihoods and irreplaceable Buddhist culture and landscapes of Tibet hang precariously in the balance."

### China's Greed for Lithium is Killing the Tibetan Plateau

13 May 2024, Japan Forward, Pema Gyalpo



*A vehicle is seen near a lithium smelter in Yichun, Jiangxi province, China March 30, 2023. (©REUTERS/Staff/File Photo)*

Why did China invade Tibet? There are several reasons, one of which is because Tibet is very rich in natural resources. This fact is supported by Chinese sources. The rising demand for electronic vehicles has given rise to a new race for lithium mining across the globe. Lithium, primarily used in lithium-ion batteries, is considered a suitable replacement for fossil fuels.

China has huge deposits of lithium. It has long been indulged in the mining, processing, and exporting of lithium to the rest of the world. The recent discovery of lithium deposits in the Tibetan Plateau has attracted the attention of hundreds of lithium industries. This has threatened the ecological biodiversity of "the roof of the world."

A report titled "Tibet, a New Frontline of White Gold Rush in Global Race for Renewable Energy" was published in October 2023 by Turquoise Roof. According to the report, China's geologists have recognized that eastern Tibet has at least 85% of all reserves of lithium in China.

It further highlights that the Tibetan plateau has been assessed to hold at least 3.655 million tons of China's estimated 4.047 million tons of lithium. Electric vehicle manufacturers like Tesla and BYD are heavily reliant on Tibet's lithium exploitation, especially on hard rock lithium (spodumene) available in the region. New factories have been set up while existing factories have doubled their production of lithium.

#### Xi Jinping's Campaign

As per the Turquoise Roof report, lithium extraction and its processing involve waste generation,

pollution, and highly energy-consuming processes. These further damage the local rivers and livestock.

The report further stressed that this large-scale exploitation of Tibet has been initiated and supported by Xi Jinping himself under his "Made in China 2025" campaign. During his visit to Qinghai Province in 2021, Xi called for the escalation of lithium extraction on a large scale. Apart from lithium, Tibet is home to the world's largest deposits of critical minerals used in various technologies in critical industries like pharmaceuticals and electronics.

Since the Chinese occupation of Tibet in the late 1950s, China began mining work in the Tsaidam Basin for chromium and bauxite. Its second biggest mining work was launched in the 1980s for the mining of gold in the river basin of Kham and Amdo. Following the discovery of large deposits of copper, Tibet saw an increase in mining in the 21st century. Recently, the discovery of huge deposits of lithium has attracted the world's largest electronic manufacturers from all across the globe. This has led to further exploitation of the natural ecology of the area. Lithium has long been used as the energy source in lithium-ion batteries.

#### Water and Soil Pollution

However, the continuous mining in the area has had a devastating impact on the ecology of the Tibetan Plateau, raising the pollution level. It not only polluted rivers and streams but, in several cases, even diverted their flow. This has severely affected the flora and fauna of the region. The government in Beijing seems least concerned about the negative effect of continuous mining across the Tibetan Plateau. Its whole focus is on making money.

Rivers have been affected the most, and they are far from recovery. The Tibetan Plateau is the origin of mighty rivers like Mekong and Yarlung Tsangpo (known as Brahmaputra in the Indian sub-continent). These rivers have been the living force for millions of people in Southeast Asia and South Asia.

Continuous mining activities along these rivers have badly impacted the essential minerals present in the water. This has led to a decline in fisheries, which are the primary source of food in the Southeastern nations. The economies of Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, and southern Vietnam are heavily dependent on the Mekong River fish.

The shortage of fish has created a situation like a food crisis in these countries. On the other hand, hundreds of people die every year due to the consumption of polluted water and infected aquatic animals from these rivers.

Pollution and waste from the Gyama Copper Polymetallic mine has poisoned the water flowing adjacent to the city of Lhasa. This has affected the

health of thousands of local Tibetans in Lhundup County.

### China's 'Dumping Ground'

Another problem is the contamination of soil. During lithium extraction, several chemicals come into contact with soil. Rivers and floods further aid this contaminated soil to reach agricultural fields, affecting the growth of crops. Apart from poisoning the nearby surface water, it also has severe effects on the groundwater.

In many cases, mine workers and surrounding inhabitants have been seriously affected and later diagnosed with various medical implications. Some have even died due to leaks of these chemicals and gases. In many parts of the Tibetan Plateau, hundred acres of vegetation and agricultural land have been impacted, further complicating the food security issues in the region.

China has made false promises at platforms like the Conference of Parties (CoP) summits and other environmental protection summits. Little has been achieved in maintaining ecological biospheres around Tibet.

On the contrary, Tibet has become a dumping ground for Beijing. Glaciers are melting, tens and hundreds of small rivers and streams have dried up, the air is polluted, and floods have become normal occurrences. Many critically endangered species are on the verge of extinction. The "roof of the world" is going through the biggest turbulence while Beijing is busy extracting "white gold."

### Inside the exquisite Tibetan monasteries salvaged from climate change

01 May 2024, BBC, Tulsi Rauniyar

Extreme weather is threatening these intricate 14th Century Tibetan monasteries, but local people are rising to the challenge to preserve them.

Tashi Kunga stands before the Kag Choede monastery, built into the Dhaulagiri mountain range on the Tibet-Nepal border. The monk's carmine robes glint in the rain, as he recounts the ancient legend of Guru Rinpoche's battle with a demon.

The legend goes that centuries ago, a demon wreaked havoc on a monastery in Tibet. Guru Rinpoche chased it south to Upper Mustang in Nepal and defeated the demon following a ferocious battle, burying the demon's remains across the mountain

range.

The

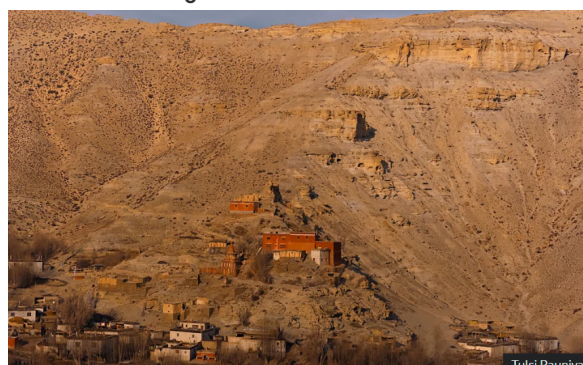


*Lo Manthang's climate-ravaged monasteries have been meticulously restored by the local community (Credit: Tulsi Rauniyar)*

people of Mustang honoured the sacred grounds by building monasteries atop the demon's body parts.

"And right on the demon's heart, the capital of Lo Manthang [was built] in 1380," says Kunga, pointing towards the narrow alleys, ancient monasteries, and flat roofs adorned with prayer flags of one of the last medieval walled cities in the world.

For centuries, Lobas, the indigenous people residing here, have thrived in this remote region situated on top of the Tibetan Plateau. One thing that has remained constant is the monasteries, locally known as "Gonpas", the most treasured heritage of the region. But almost two decades ago, many of these monasteries, which date back to the 14th Century, started crumbling.



*The ancient monasteries of Mustang, Nepal, have started crumbling due to climate impacts (Credit: Tulsi Rauniyar)*

Experts sounded the alarm, attributing the collapse to the severe impacts of climate change. Data indicates a significant increase in the intensity of storms and rainfall across the region. Increased rainfall saturates the rammed-earth buildings, as moisture in the soil is drawn upward into the walls, leading to issues such as leaking roofs and rising damp.

"For us, Buddhists, the paintings and the artifacts in the monasteries are embodiments of the gods themselves, and we can't worship a half-damaged idol," says Kanga. "There was no one to repair it. Our heritage was slowly decaying away. We thought the deities were angry."

Buddhist monasteries have long been revered as the foundation of Tibetan culture, serving as a vital hub for the creation and safeguarding of both tangible artifacts and profound intellectual traditions. But as unprecedented weather patterns pose a threat to their cultural heritage, local community members have stepped up to restore them. Local people have gained diverse skills, from reinforcing walls to crafting metal statues and restoring paintings.

Over the past 20 years, a team of local Lobas trained by Western art conservationists have replaced the old, leaky roofs of the temples with round timbers, river stones, and local clay for waterproofing, and have restored the wall paintings, statues, sculpted pillars and the ceiling decorations, giving these centuries-old monuments a new life.

Luigi Fiegini, the lead art conservator at Lo Manthang, has spearheaded the restoration project. Transforming a community of farmers into conservators has been challenging, he says. Most of the Lobas had never held a pen or a paint brush before, and undertook extensive training before they began restoring the 15th Century paintings.

"But it all worked out," says Fiegini. "Tourists visiting Mustang were keenly interested in religion. So we felt these sacred artifacts needed preservation not only for their historical significance but also for sustaining livelihoods here."

The team, initially made up of 10 members, has grown to 45 conservators, mostly women, although there was initial reluctance to accept any women in the group. According to local tradition, women are prohibited from touching sacred objects. However, women did eventually take part in the Lo Manthang restoration project.

"It took years of discussion and negotiation with the local clergy and community, but we succeeded in including local women in the wall-painting conservation team," says Fiegini.

Married Tibetan women are typically responsible for cooking, cleaning, milking the animals, churning the butter and collecting yak dung for fuel. Tashi Wangmo, 40, used to spend her time herding yak, collecting and selling herbs, and doing various odd jobs, but it never provided much income. When she received the opportunity to pursue new training and earn a daily wage in the restoration project, she jumped at it.

"It enabled many of us [women] to break free from the limits of our homes, expand our skillsets, and find new opportunities," she says. "Otherwise, life remains stagnant for us, confined to the corners with little purpose or prospects."

Another female restorer Dolma Tsering, 42, wasn't there just to learn art or refine her painting skills. She believed that by participating in the monastery's restoration, she would earn spiritual merit and

contribute to the promotion of Tibetan Buddhism through her work.

"Once you compare the faded, scraped-off outlines of deities and the vibrant expressions of revived figures, you will recognise the incredible scale of everyone's efforts. It has increased the cultural value of Lo Manthang," says Tsering. "And as women, we were able to play [a role] in it."

But the community continues to face challenges amid the onslaught of climate change. The Himalayas are particularly vulnerable to rising temperatures and climate impacts. When rainfall comes, it pours in abundance, but prolonged drought is also common. In 2023, heavy rainfall flooded many small rivers and brooks in Mustang, leading to widespread flood damage in neighbouring villages.

The roads facilitating easy transport in the region have also contributed to rapid population decline, with many Lobas moving to cities in search of economic opportunities, says Gurung.

Tashi Gurung stands out as a prime example of a farmer-turned-restorer who chose to remain in the region. He wasn't exposed to Tibetan Buddhist art as a child, but today he owns an art gallery in Lo Manthang.

His gallery showcases a remarkable array of thangkas, portraying the Buddha, his teachings, and various deities and other spiritual beings such as the bodhisattvas. His art sales not only sustain himself but also enable him to send his children to school.

Reflecting on his decision to stay, Gurung acknowledges the profound impact of monasteries on his life. "If it weren't for the monasteries, I might have followed my friends who left Mustang for better opportunities abroad," he says.

The restoration efforts have sparked a cultural renaissance, according to Fiegini. Numerous women and young people have received training in traditional craftsmanship, long-forgotten festivals have been revived, magnificent wall paintings restored for religious purposes, and monasteries and nunneries are thriving once again, he says.

"Om mani padme hum," the students at the Lo Monastic School chant the mantra that Tibetans use to invoke the bodhisattva of compassion, who is also Tibet's patron saint. Today, Kunga says, the danger imperilling the walled city of Lo Manthang and its age-old monasteries doesn't stem from mythological demons, but rather from the impacts of climate change.

"If we want to save our culture, we all need to join hands and save the monasteries because everything here spins around religion," says Tsering.



## Wildfire destroys prized mushrooms, income source for Tibetans

13 April 2024, Tenzin Pema, Dorjee Damdul and Sonam Lhamo, RFA

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

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

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

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

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

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



A Tibetan forages for matsutake mushrooms in an undated photo.

## Demanding and lucrative

Many families in Nyagchu – where Tibetans make up the majority of the county's population of over 51,000 – have for years braved the frigid mountain air to forage for the elusive mushrooms during the traditional harvest season between July and September.

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

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

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

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

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

"Nyagchu is renowned for its abundance of naturally grown matsutake, and the harvest is a crucial source of income for many Tibetan families in the county," said Washington-based Tsering Palden, a native of Nyagchu, who has sold the mushrooms in the past. Palden estimates that area households earn about 200,000 yuan (US\$28,000) annually from selling the mushrooms.

## 'Oak mushrooms'

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

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

The villagers gather the mushrooms in the morning and return home when dealers arrive at a market or drive along the roads, buying them as they go, he writes. The dealers then sell their matsutake to other

dealers, who arrange for them to be shipped across China and to Japan and South Korea.

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

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

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

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

13 April 2024, Reuters

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

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

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

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

09 April 2024, Tibetan Review

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

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

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

Exploitation will begin at once as China expects more deposit discoveries. As the latest achievement in the province's large-scale resource exploration project, the discovery reveals for the first time the deep-seated gold enrichment zone in the area, which

is poised for immediate exploitation and boost local employment, the report said.

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

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

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

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

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

09 April 2024, ZME Science

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

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





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

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

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

The growth and harvesting of yartsa gunbu

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The dark side of caterpillar fungi

Unfortunately, the high economic value of yartsa has also led to violent conflicts in the Tibetan Plateau. For instance, in 2014, a clash between two groups in Tibet over access to yartsa gunbu harvesting resulted in two deaths. And this was just one of the many disputes in the region that revolve around the caterpillar fungus.



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

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

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

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

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

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

Sustainable ways to harvest yartsa

The senior leaders in Nubri (a village in the highlands of Nepal) have developed a system that

protects their yartsa. This system is based on religious and local beliefs that ensure stable income for all families in the village. By extension, it also prevents overexploitation of the caterpillar fungus.

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

No villager is allowed to harvest before or after the scheduled harvesting season. If an individual violates this rule, they're heavily fined. Since the harvesting area is far from the village, a person can't harvest more than their quota and meet the leaders on the same day.

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

Plus, the fungus is only harvested for a brief period. So yartsa and its natural environment have a whole year to recover from any loss incurred due to harvesting.

Moreover, Nubri people are prohibited from harvesting in certain sacred regions because of their religious beliefs. Such undisturbed areas become natural havens for *O. sinensis* spores.

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

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

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

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

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

### **The disappearing glaciers of the Himalayas**

03 April 2024, Omair Ahmad, Kashmir Convener

As the Earth warms, frozen water in its many forms is affected. In mountainous regions like the Hindu Kush

Himalayas, one of the most visible signs of climate change is the impact on glaciers.

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

While water flow is determined by a host of factors – including rainfall, groundwater and springs – the presence of the cryosphere has led to stable water flows across the Hindu Kush Himalayan region. But as the frozen water in glaciers, snow and permafrost is now melting at unprecedented rates, these flows are changing.

The Himalayan glaciers are receding

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

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

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

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

The Himalayan region is warming faster than the global average

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

As ice cover melts, it exposes larger areas to solar radiation, thus allowing greater absorption of heat. Since ice reflects light, as the ground is increasingly exposed this leads to greater heating. The fact that many glaciers in the HKH region are covered with debris means this effect is less pronounced than in areas like the Arctic. Greater detail on exactly how and why this is happening can be found in the third chapter of the HKH Assessment conducted by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD).

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

What happens when glaciers melt rapidly?

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

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

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

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

The permafrost is melting

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

Within the Hindu Kush Himalayan region, study of the permafrost has been largely restricted to the Tibetan Plateau, beginning in the 1990s. Little research has been carried out in the rest of the region. The research on the Tibetan Plateau shows that the active layer of permafrost is thickening as the permafrost melts. This makes the ground less stable, leading to higher risk of landslides.

Policy recommendations

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

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

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

01 April 2024, East Money

Shanghai-based Chinese financial news site East Money recently reported that, “as the period of frenzied investment has passed, the Chinese lithium battery industry has been shrouded in the shadow of

overcapacity and price wars. .. After the Chinese New Year, which is often the peak period for job hunting and employment, many battery companies reported suspensions of production, layoffs, and salary cuts." Below are some translated excerpts from the article.

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

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

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

## March

### **Now China donates 1,500 tonnes of Tibet glacial water to Maldives amidst water crisis**

27 March 2024, The Economic Times

In a bid to alleviate the acute water shortage in the Maldives, the government of China has donated 1,500 tonnes of drinking water sourced from glaciers in Tibet. This donation comes as part of China's ongoing support to the Maldives, especially since President Dr Mohamed Muizzu took office in November 2023.

The announcement was made by the Maldives government, stating that the drinking water shipment has successfully reached the archipelago nation. This decision was a result of discussions during the official

visit of China's Tibet Autonomous Region's Chairman, Yan Jinhai, to the Maldives, where he met with President Dr Mohamed Muizzu last November, as confirmed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The donated water is produced from frozen water sourced from glacial regions, known for its cleanliness, clarity, and mineral richness. Tibet Autonomous Region is renowned for producing high-quality premium brands of water, further enhancing the value of this donation.

This is not the first instance of China's aid to the Maldives. In March, President Muizzu announced that the Maldives would receive free "non-lethal" military equipment and training from China's military under a newly signed agreement. This agreement followed President Muizzu's meetings with Major General Zhang Baoqun, Deputy Director of the Office for International Military Cooperation of China, and President of the Export-Import Bank of China, Ren Shengjun.

China's assistance to the Maldives has historically focused on urban and economic development. The Maldives, with its 26 atolls and 1,192 islands mostly composed of coral reefs and sandbars, faces extreme scarcity of groundwater and freshwater, exacerbated by climate change.

In December 2014, India conducted 'Operation Neer' during a severe water crisis in the Maldives following a massive fire in the Male Water and Sewerage Company complex. Indian aircraft delivered 375 tonnes of drinking water, and two Indian ships, INS Deepak and INS Shukanya, delivered around 2,000 tonnes of water, providing much-needed relief to the Maldivians.

"Two Indian Ships INS Deepak and INS Shukanya also arrived in Male and delivered around 2,000 tonnes of water alleviating the pressure faced by the Maldivians," it added.

The Maldives' strategic location, just 70 nautical miles from the island of Minicoy in Lakshadweep and 300 nautical miles from the mainland's western coast, gives it significant importance in the Indian Ocean Region's commercial sea lanes.

The Maldives Foreign Ministry has announced its plan to distribute the donated water as aid to various islands in the event of drinking water shortages, demonstrating China's continued support to the Maldives in times of need.

### **Most eastern Tibet dam protesters reported released, endured severe ill-treatment, beating**

26 March 2024, Tibetan Review

Hundreds of remaining monks and other Tibetans detained by Chinese police in Feb 2024 for gathering to protest and petition against a major hydroelectric power dam complex being built in



Dege County of Kardze prefecture, Sichuan province, have been released. However, they have handed over two of them, still under arrest, for prosecution, while younger monks have been transferred to government-run schools, reported the Tibetan service of rfa.org Mar 25.

Tenzin Sangpo, senior administrator of the local Wonto Monastery, and a village official named Tenzin, arrested on Feb 23, are suspected of having led the protests last month against the Gangtuo Dam project, the report said.

They were among the several detained Tibetans previously reported to have been transferred to the larger, Dege County Detention Centre.

Sangpo and Tenzin have now been handed over to the government Procuratorate Office for criminal investigation and prosecution, the report cited local sources as saying, requesting anonymity for safety reasons.

However, their whereabouts, or the charges against them remain unknown.

"The local Tibetan people are worried that the government will accuse them of having instigated the February protests and being responsible for sharing information with the outside world," the report quoted one source as saying.

The report also said the released Tibetans had been subjected to severe ill-treatment and brutal beatings, which left some of them handicapped and hospitalized.

They were crammed into crowded cells and subjected to physical abuses and beatings.

The report cited a released monk as having said the detainees were fed such poor quality tsampa (roasted barley flour, a staple Tibetan diet) as to be fit only as animal feed.

"Some days, we were not given any water to drink," the monk has said. "On other days, when there was water, we were given very little."

He has said the Chinese police slapped the monks and made them run around the prison grounds as a form of punishment, and to have beaten them severely if they refused to do so.

"One monk was beaten so badly that he could not even speak," he has said. "He is now under medical treatment."

Besides, during interrogation, the Tibetans were pressured to incriminate each other, thereby traumatizing them emotionally, the report cited other local sources as say.

Meanwhile, villages and monasteries on both sides of the Drichu (Chinese: Jinsha) river have continued to be under close surveillance, with no outsiders being allowed to enter the township.

All the more than 50 younger monks of Wonto Monastery have been dispatched to the county government school after the protests, the report said.

Wonto and nearby Yena Monastery together had around 300 monks before the dam protest crackdowns.

The Gangtuo Dam is part of a plan announced in 2012 by China's National Development and Reform Commission to build a massive 13-tier hydropower complex on the Drichu. The total planned capacity of the project is 13,920 megawatts.

The project will submerge the ancestrally inhabited homes of around 2,000 Tibetans as well as centuries-old monasteries with priceless artefacts, including murals, dating back to the 13th century.

### Nearly 3400 villagers evacuated as forest fire rages in eastern Tibet

17 March 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Mar17'24) — Nearly 3,400 Tibetans from a number of villages have been evacuated and more than 1200 firefighters deployed to fight a raging forest fire which started on Mar 15 evening in the eastern Tibetan County of Nyagchu (or Nyagchukha, Chinese: Yajiang) in Kardze (Ganzi or Garze) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan province, according to China's official media and other reports Mar 16-17. The fire soon spread to form three fire fields from south to north, reported the Chinese language chinanews.com.cn Mar 17. No damages to property, infrastructure, or human life have been reported so far.

The fire was reported to have broken out at around 17:00 on the 15th in Baizi Village in Nyagchu county's Golog (Xiala or Xi'eluo) Town. By about 15:00 on the 16th, the fire quickly expanded and spread due to sudden increase in wind power at the fire site.

The report continued that at 4 o'clock on the 17th, the Sichuan Forest Fire Corps and local professional fire-fighting teams approached the fire from the southwest and northeast sides of the fire to open a breakthrough, and put out open flames.

The report said that the three fire fields currently formed were at an average altitude of 2,600 metres, with the vegetation dominated by green hills and pine trees.

The Chinese language report continued: "Among them, the No. 1 fire site is located in the southwest of Yajiang County. There is a continuous fire line on the north and west lines of the fire site, developing toward the northwest; the No. 2 fire site is located at the northernmost side, has spread to Tongda Village in the east, and continues to develop in the northeast direction, which is the key direction of fire development; Fire Site No. 3 is located on the northwest side of Yajiang County, with continuous fire lines spreading."

A Level-4 emergency response has been activated by China's Ministry of Emergency Management, over 1200 firefighters from national and local fire rescue squads deployed, and eight helicopters mobilized to fight the fire as it quickly spread over multiple mountain ridges, said the chinanews.com.cn, the official Xinhua news agency, and scmp.com reports Mar 16-17.

So far, no casualties have been reported. The cause of the fire is still under investigation. The Lianghekou hydropower station in Yajiang is also unaffected, according to a Xinhua report Mar 17.

The scmp.com Mar 17 cited China's official CCTV broadcaster as saying a total of 3,396 villagers from a dozen villages have been safely evacuated. A photovoltaic power station in the region had not been affected, but communication with the hydroelectric station had been interrupted. Besides, a section of a highway that passes through the region has been temporarily closed, the report said, citing Xinhua.

The report cited a resident of provincial capital Chengdu, located 500km (311 miles) from the site, as saying the wildfires turned the sky orange on Mar 16.

"The sky suddenly turned frighteningly orange in Chengdu. It felt like an apocalyptic disaster movie," the city resident has said, declining to be named.

On the other hand, a Xinhua report March 17 cited local residents as saying the fire was not visible from the county seat and that water, electricity, and communication services had remained unaffected.

### New study reveals plateau's evapotranspiration changes

17 March 2024, China Daily



Aerial photo shows the scenery at Mt Nyanpo Yutse in Tibetan autonomous prefecture of Golog of Northwest China's Qinghai province. Qinghai province, located in Northwest China, much of which lies on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, is the home to the headwaters of the Yangtze, Yellow and Lancang rivers. [Photo/Xinhua]

A recently published study has pointed to the growing trend of evapotranspiration over the past four decades on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.

The study, led by Ma Yaoming, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research, offers a profound understanding of the water balance and climate impact in this ecologically significant area.

The research, based on data collected from 1982 to 2018, which was recently published in the journal Earth System Science Data, has revealed that the annual average evapotranspiration on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau over the past four decades stands at approximately 346.5 millimeters, equivalent to 930 billion metric tons of water transferred to the atmosphere annually from the plateau.

Evapotranspiration is the process in which water is transferred from the land to the atmosphere by evaporation from the soil and other surfaces, as well as by transpiration from plants.

Ma highlighted the pivotal role of evapotranspiration in the region's water balance, particularly given the prevalence of alpine meadows and the dominant arid or semiarid climate on the plateau.

Chen Xuelong, another co-corresponding author and researcher from the institute, emphasized the significance of the findings.

"The research not only confirmed an increasing trend in annual evapotranspiration, at approximately 0.96 millimeters per year, attributed to the warming and humidifying climate of the plateau, but also identified soil evaporation as the primary contributor, constituting over 84 percent of the total evapotranspiration," said Chen.

The implications of the study are far-reaching, with the data holding a pivotal value for water resource management, drought monitoring and ecological environment research and analysis, Chen said.

The research represents a monumental step forward in understanding the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau's hydro-meteorological dynamics and also underscores the critical role of evapotranspiration in shaping the region's ecological and climatic landscape.

The plateau boasts the world's highest inland lake cluster. With global warming, lakes expanded and ice periods were shortened, and the growing trend in evapotranspiration was clearly observed, according to a previous research essay by Ma.

As a result, the water cycle process has significantly accelerated, manifested by increased precipitation, with the melting of glaciers and snow and the thickening of the active layer of permafrost, and this leads to frequent natural disasters such as ice avalanches, glacier lake outbursts, river floods and mud slides, which could affect people's life and economic activities, Ma said in the essay, calling for effective measures, including strengthening the comprehensive observation and tests on multilayered land-atmosphere interactions.



Ma said the recent study highlighted the importance of shallow soil water in the intricate water and heat exchange processes between the ground and the atmosphere.

The findings of the recent research have been made publicly available through the National Tibetan Plateau Data Center and the Science Data Bank, providing a crucial resource for further scientific inquiry and policy development.

### **Tibetans demand China halt Derge dam work**

16 March 2024, RTV

The Tibetan community in the region has demanded that the Chinese government stop the construction of a hydroelectric dam on the Dri Chu river in Derge town in Dege County in Sichuan in Southwest China. The Tibetan community in the region has demanded that the Chinese government stop the construction of a hydroelectric dam on the Dri Chu river in Derge town in Dege County in Sichuan in Southwest China. According to Tibetan leader Jamyang Bhutia, the chairman of the Regional Tibetan Youth Congress in Mirik in Darjeeling, over 1000 Tibetans were arrested in one day in Derge as there were unprecedented protests against the construction of the dam very recently. Bhutia said that the proposed Gangtuo hydropower station would force the displacement of thousands of people living in the area.

"The proposed dam would also cause significant environmental harm and destroy six monasteries, including the Wonto monastery founded in the 14th century, which has one of the finest examples of Tibetan, Buddhist murals, and is a great historical and cultural significance," Mr Bhutia said on the sidelines of a peace rally in Siliguri the community organised a few days ago to mark the 65th anniversary of the Tibetan people's uprising against China's occupation in Tibet in 1959.

People from the Tibetan community came in from the northeast zone, including nearby places like Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Mirik, Odlabari in the Dooars, Gangtok in Sikkim and Salugara in Siliguri, marched in the peaceful protest rally that started from Salugara and ended at Biswadeep hall on Hill Cart Road in Siliguri.

The protestors strongly condemned the "brutal crackdown" and urged the international community to call upon China to free the protesters and halt the construction of the dam.

"Tibet remains an occupied territory under tight military surveillance. Since 2008, over 160 Tibetans have self-immolated in protest against China's repressive policies. United Nations experts have raised alarms about the forced separation of one million Tibetan children from their families for

assimilation into Chinese colonial boarding schools," Mr Bhutia said.

"As Tibet has consistently been ranked as one of the least free countries in the world by freedom houses with little to know information making its way out, Tibetans inside Tibet have shown extraordinary courage. Language, culture, history and identity are under threat in Tibet, but resistance is as strong as ever," he said.

### **How land conditions affect the Asian monsoon climate**

13 March 2024, Earth.com

Researchers at Tokyo Metropolitan University have made significant strides in understanding the intricate dance between land conditions and the Asian summer monsoon climate.

Through meticulous numerical simulations, the team has shed light on the impact of land conditions on weather patterns. Specifically, variations on the Tibetan plateau, alongside constant maritime conditions, have been shown to distinctly affect these patterns.

The findings highlight the importance of land-atmosphere interactions, which vary significantly from year to year. They also reveal a surprisingly low dependency on maritime phenomena like El Niño.

Complex dynamics of Asian monsoons

The Asian monsoon system is crucial for billions of people, affecting vast regions of Asia and its adjacent oceans. The temperature contrast between the vast Eurasian landmass and the surrounding seas primarily drives this phenomenon.

Researchers understand that both land and sea significantly impact this system, but have found dissecting the individual effects of each to be a considerable challenge.

Notably, the team highlights the shorter duration of the "memory effect" on land, which contrasts with longer-lasting oceanic influences, yet remains critical for seasonal forecasting.

Interaction between the atmosphere and land

Led by Dr. Hiroshi G. Takahashi, the researchers delved into advanced climate models to analyze weather patterns across different years.

By comparing simulations with identical maritime conditions but varied land scenarios over the Tibetan plateau, they explored how air temperature and snow cover differences affect weather variability.

The innovative approach resulted in the "L-A coupling strength index." This index measures the interaction between land conditions and the atmosphere and its impact on the Asian monsoon.

Key findings and implications

The study revealed that the Tibetan plateau's land conditions' impact on the monsoon climate fluctuates

significantly each year. Interestingly, the influence of sea surface temperatures often eclipses that of land-atmosphere coupling, depending on the year.

The researchers observed a correlation with a weaker Walker circulation, a key precursor to summer monsoons. Additionally, they discovered that El Niño had a negligible impact on L-A coupling.

Moreover, winter and early spring snow cover on the plateau appeared to have little effect on monsoon severity, suggesting a land-specific memory effect lasting about a month.

**Towards better monsoon forecasting**

The research opens up new avenues for dramatically improving seasonal forecasts in the Asian monsoon region. By enhancing our understanding of the role of land conditions, we can potentially make more accurate predictions. This would be a boon for the billions affected by monsoons annually.

As the team continues to unravel the complexities of the monsoon climate, the promise of refined forecasts brings hope for better preparedness and resilience against the whims of nature.

The work by Tokyo Metropolitan University highlights the crucial need for sophisticated land condition modeling to improve Asian monsoon climate predictions. With ongoing research, the expectation for better forecasting grows, providing optimism for the many who depend on monsoon rains.

The study is published in the journal *Climate Dynamics*.

### Construction of mega dams in Tibet worries downriver nations

10 March 2024, Geographical



Mount Kailash in western Tibet. Image: Siriwatthana Chankawee/Shutterstock

Originating close to sacred Mount Kailash, high on the remote, western part of the Tibetan plateau, the Mapcha Tsangpo River, which means the Peacock River in Tibetan, flows away from the slopes of this holiest of mountains and into Nepal, where its name changes to the Karnali. One of the most important rivers to rush through Nepal, it provides reliable

freshwater for millions of people and waters huge swathes of farmland. Continuing its southward journey, the river then enters India where it's a major tributary of the all-important Ganges River, which brings life to many hundreds of millions more people.

But, new satellite imagery appears to indicate that China has recently completed the construction of a huge new dam on the Mapcha Tsangpo River, very close to the politically important tri-junction border of Tibet, Nepal and India. And that has the governments of Nepal and India worried.

India and China are the two big powers of Asia, and they have long been uneasy neighbours. The 3440km long mountainous border between the two is ill-defined and long disputed. In 1962, China and India briefly went to war against one another along this border, and since then, there have been numerous skirmishes between the two sides, including in 2020, 2021 and 2022.

In the past few years there has been a spate of infrastructure construction along the India-China border by both sides. Much of this infrastructure, which has included road and airport construction, is intended for military use. But in the case of China, it has also included the construction of mega-dams inside the Tibet Autonomous Region, which could potentially allow China to control water flow into Nepal and India.

Work is thought to have started on the dam in 2021 and, according to a recent report in *Newsweek* who analysed satellite images of the site, the dam is now completed and filling up with water. The concrete dam, which is situated just 28km from the Nepalese border town of Hilsa (population 51,000) and 60km from the India border.

This is not the first mega-dam that China has built within Tibet, and it is very close to India. In 2021, China announced plans to link Tibet's river systems with the rest of the country, and that doing so would involve building a mega dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo River (which also originates close to Mount Kailash) at the eastern end of the Tibetan plateau along the disputed border with the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. Once the Yarlung Tsangpo bores its way through the eastern Himalaya, it becomes the Brahmaputra River, which is a critical source of freshwater for inhabitants of northeastern India and Bangladesh. In a 2022 report for the United States Institute of Peace, Mark Giordano and Anya Wahal from Georgetown University's Walsh School of Foreign Service stated that 'The Brahmaputra would appear to be at the top of the list of conflict hotspots. The river is shared between four states, including the world's two most populous, China and India. Both have rapidly growing economies, and both are already among the most water-stressed in the world.'

In recent years India has protested the construction of mega dams upstream of some of its key rivers by refusing to purchase electricity from sites with Chinese investment, such as the Chameliya hydropower station in Nepal, built with Beijing's financial aid.

### **Online reports of fatalities due to flood damage to dam in Qinghai province denied**

02 March 2024, Tibetan Review

Online reports suggested that dozens of people had died and thousands had gone missing after a dam was damaged by flooding recently in the previously earthquake-hit Maduo (Tibetan: Matoe) county in Golog Tibetan autonomous prefecture, Qinghai province, according to China's official chinadaily.com.cn Mar 3. However, the report also cited local officials as saying there were no casualties due to the incident.

There have been reports online since Feb 22 that the dam-damage and resulting flood had led to the deaths of dozens of people and the missing of thousands of people. Local authorities dismissed them as rumours, the report said.

The report also cited local authorities as saying the incident, which happened on Feb 18, had caused property damage to eight people and the deaths of 195 livestock, as well as damage to roads and water conservancy facilities. They have sought to stress that no one died from it.

The dam was stated to have been repaired on Feb 21.

Maduo county was earlier hit by a major earthquake on May 22, 2021. Highway bridges, roads and walls collapsed as a result of it. At least 20 people were killed, 300 were injured, and 13 were missing, according to a Radio Free Asia report at that time.

However, Chinese officials stated at that time that there were no deaths but that 19 people sustained minor injuries.

It was the strongest earthquake to hit the People's Republic of China since 2008, preceded by another unrelated earthquake that occurred 5 hours earlier in Yunnan province.

## **February**

### **Breakthrough in Qinghai: Cloning of Tibetan Goats Promises a Sustainable Future for Local Breeding**

26 February 2024, BNN

Chinese scientists have achieved a significant breakthrough in animal conservation by successfully cloning Tibetan goats, offering hope for the future of

the Tibetan goat breeding industry and local communities on the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau.

The dawn of a new era in animal husbandry has broken over the windswept expanses of Qinghai Province, where Chinese scientists have achieved a significant breakthrough in the field of cloning. The successful birth of two live Tibetan goats, using the body cells of adult goats, marks a pivotal moment in the efforts to preserve this breed, known for its crucial role in the livelihoods of local communities on the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau.

#### **A Leap Toward Sustainable Breeding**

The cloning program, spearheaded by a dedicated team from Northwest A&F University, has not only demonstrated the viability of cloning as a tool for animal conservation but also raised hopes for the future of the Tibetan goat breeding industry. Utilizing cells from three rams and one ewe, the scientists were able to produce clones that were born healthy, with the first weighing in at 3.4 kg. This achievement is seen as a cornerstone in maintaining the breed's adaptability to the challenging plateau environment, a trait that is of paramount importance for the survival and prosperity of local farming communities.

#### **Revitalizing Local Economies**

The Tibetan goat is not just any livestock; it is a vital source of income for farmers and herdsman in the region, contributing significantly to the local economy through the production of cashmere and other products. The success of this cloning initiative is part of broader efforts that began in 2018, aimed at improving the breeding of Tibetan yaks and goats. By promoting superior goat varieties, the program seeks to support the income of local communities, enhancing both the quality and efficiency of the breeding industry in the region.

#### **Looking to the Future**

While the cloning of Tibetan goats represents a leap forward in science and animal conservation, it also opens up a dialogue on the ethical considerations and potential challenges that accompany such advancements. The success of these efforts hinges not only on the scientific community's ability to replicate desirable genetic traits but also on its capacity to address concerns related to biodiversity and the welfare of cloned animals. Nevertheless, as the program continues to evolve, it offers a beacon of hope for the sustainable development of livestock breeding on the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau, promising a brighter future for the local communities that depend on it.

## Shifting Skies Over the Tibetan Plateau: A Future of Increased Precipitation

22 February 2024, BNN

Delve into the study revealing the projected increase in precipitation over the Tibetan Plateau amidst climate change uncertainties. Explore the global implications, challenges, and key findings shaping our understanding of climate dynamics.

Imagine standing on the vast, sprawling expanse of the Tibetan Plateau, the roof of the world, where the earth meets the sky at an average elevation of 4,000 meters. Here, in this region often referred to as the 'Asian Water Tower,' the future of millions of people and countless ecosystems hangs in the balance, swayed by the whims of precipitation patterns. A recent study led by Prof. ZHOU Tianjun from the Institute of Atmospheric Physics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences delves deep into these patterns, offering a glimpse into a future shaped by climate change.

**The Heart of the Matter: Precipitation Projections**

The study, published in *Geophysical Research Letters*, employs an innovative approach to tackle the longstanding question of how precipitation over the Tibetan Plateau will evolve in the face of global warming. Utilizing an inter-model empirical orthogonal function analysis under a high greenhouse gas emission scenario, the findings point towards a consistent increase in precipitation, particularly along the southern edge of the Plateau, throughout the 21st century. This revelation is significant, considering the critical role this region plays in the water cycle of surrounding areas.

However, the road to these findings was not straightforward. The research illuminated the substantial variability among models, underscoring the influence of model uncertainty. The increase in precipitation is predominantly attributed to enhanced vertical thermodynamic responses, with the vertical dynamical components playing a lesser role. This distinction is crucial for understanding the mechanics behind the projected changes and refining future models.

**Wider Implications: Beyond the Plateau**

The study's implications ripple far beyond the Tibetan Plateau, highlighting the intricate connections within our global climate system. One key factor influencing the region's precipitation patterns is the warming of the equatorial Pacific, which affects moisture transport to the TP. This underscores the global nature of climate impacts, where changes in one part of the world can significantly affect distant regions.

Moreover, the research sheds light on the importance of recognizing the diversity in climate model projections. These projections are influenced by variables such as climate sensitivity and the

response of equatorial Pacific sea surface temperatures to global warming. The call for further investigation into the variability of these responses under different greenhouse gas emission scenarios is a reminder of the complexities involved in predicting our climate future.

**Looking Ahead: The Path Forward**

The Tibetan Plateau's future, as outlined by Prof. ZHOU and his team, is one of increased precipitation. Yet, this future is mired in uncertainties and complexities, reflecting the broader challenges of climate modeling and prediction. The study not only contributes valuable insights into the specific changes expected over the TP but also highlights the critical need for enhanced understanding and refinement of climate models.

As the world grapples with the realities of climate change, the findings from the Tibetan Plateau serve as a microcosm of the larger challenges at play. The balance between the thermodynamic and dynamical components of our climate, the global interconnectedness of climate impacts, and the inherent uncertainties in our projections are themes that resonate across regions and scales. The journey towards a deeper understanding of our changing climate continues, with each study like Prof. ZHOU's adding a piece to the puzzle.

## Decoding Summer Rainfall Variations on Tibetan Plateau

22 February 2024, The Mirage

The Tibetan Plateau (TP), a complex high-altitude region with an average elevation of 4,000 meters, is widely recognized as the "Asian Water Tower" and "the third pole." Changes in precipitation over the TP significantly affect the water cycle in the surrounding areas, directly and indirectly affecting the lives of millions of people and ecosystems. Despite extensive efforts to project future precipitation changes over the TP due to global warming, there remains a considerable range in the magnitude of existing projections. The underlying physics causing this inter-model spread in precipitation projections over the TP remains unclear. Therefore, gaining insight into the precipitation response to global warming and identifying sources of uncertainty are critical to improving the reliability of these projections.

In a study published in *Geophysical Research Letters* on Feb. 1, researchers highlighted the persistent increase in precipitation throughout the 21st century, with the most significant changes occurring along the southern edge of the TP. However, they found substantial inter-model variability in precipitation projections, emphasizing that model uncertainty dominates the overall uncertainty in the medium and long term.

Led by Prof. ZHOU Tianjun from the Institute of Atmospheric Physics (IAP) of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the researchers used an inter-model empirical orthogonal function analysis of projected precipitation changes under a very high greenhouse gas (GHG) emission scenario, referred to as "SSP5-8.5" in climate modeling.

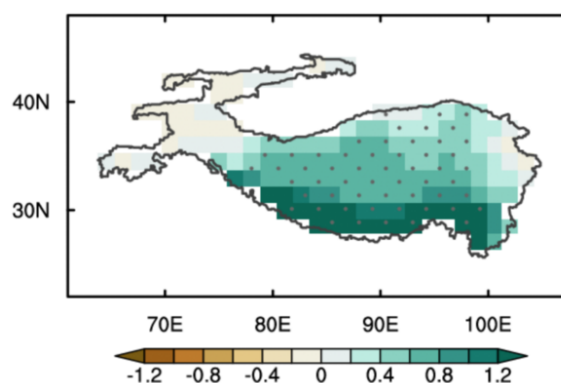
The analysis showed that the leading principal component explains over 40%, and even 80%, of the total variance at regional scales. Moisture budget analysis indicated that the increase in precipitation is primarily driven by enhanced vertical thermodynamic (TH) responses to the increased water-holding capacity of the atmosphere, with a weak effect from the vertical dynamical (DY) term. However, both vertical DY and TH components contribute to the leading mode of inter-model spread in precipitation projections.

"The vertical TH component is significantly related to the climate sensitivity among the models involved in the phase-6 of the Coupled Model Intercomparison Project, suggesting that models projecting a warmer climate also tend to project a stronger TH term," said QIU Hui, first author of the study and a Ph.D. student from the University of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

The researchers further revealed that the inter-model spread of the dynamic component is influenced by the equatorial Pacific warming pattern through the Walker Circulation change, which controls diabatic heating over the Marine continent and leads to atmospheric circulation changes that affect northward moisture transport to the southern TPs.

"Both the model weighting technique and the selection of high skill models with better performance of historical climate simulation have been traditionally used to increase the robustness of climate projection in previous studies," said Prof. ZHOU Tianjun, corresponding author of the study, "Our results enrich the research by highlighting that the diversity in CMIP6 models projecting precipitation changes over the TP is not only related to local model performance, but is influenced by the overall performance of climate models in the context of climate sensitivity and the response of equatorial Pacific sea surface temperature to global warming."

The researchers also examined the relationship between the thermodynamic term and climate sensitivity under scenarios with low (termed as "SSP1-2.6") and intermediate (termed as "SSP2-4.5") GHG emissions, and found similar results to scenarios with very high GHG emissions. They call for further research into the inter-model variability of the response of equatorial Pacific Sea Surface Temperature to global warming.



The spatial distribution of summer precipitation anomalies (units: mm day<sup>-1</sup>) in 2050-2099 over Tibetan Plateau under the SSP5-8.5 scenario. The dots denote regions where at least 80% of the models agree on the sign of change. The black line indicates the boundaries of the TP, where the elevations are above 2,500 m. The baseline climatology refers to the period from 1965-2014, and the mid- and long-term is from 2050-2099. (Image by IAP).

### Lakes in Himalayan Plateau gradually transitioning to carbon sinks from sources: Study

04 February 2024, Times of India

NEW DELHI: Yearly carbon emissions from lakes in the Qingzang Plateau (QZP) or the Tibetan Plateau have declined with some lakes shifting from being carbon sources during 1970-2000 to becoming carbon sinks in the next two decades, new research has found. Researchers said the trend of decreasing carbon emissions in QZP lakes over the past five decades suggested that these lakes could assume an increasingly significant role in both regional and global carbon cycles in the context of ongoing global climate change.

The Qingzang Plateau, known as the Himalayan Plateau in India, is a vast elevated plateau located at the intersection of Central, South and East Asia and includes the Indian regions of Ladakh and Lahaul and Spiti.

While carbon sources release more carbon into the atmosphere than they absorb, carbon sinks absorb more carbon from the atmosphere than they release. The researchers, including those from the Chinese Academy of Sciences, China, said their study offers insights into the timing and degree of shifting in the yearly carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) exchange flux for lakes in the QZP region. Their findings are published in the journal *Environmental Science and Ecotechnology*. The team found that between 1970 and 2000, the lake systems in the QZP had generally acted as carbon sources. However, from 2000 to 2020, some freshwater and saltwater lakes shifted from acting as carbon sources to small carbon sinks, with



decreasing yearly CO<sub>2</sub> exchange flux. They also found that before 2000, the average temperature on the QZP from 1970 to 2000 was lower, aquatic plant and phytoplankton rates were relatively low, and the effect of respiration on carbon emissions was more pronounced. After 2000, however, the average temperature on the QZP was seen to show a rising trend. Further, the researchers found that the CO<sub>2</sub> absorbed through photosynthesis exceeded the CO<sub>2</sub> released through respiration, along with a reduction in the partial pressure of CO<sub>2</sub> (pCO<sub>2</sub>) at the water-air interface and water bodies became increasingly less saturated. All of these conditions were conducive for CO<sub>2</sub> entering water bodies, they said. They found that in recent decades, the yearly solar radiation on the QZP has generally declined. This will weaken the circulation of warm and cold water in the water bodies, known to cause a significant outflow of CO<sub>2</sub>, and therefore reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, they said. Phytoplankton and aquatic macrophytes, too, are sensitive to light and a slight reduction will slow respiration processes and gradually decrease CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, they said.

## January

### Indian Tectonic Plate May Split Tibet in Two, Says New Study

25 January 2024, Greek Reporter

A new geophysical study suggests Tibet may be “splitting in two,” as the Indian tectonic plate is tearing underneath the Tibetan Plateau. The seismic analysis study of the Himalayas around southern Tibet was presented at the American Geophysical Union Conference in December last year, providing evidence that the Indian plate is disintegrating beneath the Eurasian plate. The Himalayas are a mountain range present in five countries, namely India, Pakistan, Nepal, China, and Bhutan. According to the Geological Society, the mountain range and the Tibetan Plateau have formed as a result of the collision between the Indian plate and the Eurasian plate which began fifty million years ago and continues to this day. Led by Lin Liu, Danian Shi, and Simon L Klemperer, the study began by examining the levels of helium present in the Tibetan springs. A new theory about the plates that lie underneath the mountain range was presented. Theories on the Indian ‘Splitting’ Tectonic Plate Existing theories posit that the Indian plate could be sliding beneath the Eurasian plate without much

subduction, a process known in the practice of geomorphology as underplating.

Another theory is that the deeper sections of the Indian plate might be subducting, while the upper segments are resisting movement against the mass of Tibet. The complex movements make it difficult to discern the precise geological activities beneath the Himalayas.

This latest study, titled “Slab tearing and delamination of the Indian lithospheric mantle during flat-slab subduction, southeast Tibet,” claims that what is actually happening may be a peeling of the tectonic plate rather than a splitting. This is a fusion of the previous two theories.

The study offers evidence that the Indian plate is subducting while, at the same time, undergoing warping and tearing. This causes the upper half to peel away. It is a completely new perspective in the discipline of earth science and presents a challenge to previous assumptions.

The study concludes: “Our SRFs objectively map depths to distinct Indian and Tibetan lithosphere-asthenosphere boundaries across a substantial region of south-eastern Tibet.”

“The inferred boundary between the two lithospheres is corroborated by more subjective mapping of changing SWS parameters,” as per the study, “and by independent interpretations of the mantle suture from mantle degassing patterns and the northern limit of sub-Moho earthquakes.”

According to the study, “The southern limit of Tibetan lithosphere and subjacent asthenosphere is at 31°N west of 90°E but steps south by >300 km to ~28°N east of 92°E likely representing a slab tear.”

If the conclusions drawn from the study are in fact an accurate picture of what is happening, it would indicate that the upper part of the Indian plate would rise up and cause Tibet to heighten, while the lower half would sink down further into the earth’s mantle.

### Jiusan Society Qinghai Provincial Committee: Study the ecological culture of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and build an ecological civilization highland – Entertainment – China Engineering Network

25 January 2024, Breaking Latest News

Jiusan Society Qinghai Provincial Committee: Studying the ecological culture of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and building an ecological civilization highland

China News Service, Xining, January 24th (Zhang Wenke, Hu Guilong, Zhang Tianfu) – The Qinghai Provincial Committee of the Jiusan Society has emphasized the importance of studying the ecological culture of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau in order to build an ecological civilization highland.

Zhu Chunyun, the chairman of the committee, highlighted the need to understand the impact of natural factors on environmental evolution, as well as the correlation between these factors and human activities in the region's ecological evolution.

The Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, also known as the "Roof of the World" and the "Third Pole of the Earth," is of great ecological importance. It serves as the source of major rivers in Asia and is a crucial water supply area for over 2 billion people. Due to its sensitivity and fragility, the plateau's ecological environment requires careful protection.

In order to safeguard the Tibetan Plateau, China has taken significant steps, such as establishing the Sanjiangyuan National Park and enacting the "Qinghai-Tibet Plateau Ecological Protection Law of the People's Republic of China." However, there is still room for improvement in terms of ecological and cultural research.

Zhu Chunyun proposed strengthening research on the ecological systems of the plateau and establishing a unified ecological big data platform. He also recommended focusing on the exploration of ecological ethics and values embedded in traditional culture, as well as building a discipline system and research institute specifically focused on the ecological culture of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.

The committee's suggestions aim to enhance the scientific understanding of the plateau's ecosystem and promote a more comprehensive approach to ecological and cultural research in the region. By doing so, they hope to contribute to the development of a sustainable and resilient ecological civilization highland on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.

### **New discoveries show Tibetan Plateau remained inhabited over 50,000 years ago**

24 January 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Jan24'24) – The hinterland of the Tibetan Plateau, reputed as the "roof of the world" or the world's third pole, had been inhabited since 50,000 years ago, rather than 40,000 years as previously known, reported China's official Xinhua news agency Jan 24, citing the latest archaeological study of a prehistoric cave site there. Over 10,000 cultural relics, including stone tools, bone artifacts, pottery fragments, bronze items, animal skeletons and plant remains, dating back to 53,000 years ago, have been unearthed at the Meilongdapu (or Melong Tagphug) cave site, reported China's official globaltimes.cn likewise, citing a state broadcaster CCTV report Jan 22.

The remains, dating from the Paleolithic Age to the early Metal Ages in an area of over 1,000 square metres of the cave, are located on a massif 4,700 metres above the sea level, making it the highest

large-scale prehistoric cave site globally, and located in the westernmost Tibetan prefecture of Ali (Tibetan: Ngari).

Archaeologists from the Xizang Regional Institute of Cultural Relics Protection and the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology (IVPP) under the Chinese Academy of Sciences were stated to have carried out six years of excavation at the site since its discovery in 2018.

Zhang Xiaoling with the IVPP has said the oldest cultural remains in the cave were dated earlier than 53,000 years ago and may even be as early as 80,000 years ago, with the top layer dated 1,000 years ago.

The site is stated to consist of three caves aligned in a row, with the first one covering an area exceeding 1,000 square meters, the second at around 60 square meters, and the third, yet to be excavated, measuring about 25 square metres.

A total of 599 stone artifacts and 1,017 well-preserved animal fossils were found in the first cave. Cut marks on many specimens have shed light on ancient human survival strategies, said the globaltimes.cn report.

Aside from the diverse cultural artifacts, the walls of the first cave also revealed arranged red ochre rock paintings depicting vertical stripes, humanoid outlines, handprints and the sun, the report said.

The second cave was stated to date back to no later than 45,000 years ago and has yielded 8,136 stone artifacts and 952 animal fossils. In addition, a small amount of animal faeces and plant remains were unearthed. Archaeologists have described the cave as the primitive accumulation left by ancient people's lives.

The archaeological team has noted that the first and second caves preserve cultural deposits from multiple human occupations across different periods, suggesting intermittent habitation due to climate changes or cave collapses.

The third layer at the cave entrance of the first cave was stated to date back to 4,000 to 3,000 years ago, with a top layer dating back 1,000 years. These layers have yielded 1,170 stone artifacts, 622 pottery fragments and 4,350 animal bone fragments, the report said.

Besides, more than 30 Old Stone Age sites and six cave sites were also stated to have been found during a survey of the Gerze Basin where the site is located, with thousands of stone artifacts being collected and five cave rock paintings discovered.

Evidence of on-site stone tool production and pottery usage were stated to support the notion of early humans using caves as permanent dwellings in extremely cold and high-altitude environment.

Regarding the discoveries' historical importance, the report said: "The abundance of artifacts opens new

avenues for exploring human migration patterns and cultural exchanges. The comparative study of stone-making techniques, types and functions at different periods brings new insights into human habitation of the plateau, the evolution of stone tool technology, changes in survival strategies and technological exchanges during the Old Stone Age.

"The diversity and complexity of the pottery have contributed to the understanding of the population composition and cultural interactions among different groups since the New Stone Age.

"The discovery of crop seeds such as barley and peas is particularly significant for studying the origin and diffusion of agriculture in extreme plateau environments and understanding the exchange of agricultural products and population movements at different altitudes."

The report further said: "Ongoing multidisciplinary research into animal and plant archaeology, paleoenvironmental studies, isotope analysis, ancient protein analysis and sedimentary DNA will provide further insight into the history of human survival in the high-altitude regions of the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau."

### **Nepal explores tapping flood-risk glacial lakes for clean power**

23 January 2024, Context News

LANGTANG, Nepal - High in the Himalayas, two villages near Nepal's border with Tibet are getting power from an unusual source: a threatening glacial lake.

In this high-altitude region, climate change is accelerating the melting of mountain ice, with villages located below fast-filling glacial lakes facing a rising risk of catastrophic flooding.

But efforts to drain some of the excess water building up in the lakes, to lower surging disaster risk, also present an opportunity to boost clean power production, by installing small hydropower generators in the drainage channels.

Since 2017, 175 households in Langtang and Kyanjin, two villages in the high Kyanjin Valley, have been able to tap clean hydropower from efforts to drain the Kyanjin glacial lake for cooking, lights and other energy needs.

"We used to go three hours away from here to collect firewood" - something hard to find above the tree line, said 48-year-old Pasang Tamang, who runs a hotel in Kyanjin, a popular stopping point for tourists trekking in the mountains.

"Now we have electricity to cook food and boil water," she said.

The hydropower project, which cost \$448,000, was paid for by the Hong Kong-based Kadoorie Charitable Foundation.

But expanding such smart solutions - which unusually cut both disaster risk and climate changing emissions - is proving challenging in Nepal with funding limited and work in high-mountain environments challenging and often costly.

Power from risk

Communities in the Himalayas - and other high mountain regions of the world - face growing risks from fast-filling glacial lakes, which can suddenly burst under pressure and send huge volumes of flash floodwater surging downstream.

More than 150 people were killed and 2,000 houses damaged after Lhonak Lake in the northeastern Indian province of Sikkim burst its banks in October last year.

Nepal has worked to lower the pressure in several of its most at-risk mountain lakes, including Tsho Rolpa and Imja, using canals to channel some water away.

It also has looked at generating power from glacial lake draining since at least 2016, when Dhananjay Regmi, a glacier expert at Tribhuvan University, recognised the possibility while leading work on efforts to reduce lake levels and cut disaster risk near Mount Everest.

Working with colleagues, he studied four Nepalese glacial lakes - Thulagi, Lower Barun, Lumding Tsho and Hongu-2 - and produced a study showing hydropower generation was possible as part of drainage efforts.

All four lakes were identified in a 2020 report by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development as having a high risk of bursting their banks. "There are two benefits to us: first, the risk of outburst will be reduced, and second, we get energy at the same volume throughout the year," Regmi told Context. He has focused in particular on Thulagi glacial lake, about 200 km (125 miles) from Kathmandu in Manang district.

The 2.5-km-long (1.55-mile) lake is 73 metres (240 ft) deep and holds 36 million cubic metres (1.27 billion cubic feet) of water, according to Regmi's 2017 report - enough to fill more than 14,400 Olympic swimming pools.

If it were to burst, the resulting floods could directly affect 166,000 people downstream and impact many more, with roads, bridges and larger hydropower projects in the region at risk, according to an unpublished analysis by Narendra Khanal, a geography professor at Tribhuvan University.

Losses could reach \$415 million, the research found, if expected flood levels of 35 metres (114 feet) above the riverbed were reached, requiring replacement of the Marsyangdi and Middle Marsyangdi hydropower dams and putting their revenue at risk.

Channelling water out of the lake to hydropower generating equipment, could produce 50 megawatts (MW) of electricity year-round, he said, and lower

the lake's water level by five to 10 metres (16.4 to 32.8 feet).

"When the water level is reduced, we don't have to worry about the lake bursting," Regmi said.

**Funding dilemma**

But finding money for such double-benefit projects and putting them into operation is not easy.

Nepal, working with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is seeking \$50 million from the Green Climate Fund, with co-financing from the government, UNDP and the private sector, to lower water levels and cut the risk of floods from the Thulagi, Lower Barun, Lumding Tsho and Hongu-2 lakes.

But the proposal does not include plans to also generate hydropower.

Chiranjeevi Chataut, the director general of Nepal's Department of Energy Development, said making such generation projects work in the high Himalayas is too challenging, one reason the country is not making plans for them.

Still, "if any private sector (applicants) are interested, we can discuss," he said.

Regmi admitted that working at high altitude could be difficult and costly, but said such generation could be helpful in regularising year-round hydropower supplies.

Nepal, for instance, in recent years has generated about 2,800 MW of hydropower nationally each year during the monsoon season, but only a third of that at other times of year, according to the Nepal Electricity Authority.

Deepak K.C., a climate change and resilience analyst for UNDP in Nepal, said tapping the country's high-mountain hydropower potential in combination with efforts to cut disaster risk would likely require more joined-up funding.

"Only the private sector can invest in that type of (power) project," he said. "Donor agencies don't invest in generating hydropower."

If the government goes ahead with a lake-lowering project at Thulagi, Regmi's team hopes to find private backing to build a demonstration hydropower project, to show generating clean power at high altitude can work.

Installing the project could have other benefits as well, Regmi said. For instance, putting in place a hydropower system would require establishing a cable in the mountains to transport equipment to the site.

That could then be turned into a cable car system to attract tourists, or for local transport, he said.

"The project can be done without environmental or ecosystem loss," he said.

## Satellite Images Show China's Dam Threatening Neighbors' Fresh Water Supply

22 January 2024, Newsweek

China appears to have completed the construction of a new dam in the country's southwestern border regions, a project that could have far-reaching strategic implications for its southern neighbors India and Nepal, according to new satellite imagery.

Mapcha Tsangpo River, which translates from Tibetan as "peacock," is known as the Ghaghara in India and the Karnali in Nepal. It is a significant and perennial source of freshwater water supply to the populations in western Nepal and in the India's northern plains.

Beijing and New Delhi have sparred over China's dam building in the Himalayas before, including since the start of construction at the Yarlung Tsangpo river three years ago. The mega-dam project involves the world's highest major river, which begins in China's southwestern Tibet Autonomous Region and flows into India as the Brahmaputra.

Newsweek's analysis of imagery from Sinergise's Sentinel Hub website, which renders photographs captured by the Sentinel-2 satellite of the European Union's Copernicus earth observation program, found construction at Mapcha Tsangpo began in July 2021. The dam north of the town of Burang, in Tibet's Ngari prefecture, is now complete and visible in images taken this month from Earth orbit.

The concrete structure is roughly 18 miles north of Nepal's border town of Hilsa and approximately 37 miles east of the Indian border. Hilsa has roughly 51,000 residents, but Nepal's wider western region is home to more than 4 million people.

New dams coming up in the upper reaches of the Himalayas could impact the lives of millions in India who live in neighboring areas on the Nepalese border. Downstream from Nepal, Mapcha Tsangpo enters the plains of India, where it is known as the Sarayu, and passes through Ayodhya in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh. The city is considered the birthplace of the Hindu god Ram.

On Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi presided over the "Pran Pratishtha" consecration ceremony at the culturally and politically significant Hindu temple.

China's additional infrastructure in its sensitive border regions includes the new Ali Pulan Airport, a dual-use site that serves both civilian and military purposes, which officially became operational late last month, according to the Tibet region's civil aviation authority.

"India is naturally concerned about the potential long-term repercussions of Chinese activities for decades. Understanding China's hydro-behavior with other neighbors is crucial in deciphering its

hegemonic approach that has gone unchecked as of now," said Sana Hashmi, a postdoctoral fellow at the Taiwan-Asia Exchange Foundation think tank in Taipei.

Beijing in 2017 stopped sharing hydrological information with New Delhi, only to later renew the data-sharing contract at a cost. Previously, in 2013, when then-Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited Beijing, the two governments signed a memorandum of understanding wherein China committed to sharing hydrological data with India annually from May 15 to October 15, Hashmi told Newsweek.

"Despite the existence of an MOU to share flood data for the Brahmaputra during the monsoon season, there is not much progress," she said.

Omais Ahmad, managing editor for South Asia at The Third Pole, a specialist publication on environmental issues in the Himalayan region, told Newsweek that the case of the new dam in Tibet had shades of China's hydropolitics in the Mekong Delta of Southeast Asia.

"The best comparison of this is how China has tried to reshape hydropolitics in the Mekong. This is where it has increasingly argued that, as an upstream neighbor, it has rights that the downstream neighbors must respect, which goes completely against all of the international law on this," Ahmad said.

"It's not simply that the water flows through an upstream and that the upstream riparian doesn't have absolute rights over a river. There is the downstream riparian that has usage rights based on traditional usage," he said.

Ahmad added: "Unlike the Mekong, there are no regional water institutions like the Mekong River Commission in South Asia, so there is not even a space to engage."

The Chinese, India and Nepalese foreign ministries did not immediately return written requests for comment before publication.

A 2022 investigation by Indian news website The Quint said China had charged India over \$19 million for data from three hydrological stations. Last fall, Hong Kong's South China Morning Post said the two governments were renegotiating the hydrological data-sharing agreement, which expired in 2023.

In 2019, Li Keqiang, China's late former premier, spearheaded a follow-up project to the South-to-North Water Diversion Project, an ambitious decades-long plan to transfer resources from the water-rich Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze River to the country's arid northern regions including Beijing and Tianjin.

That project went into "full construction" this month, according to China's official news service Xinhua.

In 2021, China announced plans to link Tibet's river systems with the rest of the mainland, which would

involve building a mega dam along the border areas with India.

The project at Yarlung Tsangpo, the fifth longest river in China, is another sticking point in China-India relations for its strategic potential to control freshwater access to the downstream Brahmaputra. The river located in the east of their long and disputed border is one of the most critical sources of fresh water for the inhabitants of India's northeastern region as well as in Bangladesh.

Mark Giordano and Anya Wahal, experts at Georgetown University's Walsh School of Foreign Service, argued in December 2022 that the water of the Brahmaputra could become a source of conflict between the two Asian giants.

"The Brahmaputra would appear to be at the top of the list of conflict hotspots. The river is shared between four states, including the world's two most populous, China and India. Both have rapidly growing economies, and both are already among the most water-stressed in the world," they wrote for the United States Institute of Peace.

In recent years, India has protested China's construction of hydropower projects by refusing to purchase electricity from sites with Chinese investment, such as the Chameliya hydropower station in Nepal, built with Beijing's financial aid.

Beijing is building yet another dam north of the Burang site, construction for which began in December 2022, according to Xinhua. The project could further control Tibet's river system upstream from the Mapcha Tsangpo.

"The total storage capacity of the reservoir is 4.0352 million cubic meters. The project development task is mainly for irrigation," China's state media said at the time.

### **Climate change in South China Sea will have global weather impact: experts**

17 January 2024, RFA

Scientists forecast more drought and heavier rainfall in the region.

The impact of climate change in the South China Sea and its surrounding areas on the local and global weather system could be "profound," new scientific research has found.

The "unique characteristics" of climate change in the South China Sea and surrounding area (SCSSA) – such as the Indo-Pacific region, Southeast Asia, and the Tibetan Plateau – include rapid warming in key regions, leading to increased precipitation during the Asian summer monsoon and notable shifts in the frequency and origin of tropical cyclones, the researchers said in a study published in the Ocean-Land-Atmosphere Research journal on Tuesday.



The alterations in weather patterns within this region have a ripple effect on a global scale, influencing atmospheric circulation, oceanic currents, and the overall climate system, the researchers said.

The South China Sea, located in the eastern part of Southeast Asia, is a partially enclosed sea surrounded by various nations such as China, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Malaysia. Renowned for its diverse biological richness, it plays a crucial role in the worldwide climate system.

"Climate change in the South China Sea and its surrounding areas is very complex. It has a significant impact on shaping not only regional climates but also exerting far-reaching impacts on weather and climate patterns across the globe," said Song Yang, a professor at Sun Yat-sen University in Zhuhai, China.

The South China Sea is experiencing a significant rise in sea surface temperatures due to global warming, leading to more powerful typhoons and hurricanes with increased frequency and severity, resulting in catastrophic consequences, substantial loss of life and property damage in coastal areas.

Climate change has also disrupted rainfall patterns in the area, leading to extreme weather events like droughts or heavy rains, which significantly impact agriculture, water resources, and ecosystems.

This week's study highlighted the Hadley circulation's expansion, a key atmospheric pattern between the equator and subtropics, and a broader influence on the Madden-Julian Oscillation, an essential tropical atmospheric disturbance.

The researchers said that increased atmospheric convection over the SCSSA can result in abnormal descending air movements, leading to drought conditions and increased humidity in southern China, South Asia, and northern Africa during the boreal – or northern region – spring and summer.

The paper forecasts increased precipitation across South Asia, East Asia, and northern Australia, attributed to warmer sea surface temperatures, a heightened water vapor supply, and intensified circulations over the South China Sea.

The research also indicates that under various projected future scenarios, the impacts of climate change in the SCSSA on both local and distant weather and climate extremes are likely to intensify.

Last week, the United Nations' World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said the global temperature reached a record high in 2023, fast approaching the critical 1.5 degrees Celsius threshold above pre-industrial levels, a key upward limit in the 2015 Paris climate agreement to save the earth from devastating impacts.

Utilizing six leading international datasets, the WMO reported Friday a new annual average temperature of 1.45 C compared to the pre-industrial era

(1850-1900), with every month from June to December setting new records.

Notably, July and August were the hottest months ever recorded. Regional temperature breakdown was not provided.

Midway through last year, the Pacific Ocean region transitioned from the cooling effects of La Niña to the warming influence of El Niño. Since El Niño typically significantly impacts global temperatures after it peaks, 2024 is expected to be even warmer, according to scientists.

"While El Niño events are naturally occurring and come and go from one year to the next, longer-term climate change is escalating, and this is unequivocal because of human activities," said WMO Secretary-General Celeste Saulo.

Long-term monitoring of global temperatures, alongside other indicators like atmospheric greenhouse gas levels, ocean heat and acidification, sea level, sea ice extent, and glacier mass balance, provide insights into the changing climate, blamed primarily on fossil fuel usage.

# TIBET DIGEST 2024

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



## TIBET IN EXILE

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# December

## Condolences for President Jimmy Carter

30 December 2024, CTA

On learning that President Jimmy Carter had passed away, His Holiness the Dalai Lama wrote to Chip Carter, the President's son, at the Carter Center, today, to offer his condolences.



His Holiness the Dalai Lama and President Jimmy Carter together in 2002.

"President Carter lived a truly meaningful life, he wrote, with decades of untiring efforts to help the poor and downtrodden, to seek peaceful solutions to conflicts and to advance democracy and human rights throughout the world. To have remained active over the course of such a long life set an example to us all of how to live our lives in the service of others. The Nobel Committee recognised his contribution to the welfare of humanity when it bestowed the Nobel Peace Prize on him in 2002.

"In addition, the Tibetan people and I remain ever grateful to President Carter for his deep interest in and concern for the situation in Tibet and for undertaking initiatives to help alleviate the plight our people."

## Sikyong Penpa Tsering Congratulates Eriko Yamatani on Becoming Chairperson of Japan's Parliamentary Tibet Support Group

30 December 2024, CTA

On 26 December 2024, Sikyong Penpa Tsering, on behalf of the Central Tibetan Administration and the Tibetan people, extended his heartfelt congratulations to Honourable Eriko Yamatani on her appointment as the chairperson of the Japan Parliamentarians Support Group for Tibet.

Sikyong wrote, "Your leadership and powerful advocacy for the Tibetan cause, as witnessed through our representative at the Office of Tibet in Japan, have been deeply encouraging. As a longtime member of the Support Group, your unwavering courage in speaking truth to power and

## TIBET IN EXILE

standing firm against authoritarian forces has been exemplary. Your bold stance against repression and commitment to defending fundamental freedoms inspire hope and set an example for global leaders.” He further commended the pivotal role of the Japan Parliamentarians Support Group for Tibet in strengthening support and awareness for the Tibetan cause in Japan, expressing optimism about its continued progress under Yamatani’s leadership. Sikyong also highlighted the forthcoming World Parliamentarian Convention on Tibet, set to take place in June 2025, noting the vital role Yamatani’s leadership will play in ensuring its success.

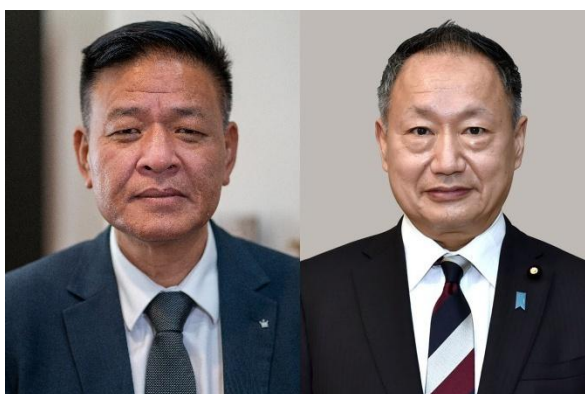


*Sikyong Penpa Tsering Congratulates Eriko Yamatani on Becoming Chairperson of Japan’s Parliamentary Tibet Support Group.*

Concluding his congratulatory message, Sikyong reaffirmed his intent to work closely with Yamatani and the Parliamentarians Support Group to advance shared commitments to justice, freedom, and human rights.

### **Sikyong Penpa Tsering Congratulates Hiroshi Yamada on Appointment as General Secretary of Japan’s Parliamentary Tibet Support Group**

30 December 2024, CTA



*Sikyong Penpa Tsering Congratulates Hiroshi Yamada on Appointment as General Secretary of Japan’s Parliamentary Tibet Support Group.*

On 26 December 2024, Sikyong Penpa Tsering, on behalf of the Central Tibetan Administration and the Tibetan people, extended his heartfelt

congratulations to Hiroshi Yamada on his appointment as the General Secretary of the Japan Parliamentarians Support Group for Tibet.

Sikyong expressed his gratitude for Yamada’s longstanding parliamentary interventions and advocacy for Tibet, noting, “Your consistent support through parliamentary initiatives and your dedication to the Tibetan cause have been deeply valued and inspiring. Your appointment as General Secretary brings great optimism to our struggle, especially during these critical times when robust parliamentary backing for Tibet is of utmost importance.”

Highlighting the significance of Yamada’s leadership, Sikyong underscored the importance of the upcoming World Parliamentarian Convention on Tibet, scheduled to take place in June 2025 in Japan. He expressed confidence in Yamada’s role in ensuring the success of this vital platform to strengthen global advocacy for Tibet.

In his congratulatory message, Sikyong also reaffirmed his trust in the Japan Parliamentarians Support Group for Tibet, under Yamada’s guidance, to remain a steadfast voice for Tibet in Japan and beyond.

### **Dalai Lama unlikely to visit Bodh Gaya this tourist season**

28 December 2024, Times of India

Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama is unlikely to visit Bodh Gaya during the ongoing 2024-25 tourist season. Sources said the Dalai Lama would leave Dharamsala on Jan 3 and arrive in Bylakuppe, Karnataka, on Jan 5 for an extended stay.

The Dalai Lama's annual Bodh Gaya visit began in the 2018-19 tourist season and continued in 2022-23 and 2023-24. However, his visits were halted during the 2020-21 and 2021-22 seasons due to Covid pandemic.

"Usually, the visit of the Dalai Lama leads to an increase in the footfall of devotees and tourists, especially from European countries, Bhutan, Tibet, Nepal, Myanmar, Vietnam and the Himalayan regions, besides Indian states like Sikkim, Meghalaya and West Bengal. As it is almost clear that the Dalai Lama will not be coming, the most affected will be small businesses like footpath vendors, roadside tea stalls and eateries. These businesses enjoy a good season whenever the Dalai Lama visits," Bodh Gaya Citizen Forum president Suresh Singh said.

Hotel Association, Bodh Gaya president Jai Singh said, "Hotels and guesthouses usually receive advance bookings during the Dalai Lama's visit. However, this season, rooms are easily available as hoteliers have not received enough inquiries about bookings."

"In such a situation, stakeholders in Bodh Gaya tourism are now relying on the ongoing annual puja performances and the annual Bodh Mahotsav to conclude the 2024-25 tourist season on a positive note," he added.

Tourist Guide Association of Bihar president Rakesh Kumar said, "The annual puja schedule issued by the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee includes 41 events during the 2024-25 season, compared to 25 events in 2022-23 and 27 in 2023-24. This year's schedule will conclude with the five-day 1st Thailand Chanting Ceremony from March 17 to 21, which is expected to attract a good number of Thai devotees."

He added, "The 10-day Tipitaka Chanting from Dec 2 to Dec 12 witnessed participation from over 8,000 devotees hailing from India, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Singapore, Indonesia, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, Korea and several European and Asian countries."

Apart from the annual events, stakeholders in Bodh Gaya found some relief with the conclusion of the fortnight-long Pitripaksh Mela, which saw nearly 22 lakh devotees visiting Gaya to perform 'pindadaan' rituals. A considerable number of these devotees also visited Bodh Gaya for darshan at the Mahabodhi Mahavihara.

Gaya: The official website of the Dalai Lama has provided a nearly clear indication that the spiritual leader will not visit Bodh Gaya during the ongoing 2024-25 tourist season. According to the website, the Dalai Lama is scheduled to leave Dharamsala on Jan 3 and arrive in Bylakuppe, Karnataka, on Jan 5 for an extended stay. The website contains no mention of the spiritual leader's Bodh Gaya visit this season.

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### **Estonian Delegation Visits Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, Delivers Letter from Estonian Speaker**

28 December 2024, CTA

A delegation of Tibet supporters from Estonia, led by Roy Strider, Coordinator of the Tibet Support Group in the Estonian Parliament, visited the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile on 27 December 2024. They met with Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang, and toured the parliament hall.

Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel was presented with a letter (Christmas card) from Speaker Lauri Hussar of the Estonian Parliament by Strider, along with gifts from MP Juku-Kalle Raid, Chair of the Tibet Support Group in the Estonian Parliament, and from the Parliament of Estonia.

Presenting the letter from the Estonian Speaker, Roy Strider remarked that it was a huge step in their support for the just cause of Tibet. A similar letter from the Estonian Speaker was presented to His Holiness the Dalai Lama earlier today during their audience with him, and a similar letter will be presented to Sikyong Penpa Tsering later as well.

During their meeting, Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel reflected on his first encounter with Roy



Strider, his visit to Estonia, and the ongoing journey in advocating for Tibet. He emphasized the strong and unique relationship between Tibet and Estonia. Speaking about His Holiness the Dalai Lama's message of love, compassion, and kindness, the Speaker highlighted Kashag's initiative to celebrate His Holiness's 90th birthday next year as the "Year of Compassion." He also suggested the possibility of a related initiative or commemoration from the Estonian Parliament or the public to mark this special occasion.

The Speaker then provided an overview of the work undertaken by the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, emphasising how, with the blessing and guidance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the support of India, the USA, Estonia, and other allies, the Central Tibetan Administration has successfully preserved and promoted Tibet's unique cultural heritage, language, and religion. He expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the supporters of Tibet in Estonia for their invaluable contributions and appealed for their continued support in the future.

Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang, in her address, emphasised that supporting Tibet is a stand for justice and truth. She underscored that their presence at the seat of the Central Tibetan Administration sends a clear message that Tibet is not isolated, as China seeks to portray. She also reaffirmed that His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration are not separatists, contrary to China's claims.

Speaking about the critical situation inside Tibet, the Deputy Speaker highlighted the Chinese government's practice of forcing Tibetan children into colonial-style boarding schools. This policy deprives them of their birthright to learn their language, culture, and religion, while subjecting them to indoctrination with communist ideology. She emphasised that this systematic effort to Sinicize Tibetan children is causing both psychological and physical harm.

The Deputy Speaker also expressed gratitude to the visiting guests from Estonia for their ongoing support of Tibet and for their visit to the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile.

-Report filed by Tibetan Parliamentary Secretariat

### **Dalai Lama's visionary leadership keeps Tibetan cause alive: CTA President**

27 December 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

The President of the exile Tibetan government, known officially as the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), Penpa Tsering, in an exclusive interview with ABC News, highlighted the enduring global focus on Tibet's struggle under the visionary leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

President Tsering attributed the resilience of the Tibetan cause to the Dalai Lama's visionary guidance, emphasising its significance despite decades of Chinese oppression. "We have never lost hope because of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's visionary leadership even if we are only about 130,000 or 140,000 Tibetans in exile. We have still kept the issue of Tibetans alive. That shows the enduring spirit of the Tibetan people," he said, addressing Tibetans in Tibet with a message of solidarity and resilience.

Speaking on China's efforts to control the selection of the next Dalai Lama, Tsering reiterated the CTA's firm stance against Beijing's interference in Tibetan spiritual matters. He warned that China's actions undermine the deeply rooted Tibetan Buddhist tradition. He further criticised the move, stating, "The reincarnation is very unique to Tibetan Buddhism. Lamas reincarnate to carry forward the unfulfilled responsibilities that they left behind in their previous life and it is the Lama that is going to be reborn. The Chinese government which does not believe in any religion wants to be responsible for the recognition of reincarnate Lamas. They are not bothered about the living 14th Dalai Lama but they are more concerned about controlling the yet to come 15th Dalai Lama."

Reflecting on the 2008 uprising in Tibet, where monks and laypeople demanded the Dalai Lama's return, President Tsering highlighted the enduring resistance. "The Tibetan resistance movement has persisted for decades. The 2008 protests saw participation from across Tibet, showcasing unity and resolve. Since then, 157 Tibetans have self-immolated, hoping to draw attention to their plight. Despite the lack of significant international intervention, we continue to inform the world about ongoing political, military, and economic developments inside Tibet. We remain optimistic about positive changes in China in the near future."

When asked about the Resolve Tibet Act signed into law by U.S. President Joe Biden on July 12, Tsering emphasised its significance and global implications. The act, which prompted sharp criticism from Beijing, reaffirms Tibet's unresolved status under international law. "The Chinese government claims sovereignty over Tibet, while we advocate for the Middle Way Approach, a non-violent, mutually beneficial solution. The Tibetan Resolve Act underscores that Tibet remains an unresolved issue under international law. It addresses four main issues, challenging China's narrative that there is no Tibet problem," he explained.

Discussing the ongoing stalemate in negotiations with China, President Tsering acknowledged limited progress. "While we maintain some contact, it has not yielded significant outcomes. With the recent

change in government, we aim to engage the new administration and strengthen collaboration with like-minded nations. The passing of this act by Congress reflects growing international support for Tibet's cause," he explained.

### **His Holiness the Dalai Lama Sends Condolences on the Passing of Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh**

27 December 2024, CTA



His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in New Delhi, India on November 10, 2018. Photo by Tenzin Choejor

On receiving news that former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had died, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has written to his widow Mrs Gursharan Kaur to express his sadness.

"I will remember him in my prayers," he wrote, "and offer my condolences to you and your family at this sad time.

"Whenever we met over the years I deeply appreciated his concern and good counsel. I felt he was like an elder brother to me.

"Your husband was motivated by a strong wish to help others. He made a significant contribution to India's development and prosperity, especially its economic growth, improving the lot of the Indian people. He was also a good friend to the Tibetan people.

His Holiness ended his letter: "We can rejoice that for 92 years he lived a truly meaningful life—an inspiration to us all."

### **Official Resolution of Solidarity Regarding the Critical Situation Inside Tibet**

27 December 2024, CTA

#### **Preamble**

The Snowland of Tibet, renowned as the "Roof of the World," was an independent country for millennia with a rich and profound history. It emerged as a formidable sovereign power in Central Asia, expanding its spiritual and political influence under the governance of the Three Great Dharma Kings and successive Tsenpo rulers. Subsequently governed

spiritually and temporally by the Sakya, Phagdru, Rinjung, Depa Tsangpa, and Gaden Phodrang, Tibet was an independent country characterised by its distinctive religion, politics, economy, language, culture and customs.

Around 1949, the Communist government of the People's Republic of China began its military invasion of Tibet, culminating in the complete occupation of the entire region by 1959 and compelling His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Tibet's spiritual and temporal leader, along with prominent religious figures from various Tibetan Buddhist traditions and approximately 80,000 Tibetans, to seek refuge in India. The Chinese Communist government's brutal occupation resulted in the deaths of over 1.2 million Tibetans, the pillaging and destruction of more than 6,000 monasteries, and widespread environmental devastation through aggressive mineral extraction, deforestation, and the damming and diversion of vital waterways across Tibet. Tibetans have been systematically stripped of their fundamental human rights, including freedoms of religion, movement, expression, press, and language. In blatant violation of international human rights law and the moral conscience of humanity, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, detentions, and imprisonments are routinely carried out as the Chinese Communist government continue to enforce repressive policies designed to eradicate Tibetan identity, culture, and language. Tibetans in Tibet continue to endure great suffering akin to a living hell. Over a million Tibetan children have been forcibly enrolled in state-run colonial boarding schools as part of a broader effort to sinicize Tibetan identity, religion, and culture. In May of this year, the Chinese government forcibly removed hundreds of young monks from Kirti Monastery and Taktsang Lhamo Kirti Monastery, compelling them to attend government-run schools while subjecting their families and communities to intimidation. These measures reflect the ongoing policy of the Chinese government to dismantle Tibet's traditional monastic education system, rendering these generational institutions analogous to a stagnant pond severed from its upstream source.

On July 12 this year, the Ragya Gangjong Norbu Lobling School in Golog, Tibet, was forcefully shut down. The school was established in 1994 after obtaining approval from various departments of the Chinese government. The school had successfully graduated over 2,500 students for over three decades, with hundreds still pursuing their studies. The forced closure of this private school dedicated to fostering educated Tibetan individuals has not only caused deep distress to its teachers, students, and staff but also has caused profound sorrow among Tibetans in and outside Tibet as well as among

individuals globally who admire and cherish the Tibetan culture.

Although assessing the actual situation in Tibet remains difficult due to the stringent restrictions imposed by the Chinese government, media reports from 2023 revealed the detention of over thirty six Tibetans, the enforced disappearance of six individuals, the deaths of three, and the sentencing of seven Tibetans within that year alone. The introduction of a new regulation, the "Administrative Measures for Religious Activity Venues," has further solidified the Chinese government's control over religious practices, intensifying the repression of the Tibetan people's religious freedom, human rights, and freedom of expression. Moreover, the Chinese government is actively pursuing policies of forced sinicization and cultural assimilation while intensifying repression under the pretext of social stability and security. Tibetans who voice their opinion on online platforms are subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention, and imprisonment, often without legal representation or protection. They are further subjected to beatings and torture, leading to the deaths of many. The Chinese government's implementation of repressive policies aimed at eradicating Tibetan religion, culture, and identity have raised serious concerns within the international community.

From June 13 to 15, 2024, a European Union (EU) delegation visited Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, and the Kongpo Nyingtri area. They toured various sites, including monasteries, residential schools, resettled households, and a prison. This visit was followed by the 39th EU-China Human Rights Dialogue on June 16. The EU issued a statement on June 17 urging the Chinese government to protect the religion, cultural heritage, and identity of the Tibetan people. The statement encouraged more visits from the international community and civil society organizations to Tibet. It also called for the immediate release of Go Sherab Gyatso, Tashi Dorje, and all other political prisoners while demanding an end to the ongoing repression of human rights in the region.

On July 4, 2024, a statement concerning the human rights situation in Tibet by the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights was submitted to the 56th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, convened in Geneva, Switzerland. The statement highlighted that multiple UN human rights bodies over the last two years had raised concern over the escalating human rights violations in Tibet, which included the forced enrolment of nearly a million Tibetan children in state-run colonial boarding schools and their separation from their families. It also underscored the dislocation of a large number of Tibetans under the coercive "labour transfer" policy and persecution of Tibetan environmental and human rights advocates,

resulting in enforced disappearances and deaths due to torture in custody. The statement emphasised that Tibetans in Tibet are unable to engage freely with the UN mechanism, in particular, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), due to a pervasive climate of fear perpetuated by decades of oppression. With a peaceful resolution to this dire situation possible through dialogue, the statement urged the Chinese government to take advantage of this opportunity. It further called upon the international community to press China, emphasising that, as a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council, China should fully respect the rights of the Tibetan people and address the root causes of the Sino-Tibet conflict.

Similarly, in the Australian Parliament, MP Lidia Thorpe raised concerns about colonial-style boarding schools in Tibet. On August 19, 2024, MP Deborah O'Neill addressed the Sino-Tibet conflict in the Australian parliament, expressing profound concern over the suffering endured by Tibetans. The parliamentarian condemned the Chinese government for unjustly and unlawfully ruling Tibetan regions through force, systematically oppressing the Tibetan people and denying them their fundamental freedoms and rights. The parliamentarian emphasized that every individual has the right to practice their religion, which must be respected. She then highlighted how the Chinese government's assimilationist policies in Tibet systematically erode Tibet's rich cultural heritage, depriving younger Tibetan generations of the opportunity to learn and cherish their tradition, a situation, she added, that must be confronted.

During its annual meeting on August 5, 2024, the American Bar Association (ABA) passed a resolution calling for the protection of human rights and the well-being of the Tibetan people in Tibet. Two days later, on August 7, the ABA urged the United States and UN member states to investigate the ongoing human rights violations in Tibet and to take action to safeguard the fundamental rights of the Tibetan people.

On September 6, 2024, a joint letter signed by 13 independent UN experts was published, addressing the Chinese government's crackdown on Tibetan protests against the construction of the Kamthok hydropower plant in Kham Derge, Tibet. Initially sent to China on July 8, 2024, the letter criticized the Chinese government for failing to engage in meaningful consultations and obtaining informed consent from the Tibetans affected by the dam project. It also condemned the use of force and the arbitrary arrests of hundreds of Tibetans who peacefully voiced their concerns. Moreover, the letter highlighted that the local Tibetans were prevented from reaching out to the outside world, thus violating their fundamental rights. The experts expressed

concern over the irreversible environmental consequences of the dam's construction, stressing its potential impact on the climate of the Tibetan plateau and China. They called for a comprehensive independent assessment of the project's environmental and human rights ramifications. In urging a halt to such unlawful projects, the experts also requested a detailed report on the situation, including the human rights implications associated with the construction.

The Friends of Tibet (Hyderabad) convened a meeting centred on the themes "River of Tibet" and "Water Wars in Asia" on July 15, 2024. The meeting discussed how China is intimidating the Southeast Asian region by constructing dams on Tibetan rivers. The meeting emphasized that the Chinese government's unchecked damming and infrastructure projects in Tibet, referred to as the "Third Pole" and the source of the world's major rivers, have doubled the glacial melting, contributing to global warming and posing a direct threat to the lives and livelihoods people in neighbouring India and other South Asian countries. Similarly, on August 18, 2024, Chinese climate experts published a research paper indicating that the changing climate of the Tibetan plateau, known as the Water Tower of Asia, contributes to rising temperatures in Tibet. This warming trend could not only disrupt global and Asian monsoon cycles but also exacerbate climate change-related disasters in China.

China's extensive mining and river damming projects in Tibet have triggered several earthquakes in recent years. Heavy rainfall on June 20, 2024, caused severe flooding in Ngaba Trochu County, damaging homes and roads in Dokha Town and Khalung Village. Vehicles and personal belongings were swept away, resulting in significant property damage. On August 3, a landslide and flood in Rikyil Village, Gudrag Town (Dartsedo), led to casualties and widespread destruction of homes and infrastructure. In early September 2024, intense rainfall in Tsolho claimed the lives of six Tibetans in Serchen County's Trelnag Township, while landslides in Honaguk village in Minhe County (Tsoshar Prefecture) killed three people. In Malho Tsekhog County, around 400 livestock perished, with extensive damage to roads, bridges, and homes. With mudslides submerging grasslands, many local areas have suffered significant losses of both people and property. Similarly, other areas in Tsoshar, such as Kadho, Tsurghor, Tsawa, and Tsawug, experienced heavy rains, landslides, and floods, leading to similar devastation. China's aggressive exploitation of Tibet's natural resources has severely disrupted the region's ecological balance, resulting in a rising frequency of natural disasters, including

heavy rains, storms, floods, earthquakes, and landslides.

The persistent enforcement of repressive policies aimed at eradicating Tibetan identity, culture, and the environment by the Chinese communist government since its invasion of Tibet has led to the March 10 uprising in 1959, a series of peaceful protests throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and the widespread pan-Tibet uprising in 2008. Since 2009, there have been 157 verified cases of Tibetans who have self-immolated in protest.

The Chinese government is not only making misleading assertions about the freedom and happiness that supposedly exist in Tibet but is also propagating disinformation about Tibet's historical status. On July 12, 2024, the President of the United States signed into law the "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act," which received overwhelming bipartisan support in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate. This landmark legislation establishes a clear U.S. policy that refutes the Chinese government's claims that Tibet has historically been an integral part of China. The law affirms the Tibetan people's right to self-determination, among other critical provisions. In a parallel development, on June 10, 2024, the Canadian Parliament passed a unanimous motion acknowledging the right of Tibetans, as a people and nation, to self-determination and as such, free to practice their religion and culture. The motion also highlights and acknowledges the systematic policy of cultural assimilation being implemented by the Chinese government against the Tibetan people.

To summarize, the Chinese government's persistent enforcement of repressive policies has perpetuated the critical political situation in Tibet, leading to the deterioration of the well-being of both the people and the environment. Reflecting this reality, it is imperative that the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile once again adopt a resolution of solidarity, as it has consistently done in its past successive sessions, at the 8th session of the 17th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile.

Resolution

1. Reaffirms and expresses our utmost respect to the unwavering courage and resolve of the Tibetans in Tibet who have made supreme sacrifices for the cause of Tibet, its people and dharma while under the oppression of the Chinese government. We earnestly pray that under the blessed care of Avalokiteshwara, the Buddha of compassion, they may be reborn in the Land of Snow and achieve outstanding accomplishments for Tibet's religion, polity, and We also express our profound condolences to their families and relatives.

2. The Chinese government must immediately halt its repressive policies that violate fundamental human rights and ensure that Tibetans in Tibet are guaranteed their rights and freedoms.
3. We firmly oppose the Chinese government's sinicization policy involving the establishment of an increasing number of colonial style boarding schools that separate Tibetan children from their families, communities, and cultural We also condemn the forced closure of the Golok Ragya Gangjong Norbu School under unjust hardline policies. Tibetans in Tibet must be granted the freedom to practice their religion, culture, and language as per their aspirations.
4. We demand the immediate release of the Eleventh Panchen Lama, Jetsun Tenzin Yeshe Trinley Palsangpo, popularly known as Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, as well as all Tibetan political prisoners suffering under the oppression of the Chinese We call for accountability regarding their well-being and insist that their fundamental rights be guaranteed.
5. Historically, Tibet was never part of China, and was a sovereign independent We stand ready to engage in dialogue to resolve the Sino-Tibet conflict based on the mutually beneficial Middle Way Policy. If the Chinese side does not make genuine attempts toward a resolution, the Chinese government will be solely responsible for any critical situation that may arise in the future.
6. We express our deepest gratitude to the government and people of India for their boundless kindness and steadfast support to Tibetans in We also extend our heartfelt appreciation to governments, parliaments, especially the U.S. government and Congress, as well as to the non- governmental organisations, dignitaries, and individuals who continue to stand in solidarity with the just cause of Tibet during this critical time.
7. We express our solidarity with Tibetans inside Tibet who have endured and continue to endure immense suffering under the Chinese government's repressive policies since the Chinese Communist government's occupation of Tibet. We also admire and praise the determination, courage, and invaluable contributions of all brave Tibetans in Tibet, both living and martyred. Tibetans living in free countries must seize every opportunity to strengthen advocacy for Tibet and lobby for support in respective governments while collectively working for the just cause of Tibet and the preservation of its religion, culture,

and language. And so be it adopted accordingly with the unanimous approval of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile on September 19, 2024.

\*The above resolution was passed unanimously by the 17th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile at its 8th session on September 19, 2024.

### **No interest in reviving talks with Dalai Lama's envoys from China: US Congressional Commission on China**

27 December 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup

The Congressional Executive Commission on China (CECC) has highlighted the People's Republic of China's (PRC) persistent unwillingness to engage with representatives of the Dalai Lama,

The CECC's annual report, released on December 20, criticised the PRC's lack of interest to resume meaningful dialogue. "The Commission did not observe any interest from People's Republic of China (PRC) officials in resuming formal negotiations with the Dalai Lama's representatives, the last round of which, the ninth, was held in January 2010," the report stated.

The CECC's findings underline a decade-long impasse in Sino-Tibetan relations. Between 1982 and 2010, Tibetan and Chinese representatives engaged in nine rounds of dialogue aimed at resolving the Sino-Tibetan conflict. The final round of official talks took place in January 2010 in China. Although the Chinese officials made baseless allegations against the Dalai Lama, Lodi Gyari, the lead Tibetan negotiator, later said, "We do not see any reason why we cannot find a common ground ... if the Chinese leadership has the sincerity and the political will to move forward."

The Tibetan government-in-exile, officially known as the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), continues to advocate for peaceful dialogue. In a May 5, 2023, interview with BBC Hard Talk, CTA President Penpa Tsering revealed the existence of backchannel communications between Tibetan and Chinese counterparts.

President Tsering emphasised the importance of dialogue, stating, "If the Sino-Tibetan conflict needs to be resolved peacefully, then there is no way other than talking with the Chinese leadership." However, he clarified that these backchannel discussions have yet to progress to formal negotiations, with current efforts focused on building contact and trust.

Former CTA President Dr. Lobsang Sangay echoed this sentiment in a 2014 interview with Reuters, confirming that informal channels of dialogue remained open despite the lack of formal talks. However, repeated attempts by the Tibetan



leadership to resume official negotiations have been rebuffed by the Chinese government.

In November 2021, China indicated it was open to discussions with the Dalai Lama but limited the scope to his “personal future,” explicitly excluding issues related to Tibet.

The Dalai Lama has long championed the Middle Way Approach, a strategy seeking genuine autonomy for Tibet within the framework of the PRC’s constitution. In a 2008 appeal to the Chinese people, His Holiness reiterated his commitment to this approach, referencing assurances from former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping in 1979 that “except for the independence of Tibet, all other questions can be negotiated.”

Despite six rounds of renewed dialogue between 2002 and 2008, the Dalai Lama acknowledged the lack of tangible results on fundamental issues. However, he reaffirmed his unwavering commitment to dialogue, expressing hope for a mutually beneficial resolution that respects Tibet’s unique cultural and regional identity.

### **Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel Congratulates Taiwanese Labor Minister Hung Sun-Han**

26 December 2024, CTA

Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, the Speaker of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, with profound gratitude and admiration extended his heartfelt congratulations to Minister Hung Sun-Han on his appointment as the Minister of Labor of Taiwan. He extended gratitude to him for being a steadfast supporter of Tibet for the past many years as a member of the Taiwan Parliamentary Group for Tibet.

The Speaker wrote, “We are confident that, with your wisdom, integrity, and determination, you will work for the benefit and welfare of your people. We are grateful for the work you have done for the Tibetan cause and for being a true friend of Tibet over the years. Additionally, we appreciate your participation in the 8th WPCT in Washington, D.C., and your recent visit to Dharamsala, where we had the privilege of discussing the misinformation spread by the Chinese government for political gain, as well as the need for stronger ties between the Taiwanese and Tibetan parliaments.”

“I am certain that you will continue to strengthen Tibet’s voice both in Taiwan and globally, making a significant impact on the advancement of Tibet’s cause. We also send our best wishes and prosperity for your future endeavours as the Minister of Labor,” he continued.

The Speaker concluded, “Once again, I express my deepest thanks to you and the members of the Taiwan Parliamentary group for Tibet for your

unwavering support and for standing with the truth of Tibet. I look forward to working closely with you to fulfil our shared interests.”

-Report filed by Tibetan parliamentary Secretariat



(Archive Image) From Left to Right: Secretary General Sonam Dorjee, Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, Taiwanese Labor Minister Hung Sun-Han, and Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang.

### **The Congressional Executive Commission on China (CECC) Tibet Museum’s ‘Long Look Homeward’ Draws**

26 December 2024, ICT

The Congressional Executive Commission on China (CECC) released its annual report on December 20, highlighting severe human rights violations in Tibet. The report indicates a lack of interest from Chinese officials in resuming negotiations with the Dalai Lama, with the last discussions occurring in January 2010. It details ongoing restrictions on Tibetan religious practices, particularly Tibetan Buddhism, including bans on worship during significant events and limited access to monasteries.

Focusing on ongoing human rights abuses by the government of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the CECC focused on the complicity of US and foreign corporations with CCP oppression. Pinpointing the actions of Thermo Fisher Scientific, whose DNA sequencers had been used by police in Tibet and Xinjiang to compile DNA databases of Tibetans and Uyghurs, the commission expressed apprehension that the technology could be misused for organ transplantation practices considering the existing accusations of forced organ harvesting in the PRC.

The CECC maintains a comprehensive database of political prisoners in China, providing valuable insights into the state of human rights and religious freedom. Of the 2,764 records of prisoners known or believed to be detained, 1,686 contained information about their religious affiliation. Notably, Tibetan Buddhism represents the largest religious

group among these prisoners. 678 prisoners are affiliated with Tibetan Buddhism, making it the most represented religious group in the database. The database also reveals significant information about the ethnic background of detainees. Out of 1,693 active detentions with available ethnic information, 790 are ethnically Tibetan. This data underscores the disproportionate targeting of Tibetans and practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism by Chinese authorities. The high number of Tibetan detainees, both in terms of religious affiliation and ethnicity, highlights the ongoing suppression of Tibetan culture, religion, and identity within China occupied Tibet.

The CECC also notes PRC officials and state, and Party controlled media continued use of the Mandarin Chinese – derived term “Xizang” instead of Tibet in English-language communications during 2024. The adoption of “Xizang” in English-language communications represents a strategic move by the PRC to influence the narrative surrounding Tibet on the global stage. By promoting this Chinese-derived term, the Chinese government aims to normalize its perspective on Tibet’s status and history in international discourse.

In the findings on Tibet (p. 241-255), the Commission highlighted violations of Tibetan language and cultural rights, restrictions on freedom of expression, continuing limitations on access to Tibetan areas, and constraints on religious freedom for Tibetans. The CECC specifically drew attention to the large-scale protests that erupted in February 2024 in Derge County against a planned hydroelectric dam on the Drichu (Jinsha) River, which threatens to flood villages and monasteries, including Wontoe Monastery, known for its well-preserved 13th-century murals. The commission noted that the planned displacement of Derge-area communities exemplifies a broader trend in Tibet, where Party and government officials impose resettlement plans without meaningful community engagement or participation in decision-making. Additionally, the report indicated that the Derge dam was not the only hydropower project endangering Tibetan communities; authorities in Dragkar (Xinghai) County began the forced relocation of monks from Atshog Monastery due to another dam construction.

CECC’s report further detailed the PRC’s ongoing efforts to restrict religious practices among Tibetans, particularly practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism as part of China’s broader “sinicization” campaign. Authorities issued prohibitions on various forms of worship and limited access to religious institutions, while also maintaining a system of residential boarding schools that threaten the intergenerational transmission of Tibetan culture and language. Overall, the CECC emphasized that these actions reflect a systematic approach by PRC officials to

control and suppress Tibetan identity and rights within the region.

### **Press Statement from Tibetan Parliament on China’s Sanctions Against Tibetan and Uyghur Advocacy Groups in Canada**

25 December 2024, CTA

#### **PRESS STATEMENT**

The People’s Republic of China (PRC) has recently imposed sanctions on the Canada Tibet Committee, the Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project, and 20 human rights advocates.

The Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile stands in solidarity with the members of the Canada Tibet Committee and the Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project, applauding their courage in speaking out against the atrocities and severe human rights violations committed by China.

We strongly condemn China’s decision to sanction these organisations and individuals. We call on China to immediately cease all forms of transnational repression designed to intimidate and silence those who courageously speak out for human rights at home and abroad.

Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile

### **7,000 Visitors, Highlights Tibetan Freedom Struggle**

25 December 2024, CTA



*Tibet Museum’s ‘Long Look Homeward’ Draws 7,000 Visitors, Highlights Tibetan Freedom Struggle*

The Tibet Museum’s traveling exhibition, “Long Look Homeward”, concluded its highly successful run across various venues in Bengaluru, captivating thousands of visitors and sparking meaningful conversations about Tibet’s history, culture, and its enduring connection with India. Through a series of interactive displays, educational talks, and cultural showcases, the exhibition explored key themes such as India-Tibet relations, the life and legacy of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, and the Tibetan struggle for freedom.

Launched in collaboration with local academic institutions, the exhibition traversed four key venues, reaching approximately 7,000 individuals, including students, faculty members, Tibetan community members, and visitors from all walks of life. Each event was designed to deepen understanding of Tibet's rich cultural heritage and its ongoing journey in the modern world.

The traveling exhibition began with a launch event at the Dalai Lama Institute for Higher Education's (DLIHE) academic centre during the institute's Tibet Week, where the exhibition attracted an eager audience of students, staff, and Tibetan scholars. A focal point of this event was a series of thought-provoking panels and documentaries on India-Tibet relations, the biography of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, and the Tibetan quest for freedom and justice. The exhibition offered an opportunity for students in the History Department and beyond to engage with Tibet's unique history in an academic setting, while also sparking conversation among Tibetan research scholars who attended in large numbers. The event's success was measured by the enthusiastic participation of 150 students, 30 staff members, and 25 Tibetan research scholars who engaged deeply with the exhibition's content.

The exhibition's next stop was Bangalore University, where it expanded its reach with a cultural collaboration between the Tibet Museum and the university's History Department. Inaugurated by dignitaries Dr. Jayakara S.M. and Chief Representative Officer Jigme Tsultrim, the event showcased a rich blend of traditional Tibetan cultural displays alongside thought-provoking talks. One highlight of this event was an interactive session led by Tibet Museum's Director Tenzin Topdhen, who delved into Tibet's numismatic heritage and how it reflects Tibetan independence. This event not only engaged students but also attracted the attention of the local Tibetan community, with 500 students, 50 staff members, and 50 community members attending the exhibition, ensuring a diverse and engaged audience.

Following the university's exhibition, DLIHE hosted a closing event, marking the end of Tibet Week. The event saw the participation of the Indo-Tibet Friendship Society (ITFS), with President of ITFS Gopi officiating the ceremony. As one of the major diplomatic organisations representing the Tibetan cause in India, the ITFS's involvement lent the exhibition added significance, offering visitors a chance to engage with the political aspects of the Tibetan struggle. Around 150 visitors, including ITFS members, Men-Tsee-Khang representatives, and members of the Tibetan diaspora, attended the event, further solidifying the exhibition's role as an important cultural and political dialogue platform.

Another significant exhibition was held at the Bangalore Tibetan Youth Hostel, coinciding with the global observance of Nobel Peace Prize Day. The exhibition here offered an intimate and culturally immersive experience, focusing on Tibetan traditions and values. It attracted around 450 visitors, including youth hostel students, members of the ITFS, and the Tibetan diaspora. The event provided a space for Tibetan youth to reflect on their cultural heritage, fostering a sense of pride and unity among younger generations.

The final leg of the exhibition was hosted at Dayananda Sagar University (DSU), where the interactive displays and animations captivated an even larger audience. The exhibition's two-day run at DSU reached over 5,000 students and faculty members, who explored themes of Tibet's political history, the process of identifying the reincarnation of the Dalai Lamas, and the long-standing relationship between India and Tibet. Through engaging multimedia, students were able to learn about the spiritual and political complexities of Tibetan identity, further expanding their knowledge of this rich and complex culture.

As the exhibition wrapped up its run in Bengaluru, it had successfully engaged a wide and varied audience across academic institutions, cultural hubs, and the Tibetan community, leaving a lasting impact on all who participated. The exhibition not only provided a deeper understanding of Tibet's history and the life of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama but also ignited critical discussions about Tibet's current political and cultural challenges. The event served as a powerful reminder of the enduring relevance of Tibet's heritage and its ongoing significance in contemporary global dialogues.

Through "Long Look Homeward", the Tibet Museum has not only brought Tibet's past to life but has also ensured that its future remains an active part of the global conversation on culture, identity, and politics.

### **Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel Educates Students at Leadership Workshop on the Evolution of Tibetan Democracy**

25 December 2024, CTA

On December 24, 2024, Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel addressed the leadership workshop for school prefects and captains, organised by the Department of Education of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). The workshop, which is scheduled to run from 23 December to 28 December, is being held at the Administrative Training Centre in Dharamshala.

In his speech, the Speaker discussed the evolution of Tibetan democracy, highlighting it as an aspiration of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who entrusted the



Tibetan people with the vision of a democratic system. Speaker Tenphel recounted the observations made by His Holiness during his visits to India in 1956 and China in 1954. During these visits, His Holiness noted the functioning of the Indian Parliament and the Chinese Communist Party's congress. The democratic framework of India, in particular, left a profound impact on His Holiness, shaping his vision for a democratic society that would be grounded in justice and fairness.



*Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel Educates Students at Leadership Workshop on the Evolution of Tibetan Democracy*

The Speaker went on to trace the development of Tibetan democracy, starting with the establishment of the Reform Committee and other key bodies by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Tibet – important steps toward democratization. However, the advancement of Tibetan democracy was tragically interrupted by the unlawful occupation of Tibet by the People's Republic of China.

Further elaborating on the history, the Speaker recalled the solemn oath taken by representatives from the three traditional provinces of Tibet and the four religious schools of Buddhism at the sacred site of Bodh Gaya in 1960. This oath, which pledged unwavering loyalty to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, marked the formal beginning of Tibet's democratic journey in exile.

His Holiness, in his wisdom, instructed the Tibetans to elect three representatives from each of the traditional provinces and one from each of the four Buddhist schools. On 2 September 1960, these representatives took their oaths, officially becoming the first members of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, formerly known as the Commission of Tibetan People's Deputies. Since that historic day, 2 September has been celebrated as Tibetan Democracy Day, a symbol of the ongoing commitment to democratic principles within the Tibetan community.

Explaining the structure of Tibetan democracy, including the unicameral system of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel emphasised the added responsibilities of Tibetans as

a diasporic community. He also discussed the roles and functions of the three pillars and autonomous bodies of the Central Tibetan Administration.

Khenpo Sonam Tenphel elaborated on the evolution of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, highlighting changes in its composition, duration, functioning, programs, and bi-annual sessions. He also covered key milestones, such as the adoption of the Charter of Tibetans in Exile in 1991. The current composition of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile includes 45 members: 10 representatives from each of Tibet's three traditional provinces – U-Tsang, Dhotoe, and Dhomey; two from each of the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism and the pre-Buddhist Bon religion; two representing Tibetan communities in North America and Europe; and one from Australasia and Asia (excluding India, Nepal, and Bhutan).

Reaching a significant milestone in the democratization process, the first-ever Kalon Tripa was directly elected by the Tibetan people in 2001. This was followed by a landmark moment in Tibet's history in 2011, when His Holiness the Dalai Lama formally transferred his political authority to the elected leaders, ensuring a future of full democratization for the Tibetan people.

Finally followed by a Q&A session, the Speaker concluded his address by advising the students who are the future of the Tibetan struggle to be aware of their responsibilities as Tibetans.

### **Co-convenor MP Tapir Gao of All Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet Speaks on His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Indian Parliament**

24 December 2024, CTA



*Co-convenor MP Tapir Gao of All Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet speaking in the Indian Parliament*

On 16 December 2024, during the Zero Hour in the Indian Parliament, Shri Tapir Gao, Member of Lok Sabha from Arunachal Pradesh and Co-Convenor of the All Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet (APIPFT), delivered a significant on His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

In his address, Shri Gao urged the Indian government to officially recognise the institution of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and to honour His

Holiness with the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award, in recognition of his global contribution to peace, non-violence, and religious harmony.

Shri Gao also highlighted the critical importance of India preparing for the eventual reincarnation and succession of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, particularly in light of China's efforts to unilaterally appoint its own 15th Dalai Lama.

These remarks were made in the context of rising concerns over China's interference in Tibetan religious matters and the potential consequences for both the Tibetan community and India. This address marks another important moment in the ongoing efforts of Indian parliamentarians to advocate for Tibet and strengthen India's commitment to the Tibetan cause.

Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, Speaker of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, on behalf of all Tibetan people, extended his deepest gratitude to Shri Tapir Gao, for taking Zero Hour in the Indian Parliament to deliver a speech about Tibet at the All-Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet's meeting on 17 December 2024 in Delhi.

Sharing a clip of his speech on his social media handle, Shri Tapir Gao wrote, "During Zero Hour today in Parliament, I urged the Government to recognize The Dalai Lama Institution, as the Chinese government's decision in 1959 to appoint the XVth Dalai Lama poses a grave threat not only to Buddhism but also to the Tibetan people and the future of Tibet. India and the world must act decisively to recognise the rightful successor, safeguarding both religious and cultural integrity, and ensuring global support for the cause. I also called for conferring the highest civilian honour, Bharat Ratna, upon His Holiness the XIVth Dalai Lama, in recognition of his unwavering dedication to peace, compassion, humanity, and universal brotherhood. This long-pending demand reflects the collective sentiment of the people, as His Holiness remains a true Messiah of Peace and a beacon of hope for the world."

### China sanctions Tibetan and Uyghur advocacy groups in Canada

23 December 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup

China has imposed sanctions on two Canadian organisations and 20 individuals connected to Tibet and East Turkestan (CH: Xinjiang) advocacy efforts. The Chinese foreign ministry announced the measures on Sunday, stating they took effect on Saturday.

The sanctions target the Canada Tibet Committee (CTC) and the Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project (URAP). The ministry stated it is freezing "movable

property, immovable property, and other types of property within the territory of China" belonging to the organisations



Sherap Therchin, the Executive Director of the Canada Tibet Committee (Photo/Screengrab)

and individuals. Those sanctioned are also barred from entering China, including Hong Kong and Macao.

Among those named are Sherap Therchin, executive director of the Canada Tibet Committee, and Samphe Lhalungpa, chair of the organization. Former Canadian diplomat Charles Burton and Margaret McCuaig-Johnston, both policy advisers at the Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project, are also on the list.

Speaking to The Globe and Mail, Therchin said, "This just makes it more formal. Members knew from the day they joined the organisation that they would no longer be permitted to visit or own assets there." He added, "Tibetans who speak out over issues such as mass relocation, environmental degradation, or the phasing out of the Tibetan language in primary education are met with repression. Having banned content on one's phone or merely contacting Tibetans in exile can result in detention."

The Canada Tibet Committee (CTC), in response to sanctions imposed by China, stated, "For 38 years, the CTC has advocated for Tibet within democratic, non-violent, and human rights frameworks aligned with His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Middle Way. These sanctions formalise the PRC's long-standing practice of denying diaspora Tibetans access to their homeland, but public participation in a democratic society is not a crime in Canada. We call on the Canadian government to protect those sanctioned and stand with our Uyghur and Canadian allies. This move strengthens our resolve to continue advocating for justice and an end to repression in Tibet."

The World Uyghur Congress issued a statement in response to the sanctions, saying, "These sanctions targeting two organisations actively advocating for Uyghur and Tibetan rights in Canada are clearly retaliatory. They aim to intimidate human rights defenders from these persecuted communities into silence." The statement added, "The WUC strongly condemns all acts of transnational repression by the



Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which seeks to silence human rights advocates. The WUC stands in full solidarity with the Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project and the Canada Tibet Committee.”

China’s measures come after Canada imposed sanctions earlier this month on eight former and current Chinese officials over human rights violations in East Turkistan (Xinjiang) and Tibet. Among those targeted by Canada were Chen Quanguo, former Communist Party chief of Xinjiang, and Wu Yingjie, former party head of Tibet.

China has denied allegations of human rights abuses in Tibet and East Turkestan (CH:Xinjiang), stating its policies aim to maintain stability and promote economic development. It has also called on Western nations to refrain from interfering in its domestic affairs.

Relations between Canada and China have been strained since 2018, when Canada detained Huawei CFO Meng Wanzhou at the request of the United States, and China detained two Canadian citizens on espionage charges. All three were later released, but tensions remain unresolved.

### **Dalai Lama Addresses Health Concerns Amid Succession Plans**

23 December 2024, StratNews Global

The Dalai Lama's prediction of living for another two decades reassures followers, but greater clarity on his succession, including reincarnation details, may come when he turns 90 on July 6, 2025.

### **Department of Education Commences Leadership Workshop for School Prefects and Captains**

23 December 2024, CTA

As Tibetan schools in India conclude their academic year for the winter break, the Department of Education (CTA) launched its leadership workshop for school prefects and captains earlier this morning at the CTA’s Administrative Training Centre in Dharamshala with a brief inaugural ceremony.

Education Kalon (Minister) Tharlam Dolma Changra, as the chief guest, graced the opening ceremony, offering profound insights into the experiences of educating Tibetan students and administering Tibetan schools.

A total of 43 student representatives from 16 different Tibetan schools, including two Nepal-based Tibetan schools, participated in the workshop. In addition, 16 teachers from these schools accompanied the students as counsellors and guardians throughout this six-day workshop.



Kalon Tharlam Dolma Changra addressing the gathering. Photo / Tenzin Phende / CTA

The event began with introductory remarks by Additional Secretary Tenzin Dorjee from the Education Department’s Academic Section. He provided an overview of the leadership workshop, emphasising that it aims to enhance the leadership skills of the participants while imparting other essential abilities in line with the objectives of the Basic Education Policy for Tibetans in Exile. He highlighted that the workshop also seeks to cultivate human qualities such as compassion and universal responsibility in the student leaders, while underscoring the importance of preserving Tibetan cultural and linguistic heritage, which is systematically undermined within state-run schools in Tibet.

In her keynote address, Kalon Tharlam Dolma Changra recalled the immense sacrifices and contributions made by the elder generations, under the leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, in establishing a robust Tibetan exile community. “Always be grateful for the abundant opportunities and resources provided by our Tibetan schools, which are often unavailable even in prestigious local and private schools. You must uphold the responsibilities as Tibetans that come with these opportunities,” she said. The Kalon further encouraged participants to share what they learn in this workshop with their fellow students.

As a former school principal, Kalon Tharlam Dolma Changra specifically addressed the responsibilities of school prefects and captains. She emphasised that they must act as a bridge between teachers and students, helping to address issues such as inadequacies and disparity in treatment among students. She also disapproved of bullying in the school environment and advised everyone to adhere to school disciplines and maintain self-discipline. Additionally, the Kalon stressed the importance of good health for academic success.

In addition to these points, the Education Kalon expressed concern over the increasing number of children with special needs in Tibetan schools and

implored school administrations and students to extend special services to support them.

The ceremony concluded with a vote of thanks from Under Secretary Dorjee Wangdue from the department's academic section.

Over the course of this leadership workshop, consultants and facilitators will explore various topics, including the importance of Tibetan language and culture, the evolution of Tibetan democracy in exile, SEE Learning, leadership and learning, conflict resolution, communication skills for leaders, the Education Department's scholarship programme, cyber safety and security, gender equality in schools, and career mapping. The programme will also include educational visits to the Dalai Lama Library and Archives and various CTA departments.

### **US Commission report highlights brutal right abuses in Xinjiang, Tibet, Hong Kong, etc**

23 December 2024, Tibetan Review

The bipartisan, bicameral US Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) has issued its 2024 Annual Report on Dec 20, providing "a detailed account of the People's Republic of China's (PRC) systematic abuses of human rights—most brutally implemented in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, Tibet, and Hong Kong", documenting "the widespread use of arbitrary detention and torture targeting ethnic minorities, human rights lawyers, and advocates for free speech, religious freedom, and an independent civil society."

Representative Christopher Smith (R-NJ) and Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Chair and Co-chair of the commission, have said the report reflects the view of CECC Commissioners that the PRC's complicity in atrocity crimes and forced labor, and its efforts to use technology to coerce and control the Chinese people and undermine democratic freedoms globally, pose a distinct challenge to the United States' interest in maintaining universally recognized human rights norms and supply chains free of forced or prison labor.

In the section on Tibet, the report said the PRC continued to restrict, and seek to control, the religious practices of Tibetans, the majority of whom practice Tibetan Buddhism.

It said that as part of the broader policy of "sinicizing" religion, PRC authorities in Tibetan areas issued prohibitions on forms of religious worship, including during important religious events or around the times of politically sensitive anniversaries, limited access to religious institutions and places of worship, including Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and temples, and otherwise unduly restricted Tibetans' freedom of religion and belief.

It also noted that the PRC continued to assert control over the process of selection and recognition of Tibetan Buddhist reincarnated teachers, including the Dalai Lama.

The commission said it did not observe any interest from PRC officials in resuming formal negotiations with the Dalai Lama's representatives, the last round of which, the ninth, was held in Jan 2010.

Regarding its key findings, the report said the PRC authorities maintained a system of residential boarding schools in Tibetan areas that observers fear could constitute a serious threat to Tibetan society and the intergenerational transmission of culture and language.

It said large-scale protests broke out in Feb 2024 in Derge (Dege) county, Kardze (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan province, due to official plans for construction of a hydroelectric dam on the Drichu (Jinsha) River that will submerge at least two villages and six monasteries, one of which, Wontoe Monastery, contains well-preserved 13th-century murals. Security personnel detained approximately 1,000 Tibetans in connection with the protests; many were later released, but local authorities escalated surveillance and monitoring of local communities in the following months.

It also said that in contravention of international human rights standards, officials punished residents of Tibetan areas for exercising protected rights, including the expression of religious belief, expressing criticism of PRC policies, and sharing information online. Notable cases this past year were reported to include those of writer Pema, a monk and teacher at Kirti Monastery, who in a lone protest held a portrait of the Dalai Lama and called for the Dalai Lama's return to Tibet and religious freedom for Tibetans; Semkyi Drolma, detained for her participation in discussion groups about Buddhism on the social media platform WeChat, and later sentenced to one year and six months in prison for "leaking state secrets"; and Tenzin Sangpo, a senior monk at Derge's Wontoe Monastery detained in Feb 2024 as part of the anti-dam protests.

China's official media accused the commission of making groundless accusations against Beijing's internal affairs for political purposes.

"The rights and freedoms of the Chinese people, including all those living in Xinjiang, Xizang and Hong Kong, are fully protected," said a commentary by one Li Yaing on China's official chinadaily.com.cn Dec 23, using the Sinicized name for Tibet.

It claimed that the three regions had enjoyed good development momentum since the strict enforcement of the rule of law brought an end to the chaos orchestrated by the US, referring to protests for democracy, human rights, and independence which

had majorly hit them at various times over the past 15 years or so.

### **Tibetan Leaders Advocate For Challenges Faced Under Chinese Rule in Delhi**

22 December 2024, Rtv

The members of the 17th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile have been actively advocating for Tibet in New Delhi, highlighting the severe challenges faced by the Tibetan people under the Chinese Communist regime.



Photo: Central Tibetan Administration

The Tibetan parliamentarians, who met Indian parliamentarians from December 16 to 18, focused their efforts on raising awareness about the ongoing struggles in Tibet and sought support for their cause. Tibetans continue to face harsh repression under Chinese rule, including the suppression of their culture, language, and religion.

The Chinese Communist Party has implemented policies aimed at eradicating Tibetan identity, including restrictions on religious practices and the forced assimilation of Tibetan culture.

The situation is exacerbated by the detainment of Tibetan political prisoners, with notable cases such as the continued imprisonment of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the 11th Panchen Lama, who disappeared into Chinese custody at the age of six.

In addition to cultural and religious repression, Tibetans have been subjected to severe human rights violations, with reports of torture, forced labour, and arbitrary detentions. The Chinese government's efforts to silence dissent have led to widespread fear among Tibetans, both inside Tibet and in exile. There are also growing concerns about the environmental impact of China's exploitation of Tibet's resources, which is contributing to global climate change, particularly through the diversion of water from Tibet's rivers and the destruction of its ecosystems.

The Tibetan parliamentarians have urged Indian leaders and the international community to support Tibet's struggle for autonomy and justice. They have called for China to engage in meaningful dialogue with Tibetan representatives, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama, under the Middle Way Policy, and to release all Tibetan political prisoners. They also seek

international recognition of Tibet as an occupied nation with a distinct and sovereign history. (Source: ANI)

### **Parliamentarians Migyur Dorjee and Pema Tso Commence Official Periodical Visitation**

22 December 2024, CTA



Parliamentarians Migyur Dorjee and Pema Tso Commence Official Periodical Visitation

As per the program of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, a parliamentary delegation consisting of parliamentarians Migyur Dorjee and Pema Tso began their periodical visitation program to Norgyeling Tibetan settlement of Bhandara in Maharashtra, Phendeling Tibetan settlement of Mainpat in Chhattisgarh, and Tibetan sweater sellers in the states of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh. They are scheduled to visit aforementioned settlements and places from 19 December 2024 to 4 January 2025.

On 19 December, two parliament members arrived at Nagpur airport from Delhi. Yeshe, the accountant from Bhandara Settlement Office, and driver Rinchen were there to welcome them at the airport.

Organized by Samten Yeshe, an executive member and cyclist for the Bharat Tibet Sahyog Movement (BTSM), a gathering was held at 4:40 PM that day at the Women's College in Nagpur. The meeting was attended by over 50 people, including BTSM National Advisor Ashok Mendhe, BTSM Maharashtra State President Prof. Vijay Kewalramani, Samta Sainik Dal's National Director Sunil Sariputta, along with other senior leaders, members, and the college principal and teachers.

During this event, the two parliament members expressed gratitude to the Indian government and people for their continued support and solidarity with Tibetans. They explained how Tibetans, under His Holiness the Dalai Lama's leadership, have preserved and promoted Buddhism, India's ancient wisdom tradition, for many centuries. However, since China's occupation of Tibet in 1959, they described



the critical situation where the Chinese Communist government has been implementing policies to eliminate Tibetan religion, culture, language, and identity.

Many Indian Tibet supporters participated in the meeting and emphasised the brotherly relationship between India and Tibet, stating that as an elder brother, India must support its younger brother Tibet during these difficult times under Chinese oppression. They declared they would continue supporting the Tibetan cause until Tibet gains freedom and His Holiness and Tibetans can return to their homeland.

On 20th December, at the Nagpur Tibetan sweater market, they addressed the Tibetan sweater sellers about His Holiness the Dalai Lama's deeds, the work of the Central Tibetan Administration, including the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, and explained how the Middle Way Approach is the best policy combining wisdom and method to resolve the Sino-Tibetan conflict. They also emphasised the importance of preserving the Tibetan language, culture, and moral values for Tibetans living in free countries, especially given China's severe restrictions on Tibetan language use in Tibet. After a Q&A session, they departed for Chandrapur, arriving there around 3:30 PM.

-Report filed by Tibetan Parliamentary Secretariat

### **Dalai Lama set for extended stay at Bylakuppe Tibetan settlement**

22 December 2024, Tibetan Review

Tibet's exiled spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, is to visit the Tibetan settlement at Bylakuppe in Mysuru district of Karnataka state for an extended stay. He will leave Dharamshala on Jan 2 and arrive at the settlement on Jan 4.

He will arrive at Tashi Lhunpo Monastery and spend significant time there, reported starofmysore.com Dec 21, citing the monastery's secretary Kelkhang Rinpoche.

Bylakuppe has the second-largest Tibetan Settlement in India, after Dharamshala. The Dalai Lama last visited it in Dec 2017, where he stayed for five days, the report noted.

No official engagements have been finalised beyond Jan 4. His Holiness will likely remain at Bylakuppe until the Tibetan Losar (New Year) festival in the last week of Feb 2025, the report added.

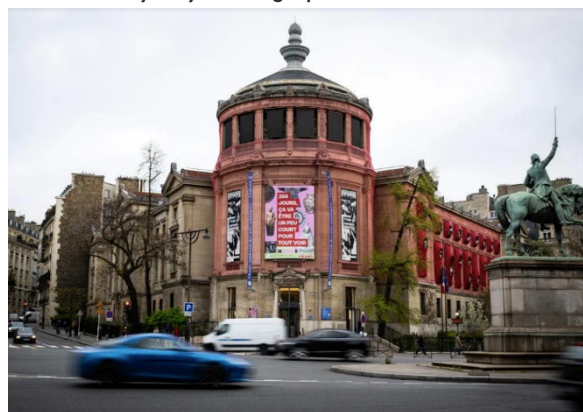
### **SFT France to continue protest as Musée Guimet refuses to rename exhibit to "Tibet"**

21 December 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

Activist group Students for a Free Tibet (SFT) in France announced plans on Thursday to intensify protests against Musée Guimet after the museum's

director, Yannick Lintz, refused to rename its exhibit "Himalayan World" to "Tibet." The exhibit, which prominently features Tibetan cultural artefacts, has drawn criticism from activists accusing the museum of deliberately erasing Tibet's identity and heritage.

Representatives of SFT France, including Rigzin Genkhang, the Dalai Lama's representative in Brussels, and Pema Rinchen, President of the Tibetan Community of France, met with Lintz to press for the recognition of Tibet's identity. They demanded the accurate representation of Tibetan heritage in the museum's exhibit labels and catalogs, highlighting the ongoing suppression of Tibetan culture under Chinese occupation. However, Lintz refused to make changes, asserting that her decisions were not influenced by any "foreign power."



Facade of Guimet Museum (Photo/AFP)

Undeterred by the museum's stance, SFT France pledged to continue its campaign until the exhibit properly acknowledges Tibet. "The fight for the defence of Tibetan culture, and ultimately the freedom of the Tibetan people, involves preserving the memory of Tibet. It is clear that the Chinese dictatorship, as well as its supporters in France, have no place in this vital struggle. We wish to express our deep gratitude to all those who support us and actively participate in our actions. The fight continues, together!," the group wrote on their social media handle.

Yangchen, President of SFT France, emphasised the impact of their collective mobilisation. "

"I believe that this meeting happened because of the pressure and our collective mobilisation, and it is the result of our efforts. In the face of statements that we find to be demagogic, we will continue our struggle until our demands are met. We will step up our mobilisation and consider new actions, especially in light of the Guimet Museum's ties to the Beijing regime, as revealed by Radio France's investigation, among others," she stated.

The group has been staging weekly sit-ins, conducting social media campaigns, and distributing educational materials on Tibetan history and identity. Thursday marked their 12th protest outside Musée

Guimet, which comes on the heels of their success in Paris, where public pressure led Musée du quai Branly to change its terminology from “Xizang” to “Tibet” for Tibetan artifacts.

Musée Guimet’s misrepresentation of Tibetan identity is not new. Tibetan writer Tsering Yangzom Lama, in an interview with Tibet Express, shared her experience of being misrepresented as “Chinese” after being shortlisted for the Guimet Prize. She promptly raised the issue with her publisher, insisting on a correction. Yangzom also noted that fellow Tibetan writer Tsering Dhondup faced a similar issue.

### **Dalai Lama’s office, Tibetan NGOs, CTA among top targets of cyber-attacks by China: Report**

21 December 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has launched a number of coordinated cyber espionage campaigns against the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Tibetan NGOs, media outlets, and the Central Tibetan Administration over the past 20 years, according to a report published on December 10 by the Tibetan Computer Emergency Readiness Team (TibCERT).

The report outlines that these cyberattacks have primarily targeted Tibetan NGOs, the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), media organisations, and the Private Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama (OHHDL). The methods used in these attacks include deceptive emails that appear to come from Tibetan organisations or human rights groups, as well as Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks and watering hole tactics. These efforts aim to disrupt operations, steal sensitive data, and interfere with the flow of information within the Tibetan community. Attribution of these attacks remains challenging. While technical evidence, including malware and attack patterns, suggests a shared origin for many of the campaigns, political attribution is more complex. Past cyberattacks have been linked to state-sponsored groups, such as the Chinese People’s Liberation Army’s (PLA) Unit 61398, which was named in the 2013 Mandiant APT1 report. These attacks are widely believed to align with the political goals of the Chinese government, focused on surveillance, censorship, and suppression of the Tibetan diaspora.

TibCERT’s report documents 63 public cases of cyberattacks, targeting organisations such as the Tibetan Women’s Association and Students for a Free Tibet as frequent targets. Tibetan activists, the CTA, and media groups also face consistent cyber threats. The attacks began in 1999, when the Tibetan community first established its online presence. Key events include the 2009 GhostNet operation, which affected government offices in 103 countries,

including the Private Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and a series of attacks between 2018 and 2019 that exploited vulnerabilities in mobile devices, compromising both iOS and Android devices of key Tibetan figures.

The report identifies email attachments as the main method or pathway that attackers use to infiltrate a system or network which is responsible for 60% of incidents. Attackers have also used phishing campaigns and mobile malware to infiltrate systems and steal data.

In response to these threats, TibCERT has recommended several measures to strengthen digital security within the Tibetan community. These include implementing comprehensive digital security policies, raising awareness through training, and encouraging behavioural changes to enhance cyber resilience. Despite these recommendations, the report concludes that the threat of cyber espionage remains a significant concern, with the CCP continuing to intensify its cyber operations against the Tibetan community.

### **Japan’s parliamentary support group for Tibet elects new leadership**

20 December 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon



New Committee Members of Japan Parliamentary Group for Tibet with outgoing Committee Members, along with Dr. Tsewang Gyalpo Arya, the Representative of the Liaison Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Japan (extreme right top row) (Photo/tibet.net)

The Japanese Parliamentary Support Group for Tibet, which is the largest support parliamentary support group for Tibet, unanimously elected new leadership on Thursday. Member of Parliament Yamatani Eriko has been appointed as the new Chairperson, with Yamada Hiroshi taking on the role of General Secretary.

This leadership transition comes after the group experienced significant membership losses during the October elections. Nearly 30% of its members, including former Chairperson Shimomura Hakuban and former General Secretary Ishikawa Akimasa, lost their parliamentary seats after losing their seats



in the election. Both outgoing leaders were members of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

Dr. Tsewang Gyalpo Arya, the Representative of the Liaison Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Japan, told Phayul that the elections to form a new committee were essential given the group's significant losses. "The new leadership, along with recently joined members of parliament, has pledged to rebuild the group's strength and intensify efforts for the Tibetan cause," he said.

Dr. Arya further told Phayul that the outgoing Chairperson Shimomura expressed confidence in his successor, Yamatani Eriko. "The newly appointed Chairperson has been a staunch supporter of Tibet. She visited Dharamshala in 2011 to meet His Holiness the Dalai Lama and has actively participated in the group's meetings over the years," Dr. Arya said. He also noted Secretary General Yamada Hiroshi's commitment to human rights and democracy.

He highlighted the pivotal role the Japan Parliamentary Support Group for Tibet plays in raising awareness about the Tibetan issue. "Our office shares a strong relationship with the group, as it works closely with Japanese parliamentarians and the government to inform the public about Tibet's causes and struggles," he added.

Expressing his gratitude, Dr. Arya thanked the outgoing leadership for their contributions and welcomed the newly elected Chairperson and General Secretary with traditional Tibetan white scarves. "I appraised the committee members of several pending issues and future projects while expressing my appreciation for their continued commitment to the Tibetan cause," he said.

### **Tibetan Youth Congress embarks on 15,000 km 'All India Motor Bike Rally' against China's "cultural genocide" in Tibet**

20 December 2024, ANI

The Tibetan Youth Congress are carrying out a bike rally from the Bum-la Pass at the Indo-Tibet border in Arunachal Pradesh against the "cultural genocide" being carried out by China in Tibet.

This rally started on November 22, and will span 15,000 kilometres across more than 20 states in India.



Participants at All India Motor Bike Rally by Tibetan Youth Congress (Photo/ANI)

Today, on the 30th day of this rally, Gonpo Dhondup, President Tibetan Youth Congress, Dharamshala highlighted the main objectives of this rally which is to "expose the atrocities committed by the Chinese Communist Regime in Tibet and to oppose its illegitimate rule, which has persisted for over six decades."

"We aim to draw urgent international attention to the ongoing cultural genocide in Tibet, where China is implementing hard-line policies designed to systematically eradicate Tibetan culture and identity. These policies include the forced enrolment of Tibetan children into colonial-style boarding schools, restricting access to educational activities related to Tibetan culture, and imprisoning teachers and individuals who strive to preserve the Tibetan language," he added.

Further, the Dhondup urged the Indian government along with the international community to raise their voices in demanding that China put an end to this cultural genocide in Tibet.

"The forced closure of Tibetan schools and monastic institutions poses a significant threat to the preservation of Tibetan culture, language, and spiritual heritage. This blatant violation of rights and freedoms serves as a stark reminder of the Chinese government's relentless efforts to suppress Tibetan identity. Therefore, we call upon the Indian government, along with the international community and non-governmental organizations, to raise their voices in demanding that China put an end to this cultural genocide in Tibet," he said.

"For thousands of years, Tibet existed as an independent country, maintaining harmonious relationships with its neighbours through cultural and civilizational exchanges. However, following the unfortunate occupation of Tibet by the People's Republic of China in 1959, the historically peaceful Indo-Tibet border was shattered. Driven by its expansionist policies, the Chinese Communist Regime has instigated infiltration into Indian territory, posing a direct threat to India's border security and

sovereignty. We call on the Indian government to adopt a resolution that supports the historical independent status of Tibet and recognizes the historical Indo-Tibet border," he added.

Notably, through this bike rally, we will be visiting Tibetan winter markets across India to promote awareness about the ongoing cultural genocide perpetrated by the Chinese Communist Regime in Tibet, as well as to emphasize the importance of unity against China.

Tibetan Youth Congress President also called upon the international community to exert pressure on China to cease its unlawful and ongoing actions aimed at erasing Tibetan culture and to respect the rights of the Tibetan people to preserve the cultural heritage.

He also thanked the Indian government for their solidarity and advocated for the Indian government to adopt a resolution supporting the historical independent status of Tibet to ensure long-term security for India.

### **Massive new Tibetan dictionary will help protect against Chinese encroachment**

20 December 2024, The Christian Century,  
Chakmo Tso



US Rep. Jim McGovern (right) looks on as Geshe Lobsang Monlam (second from right), and Sikyong Penpa Tsering (left) attend a ceremony for the presentation of the Tibetan Grand Monlam Dictionary to the Library of Congress on December 12. (Palden Gyal/Radio Free Asia)

A new 223-volume Tibetan dictionary containing definitions of over 300,000 words presented to the Library of Congress last week will play a key role in preserving the Tibetan language amid China's assimilation policies in the region, US lawmakers and advocates said.

The Monlam Grand Tibetan Dictionary project, which began in 2012 under the advice and guidance of the Dalai Lama, Tibetan Buddhism's spiritual leader, took 150 people working over nine years to complete. It is one of the largest dictionaries in the world.

The project was overseen by the Monlam Tibetan IT Research Centre in Dharamsala, India. The education software development firm founded in 2012 is funded

by the Dalai Lama Trust, the Tibet Fund and the United States Agency for International Development. The dictionary is written entirely in the Tibetan script. All 223 volumes in hardback format were presented to the Library of Congress in Washington DC, on December 12 as a "gift to the US government and the American people."

A free digital version of the dictionary is available on various iOS and Android apps.

US Congressman Jim McGovern, a Massachusetts Democrat who was at the ceremony, called it "an incredible resource that will help preserve the Tibetan language for future generations" while highlighting China's attempts to phase out Tibetan, such as forcing Tibetan children to attend Mandarin-only boarding schools.

Geshe Lobsang Monlam, founder and chief executive officer of Monlam Tibetan IT Research Centre, said the project was a "true community effort."

It "involved the participation of many editors, scholars and heads of different Tibetan Buddhist religious traditions, which is why I take great pride in saying that this dictionary is truly representative of Tibetan culture," Monlam said at the event.

"It will benefit not just the Tibetan people in our preservation of our language but also others, including in the US and China, in imparting our ancient knowledge and culture," he said.

The dictionary was given to the Library of Congress because "Tibetans have shared a long friendship and shared values with the American people," he said. "We have also enjoyed the support of the US government in the preservation of our culture, language, and religious traditions."

"This dictionary serves as proof of the fruits of that relationship and support," he said.

Other speakers and guests at the event included Tibetan government-in-exile leader Sikyong Penpa Tsering, International Campaign for Tibet President Tencho Gyatso, and representative Namgyal Choedup of the Office of Tibet in North America.

The dictionary project began as an effort to bridge the gap between the modern and ancient by developing the vocabulary and terminologies necessary in the Tibetan language to keep pace with the changing world and technological advancements, Monlam said.

The dictionary preserves the unique lexicographical system in Tibetan while incorporating the standard principles and the practices of modern dictionaries from other countries, said Monlam, a Buddhist monk, scholar, and IT innovator.

The Monlam Tibetan IT Research Centre has been on the cutting edge of preserving the language. In 2023, it created software that uses AI to translate written and spoken Tibetan into English, Chinese, and other languages faster and more accurately than

any existing translation software. Work on the dictionary is expected to continue for the next decade as the team continues to update it.

The Library of Congress's Tibetan Collection, established in 1901, is one of the largest in the West, including the entire corpus of Tibetan literature from the 8th century to the present. These include Buddhist and Bon-po philosophical texts and their commentaries, historical biographies, musical notations, the collected works of over 200 major Tibetan authors, bibliographies, and texts on linguistics, modern science, the social sciences, and modern literature.

The library's Tibetan Collection currently holds 17,000 treatises, 3,600 rare volumes, 57 different periodicals and over 15,000 photographic prints. — RFA Tibetan

### **US Congress extends 'Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act' for five more years**

19 December 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

The United States Congress has extended the 'Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act' (RATA) for an additional five years, ensuring its commitment to human rights and transparency in the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and other occupied Tibetan areas by China. The renewal, incorporated into the National Defense Authorisation Act (NDAA), will become law upon President Joe Biden's signature.

Originally signed into law in 2018, RATA mandates that the U.S. State Department to annually evaluate access to Tibet and imposes visa restrictions on Chinese officials responsible for denying Americans entry to the region. This landmark legislation marked a crucial step in challenging China's draconian policies in Tibet, where foreign visitors and media face stringent restrictions.

The key provisions of the renewed act include strengthening measures for rebuffing China's restrictions on American government officials, journalists, independent observers, Tibetan Americans, and tourists seeking entry to Tibet. The second provision mandates annual Department of Defense reports to include assessments of the People's Republic of China's (PRC) influence on the Tibetan Plateau, focusing on military and security developments. The final provision requires an analysis of the implications of the closure of the U.S. consulate in Chengdu, which previously monitored developments in Tibet whose responsibility has since shifted to the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, further from Tibet.

Several Members of Congress, including Senators Marco Rubio, Jim Risch, and Jeff Merkley, along with

Representatives Michael McCaul and Jim McGovern, played pivotal roles in championing these provisions. Tenchoe Gyatso, President of the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), praised Congress for its steadfast support. "Congress took a strong stand by including these provisions in the 2024 NDAA legislation in support of Tibet and self-determination across Asia," she stated.

"RATA is vital to continuing to bring light to the truth of how Tibet is treated by the Chinese government and ensuring that Chinese officials who try to cut Tibet off from the world are not allowed access to the United States. We hope that the President will swiftly sign the bill," she added.

### **All-Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet Adopts 12-Point Resolution on Tibet**

19 December 2024, CTA



All-Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet Adopts 12 Point Resolution on Tibet.

The All Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet (APIPFT) and the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile (TPiE) convened a meeting on 17 December 2024 to discuss key issues concerning Tibet.

Over 25 Members of Parliament from various political parties and both Houses of Parliament were present at the meeting including MP Bhartruhari Mahtab, Convener of the APIPFT, MP Tapir Gao, Co-convener of the APIPFT, MP Sujeet Kumar, MP Indra Hang Subba (SKM), MP Krishna Prasad Tenneti (TDP), MP Alfred Kanngam Arthur (INC), MP Dr Kadiyam Kavya (INC), MP Saleng A Sangma (INC), MP Mahesh Kashyap (BJP), MP Pratap Chandra Sarangi (BJP), MP Adv. Gowaal Padavi (INC), MP Dr A. Bimol Akoijam (INC), MP Sudhakar Singh (Rashtriya Janta Dal); MP June Maliah (All India Trinamool Congress), MP Harish Chandra Meena (INC), MP Amarsing Tisso (BJP), MP Kriti Devi D. Burman (BJP), MP Sangeeta Kumari Singh Deo (BJP), MP Manoj Tigga (BJP); MP Kamknya Prasad Tasa (BJP), MP Angomcha Bimol Akoijam (INC), MP Praniti Shinde (INC), MP Prabha Mallikarjun (INC), MP Bhoj Raj Nag (BJP), MP Rudra Narayan Pany (BJP), and others.

The event began with a welcome address by Shri Tapir Gao, Member of Parliament and Co-convener of the APIPFT. This was followed by a briefing on the

latest developments in Tibet by Dolma Tsering Tekhang, Deputy Speaker of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile. Additional addresses were delivered by Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, Shri Sujeet Kumar, Rajya Sabha member and former Convener of APIPFT, and Shri Bhartruhari Mahtab, Lok Sabha member and Convener of the APIPFT.

Several other Members of Parliament also spoke during the event, highlighting various aspects of the Tibet issue. The meeting concluded with the adoption of a resolution on Tibet by the All Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet.

Shri Tapir Gao, the Co-convener of the All Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet, in his address welcomed reiterated his statement in the Indian Parliament during the Zero Hour urging the Indian government to recognise the institution of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and to confer him the Bharat Ratna. He also emphasised the importance of India preparing for the reincarnation and succession of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, especially in light of China's attempts to appoint its own 15th Dalai Lama, as stated today in the Indian Parliament.

Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang briefed on the latest developments in Tibet, highlighting the Chinese government's coercion of Tibetan children into colonial boarding schools in Tibet, aimed at depriving them of their birthright to learn their language, culture, and religion. She also addressed the self-immolation protests by Tibetans in response to China's human rights abuses, as well as the strategic policies implemented in China's ongoing Sinicization efforts in Tibet, among other issues.

Shri Sujeet Kumar, Rajya Sabha member and former Convener of the APIPT, in his address, recalled his past association with the BJD, which was founded by Shri Biju Patnaik. He highlighted that Shri Patnaik, a staunch supporter of Tibet, was one of India's foremost Chief Ministers, known for providing land for Tibetan settlement in the state of Odisha. Shri Sujeet Kumar expressed pride in his long-standing connection with Tibet and emphasised that India has never shared a border with China, but with Tibet, a fact supported by the historical name of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP). He concluded assuring his steadfast support to the cause of Tibet.

In a heartfelt speech at the All-Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet (APIPFT), Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel highlighted the Forum's crucial role in uniting Indian political leaders in support of Tibet and its cause. He expressed deep gratitude for India's ongoing solidarity with Tibet, especially recognising the efforts of leaders like Shri Bhartruhari Mahtab and Shri Tapir Gao, who advocated for Tibet in the Indian Parliament. The speaker underscored Tibet's vital geopolitical and cultural ties with India, emphasising Tibet's historical

role as a buffer state and its environmental significance.

Shri Bhartruhari Mahtab, the Convener of the APIPFT, emphasised the strong friendship between India and Tibet, underscoring Tibet's rich culture, religion, and language, which are under threat of destruction due to Chinese occupation. The Convener also reiterated the historical fact that India shares a border with Tibet, not China, asserting that the Line of Actual Control rightfully represents the Indo-Tibet Border.

During the meeting, several key agendas were discussed. One of the main topics was how to enhance outreach to various political parties on Tibet-related issues, including efforts to encourage members of the All Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet (APIPFT) to raise Tibet's concerns in the Indian Parliament. Another important item was the planning of programs for the 90th birthday year (Compassion Year) of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, with the intention of organising events in collaboration with the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile (TPiE) to promote the values of compassion.

The event concluded with vote of thanks by Tashi Dekyi, Coordinator, India Tibet Coordination Office, New Delhi.

The following 12 points were adopted at the meeting.

1. Enhance reach out to different political parties.
2. Raise Tibet issues in the Indian Parliament by the members of All Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet (APIPFT).
3. Programs to be organised during the 90th birthday of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama (Compassion Year), in collaboration with the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile (TPiE).
4. Recognise Tibet as an occupied nation with its own independent and sovereign past, backed by historical evidence.
5. Urge the People's Republic of China to engage in substantive dialogue with representatives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, or democratically elected leaders of the Tibetan community without preconditions, aiming to resolve the Tibet-China conflict through the Middle Way Policy and seek genuine autonomy within the PRC's constitution.
6. Climate Change Research: Call upon the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to initiate scientific studies on the PRC's exploitation of Tibet's natural resources and its adverse effects on global climate change.
7. Human Rights Monitoring: Pressure China to grant independent human rights organisations



access to monitor and report on the human rights situation in Tibet. Additionally, extend standing invitations to UN Special Rapporteurs, especially those focusing on freedoms of opinion and expression, peaceful assembly and association, and human rights defenders, to facilitate their visits to Tibet as soon as possible.

8. **Release of Tibetan Political Prisoners:** Urge the PRC government to unconditionally release all Tibetan political prisoners, including Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the 11th Panchen Lama, whose whereabouts and well-being have been unknown since May 17, 1995.
9. **Halt Oppressive Policies:** Call on the PRC to cease its oppressive policies aimed at eradicating Tibetan culture, language, and religion.
10. **Legislative Framework Against Authoritarianism and Disinformation:** Establish a national legislative framework to combat China's networked authoritarianism and disinformation campaigns, which erode public trust in democratic institutions, increase political polarisation, and threaten regional and global stability.
11. To urge the legislators to express their concern and raise their voice over the human rights violations in Tibet at all the available platforms.
12. Any other matter with the permission of Chair.

### **ICT hails reauthorization of the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act in National Defense Authorization Act**

18 December 2024, ICT

Three important provisions defending the rights of Tibetans were approved by Congress today with the passage of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The success of these provisions despite the obstacles posed by a divided Congress is a testament to America's ongoing support of the Tibetan people during their continued oppression by the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Trio of provisions

The first provision reauthorizes the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act (RATA), which provides a mechanism for the United States to rebuff China's restrictions on American government officials, journalists, independent observers, Tibetan Americans, and tourists seeking access to Tibet. The bill was originally passed in 2018 and has been renewed for another five years.

"Congress took a strong stand by including these provisions in the 2024 NDAA legislation in support of Tibet and self-determination across Asia," said Tencho Gyatso, President of ICT.

"RATA is vital to continuing to bring light to the truth of how Tibet is treated by the Chinese government and ensuring that Chinese officials who try to cut Tibet off from the world are not allowed access to the United States. We hope that the President will swiftly sign the bill," she continued.

The second provision provides for continued monitoring of the Tibetan Plateau in Department of Defense Annual reports. It adds an assessment provision on the influence of the PRC on the Tibetan Plateau through the Department of Defense annual reporting on Military and Security Developments.

The third requires reporting on the impact of the closure of the American consulate in Chengdu. The Chengdu consulate was tasked with monitoring developments in Tibet, and Beijing's closure of the consulate shifted this work to the embassy in Beijing, which is far removed from Tibet.

ICT thanks the Members of Congress and staff who worked hard on these provisions, including Senators Marco Rubio, Jim Risch, and Jeff Merkley, along with Representatives Michael McCaul and Jim McGovern.

### **Tibet advocacy group in Switzerland conduct awareness campaign on 35th anniversary of Dalai Lama's Nobel Peace Prize**

17 December 2024, ANI

In commemoration of the 35th anniversary of Dalai Lama receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, the Voluntary Tibet Advocacy Group (V-TAG) in Switzerland organised a meaningful Tibet awareness campaign in Zurich. As per a press release by the Central Tibetan Administration, the event aimed to raise global awareness about Tibet's ongoing struggles and highlight Dalai Lama's enduring message of peace, compassion, and nonviolence.

The campaign sought to engage and educate the younger generation of Tibetans, fostering a deeper understanding of the critical issues facing Tibet today. V-TAG members organised a variety of interactive activities, including a quiz and a colouring competition, to promote creativity while sparking critical conversations about Tibet's current political and cultural challenges. These activities allowed participants to reflect on the importance of preserving Tibetan identity and culture amidst the ongoing repression.





Tibet advocacy group in Switzerland conduct awareness campaign on 35th anniversary of Dalai Lama's Nobel Peace Prize

In addition, books and images reflecting the teachings of the Dalai Lama were distributed throughout the event. Beyond raising awareness, the event highlighted the vital role of V-TAG in amplifying Tibet's cause on the global stage. As a grassroots organisation, V-TAG has been instrumental in rallying international support for Tibet, advocating for human rights, freedom, and the preservation of Tibet's cultural heritage.

According to the press release, the day served not only as a reflection on the Dalai Lama's Nobel laureateship but also as an opportunity to engage with the Tibetan diaspora, empowering them with the knowledge and tools to advocate for Tibet's future. The Tibet-China issue revolves around the status of Tibet, its political autonomy, and its cultural and religious rights. Tibet was historically an independent region, with occasional interactions with China, but it was incorporated into the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1951.

Since then, Tibetans have sought greater autonomy, citing concerns over the erosion of their culture, religion, and political freedoms under Chinese rule. Central to the issue is the role of the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan spiritual leader, who fled to India in 1959 after a failed uprising. China views Tibet as an integral part of its territory, while many Tibetans, both in Tibet and in exile, advocate for "genuine autonomy" or even full independence.

Human rights abuses, religious repression, and the influx of Han Chinese settlers into Tibet further fuel the conflict. Despite international concerns and support for Tibet's cultural preservation, China's economic and political influence has made the issue difficult to resolve. The Dalai Lama continues to call for peaceful dialogue, though the situation remains a deeply contentious and unresolved dispute.

## Sikyong Tsering Strengthens US-Tibet Ties in Washington Meetings

16 December 20224, DevDiscourse

Sikyong Penpa Tsering embarked on key meetings in Washington, DC, bolstering support for Tibet. Focused on international relations, he met with US officials, including Deputy Secretary Verma and Under Secretary Zeya, to advocate for Tibetan rights and autonomy amidst ongoing struggles with China over cultural and political issues.

In an effort to fortify international support for the Tibetan cause, Sikyong Penpa Tsering of the Central Tibetan Administration held pivotal meetings in Washington, DC. Among his significant engagements was a discussion with Richard R. Verma, the US Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources, as announced by the CTA.

Verma, who has a longstanding involvement with Tibetan affairs from his tenure as US Ambassador to India, expressed personal concern for the Dalai Lama's health, following his knee surgery. Their dialogue highlighted the enduring bonds between the US and Tibetan communities, with Verma reaffirming his dedication to Tibetan issues. This was succeeded by an hour-long meeting with Uzra Zeya, the US Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights and the Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues.

Expressing appreciation for Zeya's steadfast support, Sikyong underscored the importance of continued US backing. The meeting included Representative Namgyal Choedup, Alison Bartel, a Senior Advisor, and officials from the Bureaus of Population, Refugees, and Migration and Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. The final series of discussions was with Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff, tackling pressing human rights concerns in Tibet and Tibet's quest for autonomy amidst ongoing conflict with China.



Political leader of Central Tibetan Administration, Sikyong Penpa Tsering meets US officials (Image Credit: Central Tibetan Administration). Image Credit: ANI

The series of strategic meetings by Sikyong in Washington amplifies the Central Tibetan Administration's diplomatic pursuits for global recognition of Tibet's cultural and political challenges. Central to these efforts is the complex Tibet-China conflict, intertwined with issues of sovereignty, rights, and national identity, drawing international attention and debate without resolution.

### **Tibetan Parliamentary Delegation Concludes Official Visit to Nepal**

15 December 2024, CTA

As per the program of the 17th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, a parliamentary delegation comprising parliamentarians Lopon Thupten Gyaltzen and Lhagyari Namgyal Dolkar successfully concluded their official periodical visit to Nepal from 30 November to 13 December 2024.

During their visit, the delegation met with Tibetans residing in various locations, including Kathmandu, Boudha, Jorpati, Phakshing, Jwalakhel Samdupling, and Phunling. They held discussions with Representative Tsepri Lopan Tulku Ngawang Chokdup and Tibetan Settlement Officers from Gyalsa Phakshing, Jwalakhel, Boudha, Jorpati, and Sha-Wa-Ra. Additionally, they participated in a closed-door meeting with local dignitaries.



Tibetan Parliamentary Delegation Concludes Official Visit to Nepal

The delegation also conducted inspection visits to schools and offices under the jurisdiction of the Tibetan settlements and paid their respects to monasteries and lamas in the region. Their periodical visit to Nepal was successfully concluded on 13 December 2024.

This program was made possible by the generous support of the American people through USAID via NDI and SARD.

-Report filed by Tibetan Parliamentary Secretariat

### **Kalon Tharlam Dolma Changra Graces Commemoration of 35th Anniversary of Conferment of Nobel Peace Prize on His Holiness at Tibet House, Delhi**

13 December 2024, CTA

Tibet House, Delhi, recently marked the 35th anniversary of the Nobel Peace Prize being awarded to His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama with an inspiring event that brought together dignitaries, scholars, and supporters to reflect on the theme of Universal Ethics.

The occasion was graced by the presence of Education Minister (Kalon) Tharlam Dolma Changra of the Central Tibetan Administration, who was invited as the Chief Guest. The event also featured notable Guests of Honor, including Shri Abhijit Halder, Director General of the International Buddhist Confederation, and Prof. Amar Jiva Lochan, Dean of Foreign Students at Delhi University.

The event began with a heartfelt tribute in the form of the Nobel Peace Prize Song, performed by the talented students of TCV Samyeling Day School, dedicated to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. This performance set a reverent tone for the gathering and underscored the significance of the occasion.

In her keynote address, Hon. Tharlam Dolma Changra expressed her deep gratitude to Ven. Geshe Dorji Damdul, Director of Tibet House, for organising the panel discussion on Universal Ethics, describing it as a fitting homage to His Holiness' remarkable legacy. She emphasised the importance of the "three Hs"—Heart, Head, and Hand—as fundamental elements for holistic education. These principles, she noted, are essential for nurturing the human values that are central to His Holiness' teachings.

She also highlighted the contributions of Professor Samdhong Rinpoche, former Prime Minister (Kalon Tripa) of the Central Tibetan Administration, who, in 2005, introduced the Basic Education Policy for Tibetans in Exile. This visionary policy prioritises the cultivation of inner human values, reflecting the wisdom of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

A key focus of her speech was the Social, Emotional, and Ethical (SEE) Learning program, which equips both teachers and students with the tools needed to cultivate compassion, resilience, and ethical awareness. While acknowledging the importance of theoretical discussions on SEE Learning, she emphasised that true impact arises through its practical application in daily life.

In closing, the Chief Guest urged all attendees to make the commemoration of the Nobel Peace Prize Day meaningful by committing to embody the values promoted by His Holiness. She called on everyone to become messengers and torchbearers of His

Holiness's vision, fostering a sense of collective responsibility for building a more peaceful, compassionate world.

Following the keynote address, certificates were presented to graduates of the Nalanda Diploma Course (4th Batch), the Certificate Course (2nd Batch), and the Tibetan Language Course (27th Batch). This moment of recognition underscored Tibet House's commitment to education and intellectual growth within the Tibetan community.

Additionally, the Publication Department of Tibet House announced the launch of three significant publications:

1. Tracing the Footprints of Je Tsongkhapa, an illustrated biography by Tibetan scholar Chukyi Gedun Palsang.
2. Research Paper Collections of the Conference on Theravada and Mahayana, a collection of academic papers presented by eminent scholars from the Pali and Sanskrit traditions.
3. A Special Edition of the News Bulletin detailing Tibet House's activities from April 2022 to December 2024.

The department also unveiled the winners of the Tibetan-language research paper competition, to be featured in the 12th edition of Zamatog Journal. Furthermore, Tibet House announced the completion of paper submissions by three scholars as part of its prestigious academic initiatives, including the Thonmi Sambhota Scholarship and the Sambhota Book Series.

The Thonmi Sambhota Scholarship has been instrumental in fostering academic excellence, with Pema Dorjee being the first recipient for his pioneering research on 'The Stupa and Its Technology: A Tibeto-Buddhist Perspective.' To date, 22 volumes have been published under this initiative, garnering strong support from the academic community. Between 2021 and 2023, three new scholarships were awarded, and the scholars are now preparing their final papers, which will soon be published as part of the Sambhota Series.

The highlight of the event was a profoundly insightful panel discussion on Universal Ethics chaired by Ven. Prof. Kaveri Gill of Shiv Nadar University. The panellists included Dr Nivedita Chalill, founder of ARTH: Counselling and Arts-Based Therapy, who shared her reflections on the practical application of Buddhist psychology; Dr Bharati Puri, Associate Professor in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at IIT Delhi, who explored the intersection of ecology and ethics; and Dr Nilza Wangmo, Visiting Faculty at the IGNCA, Ministry of Culture, who offered perspectives on universal ethics as inspired by the teachings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

The panel discussion was a resounding success, offering a vibrant platform to explore various dimensions of universal ethics, including its relevance to secularism, psychology, and environmental ethics. The speakers shared valuable insights resonating with the attendees, sparking thought-provoking conversations on integrating ethical principles into contemporary global issues.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by Tenzin Kunyap, Secretary of Tibet House, who expressed gratitude to all attendees, dignitaries, and speakers for their contributions. The day left a lasting impact, reinforcing the timeless vision of His Holiness the Dalai Lama while providing practical guidance on how to live according to the universal values he espouses.

### MPs from New Zealand and Fiji Visit Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile

13 December 2024, CTA

MP Joseph Mooney, Member for Southland (National Party, New Zealand); MP Ingrid Leary, Member for Taieri (Labour Party, New Zealand); MP Helen White, Member for Mt Albert (Labour Party, New Zealand); and MP Rinesh Sharma, Member of the Fijian Parliament, visited the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile on 11 December 2024.

The parliamentary delegation was warmly welcomed by Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang, who greeted them with traditional Tibetan ceremonial scarves. The delegation was then given a tour of the parliament hall.



MPs from New Zealand and Fiji Visit Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile

Following the tour, the MPs held a meeting with Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang, MP Tsering Yangchen, and MP Tenzin Jigdal in the Standing Committee's hall.

During their meeting, important recent developments including the situation in Tibet which continues to raise concerns, as the region grapples with cultural erosion, human rights violations, and political



suppression were discussed. Tibet, historically recognised as an independent region, remains a focal point in the ongoing conflict between its quest for autonomy and China's claims of sovereignty.

"The Indo-Tibetan Border serves as a reminder of its historical independence. However, since the 1950s, China has exercised control over the region, implementing policies that have significantly impacted Tibet's traditional way of life," noted the Deputy Speaker.

As the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), led by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, has been at the forefront of efforts to preserve Tibetan culture, language, and religion. The CTA advocates for global recognition of Tibet's autonomy and the protection of its heritage.

Discussing current challenges under Chinese rule, they discussed how Tibetans face increasing restrictions on their cultural practices, including the suppression of the Tibetan language and Buddhist traditions. Educational institutions in Tibet have reportedly been used to promote Chinese propaganda, further marginalising Tibetan identity. Environmental degradation in the ecologically vital Tibetan Plateau, known as the "Third Pole," has further compounded the challenges for local communities.

The international community has expressed growing solidarity with Tibet. Advocacy groups continue to promote Tibetan art, language, and religion to preserve its heritage.

Emphasising the need for multi-lateral pressure on China to address human rights violations and environmental concerns, they discussed efforts to amplify Tibet's voice include campaigns on global platforms, drawing attention to the plight of Tibetans and the ecological importance of the region.

-Report filed by Tibetan Parliamentary Secretariat

### **Department of Religion and Culture Secretary Attends Long-life Prayer Ceremony Offered to Kochhen Rinpoche**

13 December 2024, CTA

Secretary Dhondul Dorjee of the Department of Religion and Culture, Central Tibetan Administration, attended the offering of long-life prayers to Kochhen Rinpoche at Ogyen Mindrolling Monastery in Clement Town, Dehradun on 12 December 2024.

The long-life prayers were offered by the members of exile Tibetans from Gonjo, a region in Dokham.

At 8:00 a.m., the reverent lamas and distinguished guests, accompanied by a procession of monks, escorted Kochhen Rinpoche from his residence to the courtyard in front of the temple. As Rinpoche was seated on the throne, the ceremony began with prayers.

Tibet Digest December - January 2024

Thereafter, Gonjo Long-life Offering Committee offered Rinpoche with mandala and three sacred jewels: the representations of Buddha's body, speech, and mind, followed by offerings from reverent lamas, Khenpos, and representatives of monasteries and Tibetan civil societies.

Upon the completion of the long-life prayer ceremony, a gold medal was bestowed in recognition of Rinpoche's sacred religious contributions and his unwavering benevolence towards all sentient beings. Later in the evening, cultural performances were performed as a mark of celebration.

The offering was also attended by Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, Kalon Dolma Gyari, and Parliamentarians Geshe Atong Rinchen Gyaltsen, Ven Tenpa Yarphel, Khenpo Kada Ngedup Sonam, and Geshe Lharampa Gowo Lobsang Phende. Dehradun Tibetan Settlement Officer Dhondup Gyalpo, former Tibetan Parliamentarian Gyari Bhutruk, and representatives of various monasteries and Tibetan NGOs.

-Report filed by Department of Religion and Culture, CTA



Department of Religion and Culture Secretary Attends Long-life Prayer Ceremony Offered to Kochhen Rinpoche

### **Tibetan Youth Congress urges Nepal to reject China's interference in the Tibetans' Religious affairs**

13 December 2024, Organiser

Tibetan activists from the Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) in Dharamshala have strongly opposed China's plan to send the Chinese-appointed Panchen Lama, Gyaltsen Norbu, to Nepal. They urged Nepal to reject China's interference in Tibetan religious affairs and uphold its commitment to religious freedom.

Tibetan activists from Tibetan Youth Congress at McLeodganj in Dharamshala opposed China's decision to send Chinese-appointed Panchen Lama, to Nepal. The activists demanded Nepal to denounce Chinese interference in Tibet's religious affairs and freedom.

Tenzin Choekey and Tashi Thargyal, TYC Vice President, said, "The Tibetan Youth Congress is deeply alarmed by recent news of China's plans to send Gyaltsen Norbu (Chinese: Gyaincain Norbu), the Chinese-appointed Panchen Lama, to Nepal. This move is a blatant attempt by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to interfere in Tibetan religious and cultural affairs and further its strategy to assert political control over Tibet by co-opting our religious identity." The activist said that Tibetans rejected this move by China and saw it as meddling in their affairs.

"Tibetans both in Tibet and in exile, unequivocally reject China's brazen interference in our religious traditions. The Chinese government's installation of Gyaltsen Norbu is a deliberate effort to replace our religious leadership with figures loyal to CCP. This action is part of China's broader agenda to undermine Tibetan unity and erode our distinct Tibetan culture and spiritual heritage," he said.

"We continue to revere his holiness the 14th Dalai Lama as our true spiritual leader and honour his recognition of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, who was abducted by the Chinese authorities on May 17, 1995, at the age of six. His whereabouts and well-being remain unknown and we call for his immediate release," he added.

The activists urged Nepal to not let China-appointed Lama to enter Nepal, as doing otherwise would mean an insult to the rich Buddhist history of Tibet.

"We urge Nepal, as a sovereign nation with a rich Buddhist heritage, to resist China's attempts to use its territory for furthering these repressive policies. If Gyaltsen Norbu is allowed to enter Nepal, the government of Nepal will undermine the country's rich Buddhist history and threaten to global integrity and international standing of its Buddhist institutions. Any such visit will be viewed as a dangerous signal that government of Nepal is willing to tolerate Chinese interference in religious affairs of geopolitical gain. Nepal must reject any form of Chinese government interference and reaffirm its commitment to religious freedom and human rights," the activist said.

### **Tibetan delegation meets Dutch officials to discuss Tibet crisis**

12 December 2024, ANI

A delegation from the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, led by MP Yeshe Dolma and Geshe Lharampa Gowo Lobsang Phende, concluded a highly successful advocacy mission in the Netherlands on 10 December 2024, marking International Human Rights Day.

During the visit, Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile MPs met with key officials from the Dutch Foreign Ministry,

including Kim Peters, Senior Policy Officer for the China desk, and Mariska Meijerhof, Human Rights Policy Officer.

The hour-long meeting provided an opportunity to brief Dutch officials on the escalating human rights violations in Tibet, touching on critical issues such as China's ongoing repression in Tibet, the status of the Panchen Lama, and the future of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation.

The Dutch officials expressed strong interest and pledged their support for the Tibetan cause. They assured the MPs that Tibet-related issues would be included in future foreign policy discussions, emphasizing the importance of addressing the human rights abuses taking place in Tibet.

The Tibetan MP's visit aimed to draw international attention to Tibet's ongoing human rights crisis and call for stronger global action. The MPs arrived in Amsterdam on December 9, where local Tibetan community leaders, including Representative Rigzin Choedon of the Office of Tibet Brussels and former Director of the International Tibet Campaign Europe, Tsering Jampa warmly welcomed them.



On 10 December, the Tibetan delegation visited the Amnesty International office in Amsterdam to brief staff on the worsening human rights situation in Tibet. During the meeting, the MPs highlighted the crucial role of international organizations like Amnesty in defending human rights globally. They warned that without decisive action, such organizations risk being undermined by powerful states, including China, who may use them for political purposes.

MP Yeshe Dolma and Geshe Lobsang Phende also called for an independent fact-finding mission to Tibet, urging that it take place regardless of China's approval. The meeting was constructive, with Amnesty International representatives promising to raise Tibet-related issues in future discussions.

During the visit, a joint protest was held at Dam Square in Amsterdam to mark International Human Rights Day. Tibetans, Uyghurs, Hong Kongers, and Southern Mongolians, all of whom suffer under Chinese Communist rule, gathered to raise



awareness of their shared struggles. The protest was marked by passionate speeches from the Tibetan MPs, the President of the Tibetan Association in the Netherlands, and Tsering Jampa.

Representatives from the Uyghur, Hong Kong, and Southern Mongolian communities also delivered speeches, condemning Chinese oppression and calling for global solidarity in the face of human rights abuses. The protest culminated in powerful chants and demonstrations against the Chinese Communist Party, demanding an end to the systematic violations of human rights.

The successful advocacy mission in the Netherlands is a significant step in raising global awareness about the human rights violations occurring in Tibet. Through their meetings with key officials and participation in the protest, the MPs reinforced the importance of continued international pressure on China to address its actions in Tibet.

### A Delegation from India Foundation Visits Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile

12 December 2024, CTA



A Delegation From India Foundation Visits Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile

A delegation from New Delhi-based independent research centre India Foundation visited the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile and met with Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel and Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang on 9 December 2024.

The delegation consists of Shri Suresh Prabhu, Lt. General Arun Kumar Sahni, Shri Shaurya Doval, Shri Ashok Malik, Prof. Sunaina Singh, Capt Alok Bansal, Rami Desai, Ngawang Gamtso Hardy, and Chitra Shekhawat.

During the meeting, Speaker of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile (TPiE) underscored the remarkable achievements of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) over the past 65 years, particularly in preserving Tibetan language, culture, and religion despite enduring exile.

The Speaker also praised His Holiness the Dalai Lama's vision for a democratic Tibet, which led to the formation of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile in 1960

and the election of the first Kalon Tripa (Prime Minister) in 2001. In 2011, His Holiness devolved political power to the elected leadership, establishing a fully functional democratic system.

The Speaker drew attention to the dire situation in Tibet, where Tibetans face political repression, environmental degradation, and systemic discrimination. He urged the Indian leaders to combat Chinese misinformation and report the truth about Tibet and its people.

The Deputy Speaker, in her address, welcomed the visiting guests and emphasised the CTA's role as the legitimate representative of Tibetans. She provided historical context, noting Tibet's once independent status and its diplomatic relations with neighbouring nations. She highlighted China's occupation of Tibet as the starting point of its aggression toward India and argued that resolving the Sino-Tibetan conflict is crucial to resolving the Sino-Indian border dispute.

The Deputy Speaker also spoke out against Chinese policies that restrict Tibetan freedoms, including the indoctrination of Tibetan children in Chinese-run boarding schools, and criticised the destruction of Tibetan language and religion. She called on nations that support China's One-China policy to reconsider their stance, pointing out that such support ignores historical realities.

In conclusion, the Deputy Speaker stressed the pivotal role India, along with the CTA, can play in resolving the Sino-Tibetan conflict and urged a reassessment of India's foreign policy toward Tibet.

-Report filed by Tibetan Parliamentary Secretariat

### UN Forum: ICT highlights erasure of Tibetan identity through the PRC's educational policies

12 December 2024, ICT



Mélanie Blondelle speaking at the Forum on 28 November. (Photo: UN Web TV screenshot)

In a statement delivered yesterday at the 17th UN Forum on Minority Issues in Geneva, the International Campaign for Tibet expressed its deep concern over the Chinese government's systematic erasure of the Tibetan people's identity through its education policies.

The two-day Forum, held on November 28-29, 2024, focused this year on the topic of "Minority

representation and self-representation in public spaces and discourses.” “Denying minorities a voice is the first step towards denying their wider rights,” stressed UN High Commissioner Volker Türk in his opening remarks, adding that it “creates space for ugly, false representations of minorities that perpetuates stereotypes, fuels prejudice and incite hostility.” This is exactly what China is doing with its so-called “minorities” such as Tibetans and Uyghurs. By portraying Tibetans as backward and in need being modernized, China perpetuates harmful stereotypes that undermine Tibetan identity while fueling resentment among Tibetans, who see these narratives as demeaning and dismissive of their rich cultural heritage.

Speaking at the forum under the item on “minority representation in education”, ICT’s Policy and Advocacy Officer Mélanie Blondelle detailed how schools in Tibet have increasingly been used as tool to assimilate Tibetan children – meaning molding them into the dominant Han Chinese culture. She highlighted how Tibetan children in state-run schools are primarily taught in Mandarin, with a curriculum that is culturally irrelevant and deeply misrepresentative of Tibetan history and heritage. This is exacerbated by the coercive boarding school system and the closure of private-run Tibetan schools (recently illustrated by the closure of the Taksang Lhamo monastic school).

“Education should value cultural diversity, not destroy it. Tibetan children deserve to grow up knowing who they are, where they come from, and to take pride in their heritage,” Blondelle concluded, urging China to respect its international obligations with regards to the rights of Tibetan children.

Created 17 years ago, the UN Forum on Minority Issues serves as a platform to foster dialogue and cooperation on matters concerning minority groups. This year’s session saw its highest attendance since its establishment, with over 690 representatives from minority communities, governments, NGOs, and UN bodies and agencies registered. While ICT rejects the term “minority” for the Tibetan people, the organisation uses the forum to advocate for the rights of the Tibetans.

Tibet was also in the spotlight in Geneva during an awarding ceremony of the International Contest for Minority Artists on November 26, where Tibetan artist Laowu Kuang was rewarded for his work deeply entrenched in the themes of memory, freedom and human rights. In his acceptance speech, he perfectly illustrated the lack of Tibetan language education in Tibet, explaining he was delivering his speech in Chinese as he could only receive Chinese education since he was a child, and that in his native village in Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) almost no Tibetan

from his generation could speak in their mother tongue.

Read ICT’s full statement below or watch on UN Web TV (from 01:14:47).

ICT statement

17th UN Forum on Minority Issues

28-29 November 2024 – Geneva

Item 2: Minority representation in education

Statement by the International Campaign for Tibet

Mr. Chair,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The International Campaign for Tibet would like to draw the Forum’s attention to the systematic erasure of the Tibetan people’s identity within China’s education system.

In recent years, education has been increasingly weaponized by the Chinese government as a tool for its assimilationist agenda in Tibet. In this context, Tibetan children in state-run schools are primarily taught in Mandarin, with a curriculum that lacks cultural relevance to them. They are presented with a distorted view of their culture and history, in which their way of life is denigrated as backward, their revered spiritual leader the Dalai Lama vilified, and their history manipulated to align with the ideology and interests of the Chinese Communist Party.[1] This is not education, but indoctrination aimed at severing young Tibetans from their very roots.

This is compounded by a coercive boarding school system that separates Tibetan children as young as 4 from their families and communities, alienating them further from their culture and traditions and leading to deep psychological trauma and loss of identity.

At the same time, private-run schools that still allowed parents to educate their children in their native language and culture have been increasingly forced to shut down. Monastic schools, once bastions of education and transmission of Buddhist heritage, have been particularly targeted.[2]

These policies constitute a grave violation of Tibetan children’s rights, as highlighted by multiple UN human rights treaty bodies and Special procedures. They also pose an existential threat to Tibet’s ancient and rich culture – a culture of compassion and harmony that is more relevant than ever in these troubled times.

Education should value cultural diversity, not destroy it. Tibetan children deserve to grow up in an environment that allows them to know who they are, and where they come from and to be proud of their heritage.

We therefore urge the Chinese government to respect the rights of Tibetan children guaranteed by international law, such as the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, both of which China has ratified.

Thank you.

## Senior Journalists Visit Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile

11 December 2024, CTA

A delegation of senior journalists, coordinated by the India Tibet Coordination (ITCO), visited the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile and met with Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel and Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang at 2 PM on 9 December 2024.

The delegation consisted of the following senior journalists: Narendra Nath Mishra, Political Editor at Navbharat Times; Pradeep Thakur, Editor of Governance at The Times of India; Keshav Padmanabhan, Principal Correspondent at The Print; Chin Wei Lee, Correspondent at Central News Agency, Taiwan; and Saman Husain, Correspondent at The Indian Express.

Welcoming the delegation, the Speaker emphasised that, over the past 65 years of exile, the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) has successfully preserved the unique Tibetan language, culture, and religion, while also focusing on the welfare of the Tibetan diaspora. He further highlighted the long-held vision of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to establish a democratic system for Tibetans, which culminated in the founding of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile and the swearing-in of the first 13 Tibetan representatives on 2 September 1960.



Senior Journalists Visit Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile

Following His Holiness the Dalai Lama's guidance, Tibetans elected their first Kalon Tripa (Prime Minister) in 2001, and in 2011, His Holiness devolved political authority to the elected leadership of the CTA, leading to the establishment of a fully functioning democratic system.

The Speaker also discussed the critical situation in Tibet, highlighting issues such as political repression, environmental degradation, and discrimination against Tibetans. He called attention to China's propaganda and misinformation campaigns and urged the visiting journalists to report the truth about Tibet and its people.

In her address, the Deputy Speaker welcomed the senior journalists and noted the significance of their visit to the CTA's seat. She expressed gratitude for their visit to the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile and underscored that the Central Tibetan Administration is the legitimate representative of Tibetans.

The Deputy Speaker shared historical insights, emphasising that Tibet was once an independent nation with a distinct identity and diplomatic ties with neighbouring countries. She argued that China's aggression toward India began with its occupation of Tibet, and that the resolution of the Sino-Tibetan conflict is key to resolving the Sino-Indian border dispute.

On the restrictions imposed on Tibetans by the Chinese government, the Deputy Speaker spoke about the systematic indoctrination of Tibetan children in Chinese-run boarding schools, where they are subjected to fear and Communist ideology. She also addressed the destruction of Tibetan language and religion, with policies aimed at eradicating Tibetan identity.

The Deputy Speaker further criticised countries that support China's One-China policy for business interests, without regard to the historical facts, and called on these nations to reconsider their stance against China's dictates.

Concluding her remarks, the Deputy Speaker emphasised the important role that India, with His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration in India, can play in resolving the Sino-Tibetan conflict by reassessing its foreign policy toward Tibet.

-Report filed by Tibetan Parliamentary Secretariat

## Tibetan leader calls for independent Tibet as key to Sino-Indian border resolution

11 December 2024, Times of India

No Sino-Indian talks on peaceful resolution of the border issues will achieve its intended goal unless the two sides first decides to resolve the 'Akhand Tibet' matter, restoring freedom of life and liberty to millions of Tibetans, said Dolma Gyari, the acting Sikyong (president) of Tibetan govt in exile here on Tuesday.

Gyari, who is also the minister for department of security (defence minister) of the central Tibetan administration, says for a permanent peace with China, the only option is recognition of a unified Tibet as an independent state.

"In the 1914 Shimla accord, it was Tibet which had signed the pact with India where it acknowledged Arunachal as part of India. For a permanent resolution of the border conflict, China must recognize Tibet as an independent state," she said.

The Tibetan acting president's comments came during an exclusive interaction with a media delegation where she emphasised that the Tibet issue was central to all dialogues between India and China on the disputed borders.

On Tuesday, she also hosted a delegation of MPs from New Zealand and Fiji, celebrating the 35th anniversary of conferment of Nobel Peace prize to HH Dalai Lama. Former union minister Suresh Prabhu was a special guest on the occasion where the foreign delegation expressed solidarity with the Tibetan cause and also criticized human rights violations by China in the occupied territory.

"The Central Tibetan Administration believes that Arunachal Pradesh and any other territories disputed by China are inseparable and integral parts of India," said Gyari.

Expressing her confidence of resolution of Tibet issue under PM Modi, the minister observed that "India is going in the right direction. Today's South Block (MEA) understands better than what they did 10 years ago."

Dharamshala is also preparing for the celebrations next year of Dalai Lama's 90th birthday as the 'global year of compassion'.

### **35th Dalai Lama Nobel Peace Prize anniversary marked with New Zealand, Fiji MP guests**

11 December 2024, Tibetan Review

-Tibetan communities across the free world commemorated the 35th anniversary of the conferment of the Nobel Peace Prize on His Holiness the Dalai Lama on Dec 10, joined by supporters from their host and visitor communities, with the main event being organized by the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) at the Tsuglakhang, the main Buddhist temple in Dharamshala, India.

The day was also celebrated as the 76th international Human Rights Day, marking the UN General Assembly's adoption and proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The statement of the Kashag (cabinet), delivered by the Department of Security Kalon (minister) Mrs Dolma Gyari, highlighted the CTA's plan for a year-long (Jul 6, 2025 to Jul 6, 2026) celebrations next year of a global Year of Compassion to mark the 90th Birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. She said the focus will especially be on His Holiness's four principal commitments towards the promotion of human values and religious harmony.

The statement reaffirmed the CTA's commitment to finding a peaceful resolution to the Sino-Tibet conflict through the Middle Way Approach, "which seeks genuine autonomy for all Tibetans living in the traditional Tibetan areas to handle all its own religious, cultural, linguistic, education, health, and

environmental affairs, as guaranteed by the Chinese Constitution and under the Law on Regional National Autonomy."

Like the Kashag's statement, the statement of the Tibetan Parliament in exile, delivered earlier by Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, highlighted His Holiness's enormous contributions towards the preservation of Tibetan culture, carrying forward the Tibetan national struggle and finding a solution for the issue, and the promotion of global peace and inter-religious harmony.

The gathering was also addressed by members of parliamentary delegations from New Zealand (Joseph Mooney, Ingrid Leary, and Helen White) and Fiji (Rinesh Sharma) who were especially invited for the occasion, as was Mr Suresh Prabhu, Chairman of the India Foundation, Delhi, and former Government of India minister.

The delegation member also addressed a press conference at which they expressed solidarity with the Tibetan struggle for freedom and human rights. Ingrid Leary said that while the New Zealand delegation members were from different political parties, they were united in their support for human rights and their respect for His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Rinesh Sharma, opposition member in the Fijian parliament, said he would raise a discussion of the urgent situation in Tibet in parliament.

Those were not official delegations but a demonstration of individual commitments to human rights and an understanding of the Tibetan cause, it was explained.

The 28th Himalayan Festival was held over two days at a separate location, featuring performances by diverse ethnic and cultural groups from Himachal Pradesh and neighbouring states.

The day was also marked by the Buddhists living in Itanagar and surrounding areas in India's northeastern Tibet-border state of Arunachal Pradesh, organized by the Tawang Monastery and Itanagar Buddhist Culture Society.

Tarh Tarak, chairman of the Tibet support Group (TSGAP) in the state and vice-president of the state BJP unit, spoke as the chief guest to pay homage to His Holiness, reported [arunachalobserver.org](http://arunachalobserver.org) Dec 11. He has referred to the state's ethnic affinity with Tibet.

A number of other prominent public figures also addressed the gathering, including the state BJP general secretary Nalong Mize, the report said.



## **Protest in Vienna Unites Tibetans, Uyghurs, and Christians Against CCP Oppression**

11 December 2024, Devdiscourse

On International Human Rights Day, a protest outside the Chinese Embassy in Vienna united Tibetans, Uyghurs, and Christians demanding an end to Chinese Communist Party oppression. Demonstrators called for global action against the ongoing human rights abuses and systemic oppression of marginalized communities in China by the CCP.

On International Human Rights Day, a significant protest unfolded outside the Chinese Embassy in Vienna as Tibetans, Uyghurs, and Chinese Christians united against ongoing oppression by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The event, spearheaded by the Tibetan Community Organisation in Vienna, spotlighted widespread human rights abuses by the Chinese authorities

Leading the demonstration, Tibetan diaspora members waved flags and held banners condemning the CCP's persistent violations in Tibet. They voiced concerns over issues such as the demolition of monasteries, enforced relocation of Tibetan children, and what many called cultural genocide. The protesters urged global recognition of these atrocities and pressed for international intervention to halt Chinese repressive policies.

Uyghur activists stood alongside their Tibetan peers, highlighting the severe persecution faced by Uyghurs, including mass detentions, forced labor, and the destruction of religious sites. Joined by Chinese Christians, who protested against the state's control over religious practices, they collectively demanded an end to CCP tyranny and urged the world to hold China accountable.

## **Buddhists celebrate 35th anniversary of Nobel Peace prize conferment on HH 14th Dalai Lama**

11 December 2024, Arunachal Observer

The Buddhists living in Itanagar and surrounding area celebrated 35th anniversary of conferment of Nobel Peace prize to His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama at Thupten Gatsel Ling Gonpa here on Tuesday, which was organized by Gaden Namgyal Lhatse Welfare & Charitable Society, Tawang Monastery and Itanagar Buddhist Culture Society (IBCS).

The 14th Dalai Lama (Tenzin Gyatso) was awarded Nobel Peace Prize on 10.12.1989 in recognition of his efforts to peacefully resolve Tibet conflict and preserve the cultural heritage of his people. The Nobel committee also cited his advocacy for tolerance and mutual respect.

In his acceptance speech at Oslo, the Dalai Lama had criticized China for using force against student protesters in Tiananmen Square in 1989. He also had emphasized the importance of non-violence and his desire to dialogue with China to resolve the situation. The Nobel committee chairman had said that the award was also a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi, who had championed nonviolence as the right way to achieve a peaceful society.

It may be recalled here that the 14th Dalai Lama had flee from Potala Palace on 17.03.1959 after China laid a siege in Lhasa followed by repression of Tibetans. The spiritual leader with his entourage had crossed McMahon Line on 31.03.59 and stepped into India at border post in Chuthangmu near Tawang where Assam Rifles personnel had received his holiness. He was taken to Tawang Monastery before proceeding to Himachal Pradesh to set up his Tibetan Govt in Exile headquarters in Dharamshala.

The Dalai Lama has remained in exile since then. The tragedy and defiance of the 1959 Tibetan Uprising is marked with events around the world on every March 10. While Tibet Support Groups were formed across the world, including in Arunachal Pradesh with Tarh Tarak as chairman and Core Group for Tibetan Cause headed by R K Khrimy as national convener, to make all out efforts for Tibetans across the world to return home safely to lead a dignified life .

Tarak, also state BJP vice president, speaking as chief guest, lauded the organizers and paid homage to HH for his kindness, faith and sense of gratification to be revered across the world for which he was conferred with Nobel Peace Prize.

Highlighting TSGAP activities, he assured continued support to freedom struggle and welfare of Tibetan community living in the state.

Advocating freedom of Tibet from the clutch of China, he said that Abotani group of Tibet had migrated about 500 to 1000 years ago and settled down in this state.

He said that HH has been consistently advocating non-violence, preservation of Tibetan art, culture and tradition which inspired millions of peoples globally. Justifying demand for freedom of Tibet, he urged the Govt to confer Indian highest civilian award 'Bharat Ratna' on HH.

Highlighting biography of HH, Ven Lobsang Tengyal said that he devoted his life for the welfare of the humanity, Tibetans in particular, for a peaceful resolution to their decades-old struggle for freedom.

Dr. Leiky Wangchuk, DOKAA assistant director Deden Norbu also addressed the gathering, including state BJP general secretary Nalong Mize, TSGAP team Anok Wangsa (advisor), Hiniem Tachu (VP), Nima Sange (secretary general), TMWC president Pema Darjee, IBCS secretary Pema



Phuntso, Gomba in-charge Rinchin Norbu, followed by a traditional colourful cultural programme, according to TSGAP sources.

Arunachal Pradesh boasts of Tawang Monastery, a magnificent example of Mahayana Buddhism and largest monastery in India, which was founded in 17th century by Merak Lama Lodre Gyatso in accordance with the wishes of 5th Dalai Lama. Coincidentally, Chief Minister Pema Khandu, a Buddhist, belongs to Tawang district. And Golden Pagoda, also known as Kongmu Kham (in Tai-Khamti of Namsai language), is a Burmese-style Buddhist temple, built by present Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein, spread in 20 hectare area, was opened to public in 2010. Situated inside Pariyati Sasana Buddha Vihara, the World Tripitaka Foundation is currently developing it as first international Tripiṭaka center in India.

### **Tibetans and Tibet Activists Call On Nepal to Reject China's Illegitimate Panchen Lama Visit**

11 December 2024, International Tibet Network

Tibet activists worldwide have expressed alarm at reports[1] that Gyaltsen Norbu (CH: Gyaincain Norbu), Beijing's illegitimate Panchen Lama, is due to attend the 9th South China Sea Buddhism Roundtable Conference in Nepal. 139 global Tibet Network [2] member organisations have called on Nepal's Prime Minister to repeal any agreement that he can visit stating that "allowing Gyaltsen Norbu to visit Nepal when he lacks recognition or standing among Tibetan Buddhists... would violate the wishes of Buddhists around the world."

By allowing this visit, the Nepalese government will be complying with China's efforts to not only legitimise Gyaltsen Norbu as a Tibetan Buddhist leader but also support China's soft power strategy to co-opt the religious and cultural identity of the Tibetan people to solidify political control over Tibet. The Chinese government appointed Panchen Lama, Gyaltsen Norbu, was named by Beijing in 1995, in complete contradiction to the centuries-old tradition in which the Dalai Lama identifies the Panchen Lama. The official 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima—the recognised reincarnation by the 14th Dalai Lama—has been missing since 1995 [3], when he was just six years old and was forcibly taken by Chinese authorities.

Chinese government officials have repeatedly made it clear that Beijing deploys Buddhism as a tool to achieve its political objectives of supremacy in geopolitical, military, and territorial issues as well as the legitimacy of its occupation of Tibet. [4]

China's public relations strategy to elevate Gyaltsen Norbu's status within the Buddhist hierarchy, portraying him as "the highest ranking figure in

Tibetan Buddhism" and the "leader of Tibetan Buddhism is central to its longer-term efforts to control over key lineages, including that of the Dalai Lama, and Tibetan Buddhism more widely.

UN human rights experts and expert bodies have raised multiple concerns with China [5] about the disappearance of the official 11th Panchen Lama and Beijing's reincarnation rules, citing that interference "undermines, in a discriminatory way, the religious traditions and practices of the Tibetan Buddhist' community.

The coalition called on Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli to immediately repeal any agreement that Gyaltsen Norbu can enter Nepal, ensure that any future visits by Beijing-appointed Tibetan religious figures are refused, and for the Nepalese government to oppose China's interference in Tibetan Buddhist religious affairs. The global activists further urged Sharma Oli to call for the immediate release of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, and his family.

Pema Doma, Students for a Free Tibet: "This visit represents a serious escalation in China's decades-long effort to co-opt Tibetan Buddhism to legitimize its rule in Tibet. Tibetans in and outside of Tibet categorically reject China's interference in their sacred spiritual life just as they reject the Fake Panchen Lama and Chinese rule in their land. The international community must stand with Tibetans in calling for the freedom of the real Panchen Lama, Gendun Choekyi Nyima, who has been missing since he was recognized by the Dalai Lama nearly 30 years ago."

Tenzin Yangzom, International Tibet Network: "China's interference in Tibetan Buddhism cannot be tolerated and allowing Gyaltsen Norbu, China's illegitimate Panchen Lama to visit Nepal while the official 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, remains 'missing' for nearly 30 years will be seen as a complete violation of the rights of the Tibetan people and the Tibetan Buddhist community at large. Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli must consider the far-reaching, global implications of allowing this visit – implications that do nothing more than support China's ruthless attack on religious freedom – and refuse him entry to Nepal.

Tenzyn Zöchbauer, Tibet Initiative Deutschland: "Allowing the Chinese fake Panchen Lama, Gyaltsen Norbu, to participate in the 9th South China Sea Buddhism Roundtable Conference in Nepal would be a profound misstep. While the legitimate 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, and his family remain missing without any confirmation of their well-being, it is unconscionable to legitimize the Chinese Communist Party's violent suppression of traditional Buddhist practices by

allowing such participation. The conference risks endorsing China's severe violations of religious freedom and its manipulation of the Buddhist leadership. Such an endorsement would be a grave mistake, lending credibility to the CCP's propaganda machine."

John Jones, Free Tibet: "As the birthplace of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, and the home of thousands of refugee Tibetan Buddhists, it matters deeply how Nepal responds to Gyaltsen Norbu's planned visit. If it wishes to honour this responsibility, it should not be taking direction on Buddhism from the avowedly atheist Chinese Communist Party, whose own officials have been clear that they regard the appointment of Tibetan Buddhist lamas as strategic leverage to tighten their control over Tibet. The Government of Nepal should disinvite Gyaltsen Norbu and call for the release of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima. Defying Beijing may be awkward, but insulting the 500 million Buddhists around the world would be damning."

### ICT testifies at European Parliament's hearing on EU-China human rights dialogue

10 December 2024, ICT

The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) briefed Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) on the dire human rights situation in Tibet during a meeting of the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights last week.

The meeting, which took place on 4 December, focused on the state of the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue – whose latest round took place on 16 June and was preceded by a side-visit to the Tibet Autonomous Region.



From right to left Sarah Brooks (Amnesty International), Vincent Metten (ICT), Paola Pampaloni Deputy managing Director ASIA and Pacific at the EEAS, and MEP Satouri Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights.

#### Ineffective dialogue

"Despite the European External Action Service (EEAS)'s efforts, it is clear that the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue process has not provided meaningful results," EU Policy Director Vincent Metten stressed in

his testimony, arguing China's human rights abuses have on the contrary intensified in recent years.

He called on the EU to consider reviewing the dialogue and exploring more assertive ways to press China on its human rights record. "The EU should prioritize real, measurable improvements in human rights rather than continuing ineffective dialogues that produce little to no tangible outcomes. The stakes for Tibetans, Uyghurs, Hongkongers, and all Chinese dissidents are too high for complacency," he said.

#### Worsening human rights situation in Tibet

Metten stressed that this review of the dialogue – which has been repeatedly called for by civil society organizations, including ICT in recent years – is especially urgent given the scale and severity of China's human rights abuses.

In Tibet, the Chinese government's assimilationist policies indeed not only violate the fundamental rights of Tibetans, but it also threatens Tibet's ancient culture and their survival as a distinct people Metten said, citing the coercive boarding schools system that alienates Tibetan children from their language and traditions; the forced resettlement of Tibetan nomads and rural population; and China's interferences in the succession of the Dalai Lama.

Metten also pointed to China's hydropower dam spree in Tibet, which poses a significant risk not only to the Tibetan civilization and environment but also negatively impact 1,8 million people downstream. Advanced copies of ICT's new report "Chinese Hydropower: Daming Tibetan culture, community and environment", published on 5 December, were distributed to MEPs.

Replying to a question on China's transnational repression, Metten finally emphasized the need of a common European definition and stronger cooperation to protect Uyghurs, Tibetans and other victims. Following is the full text of Vincent Metten's statement.

4 December 2024 Statement by the International Campaign for Tibet

Dear Chairman and Honorable Members of the Committee,

Thank you for inviting our organization to speak today.

A – A Critical Evaluation of the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue

We commend the efforts made by the EEAS to consult civil society organisations ahead of the dialogue, and their persistence to engage with their Chinese counterparts on human rights issues. ICT acknowledges the EU's determination to secure an official visit to Tibet in the margins of the dialogue and appreciates the fact that the EU expressed its concerns to China about the repressive policies imposed on the Tibetan people and the need to

preserve and respect their fundamental rights, including their rights to select their own religious leaders.

However, after 39 rounds of dialogue and despite the EEAS efforts, it is clear that this process has not provided meaningful results and that there are significant concerns that need to be addressed urgently.

First, it is crucial to acknowledge that the EU's human rights dialogue with China has consistently failed to bring about any substantial change. In recent years, ICT and other organizations have expressed their growing frustration at the lack of concrete outcomes. While the EU continues to use the dialogue to raise its concerns about China's human rights record, – including its ongoing repression in East Turkestan, Hong Kong, Southern Mongolia and Tibet – the Chinese government has indeed remained largely unresponsive and has even intensified its repression further. Beijing does not acknowledge its human rights violations, refuses to allow independent monitoring, and continues to implement repressive policies without consequence. The absence of real political or legislative commitment from China to address these abuses raises serious questions about the utility of the dialogue.

Furthermore, the EU's current approach does not match the severity of the human rights situation in China and Tibet – I will come back to this a bit later. The EU has already suspended human rights dialogues with highly repressive countries such as Russia, Syria, Belarus, and Myanmar, because of their human rights abuses and violations of international law. China, with its documented repressive policies, could be added to this list.

As civil society groups have repeatedly suggested, it may be time for the EU and its new leadership:

- To reconsider the dialogue's effectiveness and consider setting clear, measurable benchmark for success in this dialogue;
- To explore alternatives forms of dialogue with Chinese civil society organizations;
- To deploy more assertive and public diplomatic measures;
- To improve the mainstreaming of human rights into other EU-China policies, in particular in the field of trade and investments;
- To continue to press China to give unfettered access to East Turkestan and to Tibet to foreign diplomats, independent experts and Members of the European Parliament;
- And finally, to sanction Chinese officials who are responsible of serious human rights abuses including in Tibet, east Turkestan, Hong Kong and mainland China under the EU Global Human rights sanctions regime.

## B – Human Rights in Tibet: A Threat to Tibetan Culture and Identity

As it stands now, the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue falls short of addressing the gravity of the human rights situation in China. Today, the Tibetan people, the Tibetan culture and the very existence of the name "Tibet" are indeed seriously threatened by the assimilationist policies strategically implemented by the People's Republic of China (PRC), in particular under the leadership of Xi Jinping. Without a significant course change, the continuity of this ancient culture, the integrity of the Tibetan Plateau's environment, and the very survival of Tibetans as a distinct people is no longer guaranteed. Let me give you some examples.

### Residential boarding schools

Firstly, up to one million Tibetan children are being systematically alienated from their language and culture in compulsory boarding schools. These educational policies, denounced by many UN human rights experts and bodies as well as by the European Parliament in an urgency resolution in December 2023, separate children from their families, forcing them to enroll in schools that teach dominantly in Mandarin. This program stands to undermine the transmission of Tibetan language and culture and severe Tibetan youth from their roots and identity.

### Mass relocation programs

Secondly, according to Chinese government media sources, at least 1.8 million nomads have been settled into sedentary houses under various Chinese government policies. In areas of relocation, displaced Tibetans have not received compensation or assurances of income or employment for the future.

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

Our organisation is about to release a report on "Chinese Hydropower: Daming Tibetan culture, community and environment" – some advanced copies are available in the room, please note the report is under embargo until tomorrow 2pm.

### Government interferences in freedom of religion

Last but not least, the Chinese government interferes massively in the free exercise of religion and persecutes Tibetans who peacefully oppose this policy. Torture is routinely inflicted to silence, permanently injure, and even cause death when

Tibetans are arbitrarily detained for peacefully expressing their opinion or practicing their religion. Contrary to Tibetan religious norms and in contravention of international human rights standards protecting freedom of religion or belief, Beijing has made clear its intention to control the succession of the Dalai Lama who will turn 90 next year – as it did for the Panchen Lama – and has adopted a number of laws and regulations to legitimize its interferences.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while the EU's commitment to engaging with China on human rights is commendable, it is high time for a reassessment of the methods and effectiveness of the EU-China human rights dialogue.

The situation in Tibet, along with the broader human rights crisis in China, demands stronger action. The EU should prioritize real, measurable improvements in human rights rather than continuing ineffective dialogues that produce little to no tangible outcomes. The stakes for Tibetans, Uyghurs, Hongkongers, and all Chinese dissidents are too high for complacency. Thank you for your attention.

### **Tibetan Government-in-Exile condemns Chinese atrocities on 35th anniversary of Dalai Lama's conferment of Nobel Peace prize**

10 December 2024, ANI

On the 35th anniversary of the Dalai Lama's conferment of the Nobel Peace Prize, the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, through the Kashag, the highest executive office of the Central Tibetan Administration, strongly condemned the Chinese government's ongoing atrocities in Tibet. The Kashag emphasised the vital role of the Dalai Lama in safeguarding Tibetan culture, religion, and identity, asserting that the Chinese government's policies were systematically eroding these fundamental aspects of Tibetan life.

The Kashag highlighted the alarming consequences of China's policies, which aimed to forcibly assimilate Tibetans into the broader Han Chinese culture. According to the Kashag, by imposing Chinese as the primary language of instruction and forcibly placing Tibetan children into colonial-style boarding schools, the Chinese government seeks to sever Tibetans from their linguistic, cultural, and spiritual roots. These schools replace traditional Tibetan education with communist ideology, military training, and a heavy emphasis on loyalty to the Chinese state, thus undermining Tibet's rich cultural heritage.

In addition to the cultural assault, China's control over Tibetan monastic institutions is an increasingly grave concern. The Kashag stated that the Chinese government had imposed politically motivated

regulations on Tibetan Buddhism, including the regulation of the reincarnation of lamas, furthering its policy of Sinicization. This relentless interference is undermining the spiritual and cultural foundations of Tibetan Buddhism, threatening the preservation of one of the world's great spiritual traditions.

The Kashag also expressed deep concern over China's exploitation of Tibet's natural resources, particularly through the construction of hydropower dams and large-scale infrastructure projects. The Kashag reaffirmed its commitment to non-violence and peaceful resistance in the face of ongoing repression in Tibet. It drew attention to the international community's growing concern over human rights abuses in Tibet, as reflected in statements from the European Union, the United Nations, and the G-7 nations. The Kashag urged continued global support for the Tibetan cause and called for greater international pressure on China to respect Tibetans' fundamental human rights and preserve Tibet's unique cultural and environmental heritage.

### **Statement on International Human Rights Violations in Tibet and China's Systemic Breaches of International Standards**

10 December 2024, CTA

On this 76th anniversary of International Human Rights Day, the Department of Information and International Relations (DIIR), Central Tibetan Administration, solemnly reflects on the persistent and systematic violations of fundamental human rights confronting the Tibetan people under the occupation of the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Despite decades of sustained international advocacy, diplomatic pressure, and repeated scrutiny through various United Nations human rights mechanisms, the situation for Tibetans continues to deteriorate at an alarming rate. The PRC government's repressive policies in Tibet have systematically undermined the cultural, religious, linguistic, and civil rights of Tibetans, transforming the peaceful country into a landscape of pervasive political oppression, cultural erasure, and severe restrictions on basic freedoms of expression, assembly, and religious practice.

In its 2024 Freedom in the World report, Freedom House has designated Tibet with a global freedom score of zero after 65 years of Chinese occupation, marking Tibet's worst rating in at least eight years.

In recent years, the PRC government has strengthened the aggressive policies of Sinicization, and ideological control particularly aimed at Tibetan children and educational institutions. These measures include enrolling over a million Tibetan school-going children into state-run colonial-style boarding schools

depriving them of the space and opportunity to learn the Tibetan language. These actions systematically eliminate Tibetan linguistic heritage, with schools banning Tibetan language use, closing private language classes, and interrogating and deposing teachers who advocate for cultural preservation. whose classroom instruction is exclusively Mandarin and communist ideology is forcibly taught.

For instance, this year in Tibet's Nyagchu County, schools have mandated Mandarin-only communication. Prominent Tibetan private schools, such as the Gangjong Sherig Norling school in Golog in Tibet's Amdo Province were systematically shut down, despite providing decades of cultural education. The psychological impact has been devastating, with multiple reported incidents of teenage students and monks attempting suicide due to the trauma of cultural separation and loss of traditional educational opportunities. The systematic blocking of Tibetan-language online platforms and the repeated arrest of language activist Tashi Wangchuk represent a calculated attempt to suppress cultural dissent and linguistic expression.

China's systematic suppression of Tibetan Buddhism has intensified, with authorities implementing a multifaceted approach to restrict religious practices and cultural expression. Tibetan Buddhism continues to be subjected to intense state control, with monasteries facing severe restrictions on enrollment, mandatory political education, and direct pressure to denounce influential religious leaders like His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Monks are routinely targeted, with some sentenced to prison for leading simple prayers or maintaining religious symbols. Young monks have become particularly vulnerable, being forced out of traditional religious education and prohibited from wearing religious attire, according to reports emerging from Tibet. These actions constitute a profound intrusion and violations into the spiritual and cultural lives of Tibetan communities. Given the interference, these actions constitute a profound breach of international religious freedom standards, violating fundamental protections outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as well as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Freedom of expression has been almost entirely criminalized in Tibetan regions. Tibetans face severe consequences for the most mundane expressions of cultural identity, including social media posts, sharing images of religious leaders, or singing songs with perceived political undertones. The surveillance apparatus is extensive, involving digital monitoring, increased police presence, and even co-opting food delivery workers as auxiliary police. Tibetans have been arrested for seemingly innocuous acts like

leaving a Tibetan flag on a rooftop or communicating with people outside the region.

Tibetan activists, intellectuals, artists, and religious figures continue to be the primary targets of the Chinese authorities, facing harsh interrogations, physical beatings, denial of necessities, extended periods of detention, and severe restrictions on their personal freedoms. Multiple case studies illustrate the severity of these violations, such as the tragic death of Losel, a 38-year-old monk from Sera Monastery, who was arrested in May 2024, subjected to prolonged physical beatings, systematically denied medical care, and ultimately died in detention. Similarly, police interrogations of Tibetan dam project protesters involved severe beating of detainees, with individuals being slapped, denied food, and requiring hospitalization. Political prisoners like Thupten Lodoe, a language advocate, are sentenced to years in prison for writing articles "endangering national security." The case of Golog Palden, a Tibetan singer imprisoned for three years for performing a "politically sensitive song", further underscores the Chinese Communist regime's suppression of cultural expression. These actions directly contravene the UN Convention against Torture, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and China's own legal framework, which ostensibly protects individual rights.

Chinese authorities have consistently prioritized infrastructure and economic development over the fundamental rights and cultural practices of Tibetan people, as evidenced by large-scale displacement projects, environmental degradation, and violent suppression of local resistance. In Derge County, part of Karze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province, hundreds of Tibetans protested the Gangtuo Dam project in front of the county government office building on 14 February 2024. Over 1,000 Tibetans, including monks, were arrested and local monasteries were completely locked down by the police. Also, the 19th-century Atsok Gon Dechen Choeckhorling Monastery was demolished to make way for a hydropower dam, forcing 160 monks into makeshift tin huts. The pattern of oppression extends to environmental activism, as demonstrated by the detention of Tsogon Tsering, an activist who exposed illegal sand and gravel mining causing significant environmental damage to the Kyungchu River, and the arrest of four Tibetans in Markham County who dared to protest the seizure of their pastureland. These incidents are effectively transforming traditional Tibetan landscapes and communities through systematic displacement, economic marginalization, and brutal suppression of dissent.

The DIIR extends its deepest gratitude to the international community for their unwavering support



in highlighting human rights violations in Tibet and calling out the PRC government to fulfil its international and domestic human rights obligations. In 2024, the international community demonstrated unprecedented solidarity in addressing human rights violations in Tibet, with 21 UN member states raising critical concerns during China's 4th Universal Periodic Review and 13 UN experts expressing extreme concern on China's crackdown against Tibetans' opposition to the construction of Kamtok hydropower station in Tibet's Derge County. Landmark legislative actions by the United States, Canada, Australia, and France highlighted systematic abuses perpetrated by the PRC government, including forced child separation through colonial-style boarding schools, forcible mass DNA collection, comprehensive cultural suppression, and religious persecution. This year, a coalition of 15 countries presented a joint UN General Assembly statement demanding urgent intervention to protect Tibetan linguistic, religious, and cultural heritage. These statements including those from the European Union and the G7 leaders reflect a growing international consensus that the survival of Tibetan identity is under critical threat, requiring a coordinated and decisive global response to resolve the Sino-Tibet Conflict in the long run and improve dismal Human Rights situation inside Tibet.

As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, China has a legal and moral obligation to uphold international human rights standards. The international community must continue to demand immediate accountability, calling for an end to these systematic violations of Tibetans' rights and their calculated strategy of cultural erasure that systematically undermines the fundamental human rights of Tibetan people. The resilience of Tibetan people in confronting these challenges stands in powerful contrast to the harsh methods employed by Chinese authorities, highlighting the profound human spirit of resilience and resistance against systemic injustice.

### **Students for Free Tibet observe World Human Rights Day, urge China to release Tibetan political prisoners**

10 December 2024, ANI

Students For Free Tibet (SFT) have launched "Write for Rights" campaign: a powerful initiative to demand justice for Tibetan Political Prisoners while commemorating International Human Rights Day in Dharamshala on Tuesday.

The young Tibetan activists living in-exile gathered to observe the human rights day with an appeal to China to respect the human rights. Tibetan activists have urged general public to stand for the cause

of Tibet and sign an online petition or post cards for the release of five Tibetan political prisoners.

They will send these post cards and online petitions to the Chinese Embassy. Every letter, email, petitions, voice in this campaign is call for justice and hope for those unjust imprisoned.

Tenzin Lekdhen, Campaign Director, SFT said, that they are commemorating the Nobel Peace Prize to Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama and the World Human Rights Day. He said that they are demanding the release of five political prisoners. He said that they will send postcards to Chinese authorities, asking them to release these political prisoners unconditionally.



"Today is World Human Rights Day. It's a day that we also commemorate the Nobel Peace Prize to His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, and also the World Human Rights Day, where we try to highlight all the human rights atrocities that have been committed, all the genocide that have been committed by the regimes. So, today we are highlighting some of the Tibetan political prisoners that are currently in Tibet. So, today we are highlighting five of them," Tenzin said.

"We have range of them from environmentalists who have been detained and been jailed for 15 years for just trying to protect the rights of Tibetan environment. And also we have political prisoners who are writers who have spoken up, there are singers here. So, we have a range of political prisoners who we are trying to highlight, and not just highlight, but we have here an online petition here, and also here we have offline postcards that we are going to send to the Chinese embassies and the authorities and asking them and to release these political prisoners unconditionally," he added.

When asked whether China will listen to their voice, he responded, "They may or may not, but it's important that we do highlight these political prisoners or else their voice won't be heard. That's important for now."

Tenzin Passang, National Director, SFT - India, said that the people in Tibet have no basic fundamental human rights. She said that they have launched 'Write for Rights' campaign, where we urge the people to write postcards, emails, petitions, Twitter posts to call for the release of political prisoners.

She said, "Today as we commemorate the World Human Rights Day, and it is also the day that His Holiness got his well-deserved Nobel Peace Prize, and we celebrate this day, Day of Freedom, Day of Justice, Day of Rights and Peace, but we should also, we also know that our brothers and sisters back in Tibet have no basic fundamental human rights. They were deprived of that, and then that's why we are here highlighting and advocating for some of the political prisoners."

"We are highlighting five political prisoners here today. Some of them have raised their voice or fight for the environmental justice, or some for the language, some for identity and cultures. And that's why we are here with this campaign where we call it Write for Rights campaign, where we urge the general public to write postcards or emails or petitions, Twitter posts and social media like write everything to advocate for the political prisoners in Tibet and also write for your governors in your own countries or like Chinese authorities, Chinese embassies and write, ask them, demand them to release the political prisoners and give them their own, their justice that they deserve," she added. (ANI)

### **Tibetan admin in exile 'not concerned' by Trump's election. 'US support for Tibet is bipartisan'**

10 December 2024, The Print, Keshav Padmanabhan

Central Tibetan Administration foreign minister emphasises that US Congress has passed several bills to endorse Tibetan autonomy, one of which was signed into law by Trump in 1st term.

The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA)—the administration in exile based in India—believes that the strong bipartisan support it enjoys in the US will not change under the incoming administration of Donald Trump.

Its minister of the Department of Information and International Relations, Norzin Dolma said Wednesday that they were not concerned about the "strength and consistency" of support from Washington D.C., regardless of the change in leadership.

"Support for Tibet is bipartisan and bicameral. The support has even been legislated upon by the US Congress. It is incumbent on the US to act on the Resolve Tibet Act," said Dolma in an interaction with media personnel here.

The minister added: "The changing global order would only expand awareness about the Tibetan cause. The growing awareness would help in achieving the 'Middle Way' policy of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, which looks after the interests of both Tibet and China."

The CTA was set up in April 1959 after the Dalai Lama fled Lhasa for India following China's suppression of the Tibetan uprising a month earlier. It looks after the administration and welfare of roughly 150,000 Tibetans living in exile across 130 countries. A large number of Tibetans, close to 80,000, live in India.

The Dalai Lama formulated the 'Middle Way' policy, which seeks meaningful autonomy for Tibet within China, including in areas of religion, culture, education and the environment. One of Tibet's largest supporters has been the US, where a number of acts have been passed and signed into law with regards to its "conflict" with China.

The latest was the Resolve Tibet Act, signed into law by US President Joe Biden most recently on 12 July, 2024.

"I share the Congress's bipartisan commitment to advancing the human rights of Tibetans and supporting efforts to preserve their distinct linguistic, cultural, and religious heritage. My administration will continue to call on the People's Republic of China to resume direct dialogue, without preconditions, with the Dalai Lama, or his representatives, to seek a settlement that resolves differences and leads to a negotiated agreement on Tibet," Biden said in a statement after signing the bill into law.

US support for Tibet

The US recognises Tibet as a part of China, but under the new law, the Department of State will be allowed to fund Tibetan non-governmental organisations to counter misinformation regarding the history and culture of the Tibetan people.

In June this year, a bipartisan delegation of US lawmakers, including former Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee Michael McCaul, visited the Dalai Lama in Dharamshala just before the bill was signed into law. China slammed US lawmakers over the Resolve Tibet Act, saying that it firmly opposed the anti-China "separatist activities" by the "Dalai group". It also strongly protested the June meetings.

Beijing has reacted aggressively to previous meetings between US officials and the Dalai Lama, going so far as to threaten Washington with repercussions before a meeting between the spiritual leader and then president Barack Obama in 2010. Obama met with the Dalai Lama multiple times during his two terms in office.

Trump, in his first term, was the first US president not to have met with the Dalai Lama in over three decades. Biden, too, had promised a meeting with the Nobel Peace Prize winner during his run for office in 2020, but did not manage it in his four years in the White House.

Earlier this year, the Dalai Lama travelled to the US for a medical procedure, but there was no scheduled meeting with Biden.

"His Holiness needed time to rest, recover and recuperate following his medical procedure in the US. It was not conducive for a meeting between President Biden and His Holiness during this period," Dolma explained during the interaction with the media.

The CTA minister added: "Both Trump and Biden as presidents have signed into law acts in support of Tibet. They have shown strong commitment to the cause of Tibet."

In December 2020, Trump signed the Tibetan Policy and Support Act (TPSA), which said only the Dalai Lama and his followers could decide on the issue of succession of the religious leader, and not the Chinese government.

Furthermore, the law stated that until a US consulate was opened in Lhasa, Tibet, no further Chinese consulates would be given authorisation to open in America.

### **Chairman of the Public Service Commission Karma Yeshi Successfully Concluded Week-long Outreach Tour**

09 December 2024, CTA

The Chairman of the Public Service Commission (PSC), Karma Yeshi, successfully concluded his week-long outreach tour to engage with Tibetan college students, which took place from 1- 8 December. The tour aimed to inspire Tibetan youth to contribute to the Tibetan cause actively, preserve Tibetan culture, and engage more deeply with the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA).

On 2 December, Chairman Karma Yeshi addressed Tibetan students at the TCV Youth Hostel in Bengaluru. In his talk, he emphasised the importance of civil service, the role of Tibetan youth in shaping the future of Tibet, and the need to preserve the Tibetan language and culture. He encouraged the students to promote the Tibetan cause among their peers and to act as ambassadors for Tibet within their college communities.

The following day, Chairman Karma Yeshi participated in a Youth Leadership Workshop organized by the Tibetan Youth Congress at the Bylakuppe Tibetan settlement. During his presentation, he discussed the Central Tibetan Administration, the evolution of Tibetan democracy, and the vital role of Tibetan youth in shaping Tibet's future. The workshop included group exercises, where participants presented their reflections to the larger group. Karma Yeshi concluded the session by urging everyone to take greater responsibility for advancing the Tibetan cause.

On 4 December, the Chairman visited all the monasteries in Bylakuppe, strengthening his connection with the Tibetan religious and cultural community.

On 5 December, Karma Yeshi met with Tibetan college students in Mysore. He reiterated his message about the importance of unity within the Tibetan community and quoted the lyrics of a Tibetan song to emphasise the need for collective effort. The program concluded with an interactive Q&A session and a vote of thanks from the student leader.

On 6 December, Chairman Karma Yeshi visited the Dalai Lama Institute for Higher Studies and Mentseekhang Sowa Rigpa Medical College in Bengaluru, where he spoke to students about their role in promoting the Tibetan cause. He encouraged them to equip themselves with the necessary knowledge and skills to become ambassadors for Tibet, emphasising the importance of education, health, and activism for the community's future. The talk was followed by another Q&A session, where students could engage directly with the Chairman.

The final tour took place on 7 December at the TCV Tibetan Youth Hostel in Rohini, New Delhi. In this session, Karma Yeshi again emphasised the importance of working for the CTA and the Tibetan community's well-being. He also stressed the need for maintaining good health and dedicating time to promoting Tibetan history and culture. The meeting concluded with marking the successful conclusion of the outreach program.

The outreach program wrapped up on 8 December, with Chairman Karma Yeshi returning to Dharamsala. He was accompanied throughout the tour by Deputy Secretary Karma Thinley.

This outreach initiative was made possible by funding from USAID and the National Democratic Institute (NDI).

### **Indian government to recognise Bhoti (Tibetan) as one of the official language of Ladakh**

09 December 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup

The government of India has agreed to officially recognised "Bhoti" and Urdu as official languages of the Union Territory of Ladakh. This decision followed discussions between Ladakhi leaders and Indian government representatives at the Ministry of Home Affairs in New Delhi on December 3, according to the Kashmir Observer.

Bhoti, which experts say is essentially the Tibetan language (Bodyig), is used across the Trans-Himalayan region. Dialectic variants such as Ladakhi, Spiti, and Lahaul are spoken in regions in the Himalaya belt including Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, Arunachal Pradesh, and parts of West Bengal.

The use of the term “Bhoti” for the Tibetan language has sparked debates in Ladakh in the past. Dr. Thupten Rigzin, a Ladhaki scholar on Bhoti Language Day in April told Radio Free Asia, “In older days, we used to say we were learning Bodyig, (Tibetan) not Bhoti. Some people seem unaware of the history, and some deliberately create confusion. The Tibetan race forms the foundation of all Himalayan regions. It’s vital for Ladakhis to understand Bhoti’s origins and historical importance.”

Groups like the Imam Khomeini Memorial Trust in Kargil have questioned the historical basis for the labelling. In a statement, the group asserted, “The so-called ‘Bhoti’ script is essentially the Tibetan script. The term has no historical or socio-cultural relevance to the languages spoken in Ladakh.”

The Tibetan script, Bodyig, was developed in the 7th century when the 33rd Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo sent Thumi Sambhota and other scholars to India. After studying Indian scripts, including Devanagari, Thumi Sambhota created the Tibetan script and grammar. This script facilitated the translation of Buddhist texts in Sanskrit and Pali from India into Tibetan, supporting the spread of Buddhism in Tibet first and later in to regions like Ladakh and the Trans-Himalayan areas.

Some observers including Tibetans have noted that using the term “Bhoti” instead of Bodyig undermines the recognition of Tibetan language and that such labelling of the Tibetan language are done for political and other benefits.

### **Austria: Tibetan youth in Europe empowered to lead advocacy efforts at Vienna workshop**

09 December 2024, ANI

A three-day Tibetan Youth Leadership and Capacity Building Workshop, held in Vienna from December 6-8, 2024, focused on empowering young Tibetans in Europe to advocate for Tibet's rights and raise awareness about critical issues affecting their homeland.

According to a press release by the Central Tibetan Administration, the workshop, attended by 23 Tibetan youth from Germany, Switzerland, and Austria, aimed to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to advance Tibet advocacy in their communities and beyond.

The event was inaugurated by Representative Thinley Chukki from the Tibet Bureau in Geneva and Additional Secretary Tenzin Lekshay, the official spokesperson for the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA).

In her opening remarks, representative Chukki introduced the workshop's objectives, emphasising the importance of youth leadership in the global Tibetan movement. She expressed hope that

the training would strengthen the capacity of young Tibetans to effectively advocate for their culture, identity, and rights.

Additional Secretary Tenzin Lekshay, in his keynote speech, highlighted the importance of a dual approach to advocacy. “While engaging policymakers is crucial, mobilising grassroots movements is equally vital. You must advocate not only to those in power but also to your peers, classmates, friends, and neighbours to inspire collective action,” said Lekshay.

He underscored that advocacy should be both top-down and bottom-up, with campaigns involving a diverse range of stakeholders, from local communities to high-level officials.

The workshop provided participants with in-depth knowledge on several key issues facing Tibet. Presentations covered the Chinese government's policies in Tibet, the growing transnational aggression of the People's Republic of China (PRC), and the alarming spread of state-run residential schools in Tibet.

These schools are part of a broader effort by the Chinese government to assimilate Tibetan children, undermining their cultural and linguistic identity. Experts discussed how this system mirrors colonial tactics, aiming to erase Tibet's unique heritage.

On the first day, attendees were introduced to Tibet advocacy strategies, including the growing role of social media in shaping public opinion and advancing campaigns. The focus was on leveraging digital platforms to advocate for Tibet on a global scale, providing a modern tool to complement traditional grassroots advocacy.

On the second day, former Tibetan political prisoner Phuntsog Nyidron shared her harrowing personal experience of imprisonment and torture under Chinese authorities. Nyidron's testimony was a poignant reminder of the ongoing human rights abuses in Tibet and a powerful call for action to stop the persecution of Tibetans. Her story served as a compelling example of the real-life consequences of Tibet's political struggles.

The workshop also featured a special address from Kelsang Gyaltsen, the special envoy of the Dalai Lama, who spoke about the importance of understanding the political and social situation in China and its impact on Tibet. He emphasised that Tibet's struggle is not just about Tibetans but about global human rights issues, urging participants to view their advocacy efforts as part of a broader movement for justice and freedom.



## **22nd North American Tibetan Associations' Conference Kicks Off in Washington DC with Sikyong Penpa Tsering's Keynote Address**

09 December 2024, CTA

The first day of the 22nd North American Tibetan Associations (NATA) Conference was held at the NED Conference Hall on 8 December 2024 in the gracious presence of Sikyong Penpa Tsering. With more than 50 participants from 26 different Tibetan Associations in the United States, the proceedings began with Sikyong Penpa Tsering offering a ceremonial white scarf to the portrait of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. This was followed by members of the 17th Tibetan Parliament in Exile, Tenzing Jigme and Thondup Tsering, along with Representative Namgyal Choedup.

In his opening address, Representative Namgyal Choedup highlighted the significance of the conference, particularly in light of the profound changes in the U.S. political landscape. With the momentous occasion of His Holiness's 90th birthday approaching, he underscored the pivotal role of NATA participants in collaboratively designing and implementing programs and projects for the Goton celebration.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering, in his remarks, expressed gratitude to the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) for generously providing the venue for the conference. He commended NED for its longstanding support and friendship toward Tibet and the Tibetan cause.

Sikyong also touched upon the upcoming event organised by the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) to honour Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi for her unwavering support for Tibet. He recalled an instance when Pelosi, deeply revering His Holiness the Dalai Lama, remarked how fortunate everyone in the hall was to breathe the same air as His Holiness. This, Sikyong stated, is a testament to the profound respect and admiration His Holiness commands among global leaders and dignitaries. He emphasised how Members of the Tibetan Parliament and Sikyong himself are treated with the same respect and recognition as representatives of sovereign nations, a testament to the grace and stature of His Holiness.

Sikyong stressed the importance of adhering to the guidance and teachings of His Holiness, reiterating the need to honour his vision and values in all endeavours. Sikyong emphasised the critical importance of accurate numbers and data, particularly when engaging with foreign dignitaries. He noted that one of the most common questions posed by such officials is, "How many Tibetans reside inside Tibet and in the diaspora?" Sikyong referenced a recent meeting with the heads of the

Departments of Home, Health, Finance, and Tibet Fund regarding household listings, highlighting how collaborative efforts across these departments can produce reliable data, especially concerning Tibetans in India.

For Tibetans residing abroad, Sikyong underscored the crucial role of regional Tibetan Associations, whose familiarity with their communities positions them uniquely to assist in data collection for household listings. He stressed that in the modern world, evidence and documentation are indispensable, and he appealed to representatives of Tibetan Associations in the United States to voluntarily issue formal statements on two significant matters: first, that the issue of the reincarnation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama lies solely in his hands; and second, that the Gaden Phodrang institution must remain intact.

In addition, Sikyong addressed reports regarding the Chinese-appointed Panchen Lama's potential visit to Nepal in mid-December. Sikyong highlighted China's persistent efforts to legitimise their appointed Panchen Lama among Tibetans by sending him to Tibet for extended periods, aiming to cultivate reverence for him within the Tibetan community. He further emphasised that similar, if not more aggressive, measures could be anticipated in the case of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's succession in the near future. Regarding the 90th birthday celebration (Goton), Sikyong elaborated on the Goton Committee, which is chaired by the Secretary of Kashag and includes representatives from each department of the Central Tibetan Administration. For the United States, he highlighted that the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) has already planned several programs. With Tibetan Associations across various regions preparing their own initiatives, Sikyong suggested that it would be beneficial for all associations and organisations to submit their program details to the CTA in Dharamsala. This would enable the creation of a comprehensive calendar of events for Goton (90th birthday celebration).

## **Sikyong Penpa Tsering Commences Official Engagements in the United States**

08 December 2024, CTA

Sikyong Penpa Tsering of the Central Tibetan Administration commenced an official visit to the United States on 6 December 2024. Upon his arrival at Dulles Airport, he was received by Representative Namgyal Choedup and Tsultrim Gyatso, Chinese Liaison Officer at the Office of Tibet, Washington, D.C. Despite the cold weather and the long journey, Sikyong immediately immersed himself in a series of engagements.



Sikyong's demanding itinerary began with a luncheon hosted by the Office of Tibet in Washington, D.C. Among the notable attendees were Tencho Gyatso, the President of the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), and Bhuchung K. Tsering of ICT's Research and Monitoring Unit. Although the luncheon maintained a casual atmosphere, the participants engaged in substantive strategic discussions, evaluating the current status of Tibetans and exploring potential developments under the Trump Administration.

Later, Sikyong met with Mary Beth of The Bridge Fund (TBF), a non-profit organisation dedicated to the preservation of Tibetan culture, language, and environment through community driven programs. For over 28 years, TBF has successfully implemented initiatives in Tibetan regions, fostering collaboration with local communities, including within the Tibetan Autonomous Region. As TBF approaches its closure, Mary Beth provided Sikyong with a comprehensive briefing on the organisation's achievements and projects in Tibet.

The day continued with a meeting between Sikyong and representatives from Baron, a prominent scholars, including Tashi and Suzette. Suzette, whose primary focus is the religious aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, expressed her desire to visit and explore Tibetan monasteries and nunneries within the Tibetan diaspora in India. She noted the growing interest in Tibetan Buddhism, particularly among individuals from China, and emphasised the significant role religion plays in fostering cross cultural connections. Sikyong offered his insights and recommendations to enhance her ideas. This engaging discussion was followed by a brief interview conducted by Namgyal Shastri from Voice of America (VOA).

On the second day of Sikyong's visit to the United States, the Office of Tibet in Washington, D.C., hosted a warm welcome reception in honour of Sikyong and the participants of the 22nd North American Tibetan Associations (NATA) Conference. The conference, scheduled to take place on 8 December at the NED Conference Hall, will bring together over 50 members, including the Presidents and Secretaries of 26 Tibetan Associations out of a total 36 Tibetan Associations across the United States.

### **Speaker Emerita Pelosi to receive Light of Truth Award for unwavering support of Tibet**

08 December 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi will be honoured with the prestigious Light of Truth Award by the Boards of the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) for her unwavering commitment to the Tibetan people, their rights, and their struggle for freedom. The award will

be presented to Speaker Pelosi on December 9 in the Speaker Nancy Pelosi Caucus Room (Cannon House Office Building).

Throughout her distinguished political career, Speaker Pelosi has been a tireless advocate for Tibet, demonstrating exceptional leadership in supporting Tibet. Pelosi's connection to Tibet dates back to 1989 when she became one of the first American politicians to meet with the Dalai Lama after he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. This moment marked the beginning of a profound, decades-long friendship between Pelosi and the Tibetan spiritual leader, and she has since visited Dharamshala, the seat of the Tibetan government-in-exile, three times to meet with the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan leaders.

One of Pelosi's earliest significant actions in support of Tibet came in 1991 when, as a member of Congress, she unfurled a pro-democracy banner in Tiananmen Square in Beijing to commemorate the victims of the 1989 massacre. This act of defiance served as a clear message to the Chinese government that the United States would not remain silent on human rights abuses, including those committed against Tibetans. Over the years, Pelosi has consistently condemned China's human rights violations, from the treatment of Uyghur Muslims in East Turkestan (Xinjiang) to the suppression of freedoms in Hong Kong and Tibet.



US Speaker Emerita speaking at the Tsuklakhang courtyard in Dharamshala in June 2024 in support of the Tibetan people (Photo/Mint)

In 2008, during the widespread protests in Tibet and the lead-up to the Beijing Olympics, Pelosi made a bold stand by leading a congressional delegation to Dharamshala. There, she met with the Dalai Lama, expressing her unwavering solidarity with the Tibetan people. Her visit was widely regarded as a powerful statement against China's repressive policies and sent a clear message that the international community was watching closely.

In 2007, Pelosi played a crucial role in the passage of the Tibetan Policy Act, which supports the preservation of Tibet's unique religious, cultural, and linguistic heritage. The Act reinforced U.S. policy on Tibet and set clear goals to promote Tibet's autonomy and human rights. Pelosi's leadership continued in 2015 when she visited Tibet, despite

heavy monitoring by Chinese authorities. Even under such restrictions, she managed to meet with local Tibetans and listen to their stories of resilience and resistance.

During her advocacy for the Tibetan Policy and Support Act in 2020, Pelosi famously stated, "If we don't speak out for human rights in China because of commercial interests, then we lose all moral authority to speak out for human rights in any other place in the world."

Richard Gere, Chairman of the ICT Board, expressed his admiration for Speaker Pelosi, stating, "It is my great pleasure as Chairman of the Board of the International Campaign for Tibet that we will be honouring our old friend Nancy Pelosi. Having worked closely with her for many decades, it is clear to me that she has a genuine reverence for His Holiness the Dalai Lama as well as a deep and vast commitment to the just cause of Tibet and the Tibetan people. She is fearless."

Tencho Gyatso, President of the ICT, also lauded Pelosi's tireless efforts, stating, "We are so very lucky to have such steadfast partners in our work on behalf of the Tibetan people. Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi has been a tenacious voice for the movement since joining Congress. This is a well-deserved recognition of her many years of partnership with the people of Tibet and His Holiness the Dalai Lama. She has never failed to put her seat at the table to work for good. For all her work, we thank her."

The Light of Truth Award, established in 1995, is presented to individuals and organisations that have made outstanding contributions to the public understanding of Tibet and the plight of the Tibetan people. Previous recipients include Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Hugh Richardson, Congressman Benjamin Gilman, and other courageous individuals and groups that have supported the Tibetan cause.

### **REPORT: China's rampant dam-building spree could dislocate up to 1.2 million in Tibet**

07 December 2024, Tibetan Review

China has built or plans to build hundreds of hydropower dams in Tibet and data on a sample of 193 of them betray a formula for irreparable damage to the Tibetan civilization, the environment, downstream nations, and the climate, said Washington-based Tibet advocacy group International Campaign for Tibet (ICT, [savetibet.org](http://savetibet.org)) in a new report Dec 5.

Tibet's glacial peaks are the headwaters of the region's eight major rivers with transnational flows. The report's rigorous research and advanced GIS mapping details the Chinese Communist Party's rampant construction of 100s of hydropower dams. Its first-of-kind interactive map allows users to see the

impact each dam will have on local populations, religious sites, and surrounding land covers, the group said.

The report also presents alternatives for developing truly sustainable, renewable energy, the group added.

"The scale and scope of the PRC's hydropower dam spree is both unbelievable and unconscionable," ICT President Tencho Gyatso has said.

"Beijing's disrespect for the Tibetan people's rights, its neighbours' fate, and the urgent moral and scientific demand to combat climate change could not be clearer. China must be stopped in its tracks and called to use its money, manpower, and innovation to advance solutions—not its political manoeuvring."

One of the report's key findings is that if completed, 1.2 million residents near the 193 dam project sites could be dislocated from their homes, communities, and livelihoods. Religious and sacred sites serving communities will also be destroyed.

This is because almost 80% of the dams studied in the report are large or mega dams (with over 100MW capacity).

However, 60% of these dams are either in proposal or preparation stages, presenting opportunities to change course, the report said.

The group calls on China to cease all planning, proposing, and construction, including projects underway, of large-scale hydropower dams in Tibet.

It calls on China to protect the right of the Tibetan people to participate in all development projects as per the 1986 UN Declaration on the Right to Development and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, including the right to free, prior, and informed consent. This would include an end to the forced dislocation of Tibetan communities.

The report calls on China to instead invest in properly sited and inclusively developed solar and wind power, as they do not carry the demonstrable environmental, climate, and social costs of hydropower. These projects should prioritize co-management, co-benefits, and maintenance of traditional ways of life, and in particular, they should correspond to the needs of the local Tibetan population, it added.

The report also calls on China to engage in multi-lateral transboundary water policy forums to establish a mutually beneficial management architecture and data sharing norms.

"Hydrological data and dam project plans should not be used as bargaining tools leveraged against downstream states."

## Lower TCV school fails to attract Tibetan students living abroad, to shut down in December

06 December 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup



Lower TCV School, one of the pioneering institutions in the Tibetan exile education system, boasting 40 years of operation will close its doors in December following an unsuccessful attempt to convert it into a dedicated chartered school for Tibetan children living abroad. The decision was confirmed by Tibetan Children's Village (TCV) Head Office, citing low enrollment and operational challenges.

Earlier this year, TCV initiated the transition of Lower TCV School into a residential chartered school specifically for Tibetan children raised overseas. The project, launched in August 2024, aimed to provide these children with an immersive experience in Tibetan language, culture, and identity. However, despite significant investments of time, resources and energy, the initiative attracted only six students.

In a social media post, TCV expressed its determination to address the growing challenge of Tibetan children abroad missing out on cultural education, "With high hope and anticipation, Lower TCV School was prepared, ready, and opened...but sadly only 6 Tibetan children have enrolled... Although lots of time, money, and energy were put into this program, TCV has still not lost its hope in this pursuit, despite all odds."

Speaking with Phayul, TCV General Secretary Choeying Dhondup said that Lower TCV School will close after the winter vacation on December 18, 2024. 54 students from India currently enrolled in the school will be transferred to other TCV schools of their choice.

The six foreign students will integrate with students at Upper TCV School starting March 2025 but will reside in a separate hostel with enhanced facilities, including internet access. To encourage more participation, the annual parental contribution for overseas students has been reduced to \$100 USD.

Choeying Dhondup elaborated on the decision, "There are only 64 students in Lower TCV School, supported by 24 staff members. The operational expenditure is high, and the infrastructure is deteriorating. Therefore, it was decided to transfer the children to other schools." He also hinted at

potential future plans for the Lower TCV School campus, stating that the administration is considering "greater use" of the site, though no specific details were disclosed.

The closure of Lower TCV school reflects broader challenges faced by Tibetan schools in exile. Declining birth rates, ongoing migration to Western countries, and reduced numbers of Tibetan children arriving from Tibet have contributed to diminishing enrollment. Similar struggles have led to the recent closures of other Tibetan institutions, including STS Poanta Sahib and STS Dalhousie.

CTA President Penpa Tsering, during an earlier interview with Phayul, highlighted the need for systemic integration of Tibetan schools to ensure their long-term sustainability. He proposed consolidating schools to streamline administration, reduce costs, and enhance facilities.

"In terms of integration of schools, there are lots of questions on how we have to do it," Tsering said, emphasizing the complexity of balancing efficiency with the impact on staff and local communities. "One idea is to integrate schools zone-wise, starting with the Northeast, where most schools are under Sambhota. In Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh, many schools are TCV. We must resolve this issue collectively to sustain these institutions over the long run."

## Indologist who helped Jawaharlal Nehru to train army in Tibetan at Ladakh during Sino-Indian War, no more

06 December 2024, CTA

Rashtrapati Award winner Suniti Kumar Pathak was a key figure in establishment of India-Tibetan studies at Visva-Bharati.

-by Snehomoy Chakraborty

Suniti Kumar Pathak, a scholar chosen by Jawaharlal Nehru to train the army in Tibetan at Ladakh during the Sino-Indian War, passed away at his Abanpally residence in Santiniketan.

Rashtrapati Award winner and Indologist Pathak was a key figure in the establishment of India-Tibetan studies at Visva-Bharati.

Manabendra Mukhopadhyay, the head of the Bengali department at Visva-Bharati and a researcher on Pathak's work, said Pathak was one of the foremost scholars on Indo-Tibetan relations, Buddhism and Indology.

"Pandit Nehru had taken Pathak to help the Indian army with translation and training in Tibetan, for strategic reasons during the 1962 war. Later, he sought Nehru's permission to come back to Visva-Bharati and further pursue a life in academics," said Mukhopadhyay.

“He was an authority on Tibetan, Pali, Sanskrit, Mongolian, Chinese and Prakrit,” he said, adding that Pathak had extensively travelled on foot in some of the remotest parts of the Himalayas, collecting field notes for his research and the 200-odd books he authored. [Click here to read more.](#)

### **Dalai Lama reflects on hardships and opportunities of exile at long-life prayer ceremony**

06 December 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon



His Holiness the Dalai Lama, wearing a hat from Kinnaur, addressing the congregation during the Long Life Prayer Offering in Dharamshala on Dec. 6, 2024 (Photo/Tenzin Choejor)

The people of Kinnaur, led by Khunu Gyabung Tulku Rinpoche, the chief organiser of the offering, gathered on Friday at Thekchen Choeling Tsuglakhang temple in Dharamshala to offer a Long Life Prayer (Tenshug) to the revered Tibetan spiritual leader His Holiness the Dalai Lama, wishing him a long and healthy life.

In his address, the Dalai Lama expressed heartfelt gratitude to the nunneries, monasteries, and the general public of Kinnaur for their ongoing devotion. He reflected on the significance of the Tibetan exile experience, stating, “Living in exile has offered us a unique opportunity. If we had remained in Tibet and followed our traditional ways, I personally would not have had the chance to engage with the scriptures as deeply as I have. Exile has allowed me to step away from the formal ceremonies and customs, enabling me to engage in a more meaningful way with the teachings. This exile has been beneficial for us in many ways. So, whether in Tibet or in exile, the devotion and faith of the Tibetan people have remained unwavering, and I continue to do my best, dedicating myself to my work with sincerity.”

His Holiness further elaborated on the paradox of exile, acknowledging both its hardships and the opportunities it has created, “While we are separated from our homeland, exile has also presented us with a chance to connect with people from all over the world. This has allowed me to share

my teachings with not just Tibetans and the Himalayan people but with individuals from diverse cultures and backgrounds. What I teach is not limited to Buddhism alone. At its core, I believe it is important for all human beings to live with dignity, honesty, and kindness, cultivating a warm heart and good intentions to help others. This is the foundation of my teachings, and it is the reason why people, both believers and non-believers alike, appreciate them.”

The Dalai Lama emphasised that the essence of his message extends beyond religious doctrines, “In exile, I have had the privilege of meeting a wide variety of people. I teach them how to cultivate a peaceful mind, humility, love and compassion. By fostering harmony among all people, regardless of their beliefs, one can make one’s life meaningful. This is the message I hope to share with the world, and I believe it can benefit people everywhere, regardless of their faith or background.”

Today’s Long Life Prayer ceremony featured the visualisation of White Tara, the embodiment of the fulfilling wheel. The event concluded with an outpouring of devotion from the people of Kinnaur, who expressed their deep respect and admiration for His Holiness, as well as their ongoing prayers for his health and longevity.

### **Dharamshala facing potential drinking water crisis due to lack of rain**

06 December 2024, Tibetan Review

It has not rained for the past more than two months while there is lesser snow in the Dhauladhar mountain ranges, potentially affecting the drinking water supply in the Dharamshala region, reported the [tribuneindia.com](#) Dec 5, citing sources in the state’s water supply department. The development has raised focus on suggestion that check dams be built for ensuring a more stable water supply system. The report cited sources in the Jal Shakti Department as saying that if it does not rain in the next one week or so, the residents of Dharamshala might have to face cut in drinking water supply.

The sources have also said that the problem is likely to become acute in the coming months due to lesser snow in Dhauladhar mountain ranges.

Drinking water for Dharamshala city is stated to be sourced from Bhated and Gajj rivers flowing from Dhauladhar mountain ranges. And the water discharge in Bhated river has reduced to about half while, thankfully, Gajj river still has enough water to sustain supply to Dharamshala city, the report cited the sources as saying.

The city’s daily water supply stands at nine million litres per day, with the majority of the drinking water



schemes being gravity based and sourced from the two rivers.

The report cited local resident as saying they had not experienced such a long dry spell in their lifetime in the region.

Most of the water supply systems in the hill areas of Himachal Pradesh are sourced from surface water sources such as rivers and stream. Due to the changing rain patterns, experts have been suggesting that the Jal Shakti Department should rely on small check dams on rivers and streams as source for drinking water schemes.

The old designs of directly sourcing water from natural rivers and streams was facing challenges due to lesser snow in higher reaches of mountains and changing rain patterns, the report said.

### **Parliamentary Committee to Review the Rules and Regulation of Parliamentary Procedure and Conduct of the Business of Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile**

06 December 2024, CTA



Parliamentary Committee to Review the Rules and Regulation of Parliamentary Procedure and Conduct of the Business of Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile

A committee comprising parliamentarians Geshe Lharampa Gowo Lobsang Phende, Youdon Aukatsang, and Lobsang Thupten convened earlier today to review the Rules and Regulations for Parliamentary Procedures and Conduct of Business of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, specifically focusing on the provisions related to the removal of dignitaries of the Central Tibetan Administration. The committee unanimously elected Geshe Lharampa Gowo Lobsang Phende as chair and Youdon Aukatsang as secretary.

This committee was formed following the decision of the 8th session of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile. After the first reading of the bill amendment during the 8th session of the 17th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, and based on a general consensus of opinions, it was agreed that a comprehensive review should be undertaken. This review aims to improve the existing regulation or, if deemed necessary, to create a new

regulation with corresponding provisions, based on the feedback from that session and previous draft proposals.

Before commencing their work, committee members held a preliminary meeting with Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel and Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang to receive necessary guidance.

The committee is expected to submit its report, along with a draft proposing amendments to the relevant rules and regulations, to the Tibetan Parliamentary Secretariat by 11 March 2025.

### **Dr. Lobsang Monlam testify before US Commission on China in Washington D.C.**

06 December 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon



Screen grab of Dr. Lobsang Monlam testifying at the US Congressional-Executive Commission on China

Dr. Lobsang Monlam, the founder and CEO of the Monlam Tibetan IT Research Center, testified on Thursday at a hearing of the U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) in Washington, D.C. The hearing, titled "The Preservation of Memory: Combating the CCP's Historical Revisionism and Erasure of Culture," was chaired by Representative Christopher Smith and co-chaired by Senator Jeff Merkley.

In his testimony, Dr. Monlam addressed the grave challenges facing the Tibetan language and culture, both within Tibet and among the global Tibetan diaspora. He pointed to recent developments, such as the closure of Tibetan-centric schools like Ragya Ganjong Sherig Norbuling and the relocation of students to state-run institutions, as evidence of the Chinese government's ongoing policies of cultural assimilation.

"In Tibet, the policy of cultural assimilation of Tibetans by the Chinese government is systematically undermining Tibetan language and cultural identity," he stated. "One of the most concerning aspects of this is the imposition of Mandarin as the primary language of instruction in schools—even in those that claim to offer bilingual education. Additionally, an estimated 80% of Tibetan children are sent to state-run boarding schools where Mandarin is prioritised,



further disconnecting them from their cultural heritage.”

Dr. Monlam also shed light on the difficulties faced by Tibetans in exile, particularly younger generations born outside of traditional Tibetan communities. “Many young Tibetans, born and raised outside of the communities in exile established for Tibetans, lack regular exposure to their native language, hindering their ability to learn and appreciate it. Limited post-education opportunities as well as opportunities for higher education in Tibetan further compel them to rely on other languages, increasing the distance from their cultural roots,” he explained.

He emphasised the diminishing Tibetan population, both within Tibet and abroad, has further compounded these challenges. While community-led efforts, such as Tibetan language schools, monasteries, and cultural institutions, are working to preserve the language, these initiatives often struggle due to limited funding and resources.

Dr. Monlam further highlighted the ongoing suppression of Tibetan culture within Tibet, which he described as a key factor contributing to the erosion of traditions and cultural disintegration. He also acknowledged the resilience of the Tibetan exile community, which has made notable efforts to safeguard Tibetan culture and language through educational institutions, the Central Tibetan Administration’s policies, and various grassroots initiatives.

Despite these efforts, Dr. Monlam called for more modern, strategic, and comprehensive tools to support Tibetan education, cultural preservation, and global engagement. He highlighted the work of the Monlam Tibetan IT Research Center, which has been instrumental in developing technology to preserve the Tibetan language. The organization has compiled the Grand Tibetan Dictionary, the most extensive Tibetan lexicon to date, and developed 42 software applications, including advanced tools for optical character recognition (OCR), machine translation, and AI-driven language models.

“These ground-breaking technologies have achieved remarkable success, garnering over millions of usages and effectively bridging linguistic and technological barriers within Tibet and the global diaspora,” Dr. Monlam said. “Looking ahead, the Monlam organization has an ambitious vision for the future. We are actively developing a foundational Tibetan/Culture-focused Large Language Model (LLM). As part of our commitment to education and ethical AI development, we are exploring the creation of an AI model based on His Holiness the XIVth Dalai Lama. This model could be used to develop educational resources, promote conflict resolution, and foster ethical decision-making in AI systems.”

## Hollywood star Whitaker, well known for his charity work, visits Dalai Lama

05 December 2024, Tibetan Review

Hollywood actor, producer, and director Forest Steven Whitaker whose accolades include an Academy Award, a Golden Globe Award, a British Academy Film Award, and two Screen Actors Guild Awards, has on Dec 4 met with His Holiness the Dalai Lama at his exile residence in Dharamshala, India. He has also called on the exile Tibetans’ democratically elected political leader, the Sikyong, just ahead of the latter’s trip to the USA.

“It is a great opportunity to get a chance to see him again,” the Tibetan service of rfa.org Dec 4 quoted Whitaker, 63, as saying, after meeting with the Dalai Lama.

“I’ve been given a lot of blessings by the Tibetan people and, of course, by His Holiness today,” the report quoted Whitaker as saying, accompanied by his daughter Sonnet Noel Whitaker, 28.

“I have met him before but I was overcome with feelings when I saw him today. I just wished him better health and a long life and love. I think he is a symbol of peace.”

Whitaker had previously met with the Dalai Lama in Jul 2017 during an event hosted by Starkey Hearing Technologies in Eden Prairie, Minnesota. At that time, Whitaker moderated a panel discussion on “A Call for Compassion and Conscious Kindness,” in which the Dalai Lama was a participant, along with Starkey owner Bill Austin and Starkey’s chief philanthropy officer, Tani Austin, the report noted.

While in Dharamshala, Whitaker has also met with Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the executive head of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), on Dec 3. He also visited the Tibet Museum and Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, located within the CTA complex, Dec 4.

Whitaker has spent much of his time over the past decade dedicated to humanitarian work. In 2011, he was appointed the UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Peace and Reconciliation. UNESCO also appointed him, in 2014, its Special Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation.

In 2012, he founded the Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative (WPDI), which implements peace-building programmes in conflict affected communities throughout the world, with focus on training youths in conflict resolution and developing businesses in areas of conflict. WPDI’s programmes are currently operating throughout Africa, Mexico, and the United States.

He has won numerous doctorate and other awards as well in diverse other fields of his works.

## Kyabje Kundeling Rinpoche Represents Tibetan Buddhism at World Interfaith Conference in the Vatican

05 December 2024, CTA



Kyabje Kundeling Tatsak Rinpoche addressing the gathering during World Interfaith Conference in the Vatican.

In the gracious presence of Pope Francis, the World Interfaith Conference organised by the Sree Narayana Gurukulam Trust, in collaboration with the Italy-based Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, was convened on 29 and 30 November 2024 in the Vatican.

As a representative of the Tibetan Buddhists, Kyabje Kundeling Tatsak Rinpoche attended the conference alongside reverent spiritual leaders and priests from the world's major religious groups, public figures, and scholars.

During the meeting, Pope Francis, the head of the Catholic Church and sovereign of the Vatican City State, commended the organisers for this event and said, "The lack of respect for the noble teachings of religions is one of the causes of the troubled situation in which the world finds itself today." The Pope further stressed that good moral teachings should be practised to make a positive contribution to the world through harmonious cooperation among different religious traditions.

In his address, Kyabje Kundeling Tatsak Rinpoche introduced the noble commitments of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama and underscored the need to promote religious harmony during the World Interfaith Conference. Rinpoche further spoke about harnessing the spiritual power of different religions to address the multiple sufferings currently afflicting the world, working together towards world peace through deep and meaningful interfaith cooperation, providing moral guidance to the new generation of youth and empowering them to make positive contributions and create a more compassionate and harmonious future for all.

Moreover, during his one-on-one meetings with the Pope, Kundeling Rinpoche presented a book

authored by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, as a memento.

The organising committee also extended their invitation to Kundeling Rinpoche to attend a religious conference that is scheduled for 2025 in England.

## Symposium on Enhancing Tibetan School Education Begins in Dharamshala

05 December 2024, CTA



Symposium on Enhancing Tibetan School Education Begins in Dharamshala. Photo / Tenzin Phende / CTA

A two-day Symposium on Enhancing Tibetan School Education commenced earlier this morning in Dharamshala at the Hotel Norbu House to deliberate on further developing the quality of the existing Tibetan education system, formulating and strategising for future education-driven initiatives, and nurturing Tibetan students in line with the principles of Basic Education Policy for Tibetans in Exile.

Professor Ven Samdong Rinpoche, the former Kalon Tripa of Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), graced the opening ceremony of the symposium as its chief guest, along with Kalon (Minister) Tharlam Dolma Changra and Secretary Jigme Namgyal Namgyalkhang from the Department of Education (DoE).

The event began with a welcome address from Secretary Jigme Namgyal, who succinctly provided an introduction to the objectives of the Tibetan education system. "Education has been one of the top priorities of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama after coming into exile. Recognising its transformative importance, His Holiness emphasised the importance of providing the Tibetan children with traditional and modern quality education because it is the only way to develop a brighter future," said the Education Secretary and further elaborated on the subsequent establishment of Tibetan schools in exile.

"Today, we have 62 schools in India and Nepal under four different school systems." For this, the Secretary acknowledged gratitude to all the respective governments and supporters for their assistance in Tibetan education endeavours in exile.

“Out of the modest budget of the Central Tibetan Administration, we allocate around 30 per cent for the education of Tibetan children”, which he proudly affirmed that it surpasses the figures of some of the leading nations in the world. However, the Secretary disclosed the presence of a few shortcomings that impede the success of Tibetan education, which aims to foster students with “genuine human intelligence”. According to him, the objectives also include nurturing responsible Tibetans who are dedicated to advancing the Tibetan cause. He underscored the importance of such conferences in identifying solutions and devising strategies.

Following this, each participant of the symposium introduced themselves before the gathering. The participants consist of Kamala Makunda, Teacher, Centre for Learning, Bangalore; Karma Chungdak, Founding and Former Director, Sambhota Tibetan Schools Society; Krishna Kumar, Former Director, NCERT; Latika Gupta, Assistant Professor, DoE, University of Delhi; Geshe Lhakdor, Director of Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamshala; Neha Vaidya, Chief Operating Officer, iTeach Schools; Padma M. Sarangapani, Education Professor and Chairperson, CETE, TISS Mumbai; and Tenzin Tsenlek, Former Education Director, Tibetan Children’s Village.

With a brief self-introduction, Education Kalon Tharlam Dolma Changra presented an overview of the DoE and its key responsibilities with a particular spotlight on the undertakings of the CTA’s Education Council and Advisory Committee. The Kalon stated that all the members of this committee had made assessment visits to Tibetan schools beginning from 2019 to understand the ground realities and recognise ways to improve flaws in the system.

The Education Kalon voiced her concerns over two issues that came to the members’ attention after the visits. “One of the biggest concerns is the declining enrolment. In 2012, the strength (of students in Tibetan schools) was 23,684. Now, in 2024, it is 13,035, which declined more than ten thousand,” Kalon stated. Despite the DoE’s intensified efforts in improving Tibetan education standards through various workshops and other initiatives, the problem of this dwindling enrolment arises from three primary reasons: the cessation in the regular number of Tibetans coming from Tibet since 2008, the increase in Tibetans emigrating to west from Tibetan settlements in India, Nepal and Bhutan, and the falling birth rate of the exile Tibetan community.

The second concern, Kalon Tharlam Dolma said, is the number of Tibetan children with special needs. She revealed that 294 students under this category currently study within the four education systems: TCV, THF, STSS and Snowlion Foundation.

In his keynote address, Kalon Trisur Ven Samdong Rinpoche shared his profound insights on the Buddhist perspective of education and highlighted the pivotal roles of educators, parents, and school administration in achieving positive academic outcomes. Rinpoche further highlighted the complementary practices of hearing, contemplating, and meditating for dispelling ignorance in students’ minds and awakening their understanding, which he said is the fundamental purpose of education.

Kalon Trisur Ven Samdong Rinpoche, who has served as Principal at the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Varanasi, as well as at the Central School For Tibetans, Dalhousie, remarked, “Merely hearing (information) is like temporarily borrowing someone else’s knowledge. Without deep contemplation, simply hearing something is insufficient. Therefore, it’s crucial to use contemplation to deeply understand what has been heard and ultimately internalise the knowledge through meditation.”

In addition, Rinpoche emphasised the importance of mutual engagement in the educational process, stressing that both teachers and students should view themselves as learners. He highlighted that true learning occurs when both parties actively participate in the process of growth and discovery. In particular, Rinpoche remarked that if students show shortcomings, it is the teacher’s responsibility to address these gaps, inspire curiosity, and ignite a passion for knowledge in the students’ minds, without which, education may become a burden to students. Finally, Rinpoche stressed the importance of Tibetan Buddhist teachings as a foundation for the immediate and long-term well-being of humans. He implored Tibetan youths to take responsibility for maintaining and propagating Buddhist learning and practice.

Before concluding the inaugural, Additional Secretary Tenzin Dorjee, Head of the Academic Section of the DOE, conveyed a vote of thanks.

### **Tibetans in France protests against Musée Guimet for 11th time**

04 December 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

Tibetan activists and supporters in France held their 11th protest outside the Musée Guimet on Sunday, intensifying their call for the museum to end what they describe as the systematic erasure of Tibetan identity. They denounced the renaming of the Tibetan exhibition to “Himalayan World” as a deliberate act of negating Tibet’s existence and cultural distinctiveness.



*Tibetan protestors outside the Musée Guimet on December 1, 2024 (Photo/SFT)*

The protest, organised by Students for a Free Tibet France (SFT France), was bolstered by the presence of Pema Doma, Executive Director of Students for a Free Tibet (SFT), who traveled from New York to stand in solidarity with the activists and the Tibetan community in Paris.

Addressing the crowd, Pema Doma highlighted the enduring struggle for Tibetan's survival and identity. "I was born in the United States to a daughter of refugees. When my mother was born, her father was a prisoner. He spent years in prison because he was fighting for the Tibetan people. Decades later, I find myself here in Paris, fighting the same battle for the protection of our Tibetan cause and our community," she said.

Pema also praised the resilience of the Tibetan diaspora and underscored Paris's significance as home to one of the largest Tibetan exile communities outside Asia. She expressed profound disappointment in Musée Guimet's director, Yannick Lintz, for renaming the museum's Tibetan exhibition to "Himalayan World." According to Pema, the change undermines Tibet's distinct cultural identity and panders to external pressures, likely from the Chinese government.

Pema firmly rejected attempts to dilute Tibet's historical and cultural significance. "Tibet has existed for thousands of years—over 10,000 years," she asserted. "The decision by Yannick Lintz to change the exhibition from Tibet to "Himalayan World" at Musée Guimet just to satisfy those who may be pressuring her shows that she is not fulfilling the duties of her responsibility to this museum, the Tibetan community in Paris, the French people, and millions of Tibetan people around the world."

She drew attention to the harsh realities facing Tibet today, emphasising the Chinese government's attempts to erase Tibetan identity through measures such as colonial boarding schools, where over one million Tibetan children are currently being raised under Chinese state control. "The Chinese government would not like Tibet, Tibetan people,

language, religion, history, and culture to exist. The French should not be complicit in that mission."

Concluding her address, Pema called upon museum visitors to recognise and honour Tibet's existence. "Tibet should not be silenced and Tibet exists. No amount of propaganda will ever change the fact," she declared.

On their social media platform, SFT France reaffirmed their unwavering stance, demanding the immediate restoration of the name. "Tibet is not a geographical concept. It is a people, a nation, a memory, a civilisation. Each object in this collection carries the history of a people being silenced. We will not be silent. Tibet will remain Tibet," the statement read.

The protest campaign has gained additional significance following its victory at Paris's Musée du quai Branly, which reversed its use of the term "Xizang" to "Tibet" for its Tibetan artefacts after public protest.

### **Representative Tsering Yangkyi Makes Inspection Visit to Sunday School for Tibetan Language and Culture in London**

03 December 2024, CTA

Representative Tsering Yangkyi of the Office of Tibet, London, made an inspection visit to the Sunday School for Tibetan Language and Culture in London on 1 December 2024.

The visit began with a brief overview of the school by Tenzin Zeydhan from the Office of Tibet. The Representative was introduced to the teachers, the parents' committee, and the classrooms of the school, which are named Potala, Yumbu Lhakhang, Norling, and Dranyen class.

Thereafter, the Representative examined each class, spending approximately 15 minutes and engaged with the students. She encouraged incorporating the Tibetan language in one's daily communications with fellow Tibetans and emphasised the role of parents in realising this effort. Further underscoring the continued existence of such Tibetan language schools in the West to ensure the preservation of Tibetan language and culture, the Representative implored parents to enrol their children in these schools. "More than reiterating one's devotion to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, it is imperative that we must demonstrate it through our actions," said Representative Tsering Yangkyi.

During the discussions with teachers, the latter shared that, despite the challenges, they were encouraged by hearing about the strong Tibetan language skills of students from England during their Summer School programs in Dharamshala.

The Representative commended the teachers for their dedication to teaching Tibetan alongside their



regular work, calling it a significant contribution. She emphasised that their efforts are taking place at a critical time for the survival of the Tibetan language, a moment almost unprecedented in Tibetan history. She further urged them to continue striving to fulfil the noble wishes of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, especially as he ages, and encouraged everyone to contribute to the community's goals to the best of their abilities.

A member of the parents' committee, Khenrab, then delivered a vote of thanks before wrapping up the event.

### **Tibetan Artists Festival concludes with vision of forming Tibetan Arts Council**

02 December 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon



(L-R) Tsering Paljor, Ngawang Sherab and Jhola Techung performing 'Ngatso Bod kyi Drokpa' at the closing ceremony of the festival on Dec.1, 2024 (Phayul photo)

The Tibetan Artists Festival, a vibrant three-day celebration of Tibetan creativity and heritage organised by TibetWrites, concluded on Sunday night with a landmark announcement. During the closing ceremony, Bob Ankerson, President of the Tibet Fund, announced the formation of the Tibetan Arts Council, a transformative initiative aimed at empowering Tibetan artists and amplifying their voices globally.

He acknowledged TibetWrites' efforts to better understand the aspirations and needs of the Tibetan artist community, drawing parallels between their mission and that of the Tibet Fund. "Over the past several years, we have been supporting organisations such as Drung, TibetWrites, and Khadhok," he noted. Ankerson shared insights into the festival's brainstorming sessions, where participating artists identified challenges and opportunities in the Tibetan arts ecosystem. One of the top priorities was the establishment of a Tibetan Arts Council, envisioned as a free and open membership association for Tibetan artists and arts organisations.

"This council will be shaped and driven by the Tibetan artist community itself," Ankerson said,

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announcing the formation of an interim steering committee to map out the council's structure and an international advisory board comprising established Tibetan artists to guide its initiatives. "On behalf of the Tibet Fund, we look forward to facilitating the next steps of mapping out the specifics and then helping to support and raise funds for new initiatives in the coming years."



Bob Ankerson addressing the gathering during closing ceremony of the Tibetan Artists Festival in Dharamshala on Dec. 1, 2024

Reflecting on the significance of the festival, Ankerson expressed deep admiration for the participating artists, emphasising their critical role in keeping the Tibetan culture vibrant and creative as it evolves, adapts, and transforms over time. "We don't know what the next generations of Tibetan artists will create in 20 and 30 years but I am pretty sure, they will be inspired by your creations in the same way that many of you were once inspired by Rangzen Tsundue and Jhola Paljor," he remarked.

The event was also attended by President Penpa Tsering of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). In his speech, President Tsering highlighted the remarkable progress the Tibetan community has achieved over the past 65 years under the blessings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, including significant strides in the arts—ranging from writing and cultural performances to poetry and painting. He emphasised that if arts and creativity continue to play an active role in advancing the Tibetan cause, the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) is committed to supporting and fostering the artistic community.

He also acknowledged the panel discussions held during the festival, which he noted were a first in exile, expressing hope for continued positive progress. He lauded the festival as a valuable platform for raising awareness about the Tibetan cause, not only within the exile community but also among a broader global audience.

Bhuchung D. Sonam, who is responsible for the conception of the festival told Phayul, "I am very happy that we were able to organise the Tibetan Artists Festival. As far as I know, this is the first time something like this has been done. Bringing together nearly 30 artists from Canada, Australia, the US,



and across India to a place like this for three days is, in itself, a great success. Many of the artists returned to Dharamshala after many years, and they recognised the potential of art as a significant cultural soft power. It has also inspired them to continue engaging in their creative pursuits, such as making music and writing books, when they return to their respective places,” he said.

Speaking on the eventual formation of the Tibetan Arts Council, Bhuchung highlighted the challenges faced by Tibetan artists scattered across different countries. “Right now, our artists are dispersed across various nations, functioning within diverse cultural backgrounds and political circumstances. This fragmentation causes us to lose valuable opportunities, including funding, to create a unified platform for showcasing our work,” he explained.

He noted the lack of awareness among artists about available platforms and resources. “Writers, artists, and musicians each have their own spheres, but many are unaware of the possibilities available to them. We hope the Tibetan Arts Council will eventually establish networks and systems to provide not just financial support but also other resources to raise awareness through the work of artists spread across different countries,” Bhuchung stated.

### **CM lauds pivotal role of Tibetans in preserving ancient Indian philosophy**

02 December 2024, Arunachal Observer, Pradeep Kumar

The Tibetans have played a pivotal role in preserving ancient Indian knowledge, philosophy and Buddhist traditions. Their selfless efforts have ensured the survival of our rich cultural heritage, said Chief Minister Pema Kahndu while discussing future strategy for their settlement with Tibetan Settlement Officers.

Dharamshala-based Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), in Tibet.com, quoted CM Khandu as saying, “I had the opportunity to meet with Tibetan Settlement Officers and members of Tibet Support Group of Arunachal Pradesh (TSGAP)”. He assured all possible support to Tibetan community living in settlements, like Tenzingaon, Miao, Tezu and Tuting, which is doing rounds in social media platform.

The CM also lauded proactive role of TSGAP, particularly president Tarh Tarak and secretary general Nima Sange (who were in the team).

In appreciation, Kalsang Tseten wrote: “Thank you so much, Honorable Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, Pema Khandu Ji, for your unwavering support for Tibet and the Tibetan cause. Your genuine dedication to the Tibetan people and your steadfast faithfulness to His Holiness the Dalai

Lama will forever be remembered and cherished by Tibetans worldwide.

“May the blessings of His Holiness empower you with wisdom and strength to continue leading Arunachal Pradesh with grace and vision, ushering in progress and prosperity for your state and its people. Your leadership is an inspiration, and we are deeply grateful for your enduring solidarity with Tibet”.

The TSGAP and Core Group for Tibetan Cause-India (CGTC-I) are off springs of 1959 Tibetan uprising and giving momentum to the case.

Facilitated by India Tibet Coordination Office (ITCO), the CBTC-I, had met in New Delhi’s Bureau of His Holiness The Dalai Lama, chaired by its national convener R.K. Khrimy, to mainly focus on its by-laws..

The meeting was attended by prominent figures, including Bureau of His Holiness The Dalai Lama representative Jigmey Jungney, CTA Information and International Relations department additional secretary Tenzin Lekshay, national co-conveners Ven. Lama Chosphele Zotpa, Delhi CGTC-I regional convener Pankaj Goyal, Surender Kumar and Arvind Nicose. .

After address of ITCO acting coordinator Tashi Dekyi and keynote address of Khrimy, all had indepth discussion on new and existing suggestions of members which generated a positive and energetic atmosphere, reinforcing the collective commitment to the cause of Tibet and the pursuit of truth.

The CGTC-I serves as the central apex body of all Tibetan Support Groups (TSGs) across India, dedicated to advocating for the restoration of basic human rights and freedoms for the people of Tibet.

Moreover, the TSGAP led by Tarak is meeting often besides visiting Tibetan settlement areas to take stock of prevailing situation and apprising the inhabitants on various ongoing initiatives to ensure their return to Tibet.

Tibetan uprising on 10 March 1959, which erupted in Tibet capital Lhasa following invasion of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) after the Seventeen Point Agreement was reached in 1951 that changed the course of political history.

The Tibetan protesters feared that the PRC might arrest their spiritual leader the 14th Dalai Lama. Though the uprising initially was peaceful protests, but clashes quickly erupted as the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) used force to quell the protests.

The 14th Dalai Lama escaped from Lhasa, while the city was fully retaken by Chinese security forces. Thousands of Tibetans were killed during the uprising. The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) began had given covert support to the rebellion and the rebellion had spread to Lhasa which had filled

with refugees. Opposition to the Chinese presence in Tibet grew in Lhasa.

In mid-February 1959 the Central Committee of Chinese Communist Party's administrative office circulated an internal report in Xinhua News Agency on how "the revolts in the Tibetan region have gathered pace and developed into a nearly full-scale rebellion," in a "situation report" for top CCP leaders.

On 10.03.1959, the 14th Dalai Lama with members of his family and his Govt disguised in PLA uniform left Norbulingka palace and entered Lhuntse Dzong on March 26 when the Dalai Lama he sent a letter to Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru explaining the political situation in Tibet and requesting asylum. The CIA also cabled Nehru's office seeking permission for the Dalai Lama's party to cross the border. In response, Nehru sent a detachment of the Assam Rifles to the border post in Chuthangmu near Tawang. The Dalai Lama and his entourage crossed the McMahon Line on March 31. The same day, Nehru made an announcement in the Parliament that the Dalai Lama should be treated with respect. He had reached Tawang and stayed in Tawang Monastery before proceeding to Dharamshala where the Govt had allowed to set up the Tibetan Govt in Exile headquarters.

About 80,000 Tibetans followed the Dalai Lama to India within the next year, but data put global Tibetans diaspora at around 1.5 lakh.

### **Young Tibetans Gathered for Europe V-TAG Strategy Meeting in Stockholm**

01 December 2024, CTA

More than 30 young Tibetans, primarily members of the Tibetan Youth Association (V-TAG) from six regions (Sweden, UK, Norway, France, Belgium and the Netherlands) under the jurisdiction of the Offices of Tibet in London and Brussels, gathered in Stockholm, Sweden, for a three-day Europe V-TAG Strategy meeting and training. The meeting was organised by the Department of Information and International Relations (DIIR) of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) and was facilitated locally by the Tibetan Community in Sweden.

The meeting opened with a welcome address by Lobsang, president of the Tibetan Community in Sweden, followed by an inaugural speech from Tenzin Lekshay, Official Spokesperson and Additional Secretary for International Relations at the DIIR. Additional Secretary Lekshay highlighted the importance of empowering young Tibetans to advocate for the Tibetan cause, emphasising the need to build the capacities of the youth for future leadership in the Tibetan movement.

The first day featured a talk by Mattias Björnerstedt, Chairperson of the Swedish Tibet Committee, who discussed the challenges and opportunities for Tibetan advocacy in Europe. Drawing on his extensive experience with the Tibetan cause, Björnerstedt provided valuable insights into the current landscape and the future potential for European engagement.

Country coordinators from the V-TAG groups in the UK, Belgium, France, and the Netherlands also shared their reports, reflecting on past activities and outlining their plans for the future.

In the afternoon, Wangpo Tethong, Executive Director of the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), Europe, led a training session on effective advocacy, engaging participants in group discussions aimed at strengthening their advocacy skills.

The day's sessions concluded with a cultural celebration, as participants enjoyed traditional Tibetan dances, showcasing the vibrant cultural heritage of Tibet.

Ven. Thupten Wangchen and Thupten Gyatso, members of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile from Europe; Thupten Tsering, Coordinator of the Office of Tibet, France; Tenzin Kunga, Secretary of the Office of Tibet, London; Tenzin Phuntsok, EU Coordinator of the Office of Tibet, Brussels; and Ngawang Choedhar, DIIR Project Officer attended the meeting. The meeting aims to further empower Tibetan youth (V-TAG) across Europe, providing them with the tools and strategies needed to continue their advocacy work for the Tibetan cause.

### **Tibetan government-in-exile flags 'colonial style' schools at UN forum**

01 December 2024, Hindustan Times, Dar Ovais

UN advocacy officer from the Tibet Bureau Geneva condemned the Chinese government for what he described as a systematic campaign of cultural destruction that threatens the survival of Tibetan identity.

With the Dharamshala-based Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) repeatedly accusing China of forcibly enrolling Tibetan children in the colonial-style boarding schools in occupied Tibet, the critical schooling situation was also flagged at the recently held 17th United Nations Forum on Minority Issues at Geneva.

During the session on "minority representation in education", Phuntsok Topgyal, the UN advocacy officer from the Tibet Bureau Geneva condemned the Chinese government for what he described as a systematic campaign of cultural destruction that threatens the survival of Tibetan identity.

Notably, the officer disclosed that over 1 million Tibetan children have been forcibly enrolled in

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

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

Earlier, the CTA had called for immediate intervention to the situation from the international communities, stating that China's continuation and strengthening of compulsory and colonial-style boarding schools across Tibet is resulting in cultural erasure and loss of Tibetan identity.

The CTA had in September said the recent reports from reliable sources in the Ngaba region of Tibet have raised serious concerns about China's educational policies and practices that are targeted at young Tibetan monks and nuns and pose a threat to the preservation of traditional Tibetan culture, religion, and way of life.

The UN Forum on Minority Issues meets annually for two working days allocated to thematic discussions pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 6/15 of September 28, 2007, and resolution 19/23 of March 23, 2012. This year, the theme of the UN Forum was the representation and self-representation of minorities in public spaces and discourses.

Based on the dialogue and contributions of the participants a summary of the discussion of the Forum will be prepared by the Chairperson of the UN Forum, and the Special Rapporteur on minority issues prepares a report on the recommendations of the UN Forum to the Human Rights Council.

## November

### Inaugural Tibetan Artists Festival honours artists and intellectuals

29 November 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon



Tibet Digest December - January 2024

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tsering highlighted how these movements benefit all communities by encouraging conversations about



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

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

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

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

The Tibetan Artists Festival runs until December 1 over the weekend, offering a dynamic mix of music, storytelling, and poetry, alongside engaging panel

discussions, music concerts, and live art performances, highlighting the richness of Tibetan creativity and heritage. Notable participants include seasoned and emerging musicians, writers, and visual artists whose works reflect the nuanced experiences of Tibetan diaspora life.

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

29 November 2024, CTA

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

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

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

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

The UN Advocacy Officer disclosed that over 1 million Tibetan children have been forcibly enrolled in colonial-style boarding schools where Tibetan language instruction is banned, and Mandarin is enforced as the only medium of communication. He further detailed the demolition of sacred sites like Atsok Monastery and the relocation of Tibetan populations from their ancestral lands.

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



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

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

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

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

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

28 November 2024, CTA



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

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

The engagements began at the STS School, where Sikyong delivered an inspiring speech to the students, emphasising the importance of Tibet as an ecological region vital to the health of the planet. Sikyong spoke about the critical role Tibet plays in preserving the global environment, particularly as

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the "water tower of Asia" and urged the students to be aware of their heritage and the unique position they hold as future leaders in preserving Tibetan culture and contributing to global sustainability.

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Tibetan advocacy alliance lobbies Indian MPs with three appeals**

27 November 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

Members of the Tibet Advocacy Alliance-India with Dr. Shashi Tharoor, MP from Kerala and Chairperson





of the Committee on External Affairs in New Delhi (Photo/FNVA)

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

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

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

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

"The first appeal, however, appeared challenging for few MPs, as they needed to consider the Ministry of

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

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

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

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

27 November 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

27 November 2024, CTA

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

was followed by a visit to observe the committee in session.

The committee hearing focused on Scotland's public finances, public service reform, the National Performance Framework, and public administration in government. A key agenda item involved gathering evidence from the Office of Budget Responsibility regarding Scotland's 2025/26 Budget. Later, the delegation received a briefing on the Equality and Human Rights Committee of the Scottish Parliament, followed by an observation of its hearing. Following this, the delegation participated in a thought-provoking discussion with Eleanor Byrne-Rosengren, Secretariat of the Cross-Party Group on Tibet, and Cameron Garrett, Research & Policy Officer, alongside Ross Greer MSP. The conversation centred on the committee's role in promoting equality and human rights and its contributions to fostering inclusivity.

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

The delegation later held a private meeting with the Co-Leaders of the Scottish Greens, Patrick Harvie, Lorna Slater, Maggie Chapman, Ariane Burgess, Gillian Mackay and Mark Ruskell.

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

In the evening, the delegation observed the Stage 2 Proceedings of the Prisoners (Early Release) (Scotland) Bill in the Scottish Parliament. This emergency legislation session showcased the Parliament's ability to address urgent challenges with agility and precision.

From the public gallery, the delegation witnessed MSPs engaging in dynamic debates as they scrutinised, amended, and shaped critical legislation in real-time. It was an invaluable opportunity to observe Scotland's legislative process responding to crises with focus and adaptability.



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

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

27 November 2024, CTA

On 26 November 2024, Sikyong Penpa Tsering attended the enthronement ceremony of the Sharpa

Gyalpo Tsongkhapa, the founder of Gelug (yellow hat) school of Tibetan Buddhism.

Choeje Rinpoche Jetsun Lobsang Dorjee Pelsangpo as the 105th Gaden Tripa at Gaden Lachi.

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

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

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

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

27 November 2024, The Arunachal Times, Prem Chetry

A team of 11 bikers and four volunteers of Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) embarked on a motorcycle

rally to garner support and create awareness for Tibet's freedom.

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

passing through 22 states and a union territory.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"In recent years, the Chinese government has intensified the exploitation of Tibet's rich mineral resources under the guise of developmental projects, endangering the environment of the Tibetan Plateau and threatening the survival of historically significant sites and monasteries. The damming projects on the Drichu River and other rivers in Tibet will have devastating implications on Tibetans and downstream countries. The massive damming initiatives and nuclear production, combined with the dumping of

nuclear wastes and reckless development policies, are wreaking havoc on Tibet's environment, subsequently contributing to ecological imbalance worldwide," he added.

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

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

26 November 2024, Tibetan Review

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

26 November 2024, CTA



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

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

They were warmly received by Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang, who guided them on a tour of the parliament hall. This was followed by a meeting with the Deputy Speaker and members of the Standing Committee at the Standing Committee's hall.



Welcoming the delegation, the Deputy Speaker expressed her sincere gratitude to the United States and its people for their unwavering support of Tibet's just cause. She specifically acknowledged the U.S. for adopting numerous bills and resolutions in support of Tibet, as well as for its continued assistance to the Tibetan people in sustaining their democratic system and promoting their welfare through various ongoing programs under USAID.

The delegation's visit to Dharamshala underscored the fact that the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) is the legitimate representative of the Tibetan people worldwide. Their visit to the seat of the CTA would offer them a deeper understanding of its structure, initiatives, and other important aspects of its work.

Further discussing the recently held COP29 climate conference in Azerbaijan, the Deputy Speaker called for scientific research on the Tibetan Plateau under the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). She emphasised the significant role of the Tibetan Plateau in global climate patterns, pointing out its impact on climate change through the loss of pasturelands, the thinning of glaciers, and the flow of its rivers. She also urged for the inclusion of a representative from the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile at future climate conferences to raise awareness about Tibet's environmental crisis on the global stage.

As a former educator, the Deputy Speaker also underscored the importance of education for Tibetan children, particularly higher specialised education. She appealed for more seats to be made available to Tibetans in the Tibetan Scholarship Program (TSP) under the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), which provides opportunities for Tibetans to excel in their chosen fields of study.

The meeting concluded with a discussion between the USAID Mission Director and members of the Standing Committee on various ongoing and upcoming programs and projects.

### **Central Tibetan Administration Hosts Symposium in Taipei on Building Common Ground with Key Allies**

26 November 2024, CTA

The Snow Land Forum: 2024, titled "Symposium on Finding Common Ground", organised by the Tibet Religious Foundation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Taiwan (also called Office of Tibet), was held at National Chengchi University on 23-24 November.



*Central Tibetan Administration Hosts Symposium in Taipei on Building Common Ground with Key Allies*

This two-day event focused on the impact of U.S. legislation on Tibet and the prospect of international Tibet policy, addressing Tibet's position within the shifting global political landscape as China grows increasingly authoritarian under Xi Jinping. The symposium also explored democratic movements in China and its regions like Hong Kong, Southern Mongolia, East Turkistan, and Taiwan amidst rising tensions between Western democracies and authoritarian states.

Secretary Ngawa Tsegyam, Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama; Political Secretary Tashi Gyatso Shadrong, Cabinet Secretariat; Secretary Karma Choeying, Department of Information and International Relations; Secretary Dawa Tsering, Director of the Tibetan Policy Institute; Representative Kelsang Gyaltsen Bawa, Office of Tibet-Taipei; Jamyang Tsering, Editor of the CTA's Official Chinese Website; Tenzin Phentok, researcher at the Tibet Policy Institute; Tsultrim Gyatso, Chinese Liaison Officer Office of Tibet, Washington DC; Sangye Kyab, Chinese Liaison Officer to Europe; Dawa Sangmo, Chinese Liaison Officer to Australia; Dr Gyalo, a Tibetan Sociologist and activist; and others representing Tibetan NGOs attended the symposium from Tibetan side, along with numerous scholars and activists from Tibet's key allies, namely Chinese pro-democrats, Taiwan, East Turkistan, Hong Kong, and Southern Mongolia.

At the forum's opening ceremony, Secretary Karma Choeying of the Department of Information and International Relations highlighted that the Central Tibetan Administration has consistently presented Tibet's factual historical context on the global stage. The Secretary further pointed out that the recent U.S. legislation addressing the Tibet-China conflict not only challenges China's distortion of Tibetan history but also reinforces strong support for unconditional dialogue between the two sides. Secretary Karma Choeying reaffirmed the Central Tibetan Administration's firm commitment to resolving the Tibetan-Chinese conflict through dialogue based on the Middle Way Approach policy, emphasising that



this policy is a crucial approach that is beneficial for both Tibetans and Chinese in the long term.

The morning session of 23 November discussed "Overview of Tibet's International Status and U.S. Legislation on Tibet", which was moderated by Professor Chen Mumin of National Chung Hsing University. The panellists of this session included Representative Kalsang Gyaltsen Bawa, Office of Tibet; Ming Chu-cheng, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at National Taiwan University; and Akio Yaita, CEO of the Indo-Pacific Strategy Think Tank. They discussed the impact of successive U.S. legislations on Tibet and their importance in shaping international support for Tibet.

During the session, Professor Chen emphasised that the Tibet issue is not only a regional concern but an international issue, reflecting the broader trend of identity politics that now drives global conflicts. Representative Kalsang Gyaltsen Bawa highlighted the significance of U.S. legislative actions, such as the "Promoting a Resolution to Tibet-China Dispute Act", which affirms that Tibet is not part of China and recognises the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) as the legitimate representative of the Tibetan people. He added, "This legislation has faced strong criticism from China, yet the international community's support for Tibet continues to grow."

CEO Akio Yaita compared the approaches of both political parties of the U.S. and stressed that aligning the interests of both Taiwan and Tibet with the U.S. foreign policy is crucial for their respective causes.

Furthermore, Professor Emeritus Ming Chu-cheng discussed the four main historical aspects of the Tibet cause: human rights, ethnicity, religion, and cultural identity. He criticised China's lack of respect for human rights, particularly religious freedom, which remains a fundamental concern for many democratic nations. He emphasised that China's distortion of universal human rights values and the ongoing oppression of Tibetans, including genocide, must be clearly addressed in global discourse and called for greater awareness of Tibet's unique cultural identity, which he believes is critical not only for Tibetans but for the broader international community.

The afternoon session, titled "International Support for Tibet and CTA's Chinese Outreach Work", saw participation from Hung Kuo-chun, Chief Operating Officer (COO) of Watchout, and CTA officials. COO Hung pointed out the historical and democratic parallels between Taiwan and Tibet, suggesting that both can learn from each other as they navigate their respective struggles for autonomy and international recognition.

Likewise, Jamyang Tsering, Editor of the CTA's Official Chinese Website, and Tsultrim Gyatso, Chinese Liaison Officer Office of Tibet, Washington DC, noted the growing international attention to

Tibet cause, highlighting how global powers, including the U.S., UK, Canada, and Japan, have issued joint statements condemning China's persecution of Tibetans. Tenzin Phentok, a researcher from the Tibet Policy Institute, explained China's divisive strategy of geographically separating Tibet into the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and four other Tibetan-inhabited provinces. This division, she argued, seeks to undermine Tibetan unity and brainwash the international community into accepting Chinese sovereignty over Tibet.

Additionally, Sangye Kyab, Chinese Liaison Officer to Europe, shared insights into the evolving attitudes within China, noting that while some Chinese still support the idea of a unified China, younger generations are increasingly supportive of Tibetan self-determination. Dawa Sangmo, Chinese Liaison Officer to Australia, emphasised the importance of strengthening Tibetan-Chinese exchanges and coordination between Tibetan advocacy groups and international governments to further the Tibetan cause.

The session concluded with a call for continued international solidarity and strategic outreach, urging governments to take clear, decisive actions in support of Tibet. Speakers agreed that increased coordination between the Tibetan community and global powers is essential to counter China's attempts to isolate Tibet and erase its cultural identity.

### **Tibetan Parliamentary delegation concludes London mission with key advocacy meetings on Tibet's global cause**

25 November 2024, ANI

A Tibetan parliamentary delegation, led by Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel and accompanied by MPs Dawa Tsering and Ratsa Sonam Norbu, visited the Office of Tibet in London on November 22, 2024, marking the conclusion of their four-day London Study Mission.

According to a press release by the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), the delegation was received by Tsering Yangkyi, the representative of Tibet in the UK, and the staff of the Office of Tibet, in what was a significant step in advancing the Tibetan cause in the global political arena.

According to CTA, the day's most pivotal event was a roundtable discussion with members of the Tibet Support Group (TSG), during which Speaker Tenphel shared the outcomes of the delegation's meetings with prominent UK parliamentary leaders, experts, and advocates for Tibet. A central theme of the discussion was the revitalization of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Tibet, a key platform for advancing Tibet's cause within the UK

Parliament. Speaker Tenphel highlighted the importance of greater cooperation between Tibet, Hong Kong, and Uyghur advocacy groups, all of which are united in their fight against oppressive regimes and their efforts to draw attention to human rights violations.

During the meeting, Speaker Tenphel emphasised the necessity of strengthening Tibet's presence on the UK's legislative agenda. He called for a coordinated push to ensure that Tibet is addressed more prominently within international forums, with a focus on securing policy reforms similar to the US Resolve Tibet Act, which would advocate for concrete actions on Tibet's behalf globally. The discussions also centred on enhancing international advocacy, challenging the Chinese government's portrayal of Tibet as a thriving region under its rule, and pushing for a more accurate depiction of Tibet's reality.

The China-Tibet issue centres on a complex political, cultural, and religious conflict between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Tibet. Tibet, a historically distinct region with its own unique culture, language, and religious traditions, was incorporated into China in the early 1950s. While the Chinese government asserts that Tibet is an inseparable part of China, citing historical ties, many Tibetans, particularly those led by the Dalai Lama, have long called for greater autonomy or even full independence.

The situation took a dramatic turn in 1959 when a Tibetan uprising was violently suppressed by Chinese forces, leading to the Dalai Lama's exile in India. Since then, China has imposed strict control over Tibet, enacting policies aimed at integrating Tibetans into broader Chinese society. These measures include the promotion of the Chinese language, large-scale resettlement programs, and restrictions on religious practices, particularly Tibetan Buddhism. These actions have sparked widespread international condemnation, with critics accusing China of cultural suppression, religious persecution, and the marginalization of Tibetans in their own homeland.

### **Dharamshala: Tibetan monk transforming lives of slum children helping them through higher studies**

24 November 2024, ANI

Lobsang Jamyang, a Tibetan monk who was born in Tibet but living in exile, is working hard to change the lives of slum children in Sarah village near Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh through education.

The monk has changed the lives of hundreds of slum children who, until they met him, were either ragpickers or used to beg on the streets.

The Tong-Len Charitable Trust, which he started two decades ago with two UK volunteers, has made a significant change in the lives of those slum children, who now have become doctors, engineers, and journalists. The Dalai Lama Trust also provides them with every possible help.

Lobsang Jamyang, founder Tong-Len, opened up on their journey, and said they tried to save the lives of slum children, and now many of them have made good careers.

"Initially in 2004, we tried to save the lives of slum children, and then we planned to provide them with primary education. Gradually, they reached middle school and then high school. They are very talented, and they reached college. They are capable of higher studies, and we support them. Some of them have now become doctors and engineers, and many are doing nursing training. One of our students, Dr Pinki, is a great inspiration for many students, and some are preparing for the NEET exam. We are also supporting some students who want to get coaching for UPSC, and some are preparing for allied services. So there are many such students," he told ANI.

Mamta, one of the slum student, who was helped by the trust, and is now preparing for the SSCJL exam aiming to do a government job reflected on her journey.

Speaking to ANI, she said, "I am one of the first ten students of Tong-Len when it was started in 2004. This institute has transformed many lives. If I had not been here, then I would have gotten married because our community doesn't keep unmarried girls beyond the age of 18. My parents have faith now that our girl is capable of doing anything. I want to get a government job because, as per my knowledge, no one from our community is in the government sector, and I want to bring this change to our community."

Tong-Len was started in 2004 with just ten children, and at present, there are more than 340 students.

Tong-Len, which means 'Give and Take,' has recently celebrated its 20th founding anniversary on the 19th of November in the north Indian hill town of Dharamshala here.

Pinki, another child who used to beg in the streets during her childhood, has went on to become a doctor now.

"I have just completed my MBBS degree on July 24, and I am preparing for the FMG exam. I am looking forward to passing this exam so that I can practice as a medical practitioner in India. The entire journey from 2004 to 24 is quite challenging. The change is from the bottom to the top, not only in our education point of view but also in our lifestyle. There is a change in our thinking. There is a change in every field. It was a big challenge for Guru Jamyang to

convince and guide our parents, and I am happy that our parents made the right decision at that time. Now many children from our community are appearing in competitive exams as they are capable of all this," she said.

Lakshmi, a 9th-grade student also praised the trust and said many of the students have achieved a successful life with the help of the trust.

"Many of the students of this organisation have achieved a successful life, and they are inspiring all of us. Some are doctors, engineers, and news reporters, and some are doing nursing training. We used to live in slums, and there were no basic facilities like food or water, but now there is a big change, and we are living in a social house here," she said.

### **Tibetan Sikyong's Portugal visit seen as groundbreaking**

23 November 2024, Tibetan Review



The visit of the executive head, Sikyong Penpa Tsering, of the exile Tibetan administration to Portugal, which included meetings with cross-party parliament members, from Nov 12 to 14 has been hailed as groundbreaking. It was the first visit of an elected exile Tibetan political leader, after the Dalai Lama's 2001 and 2007 trips, said the Central Tibetan Administration on its Tibet.net website Nov 23. Calling it a "significant step forward in the 16th Kashag's outreach strategy towards opening new doors of political engagement with previously untapped nations," the report said the Tibetan Sikyong met with Members of Parliament from four political parties during his visit to the country's capital Lisbon.

The meetings were stated to have included those with Regina Bastos and Bruno Ventura from the Social Democrat Party, Rui Tavares from the LIVRE party, Paula Inês Alves de Sousa Real from the People Animals Nature party, and Rodrigo Saraiva from the Liberal Initiative (IL) party.

The Tibetan Sikyong was stated to have delivered a crucial message to European nations through these meetings, urging them to re-evaluate their China

policies in light of the EU's de-risking approach toward Beijing. This was stated to carry special significance as Portugal had recently seen increased Chinese investment, contrary to broader trends in Europe.

Following those meetings, Rodrigo Saraiva of the IL announced a draft parliamentary resolution, calling for self-determination for the Tibetan people. This provoked an angry reaction from the Chinese embassy in Lisbon, which called on the party, without mentioning its name, to cease "support for separatist activities" and "interference in Chinese internal affairs".

"We urge a certain political party to stop using issues related to Xizang (the Sinicized name for the territory of Tibet) to interfere in China's internal affairs and not to provide support for anti-China separatist activities," the expresso.pt Nov13 quoted the Chinese embassy as saying.

The report noted that earlier, in May 2023, the IL had approved a vote of concern in the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Assembly of the Republic (AR), the unicameral parliament of Portugal, regarding the "29 years since the kidnapping of the 11th 'Panchen Lama' perpetrated by the People's Republic of China".

The Panchen Lama is Tibet's second most prominent religious figure. China abducted and disappeared him, at the age of 6, and his family just days after he was recognized by the Dalai Lama, Tibet's exiled spiritual leader, in 1995, and installed another boy in his place.

While in Lisbon, the Tibetan Sikyong has also held discussions with Dr Vera Jardim, the President of the Commission on Religious Liberty and former Minister of Justice. He had previously met the Dalai Lama during the latter's visits to Portugal in 2001 and 2007. He has also held talks with Professor Paulo Morais and Dr Batalha, two social and political commentators, based in Porto, Portugal's second largest city, after Lisbon.

Professor Morais was stated to have been actively involved in organising the Dalai Lama's above two visits to Portugal.

### **Tibetan Oracle delivers message of faith at WVSOM**

21 November 2024, WVSOM

Noting a "special karma," the Nechung Oracle, Kuten-la, the official State Oracle of Tibet and spiritual advisor to the Dalai Lama, said his Nov. 19 visit to the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine (WVSOM) wasn't a random circumstance. With the assistance of a translator, the Oracle told an audience of more than 120 that while strangers today, they were sharing the same space because

they have a bond from a previous lifetime. He explained that in Buddhism, knowing who you are today requires reflecting on previous lifetimes.

Speaking during a public reception in his honor, the Oracle said he was honored to speak at WVSOM, where students learn to reduce suffering and show compassion and kindness. He called the reception “a special gathering in a special place.”

The Oracle said it’s important to consider the well-being of the body and mind but also the soul and spirit.

During the reception, the Oracle shared a prayer with the audience and conducted individual blessings, with most of those present lining up for a personal moment.

WVSOM President James W. Nemitz, Ph.D., in a live video message, welcomed the Oracle to campus. Dawn Roberts, Ed.D., associate dean for multicultural and student affairs, and Katherine Calloway, D.O., regional assistant dean for the South Central Region of WVSOM’s Statewide Campus, coordinated the reception.

The current Nechung Oracle is the Venerable Thupten Ngodup, who has been the medium of the Oracle since 1987. The Nechung Kuten-la was accompanied by Tenzin Rinchen, his personal assistant; Ganpat Purevdirj and Bayara Purevragchaa, both monks from the Nechung Monastery; Tenzin Chogyal, who organized the Oracle’s tour of the U.S.; and Tenzin Thomson, who served as the translator at WVSOM.

Kuten-la visited members of Congress during a stop in Washington, D.C., the weekend before the WVSOM reception.

Talking of world events, the Oracle told the WVSOM audience that human beings fall into three groups: those with faith and spirituality, atheists and those who don’t care about spirituality; and those who are anti-religion.

The Oracle was forced to flee Tibet for India in 1966 following the invasion of Tibet by the communist Chinese. Part of his mission in the U.S. is to represent the Tibetan Government-in-Exile.

The Oracle’s stop in Lewisburg was the result of Calloway’s visit in 2024 to India. In April, Calloway and four others — Megan Kelley and Sarah McQueen, WVSOM Class of 2025 medical students; Caroline LaFleur, M.D., of Medical Diplomats International; and Calloway’s 15-year-old daughter, Grace — visited Dehradun, Uttarakhand and Dharamshala, India, and met with the Dalai Lama.

## Exile Tibetan delegation visits Westminster as PM Starmer seeks to cement China ties

21 November 2024, Tibetan Review

As Labour Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer met with Chinese President Xi Jinping on the fringes of the G20 summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on Nov 18, and emphasised the importance of a “strong UK-China relationship” for both countries, a delegation from the Tibetan Parliament in Exile (TPiE) has visited London to meet with key lawmakers in the country, according to [bbc.com](#) Nov 18 and [Tibet.net](#) Nov 20-21.

Starmer’s was the first time a UK prime minister met the Chinese president in person since 2018, following a recent souring in relations under the erstwhile Conservative Party government. With China’s military support for Russia’s war in Ukraine having prompted criticism from the UK and other Western countries, the PM has said he wanted to “engage honestly and frankly” on areas of disagreement, including on Hong Kong, human rights and Russia’s war in Ukraine, said the [bbc.com](#) report.

In London, the TPiE delegation of Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel and member Dawa Tsering met with Sir Lindsay Hoyle, the Speaker of the House of Commons; Sir Geoffrey Clifton Browne, Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the House of Commons, other Members of Parliament (MPs), and some prominent figures over Nov 18-19, said [Tibet.net](#) reports.

The UK Speaker has appreciated the importance of resuming dialogue with China to address and resolve the Sino-Tibet issue.

Other meetings were stated to have been held with Baroness Julie Smith, Liberal Democrat spokesperson on Defence (House of Lords) and Member of the Federal Executive Committee; Lord David Alton, Member of the House of Lords; and Liberal Democrat Member of Parliament Sir Bobby Dean.

These engagements provided the delegation with valuable insights into the legislative processes of the UK Parliament. The Tibetan visitors explored how an idea evolves into a political party’s policy, its navigation through the House of Lords, and the procedural steps required for a bill to be introduced, debated, and ultimately passed into legislation by both Houses of Parliament. They offered opportunities for collaboration between the TPiE and the UK Parliament, said the [Tibet.net](#) report Nov 21.

Underlining the gravity of the situation in Tibet, marked by new Chinese policy measures that greatly heighten threats to the survival of the ethnic and cultural identity of the territory amid other severe human rights violations, Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel has appealed to the Speaker of the House of

Commons to consider adopting a policy similar to the US Resolve Tibet Act.

That act, signed into law by President Joe Biden on Jul 12, rejects China's claim that Tibet has been part of it since ancient times, that its armed occupation and annexation of the territory in the middle of the last century was illegal under international law, and recognizes the Tibetan people's right to self-determination. The act requires the US to help counter China's official position on Tibet based on its "misinformation campaign" which underplays the territory's own rich culture and history of independence, and promote substantive dialogue without preconditions between the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Dalai Lama or his representatives.

Also, another delegation of TPiE members, made up of Geshe Monlam Tharchin, Kunga Sotop, and Choedak Gyatso, has concluded its Tibet advocacy effort in Luxembourg.

The trio met with Gusty Graas, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Luxembourg Parliament and a member of the ruling party, on Nov 19 morning. They asked Graas to raise awareness and advocate for Tibet within the Luxembourgish Parliament. They emphasised that Tibet is an occupied nation, not a part of China, and called for action to counter ongoing Chinese propaganda, according to another Tibet.net report Nov 20.

They have also appealed for the adoption of a resolution on Tibet in the European Parliament and the appointment of a special coordinator for Tibetans within the European Parliament.

Graas has expressed concerns on the situation in Tibet and assured the Tibetan visitors that he would bring the issue to the attention of Luxembourg's Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The TPiE members have also visited the European Court of Justice as well as met with David Perreira, Executive Director, and Morgane Gury, Communications and Digital Marketing Manager, at Amnesty International, and briefed them about the gravity of the current situation in Tibet under Chinese rule.

### **Advocacy and Capacity Building to counter China's Transnational Repression in Europe**

21 November 2024, TCHRD

The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) conducted a seven-week long advocacy and capacity building activities aimed at countering China's transnational repression in Europe. Part of TCHRD's strategic actions to hold Chinese government accountable for spreading fear and disempowering exiled Tibetan activists and organisations, TCHRD's executive director Ms Tenzin

Dawa and manager Ms Phurbu Dolma held briefings and interactions with various stakeholders including parliamentarians, policy makers, public officials, human rights experts and other civil society members on the findings of TCHRD's report on transnational repression and discussed possible solutions. Workshops on the ways to counter transnational repression were organised to build the capacity of Tibetan civil society members in six European countries.

During the three-day advocacy program at the European Parliament from 24 to 26 September, Ms. Dawa had the opportunity to brief and hand over a three-page summary of the abovementioned report's key findings and its physical copies to 15 European Union policymakers and their parliamentary assistants in Brussels. Ms Dawa highlighted transnational repression as an urgent thematic issue and explained the harassment and intimidation faced by Tibetans in Europe, emphasising the need for government institutions and law enforcement agencies to raise awareness and establish dedicated mechanisms to protect those affected by transnational repression. While participating in the Tibetan Empowerment Program organised by the International Campaign for Tibet's Europe office in Brussels from 23 to 26 September 2024, Ms. Dawa led an hour-long presentation on China's transnational repression and shared findings from TCHRD's report with workshop participants, which included Tibetan activists from Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, and the Netherlands. Ms. Dawa also shared the report's findings with representatives from the World Uyghur Congress and Amnesty International during a meeting held at the latter's office in Brussels.

On 9 October in France, the TCHRD team met with the French Senate Tibet Support Group at the French Senate and held discussions with key members, including Senator Jacqueline Eustache-Brinio, president of the French Tibet Support group, and executive secretary Thierry Munier.

In Switzerland on 23 October, Ms. Dawa met with Mr. Nicolas Walder, a member of Switzerland's National Council, to discuss the challenges faced by the Tibetan diaspora.

On 29 October, the TCHRD team along with Melanie Blondelle from the International Campaign for Tibet Europe held a closed-door meeting at Belgium's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Brussels. The team advocated for increased protections for the Tibetan diaspora in Belgium. The team also engaged with Mr Stijn Willems and Mr Wannes Heirman, parliamentary assistants to MP Els Van Hoof, chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, urging her office to organise hearings in the Belgian Parliament on Chinese transnational repression.



On 31 October, Ms. Dawa accompanied by Mr. Norbu Tsering, president of the Tibetan Community in the Netherlands, met with officers at the China Unit of the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

In the UK, Ms. Dawa joined a virtual discussion organised by the 'Tackling Transnational Repression in the UK Working Group' on 5 November. The working group is currently working on joint policy paper submission to the UK government. Established in September 2024, the informal working group brings concerned parties together to research and monitor incidents and effects of transnational repression in the UK, support those affected by transnational repression, and identify and shape the development of a comprehensive institutional response to transnational repression in the UK.

Later that evening, MP Chris Law of the Scottish National Party hosted Ms. Dawa for a talk on China's transnational repression in the UK Parliament, attended by students, journalists, and researchers. The Labour MP for Stockport Mr Navendu Mishra also took part in the discussion and shared his thoughts. The UK-based Free Tibet organisation helped organise the talk.

Other stakeholders the TCHRD team met include Ms. Selina Morell and Ms. Caroline from the Society for Threatened Peoples with whom the team discussed transnational repression faced by Tibetans in Switzerland on 21 October. Opportunities for collaboration for an upcoming report on the issue were also explored during the discussion. Ms. Morell noted that TCHRD's capacity building workshops had enhanced awareness among Tibetans in Switzerland, many of whom were previously unaware of the extent of transnational repression.

In October, the team met with Mr. Thupten Tsering, Coordinator at the Office of Tibet in Paris and briefed him about transnational repression targeting Tibetans in France.

On 6 October, TCHRD's first awareness-raising and capacity-building workshop in Europe was held in Paris. A total of 20 participants, including members of the Paris-based Tibetan Community Association, Regional Tibetan Youth Congress, and Voluntary Tibet Advocacy Group (V-TAG) attended the one-day workshop on 'Countering China's Transnational Repression of Tibetan Diaspora Communities'. Ms. Dawa led the first session on the scope and nature of China's transnational repression, followed by Mr. Chabdak Lhamo Kyab who led a session on personal experience of China's growing transnational repression-in-exile. Mr Kyab is a writer, poet, former Tibetan parliamentarian, and Tibetan language teacher at INALCO in Paris. Mr. Hapee De Groot, Digital Protection Coordinator for Europe at Frontline Defenders, led a session on digital protection.

The workshop in Zurich on 20 October saw the participation of 40 participants from various local Tibetan organisations. Mr Eric Hsu, a researcher at the Taipei-based Doublethink Lab, led a session on 'Civil Society Best Practices for Countering Transnational Repression'. Ms. Selina Morell, China Program Manager at the Society for Threatened Peoples, discussed Switzerland's stance on transnational repression. A virtual session on resilience, well-being, and preventing burnout was conducted by TCHRD Research Director Ms. Tsering Tsomo, followed by an hour-long digital security session led by Mr. Lobsang Tseten of the Tibet Action Institute.

The workshop in Berlin on 26 October had participants from the local V-TAG group and Tibetan community association. Mr. David Missal, deputy managing director of the Tibet Initiative Deutschland, spoke on Germany's stance on transnational repression and strategies for effective engagement by local diaspora communities. Ms. Tsomo and Mr. Tseten led sessions on psychosocial well-being and digital security respectively.

On 3 November, the representatives of different Tibetan groups including executive members of the Tibetan community in Netherlands, V-TAG and International Campaign for Tibet Europe participated in the workshop. Mr. Michael Liu, a Ph.D. candidate at Leiden University, led a discussion on the United Front Work Department's role in perpetrating transnational repression. Other sessions included digital hygiene and psychosocial well-being.

The final workshop was held in London on 10 November with members of the Tibetan community. Ms Laura Harth, campaign director and lead on transnational repression at the Safeguard Defenders discussed developing a counter response to transnational repression. Safeguard Defenders is a human rights NGO that undertakes and supports local activities for the protection of human rights, promotion of the rule of law and enhancement of local civil society capacity in some of Asia's most hostile environments.

In September, with support from the Sydney-based Australia Tibet Council, TCHRD was able to brief and hand over a three-page summary on the major findings of the report on Chinese transnational repression to six parliamentarians: Dr Sophie Scamps (MP); Senator Jordon Steele-John, Senator Steph Hodgins-May, Senator David Shoebridge, Andrew Wallace (MP) and Senator Susan McDonald.

Ms Tsomo accompanied by the ATC's executive officer Dr Zoe Bedford also held a meeting with representatives of the Australian Federal Police (AFP) in Canberra during which they presented the major findings of the TCHRD's report and answered

questions. Each officer was handed with a copy of the three-page summary of the report. The AFP officers were made aware of TCHRD's upcoming initiatives to educate and inform the Tibetan community in Australia on countering TNR or foreign interference and espionage as it referred to by Australian authorities. They were urged to increase outreach efforts to community organisations and members of new developments and trends regarding Chinese efforts to infiltrate and co-opt the Tibetan community in Australia. The AFP's factsheet on countering foreign interference and espionage translated into Tibetan by TCHRD is now available on the AFP's website.

### **Tibetan leader highlights Tibet's struggle, role of global advocacy**

19 November 2024, ANI

As part of his ongoing official tour across Europe, Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the political leader of Tibet's Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), addressed the Tibetan community in Barcelona and underscored the critical importance of continuing to raise global awareness about Tibet's political situation.

Tsering reminded the community that, despite the immense challenges Tibet faces, the international visibility of the Tibet cause remains strong, largely due to the tireless efforts of the Dalai Lama, as per a statement by the CTA.

Sikyong began by paying tribute to the Dalai Lama, noting that for over 65 years, the Dalai Lama has been the leading figure in keeping the Tibetan struggle alive on the world stage, as per CTA.

"Much of the international awareness of Tibet today is due to His Holiness' leadership, kindness, and wisdom," Sikyong said, acknowledging the Dalai Lama's pivotal role in shaping global consciousness on Tibet's plight.

One of the most significant aspects of Sikyong's address was his focus on international advocacy and the growing global recognition of Tibet's cause. He specifically highlighted recent developments such as the US government's adoption of the Tibet-China Conflict Resolution Act.

This landmark legislation, which calls for a peaceful resolution to the Tibet-China issue and greater international pressure on China to respect Tibet's cultural and religious autonomy, was a key milestone in the Tibetan freedom struggle.

Sikyong stressed that such successes are not the result of isolated efforts but are the product of years of tireless work by Tibetan support groups, activists, and international policymakers. Turning to the issue of dialogue with China, Sikyong expressed cautious optimism, but also tempered his comments with a

realistic assessment of the current political landscape. He acknowledged that while the CTA remains committed to the Middle Way Approach-seeking genuine autonomy for Tibet within the framework of China-there is still uncertainty regarding the prospects for meaningful negotiations. He reiterated that the CTA's commitment to the Middle Way remains steadfast, but emphasised that Tibet's freedom struggle cannot solely rely on dialogue with the Chinese government.

Today, the Tibet-China issue remains unresolved. While the Chinese government maintains strict control over Tibet, Tibetans in exile continue to advocate for their rights, including through the work of the CTA, which functions as the Tibetan government-in-exile. Despite international pressure, the Chinese government continues to reject any form of independence or autonomy for Tibet.

### **Biden publicly mentions Tibet in final meeting with China's Xi Jinping at APEC**

19 November 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

The outgoing US President Joe Biden on Saturday publicly referenced Tibet during his final talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping, held in the presence of media on the side lines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Lima, Peru.

Biden highlighted the progress achieved in military communications, discussions on artificial intelligence risks, and efforts to counter narcotics during their diplomatic engagements. Reflecting on their long standing relationship, he remarked, "For over a decade, you and I both have spent many hours together here and in China and in between. We spent a long time dealing with these issues. I think I once had to count up the number of hours you and I spent alone together. I remember being on the Tibetan plateau with you. I remember being in Beijing."



Outgoing US President Joe Biden meets with Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the APEC Summit in Lima, Peru, on Nov. 16, 2024 (Photo/Reuters)

The final scheduled meeting between outgoing U.S. President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping included discussions on maintaining "stable, healthy,

and sustainable” China-U.S. relations, despite the impending transition to President-elect Donald Trump’s administration. Xi emphasised Beijing’s readiness to engage with the new leadership, stating, “China is ready to work with the new U.S. administration to maintain communication, expand cooperation, and manage differences.”

With two months remaining before Trump assumes office, U.S. officials warn of heightened risks of conflict during the transition. Trump has pledged aggressive measures, including a blanket 60% tariff on Chinese imports under his “America First” trade agenda, which Beijing firmly opposes. Additionally, Trump plans to appoint prominent China hawks to senior positions, including U.S. Senator Marco Rubio—sanctioned by China—as Secretary of State, and Representative Mike Waltz as National Security Adviser.

Other key topics during the meeting included Beijing’s military manoeuvres around Taiwan. Biden called for an end to such activities, according to a White House statement. In response, Xi criticised Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te’s alleged “‘Taiwan independence’ separatist activities,” claiming they undermine peace and stability, according to China’s foreign ministry. Beijing regards Taiwan as part of its territory, while Taiwan, a democratic nation, rejects these sovereignty claims. The U.S. remains Taiwan’s most significant supporter and arms supplier, despite lacking formal diplomatic ties.

### **Parliamentary Delegation Continues Visitation Program in Arunachal Pradesh**

18 November 2024, CTA

On 14 November 2024, at 9:00 AM, a delegation of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile consisting of Geshe Lharampa Atuk Tseten and Tenzin Jigdal departed from Mon Tawang. They visited the newly constructed 108 stupas at Mandala point and then proceeded to Thubten Do-Ngag Osel Dargye Ling Monastery, founded by Kyabje Drubwang Penor Rinpoche. At the monastery, they were welcomed by the Chakzoe and two teachers who gave them a detailed tour and explanation of the monastery.

This Guru temple was constructed to ward off obstacles, additionally providing significant benefits, including teaching Tibetan religion and culture to local children. The Tibetan Parliament members were the first official visitors of the Parliament to conduct an inspection of this site.



Parliamentary Delegation Continues Visitation Program in Arunachal Pradesh

In the afternoon, the two Parliament members visited Mon Dora Chenrezig Monastery. They were welcomed by the monastery’s Chakzoe and teachers, who served them tea and refreshments and provided a detailed introduction to the monastery.

Mon Dora Chenrezig Monastery was established after former Gaden Jangtse abbot Jetsun Lobsang Tsephel Rinpoche visited the area in 2018 for the inauguration of Dirang Monastery. Observing that the area was populated entirely by Buddhist and noticing that many children in this remote valley faced difficulties accessing good education, he decided to establish this monastery in line with His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s guidance. The monastery was inaugurated on 27 October 2022.

Since then, over a hundred children annually receive education, with the former abbot personally funding all expenses including teachers’ salaries, textbooks, and meals. Students take annual examinations, with top performers receiving prizes of Rs. 3,000 each, while all students receive Rs. 700 and textbooks. Additionally, Geshe scholars provide Buddhist teachings to local people during special occasions of the lunar month.

The Parliament members expressed their appreciation for the former abbot’s significant contribution to spreading Tibetan religion, language, and culture in the area, following His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s vision. They advised monastery officials to collaborate with the Tibetan settlement officer.

On 15 November, the two Parliament members departed for Shillong via Guwahati to continue their official tour.

### **Tibetan Parliamentary Delegation Calls for Stronger Support for Tibet at India-China Relations Conference in Patna**

18 November 2024, CTA

A Tibetan parliamentary delegation, consisting of Parliamentarians Tenpa Yarphel and Lupon Thupten Gyaltsen, attended a meeting titled 'Tibet Mukti Sadhana Aur Bharat-China Sambandh'. The event, organized by the India Tibet Friendship Society and the Jagjivan Ram Institute of Parliamentary Studies and Research (Patna), took place from November 16-17, 2024.

On November 16, 2024, an inaugural conference was held where the two members of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, MP Tenpa Yarphel and MP Lupon Thupten Gyaltsen, delivered speeches on the Tibet issue.



Tibetan Parliamentary Delegation Calls for Stronger Support for Tibet at India-China Relations Conference in Patna

In his address, MP Lupon Thupten Gyaltsen emphasized several key points about what India's government and people can do to support Tibet. He highlighted Tibet's historical independence, referencing the 1914 Simla Convention during British rule and Tibet's participation as an independent nation at the 1947 Asian Relations Conference in Delhi. He stressed that before Tibet's occupation by China, the Indo-Tibetan border remained peaceful and did not require military deployment. He urged the Indian public to recognize that establishing Tibet as a peaceful buffer zone between India and China would benefit both countries and promote peace across Asia and the world.

The MP also emphasized the cultural and spiritual ties between Tibet and India, pointing out that Tibetan Buddhism, which originated from ancient

Indian traditions, is integral to the Himalayan region's culture. He called for increased support from India to preserve Tibetan religion and culture during these critical times, stressing India's significant role as host to the world's largest Tibetan refugee population, as well as to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration.

In closing, he proposed that His Holiness the Dalai Lama, one of the world's most respected leaders and a guardian of India's ancient spiritual wisdom, be awarded India's highest civilian honor, the Bharat Ratna. He argued that such an honor would bring immense pride to Tibetans, the Himalayan peoples, and his global followers.

The inaugural ceremony was attended by distinguished guests, including Dr. Sanjay Paswan, Former Union Minister; Professor Anand Kumar, Patron of the India Tibet Friendship Society; Dr. Ramachandra Purve, Former RJD President and Education Minister; Mr. Harendra Kumar, President of Bihar ITFS; and Mr. Pema Khando Bhutia, Regional Convener of CGTC-

### **Uphold Dalai Lama's values: Tibetan min**

17 November 2024, The Tribune

Education Minister Kalon, Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), yesterday urged all Tibetan students to uphold the values of the Dalai Lama and pursue education with diligence.

In her message on the occasion Children's Day, the minister stressed the importance of preserving the Tibetan language. He implored students to make the most of the unique opportunity to study and use Tibetan throughout their school years, a privilege denied to children in Tibet. She emphasised that the mastery of the language was essential not only for their individual growth but also for the preservation of the Tibetan culture.

The minister encouraged students to approach their education holistically, through the three-fold process of learning, contemplation and meditation. "This method ensures that knowledge is not only acquired but also deeply understood and retained," she added.

The minister called for greater compassion towards students with special needs, emphasising the importance of kindness and inclusiveness. By treating others with empathy, students not only fostered a supportive environment but also developed personal qualities of compassion, aligning with the broader goals of education and the teachings of the Dalai Lama, she added.



## **Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel Launches Book on His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Four Commitments**

17 November 2024, CTA

Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel launched a four-volume book on His Holiness the Dalai Lama's four principal commitments today at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (LTWA) in Gangchen Kyishong on 15 November 2024.

The books, published by researcher Kunchok Tenzin with support from the Kalsang Tibetan Traditional Art of Thangka Painting, explore His Holiness's core commitments. During the event, the speaker emphasized His Holiness's unwavering dedication to the Tibetan struggle and the welfare of the Tibetan people.

The book launch event was graced by Chief Guest Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, Special Guest Secretary Lobsang Jinpa of the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and LTWA Director Geshe Lhakdor. Parliamentarians Lobsang Thupten and Tsering Lhamo also attended, along with members of the public.

Addressing the gathering, the Speaker emphasized the invaluable contributions of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to the Tibetan struggle, his efforts in preserving and promoting Tibetan culture and religion, and his commitment to protecting Tibet's environment, among numerous other accomplishments.

Speaking about His Holiness's video message at the 8th World Parliamentarians' Convention on Tibet, the Speaker shared how His Holiness highlighted that supporting Tibet goes beyond a political stance—it is a commitment to truth, justice, Tibet's unique culture of non-violence, its environment, and much more.

The Speaker also noted His Holiness's establishment of reform committees aimed at creating a just society in Tibet when he assumed leadership. Reflecting on his visits to China and India in 1954 and 1956, the Speaker pointed out that His Holiness observed two very different forms of government, with India's democratic system inspiring him to seek a similar system for Tibet.

The Speaker further highlighted His Holiness's profound commitment to democracy, which included the promulgation of Tibet's future constitution, the drafting and adoption of the Charter of Tibetans in Exile, the election of the Kalon Tripa by the Tibetan people, and the complete devolution of His Holiness's political authority to the leadership of the Central Tibetan Administration.

Speaking on the shared fate of the people from the three provinces of Tibet, the Speaker emphasized His Holiness's vision of a united Tibet, encompassing all three regions, and his unwavering dedication to

realizing this goal. He called for a collective effort from all Tibetans to achieve this aspiration.

The Speaker also highlighted His Holiness the Dalai Lama's immense contributions in preserving Tibet's distinct cultural heritage, beginning with the establishment of Tibetan schools upon his arrival in exile in India. He praised His Holiness for maximizing the global benefit of Tibetan Buddhism, for bridging the gap between Tibetans inside and outside Tibet, and for building a robust network of international support for Tibet. Furthermore, the Speaker spoke on the introduction of the Middle Way Approach, which was subsequently adopted unanimously by the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile.

In closing, the Speaker commended the Kalsang Tibetan Traditional Art of Thangka Painting and its researchers for their dedicated work. He suggested that future discussions and deliberations be organized to further explore His Holiness's commitments and aspirations, offering deeper insights into his vision for Tibet and the Tibetan people.

-Report filed by Tibetan Parliamentary Secretariat

## **Tibetan Sikyong testifies in Catalan parliament commission as exile parliament outreach team concludes Baltic States visit**

17 November 2024, Tibetan Review

The executive head, Sikyong Penpa Tsering, of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) at Dharamshala, India, has on Nov 15 delivered what was stated to be a powerful testimony before an extraordinary hearing of the Commission of Foreign Affairs in the Catalan Parliament. His testimony in the parliament of the Spanish Autonomous Community set the tone for his overarching advocacy efforts across Europe over the recent past, said the CTA on its Tibet.net website Nov 17.

The hearing was stated to have been chaired by the Catalan Parliament deputy Francesc de Dalmaes, member of the Commission of Foreign Affairs, representing the Junts per Catalunya party.

The Tibetan Sikyong has briefed the hearing on the situation in Tibet today, highlighting the total of 157 known self-immolations by Tibetans protesting against the decades-long Chinese repression and occupation rule in their homeland.

He has explained that Tibet today is seeking autonomy, not independence, under a middle way policy envisioned decades ago by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Tibet's spiritual leader living in exile.

He has referred to the Resolve Tibet Act that was signed into law by US President Joe Biden on Jul 12 this year, recognizing China's armed occupation and annexation of Tibet as illegal under international law and the Tibetan people's right to self-determination,



while promising active US support in countering China's disinformation on the issue of Tibet.

The Tibetan Sikyong has asked the commission to consider adopting a similar position, including a resolution on the issue of the reincarnation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, aligning with the US position on the issue.

This is in view of the fact that atheist China plans to install its own "reincarnation" of the current Dalai Lama when the time comes, totally throwing into wind the Tibetan Buddhists' well-established, centuries-old, and intrinsically religious practice and procedure on this matter.

Those who attended the hearing were stated to have included several prominent deputies in the Catalan Parliament, representing leading political parties, including Ennату Domingo and Agustí Colomines from the Junts per Catalunya; Anna Balsera from the Izquierda Republicana; and Andrés García Berrio from the Commons party.

The Tibetan Sikyong was stated to have been received earlier in the day by the parliament's President Josep Rull and parliamentary board members Glòria Freixa i Vilardell and Juli Fernandez Olivares.

Rull, in his remarks, has honoured the courage and determination of the Tibetan people and expressed solidarity with them as they continued to remain subjected to deteriorating human rights situation under the Chinese occupation rule.

The Tibetan Sikyong has afterwards visited the Blanquerna University to give a special talk on the human rights situation in Tibet, hosted by the International Relations Degree Director Onno Seroo. It witnessed an impressive turnout of students from international relations, law and across disciplines, along with professors and heads of global organizations, the report said.

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Meanwhile, the delegation of Geshe Lharampa Gowo Lobsang Phende and Wangdue Dorjee from the Tibetan Parliament in Exile has concluded its Tibet advocacy tour of the Baltic States in Estonia on Nov 14.

The delegation's concluding day programme began with a meeting in the parliament building of Estonia, organized by Juku-Kalle Raid, the Chair of the Tibet Support Group in the Estonian Parliament and member of the Estonia's Foreign Affairs Commission. Those who attended it included MPs Henn Põlluaas, Kalle Laanet, Jüri Jaanson, Tõnis Lukas, and Tarmo Tamm, said another Tibet.net report Nov 17.

The Tibetan outreach and advocacy delegates were stated to have provided an update on the current critical situation in Tibet and were assured continued support for the Tibetan cause by the MPs.

They have also spoken to the high school students of Tallinna Reaalkool (Tallinn Secondary School of Science) and met with Ardi Hilpus, who had served as Estonian diplomat in Germany, Norway, Iceland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Russia.

The delegation's visit to the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia concluded with a dinner with three Estonian parliamentarians and the Chair of the Tibet Support Group.

### Chinese officials counter Tibetan diplomatic efforts in EU with propaganda tour

17 November 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundop

In an apparent response to recent Tibetan diplomatic initiatives, Chinese state-backed "Tibetologists" have launched a European tour to promote Beijing's narrative on Tibet.

The delegation, organized by the Chinese State Council Information Office (SCIO), visited Latvia and Estonia between November 7-13, 2024, coinciding with visits by Tibetan parliamentarians to the same countries.



Two Tibetan parliamentarians with the Speaker of the Latvian Parliament. Also seen is official from the Office of Tibet in London (Photo/tibet.net)

According to International Campaign for Tibet, the Chinese delegation's tour appears strategically timed to counter growing support for Tibet in the Baltic region. Earlier this year, the Estonian Parliament hosted a hearing on "The Legal Status of Tibet," attended by 35 MPs and featuring testimony from Tibetan political leader Penpa Tsering. Experts at the hearing challenged China's historical claims over Tibet, with Professor Hon-Shiang Lau noting that Chinese imperial records never documented Tibet as part of China.

The propaganda push follows several diplomatic victories for the Tibetan exile government, including Penpa Tsering's meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron in May 2024. China has recently intensified its external propaganda efforts, launching

the "Tibet International Communication Center" in Lhasa on September 2, 2024, as part of a broader strategy to reshape international perspectives on Tibet.

Political scientist Anne-Marie Brady characterizes the (SCIO) State Council Information Office as an extension of China's foreign propaganda office, highlighting Beijing's systematic approach to controlling the global narrative around Tibet rather than addressing underlying political issues.

SCIO has remained consistently engaged in propagating the Chinese narrative on Tibet. It orchestrated a series of 'Forums on the Development of Tibet,' with the first event in the series held in the Austrian capital of Vienna in 2007. The second was held in the Italian capital Rome in 2009, and the third was held in the Greek capital of Athens in 2011. Since the fourth forum, which was held in the Tibetan capital Lhasa in 2014 (the fifth and sixth were also in Lhasa in 2016 and 2019, the seventh in Beijing in 2023), the Tibet Autonomous Region has also been named as a co-organizer.

### **Tibetan Women's Association hosts tour in Dharamshala to highlight the plight of children, environment**

16 November 2024, India Blooms

Tibetan Women's Association hosted an appealing tour from the north Indian city of Dharamshala on Thursday to highlight 'alarming situation for Tibetan children and the environment in Tibet.'

Tibetan women activists are going to Delhi on three bikes and the six-day journey started on Indian Children's Day and will end on November 20, World Children's Day, ANI reported.

An activist told the news agency: "We are organising this appeal tour from Dharamshala to Delhi and it is a six-day tour."

"We are starting it today on Indian Children's Day and will end in Delhi on the 20th of November, on World Children's Day," the activist told ANI.

"We are appealing to all Indians to help us to stop colonial boarding schools in China," the activist further said.

Tenzin Yingsel, project officer of TWA told ANI, "Today we have gathered here to start an appeal tour which starts today on November 14 which is Children's Day across India to November 20 which is celebrated as universal Children's Day to highlight the alarming situation for Tibetan children and environment of Tibet."

Yingsel said Tibetan children are forced by Chinese authorities to learn Mandarin.

According to reports, nearly one million Tibetan children, who are currently a part of the government-run colonial boarding schools, are taught Mandarin

language and are deprived of learning the primary language.

"When we talk about children we talk about Tibet's environment also. Tibet is the highest and the largest plateau of Asia and it's the roof of the world it is the origin of seven major rivers of Asia and the situation regarding the environment is a matter of great concern for all the downstream countries including India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan." Yingsel said.

"Due to the large number of damming and illegal mining, it is causing harm to ecological balance. So we are organizing this event to make the people aware of the situation," Yingsel added.

### **Tibetans, Uyghurs welcome China-sanctioned Rubio for US Secretary of State**

16 November 2024, Tibetan Review

The nomination by President-elect Donald Trump of Senator Marco Rubio as the top US diplomat has been welcomed by Tibetan and Uyghur activists on account of his track-record of being a harsh critic of China for its human rights record.

Rubio was named by Trump on Nov 13 as his choice to replace Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who has served through President Joe Biden's nearly four years in office. Considered a longtime foreign policy "hawk" when it comes to the Communist Party of China-government, Rubio's appointment is less controversial compared to those of several other prominent nominees of Trump who takes the presidency from Biden, come Jan 2025.

Son of Cuban migrants, Rubio would be the first sitting US Secretary of State to have been sanctioned by the Chinese government, noted rfa.org Nov 15.

China blacklisted Rubio on Mar 18, 2021 in retaliation for US sanctions on Chinese officials involved in the genocide of the Uyghurs and the crackdown in Hong Kong. This means, from among other things, that he is barred from visiting China.

While welcoming his nomination, Namgyal Choedup, representative of the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration in North America, has struck a note of caution. He believes it is too soon to say a State Department led by Rubio could lead to tangible change for Tibetans, though the nominee's sincerity to do the right thing is indubitable.

"Senator Rubio's deep understanding of Tibetan issues, his strong stance on Tibet and his significant role in sponsoring and advocating for two key Tibet-related acts passed by the US government are commendable," Choedup has said.

"While it is still too early to determine the exact impact he will have on Tibet, his unwavering support for the Tibetan cause is clear," the Tibetan envoy has added.

"With the new administration in place, we remain cautious, but we are optimistic, as the US government, Congress, and the American people have long been strong allies of Tibet," Choedup has added.

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Referring to Rubio's track record on supporting Tibet, the report noted that in 2018, he co-sponsored the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, which denies entry into the United States to Chinese officials who prohibit American citizens from entering Tibet.

He was also stated to have pushed for the Tibet Policy and Support Act. Passed by the US Congress on Dec 18, 2020, the act says any decision about the Dalai Lama's reincarnation rests solely with the Dalai Lama himself and the broader Tibetan community – and not with Beijing, which is seeking to install its own successor.

It also requires the US President to designate a Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, whose role is to advocate for Tibet and ensure the US engages on issues affecting Tibetans.

Rubio was particularly vocal in his criticism of China on its genocidal Uyghur policy and actions.

"Marco Rubio has been a steadfast advocate for human rights, particularly for the Uyghur people enduring ongoing genocide," Rushan Abbas, the executive chair of the Munich-based World Uyghur Congress, has said, noting his "leadership role" in Congress passing the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act and Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act.

"His advocacy has helped in holding Chinese officials committing Uyghur genocide accountable, highlighted Uyghur prisoners of conscience, protected American markets from Uyghur forced labor and defended religious freedom," Abbas has said.

### **Seeking to counter Tibetan outreach, China sends propaganda team to Europe**

15 November 2024, ICT

Tibetan parliamentarians have been busy in Europe this month, where they've working to garner support for Tibet with visits to Latvia and Estonia, among other countries.

As it turns out, they aren't alone. The Chinese government has sent a team of state-supported "Tibetologists" to spread Chinese propaganda in European countries in an effort to counter recent visits by leaders from the Central Tibetan Administration.

Beijing's propaganda team

Chinese state media reported that a group of "Tibetologists" visited Latvia from November 7 to 10 and Estonia from November 10 to 13, 2024. Organized by the Chinese State Council Information

Office (SCIO), the group spoke about the "development achievements of Tibet in China in the new era, and the development results of education, medical care, ecological environment protection and other developments shared by the people of all ethnic groups in Tibet."

It is no coincidence that the visit by the delegation from China overlapped with the visit to Latvia and Estonia by a group of Tibetan parliamentarians from Dharamsala to these countries. Tibetan Parliamentarians Geshe Lharampa Gowo Lobsang Phende and Wangdue Dorjee were in Latvia during which they met the Speaker of the Latvian Parliament, Daiga Mieriņa, as well as MPs on Nov. 13, 2024. Currently, several Tibetan parliamentarians are visiting different countries in Europe.

The Chinese government is likely perturbed by the continuing support for Tibet among the Baltic countries. Political scientist Anne-Marie Brady, who specializes in Chinese domestic and foreign politics, contends that the State Council Information Office is just another name for the Chinese Office of Foreign Propaganda.

SCIO has remained consistently engaged in propagating the Chinese narrative on Tibet. It orchestrated a series of 'Forums on the Development of Tibet,' with the first event in the series held in the Austrian capital of Vienna in 2007. The second was held in the Italian capital Rome in 2009, and the third was held in the Greek capital of Athens in 2011. Since the fourth forum, which was held in the Tibetan capital Lhasa in 2014 (the fifth and sixth were also in Lhasa in 2016 and 2019, the seventh in Beijing in 2023), the Tibet Autonomous Region has also been named as a co-organizer.

Expert testimony

China would have been concerned that in January 2024, a hearing titled the "The Legal Status of Tibet" was held in the Estonian Parliament and attended by 35 Estonian MPs. During the hearing, Tibetan political leader Sikyong (Political leader in exile) Penpa Tsering testified in order to "give historical context to the Tibetan narrative, Middle-Way Approach and the importance of correcting historical facts of Tibet's independence before its invasion by the People Republic of China."

Two other people who testified at the hearing were Professor Hon-Shiang Lau, a research scholar of Chinese history who retired from the City University of Hong Kong; and Dr Michael van Walt van Praag, expert in intrastate conflict resolution and international law.

Professor Lau explained that – contrary to Chinese Communist Party claims on Tibet – Chinese imperial records, whether from the Chinese Ming dynasty or the Manchu Qing dynasty, never recorded Tibet as

part of China. Dr. Michael van Walt van Praag informed the parliamentarians why “China has been looking to buy the legitimacy of its occupation of Tibet by insisting on its trading partner governments to declare ‘Tibet as an internal issue of China’ as a justification for denying Tibetan people the right to self-determination,” and explained how this position breaches international law.

Dharamsala’s official report said the “Estonian media gave the event excellent coverage’ to the hearing and the Sikyong’s visit.

Sikyong had also visited Latvia and on January 29, 2024 strategized with the Latvian Parliamentary Support Group for Tibet, while Estonian parliamentary delegations have also visited the Tibetan exiled leadership in Dharamsala as a visible symbol of their support.

Juku-Kalle Raid, the Chair of Tibet Support Group in Estonian Parliament, led a delegation to Dharamsala to participate in the 64th anniversary of Tibetan Democracy Day on September 2, 2024, and also read a message for the day from the Speaker of the Estonian Parliament. Raid had also led an Estonian parliamentary delegation to Dharamsala on April 25, 2024, and Tibet Support Group participating in the 35th birthday celebrations of the 11th Panchen Lama (under detention by China) during which he said, “The people of Estonia have consistently shown a deep admiration and affection for Tibet, and this enduring sentiment will continue to prevail.”

**Battle over perception**

China also sent similar “Tibetologists” groups to France and Norway at the end of September 2024. The visit to France by the Chinese officials was certainly connected to the meeting that Sikyong Penpa Tsering had with French President Emmanuel Macron on May 1, 2024. Sikyong had presented an autographed photo from the Dalai Lama to President Macron.

China’s Tibet policy has been a subject of international scrutiny ever since its invasion and subsequent occupation of Tibet in 1959. The Chinese government knows that there is a political problem in Tibet. But rather than working to peacefully resolve it, one of its approaches is to falsify the situation and employ various methods to control the narrative around Tibet, aiming to reshape its portrayal in global discourse.

Xi Jinping emphasized early in his tenure the importance of external propaganda in shaping China’s global image and narrative. On Aug. 19, 2013, during his address to the National Propaganda and Ideology Work Conference, Xi advocated for “innovation” in China’s external propaganda efforts, promoting the idea of effectively “telling China’s story.”

ICT expects further escalation by China in the future in an attempt to dominate the global conversation with China’s propagandistic narrative and storytelling. A new propaganda center called the “Tibet International Communication Center” was launched in Lhasa on September 2, 2024, marking a significant step in China’s ongoing campaign to reshape international public opinion on Tibet. TAR Party Secretary Wang Junzheng instructed resource integration and optimization of the external propaganda system and mechanisms to “build a foreign discourse system and narrative system related to Tibet” in accordance with the CCP central leadership’s order.

### **Education Kalon Highlights Urgent Need to Preserve Tibetan Language in Her Children’s Day Message**

14 November 2024, CTA

As schools across India celebrate Children’s Day today, Kalon (Minister) Tharlam Dolma Changra of the Department of Education, CTA, extended her heartfelt greetings to all Tibetan students, encouraging them to uphold the values of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and to pursue education with diligence.



(File image) Education Kalon Highlights Urgent Need to Preserve Tibetan Language in Her Children’s Day Message

In her message for the occasion, the Education Kalon stressed the importance of preserving the Tibetan language and implored students to make the most of the unique opportunity to study and use Tibetan throughout their school years— a privilege denied to Tibetan children in Tibet. She emphasised that mastery of the language is essential not only for individual growth but also for the preservation of Tibetan culture.

Additionally, the Kalon encouraged students to approach their education holistically, through the three-fold process of learning, contemplation, and meditation. This method ensures that knowledge is not only acquired but deeply understood and



retained. The Kalon also called for greater compassion toward students with special needs, emphasising the importance of kindness and inclusivity. By treating others with empathy, students not only foster a supportive environment but also develop personal qualities of compassion, aligning with the broader goals of education and the teachings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

### **Red-House Indie Film Festival to feature documentary 'Un-titled' on Tibetans in exile**

14 November 2024, ANI

The Red House is presenting the second edition of the Red-House Indie Film Festival (RIFF), a three-day celebration of independent filmmaking.

From November 15-17, RIFF will showcase a diverse range of films from emerging and established independent filmmakers across the country, from all over the country with distinct voices and bold new ideas to showcase their films.

On the second day of the festival, November 16, a documentary named Un-titled, will be shown. Directed by Syed Ahmad Rufai and filmed in McLeod Ganj, the documentary explores the displacement of Tibetans from their homeland and their establishment of a government-in-exile in India, highlighting their resilience and resistance through poetry.

Notably, Tibet's struggle for autonomy remains a complex issue. Since China invaded Tibet in 1950 and its subsequent incorporation into the People's Republic of China, the region has faced sweeping changes in governance and society. Tibetan leaders, including the Dalai Lama, have consistently called for greater autonomy, citing threats of cultural erosion, religious restrictions, and human rights violations.

Earlier on November 8, Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the political leader of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), urged Tibetans in exile to deepen their historical understanding of Tibet and its current challenges in order to strengthen their connection to the Tibetan cause.

He addressed people at the Kalimpong Tibetan settlement during his ongoing tour to engage with Tibetan communities and emphasised the importance of recognising Tibet's geopolitical significance, particularly its vital river systems and environmental challenges.

During his visit, Sikyong addressed students and highlighted the critical role of Tibet's history in shaping the community's struggle for autonomy. He noted the need for Tibetans to cultivate a stronger bond with their heritage and culture to preserve their identity amid mounting challenges.

Sikyong also visited key Tibetan institutions, including the Tibetan Mentseekhang, the Tibetan Old Age Home, and the Kalimpong Tibetan Opera

Association. At a gathering of approximately 200 Tibetan residents, he reflected on the community's journey into exile, honouring the sacrifices of past generations and acknowledging the role of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in establishing Tibetan settlements and schools in India.

### **Exile Tibetan parliament members interact with Lithuanian, Latvian lawmakers, others in advocacy drive**

14 November 2024, Tibetan Review

A delegation of two members of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile (TPiE) held a series of meetings with lawmakers and other Tibet supporters in the Baltic states of Lithuania and Latvia over Nov 11 and 13, including with the Speaker of Latvia's Saeima, to garner support for a host of grave issues, said the TPiE in a Tibet.net report Nov 12-14.

The delegates, Geshe Lharampa Gowo Lobsang Pende and Mr Wangdue Dorjee, have raised awareness about the Chinese government's ongoing repression of Tibetan religious freedom and the Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism and culture, and sought support for bringing an end to these repressions.

Following their initial arrival in Vilnius on Nov 10, the delegates held a breakfast meeting with Mr Dainius Zalimas, Member of the European Parliament and former President of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania, on the following day. Zalimas has expressed unwavering commitment to advocating for Tibet, despite the challenging political climate.

Zalimas has also committed to do his best to help establish the Tibet Intergroup in the European Parliament by working with like-minded MEPs. He has also promised assistance to the local Tibet Support Group in organising Tibet awareness events locally.

On the following day, the delegation has met with members of the Lithuanian Parliamentary Group for Relations with Tibet. The visit coincided with the period of political transition in the country following the recent general elections with a new parliament and a potential change in government. The outgoing chair of the group, Mr Andrius Navickas, has presided over the last meeting of the group in the outgoing parliament, which was held with the presence of the Tibetan visitors.

The MPs who attended it have also included Arunas Valinskas and Matas Maldeikis, both of whom were re-elected, and outgoing members Kestutis Navickas (former Minister for Agriculture) and Monica Navickiene.

Navickas has expressed hope that the group would be re-established in the new parliament with Arunas Valinskas at the helm while assuring full cooperation



from the outgoing members. Valinskas has assured his continued support for Tibet for the next four years of the new parliament's term.

At the meeting, Professor Vytis Vidunas, Director of the House of Tibet, has recalled His Holiness the Dalai Lama's first visit to Lithuania with much gratitude and appreciation.

Professor Vidunas and Robertas Mazeika from the local Tibet Support Group have accompanied the TPiE members to the Tibet Square – a symbol of Lithuanian solidarity with the Tibetan people. The square was opened in 2010 with a blessing by His Holiness the Dalai Lama during his visit there. His Holiness last visited the square in 2018 and planted a tree to symbolise the friendship between the peoples of Lithuania and Tibet.

Arriving in Latvia's capital Riga on Nov 13, the TPiE delegation has met with the Speaker of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, Daiga Mieriņa, as well as Juris Vīlums, Chair of the Group for the Support of Tibet in the Saeima, and Aleksandrs Kiršteins, another MP.

### **Tibet Information Office Participates in seminar hosted by the Chinese Alliance for Democracy**

13 November 2024, CTA

A two-day seminar hosted by the International Chinese Alliance for Democracy at the University of Sydney from 9 November brought together prominent Chinese democratic figures, scholars, and Taiwanese leaders to explore the potential role of Taiwan's democratic model in inspiring democratic movements within mainland China. The event also featured the participation of Dawa Sangmo, the Chinese Liaison Officer of the Tibet Information Office (also called the Office of Tibet).

Moderated by Dr Jingjing Zhong, Chairman of the Chinese Alliance for Democracy Australia, the seminar aimed to not only discuss democratic ideals but also develop practical strategies for uniting pro-democracy forces towards a common objective.

The chief guest Wang Dan, a prominent leader of the Tiananmen Square pro-democracy movement, delivered a powerful address on the importance of strengthening the Chinese democratic movement. He outlined six key strategies for achieving this goal, which included building a strong support base, engaging more actively in local and national politics, and fostering unity among pro-democracy forces. He also commented on Sino-Tibet relations, expressing admiration for the Tibetan government-in-exile and suggesting that Chinese democrats could learn valuable lessons from the Central Tibetan Administration's governance strategies.

In her talk titled "Sino-Tibet Civil Friendship and Its Path Forward," Chinese Liaison Officer Dawa Sangmo acknowledged Taiwan's democracy as a potential model for democratic reform in China. However, she emphasised the need for deeper collaboration between Chinese democrats and Tibetans, advancing their partnership to a "2.0 level." Given the close geographical and historical ties between China and Tibet, she argued that it is crucial to recognise Tibet's historical independence and its current status as an occupied territory. She also emphasised the support for the Middle Way Policy as a means to foster peaceful coexistence, advocating for mutual respect and constructive dialogue between the two regions.

The seminar was also attended by Chinese democrats from the US, including Liquan Chen, Vice Chairman of the Democratic Party of China National Committee; Xinmin Qing, Vice Chairman and Secretary-General of the International Chinese Alliance for Democracy; and Xiuhong Jing, Chairman of the Chinese Democracy & Human Rights Alliance. and it underscored a unified agreement on continued cooperation between democratic forces.

### **Asian Buddhist Summit 2024 Focuses on Strengthening Asia Through Buddhism**

13 November 2024, CTA

Under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) hosted the First Asian Buddhist Summit 2024, themed "Role of Buddhism in Strengthening Asia". The two-day summit was held at the Ashok Hotel in New Delhi from 5 to 6 November 2024. His Holiness the Dalai Lama's written message for the summit was read by Ven. Shartse Khensur Jangchup Choeden, Secretary General of the International Buddhist Confederation.

The summit was inaugurated by Smt. Droupadi Murmu, the Honorable President of India, who attended as the chief guest. She was joined by Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Union Minister of Culture, and Shri Kiren Rijiju, Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and Minority Affairs. Their presence underscored the Indian government's commitment to fostering interfaith dialogue and exchange.

Mr. Tenzin Lekshay, Official Spokesperson and Additional Secretary of International Relations, Department of Information and International Relations of the Central Tibetan Administration, delivered a presentation on Tibetan Buddhism, elaborating on its historical and spiritual significance, and its continued relevance in today's world. He also discussed the teachings and global impact of His

Holiness the Dalai Lama, emphasizing His messages of Buddhist values, science, and religion.

The summit saw the participation of many revered Buddhist leaders, including His Eminence Menri Trizin Rinpoché, Kyabje Ling Choktrul Rinpoche, Kyabje Kundeling Rinpoche, Venerable Mingyur Rinpoche, Venerable Yangten Rinpoche among others. Many senior monks, abbots, and spiritual heads from a wide array of Buddhist traditions across Asia attended the summit and, engaged in discussions on Buddhism's potential to address contemporary global challenges.

Throughout the two-day event, key discussions focused on the role of Buddhism in promoting social harmony, ecological sustainability, and fostering interfaith dialogue, all crucial in the context of Asia's diverse and complex societies.

The Asian Buddhist Summit 2024 underscored the importance of continuing the dialogue on Buddhism's role in strengthening the cultural, spiritual, and socio-political ties within Asia, with a focus on sharing wisdom for a peaceful future.

In total, the summit attracted over 700 attendees, including Buddhist leaders, monks, scholars, educators, and practitioners, reflecting the deep interest in Buddhist teachings as a force for peace and unity in the region.

### **China-linked group hacked Tibetan media and university sites to distribute Cobalt Strike payload**

13 November 2024, The Record Media, Daryna Antoniuk

A China-linked state hacker group has compromised Tibetan media and university websites in a new espionage campaign, researchers have found – part of a series of attacks targeting the Tibetan community in order to collect intelligence for Beijing.

The websites of the digital news outlet Tibet Post and Gyudmed Tantric University were hacked in late May and remain compromised as of the time of writing. Researchers at Recorded Future's Insikt Group track the group behind the activity as TAG-112.

The Record is an editorially independent unit of Recorded Future.

According to a new Insikt Group report, TAG-112 has several overlaps with another Chinese state-sponsored group, Evasive Panda, which has been described as "highly skilled and aggressive."

Evasive Panda is also interested in targeting the Tibetan community and previously compromised the Tibet Post. Both threat actors have also manipulated hacked websites to prompt visitors to download a malicious file disguised as a "security certificate."

Despite these similarities, Insikt Group analysts believe TAG-112 is a separate hacker group, as it

lacks Evasive Panda's sophistication and hasn't deployed custom malware. Instead, the group used Cobalt Strike, a legitimate cybersecurity tool designed to help security professionals simulate cyberattacks. The Cobalt Strike Beacon payload has been widely adopted by hackers to carry out real attacks.

TAG-112 is likely a subgroup of Evasive Panda, working toward the same or similar intelligence requirements, researchers said.

Both websites compromised by the group were "almost certainly" built with the Joomla content management system (CMS), which "if not maintained and updated... become[s] an easy target for cyber threat actors," the researchers said. The group likely exploited a vulnerability in the websites to upload the malicious code.

The Tibetan community in exile, along with other ethnic minority groups in China, has long been a target for various Chinese cyber-espionage groups. Beijing perceives these groups as subversive or separatist elements challenging the Chinese Communist Party.

It is highly likely that both TAG-112 and Evasive Panda will continue their targeting of ethnic, religious, and human rights-linked organizations that operate in or have a nexus to China, researchers said.

Earlier in March, Tibetans were targeted with corrupted language translation software in a cyber-espionage campaign linked to Evasive Panda. The attack affected Tibetans living in India, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Australia, and the U.S.

### **10th Young Tibetan Researchers Conference Held at Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies (CIHTS) in Varanasi**

11 November 2024, CTA



10th Young Tibetan Researchers Conference Held at Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies (CIHTS) in Varanasi

The 10th Young Tibetan Researchers Conference was held for three days from November 9-11, 2024, at

the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies (CIHTS) in Varanasi, organised by the Tibet Policy Institute. This marks the first time the Tibet Policy Institute has organised the Young Tibetan Researchers Conference at CIHTS Varanasi. Over thirty young researchers are presenting and discussing their findings on topics spanning from Tibetan religion, ancient and modern history, anthropology and epigraphy, politics and society, grammar and literature, education and development, environment, and the exile community, showcasing diverse facets of Tibetan culture.

The chief guest at the inaugural ceremony was Prof. Lobsang Tenzin Raktoe, representing the Vice-Chancellor of CIHTS, along with Secretary Dawa Tsering, Director of the Tibet Policy Institute; Joint Secretary Tempa Gyaltsen Zamlha, Deputy Director; Prof. Jampa Samten of CIHTS; Prof. Tsewang Topla of Sarah College; Assistant Professor Lhakpa Tsering of CIHTS Tibetan Language Department; Geshe Lobsang Ngodrup, Head of Tibetan Studies Department at Dalai Lama Institute for Higher Education, Bangalore; Assistant Professor Lhamo Tso from Dalai Lama Institute for Higher Education, Bangalore; and over thirty other researchers and observers.

In his welcome speech, Tibet Policy Institute Director Dawa Tsering highlighted that the conference's primary goal was to address the limited participation of exiled Tibetans in international discussions on Tibet, in contrast to China's active presence at Tibetan studies conferences. He noted that China employs over 2,000 so-called Tibetan studies experts, who misinterpret history to claim Tibet as part of China and assert that Tibetan religion and culture originated in China. Secretary Dawa emphasised the need for meaningful discussions and scholarly publications on these critical topics.

The chief guest commended the Tibet Policy Institute for organising a conference that gathered many young Tibetan researchers, emphasising the importance of studying not only Tibet's past but also its future direction—examining Tibet's past, present, and future as a whole. He remarked on Tibet's precarious current situation compared to its history, noting that Tibet's continued existence and its religion and culture's relevance in academia are largely due to collective resilience.

During his opening remarks, Deputy Director Zamlha Tempa Gyaltsen noted that the 25 researchers presenting at the three-day conference represented institutions including CIHTS Varanasi, Sarah College of Higher Tibetan Studies, Dalai Lama Institute for Higher Education in Bangalore, Tibet Policy Institute, and Nepal. Additionally, four invited experts were present to provide guidance: Dawa Tsering, Director of Tibet Policy Institute, Prof. Jampa Samten, Prof.

Tsewang Topla, and Assistant Professor Lhakpa Tsering. He announced that the conference would feature a special session on developing unified research methodologies for both traditional and modern Tibetan studies, along with a dedicated session addressing China's use of the term "Xizang" for Tibet. The event will conclude with guided tours of some historical sites in the area.

-Report filed by Tibet Policy Institute, CTA

### **Tibetan Delegates Highlight Derge Dam Concerns on First Day of COP29 UN Climate Summit**

11 November 2024, CTA

At COP29, the global climate summit that kicked off today in Baku, Tibetan representatives Dechen Palmo and Dhondup Wangmo are bringing much-needed attention to environmental concerns in Tibet. Representing the region's interests, they highlighted the potential ecological impacts of the Derge Dam project, a hydropower initiative poised to alter the landscape of the Drichu River and affect downstream communities reliant on its waters.

On the first day of COP29, Tibetan environmental researcher Dechen Palmo and Dhondup Wangmo launched a campaign to raise awareness of the environmental and cultural risks posed by the Derge Dam project. They distributed a brochure titled "Say No to the Derge Dam Project in Tibet: Protect the Drichu River, Community, and Heritage from Destruction" to attendees, government representatives, and environmental organisations.

The brochure outlines potential impacts of the dam on the Drichu River, which holds not only ecological significance but also cultural value for local communities in Tibet. "Our goal is to build support for the protection of the Drichu River and to prevent irreversible damage to Tibet's natural and cultural heritage," Dechen explained.

Dechen Palmo and Dhondup Wangmo's schedule at COP29 includes participation in government meetings, side events and visits to government offices and country pavilions. The delegates are focused on raising awareness about Tibet's vulnerable ecosystem, emphasising the urgency of addressing the impacts of hydropower development on the Tibetan plateau.

"The Derge Dam project is not just a local issue; it is part of a broader pattern impacting regional water security and biodiversity," Dhondup Wangmo stated. "We're here to advocate for sustainable approaches that respect both Tibet's unique environment and the people who depend on it."

By attending various discussions at different pavilions and government offices, the Tibetan delegation aims to foster international support for policies that protect Tibet's rivers and fragile ecosystem. With

the Derge Dam at the heart of their advocacy, the delegates' presence at COP29 underscores Tibet's role as a critical water source and a frontline region in the struggle for climate resilience.

Through this publication and discussions at COP29's side events and pavilions, Palmo and Wangmo are advocating for sustainable alternatives and international cooperation to safeguard Tibet's environment and its vital water sources.

-Report filed by Tibetan Policy Institute, CTA

### **Vietnamese Buddhist Sangha meets Dalai Lama, with invite for Vesak celebrations next year**

11 November 2024, Tibetan Review



A delegation of top Vietnamese Buddhist leaders led by Ven Thich Tam Tri, Member of the Supreme Patriarch Council of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS), has called on the Dalai Lama at his exile residence in Dharamshala, India, on Nov 8. And it asked him to send representatives of Tibetan Buddhism to attend Vesak, the most significant Buddhist festival, in May 2025 in Vietnam, reported the ANI news service Nov 10.

The VBS is the only Buddhist sangha recognised by the Vietnamese government.

"We requested his Holiness to send a delegation from Tibetan Buddhism from Dharamshala to attend an important Buddhist event to be hosted by Sangha from 6th to 8th of May next year and he has approved our proposal," Ven Thich Nhat Tu, Vice President of VBS and Vice-Chancellor of Vietnam Buddhist University, has said.

He has further said: "We also requested his Holiness to authorise a Tibetan master to sign an MoU with VBS for long life cooperation between Tibetan and Vietnamese Buddhist. Apart from this we also requested him to allow us to translate some of his books so that Tibetan Buddhism can be read and viewed by more and more people in Vietnam and then we also requested him to live a long life for the benefit of people around the world."

The 45-member Vietnamese Buddhist delegation visited Dharamshala after attending the Asian Buddhist Conference in Delhi last week.

Vesak, the day of the full moon in the month of May, is the most sacred day to millions of Buddhists around the world. It was on the day of Vesak two and a half millennia ago, in the year 623 BC, that the Buddha was born. It was also on the day of Vesak that the Buddha attained enlightenment, and it was on the day of Vesak that the Buddha in his eightieth year passed away, the report noted, citing the United Nations.

The delegation was earlier received by the Secretary and Additional Secretary of the Department of Religion and Culture of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) at the Kangra Airport at Gaggal on Nov 7 and visited the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives and Tibet Museum in the CTA complex.

The other members of the delegation were stated to included Ven Thich Tam Duc, Deputy Director of Vietnam Buddhist Research Institute and Executive Committee member of VBS; Ven Thích Bồn Đạt, President of Vietnamese Buddhist Association in Canada; Ven Thich Le Nguyen, President of Vietnamese Buddhist Association in UK; Ven Dr Thich Dong Thanh, Vice-Chancellor of Buddhist University in Hue City, Vietnam; Ven Dr Thich Giac Hiep; Ven Ngo Tri Vien, member of VBS; Bikkhuni Dr Dieu Hieu, Deputy Head of Pali Department at Vietnam Buddhist University; and Bhikkhuni Dr Giac Le Hieu, Abbess of Vietnamese Temple in Korea.

### **Sikyong Penpa Tsering Visits Tibetan Institutions in Kalimpong, Addresses Tibetans on Key Issues Concerning Tibet**

11 November 2024, CTA

As part of his ongoing official visits to Tibetan settlements in exile, Sikyong Penpa Tsering visited Tibetan establishments in Kalimpong Tibetan settlement on 8 November 2024.

Sikyong kicked off his day-long engagement with visitations to Sed-Gyued Monastery and Zhekar Choede Monastery, followed by an address at the Sambhota Tibetan School, Kalimpong.

After a brief introductory opening by the school's Principal, Tsering Tsomo, Sikyong advised students to learn about Tibet's past histories and current status to reconnect themselves with the Tibet cause. Having said that, Sikyong shared his insights about the geopolitical status of the Tibetan plateau and the major roles that Tibet's river system plays in the livelihoods of riparian Asian communities. Sikyong further spoke about the environmental challenges that have disturbed the Tibetan plateau's fragile ecosystem.

Sikyong also held a Q&A session with the student before wrapping up his address.



Thereafter, Sikyong headed to Gaden Tharpa Choeling and Tsechen Thinley Dhargyeling monastery to pay obeisance. At the same time, he also toured the monastery's museum.

Later that afternoon, Sikyong visited the local Tibetan Mentseekhang branch, the local Tibetan Old Age Home, and the Kalimpong Tibetan Opera Association before addressing the gathering of around 200 Tibetan residents at the Mani Lhakhang.

In his address, Sikyong Penpa Tsering reflected on the Tibetan community's journey into exile, highlighting the efforts of the older generation and detailing how His Holiness the Dalai Lama, with the assistance from Indian Prime Minister Nehru, established Tibetan settlements and schools in India. He also discussed how His Holiness' travels to Asia in 1967 and Europe in 1973 led to the development of the Middle Way Approach, a concept rooted in concerns for Tibet's survival and cultural preservation, particularly following the destruction wrought by China's Cultural Revolution.

The Sikyong then traced the evolution of the Middle Way, noting His Holiness's presentation of the Five-Point Peace Plan to the U.S. Congress in 1979, with an emphasis on Sino-Tibetan dialogue. In 1988, His Holiness further articulated this approach during his address to the European Parliament, which became a turning point for the Tibetan exile community. The Sikyong emphasised that the Middle Way Approach continues to guide the community's efforts toward a peaceful resolution, aligned with His Holiness' vision for Tibet's future.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering emphasised the importance of Tibetans understanding their history and staying informed about the critical situation in Tibet, where increasing Chinese restrictions have strained family relationships and reduced the number of Tibetans leaving for exile since 2008. This has had a negative impact on Tibetan monasteries and schools in the diaspora. He also expressed concern about the broader geopolitical context, noting China's weakened economic position post-pandemic and rising youth unemployment, which could present opportunities for Tibet's advocacy.

The Sikyong highlighted the 16th Kashag's strategy of engaging with global allies, including Uyghurs, Southern Mongolians, Hong Kong activists, Chinese pro-democrats, and Taiwanese, to strengthen Tibet's international appeal. He stressed that advocating for Tibet in isolation is ineffective, and a united front attracts more global attention. Finally, he warned that without a deep understanding of their history, Tibetans risk losing their cultural identity and the legacy of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's efforts, urging the community to prioritise this knowledge for future generations.

## **Tibetan MPs meet Czech lawmakers to discuss Tibet's struggles under Chinese rule**

10 November 2024, ANI

Tibetan Members of Parliament, Youdon Aukatsang and Tsering Lhamo held a series of significant meetings in Prague with Czech lawmakers and diplomats to raise awareness about Tibet's struggles under Chinese governance.

The high-level discussions focused on critical issues faced by Tibetans, such as the Chinese government's control over residential schools, the closures of Tibetan monastic and private schools, and the sensitive matter of Dalai Lama's reincarnation, an official press release by the Tibetan Parliament in Exile stated.

Hosted by prominent Czech government figures, the delegation's visit was supported by Eva Decroix, Chairperson of the Subcommittee for the Support of Democracy and Human Rights Abroad, and Jitka Seitlova, Vice President of the Senate, alongside other members of the Czech Parliament.

The Tibetan MPs shared a letter from the Speaker of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, underscoring the importance of Czech support for Tibet's rights and freedoms.

The Czech lawmakers voiced strong backing for the Tibetan cause, reaffirming their commitment to upholding Tibet's cultural and political rights. Recalling the historical friendship between the Dalai Lama and former Czech President Vaclav Havel, Czech officials emphasised their dedication to defending Tibet's unique heritage.

The meeting concluded with discussions on upcoming plans to celebrate the Dalai Lama's 90th birth anniversary in 2025, the press release stated.

In addition to these parliamentary discussions, the Tibetan MPs visited Sinopsis, a Czech-based organisation monitoring developments in China, including issues related to Tibet. It informed the delegation about an upcoming report on the succession of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, scheduled for release on December 10.

This report will examine the future of Tibetan leadership, particularly concerning the Dalai Lama's reincarnation, a topic that remains highly sensitive.

The Tibetan delegation also met with prominent Tibet advocates, Katerina and Martin Bursik, at their residence in Prague, where they discussed ongoing initiatives aimed at protecting Tibet's cultural and political rights.

The MPs then held further meetings with senior Czech officials, including Mr. Ondrej Chrast, Deputy Minister for Culture; Robert Rehak, Ambassador at Large and Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues, Interfaith Dialogue, and Freedom of Religion; and Ivana Grollova from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



These conversations focused on promoting international human rights, religious freedom, and cultural preservation, with a special emphasis on the Tibetan context.

Tibet's struggle involves complex political, cultural, and human rights issues within a region celebrated for its distinctive heritage and spiritual traditions. Since China's 1950 invasion, Tibet was integrated into the People's Republic of China, bringing significant transformations in governance, society, and daily life, stated the press release.

Driven by concerns over cultural erosion, religious repression, and widespread human rights abuses, many Tibetans, including the Dalai Lama, have long sought greater autonomy or independence.

The Chinese government maintains its position that Tibet is an inseparable part of China and views its policies in the region as essential for economic growth and modernisation. This stance has ignited persistent global debate and advocacy efforts, with supporters calling for the preservation of Tibet's culture and the safeguarding of its people's rights.

Consequently, Tibet remains a sensitive issue in international diplomacy and human rights discussions.

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10 November 2024, The Print

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Consequently, Tibet remains a sensitive issue in international diplomacy and human rights discussions. (ANI)

## Tibetan environment activist highlights China's large-scale timber extraction

09 November 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

Tibetan environment activist Padma Wangyal delivered an address at the "Rivers of the Sky: Glaciers of the Sky" exhibition, which is currently on display at the Central Tibetan Administration's Tibet Museum. The exhibition organised by Tibet Museum and researchers from the Tibet Policy Institute (TPI), highlights Tibet's major rivers and exposes China's exploitation of these vital resources as political tools.

Padma Wangyal, who has spent decades advocating for environmental preservation in both Tibet and Nepal, shared insights from his visits to Tibet between 1987 and 2008. He emphasized the extensive logging activities along Tibet's border with China, particularly in the region of Dhartsedo, where large-scale timber extraction has continued for decades. Citing figures from his observations, Wangyal reported that between 1987 and 1989, as many as 100 trucks transported timber out of Tibet on a daily basis. By 1996, this number had risen to 300 trucks, signalling an escalation in deforestation activities.

Reflecting on his experiences, Padma explained that his initial trips to Tibet were not focused on environmental research but on gaining a broader understanding of the conditions in his homeland. It was only after repeatedly witnessing the Chinese government's extensive deforestation and environmental damage that he became deeply concerned. "Prior to the 1980s, Tibet's road infrastructure was limited," he noted, "but since then, the Chinese government has built roads specifically to facilitate the large-scale extraction and transport of Tibetan timber." Wangyal referred to the Chinese authorities as "red thugs," a term he used to underscore his view of the communist regime's exploitative policies in Tibet.



Padma Wangyal speaking to the exile Tibetan media following his address at Tibet Museum exhibition (Phayul photo)

In response to the environmental destruction he witnessed, Padma initiated a tree plantation project

in 2000 at Tsurphu Monastery, the seat of His Holiness the Gyalwang Karmapa in Central Tibet. Funded by His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Private Office, the project received additional support from then-German President Johannes Rau. "I was able to carry out the tree plantation project in Tibet by bringing two forestry experts from Germany, as I had no expertise in afforestation myself," he shared. The German experts provided training to local Tibetans and monastery monks on afforestation methods and sustainable vegetable cultivation around the monastery grounds.

Since 2009, Padma has been unable to return to Tibet. After retiring as an industrial baker in Germany, he dedicated himself to environmental and humanitarian causes, serving as the Khoryug Coordinator for monasteries in Nepal under the guidance of His Holiness the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa from 2009 to 2023. Wangyal also contributed to earthquake relief efforts from 2015 to 2018, furthering his commitment to community resilience and environmental protection.

The exhibition's inauguration, held on Friday morning, saw Tibetan Parliament in Exile Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering attend as the chief guest. Also present were Karma Choeying, Secretary of the Department of Information and International Relations, and Padma Wangyal's wife, Magda.

## Tibetan parliament in-exile calls for UN research on 'damage that is being done by China' in Tibet

09 November 2024, The Sentinel

The Tibetan parliament in-exile has called on the United Nations to initiate scientific research into the implications of the damage that is being done by the China in Tibetan plateau.

The call was made during the launch of the Tibet Museum's latest exhibition, Rivers of the Sky, in Dharamshala, which aims to raise awareness on how environmental degradation in Tibet directly affects not only the region but also neighbouring countries, especially India.

The exhibition was inaugurated on Friday morning by Dolma Tsering, Deputy Speaker of the Tibetan parliament in-exile, who underscored the plateau's importance for worldwide climate patterns. "The impact is such that the monsoon fluctuation in India and Northeast Asia and the warming Europe. They are all impacted by the thinning of snow at the Tibetan plateau," Tsering told ANI.

"Therefore, we want the United Nations framework for climate convention to have a scientific research on how the Tibet's glaciers, how the Tibet plateau is significant for the survival of whole humanity... I am urging the United Nations to have scientific findings

on what are the implications of the damage that is being done by the People's Republic of China."

According to Tibetan environmentalist Padma Wangyal, "There is a massive deforestation is going on in Tibet for the past few decades and it's affecting Tibet's environment very badly. Specially countries like India are directly affected by this environmental destruction in Tibet."

Deforestation has reportedly exacerbated the effects of climate change in Tibet, affecting water supplies and monsoon cycles critical to regional agriculture and ecosystem stability.

Tenzin Thubten, director of the Tibet Museum, emphasised the exhibition's message to the international community and China. He highlighted that the main content for 'Rivers of the Sky' was developed by renowned researcher Gabriel, but was curated to reflect the Tibet Museum's perspectives.

Thubten explained, "Of course, there are multiple objectives behind this particular temporary exhibition, but the main objective is to tell Chinese that your counter-narrative your policy towards Tibet is not working because for last 70 years, China has captured Tibet and tortured Tibetans in many ways but now this is in global ways, in terms of the rivers exploitation. It is not only for the 6 million Tibetan people, it is now to the 2 billion people who are directly dependent on the major rivers that flow from Tibet." (ANI)

#### **'Rivers of the Sky' Exhibition Highlights Mismanagement of Tibet's Vulnerable River System Ahead of COP29**

08 November 2024, CTA

The Tibet Museum of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) launched its temporary exhibition titled "Rivers of the Sky" earlier today, with the gracious presence of Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang.

This exhibition, which underscores the critical importance of Asia's lifeblood and the pressing challenges it faces, is specifically designed to draw the attention of the international community in the lead-up to COP29. It emphasises the growing vulnerability of these rivers in Tibet due to the combined impacts of climate change, environmental degradation, and the mismanagement of water resources.

The exhibition also sheds light on the Tibetan Plateau—often called the "Third Pole" for its vast glaciers and snow-capped mountains—which is confronting unprecedented environmental pressures. These include the rapid melting of glaciers and the over-exploitation of water resources through large-scale damming and diversion projects. It serves as a stark warning: if the mismanagement of these rivers

continues unchecked, the consequences could be catastrophic. Both the delicate ecosystems that rely on these waterways and the millions of people who depend on them for survival are at risk. The time for action is now, and the international community must address these pressing issues before it's too late.

Tibetan environmentalist Padma Wangyal, who launched a tree plantation project at Tsurphu Monastery in Tibet in 2000 and has also served as Khoryug (environment) Coordinator for monasteries in Nepal, was featured during the exhibition's opening ceremony. Padma shared his experiences of witnessing large-scale extraction of wood from the Tibetan region to profit the Chinese state-owned enterprises and private companies during the ceremony and recalled how he received support from His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Germany's Green Party in realising his initiative to conduct a tree plantation inside Tibet.

Alongside Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang, the inaugural of this temporary exhibition was also attended by Auditor General Lhakpa Gyaltsen; Secretary Karma Choeying, Department of Information and International Relations; and Secretary Tenzin Legdup, Election and Public Service Commission; Additional Secretary Kunga Gyaltsen, Department of Religion and Culture; and Director of the Tibet Museum, Tenzin Topdhen.

#### **Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang Meets Australia Tibet Council Delegation, Expresses Gratitude for their Support to Tibet**

08 November 2024, CTA

As part of the Australia Tibet Council's (ATC) "Little Tibet" tour, a delegation led by ATC Executive Director Dr. Zoë Bedford visited the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile and met with Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang earlier today, 8 November 2024.

Welcoming the ATC delegation, Deputy Speaker Teykhang extended a warm greeting to the guests and emphasised the special bond shared between Tibetans and Australians. She praised the ATC for its unwavering advocacy for Tibet over the past decades and expressed deep gratitude for their continued support.

The delegation was briefed by the Deputy Speaker on the composition and structure of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, the roles and responsibilities of its parliamentarians, and the election process for selecting them.

The Deputy Speaker also thanked the ATC for bringing the delegation to Dharamsala, noting that learning about the Sino-Tibetan conflict and experiencing the work of the Central Tibetan

Administration (CTA) first-hand would strengthen their commitment to the just cause of Tibet.

Highlighting the importance of spreading awareness about Tibet, the Deputy Speaker stressed the challenge of countering China's disinformation campaigns. She condemned China's expansionist mentality, describing it as one of the greatest threats to global democracy. She also spoke about His Holiness the Dalai Lama's long-aspired vision for a democratic system that ensures fairness and justice for Tibetans, as well as his gift of democracy to the Tibetan people.

The Deputy Speaker also drew attention to the critical situation inside Tibet, including the forced relocation of Tibetan children to colonial-style boarding schools and the self-immolations of Tibetans as acts of protest. She expressed her gratitude to the Australian Ambassador to the UN for reading a Joint Statement from a group of nations on 22 October 2024, which raised the issue of Tibet at the UN General Assembly and condemned China's refusal to address the UN's legitimate concerns.

To conclude the visit, the delegation was honoured with traditional Tibetan ceremonial scarves and mementos as a gesture of appreciation before being given a tour of the Parliament Hall.

### **Tibetan translation of Barbara Demick's "Eat the Buddha" launched in Dharamshala**

07 November 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

The Tibetan translation of *Eat the Buddha: Life and Death in a Tibetan Town*, a critically acclaimed book by American journalist Barbara Demick, was launched on Tuesday at the conference hall of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamshala. Organised by Tibet Times, a Tibetan media outlet, the event gathered researchers, scholars, activists, and members of the Tibetan community.

Originally published in 2020, *Eat the Buddha* chronicles the complex lives of Tibetans in Ngaba, a town at the center of Tibet's self-immolation protests against Chinese repression. Through intimate narratives, Demick captures the resilience, suffering, and quiet resistance of the Tibetan people, especially those from the Kirti Monastery community, who have endured some of the most severe restrictions and violence.

In her virtual message to the gathering, Demick expressed her gratitude to the Tibetan translator, Depo Tso, and editor, Atuk Kunchok, acknowledging their dedication to making these poignant stories accessible to Tibetan readers. She shared insights into her motivation and privileged access that enabled the creation of this book. "I was based in Beijing from 2007 to 2014 as the correspondent for

the Los Angeles Times. As a registered journalist, my press card allowed me to travel anywhere in China, granting me privileges others didn't have. I felt obligated to use these privileges to the best of my abilities. I wanted to report from places that were hard for foreigners to access, and Tibet was one of them," she explained.

Since the book's release, Demick said she has had opportunities to discuss *Eat the Buddha* with young Tibetans, particularly those studying abroad. "I have had opportunities to speak about the book with young Tibetans, most of whom were highly educated university students living in the US and the UK. But I have been surprised that even they are not fully aware of the enormity of what was happening in Tibet from the 1950s onwards," she remarked. "This is why I am pleased that this book has been translated into Tibetan. I am hoping that the translation will be made accessible to the larger audience."

Depo Tso, who translated the book, shared how *Eat the Buddha* resonated with her on a personal level. "The book portrays historical accounts of Tibet, specifically self-immolations, which is something I relate to personally," she said, recounting the loss of her younger sibling, who self-immolated on January 6, 2012, alongside his friend Tsultrim. "He passed on that day, and his friend passed away the next day. Reading this book filled me with emotions, and I cried many times."

Depo Tso also reflected on the book's portrayal of the Cultural Revolution, a period that brought personal tragedy to her family. "During the Cultural Revolution, my grandfather, a Lama, was severely targeted. The Chinese authorities at the time were extremely strict with Lamas, and he was shot three times. He passed away, leaving my father, who was only three months old. Growing up, my father would narrate this story to me, and translating this book brought back those memories," she explained, noting the profound impact the book had on her.

### **Europe Tibet Advocacy in Germany: Tibetan MPs Discuss Critical Situation in Tibet with German MPs**

07 November 2024, CTA

On the last day of the visit in Berlin, Tibetan MPs Youdon Aukatsang and Tsering Lhamo held a briefing on Tibet in the Committee Room, Paul-Löbe-Haus of the German Bundestag hosted by MP Michael Brand, Chair of the German Tibetan Parliamentary Group for Tibet.

Present at the meeting were MP Michael Brand, CDU Party and Co-Chair of Inter Parliamentary Alliance on China, MP Peter Heidt, FDP Party Spokesperson on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid, MP Maria



Klein-Schmeink, Green Party Spokesperson on Health Policy and MP Frank Müller, member of FDP working group on Foreign Policy.

In addition to the UN Advocacy Officer from the Office of Tibet Geneva, Phuntsok Topgyal and Dundup Donka, President of Tibetan Community in Germany, Kai Müller, ICT Germany Director and David Missal, Tibetan Initiative Deutschland joined us in this Briefing at the German Bundestag.

The two Tibetan MPs made a brief presentation on the current situation in Tibet focusing on China's genocidal policies aimed at wiping out Tibetan identity, culture and religion. Particular concerns were raised on the state controlled residential boarding schools, closure Tibetan private schools and monastic schools, and demolition of monasteries in the name of development.

Special appeal was made to the German MPs to pass a declaration in the German Parliament endorsing His Holiness the Dalai Lama's sole authority to determine his reincarnation particularly on the occasion of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's 90th birth anniversary. The Tibetan MPs reiterated that this would send a strong signal to the Chinese government to not interfere in the religious sphere of the Tibetan people.

Upon urging the German MPs to visit Dharamshala to show their solidarity with Tibet, one of the MPs shared his interest in visiting Dharamshala in early 2025.

Following the presentation, Tibetan MPs were taken on an hour-long tour of the German Parliament courtesy MP Michael Brand and his staff. Tibetan MPs departed for Prague on the same evening.

-Report filed by Tibetan Parliamentary Secretariat

### **His Holiness the Dalai Lama Extends Congratulations to the U.S. President-elect Donald Trump**

07 November 2024, CTA

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has written to congratulate Donald Trump on his victory in the Presidential election.

"I have long admired the United States of America as the champion of democracy, freedom and the rule of law," His Holiness wrote. "The world places great hope in the democratic vision and leadership of the U.S.A. In these times of great uncertainty and upheaval in several parts of the world, it is my hope that you will provide leadership in bringing about peace and stability.

"The Tibetan people and I have been honoured to have received the support of respective U.S. Presidents and the American people, in our endeavour to protect and preserve our ancient Buddhist culture—a culture of peace, non-violence

and compassion that has the potential to benefit humanity as a whole.

His Holiness concluded, "I wish you every success in meeting the many challenges that lie ahead in fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of the American people and in contributing to peace in the world."

### **Department of Education, Central Tibetan Administration Unveils New Children's Books for Tibetan Children**

06 November 2024, CTA

On 6 November 2024, the Department of Education (DoE) of the Central Tibetan Administration released a series of children's books aimed explicitly at Tibetan children in both India and Nepal. This year, the DoE has published ten children's and five thick books, distributed free of charge. These books are available for download on the Department of Education's Tibetan language learning website and on the Issuu platform for anyone who wishes to access them.

These books are designed to enhance students' reading skills, memory, and concentration while offering fresh and creative inspiration. They aim to give children a broader understanding of various subjects and foster intellectual growth.

This initiative is supported and coordinated by USAID in partnership with The Tibet Fund.

### **Arunachal: TSGAP reiterates support to Tibetan cause**

06 November 2024, The Sentinel Assam

A team of Tibet Support Group of Arunachal Pradesh (TSGAP), led by its president Tarh Tarak and secretary-general Nima Sange called on Penpa Tsering, the Sikyong of Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), the Dharamshala-based Tibetan government-in-exile, at Tenzingang Tibetan settlement in West Kameng district, and reiterated the group's solidarity and support to the Tibetan cause.

Tarak said that TSGAP will continue its support to the Tibetan freedom struggle and work for the basic welfare of the Tibetan community residing in Arunachal Pradesh. He also said that the TSGAP will organize a series of events to bring mass awareness about Tibetans and the Tibet issues.

While highlighting the relation between Tibet and Arunachal Pradesh before the independence, Tarak advocated freedom of Tibet from China to restore the aged-old barter trade between Arunachal Pradesh and Tibet.

"TSGAP team firmly believes that under the leadership of Sikyong Penpa Tsering, CTA will renew



its call for finding a solution to the decades-old Tibet conflict with China through talks,” he said.

Tsering, who arrived here on Monday on a four-day state visit, especially West Kameng and Tawang, appreciated TSGAP for its support to the Tibetan cause and issue. Highlighting the CTA’s stand on the Tibet issue, the Sikyong of CTA said he would visit eastern part of Arunachal Pradesh in January next year.

Kalaktang MLA Tsetan Chombey, Tibetan settlement officer Rapten Tsering, and other officials of CTA were present during the interactive meeting.

The TSGAP team also met Speaker of Tibetan Parliament in-exile Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, Tibetan Member of Parliament in-exile Ven Geshe Lharampa Atuk Tsetan, TSO coordinator Tenzin Lhagyal and other senior officers of CTA here on November 3 and apprised them of the activities carried out by TSGAP and its future course of action on Tibetan cause, a press release said here on Tuesday.

### **DIIR Expresses Gratitude to 15 Countries for Their Statements on Human Rights Violations in Tibet at the 79th UNGA**

06 November 2024, CTA

The Department of Information and International Relations, Central Tibetan Administration, is pleased to extend its profound appreciation to the United States of America, as well as to Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Japan, Lithuania, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, for their collaborative efforts in issuing a joint statement during the recently concluded 79th General Assembly of the United Nations, which specifically addressed the ongoing violations of human rights by the People’s Republic of China in Tibet and East Turkistan.

Department of Information and International Relations Kalon Norzin Dolma remarked, “On behalf of the Department of Information and International Relations, Central Tibetan Administration and Tibetans in both Tibet and in exile, I acknowledge and appreciate the coalition of 15 nations led by Australia and their leaders who have courageously voiced their commitment to justice, human rights, and peace by raising the grave situation in occupied Tibet at the United Nations. This support is a meaningful step, yet we remain aware that significant work lies ahead to address the persistent challenges and human rights violations faced by Tibetans under the PRC government’s colonial occupation. Your collective support at the United Nations marks an important gesture. It reflects the ideals of international solidarity and action, and we look

forward to ongoing, collective efforts toward achieving genuine peace and justice”.

In light of the considerable challenges presently confronting Tibetans within Tibet—including the detention of individuals for the peaceful expression of political views, restrictions on travel, coercive labour arrangements, the separation of children from their families in boarding schools, and the erosion of linguistic, cultural, educational, and religious rights—Tibetan people hold the view that assertive statements regarding China’s actions on international platforms could play a crucial role in alleviating these dire situations and mitigating the sufferings endured within Tibet.

### **Deputy Speaker Meets FNVA Trustee and Tibetan Researchers**

05 November 2024, CTA

Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang met with Rebon Banerjee, Trustee of the Foundation for Non-Violent Alternatives (FNVA), on 4 November 2024 at the Deputy Speaker’s chamber. Three young Tibetan researchers accompanied Rebon Banerjee.



During their meeting, the Deputy Speaker encouraged three young Tibetan researchers to focus more on Tibet-related topics and leverage all available platforms to raise awareness about Tibet.

She also shared her experience attending one of the IPAC meetings, highlighting the importance of a unified message from Tibetans worldwide to reach a broader audience effectively.

The young researchers presented a brief overview of their work, outlining their research objectives and emphasising how well-conducted research, backed by accurate data, can help address miscommunication within the Tibetan community and in the broader international arena.

They further discussed with the Deputy Speaker how the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile and the Foundation for Non-Violent Alternatives could collaborate for more constructive outcomes and amplify the message, sharing their prior experiences in varied spheres.

They had a very fruitful meeting, followed by a guided tour of the parliament hall, where the Deputy Speaker provided an overview of the parliament's structure, evolution, and functioning.

### Central Tibetan Administration Convenes Three-Day Communication Strategy Meeting

04 November 2024, CTA

The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) convened a communication strategy meeting this morning at the Sager Science Center Hall, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, in Dharamshala, from 4 to 6 November 2024.

In the afternoon, the meeting commenced with an opening address by the Guest of Honor, Mark Tegenfeldt, Director of the General Development Office at USAID, India, followed by remarks from Kalon Norzin Dolma of the Department of Information and International Relations (DIIR).

In her address, Kalon Norzin Dolma underscored the necessity of enhancing CTA's communication strategy to disseminate news and foster public awareness effectively. She emphasised that such meetings are essential for aligning the communication needs of the CTA.

Kalon Norzin Dolma identified three primary target audiences for CTA communications: the Chinese, the international community, and the Tibetan populace. She elaborated on the importance of adequately addressing these audiences and discussed the challenges the CTA faces in this regard. She encouraged participants and facilitators to engage in the three-day meeting to fully maximize its benefits.

Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang addressed the gathering, commending the organiser of this communication strategy meeting, including parliamentarians and staff. She urged all participants to extract the utmost value from the discussions, irrespective of language barriers.

Leela Mulukutla, Chief of the Party at the National Democratic Institute, welcomed all attendees and encouraged a more interactive engagement throughout the meeting.

Members of the Parliament Standing Committee present included Tenpa Yarphel, Lupon Thupten Gyaltsen, Tsering Yangchen, Tsaneytsang Dhondup Tashi, and staff from the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile and DIIR.

This meeting is organised by the National Democratic Institute and funded by USAID.

### Pioneering Tibetan IT outfit unveils five new stages at Monlam Manifest 2024

04 November 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon



Geshe Lobsang Monlam, the visionary founder and the CEO of the Monlam Tibetan IT Research Center delivering opening remarks at Monlam Manifest 2024 at TIPA on Sunday (Photo/Tenzin Leckphel)

The Monlam Tibetan IT Research Center, a pioneering developer of Tibetan educational software, unveiled five new innovative stages as part of its ongoing technological journey at the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts (TIPA) here on Sunday. This year's Monlam Manifest 2024 event drew a diverse audience of Tibetan IT enthusiasts, educators, and community leaders eager to witness the latest innovations.

The launch event introduced Monlam AI, the first of its kind in Tibetan AI, featuring five major tools: Monlam Translate App, Monlam Web Extension, Monlam Nyamrub (Collaboration), Monlam Keyboard, and Monlam Melong, also known as the Tibetan Large Language Model (LLM). These tools reflect the centre's commitment to making the Tibetan language digitally accessible and empowering Tibetan-speaking communities to thrive in the global digital space.

Geshe Lobsang Monlam, the visionary founder and CEO of the Monlam Tibetan IT Research Center, in his opening remarks, spoke of his hope for these tools to bridge technological gaps while preserving Tibetan identity. "Through Monlam AI, we are creating not only tools but a platform where the Tibetan language can thrive digitally," he said. "Our language and culture can now be represented in ways that make it accessible globally while staying rooted in our traditions."

The five tools aim to fulfill Monlam's core aspirations by making the Tibetan language and knowledge more accessible in the digital world. The 'Monlam Translate App' enables seamless translation across voice, text, and image formats, allowing users to translate Tibetan into English and other languages effortlessly. The 'Monlam Web Extension' further supports this goal by allowing Tibetan readers to browse the internet with real-time translations of

complex concepts, thereby broadening access to educational resources. 'Monlam Nyamrub' (Collaboration) fosters community involvement by inviting Tibetan users to actively contribute to building Tibetan AI resources, creating a sense of ownership and participation in Tibetan digital progress.

The 'Monlam Keyboard', optimized for mobile devices, offers easy and accurate Tibetan typing, helping users communicate effectively and supporting digital literacy within the Tibetan community. Lastly, the 'Monlam Melong' (Tibetan Large Language Model, LLM), a key feature of Monlam's recent developments, captures the richness of Tibetan language and culture. Designed to mirror Tibetan values and knowledge, it allows users to interact with AI in a way that generates text and answers questions. Together, these tools represent Monlam's commitment to bridging technological gaps while preserving Tibetan linguistic and cultural heritage.

The event also celebrated Monlam's accomplishments, highlighting that over 43 software applications have been developed under the centre's guidance, with Geshe Monlam personally creating 37 of them. The Monlam Grand Dictionary alone has been accessed over 18 million times on iOS, with Android data expected to be even higher. Now comprising 223 volumes, the Monlam Grand Dictionary holds the distinction of being the largest dictionary in the world.

## October

### Chinese Liaison Officer Sangay Kyab Participates in a Conference Discussing Democratisation of China in Berlin

28 October 2024, CTA

The Chinese Liaison Officer from the Tibet Bureau in Geneva, Sangay Kyab, attended the "Joint conference of the people of Taiwan, Hong Kong, Chinese Liaison Officer Sangay Kyab Participates in a Conference Discussing Democratisation of China in Berlin

Tibet, Uyghur, Mongolia and Inner Mongolia against the atrocity in China" held by Sino Euro Voice in Berlin, Germany.

It was co-organised by the UK Headquarters of China Democracy Party, the Federation for a Democratic China, the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy, and the Democracy Party of China.

The conference's inaugural featured Dr Jhy-Wey Shieh, the Taiwanese Representative to Germany, who delivered the opening remarks and emphasised the importance of unity and cooperation among the



communities represented for fostering positive change in China. The Representative further expressed his gratitude to the Tibetan, Mongolian, and Uyghur communities for their solidarity and support for Taiwan in light of the increased aggression from the PRC in the Taiwan Strait.

In his address during the opening ceremony, Chinese Liaison Officer Sangay Kyab recounted His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama's immense contributions and shrewd guidance in promoting collaborations among the victims of the CPC's political repression while expressing his disappointment for the oversight in including a representative of White Paper Movement in this conference.

As the conference reflected on the Communist Party of China's 75 years of rule, Sangay Kyab provided a detailed account of the 75 years of repression in Tibet, dividing the period into four distinct phases. He noted that the Chinese government initiated major political campaigns in Tibet from 1949 to 1965, following a violent incursion. This was succeeded by the infamous Cultural Revolution, which lasted from 1966 to 1976. Kyab highlighted the CPC's promotion of mass immigration into Tibet from 1980 to 2012, alongside various sinicisation programs, marking the third phase of repression that led to numerous self-immolations, particularly after the 2008 pan-Tibet protests. He categorised the current period under Xi Jinping as the fourth phase, characterised by state policies aimed at erasing Tibetan identity, notably through the forced admission of over 1 million Tibetan children into colonial-style boarding schools. In the virtual talk section of the conference, Representative Kelsang Gyaltzen of the Office of Tibet in Taiwan delivered a talk, stressing that international discussion and attention over the Tibet cause has not yet diminished as many misperceive. In light of that, he elaborated on the recent enactment of the Resolve Tibet Act in the US.

Representatives from Tibet, Southern Mongolia, East Turkistan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Chinese pro-



democracy activist groups participated in the conference.

A day later, at 10:30 in the morning on 25 October, participants of the conference held a protest in front of the Chinese Embassy in Berlin.

### **India Tibet Coordination Office Holds Tibet Awareness Program in Mumbai to Strengthen Advocacy for Tibet**

28 October 2024, CTA



From left to right: Faculty Shri Arvind Nikose, Co-convenor of CGTC-I; Shri Santosh Rohidas Gharat, State Secretary (Political) of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), Maharashtra; Tashi Dekyi, Coordinator, ITCO; Principal Shri Kongere ji; Shri Bala Saheb Raste; and Teacher Suhas Shinde.

The India Tibet Coordination Office (ITCO) of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) organised a Tibet Awareness Program in Mumbai, engaging stakeholders across education, media, politics, and Tibet Support Groups to promote advocacy and solidarity with the Tibetan cause. The program aimed to strengthen advocacy and solidarity with the Tibetan cause, with events and meetings held across the city.

As part of the awareness initiative, "A Day for Tibet Program" was held at Shri Chhatrapati Shivaji High School in Navi Mumbai. Approximately 70 students, along with Principal Shri Kongere and faculty members, attended the program themed 'Why Tibet Matters to India'. The session was attended by chief guest Shri Santosh Gharat during which, ITCO Coordinator Tashi Dekyi shared insights on the historical, cultural, and geopolitical connections between India and Tibet in her address. The program highlighted the strategic relevance of Tibet, including environmental concerns and the importance of India's support for Tibet's cause. Students and teachers actively participated, making the session highly engaging and informative.

Likewise, an another advocacy meeting was held at Mehboob Studio with Bollywood producer Shri Raj Satyam and his nephew, Anish Vajjala. Tashi Dekyi, Coordinator of the ITCO, and Shri Raj Satyam discussed about creative ways to reach out the Indian masses; by making the Hindi cinema

fraternity more aware about Tibet, and building mass mobilisation through them.

Coordinator Tashi Dekyi also met with Shri Shashi Ranjan, an actor, filmmaker, and producer at Sony Entertainment Television, at his office in Lokandwala, Andheri West. The discussion centred on integrating Tibetan narratives into media and entertainment projects to generate public awareness.

On the political front, the program involved an advocacy meeting with Shri Santosh Rohidas Gharat, National General Secretary of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), Maharashtra. Shri Gharat expressed his support for the Tibetan cause and assured his involvement in political advocacy efforts to raise awareness at the state and national levels.

Coordinator Tashi Dekyi also made a courtesy call on Shri Varsha Eknath Gaikwad, a Congress Member of Parliament from Mumbai, at her office. The discussion focused on encouraging parliamentarians to engage with Tibet-related issues. Shri Gaikwad expressed her willingness to support initiatives promoting human rights and the preservation of Tibetan cultural heritage, signalling strong political backing for the Tibetan cause. The Coordinator also addressed the challenges faced by the Tibetan Refugee Market in Mumbai. She was joined by representatives from the Tibetan sweater-selling community in the city during this meeting. This dialogue underscored the need for continued support to sustain the livelihood and rights of Tibetan refugees in Mumbai.

In conclusion, the Tibet Awareness Program in Mumbai, spearheaded by Coordinator Tashi Dekyi marked a significant step in mobilising support across diverse sectors. The involvement of educational institutions, media professionals, political figures, and Tibet Support Groups demonstrated a collaborative effort to strengthen the Tibet advocacy movement.

The positive response from participants indicates the potential for future engagements and partnerships. Moving forward, follow-up meetings with key stakeholders, enhanced media outreach, and sustained political advocacy will be essential to maintain the program's momentum. The program also underscored the need for continued education and awareness efforts to inspire support among younger generations.

### **BTSM protests against China**

28 October 2024, Daily Excelsior

The Bharat-Tibet Sahyog Manch (BTSM) held a protest on Sunday, raising slogans against China and seeking boycott of Chinese products.

The demonstration, led by JKUT President Dr Vivek Sharma, demanded the complete liberation of Kailash Mansarovar and Tibet from Chinese control.

Dr. Sharma stated: "As civilians, we may not be able to fight at the border, but we can respond effectively by boycotting all Chinese products and encouraging others to do the same." He urged all members of society to support the boycott of Chinese goods and choose local products instead.

"Along with seeking the complete freedom of Tibet and Kailash Mansarovar, another objective of this protest is to encourage a boycott of Chinese goods in the market. While every citizen may not be able to go to war at the borders, it is our moral responsibility to embrace Swadeshi goods and demonstrate our patriotism," he said.

Rajinder Sadotra, General Secretary BTSM, said that use of Chinese goods is equal to helping China become economically stronger.

Others, who addressed the gathering, included Dr Vikrant Singh and Dr Rajesh Sharma, Vice President of BTSM; Vishal Sharma, Alok Mahajan, Mukesh Sharma and Dr Nitin.

### **Tibetan delegation in Europe raises awareness on repression by China in Tibet**

27 October 2024, ANI

A parliamentary delegation from the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) has intensified its global advocacy efforts by engaging with key figures in Switzerland to discuss the urgent situation in Tibet, a statement from CTA said.

The delegation, comprising parliamentarian MPs Geshe Atong Rinchen Gyaltsen, Lobsang Gyatso Sithar, and Tenzin Choezin met with Mario Fehr, Minister of Security of Zurich Council and embarked to express gratitude for his support during Dalai Lama's recent visit and his ongoing commitment to the Tibetan cause, the statement added.

As per the statement, during the meeting, the MPs detailed the escalating repressive measures imposed by the Chinese Communist government, aimed at erasing Tibetan religion, culture, language, and identity. They presented a letter of appeal, signed by the Speaker of the Tibetan Parliament, along with a symbolic souvenir from the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile.

Minister Fehr acknowledged his long-standing connection with the Tibetan community since 1988, reinforcing the importance of international support against China's oppressive policies. In the afternoon, the delegation convened with members of the Tibetan Community of Switzerland and Liechtenstein, as well as representatives from Tibet support groups and NGOs, the statement said.

They explored strategies to enhance collective advocacy efforts and discussed the delegation's objectives in challenging Chinese oppression. The

MPs underscored the necessity of unity within the Tibetan struggle, responding to questions and fostering a collaborative spirit among attendees, as per the statement.

Tibet, a region with a rich cultural and spiritual heritage, came under Chinese control in the 1950s following a military invasion by the People's Republic of China (PRC).

This event marked the beginning of a complex and often contentious relationship between Tibet and the Chinese government, which has led to significant international concern over various issues related to human rights, cultural preservation, and environmental degradation.

The meeting also included Thinlay Chukki, a Representative of the Tibet Bureau in Geneva, and Phuntsok Topgyal, UN Advocacy Officer of the Tibet Bureau, further emphasizing the coordinated effort to shine a spotlight on China's violations of human rights in Tibet.

Since the invasion, China has implemented policies that many observers characterize as politically repressive and culturally suppressive. These measures have included the restriction of religious practices, the imposition of Mandarin as the primary language of instruction in schools, and the repression of Tibetan cultural expressions.

China's actions have often been framed as part of a broader agenda to assimilate Tibetan identity into a unified Chinese national identity, which has fueled ongoing tensions both within Tibet and between Tibetans and the Chinese government.

### **Representative Dr Tsewang Gyalpo Arya Concludes his Maiden Tour to the Philippines**

27 October 2024, CTA

Representative Dr Tsewang Gyalpo Arya of the Liaison Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama for Japan and East Asia concluded his one-week maiden official tour to the Philippines today after a series of interactions and lecture events on the Tibet issue in the regions surrounding Manila City.

The Philippines was one of the few countries that supported Tibet in the United Nations in the early 1960s to condemn Chinese occupation of Tibet and questioned the veracity of the 'liberation' of Tibet. The prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award of the Philippines was awarded to H.H. the Dalai Lama in 1959 for his leadership in the preservation of Tibet's society, religion, and culture during a critical time.

Representative Dr Arya met with Hon. Congressman Adrian Amaton and discussed his schedule in the city. He updated the Congressman on the Tibet issue and the vision paper of the 16th Kashag of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). While presenting a copy of the recent U.S. Resolve Tibet



Act, he briefed the Congressman on the Act and requested the introduction of a similar bill in the Philippine parliament.

Congressman Adrian Amaton welcomed Dr. Arya and expressed pleasure meeting him and said that many people in the Philippines support the Tibet issue because Filipinos are freedom-loving people and Tibet represents a non-violent and justified struggle for freedom and justice. He advised continued efforts to negotiate with China for a peaceful resolution of the Tibet-China conflict.

Later, Representative Arya met with Hon. Wallace Chow, Representative of the Taipei Economic & Cultural Office in the Philippines, and discussed the situation in Tibet, Taiwan, and China. They agreed that freedom and democracy in China as important factors in resolving their issues with China and expressed solidarity to work for freedom and democracy around the world.

At the invitation of the University of the Philippines College of Mass Communication, Representative Arya visited the University, where he was received by Dean Fernando Paragas, Prof. Diosa Labiste, and the students. In his talk to the students, he briefly spoke of the early imperial power of Tibet, how Buddhism pacified the Tibetans, and how the Tibetans lived in peace under the leadership of successive Dalai Lamas until the Chinese communist invasion of Tibet in 1950. He talked about the historical distortion the CCP leadership is making to justify their claim on Tibet and warned the students of Chinese propaganda and disinformation.

Representative Dr. Arya visited the Philippine Palyul Tibetan Buddhist Dharma Center at Santa Mesa, where he met with the monks and explained the purpose of his visit to the Philippines and updated them on the workings of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), and shared with them the vision paper of the CTA.

Madam Susan Afan, President of the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation (RMAF), and Joy Alampay, Director of Ramon Magsaysay Transformative Leadership Institute, met with Representative Dr. Arya and discussed the Tibet issue and the four missions of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The President and the members of the RMAF visited Dharamsala and had an audience with His Holiness last September. The President emphasized the importance of sharing His Holiness the Dalai Lama's vision for world peace in the region and celebrating the 90th birth anniversary of His Holiness next year through seminars and other events.

Because of the typhoon emergency warning, the two lectures planned at the University of the Philippines Asian Center Forum and Del La Salle Saint Benilde's School of Diplomacy and Governance Forum were done online. Dr. Arya

spoke on the theme "The Tibetan Struggle: Search for Freedom and Justice" and "The Philippines and Tibetan Relations: Helming vibrant partnership amidst diversity" at the two forums.

Representative Arya thanked the government and the people of the Philippines for their support in the early 1950s and for awarding the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award to His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 1959. He said he appreciated and wanted to revive the Filipinos' bold and freedom-loving spirit.

Representative Dr Arya, in his presentation at the two colleges, elaborated on how Tibet has been an independent nation since ancient times and how the CCP has been trying to distort this part of history to legitimize its occupation of Tibet. He explained how the CCP is a threat to China, Asia, and the world and how the freedom-loving nations around the world should work together to free China from the CCP's authoritative regime.

Faculty members and students asked many questions about the situation in Tibet, Chinese religious interference, historical distortion, China's transnational repression and surveillance, His Holiness the Dalai Lama's reincarnation issue, and the whereabouts of Panchen Lama. As the questions exceeded the time limit, it was decided to answer through email.

The deans, faculty members, and students thanked Representative Arya for his presentation on the history and current situation of Tibet and requested such talks in the future. The University presented a certificate of appreciation to Dr Arya. Prof. Maricel Fernandez-Carag, in her closing remark, said that though Tibet and the Philippines are some 3662 km apart, we are united by the shared value of freedom and non-violence. "We need this international partnership to promote global citizenship education." She said. Some suggested starting Tibetan studies at the University and requested reading materials on Tibet. Representative Arya welcomed the idea of Tibetan studies at the University and promised to send reading materials on Tibet.

### **Tibetan rights group demands information on four missing detainees in Ngaba**

25 October 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup

A Tibetan human rights organization has raised alarm over the disappearance of four Tibetans, including two prominent monks, who were detained by Chinese authorities in Ngaba, Amdo.



The four detained Tibetans from Amdo Ngaba (Photo/TCHRD)

The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) reported that two monks from Kirti Monastery in the Tibetan province of Amdo, Lobsang Samten and Lobsang Trinley, along with Tsering Tashi and Wangkyi, were arbitrarily detained in early September. Their current whereabouts and any charges against them remain unknown.

Lobsang Samten, 53, a monk holding the Karampa (Geshe) title for academic excellence, serves as the junior chant master at Kirti Monastery's Prayer College. Originally from Khangsar township in Chikdril County, Samten has been associated with the monastery since childhood. This is not his first encounter with detention, as he was previously held in 2011 alongside 300 other monks.

The second detained monk, Lobsang Trinley, also known as Drenpo, is in his forties and hails from Rong khangsar town in Ngaba County. He has been instrumental in organizing ritual ceremonies at the monastery.

A source speaking to TCHRD revealed the intensifying situation in the region: "There have been reports of members of the Haritsang family being arrested for maintaining contacts in India, though specific details remain elusive. In recent months, repression in the Ngaba region has intensified, with increased restrictions particularly aimed at Kirti Monastery and nearby villages.

"Arbitrary detentions and secret sentencing of Tibetans have become frequent. Local Tibetans are being silenced through intimidation, making it increasingly difficult for information to surface. Even those who are released from detention are prohibited from revealing the charges against them or where they were held, further obscuring the truth from the community."

Ngaba is a region in the Tibetan province of Amdo that has been the epicentre of self-immolation protests against Chinese government repression due to which the region became unfortunately known as the "self-immolation capital of the world."

This incident follows China's closure of two major Buddhist monastery schools in July this year, forcing approximately 1,600 novice monks into government-run boarding schools, marking what observers see as

part of a broader campaign to assimilate Tibetan cultural and religious identity into Han Chinese culture.

TCHRD has issued a call for Chinese authorities to end these arbitrary detentions immediately and provide information about the status and whereabouts of the four detained individuals

## Modi-Xi meeting at BRICS draws cautious optimism from Tibetan leader

25 October 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping held a bilateral meeting on the side lines of the BRICS summit in Kazan, Russia on Wednesday.

According to information released by India's Ministry of External Affairs, the two leaders discussed improving India-China relations and agreed to work on restoring ties that had deteriorated due to border confrontations and other issues. During the meeting, Xi Jinping told Modi that India and China should take a different approach regarding their relationship and cooperation.

The first meeting in five years between Modi and Xi comes after recent talks between India and China regarding the Indo-Tibet border issues and military deployment arrangements reached some agreement. The breakthrough in the patrolling arrangement comes four years after the Galwan Valley clash and signals a move towards de-escalation in a region where both countries stationed tens of thousands of troops.

Tibetan President-in-exile Penpa Tsering welcomed the diplomatic engagement between the two Asian powers in an interview with ANI where he lauded the development while maintaining a cautious perspective.

The democratically elected Tibetan leader said, "I think from the very beginning, when PM Modi came into the office, he tried his best to build relations with China. His Holiness, the Dalai, Lama and Tibetan people have always appreciated good relations between neighbours, between countries, and between people, and we believe in nonviolence and peaceful coexistence..."

He added, "So this (bilateral meeting between PM Modi and President Xi), I would say is a good development because any relationship that is improving, that is leading towards more peace is definitely appreciative..."

While acknowledging the benefits of improved India-China relations, Tsering expressed scepticism about China's reliability and said that "it is difficult to trust China."

China's repeated aggression and unprovoked belligerence against India, especially along the Indo-Tibetan border have strained relations between the two Asian giants, despite New Delhi's attempts to normalise ties and deescalate frictions over the years.

### **Over 140 global Tibet groups condemn Musée Guimet's cultural erasure of Tibet**

25 October 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup

A coalition of more than 140 Tibet advocacy organizations has confronted Paris's Musée Guimet over its controversial decision to replace references to "Tibet" with "Himalayan World" in its exhibitions, accusing the museum of complicity in China's cultural erasure efforts.

In a letter delivered Thursday to Museum President Dr. Yannick Lintz, the coalition demanded the institution restore the use of "Tibet" in its exhibitions, arguing that the current terminology effectively censors Tibet's distinct cultural identity and tacitly endorses China's occupation of the region.

"This is not just a matter of semantics," stated Rashi Jauhri of the International Tibet Network. "By prioritising China's propaganda over historical accuracy, the museum is actively betraying every patron that walks through its door."

The controversy displays ongoing tensions surrounding Tibet's cultural representation in international institutions. Tibet, which was invaded by China in 1950, is currently ranked among the world's most repressed regions by Freedom House, with severe restrictions on civil liberties and political rights under the repressive occupation of the Chinese authority.

Critics argue that by adopting the term "Himalayan World," the museum is conflating distinct cultural traditions of Tibet, Bhutan, and Nepal, effectively obscuring Tibet's unique heritage. The museum's approach appears to contradict the International Council of Museums' Code of Ethics, which emphasizes accurate representation and appropriate consideration of represented groups.

Tenzin Namgyal of Students for a Free Tibet France expressed particular concern about the museum's lack of engagement with the Tibetan community, noting that "Ms. Yannick Lintz's refusal to enter into dialogue with the Tibetan people" is especially troubling given their direct connection to the artefacts in question.

The campaign has gained additional significance following a recent victory at Paris's Musée du quai Branly, which reversed its use of the term "Xizang" in favour of "Tibet" for its Tibetan artefacts after public protest.

### **For Tibetan political leader, 'Middle Way' to autonomy is still core focus**

24 October 2024, New Delhi Times

In the lobby of an upscale hotel in Prague, Sikyong Penpa Tsering talked about death — specifically, the eventuality that China's Xi Jinping will one day die.

"Nothing is permanent. Even our life is not permanent. We are born, and we have to die. So even empires rise and fall. Governments rise and fall. Xi Jinping will also have to die. So, these are inevitable," said Tsering, leader of Tibet's exiled government, the Central Tibetan Administration.

He said it casually, matter-of-factly, as if he wasn't talking about the potential downfall of the world's second-most powerful government and the inevitable death of its powerful leader.

"China is going to change. It has to change. There is no other choice," Tsering told VOA last week on the sidelines of the Forum 2000 democracy conference in the Czech capital Prague.

Sitting on a leather chair and wearing a black Tibetan vest and a blue button-down shirt, Tsering spoke about how this fundamental Buddhist idea of impermanence gives him hope for his homeland.

Reports say abuse has increased

China annexed Tibet in 1950, and since then human rights abuses in the region have steadily grown, according to reports from the U.S. State Department and rights groups.

Beijing claims the region has been part of China since "ancient times." It views the Central Tibetan Administration, or CTA, as a separatist organization and says that no government should allow the Dalai Lama — the spiritual and one-time political leader of Tibet — to visit.

But for Tsering, under the Buddhist concept of impermanence, everything in life — even Beijing's power and repression — is transient.

Although Tsering's hope abounds, so does his pragmatism. The prospect of an improved human rights landscape and more autonomy remains far-off. It doesn't help that the CTA and Beijing barely have an open communication channel, Tsering said.

"Even if we manage to re-establish contact, there's no possibility of anything really coming out of it," Tsering said. For now, the backchannel dialogue is for the long term, not the short term, the democratically elected leader added.

But in an ideal world, where Beijing was willing to engage with the CTA, among the top priorities would be human rights in Tibet, as well as the Middle Way Approach — the Tibet administration policy that would give the region increased autonomy while remaining part of China.

Those are among the issues Tsering sought to raise with political and civil society leaders at Forum

2000, an annual gathering on democracy human rights issues founded by former Czech President Vaclav Havel.

#### Advocating for 'Middle Way'

Although based in India, Tsering frequently travels the world to make his case for the Tibetan people. But he feels a particular kinship with the Czech Republic and other countries in Europe that once suffered under communism.

"They have experienced what our people are going through now," Tsering said. "That makes it easier for them to understand."

Tsering has about one and a half years left in his five-year term. He said he hasn't decided whether he'll pursue a second term, but one of his priorities for the next 18 months is to advocate for the Middle Way Approach.

The Middle Way Approach accepts Tibet's status as part of China but advocates for increased autonomy, like greater freedoms for religion, language and culture. It's an attempt to balance Beijing's concerns about Tibetan separatism and Tibetans' concerns about cultural preservation.

Tsering said he doesn't really understand why Beijing appears to be so opposed to the approach, since it doesn't call for independence.

#### 'Dying a slow death culturally'

For years, reports from news outlets and rights groups have detailed Beijing's grave rights abuses in Tibet.

Chinese authorities are particularly repressive of any signs of dissent among Tibetans in the region, with more than 5,600 political prisoners formerly or currently jailed in Tibet since 1990, according to the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy.

Expressions of Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan cultural identity are also restricted.

"We are dying a slow death culturally, because China is squeezing us out of our breath like a python, squeezing it out, slowly but surely," Tsering said.

Authorities have repressed the use of the Tibetan language, and the United Nations estimates that around 1 million children have been forcibly separated from families and sent to state-run boarding schools to assimilate into the dominant Han-Chinese culture.

"It's very clear that the Chinese government seeks to essentially hollow out and erase Tibetans' identities," Sophie Richardson, a visiting scholar at Stanford and the former China director at Human Rights Watch, told VOA.

China's Foreign Ministry did not reply to VOA's email requesting comment for this story.

Other human rights issues include Beijing's harassment of exiled Tibetan journalists and activists in a process known as transnational repression.

"It's essentially to prevent anybody from hearing an alternative version of their story or critique of their version. The Chinese government wants everybody to believe its version of history," Richardson said.

But when it comes to transnational repression, Tsering said he isn't a target.

"They don't threaten me because they know it doesn't make sense. I won't listen. If they threaten me, I'll be much worse," Tsering said. "If they ask me not to do something, I do it more because I know it hurts them."

### Tibetan Parliament Continues Europe Tibet Advocacy in Switzerland

24 October 2024, CTA

On the 21 October 2024, a delegation comprising Tibetan Parliament members Geshe Atong Rinchen Gyaltsen, Lobsang Gyatso Sither, and Tenzin Choezin held a meeting with member of Swiss National Council from Geneva, Nicolas Walder.

During the meeting, they briefed him about the critical situation inside Tibet and urged discussion of human rights in Tibet as a condition for continuing the Free Trade Agreement between Switzerland and China. They also raised concerns about difficulties faced by Tibetans in Switzerland. The delegation presented him with an appeal letter signed by the Speaker of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile.

On the same day, the parliamentary delegation held a closed-door meeting in the morning with UN Member States' Missions from a number of countries. During the meeting, the delegation shared updates on the critical situation inside Tibet and the current policies and practices of the Chinese government aimed towards the eradication of Tibetan Language, Culture and Religion in both physical and online spaces.

The delegation also took this opportunity to thank the various missions for their recent mentions and recommendation's at China's UPR and expressed our gratitude to them on behalf of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile and from Tibetans inside Tibet and all over the world.

At the same time, the delegation stressed on the importance to continue to hold China accountable and requested the members present at the meeting to continue to raise their voices for Tibet at the UN and at the same time, creating spaces for Tibet at UN side-events.

In the afternoon of the same day, the parliamentary delegation held a closed-door meeting with various Special Rapporteur Secretariats. The delegations shared updates on the situation inside Tibet based on the mandates represented during the meeting and also shared our overall concern about the critical situation inside Tibet.



The delegation also thanked the staff present for the number of reports that they have published on Tibet which puts China on the spot and highlights the critical situation inside Tibet to the world.

The delegation was accompanied by Thinlay Chukki, Representative of the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Geneva and UN Advocacy Officer Phuntsok Topgyal.

### **15-Nation Joint Statement Demands China Address Human Rights Abuses in Tibet and East Turkistan**

24 October 2024, CTA



James Martin Larsen, Australia's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations, delivers a joint statement on human rights abuses in Tibet and East Turkistan. Photo source: UN Web TV

James Martin Larsen, Australia's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations, delivered a joint statement on behalf of a coalition of 15 countries, expressing serious concern over grave human rights violations in East Turkistan and Tibet, and calling for urgent action from China. The statement was presented during the general discussion on human rights at the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly's Third Committee. Representing Australia, alongside 14 other countries including Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Japan, Lithuania, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States, Ambassador Larsen highlighted grave concerns based on evidence gathered by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and other UN bodies. These findings point to large-scale arbitrary detention, family separations, enforced disappearances, forced labor, and systemic repression of Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim minorities in East Turkistan. The assessment, released two years ago, described these violations as potentially amounting to crimes against humanity.

The statement also underscored growing concerns over human rights abuses in Tibet. United Nations human rights mechanisms have detailed arbitrary detentions for the peaceful expression of political views, restrictions on travel, forced labor, the forced separation of children from families in boarding

schools, and the erosion of cultural, educational and religious rights and freedom in Tibet.

Ambassador Larsen noted that despite repeated international calls for transparency, China has dismissed these concerns and labeled the OHCHR's assessment as "illegal and void" during its Universal Periodic Review adoption in July 2024. China has yet to undertake a comprehensive human rights review of its policies in Xinjiang, with its problematic legal framework on national security and counterterrorism remaining unchanged, according to an OHCHR statement from August 2024.

The 15 nations called on China to uphold its international human rights obligations and fully implement the recommendations from the OHCHR and other UN mechanisms. These include the immediate release of individuals arbitrarily detained in both East Turkistan and Tibet and full transparency regarding the fate of missing persons. Additionally, the countries urged China to allow independent observers, including those from the UN, unfettered access to assess the human rights situation in these regions.

Concluding the joint statement, Ambassador Larsen emphasised that while no country has a perfect human rights record, all states must be held accountable to international standards. The coalition urged collective global responsibility in protecting and promoting human rights worldwide.

The joint statement reflects ongoing international pressure on China to address allegations of human rights violations in its territories, marking a significant moment in global diplomacy at the UN.

### **Sikyong Penpa Tsering Addresses Seminar Titled 'Charting Tibet's Future' in Delhi**

22 October 2024, CTA

On the evening of 21 October 2024, Sikyong Penpa Tsering of the Central Tibetan Administration delivered a keynote address during a talk session



From left to right: Shri Ashok Kumar Mehta, who facilitated the session, Sikyong Penpa Tsering of the Central Tibetan Administration, Shri Om Prakash Tandon and Shri Sujeet Kumar gathered at the India International Centre Annexe.



titled 'Charting Tibet's Future: The Resolve Tibet Act, Strategies in Exile, His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Legacy, and India's Role.'

The event was hosted by the Foundation for Non-violent Alternatives (FNVA) in Lecture Room 1 at the India International Centre Annexe.

Among the distinguished speakers were Sikyong Penpa Tsering, who provided insights into the current state of Tibetan affairs, and Om Prakash Tandon, the founding trustee of FNVA. Major General Ashok Kumar Mehta facilitated the session, ensuring a constructive exchange of ideas, while Shri Sujeet Kumar, a former Member of Lok Sabha and former convener of the All-Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet (APIPFT), also participated in the discussion. The discussion focused on the significance of the Resolve Tibet Act and its potential impact on the future of Tibet and the Tibetan exile community. Sikyong elaborated on the strategies being developed by the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) to sustain and strengthen the Tibetan freedom movement in exile.

Sikyong emphasised the importance of the Tibet Policy and Support Act, highlighting its role in advocating for the rights and autonomy of the Tibetan people. He explained how the act provides a structured approach to the U.S. policy toward Tibet, reinforcing international support for the Tibetan cause and holding the Chinese government accountable for human rights abuses in Tibet. He stated, "The act supports the central Tibetan leadership, encouraging dialogue and collaboration with global partners to further the Tibetan cause." He further articulated his vision, saying, "We aspire for a free and democratic Tibet, and we remain committed to peaceful resistance and the pursuit of justice."

Additionally, Sikyong provided a concise overview of Tibet's leadership history, emphasising the continuous leadership of successive Dalai Lamas since the 15th century. He clarified misconceptions surrounding Tibet's sovereignty post-1913, explaining that Tibet maintained self-rule after expelling Chinese forces in 1912, following the fall of the Qing dynasty. He asserted, "No foreign country has ever directly ruled Tibet. While there have been instances of external influence, Tibet has never been under direct foreign control."

Sikyong further narrated the deep historical connections between India and Tibet, highlighting India's influence on Tibetan scripts and religion. He mentioned that, according to some historical accounts, the first king of Tibet was of Indian descent. Moreover, he expressed gratitude to the Indian government and people for their support of Tibetan

refugees following the flight into exile led by His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Sikyong also addressed the geopolitical and strategic significance of the Tibetan plateau, highlighting Tibet's role as the source of major rivers, including the Yarlung Tsangpo and the Mekong, and expressed concern over China's diversion of Tibet's water resources, which affects downstream countries like India and those in Southeast Asia. He condemned China for failing to share hydrological data, leading to environmental and livelihood challenges for riparian nations.

A key highlight of the talk was the enduring legacy of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama in shaping the global movement for Tibetan freedom and the preservation of Tibetan culture and identity. Since his exile in 1959, His Holiness has been a vital figure advocating for the rights of the Tibetan people, promoting a message of compassion and non-violence. Sikyong Penpa Tsering stated, "His Holiness' teachings have not only galvanised support within Tibet but have also inspired individuals and movements worldwide to stand up for justice and human rights." He added, "His commitment to dialogue and understanding continues to resonate with the Tibetan cause."

Sikyong underlined the significance of the Tibetan Plateau, often referred to as the 'Roof of the World', the 'Third Pole', or 'Asia's Water Tower.' He noted, "The rivers originating from Tibet, such as the Yarlung Tsangpo, Machu, and Dzachu, have become the lifeline for hundreds of millions of people in Asia." He pointed out that "two of the world's oldest civilisations—the Indus Valley Civilisation and Chinese Civilisation—also rely on Tibet's rivers."

However, Sikyong expressed concerns about the ongoing mismanagement of Tibetan rivers by the Chinese Communist government, stating, "This situation poses serious threats to the environment and the livelihoods of millions downstream." He warned of severe repercussions for the future, emphasising the urgent need for sustainable practices to protect these vital water resources.

The session concluded with a Q&A segment, allowing participants to engage directly and ask questions. The event offered insights into the current political situation, the challenges faced by the Tibetan community, and the CTA's plans for safeguarding Tibet's future.

**Bengaluru: Panelists urge global action for Tibetan rights amid growing pressures from China**

21 October 2024, ANI

The Dalai Lama Institute for Higher Education (DLIHE) and the Department of Information and International Relations (DIIR),

Central Tibetan Administration hosted a panel discussion titled 'Why Tibet Matters' at the institute's Aa-Ka-Ma auditorium.

The panelists engaged in a robust dialogue on Tibetan identity and rights, exploring the multifaceted challenges faced by the Tibetan community in the current political climate.

The event was moderated by Acharya Norbu, a lecturer in Tibetan History, and featured two panellists -- Dechen Palmo, an environmental researcher at the Tibet Policy Institute, and Dukthen Kyi, head of the Tibet Advocacy Section at DIIR.

During the discussion, Dukthen Kyi highlighted the political and cultural importance of protecting Tibetan identity amid increasing pressures from the Chinese government. She outlined the Central Tibetan Administration's efforts to advocate for Tibetan rights and called for heightened international awareness and support for the Tibetan cause, linking environmental sustainability with human rights.

The panel concluded with a call to action, urging participants to engage in advocacy for Tibet's critical issues. DLIHE's Principal, Tenzin Pasang, reinforced this message, emphasising the collective responsibility of attendees to support the Tibetan movement. The event, attended by nearly 200 students and faculty, fostered dialogue and community among those invested in the Tibetan cause.

The Tibetan issue involves political, cultural, and human rights concerns related to Tibet, a region known for its unique culture and spiritual traditions.

After China invaded Tibet in 1950, it was incorporated into the People's Republic of China, changing its governance and society. Many Tibetans, including the Dalai Lama, seek greater autonomy or independence due to worries about cultural loss, religious repression, and human rights violations.

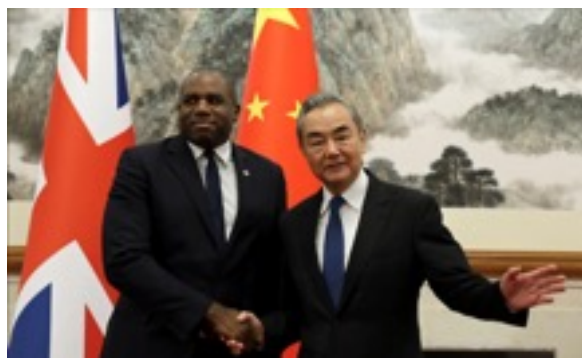
The Chinese government insists that Tibet is part of China and promotes economic development in the region. This has led to ongoing international discussions and activism for Tibet's cultural preservation and the rights of its people, making the issue a sensitive topic in international relations.

In recent years, there have been several notable cases that highlight ongoing concerns. For instance, the Chinese government's intensified crackdown on Tibetan Buddhism, including the restriction of religious practices and the surveillance of monasteries, has drawn international attention.

The situation surrounding the Panchen Lama, a key figure in Tibetan Buddhism, is particularly poignant. Kidnapped by Chinese authorities in 1995 at the age of six, he has not been seen publicly since, raising fears about religious freedom and the future of Tibetan spirituality. (ANI)

## UK Foreign Secretary raises Uyghur's rights, ignores Tibet during China visit

21 October 2024, Phayul



David Lammy and Wang Yi during the meeting on Friday in Beijing (Photo/EPA)

During his recent visit to China, UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy addressed human rights violations concerning the Uyghur population in East Turkestan (Xinjiang), but notably avoided any mention of Tibet, despite calls from rights groups to highlight the deteriorating human rights situation inside Tibet.

After Lammy's meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Friday, the UK Foreign Office issued a statement saying that the discussions included concerns over the mistreatment of Uyghurs in East Turkestan (Xinjiang) and the case of detained British citizen Jimmy Lai. The statement described the meeting as "constructive," noting that a range of foreign policy and security issues were discussed.

Ahead of Lammy's first official trip to Beijing, several Tibetan rights groups urged him to raise the deteriorating conditions in Tibet with his Chinese counterparts. In an open letter, the London-based Free Tibet organization stressed that Lammy's visit coincided with a "historic low" for human rights in Tibet. The letter expressed deep concern over Beijing's growing control over the region, citing the forced assimilation of Tibetan children through state-imposed education systems and the closure of Tibetan schools. The group also pointed to increasing transnational repression of Tibetan communities in exile, particularly in the UK, by Chinese authorities.

Rights groups also urged Lammy to use his first official visit to China as a foreign secretary to confront these human rights violations. They highlighted that Tibet remains largely closed to independent journalists, diplomats, and human rights monitors, limiting accountability. Citing the UK's economic and diplomatic influence as a key trading partner with China, the groups emphasised that Britain should leverage this position to pressure Beijing to release political prisoners and halt policies that endanger Tibetan culture, identity, and livelihood. However, no mention was made of Tibet.

During his visit to Beijing, Lammy also met with Ding Xuexiang, China's most senior vice-premier and a close ally of President Xi Jinping. He is also expected to travel to Shanghai for talks with British businesses to strengthen economic ties between the UK and China.

Lammy emphasised that the UK government is seeking to bring "consistency" to its relationship with China, noting that there had not been "sufficient contact" between London and Beijing under his predecessors, particularly regarding human rights. He also stressed the importance of maintaining a "pragmatic" approach to relations with China. His visit marks the second by a British foreign secretary in two years, following James Cleverly's trip in August 2023.

### **Tibetan advocates highlight language suppression at UN Human Rights Council event**

20 October 2024, ANI

Tibetans and their supporters took the stage at a United Nations Human Rights Council side event in Geneva, bringing attention to China's suppression of the Tibetan language and recent school closures in Tibet.

The event, hosted by the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, was moderated by Kai Mueller from the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT).

The panel featured prominent speakers including Palmo Tenzin, a senior researcher at ICT, Tenzin Choekyi from Tibet Watch, and Gloria Montgomery from the Tibet Justice Center. The discussion was well-attended by representatives from various UN missions, highlighting the growing concern over the situation in Tibet.



Tibetan advocates highlight language suppression at UN Human Rights Council (Photo/@International Campaign for Tibet)

Tenzin Choekyi opened the event by outlining the history of Tibetan protests advocating for language rights and the severe consequences faced by those who speak out against the Chinese government. She

noted that community leaders, intellectuals, and ordinary Tibetans risk detention, torture, or imprisonment for their advocacy.

During the event, Palmo Tenzin emphasised the oppressive environment that stifles open dialogue about these issues within Tibet and discussed recent educational policies detrimental to the Tibetan language and culture.

She said, "Tibetan children lose their mother tongue, are unable to communicate with relatives, and cannot access their culture and history."

Gloria Montgomery warned about the implications of China's closures of Tibetan schools, reminding attendees of the Chinese government's obligations under international law to provide education in the Tibetan language, as established by various international covenants ratified by the People's Republic of China.

In a significant move, China chose to attend the panel and respond to the testimonies rather than delegating the task to proxy organisations. However, their representatives denied the validity of the accounts presented, reflecting Beijing's longstanding dismissal of the situation in Tibet and a reluctance to engage with the testimonies provided by Tibetan advocates.

Tencho Gyatso, President of the International Campaign for Tibet, praised the advocates for clearly illustrating the harsh realities of Chinese governance in Tibet. He stated, "Instead of lying to the world, China must acknowledge that Tibetans have every right to be educated in their mother tongue and stop trying to forcibly erase Tibet's rich heritage."

The event's significance was underscored by a recent appeal from 100 Tibetan and Himalayan scholars to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk. In their petition, the scholars expressed deep concern over China's systematic closure of Tibetan monastic and public schools and called for an end to forced assimilation policies in Tibet.

This gathering at the UN serves as a critical moment for Tibetan advocates, who continue to call for recognition of their rights and the protection of their language and culture amid increasing repression.

### **Tibet and Ukraine share struggle against colonial power: former CTA President in Kyiv**

19 October 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

The former President of the Tibetan government in exile, Dr. Lobsang Sangay, during his visit to Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, highlighted parallels between the struggles of Tibet and Ukraine against colonialist aggressors.





Former President of the Tibetan government in exile Dr. Lobsang Sangay during his visit to Kyiv, Ukraine's capital (Photo/Instagram)

In an interview with Kyiv Post, Dr. Sangay emphasised the shared challenges faced by both nations—Tibet under China's ongoing occupation and Ukraine resisting Russia's invasion. He stressed that in both cases, the aggressors are targeting not only land but also the cultural identity and resources of these countries.

The former political leader detailed how China has systematically sought to erode traditional Tibetan culture by imposing Han Chinese cultural norms. "Tibet was invaded, and 98% of our monasteries were destroyed, but today they are being rebuilt. Tibetans continue to resist forced assimilation. Even now, speaking Tibetan or wearing traditional Tibetan dress is an act of resistance, as is visiting monasteries, which is why Tibetans continue to do so 'constantly,'" he explained.

He also acknowledged that while Ukraine is an internationally recognised state, its challenges differ from those faced by Tibet. However, he pointed out the commonality in their experiences—both Tibetans and Ukrainians are dealing with imperialism and colonial forces, such as China and Russia, that exploit their lands for natural resources.

Dr. Sangay further highlighted how, in the case of Tibet, many Western governments turn a blind eye to China's actions. He drew a parallel to Ukraine, where European countries have softened sanctions on Russian steel and refused to penalise metal magnates who supply not only Europe but also the Russian military.

He noted the economic dimensions of Russia's and China's interests in these occupied regions. "Russia's control of the Donbas led to the loss of 80% of Ukraine's coal reserves, which are essential for steel production, where Ukraine is a major producer. Similarly, China's exploitation of Tibet is economically motivated—80% of China's cotton comes from Xinjiang; 75% of its lithium is sourced from Tibet, along with 50% of its copper, gold, and uranium." Dr. Sangay emphasised that both Ukraine and Tibet have seen millions of lives disrupted and cultures threatened as imperialists seek to plunder their resources.

In closing, he conveyed a message of solidarity to the people of Ukraine, stating, "Your success would be our success. Ukraine is standing up for what is right—a battle between good and evil. It is time for the good side to win and the bad side to lose."

### China should look for Mao's reincarnation instead of Dalai Lama, says CTA President

17 October 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

The democratically elected leader of the exile Tibetan government, known officially as the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), President Penpa Tsering emphasised the CTA's roadmap for ensuring the succession of the 14th Dalai Lama remains free from Chinese interference while speaking on the topic 'Future of Tibet?' at the 28th Forum 2000 held in Prague, Czech Republic.

In a bold statement, President Tsering suggested that instead of focusing on the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, China should concern itself with finding the reincarnation of Mao Zedong. His comment was a sharp critique, made in response to question about Beijing's repeated claims of having the authority to decide the next Dalai Lama.

"The reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism is unique, where we have reincarnated Lamas, which China refers to as 'living Buddhas.' They have been preparing for the death of the Dalai Lama for the last 20 years or more. They are not concerned about the living 14th Dalai Lama but are more focused on the yet-to-come 15th Dalai Lama," said Tsering.



President Penpa Tsering during a conversation with Carl Gershman, the Founding President of National Endowment Democracy (NED), at the 28th Forum 2000 in Prague, Czech Republic (Photo/Instagram)

He highlighted that His Holiness the Dalai Lama has often commented on China's intentions, noting that if the Chinese government were genuinely serious about reincarnation, they should first study Tibetan Buddhism, which centers on the belief in life after death. "Maybe they should look for Mao Zedong's reincarnation first, Deng Xiaoping's reincarnation second, and now that Jiang Zemin is also no more,

perhaps they should look into Jiang Zemin's reincarnation as well," Tsering added with pointed humour.

During the forum, the Tibetan leader also outlined the CTA's strategy to safeguard the sanctity of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation process. This roadmap involves the exile government collecting statements and resolutions from Buddhist communities worldwide as evidence of their collective stance on the issue. "The Tibetan Buddhist community will be most impacted by His Holiness' reincarnation," Tsering stated.

He further hinted at the possibility of an upcoming announcement from His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama regarding his succession plans. "Maybe next year, His Holiness will say something about his succession or reincarnation plans. He will definitely make a statement on how the process will take place. Whether it happens next year or a few years after that is for His Holiness to decide. There is only one document regarding His Holiness's reincarnation, which is the September 2011 document," Tsering said.

In the same conversation, Penpa Tsering addressed several pressing issues, including the ongoing cultural genocide in Tibet and the colonial-style boarding schools designed to assimilate Tibetan children. He also touched upon the back-channel dialogues and the Dalai Lama's unwavering commitment to democratic principles throughout his life.

The Tibetan statesman concluded the discussion with a thought-provoking question; "How are democracies empowering authoritarianism?" He criticised the way Western democracies have inadvertently fueled China's rise to power. "China has all the political and military power because of its foreign exchange reserves, which they splurge on Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI), space technology, and military while initiating debt traps around the world," he said.

"Politicians tell me that the dragon is biting at us, and I told them the dragon was once very weak. Who fed the dragon to become so strong it can bite? It is the U.S., Europe, and Japan." He argued that to challenge China effectively, focusing on its economy is key. "If you want to bring China to its knees, then the economy is the answer," he suggested, emphasising that reducing business with China could be a powerful means to challenge China's overall threat.

### **Documentary Film 'Never Forget Tibet' Launches in Brazil**

16 October 2024, CTA



Documentary Film 'Never Forget Tibet' Launches in Brazil

On World Mental Health Day (10 October 2024), a special event was held in São Paulo, Brazil, to launch *Never Forget Tibet*, an officially endorsed documentary by Latin America's Office of Tibet, produced by Compassionate Films (U.K.). The film tells the incredible story of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's escape into exile, assisted by Har Mander Singh.

The documentary will be available in Brazil starting 31 October on Apple TV+, YouTube Movies, and Google Play. Already accessible in over 60 English-speaking countries, the film will be released in 120 countries over the next 12 months and is being translated into multiple languages. It is set for release in India in 2025 to honour the 90th birthday and the remarkable achievements of His Holiness.

The launch event in Brazil was a huge success, with many attendees enjoying a special exhibition at Casa Seva Gallery, showcasing photographs by Austrian explorer Heinrich Harrer, whose work is featured in the film. Harrer's photographs serve as a significant historical record of pre-invasion Tibet. The film's director, Jean-Paul Martinez, highlighted the importance of these images at the event.

In addition to the film screening, the Mystical Arts of Tibet's monks from the Drepung Loseling Monastery led a three-day Buddha of Compassion's sand mandala program and chanting sessions, creating a joyous and deeply spiritual atmosphere for all participants.

The event drew strong support from civil society and cultural influencers from various fields, including news broadcaster Patricia Poeta, singer-songwriter Thierry de Araújo Paixão da Costa, and actor João Signorelli, known for his role as Gandhi in a Brazilian T.V. show.

The documentary not only recounts the remarkable escape of His Holiness but also highlights the rich art, culture, and spirituality of Tibet. The widespread attention it received is a promising sign for keeping Tibet's globally relevant issues in the spotlight,



especially following the Resolve Tibet Act passed in the U.S. by President Biden.

A key takeaway from the event was the emphasis on inspiring the next generation with hope and awareness of Tibet. As part of this effort, a special delegation in Brazil will be taking a "Peace Tree" to five schools in São Paulo, offering an interactive exhibit to share His Holiness the Dalai Lama's message of peace with young people.

The event marks an important milestone in promoting Tibetan culture and history in Latin America and beyond.

**The Mystical Arts of Tibet in Colombia**

At the request of Compassionate Films (U.K.) and Casa Seva (São Paulo, Brazil), the Mystical Arts of Tibet group returned to Latin America, holding a successful series of events in Bogotá, Colombia, from 4 to 17 September 2024. Accompanied by Representative Jigme Tsering, the group showcased Tibetan culture and Buddhist practices through the creation of two Sand Mandalas and three sessions of Sacred Music and Sacred Chants for Peace and Healing. These events, enriched by lectures on Tibetan Buddhist traditions, arts, and philosophy, took place at venues including Centro de Meditación Budista Yamantaka – FPMT Colombia, Biblioteca Pública Julio Mario Santo Domingo, Universidad Externado de Colombia, and Universidad El Bosque – Biblioteca.

The events were organised in collaboration with the Latin America Office of Tibet, Atlanta Loseling Center, and Centro Yamantaka, Bogotá, with coordination by Geshe Lobsang Kunchen, Isabela Caro, Claudia Bonito, Doris Julio, and volunteers. The diverse audiences were deeply engaged, appreciating the spiritual significance of the Mandalas and chants, as well as the teachings of compassion and peace at the heart of Tibetan Buddhism.

The tour fostered cultural exchange and greatly contributed to raising awareness of Tibetan traditions in Colombia, strengthening ties between the Colombian and Tibetan communities while helping to preserve and share Tibet's rich cultural heritage.

### **Tibetan Sikyong meets with Czech leaders, Tibet supporters**

16 October 2024, Tibetan Review

Sikyong (executive head), Mr Penpa Tsering, of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) held a series of high-level meetings at the Senate and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic while visiting the country to attend the 28th Forum 2000 in capital Prague, said the CTA on its Tibet.net website Oct 15. Among those attending the Forum was former President Dr Tsai Ing-wen of Taiwan.

The high-level meetings followed the Forum's plenary session on the second day on Oct 14 and began in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs where the Tibetan Sikyong held discussions with Veronica Mitkova, Director of the Human Rights and Transition Policy Department, and Patrick Rumlar, Deputy Director of the Asia Department.

Mitkova has provided insights on how the Czech government had raised the issue of Tibet in multilateral forums and on international platforms. She has also offered ideas on making the 90th birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, which would be a significant event in Czechia. The CTA plans to observe the exile Tibetan spiritual leader's 90th birthday with a series of year-long events next year.

Rumlar was stated to have "candidly expressed the stance of Czech parliamentarians on the Tibetan cause".

The Tibetan Sikyong has next met with Mr Pavel Fischer, a Member of the Czech Senate, at his office. The two were stated to have discussed ways to transform the deep emotional and sympathetic sentiment that the people of Czechia had towards the Tibetan people into a more rational and strategic approach.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering has also met with Mr Jiří Oberfalzer, the Vice President of the Czech Senate, welcomed by Hayato Okamura, Member of the Chamber of Deputies, to both of their offices. Known for his active participation in Tibet events, Mr Okamura has said many in Czechia were deeply sensitive to human rights issues and would stand in solidarity with the Tibetan cause.

During the meeting with Mr Okamura, Katerina, Secretary of the Friends of Tibet Support Group in the Czech Republic, has presented to the Tibetan Sikyong a booklet showcasing the initiatives the group had undertaken in collaboration with the Tibetan community in support of the Tibetan cause.

Earlier, on his arrival in the Czech capital on Oct 13, the Tibetan Sikyong has met with representatives Zuzana from the Potala Himalayan Centre and Edita Kleckerová from the Lungta, both Tibet support groups in the country. Their discussions were stated to have centred on plans for celebrations marking the 90th birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, with particular focus on project implementations.

Later in the evening. The Tibetan Sikyong has met with Mr Fernando Iglesias, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chamber of Deputies of Argentina, and Mr Claudio Javier Rozenzwaig, Ambassador of Argentina to the Czech Republic, at the 28th Forum 2000 which was held from Oct 13 to 15.

The Prague visit was the final destination of the Tibetan Sikyong's tour of Europe this month which

included Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg in that order, beginning Oct 7.

The 28th Forum 2000 opened on Oct 13 evening in the Prague Congress Centre. Tsai Ing-Wen and the Tibetan Sikyong were prominently seated in the front row, the report noted. The keynote speakers at the opening ceremony included Mr Miloš Vystrčil, President of the Senate of the Czech Republic, and Mr Walter Russell Mead, the James Clarke Chace Professor of Foreign Affairs and Humanities at Bard College and who had taught American foreign policy at Yale University and served as the editor-at-large of The American Interest magazine.

The event provided a distinguished platform for dignitaries to engage in meaningful dialogue and exchange ideas on strengthening democratic values. Forum 2000 is a foundation and conference of the same name held in Prague, Czech Republic. The foundation was founded in 1996 as a joint initiative of the then Czech President Václav Havel, Japanese philanthropist Yohei Sasakawa, and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Elie Wiesel.

### **Surveillance in Tibet: ICT delivers remarks at 6th International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance Ministerial Conference in Berlin**

15 October 2024, ICT

Kai Mueller, Executive Director of ICT Germany, addressed the 6th International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance Ministerial Conference in Berlin last week, raising the dystopian proportions of surveillance in Tibet, particularly in Tibetan Buddhist monasteries.

The high-profile conference was hosted by the German Federal Ministry on Development Cooperation and by the German Federal Commissioner for global religious freedom or belief, Frank Schwabe, and by Ambassador at Large, Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues, Interfaith Dialogue and Freedom of Religion of the Czech Republic, Robert Rehak. German Federal Minister Schulze as well as US Ambassador at Large Rashad Hussain delivered remarks on this year's conference topic which centered on artificial intelligence and freedom of religion and belief.

Remarks[i] delivered by Kai Mueller at the International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) on October 11, German Federal Ministry of Development Cooperation (BMZ)

On behalf of the International Campaign for Tibet, thank you for organizing this important conference and the opportunity to speak today on the Chinese government's extensive use of surveillance targeting the Tibetan people.

Not surprisingly, China and thankfully the situation in Tibet and also the Uyghur region have been raised already several times today.

Rightfully so. Because China is a Leninist style one-party state that pursues a policy of so called Sinicization of religion towards Tibetan Buddhists, Uyghur Muslims and Chinese Christians, and others. And I urge for caution when using the term "Sinicization", as we should not accept the rather crude ideology of the Chinese Communist Party as the equivalent to Chinese culture. Whatever the latter may be.

In this context, the Chinese government is deliberately targeting Tibetan Buddhism.

Why? Because the tenets of Tibetan Buddhism are central to Tibetan civilization.

A multitude of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) so-called regulations and laws assert official control of all aspects of Tibetan Buddhism. This includes recognition of lamas, religious venues, affiliations, personnel, schools, and religious activities.

President Xi Jinping declared that religious institutions and clergy should serve the state's "highest interests" by prioritizing the political leadership, state socialism, and CCP priorities above the religious canon. A particularly egregious violation of Tibetan Buddhists' rights is the CCP's interference in the reincarnation process of Tibetan spiritual leaders in and outside Tibet, most prominently its expected plan to disregard the 14th Dalai Lama's authority to determine his own successor.

Returning to surveillance and AI. The CCP's methods are of dystopian proportions aiming to eliminate the integrity and genuine practice of Tibetan Buddhism.

Both human and technological means are deployed. It is important to understand that Tibetan Buddhist monasteries serve as both places of faith and community, and as schools and universities transmitting Buddhist philosophy, literature, art, and Tibetan history over generations.

This is why as many as more than 6,000 government cadres operate in as many as 1,800 monasteries in the "Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR)."

This means at least three to four cadres in every monastery. The number may be higher, as these figures are from 2015.

One of the more pervasive oppressive measures are "reeducation campaigns" that force the monastic community and laypeople to profess devotion to the Chinese Communist Party.

The aim of such campaigns in Party speak is to instill the so-called "three consciousnesses" among monks and Buddhist laypeople.

Specifically, "national consciousness", "civic consciousness" and – most bizarrely for an autocratic state without separation of powers – "consciousness for the rule of law".

Monks are forced to “expose and condemn” the Dalai Lama and to “preserve the unity of the motherland”. They have to “learn the Party’s policies, be grateful for the Party’s care, and play an active role in the religious community.”

I could go on with CCP language.

At the same time, a sophisticated network of both human and electronic surveillance is used to control the monastic community.

The methods deployed are of dystopian proportions.

In a community predicated on trust and intimacy, of close bonds between teacher and student, sealed by vows, the suspicions caused by intrusive human intelligence gathering severely compromise the basis of meditative progress.

CCTV cameras are widely deployed for surveillance of the monasteries within and outside their vicinities.

These deliberately visible cameras are the most prominent tool used by law enforcement agencies to maintain surveillance of the monastic community, retain a cumulative record, and proactively crush any hint of dissent.

The presence of ever-watching cameras produces a suffocating environment for the monastic community.

Less visible means are equally pervasive. The messaging App WeChat is popular among the monastic community. As the dominant social media app in Tibet and China, it is subject to state laws on content control.

Monks face arrest for messages as simple as sharing images of the Dalai Lama or talking about the state of Tibetan language.

Facial recognition and artificial intelligence technology for surveillance is also used to classify Tibetans as a “problematic group”. Monks and nuns are subject to the same surveillance as all other Tibetans.

Digital forensic analysis of an app Tibetans are being forced to install at police checkpoints revealed it is a surveillance tool providing access to sensitive data and control over key device functionalities.

The CCP’s imposition of fear and suspicion via human and technological intelligence gathering erodes the core of the Tibetan Buddhist’s tradition of close community and trust and intimacy between teacher and student.

It constrains the way people communicate by creating a society-wide ‘chilling effect’ on the way they think, feel and relate to each other.

I would like to offer the following recommendations to governments.

- Raise electronic surveillance of Tibetan Buddhists as violations of both the right to privacy and freedom of religion.
- Recognize the CCP’s concept of “Sinicization” as a systematic assault on religion, and

prioritize combatting this human rights violation.

- Understand AI as the “spider in the web” – integrating facial recognition technology, cameras, control of the internet, surveillance apps, DNA data collection, QR codes on residential buildings, and physical surveillance.
- As China is exporting such technology abroad, states should not just view these products as a threat to their own public safety, but also as an ethical question. Do we want to see the same cameras on our public spaces that we see in Tibetan monasteries? I do not believe so.

Let me end on a positive note.

In 2022, Tibetan Buddhist monk Geshe Lobsang Monlam, and a team of more than 150 editors and staff in Dharamsala, India, published the 223 volume “Grand Monlam Tibetan Dictionary,” containing over 360,000 Tibetan-language definitions. This has given rise to 37 apps and a website.

In December 2023, Dr. Lobsang Monlam launched Monlam AI, a platform providing access to four machine learning models comprising machine translation, optical character recognition, speech-to-text, and text-to-speech functionalities.

Uniquely, the software is based on 30 million pages of Tibetan literature, from the fields of religion, philosophy, and psychology.

These examples demonstrate the innovations possible when Tibetans are empowered and free to practice, explore, and evolve their religious practice and language.

Thank you.

### **Tibetan students face crisis as arrivals in India decline**

15 October 2024, Times of India

Due to reported Chinese oppression, the arrival of new Tibetan students in India has significantly decreased, with no new entries at the Tibetan Children's Village this year. This decline underscores the CTA's need to intensify efforts in pressuring China to allow Tibetan migration for education.

The number of Tibetan students arriving in India has significantly decreased, largely due to reported Chinese oppression, with no new arrivals at the Tibetan Children Village (TCV) this year, making it imperative for the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) to exert international pressure on China to allow the movement of Tibetans into India.

“This year there is no arrival of any student from Tibet, last year around 6 students had arrived

as against 700 to 800 students arriving every year before 2008,” said Tsultrim Dorjee, Director of the Tibetan Children’s Village (TCV).

“Reports received here indicate that China is forcibly taking young Tibetan children from cities and remote villages, bring them to 'colonial schools' established by the Chinese regime, in Tibet and convert them into Chinese,” alleged Dorjee.

He said a disturbing trend is emerging in which Tibetan students are being converted to Chinese by being taught the Chinese language, values, cultural practices, and traditions.

“This systematic approach aims to erase their Tibetan identity, leading them to forget their language, culture, values, and traditions. Moreover, it develops a sense of resentment towards Tibet, as the focus shifts entirely to a Chinese-centric education system” said Dorjee.

He claimed that China has established military camps to monitor the movement of Tibetans into India and has also set up posts along the Tibetan-Nepal border to prevent their entry into India.

Presently, there are just around 6000 Tibetan students in TCV and its branches undergoing kindergarten to Plus Two grade education as against the previous number of over 12000 students, added he.

“Our mission is that all Tibetan children under our care receive a sound education , a firm cultural identity and become self reliant and contributing members of the Tibetan community and the world at large” said the Director.

He also informed that they are celebrating the 64th Founding Anniversary of TCV with a theme that expresses solidarity with the children in Tibet, who are deprived of their language, culture, history, and values due to alleged Chinese political ideology.

“We are continuously raising the issue of Tibetans through the CTA and civil population to build international pressure on China, so it allow the movement of Tibetans into India. This will enable our youth to receive an education at TCV, Dharamshala, which is considered the mother of Tibetan schools in India and hosts the largest number of students,” he said.

### **An open letter to Foreign Secretary David Lammy**

15 October 2024, Free Tibet

As David Lammy prepares for his first trip to China as Foreign Secretary, Tibet groups in the UK urge him not to sacrifice human rights for trade

Dear Foreign Secretary,

We write on behalf of UK-based Tibet groups and the thousands of Tibetan community members based in the UK ahead of your first crucial visit to China

with a clear message: you must ensure human rights and Tibet remain at the top of the agenda for the UK government.

Your meeting takes place at a historic low point for human rights in Tibet as the Chinese government increases its control in Tibet and intensifies policies designed to eradicate the distinct culture, way of life, and identity of the Tibetan people. Meanwhile, increasing instances of transnational repression are being inflicted on Tibetan communities around the world including the UK. It is critical that you use your first visit to China as Foreign Secretary to raise these crucial issues directly with Beijing.

A successful China policy is one in which the UK directly challenges the Chinese government’s human rights abuses against the Tibetan people, working alongside other concerned governments to seek accountability for these abuses and challenging the Chinese government’s attempts to undermine the international human rights system. It also means striving for a just and lasting settlement of the Tibet-China conflict that upholds Tibetans’ rights, not least their legal and fundamental right to self-determination.

Although few details of your upcoming visit have been released by the government, reports about the meetings you will be holding in Beijing give us reason for concern. We are aware that the UK government plans to hold a “reset” with the Chinese government to establish friendlier ties and promote investment and job creation.

Recent history shows us that unless this reset contains an assertive call for an end to the Tibet-China conflict and immediate and verifiable human rights reform, it will achieve little of long-term value, and will ultimately lead the UK back to the failed policies of the so-called “Golden Era” of the 2010s when the human rights situation in Tibet sharply deteriorated. Decades of human rights diplomacy by foreign governments have failed to deter Chinese authorities, particularly Xi Jinping, from deepening the repression in Tibet. Instead it has been taken as an invitation to assert further control.

With Tibet remaining closed off to independent journalists, diplomats and human rights monitors, one of the only forms of leverage that exists is for China’s trading partners to press the Chinese government to release political prisoners and abandon policies that threaten the lives and livelihoods of Tibetans.

This does not mean halting negotiations on trade or global cooperation with China to address pressing global concerns, but it does mean using these meetings to speak up for Tibetans as they face multiple threats to their homeland and identity, and the UK government pairing its diplomacy with concerted pressure on Beijing to end its human rights abuses in Tibet, addressing transnational repression

against Tibetans in the UK and calling a just resolution of the Tibet-China conflict.

Given your previous work and well-known interest in decolonisation and the effects of imperialism, we are sure you will appreciate the importance that the UK's interactions with the Chinese government have for Tibetans, living under occupation or in exile, and that they, along with Tibet groups, and Tibet supporters will be paying close attention to the issues you raise, and those that you do not raise, during your visit.

With these considerations in mind, we urge you to use your visit to:

- Reiterate the UK's previous call for China to follow the recommendations of UN experts to immediately abolish China's colonial and coercive boarding school system imposed on Tibetan children in Tibet. Furthermore, call for an end to the closure of Tibetan schools and for the re-opening of those that have been shut down.
- Press for the immediate release of all Tibetan human rights defenders and end persecution of their families including the community leader and anti-corruption activist A-Nya Sengdra, Tibetan monk and religious philosopher Go Sherab Gyatso, and Jampa Choepel, who was detained after publishing a post about the teachings of the Dalai Lama;
- Seek information about Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the 11th Panchen Lama of Tibet, who has been missing since his abduction in 1995. This must include tangible proof of his whereabouts, safety, and well-being.
- Urge a moratorium on the building of megadevelopment projects including mines and hydropower dams in Tibet until Tibetans have given full prior, free, and informed consent to all development projects. Specifically raise the threat of the Kamtok Dam and other massive hydropower dam projects, which are forcing Tibetans from their homes and threatening monasteries with destruction from rising waters.
- And in addition to these human rights concerns, address Tibet's status by calling for a return to direct dialogue with the representatives of the Tibetan people, to end the Tibet-China conflict.

Upon conclusion of your visit, we also urge that you meet with Tibet groups and members of the Tibetan community.

The UK government's stated policy towards the Chinese government is to cooperate where it can, compete where it needs to, and challenge where it must. Your meetings this week offer their own challenge: should you return to the UK with promises of jobs and investment but without taking a stand for

Tibet, you will have sold out Tibetans and their human rights including those who are UK citizens.

On the other hand, should you be bold, and seize the moment to speak out on Tibet and challenge China over its human rights abuses, it will show that this new Labour government can be a positive force for change and an example for other governments to follow.

### **Tibetan leadership congratulates Japanese atomic bomb survivors on winning Nobel Peace Prize**

14 October 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

The exile Tibetan leadership, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the President of the Tibetan government in exile, Penpa Tsering have extended their heartfelt congratulations to Nihon Hidankyo, a Japanese group of atomic bomb survivors, for being awarded the 2024 Nobel Peace Prize. The prestigious award, presented to hibakusha, known as the survivors of the 1945 Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings has been recognised by the Norwegian Nobel Committee for efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons from the world.

Penpa Tsering, the political leader of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), congratulated the survivors, stating that their steadfast commitment to nuclear disarmament has inspired countless movements for peace around the globe. "My heartfelt congratulations to Nihon Hidankyo, this year's Nobel Peace Prize laureate. Their tireless advocacy for a nuclear-free world, shaped by the experiences of A-bomb survivors, is a profound reminder of the catastrophic threat nuclear weapons pose to humanity," he wrote. "In honouring Nihon Hidankyo with the Nobel Peace Prize, I hope this serves as a meaningful step towards a world free from nuclear weapons and united in peace."

Similarly, the foremost exile spiritual leader His Holiness the Dalai Lama sent a personal message of congratulations to the co-chairpersons of Nihon Hidankyo, Terumi Tanaka, Shigemitsu Tanaka, and Toshiyuki Mimaki, expressing his deep admiration for their resilience and courage. "During my visits to Japan, I have had the occasion to meet some of you. I deeply appreciate your work, His Holiness wrote on Saturday.

"Having visited both Hiroshima and Nagasaki myself, I have some sense of the immense suffering experienced by the victims, particularly the survivors of the nuclear bombings. I understand that because they experienced the horror of the nuclear explosions and survived, those who have founded this organisation powerfully represent the need to do away with these dangerous weapons," he further wrote.



Founded in 1956, Nihon Hidankyo has been actively sending survivors around the world to share their testimonies of the “atrocious damage” and suffering caused by nuclear weapons, according to the organisation’s website. Their mission began nearly a decade after the devastating bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

On August 6, 1945, a U.S. bomber dropped a uranium bomb over the city of Hiroshima, killing around 140,000 people. Three days later, a second nuclear weapon was dropped on Nagasaki, leading to Japan’s surrender, announced by Emperor Hirohito, which brought an end to World War II.

Speaking to reporters in Japan, a tearful Toshiyuki Mimaki, the co-head of the group, said, “Never did I dream this could happen,” he said. Mimaki also criticised the idea that nuclear weapons bring peace, stating, “It has been said that because of nuclear weapons, the world maintains peace. But nuclear weapons can be used by terrorists.”

Nihon Hidankyo has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize multiple times, including in 2005, when the group received special mention from the Norwegian Nobel Committee. The 2024 prize, which includes a diploma, a gold medal, and \$1 million, will be presented at a ceremony in Oslo this December, marking the anniversary of the death of prize creator Alfred Nobel.

### **Sikyong Penpa Tsering Attends the 28th Forum 2000 Alongside Former Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-Wen**

14 October 2024, CTA

Sikyong Penpa Tsering arrived in Prague in the early hours of the morning, marking the final destination of his European tour, to participate in the 28th Forum 2000 that is scheduled from 13 to 15 October. The first day of Sikyong’s visit began with a meeting with representatives of the Tibet Support Groups: Zuzana from the Potala Himalayan Center and Edita Kleckarová from Lungta. Their discussions centred on plans for the upcoming 90th birthday celebration of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, with a particular focus on project implementation.

During the conversation, the representatives expressed concerns regarding the insufficient awareness in the Czech media regarding the current well-being of His Holiness, which led to inquiries about his health and the situation of Tibetans, particularly those in Tibet. Following this meeting, Sikyong gave an interview to Liam Scott and Jessica Jerreat of Voice of America, during which he addressed the issue of Chinese transnational repression and underscored the importance of the Tibet-Czech Republic relationship.

In the evening, Sikyong Penpa Tsering engaged in a meeting with His Excellency Fernando Iglesias, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chamber of Deputies of Argentina, and His Excellency Claudio J. Rozencwaig, Ambassador of Argentina to the Czech Republic, at the 28th Forum 2000. His Excellency Fernando Iglesias, drawing on his extensive experience and knowledge as a journalist, demonstrated a profound understanding of Chinese history, expressing his firm support for human rights and voicing concern for those suffering oppression. Sikyong Penpa Tsering encouraged both dignitaries to explore the “Tibet Brief 2020” and Professor Lau’s book on Tibet, both of which provide compelling evidence that Tibet has never been a part of China. He urged them to critically assess these materials rather than accepting the narrative promoted by the Chinese government to the international community. The day culminated in the opening and award ceremony of the 28th Forum 2000, held at the prestigious Prague Congress Center. The event gathered an assembly of dignitaries from across the globe, with the conference focusing on the theme of democracy. Her Excellency Tsai Ing-Wen, the former President of Taiwan, and Sikyong Penpa Tsering of the Central Tibetan Administration were prominently seated in the front row. The keynote speakers at the opening ceremony included His Excellency Miloš Vystrčil, President of the Senate of the Czech Republic, and Walter Russell Mead. Mead emphasised the gravity of the current global situation, stating, “Not since the 1940s has democracy been under this kind of threat, and not since the 1930s has the world been this close to a major power conflict.” He highlighted the lack of responsibility and courage displayed by individuals in free countries, which has enabled the geopolitical expansionist ambitions of nations such as China and others. The speakers collectively stressed the urgent need to safeguard democracy amid escalating global challenges. The event provided a distinguished platform for dignitaries to engage in meaningful dialogue and exchange ideas on strengthening democratic values.

### **Tibetans in France continue protest, condemning museum’s refusal to rename exhibit as “Tibet”**

14 October 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon



Tibetans in France protesting against the two museums in Paris on September 23, 2024 (Photo/SFT France)

Tibetans and Tibet supporters in the French capital are continuing their protests against the Musée Guimet, despite the museum's recent decision not to rename exhibitor spaces as "Tibet" rather than "Himalayan world." While the Musée du quai Branly apologised and promised, on September 25, to restore the name "Tibet" with the romanised version of a Chinese term, "Xizang" on its artefacts. For weeks, members of the Tibetan diaspora, human rights activists, and Students for a Free Tibet (SFT), a chapter-based network of youth activists, have gathered outside the Musée Guimet, demanding the recognition of Tibet as a distinct cultural and historical entity. Protesters chanted slogans such as "Tibet Exists. Name It." and "Shame on Guimet," calling on the museum to honor Tibetan heritage by renaming the exhibition halls to reflect Tibet's true identity.

Despite the peaceful demonstrations, museum officials have rejected the appeal, stating that the name change was part of a broader global framework and that Tibet continues to be mentioned within the museum's exhibits.

"Many researchers and experts in the field have also expressed their disagreement with this renaming and the invisibilisation of Tibet that it entails," said Tenzin Yangchen, President of SFT France, speaking on behalf of the Tibetan community. "Their opposition underlines the importance of maintaining historical and cultural integrity in our academic and museum institutions. That is why we cannot remain silent."

Yangchen also emphasised that the issue at the Guimet Museum is just one example of the increasing Chinese influence in France. "For decades, the Tibetan people have suffered under the oppression of the Chinese government. We cannot remain silent in the face of this injustice that now extends to our own cultural institutions." She added that the protests would continue for as long as necessary until the Guimet Museum acknowledges Tibet as a nation with its own identity, culture, and artistic heritage. The activists are also stepping up efforts to engage with

local politicians and government officials to press for change.

Nicolas Tournadre, a leading expert on Tibetan languages, has also criticised the museum's reasoning, stating, "The term 'Himalaya' is a denomination that provides a cheap way of sidestepping the once powerful Tibetan state. Indeed, the northern slopes of the Himalayan range only form the southern border of Tibet, which, additionally, also has several other ranges, which reach over 7,000 meters high, crossing it from east to west. On the other hand, certain populations south of the Himalayas have adopted many elements of Tibetan culture, such as the Ladakhi [in India], the Sherpa [in Nepal], or the Sikkimese [in India]: They are often referred to as 'Bhoti,' derived from the word 'Bod' – 'Tibet' [in Tibetan]."

Fernand Meyer, a Tibetologist and former chairholder of the Science and Civilisation of the Tibetan World at the Practical School of Advanced Studies (EPHE), echoed these concerns. "Since the Musée Guimet has no problem talking about Tibetan Buddhism, it would be strange to reduce it to Himalayan Buddhism alone!" Meyer remarked. "The 'Himalayan world' is not a culturally definable entity as such. Rather, it is a zone where the cultural areas of India and Tibet meet. To reduce the latter to its southern, geographically Himalayan fringe, therefore, does not do justice to the history and extension of a specifically Tibetan culture."

The controversy gained public attention when Le Monde raised concerns that the Musée du Quai Branly had replaced "Tibet" with "Xizang Autonomous Region," and the Musée Guimet had renamed its exhibition spaces focused on Tibet as the "Himalayan world." Scholars argue that these changes align with Chinese state propaganda, which aims to rewrite and distort Tibetan history and culture, ultimately legitimising China's illegal occupation of Tibet.

### In new film, Dalai Lama says inner peace is key to happiness

12 October 2024, RFA, Rabgang Tsering Phuntsok and Tenzin Dickyi

'Wisdom of Happiness' took 6 years to complete and includes never-before-seen archival footage.

"Eight billion human beings. Everybody, including our enemy, wants peace," says the Dalai Lama in a documentary that opens in Swiss cinemas on Dec. 5 and in other movie theaters around the world.

"Wisdom of Happiness" offers an intimate, meditative cinema experience where the Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader speaks directly to the camera about what he says is the source of happiness – inner peace.

Directed by Barbara Miller and Philip Delaquis and listing Richard Gere, the American actor and Tibet advocate, as an executive producer, the 90-minute film premiered on Oct. 7 to a sold-out audience at the Zurich Film Festival.

Gere, a long-time follower of the Dalai Lama, expressed excitement at the event about the potential impact the film could have on global audiences.

"There are around 750 people here tonight with different energy, but after this film, they have the possibility to carry it back to their families, communities and the world," Gere said at the film's screening. "This is how we change the world."

Taglined "A heart-to-heart with the Dalai Lama," the film provides a personal glimpse into the Dalai Lama's reflections on peace, happiness and the potential for a peaceful 21st century, while featuring never-before-seen, newly restored archival footage of the Tibetan spiritual leader.

"We began working on this film in 2018, and it took six years to complete," Miller told Radio Free Asia. "The result is an intimate and unique documentary that captures the Dalai Lama speaking directly to viewers, creating the feeling of a personal audience."

"His Holiness advocates for greater compassion in humanity during the 21st century," she said. "It's a true blessing that we were able to create this documentary, which reflects everything His Holiness stands for."

'Not an easy century'

In the film, the 89-year-old Buddhist leader talks about balancing age-old Tibetan Buddhist traditions with contemporary values of a globalized society that is struggling with war, violence and environmental concerns.

"Our 21st century will not be an easy century," the Dalai Lama says in the film. "Lot of difficulties come. Destructive actions come from destructive emotions. So, now our world needs knowledge about our mind, about our emotions, and how to tackle these emotions."

Also present at the premiere in Zurich were Jetsun Pema, the Dalai Lama's younger sister, Sikyong Penpa Tsering, president of the Central Tibetan Administration – the Tibetan government-in-exile – the film's co-executive producer Oren Moverman and director of photography Manuel Bauer.

Speaking to RFA, Pema said, "It's a truly wonderful film in which His Holiness shares practical wisdom for navigating the challenges of this century."

"This is my second time watching it, yet every time I hear His Holiness speak, I feel both joy and sadness, and tears flow out without any control," she said. "Everyone who has seen the film has loved it, and everyone is moved by it."

Sikyong Penpa Tsering underscored the significance of the film and the relevance of the Dalai Lama's teachings amid current war and conflict around the world.

"While this film centers on His Holiness' wisdom regarding the universal pursuit of inner peace and compassion, the cause of Tibet is inherently tied to the Dalai Lama," he said. "As a result, Tibet's struggle naturally becomes part of the film, and that is why I am here at this premiere."

Though there are visible conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine, it is important to remember that there are also about 55 other wars and acts of violence occurring in the world, many of which go unnoticed, Tsering said.

"In times like these, the teachings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama on love and compassion, as presented through this film, hold immense relevance and significance," he said. "The premiere at this festival couldn't be more timely."

Archive footage

The documentary also delves into the story of the Dalai Lama's early life, including rare archival material that chronicles his journey as Tenzin Gyatso, who was chosen as the spiritual leader of Tibet at the age of 4 in 1940.

At the screening, Gere emphasized the unique presence of the Tibetan spiritual leader, saying, "He has a childlike quality, is completely unpretentious, and you feel a bubble of joy around him."

"At the same time, he is probably the greatest scholar of his generation," he said. "It's an incredible mix of purity, joy and profound wisdom."

Pema also addressed the audience at the premiere, reflecting on the special connection between Tibet and Switzerland.

"Switzerland was the first country to open its doors to Tibetan refugees after China occupied our homeland," she said. "Like Tibet, Switzerland is a mountainous country, and it's always a pleasure to be here."

### **Sikyong Penpa Tsering Advocates for Tibetan Rights During Official Visit to the Netherlands**

11 October 2024, CTA

On the morning of 9 October 2024, Sikyong Penpa Tsering of the Central Tibetan Administration landed at the Schiphol Airport in Hague to kick off his official engagements in the Netherlands.

Sikyong commenced his day with a productive interaction with members of the Foreign Affairs Committee at the Dutch Parliament Building. The meeting was graced by the presence of His Excellency Jesse Klaver, the Chairman of the committee, along with other members.

Following this meeting, Sikyong called on His Excellency Wim Geerts, the Dutch Ambassador for Human Rights, who has previously expressed serious concerns regarding the violent arrest of Tibetans in Derge and advocated for their release.

Later that day, at the Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, Sikyong engaged in a thought-provoking discussion with the centre's Political Director, Han ten Broek and Senior Project Manager, Berend Kwak. Ten young scholars of the centre also participated in the meeting, during which the gathering discoursed the global significance of the Tibetan plateau, particularly its vital water resources and their implications for riparian communities, as well as the prospects for Sino-India and India-Tibet relations.

Before heading towards Luxembourg for his scheduled programmes, Sikyong concluded the engagements in Hague with an informal meeting with coalitions of key NGOs, including representatives of Uyghur, Southern Mongolia, Hong Kong, International Campaign for Tibet, Student's for Free Tibet, and the members of the Tibetan community. This meeting underscored a shared commitment to Human Rights and humanitarian cooperation.

Throughout these formal interactions, Sikyong was accompanied by Representative Rigzin Choedon Genkhang of the Bureau du Tibet, Brussels.

### **Tibetan nuns touring the U.S. spending six days in Lincoln County performing ceremonies, creating mandala**

09 October 2024, Yachats News



Jangchub Choeling Tibetan nuns will spend 4-5 days creating an Avalokiteshvara Sand mandala in the auditorium of the Lincoln City Cultural Center beginning next week.

The first United States tour by a group of Tibetan nuns is in Lincoln City for a week of Tibetan cultural events, workshops, talks and ceremonies from through Tuesday, Oct. 15.

The highlight of the visit by the Jangchub Choeling Tibetan nuns is the creation of the Avalokiteshvara Sand Mandala in the Lincoln City Cultural Center's auditorium. It will take four to five days to complete,

and is a colorful and meticulously hand-created piece of sacred Tibetan art representing Avalokiteshvara, (Chenrezig in Tibetan) the Bodhisattva (or "Great Being") of Compassion.

The Dalai Lama himself is said to be the reincarnation of Chenrezig. The completed mandala will be a symbolic depiction of a celestial palace, filled with sacred symbols from Tibetan culture, including animals, trees, geometric designs and a portrait of Avalokiteshvara.

Unlike some other forms of "sand painting," the Tibetan sand mandalas are brocade-like designs that give the final design a three-dimensional quality. To draw the designs, the nuns use narrow metal funnels identical to the ancient tools used in Tibet for 1,000 years. The funnels are then vibrated by the nuns using a special metal rod, so that the fine lines of colored sand can be carefully "painted" into the mandala.

The week of events begins on the evening of Thursday, Oct. 10 with an opening "purification ceremony." Then, from Friday through Tuesday, the nuns will be working throughout the day on the sand mandala. The public is invited to come and observe this meditative process of the mandala's creation throughout the visit.

While the nuns are here, they will also be offering a number of other Tibetan cultural events, including a Tibetan Cultural Night on Saturday, Oct. 12, which features the sacred Dakini Dance, a ritual dance that until recently was only performed by Tibetan monks. Also on the cultural night program is the "Chod Ceremony" for removing of inner and outer obstacles featuring classic Tibetan Buddhist chanting and ceremony, followed by a question and answer and slideshow with the nuns about their history and life in Tibet, their perilous journey across the Himalayas to exile in India after the Chinese invasion in 1959, and the recent creation of an order of Tibetan nuns and "Geshemas," or senior teachers, alongside the large Tibetan monasteries of Tibetan monks.

Other events during the week include: the "White Tara Empowerment Ceremony" on Friday, Oct. 11, a meditation workshop on Saturday morning and, on Sunday, Oct. 13, a talk on "Who is Green Tara?," another important figure in Tibetan Buddhism.

On the final evening of their visit Tuesday, Oct. 15, the nuns will conduct the dissolution ceremony for the finished sand mandala, during which the completed mandala is ritually swept up and carried to the ocean. This ritual symbolizes the impermanence of all created things, a fundamental teaching of Tibetan Buddhism.

All events are open and by suggested donation. Funds raised during the visit will be used for the medical care and medical facilities for the nuns at



Jangchub Choeling Nunnery in the Tibetan Refugee Zone in Mundgod, India.

The U.S. tour is part of a year-long visit that has brought the nuns to Boston, Minneapolis, Chicago and New York City. The tour group includes four Tibetan nuns, one of whom is a Geshema, the highest degree awarded in the Tibetan monastic universities. Thanks to the efforts of Tibetan women who aspired to become nuns and to the efforts of the Dalai Lama, the order of Tibetan nuns was re-established in the 1980s, with Geshema degrees awarded to nuns only in the past decade. However, there is still a lack of facilities, as well as qualified female teachers among the nuns, and thus the nunneries work in close cooperation and support from the various Tibetan monasteries and colleges in exile in India.

### **Tibet Museum Showcases Travelling Exhibition Alongside DIIR's Tibet Awareness Talks**

08 October 2024, CTA

The Tibet Museum of the Department of Information and International Relations (DIIR), Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), has successfully concluded its two-week travelling exhibition titled "India and Tibet: Ancient Ties and Current Bonds" at various universities and colleges in Varanasi and Gujarat. The exhibition aimed to raise awareness about India and Tibet's historical and current relations through a visually engaging pictographic panel-based exhibition.



A group picture with dignitaries from Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapith University

The first round of the museum's travelling exhibition was showcased at the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies (CIHTS), Varanasi, from 23 to 25 September 2024. The exhibition was inaugurated and graced by the Vice Chancellor, Professor Wangchuk Dorje Negi, and the Registrar, Dr Sunita Chandra.

Thereafter, the exhibition was witnessed by faculty members, staff, students of the institute, and a group of Ladakh students from the Central Institute for Buddhist Studies who visited CIHTS for an education tour.

On 26 September 2024, an exhibition at Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapith (MGKVP), Varanasi, was inaugurated and led by Shri Santosh Sharma, Finance Officer and Shri Harishchand, Deputy Registrar. In a traditional gesture of goodwill, the Tibet Museum staff presented a Khatag (white scarf) to both dignitaries. Dr Sunil Vishwakarma, Head of the Department of Fine Arts, attended the opening ceremony, as well as faculty members and students from various departments of the university. The exhibition offered an opportunity for academic engagement with Tibet's rich cultural heritage and its ties to India.

From 29 September to 1 October 2024, the Tibet Museum conducted a panel-based exhibition and workshop at The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Gujarat. The exhibition was attended by Tibetan students accompanied by key members of the Regional Tibetan Youth Congress (RTYC) and Tibetan Student's Association (TSA), including Tsultrim Nyima, President of RTYC, Nyima Tsering, Vice President, and Dechen Zangmo, General Secretary. The exhibition aimed to foster a deeper understanding of Tibet's historical and cultural connections with India.

On 1 October, the exhibition was showcased at the main campus of Maharaja Sayajirao University (MSU) in Baroda. The event was attended by Kalpana, Dean of the university, Professor Sushmita Sen and students from various faculties. The exhibition provided a platform for students and faculty to explore the enduring ties between India and Tibet, creating an environment of cultural and academic exchange.

On 4 September 2024, Dr Geetika Patel, Vice President of Parul University; Dr Rajendra Parekh, Dean of the Faculty of Law; Dr Ketan Desai, Associate Professor in the Faculty of Law; and Dr Ruchi Tiwari inaugurated an exhibition at Parul University in Vadodara, Gujarat. The event attracted considerable interest, with participation from students and faculty members of the Departments of Law and Political Science. This exhibition facilitated valuable interactions between the Tibet Museum staff and the university community.

The exhibition successfully captured the attention of students and faculty and received positive feedback from visitors. Museum staff had the opportunity to engage with a diverse audience, guiding them through the various pictorial panels and fostering a deeper understanding of the long-standing ties between India and Tibet.

-Report filed by The Tibet Museum, DIIR, CTA

### **Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang Meets with the US Embassy Staff**

08 October 2024, CTA





Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile met with staff from the US Embassy of Delhi, including James Plasman, First Secretary; Mike Cramer, Political Officer; and Ajay Dayal, Political Specialist on 8 October 2024. They were joined by Dhondup Gyalpo, Secretary of the Delhi-based Tibet Bureau, and Tenzin Paljor, protocol officer from the DIIR.

The US Embassy staff were welcomed with Khatak, traditional Tibetan ceremonial scarves, and taken on a guided tour of the parliament hall.

During the visit, the Deputy Speaker provided an overview of the evolution of Tibetan democracy, highlighting key milestones such as His Holiness the Dalai Lama's vision for a democratic system for Tibet, the establishment of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile with 13 elected representatives in 1960, the inclusion of women's representation in 1964, the adoption of the Charter of Tibetans in Exile in 1991, and the devolution of His Holiness's political authority to elected leaders in 2011.

Additionally, the U.S. Embassy staff were briefed on the composition and undertaking of the Tibetan Parliament, including its key functions such as biannual sessions, visitation programs, and advocacy initiatives, among others.

The Deputy Speaker subsequently expressed her heartfelt gratitude to the U.S. government, Congress, and citizens for their unwavering support of the just cause of Tibet. She clarified that the One China policy has no justification regarding Tibet, as it lacks historical backing. She emphasised that the international community should not yield to China's dictates.

Speaking about the systematic targeting of Tibet's religion and language by the Chinese government through policies aimed at Sinicisation, the Deputy Speaker highlighted China's coercion of Tibetan children into colonial boarding schools and the promotion of marriages between Tibetans and Hans, among other measures that undermine Tibetan identity.

During the meeting, the Deputy Speaker emphasised the significance of the Tibetan Plateau and the rivers flowing from Tibet for the global climate, particularly

focusing on China's claim to hegemony over Tibet's water resources and the serious impact this has on downstream South Asian countries.

-Report filed by Tibetan Parliamentary Secretariat

## Tibetans urge NYC to add Losar to 'Alternate Side Parking suspension calendar

08 October 2024, Phayul

Tibetan and Himalayan residents of New York City on September 28 testified before the City Council, advocating for an Alternate Side Parking (ASP) holiday to recognise Losar, the Tibetan Buddhist New Year. Around 25 representatives from various organisations, including the Tibetan Community of New York and New Jersey, the United Sherpa Association, Lo Nyamship Association, and the Walung Community of North America, delivered testimonies during the public hearing.

The legislation, Intro 100, introduced by Council Member Julie Won (D-Queens) and supported by 25 co-sponsors, seeks to recognise Losar, the Tibetan Buddhist New Year, as an official holiday where 'Alternate Side Parking' (ASP) rules are suspended in New York City. The bill aims to add Losar to the city's list of holidays that already include exemptions for specific legal and religious observances important to various ethnic and religious communities.

ASP is a system that requires vehicles to be moved from designated streets to allow for routine street cleaning. While essential for maintaining city cleanliness, these parking restrictions can impose challenges for residents observing cultural or religious holidays. The City of New York currently suspends ASP rules on select holidays, such as Yom Kippur, Eid, and Diwali, to accommodate the religious practices of diverse communities.



Representatives from around 25 Tibetan and Himalayan organisations on the day of hearing (Photo/Nick Gulotta)

Tenzin Dorjee, a lecturer in political science at Columbia University and a well-known Tibet activist, delivered testimony supporting the proposed legislation to add Losar to New York City's ASP

suspension calendar. Speaking before the City Council, Dorjee highlighted the significance of Losar for nearly 100,000 people in New York, including Tibetans, Mongolians, Nepalese, Ladakhis, Sherpas, Monpas, Kalmyks, and other Buddhist communities. He stressed that instead of focusing on prayers and festivities, community members are often forced to worry about moving their cars during the celebrations.

"Many members of our community are essential workers who have kept the city going through its toughest times, including the pandemic, on so many levels," Dorjee said. "The least we can do is offer them the peace of mind to celebrate Losar without interrupting their prayers, without having to leave a family gathering just to move their cars, and without spending half an hour searching for parking."

Dorjee emphasised that the bill represents more than just a parking holiday—it is a gesture of respect and inclusion for a community that contributes to the city's rich cultural diversity. "By declaring Losar a street cleaning holiday we are acknowledging the contribution of a diverse community that has given so much to the City," he concluded.

If passed, Intro. 100, would be one of the most significant municipal laws recognising the Tibetan-American community and their civic participation in the United States.

Council Member Won, whose office includes a sizeable Tibetan and Himalayan population, including Bhutanese, Sherpas, Lowas, Sikkimese, Monpas, and more emphasised that the legislation will bring recognition to her Himalayan constituents. "Losar is the most important holiday for my Tibetan and Himalayan neighbours across the city. Intro. 100 will ensure that they can enjoy their celebrations without the disruption of moving their cars or worrying about being towed," said Council Member Julie Won. "Suspending Alternate Side Parking on Losar is another way that we can honour our neighbours' religious practices and time with their families."

### **Exile administration issues guidelines for Tibet or China visits by Tibetans**

08 October 2024, Tibetan Review

The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) of the exile Tibetans has on Oct 7 announced guidelines requiring any exile Tibetan who wishes to visit Tibet or China to intimate its Security Department beforehand.

The general guidelines announced online notes that after Tibetans got separated between those remaining in Tibet and the others who escaped into exile, visits to each other and for other purposes became possible after 1979. However, the Chinese

government has been using the opening up to infiltrate the Tibetan community in exile, which it has viewed as separatists and anti-China enemy forces, or their tools.

The announcement accuses China of having continued to carry out various kinds of devious plans with objectives to weaken the exile Tibetan setup and to create dissention and internal conflicts. In this milieu, there has been a sharp increase in recent times of the Chinese government enticing Tibetans living in India, Nepal and Bhutan as well as other foreign countries to visit Tibet for all sorts of purposes, including tourism, family visits, pilgrimage and so forth while at the same time engaging in transnational repression of Tibetans living abroad. These developments have seen a marked increase in numbers and prominence in recent times, which makes it necessary to urge everyone to take note of certain points for consideration and caution, the seven-point announcement said.

The announcement then begins by asking all senior leaders and officials at all levels of the CTA, whether current or former, not to undertake any visit to Tibet without taking into confidence its Department of Security.

The CTA has no objection to any private exile Tibetan undertaking visits to Tibet. However, they should intimate their travel plans to their concerned Settlement Representative or Welfare Officer, as the case may be, or, otherwise, the Department of Security itself.

The announcement notes that the Chinese government imposes all sorts of conditions on exile Tibetans while granting them permits; that under it, a few had set up Tibetan or Tibet-related organizations in a variety of names to organize visits to Tibet in the name of pilgrimage, tourism, scholarly visits and so forth. However, it says, these are devious programs designed to carry out political objectives, and it is important that visitors do not get snared in them, such as by becoming their members.

In the case of those who have visited Tibet and had been deceived into falling under the influence of the Chinese government, and have absolutely abandoned the fundamental Tibetan cause, anyone who publicize the Chinese propaganda and acts against the interest of the Tibetan people after their return should be considered as an opponent of the CTA. It is important that all Tibetans counter their propaganda efforts and expose them, wherever and whenever they may be, the announcement said.

The announcement also expresses concern that the Chinese government deceives Tibetans who visit Tibet by compelling them with use of monetary or material enticements, pressure tactics, threats, dire warnings, and so forth to enter into partnerships or co-operations, continuations of relationships, and so

forth. It asks such people not to allow themselves to become victims of such machinations, but remain steadfast in their stand. Tibetans should make efforts to obtain guidance from concerned entities before their trip to Tibet. In order to pre-empt any chance of falling victim to such traps, Tibetans living abroad should obtain the telephone and other contact details of their host countries' embassies in China, the announcement said.

Anyone who had mistakenly accepted Chinese government's conditions due to the latter's deception are asked to understand that once they return from their trip, they are free from the harassment and pressures of the Chinese government. They should therefore submit a timely report of the difficulties they had faced to the CTA's Department of Security and thereby make efforts to free themselves from the Chinese government pressure. Any such people who ignore such situation or who continue their clandestine contacts can find themselves in any sort of legal trouble with their host countries, the announcement warned.

The announcement notes that these days, the government of China carries out transnational repression of exile Tibetans by trying to compel them to refrain from engaging in activities for promoting the fundamental and political causes of Tibet and, instead, co-operate with it and facilitate its repressive activities. Calling such practices a violation of international law, the announcement says that in the best-case scenario, anyone who come under such pressure should publicize it before the media with proof thereof. Otherwise, such targeted persons should report the same with all the relevant details to their concerned host governments, or CTA Representative offices, or Settlement Heads, or the Department of Security, as the case may be.

### **DIIR Tibet Awareness Talk Reaches Thousands Across Indian Universities and Colleges**

07 October 2024, CTA

The Department of Information and International Relations has successfully concluded a two-week Tibet Awareness Talk series and Tibet Museum Exhibition across universities and colleges in Varanasi and Gujarat. The campaign, aimed at educating students and faculty about Tibet's perennial relationship with India and the critical current situation inside Tibet under the repressive rule and policies of Chinese government, reached a total of 1,348 participants in 13 universities.

During the talks, speakers Tenzin Kunkhen and Rinchen presented a detailed analysis of Tibet's current human rights challenges. They emphasised Tibet's global significance and urged Indian students

to address these issues in their academic work. The speakers encouraged attendees to publish articles in journals to maintain awareness of Tibet's situation, highlighting the importance of ongoing dialogue and scholarly attention to the region's concerns.

#### **Tibet Awareness Talk in Varanasi**

The Tibet Talk kicked off with its first leg in Varanasi on 23 September and 24 September, making significant inroads at three key institutions. At the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, the talks engaged 250 students and faculty members, while at Malviya Shiksha Niketan Inter College, 100 participants attended the sessions. The campaign also reached out to 20 Tibetan students at the prestigious Banaras Hindu University, ensuring a diverse audience.

#### **Gujarat Tour**

In a notable collaboration, the Bharat Tibet Sangh (BTS) led by Shri Bhavesh Joshi, Gujarat BTS State President and the vibrant and affectionate BTS team, in Gujarat played a crucial role in facilitating the DIIR's Tibet Advocacy Section staff's outreach efforts throughout the state, particularly in the cities of Rajkot and Junagadh. Members of the Bharat Tibet Sangh not only assisted in arranging the talks but also provided transportation and accommodation facilities in the state and accompanied the DIIR staff during their presentations at various universities, strengthening the impact of the awareness campaign. This partnership highlights the growing network of support for Tibetan issues in India and underscores the effectiveness of local organisations in promoting cross-cultural understanding and dialogue.

#### **Vadodara:**

- The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda (MSU) (30 September): 20 Tibetan students during the Middle Way Policy Outreach program.
- Parul University (1 October ): 65 Indian students and faculty

#### **Rajkot (3 October):**

- SMT Kansagara College: 235 female students and 27 others
- VVP Engineering College: 250 professors, technical and academic staff, and non-academic staff
- Saurashtra University: 65 students and faculty

#### **Junagadh (4 October):**

- Commerce and Law College: 120 female students and 22 faculty members
- Bhakt Narsinh Mehta University: 158 students and 20 faculty members
- Junagadh Agriculture University: Meeting with the Vice Chancellor

#### **Media Coverage and Wider Impact**

The Tibet Awareness Talk series in Rajkot and Junagadh, Gujarat, garnered significant attention

from prominent Gujarati newspapers, substantially amplifying the campaign's reach. Leading publications such as Akila News and Gujarat Samachar provided extensive coverage of the events, bringing the Tibet issue to the forefront of public discourse in the region. These newspapers, known for their wide readership and influence, played a crucial role in disseminating information about the talks to a vast audience across Gujarat. A local newspaper also covered and published the Tibet Awareness talk and the Tibet Museum Exhibition in Varanasi, not only to highlight the key messages of the campaign but also to spark interest in Tibet's cultural heritage and current challenges.

Given the popularity and extensive circulation of these newspapers, it is estimated that the media coverage exponentially increased the number of people exposed to the Tibet awareness message, far beyond the direct participants in the university talks. This media amplification has been instrumental in fostering a more informed and engaged public discourse on Tibet-related issues.

#### Enthusiastic Response and Engagement

The Tibet Awareness Talk series across universities in Varanasi and Gujarat met with an overwhelmingly positive response, underscoring the campaign's success in effectively conveying its message. Throughout the sessions, Indian students and faculty members displayed remarkable enthusiasm, engaging speakers with thought-provoking questions that reflected a deep interest in Tibet's culture, history, and the deteriorating current situation. The talks sparked lively discussions, with attendees expressing curiosity about various aspects of India-Tibet Relations and the gravity of the challenges faced by the Tibetan people inside Tibet. Many participants offered supportive messages and pledged to further educate themselves and others about Tibet-related issues. The enthusiastic reception, consistent across all visited institutions, from Central Institute for Higher Tibetan Studies to Gujarat's Saurashtra University, clearly demonstrates the talks' efficacy in raising awareness and fostering a sense of solidarity among Indian students and academics. The speakers noted that this widespread engagement and support significantly exceeded their expectations, reinforcing the importance and timeliness of the awareness campaign.

-Filed by the UN, EU and the Human Rights Desk, Tibet Advocacy Section, DIIR

#### Open Letter to the co-founder of Rubin Museum of Art

06 October 2024, Phayul

Dear Shelly,

When you graciously stopped by the MET Museum yesterday and congratulated me with a warm hug

for my newest installation, I felt like I had made two very special people in my life proud and happy – you and Donald Rubin. Your visit brought immense warmth and joy, and I found myself reflecting on the long and wonderful journey we've shared over the years.

As we spoke at length, my mind began to wander like a wind-horse galloping through memory lanes. I recalled many cherished moments from my earliest involvement with Donald Rubin and the Rubin Museum family. Each memory, still vivid, brings surges of joy to my heart.

It feels like yesterday when I was first introduced to you and Donald by Tim McHenry at the 2007 opening of "The Missing Peace: Artists Consider the 14th Dalai Lama" at the Rubin Museum of Art. This ground-breaking group exhibition brought together 80 artists from around the world to celebrate the Dalai Lama as a symbol of peace. Notable participating artists included Lobsang Gyatso, Chuck Close, Bill Viola, Anish Kapoor, Laura Anderson, Marina Abramovic, Christo, and many others. If I am not mistaken, I was the youngest artist in the group. I felt humbled, cared and loved by all the senior artists that I met during the exhibition.

Despite initial backlash from the Chinese consulate, the exhibition received widespread acclaim from the public and critics. I was just 25 years old at the time and the warmth of your handshake and Donald's radiant smile left an indelible mark on my memory.

I also remember very fondly the time Fabio and I visited Donald at his office. As we were about to sit down, Donald stepped inside the room with both his arms raised and, in his signature lively voice, said, "I love art! I love art! Show me some good art!" Everyone in the room burst into laughter. That moment captured his infectious enthusiasm for life and art, which left a lasting impression on me. On another occasion, when I was about to leave after a meeting with a curator at the Rubin Museum to discuss an upcoming exhibition titled "Kora" at the Queens Museum of Art, Donald called me over saying, "Rigdol, I want to show a wonderful artwork by a young Tibetan artist." He led me to his office and pointed to a painting. I admired it and said, "This is a very good painting, it feels like the work of a master." I then added with a smile, "By the way, it's one of mine, from my pastel series." Donald was momentarily taken aback and then burst into laughter, saying, "Are you sure, you made this?" That day, I saw how genuinely he connected with art, letting it speak to his heart before anything else. The exhibition which opened at the Queen's museums and travelled to more than four other museums became one of the most significant and widely travelled exhibitions of contemporary Tibetan



art representing artists from Tibet and the global diaspora.

One of my fondest memories dates back to 2010, during the "Tradition Transformed" exhibition. The Trace Foundation and Rubin Museum of Art co-organized a panel discussion, bringing together art critics, scholars, and participating artists. However, the discussions unexpectedly centred around a single review by New York Times art critic Ken Johnson. His critique was somewhat harsh, particularly towards two senior contemporary Tibetan artists. As the audience passionately defended the artists and exhibition, the atmosphere grew tense. Then, Donald, seated in the front row, raised his hand and calmly said, with a gentle smile, "Andy Warhol used to say he didn't read reviews; he measures it with a tape." The room erupted in laughter, and the tension dissipated instantly. Turning to us, the Tibetan artists, Donald continued, "All you need to do is create exceptional art. Focus on your work, and we'll always support you."

Through all this, I feel profound gratitude for the opportunities you, Donald, and the Rubin Museum of Art have provided me and numerous fellow artists, especially marginalized Tibetan artists.

The Rubin Museum has been and remains an integral part of my journey and that of countless artists. It is a nurturing home and platform for Tibetan, Nepalese, Mongolian, and Bhutanese art, artists, historians, and scholars.

Finally, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations and heartfelt prayers for the bold new direction the Rubin Museum is embarking upon. May the spirit and love of Donald, you, and the Rubin Museum of Art resonate across all mountains and plains.

With

warm regards

Tenzing Rigdol

### **12 Years After Dalai Lama's Previous Visit, MPs from Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile Coming to Kashmir**

05 October 2024, Kashmir Life

In a significant development for Tibetan communities across Jammu and Kashmir, the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile announced a delegation's forthcoming visit to Srinagar, Kargil, and various regions of Ladakh. The delegation, comprising parliamentarians Geshe Lharampa Gowo Lobang Phende and Phurpa Dorjee Gyaldhong, will embark on this extensive tour from October 7 to October 21, 2024, reports appearing in media suggest.

This visit holds profound historical and cultural importance, rekindling memories of the Dalai Lama's 2012 maiden visit to Srinagar, during which he met

the Tibetan refugee community and local leaders, emphasising interfaith harmony and compassion.

The delegation's itinerary includes a series of meetings across Ladakh's key areas such as Leh, Zaskar, Nubra, Dhurduk, and the Tibetan settlements of Jangthang Nubma, Kakshung, Goeyul, Hanley, Makyu, Chumur, Sumdoo, and Samedh. They are expected to engage with the Tibetan communities to address issues of welfare, education, and preservation of Tibetan cultural identity amid evolving geopolitical scenarios in the region.

Their visit will begin in Srinagar, where they will spend two days meeting with local Tibetan refugees, a reminder of the deep historical ties between Kashmir and Tibet that stretch back centuries.

The two-day engagement in Srinagar revives memories of the Dalai Lama's visit in July 2012, when he met with both Tibetan and Kashmiri leaders. At the time, he was welcomed by the then-Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, who conveyed his government's support for the Tibetan refugees.

During his 2012 visit, the Dalai Lama's interactions with the Tibetan Muslim community in Srinagar stood as a powerful symbol of interfaith harmony. Tibetan Muslims, a small but historically significant community in Kashmir, have their roots dating back to the 8th century CE, when Muslim traders began settling in Tibet. By the time of the fifth Dalai Lama, Tibetan Muslims had become an integral part of Tibetan society, granted special rights and recognition. The Dalai Lama's 2012 visit was the first to Kashmir after his retirement from active politics, focusing on meeting these Tibetan refugees who fled Tibet in 1959 following the Chinese occupation.

His Holiness had expressed deep admiration for the Tibetan Muslim community's resilience, recalling the rich cultural exchange between Tibet and Kashmir over the centuries. The community's history was shaped by centuries of trade and migration, with many Kashmiris settling in Tibet, intermarrying with Tibetan women, and becoming part of the Tibetan cultural fabric. These Tibetan Muslims were later repatriated to India after the Chinese occupation of Tibet, where they found refuge in Kashmir.

The current delegation's visit, echoing these shared histories, will undoubtedly focus on sustaining this cultural and religious harmony. After leaving Srinagar, the MPs will travel to Leh on October 11, where they will meet with Tibetan and Ladakhi Buddhist leaders. The Leh meetings are anticipated to include discussions on preserving Tibetan heritage and bolstering education initiatives within Tibetan settlements in Ladakh, especially those affected by the Sino-Indian tensions and recent border challenges.

Following their engagements in Leh, the delegation will travel across Ladakh, meeting Tibetan



communities in remote areas like Zaskar and Nubra. On October 14, they are set to visit settlements in Jangthang Nubma, Kakshung, and Goeyul, with further visits scheduled to Hanley, Makyu, Chumur, and Sumdoo between October 16 and 18. These settlements are crucial to the Tibetan community's socio-economic stability, and the delegation is expected to discuss local education, healthcare, and cultural preservation measures.

Reflecting on the Dalai Lama's 2012 address to the Tibetan Public School in Srinagar, where he praised the school's efforts to promote interfaith harmony, the Tibetan parliamentarians are likely to emphasise the need for continued support for Tibetan educational institutions. The Dalai Lama, during his 2012 visit, had stressed the importance of education as the foundation of inner peace and happiness, calling for a balance between material development and moral values in the curriculum.

The delegation will conclude their tour on 21 October in Leh before returning to Dharamshala, where they will present a report to the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile on their observations and recommendations for the Tibetan communities in Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh.

### **Chamgon Kenting Tai Situpa Rinpoche Visits Tenzingang Tibetan Settlement, Confers Teachings to Tibetan and Local Residents**

05 October 2024, CTA



Chamgon Kenting Tai Situpa Rinpoche Visits Tenzingang Tibetan Settlement, Confers Teachings to Tibetan and Local Residents

The 12th Chamgon Kenting Tai Situpa Rinpoche made a visit to Gyuto Monastery in Tenzingang Tibetan Settlement, Arunachal Pradesh, from 30 September to 2 October 2024. This visit was graciously facilitated by the Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, Shri Pema Khandu, who invited Rinpoche to the Mon Tawang area.

The Gyuto Monastery and the Tenzingang Tibetan Settlement Office jointly extended an invitation to Tai Situ Rinpoche, who kindly accepted the request. On

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the evening of 30 September, the residents of Tenzingang, along with devotees from nearby villages—Domkho, Kamalangchen, Kalaktang, and Shergaon—extended a warm and grand welcome reception for Rinpoche.

On 1 October, Rinpoche delivered a dharma talk focusing on "Refugee Practice & Mind Generation," as requested by the Tibetan Settlement Office. Rinpoche also conducted a long-life enthronement initiation for the attendees, including devotees, the public, and students at Tenzingang Gyuto Monastery, honouring the revered mother queen of the Siddha, Machi Drupi Gyalmo (Tsewang).

During the teaching, the Tibetan Settlement Officer delivered a welcome speech and presented brief introduction of the Tenzingang Tibetan Settlement, followed by a presentation of colourful cultural programme from the student of local Sambhota Tibetan School and settlers.

On 2 October, Tai Situ Rinpoche visited the Tibetan Settlement Office, Sambhota Tibetan School in Tenzingang, and K.S Memorial Clinic before departing for Guwahati, Assam.

The government of Arunachal Pradesh has declared Tai Situ Rinpoche as State guest during his visit to Arunachal Pradesh and received all the protocol and accommodations from the State government.

-Report filed by Tibetan Settlement Office, Tenzingang

### **Dalai Lama to visit Ladakh next summer**

04 October 2024, Phayul

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has agreed to visit Ladakh next summer, following a meeting with religious and community leaders from the region at his residence here on Friday .

The delegation included prominent figures such as Thiksey Rinpoche, Tsering Dorje, President of the Ladakh Buddhist Association (LBA), Tsering Angdus, President of the Ladakh Gonpa Association and Jigmet Rabtan, President of the Ladakh Youth Association. According to Thiksey Rinpoche, His Holiness agreed to the invitation to visit Ladakh and the Nubra region next summer.

The news comes as a welcome development for the Ladakhi people, who have been eagerly awaiting His Holiness's visit since a few years. Speaking to the media, Tsering Dorje, President of LBA stated that the Ladakhi community had been concerned about the Dalai Lama's health following his knee surgery.

This announcement follows an earlier request made in April by various Buddhist organizations from Ladakh. Initially, the Office of His Holiness had scheduled a visit for July 2024, but it had to be cancelled due to his knee surgery in the United States in June.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has also resumed giving public audiences, scheduled on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings at his residence here. These sessions began following the long-life prayer offered by the Monpa community of Arunachal Pradesh in the first week of September.

In recent years, public audiences for the general public have increased, with thousands of people taking the opportunity to receive the Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama's blessings in person. These public audiences were temporarily halted when His Holiness travelled to the U.S. for knee surgery in June.

### **Sikyong Delivers Kashag's Message at the Celebration of 41st Sakya Trizin Kyabgon Gongma Dorje Chang Rinpoche's 80th birthday**

04 October 2024, CTA

On 3 October 2024, a long-life prayer ceremony was held along with the 80th birthday celebration of the 41st Sakya Trizin, Kyabgon Gongma Trichen Rinpoche, organised by the Sakya community at the Sakya Monastery in Rajpur, Dehradun.

The event was attended by the 42nd Sakya Trizin Ratna Vajra Rinpoche, the 43rd Sakya Trizin Gyana Vajra Rinpoche, Khondung Avikriti Vajra Rinpoche, Khondung Asanga Vajra Rinpoche, Dungsey Abhaya Vajra Rinpoche, high lamas of the Sakya, Ngor, and Tsar traditions, Speaker of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, Sikyong Penpa Tsering, Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang, Tibetan Justice Commissioner Tenzin Lungtok, former Speaker Pema Jungney, former Deputy Speaker Acharya Yeshe Phuntsok, former Kalons (Ministers), Public Service Commissioner Karma Yeshe, standing committee members of the 17th Tibetan Parliament, some former parliamentarians, Secretary Dhondul Dorjee of the Department of Religion and Culture, Secretary of the Gaden Phodrang Lobsang Jinpa, and other dignitaries from India and the Tibetan community.

In the afternoon, a birthday celebration was held for Sakya Trichen Rinpoche, presided over by the 43rd Sakya Trizin Gyana Vajra Rinpoche, the 42nd Sakya Trizin Ratna Vajra Rinpoche, and other members of the Khon lineage. The chief guest was Satpal Ji Maharaj, Minister for Public Works Department, Culture, and Tourism of Uttarakhand state. Special guests included Sikyong Penpa Tsering, Speaker of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, and Tibetan Justice Commissioner Tenzin Lungtok, along with other reverent lamas, representatives of spiritual leaders, current and former officials of the Central Tibetan Administration, guests from various regions, and members of the monastic and lay communities.

At the event, Sikyong Penpa Tsering delivered the Kashag's message, offering heartfelt greetings and best wishes on the 80th birthday of Sakya Trichen, Ngawang Kunga Tegchen Palbar Trinley Samphel Wanggi Gyalpo. Warm regards were also extended to the 43rd Sakya Trizin, the 42nd Sakya Trizin, the Khön lineage descendants, and all the attendees. The message highlighted the significant religious, political, and cultural contributions of the Sakya tradition, led by great scholars who helped establish Buddhism in Tibet and has promoted its teachings over centuries.

In his remarks, Sikyong highlighted the enduring legacy of the five Sakya founding masters and their successors, who have upheld and propagated the Buddha's teachings through explanation, debate, and practice. The message highlighted the significant religious, political, and cultural contributions of the Sakya tradition, led by these great scholars who helped establish Buddhism in Tibet and promoted its teachings.

It praised the efforts of figures like the great scholar Kunga Gyaltsen and his disciple, Drogon Chogyal Phagpa, who earned the favour of the Mongol emperors and their subjects through their profound Dharma teachings. By halting a major Chinese invasion, they offered fearless refuge to hundreds of thousands. They also unified Tibet's three provinces under one political authority, ending a period of division.

In the speech, Sikyong applauded Sakya Gongma Rinpoche for his steadfast support of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's leadership and the Tibetan administration throughout his time in exile. Sikyong also highlighted Rinpoche's global efforts to spread the teachings of Sutra and Tantra, while fostering non-sectarian disciples in Tibet, which have greatly benefited the preservation of Buddhism and the Sakya tradition. Reflecting on the hardships of exile, Sikyong praised Sakya Trizin's pivotal role in re-establishing Sakya monasteries, modernising their education systems, and promoting gender equality by empowering female teachers and abbots. Additionally, the Sikyong acknowledged his founding of Dharma centres worldwide and his transparent reforms to the Sakya throne-holder system, underscoring the far-reaching impact of his religious and secular contributions.

Sikyong expressed personal gratitude for the privilege of attending several significant events honouring Sakya Gongma Rinpoche, including the golden jubilee of his enthronement in 2009, the 50th anniversary of the Sakya Institute of Higher Buddhist Studies in 2022, and now the celebration of Rinpoche's 80th birthday. He conveyed his appreciation for being able to offer a brief long-life

prayer on behalf of the Kashag of the Central Tibetan Administration.

Additionally, Sikyong emphasised that this celebration is an opportunity to reflect on Sakya Gongma Rinpoche's remarkable contributions and to put his teachings into practice.

In his concluding remarks, Sikyong extended heartfelt birthday greetings and wished Sakya Gongma Rinpoche a long life, hoping that all his noble aspirations will be fulfilled.

### **Tibetan Parliamentary Delegation Meets European Parliament Members in Belgium**

03 October 2024, CTA

A Tibetan parliamentary delegation, including parliamentarians Tashi Dhondup and Rigzin Lhundup, continued their advocacy efforts in Belgium on 1 October 2024.

They held meetings with Bernard Guetta, Member of the European Parliament from France; Hannes Heide, Member of the European Parliament from Austria; Dainius Žalimas, Member of the European Parliament from Lithuania; Lóránt Vincze, Member of the European Parliament from Romania; and Michael Gahler, Member of the European Parliament from Germany.

During their meetings, the Tibetan lawmakers briefed Members of the European Parliament on the situation in Tibet, focusing on policies implemented by the Chinese Communist Party. They highlighted how Tibetans in exile are working to protect and preserve their distinct language and religion, as well as the current status of the Tibetan struggle and the democratic framework of the Central Tibetan Administration.

The Tibetan MPs underscored the importance of support from the international community, particularly democratic nations, in resolving the Sino-Tibetan conflict. They urged European Parliament Members to raise the issue of Tibet within the Parliament and to adopt a resolution on the matter.

### **Office of Tibet in Canberra and Alliance for Victims of the Chinese Communist Regime Organise Counter-event on PRC's Founding Anniversary**

03 October 2024, CTA

Coinciding with the founding day of the People's Republic of China, the Tibet Information Office (Office of Tibet), in collaboration with the New Zealand and Australia Alliance for Victims of the Chinese Communist Regime, organised a counter-event on 1 October 2024 at Sydney Town Hall.

Representative Karma Singey, accompanied by Chinese Liaison Officer of Tibet Information Office, attended the event and interacted with members of the participating groups.

The event featured a morning photo exhibition and an afternoon rally, bringing together Chinese democrats, Hongkongers, Tibetans, and Falun Dafa practitioners, aimed to raise public awareness about the pressing issues each community faces under Chinese Communist rule.

The President of the Alliance, Professor Feng, moderated the rally and underscored the illegality of the Chinese Communist Party by referring founding day of the PRC as "National Fall Day".

Chinese Liaison Officer of Tibet Information Office, Dawa Sangmo, emphasised in her speech the colonial nature of Chinese state-run Tibetan boarding schools and the forced closure of local Tibetan schools, a policy aimed at further eradicating the Tibetan language and culture.

Former Chinese diplomat, Chen Yonglin, who defected from the regime, spoke at the event, drawing attention to the countless lives lost since the Communist government came to power. He called on the Australian government to invoke the Magnitsky Act to sanction Chinese officials involved in human rights abuses.

Other speakers at the rally included John Deller, spokesperson for Falun Dafa, who spoke about the illegal organ harvesting from Falun Gong practitioners, and Jenni Chen from the Hong Kong community, who discussed the severe human rights abuses under China's National Security Law.

Likewise, V-TAG Australia actively participated in the event by displaying photos and reports and raised awareness among the Australian public on the Chinese state-run colonial boarding school. Tenzin Chokrab Kindeling, a member of V-TAG Australia, delivered a speech on behalf of the group.

The event concluded with a unified call for the Australian government to take immediate action, specifically urging the use of the Magnitsky Act to sanction Chinese officials involved in human rights abuses.

-Report filed by Office of Tibet, Canberra

### **Department of Religion and Culture Achieves Key Milestones in First Year of Tibetan Digital Library Initiative**

03 October 2024, CTA

As part of the department's Strengthening Cultural Resilience of Tibetan Communities project funded by USAID, the Department of Religion and Culture has successfully completed orientation workshops on the Tibetan Digital Library Initiative at 20 different Tibetan cultural and religious institutions, marking the

beginning of the research and digitisation of scriptures.

On 13 May this year, the first orientation session was held in Dharamshala, followed by other assigned regions, namely Bylakuppe, Hunsur, Kollegal, and Mundgod, where the mentioned institutions are located. Over the span of four and a half months, the Department of Religion and Culture, in collaboration with Wadhvani AI and the Monlam IT Research Centre, conducted a series of workshops at the aforementioned Tibetan settlements on the implementation of the Tibetan Library Management System application, as well as on researching and digitising ancient scriptures.

In addition, during these orientation workshops, the task force team from the Department of Religion and Culture also participated in the project. Thus far, the initiative has completed QR code integration for 2,000 bookshelves and 70,000 master texts.

-Report filed by Department of Religion and Culture, CTA

### **Top Paris museum has replaced 'Nepal-Tibet' with incorrect 'Himalayan World' to avoid mentioning 'Tibet'**

03 October 2024, Tibetan Review

While the Musée du quai Branly apologized and promised, on Sep 25, to restore the name "Tibet" in place of the China-dictated "Xizang" on its displays and documentations, the Guimet Museum of Asian Arts, another top museum in Paris, refuses to come out of its China-pressure despite criticisms from scholars and protests by Tibetans and supporters. The criticisms included an op-ed written by eminent French specialists on Tibet and China published in Le Monde on Aug 31.

While the Quai Branly museum has recognized its error and intends to correct it, the Guimet Museum rejects the accusations, pointing out that the change of name was made as part of a global reflection, and that Tibet remains mentioned within the museum, reported actualnewsmagazine.com Sep 29.

Whether in Hong Kong or Europe, museums that showcase exhibitions related to China sometimes succumb to Xi Jinping's warning for the arts to foster "correct" viewpoints of history and culture, noted the chinadigitaltimes.net Oct 1.

China decided last year to replace 'Tibet' with 'Xizang' in all its official documents to make the point that Tibet as the world has known thus far and as Tibetans identify themselves with no longer exists. 'Xizang', on the other hand, refers to the China-designated Tibetan region called 'Xizang Autonomous Region', which is roughly the western half of Tibet.

Earlier this year, the Guimet Museum renamed certain rooms of an exhibition from "Nepal-Tibet" to "Himalayan World," claiming that the decision was meant to highlight cultural, not geographical, similarities in that region. This was despite the fact that the museum appears to carry displays of artifacts from across Tibet, of which the Himalayas form only its southern belt.

The real reason for the museum's censoring of the name 'Tibet' appears to be pressure from China. According to anonymous sources from Le Monde, the museum was subjected to sustained pressure from Chinese authorities earlier this year.

In a Sep 27 Le Monde article by Bruno Philip, Tibet specialists criticized the museum's reasoning. It quoted linguist Nicolas Tournadre, a leading specialist in Tibetan languages, as saying: "The term 'Himalaya' is a denomination that provides a cheap way of sidestepping referring to the once powerful Tibetan state. Indeed, the northern slopes of the Himalayan range only form the southern border of Tibet, which, additionally, also has several other ranges, which reach over 7,000 meters high, crossing it from east to west. On the other hand, certain populations south of the Himalayas have adopted many elements of Tibetan culture, such as the Ladakhi [in India], the Sherpa [in Nepal] or the Sikkimese [in India]: They are often referred to as 'Bhoti,' derived from the word 'Bod' - 'Tibet' [in Tibetan]."

"Since the Musée Guimet has no problem talking about Tibetan Buddhism, it would be strange to reduce it to Himalayan Buddhism alone!" Tibet specialist Fernand Meyer, a former holder of the Science and Civilization of the Tibetan World chair at the Practical School of Advanced Studies (EPHE), has said.

"the 'Himalayan world' is not a culturally definable entity as such. Rather, it is a zone where the cultural areas of India and Tibet meet. To reduce the latter to its southern, geographically Himalayan fringe, therefore, does not do justice to the history and extension of a specifically Tibetan culture," he has added.

### **Sikyong Visits Two Schools in Mussoorie, Advice Tibetan Students on Continuing Future Tibet Struggle**

03 October 2024, CTA

On 2 October 2024, Sikyong Penpa Tsering visited Tibetan Homes Foundation School (THF) and Sambhota Tibetan Day School in Mussoorie (STS), where he addressed the students and staff of both schools.

On the morning, Sikyong Penpa Tsering traveled from Dehradun to Mussoorie. Upon arriving at



Tibetan Homes School around 10 a.m, he was warmly welcomed by General Secretary of Mussoorie Tibetan Home School, Tenzin Choklang, and Sambhota School's Principal Sangpo Rigzin, along with students and staff from both schools performing traditional music.

Afterwards, in the Tsering Dolma Hall of Tibetan Homes School, students from grade 9 and above, along with staff from both schools, gathered for a meeting. The General Secretary of Tibetan Homes Foundation delivered a welcome speech and presented the school's report, followed by Principal Sangpo Rigzin presenting the report for Sambhota School. Then, the Sikyong addressed the gathering.

While lauding the teachers for their dedicated services, Sikyong began his address referring to the Tibetan saying "Hope for the best, prepare for the worst," he explained that while the hope is to resolve the Tibet issue, preparation requires hard work. He noted that since the elder generation of Tibetans who came into exile and worked for Tibet's freedom under His Holiness the Dalai Lama's leadership are gradually passing away, it is now crucial to mobilise younger generations to make them carry the baton of Tibetan freedom struggle.

Sikyong emphasised that Tibetan children should have pride in being Tibetan and maintain their cultural dignity. For this, Sikyong stressed the importance of understanding Tibet's history and current issues. He introduced the historical development of Tibet, the value and significance of Tibetan writing, and the history and evolution of Tibet-China conflicts. He further implored Tibetan youths to pay attention to and study their own history.

In relation to this, Sikyong explained that the Kashag (Cabinet) is working to gain recognition of Tibet's historical status as a sovereign nation to strengthen the support for policy of Middle Way Approach. Hence, Sikyong acknowledged that a hearing on Tibet was conducted in the U.S. for the said reason that eventually resulted in enactment of the "Resolve Tibet Act".

Additionally, regarding His Holiness the Dalai Lama's reincarnation, Sikyong disclosed that since the Chinese government will certainly interfere in the recognition process, Tibetans have passed resolutions affirming that the authority to recognise the reincarnation lies solely with His Holiness. Sikyong also suggested the importance of securing similar resolutions from Himalayan Buddhists communities, followers of Tibetan Buddhism, and the international community. He mentioned that the Department of Religion and Culture is compiling these resolutions to strategically counter China's interference in the reincarnation issue.

Furthermore, through a PowerPoint presentation, Sikyong explained Tibet's geographical location, its environmental and geopolitical importance to the world and Asia, and how Tibetan religion and culture benefit humanity. Afterwards, he answered questions from some students.

In the afternoon, Sikyong Penpa Tsering visited the Sambhota Tibetan Day School and gave a speech in English to the staff and students, primarily Indian students. First, Principal Sangpo Rigzin welcomed him and presented a brief school report. Then, the Sikyong gave his speech, expressing gratitude to the Indian government and people for assisting in the establishment of Tibetan schools in India. He explained that Tibetans consider India a holy land and that there are strong historical ties between Tibet and India, and noted that Tibetan Buddhism originated from India and His Holiness describes himself as an ambassador of ancient Indian wisdom. Sikyong also addressed the declining number of Tibetan students in Tibetan schools and the increasing number of Indian students. He explained that the Tibetan administration's continued provision of education to Indian students is a way of showing gratitude to the Indian government and people. He mentioned that due to decreasing student numbers, some schools need to be consolidated. He then spoke primarily to the Indian students about the importance of the Tibetan plateau, the development of Tibetan history, and Indo-Tibetan relations, followed by answering students' questions.

After that, Sikyong inspected land that the Tibetan Homes School plans to sell, and then visited the local Tibetan market area to examine issues raised by the community regarding their difficulties.

### **Dalai Lama praises Japan for promoting peace in world**

03 October 2024, The Tribune

The Dalai Lama has congratulated the new Prime Minister of Japan, Shigeru Ishida, on his election. In a letter to Ishida, the Dalai Lama wrote, "Over the years, I have had the opportunity to visit Japan quite regularly. I deeply appreciate the interest and enthusiasm that people from all walks of life have shown in my efforts to encourage the cultivation of fundamental human values such as compassion and my work to promote inter-religious harmony and create a peaceful world free from weapons, including nuclear weapons."

The Dalai Lama wrote, "I admire the way the Japanese people have worked to transform Japan into one of the most modern nations in the world. Japan has also frequently taken the lead in trying to establish peace in the world. Your country's spiritual traditions place great value on peace, and I hope



you will be able to build on that during your tenure. In these times of uncertainty and upheaval in many parts of the world, it is vital that earnest and concerted efforts are made to resolve problems through dialogue and diplomacy."

The Dalai Lama concluded his letter by wishing Ishida success in his efforts to fulfil the hopes and aspirations of the people of Japan and in creating a more peaceful and compassionate world.

### **Tibetan Student Unity Network Debuts on PRC's 75th Anniversary, Aims to Empower Tibetan Students**

03 October 2024, The Tibet Express

Marking a significant milestone in the Tibetan diaspora community, the Tibetan Student Unity Network (TSUN)-India was officially launched on 1 October 2024, coinciding with the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

This newly formed student network aims to unite exiled Tibetan students and youth across India, fostering unity, empowerment, and collective strength through a shared vision and apolitical stance.

The TSUN aims to educate students on Tibetan culture, history, and governance, fostering collective strength among dispersed student associations. Its initiatives include annual meetings, monthly online sessions, social media campaigns, and commemorating significant events.

Currently, 10 student associations have joined, with membership open to any student association in India. The network seeks to enhance Tibetan students' knowledge, influence, and collective strength.

In the RTYC Jalandhar President's absence due to health reasons, RTYC Jalandhar's Executive Member, Karma Tashi, spoke with us, shedding light on the TSUN's vision and initiatives.

On the origin of the TSUN, Karma says it emerged from a youth gathering, where Tibetan student leaders converged, and was refined through subsequent meetings. This collaborative effort led to the network's official launch on 1 October 2024.

"The TSUN has three key goals," says Karma. It aims to establish a strong Tibetan student organisation, promote cultural and democratic awareness among youth, and unite dispersed, fragmented associations to amplify their collective influence.

"TSUN focuses on India for now with no international expansion plans," Karma said. Currently, its social media presence is only through its newly opened page on Instagram as tsun\_india. In order to join, any student association can contact the network through Instagram or reach out to RTYC Jalandhar's President or other TSUN leaders.

Karma added that so far, "TSUN marked Tibetan Democracy Day, which falls on 2 September." He added that the student members of the group participated in making short videos, dramas, and plays related to Tibetan Democracy Day, which he said drew approximately 30 participants.

The network has no single President; instead, the 10 member associations hold equal positions. These associations are RTYC Jalandhar, SFT Jalandhar, RTYC Sarah, Chakori, MTSA Mysore, TSAM Chennai, SFT Mangalore, RTYC Mangalore, and SFT Bangalore.

The network operates primarily online with no fixed location. It was formed informally in June/July through discussions among student leaders. The network's active members are the presidents and vice presidents of the 10-member student associations.

### **Sikyong Penpa Tsering Extends His Congratulations to the New Prime Minister of Japan, Honourable Shigeru Ishiba**

03 October 2024, CTA

On 3 October 2024, Sikyong Penpa Tsering, on behalf of the Central Tibetan Administration and Tibetan people, wrote a congratulatory letter to extend greetings to Honourable Shigeru Ishiba and the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan on the election victory.

Sikyong wrote, "Japan has consistently shown gracious hospitality to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people since welcoming His Holiness in 1967, shortly after His arrival in India to exile. Over the years, Japan, a nation where the vast majority hold deep admiration and respect for His Holiness, has hosted His Holiness on multiple occasions".

Similarly, Sikyong shared the Tibetan people's admiration towards Japan's unwavering commitment to championing freedom, democracy, and the rule of law, as well as its advocacy for human rights, particularly in the face of China's egregious violations and repression in Tibet, East Turkestan, Southern Mongolia and beyond. "Japan's bold stance against authoritarianism and infringement of freedom sets a true example of global leadership in defending rights and freedom," Sikyong added.

"It is also a profound source of hope for the Tibetan people in Tibet and in exile that Japan hosts one of the world's largest parliamentary support groups for Tibet, with over 100 members across party lines."

In conclusion, the Tibetan political leader expressed his optimism over continued support for Tibet and the Tibetan people under the leadership of Japan's new Prime Minister.

### 30 Tibetans detained

02 October 2024, The Tribune

New Delhi: The Delhi Police detained 30 Tibetans heading to protest outside the Chinese embassy on Tuesday against the human rights situation in their homeland, officials said. The protest was held after China marked its 75th year of communist party rule, a protester said. "We have detained 30 Tibetan protesters. They were released later after some time from Chanakyapuri police station," a police officer said.

### Embassy in New Delhi targeted as exile Tibetans, others protest on China's 75th National Day

02 October 2024, Tibetan Review

As China marked the 75th anniversary of the founding of its Communist Party state on Oct 1 in a distinctly low-keyed manner, beset by a host of economic, social stability, and other challenges, Tibetans living in exile, supporters and other victims of its persecution rallied to register their protests.

In India's capital New Delhi, Tibetans held a demonstration and chanted slogans outside Chinese embassy in Chanakyapuri. Thirty protesters were subsequently detained by police, taken to Mandir Marg police station, and later released, reported the timesofindia.com Oct 1.

The protesters, numbering 50, had arrived in the national capital after completing a cycle rally from Dehradun, covering a distance of over 400 km, with the aim to draw attention to the ongoing human rights abuses and the suppression of Tibetan culture under China's Communist party. The multi-day rally sought to raise awareness about the situation in Tibet and called for international solidarity against China's oppressive measures, reported indiatoday.in Oct 1.

"We are here to peacefully protest the CCP's brutal occupation of Tibet. The world must acknowledge the suffering of the Tibetan people and oppose this injustice," the report quoted a Tibetan Youth Congress representative as saying before the detention.

The demonstrators vocalized their demands with slogans such as, "Make China accountable for committing atrocities in Tibet," "Free Tibet," and "Stop genocide in Tibet," reported the devdiscourse.com Oct 1.

At the Vishwavidyalaya Metro Station in Delhi, Students for a Free Tibet (SFT) organized a photo action and awareness campaign.

SFT, a New York-headquartered group with grassroots chapters in various countries, was also a part of over 50 international human rights NGOs that came together to condemn transnational

repression "in a powerful joint statement" on China's 75th National Day.

Those that signed the Joint Statement Against Transnational Repression ranged from groups such as Human Rights Watch, Freedom House, and Amnesty International to local chapters of exile Tibetan groups. They came together "to show that the CCP's transnational repression is in the spotlight, and we will fight back against it at every turn," said the statement Oct 1.

"We stand together with dissidents against the long arm of authoritarian governments around the world. As organizations committed to protecting civil liberties, we, the undersigned, pledge to remain vigilant through education and advocacy to combat the growing threat of transnational repression," the statement said.

The signatories vowed to "continue to collaborate with affected communities to raise public awareness of the tactics employed by governments that extend their reach abroad."

The statement's direct reference to China specifically said: "One disturbing example (of transnational repression) occurred on the streets of San Francisco in November 2023, when Hong Kong, Tibetan, Uyghur, and mainland Chinese protesters gathered to oppose the Chinese leader Xi Jinping during the APEC Summit. As documented by a recent report jointly published by the Hong Kong Democracy Council and Students for a Free Tibet – followed by a Washington Post investigation – harassment, intimidation, surveillance, and physical violence were orchestrated by groups affiliated with the Chinese Communist Party. Even consular personnel were seen on the ground. We urge the U.S. State Department to consider elevating this as a diplomatic incident and the Justice Department to consider bringing federal charges against those who were responsible. Congress should likewise consider passing relevant new legislation to deter future episodes."

Elsewhere, 650 to 700 members of the exiled Uyghur community in Turkey staged a protest outside the Chinese Consulate in the Seriyer district of Istanbul, reported the ANI news service Oct 1.

Led by Hidayet Oguzhan, President of the International Union of East Turkestan Organizations, the protest drew support from several NGOs advocating for Uyghur rights, the report said.

## Office of Tibet, Nepal Hosts Three-Day Exhibition Showcasing Jamyang Dorje's Masterful Tibetan Calligraphy

02 October 2024, CTA



Jamyang Dorjee showcased exceptional artwork, including various distinctive drawings using Tibetan scripts, particularly in the Umed (cursive) style

The Office of Tibet in Nepal, in collaboration with the Himalayan Buddhist Library and Cultural Center, hosted a distinguished three-day exhibition and workshop on Tibetan calligraphy from September 25 to 27, 2024.

Esteemed Tibetan calligraphy artist Jamyang Dorjee presented his remarkable artwork, featuring a variety of distinctive drawings utilizing Tibetan scripts, particularly in the Umed (འུམེད) style. A notable highlight of the exhibition was a unique scroll showcasing the complete “Padma Kathang Sheldrags” manuscript, accompanied by displays of various other calligraphic styles.

The opening ceremony was held at the Choejor Community Hall on the first day. Throughout the subsequent three days, Jamyang Dorjee conducted educational sessions tailored for diverse groups, including monastic students and practitioners—especially those from the Nyingma tradition’s Shechen Monastery and university students and schoolchildren.

Participants included students from Namgyal University, Songtsen Nepal School, Namgyal Middle School, and Samten Memorial School. During these sessions, Jamyang Dorjee provided comprehensive teachings on the history and origins of Tibetan script alongside both traditional and contemporary artistic techniques.

The event witnessed the participation of approximately 200 individuals, comprising both male and female students, along with numerous interested public members. A significant presence of monastics from various monasteries, predominantly from Shechen Monastery, further enriched the program.

-Report filed by Office of Tibet, Nepal

## His Holiness the Dalai Lama Confers Teaching on Tsongkhapa's Three Principal Aspects of the Path

01 October 2024, CTA

This morning His Holiness the Dalai Lama made a circuit of the Tsuglagkhang, the Main Tibetan Temple, on his way to address an estimated 7000 people, including 1300 from Taiwan, as well as many monks on vacation from the monasteries in South India. He smiled at those he saw as he passed, occasionally extending a hand to an elderly man or woman who caught his eye.

In the temple His Holiness warmly greeted the Ganden Throneholder and took his seat on the throne. The ‘Heart Sutra’ was chanted in Chinese, following which a mandala was offered to him.

“Today we’re going to hold a spiritual discourse,” His Holiness began. “When I was on my way here, listening to your chanting the ‘Mig-tsé-ma’ prayer to Jé Tsongkhapa reminded me that not only was I born close to his place of birth, but that I also share his philosophical views. However, the survival of the Buddhadharma is not linked to a particular location and those of us in exile have done our best to keep it alive. Jé Rinpoché’s teaching has spread around the world and I’ve done my best to clarify it.

“When I was in Tibet, and also since leaving the Land of Snow, one of my most important practices has been to read the 18 volumes of Jé Rinpoché’s Collected Works. I have a special regard for them and feel a close connection to them. Today, I’ll read his ‘Three Principles of the Path’.

“Tibetans’ core identity is focussed on the Buddhadharma. We have kept it alive and we have kept it well through study and practice. Consequently, many who have an interest in the Dharma are paying attention to our tradition.

Tea and bread served to the congregation were blessed with the recitation of a verse that celebrates His Holiness’s names:

I pray to you, O Supreme Noble Lotus Holder (Padmapani):

You are the adamantine Gentle Glory who has Mastery of Speech,

Your vase of Sublime Insight is replete with the nectar of Exalted Wisdom,

And you are embellishing jewellery of (Beautifully adorning) the Vast playful Ocean of Upholders of Dharma! “There was a prediction at the time of the Buddha,” His Holiness continued, “that the Buddhadharma would spread from the north to the north. After his enlightenment the Buddha began his teaching by explaining the Four Noble Truths. In due course, what he had to say spread throughout Tibet, which is north of India, and on to Mongolia, which is north of Tibet. Tibetans in Tibet and in exile have kept the tradition alive through study and practice of

the Three Higher Trainings—ethics, concentration and wisdom. Interest has grown around the world because these trainings are rooted in reason and logic.

“The three principles of the path are renunciation, or a determination to be free, the awakening mind and the correct view. The determination to be free does not lead to enlightenment directly, it needs to be augmented by the other two principles.

“Shantarakshita, among Indian masters invited by Tibetan kings to Tibet, established the Buddha’s teachings there. We have studied and meditated on what was taught and put the Three Higher Trainings and the Three Principles of the Path into practice.

“When we develop a determination to be free, we’ll no longer be drawn to the pleasures and attractions of this life or future lives in cyclic existence. We’ll turn away from them. However, we will not reach the state of omniscience without the awakening mind of bodhichitta and a correct view of emptiness.

“From the very beginning of my day I cultivate the awakening mind and an understanding of emptiness. When I hear sad news, these principles help me develop a determination to be free. Understanding the workings of the mind and emotions, and seeing how things are dependently arisen, we can come to an appreciation that suffering is rooted in ignorance.



His Holiness the Dalai Lama addressing the congregation during his teaching at the Main Tibetan Temple in Dharamshala, HP, India on 30 September 2024. Photo by Tenzin Choejor

“The Three Principles of the Path need to be integrated within us. They need to become part of our inner experience.”

His Holiness began to read briskly through the text noting that without a pure determination to be free there is no way to still attraction to the pleasures of cyclic existence. We need to reverse attraction to this life as well as reversing attraction to future lives. When we do not for an instant wish for the pleasures of cyclic existence, and day and night remain intent on liberation, we will have produced a determination to be free.

However, a determination to be free without a pure awakening mind of bodhichitta does not bring forth enlightenment. Therefore, Bodhisattvas generate the excellent awakening mind. They reflect on how all

beings, our mothers, are swept by the current of the four powerful rivers, tied by strong bonds of actions so hard to undo, caught in the iron net of self-centredness, completely enveloped by the darkness of ignorance, born and reborn in boundless cyclic existence, and are ceaselessly tormented by the three miseries. Thinking of them in this way they generate the awakening mind.

The text touches on how, despite these realizations, without wisdom, the realization of emptiness, we cannot cut the root of cyclic existence. Therefore, we must strive to understand dependent arising.

Jé Tsongkhapa states that appearances are infallible dependent arising, while emptiness is free of assertions. But as long as these two understandings are seen as separate, we will not have realized the intent of the Buddha. And yet, when these two realizations are simultaneous and concurrent, analysis of the profound view is complete. He goes on to reveal that appearances refute the extreme of existence, and emptiness refutes the extreme of nonexistence. When we understand the arising of cause and effect from the viewpoint of emptiness, we will not be captivated by either extreme view.



Members of the audience from Taiwan taking notes during His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s teaching at the Main Tibetan Temple in Dharamshala, HP, India on 30 September 2024. Photo by Tenzin Choejor

Jé Rinpoché counsels his disciple Ngawang Drakpa, to whom he sent these verses to realize the Three Principles of the Path, to depend on solitude and strong effort, and quickly reach the final goal.

His Holiness announced that he would offer the Bodhisattva Vow. He remarked that he finds reading books about the awakening mind of bodhichitta and its qualities, such as Shantideva’s ‘Entering the Way of a Bodhisattva’ to be both moving and inspiring. He said such books encourage us to work for all sentient beings throughout space.

“When the Buddha first set out on the path to enlightenment,” His Holiness advised, “he generated such an awakening mind. We should emulate him.”

His Holiness read the verses for taking refuge in the Three Jewels and generating the awakening mind, encouraging members of the congregation to generate the awakening mind and take the Bodhisattva vow themselves. Next, he repeated



verses from 'Entering into the Bodhisattva's Way' in celebration.

Today my birth is fruitful, my human life is justified. Today, I am born into the family of the Buddha, now I am a child of the Buddhas.

So that there may be no blemish upon this spotless family, I must now act as becomes my family.

"People around the world seem obsessed with weapons and the use of force," His Holiness observed. "As practitioners of the Buddhistharma we should avoid this. Nothing good comes from the use of force. Killing so many people only brings further suffering. Setting aside attachment, anger and hatred we should work instead to benefit all sentient beings. Much better that developing bodhichitta within ourselves should be our primary aim."



A view of crowd sitting in the courtyard attending His Holiness the Dalai Lama's teaching at the Main Tibetan Temple in Dharamshala, HP, India on 30 September 2024. Photo by Ven Zamling Norbu

Among several questions from the audience His Holiness was asked what is the main cause not to be separated from the spiritual master. He answered that heeding the teachings you've received and putting them into practice creates a strong link with your teacher.

Another questioner wanted to know whether steady cultivation of practices like the exchanging of self and others would lead to genuine experience. His Holiness replied that if you familiarize your mind with such practice, it will eventually give rise to experience. In terms of bodhichitta you'll feel ever closer to it. He repeated the verse concerning the four immeasurable wishes.

May all beings have happiness and the causes of happiness.

May all beings be free from suffering and the causes of suffering.

May all beings rejoice in the well-being of others.

May all beings live in peace, free from greed and hatred.

"If we familiarize ourselves with bodhichitta, in time we will become imbued with it. I cultivate bodhichitta and the view of emptiness on a daily basis and I feel it has created a solid experience within me."

Asked how a beginner should act to prevent their sense of bodhichitta from slackening His Holiness

simply advised that if you persevere with a practice, it will not decline. Finally, he declared that main cause of higher rebirths in the future is to cultivate the awakening mind of bodhichitta and an understanding of emptiness.

The Taiwanese disciples expressed their pleasure at His Holiness's advice with a burst of applause. He left the temple, walked steadily to the lift, smiling at well-wishers as he went, and in the courtyard boarded the golfcart that would carry him home.

### **The World Needs a Champion like the Tibetan People and the Guidance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama More Than Ever: Congressman Jim McGovern at Gratitude Event in His Honor**

01 October 2024, CTA

The Regional Tibetan Association of Massachusetts (RTAM) on Saturday held a significant gratitude event titled "Thank You, Congressman Jim McGovern," celebrating Congressman for his steadfast commitment to Tibet, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and the Tibetan people.

In a stirring address, Congressman McGovern highlighted the enduring spirit and global impact of the Tibetan community. He spoke passionately about the vital themes of human rights, peace, and resilience. "The Tibetan Spirit Represents the Value that Can Change the World," McGovern declared, reflecting on his experiences with the Tibetan community and His Holiness the Dalai Lama. His speech deeply resonated with the audience, which included community leaders, activists, and supporters of the Tibetan cause.

During his remarks, Congressman McGovern discussed the profound lessons of love, respect, and joy he has absorbed from Tibetan culture. He emphasized the importance of these values in offering a stark contrast to the turmoil seen worldwide today, underscoring the necessity of promoting these ideals to counteract the pervasive negativity and violence.

"The world needs a champion like the Tibetan people and the guidance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama more than ever," stated McGovern, acknowledging the significant influence of Tibetan philosophy on fostering global unity and contentment.

Highlighting his legislative efforts, which were inspired by his interactions with the Tibetan community both within the U.S. and internationally, McGovern reaffirmed his commitment to supporting the Tibetan cause in Congress. "This legislation arose from meetings with Tibetans globally. These ideas came from you," he noted, celebrating the cooperative efforts that have led to substantial policy advancements.



Congressman McGovern concluded with a compelling call to action: "Nothing improves in our community, our country, and the world unless good, like-minded people unite and demand change."

Other special guests for the event focused on their collective appreciation for Congressman McGovern's dedication to Tibetan freedom struggle and his broader impact on global human rights advocacy. Sikyong Penpa Tsering of the Central Tibetan Administration congratulated Congressman McGovern on receiving the well-deserved honour. In a video message, Sikyong expressed his heartfelt gratitude to Congressman McGovern for his unwavering commitment to the Tibetan cause, acknowledging the personal sacrifices he has made, including facing sanctions, as a consequence of his steadfast support for Tibet.

Thondup Tsering, Member of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile, reflected on Congressman McGovern's long-standing commitment to human rights and his direct impact on the U.S. foreign policy, especially concerning Tibet, and referred to McGovern as "truly the conscience of the House." Tsering further highlighted the congressman's resilience against international pressures, and how despite facing sanctions, Congressman McGovern continues to stand with Tibet, wearing opposition as a badge of honour. "His commitment to justice is unwavering, and his actions inspire us to maintain our fight for freedom and dignity," noted Tibetan Parliamentarian Thondup.

Namgyal Choedup, Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Washington, D.C., commended Congressman McGovern for his compassionate and moral leadership that transcends political divisions, emphasising his pivotal role in advancing the Tibetan cause and supporting human rights on a global scale. Tenchoe Gyatso, President of the International Campaign for Tibet, praised Congressman McGovern for his leadership in passing crucial legislation like the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, which has bolstered international support for Tibet and set a precedent for future U.S. policies supporting Tibet.

Dhardon Sharling, former Member of Tibetan Parliament in Exile, spoke about the historical context of Congressman McGovern's support, reflecting on a pivotal moment in 2012 when he co-authored a significant letter to the U.S. Secretary of State advocating for Tibetan rights. She underscored how his support has not only persisted but intensified over the years, significantly contributing to the Tibetan cause and reinforcing their collective spirit and resilience.

Tsultrem Kunsang, President of the Regional Tibetan Association of Massachusetts, celebrated the impactful legislative achievements spearheaded by

Congressman McGovern, particularly noting his crucial role in the passage of the Resolve Tibet Act. Kunsang highlighted this law as a significant milestone that not only affirms the U.S. commitment to the Tibetan cause but also serves as a bold declaration against misinformation about Tibet's historical sovereignty.

A highlight of the event was the special ceremonial presentation of a silver sculpture replicating the historic Sino-Tibet Treaty of A.D. 821/823. This pillar, still standing today in front of the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa, Tibet, symbolises the enduring peace and mutual recognition of sovereignty between Tibet and China.

The Resolve Tibet Act, sponsored by Congressman McGovern, not only recognises the right of the Tibetan people to self-determination under international law but also calls for a meaningful and direct dialogue without any preconditions with His Holiness the Dalai Lama or representatives of the Central Tibetan Administration. Significantly, section 5 of the Act's Findings challenges the long-standing false narrative propagated by China, stating, 'The United States Government has never taken the position that Tibet was a part of China since ancient times.' This is a historic acknowledgment by the U.S. Government, marking a clear departure from past narratives and affirming Tibet's status as a historically independent nation.

In keeping with the spirit of the Resolve Tibet Act, the pillar not only commemorates Tibet's historical independence but also underscores its rightful sovereignty, honouring Congressman McGovern's pivotal role in championing these truths.

The event featured cultural performances by the students and teachers of Thunme Lekshey School, The Tibetan Weekend School managed by RTAM. The gratitude event also served as a reaffirmation of the Tibetan community's resolve to fight for the rights of the Tibetan people and for the restoration of freedom in Tibet.

The entire event live streamed on Tibet TV can be watched here.

## September

### The Three Principles of the Path

30 September 2024, His Holiness The 14th Dalai Lama

This morning His Holiness the Dalai Lama made a circuit of the Tsuglagkhang, the Main Tibetan Temple, on his way to address an estimated 7000 people, including 1300 from Taiwan, as well as many monks on vacation from the monasteries in South

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"Today we're going to hold a spiritual discourse," His Holiness began. "When I was on my way here, listening to your chanting the 'Mig-tsé-ma' prayer to Jé Tsongkhapa reminded me that not only was I born close to his place of birth, but that I also share his philosophical views. However, the survival of the Buddhadharma is not linked to a particular location and those of us in exile have done our best to keep it alive. Jé Rinpoché's teaching has spread around the world and I've done my best to clarify it.

"When I was in Tibet, and also since leaving the Land of Snow, one of my most important practices has been to read the 18 volumes of Jé Rinpoché's Collected Works. I have a special regard for them and feel a close connection to them. Today, I'll read his 'Three Principles of the Path'.

"Tibetans' core identity is focussed on the Buddhadharma. We have kept it alive and we have kept it well through study and practice. Consequently, many who have an interest in the Dharma are paying attention to our tradition.

Tea and bread served to the congregation were blessed with the recitation of a verse that celebrates His Holiness's names:

I pray to you, O Supreme Noble Lotus Holder (Padmapani):

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And you are embellishing jewellery of (Beautifully adorning) the Vast playful Ocean of Upholders of Dharma!

"There was a prediction at the time of the Buddha," His Holiness continued, "that the Buddhadharma would spread from the north to the north. After his enlightenment the Buddha began his teaching by explaining the Four Noble Truths. In due course, what he had to say spread throughout Tibet, which is north of India, and on to Mongolia, which is north of Tibet. Tibetans in Tibet and in exile have kept the tradition alive through study and practice of the Three Higher Trainings—ethics, concentration and wisdom. Interest has grown around the world because these trainings are rooted in reason and logic.

"The three principles of the path are renunciation, or a determination to be free, the awakening mind and the correct view. The determination to be free does

not lead to enlightenment directly, it needs to be augmented by the other two principles.

"Shantarakshita, among Indian masters invited by Tibetan kings to Tibet, established the Buddha's teachings there. We have studied and meditated on what was taught and put the Three Higher Trainings and the Three Principles of the Path into practice.

"When we develop a determination to be free, we'll no longer be drawn to the pleasures and attractions of this life or future lives in cyclic existence. We'll turn away from them. However, we will not reach the state of omniscience without the awakening mind of bodhichitta and a correct view of emptiness.

"From the very beginning of my day I cultivate the awakening mind and an understanding of emptiness. When I hear sad news, these principles help me develop a determination to be free. Understanding the workings of the mind and emotions, and seeing how things are dependently arisen, we can come to an appreciation that suffering is rooted in ignorance.

"The Three Principles of the Path need to be integrated within us. They need to become part of our inner experience."

His Holiness began to read briskly through the text noting that without a pure determination to be free there is no way to still attraction to the pleasures of cyclic existence. We need to reverse attraction to this life as well as reversing attraction to future lives. When we do not for an instant wish for the pleasures of cyclic existence, and day and night remain intent on liberation, we will have produced a determination to be free.

However, a determination to be free without a pure awakening mind of bodhichitta does not bring forth enlightenment. Therefore, Bodhisattvas generate the excellent awakening mind. They reflect on how all beings, our mothers, are swept by the current of the four powerful rivers, tied by strong bonds of actions so hard to undo, caught in the iron net of self-centredness, completely enveloped by the darkness of ignorance, born and reborn in boundless cyclic existence, and are ceaselessly tormented by the three miseries. Thinking of them in this way they generate the awakening mind.

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Jé Tsongkhapa states that appearances are infallible dependent arising, while emptiness is free of assertions. But as long as these two understandings are seen as separate, we will not have realized the intent of the Buddha. And yet, when these two realizations are simultaneous and concurrent, analysis of the profound view is complete. He goes on to reveal that appearances refute the extreme of existence, and emptiness refutes the extreme of

nonexistence. When we understand the arising of cause and effect from the viewpoint of emptiness, we will not be captivated by either extreme view.

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Among several questions from the audience His Holiness was asked what is the main cause not to be separated from the spiritual master. He answered that heeding the teachings you've received and putting them into practice creates a strong link with your teacher.

Another questioner wanted to know whether steady cultivation of practices like the exchanging of self and others would lead to genuine experience. His Holiness replied that if you familiarize your mind with such practice, it will eventually give rise to experience. In terms of bodhichitta you'll feel ever closer to it. He repeated the verse concerning the four immeasurable wishes.

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Asked how a beginner should act to prevent their sense of bodhichitta from slackening His Holiness simply advised that if you persevere with a practice, it will not decline. Finally, he declared that main cause of higher rebirths in the future is to cultivate the awakening mind of bodhichitta and an understanding of emptiness.

The Taiwanese disciples expressed their pleasure at His Holiness's advice with a burst of applause. He left the temple, walked steadily to the lift, smiling at well-wishers as he went, and in the courtyard boarded the golfcart that would carry him home.

### **Former Chief Justice Commissioner and Deputy Speaker Sonam Sangpo Jadur passes away at 85**

30 September 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

Sonam Sangpo Jadur, former Tibetan Chief Justice Commissioner and Deputy Speaker of the Tibetan parliament in exile, passed away at the age of 85 on September 28 at his residence in Dolanji Bon settlement after a prolonged illness.

Born on September 28, 1939, in Jadur, Western Tibet, Sonam Sangpo began his education at the age of six at Jadur Monastery, where he learned reading and writing and later served as the monastery's treasurer. After fleeing into exile, he worked as a Hindi translator for Tibetan labourers involved in road construction projects in the Shimla and Kullu regions.

In 1966, under the guidance of His Holiness Menri Trizin, the spiritual head of the Bon tradition, Sonam Sangpo assisted in securing land to establish the Bon settlement in Dolanji. By 1979, he had become the Settlement Officer of Dolanji Bon settlement.

From September 2, 1982, to May 11, 1990, Sonam Sangpo represented the Bon tradition in the 8th and 9th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, then known as the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies (ATPD). He was re-elected to the 11th, 12th, and 13th terms of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile from May 29, 1991, to September 24, 2003. During his tenure, he served as Deputy Speaker in the 11th term and again briefly from June 1, 2001, to September 24, 2001, during the 13th term, before resigning to become a Justice.

On September 26, 2001, Sonam Sangpo was appointed as a Justice of the Supreme Justice Commission of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, later becoming the Chief Justice on October 1, 2002, a position he held until his retirement on September 28, 2004. After his retirement, he continued to serve as

Vice President of the Tibetan Bon Foundation following the instructions of the 33rd Menri Trizin. On Monday, the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) held a prayer service to honour the memory of Sonam Sangpo Jadur. The Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile has also sent a letter of condolence to his family and relatives.

### Taiwanese devotees attend teachings of the Dalai Lama in Dharamshala

30 September 2024, The Print

The 14th Dalai Lama recently delivered a spiritual discourse on 'The Three Principal Aspects of the Path' (lamtso namsum), a key text by the revered Tibetan scholar Tsongkhapa.

The event was organised at the request of Taiwanese devotees and took place at the Tsuglagkhang, the main Tibetan temple in Dharamshala. More than 5,000 people, including 1,200 Taiwanese devotees, foreigners, Tibetan monks, nuns, and locals, gathered for this special teaching in the northern Indian hill town.

This discourse attracted people from diverse religious backgrounds, reflecting the Dalai Lama's message of universal compassion. Tien Nai-Wen, a Taoist from Taiwan, expressed how meaningful the experience was for him.

"This is very important for me because I am from Taiwan, and many people in Taiwan appreciate the Dalai Lama's teachings. Even though I come from a different religion, the Dharma says all religions can come together to share these holy teachings, so I came here. I feel very happy to be part of this," Tien told ANI.

Tien also emphasised how the teachings on compassion and kindness resonated with him personally, and she expressed a desire to share these lessons with his Taoist community back in Taiwan.

"We have over 1,200 people from Taiwan here, but I am the only Taoist. I hope to bring these teachings back to Taoism because they, too, can benefit from it," she added.

Another Taiwanese devotee, Lin Yaan Yi, echoed these sentiments, noting the spiritual enrichment gained from attending the Dalai Lama's teachings. "I'm very happy to be here, and it's been beneficial for me to develop compassion for others and \*Bodhichitta\* in my mind. We came to wish His Holiness a happy birthday and to gain insight from his wisdom," she said.

The event, highlighted the Dalai Lama's enduring appeal across cultures and religious backgrounds, offering a moment of unity and spiritual growth for all those in attendance. (ANI)

### Sikyong Penpa Tsering Addresses Tibetan Community in Dehradun: Emphasises Cultural Preservation and International Support

29 September 2024, CTA



Sikyong Penpa Tsering Visits Manduwala Lingsang Settlement, Calls for Youth Engagement in Tibetan Buddhism and Language Preservation. Photo / Tenzin Tenkyong / bod.asia / CTA

Dehradun: On the morning of 28 September 2024, Sikyong Penpa Tsering began his official visit to Tibetan Settlements in the Dehradun area. Upon arrival at Manduwala Tibetan Settlement, Sikyong was warmly welcomed by the local Tibetan Settlement Officer Dondup Gyalpo, the President of the Local Tibetan Assembly, the President of the Local Tibetan Freedom Movement, representatives from various monasteries, and representatives from both governmental and non-governmental Tibetan organizations in the area.

After the welcome, Sikyong visited Gesar Temple, Zamön Gyalyung Ling Monastery, and Palpung Kunkhyab Chöling Monastery. Subsequently, he delivered a speech to the public at the Lingsang Community Hall (Manduwala).

At the beginning of the speech program, Dehradun Tibetan Settlement Officer Dondup Gyalpo welcomed the Sikyong and presented the annual report of the settlement. Afterwards, Sikyong addressed the gathering.

In his speech, the Sikyong praised the local organisations of Lingsang settlement for their ongoing efforts to address their local issues. He also promised that the Central Tibetan Administration would provide as much support as possible based on the fundamental needs of the local people.

Sikyong highlighted the challenge of the decreasing number of monks in Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in exile and stressed that, according to the records of the Department of Religion and Culture, the number of monks has decreased over the past three years. He further noted that the majority of current monks are from Himalayan communities.

Sikyong underscored the significance of Tibetan Buddhism as a source of pride for the Tibetan people and urged the youth to engage with its teachings. He articulated that the global attention towards the Tibetan cause is, in part, a reflection of the worldwide dissemination of Buddhism, a phenomenon attributed to the benevolence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

He pointed out that among all refugee communities worldwide, only Tibetans have a fully democratic system in exile. For the future stability of the Tibetan community, including the Central Tibetan Administration, he stressed the importance of abiding by local laws, properly registering organisations, following correct procedures for receiving foreign funds, and carefully preserving land ownership documents. He announced that the CTA plans to offer workshops to raise awareness about Indian laws.

Similarly, Sikyong explained that Chinese President Xi Jinping is forcibly transforming all ethnicities into Chinese people with communist ideology. He clarified that in Tibet, there are increasing restrictions on teaching the Tibetan language, and private schools teaching Tibetan are being closed.

He reminded everyone of the value of the Tibetan language, especially as the medium for priceless Buddhist scriptures and philosophical texts. In connection with this, he explained that the Department of Religion and Culture is digitising important texts to create a Tibetan digital library to preserve Tibetan Buddhism.

Furthermore, he mentioned that the Tibetan language has now entered the field of artificial intelligence.

Additionally, Sikyong explained that this year, through the joint strategic efforts of the Central Tibetan Administration, the International Campaign for Tibet, and other Tibet-related organisations, they were able to establish the Resolve Tibet Act in the United States. He elaborated that this act recognises the Tibet-China conflict as an unresolved international issue, acknowledges Tibetans' right to self-determination, Shows that the U.S. government is challenging China's false narrative that Tibet has been a part of China since ancient times, clarifies that "Tibet" refers to all three traditional provinces of Tibet.

Sikyong emphasised that the establishment of such legislation marks a new step forward in the Tibetan freedom struggle.

## China deepens repression in Tibet after passage of Resolve Tibet Act in US

29 September 2024, News Day

Top security official of China Chen Wenqing visited Tibet in the second week of September and instructed the local authorities to step up a crackdown against ethnic Tibetans, branding them as 'separatists.' It is a different question who these separatists are as China is in illegal occupation of Tibet. The move by the Chinese Communist Party to step up security in Tibet is believed to be a knee-jerk reaction to the passage in the U.S. Congress of the Resolve Tibet Act which empowers the U.S. government to put pressure on Beijing to hold talks with the Dalai Lama.

Coming from the Head of the dreaded Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission of the CCP, the threat is a cause of serious concern for the Tibetan people. The Commission oversees the vast coercive apparatus of the party-state. It is the main agency of the CCP, headed by a politburo member of the party, to maintain the supremacy of the CCP over the coercive apparatus of the state, to organize surveillance and to supervise campaigns of repression.

In his three-day stay in Tibet, Chen went to the Tibet Autonomous Region and some of the Tibetan autonomous prefectures outside TAR, across Yunnan, Sichuan, Gansu and Qinghai; calling for "resolute crackdown" against separatists, asking local officials to "maintain stability and guard against pro-independence activities." In the plateau he presided over a meeting on "anti-secession and stability maintenance in Tibet," indicating a possible increase in surveillance and restrictions.

Reports from the Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamshala in India indicate that the occupation forces of China have already started putting into practice its threat of a "resolute crackdown" in Tibetan areas. They have been trying to suppress the religion, culture and language of the Tibetan people. Now in the name of crackdown on separatists the degree of oppression on the Tibetan people will increase.

Top judges and prosecutors of China have also gone round Tibet in recent weeks. President of the Supreme People's Court Zhang Jun has visited Tibetan courts and said it is necessary to hand down tough punishment to keep up the pressure on "violent terrorism, ethnic separatism and other serious criminal crimes," says a report in South China Morning Post. Head of the Supreme People's Procuratorate Ying Yong has inspected the office of the public prosecutors in Tibet. He has stressed on the need for prosecutors to "harshly crack down in accordance with the law on all kinds of separatist



infiltration, sabotage activities and crimes endangering national security.”

The Central Tibetan Administration quotes a report by Radio Free Asia that Lobsang Thabkhey, a 55-year-old Tibetan Buddhist monk, has lately been sentenced to three years in prison after a secret trial. Arrested in June 2023, he was accused of possessing and republishing books from the exiled Tibetan community and for having contact with people outside the region when he had been in charge of the library of Kirti Monastery in Ngaba County in the Sichuan province.

While signing into law the Resolve Tibet Act, a bipartisan legislation passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in July last, U.S. President Joe Biden had said it showed the bipartisan commitment in America to advancing the human rights of Tibetans and supporting efforts to preserve their distinct linguistic, cultural, and religious heritage. He also called on Beijing to resume direct dialogue, without preconditions, with the Dalai Lama or his representatives to “seek a settlement that resolves differences and leads to a negotiated agreement on Tibet.” The Act empowers State Department officials to actively and directly counter disinformation about Tibet by the Chinese government. It also rejects Beijing’s claims that Tibet has been part of China since “ancient times,”

The move of the U.S. government to take steps to protect human rights of Tibetans and to preserve their language, culture and religion has been a badly needed one. According to reports from Tibet reaching the Central Tibetan Administration, in a systematic move to erase Tibetan identity the Chinese government has introduced a policy for education aimed at assimilation of the Tibetans with the Han Chinese identity. Colonial-style boarding schools have been set up in the plateau and young monks from monasteries as well as children from Tibetan families are being asked to join these schools where they are brought up in the Han Chinese way of life and brainwashed to forget their Tibetan identity, language, culture and religion.

## **Sikyong Penpa Tsering Talks on Significance of Tibetan Plateau and Tibet’s Water Resources at Sambhota Tibetan School, Herbertpur**

28 September 2024, CTA



On the morning of 27 September 2024, Sikyong Penpa Tsering visited Sambhota Tibetan Day School in Herbertpur. Upon his arrival, Sikyong received a warm welcome from the school’s Principal, Sonam Palkyi, along with faculty members and students. Following this, Sikyong toured the classroom and observed the class sessions.

Afterwards, during a gathering, Sikyong discussed the spiritual connection between Tibet and India and emphasised the geopolitical significance of the Tibetan plateau and its ecological importance. Sikyong also commended the Tibetan and Indian teachers and students at the school for exemplifying harmony and appreciated the coexistence of two different cultures within the same educational environment.

In this connection, Sikyong Penpa Tsering mentioned that although Tibetans have been in exile in India for over 65 years, awareness about the Tibet issue among the Indian public remains very low. Therefore, he considers it important to raise awareness about the Tibet issue among the Indian public, especially among the youth. Sikyong stated that he has been giving talks about Tibet at various Indian educational institutions, including universities. Similarly, since many local Indian students are studying at the Sambhota Day School in Herbertpur, he felt it was important to give a talk about Tibet there as well.

In his talk, Sikyong narrated the historical accounts of the first Tibetan king, who originated from India, and the derivation of Tibetan scripts and religion from India. Likewise, Sikyong also spoke about the current relations between the two nations and expressed his appreciation to the government and people of India for extending assistance to Tibetan refugees following His Holiness-led Tibetans’ flight into exile.

Similarly, Sikyong discussed the significance of the Tibetan Plateau, which is also known as the “Roof of the World,” the “Third Pole,” or “Asia’s Water Tower.” Sikyong said, “The rivers originating from Tibet, such as Yarlung Tsangpo, Machu, and Dzachu,

have become the lifeline for hundreds of millions of people in Asia". Sikyong further pointed out that two of the world's oldest civilizations, the Indus Valley Civilization and the Chinese Civilization, also depended on Tibet's rivers.

However, Sikyong shared his concerns regarding the Chinese Communist government's ongoing mismanagement of Tibetan rivers, which will have severe repercussions in the future.

### **Tibetan activist begins 5th cycle rally for Tibet cause**

September 28 2024, Phayul



TYC activists during the cycle rally from Dehradun to Delhi (Photo/TYC)

amyang Tenzin, a 64-year-old Tibetan activist, embarked on his fifth Tibet Awareness Solo-Cycle Rally from Tawang to Delhi on September 27. The rally started at Urgenling, the birthplace of the 6th Dalai Lama in Tawang. His rally coincides with the 37th anniversary of the revival of Tibetan protest uprising in Lhasa in 1987.

The veteran cyclist's journey will span from Mon Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh to Jantar Mantar in New Delhi. Throughout his route, Tenzin plans to highlight issues faced by Tibetans under Chinese occupation, including the forced closure of educational institutions and the systematic attempts to eradicate Tibetan identity, language, and culture.

Tenzin's objectives for this rally focus on three points; demanding the return of Tibet to the Tibetan people; the end to Chinese policies that aim to eliminate Tibetan identity. and appeals to the Indian government and citizens for support for Tibet.

This rally marks Tenzin's fifth awareness cycle. His previous journeys covered distances across India. The first took him from Dharamshala to Bodhgaya, spanning 3000 km. The second journey went from Bylakuppe in Karnataka to Dekyiling in Dehradun, also covering 3000 km. His third rally went from Dekyiling to Delhi, a distance of 250 km. The fourth journey took him from Ladakh Khardung La to Dharamshala, covering 800 km

The Tibetan Youth Congress also launched a bicycle rally campaign a few days prior on September 24th,

set to conclude on October 1st, marking the 75th anniversary of the People's Republic of China. The rally, which involves over 50 Tibetans of all ages, began in Dekyiling and will pass through Chandigarh before culminating in New Delhi.

Gonpo Dhondup, President of the Tibetan Youth Congress, stated that the campaign's objectives are to demand an end to policies aimed at eradicating Tibetan identity, call for human rights for Tibetans inside Tibet, and appeal for increased support from India for the Tibetan cause.

### **Tibetan anthology feature showcasing stories of exile and identity to premiere at Busan Film Festival**

27 September 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

'State of Statelessness', a Tibetan-language anthology feature film, has been officially selected for the 29th Busan International Film Festival, where it will have its world premiere from October 2-11 in the 'A Window on Asian Cinema' section. This prestigious selection is a major milestone for Tibetan cinema, as Busan is one of Asia's leading film festivals, known for showcasing unique voices and compelling stories from across the continent.

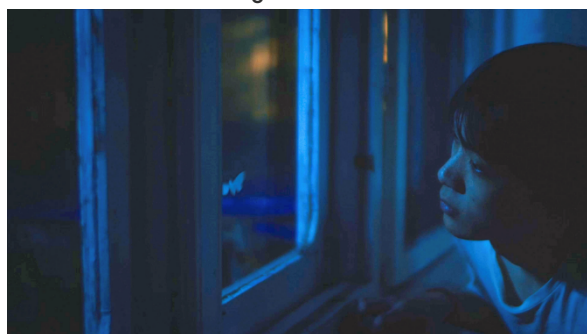
Produced by the Dharamshala-based Drung Tibetan Filmmakers' Collective, the film poignantly explores themes of statelessness and migration through four distinct stories about Tibetans living in exile. Directed by Tibetan filmmakers based in India, America, and Vietnam, the anthology sheds light on the painful realities of displacement faced by Tibetans scattered around the world.

According to the film's synopsis, the anthology tells four compelling stories; In one, a Tibetan father in Vietnam explains to his young daughter how the Mekong River, which originates in his homeland, flows into the sea in their new country, symbolising their journey into exile. Another story follows two estranged sisters who reunite to cremate their mother, only to discover that years of separation have created deep emotional complexities they must confront. The third narrative focuses on Sonam, who is recovering from a family tragedy when a visit from a long-lost school friend from America forces him and his wife to face the fragility of their lives. In the final tale, a son returns to his late father's home in Dharamshala, where he uncovers a family secret that challenges his understanding of both his heritage and identity.

Tenzin Tsetan Choklay, the New York and Dharamshala-based filmmaker who also produced 'State of Statelessness', told Phayul that the film's selection for the prestigious Busan International Film Festival marks a significant milestone for Tibetan filmmakers. He believes this recognition elevates

Tibetan voices and highlights the diversity and complexity of their narratives.

"The global stage provided by Busan brings much-needed attention to our stories. This recognition not only validates the artistic merit of our work but also gives momentum to the broader Tibetan filmmaking community, encouraging younger generations to share their own stories and, hopefully, attracting more support and opportunities for Tibetan cinema. This has been our goal at Drung Tibetan Filmmakers' Collective since the very beginning," the Tibetan filmmaker told Phayul. Tenzin Tsetan Choklay's feature documentary film "Bringing Tibet Home" also premiered at the Busan International Film Festival in 2014 in its Wide Angle section.



A still from the film (Photo/BIFF)

He said that the film is deeply rooted in the themes of exile, migration, and identity. "Through the personal and intimate stories in the film, we aim to evoke empathy and understanding for those who live without a state to call their own. We hope that viewers will leave with a greater appreciation for the shared human experience, realising that the struggles of stateless people are universal, and that we all face similar challenges regardless of nationality or borders," he further said.

The film director also spoke about how the film is shaped by the personal and collective experiences of exile. "The anthology format allows different filmmakers, including myself, to bring our unique perspectives from various corners of the Tibetan diaspora. Even within our own exile community, there are diverse experiences. The style of the film is influenced by where each of us comes from and the transient spaces we inhabit. My own experience of living in Dharamshala, South Korea, New York, and Europe has shaped the way I see the world and tell stories. The themes of disconnection, longing, and identity that run through the film are deeply personal to all of us who worked on it," he shared.

Drung is a collective of Tibetan filmmakers based in Dharamshala fostering a community that shares knowledge, skills and connections to tell stories about Tibet, India and beyond. The group is dedicated to the advancement of story-telling in the Tibetan exile communities by building a community of story-tellers

through workshops, film screenings and other educational programs.

### **Amid EU, others' criticisms, China claims over 100 countries' support for its stance on rights situation in Tibet etc**

27 September 2024, Tibetan Review

The European Union (EU), a body of 27 countries, on Sep 24 reiterated its concerns about the continuous dire human rights situation in Tibet, highlighting the obligatory boarding schooling, mass DNA sampling and closure of Tibetan schools, said the Central Tibetan Administration on its Tibet.net website Sep 26. China, on the other hand, claimed the support of over 100 countries for its position on issues related to Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong regions, namely that any criticism of human rights there amounts to interfering in China's internal affairs, according to its official globaltimes.cn Sep 25.

The Tibet.net report also said the EU highlighted the harassment, intimidation and surveillance faced by human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists, media workers, writers and intellectuals, including at transnational level. They also continue to face exit bans, house arrest, torture and ill-treatment, unlawful detention, sentencing and enforced disappearance including though Residential Surveillance in a Designated Location (RSDL) that could amount to torture and ill-treatment.

The EU was also stated to have urged China to uphold its obligations under national and international law, including its own Constitution to respect, protect and fulfil human rights for all, including Tibetans.

The EU has reaffirmed its commitment to closely monitoring the preservation of fundamental freedoms, cultural heritage and identity of Tibetans and called on China to ensure full bilingual education both in Tibetan and Chinese at all levels of the schooling system.

The EU also wanted China to allow more visits from the International Community, UN Special Procedures Mandate Holders and civil society organisations to Tibet. It has also called for the immediate and unconditional release of Anya Sengdra, Chadrel Rinpoche, Go Sherab Gyatso, Golog Palden, Semkyi Dolma and Tashi Dorje, among others.

The Chinese claim of opposing the politicization of issues on human rights followed statements made "by the US and a handful of countries which smear China's human rights situation during the ongoing 57th session of the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council," said the official globaltimes.cn report.



The report cited a joint statement made by Cuba “on behalf of nearly 80 countries” as saying “issues related to Xinjiang, Xizang, and Hong Kong Special Administrative Region are internal affairs of China”. “They oppose the politicization of human rights issues and the application of double standards, as well as using human rights as an excuse to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries,” the report quoted those more than 100 countries as saying.

### Additional Secretary Tenzin Lekshay Addresses Students and Faculty of the Central Institute for Higher Tibetan Studies on the Middle Way Policy

27 September 2024, CTA



A Moment from the Address at the Central Institute for Higher Tibetan Studies Tenzin Lekshay, Additional Secretary of the Department of Information and International Relations, Central Tibetan Administration, spoke about the Middle Way Policy at the Central Institute for Higher Tibetan Studies in Sarnath on 27 September 2024.

The Honorable Vice Chancellor of the Institute welcomed the gathering, attended by all the teachers and students. The audience remained attentive throughout the talk, taking into account the historical context and current implications of the policy.

Students and faculty alike posed insightful questions during the Q&A session, demonstrating their deep interest in and understanding of the Middle Way Policy.

-Report filed by the Tibet Advocacy Section, DIIR, CTA

### Sikyong Penpa Tsering Assesses Damages Caused by Heavy Rainfall at Puruwala Tibetan Settlement

27 September 2024, CTA



Sikyong Penpa Tsering visits Puruwala Tibetan Settlement. Photo / Tenzin Tenkyong / bod.asia

On the morning of 26 September 2024, Sikyong Penpa Tsering visited Puruwala Tibetan Settlement to assess the damages caused by heavy rainfall that disconnected several roads.

Following this, Sikyong visited the Tibetan Children’s Village School (TCV) in Selakui and its affiliate, the Tibetan Private Industrial Training Institute (ITI), in Dehradun.

Upon arrival, Sikyong was accorded a warm welcomed by school’s teachers and students, including Tsultrim Kelsang, the Principal of the Tibetan Children’s Village School, Selakui, and Tenzin Choesang, the Director of ITI.

At a gathering later that day, Sikyong addressed the students and staff members, stressing that Tibetans outside Tibet have a special responsibility to uphold the unique Tibetan identity and maintain the rich Tibetan cultural heritage as the Communist Party of China’s intensified suppressions inside Tibet by enforcing strict regulations. While sharing insights on Tibetan history, Sikyong advised students to go through ancient histories of Tibet to properly comprehend the facts amidst China’s increasing distortion of Tibet’s past.

Furthermore, Sikyong provided an overview of the Sino-Tibetan dialogue, noting that since 2010, there has been no communication between the two sides. However, Sikyong disclosed the existence of a back-channel communication, over which he opined his pessimism for its effectiveness. Therefore, Sikyong emphasised that Tibetans must explore every opportunity that the current domestic and international political situations of the PRC offer.

Additionally, the exile Tibetan political leader spoke about the geopolitical significance of the Tibetan plateau and China’s mismanagement of Tibet’s water resources, which feed billions of downstream

residents. Thereafter, Sikyong and his aides toured the school and training centre's premises.

After concluding his official visit to TCV Selakui, Sikyong visited Khera Camp Tibetan Settlement and Baluwala Tibetan Settlement later that afternoon. At Khera Camp, Sikyong made obeisance inside Gongkar Choede monastery.

Sikyong's day-long engagements ended at Herbertpur Tibetan Settlement, where he was extended a welcome reception by Settlement officer Dolma Tsering, the President of the Local Tibetan Assembly, Tenzin Sungrab, and the President of the Regional Tibetan Freedom Movement, Thupten Gyaltsen.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering was accompanied by Additional Secretary Tashi Dickey from the Department of Home, Pema Youdon from the Department of Health, and Thupten Rinzin from SARD.

### **Gonmo Kyi speaks out about her treatment in new video**

26 September 2024, Free Tibet

Gono Kyi, the sister of imprisoned Tibetan businessman Dorjee Tashi, has shared a new video talking about her efforts to raise her brother's case with authorities.

In the video, released 24 September, Gonmo Kyi talks about her efforts to secure a retrial for Dorjee Tashi. She states how her protests in front of the court in Lhasa have seen her repeatedly being detained and beaten by Public Security Bureau officers and that she is in poor health.

On 27 July, the Court of Chengguan District of Lhasa City dismissed an appeal that she lodged against her treatment by PSB officials. Tibet Watch has seen the court's documents in which court authorities stated that "petitioner, Gonmo Kyi, actions constitute breaking of the social rules and laws of the state." It further stated that "Chengguan District of Lhasa City Public Security Bureau has warned her on several occasions but she didn't obey the warning. Therefore, the Public Security Bureau had detained her".

Tibet Watch reported in April that Gonmo Kyi was severely beaten that month, one of several occasions when she suffered ill-treatment or was threatened. On other occasions, police have simply attempted to obstruct her protest from public view. In December 2023, Gonmo Kyi was held in detention for a week. Gonmo Kyi's brother, Dorjee Tashi, is serving a life prison sentence. Prior to his arrest in 2008, he was a hotelier and philanthropist. He was charged with loan fraud, a charge his family and those following his case vigorously contest. He was also reportedly subject to torture in detention in 2010.

Gonmo Kyi and other family members have pushed for a retrial and to be able to visit him in prison. No in-person visit has been permitted since 2019.

"I have petitioned the Lhasa Court to retry Dorjee Tashi's case in accordance with the law of the State but they have refused to address it. The Public Security Bureau repeatedly detained me, dragged me and beat me! So, presently, I'm in an ill health condition, afflicted by these repeated beatings! I have no power/right to petition for a retrial of my brother's case! I will continue to protest and petition unless and until the Lhasa Court addresses this appeal."

### **Unclimbed peak in Arunachal Pradesh named after 6th Dalai Lama, Tsangyang Gyatso**

26 September 2024, CTA, Bikash Singh

A team from the National Institute of Mountaineering and Adventure Sports (NIMAS) has successfully scaled an unnamed 20,942 ft high peak in Arunachal Pradesh's Gorichen range. The peak, now named Tsangyang Gyatso Peak, honors the 6th Dalai Lama. This challenging expedition highlights Arunachal Pradesh as a key destination for mountaineering and adventure sports.

Guwahati: A team from the National Institute of Mountaineering and Adventure Sports (NIMAS), has successfully scaled an unnamed and unclimbed 6383 MSL or 20,942 ft high peak in Gorichen range of Arunachal Pradesh Himalayas on Tawang-West Kameng region.

The peak was one of the most technically challenging and unexplored summits in the region. After overcoming immense challenges including sheer ice walls, treacherous crevasses, and a 2-kilometer-long glacier, the team has immortalized the momentous feat by naming the peak "Tsangyang Gyatso Peak" in honour of His Holiness the 6th Dalai Lama Rigzen Tsangyang Gyatso. Click here to read more details.

### **European Union Reiterates Concern about the Continuous Dire Situation in Tibet and Calls for the Preservation of Tibetan Identity**

26 September 2024, CTA

In a comprehensive statement delivered under item 4 during the ongoing 57th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, the European Union reiterated its concerns about the continuous dire human rights situation in Tibet, highlighting the obligatory boarding schooling, mass DNA sampling and closure of Tibetan schools.

Additionally, the EU highlighted the harassment, intimidation and surveillance faced by human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists, media workers,



writers and intellectuals, including at transnational level. They also continue to face exit bans, house arrest, torture and ill-treatment, unlawful detention, sentencing and enforced disappearance including through Residential Surveillance in a Designated Location (RSDL) that could amount to torture and ill-treatment.

Furthermore, the EU urged China to uphold its obligations under national and international law, including its own Constitution to respect, protect and fulfil human rights for all, including Tibetans.

The EU reaffirmed its commitment to closely monitoring the preservation of fundamental freedoms, cultural heritage and identity of Tibetans and called on China to ensure full bilingual education both in Tibetan and Chinese at all levels of the schooling system.

Finally, the EU encouraged China to allow more visits from the International Community, UN Special Procedures Mandate Holders and civil society organisations to Tibet. It also called for the immediate and unconditional release of Anya Sengdra, Chadrel Rinpoche, Go Sherab Gyatso, Golog Palden, Semkyi Dolma and Tashi Dorje, among others.

Welcoming the statement, Representative Rigzin Genkhang of the Office of Tibet Brussels expressed gratitude to the European Union for its commitment to addressing the dire human rights violations in Tibet and urged for continued support.

The full statement is available [here](#).

-Report filed by Office of Tibet, Brussels

### **French Museum removes “Xizang”, reverts to ‘Tibet’ for artefacts after public protest**

26 September 2024, Phayul

The Musée du quai Branly in Paris has removed the term “Xizang” from its descriptions of Tibetan artefact, following widespread public outcry. The museum has reverted to using “Tibet” in its catalogue and exhibition labels for items related to Tibet.

The museum’s decision comes after strong opposition from Tibetans and their supporters in France, who swiftly mobilised, launching petitions and making repeated appeals for the museum to correct its labelling. Scholars and activists argued that the use of “Xizang” – the Chinese term for Tibet – aligns with China’s official narrative, which they say undermines Tibet’s distinct cultural identity and historical autonomy.

However, the Musée Guimet, which renamed its Tibetan exhibition spaces as the “Himalayan World,” has yet to respond to similar appeals. Meanwhile, the Branly Museum is scheduled to meet with representatives from six Tibetan NGOs in France, who had previously sent formal letters to both

museums, seeking discussions on the implications of these terminology changes.

President Penpa Tsering, the political leader of the exile Tibetan government officially known as the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), also condemned the change in terminology. In a letter sent to French officials and the directors of both museums on September 14, Tsering argued that using “Xizang” is part of a broader Chinese strategy to erode Tibetan identity. He urged the museums to reinstate “Tibet” in their exhibits to uphold historical accuracy.

Echoing these concerns, the Tibet Museum of the CTA released a statement, calling the museums’ decisions an alarming distortion of history and an attack on Tibet’s cultural identity. Tenzin Topdhen, the museum’s director, called on both the Musée Guimet and Musée du quai Branly to correct the terminology to ensure an accurate representation of Tibetan heritage.

Tibetans and their supporters in France have been actively protesting these changes, organising petitions, contacting museum officials, and raising awareness across social media platforms. Many view the museums’ actions as part of China’s broader effort to control the global narrative around Tibet and its cultural legacy.

### **Tibetans and activists call for Tibet Intergroup at the European Parliament**

26 September 2024, ICT

This week a group of determined Tibetans and Tibet activists from six countries in Europe participated in the Tibetan Empowerment Days. The event, organized by the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) from September 23-26, brought together 12 Tibetans and Tibet activists from six European countries – Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands – to Brussels.

Participants engaged with 15 EU policymakers and their representatives, shared their stories and pushed for stronger support for Tibet within European institutions. They urged their representatives in the European Parliament for the re-establishment of the Tibet Intergroup and appealed for stronger support for Tibet at the European Union level.

ICT’s EU Policy Director Vincent Metten said: “Tibetan Empowerment Days are an excellent opportunity not only to train and empower young Tibetans to become effective advocates for Tibet, but also to raise awareness about the critical situation in Tibet within the new European Parliament following the 2024 European election. As the human rights situation inside Tibet deteriorates at an alarming pace, it is crucial that Tibet remains on the European political agenda and that Members of the European

Parliament take new initiatives in support of the Tibetan people.”

This year’s edition of the Tibetan Empowerment Days was a direct follow-up to the EU4Tibet campaign – during which over 100 European elections candidates signed a “Pledge for Tibet” committing to support the Tibetan people in the European Parliament if elected – and focused on transforming those pledges into concrete actions. One key recommendation that participants passed on to their representatives was the need for the re-establishment of the European Parliament’s Tibet Intergroup, which has historically played a pivotal role in keeping Tibet on the European agenda.

The four-day program began with a comprehensive training on EU-China policies, recent developments in Tibet as well as advocacy and communication techniques. Participants then had the opportunity to meet with dozens of Members of the European Parliament from different political groups to raise awareness about the alarming situation in Tibet and appeal for EU action on issues such as transnational repression, Chinese government’s interferences in the succession of Tibetan Buddhist leaders, the environmental degradation on the Tibetan plateau as well as China’s increasing interferences in Europe. Participants also engaged in discussions with an official from the European External Action Service (EEAS) and with representatives from NGOs working on China – including Amnesty International and the World Uyghur Congress.

The Executive Director of the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, Ms. Tenzin Dawa, also participated in the meetings to present her organization’s latest report on China’s transnational repression of Tibetans.

The event was supported by the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy as well as the Office of Tibet in Brussels.

### **Tibetan leader claims cultural identity threats from Chinese policies**

26 September 2024, Awaz The Voice

Exiled Tibetan leader Sikyong Penpa Tsering has emphasised that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is making systematic efforts to suppress Tibetan identity, including shutting down cultural and religious centres.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the political leader of the Kashag (the executive branch of the Central Tibetan Administration), explained that these actions are part of a larger strategy to make Tibetan culture more Chinese and erase its unique heritage, according to a press release from the Central Tibetan Administration.

He also expressed concern about the government’s recent change in terminology, using “Xizang” instead of “Tibet,” which he believes is an attempt to distort Tibet’s historical and cultural identity.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering made these remarks during his visit to the Sakya Tibetan Society Settlement in Puruwalla as part of his tour of Tibetan communities in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh.

During his visit, Sikyong shared updates on the 16th Kashag’s political and administrative work, focusing on the serious situation in Tibet under the CCP. He also spoke about the importance of the Tibetan plateau in global politics and reaffirmed the Kashag’s commitment to the Middle Way Approach.

This approach aims for genuine autonomy for Tibet within China. He shared the Vision Paper, which outlines the Kashag’s long-term goals and emphasises the need for ongoing international support for Tibetan rights.

After interacting with the community, Sikyong visited several local institutions, including the Sakya Magon Shedra and Sambhota Tibetan School. He then went to the Paonta Cholsum Tibetan Settlement, where he visited Shalu Monastery and continued to raise awareness about the challenging situation of Tibetan culture and religion under Chinese rule.

He also informed attendees about current projects, like digitising important documents and creating a Tibetan digital library, which are designed to strengthen the administration of the Tibetan community in exile.

Senior officials from the Central Tibetan Administration accompanied Sikyong during his visit, highlighting their commitment to supporting Tibetans living outside Tibet.

### **Tibetan artist’s installation ‘Biography of a Thought’ exhibited at Metropolitan Museum of Art**

24 September 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York has recently unveiled a remarkable installation titled “Biography of a Thought”, featuring an intricate series of Tibetan mandala inspired paintings by renowned Tibetan artist Tenzing Rigdol. Based between Nepal and New York, Rigdol’s work reflects a deep engagement with Tibetan spiritual traditions, reinterpreted through his lens.

Dissecting his thoughts, Rigdol shared that the conceptualisation and creation of the mandalas took a span of five years. He dedicated two years to the work in New York and an additional three years in Kathmandu, Nepal, with the support of his team. The “Biography of a Thought” mandalas delve into the complex layers of human consciousness. Drawing inspiration from the ancient tradition of sand

mandalas, Rigdol has reimagined this sacred art form using modern materials, with a particular emphasis on at least 50 shades of blue, which serves as the dominant colour throughout the installation. The use of blue, symbolic of both the sky and ocean, evoking the vastness and depth of thought.

The installation is structured into two halves, with four large paintings adorning the walls. The first panel introduces the fundamental principles of tantra, which are central to Tibetan Buddhism. At the core of the exhibit is a striking visual element—the artist's own head wrapped in cloth, an image that recurs throughout Rigdol's body of work.



"In most of my work, I have this one element that is repeated. I am in the painting with my head wrapped around. In all my paintings, it mostly symbolises not that I celebrate ignorance, but I am saying I am ignorant. I don't know everything, but the little that I know, I want to share with you," Rigdol explained in an interview with the MET.

Rigdol's philosophical exploration is also reflected in the acronym of the exhibit's title, 'Biography of a Thought', which spells out BOAT. He elaborated on the significance of this in one of the paintings, "In the first painting, you have myself thrown into the world, ready to learn, ready to unwrap a little bit more. When I was young, I studied in computer class, and they used to say, G.I.G.O.—garbage in, garbage out. I thought it was talking about karma. The first panel is really about how we throw garbage and everything into the ocean, and you can also see the karma—where everything you plant comes back," he said.

The second panel delves into the idea of how an unstable mind can create an unstable world, highlighting how human conflicts arise. It referenced significant historical tragedies like the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Another powerful image in the panel is the Twin Towers, evoking memories of 9/11. Rigdol explained that during the creation process, the George Floyd incident occurred, stirring widespread anger and frustration. The artwork also addressed the heart-breaking issue of gun violence, particularly involving children, a pressing concern in America.

Rigdol connected these events to a deeper tantric philosophy. "In Tantra, you don't revisit the past to

inherit hatred or to worsen things. You only visit the past to inherit its wisdom," he noted, emphasising the importance of learning from history without being consumed by it.

In the third panel, the focus shifts toward finding stability. Rigdol opened with a nod to Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger*, portraying five women. At the center of the piece, he placed an image of Ardhanari—a half-male, half-female figure from Sanskrit tradition. This duality, he explained, symbolises the balance of masculine and feminine energies that make up human existence. "Tantra is really about finding commonality—what is unique in me, but also in you. We are unique, yet the same," he noted.

The contemporary Tibetan artist also referenced modern whistle-blowers like Haugen, Manning, Snowden, and Julian Assange—individuals exposing hidden truths. "These people are warning us, yet our attention is being trained out of us by technologies like the iPhone," he reflected, suggesting that society is losing focus. This concept sets the stage for the fourth panel. The imagery of multiple hands mimics the iconography of a deity, with the American Sign Language phrase "Up is down" appearing in the palms. Rigdol used this metaphor to propose a radical idea: "Wouldn't it be nice if our brain functioned like a stomach? We would only think enough. Once the stomach is full, we vomit. Now is the time to limit your thoughts."

The fourth panel brings the viewer to a place of stillness and reflection. "Now, just sit," Rigdol suggested. "Calm yourself, and observe—what remains, the residue, is likely who you truly are." He played with the metaphor of clouds representing thoughts. "Some clouds are playful, some are angry, while others are simply relaxed," he explained. Gradually, in the fourth panel, these clouds of thought begin to settle, revealing the sky as a symbol of awareness. "The goal," he said, "is to have fewer thoughts and more love."

At the heart of this panel is the idea of interdependence—the notion that, in the end, we are all connected. Rigdol's centrepiece emphasised that individual existence is the interconnectedness of actions and their consequences.

## Renaming Tibet "Xizang": Are French Museums Backing Off?

24 September 2024, Bitter Winter

After having been named and shamed for their abject subservience to Xi Jinping, Musée Guimet and Musée du quai Branly are trying to save their reputation.

Or was it just a clerical mistake? A misunderstanding, perhaps? Having been accused of abjectly "bowing

to China's demands to rewrite history and erase peoples," two leading Paris museums are trying to back off.

What happened, exactly? On September 1, 2024, "Le Monde" published an op-ed signed by la crème de la crème of French academic Tibetologists and experts of Asian art accusing the Musée Guimet and the Musée du quai Branly of having sold their soul to Xi Jinping. The Musée du quai Branly had changed the name "Tibet" to "Xizang," according to Beijing's diktat, in its catalogues. The Guimet had changed the title of its "Tibetan" rooms to "Himalayan World" rooms.

The scholars reminded the readers of "Le Monde" that calling Tibet "Xizang" is a historical fraud. Readers of "Bitter Winter" know this already, and with all the details. While they were at it, the French scholars also repeated that "Xinjiang" is a questionable Chinese name for East Turkestan, too, and that neither Tibet nor "Xinjiang" were historically part of Imperial China. They noted, however, that "this is well known to specialists but probably less so to admirers of modern China's successes, achieved at the cost of economic exploitation of these territories and the relentless Sinicization of these peoples, thanks to the establishment of a dictatorial regime and the Han's demographic domination."

Adding that hosting the Confucius Institutes, whose real aim is spreading Chinese propaganda, as some French cultural institutions and universities do, is not acceptable either, the scholars wrote that, "Our institutions want to preserve their access to Chinese research fields, sources and archives at all costs, as well as benefit from the financial largesse and loans of museum objects that depend on the goodwill of the Chinese regime. As a result, they are coaxing the threatening power that Xi Jinping's China has become and are bowing to its demands to rewrite history and erase peoples.... That French museums should accept to be dictated to in the rewriting of history is a sign of great weakness. Our scientific and cultural institutions must, as a matter of the utmost urgency, reject any interference by undemocratic foreign regimes."

Normally, faced with the power and money of China, these appeals have no consequences. However, the criticism directed at two prestigious (and beautiful) museums was echoed by media all over the world, which ridiculed France and those who took the decisions about Tibet.

For once, it seems that the campaign had some success. After all, French use to say that ridicule kills. Finally, the Musée du quai Branly stated that it "uses the appellation Tibet in its cartels of the permanent collections and has never ceased to use this appellation in its work on the collections." "Xizang" replaced "Tibet" on the Internet, but this was due to

a "technical update in progress that may be misleading." The Musée Guimet claims that, on the contrary, it keeps using "Tibet" on the Internet, and "Himalayan" means that the same rooms are now devoted to both Tibet and Nepal.

We wait for the results of the "technical updates in progress"—and to what will happen when the international media will look the other way. For the time being, we applaud the French scholars who tried to stop the shame before it would be too late—and perhaps succeeded.

### **Tibetan leaders respond to Biden and Modi's remarks on China at Quad Summit**

23 September 2024, ANI

Tibetan leaders have reacted strongly to remarks made by President Biden and Prime Minister Modi regarding China during the recent Quad Summit. Sikyong Pempa Tsering, President of the Central Tibetan Administration, expressed his views on the evolving dynamics within the Quad alliance.

He stated, "It looks like the Quad formation is getting more entrenched and as we have been mentioning over the years the reality of China's threat is very visible so I think India's role particularly in this grouping will be very-very crucial."

Tsering also noted the significance of increased cooperation between the United States and India, particularly on issues like microchips.

"There is a convergence of strategic alliance that needs to be formed because of China and China's behaviour so that's very much clear in this grouping," he said. Tsering pointed out that the competition for influence in the Global South is also an important factor in this geopolitical landscape.

Highlighting the strategic importance of the Indo-Pacific region, Tsering remarked, "Indo Pacific is a very busy maritime trade route from Malacca Strait to Indian Ocean so it is important not only for the countries in this region but it involves a lot of trade." He emphasized that concerns over China's hegemonic claims in the South China Sea and East China Sea have intensified discussions about security and economic issues.

"I think it is very clearly mentioned South China Sea and East China Sea that is where Australia comes into," he said to ANI during the interview.

The Sikyong further indicated that nations in the Asia-Pacific region, including Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand, are also ramping up their defence spending in response to China's actions. He pointed out, "So all of these countries announce many more money on defence only because of China's behaviour."

Dolma Tsering, Deputy Speaker of the Tibetan Parliament in-exile, also weighed in on the importance of the Quad and the remarks from Biden and Modi. "I think these statements are very important that too coming from America and India.

India becoming a leading power is a very positive thing that's happening around the world so I want to congratulate Prime Minister Modi for that," she stated. Dolma noted that the Quad Summit reflects a unified stance against threats to the rule of law and democratic sovereignty.

She remarked on China's expanding influence, saying, "Looking into Xi Jinping's global ambition of expanding to wherever they are touching is not only intimidation endanger to South Asia but also to the whole world."

Dolma echoed President Biden's concerns, adding, "Therefore, I think President Biden has well said that China is testing us. Us in the sense is the whole world, the democratic setup," Dolma said to ANI.

Dolma Tsering also highlighted the need for a peaceful resolution to global conflicts. "Prime Minister Modi has also told that they are looking for a possible peaceful resolution of conflicts happening around the world," she said. She expressed a specific request to Modi regarding the situation of Tibetans in exile. "The majority of Tibetans are in India, so we want Prime Minister Modi and the stakeholders of the Quad, in America also we have sizeable American Tibetans, in Austria also, Australia also we have a sizeable number of Australian Tibetans," she stated.

Dolma urged global leaders to advocate for Tibetan rights, emphasizing, "We want the leaders to raise the issue of Tibet, the occupation of Tibet also and try to resolve this long-standing decades old conflict between Tibet and China in a most amicable way."

Earlier on Saturday, the Wilmington declaration of the Quad grouping expressed serious concern about the coercive and intimidating manoeuvres in the South China Sea.

In the joint declaration, the leaders from the US, India, Australia, and Japan opposed efforts to disrupt other countries' offshore resource exploitation activities, and reaffirmed that maritime disputes must be resolved peacefully and in accordance with international law.

The leaders asserted that they are of strong conviction that international law, including respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, along with the maintenance of peace, safety, security, and stability in the maritime domain, should be kept at the topmost priority.

## **Tibetan NGOs condemn defamatory video threatening the Dalai Lama**

23 September 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

Eight Tibetan non-governmental organisations held a press conference on Monday, strongly condemning the defamation and death threats directed at His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the revered exiled spiritual leader. The coalition of NGOs denounced the actions and views of an individual identified as Senge, known online as Gangser, a Tibetan resident of Adelaide, Australia

In a video, Senge is seen inciting the assassination of the Dalai Lama and the sabotage of the exile Tibetan government known officially as the Central Tibetan Administration. The video surfaced on micro-messaging apps, sparking discussions during the recently concluded 2024 parliamentary session.

The NGOs labeled his actions as "terrorist behaviour," asserting that they threaten Tibetan unity. The statement emphasised that Senge not only issued life-threatening remarks against the octogenarian spiritual leader with the intent to undermine the Tibetan government in exile but also incited others to defame His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Additionally, he portrayed the exile government as an enemy through his actions and inflammatory rhetoric.

The NGOs called on the Central Tibetan Administration to pursue legal action and ensure the matter is addressed according to the host country's laws. They pledged full support for any campaigns or legal measures undertaken. They also committed to providing the Indian government and relevant local authorities with information on the audio and visual materials Senge has circulated publicly, as well as details of his background. The group said that they will appeal to prevent his entry into India, citing concerns for the safety and security of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Dawa Tsering, President of the U-Tsang Cholkha Central Executive Committee, told reporters, "We are committed to providing both financial and human resource support. As discussed in parliament and stated by the Security Minister, this act is illegal and will face prosecution. We will not leave this responsibility solely to the Central Tibetan Administration. All members of the eight organisations will contribute as much as possible to ensure legal action is taken."

Students for a Free Tibet (SFT), a global network of activists headquartered in New York, also issued a statement on September 20, condemning the video as a "promotion of political violence and hate speech". The statement reiterated that both non-violence and rangzen (freedom) are core tenets of SFT's mission. "We will continue to teach and train



young people and activists around the world to use strategic nonviolence as the most effective path to achieve freedom in Tibet," the statement affirmed.

### **Tibetans rally in Paris against museum's use of Chinese term 'Xizang' for Tibet"**

23 September 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup

Around 800 Tibetan activists and supporters gathered in front of the Musée Guimet on Saturday to protest the recent terminology change in the museum's exhibitions, which replaced "Tibet" with "Xizang," a Chinese name for the country.

The demonstration came after reports that two Parisian museums had altered their terminology regarding Tibet. The Musée du quai Branly had replaced "Tibet" with "Xizang Autonomous Region," the romanised version of the Chinese term, in its catalogue of Tibetan artefacts. Similarly, the Musée Guimet renamed its exhibition spaces related to Tibet as the "Himalayan world."

Six Tibetan NGOs in France had earlier sent formal letters to both museums, seeking meetings to discuss the implications of the terminology changes. While the Musée du quai Branly agreed to meet with the groups, the Musée Guimet did not respond, prompting the protest to be centered at its premises. Protesters carried banners that read "Tibet belongs to Tibetans" and "World leaders should not succumb to Chinese pressure," accusing the museums of contributing to China's efforts to erase Tibetan history by using the term "Xizang." The demonstrators vowed to continue their protests until both museums reverted to using the term "Tibet."



Tibetans worldwide expressed solidarity via social media for the cause, where they denounced the terminology change as a blatant attempt to rewrite history. Many have called on cultural institutions to uphold historical truth and resist political pressure from Beijing.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the political leader of the Central Tibetan Administration, also spoke out against the change. In a letter sent to French officials and the directors of both museums on

September 14, Tsering argued that the use of "Xizang" was part of a broader Chinese strategy to diminish Tibetan identity. He urged the museums to restore the term "Tibet" in their exhibits to reflect historical accuracy.

The Tibet Museum of the Central Tibetan Administration echoed these concerns, issuing a statement labeling the museums' decisions as an alarming distortion of history and an attack on Tibet's cultural identity. Tenzin Topchen, the museum's director, called on the Musée Guimet and Musée du quai Branly to correct the terminology and ensure that Tibetan heritage is accurately represented.

Tibetans and supporters in France have been actively protesting the museums' changes, organizing petitions, contacting museum directors, and spreading awareness across social media platforms. Many see the actions of these museums as symptomatic of China's broader effort to control the global narrative around Tibet and its cultural legacy.

### **Central Tibetan Administration Launches Investigation Over Dalai Lama Threat**

21 September 2024, Dev Discourse

The Central Tibetan Administration's Security Department is investigating a social media threat against the Dalai Lama. The incident was discussed in the Tibetan Parliament, with MPs expressing concern and condemning the act. Authorities assure there is no security threat, attributing the issue to possible foreign influences.

The Central Tibetan Administration's Security Department is investigating a recent social media threat against the Dalai Lama. The threat was reportedly issued by a person of alleged Tibetan origin in a video message. Discussed during a session of the Tibetan Parliament in exile in Dharamshala, the matter has been handed over to the administration's Security Department for a thorough investigation. Dorjee Tseten, a Tibetan Parliamentarian in exile, confirmed, "This issue was discussed in the recent Tibetan Parliament session. As a member of parliament, I have condemned this criminal act. We have directed the Security Department to conduct a thorough investigation, ensuring the culprit is held accountable according to the law." Tseten noted that the suspect is believed to be based either in Europe or Australia, and a comprehensive investigation will reveal the motive behind the threat. Despite the seriousness of the threat, she reassured the community that there is currently no security threat to the Dalai Lama. Lhagyari Namgyal Dolkar, another MP in exile, expressed disappointment but confidence in the security measures provided by the Indian government

for the Dalai Lama. She noted, "China uses various measures to create unrest within the Tibetan community, but I trust the security that India's government has provided. The Tibetan community's love for His Holiness is profound, and I am confident he will continue to spread his message of love, peace, and compassion for a long time."

### **Bill to include Jonang in Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile fails floor test**

20 September 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup

A bill proposing the inclusion of the Jonang as the fifth Buddhist tradition represented in the parliament fails the floor test on the final day of the eighth session of the 17th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile leading to disappointment among Jonang followers and supporters.

The bill which received 21 votes out of the required 30 was introduced by the the Kashag (cabinet) on Wednesday, aiming to add Jonang alongside the currently represented schools of Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya, Gelug, and Yungdrung Bon in the Tibetan Parliament in Exile.

MP Karma Gelek, in support of the bill, stated "The composition of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile has undergone many changes. When the parliament was first introduced in September 1960, there were only 13 MPs—one member each from four religious traditions and three members each from the three provinces. In 1976, Yungdrung Bon was included, increasing the number of MPs representing religious traditions to five and adding one member for each province. In 1991, amendments were made to the charter, allowing for two MPs from each of the five religious traditions, 10 MPs from each province, and the inclusion of MPs from abroad. So, there have been changes, and Jonang leaders have persistently requested the parliament and submitted applications to gain representation in the parliament."

The International Jonang Well-being Association issued a press release shortly after the bill failed to secure the necessary votes to pass, expressing regret over the outcome. The association urged the Tibetan parliament to take full responsibility for any critical issues that may arise in the future concerning the Jonang tradition.

In their statement, the association highlighted that the current charter and related regulations have created discrimination against the Jonang tradition for the past 27 years. They pointed out that despite numerous petitions, appeals, and even peaceful protests, including a hunger strike in 2015, their pleas for equal rights have been ignored.

The association also noted that in 2011, during the 11th Religious Conference presided over by the Dalai Lama, religious leaders unanimously recognized

Jonang as an independent school of Tibetan Buddhism. However, this recognition has not been reflected in the charter of the exile government.

The failure to pass this amendment has sparked disappointment and criticism on social media platforms, with many expressing dissatisfaction with the decision. Supporters of the Jonang tradition argue that this continued exclusion undermines the unity and equality within the Tibetan exile community.

### **CTA Prez criticizes French museums for 'pandering to Chinese wishes'**

20 September 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup

The President of the Central Tibetan Administration has expressed concern over two prominent Parisian museums' decision to adopt Chinese terminology in their catalogues of Tibetan artefacts.

In a letter dated September 14, the Tibetan political leader criticized the Musée du quai Branly and the Musée Guimet for replacing the term "Tibet" with "Xizang" or "Himalayan World" in their collections.

The letter, addressed to several high-ranking French officials including the Minister of Culture and the Mayor of Paris, as well as museum directors and members of the Tibetan Support Group in the French Senate, denounced the museums' actions as "pandering to the wishes of the People's Republic of China (PRC) government."

He argued that this terminology shift, initiated by China's United Front Work Department in 2023, is part of a broader strategy to erase Tibet's identity as an independent cultural entity. He emphasized that the term "Tibet" historically encompasses three traditional provinces inhabited by Tibetans and that the use of "Xizang" distorts Tibet's history as an independent nation.

"It is particularly disheartening that the said cultural institutions in France—a nation that cherishes liberty, equality, and fraternity—are acting in complicity with the PRC government in its design to erase the identity of Tibet," the letter stated.

The Tibetan leader urged the museums to reconsider their position and accurately represent Tibet in accordance with historical facts, international laws, and the aspirations of the Tibetan people.

This controversy unfolds amid ongoing tensions between Tibet and China, with recent actions by the Chinese government exacerbating the situation. The letter highlighted several measures, including the forced enrollment of over a million Tibetan children in state-run boarding schools, efforts to Sinicize Tibetan Buddhism by exerting control over monasteries and religious education, and the forced relocation of Tibetan nomads, alongside land

confiscation under the pretext of environmental protection.

The Tibetan President's letter also highlighted the recent enactment of the Sino-Tibetan Dispute Act by the U.S. government on July 12, 2024. This legislation challenges China's historical claims over Tibet and acknowledges the Chinese government's systematic suppression of Tibetan culture and way of life.

The Tibet Museum also released a statement expressing concern over the museums' decisions, calling it an alarming distortion of history and a denial of Tibet's cultural identity. The museum's director, Tenzin Topdhen, urged the Musée du quai Branly and Musée Guimet to reverse their decisions and restore accurate representation of Tibetan heritage.

Tibetans and supporters of the Tibetan cause in France have initiated various protests against the museums for adopting Chinese names for Tibetan artifacts. They are using petitions, writing to the museum directors, and actively raising awareness on social media platforms.

### **ICT invites presidential candidates to state positions on Tibet**

17 September 2024, ICT

As the November 5, 2024 American presidential election approaches, the candidates and campaigns are presenting their positions on key questions, including America's relationship with China. As the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) recently noted, however, these positions have largely focused on trade relations. Issues such as Tibet and human rights have not been in the foreground.

ICT wrote to candidates Donald Trump, Kamala Harris, JD Vance, and Tim Walz in August requesting statements of their positions on Tibet. The release of such statements would not be unprecedented; in the 2016 election cycle Marco Rubio, then a contender for the Republican candidate for president, answered ICT's questionnaire on Tibet. Four years later Democratic candidate Joe Biden articulated his promises of support for Tibet and the Tibetan people during the 2020 campaign.

Although ICT does not endorse candidates for office, our 50,000 members across the United States have a strong interest in learning more about where each candidate stands on Tibet. We await their responses and will be ready to inform our members and the general public when we receive them.

The text of the letters sent to Trump and Harris campaigns are given below as an example:

On behalf of the 50,000 active American members of the International Campaign for Tibet, please allow me to congratulate you for securing the nomination

of your party to run for the presidency of the United States of America.

If elected, among the many issues your administration will confront in the White House is the Chinese Communist Party's ongoing occupation of Tibet, which subjects the Tibetan people to grave human rights abuses. Previous administrations under both parties have supported the Tibetan people and called for human rights and democratic freedoms in Tibet.

They have done this by meeting with the Dalai Lama and representatives of the elected Central Tibetan Administration in exile, by calling on China's leaders to reach a negotiated solution that respects Tibet's unique cultural, religious, and linguistic heritage, and by maintaining America's indefatigable, bipartisan tradition of supporting Tibet. Our laws provide invaluable tools for the White House to insist on a peaceful resolution of the Tibet situation, including the Tibet Policy and Support Act 2020, the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act of 2018 and the Resolve Tibet Act of 2024.

Between 2002 and 2010 the Chinese leaders and Tibetan representatives repeatedly engaged in dialogue in pursuit of peaceful, mutually beneficial resolution with the support of contemporary American administrations. American policy dictates that the United States should take a leading role in fostering the resumption of these negotiations, and we hope that you will take this as a core of America's China policy if elected.

As our members are deeply concerned about the situation in Tibet, I am writing to ask for your position on Tibet and your plan for bringing Beijing back to the negotiating table. While the International Campaign for Tibet cannot endorse candidates for office, we would like to share your responses with our members and the public as we believe that it is highly important for our members and all citizens to be informed of each candidate's position.

I look forward to your response.

### **Exile Tibetan parliament to resume session Sep 17 morning**

16 September 2024, Tibetan Review

The 8th session of the 17th Tibetan Parliament in exile (TPiE) is to resume on Sep 17 morning following a meeting of the Speaker, the Kashag and TPiE members, reported the Tibetan-language Tibettimes.net Sep 16.

The regular, biannual session began on Sep 11 but could not be resumed from Sep 14 afternoon for lack of quorum after some members claimed that "general public" Tibetans who took their protest before the parliament building that day posed a threat to their personal safety.

Those Tibetans have been protesting on a nearby basketball court under the banner of "People's Movement for Securing the Central Tibetan Administration", organized by a group calling itself "The Advocacy of the General Public for the Sustainability of CTA". They have been calling for the TPIE to carry out the long-ignored amendment of the Charter of Tibetans in Exile to provide for the appointment of the justice commissioners of the Tibetan Supreme Justice Commission (TSJC), to which the absentee members have been vehemently opposed thus far.

The session did not resume today also as the absentee members were demanding an assurance for their personal safety from the Central Tibetan Administration's Department of Security.

As attending members of the TPIE kept asking the Speaker to find a way to enable the continuation of the session, the "general public" protest organizers issued a press statement this afternoon, denying that the protest action on Sep 14 posed any danger to the personal safety of the TPIE members as alleged by a section of its members, that the Department of Security of the CTA was assured of it on Sep 15 and it was being repeated in today's press statement as well.

Seizing on TPIE member Geshe Monlam Tharchin's remark that it was incumbent on the TPIE to amend the Charter to provide for the appointment of the justice commissioners of the TSJC, and that all the TPIE members fully knew it, the press statement pleaded for this amendment to be carried out at the earliest, rather than the matter being relegated towards the end of the session.

Then, a little after 4:30 pm, religious constituency member Geshe Atuk Tseten, speaking on behalf of four Dotoe and religious constituency members, was reported to have spoken of having remarked that yesterday (Sep 15), the religious and Dotoe constituency members of the TPIE had informed the Speaker and Deputy Speaker that they would not attend the session if the Kashag and the Department of Security were not in a position to assure their personal safety. He has also said that the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker had now called them over, and informed them that the Kashag had assured them that the Department of Security would take responsibility for the security arrangement.

"The situation is now such that we will continue to attend the TPIE session," Atuk Tseten has added.

Meanwhile, Geshe Monlam Tharchin and Dotoe TPIE member Mr Kunchok Yangphel indicated in their media interactions that the issue on which a section of the TPIE members were not allowing the Charter to be amended to provide for the appointment of the justice commissioners continued to remain.

## Exile Tibetan parliament session aborted by lack of quorum

15 September 2024, Tibetan Review

The 17th Tibetan Parliament in Exile (TPIE), meeting for its 8th session since Sep 11, had to be postponed until further notice from the afternoon of Sep 14 due to lack of quorum. Only 23 members appeared while 22 remained absent, reported the Tibetan-language tibettme.net Sep 15. Three were already on leave at least till Sep 16.

The development followed the appearance before the parliament building of members of a group called "People's Movement for Securing the Central Tibetan Administration", shouting slogans calling for the long-aborted amendment of the Charter of Tibetans in Exile to provide for the appointment of the justice commissioners of the Tibetan Supreme Justice Commission to be carried out.

Although the item was on the session's agenda, and due to be taken up later on, movement members, who had been protesting on the nearby basketball court since Apr 11, felt that their demand was being ignored and so took the protest in front of the parliament building, seeking a meeting with the Speaker.

However, following an assurance from the CTA's Security Department Kalon (minister) Ms Dolma Gyari, the protesters peacefully left the scene. Even so, when the TPIE session resumed in the afternoon, there was lack of quorum and so could not continue, the report said. The Speaker undertook to inform the members whenever the session could be resumed.

On this issue, Bonpo TPIE member Geshe Monlam Tharchin has said, "It is our duty to amend the Charter and to provide for the appointment of the justice commissioners (of the TSJC). It is being stated that this matter is already included in the agenda; but it is yet to come up. However, despite claims being made in the name of appeal and peaceful movement of the general public, everyone has seen what they did today. What was supposed to happen was that the movement organizers had to sit down; and we needed to pay heed to the documents they gave us. However, just by looking at the TPIE session's activities in the past three days, they claimed that the general public was being ignored and they rushed here.

"When the matter was discussed with the Department of Security Kalon, Secretary, and other staff, they expressed the department's inability to guarantee security; that the protesters had their rights under the law of the land, and they were not acting on the basis of any right given by the department. And because the Department of Security could not guarantee our security, we could not attend the TPIE session."



On the other hand, President Tenzin Yangkar of the Advocacy of the General Public for the Sustainability of CTA group, has said: "For four days, the participants from the general public had maintained ethical propriety in their conduct. Last year (too), the general public was ignored. Even so, IF we had been told that because the item to amend the Charter to provide for the appointment of the justice commissioners was already on the agenda this time, we should rest assured, the general public would certainly have felt at ease. However, no response or message of any kind came to us from the TPiE authorities over the past four days. This was what drove members of the general public to proceed to the ground before the TPiE building one after another. ...

"And then, later on, we were assured, following a meeting with the Department of Security Kalon, the Deputy Speaker (because the Speaker was presiding over the TPiE meeting), officers from the local police authority, that the Speaker would meet with us. And the protesting members of the general public peacefully left the scene."

Meanwhile, Geshe Monlam Tharchin and Dotoe TPiE member Mr Kunchok Yangphel indicated in their media interactions that the issue on which a section of the TPiE members were not allowing the Charter to be amended to provide for the appointment of the justice commissioners continued to remain.

The 23 TPiE members who arrived to attend the session in the afternoon were stated to include seven Amdo, all the 10 U-Tsang and all the five overseas members. Those who stayed away included nine religious and all the 10 Dotoe members. One Domey member had taken leave for the entire session while two were on leave until Sep 16.

### **Vienna: Premiere of 'Amala' shines light on Tibetan struggle amid "cultural genocide"**

15 September 2024, ANI

A large audience gathered at a local theatre in Vienna on Saturday for the Austrian premiere of 'Amala - The Life and Struggle of the Dalai Lama's Sister,' a movie that chronicles the life of Jetsun Pema, the Dalai Lama's younger sister.

The event, organised by the 'Students for a Free Tibet' group and the Tibetan Diaspora in Austria, was a heartfelt tribute to Pema's enduring contributions to Tibetan education and culture.

Affectionately known as "Amala," meaning 'mother,' Jetsun Pema is celebrated for her leadership in the Tibetan Children's Village (TCV), a network of schools she established to educate Tibetan refugee children in India.

The film captures her personal challenges and triumphs as she took over the Nursery for Tibetan

Refugee Children and transformed it into a flourishing institution for displaced Tibetan youth.

The premiere took on a deeper resonance as it coincided with growing concerns about the ongoing cultural genocide in Tibet.

Following the screening, Tibetan-Canadian activist Chemi Lhamo, a member of the International Tibet Network's Steering Committee, addressed the audience virtually. In her impassioned speech, Lhamo highlighted the Chinese government's systematic efforts to suppress Tibetan identity.

She revealed that over one million Tibetan children have been forcibly enrolled in Chinese-run colonial boarding schools, where they are stripped of their language, culture, and traditions.

Lhamo's address underscored the urgency of the Tibetan plight, while brochures and flyers detailing human rights violations in Tibet were distributed to ensure attendees left with a deeper understanding of the ongoing struggle.

Despite the inclement weather, the event became a powerful moment of solidarity, demonstrating the Tibetan community's resilience in the face of adversity. Events like these, the organisers emphasised, are crucial in keeping the Tibetan cause in the international spotlight and resisting the erasure of their culture and identity.

The Tibetan Diaspora in Austria continues its mission to raise awareness, ensuring that the voice of Tibet remains heard across the globe.

### **Tibetan cast film "Shambhala" selected as Nepal's official entry for 97th Oscars**

14 September 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

Nepal has officially selected Tibetan-language film "Shambhala" as its official submission for the 97th Academy Awards, commonly known as the Oscars. Directed by Nepalese filmmaker, Min Bahadur Bham, the film features a predominantly Tibetan cast, marking a milestone for both Tibetan and Nepali cinema on the global stage.

The film first garnered international attention at the 74th Berlin International Film Festival, premiering in the Main Competition on February 23 at the Berlinale Palast. Shambhala also earned the Best Cinematography award at the 2024 Bishkek International Film Festival in Kyrgyzstan. Its lead actor, Thinley Lhamo, a Tibetan refugee, received the prestigious Boccacino d'Oro Prize for Best Acting Performance at the 77th Locarno Film Festival.

Filmed entirely in Tibetan, the story revolves around Pema, played by Thinley Lhamo, a pregnant woman living in the remote Dolpo region of Nepal. Pema is part of a polyandrous marriage with Tashi and his two younger brothers. When Tashi fails to return from a trading trip, raising questions about the



legitimacy of her unborn child, Pema embarks on a transformative journey to find him. As her search for Tashi unfolds, it becomes a profound spiritual quest for self-discovery and liberation, transcending the mere need to reunite with her husband.

In a statement on social media, the film's team expressed their excitement over the Oscar selection, "The stunningly crafted "Shambhala", directed by Min Bahadur Bham makes its way to the 97th Oscars. The film is contextualised in the Northern part of Nepal, and defines the concrete journey of Female Self Determination. And now, the film becomes a true inspiration itself."

Currently, Shambhala is being screened in nine theatres within Kathmandu Valley and in 39 locations outside the valley.

### **"If I were in Tibet" Art Exhibition of Tibetan students inaugurates in Dharamshala**

14 September 2024, The Tibet Post, Yangchen Dolma

The art exhibition "Dreaming Tibet" or "If I were in Tibet" by about 200 Tibetan students of classes 6 to 12 from five Tibetan schools inaugurates at the Kangra Art Museum, Dharamshala, on Friday. The aim of this exhibition is to raise awareness of Tibet among Indians and to create an opportunity for Tibetan children born in exile, under the title "If I were in Tibet", to express their feelings and thoughts through art form.

Hemraj Bairwa, Deputy Commissioner of Kangra District, inaugurates the art exhibition "Dreaming Tibet" or 'If I were in Tibet' by about 200 Tibetan students of classes 6 to 12 from five Tibetan schools at the Kangra Art Museum, Kotwali Bazar, Dharamshala, on September 13, 2024. Sonam Sichoe, President of the Tibetan Village School (TCV), Tibetan activist Tenzin Tsundue, Tibetan writer Bhuchung D Sonam and other artists, Tibetan students and the general public attended the exhibition opening and visited the students' art exhibition. The exhibition will be held from September 13 to 19, 2024.

The "Dreaming Tibet" exhibition is organised by KHADHOK, a collective of Tibetan artists based in Dharamshala. The "If I were in Tibet" art exhibition features works of Tibetan students from Upper TCV, Sambhota Petoen, TCV Gopalpur, TCV Suja and TCV Chauntra. A group of Tibetan and Indian artists has selected 50 works of art to be shown at the exhibition.

The organiser explained that everyone can have a dream, no one can limit the dream, even if we can't go to Tibet, but we can dream of Tibet, which is why we called the exhibition "Dreaming Tibet", we organised workshops in these schools to involve the

students more in the creative process. Art is the expression of our feelings and thoughts, we can raise awareness of the issue of Tibet, the true situation in Tibet, politics and culture through art forms and people can receive more messages from these artistic forms.

"After over 60 years of occupation, Tibetan children are growing up in exile, disconnected from their homeland. With Khadhok's first-ever Youth Art Engagement Project, we aim to encourage them to reflect on their roots, identity, dreams, and aspirations. This unique exhibition brings together a vibrant collection of artworks that reflect how our young artists imagine life in Tibet," the organiser said.

Tsering Chospal, from the TCV Suja School, drew a picture of Tibetan nature. He explained his drawing: "For us, Tibetan nature was beautiful, everything was green, the water was fresh, you could drink water straight from the river, all the mountains were covered in snow, the clouds were white and everyone was kind. But after China invaded Tibet, Tibetan nature was destroyed."

Tennor Samkey, a student from TCV Suja School, explained her drawing (a head that is half Chinese and half Tibetan, half Tibetan cloth and half Chinese school uniform) by saying: The drawing is called 'Who am I?' because I have heard that in Tibet, parents are forced to send their children to a Chinese board school. If I were in Tibet, I would learn and speak Chinese and live in a Chinese environment that would make me think about who I am. Because, my parents always told me: "You are a Tibetan". But the teacher is telling me and forcing me to believe that I am a Chinese! In a situation like this, the biggest and hardest question is who I am."

### **Tibet rights organisation condemns launch of Chinese propaganda centre in Lhasa**

13 September 2024, ANI

China's attempt to boost its efforts at controlling the world narrative on Tibet was witnessed yet again when the Chinese government recently inaugurated the "Tibet International Communication Center" in Lhasa.

Such a step by the Chinese administration is another way to promote the country's ongoing campaign to reshape global public opinion on Tibet, a report by the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) stated.

The ICT claimed that the establishment of such institutions in Tibet is a boost to China's propaganda on Tibet, which it had previously pointed out. And it expects further escalation by China in the future in an attempt to dominate the global conversation with China's

propagandistic narrative and storytelling.

In an earlier report released in January this year titled 'China's External Propaganda on Tibet: Erasing Tibet to tell a good Chinese story', ICT claimed that "China's Tibet policy has been a subject of international scrutiny ever since its invasion and subsequent occupation of Tibet in 1959. The Chinese government knows that there is a political problem in Tibet. But rather than resolve it, one of its approaches is to falsify the situation and employ various methods to control the narrative around Tibet, aiming to reshape its portrayal in global discourse. This report examines China's recent external propaganda efforts concerning Tibet, highlighting the objectives and the tactics".

According to the ICT report, the latest propaganda centre by China was established after a "Roundtable Meeting on Building an Effective International Communication System for Tibet" which was jointly organised by the Propaganda Department of the Tibet Autonomous Region Party Committee and the China Foreign Language Bureau. This centre is an outcome of the group study session of the Political Bureau of the CCP Central Committee in May 2021.

The ICT claimed that the immediate outcome of the Politburo CCP Central Committee appears to be the CCP's push to replace the internationally recognised country name "Tibet" with the sinicised term "Xizang" on the global conversation.

Furthermore, the same report claimed, that such a renaming policy, discreetly initiated in late 2021 during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, aligns with the CCP's General Secretary Xi Jinping's decade-old vision to "tell a good Chinese story" on the global stage.

The report also claimed that soon, China is likely to intensify its use of state-controlled media platforms to spread its narrative on Tibet.

The ICT also raised concerns that such an institution will be used to marginalize Tibetan voices and obscure the ongoing oppression in Tibet.

The report claimed that "This concern is well-founded, given China's extensive use of modern technology and media platforms to control information and shape narratives about Tibet".

### **UP-STF arrests Tibetan refugee for providing Indian bank accounts to cyber criminals**

13 September 2024, Hindustan Times, Arun Singh

Investigation revealed that Tharchin was in contact with cybercriminals operating from Nepal and Sri Lanka to dupe Indian citizens. He provided them Indian bank accounts for ₹4.5 lakh per account, said investigators

Uttar Pradesh special task force (UP-STF)'s Noida unit has arrested a 37-year-old Tibetan refugee for being allegedly involved in buying Indian bank accounts at cheap prices from financially weak people and providing these account details to cyber fraudsters operating in Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, said UP-STF officials on Thursday, adding that the suspect was residing in Delhi under a fake identity.

### **China tries to reshape Tibet, Xinjiang narratives with new propaganda efforts**

12 September 2024, VOA, William Yang

Chinese authorities have rolled out new propaganda efforts aimed at countering Western narratives about the human rights situation in the northwest Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and Tibet.

In recent weeks, they have continued to invite foreign vloggers to visit Xinjiang, home to millions of Uyghur people, a majority Muslim ethnic minority group. Also this month, China inaugurated an international communication center to produce content portraying some "positive developments" in Tibet, such as Tibetan people's growing income.

Since 2017, the United States, United Nations, European Parliament and rights organizations have condemned China for interning up to 1 million Uyghurs, forcing hundreds of thousands of Uyghur women to go through abortion or sterilization, and forcing Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang to work in factories, which prompted the United States to pass the Uyghur Forced Labor Protection Act in 2021.

In Tibet, human rights organizations and Western countries, including the U.S., have accused the Chinese government of erasing the Tibetan language and culture through compulsory Chinese language education for Tibetan children, forcing hundreds of thousands of rural Tibetans to relocate to urban areas and replacing the name "Tibet" with the Romanized Chinese name "Xizang" in official documents.

Taiwan said on September 5 it knows of reports China has been recruiting Taiwanese influencers to visit Xinjiang and help promote a more positive narrative about the region through their videos.

Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council, which oversees cross-strait exchanges, said it was still looking into the recent surge of Xinjiang-related content produced by Taiwanese influencers and urged them to avoid violating an anti-infiltration law by accepting payment from Beijing.

Taiwanese Youtuber Potter Wang claimed in June that the Chinese government had been inviting Taiwanese influencers on paid trips to China to produce content. His claims prompted several

Taiwanese YouTubers who have recently published videos about Xinjiang to deny receiving payment from Beijing.

In response to warnings from Taiwanese authorities, China's Taiwan Affairs Office said Beijing welcomed "Taiwan compatriots" to visit China and enjoy "the magnificent mountains and rivers, taste the various kinds of food, experience the local customs, and share what they have seen and heard."

Apart from inviting Taiwanese influencers to visit Xinjiang, Beijing has been inviting foreign journalists and vloggers to visit Xinjiang since the start of 2024. In several reports, China's state-run tabloid Global Times said these foreigners learned about "Xinjiang's latest economic achievements, religious freedom, and ethnic integration" following visits to local industry, religious venues and residential homes.

Some experts say Chinese authorities usually impose tight control over foreign influencers' itineraries in Xinjiang to ensure the content they produce is aligned with the positive narrative that Beijing aims to promote, which is contrary to existing foreign media reports about mass internment of Uyghurs, forced labor of ethnic minorities or harsh birth control programs.

"Foreign influencers usually spend time in Xinjiang's capital, Urumqi, and visit places like the Grand Bazaar, where they will try local food and watch dance performances that could seem to suggest that cultural forms of the Uyghur people are protected," said Timothy Grose, a professor of China Studies at Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology in Indiana.

In addition to showcasing aspects of Uyghur culture, Grose said, foreign influencers' Xinjiang videos will often portray Uyghurs being employed and local signs containing Chinese and Uyghur characters.

"Beijing believes this is an effective strategy [to counter existing international narratives about Xinjiang] if they are indirectly controlling the types of pictures that are exported out of Xinjiang," he told VOA by phone.

By flooding social media platforms with Xinjiang content produced by these foreign influencers, Grose said, the Chinese government is trying to reach and influence casual viewers, especially younger audiences, with no deep knowledge about China or Xinjiang.

"These casual viewers don't have expertise in China, so they won't know where to find signs of oppression in the videos since they are unfamiliar with the Uyghur culture or China's ethnic policy," he said.

Since China is directly or indirectly filling social media platforms with content aligned with their preferred narrative for Xinjiang, Grose said, it will be difficult for academics, activists, and journalists to counter Beijing's propaganda efforts with content that reflects the reality in the region.

## Telling the Tibet stories

Beijing has also launched a new initiative to "tell the Tibet story well."

On September 2, several local and central Chinese government agencies inaugurated an "international communication center" in the Tibetan capital, Lhasa, that aims to enhance Beijing's ability to promote its preferred narratives about Tibet.

During a roundtable event focusing on "building a more effective international communication system for Tibet-related issues," French writer Margot Chevestrier, who works for China's state-run China International Communications Group, said that many young Chinese people are affected by "biased reporting" on global social media and that these misunderstandings often stem from "misleading reporting by some media or individuals."

The new international communication center will "enable more people at home and abroad to know Tibet, understand Tibet, and love Tibet," according to China's state-run China News, an online news website.

Some analysts say the communication center may serve as a centralized institution to "coordinate" Beijing's propaganda efforts focusing on Tibet.

"Since there doesn't seem to be as much propaganda efforts on Tibet as on Xinjiang, Beijing might be thinking how they can use this tactic," said Sarah Cook, an independent researcher on China and former China research director at nonprofit organization Freedom House.

Cook said the amount of propaganda effort that China dedicated to Xinjiang and Tibet shows that these two issues are of a high priority for Beijing.

"While Tibet and Xinjiang are their priorities, the tactics that the Chinese propaganda apparatus deploys are similar, including spreading disinformation through fake accounts, restricting foreign journalists' access to certain places, and suppressing information that contradicts their preferred narrative," she told VOA by phone.

Since its propaganda efforts have been seemingly successful, Grose said, Beijing will continue to employ the same set of strategies to challenge existing facts about the situation in Xinjiang and Tibet.

To push back against Beijing's campaigns, he said, Xinjiang and Tibet-focused groups should try to increase their presence on social media platforms and create more "captivating and moving" visual content that is "properly contextualized" but can influence young audiences.

Additionally, Cook said it's important for individuals concerned about the situation in Tibet and Xinjiang to work with like-minded research groups and expose the different propaganda campaigns that China is pushing.

"They can try to produce short videos informing people of Beijing's tactics," she said.

### **'General Session' of TPIE begins, Tibetan advocacy group urges Charter amendment**

11 September 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

As the 17th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile convened its eighth session in Dharamshala on Wednesday, nearly 1,000 Tibetans from the Indian subcontinent and abroad, under the banner of 'The Advocacy of the General Public for the Sustainability of CTA,' made a direct appeal to lawmakers. They called for urgent amendments to the Charter of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) to enable the appointment of the Chief Justice Commissioner and two judges to the Tibetan Supreme Justice Commission (TSJC), the apex judicial body of the CTA.

The group stressed the urgency to appoint the Chief Justice Commissioner and two additional justices of the Tibetan Supreme Justice Commission (TSJC) to establish a robust judiciary capable of administering oaths for future leadership of the exile Tibetan government.

In a press conference on Monday, the advocacy group stated that if the charter amendment is not enacted in this session of the parliament, they plan to set in motion a series of action plans including; Call for the resignation of all the 45 current members of parliament; Begin a hunger strike campaign; Submit a petition to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, invoking his authority under Article 1(ii) of the Charter; Campaign for equal voting rights for MPs from religious sects, Call for changes to be made to the allocation of standing committee members, and the right for overseas Tibetan representatives to be on the standing committee.

The ongoing session of the current parliament, also known as the 'General session' will deliberate on the activities and workings of each department of the CTA. On the first day of the session on Wednesday, Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, in his address, reminded parliament of the vital role the democratic system plays in Tibetan governance, a system bestowed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He urged Tibetans to work towards fulfilling the Dalai Lama's aspirations, particularly his four commitments.

The Speaker also expressed gratitude for international support, citing the passage of the Resolve Tibet Act in the US, a motion supporting Tibetan self-determination in Canada, the Australian Parliament's raising of the Tibetan issue, and the formation of a convener and co-convener for the All Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet.

CTA's executive head, Sikyong Penpa Tsering responded to many questions from parliamentarians, particularly issues related to the Department of Religion and Culture. Key among them was the issue of reincarnation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. President Tsering emphasized that the current Kashag has prepared measures to prevent interference from China on the matter and that his administration has drafted a 'blue book' outlining strategies for managing national emergencies.

### **Tibet: UN experts demand clarity after wave of arrests**

10 September 2024, Table Briefings

In February, a wave of arrests swept through the Tibetan region of Derge. The reason: People were protesting against the construction of a dam. Now the UN has raised its concerns.

UN human rights experts are "deeply concerned" about the Chinese authorities' crackdown on dam protests in the Tibetan region of Derge (Mandarin Dege). 13 special rapporteurs had already sent a letter to this effect to the Chinese government in July. They demand transparency about how many people are still being detained for participating in the demonstrations and where they are being held. They also demand information on what risks the dam's construction actually poses to people and nature.

Michael Brand, Chairman of the Tibet Parliamentary Group in the German Bundestag, laments China's "extremely worrying" actions "also given the international escalation that the regime in Beijing is practicing more and more frequently." He urged that the protection of Tibetans and "the country of Tibet" should be high on the agenda of international geopolitics.

Kai Müller, Executive Director of the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) in Berlin, warns: "What is being sold with the dams as climate-friendly and green energy is in reality a ruthless strategy of exploiting an oppressed country and disenfranchising those affected." He continued that the international community should not fall for this sales ploy and that the Chinese development policy in Tibet should be resolutely questioned. Earlier, the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC) had already welcomed the letter from the UN human rights experts and called on governments to defend Tibetans' fundamental rights.

On February 14, numerous people protested in front of the government building in Derge in the autonomous prefecture of Kardze (Ganzi) against the planned Kamtok (Gangtuo) hydropower project. Soon after the protests, reports of several hundred arrests and mistreated demonstrators emerged. It is unclear how many people are still in custody. The

Derge protests are significant in that there was an apparently coordinated effort to document the peaceful resistance and disseminate video footage of the protests.

### **Motion on Tibet moved in Australian House of Representatives**

10 September 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup



Members of the Australian Tibetan community with Australian MP Andrew Wallace (Photo/CTA)

A member of parliament of the Australian House of Representatives moved a motion addressing China's repressive policies towards Tibet, calling for the protection of Tibetan rights and culture on Monday. The motion, introduced by Andrew Wallace MP in the lower house of the Australian parliament called out China's systematic cultural assimilation of Tibetans. It affirmed the Tibetan people's rights to freely choose their economic, social, cultural, and religious policies without external interference. It highlighted the right of religious communities to select their own leaders, including the reincarnation of the next Dalai Lama, without Chinese government intervention.

While moving the motion, Representative Wallace stated, "The Chinese Communist Party is not content with simply trying to wipe out the culture of Tibet and Tibetans; they also want to remove their religious background. The CCP wants to control who will become the successor to the Dalai Lama. Australia's parliament stood in solidarity, united by the convention that we cannot remain silent in the face of evil."

Susan Templeman MP, Co-Chair of Parliament Friendship of Tibet, seconded the motion, urging Chinese authorities to release the Panchen Lama and reiterating Australia's stance against interference in selecting the next Dalai Lama. Dr Daniel Mulino- MP and Hon. Dr David Gillespie- MP also spoke in support, highlighting the forced assimilation of Tibetan children and suppression of religious and cultural practices in Tibet.

The motion expressed concern over China's assimilationist policies, including forced labour transfer programs, separation of Tibetan children from their families through state-run boarding schools, detention of Tibetans for the peaceful

expression of political views, suppression of Tibetan religious expression, and excessive security measures against Tibetans.

In response to these concerns, the Australian Parliament called on China to re-engage with representatives of the 14th Dalai Lama to establish genuine autonomy for Tibetans within China, repeal discriminatory legislation, end arbitrary detention and family separation programs, remove restrictions on Tibetan culture and language, and allow access to Tibet for independent human rights observers.

The motion also referenced recent international developments, including United Nations reports on the assimilation of Tibetan children through residential schools, the European Union's resolution on the forced abduction of Tibetan children in December 2023, Canada's resolution supporting Tibet and the United States 'Promoting a Resolution to Tibet-China Act' passed in June 2024. The motion reaffirmed Australia's concern over China's assimilationist policies, which include forced labour programs, the coerced separation of Tibetan children from their families, detention for peaceful political expression, and the suppression of religious practices.

### **Tibetan group calls for charter amendments to appoint judge of TSJC**

10 September 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon



(L-R) The executive members of the group - Tseten Phuntsok, Tenzin Yangkar and Tsering Siten during the press conference at Akash Hotel, Dharamshala on Sept. 10.

A group of Tibetans under the banner of the 'People's Movement for Securing the Central Tibetan Administration' held a press conference on Monday at Dharamshala's Akash Hotel calling on parliamentarians of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile to amend the charter to enable the appointment of the Chief Justice Commissioner and two additional justices of the Tibetan Supreme Justice Commission (TSJC), the apex judiciary body of the Tibetan Government in Exile.

The press statement of the group, 'The Advocacy of the General Public for the Sustainability of CTA' stated that since October 8, 2021, they have



repeatedly submitted detailed applications of thousands of petitioners to the parliament to safeguard the democratic system of the Tibetan exile administration. However, their efforts have been consistently ignored and disregarded.

“Last year, during the sixth session of the parliament in September, nearly a thousand people from various places in India, Nepal, and other foreign countries gathered in Dharamshala to launch an appeal campaign. Subsequently, during the March 2024 parliamentary session, there were discussions on the report of the ‘Charter Review Committee’ and the draft amendments to the charter. Based on these developments, we were hopeful for amendments that would allow the appointment of the Chief Justice Commissioner and two other commissioners. Therefore, we refrained from organising any mass gathering campaigns,” said Tenzin Yangkar, President of the advocacy group.

The statement also highlighted that instead of amending the charter to allow for the appointment of the Chief Justice Commissioner and two judges, the house made other amendments that allows the oath-taking to be administered by authorities other than the Tibetan Supreme Justice Commissioners, which they said, undermines the importance of appointing the Chief Justice Commissioner and the two remaining justices, and in effect, the legitimacy and standing of the apex Tibetan court.

Tsetan Phuntsok, one of the executive members for the group told the press, “The exile Tibetan government is crucial for the sustenance of the Tibetan movement to protect its identity, language and culture. Hence, it is irresponsible of the exile Tibetans to be mute spectators to the deliberate destruction of the Tibetan democracy founded by His Holiness the Dalai Lama.” Speaking on the campaign, he emphasised that their movement is non-violent, and in accordance to the laws of the land. He said that around 1,000 Tibetans from 28 different locations, including from India, Nepal, North America and Europe, are participating in the campaign.

The organisers further stated that if the charter amendment is not enacted in this session of the parliament, they plan to set in motion a series of action plans including; Call for the resignation of all the 45 current members of parliament; Begin a hunger strike campaign; Submit a petition to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, invoking his authority under Article 1(ii) of the Charter; Campaign for equal voting rights for MPs from religious sects, Call for changes to be made to the allocation of standing committee members, and the right for overseas Tibetan representatives to be on the standing committee.

The campaign is scheduled to commence from Wednesday at the Gangkyi Basketball Court in the

CTA compound. The 8th session of the 17th Tibetan Parliament in Exile is also scheduled to begin from Wednesday until 19th of September 2024.

### **Eight Session of Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile Begins**

10 September 2024, CTA

The eighth session (general session) of the 17th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, scheduled from 11 to 19 September 2024, commenced today at 9:30 a.m. with the Speaker’s announcement of session commencement.

The parliament hall assembled with Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, Sikyong Penpa Tsering, Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang, Kalons, and parliamentarians sang the Tibetan national anthem.

In his session commencement address, the Speaker highlighted several significant events: the successful knee surgery of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in the USA, a recent long-life prayer offering made by the people of Monyul, and the celebration of His Holiness’s 90th birth anniversary according to the Tibetan calendar, attended by key leaders from Arunachal Pradesh, led by the Chief Minister.

The Speaker emphasised that the current democratic system of the Central Tibetan Administration is a blessing from His Holiness the Dalai Lama and encouraged Tibetans to work towards fulfilling His Holiness’s aspirations, including his four commitments.

He also expressed appreciation for international support, noting the US adoption of the Resolve Tibet Act, Canada’s motion supporting Tibetan self-determination, the raising of the Tibetan cause in the Australian parliament, and the appointment of a convener and co-convener to the All Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet.

The Speaker also briefed the house on the agenda of the 8th session of the 17th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile and concluded by underscoring that resolving the Sino-Tibetan conflict remains a primary responsibility as outlined in the Charter of Tibetans in exile.

A panel of Chairpersons and an Ad Hoc Committee were appointed in accordance with the ‘Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile’.

An official obituary reference to former Tibetan Parliamentarian Dhangshar Yonten Gyatso was read by parliamentarian Tenpa Yarphel. A minute of silence was then duly observed in the house to mourn the official reference.

The session continued with Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the incumbent Kalon of the Department of Religion and Culture, presenting the précis 2023-24 annual report of its main ministry office and of institutions under it.

The review of the detailed annual report of the Department of Religion and Culture by the Standing Committee was presented by parliamentarian Phurpa Dorjee Gyaldhong.

Motion for debate on the DoR&C's précis report and its review by the Standing Committee was tabled by parliamentarian Geshe Atong Rinchen Gyaltsen and supported by parliamentarian Tenzin Jigdal. Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the incumbent Kalon of the Department of Religion and Culture, presented the Kashag's clarification.

Members of Parliament participated in the deliberation over the Department of Religion and Culture's overall undertaking, applauding it.

In response to queries from lawmakers, Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the current Kalon of the department, provided detailed clarifications on recognising the reincarnation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He addressed the measures the Central Tibetan Administration is preparing to counter potential interference from China. Additionally, Sikyong Penpa Tsering provided insights into efforts to preserve major Tibetan traditional studies, including crafts, arts, and thangka painting.

He also responded to questions about various departmental projects and programs. These included the Tibetan Digital Library project, scholarships for newly arrived Tibetan monks and nuns, the Non-Sectarian Tibetan Buddhist Scholars' Conference, and other initiatives undertaken by the department.

The session proceeded with the presentation of the précis 2023-24 report of the Department of Home (DoH) by Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the incumbent Kalon of DoH. This was followed by the presentation of the Standing Committee's reviewed report on the detailed annual report of the Department of Home by parliamentarian Geshe Ngaba Gangri.

The motion for debate on the aforementioned report was tabled by parliamentarian Tsering Yangchen and supported by parliamentarian Geshe Atong Rinchen Gyaltsen. After that, Sikyong Penpa Tsering provided Kashag's (Cabinet) clarification to the reviewed report of the Department of Home by the Standing Committee.

The deliberation on the undertakings of the Department of Home remains open for tomorrow's seating.

The first day of the eighth session of the 17th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile was adjourned at 5 pm.

## **Tibet Lobby Day in Australia urge sanction against Chinese officials, support for Dalai Lama's reincarnation process**

10 September 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon



The Australia Tibet Council, along with 20 Tibetan delegates across Australia at the 13th Tibet Lobby Day (Photo/ATC)

As part of this year's Tibet Lobby Day, the Australia Tibet Council (ATC), along with 20 Tibetan representatives from across Australia, including delegates from Canberra, Sydney, Queensland, Victoria, Wagga Wagga and Nowra, engaged in discussions with around 35 members of the Australian Parliament, including Foreign Minister Penny Wong.

During the meetings, the Tibetan-Australian community urged the Co-Chairs of the Australian All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet (AAPGT) to invoke the Global Magnitsky Act against five Chinese officials responsible for human rights abuses in Tibet. The officials named include Wu Yingjie, former Party Secretary of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) from 2016 to 2021; Zhang Hongbo, Director of the Tibetan Public Security Bureau (TPSB) from 2018 to 2022; Chen Quanguo, former Communist Party Secretary of TAR from 2011 to 2016 and Xinjiang from 2016 to 2021; Ao Liuquan, former Party Secretary of Naqchu City and Prefecture from 2016 to 2020; and Zhang Qingli, who served as Party Secretary of TAR from 2006 to 2011.

The delegates also voiced concerns over the deteriorating human rights situation in Tibet, emphasising the need for the Australian government to formally recognise the reincarnation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and to adopt policies aimed at preventing China's interference in this religious process.

The ATC led the advocacy by presenting key demands to the Australian Parliament and the Department of Foreign Affairs' China and Human Rights divisions. These demands included: the Australian government to adopt measures to prevent China from interfering in the reincarnation process of His Holiness the Dalai Lama; The Australian government to condemn the Chinese government's efforts to systematically erode Tibetan identity,

language, and culture since the 1950 illegal invasion; Australia to strongly oppose China's policies of forced settlement and the establishment of draconian colonial boarding schools in Tibetan areas, which are tools for further assimilation; The Australian government to implement Magnitsky sanctions against Chinese officials responsible for the repression of Tibetans, restricting their travel and economic activities in Australia; and the Australian government to explicitly recognise that the Tibetan issue remains unresolved under international law and affirm the Tibetan people's right to self-determination.

### **UN Raises Concern Over Kamtok Dam**

10 September 2024, Free Tibet

Letter from Special Rapporteurs seeks further information on the dam construction and crackdown in Dege County.

On 8 July 2024, a group of 13 United Nations Special Rapporteurs issued a letter to the Chinese government expressing concern over human rights ramifications of the Kamtok Dam project in Dege County.

The letter, which was made public on 6 September after China failed to respond, addresses both the crackdown on peaceful protesters in February and the forced relocation of Tibetans should the dam be built. It further describes the "irreversible destruction of important cultural and religious sites" as well as "irreversible environmental impacts" to the area.

The Kamtok Dam, which is due to be constructed along the Driчу River in Dege County, would see thousands of Tibetan people displaced, at least six ancient monasteries destroyed, and the local environment devastated by the flood of water.

The dam project has been opposed by local residents since it was proposed in 2012. This opposition culminated in protests in Dege County in February 2024 in which hundreds of protesters were detained and many of them beaten by armed police.

"The allegations described below reportedly form part of a general crackdown against the Tibetan people, in breach of the human rights to take part in cultural life, freedom of opinion and expression and freedom of peaceful assembly and of association. Similar concerns have been raised in previous communications."

– UN letter to the Chinese government

Special Rapporteurs share that local Tibetans "do not appear to have been consulted in a meaningful way" about the dam, and express that the dam "will have an irreversible impact on many of their human rights" including Tibetans' cultural rights to "maintain

their way of life, to access and enjoy heritage, and to exercise their religious and cultural practices".

Alongside the Chinese government, the letter was also sent to China Huadian, the company responsible for the construction of the Kamtok Dam.

Despite the letter only requesting further information, rather than any specific actions, both the Chinese government and China Huadian did not respond within the 60-day deadline given. As a result, the letter was published publicly without a response.

It remains unknown if any response from China Huadian and the Chinese government will be forthcoming, however the letter and its lack of response will be presented to the UN Human Rights Council as a part of regular reporting.

The letter by the UN human rights experts was written following based on information supplied by Tibet groups, including Free Tibet and Tibet Watch. It also comes in the context of an international campaign to halt the Kamtok Dam, which has been running since August.

[Read the full letter here.](#)

### **Central Tibetan Administration Expresses Concern Over China's Expansion of Colonial Boarding Schools in Eastern Tibet**

09 September 2024, CTA

According to reports received from reliable sources in the Ngaba region in Tibet, China's assimilationist education policies in Tibet and its strengthening of compulsory colonial-style boarding schools across Tibet are resulting in cultural erasure and loss of Tibetan identity. Targeted mainly at young Tibetan monks and nuns, these coercive practices pose a severe threat to the preservation of traditional Tibetan culture, religion, and way of life.

Over 1,700 young monks from Kirti Monastery and two monasteries in Dzoge County—all these three monasteries located in Ngaba in the traditional province of Amdo now incorporated into Sichuan Province—have been forcibly ordered to leave monastic life and enrolled in government-run colonial boarding schools. These expulsions and forcible enrollment of monks under the age of 18 are being conducted against the wishes and consent of both the affected children and their parents.

At these schools, the young clergy undergo intensive political indoctrination, including mandatory praise of the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC). These children are primarily taught in Mandarin Chinese and are further prohibited from visiting their own monasteries during school holidays. These measures lead to a loss of Tibetan language skills and the gradual severance of their ties to Tibetan cultural identity, spiritual traditions and religious practices.

In order to ensure strict enforcement of these policies, the local authorities are threatening to revoke public benefits and even imprison parents who resist sending their children to these government-run boarding schools. Restrictions have also been placed on Tibetans building new houses on their land and on nomads from increasing their livestock numbers. It is evident that considering the deteriorating human rights conditions in Tibet under the draconian rule of the PRC government, Tibetan cultural and religious freedoms are being suppressed and annihilated at an alarmingly rapid rate. These concerning developments in recent times have coincided with a visit in July this year by Wang Huning, a high-ranking member of the Chinese Communist Party Politburo Standing Committee, to the Tibetan areas of Karze, Ngaba and Kyungchu counties.

In light of the critical situation, we urge for an immediate intervention to this critical situation from the international community including governments, the United Nations, human rights organizations, educational institutions that are committed to protecting cultural diversity and religious freedom as well as to promoting human rights and fundamental freedom for all. We reiterate the need for the PRC to uphold their international legal obligations of safeguarding the rights and freedom of the Tibetan people to express, preserve and promote their Tibetan identity. We strongly call upon the PRC government to stop the assimilationist policies being practised in the Tibetan areas through the operation of colonial boarding schools.

### **Wangchuk Sends Climate SOS from Tanglang La at 17,400 ft to World Citizens**

08 September 2024, Himbu Mail, Kuldeep Chauhan

Sonam Wangchuk, the renowned Ladakhi innovator, and his band of fellow marchers – including Ladakhi ex-army men – are five days into their grueling climate march from Leh to Delhi.

Their mission is simple yet urgent: wake up the world to the ticking climate clock and the fragile fate of the Himalayas.

As they crossed the towering Tanglang La pass at 17,450 feet and made their way to the Debring plains on the Tibetan Plateau, Wangchuk had a powerful message for the world – cut down on carbon emissions now or face irreversible consequences.

"We have less than five years to act before things spiral out of control," Wangchuk warned, standing in the biting cold at one of the highest motorable passes on the planet.

"While world leaders are setting carbon neutrality targets, India and China – two of the world's biggest polluters – are pushing timelines that simply won't cut

it. We need immediate action, like Finland, not promises for decades down the line."

Through steep climbs and treacherous paths, the marchers are determined to amplify their message as they push towards the icy heights of Lahaul-Spiti in Himachal Pradesh.

Battling snowstorms and constantly shifting weather, the group has already covered nearly 200 kilometers, and the journey is only getting tougher. Yet, their resolve remains iron-clad.

"Our glaciers are melting fast, causing flash floods and droughts".

These glaciers are our lifelines, and if they disappear, we, the indigenous people of Ladakh, will become climate refugees. The clock is ticking," Wangchuk said, urging the people and leaders of the world to act now before it's too late.

In a heartfelt plea to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Wangchuk called for the protection of the fragile ecosystems of Ladakh under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, empowering local communities to steward their environment.

"This isn't just our fight," he added. "It's a global one. We're sending out an urgent SOS from the roof of the world. The Himalayas are dying, and if they go, we all go."

And though their bodies may be weary, their spirits remain unshaken.

Their destination: Delhi's Rajghat, where they hope to deliver their urgent message to the nation's leaders.

As they push on through Lahaul-Spiti, they call on every citizen, every voice to amplify this cry for help.

"Our time is running out," Wangchuk repeated, as the march continued, undeterred, towards its final destination.

### **Dimple Yadav meets Dalai Lama in Dharamshala: 'We support cause of Tibet'**

07 September 2024, Hindustan Times

"I have come here with a spiritual purpose. His Highness Dalai Lama is here today for his 'darshan'. So, I came to visit him," the Samajwadi Party MP said.

Samajwadi Party MP Dimple Yadav on Saturday met Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama in Dharamshala. She also visited the main Tibetan temple in the city.

Interacting with media persons after the visit, Dimple Yadav also tendered support for the cause of Tibet.

"I have come here with a spiritual purpose. His Highness Dalai Lama is here today for his 'darshan'. So, I came to visit him," the MP from Uttar Pradesh's Mainpuri said. "We support the cause of Tibet."

The Dalai Lama returned to Dharamshala on September 28 after undergoing a knee replacement

surgery in the United States. The 89-year-old spiritual leader was welcomed by his devotees and well-wishers outside the Gaggal airport in Kangra.

Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Pema Khandu also visited McLeodganj, Himachal Pradesh on Friday to meet the Dalai Lama.

The chief minister participated in the special prayers organised by the people of Tawang for the long life of the Dalai Lama. The five-day prayers began on September 3 and will conclude on September 7.

"His health has improved a lot. So, we also pray for the long life of His Holiness. This morning, I had a very good discussion with His Holiness. The people of Arunachal Pradesh share a very good relation with His Holiness, the Dalai Lama," he said, according to ANI.

"So, on behalf of people of the state, I have invited him to visit Arunachal Pradesh as and when he feels so. He was kind enough to accept the invitation on behalf of the people and in coming days, he will definitely be visiting Arunachal Pradesh."

'Democracy day' in Dharamshala

Last week, Tibetans-in-exile commemorated the 64th anniversary of 'Democracy Day' in Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh September 2.

The day marks the inception of the Tibetan democratic system in exile. On this day, the Tibetan parliament-in-exile was established in 1960 following the arrival of the Dalai Lama and 80,000 Tibetans in exile in Dharamshala.

Last year also, Tibetans-in-exile celebrated the 63rd anniversary of Democracy Day in Dharamshala, where leaders of the exiled Tibetan Government, including Tibetan parliamentarians and other dignitaries, gathered at the main Buddhist temple, Tsuglagkhang in the north Indian hill town Dharmashala.

### **Arunachal Chief Minister participates in long-life prayers offering to Dalai Lama**

07 September 2024, Tibetan Review

Chief Minister Mr Pema Khandu of India's Tibet-border state of Arunachal Pradesh has on Sep 6 called on His Holiness the Dalai Lama at his exile residence at McLeod Ganj, Dharamshala, to seek his blessing and has gifted to a trust in his name a residence for him built at the spot where he had temporarily resided upon entering India in 1959 to seek asylum. Khandu has again invited the exile spiritual leader of Tibet to visit his state.

"Humbled and grateful for a warm audience with His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama at his residence... I felt deeply blessed to receive his compassionate blessings," Khandu wrote on X.

Khandu also wrote that he had invited the Dalai Lama to visit Arunachal Pradesh and that the latter said he would visit "whenever he feels the call."

The chief minister also presented to the Dalai Lama a framed photo of a Phodrang (residence) the state had built for him at Pungteng in Tawang District. The building stands on the spot where the Dalai Lama had spent a few days after arriving in India from Tibet in 1959, reported the timesofindia.com Sep 7.

The chief minister was visiting Dharamshala in connection with a long-life prayers offering being made by the Monpa community of his state to which he also belongs. The preparatory rituals began on Sep 3 and concluded on Sep 7, when the actual offerings were made.

He was accompanied by Mr Tapir Gao, Lok Sabha member from Arunachal Pradesh and the Co-convenor of the All Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet; Mr Pasang Dorjee Sona, the state's minister for Education and Tourism; and MLA's from the state.

Also on Sep 7 morning, along with the delegation, the Monpa Community of Arunachal Pradesh, joined by Tibetan residents and other followers of the Dalai Lama, gathered at the Tsuglakhang, the main local Buddhist temple, to celebrate the confluence of three auspicious occasions: the 65th anniversary of His Holiness's first dharma teaching to the people of Monyul since his arrival in India; the 341st birth anniversary of the 6th Dalai Lama Tsangyang Gyatso, who was born in Tawang; and the 90th birthday of His Holiness as per Tibetan calendar.

After his 1959 escape, the Dalai Lama has visited the state seven times so far, namely in 1983, 1996, 1997, twice in 2003, 2009, and 2017, noted arunachal24.in Sep 6.

### **UN human rights experts deeply concerned over repression of dam protests and Chinese hydropower policies in Tibet**

06 September 2024, ICT

A powerful letter published today by 13 independent UN Human Rights Special Procedures expressed "deep concern" regarding the Chinese government plans to build the Kamtok dam in the Tibetan region of Derge. The scathing letter was sent to the Chinese government in July.

It demands a clarification from the Chinese government on the numerous reports of arrests and repression inflicted by Chinese government officials on local Tibetan protesters. It also requests details on how transparency, consultation, and respect for human rights will be ensured.

The Kamtok dam will submerge at least six monasteries and two villages and expel hundreds of residents. The 13 UN special procedures emphasized



their distress regarding the irreversible destruction of religious and cultural heritage sites, as well as Tibetan ways of life. The letter also documented the lack of meaningful consultation with affected communities, a pattern of recent reprisals against protesters, and the irreversible impacts of dams on the environment and climate.

Kai Müller, Head of the UN Advocacy Team at the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), said: "This communication by 13 UN special procedures is a methodical examination of the Chinese government's violent response to Tibetan protests against the Kamtok dam in Derge, as well as China's so-called 'sustainable renewable energy' plan. In their letter, the UN human rights experts shine a bright light on the consequences of the Chinese government's false claims about its development policy in Tibet. While Beijing pitches it as a climate-friendly and sustainable energy policy with hydropower dams as a key pillar, the reality is a ruthless strategy to exploit an oppressed country and marginalized people.

Müller continued: "The international community, governments, parliaments and civil society must not fall for China's propaganda claiming that dam projects are clean and equitable "renewable" energy sources. Tibetans who are directly affected by environmental changes need to be consulted. Above all, Chinese development schemes in Tibet must be vigorously investigated and Tibet's status as an unresolved political conflict must be honestly and seriously addressed."

Meanwhile, the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC) has also welcomed the letter from the UN human rights experts and urged "respective governments to make strong representations against this construction, in favour of the fundamental rights of Tibetans."

### **China's Interference in Dalai Lama's Reincarnation Sparks International Concern**

05 September 2024, Devdiscourse

China has intensified its interference in the reincarnation process of the next Dalai Lama, according to a report by the International Tibet Network. The report outlines Beijing's strategic plans to diminish international support for Tibet and reshape Tibetan identity through control over religious practices.

China has intensified its interference in the reincarnation process of the next Dalai Lama, according to a report released on Wednesday by the International Tibet Network (ITN). The 30-page document, titled 'Tibet, the Dalai Lama, and the Geopolitics of Reincarnation,' alleges that Beijing aims to use the Dalai Lama's passing as an opportunity to end global support for Tibet's cause

and exclude the spiritual leader from his own succession planning.

The report highlights two Chinese policy documents revealing a strategy to control Tibetan religious identity and influence the international Buddhist community. In response to Chinese propaganda in 2011, the 14th Dalai Lama issued a document stating he might appoint a successor while alive—a practice with historical roots in Tibet—though this was swiftly rejected by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which insists that only Beijing can approve his successor.

The report claims China's 'Sinicization' of Tibetan Buddhism aims to sever the deep connection between Tibetans and the Dalai Lama, involving high-tech surveillance, policing of religious sites, and campaigns of 'patriotic re-education' that have included torture and sexual abuse. The CCP's strategy, according to internal briefings, also aims to influence Western governments and media to end international support for Tibet in the 'post-Dalai era.' The case of the 11th Panchen Lama, replaced controversially by a Chinese candidate in 1995, serves as a precedent for Beijing's plans. Despite these measures, loyalty to the Dalai Lama among Tibetans remains strong.

### **Tibetans-in-exile mark 64th anniversary of 'Democracy Day' in Dharamshala**

04 September 2024, India Bloom

Tibetans-in-exile recently marked the 64th anniversary of 'Democracy Day' in Dharamshala to mark the day of establishing democracy for Tibetans. The day marked the inception of the Tibetan democratic system in exile.

On this day, the Tibetan parliament-in-exile was established in 1960 following the arrival of the Dalai Lama and 80,000 Tibetans in exile in Dharamshala, reported ANI.

While speaking to ANI, a resident of Dharamshala expressed his pleasure on the occasion and said the day is very special for Tibetan people.

"In 1960, Dalai Lama declared the democracy system, started some members of parliament from the different regions of Tibet and then set up the democracy parliament system. A huge number of people from the three regions and also five sectarians of Tibetan Buddhism in Tibet. Since that, we have got a democracy system, as gradually we have the increased members of parliament from different regions," he added.

In early 1959 during the Tibetan uprising, their spiritual leader (Nobel Peace Winner) spiritual leader Dalai Lama and his retinue fled Tibet with the help of the CIA's Special Activities Division, crossing into India on 30 March 1959.

He is based in Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh since then.

### **Ramon Magsaysay Foundation launches series to mark 65th anniversary of Dalai Lama's award**

04 September 2024, Lokmat Times

The Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation on Wednesday launched a seven-volume series titled 'Greatness of Spirit' in the presence of the Dalai Lama to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the award presented to the Tibetan spiritual leader.

In August 1959, the Dalai Lama was awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award in recognition of "his leadership of the Tibetan community's gallant struggle in defence of the sacred religion that is the inspiration of their life and culture".

Susanna B. Afan, President of the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation, launched the seven-volume series at the Dalai Lama's residence in the hill town of Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh in the presence of the Foundation's Board of Trustees, selected partners, and Indian laureates.

On April 26, 2023, the Dalai Lama was presented the 1959 Ramon Magsaysay Award personally by the members of the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation after 64 years at his residence.

The Nobel Peace laureate, known for his simplicity and jovial style and for whom Mahatma Gandhi was the most influential leader of the 20th century for his idea of non-violence, prefers to participate in meetings with religious leaders, and lectures students and businessmen on ethics for the new millennium and the art of happiness.

In 2007, the Dalai Lama received the US Congressional Gold Medal, even in the face of protests by China.

Born on July 6, 1935, at Taktser hamlet in Tibet, the Dalai Lama was recognised at the age of two as the reincarnation of the 13th Dalai Lama, Thubten Gyatso.

He fled Tibet after a failed uprising against Chinese rule in 1959, basing his government-in-exile here that never won recognition from any country.

The Ramon Magsaysay Award, often called the 'Nobel Prize of Asia', is an annual award established to perpetuate former Philippine President Ramon Magsaysay's example of integrity in governance, courageous service to people, and pragmatic idealism within a democratic society.

The prize was established in April 1957 by the trustees of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund based in New York with the concurrence of the Philippine government.

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Tibet Digest December - January 2024

### **Countries should accept Tibet's historic status as independent nation: Penpa Tsering**

03 September 2024, Hindustan Times, Rezaul H Laskar

Tsering questioned the logic of countries accepting Tibet as a part of the People's Republic of China (PRC) while simultaneously pushing talks between the Dalai Lama and the Chinese government.

Countries around the world should accept Tibet's historic status as an independent country to help foster a serious dialogue with China on the future of the region, the head of the Tibetan government in exile said on Tuesday.

Penpa Tsering, the Sikyong or head of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), said the Dharamshala-based government in exile intends to work with the US to convince more countries to challenge Beijing's contention that Tibet has historically been a part of China.

Tsering questioned the logic of countries accepting Tibet as a part of the People's Republic of China (PRC) while simultaneously pushing talks between the Dalai Lama and the Chinese government. Such an approach, he said, helps the Chinese avoid any serious discussions with the Tibetan side.

Participating in the opening session of a festival with the theme of "Spirit of Tibet", Tsering described this approach as part of a new strategy that is based on Dalai Lama's "middle way" policy to find accommodation with the Chinese.

After working with the US administration for two years to pass the Resolve Tibet Act, which focuses on the historical status of Tibet as an independent country, the CTA intends to convince more countries about this position.

"We would like to work with other governments to see whether similar positions can be adopted to push the Chinese government to come to the negotiating table," Tsering said.

Tsering questioned the approach of countries that keep saying Tibet is part of the PRC while supporting negotiations between the Dalai Lama and the Chinese.

"You are removing the very ground for negotiations. When every country says Tibet is part of the PRC, where is the reason for the Chinese government to come and talk to us?," he said.

He contended the Chinese government knows "they have no legitimacy for their rule in Tibet", and added, "We have to puncture those theories."

Tsering acknowledged that the "middle way" approach – proposed by the Dalai Lama, approved by a majority of Tibetans and ratified by the Tibetan parliament in exile – remains the official policy to find a lasting solution with China based on non-violence and negotiations. However, he said there

has been a change in strategy based on “polarities or extremities”, including the current situation in Tibet under the “repressive Chinese government” and the historical state of Tibet.

Tsering also warned India about the consequences of China’s current policies in Tibet. Noting that Chinese authorities have forced more than a million Tibetan children into “colonial style boarding schools”, he said this is aimed at erasing Tibet’s long-standing relations with India going back more than 2,000 years.

“The Chinese government knows exactly what they’re doing to destroy the Tibetan identity right now,” he said, adding this will change the “emotional quotient” among Tibetans towards India. If younger Tibetans are forced to adopt the Chinese way of thinking, the emotional quotient will change, and they won’t have the same reverence and affinity towards India, he said.

China, Tsering pointed out, is renaming places to reinforce its claims on disputed regions. While noting that China refers to Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh as “southern Tibet”, he suggested India should refer to the frontier as the “Indo-Tibetan border”.

Describing China as the “biggest bully” in the world, he said the country is working with “other bullies” to create a new world order. “It started from the invasion of Tibet in those days and now you have the Chinese on the Indian border, right next to you,” Tsering said, in an apparent reference to the India-China military standoff on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) since April-May 2020.

### **Himachal Pradesh: Tibetans in-exile celebrate 64th anniversary of Democracy Day in Dharamshala**

03 September 2024, ANI

Tibetans-in-exile commemorated the 64th anniversary of 'Democracy Day' in Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh on Monday and highlighted the significance of the day in establishing democracy for Tibetans.

The day marks the inception of the Tibetan democratic system in exile. On this day, the Tibetan parliament-in-exile was established in 1960 following the arrival of the Dalai Lama and 80,000 Tibetans in exile in Dharamshala.

While speaking to ANI, a resident of Dharamshala expressed his pleasure on the occasion and said the day is very special for Tibetan people.

"In 1960, Dalai Lama declared the democracy system, started some members of parliament from the different regions of Tibet and then set up the democracy parliament system. A huge number of people from the three regions and also five sectarians of Tibetan Buddhism in Tibet. Since that,

we have got a democracy system, as gradually we have the increased members of parliament from different regions," he added.

He further added that now the Tibetans have a "full-fledged democratic system" as well as the 46th member of the parliament.

"Now we have the 46th member of the parliament. This is a fully democratic system. And the Dalai Lama has given, especially in 2011, that he has given full power to the Tibetan people and the electing there as president of the Tibetan people, the president of the exile and also from Tibet."

On September 2, 1960, a year after thousands of Tibetans were forced to flee their homes due to the 'Chinese invasion', the first elected representatives of the Tibetan Parliament-in-exile took their oaths in Bodh Gaya to inaugurate the Tibetan democratic system.

Last year also, Tibetans-in-exile celebrated the 63rd anniversary of Democracy Day in Dharamshala where leaders of the exiled Tibetan Government including Tibetan parliamentarians and other dignitaries gathered at the main Buddhist temple, Tsuglagkhang in the north Indian hill town Dharmashala.

A 13-member delegation including Swedish parliamentarians led by MP Margareta Elisabeth Cederfelt joined the occasion as distinguished guests. The democratic system of government is based on a political ideology that does not differentiate people on the basis of the question whether a person is strong or weak, rich or poor, male or female, or on the basis of their race or lineage, and so forth with regard to their status in society. Rather, it postulates the founding of a society in which everyone is seen as equal, viewed through the prism of the generality or commonality of everyone, according to the Central Tibetan Administration.

### **Tibetans praise US, Canada for support on 64th founding anniversary of Parliament-in-exile**

02 September 2024, The Morung Express

The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) on Monday commemorated the 64th founding anniversary of the Tibetan Parliament-in-exile by acknowledging the US and Canada for advocating the right to self-determination.

The Kashag (executive) said in support of the aspirations of the Tibetan people, US President Joe Biden signed the “Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act” on July 12 this year.

The Act highlights that “the current policies of the People’s Republic of China are systematically suppressing the ability of Tibetans to preserve their religion, culture, language, history, way of life, and environment”.

The Kashag mentioned in its statement on His Holiness the Dalai Lama's 89th birthday that the Act recognises the US government's position on the historical status of Tibet that the Sino-Tibet dispute is unresolved and that it is the official policy of the US government to promote a negotiated resolution to the dispute through dialogue.

The Kashag also acknowledged the unanimous resolution passed by the Canadian Parliament on June 10. This resolution asserts that the Tibetan people and their country have the right to self-determination and are empowered to freely choose their economic, social, cultural, and religious policies without interference from any external power.

The resolution also condemned the Chinese government's systematic policy implementation of cultural assimilation against Tibetans.

"The aspiration of Tibetan people to preserve our national identity and to develop our own culture cannot be crushed by any form of brute force. More so, it is the important responsibility of Tibetans living in free countries to make every effort so that the Chinese government corrects and ends its misguided and repressive policies in Tibet," said the Kashag, urging every Tibetan to make collective efforts in unity.

"While we celebrate the Tibetan democracy day, we must also acknowledge that there is still considerable scope for improving our democratic system. In particular, it is the need of the hour to strengthen completion and effectiveness of the laws and regulations that ensure fairness and justice for all," it said.

The Dalai Lama, who along with many of his supporters fled the Himalayan homeland and took refuge in India when Chinese troops moved in and took control of Lhasa in 1959, views himself as a simple Buddhist monk.

He believes in a "middle-way" approach, meaning greater autonomy for Tibet rather than outright independence.

Reiterating its commitment to non-violence and to pursue the 'middle-way policy' – the only way to resolve the China-Tibet conflict based on mutual benefit and negotiation – the Tibetan government in exile, called the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), has blamed Beijing for the lack of political will to continue with the dialogue process that has remained deadlocked since 2010.

### **Tibetans mark 64th Democracy Day with Estonian guests**

02 September 2024, Tibetan Review

The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) commemorated the 64th Tibetan Democracy Day of Sep 2 at the Tsuglakhang courtyard, Dharamshala,

by expressing gratitude to His Holiness the Dalai Lama for his gift of full democracy to the Tibetan people, condemning China for its continued hardline repressive rule in occupied Tibet, and urging international support for the resolution of the issue of Tibet in the presence of guests for the occasion from the Baltic state of Estonia.

The guests were members of the Estonian Parliamentary Support Group for Tibet led by its Chairman, Mr Juku-Kalle Raid, who is a Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Estonia Parliament. The other MP delegates were Mrs Karmen Joller, Member of Social Affairs Committee; Ms Ester Aruse, Member of Foreign Affairs Committee; and Mr Roy Strider, who coordinated the visit, said the CTA on its Tibet.net website Sep 2.

The report said the delegation continued their participation in the event despite strong opposition from the Chinese embassy in Tallinn. It said the embassy had issued a statement on Aug 30, expressing "strong opposition" to the visit of the Estonian Parliamentary Support Group for Tibet to the "Tibetan government-in-exile."

The statement was stated to include China's routine claims about Tibet being an integral part of China since ancient times and the "Tibetan government in exile" being an illegal organization, while accusing the Dalai Lama of "engaging in anti-China separatist activities."

The Dalai Lama has for decades sought a negotiated, meaningful autonomy for an undivided Tibet under Chinese sovereignty on the basis of his middle way proposal, which remains the official policy of the CTA. But China has continued to refused to talk to him, including by setting impossible preconditions.

In their keynote speeches, both Sikyong Penpa Tsering and Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel also strongly condemned China for the current phase of its policy of rapid assimilating Tibet, which has seen Tibetan children being forced into colonial style boarding schools, Tibetan language and culture schools being forced to shut down, and the activities of the religious centres being greatly curtailed.

In his speech, Mr Juku-Kalle Raid condemned the Communist Party of China (CPC) dictatorship while praising the democracy practised by the Tibetan diasporic community. He has called the Chinese statement criticizing his delegation's visit a "love letter" and denounced the CPC's dictatorship as "dictator-shit".

This was Juku-Kalle Raid and Roy Strider's second visit to the Tibetan exile capital this year, having previously attended the 35th birthday of the Chinese government-abducted 11th Panchen Lama in April, the report noted.

Each of the other delegation members also spoke in similar terms.

### **Human rights organisations express concern over enforced disappearances in Tibetan region**

01 September 2024, ANI

The United Nations, the European Union, and the Central Tibetan Administration, in a joint statement, expressed their concerns over the ongoing enforced disappearances orchestrated by China in the Tibetan region.

The organizations strongly condemned the continued rampant cases of enforced disappearances of Tibetans in the region by the Chinese government's practice of torture and ill-treatment of Tibetans while in custody.

The statement claimed that each year, the Chinese authorities arbitrarily arrest several Tibetans and subject them to enforced disappearances, including religious and community leaders, writers and musicians, and human rights and environmental activists, mainly for their expression of Tibetan national identity and opposing repressive policies. And in most of these cases, they often result in prison sentences based on trumped-up charges, whereas many who have been imprisoned continue to be unseen and unheard of.

"The systematic practice of enforced disappearances at any time under any circumstances is a crime against humanity. The first Article of the UN Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance stipulates any act of enforced disappearance constitutes a violation of the rules of international law guaranteeing, the right to recognition as a person before the law, the right to liberty and security of the person, and the right not to be subjected to torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment," the statement read.

The statement further mentioned that China, despite being a member of the UN, has consistently demonstrated a complete disrespect for international human rights law, systematically disregarding global standards in its treatment of Tibetans and people of other nationalities under its oppression.

As per the statement, among the most prominent enforced disappearance cases is the abduction of Tibet's 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, one of the highest Tibetan Buddhist leaders. At just six years of age, the Chinese administration abducted the 11th Panchen Lama, along with his family and Chadrel Rinpoche in 1995. Despite repeated expressions of concern over the matter and intervention by various UN bodies to date, China has still withheld credible information about his whereabouts or well-being for the last 29 years,

making him one of the world's longest-serving political prisoners, it added.

The joint statement also claimed that just this year, several Tibetans have "disappeared" after Chinese authorities arbitrarily detained them for various reasons, from staging peaceful protests to publishing books.

These cases include the enforced disappearances of Phuntsok, Pema, Samten, Zomkyi, Tamdin, and Lobsang Thabkhey, whose fates continue to remain unknown. One prominent case in recent years is Gendun Lhundup's arbitrary arrest in 2020. Even after more than three years since his arbitrary arrest, his whereabouts and well-being remain unknown to his family, the statement claimed.

Enforced disappearance has an impact on the victim, but its paralyzing effects on the family members, who are left uninformed of the fate of their loved ones for extended periods, are horrid. Recently, news from Tibet reported the tragic death of Phude, a 53-year-old Tibetan mother of writer Tenzin Khenrab. Her 29-year-old son was arrested in 2023 for keeping a photo of His Holiness the Dalai Lama on his phone, along with several e-books. Despite her repeated attempts, the Chinese police refused to disclose any information about her son's whereabouts. After suffering from depression from worrying about her son's well-being for over a year, the mother Phude passed away earlier this year on 17 February, the statement added.

The human rights organisations urged international governments and organizations, including the United Nations, human rights organizations, rights activists, and supporters around the world, to continue to press China to disclose information about the Tibetans arbitrarily arrested and disappeared, including the 11th Panchen Lama case.

Enforced disappearance constitutes a grave violation of international human rights standards, and China is obligated to ensure that enforced disappearances are thoroughly investigated and that it provides integral reparations for those who have been subjected to this inhuman and illegal act by international standards, it added.

### **Tibet group welcomes former exile Tibetan administration head to Arunachal Pradesh capital**

01 September 2024, Tibetan Review

A delegation of the Tibet Support Group of Arunachal Pradesh (TSGAP), led by its president Mr Tarh Tarak, has called on former executive head Prof Samdhong Rinpoche, of the Central Tibetan Administration at the state guesthouse in the state capital Itanagar on Aug 31. He is in the city for a four-day visit beginning Aug 30, reported arunachaltimes.in Sep 1 and others.



On Sep 1, Professor Samdhong Rinpoche, a distinguished scholar of Tibetan Buddhism, is to give a teaching on the Three Higher Trainings and Ways to Practice them (bslab pa gsum) at the Buddhist Gompa Itanagar. During the meeting, Rinpoche expressed hope that the "BJP-led government under the dynamic leadership of Chief Minister Pema Khandu will be performing best for greater interest of the people of Arunachal Pradesh and will be extending support for the Tibetan cause," the reports said.

Prof Rinpoche was stated to have commented the TSGAP for its continued support to the Tibetan cause and urged it for long-term policies on Tibet issues.

He has also stressed on the need to generate awareness among the younger generation on Tibet and the Tibetan issues, "so that it can carry forward the Tibetan cause."

TSGAP was established in 2013 under the aegis of the Core Group for Tibetan Cause India, an umbrella group for Tibet support groups across India.

Tarak has assured Rinpoche that the TSGAP will support the Tibetan freedom struggle "with its best effort," work for the basic welfare of the Tibetan community residing in Arunachal Pradesh, and organise a series of awareness programmes about Tibetans and the Tibet issues.

TSGAP vice president Mr Hinium Tachu has also stressed on freedom of Tibet from the People's Republic of China.

Earlier, on his arrival in the state capital on Aug 30, Rinpoche was stated to have been welcomed to the state guest house by a team led by TSGAP, joined by the Itanagar Buddhist Culture Society, Tuting Memba Welfare Society, Khamba Welfare Society, Mon Mimang Tsokpa, and other dignitaries.

Prof Samdhong Rinpoche has already been touring Arunachal Pradesh before arriving in Itanagar. On Aug 12, Chief Minister Pema Khandu led a procession to welcome him for his teaching at the request of Sherab Sangpo Society Mon in Jang sub-division of Tawang District. Mon refers to the region of the state's Tawang and West Kameng districts.

China calls Arunachal Pradesh Zangnan (south or southern Tibet) and therefore part of its territory on the basis of its armed annexation of Tibet in the middle of the last century. It does not have any support in the state for its claim, but expresses strong protests whenever any top Indian leader or the Dalai Lama, Tibet's exile spiritual leader, visits it.

US president Joe Biden on Jul 12 signed into law the "Resolve Tibet Act" passed by the two houses of the US Congress with super-majority votes. The Act calls China's annexation of Tibet illegal under international law, rejects its claims of Tibet being part of it since ancient times false, and urges a negotiated solution to the Himalayan territory's legal status.

Prof Rinpoche's visit is relevant in view of Resolve Tibet Act, 2024, which aims to promote a peaceful resolution to Tibet-China dispute according to international law and the United Nations Charter through peaceful dialogue without preconditions and empower the international community to stand up for justice and peace in Tibet.

## August

### Human rights body claims China subjects Tibetan people to inhuman treatment

31 August 2024, India Blooms

The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) has said China is still subjecting Tibetan people to inhuman treatment due to their religious beliefs and cultural identities.

On the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, TCHRD said it stands in solidarity with the victims and families of those who have been subjected to unlawful, Chinese state-sanctioned repression through enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, beatings and torture.

In a statement, it said: "The Chinese government has flagrantly overlooked its consistent human rights violations and, in direct deflection of international criticism of its human rights records, has covertly legalised enforced disappearances through amendments to the Criminal Procedure Law. During the March 2012 annual session, China's parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC), approved changes that facilitated the continued use of enforced disappearances to target critics of government policies."

"Article 73 of the revised law authorises the secret detention of Tibetans charged with vague, trumped-up charges, 'legally' allowing the Chinese state to suppress dissent and criticism by detaining Tibetans deemed threats to the People's Republic of China's unity and stability," the statement said.

Further targeting China, the body said: "Tibetans continue to endure severe oppression and disappearances, and China shows no signs of halting its repressive practices. Instead, the human rights situation has worsened, with China aiming to erode Tibetan identity through the sinicisation of Tibetan religion by infusing it with Communist elements, depriving Tibetan children of education in their native language, and tearing apart Tibetan society and families through trumped-up charges and collective punishments, all amounting to gross human rights violations."

TCHRD said it has documented more than 63 known cases of Tibetans subjected to enforced disappearance in Tibet in the past four years.

"The relatively low number of registered cases highlights a disturbing trend of underreporting, which is often associated with fear of reprisals," the body said. 63 cases of enforced disappearances in four years, rights group calls China to end its unlawful practise

31 August 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

In observance of the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, the Dharamshala-based rights group, Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) reported 63 known cases of enforced disappearances in Tibet over the past four years. In its statement, the TCHRD expressed solidarity with the victims and their families, urging China to put an immediate stop to this unlawful practice.

"The Chinese government has flagrantly overlooked its consistent human rights violations and, in direct deflection of international criticism of its human rights records, has covertly legalised enforced disappearances through amendments to the Criminal Procedure Law," the statement read.

Among the documented cases is that of Tibetan singer Gegjom Dorjee, who was arbitrarily detained by authorities in Khyungchu County on February 12, 2024. His song, "Sad Song of Whirled Tears," poignantly expressed the struggles of Tibetans under Chinese rule, referencing the absence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Tibet using the honorific title "Gyalwa." The song also symbolically addressed the collective suffering of Tibetans, using the metaphor "red-faced."

In March, Tibetan monk Pema from Kirti Monastery was arbitrarily detained and held incommunicado by local Public Security Bureau officers after staging a peaceful solo protest. He had held a portrait of the Dalai Lama on a road known locally as "Martyrs' Road" in Ngaba (Ch: Aba) County. Following his detention, Chinese security forces reportedly intensified their control and restrictions in Ngaba, particularly in Soruma village and Kirti Monastery. Pema's current whereabouts remain unknown.

"Despite international criticism and calls for accountability, China continues to target Tibetans. TCHRD urges the international community to press China to end these violations and ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance," the organisation expressed.

Due to strict surveillance imposed by Chinese authorities, news of disappearances, incidents of deaths in custody or news in general are often significantly delayed or not able to be relayed outside Tibet.

## SFT honours Dege protestors and activists with Lhakar Award on 30th anniversary

31 August 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

In commemoration of its 30th anniversary, Students for a Free Tibet (SFT), a network of young activists advocating for Tibetan freedom, awarded the 2024 'Lhakar Award for Resistance in Tibet' to the peaceful protestors of Dege in Kham region of Tibet. The Lhakar Award for Dedication was presented to activist Thupten Chonyi, while the 2024 Lhakar Award for Activism in Exile was awarded to Tsela Zoksang.

The Lhakar Awards were presented during the Longsho Night event in New York on August 24. Nyima Lhamo, the niece of the late Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, accepted the award on behalf of the Dege protestors. The ceremony also honoured Ven. Golog Jigme, a former political prisoner, was present to receive his 2013 Lhakar Award for Resistance.

The peaceful Tibetan protestors of Kham Dege in February took to the streets to protest the Chinese government's forceful relocation of thousands of local Tibetans from their ancestral lands. The government's plan to construct a hydroelectric dam in Kham Dege, along the Drichu (Yangtze) River, threatened to displace thousands of residents from two villages and six monasteries. "When news broke of the massive protests erupting in Kham Dege earlier in February of this year, the world was stunned by the incredible scenes of resistance sent out by the residents of the Wongpo Tok region of Dege," SFT stated. "Despite the hundreds of Tibetans arrested and beaten in the aftermath of the protests in Dege, Tibetans, and supporters in exile saw that the fighting spirit of the Tibetans inside Tibet remained defiant, proud, and unbroken."

Thupten Chonyi, a Tibetan activist based in Philadelphia, is known for his unwavering commitment to the Tibetan cause. From March 10, 2023, to March 10, 2024, he led a year-long vigil for Tibet outside Independence Hall, demonstrating his dedication to raising awareness for the Tibetan struggle. Chonyi has also played a key role in leading the Philadelphia Tibetan Community during the annual U.S. Tibet Lobby Day for over a decade. "Thupten Chonyi has embodied dedication to the Tibetan Freedom Movement through his many years of organising and activism. In particular, his yearlong commitment to hold a daily vigil protest outside of Philadelphia's Independence Hall every weekday from March 10th, 2023 until March 10th, 2024 has inspired generations of Tibetans to stand up for the cause of Tibetan freedom," SFT said.

Tsela Zoksang, a student activist, gained international headlines when she unfurled the Tibetan national flag on a flagpole outside a hotel where

Chinese President Xi Jinping was scheduled to meet the prominent US business leaders during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in San Francisco in November 2023. Just months later, in May, she displayed another striking display of dissent by raising the Tibetan flag in front of the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, France during Xi's visit to the French capital. "Tsela's daring direct actions over the past year have inspired countless young activists across the world. Through strategic non-violent direct actions, Tsela has demonstrated to a generation of young activists that young people have the power to shatter narratives and change the track of history," SFT remarked.

### **China's top political advisor calls for 'integration among all ethnic groups' in Tibet**

30 August 2024, Tibetan Review

Giving a fillip to President Xi Jinping's Sinicization of ethnic minority regions drive, China's top official on ethnic affairs has on Aug 27 called for the promotion of exchanges and "integration among all ethnic groups" and the strengthening of the "sense of identity with the motherland" while addressing a conference in Tibet's capital Lhasa.

It is in this context that Wang Huning, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, has urged efforts to deliver solid paired-up assistance for Xizang Autonomous Region toward the goal of building a modern socialist new Xizang, using the Chinese name for Tibet.

"Efforts should be made to promote exchanges and integration among all ethnic groups, improve people's livelihoods, rally people's support, and strengthen the sense of identity with the motherland, the Chinese nation, the Chinese culture, the CPC, and socialism with Chinese characteristics among officials and people of all ethnic groups," China's official Xinhua news agency Aug 29 quoted Wang as saying.

Addressing the fourth work conference on paired-up assistance for Xizang, and marking the programme's 30th anniversary, Wang has hailed "the notable achievements in the paired-up assistance work for Xizang over the past three decades," and "urged efforts to promote targeted, systematic and long-term assistance for the region, and elevate the comprehensive benefits yielded by the assistance work."

"Targeted, systematic and long-term assistance" obviously refers to reinforcing Beijing current renewed campaign and goal for the Sinicization of

Tibet with regard to its ethnic, linguistic, and cultural identity.

For this purpose, Wang has emphasized, "It is imperative to improve the work regarding officials and talent dispatched to assist Xizang and strengthen the organization and leadership of the paired-up assistance work."

The conference was also stated to have awarded honorary titles to exemplary individuals who had participated in the paired-up assistance for Xizang, which totalled nearly 12,000 over the period of 1994 and 2022, dispatched in 10 batches at three-yearly intervals.

The programme was stated to have involved the participation of 17 provinces and municipalities as well as dozens of ministries and state-owned enterprises of China, "bringing substantial investment, practical technology and essential talent to Xizang," said another Xinhua report Aug 28.

### **Dalai Lama back in D'shala after New York visit, to resume religious teachings**

28 August 2024, Tibetan Review

The Dalai Lama has returned to his exile home at McLeod Ganj, Dharmshala, this morning after being away since Jun 21, mainly for a knee-replacement surgery in New York city. He was welcomed by large crowds of Tibetans and other well-wishers in New Delhi and Dharamshala. He is to give a series of religious teachings next month and will be offered long-life prayer ceremonies as well.

Earlier, Dr David Mayman, MD, Chief of the Adult Reconstruction and Joint Replacement Service at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York, said last month that the Dalai Lama was recovering well and expected to continue improving, with physical therapy, over the next six to 12 months.

During his stay in the US, the Dalai Lama was offered a long-life prayers ceremony in a capacity-packed UBS Arena in New York City on Aug 22 by Tibetans as well as Mongol and Himalayan Buddhists.

He was also visited by Under Secretary of State Ms Uzra Zeya, who is designated as the Biden Administration's Special Coordinator for Tibetan issues. The meeting was condemned by China as interference in its internal affairs and an encouragement of what it called Tibetan independence "separatists".

Ms Zeya was accompanied by Kelly Razzouk, Special Assistant to the President and National Security Council Senior Director for Democracy and Human Rights.

Over the coming days, the Dalai Lama is scheduled to give religious teachings at three events in the

Tsuglakhang, located just across his residence, next month.

Over Sep 6-7, His Holiness will confer the Avalokiteshvara Initiation (chenresig wang) and will be offered a long-life prayers ceremony by the Monpa Community from Arunachal Pradesh.

Over Sep 12 – 13, the Dalai Lama will teach on a yet to be decided topic at the request of a group from Southeast Asia in the mornings and there will also be a long-life prayers offering.

On Sep 18, the Dalai Lama will be offered a long-life prayers ceremony jointly by the Tibetan Women's Association, Ex-Students of CST Dalhousie and people from Lhasa Districts.

Then, over Sep 30-Oct 2, His Holiness will give teachings on Shantideva's A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life (chodjug) at the request of Taiwanese devotees and attend a long-life prayers offering to be made by them.

### **Report by UNHRC highlights severe concerns about Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and Tibet Autonomous Region**

28 August 2024, The Print

Ravina Shamdasani the spokesperson for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on Tuesday highlighted the human rights abuses persistent in China, especially in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and the Tibet Autonomous Region. The statement by Shamdasani came after a UN Human Rights team visited China in June this year. Additionally, the UN team had engaged in dialogue with the Chinese authorities, specifically addressing the counter-terrorism policies and the criminal justice system in the country.

The statement highlighted that the UN delegation during a dialogue with the Chinese authorities found out that in Xinjiang specifically, many problematic laws and policies remain in place which must be investigated and reviewed by the authorities from the human rights perspective. According to the same statement, the UN has also urged China and civil society members in the country to continue such interactions to seek tangible progress in the protection of human rights for all in China.

Additionally, the UN also expressed that it will be closely monitoring the current human rights situation in China even when difficulties are posed by limited access to information and the fear of reprisals against individuals who engage with the United Nations. The UN team during its visit to China also called on the Chinese authorities to take prompt steps to release all individuals arbitrarily deprived of their liberty and to clarify the status and

whereabouts of those whose families have been seeking information about them.

The statement highlighted that the UN has always advocated for the implementation of the recommendations made by this UN team along with those made by other human rights mechanisms and during the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review process of China. Previously, several non-governmental organisations (NGOs) had slammed China for rejecting recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) at UNHRC's 56th session intended to address the severe human rights issues of the country.

Reportedly, China had ignored calls to implement UN findings and dismissed all serious criticism of its human rights record, refusing to budge on the documented plight of Uyghurs, Tibetans, Hong Kongers, and human rights activists.

During the 26th meeting of the United Nations Human Rights Council's (UNHRC) 56th session, held in Geneva on Thursday the Chinese diplomats refused to adopt several major recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) intended to address the severe human rights issues of the country. Responding to the dismissal of the UPR recommendations, in a joint statement on behalf of 29 NGOs delivered at the Human Rights Council after China's remarks, the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) urged China to 'genuinely engage with the UN to enact meaningful reforms' in line with the recommendations from the UN's Xinjiang report, UN Treaty Bodies and UN Special Rapporteurs. (ANI)

### **China: two years after Xinjiang findings, UN Rights Chief reports 'limited access to information', 'reprisals' against activists**

27 August 2024, ISHR

In a public statement on 27 August, the Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR) stressed its engagement and recommendations in areas where it has been pushing for responses and results from the Chinese government, including on Xinjiang, Tibet, Hong Kong, and individual cases 'of particular concern' in mainland China.

This includes a renewed call on Beijing to 'take prompt steps to release all individuals arbitrarily deprived of their liberty, and to clarify the status and whereabouts of those whose families have been seeking information about them.'

'I welcome Volker Türk's strong endorsement of the Xinjiang report. One day is a day too long for victims like my mother. This must be an urgent wake-up call for all countries to take concrete and swift action to hold China accountable for its long list of

documented human rights violations, starting at the UN Human Rights Council.'

Ziba Murat, activist and daughter of arbitrarily detained Uyghur doctor Gulshan Abbas

Two years ago, on 31 August 2022, former High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet released a long-awaited report determining the possible commission of 'crimes against humanity' against Uyghurs and other Muslim peoples by Chinese authorities. While the UN report already concluded that conditions were in place for 'serious violations to continue and recur,' mounting documentation by UN expert bodies and civil society have confirmed the serious deterioration of the human rights situation in the Uyghur region and across China since 2022.

In today's statement, the OHCHR underscored that 'many problematic laws and policies remain in place' and that allegations of human rights violations, including torture, must be 'fully investigated'. The Office also called for a 'full review' with a human rights emphasis of the legal frameworks governing Chinese policies related to national security, counter-terrorism and minority rights. All of these have remained in place despite extensive concerns, including in the 2022 report, that authorities have weaponised such tools to target Muslim individuals, but also Tibetans, human rights defenders and journalists, and to clamp down on civil society space across mainland China and Hong Kong.

The Chinese government also maintains widespread and systematic restrictions, including through laws, policies and practices described in the UN report, that severely impact the intergenerational transmission of culture, language and religion of Uyghurs and Tibetans.

Beijing has perpetually attempted to present the Xinjiang report to other countries as an isolated initiative. Yet, since its release, further findings by widely-respected UN expert bodies have confirmed and expanded on its findings. Two impartial UN expert committees have called for the report's full implementation: the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in their unprecedented November 2022 Urgent Action Decision on Xinjiang, and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) in their May 2023 review of China.

In December 2022, at least 15 UN experts also recalled numerous report findings in a strongly-worded letter to the government, laying out seven benchmarks for immediate action, yet expectedly rejected by Beijing. 'We welcome the High Commissioner's commitment to work with civil society and advocate for the implementation of all UN recommendations to China. Beijing does not get to cherry pick: UN human rights findings are indivisible and, altogether, chart the only genuine path forward for China to achieve meaningful human rights

change. Any step away from it is deceitful and a proof of lack of willingness to be a responsible global actor.' Raphaël Viana David, ISHR China Programme Manager

Crucially, the OHCHR stated it continues to 'follow closely the situation,' but reported 'difficulties posed by limited access to information and the fear of reprisals against individuals who engage with the United Nations.' The High Commissioner's Office also committed to advocating on behalf of victims and engaging with civil society 'to seek tangible progress in the protection of human rights for all in China.'

'After two years, High Commissioner Türk's update that the Office is committed to tangible change in China is heartening. Yet, China has not implemented any OHCHR recommendations, and independent investigations are still limited or blocked. Victims like my brother Ekpar Asat, who endured three years in solitary confinement, and families facing China's psychological warfare can't wait any longer. Türk's work and engagement with China must fully acknowledge these realities.' Rayhan Asat, Uyghur human rights lawyer Further evidence of the absence of good faith from Beijing in its engagement with the UN include an increased rejection rate of recommendations during its last UN human rights peer-review in January 2024 – including all related to the Xinjiang report and UN Treaty Bodies – and its unwillingness to provide unrestricted access to the whole territory for UN Special Rapporteurs listed in the Xinjiang report.

China also remains among the top perpetrators of reprisals against those cooperating, or seeking to cooperate with the UN, and has increased transnational repressive tactics to try silencing activists and victims abroad. In June 2024, two UN experts condemned the continued enforced disappearance of Uyghur doctor Gulshan Abbas, recalling the Xinjiang report's findings of a pattern of reprisals 'against family members of Uyghurs in exile who had engaged in advocacy.'

'Beijing has done its best to discredit the report, even touring foreign officials through Xinjiang, avoiding substantial discussion about the UN's findings,' added Raphaël Viana David. 'The High Commissioner's message places the Xinjiang report at heart of his engagement with Beijing. The onus is now on China to take meaningful steps forward and on the Human Rights Council to closely monitor until it does so,' Viana concluded.

In June 2020, June 2022 and September 2022, over 40 UN experts jointly rang the alarm at China's human rights crisis, urging the Human Rights Council to establish a monitoring and reporting mechanism on the country's rights situation.



Last June, ISHR and three rights groups jointly released translations of the Xinjiang report in the five remaining UN official languages.

ISHR urges:

The Chinese government to adopt a roadmap with a clear timeline for the implementation of recommendations from the OHCHR Xinjiang report and other UN human rights mechanisms, and for its meaningful reengagement with UN bodies, including by allowing unrestricted access to the whole territory for UN independent experts for adequate investigation and by putting an immediate end to all acts of reprisals as reported by the UN;

ISHR further calls on:

The Human Rights Council to establish a monitoring and reporting mechanism on the human rights situation in China, with a view to uphold the integrity of its mandate and put an end to China's exceptionalism.

The High Commissioner to continue monitoring the human rights situation in China, to publicly report about it, including on the implementation of the Xinjiang report and any restrictions in accessing information, and to publicly advocate on individual cases.

### **US coordinator highlights Tibet's role as regional freshwater source**

27 August 2024, RFA

A U.S. official who handles Tibetan issues has called for information sharing about environmental changes taking place in Tibetan areas of China to help scientists prepare for climate change.

Uzra Zeya, the U.S. special coordinator for Tibetan issues, emphasized the critical role of the Tibetan Plateau in advancing global water security in virtual remarks given on Saturday to the World Water Week 2024 conference in Stockholm.

Zeya highlighted the negative effects of the increase in Chinese hydropower and water diversion projects in Tibet, including their impact on the Brahmaputra, Indus, and Mekong rivers for South and Southeast Asian nations.

The projects have been carried out without input from the 6 million Tibetans living in China, she said as part of a panel of speakers on water security.

"Opaque governance institutions and infrastructure development without inclusive public input exacerbate the impact of warming temperatures," Zeya said.

The glaciers, alpine lakes and waterfalls of the vast Tibetan Plateau are water sources for many of Asia's largest rivers.

But the region's warming climate is causing quicker melting and evaporation, threatening the plateau's

freshwater reserves. Industrial activity, deforestation and mining have also affected the quantity and quality of Tibet's water sources.

These factors could lead to water scarcity in the future, scientists say.

Displaced by dams

Nevertheless, the Chinese government has increasingly sought to manage and control Tibet's water resources for its own benefit, building dozens of hydropower dams on rivers originating upstream in the Tibetan Plateau.

In some cases, the projects have been met with anger by Tibetans facing displacement and loss of agricultural and grazing land.

In February, over 300 Tibetans in Dege county of Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan province staged a rare protest against China's plans to build the 1,100-megawatt Gangtuo hydropower dam on the Driчу River.

The project was expected to displace residents of at least two villages and destroy several monasteries with religious and historical significance, including the Wonto and Yena monasteries.

A video shared exclusively with Radio Free Asia by a source who recorded it in early July shows that nothing remains of the religious structure, with the monastery's main prayer halls and the many stupas that surround it completely razed to the ground. RFA was able to independently verify the authenticity of the video with two sources from Tibet and in exile. In April, Chinese authorities began relocating another 19th-century Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Dragkar county, or Xinghai in Chinese, in Qinghai province due to the expansion of the Yangqu hydropower station on the Yellow River — known as the Machu River among Tibetans.

By July, authorities had demolished the Atsok Dechen Choekhorling Monastery, with video shared exclusively with RFA showing that nothing remained of the religious structure.

'Preserve these majestic glaciers'

Zeya, who is also U.S. under secretary for civilian security, democracy and human rights, highlighted the need for data sharing on climate changes taking place in Tibet.

"Scientists also struggle to obtain and verify data from Tibetan areas of China, which has vast implications for research and policy development," she said in her address.

"Without transparent information on areas like snowpack melt, regional partners are hindered from preventing, preparing for, and adapting to our changing climate,"

Zeya said. Earlier this month, Chinese scientists warned that global warming is causing the rate of glacier evaporation in Tibet to outpace the rate of precipitation, and could result in

the permanent disappearance of some low-elevation glaciers on the Tibetan Plateau.

"The Himalayan Region and Tibetan Plateau and their fragile ecosystems are particularly vulnerable to climate change," Zeya said.

"As increased temperatures imperil this frozen cache of freshwater high in the mountains, we are reminded of the imperative to accelerate the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions ... to help preserve these majestic glaciers," she said.

Stretching across the southern border of the Tibetan Plateau, the Himalayan Mountain region includes over 100,000 square kilometers (38,600 square miles) of glaciers, is one of the largest stores of frozen water in the world, and serves as crucial sources of freshwater for those in the region as well as for over 1.8 billion people downstream, said Zeya, noting that the U.N. General Assembly has declared 2025 as the "Year of International Glaciers' Preservation."

World Water Week 2024, which runs Aug. 24-29, explores the theme "Bridging Borders: Water for a Peaceful and Sustainable Future."

The event highlights the critical role of water cooperation in fostering peace and security across communities and nations.

### **Karmapa calls on Dalai Lama in Zurich, their first meeting in seven years**

26 August 2024, Tibetan Review

The 17th Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje, one of Tibet's most prominent religious figures, living in exile since Dec 1999, has called on the Dalai Lama in the Swiss city of Zurich on Aug 25 in their first meeting in over seven years, reported the IANS news service Aug 25.

It was the day on which the Dalai Lama, on a stopover from New York City to New Delhi, was offered a long-life prayers offering by Tibetans in Switzerland and Liechtenstein in a capacity packed Hallenstadion, Zurich.

It was not clear what transpired in their meeting.

The report said the meeting, the first since Jan 2017 during the Dalai Lama's 34th Kalachakra teachings, given in Bodhgaya, revived hopes among his followers that the Karmapa may return to India soon. The Karmapa has a significant following in India, especially in Sikkim which had for long lobbied with New Delhi for his visit and eventual return. The Rumtek Monastery in Sikkim's Capital Gangtok is the Karmapa's exile seat.

Most recently, the state's Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang reached out to Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and Minority Affairs, Kiren

Rijiju, in Delhi and held discussions regarding the prospect of bringing the 17th Karmapa to Sikkim.

The Karmapa fled Tibet in Dec 1999 at 14 years of age and sought refuge in India, citing lack of religious freedom under Chinese rule. He mostly lived at the Gyuto Monastery in Sidhbari near Dharamsala, with the Indian government treating him as an 'honoured guest'.

He left for the USA in 2017 to seek medical treatment and later took up citizenship of the Commonwealth of Dominica. He has since then been unable to visit or return to India.

The Karmapa is the head of the Karma (or Kamtsang) Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism, of which he is the holder of the oldest lineage of reincarnations.

### **Dalai Lama emphasizes helping all sentient beings at Zurich long-life prayers offering**

25 August 2024, Tibetan Review

A capacity crowd of 15,000 Tibetans and others from across Europe filled the Hallenstadion in the Swiss city of Zurich to make a long-life (Tenshug) prayers offering to His Holiness the Dalai Lama this morning. Switzerland was among the very first few countries to resettle Tibetan refugees after China consummated its annexation of Tibet in 1959.

In his speech the Dalai Lama has told the audience what being a Buddhist religious person meant.

"Cultivating warm-heartedness is the essence of religion. Cultivating the awakening mind of bodhichitta involves the intention to bring happiness to all sentient beings. It enables you to fulfil the goals of others and yourself."

He has noted that even people who don't think of themselves as religious recognize that Tibetan Buddhism includes many solutions to the problems we face today.

People in the outside world are especially attracted by Tibetan Buddhism's instructions about the workings of the mind and emotions and ways to cultivate positive qualities within us. "Even in China faith and understanding of the Buddhadharma has grown," he has noted.

As he conducted a brief ceremony for cultivating the awakening mind of bodhichitta, His Holiness has suggested that the gathering think of all sentient beings as having been our kind mothers. In an effort to repay that kindness we should make a strong determination to bring benefit and happiness to all sentient beings. And having generated bodhichitta we should call on all sentient beings as our guests at a feast of happiness.

"The awakening mind of bodhichitta is the key to fulfilling your own and others' goals. At the same

time negative thoughts such as anger and pride subside," he has added.

His Holiness has also given the transmission of the mantra of Buddha Shakyamuni and Avalokiteshvara, the patron deity of Tibet, by asking those assembled to recite them after him.

After his knee replacement surgery in New York City on Jun 28, followed by a long-life prayers offering by a capacity packed UBS Arena there on Aug 22, the Dalai Lama landed at Zurich Airport on Aug 23 morning.

Mario Fehr, the representative of Zurich cantonal government; Yashbir Singh, the Government of India's Liaison Officer for His Holiness the Dalai Lama; Naveen Hooda, secretary of the Indian Embassy in Bern, had joined some 1,200 Tibetans for the Swiss reception led by Representative Ms Thinley Chukki of the Tibet Bureau, Geneva.

The Dalai Lama last visited Switzerland in Sep 2018 when he attended the 50th anniversary of the Tibet Institute in Rikon in Zurich's Töss Valley. On an earlier visit in Aug 2005, he held eight days of lessons in the Hallenstadion; some 30,000 people from 44 countries travelled to Oerlikon at the time, with around 270 journalists from Switzerland and abroad reporting on the event, noted swissinfo.ch Aug 24. The Dalai Lama will arrive at New Delhi airport on Aug 26 evening and will be back in Dharamshala, his exile home, on Aug 28.

### **Rubio Sounds Alarm Over Chinese Abuse of Tibetans**

23 August 2024, Floridian Press, Mateo Guillamont

China is facing new political pressure from conservatives following reports it is employing draconian surveillance tactics to monitor Tibetans.

According to Radio Free Asia (RFA), China is persecuting Tibetan dissidents by increasing its police presence in Tibet, suppressing social media use, and employing surreptitious civilian surveillance officers. US Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) publicly lamented Tibetans' oppression at the hands of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

China invaded Tibet in 1950 and has retained control of the country since then.

The US has historically sided with Tibetan rebels, who resisted Chinese authority in the years shortly after the latter's invasion to no avail.

The United Nations (UN), notwithstanding condemnations of China's human rights abuses in Tibet, has refused to recognize Tibet's self-determination rights.

Senator Rubio, a leading China hawk, called on the international community to respond to the CCP's persecution of Tibetans.

"Tibetans face harsh scrutiny and oppression by the occupying Chinese Communist Party," said Rubio. "The international community cannot remain as bystanders to these injustices"

Rubio has politically attacked the CCP extensively throughout this year.

From recommending the US deny Chinese companies IPOs to congressionally investigating investment funds engaged in Chinese markets, Rubio's animosity towards the CCP is palpable.

In June, Rubio sent a bipartisan letter to the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of MSCI Henry Fernandez after MSCI seemingly ignored the CCP's alleged abuse of Uyghurs.

MSCI upgraded Volkswagen standing within its network although the latter was discovered to be harnessing Uyghur slave labor in its factory in Xinjiang. Many have accused the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) of committing genocide against Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim ethnic groups in Xinjiang via forced labor and other genocidal acts.

### **Capacity crowd of 17,000 attend long-life prayers offering to Dalai Lama in New York**

23 August 2024, Tibetan Review

A capacity crowd of 17,000, overwhelmingly Tibetan, people filled the UBS Arena in New York City's outskirt on Aug 22 to offer a long-life prayers ceremony to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Recovering well from a knee surgery on Jun 28 and just a day before leaving the United States, the exile spiritual leader of Tibet assured the huge gathering about his good health and his confidence to live well past 100 years of age.

Addressing the crowd at the ceremony, which included Himalayan Buddhists, Mongols, Chinese, Koreans, Taiwanese and numerous others as well, the Dalai Lama has said:

"Here we have Tibetans from all three regions of Tibet demonstrating how we are united. Tibetan culture can be of benefit to the whole of humanity. The Buddha, Shakyamuni, became enlightened and gave teachings that have been preserved in Tibet and the Himalayan region. These teachings are profound and deeply valuable. I have studied them since I was very young. "The Buddha's teachings have influenced our way of life to the extent that the people of Tibet have been determined to keep them alive. I intend to live to be more than 100 years old and I will continue to do my best to help the Tibetan people.

"Chinese Communists may look down on Tibetan culture, but across the world we have friends who appreciate it. In Tibet we have the most complete transmission of the Buddha's teachings. As Tibetans have spread out across the world other people have

become more aware of our traditions. We have many loyal friends who I'd like to thank. People around the world are taking an interest in Buddhism and even in China there are many curious to learn about Tibetan Buddhism."

The Dalai Lama also gave a short instruction on generating the awakening mind of bodhichitta. Explaining that he had followed the Buddha's teachings and generated the wish to become a Buddha in order to benefit beings over many lifetimes, he invited his listeners to make a similar commitment.

The Dalai Lama then gave transmissions of the mantras of Buddha Shakyamuni, Arya Tara, Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri, Hayagriva, the Medicine Buddha and Guru Rinpoché.

As the Tenshug prayers began, representatives from each of the 30 Tibetan Associations in the United States and Canada as well as from the Kalmykia, Buryatia, Mongolian communities, besides from the Sherpa, Tamang, Hyolmo, Bhutanese, Limi, Mustang, Manangi, Nubri, and other Himalayan communities, and New York based Tibetan NGOs, walked in a procession past the stage in symbolic offerings of Khatags (ceremonial greeting scarves).

The Dalai Lama also spoke about the need for religious harmony and emphasized the principles of secular ethics – an ethics system that appeals to the religious and the nonreligious alike and is based on the cultivation of genuine compassion.

Dr Namgyal Choedup, Representative at the Office of Tibet, Washington, DC, expressed special gratitude to Carol and Sam Nappi for their generous help in coordinating the arrangements for the Dalai Lama's successful knee replacement surgery and for their subsequent exceptional hospitality as he underwent over six weeks of physiotherapy in Syracuse. They were cheered by the crowd as His Holiness also personally thanked them.

Hollywood star and Tibet activist Richard Gere was a notable presence at the ceremony.

### **China protests, foul-mouths Dalai Lama, after US envoy for Tibet meets him**

22 August 2024, Tibetan Review

The top US official on Tibetan issues has on Aug 21 met with Tibet's exiled spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, in New York City, prompting China to make what it said was "serious protest" with Washington the next day. The Dalai Lama, 89, has been in New York since Jun 23 for knee replacement surgery. The meeting with the US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, Under Secretary Uzra Zeya, was his first meeting with a senior US government official during his current sojourn.

Ms Zeya, who is also the Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights, was accompanied by Kelly Razzouk, Special Assistant to the President and National Security Council Senior Director for Democracy and Human Rights. "During the audience, she conveyed, on behalf of President Biden, best wishes for His Holiness's good health and reaffirmed the US commitment to advancing the human rights of Tibetans and supporting efforts to preserve their distinct historical, linguistic, cultural, and religious heritage," said the Office of the State Department Spokesperson in a media note Aug 21.

"Under Secretary Zeya welcomed His Holiness the Dalai Lama's lifelong dedication to promoting nonviolence and compassion. The Under Secretary also took the opportunity to discuss with His Holiness Tibetan cultural preservation, the United States' ongoing efforts to address human rights abuses inside Tibet, and support for resuming dialogue between the PRC and His Holiness and his representatives," the note said

The Chinese criticism came in response to a question from the AFP during Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning's Regular Press Conference.

"China firmly opposes any country allowing the Dalai Lama to make visits under any pretext and opposes government officials of any country meeting with the Dalai Lama in any form. We've made serious protest with the US," the foreign ministry website quoted Mao as saying in her remarks.

She has sought to make the point that "the 14th Dalai Lama is not a pure religious figure, still less a figure promoting 'non-violence' and 'peace', but a political exile engaged in anti-China separatist activities under the cloak of religion."

Mao has further said: "We urge the US to fully understand the gravity and sensitivity of Xizang-related issues, be fully aware of the Dalai group's anti-China and separatist nature, honour the commitments the US has made to China on issues related to Xizang, truly respect China's core interests and major concerns, not allow the Dalai Lama to engage in political separatist activities in the US, have no contact with the Dalai Lama in any form, and stop sending the wrong message to the world."

Xizang is China's name for Tibet Autonomous Region, which is roughly the western half of Tibet proper.

The Dalai Lama is to attend a long-life prayer ceremony being offered by Tibetans, Mongolians and people of Himalayan communities based in North America in the UBS Arena in New York on Aug 22. He will then leave for Zurich where the Tibetan communities in Switzerland and Lichtenstein will also make a long-life ceremonial offering to him in the Hallenstadion on Aug 25.

This is the Dalai Lama's first visit to the USA since 2017. He has been reported to be recovering well from his knee surgery and is expected to be back at Dharamshala, his exile home, on Aug 28.

Earlier, Dr David Mayman, MD, Chief of the Adult Reconstruction and Joint Replacement Service at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York, said last month that the Dalai Lama was expected to continue improving over the next six to 12 months.

Other meetings with US leaders seem unlikely, given the fact that the Dalai Lama is leaving the US on Aug 23.

In 2020, Candidate Joe Biden criticized then President Donald Trump for being the only president in three decades who had not met or spoken with the Tibetan spiritual leader, calling it "disgraceful," noted Reuters Aug 21.

### **US official meets Dalai Lama to discuss Chinese 'human rights abuses inside Tibet'**

22 August 2024, WION

Dalai Lama on Wednesday (Aug 21) met a Biden administration official in New York City as the India-based Tibetan spiritual leader continues with his effort for Tibetan self-rule decades after China took territorial control over 1.2 million sq km of landmass neighbouring India.

"On August 21, 2024, Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights and Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues Uzra Zeya traveled to New York City, New York for an audience with His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama," US State Department said in an official statement. The meeting takes place over a month after US President Joe Biden signed the 'Resolve Tibet Act', which enhances Washington's support for the Tibetan cause while aiming to promote dialogue between Beijing and the Dalai Lama toward a peaceful resolution of the dispute over the status and governance of the remote Himalayan region.

The act rejects false claims that Tibet has been part of China since "ancient times".

"Under Secretary Zeya was joined by Special Assistant to the President and National Security Council Senior Director for Democracy and Human Rights Kelly Razzouk," the statement added.

"During the audience, she conveyed, on behalf of President Biden, best wishes for His Holiness's good health and reaffirmed the US commitment to advancing the human rights of Tibetans and supporting efforts to preserve their distinct historical, linguistic, cultural, and religious heritage," it said.

"Under Secretary Zeya welcomed His Holiness the Dalai Lama's lifelong dedication to promoting nonviolence and compassion. The Under Secretary also took the opportunity to discuss with His Holiness

Tibetan cultural preservation, the United States' ongoing efforts to address human rights abuses inside Tibet, and support for resuming dialogue between the PRC and His Holiness and his representatives," the statement added. The 14th Dalai Lama fled Tibet in 1959 and came to India, where he set up the government-in-exile at Dharamshala in the northern state of Himachal Pradesh.

From 2002 to 2010, the Dalai Lama's representatives and the Chinese government held nine rounds of dialogue that did not produce any concrete outcome.

### **Dalai Lama Chair to be set up at Panjab University**

20 August 2024, The Tribune

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) has been signed between the Dalai Lama's Foundation for Universal Responsibility and Panjab University (PU) to establish the Dalai Lama Chair in the Department of Gandhian and Peace Studies.

PU Vice-Chancellor Prof Renu Vig said the main purpose of establishing the prestigious chair is to promote and preserve the Indo-Tibetan heritage for the dissemination of philosophical, historical and spiritual studies. The chair will disseminate the teachings and philosophy of the Dalai Lama and promote critical thinking and self-reflection among students, faculty and the wider community.

The chair will help, nurture and promote Buddhist response to contemporary issues, study of Tibetan and Pali Buddhist texts, Tibetan Buddhist art and architecture and Buddhist philosophy.

Department chairperson Prof Ashu Pasricha said the MoU will further explore Dalai Lama studies that discourses His Holiness' personal contribution on the important subject of ahimsa, social, ethical and emotional learning.

### **China's Tibetan Traditional Medicine Center eyes Manila satellite facility**

20 August 2024, Manila Standard, Othel V. Campos

The Tibetan Traditional Medicine Center in Zhongshan, Guangdong Province in China disclosed plans to set up a satellite facility in Manila, a part of its global strategy to widen the reach of traditional Chinese therapeutic techniques.

"We are exploring how we can bring the benefits of Tibetan medicine closure to Filipinos. In fact, there is an ongoing government-to-government [G2G] negotiation between the Philippines and China," said New Goldmines Tours and Travel president Ruben Co. If talks go as anticipated, a new and the 7th Tibetan Traditional Medicine Center is expected to rise in Manila by July 2025, Co said.



As part of the Tibetan culture, the center will be adorned with traditional Tibetan decorations straight from Tibet to showcase its ethnicity and uniqueness. While there is no estimate yet on the cost of the facility, the traditional Tibetan works of art that will be used to decorate the building will reach about CY50 million.

Among the services the center intends to provide is an initial analysis of one's health conditions, particularly underlying illnesses not evident to the naked eye.

The center will also house a museum of traditional Chinese medicines, detailing their origin and their benefits to the human body. "Many Filipinos have sought the wisdom of Tibetan traditional medicine, particularly for those with serious health conditions such as cancer and internal organ failure," said Co. New Goldmines Tours provides a medical tour of the facility as part of a new tour package showcasing the cities in Southern China.

The traditional medicine segment targets mature markets who are into health longevity and therapy.

### **Tibetan actress wins Best Acting Performance at 77th Locarno Film Festival**

18 August 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

profound spiritual quest for self-discovery and liberation, transcending the mere search for her missing husband.

The film was previously featured in the prestigious line up of the 74th Berlin International Film Festival, where it premiered in the Main Competition at the Berlinale Palast on February 23. Shambhala also won the Best Cinematography award at the Bishkek International Film Festival 2024 in Kyrgyzstan.

### **The Schrucker Fellowship for the Arts: Empowering Contemporary Tibetan Creatives**

16 August 2024, ICT

Thinley Lhamo, the lead actor in Shambhala, a film prominently featuring a Tibetan cast and directed by Nepalese filmmaker Min Bahadur Bham, has been honoured with the prestigious Boccacino d'Oro Prize for Best Acting Performance at the 77th Locarno Film Festival. The festival is held from August 7 to 17, 2024, in Switzerland.

In a press release issued on Saturday, the film's team announced the honour, stating, "Shambhala team extends our heartfelt congratulations to Thinley and the entire team on this extraordinary accomplishment. This is a historic win and a first-of-its-kind recognition of a South Asian actor. Not only is this award recognition of Thinley's exceptional performance but also a testament to the emerging

Nepali talents. It highlights the region's growing influence on the global cinematic stage."

Filmed entirely in Tibetan language, Thinley plays the role of Pema, the film's protagonist, who is a pregnant woman living in remote Dolpo, Nepal. Pema is in a polyandrous marriage with Tashi and his two younger brothers. When Tashi fails to return from a trading trip, leaving the legitimacy of her unborn child in doubt, Pema embarks on a journey to find him. As she searches for Tashi, Pema's journey transforms into a

### **Solidarity campaign for justice and protection of Tibetan rights**

16 August 2024, Awaz The Voice, Sumana

In a continued display of solidarity with the Tibetan people, a group of exiled Tibetan families residing in Switzerland has been tirelessly advocating for the rights and freedoms of Tibetans living under Chinese rule. Their campaign, which began on Human Rights Day, December 10, 2012, persists with monthly protests in front of the United Nations Office in Geneva.

The campaign by the Tibet Solidarity Movement honours the memory of the 1.2 million Tibetans who lost their lives under Chinese domination and highlights the ongoing suffering of those still living in Tibet.

These activists stand in tribute to those who have committed the ultimate act of nonviolent civil disobedience—self-immolation—in protest against the political repression, cultural assimilation, social discrimination, and environmental degradation enforced by the Chinese government.

Under the guise of development and goodwill, the Tibetan people have been systematically deprived of their fundamental rights.

"Nearly a million Tibetan children, aged four to eighteen, are forcibly enrolled in colonial boarding schools, isolating them from their families, language, and cultural heritage. Simultaneously, Tibetan language schools are being shut down, further eroding the national identity of the Tibetan people", Tibet Solidarity Movement said in a statement.

The group has issued a series of urgent appeals, demanding international action to save Tibet.

They call for the implementation of United Nations resolutions on Tibet, adopted in 1959, 1961, and 1965, to restore freedom and peace in the region.

They also urge international bodies to support the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet.

Activists are also demanding an end to the massive environmental destruction in Tibet, which includes

deforestation, overgrazing, uncontrolled mining, and the dumping of nuclear waste.

They emphasise the need to protect Tibet's fragile ecosystem, often referred to as the "Third Pole" and "Water Tower of Asia."

Their demands also include the release of political prisoners, investigation into the suppression of religious and cultural freedoms, closure of colonial boarding schools, and the establishment of a UN fact-finding mission.

Additionally, they urge the Chinese government to engage in substantive negotiations with representatives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to resolve the Tibet issue peacefully and respect the rights of all its citizens, including

Tibetans, Southern Mongolians, and Uighurs, in line with international obligations.

The exiled Tibetan community in Switzerland remains steadfast in their commitment to this cause, emphasizing that the world can no longer turn a blind eye to the violence and lies of authoritarian regimes. They urge the international community to act decisively before it's too late, to protect the children of Tibet and preserve the unique identity and culture of the Tibetan people.

"Save Tibet before it's too late," their message resonates, as they continue their peaceful but determined campaign for justice and freedom.

### **TYC concludes annual meeting, reaffirms commitment to Tibetan independence and global advocacy**

16 August 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

The Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC), the largest grassroots organization dedicated to the Tibetan independence cause, concluded its 54th Working Committee Meeting on August 10 in Gangtok, Sikkim. This gathering brought together around 200 representatives from 38 chapters, including from Nepal and India.

During the five-day meeting, both central and regional members of the organization engaged in extensive deliberations on nine key agendas, resulting in the adoption of 23 resolutions. The participants reaffirmed the overarching objectives of the TYC, emphasising the organisation's commitment to advancing the Tibetan independence movement among Tibetan youths and those living in Tibetan settlements. This includes organising workshops and discussions featuring discussions with former Tibetan political prisoners, and leveraging social media platforms to engage and inspire Tibetan youth across the diaspora to participate in the movement actively. The attendees expressed their determination to explore additional avenues for raising awareness about the ongoing

atrocities in Tibet within the international community and among non-governmental organisations. They emphasised that Tibet has endured forced occupation for decades and reaffirmed their commitment to working closely with governments and NGOs to develop policies aimed at achieving Tibetan independence. The group also conveyed their gratitude to the United States for signing the "Resolve Tibet Act," expressing hope that other like-minded countries will enact similar legislation supporting Tibet.

The organization in their agenda also announced plans to collaborate with Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in the Bylakuppe Tibetan settlement, the spiritual and cultural seat of the Panchen Lama in exile, to mark the Panchen Lama's enforced disappearance in 2025. As part of this effort, they will send formal communications to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

On the final day, the participants in the meeting issued a statement condemning the Chinese Communist Party's ongoing cultural genocide in Tibet and reaffirmed their determination to draw international attention to the recent forced closure of the Ganjong Sherig Norbu Lobling School in Rajya, Tibet. They emphasised the urgent need for international intervention and support. The group announced plans to seek backing through advocacy and political efforts, including issuing a formal condemnation of the ongoing closures of numerous schools and monasteries in Tibet. They also intend to submit an appeal to the international community and its leaders, particularly highlighting the violations of children's rights.

The meeting concluded with the adoption of 23 resolutions, following the unanimous decision to withdraw three regional chapters of the Tibetan Youth Congress in Bylakuppe, Hunsur Rabgyaling, and Kollegal Dhondelling, and from using the TYC title in their future endeavours. The meeting also involved a comprehensive review of the annual financial reports from the TYC central leadership and regional chapters. Additionally, there were in-depth discussions on the implementation of resolutions passed during the previous Working Committee Meeting.

### **Toronto Tibetan activist concludes third bicycle rally for Free Tibet**

16 August 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup

Sangyal Kyab with his cycle in Toronto, Canada (Photo/Facebook) Toronto-based

Tibetan activist Sangyal Kyap concluded his third bicycle rally for Free Tibet across Canada on Wednesday. Kyap completed his rally, beginning in Victoria, British Columbia, and ending in Toronto, Ontario, to raise awareness and inform Canadians about the Sino-Tibet conflict.

He covered a distance of 4,182.8 kilometres and took 54 days. The rally started on June 21 and concluded on August 14 when Kyap arrived at the Chinese Consulate in Toronto. Upon his arrival, he was greeted by Tibetans and supporters who had gathered to join him in the cause. The rally traversed remote Canadian provinces and made efforts to reach isolated areas. Throughout the journey, Kyap distributed brochures detailing the critical situation in Tibet and engaged in discussions about the urgent need for a resolution to the Tibet-China conflict.

Kyap outlined six demands to the Canadian government and the international community during this year's rally. The first demand is the immediate return of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama to Tibet without conditions. The second demand calls for the renewal of Sino-Tibet dialogue to resolve the conflict in good faith.

The third demand involves the immediate release of the Panchen Lama, who was abducted by the Chinese government on May 17, 1995, at age six. Kyap also called for the release of Go Sherab Gyatso and all other Tibetan political prisoners. Additional demands include shutting down Chinese colonial boarding schools in Tibet to free one million Tibetan children, halting illegal Chinese hydropower dam constructions in Dege, Kham, and other parts of Tibet, and ensuring human rights and religious freedom in Tibet due to ongoing abuses by the Chinese government.

Sangyal Kyap began his activism for the Tibetan cause in 2018 with a solo protest outside the Chinese embassy in Canada. He has since completed five peace marches spanning hundreds of kilometers to protest Chinese rule and policies in Tibet.

Sangyal Kyap's first bike rally for Free Tibet began in Vancouver, B.C., on August 16, 2022, and concluded in Ontario on October 12, covering 5,000 kilometres. His second bike rally, dedicated to H.H. The 14th Dalai Lama and Free Tibet, took place across Canada from Ottawa to Nova Scotia and then to Vancouver in May 2023.

### **Central Tibetan Administration Commemorates 78th Indian Independence Day**

15 August 2024, CTA

In commemoration of the 78th Indian Independence Day, the Central Tibetan Administration held a brief ceremony at the Gangchen Kyishong to mark the joyous day alongside Indian brothers and sisters.

The celebration was attended by Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, Sikyong Penpa Tsering, Education Kalon (minister) Tharlam Dolma Changra, Security Kalon Dolma Gyari and Secretaries of the Central Tibetan Administration.

The proceedings began with Sikyong unfurling the Indian national flag and singing of India's national anthem. Sikyong then spoke to the media, offering congratulatory remarks to the government and people of India on this landmark occasion. "On behalf of Tibetans inside and outside Tibet, we wish to extend our warm greetings to the leadership and people of India on the 78th Independence Day celebration." While acknowledging the sincere assistance that India has rendered to Tibetan refugees during the latter's worst period of history for the last more than sixty years, the Tibetan political leader expressed gratitude on behalf of every Tibetan to the government and people of India.

Sikyong further said, "It's ironical that India got its independence in 1947, and three years later we lost our independence. In fact, many countries around the world, particularly after World War II, gained independence from colonial rulers. But unfortunately, the wave of communism that enveloped the region also enveloped Tibet under the forceful occupation by China. We still remain as political refugees here, and we also take inspiration from India's independence that we too will get to return back to Tibet as a free nation, as a people who can practice its freedom in the preservation of and promotion of its identity in terms of language, culture, religion, and way of life, and particularly Tibet's environment, that's not only important for Tibet but for the whole world. So it is a joyous occasion for Indians to celebrate, but for us, as Tibetans, we enjoy it with you. At the same time, we also think about and long for the day when we also get to celebrate our freedom.

### **Petition by 100 Tibetan scholars to UN High Commissioner calls for an end to school closures and cultural assimilation policies in Tibet**

14 August 2024, ICT

The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) welcomes a petition to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk calling for an end to China's forced assimilation policies in Tibet. In the petition 100 Tibetan professors, scientists and doctoral students in exile express their deep concern about the Chinese government's systematic closure of Tibetan monastic and public schools.

"This appeal by Tibetan scholars emphasizes the urgency of the situation in Tibet. The suppression of

the Tibetan language and culture in everyday life through targeted school closures, indoctrination and propaganda in the educational sector are a core element of the Chinese government's assimilation policy. We expressly support the demands articulated in the petition. Tibetan students must have the opportunity to study at schools that celebrate their language and culture, Tibetan schools must not be closed, and the system of coercive boarding schools must be abolished," the International Campaign for Tibet stated.

The appeal was initiated by the Tibet Times, which is published in Dharamsala, India.

#### Campaign of school closures

A recent example of the cultural assimilation policies in Tibet is the closure of the Gangjong Sherig Norbu Lobling School in Ragya in July 2024. The Norbu Lobling School was the first private Tibetan school in the Golog region's Machen county (Chinese: Maqin qian) and was particularly well known for promoting the Tibetan language and culture. After its foundation in 1994, it made a name for itself as a vocational school, primarily through its Tibetan language courses. Human rights organizations have been observing with growing concern how the Chinese Communist Party has been replacing Tibetan textbooks with Chinese ones in primary and secondary schools in Tibet. Content in Tibetan is being systematically replaced by Chinese as the language of literature and instruction. At the same time, more and more public schools run by Tibetan monasteries and individuals have been forcibly closed by the Chinese authorities in recent years.

The petition has been submitted to the UN High Commissioner on 29 July by 100 professors, doctoral students and academics from the Tibetan exile community, and has also been signed by scholars who are attached to Tibetan culture.

It urges the UN High Commissioner to:

- Urge for an end to forced school closures and ensure restoration; protect private and monastic schools for their continued existence throughout Tibet and enable the immediate reopening of all forcibly closed schools.
- Call for an immediate end of the boarding school system in Tibet.
- Raise his voice to protect the Tibetan language, culture and religion and speak out publicly on the human rights situation in Tibet.
- Press for accountability and urge the Chinese government to comply with international education rights standards, as China has ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Urge those responsible for violations to be held accountable.

#### Petition text

The signatories of the petition have requested that their names not be made public. The UN High Commissioner has received an unredacted version of the petition. ICT publishes the petition text hereafter, without indicating the names of the signatories:

Your Excellency,

The human rights situation in Tibet has been severely deteriorating. The PRC's assault on Tibetan cultural identity is evident in its accelerated implementation of what it calls 'bilingual education'. This policy

undermines the Tibetan education system and uses the national curriculum to promote indoctrination and assimilation. In this context, we, the undersigned, express our deep concern over the Chinese government's systematic closure of privately-operated Tibetan schools.

Since 2010, the Chinese government's cultural assimilation policy has forced all schools in Tibet to use Chinese as the primary language, beginning from kindergarten. From primary school onward, all Tibetan students must take examinations in spoken Mandarin. In addition, colonial style boarding schools in Tibet separate Tibetan children from their families and communities, thus depriving them of their language, culture, and traditions from the grassroots level.

The recent closure of the reputed Ragya Gangjong Sherig Norbuling School in Golog Machen County, Qinghai Province, Tibet, on July 14, 2024, is particularly disheartening and alarming for Tibetans both within and outside of Tibet. This school has faced relentless pressure from the Chinese government through various means, including false allegations that elements of their logo were symbols of the Tibetan national flag, and false allegations charges against its founder, Ven. Jigme Gyaltzen (charges that were later dismissed), among other political accusations.

The Chinese government's cultural assimilation policy is ostensibly meant to provide better and equal job opportunities for Tibetans. However, in reality, privately-owned Tibetan schools have offered greater benefits and opportunities for the Tibetan people in general. One such example is Ragya School.

Ragya Gangjong Sherig Norbuling School was formally established in August 1994 with permission from the so-called Golog Local People's Government. It was the first privately-operated school in Qinghai Province. Over time, it became a specialized vocational school offering classes in Tibetan language, English, computer science, engineering, medicine, videography, and physical education. Since its inception, over 2,300 students have

graduated, including at least 800 university students, 50 researchers, 90 doctors, 110 government employees, 250 university teachers, 13 headmasters, 110 monastic workers, and 260 entrepreneurs.

This is not the first instance of such closures. The Chinese government is targeting privately-operated schools, especially those engaged in promoting and preserving Tibetan culture and language. As per record of the Tibet Times, a Tibetan media outlet monitoring developments in Tibet from Dharamsala, India, out of 16 known private owned schools in Golog regions, since 2021, eight schools have already been shut down and most of the remaining schools under threat of closure through constant allegation and administrative pressure. For detailed reports on the

Ragya School shutdown, please refer to this 'Tibet Times' news link: <https://en.tibettimes.net/2024/07/14/chinese-government-forcefully-shuts-down-ragya-gangjong-sherig-norbuling-school/> Buddhist philosophy based on Tibetan language offers numerous benefits to today's modern world, addressing both individual well-being and societal harmony. Concepts and practices from the Tibetan tradition are increasingly embraced and applied by a global audience. It is in every individual's interest to fight to preserve these invaluable ways of learning and living.

The United Nations promotes diversity and inclusion as fundamental principles across its agenda and it is also evident across its various programs and initiatives, aiming to build a more equitable and just world. This richness of Tibetan language, culture, and tradition offers much towards this diversity. The increasingly marginalized Tibetan language and culture should be protected and secured according to the principles and aims promoted by the United Nations.

As members of the global community, we urge the United Nations to take immediate and decisive action to address these critical issues and to preserve basic human rights and freedoms of the Tibetan people inside Tibet.

Given the severity and wide-reaching consequences of these educational restrictions, we respectfully request Your Excellency to:

- Urge for an end to forced school closures and ensure restoration; protect private and monastic schools for their continued existence throughout Tibet and enable the immediate reopening of all forcibly closed schools.

- Call for an immediate end of the boarding school system in Tibet.

- Raise your voice to protect the Tibetan language, culture and religion and speak out publicly on the human rights situation in Tibet.

- Press for accountability and urge the Chinese government to comply with international education rights standards, as China has ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Urge those responsible for violations to be held accountable.

We believe these measures will significantly improve the right to education and cultural rights of the Tibetan people, their identity and cultural traditions, which in turn will help promote peace, security, and justice for the Tibetan people.

We have gathered signatures from Tibetans and those from other Himalayan regions – professors, lecturers, PhDs and Scholars from outside of Tibet – who have tremendous concern over the education crisis in Tibet. Their signatures below demonstrate widespread support for this letter and a collective desire for meaningful action and protection of fundamental human rights in Tibet.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your prompt response. Together, we can work towards a more just and humane world for all.

Sincerely,

[Names redacted]

### **Former Ambassador Dilip Sinha talks to Tibetans in- exile about “Imperial Games in Tibet”**

14 August 2024, The Print

The Tibet Policy Institute of the Department of Information and International Relations, Central Tibetan Administration on Wednesday held a talk by Former Ambassador Dilip Sinha on his recent book titled “Imperial Games in Tibet” in Dharamshala.

Various Tibetan intellectuals including Tibetan activists, a few members of the Tibetan parliament-in-exile and officials of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) attended the event.

Speaking to ANI, the author, Dilip Sinha, the former ambassador said, “I am grateful to the CTA and the Tibetan community in Dharamshala that they have invited me to speak on my book that was released a month ago in Delhi. It is a book called ‘The Imperial Games in Tibet’. It is about Tibetan history and about the cause of Tibet so the purpose of the book is to make the Indian people know about the history of Tibet and what happened to Tibet and what is the issue that we face today in our relations with China.” Talking about India's policy towards Tibet, Sinha said, “India's policy at the moment is a policy of supporting the Tibetan community in exile. India also supports the Central Tibetan Administration which



runs the affairs of the Tibetan community but at the same time, the Indian government used to support the desires of the Tibetan people and their spiritual leader his holiness the Dalai Lama. We recognise that Tibet is an autonomous region of China and the autonomy should be respected and Tibetan culture and identity should also be respected."

Speaking about the motivation to write the book, Sinha further said, "I have been a student of political science and history and I realised that there was a neighbour of ours which we knew very little and our northern border which was always very peaceful border, has now become a security risk for us so how did this happen? Why did this happen? And why is the way forward? This is something that I wanted to read

about to discover for myself and this is what I have written in the book."

The deputy director of Tibet Policy Institute, Tempa Gyaltsen Zamlha said, "I think it is an important event because the author is an Indian brother who wrote a wonderful book on Tibet and since he is a prominent former ambassador and diplomat so his presence here would highlight his book of course and also highlight how the imperial politics that was played at the time of independent Tibet and also around the time when Tibet was on the verge of losing its independence. The book will help the cause of Tibet because when more and more people read it they will have more and more understanding of what really happened to Tibet. After all, the book deals with the time between 1700 to the time when Tibet lost its independence so they will definitely have a great understanding." (ANI)

### Committee Reviews Rules and Regulations of Parliamentary Procedure and Conduct for Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile

13 August 2024, CTA

Following the decision made by the 7th session of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, a committee convened to review the 'Rules and Regulations for Parliamentary Procedures and Conduct of Business' concerning the removal of dignitaries from the Central Tibetan Administration has successfully concluded its work at 4 pm today.

The committee, chaired by Parliamentarian Dorjee Tseten and including Parliamentarian Karma Gelek (Secretary) and Parliamentarian Tenzin Jigdal, has spent over two months examining the current rules and comparing them with similar regulations from other countries.

The committee has submitted its report on these rules and regulations to Secretary-General Sonam Dorjee of the Tibetan parliamentary secretariat today.

### Department of Education Initiates Free Distribution of Storybooks for Schools

11 August 2024, CTA

The Department of Education (DoE), Central Tibetan Administration initiated the free distribution of storybooks published between 2023 and 2024.

The Education Department aimed particularly on enhancing the reading proficiency of students in Tibetan schools throughout India. Each year, they translated internationally renowned children's storybooks, produced new children's publications, and distributed summaries of fairy tales. In the academic year 2023 to 2024, a total of 29 significant children's storybooks were released, of which 10 had been published previously.



Department of Education Initiates the Free Distribution of Storybooks

### Dalai Lama's Succession Strategy; China's Xi Jinping Can't Handle Unpredictability: Tibet's Sikyong

11 August 2024, StratNews Global, Amitabh P. Ravi

Tibet's Sikyong (political head) Penpa Tsering in a wide-ranging, comprehensive chat on 'The Gist' Tibetan Sikyong Exclusive: Watch Here.

"China cannot handle unpredictability. So they don't know when His Holiness the Dalai Lama will talk about emanation, which means choosing somebody before one's own demise. Or reincarnation. That's finding a new body in the next life". Tibet's Sikyong or political head, Penpa Tsering says in an exclusive 'The Gist' interview with StratNews Global's Amitabh P. Ravi. "Sometimes when he's asked whether it could be a woman, he says, why not? So all options are very open. And one thing, the Chinese cannot handle is unpredictability. So I think His Holiness is also being very strategic about his approach. But we can be very, very sure that he and he alone will be responsible for his succession. But he will definitely leave signs and indications," the leader elected by Tibetans outside their country says.

India's Tibet Policy

“Everybody would love to hear something from the Indian government. But I think it is taken for granted from our side too, that India is concerned, India has a stake in this. Suppose the next Dalai Lama is born in India. That makes it more relevant for India. So, I’m sure the Indian authorities are really thinking about and working on all this. And when and what they say is something for them to decide,” Penpa Tsering adds in this Tibet Sikyong Exclusive.

The Sikyong Also Discusses:

- The ‘Resolve Tibet’ Act that U.S. President Joe Biden has signed into law.
- Its overall ramifications and the next steps planned.
- Whether India’s Tibet policy needs to be recalibrated.
- Calls for renaming the Line of Actual Control (LAC) the Tibet border.
- Ways to counter the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) changing names of places in Tibet and India.
- The Tibetan government-in-exile’s plans for a detailed historical map.
- How to bring the CCP “to its knees”.
- The Central Tibetan Administration’s position on Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh.
- Tibetans under Indian military command in the Special Frontier Force (SFF) and Vikas battalions.
- The Dalai Lama’s middle way and dual polarity.
- Non-violence and the possibility of armed struggle.
- Back-channel talks in a third country.
- When the Dalai Lama will be back in India after recovering from knee surgery.
- And the succession issue and why Xi Jinping can’t handle the unpredictability.

### MPs re-launch Tibet group | Gao supports Tibetan people’s rights

10 August 2024, Arunachal Observer

The All-Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet (APIPFT), first set up in 1970, was re-launched in new Indian Parliament on Wednesday following after the 2024 general elections as a delegation of Tibetan Parliament in Exile (TPiE) lobbied during ongoing session of the Parliament.

Odisha’s BJP MP Bhartruhari Mahtab, who served as the pro-tem speaker of current 18th Lok Sabha is the group’s convenor while Arunachal Pradesh BJP MP Tapir Gao is co-convenor, Central Tibetan Administration posted on its Tibet.net website.

Gao expressing his support for Tibetan people’s rights to self-determination, said resumption of dialogue between China and envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama on the basis of the latter’s middle way proposal, and for countering of China’s false

narrative on Tibet. He has called on China to immediately release all Tibetan political prisoners. Mehtab could not attend due to some unavoidable circumstance, Gao added. The re-launch was announced during a dinner hosted by the TPiE and India Tibet Coordination Office (ITCO) here. Other MPs present were Sujeet Kumar (Rajya Sabha, BJD), and former APIPFT convener Manoj Tigga (BJP MP, West Bengal); Amarsing Tisso (BJP MP, Assam); Joyanta Basumatary (MP, United People’s

Party Libera, Assam); Phangnon Konyak (Rajya Sabha, BJP, Nagaland); Birendra Prasad Baishya (Rajya Sabha, Asom Gana Parishad, Assam); Jagannath Sarkar (MP, BJP, West Bengal); Angomcha Bimol Akoijam (MP, INC, Manipur); Indra Hang Subba (MP, Sikkim Krantikari Morcha, Sikkim); Pradyut Bordoloi (MP, INC, Assam); Phani Bhusan Choudhury (MP, Asom Gana Parishad, Assam), Mohammad Haneefa (MP, Independent, Ladakh), Maneka Gandhi (former MP, BJP), Dr Pankaj Pushkar (Rajiv Gandhi Foundation Legislative Support Group senior fellow-cum-former Delhi Assembly MLA).

The TPiE members, who attended, also included Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, delegation members Geshe Lharampa Atuk Tsetan, Lopon Thupten Gyaltsen, Tsaneytsang Dhondup Tashi, Geshe Ngaba Gangri, Geshe Atong Rinchen Gyaltsen, and Tsering Yangchen.

The re-launching of APIPFT is relevant after the US Congress recently passed the Promoting a Resolution to Tibet-China Dispute Act also known as Resolve Tibet Act. This legislation aims to promote a peaceful resolution to the Tibet-China dispute according to international law and the United Nations (UN) Charter through peaceful dialogue without preconditions.

Moreover this would also strengthen the efforts of Core Group for Tibetan Cause-India (CGTC-I) with former MP R K Khrimy as convenor and Tibet Support Group of Arunachal Pradesh president Tarh Tarak and secretary general Nima Sangey for honourable return of Tibetans living across the world to their motherland to lead a decent life free from coercion by China.

### Indo-Tibetan support group declares 2025 as ‘Year of Compassion’ for Dalai Lama’s 90th Birthday

10 August 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup

The Bharat-Tibet Sahayog Manch’s (BTSM) national council meeting China’s aggressive policies in Tibet and expansionist ambitions against India and declared 2025 as ‘Year of Compassion’ honouring Dalai Lama’s 90th Birthday.

The meeting held on 3 and 4 August in Sonapat, Haryana had a total of 267 members from 24 states featured the adoption of five resolutions addressing issues concerning Tibet and Sino-Indian relations. Minister of Security of the exile Tibetan government, Gyari Dolma attended the meeting as the chief guest. During the meeting, BTSM declared the year 2025 as the Karuna Varsh (Year of Compassion), in celebration of the 90th birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Recognised globally as a symbol of peace, His Holiness the Dalai Lama's birthday will be marked by year-long celebrations promoting peace, non-violence, brotherhood, and love. The group acknowledged its commitment to forming a committee to organise these celebrations, engaging communities across India and the world.

MP Indresh Kumar, the patron of Bharat Tibbat Sahyog Manch said that the ongoing sinicisation in Tibet such as the recent closure of the Renounced Ragya Gangjong Sherig Norbuling School in Golog is a clear motive of China to eradicate Tibet and its unique identity. "What kind of humanity is it that China is eradicating Tibetan identity from Tibet, except for a few thousand of them in the rest of the world". He further stated that "BTSM condemned China's actions aimed at eliminating the Tibetan race through a systematic campaign of sinicization. BTSM firmly believes that China is engaged in a conspiracy to erase Tibetan culture and identity", he said.

National working president of BTSM Harjit Singh Grewal stated "We must Keep moving, keep talking about these things, keep making programs, with other groups, and new groups. We will be blessed because our movement is for the injustice faced by Tibetans from China. For the protection of India, we must continue doing it".

The Bharat-Tibet Sahayog Manch (BTSM) is a pan-Indian Tibet support group that was founded in 1998. Over the past 26 years, BTSM has grown to establish branches across India, becoming one of the largest Tibet support groups in the country. On Wednesday another Indian support group for Tibet, the All Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet (APIPFT), was successfully revived. The APIPFT appointed Shri Bhartruhari Mahtab, the pro-tem Speaker of the 18th Lok Sabha and Member of Parliament from the BJP, as its Convener. Shri Tapir Gao, also a BJP MP, was appointed as the Co-convener in the capital of India New Delhi.

## Tibetan Parliamentary Delegation Advocates Tibet, Meets Key Indian Leaders

09 August 2024, CTA

A Tibetan parliamentary delegation led by Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, continued their Tibet outreach campaign on their fourth day of the Tibet advocacy campaign meeting key Indian leaders.

They held meetings with Shri. Sujeet Kumar, Rajya Sabha MP; Shri Kethi Reddy Suresh Reddy, Lok Sabha MP; Shri Mohammad Nisar, General Secretary of Janata Dal (United); and Shri Surendra Kumar, Co- convener of Core Group for Tibetan Cause.

The first group of the Tibetan parliamentary delegation led by Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel and consisting of MP Geshe Lharampa Atuk Tseten and MP Tsaneytsang Dhondup Tashi met with Shri Sujeet Kumar, Rajya Sabha MP. They expressed their heartfelt gratitude to the MP for his role as the convener of the All Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet for the last three years and his valuable contribution to the Tibetan cause. They presented him with a 12-point appeal letter and sought his continued support. Shri Kumar affirmed his steadfast commitment to the Tibetan cause.

Thereafter, the group met with Shri Mohammad Nisar, National Secretary, Janata Dal (United). They presented him with the 12-point appeal letter outlining the critical situation in Tibet. Shri Nisar, who has a keen interest in Buddhism and is aware of the Sino-Tibetan conflict, acknowledged the historical support of JDU leaders like Shri George Fernandes and noted that many current leaders of JDU also support Tibet.

The second group consisting of MP Lupon Thupten Gyaltsen, MP Geshe Gangri, MP Geshe Atong Rinchen Gyaltsen, and MP Tsering Yangchen met with Shri Kethi Reddy Suresh Reddy (Rajya Sabha MP, Bharat Rashtra Samithi, Telangana).

They briefed him about the critical situation in Tibet including the forced placement of children as young as six in boarding schools with the recent closure of Tibetan institutions such as the Gangjong Sherig Norbu Lobling (Jigme Gyaltsen Nationalities Vocational School) in Golok. They presented him with the 12- point appeal letter, highlighted the tragic self- immolations by 157 Tibetans protesting China's policies, and urged him to join the All Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet.

Throughout their advocacy campaign, the delegation also met with other key Indian leaders, emphasising the urgency of the situation in Tibet and the aspirations of the Tibetan people. Indian leaders expressed their support and solidarity with Tibetans. During the advocacy campaign, the delegation was accompanied by Tashi Dekyi, Acting Coordinator of

India Tibet Coordination Office; Tenzin Paljor and Tenzin Sherab, staff of Tibetan parliamentary secretariat; and Phuntsok Gyatso, Delhi based coordinator of Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile.

### **American Bar Association urges rights violations investigation in Tibet in first stand on the issue**

08 August 2024, Tibetan Review

In what has been termed as a landmark development, the American Bar Association (ABA) has on Aug 5 adopted a resolution urging the United States and the United Nations to investigate human rights violations in Tibet. The resolution came less than a month after US President Joe Biden signed the 'Resolve Tibet Act', which calls China's occupation of Tibet illegal under international law, recognizes the Tibetan people's right to self-determination, and mandates US support for a negotiated settlement of the issue.

The resolution, passed at the ABA's Annual General Meeting in Chicago, marks the first time the organization has taken a stance on the issue of Tibet, and "recommends measures to address ongoing atrocity crimes in Tibet", noted the jurist.org Aug 7. In particular, the resolution calls on the US Department of State's Office of Global Criminal Justice to investigate and publish updated findings on the question of genocide, crimes against humanity, and other human rights violations in Tibet. It also urges the UN Human Rights Council, Geneva, to appoint a special rapporteur on the situation concerning Tibet and to include the situation of Tibet on its agenda.



The ABA House of Delegates, the association's policymaking body, met Aug. 5-6 to conclude the 2024 Annual Meeting in Chicago. (Photo courtesy: ABA)

The resolution was proposed by the International Law Section (ILS) of the ABA and received unanimous support from the delegates at the meeting. Sara Sandford, Attorney and former Chair of the ILS, stated that "the American Bar Association stood up for the rule of law and protection of human rights" by adopting the resolution, the report said.

Regina M Paulose, an international criminal law attorney and Co-Chair of the International Criminal Law Committee in ILS, has welcomed the news and expressed hope for future actions by the ABA in promoting dialogue and conversations about the rule of law, justice, and accountability related to Tibet. She has said:

"The situation in Tibet has been ignored for far too long despite credible and well documented reports indicating the commission of international crimes. The steps taken in this resolution should be implemented by the international community at large – not just the United States; ensuring accountability for Tibet in the wake of PRC's actions, upholding human rights, religious liberty, cultural heritage, and ensure international court rulings are adhered to."

### **China must end its persecution of Tibetan human rights defender Tsering Tso**

08 August 2024, TCHRD

The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy strongly condemns the relentless persecution of

Tibetan human rights defender Tsering Tso, who was arbitrarily arrested and subjected to a 10-day "administrative detention" by the local police in Yushu Prefecture.

Tsering Tso, a tour guide by profession, was detained for the fourth time in five years by the Chinese authorities for exposing Chinese authorities racial discrimination practices against two Tibetan monks on their way to pilgrimage in Drachen (Ch: Bachen) County, Nagchu (Ch: Naqu) Prefecture, Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). On the evening of 10 June, at approximately 5 pm local time, while escorting a group of monks on a pilgrimage tour to Lhasa and Tsari, local police in Gomri Township, Drachen County, interrupted their journey. The police stated that the monks needed to obtain prior permission from both the Monastery Management Committee and the local government for their travel. Later that night, the local police took the two monks, including Thutop Namgyal and another monk (name withheld for security reasons), into custody and subjected them to rigorous interrogation.

Upon learning of their arrest, Tsering Tso contacted the police, pointing out how Chinese tourists required no prior permission while Tibetan monks faced restrictions and mistreatment over permit requirements. She demanded the authorities for the immediate release of the two monks, asserting that their detention by Drachen County police was unlawful and in violation of China's law and domestic policies. Initially, the Drachen County police denied detaining the monks but later admitted to

taking them for “interrogation”, suggesting “cooperation” would expedite their release.

In a recorded conversation with the local police, Tsering Tso criticised the police’s misuse of powers for harassing Tibetan pilgrims, stating that such actions contravened Xi Jinping’s policies on ethnic unity.

Tsering can be heard saying, “As law-abiding citizens of China, Tibetans should have the same rights as Han Chinese. President Xi Jinping and the government always profess ethnic unity, but why am I facing this issue? What can I do now? Will you [the local police] not implement President Xi’s policies?” demanding an end to the Drachen County authorities’ abuse of power. The police responded with vague excuses, stating that different departments had different regulations. After three hours of urging the local authorities, the monks were eventually released around 3 am.

Tso later shared the entire recordings of the event on social media, exposing Drachen County police’s discriminatory practices and illegal detention of the two monks. ‘Subsequently, upon her return to her hometown in Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, she was detained on 29 June on charges of “endangering social stability” and was later released on 8 July after ten days in administrative detention. This is the fourth time Tso has been detained for criticising the Chinese government’s discriminatory policies and advocating for equal and fair treatment of Tibetans inside Tibet.

In December last year, Drachen County police detained Tsering Tso for fifteen days, accusing her of refusing to cooperate with a traffic investigation and spreading false information online.

In October, Tsering Tso posted short videos on social media platforms, including WeChat and Douyin, exposing the Chinese government’s discriminatory practices against Tibetans. Her videos highlighted how officials from various departments were harassing Tibetan businesses in Tibet, attempting to force their closure by leaving business owners with no option but to comply.

As a result, the Yushu Public Security Bureau officers sentenced her to 15 days of administrative detention on charges of ‘picking quarrels and provoking troubles,’ an allegation frequently levied against human rights defenders, minority groups, critics, and dissenters to compel conformity with the official narrative and to stifle questioning and dissent by deterring criticism of government policies. Whether at the central or local level, the party-state exercises its authority to define and enforce these trumped-up charges, categorising any deviation from the official stance as a violation.

Similarly, on the evening of 12 November 2020, Tsering Tso was forcibly detained from her Xining

home by ten officers and taken to the Trikha (Ch: Guide) County detention centre. She was subsequently subjected to a 10-day administrative detention from 13 to 23 November and imposed a monetary fine of Yuan 1000. In addition to surviving only on steamed buns and boiled water during her detention, she was subjected to ill-treatment and intimidation, which the detention officers employed to coerce her into abandoning her vocal advocacy for democracy and the rule of law.

In 2017, while advocating for the legal right of local Tibetans to apply for passports in Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Tsering Tso was detained and interrogated by the Public Security Bureau (PSB) of Yushu Prefecture. She was brutally assaulted by an officer named Jamga from the Immigration Administration Division of the Yushu PSB, who kicked her in the head, face, chest, and abdomen. Although doctors from both the provincial and prefectural PSBs concluded that she had not sustained significant injuries, despite contrary reports from her husband and friends about the severity of her condition, the authorities fabricated a narrative to deflect responsibility. They claimed that the attack was perpetrated by ordinary civilians under the influence of alcohol, thereby denying her access to justice.

Tsering Tso is a native of Trika (Ch: Guide) County in Tsoelho (Ch: Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture but works and lives in Yushu City. She operates the Tibet World Tours and Travel, specialising in organising tours in various regions, including Lhasa City, Ngari, and other parts of Tibet, as well as destinations in other parts of the world.

Tsering Tso has consistently advocated for equal rights for Tibetans, including freedom of movement as guaranteed by the Chinese Constitution. Instead of addressing her concerns, the Chinese government has repeatedly abused its power by detaining, intimidating, and harassing her.

In its concluding observations following China’s periodic review in 2018, the UN Committee on Racial Discrimination called upon the Chinese government to revise its regulations and practices to ensure non-discriminatory determinations on passport applications and freedom of movement for Tibetans who wish to travel within the Tibet Autonomous Region and abroad. The contradictions between what is purportedly promised in the constitution against actual legal amendments and practices, especially in criminal procedures, reveal a legal system deliberately structured to navigate and manipulate domestic and international scrutiny, evading accountability for egregious human rights abuses.

Arbitrary arrests and detention are some of the pressing human rights issues that undermine the criminal justice system in China. Thousands are



incarcerated outside the formal criminal process without access to legal rights and punished for up to 15 days in jail at mercy to police discretion. We call on the Chinese government to uphold the principles of equality and non-discrimination enshrined in its constitution, immediately abolish the discriminatory passport regulations, and allow Tibetans the right to movement and access pilgrimage sites in Tibet.

### **Tibetan athlete fails to medal in her latest Olympics but is 'happy'**

07 August 2024, RFA, Jeff Wang

Choeying Kyi, the only Tibetan ever to win a gold medal, was cheered on by Tibetans around the world.

Choeying Kyi and her partner in the race walk mixed relay marathon finished well outside of medal contention on Wednesday, a result she immediately described as "not good, not good, not good!"

But after having a moment to catch her breath, the lone Tibetan athlete at the 2024 Paris Olympics and the only Tibetan ever to win gold said that ultimately she had accomplished something of greater consequence.

"I have participated in four Olympic Games, and I was the only Tibetan representative in all four of them," Kyi told reporters after completing the race.

"I have persisted for so long because I really want to influence some children. I see more and more Tibetan athletes, and I feel very happy. I think it's all worth it. This cannot be proven by a medal."



Choeying Kyi speaks to reporters after competing in the race walk mixed relay marathon at the 2024 Summer Olympics, Aug. 7, 2024, in Paris.

Kyi and her teammate, He Xianghong, finished 14th in the 42.2-kilometers (26.2 miles) mixed team relay, which made its Olympic debut in Paris on Wednesday. They were among the 25 teams that competed in four roughly 10-km stages with the competitors – man, woman, man, woman – alternating in the race.

He Xianghong faced a three-minute penalty at the 29-km mark for committing three violations of the

game's rules, which caused the team's ranking to drop sharply.

Kyi and He Xianghong finished the race in 2 hours, 59 minutes and 13 seconds, nearly 10 minutes behind the Spanish team that won but ahead of the other Chinese team that was competing.

Kyi – known as Qieyang Shijie in Chinese – said she knew the penalty would cost her team a medal but that she still pushed hard over her last leg.

"The main thing is to show the spirit of the Chinese team," she told reporters.

Kyi and He Xianghong won the mixed team's 35-km race walk at the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou, east China's Zhejiang Province, in October 2023.

#### **Mixed emotions**

Before the race in Paris, Tibetan netizens, including those inside Tibet, extended well wishes to Kyi, referring to her as the "Snow Princess of the Mountains," "Daughter of the Snowland" and "Pride of the Tibetan Race."

Along the route at the foot of the Eiffel Tower, Tibetan Parisians waved the Tibetan national flag as she raced past and shouted "Choeying Kyi, Go for it!" Afterward, some expressed mixed emotions about the scene.

"As a Tibetan, I was overwhelmed with joy to be able to witness a Tibetan girl taking part in this race at the Paris Olympics," said Tenzin Namgyal, a Paris resident. "But I was also overcome with sadness and a deep hope that one day Tibetan athletes will represent Tibet proudly under the Tibetan national flag. And I pray that such a day would come for Tibetans."

Online, Tibetans expressed similar feelings.

"In sports, it is not important to be the first. It's the joy and pride and inspiration she brought to 6 million Tibetans," Loten Namling, a Tibetan living in Switzerland, wrote on Facebook.

"Even if she had won the gold medal, China would have taken it away from her, but China cannot take away the joy and inspiration she gave to her people! This is a victory more valuable than a gold medal," he said.

Kyi was born in 1990 to humble beginnings in Haiyan County in Haibei Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai province but rose to be among the best in her sport.

She competed in the previous three Olympic Games in London, Rio and Tokyo. In 2012, Kyi originally finished third in the women's 20-km race walk, earning a bronze medal.

But 11 years later she made history when she was awarded the gold after the original first and second-place finishers were disqualified due to doping violations. Kyi also won a silver medal in the 20-km race at the 13th National Games in China in 2017.

"I felt both happy and sad when I heard the news," Kyi wrote on social media upon hearing the news in 2023 that she was an Olympic champion.

"I'm happy because I could be the champion I am in my heart and I could have an Olympic gold medal. But I'm also regretful as I didn't experience what an Olympic gold medalist should have experienced."

"Let bygones be bygones, and I will always try to work hard to get what I want," she added. "Tomorrow is a new beginning and a fresh start. Thank you all for your support and blessings over the years. May you all be healthy, safe and happy."

### **'Pro-democracy' academic who spied on Tibetans etc for China set for Jan 9 sentencing**

07 August 2024, Tibetan Review

Wang Shujun wanted to be seen as a democracy activist with a passion to see his country become a free and open society, but a court in New York City has found that he was wearing that hat only to spy on critics of China, including Tibetans. The 76-year-old Chinese-American academic was convicted Aug 6 for illegally collecting information for Beijing.

A federal jury has found Wang guilty on four counts including acting as a foreign agent without notifying the US attorney general and lying to US authorities following a week-long trial in Brooklyn federal court. He is to be sentenced on Jan 9, 2025 and could be jailed for up to 25 years, reported Reuters and other news agencies Aug 7,

Federal prosecutors had said Wang portrayed himself as a proponent of democracy and fierce opponent of the ruling Communist Party of China (CP) to gain the trust of his targeted groups. His contacts were stated to include Hong Kong pro-democracy activists, supporters of Taiwan declaring independence as well as Uyghur and Tibetan campaign groups.

Prosecutors had accused Wang of interacting with them only for the purpose of spying on their activists and sharing information with China's main intelligence agency, the Ministry of State Security (MSS).

Wang composed emails – styled as "diaries" – that recounted conversations, meetings and plans of various critics of the Chinese government. He saved them as email drafts that Chinese intelligence officials could access and read by signing in with a shared password. He did not send those emails in order to avoid creating a digital trail.

The emails included those that talked about people planning demonstrations during various visits that Chinese President Xi Jinping made to the US.

The indictment said Wang also wrote separate encrypted messages that contained details of

upcoming pro-democracy events and plans for him to meet with prominent Hong Kong dissidents.

Wang lived a double life for over a decade. He held himself out as a critic of the Chinese government so that he could build rapport with people who actually opposed it, then betrayed their trust by telling Beijing what they said and planned, prosecutors have said. "The indictment could have been the plot of a spy novel, but the evidence is shockingly real that the defendant was a secret agent for the Chinese government," Brooklyn-based US attorney Breon Peace has said in a statement after the verdict.

Prosecutors have also charged four Chinese intelligence officers who allegedly worked as Wang's handlers. They are all at large and believed to be in China.

Wang was arrested in Mar 2022. He came to New York in 1994 to teach after doing so at a Chinese university and later became a naturalized US citizen. He helped to found the Queens-based Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang Memorial Foundation, named for two CPC leaders who were sympathetic to calls for reform in the 1980s, said the AP Aug 7.

The indictment was part of the US Department of Justice's crackdown in recent years on "transnational repression" by Beijing, referring to its alleged attempts at overseas surveillance and intimidation.

During a series of FBI interviews from 2017 to 2021, Wang initially said he had no contacts with the MSS, but he later acknowledged on videotape that the intelligence agency asked him to gather information on democracy advocates and that he sometimes did, FBI agents testified.

Still, Wang had pleaded not guilty. His lawyers has cast him as someone who was forthcoming with US authorities about activities he saw as innocuous, and they disputed that his communications were truly under Chinese officials' direction or control, the report said.

Liu Pengyu, a spokesperson for the Chinese embassy, has claimed in a statement Aug 6 that he was unaware of the specifics of the Wang case but that China opposed the United States' "slander," "political manipulation" and "malicious fabrication of the so-called 'transnational suppression' narrative and its blatant prosecution of officials from relevant Chinese departments."

### **Tibet House Japan Starts Three-month Tibetan Language Class**

05 August 2024, CTA

The Tibet House Japan, a cultural wing of the Liaison Office of H.H. the Dalai Lama for Japan and East Asia, began its in-person and online three-month language and culture class on 3 August, 2024.

Representative Dr. Tsewang Gyalpo Arya welcomed the participants and thanked them for taking an interest in the Tibetan language. He explained the contents of the class and what they will learn at the end of the class.

Representative Arya introduced the two staff, Tashi Yangzom and Chisa Tselha of the office, who will help take the class. He further said that along with the Tibetan conversation, reading, and writing class, the office will endeavour to enlighten the students on Tibetan religion and culture.

While participants from Tokyo and neighbouring areas will attend the class at the office, others from faraway prefectures will participate online. Some of the participants were repeat students who said they came again to refresh what they had learned earlier. Some elderly participants said that their interest in the Tibetan language was to gain some information on Tibetan religion and culture.

### **Lower TCV hosts first residential school for overseas Tibetan students**

04 August 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhondup

Lower TCV school, a pioneer school in the exile Tibetan set up based in India celebrated the opening ceremony of the first residential school for Tibetan students from overseas on Friday in a bid to preserve the Tibetan identity and language for children based in the west.

The initiative by Tibetan Children Village for overseas Tibetan children living abroad aims to impart Tibetan language skills and cultural traditions, while simultaneously teaching modern education. At the moment, only students from the fourth to eighth grades are enrolled.



Tibetan children and their parents from overseas at the opening function (Photo/LTCV Facebook)

Only five overseas children ( 3 boys and 2 girls) have arrived in school from the registered eight. The school which was on the verge of closing in 2020

has now 73 students mostly from Arunachal, Tawang and the Himalayan region.

TCV Director Sonam Sichoe said that initially, the aim was to gather around sixty students from abroad. Fifteen students were enrolled earlier but due to visa issues, the numbers further dwindled. He further stated, "It's sad to see only a few children have enrolled on this programme but regardless of the numbers, the school will proceed as planned".

He said, "In Tibet, the Chinese authorities are closing schools and transferring Tibetan children to colonial boarding schools to sinicise the young Tibetan children. The Tibetan children inside Tibet do not have the opportunity and facilities to study the Tibetan language but in exile, we have both facilities and opportunities due to the efforts of His Holiness the 14 Dalai Lama, hence we have to preserve the Tibetan language and culture."

Sichoe further stated that critics of the initiatives say that "this initiative by TCV is to make profits but it's not true the sole aim of this programme is to provide Tibetan education". The fees for overseas students cost US\$350 per child per month for tuition, room and board.

Lobsang Sherab from New York, a parent of two children who enrolled in the school, shared his thoughts with Phayul, "The primary reason for bringing my children here is to instil Tibetan character in them. Education can be procured from anywhere, but my hope is to instil kindness and the Tibetan nature in my children. I would be satisfied if my children acquired Tibetan character and language. In foreign countries, it is hard to learn Tibetan ways. There, the children are Tibetan only in name; only their face is Tibetan, but their behaviour and personality are like Westerners, which saddens the heart."

He further explained, "The weekend schools in New York are only gathered on weekends, so the time is very limited, and the children speak English in the classes. There are no substantial results in terms of inculcating Tibetan language, culture, and traditions in the children, which is why I brought my children here. Although my children are not very excited to go to school here, it is up to the parents to decide the future of their children. I have thought for their future, keeping in mind the importance of preserving the Tibetan identity."

In their social media handles, the school expressed excitement and anticipation stating "We are excited to see these students integrate into our community and bring their diverse perspectives and experiences. The entire school is abuzz with anticipation and enthusiasm as we prepare to support them in this new journey. Some students are still yet to report they will soon join here. We wish them the best of luck for their upcoming new session in the new

school and hope they find this experience both enriching and memorable”.

### **Richard Gere helping to produce documentary on Dalai Lama's message of kindness**

03 August 2024, Tibetan Review

Hollywood star Richard Gere, possibly the world's most famous lay Tibetan Buddhist as well as Tibet activist, is helping to produce a documentary about the Dalai Lama and his message of peace, reported aussiedlerbote.de Aug 2, citing an interview with the Süddeutsche Zeitung.

Together with producer and director Oren Moverman (58), Gere, 74, will serve as an executive producer for the Swiss documentary “Wisdom of Happiness”.

As stated in the press release, the film will “create a powerful cinematic exploration of the inner thoughts of the Dalai Lama”, the report said.

The documentary is set to be released worldwide in theatres in fall/winter 2024 and aims to be “a philosophical testament of the Dalai Lama on the big screen”. Regarding the potential impact of the documentary, Gere has said, “This is a fine film that can have a great impact on the future.”

Fellow producer Moverman has added: “As a filmmaker, I am deeply grateful for the invitation to participate in this truly unique film that so beautifully translates the message of kindness into the visual language of cinema.”

Gere is the Board Chair of Washington-based International Campaign for Tibet which researches on and advocates for Tibet. He has taken part in lobbying efforts in the US Congress, including hearings, on Tibet.

He remains banned from Oscar ceremonies for speaking up on Tibet while China's ban on his films has greatly affected his Hollywood career.

### **Sikkim: Tibetan Association hails MP Dorjee Lepcha's statement clarifying border as Tibet's, not China's**

02 August 2024, India Today, Sujal Pradhan

The Tibetan Association has expressed its gratitude to Rajya Sabha MP Dorjee Tsering Lepcha for his statement that the border from Arunachal Pradesh to Sikkim is Tibet's, not China's. This statement has brought joy to Tibetans globally and highlighted Tibet's independent status before Chinese occupation.

The various branches of the Tibetan Association has extended gratitude to Rajya Sabha MP, Dorjee Tsering Lepcha for stating that the border from Arunachal Pradesh to Sikkim is the Tibet border and not China border. In a press release, the association

comprising Tibetan Freedom Movement; Regional Tibetan Youth Congress, Gangtok (TYC); Regional Tibetan Women Association, Gangtok; Domey Association; Utsang Association; Dokham Chushi Khandruk, on behalf of the entire Tibetan community of Sikkim and Tibetans residing all over the globe, thanked Lepcha for “the immense love, support and for his bold statement.” The Rajya Sabha MP in his statement said, “This border, from Arunachal Pradesh to Sikkim, is approximately 1400 kilometers. We refer to it as the China border. It is not the China border; it is the Tibet border. Because along the entire Line of Actual Control (LAC), there is no China, the entire area is Tibet. Call it the Tibet Border.”

He also stated that it is not the China border, but rather the Tibet border, and we should refer to it as such. “By doing this, the name of the dragon will be erased!” He also demanded that the government refer to this border as the Tibet border instead of the China border. “Whether it is the Army, GREF, BRO, or any agency operating through the Central Government, they should be given directions to not treat it as the China border but as the Tibet border,” he said.

“Your statement has brought so much joy and happiness in the faces of Tibetans residing all over the world. The voices we raise and want the world to know that Tibet was forcefully occupied by the communist Chinese regime and further Tibet was always an independent country,” the members said, further stating, “Sir we wish you long healthy life ahead and success for your future endeavours.”

## **July**

### **Central Tibetan Administration seeks US action on exiled Tibetans as Chinese repression intensifies**

30 July 2024, Take One

The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), based in Dharamshala, which represents Tibetans living in exile, highlighted the need for the United States to provide concrete assistance to Tibetans who are already experiencing backlash from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

In a post on X, the CTA emphasised that while the US Resolve Tibet Act is a significant step in challenging the CCP's attempts to rewrite Tibetan history, it's crucial for the US to support the Tibetan community actively as they face increasing retaliation. The CTB on X said, “The act takes a landmark step in challenging the CCP's historical revisionism. But the US should be prepared to offer concrete support to



the Tibetan community, which is already beginning to feel the CCP's retaliation."

The US Resolve Tibet Act is a legislative measure aimed at supporting Tibetans and addressing issues related to Chinese policies in Tibet. The act typically focuses on enhancing US support for the Tibetan people, promoting human rights, and challenging Chinese government actions that are perceived as oppressive or unjust.

In the 1950s, Tibet came under the control of the People's Republic of China (PRC) following a military invasion. This event prompted the Dalai Lama, Tibet's spiritual leader, to flee to India in 1959, where he set up a government in exile. China considers Tibet a fundamental part of its territory and has worked to integrate it into the broader Chinese state. This has involved relocating Han Chinese settlers to Tibet and enforcing strict regulations on Tibetan political and religious practices.

Human rights organisations and Tibetan advocacy groups have raised alarms about various issues in Tibet, including political repression, restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly, arbitrary detentions of activists, and cultural suppression.

Reports also indicate significant environmental damage and resource exploitation in Tibetan areas. On the global stage, Tibet's situation remains a sensitive diplomatic matter, with some countries and international bodies expressing concern over human rights violations and advocating for peaceful dialogue between China and Tibetan representatives to address these issues.

### **Panel Discussion on 'Forced Closure of Ragya Sherig Norling Educational Institution: Causes and Impacts'**

29 July 2024, CTA

The Tibet Policy Institute, a research center affiliated with the Central Tibetan Administration, hosted a panel discussion titled "Forced Closure of Ragya Sherig Norling Educational Institute: Causes and Impacts" this morning at 10 a.m. in the TPI Hall.

The event featured distinguished panellists, including Pema Tso, Member of the Tibetan Parliament and Chief Editor of Tibet Times; Dawa Tsering, Director of the Tibet Policy Institute, CTA; and Shede Dawa, Researcher at Tibet Watch and former student of Ragya Sherig Norling Educational Institute.

TPI's Deputy Director, Zamlha Tempa Gyaltsen, moderated the discussion. He provided an overview of the subject matter and introduced the topic. He brought up 'The Last Class,' a story by Alphonse Daudet, exploring different aspects of French nationalism and identity. The protagonist was a young boy attending his last French class, drawing

parallels to the situation of Ragya Sherig Norling Educational Institute.

The panel discussion commenced with poignant opening remarks from each panellist, delving into the recent 'Forced Closure of Ragya Sherig Norling Educational Institute (Jigme Gyaltsen Nationalities Vocational High School in Golog) in Tibet' and its multifaceted implications within their respective domains of expertise.

Parliamentarian Pema Tso highlighted the challenges and restrictions Ragya Sherig Norling faced in its educational endeavours. She first received the news on the morning of 14 July 2024, at 5:35 a.m. via mobile, learning that the school had been closed two hours earlier and that all students were being sent home. Following this, Tibetans inside and outside Tibet started writing articles about the closure and sharing videos of students crying on the school grounds. This news spread across almost all social media platforms, raising questions among Tibetans about the reason behind the closure. She stated, "Between 1994 and 2021, more than 2,200 students graduated from this institution, and 253 were former staff members. As of 2021, this year in 2024, more than 120 students have graduated from the same institute." She also provided a brief history of the founder of Jigme Ragya Sherig School, Gen Jigme Gyaltsen.

Shede Dawa, a former student of Ragya Sherig Norling Educational Institute, shared his experiences and memories from his school days. He also discussed the history of the school's founder, Gen Jigme Gyaltsen. He recalled the latter emphasising the importance of the Tibetan language for the Tibetan people, asserting that without their own language, they would fall behind in society. He remarked that Gen Jigme wasn't someone of high social status or wealth who established the university but rather a humble monk from a nomadic region who made it possible through immense effort and dedication to the Tibetan language.

In his account of being a student at the institute, Shide Dawa shared that he initially had no interest in Tibetan. However, under the educational guidance of Gen Jigme Gyaltsen, he was eventually able to enroll in the institute for further studies. "Gen Jigme Gyaltsen consistently emphasised that preserving the Tibetan language and writing was crucial for the survival of the Tibetan people." He further added that Gen Jigme used to inspire students by saying that just as a Chinese or English person must know their language first, so must Tibetans. His inspiring words and active participation in every co-curricular activity motivated the students to embrace their heritage and language.

Geshe Akuk Tseten, a member of the Tibetan Parliament and a special guest on the panel,



highlighted the significance of the school for Tibetans both inside and outside Tibet. He explained that the Chinese government shut down the school because they saw it as a threat. He also mentioned that Jigme Gyaltsen, a student of the Panchen Lama, sold his mother's jewellery to establish the school. Recognizing his noble intention, some monks assisted him without any compensation. He noted that Rejia Sherab Ling was not only a center for Tibetan language studies but also for logic and contemporary education.

Tenzin Lekshey, the spokesman and Additional Secretary of the Department of Information and International Relations, expressed strong opposition to the Chinese government's policy of shutting down Tibetan schools and replacing them with boarding schools. He argued that these measures aim to undermine Tibetan culture, religion, and people. Tenzin Pema, Additional Secretary for Education at the Central Tibetan Administration; Kalsang Dolma, deputy secretary of the Tibetan Women's League; Sonam Tsering, secretary of the Tibetan Youth League; and Lobsang Yangtso, director of the Tibet Affairs Office, also spoke on the matter, highlighting its seriousness.

TPI Director Dawa Tsering addressed the future prospects for Tibetan language education in light of the closure of Ragya Sherig Norling. He emphasised that to shape a positive future for Tibet, it is crucial to understand and address the current situation. "Presently, the Chinese government is actively closing monasteries and Tibetan schools. This is not the first instance of such actions; recent events include the mass relocation of Tibetans due to hydropower projects in Tibetan areas and the downstream regions outside Tibet. These measures are part of a broader strategy by Chinese authorities to eradicate the Tibetan language and culture systematically," he added.

The panel discussion was also attended by Tibetan parliamentarians Geshe Lharampa Atuk Tseten, Geshe Atong Rinchen Gyaltsen and Geshe Ngaba Gangri, along with Additional Secretaries Tenzin Lekshey and Tenzin Pema, and representatives from various Tibetan NGOs and media outlets came together to engage in insightful discussions.

### **Tibet Represented at the Opening Ceremony of Paris Olympic Games**

27 July 2024, CTA

Representative Rigzin Genkhang led a Tibetan delegation comprising Co-ordinator Thupten Tsering, Tibetan Community President Pema Rinchen and former President Ven. Tenzin Penpa, as invited guests to the opening Ceremony of the Paris Olympic

Games along the Seine river, flowing through the heart of the city of light.

Despite Tibet not being represented at the Olympics alongside other nations, the presence of this delegation was crucial to represent Tibet and raise awareness and advocate for the ongoing Tibetan situation.

It may be noted here that France, with one the highest number of Tibet Support Groups, is also home to the largest Tibetan diaspora in Europe.

Proudly displaying their national flag, which quickly attracted a lot of interest and questions, the Tibetan delegation joined the French people in this historic moment, celebrating the Olympic spirit.

-Report filed by Bureau du Tibet, Brussels

### **Sikyong Penpa Tsering Meets US Congress Members in Washington DC, Expresses Gratitude on Behalf of Tibetans**

26 July 2024, CTA

From 22 to 25 July, Sikyong Penpa Tsering visited Washington DC for a series of official engagements, during which he expressed gratitude to US legislators in person for their support of the "Resolve Tibet Act."

In addition to meeting with the US Congress members, Sikyong had meetings with the State Department and White House officials on Tibet-related issues. Sikyong also participated in a closed-door expert roundtable at Brookings Institution, moderated by its China centre director, Ryan Hass. Other engagements included meetings with USAID officials and congressional staffers.

A reception was organised at the Capitol Visitor Center to mark the signing of "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act" into law. Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the Tibetan political leader, expressed the gratitude of the Tibetan people to the sponsors of the Bill. The reception was attended by Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi, Chairman Michael McCaul, Congressman Jim McGovern, and Congressman Joe Wilson. A video with a collection of Tibetan people thanking the United States was also screened at the reception and enjoyed by the attendees.

Sikyong also attended the community celebration of the Resolve Tibet Act becoming law at the Capital Area Tibetan Community Center and addressed the gathering. In his speech, Sikyong said, "It's very rare for Tibetans to celebrate. There were times when Tibetans celebrated when His Holiness was honoured with the Nobel Peace Prize, the US Congressional Gold Medal, and recognitions from many institutions and organisations or otherwise; the Tibet issue became known internationally because of Tibetans suffering inside Tibet. And, for the first time, this is a

very momentous day for the Tibetans that we celebrate because of the government's decision to pass legislation like the Resolve Tibet Act, which challenges every aspect of China's claim on Tibet."

Regarding the development of the "Resolve Tibet Act," Sikyong Penpa Tsering expressed his gratitude, stating, "I want to extend my thanks to Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi. This bill originated from her office during her tenure as Speaker in 2022. At that time, Richard Gere as the President of the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), I as Sikyong, and the team from the Office of Tibet and ICT met with Speaker Pelosi and Congressman Jim McGovern. During this meeting, we strategise on three basic issues: organising a World Parliamentary Convention on Tibet in Washington, DC—since the last one was held in 1997 and this was organised in June 2022, and around the same time, the testimony on Tibet's historical status by Tenzin Namgyal Tethong, Ellen Bork, Chinese historian Professor Lao, and Professor Michael, the four of them testified before the Congressional-Executive Commission on China. Based on that testimony, this "Resolve Tibet Act" was sponsored by Congressman Jim McGovern and Chairman McCaul in the house, and Senator Todd Young and Senator Jeff Markley in the Senate with the support of Senator Cardin as Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. We are deeply thankful for their support."

Sikyong further added, "As Speaker Pelosi said when she visited Dharamshala, she mentioned that this was also due to the Tibetan people that this bill got passed. So, I am gonna thank all the Tibetans in America, the Tibet Support Groups, the Tibetan associations, the Tibetan advocates, particularly the younger generations of Tibet who have been at the Hill this year in March. And I know that there has been a lot of input and support also from the Congressional staffers, some of whom are present here, who have been architects of this bill."

During the weekend, Sikyong will be visiting Tibetan communities in Madison-Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Chicago.

### **International Campaign for Tibet alleges "systematic censorship" of Tibetan content on Chinese platforms**

25 July 2024, ANI

The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), in its recent report, has highlighted the "severe challenges" faced by Tibetan users on platforms like Douyin and other prominent Chinese social media channels due to a "systematic censorship" of Tibetan content.

The report stated that these platforms are part of Beijing's broader strategy to diminish Tibetan

language and culture in favour of promoting Mandarin.

Despite assertions by Chinese authorities that they support minority languages, including Tibetan, there has been no official acknowledgment or response to protests from Tibetans regarding these discriminatory practices, claims ICT.

According to the International Campaign for Tibet, Tibetans engaging in online commerce and communication encounter significant barriers such as blocked livestreams and restricted comments in Tibetan.

This censorship severely limits their ability to freely engage online. Even Tibetan medical professionals are impacted, as they are unable to effectively communicate with patients in Tibetan due to language restrictions imposed by platforms like Douyin.

The report underscores that these actions are part of a deliberate effort to enhance the dominance of Mandarin while suppressing Tibetan cultural expression. This contradicts official claims of respecting ethnic minority languages and suggests governmental complicity in enforcing policies that undermine Tibetan language rights, despite constitutional protections.

This situation raises broader concerns about freedom of expression and cultural preservation in Tibet, echoing ongoing struggles faced by Tibetan advocates like Tashi Wangchuk, who continue to advocate for language rights amid repression.

ICT further stated that the stringent censorship and monitoring of Tibetan-related content on social media platforms like Douyin reflect a systematic approach to control narratives and silence dissenting voices, aligning with the broader objectives of the Chinese Communist Party.

This suppression extends globally, as seen in instances where platforms such as TikTok are used to harass Tibetan communities abroad, highlighting the international impact of these restrictive policies. The ongoing restrictions on Tibetan language use online and the lack of official response to grievances highlight a troubling pattern of neglect and suppression. This situation raises serious concerns about the future of Tibetan cultural identity and linguistic heritage under Chinese governance, the report added.

In the Tibetan region, the Chinese government has promoted a bilingual education policy where Mandarin Chinese is increasingly emphasised over Tibetan.

This policy has led to Mandarin becoming the primary language of instruction in many schools, reducing the prominence of Tibetan language education. There have been reports of restrictions on teaching Tibetan language in schools beyond a

certain level, particularly in higher education institutions. This limits opportunities for Tibetan language development and higher education in Tibetan.

As per reports, the Chinese government exercises strict control over textbooks and publications in Tibetan areas, ensuring that materials align with state-approved narratives and ideologies. This control extends to content related to Tibetan language and culture. (ANI)

### Secretary Tsering Yangkyi is Appointed Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama at Office of Tibet, London

24 July 2024, CTA

In a circular issued today, 24 July 2024, the Kashag announced the appointment of Secretary Tsering Yangkyi as the Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama at the Office of Tibet in London.

Currently serving as the Secretary of the Election and Public Service Commission (CTA), Secretary Tsering Yangkyi's appointment aligns with Article 19 (1) of the Public Service Commission's rules and regulations. This article stipulates that the Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama at the Offices of Tibet must be appointed by the Kashag in the presence of Sikyong and the Kalons.



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### 'People's Court' finds President Xi guilty of 'crime against humanity' in Tibet, verdict refutes China's propaganda

21 July 2024, Tibetan Review

While defeated rulers and fallen military leaders of smaller countries with limited global influence have faced judicial scrutiny and punishment under international law, those in the Communist Party of

China leadership, topped by President Xi Jinping, continue their crimes against humanity, including acts bordering on genocide, with impunity. This has outraged the global civil society which recently held a 'people's court' hearing in The Hague on China's acts of aggression in Taiwan, crimes against humanity in Tibet, and genocide against the Uyghur population in Xinjiang. The tribunal found Chinese President Xi Jinping guilty on most counts and issued a symbolic arrest warrant against him on Jul 12.

"The evidence-backed findings affirm the occurrence of severe crimes against humanity, lending credibility to calls for justice and accountability. They may compel countries to impose sanctions or reconsider their economic and political ties with China," noted the jurist.org Jul 13.

The court confirmed charges of crimes against humanity against Chinese President Xi Jinping based on evidence of his effective control over the state organs committing widespread and systematic violations in Tibet and Xinjiang with knowledge of the situation.

Regarding China's actions in Tibet, the court confirmed crimes against humanity, including forcible transfer of children, imprisonment, and persecution. Judge Fonseca has said, "We believe there are substantial grounds to infer a widespread and systematic attack directed against the civilian population with knowledge of cyber attacks. Thus, the court confirms counts two, three and four of the indictment."

The 'people's court' known as 'The Court of the Citizens of the World', comprised of Former Ambassador for War Crimes Stephen Rapp, Former Madela appointee before the Constitutional Court of South Africa Zak Yacoob, and lawyer and international law specialist Bhavani Fonseca, and held its hearing from Jul 8-11, 2024. The cases were meticulously presented through opening statements, expert testimonies, and victim narratives, the report noted.

Apart from lending credibility to calls for justice and accountability, the tribunal's judgment may challenge domestic Chinese propaganda and prompt the younger Chinese populace to question their government's policies. The rulings imply that human rights violations will not go unnoticed and signal to authoritarian regimes worldwide that justice may ultimately prevail. The tribunal's findings validate the survivors' and advocates' efforts against atrocities, reinforcing their hopes for eventual accountability, noted the jurist.org report.

"The tribunal has imparted a powerful moral and legal message against human rights violations, even if current geopolitical realities might impede immediate action. Its comprehensive findings and unequivocal moral stance ensure these crimes remain

in global consciousness. This judgment provides enduring hope that future international legal bodies might hold even the most powerful leaders accountable, thus upholding the rights of vulnerable communities worldwide," the report said.

The court successfully concluded its session despite facing harassment and attempts to shut it down with fake threats that called the trial illegal by citing a series of alleged violations under Article 118 of the Dutch Penal Code "including but not limited to impersonation of judicial authority, violation of public order, defamation, false imprisonment, and complicity in criminal activities."

Besides, an alleged spy, disguised as a new legal volunteer from Italy, was stated to have claimed on Jul 2 with no reason in an unauthorised group message to all staff members that the court was not paying its staff, was acting 'unjustly,' while also questioning the court's moral legitimacy. The individual was stated to have "provoked fellow volunteers to resign and sent an email to legal participants from the official email accounts, asking them not to attend the trial this coming week in The Hague against President Xi."

The pursuit of peace and human rights remains a universal endeavour, with the China Tribunal paving the way for a more just world, the report concluded.

### **"China cannot just change history", says Tibet President in exile as US passes Resolve Tibet act**

21 July 2024, The Economic Times

US House recently passed the Tibet bill S-138, urging China to resolve the Tibet dispute. This bill also known as the Resolve Tibet Act, refutes Beijing's claims about Tibet and urges China to stop spreading disinformation about Tibet's history and the Tibetan people.

The bill was followed by the visit of a bipartisan group of US lawmakers led by Congressman Michael McCaul and former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Dharamshala where they met with the Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama. The visit raised the hackles of the Chinese government which had described the bill as being groundless and futile.

The passage of the bill, however, has given a fillip to the Tibetan struggle for independence. Speaking exclusively to ANI, Tibetan President in exile, Penpa Tsering, said they want a clear message to go out to China that it cannot just change history.

"This is part of the strategy that we adopted since we came into this job in May 2021. The first time I travelled to the United States was in April 2022... we informed Speaker Pelosi that this is our changing strategy and we need to focus on the extremes... There cannot be a middle way... There could be political, social, economic and educational

dimensions... One extreme is the present situation of Tibet, occupied under the repressive communist government... The other extreme is the historical status of Tibet as an independent state," Tsering said. "We have reasons for doing this. First is to send a message to China that they cannot just change history... The second message is to the international community that without understanding Tibet's history, how can they parrot what the Chinese government wants them to say over the last 60-65 years?" Tsering added.

Congressman Michael McCaul who leads the Republican House Committee on Foreign Affairs had led a delegation that called on the Dalai Lama after the Resolve Tibet bill was passed in the House said that the Chinese government has been working to stomp out Tibetan culture.

"I hope our visit served as a symbol of the U.S. government's support for the people of Tibet and the friendship between our two peoples," Congressman McCaul said.

"The CCP's (Chinese Communist Party) propaganda campaign can't hide the truth: the people of Tibet have a unique culture, history, and religion that have never been part of China, despite the regime's lies. The CCP is working to stomp out Tibetan culture. This cannot be allowed to happen," he added.

Tibetan President in exile Penpa Tsering agrees with that view and says that for the first time the Chinese claim that Tibet is part of the Peoples Republic of China is being challenged.

"There are a lot of discrepancies in China's logic towards history and they have been shifting the goalpost all the time. This Tibet Resolve Act focuses on the part countering China's disinformation on Tibetan history, its people and His Holiness... The first issue is that it's an unresolved conflict. Because China thinks Tibet is already resolved, they have managed to convince the world that Tibet is part of PRC and that is being challenged for the first time," Tsering said.

"They keep saying there is not one country that recognizes the independence of Tibet. The law does not say we recognize independence, but it challenges China's narrative that they have not accepted Tibet as a part of China... In the fourth part of this bill, these are all acting against China's narrative, and it is a new tool in our hand," Tsering added. The new act has now opened a fresh standoff point between the United States and China. China's Foreign Ministry has questioned the Resolve Tibet act, saying the move is pure interference in the country's internal affairs.

## **Tibetan govt-in-exile takes on Chinese embassy, says Tibet not 'internal affair'**

21 July 2024, The Economic Times

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## **Tibetan govt in exile to issue map of Tibet to counter China's 'cartographic aggression'**

20 July 2024, MyIndMakers

The Tibetan government-in-exile plans to release a map of Tibet founded on historical records, featuring original boundaries and place names, in response to China's "cartographic aggression" and its practice of renaming locations to assert claims over disputed territories.

Penpa Tsering, the Sikyong or political leader of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) based in Dharamshala, announced that the CTA will utilise various research studies by experts on Tibet and ancient maps to create a new map. This map will be made available online for Tibetans and academics globally.

"We are doing this so that Tibetans living around the world get to know the real history of their country, and so that the memories of the Tibetans living inside Tibet don't fade away in the face of China's cartographic aggression," Tsering told HT.

"This is the overall Chinese strategy, it's nothing new. Renaming [of places] has happened before with Tibet. They did it last year too. If you look at the overall Chinese strategy, they use only Chinese names for [territories they claim, such as] Senkaku islands of Japan, or islands near Taiwan or Spratly Islands in the South China Sea," said Tsering, who like most of the current Tibetan leadership in exile was born in India and has never been to Tibet.

"The Chinese have their own names for islands they claim, not the names coined by other countries. They have also done something similar in Arunachal Pradesh. Within China, they are trying to erase the historical background of these names."

Tsering stated that the CTA will collaborate with a Tibetan cartographer based at Stanford to develop a searchable map of Tibet, with the project expected to be completed within six months to a year.

"We will then make it available online for everyone, otherwise there is no reason to have this map. It will provide a complete picture of Tibet," he said.



Another project taken up by the CTA is developing a search engine with Tibetan names of places. "Now, if I go to Google, I can't recognise names or places inside Tibet. We're going to do research on names of every place inside Tibet, and their Tibetan origins," Tsering said.

According to a recent report by Human Rights Watch, Chinese authorities have forcibly relocated 500 villages, displacing over 140,000 residents in the Tibet Autonomous Region since 2016. They have also renamed numerous places across the ancient kingdom of Tibet.

In addition to renaming Tibet as Xizang and establishing the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) in 1965, Chinese authorities have incorporated several regions of the ancient kingdom of Tibet into Chinese provinces. For example, Tibetan officials noted that the region of Amdo is now part of Qinghai province, the Kham region was included in Sichuan province, and some other areas were integrated into Yunnan province.

The map being developed by the CTA will address these historical issues. Tsering expressed his belief that other countries facing similar problems with China should also push back.

"Countries with disputes in the South China Sea and in the case of the Senkaku Islands – everyone should push back against their designs. Because these designs amplify China's hegemonistic ambitions despite their denials," he said.

China refers to the northeastern Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh as "Zangnan" and claims the strategic region as part of South Tibet. In recent years, China has renamed dozens of towns and geographical features in Arunachal Pradesh to assert its claim on the region. The Indian government has dismissed such moves, stating that the state will always remain a part of India.

Referring to the Resolve Tibet Act, signed by US President Joe Biden on 12th July, which aims to pressure China for a negotiated settlement regarding Tibet's demand for greater autonomy, Tsering said, "The main issue is that we were trying to push against China's disinformation on Tibetan history. [The Act] says the US doesn't recognise China's assertion that Tibet has been part of China since ancient times."

### **Dr Gyal Lo's Makes Presentation on China's Colonial-style Boarding Schools in Tibet at a Conference in Tokyo**

20 July 2024, CTA

Tibet House Japan and the Asian Democracy Movement organised a talk and press conference by Tibetan Educational Sociologist Dr. Gyal Lo and his team comprising Dorjee Tsetan, Tibetan Parliamentarian and Asia Program Manager at Tibet

Action Institute, and Tenzin Minlek and Tsering Dorjee of the Students for Free Tibet at Bunkyo Civic Center in Tokyo today.

Representative of the Liaison Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama for Japan and East Asia, Dr. Tsewang Gyalpo Arya, welcomed the audience and introduced Dr. Gyal Lo, who has a long experience as a teacher and lecturer in different schools and universities in Tibet, and how Chinese policy behind the boarding school and the discrimination he faced forced him to flee Tibet and take refuge abroad. A short documentary on the Chinese colonial boarding school was presented to highlight the gravity of the situation.

Dr. Arya also shared the good news of the signing of the US Congress' Tibet Resolve Act by President Joe Biden on 12 July. He explained the importance of the law and how it strongly establishes and demonstrates the US's support and vision for a free and democratic Tibet. A Japanese translation of the law (S.138) was distributed to the audience, and some important points were read for particular attention.

Dr. Gyal Lo, educational sociologist and a leading expert on China's assimilative education policies in Tibet, made a presentation on China's colonial boarding schools in Tibet and how it started and evolved in three stages: first in 1970s with introduction of assimilative policies; second from 1984 onwards to take the Tibetan children away to Chinese cities; and third and the latest from 2016 with the closure of the native schools and forced education of one million Tibetan children from as young as 4 and 5 to 18 years old at the Chinese boarding schools. He explained how young children are indoctrinated and how they behave awkwardly after attending boarding school for some time.

Tenzin Minlek of the Students for Free Tibet (SFT) talked about the activities of the SFT to highlight the Chinese brutal assimilative policy to destroy Tibetan identity and deny the young children their mother tongue, culture, and religion.

Tibetan MP Dorjee Tsetan thanked the organisers and the audience for providing a platform to speak on this CCP's drastic policy to rob the Tibetan children of their language and identity. He also talked about the US Tibet Resolve Act. He requested the Japanese people and the government to come up with a statement condemning China's colonial boarding schools and for legislation similar to the US Tibet Resolve Act to demonstrate Japan's support for freedom, human rights, and democracy in Tibet.

The press conference was held after the talk. Media people asked about specific suffering and torture faced by the children and its impact on both children and the parents, and how Tibetans in exile are making efforts to counter this Chinese assimilative policy.

A report booklet on colonial boarding schools by the Tibetan Action Institute and translated into Japanese by the Tibet House Japan was distributed freely to the audience and the media. Akira Shiho moderated the talk event, and Takayuki Kojima of the Asian Democracy Movement moderated the press conference.

Dr. Gyal Lo and the team delivered talks and presentations at Meiji and Waseda Universities. They met Shimomura Hakubun, Chairman of the Japan Parliamentarian Support Group for Tibet, where Dr. Gyal Lo informed the critical nature of the situation in Tibet and sought the lawmaker's support. Dr. Gyal Lo will speak at Tokyo University and some other places.

### **Hegemonistic Ambitions: Tibet PM-In-Exile On China Renaming Places In India**

18 July 2024, NDTV

"All the neighboring countries from Japan to Taiwan to Philippines, now they are having serious problems in the strategies," said Tibetan Prime Minister-in-Exile, Sikyong Penpa Tsering

Renaming places in Arunachal Pradesh and belligerence in Ladakh – this is what reflects China's hegemonistic ambition and now that the US law about Tibet has been passed, it has challenged China's claim that no nation recognises Tibetan Independence, Tibetan Prime Minister-in-Exile, Sikyong Penpa Tsering told NDTV today in an exclusive interview.

Asked about the Resolve Tibet Act – which became a law in the United States four days ago – he said through the Act, the US government says they do not accept the Chinese narrative that Tibet has been part of China since ancient times.

"So far, the Chinese government has been saying that there is not a single country that recognises the independence of Tibet or the government in exile...

'But with this act, would the Chinese government be able to say that?' he said.

China has watched warily as a bipartisan delegation led by ex-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Michael McCaul came to India last month and met the Dalai Lama, underscoring an acceleration in US diplomatic initiative on a long-pending human rights issue.

China had asked the US to respect its sensitivity on matters related to Tibet and suggested that the Dalai Lama "correct" his political propositions before talks can be held with him.

Asked about that, Mr McCaul said the US message to China was that "Do not destroy the culture of these people, their religion... Every people and country have a right to self-determination".

The US message to China was also a silent criticism of Beijing's alleged hegemonistic ambition that has led to discomfort among some.

Mr Tsering also alluded to it, saying, "All the neighboring countries from Japan to Taiwan to Philippines, now they are having serious problems in the strategies... Malaysia, Brunei, Vietnam, everywhere they are escalating the situation. And then also because of their behavior, all the defense expenditures of all these countries are going on increasing every year, including New Zealand and Australia".

"Some 8, 10 years ago, China declared an air identification [zone] and so on. At that time, I told our US friends when China can claim the air, they will claim everything under that air, sea or land or whatever," he said.

"So these days, China's hegemonistic ambitions are also reflected in terms of how they are renaming places, not just in Arunachal Pradesh or belligerence on Ladakh," he added.

### **Chinese know "they're hurt": Tibetan leader on US President Biden signing 'Resolve Tibet Bill'**

18 July 2024, The Print

Penpa Tsering, the President of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, commented on President Biden's recent signing of the 'Resolve Tibet Bill,' stating that the move has clearly struck a nerve with China.

Last week, US President Joe Biden signed the 'Resolve Tibet Act', which states that China's ongoing occupation of Tibet must be resolved per international law peacefully and not through repression.

In an interview with ANI, Tsering highlighted the intense reaction from the Chinese government, which has condemned the bill as an interference in their domestic affairs.

"The very fact that they came here to deliver the bill to His Holiness and then President Biden signing it, even before he signed, they said, please don't sign the form. Now, after signing, they are saying, don't implement the bill; otherwise, it will have consequences," Tsering said, adding, "So, in that sense, we know that it has worked and China has for it."

Expressing a confident stance on the impact of the newly signed 'Resolve Tibet Bill' and highlighting that the bill has significantly unsettled the Chinese government. Tsering remarked that the strong Chinese reaction underscores the bill's effectiveness in challenging Beijing's narrative on Tibet.

Reflecting on the strategic approach adopted by his administration since May 2021, Tsering explained, "This is part of the strategy that we adopted since we came into this job in May 2021. The first time I

managed to travel to the United States was in April 2022, because the pandemic was going on. And at that time, we did inform our friends in Congress, particularly Speaker Nancy Pelosi at that time, that this is our change in strategy, that we need to focus on the extremes."

He elaborated on this strategy, saying, "When we talk about the middle way, then there has to be extremes. Without extremes, there is no middle way. And if you have no recognition for the extremes, then there is no value for the middle way. So extreme could be in many dimensions. It could be political, social, economic, educational, whatever."

Tsering highlighted the bill's role in countering China's historical claims over Tibet. He asserted, "One is to send a message to China that they cannot just change history. History is in the past. And it's best left to historians." He criticised the Chinese government's shifting historical narratives, saying, "China thinks Tibet is already resolved, that they have managed to convince the world that Tibet is part of the PRC. And that is being challenged for the first time."

He further elaborated on the bill's impact, "The law does not say we recognise independence, but it challenges China's narratives that they have not accepted that Tibet has been part of China since ancient times."

Regarding future diplomatic strategies, Tsering expressed a commitment to international advocacy, stating, "Definitely, definitely. Now we would expect the United States to lend a shoulder to work with like-minded countries, because that is something about which the United States has always been talking, and we can reach out only to the free world."

He also addressed the role of India in this context, saying, "I have always said that no country will leave aside their national interests and pick up India's national interests. So as long as that nation's security interests and other interests align with Tibetan interests, and Tibet and India, we have age-old relations."

On the subject of back-channel talks with China, Tsering was sceptical, noting, "No, I have admitted to having back channels, but then it's nothing important to talk about. There's nothing significant to talk about. It doesn't look very likely that there would be any positive outcome."

Regarding the Dalai Lama's health and return to Dharamshala, Tsering said, "The dates are not fixed because it will all depend on how well His Holiness recovers and what other engagements might appear." (ANI)

## **Tibetans in-exile condemn China's policies, hold candlelight vigil**

18 July 2024, ANI

The Tibetans in exile held a candlelight vigil in Dharamshala on Wednesday to condemn China's forced closure of the renowned Ragya Gangjong Sherig Norbuling School in Golog and to stand in solidarity with Tibetans.

On the occasion of International Justice Day on Wednesday, the Tibetan NGOs in Dharamshala condemned Chinese policies in Tibet. Eight non-governmental organisations based in Dharamshala express their profound concern and condemnation of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) systematic violations of human rights in Tibet.

Tibetan activists said that Beijing's policies in Tibet have resulted in egregious violations affecting the fundamental rights of Tibetan children and their access to education.

More than one million Tibetan children are currently enrolled in colonial-style boarding schools, forcibly separated from their families and cultural roots. This forced assimilation into the Chinese language and culture runs counter to international standards on cultural rights and education, they said.

Moreover, the Communist Party has aggressively shut down privately-run Tibetan schools and educational institutions, eroding Tibetan communities' ability to preserve and transmit their unique cultural heritage and values through education, they alleged.

On July 14, 2024, the Ragya Gangjong Sherig Norbu School, founded by the renowned Tibetan educator Jigme Gyaltsen with the approval of the local people's government, was forced to close under pressure from the Chinese Communist government, they said.

Therefore, the coalition of NGOs based in Dharamshala vehemently condemns the forced closure of the school founded in 1994 by Ragya Jigme Gyaltsen, the school served as a cornerstone of Tibetan cultural and linguistic education for three decades before its abrupt shutdown by CCP.

These actions are part of a malicious policy aimed at destroying the environment for nurturing Tibetan education, culture, psychology, and consciousness, effectively erasing the Tibetan people's identity. "We strongly oppose this policy and condemn the Chinese government's actions," they said.

The NGOs in Dharamshala call upon the international community, including governments, human rights organisations, and educational institutions, to take immediate and decisive action to hold China accountable for these grave violations.

On this World Justice Day, the NGOs in Dharamshala reaffirm their commitment to

advocating for justice, freedom, and the preservation of Tibetan cultural heritage, they said. (ANI)

### **Long-time friend of Tibet Richard Gere recovering after prostate operation**

18 July 2024, Phayul

Richard Gere, hollywood actor and long-time advocate for Tibet and a good friend of the Tibetan exiled spiritual leader His Holiness the Dalai Lama, has recently been the subject of public concern over reports of his health. The President of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) Sikyong Penpa during a public talk on the last-day visit to Ladakh, revealed that the 74-year-old actor had undergone prostate surgery earlier in June.

"Earlier in June, Richard Gere underwent a prostate operation. He relocated to Spain 10-15 days post-operation. Unfortunately, he required a second procedure due to an infection. Gere has been a devoted ally to our cause for many years. During this challenging time, I urge Tibetans to pray for his swift recovery," stated Sikyong Penpa Tsering in his public address (min. 47:43 onwards).

The concerns over Richard Gere's health amplified following an online post by Tibetan singer Loten Namling who shared information received from Fabrizio Pallotti, a close friend of Gere. According to the post, Gere's health issues began with an operation in the United States, during which his blood became infected. The details of the initial procedure and the nature of the infection remain undisclosed. Following the complications from the initial operation, Gere underwent a second operation and is now recuperating in Spain.

The news of Richard Gere's health has elicited widespread concern and well-wishes from supporters around the world. Social media platforms have been flooded with messages of support and prayers for his recovery. Gere's unwavering support for the Tibetan cause has earned him immense respect and built a strong emotional connection, particularly within the Tibetan community.

In 1993, during the Academy Awards, while presenting the Best Art Direction, Gere skipped the script and called out China's occupation of Tibet and its "horrendous, horrendous human rights situation." He continued his advocacy, calling for a boycott of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, and he continues to support the cause through his two foundations, the Washington-based International Campaign for Tibet and the Gere Foundation in New York.

A netizen via Facebook wrote, "I really hope he will recover well as soon as possible. He is our real friend. May Buddha bless him."

"Sending from my heart streams of sincere prayers and wishes for a speedy recovery and long life. We

Tibetans deeply remain grateful to you dearest Gere," another netizen expressed.

### **"We consider ourselves extension of Indian culture," says Tibetan leader in exile**

18 July 2024, ANI

Penpa Tsering, the President of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, appreciated India's support for Tibetan culture and highlighted their strong cultural connection with New Delhi, adding that Tibetans consider themselves an extension of Indian culture, language and religion.

Tsering further noted that Tibetan language and religion are based on Indian scripts and have translated many Sanskrit and Pali texts into Tibetan, preserving ancient Indian wisdom.

"We consider ourselves as an extension of Indian culture, language or religion. The script of our language and religion all came from India. We consider ourselves as an extension of Indian culture because we translated every available Sanskrit and Pali text into Tibetan and we are the only country to do that. So, we are the repository of one part of ancient Indian wisdom," Penpa Tsering said.

Further, he also acknowledged India's role in providing refuge to the Dalai Lama and 72,000 Tibetan people when China annexed Tibet in 1951.

"We are very grateful to the Indian government at the most difficult period of our history, to give refuge here in India to His Holiness and now there are 72,000 Indian Tibetans in India," said Tsering.

Tsering also spoke about the recent United States Congressional delegation's visit to India. The delegation, including former US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, met Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama at his residence in Dharamshala on June 20.

The US delegation also met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

Tsering said that India's permission for a congressional visit to Dharamshala and the subsequent meetings with Indian leaders is a sign of validation and support for the Tibetan cause.

"I think a lot of analysis has been done during the congressional visit to Dharamshala where a lot of credit is given to the Indian government for allowing them to visit India, visit Dharamshala make those statements and they're on the way back meet with Prime Minister Modi ji and also the foreign minister," said Tsering

"So I think in Taiwan also it's being interpreted as validation of this visit to Dharamshala by the Indian government," he added.

The Tibetan Government-in-Exile President also hailed US President Joe Biden's recent signing of the 'Resolve Tibet Bill,' stating that the move has clearly struck a nerve with China.

Last week, US President Joe Biden signed the 'Resolve Tibet Act', which states that China's ongoing occupation of Tibet must be resolved per international law peacefully and not through repression.

Expressing a confident stance on the impact of the newly signed 'Resolve Tibet Bill' and highlighting that the bill has "significantly unsettled" the Chinese government, Tsering remarked that the strong Chinese reaction underscores the bill's effectiveness in challenging Beijing's narrative on Tibet. (ANI)

### **Tibetans express gratitude to US President for enacting 'Resolve Tibet Act'**

17 July 2024, Awaz The Voice

The Tibetan community in Shimla held a grand ceremony at the Sambhota Tibetan School on Wednesday to thank the US and President Joe Biden for enacting the 'Resolve Tibet Act' which calls for a resolution to the Tibet-China dispute.

Last week, US President Joe Biden signed the 'Resolve Tibet Act', which states that China's ongoing occupation of Tibet must be resolved per international law peacefully and not through repression.

The Tibetan community said the legislation is a historical milestone and sends a strong political message to China, seven decades since the People's Republic of China (PRC) illegally occupied Tibet and forced the Tibetan delegation to sign the so-called 17-point Agreement in 1951 under duress.

During the celebration, Tibetan students, elders and others performed traditional dances at the Tibetan Sambhota School in Shimla. The Traditional circle dance (Gorshey) was also performed by Tibetans.

Tsewang Phuntsok, Chief Representative Officer of the Central Tibetan Administration in Shimla, said this will help the international community to send a strong message and enforce China to start dialogue with His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

"The Tibetan community in Shimla has gathered to celebrate the signing of the Tibet Issue Resolve Act. This will help the Tibetan community and international community to send a strong message and enforce China to start dialogue with His Holiness the Dalai Lama and between the democratically elected representatives of the Tibetan government-in-exile and China," Phuntsok said.

Calling it a "landmark for the Tibetan issue," he said, "This is the first ever such act signed by any country in the past seven decades."

Phuntsok said that the function is organised by the Tibetan community to pay gratitude and heartfelt thanks to the US.

"It's important, as it's Wednesday today, that we organise the traditional circle dance (gorshey). We

take this day as the birth of the Dalai Lama as per the Tibetan lunar calendar," Tsewang Phuntsok added.

The Tibetan community said they are happy that the bill was passed with overwhelming support. They said the signing of the legislation further reiterated the current policy of the China's systematically eradicating the Tibetan religion, culture, language, history, way of life and environment.

Tibetan freedom activist Tenzin Palden said that this is a "landmark legislation" for their freedom struggle.

"This is an important day for us. We have gathered here to thank the United States of America for signing the Act for Tibet. This is a landmark for us, as since 1959 it has been an act, which makes it important for us as a landmark of our freedom struggle. They have made it an act and law and it will send a message to China and to the countries of the world as the friends of Tibet across the globe are coming forward," he said.

Palden added that they are expressing their gratitude to US President Joe Biden and the people of the US for signing this act favouring the resolution of the Tibet issue. "It is a historic milestone for us," Palden said.

The young Tibetan generation are happy to know that powerful Nations like the USA are coming forward to understand and recognise the issue of Tibet.

Dawa Choedon, a young Tibetan activist, said the young generation is happy that strong nations like the US are coming forward to understand and recognise the issue of Tibet.

"On July 12, US President Joe Biden signed an Act to resolve the Tibet issue. We, the Tibetan diaspora here in Shimla, have gathered to celebrate this day. We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the US, as it is a very important day for us. Today is White Wednesday, which we usually celebrate, and today is a very special Wednesday because of the support we get from the world, especially the powerful countries like the USA, as they are recognising our problems."

Choedon added that this would enforce China to realise its mistake, recognise our problems and resolve them.

"As I said, this is the first milestone that we have achieved, the young Tibetan population across the globe are happy for this and are thankful to the United States of America," Choedonb said.

### **Back-channel talks between China, Tibetan govt-in-exile going on: Sikyong Penpa Tsering**

17 July 2024, The Economic Times



The Tibetan government-in-exile and China are continuing to hold back-channel talks and the last round took place this month, just days before US President Joe Biden signed a legislation that seeks to press Beijing for a negotiated settlement to Tibet's demands for greater autonomy. "Last round of talks happened at the beginning of this month," Penpa Tsering, the Sikyong or political head of Tibet's government-in-exile, said on Wednesday.

The Tibetan side has been joining the back-channel negotiations with a long-term perspective and that it does not have any expectations from the Xi Jinping-led Chinese government, he told a small group of journalists.

"We just cannot think of the short term. We cannot only think about Xi Jinping. He will be there for sometime and then he will be gone. But we have to keep our communications (with Beijing) ..

In April, Beijing rejected reports of the back-channel talks with the Tibetan government-in-exile and said it will hold negotiations only with the representatives of the Dalai Lama.

"The back-channel talks are going on. However China never acknowledges them. It is their policy not to acknowledge," Tsering said.

From 2002 to 2010, Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama's representatives and the Chinese government held nine rounds of dialogue that did not produce any concrete outcomes. No formal talks have been held since then.

The back-channel talks were seen as willingness by both sides to re-engage over a decade after the formal dialogue process hit a dead end in view of anti-China protests in Tibet and Beijing's hardline approach towards the Buddhist region.

Sikyong said the talks are taking place in a third country and it was Beijing which reached out to Tibet's government-in-exile for the negotiations.

At the same time, he said there has been no contact between the two sides since Biden signed into law the "The Resolve Tibet Act".

"My Administration will continue to call on the People's Republic of China to resume direct dialogue, without preconditions, with the Dalai Lama, or his representatives, to seek a settlement that resolves differences and leads to a negotiated agreement on Tibet," Biden said after signing the Act on July 12.

The legislation, seen as significant in Tibet's struggle for autonomy, says it is Washington's policy that the conflict must be resolved in accordance with international law through dialogue without preconditions.

"If there has to be a resolution, it should be based on international law – that is the first aspect of this act," the Sikyong said.

"Even though we are asking for some kind of autonomy under the Middle-Way policy, the concept

of autonomy is not defined in international law. The only thing that is defined in international law is self determination," he explained.

"And that is what the US recognises that the Tibetan people have the right to self determination just as the UN General Assembly passed a resolution way back in 1961." Tsering said the Tibetan people are very committed to the 'Middleway' policy of the Dalai Lama to resolve the conflict.

"We are very very committed to the Middleway policy of His Holiness the Dalai Lama that is approved by the majority of Tibetans and unanimously adopted by the Parliament way back in 1997," he said.

"We remain committed to His Holiness's thinking and try to find a non-violent, negotiated, mutually-beneficial lasting solution to the cause of Tibet," he said.

"But we decided to change our policy a little bit in the sense that when we speak about the Middle-way, then there needs to be polarities. Without polarities, there cannot be a middle-way and without recognition of the polarities, there is no value for middle-way," Tsering said.

Explaining the two polarities, he said one is the present situation in Tibet under the "repressive" Chinese communist government and the other is the historical status of Tibet as an independent state.

Another significant aspect of "The Resolve Tibet Act" is the US's assertion that China is wrong in claiming that Tibet has been part of China since ancient times. In its talks with China between 2002 and 2010, the Tibetan side pitched genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people in line with the Dalai Lama's middle way policy.

China has in the past accused the Dalai Lama of indulging in "separatist" activities and trying to split Tibet and considers him as a divisive figure.

However, the Tibetan spiritual leader has insisted that he is not seeking independence but "genuine autonomy for all Tibetans living in the three traditional provinces of Tibet" under the "Middle-Way approach".

After a failed anti-Chinese uprising in 1959, the 14th Dalai Lama fled Tibet and came to India where he set up the government-in-exile. The Chinese government officials and the Dalai Lama or his representatives have not met in formal negotiations since 2010.

Beijing has been maintaining that it freed "serfs and slaves" from a brutal theocracy in Tibet and bringing the region on the path of prosperity and modernisation.

### **7th international Rangzen Conference concludes in Toronto, Canada**

16 July 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

The 7th International Rangzen (Independence) Conference, dedicated to the cause of Tibetan independence, was held from July 13-15 in Toronto, Canada, garnering over 250 delegates from Canada, the US, Australia, Europe, and India.

The conference was honoured by the presence of Bradd Redekopp, a Canadian Member of Parliament, who served as the chief guest. Other distinguished attendees included members of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, Geshe Monlam Tharchin, Geshe Lharampa Gowo Lobsang Phende, Tenpa Yarphe, Tenzin Jigdal, Juchen Kunchok Chodon, Phurba Dorje Gyalthong, and Lhagyari Namgyal Dolkar. Additionally, the event featured special guests such as Tibetan writers, artists, and researchers besides other members of the public.

The conference organisers passed four resolutions reaffirming their stance. They reiterated their belief to never trust the Chinese government due to the ongoing repression, torture and murder of the Tibetan people. They condemned the recent forced closure of a highly successful Tibetan school in Golog, expressing solidarity with its students and teachers. They expressed deep gratitude to the Court of Citizens of the World for issuing an arrest warrant against Xi Jinping for crimes against humanity in Tibet. They also voiced concerns over “selective and biased reporting by Tibetan mainstream media,” urging these outlets to “prioritise fair and objective reporting.”

In his speech, Geshe Monlam Tharchin emphasised, “When advocating for people’s cause, we must prioritise on their capabilities. While many countries offer support and enact legislation in our favour, they often prioritise their national interests and consider all circumstances first. Although we should be grateful for their support, it is essential to recognise and leverage our own strengths.”

“We have received support and condolences, and His Holiness the Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and had the opportunity to propose the Five-Point Peace Plan in Congress. However, we must carefully consider whether the current legislation genuinely benefits us. Various individuals and organisations have actively lobbied for the bill’s passage, so they must reflect on whether the law is truly intended to benefit Tibetans or if it is using Tibet’s issue on an international platform,” he further emphasised.

During the question and answer session with the public, Tibetan filmmaker and activist Shenpenn Khymtsar stated, “Rangzen (Independence) is not a policy but our birth right. When we speak of Rangzen, we must be clear about from whom we seek it—whether it is from those who bully us, torture us, killed our parents, or stole our land. The moment

we speak of Rangzen, we should automatically think of China. However, when we speak of Rangzen, we often overlook China, leading to internal disputes within the community. Ideally, China should be the focus of our pursuit of Rangzen, but instead, Umaylam (Middle Way Approach) enters the discussion, which is unnecessary.”

“We Tibetans should prepare to counter China not just by vocalising our demands or organising protests, but by understanding the political landscape within China and its relations with other countries. Personally, I believe it is not our role to host debates between supporters of Rangzen and Umaylam. In parliamentary sessions, I hope to see discussions on how to resolve the Tibet conflict, counter China’s narrative, and unite Tibetans spread across the globe. I do not wish to hear debates on Umaylam, Rangzen, Sikyong Penpa Tsering, and Sisur Lobsang Sangay,” he further remarked.

The inaugural Rangzen Conference took place in Dharamsala on June 27, 2012. Subsequent editions were held in New Delhi (2015), New York (2016), and Paris (2017). The fifth conference returned to Dharamsala in 2018, where participants were honoured with an audience by His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. The sixth conference convened in New Delhi in 2023. During the seventh International Rangzen Conference in Toronto, Canada, it was decided that the eighth International Rangzen Conference would be held in Australia in 2025.

### **OoT, Canberra & Chinese Alliance for Democracy Conduct Seminar titled “Sino-Tibet Relations in the Post-Xi Jinping Era”**

15 July 2024, CTA

The Office of Tibet, Canberra, in collaboration with the Chinese Alliance for Democracy, organised a seminar titled “Sino-Tibet Relations in the Post Xi Jinping Era” at Sydney University on 10 July 2024.

The seminar, graced by the presence of esteemed researchers, activists, and leading experts on China, engaged in a comprehensive discourse. The discussions ranged from the impact of Xi-Jinping’s policies on Sino-Tibetan relations to the alarming cultural genocide unfolding in Tibet under his rule.

In his opening remarks, Representative Karma Singey underscored the situation’s urgency, stating, “Today, a deep sense of insecurity, uncertainty, and fear pervades due to the Chinese government’s expansionist greed and repressive policies. If these policies remain unchallenged, the world’s peace and security are in grave jeopardy.” He further revealed China’s policy to securitise Tibet and Sinicise Tibetan people as part of Xi Jinping’s long-term assimilation drive.

Dr Gyalo, a leading expert on China's assimilation and education policies in Tibet, shared his profound insights on Xi Jinping's overall vision to create a Han-centric nationalism policy and how the Chinese government has enforced mandatory boarding school education for Tibetan children, which he described as forced sinicisation and policy of culture genocide against Tibetans.

Bawa Kalsang Gyaltsen, Representative of the Office of Tibet in Taiwan, explained the Central Tibetan Administration's commitment to Middle Way Policy in finding a peaceful solution to the Sino-Tibet conflict. He further emphasised the importance of more vital interaction and allyship between Tibetan and Chinese communities to strengthen the friendship between the two communities.

Finally, Prof. Feng Chongyi, Associate Professor at the University of Technology Sydney and Chairman of the Australia and New Zealand Alliance of Victims of Chinese Communist Party spoke on how establishing a democratic constitutional government in China is the prerequisite for any nationality to achieve self-determination. He further explained that democratic negotiation or a referendum under a democratic political system is necessary to realise self-determination, which could result in autonomy, independence, or maintaining the status quo.

Dr Jin Jiang, Chairman of the Chinese Alliance for Democracy, Duoduo Zhang, President of the Sydney Chinese-Tibetan Friendship Group, and Sophia Tsai, a Taiwanese ally, moderated the seminar.

Dawa Sangmo, Chinese liaison officer of the Tibet Office, Canberra, delivered the closing remarks.

### **Tibetans in exile mark death anniversary of freedom fighter Tulku Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, release book on his struggles**

15 July 2024, Rtv

A memorial event for Tibetan freedom fighter Tulku Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, marking the anniversary of his unjust death in Chinese custody, was organized on Friday at the Gangkyi Tibetan Library in the North Indian hill town of Dharamshala.

A memorial event for Tibetan freedom fighter Tulku Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, marking the anniversary of his unjust death in Chinese custody, was organized on Friday at the Gangkyi Tibetan Library in the North Indian hill town of Dharamshala. A book about Rinpoche's life, authored by his niece Nyima Lhamo, was also released at the event.

Exile Tibetan Minister of Defence Gryari Dolma attended the event as the chief guest and honoured the memory of Tulku Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, a Tibetan freedom fighter who was wrongly accused and imprisoned by China. Speaking to ANI, Dolma Gyari said, 'Today marks the death anniversary of

the renowned Tibetan freedom fighter and former political prisoner Tulku Tenzin Delek Rinpoche. He was arrested on false charges, spent a long time in Chinese prison, and ultimately died there. This event is to remember his death anniversary.'

During the event, Rinpoche's niece launched a book detailing her personal experiences from the time her family faced pressures and challenges due to the false charges against Rinpoche. She has written the book to speak the truth about her experiences.

Following this, Tibetan activist Sonam Tsering was also present at the event to honour Rinpoche's memory. He highlighted the ongoing struggles of Tibetans facing persecution in China and urged the Chinese government to free all Tibetan political prisoners.

Sonam Tsering also spoke with ANI, stating, 'Today marks the 10th anniversary of Tulku Rinpoche, a prominent Lama who passed away under Chinese torture and prosecution. We also demand that the Chinese Communist government release all Tibetan political prisoners.'

### **President Biden signs Resolve Tibet Act, strengthening US support for Tibet negotiations**

12 July 2024, International Campaign for Tibet

The United States has a message for Beijing: China's ongoing occupation of Tibet must be peacefully resolved through negotiation, not repression.

President Joe Biden signed the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act [read his message here], popularly known as the Resolve Tibet Act, earlier today. The law states that it is American policy that the Tibet issue must be resolved in accordance with international law by peaceful means, through dialogue without preconditions.

It also takes aim at China's lies about Tibet, calling on China to stop propagating disinformation about Tibet's history and giving the State Department a new mandate to directly counter these false claims.

"The Resolve Tibet Act cuts to the heart of China's brutal treatment of the Tibetan people," said Tencho Gyatso, President of the International Campaign for Tibet. "To Tibetans it is a statement of hope. To other countries it is a clarion call to support Tibet's peaceful struggle for human rights and democratic freedoms. And to Beijing it is a declaration that American support for Tibet does not come with an expiration date; China must resume dialogue and find a solution that supports the fundamental rights of the Tibetan people."

Empowering the Tibetan people

One key feature of the bill is defining the Tibetan people as a people with their own distinct religious, cultural, linguistic, and historical identity. It then states that Chinese policies are systematically

suppressing the ability of the Tibetan people to preserve their way of life.

The Dalai Lama has repeatedly called for China to grant genuine autonomy to the Tibetan people, and it is clear under international law that people are entitled to self-determination. When House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaul (R-TX) spoke before it passed Congress, he expressed his hopes that the new law will help “put the people of Tibet in charge of their own future.”

Secretary of State Antony Blinken frequently refers to support for self-determination as a core principle of American foreign policy. President Biden previously pledged to push Beijing to “return to direct dialogue with the representatives of the Tibetan people to achieve meaningful autonomy, respect for human rights, and the preservation of Tibet’s environment as well as its unique cultural, linguistic and religious traditions.”

Now that the Resolve Tibet Act is law, the onus is on the State Department and the White House to vigorously champion genuine negotiation and overcome Beijing’s stalling tactics.

“President Biden promised his administration would stand up for the people of Tibet,” said ICT President Tencho Gyatso. “There is not a moment to lose. Experienced State Department officials like Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues Uzra Zeya now have a valuable tool to elevate their calls for negotiations and fulfill the core objective of the Special Coordinator’s office: promoting substantive dialogue, without preconditions, between China and the Dalai Lama, his representatives, or democratically elected Tibetan leaders in support of a negotiated agreement on Tibet.”

Persistent advocacy for Tibet

The Resolve Tibet Act became law after three years of effort by a select group of members of Congress backed by a broad range of Tibet supporters and Tibetan Americans.

Senior leaders of the Central Tibetan Administration and the ICT board and staff met with Congressional leaders to brief them on the situation in Tibet and discuss how new initiatives could help. Representatives Jim McGovern (D-MA) and Michael McCaul (R-TX) took the lead in the House, while Senators Jeff Merkley (D-OR) and Todd Young (R-IN) introduced the bill in the Senate. All four leads and their staff worked tirelessly to put this law in place.

Advocates for Tibet helped at every step along the way. These efforts included testimony from international law scholars, grassroots advocacy by Tibetan Associations, waves of petitions from ICT members, record-breaking turnout at Tibet Lobby Day, and coordination between the Office of Tibet, the International Campaign for Tibet, Students for a Free Tibet, and other prominent Tibet groups.

“It was inspiring to witness such a positive response to the Resolve Tibet Act from across the country and around the world,” said ICT President Tencho Gyatso. “It is clear how much can be accomplished when citizens, organizations, and dedicated decision makers unite. Moving forward, I know we can build on today’s extraordinary accomplishment.”

“As His Holiness the Dalai Lama says, change only takes place through action,” she added.

To see a timeline of how the bill was crafted, introduced, and passed, please click [here](#).

Quotes from Members of Congress and Tibetan leaders

The Resolve Tibet Act’s lead sponsors put out videos celebrating the passage of the bill, partially transcribed below. Separately, Tibetan leader Namgyal Choedup issued a statement:

Rep. Jim McGovern, D-MA, said: “I am thrilled. The United States once again affirms our strong support for the rights of the Tibetan people under international law, including their right to self-determination.

With its bipartisan passage, we hope to restart dialogue between Tibet and China to resolve the decades-long dispute over Tibet’s autonomy and governance in keeping with U.S. policy. The Tibetans are willing; the People’s Republic of China should come to the table.”

Rep. Michael McCaul, R-TX, said during his recent visit to Dharamsala: “We are here just one week after the House of Representatives and the Congress passed the Resolve Tibet Act. This bill makes it clear the United States believes Tibet has its own unique language, religion and culture, and has a right to self-determination. The bill also requires the State Department to aggressively challenge CCP propaganda about Tibet.”

Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-OR, said: “All people should have the right to live in peace and decide their own future. But the people of Tibet have not had those freedoms for more than 70 years. We just took an important step toward changing that.

President Biden signed into law my bipartisan bill to support Tibet, which passed Congress overwhelmingly. This bill empowers the State Department to counter the Chinese government’s attempt to rewrite or in some cases erase history, and it encourages dialogue between the leaders of Tibet and China to reach a peaceful resolution.”

Sen. Todd Young, R-IN, said: “Over the past several years, I’ve worked with my colleague Jeff Merkley on legislation to encourage a peaceful resolution to the dispute between Tibet and China.

I want to thank the Office of Tibet and the International Campaign for Tibet for your tireless advocacy for this legislation. Your brave leadership on this issue has been instrumental in making the

case for why American leadership, grounded in liberal values like pluralism, religious freedom, and self-determination, is so critical to ensuring a safer, more secure future for Tibet and the Tibetan people.” Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration to North America Namgyal Choedup said: “The bipartisan and bicameral passage of the Tibet bill and the signing of the bill into law by President Biden is a huge moral boost to the Tibetan people, who continues to suffer PRC’s systematic repression. This is a clear indication of unwavering support of the US government and its people towards the just cause of Tibetan people. This is a call to Beijing that the only solution to Tibet China dispute is through dialogue and negotiation in good faith.”

What the bill does

The Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act states that it is US policy that the dispute between Tibet and China remains unresolved in accordance with international law.

The legislation also:

- Empowers the Special Coordinator for Tibet to actively and directly counter disinformation about Tibet from the Chinese government and Communist Party, including working to ensure that US government statements and documents counter disinformation about Tibet.
- Rejects as “inaccurate” China’s false claims that Tibet has been part of China since “ancient times.”
- Promotes substantive dialogue without preconditions between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama or his representatives or the democratically elected leaders of the Tibetan community. The US could also explore activities to improve prospects for dialogue leading to a negotiated agreement on Tibet.
- Affirms the State Department’s responsibility to coordinate with other governments in multilateral efforts toward the goal of a negotiated agreement on Tibet.
- Encourages China’s government to address the aspirations of the Tibetan people regarding their distinct historical, cultural, religious and linguistic identity.

### **Statement from President Joe Biden on S. 138, the “Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act”**

12 July 2024, WH.GOV

Today, I have signed into law S. 138, the “Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act” (the “Act”). I share the Congress’s bipartisan commitment to advancing the human rights of Tibetans and

supporting efforts to preserve their distinct linguistic, cultural, and religious heritage. My Administration will continue to call on the People’s Republic of China to resume direct dialogue, without preconditions, with the Dalai Lama, or his representatives, to seek a settlement that resolves differences and leads to a negotiated agreement on Tibet. The Act does not change longstanding bipartisan United States policy to recognize the Tibet Autonomous Region and other Tibetan areas of China as part of the People’s Republic of China -- a policy decision that falls within my authority to recognize foreign states and the territorial bounds of such states.

### **India and US support for the Dalai Lama and Tibetans upsets China**

12 July 2024, The Pioneer, K.S. Tomar

India and America's identical and unequivocal stance on Tibet has rattled China, highlighting the evolving geopolitical dynamics in Asia

In a significant diplomatic move, both India and the United States have extended their support to the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan cause, provoking a strong reaction from China. The adoption of the Resolve Tibet Act by the US Congress and a recent high-profile meeting between a bipartisan American Congressional delegation and the Dalai Lama in Dharamshala have amplified the tensions between the US, India, and China. This article explores the strategic and ideological implications of these developments.

A Diplomatic Convergence:

The backdrop of this development is the increasingly strained relationship between the United States and China.

The US Congress's passage of the Resolve Tibet Act, which promises comprehensive support for the Tibetan cause, marks a clear stance against China's policies in Tibet. The meeting between the American delegation and the Dalai Lama further underscores this commitment.

In a related move, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with the US delegation, who congratulated him on his historic third-term election victory and praised the fairness and transparency of the recent Indian general elections. Modi's subsequent Twitter post highlighted the strong bipartisan support for advancing the India-US strategic partnership. Notably, the post did not mention the Dalai Lama, though it was clear the topic was a significant aspect of the discussions.

India's hosting of the Tibetan government-in-exile in Dharamshala places it in a unique position concerning the Tibetan cause. The Indian government has historically balanced its support for Tibet with its



broader strategic and economic relations with China. The timing of the meetings suggests a coordinated diplomatic effort to highlight shared values and mutual interests in countering China's assertive policies.

**Strategic Ramifications:** The convergence of American and Indian interests reflects the evolving geopolitical landscape in Asia. Both nations share concerns about China's growing influence and assertive behavior, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region. By reinforcing their strategic partnership, the United States and India signal their commitment to a rules-based international order, countering China's ambitions.

In response, China is likely to intensify its efforts to strengthen alliances and expand its influence in the region. This could involve deepening ties with Pakistan, increasing engagement with other South Asian nations, and accelerating Belt and Road Initiative projects to secure strategic footholds. Additionally, China might enhance its military posture along disputed borders with India, particularly in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh, to assert territorial claims.

Beyond immediate strategic calculations, these meetings highlight the broader ideological contest between democratic values and authoritarian governance. The Dalai Lama, a symbol of non-violent resistance and spiritual leadership, embodies values resonating with global advocates of democracy and human rights. Engaging with him reinforces the US and India's commitment to these principles.

China, facing scrutiny over its human rights record in Tibet, Xinjiang, and Hong Kong, is placed in a defensive position. In the global influence battle, soft power and moral authority are becoming increasingly important.

The Dharamshala and Delhi meetings enhance the soft power of the United States and India, positioning them as champions of human rights and democratic values.

**The Path Forward:** As the geopolitical chessboard in Asia becomes more complex, the interplay between diplomacy and deterrence will be crucial. The United States and India, through coordinated diplomatic actions, are setting the stage for a more assertive and collaborative approach to countering China's influence. This involves not only strengthening bilateral ties but also fostering broader coalitions with like-minded countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

The high-level US delegation, led by Republican Rep. Michael McCaul and including prominent figures like Democratic former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, discussed the relevance and significance of the Resolve Tibet Act. President Joe Biden, a strong advocate for Tibetan rights, is expected to approve the Act.

China's reaction has been predictably strong, warning the United States against sending the "wrong signal." The Chinese embassy in India emphasized China's stance on Tibet as an internal matter, condemning any perceived interference in its domestic affairs.

#### Conclusion

India and America's identical and unequivocal stance on Tibet has rattled China, highlighting the evolving geopolitical dynamics in Asia. The historical breach of trust by China in 1962, replicated in 2020 during the Ladakh confrontation, underscores the challenges in Sino-Indian relations. Prime Minister Modi's efforts to normalize ties with Beijing have not yielded desired results, reflecting the ongoing tension.

Adopting a more nuanced approach to diplomacy may help mitigate tensions while advancing China's strategic goals.

#### **Japan to Host International Meeting on Support for Tibet Next June for 1st Time; Dalai Lama to Deliver Speech Online**

11 July 2024, The Japan News, The Yomiuri Shimbun

Japan will hold an international meeting to discuss support for Tibetans early next June in Tokyo, it has been learned.

Since the first such meeting in 1994, talks on aiding the oppressed ethnic minority in China have mainly been held in the United States and Europe. It will be the first time for Japan to host.

The meeting is being backed by the cross-party Japan-Tibet Parliamentary Association, which is headed by former education minister Hakubun Shimomura and aims to boost support for Tibet.

The legislative body of Tibet's government in exile will run the meeting, with around 90 people including lawmakers and scholars to come from 26 countries. The Dalai Lama, exiled supreme leader of Tibetan Buddhism, is planned to deliver a speech online.

The parliamentary association includes 105 members of the Diet. Shu Watanabe, a member of the lower house for the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan, serves as acting chair and Keiji Furuya, a member of the lower house for the Liberal Democratic Party who previously chaired the National Public Safety Commission, serves as vice chair.

In 2022, both houses of the Diet adopted a resolution expressing concern about human rights abuses in China including in Tibet.

## **Previously banned, Dalai Lama's 89th birthday celebrated in Nepal's capital**

11 July 2024, Tibetan Review

The 89th birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, usually clamped down on by the government of Nepal with preventive detentions, police deployments and onsite arrests due to its fear of offending China, appears to have been held in Kathmandu without a hitch this time as a religious and cultural event on Jul 6.

The event was held at the Hyolmo Monastery near the capital city's landmark Buddhist site of Boudha stupa.

Senior diplomats and officials from the European Union, Australia, Switzerland, France and the United States, attended the event, said the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) on its Tibet.net website Jul 10.

The chief guest was stated to be Sabchu Rinpoché, with the special guest being HH the Dalai Lama's representative at the Office of Tibet, CTA, Tsepri Lopan Tulku Ngawang Chokdup. His office previously organized the event until Nepal's crackdown came since many years ago.

Besides, prominent figures from Nepal's human rights groups such as Inhured International, Human Rights Organisation for Nepal, and HURON, as well as prominent individual human rights activists were stated to have attended the event which drew a crowd of more than 2000.

The celebrations, in fact, continued over two days filled with Tibetan opera and other Tibetan cultural performances, the report said.

However, Nepal still does not allow Tibetans to gather on Wednesdays to mark the Dalai Lama's weekly birthday with traditional folk group dances.

## **Sikyong Penpa Tsering's Visit to Ladakh: Engaging with Monasteries and Schools on a Cultural and Educational Journey**

10 July 2024, CTA

On 9 July 2024, as part of the ongoing official visit in Ladakh, Sikyong Penpa Tsering of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) paid visits to monasteries under the jurisdiction of Department of Religion and Culture (CTA) and SOS Tibetan Children's Village School (TCV) and its branch schools in Choglamsar, along with the latter's affiliate Old People's Home. Sikyong was also honoured with a dinner reception at the Triksey Monastery hosted by Venerable Triksey Rinpoche.

Beginning from the Shewatsel Phodrang Gapheling, Sikyong paid obeisance to sacred icons in Leh-based Monasteries, namely Karma Drupgyu Choeling, Sheten Youngdrung Lhatse Bon Monastery, and

Rutok Lhundup Choeling, as part of his second-day itinerary. At the same time, Sikyong held a brief meetings with the respective monastic administrations to discuss on necessities crucial for their sustenances.

Thereafter, Sikyong headed towards TCV Menlha and Agling branch schools to inspect education facilities over there. Likewise, Sikyong toured premises of Sonamling main TCV school, including its affiliate Old People's Home.

Sikyong later addressed the students and teachers of Ladakh TCV at its auditorium to apprise the gathering on the geo-political and strategic significance of the Tibetan plateau and its environment that has immense potential to bring harmony in the region, the imperativeness of maintaining the unique cultural and linguistic heritage of Tibet amidst intensifies restrictions and systematic annihilations of Tibetan identity in Tibet under CCP, and benefits of the Tibetan Buddhist culture in bringing about global peace. Given the CCP's continued repression and manipulation over these matters, Sikyong underscored CTA's policy of the Middle Way Approach that is pragmatically actionable and has the potential to resolve the longstanding Tibet-China conflict. In light of this, Sikyong briefly touched on the passage of the Resolve Tibet Act in both houses of the United States with unanimous bipartisan support. Hence, to strengthen and continue the Tibetan freedom struggle, Sikyong implored teachers to educate students on these issues during class and advised students to enhance their knowledge of Tibet's current status.

Following Sikyong's address, a Q&A session was held with students in which he delved into an array of issues concerning the Tibet cause as well as student's education.

Additionally, Sikyong conducted an inspection of the housing projects currently underway in Choglamsar where he toured the project site and interacted with the residents of Maque and Chushul, who are about to relocate to the project site area after its completion.

Later in the evening, Sikyong attended a dinner reception hosted by Triksey Rinpoche. It was also joined by the honourable Chairman of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Shri Tashi Gyaltsen, and Deputy Chair Tsering Angchuk, along with Councillors and prominent officials of Ladakh UT.

Throughout these programmes, Sikyong was accompanied by Chief Representative Officer Dhondup Tashi and Joint Secretary Tashi Dickey from the Department of Home (CTA).

## China's Interference in the Succession of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama Unacceptable

10 July 2024, CTA

In a press release issued on the occasion of the 89th birthday of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, the Interparliamentary group for Tibet in the French Senate led by Senator Jacqueline Eustache-Brinio asserts that the life of His Holiness Dalai Lama, heir to a long historical lineage, is inseparable from the destiny of his people and Tibetan Buddhism. As such, it is unacceptable for the Chinese authorities to interfere in the process of appointing the spiritual leader of the Tibetans, since it is undeniable and legitimate that the choice of a possible successor to the 14th Dalai Lama should be made by Tibetans alone.

In the same communication, the Senator also recalls His Holiness the Dalai Lama's contribution to his people and the world at large.

The full statement in French can be read [here](#)

– Filed by Office of Tibet, Brussels

## "He was being playful": Delhi High Court rejects plea for POCSO action against Dalai Lama for kissing child

09 July 2024, Bar and Bench, Prashant Jha

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday rejected a plea seeking action under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offence Act (POCSO Act) against the spiritual leader Dalai Lama for kissing a child on the lips [Confederation of NGOs & Anr v Union of India & Ors].

A Division Bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela rejected the plea filed by a bunch of non-governmental organizations.

"Dalai Lama has apologised for it. He has said he was just trying to be playful. It should be seen in the context of Tibetan culture," the Court observed.

## Dalai Lama relocates to Syracuse, NY for recovery from knee surgery

09 July 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

The revered exiled spiritual leader His Holiness the Dalai Lama, departed the Park Hyatt hotel in New York early Tuesday morning to a temporary residence in Syracuse, New York, to aid his recovery and undergo follow-up physiotherapy in the coming days.

The Dalai Lama, who recently had knee replacement surgery at the Hospital for Special Surgery (HSS) in New York, had been staying at the Park Hyatt since his discharge from the hospital. According to his

Tibet Digest December - January 2024

personal physicians, Dr. Tsetan Dorjee Sadhutsang and Dr. Tsewang Tamdin, the octogenarian leader's recovery is progressing positively, prompting the move to a more accommodating environment for his continued recovery.

"His Holiness is recovering exceptionally well and is able to walk. Soon, he will move to a place with a better environment. Tibetans inside Tibet and in exile should not be worried about his condition. There's nothing to worry about," stated Dr. Tsetan D. Sadhutsang.

In a medical bulletin, Dr. David J. Mayman, Chief of the Adult Reconstruction and Joint Replacement Service at HSS, detailed the recovery process earlier. "During the first week after knee replacement, the primary objective is to minimise inflammation and swelling. His Holiness is mobile and walking with our physical therapy team." "I would expect His Holiness to continue to improve in terms of his knee and walking over this coming year," Dr. Mayman said.



Tibetans in New York city welcoming H.H. the Dalai Lama (Photo/Indianeconomicobserver)

Meanwhile, a large number of Tibetans and followers of the Dalai Lama gathered outside the Park Hyatt hotel early in the morning to see their leader off, expressing strong emotions and chanting longevity prayers for his swift recovery. International leaders, followers and well-wishers have poured in with their message of love and speedy recovery for the much admired religious leader.

## China condemns US and India's Dalai Lama birthday greetings as subversive, reiterates vow of its own successor to him

08 July 2024, Tibetan Review

China's party-government experts have condemned the United States and India for conveying their greetings to the exile spiritual leader of Tibet on his 89th birthday on Jul 6. They have condemned their actions as attempts to play "the so-called Dalai card" to contain China, according to China's official globaltimes.cn Jul 7.

When asked whether the actions of the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi may imply an intention to contain China by playing the so-called Dalai card, Zhu Weiqun, former head of the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, affirmed such intention, the report said.

Without explaining what he meant by it, Zhu has maintained that "such attempts are increasingly ineffective as the influence of the Dalai clique has been declining, which is an inevitable historical trend."

"The attempts of the US and India are a self-consoling elegy," he has said.

Blinken extended his birthday greetings to the Dalai Lama in a statement on the website of the US Department of State while Modi did so in an X (formerly Twitter) post, wishing him a long life.

The report also had Chinese analysts refuting a Reuters report Jul 6, titled as titled "As the Dalai Lama turns 89, exiled Tibetans fear a future without him."

"The initiative of finding the successor of Dalai Lama is firmly held by the Chinese central government," Zhu has asserted, emphasizing that "the finding work will definitely be in accordance with relevant policies and the sincere wishes of religious believers in Xizang, and will never be based on the fantasies of the separatist Dalai clique."

### **Dalai Lama Succession: US, India Don't Want China Involved**

08 July 2024, India West Journal

In a monastery beneath snow-capped mountains in northern India, the Buddhist monk entrusted with protecting the Dalai Lama and foretelling his people's future is concerned.

The Dalai Lama has turned 89 and China insists it will choose his successor as Tibet's chief spiritual leader. That has the Medium of Tibet's Chief State Oracle contemplating what might come next.

"His Holiness is the fourteenth Dalai Lama, then there will be a fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth," the Medium, known as the Nechung, said. "In countries, leaders change, and then that story is over. But in Tibet it works differently."

Tibetan Buddhists believe that learned monastics are reincarnated after death as newborns. The Dalai Lama, who is currently recuperating in the United States from a medical procedure, has said he will clarify questions about succession – including if and where he will be reincarnated – around his ninetieth birthday. As part of a reincarnation identification process, the medium will enter a trance to consult the oracle.

The incumbent Dalai Lama is a charismatic figure who popularized Buddhism internationally and won a Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 for keeping alive the Tibetan cause in exile. Beijing sees him as a dangerous separatist, though he has embraced what he calls a "Middle Way" of peacefully seeking genuine autonomy and religious freedom within China.

Any successor will be inexperienced and unknown on the global stage. That has sparked concerns about whether the movement will lose momentum or grow more radical amid heightened tensions between Beijing and Washington, long a source of bipartisan support for the Central Tibetan Administration, Tibet's government-in-exile.

The CTA and its partners in the West as well as India, which has hosted the Dalai Lama in the Himalayan foothills for more than six decades, are preparing for a future without his influential presence.

President Joe Biden is expected to soon sign a bill that requires the State Department to counter what it calls Chinese "disinformation" that Tibet, which was annexed by the People's Republic of China in 1951, has been part of China since ancient times.

"China wants recognition that Tibet has been part of China ... throughout history, and this bill is suggesting that it would be relatively easy for Tibet supporters to get a western government to refuse to give recognition for such an extensive claim," said Tibet specialist Robert Barnett of London's School of Oriental and African Studies.

U.S. lawmakers, including former House speaker Nancy Pelosi, visited the Dalai Lama in June to celebrate Congress passing the legislation, which Sikyong Penpa Tsering, who heads the CTA, called a "breakthrough."

The bill is part of a strategic shift away from emphasizing Chinese rights violations such as forced assimilation, the Sikyong, or political leader. Since 2021, CTA has lobbied two dozen countries including the U.S., to publicly undermine Beijing's narrative that Tibet has always been part of China, he said.

With U.S. weight behind this strategy, the exiles hope to push China to the negotiating table, he said. "If every country keeps saying that Tibet is part of the People's Republic of China, then where is the reason for China to come and talk to us?"

The Chinese foreign ministry said in response to Reuters' questions that it would be open to discussions with the Dalai Lama about his "personal future" if he "truly gives up his position of splitting the motherland" and recognized Tibet as an unalienable part of China.

Beijing, which has not held official talks with the Dalai Lama's representatives since 2010, has also urged Biden not to sign the bill.



The office of the Dalai Lama, who has in recent years apologized for remarks he made about women and to a young child, referred an interview request to the Sikyong.

#### Succession

Most historians say Tibet was assimilated into the Mongol empire during the 13th-14th century Yuan dynasty, which also covered large parts of present-day China. Beijing says that established its sovereign claim, though scholars believe the relationship varied greatly over the centuries and remote Tibet largely governed itself for much of the time.

In 1995, atheist China and the Dalai Lama separately identified two boys as the Panchen Lama, the second-most-important Tibetan Buddhist leader. The Dalai Lama's pick was taken away by Chinese authorities and has not been seen since.

Many Buddhists consider Beijing's choice illegitimate, though most expect a similar parallel selection for the next Dalai Lama given the Chinese government's stance that he must reincarnate, and it must approve the successor.

Chinese authorities have "tried to insert themselves into the succession of the Dalai Lama but we will not let that happen," said Michael McCaul, Republican chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee during his Dharamsala visit.

India, whose troops clashed with China near the Tibetan plateau in 2022, has been less vocal about its position on succession.

"The U.S. ... does not have to worry about border incursions as India does," said Donald Camp, a former top South Asia official on the U.S. National Security Council.

But as home to tens of thousands of Tibetans and an ascendant voice on the global stage, Delhi will be pulled into the fray, observers of Indian diplomacy say. Hawkish commentators have already called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi to meet with the Dalai Lama as a way of pressuring China.

Delhi's Ministry of External Affairs declined to comment on the succession but its former ambassador to China, Ashok Kantha, said India would not be "comfortable with China trying to control that process."

"Privately we have told China ... that for them the best option is engaging with the Dalai Lama and his representatives," said Kantha. "Post-fourteenth Dalai Lama we don't know what will happen."

The respect that the Dalai Lama commands among Tibetan exiles has kept in check frustrations and a formal push for independence, though it isn't clear if that balance will be maintained following his death

## Sonam Wangchuk demands Bharat Ratna for Dalai Lama

08 July 2024, The Earth News

Renowned climate activist and innovator Sonam Wangchuk has called for India's highest civilian award, the Bharat Ratna, to be conferred upon His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso. This appeal was made on the auspicious occasion of the Dalai Lama's 89th birthday, highlighting his lifelong dedication to peace, compassion, and humanity.

In a heartfelt video message posted on X, Wangchuk emphasized the Dalai Lama's unparalleled contributions to global harmony, spiritual teachings, and advocacy for non-violence. He noted that the Dalai Lama has dedicated his life to promoting the values of compassion, peace, and understanding, making him a tremendous ambassador of Indian values and culture to the world. "Bestowing the Bharat Ratna upon him would be a fitting acknowledgment of his tireless efforts and a message of support for his enduring legacy," Wangchuk stated.

The post captioned, HH THE #DALAILAMA, has been the biggest ambassador of Indian values in the world. Today 6th July is His birthday. Let's give Him a befitting gift from India.

Wangchuk also highlighted the Dalai Lama's influential role in promoting interfaith dialogue, environmental consciousness, and the preservation of Tibetan culture. "In a world facing unprecedented challenges, His Holiness has been a beacon of hope and wisdom. His teachings on compassion and sustainability resonate deeply with the principles of our nation," he added.

The Dalai Lama, born on July 6, 1935, in Taktser, Amdo, Tibet, has been a global spiritual leader and a symbol of the Tibetan struggle for autonomy. Despite living in exile for over six decades, he continues to inspire millions worldwide with his message of love and forgiveness.

Wangchuk's appeal has garnered widespread support from various quarters, including social activists, religious leaders, and political figures. Many believe that honouring the Dalai Lama with the Bharat Ratna would not only celebrate his contributions but also reinforce the values of peace and compassion in the contemporary world.

## PM Modi sends greetings to the Dalai Lama on his 89th birthday

07 July 2024, Deccan Herald, Anirban Bhaumik

This is the fourth year in a row the prime minister went public about his greetings to the Tibetan Buddhist monk on his birthday. He started doing it in



2021, apparently to send a message to Beijing in the wake of China's aggressive moves along its Line of Actual Control (LAC) with India.

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday sent greetings to the 14th Dalai Lama on occasion of the 89th birthday of the monk and prayed for his long life, disregarding Beijing's objection to such greetings to the icon of the global campaign against the occupation of Tibet by China. The Dalai Lama has been living in exile in India since 1959. He is currently in the United States recuperating after knee surgery.

"Sent my greetings to His Holiness @DalaiLama on the occasion of his 89th birthday. Pray for his quick recovery after knee surgery, good health, and long life", the prime minister wrote on X.

This is the fourth year in a row the prime minister went public about his greetings to the Tibetan Buddhist monk on his birthday. He started doing it in 2021, apparently to send a message to Beijing in the wake of China's aggressive moves along its Line of Actual Control (LAC) with India.

The military stand-off along the LAC brought down the relations between India and China to a new low.

"Beijing had strongly reacted after Modi had called and greeted the Dalai Lama last year. The Indian side should fully recognise the anti-China separatist nature of the 14th Dalai Lama. It should abide by its commitment to China, speak and act prudently, and stop using Tibet-related issues to interfere in China's internal affairs", a spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Chinese Government had told journalists in Beijing.

The Dalai Lama has been living in exile in India following his 1959 escape from Tibet, which had been occupied by the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) in 1950-51.

The monk, a staunch advocate for non-violence and freedom, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. He has been arguing for "genuine autonomy" – not independence from the Chinese Government's rule – for Tibet. Beijing, however, still calls him a "separatist" and accuses him of running a campaign to split China.

His meeting with the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in August 2010 or his visit to Rashtrapati Bhavan on an invitation from then President Pranab Mukherjee in December 2016 had triggered strong protests from China. So did New Delhi's decisions in 2009 and 2017 to allow him to visit Arunachal Pradesh, where China claims nearly 90,000 sq. km of Indian territory to be its own.

Modi, however, did not have any public contact or engagement with the Dalai Lama till 2021, ostensibly to avoid hurting the sensitivity of China. He did not change the policy of maintaining distance from the Dalai Lama and refrained from publicly wishing the

octogenarian on his birthday on July 6, 2020, even though New Delhi's relations with Beijing nosedived after the June 15, 2020 clash between the Indian Army and the Chinese People's Liberation Army along the LAC in Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh.

## **The Dalai Lama turns 89; exiled Tibetans fear future without him**

06 July 2024, VOA

In a monastery beneath snow-capped mountains in northern India, the Buddhist monk entrusted with protecting the Dalai Lama and foretelling his people's future is concerned.

The Dalai Lama turns 89 on Saturday and China insists it will choose his successor as Tibet's chief spiritual leader.

That has the Medium of Tibet's Chief State Oracle contemplating what might come next.

"His Holiness is the fourteenth Dalai Lama, then there will be a fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth," the medium, known as the Nechung, said. "In countries, leaders change, and then that story is over. But in Tibet it works differently."

Tibetan Buddhists believe that learned monastics are reincarnated after death as newborns. The Dalai Lama, who is currently recuperating in the United States from a medical procedure, has said he will clarify questions about succession - including if and where he will be reincarnated - around his ninetieth birthday. As part of a reincarnation identification process, the medium will enter a trance to consult the oracle.

The incumbent Dalai Lama is a charismatic figure who popularized Buddhism internationally and won a Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 for keeping alive the Tibetan cause in exile. Beijing sees him as a dangerous separatist, though he has embraced what he calls a "Middle Way" of peacefully seeking genuine autonomy and religious freedom within China.

Any successor will be inexperienced and unknown on the global stage. That has sparked concerns about whether the movement will lose momentum or grow more radical amid heightened tensions between Beijing and Washington, long a source of bipartisan support for the Central Tibetan Administration, or CTA, Tibet's government-in-exile.

The CTA and its partners in the West, as well as India, which has hosted the Dalai Lama in the Himalayan foothills for more than six decades, are preparing for a future without his influential presence.

U.S. President Joe Biden is expected to soon sign a bill that requires the State Department to counter what it calls Chinese "disinformation" that Tibet, which was annexed by the People's Republic of

China in 1951, has been part of China since ancient times.

"China wants recognition that Tibet has been part of China ... throughout history, and this bill is suggesting that it would be relatively easy for Tibet supporters to get a western government to refuse to give recognition for such an extensive claim," said Tibet specialist Robert Barnett of London's School of Oriental and African Studies.

U.S. lawmakers, including former House speaker Nancy Pelosi, visited the Dalai Lama in June to celebrate Congress passing the legislation, which Sikyong Penpa Tsering, who heads the CTA, called a "breakthrough."

The bill is part of a strategic shift away from emphasizing Chinese rights violations such as forced assimilation, the Sikyong, or political leader, told Reuters. Since 2021, CTA has lobbied two dozen countries including the U.S., to publicly undermine Beijing's narrative that Tibet has always been part of China, he said.

With U.S. weight behind this strategy, the exiles hope to push China to the negotiating table, he said. "If every country keeps saying that Tibet is part of the People's Republic of China, then where is the reason for China to come and talk to us?"

The Chinese foreign ministry said in response to Reuters' questions that it would be open to discussions with the Dalai Lama about his "personal future" if he "truly gives up his position of splitting the motherland" and recognized Tibet as an unalienable part of China.

Beijing, which has not held official talks with the Dalai Lama's representatives since 2010, has also urged Biden not to sign the bill.

The office of the Dalai Lama, who has in recent years apologized for remarks he made about women and to a young child, referred an interview request to the Sikyong.

**Succession questions**

Most historians say Tibet was assimilated into the Mongol empire during the 13th-14th century Yuan dynasty, which also covered large parts of present day China. Beijing says that established its sovereign claim, though scholars believe the relationship varied greatly over the centuries and remote Tibet largely governed itself for much of the time.

The People's Liberation Army marched into Tibet in 1950 and announced its "peaceful liberation." After a failed uprising against Chinese rule in 1959, a young Dalai Lama fled into exile in India.

In 1995, atheist China and the Dalai Lama separately identified two boys as the Panchen Lama, the second-most-important Tibetan Buddhist leader. The Dalai Lama's pick was taken away by Chinese authorities and has not been seen since.

Many Buddhists consider Beijing's choice illegitimate, though most expect a similar parallel selection for the next Dalai Lama, given the Chinese government's stance that he must reincarnate, and it must approve the successor.

Chinese authorities have "tried to insert themselves into the succession of the Dalai Lama but we will not let that happen," said Michael McCaul, Republican chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee during his Dharamsala visit.

## **World Tibet Day - Showcasing Uniqueness Of Tibetan Culture, Thought**

06 July 2024, ETV Bharat

World Tibet Day is observed every year on July 6. It aims to increase awareness of the genocidal threats to the Tibetan people, and showcase the uniqueness of Tibetan culture and thought.

July 6 is observed as World Tibet Day, marking the birthday of His Holiness, the XIV Dalai Lama of Tibet. It aims to help restore essential freedoms for those living in Chinese-occupied Tibet, increase awareness of the genocidal threats to the Tibetan people, and showcase the uniqueness of Tibetan culture and thought.

Tibet is a region in East Asia, centred on the Tibetan Plateau north of the Himalayas. It is technically part of China, but it has had a long history as an independent power, and its rule by China is controversial. Tibet's unique form of Buddhism is its predominant religion and the central part of its culture.

**Who is Called Dalai Lama:** Dalai Lama is called the biggest religious leader of Tibet. Lama means Guru who inspires his people to follow the right path.

The current 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet, Tenzin Gyatso, has been living in India since 1959. The Dalai Lama lives in Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh and from here he runs the Tibetan government in exile.

In 1937, the child was declared the reincarnation of a great Buddhist spiritual leader and named the 14th Dalai Lama. His leadership rights were exercised by a regency until 1950. That same year, he was forced to flee by the Chinese but negotiated an agreement and returned to lead Tibet for the next eight years.

On March 17, 1959, an unsuccessful Tibetan nationalist uprising led to a crackdown by China, and the Dalai Lama fled to Punjab, India, where he established his democratic government in exile. In 1989, he won the Nobel Peace Prize for his commitment to the nonviolent liberation of Tibet.

**Dalai Lama Sent A Message To Nehru:** After reaching Lhotse Zog, Dalai Lama performed the ceremony of forming the new Tibetan government. But by then it was clear that Dalai Lama's life was in great danger while staying in Tibet. Therefore,

messages were sent to India and America that the Dalai Lama wanted to cross the border and take refuge in India.

John Greeny, a senior CIA officer, received this message on March 28. He immediately sent information to Delhi and informed about the Dalai Lama's intention. Earlier on March 26, Dalai Lama had sent a message to India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, "Indian people are known all over the world for supporting human values. We are entering India from the Sona area. We hope that you will make arrangements for our stay on Indian soil. We have full faith in your kindness." Nehru immediately said 'yes' to this.

23 May 1951 - Tibetans consider this day a black day, while the Chinese call it a day of peace efforts. On this day, Tibet signed an agreement with China. With this agreement, Tibet was occupied by China.

History Of Tibet Since The Chinese Invasion: China's newly established communist government sent troops to invade Tibet in 1949-50. An agreement was imposed on the Tibetan government in May of 1951, acknowledging sovereignty over Tibet but recognising the Tibetan government's autonomy with respect to Tibet's internal affairs. As the Chinese consolidated their control, they repeatedly violated the treaty and open resistance to their rule grew, leading to the National Uprising in 1959 and the flight into India of the Dalai Lama.

The international community reacted with shock at the events in Tibet. The question of Tibet was discussed on numerous occasions by the UN General Assembly between 1959 and 1965. Three resolutions were passed by the General Assembly condemning China's violations of human rights in Tibet and calling upon China to respect those rights, including Tibet's right to self-determination.

### **Penpa Tsering, Sikyong of CTA raises concern as China imposes restrictions ahead of Dalai Lama's 89th birthday**

05 July 2024, ANI

President of the Central Tibetan Administration of the Tibetan government-in-exile, Penpa Tsering Sikyong, expressed regret that Tibetans cannot celebrate the 89th birthday of their spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, on July 6 in his birthplace due to China's restrictions.

Conveying his message to all Tibetans, Sikyong said, "It is a joyous occasion for us who have the freedom to celebrate his birthday, but for Tibetans inside, of course, they still have to be bound by the restrictions that the Chinese government has imposed on not being able to celebrate Dalai Lama's birthday in the place of his birth."

The 14th Dalai Lama, known to the Tibetan people as Gyalwa Rinpoche, is the current Dalai Lama, also the highest spiritual leader and head of Tibet. The Chinese government is intensifying already stringent social media restrictions on Tibetans to keep them from celebrating the July 6 birthday of the Dalai Lama.

While speaking to ANI on Friday, he urged Tibetans to unite and support the Dalai Lama's efforts to keep the Tibetan issue alive.

"So that is very unfortunate but people have learned to understand the situation and the Chinese government is always very nervous around this time. Dalai Lama is going to be 89 this year, so to all the Tibetans inside and outside, I keep saying we see his holiness reincarnation of Aviloteshwara and so far, he alone travelled around the world with his folded hands and made sure that the Tibet issue is alive and one form of Aviloktेशvara is a thousand eyes, thousand hands, now I ask Tibetans inside and outside to be one eye and one hand of Dalai Lama," said Sikyong .

Dalai Lama is in United States these days, as he went there for knee surgery. Talking about Dalai Lama's health, Sikyong said, "Dalai Lama's health is improving. The surgery went very well on the 28th of the last month and it was a short surgery and now he is in the recovery section and he will move somewhere to have physiotherapy for a complete recovery."

The US has also come up with a new law in support of Tibet and Tibetans are waiting for US President Biden to sign new legislation, the 'Tibet Resolve Act'. Commenting on the government of India's vision or policy towards China, Sikyong said, "I keep saying that I am nobody to advise the Indian government and they are much smarter. People working at the top there and we of course work with them and yeah when a lot of things are happening, when there are lot of things on the table, it is also important to think about recalibration depending on the changing political scenario..."

The Chinese government labels Tibet as a "socialist paradise," but the CTA President questions why they don't allow people to see it for themselves if that's truly the case.

"Sometimes we get to know only after things have happened, one or two weeks or sometimes even one month after things have happened because the Chinese government knows that the world community and the media need evidence so they don't allow people to come and see for themselves. They call Tibet a socialist paradise so we keep asking, If Tibet is a socialist paradise, then why don't you allow people to see for themselves?," said CTA President "Instead of going into a very single detail about what is happening inside Tibet, all I could say is that we're

dying a slow death," he added.

Tibetan Buddhism originated from India and Tibetans consider themselves a part of Indian culture, said Tsering, adding that China is trying to erase Tibetan culture and replace it with Chinese culture, which will also affect India.

"Tibetan Buddhism came from India. We consider ourselves as an extension of Indian culture. Because we have translated every available Sanskrit and Pali text into Tibetan way back from the 8th to 13th century. So today it is being destroyed and this will also have implications for India because what China is trying to do is turn every young Tibetan into a Chinese," said Tsering.

China considers Dalai Lama, who has been living in exile in India for decades, a separatist intending to split the formerly independent region from the control of China, as per UCA News.

Chinese forces invaded and annexed Tibet in the 1950s under the pretext that it had always been a part of China. (ANI)

### **As UPR concludes, UN Human Rights Council voices clear criticism of China's abuses in Tibet**

04 July 2024, International Campaign for Tibet

The United Nations Human Rights Council has once again issued substantive criticism of Beijing's systematic human rights violations against Tibetans, Uyghurs, Hong Kongers and Chinese. This evaluation of China's human rights record came during China's Universal Periodic Review (UPR), which takes place every four and a half years and whose final report was adopted by the UN Human Rights Council today.

Despite intense lobbying by Beijing and the deployment of an array of non-governmental organizations controlled by the Chinese government (government-organized non-government organizations, or GONGOs), 21 states addressed the situation in Tibet. This was the largest number since China underwent its first review in 2009.

The United Kingdom made the following statement: "China tried to claim that the Office of the High Commissioners' authoritative Xinjiang assessment is, and I quote: illegal and void. It is neither. Let me again urge China to end its persecution and arbitrary detention of Uyghurs and Tibetans and to allow genuine freedom of religion and expression."

The United States also made a statement, saying, "The United States condemns the human rights abuses in Tibet, Inner Mongolia, and across China."

As expected, the Chinese government rejected substantial recommendations, or in some cases "accepted" them with the argument that various human rights standards had "already been implemented." These claims are in clear contradiction

to the reality in Tibet, as has been stated many times by independent UN human rights experts.

ICT Executive Director Kai Müller said: "No matter how hard they try, the Chinese government cannot conceal what is happening in Tibet. However, it is a cause for concern that more and more states are apparently allowing themselves to be put under pressure by China and are singing Beijing's song. The large number of GONGOs on the Human Rights Council is also a serious impediment to the proper functioning of these processes.

"On the other hand, it is positive that more states than ever before have critically addressed the situation in Tibet and called for change. Especially as a member of the UN Security Council, China must comply with international rules, and human rights are a central part of this," Müller continued.

Increased criticism

Compared to the UPR review six years ago, 21 states – up from nine – expressed substantial criticism of China's human rights record in Tibet and 19 states made recommendations. The so-called "Advanced Questions" to China, which could be submitted to the Chinese government in advance, indicated increased interest. Twice as many of these questions were submitted compared to 2018.

The review took place in a tense climate, as the Chinese government was once again present with an unusually large delegation of diplomats. Beijing also mobilized a large number of GONGOs that strictly repeat the party line. Of the 67 organizations registered to speak at the Human Rights Council, at least 25 were Chinese GONGOs and another five were GONGOs from friendly authoritarian states such as Russia or Cuba. At the same time, a large number of states used their speaking time for statements supportive of Chinese policies.

ICT advocacy

ICT advocacy staffer Melanie Blondelle was able to deliver a statement on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights in the plenary session of the Human Rights Council. Blondelle:

"Over the past two years, several UN human rights bodies have raised the alarm over the escalation of human rights violations in Tibet. These include the boarding school system that has separated nearly one million Tibetan children from their families and communities, extensive forced labor programs, massive displacement of the rural Tibetan population, and the imprisonment of Tibetan environmentalists. Tibetans continue to face torture, death in custody and enforced disappearances at the hands of the Chinese state.

As a result, an unprecedented number of states have made recommendations and raised preliminary questions on Tibet, expressing the growing concern of the international community. We strongly welcome



this expression of genuine concern, which not only recognizes the situation on the ground, but also protects the credibility of the Human Rights Council itself.”

In her statement on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, Blondelle also pointed out that several nations had called on the Chinese government to grant open, independent and unrestricted access to Tibet, including through the UN OHCHR and special rapporteurs. China is consistently blocking this access and instead spreading disinformation in which alleged social progress is used to justify its repressive tactics. The international community must see through this barely disguised strategy and insist on the universality and indivisibility of human rights, Blondelle continued.

Appendix: Statement in the original text

Item 6: UPR outcomes

Statement delivered by Mélanie Blondelle on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights – Check against delivery

Mr. President,

Over the last two years, multiple UN human rights bodies raised alarm at the escalation of human rights violations in Tibet. This includes nearly one million Tibetan children separated from their families and forced into Mandarin dominated schools; extensive forced labor transfer programs; massive dislocation of the rural Tibetan population; and imprisonment of Tibetan environmental and human rights defenders. Tibetans are routinely tortured, die in custody, and are disappeared.

An unprecedented number of states offered recommendations and submitted advance questions on Tibet, demonstrating the international community’s dismay. We welcome this expression of genuine concern, which does not only acknowledge the situation on the ground, but also protects the credibility of the Human Rights Council itself.

China’s predicted rejection of almost 70% of the 23 Tibet-specific recommendations and its listing of the remainder as ‘accepted and already implemented’, contradicts verified facts.

Several states and the EU called on China to provide independent and unfettered access to Tibet, including by UN OHCHR and Special Rapporteurs. China consistently blocks such access, opting instead to spread disinformation alleging social progress as justification for its oppressive tactics. The international community must see through this thinly veiled strategy and insist on the universality and indivisibility of human rights.

We also stress that Tibetans in Tibet are not able to engage freely with UN mechanisms, foremost the UPR due to the pervasive climate of fear instilled by decades long oppression.

Despite this dire situation, options exist to achieve peaceful change. The Dalai Lama continues to pursue a path to invite dialogue and mutual understanding. The Chinese government should seize this opportunity, and the international community should press China, a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council, to fully respect the rights of the Tibetan people and to address the root causes for the conflict on the plateau.

Tibet is a test of the UN Human Rights Council’s ability to uphold universal human rights, through the UPR and beyond. It is a test it must not fail.

### **Dalai Lama’s followers pray for his knee surgery recovery outside makeshift ‘temple’ — a ritzy NYC hotel**

04 July 2024, New York Post, Caitlin McCormack and Matt Troutman

They’re Tibet-ing on a speedy recovery.

Acolytes of the Dalai Lama congregated during the July Fourth holiday outside Midtown’s ritzy Park Hyatt Hotel, where the exiled leader of Tibetan Buddhism is recuperating from knee replacement surgery.

Throngs of Dalai devotees, some wearing traditional Tibetan garb and prayer beads, posed for photos and prayed outside the West 57th Street hotel Thursday, walking around the block clockwise as if it were a Buddhist temple.

“We believe that if you circumambulate, it’s offering us good luck in our future and in our present also,” said Yonten Dorjee, 40, of Kew Gardens, Queens.

“We imagine this as our temple and His Holiness is inside,” Dorjee’s wife, Kalsang Youdon, 45, said.



Acolytes offered prayers to the Dalai Lama’s recovery and sought to circumambulate the Park Hyatt hotel.

The Dalai Lama arrived in New York City in late June — his first trip to the US since 2017 — to undergo knee replacement surgery at the Hospital for Special Surgery.

The 88-year-old Nobel Peace Prize laureate, who fled to India in 1959 after a failed uprising against



Chinese rule in Tibet, has suffered health problems for years.

His June 28 surgery was successful and he's expected to make a full recovery after his discharge a day later, said David J. Mayman, the chief of adult reconstruction and joint replacement service at the Upper East Side hospital, in a statement.

"His Holiness's personal medical team and office were in constant communication with the surgical and medical staff at HSS," Mayman said.

It's unclear how long the Dalai Lama will be recovering at the five-star hotel across from Carnegie Hall, where admirers' have been making daily devotional visits, Gothamist first reported.

Existence may be suffering, as the Buddha taught, but the mood outside the hotel has been joyous.

The Dalai Lama's personal cook Tenzin Pasang made an appearance at one point Thursday and was immediately greeted by spectators as though he were Taylor Swift.

"I heard that [the Dalai Lama's] treatments were successful, so that's why we're very happy," said Kalsang Phuntsok, 58, who brought his family from Jackson Heights.

"He shares wisdom throughout all of Tibet and India, and my family is so proud of what he's done," said Phuntsok's son Baruwa Kunshey, 11.

China views the Dalai Lama as a dangerous separatist, a charge the religious leader has dismissed.

Indeed, his New York City visit came shortly after a bipartisan House delegation visited him in northern India – a trip that drew a threatening letter from China's embassy to the US.

"The visit interferes with China's internal affairs, violates China's sovereignty and territorial integrity," the letter stated.

"Free Tibet" chatter was scarce outside the Park Hyatt among the Independence Day crowd.

For Ella Krivova, 37, an Upper East Sider who was grateful for the holiday off so she could spend more time near the Dalai Lama, the religious leader's presence itself was a "precious opportunity."

"This city can be so materialistic, being here helps you to be closer to the teaching and to develop and deepen your life," she said.

"His mindstream is very vast and kind and generous so it's to be connected to the teaching and to liberate and help other people in the future."

## 2nd International Tibet Youth Forum Commences in Dharamshala, Sikyong Calls for Unified Efforts in Advocating for Tibet

03 July 2024, CTA



Sikyong Penpa Tsering addressing the gathering.  
Photo / Tenzin Phende / CTA

The Department of Information and International Relations (DIIR), Central Tibetan Administration, earlier today commenced the 2nd International Tibet Youth Forum, a hallmark initiative of the 16th Kashag, in Dharamshala that brought together over 100 Tibetan youths representing diverse educational and professional backgrounds from more than 13 countries.

The inaugural session of this three-day seminar, from 3 to 5 July, was honoured by the presence of Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the democratically elected leader of the Central Tibetan Administration, who presided over the proceedings with grace and conviction. Secretary Karma Choeying and Additional Secretary Tenzin Lekshay from the DIIR also graced the occasion with their presence.

Following the arrival of the guests and participants at the venue, Secretary Karma Choeying delivered a welcome address to emphasise the importance of this conference. He stated that in this critical time of generational transition, it is paramount for younger Tibetans to inherit the mantle of our freedom struggle and safeguard Tibet's unique identity. Hence, under the stewardship of Sikyong Penpa Tsering and the 16th Kashag, the V-TAG (Voluntary Tibet Advocacy Group) initiative was introduced in 2021 to amplify Tibet advocacy efforts worldwide. The Secretary further said this seminar aims to empower members of V-TAG and other Tibetan youths from diverse organisations to advance the Tibetan Freedom Movement through coordinated advocacy and awareness campaigns.

In addition, Secretary Karma Choeying clarified that V-TAG is not a Central Tibetan Administration's youth group but rather a platform for younger Tibetans, regardless of their political opinions, to dedicate themselves to furthering the cause of Tibet.

The event's chief guest, Sikyong Penpa Tsering, extended his greetings to the participants and lauded their commitment to advocating for the Tibetan cause while introducing the conference speakers.

Beginning with the benevolent and lifelong contributions of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in resolving the longstanding Tibet-China conflict and establishing this unparalleled exile Tibetan community, Sikyong implored everyone to pray for the wellbeing of His Holiness. Sikyong further stated that following His Holiness' noble guidance is the most appropriate way to offer prayers and to do so, "We must not fall into petty factional arguments and, instead, we must all unify our efforts regardless of our political stands to strive for freedom in Tibet." In relation to this, Sikyong shed light on the Central Tibetan Administration's policy of the Middle Way Approach (MWA). "Every political view among Tibetans, including those seeking a win-win solution through MWA and others who want complete independence, have their valid reasons based on the truth. But, His Holiness introduced MWA, which was later unanimously adopted as the official political position by the Tibetan Parliament in Exile, for the sole reason of Tibet's survival that otherwise has reached a stage of complete extinction."

Apart from that, as part of his keynote speech, Sikyong Penpa Tsering spoke about the V-TAG's increasing impact over the last three years and commended all active members for their efforts. "Central Tibetan Administration has prioritised inclusiveness of all sections of our community in the Tibetan freedom struggle", and therefore, Sikyong encouraged others to take part in the journey of V-TAG. "A success of V-TAG can later be translated into a people's movement", Sikyong declared.

Furthermore, the exile Tibetan political leader shared profound insights into international politics, shedding light on China's current geopolitical stance and its internal political dynamics before concluding his talk. Thereafter, a Q&A session with Sikyong was held for around half an hour that was followed by a vote of thanks from DIIR Additional Secretary Tenzin Lekshay.

Over the course of following three days, Kasur (former Kalon) Tenpa Tsering; Bhutika Karpoché, Member of the Provincial Parliament for Parkdale-High Park, Canada; Namgyal Gangshontsang, Mayor of the Oetwil am See, Switzerland; Geshe Lhakdor, Director of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives; Namkyi, a former Tibetan Political Prisoner; Franz Matzner, Director of Government Relations, International Campaign for Tibet; Tenzin Dorjee, Strategist and Senior Researcher, Tibet Action Institute; Karma Lekshey, Director of the Tibetan Centre for Conflict Resolution; Topjor Tsaltrim, Communication Coordinator of the Students

for a Free Tibet; and Tenzin Yangzom, Campaign Coordinator, International Tibet Network, will speak on various topics concerning Tibet advocacy.

### Artist launches collection of 108 visual arts from exile Tibetan artists

03 July 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

Whiteline Graphics, an initiative by Jamyang Tenzin and his brother Tsering Namgyal, launched the first-ever meticulously curated book titled "108 Exile Tibetan Visual Artists and Their Expression of Universal Responsibility and The Environment." This unique project celebrated the rich tapestry of Tibetan art and culture in exile. Through this initiative, Jamyang showcased unique artworks of 108 incredible talents that boast of diversity and inclusiveness within the Tibetan art community.

A panel discussion featured Ven. Tenzin Tselek, a former TCV Education Director; Bhuchung D. Sonam, a writer, poet, and co-founder of Tibetwrit.es; and was attended by Geshe Lhakdor, Director of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives. During the discussions, Ven. Tselek, who also served as the Principal of TCV Selakui, emphasised the importance of prioritising the foundations of the arts in schools.

Bhuchung D. Sonam urged the audience to respect and support artists, highlighting the lack of recognition they receive. He referenced an editorial from Amnye Machen's magazine, Lungtah, which noted that traditionally, artists in Tibet, including dancers and singers, are often viewed unfavourably. He also discussed Drubchen Thangtong Gyalpo, who pioneered Tibetan opera in the 15th century.

Despite his significant contributions, historical records and biographies seldom acknowledged him as the founder of Tibetan opera. Nowadays, his contributions are verbally recognised, as demonstrated during Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts' Opera Festival, where homage is duly paid to Thangtong Gyalpo. Bhuchung also shared personal anecdotes, recounting how his parents would disparagingly refer to singers as "beggars" during the harvest festival, where these performers would sing songs.

"The purpose of including 108 artists' works holds symbolic significance," Jamyang told Phayul. "There are numerous ways to interpret this number. In Buddhism, we believe that 108 steps are required to reach Nirvana, and the Tibetan rosary typically consists of 108 beads. While there isn't a definitive reason for choosing 108, it is considered an auspicious number. Based on this symbolism, I curated the artworks of 108 Tibetan artists in exile. Although I had a list of around 270 visual artists, I could only contact 108."

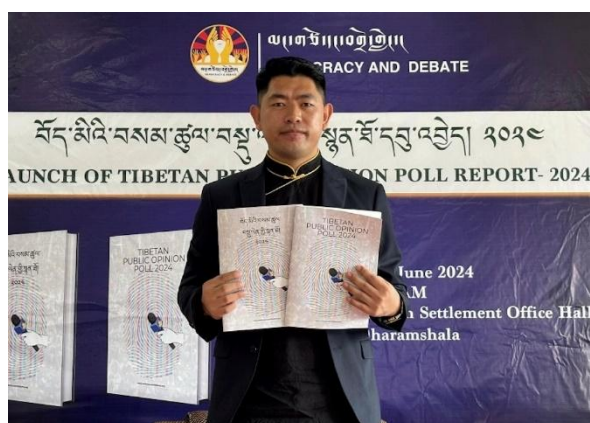
Discussing the process of compiling the artworks, Jamyang mentioned facing challenges in reaching senior artists due to their lack of social media presence, which required considerable effort to contact them. With younger artists, transparency was a concern, as they wanted assurance that their artworks would not be used for commercial purposes.

Jamyang reported that the response from most artists has been positive. He explained that his inspiration for creating this book was to unite the artistic efforts of 108 exiled Tibetan visual artists, each contributing a piece that reflects their unique perspective.

## June

### Discourse facilitator 'Democracy and Debate' launches report on opinion poll from Tibetan public

28 June 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon



Lharong, the co-founder of the Democracy and Debate during the launch of Tibetan Public Opinion Poll on June 28, 2024 (Phayul photo)

Democracy and Debate, a non-partisan and independent initiative dedicated to fostering open dialogue and transparency, released a report on Friday based on an public opinion poll conducted among Tibetans from around the globe.

This comprehensive survey, which included 28 questions and garnered responses from 1,088 Tibetans residing in over 30 countries, offers a unique and expansive view of the current challenges and the need for reform in Tibetan democracy. The poll was conducted using a combination of online surveys and in-person interviews to ensure a broad and representative sample.

The findings of the poll highlighted the urgent need for reform in several areas in the political set up and democratic system of the exile Tibetan community with 89% of respondents supporting democratic reforms to ensure an equal number of voting rights

for all Tibetans, 80% supporting the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) holding a special meeting to foster broader engagement and dialogue with Tibetan communities on democracy issues, 70% support the separation of politics and religion within the Tibetan democratic system and 64% support increasing the number of parliamentary seats for Tibetans abroad. Another area for reform is in the area of policy 64% support increasing the Green Book fee by 50%.

The report also highlighted several challenges facing Tibetan democracy. Many respondents pointed out the polarisation within the community. They suggested measures to reduce it, such as promoting unity, separating politics and religion, eradicating regionalism, following the guidance of His Holiness, ensuring equal voting rights, and leading by example.

"The purpose of the opinion poll is to understand Tibetan's perspectives on Tibetan democracy as well as to establish a channel between the CTA and the Tibetan community. The discussion in Tibetan democracy often lacks data on public opinion. With this detailed data released will help policymakers, media, and the general public to understand the community's perspective on a variety of issues, including structural issues, policy issues, and public approval ratings on institutions and decisions-makers," stated Lharong, the co-founder of the Democracy and Debate, during the launch of the report.

### Tibetans worldwide rejoice over Dalai Lama's successful knee surgery

28 June 2024, RFA

The Buddhist spiritual leader enjoys strong support in the US, where the operation took place.

The Dalai Lama had successful total knee replacement surgery at a top New York hospital and will be discharged on Saturday, the Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader's personal physician said as Tibetans around the world rejoiced at the news.

The Dalai Lama, who turns 89 on July 6, has experienced health problems for years. His knee issues required medical attention outside northern India where he has lived in exile for 65 years following a failed uprising against Chinese rule in Tibet.

The Nobel Prize winner enjoys strong support in the United States, especially among prominent lawmakers who have spoken out about human rights issues in Tibet, despite objections by China which views him as a separatist and bristles at his interactions with foreign officials.



"After the surgery, he returned to his room in the hospital in a very stable condition and has already had his lunch," said Dr. Tsetan Dorjee Sadutshang, who gave a video briefing on the Dalai Lama's condition just hours after his operation Friday at New York's Hospital for Special Surgery, a top medical facility for musculoskeletal health.

The operation began in the early morning amid mass prayers and religious rituals by Tibetans worldwide, including those inside Tibet, for the Dalai Lama's successful surgery and swift recovery.

"The entire team looking after His Holiness at the hospital has been very supportive and caring," said Sadutshang, who was accompanied by Tenzin Taklha, the Dalai Lama's secretary, at the briefing.

The treatment was successful, and the surgery ended around 7:30 a.m., said another source with knowledge of the matter.

The Dalai Lama arrived in New York on June 23, marking his first visit to the United States in over seven years and his first overseas trip since November 2018.

Tibetans across Tibet have been offering prayers for his well-being ever since news of his U.S. visit reached people in various corners of the region and in Tibetan-populated areas of China's western provinces, Tibetan sources said.

In Lhasa, Tibetans offered prayers at the Jokhang Temple, Ramoche Temple and other monasteries on Friday, as China tightened security at religious sites amid news of widespread prayer by Tibetans inside Tibet for the Dalai Lama's successful surgery, the sources said.



People await the arrival of the Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, at his hotel in New York before he undergoes knee surgery, June 23, 2024. (Adam Gray/AFP)

Tibetans worldwide also took to social media to express their joy and gratitude.

"Thank you so much for the updates, Doctor. Wishing His Holiness the Dalai Lama a speedy recovery," wrote one Tibetan netizen, commenting on the press briefing video posted on YouTube.

Another wrote: "Thank you, USA medical team. This is really good news for us."

The Dalai Lama's trip to the U.S. comes in the wake of the passage of a bill in the U.S. Congress urging Beijing to re-engage with him and other Tibetan leaders to peacefully resolve their dispute over the status and governance of Tibet.

### **Tibetans worldwide pray as Dalai Lama undergoes knee surgery in the USA**

28 June 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup

Tibetans across the globe are united in prayer today as His Holiness the Dalai Lama underwent knee surgery at the Hospital for Special Surgery (HSS) in New York city.

According to Voice of America and Radio Free Asia, both media houses headquartered in the United States, the surgery has been successful and His Holiness the Dalai Lama's condition is good, citing confirmed sources. However, there are no official announcements or updates from his office yet.

The surgery took place this morning (New York time) at HSS, the world's leading academic medical centre focused on musculoskeletal health. Renowned for its excellence, HSS has been ranked No. 1 in orthopaedics for 14 consecutive years by U.S. News & World Report (2023-2024) and has consistently been among the top-ranked hospitals for both orthopaedics and rheumatology for 32 years.

The Dalai Lama, the revered spiritual leader of Tibet, has been experiencing knee issues that necessitated this medical intervention. He will be 89 years of age next month on his birthday which falls on July 6th.

From Dharamshala to New York, Tibetans and supporters of His Holiness have been gathering in temples, community centres, and private homes to offer prayers and perform rituals for his swift recovery. Social media platforms are also flooded with messages of support and well-wishes from followers around the world.

The global Tibetan community remains hopeful and united in their support for the Dalai Lama during this critical time. Further updates on His Holiness's condition are eagerly awaited by his followers worldwide.

### **'Dalai Lama will live on, Xi Jinping will die' — former Tibet PM on reincarnation geopolitics**

28 June 2024, The Print, Monami Gogoi

Lobsang Sangay said 'no one has done more for Tibetans than India', adding that the Indian media has fallen prey to Chinese propaganda in the past.

Lobsang Sangay, former Sikyong or Prime Minister of the Tibetan government in exile, is confident in his understanding of how the United States functions. Shedding light on Tibet's relations with the US,

Sangay, currently a Harvard Law School professor, described the ties as 'a roller coaster experience', while mentioning the US' 'ping-pong' diplomacy and Richard Nixon's attempt to normalise his country's relationship with China in order to counter the Soviet Union. Sangay made the comments during a lecture on 'Geopolitics of Reincarnation' at New Delhi's India International Centre on 20 June in front of a full house of nearly 100 people. In the 90-minute session, the 56-year-old spoke on themes of geopolitics and international diplomacy alongside Buddhist concepts of reincarnation, karma, and compassion.

Realpolitik and spirituality might seem completely antithetical, but the two topics are interconnected for Sangay. Political acumen and spiritual wisdom intertwined to explain the evolving nature of the Chinese occupation of the Tibetan plateau, including the thorny issue of China's position on the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama.

The talk didn't happen in isolation. A day before, a bipartisan seven-member US delegation, which included former US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, had visited the Dalai Lama in Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh. It was followed by their announcement that the US would not allow China to interfere in the succession of the Dalai Lama. Sangay intended to remind the audience about the Dalai Lama's statement on reincarnation from 2011, where, among several other things, he had categorically stated that the next Dalai Lama wouldn't be born in China if the issue of Tibet was not resolved. He did it by highlighting the subsequent "disinformation strategy" of the Chinese government "to manipulate and control the narrative."

The professor said the geopolitics of reincarnation affects huge geography, naming areas where Tibetan Buddhism is practised—regions along the Himalayas, inner and outer Mongolia, among other places. Continuing his argument, Sangay also mentioned China, East Asia, and Southeast Asian countries where Buddhism is a dominant religion.

"And you might be surprised to know that the third largest religion in Italy—the land of the Catholic Church and Pope—is Buddhism. In all of Europe as well. So Buddhism has become a major religion all over the world. But directly impacting this. So, the reincarnation of His Holiness Dalai Lama has major geopolitical significance," he said.

An atheistic party interfering in reincarnation

Sangay, who served as the Sikyong from 2011 to 2021, cited numerous instances of the workings of the Chinese government's "disruptive propaganda machine." To an audience comprising several journalists, he stated that the Indian media had fallen prey to Chinese propaganda in the past. Sangay recalled that in 2019, a team of Indian journalists

went on a "guided tour" to China. Before the trip, he had warned a journalist not to "get fooled" by the Chinese.

"They came back on July 11th or 12th. And all the headlines, in all the major newspapers of India, were this—'India should not interfere in the selection of Dalai Lama. China will select,'" he said, pointing to a slide showing headlines of several news articles.

While pinpointing the media's shortcomings, Sangay also underscored and appreciated India's role in the Tibetan freedom movement.

"No one has done more for Tibetans than India. India has done the most. Indian people have been the most hospitable. The fact that we are here, we have a government-in-exile here," he said.

He also discussed the Chinese government's ongoing efforts to assert control over the reincarnation process of Tibetan Lamas, including the Dalai Lama. Sangay pointed out the historical and political manipulations involved, referencing the "Golden Urn" method used by the Qing Dynasty to legitimise the selection of reincarnations of Tibetan lamas. The Chinese government still insists on using this method.

"Communist Party of China, which says religion is poison, is now issuing certificates to legitimise Lamas," he remarked, highlighting the irony in the Chinese government's stance.

Sangay also brought to focus a 70,000-character petition, dated 18 May 1962, written by the 10th Panchen Lama and addressed to the Chinese government. In the report, Panchen Lama wrote about the destruction of monasteries and nunneries in Tibet.

"After all this destruction, what legitimacy does the Chinese government have to say – we have destroyed everything but we have the right to choose your Lama?" the professor said.

Reincarnation, karma, and compassion

Balancing geopolitics and the spiritual, Sangay consistently mentioned the deeply rooted Tibetan Buddhist concepts of reincarnation, karma, and compassion throughout his lecture. He went through the Dalai Lama's 2011 statement on reincarnation, succinctly explaining all the states of the process. He also briefed on the emanation and selection process of the next Dalai Lama, which involves divination.

Though the reincarnation process might seem "complicated" to others, Sangay said it isn't so for Tibetans.

"For 800 years, we've been practising this, we have nailed it. So we know how it works. It's a well-oiled system that we have," he said.

During the Q&A session, when tough remarks surfaced about the US' history of "abandoning" Tibet in the past, Sangay's reply had a latent Buddhist approach.



"We know how America functions. Generally, we know how realpolitik is, right? In international relations, everybody works for their own national interests. So when their national interests coincide with ours, we welcome them. When it doesn't, we are compassionate," he said, underscoring the importance of allies.

Another question was whether Pelosi's provocative remark in Dharmshala, where she had said that the Dalai Lama's legacy would continue and Xi Jinping's would be forgotten, could be read as an endorsement by the Indian government.

As a seasoned speaker, Sangay skirted a direct reply but gave a response steeped in Buddhist teachings.

"Leader Nancy Pelosi is right. His (Dalai Lama's) legacy will live on, and Xi Jinping will die, and no one will remember. All the dictators will die. It's a historical fact that in the 20th century, eight empires collapsed," he said, beginning his argument. Eight empires will come in the 21st century, and they will all collapse too, he added.

"So as Buddhists, we believe in impermanence. We just have to wait and survive. And our turn will come. That's the law of karma."

### **'Tibetans Forced To Join Chinese Army Won't Be Deployed Near Indian Border': Tibetan Govt In Exile Head**

28 June 2024, Times Now Digital

Tibetans, forced to join the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), wouldn't be sent near the Indian border, Lobsang Sangay, sikkong or political head of the Tibetan government in exile, said. For, they would "cross over," he said. He also wondered how much PLA officers would trust Tibetan troops, especially if there's been coercion in the enrolment. On the other hand, Tibetan troops with the Indian security forces did well in Ladakh and forced the Chinese to pull back several years ago, he said.

Speaking about former U.S. Speaker of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi and her bipartisan delegation of Democrats and Republicans calling on the Dalai Lama, he said it was evidence of American intent. He agreed with Pelosi's statement about Chinese leader Xi Jinping being forgotten by history. "All dictators will die... Pelosi is right. He will be forgotten while His Holiness, the Dalai Lama will be remembered," he added. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with Pelosi's delegation was a sign of solidarity, he added. It was also symbolic, he said.

The sikkong from 2011 to 2021, Sangay said China is keen on destroying Tibetan civilisation, including repressive measures against lamas and the destruction of monasteries, but has failed so far.

Nor while the Chinese have a role in finding the next Dalai Lama. Sangay said that when the current Dalai

Lama does pass on, the Regent will take over while a selection committee will shortlist about 10 little boys. Of them, two or three may go before the finding committee and from the two-three, the next Dalai Lama will be chosen through divination. The process can take 3-6 years.

### **US is Ready to Stand With Tibet and Its People**

25 June 2024, Japan Forward, Professor Pema Gyalpo

New US legislation, a Congressional delegation visit to Dharmshala, and the Dalai Lama in New York highlight American support for Tibet amid Chinese objections.

I went to Dharmshala to participate in a special prayer for the "Long Life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama." The former staff of the Central Tibetan Administration organized this event for the spiritual leader of Tibet.

While I was still in India, a very impressive and important delegation of United States friends came to Dharmshala, where His Holiness the Dalai Lama resides today. Leading this delegation was Republican Representative Michael McCaul, along with prominent Democrat, former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

This high-profile seven-member delegation made me feel that some images are powerful and others even more so. Take the case of this US Congressional delegation meeting His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama in Dharmshala on June 19, 2024.

However, even more critical politically was the picture of the same US congressional delegation meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi. Of course, the icing on the cake was Nancy Pelosi's announcement that President Joe Biden is likely to sign the Tibet Resolve Act very soon. Doing so would show America's support for Tibet and the Tibetan people.

In all, it is a heady combination of politics and spirituality that sends strong signals to the so-called People's Republic of China. It also shows that India is beginning to realize the importance of showing support for the Tibetan people.

#### **Resolve Tibet Act**

On June 12, the US Congress passed a resolution to enhance the Tibet-China Dispute Act, better known as the Resolve Tibet Act. Congress's bipartisan legislation now awaits signing from President Joe Biden, following which it will be ratified into law.

Following the Tibetan Policy Act or TPA (2002) and the Tibetan Policy & Support Act or the TPSA (2020), this is the third legislation that the US has taken regarding Tibet. Washington has long supported the Tibetan cause, and the latest bill is another step in the effort.

The Resolve Tibet Act underlines the need for such talks to be pursued without "preconditions" on the terms to seek a settlement that resolves differences. It also states that the succession of the Dalai Lama was not of China's concern and would best be left to Tibetan Buddhists. (Of course, we Tibetans believe His Holiness will live for decades to come).

#### Dharamsala Delegation

This is precisely why the delegation's recent visit to Dharamsala to meet His Holiness at his temporary phodrang (palace, residence) angered China. Beijing views His Holiness, the beloved peace-loving Spiritual Tibetan leader, as a dangerous separatist. (His Holiness has handed over His Temporal power to the directly elected Sikyong)

According to a local paper, "The high-level delegation, led by Republican Representative Michael McCaul and including Democratic former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, arrived Tuesday at the hillside town, which the Nobel Peace Prize laureate has made his headquarters since fleeing from Tibet after a failed uprising against Chinese rule in 1959. There, they met with officials from the Tibetan government-in-exile, which wants more autonomy for Tibet."

They said that a key focus of their visit was to underscore the Resolve Tibet Act. The Act aims to encourage dialogue between His Holiness and Chinese officials to find a peaceful resolution between Tibet and Beijing. The Bill should now be sent to the White House for President Biden to sign into law.

Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, speaks with former US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi during their meeting at Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh, India, June 19, 2024. (©Tenzin Choejor/Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama/Handout via REUTERS)

#### A Strong Message

Nancy Pelosi said the bill is "a message to the Chinese government that we have clarity in our thinking and our understanding of this issue of the freedom of Tibet."

Representative McCaul said it reaffirmed American support for the Tibetan right to self-determination. "Just this week, our delegation received a letter from the Chinese Communist Party, warning us not to come here...but we did not let the CCP intimidate us, for we are here today," he said as people cheered.

Apart from Representative McCaul, the delegation consisted of six prominent US congressional members: former House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Mariannette Miller, Gregory Meeks, Nicole Malliotakis, Jim McGovern, and Ami Bera.

Indeed, the timing and sequence of the visit is interesting. The US delegation chose first to visit Dharamsala, meet with His Holiness the Dalai Lama,

and then come down to New Delhi, where they called on the Prime Minister of India.

While the meeting was likely a bipartisan message showing US support for India and its new government, the underlying message could not have been stronger. After all, Prime Minister Modi chose to meet the delegation soon after they met with His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

#### Support From India

An official Government of India release stated, "The delegation members congratulated the Prime Minister on his election for a historic third consecutive term. They expressed deep appreciation for the scale, fairness, and transparency of the recently concluded world's largest democratic electoral exercise in India."

Prime Minister Modi posted a photo on X along with the message, "Had a very good exchange of views with friends from the US Congress in a delegation led by Representative McCaul, Chairman of House Foreign GOP. Deeply value the strong bipartisan support in advancing India- US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership."

Later, the delegation met India's External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) clarified that "Dalai Lama is a revered religious leader and is deeply respected by the people of India. His Holiness is accorded due courtesies and freedom to conduct his religious and spiritual activities."

Tibetans are always grateful to the people and government of India for their help and support. India stood by Tibet in the hardest and darkest days of its more than 2,150 years of history. We understand India's delicate situation. Tibetans can not only read India's lips but also the hearts of Indian leaders and its great people.

Prime Minister Modi's meeting with the US delegation and tweeting about it was hugely significant. While in India, the delegation had an audience with His Holiness and interacted with Sikyong Penpa Tsering (the prime minister of the government in exile ) and his team of leaders. Modi announcing this via X was a direct endorsement, if not an indication and acknowledgment of what was going on. Moreover, it was a brave symbolic gesture of support. Actions speak louder than words.

Now, while His Holiness is in the US for knee surgery, the next step would be for President Biden to meet His Holiness. A meeting between the two would send a clearer signal to China that it can never accomplish its erasure of Tibetan Identity and culture. Such a meeting would shield the Dalai Lama's institution from external interference, especially from atheist Chinese Communists.

This is the clearest indication yet that India and the US are aligned on Tibet, which may also encourage

Japan, the United Kingdom, and the European Union. That is the long-term significance of the recent US Congressional visit to India and their meeting with His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

### **PM Modi meets US delegations who visited Dalai Lama despite China's objection**

21 June 2024, The Economic Times

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with a US Congressional delegation on Thursday, following their visit to Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama in Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh, earlier this week. The delegation, including former US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi, congratulated PM Modi on his third consecutive term and expressed "deep appreciation" for the scale and transparency of India's recent general elections. Led by House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaul, the seven-member delegation highlighted the significance of India-US relations, describing them as the "most consequential one," according to a statement from the Prime Minister's Office. In addition to McCaul, the delegation comprised six prominent US Congressional members: Nancy Pelosi, Mariannette Miller, Gregory Meeks, Nicole Malliotakis, Jim McGovern, and Ami Bera. The delegation expressed their support for enhancing the Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership between India and the US, focusing on areas such as trade, emerging technology, defense, and people-to-people exchanges.



Prime Minister Modi posted a photo with the delegation on X (formerly Twitter).

"Had a very good exchange of views with friends from the US Congress in a delegation led by @RepMcCaul, Chairman of @HouseForeignGOP. Deeply value the strong bipartisan support in advancing India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership," he wrote on the social media platform. A Dharamshala visit that irked ChinaThe US delegation arrived in Dharamshala on Tuesday and met with the Dalai Lama on Wednesday. This prompted a stern response from China, which urged the United States to "fully recognize the anti-China

and separatist nature of the Dalai clique" and to refrain from "any form of contact with it."

The United States has long supported the rights of the Tibetan people to practice their religion and culture, and has accused China of human rights violations in the Himalayan region bordering India. Recently, the US House of Representatives passed a bipartisan bill aiming to push Beijing to resume stalled talks with Tibetan leaders and address Tibetan aspirations related to historical, cultural, religious, and linguistic identity.

The bill has aggravated tensions with China at a time when Beijing and Washington are attempting to improve bilateral relations. Additionally, India's relationship with China has been strained since a 2020 military standoff along their Himalayan border resulted in the deaths of 24 soldiers.

US President Joe Biden is expected to sign the Resolve Tibet Act soon, which seeks to find a resolution to the Tibet dispute. While Washington acknowledges the Tibetan Autonomous Region as part of China, the bill emphasizes the need for Tibetans to have a say in their own future.

"This visit should highlight the bipartisan support in the U.S. Congress for Tibet to have a say in their own future," said Michael McCaul, head of the US delegation and co-author of the bill, before departing from Washington.

During their meeting with PM Modi, the US delegation, including former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, congratulated him on his third consecutive term and praised the scale and transparency of India's recent general elections. The seven-member delegation emphasized the importance of India-US relations, describing them as the "most consequential one," according to a statement from the Prime Minister's Office.

The delegation, led by McCaul, included Pelosi, Mariannette Miller, Gregory Meeks, Nicole Malliotakis, Jim McGovern, and Ami Bera. They expressed their support for deepening the Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership between India and the US, focusing on trade, emerging technology, defense, and people-to-people exchanges.

**Modi lauds India-US ties**

Modi, in his turn, highlighted the "significant role played by the consistent and bipartisan support of the US Congress in advancing India-US ties," which, he said, are based on shared democratic values, rule of law, and strong people-to-people ties.

He reiterated the commitment to "further strengthen bilateral relations for the global good," the statement said.

Modi recalled his State Visit to the US in June last year during which he had an opportunity to address a Joint Session of the US Congress for a historic

second time.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday said that he met with the members of the visiting bipartisan US Congressional delegation and appreciated their "strong and continued support" to the partnership.

PM Modi's third term

In the recently-held Lok Sabha polls, the BJP with 240 seats fell short of a majority but the NDA secured the mandate with 293 seats.

The Congress bagged 99 seats, while the INDIA bloc, of which it is a part, got 234 seats.

Following the polls, two Independents who won the election pledged support to the Congress, taking the INDIA bloc tally to 236.

The general election for the 18th Lok Sabha were held in seven phases from April 19 to June 1 and votes were counted on June 4.

### **Nancy Pelosi, After Meeting Dalai Lama, Says China Is 'Trying to Erase' Tibetan Culture**

19 June 2024, Time, Sudhi Ranjan Sen and Dan Strumpf

Former U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi accused China of trying to erase Tibetan culture following her high-profile meeting with the Dalai Lama at his home in northern India Wednesday, a visit condemned by Beijing.

Pelosi was joined on the trip to Dharamshala by a bipartisan delegation led by Michael McCaul, the Republican chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. The group also met with officials from Tibet's government in exile.

Pelosi said a bill recently passed in Congress strengthening U.S. support to Tibet sends a strong message to China.

China is "trying to erase the culture, reduce the use of the language," Pelosi said during a public ceremony Wednesday in Dharamshala. "They are trying something that we cannot let them get away with."

"This bill is a message to the Chinese government that we have clarity in our thinking and understanding of this issue of the freedom of Tibet," Pelosi said.

Beijing had warned the U.S. lawmakers against the meeting, urging the U.S. in remarks on Tuesday to "see clearly the anti-China separatism nature" of the Dalai Lama and his followers.

China considers the Dalai Lama a separatist for his commitment to limited autonomy for the region. Pelosi has been a longtime critic of Chinese policy on Tibet, and visited the Tibetan city of Lhasa in 2015.

China annexed Tibet in the 1950s, with the Dalai Lama and other monks fleeing to India nine years

later, where they live as refugees and have set up a government in exile in Dharamshala.

Officials from the Tibetan government-in-exile earlier said the U.S. visit and legislation will put pressure on China to engage with them as they seek autonomy for the region.

### **Nancy Pelosi's scathing attack on Xi Jinping: 'Dalai Lama's legacy will live forever, you'll be gone'**

19 June 2024, Business Today

A US congressional delegation, led by House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaulis, is visiting India to strengthen bilateral ties and to meet the Tibetan spiritual leader.



Former US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is part of the delegation that reached Dharamshala on Tuesday

Former US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who is on a two-day visit to India, on Wednesday launched a blistering attack on Chinese President Xi Jinping, saying Dalai Lama's legacy will live forever but Xi will be gone in a few years. "His Holiness Dalai Lama, with his message of knowledge, tradition, compassion, purity of soul, and love, will live a long time and his legacy will live forever. But you, the President of China, you'll be gone and nobody will give you credit for anything," she said during the public felicitation programme at Tsuglagkhang Complex in Dharamshala.

China considers spiritual leader Dalai Lama as a separatist because of his demand for autonomy for Tibet, which Beijing occupied in the 1950s.

During the address, Pelosi said the Dalai Lama would not approve of her comment against China. "When I criticize the Chinese government, he (Dalai Lama) says, let's pray for Nancy to rid her of her negative attitudes. I hope he will indulge me today to say that change is on the way. As our colleagues have said hope brings some faith and the faith of the Tibetan people in the goodness of others is what is going to make all the difference."

A US congressional delegation, led by House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaulis, is visiting India to strengthen bilateral ties and to meet the Tibetan spiritual leader. Former US

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is part of the delegation that reached Dharamsala on Tuesday. Dharamsala is the seat of power for Tibet's government in exile since the Dalai Lama stepped into India six decades ago. Last Wednesday, the US House of Representatives voted 391-26 to approve the Promoting and Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act, which the Senate passed. The bill would direct funds to counter what it calls "disinformation" from Beijing about Tibet's history, people, and institutions.

On Tuesday, China urged US President Joe Biden not to sign the Tibet policy bill. "The 14th Dalai Lama is not a pure religious figure, but a political exile engaged in anti-China separatist activities under the cloak of religion," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said. He also said that Beijing was gravely concerned and urged the US side to fully recognise the anti-China separatist nature of the Dalai group, honour the commitments the US has made to China on issues related to Xizang, a Chinese name for Tibet. Jian also urged the US to have no contact with the Dalai group in any form.

On Wednesday, the White House said that Biden was going to make a decision that he thought was in the best interest of the US. "The President is going to do what he thinks is best on behalf of the American people, that's what I can tell you," White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters when asked about China's warning.

Referring to the legislation, Pelosi said the passage of this bill (Resolve Tibet Act) is a message to the Chinese government that the US has clarity in its thinking and understanding of this issue of the freedom of Tibet. "Listening to the leader of our delegation and the leader of the foreign affairs committee was so masterful in not only the policy but in the process of getting it passed in the most bipartisan way."

The Resolve Tibet Act is a bipartisan bill to enhance US support for Tibet and promote dialogue between the People's Republic of China and the Dalai Lama toward a peaceful resolution of the long-standing dispute between Tibet and China. The Act enhances US support for Tibet – empowering State Department officials to actively and directly counter disinformation about Tibet from the Chinese government, and reject false claims that Tibet has been part of China since "ancient times".

The bill also encourages officials to push for negotiations without preconditions between Beijing and the Dalai Lama or his representatives and coordinate with other governments in multilateral efforts toward the goal of a negotiated agreement on Tibet.

However, Beijing is opposed to the Act and has asked Biden not to sign it. The Chinese foreign

ministry spokesperson has said that anyone or any force who attempts to destabilise Xizang to contain or suppress China will not succeed. "The US should not sign the bill. China will take resolute measures to defend its sovereignty, security, and development interests," Jian said.

China, which officially refers to Tibet as Xizang, earlier this year said it would talk only with the representatives of the Dalai Lama and not the officials of the Tibetan government in exile. At the same time, China ruled out dialogue on the Dalai Lama's long-pending demand for autonomy for his remote Himalayan homeland.

In its talks with China between 2002 and 2010, the Tibetan side pitched genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people in line with the middle-way policy as proposed by the Dalai Lama. The Tibetan spiritual leader has said he does not seek political independence for Tibet but seeks autonomy for all Tibetan areas which include Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces besides the current official Tibet Autonomous Region, a truncated version of Tibet before it was annexed by China.

After a failed anti-Chinese uprising in 1959, the 14th Dalai Lama fled Tibet and came to India. He set up the government-in-exile in Himachal.

### **US Legislators in Dharamsala to Meet Dalai Lama, China 'Gravely Concerned'**

18 June 2024, The Wire

The leader of the group of legislators said that US President Joe Biden would soon sign into law a Bill that pushes for negotiations between Tibet and China and that has passed through both chambers of the US federal legislature.

A group of seven US legislators from either of the country's main political parties arrived in Dharamsala today (June 18) to meet the Dalai Lama, with its leader saying US President Joe Biden will soon sign a Bill that pushes for negotiations between Tibet and China. Among the legislators are Michael McCaul, a Republican who is chairman of the US House of Representatives' foreign affairs committee, and Nancy Pelosi, a Democrat who has served as speaker of the House, which is the lower chamber of the country's federal legislature.

They will meet the Dalai Lama, who is the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, tomorrow, according to news reports.

"We are very excited to see His Holiness tomorrow to talk about many things, including the Bill we just passed out of Congress [the name of the US federal legislature] that basically says the United States of America stands with the people of Tibet," Reuters quoted McCaul as saying.



When asked if Biden would sign the Bill – which is officially titled the ‘Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act’ – into law soon, McCaul said according to Reuters: “Yes, he will, he will.”

Its report added that US legislators have regularly visited Dharamsala and promoted the Dalai Lama’s work in an effort to garner support for a linguistically and culturally autonomous Tibet.

Responding to the developments, China said it was “gravely concerned” and insisted the US does not engage with the “Dalai group”.

“It’s known by all that the 14th Dalai Lama is not a pure religious figure, but a political exile engaged in anti-China separatist activities under the cloak of religion,” Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said at a press briefing today. Lin urged the US to “fully recognise the anti-China separatist nature of the Dalai group, honour the commitments the US has made to China on issues related to Xizang [China’s name for Tibet], have no contact with the Dalai group in any form and stop sending the wrong signal to the world”.

The Promoting a Resolution Bill was passed by both houses of the US federal legislature, most recently by the House of Representatives last Wednesday, and received broad bipartisan support, The Hill reported. According to the website of the US House’s foreign affairs committee, the Bill seeks to empower officials of the US state department to “actively and directly counter” disinformation about Tibet from China’s government, as well as to reject “false claims that Tibet has been part of China since ‘ancient times’.”

But Lin said at Tuesday’s press conference that “Xizang has always been part of China since ancient times”, adding that the US “must not sign the Bill into law”.

“Xizang’s affairs are purely China’s domestic affairs and no external interference will ever be allowed,” he also said.

### **Washington’s new Tibet policy bill ‘likely to be counterproductive’**

18 June 2024, SCMP, Dewey Sim

A new Tibet policy bill passed in the United States last week is set to fuel fresh tensions with China, with one analyst saying it could be counterproductive.

The US House of Representatives on Wednesday approved the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act, which would channel funds to boost Washington’s support for Tibet and counter what it calls “disinformation” from China about the region’s history, people and institutions.

The bipartisan bill, among other things, refutes Beijing’s claim that Tibet has been part of China since ancient times and promotes talks between the

Chinese government and the Dalai Lama, Tibet’s exiled spiritual leader.

The bill’s authors argued that the Chinese government was “systematically suppressing” the ability of Tibetans to preserve their religion, culture, language, history, way of life and environment.

“Passing this bill demonstrates America’s resolve that the CCP’s status quo in Tibet is not acceptable,” said Republican representative Michael McCaul of Texas on the House floor, referring to the Chinese Communist Party.

“If the CCP truly does respect ‘sovereignty’ as it claims to do then it will engage in peaceful dialogue with the Tibetans to resolve this conflict, not force the Tibetans to accept a CCP proposal.”

“It will not go down well in Beijing. China is very sensitive about Tibet and they will see the latest move by the US as nothing more than an attempt to further smear China,” he said.

Asked about the bill at a press briefing in Beijing on Tuesday, foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian said Tibet had always been Chinese territory, and that issues surrounding Tibet were “purely China’s internal affairs”.

“It will not go down well in Beijing. China is very sensitive about Tibet and they will see the latest move by the US as nothing more than an attempt to further smear China,” he said.

Asked about the bill at a press briefing in Beijing on Tuesday, foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian said Tibet had always been Chinese territory, and that issues surrounding Tibet were “purely China’s internal affairs”.

“Anyone or any force who attempts to destabilise Xizang to contain or suppress China will not succeed,” he said, referring to the Tibet region. “The US should not sign the bill. China will take resolute measures to defend its sovereignty, security and development interests.”

China maintains that Tibet has remained under central Chinese rule for over 700 years, despite extended periods in which Tibetan campaigners argue that the region was effectively self-governed.

### **Tibetans protest Chinese Premier Li Qiang’s visit to New Zealand with six demands**

17 June 2024, The Tibet Post, Yangchen Dolma

Tibetans and Tibet supporters have strongly protested against Chinese Premier Li Qiang’s visit to Wellington and Auckland in New Zealand and called on the Chinese government to respect human rights and demand freedom in Tibet. During the peaceful protests, Tibetans were subjected to physical violence and harassment by pro-Chinese government individuals, which represents Chinese transnational repression in the free world.

Tibetans from Auckland Tibetan Association and members of Friends of Tibet protested against Chinese Premier Li Qiang's visit to Auckland on June 14, 2024 by holding up the Tibetan national flag, which is banned in Tibet by the Chinese government, and shouting slogans such as "We want justice in Tibet, we want human rights in Tibet, we want freedom in Tibet" etc. Supporters of Tibet also protested against Chinese Premier Li Qiang's visit to Wellington, Capital of New Zealand on Junw 13, 2024. When Chinese Premier Li Qiang arrived in Wellington, members of the Wellington chapter of Friends of Tibet organised a demonstration to protest against Li Qiang and the CCP on the side of the road where the Premier's motorcade passed.

A member of the Wellington Chapter of Friends of Tibet who participated in the protests, Robin Greenberg said, "In Wellington, we don't have Tibetans living here at the moment, Friends of Tibet feels a real privilege to make our presence felt and made the Chinese Premier seen us displaying the Tibetan flags high". She further mentioned the importance of putting human rights above trade and holding Chinese leadership to account for its atrocities in Tibet.

Although small in number, Tibetans in Auckland made sure that their voices were heard to Chinese the Chinese Premier Li Qiang and Chinese government and that they stood up for the truth. Tibetan activists were jostled, pushed aside and relentlessly pursued around the protest site by the much larger pro-China group, who tried to tear down Tibetan banners. Yet the Tibetan flag flew high wherever the Premier had engagements in the cities of New Zealand. The Peaceful Tibetan demonstrators braved the rain and resisted beatings and harassment from their Chinese supporters.

The Tibetan protesters have made six demands of the Chinese government:

1. To Call on China to re-engage in dialogue with the Dalai Lama and Central Tibetan Administration to resolve the Sino-Tibet conflict.
2. Reinforce New Zealand's expectation that China immediately grants meaningful and unfettered access to Tibet for independent observers, including the Office of the UN High Commission.
3. Demand that China end its oppressive policies targeting Tibetan children and end the residential boarding school and pre-school system that separate an estimated one million Tibetan children from their families in denial of their cultural, religious and linguistic rights.
4. Demand that China cease interference in the selection and installation of Tibetan Buddhist leaders, including any future Dalai Lama. The determination of Tibetan Buddhist leaders must be determined solely by the Tibetan people, in accordance with

international human rights law, without any interference by the Chinese Government.

5. Demand that China immediately release the world's youngest political prisoner His Eminence the 11th Panchen Lama and all other prisoners of conscience.

6. Demand that China repeal or amend provisions of their Criminal Procedure Law that violate the rights of detainees to a fair trial, and are routinely used to arrest Tibetans for peacefully exercising their human rights under the guise of 'separatism' and other State Security crimes.

### **Dalai Lama keeps cards close to chest on his successor, says 'not thinking of re-incarnation'**

17 June 2024, The Tribune, Ajay Banerjee

Developments on the front are being followed keenly by Tibetans as the Dalai Lama is leading the fight seeking autonomy from China

Keeping cards close to his chest on who will his successor, the 14th Dalai Lama, on Monday said he was not 'thinking' about re-incarnation – a process to appoint the next Dalai Lama.

Developments on the front are being followed keenly by Tibetans as the Dalai Lama is leading the fight seeking autonomy from China; that in turn, is trying to meddle in the appointment of a successor. Speaking to a select group of media-persons from Delhi, the Dalai Lama, who turns 89 in July, was asked how would the Tibetan community maintain the sanctity of re-incarnation to which he said, "I am not thinking of reincarnation. The Important thing is as long as I am alive, I should use my energies to help as many people as I can".

The Dalai Lama is the spiritual head of the Tibetan Government in exile, headquartered here in Dharamsala.

Re-incarnation is a traditional Buddhist method of anointing a successor. A Dalai Lama before dying leave hints of where his re-birth would be. These hints are followed by a religious committee to trace the child who is supposed to have been born as the next Dalai Lama. The present Dalai Lama was selected in 1940 as five years old.

A senior official of the Central Tibetan Administration, who did not wish to be identified, mentioned the process of re-incarnation saying "his holiness (the Dalai Lama) has kept an element of surprise. He has maintained an uncertainty since China is an unpredictable entity".

For years, the Chinese government has claimed that the Dalai Lama's eventual reincarnation must comply with Chinese law—that ignores Tibetans' history of selecting the Dalai Lama without foreign interference. Tibetans want to keep China out, as that has been the case for centuries.

Spokesperson of the CTA Tenzin Lekshey says "The Chinese have never thought about Tibet, but about themselves. Beijing has no legitimate right, and there was no need to consult them on the appointment of the next Dalai Lama".

The US also wants to keep Beijing out of this 'selection' process and even passed a law 'The Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020'. It makes it official US policy that the Dalai Lama's succession is a strictly religious issue that only he and his followers can decide on. India also wants to follow the wish of the Tibetans.

The issue of re-incarnation is now being debated as the Dalai Lama had said in the past on his successor: "When I am about ninety I will consult the high Lamas of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions, the Tibetan public, and other concerned people who follow Tibetan Buddhism and re-evaluate whether the institution of the Dalai Lama should continue or not."

On that basis we will take a decision. If it is decided that the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama should continue and there is a need for the Fifteenth Dalai Lama to be recognized. The Dalai Lama has tasked the 'Dalai Lama's Gaden Phodrang Trust' to locate the successor.

The procedures of search and recognition of the next Dalai Lama has to be in accordance with past tradition.

On Monday morning, the Dalai Lama on being asked if he would be keen to visit his home province of Amdo in Tibet, said "I am not thinking of Amdo, neither I feel anything like that".

### **US 'Resolve Tibet Act' an important tool to internationally counter China's claim on Tibet**

16 June 2024, Tibetan Review

The Resolve Tibet Act, which was passed in its final version by the US House of Representatives on Jun 12, will be an important tool to counter China's false claim that Tibet has been part of China since ancient times once it is signed into law by President Joe Biden, the Sikyong (executive head) Mr Penpa Tsering of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) has said.

When it becomes a law in the US, it will become an important tool for us to reach out to other governments to counter China's false narrative that Tibet is part of the People's Republic of China (PRC), he has said in an interview which appeared on theweek.in Jun 16.

"China has been asking every country to say that Tibet is part of PRC. That is why the law is important to explain to governments that if they keep parroting what the Chinese want them to say, then it is against (this) law because if they support negotiations

between Representatives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Chinese government, then they cannot contradict themselves by saying Tibet is part of PRC, because that removes the very ground for negotiation," he has explained.

Support for a negotiated settlement to the issue of Tibet exists mainly in Western democracies. Most of the global south, on the other hand, play second fiddle to Beijing's line to include Tibet also in its so-called One China policy towards Taiwan. These countries are heavily dependent on Chinese investment, loan, aid, and market, although debt-burdening is now becoming a burgeoning issue to them.

This is not to say that a robust support for the Tibet issue does not exist in the civil society in these countries.

The Resolve Tibet Act recognizes the fact that China's armed annexation of Tibet more than 70 years ago is illegal under international law, that the country's legal status therefore needs to be resolved through negotiation with the Tibetan people through their leadership in exile, and that the US should gear its policy towards actively facilitating and realizing this objective.

While the CTA's policy is to seek genuine autonomy for a historically defined Tibetan homeland through a negotiated settlement, a vociferous section of the Tibetan population remains adamant in demanding independence.

### **Canada should consider recognizing Tibet as an Independent Nation**

14 June 2024, Tibetan Review

#### **LETTER**

The arrest of two innocent Canadian citizens by China in 2018 has strained relations between the two countries. With rising concerns about foreign interference in Canadian elections, there is growing pressure on the government and politicians to address this issue, providing an opportunity for Canadian Tibetans to advocate for the freedom and human rights of Tibetans oppressed by China. Therefore, Canadian Tibetan organizations across the country under the leadership of Canada Tibet Committee have been relentless in their efforts to garner support from politicians across the political spectrum for the Tibetan advocacy movement, achieving significant milestones along the way.

December 14, 2022, marked a historic day for Tibet as the Canadian parliament unanimously passed a motion in support of Sino-Tibetan dialogue, highlighting its dedication to promoting peaceful negotiations. The motion on Sino-Tibetan dialogue was sponsored by Conservative MP and prominent Tibetan supporter Garnett Genuis

Then, just recently, on June 10, 2024, the Canadian parliament took a remarkable step by passing a motion with unanimous consent, recognizing Tibet's right to self-determination. It was sponsored by the Bloc Quebecois Party MP Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe. This historic achievement in Canada's support for the Tibetan freedom movement recognizes the fundamental rights of Tibetans to choose their political and socio-economic systems. The motion marks a significant milestone in the pursuit of Tibet's aspirations for freedom.

This motion sends a powerful message to both Tibetans and the Chinese government, recognizing the Tibetan people's persistent efforts for freedom and human rights while simultaneously expressing Canada's opposition to China's illegal occupation of Tibet.

To me, as a Tibetan Canadian, this motion reinforces our commitment to advocating for the Tibetan cause and seeking recognition for Tibet as an independent nation. We must encourage Canadian politicians to support this motion and end the classification of Tibetans as Chinese nationals on Canadian passports. Tibet was a historically independent nation, and it is only right that we Tibetans do not want to be identified as Chinese on our Canadian passports. It is both painful and outrageous for us Canadian Tibetans to see China listed as our country of origin on our passports. We aspire to have Tibet listed as our country of origin on our passports instead. This change would be a significant step towards recognizing Tibet as an independent nation. Also, recognizing Tibet as an independent nation through a parliamentary motion would be in line with the Canadian government's position on Tibet's status adopted in 1950, when its Minister of External Affairs, Lester Pearson, sent a confidential memo to the country's Ambassador in Washington. In the memo, Pearson made it clear: "In fact it appears that during the past 40 years Tibet has controlled its own internal and external affairs. Viewing the situation thus, I am of the opinion that Tibet is, from the point of view of international law, qualified for recognition as an independent state. We look forward to advocating for our quest to recognize Tibet as an independent nation and our desire to remove China as our country of origin on our Canadian passports. Let's strive to make this happen soon. As we are in a free country, it is our moral responsibility to support the voiceless Tibetans who are oppressed and repressed by the Chinese government.

– Youngdoun Tenzin

## EU officials to make rare Tibet visit to examine human rights

14 June 2024, RFA, Tenzin Pema and Jewlan

The delegation hopes to visit schools, prisons and places of worship but access could be limited.

European Union officials are scheduled to make a rare visit starting this weekend to the Tibet Autonomous Region during their annual human rights talks with China, an EU spokesperson told Radio Free Asia. Although it isn't clear how much access the officials will ultimately be granted, the spokesperson, Peter Stano, told RFA that the EU has put forth "concrete proposals" for the places the delegation would like to see, including boarding schools, prisons and places of worship.

"We have requested a meaningful, non-touristic visit that will allow us to measure our long-standing human rights concerns against the reality in Tibet on the ground," Stano said.

A small group of EU officials led by Paola Pampaloni, the EU's deputy managing director of Asia and Pacific Department, will make the visit to Tibet during the annual EU-China Human Rights Dialogue in Chongqing, China, that is scheduled to start on June 16.

A man shaves the hair of a woman as dozens of activists from Tibet, Mongolia and China, demonstrate in front of the European Parliament in Brussels, March 31, 2014, during a visit by the President of China to the European Institutions. (Thierry Charlier/AFP)

The Tibet visit was agreed in principle during a previous round of EU-China talks, the EU spokesperson told RFA. The details of the visit are being organized by Chinese authorities and remain unclear. "It's very rare that an official visit such as this one is taking place," Vincent Metten, EU policy director for the International Campaign for Tibet, told RFA from Brussels. The last highest EU official visit to Tibet was more than 10 years ago when then-EU Special Representative for Human Rights Stavros Lambrinidis took a trip there in September 2013.

Access to Tibet remains difficult, if not impossible, for diplomats, parliamentarians, non-governmental organizations, journalists and even tourists.

A U.S. State Department report on access to Tibetan areas said Chinese security forces have used "conspicuous surveillance" to intimidate, monitor, harass and restrict the movements of U.S. diplomats, officials and tourists traveling to Tibetan areas.

Tenzin Lekshay, a spokesman for the Central Tibetan Administration – the Tibetan government-in-exile based in Dharamsala, India – said it would be crucial for EU officials to have the ability to travel

freely inside Tibet for the trip to yield meaningful results.

"It would be difficult to understand the realities of human rights conditions inside Tibet if their movement is restricted by the Chinese," Lekshay said.

Talk is cheap

News of the pending trip to Tibet comes after five human rights groups criticized the EU's continued participation in the broader human rights dialogue with China, noting little has changed in 38 previous rounds of talks. In a June 12 statement, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Front Line Defenders, International Service for Human Rights and the World Uyghur Congress said that the talks allow European officials to raise key issues with their Chinese counterparts.

Head of the European Union's Delegation to the Human Rights Dialogue Paola Pampaloni briefs journalists at the EU Delegation compound in Beijing, China, Monday, July 9, 2018. (Ng Han Guan/AP)

But the lack of measurable benchmarks or defined objectives make the discussions a largely pointless exercise, the letter states.

"While the EU raises concerns during these dialogues, it knows that the Chinese government will not acknowledge abuses, will not undertake any effort to secure accountability, and will not be persuaded to undertake any policy or legislative action to comply with China's international human rights obligations," the groups said.

Sophie Richardson, a visiting scholar at Stanford University's Center on Democracy, Development and Rule of Law, said in an interview with RFA Uyghur that these types of talks can do more harm than good in that they tend to relieve the pressure on more senior political leaders to press the case for change with their Chinese counterparts.

"Beijing's goal in these dialogues is to keep human rights out of all other conversations," said Richardson, who previously was China director for Human Rights Watch.

"This diplomatic tool not only stopped being useful about a decade ago, but actually started to be problematic because it prevents you from doing things that I think would be more effective, like pursuing investigations of the Chinese government officials who are complicit in crimes against humanity," she said.

European Commissioner Janez Lenarčič attends a joint news conference at the Quai d'Orsay in Paris, France, April 15, 2024. (Sarah Meyssonier/Reuters)

She added that the Tibetan trip's value won't be known until a clearer understanding of the restrictions the delegation will operate in is known.

The EU has been critical of Chinese policies in Tibet and in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region, where more

than 1 million Uyghurs and other ethnic Turkic Muslims have been detained in a crackdown that began in 2017.

Tibetan boarding schools

In December, Janez Lenarčič, EU crisis management commissioner, gave a speech criticizing China's restrictive policies in Tibet and in Chinese provinces where many Tibetans live.

She noted political repression and widespread reports of Tibetan students being pressured to attend boarding schools with Mandarin-heavy curriculums, which critics say threatens Tibetan cultural and religious traditions.

Chinese officials say that boarding schools are the best way to educate a population of students scattered in remote areas over a vast geographical region. The students aren't forced to attend the schools, according to official statements.

Dozens of activists from Tibet, Mongolia and China hold placards reading "Mr Xi Jinping start dialogue, leave Tibet" as they demonstrate in front of the European Parliament in Brussels on March 31, 2014, during a visit by the President of China to the European Institutions. (Thierry Charlier/AFP)

But exiled Tibetans say Chinese authorities coerce attendance by promising to withhold governmental benefits or future educational opportunities.

Previous international delegations that have visited areas where many of the abuse claims emanate have been limited.

A 2022 United Nations report based on a trip to Xinjiang alleged serious human rights abuses had been perpetrated against ethnic Uyghurs and others there in the name of combating terrorism and extremism.

China said the report was based on "disinformation and lies fabricated by anti-China forces."

Tenzin Dawa, director of the Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy in Dharamsala, India, said the visiting EU officials should try to find information on Tibetan political prisoners Go Sherab Gyatso and Lodoe Gyatso.

Go Sherab Gyatso is a writer and educator known for his loyalty to the exiled spiritual leader the Dalai Lama.

Lodoe Gyatso was rearrested and sentenced to 18 years for protesting against repression in Tibet shortly after he had been released from a 20-year sentence.



## Exiled Tibetan political leader honored with democracy medal

14 June 2024, RFA, Tenzin Dickyi and Tashi Wangchuk



Tibetan President Penpa Tsering, center, Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and International Campaign for Tibet Chairman Richard Gere, celebrate the 16th anniversary of the reception of the Congressional Gold Medal by the Dalai Lama at the Capitol, Tuesday, Oct. 17, 2023.

The leader of Tibet's government-in-exile on Thursday won the Democracy Service Medal from the U.S.-based National Endowment for Democracy, recognizing Sikyong Penpa Tsering's commitment to advancing democracy and promoting the dignity of the Tibetan people.

In his acceptance speech, Tsering dedicated the award to Tibetans inside Tibet and in exile, and to the Dalai Lama, acknowledging the Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader's role in defending democracy and human rights for all Tibetans.

"I am an ordinary person, but His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama is the architect and spirit behind everything that we are now or what we have today," he said. during the award ceremony at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Washington.

"This award is for the people I serve," said Tsering, who is head of the Central Tibetan Administration.

The award, which honors people defending democracy worldwide, was also given to former U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, Russian opposition leader Vladimir Kara-Murza and Free Belarus leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya.

Since taking office after winning the 2021 democratic elections which saw a 77% voter turnout, Sikyong Penpa Tsering has worked to counter Chinese influence and mobilised Tibet's allies to speak up against the suppression of cultural identity within Tibet, said Castro. "In recognition of those efforts, it's my honour to present the 2024 democracy service medal to Sikyong Penpa Tsering on behalf of the National Endowment for Democracy.

Also on Thursday, the Tibet Action Institute received the endowment's Democracy Award for its work in documenting the Chinese Communist Party's efforts to erase Tibetan children's identity by forcibly enrolling them in state-run boarding schools in Tibet. The Regional Center for Human Rights and the Waey Organisation also received the Democracy Award. The National Endowment for Democracy, founded in 1983, promotes democracy worldwide through grants funded primarily by the U.S. Congress.

### Resolve Tibet Act

The ceremony came a day after the U.S. Congress passed the Resolve Tibet Act, urging China to resolve the Tibet-China dispute through dialogue. It now awaits President Joe Biden's signature to become law.

It calls on Beijing to resume dialogue with the Dalai Lama, who is the spiritual leader of Tibet, and other Tibetan leaders about how Tibet is governed. No formal talks have taken place since 2010.

Tsering welcomed the passage of the bill and expressed hope that Biden would sign it into law soon. He also confirmed that a congressional bipartisan delegation led by Rep. Michael McCaul and which includes Pelosi, is set to meet with the Dalai Lama and Central Tibetan Administration leaders in India on June 19.

Tsering also presented Pelosi – a long-time Tibet supporter and strong China critic – with her award, while lauding her unwavering fight for democracy, and against authoritarianism, everywhere.

Pelosi commended the endowment for its efforts to highlight global injustices.

"One of the cruelest tactics used by oppressors is to imprison people and make them disappear, hoping they will be forgotten," she said.

"But we do not forget them," she said. "Our members of Congress, in a bipartisan manner, consistently raise their names—whether on the House floor, in meetings with heads of state, or during visits to other countries."

## 115 candidates for the European Parliament pledge to support Tibet

13 June 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup

A total of 115 candidates from 16 EU member states have pledged to defend the fundamental freedom of the Tibetan people if elected to the European Parliament.

"Europe for Tibet" is an online campaign launched in the European Parliament on 9 April 2024 ahead of the 6-9 June European election. The counting of votes is underway, as of now 14 of 27 countries have finished counting.

The joint online campaign was led by the Office of Tibet, Brussels, Tibet Interest Group of the European

Parliament, and International Campaign for Tibet with the support of the Offices of Tibet in London and Geneva and International Tibet Network.

Representative Rigzin Genkhang of the Office of Tibet Brussels stated, "In view of China's relentless attacks on the fundamental rights of Tibetans in Tibet, it is crucial that the new Parliament reaffirms and redoubles its support for the non-violent freedom struggle of the Tibetan people. It can do so by prioritising the re-establishment of the Tibet Intergroup, which is pivotal in ensuring that Tibet remains a priority for the European Parliament." reported tibet.net.

The European Parliament is a forum for political debate and decision-making at the EU level. The Members of the European Parliament are directly elected by voters in all Member States to represent people's interests in EU law-making and to ensure that other EU institutions are working democratically. The Parliament acts as a co-legislator, sharing with the Council the power to adopt and amend legislative proposals and to decide on the EU budget. A total of 27 countries in Europe is part of the European Union.

The European Parliament has been an active supporter of the Tibetan cause and the Dalai Lama's non-violent approach. It has advocated for dialogue to resolve differences between the Dalai Lama and the Chinese government, pushing for autonomy in Tibet to safeguard religious and cultural freedoms.

In 1988, the European Parliament became the first parliament in Europe to allow the Tibetan spiritual leader to address an official meeting on Tibet, despite strong protests from the Chinese government. On 15 June, a year after he presented a Five-Point Peace Plan for the restoration of peace and human rights in Tibet at the U.S. Congressional Human Rights Caucus in Washington, D.C, the Dalai Lama was invited for the first time to the European Parliament in Strasbourg, where he elaborated on this plan, proposing a concrete framework of negotiations and the creation of a self-governing democratic Tibet "in association with the People's Republic of China".

Over the years, the European Parliament has raised awareness about Tibet's human rights situation through hearings, exhibitions, and conferences. It has passed around 50 resolutions focusing on Tibet, human rights, and China, addressing issues like religious freedom restrictions and linguistic rights violations.

## US Congress passes Resolve Tibet Act

12 June 2024, International Campaign for Tibet

In a second vote, the House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly in favor of the Resolve Tibet Act today, June 12, 2024. It now goes to the White House for President Biden's signature.

Speaking on the House floor as he raised the bill, House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaul (R-TX) spoke in support of the Resolve Tibet Act, saying, "the US strongly condemns all oppression and coercion of Tibetans." An original sponsor of the bill, McCaul added that it will help "put the people of Tibet in charge of their own future."

Representative Jim McGovern (D-MA), the author of the bill, welcomed another chance to spotlight it. He urged his colleagues to pass the Resolve Tibet Act and said that with this bill, "we hope to restart dialogue between Tibet and China."

Representative Bill Keating (D-MA) rose to speak in favor as well, saying the bill calls out Beijing's "oppressive tactics and relentless disinformation campaign" about Tibet.

"This latest indication of American support of Tibet is a source of hope and encouragement to the Tibetan people, who have been nonviolently struggling against the Chinese government for more than six decades for human rights and democratic freedoms," International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) President Tencho Gyatso said as voting concluded.

She added: "I thank the main sponsors of the bill – Representative Jim McGovern, Chairman Michael McCaul, Senator Jeff Merkley, and Senator Todd Young – for their leadership. The Resolve Tibet Act is a strong message to China that the Tibet issue has to be resolved through negotiation instead of an assault on Tibet's unique and ancient civilization."

Previously passed by the House in February and the Senate in May, the Resolve Tibet Act emerged from the two legislative bodies with minor wording differences that necessitated a return to the House floor. It passed again today with 391 votes in favor.

To the president's desk

The next and final step is for President Biden to sign the bill. This should happen within the next two weeks, turning the Resolve Tibet Act into law.

The Resolve Tibet Act will strengthen US efforts to push the Chinese government to resolve the longstanding Tibet-China dispute through dialogue with Tibetan leaders and arm the State Department's Special Coordinator for Tibet office with more tools to combat the CCP's disinformation on Tibet.

Quote from Congress members and Tibetan leaders  
Representative Jim McGovern, D-MA, said: "Let the overwhelming passage of our strong, bipartisan bill be a clear message to the Tibetan people: America

stands with you on the side of human dignity, and we support you in your quest to secure the basic rights to which you are entitled under international law. The People's Republic of China has systematically denied Tibetans the right to self-determination and continues to deliberately erase Tibetan religion, culture, and language. The ongoing oppression of the Tibetan people is a grave tragedy, and our bill provides further tools that empower both America and the international community to stand up for justice and peace."

Representative Michael McCaul, R-TX, said: "Tibetans, like all people, have the right to religious freedom – which includes freedom from CCP surveillance, censorship, and detention. If the CCP truly does respect 'sovereignty' as it claims to do then it will engage in peaceful dialogue with the Tibetans to resolve this conflict, not force the Tibetans to accept a CCP proposal. Passing this bipartisan bill demonstrates America's resolve that the CCP's status quo in Tibet is not acceptable."

Senator Jeff Merkley, D-OR, said: "The people of Tibet deserve to be in charge of their own future, and, today, Congress has voted to stand with Tibetans in their struggle for freedom and self-determination. The Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act helps counter misinformation from the Chinese government about Tibet and pushes for negotiations between the People's Republic of China and Tibet to end this longstanding dispute. I look forward to President Biden swiftly signing this bill into law—the people of Tibet cannot wait any longer."

Senator Todd Young, R-IN, said: "Our bipartisan bill will refresh U.S. policy towards Tibet and push for negotiations that advance freedom for the Tibetan people and a peaceful resolution to the CCP's conflict with the Dalai Lama. Congressional passage of this legislation further demonstrates America's resolve that the CCP's status quo – both in Tibet and elsewhere – is not acceptable. I look forward to this important effort becoming law and working with my colleagues and the Administration to ensure swift and effective implementation."

Namgyal Choedup, Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration, said: "Senate passage of the Resolve Tibet Act is a clear message that China's systematic oppression and erasure of Tibetan identity is never the answer to resolving the Tibet-China dispute. The Central Tibet Administration remains fully committed to His Holiness the Dalai Lama's vision of a Middle Way to find a mutually beneficial and long-lasting negotiated solution to the Tibet-China dispute. We are grateful for Senator Merkley and Senator Young's leadership in showing that America will not concede to China's false claims and refusal to follow

international law. Until China comes back to the negotiating table in good faith, the Tibetan people will never abandon hope and will remain resilient in their non-violent resistance. Ending the Tibet-China dispute is within grasp—if China is willing to abandon lies for truth."

Rep. Chris Smith, R-NJ, Chairman of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, said: "The people of Tibet will not be forgotten, and the enactment of the bipartisan Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act underscores that fact. The Chinese Communist Party cannot erase the history, language and culture of the Tibetan people, nor the central importance religious faith plays in the everyday lives of Tibetans. We stand in solidarity with the Dalai Lama in his quest for a lasting and just peace."

What the bill does

The Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act states that it is US policy that the dispute between Tibet and China remains unresolved in accordance with international law.

The legislation also:

- Empowers the Special Coordinator for Tibet to actively and directly counter disinformation about Tibet from the Chinese government and Communist Party, including working to ensure that US government statements and documents counter disinformation about Tibet.
- Rejects as "inaccurate" China's false claims that Tibet has been part of China since "ancient times."
- Promotes substantive dialogue without preconditions between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama or his representatives or the democratically elected leaders of the Tibetan community. The US could also explore activities to improve prospects for dialogue leading to a negotiated agreement on Tibet.
- Affirms the State Department's responsibility to coordinate with other governments in multilateral efforts toward the goal of a negotiated agreement on Tibet.
- Encourages China's government to address the aspirations of the Tibetan people regarding their distinct historical, cultural, religious and linguistic identity.

Learn more about the Resolve Tibet Act.

### **Dalai Lama to meet Australian ministers**

11 June 2024, Reuters

The Dalai Lama arrived in Australia for a five-day visit on Wednesday, with supporters urging the

Australian government to encourage China to return to talks with envoys of the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader.

The Dalai Lama will meet Immigration Minister Chris Evans, who is acting head of government while Prime Minister Kevin Rudd is overseas, as well as Foreign Minister Stephen Smith.

"This reflects the Dalai Lama's status as an international religious leader and the significant domestic interest in the Dalai Lama's visit, including from the Tibetan immigrant community in Australia," a government spokesman said.

He will also hold a series of public lectures on meditation during his trip.

The meetings with government officials are likely to upset Beijing, which is keen to contain the Tibet issue ahead of the Olympics in August.

China blames a "Dalai Lama clique" for violent protests in Tibet in March, and for protests that disrupted the Olympic torch relay.

Chinese officials met the Dalai Lama's representatives for talks on May 4, but further talks originally set to start on Wednesday were postponed after an earthquake in China in May killed or left missing nearly 87,000 people.

China's Foreign Minister Yang Jeichi on Tuesday called on the Dalai Lama and his supporters to stop their Tibet protests and attempts to "ruin the Olympics" to enable further talks.

The Australian Tibet Council said it was concerned the comments signalled China wanted to avoid further talks on Tibet ahead of the Olympics.

"With less than two months remaining before the Olympics, the Australia Tibet Council fears that the Chinese government believes that it can use delaying tactics to avoid addressing the Tibet issue," council chief executive officer Paul Bourke said.

"It's clear that it is going to take concerted pressure from concerned governments for the talks even to go ahead and a major shift in China's approach for results-orientated formal negotiations to begin before the Games."

He said the Australia Tibet Council had asked the Australian government to talk to the Dalai Lama about ways to encourage further talks with China.

Former prime minister John Howard and Rudd, who was then opposition leader, met the Dalai Lama during his last visit to Australia in 2007.

Rudd returns to Australia on Sunday after visiting Japan and Indonesia, leaving little time for a meeting before the Dalai Lama leaves the country early on Monday.

The Dalai Lama fled into exile in India in 1959 after an abortive uprising against Chinese rule in Tibet. He says he advocates autonomy for the Himalayan region, and not independence.

About 30 supporters, and a small group of pro-China protesters, were at the airport on Wednesday when the Dalai Lama arrived in Sydney.

### Canadian Parliament supports Tibet's self-determination

11 June 2024, RFA, Tashi Wangchuk and Tenzin Dickyi

The motion recognizes that Tibetans are victims of China's systemic cultural assimilation.



Canadian lawmaker Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe of the Bloc Québécois introduces a motion advocating for Tibet's right to self-determination, at the Canadian Parliament in Ottawa, June 10, 2024.

Canada's Parliament has unanimously passed a motion in the House of Commons advocating for Tibet's right to self-determination.

The nonbinding motion recognizes Tibetans as "a people and a nation" with the inherent right to determine their own social, economic, cultural and religious policies, including the selection of the next Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism. The measure demonstrates growing international support for Tibetans and their cause as the Chinese government steps up its repressive policies in the western region by eroding Tibetan language, culture and religion.

Sponsored by the bloc Québécois, the motion was introduced by party lawmaker Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe.

"The purpose of the motion was for the House of Commons to recognize that Tibetans are victims of systemic cultural assimilation by China; and to offer unanimous support to the Tibetan people's efforts and actions towards self-determination," he said in a written response to Radio Free Asia.

The motion says Tibetans can claim the right to self-determination and freely choose their economic, social, cultural and religious policies without interference from external powers

It also says this empowerment prohibits China from interfering in the selection of the next Dalai Lama, whom Tibetans believe should be determined in accordance with their Buddhist belief in reincarnation.



The Chinese Embassy in Ottawa did not respond to RFA's request for comment.

'Not forgotten'

The motion's passage on Monday follows a series of meetings between Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the leader of the Tibetan government-in-exile, Namgyal Choedup, the Dalai Lama's representative for North America, and the Canada Tibet Committee with Bloc Québécois leaders in Montreal, Ottawa, and Washington.

"Canada's unanimous passage of the motion reaffirming Tibetan self-determination sends a strong message to Tibetans in Tibet that their resilience is not forgotten," Tsering posted on his X account.

Tenzin Lekshey, spokesman for the Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamsala, India, expressed the gratitude of the Tibetan government-in-exile to the Canadian Parliament for supporting the motion.

"This motion holds immense significance for the Tibetan people inside Tibet, addressing key issues such as Tibet's self-determination, the future reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, Chinese interference, Chinese assimilation policies, and the importance of preserving Tibetan culture," he said.

The adoption of the motion coincides with Canada Tibet Lobby Days 2024 during which Tibetans from across Canada travel to Ottawa to meet with lawmakers and express their concerns about China's repression of Tibetans.

In December 2022, Canada's House of Commons unanimously passed a motion endorsing Tibet's Middle Way Approach and supporting the resumption of dialogue between Tibetan representatives and the Chinese government.

The approach accepts the formerly independent Himalayan nation's status as a part of China but urges greater cultural and religious freedoms, including strengthened language rights, guaranteed for ethnic minorities under provisions of China's constitution.

### **Auckland Tibetan Association Calls on PM Luxon to Raise Tibet During the Chinese Premier Li Qiang's Visit to New Zealand**

11 June 2024, CTA

The Auckland Tibetan Association has sent a letter to the New Zealand Prime Minister requesting to raise Tibet during the Chinese Premier Li Qiang's visit to the island country.

The letter to Prime Minister Christopher Luxon reads, "Chinese Premier Li Qiang's visit to New Zealand this week is a significant one and Tibetan-New Zealanders are always in support of what our leaders do to further our nation's interest. China is New Zealand's largest trading partner and we

understand the government's focus on further growth opportunities."

"However I urge you not to be silenced by China and be complicit in their moral and ethical depravation."

The letter continues, "In February 2024 alone, over a thousand Tibetans in Dege County protested the planned development of a massive hydro-dam that would flood nearby villages and obliterate six monasteries, each with centuries-old Buddhist murals. The peaceful protestors, many of whom were seen getting down on their knees, wailing and begging the Chinese authorities were arrested for simply trying to protect what was rightfully theirs.

Political repression, social discrimination, economic marginalization, environmental destruction and cultural assimilation is Tibet's reality today. China's 'Sinicization' campaign in Tibet continues to intensify with state-run colonial style boarding schools housing nearly one million Tibetan children forced apart from their parents. Restrictions on the Tibetan language in schools and across monasteries is aimed to dilute and eventually erase the Tibetan cultural and religious identity. Reports from Toronto based Citizen Lab state that between 2016 and 2022, Chinese police have collected roughly 1.2 million DNA samples of Tibetans from some as young as five to combat 'crime' and 'social stability' in the region. The PRC also demanded biometric information from Tibetans in other parts of Tibet such as DNA and IRIS records on the pretext of researching altitude sickness and studying male ancestry. These actions are covertly designed to intensify political surveillance of Tibetans. Tragically, 159 Tibetans have self-immolated since 2009 as a form of political protest. According to International watchdog group Freedom House's 'Freedom in the World 2024' report, Tibet is the least free country on earth with a score of 0 out of 100. On the other hand, New Zealand is one of the freest countries with a score of 99. The stark difference is glaring to say the least.

Religion is fundamental to the Tibetan way of life and Buddhism primarily defines the Tibetan national identity. The Tibetan people's devotion to His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, a Nobel Laureate is viewed as an act of separatism and a national security threat by the CCP. This results in continuous crackdown on the Tibetan monastic community and freedom of religion.

The visiting Chinese Premier Li Qiang himself reaffirmed the Party's stand at its annual China's National People's Congress on March 5th, 2024, by stating; "We will adhere to the Party's basic policy on religious affairs, ensure that religions in China must be Chinese in orientation, and provide guidance



to religions so that they can adapt themselves to our socialist society”.

During meetings with Chinese Premier Li Qiang, we urge New Zealand Government to:

1. Call on China to re-engage in dialogue with the Dalai Lama and Central Tibetan Administration to resolve the Sino-Tibet conflict.
2. Reinforce New Zealand's expectation that China immediately grants meaningful and unfettered access to Tibet for independent observers, including the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.
3. Demand that China end its oppressive policies targeting Tibetan children and end the residential boarding school and pre-school system that separate an estimated one million Tibetan children from their families in denial of their cultural, religious and linguistic rights.
4. Demand that China cease interference in the selection and installation of Tibetan Buddhist leaders, including any future Dalai Lama. The determination of Tibetan Buddhist leaders must be determined solely by the Tibetan people, in accordance with international human rights law, without any interference by the Chinese Government.
5. Demand that China immediately release the world's youngest political prisoner His Eminence the 11th Panchen Lama and all other prisoners of conscience.
6. Demand that China repeal or amend provisions of their Criminal Procedure Law that violate the rights of detainees to a fair trial, and are routinely used to arrest Tibetans for peacefully exercising their human rights under the guise of 'separatism' and other State Security crimes.

China is no doubt a powerful country. Its influence has reached far and wide but not without consequences. China's Debt Trap Diplomacy in the Pacific Islands feels a little too close to home and not without threats to New Zealand. China's alleged state sponsored cyber hacking on New Zealand parliament in 2021 and response from our government just cautioning them to 'refrain from such activity in future' has been lack lustre.

New Zealand must shut down Confucius Institutes in its university campuses, adopt Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, adopt Magnitsky Act and oppose the Belt and Road Initiative. If New Zealand allows China to oppress and continually abuse Tibetan human rights with impunity then New Zealand is complicit in the oppression of Tibetans. I once again ask you to use the occasion of the visit of Chinese Premier Li Qiang to raise China's human rights abuses and to stand

with Tibet. Supporting the Tibetan cause is not anti-China; rather pro-justice.”

-Report filed by Office of Tibet, Canberra

### **Sikyong Penpa Tsering and Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang Launch Autobiography of Former Kalon Tashi Wangdi**

07 June 2024, CTA

Dharamshala: Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the chief guest, along with Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang and Geshe Lhakdor as special guests, launched Kasur Tashi Wangdi's autobiography "My Life: Born in Free Tibet, Served in Exile" at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamshala on 7 June 2024.

In his keynote speech, Sikyong Penpa Tsering shared the story of his first encounter with former Kalon Tashi Wangdi. He commended Kasur Tashi Wangdi for his over four decades of service to the Tibetan people. Tashi Wangdi had held six cabinet minister positions and served as the representative of the Offices of Tibet. Sikyong stressed the importance of the younger generation of Tibetans learning about the hardships and sacrifices of the senior ministers who supported His Holiness the Dalai Lama during the difficult times of the Tibetan freedom struggle. Sikyong concluded his speech by urging Tibetan elders to document their own histories in line with the wishes of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He also advised Tibetans to cherish historical evidence and research materials, emphasising the importance of preserving them.

During her address, Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang acknowledged the lifelong dedication and service of former Kalon Tashi Wangdi to the cause of Tibet. She also commended the author for his decision to write his autobiography, following the advice of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. The Deputy Speaker provided a detailed account of the author's life, starting from his early days as a senior clerk at the beginning of the Central Tibetan Administration, which was formerly known as the Gaden Phodrang government. She also highlighted his journey to becoming Kalon (Minister) serving the CTA's departments. Additionally, she recognised the significant sacrifices made by the former Kalon's family in supporting him in his duties, especially acknowledging the contributions of his late wife Diky and his children, whom she found equally remarkable and praiseworthy.

Kalon (Minister) Norzin Dolma from the Department of Information and International Relations, Secretaries from Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), Secretaries from Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and former CTA dignitaries and bureaucrats also graced the book launch event.

## **Sikyong Penpa Tsering Congratulates Indian PM Modi for Historic Third Win**

06 June 2024, CTA

On 6 June 2024, Sikyong Penpa Tsering of the Central Tibetan Administration offered his congratulations to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) for their landmark victory in the recent General elections 2024. In the letter addressed to PM Modi, Sikyong attributed the electoral victory to the enduring trust and confidence reposed by the people of India in Modi's robust leadership and the NDA's commitment to the nation's progress.

Sikyong further expressed gratitude to the Government and people of India for their long-standing support and hospitality extended towards His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan community over the decades. The letter stated, "India has graciously embraced us as cherished guests, providing a sanctuary where we can safeguard our distinct culture, language, and heritage".

The letter also highlighted the deep bond between His Holiness the Dalai Lama and India, noting His Holiness's frequent reference to himself as a son of India, acknowledging the profound influence of the ancient Nalanda tradition on his philosophical outlook. Sikyong, in the letter, also underscored His Holiness's dedication to reviving ancient Indian knowledge and wisdom and expressed deep gratitude for the initiatives supported by the central and state governments in this honourable mission.

In the letter, Sikyong Tsering urged India, the world's largest democracy, to lead democratic cooperation with like-minded nations amidst current global turmoil. Sikyong wrote, "With a legacy deeply rooted in the principles of nonviolence, India's leadership is more crucial than ever in guiding the world towards peace and stability. As you embark upon this historic third term, we continue to remain highly optimistic that under your leadership, India will continue to champion the values of democracy, freedom and human rights."

## **Dalai Lama to visit US for knee treatment in coming weeks**

04 June 2024, RFA, Tashi Wangchuk and  
Tenzin Dickyi

The Tibetan Buddhism spiritual leader's last visit was in June 2017.

The Dalai Lama is scheduled to visit the United States for medical treatment for his knees in the coming weeks, according to his office, in what would be his first visit to the country since 2017.

Though the dates for which have not yet been announced, his trip is expected to take place this summer. It will be the Dalai Lama's first overseas trip since November 2018 and first overseas trip since the coronavirus pandemic.

The statement issued by his office in Dharamsala, in northern India, where the 88-year-old Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader lives in exile, said there will be no engagements scheduled from June 20 onwards.

The Dalai Lama enjoys strong support in the United States, where prominent lawmakers have spoken out about human rights issues in Tibet, through China considers him a separatist and has criticized those who meet with him.

Neither the Dalai Lama's private office nor his representative in the Washington-based Office of Tibet commented on Radio Free Asia's inquiries about the exact dates of his scheduled U.S. travel, citing security reasons.

The U.S. magazine The Atlantic said the exact timing of the Dalai Lama's visit "is not yet decided," citing sources involved in planning the trip, but that it will follow a visit later this month to Dharamsala by a bipartisan congressional delegation led by Rep. Nancy Pelosi, a California Democrat and former speaker of the House. She is a staunch supporter of human rights in Tibet.

Her spokesperson declined to comment on the news, saying, "We do not comment on Speaker Pelosi's upcoming or potential foreign travel" due to security concerns.

The Atlantic also said the Dalai Lama, who has bad knees, has decided to travel to the U.S. "this summer to investigate the possibility of replacement" for his knees. During the Dalai Lama's last U.S. trip in June 2017, he gave the keynote address to 25,000 graduates and their families at the University of California, San Diego. Additionally, he underwent his annual medical check-up in Rochester, Minnesota, as part of his routine health checks. His 2017 visit also included a stop in Massachusetts.

The Dalai Lama's most recent foreign trip outside of India was to Japan in November 2018, where he conducted a series of teachings and public events in Yokohama, Tokyo, Chiba and Fukuoka.

Although he hasn't traveled abroad since 2018, he has continued to travel every year to Bodhi Gaya, the holiest pilgrimage site for Buddhists, located in northeast India to conduct teachings, except during the COVID-19 lockdown in India.

Foreign visits

For years, the Dalai Lama has shared Buddhist teachings globally, while advocating for increased autonomy for Tibet and engaging with global leaders to urge China to implement these changes.

Despite the pain of being in exile, he acknowledges its benefits, facilitating his travel, interactions with diverse individuals, and the dissemination of Buddhist wisdom as a Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

Beijing has consistently criticized and opposed any foreign trips by the Dalai Lama and regards them as “a severe insult” to the feelings of the Chinese people.

“The Chinese consider such visits ... a deviation from their commitment to recognizing the government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legal government representing the whole of China,” Zhang Yijiong, a senior Communist Party leader, said in October 2017.

The Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration — the Tibetan government-in-exile — has adopted a Middle Way approach to the question of Tibet's status under Beijing's rule, by which accepts Tibet as a part of China but urges greater cultural and religious freedoms, including strengthened language rights guaranteed for ethnic minorities under the provisions of China's own constitution.

Nine rounds of talks on greater autonomy in Tibet and Tibetan populated areas of China were held between envoys of the Dalai Lama and high-level Chinese officials beginning in 2002, but stalled in 2010 and were never resumed.

#### Resolve Tibet Act

The Dalai Lama's visit comes amid the much-awaited passage of a U.S. bill urging the Chinese government to engage in dialogue, without any preconditions, with the Dalai Lama or his representatives or democratically elected Tibetan leaders to resolve the China-Tibet dispute.

The bipartisan Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act, also known as the Resolve Tibet Act, calls on China to “cease its propagation of disinformation about the history of Tibet, the Tibetan people, and Tibetan institutions, including that of the Dalai Lama.”

The Senate unanimously approved a revised version of the bill and is due for another vote by the House. If approved, it will go to U.S. President Joe Biden, who is likely to sign it into law.

In 2020, while serving as the Democratic party presidential nominee, Biden pledged to urge China to engage in discussions with Tibetans aimed at achieving “meaningful autonomy.”

He also said at the time that if elected president, he would meet with the Dalai Lama, although he has yet to do this since taking office in 2021.

In December 2021, the Biden administration appointed Uzra Zeya as under secretary for civilian security, democracy, and human rights to serve concurrently as the U.S. special coordinator for Tibetan issues.

## Department of Religion and Culture's Monastic Assessment Committee Presents Report of their Findings to His Holiness the Dalai Lama

03 June 2024, CTA



Department of Religion and Culture's Monastic Assessment Committee Presents Report of their Findings to His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

The Department of Religion and Culture, Central Tibetan Administration, held a closing meeting of the assessment committee to prepare a report of their finding to be presented to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The 14th Tibetan Religious Conference's 13th resolution of its first agenda requires the Department of Religion and Culture to set up an assessment committee to investigate the deterioration of the religious traditions across Tibetan monasteries based in India, Nepal, and Bhutan. Accordingly, the department appealed to religious heads of all schools of Tibetan Buddhism and Yungdrung Bon to send two representatives from each school as members of the committee, following which the committee was formed.

This year, on 9 and 10 April, the committee members gathered at the Department of Religion and Culture and devised a scheme to assess the exposition and study of religious theories and practices, instruction of Vinaya rules (monastic discipline), and incorporation of modern education, health, and science at the monasteries. The committee further established a form to be employed for the assessment.

From 11 April to 24 May, the committee dispatched four teams of three members to their assigned monasteries and thus far conducted meticulous evaluations at 76 monasteries.

Thereafter, the department convened members of the committee from 25 to 30 May and drafted a report of their assessment that was later presented to His Holiness the Dalai Lama during a special audience on 31 May.

## Tibetans in Dharamshala vote in the 2024 Indian general elections

01 June 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup



A Tibetan monk shows his inked finger after casting his vote in Dharamshala (Photo/ANI)

Hundreds of Tibetans with voter ID voted at the Bhagsunath polling station in Dharamshala during the final phase of the 2024 Indian General Election, on Saturday. Tibetans all over India with voter ID have cast their votes in the Lok Sabha election over the course of the last few weeks. The Indian general elections, spread across seven phases took place from April 19 to June 1, 2024, to elect 543 members of the Lok Sabha of the Indian parliament. The counting of votes and the declaration of results will be done on June 4, 2024.

Himachal Pradesh, home to the second-largest population of Tibetan exiles after Karnataka, conducted its polling in the final phase on June 1. Many Tibetans holding voter ID cards, predominantly in the Kangra district, where the exile Tibetan government and Tibetan leader His Holiness the Dalai Lama are based, gave their mandate today.

The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) advised Tibetans to exercise personal discretion regarding their participation in the election. Earlier this month in an interview with Voice of Tibet, CTA spokesperson Tenzin Lekshay stated that the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) cannot dictate whether Tibetans in exile should acquire Indian voter ID cards and Indian passports or not, it can only offer guidance. Lekshay explained that the Indian government issues Registration Certificates (RC) and Identity Cards (IC) to Tibetans with refugee status. However, the government also provides Indian passports and voter ID cards, which confer Indian citizenship. He emphasised the need for caution in deciding whether to obtain these documents, as involvement in Indian politics could have implications for the Tibetan community. He further stated that Tibetans must carefully consider whether such participation is beneficial for the collective future or not.

On May 27, the incumbent Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh, Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, visited Dharamshala to meet and appeal for votes from the local Tibetan community. The meeting took place at the Tibetan Settlement Office Hall in McLeod Ganj, where the Tibetan Settlement Officer presented a list of three pressing issues faced by the Tibetan community in Dharamshala.

The first issue highlighted was the construction of proper roads in the area. The second problem raised was the need for permanent shops for Tibetan shop owners, who currently operate from temporary setups along the roadside. The third issue involved resolving the dispute concerning the old Tibetan Settlement Office. Chief Minister Sukhu acknowledged these concerns and assured the community that he would make efforts to address and resolve these problems.

Speaking to Phayul, a Tibetan who voted in Dharamshala today said, "It's my fifth time voting. The reason for voting is the same as our Indian counterparts, like issues including inflation of daily needs products. It is our right to choose a representative who can work on these issues. The other advantage of having a voter card is the ease of travelling to other countries. I have relatives in Nepal, and a voter ID card, helps me to travel by flight without any difficulties. With other documents, it's hard to travel there."

Another voter stated, "The reason I made a voter ID card is because of the ease of travelling to other countries. Many countries have difficulty accepting the Identity Certificate (IC) provided to us. With a voter ID, the ease of travelling is the reason."

Tibetans in Sarguja, Chhattisgarh, participated in the third phase of the elections on May 7, 2024. In the Phuntsokling settlement, Orissa, Tibetan voters were in a dilemma about whether to participate in the Indian election due to concerns about losing refugee status. In Himachal Pradesh, Tibetans with voter ID cards have been participating in Indian elections for some years.

In February 2014, India's chief election body directed all states to include Tibetans and their offspring born in India in the electoral rolls. This followed a 2013 court order granting Indian citizenship to Tibetan refugees born in India between January 26, 1950, and July 1, 1987, and their children under the Indian Citizenship Act 1955.

## New school for overseas Tibetan kids aims to preserve language

01 June 2024, RFA, Lobe Socktsang, Tashi Wangchuk and Tenzin Dickyi

The move comes amid China's attempts to suppress Tibetan language and culture among children.





Tibetan children pose for a photo at the Lower Tibetan Children's Villages school in Dharamsala, India, in an undated photo.

In a bid to help preserve Tibet's language and culture, a nonprofit organization in northern India is transforming one of its facilities into a boarding school where children of Tibetans living overseas can go to live and study.

The Dharamsala, India-based school being created by the Tibetan Children's Villages, or TCV, is accepting applications for the academic year starting Aug. 1 for children entering grades four to eight.

There are already several Tibetan boarding schools elsewhere in India, but this will be the first time one is being created for the children of overseas Tibetans.

The move comes as China intensifies its policies to suppress — or even eradicate — Tibetan and other ethnic languages and cultures and replace them with Mandarin and Han Chinese customs.

Chinese officials in Tibet and in Tibetan-populated areas in China's western provinces are using government-run boarding schools to assimilate Tibetan children culturally, religiously and linguistically, rights groups say.

Schools become 'battleground'

Tibetan students are being forcibly removed from their homes and immersed in a Mandarin-language curriculum without an opportunity to learn the Tibetan language or culture.

"Tibetan schools are the battleground for CCP ideology," said Kai Mueller, the Berlin-based executive director and head of U.N. advocacy at the International Campaign for Tibet, referring to the Chinese Communist Party.

"We have noted so many forms of indoctrination towards Tibetan children in school that it is quite astounding," he said.



The Lower TCV school in Dharamsala, India, is being renovated as a new residential school for Tibetan children from abroad. (TCV)

The types of indoctrination include poetry competitions on Chinese President Xi Jinping's Thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics, field trips to Communist Party museums, and school visits by Chinese officials and members of the Chinese military who teach children about national unity, Mueller said.

"The Chinese rulers are using ever new methods to try to transform young Tibetans into loyal Chinese," he said.

"Their main starting point is language," he said.

In a two-pronged approach, Chinese officials work to dissuade children from learning their mother tongue by sending them to compulsory boarding schools and make Mandarin attractive to young Tibetans, Mueller said.

"In this way, the Chinese leadership wants to destroy the youth's connection to traditional Tibetan culture and language," he said.



Students learn about tuberculosis at the Tibetan Children's Villages lower school in Dharamsala, India, in an undated photo. (TCV)

#### Grassroots idea

For this reason, many Tibetans both inside and outside Tibet urged Tibetan Children's Villages to set up a boarding school for children from overseas, TCV Director Sonam Sichoe told Radio Free Asia. The proposal was then approved by the network's board.

The school's main priority will be to teach Tibetan language skills and cultural traditions, while



simultaneously receiving a modern education that is on par with the West, Sichoe said.

So far, about 15 students from the United States, Canada, Australia, Denmark and Germany have enrolled. Regardless of the numbers, the school will proceed as planned, he said.

In the dormitories, the children from overseas will be mixed with students from India so that they don't end up speaking only English, he added.



The Lower TCV school in Dharamsala, India, is being renovated as a new residential school for Tibetan children from abroad. (TCV)

Tuition, room and board cost US\$350 per child per month, Sichoe said.

Because the children are expected to come from different countries, the main medium of teaching academic subjects will be in English to ensure ease of understanding and communication, he said.

Studio Nyandak Dharamsala, a design company whose local employees are all TCV alumni, is working with school administrators to renovate the campus. Changes include the installation of Western toilets, single beds instead of bunk beds, water heating facilities and solar panels.

#### Expanded network

Set up in 1960 as a nursery for Tibetan children, TCV was established after the Dalai Lama proposed a center to care for kids who had been orphaned or separated from their families while fleeing after China's annexation of Tibet in 1959.

Since then, the organization expanded its footprint across India to become a network of boarding schools caring for over 15,000 children.

The Dharamsala-based Lower TCV campus — now being renovated into a residential school for overseas children — came about in the 1980s after the main TCV school was inundated with children who had been smuggled out of Tibet by Tibetan parents during China's liberalization program of that period.

Earlier this year, Jetsun Pema, the younger sister of the Dalai Lama who led the school for many years, received the Pearl S. Buck award from Randolph College in Lynchburg, Virginia, in recognition of her service.

#### Parents' reactions

Migmar Bhuti, a Tibetan in New York, welcomed the new boarding school, saying it would enable Tibetan children to more effectively learn and preserve the Tibetan language and culture at an early age. But she also expressed concern over whether math, English, science and the social sciences would be adequately taught.

"Since the Lower TCV School is planning to only take in students from the fourth to eighth grades, I wonder if that will allow the children to catch up in their classes when they move back here from the ninth grade, or whether they will need to drop a grade," she told RFA Tibetan.

Given that academic and vacation schedules in the West differ from those in India, school officials are in discussions with parents about these concerns, said Choeying Dhondup, TCV's general-secretary.



The Lower TCV school in Dharamsala, India, is being renovated as a new residential school for Tibetan children from abroad. (TCV)

Kalsang Dorji, a father of two children and principal of a Sunday school for Tibetan children in Berkeley, California, said Tibetans there have wanted a dedicated residential school to teach their language and culture to youngsters.

"Not only do they get to learn the Tibetan language and culture very early on, they also have the opportunity to engage with other Tibetan children," he said.

The success of the school will be determined by the quality of the faculty and enrollment numbers, he added.

"In our community, there is a widespread desire to have a dedicated school like this for Tibetan children, which is why I deeply appreciate TCV's move to convert Lower TCV into a residential school for children from the West," Dorji said.

## Chinese ambassador reprimands Estonian MP for visiting Tibetans in D'shala last month

30 May 2024, Tibetan Review

In a belated, angry reaction, the Chinese Ambassador to Estonia has written to an Estonian MP, reprimanding him for visiting the exile Tibetan community in India at Dharamshala and meeting with their Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) leaders late last month, reported news.err.ee May 29.

The Ambassador, Mr Guo Xiaomei, has also requested a meeting with the MP, Mr Juku-Kalle Raid, who is the chairman of the parliamentary support group for Tibet in the Riigikogu, Estonia's unicameral parliament.

"No country or government in the world has ever recognized 'Tibetan independence'," the report quoted Guo as having written to Raid. "As a responsible politician, a member of the Riigikogu should firmly adhere to international norms, respect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, become more familiar with facts related to Xizang, and cease any form of interaction with the so-called Tibetan government in exile."

Raid has dismissed Guo's complaint as "a very old and tired tune in which China always reacts very painfully to questions about Tibet."

"But not only that. Beijing was similarly enraged by a visit to Taiwan, and the same happens every time someone draws attention to the Chinese regime, which relentlessly harasses minority peoples," Raid has said.

Raid led an Estonian parliamentary and Tibet Support Group (TSG) delegation to Dharamshala late last month. The delegation included Estonian parliament members Henn Polluaas (former speaker) and Tarmo Tamm; former MP Andres Herkel; journalist Roy Strider and Estonian Tibet Support Coordinator; and TSG members Eleri Porroson and Annabel Piiritalu.

The delegation took part in the commemoration on Apr 25 of the 35th birthday of the 11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, Tibet's second most prominent religious figure abducted and disappeared by the Chinese government when he was six years old, in 1995. His fate or whereabouts have continued to remain unknown to this day. China has appointed its own 11th Panchen Lama to replace him.

In his address to the gathering at that time, Raid, who is said to be also a member of the Estonian government's Foreign Affairs Commission, said, "We have had a similar past, and the past was similarly

terrible, but we hope we will have a similar future that is not terrible."

Raid also met with the Dalai Lama and visited the Tibetan Parliament in Exile during the visit, said the CTA in its Tibet.net website reports Apr 25 and 26.

## PM Modi refers to his frequent talks with the Dalai Lama in election speech

25 May 2024, Tibetan Review

Prime Minister Narendra Modi revealed that he talked frequently with the Dalai Lama in his May 24 election speech in Mandi constituency, which covers almost two-thirds of the state of Himachal Pradesh, reported the IANS news service May 24. The state votes on Jun 1 to elect four members to the Lok Sabha, the upper house of the Indian parliament.

Modi's BJP and the Congress are the main rivals for all the four seats. The BJP candidate for the Mandi Lok Sabha constituency seat is the well-known Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut. Soon after her nomination for contesting the seat, Ranaut called on the Dalai Lama on Apr 15, accompanied by the state's former BJP Chief minister Jairam Ramesh Thakur. She called her experience of the meeting "very emotional", and something she will "cherish all my life."

Meanwhile, in his election speech in Mandi, Modi has said, "India is the country of Buddha and the Modi government has vigorously promoted this heritage," while highlighting places of Buddhism in the state.

Modi's remarks came after reports that the actress was shown black flags at the Buddhist-dominated Kaza in Lahaul and Spiti. It was reported as a protest against her for what was seen as a critical online Tweet on the Tibetan spiritual leader by her in Apr 2023, although the actress later apologised after protests and said it was meant to be a harmless joke and that she respected the Dalai Lama.

Referring to that episode, the Congress candidate Vikramaditya Singh on May 22 targeted Ranaut, saying, "People of the tribal area worship Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama as their God and if someone passes any remarks against their God, they will surely not like it and protest," reported the PTI new agency May 22.

The report cited Ranaut as saying the Congress was behind the protest against her at Kaza.

The Mandi constituency seat includes Kullu, Mandi and some areas of Chamba and Shimla districts, besides the tribal-dominated Kinnaur and Lahaul and Spiti, which are dominated by Buddhists.

Interestingly, Modi's assertion came just hours after the state's Chief Minister Sukhvinder Sukhu made a

courtesy call on the Dalai Lama, said the IANS report said.

Sukhu sought blessings from the Dalai Lama, who praised the state and India's religious respect, reported the PTI May 24.

The report also said around 800 Tibetan exiles had registered as voters in this election.

### **His Holiness the Dalai Lama Addresses Participants of Conference Themed 'Investigating the Impact of Contemplative Practices'**

24 May 2024, CTA

Thekchen Chöling, Dharamshala, HP, India, 24 May 2024: This morning His Holiness the Dalai Lama met 200 people from, or associated with, Emory University, who have come to Dharamshala to take part in a conference on the theme 'Investigating the Impact of Contemplative Practices'. Executive Director of the Emory Compassion Center, Geshé Lobsang Tenzin Negi, introduced the occasion.

"Your Holiness, on behalf of everyone present I would like to express our gratitude to you for inviting us to this conference co-hosted by Emory University and the Dalai Lama Trust.

"Among us are Emory faculty, staff and students; Emory-Tibet Science Initiative (ETSI) students, teachers and staff; Tibetan teachers and students who are following Social, Emotional and Ethical Learning (SEE Learning) programs, as well as other observers and participants.

"For the first time, Tibetan monastic scholars who have systematically studied modern science are presenting the first outcomes of their research in the field of contemplative practice. This is an historic event, the fruit of your visionary introduction of science to the Tibetan monastic centers of learning about 20 years ago. Science has become an integral part of Tibetan monastic education. As a result of this education, monks and nuns are emerging as scientists.

"Before handing over to Dr Barbara Krauthammer, Dean of Emory University, I'd like to introduce David Nassar, Vice-president of the Templeton Foundation and John Cunningham, Executive Director of the Templeton Foundation. We are grateful for their presence and the Foundation's support of the ETSI Program over the last ten years."

Dr Negi explained that Emory students who are studying Tibetan culture, Buddhist philosophy and the Buddhist science of mind; ETSI students and Tibetan school-children would each put a question to His Holiness.

On behalf of Emory University Dr Barbara Krauthammer thanked His Holiness for his vision and kindness.

"I have nothing special to say today," His Holiness replied. "From our study of Buddhism, we have access to a great deal of information about psychology, the workings of the mind and emotions. When they talk about religion, people are generally referring to matters of faith not how to conduct an investigation. However, the Nalanda Tradition places emphasis on taking a critical, analytical approach, and its scholars are learned when it comes to the study of the mind.

"When the Indian master Shantarakshita came to Tibet in 8th century he recognized that Tibetans have an ability for deep thought. This was a measure of his kindness to us.

"I like to talk about secular ethics and what make them important is that they can be applied by anyone whether they are religious or not. The crucial issue is to discover how to achieve peace of mind. Buddhists also have to understand that what's important is not the conduct of rituals, but whether we can endow others and ourselves with peace of mind. And the way to do this is by employing the mind.

"In the monastic curriculum we learn about the four Buddhist philosophical schools, but when we interact with other people it's more practical to talk about how our mind and emotions work. This is something of common interest. The way we can help other people is to discuss how to relax and achieve peace of mind from a scientific point of view.

An Emory University student asked His Holiness how to keep hope alive in our world today.

"A lot of the time," His Holiness replied, "we have all sorts of expectations, but what we have to keep in mind is that bad as well as good things can happen. We have to use our intelligence to solve the problems we face. We have to examine what is really going on. Sometimes we may turn to religion in search of a solution, but much more effective is to employ our intelligence and our ability to reason.

"When we engage in formal debate in the monasteries, it's customary for challengers to cite quotations from scripture to support their assertions.



Barbara Krauthammer, Dean of Emory College of Arts and Sciences, thanking His Holiness the Dalai Lama for his vision and kindness during the meeting with participants of the conference about the impact of

Contemplative studies, co-organised by Emory University and The Dalai Lama Trust, at his residence in Dharamshala, HP, India on 24 May 2024. Photo by Tenzin Choejor

The defenders take off their hats to indicate their respect, but then reply that what has been cited is not logically necessary. Instead, they declare that what's important is to employ our critical faculties.

"A scientific approach is an excellent tool for assessing the reality of any given situation. The Nalanda Tradition too teaches us how analyze and investigate without resort to scripture."

A monk from the ETSI program asked how monastics who have studied science can contribute to society. His Holiness responded:

"The very purpose of studying is to be able to serve others better. As I've already said, we have to use our intelligence with reason and logic. Of course, there is a great deal we learn about the mind from reading books, but we must understand that we will learn more and in greater detail if we examine our minds in a scientific way."

Noting that His Holiness is keen to encourage an appreciation of secular ethics and that their essence is compassion, a Tibetan Children's Village (TCV) student asked what the nature of compassion is.

"Different traditions teach us how to be more considerate and well-mannered," His Holiness told her, "but compassion in terms of active concern for others is the key issue. Secular ethics provides us with the means to guide society, but on a person-to-person level, what everyone appreciates is warm-heartedness."

Two science books published by ETSI were presented to His Holiness. The visitors gathered in their various groups around him to have their photographs taken, and then they departed for the first session of their conference.

### **Central Tibetan Administration Appreciates the US Senate's Unanimous Passage of Resolve Tibet Bill**

24 May 2024, CTA



Sikyong Penpa Tsering addressing the media during

a press conference held on the US Senate's passage of Resolve Tibet Bill following the conclusion of Tibetan Cooperative's Conference. Photo / Tenzin Phende / CTA

The Central Tibetan Administration commends the US Senate's unanimous passage of the S. 138, titled "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act". The US Senate passed the bipartisan and bicameral legislation on 23 May 2024, sponsored by Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR), co-chair of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, along with Senator Todd Young (R-IN).

Known as the Resolve Tibet Bill, this act reaffirms the U.S. policy of advocating for direct dialogue between the People's Republic of China and representatives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, or with democratically elected Tibetan leaders, without preconditions, to address the Tibet-China conflict. It acknowledges that the Tibet-China conflict remains unresolved and that Tibet's legal status is yet to be determined in accordance with international law. Additionally, the legislation aims to combat Chinese government's disinformation about Tibet, including fabricated narratives concerning Tibet's history, culture, people, and institutions, including that of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Senator Merkley said, "All peoples around the world have inalienable rights to freedom and self-determination, including the Tibetans. Our bipartisan, bicameral Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act is a direct response to the tactics of the People's Republic of China (PRC), which continues to trample on the fundamental rights of the Tibetan people. The bill supports a peaceful resolution to the ongoing dispute between the PRC and Tibet and counters disinformation from the PRC about Tibet and its history. It now heads back to the House, and we will work to get it to President Biden's desk to help put the people of Tibet in charge of their own future."

Senator Young said, "The Chinese Communist Party's aggression towards Tibet is self-serving, with negotiations and even the very definition of Tibet on the CCP's terms. We must refresh U.S. policy towards Tibet, and push for negotiations that advance freedoms for the Tibetan people and peaceful resolution to the CCP's conflict with the Dalai Lama. The Senate's vote to pass this legislation demonstrates America's resolve that the CCP's status quo - both in Tibet and elsewhere - is not acceptable."

Sikyong Penpa Tsering on the Senate's passage of the bill said, "On the very auspicious day of the Saka Dawa, the US Senate unanimously passed the Resolve Tibet Bill. This is an essential step, advancing us significantly toward the bill's enactment and moving us toward right direction. The bill's progress



thus far is a result of collective efforts that cannot be accomplished by one person or group alone. Despite our limited human and financial resources, we have demonstrated that by working together, we can achieve our goal. We are particularly grateful to the sponsors of the bill, Senator Jeff Merkley and Senator Todd Young and all the cosponsors for championing this bill and the senate for the decisive support to the bill."

### **Senate approval sends bill back to House for eventual US mandate to help resolve Tibet's status**

24 May 2024, Tibetan Review

The United States Senate has on May 23 unanimously passed the bipartisan Tibet bill titled "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act" (or "Resolve Tibet Act" in short). Though already passed by the House of Representatives in Feb 2024 by overwhelming majority, the bill now heads back to it for its concurrence on a few Senate amendments before it could be sent to President Joe Biden for being signed into law.

The bill questions the legitimacy of the Chinese occupation rule in Tibet and seeks to make it a US policy to promote a resolution of the Tibet-China dispute in accordance with international law. It specifically rejects as "inaccurate" China's claims that Tibet has been part of China since "ancient times."

In keeping with this fact, the bill, once it becomes law, will empower the US Special Coordinator for Tibetan issues to actively and directly counter disinformation about Tibet from the Chinese government and Communist Party, while US government statements and documents will also be required to do the same.

Also, it will require the US government to promote substantive dialogue without preconditions between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama or his representatives or the democratically elected leaders of the Tibetan community, leading to a negotiated agreement on Tibet.

The proposed new law will task the US State Department with the responsibility to coordinate with other governments in multilateral efforts toward the goal of a negotiated agreement on Tibet.

The US government will also be required to encourage China to address the aspirations of the Tibetan people regarding their distinct historical, cultural, religious and linguistic identity.

President Tencho Gyatso of Washington-based International Campaign for Tibet has thanked Senators Jeff Merkley (D-Ore) and Todd Young (R-Ind), who had introduced the bill in the Senate, for

their dedication to the cause of freedom and justice for Tibetans.

Senator Merkley has called the bill a direct response to the tactics of the People's Republic of China (PRC), "which continues to trample on the fundamental rights of the Tibetan people." He has said "he bill supports a peaceful resolution to the ongoing dispute between the PRC and Tibet and counters disinformation from the PRC about Tibet and its history."

Condemning China's ongoing aggression towards Tibet as self-serving, Senator Young has said, "We must refresh US policy towards Tibet, and push for negotiations that advance freedoms for the Tibetan people and peaceful resolution to the CCP's conflict with the Dalai Lama. The Senate's vote to pass this legislation demonstrates America's resolve that the CCP's status quo – both in Tibet and elsewhere – is not acceptable."

Namgyal Choedup, Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration to North America has said: "Senate passage of the Resolve Tibet Act is a clear message that China's systematic oppression and erasure of Tibetan identity is never the answer to resolving the Tibet-China dispute."

Sikyong (executive head) Penpa Tsering of the CTA sees the Senate's unanimous passage of the bill as auspicious, saying, "On the very auspicious day of the Saka Dawa, the US Senate unanimously passed the Resolve Tibet Bill." The full-moon day of the Sakadawa (4th month of the Tibetan calendar) marks the birth, enlightenment and passing away of the Buddhas Shakyamuni and it fell on May 23 this year.

Senator Merkley has vowed to work with others to get the bill to President Biden's desk to help put the people of Tibet in charge of their own future.

### **Sikyong Penpa Tsering Addresses Closing Ceremony of Tibetan Cooperative's Conference**

24 May 2024, CTA



The participants of the 3-day Tibetan Cooperative Society's Conference, 24 May 2024.



Sikyong Penpa Tsering of the Central Tibetan Administration attended the closing ceremony of the 3-day Tibetan Cooperative's conference today, 24 May 2024, at the CTA training centre located inside the premises of the Tibetan Reception Centre. In his keynote address as the event's chief guest, Sikyong stressed the purpose of this meeting, which aimed to draft proposals for establishing a cohesive and robust exiled Tibetan Community through the initiatives of Tibetan Cooperative Societies backed by DoH and FTCl. Sikyong encouraged the workshop participants to perform their duties according to the noble wishes of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to continue the legacies of His Holiness-led older Tibetan generations. Given the fact that one of the key objectives of Tibetan Cooperative Societies is to make Tibetan settlements viable and sustainable, Sikyong suggested meeting the work demands of younger generations in settlements by creating additional job opportunities through innovative schemes. Sikyong further proposed creating guidelines for future reference to promote healthy functioning and collaboration amongst the DoH, FTCl, and member Cooperatives Societies.

On a sideline event, Sikyong Penpa Tsering also brought attention to a significant development- the U.S. Senate's Unanimous passage of the Resolve Tibet bill on 23 May 2024. This news, undoubtedly, brings a sense of hope and optimism for the Tibetan community.

Alongside Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the concluding ceremony of the conference was graced by the presence of other esteemed individuals. These included Home Secretary Palden Dhondup, Additional Secretaries Tenzin Norbu and Jampa Phuntsok, and Pema Delek, Chairman of the Federation of Tibetan Cooperatives in India (FTCl).

### **Kharge calls upon scholars to unearth hidden history of Buddhism to enlighten next generation**

23 May 2024, The Hindu

Stressing on the need for digging into history and unearthing the facts about Buddhism in the country, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge questioned why the Krishna, the banks of which provided a lot of clues on Buddha, was neglected in historical research as compared to the Ganga, the Yamuna, and the Cauvery.



Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge paying floral tributes to Buddha at Buddha Vihar on the outskirts of Kalaburagi on Thursday. | Photo Credit: ARUN KULKARNI

"History is hidden sometimes. It is unearthed some other times. It is also distorted often. Numerous archaeological evidences found along the banks of the Krishna and its tributary the Bhima indicated that Buddhism flourished in southern India. But, there is no further research to unearth more facts about Buddhism and reconstruct its history. Our mythology has plenty of references to the Ganga, the Yamuna, and the Cauvery and it hardly had any reference to the Krishna and the Bhima," Mr. Kharge said.

He was speaking at the celebration of the 2568th Vaishakha Purnima, the birth anniversary of Gautam Buddha at Buddha Vihar on the outskirts of Kalaburagi on Thursday.

"King Nagarjuna was a great patron to thousands of Buddhist monks. When he faced stiff resistance to his patronage of Buddhism, he sent the monks to China, Tibet, and other countries. We must pick up such history, which is hitherto hidden, and pass it on to the next generation, no matter what resistance we face," Mr. Kharge said.

Expressing his discontentment over the poor response to Buddhist thoughts in India, Mr. Kharge said that the number of foreigners visiting Sarnath was more than Indians visiting the place.

"People from Japan, Thailand, Indonesia, Myanmar, Vietnam, and other countries increasingly visit Sarnath. How many people from India are visiting the place which is just 16 km from Varanasi? It is the place where Gautama Buddha taught his first sermon to his five disciples after attaining enlightenment at Bodh Gaya," he said.

Upholding the Buddha as a great philosopher and social reformer who enlightened the world with his revolutionary and scientific thoughts, Mr. Kharge, who is the founder of Buddha Vihar Trust in Kalaburagi, called upon the people understand, internalise, and follow Buddhist philosophy to get enlightened and lead a more humane life.

"We all must read, understand and internalise Buddha. Those who follow Buddha will be enlightened and lead a meaningful life. All religions have a bunch of fairytales and legendary stories. The followers of those religions exaggerated them to

impress the people. However, Buddha had never lied. There was no exaggeration in Buddhist stories. All his words are facts and based on real-life experiences. His philosophy is rational and scientific. This is what exactly Basavanna [the 12th-century social reformer and poet in Karnataka] had advocated through his Vachanas [poems]. We need to think of and follow such scientific and progressive ideologies to lead more meaningful life," Mr. Kharge said.

The event was attended by Medical Education Minister Sharan Prakash Patil, MLAs Allamprabhu Patil and M.Y. Patil, MLC Tippannappa Kamaknur and Congress leader Jagadev Guttedar.

Apart from Mr. Kharge's wife Radhabai and several Buddhist monks arrived from different places.

"Buddha never advised his followers or the people at large what to be done and what not to be done. He never said he was a god. He simply went on to share his experiences. Buddha is regarded as the ninth incarnation of Vishnu. Is Buddha receiving the same treatment that Rama, Krishna, Parashuram, and other deities who were regarded as the other incarnations of Vishnu are receiving? When we had raised such valid questions, Prime Minister Modi alleged that we are making divisions between deities," Mr. Kharge said.

Writer H.R. Swamy, who gave a special lecture on Buddha and his thoughts, said that Albert Einstein, who was regarded as the greatest scientist of all times, had termed Buddhism as the religion based on scientific foundation.

"The Buddhist thoughts are the basis for the revolutionary and progressive thoughts of the 12th century reformer Basavanna and Mahatma Gandhi," he said.

### **Resolve Tibet Act unanimously passes Senate**

23 May 2024, International Campaign for Tibet

The United States Senate unanimously passed the bipartisan Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act today, May 23, 2024.

Also known as the Resolve Tibet Act, this bill will strengthen US efforts to push the Chinese government to resolve the longstanding Tibet-China dispute through dialogue with Tibetan leaders.

In a statement, International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) President Tencho Gyatso lauded the advance of the bill and emphasized that China must resume dialogue with the Tibetans, saying, "I hope Beijing will now see that this dispute must be resolved through negotiation, instead of an assault on Tibet's unique and ancient civilization."

Steady advance through Congress

The House version of the Resolve Tibet Act was passed earlier this year with overwhelming bipartisan support. Although additional procedural hurdles remain, passing the Senate is a crucial step forward for the bill.

This day arrived following ongoing advocacy efforts ICT, the Office of Tibet, Tibetan Associations around the country, and other prominent Tibet groups that included postcard campaigns to members of Congress, letters from Tibetan Associations to their elected representatives, and numerous grassroots efforts by Tibet support groups including a record-breaking turnout at the 2024 Tibet Lobby Day, organized by ICT.

After 65 years of Chinese occupation, Tibet's global freedom score has now dropped all the way to zero, watchdog group Freedom House says in a recent report.

Quotes from Congress members and Tibetan leaders International Campaign for Tibet President Tencho Gyatso said: "Today's Senate action is an indication that American support of Tibet will never waver. The Resolve Tibet Act is crystal clear; it is incumbent on China to resume dialogue, and the United States will not accept China's disinformation about Tibet, particularly when it concerns the historical status of Tibet. I thank Senator Merkley and Senator Young for their dedication to the cause of freedom and justice for Tibetans, and I hope Beijing will now see that this dispute must be resolved through negotiation instead of an assault on Tibet's unique and ancient civilization."

Senator Jeff Merkley, D-OR, said: "All peoples around the world have inalienable rights to freedom and self-determination, including the Tibetans. Our bipartisan, bicameral Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act is a direct response to the tactics of the People's Republic of China (PRC), which continues to trample on the fundamental rights of the Tibetan people. The bill supports a peaceful resolution to the ongoing dispute between the PRC and Tibet and counters disinformation from the PRC about Tibet and its history. It now heads back to the House, and we will work to get it to President Biden's desk to help put the people of Tibet in charge of their own future."

Senator Todd Young, R-IN, said: "The Chinese Communist Party's aggression towards Tibet is self-serving, with negotiations and even the very definition of Tibet on the CCP's terms. We must refresh U.S. policy towards Tibet, and push for negotiations that advance freedoms for the Tibetan people and peaceful resolution to the CCP's conflict with the Dalai Lama. The Senate's vote to pass this legislation demonstrates America's resolve that the CCP's status quo – both in Tibet and elsewhere – is not acceptable."

Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration to North America Namgyal Choedup said: "Senate passage of the Resolve Tibet Act is a clear message that China's systematic oppression and erasure of Tibetan identity is never the answer to resolving the Tibet-China dispute. The Central Tibet Administration remains fully committed to His Holiness the Dalai Lama's vision of a Middle Way to find a mutually beneficial and long-lasting negotiated solution to the Tibet-China dispute. We are grateful for Senator Merkley and Senator Young's leadership in showing that America will not concede to China's false claims and refusal to follow international law. Until China comes back to the negotiating table in good faith, the Tibetan people will never abandon hope and will remain resilient in their non-violent resistance. Ending the Tibet-China dispute is within grasp—if China is willing to abandon lies for truth."

What the bill does

The Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act states that it is US policy that the dispute between Tibet and China remains unresolved in accordance with international law.

The legislation also:

- Empowers the Special Coordinator for Tibet to actively and directly counter disinformation about Tibet from the Chinese government and Communist Party, including working to ensure that US government statements and documents counter disinformation about Tibet.
- Rejects as "inaccurate" China's false claims that Tibet has been part of China since "ancient times."
- Promotes substantive dialogue without preconditions between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama or his representatives or the democratically elected leaders of the Tibetan community. The US could also explore activities to improve prospects for dialogue leading to a negotiated agreement on Tibet.
- Affirms the State Department's responsibility to coordinate with other governments in multilateral efforts toward the goal of a negotiated agreement on Tibet.
- Encourages China's government to address the aspirations of the Tibetan people regarding their distinct historical, cultural, religious and linguistic identity.

## Reports detail forced displacement and violent reprisals against protest in Tibet

22 May 2024, China Digital Times, Arthur Kaufman

Two research reports published this week underscore how authorities in Tibet have displaced local communities to impose state-sponsored projects, undermining environmental protection and human rights. The collaborative research network Turquoise Roof published the first report, "Occupying Tibet's rivers: China's hydropower 'battlefield' in Tibet." The report details how violent paramilitary reprisals have stifled protests against the construction of the planned Kamtok hydropower dam along the Dri Chu (Yangtze) river, threatening the displacement of villages and Buddhist monasteries:

The protests draw urgent attention to China's extractivist plans that are carving up the Tibetan landscape, risking landslides, earthquakes and food insecurity, and impacting tens of millions living downstream in China, India and elsewhere in Asia. State-owned conglomerates are accelerating the construction of mega dams and associated infrastructure in Tibet despite the inherent dangers of a seismically unstable region where river systems are increasingly unpredictable due to climate change.

For the first time, China's dambuilding is now reaching upriver to the sources of Asia's great wild mountain rivers in Tibet in landscapes that were previously among the least disturbed habitats on earth. Tibet is described by Chinese engineers as "the main battlefield of China's hydropower construction", while a Chinese chief engineer warned that the process of constructing a dam in the upper reaches of the Dri Chu river is like building "high-rise blocks on tofu".

[...] The plans involve the entire population of the area – monks and lay, old and young – being uprooted and displaced in their thousands from villages and monasteries that have flourished upstream in the sacred mountains of Gendong alongside the Dri Chu or the upper Yangtze River, the longest and largest river on the Eurasian continent.

[...] The construction of the Kamtok dam risks a cascade of adverse consequences both on the plateau and in China, serving as a reminder that China's policies in Tibet – where water is regarded as a 'strategic asset' by the Communist Party state – affect global climate systems already challenged by food and water insecurity involving glacial melting and erratic monsoon cycles. A leading Tibetan professor based in Beijing has revealed data showing that the rivers of Tibet are becoming more and more unpredictable.

Protests against the dam began in mid-February in Derge County (also known as Dege) in Sichuan Province, where authorities reportedly arrested over

100 Tibetan Buddhist monks and other residents. Videos of the protests showed black-clad forces pushing around Tibetan monks who were peacefully protesting. Similar dynamics were observed in mid-April, as Tibet Watch reported that the government had already started relocating around 60 households located near another planned hydropower station on the Machu river in Qinghai Province.

A second report was published by Human Rights Watch and titled, "Educate the Masses to Change Their Minds: China's Forced Relocation of Rural Tibetans." The report draws on over 1,000 official Chinese media articles between 2016 and 2023 as well as government publications and academic field studies. It shows that Chinese media reports in many cases contradict official claims that all those relocated gave their consent and instead indicate that participation in "whole-village relocation" programs in Tibet is in effect compulsory:

The official press reports indicate the extreme forms of persuasion—that is, coercion—used by officials to pressure villagers and nomadic people or nomads to agree to whole-village relocation. These methods include repeated home visits; denigrating the intellectual capacity of the villagers to make decisions for themselves; implicit threats of punishment; banning of criticism; and threats of disciplinary action against local officials who fail to meet targets. In some cases, officials of increasing seniority visited families at their homes to gain their "consent," visits that sometimes were repeated over several years. Some official press reports and videos obtained by Human Rights Watch show officials telling residents that essential services would be cut to their current homes if they did not move. Others showed authorities openly threatening villagers who voiced disagreements about the relocations, accusing them of "spreading rumors" and ordering officials to crack down on such actions "swiftly and resolutely"—implying administrative and criminal penalties. This report includes three case studies that show in detail the timelines, objectives, arguments, and methods used to obtain the "consent" of residents of entire villages to relocate.

[...] Official statistics suggest that between 2000 and 2025, the Chinese authorities will have relocated over 930,000 rural Tibetans (see Appendix I). Most of these relocations—over 709,000 people or 76 percent of these relocations—have taken place since 2016. Among these 709,000 people relocated, 140,000 are moved as part of the whole village relocation drives, 567,000 as part of individual household relocations.

[...] The relocation program in Tibet contravenes international human rights law standards. International law prohibits "forced evictions," which

have been defined as the removal of individuals, families, or communities against their will from their homes or land without access to appropriate forms of legal or other protection. Forced evictions include those that lack meaningful consultation or compensation, and which do not consider "all feasible alternatives" to relocation. Otherwise, lawful evictions must still be carried out in compliance with relevant international human rights law and "in accordance with general principles of reasonableness and proportionality."

The report stated that over three million Tibetans have been forced to give up their traditional nomadic lifestyles based on yak herding and agriculture, and that "most relocation programs in Tibet move former farmers and pastoralists to areas where they cannot practice their former livelihood and have no choice but to seek work as wage laborers in off-farm industries." Providing more details from the report, Marrian Zhou from Nikkei Asia highlighted the involuntary nature of the relocations and their detrimental economic effects:

In one case, 200 out of 262 families in a village in the nomadic area of Nagqu initially refused to move almost 1,000 kilometers away. Villagers eventually consented and there has been no record of anyone who was able to avoid relocation.

"The Chinese government says that the relocation of Tibetan villages is voluntary, but official media reports contradict this claim," said Maya Wang, acting China director at Human Rights Watch. "Those reports make clear that when a whole village is targeted for relocation, it is practically impossible for the residents to refuse to move without facing serious repercussions."

[...] Government officials also ask poorer families to move away from areas that are deemed "more suitable for income generation," according to the report. Researchers found that local officials sometimes lied about the economic benefits of relocation to get the families to move, leaving them financially stranded in their new neighborhoods.

[...] Chinese laws require that families who relocate demolish their former homes to prevent them from returning. Researchers found that local officials in Tibet often enforce the demolition as well.



International Campaign for Tibet · May 22, 2024

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ICT President Tencho Gyatso says, "China's coercive mass displacement of Tibetans destroys Tibetan way of life and culture under the misleading policy labels of 'poverty alleviation' and 'ecology protection'. Tibetans have lived on the Tibetan plateau for thousands of years..



International Campaign for Tibet

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way before China came into existence, adapting genetically and socially on how best to live and protect the high-altitude environment. China's reckless displacement policy and programs is pulling apart Tibetan society, its ancient cultural and environmental best practices."

7:30 PM · May 22, 2024



1



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State-driven forced displacement has put Tibetan culture under threat. President of the Tibetan government-in-exile Penpa Tsering told France Culture this week, "We need to talk with the Chinese government. We try to find dialogue. But if you see what the government is doing all over China : everything is aimed at eradicating Tibetan culture. It is a true cultural genocide. We are dying a slow death, and so are the Uyghurs." Covering the Human Rights Watch report for VOA, William Yang showed that Tibetan activists shared Penpa's fears about the eradication of Tibetan identity:

Some Tibetan activists worry that the mass relocation or displacement of Tibetan communities may eventually "eradicate the Tibetan identity."

"It takes many years for [a community] to flourish in one land, and you can't easily build that in a place where you are not willing to go," Tenzin Choekyi, a senior researcher at Tibet Watch, told VOA by phone.

In her view, the implementation of the relocation policies hasn't taken the Tibetan community's opinions and thoughts into consideration. "The Tibetan identity is in the hands of the Chinese party-state and is being eradicated under different policy directives," she said.

This week, Tibetscapes, a research collective at the Indian Institute of Technology-Madras, shared a preview of R. Madhumitha's recently submitted M.A. thesis that connects the themes of forced displacement, urbanization, Tibetan identity. It is titled, "Fiction as a Window to Contemporary Tibet: Understanding the Tibetan Experience of Sedentarisation & Urbanisation":

Madhumitha's thesis examines Tibetan responses to Chinese state-making as they emerge through modern Tibetan fiction in English and English translations of Tibetan writing. She argues that 21st-



century Tibetan literature has framed an uneasy confrontation with the state's processes of sedentarization and urbanisation as a central element of the modern Tibetan identity and captures diverse and nuanced lived experiences of Tibetans.

Last year, CDT produced an interview series about Tibet and spoke with Tenzin Norgay, Lhadon Tethong (part one and part two), Bhuchung Tsering, Dechen Pemba, and Tsering Yangzom Lama. The latest interview in the series was with Lobsang Yangtso, Environmental Researcher at the International Tibet Network, who argued that the Chinese government's interpretation of environmental protection in fact prioritizes extractive economic policies at the expense of sustainability and participatory governance:

The kind of environmental problems that we see in Tibet, all of them are very urgent. But one thing that I would like to highlight is how the Chinese government interprets environmental protection in the name of clean energy and so-called ecological civilization. They bring policies to Tibet and then remove people from their land in the name of protection: people are relocated, nomads are removed from their land. According to the Chinese government, removing nomads is essential to protect the grassland from degradation, and also to elevate the nomads from poverty. This is a really significant issue because nomads are losing their livelihood. And the nomadic way of life is their identity, their culture. The participation of nomads in the decision making is completely missing in the current policy that we see in Tibet. This has an economic, cultural, and political implication as well. So I feel this is very, very urgent.

[...] When we talk about environmental policies from the government, the one problem that I see is that, in this whole policy of the Chinese government, economic development is the main emphasis, and in the name of economic development, they try to gain legitimacy from the local people. For them, economic development is more important than environmental protection in Tibet. So many policies like urbanization, especially when we specifically focus on border areas, specifically on the Brahmaputra, that kind of infrastructure development—the roads, the railways, the airports that we see have a lot of impact on water. Slowly, with these infrastructure developments, it will bring more army, more Chinese, and then slowly they will do mining, and then tunnel-building. Everything is all about gaining and extracting the resources from Tibet and then neglecting the respect for the whole nature and ecosystem. For us, we believe in nature reserves and we believe the rivers are sacred, but these concepts have not been really included in the policymaking. Right now, we are under the colonial occupation of



China. And yes, the whole global world is facing climate change, but Chinese political control and colonialism has further degraded the whole Tibet environment.

### China accelerates forced relocation of rural Tibetans to urban areas, report says

22 May 2024, VOA, William Yang

In a newly released report, Human Rights Watch says China has been accelerating the forced relocation of Tibetan villagers and herders in the name of “poverty alleviation” and environmental protection since 2016.

While Chinese authorities describe the relocations as voluntary, the New York-based international rights organization’s report cites more than 1,000 Chinese state media reports and government publications that it says contradict that assertion.

“The news articles indicate that participation in whole-village relocation programs in Tibet is in effect compulsory,” the report said, adding that many Tibetans asked to relocate express “high levels of reluctance.”

China’s official data suggests that more than 930,000 Tibetans in rural areas have been relocated since 2000, and around 76% of these relocations happened since 2016, the report said.



FILE - Yaks graze around tents set up for herders to live in the during the summer grazing season on grasslands near Lhasa, in western China's Tibet Autonomous Region, on June 2, 2021.

Of that total, at least 140,000 rural Tibetans were moved as part of what authorities called “whole-village relocation.” In some cases, rural Tibetans are relocated to places hundreds of kilometers from their homes.

And while some Tibetan villagers are reluctant to take part in the government’s relocation program initially, state media reports show how local authorities have used coercive measures, including repeated home visits, threats of punishment or the banning of criticism, to push these Tibetans to comply, the report said.

“In some cases, officials of increasing seniority visit families to gain their ‘consent’ [while] some official reports show [local authorities] telling residents that essential services would be cut to their current homes if they didn’t move,” the report wrote.

Human Rights Watch also found that higher-level authorities would routinely pressure local officials to use coercive measures to achieve the goal of relocating rural Tibetans. The higher-level authorities would “routinely characterize the relocation program as a non-negotiable policy coming straight from the national capital, Beijing, or from Lhasa, the regional capital,” the report said.

Maya Wang, the interim director at Human Rights Watch, told VOA that the forced relocations are part of the Chinese government’s efforts to “assimilate” Tibetans into the majority Han Chinese society.

“The whole project has an impact of transforming Tibetans’ way of life,” Wang said, adding that the relocations “undermine the Tibetan language, culture and religion.”

During a press conference in 2020, China’s State Council Information Office said 266,000 rural Tibetans had been relocated to 965 areas established by the Chinese government as part of its efforts to “alleviate poverty” in Tibet.

#### Misleading promises



In addition to the “whole-village relocation,” the report said around 567,000 rural Tibetans may have been relocated as part of the government’s “individual household relocation” program since 2016.

While individual household relocation involves less coercive measures, Human Rights Watch found that officials would try to gain Tibetan families’ consent by providing misleading information about the economic benefits of moving to a new place.

“Surveys carried out by official scholars at relocation sites in Tibet concluded that many of those relocated

'cannot find suitable jobs to support their families' and 'satisfaction with relocation is low,'" the report said.

These Tibetans "have to leave their animals and move to an area near a town where they can't farm," Robert Barnett, an expert on Tibet at King's College London, told VOA by phone.

He said in other cases, rural Tibetans are relocated to areas they are not familiar with culturally, and one of the requirements for them to find jobs in urban centers is to acquire Chinese language skills. "There are lots of question marks about whether the Chinese government thought through this strategy," Barnett said.

To help Tibetans find jobs, Barnett said the Chinese government has tried to set up industries and projects for them to work on. "I'm not sure it's a very satisfying form of income for the Tibetans, as they've spent their entire lives being their own bosses," he told VOA.

In response to the report, the Chinese embassy in the United States said the assertion that Tibetans have been forcefully relocated is "entirely groundless."

"No one has been forced to become 'transferred laborers' in Xizang [China's official name for Tibet] and workers of all ethnic groups in Xizang choose their professions according to their own will," Liu Pengyu, the spokesperson of the Chinese embassy in the U.S., told VOA in a written response.

Violation of international law

Despite the Chinese government's defense of its relocation program in Tibet, Human Rights Watch said the two relocation programs and other government programs that require rural Tibetans to rebuild houses or adopt "a sedentary way of life" if they are nomads have affected most of the 4.55 million Tibetan population in rural areas.

"While such mass relocations of residents have been occurring elsewhere in poor rural areas in China, these drives risk causing a devastating impact on Tibetan communities," the report wrote.

Maya Wang told VOA that the involuntary nature of these relocations constitutes forced eviction, which is prohibited by international law. "This is a classic Chinese development behavior towards minorities that in many ways violates international human rights law," she said.

Some Tibetan activists worry that the mass relocation or displacement of Tibetan communities may eventually "eradicate the Tibetan identity."

"It takes many years for [a community] to flourish in one land, and you can't easily build that in a place where you are not willing to go," Tenzin Choekyi, a senior researcher at Tibet Watch, told VOA by phone.

In her view, the implementation of the relocation policies hasn't taken the Tibetan community's

opinions and thoughts into consideration. "The Tibetan identity is in the hands of the Chinese party-state and is being eradicated under different policy directives," she said.

### **From Scrolls to Screens: Tibetan Digital Library Initiative Begins in Dharamshala-based Monasteries and Cultural Centres**

21 May 2024, CTA



From Scrolls to Screens: Tibetan Digital Library Initiative Begins in Dharamshala-based Monasteries and Cultural Centres

As part of its ongoing Tibetan Digital Library Initiative, the Department of Religion and Culture, Central Tibetan Administration, convened a two-day introductory workshop on 13 and 14 May 2024. The workshop's primary objective was to acquaint the staff and dealing personnel from three Dharamshala-based Tibetan monasteries and cultural centres with the sophisticated tools and methodologies provided by Wadhvani AI and the Buddhist Digital Resource Center's application.

With the successful conclusion of the workshop, the task force responsible for the initiative commenced the pivotal phase of researching and digitising ancient scriptures housed within the monastic repositories on 15 May.

Under this initiative, the project will render mechanical facilities, along with training and a year-long salary, to dealing staff of the monasteries to realise this digitisation initiative in 20 monasteries by forthcoming September.

The project was funded by USAID.

### **His Holiness the Dalai Lama Congratulates the New President of Taiwan**

21 May 2024, CTA

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has written to His Excellency Lai Ching-te to offer warm congratulations

on his assuming the Presidency of the Republic of China.

"It is wonderful to see how firmly rooted democracy has become in Taiwan," he wrote. "The Taiwanese people have not only developed a flourishing, robust democracy, but have also achieved great prosperity, while at the same time preserving their rich cultural traditions.

"May I wish you every success in meeting the challenges that lie ahead in fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of the people of Taiwan."

### **The only power China lacks is moral power**

21 May 2024, NZZ, Marco Kauffmann Bossart



The head of the Tibetan exile government, Penpa Tsering, calls for autonomy for Tibetans living under the Chinese state.

The spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, the Dalai Lama, is as famous as the pope. Few people know the political leader Penpa Tsering. On trips abroad, the president of Tibet's government-in-exile lobbies for autonomy in Tibet, the highlands which were occupied by the young People's Republic of China in 1951.

The communist regime rules the so-called autonomous region of Tibet with an iron fist. It monitors monasteries, and insists on having a say in the naming of the next dalai lama. The officially atheist government in Beijing even had a law passed stating that his reincarnation must take place in China. Tibetan Buddhists believe that the dalai lama is reincarnated after death and can be identified. The 14th dalai lama, the current holder of the title, announced that his reincarnation would take place in a free country, thus ruling out the possibility of his successor being discovered in the People's Republic of China.

Out of consideration for Beijing's sensitivities, Tibetan politicians are rarely received by members of the government. This made the brief meeting between Penpa Tsering and French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris at the beginning of May all the more remarkable. In Switzerland, the president of the exile

government met with members of the Tibet Parliamentary Group.

A delegation of employees and assistants accompanied him to the interview on the roof of a hotel in Bern. The 57-year-old surveyed the snow-covered mountain ranges of the Bernese Oberland, stubbed out a cigarette, and was then ready for the first question.

Mr. Penpa Tsering, the wars in Gaza and Ukraine are dominating the world's attention. Is it still possible to arouse interest in the needs of Tibetans?

Especially now, when bloody conflicts are captivating the world, it is important to promote peaceful solutions. His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, and the government in exile are striving for a nonviolent «middle way» for Tibet.

What does this middle way look like?

An autonomous status for Tibet, not only in name, but also in reality. However, a middle way can emerge only on the following condition: We must recognize that we are starting from two completely opposite poles. One is the historical status of Tibet as an independent state. The other pole corresponds to Tibet's current situation under the repressive Chinese communist government.

Beijing claims that Tibet has always been part of China. You devote considerable energy to refuting this characterization. Why is this fight so important?

Regardless of whether we are talking about the occupation of Ukraine or what happened in Tibet 70 years ago, we are talking about the same international law. Tibet was occupied by force. Under international law, this occupation should be null and void. In fact, the Chinese government knows very well that its rule of Tibet has no legitimacy. Otherwise the communists would not be trying with all their might to convince the international community that Tibet has always belonged to China. For 12 years, there was radio silence between Beijing and the Tibetans in exile. Informal talks have been resumed during your term of office. How did this come about?

The Chinese side approached us at the beginning of 2023. They are obviously aiming to reopen an official channel for talks. But we have no great expectations. You have only to look at what is happening under President Xi Jinping.

What are you alluding to?

China's leadership is aiming to destroy the identity of the various nationalities, especially in Tibet. Boarding schools have been established where everything is taught in Mandarin. Tibetan lessons have been reduced to just four hours per week. University entrance exams and exams for Chinese jobs are all in Chinese. This reduces the value of the national languages, and thus weakens the foundation of national identity.

Five years ago, your predecessor said that China would never succeed in destroying Tibetan culture. Is that no longer true?

His assessments reflected the situation in 2019. The situation in Tibet is changing, and there are reports that they may altogether eliminate use of the Tibetan language. If that happens, it will have even more serious consequences for Tibetans. A whole generation of Tibetans would become Chinese. A generation without a Tibetan identity.

You say that China's leadership is intensifying its repression in Tibet. So why are they simultaneously seeking dialogue?

I don't know the exact reasons, but one obvious reason is His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He is 88 years old. The possibility that he may die soon cannot be ruled out. Beijing is more concerned about the next dalai lama than the living one. The Chinese know that they can control the Tibetan people as long as they control the next dalai lama. So I have no doubt: China wants to control the next dalai lama.

The Chinese leadership wants to influence the selection of the next Dalai Lama. Does that worry you?

His Holiness – and only His Holiness – is responsible for his reincarnation. In 2011, he wrote in a document that he would say more after he turned 90. There is nothing the Chinese government can do about this. Moreover, we do not believe that an atheist regime has any credibility on this issue. If the Chinese government is really serious about reincarnation, it would first have to believe in life after death.

So no need to worry?

Not really, for the reasons mentioned. On the other hand, we also know that China will try to pressure other countries to adopt its view of things – as it is doing with regard to the history of Tibet. They use all their economic influence to push others to support their position. When you took office, you set yourself the goal of «solving the Tibetan question.» That sounds unrealistic.

We aren't striving for independence. But despite this, the Chinese government continues to refer to the Dalai Lama as a separatist. They also call me a separatist. My question to the Chinese government is: Who wants to separate from China? His Holiness repeats: middle way, middle way, middle way. Like a mantra. And the Chinese shout: separatist, separatist, separatist!

Is rapprochement impossible, and the Tibet question insoluble?

In the short term, yes. The conflict has been going on for 70 years. I can't wave a magic wand and solve the problems in a year or two. But things are changing in China, that much we know. President Xi Jinping lives in a paranoid world in which he sees

enemies everywhere, abroad and at home. So when we talk about China's military and political strength, it comes from the country's economic position. The only power China lacks is moral power.

From Beijing's perspective, the communist leadership has done a great deal for Tibet, especially with regard to advancing the region economically.

That has been good. But the Chinese way of thinking falls short. They are fixated on economic development. But this does not correspond to the reality of our nature, our existence, which has more dimensions. Thus, people are seeking more than economic development. You don't believe in a god? You don't believe in life after death? That's all right. But we also need to respect people who have a faith. Xi Jinping must understand that his policies are being rejected in Tibet.

You live in exile. How do you learn what is actually happening in Tibet?

We have our sources within Tibet. And for decades, Tibetans have been crossing the Himalayas and fleeing to Dharamsala in India, the seat of the exile government.

You said in a speech that frustration and anger were growing among the Tibetans over the complicated situation. Is there a threat of radicalization?

I can't make any predictions. Theoretically there is a risk. But let's look at what is actually happening: In Tibet, around 160 Tibetans set themselves on fire between 2009 and 2022. Most of the people who did this were between 16 and 35 years old. They had never experienced independence. They did not live through the invasion of Tibet by China. They only saw what the Chinese government is doing to the Tibetan people today. And this act of self-immolation is an act of desperation.

There is a sense of frustration in the diaspora. I can understand that. When I was young, I wanted to fight with every single Chinese person. But no one has allowed themselves to be provoked into acts of violence. Why? The Dalai Lama is committed to nonviolence. And I have also radically changed my attitude. Wherever we meet with young people, we repeat the core message: violence generates counterviolence.

Penpa Tsering

As a child of Tibetan refugees, Penpa Tsering studied economics in India. In 2021, around 60,000 Tibetans in over 40 countries elected him as political head (Sikyong) of the exile government, the so-called Central Tibetan Administration. Like the Dalai Lama, who handed over his political functions to the secular Sikyong in 2011, Penpa Tsering resides in Dharamsala, India, at the foot of the Himalayas.



## Tibet Support Group in Vilnius Organises Peaceful Protest to Free Panchen Lama In Front of the Chinese Embassy

19 May 2024, CTA



The members of the Tibet Support Group organised a protest action in front of the Chinese Embassy in Vilnius

On 17 May, on the 29th anniversary of the abduction of the Panchen Lama, members of the Tibet Support Group organised a protest action in front of the Chinese Embassy in Vilnius. The protesters demanded that Lithuanian and European politicians pay attention to human rights problems in Tibet.

On this day in 1995, six-year-old Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, who had been proclaimed as the incarnation of the XI Panchen Lama just three days earlier, was kidnapped and forcibly disappeared by the Chinese government. Robertas Mažeika, a member of the Tibet Support Group, stressed that China must be pressured to reveal the whereabouts of the recognised Panchen Lama. He also noted that in response to the deteriorating situation in the region, Tibetan communities and representatives in Lithuania and abroad are calling on present and future Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to sign a pledge to support Tibet.

Vytis Vydūnas, head of Tibet House and a lecturer at Vilnius University, admitted that the question of the Dalai Lama's successor may seem exotic to the Lithuanian public, but noted that it is a cultural aspect of global significance. "Tibetans are our natural allies. The Uighurs are our natural allies, just as the Chinese regime is an ally of the monstrous and inhuman regime that is currently in Russia. We must support the Tibetan struggle," said Mr. Vydūnas.

The picketers carried Tibetan and Lithuanian flags, and placards reflecting the demands of the action read "Free Panchen Lama", "Respect human rights in Tibet", "Stop cultural genocide of Tibetans: close colonial boarding schools!" and more. They also chanted "Free Tibet".

The national broadcaster LRT produced a TV report and distributed information about the event on its website, [lrt.lt](http://lrt.lt).

## DIIR Statement on the 29th Enforced Disappearance Day of the 11th Panchen Lama

17 May, 2024, CTA

### 29 Years On: Still "Missing"

Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the 11th Panchen Lama, was abducted by the authorities of the People's Republic of China on this day in 1995. At that time, the mere six-year-old was then recognised as one of the highest religious leaders in Tibetan Buddhism. On 14 May 1995, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama had publicly announced the young boy as the 11th Panchen Lama and officially bestowed him the name Jetsun Tenzin Gedhun Yeshe Trinley Phuntsok Pal Sangpo. Three days later, on 17 May, the young Panchen Lama "disappeared" along with his parents and Chadrel Rinpoche, the abbot of the Panchen Lama's seat Tashi Lhunpo monastery. Rejecting His Holiness the Dalai Lama's recognition of the Panchen Lama's reincarnation, the Chinese authorities appointed another boy in his place for political motives. 29 years on, the Panchen Lama, his parents and Chadrel Rinpoche are still "missing", without a trace.

Over these years, the international community, various governments, organisations, supporters and Tibetans around the world made extensive efforts on many accounts to ascertain the whereabouts of the 11th Panchen Lama, who was popularly known by his birth name Gedhun Choekyi Nyima. Some even raised concerns about the Panchen Lama's health and whereabouts directly with PRC delegations, including in the United Nations on several occasions but to no avail.

"We condemn China's prolonged enforced disappearance of the 11th Panchen Lama and reiterate our call on the PRC government to immediately release the Panchen Lama who has remained in captivity for 29 years," states Tenzin Lekshay, the spokesperson of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), and Additional Secretary of the Department of Information and International Relations. "Where else would it be possible but under the PRC government that an adult is kept completely oblivious of what's happening and hidden from the face of the earth that there is not even a single reliable information or photo of the abducted Panchen Lama of recent times? We demand the PRC government to release verifiable information of the well-being and the location of the Panchen Lama, and that of his parents and Chadrel Rinpoche. Until the light of truth is shined, we will



continue to demand for their freedom,” he further exclaims.

Last month, on 24 April, the Panchen Lama turned 35 years of age. The CTA observed his birthday in absentia, along with many others around the world. As long as the PRC continues to keep him “disappeared”, the CTA’s efforts in advocating for the Panchen Lama’s release will continue, the search will continue.

### **Marking 29 Years Since the Panchen Lama’s Disappearance**

17 May 2024, US Department of State, Matthew Miller

Today marks 29 years since the People’s Republic of China (PRC) abducted the 11th Panchen Lama, one of the most important figures in Tibetan Buddhism, as a six-year-old child. Gedhun Choekyi Nyima remains missing and has not appeared in public since that day. The PRC government is denying members of the Tibetan community access to this important religious figure and instead continues to promote a state-selected proxy.

The United States supports Tibetans’ human rights and their exercise of those rights in connection with their distinct religious, cultural, and linguistic identity. Tibetans, like members of all religious communities, should have the ability to select, educate, and venerate their own leaders, like the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama, according to their own beliefs and without government interference.

We urge PRC authorities to immediately account for Gedhun Choekyi Nyima’s whereabouts and well-being and to allow him to fully exercise his human rights in line with the PRC’s international commitments.

### **Central Tibetan Administration Congratulates New Co-Chair for Australian Parliamentary Group for Tibet, Senator Barbara Pocock**

16 May 2024, CTA

Representative Karma Singey of the Tibet Information Office, Canberra, met Australian Green’s Senator Barbara Pocock at the Parliament House yesterday and delivered her Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel of Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile and Kalon (Minister) Norzin Dolma of the Department of Information and International Relation’s congratulatory messages on her assuming as the new Co-Chair of the Australian All Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet (AAPGT). Representative Karma Singey was accompanied by Dr Zoe Bedford, Executive Officer of Australia Tibet Council.

Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel has, in his message, said, “On behalf of the 17th Tibetan Parliament in

Exile, I extend my warmest congratulations to you on your assumption as the new Co-Chair of the Australian All Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet. You were awarded Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 2010 for your services to social justice, and your dedication to climate change, LGBTQ rights, refugee rights, and anti-nuclear policies resonate with the just cause of Tibet and Tibetans.”



Representative Karma Singey with Senator Barbara Pocock, New Co-Chair of AAPGT.

Kalon Norzin Dolma wrote, “Your appointment as Co-Chair of AAPGT is a testament to your unwavering commitment to human rights and dedication to amplifying the voices of those who are oppressed and marginalized. As a Representative of the Tibetan people, I want to express my deep appreciation for your willingness to champion the rights and freedom of the Tibetan people.”

During the meeting, Representative Karma Singey took the opportunity to present a brief introduction of the Central Tibetan Administration and an overview of his role and responsibilities as a Representative. He also briefed Senator Barbara and her staffers about some of the important upcoming events, including the visit by a Tibetan Parliamentary delegation in August 2024.

### **Tibetan In Exile Reveals Cousin’s Ordeal**

16 May 2024, Free Tibet

A Tibetan refugee in India has revealed the ordeal her cousin brother faced since his detention in 2015 after he called for freedom and the return of the exiled leader His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet. Gendun Phuntsok, a monk at Kirti Monastery then aged only 16, staged a solo street protest in Ngaba County on 8 March 2015 holding up a photo of the Dalai Lama, shouting “We want freedom and equality in Tibet! Let the Dalai Lama return to Tibet!”

His home county of Ngaba is where the first and the largest number of Tibetans had burned themselves alive in protest against the ruling Chinese government.

Although his arrest was reported at the time by Tibetan exile media, it was not known that seven months later, in October 2015, his cousin sister, Namkyi, had also taken to the street with the photo of the Dalai Lama calling for freedom. She too was subsequently taken into custody and subjected to extreme torture, including being confined to a narrow cell without ventilation that stifled them with extreme heat and sweating.

Namkyi, 24, now living in Dharamsala, home to the 89-year-old Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government-in-exile, is one of the handful Tibetan refugees to have escaped alive into exile after being imprisoned and tortured for her courageous protest calling for freedom in Tibet. She is also amongst the only few refugees to have spoken publicly about her life since detention (full interview forthcoming), as well as that of her brother. "Ngaba County police arrived and arrested him. He was then taken to People's Court in Tashi Ling (Ch: Li) County in Ngaba Prefecture and sentenced to four years in prison. He was imprisoned at Deyang Prison in Huangxu City in Sichuan province. In Deyang prison, he was put in forced labour such as sewing clothes in the prison factory. Before he was imprisoned, he was tortured inhumanly during the interrogations by police authorities at a detention centre in Ngaba County. He suffered from head ache and his ribs were broken due to the police torture at the detention."

"On 8 March 8 2019, Gendun was released and he was taken from the prison to Ngaba County police custody where he was kept under detention for a few more days and then his illness became worse. His family asked the concerned police authorities to allow him to see a doctor in Ngaba County but the county hospital said that they can't treat his illness and suggested taking him to a better hospital in Chengdu City."

"When he was checked in Chengdu City hospital, they found out that Gendun had an illness that looks like tuberculosis and his stomach was full of some fluid. So Gendun was operated and treated at the hospital for two months and finally saved his life. He almost died at that time. Later his illness became better but now Gedun's health deteriorated and became an unhealthy person. His family paid 10,000 Chinese yuan for his treatment at the hospital. Gendun didn't go to the monastery due to the injuries he sustained in both Chinese detention and prison labour. Currently, he lives at home under his family's care."

Gendun Phuntsok (དགེ་འདུན་ཕུན་ཚོགས།) is from Pema Lhathang Village (པལ་ལྷ་ཐང་གྲེ་བ།) in Lower Charo Chugra

(གཙང་རྩོུགས་ར་འགབ་མ།), Ngaba County. He joined Kirti Monastery as a young boy and studied there until his arrest in March 2015.

## Former Chinese spy expose covert operations against dissidents overseas

15 May 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon



Eric (fourth from left) with the exiled spiritual leader H.H. the Dalai Lama in 2016 (Photo/ABC News)

A former Chinese secret agent named Eric, once a dissident himself, has come forward with crucial information exposing the Chinese Communist Party's covert operations targeting dissidents overseas. He was assigned to infiltrate pro-democracy organisations and target dissidents critical of the Communist regime for 15 years since 2008, reported ABC News.

In a revelation, Eric disclosed that in 2016, he received an invitation to attend a gathering of activists in Dharamshala, the headquarters of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. During this event, he also had a meeting with the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader, His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Speaking to ABC News, Eric admitted to submitting a detailed report to his handler, outlining the exiled government's policy on China. He further stated that this report was "well received."

The former Chinese spy disclosed that he undertook missions in multiple countries as an agent for Chinese Communist Party's covert operations aimed at dissidents abroad. In 2018, Eric received orders to locate Edwin Yin, a YouTuber known for his staunch criticism of Chinese President Xi Jinping.



Former Chinese spy Eric worked for the Communist party for 15 years since 2008 (Photo/Keana Naughton)

He further revealed that before working as a Chinese spy, he was a university student who joined the US-founded China Social Democratic Party in 2007 out of admiration for Western democracy. Unaware of surveillance, he shared about the party's annual meeting on social media, leading to a visit from the police who coerced him into collaboration. "They forced me to work with them. I didn't have a choice," he said.

Eric's story exposes the Chinese government's extensive history of Beijing's transnational repression that includes monitoring, harassing, and silencing dissidents abroad. The CCP employs various tactics, including surveillance, intimidation, and even abduction, to suppress dissenting voices that challenge its authority or advocate for human rights and democracy, according to multiple independent observers.

### **Congressional Executive Commission on China's Annual Report Finds Persistent Human Rights Violations in Tibet**

15 May, 2024, CTA

The latest annual report from the Congressional Executive Commission on China (CECC) underscores the persistent severe limitations on international human rights, evidenced by the punishment of Tibetans for exercising their fundamental rights. These include expressing religious beliefs, critiquing PRC policies, and sharing information online. The 2023 annual report, which covers human rights and rule of law developments in the People's Republic of China (PRC) from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023, notes the lack of renewed negotiations between the PRC and His Holiness the Dalai Lama's representatives since 2010 and the PRC's interference and attempt to control over the selection and recognition of Tibetan Buddhist reincarnated lamas, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The report outlines the DNA, blood sample, and iris scan collection programs employed by the PRC as

forms of social control, surveillance, and repression of Tibetans. It also highlights PRC policies aimed to restrict the use of Tibetan and other regional languages, such as shutting down schools, banning language instruction in anything other than Standard Mandarin, and establishing a network of boarding schools where Tibetan children are forced to enrol.

The report also finds PRC authorities intensifying restrictions on religious activities, particularly around significant events and sensitive dates. Examples include prohibitions on celebrating His Holiness the Dalai Lama's birthday, increased surveillance during such occasions, and warnings against sharing images of His Holiness. Additionally, individuals have faced detention for unauthorized social media groups celebrating religious figures' birthdays, warnings against commemorating His Holiness the Dalai Lama's birthdays online, and severe consequences for sending donations abroad, with monks receiving prison sentences for supporting exiled leaders. Tragic incidents, such as deaths in custody and allegations of police torture, further highlight the oppressive environment faced by Tibetans.

The report also delineates the impact of strict "zero COVID" measures following the COVID-19 outbreaks in Tibet, causing criticism and protests due to inadequate support during lockdowns. Authorities censored dissent, detained hundreds, and discriminated against Tibetan detainees. Despite partial relaxation of restrictions, protests continued, especially by Han Chinese migrants seeking to leave Tibet, highlighting ongoing tensions.

The 2023 annual report includes a new chapter titled "Technology-Enhanced Authoritarianism", acknowledging how emerging technology facilitates surveillance, censorship, and repression of freedoms in China and globally.

Recommendations from the CECC for Members of the U.S. Congress and Administration officials:

Members of the U.S. Congress and Administration officials are encouraged to take the following actions:

- Work with the United Nations to help set up visits by U.N. human rights officials, including the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, and the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, to Tibetan areas of China to independently assess the human rights situation there, free of any restrictions or hindrances by Chinese Communist Party or government officials, to be followed by a full report to the United Nations on their findings.
- Adopt and implement appropriate legislation to prohibit American companies doing business with Chinese police and other law enforcement agencies in Tibet from selling or

providing equipment used by those forces in gross human rights violations, including mass coercive biometric data-gathering and surveillance programs.

- Work with government officials, parliamentarians, and nongovernmental organizations in like-minded countries to pressure the Chinese government and Communist Party to respect, as a matter of the right to religious freedom and as recognized under Chinese and international law, that it is the right of Tibetan Buddhists to identify and educate all religious teachers, including the Dalai Lama, in a manner consistent with Tibetan Buddhist practices and traditions.
- Urge the Chinese government to cease treating the Dalai Lama as a security threat, and encourage the resumption of genuine dialogue, without preconditions, between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama or his representatives.
- In interactions with Chinese officials, call for the release of Tibetan political prisoners currently detained or imprisoned for the peaceful exercise of their human rights. The records of detained Tibetans in the Commission's Political Prisoner Database provide a useful resource for such advocacy. Urge the Chinese government and its law enforcement and security forces to end the use of arbitrary detention, disappearance, beatings, torture, and intimidation to suppress and punish Tibetans for the peaceful exercise of their rights.
- Urge the Chinese government to invite representatives of governments and international organizations to meet with Gedun Choekyi Nyima, whom the Dalai Lama recognized as the 11th Panchen Lama, and his parents, all three of whom disappeared shortly after his recognition as Panchen Lama in 1995.

## 16th Kashag Convenes 6th Permanent Strategy Committee Meeting

14 May 2024, CTA



6th Permanent Strategy Committee Meeting of the 16th Kashag

The 16th Kashag convened 6th Permanent Strategy Committee Meeting in Switzerland on 13 May 2024. The 3-day bi-annual meeting will follow up with the implementation of measures chalked out at the previous five meetings and additionally, will discuss the progress of the ongoing strategic programs and deliberate on future advocacy initiatives as per the committee's objectives.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering will chair the meeting which will be attended by the members of committee comprising Kalon (Minister) Dolma Gyari (Department of Security), Kalon (Minister) Norzin Dolma (Department of Information and International Relations), former Kalon Tempa Tsering and former envoy Kelsang Gyaltsen, Political Secretary Tashi Gyatso of Kashag Secretariat Secretary Karma Rinchen (Department of Security), Secretary Karma Choeying (Department of Information and International Relations), Secretary Dawa Tsering of the Tibet Policy Institute (TPI), Secretary Ngaba Tsegyam of Gaden Phodrang office, and Additional Secretary Lobsang Choedak of Kashag Secretariat.

Following the dissolution of the previous Task Force on Sino-Tibetan Negotiations by the 16th Kashag, this new Permanent Strategy Committee was established. The Committee held its first meeting in November 2021, the second meeting in July 2022, the third meeting in November 2022, the fourth meeting in April 2023, the Fifth meeting in November 2023 in Dharamshala.

## No interest from PRC to resume dialogue: US Congressional Committee on China

14 May 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

The 2023 annual report of the bipartisan Congressional-Executive Commission on China



(CECC) released on Friday stated that there is no interest from the People's Republic of China (PRC) in resuming the long-stalled dialogue with the representatives of the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

The commission on China urged the Chinese government to stop treating the Dalai Lama as a "security threat" and to facilitate the resumption of genuine dialogue, without preconditions, between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama or his representatives.

Despite the Dalai Lama's consistent stance on seeking autonomy rather than independence for Tibet, a position reiterated over time, the Chinese government has persisted in its refusal to engage in talks regarding Tibetan autonomy.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin stated on April 26 that Beijing would only engage with the Dalai Lama's representatives, excluding officials of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, and dismissed any possibility of dialogue concerning the long-pending demand for autonomy for Tibetan people. Wang also dismissed any reports of back-channel discussions between the Tibetan Government-in-Exile and the Chinese government, categorising the Government-in-Exile as a "separatist" entity during a press briefing in Beijing. "First, we would only have contact and talks with the personal representative of the 14th Dalai Lama, not the so-called 'Tibetan government-in-exile' or the 'Central Tibetan Administration.' The Chinese government will not be dealing with it," he said.

This statement came after the President of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile Sikyong Penpa Tsering disclosed to a group of journalists in Dharamshala a day earlier, that informal back-channel engagements had been ongoing since last year. "We have had back-channel (engagement) since last year. But we have no immediate expectations from it. It has to be a long-term (one)." Insisting that the talks are "very informal," Sikyong Penpa Tsering said. "I have my interlocutor who deals with people in Beijing. Then, there are other elements also trying to reach out to us." The dialogue between Beijing and representatives of the Dalai Lama began with fact-finding Tibetan delegations visiting Tibet in 1979 and 1980, followed by exploratory talks in Beijing in 1982 and 1984. From 2002 onwards, nine rounds of discussions took place between envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and China's United Front Work Department.

Throughout these talks, the Tibetan delegation advocated for genuine autonomy for Tibet within the framework of Chinese constitutional principles and the Law on Regional National Autonomy, culminating in the presentation of a memorandum and note to the Chinese leadership. However, the ninth and final

round of talks occurred in 2010 and 2012, the Dalai Lama's envoys resigned after the ninth round, citing the deteriorating situation in Tibet and a perceived lack of sincerity and willingness from the Chinese side.

### **Representative Genkhang-led Tibetan Delegation Visits Spanish Parliament to Discuss Tibet**

13 May 2024, CTA



Tibetan delegation with President Juan Van-Halen, Secretary General Fernando Sanz Alonso & former Senator Robert Nahar

On the invitation of the President and Secretary General of the Association of Former Parliamentarians, Representative Rigzin Genkhang and Europe-based Tibetan Parliamentarian Thupten Wangchen visited the Spanish Parliament on Friday, 10 May 2024, to discuss the critical situation in Tibet. They were joined by Executive Director of ICT, Wangpo Tethong.

The visit underscored the importance of raising awareness about the plight of Tibetans and advocating for their rights on the international stage. During the discussions, Representative Genkhang outlined the systematic violations of human rights and the ongoing deliberate attempt of the Chinese government to Sinicise Tibetan language, religion and culture. The Representative also highlighted the resilience of the Tibetan people and their commitment to non-violence in the face of adversity, emphasising the need for international support to address the issues, while Parliamentarian Thupten Wangchen and Wangpo Tethong focused on freedom of religion in Tibet and the Tibet issue in Europe in general.

Former members of the Spanish Parliament showed great interest in the Tibetan cause and engaged in a constructive dialogue and expressed their concerns and solidarity with the Tibetan people in their freedom struggle. They acknowledged the importance of raising awareness about the situation in Tibet and pledged to support the initiatives.



Overall, the visit of the Representative to the Spanish Parliament marks a significant milestone laying the foundation for future collaboration.

The event was made possible by the efforts of former Senator Robert Nahar and a good friend of Tibet.

The visit was covered by El Mundo, the second largest printed daily newspaper in Spain.

### **Tibetan women detained over 'Free Tibet' bag in Paris**

13 May, 2024, RTV



Two Tibetan women were reportedly detained by the French authorities for several hours during a peaceful demonstration when Chinese President Xi Jinping's convoy passed through Paris. One of the women was carrying a white tote bag with the slogan "FREE TIBET" inscribed on it. The two Tibetan women, who were walking home from work, encountered a gathering of people waving Chinese flags in anticipation of Xi Jinping's arrival. One of the women, upon seeing the crowd, took out a pen and wrote "FREE TIBET" on her bag. As Xi's motorcade approached, she held up her bag amidst the crowd of Chinese people and flags, standing alone in her protest.

The French police intervened and demanded that she leave the area. She complied by stepping a few meters away but continued to hold the "FREE TIBET" bag. Despite her cooperation, the police detained her and kept her in a dark detention vehicle until Xi Jinping's motorcade had passed.

The video footage obtained by Students for a Free Tibet (SFT) captured the tense encounter between the Tibetan woman and the French police. In the video, the police can be heard instructing the woman to "remain for 10-15 minutes." One of the detained women, speaking from a jail cell, expressed their distress, stating, "Everyone, please, now I have been captured. I have been captured. They have put me in some sort of vehicle. I am with my cousin sister, they have captured us both." The detention has sparked widespread attention and raised concerns regarding freedom of expression in a free country like France, due to Chinese pressure. Netizens have taken to their social media platforms to voice their opinions regarding Xi Jinping's arrival in Europe, interpreting

it as emblematic of China's ambition to reshape the global order. They argue that this signals a potential threat to Western democracies, which could face continued undermining.

Moreover, the detention of the two women has reignited concerns about the safety of Tibetans, both within and outside Tibet, from Chinese rule. Some commentators suggest that this incident shows the vulnerability of Western democracies, which appear to be easily swayed by economic opportunities while ignoring fundamental human rights and democratic principles.

### **Sikyong Continues Advocating for Tibet and Acknowledges Italy's Longstanding Support for the Tibet Cause**

12 May 2024, CTA

Continuing his whirlwind tour, Sikyong Penpa Tsering made a brief halt in Rome, Italy on Thursday to meet with Parliamentary Intergroup Italia Tibet. This visit follows his packed itinerary spanning Berlin, Munich (Germany), Innsbruck (Austria), Bolzano, Trento, Milan (Italy), Paris (France), and Zurich (Switzerland) starting 28 April. Accompanied by Representative Thinlay Chukki and Phuntsok Topgyal from the Tibet Bureau Geneva, Sikyong Penpa Tsering and the delegates were warmly received in the Italian senate chambers.

While on that day, the Italian Senate was bustling with various party conventions and also hosting visits from the Italian president, the MPs accorded utmost significance to their meeting with Sikyong Penpa Tsering and the Tibetan delegates. They engaged in an in-depth discussion with the Sikyong, deliberating on the current situation in Tibet and devising actionable future plans to deter China's intensified repression of the Tibetans in Tibet.



Senator De Priamo Andrea, President of the Parliamentary Intergroup Italia Tibet receives Sikyong Penpa Tsering at the Senate in Rome, Italy, 9 May 2024

Sikyong Penpa Tsering, in his remarks, underscored the deep historical ties between Italy and Tibet,

dating back to the late 16th century when Jesuit missionaries ventured into Tibet. Recognising Italy as the first European nation to engage with Tibetans on the roof of the world, he highlighted the significance of Italy's longstanding support for the Tibetan people and the cause. Sikyong also extended an invitation to the Parliamentary Intergroup Italia Tibet, led by President Senator De Priamo Andrea, to spearhead a high-level parliamentary delegation to Dharamshala in the near future.

The members present included: President of Parliamentary Intergroup Italia Tibet – Senator De Priamo Andrea; Vice President and member of Chamber of Deputies On. Ilenia Malavasi members of the Intergroup Senator Terzi di Sant'Agata Giulio who is also a former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Domenica Spinelli, President of the Italia Tibet Association Mr. Claudio Cardelli, President of Tibetan community Italy Tseten Lunghini, and Matteo Angioli, general secretary of Global Committee for the Rule of Law, also represents Radio Radicale.

Building on his advocacy in Germany and the other nations he visited the past two weeks, Sikyong urged the intergroup to spearhead parliamentary initiatives spotlighting some of the most critical issues threatening the survival of the Tibetan culture and Buddhist traditions, including China's unprecedented sinicization of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions, and Tibetan language.

As part of his tasks, Sikyong implored the MPs to push for an official policy affirming that the authority of decisions concerning the reincarnation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama rests solely with His Holiness the Dalai Lama himself, and to reject any governmental inferences. Sikyong also rallied for swift parliamentary intervention to hold China accountable on its operation of colonial style boarding schools in Tibet.

Senator De Priamo Andrea and the MP delegates stressed the urgent need to intensify support for Tibet and briefed Sikyong on ongoing initiatives by the intergroup focusing on the crackdown on the peaceful protests by Tibetans in Derge and the colonial boarding schools in Tibet.

Senator Terzi echoed concerns about China's attempts to divide the European Union and emphasised the importance of coordinated action in countering China's transnational repression.

Sikyong further warned of the economic implications of Europe's trade deficit with China, underlining how China's foreign exchange surplus fuels its aggressive pursuits, including space technology investments and expanding debt economies in regions like Africa and South Asia. He called for a coordinated multilateral strategy to push back against what he called China's economic colonialism.

Following the meeting, Sikyong spoke to Radio Radicale, and held meetings with longtime friends of Tibet, as well as members of the Tibetan community. During the discussion, Sikyong proposed a collaborative project documenting the early relations between Italy and Tibet, which received positive feedback from the members. Discussions further ensued on the yearlong celebration of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's 90th birthday in 2025, which will be marked as the Year of Peace.

In the evening, Sikyong departed for Vienna, Austria.

### **Xi Jinping's Visit to Hungary: Hiding the Flag, mysterious Chinese Policemen and 18 Agreements**

11 May 2024, Sarajevo Times



Chinese President Xi Jinping ended his European tour with a visit to Hungary where he held a series of meetings with Hungarian officials, including Prime Minister Viktor Orban.

On the last day of the visit, Orban hosted a lunch attended by his wife Anika Levai and Xi Jinping and his wife Peng Li-yuan.

On that occasion, journalists had the opportunity to ask Orban and Xi several questions, and one of them was a review of the anti-Chinese protests that were organized before the visit of the Chinese president. On that occasion, Tibetan activists unfurled the flag of Tibet on Gellert Hill, and the police quickly chased them away, and they hung the flag of China at that place.

"It is an old debate. The position of the Hungarian government is clear. At home there is freedom of expression, but the guests who come have the right to be guests. These two rights must be harmonized. We will not allow the value of the visit of the guests who come here to be destroyed. Demonstrations and reception they must be spatially separated from each other," explained Orban.

What is interesting is that the Pro-Tibet protesters were driven away by policemen from China who were in civilian clothes performing the duty of securing the event. Although there were police

officials from another country, Orban did not see anything objectionable in all of this.

"It is not a question of national security, but of ensuring public order and peace," said the Hungarian Prime Minister.

The media in Hungary also referred to the results of Xi Jinping's visit. According to information from Budapest, Orban and Xi signed a total of 18 agreements and new plans and goals were defined.

The agreements include, among other things, the construction of a railway line, a railway bypass around Budapest, and the construction of a border crossing between Serbia and Hungary to facilitate the transport of people and goods.

"Hungary and China will consider the option of building an oil pipeline between the two countries, and there is also a willingness to expand cooperation in the field of nuclear energy," Orban said.

In addition to Hungary, Chinese President Xi Jinping previously visited France, where he met with President Emmanuel Macron, and Serbia, where he held meetings with the country's leadership, including President Aleksandar Vucic, Klix.ba reports.

### **Austrian MPs host Tibetan government in exile, pledge support**

11 May 2024, The Print

In a show of solidarity, Austrian Members of Parliament opened their doors to Penpa Tsering, president of the Central Tibetan Administration, for a discussion on the plight of Tibetans amidst China's human rights abuses. The meeting, held on Friday within the halls of the Austrian Parliament in Vienna, marked a pivotal moment in European support for Tibet's struggle against cultural oppression and political suppression. Penpa Tsering, on a diplomatic mission across Europe for the past ten days, has been advocating for international awareness regarding China's systematic violations in Tibet. His visit to Vienna saw him engaging with members of the Austrian People's Party and the GREENS, shedding light on China's egregious targeting of Tibetan children, and Buddhist monks, and the relentless assault on Tibetan cultural heritage.



Austrian MPs host Tibetan Government in Exile, pledge support (Photo/ANI)

During the parliamentary rendezvous, Penpa Tsering underscored two critical concerns: the grave implications of China's operation of state-controlled boarding schools in Tibet and the urgent need to safeguard Tibetan religious freedom and Buddhist heritage.

He laid bare the reality of China's tight grip over the Tibet Autonomous Region and Tibetan-populated areas, stifling political dissent and trampling on cultural and religious expressions.

In his impassioned plea, Penpa Tsering called for a nuanced understanding of China's behaviour, emphasizing its ramifications not only for Tibet but also for Europe's own interests.

He urged recognition of Tibet's historical independence and endorsed the middle-way approach for autonomy as a viable solution. His words resonated with the Austrian Parliamentarians, who acknowledged the imperative of sustained international support for Tibetans in their quest for fundamental rights.

Gudrun Kugler, MP from the Austrian People's Party and spokesperson for human rights and displaced persons, along with Faika El-Nagashi, MP from the GREENS, joined forces with a delegation from Save Tibet, Austria, and Friends of Tibet, Austria, in reaffirming their commitment to upholding human rights. They pledged to amplify the Tibetan cause in various multilateral forums to hold the Chinese government accountable for its transgressions. (ANI)

### **Calligraphy Day keeps alive Tibetans' written language**

11 May 2024, RFA, Pelbar, Pasang Tsering and Dolma Lhamo

For several years now, Tibetan Calligraphy Day has been a way for Tibetans to keep their language and heritage alive amid China imposing restrictions and bans on use of the language.



On April 30, Tibetans across the Tibet Autonomous Region, in northern India as well as in Chinese provinces where Tibetans live participated in competitions, festivals and displays of calligraphy to mark the day on April 30, sources told Radio Free Asia. The Tibetan Language Preservation Committee, a group based in Gangtok in northern India that is dedicated to preserving the Tibetan language, observed the day by organizing a calligraphy competition.



Participants in a calligraphy competition observe Tibetan Calligraphy Day at Karma township in Chamdo, western China's Tibet Autonomous Region, April 30, 2024.

"His Holiness the Dalai Lama has consistently urged Tibetans in exile to safeguard and preserve our invaluable Tibetan language," said Tenzin Tsephel, president of the Gangtok Regional Tibetan Youth Congress.

Tibetans throughout Tibet shared their writings and opinions on Tibetan calligraphy and the significance of the Tibetan language on social media platforms. Several monasteries and educational institutions in Tibet and in Tibetan-populated areas of China organized events to commemorate the day. Over 300 participants gathered in Barkham county of Ngawa Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture in northwestern Sichuan province.

Videos posted on social media showed Buddhist monks in crimson robes who gathered with brushes, ink and paper to display their writing skills at the Tsangkor Sholma-gon Pel Ngedhon Tashi Choekorling Monastery in Qinghai province on April 30.

The Labrang Calligraphy Association in Sangchu county of Kanlho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Gansu province also organized calligraphy exhibitions in all county schools.

#### Banning Tibetan

Since 2020, the Chinese government has tightened its restrictions on the use and study of Tibetan, closing private Tibetan schools in Tibet and intensifying Chinese-language education in the schools in the name of promoting uniformity in the use of textbooks and instructional materials.

Just recently, authorities banned students in schools in a Tibetan-populated area in China's Sichuan province from speaking their native language, following a similar case in another part of the province.

Tibetan Calligraphy Day began in 2017 following a Tibetan calligraphy conference held at Qinghai Nationalities University in western China.

The significance of the date – April 30 – lies in its numerical representation: The number four symbolizes the number of vowels in the Tibetan alphabet, while 30 represents the number of consonants.

Given the importance of Buddhism to Tibetans, many traditions in Tibetan calligraphy come from religious texts written by monks in monasteries.

Despite the absence of a dedicated Tibetan school for children in Gangtok, a youth congress there began a Sunday school program in 2018 to teach children how to read and write Tibetan.

The day is more than just commemorating Tibetan calligraphy and hosting writing competitions, said Tsering Dhondup, a volunteer Tibetan teacher at the Sunday school.

"We must also consider Tibetan alphabets, vowels and the Tibetan language as a whole, given its vast richness in representing Tibet," he told Radio Free Asia.

#### Preserving a culture

Pema Tsultrim, a renowned Tibetan calligrapher based in Tibet, organized the Pema Golden Pen Competition in Chengdu, attracting about 100 Tibetan calligraphy experts, historians and writers from across Tibet who discussed the significance of Tibetan calligraphy.

He said the contest aimed to preserve the rich heritage of Tibetan calligraphy and to provide participants with a platform to display their talent.

Among the more than 1,200 calligraphy submissions from Tibetans various regions of Tibet, Dhondup Norbu, a resident of Lhasa, was chosen as the contest winner.

"Calligraphy holds significant importance in preserving Tibet's unique traditions," said Geshe Lobsang Monlam, a Buddhist scholar, lexicologist and leading innovator of Tibetan information technology.

Through various calligraphy styles, we can understand writings that date back over 1,000 years," he said. "Despite the presence of numerous dialects within Tibet, our ability to communicate and understand one another is facilitated by these Tibetan calligraphies."

The day was observed in Tibetan communities around the world.

The Latse Project, a U.S.-based volunteer nonprofit group that promotes Tibetan language use and

literacy, along with the Center for South Asia and the Center for East Asian Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison held an event on Tibetan calligraphic arts on April 26-27.

In 2018, The Latse Project organized the first Tibetan Calligraphy Day to be held outside Tibet in New York City, and held subsequent calligraphy exhibits in Paris, France, and at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville.

### **Representative Kelsang Gyaltsen Bawa Meets with Ukrainian Cross-sectoral Delegation**

10 May, 2024, CTA



Representative Kelsang Gyaltsen Bawa Meets with a Group of Ukrainian Cross-sectoral Delegation

Representative Kelsang Gyaltsen Bawa held an hour-long discussion with a group of Ukrainian cross-sectoral delegation from Liberal Democratic League of Ukraine (LDLU), Ukraine+Taiwan Forum, Kyiv Independent, and International Renaissance Foundation on 23 April 2024, sharing information about their respective causes, exchanging experiences, and presenting views on the future endeavours.

Headed by Yevheniia Fedotova, the Vice President of LDLU, the delegation, consisting reporter Asami Terajima from Kyiv Independent; a war-related volunteer and expert in post-war rebuilding Uliana Dzhurliak; and Head of the direction of minimisation of corruption risks in the sanctions policy of the National Agency on Corruption Prevention of Ukraine Agiya Zahrebelska, introduced the objectives of their mission that aimed to enhance mutual understanding between key decision-makers in Taiwan and various sectors of Ukrainian society, including civil rights campaigners and volunteers, media professionals, and public affairs stakeholders during the meeting. The visitors also expressed their deep respect for His Holiness the Dalai Lama and stated, "The resilience of the Tibetan people for decades serves as a source of inspiration to the people of Ukraine, who are defending the values of

lasting and just peace, human dignity, and freedom, these days. The Chinese invasion of Tibet was the first major attack on the rule-based international order without the appropriate attention of democratic stakeholders. Eventually, the path started by the People's Republic of China was continued by Russia in Ukraine through the occupation of Crimea (2014) and the ongoing full-scale invasion (2022). Taking this into account, the Liberal Democratic League of Ukraine considers supporting a free Tibet as a lifelong mission of every freedom-seeker."

In response, the Representative extended his greetings on behalf of the Office of Tibet in Taipei and expressed solidarity with the Ukrainian people's current situation. He vocalised his optimism that Ukrainians will prevail over the ongoing conflict, citing strong backing from democratic and justice-loving allies.

Additionally, Representative Bawa further promised to forward their suggestions to the Central Tibetan Administration and report their ideas for collaboration to the Tibetan NGOs. During the Q&A session of the meeting, Representative Bawa presented a brief overview of the Offices of Tibet and their undertakings, particularly about the one inside Taiwan.

The Ukrainian cross-sectoral delegation was met by members of prominent Taiwanese political parties, NGOs, and the general public, most notably by the Vice President-elect, Hsiao Bi-Khim.

### **Sikyong Advocates for Tibetan Rights & Religious Freedom in Germany, Calls on Europe to Stand Against China's Authoritarian Regime**

10 May 2024, CTA



Sikyong Penpa Tsering, accompanied by Representative Thinley Chukki, during the meeting with Anke Oppermann, Director of the Unit of the Federal Government Commissioner for Freedom of Religious and Belief at the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Germany.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering concluded a series of engagements in Berlin, focusing on two critical issues: addressing China's state-run colonial boarding



schools in Tibet and the safeguarding Tibetan religious freedom as well as unique Buddhist traditions, including the succession of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Citing the US policies on these two issues, Sikyong urged leaders in Berlin to consider similar instruments and also use multilateral forums to hold the Chinese government accountable.

A key highlight of Sikyong's visit was his meeting with Anke Oppermann, Director of the Unit of the Federal Government Commissioner for Freedom of Religious and Belief at the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Germany, on 7 May.

During their hour-long meeting at the Commission, Anke Oppermann briefed Sikyong on the German Federal Government's Third Report on the Global Status of Freedom of Religion or Belief and on forthcoming initiatives by the Commission aimed at bolstering religious freedom advocacy.

Sikyong, in turn, thanked the Commission, particularly Commissioner Frank Schwabe, for his statement on Panchen Rinpoche's enforced disappearance. Sikyong urged for sustained international attention and called on the Ministry to join like-minded nations in affirming the reincarnation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama as a purely religious matter that should be free from governmental interference.

In another significant engagement, Sikyong Penpa Tsering met with Hon. Roderich Kiesewetter, a member of the German Bundestag who is also the representative of foreign affairs for the CDU/CSU Caucus, as well as Deputy Chairman of the Parliamentary Oversight Panel. Sikyong discussed the pragmatic lessons that can be learned from Tibetans in facing China's authoritarian regime. Both reiterated their shared commitment to upholding human rights, with the Honourable MP lauding the enduring relevance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's message of peace and non-violence as well as the strategic nonviolent struggle of the Tibetan people.

Throughout 5 to 6 May and 8 May as well, Sikyong engaged in closed-door meetings and round tables with high-level government officials and relevant figures. Additionally, he addressed prominent German media outlets, including Table Media, RBB Radio, DieZeit, and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, advocating for a robust European policy on China.

On 6 and 8 May, respectively, Sikyong met with key Tibetan advocacy organisations in Berlin, namely Tibet Initiative Deutschland and ICT Germany, to strategise on forthcoming projects addressing the deteriorating situation in Tibet.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering's overarching message in Germany was to urge Europe, particularly Germany, to leverage its strengths in dealing with China and to draw inspiration from Tibetans in confronting the

authoritarian regime. He called on Germany, as a leading nation, to champion the values and freedoms cherished in Germany.

On 9 May, Sikyong Penpa Tsering will hold a one-day engagement in Rome, Italy, followed by a visit to Vienna, Austria, on 10 and 11 May. From 12 to 15 May, Sikyong will hold closed-door meetings in Zurich, Switzerland.

### **Chinese volunteers joined Hungarian security to harass Tibet protesters during Xi Jinping visit**

10 May 2024, Tibetan Review



Tibetan protesters displayed Tibetan flags next to Chinese national flags on Gellert Hill to oppose Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Budapest, Hungary, May 9, 2024. (Photo courtesy: AP)

Chinese people not only turned up in strength to welcome their President Xi Jinping who arrived for a state visit to Budapest on May 8 evening but also harassed and bullied Tibet protesters and others as well while the country's police joined force with them, according to various media reports. Tímea Szabó, co-chairman of the opposition party Párbeszéd, hung a Tibetan flag from his window on May 8 and within minutes received threats from the Speaker of the Hungarian House of Representatives László Kövér and the secret service, reported [dailynewshungary.com](https://dailynewshungary.com) May 9. Before the arrival of Xi for a ceremonial welcome on May 9, Tibor Hendrey, president of the Tibet Aid Society (Tibeti Segítő Társaság), stretched the Tibetan flag on the cross fence in Gellért Hill. However, within minutes Chinese activists covered it with the Chinese flag.

The report cited Hendrey as saying later that he was searched by police three times that day. The report also cited witnesses as saying the police only looked for Hungarians at the scene, and no Chinese at all. Pro-China activists waved at least 16 Chinese flags to hide from view Tibetan flags the protesters were holding, reported the Tibetan service of [rfa.org](https://rfa.org) May 9. Also, Tibetan protesters tried to hoist a "Free Tibet" banner along with the Tibetan flag on the Elizabeth Bridge, under which Xi's motorcade would have had to pass on its way to the presidential

palace in Budapest on May 9 morning. But the Chinese activists disrupted them again, the report said.

"These guys just came and ripped our banner, and they are still allowed to be here, pushing us further and further out," Chime Lhamo, campaigns director of Students for Free Tibet, has told journalists on the street. "Is this a free country?"

Hungarian police standing nearby did not intervene, the report added.

After the street encounter, the protesters were followed by what appeared to be about eight undercover police officers on their way to the Budapest airport, one of them has said.

In fact, "over the last few days, we were followed, harassed and intimidated by undercover Hungarian police, as well as Chinese people and police everywhere in the city," Tenzin Yangzom from the International Tibet Network has said. "Everywhere in the city is swarmed by them."

"We had come here to peacefully protest Xi's genocidal policies in Tibet, East Turkistan, Hong Kong and beyond and the treatment of Tibetans, Hong Kongers, Uyghurs and Chinese people," she has added. Márton Tompos, vice-president of the opposition party Momentum, wanted to place the EU flag at the Elisabeth Bridge in Budapest but was prevented by Chinese volunteers wearing red caps working for their embassy. He was even asked which flags he wanted to put up and why, said the [dailynewshungary.com](https://www.dailynewshungary.com) report.

It appears that no flags other than those of China will be displayed in Budapest while Xi is in town, the report added. "Budapest is full of Chinese volunteer gendarmes wearing red caps to protect Xi Jinping, known as Winnie the Pooh, from the 'unfriendly' Tibetan and Taiwanese flags," Tompos was stated to have written in a video post.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and Hungary and the two countries have decided to elevate bilateral relations to an all-weather comprehensive strategic partnership for the new era during Xi's meeting with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban.

Frequently at loggerheads with the EU, Orban has been advocating an "Eastern opening" foreign policy since his return to power in 2010, seeking closer economic ties with China, Russia and other Asian countries. Beijing has invested billions in Hungary and sees the EU member as an important foothold inside the 27-member trading bloc. In December, Hungary announced that one of the world's largest EV manufacturers, China's BYD, will open its first European EV production factory in the south of the country – an inroad that could upend

the competitiveness of the continent's auto industry, noted the AP May 9.

The state visit to Hungary is the last leg of Xi's current European tour after France and Serbia, his first since 2019. His visit to France, marking 60th year of establishing diplomatic relations, was cordial but also highlighted tensions between Beijing and the EU over the war in Ukraine and global trade.

His visit to non-EU, non-NATO member Serbia, known for its staunch alliance with Russia, took place on the 25th anniversary of NATO's accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy at Belgrade during the Yugoslavia conflict, which Xi said his country will never forget despite the issue being settled with payment of compensations.

### **Office of Tibet in Taiwan Leads Efforts to Revive Taiwanese Parliamentary Group for Tibet: Over 30 Legislators Poised to Join**

10 May 2024, CTA

The Office of Tibet in Taipei, in collaboration with the Human Rights Network for Tibet and Taiwan, initiated a lobbying campaign at the end of March to re-establish the Taiwanese parliamentary group for Tibet in the 11th Legislative Yuan (Taiwanese Parliament).

Representative Kalsang Gyaltsen Bawa from the Office of Tibet, along with Secretary Mingyur Yudon and executive member of the Human Rights Network for Tibet and Taiwan, Tashi Tsering, paid a courtesy call upon distinguished parliamentarians to congratulate them on their election and implored them to remain a member of the group during their new tenure. The elected members were also appreciated and thanked for their years of constant support for the Tibetan cause and the Tibetan people's right to self-determination.

On 29 March, the Tibetan delegation paid a visit to Hong Shenhan, the 10th Legislative Yuan's vice chair of the Taiwanese parliamentary group for Tibet, to discuss holding a ceremony of re-establishment of the group on the day (17 May) of 29th enforced disappearance of His Serenity the 11th Panchen Lama Tenzin Gedhun Yeshe Trinley Phuntsok Pal Sangpo. The meeting also discussed dispatching Tashi Tsering to extend invitations to representatives of the Kashag and the Tibetan Parliament in Exile for that occasion.

Similarly, the Representative-led Tibetan delegation called on several other Taiwanese legislators, including Huang Jie on 1 April, Wang Dingyu on 3 April, and Shen Boyang, Qiu Zhiwei, Zhang Yalin, and Chen Peiyu on 11 April. On 15 April, the team met with parliamentarian Chen Zhaozi, followed by Qiu Yiyang and Fan Yun on 17 and 23 April, respectively.

During the meetings with the aforementioned Taiwanese lawmakers, the Tibetan delegation presented the Central Tibetan Administration's appeal letter concerning the recent issue of Dam construction in Kham Derge, 16th Kashag's vision paper, and calendars and paperweights engraved with His Holiness' message and the symbolic "Ah Ka Ma" words to enlighten the new members on Tibetan political history. While extending gratitude to the old members, the Tibetan team beseeched newer members to join the Taiwanese parliamentary group for Tibet to bolster support.

In addition, the issue of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama's reincarnation and the Chinese government's misappropriation of it, current human rights situations inside Tibet, the representations of "Ah Ka Ma" words that were visualised in sacred Lhamoi Lhatso lake during the recognition of current Dalai Lama, and seeking assistance in lessening the difficulties faced by Tibetan refugees in obtaining visas to enter Taiwan were discussed during the interactions with Taiwanese parliamentarians.

More than 30 Taiwanese legislators expressed their intentions to join the Taiwanese parliamentary group for Tibet.

On 3 May, the delegation held a prep meeting with Parliamentarian Hong Shenhan to discuss programmes for the forthcoming re-establishment event of the parliamentary support group for Tibet which is scheduled to hold on 17 May.

### **Tibet's Derge printing house's historic printing blocks earn UNESCO recognition**

11 May 2024, Phayul



Workers printing texts using wooden blocks at the Derge Printing House (Photo/Tibet Travel)

The printing blocks housed at the Derge Printing House in Tibet have been included in this year's UNESCO's Asia-Pacific regional register of memory of the world on May 8.

Listed among this year's 20 successfully inscribed items to the MOWCAP Regional Register for Asia-Pacific, the Dege Printing House is the largest of the three major Sutra-printing houses in the Tibet,

alongside Lhasa sutra-printing house in Meru monastery, Lhasa which was built more than 400 years ago, during the days of the 5th Dalai Lama and Lhapuleng House in Laprang Monastery in Amdo region.

Dege Printing House is in the Gonchen monastery, founded by Thang Tong Gyalpo also known as Derge Monastery, the printing house was built in 1729. The monastery, located in the Kham region of Tibet, was completely destroyed during the Chinese invasion of Tibet and was later restored in the 1980s. On the ground floor of the monastery lies the famous Derge Parkhang (printing house), where Buddhist scriptures such as the Kangyur and the Tengyur, along with other religious, historical, literary, medical, astronomical, and calendrical works in Tibetan, are still printed from wooden blocks using traditional handwork.

The printing house continues to employ ancient techniques without the use of electricity. Approximately 217,000 engraved blocks of scriptures from all Tibetan Buddhist sects, including the Bon tradition, are housed here, with about 2,500 pages produced by hand each day in the traditional manner.

The inclusion of the Dege printing blocks in UNESCO's Memory of the World (MOW) acknowledges human innovation and imagination in the Asia-Pacific region. This recognition was decided at the 10th General Meeting of the Memory of the World Committee for Asia and the Pacific (MOWCAP), held from May 7 to 8 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

UNESCO initiated the Memory of the World (MoW) Programme in 1992 to safeguard against collective amnesia by preserving valuable archive holdings and library collections worldwide and ensuring their wide dissemination. The programme aims for the world's documentary heritage to be fully preserved, protected, and permanently accessible to all, respecting cultural differences and practical considerations.

### **CTA Prez calls for unified action against CCP to catalyze positive change**

08 May 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup

The President of the Tibetan government in Exile, Penpa Tsering called for unified action from various oppressed people representing different causes against the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in pursuit of meaningful change within China, at the 20th anniversary of the World Uyghur Congress on May 3 in Munich.

As the guest speaker for the opening ceremony, the Sikyong reminisced about the historic collaboration between Erkin Alptekin, founding President of the



World Uyghur Congress, and the late Lodi Gyari, former Special Envoy of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He emphasized their efforts to establish an allied committee, showcasing the longstanding bond between the Tibetan and Uyghur communities.

"I consider the Uyghurs, Mongolians, now even the Manchus, Tibetans, Hongkongers, Pro-Democracy leaders in China, and, if you want to include, Taiwan also. We are all travelling in the same boat against the brutal storm of Communist China," the Sikyong asserted, highlighting the imperative of unity in the face of Chinese oppression.



Sikyong Penpa Tsering delivering his speech during the opening session of the 20th anniversary of the World Uyghur Congress in Munich on 3 May 2024 (Photo/CTA)

Expressing gratitude for the collaboration with Rebiya Kadeer and Dolkun Isa, former and current Presidents of the World Uyghur Congress, Sikyong stressed the importance of collective action. "If we have to bring positive changes to China, then we need both internal and external forces. And we are the internal forces," he stated.

In a bold move, the Sikyong proposed organizing a large rally in Europe, uniting Uyghurs, Tibetans, Hongkongers, Mongolians, Taiwanese, and pro-democratic Chinese leaders. "If you are willing to do that, we are willing to join you or take the leadership," he declared, a call to action for solidarity against Chinese oppression.

The former president of the Tibetan Government in Exile, Dr Lobsang Sangay was also present at the event, in his keynote speech on May 4 as a guest speaker, he said that despite the Chinese government's attempts to erase Uyghur and Tibetan culture, the younger generation born in Germany remains steadfast in preserving their identity and heritage, pledging to stand proudly in their Uyghur identity inherited from their elders, sending a resounding message to Beijing that their cultural resilience will endure despite attempts at suppression. In addition to his participation in the World Uyghur Congress anniversary, Sikyong Penpa Tsering embarked on a week-long journey across Europe,

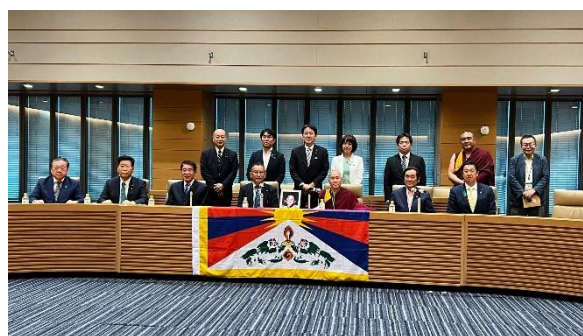
engaging with Tibetan communities and forging alliances. His itinerary included visits to Zurich, Switzerland; Milan, Trento, and Bolzano in Italy; Innsbruck, Austria; and Berlin, Germany.

In Innsbruck, Sikyong's meetings with university leaders bore fruit as Vice-Rector Prof. Dr. Bernhard Fügenschuh extended a fully funded scholarship opportunity for Tibetan students.

Currently in Berlin for closed-door meetings with high-level government officials, Sikyong Penpa Tsering continues his advocacy for Tibetan rights and international solidarity against Chinese oppression.

## Zeekgyab Rinpoche Appeals to Japanese parliamentarians

08 May 2024, CTA



A group photo with the parliamentarians

The Liaison Office of H.H. the Dalai Lama for Japan and East Asia organised a Tibet workshop for the Japanese parliamentarians at the Japan Lower House International Conference Hall in Tokyo on 7 May 2024. Tibet supporters and media people also participated in the workshop. The theme of the workshop was "Human rights violations and religious atrocities in Tibet".

Ishibashi Rintaro, a Liberal Democratic Party Member, moderated the event and in his opening remarks, he briefed the lawmakers on the Panchen Lama issue and how even after nearly three decades his whereabouts are still not known.

Representative Dr. Tsewang Gyalpo Arya of the Liaison Office of H.H. the Dalai Lama for Japan and East Asia thanked the lawmakers, Tibet supporters, and media members for attending the workshop. He introduced Zeekgyab Rinpoche and spoke on how the situation in Tibet has worsened and how the CCP is trying to destroy Tibetan identity and religious culture through colonial boarding schools and continued interference in Tibetan religious matters, including selections of high reincarnate Lamas.

Zeekgyab Rinpoche, Chief Abbot of the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in South India, spoke on the disappearance of the real Panchen Lama and the

continued Chinese interference in Tibetan religious matters.

"I make this heartfelt appeal in the context of the dire situation in Tibet. The severe oppression and inhumane restrictions imposed on the Tibetan people, their movement, and their freedoms continued to worsen. The people of Tibet suffer in silence. Today, my primary appeal is for your help in the immediate release of the 11th Panchen Lama and addressing the long-standing plight of the Tibetan people in Tibet- their native land." He said.

Speaking on the CCP's repressive and colonial policy toward Tibet he appealed to the lawmakers and the supporters on three points:

- 1) Japanese parliament members exert every possible effort and pressure on the Chinese government to immediately release and announce the whereabouts of the 11th Panchen Lama.
- 2) To adopt a resolution condemning China's human rights violations and interference in the Tibetan religious matters, including the selection of the reincarnation of H.H. the Dalai Lama.
- 3) To support the vision of H.H. the Dalai Lama in making Tibet a zone of peace and resolution of the Tibet issue through dialogue and the Middle Way Approach. Writer scholar Miura Junko translated for Rinpoche.

Lawmaker Furuya Keiji, Chairman of the Japanese parliamentarian monitoring China's human rights violations, thanked Rinpoche for his statement and promised full support for religious freedom in Tibet. He called on the lawmakers to study the three points and expressed the possibility of issuing a statement urging China not to interfere in the selection of H.H. the Dalai Lama's reincarnation.

Shimomura Hakubun, Chairman of the Japan Parliamentary Support Group for Tibet, spoke on the contribution of Buddhism in bringing peace and harmony at societal and national levels. He spoke on the resolution the Japanese Parliament passed in 2022 condemning China for human rights violations in Tibet and other occupied territories. He talked of the visits of the two Sikyongs of the Central Tibetan Administration to Japan and their interaction with the parliamentarians.

Lawmakers in the audience asked questions about the current situation in Tibet and information and how news is sabotaged. Zeekgyab Rinpoche and Dr. Arya attended to the lawmaker's question and informed the audience on the colonial boarding schools, Larungar and Yachen gar situation, the destruction of the Buddha statue and prayer wheels in Drago, self-immolation of 157 Tibetans, and the recent forced relocation of Tibetans for dam buildings.

Lawmaker Ishikawa Akimasa, Vice Minister of Cabinet Affairs and Digital Ministry and General

Secretary of the Japan Parliamentary Support Group for Tibet, spoke on the Tashi Lhunpo monastery which he read from Japanese sources and how the monastery and the Panchen Lamas played important roles in Tibetan religious culture.

### **President Macron Urged to Raise Tibet with President Xi and Put Tibet at the Heart of French Strategy Towards China**

06 May, 2024, CTA

Ahead of Chinese President Xi's visit to Paris, Senator Jacqueline Eustache-Brinio, President of the French Parliamentary group for Tibet addressed an open letter to President Macron urging him to raise Tibet with his Chinese counterpart.

In the letter, co-signed by 13 other Senators, Senator Eustache-Brinio highlights the deteriorating human rights situation in Tibet under President Xi, underscores Tibet's geopolitical and ecological importance. She further stresses that in the face of the many ongoing conflicts in the region, His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Five Point Peace Plan for Tibet is more relevant than ever before.

"Therefore, the resumption of dialogue and respect for the rights of the Tibetan people must be at the heart of France's strategy towards China", say the Senators.

President Xi Jinping arrived in Paris on Sunday, 5 May, and is scheduled to meet President Macron and President Ursula von der Leyen of the European Commission today.

### **Tibetan, Uyghur protesters greet Xi Jinping in Paris**

06 May, 2024 , RFA, Roseanne Gerin

Unfurling banners and waving flags, Uyghur, Tibetan and Chinese activists took to the streets to protest Chinese President Xi Jinping's two-day visit to Paris "Free Tibet. Dictator Xi Jinping, your time is up!" declared a large white banner that his motorcade had to drive under on the Boulevard Périphérique after his arrival on Sunday, on his way for a state visit with French President Emmanuel Macron.

Atop the banner was the flag of Tibet – a symbol of the Tibetan independence movement that has become known as the "Free Tibet flag." The visit was Xi's first European tour since 2019 and marked the 60th anniversary of the establishment of Franco-Chinese diplomatic relations.





Activists display a giant banner from Pont Dauphine as Chinese President Xi Jinping's motorcade drives along Boulevard Périphérique in Paris, May 5, 2024.

Ethnic Tibetan from France, Belgium, Hungary and elsewhere gathered to express their anger over Beijing's restrictions on religious and cultural expression in Tibet – which China invaded in 1950 and now controls – and human rights violations.

Uyghurs also rallied in Paris, seeking to draw attention to the abuses their families and friends have suffered in the far-western region of Xinjiang, including mass arbitrary detentions in prisons. The United States and some Western parliaments have identified China's persecution of the Uyghurs as a genocide and crimes against humanity.

The protesters were joined by Chinese, Taiwanese, Mongolian and Vietnamese human rights activists as well as Hong Kong pro-democracy supporters.

"Under Xi Jinping's rule, the situation in Tibet has gone from bad to worse," Tenzin Yangzom, campaigns coordinator at International Tibet Network, said in a statement.

"Today, we confronted Xi with our message that his time is up and Tibet will be free as he was forced to drive under our banner and Tibetan flags," she said. "President Macron and European leaders should not be rolling out the red carpet for a man guilty of genocide."

More than 1,000 demonstrators gathered in the city's Place de la République on May 5, displaying Tibetan flags and placards in French, calling for an end to repression inside Tibet, the release of Tibetan prisoners and a stop to China's construction of dams in the region.

As street performers depicted the dismal human rights situation inside Tibet, they then marched to the Place de la Bastille, where they remained for over four hours.

Within Xi's sight, Tibetan activists waved Tibetan national flags – an action banned in Tibet by the Chinese government and punishable by arrest, Students for a Free Tibet said in a statement.

French politicians

Even French politicians got into the act, calling on Macron to raise the Tibet issue with Xi in a letter signed by 14 senators on May 2.

"The resumption of Sino-Tibetan dialogue and respect for the rights of the Tibetan people must be at the heart of the French strategy vis-à-vis China," the letter said, in a reference to the Chinese government's cutoff of talks in 2010 between Beijing and the Dalai Lama on genuine autonomy for Tibetans.

Uyghurs gathered at Madeleine Square, close to the French president's residence, to show their opposition to Xi, said Dilnur Ryhan, president of the European Uyghur Institute.

Some pro-China activists holding Chinese flags attacked the group in three waves, one after the other, while Chinese agents wearing dark sunglasses were positioned around the square, closely monitoring their activities, she said.

Gulbahar Haitiwaji, a Uyghur detained in "re-education" camps for two years but who now lives in France, urged Macron to address the plight of those still detained in Xinjiang and other human rights abuses there.

Not all agree

Anti-Xi activists from China also participated in the protests, including one who identified himself as Jiang, an artist living in Paris who represents the group Freedom Square.

Jiang said Xi Jinping's views and actions do not have the support of all Chinese, including his "ethnic cleansing" of Tibetans, his comprehensive surveillance of Chinese citizens, aggression towards Taiwan and suppression of Hong Kong.

"These views are actually different from ours," he said. "We want to convey to the outside world that China does not only have one voice, and Xi Jinping does not represent us."

Xi is a dictator, said Liu Feilong, a Chinese dissident who lives in the Netherlands, who decided to go to Paris and participate in the demonstrations after seeing protest announcements on social media.

"Xi Jinping not only harms people living in China, but also infiltrates democratic countries in Europe and America, posing a serious threat to universal values," he said. "I escaped from China for freedom and found the freedom I wanted in the Netherlands, so I should also defend freedom and universal values."

After France, Xi will visit Serbia and Hungary – two European countries that are shifting towards authoritarianism and are big beneficiaries of Xi's Belt and Road Initiative, which aims to connect China with other nations.

It includes plans for a Budapest-Belgrade high-speed railway financed mainly by China to transport Chinese goods from the Greek port of Piraeus into Europe.

## **Long-time supporter of Tibet awarded US Presidential Medal of Freedom**

05 May 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

A notable figure in the Tibetan advocacy movement in the United States and a close friend of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Rep. Nancy Pelosi was honoured with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honour of the United States on Friday.

During the ceremony, US President Biden took a moment to highlight each honouree, commending their unwavering commitment to “curiosity, innovation, creativity, and optimism.” He specifically lauded Speaker Pelosi as the “greatest Speaker of the House of Representatives in history,” attributing her remarkable achievements to her extraordinary leadership and legislative prowess.

Rep. Nancy Pelosi’s historic milestones were also recognised during the event. In 2007, she made history by becoming the first woman to assume the role of Speaker of the House, marking a watershed moment in American politics. Subsequently, in 2019, she made history once more by being re-elected to this prestigious position. Notably, President Biden emphasised how she utilised her exceptional abilities to pass some of the most transformative laws in the nation’s history through Congress.

The former Speaker of the House has long been an advocate for the Tibetan cause. In 2020, during her tenure as Speaker, she delivered an address on the floor of the House of Representatives in support of H.R. 4331, known as the Tibet Policy Act of 2019, bipartisan legislation aimed to support the aspirations of the Tibetan people in safeguarding their unique cultural identity.

In her remarks, she voiced strong support for the Tibet Policy Act of 2019, expressing, “I rise in support of the Tibetan Policy Act of 2019: strong, bipartisan and urgently-needed legislation to strengthen America’s commitment to the Tibetan people and their right to safeguard their distinct identity. If we don’t speak out for human rights in China because of commercial interests, then we lose all moral authority to speak out for human rights in any other place in the world. I urge a strong vote for this legislation and support the Tibetan people as they seek to defend their culture, their identity, and their pursuit of a future of freedom and dignity.”

Among other priorities, Speaker Pelosi has consistently criticised the Chinese regime for its interference in the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama. As a closely of the His Holiness Dalai Lama, she has actively supported the ‘Middle Way Approach’ a policy advocated by the Tibetan leader seeking genuine autonomy for Tibet. “I heard His Holiness first describe his ‘Middle Way Approach’ for Tibet,

and it was an approach about autonomy, not about independence. So when the Chinese say that it’s about independence, that’s not what it ever has been about as far as His Holiness’s presentation on Capitol Hill, or to the world.”

“In 1987, when I first came to Congress, I heard Tom Lantos – I mentioned the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission – Tom Lantos invited me to meet His Holiness the Dalai Lama, to be in a small meeting with him. I heard His Holiness first describe his ‘Middle Way Approach’ for Tibet, and it was an approach about autonomy, not about independence. So when the Chinese say that it’s about independence, that’s not what it ever has been about as far as His Holiness’s presentation on Capitol Hill, or to the world,” she also said in support of the Tibet Policy Act of 2019.

In 2023, during the fourth day of its budget session, the 17th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile unanimously passed a “Resolution of Gratitude” to honour Nancy Pelosi. The resolution acknowledged Speaker Pelosi’s unwavering support and tireless advocacy on behalf of Tibet and Tibetans in holding China accountable for its oppression of the Tibetan people and its denial of their fundamental rights.

The Presidential Medal of Freedom, established by President Harry S. Truman in 1945, is one of the highest civilian awards of the United States, presented to individuals who have made especially exceptional contributions to the security or national interests of the United States, to world peace, or cultural or other significant public or private endeavours.

## **Sikyong Penpa Tsering Meets President Kompatscher; the Latter Assures to Lead Parliamentary Initiatives to Spotlight Tibet’s Deteriorating Situation**

04 May 2024, CTA

Sikyong Penpa Tsering on Thursday met with President of the Autonomous Province of Bolzano, South Tyrol, marking his second official visit to the Autonomous Province of Bolzano, South Tyrol. Sikyong last met President Kompatscher in October 2021 on his first formal visit to South Tyrol.

Lasting an hour, their discourse focused on the dire situation in Tibet, where the political, socio-cultural, and economic rights of Tibetan people have significantly deteriorated, ranking Tibet as the least free country on earth alongside South Sudan and Syria.

Sikyong addressed the alarming reality of China’s state-run colonial boarding schools in Tibet, which have forcibly separated over a million Tibetan children from their families and their cultural roots as part of China’s policy of sinicisation.

Despite these challenges, Sikyong highlighted the resilience of the Tibetan spirit, drawing inspiration from the successful autonomy model exemplified in South Tyrol which he deemed a profound contribution to humanity and particularly meaningful for the Tibetan people. Sikyong also extended an invitation to President Kompatscher to visit the Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamshala as part of a forthcoming event being organized by the CTA, which the President graciously accepted.

Responding to Sikyong's specific appeals, President Kompatscher assured to lead parliamentary initiatives to spotlight the deteriorating situation inside Tibet. Furthermore, he committed to furthering collaborations between South Tyrol and Tibet, as part of which the President unveiled plans for a new Provincial Library in Bolzano, ensuring representation for Tibet and the Tibetan movement in the Library's Documentation Center for the Protection of Minorities and Autonomy. Sikyong was accompanied by Representative Thinlay Chukki and Dr. Gunther Cologna to the meeting.

While in Bolzano, Sikyong also met with the local Tibetans over a dinner gathering, attended by Dr. Gunther Cologna and other longstanding friends of Tibet.

At the esteemed EURAC Research Center, Sikyong engaged with resident researchers, discussing the relevance of the CTA's Middle Way Approach in today's tumultuous world and advocating for Tibet's historical status in support of the Middle Way. The researchers expressed eagerness to enhance collaboration between EURAC and CTA.

Sikyong later gave interviews to the Communications team of EURAC and three prominent news media outlets, including ORF Austrian TV.

Prior to his visit to Bolzano, Sikyong visited the Tibetan community in Milan, Italy on Wednesday, 1 May. Led by the President and Vice-President of the Tibetan community Italy, the Milan Tibetan community hosted a rousing reception in honour of the Sikyong's second official visit. The reception held at Ghe Pel Ling Institute for Tibetan Buddhist Studies was joined by Filippo Scianna, President of the Italian Buddhist Union, among other longtime friends of Tibet.

Following the community engagement, Sikyong proceeded to Trentino to visit the 'Ice Stupa Zanskar' exhibition at the invitation of Roberto Pinter, a former councillor of Trentino and president of Trentino For Tibet. At the exhibition, Sikyong was warmly welcomed by the Vice Mayor of Trento and local Tibetans in Trento. The total population of Tibetans across Italy is estimated at approximately 198.

## Calls for freedom on Panchen Lama's 35th birthday

03 May 2024, International Campaign for Tibet

As the Panchen Lama spent a milestone birthday in captivity last week, supporters around the globe called on China's government to finally free the Tibetan Buddhist leader.

"On the occasion of the 35th birthday of the 11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima of Tibet, we call on the Chinese authorities for his immediate release along with his family, teacher and other Tibetan political prisoners," Els Van Hoof and Samuel Cogolati, chair and deputy chair of the external affairs committee of Belgium's Federal Parliament, said in one of several statements by global officials last week.

The Panchen Lama, one of Tibetan Buddhism's most important leaders, turned 35 on April 25, 2024.

Born in Chinese-occupied Tibet, he was recognized by the Dalai Lama as the reincarnation of the previous Panchen Lama at age 6. Just three days later, the Chinese government abducted him and his family. The Panchen Lama has not been seen since.

The Panchen Lama's birthday last week was "a day of great importance to be observed with celebrations by all the Tibetan people, both inside and outside Tibet," the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile said in a statement.

"However, this day has also become one of great sadness for the people of Tibet, as it has been decades since we last saw him or heard his teachings."

US leaders

In the United States, several officials spoke up for the Panchen Lama as he turned 35.

"Today marks Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima's 35th birthday," Under Secretary of State Uzra Zeya, who serves as the US special coordinator for Tibetan issues, said on Twitter/X. "On this day, [the United States] renews our calls for the [People's Republic of China] to immediately provide proof of his whereabouts & well-being and reaffirms our support for Tibetans to select, educate, and venerate their religious leaders free of government interference."

"The PRC should provide the location and status of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the 11th Panchen Lama, who turns 35 today," added US Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Rashad Hussain. "Like members of all religious and spiritual groups, Tibetan Buddhists should be able to select, educate, and venerate their leaders, free from interference."

Members of the US Congress also spoke up for the Panchen Lama on his birthday.

Rep. Chris Smith, R-NJ, and Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Wash., chair and co-chair of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, called for “confirmation of his whereabouts and safety, immediate release for him and his parents, and an end to PRC interference in the religious traditions of #Tibetan Buddhism.”

The Lantos Foundation for Human Rights and Justice, which carries on the legacy of late Congressman Tom Lantos, tweeted: “Holding a spiritual leader as a political prisoner for decades does not erase his position, nor does it lessen his deep connection to his people. On the occasion of his birthday, our wish is to finally get an answer to the question #WhereisthePanchenLama?”

Other US officials also raised their voice for the Panchen Lama.

David Curry, a commissioner of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, said: “Today is the Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima’s 35th birthday, and still no proof of his whereabouts. Nearly 30 years have passed since Chinese authorities abducted him & his family.”

Curry added that Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken “must demand answers.”

Nury Turkel, the commission’s chair, said: “The #CCP brutally suppresses Tibetan Buddhists, including interfering in the succession process of the Dalai Lama & other religious leaders—a right that belongs to the Tibetan Buddhist community alone.”

According to Radio Free Asia, a State Department spokesperson said, “We are saddened that the PRC continues to separate the Panchen Lama from his community and deny him his rightful place as a Tibetan Buddhist leader.”

Around the globe

Alongside Van Hoof and Cogolati, the two Belgian parliamentarians, several officials around the globe raised the Panchen Lama’s disappearance on his birthday.

Germany’s Commissioner for Global Freedom of Religion Frank Schwabe tweeted that China’s kidnapping of the Panchen Lama was “an act of enforced disappearance.”

“I urge the Government of China to disclose precisely his whereabouts, to allow an independent monitor to visit him + to ensure that Tibetan Buddhists are able to freely practice their religion, traditions + culture without interference according to international human rights law,” Schwabe added.

## Calls for freedom on Panchen Lama’s 35th birthday

03 May 2024, International Campaign for Tibet



As the Panchen Lama spent a milestone birthday in captivity last week, supporters around the globe called on China’s government to finally free the Tibetan Buddhist leader.

“On the occasion of the 35th birthday of the 11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima of Tibet, we call on the Chinese authorities for his immediate release along with his family, teacher and other Tibetan political prisoners,” Els Van Hoof and Samuel Cogolati, chair and deputy chair of the external affairs committee of Belgium’s Federal Parliament, said in one of several statements by global officials last week.

The Panchen Lama, one of Tibetan Buddhism’s most important leaders, turned 35 on April 25, 2024.

Born in Chinese-occupied Tibet, he was recognized by the Dalai Lama as the reincarnation of the previous Panchen Lama at age 6. Just three days later, the Chinese government abducted him and his family. The Panchen Lama has not been seen since.

The Panchen Lama’s birthday last week was “a day of great importance to be observed with celebrations by all the Tibetan people, both inside and outside Tibet,” the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile said in a statement.

“However, this day has also become one of great sadness for the people of Tibet, as it has been decades since we last saw him or heard his teachings.”

US leaders

In the United States, several officials spoke up for the Panchen Lama as he turned 35.

“Today marks Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima’s 35th birthday,” Under Secretary of State Uzra Zeya, who serves as the US special coordinator for Tibetan issues, said on Twitter/X. “On this day, [the United States] renews our calls for the [People’s Republic of China] to immediately provide proof of his whereabouts & well-being and reaffirms our support for Tibetans to select, educate, and venerate their religious leaders free of government interference.”

“The PRC should provide the location and status of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the 11th Panchen Lama,



who turns 35 today," added US Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Rashad Hussain. "Like members of all religious and spiritual groups, Tibetan Buddhists should be able to select, educate, and venerate their leaders, free from interference."

Members of the US Congress also spoke up for the Panchen Lama on his birthday.

Rep. Chris Smith, R-NJ, and Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Wash., chair and co-chair of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, called for "confirmation of his whereabouts and safety, immediate release for him and his parents, and an end to PRC interference in the religious traditions of #Tibetan Buddhism."

The Lantos Foundation for Human Rights and Justice, which carries on the legacy of late Congressman Tom Lantos, tweeted: "Holding a spiritual leader as a political prisoner for decades does not erase his position, nor does it lessen his deep connection to his people. On the occasion of his birthday, our wish is to finally get an answer to the question #WhereisThePanchenLama?"

Other US officials also raised their voice for the Panchen Lama.

David Curry, a commissioner of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, said: "Today is the Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima's 35th birthday, and still no proof of his whereabouts. Nearly 30 years have passed since Chinese authorities abducted him & his family."

Curry added that Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken "must demand answers."

Nury Turkel, the commission's chair, said: "The #CCP brutally suppresses Tibetan Buddhists, including interfering in the succession process of the Dalai Lama & other religious leaders—a right that belongs to the Tibetan Buddhist community alone."

According to Radio Free Asia, a State Department spokesperson said, "We are saddened that the PRC continues to separate the Panchen Lama from his community and deny him his rightful place as a Tibetan Buddhist leader."

Around the globe

Alongside Van Hoof and Cogolati, the two Belgian parliamentarians, several officials around the globe raised the Panchen Lama's disappearance on his birthday.

Germany's Commissioner for Global Freedom of Religion Frank Schwabe tweeted that China's kidnapping of the Panchen Lama was "an act of enforced disappearance."

"I urge the Government of China to disclose precisely his whereabouts, to allow an independent monitor to visit him + to ensure that Tibetan Buddhists are able to freely practice their religion, traditions +

culture without interference according to international human rights law," Schwabe added.

A delegation from Estonia's parliament traveled to Dharamsala, India—the exile capital of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people—for the Panchen Lama's birthday.

The delegation members held a press conference where they called for the Panchen Lama's release and expressed unwavering support for Tibet, which China has brutally occupied for over 65 years.

Juku-Kalle Raid, a member of the delegation, said after meeting the Dalai Lama: "As His Holiness [the Dalai Lama] mentioned today, the issue at hand is not just about the Panchen Lama; it is a global matter involving unlawful acts, forced occupation, and the violations of human rights. We are committed to raising awareness on these issues in the European Parliament."

Tibetan leaders

In Dharamsala, the Central Tibetan Administration, which provides democratic governance for Tibetan exiles around the globe, led a celebration of the Panchen Lama's birthday at the Tsuglagkhang temple.

Along with the Estonian delegation, Buddhist officials, Tibetan leaders and others took part in the events.

The abbot of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, the traditional home of the Panchen Lama, implored all Tibetans to pool their efforts in advocating for the Panchen Lama's release.

Zeekyab Rinpoche, the abbot, earlier joined other Buddhist leaders from the Himalayas to release a five-point appeal for the Panchen Lama to foreign governments, the United Nations and the international community.

Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, speaker of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, said on Twitter/X: "For 29 years, [the Panchen Lama's] whereabouts remain unknown. I urge governments and the international community to advocate for his release. #FreePanchenLama."

The Tibetan Sikyong (President) Penpa Tsering tweeted: "On the occasion of the 35th birthday of the 11th #PanchenRinpoche, Tenzin Gendun Yeshe Thinley Phuntsok, we pray that Rinpoche may soon be able to break the shackles of Chinese government's illegal captivity and assume his rightful throne of the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery."

**Gyari Dorjee Youdon, female warrior who fought Chinese army passes away at 92**

02 May 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon





Gyari Dorjee Youdon in an undated photo (Photo/Facebook)

Gyari Dorjee Youdon, a significant yet an overlooked figure in Tibetan history, passed away at the age of 92. Despite her lesser-known status, she played a pivotal role as a female warrior leading revolts against invading Chinese armies in 1956 in Nyarong, in eastern Tibet's Kham region.

Her cremation ceremony, held in Mindroling, Clement Town, India on April 29, was a solemn occasion attended by dignitaries from various sections of the exile Tibetan set up. His Eminence Khokim Rinpoche presided over the ceremony, paying tribute to her remarkable life and contributions.

In 1956, Gyari Dorjee Youdon emerged as a courageous leader amidst the turmoil of Chinese oppression in Nyarong. The Chinese Communist soldiers, as part of their aggressive agenda, implemented a series of so-called "democratic reforms," which included brutal tactics such as "struggle sessions" (thamzings). These sessions involved public criticism, denunciation, and even physical violence against prominent citizens, lamas, and village headmen, often resulting in executions. Upon learning of these atrocities, Gyari Dorjee Youdon, alongside her husband Gyari Nyima and his senior wife Norzin Lhamo, recognised the urgent need for action. Despite being less of a public figure compared to her husband and Norzin Lhamo, Gyari Dorjee Youdon took the lead in organising a rebellion in their local area to protect her community from the ruthless tactics of the Chinese military.

Accounts from Jamyang Norbu, a well-known Tibetan writer and historian, described Gyari Dorjee Youdon, clad in the attire of a man and armed with a pistol strapped to her side, fearlessly led her warriors into battle against the Chinese invaders. She attacked Chinese columns and outposts across Nyarong.

Dorjee Youdon also led an assault on the Drukmo Dzong, the former Gyaristang family palace where the Chinese were stationed. After freeing the chieftains, she attacked the castle with her 1400 troops. Lacking sufficient artillery to breach the walls, they surrounded it to cut off supplies. In the ensuing battle, they killed most of the Chinese soldiers and

lost 26 of their own. She offered a ceasefire on two conditions to the Chinese: release of captive chieftains in Dartsedo including her husband, Gyari Nyima, and cessation of the Chinese democratic reform program.

Gyari Dorjee Youdon's name may not be as widely recognised as other figures in Tibetan history, historians believe that her legacy as a courageous female warrior and leader of the revolt against Chinese oppression will endure. They say, her life serves as a reminder of the resilience and indomitable spirit of the Tibetan people.

### Tibetan activists to protest Xi Jinping's visit to Paris

01 May 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup

Chinese President Xi Jinping is set visit Europe later this week from May 5-10, with scheduled visits to France, Hungary, and Serbia. This marks his first visit to Europe in five years.

Ahead of Xi's visit to France, the head of the Tibetan government in exile, Sikyong Penpa Tsering, met with French President Emmanuel Macron on Tuesday. During the meeting, an autographed photo of the Dalai Lama and Macron was presented to the French President during a ceremony honouring Mr. André Gattolin, a former Senator known for his support of Tibet.

As anticipation builds for President Xi's upcoming visit to France, the country finds itself bracing for potential protests, particularly from the Tibetan community there. Activist group Students for a Free Tibet is gearing for what it called the "biggest unwelcoming of Xi's Europe trip", urging fellow protestors to call out the Chinese President. France has the largest population of Tibetan exiles in Europe and is expected to voice concerns over China's policies towards Tibet and broader human rights issues.

Preparations are underway as demonstrators gear up to make their voices heard during Xi's visit. The protests aim to draw attention to the ongoing challenges faced by Tibetans under Chinese rule and advocate for greater international scrutiny of human rights violations in the region.

Experts say that the primary motive behind the visit to Europe and particularly to Italy is linked with the recent decision to withdraw from China's New Silk Road program, a decision to be finalized by Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni in Beijing in July, following some initial hesitation. Italy's departure from the initiative elevates the importance of Hungary and Serbia which are strategically positioned in central and eastern Europe, for China's access to the EU through land.

An agreement with the Italian government is expected to be postponed until after Xi's European tour concludes in May, during which he aims to assess the intentions of other European nations. The Belgrade-Budapest freight railway emerges as a focal point, shedding light on the gravity of Xi's visits to these neighbouring capitals.

### **Tibetan Sikyong meets with French President ahead of state visit by Chinese president**

01 May 2024, Tibetan Review

Ahead of the arrival of Chinese President Xi Jinping for a state visit, President Emmanuel Macron of France had a brief meeting with the Sikyong (executive head) Mr Penpa Tsering of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) at his official Élysée Palace on Apr 30 evening during an award ceremony.

The occasion was a ceremony to present the National Order of the Legion of Honour awarded to Andre Gattolin, a former French senator known for his strong support for the issue of Tibet.

It was a brief yet consequential visit to Paris for the Tibetan Sikyong, said the CTA, which is effectively the Tibetan government in exile, on its Tibet.net website May 1.

The Sikyong was stated to have presented to Mr Macron an autographed picture of the latter with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, while urging him not to forget Tibet.

Although the main purpose of the Sikyong's palace visit was the award ceremony, it still remains to be seen how China will react, if at all. China sees any foreign leader's meeting with an exile Tibetan leader as encouragement of Tibetan independence despite the fact that the latter only seeks autonomy, not independence from Chinese rule.

Chinese President Xi Jinping is paying state visits to France, Serbia and Hungary from May 5 to 10 at the invitation of Mr Macron, President Aleksandar Vucic of the Republic of Serbia and President Tamas Sulyok and Prime Minister Viktor Orban of Hungary.

The upcoming visits show that both China and Europe are striving to explore the space and prospects of cooperation in an era when major power strategic competition intensifies and geopolitics returns, China's official globaltimes.cn Apr 29 cited Chinese and European experts as saying. The report painted the visits as charting of blueprint for ties.

The visits are expected to shape the future of relations between China and Europe at a time when ties with the USA show little prospects for normalization in the foreseeable future.

Before Paris, the Sikyong visited Switzerland where he took part in closed-door meetings with prominent

leaders and senior officials of the Swiss administration, said another Tibet.net report May 1. He was also hosted in the Swiss parliament in capital Bern on Apr 29 by its Parliamentary Group for Tibet (PGT). The event was led by Maya Graf, Vice President of the PGT; Barbara Gysi; Fabian Molina, Co-president of the PGT; and Nik Gugger, Co-president of the PGT, joined by the group's founder 35 years ago, Rene Longet. The Sikyong was also stated to have been hosted a luncheon in the parliament building.

The Sikyong was also stated to have had a dinner engagement later in the evening with Eric Nussbaumer, the Speaker of the Swiss National Council, or lower house of parliament.

The Sikyong also met with the Tibetan community in the country, delivering a speech and answering their questions on a range of issues.

### **French president urged to put human rights, Tibet at heart of Xi Jinping talks**

01 May 2024, RFA, Tenzin Pema, Tashi Wangchuk, Yeshe Dawa

Government officials will meet only with representatives of the Dalai Lama, says a foreign ministry spokesman.



Sikong Penpa Tsering, leader of the Tibetan government-in-exile, gestures after an interview with AFP in his office in Dharamsala, India, Feb. 19, 2024.

The Chinese government says it will only talk with the representatives of the Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, while ruling out any scope for "contact" with the India-based Tibetan government in exile.

Beijing called the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), as the government is known, a "separatist" bloc demanding autonomy for Tibet – a line that experts say it has long upheld and signals no change in Beijing's stance towards engaging meaningfully with the Tibetan side since previous talks fell through in 2010.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin, who made the comment on April 27, was reacting to

a statement by Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the democratically elected leader of the Central Tibetan Administration, or CTA, about his government engaging in back-channel talks with the Chinese government.

Wang told a press conference there were two main conditions for any "contact or negotiations" on Tibet.

"First, we would only have contact and talks with the personal representative of the 14th Dalai Lama, not the so-called 'Tibetan government-in-exile' or 'Central Tibetan Administration,' he said." The Chinese government will not be dealing with it."

"Second, any contact or talks will only be about the personal future of the 14th Dalai Lama himself, or at most, a handful of people close to him, not the so-called 'high degree of autonomy for Tibet,'" he added.

Following the Chinese government's statement, Tsering said negotiation was the only way forward to resolve the Tibet-China conflict and the CTA would continue appealing to the government and international community to urge the Chinese government to resume dialogue.

Sino-Tibetan dialogue began in 2002 in an effort to consider prospects of "genuine" autonomy for Tibet, as called for by the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, as part of his Middle Way policy.

The approach accepts the formerly independent Himalayan nation's status as a part of China but urges greater cultural and religious freedoms, including strengthened language rights, guaranteed for ethnic minorities under provisions of China's constitution.

"His Holiness the Dalai Lama has said time and again that the Tibet issue is the issue of six million Tibetans and not his personal matter," CTA spokesman Tenzin Lekshay told Radio Free Asia.

"The Central Tibetan Administration's Middle Way Policy seeks genuine, meaningful autonomy for the Tibetan people within the framework of the Chinese constitution and the Regional National Autonomy Law of China," he said.

"Resolving the Sino-Tibet conflict through the Middle Way Approach is mutually beneficial," he added.

False sense of hope

The Sino-Tibetan talks ground to a halt in 2010 without any breakthrough following nine formal rounds of discussion and one informal meeting.

Chinese officials rejected proposals by the Tibetan delegation — which included the Dalai Lama's special envoy Lodi Gyari and senior envoy Kelsang Gyaltsen — in which they called for greater autonomy for Tibet within China.

Both Gyari and Gyaltsen resigned from their posts two years after the talks stalled, citing frustration

over the lack of a positive response from the Chinese side.

Reacting to the Chinese government's latest statement on conditions for talks to resolve the conflict, Gyaltsen told RFA that Wang's statement reflected the Chinese government line as usual.

"In fact, I can see that the Chinese government has intensified its tough stance on Tibet and, the statement signals a negative turn as now there is no scope even for a discussion on autonomy," he said.

Wang's statement also appeared to be "an attempt by the Chinese Communist Party, or CCP, to create a false sense of hope among Tibetans and create further differences within the Tibetan communities," he added.

London-based Tibetologist Robert Barnett of London University's School of Oriental and African Studies, echoed Gyaltsen's assessment, noting that the Chinese ministry spokesperson "does not deny that there are back-channel talks."

"Basically, he confirms it. ... That might also explain why it is so aggressive. They want to distract Chinese listeners at least from realizing that they are talking with the Tibetans, perhaps," Barnett told RFA, referring to the two conditions China laid out for talks.

What China was saying in public differed from what Chinese officials were saying behind the scenes, Barnett said.

"It is not credible that the Chinese will only talk about the Dalai Lama's personal situation, as they claim," he said. "They may well refuse to discuss autonomy, but we can be fairly sure that they will be talking about other issues besides the Dalai Lama's personal position and that of his retinue," he said.

Push for 'meaningful' dialogue

Some governments, including those of the United States and European countries, have made repeated calls for the Chinese government to resume talks with the Dalai Lama or Tibetan leaders.

On Tuesday, a U.S. State Department spokesperson told RFA that the U.S. government would work with its allies and partners to encourage China to return, without preconditions, to direct dialogue with the Dalai Lama, his representatives or the democratically elected Tibetan leaders to achieve meaningful autonomy for Tibetans and ensure they can preserve their religion, culture and language.

In April, the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee unanimously approved a bipartisan bill urging China to resume negotiations with the Dalai Lama or his representatives, without preconditions, and address the aspirations of Tibetans regarding their historical, cultural, religious and linguistic identity.

"The CCP has oppressed the Tibetan people for 70 years and will not stop until their culture is eliminated," U.S. Rep. Young Kim, a California

Republican, told RFA. "The only way that there will be a peaceful resolution is if the voice of the Tibetan people is included in any conversations with the CCP."

The Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act, also known as the Resolve Tibet Act, was approved by the U.S. House of Representatives in February, and now needs to pass the Senate for it to become law.

The bill notes that an obstacle to further dialogue is that the Chinese government continues to impose conditions on substantive dialogue with the Dalai Lama, including "a demand that he say that Tibet has been part of China since ancient times, which the Dalai Lama has refused to do because it is inaccurate."

The European Parliament in December 2023 adopted a resolution in which it repeated its call for the Chinese government to re-engage with the Dalai Lama's representatives to establish genuine autonomy for Tibetans within China.

The resolution also urged Chinese authorities to release the Panchen Lama, Tibet's second most senior Buddhist monk abducted by Chinese authorities in 1995, and refrain from interfering in the designation of the next Dalai Lama.

## April

### Sikyong Penpa Tsering Discusses Bringing Positive Change in China with Swiss Parliamentarians

30 April 2024, CTA



Sikyong Penpa Tsering and Representative Thinlay Chukki with Speaker of the Swiss National Council, Eric Nussbaumer.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering interacted with members of the Swiss Parliament and participated in closed meetings with prominent leaders and senior officials of the Swiss administration on 29 April 2024 in Bern. Sikyong Penpa Tsering was graciously hosted at the Swiss Parliament by the Parliamentary Group for

Tibet, led by MP Maya Graf-Vice President of the PGT, MP Barbara Gysi-PGT member, MP Fabian Molina, Co-President of the PGT, and MP Nik Gugger, Co-President of the PGT.

Throughout the extended meeting with the Parliamentarians, Sikyong Penpa Tsering underscored the pivotal role of Tibetans, Uyghurs, Hong Kongers, and Taiwanese as intrinsic agents of change within China, "If you want to bring positive change in China, you need both internal and external forces, and we are the internal forces."

Further, Sikyong Penpa Tsering appealed to the Parliamentarians on the significance of the historical status of Tibet in adding value to the Middle Way Policy. Sikyong also advocated for parliamentary initiatives aimed at addressing the prevailing situation inside Tibet.

In the growing climate of interest across Europe and globally in reevaluating their China policies, spurred by recent experiences, Sikyong Penpa Tsering implored Switzerland to adopt a more pragmatic approach in its bilateral relations with China.

In response, MP Maya Graf echoed the call for a paradigm shift, underscoring the imperative of historical context, and revisiting past stances.

The meeting culminated in a luncheon held within the parliament halls in honour of the Sikyong's visit, attended by MP Fabian Molina, Co-president of PGT, MP Nik Gugger, Co-president PGT, along with MP Maya Graf and MP Barbara Gysi.

Rene Longet, Co-founder of the Parliamentary Group for Tibet also joined the meeting. Sikyong Penpa Tsering expressed gratitude to Longet for his unwavering support for Tibet and his instrumental role in the establishment of the Swiss parliamentary group for Tibet 35 years ago.

Accompanying Sikyong Tsering were Representative Thinlay Chukki and Phuntsok Topgyal from the Tibet Bureau Geneva, Chisur Jampa Samdho, Co-president of Gesellschaft Schweizerisch-Tibetische Freundschaft (GSTF), Thomas Buchli, Secretary of the Tibet Parliamentary Group, President of Tibet Community Switzerland and Liechtenstein Ngedun Gyatso Drongpatsang, Vice President Kalsang Kangrang, Namgyal Gangshontsang, Mayor of Oetwil a.S, GSTF Board members Lhawang Ngorkhangsar and Michaela Litzenburger, Bettina Eckert GSTF, VTJE Co-president Arya Amipa, and Selina Morell from STP.

On the evening of 29 April, Sikyong had a dinner engagement with the Speaker of the Swiss National Council, Eric Nussbaumer. Sikyong was accompanied by Representative Thinlay Chukki, Tibet Bureau Geneva and Phuntsok Topgyal, Tibet Bureau Geneva. On the sidelines of the visit, Sikyong also gave media interviews with prominent Swiss local press.



## Sikyong Addresses Tibetan Community in Zurich, Debunks Recent Comment by Spokesperson of Chinese Foreign Ministry

29 April 2024, CTA



Sikyong Penpa Tsering addressing the Tibetan community of Zurich. Photo / Tenzin Nyishon

Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the democratically elected leader of the exile Tibetan people, embarked on his five-nation tour starting with Zurich on 28 April 2024. Led by Representative Thinlay Chukki, Tibet Bureau Geneva and its staff, and Presidents and Vice-Presidents of Tibetan communities in Switzerland and Liechtenstein, the community extended a warm welcome to Sikyong as he arrived on his second round of official visits there.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering's first engagement was at the Tibet Institute Rekon, where he held a meeting with Dr. Karma Dolma Lobsang, President of Rikon, Managing Director Peter Oberholzer, Ven. Lama Tenzin Jottotshang, Representative of the Monastic Community and Ven. Abbot Geshe Tenzin Jangchup along with Representative of Tibet Bureau Geneva and President of Tibetan Community of Switzerland and Liechtenstein.

Later, Sikyong engaged with the Tibetan community at Dietikon, including a brief interaction with the teachers and heads of the Weekend Tibetan language school.

In his address to the Tibetan community, Sikyong emphasised everyone to remember and appreciate the dedicated contributions of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and elder Tibetans for setting up this unparalleled exile community with well established democratic system to maintain Tibetan freedom struggle while imploring the newer generations to uphold their legacies.

Highlighting the importance of the continued existence and relevance of the Central Tibetan Administration in Tibetans' pursuit of freedom, the Tibetan political leader said, "Since we are unsure if someone with His Holiness' level of influence and impact will take the helm, it is crucial that this

institution must endure in order to safeguard the Tibetan freedom movement going forward."

Sikyong further apprised the gathering of 16th Kashag's official undertakings to capacitate and strengthen the operations of the Central Tibetan Administration. And, with regard to the recent comment made by Chinese Foreign Ministry's spokesperson on back-channel communication between the Central Tibetan Administration and the People's Republic of China, the Tibetan political leader stressed, "Negotiation is the only way forward for resolving the Tibet-China conflict and the Central Tibetan Administration would continue making appeals to the government and international community to urge the Chinese government to resume the dialogue."

In this connection, Sikyong urged the Chinese government to start enacting constructive reforms within Tibet instead of giving His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Tibetan leaders instructions on what to do or not.

On 29 April, Sikyong is set to meet with Swiss parliamentarians in the capital city of Bern.

### Resolution of Sino-Tibet conflict to be mutually beneficial: Tibetan leadership

29 April 2024, Hindustan Times

Penpa Tsering said last week his interlocutor was dealing with "people in Beijing", and "other elements" on the Chinese side have also reached out. The Tibetan government-in-exile has reiterated that resolving the "Sino-Tibet conflict" through a process that leads to genuine autonomy for Tibet will be mutually beneficial, days after Beijing ruled out talks with the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). Penpa Tsering, the Sikyong or political leader of the CTA, told a small group of reporters in Dharamshala last week that the Tibetan government-in-exile has opened back channel communications with China to explore ways to find a resolution to the issue of Tibet though there is no expectation of an immediate breakthrough. Responding to Tsering's remarks, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said on Friday that Beijing will only have talks with the personal representative of the Dalai Lama and not the Tibetan government-in-exile. "The Middle Way Policy (MWP) of [the] Central Tibetan Administration is to seek genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people within the framework of Chinese constitution & Regional National Autonomy Law of China," CTA spokesperson Tenzin Lekshay said in a post on X in response to the Chinese foreign ministry's stance.

"Resolving Sino-Tibet conflict through MWP is mutually beneficial," Lekshay said, referring to the Tibetan government-in-exile's official position of



seeking autonomy, and not independence, for Tibet. The Indian side has not made any official comments on this issue so far. The Tibetan government-in-exile is based in Dharamshala town in Himachal Pradesh and Tsering said the CTA works closely with the external affairs ministry and Indian security agencies on the issue of Tibet.

Tsering also said his interlocutor has been dealing with “people in Beijing”, and “other elements” on the Chinese side have sought to reach out to the Tibetan leadership.

“We keep the communications going, it has been almost more than a year since we started the back channels,” Tsering said. “They [the Chinese] are reaching out to us, it’s not us reaching out to them. But to hope for something at this juncture? It is not realistic.” Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang, however, described the Tibetan government-in-exile as an “organised separatist political group” with an agenda for “Tibetan independence”. The Chinese government will only have contacts and talks with the personal representative of the Dalai Lama, and such talks will “only be about the personal future” of the Dalai Lama and “not the so-called ‘high degree of autonomy for Tibet’”, he said.

Wang added that “future contact and talks” can be considered when the Dalai Lama gives up “any activity aimed at disrupting the social order” in Tibet.

### **China pushed back on rights, Tibet in meetings with top US diplomat**

28 April 2024, Tibetan Review

Back from meetings with top Chinese leaders in Beijing and Shanghai over Apr 24-26, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said that apart from discussing the numerous weighty matters that continue to bedevil good relations between the two sides, issues relating to human rights and Tibet as well as Xinjiang and other serious concerns such, especially, as Taiwan were also raised. But China has made it clear that it pushed back against the US advocacy on those issues.

At a press availability on Apr 26, Blinken has said: “I raised the cases of American citizens who are wrongfully detained and those who are subject to exit bans. President Biden and I will not rest until they’re back with their families where they belong. I also raised concerns about the erosion of Hong Kong’s autonomy and democratic institutions as well as transnational repression, ongoing human rights abuses in Xinjiang and Tibet, and a number of individual human rights cases.”

Blinken has not said what China’s reaction was to his raising of those concerns. However, China’s official Xinhua news agency Apr 27 cited Yang Tao, Director General of the Department of North American and

Oceanian Affairs of the Foreign Ministry, as saying at a media briefing on the just-concluded visit: “On issues related to Hong Kong, Xinjiang, Xizang, and human rights, Yang noted that Hong Kong belongs to China, and the United States should respect China’s sovereignty and the rule of law in Hong Kong. Any smearing campaign must be stopped. Issues related to Xinjiang and Xizang are China’s internal affairs. The United States should not make unwarranted remarks, still less interfere in them under the pretext of human rights.”

In fact, referring to Blinken’s plans made clear earlier to raise those issues during his upcoming meetings, China made it clear Apr 23 that it will not welcome any raising of human rights, Tibet, and Taiwan issues. China’s official globaltimes.cn Apr 23 cited a senior official from the country’s Foreign Ministry as saying that it will be made clear that “issues related to Xinjiang, Xizang [Tibet], and Hong Kong are matters of China’s internal affairs and have nothing to do with so-called human rights.”

The report cited the unnamed senior official as saying the US must not use human rights as an excuse to interfere in China’s internal affairs, that how human rights are in a country is best judged by its own people, the official was stated to have maintained.

Xinhua cited Yang as saying Blinken’s visit took place at the invitation of Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee. The visit was stated to be part of the efforts by China and the US to follow through on the common understandings reached by the two presidents at their meeting in San Francisco, maintain dialogue, manage differences, advance cooperation and strengthen coordination on international affairs.

Apart from President Xi Jinping and Wang Yi, Blinken was stated to have met with Wang Xiaohong, State Councilor and Minister of Public Security, for exchange of views on counter-narcotics law enforcement cooperation. Blinken has also met, Apr 25, with Secretary of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee Chen Jining to discuss Shanghai’s exchanges and cooperation with the US side.

Globaltimes.cn Apr 27 said Chinese experts deemed Blinken’s visit as “generally positive and playing a role in stabilizing relations between China and the US,” but cited observers as also believing such a visit by itself cannot fundamentally change the current trend of China-US ties.

## Dialogue with Dalai Lama's representatives only, not with Tibetan Government-in-Exile, says China

28 April 2024, Phayul

China on Friday said it would talk only with the representatives of the Dalai Lama and not the officials of the Tibetan government-in-exile, also ruling out dialogue on the long-pending demand for autonomy for Tibetan people.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin refuted reports of back-channel discussions between the Tibetan government-in-exile and the Chinese government by categorizing the Tibetan government-in-exile, headquartered in Dharamshala, as a "separatist" entity, during a press briefing in Beijing.

Wang stated that "The so-called 'Tibetan government-in-exile' is an entirely organised separatist political group with a political platform and an agenda for 'Tibetan independence.' It is an illegal organisation that violates China's Constitution and laws. No country in the world recognises it," Wang said.

Elaborating on China's stand, Wang said the Chinese government has two basic principles when it comes to contact and talks. "First, we would only have contact and talks with the personal representative of the 14th Dalai Lama, not the so-called 'Tibetan government-in-exile' or the 'Central Tibetan Administration.' The Chinese government will not be dealing with it," he said.

"Second, any contact or talks will only be about the personal future of the 14th Dalai Lama himself, or to the utmost extent, a handful of people close to him, not the so-called 'high degree of autonomy for Tibet,' Wang added.

He further stated "We hope the 14th Dalai Lama will have a right understanding of the central government's policy, seriously reflect on and thoroughly correct its political propositions and actions, give up any activity aimed to disrupt the social order in Xizang (Tibet) and return to the right path. Only then can contact and talks be considered next," he said. China calls Tibet as Xizang in its efforts to sinicize the name of Tibet on the global stage.

The Dalai Lama has, time and again, denied aspiration for independence, and instead called for autonomy for Tibet, which has subsequently been bifurcated into various prefectures by the Chinese government after taking it over in 1951.

On Thursday, Sikyong or the political head of Tibet's government-in-exile, Penpa Tsering, told a visiting group of journalists in Dharamshala, India, "We have had back-channel (engagement) since last year. But we have no immediate expectations from it. It has to be a long-term (one)." Insisting that the talks are

"very informal," the head of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) said, "I have my interlocutor who deals with people in Beijing. Then, there are other elements also trying to reach out to us."

His cabinet minister for Information and International Relations Minister Norzin Dolma on Thursday reaffirmed that there are back-channel talks with China that are aimed at reviving the overall dialogue process as it is the only way out to resolve the Tibetan issue.

The dialogue between Beijing and representatives of the Dalai Lama began with fact-finding Tibetan delegations visiting Tibet in 1979 and 1980, followed by exploratory talks in Beijing in 1982 and 1984. From 2002 onwards, nine rounds of discussions took place between envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and China's United Front Work Department.

Throughout these talks, the Tibetan delegation advocated for genuine autonomy for Tibet by Chinese constitutional principles and the Law on Regional National Autonomy, culminating in the presentation of a Memorandum and Note to the Chinese leadership. However, the ninth and final round of talks occurred in 2010 and 2012, the Dalai Lama's envoys resigned after the ninth round, citing the deteriorating situation in Tibet and a perceived lack of sincerity and willingness from the Chinese side.

## Fleeing Chinese persecution: One woman's great escape from Tibet to India

27 April 2024, The New Indian Express

"I have left my family behind and crossed over to tell the world how difficult life is for us in Tibet. Human rights are violated with impunity," the 24-year-old Namkyi told The New Indian Express

DHARAMSALA: A year ago, Namkyi left her home in Charo village, Tibet, and walked continuously for 10 days and nights along with her aunt Tsering Kyi before crossing into Nepal and finally reaching India. Now 24, she recalls how she was imprisoned for a year at the age of 15 by Chinese authorities after she and her sister protested over not being allowed to practise their faith.

"I have left my family behind and crossed over to tell the world how difficult life is for us in Tibet. Human rights are violated with impunity and we are always treated with suspicion and looked down upon. I shudder to recall the days I spent in jail when I was barely 15, men in uniform would hit us, leftover food was fed, and we slept in the cold with thin blankets. There was just nobody who could come to our rescue. I was let off after being tried but with threats and warnings," a teary-eyed Namkyi told The New Indian Express.

Namkyi was detained in the Tashi Gyalkaling County along with her sister. The charges levelled against her were 'separatist acts against the nation' and supporting the 'Dalai clique'.

"While in prison, we were made to undertake military training and learn about the Chinese constitution. We also worked in a labour camp making copper wires, cigarette boxes and watches. After completing our prison term, we were kept at a police station in Pema Lhathang in Ngaba County for a week. My family has been kept on a blacklist ever since," she said adding that her family was questioned after she left, and she fears they would be tortured.

After reaching India in June 2023, Namkyi has been in a transit school where she is learning the local language as her dialect isn't similar to what the Tibetans in exile speak in India.

She got an audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, a few weeks after she reached Dharamsala, which she says helped her heal. "HH said that we should preserve our culture and tradition," she said.

Namkyi has gone through a lot, but her story is not any different from thousands of Tibetan refugees who have braved harsh terrain to escape Tibet. Namkyi says that she hopes to travel across the world and make people aware of the gross human rights violations in China and hopes that someday justice will prevail.

### Chinese 'democracy activist' in Germany known to be close to Tibetan groups held for spying

27 April 2024, Tibetan Review



Source of photograph: Tibetan Review

An aide to a German member of the European Parliament arrested for spying for China was not only a familiar presence in the overseas Chinese pro-democracy movement but had also organized a group visit to the Dalai Lama in India and was well-placed to convey sensitive information to Beijing, reported the Cantonese service of rfa.org Apr 26, citing activists.

German citizen Guo Jian, who has since been suspended from his job as an aide to far-right Member of the European Parliament Maximilian

Krah, was reported arrested on Apr 22 by police in Dresden.

Federal prosecutors have said he was working for a Chinese intelligence agency, and that he repeatedly passed to it information on European Parliament negotiations and decisions in January. He is also accused of spying on Chinese dissidents and overseas activists in Germany.

Canada-based writer and activist Sheng Xue has said she had met Guo several times at pro-democracy events, where she noticed he didn't say much, but spent most of his time observing.

"He was a director of the Federation for a Democratic China and the secretary-general of the China Republican Party, so he knew all of the details of the people who attended their meetings."

"Guo Jian has been active in the Chinese democratic circle in Germany," Germany-based rights activist and journalist Su Yutong has, likewise, written in a tweet on Apr 23. Because he had served on those two posts, "people in the democracy movement trusted him a great deal," and "many well-known democrats have participated in the meetings he helped to prepare."

According to Su, Guo had also been "close to Tibetan organizations" and had led a group of people to visit Dharamshala, meet the Dalai Lama there, and shared a photo from the trip.

The report noted that an account of the 2018 visit penned by Guo was still visible on the official Chinese-language website of the Tibetan government-in-exile on Apr 25, confirming Su's claim, along with the same photo she shared of Guo with the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader.

The report said that in that article, endorsed by the Central Tibetan Administration's European Liaison Office, Guo had described his visit as "a democratic learning journey," saying "democracy activists must communicate more with Tibetans and learn about their democratic achievements."

Sheng sees Guo's arrest as highlighting the enormity of China's global reach when it comes to targeting dissidents and activists overseas.

"The Chinese Communist Party has put huge effort into bribing and infiltrating the politics, economy, media and academic life of various countries," she has said.

Earlier in 2017, Sweden's Security Police (SÄPO) arrested a Tibetan refugee named Dorjee Gyantsan, 49, for spying on the Tibetan community in the country as well in nearby countries, such as Denmark, Norway, and Poland, for China's Ministry of State Security. He reported to a handler named Lei Da in meetings in Finland and Poland, where the latter worked as a secretary at the Chinese Embassy in Warsaw.

Dorjee, having fled to Nepal from Tibet in 1997, was a real refugee. He changed his name to Dorjee Gyantsan to reflect his Tibetan ancestry on his mother's side – his previous name was Abdul Ma, after his father who was a Hui Muslim. He moved to Stockholm in 2002 after being granted refugee status by the UNHCR and offered asylum in Sweden. Jamyang Choedon, the then head of the Tibetan community organization in Sweden, told Safeguard Defenders at that time that everyone was shocked by his arrest, and about the fact that a spy had been placed in their midst.

Dorjee was sentenced to 22 months for spying on Tibetans in Sweden for China.

After this release from Mariefreds prison in central Sweden on May 14, 2020, SÄPO placed him into custody immediately, remanded him to Sollentuna häkte, one of Sweden's newest detention centres, just north of Stockholm, and requested his expulsion from the country on the ground that he was a threat to Sweden's national security. He was not allowed to go home to his family, a wife, and two children.

After the Swedish Migration Board and High Court of Migration agreed in July and September, respectively, Sweden's Home Minister approved Dorjee's expulsion for life on Oct 22. However, because of his status as a UNCHR refugee under Swedish law, there were legal hurdles to sending him back to China. And so Dorjee remained in custody awaiting his fate amid a possible prolonged legal wrangling.

### **Calls grow for proof of whereabouts of Tibet's missing Panchen Lama**

26 April 2024, RFA

Global leaders joined Tibetans across the world this week to mark the 35th birthday of a revered Tibetan religious leader taken into custody 29 years ago and missing ever since.

Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, then just six years old, was recognized by Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, as the 11th Panchen Lama, Tibet's second most-senior Buddhist monk, in May 1995.



An exile Tibetan Buddhist monk puts a scarf in front of a portrait of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, at an event marking his birthday in Dharamshala, India, Thursday, April 25, 2024. (Ashwini Bhatia/AP)

Shortly after the Dalai Lama's announcement, Chinese authorities abducted the new Panchen Lama, his family and his teacher. His whereabouts remain unknown. If alive, he would have turned 35 on Thursday.

At a commemoration event in Dharamshala, India, Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the democratically elected head of the Tibetan government-in-exile, reissued a long-standing plea for information about his fate.

"Our most pressing concern is whether the Panchen Rinpoche is still alive or not," Tsering said, using a name Tibetan Buddhists reserve for reincarnated lamas.

China's choice

The Panchen Lama's abduction illustrates the sensitivity of Chinese authorities to other prominent figures and their effort to control Tibetans by suppressing expressions of their Buddhist faith.

After the 1950-51 Chinese invasion and annexation of Tibet, Beijing made efforts to influence Tibetan affairs, including through the selection of a spiritual successor to the 10th Panchen Lama, who died in 1989.

Tibetan Buddhists believe that the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama are reincarnated as children when they die, and that they have the right to select the religious leaders based on their religious belief in the principle of rebirth.

After abducting Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the ruling Chinese Communist Party installed another boy, Gyaltsen Norbu, called Gyaincain Norbu in Chinese, as the 11th Panchen Lama.

However, the Chinese government-appointed religious figure remains unpopular with Tibetans both in exile and at home and is perceived as a "political tool" for Beijing.

The fight over the 11th Panchen Lama is likely a precursor to the battle over who will follow the 14th Dalai Lama, who is now 88 years old. China, always wary of opposition to its authority, particularly in the sometimes restive Tibetan region, says it can appoint



the successor under Chinese law. Sikyong Tsering also called on the Beijing-appointed Panchen Lama to “not become a political tool of the Chinese government’s sinister motives.”

“Instead, he must recognize the unprecedented danger threatening the survival of the Tibetan people and Tibetan Buddhism, and fearlessly undertake his responsibility, and not commit any act that would hurt the Tibetans and Tibet’s spiritual and political cause,” he said.

Traditionally the Panchen Lama has played a leading role in Tibetan Buddhist scholarship as the leader of the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in Shigatse, the second-largest city in Tibet, which has been controlled by China since 1951. The previous incarnation of the Panchen Lama passed away in 1989 at the monastery.

International criticism

Uzra Zeya, special coordinator for Tibetan issues in the U.S. State Department, marked the Panchen Lama’s birthday by calling on China to provide proof of his whereabouts and well-being.

The U.S. government “reaffirms our support for Tibetans to select, educate and venerate their religious leaders free of government interference,” she wrote on X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter.

A U.S. State Department spokesperson told RFA that Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who is on a visit to China, is expected to “raise clearly and candidly our concerns on human rights, including the ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang, and abuses throughout the country, including in Hong Kong and Tibet.”

“We are saddened that the PRC [People’s Republic of China] continues to separate the Panchen Lama from his community and deny him his rightful place as a Tibetan Buddhist leader,” the spokesperson said, adding that the U.S. has called on Beijing to publicize verifiable proof of his whereabouts and to allow him to speak for himself.

In Europe, Els Van Hoof, chair of the External Affairs Committee of the Federal Parliament of Belgium, and Samuel Cogolati, deputy chair, issued a statement condemning the 29-year-long enforced disappearance of the Panchen Lama and calling for his immediate release along with those of his family, teacher and other political prisoners.

Additional reporting by Tenzin Dickyi for RFA Tibetan. Edited by Tenzin Pema, Roseanne Gerin and Jim Snyder.

## Estonian Parliamentary Delegation Holds Press Conference to Express their Concerns Over State of His Serenity the 11th Panchen Lama

26 April 2024, CTA



Juku Kalle Raid, member of Estonian Parliament and Estonia’s Foreign Affairs Commission, speaking during the press conference. Photo / Tenzin Jigme Taydeh / CTA

On 25 April 2024, delegates from the Estonian Parliament and Tibet Support Group participating in the official ceremony of the 35th birthday of His Serenity the 11th Panchen Lama Gedun Choekyi Nyima came together to hold a joint press conference at Tsuglagkhang.

The delegation: Juku Kalle Raid, member of Estonian Parliament and Estonia’s Foreign Affairs Commission; Jenn Polluaas, Member of Estonian Parliament and its Former Speaker; Tarmo Tamm, Member of Estonian Parliament, and Andres Herkel, Former Estonian MP and Journalist, partook in the press meeting and made an appeal to China, urging for the immediate release of the 11th Panchen Lama, while expressing their unwavering support for the cause of Tibet.

Chair of the Estonian Parliamentary Support Group for Tibet, Juko Kalle Raid, emphasised the significance of this press conference for the Estonian nation and its people. He remarked that His Holiness the Dalai Lama had visited Estonia on three separate occasions, and each time, a significant number of Estonians warmly received Him. The people of Estonia have consistently shown a deep admiration and affection for Tibet, and this enduring sentiment will continue to prevail. Given the resemblance between Tibet and Estonia for having undergone similar experiences of foreign occupation, he added, “Despite the challenging circumstances we find ourselves in, it is imperative that we continue to progress and refrain from regressing or remaining stagnant. The system deems the violation of human rights and the act of forced occupation as illegitimate.”

He further assured his commitment to amplifying voices across European countries with increased conviction and impact to seek European nations’



acknowledgement on the Tibetan people's self determination. He stressed that China must refrain from meddling in Tibetan affairs to ensure the continued existence of Tibet's unique heritage.

Following the address of the delegation members, a Q&A session was held with the media representatives discussing the urgent request for China to release the 11th Panchen Lama. MP Juko Kalle Raid responded, "As His Holiness mentioned today (during their private audience with His Holiness), the issue at hand is not just about the Panchen Lama; it is a global matter involving unlawful acts, forced occupation, and the violations of human rights. We are committed to raising awareness on these issues in the European Parliament."

Additionally, he claimed, "The Upcoming election of the European Parliament is on the horizon. I have the necessary criteria to vote for individuals capable of raising these issues and concerns. It is crucial not only to address the whereabouts of the 11th Panchen Lama separately but also to discuss and bring to light the unlawful actions of the Chinese government." Furthermore, he made a noteworthy point about his experiences under Soviet Union rule, expressing his complete distrust of the authoritarian government, including the Chinese government.

The other members the delegation also participated in the press conference and shared their concerns over the PRC's continued repression inside Tibet.

### **Very informal talks with China on since last year, but have no immediate expectations: Tibet's govt-in-exile head**

25 April 2024, First Post

The political head of Tibet's government-in-exile Penpa Tsering has confirmed that his interlocutor are holding "very informal" talks with China but expressed there is no immediate expectation of a forward movement.

The formal dialogue process had hit a roadblock over a decade ago in view of anti-China protests in Tibet and Beijing's hardline approach towards the Buddhist region.

"We have had back-channel (engagement) since last year. But we have no immediate expectations from it. It has to be a long-term (one)," PTI quoted the Sikyong or political head of Tibet's government-in-exile Penpa Tsering as saying to journalists, insisting that the talks are "very informal".

"I have my interlocutor who deals with people in Beijing. Then there are other elements also trying to reach out to us," the head of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) said.

Between 2002 and 2010, representatives of the Dalai Lama engaged in nine rounds of dialogue with the Chinese government, yielding no tangible results.

However, formal discussions have been dormant since that time.

A prominent senior Tibetan leader hinted that informal discussions are underway to reinvigorate the broader dialogue, recognising it as the sole avenue to address the Tibetan situation.

Regarding the strained relations between New Delhi and Beijing after the eastern Ladakh dispute in 2020, a leader from the Central Tibetan Administration noted that Chinese aggression along the Indian border has underscored the significance of the Tibetan issue in India.

"With the Chinese belligerence on the border, the Tibetan issue also naturally gets highlighted in India," PTI quoted him as saying.

At the same time, Tsering pitched for greater support from India to the Tibetan cause.

"Now you can see that India's foreign policy is becoming more vibrant. India's influence around the world is also growing. In that sense, we would definitely want India to be a little more vocal towards the Tibetan cause," he said.

After a failed anti-Chinese uprising in 1959, the 14th Dalai Lama fled Tibet and came to India where he set up the government-in-exile. The Chinese government officials and the Dalai Lama or his representatives have not met in formal negotiations since 2010.

Beijing has been maintaining that it freed "serfs and slaves" from a brutal theocracy in Tibet and is bringing the region on the path of prosperity and modernisation.

China has in the past accused the Dalai Lama of indulging in "separatist" activities and trying to split Tibet and considers him a divisive figure.

However, the Tibetan spiritual leader has insisted that he is not seeking independence but "genuine autonomy for all Tibetans living in the three traditional provinces of Tibet" under the "Middle-Way approach".

Relations between the two sides strained further due to protests against China in Tibetan areas in 2008.

The Dalai Lama has been favouring resolution of the Tibetan issue through dialogue.

"I am always open to talks with China and have made it clear years ago that we are not seeking complete independence and would remain a part of the People's Republic of China (PRC)," the Dalai Lama said last year.

In his remarks, Tsering suggested that less complicated relations between India and China could help in moving positively toward the resolution of the Tibetan issue.

In this context, he also highlighted the deep-rooted connection between Indian and Tibetan culture and heritage.

"His Holiness the Dalai Lama keeps saying that 'I am a son of Indian soil' and that 'I'm a messenger of Indian wisdom'. So we are close to Indian culture but not to China's," he said.

### **Tibetan govt-in-exile holds back-channel informal dialogue with China**

25 April 2024, Business Standard



From 2002 To 2010, Tibetan Spiritual Leader The Dalai Lama's Representatives And The Chinese Government Held Nine Rounds Of Dialogue That Did Not Produce A Concrete Outcome. No Formal Talks Have Been Held Since Then | (Photo: PTI)

The Tibetan government-in-exile and China are holding back-channel talks, signalling signs of willingness by both sides to re-engage over a decade after the formal dialogue process hit a dead end in view of anti-China protests in Tibet and Beijing's hardline approach towards the Buddhist region.

The Sikyong or political head of Tibet's government-in-exile, Penpa Tsering, confirmed the holding of informal talks and said his interlocutor has been dealing with "people in Beijing" but there is no immediate expectation of a forward movement.

"We have had back-channel (engagement) since last year. But we have no immediate expectations from it. It has to be a long-term (one)," Tsering told a small group of journalists, insisting that the talks are "very informal".

"I have my interlocutor who deals with people in Beijing. Then there are other elements also trying to reach out to us," the head of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) said.

From 2002 to 2010, Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama's representatives and the Chinese government held nine rounds of dialogue that did not produce a concrete outcome. No formal talks have been held since then.

Another senior Tibetan leader indicated that the back-channel talks are aimed at reviving the overall dialogue process as it is the only way out to resolve the Tibetan issue.

The CTA leader, referring to the frosty ties between New Delhi and Beijing following the eastern Ladakh row in 2020, said the Chinese belligerence along the Indian border highlighted the Tibetan issue in India.

"With the Chinese belligerence on the border, the Tibetan issue also naturally gets highlighted in India," he said.

At the same time, Tsering pitched for greater support from India for the Tibetan cause.

"Now you can see that India's foreign policy is becoming more vibrant. India's influence around the world is also growing. In that sense, we would definitely want India to be a little more vocal towards the Tibetan cause," he said.

After a failed anti-Chinese uprising in 1959, the 14th Dalai Lama fled Tibet and came to India where he set up the government-in-exile. The Chinese government officials and the Dalai Lama or his representatives have not met in formal negotiations since 2010.

Beijing has been maintaining that it freed "serfs and slaves" from a brutal theocracy in Tibet and was bringing the region on the path of prosperity and modernisation.

China has in the past accused the Dalai Lama of indulging in "separatist" activities and trying to split Tibet and considers him a divisive figure.

However, the Tibetan spiritual leader has insisted that he is not seeking independence but "genuine autonomy for all Tibetans living in the three traditional provinces of Tibet" under the "Middle-Way approach".

Relations between the two sides strained further due to protests against China in Tibetan areas in 2008.

The Sikyong also mentioned that India doesn't make statements on Tibet during the periodic review of human rights in China by the United Nations Human Rights Council.

"Normally, other countries look at the leadership of India because India is one country that knows Tibet historically. In that sense we would also like them to be a little more vocal," he said.

In its talks with China between 2002 and 2010, the Tibetan side pitched for genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people in line with the Dalai Lama's middle-way policy.

The Dalai Lama has been favouring a resolution of the Tibetan issue through dialogue.

"I am always open to talks with China and have made it clear years ago that we are not seeking complete independence and would remain a part of the People's Republic of China (PRC)," the Dalai Lama said last year. In his remarks, Tsering suggested that less complicated relations between India and China could help in moving positively toward the resolution of the Tibetan issue.

In this context, he also highlighted the deep-rooted connection between Indian and Tibetan culture and heritage.

"His Holiness the Dalai Lama keeps saying that 'I am a son of Indian soil' and that 'I'm a messenger of

Indian wisdom'. So we are close to Indian culture but not to China's," he said.

### **Tibetans call on India, other democratic nations to press Beijing on whereabouts of Panchen Lama**

25 April 2024, The Economic Times

The Tibetan government-in-exile on Thursday called on India and other democratic nations to press Beijing to divulge the whereabouts of Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and allow an independent fact-finding commission to examine his disappearance in China nearly 29 years ago. The demand was made at a grand event held in this Himachal Pradesh town commemorating the 35th birth anniversary of Choekyi Nyima who disappeared just three days after the Dalai Lama declared the then six-year to be the reincarnated Panchen Lama. A joint statement issued by leading Tibetan leaders called on foreign governments and the UN to direct their ambassadors in China to meet with the 11th Panchen Lama and ascertain his whereabouts and wellbeing.

The Panchen Lama is the second most important figure in Tibetan Buddhism.

"Our most pressing concern is whether the Panchen Rinpoche is still alive or not," said Penpa Tsering, the Sikyong or political head of Tibet's government-in-exile, in presence of hundreds of Tibetans and international delegations.

"If he is presumed to be alive, has he been brought up with his parents from the age of six up till now for the last 29 years? Or had he been kept in a remote environment to become someone who can't speak even in Tibetan? How much the people around him might have abused and tortured him?" Tsering accused the Chinese government of "brazenly violating" fundamental human rights and freedom of the Panchen Lama.

In May 1995, Choekyi Nyima was identified by the Dalai Lama as the 11th Panchen Lama, six years after the death of his predecessor. China had rejected the move and anointed its own Panchen Lama, Gyaltzen Norbu. Tsering said the Chinese authorities should immediately allow an independent fact-finding commission to get access to the Panchen Lama and that he should be given his basic human rights. The Chinese government has not yet responded clearly to questions about the whereabouts of Panchen Lama.

In 2015, it claimed that the Panchen Lama is receiving education like other children and that he does not want to be disturbed by anyone."The Chinese government has brazenly violated fundamental human rights and freedoms of Panchen Rinpoche recognised by His Holiness the Dalai Lama," Tsering said. In their statement, the leading

Tibetan religious leaders hoped that the foreign governments, the UN and the international community will consider the "reality" of the Tibetan situation, especially on the issue of the Panchen Lama's enforced disappearance. In their statement, the leading Tibetan religious leaders hoped that the foreign governments, the UN and the international community will consider the "reality" of the Tibetan situation, especially on the issue of the Panchen Lama's enforced disappearance for almost 29 years, and as someone who has been denied with his human rights, religious freedom, rights of a child and other fundamental rights of movement," according to the statement. The leaders also urged the international community to actively call for the release of Chadrel Rinpoche, a lama of Tashi Lhunpo monastery who was the head of the search committee for the 11 Panchen Lama, as well as other Tibetan political prisoners.

"On account of the dire situation inside Tibet, Tibetans have been resorting to acts of self-immolation, the latest being a 25-year-old Tibetan singer Tsewang Norbu and an 81-year-old Taphun in 2022," the statement said. "The self-immolators have sacrificed their most cherished life in order to draw the attention of the UN and the international community to the critical situation in Tibet," it said. A high-level parliamentary delegation from Estonia attended the event. "Every Estonian feel connected with the Tibetan cause. The issue is not only about Panchen Lama. It is about protecting human rights and dignity of people," said Jukku Kalle Raid, one of the members of the delegation. He said there has been greater understanding now in Europe about challenges emanating from China. "We urge the foreign governments, the United Nations and the international community to pass a motion urging them to direct their ambassadors in China to meet with the 11th Panchen Lama and ascertain his whereabouts and wellbeing," they said. The leaders also urged the international community to actively call for the release of Chadrel Rinpoche, a lama of Tashi Lhunpo monastery who was the head of the search committee for the 11 Panchen Lama, as well as other Tibetan political prisoners.

## Buddhist Leaders from Himalaya Holds Joint Press Conference to Raise Issue of the 11th Panchen Lama's Whereabout

25 April 2024, CTA



Regzin Dorjay, Acting President of the Ladakh Buddhist Association, speaking during the press conference. Photo / Tenzin Jigme Taydeh / CTA

Kyabje Zeekyab Tulku Jetsun Tenzin Thupten Rabgyal, Abbot of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, the traditional seat of the Panchen Lama; Kyabje Lochen Rinpoche, Tsechokling Tulku Tenzing Gelek, Sikkim; and Regzin Dorjay, Acting President of the Ladakh Buddhist Association, jointly held a press conference to call for the immediate release of His Serenity the 11th Panchen Rinpoche who was recognised by His Holiness the Dalai Lama on the occasion of His Serenity the 11th Panchen Rinpoche's birthday.

At the press meeting, Zeekyab Rinpoche read a joint appeal undersigned by himself, along with Kyabje Lochen Rinpoche of the Key Monastery in Spiti, Tsechokling Rinpoche, and Regzin Dorjay. The petition reads, "It is with great concern that we, representing four monasteries and associations from the Himalayan region and the traditional seat of the Panchen Lama, the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, make this joint appeal with following five points to the Foreign Governments, the United Nations, and the International Community:

We urge the foreign governments, the United Nations and the international community to pass a motion urging them to direct their ambassadors in China to meet with the 11th Panchen Lama and ascertain his whereabouts and wellbeing.

We urge the foreign governments, the United Nations and the international community to honor the 11th Panchen Lama with an award recognizing him as a victim of enforced disappearance for almost 29 years, and as someone who has been denied with his human rights, religious freedom, rights of a child and other fundamental rights of movement, residency and action.

In order to enable his early release and as a way to draw attention to his situation, we appeal the foreign governments, the United Nations and the

international community to observe the birthday of the 11th Panchen Lama.

We also urge the foreign governments, the United Nations and the international community to actively call for the release of Chadrel Rinpoche, a lama of Tashi Lhunpo monastery who was the head of the search committee for the 11th Panchen Lama, as well as the very many Tibetan political prisoners. On account of the dire situation inside Tibet, more than 150 Tibetans have been resorting to acts of self-immolation, the latest being a 25-year-old Tibetan singer Tsewang Norbu and an 81-year-old Taphun in 2022. The self-immolators have sacrificed their most cherished life in order to draw the attention of the United Nations and the international community to the critical situation in Tibet. Therefore, we urge the foreign governments, the United Nations and the international community to respond positively to their plea.

The aspiration of the Tibetans in Tibet is for His Holiness the Dalai Lama to be able to return to Tibet at the earliest. Therefore, we strongly appeal to the foreign governments, the United Nations and the international community to consider taking concrete initiatives to support His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration to enable the resolution of the Tibet-China conflict through the mutually beneficial Middle Way Approach.

The foreign governments, their citizens, the United Nations, and the international community have been consistently supporting the Tibetan people. So, we take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude. This five-point joint appeal that we have presented today are in one way also connected to the holistic wellbeing of the several million believers and followers, and therefore, is connected to democratic rights of these many individuals.

We have firm hope that the foreign governments, the United Nations and the international community will consider the reality of the Tibetan situation, particularly on the issue of the Panchen Lama's enforced disappearance case, and consider our appeals positively."

Addressing the press meeting, Regzin Dorjay, Acting President of the Ladakh Buddhist Association, shared his comments on His Serenity the 11 Panchen Lama's plight and expressed dismay over the long disappearance of the latter after being recognised by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He urged the Indian government to initiate dialogue with China concerning the whereabouts of the Panchen Lama and appealed to the United Nations to intervene in the situation. He added, "As a Buddhist leader, I highly doubt the Panchen Lama's current status, as no one has seen him since his disappearance. We must exert pressure on the Chinese government as this violates our human rights. It's a significant loss to



the Buddhist community and sends a troubling message that the Panchen Lama remains missing after so many years”.

Following the address, the speakers answered questions from the media personnel from Tibetan and Indian news outlets assembled at the joint press meeting.

**Statement of TPIE on the 35th Birthday of the  
11th Kunzig Panchen Rinpoche Jetsun Tenzin  
Gedhun Yeshe Trinley Phuntsok Pal Sangpo**

25 April 2024, CTA



Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel reading the Tibetan Parliament in Exile's statement on 35th Birthday of His Serenity the 11th Panchen Rinpoche. Photo / Tenzin Jigme Taydeh / CTA

Today marks the momentous occasion of the 35th birthday of the 11th Kunzig Panchen Rinpoche, Jetsun Tenzin Gedhun Yeshe Trinley Phuntsok Pal Sangpo (Gedhun Choekyi Nyima). It is therefore a day of great importance to be observed with celebrations by all the Tibetan people, both inside and outside Tibet. However, this day has also become one of great sadness for the people of Tibet, as it has been decades since we last saw him or heard his teachings

Gedhun Choekyi Nyima was born on the 25th day of April in 1989, corresponding to the 19th day of the 3rd month in the Tibetan Earth-Serpent Year. His birth took place in Lhari Dzong, located in the Nagchu region of Tibet, to his father, Konchog Phuntsog, and mother, Dechen Choedon. The historical relationship between successive Dalai Lamas and successive Panchen Lamas has been uniquely characterized by mutual recognition of their reincarnations, with each often serving as either a teacher or a disciple to the other. In line with this unique historical bond between them, His Holiness the Dalai Lama assumed the responsibility with deep commitment to conduct comprehensive examinations of all the facts in the Panchen Lama reincarnation process for many years. This was done in strict adherence to Tibetan customs, traditions, as well as religious rituals and practices.

On the 15th day of the 3rd month in the Tibetan Wood-Hog Year, corresponding to May 14, 1995, His Holiness the great 14th Dalai Lama made an unmistakable recognition of the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama. He bestowed upon him the name Tenzin Gedhun Yeshe Trinley Phuntsok Pal Sangpo and composed a prayer for his spontaneous fulfilment of wishes. With this proclamation, His Holiness the Dalai Lama officially recognized him as the reincarnated 11th Panchen Rinpoche.

On May 17, 1995, the Chinese Communist Party government issued an announcement filled with wild and distorted narratives, attempting to argue that the proclamation made by His Holiness the Dalai Lama was illegal and, therefore, void. Furthermore, the Chinese Communist Party government forcibly abducted the six-year-old reincarnated Rinpoche Gedhun Choekyi Nyima along with his parents, other family members, and Chadrel Rinpoche, who served as the Chairman of the committee tasked with searching for the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Rinpoche. It has now been 29 years since their disappearance.

The Chinese Communist Party, which staunchly opposes and disregards any religious faith, installed another boy in place of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima solely to serve their deceitful political agenda. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the Tibetan people both inside and outside Tibet, along with Buddhists worldwide, steadfastly believe that Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, recognized by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, is the true reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Rinpoche. This conviction is unwavering—their faith in him remains unshakeable.

The 10th Kunzig Panchen Rinpoche, Jetsun Tenzin Trinley Jigme Choekyi Wangchug Pal Sangpo, was unwavering in his relentless commitment to the religious, political, and national causes of Tibet. On May 18, 1962, he courageously presented a seventy-thousand-character petition to Chinese Premier Zhao Enlai, detailing the atrocities suffered by the Tibetan people across their homeland. In reprisal for this appeal, the Chinese Communist Party subjected the revered Panchen Rinpoche to vicious struggle sessions and launched scathing criticisms against him. Consequently, he was imprisoned in Beijing for nearly 9 years and 10 months. Upon his release, the Panchen Rinpoche resumed his dedicated service to the religious, political, and national interests of the Tibetan people. In particular, he revitalized the preservation of the Tibetan language and script. The Tibetan people remain immensely grateful to the 10th Panchen Rinpoche for his remarkable contributions and accomplishments.

It has now been 29 years since the Communist Party of China abducted and made the 11th Panchen Rinpoche disappear at the age of six. This action by



the Chinese government constitutes a grave violation of various provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. He remains, to this day, the world's youngest prisoner of conscience. For an entire year following his abduction on May 17, 1995, the Chinese Communist Party denied holding him. In May 1996, China finally admitted to holding the young boy 'under the protection of the government at the request of his parents.' However, the Chinese government has yet to grant any access to him—neither to governmental bodies, concerned organizations, nor non-governmental investigators—to ascertain whether he is even alive.

In fact, the Communist Party of China continues to flagrantly violate human rights and religious freedom in this matter.

Concerning the whereabouts and well-being of the 11th Panchen Rinpoche and his family, pressures have been exerted by various United Nations working groups, committees, and human rights officials. These include the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Committee against Torture, among others.

Despite these efforts, the Chinese government has kept on making efforts to avoid the issue by making unsubstantiated claims. Their responses have consistently been evasive, refusing to disclose any meaningful information, which strains credibility. As a result, we do not trust the claims made by the Chinese government and believe their actions violate international laws.

The United Nations Organization, governments, international organizations, members of parliaments, the global community of Tibet support groups, international human rights organizations, and individual lawmakers worldwide have tirelessly campaigned for the immediate release of the 11th Panchen Rinpoche from his custodial detention by the Communist Party of China.

Similarly, the Central Tibetan Administration, the exile-based Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, and Tibetan non-governmental organizations have repeatedly appealed to governments and parliaments worldwide, urging their support for the immediate release of the Panchen Rinpoche, his family members, and Chadrel Rinpoche.

In this context, the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile has also undertaken and will continue to undertake, international lobbying efforts, particularly for this cause, besides consistently voicing criticisms and issuing appeals to the Chinese government on numerous occasions through the adoption of official resolutions of solidarity in each session.

Remembering the debt of gratitude we owe to His Holiness the Dalai Lama for his great kindness in having undertaken the unmistakable recognition of the reincarnation of the Kunzig Panchen Rinpoche, we appeal to everyone concerned about this issue to consolidate their efforts with a reinforced sense of commitment. It is crucial to grasp the gravity of the situation in which the Panchen Rinpoche is living.

We also reiterate our call to the Chinese Communist Party government that it must be fully transparent in clearing all doubts regarding the true situation of the Kunzig Panchen Rinpoche and the members of his family.

We remain fervent in our prayers and supplication that the 11th Kunzig Panchen Rinpoche Jetsun Tenzin Gedhun Yeshe Trinley Phuntsok Pal Sangpo remains in sound health conditions; that he may swiftly be released from the captivity of the Communist Party of Chinese government; that the entire communities of the Tibetan people and Buddhist peoples may definitely realize the glorious visual blessings of his golden countenance; and that he may thereby be able to resume the role that he has inherited from his predecessors.

In conclusion, we wish and pray that His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the supreme leader of the Tibetan people, the refuge and protector of the sentient beings of all the three realms of existence but especially us the people of the Snowland of Tibet, may live for a hundred aeons; that all his altruistic wishes and desires may be seen fulfilled with spontaneity without any hindrance, and that the just cause of the Tibetan people may definitely be seen to prevail.

The Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile

25 April 2024

### Statement of the Kashag on the Thirty-Fifth Birthday of His Serenity the Eleventh Panchen Rinpoche

25 April 2024, CTA



Sikyong Penpa Tsering reading the Kashag's statement on 35th Birthday of His Serenity the 11th Panchen Rinpoche. Photo / Tenzin Jigme Taydeh / CTA

Today, we are gathered here to mark the special occasion of the thirty-fifth birthday of His Eminence the eleventh Panchen Rinpoche, Tenzin Gendun Yeshe Thinley Phuntsok. On this special occasion, we fervently pray that His Eminence may soon be able to break the shackles of the Chinese government's illegal captivity to freedom and assume his rightful throne of the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery.

It is a day for us to engage in customary festivity to celebrate the Panchen Rinpoche's birthday. Sadly, the Panchen Rinpoche's whereabouts and that of his parents Kunchok Phuntsok and Dechen Choedon and Jadrel Jampa Trinley Rinpoche, who had been appointed chairman by the Chinese government's search committee, remain unknown after they were forcibly abducted by the Chinese authorities on the night of 17th May 1995, three days after His Holiness the Dalai Lama recognised him as the reincarnation of the Panchen Rinpoche.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Rinpoche, considered the sun and moon by the Tibetans, are the two foremost holders of the Gelug tradition of Tibetan Buddhism in history. Not only are they the highest-ranking masters of the Gelug tradition, but they have a long history of spiritual relationship in terms of recognising each other's successive reincarnations, bestowing ordination on and transmitting teachings to each other.

Born in Amdo around the same time as His Holiness the fourteenth Dalai Lama and after being recognised as the reincarnation of the Panchen Rinpoche by His Holiness, they met in 1952. They together visited China and India in 1954 and 1956 respectively. The turmoil in 1959 resulted in their separation, following which the Chinese government appointed Panchen Rinpoche as the deputy chairman of the so-called Preparatory Committee for the Autonomous Region of Tibet. The Panchen Rinpoche had witnessed the atrocious land and democratic reforms, so-called "pacification" of the rebellion, destruction of monasteries, forced disrobing of monks and nuns, the massacre, imprisonment, and torture of hundreds of thousands of Tibetans, and the untimely death of many Tibetans, which brought hell on earth to Tibet. Despite the insistence of his tutor Ngulchu Rinpoche, Ngabo, Geshe Sherab Gyatso, and others, Panchen Rinpoche submitted the 70,000-character petition to the Chinese Prime Minister. As a result, he suffered immeasurable suffering in the Chinese prison for more than 14 years. Following his release from incarceration, with unshaken determination, he tirelessly advocated for the education of Tibetans, the promotion and preservation of Tibetan Buddhism and the rights of the Tibetan people.

On the Tenth death anniversary of the 10th Panchen Rinpoche in 1999, His Holiness the Dalai Lama said, "Panchen Rinpoche has been a hero who has sacrificed his life for the cause of the Tibetan people's culture and freedom, despite threat to his life, and especially for the teachings of Lama Tsongkhapa. This is indisputably well known. We can see it clearly from his 70,000-character petition. In this way, he is an extraordinary person whose aspirations have ripened in time."

"When Panchen Rinpoche was alive, I could think he would do whatever he could to help Tibet. After the Panchen Rinpoche's death, whenever there was a crisis in Tibet, I would think that it was terrible to think that Panchen Rinpoche was not there. If Panchen Rinpoche were here, I would think he would do everything possible."

On 14th May 1995, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, following the traditional Tibetan Buddhist rituals and tests, announced the unmistakable reincarnation of the tenth Panchen Rinpoche. However, three days later, the Chinese government abducted him along with his parents and since then 29 years passed and their whereabouts remain unknown.

Since 1995, the case of the enforced disappearance of the 10th Panchen Rinpoche has been consistently discussed in the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, UN Human Rights Commission's Special Investigation Group on Forced Disappearances, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Special Rapporteur on freedom of Religion or Belief, UN Convention Against Torture, and other committees. Likewise, Members of Parliaments and Governments in the United States, Lithuania, Germany, Czech Republic, Canada, Slovakia, India, Italy, Belgium, Japan, Switzerland, Taiwan, the European Union, United Kingdom, South Africa, Australia, Chile, and Spain among others have expressed their serious concern about the situation of the Panchen Lama and have called for his immediate release.

The Chinese government has not responded clearly to questions about the whereabouts of Panchen Rinpoche raised by the United Nations and the international community. In 2015, the Chinese government's spokesperson claimed that the Panchen Rinpoche is receiving education like other children and that he does not want to be disturbed by anyone. The report from a five-member UN human rights experts in their meeting with the Chinese government on 2nd June 2020, the Chinese government claimed that Panchen Rinpoche received free compulsory education when he was a child, passed the college entrance examination and now has a job. Similarly, on being questioned on Panchen Rinpoche during the 45th session of the UN Human Rights Council held on 22nd September 2020, the

Chinese government's representative said the Gendun Choekyi Nyima is a common Chinese citizen and not the reincarnation of Panchen Rinpoche.

The Central Tibetan Administration has persistently called for the immediate release of Panchen Rinpoche through resolutions passed in the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile and in statements of the Kashag. The offices of Tibet carried out various campaigns to garner support from the international community. Similarly, non-government organisations such as the International Campaign for Tibet and Tibet Support Groups worldwide have initiated numerous advocacy campaigns. The Tashi Lhunpo Monastery has unceasingly carried out campaigns for the release of Panchen Rinpoche. On the occasion of the 33rd birthday of Panchen Rinpoche in 2022, Venerable Zeekgyab Rinpoche, Abbot of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery along with Sikyong met with Nancy Pelosi, the then Speaker of the US Congress and Uzra Zeya, the US Special Coordinator for the Tibetan Issues. They also participated in a testimony in the Canadian Parliament on 5th May. With the coordination with the offices of Tibet, Ven. Zeekgyab Rinpoche carried out advocacy campaigns in Belgium and England, among others. Sadly, the Chinese government has paid no heed to the genuine concern and appeal of the international community and the Tibetans in exile.

Our most pressing concern is whether the Panchen Rinpoche is still alive or not. If he is presumed to be alive, had he been brought up with his parents from the age of six up till now for the last 29 years? Or had he been kept in a remote environment to become someone who can't speak even in Tibetan? How much the people around him might have abused and tortured him, just as the Chinese communist red guards subjected the 10th Panchen Rinpoche through struggle session? Has he been confined within the high walls of a Chinese prison with no communication with the outside world? Or had he been kept in solitary confinement with no sight of the sunlight, just as the 10th Panchen Rinpoche? Was he being tortured by the Chinese government with cold and hunger in a place battered with blizzard? Or is he being forced to work as a slave in a labor camp? Is the Panchen Lama, who has reached his prime age really living a healthy life?

These are the vital questions which remained unanswered?

The Chinese government has brazenly violated fundamental human rights and freedoms of Panchen Rinpoche recognised by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Moreover, it alleges that the appeals made by Tibetans in exile and the international community to restore his fundamental human rights and freedoms are disturbing him. Such tactics to hoodwink the

international community is untenable. The underlying philosophy of the reincarnation system is that one must accept the concept of rebirth. The purpose of the appearance of a reincarnation is to continue the predecessor's unfinished work. Therefore, respecting the international law, human dignity, aspirations of millions of followers of Tibetan Buddhism and their national laws, the Chinese authorities should immediately allow an independent fact-finding commission access to Panchen Rinpoche, who should be given his basic human rights.

Giving free rein to those regimes that brazenly violate international law and human rights is tantamount to neglecting the foundation of peace and justice in the world. Therefore, we appeal to all free democratic governments to take effective measures to secure the immediate release of Panchen Rinpoche. We call on the human rights organisations and supporters of the Tibetan cause to take all possible steps to appeal to their governments.

Taking this opportunity, the Kashag would like to urge Gyaltsen Norbu, who was appointed by the Chinese government, being a Tibetan and someone who had the opportunity to study Tibetan Buddhism, should not become a political tool of the Chinese government's sinister motives. Instead, he must recognise the unprecedented danger threatening the survival of the Tibetan people and Tibetan Buddhism, and fearlessly undertaken his responsibility and not commit any act that would hurt the Tibetans and Tibet's spiritual and political cause.

Finally, we pray for the long life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the immediate release of His Eminence the eleventh Panchen Rinpoche Tenzin Gendun. May the two be reunited soon!

Penpa Tsering

Sikyong

25 April 2024

### **Tibetans from Europe find China's visa-free policy not so free**

25 April 2024, RFA

Four ethnic Tibetan travelers with EU passports say they were questioned for hours upon arrival in China – and two were ultimately deported – despite Beijing's visa-free policy for citizens of several European countries for visits of up to 15 days.

Belgian citizen Thubten Gyatso, who was traveling to meet family in Qinghai province via Shanghai in early April, said authorities detained him and his 6-year-old son for about 18 hours at Shanghai's Pudong International Airport, where at least six Chinese officials took turns grilling him in a small room.

"During the 18 hours, we were provided with only one meal, along with water and a few biscuits," said

Gyatso, adding that he and his son could not leave the room except to use the restroom, during which they were escorted by two policemen, he said.

When authorities searched Gyatso's belongings and his mobile phone, they found pictures of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan flag – both banned in the Tibetan Autonomous Region.

Gyatso explained to them that the leader of Tibetan Buddhism – whom Beijing views as a separatist – is a “global leader, universally respected, with numerous images freely available online.”

“My reverence for His Holiness transcends boundaries, and if the Chinese authorities prohibit my entry into Tibet due to these images, I accept it without regret,” he said.

Authorities also questioned Gyatso about his escape from Tibet to India in 1994, his move to Belgium and his citizenship status there, and details about family members' professions, he said.

After 18 hours, the officials told him that he would not be allowed to return to his hometown because of the photo of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan national flag, Gyatso said.

They then made Gyatso and his son board a plane at 1 a.m. on April 4 to London, where he is currently based.

Attempt to boost tourism

In an apparent effort to increase tourism and foreign investment, China has allowed visa-free entry to travelers from five European countries – Germany, France, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands – for business, tourism, family visits and transit for up to 15 days until Nov. 30, 2024

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs later expanded the policy to citizens of Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, Ireland, Hungary and Luxembourg.

In return, the Chinese government hopes more countries will facilitate visas for Chinese citizens and work with Beijing on networks for faster cross-border travel and the speedy resumption of international passenger flights, according to a March statement by the ministry, citing Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

“This will make it more convenient for Chinese citizens to travel abroad, and make foreign friends feel at home in China,” it said.

But that doesn't seem to apply to European citizens of Tibetan ethnicity.

In March, A French citizen with family in the Tibetan Autonomous Region was denied entry into Tibet and told to redirect his travel to Chengdu to where his family members would have to travel to meet him.

Some Tibetans from Europe have been able to travel to their hometowns to meet relatives, though their families have reported similar accounts of heightened scrutiny owing to their Tibetan background.

In March, authorities at Shanghai's Pudong International Airport interrogated a Tibetan with

German citizenship for six hours before letting him travel onward to visit his family in Tsolho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai province.

“Despite conducting a thorough search of my phone, other tech gadgets and luggage, authorities did not find any photos of the Dalai Lama, so they allowed me to travel to my hometown in Amdo,” he said, referring to one of the three traditional Tibetan regions. The man spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal by Chinese authorities.

But upon his arrival in Qinghai province, police subjected him to further interrogation, he added.

Translated by Tenzin Palmo and Tenzin Dickyi for RFA Tibetan. Edited by Tenzin Pema for RFA Tibetan, and by Roseanne Gerin and Malcolm Foster.

## **Genocidal China condemned for catena of Tibet violations in US annual rights report**

24 April 2024, Tibetan Review

While highlighting China's continued genocidal crimes against the predominantly Uyghur Muslims and others in East Turkestan (Xinjiang), the US State Department's 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, released Apr 22, also cited a long list of human rights abuses against the Tibetan people enduring Chinese rule. The report underscores the need to resolve Tibet's status, said Washington-based International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) Apr 23. China has condemned the report, accusing the US of slandering it.

The report shows that China violated Tibetans' human rights on a massive scale last year. These included torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, censorship, transnational repression, restrictions on religious freedom, denial of democratic elections and much more, said ICT.

The catena of violations highlighted by the report, ICT said, included the following:

- Forcing Tibetan Buddhist monks to sign documents denouncing the Dalai Lama, their exiled spiritual leader
- Disappearing and torturing Tibetan political prisoners
- Requiring job applicants to “align ideologically, politically, and in action with the [Chinese Communist Party] Central Committee”
- Severely restricting Tibetans' travel and freedom of movement
- Harassing and denying opportunities to the families of Tibetan self-immolators
- Depriving Tibetans of internet freedom, freedom of the press, the right to peacefully assemble and the right to change their government through free and fair elections
- Requiring monasteries to incorporate CCP members into their administrative systems. These

members were tasked with overseeing various aspects, including monastic admissions, education, security and finances

– Criminalizing speech as spreading information “damaging to ethnic unity,” “subverting state power,” “undermining national unity” and “damaging the honor and interests of the state.”

Besides, the report shows “that China is severely violating the human rights of the Tibetan people all across the globe,” according to ICT President Tencho Gyatso. “Even inside the United States, China is discriminating against Tibetan Americans. In Tibet, China’s abuses are shocking.”

The report was released by Secretary of Antony Blinken ahead of his Apr 24-26 travel to China.

China condemned the report, calling it politically biased and ideological prejudiced. The human rights situation in China is best judged by the Chinese people, its official globaltimes.cn Apr 23 cited Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin as saying during his press briefing on Apr 23.

The US, despite having multiple affairs to cooperate and coordinate with China, is slandering the country simultaneously, the report claimed.

On the other hand, ICT says the report vindicates the ongoing move for the final passage of the Resolve Tibet Act bill which now awaits full Senate vote before it could be signed into law by President Joe Biden. The bill rejects China’s claim that the historically and ethnographically defined Tibet has been part of China since ancient times; that its legal status therefore needs to be resolved through negotiations with the Dalai Lama, Tibet’s exiled spiritual leader, and the democratically elected Tibetan leadership; and that the US should actively involve itself to help realize such a settlement.

### State Department reports show need to resolve Tibet

23 April 2024, International Campaign for Tibet



New reports from the US State Department identify a long list of Chinese government human rights abuses against the Tibetan people, underscoring the need to resolve Tibet’s status, the International Campaign for Tibet said today.

“These reports show that China is severely violating the human rights of the Tibetan people all across the globe,” ICT President Tencho Gyatso said. “Even inside the United States, China is discriminating against Tibetan Americans. In Tibet, China’s abuses are shocking.

“With Secretary Blinken traveling to China this week, we once again call on him to raise Tibet both privately and publicly during his trip. That includes reiterating to Chinese leaders that they must take part in dialogue with Tibetan officials to resolve Tibet’s status. China’s human rights abuses against the Tibetan people cannot continue, and its occupation of Tibet must come to a peaceful end.”

The State Department released the 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices yesterday, April 22, 2024.

Human rights violations in Tibet

The reports show that China violated Tibetans’ human rights on a massive scale last year.

The violations included torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, censorship, transnational repression, restrictions on religious freedom, denial of democratic elections and much more.

A few of China’s abuses listed in the report are:

Forcing Tibetan Buddhist monks to sign documents denouncing the Dalai Lama, their exiled spiritual leader

Disappearing and torturing Tibetan political prisoners

Requiring job applicants to “align ideologically, politically, and in action with the [Chinese Communist Party] Central Committee”

Severely restricting Tibetans’ travel and freedom of movement

Harassing and denying opportunities to the families of Tibetan self-immolators

Depriving Tibetans of internet freedom, freedom of the press, the right to peacefully assemble and the right to change their government through free and fair elections

Requiring monasteries to incorporate CCP members into their administrative systems. These members were tasked with overseeing various aspects, including monastic admissions, education, security and finances

Criminalizing speech as spreading information “damaging to ethnic unity,” “subverting state power,” “undermining national unity” and “damaging the honor and interests of the state”

In addition, no international NGOs were reported to be active last year in the Tibet Autonomous Region, which spans less than half of Tibet. Government officials showed little cooperation or responsiveness to the perspectives of Tibetan or foreign human rights organizations.



The reports note that ICT expressed concerns over China reportedly collecting DNA from about 1 million residents of the Tibet Autonomous Region, as well as about Chinese authorities withholding household registrations from some Tibetans who traveled abroad, particularly those who went to India, the exile home of the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration.

#### Resolving Tibet's status

The reports arrive on the back of the US Senate Foreign Relations committee voting to approve the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act on April 16.

Known as the Resolve Tibet Act, the bipartisan bill will strengthen US efforts to get China back to the negotiating table with Tibetan leaders for the first time since 2010 to resolve Tibet's status. The bill will also combat China's disinformation about Tibet.

China has occupied Tibet for over 65 years, forcing the Dalai Lama to escape into exile in 1959. Under China's iron rule, Tibet now has a total global freedom score of zero, according to the watchdog group Freedom House.

The Resolve Tibet Act can now move to the Senate floor for a vote. It already passed the House in February.

Earlier this year, members of the House also introduced a bipartisan resolution reaffirming support for Tibetans' human rights—including their right to self-determination—and condemning China's mass arrest of Tibetans who protested a destructive hydropower dam project in Derge (Chinese: Dege) county in eastern Tibet.

#### Blinken's trip

The reports also come as Secretary Blinken prepares to travel to China April 24-26.

Blinken's trip will overlap with the 35th birthday of the Panchen Lama, the Tibetan Buddhist leader whose ongoing disappearance by the Chinese government is mentioned in the reports.

ICT calls on Blinken to raise the issue of Tibet during his meetings with Chinese leaders, as well as publicly in front of the press.

The topics for Blinken to discuss include China's disappearance of the Panchen Lama; its attempts to interfere in the succession of the Dalai Lama; and its responsibility to resume negotiations with Tibetan leaders.

### **The Tibet Support Group of the Riigikogu will pay a visit to the Dalai Lama**

24 April 2024, Riigikogu

The delegation of the Tibet Support Group of the Riigikogu (Parliament of Estonia) will meet with Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso, the Tibetan Government-in-Exile

and the community of Tibetans in exile in Dharhamsala, India.

"The Tibet Support Group in this Riigikogu is the largest of all time, and it has altogether 16 members," Chairman of the Tibet Support Group Juku-Kalle Raid said. "It is understandable because the situation with the native language, education, politics, human rights and freedoms in occupied Tibet is extremely complicated and is becoming more and more grim every day. The cooperation between China and Russia in oppressing other nations has been gathering wind beneath its wings, Iran's actions can be added to this, and of course all this is being noticed," Raid explained.

"The programme is busy and quite likely we will get a closer look at what China has been doing in occupied Tibet," Raid said, and added that the delegation of the Riigikogu planned to meet with the Head and the ministers of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile and to visit the Tibetan parliament.

Besides the Chairman of the Tibet Support Group, the delegation also includes members of the Support Group Tarmo Tamm and Henn Põlluaas, as well as representatives of the Estonian Institute of Human Rights and the Tibetan Institute, and Estonian journalists.

The 14th Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso has visited Estonia three times, in 1991, 2001 and 2011. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 for his peaceful struggle for the liberation of Tibet. He has published dozens of books about the Tibetan Buddhism, several of which have been translated into Estonian. The Dalai Lama is a title that was bestowed to Sönam Gyatso, the Head Lama of the Gelugpa school of Buddhism, by ruler of the Mongols Altan Khan in 1578. After the People's Republic of China occupied Tibet in the 1950s, the 14th Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso went into exile in India in 1959 and founded the Tibetan Government-in-Exile in Dharamsala.

### **Massive Chinese Cyber Espionage of Tibetan Diaspora Revealed**

24 April 2024, Bitter Winter

Documents leaked from private company i-Soon reveal constant attacks against emails and mobile phones of exiles from Tibet, including the Dalai Lama

We all knew that Chinese intelligence agencies keep the Tibetan and Uyghur diasporas under surveillance and harass them in many different ways. However, a data leak from the private company Shanghai Anxun Information Technology Co., Ltd. (i-Soon), which occurred on February 18, 2024, probably thanks to an anonymous whistleblower within the corporation,

revealed that cyber surveillance has now escalated to a higher and much more dangerous level.

On April 18, the specialized research network Turquoise Roof released a detailed report analyzing the leaked i-Soon data, which mentions Uyghur targets but focuses on Tibetans. The leaked data reveal that among the main clients of i-Soon are "the Chinese police, the People's Liberation Army, the Ministry of State Security, and the Tibetan regional authorities based in Lhasa."

The i-Soon company supports a Chinese intelligence project known as "Poison Carp," which has targeted since 2018 the mobile phones of Tibetans and Uyghurs in exile, including the Dalai Lama himself. The data reveal that in recent years the technology supplied by i-Soon has achieved a much higher level of sophistication. Some of the vulnerabilities in cell phones operating in India and elsewhere that i-Soon exploited were previously unknown to Western experts.

In addition, i-Soon technology was used to spy on commercial email used by thousands of Tibetans abroad. It can be safely assumed that whenever Tibetans in the diaspora, including the highest figures in the Central Tibetan Administration, use non-encrypted email, their messages are known to and analyzed by the Chinese intelligence.

The data also evidenced that i-Soon technology was used to spy on pro-democracy activists in Hong Kong and even on entering the private mailboxes and cell phones of foreign officials, including some working for the police of independent Mongolia and for India's customs agencies.

Experts warn that Chinese cyber espionage technology appears to be much more advanced than Western intelligence had previously assumed. The i-Soon company was believed to be a comparatively minor player and its technology was not properly analyzed before the February 2024 leak.

Other opponents of China may also safely assume that their cell phones and non-encrypted emails are regular targets of Chinese espionage.

### **Chinese government tries to destroy Buddhism, but Chinese people show interest in it**

22 April 2024, The Tibet Post

His Holiness the Dalai Lama gives a teaching to Mongolians, Tibetans and people from all over the world in Dharamshala on Friday. His Holiness said: "The Chinese Communists have tried to destroy Buddhism, but many other people in China are showing an interest in Buddhism. Bodhichitta is very precious. It brings peace of mind. It is a powerful way of serving others."

His Holiness the Dalai Lama begins the first day of the two-day teachings on "100 Deities of Tushita

Heaven" at the request of Lamiin Gegeen Teaching Mongol Sunchoi Organising Committee and estimated 6100 of Buddhists and well-wishers from 72 countries gathered to listen his teaching, at Tibetan Main Temple (Thekchen Choeling Tsuglakhang) in Dharamshala, HP, India on April 19, 2024.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama begins his speech by saying, "Today, we have an opportunity to hold a discourse on the Dharma. When I look back, I have tried to preserve the Dharma traditions that flourished in Tibet. I have spoken up to protect the environment, to secure peace in the world and to encourage inter-religious harmony."

"Those of us gathered here are all followers of the same Buddha. We uphold the Nalanda Tradition, the complete teaching of the Buddha, which we kept alive in Tibet, Mongolia and the Himalayan regions. I have had dreams that clearly indicate I am an incarnation of King Trisong Detsen and I have done my best to preserve the tradition established under his direction. I would like to thank all of you for the trust you have placed in me," the spiritual leader of Tibet told the gathering.

His Holiness addressed the congregation on the second day of the teaching and said, "Today, we have here Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhists, as well as people from elsewhere who are interested in learning about Buddhist teachings. They are attracted by their discovery that Buddhism is based on reason and has a bearing on peace of mind as well as peace in the world."

"We Tibetans here are living in exile because we lost our country. But where we are doesn't matter that much because we rely on the Nalanda Tradition that the great Indian master Shantarakshita established in Tibet at the invitation of King Trisong Detsen. This tradition has spread all over Tibet and the Himalayan region. Conditions may change but we have a custom of responding to each other warm-heartedly. This is something worth preserving," the Tibetan spiritual leader said.

"Tibetans in Tibet continue to wish to follow the tradition introduced by Shantarakshita, and they place their trust in me. Not only in Tibet, but also in mainland China, growing numbers of people are taking an interest in Tibetan Buddhism and its essence—warmheartedness. Tibetan Buddhism includes a thorough understanding of the workings of the mind and emotions, which interests scientists. Other people are keen to know more about training the mind and tackling their emotions," His Holiness explained.

"My Dharma friends, it is good to remember that we are able to study and practice now due to the traditions passed down by past masters. The Chinese Communists have tried to destroy Buddhism, but many other people in China are showing an interest in Buddhism. We Tibetans need to think carefully

about the significance of sharing what we know of the Buddha's teachings with interested Chinese," the spiritual leader told the gathering.

He declared: "Bodhichitta is very precious. It brings peace of mind. It is a powerful way of serving others. There is the Seven-fold Cause and Effect method and the more powerful Equalizing and Exchanging Self and Others approach. Taking account of all sentient beings and cultivating the mind that cherishes others more than oneself is powerfully transformative. It brings confidence and peace."

"Like us, all human beings wish to be happy. We are the same. That's why we need to be warm-hearted to everyone. Cherishing others is the source of all good qualities. Cherishing only ourselves is a source of misery. We survive due to the kindness of others, therefore, showing kindness and good heartedness are the simple key to happiness," His Holiness concluded.

### Why a Tibetan lama visiting Bhutan is significant

21 April 2024, First Post

A few years ago, during a visit to Drukyl, the Land of the Dragon, as Bhutan is locally known, I had the occasion to meet a group of Bhutanese scholars and historians belonging to a local think tank. During the course of the discussion, the term "our northern neighbour" kept coming up in the conversation.

As I was wondering why the Bhutanese were not naming China, I asked an Indian friend accompanying me, "Why does nobody name China?" My friend explained that as a 'small' (by size at least) country, Drukyl does not like even to pronounce the name of its northern neighbour.

A formula used by the 13th Dalai Lama as he was chased out of his country by a Chinese warlord in 1910 returned to my mind: "The big insect always eats small insects."

In the past, Tibet played the role of 'big insect' for Bhutan, the southern neighbour.

Until very recently, Thimphu has been extremely wary of the Tibetans; for example, the Dalai Lama has never been permitted to visit the Land of Dragon, even 65 years after he took refuge in India.

The recent visit to Bhutan by one of the highest Tibetan lamas should be seen in this background.

Sakya Trichen Known as His Holiness Kyabgon Gongma Trichen Rinpoche, the respected lama, served as the 41st head (Trizin) of the Sakya School of Tibetan Buddhism from 1951 until March 2017, when he handed over his responsibilities as throneholder to a successor.

His biography says: "His Holiness Sakya Trichen [former throne-holder] is renowned throughout the world for the brilliance and clarity of his teachings and his fluency and precise command of English.

Receiving teachings directly from His Holiness carries a special lineage of blessings from the founders of the Sakya Order as well as from Manjushri himself."

It speaks of an unbroken lineage dating back to 1073 AD: "Since this celestial race descended upon earth over one thousand years ago, the lineage remains unbroken to this day. Many illustrious masters and practitioners have appeared in the lineage, including the Five Great Masters of the Sakya Order."

Sakya Trichen is a member of the Khon noble family, which founded the Sakya School in the eleventh century and ruled over Tibet for centuries. The present Sakya Trichen is said to be a manifestation of Manjusri, the Buddha of transcendent wisdom.

First relocated in Darjeeling in 1959, the Lama soon shifted to Rajpur, near Dehradun, from where he reestablished the Sakya monastery and preserved his lineage's tradition.

#### The Visit

Sakya Trichen left India for his inaugural visit to Bhutan on April 9 this year. As he arrived at the Paro Airport, he was received by Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche, one of his foremost disciples, who apparently organised the visit.

Incidentally, Khyentse is not only a renowned religious teacher but also a filmmaker (he directed the hugely successful "The Cup"), a photographer, and a football fan. Khyentse was born in 1961 into a 'hard-core Buddhist family' in the 'staunchly Buddhist country' of Bhutan.

At the age of seven, he was recognised by the same Sakya Trichen as the main incarnation of the unrivaled Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Chökyi Lodrö, the spiritual heir of one of the most influential and admired 19th century 'Rime' (non-sectarian) traditions of Tibetan Buddhism; his biographer says: "At a time when sectarianism threatened to decimate the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, in a unique collaboration with Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Taye and Chogyur Lingpa, Khyentse Wangpo was responsible for initiating and promoting 'Rime' throughout the Land of Snow, effectively breathing new life into all schools of Buddhism, and rescuing many lineages from complete extinction."

#### Sakya Trichen in Bhutan

On April 11 this year, Sakya Trichen emphasised the importance of devotion to Guru Rinpoche (also known as Padmasambhava) in today's world.

The next day, he met Dzongsar Khyentse and other Bhutanese Rinpoches.

Most impressive was the grand procession in Bumthang on April 13, where tens of thousands of devotees gathered to receive the teachings and blessings of the 78-year-old lama. Sakya Trichen took the opportunity to bestow a number of oral

transmissions and empowerments on the local population.

On April 15, he had an audience with the King and Queen of Bhutan and some of the members of the royal family, during which the Tibetan lama was accompanied by his wife, Dagmo Tashi Lhakyi Sakya.

Interestingly, on the following day, he met the Lopens of the 'Zhung Dratshang', or Central Monk Body of the Drukpa Kagyu tradition established in 1620 by Shabdrung Ngawang Tenzin Namgyel, the Founder of the Bhutanese State, who unified the country, codified the laws, and set up the dual system of governance (religious and secular).

In 1637, the Sangha moved to Punakha Dzong, which still today continues to serve as the winter headquarters of the 'Zhung Dratshang', representing more than 7,000 monks, nuns, and 'gomchens' (meditators). According to the Constitution of Bhutan, the Zhung Dratshang is an autonomous institution financed by an annual grant from the Royal Government.

The Tibetan Rinpoche had the occasion to mention the long cordial relations between the Zhung Dratshang and the Sakya lineage since the 17th century.

Why the Visit is Important

There is no doubt that the visit, though not covered by the world media, has important religious as well as political implications.

First, it showcased that despite the differences, the cultural bondage between Tibet and Bhutan remains strong; it also demonstrates the spiritual reverence for a non-Bhutanese respected lama; let us remember that Sakya Trichen belongs to a different school than the main stream Drukpa Kagyu in Bhutan.

In his speeches, the Tibetan lama lauded time and again Bhutan's spiritual atmosphere; he was happy to visit the ancient 'gompas' and enjoyed meeting the common people as well as the religious leaders of the country. He was all praise for the royal family, particularly the "Dharma Raja", the present king (the fifth of the Wangchuk dynasty), whose role was stressed time and again as pivotal to the nation's progress.

Religiously, the Sakya lama stressed Guru Rinpoche's significance; he asked the Bhutanese to pray for the Tantric master of Swat, who strengthened Buddhism in the 8th century in Tibet, and visited several places in Bhutan during his spiritual peregrinations. For the lama, Bhutan, with its ethos of Gross National Happiness, encapsulates a harmonious blend of cultural development, spiritual atmosphere, and aspiration for global peace.

The visit of Sakya Trichen to the famous Paro Taktsang, or 'Tiger's Nest', a monastery built on a cliff wall about 900 metres above Paro valley, is

significant in this context as the monastery is built around a cave where Padmasambhava is said to have meditated. The sage is said to have flown there from Tibet on the back of Yeshe Tsogyal, his consort, whom he had, for the purpose, transformed into a flying tigress.

Political Significance

But the visit also has political significance, at a time when the 'northern neighbour' repeatedly intrudes into Bhutanese territory to bully Thimphu; the visit of the Indian Prime Minister Modi in April was probably linked to this, particularly the fact that Beijing is trying to force a border agreement on Bhutan. Could a Tibetan lama siding with its former 'southern neighbour' make Beijing think twice? Not sure.

One should remember that relations have not always been cordial between the Tibetans and the Bhutanese.

On April 5, 1964, Jigme Dorji, then Bhutanese Prime Minister, was assassinated by some Bhutanese officers.

Three days after the murder, the alleged assassin, Zambay, was arrested; he apparently confessed that Bhutan's deputy commander-in-chief, Brigadier Namgyal Bahadur, had ordered him to kill the Prime Minister.

The then King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk was away in Switzerland; he returned hurriedly, but rumours had already circulated that Yankie, the Tibetan mistress of the King, was involved, being jealous of the power of the Dorji family.

Eventually, a total of 39 army officers, including Brigadier Bahadur, were arrested, and the brigadier was executed by a firing squad on May 17, 1964. Zambay was put to death on July 4, 1964.

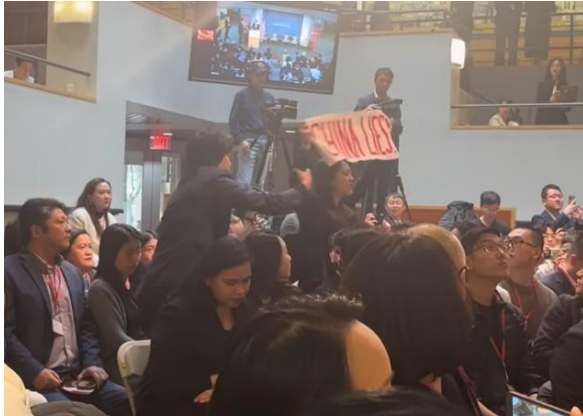
Referring to local reports, the Bhutanese court that convicted Brigadier Bahadur noted: "There is no evidence at all that any foreign power was in any way involved... The full and entire responsibility for this plot belongs to these accused and only to them." Though Yankie was exonerated, mistrust continued to persist.

One could mention many such incidents, showing that the suspicion between the Bhutanese and the Tibetans has continued. With this background, the visit of the Sakya Lama is a most welcome change, and it could be a powerful message to China that 'divide and rule' between traditional neighbours cannot be exploited forever.

Will the visit of the Sakya Trichen be followed by a trip by the Dalai Lama to the Land of the Dragon? It is too early to say, but it would be interesting.

## Chinese Ambassador's address at Harvard disrupted by student activists

21 April 2024, Phayul



Screen grab of a Taiwanese student activist denouncing Ambassador Xie at the event in Harvard University.

A group of student activists representing organisations like Students for a Free Tibet and the Coalition of Students Resisting the CCP disrupted an address by the Chinese Ambassador to the United States, Xie Feng, at Harvard University on Saturday. The student activists voiced their strong opposition to Ambassador Xie's involvement in the erosion of freedom in Hong Kong, the suppression of democracy, support for genocide in Tibet and East Turkestan, and advocacy for military action against Taiwan.

In a widely circulated video, a female Taiwanese student activist from Harvard is seen denouncing Ambassador Xie's complicity in tarnishing Hong Kong's freedoms and democracy, extending to similar intentions in her native Taiwan. "Xie Feng, you come to paint your delusion of a "prosperous China" when your hands are painted with blood. You robbed the Hong Kongers of fundamental freedoms and devastated their democracy. Now in my country, Taiwan, you sought to do the same."

Another female Tibetan student activist in the same video decried China's policies, asserting, "China lies, people die. 80% of Tibetan children are forced into larger colonial-style boarding schools which are aimed at destroying my Tibetan people's existence. Shame on Xie Feng. Free Tibet. Free East Turkestan. You have blood on your hands. Guilty of genocide. Shame on Xie Feng."

In another widely circulated video, a male Tibetan student activist named Topjor is seen holding the Tibetan national flag and shouting, "Free Tibet. How can you be here when the Chinese government is in direct contravention of every human rights law in the world? You are a representative of a government that advocates for genocide. The genocide of the Tibetan people, of the Uyghur people, the

occupation of Hong Kong. You are a travesty. You do not deserve to be here. This is a free country. You cannot project your transnational repression in this country, in this continent. You are a shame, a stain on this institution. Shame on you Xie Feng. Shame on China."

Furthermore, the two female Harvard student activists, who were expelled from the event expressed, "We just got kicked out of our own university. Right now, Xie Feng, the Chinese Ambassador to the United States is inside giving a propaganda speech. We Harvard students went in to tell him that we will not give him this undeserved platform. Xie Feng is spinning bloody, bloody lies touting the "good China story."

In response to Ambassador Xie's address at Harvard University, Students for a Free Tibet issued a statement, asserting, "Ambassador Xie Feng's job is to spread propaganda about China and the CCP, but today the truth was louder. These student activists sent a strong message that advocates of genocide are to be welcome on our campuses and the presence of the CCP on campus is a stain on the institution."

## G7 foreign ministers express concern over China's human rights violations in Xinjiang, Tibet

20 April 2024, Indian Narrative

The G7 foreign ministers on Friday reiterated the importance of peace in the Taiwan Strait and expressed their concern over the human rights violations in Xinjiang and Tibet by Chinese authorities, Taiwan News reported citing a joint statement issued on Friday.

Regional peace and stability are "indispensable to security and prosperity for the whole international community," the ministers said, calling for a peaceful resolution of cross-strait issues.

They also reaffirmed their support for Taiwan's inclusion in international organisations, such as the World Health Assembly and World Health Organisation technical meetings. There is no change in the basic position of the G7 members on Taiwan, they added.

The ministers expressed concern about China's human rights violations in Xinjiang and Tibet and pointed out the "deterioration of pluralism" in Hong Kong. They also urged China to stop activities undermining democratic institutions and the security of communities.

The joint statement follows US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Kritenbrink's meeting with China's Taiwan Affairs Office Deputy Director Qiu Kaiming in Beijing on April 15.



Accompanied by US National Security Council Senior Director for China and Taiwan Affairs Sarah Beran, Krittenbrink stressed the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

He also assured Beijing there was no change to the US "one China" policy, Taiwan News reported.

Despite calls from the international community for regional peace, China has continued to ramp up military activity around Taiwan. The threat of a potential invasion of Taiwan has prompted the US to help beef up Taiwanese defence.

Most recently, US House Speaker Mike Johnson proposed the 2024 Indo-Pacific Security Supplemental Appropriations Act on April 17 that allocates USD 2 billion (NTD 65.07 billion) from the Foreign Military Financing Program for Taiwan and other regional security partners for "confronting Chinese aggression." It also provides an additional USD 1.9 billion to "replenish defence articles and defence services" for Taiwan and other partners.

### US 'repatriates' lost Tibetan Buddhist relics to China

19 April 2024, Tibetan Review

The United States has on Apr 17 delivered 38 cultural relics to China as part of a repatriation deal to help Beijing retrieve artifacts that have been lost throughout the centuries. However, what is disconcerting about this "repatriation" is that "the prized haul primarily comprises Tibetan Buddhist objects spanning from the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) to the Qing Dynasty (1644 -1911)" as reported by China's official news.cgtn.com Apr 19.

The repatriation is part of a 2009 MOU between China and the US relating to the illegal importation of Chinese cultural property, so it is obviously based on the US recognition of Tibet being part of China which illegally annexed the Himalayan country in 1951.

The repatriation of the relics was made to Chinese officials on Apr 17 at a handover ceremony held at the Chinese consulate general in New York City.

During China's invasion of Tibet from late 1949 and especially during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), Chinese officials ransacked monasteries and temples, as well as the Potala Palace in Capital Lhasa, and plundered them of their countless and priceless artifacts which were then said to have been smuggled to antique markets in Hong Kong and elsewhere.

Since signing the MOU in 2009, 504 lost artefacts have been successfully returned to China from the US in 15 batches, the scmp.com Apr 19 cited Li Qun, director general of the Chinese National Cultural Heritage Administration (NCHA), as saying said during the ceremony.

These unwavering efforts, coupled with intensified global cooperation, have yielded major gains, with over 150,000 artifacts retrieved through more than 300 repatriation missions since 1949, said the news.cgtn.com report.

The report cited the Chinese Society of Cultural Relics as saying that over 10 million Chinese artifacts had been displaced overseas since the Opium War in 1840, a consequence of warfare and illicit trade. It did not refer to the Cultural Revolution period plunders of artifacts in Tibet by communist Chinese officials.

The question is, will the US continue to "repatriate" to China lost or stolen Tibetan artifacts should its Congress pass the ongoing "Resolve Tibet Act" which recognized Tibet as an occupied country and whose legal status remains to be resolved under international law?

### Dalai Lama's sister receives award for educating Tibetans in exile

19 April 2024, Tibetan Review

Sue Ott Rowlands (L), president of Randolph College, presents Jetsun Pema, the younger sister of the Dalai Lama, with the Pearl S. Buck Award at Randolph College in Lynchburg, Virginia, April 18, 2024.

The younger sister of the Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader the Dalai Lama has received a prestigious university award for her lifelong dedication to educating Tibetan children who live in exile.

Jetsun Pema, 84, received the Pearl S. Buck Award, with a medallion and a cash prize of US\$25,000, from Randolph College in Lynchburg, Virginia, on Thursday.

Pema, revered by Tibetans as "Amala," or "Respected Mother," has built one of the most successful Tibetan educational institutions abroad – the Tibetan Children's Villages, or TCV. The nonprofit organization cares for and educates orphaned, destitute and refugee children from Tibet. Its main facility is in Dharamsala in northern India.

She is the first Tibetan to receive the award given to women who exemplify the ideals, values and commitments of writer and novelist Pearl S. Buck, the first American woman to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature and a champion of women's and children's rights.

"We had some amazing nominations, and when the nominations for Jetsun Pema came through, it just felt like this is [someone] who exemplifies Pearl Buck and her commitments to people of Asia and the children, and her commitment to education," college president Sue Ott Rowlands told Radio Free Asia.

Pema was also the first woman elected to a ministerial post in the Tibetan parliament-in-exile, serving as minister for education.

Officially recognized by the Tibetan parliament-in-exile as the “Mother of Tibet,” Pema worked at TCV for over five decades.

She served as president of TCV from 1964 to 2006 and was instrumental in leading the expansion of schools across India and in caring for and educating over 53,000 Tibetan children who had escaped Tibet and were separated from their families, or who were orphaned or from underprivileged families.

After she retired in August 2006, Pema continued to work on various children’s education projects, including the Dalai Lama Institute for Higher Education in Bangalore, India.

“This award acknowledges the efforts of not only myself but everyone who has contributed to this cause, starting from my late elder sister along with many others who have dedicated their lives to the education of Tibetan children,” Pema told RFA Tibetan in an interview.

**Illustrious list**

Previous award winners include former Irish President Mary Robinson, Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, former First Lady of Egypt Jehan Sadat, former Philippines President Corazon Aquino, U.S. architect, designer and sculptor Maya Lin, and American author Maxine Hong Kingston.

Pema said she would donate her award money to TCV.

“The education we have given to our young people has benefited them greatly and has empowered them ... and that is encouraging,” Pema said, addressing a gathering of several hundred people, including former students and Tibetans who had traveled from other parts of the country to be at the award ceremony.

At the event, Pema spoke about the mandate she received from the Dalai Lama to ensure Tibetan children received a good education and care when she took over the work initiated by her late sister, Tsering Dolma Takla.

Takla, the elder sister of the Dalai Lama, first volunteered in May 1960 to care for over 50 Tibetan children whose parents were working in road construction camps in north India, creating a nursery home for them, which later expanded into a series of over 15 TCV schools across India under Pema’s leadership. Pema has received several global honors, including the World’s Children’s Prize for the Rights of the Child in Sweden in 2006, the Maria Montessori Award in Italy in 2010, and a UNESCO Medal in 1999.

She also received the esteemed Nari Shakti Puraskar award in 2018 from the Indian government, which

recognizes women or institutions dedicated to advancing women’s empowerment.

Translated by Tenzin Dickyi with additional reporting by Passang Dhonden for RFA Tibetan. Edited by Tenzin Pema for RFA Tibetan, and by Roseanne Gerin and Malcolm Foster.

## Former political prisoner shares testimonial of her suffering in Chinese prison

19 April 2024, Phayul



Former Tibetan political prisoner Namkyi speaking at the press conference at the CTA compound in Dharamshala on April 19, 2024 (Photo/CTA)

Former Tibetan political prisoner Namkyi, who escaped into exile last year shared a gripping testimonial of her suffering and persecution under Chinese occupation in Tibet, at a press briefing on Friday, at the exile Tibetan government’s compound here.

Speaking to reporters, Namkyi recounted her upbringing in Charo village, Ngaba County, eastern Tibet, within a nomadic family where she shared the sorrow felt by many Tibetans over the forced occupation by “Red China” and the subsequent exodus of spiritual leaders such as His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Namkyi detailed the challenges faced by Tibetan activists in Tibet, including restrictions on movement and suppression of cultural and religious practices by the Chinese government. She expressed concerns over whether the international community fully grasped the plight of Tibetans under Chinese rule.

She recalled the events of October 21, 2015, at 3 pm Beijing local time when she and her companion held portraits of His Holiness the Dalai Lama as they marched along Ngaba’s ‘martyr’s roads’, advocating for the freedom of Tibet and the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and His Eminence Kirti Rinpoche. Within minutes, police officers emerged, seizing their portraits.

Despite resistance, they were eventually subdued, handcuffed, and taken to Ngaba County’s detention centre. Subsequently, they endured seven months of detention before facing an unjust three-year prison sentence on false charges of separatism. Their time in

a prison in Sichuan Province was marked by forced labour and discrimination.

Namkyi continued, describing the subsequent events of her arrest, detention, and trial, vividly recalling the interrogations, physical abuse, and unjust sentencing she and her sister endured. Their time in prison was further worsened by conditions such as malnutrition, cold, and discrimination, she said.

She further stated, "On 21 October 2018, we were released from prison after completing the prison term and kept at the police station of Pema Lhathang in Ngaba County for a week as concerned authorities called upon our family to write a promise letter for our release. My family was put on a blacklist because my elder brother was also in prison. Despite our release, our expressions and movement were severely restricted, putting anyone we were in contact with at risk."

Last year, in 2023, Namkyi started her journey of escape with her cousin sister Tsering Kyi without informing anyone. They arrived in Dharamshala and reached the reception centre in Dharamshala on 28 June last year.

### **Senators Young, Merkley celebrate committee passage of bill promoting peaceful resolution to the Tibet-China Conflict**

18 April 2024, Giant RealRadio WTCA

U.S. Senator Todd Young (R-Ind.), a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) praised committee passage of the bipartisan, bicameral Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act. The legislation strengthens the United States' policy to promote dialogue between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Dalai Lama to move toward a peaceful resolution of the conflict between Tibet and the PRC. The Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act previously passed the House of Representatives, and the next step is a vote in the full Senate.

"The Chinese Communist Party's aggression towards Tibet is self-serving, with negotiations and even the very definition of Tibet on the CCP's terms. We must refresh U.S. policy towards Tibet, and push for negotiations that advance freedoms for the Tibetan people and peaceful resolution to the CCP's conflict with the Dalai Lama. I am pleased by this vote, and I urge the full Senate to pass this bipartisan legislation and demonstrate America's resolve that the CCP's status quo – both in Tibet and elsewhere – is not acceptable," said Senator Young.

"All peoples around the world have inalienable rights to freedom and self-determination. These principles must guide the actions and relationships of the United States around the world, especially in the

face of our biggest adversaries. The People's Republic of China continues to ignore the basic rights of the Tibetan people, and the status quo is not tenable. The Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act sends a straightforward message to the Chinese government: stop spreading disinformation about Tibet and its history and enter sincere negotiations over Tibet's status. We must get this bipartisan bill over the finish line because the people of Tibet deserve a say in how they are governed," said Senator Merkley.

In addition to Senators Young and Merkley, the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act was cosponsored by U.S. Senators Ben Cardin (D-Md.), Mike Braun (R-Ind.), Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), Christopher Coons (D-Del.), Mitt Romney (R-Utah), Tina Smith (D-Minn.), Tim Kaine (D-Va.), Jim Risch (R-Idaho), and Mike Crapo (R-Idaho). The House version of the bill was led by U.S. Representatives Jim McGovern (D-MA-02) and Michael McCaul (R-TX-10).

### **Sikyong Penpa Tsering Calls on Legislators, Addresses Tibetan Community in Vermont and Boston**

18 April 2024, CTA



Following the conclusion of his official engagements in Toronto and Montreal, Sikyong Penpa Tsering proceeded with his official engagements in North America, specifically in Vermont and Boston. During this leg of his visit, he participated in public talks, engaged with young individuals, and held meetings with congressional and legislative representatives.

In the morning of April 12, Sikyong met with Senator Peter Welch, David Scherr, the State Director at the Office of Representative Becca Balint, and staff from Burlington Mayor Emma Mulvaney-Stanak's office in the US state of Vermont. During these meetings, Sikyong conveyed the urgent situation in Tibet, highlighting China's efforts to eradicate Tibet's

distinct culture, identity, and assimilate the Tibetan people.

Following these meetings, Sikyong interacted with local Tibetan youths, discussing Tibet's historical significance, the Tibetan plateau's history, as well as its natural environment.

Later in the evening, Sikyong was welcomed in the traditional Tibetan manner, with a cultural dance performance by the regional Tibetan association. After a summary of activities by the association's president, Tsering Yangkyi and a welcome speech by Representative Dr. Namgyal Choedup of the Office of Tibet, North America, Sikyong addressed the local Tibetan residents gathered there.

Sikyong commended the efforts of the regional Tibetan association in organising meetings with officials and local authorities, despite their small team, appreciating their efficiency during the brief duration of his visit. He outlined the primary objectives of his North America visit, including discussing the responsibilities of the Central Tibetan Administration and China's policies aimed at assimilating Tibetan religion, culture, and language, along with the current situation in Tibet. Sikyong attributed the increased attention to the Tibetan cause in recent years to the influence of His Holiness, and he explained the policies and activities of the current Kashag, followed by an open Q&A session with the public.

On 13 April, Sikyong arrived in Boston, where he delivered a speech to local Tibetan residents at the regional Tibetan assembly hall. He was warmly welcomed, followed by a recap of activities by the President of the Regional Tibetan Association of Boston, Yama, and a welcoming address by Representative Dr. Namgyal Choedup.

During his speech, Sikyong reflected on his extensive travels over the past two years, visiting 24 countries on official visits, and underscored the unique nature of the exile government, which no other refugee community possesses, attributing this achievement to His Holiness's visionary leadership. He discussed the priorities and policies of the 16th Kashag, strategies for enhancing the stability and efficiency of departments within the Central Tibetan Administration, and the Middle Way Policy. Afterwards, Sikyong participated as the chief guest in a fundraising dinner organised by the regional Tibetan association.

In the morning of 14 April, Sikyong Penpa Tsering engaged in an interactive session with Tibetan youths in Boston, focusing on topics such as Tibetan history and environmental issues to enrich their knowledge and foster engagement. Following this session, he promptly departed for Washington DC, where he met with officials from the State Department and members of the legislative assembly.

## Report: Government-linked hackers in China target exiled Tibetan leaders

18 April 2024, VOA News

A new report by a team of Tibet-focused cybersecurity analysts details how hackers with links to the Chinese government are using cyber espionage tactics to target members of the Tibetan government-in-exile and the office of the Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama.

"Spyware-as-a-Service," which was released Thursday, uses information from an enormous data leak in February from Chinese cybersecurity firm I-Soon. According to the report, hackers have been targeting the mobile phones of officials from the Central Tibetan Administration, or CTA, since 2018 and the large amount of information Chinese hackers have collected could pose significant security risks to them and those in their social networks.

That targeting, "represents a significant shift in the tactics used by threat actors, signaling an adaptation to modern communication methods and an understanding of the increasing reliance on mobile devices for both personal and professional activities," the report said. Tibet-focused research network Turquoise Roof published the report.

The February data dump was a treasure trove of information about China's cyber espionage and other activities. Leaked documents revealed that private firm I-Soon's clients include the Chinese police, China's Ministry of Public Security, and the People's Liberation Army. The leaked information also detailed tools and tactics used by the organization and connections among hacking groups in China.

'Tip of an iceberg'

These new findings provide a glimpse into "the sprawling cyber espionage apparatus" that China has used to target ethnic minorities over the last few decades, says Greg Walton, senior investigator at U.K.-based security consulting firm Secdev Group.

"While the revelation is only the tip of an iceberg, it's a very revealing one," said Walton, who is the report's author.

"The findings help us learn more about the opaque system [that the Chinese authorities] have been using to target the West," he told VOA by phone.

One leaked white paper described in the report focused on how I-Soon used compromised e-mail inboxes of exiled Tibetan authorities to demonstrate how their system can satisfy the demand of China's intelligence agencies to "mine through substantial volumes of intercepted email data."

"The platform is engineered to facilitate investigations into an individual's 'interpersonal



network' and to intricately map the social networks of targeted individuals," the report wrote.

Walton said the white paper offers rare insight into the "capabilities of the Chinese party-state."

"[Since] we know that I-Soon has been selling their services to Chinese intelligence agencies, including the public security bureau in Tibet, we make the point in the report that the harvested social network analysis from the exiles' inboxes could be sold to the authorities in Tibet," he told VOA.

In his view, Chinese authorities could incorporate "the web of personal and professional connections" identified from the compromised e-mail inboxes of exiled Tibetan officials into the big data policing platform that they use to crack down on the local community in Tibet.

"The platform is instrumental in a campaign that criminalizes even moderate cultural, religious expressions, language rights advocacy and surfaces links to exile Tibetan networks," Walton said.

In response to the report's findings, the Chinese Embassy in Washington said Beijing has "always firmly opposed and cracked down on all forms of cyber hacking" according to law.

The accusation from the report "is a complete reversal of black and white," Liu Pengyu, the spokesperson of the Chinese Embassy, told VOA in a written response.

A long history of threats from Chinese cyber espionage

The CTA and the Tibetan diaspora community have been targets of Chinese cyber espionage for more than a decade. In 2008, an extensive cyber operation called "GhostNet," which is connected to a specialized division of the People's Liberation Army, caused serious problems across the Tibetan community.

Between November 2018 and May 2019, some senior members of Tibetan groups received malicious links in tailored WhatsApp text exchanges with operators disguised as NGO workers and other fake personas, according to research conducted by the University of Toronto's Citizen Lab.

According to Turquoise Roof's report, the escalation of cyber operations against the CTA by China's military and intelligence services is "in step with" the exiled Tibetan government's increased investment in its digital presence and reliance on digital systems for interacting with the diaspora community.

Some Tibetan organizations have been conducting training to enhance their resilience against Chinese cyberattacks.

"The Tibet Action Institute provides tech assistance to exiled Tibetan organizations and they often teach us about the security measures we can adopt to prevent our accounts or digital devices from being hacked," Ngawang Lungtok, a researcher at the Tibetan

Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, told VOA by phone.

The CTA has also been focusing on upgrading its technical capacity and offering orientations to all Tibetan officials in recent years.

"The Tibetan Computer Resource Center offers training and workshops regularly," Tenzin Lekshay, the spokesperson of the CTA, told VOA in a written response.

Walton adds that the CTA even sent people to the United States for specialized training.

"The CTA has some good people trained in the U.S. and is now in the position to help tackle risks extended from Chinese cyberattacks," he said.

The report says the I-Soon leak offers significant insight into the Chinese authorities' use of AI-driven surveillance systems to "enforce political controls" within and beyond its border. It also showcases Beijing's efforts to "refine its espionage capabilities" by using novel intelligence tactics against vulnerable populations like the Tibetans before global deployment. Considering the impact of cyber espionage on the Tibetans, Walton said he believes investing in the protection of vulnerable populations from digital transnational repression "is an example of" aligning traditional security with human rights advocacy.

### Why China is blocking the Dalai Lama's Sri Lanka visit

18 April 2024, First Post



The Sri Lankans have been trying to have the Dalai Lama visit since January 2023

The—70 per cent plus Buddhist—Sinhala population of Sri Lanka fervently wants to welcome the 87-year-old Dalai Lama into their country at the earliest. A group of Sri Lankan Buddhist monks who met the Dalai Lama in Bodhi Gaya in 2022 invited him to come.

Dalai Lama is revered by his direct followers and other Buddhist sects as the 14th reincarnation of the Buddha, Avalokiteshvara. The current monk was anointed at the age of 15 in 1950, the very year the Chinese took over Tibet.

The Sri Lankans have been trying to have the Dalai Lama visit since January 2023. They are trying once more now as fresh efforts intensify on the open invitation from the various Buddhist monasteries.



Many Sri Lankan Buddhists feel the Dalai Lama can help sort out the island nation's economic woes with his wisdom and blessings.

Leading Sri Lankan Buddhist leader Waskaduwe Mahindawansa went on television to state that the Chinese had pressured the Sri Lankan government to prevent the visit.

The Chinese, ever political and strategic, want the Sri Lankan Buddhists to team up with Gandharan Buddhists in Pakistan rather than the Indian-orders that are opposed to the Chinese. And certainly, they do not want the Dalai Lama to visit and be honoured.

The impediment to a Sri Lankan visit comes every time by way of China. Beijing's debt restructuring will play a crucial role in obtaining further soft loans from the IMF. This has tied the hands of the Sri Lankan government.

The Chinese still regard the elderly Dalai Lama as a dangerous separatist with massive influence, a living and highly popular symbol of resistance to the Chinese takeover of Tibet.

One of the thorny problems stretching beyond the present incumbent is that the Buddhist monasteries in Tawang, Leh, and elsewhere in India do not agree that the Dalai Lama's successor can be chosen by the Chinese. The Buddhists everywhere are furious at the constant insults hurled by the Communist Chinese against the Dalai Lama, who do not recognise him as a spiritual leader at all, calling him a 'wolf' in monks robes.

The internal facts in Tibet are quite damning. Since 1949, over 1.2 million Tibetans have been killed, over 6,000 monasteries destroyed, and thousands of Tibetans imprisoned. The Tibetans are being relocated to dense city enclaves in Lhasa; their smart phones are monitored; and the Mandarin language is being pushed in place of the Tibetan.

With all this and 74 years of effort, including much infrastructure development and the relocation of ethnic Han Chinese to Lhasa, the Chinese are still not the masters of Tibetan hearts and minds. Similar problems of non-acceptance of unbridled repression plague the Communist CCP in Xinkiang, Hong Kong, against dissidence of any kind in the country, and of course, Taiwan.

The Chinese authorities bristle at everything the Dalai Lama says and does, and are disturbed every time the Dalai Lama travels within India or internationally. Still, the Dalai Lama has been very successful at promoting the Tibetan cause. The Chinese don't like the fact that the Dalai Lama is completely free in India. They objected strongly to the Dalai Lama's visit to the Tawang Buddhist monastery and other parts of Arunachal Pradesh as a state guest in 2016. China, typically and audaciously, claims 90,000 sq km of the state, even today as 'South Tibet'. China is firmly

opposed to the Nobel Laureate and international apostle of spiritual optimism. The fact that the young Lama escaped to India, which gave him sanctuary, is a constant thorn in the flesh of the Chinese side. Even today, Tibetans in occupied Tibet are rarely given Chinese passports to travel. They are specifically discouraged from visiting the Dalai Lama in India, more so since 2012. There is also a ban on openly worshipping him.

China handed out brownie points to relatively smaller countries like South Africa, a part of BRICS, when it was far more important and influential, for blocking a Dalai Lama visit in 2011.

This was widely criticised internally. The Lama was to go to Cape Town on the occasion of the 80th birthday of fellow Nobel Peace Laureate Desmond Tutu, at his invitation.

The Dalai Lama did visit South Africa to meet with Nelson Mandela in 1996. But he was prevented from doing so again before the 2010 World Cup. The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman in 2011, Hong Lei, laid out the unrelenting policy on the venerable monk when he said, 'China's position of opposing the Dalai Lama visiting any country with ties to China is clear and consistent'.

When the Dalai Lama met Mexican President Felipe Calderon in 2011, China said it had 'harmed Chinese-Mexican relations'. Likewise, Beijing was critical of President Barack Obama receiving the Dalai Lama in the White House in July 2011. However, Presidents Clinton and George W Bush also met the Dalai Lama, ignoring Chinese protests. As did Angela Merkel of Germany, Nicholas Sarkozy of France, and Gordon Brown of Britain.

Much was done to impact the careers of Hollywood stars like Richard Gere by backing Tibetan aspirations and regularly visiting McLeod Ganj.

The Dalai Lama fled to India in 1959 on muleback and on foot, just ahead of the Chinese takeover of his Potala Palace in Lhasa. This followed a failed Tibetan uprising against the Han Chinese occupation of Tibet. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, in an admirable act of idealistic courage, allowed the young Dalai Lama and his small band of fellow monks and followers refuge at Dharamshala/McLeod Ganj, in what is now Himachal Pradesh. India signed a document recognising China's takeover of Tibet in 1954.

Yet, in hindsight, Nehru may have had to pay for harbouring the Dalai Lama, by way of the unprovoked Chinese invasion of NEFA in 1962. Of course, it wasn't the only reason. However, it was a shock and humiliation that Nehru wasn't able to survive for long.

Soon, a nucleus of exiled Tibetans and enough monks to form a spiritual organisation grew around the Dalai Lama. More and more Indian and

international devotees and admirers made the trip to McLeod Ganj as the time wore on. For the Tibetans trapped on the other side, in Chinese-occupied Tibet, the Dalai Lama has remained a symbol of hope for 'genuine autonomy' instead of subjugation, over the years, since 1950.

A Tibetan government in exile formed in McLeod Ganj holds elections and thrives to this day, frequently appearing to give its views on Indian television. Its stated purpose is to one day see their way to a free Tibet, or at least a truly 'autonomous' region.

Many of the Tibetans and their descendants have integrated into Indian society, marrying other communities, forming clusters and colonies in different parts of the hills and plains of India.

The Indo-Tibetan Border Force is a formidable military presence all along the LAC with China and is being steadily expanded. By way of contrast, the Han Chinese have had great difficulty motivating the natives of sparsely populated Tibet to work with them in any capacity or help their efforts to man and defend the LAC with India.

Instead, the Chinese have been forced to use Han conscripts from the plains, ill-suited to the rare air and high altitude. Most, including the senior officers, fall sick, and have to be frequently replaced.

China puts out a different development narrative with impressive statistics. Tibet now has a prosperous economy with a GDP of \$31 billion and a per capita income of \$8,000. This is twice that of Sri Lanka and four times that of India, they state. Life expectancy is now 72.19 years. There are 46,000 monks and nuns in over 1,700 monasteries in Tibet.

Critics say these statistics are fudged and a debt-driven narrative. Most of all, there is no freedom of religion. The effort to nurture a phoney Buddhist ethos is to legitimise Chinese efforts to name a state-sponsored Dalai Lama successor.

The writer is a Delhi-based political commentator. Views expressed in the above piece are personal and solely those of the author. They do not necessarily reflect Firstpost's views.

### **Bill mandating US gov't help to resolve Tibet's legal status set for full Senate vote**

17 April 2024, Tibetan Review

A bill mandating the US government to pressure China to negotiate with the Dalai Lama or his representatives or the democratically elected exile Tibetan leadership to reach a settlement on the legal status of Tibet has moved closer to being enacted into law with its clearance by a Senate committee on Apr 16, said Washington-based Tibet campaign group International Campaign for Tibet (ICT). The bill also recognizes Tibet as an occupied country and

will require the US government to combat China's propaganda disinformation campaign on this issue.

The bipartisan "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act" was approved at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee at its business meeting on Apr 16, 2024. The development has coincided with the visit of the executive head, Sikyong Mr Penpa Tsering, of Dharamshala-based Central Tibetan Administration, which is effectively the Tibetan government in exile.

The main Agenda of Sikyong Penpa Tsering's visit to Washington, DC, is to meet with administration officials as well as members of Congress to push for the passage of this legislation which now heads to the full Senate for final debate and possible approval before President Joe Biden could sign it into law, said the ICT on its savetibet.org website Apr 16.

Speaking to the media after the approval, the Chairman of the Committee, Senator Ben Cardin, acknowledged his discussion with the Tibetan Sikyong the night before and said the bill's language was precisely the same as that which the Lower House had approved, according to the CTA on its Tibet.net website Apr 17.

The bill was earlier introduced by Reps. Jim McGovern, D-Mass., and Michael McCaul, R-Texas, and Sens. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., and Todd Young, R-Ind in the two chambers of the US Congress. It was passed by the House of Representatives on Feb 15.

Known as the "Resolve Tibet Act" in short, the bill seeks to make it a US position that the dispute between Tibet and China must be resolved in accordance with international law, including the UN Charter, by peaceful means through dialogue without preconditions.

It also states that the Chinese government's disinformation campaign, claiming Tibet has been part of China since "ancient times", is historically inaccurate. For this purpose, the US government is urged to use public diplomacy efforts to "counter disinformation about Tibet" from the Chinese government and Communist Party, including "disinformation about the history of Tibet, the Tibetan people, and Tibetan institutions including that of the Dalai Lama."

In this connection, the State Department's special coordinator for Tibetan issues is sought to be empowered to work to ensure that US government statements and documents counter Beijing's disinformation about Tibet.

The bill also encourages Washington to coordinate with other governments in multilateral efforts toward the goal of a negotiated agreement on Tibet.

It also encourages Beijing to address the aspirations of the Tibetan people regarding their distinct historical, cultural, religious and linguistic identity.

Significantly, the proposed legislation makes it clear that Tibet includes not just what China calls Xizang or Xizang Autonomous Region, but also the Tibetan regions that currently constitute or form parts of Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces.

**US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations  
Approves Resolve Tibet Bill, the Committee's  
Chair Assures His Support for the Bill's Passage in  
Senate**

17 April 2024, CTA



In photos: Senator Ben Cardin (L), Senator Jeff Merkley (C), and Senator Todd Young (R)

The Resolve Tibet Bill, S. 138, "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act", was unanimously approved on 16 April 2024 by the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

Speaking to the media following the Committee's session, the Chairman of the Committee, Senator Ben Cardin, acknowledged his discussion with Sikyong the night before regarding the procedure to be adopted in connection with this bill and said the bill's language was precisely the same as that which the Lower House had approved.

According to the Tibetan language broadcaster, immediately after the bill was unanimously approved, Senator Jeff Merkley (Democratic Party) and Senator Todd Young (Republican Party) explained the Committee's approval of the bill was a further confirmation of the United States' policy of advocating peaceful dialogue between His Holiness the Dalai Lama or His representative and the People's Republic of China to resolve the Tibet-China conflict. They further stated the bill had already been passed in the US House of Representatives and could now move to the Senate floor.

Representative Dr Namgyal Choedup delivered this great news to the members of North American Tibetan Associations and extended his appreciation on behalf of the Central Tibetan Administration for their commitment to seeking support from the Senators of their respective states and called for continued effort. While ensuring that the Office of Tibet and the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) have been doing their best, the Representative apprised Sikyong has been actively involved in

meetings with lawmakers and government officials during this ongoing visit in the US to advocate for the passage of the bill. He further acknowledged Sikyong Penpa Tsering and ICT Chair Richard Gere's successful meeting with the Chairman of the United States Senate Committee, Senator Ben Cardin, during which the latter affirmed his firm support for the bill's passage.

**China prevents exposure of human rights  
violations in Tibet and Xinjiang in foreign media**

17 April 2024, Colombo Gazette

As Beijing increases its repression of ethnic minorities in China to establish Han domination, the Chinese Communist Party is also devising numerous ways to ensure that the overseas media cannot expose this ongoing violation of human rights behind the bamboo curtain.

The Chinese media is highly censored. To project the false image of China as a progressive country, the mandarins of the CCP must prevent all these atrocities from being exposed in newspapers, news agencies and televisions in other countries.

From the experiences of foreign journalists reporting from Tibet and Xinjiang, the land of ethnic Tibetan and Uighur people, respectively, now under the illegal control of China, and from research into how the CCP controls the foreign media, it transpires that there are essentially two ways of doing this.

One is to stop the flow of information to the outside world from these regions simply by preventing foreign reporters from visiting and operating in these areas. The other is to misguide the foreign media by planting fake news, by ideological brain-washing of journalists in different countries and by intimidating them with draconian legislations purportedly with extra-terrestrial reach.

"Tibet is one of the most restrictive places in the world for Press freedom, with information online and offline tightly controlled and censored by the Chinese government," says a research paper by Sage, a global academic publisher of books and journals. Special restrictions exist on foreign correspondents who travel to the Tibet Autonomous Region and report to Tibetan areas.

Tibetans who act as sources are persecuted. Requests from the Foreign Correspondents Club of China for visits to Tibet are routinely denied. Tours of foreign correspondents to the TAR, few and far between, are group trips closely supervised and coordinated by the authorities.

To prevent the filtering out of the real situation in Tibet to other countries, measures like network shutdowns, internet filtering, social media censorship, confiscation of satellite dishes and shortwave radio signal jamming are adopted. The authorities

persecute Tibetans who provide journalists with assistance without official permission.

A well-known case was of Tashi Wangchuk, Tibetan herder-turned-shopkeeper who in 2018 was sentenced to five years in prison for 'inciting separatism' for having talked to a New York Times reporter in Beijing in 2015. "Some of my sources have been prosecuted and sentenced from three to 16 years. A lot of them have been imprisoned," a Tibetan journalist in exile has been quoted.

Internet filtering and radio jamming help Tibetan news groups reach Tibetan audiences. Frequencies are jammed, and the authorities confiscate satellite dishes. Websites face 'Disturbed Denial of Service' attacks, which typically occur around sensitive political anniversaries of Tibetan people.

The experience of Albanian-Canadian historian and journalist Olsi Jazexhi in 2019, as narrated in *Al-Jazeera*, is a telling story of how China prevents the filtering out of news to the outside world of violation of human rights inflicted on the Uighur Muslims. Jazexhi had joined a media tour of foreign journalists, mostly from Muslim countries, to the Xinjiang region.

"I wanted to defend the Chinese government," he recalled. But he quickly understood that defending the Chinese narrative was a far more difficult task than he had anticipated. They were taken to one of the so-called vocational training centres outside the regional capital of Urumqi. "They said it was like a school but it was clearly a high-security site in the middle of the desert," Jazexhi said.

"They also told us that the people staying there were not allowed to leave. So it was obviously not a school but a prison and the people there were not students but prisoners. They (the Chinese hosts) were portraying the indigenous people of Xinjiang as immigrants and Islam as a religion that was foreign to the region. It was incorrect."

Such media tours, organised at the behest of Chinese President Xi Jinping, are a common tactic employed by countries with something to hide.

Associated Press journalist posted in Beijing Yanan Wang has narrated the subtle ways of the propaganda department of the Chinese government to control reporting in the Uighur Autonomous Region.

"At the airport we had a welcoming committee from the local authorities. They offered us drives in their car and plenty of hospitality. From the moment we arrived, we're followed by at least one car. We were taking photos, and someone suddenly appeared on the scene to say he was a 'concerned citizen.'

He said taking photos was an infringement of his privacy rights. He had this long monologue about privacy rights and about how it wasn't right for us to take photos of him without his knowledge. We asked

him: 'Well, where are you in these photos?' He'd go through all of them. He said we had to delete all of them. 'This is my brother,' or 'This is my place of work, you have to delete it.' They posed as concerned citizens to obstruct reporting."

A BBC team had a harrowing experience on a visit to the Uighur Autonomous region. "Over a period of less than 72 hours in Xinjiang we were followed constantly and on five separate occasions approached by people who attempted to stop us from filming in public, sometimes violently. In at least two instances, we were accused of breaching the privacy of these individuals on the basis that their attempts to stop us had led them to walk in front of our camera.

Uniformed police officers attending these 'incidents' twice deleted our footage and on the other occasion we were briefly held by local officials who claimed we had infringed a farmer's rights by filming a field." The BBC team concludes: "China's propaganda efforts may be a sign of just how damaging it believes the coverage of Xinjiang has been to its international reputation."

Besides expelling foreign correspondents from China, the communist regime is now also trying to influence in its favour coverage in the international media, especially in countries where it has invested in Belt and Road Initiative projects. China regularly conducts exchange programmes for foreign reporters, training for journalists in Chinese cities and regular discussions with foreign journalists in Chinese media unions.

Media contents with official propaganda are provided free to foreign journalists. Bilateral cooperation agreements with media outlets are launched at local levels, and supplements are run in respectable foreign publications.

In 2019, when Italy signed the BRI agreement with China, President of China Xi Jinping signed a series of agreements with Italian media companies. The Xinhua Italian News Service was launched in a MoU between the Italian news agency ANSA and the Chinese news agency Xinhua.

Public broadcaster of Italy RAI reached agreements with China Media Group. "An expanding presence in Italian media gives Beijing a platform to spread its official view while potentially inhibiting more critical debates from emerging," a London-based Henry Jackson Society report says. ANSA ended the agreement in 2022.

In poorer nations the infusion of money is often inducement enough. "A desk, a telephone and regular pay are all positives in countries where these are luxuries," Jeremy Dear of the International Federation of Journalists has been quoted.

Fake news on China is also planted in foreign media outlets, taking advantage of the latest communication

technologies. Appeals to ideological beliefs are made to journalists to self-censor reports critical of China in cities with a communist tradition.

When nothing works, Beijing resorts to threats against foreign journalists to make them fall in line. In December 2023, China placed sanctions on Los Angeles-based research and data analytics firm Kharon and its two lead analysts, according to an Al Jazeera report.

They were barred from entry into China. Assets or property owned by the company and the two analysts would be frozen. Organisations and individuals in China were prohibited from conducting transactions or cooperating with them. The company had reported extensively on human rights abuses against Uighur and other Muslim groups.

China uses the National Security Law of Hong Kong to threaten foreign journalists with arrest and prosecution if they are in a Chinese jurisdiction, even for transit. On March 13, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region government threatened the London-based Hong Kong Watch with treason for critiquing the draconian Safeguarding National Security Ordinance.

### **Bill mandating US gov't help to resolve Tibet's legal status set for full Senate vote**

17 April 2024, Tibetan Review

A bill mandating the US government to pressure China to negotiate with the Dalai Lama or his representatives or the democratically elected exile Tibetan leadership to reach a settlement on the legal status of Tibet has moved closer to being enacted into law with its clearance by a Senate committee on Apr 16, said Washington-based Tibet campaign group International Campaign for Tibet (ICT). The bill also recognizes Tibet as an occupied country and will require the US government to combat China's propaganda disinformation campaign on this issue.

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The main Agenda of Sikyong Penpa Tsering's visit to Washington, DC, is to meet with administration officials as well as members of Congress to push for the passage of this legislation which now heads to the full Senate for final debate and possible approval before President Joe Biden could sign it into law, said the ICT on its savetibet.org website Apr 16.

Speaking to the media after the approval, the Chairman of the Committee, Senator Ben Cardin,

acknowledged his discussion with the Tibetan Sikyong the night before and said the bill's language was precisely the same as that which the Lower House had approved, according to the CTA on its Tibet.net website Apr 17.

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Known as the "Resolve Tibet Act" in short, the bill seeks to make it a US position that the dispute between Tibet and China must be resolved in accordance with international law, including the UN Charter, by peaceful means through dialogue without preconditions.

It also states that the Chinese government's disinformation campaign, claiming Tibet has been part of China since "ancient times", is historically inaccurate. For this purpose, the US government is urged to use public diplomacy efforts to "counter disinformation about Tibet" from the Chinese government and Communist Party, including "disinformation about the history of Tibet, the Tibetan people, and Tibetan institutions including that of the Dalai Lama."

In this connection, the State Department's special coordinator for Tibetan issues is sought to be empowered to work to ensure that US government statements and documents counter Beijing's disinformation about Tibet.

The bill also encourages Washington to coordinate with other governments in multilateral efforts toward the goal of a negotiated agreement on Tibet.

It also encourages Beijing to address the aspirations of the Tibetan people regarding their distinct historical, cultural, religious and linguistic identity.

Significantly, the proposed legislation makes it clear that Tibet includes not just what China calls Xizang or Xizang Autonomous Region, but also the Tibetan regions that currently constitute or form parts of Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces.

### **Central Tibetan Administration Appreciates Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Approval of Resolve Tibet Bill**

17 April 2024, CTA

The Central Tibetan Administration applauds the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's (SFRC) approval of the Resolve Tibet bill, S. 138 "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act". The bipartisan, bicameral Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act received approval during the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's session on 16 April 2024.



The bill also known as the Resolve Tibet Bill reaffirms the US policy of supporting direct dialogue between the People's Republic of China and representatives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama or with democratically elected Tibetan leaders, without any preconditions, to resolve the Tibet-China conflict. The legislation also aims to counter disinformation propagated by the Chinese government regarding Tibet included fabricated narratives about Tibet's history, culture, people, and institutions including that of the Dalai Lama.

The bill approved by the SFRC is a revised iteration of the legislation initially presented by Senators Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) and Todd Young (R-Ind.), and also by Representatives Jim McGovern (D-Mass.) and Michael McCaul (R-Texas) in the House, where it secured passage. Following its approval by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the bill is now slated to proceed to the Senate floor.

During the bill introduction, Senator Merkley stated, "The People's Republic of China continues to ignore the basic rights of the Tibetan people, and the status quo is not tenable. The Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act sends a straightforward message to the Chinese government: stop spreading disinformation about Tibet and its history and enter sincere negotiations over Tibet's status. We must get this bipartisan bill over the finish line because the people of Tibet deserve a say in how they are governed."

Senator Young urged, "The Chinese Communist Party's aggression towards Tibet is self-serving, with negotiations and even the very definition of Tibet on the CCP's terms. We must refresh U.S. policy towards Tibet, and push for negotiations that advance freedoms for the Tibetan people and peaceful resolution to the CCP's conflict with the Dalai Lama. I am pleased by today's vote, and I urge the full Senate to pass this bipartisan legislation and demonstrate America's resolve that the CCP's status quo – both in Tibet and elsewhere – is not acceptable.

In his official X (formerly called Twitter) account, Sikyong Penpa Tsering posted, "Grateful to witness the Resolve Tibet Act pass the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee. This marks a significant first step towards countering China's false narrative on Tibet's history. I thank SFRC Chairman Senator Cardin and all the members for their unwavering support."

Dr. Namgyal Choedup, Representative of Office of Tibet, North America, said: "Tibetans hold the US Congress in high regard and are always grateful for the support of the American people. With today's vote, the United States is once again showing that it is the leader on the international stage when it comes to advancing the just cause of the Tibetans. We thank the members of the committee for moving the Resolve

Tibet Act to the Senate floor, and we call on the Senate to pass this bill without delay."

Sikyong Penpa Tsering of the Central Tibetan Administration has embarked on his official endeavours in Washington DC since Monday, 15 April 2024 as part of his engagement in North America. He has been actively involved in meetings with legislators and government officials to champion the passage of the Resolve Tibet Bill.

### **Senate committee advances bill pushing Tibet-China negotiations**

16 April 2024, International Campaign for Tibet

A bill to strengthen US efforts to get China back to the negotiating table with Tibetan leaders and combat China's disinformation about Tibet can now move to the Senate floor after a key committee's approval today.

The bipartisan Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act was approved at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's business meeting this morning, April 16, 2024.

The approval comes as Penpa Tsering, the exile-based Tibetan sikyong (president), is in Washington, DC for meetings with administration officials and with members of Congress to push for passage of this legislation.

Namgyal Choedup, representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration to North America, said: "Tibetans hold the US Congress in high regard and are always grateful for the support of the American people. With today's vote, the United States is once again showing that it is the leader on the international stage when it comes to advancing the just cause of the Tibetans. We thank the members of the committee for moving the Resolve Tibet Act to the Senate floor, and we call on the Senate to pass this bill without delay."

International Campaign for Tibet President Tencho Gyatso said: "Today's vote shows that Congress is making it a priority to resolve China's brutal occupation of Tibet through dialogue. We look forward to seeing this bill passed by the Senate and signed into law by the president. China needs to get back to negotiations with Tibetan leaders, and this bill will raise the diplomatic pressure on China significantly."

About the bill

The Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act was introduced by Reps. Jim McGovern, D-Mass., and Michael McCaul, R-Texas, and Sens. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., and Todd Young, R-Ind. It passed the House on Feb. 15.

Known as the Resolve Tibet Act, the bill states that it is US policy that the dispute between Tibet and China

must be resolved in accordance with international law, including the UN Charter, by peaceful means through dialogue without preconditions.

Between 2002-10, the Chinese government took part in 10 rounds of dialogue with Tibetan leaders. Since then, China has refused to negotiate in good faith.

The bill also states that the Chinese government's disinformation claiming that Tibet has been part of China since "ancient times" is historically inaccurate.

The Resolve Tibet Act says that the US should:

- Promote substantive dialogue without preconditions between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama or his representatives or the democratically elected leaders of the Tibetan community. The US could also explore activities to improve prospects for dialogue leading to a negotiated agreement on Tibet.
- Coordinate with other governments in multilateral efforts toward the goal of a negotiated agreement on Tibet.
- Encourage China's government to address the aspirations of the Tibetan people regarding their distinct historical, cultural, religious and linguistic identity.
- Use public diplomacy efforts to "counter disinformation about Tibet" from the Chinese government and Communist Party, including "disinformation about the history of Tibet, the Tibetan people, and Tibetan institutions including that of the Dalai Lama."
- Empower the State Department's special coordinator for Tibetan issues to work to ensure that US government statements and documents counter disinformation about Tibet.

Although the Chinese government attempts to shape a narrative that Tibet is only the Tibet Autonomous Region—an administrative region that spans less than half the Tibetan homeland—this legislation makes clear that Tibet also includes Tibetan regions of Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces.

Suspend the Rules and Pass the Bill, H. R. 533, With an Amendment

(The amendment strikes all after the enacting clause and inserts a complete new text)

118TH CONGRESS 2D SESSION

To amend the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 to modify certain provisions of that Act.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 26, 2023

Mr. MCGOVERN (for himself and Mr. MCCAUL) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

A BILL

To amend the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 to modify certain provisions of that Act.

H. R. 533

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) It has been the long-standing policy of the United States to encourage meaningful and direct dialogue between representatives of the People's Republic of China and the Dalai Lama, his or her representatives, or democratically elected leaders of the Tibetan community, without preconditions, to seek a settlement that resolves differences.

(2) Nine rounds of dialogue held between 2002 and 2010 between the People's Republic of China authorities and the 14th Dalai Lama's representatives failed to produce a settlement that resolved differences, and the two sides have held no formal dialogue since January 2010.

(3) An obstacle to further dialogue is that the Government of the People's Republic of China continues to impose conditions on substantive dialogue with the Dalai Lama, including demand that he say that Tibet has been part of China since ancient times, which the Dalai Lama has refused to do because it is inaccurate.

(4) Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights provide that "All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development."

(4) Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights provide that "All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development."

(5) The United States Government has never taken the position that Tibet was a part of China since ancient times

(6) China signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on October 5, 1998, and ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on March 27, 2001.

(7) Under international law, including United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2625, the right to self-determination is the right of a people to determine its own destiny and the exercise of this right can result in a variety of outcomes ranging from independence, federation, protection, some form of autonomy or full integration within a State.

(8) United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1723, adopted on December 20, 1961, called for

the “cessation of practices which deprive the Tibetan people of their fundamental human rights and freedoms, including their right to self-determination.”.

(8) United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1723, adopted on December 20, 1961, called for the “cessation of practices which deprive the Tibetan people of their fundamental human rights and freedoms, including their right to self-determination.”

(9) Secretary of State Antony Blinken, in a May 26, 2022, speech entitled “The Administration’s Approach to the People’s Republic of China,” said that the rules-based international order’s “founding documents include the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which enshrined concepts like self-determination, sovereignty, the peaceful settlement of disputes. These are not Western constructs. They are reflections of the world’s shared aspirations.”

(10) The Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 (22 U.S.C. 6901 note), as amended by the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020, in directing the United States Government “to promote the human rights and distinct religious, cultural, linguistic, and historical identity of the Tibetan people” acknowledges that the Tibetan people possess a distinct religious, cultural, linguistic, and historical identity.

(11) Department of State reports on human rights and religious freedom have consistently documented systematic repression by the authorities of the People’s Republic of China against Tibetans as well as acts of defiance and resistance by Tibetan people against the People’s Republic of China policies.

(12) The Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 (22 U.S.C. 6901 note), as amended by the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020, specifies that the central objective of the United States Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues is to promote substantive dialogue between the Government of the People’s Republic of China and the Dalai Lama, his or her representatives, or democratically elected leaders of the Tibetan community.

### SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.

It is the policy of the United States—

(1) that the Tibetan people are a people with a distinct religious, cultural, linguistic and historical identity;

- (2) that the dispute between Tibet and the People’s Republic of China must be resolved in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Charter, by peaceful means, through dialogue without preconditions,
- (3) that the People’s Republic of China should cease its propagation of disinformation about

the history of Tibet, the Tibetan people, and Tibetan institutions, including that of the Dalai Lama;

- (4) to encourage the People’s Republic of China to uphold all its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights; and

- (5) in accordance with the Tibetan Policy

and Support Act of 2020

- (A) to promote substantive dialogue without pre-conditions, between the Government of the People’s Republic of China and the Dalai Lama, his or her representatives, or democratically elected leaders of the Tibetan community, or explore activities to improve prospects for dialogue, that leads to a negotiated agreement on Tibet;
- (B) to coordinate with other governments in multilateral efforts towards the goal of a negotiated agreement on Tibet; and
- (C) to encourage the Government of the People’s Republic of China to address the aspirations of the Tibetan people with regard to their distinct historical, cultural, religious, and linguistic identity.

### SEC. 4. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

It is the sense of Congress that—

- (1) claims made by officials of the People’s Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party that Tibet has been a part of China since ancient times are historically inaccurate;
- (2) the current policies of the People’s Republic of China are systematically suppressing the ability of the Tibetan people to preserve their religion, culture, language, history, way of life and environment;
- (3) the Government of the People’s Republic of China is failing to meet the expectations of the United States to engage in meaningful dialogue with the Dalai Lama or his representatives or to reach a negotiated resolution that includes the aspirations of the Tibetan people; and

### SEC. 5. MODIFICATIONS TO THE TIBETAN POLICY ACT OF 2002.

(a) TIBET NEGOTIATIONS.—Section 613(b) of the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 (22 U.S.C. 6901 note) is amended—

- (1) in paragraph (2), by striking “and” at the end;
- (2) in paragraph (3), by striking the period at the end and inserting “; and”; and
- (3) by adding at the end the following:

“(4) efforts to counter disinformation about Tibet from the Government of the People’s Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party, including disinformation about the history of Tibet, the Tibetan

people, and Tibetan institutions including that of the Dalai Lama.”

(b) UNITED STATES SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR TIBETAN ISSUES.—Section 621(d) of the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 (22 U.S.C. 6901 note) is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraphs (6), (7), and (8) as paragraphs (7), (8), and (9), respectively; and

(2) by inserting after paragraph (5) the following:

“work with relevant bureaus of the Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development to ensure that United States Government statements and documents counter, as appropriate, disinformation about Tibet from the Government of the People’s Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party, including disinformation about the history of Tibet, the Tibetan people, and Tibetan institutions including that of the Dalai Lama;”

(c) DEFINITION.—The Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 (22 U.S.C. 6901 note) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“SEC. 622. DEFINITION.

“For purposes of this Act, the term ‘Tibet’ refers to the following areas:

“(1) The Tibet Autonomous Region.

“(2) The areas that the Government of the People’s Republic of China designated as Tibetan Autonomous, as of 2018, as follows:

“(A) Kanlho (Gannan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, and Pari (Tianzhu) Tibetan Autonomous County located in Gansu Province.

“(B) Golog (Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Malho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Tsojiang (Haibei) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Tsolho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Tsonub (Haixi) Mongolian and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, and Yulshul (Yushu) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, located in Qinghai Province.

“(C) Garze (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Ngawa (Aba) Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, and Muli (Mili) Tibetan Autonomous County, located in Sichuan Province.

“(D) Dechen (Diqing) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, located in Yunnan Province.”

SEC. 6. AVAILABILITY OF AMOUNTS TO COUNTER DISINFORMATION ABOUT TIBET.

Amounts authorized to be appropriated or otherwise made available under section 346 of subtitle E of title III of division FF of Public Law 116–260 (“Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020”) are authorized to be made available to counter disinformation about Tibet from the Government of the People’s Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party, including disinformation about the history of Tibet, the Tibetan

people, and Tibetan institutions including that of the Dalai Lama.

## **Sikkim CM alleges former state govt. coerced Karmapa’s exit from India**

15 April 2024, Phayul

Ahead of the 2024 Indian Lok Sabha election, the anticipated return of the revered Buddhist figure, the 17th Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje, to India has become a prominent theme in political campaigns in the state of Sikkim. Prem Singh Tamang, the incumbent Chief Minister of Sikkim, alleged on Wednesday that the previous ruling party of the state, the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) led by Pawan Kumar Chamling coerced the 17th Karmapa to leave India by unjustly labelling him a Chinese agent.

Tamang promised the crowd that the government would support a pilgrimage for 4,000 Buddhist monks to the Dominican Republic to receive the blessings of the Karmapa. He criticised the former CM Pawan Kumar Chamling for supposedly pledging to send 4,000 lamas to the Dominican Republic to meet with Karmapa, calling it deceptive. In August 2020, CM Tamang reportedly wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, asking the Indian government to allow the 17th Karmapa to return to India, as reported by The Week. He informed PM Modi that Sikkimese and Buddhist devotees were urging him to let the Tibetan spiritual figure come back for religious commitments.

Tamang reminded PM Modi that Karmapa was granted asylum by PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 2000. He mentioned that restrictions were later placed on his movement within the country, preventing his visit to Sikkim despite popular demands from devotees. He also acknowledged that it was the Modi government that lifted these restrictions in 2018, except entry into the Rumtek Monastery, and expressed gratitude on behalf of the people of Sikkim for removing such barriers. Furthermore, Tamang stated that the public demand for Karmapa’s visit has been growing and urged Modi to consider allowing the Tibetan spiritual leader entry into India as soon as possible.

The former CM Chamling during his chief-ministership reached out to the then External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, asking for permission for the 17th Karmapa to visit the north-eastern state. “I have written a letter to Sushma Swaraj seeking her assistance and cooperation in permitting the 17th Karmapa, His Holiness Ogyen Trinley Dorje, to visit any monastery in Sikkim, if not Rumtek Monastery, to bless our people,” Chamling stated in an interview. He emphasised that the Karmapa’s visit would fulfill

the longstanding demand of the people and the Sikkim government.

The Karmapa obtained a passport from the Commonwealth of Dominica in 2018 to make traveling easier after facing restrictions on movement in India. He serves as the head of the Karma Kagyu School, one of the four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Tibetans and Buddhists in India have been advocating for his return to India where the bulk of his followership is based.

Rumtek Monastery, also known as the Dharmachakra Centre in Sikkim, is considered the main seat of the Karma Kagyu lineage in exile and has become a focal point of a long-standing dispute within the sect. Despite being in exile, the spiritual leader of the Kagyu lineage has not been permitted to visit the monastery.

### **Bollywood star calls on Dalai Lama as she campaigns for parliament seat**

15 April 2024, Tibetan Review

Bollywood star Ms Kangana Ranaut has on Apr 15 called on His Holiness the Dalai Lama at his residence in Dharamshala along with former BJP Chief minister (Ex-CM) Jairam Ramesh Thakur of Himachal Pradesh. The much-publicized Indian actress is contesting as the BJP candidate for the Mandi district constituency seat in the ongoing general elections.

"It was an experience which I'll cherish all my life. I think it is exceptional to be in the presence of such a being who has sheer divinity around him. So, it was very emotional for me and ex-CM-Ji. ... It is something I will cherish all my life," she said, following her meeting.

Last year, on Apr 12, Kangana had re-tweeted a meme which featured the Dalai Lama and read, "The Dalai Lama receives a warm welcome at the White house". The picture in the tweet showed Dalai Lama sticking his tongue out with Joe Biden Photoshopped in front of him.

Sharing the post, the actor wrote, "Hmmm dono ko same bimari hai, definitely dono ki dosti ho sakti hai (The two have the same illness, they can be friends for sure)."

Given the media controversy raised about a news video of the Dalai Lama shown sticking his tongue out to an Indian boy during a public meeting, and the out-of-context suggestions of misconduct sought to be attributed to the Tibetan spiritual leader at that time, Tibetans protested strongly against her, including outside her office in Mumbai.

It prompted Ms Ranaut to clarify on Instagram: "A group of Buddhist people doing dharna outside my office in Pali Hill, I didn't mean to hurt anyone, it was a harmless joke about Biden being friends with Dalai

Lama.... please don't misunderstand my intentions (folded hands emoji)."

She also added, "I do believe in Buddha's teachings and his holiness 14th Dalai Lama has spent his whole life in public service, I hold nothing against anyone, don't stand in the harsh heat, please go home", (with a folded hands emoji again). Ms Ranaut is pitted Against Congress stalwart Vikramaditya Singh, son of the state's late former Chief Minister Virbhadra Singh who had got elected from the Mandi parliamentary constituency in the 2009 general elections and in 2013 by-election. Vikramaditya is currently a state government minister. Virbhadra Singh's widow Pratibha Singh currently represents Mandi in the Indian parliament, having won it in the 2021 election. Voting for the Mandi Lok Sabha (Lower House of Indian parliament) seat, which has 17 assembly segments, is being held together with the Lok Sabha polls on Jun 1. The fight between the two candidates is seen as a tough one. Kangana, who turned 37 on Mar 23, was born in a small town of Mandi district. Her great-grandfather, Sarju Singh Ranaut, was an MLA. Her mother, Asha Ranaut, retired as a schoolteacher from Mandi, and her father, Amardeep, is a businessman. The actor previously visited the Baglamukhi and Jwala Devi temples in Himachal to celebrate her nomination on Mar 24.

### **Representative Rigzin Genkhang Briefs Dutch Ambassador for Human Rights on the Critical Situation in Tibet**

16 April 2024, CTA

Representative Rigzin Genkhang met with H.E. Wim Geerts, Dutch Ambassador for human rights at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. During the meeting Representative Genkhang expressed her gratitude to Ambassador Geerts for his recent expression of concern on the situation in Derge and calling on the Chinese government for the immediate release of those arrested for exercising their fundamental rights.





Representative Rigzin Genkhang with H.E. Wim Geerts, Dutch Ambassador for human rights at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

Representative Genkhang further briefed Ambassador Geerts on the critical situation in Tibet highlighting among other things, Chinese interference in the succession of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama and the forced assimilation of Tibetan children in Chinese state-run boarding schools aimed at eradicating Tibetan identity and culture.

Ambassador Geerts reaffirmed his government's continued support and informed Representative Genkhang that Prime Minister Rutte raised the issue of Tibet with his Chinese counterpart during his visit to China in March this year.

Ambassador Geerts was previously the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Netherlands to China and is well acquainted with the situation in Tibet.

### **Eminent Buddhist teacher Arjia Rinpoche gives first-hand information about China's atrocities to Japanese lawmakers**

11 April 2024, The Print

Tokyo [Japan], April 11 (ANI): Internationally known Buddhist teacher Lobsang Tubten Jigme Gyatso, prominently known as the Arjia Rinpoche, revealed to Japanese lawmakers the ongoing human rights violations in Tibet inflicted by China.

During his visit to Japan, Rinpoche was invited to the Japanese National Parliament, popularly known as Diet in Tokyo, a press release by the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) reported.

During his visit, Rinpoche met with the Japanese Parliamentarian Group, monitoring China's human rights violations.



Prominent Buddhist teacher Arjia Rinpoche reveals first-hand information of China's atrocities to Japanese lawmakers (Photo credits: Central Tibetan Administration)

Lobsang Tubten Jigme Gyatso is a Mongolian, who was recognised as the 8th Arjia Rinpoche at the age of two in 1952 by the 10th Panchen Lama. Rinpoche revealed how China invaded Tibet and destroyed monasteries, religious artefacts, and how monks, including him, were forced to disrobe and denied religious education.

He further talked about how the 11th Panchen Lama recognised by the Dalai Lama was kidnapped and how a false Panchen Lama was installed through dubious means, the press release said.

Rinpoche said that he was given a high religious position, only to be controlled and used by the communist leadership.

When he was asked to tutor the false Panchen Lama and forced to do things against his religious faith, he decided to flee Tibet, he said.

Another Japanese lawmaker, Shimamura Hakubun, thanked the Rinpoche for the information provided.

Hakubun also mentioned that it greatly helped the parliamentarians to get firsthand information on Chinese religious atrocities in Tibet.

He assured Rinpoche that Japan would do its best to address Chinese repression in Tibet and southern Mongolia.

According to the press release, Arjia Rinpoche attended to questions from lawmakers on how Japan could further extend help, the relationship with Japanese monasteries, and Tibetan independence.

During his session at the Diet, Rinpoche requested the issuance of statements of support from the Japanese government and the public.

On the relationship with Japanese monasteries, Rinpoche said Japanese sangha members greatly respect the Dalai Lama and have maintained a good relationship with the Tibetan Buddhist community.

On the independence issue, Rinpoche explained the Dalai Lama's Middle Way Approach and requested the support of the Japanese parliament. (ANI)

## Europe For Tibet Campaign Launched in The European Parliament

10 April 2024, CTA



The campaign “Europe for Tibet” was launched in the European Parliament during a meeting with Members of European Parliament, ahead of the 06-09 June European elections.

The campaign website [eu4tibet.org](http://eu4tibet.org) will serve as a platform for all groups advocating for the rights and freedom of the Tibetan people based in the member states to obtain a pledge of support for Tibet from the candidates of the 2024 European elections and to question their political parties on their position on Tibet.

This campaign jointly organised by the Office of Tibet, Brussels, and the International Campaign for Tibet with the support from Offices of Tibet in London and Geneva and the International Tibet Network aims to mobilize support from current and future members of the European Parliament, Tibet Support Groups, Tibetan Communities in Europe, V-TAG members and all other groups advocating for Tibet to reestablish a dedicated group of Members of the European Parliament supportive of Tibet in order to ensure Tibet’s continued presence on the agenda of the European Union in the next legislative term.

Speakers at the event included Mikulas Peksa, Salima Yenbou, Ausra Maldeikiene, Members of the European Parliament, Rigzin Genkhang, Representative of H.H. the Dalai Lama in Brussels, Wangpo Tethong, Executive Director of the International Campaign for Tibet.

Parliamentary Assistants, Vincent Metten and Mélanie Blondel, ICT, Brussels, Thinley Wangdue, Office of Tibet, Brussels and V-TAG members also attended the event.

To close the event, Members of the European Parliament were offered a traditional Tibetan scarf.

## 27th Tibetan Shoton Festival Begins in Dharamshala, Kundeling Tatsak Rinpoche Graces the Festival’s Inaugural

10 April 2024, CTA



Kyabje Kundeling Tatsak Rinpoche addressing the gathering during the opening ceremony of the 27th Tibetan Shoton Festival. Photo / Tenzin Jigme Taydeh / CTA

The 27th annual Tibetan Shoton Festival (yoghurt festival) in exile kicked off today at the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts (TIPA) in Dharamshala to celebrate Tibetan opera from 10 – 22 April 2024.

Kyabje Kundeling Tatsak Rinpoche Jetsun Tenzin Chokyi Gyaltzen graced the opening ceremony of the festival as chief guest, along with officiating Sikyong Tharlam Dolma Changra, Kalon (Minister) of the Department of Education, and Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang from the Tibetan Parliament in Exile.

Election and Public Service Commissioner Wangdue Tsering Pesur, Standing Committee Members and Dharamshala-based Parliamentarians of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile, Secretaries and staff of the Central Tibetan Administration, Secretaries of the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Dharamshala Tibetan Settlement Officer, Members of Local Tibetan Assembly and Tibetan Freedom Movement, and representatives of the Tibetan NGOs and institutions also attended the festival’s inaugural.

Following a day-long display of each opera story’s preview from the participating troupes, chief guest Kundeling Tatsak Rinpoche delivered a keynote speech. “Despite Tibet’s continued difficulties and the geographical separation of Tibetans inside and outside of Tibet, we should be proud of our capacity to host the Shoton Festival of this magnitude in exile, drawing ever-larger crowds of participants,” said Rinpoche while commending the members of opera troupes for their devotion and dedication to preserving the rich opera tradition of Tibet. The chief guest went on to say that it was His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s leadership that empowered the Tibetan people to preserve and honour their rich cultural heritages and hence advised all the Tibetans to

remember the benevolence of His Holiness time and again and adhere to His noble guidance. Rinpoche further emphasised the collective efforts of every Tibetan in maintaining Tibet's unique traditions, including Tibetan opera.

After concluding the address, Kundeling Tatsak Rinpoche handed over a cheque of 1 Lakh rupees to each troupe group, a small contribution from the Department of Religion and Culture, CTA, for their sustenance.

Over the course of the 13-day Shoton Festival, Tibetan troupes from various settlements will present different Tibetan opera performances.

### **White paper addresses Himalayan water security challenges**

08 April 2024, International Campaign for Tibet

A new white paper summarizing a panel at World Water Week 2023 in Stockholm is providing recommendations for China and other stakeholders to address water security in the region where Tibet is located.

"Addressing Water Security Challenges in the Himalayan Region" is available to read now.

The white paper is the result of the panel during World Water Week organized by the International Water Management Institute and supported by the US Department of State, the International Tibet Network, the Mountain Resiliency Project and the International Campaign for Tibet.

The panel featured two Tibetan experts based in exile: Tsechu Dolma, founder of the Mountain Resiliency Project, and Lobsang Yangtso, senior researcher at the International Tibet Network. The third panelist was Manohara Khadka, the Nepal country representative for the International Water Management Institute.

The thoughts and recommendations of all three panelists are featured in the white paper.

Water security panel

The panel took place Aug. 24, 2023 at the World Water Week Conference in Stockholm.

The discussion focused on environmental sustainability and climate change on the Earth's "Third Pole," as the Himalayan region is known.

That region is home to one-fifth of the world's freshwater supply. Glacial runoff forms rivers in almost every country across South and Southeast Asia.

Under Secretary of State Uzra Zeya, who serves as the US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, spoke to the panel by video message.

Asok Kumar, director general of the National Mission for Clean Ganga, Ministry of Jal Shakti, government of India, also addressed the panel by video, while Rebecca Peters, a water policy advisor

to the State Department, delivered remarks in person.

"Water is essential to all life," said Franz Matzner, director of government relations for the International Campaign for Tibet. "World Water Week brings together people from across the globe with a shared mission to use water for peace. ICT was proud to be a part of the event."

The views of the three main experts at the panel—Tsechu Dolma, Lobsang Yangtso and Manohara Khadka—are featured in the white paper, which also includes a comment from Matzner.

The white paper touches on topics like adaptation measures in the face of climate change and receding glaciers; the implications of water challenges for women, poor and marginalized communities; and how global networks in water and environmental security can aid Himalayan nations.

The paper also includes Dolma's, Yangtso's and Khadka's policy recommendations.

These recommendations call for:

- the People's Republic of China and other central governments to halt policies that prioritize extraction
- building the capacity of local governments to design, implement and assess the impact of policies on equitable access to and control over water, land and energy
- the Chinese government to provide access to Tibet for independent media, scientists, NGOs, UN monitors and other international observers
- investing in sustainable renewable energy sources, such as solar or wind energy. Properly sited and constructed for co-management, such installations can generate clean energy while maintaining additional values, such as grazing and herding. The technology exists, so it is a matter of making choices and much more

### **Sikyong Penpa Tsering Addresses Members of Tibetan Community in Toronto**

08 April 2024, CTA

As part of his official engagements in Toronto, Sikyong Penpa Tsering of the Central Tibetan Administration addressed the members of the Tibetan community on 6 April 2024 at the auditorium of the Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre.

While crediting His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama for establishing the unparalleled exiled Tibetan community with full-fledged democratic institution, Sikyong Penpa Tsering said, "Although more than six decades have passed since the start of our journey into exile, Tibetans are still struggling to sort out the long-standing Tibet-China conflict with full



commitment.” However, given the uncompromising policies of Chinese President Xi Jinping, the Tibetan political leader added that immediate resolution of this conflict seems unattainable at the moment and, hence, implored Tibetans to remain dedicated and pool their efforts and energies in resolving the Tibet-China conflict without falling into petty internal infightings. Sikyong further illuminated the gathering about Central Tibetan Administration’s policy of Middle Way Approach, a win-win solution that aims to seek a peaceful solution through dialogue.



Sikyong Penpa Tsering during his meeting with Tibetan residents of Toronto at Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre

In regard to the Tibet advocacy campaign, Sikyong informed that he paid special visits to countries with whom Tibet had no prior formal relationship to draw their attention to the plight of the Tibetan people and cautioned them against doing business with China. He pointed out that the current aggressive behaviour of China on the international stage has led to a negative attitude towards China in many countries and that this has led to a growing interest in the Tibetan freedom struggle.

Likewise, as the Resolve Tibet Act is currently making its way through the US House of Senators, Sikyong acknowledged that the goal of this visit is to garner support for the successful passage of this Tibet bill before concluding his talk.

On Sunday, Sikyong Penpa Tsering interacted with students and teachers of the Tibetan Weekend school and held a separate meeting with Tibetan youths to enlighten them about the geopolitical and strategic significance of the Tibetan plateau. Similarly, Sikyong also convened representatives of the Tibetan Buddhist Centres to discuss issues concerning Tibetan Buddhism, including the reincarnation of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama.

Until 11 April, Sikyong Penpa Tsering will undertake a series of official engagements in Toronto and Montreal before heading to the United States.

## **“Don’t flood your country with cheap Chinese products”: Tibetan leader in exile Sikyong Penpa**

05 April 2024, Organiser

Exiled Tibetan leader Sikyong Penpa Tsering advised against inundating nations with inexpensive Chinese goods, highlighting the threat posed to local industries. Tsering underscores China's strategic trade tactics, urging caution in engaging with their exports to the Global South.

Fretting over “dumping” by China to Global South—that is, exporting goods at artificially low prices, President of Central Tibetan Administration of Tibetan government-in-exile Sikyong Penpa Tsering, warned them to be careful while doing business with China.....

While speaking to ANI, Sikyong Penpa Tsering said, “China is now exporting more to the Global South, and my warning to those countries is don’t flood your country with cheap Chinese products because they are going to kill your industries. Nothing comes for free from China. They always come with the strategy.”.....China’s overinvestment and excess capacity could result in cheap products flooding global markets, affecting local industries and employment. Raising concern over cheap Chinese products inundating the Global South, Tsering urged the nations to give China less business. The only way to bring them down, to their knees is through the economy. Give them less business, and then they won’t have all that money to splurge on the Belt and Road initiatives (BRI) and create a dead economy worldwide,” said Tsering. BRI aims to connect Asia, Africa, and Europe. Its goal is to increase trade, improve regional integration, and stimulate economic growth. Sikyong Penpa Tsering also raised concern over China controlling regional water resources, shown in its reluctance to sign international agreements on cross-border water management. The country can seize water sources without any military force; because the rivers originate within its territory, they are seen as China’s natural assets. He said that China wants to control the water resources so they are building multiple dams in Tibet. This will have an impact on several countries.

Commenting on the building of multiple dams in Tibet by China, Tsering stated, “You know the 10 major rivers that flow out of Tibet go into 10 different countries, and from China to 5 countries in Southeast Asia. Burma Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Nepal, Pakistan, and Bangladesh all have rivers as precious commodities.

“Some people say that the ‘Third World War’ could happen because of water, if that is the case, then I consider Tibet a hotspot. Because Tibet is now also being offered as the water tower of Asia... because

of the snow mountain ranges, people started calling Tibet the roof of the world, and now Chinese environmental scientists call Tibet a third pole," he added.

Climate change plays a key role in the water shortage crisis in China. For thousands of years, civilisations along the Yangtze and Yellow Rivers fed on the glacial meltwater from the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau – also known as 'The Third Pole'. Once a stable source of river flow, the ice mass is now less capable of supplying glacial melt with fresh snow and ice, since global warming has raised the temperature of the glacial region by 3- 3.5C over the past half-century.

Furthermore, he expressed concerns about several villages and monasteries facing inundation. He said to media, "Several villages are going to be inundated, about six monasteries, 600 to 700 years old will be submerged in water and ultimately destroyed, so the Chinese government has no more concerns about addressing the grievances of the local people."

During an interview with media, Tsering emphasised there will be no normalisation of relationships due to the Chinese activities along the Ladakh border.

"So in that sense, we see the continuity of the programmes and right now with this government, having taken a stronger position on the diligence on the Ladakh border by the Chinese government, that till there is disengagement from all sectors there will be no normalisation of relationships and adding to all these are also developments in the maritime security of India, including Maldives," Tsering added. He also spoke on the India-Maldives diplomatic rift, Tsering said, "We are talking about the Maldives government asking the Indian army to move out by May 10 so all these geopolitical developments are not helping build better relations." The Maldives has recently found itself in the midst of diplomatic turmoil, raising questions about its relations with India through undiplomatic remarks, military positioning, and the scrapping of crucial agreements. Maldives has also signed new deals with China, further complicating the geopolitical landscape.

"So just as China is complaining that the US is trying to contain us, China has been trying to contain India for the last so many decades and they can't apply double standards. What works for them is fine and what doesn't work for them isn't fine for the Chinese," he said.

### **Sri Lankan monks present Buddha relics to HH the Dalai Lama**

04 April 2024, Tibetan Review

A delegation of Buddhist monks from Sri Lanka has on Apr 4 presented to His Holiness the Dalai Lama at

Tibet Digest December - January 2024

Dharamshala, relics of the Buddha that has been kept at their monastery for the last one and a quarter century. It was stated to be a long-standing aim of a group of Sri Lankan Buddhists led by the Most Venerable Dr Waskaduwe Mahindawansa Maha Nayaka Thero, head of Amarapura Sambuddha Sasanodaya Maha Nikaya, to realise this historic occasion.

The presentation was coordinated by Dr Damenda Porage, Founder-President of the Sri Lanka-Tibetan Buddhist Brotherhood in Sri Lanka.

His Holiness greeted the relics at the gate of his residence from a ceremonial procession led by the Most Venerable Thero and his party from Sri Lanka.

His Holiness respectfully touched the portable reliquary with his bowed head as the Sri Lankan party chanted auspicious verses.

"We pray for your good health and long life and offer these relics to you," the Most Venerable Thero was quoted as having told His Holiness. "We, members of the Sri Lankan Mahasangha appreciate your service to the world," the Most Venerable Thero has told His Holiness. "Teaching the world loving-kindness is one of the Buddha's accomplishments. You too are doing what the Buddha did. We have metta for everyone. Cultivating warm-heartedness is what the Dharma is about." (Metta is a Buddhist concept meaning benevolence, loving-kindness, friendliness, amity, good will, and active interest in others.)

Sitting with the Most Venerable Thero, joined by Prof Samdhong Rinpoché, Ling Rinpoché, Kirti Rinpoché, and Sikyong Penpa Tsering, His Holiness has said, among other things: "I respect all religious traditions, but it's Buddhism in particular that employs reason. This is why we are able to hold our own in discussions with scientists. I've met scientists who were initially sceptical about religion in general who eventually became Buddhists.

"Now, on a practical level, the world needs peace and that's the core of the Buddha's message. However, I'm prepared not to mention Buddhism as such but to emphasize secular ethics and universal values crucial among which is compassion. The important thing is to have a warm heart. Consequently, I'm committed to encouraging people to cultivate loving-kindness. What I want to convey is that I'm fully committed to promoting the Buddha's message from a secular point of view. What do you think?"

"It's a good way to approach the future," the Most Venerable Thero has responded.

After Buddha Shakyamuni's mortal remains were cremated following his passing away, what remained of his relics, in the form of fragments of bones and teeth, were divided among eight kingdoms. Stupas were then erected over them in Allakappa,



Kapilavastu, Kushinagar, Pava, Rajagriha, Ramagrama, Vaishali, and Vethapida. During excavations at Piprahwa, which is identified with Kapilavastu, relics of the Buddha were discovered that had been enshrined by the Buddha's Shakyen relatives in Kapilavastu. In 1898, a British official, William Peppé, made a gift of these relics to the erudite Sri Lankan monk Most Venerable Waskaduwe Sri Subhuthi Mahanayake Thera, who brought them to Sri Lanka. The Most Venerable Dr Waskaduwe Mahindawansa Maha Nayaka Thero and his party arrived this morning at Kangra airport at Gaggal and drove up from there to His Holiness's residence to make its presentation to him.

### **Dalai Lama determined to live 100+ years to continue to serve Buddhадharma**

04 April 2024, Tibetan Review

At a time when the Buddhадharma is seeing a bit of a decline, I am determined to serve it for another 15-20 years, said Holiness the Dalai Lama Apr 3 at a ceremony to offer long-life prayers to him made by the Toepa and Purang Tibetan communities.

His Holiness said the heartfelt sincerity of devotion of those making the offering has been a source encouragement to him. Besides, he said, doctors most recently told him that he was in sound health.

The ceremony was led by Ling Rinpoché. He was joined in the front row by the two reincarnations of Trulshik Rinpoché and to his right, the Abbot of Sera-mé, the Lobsön of his Namgyal Monastery and Bodong Rinpoché. To his left sat the Abbot of Drepung Loseling and the Abbot of Tawang Monastery. In his address at the end of the ceremony, His Holiness said: "This is a time when the Buddhадharma is in (a bit of a) decline and yet there have been many causes and conditions for me to be able to serve the teaching of the Buddha. Today, in places where the Dharma had not previously spread, people are taking interest in what the Buddha had to say about the workings of the mind and emotions, scientists particularly among them.

"Whether they are religious or not, there are growing numbers of people who appreciate that we can bring peace to the world by first achieving peace within. In this context this is my prayer:

"Wherever the Buddha's teaching has not spread  
And wherever it has spread but has declined

May I, moved by great compassion, clearly elucidate  
This treasury of excellent benefit and happiness for all." He also said: "At the same time, I would like to encourage people to have a keener sense of ethics, to serve humanity and, through understanding the functioning of their minds and emotions, to cultivate peace of mind. The inner and outer conditions exist for me to do this and the Dharma Protectors, who

take responsibility for defending and preserving the Dharma, are helping me in what I'm trying to do."

### **His Holiness the Dalai Lama Expresses Solidarity with Victims of Taiwan Earthquake**

03 April 2024, CTA

Thekchen Chöling, Dharamsala, HP, India – His Holiness the Dalai Lama has written today to Tsai Ing-wen, President of Taiwan, the Republic of China, to express his sadness to learn of the loss of life and extensive devastation of property and infrastructure that has taken place during a powerful earthquake off the east coast of Taiwan this morning.

"I pray for those who have lost their lives," he wrote, "as well as for the many who have been injured as a result of this natural disaster. I offer my condolences to Your Excellency and to the families of all who have been affected by this tragedy.

"I commend your Government and its concerned agencies for their swift response as they seek to rescue the injured and provide relief to those who need help.

### **China celebrates annexation of Tibet with events in border villages**

02 April 2024, Phayul

China has organized celebratory events in newly built border villages close to the borders with India and Bhutan to commemorate the anniversary of its annexation of Tibet last week on March 28.

Chinese state-run Xinhua news agency in its report stated that March 28th marks the 65th anniversary of what China terms the "democratic reform" in its southwestern so-called Xizang Autonomous Region, globally known as Tibet.

The celebrations were highlighted in the state-run Global Times, emphasizing their presence in the newly established border villages adjacent to India and Bhutan. China has been actively constructing well-equipped settlements along these borders, a move that has sparked concerns in both India and Bhutan.

A recent report in February revealed that three villages, featuring modern infrastructure for residents and soldiers, were erected along the disputed boundary with Bhutan. While China portrays these developments as part of its poverty alleviation efforts, they are also viewed by critics as strategic moves to broaden its foothold in the Himalayan region.

According to the Global Times, China has constructed approximately 624 such villages in border regions. The report underscored the celebrations held across these areas, depicting them

as symbols of development and progress. In specific regions like the so-called Yadong County and Medog County, located along the southern borderlands with India and Bhutan, multiple events were organized to mark the anniversary.

China's relentless efforts to develop these border areas, coupled with its strategic undertones, continue to be closely monitored by India and neighbouring countries, especially amid ongoing geopolitical tensions in the region.

Two days after the celebration on Saturday, China announced the renaming of 30 additional places within a disputed border region with India, in a move seen as a bid to reinforce its territorial claims in the area. The Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs released the updated list of names on Saturday, covering various locations in Arunachal Pradesh, a border state of India.

### **US government allocates \$23 million to support Tibetan programs**

02 April 2024, Phayul

The US has earmarked \$23 million to support Tibetan programs, according to the Washington-based International Campaign for Tibet (ICT). This allocation forms part of the extensive \$1.2 trillion government funding bill recently passed by the US Congress and signed into law by President Joe Biden on March 23, aimed at financing various federal initiatives. The funds allocated to Tibetan programs include language preservation, environmental conservation, and efforts to strengthen Tibetan democracy in exile.

Among the allocations for Tibetan programs, \$10 million is designated for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with proven experience in collaborating with Tibetan communities. This funding aims to support activities focused on preserving cultural traditions, fostering sustainable development, enhancing education, and promoting environmental conservation in Tibet.

Additionally, \$8 million is allocated to promote and safeguard Tibetan culture and language within Tibetan refugee and diaspora communities. This funding will also contribute to the development and resilience of Tibetan communities and the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) in India and Nepal. Moreover, it will facilitate the education and empowerment of the next generation of Tibetan leaders from these communities.

Furthermore, \$5 million is set aside to enhance the capacity of the CTA, which governs democratically for Tibetans in exile. A portion of this support, up to \$1.5 million, can be utilised for initiatives aimed at economic growth and capacity-building, including

assistance for displaced Tibetan refugee families residing in India and Nepal.

The legislation also included a provision stipulating that no federal funds should be allocated for the production of maps or any other materials that depict Tibet as part of the People's Republic of China. This restriction remains in effect until the Chinese government engages in negotiations to reach a mutually agreed resolution regarding the status of Tibet.

Franz Matzner, director of government relations at the International Campaign for Tibet, hailed the new funding bill, stating, "The United States has once again demonstrated its commitment to the Tibetan people in concrete terms that provide crucial resources for their pursuit of freedom and cultural preservation in the face of the Xi Jinping regime's escalating oppression.

"For those fighting for survival in Tibet, every dollar counts—and we are grateful for each one. For those outside Tibet, Congress' investment in maintaining the Tibetan people's distinct language, religion and way of life provides essential aid and a firm message of hope and solidarity."

## **March**

### **Latest US gov't spending bill allocates \$23 million for Tibet support projects**

30 March 2024, Tibetan Review

The massive \$1.2 trillion government funding bill passed by the US Congress earlier this month and signed into law by President Joe Biden on Mar 23 to fund the rest of the federal government included provisions totalling \$23 million for Tibetan programmes, said Washington-based International Campaign for Tibet (ICT, [savetibet.org](https://savetibet.org)) Mar 29. The Tibetan-programme allocations cover projects in areas that include language preservation, environmental protection, and Tibetan democracy in exile.

Also, included in the bill's more than 1,000 pages is a narration which bans federal spending on maps or other materials that recognize Tibet as part of the People's Republic of China until the Chinese government agrees to a negotiated resolution of Tibet's status.

Of the allocations for Tibetan programmes, \$10 million is meant for NGOs that have experience working with Tibetan communities to support activities that preserve cultural traditions and promote sustainable development, education and environmental conservation in Tibet.

Besides, \$8 million is earmarked for promoting and preserving Tibetan culture and language in Tibetan refugee and diaspora communities, as well as

development and the resilience of Tibetan communities and the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) in India and Nepal. This funding will also assist in the education and development of the next generation of Tibetan leaders from those communities, said the savetibet.org report.

In addition, \$5 million is allocated for strengthening the capacity of the CTA, which provides democratic governance for Tibetans in exile. Up to \$1.5 million of this support can be made available to address economic growth and capacity-building activities, including for displaced Tibetan refugee families in India and Nepal, the report said.

The bill's documents also address China's attempts to spread disinformation about Tibet and avoid negotiating with Tibetan leaders. It forbids spending on documents, reports, maps or other materials that recognize Tibet as part of the People's Republic of China "until the Secretary of State reports to the appropriate congressional committees that the Government of the PRC has reached a final negotiated agreement on Tibet with the Dalai Lama or his representatives or with democratically-elected leaders of the Tibetan people."

Franz Matzner, director of government relations at the ICT, has said: "The United States has once again demonstrated its commitment to the Tibetan people in concrete terms that provide crucial resources for their pursuit of freedom and cultural preservation in the face of the Xi Jinping regime's escalating oppression. "For those fighting for survival in Tibet, every dollar counts—and we are grateful for each one. For those outside Tibet, Congress' investment in maintaining the Tibetan people's distinct language, religion and way of life provides essential aid and a firm message of hope and solidarity."

### **Tibetan musician advocates colonial boarding school in Tibet, sparks backlash**

23 March 2024, Phayul

A controversial remark by a Tibetan musician named Dechen Shak-Dagsay based in Switzerland advocating the colonial-style boarding schools run by China in Tibet, has sparked condemnation and censure from fellow Tibetans.

In a seminar titled, "The Protection of Human Rights for Minorities: Progress in China's Ethnic Autonomous Region" at the University of Geneva organised by the China Society for Human Rights Studies (CSHRS), Dechen can be seen expressing her wish for the success of the Chinese colonial boarding system in Tibet and referred to Tibet as "Xizang."

"Last but not the least I would like to express my wish that this Tibetan students boarding project in Xizang will be very successful," she stated.

This statement made by Dechen has drawn backlash, particularly from the Tibetan diaspora in exile. Many

within the community argue that the use of the term "Xizang" represents a concession to the Chinese government terminology regarding Tibet and a direct attempt by Beijing to push their narrative. Others have said that her remarks contradict overwhelming evidence and reports documenting human rights abuses associated with China's coerced colonial boarding school system in Tibet.

A comprehensive report published by the Tibet Action Institute with Tibetan educationist Dr. Gyal lo point out that these schools enforce mandatory attendance and use Chinese as the primary medium of instruction, effectively eroding the Tibetan language and culture. Additionally, reports suggest that over a million Tibetan children have been separated from their families forcefully due to these policies, raising concerns about the impact on familial and cultural ties, against the backdrop of China's totalitarian regime.

Furthermore, Dechen's praise for the colonial boarding school system and her use of the term "Xizang" to refer to Tibet has been met with strong disapproval from the Central Tibetan Administration's advocacy groups like the Voluntary Tibetan Advocacy Group (V-TAG), "V-TAG condemned her assertion and the use of the term "Xizang" to refer to Tibet, and her unabashed praise for the oppressive Colonial Boarding School System, which forcibly impose Mandarin upon millions of Tibet students, eroding their cultural identity."

Like many Tibetans, V-TAG also demanded unequivocal clarifications from Dechen, specifically regarding her stance on these colonial boarding schools. The group challenged her to substantiate her claims by disclosing the names of the schools she visited and providing evidence of her interactions with Tibetan students. Her remarks were also met with strong opposition in the ongoing session of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile.

### **2023 Annual Report on Human Rights Situation in Tibet Released**

21 March 2024, CTA

By Tibetan Centre for Human Rights & Democracy. 20 March 2024.

Even as China ended its draconian zero-Covid policy measures in 2023, Tibetans continue to face escalating crackdowns on freedom of expression, religion and belief. Despite numerous calls from the international community to immediately halt its forced assimilation policy, Chinese authorities imposed Chinese medium education in Tibetan schools and amended local regulations in Tibetan areas to promote Mandarin Chinese.

Tibetans face restrictions not only on their right to freedom of assembly but also on expressing opinions or criticisms against repressive and unjust government

policies, both online and offline. Under the guise of maintaining social stability, Chinese authorities exercise direct supervision and censorship over all online platforms.

The right to freedom of religion and belief faced further restrictions as Chinese authorities introduced more repressive regulations to exercise total control over the establishment, management and activities of the religious activity sites. Despite the relaxation of Zero-Covid restrictions, it made no difference to Tibetan Buddhists, who continued to face restrictions in undertaking religious pilgrimages.

Tibetan detainees inside Tibet continue to face a litany of human rights violations. Those arbitrarily, preventatively or forcefully detained underwent unjust sentencing and torture, resulting in custodial deaths. Incommunicado detention in undisclosed locations without due process also remained a regular practice, leading to lasting health issues and premature deaths among political prisoners upon release.

[Click here to read more.](#)

### **Human Rights Violations in Tibet Raised at 55th UN Human Rights Council Session**

21 March 2024, CTA

A Tibetan delegate urged the UN Human Rights Council to promptly address concerning reports of China's human rights violations.

Phuntsok Topgyal, the UN Advocacy Officer at the Tibet Bureau in Geneva, delivered an oral statement on March 20, 2024, during the 55th UN Human Rights Council Session, highlighting critical human rights issues demanding attention. He expressed alarm over China's systematic efforts to eradicate Tibetan cultural identity.

Topgyal emphasised the significance of the 65th anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising, stressing the ongoing flagrant violations of Tibetan people's rights over the past six decades. He urged immediate action from the council to halt these abuses. Topgyal outlined the dire situation in Tibet, citing concerns such as the enrolment of nearly 1 million Tibetan students in residential schools, China's extensive surveillance measures including iris scans and DNA collection from Tibetans, and the unresolved disappearance of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedun Choekyi Nyima, who will reach 35 years of age this year.

Highlighting recent events, Topgyal noted that just four days before the 55th Human Rights Council session, Chinese authorities conducted mass arrests of Tibetans peacefully protesting the construction of a large dam in Derge. This dam project threatens to displace two villages, destroy Buddhist monasteries, and obliterate ancient murals.

Topgyal urged China to release all Tibetan protestors unconditionally and to halt the dam project, which poses a significant threat to the delicate ecosystem of the Tibetan Plateau. He called upon the UN Human Rights Council to demand that China refrain from arbitrary detention and violence against peaceful protestors, such as Gonpo Kyi, and instead uphold their right to freedom.

The video link to the oral statement is here. <http://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1a/k1a6tk9tw4>

### **Office of Tibet in Canberra Urges Australian Foreign Minister to Address Tibet Issue During Chinese Counterpart's Visit**

19 March 2024, CTA

In an urgent plea ahead of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's visit to Australia this week, Representative Karma Singey has called upon the Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong to prioritise discussions on the critical situation in Tibet.

Highlighting the escalating repression and systemic discrimination faced by Tibetans under Chinese rule, the Representative has underscored the urgent need for international attention and action.

In a letter addressed to the Australian Foreign Minister, Representative Karma Singey states that Wang Yi's forthcoming visit serves as a crucial opportunity to raise concerns regarding the deteriorating human rights situation in Tibet.

The letter outlines various violations, including the forced separation of Tibetan children from their families and their indoctrination into Chinese Communist ideology within state-run boarding schools. Additionally, it highlights the severe restrictions imposed on religious practices, arbitrary detentions of Tibetan monks and individuals, and the recent crackdown on peaceful Tibetan protesters in Derge County.

Emphasising the importance of holding China accountable for its human rights abuses, the Representative urged the Australian government to utilise its diplomatic engagement with China to address these pressing issues.

During the anticipated meeting between the Australian Foreign Minister and Wang Yi, the Representative has urged for the following actions:

1. Raise the Tibet issue and the ongoing human rights crisis, including the ongoing repression of political and religious freedoms, environmental degradation and the eradication of Tibetan cultural and language.
2. Urge the Chinese government to immediately and unconditionally release all Tibetan protesters in Derge County who have been wrongfully detained for exercising their fundamental rights of peaceful protest and to

ensure proper and timely medical treatment for injured Tibetans.

3. Encourage China to allow greater access to Tibet by international observers and greater freedom of media and movement in Tibet.
4. Encourage China to genuinely commit to resolving the Tibet issue by reopening the Sino-Tibetan dialogue.

As Australia maintains a significant trade relationship with China, the Representative stressed the importance of incorporating human rights concerns into bilateral discussions to foster a more equitable and just relationship between the two nations.

### **Sikyong Penpa Tsering Meets with Martin Luther King III, Discusses Tibetan Freedom Movement**

18 March 2024, CTA



Sikyong Penpa Tsering addressing the delegation.

Dharamshala: Sikyong Penpa Tsering of the Central Tibetan Administration met with Martin Luther King III, a global human rights activist and the son of Martin Luther King Jr, and a delegation from Dalai Lama Center today at the Kashag secretariat.

During the meeting, Sikyong Penpa Tsering presented an overview of the political history of Tibet, situations inside Tibet, and the Tibetan community in exile. To shed light on Tibetan freedom movement, Sikyong introduced ancient ties between Tibet and China and Tibet and India, and debunked the PRC's claim over Tibet as its integral part since time immemorial and underscored resolving the Tibet-China conflict through the Middle Way Approach while maintaining the historically proven Tibet as a separate entity.

Sikyong brought to light concerning situations inside Tibet, particularly the deteriorating environment brought about by Beijing's exploitation and misapplication of Tibet's river system, the systematic elimination of Tibet's distinct identity, the Chinese government's appropriation of Tibetan religion and manipulation of the system of recognising high lamas reincarnations, and the expansion of sophisticated surveillance inside Tibet. Sikyong Penpa Tsering further spoke about the exiled Tibetan community

and the principal responsibilities of the Central Tibetan Administration.

Martin Luther King III, who received a special audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama earlier this morning, shared his interest in collaborating with the US-based Dalai Lama Centre to promote the oneness of humanity to Sikyong during the meeting.

### **New resolution on Tibet introduced in the US House**

18 March 2024, RTV

A new resolution has been introduced in the United States House of Representatives titled "Recognizing the 65th anniversary of the Tibetan Uprising Day of March 10, 1959, and condemning human rights violations related to the hydropower dam construction project in Derge". The resolution that condemns China's mass arrest of peaceful Tibetan protestors and reaffirms the support for Tibetan self-determination was introduced by Representatives Jim McGovern, D-Massachusetts, and Young Kim, R-California, on Monday, March 11.

The resolution acknowledges the historical events surrounding the Tibetan Uprising Day, particularly the efforts of Tibetan people who formed a human barricade around the Dalai Lama's residence to protect him from Chinese troops in 1959. Additionally, it acknowledges the recent protests in Derge County, eastern Tibet, against a hydropower dam project that would displace residents and destroy Buddhist monasteries.

Rep. McGovern said: "It's been 65 years since His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama was forced to flee as the People's Republic of China forcibly took control of Tibet. Every day since, the Tibetan people have been defending their human rights and fighting for their self-determination. The PRC must comply with its laws and its international human rights obligations, and stop oppressing Tibetans."

Rep. Kim said: "The Tibetan people have suffered the Chinese Communist Party's oppression and control for 70 years, and the CCP shows no signs of slowing down until it has erased Tibetan culture. The freedom-loving people of Tibet deserve our support. I'm proud to join Rep. McGovern in a bipartisan call to stand with the Tibetan people and urge the Biden administration to enforce laws in place to hold the CCP accountable."

The resolution reaffirms the House's support for Tibetan human rights and condemns China's efforts to erase Tibetan cultural identity, particularly by condemning projects like the hydropower dam project in Derge. It demands the immediate release of protestors and prisoners of conscience, along with apologies and redress for rights violations.



Additionally, it calls on the Biden administration to urge China to halt the dam project and respect Tibetan input into development projects.

This resolution adds to previous Congressional actions supporting Tibet, including the passage of the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act of 2018 and the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020. The House also recently passed the Resolve Tibet Act, aimed at pushing China to negotiate peacefully with Tibetan leaders to resolve the conflict in Tibet.

### **Tibet Policy Institute Convenes Panel Discussion Titled “China’s Dam in Dege” on International Day of Action for Rivers**

14 March 2024, CTA

The Tibet Policy Institute, a research centre affiliated with the Central Tibetan Administration, convened a panel discussion entitled “China’s Dam in Dege: Assessing the Social, Cultural, and Ecological Impact on Tibetans and Beyond” in commemoration of the International Day of Action for Rivers.

Held at DIIR Lhakpa Tsering Hall, CTA, Dharamshala, the event featured distinguished panellists including Research Fellow Dechen Palmo from the Tibet Policy Institute, CTA; Researcher Ngawang Lungtok from the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights & Democracy; and Senior Environmental Researcher Dr Lobsang Yangtso from the International Tibet Network, with moderation by Dr Tenzin Lhadon, Research Fellow of the Tibet Policy Institute, CTA.

Attendees representing various Tibetan NGOs and Tibetan media outlets gathered to participate in the insightful discussions.

TPI’s Deputy Director, Zamlha Tempa Gyaltsen, provided a comprehensive overview of the subject matter and introduced the esteemed panellists.

The panel discussion commenced with poignant opening remarks from each panellist, delving into the recent damming project and its multifaceted implications within their respective domains of expertise. Dechen Palmo from TPI underscored the socio-economic repercussions of the Dege Dam construction, urging affected downstream nations to unify and confront the issue with China.

Ngawang Lungtok from TCHRD shed light on the human rights dimensions, while Dr Lobsang Yangtso from ITN elucidated the environmental ramifications of the dam initiative.

The moderator articulated the primary objective of the panel discussion: to raise awareness about the recent damming endeavour in Dege, Kham, and its consequential displacement of Tibetan communities and religious institutions.

Following the panellists’ insights, the audience engaged with pertinent inquiries. The session,

supported by USAID and NDI, concluded with a ten-point call to action, underscoring the imperative for collective advocacy and action on this pressing issue.

1. Cease Construction of Dams Without Local Consent: Considering the potential social, cultural, and ecological impacts of the ongoing dam construction in Dege, the Chinese government should halt the construction of all large hydropower dams which are against the needs and wishes of the local communities. Additionally, any forced relocations should cease immediately, and Tibetans unjustly detained for expressing their concerns should be unconditionally released, with proper medical care provided to the injured.

2. Enhance Transparency in Eco-Environment Information: The Chinese government should prioritise transparency by disclosing more information about hydropower development plans in Tibet’s major rivers, such as Drichu, Zachu, Machu, Gyalmo Ngulchu, Senge Tsangpo and Yarlung Tsangpo to ensure people’s right to be informed.

3. Increase Public Involvement in Environmental Decision-making: There should be improved public participation in planning and decision-making processes, including thorough Environmental and Social Impact Assessments for all development projects in Tibet. Public involvement in evaluating plans with potential adverse environmental impacts should be allowed to safeguard environmental rights.

4. Conduct Seismic Risk Assessments: Given Tibet’s high seismic activity, thorough seismic risk assessments are necessary to understand the potential risks posed by earthquakes to large dams and the millions of people living along Tibet’s rivers, including people in Tibet, China, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Burma, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia.

5. Advocate for Free, Prior, and Informed Consent: Governments, NGOs, and civil society groups should advocate for genuine adherence to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent principles, ensuring proper compensation, resettlement, and preservation of cultural heritage before initiating any projects requiring local consent, particularly concerning dam construction in Tibet.

6. Disengage from Businesses Affecting Tibetan Environment: The international community should cease business relations with Chinese companies involved in environmentally detrimental activities, such as mining and dam construction in Tibet until there is a demonstrable improvement in human rights conditions for Tibetans and all social and environmental concerns are fully addressed.

7. Ratify Human Rights Treaties: China should promptly ratify crucial human rights treaties to protect local communities and indigenous inhabitants from coercion related to relocation or the destruction of culturally significant sites.

8. Recognise the Ecological Importance of Tibet: China and the global community should acknowledge the ecological significance of the Tibetan Plateau, recognising its biodiversity, influence on regional weather patterns, and its role in ensuring food and water security in Asia.

9. Address Colonial Behaviours in Tibet: Recognise and rectify the impact of Chinese colonial policies in Tibet since 1959, including resource extraction, dam construction, and forced resettlement of Tibetan nomads. Adopt a rights-based approach to protect frontline communities and respect traditional knowledge.

10. Cease Criminalisation of Environmental Defenders: The Chinese state should refrain from criminalising Tibetan environmental defenders and release all individuals, such as A-nya Sengdra and Karma Samdrup, detained for peaceful activism against dam construction and forced relocation in Tibet.

### **House resolution supports Tibetan self-determination, protestors**

12 March 2024, International Campaign for Tibet

A new bipartisan House resolution will condemn China's recent mass arrest of peaceful Tibetan protestors and reaffirm House support for Tibetan self-determination following the 65th anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising.

Reps. Jim McGovern, D-Mass., and Young Kim, R-Calif., introduced the resolution "Recognizing the 65th anniversary of the Tibetan Uprising Day of March 10, 1959, and condemning human rights violations related to the hydropower dam construction project in Derge" on Monday, March 11.

The resolution recognizes the thousands of Tibetan people who formed a human shield around the Dalai Lama's residence on March 10, 1959 to protect their leader from the imminent threat of abduction by Chinese troops. Seven days later, the Dalai Lama was able to escape into exile to keep the Tibetan cause alive.

The resolution also recognizes the Tibetan mass protesters in Derge (Chinese: Dege) county in eastern Tibet. Last month, those protestors demonstrated against a hydropower dam project that would reportedly force residents of two villages to abandon their homes and destroy six Buddhist monasteries containing centuries-old religious murals. Chinese authorities reportedly arrested over 1,000 Tibetan people in the wake of the protests.

The resolution comes as over 200 Tibetan Americans and Tibet supporters are in Washington, DC for the annual Tibet Lobby Day, an event organized by the International Campaign for Tibet that brings

advocates to the nation's capital to meet with their Congressional offices.

Quotes from Congress members, ICT

Rep. McGovern said: "It's been 65 years since His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama was forced to flee as the People's Republic of China forcibly took control of Tibet. Every day since, the Tibetan people have been defending their human rights and fighting for their self-determination. The PRC must comply with its own laws and its international human rights obligations, and stop oppressing Tibetans."

Rep. Kim said: "The Tibetan people have suffered the Chinese Communist Party's oppression and control for 70 years, and the CCP shows no signs of slowing down until it has erased Tibetan culture. The freedom-loving people of Tibet deserve our support. I'm proud to join Rep. McGovern in a bipartisan call to stand with the Tibetan people and urge the Biden administration to enforce laws in place to hold the CCP accountable."

International Campaign for Tibet President Tencho Gyatso: "This resolution is a tribute to the resistance and resilience of the Tibetan people over 65 years, as well as the US Congress' consistent, bipartisan support for their cause. From the Tibetan National Uprising of 1959 to the recent protests in Derge, the Tibetan people have continued to reject China's attempts to destroy their culture and way of life, and Congress has been inspirational in supporting their efforts. We thank Reps. McGovern and Kim for introducing this resolution, and we look forward to working with them and their colleagues not only to pass this legislation in the House, but to pass the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act in the Senate, too."

House resolution

The resolution confirms the House's "longstanding support for the human rights, including the right of self-determination, of the Tibetan people." It also "condemns the People's Republic of China's persistent efforts to erase the Tibetan people's distinct religious, cultural, linguistic, and historical identity."

According to the resolution, those efforts include the hydropower dam project in Derge. The resolution condemns China's "arbitrary detention" of the protestors and expresses "grave concern" for their well-being. It demands China immediately release the protestors and all prisoners of conscience.

The resolution also demands that China "publicly apologize" for violating the protestors' rights, "provide immediate redress for physical and emotional trauma, and expunge from the detainees' official records any mention of the arrests or charges."

The resolution calls on the Biden administration to urge Chinese authorities to halt the dam project

unless China takes local Tibetans' views into account and obtains their genuine consent.

The Biden administration should also insist that China abide by its commitments to safeguard cultural heritage, and the administration should fully implement the Tibet Project Principles that require Tibetan input into development projects.

Read the House resolution.

Resolving Tibet

The new resolution is the latest in a major wave of Congressional support for Tibet, including the passage of the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act of 2018 and the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020.

Last month, the House passed the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act, a bipartisan bill introduced by McGovern and Rep. Michael McCaul, R-Texas. Kim spoke in support of the legislation on the House floor.

Known as the Resolve Tibet Act, the bill will strengthen US efforts to push China to resolve the crisis in Tibet through peaceful negotiations with Tibetan leaders.

### **China eroding Tibetan language, religion: Sikyong on 65th uprising day**

11 March 2024, Hindustan Times

Penpa said that the forced assimilation of nearly one million Tibetan children in Chinese state-run colonial style boarding schools and promotion of Chinese language in kindergartens established across Tibet denies Tibetan children the right to learn and use their own language and cuts them off from their way of thinking, customs and beliefs

Sikyong (president) of Tibetan government-in-exile Penpa Tsering on Sunday alleged that China was using policies to erode Tibetan language and religion.

"The People's Republic of China is pursuing a policy of forging a strong sense of the Chinese as a single identity by erasing Tibetan identity, promotion of Chinese language by banning and minimising the teaching and use of Tibetan language and sinicisation of Tibetan Buddhism," he said while reading the statement of kashag (cabinet) on the 65th fifth anniversary of Tibetan National Uprising Day.

The kashag is the highest executive office of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) and is headed by Sikyong, the political leader elected by the exiled populace. On March 10 in 1959, the people of Tibet from the three traditional provinces rose in protest against the repression by the Chinese communist forces in capital Lhasa.

Penpa said that the forced assimilation of nearly one million Tibetan children in Chinese state-run colonial style boarding schools and promotion of Chinese

language in kindergartens established across Tibet denies Tibetan children the right to learn and use their own language and cuts them off from their way of thinking, customs and beliefs.

The cabinet expressed concern over alleged destruction of Tibetan Buddhism.

"The regulations by China are aimed at controlling the numbers, recognition, eligibility and curriculum of monks and nuns, and properties, revenue, expenditure and management of monasteries and nunneries. These mandate the Chinese Communist Party's misappropriation of Tibetan people's authority to select reincarnation of trulkus, restriction on all religious activities and movement of monks and nuns across administrative areas. These extreme measures expand on the existing Chinese government's regulations to control Tibetan Buddhism," the cabinet said in a statement on Sunday.

They appealed to the PRC government to allow Tibetans to learn and use Tibetan as their official language as guaranteed in the Chinese constitution and law on regional national autonomy.

Tibetan Parliament-in-exile also expressed concern over the Chinese government's plan to build a major hydroelectric power dam in Dege area of Kham on the Driчу river.

About three thousand Tibetans, including monks and nuns, gathered in the hill town Dharamshala and held a protest march against China.

### **Tibetan Resistance Resurfaces: Protests Erupt Over Controversial Dam Construction**

10 March 2024, Financial Express

As the world commemorates 65 years since the Tibetan rebellion on March 10th, demonstrations across global capitals, from Delhi to Dharamshala, underscore the enduring spirit of resistance against China's repressive regime.

A growing movement has started within the Chinese-occupied Tibet region. Triggered by China's plans to erect a dam in Wongpo Tok city of Dige County, protestors rally against the impending demolition of the region's historic and sacred monasteries.

Recently, approximately 1000 Tibetan citizens staged a demonstration outside the Eastern Tibet (Sichuan Province) headquarters of the Dige Administration. In response, Chinese authorities ruthlessly dispersed the protesters, leading to the arrest of nearly 100 individuals, including religious leaders from the Vonto Monastery. Alarming footage depicting Chinese officers clad in black are seen forcibly subduing demonstrators surfaced, amplifying global attention on the escalating tensions.

Reports in the public domain reveal that while 40 detainees have been released under strict conditions, forbidding any involvement in future protests or

dissemination of protest-related materials, a pervasive atmosphere of surveillance looms over Tibetan social media platforms and communities. This resurgence of Tibetan dissent against the Chinese Communist government stems from mounting grievances surrounding stringent security measures and pervasive surveillance policies enforced by Xi Jinping's administration. Unlike previous sporadic movements, notably the 2021 protests following the suspicious death of a Tibetan youth, this current wave of unrest exhibits remarkable resilience and international solidarity.

Central to the discord is China's relentless exploitation of Tibet's abundant natural resources, epitomized by the construction of colossal infrastructure projects like the 13-story, 13900 MW Kamtok (Kham Dige) Dam on the Dri Chu (Yangtse) river. Local Tibetans fear not only displacement but also the imminent threat of flooding to cherished landmarks, including the 13th-century Wonto Monastery, revered for its profound historical and religious significance.

Beyond Tibet's borders, Tibetan diaspora communities, including those in India, mobilize in solidarity, amplifying the global outcry against CCP's oppressive policies. With protests coinciding with the upcoming anniversary of the Tibetan uprising, the Chinese administration intensifies efforts to suppress dissent, reflecting on their historical tactics to quell resistance.

### **Tibetans targeted by China-linked supply chain attacks using malicious language translators**

07 March 2024, The Record

Tibetans are being targeted with corrupted language translation software in a cyber espionage campaign that began last September, according to new research.

The attackers – which cybersecurity firm ESET said are part of the Chinese government hacking group Evasive Panda – targeted Tibetans living in India, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Australia and the U.S.

In addition to the corrupt Windows and macOS software, ESET said the campaign also involved the compromise of the website of an organizer of an annual religious gathering called the Monlam Festival, which takes place in India each year.

The hackers added malicious code to the website to create a watering-hole attack – where attackers target specific groups by compromising popular platforms.

"We believe that the attackers capitalized, at the time, on the upcoming Monlam festival in January and February of 2024 to compromise users when they visited the festival's website-turned-watering-hole," ESET said. "In addition, the attackers

compromised the supply chain of a software developer of Tibetan language translation apps."

ESET researcher Anh Ho, who discovered the attack, said the Evasive Panda hackers used several different types of malicious tools that they have spotted in other attacks on networks across East Asia.

Most notably, the group used MgBot – Evasive Panda's flagship Windows backdoor that has existed since at least 2012 and is used to steal files and credentials and record keystrokes. In April, Evasive Panda used the malware to target a telecom company in Africa.

The majority of MgBot's plugins are designed to steal information from popular Chinese applications such as QQ, WeChat, QQBrowser and Foxmail – all developed by Tencent.

Ho said ESET also discovered another backdoor that has not been publicly documented yet, naming it "Nightdoor." ESET noted that they discovered Nightdoor was used as far back as 2020, when it was deployed on the machine of a "high-profile target in Vietnam."

"The Nightdoor backdoor, used in the supply-chain attack, is a recent addition to Evasive Panda's toolset," Ho added.

ESET said it initially discovered the campaign in January after finding malicious code buried in a website run by the Kagyu International Monlam Trust, an organization based in India that promotes Tibetan Buddhism internationally.

The researchers theorized that the compromise was likely intended to take advantage of interest in the festival, which is held every January in the Indian city of Bodhgaya. In conjunction with the website attack, the researchers also found that an Indian software development company producing Tibetan language translation software was also compromised, with the attackers corrupting applications that deployed malicious downloaders on both Windows and macOS devices.

ESET found another compromise of a Tibetan news website called Tibetpost that was used to host the malicious payloads.

The use of MgBot is what led to ESET attributing the campaign to Evasive Panda – which has used the malware in attacks on a religious organization in Taiwan and elsewhere.

Evasive Panda has been operating since 2012, conducting dozens of attacks aligning with China's geopolitical interests on government entities in Myanmar, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam.

Since 2020, ESET said it has seen Evasive Panda repeatedly hijack the update processes of legitimate software as a way to deliver its malware.

### **'China should leave Tibet:' Tibetans march near Parliament House to mark 65th uprising**

10 March 2024, Times of India

NEW DELHI: Hundreds of Tibetans in exile took to the streets of New Delhi on Sunday to mark the 65th Tibetan National Uprising Day against China.

More than 300 protesters gathered near the Parliament House raising slogans such as "Tibet was never a part of China" and "China should leave Tibet."

The demonstrators waved Tibetan flags and carried photographs of their spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama. Seeking refuge in the town of Dharmasala since his escape from Tibet, the 88-year-old Dalai Lama advocates for substantial autonomy and the preservation of Tibet's native Buddhist culture, refusing China's claim that he is a separatist.

While India considers Tibet as part of China, it continues to host Tibetan exiles.

The Tibetan government-in-exile accuses China of trampling on the basic human rights of Tibetans and systematically eradicating their identity.

The New Delhi protest march, organised by the Tibetan Youth Congress, said that in 1959, the Chinese Communist regime occupied Tibet, leading to a Tibetan uprising.

"Since then, the Chinese regime has resorted to brutal tactics, resulting in the deaths of over a million Tibetans who peacefully protested against oppressive Chinese rule," the Tibetan Youth Congress said in a statement.

### **Statement: Kashag Urges PRC Govt to Immediately Release all Tibetans Detained in Derge Protests and Respect Rights & Aspirations of Tibetans**

07 March 2024, CTA

The Central Tibetan Administration is highly concerned by the brutal crackdown on peaceful Tibetan protesters in Derge, Tibet by the authorities of the People's Republic of China (PRC) resulting in mass arbitrary detention and injuries to many Tibetans. Since last month, Tibetans have been appealing to halt the planned construction of hydroelectric power plant that would result in forceful relocation of hundreds of Tibetans from their ancestral village and destruction of centuries-old monasteries dating back to the 13th century that house a wealth of ancient relics and murals of Buddha.

On 14 February 2024, at least 300 Tibetans peacefully protested outside the Derge (Ch: Dege) County government in Karze "Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture" in the traditional province of Kham, now incorporated into Sichuan Province, appealing to

stop the hydroelectric dam construction and to withdraw the official order for Tibetans to relocate. A week later, on 20 and 21 February, County officials and security forces in large numbers arrived at the two monasteries – Wontoe and Yena – in Wonpotoe (Tibetan: དཔོན་པོ་རྩེ། Ch: Wangbuding) township to prepare for their demolition. At that time, a large number of Tibetans appealed again by kneeling and crying in desperation to the Chinese officials to stop the demolition. Chinese police deployed in the region on 22 February severely beat Tibetans using weaponries resulting in injuries that necessitated hospitalization for many participating in the peaceful protest and also led to mass arrest and detention.

The construction of Kamtok (Ch: Gangtuo) dam, the 6th of 13 dams proposed along the upper reaches of Yangtze river, or Drichu in Tibetan, will submerge two villages – Wonpotoe (or Wontoe for short as locally known) in Derge County, Karze, and Shepa Village in Jomda County in Chamdo (Ch: Changdu) – as well as six monasteries along the riverbanks namely Yena, Wontoe, Khadho, Rabten, Gonsar and Tashi Monastery. Additionally, the Wontoe and Yena monasteries are at immediate risk of irreparable destruction of its ancient relics and murals of historical and religious significance.

Tibetan protesters are primarily concerned about the Chinese authorities' failure to legitimately consult with local Tibetans whose traditional livelihoods and customary way of lives are at the risk of facing complete disruption with the planned dam construction to which they have no say. The massive power of this hydroelectric plant, capable of generating 1.1 million kilowatts of electricity, will be transferred through the Ultra High Voltage "West to East" (Ch: xi dian dong song) transmission network only to Chinese cities, while Tibet will not be benefited from the hydropower plant in any significant way.

This recent crackdown on peaceful Tibetan protesters in Derge County demonstrates the disregard for the fundamental rights and freedoms of the Tibetan people by the Chinese Communist Party. Currently, the Chinese authorities have completely shut down internet access and censored information relating to the protest on social media platforms as part of the widespread security clampdown in the area.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the President of the Central Tibetan Administration, said, "The crackdown of non-violent protests in Derge, as well as the disregard for Tibetans' fundamental rights by the Chinese authorities, is unacceptable on all levels. These punitive measures demonstrate China's preference for its communist ideology and economic interests over ensuring and upholding fundamental human rights of Tibetans. We urge the PRC government to immediately release all Tibetans detained in Derge



protests and to respect the rights and aspirations of Tibetans. There is an urgent need for the world to hear the Tibetan voices and to confront the reality of Chinese misrule in Tibet.”

As we have urged and communicated to all foreign ministries, UN bodies and relevant offices for immediate attention and action, we reiterate our appeals to the international community, to call upon the PRC government to:

- Immediately and unconditionally release these Tibetan protesters who have been wrongfully detained for exercising their fundamental rights and to ensure proper and timely medical treatment for the injured Tibetans;
- Immediately halt the construction of mega hydropower dams in Tibet without the consent of the local population and taking into consideration its ecological implications;
- End the current crackdown, the forced and involuntary mass relocation of Tibetans from their ancestral lands and stop forced relocation without their consent in order to implement so-called economic development projects;
- Respect the religious sentiments and rights of the Tibetan people to practice and preserve Tibetan Buddhism and ancient monasteries;
- As a signatory to multiple international covenants and treaties, the PRC government must respect the rights and aspirations of the Tibetan people.

### **Most Indians Ignorant of Indo-Tibet Historic Ties, says Tibetan Activist News**

06 March 2024, Deccan Chronicle

Tibetan activist Tenzin Tsundue on Wednesday called for educating Indian youth about Tibet, its culture, language, and ongoing struggles, in light of recent geopolitical tensions such as the Galwan Valley conflict. Delivering a talk that delves into the historical and contemporary ties between the Indian subcontinent and Tibet at the Guruswamy Centre, Tsundue said the lack of awareness about Tibet among Indian youth poses a significant challenge, hindering their understanding of the complex dynamics in the region, including the occupation of Tibetan territories by China.

Tsundue, who is also a poet, writer and Tibetan refugee and activist, blamed India’s historical policy of "Hindi-Cheeni Bhai-Bhai" (India-China brotherhood) and subsequent silence on the Tibet issue for the dearth of information about Tibet in India. He also pointed out the glaring omission of Tibet from Indian textbooks, despite its immense geopolitical importance and vast territorial expanse, covering two-thirds of India’s land area.

Recalling the historic ties between India and Tibet for centuries, Tsundue highlighted the vibrant trade that once thrived across the Himalayas, with commodities like jaggery from India and yak wool, cotton, and precious metals from Tibet flowing freely between the two territories. He spoke about the significance of the extensive 4,000-kilometre border shared by India and Tibet, spanning diverse landscapes and cultures, encompassing various Buddhist sects, languages, and traditional practices.

The lecture provided attendees with a comprehensive overview of the intricate relationship between the Indian Himalayas and Tibet, shedding light on historical ties, cultural exchanges, and contemporary challenges.

### **Austria: Protest held outside Chinese Embassy demanding release of Tibetans arrested in Sichuan**

01 March 2024, Take One

Vienna [Austria], March 1 (ANI): The Tibetan diaspora held a protest in front of the Chinese Embassy in Vienna on Wednesday, demanding the release of arrested Tibetans in Sichuan who were peacefully protesting the planned construction of a dam in Tibet, local sources stated.

The protest was held to showcase their solidarity with Tibetans in China’s Sichuan province and the demonstrators called for the immediate release of hundreds of Tibetan monks and villagers.

During the protest, the Tibetan diaspora members raised slogans and held flags against this “illegal and inhumane action” by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). These Tibetan individuals also spoke about their stand against China’s “draconian laws in the occupied territory.”

The protesters carried placards that read, “Chinese Communist Party should stop the forced relocation and dam construction in Kham Dege Wonpo village in Tibet” and “China stop the demolition of homes and monasteries in Kham Dege in Tibet.”

One of the protesters said, “The proposed dam would submerge historic monasteries and numerous Tibetan villages. This dam is the sixth in a proposed series of 13 dams on the River Dri Chu. The demonstration in Sichuan province started when CCP officials came to demolish the Yena and Wontoe monasteries for the construction of the dam.”

“Yena monastery in Shiba village and Wontoe monastery in Wontoe village are cultural landmarks believed to date back over 700 years, and the mural paintings in the monasteries have historical importance,” he added.

Previously, three youngsters from the Tibetan community in Austria staged a protest in front of the Chinese Embassy in Vienna on Saturday over the

human rights violations perpetrated by the Chinese Communist Party in Tibet.

They urged the international community to unite and openly support the Tibetan government-in-exile in their ongoing struggle to protect the human rights of Tibetans in Tibet.

Adopting a novel protest, the young Tibetans used a projector and played videos of the forceful displacement of Tibetans by the Chinese in Tibet on the walls of the Chinese Embassy in Vienna. They also projected words highlighting the human rights violations of China and the cultural genocide carried out by China to erase the Tibetan identity.

The young Tibetans, associated with the Voluntary Tibet Advocacy Group (V-TAG), Europe, also raised slogans against the large-scale environmental degradation happening in Tibet under the guise of huge projects that are unsustainable for the region.

During the protest, the young Tibetans also raised slogans in German to create awareness among the people in Austria about what is happening to Tibetans in Tibet: the deliberate extinction of a community, an identity.

According to young Tibetans, these projects, including huge defence establishments, and large dams, would displace a large number of Tibetans from their native homeland. One of the main objectives behind such projects is to forcefully relocate Tibetans and erase their identities.

The protesters stressed that the systematic disregard for the fundamental rights of Tibetans by the Chinese government reflects a blatant violation of international human rights law.

Protesters said that China, obligated to respect and adhere to mechanisms safeguarding people's rights, has been persecuting human rights defenders, forcibly resettling Tibetans, engaging in forced labour, fostering workplace discrimination, curtailing religious freedom and language rights, assimilating Tibetan children in boarding schools, and perpetrating cultural genocide.

## February

### Freedom House gives Tibet global freedom score of zero

29 February 2024, International Campaign for Tibet  
After 65 years of Chinese occupation, Tibet's global freedom score has now dropped all the way to zero, watchdog group Freedom House says in its new Freedom in the World report.

"This score leaves no doubt that China's occupation of Tibet has been a global catastrophe," International Campaign for Tibet President Tencho Gyatso said. "For 65 years, the

Chinese government has brutalized Tibet to the point that its global freedom score has now hit rock bottom. That is a clear indictment of China's failed policies in Tibet and the need for the Chinese government to get back to peaceful dialogue with Tibetan leaders to resolve this disastrous occupation."

In Freedom House's 2024 report—released today, Feb. 29—Tibet has a political rights score of negative 2 out of a possible 40 and a civil liberties score of 2 out of a possible 60. That gives Tibet an overall score of 0 out of 100.

The zero rating is Tibet's worst in at least eight years. Tibet had an overall score of 1 in Freedom House's 2023 report.

### 65th anniversary of Tibetan National Uprising

Tibet's new low score arrives as Tibetans prepare to mark the 65th anniversary of the March 10, 1959 Tibetan National Uprising and the subsequent flight of the Dalai Lama into exile on March 17, 1959.

Under China's rule, Tibetans lack the freedom to practice their Buddhist faith, speak their own language and even raise their own children.

One of the most horrific reports to emerge from Tibet in 2023—the year Freedom House analyzed for its report—was of China's state-run boarding schools in Tibet, which have separated over 1 million Tibetan children from their families and forced them to learn in Chinese with a curriculum focused on Chinese subjects.

The boarding schools are part of China's policy of "Sinification," which seeks to eliminate Tibetans' unique culture, language and identity by forcing them to assimilate as loyal subjects of the Chinese Communist Party.

China has also reportedly collected DNA from about 1 million residents of the Tibet Autonomous Region, which spans much of central and western Tibet. According to Human Rights Watch, the Chinese government has even taken blood from children as young as 5 without their parents' consent.

China has also clamped down on Tibet's borders, making it nearly impossible for foreign journalists, diplomats and tourists to enter the country—and for Tibetans to escape as refugees.

### Resolving Tibet

Despite China's 65 years of brutality, Tibetans continue to show resistance and resilience.

Just this month, thousands of Tibetans in Derge (Chinese: Dege) County in eastern Tibet took part in mass protests against a proposed hydropower dam that will force two villages to vacate and destroy several Buddhist monasteries, including several centuries-old religious murals. Chinese authorities have reportedly arrested over 1,000 of the protestors.

Tibet has also received growing support from the international community.

At the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review of China in January, the number of states that raised concerns about Tibet more than doubled compared to China's last review in 2018.

Earlier this month, the US House passed the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act. Known as the Resolve Tibet Act, the bipartisan bill will strengthen US efforts to push the Chinese government to get back to the negotiating table with Tibetan leaders to finally resolve China's 65-year occupation of Tibet.

### **Tibetans in India march in solidarity with those arrested in dam protest in China**

28 February 2024, RFA

Other rallies were held in India's Bir and Clementown, and in London.



Tibetans and Buddhist leaders march in Ladakh, India, on Feb. 28, 2024, to show their solidarity with Tibetans in Dege county, southwestern China's Sichuan province, who were arrested for protesting China's planned construction of a dam on the Driчу River.

Tibetans and Buddhist leaders in northern India on Wednesday participated in a march to show their solidarity with Tibetans in southwestern China's Sichuan province arrested for peacefully protesting the planned construction of a dam.

Similar solidarity rallies were held in London and other cities the same day.

The large Buddhist community in Ladakh – in Jammu and Kashmir – expressed concerns that the dam project will submerge several significant monasteries with ancient murals that date back to the 13th century.

The Regional Tibetan Youth Congress, which organized the march and rally, said Buddhists there were concerned about the humanitarian situation and the violation of cultural and religious rights stemming from the expected impact of the dam on several monasteries and villages near the Driчу River.

On Feb. 23, police arrested more than 1,000 Tibetans, including monks and residents, of Dege

county in Sichuan's Kardze Autonomous Tibetan Prefecture, who had been protesting the construction of the Gangtuo Dam, meant to generate electricity.

If built, the power station could submerge monasteries in Dege's Wangbuding township and force residents of at least two villages near the Driчу River to relocate, sources told RFA.

Rigzin Dorje, president of the youth wing of the Ladakh Buddhist Association Leh, said there is an urgent need to address the ongoing human rights abuses and environmental destruction perpetrated by China's communist government.

He underscored the interconnectedness of global Buddhist communities and the shared responsibility to stand in solidarity with Tibetans in their struggle for justice, freedom and dignity.

'Collective commitment'

Lobsang Tsering, vice president of the Regional Tibetan Youth Congress of Ladakh, said the rally serves as "an expression of solidarity and support for Tibetans facing challenges and oppression in Dege county."

"It symbolizes a collective commitment to standing up against oppression, promoting human rights and preserving Tibetan culture and identity in the face of adversity," Tsering said.

Tenzin Peldon, who participated in the march in Ladakh said while Tibetans everywhere usually gather to raise their voices against China on politically significant dates such as March 10, known as Tibetan Uprising Day – which commemorates the thousands of lives lost in the 1959 uprising against China's invasion and occupation of their homeland – it is crucial that they come together during dire situations like the one being faced by Tibetans in Dege to collectively speak up against China's oppression.

"I urge all Tibetans in exile not to give up hope and to continue to raise awareness on online platforms about the plight of Tibetans in Dege county," she said.

Other protests were held in Bir village and Clement town in India, and in London, where Tibetans demonstrated outside the Chinese Embassy to show their support for the Dege county protesters, demand the release of the detainees, and call for an immediate halt to the dam construction.

"Risking arrest and torture, Tibetan residents of Kham Derge [Dege county] have shared images and videos of the protest with the outside world," the Tibetan Community UK said in a statement. "They want the international community in the free world to know about their plight and to raise their voice."

Authorities released about 40 of the arrested monks on Feb. 26 and 27, RFA reported on Tuesday.

Chinese authorities released about 20 monks each on Monday and Tuesday, said the sources who spoke on condition of anonymity for safety reasons. Also on Wednesday, Human Rights Watch called on Chinese authorities to immediately release the detained Tibetan monks.

"The Chinese authorities have long been hostile to public protests, but their response is especially brutal when the protests are by Tibetans and other ethnic groups," said Maya Wang, the group's acting China director, in a statement.

"Other governments should press Beijing to free these protesters, who have been wrongfully detained for exercising their basic rights," she said.

### **US official expresses concern over crackdown on Tibetans protesting dam**

28 February 2024, Rtv

Chinese police have arrested more than 1,000 and beaten some during interrogation, sources say.

An American official expressed deep concern about the arrest of over 1,000 Tibetans protesting a dam project in central China that would destroy several Buddhist monasteries, saying the United States "stands with Tibetans in preserving their unique cultural, religious, and linguistic identity."

Tibetan advocacy groups condemned China's actions, calling for the immediate release of those detained.

On Feb. 23, police arrested more than 1,000 Tibetans, including monks and residents, in Dege county in Kardze Autonomous Tibetan Prefecture, who had been peacefully protesting against the dam, which would also force two villages to be relocated, sources told Radio Free Asia.

Over the weekend, police began interrogations, beating some detainees so badly that they required medical attention, sources told RFA.

Uzra Zeya, U.S. under secretary for civilian security, democracy and human rights and U.S. special coordinator for Tibetan Issues, said on X on Feb. 25 that she was deeply concerned by reports of the "mass arrests of Tibetans protesting the construction of a dam that threatens displacement of villages & destruction of monasteries."

"China must respect human rights & freedom of expression and include Tibetans in the development & implementation of water and land management policies," she tweeted.

"These centuries-old monasteries are home to hundreds of Tibetan Buddhist monks and contain irreplaceable cultural relics," she wrote. "The U.S. stands with Tibetans in preserving their unique cultural, religious, and linguistic identity."

'Wiping out culture and religion'

The arrests "should be a reminder to the world of how brutal daily life under China's occupation is for the Tibetan people," a statement issued Monday on X from the International Campaign for Tibet by its president, Tencho Gyatso.

"China tries to hide its forced relocation of Tibetans, its destruction of their environment, and its attempts to wipe out their culture and religion," the statement said.

Saying the protesters demonstrated "incredible courage," Gyatso said they needed the support of the international community.

"We call on the Chinese government to free these Tibetans at once," she said. "We also call on the U.S. and other governments to step up pressure on China to end its vicious occupation of Tibet."

Four Tibetan NGOs based in Dharamsala, India, home to the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, issued a statement of solidarity with the Tibetan community in Dege county.

They said that the displacement of Tibetan communities is "not new phenomena," just one of many examples.

"The continued disregard for the rights and well-being of Tibetans in the face of such development projects is unacceptable and demands immediate attention from the international community," said the statement by the Tibetan Women's Association, National Democratic Party of Tibet, Regional Tibetan Youth Congress and Students for a Free Tibet.

Environmental disruption

The four groups went on to say that the construction of the dam not only threatens the local Tibetan community but also poses a risk to the fragile ecosystem of the Tibetan plateau.

"Any disruption to Tibet's rivers and a diversion of the rivers could have far-reaching consequences for the environment, biodiversity, and livelihoods of millions of people downstream," they said.

William Nee, research and advocacy coordinator at Chinese Human Rights Defenders, or CHRDR, told RFA that his organization was concerned about the situation of the detainees, whether they are being maltreated and if they have sufficient food.

RFA reported earlier that authorities told those who were arrested to bring bedding and food, suggesting they would not be released soon.

CHRDR was also concerned whether authorities were giving those arrested access to relatives and lawyers, and whether they were being detained according to Chinese Criminal Procedure Law.

"But beyond that, there are also concerns about the livelihood of the potentially affected communities by the dam and whether this has been taken into consideration," Nee said. "And also the cultural rights, given that this might impact monasteries -

some having ancient murals going back to the 13th century.”

Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, speaker of the Tibetan parliament-in-exile, tweeted on X that Tibetans worldwide condemned the crackdown.

“We urge China to promptly release those detained and to cease the dam construction,” he tweeted. “It is crucial for China to acknowledge the peaceful protests of Tibetans, addressing their concerns about preserving historic monasteries and safeguarding their homes.”

### **Austria: Tibetan youths protest outside Chinese embassy in Vienna over human rights violations**

25 February 2024, ANI

Vienna [Austria], February 25 (ANI): Three youngsters from the Tibetan community in Austria staged a protest in front of the Chinese Embassy in Vienna on Saturday over the human rights violations perpetrated by the Chinese Communist Party in Tibet. They urged the international community to unite and openly support the Tibetan Government-in-exile in their ongoing struggle to protect the human rights of Tibetans in Tibet.

Adopting a novel protest, the young Tibetans used a projector and played videos of the forceful displacement of Tibetans by the Chinese in Tibet on the walls of the Chinese Embassy in Vienna. They also projected words highlighting the human rights violations of China and the cultural genocide carried out by China to erase the Tibetan identity.

The young Tibetans, associated with VTAG, Europe, also raised slogans against the large-scale environmental degradation happening in Tibet in the guise of huge projects that are unsustainable for the region.

During the protest, the young Tibetans also raised slogans in German to create awareness among the people in Austria that what is happening to Tibetans in Tibet is a deliberate extinction of a community, an identity.

According to young Tibetans, these projects including huge defence establishments, and large dams would displace a large number of Tibetans from their native homeland.

One of the main objectives behind such projects is to forcefully relocate Tibetans and erase their identity. The protesters stressed that the systematic disregard for the fundamental rights of Tibetans by the Chinese government reflects a blatant violation of international human rights law.

Protesters said that China, obligated to respect and adhere to mechanisms safeguarding people's rights, has been persecuting human rights defenders, forcibly resettling Tibetans, engaging in forced

labour, fostering workplace discrimination, curtailing religious freedom and language rights, assimilating Tibetan children in boarding schools, and perpetrating cultural genocide. (ANI)

### **Dalai Lama's 1959 escape route in Arunachal to be developed for spiritual tourism**

24 February 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Feb24'24) – The government of the state of Arunachal Pradesh is developing the 1959 escape trail within India of Tibet's spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, following China's annexation of Tibet into a spiritual and religious tourism circuit.

Little-known Lumla in western Arunachal Pradesh's Tawang district would soon be on the national tourism map. The young Dalai Lama had passed through, even stayed in this area, during his escape from Lhasa to India, reported the PTI news agency Feb 23.

“We are developing the escape trail of His Holiness into a religious and spiritual tourism circuit which is going on. As many as five monoliths will be constructed in each place where the Dalai Lama spent the night during his journey to India from Tibet”, Tsering Lhamu the Lumla MLA, has told PTI.

The escape trail was stated to be through the business route that started in Tibet's Tsona district and ended at Khen-Dze-mani under the Zemithang circle in Tawang district.

On Mar 31, 1959, the Dalai Lama and a group of eight people along with another group of eighty people were received officially at Khen-Dze-Mani by the political officer of Tawang, the 5 Assam Rifles and the people of Zemithang, the report said.

Currently, a small gate known as 'Lhasa Dwar', the point where the Dalai Lama entered India, is marked by a 'Holy Tree', which is said to have grown from a staff dug by the Dalai Lama during his escape. It is now worshipped as a relic marking the historic event. Another notable point of interest in this area is stated to be a hanging bridge on the Indian side, followed by the Lhasa Dwar.

Then there is Gorsam Chorten, a little far from Lhasa Dwar, located 90 km from Tawang. It was founded by a Monpa monk named Lama Pradhar in the 12th century and is the largest Buddhist stupa in the region, the report said. Monpa is a major tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. The Dalai Lama stayed in the Gorsam Chorten for a day.

Zemithang is also being developed as a vibrant village in Tawang district under New Delhi's vibrant village programme to counter China's 'border defence villages' in occupied Tibet.

Lhamu has said two gompas at Thonglek and Lumla areas had been completed as part of the project



while a museum is coming up at Lumla, which will display various artefacts related to the Dalai Lama. Also, a 113 feet Maitreya Buddha (the coming Buddha) statue is coming up at Buri along the India-Bhutan border, under the NE scheme of Swadesh Darshan of the Union Tourism ministry for the development of Bhalukpong-Bomdila-Tawang tourism circuit, the report said.

Swadesh Darshan scheme is one of the flagship programmes of the ministry for the development of thematic circuits in the country in a planned and prioritised manner. Under the scheme, the government is focussing on the development of quality infrastructure with the objective of providing better experience and facilities to visitors while fostering economic growth.

### **China's Policies Are 'Like a Python Squeezing Us Out of Our Breath Slowly', Says Tibetan Exiled Leader**

21 February 2024, News18

As Tibetans prepare to mark 65 years since a failed uprising against Chinese rule and questions loom over the Dalai Lama's successor, the diaspora's elected leader said Beijing is crushing his people.

Tibetans on March 10 will commemorate the 1959 uprising against Chinese forces that led the future Nobel laureate – and thousands of his followers – to cross snowy Himalayan passes into neighbouring India and set up a government in exile.

But the anniversary has also put the question of who will succeed the ageing Dalai Lama into sharp focus, with the choice likely to spark a controversial geopolitical contest. The charismatic spiritual leader already stepped down as his people's political head in 2011, passing the baton of secular power to a government chosen democratically by some 130,000 Tibetans across the world.

Penpa Tsering, born in India in 1967, was elected in 2021 as its second-ever leader, or sikyong. "If you look at the policies of the Chinese government today, they're squeezing us – like a python squeezing us out of our breath slowly," Tsering told AFP in an interview at the office of the Tibetan government in exile in India. "That's why we are dying a slow death."

Tibet – ruled with an iron fist by China since the 1950s – was historically an independent country, but Beijing maintains its long-held position that "Tibet is part of China".

– EMPIRES FALL –

Tsering readily admits the task of seeking a "resolution to the Sino-Tibetan conflict" with vastly more powerful China can seem overwhelming. But the committed Buddhist takes a long view of history. "Nothing is permanent," he said, sitting in front of a Tibetan flag in the hills above the northern Indian

town of Dharamsala, where the Dalai Lama also lives.

India has hosted the exiled Tibetan leadership for decades and is itself a regional rival of China – tensions between the world's two most populous countries flared after a deadly Himalayan border clash in 2020. "There have been a lot of empires in this world, and every empire has fallen," Tsering said. But as the campaign for a free Tibet drags on, many worry there is a more time-pressing issue ahead.

The 88-year-old Dalai Lama has shown no indication he faces serious health problems, but the internationally recognisable face of Tibet has dramatically reduced his once-frenetic globetrotting. "He's always very aware of his mortality... So one day he will die, that is understood, that's a matter of fact," Tsering said. "But, of course, we like to hope that there will be some resolution to the cause of Tibet during the lifetime of this Dalai Lama."

Tibetan Buddhists believe the Dalai Lama is the 14th reincarnation of the leader of an institution dating back six centuries, chosen by monks according to ancient Buddhist traditions. Many expect Beijing will name a successor itself, raising the likelihood of rival nominations for the post. When he stepped aside in favour of the elected government, the Dalai Lama said: "No recognition or acceptance should be given to a candidate chosen for political ends", singling out China.

– 'CONTROL THE TIBETAN PEOPLE' –

Tsering believes the spiritual leader still has decades to live. "His Holiness keeps saying that 'I will live up to 113,'" he said. "So I chide my Chinese friends, saying: 'You are waiting for this Dalai Lama to die. "'You are not concerned about the living 14th, but you are more concerned about the yet to come 15th – because you know that if you can control the Dalai Lama, you can control the Tibetan people.'"

Tsering stressed he had no immediate concerns. "Let us see whether His Holiness the Dalai Lama outlives the Communist Party, or the Communist Party outlives His Holiness," he added. "Even this morning, His Holiness was saying: 'I have not lost one of my teeth. I'll live long'. So let's see." Tsering sometimes travels to the mountainous Indian border to stare across to the homeland he has never visited, he said, to "fulfil my emotional needs".

He does not seek full independence for Tibet, in line with the long-standing "Middle Way" policy of the Dalai Lama, who believes that pushing demands beyond autonomy would be suicidal. But the Dalai Lama has also rejected Beijing's longstanding demand that he publicly agree Tibet was historically part of China, a refusal cited by Beijing in declining dialogue with his representatives since 2010. Tsering, who campaigns for the rights of the estimated seven

million Tibetans he said live under Chinese control, said "back-channel" contacts were in place with Beijing and would continue. "If there's no hope, the cause itself is lost."

### **Division and factionalism in exile "regrettably shameful", says Dalai Lama in new letter**

21 February 2024, Phayul

A letter to felicitate the 50th founding anniversary of the Kollegal Dhondenling Tibetan settlement in South India, by the Tibetan spiritual leader His Holiness the Dalai Lama discouraged the divisive leanings among exile Tibetans including the leadership. Amidst the celebrations, a poignant message from the octogenarian Tibetan leader was delivered by the President of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), Sikyong Penpa Tsering, who graced the event as the chief guest on Saturday.

The message conveyed by the foremost exiled spiritual leader through the Sikyong Penpa Tsering encapsulated a crucial theme. The octogenarian leader implored exiled Tibetans to prioritise unity and solidarity, echoing the resilience demonstrated by Tibetans inside Tibet in the face of severe repression by the Chinese communist government. He cautioned against factionalism, urging the community to show unity displayed by Tibetans inside Tibet.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering, while reading the letter from His Holiness the Dalai Lama highlighted the following key points. "Despite living under the illegal occupation by the Communist Chinese, the spirit of unity among Tibetans inside Tibet has endured. However, some living in exile are straying from the path of selflessness. Divisions are being sown within our community by those with narrow minds, who seek to emphasise factions based on regional origins (Cholka) or religious affiliations (Cholug). This is regrettably shameful. Therefore, those entrusted with leadership roles must be careful," the letter expressed.

The letter from His Holiness the Dalai Lama, highlighted by Sikyong emphasises a key aspect of the divisive politics that have emerged within the Tibetan exile community, particularly during parliamentary proceedings and during campaign trails between elections. These factions often become visible particularly during parliamentary sessions, leading to stalemates and disruptions in the proceedings in recent times, thus causing negative impact on the unity and coherence among members of the Tibetan diaspora.

The remainder of the sixth session of the 17th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile (TPiE), faced significant challenges, leading to the rescheduling of sessions on March 13 to 16 due to the unavailability of the required quorum needed to officially convene the

session. The session also encountered disruptions following a walk out by some members of the parliament.

However, many say that this unprecedented trend of prolonged deadlock shows the inability of the parliament to function effectively, thereby jeopardising the governance and stability of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, known officially as the Central Tibetan Administration. Others say that such prolonged disruptions undermine the legitimacy and credibility of the Tibetan leadership, and contribute to the already growing trust deficit between the leadership and the masses.

### **Beijing crushing Tibetans, exiled political leader says**

21 February 2024, France24

Dharamsala (India) (AFP) – As Tibetans prepare to mark 65 years since a failed uprising against Chinese rule and questions loom over the Dalai Lama's successor, the diaspora's elected leader said Beijing is crushing his people.

Tibetans on March 10 will commemorate the 1959 uprising against Chinese forces that led the future Nobel laureate – and thousands of his followers – to cross snowy Himalayan passes into neighbouring India and set up a government in exile.

But the anniversary has also put the question of who will succeed the ageing Dalai Lama into sharp focus, with the choice likely to spark a controversial geopolitical contest.

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Penpa Tsering, born in India in 1967, was elected in 2021 as its second-ever leader, or sikyong.

"If you look at the policies of the Chinese government today, they're squeezing us – like a python squeezing us out of our breath slowly," Tsering told AFP in an interview at the office of the Tibetan government in exile in India.

"That's why we are dying a slow death."

Tibet – ruled with an iron fist by China since the 1950s – was historically an independent country, but Beijing maintains its long-held position that "Tibet is part of China".

Empires fall

Tsering readily admits the task of seeking a "resolution to the Sino-Tibetan conflict" with vastly more powerful China can seem overwhelming.

But the committed Buddhist takes a long view of history.

"Nothing is permanent," he said, sitting in front of a Tibetan flag in the hills above the northern Indian town of Dharamsala, where the Dalai Lama also lives.

India has hosted the exiled Tibetan leadership for decades and is itself a regional rival of China – tensions between the world's two most populous countries flared after a deadly Himalayan border clash in 2020.

"There have been a lot of empires in this world, and every empire has fallen," Tsering said.

But as the campaign for a free Tibet drags on, many worry there is a more time-pressing issue ahead.

The 88-year-old Dalai Lama has shown no indication he faces serious health problems, but the internationally recognisable face of Tibet has dramatically reduced his once-frenetic globetrotting.

"He's always very aware of his mortality... So one day he will die, that is understood, that's a matter of fact," Tsering said.

"But, of course, we like to hope that there will be some resolution to the cause of Tibet during the lifetime of this Dalai Lama."

Many expect Beijing will name a successor itself, raising the likelihood of rival nominations for the post.

When he stepped aside in favour of the elected government, the Dalai Lama said: "No recognition or acceptance should be given to a candidate chosen for political ends", singling out China.

'Control the Tibetan people'

Tsering believes the spiritual leader still has decades to live.

"His Holiness keeps saying that 'I will live up to 113,'" he said.

"So I chide my Chinese friends, saying: 'You are waiting for this Dalai Lama to die.'

"'You are not concerned about the living 14th, but you are more concerned about the yet to come 15th – because you know that if you can control the Dalai Lama, you can control the Tibetan people.'"

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"Let us see whether His Holiness the Dalai Lama outlives the Communist Party, or the Communist Party outlives His Holiness," he added.

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Tsering, who campaigns for the rights of the estimated seven million Tibetans he said live under Chinese control, said "back-channel" contacts were in place with Beijing and would continue.

"If there's no hope, the cause itself is lost."

### **US House passes bill recognising Tibet's unresolved political status**

16 February 2024, Phayul

In a display of bipartisan unity, the United States House of Representatives made a historic decision on Thursday, passing the 'Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Conflict Act'. This landmark legislation not only recognises Tibet's unresolved political status but also holds China accountable for violating the legitimate right to self-determination of the Tibetan people.

The bill, introduced by long-time Tibet supporters Representative Jim McGovern of Massachusetts and Representative Michael McCaul of Texas, alongside Senators Jeff Merkley of Oregon and Todd Young of Indiana, aims to affirm the United States government's stance on Tibet's legal status in the international arena.

Several members of Congress spoke in support of the Resolve Tibet Act. Rep. McGovern, known for his unwavering dedication to human rights, stressed on the importance of standing in solidarity with the Tibetan people. "It has been more than 60 years since the People's Republic of China forced His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama into exile and took control of Tibet against the will of its people. The dispute between the Chinese and Tibetans over Tibet's status and governance has persisted ever since. In spite of the willingness of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people to resolve Tibet status in

governance through dialogue. With dialogue blocked, the PRC has continued its unceasing efforts to erode Tibetan history, Tibetan language, Tibetan culture and Tibetan religion. A few years ago, I was on delegation with Speaker Pelosi. We went to Tibet and we saw first-hand the PRC's repression against the people of Tibet essentially trying to erase Tibetans as a people."

"This bill that we are discussing here today seeks to end that. By explicitly recognising the Tibetan people are a people with a distinct religious, cultural, linguistic and historical identity. By reminding all concerned that people's and not least the Tibetan people have a right to self-determination under international human rights law and by requiring the US government to actively counter the PRC's propaganda about Tibet. Like the false claim that Tibet has been a part of China since ancient times. A position that the United States has never accepted and there was no basis for such a claim. Through these measures, we hope to kickstart dialogue between Tibet and China, in keeping with the longstanding US policy," he emphasised.

"The decades old dispute between Tibet and China started as an armed conflict of invasion, resistance and insurgency. In the long-run, the only guarantee against the resumption of large scale violence is for the PRC to fully respect the human rights and dignity of the Tibetan people. A vote for this bill is a vote to recognise the rights of the Tibetan people and it is a vote to insist on resolving the dispute between Tibet and People's Republic of China peacefully and in accordance with international law through dialogue and without preconditions. There is still an opportunity to do this but time is running out. And again, I urge my colleagues to support this bill because it is about standing up for human rights. It is about standing up for the Tibetan people who have been repressed for far too long," he further added.

The bill will recognise Tibet's unresolved political status and hold China suspect of violating Tibetan people's legitimate right to self-determination. The bill also aims to counter the narrative propagated by the Chinese government, which asserts that Tibet has been an integral part of China since ancient times. Additionally, the bill also makes clear that Tibet's land mass does not only include the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) but also the significant Tibetan-inhabited areas in Gansu, Sichuan, Qinghai, and Yunnan provinces.

Furthermore, the bill faults China for its refusal to engage in discussions with the Dalai Lama or his representatives. The bill also seeks to empower the position of US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, currently held by Under Secretary Uzra Zeya to counter CCP's propaganda and address Tibet-related concerns effectively.

This unprecedented move by the US House committee under the Biden Administration is followed by two other Acts that work on demanding more access from inside Tibet and reaffirming that the reincarnation of the next Dalai Lama falls strictly in the hands of the Tibetan people; Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act (2018) and Tibetan Policy and Support Act (2020) respectively.

### **China fails to stop New Jersey Township Mayor from raising Tibetan flag to celebrate Losar**

14 February 2024, RTV

Losar, the Tibetan New Year, which fell on Feb 10 this time, was celebrated in the US State Department while Mayor Michael Melham of Belleville Township in the state of New Jersey flew the Tibetan national flag on Feb 9, rejecting a written objection from China's vice consul in New York.

Extending warmest wishes to all those celebrating Losar, the Tibetan New Year, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement Feb 9, "On this first day of the Year of the Wood Dragon, we celebrate the strength and perseverance of the Tibetan community around the globe. Here in the United States, tens of thousands of Tibetan-Americans are integral to the preservation of Tibetans' distinct cultural, linguistic, and religious heritage."

He wished Tibetans celebrating all across the world peace and prosperity in the new year.

Meanwhile, in Belleville, Mayor Melham went on to raise the Tibetan flag, rejecting a second last-second letter, from China's vice consul in New York, imploring the mayor to cancel the noon event at town hall, claiming the flag was a symbol of "an illegal separatist political group," reported [tapinto.net](https://tapinto.net), [cbsnews.com](https://cbsnews.com) and other news outlets Feb 10.

The reports said the mayor responded in writing to vice consul Huang Ping, saying: "Here in Belleville, New Jersey, we pride ourselves on fostering an environment of inclusivity and acceptance, regardless of nationality or territorial affiliation. Our community's rich history is deeply rooted in these principles, shaping the very essence of who we are."

The mayor has added: "It's essential to clarify that our intentions are not aimed at challenging the sovereignty of any nation. Instead, our gesture symbolizes solidarity with the Tibetan people and their aspirations for freedom and self-determination."

"We stand with the Tibetan people in their struggle for autonomy and respect for their cultural heritage," the mayor has concluded, urging Ping to delve into Belleville's "fascinating Chinese history, which spans over a century and a half."

The mayor has also noted that Belleville was live-streaming a Chinese New Year event on Feb 10, serving "as a testament to our deep appreciation for Chinese culture and traditions. It is a reflection of our longstanding relationship with the Chinese community."

He has also said, "As a Township, we remain committed to fostering understanding, dialogue, and mutual respect among all peoples, both locally and globally."

The mayor said his decision was not political and that he sent a respectful letter back to China's vice consul saying the flag went up because his diverse community respects all voices, according to the cbsnews.com report.

This year, the Tibetan New Year fell on the same day as the Chinese Lunar New Year.

### **On Losar, Dalai Lama exhorts Tibetans to uphold culture**

11 February 2024, The Sentinel

Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama on Saturday greeted Tibetans in Tibet and in exile on Tibetan New Year, Losar 2151 – the year of the Wood-Dragon.

In a video message, the spiritual leader said: "Despite undergoing great difficulties in exile and living under a powerful Communist Chinese regime, our people, the majority of whom are inside of Tibet, have remained unscathed while I have been the leader.

"Although the Communist Chinese rulers, after the 'so-called peaceful liberation', have wished that we Tibetans forget our religious faith, we have held onto our convictions and our culture even more firmly – this is very good. Today, there is a renewed interest in Buddhism, not only among Tibetans, but even among some Chinese.

"In many parts of the world today, Tibetan spiritual and cultural traditions are regarded as logical, rational and of practical benefit when closely considered since they enable us to transform our minds in a positive way and bring about inner peace."

According to the Tibetan lunar calendar, Losar is the first day of the New Year. Traditionally, it is celebrated in a big way. This year, the festival falls on February 10. The three-day festival marks sacred and secular practices like prayers, ceremonies, rituals, and folk dancing and merrymaking.

The elderly Buddhist monk said: "Nowadays, an increasing number of people in Western countries are taking interest in Tibetan culture and spirituality. I'm also aware of an increasing number of Western scientists who admire the methods for developing a

kind heart that is found in our culture, although they lack any religious belief."

Saying that the Communist Chinese have attempted systematically to eliminate spiritual and cultural heritage, His Holiness in the video message added: "However, it has become clear that rather than destroying it, there is a renewed interest in our cultural traditions in the world today."

Wishing, in particular, to express appreciation for his fellow Tibetans in Tibet for the unflinching faith and devotion they possess, he said: "Still, I think it's important that the new generation of Tibetans has a deep understanding of the good customs we have upheld for more than a thousand years, not just because they are our customs but also because they accord with reason."

"In the reality of today's world, I think it's necessary that the new generation take a fresh look at the traditions we've preserved in the light of Western scientific interest. They need to understand why people in the West with no particular belief in religion take interest in our traditions.

"And they need to be able to recognize the value of the centuries-old cherished treasures of Tibet in order to preserve them well." (IANS)

### **China opens Lhasa for Tibetans from other regions for Losar, but tight restrictions remain**

11 February 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Feb11'24) – China announced a relaxation in restrictions it had imposed in 2018 on the entry into Tibet's capital Lhasa of Tibetans from outside the region in a move to revive its flagging economy ahead of the Tibetan New Year, or Losar, festivities, reported the Tibetan service of rfa.org Feb 9. But restrictions, bordering on a ban, continues to remain on Tibetans seeking to travel to the other countries.

Besides, the relaxations have come with restrictions which severely curtail one of the main Tibetan purposes for undertaking the visit, the report said, citing three local Tibetan sources.

Most of the Tibetans who make it to Lhasa after the relaxation of entry rules have been Kham and Amdo people whose historical Tibetan regions are now parts of Sichuan and Qinghai provinces. And their main or only purpose is to undertake pilgrimage to the major Buddhist religious sites that include the Potala Palace, the Barkhor Street, the Jokhang Temple and the Norbulingka Palace.

The relaxation has led to the largest number of arrivals from the traditional Kham and Amdo provinces of Tibet.

However, the TAR authorities have imposed restrictions on visits to a number of these sites, including the Jokhang Temple, the holiest site in Tibetan Buddhism. It has decided to open the site on



the first day of Losar, on Feb 10, and then close it from Feb 11 to 16.

Besides, limits have been placed on visits to other religious sites as well, including on forming of large gatherings, during the 15-day Losar celebrations. Devotees must present their identification cards before participating in religious rituals near temples and pilgrimage sites, the report said, citing a Lhasa police order.

Until last year, Tibetans from other regions were required to submit to an office in Lhasa a prescribed application after obtaining the form for the purpose from a local office, while a resident of the host city was required to provide guarantee that the visitors would not engage in any protest activity.

The report also said Tibetans continued to face severe restrictions on undertaking travels outside the country.

"I went to Nepal with a few of my friends last month but in order to go on that trip, I had to deposit 100,000 Nepali rupee [US\$750] and give the name of someone I knew in Lhasa as security," the report quoted one of the sources as saying, speaking, like the others, on condition of anonymity for safety reasons. Besides, only group travel, accompanied by a travel agency representative, was allowed.

"I felt like a prisoner," the source has said.

In addition, "It's almost impossible for Tibetans to travel to the United States and other Western countries," a third source has told rfa.org.

### **Tibetan Flag Raised in Belleville: An Act of Solidarity Amid Diplomatic Tensions**

10 February 2024, BNN

In a defiant act of solidarity, Mayor Michael Melham of Belleville, New Jersey, raised the Tibetan flag on February 11, 2024, honoring a community member, Yangchen Nodong, who fled Tibet in 1960. This gesture came despite a last-minute plea from the Chinese government to cancel the event.

**A Last-Minute Plea Ignored**

In a display of unwavering support for Tibetan exiles, Mayor Michael Melham of Belleville, New Jersey, raised the Tibetan flag on February 11, 2024. This significant event was held to honor Yangchen Nodong, a Belleville resident who escaped Tibet in 1960. The Chinese government attempted to thwart the flag-raising by sending a last-minute letter urging Mayor Melham to call off the ceremony.

Despite the Chinese government's efforts, Mayor Melham refused to back down, stating that his township respects all voices. Belleville is known for its diverse population, and the mayor believes that embracing this diversity is essential for fostering unity and acceptance.

**A Symbol of Freedom and Suppression**

Tibet has been an autonomous region of China since 1950, but many exiles argue that their culture and religion have been systematically suppressed under communist rule. The Tibetan flag, banned in Tibet, has become a powerful symbol of freedom and self-determination for those who have been forced to flee their homeland.

For Yangchen Nodong, the flag-raising ceremony was a deeply emotional experience. "Raising the Tibetan flag in Belleville is a testament to our resilience and the unwavering hope for freedom," she said. "I am grateful to Mayor Melham and the people of Belleville for standing with us."

The ceremony was attended by members of the Tibetan community, local residents, and several dignitaries. Many participants expressed their appreciation for Mayor Melham's support and his commitment to inclusivity.

**A Dance of Diplomacy and Defiance**

Mayor Melham's decision to raise the Tibetan flag has sparked a diplomatic dance between local and international interests. While the Chinese government has condemned the move, stating that it "interferes with China's internal affairs," Mayor Melham remains steadfast in his belief that the gesture was a symbol of solidarity and respect for the Tibetan people.

The mayor's actions have also drawn attention to the broader issue of human rights in Tibet. Activists and supporters of the Tibetan cause are hopeful that this event will help raise awareness and lead to a more open and inclusive dialogue about the situation in Tibet.

As the sun set on the flag-raising ceremony, the Tibetan flag fluttered proudly in the breeze, a powerful reminder of the enduring spirit of the Tibetan people and their quest for freedom.

In defiance of a last-minute plea from the Chinese government, Mayor Michael Melham of Belleville, New Jersey, raised the Tibetan flag on February 11, 2024. This act of solidarity honored Yangchen Nodong, a Tibetan exile who escaped her homeland in 1960. The flag-raising ceremony was a poignant symbol of hope and freedom for the Tibetan community, as well as a testament to Belleville's commitment to inclusivity and acceptance.

As the Tibetan flag continues to fly in Belleville, it serves as a reminder of the ongoing struggle for freedom and self-determination faced by the Tibetan people. Amidst diplomatic tensions, Mayor Melham's unwavering support for the Tibetan cause highlights the importance of standing up for human rights and the preservation of cultural identity.

## **'Lack of information from Tibet is due to high level of Chinese gov't repression'**

07 February 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Feb07'24) – The reason why not much is heard about, and therefore reported on, on the human rights situation in Tibet today is because it remains the least free country on earth, an international summit on religious freedom held in Washington, DC, was told last week.

"Today we don't hear much about Tibet. And the reason is exactly because it's the least-free country on Earth," Mr Namgyal Choedup, Washington-based representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration to North America, told the meeting.

He was one of the main speakers at the summit's breakout session, which was also addressed by the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief Nazila Ghanea and Campaign for Uyghurs Founder and Executive Director Rushan Abbas.

This panel of the summit's session on violations in surveillance states was developed by Washington-based International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) with the groups Boat People SOS and the Campaign for Uyghurs.

Tibet also featured in the summit's panel discussion on challenges and opportunities in freedom of religion or belief in Asia. This panel also highlighted the situation in Nepal, including for Tibetan refugees there, and the situation in Sri Lanka. ICT's Mr Franz Matzner moderated the discussion.

Namgyal traced the current nature of the state of Chinese government surveillance in Tibet Autonomous Region to the 2011-16 tenure of its regional Party Secretary Mr Chen Quanguo, who developed a system of mass surveillance and militarization that has only grown since. Chen was later moved to East Turkestan (Xinjiang) to become the architect of alleged genocide of mostly Uyghur Muslims.

"What we have is kind of reminiscent of the Cultural Revolution period," he said, referring to the decade-long violent purges led by Chairman Mao Zedong. China has largely shut down access to Tibet from the outside world, with Tibetans being even forced to spy on one another, he said.

Any individual act of dissent leads to collective punishment in the form of mass repression and immediate shutdown of internet access to prevent the news from spreading, he said, citing the more recent example of the protest self-immolation in Tibet's capital Lhasa last year by Mr Tsewang Norbu, a popular young Tibetan singer.

He also cited the example of a Tibetan university student named Tsedon in Lhasa who was detained by Chinese authorities on Dec 26 last year and reported

dead in police detention on Jan 15, with no avenue to verify these reports.

Namgyal accused China of implementing a policy of Sinification by means of eliminating Tibet's unique civilization by forcing its people to give up their language, religion and culture.

## **January**

### **China started destroying monasteries after occupying Tibet: Former Tibetan PM-in-exile**

29 January 2024, ANI

New Delhi [India], January 29 (ANI): Former Tibetan Prime Minister-in-exile Lobsang Sangay has accused China of exploiting Tibetan identity, language and culture since the Chinese troops entered the Tibet region on October 7, 1950. The incident marked the beginning of a dark period in the history of the Tibetan people's homeland, said Lobsang Sangay in an exclusive interview with ANI.

"China occupied our country, brutalised our people, around million Tibetans died because of killing, starvation and suicides. Monasteries were destroyed, treasures were looted, burnt and sold. Thousands years of civilisations there were brought from Nalanda to Tibet were reduced to ashes." Lobsang Sangay said.

In an effort to revitalise Tibetan culture into mainstream Chinese culture, Beijing has implemented several policies over the years which have resulted in the disappearance of regional culture elements.

Officially an atheist state, China has long persecuted Buddhism, which is revered as a force that binds all Tibetans. In fact, the attack on the faith was the main reason why several monks joined the guerrilla group during the Tibetan uprising of 1959.

"Monks wanted to defend their faith as the Communist Party of China started destroying the monasteries after occupying Tibet," said Lobsang Sangay during the interview.

The Chinese government has also meddled in the succession of the 14th Dalai Lama. Beijing's interference is being seen as violations of religious freedom of the Tibetan people.

He said, "Chinese have no business whatsoever, they destroyed monasteries, they are communists, they are atheists, they don't believe in religion, they have no right to select our religious leader."

When asked if he had ever felt that the Tibetan cause was a lost cause, Lobsang gave a very optimistic view.

He said, "We are Buddhist. We believe in the notion of impermanence. Nothing is permanent. You are born and you die. Wherever you are today, you might not be there tomorrow. Everything is a cycle,

so there is always a hope. There is a Tibetan nation, there is a Tibetan civilization, there are Tibetan people, and there is a Tibetan cause. That will always be alive, no matter what".

"As long as you survive your time will come because it is inevitable. Great powers from Mughals to the British, you just name it, how many empires have come and how many empires have gone. China will inevitably go," he added.

Lobsang Sangay is the first person who served as the Tibetan Prime Minister without a monastic background. He was born in Darjeeling in 1968 in a refugee community. He earned a Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of Delhi. He studied international law and democracy at Harvard University. Later, he became an American citizen. (ANI)

### **DIIR Holds 'Tibet Advocacy Training and Youth Capacity Building Program' for North Indian V-Tag Members**

28 January 2024, CTA

Dharamshala: As part of the V-TAG initiative, Department of Information and International Relations-CTA (DIIR) organised a 'Tibet Advocacy Training and Youth Capacity Building program' for a group of V-TAG members from North India to enhance personal skills in Advocacy, communication, and effective presentation at Lemon Tree Hotel in Dharamshala from 26 to 29 January 2024.



Members of regional Tibetan V-TAG members at the 'Tibet Advocacy Training and Youth Capacity Building program'. Photo / Tenzin Jigme Taydeh / CTA

This morning, on the second day, DIIR Secretary Karma Choeying, as chief guest, delivered a keynote address to the participants. In his talk, he stressed, "With the older Tibetan generations slowly diminishing in exile, it is of utmost importance for the younger generations to take over in charge of the Tibetan freedom movement". He underscored the participants to broaden their understanding of Tibetan history, the political climate in Tibet now, and the circumstances facing Tibetans both in Tibet and

abroad in order to augment their advocacy proficiency.

In light of China's systematic denial of rights and erasure of Tibetan identity through sinicization process, the Secretary further emphasised the need for younger generations never to forget the gracious contributions of His Holiness the Dalai Lama for establishing and fostering this unparalleled exile Tibetan community and forging ahead with the Tibetan freedom movement.

Following an inaugural speech by Secretary Karma Choeying, a panel discussion was held featuring presidents and directors of Tibetan non-governmental organisations, including Gonpo Dhondup, the President of the Tibetan Youth Congress; Wangden Kyab, a researcher at Tibet Watch; Tsering Dolma, the Vice President of the Tibetan Women's Association; and Tenzing Passang, the India National Director of the Students for Free Tibet. The session was moderated by Tenzing Dhamdul from the Foundation for Non-Violent Alternatives (FNVA).

### **Tibetan politician in exile talks about continued saga of survival**

28 January 2024, Devdiscourse

Tibetan-American politician in exile, Lobsang Sangay, recently provided insight into the struggle of the people living in his parents' native land, Tibet.

Tibetan-American politician in exile, Lobsang Sangay, recently provided insight into the struggle of the people living in his parents' native land, Tibet. In an exclusive interview with ANI, Lobsang Sangay, who served as the Tibetan Prime Minister-in-exile from 2011 to 2021, recounted his parents' struggle for survival and their journey to seek refuge in India amid the Chinese occupation of Tibet.

Sangay explained how China invaded Tibet and forced the 14th Dalai Lama to take refuge in India. While talking about the Tibetan uprising of 1959 and the armed guerrilla group, Lobsang acknowledged that Tibetans were left with no choice but to take up arms in order to defend their motherland. "Many monks joined the guerrilla group to defend their faith as the Communist Party of China started destroying the monasteries after occupying Tibet," Sangay said.

On the question of America's help to Tibetans, Lobsang Sangay explained why the US extended limited support to them. "America came in support of Tibetans because of the Korean War. During the Korean War, the Chinese were literally fighting against the Americans. The US needed a second front to divert attention. So, they started supplying arms and ammunition, but what they provided was very limited. Had they supplied more, the Tibetans would have fought bravely. There was a chance that we could defend at least some parts of our territory," said Sangay.

In response to a question concerning whether Tibetans ever felt deceived by America's treatment of them, Lobsang stated, "When Nixon went to China in 1972 to normalise the relations, several Tibetan guerrillas felt betrayed and committed suicides". When asked about Lobsang's decision to return to his roots, he replied, "China occupied our country, brutalised our people, around million Tibetans died, because of the killings, suicides, starvation. Numerous monasteries were looted and burned. When you grow up with these kinds of stories, you have to fight for your cause."

Lobsang Sangay is the first person to serve as the Tibetan Prime Minister without a monastic background. He was born in Darjeeling in 1968 in a refugee community.

Sangay earned a Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of Delhi. He studied International law and democracy at Harvard University. Later, he became an American citizen.

### **Dalai Lama reaches Sikkim after 13 years amidst tension with China, know why this visit was special**

25 January 2024, Newstrack

As soon as the Dalai Lama reached Sikkim, many discussions started. His visit is also being seen as India giving a strong message to Dragon amid the tension between India and China.

Tibetan Buddhist guru and spiritual leader Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso reached Sikkim after 13 years on January 22. The Dalai Lama landed at Army's Libing helipad in East Sikkim. There he was welcomed by Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang. On the first day of his visit, he also met some members of the Tibetan Parliament in exile, the Tibetan Settlement Office and the local Tibetan Assembly. After this, on Tuesday, he gave knowledge on the book '37 Practices of Bodhisattvas' written by religious guru Acharya Gyalse Thokme Sangpo at Paljor Stadium, about 50 km from the India-China border in Nathula. Also Read - On this day India entered Pakistan and took revenge of Pulwama attack, 5 years completed As soon as the Dalai Lama reached Sikkim, many discussions started. His visit is also being seen as India giving a strong message to Dragon amid the tension between India and China. Actually, China considers Dalai Lama as an enemy. When China occupied Tibet, India gave shelter to the Dalai Lama and his supporters. China had become more angry with India since that time. By the way, China is also claiming large parts of Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim as its own. Even before this, he had expressed strong objection to the visit of Dalai Lama to these two states.

Tension has been going on between India and China for the last 2 years. Also, meeting people especially

related to Tibet during this tour is like directly teasing China. There are speculations through this visit that India has tried to send a message to China that it does not take its claims on Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh seriously. Also he is not afraid of China.

### **Tibetan Parliamentary Delegation Calls on Maharashtra's Governor and Speaker**

24 January 2024, CTA



Tibetan parliamentary delegation with the Governor, Shri Ramesh Bais.

Dharamshala: As part of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile's advocacy campaign for Tibet across various Indian states, parliamentarians Geshe Lharampa Atuk Tseten, Dhondup Tashi, and Tsering Yangchen visited the state of Maharashtra. During their advocacy tour, they met with the Governor, Shri Ramesh Bais, and the Speaker of the State Legislative Assembly, Shri Rahul Narwekar.

With coordination from the National Campaign for Free Tibet Support (NCFTS)'s regional convenor from Pune and Sangli, Shri Bala Saheb Raste, the Tibetan parliamentary delegates received a visit from Dr. Rajaram Bhonsle, a staff member of the District Malaria Officer, on 19 January 2024.

In the afternoon, they conducted a press conference at the Mumbai Marathi Patrakara Sangh, emphasizing the significance of Tibet to India and shedding light on the current critical situation within Tibet. Expressing gratitude to India and its citizens for their steadfast support for the just cause of Tibet, the parliamentarians addressed each of the media's questions regarding Tibet. Subsequently, they met with Shri Rahul Narwekar, the Speaker of the Maharashtra Assembly, advocating for Tibet and presenting him with a souvenir from the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile along with relevant documents.

Shri Girish Wankhede, a distinguished expert in the film and media industry, organized a meeting with film and music artists on the next day. In the meeting, MP Geshe Lharampa Atuk Tseten spoke on the religious connection between India and Tibet, while MP Dhondup Tashi focused on the geopolitical connection of the border between the two nations, and MP Tsering Yangchen delved into the intricate



relationship of the Tibetan diaspora with India and its citizens. The talk was followed by a question-answer session.

On 22 January, they met with the Governor of Maharashtra, Shri Ramesh Bais, to discuss the historical status of Tibet as an independent nation currently occupied by China. Emphasizing that recognizing Tibet as part of China could impede the resolution of the Sino-Tibetan conflict through non-violent means, they advocated for the Middle Way Approach. This approach advocates dialogue between the envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and its Chinese counterparts to address the conflict.

In addition to highlighting the environmental challenges facing Tibet, they underscored the importance of the Tibetan plateau and rivers flowing into South Asian countries, including India. They urged for unrestricted access for media and researchers to Tibet and the release of Tibetan political prisoners, including Panchen Rinpoche, Gendhun Choekyi Nyima.

Governor Bais shared his prior meeting with His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Dharamshala and conveyed the discussed matters to the then PM of India, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee. He assured the delegation that he would relay their message to the current Indian PM, Shri Narendra Modi.

Having successfully concluded their official advocacy tour in Maharashtra, they proceeded to Telangana.

### **The UN China Review Finds Unprecedented Support for Tibetan Rights by Member States, While Beijing Shuts Down Criticism**

24 January 2024, CTA

Geneva: On 23 January this year, 24 United Nations Member States mentioned Tibet and Tibetans in their oral statements during China's fourth Universal Periodic Review (UPR) cycle. Among these, 21 countries raised serious concerns regarding the human rights situation in Tibet, resulting in 23 recommendations.

China's human rights record was the major focus of intense scrutiny over its treatment of Tibetans, Uyghurs, and dissidents in Hong Kong. The States that raised Tibet at China's review were Austria, Australia, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Lithuania, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The statements by the Member States offered a wide-ranging look at China's human rights violations in Tibet, urging a review of Beijing's rights record to focus on its cultural genocide and political indoctrination. The major focus was particularly on China's repression of cultural and religious rights. The Member States expressed concerns over human

rights violations in Tibet and in particular called for the abolition of the colonial boarding schools that separated over 1 million Tibetan children from their families, language, religion and culture. The States also called for the authorisation of private schools, the release of arbitrarily detained Tibetans and unhindered access for UN representatives to Tibet.

As usual, the PRC government has portrayed boarding schools in Tibet as a means of bridging the gap between urban and rural populations for equal education access; however, it has failed to provide evidence that the curriculum in the schools does not undermine Tibetan language or culture among young Tibetan students. The Chinese delegation maintained that Tibetans enjoy religious freedom and cultural rights based on a variety of statistics that provide little support for their claim. Relocation policies were outlined by the Chinese delegation as operating with the consent of Tibetans. The Chinese ambassador refuted criticism and denounced allegations as smears, lies, and defamatory attacks on China.

Karma Choeying, Secretary of the Department of Information and International Relations, applauded the substantial increase in the number of States raising Tibet at the UN China Review and said: "We are grateful to all states that raised Tibet's grave human rights situation under the unlawful rule of the PRC government. Considering the severity of the situation within Tibet, China should be attentive to the Universal Periodic Review and comply with the recommendations provided by Member States of the UN. In addition to complying with its obligations to respect the protected rights of Tibetans and others, China must immediately cease its assimilationist practices that undermine Tibetan identity."

Several months before China's review by the United Nations Human Rights Council, the Tibetan Bureau Geneva, together with the Central Tibetan Women's Association and the Tibetan Community of Switzerland and Liechtenstein, have already submitted a report in July 2023 detailing systematic and widespread patterns of human rights violations in Tibet. Aside from providing recommendations to the international community, the report also highlights aspects of Chinese government's repressive policies on Tibetan culture, including colonial boarding schools, Sinicization of Tibetan identity and language, crackdown on religious freedom, transnational repression, surveillance system, destruction of Tibetan environment, and arbitrary arrests.

China underwent its third cycle of the UN Convention on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights implementation review before the Universal Periodic Review in February last year. The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights concluded its review of China with its concluding observations



noting widespread violations by the country. It requested that the PRC government immediately cease its operation of colonial boarding schools in Tibet, and its program of mass relocation of Tibetans, and called to allow Tibetans to exercise their cultural and religious rights without interference.

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a process through which all UN Member States are provided the opportunity to review the human rights records of all other Member States every five years. The UPR aims to offer constructive criticism and to ensure scrutiny of every country's human rights record and recommendations for compliance with international human rights law. China's previous UPR was held on 6 November 2018.

### Twofold increase in states raising Tibet at UN China review

23 January 2024, International Campaign for Tibet



An unprecedented number of UN member states raised China's oppression in Tibet during the Chinese government's Universal Periodic Review at the UN Human Rights Council today in Geneva.

Twenty states took to the floor to challenge China's human rights record in Tibet and to offer recommendations. That number is more than twice the nine states that raised Tibet during China's last Universal Periodic Review in 2018. The increase also reflects the rise in so-called Advanced Questions, which doubled compared to 2018.

Member states also made 24 recommendations on Tibet, up from 11 in 2018.

The Universal Periodic Review is a mechanism of the Human Rights Council to assess the human rights record of every UN member state every four to five years.

The states that raised Tibet at China's review this year were: the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, France, Lithuania, Japan, Sweden, Norway, Austria, Switzerland, Poland, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Ireland, Montenegro, New Zealand, Canada, Denmark and Estonia.

"We welcome the considerable rise in statements and concern among states with regard to Chinese policies in Tibet," said the International Campaign for Tibet.

"Tibetans from Tibet have not had the chance to contribute to this review and raise their voices. We are therefore grateful to all states that raised China's coercive boarding schools and relocation policies in Tibet and called for religious freedom, cultural rights for Tibetans and unfettered access to Tibet. Now the international community needs to follow up in bilateral relations with China and continue to raise Tibet."

Boarding schools, arbitrary detentions and lack of access

The statements by the member states raised the religious and cultural rights of Tibetans. They highlighted in particular the boarding schools that have separated over 1 million Tibetan children from their families, language, religion and culture.

States called for the abolition of the boarding schools. They also called for the release of arbitrarily detained Tibetans and for unfettered access to Tibet, which China keeps largely cut off to foreign diplomats and journalists.

The Chinese government refrained from responding to the issue of boarding schools and flatly claimed that religious freedom and cultural rights of Tibetans were protected, citing numbers of temples, religious personnel or teachers.

Regarding relocation policies, the Chinese delegation claimed to relocate Tibetans from high altitudes with their consent, in the absence of an independent judiciary and rule of law and in a pervasive climate of fear. With what appeared to be an aggressive tone, the Chinese ambassador rebutted criticism and denounced allegations as smears, lies and an attempt at defamation.

Tense climate

The review took place in a tense climate, with the Chinese government present with an unusually large delegation, comprising more than 40 diplomats. Beijing also mobilized a considerable number of Chinese NGOs (known as GONGOs—government-organized NGOs) that merely parrot the party line.

The Human Rights Council also restricted access to the review for civil society, with NGOs initially only having 15 seats available in the room, which were taken up by Chinese GONGOs.

Moreover, the unusually high number of states wanting to take the floor reduced each statement to within 45 seconds. At the same time, a large number of states merely used their speaking time for bluntly affirmative statements ignoring the reality on the ground.

Side event

On the eve of China's review, the International Campaign for Tibet participated in a side event at the Human Rights Council organized by the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights.

Panelists included the Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama Thinlay Chukki; Lhadon Tethong, director of the Tibet Action Institute; and Bhuchung Tsering, head of the Research and Monitoring Unit at the International Campaign for Tibet.

US Under Secretary of State Uzra Zeya, who serves as the US special coordinator for Tibetan issues, and Ambassador Michèle Taylor delivered statements at the panel, with Zeya's pre-recorded and Taylor's delivered on the floor.

### **UN China review: International community must clearly address Tibet**

22 January 2024, International Campaign for Tibet

One day before the UN Human Rights Council's review of China, the International Campaign for Tibet urgently appeals to the international community to address the Communist Party's repressive policies in Tibet.

On Jan. 23, 2024 in Geneva, China will face the so-called "Universal Periodic Review" (UPR) for the fourth time. All UN member states must undergo the review on a rotating basis.

"UN member states must use the upcoming review process to press for sweeping changes in Chinese policy in Tibet. The massive attacks on Tibetan culture, Tibetan Buddhism, the Tibetan language and the Tibetan way of life are no longer acceptable. Of particular concern are the residential school system and resettlement programs, which affect millions of Tibetans. It is a farce that the Communist Party is selling this as progress, according to its authoritarian definition of what is supposedly good for the people and what is not," said the International Campaign for Tibet, an advocacy group that promotes human rights and democratic freedoms for Tibetans.

**Widespread, systematic violations**

In the run-up to China's review at the UN Human Rights Council, ICT, together with the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), had already submitted a report in July 2023 detailing the systematic and widespread patterns of rights violations in Tibet.

The report contains a number of recommendations to the international community, which ICT and FIDH believe should be addressed to the Chinese government in the context of Tuesday's review of China by the UN Human Rights Council.

In their report, ICT and FIDH highlight three aspects of the Chinese government's repressive policies against Tibetan culture:

- The system of "forced boarding schools" and the associated goal of restricting the Tibetan language and alienating Tibetan children from their culture.

- The forcible expulsion and resettlement of Tibetan nomads and rural populations from their ancestral lands.
- The persecution of Tibetan Buddhists because of their faith and religious practice, combined with an ideological transformation of religious institutions.

Read ICT and FIDH's detailed report to the UN Human Rights Council.

### **Tibetan activist receives State Department religious freedom award**

19 January 2024, International Campaign for Tibet

The International Campaign for Tibet congratulates Tibetan activist Lhadon Tethong on receiving a US State Department International Religious Freedom Award as part of the department's 25th anniversary celebration of the International Religious Freedom Act.

At the award ceremony on Jan. 18, 2024, Richard Verma, deputy secretary of state for management and resources, hailed Lhadon for "us[ing] technology to support Tibetans and others facing Chinese repression."

Lhadon, who was one of several to receive the awards, is the co-founder and director of Tibet Action Institute, an organization that combines digital communication and strategic nonviolent action to advance the Tibetan freedom movement.

After the ceremony, Lhadon tweeted: "Today the US [Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom Rashad Hussain] recognized @TibetAction's work to defend the inalienable right of Tibetans in PRC-occupied Tibet to worship freely as Beijing holds 1M Tibetan kids in a system of colonial boarding schools, intentionally cutting them off from their religion & culture."

**International Religious Freedom Awards**

The International Religious Freedom Awards are part of the events celebrating a quarter-century of the International Religious Freedom Act, which President Bill Clinton signed into law in October 1998. The act elevated the role of religious freedom in US foreign policy.

According to the State Department, the awards recognize individuals for "their courage and commitment to promoting and defending religious freedom globally."

Along with Lhadon, awards this year went to Farid Ahmed, Kola Alapinni, Mirza Dinnayi, Peter Jacob, Martha Patricia Molina Montenegro, Tali Nates and a group of nine Orthodox clergy from Lithuania represented by Gintaras Sungaila.

"These advocates," the department said, "have focused on promoting human rights and mutual respect for all in countries including Nigeria, Iraq,

Pakistan, New Zealand, South Africa, and Nicaragua, as well as protecting the rights of Orthodox Christians, Tibetan Buddhists, and members of other religious communities around the world.”

Staff of the Office of Tibet, including Representative Namgyal Choedup, and International Campaign for Tibet were among those invited to attend the awards ceremony and congratulated Lhadon and the other award recipients.

Lhadon also recently appeared on ICT’s Tibet Talks podcast to discuss China’s boarding schools in Tibet, which have separated over 1 million Tibetan children from their families, language, religion and culture.

State Department support

The award for Lhadon is just one of several recent US government actions that have shined a light on the human rights situation in Tibet.

- Secretary of State Anthony Blinken last year announced visa sanctions on Chinese officials for their involvement in the boarding school system.
- Blinken also expressed concerns about China’s reported mass DNA collection in Tibet, making him the senior-most US official to raise the issue publicly.
- President Joe Biden also raised Tibet with Xi Jinping during their meeting in San Francisco in November.
- In recent years, the US has enacted the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act and the Tibetan Policy and Support Act. Congress is now considering another bipartisan bill, the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act, which unanimously passed the House Foreign Affairs Committee late last year.

### **India awards gallantry medals in previously unreported recent Tibet-border clashes**

18 January 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Jan18’24) – Amid claims and suggestions that an uneasy calm has continued to prevail on India’s border with Chinese occupied Tibet, it has emerged that more clashes between Indian and Chinese troops have occurred than had been reported in the recent past and that soldiers had been awarded medals last week for their displays of exceptional gallantry.

Recent citations for gallantry awards at the Indian Army’s Western Command investiture ceremony shed light on at least two previously undisclosed hand-to-hand clashes between Indian and Chinese troops along the LAC (line of actual control), reported the timesofindia.com and scmp.com Jan 17.

At the ceremony held last week, the Indian Army’s firm response to China’s People’s Liberation Army

I(PLA) soldiers’ aggression was commended, said the timesofindia.com report.

The incidents mentioned in the citations were stated to have occurred between Sep 2021 and Nov 2022.

The citations were stated to provide brief accounts of how Indian troops responded firmly to the aggressive behaviour exhibited by soldiers from the PLA along the LAC.

The Indian Army’s Western Command, headquartered in Chandimandir, had initially uploaded a video of the ceremony on its YouTube channel, featuring commentary on the gallantry awards. However, the video was deactivated on Jan 15, the report said.

The incidents involved hand-to-hand combat and came as New Delhi and Beijing held a series of diplomatic and military talks to resolve their worst military conflict in decades. These skirmishes in India’s Ladakh region, the last of which is now known to have happened in Nov 2022, show that the tensions along the unmarked border continued much longer than previously reported, noted the scmp.com report.

During physical jostling, an Indian soldier wounded at least four Chinese troops and snatched their rifles, “forcing them to go back”, the citation in the first incident was quoted as saying.

In the second incident, which occurred in Nov 2022, Indian troops pushed back “a group of 40 to 50 soldiers of (PLA)” who were trying to enter Indian territory. A unit of Indian soldiers attacked and injured them, “thus foiling the enemy’s plan to capture the post”, the report quoted the citation as saying.

The citations were also cited as saying army units of the two countries were involved in a two-day stand-off in an unspecified area in 2022.

Since the clashes in Ladakh’s Galwan Valley in Jun 2020, the Indian Army has maintained a high level of combat readiness along the 3,488 km-long LAC.

Over the past three and a half years, there have been multiple skirmishes between Indian and Chinese troops following the border dispute in eastern Ladakh that began in May 2020 in the LAC’s western sector. The Chinese troops also attempted a transgression in the Tawang sector of the LAC in Arunachal Pradesh in the eastern sector, the report noted.

This occurred on Dec 9, 2022, when PLA troops made an unsuccessful attempt to transgress the LAC in the Yangtse area of Tawang Sector, resulting in a unilateral change in the status quo. India’s Defence Minister Rajnath Singh addressed Parliament four days later and confirmed that Indian troops firmly contested the Chinese attempt. Several Indian Army personnel involved in countering the transgression

were honoured with gallantry awards during the investiture ceremony, the report said.

"The ensuing face-off led to a physical scuffle in which the Indian Army bravely prevented the PLA from transgressing into our territory and compelled them to return to their posts," Singh said.

Even earlier reports, dating from Aug 2020, had hinted that the Galwan clash was not an isolated incident, with several preceding skirmishes, including all-night clashes causing substantial injuries on both sides. The recently disclosed clashes offer a deeper understanding of the escalating tension between these two nuclear-armed powers, locked in a standoff since May 2020, said a [financialexpress.com](#) report Jan 16.

### **'India should be alert...': Shashi Tharoor warns on growing proximity between Maldives and China**

15 January 2024, Live Mint

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor has warned India about the increasing proximity of the Maldives government to China and said that the government must be aware of the danger that this represents.

While speaking at the 54th annual day of 'Thuglak' magazine, Tharoor said that China has been attempting to expand its influence throughout India's periphery. "We have to watch very carefully the increasing proximity of the Maldives government to the Chinese," he said.

Further adding, Tharoor, who had served as the Minister of State for External Affairs said, "There is no doubt about the fact that China has been attempting to expand its influence throughout our periphery. They have been increasingly influential in everyone of our neighbouring countries, everyone, without exception."

"We (India) should certainly be alert and I am sure that our government must be aware of the dangers that this represents and there will be some redlines which would be privately communicated among governments."

"...We have to understand is that you (Maldives) have the right to have relations with other countries like we do, but some things we would see as a serious concern for our interests and in those we will take proper action. So far, I think there was no cause for any alarm," he noted.

However, he observed that India's foreign policy should not be discussed in social media and there has to be a more serious level of engagement following the diplomatic row between India and Maldives being widely discussed in various social media platforms.

"We must understand and respect the sensitivities of a small neighbour being close to all," he said.

Meanwhile, on Sunday, the Maldives asked India to withdraw its troops stationed in the country by 15

March, said Abdulla Nazim Ibrahim, a top aide to President Mohamed Muizzu, at a press conference. Tensions between the two countries took a hit after some Maldivian ministers made comments on social media that were seen as derogatory to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Indians. These prompted a backlash on social media and led to the suspension of three deputy ministers. The Maldives government distanced itself from the statements of these ministers.

President Muizzu who recently completed a state visit to China, during which Beijing agreed to provide \$130 million for the development of Male, the capital city. The two countries also signed an agreement on agricultural cooperation. The newly elected President also called China "one of the Maldives' closest allies and developmental partners". Recently, in a press conference, Muizzu also made comments that were seen to be aimed at India. "We may be small, but that doesn't give you the licence to bully us," Muizzu was quoted as saying by Maldivian media. "We aren't in anyone's backyard. We are an independent and sovereign state."

Earlier, referring to a question on whether the I.N.D.I.A. bloc alliance would bring Muslims to power, he said, "I.N.D.I.A. Bloc alliance would bring Indians to power and I want to remind you that Muslims are also Indians."

"We should not forget that one of the great strengths of our society is that we have appreciated people of all sorts of backgrounds," he said.

### **Tibet Not in Focus, Repression Persists: Exiled Former Leader**

15 January 2024, CTA

TAIPEI, (Reuters) – The plight of Tibet has become less discussed internationally but repression continues and China is applying what it did there to other regions, a former head of the Tibetan government-in-exile said on Saturday.

China seized control of Tibet in 1950 in what it describes as a "peaceful liberation" from feudalistic serfdom. International human rights groups and exiles routinely condemn what they call China's oppressive rule in Tibetan areas.

Tibet went through mass protests in 2008 before Beijing held the Olympics, and then a series of self-immolations by Tibetans in protest against Chinese rule, but then what China was doing to Uyghurs in Xinjiang followed by the security crackdown in Hong Kong took more attention, he added.

"On the one hand, yes, there is less coverage about Tibet. That doesn't mean the situation in Tibet is less serious," Sangay said.

China's Foreign Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment. China does not recognise the exiled government, and has defended

its rule in Tibet as bringing much needed development to what was a backward and feudal society.

[Click here to read more.](#)

### **His Holiness the Dalai Lama Congratulates President-elect Lai Ching-te of Taiwan**

14 January 2024, CTA

Bodhgaya, Bihar, India – Following yesterday's presidential elections in Taiwan, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has written to Mr. Lai Ching-te, the President-Elect, to offer his warm congratulations

"Indeed," he wrote, "observing the exercise of democracy, as has just taken place in Taiwan, is a source of encouragement for all of us who aspire to live in freedom and dignity.

"I have fond memories of the hospitality the people of Taiwan showed me during my visits there, when I was also able to see how firmly rooted democracy has become. The Taiwanese people have not only developed a flourishing, robust democracy, but have also achieved a great deal in terms of economics and education, while at the same time preserving their rich traditional culture.

"I admire the strong devotion Taiwanese Buddhists have to the Buddha dharma. As a Buddhist monk, I try my best to fulfill their requests for teachings and spiritual guidance from time to time.

"Good relations between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China are of utmost importance. It is my longstanding conviction that engaging in dialogue is the best way to resolve difficult issues, whether on a local, national or international level."

His Holiness concluded by wishing Mr. Lai every success in meeting the challenges that lie ahead in fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of the people of Taiwan.

### **Human Rights Situation in Tibet 2023 – A Year in Review**

13 January 2024, CTA

Dharamshala: The year 2023 has been marked by a significant amount of global conflict, including two major wars and the loss of many lives. As the world deals with these crises and conflicts, Tibet has been, for more than six decades, a place where some of the most visible and egregious human rights violations committed by the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) have occurred, and the human rights situation in 2023 was no different.

For the third consecutive year, Freedom House has ranked Tibet as the least free region on Earth, with an overall score of just 1 out of 100. In 2023, China remained the world's worst offender of internet freedom for the ninth consecutive year as free expression continues to be suppressed in the country

with heightened control over citizens' access to information, online activities on social media and crackdown on prominent rights activists and bloggers with long imprisonment.

The PRC government's "Sinicization" campaign in Tibet continues to intensify, evident by the persistent operations of state-run colonial boarding schools housing nearly 1 million Tibetan children, even as Tibetan schools are being systematically shut down across the region. The government mouthpieces have amplified their publicity of boarding schools, indicating their intent to offer education to children from all regions of Tibet. However, they failed to address pressing curriculum concerns or discriminatory policies that impede access to cultural, religious, and language education for Tibetan students. Last year alone, more than 34 thousand Tibetan residents have been forced to relocate from their traditional land to government-built housing for various reasons, including making way for hydropower projects, so-called ecological conservation and facilitating the PRC government's control of Tibetans in fixed settlements.

Reports from exile news media indicate that at least 40 Tibetans, both monks and laypeople, have been detained arbitrarily, of whom eight have received prison sentences of up to three years in connection with their expression of Tibetan identity. The practice of torture, despite being regarded as a grave violation of fundamental human rights, continues to be endemic in Chinese prisons without any repercussions. Several reports have emerged that Tibetan political prisoners have died in Chinese custody, prisoners have been released in very poor health or on medical parole, and Tibetan activists have been beaten up by Chinese authorities or CCP goons. The repeated assaults by Chinese authorities on Tibetan rights activist Gonpo Kyi demonstrate the extent to which the Chinese government is willing to use its power to restrict Tibetans' fundamental rights, including the right to appeal for a fair trial despite its guarantee by Chinese law. Tibetan language rights activist Tashi Wangchuk was also ambushed by CCP goons in a hotel room and later denied a business license by the local municipality, in a clear example of the continued attacks and mistreatment of former political prisoners.

Zangkar Jamyang and Golog Palden's long prison terms demonstrate the PRC government's recklessness in attacking influential Tibetan individuals merely for expressing Tibetan identity and concerns about the eradication of Tibetan language due to Chinese oppression. A group of four Tibetan individuals were given two years of imprisonment each for initiating religious events in their village, which simply included sang-sol, a purification or cleansing of spiritual pollution or blockages, and



reciting prayers for the longevity and wellbeing of Tibetan Buddhist religious leaders. Also, a Tibetan man named Tsultrim and a Tibetan woman named Semkyi Dolma were both sentenced to two and one and a half years imprisonment for maintaining pictures of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and communicating with Tibetans in exile, respectively.

By promulgating the infamous “Measures for the Administration of Religious Activity Sites”, or Order 19, the PRC government has demonstrated its malicious attempts to subjugate and gain control over religious institutions by making the “Sinicization” of religion a mandatory part of its national laws. It mandates, among other things, that religious institutions provide political indoctrination sessions to their members, where the members will be instructed in the CCP’s policies and guidelines, laws and regulations, and the “excellent traditional culture” and religion of China. The Tibetan people continue to face harsh punishment and arbitrary detention as a consequence of their expression of religious identity and participation in religious activities. Chinese authorities have barred Tibetans from attending a key Buddhist event of Kalachakra out of fear that the gathering of more than 100,000 people could pose a threat to the government. Two basic facts can be drawn: Tibetan people lack respect, dignity, and freedom to express their rights, while the Chinese government is insecure about the rule of Tibet.

The utilization of advanced AI tools to monitor and surveil Tibetans, coupled with other surveillance strategies such as disinformation campaigns and censorship, is exacerbating the deteriorating human rights condition in Tibet. The Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) Cyber Security Management Regulations which came into effect on 1 February 2023 subject individuals engaging in activities that relate to Tibetan culture, language or religion to stricter regulations and harsher punishments. The law does not specify what violations could lead to an individual Tibetan being detained or arrested by authorities, thus giving Chinese police the arbitrary power to target Tibetans for cultural, social, and religious conversations. The regulations have caused disruption and setbacks in the lives of Tibetans where they are unable to practice their culture and go about their normal lives. For instance, a number of Tibetan men and women were arbitrarily detained for sharing pictures of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, audio tracks on Tibetan Buddhism, talking on accumulating religious merits on social media WeChat groups.

Transnational repression by the PRC government has led to self-censorship among Tibetan diaspora, who live in constant fear and have, as a result, been forced to sever contact with family members in Tibet to protect them from potential PRC government

reprisals. Last year, credible reports indicated Tibetan youth were denied the opportunity to apply for government jobs if their family members are in diaspora communities or they actively participate in activities to expose the PRC’s repression of Tibet, thereby forcing them to cut ties with their families in exile.

China’s disinformation campaign is strategically crafted to achieve two goals: to counter Tibetan historical accounts and to divert and mislead the global audience, shifting their attention away from its human rights abuses. The latest “White Paper” on Tibet titled “CCP Policies on the Governance of Xizang in the New Era: Approach and Achievements”, aims primarily to misinform the international community by painting a flowery image of Tibet by using figures that imply development that does not benefit Tibetans in any way, while sugarcoating the violations of human rights being committed in Tibet. All official documents replacing “Tibet” with “Xizang” (Chinese term for Tibet) make it clear that the PRC government attempts to imply legitimacy of its illegal occupation of Tibet and reclaim the global association of “Tibet” with injustice and eradicating a valuable culture.

In addition to all of the unjust stories from Tibet under CCP repression, last year also saw growing support for Tibet from the international community through the passing of legislation and resolutions, as well as the release of statements and reports condemning the PRC government’s repressive policies aimed at eradicating Tibetan identity at its core through compulsory colonial boarding schools and “vocational training” programs, among others. Having the support of the international community is vital to advancing the Tibetan cause since it provides a platform for advocacy, intensifies diplomatic pressure, and promotes a greater understanding of Tibetan issues in general.

Likewise, last year demonstrated that the Tibetan people inside Tibet have remained committed to preserving Tibetan identity despite increasing pressure and repression by the PRC government in its attempt to penetrate Tibetan identity and turn it into Chinese.

### **UN Must Include Strong Language on Tibet in China Review**

12 January 2024, CTA

As the United Nations prepares to take up China’s report at the upcoming Universal Periodic Review at the end of January, the accelerating deterioration in Tibet demands that UN member states scrutinize China and that the UN adopts strong language on Tibet in its concluding report.

China’s Universal Periodic Review will take place Jan 23 in Geneva. The UPR is a mechanism of the Human

Rights Council to assess the human rights record of every UN member state every four to five years.

In July 2023 the International Campaign for Tibet and the International Federation for Human Rights submitted a joint report detailing systematic and widespread patterns of rights violations in Tibet. The report particularly highlighted three aspects that indicate a shift to a more oppressive and destructive system:

- The so-called “residential boarding schools” in Tibet, which have coerced the separation of over 1 million Tibetan children from their families, and an attendant focus on uprooting the Tibetan language
- Forcible and coercive expulsion of nomads and rural agrarians from their traditional lands
- Punishment for religious expression coupled with an insidious infiltration of religious institutions.

Since the joint report, the situation in Tibet continues to show further deterioration. The Chinese government’s policy of repression is clearly aimed at eradicating the authentic and self-determined Tibetan culture.

### **Refusing to add ‘China’ to sash, Tibetan woman forced out of pageant**

12 January 2024, RFA

A Tibetan woman was forced to withdraw from a beauty pageant in Cambodia due to apparent pressure from China after she refused to add “China” to the words “Miss Tibet” on her sash, she and organizers said.

The incident involving Tenzin Paldon, 28, a contestant at the Miss Global 2023 pageant, jointly hosted by Cambodia and Vietnam, is the latest example where China has used pressure tactics to force international events to toe its political line.

“The organizers, under Chinese pressure, gave me two options: to participate with ‘China’ added to my sash or to not wear a sash at all, which I felt defeated the purpose of my participation which was to represent my country, Tibet,” Paldon told Radio Free Asia from her home in New York, after returning from Cambodia.

“So, I chose to walk out of the event,” said Paldon, who had participated in the same competition in Cambodia in January 2018.

Organizers also said a Taiwanese contestant, Linda Huang, was initially excluded from the competition, but then was reinstated after she agreed to change her sash from “Taiwan ROC” – referring to the Republic of China – to one that read “Taipei China.”

In Sophin, the owner of Mahahang Production, representing the Cambodian side of the organizers, confirmed to RFA that government officials recommended removing two candidates, one from

Tibet and one from Taiwan, in keeping with the “one China policy.”

Paldon said she heard the same thing: “One of the organizers said the Cambodian prime minister had texted them saying the Taiwanese and Tibetan pageant candidates should be kicked out of the competition.”

In Sophin said that Huang returned to the pageant after agreeing to wear the “Taipei China” sash.

But Huang told RFA that she was not suspended from the competition. She said that in addition to a sash saying “Taiwan ROC,” she was “offered” a second sash by organizers that read “Taipei China.” She refused to say whether she agreed to wear the second sash.

Video from the competition shows her wearing a sash saying “Taiwan ROC.”

Huang said that the “Taipei China” label is officially used by athletes and contestants representing the island at international events, including the Olympics, and so saw nothing wrong with it.

“Overall, my representation aligns with the Taiwanese government’s stance on maintaining peace, preserving our freedom index, and engaging in the world in a peaceful and fair manner,” she told RFA.

‘Victory to Tibet’

Paldon, who wore a sash that said “Miss Tibet” during the introductory round on Jan. 2, likely caught the attention of Chinese authorities after she shouted “Bhod Gyalo,” or “Victory to Tibet,” during the sash ceremony, which was broadcast live on social media platforms and Cambodian television, she said.

Shortly thereafter, Paldon was stopped at the Vietnamese border as she was making her way to the venue of the next round of the competition.

There, pageant organizers told her the Chinese government had put pressure on Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet to have Paldon removed from the pageant after they saw the sash ceremony, and questioned the Cambodian government on why a candidate representing Tibet was allowed to wear a sash that read Miss Tibet and shout, “Bhod Gyalo.”

For years, Cambodia has sought to deepen ties with China. Hun Manet chose to go to Beijing for his maiden official trip abroad in September after taking over as prime minister from his father, Hun Sen, signaling a continued commitment to strengthening Cambodia’s relationship with China.

Sash politics

Paldon, who won the “Miss Tibet 2017” title at a beauty pageant held for Tibetan women of the diaspora, also expressed disappointment at the politicization of international beauty pageants.

“It is unfortunate that politics dictate events of young women and their aspirations, and it’s heartbreaking

to note that these events are fixed,” Paldon said. “All I want to be is a role model for young Tibetan women out there, in particular to empower many women who are from displaced communities like me.”

When Paldon arrived back at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York on Jan. 10 after waiting for nearly a week in Cambodia at her own expense, she was welcomed by Tibetan community members and supporters, who praised her for her stance.

“We are disheartened but also very proud of the firm stand [she has taken] as a Tibetan,” said Tashi Palmo, secretary of the Regional Tibetan Women's Organization of New York and New Jersey.

This is not the first time Miss Tibet candidates have had to withdraw from global beauty contests for refusing to add “China” to their sash.

In 2005, Tashi Yangchen was forced to withdraw from a Miss Tourism Pageant held in Zimbabwe after she came under pressure to either wear a sash that said ‘Miss Tibet-China’ or to participate as a guest. She chose to walk out of the event.

Two years later, Miss Tibet 2006 Tsering Chungdak also met with a similar fate at a contest in Malaysia.

The Miss Tibet contest, started by Lobsang Wangyal Productions in 2002 with the mission of ‘Celebrating Tibetan Women,’ had 15 annual editions until 2017, after which it did not take place for various reasons, including a lack of enough applicants and the coronavirus pandemic.

The pageant, however, is set to make a comeback in 2024 after a five-year-long hiatus, Lobsang Wangyal, Director of Miss Tibet beauty pageant, said in a statement.

### **Belgian Prime Minister urged to take up Tibet during upcoming China visit**

09 January 2023, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Jan09'24) – Ahead of Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo and Minister of Foreign Affairs Hadja Lahbib's visit China this week, marking the first high-level mission since 2019, the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) has called for the issue of Tibet to be included in the discussions, reported [brusselstimes.com](https://brusselstimes.com) Jan 8.

De Croo is scheduled to travel to Beijing over Jan 11 to 12 in a trip to renew high-level ties. Lahbib, who touches down in Shanghai on Jan 10 for fostering economic connections, will join De Croo in Beijing on Jan 11 for official engagements with President Xi Jinping, Prime Minister Li Qiang, and Zhao Leji, the Chairman of the National People's Congress, which is China's parliament. Key to discussions will be all aspects of Sino-Belgian relationships.

The report noted that in Dec 2023, De Croo confirmed that he would discuss China's political

interference with Belgian officials following the revelation that honorary Flemish MP Frank Creyelman (Vlaams Belang) was working as a Chinese spy.

Drawing on that remark, Vincent Metten, EU Policy Director of the ICT, has said, “Chinese interference in national politics runs parallel with the repression of Tibetan and Uyghur diasporas.”

He has said that in Belgium, as in other European nations, members of these communities had reported receiving threatening phone calls directed at themselves or family back home in a bid to dissuade them from campaigning. “The Belgian State has an obligation to protect its citizens,” Metten had maintained.

Belgium is home to a sizeable number of Tibetans who had been given asylum in recent decades.

On Tibet, ICT has said, “Recent reports clearly demonstrate China's determination to erase Tibetan identity. ICT is deeply concerned about the ongoing cultural genocide against the Tibetan people.”

The Washington-headquartered ICT has concluded, “Belgium, currently holding the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union, has the responsibility to hold China accountable for these violations of international law. Prime Minister De Croo should urge Chinese authorities to resume negotiations with the Dalai Lama to resolve the conflict in Tibet.”

Mirroring EU policy, De Croo had explained last month, “Our relationship with China hinges on three components, much like the European Union. China is simultaneously a partner, competitor, and a rival. Means we must navigate areas of collaboration and maintain vigilance.”

### **Thermo Fisher stops sale of DNA kits in Tibet after activists raised fears of rights abuses**

06 January 2024, The Guardian

The US biotech company Thermo Fisher has halted sales of its DNA identification kits in Tibet, nearly five years after it made a similar commitment about the sale of its products in the neighbouring western Chinese region of Xinjiang.

It decided to stop sales in Tibet after months of complaints from rights groups and investors that the technology may be used in a way that abuses human rights. The company said that the decision was made in the middle of 2023, but it was only revealed to investors late last month.

Human rights experts and exiles have said there are pervasive levels of surveillance in Tibet, one of the most tightly controlled parts of China. Foreigners cannot freely visit and many exiled Tibetans have limited contact with their relatives there, making it hard for information to reach the outside world.

Conditions have been likened to those in Xinjiang, where rights groups said that the authorities are building a DNA database for Uyghur Muslims. The authorities have denied the accusations.

Beijing worries about separatism in both regions. The regions' dominant ethnic groups practise cultures and faiths that are different from the Chinese Han majority, and which the Chinese Communist party views with suspicion.

In 2022, the Intercept reported that Tibetan police signed a deal to purchase more than \$160,000 worth of DNA profiling kits from Thermo Fisher. Separately, Human Rights Watch reported that mass DNA collection was taking place across Tibet, including from boys as young as five. Citizen Lab, a research institute at the University of Toronto, estimated that between 2016 and 2022, up to one-third of Tibet's population gave DNA samples to the police.

In 2019, Thermo Fisher said it would stop selling its DNA kits in Xinjiang, citing its ethics code. Last month the Guardian revealed that an academic paper published in 2019 which evaluated Thermo Fisher's genetic sequencing technology on minorities in Xinjiang had been retracted because of concerns that the DNA samples had not been obtained with the proper consent. The study was conducted by university researchers, not Thermo Fisher's own scientists.

Campaigners said DNA sampling in Tibet should also be closely scrutinised. Tibetans are monitored "constantly", said Tenzin Rabga Tashi, an activist with Free Tibet, a London-based NGO. He said the kits would have enhanced the Chinese government's ability to surveil the local population.

Responding to Thermo Fisher's decision on Thursday, the Global Times, a Chinese state media tabloid, said "the narrative that the 'Chinese government is collecting DNA data in Xizang [Tibet] for surveillance' comes out of nowhere. Collecting DNA data in China has been an effective approach for public security organs in the country to trace missing children and combat human trafficking."

Thermo Fisher said its sales in Tibet "are consistent with routine forensic investigation in an area of this size" and that its human identification technology "is used for important forensic applications, from tracking down criminals, to stopping human trafficking and freeing the unjustly accused". It did not elaborate on the reasons for halting sales to Tibet.

Joshua Brockwell, investment communications director for Azzad Asset Management, said: "As investors of conscience, Azzad is pleased that our calls on Thermo Fisher to make the right choice and help end biometric repression as a tool of Chinese authoritarian surveillance have been heeded."

Yves Moreau, a professor of engineering at the University of Leuven, in Belgium, who focuses on DNA analysis, said: "The persecution of Tibetans and control of the Tibetan plateau relies on a hi-tech system of digital authoritarianism ... DNA databases are a piece of this architecture of total surveillance ... By selling its products to Tibetan public security, Thermo Fisher was aiding and abetting those abuses."

Thermo Fisher's business in China has come under particular scrutiny because the company's chief executive, Marc Casper, also chairs the US-China Business Council. In November, he hosted a \$40,000 per table dinner to welcome China's president, Xi Jinping, to San Francisco. At the dinner, Casper said that companies like Thermo Fisher "have been at the forefront of China's modernisation" and cited the fact that the "vast majority" of the company's employees were in the US and China.

Casper's role on the council "destroys any ignorance [the company] can claim, particularly after the company withdrew from the Uyghur region in 2019", said John Jones, the head of campaigns at Free Tibet.

In 2022, the company generated revenue of \$3.8bn in China, up from \$3.4bn the previous year. China is Thermo Fisher's biggest market outside the US.

### Body found near where Tibetan Buddhist monk went missing

05 January 2024, RFA



Geshe Dadul Namgyal teaches at Sravasti Abbey in Newport, Washington, on Sep. 28, 2023, less than two months before he was reported missing.

A sheriff's office in Washington state said they found the body of a deceased male in a pond near where a 64-year-old Tibetan Buddhist monk went missing in November.

Investigators have said the clothing on the body matched that of Geshe Dadul Namgyal, a senior monk and male resident teacher at the Sravasti Abbey in Newport who was reported missing on Nov. 8 after he failed to show up for a prayer ceremony a day earlier.



Investigators said they are awaiting the results of the autopsy report to confirm the identity of the body, which residents of the abbey said had been frozen over with ice and had only recently thawed.

Newport is the county seat of Pend Oreille County in the northeast corner of the state, bordering Idaho.

In a statement, the Pend Oreille County Sheriff's Office said they received a call on Jan. 3 from the abbey reporting that residents had sighted a body floating in a pond. Police retrieved the body, which was partially submerged in the cold water, using a canoe, the Sheriff's Office said.

"While walking around the pond on Abbey property yesterday, two monastics noticed that maroon-colored clothing was floating on the surface of the water," according to a Jan. 4 statement by Sravasti Abbey.

"We contacted the Sheriff's Department immediately. They came out, called for a boat, and retrieved a body which they think matches the description of Geshe Chodrak (the ordination name of Geshe Dadul Namgyal)," the statement said.

Namgyal was reportedly last seen wearing a maroon jacket over his monk's robes when he went missing while taking a walk around the abbey's 300-acre grounds.

The sheriff's office and the abbey didn't immediately respond to Radio Free Asia's requests for comments.

Extensive search in November

"An autopsy was requested by the Coroner to determine an estimated time of death and possible cause," the sheriff's office said. "Also requested was a positive identity of the deceased person."

In November, the sheriff's office, abbey residents and local search and rescue volunteers carried out extensive searches in the area surrounding the abbey's grounds.

Namgyal's family also offered a reward of up to \$25,000 in cash for any information that may help find the missing monk.

Namgyal – who joined the abbey in May as one of its first male resident teachers – has been a practicing monk and a Buddhist practitioner, teacher, scholar and translator for over four decades.

He served as an English language translator for the Dalai Lama and as a speaker and interpreter at many Buddhist conferences that delve into the intersection of Buddhism with modern science, psychology and Western philosophy.

Namgyal has also made significant contributions in developing a comprehensive bilingual science learning curriculum for Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns while working with the Emory-Tibet Science Initiative as one of the lead translators.

Prior to joining Sravasti Abbey, he was the senior translator and interpreter with the Emory University's Center for Contemplative Science and Compassion-

based Ethics, while also serving as the senior resident teacher for the Drepung Loseling Monastery in Atlanta.

"Geshe Dadul was a very learned scholar," said Tsondue Samphel, assistant director for Emory's Social, Emotional and Ethical Learning Program. "He understood and translated scientific terminologies and jargons with ease. This, in turn, was of great benefit to the scientists as well as the monks and nuns studying science."

Namgyal also served for several years as the principal of the Monastic School for Modern Education at Drepung Loseling Monastery in south India, and later, as a professor of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism at the Central University of Tibetan Studies in Sarnath in north India.

He received his Geshe Lharam degree – the highest degree of learning in Tibetan Buddhism – from Drepung Loseling Monastery in South India in 1992.

### **Child-ed group Manjushri unveils new books**

03 January 2024, Phayul

Manjushri, a Dharamshala based organization dedicated to promoting Tibetan children's literature and education, unveiled new books that included five Tibetan folktale books, a Tibetan jigsaw puzzle, and an activity book on Tuesday.

Jamyang Gyaltsen, the executive director of Manjushree, expressed pride in the organization's achievements, highlighting that they have successfully published 81 titles of Tibetan children's books since its inception. These publications have reached a wide audience, with over 70,000 copies distributed, nearly half of them are provided free of charge to ensure accessibility.

Director of Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Geshe Lhakdor, who attended the event as the chief guest, highlighted critical aspects of Tibetan education system in exile. While emphasizing the significance of instilling Tibetan education in children, he expressed concern over the increasing trend of migration of Tibetan youth to the West, which poses a threat to Tibetan language and culture. He stressed the pivotal role of parents in supplementing classroom learning and urged them to prioritize Tibetan language in their households.

Acknowledging the collaborative efforts of the Department of Education (DoE) and various organizations supporting projects of Manjushree, Geshe Lhakdor praised their joint endeavours. He cautioned against the notion of singular superiority in organizational efforts, emphasizing the necessity of collective action. Stressing the shared goal of providing quality education to Tibetan children, he advocated for further collaboration among stakeholders.



Geshe Lhakdor also emphasized the holistic development of children through education, beyond mere literacy and language. He articulated that comprehensive child development involves more than just teaching reading and writing, instead necessitates a focus on broader aspects of a child's growth and learning.

He also shed light on the issue of a tribal mentality prevailing within the Tibetan community. He highlighted the detrimental effects of engaging in divisive politics and fostering internal conflicts, labelling these actions as indicative of a "tribal mentality." Moreover, he emphasized that this isn't unique to the Tibetan community but is witnessed across various societies. Describing this mentality as incompatible with democratic principles, he stressed the need for education to counteract such divisive tendencies.

### **Long-life prayer ceremony concludes Dalai Lama's Bodh Gaya visit**

02 January 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Jan02'24) – The Dalai Lama concluded on Jan 1 his 11 days of scheduled programmes at Bodh Gaya, gracing a long-life ceremonial prayer offering made to him by an assortment of three Tibetan entities. They consisted of the Central Institute of Tibetan Studies, Sarnath, and its alumni; former students of the Dalhousie Tibetan School; and residents of the Tibetan settlement at Paonta Sahib, Himachal Pradesh.

Held on the Kalachakra Teaching Ground before a mammoth gathering of Buddhists from across India and numerous other countries, the ceremony was led by the Chant-master of Namgyal Monastery and presided over by the Ganden Tri Rinpoché, the throneholder of the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism. Jangtsé Chöjé Rinpoché and Sakya Gongma Rinpoché also attended the ceremony while Trulshik Rinpoché also took part in the ceremony.

In his address, the Dalai Lama said he considered it his responsibility to bring to people's attention the fact that "if we learn to appreciate the oneness of humanity, that we are all the same as human beings, we will learn to live in harmony and friendship, able to be of help to each other."

He reiterated this message while offering his greetings to the gathering on the occasion of the New Year Day. He said: "As Buddhists we pray for the welfare of all sentient beings, but at least we should do what we can to help the beings of this world. What's important is to recognise our companions as fellow human beings—then we'll be able to create a more peaceful world."

And in a separate message for New Year, the Dalai Lama said: "I also firmly believe that we can find peace in the world only when we find peace within.

Every human being has the potential to cultivate inner peace, and by so doing to contribute to the peace of our global community."



His Holiness the Dalai Lama greeting the crowd as he arrives on stage at the Kalachakra Teaching Ground to attend a Long-Life Prayer offered to him by several Tibetan groups in Bodhgaya, Bihar, India on January 1, 2014. (Photo courtesy: OHHDL/Tenzin Choejor)

The Dalai Lama earlier arrived at Bodh Gaya on Dec 15 after concluding his teachings in Sikkim's capital Gangtok and at Sed-gyued Monastery in Salugara, West Bengal. He began by undertaking a pilgrimage to the Mahabodhi Temple, which marks the location where the Buddha is said to have attained enlightenment more than 2,500 years ago.

On Dec 20, he inaugurated the first International Sangha Forum, a conference of over 2,000 Buddhist monks, nuns and scholars belonging to different traditions from 33 countries, organized mainly by his office and Delhi-based International Buddhist Confederation.

He led a prayer for world peace with the forum participants on Dec 23 after the three-day conference.

Over Dec 29-31, the Dalai Lama gave religious teachings to a gathering estimated to be over 50,000 people that included some 15,000 from over 50 countries.

# TIBET DIGEST 2024

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## CHINA POLITICS

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## Corruption galore in China's new detention system targeting the corrupt, dissent

30 December 2024, Tibetan Review

### CHINA POLITICS

China has built or expanded more than 200 specialized detention facilities nationwide under a new law to interrogate suspects ensnared in Xi Jinping's widening anti-corruption drive as the Chinese leader extends his crackdown beyond the ruling Communist Party to a vast swath of public sectors, reported the edition.cnn.com Dec 28. However, the anti-corruption campaign is seen as selective, mainly targeting those seen as threat to the Xi Jinping leadership, besides being prone to abuse by a corrupt officialdom, and therefore largely ineffective, according to this report and the firstpost.com Dec 28.

Indeed, the CNN investigation report noted that since taking power in 2012, Xi had launched a sweeping campaign against graft and disloyalty, taking down corrupt officials as well as political rivals at an unprecedented speed and scale as he consolidated control over the party and the military. The expanded detention regime, named "liuzhi," or "retention in custody," comes with facilities with padded surfaces and round-the-clock guards in every cell, where detainees can be held under harrowing conditions for up to six months without ever seeing a lawyer or family members, said the edition.cnn.com report.

The report called it an extension of a system long used by the party to exert control and instil fear among its members.

A National Supervisory Commission (NSC) was founded in 2018 as part of the constitutional revision that cleared the way for Xi to rule for life. It consolidated the government's anti-graft forces and merged them with the party's disciplinary arm, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI). The two agencies work hand in glove and share the same offices, same personnel and even the same website – an arrangement that expands the remit of the party's internal graft watchdog to the entire public sector.

A criminal defence lawyer, requesting anonymity due to fears of retribution from the government, has said many of their clients had detailed abuse, threats and forced confessions while in liuzhi custody.

"Most of them would succumb to the pressure and agony. Those who resisted until the end were a tiny minority," the lawyer said.

The report cited state media as saying the expanded jurisdiction fills longstanding loopholes in the party's

anti-corruption fight and enables graft busters to go after everyday abuse of power endemic in the country's behemoth public sector, from bribes and kickbacks in hospitals to misappropriation of school funds.

However, critics say it is another example of the party's ever-tightening grip over the state and all aspects of society under Xi, China's most powerful and authoritarian leader in decades, it added.

The spate of construction of liuzhi centres appears to be largely driven by a surge in demand for detention cells due to the NSC's new broad remit, as well as efforts to make liuzhi facilities more standardized and regulated than the hotels and villas often used for a controversial practice – now disbanded – known as “shuanggui,” or “double designation”, before the NSC was established and which targeted party officials, the report said.

Authorities are seen to have laid down standard construction rules for liuzhi centres – including a national plan for building these facilities between 2023 and 2027 – which is a financial burden especially for poor local administrations.

For example, the report noted that Dingxi, one of the poorest cities in the northwestern province of Gansu, had said its 305-million-yuan (\$42 million) detention centre would be built following requirements specified by the CCDI and NSC to achieve the “standardized, law-based, and professional operations” of the liuzhi facility.

This massive complex, featuring 542 rooms, will include 32 detention cells, accommodation for investigators and guards to live on site, as well as other facilities to meet their daily needs, according to a 2024 budget document of the city's anti-graft agency, the report said.

Despite a national supervision law, introduced in 2018 to regulate the NSC, legal experts have said the legislation only wraps a thin veil of legality around a detention regime that operates outside the judicial system, lacks external oversight and remains inherently prone to abuse.

“In the past, it was extra-legal. Now, some critics call it ‘legally illegal,’” a Chinese legal scholar who has studied the NSC has said, speaking on condition of anonymity, citing fears of government retribution.

And China's opaque court system, which answers to the Communist Party, already boasts a conviction rate above 99%, the report noted.

Abuses of the system appear to be common. In September, Zhou Tianyong, a top economist and former professor at the elite Central Party School, where the Communist Party trains its senior officials, warned that local authorities had been using corruption probes to extort money from private entrepreneurs to fill their strained coffers, the report said.

It said that in recent years, allegations of abuse and forced confessions had emerged in multiple liuzhi cases publicized online. For example, Chen Jianjun, an architect-turned-local official, has claimed that he was deceived and forced into making false confessions of bribe-taking while detained under liuzhi in 2022 in the northwestern city of Xianyang.

Given the extreme conditions under which liuzhi detainees are held, “where both the body and the mind are pushed to their limits,” it becomes increasingly difficult to tell whether the detainee is giving an “honest confession” based on facts or opting for “full cooperation” by compromising the truth under unbearable pressure, the report cited Dacheng, a Beijing-based law firm, as saying said in an article on its social media account.

Structural reforms to address systemic corruption have yet to be implemented – or even fully ideated – leaving the root causes of graft largely unaddressed. While the crackdown has removed numerous officials, its long-term effectiveness remains uncertain, noted the firstpost.com report.

### **China makes room for younger faces on middle rungs of Communist Party promotions ladder**

28 December 2024, SCMP, William Zheng

A number of ‘post-70s’ officials born between 1970 and 1979 have achieved full ministerial rank this year

A slew of cadres in their early 50s clinched significant administrative positions with full ministerial rank this year, as China's ruling Communist Party moves younger faces into mid-tier leadership positions.

The latest to be promoted was Liu Jie, 54, who was made acting governor of Zhejiang in eastern China on December 18. Zhejiang is well known as a power base of President Xi Jinping, who governed the province in the early 2000s.

Liu's appointment makes him China's youngest provincial governor. He is also the third “post-70s” cadre – a term used to describe officials born between 1970 and 1979 – to achieve full ministerial rank.

After graduating from University of Science and Technology Beijing with a degree in metallurgy, Liu started his career in 1992 as a technician with Xiangtan Iron and Steel Group in central Hunan province.

He spent nearly 15 years with the state-owned firm, rising to general manager before being appointed director of the Hunan Department of Commerce in 2008.

After a decade-long rotation to Jiangxi province in the southeast and Guizhou in the southwest, Liu's career took a decisive leap in 2021 when he was

picked to replace a scandal-hit party boss in Zhejiang.

Liu, who was born in January 1970, was transferred to serve as party chief of Zhejiang's e-commerce hub of Hangzhou after his predecessor Zhou Jiangyong crashed out in the corruption scandal.

His fellow post-70s ministerial-level officials are Li Yunze, director of the National Financial Regulatory Administration (NFRA), who was born in September 1970, and the two months younger A Dong, first secretary of the Communist Youth League.

Li spent decades with what is now China Construction Bank before his promotion while A Dong served as director of policy at the State Oceanic Administration before he was appointed mayor of Sansha in 2017.

Sansha, on the southern island province of Hainan, was established as a city in 2012 to assert Beijing's claims to the resource-rich South China Sea.

A Chinese political observer who declined to be identified said Liu seemed to be leading the political race among the trio, despite their similar rankings. The Zhejiang governorship, he said, was "more comprehensive" and had more political significance. The Communist Youth League was once seen as a cradle for China's future political stars, but has receded in significance in recent years.

"The Communist Youth League has been marginalised by Xi, as he prefers cadres with grass-roots or actual administrative track records. It is no longer the fast promotion track of [former president] Hu Jintao's days," the observer said.

"Li Yunze's NFRA is an important financial regulator but its responsibility is much narrower compared to a governor," he added.

In contrast, "taking top leading positions in Zhejiang and Fujian, where Xi has worked for decades, also carries prominent political weight", the observer noted.

Xie Maosong, a senior researcher at Tsinghua University's National Institute of Strategic Studies, said the Chinese ruling party was sourcing most of its next generation of leaders from three groups – government administrators, state-owned enterprise managers, and professional and technical talent pools.

"All of them are well-educated. Beijing is rotating them to different job functions, especially the security aspects, so that they are exposed to vastly different works. The competition among them is very tough," he said.

A handful of officials born in the late 1960s have also achieved ministerial rank in the past two years, most prominently Beijing mayor Yin Yong and Sichuan governor Shi Xiaolin, both born in 1969 and widely regarded as rising political stars.

Yin, who has a doctorate in engineering from Tsinghua University and a master's degree in public

administration from Harvard Kennedy School, spent two decades with the State Administration of Foreign Exchange and the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank.

He was rotated out of the deputy central banker's role to become deputy mayor of Beijing in 2018.

Shi was appointed party boss of Sichuan's provincial capital Chengdu in 2021, becoming the youngest person to hold the post, after nearly three decades in Shanghai.

Shi, a Shanghai University graduate in electrical engineering, rose through the party ranks to head the city's united front work department in 2017. She was subsequently transferred to other regional roles.

Observers in China have also been tracking the careers of several other prominent post-70s senior officials to have risen to deputy ministerial-level posts in recent years.

They include Zhu Zhongming, the 1972-born newly appointed Shanghai security head. Zhu served in various positions in the Zhejiang finance department when Xi and Premier Li Qiang held leading positions in the province.

Other names in the fray are Hubei's deputy party secretary Zhuge Yujie, born in 1971, and Shi Guanghui, deputy secretary and security head of the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, born in 1970. Both previously served extensively in Shanghai.

Zhu, who spent three years as deputy finance minister from 2021 before his rotation to Shanghai, is widely regarded as a leading candidate to succeed the city's mayor Gong Zheng, who reaches the official retirement age of 65 in March.

Observers said that Yin, the Beijing mayor, was ahead of the similarly aged field in terms of party appointments.

He has been a full member of the powerful Central Committee since the 20th party congress in 2022, while Shi Xiaolin and the rest of the post-70s cohort are still alternate members of the top decision-making body

### **China's Xi vows to stop mass killings known as 'revenge on society crimes'**

27 December 2024, AP News

The order came from the top.

China's leader Xi Jinping wants the recent spree of mass killings that shocked the country not to happen again. He ordered local governments to prevent future "extreme cases."

The attacks, where drivers mow down people on foot or knife-wielding assailants stab multiple victims, are not new in China. But the latest surge drew attention. Local officials were quick to vow to examine all sorts of personal disputes that could trigger aggression,



from marital troubles to disagreements over inheritance.

However, the increasing reach into people's private lives raises concerns at a time when the Chinese state has already tightened its grip over all social and political aspects in the East Asian nation.

#### 'Revenge on Society Crimes'

This is how people in China label these attacks.

In November alone, three took place: A man struck people at an elementary school in Hunan province, wounding 30, after suffering investment losses. A student who failed his examination stabbed and killed eight at a vocational school in the city of Yixing. The most victims, 35 people, resulted from a man mowing down a crowd in the southern city of Zhuhai, supposedly upset over his divorce.

While pinpointing the exact motive of such attacks can be difficult, there is an overwhelming feeling of being pressured within Chinese society, experts say.

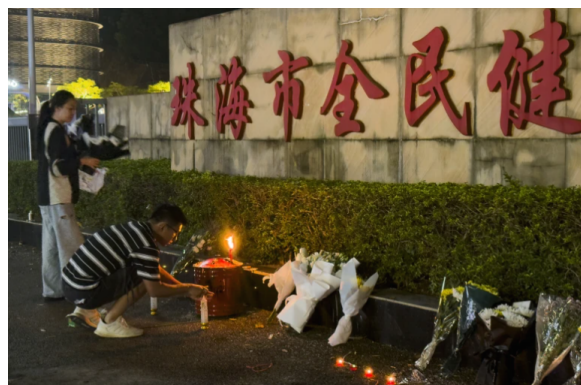
"On the surface, it seems like there are individual factors, but we see there's a common link," Wu Qiang, a former political science professor, said. "This link is, in my personal opinion, every person has a feeling of injustice. They feel deeply that this society is very unfair and they can't bear it anymore."

Since 2015, Chinese police have targeted human rights lawyers and non-profit advocacy groups, jailing many, while keeping tight surveillance on others, effectively destroying the civil society that had been active from the early 2000s to 2010s.

Wu was fired from Tsinghua University after conducting fieldwork during the 2014 Occupy protests in Hong Kong. He says police officers have been regularly stationed outside his home in Beijing since last year.

#### Keeping a tight lid on the killings

A decade ago, media outlets could report an incident as it developed and even share a suspect's name. Nowadays, it's rarely possible. During the 24 hours before the death toll was released in the Zhuhai slaying, state censors were quick to remove any videos of the incident and eyewitness accounts shared online. In the case of the Hunan elementary school attack, authorities shared the number of the wounded only after the court sentencing, nearly a month later. A tally of violent attacks can be documented in other countries; notably, the U.S. had 38 mass killings so far this year, according to an Associated Press database. But in China, a lack of public data makes it hard to decipher mass killing trends.



A man lights a candle near flowers placed outside the Zhuhai People's Fitness Plaza, where a man deliberately rammed his car into people exercising at the sports center, killing some and injuring others in Zhuhai in southern China's Guangdong province on Tuesday, Nov. 12, 2024. (AP Photo/Ng Han Guan, File)

"From 2000 to 2010, there was a lot of discussions, including how do we help these people by making structural changes to reduce these risks, but now there's not," said Rose Luqiu, a well-known former journalist with state-owned Phoenix Television and an associate professor at Hong Kong Baptist University. Luqiu believes the government may be enforcing censorship thinking it will prevent copycats from imitating such crimes.

"Things will only become more and more strict," she predicted. For the Chinese state, "the only method to deal with it is to strengthen control."

#### Officials vow to ferret out hidden risks

After the Zhuhai attack, Xi called on all local governments "to strengthen prevention and control of risks at the source, strictly prevent extreme cases from occurring, and to resolve conflicts and disputes in a timely manner," according to the official Xinhua news agency.

The AP found at least a dozen local government notices, from small towns to big cities, announcing actions in response.

In eastern Anhui province, a ruling Communist Party leader inspected a middle school, a local police station, and even the warehouse of a chemical factory where he urged the workers to "ferret out any hidden risks." He said they must "thoroughly and meticulously investigate and resolve conflicts and disputes," including in families, marriages and neighborhoods.

Police and prosecutors issued similar statements.

The Ministry of Justice promised to curtail conflicts by looking into squabbles over inheritance, housing, land and unpaid wages.

However, many expressed worry over how such disputes will be detected.

"I think we're at the beginning of a vicious cycle," said Lynette Ong, a professor at the University of Toronto and author of "Outsourcing Repression:

Everyday State Power in Contemporary China.” “If you nip the conflict in its bud, you’d imagine the system then would impose a lot of pressure ... on schools, enterprises and factories.”

The new announcements reminded Ong of China’s strict policies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Neighborhood committees, the lowest rung of government, set up fences and barriers in front of buildings to control entry and exit and broke into homes in extreme cases to disinfect the apartments of people who had caught the virus.

Eventually, people protested en masse.

“If we see non-sensible measures being introduced, you’ll be met by resistance and anger and grievances from the people, and it’s going to feed into this vicious cycle where more extreme measures are going to be brought,” she said.

### VOA Mandarin: Four generals' absence from Chinese ceremony sparks power struggle speculation

26 December 2024, VOA

The Central Military Commission of the Communist Party of China appointed Chen Hui as political commissar of the army and promoted him to the rank of senior general on Monday. However, former army political commissar Qin Shutong and three other senior generals were absent from the ceremony. Experts said the four might have been dismissed because of corruption issues, and that the incident might reveal power struggles within the Communist Party and the military.

[Click here for the full story in Mandarin.](#)

### 2 more Chinese generals fall after anti-corruption drive delivers big changes to military

26 December 2024, SCMP, Vanessa Cai

NPC Standing Committee announces Lieutenant General You Haitao and Vice-Admiral Li Pengcheng removed from China’s top legislature



Beijing has stripped two more generals in the People’s Liberation Army of their lawmaker

status, as China continues a wider anti-corruption drive into the country’s military.

In a notice on Wednesday, the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress (NPC) confirmed that Lieutenant General You Haitao, former deputy commander of China’s army, and Vice-Admiral Li Pengcheng, former naval commander of the PLA Southern Theatre Command, had been removed from the country’s top legislature.

A separate NPC statement said You and Li were suspected of “serious violation of laws and discipline” – a phrase that usually refers to corruption.

The downfall of the two generals comes amid a slew of personnel changes within the PLA, with several senior officers brought down by corruption charges. Miao Hua, a member of the powerful Central Military Commission and the director of its political work department, was placed under investigation for corruption in November.

You, 66, became the deputy commander of the army in early 2016. Previously he was deputy commander of the Nanjing Military Region and was promoted to lieutenant general in 2014.

Li, 61, previously served in roles including the deputy chief of staff of the PLA Navy’s North Sea Fleet, director of the Navy Equipment Research Institute, and chief of staff of the East Sea Fleet.

Li served as the naval commander of the Southern Theatre Command after his predecessor, Ju Xinchun, was dismissed from the NPC in December last year alongside eight other PLA generals, including a number of senior members of the PLA Rocket Force which oversees the country’s nuclear arsenal.

The recent personnel changes also include the promotion of long-time air force officer Chen Hui to the rank of general, confirming him as the new army political commissar to oversee ideology, political education and unit morale, state news agency Xinhua said on Monday.

Chen replaced Qin Shutong, 61, whose appointment as the army political commissar was made public in January 2022. Qin’s whereabouts are not known.

In September, it was announced that Deng Zhiping, a deputy commander of the army, was removed from the NPC for suspected corruption. Deng, 60, was hailed as a war hero during China’s border clashes with Vietnam in the 1970s and 80s.

Beijing also placed two of its former defence ministers, Li Shangfu and Wei Fenghe, under investigation in June.

Wei served in the role from 2018 to 2023. Li was promoted to the job in March 2023 but sacked in October the same year after vanishing from the public eye, making him the country’s shortest serving defence minister.

Both are expected to face indictments in their corruption cases.

### **VOA Mandarin: Chinese graduate school applications drop as youth unemployment rises**

25 December 2024, VOA

Graduate school applications in China have declined for the second consecutive year, with 500,000 fewer applicants for the 2025 entrance exams compared with the previous year. Simultaneously, competition for civil service positions has intensified, signaling a societal shift away from the traditional "degree obsession."

[Click here for the full story in Mandarin.](#)

### **China sets dates for 'two sessions' as investors await 2025 economic growth target**

25 December 2024, SCMP, William Zheng

Premier Li Qiang expected to deliver work report when top legislature's meeting opens on March 5, but he will skip press conference again

China's top legislature will begin its annual parliamentary meeting on March 5 next year – a session that will be closely watched by investors as Beijing will announce its growth target and decide on ways to stimulate the country's stalled economy.

The start date of the third annual session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) in Beijing was announced by the NPC Standing Committee on Wednesday.

On the same day, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), the country's top political advisory body, announced March 4 as the tentative start date for its annual session.

China typically holds these meetings, known as the "two sessions", in early March.

During the meetings, the Chinese government is expected to reveal its annual policy plans for the economy, military, trade, diplomacy, the environment and other areas for deliberation and approval.

The meeting is expected to last about a week, with President Xi Jinping and other top Communist Party leaders joining the group discussions. Xi's speeches during these deliberation sessions are usually regarded as important signs of China's priorities and direction.

Premier Li Qiang is expected to deliver an annual government work report to legislators at the NPC's opening session. It will be followed by two written reports from the National Development and Reform Commission and the Ministry of Finance outlining plans and the budget.

Although there will be several tightly scripted press conferences during the two sessions, including one

by Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Li will not hold a press conference at the end of the event, following a change introduced last year.

Beijing scrapped the premier's press conference in March, saying it "often overlapped with similar events". The conference – first held in 1988, though it did not become an annual practice until 1993 – was once one of the highlights of the two sessions.

This year's two sessions will draw special attention as the world waits for Beijing to decide on its growth target and corresponding policies to achieve it as the Chinese economy faces uncertainty from Donald Trump's tariff threats, sluggish domestic consumption and a property slump.

Lynn Song, ING's chief economist for greater China, said the growth target would set the tone for government policy for the coming year.

"The growth target set will also show how serious policymakers are about shoring up growth amid what will likely be a less supportive external environment in 2025," he said.

Song added that China had rarely failed to meet its growth targets, with only two years on record when growth fell significantly short of the goal – in 1990 and 2022.

Song said he expected China to either announce a growth target of "around 5 per cent" for a third consecutive year in 2025 or "above 4.5 per cent".

"Either of these targets would set a relatively acceptable floor for growth and would send a message that the government remains confident in its ability to stabilise growth," he said.

Global investors have questioned the speed and aggressiveness of Beijing's fiscal and monetary policy easing to counter economic headwinds, and the government work report is expected to offer more clues.

Beijing has indicated its policy focus is likely to shift towards boosting domestic demand, as the odds of export demand holding up are not high. It is also likely to offer targeted support for industries affected by tariffs.

The world will also be watching for any changes to China's military spending. China raised its military budget by 7.2 per cent this year, the same as last year.

## China says economists who spread 'inappropriate' views should be fired

23 December 2024, Nikkei Asia, Stella Yifan Xie

Securities watchdog says brokerages must help 'boost investor confidence'



Chinese regulators say brokerage economists must "play a positive role in interpreting government policies and boost investor confidence." © Reuters

China has issued a directive to the country's brokerage firms as it aims to change perceptions of its flagging economy: monitor speeches by top economists and fire them if necessary.

Chief economists at Chinese brokerages must "play a positive role in interpreting government policies and boost investor confidence," the industry watchdog Securities Association of China (SAC) told its members last week, according to the state-run financial newspaper Securities Times.

However, if the individuals have "repeatedly triggered reputational risk over inappropriate commentaries or behaviors" within a certain period of time or caused "major negative impacts," the company shall "severely deal with the person until termination of employment," said the notice, without elaborating on the definition of inappropriate comments.

The order marks a fresh attempt by Beijing to rekindle confidence and hasten growth by avoiding negative takes on the world's second-largest economy. But some analysts and economists are concerned that censorship would only deepen the public's frustration over the economy's sluggish performance and increase the risk of policy missteps. One Chinese economist at a bank received an internal warning in recent months, in part for making public comments on the economy, Nikkei Asia learned.

The Chinese government has long been sensitive about critiques on economic affairs, but the latest directive represents "the turning of the screw to clamp down on free and open discussion of economic issues," said George Magnus, a research associate at the University of Oxford's China Centre and a former chief economist at UBS.

"It might be that they want to make sure there is only one narrative coming out of China, which is the

government's narrative," he said. "But you can't solve the issues if you can't discuss them."

Chief economists are barred from attending meetings and events or publicizing opinions without approval from the brokerages they work for, according to the guidance from SAC, which is supervised by the China Securities Regulatory Commission. Companies should not hire economists with "tarnished records," it added.

The CSRC did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The stern warning by the securities regulator came just weeks after candid speeches by two prominent Chinese economists fueled discussions on social media about the reliability of official economic indicators, including the unemployment count and overall growth rate. Access to the social media accounts of Gao Shanwen and Fu Peng were restricted after their speeches went viral.

China's post-pandemic recovery has fallen short of expectations, leading to debates about whether the country is stuck in stagnation similar to Japan's experience in the 1990s. Last year, China's official growth rate was 5.2%, the slowest pace since 1990 apart from two years when COVID-19 curbs disrupted activity.

At the annual economic work conference last year, Beijing urged officials to promote the "bright theory" of the economy, as it battled against a property market meltdown and slumping stocks. The country's top intelligence agency warned the public against those who "denigrate China's economy through false narratives." Negative commentaries and articles about the state of the economy have vanished from Chinese media.

Since September, Chinese leaders have sought to inject confidence with a broad range of stimulus measures such as cutting interest rates, lowering mortgage costs and extending cheap loans for companies to buy back shares to shore up the stock market.

Nevertheless, consumer inflation dropped to a five-month low in November. Exports slowed sharply last month while imports fell unexpectedly.

Beijing vowed to boost domestic demand and ramp up fiscal spending by issuing more debt next year at a key political gathering this month, as it braces for shocks from a second U.S. presidency under Donald Trump, who has threatened to hike tariffs on Chinese goods.

Officials continue to strike a positive tone.

Han Wenxiu, deputy director of the Central Committee for Financial and Economic Affairs, said earlier this month that China's economy is expected to grow by around 5% in 2024, a target that many economists believe to be tough to hit without bolder stimulus.



## China's security ministry says foreign spies are slandering revolutionary heroes online

23 December 2024, SCMP, Yuanyue Dang

Overseas intelligence agencies are 'flooding online comment sections with unofficial and fake history', ministry says



China's leading anti-spy agency has blamed foreign agents for comments on social media that it says distort history and "slander" revolutionary heroes.

"There are foreign spy agencies flooding online comment sections with unofficial and fake history about our country's historical heroes, trying to discredit and slander our historical culture and heroic role models, and dispel people's admiration for heroes and their identification with our historical culture," the Ministry of State Security said in a social media post on Monday.

The post on the ministry's official WeChat account warned that "some foreign spy agencies" were "stealing state secrets, disrupting online order and posing a threat to national security".

Foreign spies pretended to be interested in politics, military matters, economics or science and technology and tried to steal information by interacting with social media users, the ministry said. It said officers had discovered that spies were using "manual screening or algorithmic capture" to entice people to post sensitive information such as the "parameters, serial numbers and developers of our research equipment" in the comments under a video about a "certain Chinese technology project".

The spies also recruited trolls or used bots to "recklessly fabricate and spread false statements that discredit our government and policies", the ministry added.

The ministry has become increasingly active on social media with warnings about the risk posed by foreigners.

It said foreign spies "maliciously [post] sensitive topics" on Chinese social media and "flood the screen with provocative and reactionary comments, inflaming public sentiment, and try to provoke disputes and create chaos".

The post did not say which countries were responsible for doing this or what social media platforms they were targeting.

The ministry warned government employees in sensitive positions not to post classified information online or reveal their jobs "to avoid being exploited by people with ulterior motives".

It also asked social media users to report any "reactionary, sensitive or other negative information that endangers our national security" and avoid posting "rumours or slanderous comments that discredit our country's history, revolutionary process, development and construction".

China has a strict law protecting the Communist Party's heroes and martyrs.

Some have questioned whether heroic stories about these people have been embellished for propaganda purposes, but Beijing calls discussion or research that challenges its official version of history "historical nihilism".

Journalist Luo Changping was jailed for seven months in 2021 for "insulting" soldiers who died in the Korean war.

The Chinese authorities have been increasingly vocal about national security and changed the law last year to broaden the definition of espionage.

The ministry opened a WeChat account in August last year and has since used the social media platform to warn that public foreign spy agencies are targeting Chinese citizens and companies.

## Xi Jinping's anti-corruption campaign nets record number of 'tigers' in 2024

22 December 2024, SCMP, William Zheng

Fifty-six high-ranking officials placed under investigation this year as graft-buster targets central agencies

Chinese leader Xi Jinping's war on corruption has ensnared a record number of high-ranking officials this year, with 56 senior cadres at vice-ministerial level or above being investigated, a tally by the South China Morning Post has found.

That marks a jump of nearly 25 per cent from 2023, when 45 high-ranking officials were subject to graft probes by anti-corruption agency the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, or CCDI.

According to the Post's analysis, corruption cases involving top party organs and ministries have doubled, while there was also an increase in cases within the aviation and defence industries.

But in 2024 there were fewer corruption cases in the finance sector – a key focus of the campaign last year.

Deng Yuwen, former deputy editor of the Study Times newspaper published by the Central Party



School, said more officials were getting caught up in the campaign.

"The anti-corruption net has been cast wider while the mesh is getting smaller – so more are getting caught and fewer can slip through," he said.

All of this year's ensnared "tigers" – as the CCDI calls disgraced top-level officials – were from a pool of "centrally managed cadres", meaning they were at the vice-ministerial level and above. While some were ranked slightly lower, they held key positions in critical sectors.

Taking the count to 56 on Monday was Wu Cunrong, the 61-year-old head of the provincial political advisory body in Shanxi. The CCDI said Wu had been placed under investigation and was "suspected of serious violations of discipline and law" – a euphemism for corruption. Wu was the party boss of Hefei, capital of Anhui province, in 2011 and became deputy party boss of Chongqing a decade later.

Twelve of the 56 officials detained this year held positions in central Communist Party and state agencies – double the number in 2023, suggesting more of a focus on the top party apparatus and ministries.

Some of the more prominent officials placed under investigation include former justice minister Tang Yijun, agriculture minister Tang Renjian and national sports chief Gou Zhongwen.

In addition to corruption allegations, the three men are also accused of failing to implement the instructions of party leaders and political disloyalty. They are awaiting trial after being kicked out of the party and removed from their public positions.

Deng, who is now an independent political analyst based in the US, said the focus on high-ranking officials from central agencies was consistent with Xi's instruction to the CCDI during the 2022 party congress. He said Xi had called on inspectors to "intensify efforts to uproot corruption in sectors with a high concentration of power, funds and resources". "The central agencies are at the top echelon of China's political power structure," Deng said. "The top officials are surrounded by local governments lobbying for projects, funding or subsidies, or businesspeople wanting approvals or licences."

One example is the corruption allegations against Xu Ying, who was deputy director of the State Tobacco Monopoly Administration – the powerful agency that controls China's US\$30 billion tobacco market and has sole decision-making power over the lucrative production and distribution chain. Xu was sacked and expelled from the party, and is also awaiting trial.

There was also an increase in the number of cases at non-financial state-owned enterprises in 2024, with six SOE bosses under investigation compared to

three last year. Among them is Tan Ruisong, former chairman of the Aviation Industry Corporation of China.

Dozens of top and former aviation and defence industry executives have also been placed under investigation in the past year, including Zhu Zhisong, head of Shanghai's free-trade zone. Zhu was previously in charge of Shanghai's aerospace bureau, which serves as a research and development base for rockets and missiles. It followed a corruption investigation into his former deputy at the bureau, Dai Shoulun.

Three senior aerospace and defence executives were also expelled from the nation's top political advisory body in December last year.

Xi's sweeping anti-corruption campaign – which has been under way since late 2012 – has also had the military in its sights, a crackdown carried out by the People's Liberation Army's anti-graft watchdog. Officials from the PLA Rocket Force that oversees the nuclear arsenal have been a focus since last year.

In the most recent case, Central Military Commission ideology chief Miao Hua was suspended last month and is being investigated for "serious violations of discipline". In June, Beijing announced that former defence minister Li Shangfu and his predecessor Wei Fenghe were being investigated for corruption, and that they had been expelled from the party and stripped of their military ranks.

Alfred Wu, an associate professor at the National University of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, said Xi was purging both the buyers and sellers in China's defence industry.

"His military disciplinary inspectors have taken down several top generals, while the CCDI, which oversees the civilian officials, crack down on defence SOEs," Wu said. "This is the most intensive year for the military crackdown – and there's no end in sight."

Deng said SOEs were also in the crosshairs because of their role in Beijing's push for technological self-reliance and in strategic projects, and also because they are major employers at a time when the economy is struggling.

Four senior state bankers were placed under investigation for corruption this year, compared to eight in 2023. But none of this year's banking "tigers" are at the top level. Last year the finance world was shocked by the downfalls of former China Everbright Bank presidents Li Xiaopeng and Tang Shuangning, and former Bank of China president Liu Liange.

This year also saw several rising young political stars caught up in graft probes – Yang Fasen, who was the Qinghai province security chief, Beijing's deputy mayor Gao Peng, and Tibet's deputy government head Wang Yong.

### **Wang Huning urges efforts to forge sense of community for Chinese nation**

19 December 2024, CPPCC

Wang Huning, chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, on Wednesday urged efforts to forge a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation and to grasp the importance of taking the correct and distinctively Chinese approach to handling ethnic affairs.

Wang, also a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, made the remarks at a meeting on the work on ethnic affairs.

Wang stressed the need to highlight the prominent features of the Chinese civilization and consolidate the sense of identity with the motherland, the Chinese nation, Chinese culture, the CPC and Chinese socialism among all ethnic groups.

He also called for measures to accelerate modernization in areas with large ethnic minority populations, promote exchanges between different ethnic groups, and improve laws, regulations and policies concerning ethnic affairs.

### **Chinese Premier Li Qiang pledges to crack down on unfair targeting of private firms**

18 December 2024, SCMP, William Zheng

Companies have complained of being unjustly targeted by law enforcement to raise funds for cash-strapped local governments

Chinese Premier Li Qiang has warned local governments not to target private companies with unfair fines and promised further measures to improve the business environment next year.

The pledge – made at a meeting of the State Council, China's cabinet, on Monday – follows accusations that some local authorities have been trying to raise extra funds by targeting private firms outside their jurisdictions.

This year Beijing has announced a series of measures to improve the business environment as part of its efforts to boost the faltering economy.

This includes a drive by the country's top prosecuting authority to strengthen legal protections for private enterprises.

According to state news agency Xinhua, Li said that the abuse of administrative punishments and unfair law enforcement are still problems in some parts of the country and in certain sectors.

He told the meeting it is important for the government to start with the issues that are of "grave concern to the public and businesses" and standardise the exercise of power across the nation.

A special campaign will be launched in 2025 to regulate business-related law enforcement with the aim of improving the business environment and boosting market confidence, Li said.

He pledged that the government's enforcement of administrative law will be fully transparent and on the record and will include a review process for major decisions.

He also vowed to keep the channels for appeals open and said "soft measures" could be taken to tackle minor offences.

He also vowed to strengthen the supervision of law enforcement, pay attention to local governments that allow the "abnormal growth of fines and confiscations" and ensure frequent out-of-jurisdiction law enforcement and consistent maximum penalties.

He said the authorities should respond to the problem of unreasonable fines and punishments by reviewing and standardising penalties to ensure they are proportionate and consistent.

In recent years, Chinese entrepreneurs have complained of being targeted by law enforcement to milk them for cash, often using trumped up criminal charges or preying on firms outside their jurisdiction.

While this process is officially known as "profit-driven law enforcement", Chinese entrepreneurs have described it as "distant fishing", likening the police to fishermen who venture far out to sea for their catch.

The problem is compounded by the mounting debts and falling revenues many local governments are facing, something that also increases the pressure to find alternative sources of funding.

In November, a report by prosecutors in the eastern province of Zhejiang outlining how police could abuse their powers to target private businesses went viral online.

The report gave details of a case where two police officers from an unnamed province had been extorting money from entrepreneurs in Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces. The officers were eventually jailed for abuse of power.

In October, Zheng Shanjie, the head of the National Development and Reform Commission, the country's top economic planning body, said there would be a crackdown on unauthorised and "profit-driven enforcement" measures, as well as arbitrary fines, inspections and business closures.

### **China's anticorruption crackdown is impeding its military buildup plans, Pentagon says**

18 December 2024, CNN, Haley Britzky

A widespread anticorruption campaign within the senior levels of the Chinese military and government is impeding its push to build up its military by 2027, the Pentagon says in a new report released on Wednesday.

"In the second half of 2023 alone, at least 15 high ranking military officials and defense industry executives were removed from their posts for corruption ... This wave of corruption related investigations and the removal of senior leaders may have disrupted the [People's Liberation Army's] progress toward its 2027 goals," a senior defense official told reporters this week in a briefing on the China Military Power report, which is delivered to Congress annually and outlines China's military and security developments.

The official added that it is "having some impact already" and will "inevitably" come up again as the Pentagon continues to track the campaign's impact on development and acquisition of military capabilities, as well as major construction projects and personnel.

The report also says that China is "almost certainly" learning from Russia's war in Ukraine and applying those lessons to its approach to Taiwan. Specifically, the senior defense official said China is looking to "advance their objectives" in the information space and has seen the sanctions against Russia as a sign China needs to be more self-reliant to be able to withstand additional penalties.

The report also said China has an estimated 600 operational nuclear warheads, up roughly 100 since last year's report was released. It says that they will have more than 1,000 operational nuclear warheads by 2030, and while the senior defense official said it was in line with their previous assessments, they added that they certainly expect China will "continue expanding and modernizing their force" beyond 2030.

China's leader Xi Jinping has laid out an ambitious plan to "modernize" the PLA by 2035 and transform it into a "world class" military by mid-century. American officials believe Xi has instructed the PLA to be ready to invade the self-governing island of Taiwan by 2027, though they have stressed that doesn't mean an invasion will occur in 2027.

Amid the push, though, Xi is increasingly turning against members of his own government and struggling with disloyalty in the ranks, CNN has reported. Indeed, the Pentagon's report pinpoints numerous recent incidents of senior officials within the military, government, and defense industry, being fired or investigated.

In November, for example, a top military official viewed as a close protégé of Xi was suspended and placed under investigation for corruption. The senior official also said that while more senior people within China's military get the most attention, personnel are purged "at all levels."

Wednesday's report says that political leaders in China "probably view" the campaign against corruption "as a necessary tool to build a

professional fighting force as part of the PLA's 2027 modernization goals."

But that "frequent turnover and replacement of high-level personnel" specifically is what is impacting the PLA's 2027 goal, the senior defense official said. For example, on a major construction project or within their defense industry, the official said, turnover at that scale could slow down projects.

Experts say corruption within the defense industry in particular is relatively unsurprising given the relentless focus China has had on increase its procurement of weapons systems and warships. Victor Shih, a political science professor at the University of San Diego, previously told CNN that the push to modernize the PLA Navy alone provides plenty of opportunities for corruption.

"[O]nce they uncover corruption in one place or involving one senior official, there's sort of a bit of a spiraling kind of effect where it inevitably seems to draw in additional officials," the senior official said. They added it was unlikely Xi would abandon the anticorruption campaign, as he has made it a "hallmark of his tenure."

"I think they've identified it as something that really has posed great risks to the political reliability and ultimately the operational capability of the PLA," the official said, "so I would certainly expect them to continue to pursue the anticorruption campaign."

### **China's top political advisor again calls for community-for-Chinese-nation drive among ethnic minorities**

18 December 2024, Tibetan Review

In yet another reported meeting on work on ethnic affairs by a Sinicization-obsessed party-state of the People's Republic of China (PRC), top leader Wang Huning has on Dec 18 urged efforts to forge a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation and to grasp the importance of taking the correct and distinctively Chinese approach to handling ethnic affairs.

Chinese leaders employ cryptic euphemisms in their policy documents and official remarks whose actual implementations are all about forced assimilation of the ethnic minorities and the destruction of their cultural identity under the ongoing Sinicization drive for Han-homogenizing the PRC.

Wang, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, made the remarks at a meeting on the work on ethnic affairs, reported China's official chinadaily.com.cn Dec 18.

The report did not give any details about that meeting, such as who all took part in it, what its agenda was, and its decisions.

The report said Wang stressed the need to highlight the prominent features of the Chinese civilization and consolidate the sense of identity with the motherland, the Chinese nation, Chinese culture, the CPC and Chinese socialism among all ethnic groups.

He was stated to have also called for measures to accelerate modernization in areas with large ethnic minority populations, promote exchanges between different ethnic groups, and improve laws, regulations and policies concerning ethnic affairs.

### **The EU Expresses Concern About Deteriorating Situation in Tibet**

13 December 2024, CTA

On 10 December, 2024, the European Union (EU) delegation in China issued a statement marking International Human Rights Day, reaffirming the EU's commitment to the protection of human rights globally. The statement highlighted ongoing concerns about human rights abuses in China, with particular reference to Tibet and expressed the EU's serious concerns about the deterioration of civil, cultural, and political freedoms.

The EU highlighted the severe restrictions placed on freedom of speech, expression, movement and assembly in Tibetan areas where Tibetans continue to face tight controls on their ability to express dissent. The statement also noted the ongoing limitations on international travel for Tibetans, with restrictions on obtaining passports and stringent controls on the movement of Tibetan religious leaders, such as Lamas.

The EU expressed concerns over the repression of religious freedoms, including the monitoring and restriction of religious practices. Tibetan Buddhism remains under increasing state control, with religious practices being aligned with the ideology of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

The statement also flagged the establishment of mandatory boarding schools for Tibetan children, where children are forcefully separated from their families, as a significant concern for the preservation of Tibetan cultural and linguistic identity.

The EU delegation raised alarms about efforts to suppress Tibetan language and culture, citing the closure of schools that teach in Tibetan, such as the Jigme Gyaltsen Nationalities Vocational School in Golog. Such closures, along with the promotion of Mandarin-language education, risk leading to cultural erasure.

The EU reiterated its call for the immediate and unconditional release of 6 Tibetan political prisoners (Chadrel Rinpoche, Anya Sangdra, Go Sherab

Gytaso, Golog Palden, Semkyi Dolma and Tashi Dorje) arbitrarily detained for exercising their fundamental rights. It emphasised the importance of fair trials, the abolition of practices like "Residential Surveillance at a Designated Location" (RSDL), and an end to torture and ill-treatment. The EU's concerns regarding arbitrary detention extend to Tibetan political prisoners, particularly those arrested for peaceful advocacy of Tibetan rights and independence.

The EU delegation reaffirmed the importance of international engagement with Tibet, encouraging more visits from the international community and civil society organisations to monitor the situation and promote dialogue. A side visit to Tibet took place in June 2024 as part of the 39th EU-China Human Rights Dialogue, demonstrating the EU's ongoing interest in raising human rights concerns in the region.

In conclusion, the EU's statement on International Human Rights Day 2024 underscores its ongoing concern about the human rights situation in Tibet. The delegation called on China to respect and protect the rights of Tibetans, emphasising the importance of cultural preservation, religious freedom, and the right to self-expression. The EU also urged China to engage more constructively with international human rights mechanisms and to create an environment where Tibetans can freely practice their religion and maintain their cultural identity.

The full statement is available [here](#).

### **The CPC Central Committee approved the expulsion of Wu Yingjie from the party due to improper family traditions**

11 December 2024, Kzaobao, Lianhe Zaobao

The website of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and the National Supervisory Commission reported on December 10 that with the approval of the CPC Central Committee, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and the National Supervisory Commission have initiated an investigation into the serious violations of discipline and law by Wu Yingjie, former member of the Standing Committee of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and former director of the Culture, History, and Learning Committee.

Upon investigation, it was found that Wu Yingjie had lost his ideals, beliefs and principles of Party spirit, deviated from his original aspiration and mission, failed to implement the Party Central Committee's Tibet governance strategy in the new era, intervened in engineering projects on a large scale, sought profit for personal gain, seriously affected Tibet's high-quality development, failed to fulfill his main

responsibility of comprehensively and strictly governing the Party, contributed to the growth of corruption, and damaged the political ecology; he violated the spirit of the Central Committee's eight regulations and accepted banquets in violation of regulations; he had a weak sense of organization and did not truthfully explain the problems during organizational interviews and inquiries; he lost his integrity and accepted gifts and cash, and used his power to seek special treatment for his relatives; he interfered with discipline and law enforcement in violation of regulations; he had a bad family style and failed to supervise and educate his family members; he used public power as a tool to seek personal gain, used his position to seek profits for others in engineering contracting and other aspects, and illegally accepted huge amounts of property.

Wu Yingjie seriously violated the party's political discipline, organizational discipline, discipline on integrity, work discipline and discipline in life, constituted a serious duty violation and was suspected of bribery, and did not stop after the 18th CPC National Congress. The nature of his violations is serious and the impact is bad, and he should be dealt with seriously. In accordance with the relevant provisions of the "Regulations on Disciplinary Actions of the Communist Party of China", "Supervision Law of the People's Republic of China", "Administrative Punishment Law of the People's Republic of China for Public Officials", etc., after the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection Standing Committee meeting studied and reported to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China for approval, it was decided to expel Wu Yingjie from the party; the National Supervision Commission shall expel him from public office; confiscate his illegal gains; and transfer his suspected criminal issues to the procuratorate for examination and prosecution in accordance with the law, and transfer the relevant property together.

On June 16 this year, it was reported that Wu Yingjie was under investigation.

According to his public resume, Wu Yingjie, male, Han nationality, was born in December 1956 in Changyi, Shandong Province. He joined the Communist Party of China in May 1987 and started working in October 1974. He has a postgraduate degree from the Central Party School.

He has worked in Tibet for a long time, and has served as: deputy secretary and director of the Party Leadership Group of the Tibet Autonomous Region Education Department, vice chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Region Government, member of the Standing Committee of the Tibet Autonomous Region Party Committee and Minister of the Propaganda Department, member of the Standing Committee of the Tibet Autonomous Region Party Committee,

deputy secretary of the Party Leadership Group of the Regional Government and executive vice chairman, executive vice secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Region Party Committee, and secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Region Party Committee.

In October 2021, he was appointed as the Vice Chairman of the Education, Science, Culture and Health Committee of the 13th National People's Congress; in March 2023, he was appointed as the Director of the Culture, History, and Learning Committee of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

### **Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning's Regular Press Conference on December 11, 2024**

11 December 2024, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

At the invitation of Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi, Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Expatriates Badr Abdel Aaty will visit China and co-chair the China-Egypt foreign ministers' strategic dialogue from December 12 to 13.

TASS: According to media reports, Deputy Chairman of the Security Council of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev began his visit to China today. Could the Foreign Ministry provide more information on that? Does China have any expectations for this visit?

Mao Ning: Chairman of the United Russia party Dmitry Medvedev's visit is an important event of high-level exchange between China and Russia. The Chinese side will release timely information about the visit. Please stay tuned.

Beijing Daily: The US-based Center for Strategic and International Studies recently issued a report entitled "China's Intelligence Footprint in Cuba: New Evidence and Implications for US Security," saying that there are four sites within Cuba that are most likely to be supporting China's efforts to collect intelligence on the United States and its neighbors and suggesting that the United States and its regional partners should carefully monitor China's growing role in Cuba. What's China's comment?

Mao Ning: I noted what you mentioned. As Cuban Deputy Foreign Minister Carlos Fernández de Cossío said, the US think tank's accusations of so-called Chinese military bases in Cuba are just tales that do not exist and no one has seen.

Let me stress again that China's cooperation with Cuba is done aboveboard, and does not target any third party. We certainly would not accept any deliberate vilification and smear from any third party. It is widely known that US intelligence agencies have an egregious record in Latin America and the Caribbean. The US unlawfully occupied



Guantanamo Bay as its military base and imposed blockade and sanctions against Cuba for over six decades, which has been catastrophic for the Cuban people.

China once again urges the US to follow the just call of the international community, lift the blockade and sanctions on Cuba as soon as possible, remove Cuba from the list of "state sponsors of terrorism," and stop creating barriers that hinder Cuba's socioeconomic development.

AFP: A senior security official in Taiwan told AFP today that apparent military drills conducted by China this week around the island are aimed at drawing a red line ahead of the incoming US presidential administration of Donald Trump. Can the Foreign Ministry confirm today these Chinese military drills and does it have any comment?

Mao Ning: I would refer you to the competent Chinese authorities for your specific question. Let me say that the Taiwan question is the first red line that cannot be crossed in China-US relations and this has always been our position. Upholding the one-China principle is the key to ensuring peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. China will firmly safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Hubei Media Group: In a statement issued on December 10 local time, Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs Mélanie Joly announced sanctions against some Chinese personnel for alleged human rights violations. Do you have any comment on this?

Mao Ning: Without any factual basis, the Canadian government made false allegations against China in the name of human rights and imposed illicit sanctions on Chinese personnel. This is gross interference in China's internal affairs and a serious violation of international law and the basic norms governing international relations. China firmly opposes and strongly condemns this.

The Chinese government follows a people-centered development philosophy and attaches absolute importance to respecting and protecting human rights. China has achieved enormous progress in human rights and made important contribution to the world's human rights cause. This is a simple fact that no one without bias can deny.

Canada faces its own list of human rights issues. Its own human rights record has not been spotless. Even today, Canada's indigenous people still face systemic racial discrimination and unfair treatment. Instead of dealing with it, Canada chooses to smear and vilify other countries and spread lies about China's alleged human rights issues. This is a typical move of "thief-crying-stop-thief" and can hardly convince the world. Facts have laid bare Canada's double standards and hypocrisy. Canada is in no position to lecture others on human rights and point fingers at others' human rights situation, nor do they

have any right to act as a judge and arbitrarily impose sanctions.

China strongly urges Canada to reflect on itself, stop interfering in China's internal affairs, stop undermining China's interests and image under the pretext of human rights, stop its poor political stunt and immediately lift its unlawful sanctions against relevant Chinese personnel. We will take all measures necessary to firmly defend our sovereignty, security and development interests.

News 1 Korea: ROK media reported that the new Chinese ambassador to the ROK will travel to the ROK this month to assume office. What's China's comment and expectation?

Mao Ning: You may follow our ministry's website for any update on the new Chinese ambassador to the ROK. On China-ROK relations, our position is consistent. We stand ready to work with the ROK to advance China-ROK relations.

Reuters: China has approved no loans to Cambodia this year, despite being historically its top creditor country. This is according to data from Cambodia's finance ministry. Is there a particular reason for this?

Mao Ning: I would refer you to the competent Chinese authorities for your specific question. Let me say that China and Cambodia are iron-clad friends. We will continue to strengthen cooperation with Cambodia in various fields and support Cambodia in pursuing development and improving people's livelihood.

AFP: The United States said yesterday that it is offering a US\$10 million reward for information leading to the arrest of a Chinese man and co-conspirators who are wanted for hacking computer fire walls in order to commit fraud. This was in April of 2020 and the US Treasury said it had imposed sanctions on the man's company. Does the Foreign Ministry have any comment on this case?

Mao Ning: China has always opposed and fought all types of cyberattacks in accordance with the law. We firmly reject using unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction against Chinese entities and individuals. We urge the US to stop using cybersecurity issues to smear and vilify China, and stop imposing illicit unilateral sanctions. China will do what is necessary to protect the legitimate and lawful rights and interests of Chinese companies and citizens.

CCTV: On December 10, the US Commerce Department added two Chinese high-tech companies to the "Entity List" for "human rights violations." What is China's comment on this?

Mao Ning: The so-called sanctions you mentioned are a blatant suppression of Chinese high-tech companies in the name of human rights. The move further reveals the US's true intention of depriving the Chinese people's right to development. Protecting

human rights is just a pretext they use to advance that objective. Such schemes will not succeed. If the US truly cares about human rights, it should take care of its own human rights deficit first, rather than politicizing and weaponizing human rights issues to meddle in other countries' internal affairs and harm other countries' interests.

### China's record 'worsening' on Human Rights Day, activists say

10 December 2024, RFA

There is less and less room to criticize the government, follow a religion or receive justice in a court of law.



Chinese rights lawyer Jiang Tianyong appears in People's Court, August 22, 2017, in Changsha, China. (Changsha Intermediate People's Court via AFP)

The right to criticize the government, follow a religion and to get a meaningful defense in court are all deteriorating in China, activists told Radio Free Asia on Tuesday, Human Rights Day.

Over the past year in China, 45 pro-democracy activists and former lawmakers in Hong Kong were jailed for "subversion" after organizing a democratic primary, prominent dissident Xu Zhiyong held a hunger strike to protest his treatment in prison and a journalist was jailed for having lunch with a Japanese diplomat.

The ruling Communist Party has stepped up its suppression of public speech, organized religion and personal freedoms, while continuing to persecute anyone agitating for change, rights activists told RFA Mandarin in recent interviews.

On this day in 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which proclaimed the inherent, inalienable rights of every person "without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status."

Some of that language is echoed in China's Constitution.

Article 34 guarantees citizens "the right to vote and stand for election," while Article 35 guarantees

"freedom of speech, the press, assembly, association, procession and demonstration."

Article 36 promises them freedom of religious belief. But activists say there is less and less protection for anything resembling those rights in China today.

"Right now, we don't feel that human rights have improved," Shandong-based rights activist Lu Xiumei told RFA Mandarin. "Controls have become more severe, and there are more rules and regulations."

1,700 prisoners of conscience

According to the China Political Prisoner Concern Database, there are more than 1,700 known prisoners of conscience behind bars.

While many once believed that the internet would be impossible for the authorities to control, eventually leading to greater freedom of speech in China, the government has spent the last 30 years perfecting its control of online spaces.

"On social media platforms like WeChat and TikTok, it is almost impossible to post comments that have a negative impact on the government," Jiangsu-based rights activist Lu Jianrong told RFA Mandarin. "You can only praise the government."

Police have targeted young people who dress up for Halloween, particularly if their costumes had a satirical twist, while online censors have been going after social media accounts that use "unauthorized" language, including puns and homophones, to get around censorship.

Meanwhile, life is getting harder for women and for the LGBTQ+ community.

The party is also cracking down on its own officials if they're found in possession of banned books, and taking direct control over the running of the country's universities.

And it's training up the next generation of religious leaders under President Xi Jinping's "sinicization" of religion policy, to ensure that they put loyalty to the government ahead of the requirements of their faith.

A Protestant pastor from the central province of Henan who gave only the surname Li for fear of reprisals told Radio Free Asia: "There is almost no religious freedom; they don't want to give believers any room to breathe at all."

"A lot of churches have been banned, and are still being banned," he said.

No criticism allowed

Even pursuing complaints against the government using its own official channels can get a person in hot water.

"Take Xu Weibao for example, a petitioner from Taizhou," Lu Jianrong said. "He has been persecuted to the point that he can no longer survive in his hometown, and has had to move somewhere else."

Many who complain about official wrongdoing are targeted for harassment, extrajudicial detention and

even physical violence, or locked up in a psychiatric institution for “mental illness.”

“There’s another petitioner from Taixing who was held in a psychiatric hospital for three years,” Lu said. “He’s still under surveillance, and has no freedom at all.”

A human rights lawyer who asked to remain anonymous for fear of reprisals said that prior to the 2015 crackdown on public interest law firms and rights lawyers, the profession wasn’t generally regarded as a threat to the ruling party.

Now, they’re seen as a natural enemy of the Chinese Communist Party, he said.

“Many have had their licenses revoked, and some have also been sent to prison,” he said.

Heavier sentences

Lawyer Li Fangping, who represented the jailed Uyghur scholar Ilham Tohti said rights protections are getting weaker across the board in China.

“There’s a serious regression,” Li said. “We are seeing cases getting much heavier sentences now, especially for people who try to speak out, which is getting harder and harder.”

He said there has been scant information about the status of Ilham Tohti in prison.

Foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning hit out on Tuesday at criticisms of China’s human rights record, saying the government had massively advanced its citizens’ social and economic rights.

“Some countries have used human rights as a weapon to serve their political agenda,” Mao told a regular news briefing in Beijing.

“We also hope that certain countries will discard megaphone diplomacy and stop interfering in other countries’ internal affairs under the pretext of so-called human rights issues,” she said.

Also in Beijing, independent journalist Gao Yu said local police had once more taken steps to stop her from speaking out on Dec. 10.

“The police came to my house on Human Rights Day,” Gao said in a post to her X account, adding that she had used the day to commemorate late Nobel peace laureate and dissident Liu Xiaobo, whose subversion trial was held on Dec. 10, 2009.

Liu, who co-authored the Charter 08 manifesto calling for sweeping political change, died of liver cancer in prison in 2017 despite multiple applications for medical parole.

“I climbed up a ladder and tied a yellow ribbon to the window railing in front of them,” Gao wrote, adding that the local state security police were once more keeping watch outside her apartment building in a vehicle now very familiar both to Gao and her neighbors.

“Today is the 74th Human Rights Day, and the seven-seater Buick is here again,” she wrote.

## Xi Jinping calls for wider use of Mandarin in China’s border areas amid security push

10 December 2024, SCMP, Vanessa Cai

Leader tells Politburo study session that the unity of all ethnic groups ‘like pomegranate seeds tightly held together’ should be promoted

President Xi Jinping has called for national security and social stability to be upheld in China’s border regions and for Mandarin to be spoken more broadly in those areas, according to state media.

Addressing a Politburo study session on Monday, Xi said maintaining security and stability was the “baseline requirement” for border governance, state news agency Xinhua reported on Tuesday.

The Chinese leader said efforts should be made to improve social governance, infrastructure and “the overall ability to defend the country and safeguard the border”.

He told members of the ruling party’s top policymaking body that it was necessary to guide all ethnic groups in border regions to “continuously enhance their recognition of the Chinese nation, Chinese culture and the Communist Party”.

He also said use of the common Chinese language, Mandarin, and nationally unified textbooks should be promoted.

“We should continue to deepen efforts on ethnic unity and progress, actively build an integrated social structure and community environment, and promote the unity of all ethnic groups – like pomegranate seeds tightly held together,” he said.

Xi renewed those calls as the 24-member Politburo held a group study session on the history of Chinese border governance.

The Politburo regularly holds such sessions, with discussion usually led by an academic – Monday’s session was led by Li Guoqiang, vice-president of the Chinese Academy of History.

China’s borderlands stretch across five provinces – Yunnan in the southwest, Gansu in the northwest, and Jilin, Liaoning and Heilongjiang in the northeast – as well as four autonomous regions – Tibet and Xinjiang Uygur in the west, Inner Mongolia in the north and Guangxi Zhuang in the south.

Ethnic tensions in those autonomous regions, especially Xinjiang and Tibet, have historically been a challenge for Beijing.

In August, authorities in Xinjiang vowed to make stability and security their top priority and to turn the far western region into a “strategic barrier” against geopolitical risks. Xinjiang shares borders with countries including Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. China has been accused of human rights abuses against Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang – claims Beijing has denied.

In recent years, authorities have also stepped up efforts to promote Mandarin-language education as part of a nationwide drive to assimilate people from ethnic minorities into the majority Han culture.

However, such calls have been controversial. In 2020, efforts to promote the use of Mandarin rather than Mongolian in schools in Inner Mongolia prompted large-scale street protests over fears that the native language would be wiped out.

On Monday, Xi said modernising the border governance system and governance capacity was essential.

"The development of border areas must be incorporated into the overall strategy of Chinese-style modernisation, regional coordinated development strategies, and major regional strategies," he said, according to the Xinhua report.

The Chinese leader also called for efforts to support border areas to leverage their resources and advantages to achieve development.

He said it was important to improve the standard of living in the border regions and to speed up development of infrastructure and basic public services.

Xi also called for more multidisciplinary research on border history and governance and for accelerated efforts to establish a Chinese "knowledge system" on border studies.

### **China's villages put to Communist Party loyalty test in national anti-corruption campaign**

08 December 2024, SCMP, William Zheng

About 77,000 village officials were reprimanded in first three quarters of this year

Tens of thousands of anti-corruption inspectors have fanned out across China to carry out the first national check on the party loyalty of cadres in the country's half a million villages.

The announcement of the campaign came a month after the Communist Party's graft watchdog, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), said 77,000 village party bosses faced disciplinary action in the first three quarters of this year, a year-on-year increase of nearly 70 per cent.

The village is the lowest level in China's administrative hierarchy and was added to the inspection remit of county and municipal party committees for the first time in regulations introduced in February.

In an editorial published on November 25, the China Discipline Inspection and Supervision News, the CCDI's official newspaper, said the inspection of the village-level governments was key to resolving grass-roots issues and reinforcing governance at this level.

It said it would be "a strong guarantee" for consolidating President Xi Jinping's poverty alleviation campaign and rural revitalisation plans.

At an inspection planning meeting a few days earlier,, CCDI chief and Politburo member Li Xi said the investigations were necessary to rectify "misconduct and corruption that occur on people's doorsteps" and to win more public support for the party.

The top priority, Li said, was to check on the cadres' "political loyalty" to the party, to ensure they implemented the leadership's decisions and policies, and to find solutions to urgent problems, according to state news agency Xinhua.

Inspectors found over 50 per cent more corruption, abuses of power, and dereliction of duty problems in the villages this year, compared with 2023.

Village official, Hainan province

A village official in Hainan province, who declined to be named, said the inspectors coming to his area were led by provincial officials who have never served in the county or municipality – part of a strategy to prevent collusion.

"China's cities and counties are largely 'acquaintance societies', where people all know each other, or are connected to each other in some way. So inspectors from higher up or other jurisdictions can uncover problems better," the official said.

He said that under the new approach, the inspectors had found over 50 per cent more corruption, abuses of power, and dereliction of duty problems in the villages this year, compared with 2023.

An official in Hunan province said similar arrangements were in place there but the teams would focus on "the most notorious villages".

"There are neighbouring villages that organised thousands of people in massive fights over minor disputes in the 1990s. Some villages were known for their participation in telecom scams. We will ensure the teams led by provincial inspectors pay special attention to them," the Hunan official said.

Alfred Wu, an associate professor at the National University of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, said corruption in villages in more developed provinces was mainly linked to land acquisition and development.

In poorer areas, corrupt village chiefs were more likely to be involved in embezzlement or misappropriation of poverty alleviation funds and other government subsidies.

Beijing spent nearly 1.6 trillion yuan (US\$221 billion) on its poverty alleviation campaign from 2013 to 2021, while the agricultural ministry has pledged up to 7 trillion yuan to finance rural revitalisation projects.

"Many of the villages' party chiefs have monopolised decision-making power. There have been inadequate checks and balances," Wu added.

### **China's security chief urges all-out efforts to ensure safe New Year and Spring Festival**

08 December 2024, SCMP, Sylvia Ma

Call from Chen Wenqing comes as China doubles down on social stability and judicial fairness after string of public attacks

China's top security official Chen Wenqing has called for all-out efforts to ensure social security and stability during the coming New Year and Spring Festival holidays.

Spring Festival or Lunar New Year, is China's biggest annual celebration and falls on January 29 this time.

Chen issued the call for stronger security measures at key venues and for major events as he toured central Hubei province last week, state news agency Xinhua reported on Saturday.

He also called for increased street patrols to "bolster the public's sense of security" through greater police presence, the report said.

Chen is head of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission, which oversees China's law enforcement agencies. He is also a member of the ruling Communist Party's elite decision-making Politburo.

One stop on the trip was Hubei's high court, where he said judicial efforts should "fully consider the social harm caused by criminal acts and focus on the people's real concerns" to ensure fairness and justice.

Serious and vicious violent crime must be punished swiftly and severely in accordance with the law, he added, so as to effectively safeguard the legitimate rights of the people.

China has doubled down on social stability and judicial fairness after a string of mass killings, set against the backdrop of economic struggles and rising unemployment.

On November 11, an SUV ploughed into a crowd at a sports centre in Zhuhai, in southern Guangdong province, leaving 35 dead and 43 injured.

Days later, a knife attack by a former student at a vocational college in the eastern province of Jiangsu, claimed eight lives and injured 17.

Three days later, an SUV hit a group of parents and children outside a primary school in Changde, in central Hunan province.

In the Zhuhai case, police said the 62-year-old suspect was angered by court decisions regarding the division of property in his divorce.

In a rare commentary for party mouthpiece People's Daily last week, a senior judicial official from Zhejiang urged judges and prosecutors to pay more

attention to solving conflicts and ensuring fairness, rather than just closing cases.

The Ministry of Justice met late last month to discuss specific measures to solve conflicts in the wake of the attacks. It called on local officials to look into "marriage issues, neighbour relations, inheritances, property and land disputes and wage arrears" to tackle problems before they can escalate.

During his trip to Hubei, Chen also urged authorities to speed up the establishment of standardised county-level governance centres, which would make dispute resolution easier as people would need to visit just "a single place".

Efforts should be stepped up to resettle released prisoners, help people with severe mental disorders, and prevent juvenile crime, Chen added, while calling for more information sharing and inter-department coordination for a mechanism that can effectively prevent harmful behaviours while providing care.

### **In wake of mass attacks, China's judges urged to ensure fairness to maintain stability**

03 December 2024, SCMP, Phoebe Zhang

In rare People's Daily commentary, senior official calls on judiciary to focus on fixing conflicts to prevent 'social risks from escalating'

China's judges and prosecutors must pay more attention to solving conflicts and ensuring fairness rather than just closing cases, a senior judicial official said in a rare commentary, as authorities reflect on a string of mass killings in recent weeks.

Wang Chengguo, secretary of the Political and Legal Affairs Commission of Zhejiang province, wrote in the official People's Daily on Tuesday that China's judicial system must focus on maintaining social stability as its main task.

He said China faced "an increasing number of uncertain and unpredictable factors", and law enforcement and judicial work served to achieve justice in individual cases and were crucial channels for repairing social relations and advancing social governance.

If officials focus on judicial procedure and aim to close cases quickly, ignoring individual justice, or if they apply laws mechanically to simplify cases without solving the actual problems, they might "intensify conflicts between the parties involved", Wang wrote.

He called for solving problems and strengthening governance "at the root" to prevent "various social risks from escalating".

Wang's commentary is likely a reflection of recent mass incidents, said a political scientist who asked to remain anonymous.



"The commentary meant that unfair judicial decisions and improper handling of cases can trigger social instability, and that authorities should pay attention to these factors," he said.

"Furthermore, there is also the need to strengthen the judicial branch and increase punishment for crimes, including crimes that cause large-scale harm to groups of people."

China has faced an unusually high number of mass killings in recent weeks, which unfolded against the backdrop of an economic slump and high unemployment.

On November 11, an SUV rammed into a crowd of people exercising in Zhuhai in the southern province of Guangdong, killing 35 and injuring 43.

On November 16, at a vocational college in Wuxi in Jiangsu province, a former student killed eight and wounded 17 with a knife.

Three days later, an SUV hit a group of parents and children outside a primary school in Changde in the central province of Hunan. Local police reported that several children were injured and needed hospital treatment, but there were no deaths.

Local police said the suspect in the Zhuhai killing, a 62-year-old man, was unhappy about court decisions regarding the division of property in his divorce.

Wang said that to promote social harmony in judicial work, there must be laws and regulations as well as a conflict-solving mechanism to encourage communication between parties and seek a compromise that satisfies all sides. He called for community volunteers to take part in solving conflicts and urged the use of big data and other technical measures to promote efficiency.

He added that officials should improve their abilities and "act as a bridge to communication" to balance the interests of all sides and solve problems in creative ways.

On November 22, China's Ministry of Justice held a meeting to discuss specific measures to solve conflicts. It called for local officials to look into "marriage issues, neighbour relations, inheritances, property and land disputes and wage arrears" in an effort to nip problems in the bud.

President Xi Jinping has promoted the "Fengqiao experience" – a model of solving problems at the community level – to manage disputes and social relations. Its motto is "small things do not leave the village, big things do not leave the town, and conflicts do not turn over".

In a 2021 speech recorded in Qiushi, the Communist Party's most authoritative theoretical journal, Xi said China's special circumstances meant it could not become "a country of litigation".

"We have 1.4 billion people. If everything, big or small, has to be decided by a lawsuit, our system wouldn't be able to bear the burden," he said, while

calling for more mediation of conflicts and insisting on the Fengqiao experience.

## **China's Xi calls for the protection of Belt and Road Initiative interests overseas**

03 December 2024, SCMP, Liu Zhen

China must protect its overseas interests related to the Belt and Road Initiative amid growing global risks, President Xi Jinping said on Monday.

Speaking at a working conference on the projects, Beijing's sprawling effort to build out a global infrastructure and trade network that connects to China, Xi warned that the international environment has become "tough and complicated".

"In recent years, the world has entered a new period of turbulence and change, with a significant rise in unilateralism and protectionism, and regional conflicts and upheavals have become frequent," Xi told the meeting.

"Against such circumstances ... it is necessary to appropriately respond to various risks and challenges, effectively overcome the impact of geopolitical conflicts, correctly address the relationship between enhancing the sense of gain of the partner countries and ensure the benefits to our country, and effectively safeguard the security of our overseas interests," he said.

Xi added that there are still more opportunities than challenges in promoting the initiative, despite the more challenging environment.

"We must strengthen our strategic confidence, maintain our strategic determination and have the courage to take on responsibilities," he said, calling for an improvement in project risk control and a mechanism to protect the interests of host countries.

It has entered a "new phase", said Xi, which should combine major "iconic" infrastructure constructions with "small and beautiful" projects that would improve the livelihoods of local populations, expand into new emerging fields to explore "new space for win-win development that is of higher-standard, more resilient and sustainable".

The initiative was first proposed by Xi in 2013, involving ambitious plans to build power plants, roads, railways, ports and other infrastructure overseas mainly by Chinese companies and funded by Chinese investment development bank loans.

Through these projects, China has deepened its relations with Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.

They are seen as a way for China to expand its countries such as the United States and some of its allies. As the geopolitical tensions increase between China and the West, some major partners, such as

Italy and Australia, have announced they are pulling out from the programme.

Critics have accused Beijing of saddling some project partner countries with unaffordable loan repayment terms, leading some of them to call the belt and road projects “debt traps”.

Some have also said that the projects bring little benefit to local economies, and levelled accusations of low transparency, corruption or human rights violations, as well as environmental damage.

Some high-profile projects under the initiative, such as the Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka, struggled to repay the Chinese loans. Other projects like the Melaka Gateway project in Malaysia, have been cancelled or scaled down.

In addition, Chinese expatriates and construction sites of belt and road projects in Pakistan – a key investment destination and host of some of flagship programmes – have been targeted by terrorists.

Monday’s meeting was attended by senior Chinese officials involved in the projects and was the fourth edition following those in 2016, 2018 and 2021.

## November

### China condemns G7 foreign minister’s Fiuggi statement on Tibet etc as interference

28 November 2024, Tibetan Review

China has on Nov 27 condemned the G7 countries for the joint statement at their foreign ministers’ meeting in Fiuggi, Italy, over Nov 24-27. The statement criticized Beijing on a host of issues, including human rights and other matters in Tibet etc, while seeking constructive and stable relations with the country, expressing readiness to cooperate with it to address global challenges.

The statement, released by the G7 Foreign Ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America and the High Representative of the European Union, expressed concern on the “human rights situation in China, including in Xinjiang and Tibet” as well as on “the erosion of civil society, human rights and fundamental freedoms in Hong Kong.

China accused the G7 foreign ministers of, among other things, making wrongful comments on issues related to the East China Sea, South China Sea, and China’s Taiwan, Xinjiang, Xizang, and Hong Kong. Xizang is China’s Sinicized name for Tibet.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning has said China’s position on issues related to the East China Sea, the South China Sea, Taiwan, Xinjiang, Xizang and Hong Kong was consistent and clear-cut.

“We firmly oppose the G7 undermining China’s sovereignty and interfering in China’s internal affairs. We urge G7 countries to abide by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and the basic norms governing international relations and look after their own affairs,” the official globaltimes.cn Nov 27 quoted Mao as saying.

### China’s defence minister Admiral Dong Jun under probe for corruption

28 November 2024, Phayulv, Tenzin Nyidon

Admiral Dong Jun, China’s defence minister, is under investigation for alleged corruption, making him the third consecutive minister to face such charges. Dong, who assumed the role in December 2023 following the removal of his predecessor Li Shangfu, now faces similar corruption charges just seven months into his tenure.



China's defence minister Admiral Dong Jun in an undated photo (Photo/AP)

Dong was last seen publicly on November 21 in Vientiane, Laos, where he attended an Asian defence meeting but declined to meet with U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin. China’s defence ministers have traditionally served as members of both the Central Military Commission (CMC), the highest decision-making body for military affairs, and the State Council, the cabinet-level executive body. However, Dong was neither promoted to the six-member CMC, led by Xi Jinping, nor appointed to the State Council.

In a press conference, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning dismissed the investigation as “just shadow chasing,” implying that the allegations lacked substance. However, Dong’s case aligns with a growing pattern of corruption probes targeting senior military officials.

This investigation is part of a decade-long anti-corruption campaign initiated by President Xi Jinping in 2012, which has aggressively targeted high-ranking officials within the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). Dong’s predecessors, Li Shangfu and Wei Fenghe, also fell under scrutiny, with Li removed after just seven months in office for “serious violations of

discipline,” a term often used to denote corruption. Wei, a former defence minister and head of the PLA Rocket Force, was similarly dismissed, with no details provided on his whereabouts.

Observers note that these investigations reflect deeper instability within the Chinese military leadership. In December 2023, nine senior military officers were ousted from China’s national legislative body, signalling a sweeping effort to consolidate power and address corruption in the ranks. Critics, however, argue that the anti-corruption drive doubles as a political tool for eliminating rivals and tightening President Xi’s grip on power.

### **China investigates head of Shanghai’s free-trade zone for corruption**

27 November 2024, SCMP, Vanessa Cai

Zhu Zhisong, Communist Party chief of Pudong New Area, is among a number of aerospace veterans under a cloud

The Communist Party chief of Shanghai’s Pudong New Area, Zhu Zhisong, is under investigation on suspicion of corruption.

The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) said on Wednesday that Zhu, 55, an aerospace veteran, was suspected of committing “serious violations of discipline and law” – a euphemism for corruption.

Zhu is the first party chief of Shanghai’s Pudong New Area to come under investigation since the district, a major testing ground for China’s economic reforms, was established in 1992.

However, he is the second “tiger”, or senior official, in Shanghai to be targeted by the CCDI since the party wrapped up a major reshuffle at its 20th congress in October 2022.

In July last year, Dong Yunhu, Shanghai’s top legislator, was put under investigation before being sentenced in August this year to life in prison for accepting 148 million yuan (US\$20.4 million) in bribes.

Advertisement

Zhu’s last public appearance was on Monday afternoon during an inspection tour of two Pudong New Area communities.

He also attended the Hongqiao International Economic Forum on November 6, telling a gathering that Pudong would further promote institutional opening up and better align with high-standard international economic and trade rules, state media reported.

In December last year, three senior Chinese aerospace-defence executives were stripped of their titles as members of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, China’s top national

political advisory body. The measures signalled that Beijing was pressing ahead with anti-corruption efforts in the key military sector.

The trio were Wu Yansheng, chairman of the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation, Liu Shiquan, chairman of the board of the China North Industries Group Corporation, and Wang Changqing, deputy manager of the state-owned China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation.

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### **China aims for more than 100 ‘trusted data spaces’ by 2028 under national action plan**

25 November 2024, SCMP, William Zheng



National Data Administration action plan marks major step forward in building integrated data market with secure links to other countries

China aims to build more than 100 “trusted data spaces” by 2028 and develop a series of data space solutions and best practices, according to an action plan released over the weekend.

The move marks a major step forward in building a national integrated data market with secure links to other countries.

A trusted data space is an infrastructure for secure data circulation and use, connecting trusted players including data owners, providers, users and developers. The storage and exchange of this data is based on consensus rules and standards, enabling efficient sharing.

According to the 2024-2028 action plan released on Saturday by the National Data

Administration (NDA), initiatives will be launched to promote trusted data spaces across enterprises, industries, cities and beyond.

The administration pledged to set up an “efficient, convenient and secure” cross-border data flow mechanism based on multilateral frameworks, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Brics and Group of 20.

“We will explore the establishment of a trusted data space dialogue and cooperation mechanism, and promote the construction of international cooperation demonstration projects for trusted data space under regional cooperation platforms such as the Belt and Road Initiative,” the action plan said, referring to Beijing’s cross-continental trade and infrastructure strategy.

It also pledged to “explore the interconnection of domestic and foreign data spaces”.

Within the country, the NDA will build a secure and reliable data space framework, with clearly identified rights and responsibilities for resource management, and safe and reliable application services.

Trusted data space operators will also be encouraged to ensure full traceability of data resource development and utilisation, so as to safeguard the rights and interests of all parties involved.

Operators of the trusted data space will also provide technical services such as data identification and semantic conversion.

Wu Hequan, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Engineering, said that many cities in China generated a vast amount of data that required a lot of pre-processing, because the receiving parties did not always have the ability to handle it.

Trusted data spaces would facilitate data resource retrieval and utilisation, by providing a secure environment for their development and application, Wu was quoted as saying by state news agency Xinhua.

The trusted data spaces plan is one of eight development policy guidelines expected from the NDA, which was set up in October last year to promote the building of a “digital China”.

NDA director Liu Liehong said in July that the eight guidelines would relate to issues including data property rights, data circulation, data revenue sharing, security governance, public data development, enterprise data development and high-quality development of the digital economy.

On Friday, a day before releasing the trusted data space plan, the NDA released a set of draft guidelines for national data infrastructure construction. The guidelines are open for public feedback until December 1.

## China zeroes in on ‘common’ disputes in wake of deadly Zhuhai attacks

25 November 2024, Hong Kong Free Press

Earlier this month, a 62-year-old man killed 35 people and wounded more than 40 more when he rammed his car into a crowd in the southern city of Zhuhai – the country’s deadliest attack in a decade.

Beijing is ramping up scrutiny of “common” disputes such as those involving marriages and property, the justice ministry said, as the public reels from a recent string of deadly attacks.

China has witnessed a spate of violent incidents in recent months – from mass stabbings to car rammings – a rare development for a country with a proud reputation for public security.

The issue has prompted soul-searching about the state of society, with some despairing about why an increasing number of people seem willing to “take revenge” on random civilians.

The justice ministry has urged local mediators to carry out “in-depth investigations” into disputes involving family, neighbours, land and wages.

Such close attention is necessary to resolve disputes at the early stage, the ministry said Saturday.

Officials also stressed the importance of maintaining “safety and stability” in prisons.

“It is necessary to increase efforts to resettle and assist released prisoners... to effectively prevent and reduce re-offending,” the ministry statement said.

Earlier this month, a 62-year-old man killed 35 people and wounded more than 40 more when he rammed his car into a crowd in the southern city of Zhuhai – the country’s deadliest attack in a decade.

Preliminary investigations suggested the attack had been “triggered by (his) dissatisfaction with the division of property following his divorce”, according to local police.

Days later, eight people were killed and 17 others wounded in a knife attack at a vocational school in eastern China.

Police said the suspect was a 21-year-old former student at the school, who was meant to graduate this year but had failed his exams.

Officials from China’s Supreme People’s Court also met Saturday and said they would “severely punish major vicious crimes in accordance with the law and maintain social stability”.

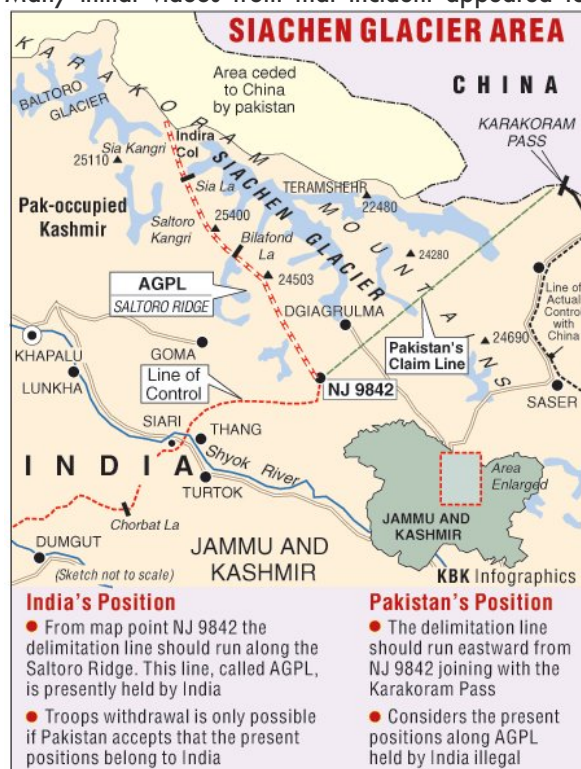
And Beijing’s top public prosecutor vowed “zero tolerance for crimes that infringe students’ rights and interests and endanger campus safety” at a meeting Tuesday.

It also pledged to “make every effort to safeguard the safety of campuses and students”, according to a post on its official WeChat account.

On Tuesday, a car crashed near a primary school in central China and injured multiple children.



Many initial videos from that incident appeared to



have been removed from China's tightly controlled social media platforms, echoing other mass casualty events.

In the Zhuhai attack, it took police almost 24 hours to release the death toll, and videos of the attack later appeared to be scrubbed from social media.

### Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning's Regular Press Conference on November 25, 2024

25 November 2024, MFA

It's reported that the UN Climate Change Conference (COP29) held in Baku agreed on the new collective quantified goal. How does China view the results of the meeting and what role will China play in the implementation of the outcomes?

Mao Ning: On November 24, the 29th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29) was concluded in Baku, the capital city of Azerbaijan. After two weeks of tough negotiations, parties reached consensus on the new collective quantified goal, the operationalization of Article 6 of the Paris Agreement and other issues. The outcomes of the meeting embody the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and demonstrate global effort and aspiration for climate response.

The Chinese government attaches great importance to COP29. President Xi Jinping's Special Representative, Member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Vice Premier of the State Council Ding Xuexiang attended and addressed the World Leaders Climate Action Summit held during COP29. Vice Premier

Ding Xuexiang also attended events hosted by China, including the High-Level meeting on "Early Warnings for a Climate-Resilient Future" and the Launch Conference of the International Zero-Carbon Island Cooperation Initiative. The Chinese delegation shared information on the Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization and China's achievements in climate actions, participated in consultations on various topics in a comprehensive and in-depth manner, contributed constructive plans for negotiations on key issues, and promoted all sides to expand common ground while resolving differences, making important contributions to reaching the outcomes of the meeting.

The new collective quantified goal reached at COP29 requires developed country Parties to take the lead in providing and mobilizing at least US\$300 billion per year by 2035 for developing country Parties for climate action. It is a continuation of the commitment of mobilizing US\$100 billion per year made by developed countries in 2009. The COP29 meeting also called on all actors to work together to enable the scaling up of financing to developing country Parties for climate action from all sources to at least US\$1.3 trillion per year by 2035.

Climate finance is crucial to supporting developing countries' climate response. China calls on developed countries to earnestly fulfill their obligations and responsibilities of providing funding support to developing countries to boost global climate actions. China will continue to enhance South-South cooperation and provide as much support as we can for the climate response effort of fellow developing countries.

Reuters: What is the latest update on the Chinese ship Yi Peng 3 that was anchored between Denmark and Sweden? Are you able to tell us whether the ship is staying voluntarily or if it is being detained and if the crew is being questioned?

Mao Ning: As I have learned, China maintains smooth communication with relevant parties of the incident through diplomatic channels. As for specifics about the Chinese vessel, I have no more information to share and would like to refer you to competent authorities.

KBS: In accordance with China's criminal law, the South Korean citizen detained for violating the anti-





espionage law must stand trial within this year. Can you update us on the investigation progress?

Mao Ning: I'm not familiar with what you mentioned. On the specifics about how the case is being handled, I'd refer you to competent Chinese authorities.

TV Asahi: Last Friday, China issued its unilateral 30-day visa-free policy for Japan. Previously, China's stance was to jointly facilitate cross-border travel and require reciprocal visa exemption measures. Why did China change its stance?

Mao Ning: The Chinese government always attaches high importance to the facilitation of cross-border exchanges. We hope that Japan will work with us in the same direction and jointly facilitate cross-border travel between our two countries.

Rudaw Media Network: Iraq is an important economic and trade partner for China. Israel is threatening to attack regions in Iraq. Do you believe such an action could harm China's interests there? Has China taken any steps through the United Nations Security Council or other diplomatic channels to prevent such attacks on Iraq?

Mao Ning: China opposes infringement upon other countries' sovereignty and security and opposes arbitrary use of force. As tensions in the Middle East are running high, relevant parties need to avoid further increasing the overall security risks in the region. The recent series of incidents once again highlight the urgency of realizing a ceasefire. The international community, major countries with influence in particular, need to play a constructive role and create necessary conditions for cooling down the situation in the region. China will continue to leverage its influence and contribute to keeping the region peaceful and stable.

AFP: A spokesman for Afghanistan's foreign ministry posted on X today about an apparent meeting between top Taliban diplomat Amir Khan Muttaqi and China's special envoy for Afghan affairs Yue Xiaoyong. Can you tell us more about the content or outcomes of this meeting?

Mao Ning: I'll need to check with my colleagues.

Shenzhen TV: The Global Financial Leaders' Investment Summit was successfully held from November 18 to 20 in Hong Kong. The annual meeting of the International Financial Forum was also held for the first time in Hong Kong from November 22 to 23. The two important meetings had the participation of senior financial officials as well as heads of financial institutions from a good number of countries and regions, and received widespread attention. What's the Foreign Ministry's comment?

Mao Ning: We congratulate Hong Kong on successfully hosting these two important meetings in international finance, which represents a vote of confidence from the international community for

Hong Kong's status as an international financial center, its business environment and development outlook. Facts prove that with the safeguards of One Country, Two Systems, the strong support of the nation and concerted efforts of all sectors, Hong Kong will maintain lasting prosperity and stability and it will better leverage its role as an international financial center. China welcomes companies and talents from across the world to invest, do business and tap full potential in Hong Kong. They will surely benefit from Hong Kong's development and One Country, Two Systems.

Reuters: The Biden administration is set to unveil new export restrictions on China as soon as next week, the US Chamber of Commerce said on Thursday.

Does the Foreign Ministry have any comment on this?

Mao Ning: China is firmly opposed to the US overstretching the concept of national security, abusing export control measures and making malicious attempts to block and suppress China. Such moves seriously violate the laws of market economy and the principles of fair competition, disrupt international economic and trade order and the stability of global industrial and supply chains, and will eventually harm the interest of all countries. China will take resolute measures to firmly defend the legitimate and lawful rights and interests of Chinese companies.

China News Service: It's reported that on November 24, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Rudenko told TASS in an interview that "Naturally, the issue of Taiwan is in the exclusive competence of our Chinese colleagues. However, we see that Washington, in violation of the one-China principle, is strengthening military-political contacts with Taipei under the slogan of maintaining the 'status quo', and increasing arms supplies. The goal of such obvious US interference in the region's affairs is to provoke China and generate a crisis in Asia to suit its own selfish interests." What's China's comment?

Mao Ning: We noted the reports. The one-China principle is a prevailing international consensus and a basic norm governing international relations. China highly commends Russia's just position of staying committed to the one-China principle and opposing the attempt of using Taiwan to contain China.



AFP: According to Japanese media, the United States is working with Japan on contingency plans for a possible future emergency involving Taiwan. These plans would see the United States deploy missile units on Japan's Nansei Islands as well as in the Philippines. Is China aware of such plans and does it have any comments on the report?

Mao Ning: Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory, and the Taiwan question is China's internal affair. The key to upholding cross-strait peace and stability is to remain committed to the one-China principle. China firmly opposes relevant countries using the Taiwan question as an excuse to strengthen military deployment in the region, heighten tensions and confrontation, and disturb regional peace and stability.

Bloomberg: Lithuania's incoming Prime Minister Paluckas said he is open to restoring diplomatic relations with China three years after a trade dispute led to Beijing downgrading its ties. The incoming Prime Minister signals support for repairing ties by returning envoys to both capitals, but he stressed that his administration won't reverse course on current policies that include maintaining trade links with Taiwan. Does the Foreign Ministry have any comment?

Mao Ning: We noted relevant statement from the Lithuanian side. As is widely known, Lithuania's wrongful acts on issues concerning Taiwan are the root cause of the fraught relations between China and Lithuania. China's door remains open to dialogue and we hope that Lithuania will return to the right path of upholding the one-China principle, abide by the political commitments in the communiqué on the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Lithuania, and accumulate enabling conditions for the normalization of bilateral relations.

Kyodo News: A follow-up to the question raised by TV Asahi. Has China asked Japan to offer visa exemptions for its nationals?

Mao Ning: We hope that Japan will work with us in the same direction and further facilitate cross-border travel between the two countries.

AFP: Taiwan defense ministry said today that it had detected a Chinese balloon passing over waters yesterday northwest of the island. This is the first such balloon it has reported since April. Can you provide details about the situation or do you have any comment?

Mao Ning: First of all, there is no such thing as "Taiwan defense ministry" and the question is not related to foreign affairs.

Global Times: Yamandu Orsi, candidate for the Frente Amplio (Broad Front), a coalition of major opposition parties was reportedly leading in the second round of votes in Uruguay's presidential election. The candidate of the ruling National Party conceded defeat and the incumbent Uruguayan President Luis Lacalle Pou has sent a congratulatory message to Yamandu Orsi on his election. Do you have any comment?

Mao Ning: We express congratulations for this smooth and successful presidential election in Uruguay and congratulate Mr. Yamandu Orsi on his election as the new president. China attaches high importance to growing relations with Uruguay and stands ready to work with Uruguay to further strengthen mutual political trust, deepen cooperation and exchanges in various fields, have closer communication and coordination in international and regional affairs, and work for the sustained and in-depth development of our comprehensive strategic partnership to the benefit of the two peoples.

### China's top judge promises swift justice after recent mass killings that shocked nation

24 November 2024, SCMP, William Zheng

Chief justice Zhang Jun says stern measures will help public 'truly feel fairness' but lighter punishments may be better for lesser crimes

China's most senior judge has promised to dish out swift punishments for random attacks on members of the public following a series of incidents that have shocked the nation.

In the most serious incident, 35 people were killed and dozens injured when a car ploughed into crowds of people exercising outside a sports stadium in the southern city of Zhuhai almost two weeks ago, prompting authorities around the country to tighten security measures.

Zhang Jun, president and chief justice of the Supreme People's Court, told a special meeting of the country's top courts on Saturday that serious and vicious crimes must be sternly punished, while trials and sentencing must be timely so the public can "truly feel fairness and justice".

But he said courts should consider lighter punishments for minor social crimes or incidents triggered by social conflict – if the defendant pleads

guilty and is forgiven by the victim – to “promote the reform of criminals”.

Zhang also said that when there are repeated incidents in a short space of time, the judicial system should find the source of the problem to help prevent future incidents and focus on strengthening correctional education, as well as support for former convicts and patients with severe mental disorders.

The chief justice also told courts across the country to implement a campaign to “resolve conflict and maintain stability” ordered by the country’s top security body after the Zhuhai car attack, a statement from the supreme court said.

The suspect in the case went into a coma after trying to slit his throat after the attack. The local authorities said a preliminary investigation indicated he was angry about his divorce settlement.

Days after the incident, eight people were killed and 17 injured when a knifeman went on the rampage at a college in the eastern city of Wuxi. A 21-year-old former student who had failed his exams and was said to be angry about his low pay as a factory intern was detained at the scene of the attack.

Police are also investigating an incident in which a car ploughed into a group of parents and children outside a school in the central city of Changde on Tuesday. A 39-year-old man was detained at the scene.

On Sunday, Yin Bai, secretary general of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission, called for more controls to prevent “major security incidents”.

During a tour of Zhejiang province, Yin said local governments must provide “one-stop solutions” to resolve disputes and prevent conflicts.

He urged China’s security force to dig into their vast data resources to discover potential risks and hidden dangers and better predict when attacks might occur so they can be stopped.

Officials around the country have also been stepping up security measures around schools and other places where large crowds gather.

Dozens of Chinese cities also saw their party and government inspecting security measures at places with large crowds, especially schools, according to mainland media reports.

In one city, Bijie in the southwestern province of Guizhou, the mayor has ordered traffic and pedestrians to be diverted away from schools at the start and end of the school day.

Senior officials, including President Xi Jinping, have called for stronger security measures in the wake of the Zhuhai attack.

The Ministry of Public Security has urged police across the country to “resolve conflicts at the grass-roots level” to prevent “extreme cases”.

Meanwhile, Ying Yong, the country’s top prosecutor, called on prosecution agencies to support measures

to deter “similar malicious crimes” but also “learn profound lessons” from the incident and step up investigative action.

### China's top political advisor stresses united front in Chinese modernization

23 November 2024, People’s Daily Online



Wang Huning, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, learns about the operation of the Hainan Free Trade Port at the Xinhai Port in Haikou, south China's Hainan Province, Nov. 20, 2024. Wang made an inspection tour in south China's Hainan Province from Wednesday to Friday. (Xinhua/Rao Aimin)

China's top political advisor Wang Huning has stressed the importance of building a broad united front to rally support from all groups in deepening reform and promoting Chinese modernization.

Wang, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, made the remarks during an inspection tour in the southern island province of Hainan from Wednesday to Friday.

During the tour, Wang visited schools, universities and enterprises invested by Taiwan compatriots, where he spoke with teachers and students from Taiwan and learned about the investment and entrepreneurship of Taiwan compatriots. He also learned about the operation of the Hainan Free Trade Port.

Wang urged measures to better meet the demands of Taiwan compatriots regarding study, employment, and business operations in Hainan, thus promoting integrated development across the Taiwan Strait.

As of the end of 2023, Hainan had approved the establishment of more than 2,500 enterprises invested by Taiwan compatriots. In November 2023, the province announced a series of measures to encourage Taiwan compatriots to make investments or start businesses in the Hainan Free Trade Port.

## China confronts false accusations that plague Communist Party's anti-corruption crusade

23 November 2024, SCMP, Xinlu Liang

Observers say unfounded claims about cadres waste resources, dampen morale and deter officials from making bold moves to boost the economy

When Chinese President Xi Jinping launched his anti-corruption campaign in 2012, the Communist Party cast its net wide, encouraging party members and the public to report any misconduct.

However, more than a decade later, the party has come to realise many have exploited this to make false accusations against officials.

At a major party conclave in July, Xi and other top officials pledged to "take stronger steps to handle false accusations".

Observers say unfounded claims about corruption waste resources, undermine careers, dampen morale and deter officials from taking decisive action as China faces economic challenges.

"This disrupts disciplinary inspection work, pollutes the political ecosystem, and hurts the feelings of reform-minded leaders," said Zhuang Deshui, deputy director at Peking University's public policy research centre.

Beijing has pledged to foster a healthier political environment that motivates cadres to get things done.

"The aim is not to discourage genuine reporting but to create a positive atmosphere where individuals respect their own rights and report issues transparently, thereby protecting leaders," Zhuang said.

"In recent years, there has been a rise in fabricated claims, prompting the need for a heavy-handed crackdown on such practices."

A tally by the South China Morning Post of over 100 cases found that common motives include retaliation, personal grievances and jealousy. The accusers include political rivals, people with conflicting interests, those seeking personal profits and disgruntled citizens with unmet demands.

A notable case is that of Sun Xiangyu, a former district police chief in Heilongjiang's provincial capital Harbin, who submitted over 60 false reports against six police officers between 2015 and 2021, accusing them of bribery and misconduct.

Sun was motivated by grievances and the desire to advance his career and also told others to make false claims. In 2023, he was expelled from the party, removed from public office, and later faced criminal charges, according to a report by the Heilongjiang disciplinary body released in June.

In another case, Ma Weitao director of a tree farm in Henan province, was falsely accused by an anonymous whistle-blower of profiting from illegal sand mining during the 2021 flood season. After a

two-month investigation, the local disciplinary body exonerated him and held a meeting to restore his reputation.

In an interview with mainland news outlet China News Weekly last October, Ma said that upon learning the allegations against him, he was in very low spirits and considered resigning.

"If party members and cadres like me are held accountable for this, it will inevitably make them hesitant in their future work, and some may even become 'lying-flat' officials in urgent situations," he said, using a phrase that refers to cadres who have become complacent.

He added that timely clarification by the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), the country's top anti-corruption watchdog, could encourage officials to pursue hard work and take initiative.

The CCDI is not allowed to investigate the identities of anonymous whistle-blowers unless there is evidence a false accusation has been made.

"This anonymity offers an opportunity for individuals with ulterior motives to exploit the reporting system," said Zhuang, who specialises in clean governance research.

"This creates challenges for disciplinary work and affects the morale of certain leaders. People may make these accusations for personal gain, leading to the stifling of important reforms and innovative efforts by capable officials."

Xie Maosong, a senior researcher at the National Institute of Strategic Studies at Tsinghua University, acknowledged the "critical role" whistle-blowing had played in the "unprecedented" anti-corruption crackdown.

But he noted the battle against corruption had entered a new phase, and efforts to counter false accusations were necessary and healthy "adjustments" that should not be dismissed as side effects of the anti-corruption fight.

Zhuang said false accusations often arise when officials are nearing promotions. If one official is reported while another is not, leaders might be reluctant to promote the reported official – even if an investigation later confirms the official was falsely accused.

A Beijing-based political scientist, who requested anonymity, said that in recent years, the party had "almost been 'encouraging' reports of cadres' misconduct or complaints about pretty much anything, both among the cadre ranks and within broader Chinese society", which had contributed to false accusations.

She said the efforts to stop false accusations might be a sign that efforts to encourage reporting had "gone too far" and the party was starting to "lose control" of the whistle-blowing campaign.

She added that leaders might be concerned that frequent accusations, whether false or not, could make the party look bad and threaten its legitimacy. The authorities have stepped up the drive against false accusations this year amid growing pressure to counteract falling economic momentum, analysts say. Xie said the central government highlighted the issue of false accusations during the second plenum of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection in January and vowed to “take stronger steps” to handle them at the party’s third plenum in July.

“The [third plenum statement] encourages leaders to take bold action and also imposes restrictions on those who make false accusations,” he said.

The third plenum document also calls for taking “stronger steps” in other areas to motivate officials – many of whom are reluctant to innovate and fear making mistakes – to “forge ahead in a pioneering spirit and demonstrate enterprise in their work”.

One of those efforts to motivate officials is the “three differentiation” policy, which distinguishes between “mistakes” made during reforms, suggesting leniency for those whose missteps stem from inexperience rather than deliberate violations of discipline.

“During economic downturns, encouraging officials to take decisive action is critical, but the fear of false accusations from competitors can stifle their willingness to engage with the private sector,” Xie said.

The party’s campaign to tackle false accusations ensures accountability for false reports, he said.

“Officials must feel safe to act without the risk of unfounded allegations derailing their careers or decision-making processes,” he added.

A handful of provinces and cities have waged campaigns against false accusations and released reports about cases, punishments and steps taken to clear the names of wronged officials.

Penalties for those who make false accusations can range from party discipline or administrative sanctions to criminal charges.

Methods for absolving falsely accused cadres include statements refuting the false claims, private discussions and open meetings to clear their names.

In August, Yunnan province cleared the names of 2,900 party members and investigated 61 false accusation cases.

Heilongjiang province screened 162 reported cases, leading to 145 investigations and 67 punishments, and 657 officials had their names cleared.

Harbin’s Discipline Inspection Commission has organised a campaign to punish those who make false accusations. The city has examined reports dating back to 2020 to distinguish between false and legitimate claims.

As of late June, Harbin had reviewed over 12,704 reports and referred 221 serious cases to law

enforcement. The city has punished 51 people and cleared the names of 624 officials.

Despite these efforts, challenges persist in handling cases that involve disciplinary violations that do not constitute crimes.

According to lawyers quoted in Chinese media, it is often difficult to determine whether reports should be classified as malicious false accusations or incorrect claims made in good faith.

Zhuang said there was a need for the “political art of balance” within disciplinary agencies, and this required practical experience. These agencies must navigate unfounded allegations while ensuring genuine concerns are addressed and protecting citizens’ right to petition.

“If false accusations are reduced, the overall quality of petition reports will also improve, ultimately benefiting the system and restoring trust among officials and the public,” he said.

The anonymous political scientist warned: “Whether the accusations are ‘false’ or ‘truthful’, basing party discipline on an ‘accusation culture’ rather than through further institution building and rule of law that can regulate cadre behaviour institutionally probably will not serve the party’s interest in the long term.”

She added that because the campaign against false accusations is “relatively fresh”, it is not yet clear how it will affect anti-corruption efforts. While local governments have promptly responded, anti-corruption and cadre discipline remain among the central government’s top priorities, she said.

### **Top political advisor urges pooling strength of Chinese from home, abroad for Chinese modernization**

18 November 2024, Xinhua

China's top political advisor Wang Huning on Monday urged the China Overseas Friendship Association (COFA) to shoulder more responsibilities and pool the wisdom and strength of Chinese people from home and abroad to advance Chinese modernization.

Wang, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, made the remarks at a meeting of COFA executive directors in Beijing.

Noting the great successes both the Party and the country have made in the new era, Wang said these achievements could not be separated from the support and contributions of compatriots in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, as well as overseas Chinese.



With strong support from the motherland, the prospects for them to serve their motherland and pursue their dreams are very bright, Wang said. He asked the COFA and its directors to make further suggestions and contributions for the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong and Macao, and enhance economic and cultural exchanges and cooperation, as well as integrated development across the Taiwan Strait.

Shi Taifeng, a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and head of the United Front Work Department of the CPC Central Committee, attended the meeting, where he was re-elected head of the COFA.

### **Xi Jinping weighs pros and cons of China's shrinking population**

16 November 2024, SCMP, Vanessa Cai

China's shrinking population brings both negative and positive effects, President Xi Jinping has said, noting that a lighter environmental burden is among the benefits of a smaller population.

The Chinese leader also defended the "correctness and effectiveness" of past birth control policies, according to excerpts from a speech to the Central Financial and Economic Affairs Commission.

He made the speech in May last year but the excerpts were published for the first time on Friday in *Qiushi*, the Communist Party's top theoretical journal. The impact of population decline "must be viewed in a dialectical manner", Xi told commission officials.

The drop could bring positive effects, he said, such as "easing pressure on resources and the environment" as well as forcing economic development.

But Xi also acknowledged the negative effects, such as a reduced labour force and weaker consumer and investment momentum.

"Overall, the impact of population decline on economic and social development has both positive and negative aspects. We cannot look at it from just one side. Some issues require long-term consideration, and we should avoid rushing to conclusions ... and we should work to maximise benefits while avoiding harm," he said.

China faces deepening demographic challenges as its birth rate plummets. Only 9 million births were reported in the country in 2023, the lowest since records began in 1949, as the population dropped for the second year in a row to 1.4 billion, a decline of more than 2 million.

National and local governments have rolled out a raft of policies, such as cash subsidies and extended maternity and paternity leave. But demographers argue these have failed to address deeper issues

such as high living costs, insufficient childcare support and persistent gender inequality.

According to the article published on Friday, Xi noted that China's demographic changes arrived as the country "completed in a few decades what took developed nations over a hundred years to achieve in terms of industrialisation".

"The pace of population transition is fast, the population decline has come earlier than expected, but overall it follows the general pattern of modernisation development worldwide," he was quoted as saying by the party journal, which regularly highlights internal leadership speeches months after they are given.

Regarding China's historic birth control policies, Xi said their "correctness and effectiveness should be fully affirmed".

The policies "effectively controlled rapid population growth and the pressures it brought, and strongly supported the reform and opening-up", he said.

China's one-child policy started in 1980 and was strictly enforced with punishment, including fines for violators and often forced abortion. It officially ended in January 2016 in favour of a two-child policy amid an ageing population and shrinking workforce.

This was followed by a three-child policy in May 2021, after a national census showed a fourth consecutive drop in the annual birth rate.

Friday's *Qiushi* article noted Xi's call for continued reforms and innovation to promote high-quality population development.

But he said rushed decisions leading to "measures introduced hastily that may easily raise controversies" must be avoided.

### **China's Communist Party expels former agriculture minister for corruption**

15 November 2024, Reuters, Mei Mei Chu

China's Communist Party has expelled former agriculture minister Tang Renjian, state media reported on Friday, six months after he was placed under investigation by the country's anti-graft watchdog and removed from his post.

Tang, 61, was investigated for "serious violations of discipline and law", a euphemism for corruption, and removed from the leadership roster of the ministry's website in May.

The move to investigate Tang was unusually swift and follows similar investigations on defence minister Li Shangfu and his predecessor Wei Fenghe as China cracks down on corruption.

Tang was found to have accepted gifts and money in violation of regulations, accepting property in the selection and appointment of cadres, using his authority to provide assistance to his relatives'

business activities, and interfering in judicial activities, state media CCTV reported.

"Tang Renjian lost his ideals and beliefs, abandoned his original mission," CCTV reported.

President Xi Jinping has pursued a tough and sweeping anti-graft campaign since taking power in 2012 and earlier this year declared "overwhelming victory" in the crackdown while vowing to keep up the pressure.

Xi views his anti-corruption drive as a key political achievement, but critics say the campaign has been used to purge his political opponents and does not address the root causes of graft, such as low wages and the unchecked powers of party-appointed state officials.

Tang was governor of the western province of Gansu from 2017 to 2020 before being named minister of agriculture and rural affairs, according to official biographies.

Under Tang, the agriculture and rural affairs ministry had stepped up its food security policies, approving the use of genetically-modified crops and adopting a food security law.

China appointed veteran official Han Jun, 60, as the new head of the ministry in September.

### State television serial paints President Xi as worthy son of a glorious father

09 November 2024, Tibetan Review

Xi Zhongxun, the father of China's party general secretary and state president Xi Jinping, is the subject of a rousing new historical drama that premiered on Chinese state television on Nov 5, reported theguardian.com Nov 8.

Funded by the Central Propaganda Department of the Communist party of China (CPC), *Time in the Northwest*, a 39-part serialised drama, chronicles the life of senior Xi, who was himself a CPC elder and a key figure in the party under Chairman Mao Zedong.

The show has naturally received overwhelmingly positive reviews on China's closely censored social media platforms, focused as it is on glorifying the CPC's military history. But unlike other popular television shows and films, *Time in the Northwest* also glorifies Xi Jinping's personal family history, the report noted.

Across 39 episodes, the show is said to dramatize the elder Xi's life from a peasant family in rural Shaanxi province to a leader in the CPC revolution in China's north-west.

The report cited an article published by the state broadcaster CCTV to promote the show as saying the biopic is "the first epic masterpiece that presents a panoramic view of the magnificent history of the

north-west revolution", and in particular, highlights Xi's "extraordinary experience".

The show, taking place against the backdrop of the Chinese civil war, in which the Communists and the Nationalists (KMT) fought for control of the country after the fall of the Manchu Qing dynasty, portrays Xi as a loyal and determined revolutionary who helped to build key CPC bases in Shaanxi and Gansu provinces.

The senior Xi's fervour as a young man propelled him into the highest echelons of the CPC elite. After the Communists' victory in the civil war, he became the head of the party's publicity department and a vice-premier of China. His red credentials have been inherited by his son, Xi Jinping, who is often referred to as a "princeling" of the party he now controls, the report said.

The serial conveniently ends in 1952, one year before Xi Jinping was born, and a decade before Zhongxun was purged for supporting a novel that was seen as a covert attempt to rewrite the party history.

Were it to continue, the serial would have to show how in the 1960s and 70s, Xi spent 16 years in purgatory. Xi was rehabilitated after the end of the Cultural Revolution, and went on to hold leadership positions.

In the first episode, which aired on Nov 5 evening, Xi is shown scrapping with a school administrator called Wei Hai. In real life, Xi was jailed for his involvement in a plot to assassinate Wei, the report said, citing a forthcoming biography of Xi Zhongxun by Joseph Torigian, a research fellow at Stanford University's Hoover History Lab. The dramatized version is said to minimise Xi's role in the attempted killing.

"Part of the idea of Xi's model is that this generation needs to take the baton from the older generation," Torigian has said. "One specific, concrete way of doing that is to show how Xi Jinping took the baton from his own father."

This is expected to have a countervailing influence in a country where the buzzwords that have become popular among young Chinese today include *tangping*, or "lying flat", reflecting a desire to quit the rat race for a more passive lifestyle, and *neijuan*, or "involution", reflecting despair at the feeling of being overworked.

### "Red Cultural Education" for Clergy of All Religions in China

07 November 2024, Bitter Winter, Hu Zimo

For seven days, clergy was taken around Henan to pay homage to CCP heroes and learn that "Xi Jinping's thought on culture is profound, logically rigorous, and of great significance."

The five authorized religions in China are taking very seriously the instructions of submitting their clergy to

“patriotic education,” i.e., the national program of indoctrination introduced by a law that came into force on January 1, 2024. Special guidelines on how religions should implement it were issued on January 4.

It seems that a favorite way for the mandatory indoctrination of the clergy is to organize pilgrimages to the red shrines of the Civil War and of the history of the Communist Party. They are organized at times of traditional religious pilgrimages to effectively replace them. It is also believed that the clergy may like the opportunity to do some tourism and would more easily tolerate boring propaganda lectures if they are alternated with banquets and traveling.

As part of the program, a “red cultural tour” for clergy of all provinces and regions was held from October 21 to 27 in Henan Province. The event, organised by the United Front Work Department, saw the participation of 140 religious figures nationwide.

The clergy was submitted to lectures on the “Resolution of the CCP Central Committee on Further Deepening Reforms and Promoting Modernization with Chinese Characteristics,” endorsed at the Third Plenary Session of the 20th CCP Central Committee. The Resolution emphasizes “building a socialist cultural power,” noting this is also essential to complete the Sinicization of religion in China.

The seven-day indoctrination tour featured lectures, on-site teaching, and group discussions. The organizers arranged talks on “Understanding Xi Jinping’s thought on culture” and the “Dabie Mountain Spirit,” which refers to a strategically situated Red Army base during the Civil War.

This was one of the “red” pilgrimage sites the clergy was taken to visit, along with the Red Flag Canal, the Jiao Yulu Memorial Hall, and others. The Red Flag Canal was aimed at improving Henan’s irrigation but what the clergy was not told was that the “heroism” of those who built it in difficult conditions was not spontaneous. It was completed during the Cultural Revolution by workers who in many cases were forcibly taken there, and many died. The official figure of 81 casualties is probably under-estimated. The Jiao Yulu Memorial Hall celebrates one of the Mao-era Communist heroes whose exploits as told are largely apochryphal. Jiao was the Party chief of Lankao and died of cancer at age 42 in 1964. He is hailed for extraordinary successes in agriculture that are probably imaginary.

As reported on social media and in the official press release, the message hammered into the clergy was that, “Everyone believes that Xi Jinping’s thought on culture is profound, logically rigorous, and of great significance. We must not only persist in learning and

understanding it, but also truly learn and apply it and put it into practice.”

### Entire Village of the Yi Ethnic Minority “Deprogrammed” in Yunnan

06 November 2024, Bitter Winter, Mo Yuan

When the authorities learned that the banned Association of Disciples had converted all villagers in Jiciping, reeducation was entrusted directly to the police.

The Association of Disciples has been added by Chinese authorities to the category of “xie jiao” (“movements spreading heterodox teachings”) regarded as direct threats to national security, a dubious honor it shares with The Church of Almighty God and Falun Gong.

The Association of Disciples (门徒会, Mentuhui) is also known as “Teachings of the Third Redemption” (三赎教), a name indicating the claim that their doctrine is the third historical source of salvation following Noah’s ark and the cross of Jesus Christ.

The movement was established by Ji Sanbao (季三保, 1940–1997), a former member of the True Jesus Church, in 1989. It was listed as a “xie jiao” in 1990, and submitted to intense persecution.

From 2020, the authorities launched a national campaign aimed at eradicating the Association of Disciples, which, like other forms of “illegal” religion, had experienced a new growth during the COVID-19 pandemic, offering comfort during a time of crisis and an explanation why God permitted it.

During this national campaign, the specialized anti-xie-jiao police discovered something it did not know. From some ten years, in a remote area of Yunnan, unbeknownst to the authorities an entire village had converted to the Association of Disciples faith. Jiciping Village, part of Zixin, Guanping Township, Yunlong County, is not easy to reach. It is located at an eight of some 2,700 meters in Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture. Its 53 inhabitants belong to the Yi ethnic minority.

They were reached by Association of Disciples missionaries and all converted. The village chief did not report the development to the authorities for the good reason that he had converted himself.

It took ten years to the anti-xie-jiao police to realize what was going on—and to organize a reaction. Specially trained police officers descended on the village and submitted all villagers to intense sessions of “deprogramming” and indoctrination. Villagers were constantly followed by the officers during their daily activities.

In the end, they all had to sign declarations renouncing the Association of Disciples and thanking the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the police.

The scandal of the "xie jiao village" was (reportedly) put to an end. The nation-wide repression of the Association of Disciples continues.

### **China warns military members against online dating, gambling**

05 November 2024, VOA

In an unusual warning, China's navy told young officers and personnel that they could get ensnared by online dating scams and virtual gambling if they let down their guard, exposing themselves to security risks and undermining the military.

Addressing those born from 1990 who are "becoming the core of the army," the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy said in a social media post that young soldiers should avoid revealing their military identity online as they could be "extremely easy" targets of criminals.

The political and confidential nature of the military profession dictates that the military personnel identity must not be exposed online, it said.

"Distinguish carefully and keep some distance when making friends online," a line in the post advised, and "never lose sight of your principles and make random friends with netizens."

The navy also cautioned against virtual gambling, which is illegal in China, likening gambling addiction to being "possessed by a demon" and warning against schemes that could lead to a "fall into an endless abyss" of debt.

China's military projects an image of power, from launching drills around democratically governed Taiwan to deploying patrols in the South China Sea. But President Xi Jinping, also the military's commander-in-chief, has often warned that the armed forces face "deep-seated" problems from within, including corruption and a lack of discipline.

Young soldiers are not the only demographic singled out. Xi has also stressed political loyalty from senior military personnel.

At a military conference in June, Xi emphasized upholding the Chinese Communist Party's "absolute leadership" over the PLA and that the armed forces must always "uphold their core values, maintain purity, and strictly adhere to discipline."

Xi attributed the root cause of problems to the lack of ideals and beliefs, calling on the armed forces particularly senior cadres, to "introspect, engage in soul-searching reflections, and make earnest rectifications," according to official news agency Xinhua.

### **Xi Jinping urges China's provinces to be patient and fair in push for economic reforms**

05 November 2024, SCMP, Josephine Ma

The Chinese leader also urged provincial leaders to remove the country's internal barriers to create a national market

Chinese President Xi Jinping has called on provincial leaders to be patient about the pace of economic reforms and cautioned them against trying to solve problems hastily, according to Communist Party mouthpiece People's Daily.

He also urged them to break down the fences of vested interests in each province in favour of a national market and to avoid "selective law enforcement", the newspaper said.

"Reform is a gradual process and cannot be achieved with just one move," Xi told the officials last week at a study session about the spirit of the party's third plenum – the conclave that took place in July and outlined the country's economic direction. The market, meanwhile, is closely watching the meeting of the country's top legislative body, which is reviewing and set to unveil a bill this week on local government debt swaps, along with other measures in a financial policy package to address short-term economic pains and prop up growth.

While it only published a summary of Xi's speech to the officials, the flagship newspaper has rolled out four opinion pieces based on the speech's highlights in recent days in an effort to get the key messages across.

Xi delivered his remarks amid high expectations that Beijing was about to unveil a range of fiscal stimulus measures designed to inject funds into the Chinese economy against a backdrop of economic challenges.

On October 18, China posted quarterly economic growth of 4.6 per cent – its lowest since the first quarter of last year, raising concerns about whether it can reach this year's target of "around five per cent".

Xi has issued three rallying calls since October 14, urging local officials to exhaust all means to reach the economic target, while reiterating the need to deepen reforms with the aim of steering a tech-driven path towards growth over the long run.

He told the provincial leaders at the October 29 study session that they should do everything they could to reach the annual target, according to People's Daily.

Xi also highlighted the importance of protecting people's legal rights, warning local officials not to "selectively" enforce the law nor spare lawbreakers, it said.

While the articles did not elaborate on what Xi meant by selective enforcement, the term has been

used in recent months to refer to the practice of provincial authorities hitting private enterprises with fines as a way to boost local government coffers.

Last month, the justice ministry announced an investigation into whether local law enforcement departments have been targeting businesses for selective enforcement or revenue-generating law enforcement.

And in June the party's Study Times called on local authorities to avoid selective law enforcement after reports that some firms had been asked to pay tax bills dating as far back as the 1990s, creating panic among many businesspeople.

Another of the People's Daily opinion pieces said that Xi called on provincial officials to break the local protectionism and market barriers in different provinces to create a national market.

"As the reforms go deeper, the more vested interests will be affected. We should have a better awareness of the overall picture and correctly view the changes of vested interests in the process of reform, as well as personal gains and losses," he said.

One of the opinion pieces said it was noteworthy that Xi had asked the provincial leaders to rally public support by quickly dismissing people's worries and addressing their concerns.

### **Chinese officials told to stop avoiding media questions about emergencies**

03 November 2024, SCMP, William Zheng

Chinese government officials will no longer be allowed to avoid commenting on emergencies under new legislative amendments to give journalists better "legal protection".

A commentary published on Friday in Legal Weekly, a newspaper under the supervision of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission – a Communist Party body with a wide range of supervisory powers over the legal system and security apparatus – said changes to the Emergency Response Law meant officials should not be evasive in response to media queries.

The law was adopted by the National People's Congress Standing Committee in 2007, and was revised for the first time in June. The changes came into effect this month.

"The implementation of the [amended] Emergency Response Law means that government departments can no longer use 'no comment' to prevaricate when responding to media questions on emergencies," the Legal Weekly commentary said.

"It undoubtedly provides legal protection for news interviews and reports on emergencies."

The commentary highlighted Article 8 of the law, which stipulates that government departments should "support the news media in their coverage and

public oversight" of official bodies, and that news coverage of emergencies should be "timely, accurate, objective and fair".

It also highlighted the duty of government to be prompt in releasing public alerts and other information about emergency responses.

The amended law also warned that no institutions or individuals should "fabricate or deliberately spread false information about emergencies", and that government bodies should promptly release clarifications if "false or incomplete information" is spreading in the public domain.

The commentary noted that the amended Article 97 stipulates that if the person directly responsible for spreading false information is a public official, "they shall also be punished in accordance with the law".

The All-China Journalists Association said on Thursday that without timely information and public oversight during emergencies, the government risked falling into a "Tacitus Trap".

Named after the Roman historian Tacitus, the concept suggests that a government with no public trust will always be hated by the people, no matter what it does.

A lecturer from the Communication University of China, who declined to be named, said the amendments were a good start in granting the media some freedom and protection to cover emergencies, but local government officials could easily find ways to circumvent the "no comment" rules.

"What's key is the law says now the officials will be held responsible if they are found to have fabricated information," the lecturer said.

"This will curb a little the knee-jerk tendency of local officials to cover up. But they can still play delaying tactics, because the law was not very clear on how timely the release of information should be.

"Alternatively, they can also get around the rules by saying 'we are still investigating it', or 'the death toll is still being calculated' – which are de facto 'no comments'."

The propaganda chief of one area could also call a counterpart in another area, asking for censorship and offering to reciprocate in the future.

"All these are very common in China nowadays, so we can only be cautiously optimistic," he added.

### **Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lin Jian's Regular Press Conference on November 1, 2024**

01 November 2024, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

At the invitation of the Chinese side, Prime Minister of Malaysia Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim will pay a working visit to China from November 4 to 7.

Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting: I have a question about the terrorist attack in Iran. On Saturday, October 26, 2024, a foreign terrorist



group supported by and linked with ISIS-Khorasan, carried out a terrorist attack on two vehicles of the patrol unit of the Islamic Republic of Iran Police Command in the city of Taftan in the province of Sistan and Baluchistan. This attack by the Jaish al-Zalm terrorist group unfortunately led to the martyrdom of 10 Iranian policemen. What is the Chinese government's comment in this regard?

Lin Jian: China condemns the terrorist attack. We oppose terrorism of all forms and support Iran's effort to keep the country safe and stable.

Reuters: Viet Nam on Thursday said they have protested against China's alleged detention of Vietnamese fishermen and fishing vessels in the Paracel Islands. Please could the Foreign Ministry confirm this?

Lin Jian: Xisha Qundao is China's inherent territory. China hopes Viet Nam will earnestly raise the awareness of its fishermen and make sure they will not engage in illegal activities in waters under China's jurisdiction.

AFP: A question about the reported presence of North Korean soldiers in Russia. Ukrainian President Zelenskyy said he was surprised by China's "silence" on this issue of the North Korean soldiers. What is China's response to the Ukrainian President?

Lin Jian: We have noted some reports related to this and responses from various parties recently. The DPRK and Russia are two independent sovereign states, and how to develop bilateral relations is a matter for themselves. China is not aware of the specifics of bilateral exchanges and cooperation between the DPRK and Russia.

China's position on the Ukraine crisis is consistent and clear. Let me stress that China hopes that parties will work to ease tensions and remain committed to the political settlement of the Ukraine crisis. This position remains unchanged. China will continue to play a constructive role to this end.

AFP: Still a question on the same topic about the reported presence of North Korean soldiers in Russia. The US said that up to 8,000 North Korean troops have reached Russia's border region with Ukraine. Do you confirm these claims and is China in contact with North Korea on this issue?

Lin Jian: I am not familiar with this. On the Ukraine crisis, I have shared China's consistent and clear position just now.

Reuters: Myanmar's local media reports the head of Myanmar will visit China. Please could the Foreign Ministry confirm this visit?

Lin Jian: I have nothing to share on that.

AFP: Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, is visiting Japan starting from today. During the visit, the Japanese government and the European Union will sign the Japan-EU Security and Defence

Partnership agreement, which according to local media reports, targets China. What is China's response to the agreement between the EU and Japan?

Lin Jian: Security and defense cooperation between various parties should be conducive to regional peace and stability, and not target any third party or undermine the security interests of other countries. Let me stress that due to historical reasons, Japan's military and security moves have been closely watched by the international community and its Asian neighbors. We urge Japan to earnestly draw lessons from history, adhere to peaceful development, respect the security concerns of its neighbors in Asia, and stay prudent in military and security areas. We also hope that the EU will not interfere in the disputes on territorial and maritime rights and interests between regional countries, but instead play a constructive role for regional peace, stability, and development.

The Paper: The seventh China International Import Expo (CIIE) will kick off next week, and the preparations are almost completed. According to statistics, the number of participants will hit a new record, with 297 Fortune Global 500 companies, industry leaders and nearly 800 trading groups from various countries set to attend the event. How do you view the significance of this year's CIIE to China's effort of expanding high-standard opening up?

Lin Jian: Hosting the CIIE is an important step for China to further open up and a concrete action China took to build an open world economy. The numbers you just mentioned showcase the appeal of China's mega-sized market, speak volumes about the strong confidence of the international community in China's economic outlook, and demonstrate the common aspiration of all sides for win-win result through open cooperation.

Since the first CIIE in 2018, the event has been upgraded and expanded into a window for China to forge a new development paradigm and a platform to advance high-standard opening up. The CIIE has an expanding network of friends and growing significance as an international public good. This year's CIIE provides support for 37 least developed countries to participate in country exhibition and business exhibition, and further expands the exhibition area for African products in the food and agricultural products exhibition, in an effort to help more developing countries take part in the universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization.

Openness is the core value of the CIIE and a defining feature of today's development in China. China is striving for high-quality development by advancing high-standard opening up. We stand ready to work with all sides through the CIIE to make the pie of

opening up bigger and the list of cooperation longer, so that the opportunities of China's huge market can be shared by all countries and benefit people across the world.

Bloomberg: Viet Nam said it has asked China to immediately release vessels and fishermen detained in the South China Sea. It has also demanded compensation for losses. Would the Foreign Ministry like to respond to this?

Lin Jian: I answered the relevant question just now.

The following question was raised after the press conference: During the meeting with Slovakia's Prime Minister Robert Fico, President Xi Jinping announced China's unilateral visa-free policy to Slovakia. Could you share with us more details? Besides the 20 other countries whose ordinary passport holders have enjoyed the unilateral visa-free policy, has China rolled out this policy to more countries?

Lin Jian: To further facilitate cross-border travel, China decided to give visa-free treatment to more countries by extending the visa-free policy to ordinary passport holders from Slovakia, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Andorra, Monaco, Liechtenstein, and the ROK on a trial basis. From November 8, 2024 to December 31, 2025, ordinary passport holders from these nine countries can be exempted from visa to enter China and stay for no more than 15 days for business, tourism, family visit and transit purposes.

## October

### Xi stresses advancing reform at study session for senior officials

30 October 2024, Xinhua

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday called for pooling strength to advance reform in a steady and sustained manner, as he addressed senior officials attending a central Party school study session.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks at the opening of the study session at the Party School of the CPC Central Committee (National Academy of Governance) for principal officials at the provincial and ministerial level.

The session is themed on implementing the guiding principles of the third plenary session of the 20th CPC Central Committee, which rolled out a new package of comprehensive reforms for the country.

Xi pointed out that China's efforts to advance reforms on all fronts in the new era have yielded substantial results across practical, institutional and theoretical

dimensions, representing one of the most monumental chapters in the nation's journey of reform and opening up.

He emphasized that the reforms are guided by clear principles. Core commitments include upholding the Party's overall leadership, adhering to Marxism, adhering to socialism with Chinese characteristics, and upholding the people's democratic dictatorship, focusing on fostering social equity and enhancing people's well-being in everything the authorities do.

Xi asserted that these principles must remain unwavering, regardless of circumstances.

He also highlighted the need to uphold the unity of reform and the rule of law, bolster the rule of law through reform, advance reform in the domain of law-based governance, and continuously improve the system of socialist rule of law with Chinese characteristics.

Xi underscored the need to uphold the unity of reform and opening up, steadily expand institutional opening up, take the initiative to align with high-standard international economic and trade rules, deepen reform in foreign trade, foreign investment and outbound investment management system, and foster a first-class business environment that is market-oriented, law-based and internationalized.

Xi stressed that leading officials, especially senior officials, should strive to open new horizons for reform and development rather than shying away from risks and challenges.

It is essential to build broad consensus and mobilize all positive factors to advance reforms, Xi said.

All regions and departments must implement the existing and incremental policies and strive to achieve the annual economic and social development goals, he noted.

The opening session was presided over by Li Qiang, and attended by Zhao Leji, Wang Huning, Cai Qi, Ding Xuexiang and Li Xi, who are all members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee. Vice President Han Zheng also attended the opening session.

Xi's speech is of great significance to solidifying confidence and pooling strength for advancing reforms, and will help ensure the effective implementation of various reform measures, said Li Qiang.

It is essential to grasp the core principles and practical implications of Xi's speech, and to implement reform measures with creativity, Li added.

### Role reversed for China's birth-control enforcers, now cajoling women to marry, have children

29 October 2024, Tibetan Review

As China unveiled on Oct 28 new birth support policy measures to promote the building of a birth-

friendly society, its grass roots government workers, who had spent decades imposing strict birth control policies, ruining careers and families, are now calling up women in their neighbourhoods to urge them to get pregnant amid the country's demographic crisis, reported China's official Xinhua news agency and the scmp.com Oct 28.

A directive from the General Office of China's State Council (the cabinet) details 13 targeted measures on enhancing childbirth support services, expanding child-care systems, strengthening support in education, housing and employment, and fostering a birth-friendly social atmosphere, said the Xinhua report.

The measures are designed for actively building a "new marriage and childbearing culture", noted Reuters Oct 28.

Tens of thousands of Chinese women of childbearing age are now being pursued through a vigorous campaign organised by vast district administrative networks. Grass-roots government workers have been mobilised to contact women in their neighbourhoods to urge them to get pregnant, said the scmp.com report.

The central government also hopes to learn why so many women are reluctant to have more children, and devise new policy options as a plummeting birth rate steers the country towards a demographic crisis, the report said.

A nationwide survey announced Oct 17 by China's Population and Development Research Centre sought to "obtain new data on views on marriage and fertility and key influencing factors".

A Sample Survey on Population and Family Development in China, approved by the National Bureau of Statistics on Oct 11 targeted women of child-bearing age – defined by the bureau as women aged between 15 and 49 – from about 30,000 families, covering 1,500 communities or villages across 150 counties.

Their responses showed strong grievance and anger against the country's past draconian one-child policy and antipathy towards marrying or having children in the post-Deng Xiaoping reform era of today.

Huang, a 35-year-old working mother of one son who lives in the southeast coastal province of Fujian, has said an overly enthusiastic social worker even asked about the timing of her most recent period and offered to give her a reminder call when it was "the right time" to conceive another baby.

She has cut short the government effort by telling the social worker that she had no immediate plans for a second child, that "I have no money, no time and no energy for a second baby."

Huang's sentiment was "very common", the scmp.com report cited district level officials from

three coastal provinces as saying, speaking on condition of anonymity.

They have said many respondents had vented "strong grievances" about the country's recent past one-child policy as well as considerable worries about the economy and employment.

One official from Fujian, surnamed Lin, who was involved in the survey, has said many who had been fined by the government for breaching the previously strictly enforced birth control rule wanted the authorities to refund the penalties imposed on families.

China scrapped its decades-old draconian birth control policies in 2021, when Beijing raised the limit of children per family to three, and stopped imposing fines on families who exceed the quota.

Previously, couples who had more children than allowed were required by the local birth control department to pay "social maintenance fees", to have the child legally registered in the household.

In 2020, one couple in Guangzhou were fined nearly 320,000 yuan (US\$44,870) for having a third child, the report said, citing mainland media reports.

Women of child-bearing in China are now being targeted by joint efforts of the "civil affairs, education, police, health, statistics, medical insurance, social security departments," who seek to "understand how many women in our district are of child-bearing age, their intentions to have more children, their physical condition and the family's financial condition."

Some districts even offered women who intend to have more children in the near future free folic acid supplements, to help reduce the chance of birth defects, a Guangdong district official surnamed Chen has said.

According to the China Population and Development Research Centre, in 2022, China's fertility rate dropped to 1.09, while the total fertility rate in Shanghai, one of China's wealthiest cities, dipped to 0.6 in 2023, according to the municipality, the report noted.

A replacement fertility rate of 2.1 children per woman is widely accepted as the necessary rate for a country's population to remain constant.

If China's fertility rate remains on its downward trajectory, for every child born in the future, six people will die – a trend that threatens to intensify the nation's demographic crisis, the report was stated to have warned.

## China faces stormy future as confidence in Xi crumbles

29 October 2024, ANI



A File Photo of Xi Jinping at a Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference meeting in Beijing (File Photo/Reuters)

Recently circulating on social media was a photo of a Chinese soldier wedding his bride. Behind them, an enormous slogan was emblazoned: "Listen to Chairman Xi's command; Be responsible to Chairman Xi; Let Chairman Xi rest assured."

These were the kinds of slogans prevalent during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s, promoting a personality cult for Mao Zedong.

There can be no questioning the centrality of Xi in China but as the country's economy increasingly struggles, many are questioning the direction Chairman Xi Jinping has taken China.

One who is critical of Xi is Desmond Shum, a Hong Kong-raised businessman who was once married to billionaire businesswoman Duan Weihong. Witnessing the direction Xi was taking China, Shum departed China in 2015 and, six years later, wrote *Red Roulette*, a book that describes corruption within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

In mid-October, he posted public criticism of Xi on social media, saying, "Xi is systematically dismantling the most valuable asset of the CCP: public trust. Over the past few weeks, we've witnessed the wreckage of Xi's financial policies unfolding in real-time."

Shum continued: "To me, the more pressing issue isn't merely the financial mishaps but how Xi is eroding the longstanding trust and confidence the Chinese people once had in CCP governance. While this is probably unintentional on his part, it is definitely systematic and far-reaching."

He said previous Chinese leaders like Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao were generally pragmatic. "This created a bond between the CCP and the public, rooted in the belief that the party was steering China towards continued prosperity. However, Xi has systematically undermined this trust through a combination of political centralization,

economic clampdowns and a stifling of civil society. His leadership marks a sharp departure from the more collective and pragmatic governance approach seen in previous administrations."

Shum highlighted seven specific areas of failure. The first is political centralisation and authoritarianism, as Xi concentrated power to a degree not seen since Mao. Secondly, he has suppressed civil society and freedoms through censorship, crackdowns on non governmental organisations and the treatment of Hong Kong.

Thirdly, Xi's anti-corruption campaign, initially popular, is now viewed as a political purge that has generated fear without rooting out corruption.

Fourthly, Xi has eroded longstanding institutional norms, such as senior cadre appointments and bureaucratic procedures.

Fifthly, Shum said, Xi is to blame for economic tightening and state control, as his focus on expanding the role of state-owned enterprises came at the expense of the private sector.

Sixthly, Xi grossly mishandled COVID-19, and this was perhaps the most damaging action he ever took. "After years of strict zero-COVID policies that ground daily life to a halt, the sudden reversal in late 2022 shocked the nation.

Particularly among younger generations, many view this as a defining moment of CCP mismanagement." Finally, Shum identified nationalism and Beijing's aggressive stance on Taiwan, the South China Sea and the Indian border is a mistake.

Shum concluded: "When Wen Jiabao famously remarked that 'confidence is more important than gold' in 2008, it underscored the essential role trust plays in governance. Yet Xi has worked relentlessly—albeit unintentionally—to erode that very confidence. His COVID management has shaken people's trust in his societal governance, and the ongoing stock market debacle calls into question his ability to lead China's economy. As trust in Xi's leadership falters, the road ahead looks increasingly bleak."

A Chatham House seminar on 24 September, titled "Can China still Prosper under Xi?" featured several experts, including Dr. Winnie King, Senior Lecturer in Chinese International Political Economy, University of Bristol. Asked about Xi's performance, she noted, "I think in terms of the international system's expectations of China, we're quite disappointed, mainly because there was a lot of hope that he would bring in reform..."

David Lubin, Michael Klein Research Fellow, Global Economy and Finance Programme, Chatham House, also participating in the seminar, said: "I think, if the question is, is he doing as much as he can do for the welfare of Chinese households, The answer is clearly no. But I don't think that's the question he's asking himself. The question he's asking himself is what can I

do to promote the interests of the Chinese nation? And it's interesting that those two ideas that are so separate in the Chinese context [is] because of the way Xi Jinping feels himself to be encircled geopolitically. So economic policy is oriented around the need to protect China from geopolitical risk. From that point of view, he probably thinks he's doing quite well, but household welfare becomes a sort of sideshow."

An economic macro trend is evident. China benefitted greatly from wider access to the global economy when it joined the World Trade Organisation in 2001, but China's ability to generate structural growth started fading rapidly in the 2010s. Beijing's solution was to leverage—to borrow funds to buy investments—and so it went on a huge credit binge even whilst the West was deleveraging to repair balance sheets. From 2012-16, the Chinese corporate sector took on much of the burden as companies attempted to level up their business models and expand operations in the West.

Chinese household debt rose quickly at the same time. This was because China's business model was not about rewarding workers with greater wages, for that would hurt Chinese exports.

Instead, the easiest way for households to join the wealth creation craze was via the real estate market. As more houses were purchased, prices rose, and at last, the average Chinese person felt they were getting richer. In fact, property currently accounts for 62 per cent of Chinese household net worth, compared to just 23 per cent in the US.

However, Xi clamped down on the property sector as he signaled that paper wealth creation should be brought under control and as he promoted "common prosperity." The results were predictable, as the government could not deleverage a USD50-trillion real estate bubble in an orderly manner. As house prices fell, indebted households and developers sold off properties to fix their balance sheets. In a vicious cycle, fewer Chinese are seeking mortgages and less credit is available, causing prices to further tumble. Interest rates are dropping in China, and pressure on the Chinese yuan is building.

Incidentally, China will lift the retirement age from next year. Beijing listed factors for this, such as a rising life expectancy (78.6 in 2023 compared to 35 in 1949) and average years of education for new entrants in the workforce (14 years of education in 2023, versus eight years in 1982).

However, the real reason forcing this change is an ageing population, a plummeting birthrate and a tighter pension budget. Shum said 2008 was a watershed moment for the CCP when it realised the Western model had failings. Indeed, as the rest of the world reeled, Beijing emerged as something of a

hero as the West relied on China to stabilise things. "That's the moment when the Chinese leadership really decided, 'Hey, their system is not that great; our system may not be that bad, so we need to find our own way. That's the moment everything changed,'" Shum said, well before Xi assumed the reins of power.

Concurrently, there was a diffusion of power throughout Chinese society, as private companies and wealthy individuals wielded more influence. Of course, this "was a problem for the party. The entire leadership sees that as a problem, but people are not sure what to do about it," Shum explained. It was at this point that Xi stepped in. Lubin described, under Xi's leadership, a change in balance of power between state-owned enterprises and the private sector to reduce the latter's influence.

He related, "Starting in 2015-16, you got this sense that economic policy was emphasising the idea of bigger, better, stronger state-owned enterprises," and the balance started to tilt towards the state sector from that time on. The crushing of the private sector followed in 2021, which is when "the most important policy phrase or slogan in this context was the struggle against the unrestrained expansion of capital, the idea that the private sector was taking advantage of its position, taking things that were not in the national interest."

There was even a Chinese proposal in December 2021 to create a traffic light system where the government would decide what investments in both the state and private sectors were good or not. This was a blatant attempt by the party to insert itself into the allocation of resources. Although the policy proposal died a natural death, it did reflect Xi's thinking about doing whatever it took to keep the CCP in power.

Shum continued, "I think by now probably the whole world is seeing that China is taking a different trajectory since [Xi] came to power a decade ago ... It's amazing how badly he's played his hand and taken the country in a different trajectory."

King described Xi as a combination of a Marxist and a nationalist. "...I think the nationalism side is very under-discussed." She also highlighted the global financial crisis of 2008 as being pivotal in China's future direction. "The Chinese with their economy [were] facing something fundamentally different than they had envisioned, because they were working within a system that was seen to be quite stable. But the global financial crisis demonstrated to the Chinese that there was actually something that didn't fit for them."

Added to that were geopolitical changes—such as Obama's pivot to Asia, Trump's stronger line and American efforts to contain China—and this caused Xi to consider "the context of how the Chinese



Communist Party was going to legitimise themselves and ensure their regime security."

Rather than seeing him as a Marxist, Lubin believes Xi is more of a Leninist "in the sense that it seems fairly clear that Xi Jinping is an ideological leader. But the way one needs to understand ideology in this context is to understand it in a Leninist way. In other words, it's not a pure set of ideas—it's a set of ideas needed to keep the ruling party in power.

That is quintessentially a Leninist approach, and I think that's his approach." Shum, taking part in the same Chatham House seminar, gave this assessment of Xi. "First and foremost, we really need to see him as a man of conviction and belief. He's a man of conviction and belief; seeing him as a power-hungry dictator is really missing the point.

I think his vision for China is that it needs to be the primary geopolitical power, and rival, of the US. He believes the Chinese Communist Party should be the eternal ruler of China as a nation... You may not agree with his belief and conviction, and some of the worst tragedies of mankind in history happened [because of] people like Mao, like Hitler, like Stalin. Those were men of belief."

Shum warned: "A man with belief of the wrong kind can do the most damage to humanity, and I tend to believe he's that sort." He noted that for Xi, "the party interest comes first," rather than the people.

He said Xi set himself up for this declining state of affairs. By arresting hundreds of thousands, he was riding a tiger and cannot release his grip on power. As economic conditions worsen, Xi and his party core must increase their stranglehold over society because they are afraid of a backlash. However, Shum does not foresee a "collapse" of the CCP. He believes this is the wrong term; instead, he views it as a "long decline, because the CCP has such a complete hold on the country."

China has lost its luster for many foreign investors and for many Chinese. This year, China will experience its largest-ever outflow of high-net-worth individuals. In 2024, a record exodus of 15,200 wealthy individuals is expected, greater than the 13,800 who departed in 2023.

Illustrating how Xi's ideology means nothing to them, many pragmatic Chinese fear their wealth will be appropriated by the government. As Shum himself admitted, "As long as my money is in China, it's not really my money. The moment my money is out of China; that's my money!"

### **Village leaders facing spate of investigations**

29 October 2024, China Daily

In the first nine months of this year, 77,000 current or former village heads and Party chiefs have been investigated in China, an increase of 31,000

compared to last year, as the central government's anti-corruption campaign delves deeper into the grassroots level.

Data from the country's top watchdog showed figures from January to September this year exceeded the total number of such officials investigated last year — 61,000 — with the supervision of grassroots officials being strengthened amid intensified rural vitalization efforts.

From January to September, disciplinary watchdogs handled 642,000 cases across the country, including investigations into officials at various levels, with 58 at the provincial and ministerial levels, according to a recent release from the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection.

Among the officials investigated, about 3,260 are at the department and bureau levels, 26,000 are at the county level and 89,000 are at the township level, data showed.

At the annual plenary session of the CCDI in January, the central leadership emphasized the need to extend the anti-corruption campaign to the grassroots level to better ensure justice for the people.

A targeted crackdown on corruption and misconduct in rural vitalization efforts was also stressed in the No 1 central document for 2024 released in February, which outlined the priorities for promoting rural vitalization this year.

As scrutiny on grassroots officials intensifies, cases of corruption involving village officials have been disclosed.

In September, Guizhou province revealed a case in which a village official was caught accepting kickbacks related to a toilet renovation project. And in another instance in August, a 32-year-old former village Party chief in Huizhou, Guangdong province, was found guilty of fraudulently obtaining compensation funds for crops.

Measures have been implemented to enhance the management and oversight of village cadres, especially those with significant responsibilities, as rural vitalization work progresses.

In November 2022, Guizhou issued regulations specifically targeting village heads to ensure they perform their duties with integrity. They encompass aspects such as standardizing village-level decision-making and implementing disciplinary supervision.

The document detailing the regulations stipulates that matters concerning village-level asset management must be deliberated by the village Party organization, and reported to the township Party committee for the record.

It also emphasizes strict implementation of the annual inspection system for rural collective assets and a regular reporting system.

It explicitly requires that supervision should be strengthened in villages with large collective economies, numerous construction projects and high integrity risks. Furthermore, each village Party organization under the jurisdiction of a county Party committee should be inspected at least once per term of service.

### **China takes down fake news about its military, closes social media accounts**

29 October 2024, SCMP, Phoebe Zhang

Internet watchdog reports targets include false reports of 'cyberwarfare' in the South China Sea and other 'fantasy stories'

Chinese internet regulators are removing social media accounts that use fake information to hype the country's military strength, including false reports of "cyberwarfare" in the South China Sea.

A sample post from June on Douyin, China's version of TikTok, read: "Breaking news: China and the US engaged in 12 hours of cyber warfare, causing Luzon Island in the Philippines to lose all GPS, communication and phone signals!"

Another invented post in July featured a video delivering an in-depth explanation of how China had won in its rivalry with the United States, thanks to a technology breakthrough by telecoms giant Huawei which had upgraded China's radars.

In its latest report released on Monday, the Cyberspace Administration of China said the posts were promptly identified as rumours and removed. The accounts responsible invented "military fantasy stories" to give themselves a sense of satisfaction and fulfilment, it said.

According to the report, various military and local government authorities have recently removed a batch of accounts for "speculating and fabricating false information, misleading the public and distorting the image of military personnel".

Many of the accounts had been spreading military rumours and made-up history, the report said, naming two WeChat accounts that falsely said China had sunk four foreign ships.

Shanghai-based online news outlet The Paper appeared to be referring to the fabricated posts in July, when its representative asked defence ministry spokesman Zhang Xiaogang at a press conference about cyberwarfare chatter on social media.

Zhang told the assembled journalists that he had not heard of any such cyberwar occurring in the South China Sea.

According to the internet regulator's report, some social media accounts were removed because they "engaged in historical nihilism", a term that usually refers to present-day narratives that contradict the official version of history.

The report said these included two accounts on Zhihu – China's version of the question-and-answer platform Quora – which said "Japanese soldiers killed by guerilla warfare on the Chinese battlefield were only a small portion of the entire army".

Other accounts were removed for distorting the image and policies of the People's Liberation Army. A Douyin account said a man joined the PLA despite his family's objections and a few years later "all his mother got to see was his ash box".

Some accounts called for 200,000 of the country's troops to be discharged, saying it was too expensive to keep an army and such an action would ease China's current financial troubles, the report said.

The cyberspace administration also said it was unacceptable for e-commerce traders to lure buyers for their online products in the name of the military.

Some accounts on Taobao and Xianyu – China's biggest e-commerce platforms owned by Alibaba, which also owns the South China Morning Post – have been using PLA logos or claiming that products are "special supply in the military", it said.

The accounts mentioned in the report could no longer be found on social media platforms, but some of the content continues to linger in the form of shared posts and screenshots.

"We will continue to crack down on illegal actions of social media accounts in military-related news, investigate and punish account owners who publish and hype false information, and expose typical cases," the regulator said, and invited the public to report any examples they see.

Chinese authorities have little tolerance for the spreading of unconfirmed or negative information about the military.

In April 2018, the Standing Committee passed legislation banning the slander of "heroes and martyrs", imposing administrative penalties on anyone who damaged memorials or insulted and defamed war heroes and other national figures.

In 2017, a woman was briefly detained for alleging that a sexual harassment scandal around a Beijing kindergarten involved serving members of the PLA. Her accusations were later denied by the military.

### **Xi stresses enhancing inclusive public services for people**

26 October 2024, Xinhua

Chinese President Xi Jinping has urged efforts to enhance inclusive public services for the people.

In a recent instruction on civil affairs work, Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, emphasized the need to strengthen public services aimed at meeting the

essential needs of the people and ensuring basic living standards for those facing difficulties.



Chinese Premier Li Qiang, also a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, addresses a national civil affairs conference in Beijing, capital of China. The conference was held in Beijing from Oct. 25 to 26. [Photo/Xinhua]

Lauding the new progress achieved in all aspects of civil affairs in recent years, Xi urged Party committees and governments at all levels to follow a people-centered approach to resolve the most practical problems that are of the greatest and most direct concern to the people.

He called on civil affairs departments at all levels to promote the implementation of a proactive national strategy in response to population aging, and to improve work in social assistance, social welfare, social affairs and social governance.

Xi also emphasized the need for civil affairs departments to take the initiative in enhancing benefits for the people, meeting their needs and helping them overcome difficulties.

Xi's instruction was read out at a national civil affairs conference that was held in Beijing from Friday to Saturday. Premier Li Qiang, also a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, addressed the conference.

The advancement of Chinese modernization requires the continuous enhancement of civil affairs work to safeguard and promote the immediate interests of various groups, including people in difficulties and people with disabilities, Li said.

Li underscored the importance of doing the civil affairs work with profound feelings for the people and making solid progress to the satisfaction of the populace.

He also called for systematic efforts to plan and carry out reforms to break new ground in the civil affairs sector.

Speaking at the conference, State Councilor Shen Yiqin urged efforts to further improve the systems for social assistance and elderly care services. She also highlighted the importance of deepening reforms in

funeral services and other fields, as well as boosting the development of charitable initiatives.

Model individuals and groups in the country's civil affairs sector were awarded at the conference.

### **Former Chinese Justice Minister Tang Yijun Arrested on Corruption Charges**

24 October 2024, ChinaScope

Tang Yijun, China's former Minister of Justice, has been arrested on suspicion of accepting bribes, according to Xinhua News Agency. The Supreme People's Procuratorate has formally approved his arrest following an investigation by the National Supervision Commission.

The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and National Supervisory Commission previously revealed several allegations against Tang, including using his authority to help relatives secure financial business deals, improperly interfering in market economic activities and judicial proceedings, failing to properly supervise his spouse, using public power for personal gain through large-scale trading of power for money, and illegally accepting massive amounts of bribes in exchange for favors in business operations, company listings, promotions, and case handling.

Notably, Caixin Media reported that during Tang's two-and-a-half-year tenure in Liaoning Province, he helped Evergrande Group acquire controlling stakes in Shengjing Bank, which led to substantial bad debts. Evergrande also made significant real estate investments in Liaoning, leaving behind unfinished buildings when its capital chain broke.

Tang's career included extensive work in Zhejiang Province before becoming the Chairman of Ningbo CPPCC in 2011. He later served as Liaoning Province Governor and Minister of Justice (2020-2023). His last position was Chairman of the Jiangxi Provincial CPPCC before his dismissal from both the Party and public office. Sources indicate that most of the alleged violations occurred during his time in Ningbo and Liaoning.

### **China accuses Australia of 'systemic racism', 'hate crimes' after human rights concerns raised**

24 October 2024, Nine News, Yashee Sharma

China has accused Australia of being "plagued by systemic racism and hate crimes" in retaliation to concerns raised about human rights abuses in Xinjiang and Tibet.

Australia's Ambassador to the United Nations James Larsen shared a joint statement with 14 other countries this week to urge China to uphold its

international human rights obligations following findings of serious human rights violations.

But Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said those matters were China's "internal affairs" and pointed the finger back at Australia.

"Australia, long plagued by systemic racism and hate crimes, has severely violated the rights of refugees and immigrants, and left Indigenous people with vulnerable living conditions," he said yesterday.

"Australian soldiers have committed abhorrent crimes in Afghanistan and other countries during their military operations overseas."

Lin added that Australia, the US and other Western countries often turn a blind eye to the injustices at home.

### **China's top political advisor stresses forging strong sense of community for Chinese nation**

24 October 2024, Xinhua

China's top political advisor Wang Huning has stressed forging a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation and advancing the development of a beautiful Xinjiang.

Wang, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, made the remarks during a four-day research tour of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region that ended on Thursday.

He called for solid efforts to promote ethnic unity in community-level governance, school education and people's daily life while visiting hospitals, primary schools and villages, and urged building a modern industrial system and enhancing higher education development when visiting enterprises and colleges. Maintaining social stability is a priority in Xinjiang-related work, Wang said, urging efforts to strengthen the sense of community for the Chinese nation among people of various ethnic groups by promoting fine culture in the region.

He also urged efforts to promote high-quality development in Xinjiang to consolidate the economic foundation for social stability and long-term security in the region.

### **West blasts China on rights, China responds: What about Gaza?**

23 October 2024, Reuters, Michelle Nichols

Australia, the United States and 13 other countries criticized China at the United Nations on Tuesday over alleged human rights abuses in Xinjiang and Tibet, prompting China to denounce them for ignoring the "living hell" in the Gaza Strip.

Clashes over China's treatment of Uyghurs and other Muslims have become a common occurrence at both the United Nations in New York and the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva.

A U.N. report released two years ago said China's "arbitrary and discriminatory detention" of Uyghurs and other Muslims in its Xinjiang region may constitute crimes against humanity. It said that "serious human rights violations" had been committed.

"We urge China to uphold the international human-rights obligations that it has voluntarily assumed, and to implement all U.N. recommendations," Australia's U.N. Ambassador James Larsen told the U.N. General Assembly's human rights committee.

"This includes releasing all individuals arbitrarily detained in both Xinjiang and Tibet, and urgently clarifying the fate and whereabouts of missing family members," Larsen said.

He spoke on behalf of Australia, the United States, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Japan, Lithuania, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and Britain.

Beijing has long denied all allegations of abuse of Uyghurs. China's U.N. Ambassador Fu Cong on Tuesday accused the group of Western states of resorting "to lies to provoke confrontations."

"The human-rights situation that should gather the most attention at the committee this year is undoubtedly that of Gaza," he said. "Australia and the U.S., among a few others, played down this living hell, while unleashing attacks and smears against the peaceful and tranquil Xinjiang."

**'BIGGEST LIE'**

Palestinian militants Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing 1,200 people and abducting some 250 others.

U.S. ally Israel retaliated in Gaza, where Gaza authorities say more than 42,000 people have been killed and almost everyone in the enclave of 2.3 million displaced.

Fu said if the Gaza death toll was not enough to "awake the conscience of a few Western countries ... then their so-called protection of human rights of Muslims is nothing but the biggest lie."

Independent U.N. human-rights experts criticized mostly Western states last month for supporting Israel despite its actions in Gaza.

Delivering the U.S. statement to the committee, deputy U.S. Ambassador Lisa Carty said Washington was calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, the immediate release of hostages held by Hamas and for Israel to allow more aid into the enclave.

"We continue to condemn (China's) ongoing atrocities in Xinjiang, repression of Tibetans, crackdown on Hong Kong's democratic institutions,

and use of transnational repression to silence those abroad," said Carty.

Pakistan's U.N. Ambassador Munir Akram read a statement to the rights committee on behalf of 80 countries that said any issues related to Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Tibet were internal matters for China. The group also said it opposed politicization of human rights and double standards.

"No country has a perfect human-rights record. But no country is above fair scrutiny of its human-rights obligations," Australia's Larsen said. "It is incumbent on all of us not to undermine international human-rights commitments that benefit us all, and for which all states are accountable."

### **China eyes 'top-tier industrial workforce' by 2035, vows hi-tech training, talent support**

22 October 2024, SCMP, Vanessa Cai

Guidelines jointly issued by party Central Committee and the State Council come amid record youth joblessness and the continuing US tech war

China aims to boost training, support and "ideological guidance" for its industrial workforce, to create a highly skilled talent pool as the country doubles down on hi-tech development.

The goals were laid down in a set of guidelines issued jointly by the Communist Party Central Committee, the core leadership body of the ruling party, and the State Council – China's cabinet.

According to the guidelines, the country will focus on training to drive the development of "a top-tier industrial technical workforce" and provide talent and skill support for "Chinese-style modernisation".

The industrial workforce is "the backbone of creating social wealth, and a key force in implementing innovation-driven development strategies and accelerating the construction of a manufacturing powerhouse", the document released on Monday but dated October 12 said.

It also called for efforts to "unite and guide industrial workers to play a leading role in the construction of Chinese-style modernisation".

Main goals listed included "solidifying ideological and political guidance" for the workforce, and improving its overall quality "with an ever-expanding team of knowledgeable, skilled, and innovative industrial workers".

The country also aims to produce around 62,000 "master artisans" by 2035, including 2,000 defined as "national-level craftsmen", according to state news agency Xinhua's report on the guidelines.

The party's top leadership has repeatedly called for technological innovation as the country focuses on self-reliance and "new quality productive forces" amid a tech war with the United States, which has sought to curb China's hi-tech access.

According to Monday's guidelines, the training system should be improved so the workforce can meet emerging industry needs.

Modern vocational education will be improved to integrate practical training, along with the creation of quality courses and teaching teams. Skilled professionals will be encouraged to become educators, and teaching capabilities should be improved to set up vocational schools that meet international standards.

Improved worker welfare is also among the national goals for 2035, with the guidelines calling for a better support system for the career development, labour rights and well-being of industrial workers. This should be done through higher pay based on skills and innovation, and by ensuring job security with written contracts and labour dispute resolution mechanisms.

Another focus is protection of intellectual property rights related to innovation, and guiding skilled workers to take part in major technological projects and awards.

Meanwhile, working environments should be improved to "enhance the appeal of manufacturing jobs" for young people, the guidelines said, at a time when China is battling record joblessness among the 16-24 age group.

Migrant workers will be provided with skills training as well as support for their integration into cities. This will be done by relaxing rules related to hukou – or household registration – so they can better access social welfare where they live for work.

In emphasising the need to "strengthen ideological and political guidance", the guidelines said this aimed to ensure loyalty to the ruling party.

It called for efforts to promote the party's "innovative theories" among industrial workers and "to deepen education on socialist core values".

### **'Confident' China should relax grip on cultural, information exchange: academic**

20 October 2024, SCMP, Jane Cai

Too many Chinese scholars fail to properly engage with their overseas peers, leading to worsening decoupling, professor warns

China should cut red tape around international cultural exchanges and relax its internet controls to prevent the worsening of its information "decoupling" from the world, a leading academic said.

Wang Wen, dean and professor of the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University, noted that China had become a target for criticism by Western countries as Beijing pursued a bigger say in the global narrative.



"China has solved the problems of hunger and poverty. Now it's time to address the problem of being scolded," he wrote in last week's issue of Think Tank: Theory & Practice, the bimonthly journal published by the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Nanjing University.

According to Wang, he has witnessed many awkward moments when Chinese scholars at overseas symposiums were asked "sensitive questions" on topics ranging from China's leadership moves to human rights concerns in Xinjiang or Tibet. Wang said he had attended events in more than 20 countries since China removed its pandemic curbs in 2022, and seen many scholars fail to properly address queries from overseas audiences.

Other subjects that Chinese academics find difficult to handle at these events include China's battle against Covid-19, social governance, and cross-strait tensions with Taiwan, according to the article.

Wang suggested that these difficulties could arise because of insufficient language skills, limited knowledge of the matters raised, or that the speaker may "have some concerns", which he did not specify.

Many Chinese scholars chose to resort to the "official narrative" to explain what was happening in the country to foreign peers, instead of providing their own perspectives as public intellectuals, he wrote.

"If American scholars only repeated the White House's policy advocacy or remarks of the US president, [it would be impossible for] the US to take the leading position in the world's narrative system for such a long time."

China has tightened speech controls as it prioritises national security amid the rivalry with the US and its allies, creating a tense environment for people to speak freely especially on controversial and politically sensitive issues.

Meanwhile, at the third plenum – a key Communist Party conclave which concluded in July – the party's elites agreed to "establish a more effective international communication system", as well as expand cultural exchanges and cooperation to benefit China's development.

In his article, Wang noted that Chinese academics went through lengthy scrutiny for approval from their employers to be interviewed by overseas media, go abroad for seminars, or receive visiting foreign peers.

The process "seriously hampers exchanges of views and opinions", he wrote. "China should thoroughly simplify the approval procedures, get rid of the formalism and stop overstretching the concept of national security to facilitate international communication."

Wang also turned his attention to the Great Firewall – China's sophisticated internet censorship

system – which he said had "semi-decoupled" Chinese academia from the world and led to slow progress in efforts to catch up in technology and social sciences.

China's internet controls made it hard for researchers to use foreign search engines and access overseas websites. Instead, most had to rely on domestic search engines which were at least a decade behind more advanced systems, he wrote.

According to Wang, information decoupling threatens to be even more devastating for China in the age of artificial intelligence.

He argued that if Chinese content could not flow freely and merge into the databases used to feed AI models, Beijing's narrative would be at a disadvantage in international communications.

Wang called for the gradual removal – region by region – of the Great Firewall, to stop the developing trend of "parallel worlds" from worsening as China gradually became more disconnected from the outside world.

He also suggested that China should expand its visa-free policy to visitors from more countries to improve people-to-people exchanges.

At present, foreign nationals from 54 countries – including the US, Canada, and Britain – are eligible for 72/144-hour visa-free entry if they have a valid onwards ticket to another country. There are also exemptions for cruise ship passengers.

China's "strict disciplines, complicated procedures and prevalent formalism" were unnecessarily depressing international exchanges as well as other aspects of people's lives, according to the article.

Wang said that during his visits to cities such as Paris, Berlin and Istanbul he had enjoyed the relaxed lifestyle, chatting with friends and reading newspapers over coffee. China should be similarly confident and loosen controls over cultural exchanges, he added.

In Wang's own experience, he wrote that he usually enjoyed sharing information and taking part in the heated debates and brainstorming of overseas seminars. The talks were "straightforward", he said. "No empty talks."

### **Xi Jinping again urges his troops to be ready for war**

20 October 2024, Tibetan Review

Amid unprecedented purges in the top military brass, a volatile situation in the South China Sea, warmongering over Taiwan, and a refusal to back down from a military standoff with India in the latter's eastern Ladakh border area, China's President Xi Jinping has again called on his troops to strengthen their preparedness for war. The latest call

has come just days after Beijing staged large-scale military drills around Taiwan on Oct 14.

Xi made his comments while visiting a brigade of the People's Liberation Army Rocket Force on Oct 17, reported the AFP Oct 19, citing state-run broadcaster CCTV.

The military should "comprehensively strengthen training and preparation for war, (and) ensure troops have solid combat capabilities", CCTV was stated to have quoted Xi as saying.

Soldiers must "enhance their strategic deterrent and combat capability," Xi has said.

He has also said Chinese military must "strongly safeguard the country's strategic security and core interests."

The dispute between China and Taiwan dates back to a civil war in China in which the Kuomintang nationalist forces of Chiang Kai-shek were defeated by Mao Zedong's communist fighters and fled to the island in 1949.

China has vowed to take Taiwan ever since, while the latter claimed to be the legitimate government of China and he held the country's UN seat, with the veto power, until it lost that to the communist-ruled China in the 1970s.

The independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party, which now holds Taiwan's presidency, has called the island a sovereign country, with President Lai Ching-te rejecting China's claim to be its motherland during his Oct 10 national day speech. It prompted China to react with its latest war drills around the island as a stern warning to the "separatist acts" of "Taiwan Independence" forces.

China said Oct 16 that it will never give up its commitment to use force against Taiwan, which it wants to accept its "One China Policy".

### China's increasing passport controls evoke Mao era

18 October 2024, VOA

The Chinese government has been acting to restrict travel outside the country by ordering some teachers, civil servants and executives of state-owned enterprises to hand in their passports.

Analysts say that under President Xi Jinping, Beijing is reinstating some internal controls not seen since the era of communist China's founder, Mao Zedong.

Hong Jingfu, a professor in the political science department at Taiwan's National Cheng Kung University, told VOA Mandarin the Chinese Communist Party's confiscation of the passports aims to prevent foreign infiltration and secrets from being leaked.

Hong said the CCP is also worried that as people's confidence in the economy slows, they will become

less loyal to Xi's regime and China's system, and that personnel and capital will flee the country.

Hong said Xi is taking China back to the Mao era path of "internal control and external defense," of closing the country to the outside world, because the CCP fears sharing the fate of its Soviet counterpart, which collapsed in 1991.

"Under the so-called overall national security concept, his demand for security is constantly rising, which, in fact, is ironically highlighting that China's so-called 'four self-confidences' Xi promotes is [just] more lying and boasting," Hong said.

Former Chinese President Hu Jintao in 2011 announced the so-called "Three Self-Confidences," promoting China's socialist path, theories and system. Xi in 2016 added a fourth one, socialist culture, as a way of cementing his authority and pushing for more communist and nationalist propaganda in education.

The Financial Times reported October 6 that since last year, an increasing number of schoolteachers and public sector employees in China have been required to hand in their passports, and those already abroad have been told to avoid contact with "foreign, hostile forces."

Chinese authorities have always regarded "instilling loyalty in students" as a top priority. The FT reports the passport controls aim to prevent teachers from being "ideologically polluted by foreign forces" and spreading ideas that are deemed ill-suited for the country.

It's not the first time in modern China that authorities have seized the passports of large categories of key workers. Radio Free Asia reports authorities ordered teachers to hand in their travel documents as early as 2018.

A university professor surnamed Li in China's southeastern, coastal Fujian province, who didn't want to give his full name due to the sensitivity of the issue, told VOA Mandarin that his university since 2019 has required teachers at the rank of associate professor and above to hand in their travel documents.

Even retirees are required to hand in their passports and entry and exit documents, he said, and department heads will only get them back five years after retirement.

Li said if a professor wants to travel abroad, they must report to their supervisor the country they are going to, the number of days they will be there, the purpose of the trip and the source of funds before they can get their passport back.

Li said the university also requires that passports be turned back in within five working days after returning from abroad.

The school did not give them a detailed explanation for the policy, said Li, telling its staff only that it's to

ensure that the teaching, research and management work "maintains normal order" and is in line with the "spirit of the relevant documents of the superiors."

Legal authority for Chinese universities to require custody of passports and travel documents appears to be dubious. Article 16 of China's Detailed Rules for the Implementation of the Law on the Administration of the Exit and Entry of Chinese Citizens states that no organ, organization, enterprise, institution or individual other than the public security organ, the original document-issuing authority, the people's procuratorate, or the people's court may revoke or confiscate people's identification documents.

Observers told VOA Mandarin the practice increased significantly after Xi came to power in 2012. The Chinese government last year tightened restrictions on private overseas travel by civil servants and employees of state-owned enterprises, including banning overseas travel, vetting overseas relations, and strengthening approvals and confidentiality training.

Li believes his university's policy was prompted by government fears that teachers may leak sensitive research information or fail to return to China at all.

Hong, of National Cheng Kung University, says the control of passports also aims to keep middle-class people from leaving the country in order to restore consumer confidence and consumption levels.

China's economic downturn has led to a drop in consumer confidence and spending among the middle class that Beijing has tried to reignite with a series of stimulus measures.

But Hong said the CCP's passport controls are restricting economic activities and discouraging international exchanges that could help grow the economy.

"Actually, you are accelerating your so-called internal disintegration because there is no way to solve your internal contradictions," he said.

Despite the increasing number of passports reported seized, analysts say it's impossible for China to close off as much as it was under founding leader Mao, when everyone needed permission to travel abroad and being granted a passport was rare.

Wang Jian, a commentator living in the U.S. who used to work for the Hong Kong Economic Times, Ming Pao Daily News and Sing Tao Daily News, told VOA Mandarin that since China's reform and opening up after Mao died in 1976, there is no way to close the country as it depends on exporting products and importing raw materials.

"China's current foreign trade model has determined that China's door cannot be closed," he said. "Second, the Chinese people [would] not accept it."

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Chinese authorities implemented strict controls on movement, including

travel abroad, and stopped issuing new passports for nearly three years to try to control the spread of the virus.

The restrictions led to rare public protests against authorities known as the "White Paper Movement."

### **China again ranks as the country with worst internet freedom, Myanmar giving it company this time**

17 October 2024, Tibetan Review

China has done it again, sharing the spot this time with Myanmar: the country with the world's worst environment for internet freedom, according to the annual ranking by the US-based Freedom House, which released its report Oct 16.

For the past decade, China has consistently ranked last in the world for internet freedom due to its all-pervading online surveillance and content control system dubbed the "Great Firewall," noted the edition.cnn.com Oct 17.

The organisation's 2024 Freedom on the Net (FOTN) report assessed internet freedom based on data collected from Jun 2023 to May 2024 in terms of obstacles people face accessing the internet, limits on content and violations of users' rights. China and Myanmar both scored 9 out of 100 in internet freedom, the lowest among all the countries assessed.

The report says China intensified its efforts to seal off its domestic internet from the global network, blocked international access to certain official websites, and imposed hefty fines on individuals using virtual private networks (VPNs).

"Beijing has persisted in its effort to isolate China's domestic internet from the rest of the world, blocking international traffic to some government websites and imposing huge fines on people using VPNs. The Chinese government also continued to systematically repress dissent, for example by censoring online discussions about activist and journalist Sun Lin, who died in November 2023 after police beat him in apparent retaliation for his social media posts about protests against the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leader Xi Jinping," the report says.

China's censors have reined in blogs, US search giants, and social media – even regulating "likes" of public posts, the report said.

The report from Freedom House, a US government-funded NGO, has found that global internet freedom has declined for the 14th consecutive year.

As expected, China has rejected the report's findings. Its Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Oct 16 that "Chinese citizens enjoy all rights and freedoms in accordance with the law."

"this so-called report is completely false and has ulterior motives," the edition.cnn.com reported quoted Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning as saying.

### **Gansu, Association of Disciples Member Deprogrammed—to Atheism**

16 October 2024, Bitter Winter, Fang Yongrui

After deprogramming, a former devotee acknowledges he is "his own God" and promises he "will only believe in science and the government."

There has been a new developments during and after COVID in the Chinese fight against the xie jiao—"movements spreading heterodox teachings" (sometimes less precisely translated as "evil cults")—which are mercilessly persecuted. To Falun Gong and The Church of Almighty God a third group has been added as a "direct threat to national security," the Association of Disciples.

The Association of Disciples (门徒会, Mentuhui) is a Christian new religious movement established by Ji Sanbao (季三保, 1940-1997), who was previously part of the True Jesus Church, in 1989. It faced a ban in 1990, was listed as one of the xie jiao, and experienced intense persecution.

From 2020, a national campaign of annihilation was launched against the Association of Disciples, which, like other forms of "illegal" religion, has experienced a new growth during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Movements like the Association of Disciples provided religious reasons for why God permits natural disasters. They suggested they can be used by believers for spiritual growth, drawing in those unhappy with state-controlled churches, which during COVID only repeated the government's slogans.

Members of the Association of Disciples assert that their movement imparts the "teachings of the Third Redemption" (三赎教), indicating it as the third symbol of salvation following Noah's ark and the cross of Jesus Christ.

Deprogramming, a practice banned as a crime in most democratic countries, consists in submitting believers to threats, pressures, and intense indoctrination in a confined setting, until they renounce their faith. In China, deprogramming is routinely used by the state to persuade xie jiao devotees to abandon their religious movements. A "success story" from Gansu recently published by the China Anti-Xie-Jiao Association, which claims to be the largest anti-cult organization in the world and is directly controlled by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), sheds light on a feature of Chinese deprogramming. It does not limit itself to break the faith of xie jiao members. It wants to lead them to atheism.



Anti-cult poster: how the state will smash the Association of Disciples. From Weibo.

In the story, a member of the Association of Disciples, after having been arrested, is submitted to deprogramming. While the report tries to attract the attention of the readers to the usual tragic story of how the devotee did not provide medical care to his son, who died, relying on prayer only, the interesting part concerns the atheistic outcome of the deprogramming process. The devotee, we read, "woke up as if from a dream. When he first joined the cult, he was confused about 'what kind of 'God' is the 'true God.' Now he finally found the answer to this question: respect your parents, love your wife and children, work hard, be down-to-earth, advocate science, and love life, so that you can be your own 'God.'"

Confirming he had been successfully deprogrammed, in the end the former devotee proclaimed: "I will never believe in the 'Three Redemption Christ' thing again. I will only believe in science and the government."

These are the Chinese citizens the horrific system of deprogramming and torture aims to produce. Citizens who do not believe in God but are persuaded they are "their own God," and "only believe in science and the government."

### **China cracks down on Communist party officials for reading banned books**

12 October 2024, The Guardian, Helen Davidson and Chi-hui-Lin

Hillary Clinton and Hannah Arendt thought to be among authors of books procured by officials, as Xi Jinping tightens grip on Communist party  
When Lam Wing-kee ran his bookshop in Hong Kong, filled with controversial and political titles banned in mainland China, many of his customers were Chinese Communist party officials.

Back then, in the early years of Chinese leader Xi Jinping's reign, and before Lam was detained by Chinese authorities for his work, the officials would load up boxes of books on CCP politics, Chinese economics, and scandal, often taking them back over the border.

"CCP officials would look for books about what's going on in China, about changes in the top rank officials, who gets the most power, changes in the power and the struggle between them, etcetera," Lam tells the Guardian, suggesting officials were often buying the books to learn about what was going on inside their own party.

"Some of my customers were high-ranking members of the CCP," he said.

But today, such purchases are coming back to bite their buyers. Several recent corruption cases against CCP officials have included accusations of procuring or reading banned materials. The officials have so far received internal disciplinary actions, including being expelled from the party, but observers are watching to see if criminal charges follow.

In September a former municipal level official in Heilongjiang, Li Bin, accused of corruption, was also found to have "privately read an illegal publication containing contents that undermined the unity and solidarity of the Party", according to state media. He was expelled from the Party and his case given to prosecutors.

That same month, Cheng Zhiyi, former party secretary of Chongqing's Jiangjin district, was also expelled. Among the accusations were "losing ideals and beliefs" after he privately read books and magazines with "serious political problems" while "outside the country".

Henan official Yang Lei also was accused of "losing ideals and beliefs and abandoning the original mission" when he violated "political discipline and national laws", including bringing prohibited books into the country, according to CCTV in August.

A recent report by the South China Morning Post said at least a dozen cases this year had prominently included accusations of reading or procuring banned materials, up from seven last year. They emphasise illicit reading ahead of other crimes like bribery.

Wen-ti Sung, a nonresident fellow with the Atlantic Council's Global China Hub, attributes the rush of punishments to new performance targets for party discipline bureaucrats tasked with "punishing those who are deemed disparaging of the party's image, principles, or policies, as well as those who are in possession of material that could have such effect."

"The Chinese Communist party champions itself as always 'great, glorious, and correct'. This image of infallibility must not be challenged, lest it threatens the governing legitimacy of the party," he said.

None of the corruption cases publicly reveal what reading materials the fallen cadres had accessed. But a list of banned titles published by China Digital Times offers some possibilities. The list includes writings on Chinese politics and history, including the Tiananmen Square massacre and the disastrous Mao-

era policies that saw millions die from famine, violence, and political purges. There are books scrutinising the modern CCP's politics and power, or sharing the views of political enemies and critics like Hong Kong tycoon and activist Jimmy Lai, the exiled Tibetan Dalai Lama, and Bo Xilai, the fallen political foe of Xi Jinping. Hillary Clinton's memoir is on the list, as is Machiavelli's *The Prince*, and Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.

Many of the banned books line the shelves of Lam's new shop in downtown Taipei, which he reopened in 2020 after fleeing to the Taiwanese capital in exile.

Xi's leadership has been particularly noteworthy for its purges of political rivals and crushing of factionalism. Discussion, criticism, even gossip, has become more and more dangerous for those trying to survive politically.

As Xi's grip tightens, it will be interesting to see if the illicit reading cases move beyond Party disciplinary proceedings and start to attract criminal charges, says law Prof Margaret Lewis, of Seton Hall University.

"It's not like in the past people would be like 'I'll just take an unauthorised biography of Bo Xilai down the coffee shop'. But it's a matter of turning up the temperature, not totally changing the climate" says Lewis.

"But it goes to show the power of information and books. They care enough to say this is punishable infraction."

### **China's Li Xiaopeng, son of former premier Li Peng, signals end to closely watched career**

12 October 2024, SCMP, Sylvie Zhuang

The former transport minister, a member of one of China's most powerful families, takes semi-retirement role on political advisory body

Li Xiaopeng, son of former Chinese premier Li Peng, has taken a semi-retirement role on the country's top political advisory body, drawing an end to the closely watched political career of a member of one of China's most powerful families.

Li was assigned the role of deputy director of the economic affairs committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), state news agency Xinhua reported on Friday.

The position is commonly seen as a semi-retirement role without actual decision-making power in Chinese politics. The decision was announced at a two-day meeting of the advisory body's standing committee that concluded on Friday.

Li served as Communist Party chief of the Ministry of Transport from May 2023 until his title was removed at the end of September, three months after he turned 65 – the de facto retirement age for ministerial-level officials in China.



Li was born in June 1959 in Beijing. He earned a bachelor's degree from North China Electric Power University, where he studied electrical engineering. He started his career as a technician at the system institute of the China Electric Power Research Institute in 1982 and rose through the ranks to become the head of the system institute in 1990.

He worked in the power industry until 2008, eventually becoming chairman of Huaneng Power, one of the country's biggest electricity producers.

This was followed by eight years of leadership experience in coal-rich Shanxi province, where he was governor and deputy party chief from 2013 to 2016.

Li became China's transport minister in 2016.

Li's career moves have attracted attention within China as he is the son of Li Peng, who served as China's premier from 1987 to 1998 and was one of the country's most influential – and controversial – political leaders.

Li Peng died in 2019 at age 90 in Beijing. As the only Chinese leader to serve as both premier and chairman of the national legislature, he wielded tremendous influence during his career.

As premier, he was openly at odds with party general secretary Zhao Ziyang during the student-led pro-democracy protests in the summer of 1989.

On May 20, 1989, Li appeared on national television and officially declared martial law in Beijing. This eventually led to the bloody Tiananmen Square crackdown on June 4 of that year, and his name was often associated with the incident.

In a rare move for a Chinese leader, Li Peng published a memoir in 2014 about his early political career, though he omitted the sensitive episodes of the later years.

While former paramount leader Deng Xiaoping picked Jiang Zemin to replace Zhao in 1989, Li remained premier until 1998, when he became chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, cementing his position as the second most powerful man in China at the time. He retired from politics in 2003.

Li Peng's family has been powerful in China's energy sector for many years. His daughter, Li Xiaolin, has been called China's "power queen", holding top jobs in various state-owned energy giants until her retirement in 2018.

Li Xiaopeng is the only child of Li Peng to have entered politics.

### **China's finance minister says there is room for more economic stimulus but offers no plan**

12 October 2024, AP, Ken Moritsugu

The Chinese government is looking at additional ways to boost the economy, Finance Minister Lan

Fo'an said Saturday, but he stopped short of unveiling a major new stimulus plan that analysts and stock investors were hoping for.

Lan's remarks left the door open for such a plan in the future but he did not divulge what is under consideration.

"There are other policy tools that are being discussed that are still in the pipeline," he said at a news conference, adding that there is "ample room" in the government budget to raise debt and increase the deficit.

China's economy has remained sluggish despite the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions at the end of 2022. Companies have cut back on hiring and wages and a prolonged downturn in the property market has deflated consumer confidence, curbing spending.

The government has raised pensions and offered subsidies to people who trade in old cars or appliances for new ones, but such steps have failed to jolt economic growth.

Chinese stock markets rallied after the central bank and other government agencies announced steps at the end of September to revive the property sector and prop up financial markets.

But the rally has since cooled amid concern about whether the moves were enough to generate a sustainable economic recovery. Investors were hoping Lan would announce a stimulus package of up to 2 trillion yuan (\$280 billion).

The finance minister instead said the government would roll out a package of incremental measures to speed up implementation of its existing policies.

They include increasing scholarships for students, issuing bonds to help major banks replenish their capital, and providing more support to highly indebted local governments, some of which have had to curtail public services.

### **China's political advisors urged to contribute to country's cultural advancement**

12 October 2024, China Daily

China's top political advisor Wang Huning on Friday called on the country's political advisors to continue conducting research and deliberating on matters revolving around deepening reform in the cultural sector.

Wang, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference National Committee, made the remarks at the closing meeting of a standing committee session of the CPPCC National Committee.

Political advisors were asked to pool wisdom for building up the country's cultural strength.

Wang also called on them to firmly uphold the CPPCC system, effectively run the CPPCC and fully leverage its political advantages.

### **Japan urged to investigate China's transnational repression operating in the country**

11 October 2024, Tibetan Review

As the exile Tibetan administration advised overseas Tibetans not to submit or even remain silent but report and publicize when subjected to transnational repression by China, New York-based Human Rights Watch has issued a report Oct 9, saying people from Xinjiang, Tibet, Inner Mongolia and other places in the People's Republic of China (PRC) living in Japan had been subjected to such repression in recent times.

The report said that interviews with 25 people, including from Xinjiang, Tibet and Inner Mongolia, revealed that Chinese police or the Chinese Embassy in Japan had contacted them or their relatives in the PRC, pressuring them to end their activities in Japan. The interviewees were stated to have participated in nonviolent activities, such as organizing public events to draw attention to human rights abuses in Xinjiang, promoting Tibetan culture, and hosting book discussions featuring works by Inner Mongolian activists.

The group has urged the Japanese government to call on China to end its surveillance and threats against those living in Japan.

It has also urged Japan to establish a system to report such incidents and provide protection.

The group, which has posted its report on its hrw.org website, said a woman was arrested in 2023 upon returning to Hong Kong for posting pro-democratic comments online during her studies in Japan, while another individual who promoted Tibetan culture in Japan was told to return to Tibet to renew their passport.

Also, a man from Xinjiang has said that when he received a call from a relative asking him to return home, a police officer came on the line and told him he "could not guarantee what would happen to your family" unless he complied with the relative's request. He was later contacted on a messaging app by a police officer telling him to provide information about activists in Japan, Human Rights Watch said.

A person from Taiwan who had participated in activism related to Hong Kong while in a third country has reported having received multiple invitations from the Chinese embassy to go and "retrieve important documents". The person was stated to have declined the offer, fearing detention or reprisal.

China has previously been reported to have set up illegal police stations, disguised as facilitation centres

for overseas Chinese, in a number of countries to carry out its transnational repression. When exposed, China's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said at a press conference, "All our actions are carried out in accordance with laws and regulations."

Teppey Kasai, Asia program officer at Human Rights Watch, has said, "Japan should promptly establish a national system to investigate cases of transnational repression with appropriate safeguards for individuals' privacy."

On Oct 7, the exile Tibetan administration, known as the Central Tibetan Administration, based in Dharamshala, India, called the Chinese government's conduct a violation of international law. It urged anyone who come under such pressure to publicize it before the media with proof thereof. It also suggested that such targeted Tibetans should report the same with all the relevant details to their concerned host governments, or the CTA Representative offices, or Settlement Heads, or the Department of Security, as the case may be.

The call was part of a nine-point guideline for overseas Tibetans desiring to visit Tibet and China.

### **Political disloyalty being emphasized in China's anti-corruption investigations**

09 October 2024, Tibetan Review

As President Xi Jinping tightens control, demanding absolute loyalty from more than 99 million members of the Communist Party of China (CPC), officials put under investigation for corruption are increasingly being accused primarily of having read forbidden publications, which is cited as proof of their disloyalty.

While such reading bans in China are believed to date back decades, the recent uptick in naming and shaming appears to coincide with last year's amendment of the party disciplinary regulations, which greatly expanded the clause related to reading unapproved materials, noted the scmp.com Oct 7.

Those who privately read, browse or listen to publications and make irresponsible comments on the party Central Committee's major policies, vilify the image of the party and the country, or slander leaders will be issued warnings, the amended clause is stated to stipulate. If the circumstances are serious, such persons could be removed from party positions. Deng Yuwen, former deputy editor of Study Times, the newspaper of the cadre-training Central Party School, has said reading and circulating some sensitive materials within the party was common. This had long been impossible to ban, even in Mao Zedong's era, he has added.

"It is not a big deal if they are not under disciplinary investigation, but it can be major evidence of disloyalty when [the top watchdog] finds them."

Allegations of reading politically forbidden books have appeared in at least a dozen corruption case readouts so far this year – compared to around seven last year, the report said.

Similar accusations have been made by anti-corruption bodies in at least five other provinces this year.

One of the recent examples is Li Bin, a former vice-director of the municipal legislature of Mudanjiang in northeastern Heilongjiang province. He was expelled from the Communist Party on suspicions of corruption late last month.

At the top of the allegations made public was the accusation that he privately read an "illegal publication" with content that would "jeopardise the unity of the party", with the municipal corruption inspectors not leading the charges with claims of corrupt dealings.

This was in keeping with a norm in which political disloyalty is always the first charge listed, the report noted.

Similarly, Cheng Zhiyi, 61, former party secretary of Chongqing's Jiangjin district, was also accused of possessing and reading forbidden books. The southwestern city's corruption investigators issued an announcement on his wrongdoings, saying he was accused of "reading overseas books and periodicals with serious political problems".

Though the investigators did not name the books claimed to have been found in the allegedly corrupt officials' possession, the "forbidden books" are generally believed to include but not limited to those that examine a sensitive period for the party. These include insider stories about the struggle of the party and its leaders; the Chinese Civil War; the Anti-Rightist Movement of the 1950s; the Great Leap Forward (1958-62); the Three Years of Hardship famine (1959-61); the Cultural Revolution (1966-76); and the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989.

A 2021 customs document is stated to define articles that are prohibited and restricted from entering and leaving China. These include printed materials, films, photos, records, audio and video tapes, laser discs and computer storage media that are harmful to China's politics, economy, culture and morality.

A statement released by the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), China's top political disciplinary and anti-corruption body, was on Sep 12 stated to have accused Zhang Zulin, former vice-governor of southwestern Yunnan province, of possessing and reading forbidden books.

The 65-year-old retiree was stated to have been accused of "losing his political ideals and aspirations, forming political cliques ... and possessing and

reading books, periodicals and audio-visual products with serious political problems" in private.

Three days earlier, the anti-corruption watchdog in Jiangxi province was stated to have accused Gan Chengjiu – a former general manager at the local government-owned Jiangxi Financial Holding Group Ltd – of bringing "reactionary books into the country" and reading them privately, along with other political disloyalty and corruption charges.

## Japan: Chinese Authorities Harass Critics Abroad

09 October 2024, HRW

Beijing's Transnational Repression Hinges on Threats Against Families in China

Chinese authorities are seeking to intimidate people from China living in Japan who take part in activities critical of the Chinese government, Human Rights Watch said today.

The Chinese government's harassment of people from China, including those from Xinjiang, Tibet, and Inner Mongolia, and their family members back home, appears aimed at deterring members of the diaspora from protesting against the government or engaging in events deemed politically sensitive. The Chinese authorities have also sought out diaspora members to provide information on others in Japan.

"Chinese authorities appear to have few scruples about silencing people from China living in Japan who criticize Beijing's abuses," said Teppei Kasai, Asia program officer at Human Rights Watch. "The Japanese government should make clear to Beijing it won't tolerate the long arm of China's transnational repression in Japan."

Between June and August 2024, Human Rights Watch interviewed 25 people from Hong Kong and mainland China, including from Xinjiang, Tibet, and Inner Mongolia, who were living in Japan. All had been involved in peaceful activities that the Chinese Communist Party deems unfavorable or threatening to one-party rule; such as holding public events to raise awareness about crimes against humanity in Xinjiang, promoting Tibetan culture, or having a reading club discuss a book by an activist from Inner Mongolia.

Most of those interviewed said that the Chinese police have contacted them or their relatives back home, pressuring them to end their activities in Japan. Several provided logs of messages from the Chinese social media platform WeChat, recordings of video calls, and CCTV footage that corroborated their accounts.

One person said they stopped participating in any politically sensitive in-person and online activities after receiving a call from Chinese authorities in 2024. Another who initially agreed to be

interviewed later decided not to participate out of fear that Chinese authorities would retaliate.

Several ethnic Uyghurs from Xinjiang said that Chinese authorities contacted them through their relatives back home. The police then called them on WeChat and told them to either stop their anti-Chinese government activities in Japan or pressed them to share information about Japan's Uyghur community, including the members of the advocacy group Japan Uyghur Association.

Several people from Inner Mongolia involved in promoting language rights and peaceful self-determination for Inner Mongolians, an ethnic minority, said that Chinese authorities had contacted them, often through their relatives back home.

A person from Tibet who promotes Tibetan culture in Japan said that when they went to the Chinese embassy in Tokyo to renew their passport, embassy officials told them they needed to return to Tibet to do so. A person from Taiwan previously involved in Hong Kong's pro-democracy activism in a third country said the Chinese embassy sent them multiple invitations to "retrieve important documents." Both people said they rejected the embassy's recommendations, fearing they would be detained or face punishment.

Chinese authorities have violated the rights of Chinese nationals who return home. In 2023 Hong Kong police arbitrarily arrested a 23-year-old Hong Kong woman upon her return to the city for pro-democracy comments she posted online while studying in Japan.

Several people said they did not seek help from the Japanese police as they did not believe Japanese authorities could provide any remedy, or feared reprisals or making the situation worse for themselves and their relatives back home.

Human Rights Watch shared its findings and wrote to the Chinese embassy in Japan for comment, but they have not responded. Japan's Foreign Ministry declined to comment, and the National Police Agency did not respond to a Human Rights Watch letter requesting information about their response to China's efforts at repression in Japan.

In recent years, the Japanese government has become increasingly vocal about the Chinese government's human rights violations, including raising the issue with Chinese officials, and with resolutions in parliament to monitor the cases.

The term "transnational repression" is increasingly used to refer to state actors reaching beyond their borders to suppress or stifle dissent. Nationals or former nationals living in another country, members of diaspora communities, and those living in exile are particularly vulnerable.

The Japanese government should recognize the threat posed by the Chinese government's repression

of Chinese nationals abroad, and help protect their basic rights by establishing a system for residents in Japan to report such incidents, Human Rights Watch said.

Such a system should have appropriate safeguards for individuals' privacy, facilitate criminal investigations in cases in which Japanese law has been violated, and protect people who have contacted the authorities to report credible cases from deportation and extradition. People who face such pressure should be advised of their right to seek asylum or other forms of protection.

The Japanese government should call on the Chinese government to end its surveillance and threats against those living in Japan. On June 26 Japan joined 54 countries from all regions at the UN Human Rights Council in condemning transnational repression and pledging to hold those responsible to account. Japan should also coordinate with other governments and UN bodies to protect those at risk.

"Japan should review its policies to establish support mechanisms to help those facing Chinese government harassment," Kasai said. "Japan should promptly establish a national system to investigate cases of transnational repression with appropriate safeguards for individuals' privacy."

For select accounts of Chinese government harassment of Chinese nationals living in Japan, please see below.

The names, dates, and personal information of those interviewed have been withheld for their protection.

#### Pressuring Relatives in China

A.B. is from Inner Mongolia, a region of northern China where ethnic minority Mongols who mainly speak Mongolian comprise 17 percent of the population. A.B. came to Japan for work in 2018 and said he joined peaceful protests in Japan against the Chinese government's policy of replacing Mongolian with Mandarin Chinese at schools. He said:

In response to the language issue, I felt that if I didn't say anything myself, we [eventually] wouldn't be able to do anything, so I started expressing my opinions against the Chinese government, against Beijing.... At first, I didn't disclose my name and face, I wore a mask. My [relatives] were worried about me. I wasn't sure about my future, I didn't have capacity to think about it.... I eventually found a job [in Japan], and that's when I went public with my face and name.

Since going public, A.B. said that officials of the local public security bureau – China's police – in Inner Mongolia have visited his relatives, who are not politically active. Two CCTV videos both timestamped on the same date in 2022, provided by A.B. and verified by Human Rights Watch to have been filmed in Inner Mongolia, show a car with sirens marked

“public security bureau” driving up to his relative’s home. Three men, one apparently wearing a local public security bureau uniform, enter the home of A.B.’s relatives. A few minutes later, the three men are seen escorting A.B.’s relatives from their home:

The officials told my [relatives] they wanted to ask a few questions about some photographs, but that they couldn’t show [the photographs] to them there, so they asked my [relatives] to come to the closest public security bureau office. They showed my [relatives] photographs posted online by an Inner Mongolian group [in Japan] and said I was in them. My [relative] just said these are probably fake.

Subsequently, A.B. said the local public security bureau told his relatives to sign documents declaring that A.B. would not participate in any protests in Japan, which they refused to do:

At the time, my [relatives] just told [the authorities] they couldn’t read the Chinese characters.... [My relatives] told me at the time that these documents may be unfavorable to me because I’m participating in protests.... They knew what the document said to a certain extent.

A.B. said that while he does not believe he is doing anything wrong by participating in protests, at times he feels afraid. Worst of all, he said, is that he feels guilty that the local police are questioning and threatening his relatives in Inner Mongolia because of his activities in Japan:

In Japan, it’s normal for people to interact with the police, including when they lose their belongings. But in Inner Mongolia, you don’t interact with the police unless there’s a serious incident. My [relatives] tell me they’re afraid of the pressure they’re feeling [from the police], and that has been tough on me.

F.G., who is also from Inner Mongolia, has lived in Japan for about two decades and has been participating in public protests since the early 2000s. He said that in 2019, as he prepared to protest Chinese President Xi Jinping’s attendance at the G20 leaders’ summit in Osaka, Japan, police officers visited his relatives back home:

They intimidated my relatives, asking them to tell me that I’m committing a crime against the [Chinese] state. They took down all of my relatives’ contact information. My [relative] was afraid, telling me, “So many police officers came to our house because of you. Our [relatives] are getting older, could you please stop?” ... Since then, my [relative] cut off contact with me.

R.S. moved to Japan from Xinjiang in the early 2000s and began participating in protests in 2009. Since then, R.S. said that the Chinese police have contacted his relatives in Xinjiang a number of times, who then urged him to stop his activities in Japan.

R.S. said such harassment has taken a mental toll on his family. In early 2024, a police officer in Xinjiang

again called his relative back home, asking for details about him and his family in Japan:

They called my [relative], asking for details such as where we live and what we’re doing.... My [relative] was panicking, saying “We already told them once, isn’t that good enough? What else do they want?” They called my [relative] again twice.... Apparently, they spoke to my [relative] in a terrible manner, and my [relative] couldn’t take it so [the relative] threw the phone, breaking it into pieces.

S.T., who is also from Xinjiang and moved to Japan in the early 2000s, said he began privately supporting a local advocacy group in 2008 to raise awareness of human rights issues in Xinjiang. He said he was regularly in touch with his relatives back home, but the situation changed in 2017, when his relatives suddenly began asking him to come home. S.T. said:

One day, I was having another phone call with a [relative], rejecting his request for me to come home, and a police officer got on the phone. He told me, “Listen to your [relative], or I can’t guarantee what happens to your family.” That’s when I realized they were being forced to tell me to come home.

S.T. said that was the last time he spoke to that relative. Subsequently, in 2018, S.T. said a police officer repeatedly messaged him on WeChat:

I asked him, “What do you want?” He said, “Don’t have such a negative attitude and instead show loyalty to the central [Chinese] government.... If you provide information about activists in Japan, I can solve the issue involving your family very quickly.” I told him, “I’m not going to cooperate with someone who won’t let me contact my family, so don’t call me,” and I hung up.

After his interaction with the police officer, S.T. said he tried calling his relatives, but no one picked up. He believes his relatives were afraid of picking up a phone call from a foreign number

#### Restricting Freedom of Movement

A.B. said that Chinese authorities have restricted his relatives’ freedom of movement, presumably because they are related to A.B.:

Last May, I invited my [relatives] to Japan, so I asked them to get passports. They went to the local public security bureau, and when they typed my name into their system, the word “national security personnel” came up in red.... They couldn’t have their passports issued.

In 2024, A.B. said Chinese authorities again blocked his relatives from getting their passports:

When my [relative] found out their passport couldn’t be issued, I think they were crying. So I told them, you don’t need to come [to Japan]. I told them it’s okay. That’s when I had the realization that maybe I won’t be able to see them again.... The last time I saw them was in 2018 before I came to Japan.



A.B. says he cannot visit Inner Mongolia to see his family as he believes Chinese authorities will detain him: "I'll be detained if I return so I don't have any plans, this is something I'm mindful about.... My [relatives] told me, 'We'll kill ourselves if you're detained.'"

#### Targeting Commonplace Activities

Chinese authorities have been targeting and attempting to shut down commonplace activities in Japan, such as a reading club. J.K., from Inner Mongolia now living in Japan, said that a local police officer reached out to his relatives back home after he began organizing a reading club in 2024 that focused on a book written by an academic and activist from Inner Mongolia. He said:

The police told my relatives that I was part of a reading club that was discussing a book by a well-known academic and activist from Inner Mongolia, and that it's an "anti-China" gathering.... My relatives were very nervous, asking me why I'm not simply focusing on my research and why I'm participating in "anti-China" activities. They asked me if I'm a "Han traitor." I told them, "How could you call me that?" and I got very upset. We fought. I asked my relatives, "Which law am I breaking here?" And they told me, "Laws are meaningless, if the [Chinese] government says someone is bad, then that person is bad." They told me they just want to live safely and told me not to do anything dangerous.

Subsequently, the same police officer added J.K. on WeChat:

I spoke to him on WeChat. I asked him, "What do you want to talk about?" and he simply said "Talk." I asked him, "Please ask me a question," and he said, "Did you host this reading club?" I told him I did, and he said I should just pretend I didn't, so he asked me to clarify in writing that I did not host it. The police officer told me what to write.

Fearing for the safety of his relatives, J.K. sent a written statement to the police officer on WeChat. He also said that the police officer effectively asked him to spy on others, including by attending events, taking photographs of others, and sending information to him, which he refused.

J.K. said that he did not consult Japanese police about this incident because he fears the situation could get worse, and his relatives back home could face retribution.

#### Repressing Freedom of Expression and Assembly

X.Y., who is from mainland China, said that he moved to Japan in 2023 as he felt the Chinese government's increasing repression against those in the arts.

X.Y. said that after he moved to Japan, a Chinese police official reached out to his family in China in 2024, asking for the details of his WeChat account.

Fearing for his family's safety, X.Y. told his family to have the officer reach out to him directly:

[The officer] initially called my family [in China]. My family asked me, "Do you know why the public security agency wants your phone number?" At the time, the authorities didn't know I was in Japan, so they called my family thinking I was with them. I don't know if they were intending on intimidating my family, but it had an impact on them.

Subsequently, a public security official contacted X.Y. on WeChat and asked him to refrain from certain activities online, which Human Rights Watch is withholding for his security. X.Y. said the call changed his behavior in Japan, and that he still fears for the safety of his family in China:

I haven't received a call from them since, but I think this is because I stopped uploading material on sensitive topics and limited my activities.... I'm still affected by this. My family is in China, so there's a possibility they're being threatened as well.... Although I came to Japan, I don't think my freedom of expression is being protected.

X.Y. said that he did not ask Japanese authorities for help, as he believes that may put his family at greater risk of Chinese government retaliation:

Even if there were a hotline [to ask for help], I don't think I would use it. My family is still in China, and there's not much the police in Japan can do regarding what China's public security agency does. If I were to coordinate with the Japanese police, or not pick up a call from Chinese authorities, there's a possibility the situation may get even more complicated.... I don't know what will happen when I go back to China next time to see my family.

In late November 2022, thousands of people in China's cities took to the streets in what became known as the "White Paper" protests, to demonstrate against the government's "Zero Covid" measures and, for some, the Chinese Communist Party's authoritarian rule. People from China held similar protests in Japan. M.N., who was involved in organizing one of the protests in Tokyo, said that he received a call from an official at the Chinese embassy in Japan before one of the gatherings, asking him to cancel the protests. M.N. said:

When the "White Paper" protests were happening in China, we decided to also organize protests in Japan.... The Chinese embassy saw a poster about it, and they called me, asking me to stop.... Afterward, they called the Japanese language school I was attending and told them to stop my activism.... My teacher is from China, and he told me, "Please stop any political activities, or quit the school yourself."... I quit and now attend a vocational school to learn about the internet.

M.N., who was detained several times in China for participating in human rights activism, said that after

he moved to Japan in 2022, a police officer visited his family in China. Police also called M.N. directly on WeChat in late 2022. M.N. provided a recording of the video call between him and two men, one of whom is wearing a police uniform with a visible six-digit identification number. The police officer asked M.N. if he was still in Japan, about his studies, and about his social media activities. They told him he should “focus on himself” and “study well.” M.N. said: “After the call with the police, my family called me and told me to stop my activism, to study well, get into a Japanese university, and not participate in anything political.”

### **China throws the book: more corruption suspects hit with claims of illicit reading**

07 October 2024, SCMP, William Zheng

Growing number of disgraced officials being accused by anti-corruption agencies of reading forbidden books, cited as disloyalty to the party

Reading publications with “serious political problems” has become an increasingly common accusation levelled at disgraced officials by China’s anti-corruption agencies, who cite it as proof of disloyalty.

Among them is Li Bin, a former vice-director of the municipal legislature of Mudanjiang in northeastern Heilongjiang province. He was expelled from the Communist Party on suspicions of corruption late last month.

However, municipal corruption inspectors did not lead with claims of corrupt dealings. Instead, at the top of allegations made public was the accusation that he privately read an “illegal publication” with content that would “jeopardise the unity of the party”.

It was in keeping with a norm in which political disloyalty is always the first charge listed.

A few days earlier, Cheng Zhiyi, 61, former party secretary of Chongqing’s Jiangjin district, was also accused of possessing and reading forbidden books. The southwestern city’s corruption investigators issued an announcement on his wrongdoings, saying he was accused of “reading overseas books and periodicals with serious political problems”.

Cheng and Li are among a growing group of disgraced Chinese officials who are being accused in public by corruption fighters at various levels of reading publications not endorsed by the authorities. While the investigators did not name the books claimed to have been found in these officials’ possession, the accused are generally understood to have read political books that had been published outside mainland China and quietly carried across the border.

It is generally believed that “forbidden books” include but are not limited to those that examine a sensitive period for the party.

These include insider stories about the struggle of the party and its leaders; the Chinese Civil War; the Anti-Rightist Movement of the 1950s; the Great Leap Forward; the Three Years of Hardship famine; the Cultural Revolution; and the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989.

Publications on these subjects and others are forbidden by Chinese authorities and the act of carrying them across the border violates customs regulations.

A 2021 customs document defines articles prohibited and restricted from entering and leaving China. These include printed materials, films, photos, records, audio and video tapes, laser discs and computer storage media harmful to China’s politics, economy, culture and morality.

According to a tally by the South China Morning Post, allegations of reading politically forbidden books have appeared in at least a dozen corruption case readouts so far this year – from around seven last year.

Similar accusations have been made by anti-corruption bodies in at least five other provinces this year.

Deng Yuwen, former deputy editor of Study Times, the newspaper of the cadre-training Central Party School, said reading and circulating some sensitive materials within the party was common. This had long been impossible to ban, even in Mao Zedong’s era, he said.

“It is not a big deal if they are not under disciplinary investigation, but it can be major evidence of disloyalty when [the top watchdog] finds them.”

Zhang Zulin, former vice-governor of southwestern Yunnan province, was accused on September 12 of possessing and reading forbidden books, according to a statement released by the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), China’s top political disciplinary and anti-corruption body.

Zhang, who is 65 and retired, is accused of “losing his political ideals and aspirations, forming political cliques ... and possessing and reading books, periodicals and audiovisual products with serious political problems” in private, according to the CCDI. The CCDI statement also announced that Zhang would be stripped of party membership and handed over to the judiciary for trial.

Three days earlier, the anti-corruption watchdog in Jiangxi province accused Gan Chengjiu – a former general manager at Jiangxi Financial Holding Group Ltd – of bringing “reactionary books into the country” and reading them privately, along with other political disloyalty and corruption charges.

Jiangxi Financial Holding is wholly owned by the eastern provincial government.

While such reading bans in China are believed to date back decades, the recent uptick in naming and shaming appears to coincide with last year's amendment of the party disciplinary regulations, which greatly expanded the clause related to reading unapproved materials.

Those who privately read, browse or listen to publications and make irresponsible comments on the party Central Committee's major policies, vilify the image of the party and the country, or slander leaders will be issued warnings, the amended clause stipulates. If the circumstances are serious, such persons could be removed from party positions.

### **As economic challenges and security threats linger, China marks 75 years of Communist Party rule**

01 October 2024, PBS, Adam Kemp

China is marking the 75th year of Communist Party rule as economic challenges and security threats linger over the massive state.

No festivities have been announced for the occasion Tuesday, save for a flag-raising ceremony at Tiananmen Square, with an honor guard marching from the entrance of the sprawling palace that in past centuries was the home of Chinese emperors. The entirely state-controlled media ran constant reports on China's economic progress and social stability, with no mention of challenges ranging from a declining birth rate to the disruption in supply chains that has harmed the largely export-driven economy.

Commemorations were also held in the former British colony of Hong Kong and Portugal's former territory of Macao, both of which returned to Chinese sovereignty in the late 1990s in a key indication of Beijing's determination to overcome what it has called a "Century of Humiliation."

In recent decades, China has mounted military parades and displays of the country's economic might only at the turn of decades, such as for the 60th and 70th anniversaries.

The world's second largest economy has struggled to regain momentum after the COVID-19 pandemic.

A prolonged property slump led to a spillover effect on other parts of the economy, from construction to sales of home appliances. Last week, China announced a slew of measures to boost the economy, including lower interest rates and smaller down payment requirements for mortgages.

Party leader and head of state Xi Jinping has largely avoided overseas travel since the pandemic, while continuing with his purges at home of top officials

considered insufficiently loyal or being suspected of corruption or personal indiscretions.

"The road ahead will not be smooth, there will definitely be difficulties and obstacles, and we may encounter major tests such as high winds and rough seas, or even stormy waves" Xi warned during a banquet on the eve of the anniversary.

"We must be vigilant in times of peace, plan ahead, and rely closely on the entire Party, the entire army, and people of all ethnic groups across the country" he said, "no difficulties can stop the Chinese people from moving forward."

The anniversary also comes as China is facing growing frictions with neighbors including Japan, South Korea and the Philippines over territorial claims and their close relationships with Beijing's chief rival, the United States.

The Communists under Mao Zedong seized power in 1949 amid a civil war with the Nationalists, also known as the KMT, led by Chiang Kai-shek, who shifted their political, economic and military power to the now self-governing island democracy of Taiwan. Beijing continues to insist Taiwan must be annexed under Communist Party rule, by force if necessary, while the U.S. has provided arms to ensure its defense.

China, meanwhile, has involved itself in disputes over its claims to most of the South China Sea and uninhabited islands held by Japan, the Philippines, Vietnam and other neighboring nations.

China's military buildup and its recent launch of a nuclear capable ballistic missile into the Pacific Ocean have raised concerns about a possible conflict.

At home, Xi has made himself effectively leader for life by ending term limits and extending his power over key government and party bodies. China allows no competitive elections and the party retains near total control over the media that informs its 1.4 billion people.

## **September**

### **Building on Past Achievements and Forging Ahead Together Toward a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind**

29 September 2024, MFA

Mr. President, Colleagues,

Today, humanity has once again come to a historical crossroads. We are facing a changing and turbulent world. Challenges of insecurity, imbalanced development and ineffective governance are increasingly prominent. Hotspot conflicts, major-country confrontation and geopolitical tensions keep emerging. The future of this planet is becoming a



Statement by H.E. Wang Yi  
Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China At the General Debate of the 79th Session of The United Nations General Assembly New York, September 28, 2024

cause for growing concern. Meanwhile, we are also embracing a world full of hope. Multipolarity and globalization have become the unstoppable trend of our times. The aspirations of the Global South nations for modernization has never been stronger. Our stride toward modernization has never been more steadfast.

This institution, the United Nations, embodies the aspirations of people across the world for lasting peace and common prosperity, and bears witness to the glorious journey of the international community coming together in pursuit of progress. President Xi Jinping stressed on multiple occasions that the role of the U.N. should be strengthened, not weakened. Amid global transformation not seen in a century, what China calls for is to follow the trend of the times, keep to the direction of human progress, and make the right choices of history. What China proposes is to uphold peaceful coexistence and put in place a security architecture that ensures enduring stability; uphold openness and inclusiveness and foster a development paradigm that promotes shared prosperity; uphold harmony without uniformity and adopt an approach to civilizations that promotes exchange and mutual learning; and uphold fairness and justice and develop a governance structure that pools strengths for shared benefit.

In today's world, the security of all countries is tied together. In face of various kinds of global challenges and risks, no one can stay immune or enjoy security alone. Countries need to be guided by a vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security. We should respect each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, take the legitimate security concerns of others seriously, and resolve disputes and differences through dialogue and consultation. We should actively explore a path for major countries to coexist in peace, and work for a new type of international relations characterized

by mutual respect, fairness, justice and win-win cooperation.

In today's world, the development of all countries is deeply integrated. If the rich get richer while the poor remain poor, then "everyone is born equal" would become an empty slogan, and fairness and justice would be even more elusive. Achieving modernization is a legitimate right of the people of all countries, not a prerogative of a few. We should be committed to advancing global modernization, and ensure that no one and no country is left behind on the journey toward modernization. We should advocate a universally beneficial and inclusive globalization, unequivocally oppose unilateralism and protectionism, and help developing countries leap over the development divide, to maintain the vitality of global economic growth.

In today's world, each civilization has its own strengths. President Xi Jinping pointed out that there is no such thing as a superior or inferior civilization, and civilizations are different only in identity and location. We should respect the diversity of civilizations, and strive to replace estrangement and clash of civilizations with exchanges and mutual learning. We should advocate humanity's common values, namely, peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom, refrain from conducting values-oriented diplomacy, and oppose ideology-based confrontation. We should respect each other as equals, and help each other succeed with an inclusive mind. In today's world, countries should all enjoy sovereign equality. As a large number of Global South nations are growing with a strong momentum, gone are the days when one or two major powers call the shots on everything. We should advocate an equal and orderly multipolar world, and see that all countries, regardless of their size, have their own place and role in the multipolar system. We should practice true multilateralism, oppose hegemonism and power politics, and make international relations more democratic. We should follow the principle of extensive consultation and joint contribution for shared benefit, and make global governance more just and equitable.

Mr. President,

Peace is the most precious thing in our world today. You may wonder if there is a path leading to peace. In fact, peace is the path. Without peace, development will not sustain; without peace, cooperation cannot happen. For the sake of peace, a single ray of hope is reason enough not to give up; the slightest chance deserves a hundredfold effort.

An end to the Ukraine crisis remains elusive. The top priority is to commit to "no expansion of the battlefield, no escalation of fighting and no provocation by any party," and push for deescalation of the situation as soon as possible.

China is committed to playing a constructive role, engaging in shuttle mediation and promoting talks for peace, not throwing oil on the fire or exploiting the situation for selfish gains. At this session of the General Assembly, China, Brazil and other Global South countries have jointly launched the group of Friends for Peace. Its very purpose is to uphold the purposes and principles of the U.N. Charter, build consensus for a political settlement of the crisis and contribute to a prospect of peace.

The question of Palestine is the biggest wound to human conscience. As we speak, the conflict in Gaza is still going on, causing more civilian casualties with each passing day. Fighting has spread to Lebanon; might must not take the place of justice. Palestine's long-held aspiration to establish an independent state should not be shunned anymore, and the historical injustice suffered by the Palestinian people should not be ignored any longer. There must not be any delay in reaching a comprehensive ceasefire, and the fundamental way out lies in the two-State solution. China has always been a staunch supporter of the just cause of the Palestinian people to regain their legitimate national rights, and a staunch supporter of Palestine's full U.N. membership. We have recently helped to bring about breakthroughs in intra-Palestine reconciliation, and will continue to work in concert with like-minded countries for a comprehensive and just settlement of the question of Palestine and durable peace and security in the Middle East.

The issue of Afghanistan concerns regional peace and security. It is important to help Afghanistan exercise prudent governance, fight terrorism effectively, improve people's life and reinvigorate the economy, to open up a better future for the Afghan people.

The Korean Peninsula should not experience war again. The important thing is to make persistent effort for deescalation, commit to seeking solutions through dialogue and consultation, realize a transition from the armistice to a peace mechanism, and safeguard peace and stability on the Peninsula.

China is deeply aware that Asia needs stability and development and opposes division and conflict. As an important origin of human civilization and a key engine of global growth, Asia has the wisdom and capability to stabilize the situation through regional cooperation and handle differences properly through dialogue and consultation. We are firmly against the meddling by countries outside the region, and will resolutely resist attempts by any force to stoke trouble and confrontation in the region.

Mr. President,

As the world faces increasingly serious challenges, China has never opted to be an indifferent spectator. Instead, we have been playing a bigger part in

global governance than ever before. President Xi Jinping has put forth the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative in recent years. They carry China's wisdom for resolving various difficult issues confronting humanity, and bring impetus from China for improving global governance.

In the face of uneven and inadequate global development, China's proposal is to put development at the top of the global agenda, focus on delivering the Sustainable Development Goals of the U.N. 2030 Agenda, increase input in development, and help developing countries better respond to different risks and challenges. At the recent Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, President Xi Jinping outlined 10 partnership actions to be taken together with Africa to advance modernization, and announced the decision to give over 40 LDCs, including those in Africa, zero-tariff treatment for 100 percent tariff lines. China is the first major developing country and the first major economy to take such a significant step.

In the face of unilateral, bullying acts such as sanctions and blockade, China firmly supports countries in defending their legitimate rights, upholding the equity and openness of the international system, making global development more coordinated and beneficial for all, and jointly opposing technology blockade and rejecting decoupling or severing supply chains. Sanctions and pressure will not bring monopolistic advantages. Suppressing and containing others will not solve problems at home. The right of people of all countries to pursue a better life should not be taken away. Here, we once again urge the United States to completely lift its blockade, sanctions and terrorism-related designation against Cuba.

In the face of aggravating ecological challenges, China is firmly committed to a path of green, low-carbon and sustainable development. We will move from carbon peaking to carbon neutrality in the shortest time span in world history, contributing China's efforts to harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature. At the global level, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities must be upheld, and the Paris Agreement must be implemented in earnest. Developed countries should assist developing countries in building their capacity to cope with climate change. Touting the need of climate response while suppressing the green industries of others will only hold back global progress in green transition.

In the face of burgeoning artificial intelligence (AI), China is committed to taking a people-centered approach, developing AI for good, and putting equal emphasis on development and security. We are working to explore and establish widely-



recognized international rules and standards. China supports the U.N.'s role as the main channel for global AI governance and is committed to strengthening international cooperation on AI capacity-building. China has put forth the AI Capacity-Building Action Plan for Good and for All, and is ready to make more contributions to the sound, orderly, fair and inclusive development of AI. In the face of the task of human rights protection, China maintains that all countries' right to independently choose their path of human rights development should be respected. No country should impose its own will on others, or arbitrarily interfere in others' internal affairs citing human rights as an excuse. In human rights protection, China is committed to putting people first and promoting the free and well-rounded development of the people. We have found a path of human rights development that suits China's national conditions. China is ready to engage in dialogue and exchanges with all countries and U.N. human rights bodies on an equal footing, and jointly promote the sound development of the global human rights cause.

Mr. President,

Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory. This is the history and the reality. Both the Cairo Declaration and the Potsdam Proclamation stated in explicit terms that all the territories Japan had stolen from the Chinese, such as Taiwan and the Penghu Islands, shall be restored to China, and this constitutes an important part of the post-war international order. Right here in this august hall 53 years ago, the 26th session of the U.N. General Assembly adopted Resolution 2758 with an overwhelming majority, deciding to restore all the rights of the People's Republic of China at the U.N., to recognize the representatives of the Government of the People's Republic of China as the only legitimate representatives of China to the U.N., and to expel forthwith the representatives of the Taiwan region from the U.N. and all the organizations related to it. Once and for all, the resolution resolved the issue of the representation of the whole of China, including Taiwan, in the U.N. It made clear that there is no such thing as "two Chinas," or "one China, one Taiwan." On this matter of principle, there is no gray zone or room for ambiguity. The complete reunification of China will be achieved. Taiwan will eventually return to the embrace of the motherland. This is the overwhelming trend of history that no one and no force can stop.

Mr. President,

In a few days' time, the People's Republic of China will celebrate the 75th anniversary of its founding. Over the past 75 years, no matter how the world changes, China's dedication has not changed. It is dedicated to pursuing happiness for the Chinese

people and the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. It is also dedicated to human progress and world harmony. In the course of seeking its own development, China has kept in mind the common interests of the whole world, generating new opportunities for the world through its own development. Not long ago, the Third Plenum of the 20th CPC Central Committee made an important decision on further deepening reform comprehensively to advance Chinese modernization. It set in motion a new journey where China joins hands with the world in common development and progress.

Chinese modernization will contribute robustly to world peace and stability. The Chinese culture values peace, and the Chinese nation has no tradition of external expansion. China, once a victim of foreign power bullying, knows full well the value of peace and the hard-won gains of development. In fact, China is the only major country that has written peaceful development into its constitution, and the only country among the five nuclear-weapon states to pledge no-first-use of nuclear weapons. We are actively exploring and putting into practice the Chinese way of addressing hotspot issues, boosting the prospects for resolving the security dilemma and improving security governance, and paving the ground for conflict settlement and peacebuilding. Every step in China's development is an increase in the force for peace.

Chinese modernization will contribute robustly to the common development for all. China does not only care about its own development. We are ready to develop hand in hand with all countries. By further expanding high-standard opening up, China is aligning proactively with high-standard international economic and trade rules to foster a market-oriented, law-based and world-class business environment. China has realized full mutual visa exemption with many countries, and is expanding its unilateral visa waiver program to facilitate two-way personnel flows. China is vigorously promoting high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, a concrete step to support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. China will also speed up the implementation of the eight measures in support of Global South cooperation and the series of initiatives supporting Africa's peace and development, in order to help countries in the Global South stride toward modernization.

Chinese modernization will contribute robustly to improving global governance. China has been an abiding supporter of the U.N.'s continued reform and development to bring about a modernized "U.N. 2.0." The international financial system needs to be more fit for the times and global governance should be more balanced and effective. China will

continue to fulfill its international obligations, provide financial support and send our best minds to the United Nations. The U.N. system needs to respond to the legitimate calls of developing countries and increase the representation and voice of those in the Global South.

Chinese modernization will contribute robustly to the advancement of human civilization. Chinese modernization is rooted in China, but has also drawn on the achievements of other civilizations. It has created a new form of human advancement, and provided a new choice to other countries in exploring modernization paths. China believes that different civilizations should respect and learn from one another, and jointly contribute to the progress of human civilization. China has proposed the setting up of an International Day for Dialogue among Civilizations. We call for more people-to-people exchanges and cooperation across the world, to strengthen mutual understanding and amity among people of all countries.

Mr. President,

Next year will mark the 80th anniversary of the victory of the World Anti-Fascist War and the founding of this very Organization. China stands ready to work with all countries to renew the founding purposes and mission of the U.N., reaffirm our steadfast commitment to the U.N. Charter, advocate and practice true multilateralism, build a community with a shared future for mankind, and jointly usher in a better world.

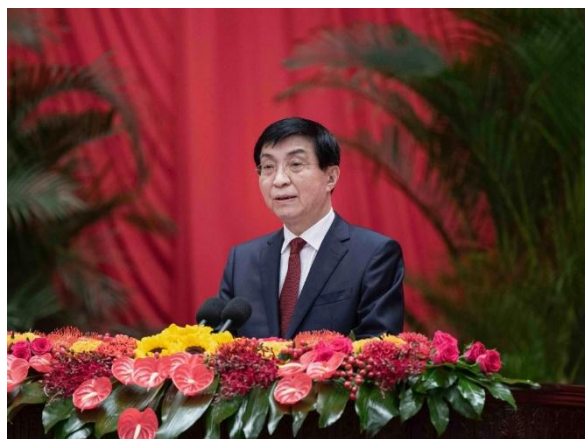
Thank you.

### **China's top political advisor calls for broadest patriotic united front at National Day reception**

29 September 2024, People's Daily Online

China's top political advisor Wang Huning on Saturday called for consolidating and developing the broadest possible patriotic united front to rally the people's support, foster consensus, and pool their strength to advance Chinese modernization.

Wang, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political



Wang Huning, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), delivers a speech at a reception to celebrate the upcoming 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, in Beijing, capital of China, Sept. 28, 2024. The reception was jointly held by the General Office of the CPPCC National Committee, the United Front Work Department of the CPC Central Committee, the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council, the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council, the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, and the All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese. (Xinhua/Li Tao)

Consultative Conference, made the remarks at a reception held in Beijing to celebrate the upcoming 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

"To accomplish Chinese modernization, it is essential for all Chinese people to unite and collaborate collectively," he said.

On Hong Kong and Macao, Wang stressed the determination to continue to fully, faithfully, and resolutely implement the policy of One Country, Two Systems, see that Hong Kong and Macao are administered by patriots, inspire more people in Hong Kong and Macao to love both the country and their own regions, and support Hong Kong and Macao in better integrating themselves into the country's overall development.

On Taiwan, Wang stressed adherence to the one-China principle and the 1992 Consensus, expressing the willingness to promote peaceful development of cross-strait relations and advance integrated development in all fields.

He called for efforts to resolutely oppose "Taiwan independence" separatist activities and foreign interference and unswervingly advance the cause of national reunification.

About 2,000 representatives from Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and overseas Chinese communities attended the reception.

## **'Get things done': China tries to rally risk-averse officials to revive economy**

27 September 2024, SCMP, Xinlu Liang and William Zheng

China's leaders are again seeking to rally risk-averse cadres to the cause of decisive economic action by stressing the need to "get things done" and its tolerance of mistakes in a policy known as the "three exempts".

The Politburo, the ruling Communist Party's inner circle, signalled the renewed political commitment in a statement after a meeting on Thursday to, in part, address the lack of action among many officials to help revive the economy.

"Party members and officials are urged to take responsibility and be willing to innovate, using challenges as opportunities to grow and achieve results," state news agency Xinhua quoted the Politburo as saying.

"The 'three exempts' framework must be effectively applied to support those who take on responsibilities and get things done. Major economic provinces should be encouraged to take the lead and play a greater role in driving the economy forward."

The meeting came a day after financial authorities unveiled a series of sweeping stimulus measures and in the lead-up to National Day celebrations, underscoring Beijing's desire to prop up growth over other priorities.

It also stressed the need for proactive policies, effective financial measures and support for the private sector.

President Xi Jinping launched the three exempts policy in 2016 to tackle the challenges officials face in advancing reforms.

Many civil servants are reluctant to innovate and fear making mistakes, daunted by the system's centralisation, tight controls and lack of flexibility. Stringent oversight by the party's formidable disciplinary bodies is also a deterrent.

The three exempts policy differentiates between "mistakes" made during reforms, suggesting leniency for those stemming from inexperience rather than deliberate violations of discipline; those made in exploration; and those made unintentionally to promote development rather than for personal gain. In 2020, the party's Central Committee went one step further to protect the rights of members to make mistakes, aiming to encourage initiative among its cadres.

The three exempts were underscored by Xi in January and again at a major party meeting in July to encourage officials to "forge ahead in a pioneering spirit and demonstrate enterprise in their work".

In a first, the July meeting referred specifically to the need to seriously investigate and handle "false accusations" against officials.

"It's a clear signal from the party's top leadership, telling officials down the command chain that now the economy is their priority"

• Deng Yuwen, former Study Times editor

Deng Yuwen, former deputy editor of Study Times, the official newspaper of the Central Party School, said the three exempts reference on Thursday was a clear message to officials down the line that economic recovery was now the top performance indicator on their report card.

"It's a clear signal from the party's top leadership, telling officials down the command chain that now the economy is Beijing has tried to strike a balance between national security and economic growth as "external hostilities" have grown, but mixed messaging and ambiguity have long made cadres fearful of taking action.

Xie Maosong, a senior researcher at the National Institute of Strategic Studies at Tsinghua University, said trial and error were a part of any difficult task.

"The party has to value those cadres who have the guts to test the water, because its reform and opening up is entering deep waters, with all the low-hanging fruit already picked," Xie said.

Victor Shih, a specialist in Chinese elite politics and finance at the University of California San Diego, said the sloganeering was an attempt to encourage local officials to take more risks as their counterparts did in the 1980s and 1990s to drive growth.

"Local initiative would indeed help with growth today," Shih said.

But there were big differences between then and now.

"First, local governments are much more indebted so are less able to take initiatives on their own. They will need to dovetail their initiatives with central projects in order to take advantage of central transfer payments," he said.

"Second, given the strong national security concern in Beijing, local officials still will be hesitant to collaborate with foreign investors. This was not the case in the 1980s and 1990s, when foreign investors were seen as highly desirable by the central leadership."

To foster genuine economic recovery, Beijing must demonstrate that officials who take risks and innovate will be rewarded, according to a political scientist at Peking University who declined to be named.

He said motivated officials were "the most critical driver" to China's growth but tougher regulations and anti-corruption campaigns over the past decade had made officials more risk-averse and hesitant to engage with the business community.

"So many just don't push for new initiatives, don't do extra, just pass the bosses' instructions down," he said.

"Beijing needs to reward them and let the whole party know, so that more will follow. Without such examples, few will take a first step because the previous few years have fixed their view."

their priority. It essentially relaxes the current strict political requirements so that officials know what they should focus on," Deng said.

"As the economy continues to worsen, the party's leadership is getting more anxious than before, because they know a stagnant economy will mean major political risk in the future.

"They have also come to realise that besides the stimulus from the central bank and the Ministry of Finance, they also need to stimulate the enthusiasm of cadres."

### **Top Chinese economist disappears from public life after criticizing Xi Jinping**

27 September 2024, Tibetan Review

China sought to deny that Xi Jinping is a dictator when criticized as such by US President Joe Biden in Nov 2023, but a leading economist at a government thinktank has reportedly disappeared after being disciplined for criticising the Chinese President in a private online chat group.

Zhu Hengpeng, 55, reportedly made disparaging remarks about China's economy, and potentially about the Chinese leader specifically, in a private WeChat group. He was subsequently detained in April and put under investigation, according to the Wall Street Journal which cited anonymous sources.

The specifics of what Zhu wrote in the private WeChat group are not known, although Hong Kong's Sing Tao Daily has said he "improperly discussed central policies". The Wall Street Journal has also reported that he allegedly made a reference to "Xi's mortality".

Zhu worked at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Cass) for more than 20 years, most recently as the Institute of Economics deputy director and director of the Public Policy Research Center.

He has reportedly not been seen in public since April when he spoke at an event organised by Chinese media outlet Caixin, which he had done previously. Efforts by the Wall Street Journal to contact him at home were reportedly unsuccessful. The Cass has not responded to queries, reported theguardian.com Sep 25.

Zhu's loss of position at the Cass also saw a shakeup of the institute's senior ranks, with the director and secretary also removed from their posts, the report said, citing Hong Kong media reports earlier this

month. While those two officials were reassigned, Zhu was not, the report said, citing Sing Tao Daily. He is no longer listed on the Cass website.

Websites related to his work at Tsinghua University have also reportedly been taken offline.

Cass is a state research think tank that reports directly to China's top leadership. Chen Daoyin, a former associate professor at Shanghai University of Political Science and Law, described it as a "body to formulate party ideology to support the leadership," noted businessinsider.in Sep 24.

While Cass sometimes provides relatively frank analysis, under the increasingly authoritarian rule of Xi, criticism of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and his individual leadership has become increasingly frowned upon, and treated punitively, said theguardian.com report.

Notices on the Cass website were stated to show staff engaging in several political education sessions in recent months, with a heavy focus on party loyalty and adherence to Xi Jinping Thought – the name given to the enshrined political ideology of the CPC leader.

China's economy is struggling, and there are concerns that the world's second-largest economy will miss its own 5% annual growth target, a relatively modest ambition by historic standards. However, Xi is seen as giving greater importance to his and the party's grip on power than the nation's economy.

### **Reforms key to better protection of human rights**

25 September 2024, China Daily

Experts at a human rights symposium in Beijing on Tuesday called for stronger judicial protection of human rights, enhanced oversight of law enforcement, and reforms to address issues in the application of coercive legal measures.

Organized by the China Society for Human Rights Studies, the symposium aimed to promote the comprehensive development of human rights across the country.

Zhang Wenxian, director of the Academic Committee of the China Law Society, stressed that the rule of law is the most effective means to protect human rights.

He noted that despite progress, misuse of administrative and coercive measures – which sometimes constitute infringement on personal and property rights – still exists. Zhang said the need for further reforms to safeguard citizens and the legal representatives of entities and organizations is critical.

His comments came after the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China reaffirmed the importance of the judicial

protection of human rights, calling for a "correct outlook on human rights "and more robust legal safeguards.

In July, the CPC Central Committee issued a resolution aimed at advancing Chinese modernization, highlighting the need for stronger protection of personal and property rights through law enforcement and judicial mechanisms. The resolution stressed improving systems for oversight and redress, particularly in cases involving coercive measures such as illegal detentions, the use of torture and the freezing of assets.

Zhang acknowledged that systemic shortcomings remain, particularly in ensuring personal and property rights are respected in law enforcement. He called for a comprehensive plan to improve human rights awareness among judicial personnel and more intensive reforms to prevent abuses of power.

Ma Huaide, president of China University of Political Science and Law, pointed to the problematic application of coercive measures such as the seizure and freezing of property, which often leads to human rights violations.

Ma cited a recent case in Shandong province, where a market regulation official was investigated for threatening a business operator, illustrating the need for greater oversight.

Li Xiao, a senior inspector at the Supreme People's Court, highlighted progress in reforming the trial-centered criminal procedure system, leading to the correction of several wrongful convictions.

However, she noted that misconduct by some law enforcement officers, including illegal detentions and abuse of power for personal gain, continues to undermine public trust in the judicial system.

Li stressed the importance of further reforms to strengthen supervision at all stages of law enforcement and related judicial processes, ensuring that abuses of power are checked and human rights are protected.

### **Xi stresses imperative to give full play to CPPCC's political strengths**

22 September 2024, The State Council

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) convened a grand gathering to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the CPPCC. The event took place in the auditorium of the National Committee of the CPPCC on the morning of September 20. Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, Chinese president, and chairman of the Central Military Commission, attended the conference and delivered an important address. Xi underscored the imperative of having

greater confidence in the path, theory, system, and culture, giving full play to the salient political strengths of the CPPCC in advancing the whole-process people's democracy, and continuously consolidating and fostering a vibrant, stable and united political landscape.

Li Qiang, Zhao Leji, Cai Qi, Ding Xuexiang and Li Xi, who are members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, and Vice President Han Zheng, attended the conference. Wang Huning, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and chairman of the National Committee of the CPPCC, chaired the conference.

The conference commenced with the majestic national anthem. Xi delivered an important speech. He pointed out that the practice in the past 75 years has fully demonstrated that the CPPCC stands as a remarkable achievement the CPC has made in adapting the united front theory, political party theory, and democratic politics theory of Marxism-Leninism to China's realities and to the best of its traditional culture. The CPPCC is a great invention by the CPC leading other political parties, personages without party affiliation, people's organizations and people from all walks of life and all ethnic groups in the development of China's political system. It has a profound cultural, theoretical and practical foundation, distinct Chinese characteristics and significant political strengths. It is a scientific and effective institutional arrangement, and has distinctive political value unique in the development of the political systems of mankind.

Xi stressed that since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, we have adapted to the situation and tasks of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era, promoted innovation in theories on the development of the CPPCC based on practice, and constantly deepened the understanding of how the CPPCC should function and develop. The fundamental principles are as follows: the Party's overall leadership over the CPPCC must be upheld, the nature of the CPPCC must remain unchanged, the role of the CPPCC as a specialized consultative body must be given full play, China's new socialist political party system must be adhered to and improved, great unity and alliance must be maintained, strengthening ideological and political guidance and building a broad consensus must be taken as the central link, the central tasks of the Party and the country must be the focus when the CPPCC performs its duties, serving the people must be what the CPPCC pursues, the responsibilities of its members must be strengthened, and the CPPCC's capacity for performing its duties must be built in the spirit of reform and innovation. These 10 principles constitute our Party's important thinking on strengthening and



improving the work of the CPPCC, Xi said. They epitomize the experience the CPPCC has accumulated in its development in the past 75 years, especially since the beginning of the new era, and are fundamental guidelines for the CPPCC's work on the new journey in the new era. They must be implemented in a complete, accurate and comprehensive manner, and continue to be enriched and developed in practice.

Xi pointed out that consultative democracy is an important component of the whole-process people's democracy, a unique form and distinctive advantage of China's socialist democratic politics, and an important embodiment of the Party's mass line in the political sphere. On the new journey in the new era, we must adhere to the correct political direction, improve the system of consultative democracy in an integrated manner, make efforts to improve the mechanism of consultative democracy, continuously expand the methods and platforms of consultation, and actively create a good atmosphere and favorable conditions so as to promote extensive, multilevel, and institutionalized development of consultative democracy.

Xi noted that, on the new journey in the new era, the CPPCC should carry forward its fine traditions, shoulder its political responsibilities, ensure the integration of Party leadership, the united front, and consultative democracy, and give full play to the role of a specialized consultative body, so as to rally the people's support, build consensus, draw on collective wisdom, and pool strengths for advancing Chinese modernization.

Xi pointed out that upholding and developing socialism with Chinese characteristics is the linchpin of consolidating the common ideological and political foundation, and the Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era is the general guideline for the work of the CPPCC. The CPPCC must have a thorough understanding of the distinct political attributes of its system and its organizations, thoroughly study and implement the Party's innovative theories, constantly consolidate the common ideological and political foundation for unity and hard work, and do its work well for promoting political unity and cooperation, common ideological progress, and concerted action among all political parties, organizations, and people of all ethnic groups and from all walks of life.

Xi stressed that the CPPCC should leverage well its strengths in gathering talent and pooling wisdom, and further advance consultation and deliberation on state affairs with focus on major, challenging and hotspot issues concerning advancing Chinese modernization, further comprehensively deepening reform, promoting high-quality development and safeguarding social harmony and stability. He said

that the CPPCC should also give full play to its strengths in consultative oversight, and help ensure that the Party and the state's major decisions and plans deliver substantially.

Xi noted that the CPPCC should improve its working mechanism that propels the role of the united front in rallying the people's support and pooling strengths. He said the CPPCC should strengthen the political guidance on intellectuals who are not Party members, those working in the non-public sector, people from emerging social groups and those from the religious sector, extensively unite and stay engaged with overseas Chinese, and expand the convergence of interests in building a strong country and the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

Xi stressed that it is imperative to improve the working institutions and mechanisms of the CPPCC, and strengthen the coordination and cooperation between its consultation and other forms of consultation. It is essential to refine the mechanisms under which in-depth consultations and interactions are conducted, opinions are fully expressed, and broad consensus is built. It is equally important to strengthen the building of mechanisms under which the CPPCC can know better about social realities and public opinions, and stay engaged with and serve the people. The CPPCC should do more work to know more about people's actual conditions, address their concerns and make them feel that we do care about them.

Xi pointed out that building a team of CPPCC members who have profound understanding of the CPPCC, are adept at political consultation and discussion of state affairs, and abide by discipline, value norms and moral integrity, is an important guarantee for the CPPCC to perform its duties in high quality. All CPPCC members should cherish their political identity, temper their political morals, improve their capability to do political work, and have a stronger sense of mission and responsibility so that they can devote themselves to the practical work of pooling collective wisdom and strength, consulting on decision-making, consultative democracy and national governance.

Xi emphasized that CPC committees at all levels should strengthen the leadership over the work of the CPPCC and support the CPPCC in performing its duties. The leading Party members group of the CPPCC National Committee should play a leading role in commanding the direction, managing the overall situation, and ensuring implementation of related policies, and improve and implement the organizational system and institutional mechanism for the CPC's leadership over the work of the CPPCC. With the progress of the CPC's political work as guide, it is imperative to promote the CPPCC's Party building in a comprehensive way so that a clean

political ecology will be created for the CPPCC to perform its duties well.

Presiding over the meeting, Wang Huning pointed out that in his important speech, General Secretary Xi Jinping spoke highly of the historical contribution of the CPPCC, profoundly expounded on the CPPCC's distinct Chinese characteristics and significant political strengths, put forward clear requirements for continuously promoting extensive, multilevel, and institutionalized development of consultative democracy, and made comprehensive arrangements for the work of the CPPCC at present and in the future. The speech has pointed out the direction forward and provided fundamental guidelines for the high-quality development of the CPPCC work on the new journey in the new era. The speech is insightful and in depth, has rich connotations and is of political, ideological, and guiding significance. It is essential for us to earnestly study and implement the essence of the speech, Wang said. It is imperative to thoroughly study, comprehend and implement General Secretary Xi Jinping's important thinking on strengthening and improving the work of the CPPCC, understand the decisive significance of the "Two Establishments," consciously act on the "Two Upholds," and guarantee the integration of the Party's leadership, the united front, and consultative democracy, striving to make new contributions to the development of the Party and the country.

Those present at the meeting included members of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee in Beijing, members of the CPC Central Committee Secretariat, some vice chairpersons of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, state councilors, the president of the Supreme People's Court, the procurator-general of the Supreme People's Procuratorate, vice chairpersons of the National Committee of the CPPCC, and former leading officials of the CPPCC National Committee who have retired.

Approximately 800 attendees were present at the meeting, including the leading officials from relevant central Party and state departments, and relevant people's organizations and units, leaders of the other political parties' central committees and the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, and personages without party affiliation, members of the Standing Committee of the CPPCC National Committee in Beijing as well as representatives of relevant sectors.

## China sees significant rise in protests despite CCP regime's tight control: Report

21 September 2024, Zimbabwe Independent

An American nonprofit human rights organization, in its latest report released on August 28, documented 805 incidents of dissent in China between April and June, which marks an 18 percent increase compared to the same period in 2023, despite the Chinese communist regime's stringent controls.

According to the report by Washington-based Freedom House's China Dissent Monitor (CDM), most of the dissent incidents recorded across 370 provincial cities in China were related to labour disputes (44 percent) and homeowners' protests (21 percent), with the remainder involving diverse groups like rural residents, students, parents, investors, consumers, members of religious groups, activists, Tibetans, ethnic Mongolians, and members of the LGBT+ community.

Guangdong Province saw the highest number of protests, accounting for 13 percent of the total, followed by Shandong, Hebei, Henan, and Zhejiang. Shenzhen, Xi'an, and Sanya were among the cities with the highest rates of protests over economic issues.

Additionally, several cities in Guangdong Province also experienced a significant percentage of protests, as per the report.

Freedom House's CDM, documenting nearly 6,400 dissent events over two years, logged 805 dissent incidents in the second quarter of 2024, as per the report.

"The top regions for protest events were Guangdong (13 percent), followed by Shandong, Hebei, Henan, and Zhejiang. CDM has logged a total of 6,300 cases of dissent since data collection began in June 2022," the report read.

The CDM documented 228 protests led by rural residents over the past two years, most of which were linked to forced relocation and unfair land acquisition.

These cases shed light on the corruption and discontent that arises from widespread land expropriation, the report said.

The report analyzed 91 protests led by taxi, ride-hailing, delivery, bus, and truck drivers in China, while many of these events were sparked by policies affecting transportation workers, such as regulation on ride-hailing apps and self-driving taxis.

Dissent by homeowners and construction workers constitute 44 percent of all dissent cases in CDM's database, reflecting the major impact of the real estate crisis on citizens' livelihoods.

Despite the Chinese government's attempts to abate the real estate sector's collapse, CDM data indicates that protest frequency has not declined.

Analysis of CDM's data collected over two years indicates that Shenzhen, Xi'an, and Sanya have more protests over economic grievances on a per capita basis than any other cities in China, while many other highly ranked cities are located in Guangdong Province.

Meanwhile, despite Beijing's intervention efforts, China's economy is sliding into stagnation after four decades of growth.

The communist regime's measures have been unable to resolve key obstacles to economic advancement, such as the real estate crisis, a trade war with the United States, restrictions on the private sector, and the prolonged negative impacts of its stringent Covid-19 lockdowns and restrictions, as per the report.

The report indicates that many of the protests were suppressed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) due to concerns that they might pose greater political risks.

China observers suggest that the rise in protests, despite the CCP's stringent control, signals a legitimacy crisis for the party.

Chairman of the board of Taiwan's New School for Democracy, Tseng Chien-Yuan, told The Epoch Times that the current situation in China is unlike anywhere else, as even the middle class, including property owners, have stood up to protest, which shows that China's economic situation is very serious.

"People are forced to live in poverty, and the legitimacy of the CCP's rule, which is built on economic development, is greatly weakened," Yuan said.

"Under strict surveillance, people still come out to protest, which is a warning sign of a major crisis," he added.

Speaking to The Epoch Times on the matter, Wu Se-Chih, a researcher at Cross-Strait Policy Association in Taiwan, said, "Generally speaking, social protests occur when people's forbearance has reached its limit."

He claimed that the real number of the protests is much larger than what the CDM was able to collect because of the CCP's control and its censorship.

Freedom House acknowledged the media restrictions in China and the "risks associated with collecting information from within the country about dissent and protest" in the report.

Freedom House's CDM "was created in response to the information gap" through data collected from "news reports, civil society organizations, and China-based social media," as well as other sources.

Wu Se-Chih said that the Chinese regime always suppresses protests and blocks information from reaching the public and outside world.

The CCP also "used other methods to ease the backlash from the people or society," Wu said,

adding that "the CCP now has fewer and fewer means that it can use, especially as it's facing serious financial problems."

The researcher said when Chinese society as a whole falls into economic despair, it will be more difficult for the CCP to control the power of the people to counter its regime.

"In the end, the CCP will collapse due to the social unrest," he told the publication.

### **Translation: Chinese Universities Install Software to Identify and Punish Students Who Circumvent the Great Firewall**

18 September 2024, China Digital Times

A recent WeChat post reveals that some Chinese schools and universities are using special software to identify and punish students who "scale the wall"—that is, circumvent China's Great Firewall (GFW) to access overseas websites and portals. The post begins with a not-very-convincing exchange of WeChat messages between three students—identified as "student A," "student B," and "student C," respectively—discussing their university's use of the ABT Online Behavior Management System (安博通上网行为管理, Ānbótōng shàngwǎng xíngwéi guǎnlǐ) to identify and punish fellow students who circumvented the GFW to access blocked overseas websites and engage in "illegal discourse." In their conversation, one of the students writes that it was "lucky the school caught the offenders before they ruined the school's reputation." The text that follows this exchange reads like advertising copy and praises the various "advantages" of the software.

Below is a partial translation, with some added explanatory links, of the WeChat post. The post includes a statement—ostensibly from a teacher in the university's department of information management, though it reads more like an ABT product pitch—touting the four "advantages" of ABT's software:

1. High performance equipment, simple installation. [...] Tailor-made for colleges and universities.
2. Cutting-edge capability for identifying 116 types of GFW-circumvention proxy utilities, including popular utilities such as Shadowrocket, Clash, Freerate, and more.
3. A variety of authentication methods to meet the real-name requirements of different clients. [...] Utilizes overseas IP-address tracing and real-name registration to accurately pinpoint and "apprehend" violators.
4. Detailed and comprehensive reports, displayed in a separate interface.

How did the school discover which students "scaled the wall" to visit overseas websites? [...] The school

had installed the ABT Online Behavior Management System, which utilizes reverse IP lookup and real-name identification to accurately pinpoint students who circumvent the Great Firewall.

[...] Universities in various cities and provinces have also issued similar notices. For example, the National University of Defense Technology [in Changsha, Hunan province] issued a notice declaring, "This wall cannot be scaled! Do not test the law," and Jilin University of Finance and Economics issued a set of "regulations regarding students' illegal use of GFW-circumvention software."

[...] What are some university test-cases?

Five universities in Jiangxi province: Thanks to the product's outstanding accurate proxy-identification capability and robust library of proxy-identifying features, [ABT] successfully won the bid involving both 40Gb/s- and 60Gb/s-bandwidth equipment.

During a test at a certain university in Jiangxi, the Internet Supervision Office reported that a student had used a VPN to circumvent the GFW. ABT's technical staff worked closely with teachers in the university's Information Management Office to check the VPN logs and NAT (Network Address Translation) logs on ABT's Online Behavior Management System, and were able to accurately identify the suspected violator. A subsequent inspection of the student's computer revealed evidence that the suspect had accessed VPN software and illegal online forums. This efficient collaboration and precise investigation won high praise for our equipment and service from the teachers at the university's Information Management Office, which not only laid the groundwork for cooperation between our two parties, but also smoothed the path to ABT winning the bid for the project.

[...] In addition to countering circumvention, ABT's Online Behavior Management System also has sophisticated capabilities for identifying, controlling, and auditing more than 7,000 common software applications such as instant messaging, P2P downloads, stock trading, online gaming, online video-streaming, and more. By combining powerful bandwidth-management features, sophisticated management of network application behavior, and user-friendly logs and other functions, it can help academic institutions and companies alike to achieve visual control and worry-free security. [Chinese]

There is a long history of prosecutions and punishments of individuals in China who use VPNs to circumvent the GFW and access the uncensored Internet. One recent case involved the retroactive administrative punishment of a man in Ningde, Fujian province, for using a VPN back in 2020. In 2023, a programmer in Chengde, Hebei province, was fined three years of "illegal income," totaling over one

million yuan, for using a VPN to do work for an overseas client. VPN-related prosecutions of Uyghurs in Xinjiang have been even stricter than in other areas: in 2017, a computer science student in Urumqi was sentenced to 13 years in prison for using a VPN to bypass Internet censorship and view "illegal information." Other double standards abound: in November of last year, current affairs blogger Xiang Dongliang had his Weibo account banned for reporting nationalist pundit and former Global Times Editor-in-Chief Hu Xijin for illegal VPN use and posting to overseas websites such as X. (Xiang was punished, but authorities ignored his complaint about Hu's violation of the law.) In late 2022, CDT translated a censorship directive about a crackdown on censorship-circumvention tools. The crackdown was likely aimed at suppressing news about the nationwide spate of anti-lockdown demonstrations that came to be known as the "White Paper protests."

### **Xi urges continuous efforts to run people's congresses to good effect**

16 September 2024, The State Council

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC) held a grand meeting at the Great Hall of the People on the morning of Sept. 14 to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the NPC. Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, Chinese president and chairman of the Central Military Commission, attended the meeting and delivered an important speech. He stressed the need to further firm up confidence in the path, theory, system and culture, develop whole-process people's democracy, and continuously uphold, improve and run the system of people's congresses to good effect to provide a solid institutional guarantee for the Party and the people to achieve their goals on the new journey in the new era.

Li Qiang, Wang Huning, Cai Qi, Ding Xuexiang and Li Xi, who are members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, and Vice President Han Zheng, attended the event. The meeting was presided over by Zhao Leji, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and chairman of the NPC Standing Committee.

The meeting commenced amidst the resounding national anthem. Xi delivered an important speech. He pointed out that the system of people's congresses is the result of the arduous exploration and long-term struggles of the Chinese people under the CPC leadership. It is an entirely new political system that has grown from the Chinese soil and a

great invention in the evolution of political institutions. The establishment of this system marked a great transformation in China's political system, signifying a great shift from a power structure where the power was concentrated in the hands of a few while the majority faced oppression and exploitation, to one that is led by the Party and empowers the people to govern the country as its masters.

Xi emphasized that over the past 70 years, the system of people's congresses has, under the Party's leadership, effectively ensured that our country continues to advance along the socialist path. It has demonstrated significant political advantages in guaranteeing that the Party leads the people in governing the country according to law, ensuring that the people are the masters of the country, maintaining political life that is both vibrant and orderly, promoting the rule of law in all aspects of national governance, and safeguarding long-term stability and peace. This system has provided an important institutional guarantee for creating miracles of rapid economic development and long-term social stability. Practice has proven that the people's congress system is a sound system that accords with China's national conditions and realities, embodies the nature of socialist countries, and effectively rallies the strength of all Chinese people to advance Chinese modernization.

Xi pointed out that since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, our Party has stood at a new historical juncture, gained a deep understanding of the new changes to the principal contradictions in Chinese society, actively responded to the people's new demands and aspirations for democracy and rule of law, and improved the organizational and working systems of people's congresses, making historic achievements in its work. We adhere to adapting the basic tenets of Marxism to China's specific realities and fine traditional Chinese culture, deeply grasp the laws governing the development of socialist democracy, and continuously promote theoretical and practical innovations in the system of people's congresses. Noting that the system of people's congresses is an important institutional vehicle for realizing whole-process people's democracy in China, Xi said it is imperative to uphold the CPC's leadership, adhere to the use of a system of institutions to ensure that the people run the country, exercise law-based governance on all fronts, uphold democratic centralism, and stick to the path of socialist political advancement with Chinese characteristics. Efforts must be made to modernize China's system and capacity for governance, give full play to the role of deputies to people's congresses, strengthen the self-improvement efforts of people's congresses at various levels to uphold their four-fold role as political, working, representative institutions,

and institutions of state power. This series of new concepts, ideas and requirements form the Party's important thoughts on upholding and improving the system of people's congresses, providing fundamental guidance for the high-quality development of people's congresses in the new era, Xi said.

Xi emphasized the need to give full play to the role of people's congresses in ensuring full and effective implementation of the Constitution and laws. People's congresses at all levels and their standing committees must fully perform their functions, firmly safeguard the unity, dignity, and authority of the country's legal system, ensure effective implementation of the Constitution and laws, and make sure that all state organs fulfill their duties and carry out their work within the scope permitted by the Constitution and laws.

It is important that people's congresses play a leading role in legislative work, Xi said. He urges efforts to improve the legislative framework featuring guidance from Party committees, the leading role played by people's congresses, support from the government, and participation by all parties. Efforts should be made to step up legislation in key, emerging, and foreign-related fields, improve the quality of legislation, and continuously improve the socialist legal system with Chinese characteristics. He also urged efforts to accelerate the improvement of a legal system featuring equal rights, equal opportunities and fair rules for all to ensure that citizens fully enjoy their rights.

Xi emphasized the need to give full play to the key role of the oversight by people's congresses in the Party and state supervision systems. It is imperative to improve the system through which people's congresses oversee the government, the supervisory commissions, the people's courts and the people's procuratorates. Xi urged people's congresses to strengthen oversight of the implementation of the Constitution and laws, and intensify the review and oversight of government budgets and final accounts and the oversight over the management of state-owned assets and government debts. People's congresses should work to promote the implementation of the CPC Central Committee's decisions and plans, and ensure that all state organs exercise their powers by law and that the legitimate rights and interests of the people are safeguarded and realized. Administrative, supervisory, adjudicatory and procuratorial organs at various levels should readily accept oversight from people's congresses and effectively fulfill their respective supervisory duties, he said.

Xi pointed out that people's congresses should play an exemplary role in maintaining close ties with the people. All state organs and their employees must



foster a strong sense of service to the people, put the people above all else, and maintain close ties with them. Deputies to people's congresses shoulder the honorable duties entrusted to them by the people, Xi noted, urging them to faithfully represent the interests and will of the people, and serve as the bridge that links the Party and the state with the people. He stressed the need for all state organs to provide support for the deputies to the people's congresses to perform their duties in accordance with the law, improve the systems and mechanisms for contact with deputies, and ensure that deputies reach out to the public on a greater variety of issues and in more diversified ways.

Xi emphasized that party committees at all levels should strengthen their overall leadership over the work of the people's congresses, and support the people's congresses and their standing committees in exercising their powers and carrying out their work in accordance with the law. The leading Party members groups of the standing committees of the people's congresses at all levels should always adhere to the centralized and unified leadership of the Party Central Committee, fulfill their main responsibilities for comprehensively and strictly governing the Party, and strengthen the political, ideological, organizational, work style, and disciplinary construction of the people's congresses in line with the requirement to uphold the four-fold role. They should train personnel that maintain political resolve, serve the people, respect the rule of law, promote democracy, and are diligent and responsible, and continuously improve the quality and level of the people's congress work in the new era and on the new journey.

While presiding over the meeting, Zhao Leji said that General Secretary Xi Jinping's important speech reviewed the glorious course of the CPC leading the Chinese people in establishing and improving the system of people's congresses, and profoundly expounded on the remarkable political advantages of the system. The speech has systematically summarized the major achievements in theoretical and practical innovations of the system in the new era, and made comprehensive arrangements and clear requirements for upholding, improving, and running the system at a new historical starting point. The speech is forward-looking and inspires people to forge ahead. It enriches and develops Xi's important thoughts on upholding and improving the system, and is a guiding document shining with the brilliance of the truth of Marxism. We must study and comprehend it earnestly and firmly implement it. We must gain a deep understanding of the decisive significance of establishing Comrade Xi Jinping's core position on the Party Central Committee and in the Party as a whole and establishing the guiding role of

Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, and consciously uphold Comrade Xi Jinping's core position on the Party Central Committee and in the Party as a whole and uphold the Central Committee's authority and its centralized, unified leadership. We must unwaveringly keep to the path of socialist political advancement with Chinese characteristics, and uphold, improve and run the system of people's congresses to good effect.

The meeting was attended by members of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee, vice chairpersons of the NPC Standing Committee, State Councilors, president of the Supreme People's Court, procurator general of the Supreme People's Procuratorate, some vice chairpersons of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, senior comrades who had assumed leading positions at the NPC Standing Committee, as well as members of the Central Military Commission in Beijing.

Approximately 3,000 people attended the meeting, including leaders from various departments of the CPC Central Committee, government, military and people's organizations as well as leading officials from Beijing, leaders of the central committees of democratic parties and the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, representatives of non-party personages, members of the NPC Standing Committee and various special committees, senior officials from the standing committees of people's congresses at the provincial, regional and municipal levels, some NPC deputies, representatives from all walks of life in the capital, and foreign envoys in China.

### **China is poised to amend its anti-corruption law for the first time**

14 September 2024, SCMP, Yuanyue Dang

China is set to amend its anti-corruption law, allowing bail for corruption suspects during investigations but also extending the detention period during which suspects are denied access to a lawyer.

A draft amendment to the Supervision Law was under review by the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, China's top legislative body, during its four-day session that ended on Friday, state news agency Xinhua said.

It would be the first amendment since the legislation's introduction in March 2018. The draft was published on the NPC website on Friday afternoon as a month-long public consultation starts.

The Xinhua report did not say when and whether the standing committee would approve the amendments

but legislative amendments are generally adopted after three reviews.

Some lawyers said that the draft did not give them more leeway in defending their clients while providing anti-corruption agencies more legal tools to carry out investigations.

Under one new provision, investigators are authorised to “compel an individual who is suspected of serious dereliction of duties or committing a crime by abusing power to make himself available for investigation”.

The same provision also stipulates that investigators can only hold a suspect for 12 hours under normal circumstances, though the detention may be extended to 24 hours if it is deemed necessary considering the safety and psychological conditions of the suspect. Investigators would not be allowed to hold a suspect indefinitely by repeatedly extending the detention.

Another proposal would allow suspects of minor corruption offences to be released on bail for a maximum period of 12 months.

In addition, one provision would permit investigators to hold suspects of minor offences in a detention facility even if the suspects are not officially detained but deemed to pose “real security risks”, such as flight risk or the risk of suicide.

Under such circumstances, investigators would have to send the suspect to detention facilities within 24 hours after they identify the risk and decide within seven days whether to formally hold him in detention or release him.

Under the amendment, the period of disciplinary detention – commonly known as liuzhi – may be extended.

Under current law, disciplinary detention allows anti-corruption investigators to hold a suspect at designated facilities for up to six months. Such detention could apply to anyone employed in the state sector or on a public payroll, including officials, academics and teachers as well as those suspected of offering bribes.

A new provision would let investigators extend the detention another two months if they determine that a suspect’s offence could warrant more than 10 years’ imprisonment and that their inquiry cannot be completed within six months.

However, the extension would require approval from the country’s top anti-corruption body, the National Supervisory Commission – which is essentially the same body as the Communist Party’s Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI).

Additionally, the provision states, if the anti-corruption agency at or above the provincial level discovers that the suspect has committed other serious crimes, it can apply to the national agency

for a renewal of their detention period, which can be as long as eight months.

The change means that suspects in corruption cases may not be able to see a lawyer for more than a year before prosecutors charge them.

According to the CCDI, China’s top anti-corruption body, some 26,000 disciplinary detentions were ordered in 2023.

The most controversial feature of the Supervision Law has been that people detained by anti-corruption authorities are not allowed access to lawyers until they have been formally charged.

Despite years of calls from lawyers and legal scholars to change the rule, the proposed amendment does not modify it.

Xie Dan, a partner at Beijing Ronghe Law Firm, said: “We lawyers have been concerned over the years about how the authorities can protect the rights of suspects during investigations. The amendment partly addresses these concerns by providing alternatives to liuzhi and providing more details about how the system works.”

But, he added, “I still think that the authorities should allow them [suspects in corruption cases] to meet with lawyers during detention.”

Jin Hongwei, a partner at Beijing Huayi Law Firm, said that under the current Supervision Law, investigation almost automatically means detention, and that the new measures of the draft amendment make the transition from investigation to detention “more nuanced”.

Jin said the changes were expected to have a major impact on those under investigation, but “not on lawyers”.

For the first time, the draft also states that anti-corruption agencies should not “use their power to illegally interfere in the operation of enterprises” and should protect the “rights and interests of personal freedom and property” of entrepreneurs under investigation.

Beijing has called for protection of private businesses to create a more favourable business environment as China endures a weak economic recovery.

### **Report details how China retaliates against people for engaging with UN**

13 September 2024, VOA News, Liam Scott



*FILE - Jimmy Lai walks through the Stanley prison in Hong Kong on July 28, 2023.*

China is among the foreign governments that retaliate against people for engaging with the United Nations, according to a report released this week by the U.N. Secretary-General.

The report highlights how hard Beijing tries to silence its critics, according to Sophie Richardson, an expert on human rights in China.

"These [U.N.] mechanisms are some of the only ones available to people inside China, at least on paper, to provide any modicum of redress or justice for the human rights abuses either they've endured or the communities they work with have endured," Richardson told VOA.

"That's why you see the Chinese government go to extraordinary lengths to silence people who are simply trying to take reports to some of these human rights experts or bodies," Richardson said.

A former China director at Human Rights Watch, Richardson is currently a visiting scholar at Stanford University.

The annual report chronicles government retaliation against people for engaging with the U.N. In addition to China, other countries named in the report include Colombia, India, Nicaragua, the Philippines and Russia.

"In my perfect world, governments that get referenced in these reprisals reports shouldn't be members of the Human Rights Council," said Richardson, who is based in Washington. China is a current member of the council in Geneva.

China's Washington embassy, as well as its U.N. offices in New York and Geneva, did not reply to VOA's emails requesting comment for this story.

One of the incidents included in the report's China section is harassment against two members of the international legal team supporting Jimmy Lai, a pro-democracy publisher.

Lai is on trial in Hong Kong on national security charges that are widely viewed as politically motivated. The 76-year-old is in prison following convictions in other cases that supporters also view as sham cases.

Members of Lai's legal team have faced death and rape threats, as well as attempts by unknown sources

to hack their email and bank accounts, according to the report.

Sebastien Lai thanked the U.N. for shedding light on his father's case.

"These intimidation tactics will not succeed. I will not rest until my father is freed," he said in a statement.

Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC, a barrister leading Jimmy's international legal team, also condemned the attacks.

The reprisals "are personally unpleasant and distressing," Gallagher said in a statement. "But they are also an attack on the legal profession and on the international human rights system."

The reprisals make it harder for Jimmy Lai to use U.N. mechanisms to achieve justice in his case, Gallagher said.

Hong Kong's government has tried to argue that the legal team interfered in Hong Kong's judicial process by bringing his case to U.N. human rights mechanisms, according to the report.

"It's just so nakedly in tension with its obligations under international law," Richardson said.

On Thursday, Lai's international legal team submitted an urgent appeal to the U.N. special rapporteur on torture. The appeal raised several concerns, including that the elderly publisher has been in solitary confinement since late 2020 and that the British national has been denied access to independent medical care, according to a statement from his legal team.

Lai's trial began in December 2023. It was initially expected to last around 80 days but is now expected to resume in November.

Press freedom groups have called the trial a sham, and the U.S. and British governments have called for his immediate release. Hong Kong officials, however, have said he will receive a fair trial.

Other incidents cited in the U.N. report include the case of Cao Shunli, a Beijing-based human rights defender who was arrested following an attempt to engage in a universal periodic review of China's human rights record at the Human Rights Council. Cao died in custody in 2014.

Another case is that of the Beijing-based activists Li Wenzu and Wang Quanzhang, who are married. The couple have faced significant retaliation, including police surveillance and evictions, and their son is unable to enroll in school due to pressure from state authorities, the report said.

"If one reads these cases, you get a sense of what risks — what unbelievable risks — people are taking to do this kind of work," Richardson said.

The report doesn't mention specific incidents involving Uyghurs or Tibetans, but Richardson says their absence underscores how difficult it is for some groups to access U.N. mechanisms in the first place,

as well as how some people may be too scared to report such incidents to the U.N.

The Chinese government has engaged in severe human rights abuses against both ethnic groups, according to myriad reports. Multiple governments and international human rights organizations have accused Beijing of committing genocide and crimes against humanity against the Uyghurs, which the Chinese government rejects.

### **China to train 3,000 foreign law enforcement officers to protect overseas interests**

10 September 2024, SCMP, Phoebe Zhang

Public Security Minister Wang Xiaohong says Beijing will also send consultants to help countries improve law enforcement and tackle cross-border crime.

China will help to train 3,000 foreign law enforcement officials over the next year to tackle global security issues and better protect Chinese interests beyond its borders, the country's public security minister said.

Wang Xiaohong made the pledge in a speech on Monday at the opening of the 2024 Conference of the Global Public Security Cooperation Forum in Lianyungang, in eastern China's Jiangsu province, China Daily reported.

China will also send police consultants and working units to countries to help improve their law enforcement capacity, conduct joint patrols and investigations, and tackle cross-border crime, Wang said.

Beijing is seeking ways to boost its presence beyond its borders to protect overseas interests while offering an alternative to Western-led global security governance.

In the past year, China has worked with all parties to implement in-depth global security initiatives, and will continue to promote the development of the global public security governance system in a "more fair, reasonable and efficient direction", Wang said, according to state news agency Xinhua.

This year's conference was themed "Win-win cooperation under changing circumstances: building a global public security community". More than 2,100 people from 122 countries, regions and international organisations attended this year's event, which also featured forums on tourist security, police education and law enforcement capacity building, according to The Paper.

On Monday, Wang met security officials from Malaysia, Myanmar, Zambia, Nicaragua and Russia, and told them that China was willing to cooperate in the fight against telecoms fraud, drug trafficking and other cross-border crimes, boost security along belt and road infrastructure projects and offer criminal judicial help, Xinhua reported.

Francisco Javier Diaz Madriz, director general of Nicaragua's national police, told Xinhua his country was "looking forward to learning from China's successful experience".

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At last year's conference, Wang discussed the need to build a cooperative public security network, and said global powers "with more resources and advantages" should take the lead in upholding fairness and justice in the international community and take a stand against hegemony.

That forum also issued several documents, including proposals on data security, artificial intelligence governance, and a talent programme for global public security.

Beijing released a concept paper in February 2023 on its Global Security Initiative, a plan announced by President Xi Jinping almost a year earlier, as China tries to take a bigger role in global governance and security.

In the paper, Beijing repeated a call for countries to strengthen strategic dialogue to improve mutual trust and manage differences.

### **Questions continue to swirl around China's 'disappeared' foreign minister**

10 September 2024, VOA, Xiaoshan Xue

More than a year after China's former foreign minister, Qin Gang, disappeared from public view, raising a host of questions, the Chinese government remains silent on his whereabouts.

A new report this week from The Washington Post, citing two former U.S. government officials, suggests Qin has been spared any jail time and now is nominally holding a low-ranking position at a publishing house under the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Earlier reports speculated that he was sentenced to life in prison or had died from suicide or torture.

Some are skeptical about the Washington Post report, while others see it as evidence of uncertainty and impermanence within the political system directed by the Chinese Communist Party, or CCP.

According to Sunday's Washington Post report, Qin, 58, now works, at least on paper, for the World Affairs Press, a state-owned publishing house under the Foreign Ministry.

One of the former officials said Qin is "not going to jail, but his career is over."

Before he disappeared from public view in July of last year, Qin was the youngest foreign minister since the founding of the CCP. A leading theory among Chinese political analysts is that Qin was removed because he had an affair with Fu Xiaotian, a prominent Chinese television journalist, and that the

pair had a child born out of wedlock in the United States.

Some reports suggested that the Chinese government suspected Fu of sharing state secrets with foreign intelligence agencies, but these rumors have never been confirmed. Like Qin, Fu disappeared from public life for more than a year ago.

During a top-level political meeting in July, the Third Plenum of the 20th Central Committee, the CCP agreed to Qin's request that he be removed from his post as a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Chinese state media reported. That followed an official announcement in February that said Qin had resigned as a parliamentary deputy.

A reporter from The Washington Post recently visited the bookstore of the World Affairs Press in Beijing, but employees there told the newspaper that they had not heard that Qin worked at the publishing house. A staff member who answered the phone said she did not know if the news was true. China's Foreign Ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

Some observers pointed out that the Washington Post's report is based on an anonymous source who has left office, and the authenticity still needs to be verified.

Neil Thomas, a fellow on Chinese politics at the Asia Society Policy Institute's Center for China Analysis, said on social media platform X, "The rumors of Qin Gang moving to World Affairs Press have been around for months. Sources are U.S. ex-officials and I don't know what they do. But @nakashimae & @cdcshepherd are top reporters."

Charles Smith, an encryption security expert, said on X that he doesn't believe the article, which "even notes the 'bookstore' employees have never seen Qin. ... He's on an extended fishing vacation." His tweet was accompanied by an image of a skeleton fishing underwater.

Last December, online news outlet Politico reported that Qin had been arrested for undermining national security and was tortured to death or committed suicide.

Yen-Ting, an X user who frequently comments on China's social and political issues, tweeted, "It's almost poetic justice, a 'Wolf Warrior' reduced to selling books while the regime's whispers suggest he's paid off the hook rather than locked up. This is China's way of dealing w/ its wayward wolves: not through the claws of justice but by shoving them into obscurity."

Kalpit A. Mankikar, a fellow in the Strategic Studies Program with the Observer Research Foundation in New Delhi, tweeted, "Once seen as Stalin's heir, Soviet politician Georgy Malenkov fell from grace and was banished to Kazakhstan to manage a power

plant. In #China, ex-foreign minister Qin Gang seems to have rehabilitated at a Party-run bookshop, says @washingtonpost."

The Washington Post report also quoted current and former U.S. officials who had dealt with Qin as saying he lacked the diplomatic skills of his experienced colleagues to break out of the "Wolf Warrior" model.

One example is that Qin appeared to threaten the U.S. with China "erasing" Taiwan Strait's median line, in a heated exchange with U.S. officials amid former U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in August 2022.

American columnist James Pinkerton tweeted a reader's online comment on the Washington Post report.

The reader Paul Messina said, "I believe that now that the Chinese economy is falling apart, Xi has realized that this 'Wolf Warrior' tactic has actually exacerbated the fall of Chinese industry. Besides aggravating the West, particularly the United States with this nonsense, it has led to multiple Western corporations leaving China, permanently closing their doors and factories in search of friendlier nations to do business.

"Vietnam and other nations have greatly benefited. Thus this idiot actually decreased the CCP's prestige in the world. I believe that this is why his new 'career' is librarian. Xi made a big mistake with his 'Wolf Warrior' attitude towards the world. I believe that he now realizes this fact."

Liu Jianchao, the head of the International Liaison Department of the CCP Central Committee, who is relatively moderate in terms of rhetoric and image, is considered a possible candidate to succeed Wang Yi as the next foreign minister.

According to The New York Times, as China is already seeking to soften its image in the U.S. and Europe and improve relations with some of its neighbors, appointing Liu may mean China is abandoning its "Wolf Warrior" diplomacy.

### **Chinese legal community asks: where is the line on death penalty for corrupt officials?**

08 September 2024, SCMP, William Zheng

Inner Mongolia court dismisses appeal by party official who pleaded guilty to pocketing more than US\$422 million and was sentenced to death.

China may see more death sentences handed down to corrupt officials in the future as President Xi Jinping's anti-corruption efforts reach into lucrative sectors and the spoils of corruption rise, according to Chinese law practitioners and observers.

The Chinese legal community's latest discussion about standards for the death penalty come after a court in



the Inner Mongolia autonomous region upheld the death sentence of a local official who pleaded guilty to pocketing more than 3 billion yuan (US\$422 million) in total.

On August 27, Inner Mongolia's regional high court dismissed an appeal by Li Jianping, 64, former party secretary of the economic and technological development zone in Hohhot, the region's capital city, according to its website.

Li's death sentence is awaiting final approval by the Supreme People's Court in keeping with a practice observed since 2006.

Li was also found guilty of condoning a local mafia organisation that carried out numerous illegal and criminal activities.

Even though more than 4 million officials have been caught up in China's sweeping anti-corruption campaign since Xi Jinping came to power at the end of 2012, it is rare for death sentences not to be suspended in corruption cases.

Li is only the third known case among officials handed the death penalty in the past decade. The others were Lai Xiaomin and Bai Tianhui, the former chairman and general manager of China Huarong International Holdings, one of the country's largest state-controlled asset management firms.

Lai was put to death by a court in the northern city of Tianjin in January 2021 after he was indicted for taking almost 1.8 billion yuan in bribes, as well as other forms of corruption and bigamy. His former subordinate Bai was handed the death penalty in May for accepting bribes exceeding 1.1 billion yuan. Two Chinese lawyers who handle corruption cases said the recent death penalty rulings were being closely watched by China's law practitioners for strong hints about the standard for the death penalty in such cases. Both declined to be named because of the sensitivity of the issue.

"If Bai is sentenced to death without a two-year suspension, then the 'death line' will be around 1.1 billion [yuan] in Bai's case," said one Beijing-based lawyer.

There is no official information about an appeal by Bai, but his death sentence has not been sent to the Supreme Court for final approval, meaning the ruling is not yet final.

A Shanghai lawyer concurred. He also noted that Zhang Zhongsheng – a former deputy mayor of Luliang city in Shanxi province who was indicted of taking 1.04 billion yuan – avoided execution when in 2021 he was granted a two-year reprieve on his death sentence on his appeal to Shanxi's provincial high court.

Under the presidency of Hu Jintao between 2003 and 2013, death penalties handed to corrupt officials were also rare but the sums involved were smaller.

Xu Maiyong and Jiang Renjie, former mayors of the eastern cities of Hangzhou and Suzhou, respectively, were corrupt officials who paid the ultimate price. Both were put to death in 2011.

Xu pleaded guilty to accepting more than 160 million yuan in bribes and embezzling more than 53 million yuan, while Jiang pocketed more than 100 million yuan.

Zheng Xiaoyu, director of the State Food and Drug Administration of China from 2003 to 2005, was sentenced to death for taking more than 6.49 million yuan. He was executed in 2007 in a case that was deemed extraordinary because he oversaw a sector considered highly consequential to the health of all Chinese.

Liu Changsong, director and founder of Beijing Mugong Law Firm, said although today's 1 billion yuan red line was "a rough threshold", any final decision on death penalty sentencing involved many other factors, including harm to the country and society from the crime, and mitigating circumstances such as a sincere confession of guilt, expression of repentance and efforts to return the proceeds of crime.

"In some cases, if the harm caused is extremely terrible, even if the bribe amount is not much, or just over the limit, the death penalty may be imposed," he said, noting the case of Lin Shiyuan, former deputy secretary of Chongqing's Qijiang county in 1999.

Lin was found guilty of accepting bribes of 110,000 yuan, which was just over the 100,000 yuan limit deemed to be serious corruption. But he was sentenced to death because the bribes he took led to the neglect of a local bridge that collapsed in 1999, killing 40 people. He managed to plead to a suspended death sentence in the second instance by reporting his boss for corruption.

Li Jianping, who is accused of receiving bribes from mining businessmen in the resource-rich Inner Mongolia region, was charged with pocketing 3 billion yuan in total – a record amount in recent decades. It is an example of what China's anti-corruption agency calls "small officials with big corruption".

According to Deng Yuwen, a former deputy editor of the Study Times, the Central Party School's official newspaper, China is likely to see the death penalty handed down to more corrupt officials as Xi puts hugely lucrative sectors – including finance and mining – in the cross hairs of anti-corruption investigators.

"Despite his rank, the total amount on Li's charge paper is even bigger than [that for] Lai Xiaomin, who was of deputy-ministerial rank, and held the previous corruption record," Deng said.

"That shows that while rank can be important, the position and what sectors under their control is key. If he is in charge of approving land usage, mining rights, etc, people will be willing to pay him top money or give him shares in the business to get a bite of the cake."

### **Rock 'n' roll, internet are potential Western 'colour revolution' traps: Chinese textbook**

04 September 2024, SCMP, Alcott Wei

Rock 'n' roll, pop music and the internet are Western vices that can be used to sow the seeds of "colour revolution" among Chinese youth, according to China's latest college textbook on national security. The textbook, which was officially launched last week, represents the latest move from Beijing to strengthen ideological control and promote national security among young Chinese.

The book, National Security Education Reader for College Students, will be used in the foundational course on national security education in universities, according to Community Party mouthpiece People's Daily.

According to the book, university students must remain vigilant against Western popular culture and beware of "colour revolution" traps when surfing online.

"Colour revolution" is Beijing's code for subversion instigated by Western powers, and their attempts to infiltrate various sectors of society and fuel unrest with the purpose of overthrowing the ruling establishment.

"The internet is a key channel of communication; popular culture like pop and rock music are often used as covers for [colour revolution]," the textbook warns.

It cites the 2010 Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia and the Arab spring movement that followed as examples of colour revolutions, arguing that these movements led to national turmoil.

The new textbook is based on various speeches on national security by President Xi Jinping and includes several essays tailored for university students.

The Ministry of Education, which held a symposium on Friday to mark the launch of the book, has urged teachers to make full use of it to boost awareness of national security risks.

"Comprehensively promote the use of the textbook, effectively equip university students to have a proper understanding of the concept of overall national security, guide them to become the firm practitioners of national security," the ministry said in an announcement on the launch.

Students are also required to study the meaning of "overall national security" – a concept put forward

by Xi in 2014 about raising such awareness and written into the National Security Law a year later. The book argues that the internet is a crucial platform for shaping public opinion, and China must defend cyberspace as it is a key battleground for national security in its ideological struggle with the West.

It also says that failure to safeguard national security was the main reason behind the collapse of the former Soviet Union, which had abandoned Marxism and one-party rule.

Xi has repeatedly called on his party to learn from the lessons of the Soviet Union's disintegration to avoid a similar fate.

It uses quotes from ancient Chinese texts to argue that university students should have a sense of crisis about national security, saying that they must be conscious about their roles in safeguarding national security, actively take part in related activities on campus and be vigilant against foreign infiltration.

"It's imperative to heighten sensitivity about national security on campus, and individuals must take the initiative and dare to struggle."

Primary and junior high schools have also been issued new textbooks that emphasise national security and traditional culture, state broadcaster CCTV reported as the autumn semester began on Sunday.

Since Xi came to power over a decade ago, the leadership in Beijing has stepped up national security education in school as a defence against what it calls infiltration by Western forces among Chinese youth.

In 2015, China designated April 15 as National Security Education Day, with numerous related activities organised in schools every year on this day since then.

In a speech delivered at the National Education Conference in 2018, Xi attacked Western countries for their attempts to "westernise" Chinese youth and orchestrate colour revolutions, as he stressed the importance of ideological education in classrooms. The speech was recently published in the party journal Qiushi.

### **China is pushing divisive political messages online using fake U.S. voters**

03 September 2024, NPR, Shannon Bond

A long-running Chinese influence operation is posing as American voters on social media in an attempt to exacerbate social divisions ahead of the 2024 presidential election, according to a new report from the research company Graphika.

The push by the campaign known as "Spamouflage" includes accounts claiming to be American voters and U.S. soldiers. They posted about hot-button topics including reproductive rights, homelessness,

U.S. support for Ukraine, and American policy toward Israel. They criticized President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris as well as former President Donald Trump and the Republican Party, and sometimes used artificial intelligence tools to create content.

The group of fake accounts Graphika identified is small — 15 accounts on X (formerly known as Twitter), one on TikTok, as well as a persona impersonating a U.S. news outlet across platforms. They claimed to be U.S. citizens or U.S.-focused activists “frustrated by American politics and the West,” the report said. With the exception of one TikTok video, they didn’t gain much traction with real users online.

Still, the activity underscores how China is “engaging in these more advanced deceptive behaviors and directly targeting these organic but hyper-sensitive social rifts” as part of a broader effort “to portray the U.S. as this declining global power with weak political leadership and a failing system of governance,” said Jack Stubbs, Graphika’s chief intelligence officer.

The U.S. intelligence community said in its most recent election security update in late July that China’s influence operations “are using social media to sow divisions in the United States and portray democracies as chaotic.”

However, intelligence officials say they do not believe Beijing plans to influence the outcome of the presidential election, which may explain why the Spamouflage cluster Graphika identified targeted both Democrats and Republicans.

“Generally, the accounts were very critical of Biden, but we also saw them criticizing Trump as well, and in more recent weeks, actually increasingly targeting Kamala Harris since Biden dropped off the ticket,” Stubbs said. “It looks to us like they were attempting to build their fake identities less around an individual party or individual party candidate and more around the idea of U.S. patriotism or national pride.”

Graphika is a research company that studies social networks and online communities for companies, tech platforms, human rights organizations and universities.

The findings build on another report earlier this year from the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, a nonprofit which studies extremism and disinformation, that uncovered four other Spamouflage accounts on X posing as supporters of Trump and the MAGA movement.

Graphika first publicly identified the Spamouflage operation in 2019. It’s grown into one of the most sprawling networks of fake accounts across the internet. It has largely focused on pushing pro-China narratives, including attacks on pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong, praise for

China’s COVID-19 response, and AI-generated news videos promoting Chinese leadership. More recently, it has also begun posting about American politics and elections. Last year, Facebook owner Meta linked the operation to Chinese law enforcement.

The accounts Graphika identified bore many hallmarks of Spamouflage activity, including coordinated posting and sharing content that has previously been linked to the operation. Some accounts occasionally slipped up and posted in Chinese. One account on X, calling itself “Common fireman,” was previously branded as a pro-China media outlet, Graphika said.

Stubbs cautioned that the cluster of accounts Graphika found is “one small sliver of this wider operation.” He noted a larger portion of the Spamouflage network is also targeting the U.S. using different types of accounts. “And then there are huge parts of the network that are targeting issues in Hong Kong, for example, or the broader Indo-Pacific, that aren’t directly concerned with the upcoming U.S. election.”

While the cluster’s efforts went largely unnoticed by real people, it did strike one success. A TikTok account posing as a conservative American news outlet and social media influencer posted a video mocking Biden in July that was viewed 1.5 million times, Graphika said.

TikTok said it has taken the account down for violating its policies, as well as the other accounts Graphika identified.

“The TikTok accounts referenced in this report have been banned, and we will continue to remove deceptive accounts and harmful misinformation as we protect the integrity of our platform during the US elections,” a TikTok spokesperson said.

The fake news outlet also has an account on X, and previously had a YouTube channel and Instagram account, both of which have been taken down.

Stubbs said it wasn’t clear why that particular video had been removed, but that occasional hits are possible with a “high volume, low impact” operation like Spamouflage.

“They’re just throwing a lot of stuff out there, and every now and then a little bit of it will stick,” he said. “But it’s probably worth noting that throwing spaghetti at the wall and hoping that occasionally a piece will stick doesn’t feel to be a recipe for longer term success.”

## August

### China places former chairman of top aircraft maker AVIC under investigation for corruption

31 August 2024, SCMP, Jane Cai

A former head of China's leading aircraft manufacturer has been placed under investigation as Beijing pushes ahead with anti-corruption efforts in sectors crucial to its military capacity.

Tan Ruisong, chairman of the Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC) from 2018 to 2023, is suspected to have committed "severe violations" of the law and Communist Party discipline.

He is being investigated by the party's Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) and the National Commission of Supervision, according to a statement released on Friday.

The country's top anti-corruption watchdogs did not provide details of the alleged "severe violations", a euphemism for corruption.

Tan, 62, was removed from his post at state-owned giant AVIC in March 2023 for age reasons, according to the party's personnel management arm.

Tan, a native of Hunan province, is a technocrat trained in aviation engine design, manufacturing and engineering. He had spent two decades with AVIC, a conglomerate with over 100 subsidiaries and 450,000 employees worldwide – more than America's Boeing and Europe's Airbus combined.

AVIC was the sixth largest defence contractor globally as of 2022 and second largest Chinese defence contractor by annual revenue after China North Industries Group, according to data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

In 2022, Tan vowed to turn AVIC into a world-class military equipment supplier.

The company aimed to become an industry champion like "the national ping pong team", he told the China International Aviation & Aerospace Exhibition, the country's premier air show held in the southern city of Zhuhai every two years.

AVIC is at the forefront of China's drive to become more technologically self-reliant, and makes products for military use as well as for the civil aviation market. Through its many subsidiaries, it manufactures some of China's leading fighter aircraft such as the J-10, J-11, and J-20.

The company is also a major supplier of components for China's small regional jet ARJ-21 and the C919, a narrowbody medium-haul aircraft. Its exports include the regional turboprop MA60 series and Y12s, and the AC series helicopters.

The aerospace and defence industry sector is a major source of technocrats favoured by Chinese President Xi Jinping to become part of the political elite. However, it has become a key target of Beijing's anti-graft campaign since nine generals including previous and serving commanders from the rocket and air

forces were dismissed from the top legislature in December, after several of them were placed under investigation.

The shake-up exposed rampant irregularities in bidding and procurement processes for military equipment.

Months later, in June, former defence minister Li Shangfu and his predecessor Wei Fenghe were both expelled from the party as Beijing confirmed they were being investigated on suspicion of corruption.

The announcement of the unprecedented move came eight months after the abrupt dismissal of Li, making him China's shortest-serving defence minister.

Li, 66, previously oversaw military procurement. He was accused of accepting "large sums of money" to seek benefits for others, and allegedly bribing others. Wei was accused of accepting a huge amount of money and helping others to gain improper benefits. AVIC and other eight state-owned enterprises operating in key sectors including nuclear, aerospace and shipbuilding promised in July to tighten their bidding and procurement rules as well as look at areas such as hiring and quality control, following a series of inspections by the CCDI.

A number of senior defence company executives have already been caught up in the anti-corruption campaign. China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC), a main contractor for the country's space programme, said 36 employees had been the subject of the party's disciplinary action and seven had been handed over to judicial authorities.

Former CASC chairman Wu Yansheng was among three senior aerospace-defence executives stripped of their seats on the country's top political advisory body, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), in December.

### China's Communist Party brings in new rules to regulate faith, loyalty and performance

30 August 2024, SCMP, William Zheng

Regulations target members who are not guilty of serious breaches but 'lack revolutionary spirit' or fail to pay membership fees on time.

China's Communist Party has rolled out a set of new rules to remove incompetent members deemed lagging in their faith, loyalty and performance, in a bid to further strengthen the party's control over the conduct of its nearly 100 million members.

The new rules released by the party's general office on Thursday, decree that underperforming party members, whose conduct might not warrant a formal corruption investigation, be disqualified from the party, state-run Xinhua news agency said.

Comprising 27 articles, the rules are "crucial for exercising full and rigorous" party self-cleansing,

according to Xinhua, quoting an official from the Central Organisation Department, the party's top personnel office.

Unlike disciplinary measures imposed on party members who violate the party's discipline, for example through corruption, this new set of regulations specifically targets party members who "lack revolutionary spirit, fail to fulfil their party obligations, or no longer meet party membership criteria", the official told Xinhua.

It is essential for establishing a team of party members with "stronger beliefs, better political reliability, superior qualities, stricter discipline and more significant contributions", the official said.

According to Xie Maosong, a senior research fellow at the National Strategy Institute at Tsinghua University, party membership is a necessity for those who want to climb the political or social ladder, but that many slack off after joining the party.

"The party is already very big. While it is growing in numbers, it must also control the quality of people who are in the party," Xie said.

According to the report issued by the Central Organisation Department in June, the party had more than 99.18 million members at the end of 2023, up by more than 1.14 million from 2022.

Xie said that previously the party had mainly relied on the party's anti-graft watchdogs for self-cleansing but, they can only tackle serious wrongdoing.

Many with smaller conduct problems had previously not resulted in disciplinary action, but the organisation department will now have the necessary means to show the exit to those who were lagging behind, he said.

The official from the Central Organisation Department told Xinhua party branches were now required to closely watch their members' conduct and set a deadline for underperforming members – such as those failing to take part in regular party activities or pay membership fees in full and on time – to rectify their behaviour.

Party branches will now be able expel members who have lost their ideals and beliefs, waver in their political stance, neglect work assigned to them by the party, are disloyal to the party or fail to take part in party organisational activities for six months without a valid reason.

Depending on the circumstances, they can also persuade those who fail to rectify their conduct to

withdraw from the party voluntarily or it can expel them, according to the official.

The official added that members who threaten to leave the Communist Party as an attempt to gain leverage will be strongly encouraged to leave the party if they do not change their behaviour despite consultation.

## **New Chinese textbooks play up national security, Xi Jinping Thought and Vietnam, India wars**

28 August 2024, SCMP

New Chinese school textbooks will give more space to national security and traditional culture in Beijing's latest move to step up ideological propaganda and control.

Primary and junior high school students starting the autumn semester next week will be handed the new textbooks on Chinese language, history, as well as morality and law, state broadcaster CCTV said on Tuesday.

Morality and law was known until 2016 as ideology and politics. It is a mandatory subject that promotes the ideology of the ruling Communist Party.

Topics highlighted in the new textbooks include the president's political philosophy, Xi Jinping Thought. There will also be an emphasis on traditional Chinese culture and national security, according to a Ministry of Education official cited in the report.

All Chinese nationals receive nine years of compulsory education, six in primary school and the rest in junior high. The new textbooks will initially be used in the first and seventh grades, and will be extended to all nine grades within three years, according to CCTV. The new morality and law textbook would introduce the "main content and historical status" of Xi Jinping Thought, the report said.

Officially known as "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era", Xi's political philosophy was enshrined in China's constitution in 2018.

However, it has expanded in recent years to include seven aspects, covering his instructions on economic, diplomatic, military and environmental matters, as well as the law, propaganda and party discipline.

Earlier this year, the study of these ideas was made a top priority for all party organisations across the

country, with orders to hold regular meetings to study Xi's speeches and directives.

The new history textbooks will include the brief but bloody border war in 1962 between China and India, which ended with India's defeat after four weeks.



China and India are still at odds over their ill-defined Himalayan border, involving more than 120,000 sq km (46,300 square miles) of disputed territory. Both countries maintain a significant military presence in the border areas, and were involved in another deadly conflict in June 2020.

The 1979 China-Vietnam conflict will also feature in the new history books. Some 300,000 Chinese troops entered Vietnam to prevent Hanoi from overthrowing the Beijing-backed Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia. The conflict caused tens of thousands of casualties on both sides in what Beijing called a "self-defence war against Vietnam".

However it has long been silent on the issue, including not organising public commemorations of its 40th anniversary in 2019 and trying to prevent veterans from paying tribute.

Vietnam seeks Chinese investment and technical support, but the 1979 war and territorial disputes with Beijing in the South China Sea are potential hurdles to bilateral ties.

The Ministry of Education official quoted in the CCTV report said the new content would "allow students to deeply understand that national security is a top priority and that everyone has a responsibility to safeguard it".

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### China to make marriage easier, divorce harder in latest move to reverse population decline

25 August 2024, Tibetan Review

China had found it easier to punish its citizens in the past for violating its decades-long one-child policy than to motivate them now to have more children. With incentive policies having failed, its civil affairs ministry has now released a draft amendment to the Regulation on Marriage Registration this month, with the aim to make it easier for citizens to get married and harder to get divorced.

Calling it an important change to "build happy and harmonious families", the ministry has opened the draft amendment for public feedback until Sep 11.

For decades, families were ruined by impositions of steep fines and loss of jobs and opportunities for violating the country's draconian one-child norm. But now, with its population shrinking and rapidly ageing, the country is facing a demographic crisis. Policymakers have been struggling to encourage young people to get married and have children.

According to official data, some 3.43 million people registered for marriage in the first six months of 2024 – down 12% from a year ago and the lowest number in a decade, noted the scmp.com Aug 25.

The birth rate meanwhile plunged to a record low of 9.02 million births in 2023, the National Bureau of Statistics was cited as saying.

Under the revised regulation, couples can get married using just their ID cards anywhere in the country. Previously, they also needed their official household registration, or hukou, and could only marry in the places where they were registered.

The revision also includes a 30-day cooling-off period for a divorce, when either party may withdraw their application. This only applies to divorce applications made at registry offices, not divorce by lawsuit.

But it remains doubtful whether the new legislation would make any significant difference. Faced with high living costs, a challenging job market and increasing work pressure, many young people are choosing not to marry and start families. In addition, more women are becoming well-educated and financially independent, which has led to more individual freedom and choices, the report noted.

The government has been trying to drive up the birth rate with incentives that included cheaper housing, tax

cuts and even cash payments. President Xi Jinping has called for women to return to more traditional roles, urging officials to “foster a new type of marriage and childbearing culture”.

But many young people are drawn to the narrative that marriage is a trap and has no benefits, the report noted.

For some young people, the trend away from marriage is liberating. Tiffany Chen, an unmarried film producer in Beijing, said it showed that young people saw marriage as an outdated institution, the report said. “When young people are no longer getting married, it means that they believe love, intimacy, sex and companionship – crucial concepts to humankind – are no longer linked to a marriage,” she has said.

### **China moves to ease low-level officials out from endless meetings, reports and red tape**

25 August 2024, SCMP, Xinlu Liang

‘Formalism’ is viewed as scourge of grass-roots officials pushed to meet onerous standards and carry out ‘pointless formalities’.

China has unveiled new regulations to tackle “formalism” and reduce the burden on grass-roots officials to improve governance amid endless red tape.

The issue of formalism – characterised by excessive paperwork, meetings and inspections – has hindered the ability of local leaders to effectively do their job, according to the new regulations released by the General Office of the Central Committee and the State Council.

The regulations were created as a vital part of the party’s broader efforts to enhance governance quality and align with directives laid out by President Xi Jinping during the third plenum, a spokesperson from the General Office of the Central Committee told Xinhua on Monday, adding: “For the first time, it has established institutional norms in the form of intraparty regulations aimed at reducing burdens at the grass-roots level”.

This initiative responds to a long-standing problem in which junior party officials often feel overwhelmed by a barrage of meetings and extensive reports they must produce. These pressures have hindered Xi’s ambitions related to anti-corruption, revitalising the sluggish economy and rejuvenating the nation.

During last month’s third plenum, China also announced plans to improve mechanisms aimed at reducing “pointless formalities and bureaucratism”.

The published resolution emphasised the need to streamline meetings, documents and initiatives while curtailing community-level inspections and evaluations. It said there would be efforts to enhance

the quality of research and make such activities less frequent.

“We will formulate lists of duties for towns and townships [urban subdistricts] and refine the long-term mechanisms for reducing their burdens,” it added.

The newly enacted document includes reforms to streamline documentation, limit meetings, revise assessment protocols and ease burdens imposed on local-level organisations.

New guidelines governing how local policy documents are created aim to keep tasks to a minimum. Additionally, the document advises against using unnecessarily complex evaluation systems or burdening officials with detailed criteria, allowing them to focus on taking policy action instead.

In April, the central working group tackling formalism and China’s top anti-corruption watchdog, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), reported instances of junior cadres being burdened by bureaucratic tasks.

According to a report jointly released by the CCDI and a central working group tackling formalism, the education bureau conducted an unauthorised initiative in Changchun in Jilin province.

In 2023, the bureau changed the frequency of evaluations from every two years to annually and expanded the original 98 evaluation criteria into 179 scoring standards – resulting in some schools having to prepare around 1,000 review documents.

The Nanguan District Education Bureau even borrowed veteran teachers from primary and secondary schools to work in the bureau.

The same joint report said China’s state-owned pipeline giant PipeChina faced criticism for poorly coordinating meetings across departments.

In 2022, its headquarters ordered participation in more than 800 meetings. On average, the employees had to attend more than three meetings each work day.

Concerns about excessive meetings were raised to relevant departments last September, but their number further increased over the following six months.

“This high volume of meetings significantly consumed work time, prompting strong feedback from employees regarding the inefficiency and disruption caused by such practices,” the CCDI notice said.

The rules tighten the management of government-run social media accounts and applications to ease the pressure of preventing damage from zombie accounts, hackers and trolls.

Earlier this year, Beijing’s cyberspace watchdog ordered many local governments to shut down their social media accounts, once seen as a propaganda tool, amid budget cuts, institutional reforms and fatigue among the officials managing these accounts.

Additionally, stricter rules have been put in place to stop higher-level offices borrowing too many staff members from local units, including a broad range of public sector workers such as teachers.

He Xuefeng, a professor at Wuhan University specialising in rural governance, said higher-level departments often shifted responsibilities to grass-roots organisations while imposing stringent requirements, leading to chaos and confusion.

"Due to overly strict demands and excessive tasks from above, along with insufficient governance resources at the grass-roots level and many requirements that do not align with local realities, grass-roots organisations can only resort to formalism to cope with the bureaucratic demands of higher departments," he wrote in an article published on Monday by the local media outlet Guancha.cn.

He said that in one example in Henan province, village officials reported that collecting rural health insurance fees was more challenging than collecting agricultural taxes.

According to He, the burden on farmers had increased significantly and many were not willing to pay. Last year, they had to pay 380 yuan (US\$53) per person for the year, compared to just 10 yuan (US\$1.40) previously.

To meet collection goals, higher-level health insurance departments rank grass-roots organisations based on their performance in collecting health insurance, often leading to punitive measures for those that fall short, he wrote.

This system "shifts the responsibility of fee collection onto village officials instead of allowing voluntary participation from residents", creating significant frustration and confusion, He wrote.

In light of this challenge, the new regulations call for clear duty descriptions for townships and streets to ensure that the assessment of grass-roots work is based on defined responsibilities, preventing responsibilities being transferred from higher authorities.

Cai Qi, China's No 5 official and Xi's chief of staff, has emphasised the importance of ongoing reforms to reduce formalism. During a meeting on Tuesday, he urged officials to streamline inspections, evaluations and assessments to lessen the burden on grass-roots units, allowing them to focus more on "practical implementation".

### **China's Politburo meeting stresses Chinese-ness, ethnic unity, border stability**

23 August 2024, Tibetan Review

The Political Bureau (Politburo) of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee has called for the forging of a strong sense of community for the

Chinese nation to safeguard ethnic unity and stability in border areas during a meeting it held on Aug 23 to review policies and measures to open up a new vista in the large-scale development of the western region, according to China's official Xinhua news agency.

The meeting of China's top decision-making body was stated to have been chaired by Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee.

The meeting was stated to have urged focused efforts to pursue well-coordinated environmental conservation, large-scale opening-up, and high-quality development, and move faster to create a new pattern of development to elevate overall regional strength and sustainable development capacity.

These are often euphemisms employed by the Chinese leadership to implement policies for forced-relocation of Tibetan farmers and nomads, and for the facilitation of the settlement of burgeoning Chinese immigrants for a speedy Sinicization of the Tibetan Plateau. Many Tibetan farmers and herders have been force-relocated to newly built villages in remote areas near the borders with India, Bhutan and Nepal to act as eyes and ears for China's security apparatus, with little consideration for their largely subsidy-based living condition.

Efforts should be made to deepen reform comprehensively, further unleash and develop the productive forces, boost the vitality of society, and blaze a path of Chinese modernization that suits the realities of the region, a statement released after the meeting was cited as saying.

Measures will be taken to advance the new urbanization in accordance with local conditions, consolidate the poverty alleviation achievements, and make sure that there will be no relapsing into poverty on a large scale in rural areas, the meeting was cited as saying.

Much of the forced relocations in Tibet take place in the name of environmental protection and improving living conditions of Tibetan farmers and herders. The meeting was stated to have stressed "efforts to promote high-level environmental conservation, build a beautiful western region, thoroughly carry out pollution prevention and control, and advance green and low-carbon development."

Forging a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation, a euphemism for Sinicizing the ethnic minority regions, is also seen to have been stressed at the 4th Qomolangma Forum on Tibetan Studies held in Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province, from Aug 21 to 23.

Held four times since 2010 and organized by the China Association for Preservation and Development of Tibetan Culture and the China Tibetology Research Centre, nearly a hundred scholars from

universities and scientific research institutions in Sichuan, Yunnan, Gansu and Qinghai provinces, as well as Beijing and the Tibet autonomous region were stated to have attended this year's forum.

The participants were stated to have "exchanged academic research results from the perspectives of the contemporary inheritance and innovation of Tibetan studies, the practice of Chinese-style modernization in Xizang, and the forging of a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation."

### **As China celebrates Deng Xiaoping's legacy, the country is again at a crossroads**

22 August 2024, SCMP, Chow Chung-yan, Jane Cai and William Zheng

Deng and his 'true heir' Xi Jinping differ in strategies and approaches, but closer examination reveals many core similarities.

As China commemorates the 120th anniversary of Deng Xiaoping's birth, the Post examines his legacy across generations. In the first of a three-part series, we look at Deng's continuing resonance with the ruling Communist Party's leadership.

Chairman Mao Zedong called him the "steel factory" for his uncompromising resolve. Yet he was also a master of charm – winning the hearts and minds of the American public in one swoop by donning a cowboy hat on the first visit by a Chinese communist leader to the US.

The "chief architect" of the greatest economic liberation programme in history was also the man who demanded that the Communist Party "unwaveringly uphold the dictatorship of the proletariat", nipping the country's democracy movement in its bud.

As China celebrates the 120th anniversary of the birth of the late paramount leader Deng Xiaoping, the seemingly contradictory duality of the man and his legacy continue to resonate.

In Chinese culture, 60 years is known as *jiazi*, representing the full alignment cycle between heaven and earth.

The commemoration of Deng's 120th birthday on August 22 comes at a most intriguing time. After four decades of spectacular growth thanks to Deng's reforms, the world is again "standing at a crossroads of history", as his modern-day successor Xi Jinping put it.

Comparisons between the two men are almost inevitable. Xi, said to be the most powerful Chinese leader since Deng, is often depicted in Western narratives as the "dismantler" of Deng's reforms – an assertion that Beijing would angrily dismiss as a smear. Xi, according to various official reports and his own speeches, regards himself as Deng's true heir and the one to see through the great mission that

Deng started – the rejuvenation of China as a great civilisation.

Although the two leaders differed in their strategies and approaches, closer examination reveals many core similarities.

Each of them faced critical moments that would decide the Communist Party's very survival and reacted by breaking with the conventions and paths set by their predecessors.

Both Deng and Xi embarked on a zealous mission to restore China to its position as a great world power, and they shared a conviction that the Communist Party is indispensable to achieving that goal.

Deng was the first to warn that China must chart its own reform path and not blindly copy the Western model. He sneered at Mikhail Gorbachev's "perestroika" reforms in the Soviet Union, even as they were widely praised in the West.

"My father thinks Gorbachev is an idiot," Deng's younger son, Deng Zhifang, once told a friend.

By dismantling the Communist Party's power structure, "he [Gorbachev] will lose the power to fix the problems before people kick him out", the younger Deng recalled his father predicting, ahead of the Soviet Union's eventual collapse in 1991.

"Deng likes to say that he was groping for the stones as he crossed the river," wrote Ezra Vogel in his book *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*. "But in fact, he had developed strong convictions about getting across that particular river. One was that the Communist Party should be in charge."

Deng Yuwen, former deputy chief editor of the Central Party School's *Study Times*, also called Deng "a diehard communist".

"He did not want anyone using his reform initiative to damage the party's rule. He laid down the 'Four Cardinal Principles' to safeguard that."

The cardinal principles required Chinese leaders to adhere to the socialist path, the people's democratic dictatorship, the party's leadership, and Mao Zedong's Thought and Marxism-Leninism principles – the same message that Xi likes to stress.

"The most distinct feature of Comrade Deng's thoughts and practices is [they start] from reality, from the general trend of the world and from the situation and conditions of China," said Xi, in a 2014 speech to mark the 110th anniversary of his predecessor's birth. "A developing country like China would not rise if its people had no national dignity or the country lost its independence," Xi said. "We should not belittle ourselves, forget our heritage or betray the motherland."

Xi upheld Deng's Four Principles and answered with his own "Four Convictions" – officially translated as the Four Confidences.

These demand that the party's 99 million members demonstrate full faith in China's path, its unique political theories and system, and its rich history and

culture. The language and terminology used may differ, but the two men spoke with one voice.

Consensus, centralisation

However, each of them inherited a China facing drastically different challenges and conditions, and each responded with a unique approach.

When Deng and his colleagues emerged from the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution, the party and the country were on the brink of collapse. The decade-long anarchy had left the party's structure fragmented and ideologically divided.

Deng realised that his first task was to pull the party out of a quagmire of ideological infighting and shift the focus to economic growth. He opted for collective leadership – a consensus-building mechanism that gave the different factions seats at the table. "Meetings should be small and short ... If you don't have anything to say, save your breath ... the only reason to have meetings is to solve problems"

- Deng Xiaoping

Many of the unwritten rules in Chinese politics were formed in the years that followed, including the customary retirement age of 68 for senior leaders and the immunity from prosecution for former top leaders. These rules provided basic power-sharing and a mutual protection framework that made it possible for the factions to work together.

It was a design born out of pragmatism. Deng and his colleagues realised that factional and ideological differences would lead to little actual result and must be set aside.

If they could not reunite their divided party and refocus minds on economic development, the party's very survival – along with the People's Republic of China – would be in doubt.

While Deng was the unquestioned leader, he had the support of other party elders, such as Chen Yun – like Deng, a founding father of the People's Republic – and other peers. In his book, Vogel called Deng China's "general manager".

Deng's emphasis on pragmatism is best reflected in his speech at the closing of the fifth plenum of the 11th party congress.

"Meetings should be small and short. They should not be held at all unless the participants have prepared ... If you don't have anything to say, save your breath ... the only reason to have meetings is to solve problems," he said.

"There should be collective leadership in settling major issues. But when it comes to particular jobs or tasks, individual responsibility must be clearly defined, and each person should be held responsible."

The principle of collective leadership was designed to revitalise the party, as well as to prevent any faction from total domination.

While it proved useful, its shortcomings gradually become apparent. The striving for superficial unity eventually led to extreme caution, inertia and a breakdown of party discipline.

Later party chiefs would increasingly struggle to assemble a support team of their own choosing or to carry out reform programmes that would upset entrenched interest groups.

This was most apparent under former president Hu Jintao, who expanded the powerful Politburo Standing Committee's membership to nine to accommodate conflicting factional demands.

The decision-making body was half-jokingly referred to as the "nine dragons ruling the rainfall", in reference to an idiom observing that when power is shared, no one is powerful enough to effect a downpour.

With no strong leadership at the top and responsibility spread across the team, party discipline broke down, breeding rampant corruption as well as abuses of power and even insubordination.

Xi responded to the crisis by launching the largest anti-corruption campaign in the party's history and a drive to recentralise power. In the process, the unwritten rules – such as the exemption from prosecution of former top leaders – were shattered.

While the two leaders opted for opposing strategies, both Deng and Xi were aiming for the same goal – to refocus the party's minds on the common goal of national rejuvenation.

And Xi, like Deng, is also known for his dislike of "empty talk", often urging the party's cadres to "roll up their sleeves and work harder".

Xi's move to recentralise power was based on his view that the party was in danger of losing its cohesion and being hijacked by powerful interest groups, in a repeat of Gorbachev's Soviet Union.

Such concerns have deep roots in Chinese governing philosophy. Han Fei – whose teachings of 2,200 years ago formed the foundation of the Qin empire – said "the key to governing [a vast empire] with pressing issues on all fronts is a strong core".

Xi cited this quote in a keynote speech to the Politburo Standing Committee on January 15, 2018 – two months before the National People's Congress approved the amendment to the constitution removing presidential term limits.

Legacy and challenges

Deng's reforms transformed China in just 30 years – half a jiazi, before heaven and earth could complete one full cycle of alignment – from one of the poorest countries to the world's second-largest economy.



"If there is one leader to whom most Chinese people express gratitude for improvements in their daily lives, it is Deng Xiaoping," Vogel wrote.

"Did any other leader in the 20th century do more to improve the lives of so many? Did any other 20th-century leader have such a large and lasting influence on world history?"

Yet the Chinese leader's unparalleled success also created a host of problems. Towards the end of Vogel's book – written in 2011, just a year before Xi's ascension to power – the Harvard professor listed five challenges for Deng's successors.

They were: to contain corruption; provide universal social security; preserve the environment; maintain the party's legitimacy to rule; and to redefine and manage the boundaries of freedom. All have been top of the agenda under Xi.

"Things have changed so much ... but China still follows the route set by Deng, aiming to achieve rejuvenation by the construction of a unique China, no matter how the party's narrative put it," said Victor Gao, a former foreign ministry official and a translator for Deng in the 1980s.

According to Gao, vice-president of the Beijing-based think tank Centre for China and Globalisation, Deng's "vision and thinking remain relevant today" as the country "faces many challenges on how to open up to the world".

"It calls for an outstanding leader who can see the big picture clearly and work from the right direction, just like Deng did," he said.

### **Honour reformer Deng Xiaoping by realising China's revival, Xi Jinping urges nation**

22 August 2024, SCMP

Deng Xiaoping is heralded as the "architect" of China's economic reform, transforming a poor, backward country into a global superpower. Photo: AFP

The best way to commemorate Communist Party patriarch Deng Xiaoping is to persevere to realise the mission of national rejuvenation, Chinese President Xi Jinping said on Thursday, the 120th anniversary of the late leader's birth.

Paying tribute to Deng's political legacy while also identifying with it, Xi called on the country to rally behind his own policies on establishing a modern economic system, promoting hi-tech self-reliance, and safeguarding national sovereignty and development interests.

"The enduring tribute to Comrade Deng Xiaoping is to continue pushing forward the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics he initiated," Xi told top government and party officials as well as Deng's

relatives and former staff at Beijing's Great Hall of the People, according to state news agency Xinhua.

Xi delivered the address at a commemorative event held every decade around August 22 – a tradition that allows the party's leaders to reconnect with its founding fathers and announce a path forward.

He used the event to offer a salute to the past and to acknowledge the political challenges of today.

Xi said Deng's "one country, two systems" proposal – which defines Hong Kong and Macau's relationship with the mainland – "opened up a new path to achieve the complete reunification" of China in a peaceful way. The principle did so because it was centred on the country's fundamental, overall and long-term interests, ensuring both autonomy and stability in the two special administrative regions.

"We must steadfastly implement the one country, two systems policy and promote Hong Kong and Macau's integration into the national development framework," Xi said, in a year that not only marks 40th anniversary of the Sino-British Joint Declaration, a key document over the handover of Hong Kong to China, but also the 25th anniversary of the return of Macau to China.

One country, two systems was also supposed to be a template for unification with Taiwan.

In his address, Xi restated Beijing's unyielding position against Taiwanese independence, and presented himself as taking on the responsibility left by the party's elders.

"Achieving national reunification is not merely an aspiration of past leaders like Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, but a collective yearning of the Chinese people both home and abroad, and also an unstoppable historical trend."

Beijing regards Taiwan as a part of China to be reunited by force if necessary. Most countries, including the United States, do not recognise Taiwan as an independent state, but Washington is against any move to take it by force and is committed to arming the island.

Deng, who died in 1997 at the age of 92, is credited as the "architect" of China's economic reform which transformed a poor, backward country into a global superpower.

He dismantled the constraints of a heavily regulated planned economy and pioneered a hybrid market economy that has propelled China onto the world stage. He also reintroduced public examinations for university admissions and government jobs, laying the groundwork for the resurgence of education, science and technology in modern China.

But the anniversary comes as China grapples with unprecedented challenges, including economic sluggishness, rising unemployment and an intensified rivalry with the US.

With the country at a new crossroads, the leadership is drawing lessons from Deng but also searching for a path through the international tensions and economic headwinds.

"As we embark on this new journey in a new era, we must deeply study and apply Deng Xiaoping Theory to navigate the complexities of our time," Xi said, directly connecting his policies to the foundational work done by Deng.

Xi has articulated clearer objectives with specific timelines, such as aiming for a "moderately developed" economy by 2035 and realising the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation by 2049.

Party discipline is central to that reform mission – "the party must have a core, and the party's Central Committee must have authority".

"Reforms should be bold in spirit but steady in pace, managing the relationship between reform, development, and stability, with stability being paramount. The key to handling China's affairs lies in the party, which must focus on both reform and opening up, and on combating corruption," he said. Xi also reflected on Deng and China's place in the global order.

For the first time, Xi applauded Deng as "a great internationalist who has made significant contributions to world peace and development", remarks that tied China's present global path to Deng's strategy.

"China is a staunch force for world peace. We will advocate peace, development, cooperation, and win-win outcomes while pushing forward with initiatives to create a community of shared human destiny," Xi said, reaffirming his long-held goal for China to become a peaceful global superpower on the international stage.

"[Deng] profoundly summed up the experience and lessons of the reform and opening up process, emphasising the need to concentrate on party building, strengthen ideological and political work and education on fine traditions, improve the party's leadership level and governing ability, and ensure the stability of the red regime."

Xie Maosong, a senior researcher at the National Institute of Strategic Studies at Tsinghua University, said the speech framed Deng as the staunch defender of China's socialist path, a central legacy that Xi inherited and was upholding now.

"Just imagine if China were to follow the Soviet Union's path and to fall apart. The country might be totally different now. Deng's fundamental contribution to the party and his successors was leaving a united socialist China with the Communist Party playing an effective leadership," Xie said.

Rana Mitter, ST Lee Chair in US-Asia Relations at Harvard Kennedy School, said not all of Deng's approach was applicable today.

"Deng Xiaoping was a key figure in moving China from a command economy to market socialism. He worked with other key reformist figures, notably Zhao Ziyang and Hu Yaobang, and had to push back against economic conservatives such as Chen Yun," Mitter said.

"His plans worked well during the period of high global economic growth. However, today China faces slower growth and a need to move towards a more open, tech-driven economy – the export-oriented manufacturing of Deng's time can't just be translated to the 2020s."

Alfred Wu, an associate professor at the National University of Singapore, said there was a desire to return to the times of strong economic growth.

"All reforms are driven by necessity," he said. "Now everyone is dissatisfied, as the economic downturn is quite evident, and China is facing a hostile environment amid rivalry with the US."

### **Leaked Documents Reveal CCP Plan to "Eliminate" Falun Gong, Escalating Persecution**

20 August 2024, ChinaScope

The Falun Dafa Information Center has reportedly obtained information from insiders in China's Ministry of Public Security's (MPS) regarding the organization's new plan to "dismantle Falun Gong worldwide," including in the United States. Falun Gong (also called Falun Dafa) "is an ancient spiritual practice in the Buddhist tradition." The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) started persecuting Falun Gong in 1999 and has continued its persecution of the practice until today. The CCP has also targeted the Shen Yun performing arts group, which showcases traditional Chinese culture and religious beliefs and aims to raise awareness about the CCP's persecution of Falun Gong. The Falun Dafa Information Center's report stated that "it is abundantly clear both from sources inside China as well as from observable attacks (on Falun Gong and Shen Yun) over the past few months that these escalations against Falun Gong have already begun and are trending into uncharted territory. The internal documents explicitly state that the regime's aim is to 'eliminate Falun Gong worldwide.'"

The MPS' new plan has five tactics:

1. "Coordinated propaganda attacks against Shen Yun, Falun Gong"
2. "Inciting conflict between Falun Gong and the U.S. Government"

The MPS indicates it will deploy a two-pronged strategy:

1. Incite Falun Gong practitioners to distrust and even protest the U.S. government.

2. Provoke the U.S. government to investigate Shen Yun Performing Arts and other organizations founded by Falun Gong practitioners.
3. "Cutting communication channels that expose persecution inside China," blocking Falun Gong practitioners in China from contacting their overseas supporters
4. "Manipulating search engines and disseminating content in multiple formats" as a means to "carry out the offensive" against Falun Gong.
5. "Provoking distrust and internal divisions within the Falun Gong community"

### Chinese cartoon campaign warns village clans against hindering Communist Party

20 August 2024, SCMP

A cartoon circulating on official Chinese websites and social media accounts is intended as a cautionary tale against confronting the Communist Party and the government. Photo: Handout

Beijing is urging family clans in rural areas not to stand in the way of Communist Party and government policies.

In a cartoon circulating on government websites and social media since last week, a family elder demands that his nephew, a village official, block the construction of a telecommunications tower.



A comic strip issued by Beijing outlines a cautionary tale about a family elder demanding that a relative block the construction of a telecommunications tower. Image: Handout

It goes on to say the tower was demolished by the villagers, "causing more than 200,000 yuan [US\$28,000] damage" and the village official was expelled from the party.

The illustrated narrative, which was published on August 12 on the WeChat account of the Organisation Department of the eastern province of Jiangsu's party committee, has been reproduced on the social media accounts and web pages of courts and anti-corruption agencies in different regions of China.

The publication described the cartoon as a "case study", but did not say whether it was based on a real case – and if so, when or where the incident took place.

The text accompanying the cartoon warned that "in recent years, a small number of people with bad intentions have organised themselves and used the solidarity and cooperation within clans to confront the party and the government".

In many rural areas of China where people value family heritage, clans – often made up of male relatives with the same surname – hold considerable influence.

Under China's village committee organisation law, villagers can elect officials to form a committee to run their village and decide some village affairs by voting. The government post last week said the clans had "formed a 'state within a state', which has had extremely bad social effects". It called on party members and cadres to "consciously resist" such behaviour.

The cartoon is part of a massive public education campaign launched by Beijing regarding new party discipline rules announced at the end of last year.

The new rules, which came into force this year, broadened the scope of violations and punishments, such as banning party members from reading negative party histories.

They also reaffirmed the party's rules against clan influence, including the disqualification of party members who "organise and use clan influence to confront the party and the government".

In some areas with strong clan influence – such as Guangdong and Fujian provinces in southern China – and in some areas with ethnic minority populations, village administrators are often from the same surname. Their defence of clan interests has challenged the introduction of party policies in the villages.

Over the years, Beijing has repeatedly called for family clans and gangsters who have taken root in the countryside to be punished, demanding that local governments prevent them from "undermining the primary-level political system".

### Walz's China experience draws GOP attacks, but Beijing isn't counting on better ties

17 August 2024, ABC News

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz has a history with China. Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz has a history with China. And Republicans are seizing on it.

At 25, Walz taught a year of high school in China. He returned for his honeymoon and many more times with American exchange students. As a congressman, he served on a committee tracking

China's human rights and met figures like the Dalai Lama.

Now that Walz is the Democratic vice presidential nominee, Republicans have accused him of a decadeslong relationship with "Communist China" and even opened an investigation. The attacks reflect how, amid a tense U.S.-China relationship, visits once seen as simple cultural interactions have become a target for political opponents. Ultimately, Beijing does not expect U.S. policy to thaw regardless of who is in the White House, experts say.

With competition defining Washington's relationship with Beijing, any interaction with China appears to be "regarded with skepticism, if not outright suspicion," and it's become "a well-worn tactic to attack opponents simply for having a China line in their resumes," said Kyle Jaros, an associate professor of global affairs at the University of Notre Dame.

"The assumption behind these attack lines is that having China connections makes individuals beholden or sympathetic to China and compromises U.S. interests," Jaros said. "There is definitely such a thing as being too cozy with one's geopolitical rival, but blanket China-bashing and excluding people with firsthand China experience from U.S. policymaking is also bad for U.S. interests."

Republican Rep. James Comer, chair of the House Oversight and Accountability Committee, announced on Friday an investigation into Walz's China connections, including the student trips he had organized. Comer said he asked the FBI for information on whether Walz could have targeted by or recruited for Beijing's influence operations.

Walz's "longstanding and cozy relationship with China" should be a concern for Americans, Comer said in a statement.

Walz spokesman Teddy Tschann pointed to the governor's record in standing up to China's Communist Party and fighting for human rights and democracy. "Republicans are twisting basic facts and desperately lying to distract from the Trump-Vance agenda," Tschann said.

Scrutiny started almost immediately after Walz was named Vice President Kamala Harris' running mate in the November presidential election.

"Communist China is very happy with" Walz, Richard Grenell, former acting director of national intelligence

in President Donald Trump's administration, posted on the social media platform X.

Republican Sen. Tom Cotton of Arkansas wrote on X that Walz "owes the American people an explanation about his unusual, 35-year relationship with Communist China." Sen. Marco Rubio, a Florida

Republican, called Walz "an example of how Beijing patiently grooms future American leaders."

Walz was 26 when he returned from a one-year teaching gig in China. He spoke kindly of the Chinese people and said they had been "mistreated and cheated" by their government. He told the newspaper Chadron Record in his home state of Nebraska that he wished they had proper leadership.

Walz returned to China in 1994 for his honeymoon. He got married on June 4, the fifth anniversary of the bloody crackdown of the student-led pro-democracy movement in Tiananmen Square, which remains a political taboo in China.

"He wanted to have a date he'll always remember," Gwen Whipple, Walz's wife-to-be, told the Star-Herald of Scottsbluff, Nebraska, ahead of their trip. Later, when Walz came to Washington as a Minnesota congressman, he became a champion for China's human rights and served on a congressional committee that tracks the issue. He called a lunch with the Dalai Lama "life-changing."

He also posed for photos with Hong Kong pro-democracy activist Joshua Wong, who testified before Congress in 2019 when the territory was engulfed in monthslong protests over an unpopular proposal to allow suspects to be extradited to China for trial that raised concerns about Hong Kong's autonomy. Beijing sees the Tibetan spiritual leader and Wong as threats to its rule and disapproved of U.S. politicians meeting them.

In recent years, China has moderated its hopes for U.S. politicians with a history in the country, said Yun Sun, director of the China program at the foreign affairs think tank Stimson Center. That's partly because they might know details of China's internal problems, she said.

Walz's knowledge could actually lend credibility to U.S. criticism of the ruling Communist Party, said Dimitar Gueorguiev, an associate professor of political science at Syracuse University.

He also shows "how it is possible to have China experience and human-level empathy while retaining moral clarity" about the Chinese government, said Jaros of the University of Notre Dame.

In China, the public has been curious about Walz's experience in the country, but the government is tamping down discussions.

Alumni of Foshan No. 1 High School, the Chinese school where Walz taught in 1989-90, were asked not to post anything about Walz or accept media interviews, especially not with foreign journalists. The

notice, posted to at least one alumni chat group and shared with The Associated Press, cited the "extremely sensitive" China-U.S. relationship, the

anti-China consensus of both political parties and the need to “avoid unnecessary troubles.”

The nationalistic Chinese news site *guancha.cn* published an exclusive interview with Chen Weichuan, a retired English teacher from the school who was a translator between Walz and the principal and had taken Walz out for street food.

Chen described Walz as “very nice, easygoing and loved by students” and expressed admiration for Walz’s ascent from a teacher to governor and now vice presidential candidate. “He is remarkable,” Chen told *guancha.cn*.

Mao Ning, a spokeswoman for the Chinese foreign ministry, declined to comment, saying U.S. elections were a domestic affair.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has no illusion that Washington would soften its stance on Beijing, regardless of who gets elected in November, said Willy Lam, a senior fellow at the research institute Jamestown Foundation.

“They have stopped entertaining the aspect that individual politicians, individual CEOs might push the White House towards a more China-friendly policy,” Lam said.

### **Jailed Chinese activist faces another birthday alone in a cell, his wife says**

17 August 2024, AP News

Ding Jiaxi knew he would spend his 57th birthday alone in a Chinese prison cell, without a phone call from family or a chance to stretch in the sunlight.

It was the activist’s fifth year in those conditions. Despite letters assuring his family in the United States that he was healthy, his wife, Sophie Luo, was not convinced.

“I’m really worried about his health, because he was tortured before,” Luo told The Associated Press from Washington.

Luo shared details about her husband’s plight before his birthday Saturday, casting light on the harsh treatment endured by the country’s jailed political prisoners, who are often deprived of rights such as outdoor exercise and contact with loved ones, according to families and human rights groups.

Beijing has said prisoners’ legal rights are protected in accordance with Chinese law. The Chinese Embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

Ding, a key member of the now-defunct New Citizen’s Movement that sought to promote democracy and civil society in China, was detained in December 2019 after taking part in an informal gathering in the southeastern city of Xiamen to discuss current affairs. He was sentenced to 12 years in prison in April 2023 on charges of subverting state power.

Maya Wang, interim China director for the rights advocacy group Human Rights Watch, called harsh treatment “all common fare” for China’s political prisoners.

“Unfortunately, the mistreatment is very common, and it has gotten worse under Chinese President Xi Jinping,” Wang said. Political prisoners have been tortured, deprived of access to lawyers and given “very little” contact with their families, she said, adding that the secrecy has made it easier for abuse against prisoners to continue and their health to suffer. Rep. Adam Schiff, who serves on a bipartisan congressional human rights commission, urged Ding’s release.

“Once again, he will be alone in a prison in Hubei Province in China. He will be separated from his loved ones – his wife and children. He will mark the passing of yet another birthday in isolation – his fifth in prison,” Schiff, D-Calif., said in a statement released Friday.

Luo said she has not been allowed to speak with her husband on the phone since he was taken away by authorities in 2019. Since then, “I haven’t heard his voice,” said Luo, who moved to the U.S. with the couple’s two children soon after Ding was detained the first time in 2013.

It was only this March that she received his first letter. In letters, Ding has not been allowed to write about his case, how he has been treated in prison or any other subject deemed sensitive by the Chinese government, Luo said.

She said she could not believe Ding was banned from leaving his cell to go out for exercise. “This is really bad for his health,” Luo said. “Every prisoner in China should have the right to be let out for exercise. Why can’t he have that?”

And she lamented on the absence of Ding from the lives of their two daughters. “He can’t be with the girls when they needed a father most,” she said. “It’s really a big loss.”

### **TikTok promotes pro-China bias on Tibet, Taiwan, Uyghurs: study**

16 August 2024, RFA

The findings show Beijing’s attempts to sway public opinion, particularly among youth, experts say.

TikTok algorithms promote the Chinese government’s narratives on hot-button issues such as Tibet, Taiwan and the Uyghurs – while suppressing content critical of Beijing, a new study has found.

When users search for terms on TikTok – owned by Chinese company ByteDance – that are sensitive to

the ruling Chinese Communist Party, or CCP, such as “Tibet” and “Taiwan,” the results show much more



content that is pro-China than content that is critical of China, researchers found.

Compared to similar searches on Instagram and YouTube, the results showed a pronounced pro-Beijing bias, according to the study, titled "The CCP's Digital Charm Offensive," by the Network Contagion Research Institute, or NCRI, at Rutgers University.

The findings, "while not definitive proof of state orchestration, present compelling and strong circumstantial evidence of TikTok's covert content manipulation," wrote NCRI co-founder Joel Finkelstein in the report.

Swaying youth

The study mimicked the user journeys of American 16-year-olds based on the newly created accounts that were used to test the three platforms' search algorithm results, the report said.

The findings point to attempts by the Chinese government to shape public opinion — particularly among youth — on human rights and political issues, experts said.

Tibetan and Uyghur activists say that such bias obfuscates China's oppression of Tibetans and Uyghurs and its attempts to undermine or wipe out their languages and cultures.

Constant exposure to TikTok's pro-Beijing content is "a significant threat and concern," said Lobsang Gyatso Sithar, a member of the Tibetan parliament-in-exile and director of technology at the Tibet Action Institute.

Rushan Abbas, executive director of the Campaign for Uyghurs, said that the research shows a "strong possibility" of content suppression or amplification to align with Beijing's interests.

"The CCP is responsible for the Uyghur genocide and the oppression of the people of Hong Kong and Tibet," she said.

Beijing is using social media "in their campaign of transnational repression, harassing human rights defenders living outside of China," she said.

TikTok users also say that the short-form mobile video app has censored comments deemed critical of Beijing.

One young Uyghur user who wanted to remain nameless said that last November, after the outbreak of conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, Chinese officials said on social media that a genocide was happening in Gaza but not in Xinjiang, home to some 11 million Uyghurs.

"I posted a comment in Arabic saying China was actually committing genocide against Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang," he said. "My comment was soon removed by TikTok. I was quite shocked. Apparently, TikTok didn't want the Muslim world to know about the Uyghur genocide."

Rejecting criticism

A TikTok spokesperson rejected the study, saying it was a "non-peer reviewed, flawed experiment ... clearly engineered to reach a false, predetermined conclusion."

"Previous research by NCRI has been debunked by outside analysts, and this latest paper is equally flawed," the spokesperson, who asked that his name not be published, told RFA in an email.

"Creating fake accounts that interact with the app in a prescribed manner does not reflect real users' experience, just as this so-called study does not reflect facts or reality."

"One would hope media outlets would apply journalistic standards and rigor to fact check this type of fiction before rushing to publication," he wrote.

Concerns about Beijing's influence over TikTok are not new.

Since 2020, the Indian government has imposed a ban on more than 232 Chinese apps, including TikTok.

As of 2023, some 34 U.S. states enacted policies prohibiting government agencies and officials, including contract employees, from using TikTok. This year, the U.S. Congress passed legislation banning TikTok unless it is sold to a government-approved buyer. There are ongoing hearings about the potential for a ban of the app across the U.S.

The NCRI research found that when using TikTok to search for terms such as "Tibet," "Tibet," "Uyghurs" or "1989 Tiananmen Massacre," between 61% and 93% of the results were either pro-China or irrelevant, while anti-China content constituted only 5%.

By comparison, pro-China content made up 13.7% of content on YouTube and 27.7% on Instagram, the study showed.

In December 2023, the NCRI published its first report on TikTok which showed a strong possibility that content on the video-sharing app was being either amplified or suppressed based on the alignment with Chinese government narratives.

Influence tool

The Chinese government uses TikTok as a strategic tool to influence other countries, particularly young people, in an effort to shift their perceptions of China, said Vinayak Bhatt, an Indian defense analyst and former army general.

"This includes promoting the idea that China's economic growth is due not only to hard work but also to strategic government planning," he said.

Many Gen Z users of TikTok say they are aware of the Chinese government's biases and potential for content manipulation on the app, but choose to use it for recreational purposes.

"My page doesn't have any political content, so when I think of TikTok, I view it as more recreational,

but I also have a subconscious awareness that when I see anything pro-China or political, that it may be

influenced," said Tenzin Khando, a 20-year-old Tibetan student from New York, who has had a TikTok account since 2019.

Dolma Lhamo, a 25-year-old Tibetan resident of Orissa, India, recalled an issue with TikTok in 2019 when she posted a picture of the Dalai Lama and a note of appreciation on the platform on his birthday, but the post was blocked and did not appear.

Lhamo, who created her TikTok account about 10 years ago, expressed concern about the incident and said she stopped posting anything related to Tibet. Most TikTok Gen Z users say they are subconsciously aware of the Chinese government's biases and potential for content manipulation on the app, but choose to use it for recreational purposes.

But Chemi Lhamo, a Tibetan-Canadian human rights activist and campaign director at Students for a Free Tibet, said she avoids apps and digital platforms created by the Chinese government because she doesn't trust them.

"I also advise others against using such platforms due to concerns about bias," she said.

#### Language restrictions

Dawa Tsering, director of the Tibetan Policy Institute in Dharamsala, India, told RFA that the prohibition of Tibetan language on ByteDance's Douyin, the Chinese version of the TikTok app available to Tibetans inside Tibet and others in China, is indicative of a broader policy to eradicate the Tibetan language.

He said these restrictions are in line with Chinese government orders to suppress Tibetan culture and language, with social media platforms like TikTok actively supporting this policy of cultural eradication. Douyin has become a key platform for the Chinese authorities to distribute information and propaganda. Like other social media services in China, Douyin adheres to the censorship regulations set by the CCP.

### Experts warn of national security risks from Chinese apps

12 August 2024, Focus Taiwan

Chinese apps are a potential national security risk because of China's authoritarian political system, according to two experts from the Institute for National Defense and Security Research (INDSR).

"Information security risks are national security risks," said Tzeng Yi-suo (曾怡碩), an associate research fellow at INDSR's Division of Cyber Security and Decision-making Simulation.

"As long as the app is under the jurisdiction of the Chinese government, there will basically be security concerns," he explained.

Tzeng told CNA that commercial companies collect data about app users and then use algorithms to tailor relevant information and marketing.

This is not a problem in a democratic country governed by the rule of law such as Taiwan, the cyber-security expert said, because if the information involves judicial cases, the government will need to go through certain legal procedures to obtain the information.

However, the National Intelligence Law of the People's Republic of China and the Law of the People's Republic of China on Guarding State Secrets empower Chinese government agencies to require platform service providers to hand over users' data "as long as they determine that national security is involved," Tzeng said.

"How the Chinese government obtains the data and what they will do with it is not transparent," the security expert added.

In areas under China's authoritarian control, including Hong Kong and Macau, China "can assert its sovereignty" and "investigate the words and actions of users" through data collected by Chinese apps, said Tzeng.

In places outside of its jurisdiction, "China's authoritarian system" still poses risks to users, according to Lee Jyun-yi (李俊毅), an associate research fellow at INDSR's Division of National Security Research.

Lee cited the U.S. court testimony of former employees of ByteDance, TikTok's parent company, as evidence that "TikTok does indeed transmit users' personal information back to China."

In addition to the security of personal data, Chinese apps such as Douyin and TikTok pose risks relating to the spread of false information, according to Lee.

Lee told CNA that although misleading information is not limited to Chinese apps, popular Western platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube have adopted new methods to crack down on bot accounts and mark state-funded media.

"TikTok's lack of effort to do so makes it relatively easy for false information to spread," the expert said.

Lee also believes that Chinese apps may "shape users' perceptions" through algorithms.

Up to 40 percent of popular videos come from accounts controlled by the Chinese government, he noted.

"The Chinese government has legislated to require media platforms' algorithm recommendation models to comply with the values of the Chinese Communist Party," the security expert told CNA.

Taking Douyin as an example, Lee said that the platform promotes content that is "beneficial to China" and the Chinese government requires the platform to self-censor.

According to the scholar, this makes it "difficult for short videos that are negative or critical of China to appear or spread, which has a long-term effect in shaping people's perceptions."

The two security experts are not alone in their concerns over Chinese apps such as TikTok.

In March, Taiwan's Minister of Digital Affairs Audrey Tang (唐鳳) said that TikTok had been classified as a "dangerous product." The use of the app is banned in government agencies and on their premises in Taiwan. In April, U.S. President Joe Biden signed into law a bill titled Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act which required ByteDance to divest its U.S. assets or face a nationwide ban. The earliest such a ban could go into effect would be Jan. 19, 2025.

India completely banned TikTok in June 2020, while countries including Australia, the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Belgium, Denmark, Canada and New Zealand have separately imposed rules limiting certain workers from using the app due to cyber-security concerns.

### **Communist Party exhibitions lean on honour and obligation among young Chinese**

11 August 2024, SCMP, Yijing Shen and Alcott Wei

Xintiandi in downtown Shanghai used to be the name of a subway stop known for its chic restaurants and boutiques.

Three years ago, the stop was rebadged as the Site of the First National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, Xintiandi Station, to mark the party's centenary. At the same time, just a few minutes' walk from the station, an expanded memorial to the party's origins in the city opened, housing a permanent exhibition to the organisation's founding.

Since then, a steady stream of visitors – many of them students – have bypassed the shops to make their way to the patriotic-themed memorial, particularly on public holidays.

As part of summer holiday school assignments, students are required to visit patriotic exhibitions, and the one at the memorial is on a list of options they can choose from.

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The idea is to inspire greater loyalty to the party through stories of its struggles and success but while some visitors say the approach is motivating, others are looking for a more diverse view of history.

Patriotic education has become a national priority with the introduction of a law in January that spells out the responsibilities of everyone, from children to

adults, and schools to families, to the drive to build a strong, rejuvenated nation.

The effectiveness of the patriotism drive is difficult to measure, but one of those won over at the Shanghai memorial was Wang Xinning, a student at Fudan University in Shanghai.

Visiting the exhibition before the summer holiday, Wang said she was impressed by the stories of party martyrs who sacrificed their lives at a young age. "[Their stories] contrasted sharply with my life, and made me rethink my purpose of joining the Communist Party," she said.

It was a similar story at the Red Building on the Peking University campus in Beijing, where a young student of Marxism said she felt "fired up" when she visited the historic party site.

The site is often regarded as the cradle of the student-led May Fourth Movement of 1919, an anti-imperialist, cultural, and political movement in early modern China. The Red Building, a four-storey red brick house, reopened in 2021 to serve as a memorial to the party's early revolutionary activities. "I feel like I am in the company of those students [in 1919], and I am motivated to relearn Marxism and theories about the Communist Party," the student said.

[Their stories] contrasted sharply with my life, and made me rethink my purpose of joining the Communist Party

Wang Xinning, university student

But there were also visitors to these exhibitions who came out of obligation.

At the Communist Party Museum near Beijing Olympic Park, some parents said they came to help their children fulfil school requirements. One mother said her son needed to complete a worksheet about the Red Army and write the story of a Red Army soldier. "These tasks are troublesome, but they are requirements from the school. How can we refuse to do that?" she said.

An undergraduate student at the Red Building said the visit was just "a waste of time".

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"It's so boring and all propaganda, and there's nothing new in any of these [exhibition] rooms," he said. "I could have spent my time better studying for the postgraduate entrance examination.

"We waste too much time in ideological and political courses – even when we are on summer holidays." Yuan Bo, who has completed her graduate studies and is working at a start-up in Shanghai, said she was often more interested in observing other visitors' reactions rather than the exhibits.

On a humid and hot Sunday afternoon in July, she visited the Sihang Warehouse Memorial of War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression in central

Shanghai, which houses an exhibition documenting a battle by Chinese soldiers against the invading Japanese army that started in 1937.

Yuan said she was indifferent about the memorial since the exhibition was similar to other patriotic education sites she had visited.

"We are told how we should feel about history and the motherland, instead of having our own thoughts and ideas. We won [the war against Japan's invasion] because of all the great work by our country and our people," she said.

Watching small children running and shouting "defeat the Japanese" at the memorial, Yuan said she was like them when she was their age but had since experienced a shift.

"Before I could form my own values, I was often fed with different ideas by others, and it's difficult not to be influenced by all those anti-Japanese films and TV series.

"But I don't want to blindly follow others now."

She said while patriotism was important, it should not be at the expense of independent thinking.

"Patriotic education is indeed necessary, but there should be room for discussion," Yuan said.

"Promoting peace may be more important than promoting patriotism."

Jonathan Sullivan, an associate professor specialising in Chinese politics at the University of Nottingham, said that in China, "control of representations of the past represents an ideological battleground".



The People's Cafe serves up a patriotic coffee. Photo: Yijing Shen

Just outside the Sihang Warehouse exhibition, a coffee shop called The People's Cafe continues the patriotic message in its decor, which features red stars and other Communist Party icons. A stereo plays patriotic songs on a loop, and revolutionary posters on the walls carry slogans such as "Taiwan independence is a dead end".

Beijing sees Taiwan as part of China to be reunited by force if necessary. Most countries, including the US, do not recognise Taiwan as an independent state, but Washington is opposed to any attempt to take the self-governed island by force and is committed to supplying it with weapons.

Tibet Digest December - January 2024

The cafe sells two types of cappuccino – one with foam in the shape of China's territory and the other topped with foam in the shape of the word "China" in Chinese characters.

Its pineapple-flavoured latte, a new introduction in July, is decorated with the shape of Taiwan island and the words "must be returned" on top.

"I felt I was living in magical realism," said Yuan, watching the chocolate foam dwindling from the cappuccino she ordered.

### Chinese diplomat reaffirms "One China" stance

10 August 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup

In what is seen as reaffirmation of a key precondition by Beijing for any political resolution for Tibetans, Victor Gao, a former translator for Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping and vice president of the Center for China and Globalization has said, "If you want to go back to Tibet, acknowledge Tibet is part of China." during an interview with Al Jazeera at Conway hall in London, England, on Friday.

The interview, hosted by journalist Mehdi Hasan, focused on China's foreign policy and its handling of dissent in Tibet, East Turkistan, and Taiwan. The discussion featured three experts on China: Rayhan Asat, an international human rights lawyer of Uighur descent and senior fellow at the Atlantic Council; Stephen Chan, a professor of world politics at the University of London, School of African and Oriental Studies; and Martin Jacques, author of *When China Rules the World* and visiting professor at Tsinghua University in Beijing.

During the Q&A session, Sonam Frasi, the representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama at the Office of Tibet in London, asked about the current situation in Tibet, noting that after 74 years of Chinese rule, Tibet remains under strict control with limited access for journalists, tourists, and even Tibetans wishing to visit their families. Gao responded by stating, "Tibet has been part of China ever since the Yuan dynasty... I can assure you during your lifetime and mine Tibet will always be part of China." He emphasized that acknowledging Tibet as part of China is necessary for anyone wishing to visit Tibet or any resolution for Tibet.

When Mehdi Hasan questioned the reasoning behind China's approach to Taiwan and Tibet, Gao reiterated that China's security is based on the principle that

there is only one China, with Taiwan, Tibet, and East Turkistan (Xinjiang) as integral parts of it.

The One China principle is a stance maintained by the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP), asserting that there is only one sovereign state under the name China

which includes the occupied East Turkestan, Tibet, Southern Mongolia, Manchuria and Taiwan, which China is seeking to occupy. According to this principle, the PRC is recognized as the sole legitimate government representing this expansive entity.

Experts say that Beijing has effectively weaponized the “One-China Principle” by pressuring countries to acknowledge the “One China Policy” as a prerequisite for establishing diplomatic relations with China. The Chinese government demands that “All countries having diplomatic relations with China and all member states of the UN should unconditionally adhere to the one-China principle and follow the guidance of UNGA Resolution 2758. Any attempt to unilaterally add preconditions and provisos to the one-China principle, to distort, fudge and hollow out the one-China principle is illegal, null and void”. This approach has become a critical tool in China’s diplomatic strategy, influencing international recognition and relations. Till now, China claims that 181 countries acknowledge the “One China Principle”.

### **China’s third plenum highlights the quiet rise of political theorist Wang Huning**

10 August 2024, SCMP, Yuanyue Dang and William Zheng

The CPPCC chairman’s role on the plenum’s documents drafting team shows he remains Xi’s ideological ‘brains trust’, an observer said.

In March 1994, Wang Huning was a star professor in political science at Shanghai’s prestigious Fudan University, whose dream was to “write more good books and teach more good students”, according to his diary from the time.

Instead, Wang’s career has taken him deep into the heart of elite politics in China. He has been an ideology guru for three of the country’s leaders, including President Xi Jinping, and is the ruling Communist Party’s fourth most senior official.

In a sign of his status, Wang was a deputy head on the Xi-led team that drafted the resolutions for last month’s third plenary session of the party’s Central Committee, setting China’s economic development tone for at least the next five years.

Wang, 68, stepped away from his ideology role and became chairman of political advisory body the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) last year.

But he continues to serve on the Politburo Standing Committee, the party’s top decision-making body, where he was ideology and propaganda chief from 2017, in his first five-year term.

While Xi has remained exclusively in the pilot’s seat of the drafting process for all party plenum resolutions since 2012, he has always selected two or

three deputy heads from the seven-strong Standing Committee.

Two sources with relevant knowledge said that, besides seeking his assistance in drafting the resolution for the latest plenum, Xi regularly asks for Wang’s input on his major speeches and statements. Since 2017, when he first gained a seat on the seven-strong committee, Wang has served as a deputy head on one of these drafting teams three times, for some of the party’s most historic resolutions.

In 2021, he co-led the team that composed a resolution on the history of the Communist Party – only the third of its kind in the party’s 100 years. A year earlier, he played a similar role in drafting the outline for China’s 14th five-year plan.

Wang was also a vice-director of the drafting team for the 20th party congress in 2022, when Xi delivered the report which laid out his vision for the next five years to more than 2,000 delegates in Beijing.

Wang has also retained his position as deputy director of the Central Comprehensively Deepening Reforms Commission, a party group founded and chaired by Xi that met for fresh discussions on a range of issues just before the third plenum.

Wang’s positions have given him sway in a long list of policy areas, including Taiwan, ethnic minority groups, the border regions of Xinjiang and Tibet, as well as Beijing’s courtship of the country’s private sector.

According to Neil Thomas, a Chinese politics fellow at the Asia Society Policy Institute’s Centre for China Analysis, Wang’s role on the drafting team “shows that his political influence exceeds what is normal for a CPPCC chairman”.

“Wang appears to still serve as Xi’s brains trust for his domestic reform agenda,” Thomas said.

He is a political survivor who loyally served Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao but found his greatest supporter in Xi Jinping

Neil Thomas, analyst

Wang had gained Xi’s trust because he “is a believer in centralising power, fighting corruption, and prioritising hi-tech growth and has helped to make these issues central to Xi’s political agenda”.

“He is a political survivor who loyally served Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao but found his greatest supporter in Xi Jinping. Wang’s neo-authoritarian intellectual project is a perfect complement to Xi’s centralising political project,” he said.

Wang’s reputation was established in the early 1990s, with a number of published works – including a collection of his diaries – that made him a rarity among China’s career bureaucrats and articulated his political vision of “neo-authoritarianism”.

Rather than a Western-style system based on checks and balances, China “must discover new political



values from our own cultural traditions”, Wang wrote in his 1994 diary.

He also noted that “China’s development requires an authority that can regulate the whole of society in a unified way” and weighed in on how to fight corruption.

In his 1991 book *America Against America*, Wang said Japan’s economic race with the US in the 1980s taught him that “individualism, hedonism and democratism” could be defeated by “collectivism, altruism and authoritarianism”.

In the 1980s, when he was developing his political theories, Wang attached great importance to the concentration of state power, according to Xia Ming, one of his former students at Fudan, who now teaches political science at the City University of New York. “He believed that with its unique political ecology, China has a unique political path,” Xia said. Despite his familiarity with political thinkers like Hegel and Rousseau, Wang believed that he should be a defender of that path, Xia added.

“[Wang] thinks that with its large size, China must keep its authority on the central level to maintain its stability [and the West’s] path of liberalisation is not suitable for China because it is too big and too poor, especially with the conditions in rural areas and with its clans,” he said.

A political-science professor at Tsinghua University, who asked to remain anonymous, said Wang was very different from the Chinese intellectuals who looked to the West for inspiration after China opened its doors. “Wang was not impressed by the Western style democracy of the US after he visited twice. He believed that was not suitable for China. Wang believed China must take a different development path from the US if it wants to overtake the US one day,” he said.

In 1995, Wang left Shanghai for Beijing to begin his political career as head of the policy team at the Central Policy Research Office, in support of then president Jiang Zemin.

Wang was not impressed by the Western style democracy of the US after he visited twice

Political-science professor

The office is involved in drafting key documents for the leadership and advising the party on inner-party and domestic policies.

According to a mainland political analyst who interacted with Wang several times before his promotion to Beijing, it was after this move that the academic “retreated behind the scenes to provide advice to his political leaders”.

The party’s long-standing trust in Wang showed “its deep-rooted need for a sophisticated intellectual to explain the legitimacy of China’s one-party rule and party-state system both externally and internally”, he added.

For decades, Wang was known as purely a party theorist. In 2002, he was appointed director of the research office, a position he held for 18 years – the longest tenure of any official in the role.

While his position at the research office remained unchanged, his ranking in the party kept climbing – another rarity among Chinese officials. Notably, when Wang left the role in 2022, his successor’s party ranking was far below his own.

Wang helped Jiang and his successor as president, Hu Jintao, to build their own ideological systems that were later written into the party’s constitution. He also stood quietly behind them on numerous domestic and international trips.

He also helped to launch the Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, also enshrined in the constitution, and is believed to be behind Xi’s promotion of the concept of the “Chinese dream” for China’s renaissance.

Wang remained in the background for the first years of Xi’s presidency but gradually moved into the spotlight after 2017 and his accession to the Politburo Standing Committee, when the public started to hear Wang’s voice for the first time.

In January 2018, as China’s ideology chief, Wang used a meeting of the country’s propaganda officials to call for the “construction of a socialist ideology with strong cohesion and guiding force”.

On becoming CPPCC chairman, Wang’s role expanded further to include management of sensitive issues such as ethnicity, religion and Taiwan, making him the top official in these areas.

In a meeting with Christian groups late last year, Wang asked them to ensure “strict” supervision of religion and to insist on the “Sinofication” of Christianity.

In February, a month after the election of the pro-independence Taiwanese leader William Lai Ching-te, Wang called for a “tough crackdown” on Taiwan independence and “interference from outside forces”. But decades in the party’s research arm has left Wang with very few protégés in the rank and file, unlike other officials who have years of local governance experience under their belts.

Wang’s most visible protégé, Lin Shangli, was also his student and colleague at Fudan University. He left the Central Policy Research Office in 2022, after only a year as deputy director, to take up the presidency at Renmin University of China.

Wang is the only known official of his rank to have written a book on the US and his 1991 work *America Against America* is still popular among observers of Chinese politics.

Wang is seen as a political theorist rather than a grand strategist

Sun Yun, analyst

Sun Yun, co-director of the East Asia Programme and director of the China programme at the Stimson Centre in Washington, said Wang's knowledge of the US was "unique" among China's top leaders.

"He has dedicated experience studying and dealing with the US, while his colleagues on the Politburo Standing Committee are primarily domestic generalists," she said.

But Sun noted that "Wang is seen as a political theorist rather than a grand strategist", adding that his book on the US "is primarily about domestic politics rather than US-China relations".

Sun observed that Wang "plays a key supportive role" in China's US strategy, given that "Xi is the key decision-maker".

While Wang has said he remains largely critical of the political system in the US, he did have some positive takeaways from his experiences in the late 1980s when he was learning about American society and its perceived successes and failures.

As he wrote in his 1991 book: "Although America is a commodity society, a money-oriented society, when it comes to science and technology education, they have a deep understanding of how to spend money to get the most out of it."

### **Agents 'implanted' anti-China content in overseas university applications, ministry says**

09 August 2024, SCMP, Hayley Wong

Beijing's top spy agency has hit out at education consultants it said "implanted" anti-China messages in the applications of students seeking admission to overseas universities.

In a post on WeChat on Friday, the Ministry of State Security said some education agents had "stirred up sensitive issues" and used "defamation and slander" to "provide ammunition to anti-China activities" in the applications.

It said this was done to boost the students' chances of being accepted into foreign universities.

The ministry said there were "hidden risks" involved, and that smearing China in overseas university applications was a national security risk.

China is the world's largest source of overseas students, and it has become common practice for them to use agents to apply for foreign universities to help them navigate unfamiliar education and admissions systems.

In the WeChat post, the ministry highlighted the case of a high school student it identified as Zhang. It said Zhang had been told by an agent there would be a much higher chance of being accepted at an overseas

university if the student's application letter was "polished".

The ministry alleged that Zhang's letter had subsequently, without permission, been "implanted with a large amount of fake content that pandered to anti-China biases, including reactionary, political speech".

The consultancy involved was investigated by "national security authorities" and penalised in May, the ministry said, without elaborating.

It said it was illegal to fabricate, publish or disseminate information that endangers national security, citing the detailed rules for the implementation of the counter-espionage law that took effect in 2017.

The ministry said "certain countries" were tightening their policies for international students, and that they were also "trying to use studying abroad as bait to lure young students to engage in anti-China activities".

It said some education agencies "blindly pursue" their financial interests and university acceptance rates, and in doing so they become "accomplices of overseas anti-China forces that induce young students to fabricate false résumés and images".

The ministry also took aim at agencies it said had failed to adequately supervise staff training and that lacked awareness about national security.

It said there was "loose screening of foreign staff in some agencies" and some had hired "ill-intended foreign staff with unknown backgrounds and unclear qualifications".

According to the ministry, those staff had "catered to anti-China forces in the name of obtaining advantages for admission" by rewriting student applications for overseas universities.

Western countries are popular destinations for Chinese looking to study abroad, with the UK, US and Australia the top three choices this year, according to a report by Chinese educational service provider New Oriental Education & Technology Group.

Although numbers have fallen since the pandemic, Chinese students still topped the list of international students in many countries last year – from the US and UK to Germany, Australia, New Zealand and Japan, a separate report by Chinese consultancy EIC Education said.

More Chinese students have headed to Asian destinations in recent years, and mainland Chinese have also looked to Hong Kong to study.

Last month, two mainland Chinese women were arrested in Hong Kong after it was discovered that around 30 students had secured places at the University of Hong Kong business school with the help of agents who had forged documents.

### **China's Proposed Nationwide Digital ID System Stokes Fears of Government Overreach**

01 August 2024, Time, Josh Xiao

China's plan to introduce a nationwide digital identification system has been met with criticism of government overreach in a country that already closely monitors and censors speech.

Some legal experts and users in the world's largest internet market have openly doubted the efforts' stated goal of protecting privacy after authorities published the proposal last week. China's internet regulator and police said users could opt in to such digital IDs, which would let them verify their identity online without giving up unnecessary personal details to internet service providers.

"The real intention is to step up the control of individual expressions online," Lao Dongyan, a law professor at Tsinghua University, said in a post on X-like Weibo on Tuesday that has since been removed. Du Zhaoyong, a lawyer, said in another post the move will have a "destructive" effect on the free flow of information.

The Chinese government already requires internet users to use their real identities to register for digital services and has extensive access to their online behavior and communications. But a new centralized digital ID system may give authorities a more direct and complete view of people's online lives.

Jeremy Daum, senior fellow at the Yale Law School Paul Tsai China Center, said Chinese people may be more wary of such a system following the use of health codes, an online identification system China used during the pandemic to record and control citizens' movement in order to contain the virus.

But he said the regulation appears to be focused on privacy, not content.

"In China, privacy regulation is usually privacy versus other citizens and corporations rather than versus the government," he said. The proposed system "gives you a new level of privacy where you don't have to share information with a corporation, but the government of course still has access to that information."

The proposal by the Cyberspace Administration of China and the Ministry of Public Security seeks to create a unified system for identity verification that would limit internet companies' ability to collect data. Users may voluntarily request a unique ID, made up of alphabets and digits, and a digital certificate to confirm their identity. Internet platforms shouldn't ask for other personal information once a user is authenticated, according to the proposal.

Beijing has lashed out at internet platform companies for collecting excessive data, with the internet watchdog in 2021 naming 105 apps for violations including ByteDance Ltd's Douyin and Microsoft Corp.'s LinkedIn.

More than 50 popular apps, including those run by Tencent Holdings Ltd, Alibaba Group Holdings Ltd and ByteDance, have tested the proposed authentication

system, the South China Morning Post reported Thursday, citing a survey it carried out.

### Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lin Jian's Regular Press Conference on August 1, 2024

01 August 2024, Ministry of Foreign Affairs



CCTV: It's reported that Indian Navy and Coast Guard recently rescued an accidentally injured Chinese mariner off Mumbai coast and took him to hospital. What is China's comment?

Lin Jian: Most recently, a Chinese mariner was accidentally injured when operating on a ship off Mumbai coast. The Indian side swiftly came to his rescue and provided him with timely medical treatment. He is now in stable condition and recovering back in China.

The Chinese side expresses its heartfelt appreciation to all the departments and personnel of the Indian side who overcame the challenging conditions on the scene and successfully carried out this humanitarian rescue operation.

Dragon TV: It's reported that the DPRK recently commemorated the 71st anniversary of the armistice of the Korean War. Ambassadors of Russia, Viet Nam, Cuba and so on attended the event but the ambassador of China was not spotted there. Some say this is yet another sign that the relationship between China and the DPRK is experiencing issues and that China and Russia are in a contest over relations with the DPRK. What is China's comment?

Lin Jian: This year marks the 71st anniversary of the armistice of the Korean War. Seventy-one years ago, the Chinese People's Volunteers fought alongside the Korean people and troops and together achieved a resounding victory in the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea and the Fatherland Liberation War. In that process, China and the DPRK forged with blood an unbreakable friendship.

Despite the transformation in the international and regional landscape, the CPC and the Chinese government have never changed the importance they attach and their commitment to the

traditional friendship and cooperative relationship between China and the DPRK.

Lately, certain countries and media outlets have been speculating and asserting that there have been issues with China-DPRK relations or there is a China-Russia contest over relations with the DPRK. These are unsubstantiated, ill-motivated claims. Let me stress that both the DPRK and Russia are China's friendly neighbors. China is happy to see the DPRK and Russia grow their ties and play a constructive role for the peace and stability of this region.

Rudaw Media Network: How will the killing of Ismail Haniyeh impact the Chinese peace effort in the Middle East? Will it affect the recently signed "Beijing agreement" mediated by China? The problems in the Middle East are increasingly getting complicated. Does this distract or diminish your efforts regarding achieving security and stability and peace in the region?

Lin Jian: China has stated its position on the incident. We firmly oppose and condemn the act of assassination and are deeply concerned that the incident may plunge the region into greater turmoil. Gaza needs a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire as soon as possible and there should be no more escalation of the conflict and confrontation.

China supports Palestine's internal reconciliation and believes this is an important step towards solving the Palestinian question and realizing peace and stability in the Middle East. China commends Palestinian factions for their effort on the Beijing Declaration, and looks forward to the day when Palestinian factions achieve reconciliation and, on that basis, realize independent statehood as early as possible. We will continue to work with relevant parties towards this goal.

On your second question, the more daunting the situation is in the Middle East, the more critical it is for the international community to try to cool down the situation and enable deescalation. China remains committed to keeping the Middle East peaceful and stable, and opposes external interference. We stand ready to work with relevant parties to work hard for lasting peace and security in the region.

Kyodo News: It's reported that after China-Japan foreign ministers' meeting on July 26, China altered and published the Japanese Foreign Minister's remarks. China's readout stated that Japan's commitment to the one-China position remains unchanged and that Japan's control on semiconductor export is not targeted at any particular country, and Japan is willing to maintain

constructive communication with the Chinese side to handle it properly. Did Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa make the above-mentioned remarks? It's reported that Japan's Foreign Ministry privately pointed out to the

Chinese side that the readout was inaccurate. Is that true?

Lin Jian: The one-China principle is a basic norm in international relations and prevailing international consensus. It's also the political premise on which China establishes and develops diplomatic relations with any country in the world. Japan made a clear commitment on this in the 1972 China-Japan Joint Statement, which says "The Government of Japan recognizes the Government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legal Government of China. The Government of the People's Republic of China reiterates that Taiwan is an inalienable part of the territory of the People's Republic of China. The Government of Japan fully understands and respects this position of the Government of the People's Republic of China, and it firmly maintains its position under Article 8 of the Potsdam Proclamation." According to my knowledge, Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa reaffirmed Japan's position during the meeting, which has not changed.

When it comes to semiconductors, certain country, to perpetuate its supremacy, has been turning normal economic cooperation and trade into political and security issues, either enticing or coercing other countries to join its tech blockade against China, and deliberately disrupting global supply and industrial chains. We have noted that Japanese officials have repeatedly stated publicly that their export control measures on semiconductors are not directed at any particular country. China will work with countries around the world to stay open and pursue cooperation, and keep the global semiconductor industrial and supply chains stable.

AFP: The government of Germany accused China of conducting cyberattack on the Federal Agency for Cartography and Geodesy (BKG). It also summoned the Chinese ambassador to lodge a protest. What is China's comment?

Lin Jian: China noted Germany's statement and remarks. During the past few months, some Western politicians and media have been spreading unverified and even deliberately fabricated disinformation to spread the fear for so-called "Chinese cyber threat." Their motive is clearly not about cybersecurity. China firmly opposes such political manipulation that clearly was preorchestrated and played up to attack China. We oppose any move to politicize and weaponize cybersecurity issues. China's Embassy in Germany

has voiced strong opposition and lodged a protest to the German side.

Ensuring cybersecurity is a global challenge. China is a major victim of cyberattacks. We oppose and have fought various types of cyberattacks in accordance with the law. China and Germany have open lines of communication on cybersecurity. The two sides need to jointly address threats and challenges through

dialogue and cooperation, rather than resort to megaphone diplomacy, smear and attack one another and spread disinformation about so-called Chinese hacking operations. We call on Germany to maintain strategic independence, take a constructive and responsible attitude, abandon bloc confrontation and the Cold War mentality, and work with countries through dialogue and cooperation to keep the cyberspace peaceful and secure.

## July

### China's state employees to face forced three-child policy?

29 July 2024, Tibetan Review

China is desperate as it fails to repeat the spectacular success of its decades-long one-child policy in implementing its current three-child policy. Burdened by economic hardship and for sundry other reasons, young people are simply refusing to marry and procreate or otherwise have more children.

A leaked draft document has revealed that the government plans to coerce government officials and employees into having more children, reported news.com.au Jul 28.

China's population is already contracting. As its citizens age, the labour force is shrinking. And that means its social, economic and military ambitions are coming under increasing pressure, the report noted. While the party-state realized this as early as 2015 when it abandoned its long-enforced draconian one-child policy, the nation's birth-rates only continued to decline.

Now, a leaked draft document circulating on Chinese social media reportedly details plans to "organise and implement" Chairman Xi Jinping's 2021 "three-child" policy among party officials and municipal employees. In particular, the document states among its "key tasks and measures" the need for bureaucrats at all levels to lead by example.

"Party members and cadres at all levels of government agencies, state-owned enterprises, and public institutions should take the lead in implementing the three-child policy," the report cited

the Chinese Sina news service report as saying, referring to the leaked document.

The Quanzhou Municipal Health Commission is stated to have confirmed to Sina the document was authentic, while blaming "negligent" staff for its early release.

"Later, the relevant departments of Quanzhou City may publish it in due course according to the situation," it has added.

It is not clear from the report whether this is a nationwide policy yet.

The Quanzhou documents is stated to list three main areas of work: "First, organise and implement the three-child policy; Second, cancel fertility restrictions, including cancelling social maintenance fees, cleaning up policy documents and social restrictions that are not suitable for the population development situation; Third, improve the population service system, improve the overall solution for the 'old and young', and establish and improve the population service system covering the life cycle."

But what attracted public attention was stated to be a fourth element. "In the section on 'organising and implementing the three-child policy', the mention of party members and cadres taking the lead in implementing the three-child policy made some netizens feel uncomfortable," the Sina report was stated to read.

"Some people worried that it would become a disguised forced birth of three children," the report quoted one commentator as saying.

Apart from the prosperous Quanzhou, Jiemian Financial News has reported that the Xiangtan District in Xiangtan City, Hunan Province, had already taken similar steps.

"We call on party members and cadres to publicise and guide, take the lead in implementation, and consciously implement the country's optimised fertility policy, and make positive contributions to promoting the long-term balanced development of the population," the Xiangtan District CPC administration was stated to have proclaimed in Nov 2023.

Party General Secretary Xi set the ball rolling in Nov 2023, when he told an assembly of the All-China Women's Federation: "We need to actively cultivate a new culture of marriage and child-bearing" as an essential contribution to the "rejuvenation" of the nation.

Following it, the party last year ordered government family planning officials to "intervene" and reduce the number of abortions among teenagers. They must now campaign for "respecting the social value of childbirth, advocating age-appropriate marriage and child-bearing, as well as optimal child-bearing and raising", the report noted.

"The new marriage and childbirth culture must be incorporated into village regulations, and content



that is inconsistent with this must be revised," the family planning directive was stated to have added. State employees who fail to comply "can forget about getting promoted or getting rich," another commentator was stated to have noted.

The concern about declining birth rate was also mentioned recently by China's Central Party Committee, whose 205 members are responsible for establishing national policy, during its Third Plenum (five-yearly assembly) under Chairman Xi Jinping earlier this month.

"A sound system will be instituted to provide full life-cycle population services to all in order to promote high-quality population development. China will refine the policy system and incentive mechanisms for boosting the birth-rate and strive to build a childbirth-friendly society," Xinhua reported the Plenum as ruling.

A Global Times article Jul 22 stated that work was already underway to establish a "child-bearing and child-rearing support system".

Progress so far includes "a number of policies rolled out in localities across the country, including extending maternity leave to 158 days or longer, raising childbirth allowance and child-rearing subsidies, and providing more professional and affordable babysitter services at childcare institutions," it added.

### **China's former Hainan party chief Luo Baoming faces corruption investigation**

26 July 2024, SCMP

Official who helped transform Hainan into strategic and economic hub in the South China Sea is being probed for 'violations of party discipline and the law'

The former Communist Party boss of the southern Chinese province of Hainan who helped transform it into a strategic hub in the South China Sea has been placed under investigation for corruption.

China's top corruption watchdog, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), said on Thursday that Luo Baoming was being investigated for suspected severe violations of party discipline and the law – the usual euphemism for corruption.

Luo, who went on to serve as the vice-chairman of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee of the National People's Congress, China's legislature, "voluntarily turned himself in", according to the commission. No further details were given.

Luo, 72, a native of northern city of Tianjin, started his career at the Inner Mongolia Production and Construction Corporation in 1969, then returned to Tianjin in 1973, where he rose through the ranks to eventually head the city's Communist Party

propaganda department in 1997, according to public records.

Luo rose to prominence in Hainan where he spent more than 15 years in various senior roles.

During his time in office, the rustic island was transformed into one of the region's most popular tourist destinations, and has become a strategic Chinese outpost in the northern part of the South China Sea, where China has staked vast territorial claims that have fuelled tensions between Beijing, its neighbours and Washington.

In 2001, Luo was promoted to deputy secretary of the party committee in Hainan. He became the provincial governor in 2007 and was appointed as the province's Communist Party chief in 2011.

Hainan, which is almost the size of Taiwan, has gone through rapid development on its way to becoming a major resort.

After being approved by the State Council, the province established the prefecture-level city of Sansha in 2012 at Yongxing Island – or Woody Island – under Luo's watch. The city, which is situated in the contested Paracel Islands, is responsible for managing the islands, reefs, and surrounding waters in the South China Sea.

While Luo was in power, Hainan invested in building, upgrading and expanding critical civilian infrastructure, including railways, ports and airports – such as Meilan International airport in Haikou city – to boost capacity and connectivity, transforming the island into a strategic and economic hub.

In 2016, Luo led a delegation to Canada and the United States and said Chinese provincial party secretaries should be invited "to lead Communist Party delegations to visit the US annually to enhance dialogue, exchanges, and mutual trust between the two sides", according to the official Hainan Daily.

Luo stepped down from his role as Hainan's party secretary in 2017 to serve as the vice-chairman of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee of the 12th and 13th National People's Congress until 2023, according to public records.

### **Chinese Communist Party Plans To Raise Retirement Age To Deal With Aging Population**

25 July 2024, Eurasia Review, Hsia Hsiao-hwa

The ruling Chinese Communist Party has announced plans to raise the retirement age as part of its response to falling births and a rapidly aging population.

Party leader Xi Jinping called on party and government at a recent top-level meeting in Beijing to "advance reform to gradually raise the statutory retirement age in a prudent and orderly manner in line with the principle of promoting voluntary participation while allowing appropriate flexibility."

Xi also called for moves to “improve the systems for supporting population development and providing related services, refine the policy system and incentive mechanisms for boosting the birth rate, and refine the policies and mechanisms for developing elderly care programs and industries.”

China has one of the lowest statutory retirement ages in the world, currently set at 60 for men, at 55 for female officials and at 50 for female workers.

Retired teacher Gu Guoping, who currently lives in Shanghai, said the authorities are likely to change the mandatory retirement age to 65 for men and 55 for women, which is likely to be unpopular.

“The vast majority of people in China don’t want a later retirement age,” he said. “Some men want to retire at 58 or 55.”

“If you start to receive [your pension] too late, you’ll only have a short time left to enjoy it,” Gu said.

He added: “Women live longer on average than men, so having them retire at 50 is too soon,” Gu said. “Extending their retirement age to 55 is reasonable and acceptable to most people.”

“But it makes no sense to stop men from retiring at 60 given that they don’t live as long as women.”

#### Rising life expectancy

In the meantime, the authorities are getting people used to the idea of a later retirement by promoting “flexibility” and voluntary approaches, he said.

International medical journal The Lancet reported last year that average life expectancy in China will likely rise to 81.3 years old by 2035, 85.1 years for women and 78 years for men, with the gap widening from 5.2 years in 2019 to 7 years by that time.

However, the disadvantage of later retirement is that older people continue to occupy jobs at a time of widespread youth unemployment, according to Gu.

A Beijing resident who asked not to be identified for fear of reprisals said part of the issue is that people currently in work are paying for the pensions of people who are currently retired, making the social security system increasingly top-heavy and unsustainable as the population ages and births plummet

Raising the pension age to 65 could plunge a lot of people into economic hardship, she said.

“Delaying retirement should be part of a system-wide approach,” she said, saying more jobs for older people would be needed if they can’t collect their pensions until that age.

“Not many people in today’s China stay with the same employer their whole life,” the woman said. “Once they delay the pensionable retirement age, people will be forced to do odd jobs, change employers and jobs.”

“Measures need to be in place to support this kind of situation, especially when it comes to [preventing rampant] age discrimination,” she said. “Those

attitudes are entrenched, and aren’t going to change overnight.”

#### Meager pension resources

The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences estimated recently that there will be nothing left in the national pension fund for city-based employees by 2035, while the International Monetary Fund has predicted that a sluggish economy will also impact the pension system.

Some 300 million people are expected to retire in China over the next decade, putting huge pressure on pension funding.

While 10 working-age people supported 1 retiree in 2002, the ratio had fallen to 5 to 1 by 2021. It will likely fall further to 4 in 2030 and 2 in 2050, Larry Hu, chief economist at Macquarie, told Reuters in January.

China’s pension system consists of three elements: basic pension, corporate and occupational annuities, and personal pension plans.

The economic downturn has reduced people’s ability to pay into the optional elements of that package.

At the end of 2023, only 20% of the 50 million people who have personal pensions had paid anything into them, with the average value of personal pension pots standing at a meager 2,000 yuan (US\$275).

China’s population aged 60 and over reached 296.97 million in 2023, about 21.1% of its total population, up from 280.04 million in 2022, Reuters reported on Jan. 18.

China created a special fund in 2018 to shift pension funds from richer coastal provinces like Guangdong to places like Heilongjiang and Liaoning, to tackle cross-country disparities, yet about a third of China’s provincial-level jurisdictions are running pension deficits, the agency reported.

### **China’s third plenum sees Communist Party double down on economic, tech, military power**

21 July 2024, SCMP

China will focus on boosting its economic, technological and defence capabilities to tackle growing conflicts with the US-led West, the full text of decisions from a key party conclave has revealed.

The more than 22,000-word resolution document lists a wide range of measures for the next five years approved by the Central Committee of the ruling Communist Party, which met for its key third plenum last week.

The measures aim to strengthen China’s economic resilience, deepen the tech talent pool and narrow the rural-urban gap as part of efforts to find new growth engines and address demographic challenges, according to the document released by state news agency Xinhua on Sunday.

National security also gets greater prominence, with pledges to keep key industrial chains safe and boost strategic military deterrence.

The goals have to be accomplished by 2029, the 80th anniversary of the People's Republic. The coming five years will also be a decisive period for the party's target of building a modern socialist China by 2035, giving it a strong position in the great power rivalry with the United States and other geopolitical hostilities.

President Xi Jinping said the measures aimed to meet China's "urgent need" to counter major risks and challenges, according to a separate Xinhua article on decisions made at the plenum.

Xi, who leads the Central Committee, said China was faced with "increasing uncertainties and unpredictable factors" impacting national development, as "external suppression and containment are continuously escalating".

The four-day, closed-door plenary session of the Central Committee concluded on Thursday.

A unified set of market rules, fair and consistent regulatory framework, removal of restrictions to market entry and competition are among the aims listed in the resolution document, which also calls for efficient and coordinated policy implementation and pledges to address the financing difficulties of local governments.

It includes a promise to equally protect the "property rights of all types of ownership economies", and to support the private sector.

The leadership also aims to promote the development of future industries, "new fields and new competitive tracks" in the global tech race.

The boost for tech and the private sector – the backbone of job creation and innovation – comes as China's post-Covid economic recovery remains patchy. Growth momentum slowed in the second quarter, and public sentiment remains weak amid a prolonged property market slump, lacklustre financial markets and rising unemployment.

In manufacturing, China is under pressure from a global supply chain diversification away from its market and tightened hi-tech restrictions led by the US. Trade tensions with the European Union have also escalated, with exports of electric vehicles and some new energy products in limbo.

The difficulties have pushed Beijing to strengthen the resilience and security of its supply chains, including a mission to build up a "strategic hinterland" as backup for key industries and improve the national reserve system for key resources.

According to the document, the party also called to "step up building a self-controlled industrial and supply chain" with a focus on integrated chips, industrial master machines, medical equipment and advanced materials.

Xie Maosong, a senior researcher at Tsinghua University's National Institute of Strategic Studies, said the fact that almost all of the long document was devoted to domestic issues indicated the leadership's focus on stability and the push for progress.

He said the message was clear, that the only way China could cope better was by making itself stronger and be more prepared to tackle challenges on all fronts, he said.

"The message from the top leadership is consistent: we should prioritise our own matters first," Xie said.

"But China's door will remain wide open. It will continue to push for trade, investment and innovation links with the more friendly parts of the world as the decision indicates."

The document includes a pledge to implement "transparent, stable and predictable" policies, in an apparent attempt to restore China's market allure for foreign investors. This group has raised concerns about tightened security control in China, as they come under pressure to adjust supply chains or China operations amid the US-led decoupling.

Beijing has also doubled down on national security and stepped up military reform efforts, at a time when maritime tensions threaten to become flashpoints in its tensions with the US and its regional allies.

"[We should] accelerate the development of strategic deterrence forces, and develop new domain and quality combat forces," the document said, elaborating on aims to build up military power in five years.

The leadership has also vowed to further improve national security mechanisms, to counter "long-arm jurisdiction" and to better safeguard China's maritime rights and interests.

A mainland-based political analyst, who requested anonymity, said Beijing will continue to launch sanctions and legislation to hit back at US sanctions and protect its core interests over the issue of Taiwan and the South China Sea.

On the science and tech front, the decisions from the plenum include a call to cultivate national "innovative capabilities" and encourage "high-level foreign science and engineering universities to cooperate in running schools in China".

More open and effective talent recruitment and cultivation mechanisms are expected, with the party calling for better treatment for young scientists so that they can focus on research.

It has also pledged more funding for basic research and better allocation of funds for research projects – including giving scientists more decision-making power and greater control over the funds.

## **Xi's big economic meeting shows the Party bracing for slower growth driven by advanced manufacturing**

18 July 2024, Himalayan Dak

China's Communist Party concluded its "third plenum," a biennial meeting focused on long-term reform, from July 15th to 18th. President Xi Jinping emphasized "high-quality development" as the guiding principle, but there were few signs of major changes to boost demand or address the property market decline. The communique indicated no significant shift from recent economic policies. State media Xinhua briefly published an article praising Xi as a reformer, which was later removed for unknown reasons. One might ask: How does that affect the supply chain and manufacturing shifts between China and India?

## **China's Communist Party removes ex-foreign, defence ministers from top body**

18 July 2024, Reuters, Laurie Chen and Jessie Pang

China's Communist Party removed its former foreign and defence ministers, Qin Gang and Li Shangfu, from its Central Committee on Thursday during a meeting of its largest top decision-making body, state news agency Xinhua reported.

The two officials had been removed from their jobs last year.

The ruling Communist Party ended its long-delayed third plenum on Thursday, a meeting of the 205-member Central Committee held roughly once every five years to map out the general direction of the country's long-term social and economic policies. Removals of Central Committee members would also be approved at such meetings.

The Central Committee said in a communique released by Xinhua that it accepted Qin Gang's resignation from the body, and confirmed the expulsion of Li Shangfu, 66, as well as former PLA Rocket Force commander Li Yuchao, 61, from the Communist Party for "serious violations of discipline and law", a euphemism for corruption. Li Yuchao was also removed from his job last year.

The decision to expel Li Shangfu and Li Yuchao from the Communist Party and its Central Committee by extension suggests harsher political consequences for the pair, compared to Qin Gang's resignation. Qin remains a Communist Party member.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has spearheaded a wide-ranging anti-corruption campaign since becoming leader of the Communist Party in 2012. In the first half of this year alone, the party's top graft watchdog has investigated 36 officials at the vice-ministerial level and above.

Li Shangfu and his predecessor Wei Fenghe were both expelled from the Communist Party last month on bribery charges, as China's People's Liberation Army undergoes a sweeping anti-corruption purge which has implicated two former defence ministers and nine top generals.

Qin, 58, was abruptly removed as foreign minister in July last year after seven months in the job, and has not been seen in public since following rumours of an extramarital affair. He was removed from China's cabinet, the State Council, in October and "resigned" from the national legislative body in February.

He became one of the country's youngest foreign ministers when he was appointed in December 2022, enjoying a meteoric rise which analysts partly attributed to his closeness to President Xi. No official reason was given for Qin's resignation from the Central Committee.

"Qin and Xi's images are somewhat tied - there is no way to make Qin look bad without making Xi look bad," said Wen-Ti Sung, a fellow at the Atlantic Council's Global China Hub.

"Qin Gang is able to get a relatively more graceful exit. The communique grants him the dignity of appearing to 'resign' on his own volition, and still calls him a 'comrade'"

## **ANTI-CORRUPTION DRIVE**

Li Shangfu was ousted as defence minister last October without explanation, before being placed under a graft investigation. He was removed from the party's highest military command body in February.

Li Yuchao was replaced last July during a shakeup of the Rocket Force leadership which also saw its political commissar dismissed. He oversaw a highly strategic unit of the PLA responsible for the nation's conventional and nuclear missile arsenal.

The Central Committee's communique also pledged to deepen Chinese military reforms, "uphold the party's leadership over the PLA", and to "provide effective guarantees for achieving military and national defence modernisation" - without mentioning the military corruption crackdown.

Agriculture minister Tang Renjian, 61, who has been under investigation for corruption since May, remains a member of the Central Committee.

"One could see (the dismissals) as a sign of the continued vigour of Xi's anti-corruption campaign - or its sub-optimal effectiveness at preventing corruption even after more than a decade," said Sung.

Three alternate Central Committee members were appointed as full members according to the communique: Anhui provincial Communist Party personnel boss Ding Xiangqun, Sichuan provincial Communist Party personnel boss Yu Lijun and Beijing Normal University President Yu Jihong.

According to past convention, the Central Committee would appoint some of its 171 alternate members to

fill in vacancies by order of the number of votes they received.

The new appointments this time skipped PLA Rocket Force deputy political commissar Ding Xingnong, who would have been second in line to join the Central Committee.

Former Central Committee alternate member and PLA Rocket Force chief of staff Lieutenant General Sun Jinming was also expelled from the Communist Party for corruption, the communique said.

Only 199 full Central Committee members and 165 alternate members attended the plenum, according to the communique.

### China's Communist Party meets to set direction for troubled economy

14 July 2024, CNN, Simone McCarthy

After months of unexplained delay, top officials from China's ruling Communist Party are gathering in Beijing this week to signal the direction forward for the world's second largest economy as it faces major economic challenges and friction with the West.

Stakes are high for the meeting, which takes place every five years and is known as China's third plenum. It has historically been a platform for the party's leadership to announce key economic reforms and policy directives.

China is grappling with a property sector crisis, high local government debt and weak consumer demand – as well as flagging investor confidence and intensifying trade and technology tensions with the United States and Europe.

Those challenges were underscored by its latest economic growth data, which were announced Monday. China's gross domestic product expanded by 4.7% in the April to June months, compared to the previous year.

That represents a slowdown from the 5.3% growth reported for the first quarter and also missed the expectations of a group of economists polled by Reuters who had predicted 5.1% expansion in the second quarter.

Economic problems on the back of years of stringent pandemic controls have triggered mounting social frustration, as well as questions about the direction of the country under Xi Jinping, its most powerful leader in decades.

Those questions have been underscored by a recent shake-up in the upper echelons of Xi's government that saw three ministers and a handful of top military officers removed from posts or investigated, a situation that some observers of China's opaque political system believe contributed to the plenum's delay.

How Xi and his top officials choose to address the country's economic challenges will have

significant impact on whether they can continue to raise quality of life, and public confidence, within China.

They could also have a broad impact on the country's role in the global economy and how willing foreign investors will be to do business there as uncertainties, including the outcome of the upcoming US presidential election, loom.

Here's what to expect at the four-day gathering, which begins Monday.

Big changes?

About 200 members of the party's Central Committee leadership body as well as 170 alternate committee members are gathering in Beijing to approve a document laying out a plan on "deepening reform" and advancing "Chinese-style modernization," according to state media.

Past third plenums have delivered sweeping reforms.

The meeting in 1978 was linked to the landmark shift toward the "reform and opening" of China's economy, while Xi's first third plenum as leader in 2013 set in motion the move to dismantle the decades-old one child policy.

But observers of China's opaque political machine don't believe there will be fundamental economic reforms this time around.

Instead, they will be watching for more targeted efforts to address structural economic issues and social problems – and to enhance China's technological self-reliance at a time when it faces a raft of restrictions on access to technology driven by the US.

This is Xi's third time overseeing this meeting after he extended his rule into a norm-breaking second decade at the last Party Congress in 2022.

Speculation has swirled around why the meeting, which was widely expected to take place last fall, is only happening now.

Some observers suggested the flagging economy and internal disagreement over how to address it, as well as the high-level personnel shake-ups that cast a shadow over Xi's third term, could have played a role.



Uncompleted residential buildings at a real estate project on the outskirts of Shenyang in China's Liaoning province earlier this year.



### Economic challenges

The high debt loads held by local governments and their shrinking income, linked to an ongoing property sector crisis, lie at the heart of China's current economic woes.

They'll also be looking for signals on a new direction for real estate development and property sector policy in the wake of the industry crisis that's seen dozens of Chinese developers default on their debts, which has, in turn, devastated investors, homebuyers and construction workers.

Observers will be watching for fiscal reforms, especially around taxation and government spending, that could reduce pressure on local governments and bolster their revenue.

Many also say the government should take steps to boost consumer spending and increase household income, including potential reforms to change rural land ownership and China's restrictive household registration system, as well as to expand social safety nets in a country grappling with high medical costs and a rapidly aging population.

Xi has acknowledged economic hardship in China, saying in a New Year's speech that "some people" had "difficulty finding jobs and meeting basic needs." In a May speech, he also stressed that the party should "do more practical things that benefit the people's livelihood," adding that reform should give people a sense of "gain."

While chasing rapid economic growth is "no longer Beijing's singular priority," Asia Society Center for China Analysis experts Neil Thomas and Jing Qian wrote last week, Xi likely recognizes that his priorities of national security and tech self-reliance "must co-exist with a baseline level of growth that sustains consumption, investment, social stability, and his own political security."

### Tech push

Tech self-reliance has become a key focus for Beijing as the US and its allies have moved to limit China's access to high-end technologies, citing their own security concerns.

The plenum is expected to greenlight more government coordination around Xi's plan to build China into a "science and technology power," both in terms of innovation as well as industry.

But such a focus also threatens to heighten frictions with the West.

The EU and the US have recently slapped hefty tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles, saying they are unfairly subsidized by the government and flooding global markets. Any moves this week that bolster the production of such high-end green technologies, which also include goods like solar panels or batteries, could further inflame the issue.

Meanwhile, global investors will be looking for Beijing to make good on promises to further open up its market, even as many firms have become more wary of doing business in the country as Xi has prioritized heightened state control and security.

The plenum could also see the formal ousting of top Communist Party officials who have been ensnared in opaque disciplinary investigations or removed from posts without explanation, some of whom were linked to an apparent military purge.

Li Shangfu, China's former defense minister who was fired from his role in October and expelled from the Communist Party following a corruption investigation, will likely be formally removed from the Central Committee.

Observers will be watching closely for any similar movement around other ousted government and military officials, including former Foreign Minister Qin Gang, People's Liberation Army Rocket Force commander Li Yuchao and his political commissar Xu Zhongbo.

### China's ailing economy under spotlight as leader Xi Jinping and top officials to meet

14 July 2024, Hong Kong Free Press

The world's second-largest economy is grappling with a real estate debt crisis, weakening consumption, an ageing population and geopolitical tensions overseas, some of which are expected to be addressed at the upcoming Third Plenum.

Top Chinese officials gather in Beijing on Monday, with all eyes on how they might kickstart lacklustre growth at a key political meeting that has traditionally seen officials unveil big-picture economic policy changes.

The world's second-largest economy is grappling with a real estate debt crisis, weakening consumption, an ageing population and geopolitical tensions overseas.

President Xi Jinping will oversee the ruling Communist Party's secretive Third Plenum, which usually takes place every five years in October, though Beijing has offered few hints about what might be on the table.

State media in June said the delayed four-day gathering would "primarily examine issues related to further comprehensively deepening reform and advancing Chinese modernization", and Xi last week said the CCP was planning "major" reforms.

Analysts are hoping those pledges will result in badly needed support for the economy.

"There are many hopes that this Third Plenum will provide some new breakthroughs on policy," Andrew Batson of the Beijing-based consultancy Gavekal Dragonomics told AFP.

"China's government has struggled to execute a successful economic strategy since emerging from the pandemic," he added.

But he said he did not expect a "fundamental departure from the course Xi has already laid out", in which technological self-sufficiency and national security outweigh economic growth.

And the People's Daily, the Communist Party's official newspaper, warned on Monday that "reform is not about changing direction and transformation is not about changing colour".

Ting Lu, chief China economist at Nomura, said the meeting was "intended to generate and discuss big, long-term ideas and structural reforms instead of making short-term policy adjustments".

The Third Plenum has long been an occasion for the Communist Party's top leadership to unveil major economic policy shifts.

In 1978, then-leader Deng Xiaoping used the meeting to announce market reforms that would put China on the path to dazzling economic growth by opening it to the world.

And more recently following the closed-door meeting in 2013, the leadership pledged to give the free market a "decisive" role in resource allocation as well as other sweeping changes to economic and social policy.

Growth figures expected

This year's conclave will begin the same day China is due to release its growth figures for the second quarter.

Experts polled by AFP expect China's economy to have grown, on average, 5.3 percent year-on-year between April and June.

Beijing has said it is aiming for five percent growth this year – enviable for many Western countries but a far cry from the double-digit expansion that for years drove the Chinese economy.

Authorities have been clear they want to reorient the economy away from state-funded investment and instead base growth around high-tech innovation and domestic consumption.

But economic uncertainty is fuelling a vicious cycle that has kept consumption stubbornly low.

Among the most urgent issues facing the economy is a persistent crisis in the property sector, which long served as a key engine for growth but is now mired in debt, with several top firms facing liquidation.

Authorities have moved in recent months to ease pressure on developers and restore confidence, such as by encouraging local governments to buy up unsold homes.

Analysts say much more is required for a full rebound as the country's economy has yet to bounce back more than 18 months after damaging Covid-19 restrictions ended.

"Short-term stimulus is badly needed to boost the teetering economy," Nomura's Ting said.

But, he added, "major steps towards market-oriented reforms might be limited this time".

## China amasses record half-year 'tiger' tally in anti-corruption campaign

06 July 2024, SCMP, William Zheng

High-profile casualties show that past glories are no protection in the long-running crackdown, analyst says.

Three dozen "tigers" were detained by China's anti-corruption watchdog in the first half of the year, setting a new six-month benchmark for President Xi Jinping's signature anti-corruption campaign.

The detention of the 36 senior officials of at least vice-ministerial rank compares to the 22 investigated in the same time last year, a total that was a half-year high at the time, according to a South China Morning Post tally.

The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) – China's top anti-corruption agency – announced 45 investigations into senior officials last year but two more have since been added to that total with the announcement in June that former defence ministers Li Shangfu and Wei Fenghe came under investigation in 2023.

All of the tigers – as the CCDI refers to them – belonged to a pool of officials known as "centrally managed cadres", meaning they held ranks at the deputy ministerial level or above. A smaller number held slightly lower ranks but occupied key positions in critical sectors.

Eight of the 36 detained in the first half held positions in central Communist Party and state agencies, while 20 of them were from local governments or party bodies, suggesting the investigators cast a wide net.

The biggest cases involved former agriculture minister Tang Renjian; former justice minister Tang Yijun; Gou Zhongwen, China's former sports chief credited with the country's Olympic medals success; former deputy propaganda chief Zhang Jiancun; and Zhong Ziran, former director of the China Geological Survey.

The most high-profile downfalls among the 20 regional officials were former Tibet party boss Wu Yingjie; Gansu's deputy provincial governor Yang Zixing; and his counterpart in Yunnan province, Li Shisong.

Li Shisong is the first alternate member of the party's present Central Committee – convened in 2022 – ensnared in a corruption investigation. The CCDI announced his detention on June 25, just three weeks before the committee meets for its much-awaited third plenum, set to start July 15.

The plenum is likely to endorse a decision to remove three full members of the Central Committee under

investigation, namely former defence minister Li Shangfu, agriculture minister Tang Renjian and former rocket force commander Li Yuchao.

Beyond the Central Committee, other big names brought down by CCDI in the six months include two prominent security officials. Liu Yuejin, China's former anti-terror chief and renowned anti-narcotics hero, was targeted in March and Liu Zhiqiang, the police's former international cooperation head and deputy justice minister, found himself in the cross hairs in April.

Liu Yuejing's downfall was particularly shocking because he was known as one of the country's best anti-narcotics officers, working on many high-profile cases before rising to head the China National Narcotics Control Commission in May 2015.

He became the country's first anti-terror chief in December 2015, following a series of attacks across China, notably one in March 2014 when dozens of people were killed by a knife-wielding gang that rampaged at a railway station in Kunming, Yunnan province. Beijing blamed that attack on Xinjiang separatists.

These investigations showed that past glories, outstanding expertise or political connections were no longer bargaining chips with the disciplinary watchdog, said a political scientist from Beijing's Renmin university.

"Liu [Yuejing] was a well-known anti-narcotics cop. Gou was hailed as the man behind China's successful winter Olympics run ... Tibet's Wu Yingjie had boasted of Tibet's stability during his rule. But the anti-corruption team did not let them hide behind their past glories," the political scientist said on condition of anonymity.

"In Xi's era, no one can be spared. The investigators don't care about officials' past contributions. At the ministerial level, there is no immunity privilege."

### **China's uncalled for gloating over UN's adoption of its rights review report**

05 July 2024, Tibetan Review

China has sought to gloat over the fact that the UN human rights Council, Geneva, has "unanimously" approved the 4th Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of its human rights record on Jul 4 as if this amounted to unanimous approval of its human rights record. In fact, a number of countries have expressed serious concern at the gravity of the situation not only in China itself but also in Tibet, Xinjiang, and elsewhere and Beijing's continued refusal to address them both during the UPR hearing and when the report came up for adoption.

The only countries that praised it, even if many, were those with serious human rights problems of their own and that had been lobbied by China to be

present and speak for it. China's official globaltimes.cn, reporting Jul 5 on the report's adoption, mentioned some of them. "Russia, Venezuela, Uzbekistan, Gambia, Vietnam, and many other countries at the meeting positively assessed China's efforts and achievements in human rights development."

In fact, during the UPR hearing to evaluate China's record, 21 states made substantial criticism of its human rights record in Tibet – the largest number since China underwent its first review in 2009, said Washington-based International Campaign for Tibet (savetibet.org) Jul 4.

Criticism of China's human rights record, including in Tibet, was galore even at the meeting for the adoption of the report.

The United Kingdom made the following scathing statement: "China tried to claim that the Office of the High Commissioners' authoritative Xinjiang assessment is, and I quote: illegal and void. It is neither. Let me again urge China to end its persecution and arbitrary detention of Uyghurs and Tibetans and to allow genuine freedom of religion and expression."

It "again" urged China to "end its persecution and arbitrary detention of Uyghurs and Tibetans and to allow genuine freedom of religion or belief and cultural expression," and so forth.

Likewise, the United States said, "The United States condemns the human rights abuses in Tibet, Inner Mongolia, and across China."

China brought a large delegation to the meeting. "Representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Supreme People's Court, as well as delegates from the Xizang Autonomous Region, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, Hong Kong, and Macao Special Administrative Regions also attended as members of the Chinese government delegation," said the globaltimes.cn report.

The report also said, "After the Human Rights Council approved China's report, the venue resounded with warm applause, and many representatives from other countries congratulated the Chinese delegation."

Nevertheless, Ambassador Chen Xu, Permanent Representative of China to the UN Office at Geneva and other international organizations in Switzerland, who led the Chinese government delegation, has felt constrained to vent his anger at the criticisms China had received throughout the UPR process.

"China firmly opposes the politicization, instrumentalization, and weaponization of human rights issues, and firmly opposes using human rights issues as an excuse to interfere in China's internal affairs," the report cited him as saying.

## China rejects key Western calls for human-rights reforms at U.N. meeting

04 July 2024, Reuters, Emma Farge

China on Thursday rejected Western-led recommendations for human-rights reforms including calls for greater freedoms in Hong Kong and for Uyghurs in Xinjiang, but accepted others from allies, as it sought to defend its record at a U.N. meeting.

The U.N. Human Rights Council session in Geneva caps off a review process in which Beijing has strived to fend off criticism following a 2022 U.N. report which said the detention of Uyghurs and other Muslims in China's Xinjiang region may constitute crimes against humanity. China denies any abuses.

The council's president, Omar Zniber, said China had accepted nearly 70% of the more than 400 reform recommendations it received as part of the U.N. review.

"Progress and development on human rights is achieved in China with each passing day," China's ambassador, Chen Xu, told the meeting, alongside a large delegation of Chinese diplomats and officials. He said it rejected recommendations that were "politically motivated based on disinformation, ideologically biased or interfering in China's traditional sovereignty" and condemned what he called an attempt to "smear and attack" it.

Yet China's critics say its high acceptance rate is misleading, with one Western diplomat alleging the country had "stacked the deck" by investing political capital in quelling criticism.

Reuters previously reported that China had lobbied non-Western countries to praise its record by asking them to make "constructive recommendations."

British ambassador Simon Manley complained to the council that China had rejected each and every one of its recommendations, including a call for an end to persecutions of Uyghurs and for the Hong Kong security law to be repealed.

U.S. Human Rights Ambassador Michèle Taylor also voiced disappointment at what she called China's refusal to take action.

"China's abuses constitute a rejection of U.N. assessments and recommendations and violate or undermine international commitments," she said. Other countries were more upbeat, including Russia's envoy who praised China's "constructive approach" and Gambia's envoy who lauded the country's progress.

The U.N. review of China is not unique and all countries undergo the process every few years at the council - the only intergovernmental body designed to protect human rights worldwide.

An attempt to hold a debate about the U.N. High Commissioner's China report was voted down by

mostly non-Western members later in 2022 - a result seen as a diplomatic victory for Beijing.

## China's internet watchdog calls for 'favourable' environment ahead of third plenum

03 July 2024, SCMP, William Zheng

China's top internet watchdog has called on regulators and internet companies to create a "favourable" environment ahead of a crucial Communist Party meeting this month.

The Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) made the call at a national cyberspace meeting held last week, according to a statement released on social media on Tuesday.

The meeting came less than a month ahead of the third plenum, a gathering of more than 370 members of the party elite setting out the policy direction to tackle China's economic and social challenges over the next five to 10 years.

CAC deputy director Niu Yibing urged all departments and China's web platforms to "go all out" to create a "favourable" public opinion environment in the build-up to the four-day meeting, which starts in just under two weeks.

"[We must] adhere to the correct political position of directing public opinion and orienting social values," the statement said, also vowing to continue a crackdown on bad behaviour online.

The statement also warned regulators and internet companies to properly handle "the relationship between security and development".

They must make use of the internet to help drive economic growth, especially for new industries, and at the same time strengthen content management and control to "prevent various risks and hidden dangers", it said.

Officials from the CAC's Beijing headquarters and provincial branches, as well as representatives of leading internet companies attended the meeting.

A few days after the meeting finished, internet platforms started to crack down on ultranationalist comments in the wake of the death of Hu Youping, who tried to stop a knife attack on a Japanese school bus in Suzhou.

Hu's bravery was applauded by most of the public, but some sporadic anti-Japanese postings described her as a "Japanese spy".

On Sunday some of the country's top tech firms, including Tencent, NetEase, Sina Weibo, Douyin - the Chinese version of TikTok - and Phoenix New Media's news portal Ifeng.com, said they had deleted comments of this nature and banned accounts that promoted hatred and extremism.

Although it is routine for the internet watchdog to keep online opinion in check ahead of major political meetings, the authorities need to tread carefully and



not be seen as too aggressive in undermining economic growth, said Alfred Wu, an associate professor at the National University of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy.

"Security is clearly still the top concern ahead of the party plenum. Any incident can create unnecessary attention from the top leadership and result in potential setbacks in the careers of the officials in charge," Wu said.

"But for the Chinese regulators, now they are also mindful of not going overboard in the security aspect. They probably don't want to create another saga like the online gaming rule proposal, which caused a major market meltdown."

In January regulators were forced into a rare reversal after a proposal to limit the amount of time and money people could spend on video games caused the share price of some major companies such as Tencent Holdings and NetEase to plummet.

### **Former Chinese TAR boss Wu Yingjie's fall likely due to misuse of funds**

03 July 2024, International Campaign for Tibet

On June 16, 2024, Chinese state media reported that former Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) Party Secretary Wu Yingjie is being investigated for "suspected severe violations of Party discipline and the law."

The announcement has prompted speculation that Wu's downfall might be connected to his work in Tibet. Wu spent over 45 years working in different departments of the TAR government from 1974 to 2021, lending some credence to this speculation.

However, given the Chinese government's penchant for secrecy no details have been provided about Wu's investigation, and there may not be an authoritative answer until charges have been filed and his sentencing is announced. In the meantime, it is possible to analyze some developments around the time of Wu's investigation, including actions taken against other senior officials that are connected to the possible misuse of funds in Tibet.

#### **Timeline of events**

On December 28, 2020, Chinese state media reported on a meeting that Wu Yingjie, then secretary of the TAR Party Committee, and Che Dralha (Chinese: Qi Zhala), then chairman of TAR, had in Beijing with China Development Bank (CDB) Chairman Zhao Huan and Ouyang Weimin, then president of the Bank. They signed a "Memorandum of Cooperation on Development Finance Supporting Long-term Stability and High-quality Development in Tibet in the New Era." Also present in that meeting were Zhou Qingyu, then vice president of CDB, and Jiang Jie, then TAR party committee member.



(from left) Wu Yingjie, Che Dralha, Zhao Huan, Ouyang Weimin, Zhou Qingyu, and Jiang Jie

Since then investigations, indictments, and trials have been variously announced against three of the six participants of this meeting, while another one has disappeared from public view. This could indicate that this meeting and the participants involved are connected with the latest investigation against Wu Yingjie.

On June 14, 2024, two days before Wu's investigation was announced, Jiang Jie, one of the attendees of the meeting, was indicted after prosecutors accused him of "taking advantage of his various positions to seek profits for others, in return he illegally accepted huge sums of money and valuables," according to state media. The investigation against Jiang was announced on July 3, 2023, and the reasoning given was the same as for Wu: "for suspected severe violations of Party discipline and laws." Jiang was subsequently dismissed from the membership of the TAR committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

On May 19, 2023, disciplinary and supervisory investigation was announced against Zhou Qingyu of CDB, another participant in the 2020 meeting. He was arrested in December 2023 on suspicion of bribe-taking, again with the same reasoning given as Jiang and Wu.

On June 14, 2024, state media reported on his trial. Reports said between 2013 and 2023, "Zhou took advantage of his various positions at the bank to provide assistance to others in matters such as loan financing, project contracting, business operations, and personnel arrangements. In return, Zhou accepted money and valuables worth over 67.43 million yuan (about 9.5 million U.S. dollars)."

#### **Corruption in Tibet under Chinese rule**

The official narrative is that these are part of the broader anti-corruption campaign announced by Chinese Communist Party leader Xi Jinping. It is possible that given the close proximity of these announcements, they might be connected to a larger group of people working on Tibet – if corruption is the real reason for the investigation.

To date, from among the participants of the 2020 meeting, only CDB's Zhao Huan remains in his position as the chair of the Bank. On February 17,



2023, CDB announced that Ouyang Weimin was relieved of his post without providing any reason. He seems to have disappeared from public view, and it will be unsurprising if an investigation against him is announced soon.

The only other named attendee, and the only Tibetan in that meeting, is Che Dralha. Soon after his transfer to the TAR from Dechen (Diqing) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan in 2017 observers noted indications that Chinese authorities were promoting him for possible token Tibetan representation as a senior leader at the national level. However, in October 2021 he was unexpectedly transferred to serve as a vice chair of a committee of the National People's Congress (NPC). It might not be a coincidence that Wu was also transferred from Lhasa to be a vice chair of another committee of the NPC. It may be the case that Wu and Che Dralha were already being scrutinized by the Party.

Available information indicates that CBD has been involved in funding projects in the TAR for years. It has a branch in Lhasa that opened in 2011, and according to a recruitment announcement, it "closely focuses on serving the Party's Tibet governance strategy in the new era, gives full play to the advantages of medium- and long-term investment and financing of development finance and comprehensive financial services, takes root in the snow-covered plateau, serves the construction of the border, vigorously supports infrastructure construction, energy and transportation, ecological protection, rural revitalization, improvement of people's livelihood and characteristic and advantageous industries, and serves the long-term stability and high-quality development of Tibet."

In 2013 CDB announced that it was investing 50 billion yuan (around US \$ 7 billion) of financing to support TAR economic and social development from 2013 to 2020. In 2018, CDB announced that it was investing 60 billion yuan (around US \$8 billion).

Wu has spent most of his professional career working in TAR, having worked there nearly 50 years (from 1974 to 2021). In August 2016, he became TAR party secretary before being shunted to Beijing in October 2021. Interestingly, on Dec. 9, 2022 the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), announced that Wu was among 40 individuals and entities that are being sanctioned for their connection to corruption or human rights abuse across nine countries.

Will Che Dralha face investigation?

A Tibetan source in exile with contacts in Lhasa said that when hearing about the investigation into Wu Yingjie in June, some people there asked why Che Dralha was not being investigated.

There may be some basis for this speculation. Che Dralha and Wu worked together in Lhasa from 2017 to October 2021, and the announcement of their transfer from Lhasa was made on the same day, indicating a likely connection. The fact that he did not appear anywhere during the 20th Party Congress and did not make the jump to national leadership despite previous years of active promotion by the Party may be another indication.

Also, in January 2024 Zhang Yongze, who was vice chairman of TAR when Che Dralha was the chairman, was sentenced to 14 years in prison for bribery. According to Chinese state media, he been indicted earlier on charges of taking bribes of about 51.8 million yuan (US \$7 million). Similarly, on January 29, 2024, investigation against another TAR vice chair, Wang Yong, was announced and in March he was dismissed from his position in Tibet.

Conclusion

It may be some time before there are conclusive answers about Wu's actions and those of the other members of this circle.

The established facts, however, are indicative of the nature of Chinese rule in Tibet. The absence of a free press, freedom of speech, and an independent judiciary have created the conditions for massive, endemic corruption that includes China's highest leaders in Tibet. Xi's anti-corruption campaign may remove some of these officials from power, but it has not addressed the broader factors that gave rise their corruption in the first place. It seems unlikely that many leading officials, from the lowest level to the highest, could survive any level of scrutiny into their actions.

There is an awareness in Tibet of widespread corruption in Chinese officialdom and the Chinese Communist Party. Chinese authorities do not take kindly to outside attempts to curb this corruption, however; see the case of Sengdra, a Tibetan township chief who spent more than a year in prison for raising questions about government corruption.

If Xi is truly concerned about corruption in Tibet, allowing Tibetans to speak freely about the abuses of CCP officials in Tibet is a better solution than fostering an environment of corruption and then haphazardly pursuing some of the officials within it.

### **Xi Jinping exposes China's hypocrisy with Panchsheel fakery**

01 July 2024, India Today, Yudhajit Shankar Das

China celebrated the 70th anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, or Panchsheel Agreement, first signed with India. As Chinese President Xi Jinping heaped praises on Panchsheel, it exposed China's hypocrisy of celebrating the

anniversary of the principles that it continues to trample on with impunity.

China commemorated the 70th anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, which is known in India as Panchsheel and a cornerstone of former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's vision of a world order. In marking the anniversary and heaping praise on Panchsheel, China and its President, Xi Jinping, revealed their hypocrisy. There's a reason why China is talking about Panchsheel now, an agreement that it trampled upon with its war against India in 1962.

It is to increase its influence on the global south that China is parroting the Five Principles of Peaceful Existence. It signed the first agreement with India in 1954.

However, unlike the 60th anniversary celebrations in 2014, India officially stayed away from the Panchsheel ceremony in China this year.

National strategy experts have called out China's fakery in commemorating the Panchsheel anniversary.

They pointed out that the commemoration is ironic because China itself has "flagrantly violated all the Panchsheel principles".

The first of the Panchsheel principles is mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty. China has, from the very beginning, blatantly flouted that.

Experts also pointed out how China still continues to violate these principles with its continuing territorial claims and massing of troops along the border.

**PANCHSHEEL, ONE OF BIGGEST BLUNDERS, SAY EXPERTS**

The Panchsheel Agreement, signed on April 29, 1954, is formerly known as The Agreement on Trade and Intercourse with Tibet Region. It was signed by the Indian envoy to Beijing, N Raghavan, and the Chinese Foreign Minister, Zhang Han-Fu.

It gave major concessions to the Chinese side, and ended up trading Tibet's independence, which made India share immediate borders with China.

There has been vehement opposition to the agreement in India since the very beginning.

"Born in sin" is how Congress leader Acharya Kriplani described the Panchsheel Agreement of 1954. Kriplani said during a debate in the Lok Sabha in 1959 that with the Panchsheel, India "put the seal of our approval on the destruction of an ancient nation [Tibet]".

Kriplani's criticism came years before the Chinese thrust upon a war on unprepared India.

"The 1954 Panchsheel Agreement represented one of India's biggest post-Independence blunders," said geostrategist Brahma Chellaney, while commenting on China marking the Panchsheel anniversary.

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Saturday (June 29) highlighted the significance of the Panchsheel Agreement in resolving current global conflicts as he sought to expand influence in the Global South amid its tussle with the West.

"The Five Principles have set a historic benchmark for international relations and international rule of law," said Xi.

**EXPERTS CALL OUT CHINA'S, XI'S PANCHSHEEL FAKERY**

"It is scarcely a surprise that Xi heaps praise on the five principles ("Panchsheel") of peaceful coexistence... What Xi did not say is that, just about eight years later, China, by invading India in 1962, flagrantly violated all the Panchsheel Principles," wrote Brahma Chellaney on X.

"Worse still, China continues to violate those principles in its relations with its neighbours," added Chellaney.

It isn't just with India, China has territorial disputes with several neighbours.

Recently, Chinese military personnel rammed two Philippine navy boats, boarded them and used axes, spears, machetes and hammers to damage the boats. The Chinese aggression in a disputed area of the South China Sea seemed similar to China's Galwan Valley attack of June 2020, and Indians called it "Galwan 2.0 in the South China Sea".

A post by Sudheendra Kulkarni, columnist and an official of Atal Bihari Vajpayee's PMO, on him attending the Panchsheel anniversary celebration in Beijing irked several experts.

"Panchsheel principles were supposed to be the bedrock of India-China ties following India's acceptance of Tibet as part of China, a massive political concession India made to China in the interest of peaceful relations," said Kanwal Sibal, former foreign secretary of India.

"China totally violated these principles in 1962 and continues to violate them with continuing territorial claims on India and military pressures on the border," Sibal wrote on X, reacting to Kulkarni's post. "Is massing of 50,000 troops by each side on the border consistent with Panch Sheel principles?" asked Sibal, a career diplomat.

Against this backdrop, Kanwal Sibal said it was appropriate that India didn't attend the celebrations in Beijing.

"India's presence at this self-serving Chinese propagandist show would be endorsing China's adherence to these principles in India-China ties and Chinese conduct elsewhere," he said. "We would be making a political fool of ourselves as a country," he added.

**CHINA'S PANCHSHEEL MOVE STRATEGIC**

There's a reason why China is showing its affinity to the Panchsheel.

Chinese President Xi invoked the Five Principles and linked them to his Global Security Initiative, saying it aims for "joint security and a shared future for humanity".

Xi has been promoting various initiatives, including the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), to expand China's global influence.

However, it is a hogwash that doesn't need much effort to be deciphered.

China has trampled upon all five of the Panchsheel principles and continues to violate them in its dealings with its neighbours. Therefore, marking the 70th anniversary of the Five Principles is plain Chinese fakery, which was exposed by President Xi as he heaped praises on the Panchsheel Agreement, while working against its spirit.

### **China's Communist Party on track for 100 million members by year's end**

01 July 2024, SCMP, Phoebe Zhang

Membership of the Chinese Communist Party reached 99 million last year and is on track to reach 100 million by the end of 2024, but the rate of growth continues to slow, according to the latest official tally.

In line with tradition, the data was released a day ahead of the July 1 celebrations to honour the party's founding in 1921.

The Central Organisation Department – the party's top personnel office – reported a net increase of 1.14 million members, a 1.2 per cent growth, compared with the end of 2022 when party membership rose by 1.4 per cent, increasing by 1.32 million.

Chinese President Xi Jinping – who is also the party's general secretary – extended greetings to party members across the country on Friday, in advance of the 103rd anniversary, at a Politburo study session.

Xi stressed that "comprehensive and strict governance over the party" must be upheld, to push forward party-building in the new era, and its organisation needs to be effective, insisting on a centralised and united leadership.

Grass roots party organisations also need to be reformed, to increase the party's local governance ability, he said. Internet and information technologies should be applied to party-building, to achieve full coverage of the organisation, online and offline.

A closer look at the tally shows that the number of members aged under 30 dropped to 12.41 million – a 0.18 per cent decrease of 23,000 on 2022. The drop was much slower than the previous year, when young membership fell by 1.5 per cent, or 189,000 from 2021.

The party has become more educated, with 56.2 per cent – 55.78 million members – having a college

degree or higher, an increase of 2.13 million. While women and ethnic minority groups remain under-represented, there have been improvements.

Female members increased by 88,300 to reach 30.18 million – 30.4 per cent of the membership – while ethnic minority groups now represent 7.7 per cent of the party, with a rise of 14,700 in 2023 to a total of 7.59 million, the data showed.

Xi has used various domestic and international settings over the years to stress the importance of female issues and called for women's rights and interests to be protected.

At a United Nations meeting in 2020 marking the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women for example, he said efforts must be made to ensure that women's development went hand in hand with economic and social development.

And in October last year, at a meeting with the All-China Women's Federation, Xi said women's roles were "irreplaceable" and called for more female participation in areas including high-quality development and village revitalisation.

Despite leadership support for economic and social empowerment, female participation in China's elite politics is lagging. In a break from a two-decade tradition, the current Politburo has 24 men and no women.

## **June**

### **CHINA: Harsh words, political disloyalty allegations mark purge of two former defence ministers**

28 June 2024, Tibetan Review

China has used especially harsh words in announcing the expulsion from the party of the country's two immediate former defence ministers while also underlining their political disloyalty, noted the scmp.com Jun 28, citing observers and China's official Xinhua news agency.

In an unprecedented move, the party's 24-person Politburo decided to launch corruption investigations into Wei Fenghe and his successor Li Shangfu, and expelled both from the party, the report said, citing statements on the decision released by state news agency Xinhua on Jun 27.

Both have also been stripped of their positions as generals and membership of the People's Liberation Army and will reportedly face criminal charges from military prosecutors too.

Li was sacked from his job in October, just seven months after he became defence minister while Wei held the position from 2018 to 2023.

Wei had also become the first chief of the rocket force when it was formed in 2015 as part of a major military overhaul. His two successors as heads of the force, Zhou Yaning and Li Yuchao, were both ousted last year.

The statements were quoted as saying the two former ministers "betrayed the trust of the party and the CMC [Central Military Commission], seriously polluted the political environment of the military, and caused great damage to the party's cause, national defence and military construction, as well as the image of its senior leaders".

The statements were stated to have singled Wei out for degrading the "political ecosystem" of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), and Li for contaminating the PLA's military equipment industry. Observers have drawn attention to the especially harsh wording in the brief statements of accusations against the two men. The wording is much harsher than the accusations previously made against Xu Caihou and Guo Boxiong, two former vice-chairmen of the CMC – China's top military command body – who were sacked for corruption during the first term of President Xi Jinping, a political scientist from Nanjing university, who asked not to be named due to sensitivity of the matter, has said.

"You can almost tell there is a feeling of 'how dare you let me down on the most important job!'"

The analyst has added that Beijing's frustration may have been compounded because unlike Guo and Xu, both Wei and Li were promoted to their most senior position under Xi.

He has noted that beside the usual short description of the alleged corruption, the Xinhua announcement underlined Wei and Li's political disloyalty.

The military, the bastion of the party's political power, has become a prime target for Xi's anti-graft campaign, and Beijing has said proudly that more Chinese generals have been sacked for corruption under Xi than were killed in decades of war in the 20th century, the report noted.

The official announcements were cited as saying that while Wei Fenghe was accused of taking bribes, his successor Li Shangfu was accused of both taking and giving bribes, raising new questions.

"It would be interesting to ask to whom did Li, who was already a top brass in the military, give money to," the Nanjing-based analyst has said.

The sacking of such a large number of senior defence officials is seen as a sign of the strength of President Xi's control over the military.

"Xi Jinping's control over the PLA is stronger than that of any of his predecessors, even Mao Zedong, if we look at the reforms he has been able to effect throughout the PLA since late 2015," James Char, a research fellow with the S. Rajaratnam School of

International Studies at the Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, has said.

While some observers have argued that corruption in the PLA has exposed weaknesses in its military abilities, some have argued it could actually improve the force's capacity to fight, the report said.

## Xi Says China Planning 'Major' Reforms Ahead Of Key Political Meeting

28 June 2024, Barron's

Chinese President Xi Jinping said Friday the ruling Communist Party was planning and implementing "major" reforms, ahead of a closely watched political conclave that is expected to put economic recovery high on the agenda.

Chinese policymakers have struggled to reignite growth since the end of strict Covid-19 pandemic health curbs in late 2022.

The world's second-largest economy is beset by a debt crisis in the property sector, persistently low consumption and high youth unemployment.

Xi said in a speech on Friday policymakers "are planning and implementing major measures to further deepen reform in a comprehensive manner".

"We will... form a more market-oriented, legal and international business environment," he said.

"China's door will only open wider and wider, and will never be closed."

Xi has touted the promise of significant reform several times this year and the government has already enacted measures in key sectors such as real estate to try to address critical issues.

It was announced on Thursday that the delayed Third Plenum – a meeting historically watched for signals on economic policy direction – will take place in Beijing in mid-July.

The key meeting of top officials, originally expected last autumn, is highly anticipated in the hopes it might resolve the uncertainty that has weighed on China's economy.

The People's Bank of China (PBOC), the country's central bank, pledged later on Friday to "promote the implementation of the financial policies and measures already issued, and push for the stable and healthy development of the real estate market".

"(We will)... promote the accelerated construction of a new model for real estate development," the PBOC said in a statement.

Xi's address at Beijing's opulent Great Hall of the People, delivered in front of a high-profile international audience, marked the 70th anniversary of some of China's foundational diplomatic tenets.

The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence include mutual respect for territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in internal

affairs, equality and cooperation for mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence.

Xi hailed China as a force for global peace, saying in his speech Beijing would continue to play "constructive roles" in international conflicts such as Gaza and Ukraine.

China has been criticised by Ukraine's allies for failing to condemn Russia's 2022 invasion and accused of favouring Moscow. Beijing insists it is a neutral party.

In the Middle East, China has advocated for decades for a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

Xi called for greater cooperation between China and developing countries in his speech.

"Engaging in small yard, high-wall decoupling practices is to move against the tide of history," Xi said.

"It will only harm the common interests of the international community."

### **China condemned for rejecting key recommendations of UN review of its rights record**

26 June 2024, Tibetan Review

China has rejected all key recommendations urging it to end violations of human rights of its citizens while accepting only those from friendly governments which either do not criticize it or which, in fact, praises its repressive policies in the name of combating separatism and maintaining the socialist government system following the UN's Universal Periodical Review (UPR) of its record held in Jan 2024.

The UPR is a process through which all UN member states' human rights records are examined by other members and the latest was China's fourth since 2009.

Announcing China's response to the 418 recommendations made at the end of the review hearing, the UN has said Jun 11 that the Chinese government had agreed to accept 290 recommendations, partially accept 8, take note of 32, and reject 98.

China has cited the 290 as those it had either "accepted and (were) being implemented" or those it had "accepted and already implemented." However, none of the "accepted" recommendations address concerns raised by UN member states about crimes against humanity, torture, forced disappearance, persecution of human rights defenders and journalists, or other grave and well-documented violations, said a group of 13 human rights organizations that include Chinese, Tibetan, Uyghur, Hong Kong, as well as international groups

such as Human Rights Watch in a joint statement on Jun 25.

The statement said that through intense lobbying campaign ahead of the review, China acted to whitewash its record, submitting false information and blocking any domestic civil society groups from participating in the preparation of the state report or from making contributions to the review. It also succeeded in having a number of states friendly to it to ask bland questions that made vague recommendations while using their platform to, in fact, praise the Chinese government's rights record.

"This provided ample weak recommendations that the Chinese government could deem acceptable."

Given this context, the numerous acceptances by the Chinese government does not mean actual intention to improve its rights record. No one should confuse a high number of accepted recommendations with any real commitment by Beijing on human rights, the statement said.

In fact, China's latest rejection rate is stated to be 30%, much higher than in the last one, in 2018, at 18%.

The statement dismissed China's claim made at the Jan 2024 review of the achievement from its "acceptance" of many recommendations from the 2018 review, citing NGO research which showed that "the overwhelming majority of those accepted recommendations were so weak, vague, or based on flawed assumptions, that progress towards them cannot be meaningfully verified."

In fact, "dozens of the accepted recommendations clearly or implicitly endorse human rights violations. For example, Belarus recommended that China "[c]ombat separatism and promote modernization of the social governance system and capacity in Xizang" [using the Chinese government's official name for Tibet], the statement pointed out.

Given the sorry state of the UPR recommendations and China's rejection of their substantive contents, the statement suggested: "The Chinese government's posture towards the UPR should prompt the HRC member states and other actors to press Beijing to follow up on recommendations made by independent UN human rights monitors and officials, including Special Procedures, treaty bodies, and the OHCHR."

The joint statement came ahead of the adoption of China's UPR at the ongoing Jun 18 – Jul 12, 2024, session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. China's official position is that any discussion critical of its human rights record constitutes interference in its internal affair even as it plays an outsized role in the UN human rights system



## Chinese Government Rejects Key Human Rights Recommendations in Latest UN Review

25 June 2024, TCHRD

### Intense Lobbying Campaign Produces Many Weak Recommendations

The Chinese government's rejection of recommendations to end its deepening human rights crisis reflects its disdain for international human rights reviews at the United Nations, the undersigned human rights nongovernmental organizations said in a joint statement released on 25 June 2024.

On 11 June 2024, the UN made available the Chinese government's announcement to accept or reject recommendations from the latest Universal Periodical Review (UPR) in January 2024, a process through which all UN member states' human rights records are examined. In a disingenuous effort to paper over its refusal to engage to improve its appalling record, the Chinese government said it would accept 290 of the 428 recommendations, partially accept 8, note 32, and reject 98 of the recommendations made. The 290 accepted ones include those the government said it "accepted and being implemented" and those "accepted and already implemented."

None of the "accepted" recommendations address concerns raised by UN member states about crimes against humanity, torture, forced disappearance, persecution of human rights defenders and journalists, or other grave and well-documented violations.

The Chinese government, in the preparatory process leading up to the January 2024 review, as it did in and around three previous UPRs in 2009, 2013, and 2018, submitted false information, and blocked any domestic civil society groups from participating in the preparation of the state report or from making contributions to the review. Through an intense lobbying campaign ahead of the review, it acted to whitewash its record, and succeeded in having a number of states ask bland questions, make vague recommendations, and use their platform to praise the Chinese government's rights record. This provided ample weak recommendations that the Chinese government could deem acceptable.

Despite the heavy pressure, some countries took a principled approach, raising concerns, and making recommendations, on the basis of the growing body of evidence of abuses compiled by NGOs, UN special procedures, treaty bodies and the UN Human Rights Office.

However, Beijing categorically rejected all recommendations calling on it to stop these egregious human rights violations and to end impunity for the perpetrators. The rejection rate is 30%, much higher than in 2018 – 18%. It also

rejected all recommendations calling on the government to end reprisals against individuals engaging with the international human rights system, a message of disdain on the ten-year anniversary of the death of Cao Shunli in detention, a courageous Chinese human rights defender taken into custody on her way to Geneva for China's 2014 UPR.

In this context, the numerous acceptances by the Chinese government does not mean actual intention to improve its rights record. No one should confuse a high number of accepted recommendations with any real commitment by Beijing on human rights.

At the January 2024 review, Chinese officials claimed as the government's achievement its "acceptance" of many recommendations from the 2018 review, yet NGO research shows that the overwhelming majority of those accepted recommendations were so weak, vague, or based on flawed assumptions, that progress towards them cannot be meaningfully verified. Worse still, dozens of the accepted recommendations also clearly or implicitly endorse human rights violations. For example, Belarus recommended that China "[c]ombat separatism and promote modernization of the social governance system and capacity in Xizang" [using the Chinese government's official name for Tibet].

Since the 2018 UPR, civil society groups have documented a range of acts of intimidation and reprisals, including Chinese diplomats photographing civil society representatives and journalists inside UN premises. And intimidation was intense around and during the January 2024 review, as the Chinese government, in clear violation of its legal obligation to uphold the right to unhindered access to the UN, tried to silence critics who may offer an honest assessment.

Beijing's responses to UPR recommendations also include hostility towards the process and towards UN human rights mechanisms. The government has challenged the authority of the UPR to address topics Beijing insists are a matter of "sovereignty," and disparaged the professionalism of UN human rights experts. The Chinese government also falsely proclaimed the August 2022 OHCHR report on human rights abuses in Xinjiang, which that office alleged may constitute crimes against humanity, as "completely illegal and void."

The adoption of China's UPR at this session of the Human Rights Council should be an important inflection point. The Chinese government's posture towards the UPR should prompt the HRC member states and other actors to press Beijing to follow up on recommendations made by independent UN human rights monitors and officials, including Special Procedures, treaty bodies, and the OHCHR.

Specifically, the UN High Commissioner and member states should follow up on the landmark 2022 OHCHR report on abuses in the Uyghur region. The Special Advisor of the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect should take concrete action in response to the referral of the situation of Xinjiang to their Office by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in November 2022.

Member states from all regional and political groups should take overdue action to heed the call by more than fifty UN human rights experts in June 2020 for them “to act collectively and decisively to ensure China respects human rights and abides by its international obligations,” including by holding an HRC special session on China and establishing an impartial and independent United Nations mechanism “to closely monitor, analyze and report annually on the human rights situation in China.” Such a mechanism is needed more than ever, in the face of Beijing’s intransigence and deepening repression. The experts repeated the call in June 2022 and September 2022.

Member states should also press Beijing to end intimidation and seriously cooperate with other forthcoming treaty body reviews, including under the Convention against Torture, for which its state report is five years overdue, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Undersigned, in alphabetical order: Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD), CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, Hong Kong Democracy Council (HKDC), Hong Kong Watch (HKW), Human Rights in China (HRIC), Human Rights Watch (HRW), International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), International Tibet Network, Reporters without Borders (RSF), Safeguard Defenders, The Rights Practice (TRP), Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD), Uyghur Human Rights Project, Campaign for Uyghurs, World Uyghur Congress.

### **Cities, provinces across China join global propaganda push**

21 June 2024, VOA, Lin Yang

Each year, China’s government spends billions on foreign propaganda and until recently those efforts were largely driven by departments in the central government and state media. Now, a growing number of cities are joining that effort, with the China Media Project, an independent research group, recently documenting at least 23 foreign propaganda centers at China’s city and provincial levels.

China experts say the move makes sense because it allows Beijing to draw on more resources and create

tailored messages at a time when the country’s image is facing serious challenges over concerns that range from trade to human rights as well its handling of the COVID pandemic.

“The battle for discourse power requires all hands on deck,” Jonathan Sullivan, a China specialist at the University of Nottingham, told VOA.

“In every sector, China brings its full capacity – institutional, financial and human resources – to the fight, so it is normal” for Beijing to do the same with propaganda, Sullivan said.

Joshua Kurlantzick, author of Beijing’s Global Media Offensive, said this is one of the many attempts to spread the Chinese Communist Party, or CCP, propaganda.

“If one doesn’t work, China has so many efforts they can try others,” he told VOA in a written response.

The centers are popping up across the country and the most recent was on June 7, when China’s northeastern city of Tianjin established the Tianjin International Communication Center, or TICC.

According to the city’s state-run newspaper, the Tianjin Daily, the new center will “use lenses and pens to demonstrate a lively Tianjin to the outside world” and “serve the country’s overall public diplomacy.”

The establishment of the TICC follows the formation on May 31 of Zhejiang International Communication Center. That provincial-level center, according to the China Public Diplomacy Association, will “showcase China’s governance through the Zhejiang model ... and allow the world to truly understand China.”

Since 2023, the spread of global propaganda centers at the local level began expanding rapidly. On July 3, 2023, Shenzhen formed the SZMG International Communication Center. A few days later, eastern Jiangsu province established Jiangsu International Communication Center on July 12. Shanghai joined in October 2023 with SMG International, a city-level external communication base dubbed as “a video window for Shanghai’s city image.”

On January 6, 2024, the northern province of Hebei announced its own Great Wall International Communication Center. As of this month, China has established 23 provincial-level external communication centers, tasked to remake China’s approach of delivering its message externally.

Gary Rawnsley, a professor of public diplomacy at the University of Lincoln, said these provincial-level centers indicate China has begun to realize that it cannot carry out the same propaganda to all foreigners.

“I would say that this is a clever and strategic move because it indicates that China is understanding the need to tailor its messages for particular audiences,” he said. “When we look at the activities of some of

these centers, they are very much oriented toward the needs and interests of people in neighboring countries."

Tailored for its audiences

"Tailored" and "targeted" are key words used by provincial-level international communication centers, or ICCs.

An article by Qiushi Journal, the leading official theoretical journal for the Chinese Communist Party, says the centers are "developed based on local propaganda needs" and will become "a new force" for China's global propaganda.

The Jiangsu International Communication Center has active accounts in seven languages on major social platforms that are blocked in China, including X, formerly known as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

The director of the Hubei Communication Center told a local newspaper that in addition to making full use of social media accounts, the center has adopted a "one place, one policy" approach to tailor the content according to their audiences.

"For example, we focus on football programs to Brazil and Argentina, and culinary shows to Southeast Asia and Italy," said the center's director, Cao Xiqing.

Not all the centers were established over the past year.

China's Yunnan province, which borders Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam, formed the South and Southeast Asian Media Network on May 31, 2022. According to the Information Office of the Yunnan Government, this is "the only international communication center in the country specially designed for audiences in South Asia and Southeast Asia."

The regional network publishes journals in Burmese, Thai, Cambodian and Lao. In addition to distributing its content on social media, it also has web pages in seven languages — Burmese, Lao, Thai, Khmer, English, Vietnamese and Chinese.

Soft power focus

The local ICCs focus on China's soft power. Rawnsley from the University of Lincoln said this is deliberate.

"It seems to be that at the central level, they are moving toward a much more political style of programming and letting these regional centers soften their programming for particular audiences and focusing much more on culture, tourism and history," he told VOA.

VOA examined recent tweets by the Henan International Communication Center and found topics that included night scenes of its capital, Zhengzhou, foreigners learning Chinese medicine, Henan Opera and Shaolin Kung Fu. The Henan ICC also has a promotional video of the Belt and Road Initiative, Beijing's massive global infrastructure project.

The ICCs also host various activities. For example, the Hubei ICC held an event named "The Story of the Communist Party of China" in May 2023, inviting foreigners in China to learn the history of the CCP.

Rawnsley said this highlights how everything the regional centers are doing is not completely autonomous.

"Everything will be following particular guidelines that are laid down in Beijing," he said.

Limited effect

Despite their rapid formations, these centers have not attracted much traffic. The Henan ICC, which joined X in November 2022, currently has 19,000 followers. The Jinan ICC's X account has around 55,000 followers since it was established in April 2022.

China has poured enormous resources into its external propaganda, yet people's attitudes toward China have worsened in recent years, especially since the 2020 coronavirus outbreak.

A poll by the Pew Research Center in May showed that 81% of Americans have an unfavorable view of China, including 43% who hold a very unfavorable view of the country.

A 2022 poll by Pew that surveyed people in 19 countries found 68% of the respondents had an unfavorable impression of Beijing. The research organization found these unfavorable opinions are related to concerns about China's policies on human rights.

China has received heavy criticism for its strict policies in Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong, as well as its aggression toward self-ruling island Taiwan, which China claims as a breakaway province. The CCP leadership denies all these accusations.

Rawnsley said the problem China faces is much more than just its presentation.

"China keeps adding more and more platforms, but it doesn't change the message. It doesn't change what people know is going on inside China," he said.

"At the end of the day, policy and behavior determines credibility," he said. "Actions speak louder than words."

### Xi calls for carrying forward patriotism

21 June 2024, China Daily

President Xi Jinping expressed the hope for the Tibetan Buddhist circle in Qinghai province to carry on the fine traditions of patriotism, help promote religious, social and ethnic harmony, and play an active role in advancing Chinese modernization, during an inspection tour in the province.



*President Xi Jinping, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, is welcomed by monks at a Tibetan Buddhist temple in Xining, Qinghai province, on Tuesday. He inspected Qinghai from Tuesday to Wednesday. [Photo by Xie Huanchi / XINHUA]*

Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks while visiting the Hongjue Temple in the provincial capital of Xining on Tuesday afternoon.

He said the temple has played an important role as a bridge in strengthening the bond between the central government and Tibetan Buddhism over generations.

"It is essential to protect this precious historical and cultural heritage, and renew efforts to foster a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation and promote ethnic unity and progress," Xi said.

The Hongjue Temple in central Xining has a history of more than 1,000 years. Konchok Gyatso, a senior monk at the temple, said it has played an important role in boosting exchanges between the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and other parts of China and promoting peace among people from different ethnic groups.

Since the establishment of the monastery in 941 AD, it has always been inclusive to different cultures, Konchok Gyatso said. "The founder of the monastery was taught and approved by three masters from Tibetan Buddhism and two from Chinese Buddhism (also known as Mahayana Buddhism). And Hongjue is the temple with the longest history for integrating the cultures of both Tibetan Buddhism and Chinese Buddhism in China."

Because of such integration, it has become a well-known school among Tibetan Buddhist monks, and many accomplished monks and living Buddhas have studied at the temple, he added. "More importantly, besides their accomplishments in Tibetan Buddhism, they all share the same vision of promoting peace and unity among people from different ethnic groups till today."

Furthermore, the temple, which is located at the eastern entry point of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, has always helped to enforce ties between the central government and Tibetan Buddhism, Konchok Gyatso said.

In 1779, the 6th Panchen Erdeni Lobsang Palden Yeshe was invited to Beijing by Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). To make his stop at the Hongjue Temple comfortable, the emperor had the temple fully renovated. And it has become a key spot where the Panchen Lama — one of the two most revered living Buddhas in Tibetan Buddhism — stayed in Qinghai ever since.

Also, born in Qinghai in 1938, the 10th Panchen Erdeni Chokyi Gyaltsen set off from the temple to Xizang in 1951 to fulfill his duty after completing a series of studies on Tibetan Buddhism.

"He then became a living Buddha with profound Buddhist knowledge and full love of the country and his religion. He worked hard for the country's unification and ethnic unity, which inspired us all," Konchok Gyatso said.

To protect Hongjue Temple's rich cultural heritage, a renovation and restoration project was launched in 2004. Upon the completion of the project in 2014, a new grand prayer hall was built at the temple.

"When people come to visit the monastery, besides the culture of Tibetan Buddhism, we want them to see its long-lasting tradition of boosting understanding among people from different ethnic groups, such as Tibetan, Mongolian and Han," Konchok Gyatso said. Chen Lijian, a researcher at the China Tibetology Research Center, said the temple has been influential in Tibetan Buddhism historically.

"And it will continue to serve as a key platform for promoting exchanges among different cultures and ethnic unity on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau," Chen said.

### **Xi Jinping visits Mao's caves**

20 June 2024, RFA, Qian Lang

The Chinese leader uses symbolism of wartime revolutionary base to signal grip on the military.

President Xi Jinping has led top military brass on a pilgrimage of caves that were a key revolutionary base for the late supreme leader Mao Zedong, state media reported, a move analysts said was aimed at strengthening grip over the People's Liberation Army.

The cave complex of Yan'an, in northeast China, where Mao spent the formative years of the Chinese Communist Party leadership during the war with Japan, has become a symbol of ideological purity in China, and has been described by commentators as one of the "holy sites" of the Chinese revolution.

The Yan'an conference marks "a return to the roots of the military," state news agency Xinhua paraphrased Xi as saying.



It comes after Xi fired Li Shangfu from his post as defense minister on Oct. 24, 2023, with no explanation given. A number of senior leaders of the People's Liberation Army's Rocket Corps, including the head of China's nuclear arsenal, had also been fired by Xi in July.

Yan'an is also where Mao launched a major "rectification" campaign, purging his opponents from party ranks.

Commentators told RFA that the choice of Yan'an as a venue for Xi's speech sent out a strong symbolic message.

Xi told the political work conference in Shaanxi province that "the armed forces must always be led by those who are reliable and loyal to the party," Xinhua reported.

He warned of "deep-seated problems" in the military due to a "lack of ideals and beliefs."

Useful propaganda tool

Communist troops arrived in Yan'an, on the poverty-stricken loess plateau of the Yellow River, in 1935, making their homes in caves and eating millet gruel every day until the tide swung their way in the civil war in 1948.

The Yan'an period of Chinese history is a useful propaganda tool, because it came before the power struggles and political campaigns launched by Mao against his opponents threw the country into years of turmoil and cost millions of lives, and still carries a message of hope for many Chinese people. Current affairs commentator Cai Shenkun said Xi's message was clear.

"He is emphasizing the importance of who it is holding the gun," Cai said. "It used to be said that the party should command the gun, but the key question is, who is actually holding it?"

"Mao Zedong ruled the party with guns, Deng Xiaoping did the same," he said in a reference to Mao's successor who ordered the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre by People's Liberation Army forces in Beijing.

Wife promoted

Meanwhile, Xi has reportedly promoted his wife Peng Liyuan, a former military singer who holds the rank of major-general, to a senior position in the Central Military Commission's Cadre Assessment Committee, which approves appointments, according to senior political commentator Willy Lam.

"Peng's increasing public profile and potential elevation within the military hierarchy invites comparisons to Mao Zedong's reliance on his fourth wife, Jiang Qing, during the Cultural Revolution," Lam wrote in a commentary last month for the Jamestown Foundation.

Cai said it is significant that the conference is being held ahead of the third plenum of the Central Committee next month, and can be seen as a

message that Xi is strengthening his grip on the military.

Current affairs commentator Guo Min agreed, saying that party control over the armed forces is a recurrent concern for Xi.

"He's talking about the absolute leadership of the party over the military, which basically means, his absolute command over the military," Guo said.

"Political work is actually about toeing the line, the same line as [Xi]," he said.

### **Xi Jinping tells top PLA leaders they must eliminate 'conditions that breed corruption'**

20 June 2024, SCMP, Liu Zhen

The People's Liberation Army must show absolute loyalty to the Communist Party and there can be no room for corruption in the military, President Xi Jinping told top PLA brass this week.

"We must make it clear that the barrels of guns must always be in the hands of those who are loyal and dependable to the party ... And we must make it clear that there is no place for any corrupt elements in the military," Xi was quoted by state media as saying.

Xi spoke on Monday in Yanan, in northwest Shaanxi province, at a political work conference of the Central Military Commission (CMC) with key officials and political commissars of the military, state news agency Xinhua reported. The appearance came before next month's Third Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, which is expected to lay out China's reform and economic priorities for the next few years.

The Xinhua report highlighted that the conference was initiated by Xi, who is the chairman of the CMC – the top decision-making body of the PLA.

Xi's speech, which covered a range of issues from global geopolitical challenges to the PLA's modernisation, mirrored a similar one he gave a decade ago in Gutian, Fujian province, that heralded an overhaul of the PLA and acceleration of its modernisation drive.

On Monday, Xi told the PLA elites that they must never forget the revolutionary spirit of the Communist Party founders, stay loyal to the party, and steel themselves for an unstable and rapidly changing world.

"At present, we face complex and profound changes in the world, country, party and the army," he said.

"Politically, we must incessantly promote politics in our army-building as our military face sophisticated and unparalleled challenges so that we can ensure the nature and principles of the people's army will never change, and we can always dare to fight and win."



In order to win, Xi said leading cadres must be prepared to do “deep soul searching” and face their own shortcomings.

“[PLA] cadres at all levels, the senior ones in particular, must step forward, dare to lose face and face up to their own shortcomings and flaws ... make earnest rectifications, resolve problems that are deeply rooted in their thinking,” Xi said.

He added that the top brass must eliminate “hotbeds and conditions that breed corruption” by improving the distribution of power and operational check and balance mechanisms, “enriching the toolbox for punishing new types of corruption and hidden corruption” and strengthening the all-round supervision of high-ranking officers in their performance and use of power.

Xi made no mention of individuals in his speech, which came after the sacking of dozens of senior PLA officials since last year. Former defence minister Li Shangfu was abruptly removed in October, with the reason for his removal never announced.

Additionally, nine senior generals – including past or current top commanders of the PLA Rocket Force (PLARF), the former air force commander and a few Central Military Commission officials with the Equipment Development Department in charge of equipment development of procurement – were disqualified from their posts in the National People’s Congress in December. Their removals also remain unexplained.

SCMP reported last year that Beijing had started a wide-ranging anti-corruption investigation focused on the leaders of the PLARF, a key element of the country’s nuclear arsenal. In December, the inquiries led to the dismissal of three senior Chinese aerospace-defence executives from China’s top advisory body, the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, and a prominent Chinese rocket scientist was also expelled from the CPPCC in January.

The military has been one of the main targets of Xi’s far-reaching anti-corruption campaign. The decade-long effort has seen the downfall of top military leaders like Guo Boxiong and Xu Caihou, both former vice-chairmen of the CMC, in 2014 and 2015. The Political Work Conference is part of the Central Military Commission’s meeting series on important issues, as “political work is always the lifeline of the PLA”.

In 2014, Xi chaired an extended Political Work Conference of the CMC with delegates from the entire PLA in Gutian, Fujian province. The meeting echoed the 1929 meeting held in the same place by Mao Zedong, during which the Communist Party established the principle of “the party commands the gun”.

## **China’s leader Xi Jinping vows to step up crackdown on corruption in armed forces**

20 June 2024, Hong Kong Free Press

Xi Jinping has waged an unrelenting crackdown on deep-seated corruption since coming to power a decade ago, a campaign critics say is a tool to purge political rivals.

China’s President Xi Jinping has vowed to boost his crackdown on corruption and enhance loyalty within the armed forces, state media reported Wednesday.

Xi has waged an unrelenting crackdown on deep-seated corruption since coming to power a decade ago, a campaign critics say is a tool to purge political rivals.

China’s former defence minister Li Shangfu was sacked abruptly last year in unexplained circumstances and replaced weeks later by the incumbent Dong Jun.

Xi addressed China’s top brass on Monday at a meeting of the Central Military Commission in the northwestern city of Yan’an, state broadcaster CCTV said.

He urged participants to “eradicate the soil and conditions in which corruption thrives (and) expand the depth and breadth of the anti-corruption struggle”, CCTV said.

Xi also called on the military to “strengthen the all-round supervision of senior cadres in exercising their duties and using their powers”.

The meeting took place as China and its regional neighbours have butted heads in recent months over territorial claims in the hotly disputed South China Sea.

China also held war games last month around Taiwan, the self-ruled island that it claims as part of its territory and has vowed to seize one day, by force if needed.

“The situation in the world, country, party and army are undergoing complex and profound changes,” Xi said, according to CCTV.

“We must unceasingly promote political army-building... and always dare to fight and win.”

## **Xi stresses PLA's political loyalty at crucial meeting held in old revolutionary base**

19 June 2024, The State Council

Chinese President Xi Jinping emphasized the armed forces' political loyalty as a crucial meeting on the political work in the military was held in Yan'an, an old revolutionary base in northwest China's Shaanxi Province.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the

Central Military Commission (CMC), demanded efforts to ensure a solid political guarantee for building a strong military, as he addressed the CMC Political Work Conference, held from Monday to Wednesday.

The Yan'an conference, which Xi personally decided to convene, took place 10 years after a similar meeting was held in Gutian, east China's Fujian Province. The participants discussed and made arrangements for promoting political work in the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

Xi emphasized the need to uphold the Party's absolute leadership over the military and to build a high-quality cadre team that is loyal, clean, responsible, and capable of fulfilling the mission of strengthening the military.

On Monday afternoon, Xi led CMC members and heads of various departments and units to visit the revolutionary relics at Wangjiaping, where the CMC's headquarters were stationed from August 1937 to March 1947.

Xi visited the former residences of late revolutionary leaders including Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai and Zhu De in Yan'an to honor the memory of their revolutionary struggle.

The Yan'an conference marks a return to the roots of the military, Xi said.

He called on senior military officers to shoulder the responsibilities entrusted by the Party and the people to keep strengthening the armed forces.

Xi delivered an important speech at the conference, noting that after the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, the CPC Central Committee held the 2014 military political work conference in Gutian and improved political conduct through rectification initiatives.

Measures to govern the military with strict discipline have been comprehensively implemented with unprecedented determination and intensity, achieving historic accomplishments in enhancing political loyalty in the military, according to Xi.

Xi stressed that political work is always the lifeline of the country's military. The armed forces must always be led by those who are reliable and loyal to the Party, and there must be no place for corruption within the military.

Noting that China's military is confronted with complicated challenges in the political work, Xi said it is necessary to continuously enhance political loyalty in the military to ensure that the people's armed forces always uphold their core values, maintain purity, and strictly adhere to discipline.

He also analyzed the deep-seated problems that need to be addressed in military political work, emphasizing that a root cause of these problems lies in the lack of ideals and beliefs.

Xi called on relevant personnel at all levels, especially senior cadres, to introspect, engage in soul-searching reflections, and make earnest rectifications.

Xi highlighted key work to enhance political loyalty in the military, urging efforts to arm the military with the Party's new theories and improve the leadership of Party organizations, as well as their capabilities of organization and implementation.

The Party leadership must be upheld in all the fields and the whole process of enhancing combat readiness, Xi noted.

Xi urged efforts to nurture a contingent of high-caliber officers, eradicate the breeding ground for corruption, and enhance the comprehensive oversight of high-ranking officers in terms of their performance of duty and exercise of power.

Officers at all levels, especially those in the higher ranks, should lead by example and serve as pioneers and models, Xi said.

### **Chinese Communist Party warns members not to criticise policy ahead of major economic policy meeting**

16 June 2024, SCMP, Sylvie Zhuang

The Chinese Communist Party's watchdog has issued a stern reminder to members not to criticise party policy ahead of a major party meeting that is likely to set the direction of economic policy for the next five years.

But analysts warned this effort to "unify thought", to use the party's own jargon, amid challenging economic conditions may further damage Beijing's credibility and erode business confidence if it is seen as "unreasonably trying to control the storyline".

The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection published a special report via state news agency Xinhua on Wednesday that warned against "openly speaking ill of the party on major issues" as part of the watchdog's latest internal disciplinary drive.

The report said "public statements that contradict the decisions of the Central Committee are absolutely not allowed".

It added that public comments that "irresponsibly discuss" the party's main policies, "disrupt the thoughts" and undermine the unity of party members, warning that those who hinder policy execution must be "dealt with strictly".

Explaining its rationale, the report said the party leadership "fully listened" to different voices before it made a decision, and once it had decided all party members "must resolutely implement" that policy.

It also said there were internal party procedures that should be used to address any problems that may arise.

The disciplinary message came weeks ahead of the third plenum – a key meeting of the party’s Central Committee next month that will set the country’s economic strategy for the coming five years.

The event was moved back from its customary time slot in the latter months of last year, possibly to give the leadership more time to prepare in the face of growing economic headwinds.

The event is expected to be one of the defining moments for President Xi Jinping’s third five-year term as the party’s leader.

Its outcome is also likely to play a major role in determining whether the country can avoid the increasingly obvious middle-income trap – where rising costs and declining competitiveness prevent emerging economies reaching high-income status – and reach the party’s goal of becoming an innovation-driven developed economy.

The country is also facing multiple challenges on other fronts, including the property crisis, sluggish growth, tariffs from the United States and the European Union’s de-risking strategy.

In the run-up to the plenum senior leadership figures have been touring the country to solicit opinion on economic policy, including Xi himself, who held a rare meeting with business leaders in Shandong province and pledged to carry out further reforms.

“Now, as the third plenary session is about to be held, the central leadership undoubtedly wants to control the pace of the discussion,” said Dali Yang, a political scientist at the University of Chicago.

“The talk of reforms suggest that everyone is encouraged to speak out, but the ban on public criticism is a stark reminder that dissenting voices will face consequences,” he said.

Deng Yuwen, former deputy editor of Study Times, the Central Party School’s official newspaper, said the message being sent was “everyone should unify their thoughts before the Third Plenary Session and do not say anything that does not align with the central leadership’s main themes and spirit”.

He said: “Disciplinary moves of this kind are nominally confined to the party, but it is always the aim to regulate society as a whole.”

The rules against public criticisms were included in a major revamp of the party’s disciplinary code in 2015 that tightened its control over the membership.

The first person to fall foul of such a charge was Zhao Xinwei, the former editor-in-chief of Xinjiang Daily, the Communist Party mouthpiece in the far-western region.

He was expelled from the party in 2015 for a series of charges including openly opposing key policies aimed at combating terrorism and extremism.

Since then, more than 16 officials have been placed under investigation on suspicion of publicly speaking

or going against major party policies, according to a report by the official newspaper Legal Daily in 2021. Such moves have heightened fears the party is further chipping away at differences of opinion in line with the wider trend of tightening access to information and data.

James Zimmerman, a partner in international law firm Perkins Coie and former chairman of the American Chamber of Commerce in China, said “any attempt to unreasonably and dishonestly control the storyline will only further erode Beijing’s credibility”. He said foreign businesses already had doubts about the credibility of China’s official data and information, and restrictions on policy discussions would further dampen investor and consumer confidence.

China has strongly hit out at questions about its future economic prospects, but last year when the country’s youth unemployment rate hit an all-time high, China’s national statistics agency simply stopped issuing the data. It said it needed to make adjustments and resumed publication six months later.

Nis Grunberg, a China analyst with the Berlin-based think tank Mercator Institute for China Studies, said the decreasing opportunities to speak out or gain access to opinion were not conducive to academic research or building business confidence.

“I don’t think obsessive streamlining of information and only making one single message available is good for business confidence or trust,” said Grunberg, adding that it is clear that Beijing wants everyone to speak with one voice.

He said the lack of transparency and trust in Chinese information also hinders academic research because it is hard to verify or test any assumptions.

“Now the third plenum is approaching and nobody knows what’s coming, really,” said Grunberg.

“So it’s very clear that everyone is supposed to stick to the official line and not to stir up some assumptions or even demands for [the reforms that are] coming.”

### **China’s Communist Party Members Revised Disciplinary Code Details “Hundred Sins”**

14 June 2024, China Scope

The Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP’s) nearly 100 million members are studying a newly revised set of “Disciplinary Regulations.” The regulations contain over 100 provisions, leading Hong Kong media outlet Ming Pao to sarcastically comment that members who can avoid violating any of them are almost “saints” or “perfect people.”

According to the commentary in Ming Pao, the revised regulations list 158 disciplinary violations for party members. These include bans on religious beliefs, stock trading, and joining alumni or hometown associations without approval.

First introduced in 2003 and frequently revised since, the latest version of the CCP's "Disciplinary Regulations" took effect on January 1st, 2023 after the latest revisions were finalized in December 2022. Violations span six categories: political, organizational, integrity, mass relations, work, and life. On the political discipline front, publicly expressing "right-wing" views that "adhere to the position of bourgeois liberalization and oppose the Four Cardinal Principles," as well as "ultra-leftist" opposition to China's reform and opening up policies, are considered violations. Newly added are violations like "opportunistic networking" and "associating with 'political fraudsters.'"

"Political fraudsters" refer to those who claim high-level connections to officials, those who claim to have "special backgrounds" as experts/masters, and those who ingratiate themselves with local politicians to facilitate promotions or to resolve legal cases for personal gain.

The Ming Pao commentary noted that, while some violations like "failing to resolutely implement central policies" are clear, others like "pursuing sensual pleasures and vulgar interests" or "inaction, false action, and slow action" are more vague and hard to interpret.

### **China rolls out 'zero tolerance' crackdown on fake government officials, financial crimes**

07 June 2024, SCMP, Sylie Zhuang

Beijing has launched a nationwide "zero tolerance" crackdown on people who pretend to be government officials to defraud investors by selling fake official seals – among other schemes.

In a meeting last week, the Ministry of Public Security called on agencies nationwide to target people who impersonated officials from government ministries or state-owned companies to dupe investors.

The rackets had "severely damaged the image of the Communist Party and the government and disrupted social and economic order", according to a statement posted to the ministry's website on Thursday.

In an effort to maintain a "good business environment", the ministry said, law enforcement agencies should leverage mechanisms like big data to uncover illegal fundraising, contract fraud, and illegal deposits.

The crackdown was announced after state media published several reports about individuals or groups that have scammed investors and the public by leveraging the credibility of state institutions.

According to a November report by state news agency Xinhua, more than 20 central ministries and agencies, including the ministries of finance, agriculture and rural affairs, and science and

technology, as well as state-owned enterprises, had issued "fraud prevention statements" warning the public to be aware of impostors.

In one case from a court in the city of Dezhou in the eastern province of Shandong, a gang had defrauded 286 victims of almost 29 million yuan (US\$4 million) by claiming to have "government backing", according to the Xinhua report.

In another case from May 2023, fraudsters who pretended to be a working-group affiliated with the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), the country's top national economic planner, told local government officials that could obtain subsidies of up to 10 billion yuan, according to a report in March by state broadcaster CCTV.

The scam forced the NDRC to issue a statement on its official WeChat account saying that it had no such working group and there were no such government subsidies.

Chinese authorities have also been battling frauds in which scammers use artificial intelligence to commit financial crimes with increasingly sophisticated technology.

The frequent media presence of some high-profile government officials had offered scammers abundant content to create realistic simulations for scams using facial and voice recognition, CCTV reported.

Earlier this year, Beijing vowed to ramp up a crackdown on financial crimes and pledged to improve monitoring of transactions to reduce risks.

### **Xi Jinping using relatives to conceal \$707.2mn wealth, says report**

10 June 2024, WION, Heena Sharma

Chinese President Xi Jinping and other senior Chinese leaders have engaged in corruption and concealed vast amounts of wealth, using their relatives to obscure their activities, according to a US government report.

The report by the Congressional Research Service (CRS), a public policy research institute of the United States Congress also highlighted the challenges in obtaining public information regarding the wealth and corruption of high-ranking Communist Party officials.

According to the report, Xi had accrued a staggering \$376 million in company investments by 2012.

This is in addition to an indirect 18 per cent stake in a rare-earth mineral company valued over \$311 million as well as holdings totaling \$20.2 million in a technology company.

The report underscored the lack of transparency within the Communist Party of China (CPC), as officials are not mandated to disclose their assets publicly.

Control of media is also mentioned in the report, saying that Chinese authorities want to ensure that any reporting on corruption is swiftly suppressed.

Notably, American intelligence agencies are also preparing a report that's likely to uncover major corruption and undisclosed riches among Chinese Communist Party figures, including Xi Jinping.

CRS report is prepared for members of the US Congress ahead of this US intel report.

The CRS report indicated that there was an expulsion of 266 members of the CPC Central Committee, including prominent figures like former Defence Minister Li Shangfu and former Foreign Minister Qin Gang.

Four types of corruption

The report identified four types of corruption prevalent in China, with "access money" being the most prominent.

This form of corruption involves bribes from capitalists to powerful party officials in exchange for various privileges, as per reports. The other forms of corruption include speed money, grand theft and petty theft.

Several high-profile corruption cases involving Chinese leaders and their relatives have been uncovered by investigations, including those of President Xi's family members and former Premier Wen Jiabao's relatives.

Most of the Xi's \$707.2 million wealth were owned by his eldest sister Qi Qiaoqiao and her husband Deng Jiagui and the couple's daughter Zhang Yunnan.

### **In China, regional security officials have been told to make regime stability a priority**

10 June 2024, SCMP, William Zheng

Regional officials have been told to safeguard national security and regime stability in meetings held across China ahead of the ruling Communist Party's third plenum in July.

It comes after President Xi Jinping put the focus on regime stability when the National Security Commission met in May last year.

It is rare for such meetings to be made public at any level, and it is not known how often the national body meets during its five-year term.

According to official readouts, at least four provincial and municipal committees of the National Security Commission held meetings in May and early June. The readouts were brief and made no mention of specific events or targets.

At a meeting in the southeastern province of Anhui on June 3, party chief Han Jun emphasised Xi's "holistic approach to national security" and told officials to give priority to "political security" – meaning regime stability.

Prioritising political security and Xi's "holistic approach" were also the main messages at national security meetings held in May in Shanghai in the east, as well as in Chongqing and Yunnan province, both in the southwest, according to official media reports.

Xi first made mention of the "holistic approach" during a speech at the inaugural meeting of the National Security Commission a decade ago. Xi leads the commission, which was set up under the Central Committee in November 2013 as part of a major overhaul of the party's institutions to strengthen its control over security.

In his speech, Xi said political security was the foundation of the holistic approach to national security, and he also stressed the need for economic, military, cultural and social security.

Addressing the national body in May last year, Xi told officials to be ready for "worst-case and most extreme scenarios" so that they could withstand "high winds and waves and even perilous storms". He said China was facing national security issues that were "considerably more complex and much more difficult" to deal with than before.

Party secretaries – who also head the provincial and municipal committees of the National Security Commission – laid out their approaches to improve security at the recent meetings.

Chongqing party chief Yuan Jiajun stressed the need to "guard against and crack down on the infiltration, sabotage, subversion and secession activities of hostile forces, resolutely fight the ideological struggle, and crack down on violent terrorist activities harshly" during a meeting on May 31, according to the official readout.

He told officials to do their "utmost to ensure economic and financial security", especially to prevent and deal with the hidden debts of local governments and state-owned enterprises.

In Yunnan the previous day, party boss Wang Ning stressed the province's role in safeguarding China's southwest, including by cracking down on cross-border crimes such as telecoms scams, illegal immigration and smuggling. Yunnan shares borders with Vietnam, Myanmar and Laos.

At a meeting on May 15, Shanghai's party chief Chen Jining said the city should build "a solid foundation for economic security and effectively safeguard cultural security", according to party mouthpiece Jiefang Daily. Chen also called for people's safety to be maintained, and for there to be "virtuous interaction" between high-quality development and high-level security.

A political scientist at Nanjing University said the security push needs to be balanced with development since the economy is facing more headwinds than it



was 10 years ago when Xi first introduced the “holistic” concept.

“Security is certainly very important for the party’s regime stability, but by overdoing it, it seems to be eating into China’s economic growth and affecting employment, people’s lives and government revenue,” said the political scientist, who declined to be named as he is not authorised to speak to the media.

“So if they are true believers in the ‘holistic’ security approach they should take another look at how to balance it, because too much emphasis on security is creating other social risks.”

### **Key report helps to reveal the wealth and corruption of the CCP**

09 June 2024, The Sunday Guardian, Paul Berkowitz and Bradley A. Thayer

WASHINGTON DC: By revealing the corrupt nature of CCP, the CRS report helps the world to grasp the fundamental nature of CCP.

An important Congressional Research Service (CRS) report was released in Washington at the end of May. The report studied the publicly available information on the wealth and corruption of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). This includes the General Secretary of the CCP, Xi Jinping, and senior leadership officials of the Central Committee, the Politburo, the Politburo Standing Committee, the regional Party Secretaries, as well as the leaders of the five autonomous regions, and four municipalities that report directly to the central government. This was mandated by members of the U.S. House and Senate and also tasked the U.S. intelligence community with producing a similar, publicly available study. The report was precipitated by the fact that the CCP leadership and their families are as wealthy as Croesus while shamelessly espousing socialist rhetoric. Precisely how did selfless CCP leadership gain this wealth on their nominal salaries is curious and it is certain that the Chinese people will wish to know.

The CRS report is of paramount importance for four reasons. First, it reveals for global audiences the corrupt nature of the CCP and to identify pathways for investigative journalism, documentation on social media, and how states within the Quad may wish to employ their resources, including their intelligence communities, to document these facts. There is a rich menu of topic for journalists to explore and for other media, perhaps most importantly social media, to highlight the CCP’s wealth and corruption, and so publicize and thus inform global populations.

Second, the report reviews some of what is openly known about senior CCP officials like Xi Jinping and his family, former CCP officials like Wen Jiabao, and

tycoons like Wang Jianlin. It also documents the difficulties some journalists have experienced in their investigations. Those difficulties have come from the People’s Republic of China’s (PRC) government. For example, when the Wall Street Journal reported on the activities of Xi’s material cousin, Ming Chai, one of the article’s co-authors, Chun Han Wong, did not have his press credentials renewed, which effectively expelled him from the country. But there is another more odious form employed to discourage investigation into the wealth of the CCP leadership. The example of Michael Forsythe, who was leading a Bloomberg News investigation into Xi’s wealth. After publishing an exposé, Forsythe and his family received death threats, and Bloomberg’s site was blocked within the PRC, and Bloomberg declined to publish a subsequent investigation into Wang Jianlin, a well-connected head of a major real estate and entertainment concern. The PRC’s direct and indirect pressure against media is tangible however intrepid journalists may be. It underscores the need of alternatives to find the information, including the Chinese diaspora and by individual nation states to employ their resources.

Third, by revealing the corrupt nature of the CCP, the CRS report helps the world to grasp the fundamental nature of the CCP. While the CCP rules China, it is not its legitimate government. Their grotesque wealth and corruption are a symptom of their illegitimacy. They are not the rightful rulers of the Chinese people but gangsters, thugs and goons who came to power due to the Communist International and ultimately as a result of Soviet dictator Josef Stalin’s support in the wake of the defeat of Japan. They are the poisoned fruit of the Bolshevik Revolution who seek to sustain the tyranny of the failed ideology of Marxism-Leninism on the Chinese people. They only held onto power after the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre because of the world’s industrial states’ reluctance to ostracize Beijing as long as it could provide rock bottom cheap and slave labour.

Fourth, the CRS report is the beginning of a path and framework for creating the most effective tool of political warfare that members of the Quad and other concerned nations possess. Illuminating the corruption and obscene wealth of the CCP leadership means that the CCP’s legitimization crisis is close at hand for the Chinese people to act upon and for nations to factor in when calculating risk in bilateral relations. As a result of its gross human rights abuses, hyperaggression directed at East Turkestan, India, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Tibet, the CCP is beyond the bounds of acceptable behaviour in international society. It is hoped that armed with detailed facts about the enormous wealth of individual leaders of the CCP, the Chinese people

will turn China into a respected democracy like Taiwan.

Having made a contribution, the question becomes what will the global public do with such information. The Quad members, acting either as individual states or as a unified group, can lead the community of nations to identify the sources and location of the wealth of the CCP. It is a certainty that investigations will reveal that the CCP's leaders are billionaires with untold wealth in New York, Switzerland, Dubai, London, Paris, and other locations. While that has been long suspected, the revelation of the facts will be a critical component for the Chinese people to free themselves from this base and evil regime.

The CRS report, and related ones, are important steps in delegitimizing the CCP to remove this aggressive cancer from continuing to harm the health of China and the body of global humanity. Working together, the international community should labour towards a complete accounting of how many billions Xi, his family, and Party comrades have in overseas banks

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, properties, and other assets. Thereby, the true, corrupt nature of the CCP leadership, with specific amounts and locations documented, will permit the victims of the CCP, domestic and international, to move to seize those assets. That window into the sordid behaviour of the CCP will permit the Chinese people and the world to demand accountability while also energizing the necessary response from people of goodwill around the world.

Paul Berkowitz is a former House Foreign Affairs Committee staffer. He covered Asia and the Pacific for Chairman Benjamin A. Gilman who was honoured with the Padma Vibhushan Award for Public Affairs in 2001. Bradley A. Thayer is the coauthor with James Fanell of "Embracing Communist China: America's Greatest Strategic Failure".

### **China's political advisors meet on high-level socialist market economy**

04 June 2024, Xinhua

The seventh meeting of the Standing Committee of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), China's top political advisory body, opened in Beijing on Tuesday, focusing on building a high-level socialist market economy system.

Wang Huning, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the CPPCC National Committee, presided over the opening meeting.

Ding Xuexiang, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee

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and vice premier, was invited to attend the meeting and delivered a report.

Wang called on the national political advisors to carry out in-depth consultations and put forward suggestions on building a high-level socialist market economy system, and contribute wisdom and strength to advancing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation on all fronts through Chinese modernization.

In delivering a report, Ding stressed efforts to encourage state-owned capital and state-owned enterprises to grow stronger, better and bigger, and provide a sound environment and more opportunities for the non-public sector.

It is important to speed up the development of a unified national market, improve fundamental market economic systems such as property-rights protection, market access, fair competition and social credit, and build a high-standard market system, he said.

He called for giving full play to the strategic guidance of national development plans and strengthening coordination between fiscal and monetary policies, so as to promote sustained and sound economic development.

"We will take more initiative to align with high-standard international economic and trade rules, steadily expand institutional opening-up, and foster new advantages in global economic cooperation and competition," he said.

The political advisors listened to reports on a number of topics, including the transformation and upgrading of traditional manufacturing industries, the construction of water conservancy infrastructure for better production capacity in agriculture, and green and low-carbon transformation of industries.

The meeting will last for two and a half days. The political advisors will conduct group discussions on seven topics.

## **May**

### **Statement From the Tiananmen Mothers on the 35th Anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Massacre**

30 May 2024, Human Rights in China

Human Rights in China has translated the following statement by the Tiananmen Mothers, a group of survivors and families of the victims of the Tiananmen Massacre, in honor and remembrance on the 35th Anniversary.

Today, we, the families and relatives of the June Fourth victims, are gathered in Beijing to commemorate the 35th anniversary of the Tiananmen Massacre. As we gaze upon the photos

of our loved ones, our hearts are filled with a mix of grief and anger, and the pain arises suddenly.

We will never forget that day on June Fourth, 35 years ago, when your vibrant lives were struck by bullets, crushed by tanks, and snuffed out! The missing people whose remains could not even be found, and whose family members could not wipe the blood from your bodies and bid you a final farewell. These events happened in peacetime, on Chang'an Avenue in Beijing, the capital of China. It was too cruel! The injustices were too many to name! For the past 35 years, we have never been able to forget the sight of you leaving home, and the gunshots in the night sky of Beijing which made us worry that something happened to you when you did not return home on time. We anxiously searched day after day, asking about you at major hospitals and all levels of government offices, tirelessly striving to find you and bring you home. When we finally heard the bad news, our anxious tension completely collapsed. We were heartbroken, devastated. Every family then seemed to live in darkness without light, and some could only shed endless tears.

Some of the wounded that Beijing citizens brought to the hospitals were hovering on the line between life and death. The doctors saved lives in one operation after another, hoping that there would be a miracle. Your family and loved ones were by your side day and night, praying that you could have a chance to reunite with your parents, wives and children, and that there would be the same harmony and warmth in your families as before. However, the Chinese authorities issued inhumane and indifferent orders mandating that the injured were not to be rescued, that blood transfusions were not to be given, martial law forces were to investigate the injured in major hospitals, and so on, so the hospitals had no choice but to conceal your injuries as other diseases. What's more, when those young lives were struck by bullets and fell to the ground, some citizens desperately tried to rescue them, but the soldiers did not allow citizens to even come close, and even stabbed the injured again with their bayonets several times.

The Geneva Convention of the International Red Cross clearly states: "Both sides of a conflict should observe humanitarian principles regarding prisoners of war, ensure the neutrality of the wounded, and in the event of war, they should make every effort to rescue the wounded regardless of nationality, ethnicity, and religious belief, and reduce deaths."<sup>1</sup> China is a signatory to this convention. The 1989 June Fourth Massacre, which occurred in peacetime, was a result of the Chinese military shooting at students and citizens who were petitioning for peace, and no rescue of the resulting casualties was allowed. This was antithetical to the laws of nature and humanity! Every human being on this Earth has

the right to life and human dignity, and no ruler or leader has the right to arbitrarily deprive others of their lives.

Some students came from other provinces, full of youthful optimism. Carrying the expectations of their parents and fellow villagers, they came to the capital Beijing alone for their studies. The students of the '80s were the most idealistic and ambitious group of young people after the college entrance examinations were reinstated, and they would have become the pillars of the country. Instead, with the sound of a gunshot, their young lives were forever frozen on Shili Chang'an Street, and their blood stained the streets. Thirty-five years have passed, and the marks of that year have been erased by merciless time, but the traces of their blood and souls forever remain in the hearts of the witnesses, and in the hearts of their parents and loved ones. A mother from one of those faraway provinces once said: "My child went to Beijing to study, I never thought that my child wouldn't finish school, but would lose their life instead!" How heartbroken she was, and how helpless she must have felt against the government for her to say that.

As we stand here today, looking at the pictures of our loved ones, we feel incomparably sad. We can't help but ask China's ruling party and the Chinese government: Do society's problems have to be resolved by taking the lives of others?! Behind every life is their family, their parents, their siblings, their wives, and their children. For the families, the sudden loss of a loved one overnight is like the sky has fallen, and we are unable to accept the cruel truth. As a group of family members and relatives of the victims, we have the right to know the truth about the June Fourth Massacre, how many people were killed, how many people were injured, and how many people were implicated in this massacre that shocked China and the rest of the world. It is the responsibility of the government to give an explanation to society about this tragic incident that is in line with the facts, to publish the names of those who died, to make a public apology in the government's name, and to return fairness and justice to us.

Thirty-five years have passed, and the authorities remain silent. All that can be seen on the Internet is A Concise History of the Communist Party of China, which says that a tragic incident was caused by the student movement in 1989. We cannot accept or tolerate such statements that ignore the facts. In the student movement triggered by Hu Yaobang's death, the slogans put forward by the students were anti-official and anti-corruption, demanding the disclosure of officials' personal assets and the people's right to know the truth. These demands solicited extensive responses and support from people from all walks of life. The people had good intentions; they wanted to

express the people's wishes to the government in this way, hoping that the government would listen to the people's demands, and bring about a vision of a clean and honest government. Isn't the current government also fighting corruption and discussing the proposal of "officials disclosing their assets" at the National People's Congress?

Thirty-five years have passed, and we ask the Chinese ruling party and the Chinese government again: Where were the counter-revolutionary riots that took place during the June Fourth Massacre, who were the counter-revolutionary rioters, and which key departments of the party and government leaders were hit on the day of the June Fourth Massacre? What was the behind the scenes information? What were the rumors being spread? After the army cleared Tiananmen Square, the government spokesman said in public that no shots were fired in Tiananmen Square and no one was killed. Since no shots were fired and no one died, how could the counter-revolutionary riots in Tiananmen Square come from that instigated by the counter-revolutionaries? Why did the "Concise History" mention Tiananmen Square without mentioning the students? Why did the "Concise History" not mention what the decisive measures were? Not mention the army's indiscriminate killing of innocent people, which filled the hundreds of thousands of people on Chang'an Avenue that day with fear? Only when history is factual can future generations in China reflect on it and learn from it.

Since June Fourth, the government has ignored the legitimate demands of the family members and relatives of the innocent victims of the Tiananmen Massacre and has continued to interfere with the daily lives of the remaining family members and relatives in various ways. The government's propaganda emphasizes that the principles and policies of governing the country must be implemented according to the law and must put people's interests first. However, the demands of the family members and relatives of the June Fourth victims have been ignored, completely deviating from the ruling philosophy of upholding the supremacy of the people and the supremacy of life.

Over the past 35 years, we have repeatedly appealed to our national leaders, hoping to have a sincere dialogue with the government on the following matters related to the June Fourth Massacre:

(1) Publish the list and number of the deceased persons in the incident;

(2) Provide appropriate compensation to the victims of June Fourth and victims' families in accordance with the law;

(3) Investigate those responsible for the incident in accordance with legal procedures.

These are also the three demands of truth, reparations, and accountability that our group has always adhered to.

On the occasion of the 35th anniversary of the June Fourth Massacre, we once again sincerely appeal to President Xi Jinping and the government to engage in dialogue with us on these issues. The June Fourth Massacre is a historic and tragic event that the Chinese government must face and needs to explain to the people. It cannot be ignored, and there are members of government from that time who should bear legal responsibility for indiscriminately killing innocent people. For 35 years, we have suffered the loss of our loved ones. Many parents who lost their children have already passed away, carrying with them endless regrets. If the government sincerely addresses this tragedy, it would be the greatest consolation to the parents who are still alive.

This year, another victim and another bereaved family member in our group passed away due to illness. One is the disabled Mr. Qi Zhiyong, who died on January 2 at the age of 68. He was injured in the Liubukou area of Xidan. He had a high-limb amputation on his left leg, contracted Hepatitis C from a blood transfusion, and had suffered for 35 years. He once had a happy home, but the June Fourth Massacre completely changed his life. Another victim, Mr. Jia Fuquan, died at the age of 80 on March 7 due to a new coronavirus infection. On the morning of June 4, 1989, his wife, Mu Guilian, an employee of the No. 3 Jingmian Factory, went out to buy breakfast for her family when she was shot by a military vehicle at the Chaoyangmen overpass. She died on the spot.

We take this opportunity to mourn the both of them. May their souls rest in peace! We will continue to hold on to your last wishes until the day of justice arrives!

Signed:

You Weijie, Guo Liying, Zhang Yanqiu, Wu Lihong, Zhu Zhidi, Ye Xiangrong, Ding Zilin, Zhang Xianling, Zhou Shuzhuang, Qian Putai, Wu Dingfu, Song Xiuling, Sun Chengkang, Yu Qing, Sun Ning, Huang Jinping, Meng Shuying, Yuan Shumin, Liu Meihua, Xie Jinghua, Ma Xueqin, Kuang Ruirong, Yang Darong, He Tianfeng, Liu Xiuchen, Shen Guifang, Xie Jingrong, Yao Furong, Meng Shuzhen, Shao Qiufeng, Tan Hanfeng, Wang Wenhua, Chen Mei, Zhou Yan, Li Guiying, Xu Baoyan, Di Mengqi, Wang Lian, Guan Weidong, Liu Shuqin, Sun Shanping, Liu Tianyuan, Huang Dingying, Xiong Hui, Zhang Caifeng, He Ruitian, Tian Weiyan, Yang Zhiyu, Li Xianyuan, Wang Yuqin, Fang Zheng, He Xingcai, Liu Ren'an, Qi Guoxiang, Han Guogang, Pang Meiqing, Huang Ning, Wang Bodong, Zhang Zhiqiang, Zhao Jinsuo, Kong Weizhen, Liu Baodong, Qi Zhiying, Fang Guizhen, Lei Yong, Ge Guirong, Zheng Xiucun,

Gui Delan, Wang Yunqi, Huang Xuefen, Guo Daxian, Wang Lin, Zhu Jingrong, Mu Huailan, Wang Zhengqiang, Ning Shuping, Cao Yunlan, Feng Shulan, Fu Yuanyuan, Li Chunshan Jiang Yanqin, He Fengting, Xi Yongshun, Xiao Zongyou, Qiao Xiulan, Lu Yanjing, Li Haoquan, Lai Yundi, Zhou Xiaojiao, Zhou Yunjiao, Chen Yongbang, Liu Yongliang, Zhang Jingli, Sun Haiwen, Wang Hai, Lu Sanbao, Yao Yueying, Ren Gailian, Ni Shishu, Yang Yunlong, Cui Linsen, Wu Weidong, Wang Deyi, Shi Jing, Yuan Ren, Bao Limei, Xi Guijun, Zhong Junhua, Ya Aiqiang, Chen Weidong, Hao Jian, Zhang Suying, Lin Li, Duan Changqi (114 people in total)

At the suggestion of fellow sufferers, we have decided to append the list of deceased signatories from previous years to honor their final wishes:

Wu Xuehan, Su Bingxian, Yao Ruisheng, Yang Shiyu, Yuan Changlu, Zhou Shuzhen, Wang Guoxian, Bao Yutian, Lin Jingpei, Kou Yusheng, Meng Jinxiu, Zhang Junsheng, Wu Shouqin, Zhou Zhigang, Sun Xiuzhi, Luo Rang, Yan Guanghan, Li Zhenying, Kuang Diqing, Duan Hongbing, Liu Chunlin, Zhang Yaozu, Li Shujuan, Yang Yinshan, Wang Peijing, Yuan Kezhi, Pan Muzhi, Xiao Changyi, Ya Weilin, Liu Jianlan, Suo Xiunu, Yang Ziming, Cheng Shuzhen, Du Dongxu, Zhang Guirong, Zhao Tingjie, Lu Masheng, Jiang Peikun, Ren Jinbao, Zhang Shuyun, Han Shuxiang, Shi Feng, Wang Guirong, Sui Lisong, Tian Shuling, Sun Shufang, Chen Yongchao, Sun Hengyao, Xu Jue, Wang Fandi Li Xuewen, Wang Shuanglan, Zhang Zhenxia, Xiao Shulan, Tan Shuqin, Gao Jie, Jin Yaxi, Xing Chengli, Zhou Guolin, Hao Yichuan, Lu Yubao, Cao Changxian, Yin Min, Liu Qian, Lin Wuyun, Jin Zhenyu, Feng Youxiang, Wang Huirong, Zhu Yuxian, Zhang Shusen, Wang Guangming, Qi Zhiyong, Jia Fuquan (73 people in total)

### Former China politics lecturer slams curbs on university research

27 May 2024, RFA, Song Danyang and Qian Lang for RFA Mandarin

Since he published an open letter criticizing "Cultural Revolution-style" ideological controls of China's higher education system, former Tsinghua University politics lecturer Wu Qiang has found it a little harder to move around Beijing.

Wu, whose former school is the fictional location for the gruesome Cultural Revolution political 'struggle session' scene that opens Liu Cixin's popular science fiction trilogy *The Three-Body Problem*, told RFA Mandarin in a recent interview that he is now regarded as a "sensitive person" by the country's state security police, which means restrictions on his day-to-day activities.



Former Tsinghua University lecturer Wu Qiang is photographed at his apartment in Beijing in June 2021. (Leo Ramirez/AFP)

"The Beijing police stop me from entering the embassy district because I have a lot of contact with foreign journalists and diplomats," Wu said. "I get identified through facial recognition technology, then my ID card gets checked at the next intersection, and I'm told to leave."

"Ten minutes after that, I may get a call from state security police telling me not to remain in the area," he said.

Wu studies mass protests and demonstrations, a highly sensitive topic termed "mass incidents" by the increasingly security-obsessed ruling Chinese Communist Party.

He was suspended from his lectureship at Tsinghua University in 2015 for researching the 2014 Occupy Central pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong, as well as protests and land-related campaigns in the rebel Guangdong villages of Taishi and Wukan.

Since the Chinese Communist Party enshrined Xi Jinping's personal brand of ideology – Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics in the New Era – into the party charter in 2017, colleges and universities have scrambled to launch research programs and institutes to study "Xi Jinping Thought."

Stepped up surveillance

In January, RFA reported that the ruling party was taking more direct control over colleges and universities, with the ongoing mergers of university-level Communist Party committees with university presidents' offices, something that didn't even happen during the political turmoil of the 1966-1976 Cultural Revolution.

It is also using technology to step up surveillance and monitoring of anyone deemed a potential threat to state security, including Wu Qiang.

Just a decade ago, it usually took the authorities at least a few days to put an end to Wu's research activities, Wu told RFA.

"Now it takes them just 10 minutes," he said. "Even normal communication with foreigners has become



dangerous, even though I have no access to any secrets – the system is highly sensitive."

The increased restrictions came after Wu penned an open letter in March to newly appointed Tsinghua University President Li Luming calling on him to drop a lawsuit against him which the school is pursuing despite its having been rejected by a Beijing court in 2021.

Wu, who was placed under house arrest around the same time, also took the opportunity to note that many former politics lecturers and professors at top schools in Beijing, Shanghai and across China have fled overseas to escape the political repercussions of doing their jobs.

Intimidation

A friend of Wu's who asked to remain anonymous for fear of reprisals said he believes the lawsuit against Wu is a form of intimidation.

"I believe that the plaintiff is trying to make an example of Wu Qiang by repeatedly suing him, so as to tame other Tsinghua lecturers," the friend said.

A former colleague who gave only the surname Hu for fear of reprisals said the authorities have targeted Wu entirely due to his academic interests.

"Tsinghua University blacklisted Wu Qiang in the spring of 2020, and continues to do so to this day," Hu told RFA Mandarin. "They have banned him from living on campus, and they are demanding so-called liquidated damages of more than 1 million yuan."

"A court has already ruled that the school has no jurisdiction, but Tsinghua University just keeps filing these trumped-up lawsuits, which means that this is a form of persecution," he said.

The school has also targeted Wu's colleagues, including the outspoken sociology professor Guo Yuhua, who was last year stopped by border guards while trying to leave China, and former law professor Xu Zhangrun, who was fired from his post in July 2020 after he called online for political reforms.

'Truth has been ripped to pieces'

Wu has continued with his research despite being banned from lecturing, but is finding it more and more difficult to make headway, something he blames on an overriding obsession with the political security of the regime under Xi Jinping.

"There is no regular field research happening any more," Wu said. "Everything is performance-based from top to bottom."

"Just as communities were locked down during the three years of zero-COVID, China has been shut off from the rest of the world, and the truth has been ripped to pieces," he said. "Isolation is what is happening to China, and it's also what's happening to me."

Wu started studying social movements for his PhD in political science at Germany's University of Duisburg-

Essen, and was able to continue fieldwork for a few years on his return to China, although the authorities began obstructing his work as early as 2003 in various ways.

"It became increasingly difficult to obtain that kind of material [first hand]," he said. "I was followed by police while carrying out fieldwork and had them carry out checks on me in the middle of the night at my hotel."

"I even got expelled from one city," said Wu, who studies popular protest and resistance to the government, including spontaneous mass demonstrations and long-running attempts to redress grievances through official channels by petitioners.

Xia Ming, a professor of political science at New York's City University, confirmed Wu's account.

"Major universities in China are all infiltrated and tightly controlled by the state security police, the regular police, the political security police ... and so on," Xia said.

He described Wu as a rare and professional scholar capable of facilitating communication between China and the rest of the world.

Yet that's precisely what makes him a target.

"What Tsinghua has done to Wu Qiang is an indicator for the tightening of controls over colleges and universities in China generally," said Xia, who has previously worked at Fudan University in Shanghai. "Influential universities in China are always subject to selective control by the Chinese Communist Party."

"Very active and influential academics with international academic connections are monitored, warned, and eventually heavily persecuted," he said. Translated by Luisetta Mudie. Edited by Malcolm Foster.

### **China's political advisors discuss fortifying strong sense of community for Chinese nation**

25 May 2024, People's Daily Online

BEIJING, May 24 (Xinhua) -- The National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), China's top political advisory body, on Friday held a fortnightly consultation session to discuss forging a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation.

Wang Huning, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the CPPCC National Committee, presided over the session.

To foster a strong sense of community and a shared sense of belonging for the Chinese nation, it is imperative to follow the guidance of the core socialist values and promote interactions, exchanges and integration among all ethnic groups, Wang said.

Calling for increased research and proposals in this regard, Wang urged political advisors to contribute their insights toward building China's independent systems of historical records, discourse, and theory for the community of the Chinese nation.

Ten political advisors and experts voiced their opinions at the meeting. Highlighting the role of civilization, culture, and language, they called for constant efforts to nurture a shared sense of belonging for the Chinese nation.

They also proposed efforts to forge a strong cultural identity and promote high-quality development of ethnic minority areas, among others.

### **China's latest AI chatbot is trained on President Xi Jinping's political ideology**

24 May 2024, ABC News

China's latest artificial intelligence chatbot is trained on President Xi Jinping's doctrine, in a stark reminder of the ideological parameters that Chinese AI models should abide by.

China's cyberspace academy earlier this week announced the chatbot trained on Xi Jinping Thought, a doctrine which promotes "socialism with Chinese characteristics."

The chatbot was trained on seven databases, six of which were mostly related to information technologies provided by China's internet watchdog, the Cyberspace Administration of China, or CAC.

Xi Jinping Thought was the seventh database that the chatbot was trained on, according to a WeChat messaging service post by CAC's magazine about the AI model.

The Xi-trained large language model is the latest effort by authorities to spread the Chinese leader's ideology and ideas. Students have had to take classes on Xi Jinping Thought in schools, and an app called Study Xi Strong Nation was also rolled out in 2019 to allow users to learn and take quizzes about his ideologies.

Xi Jinping Thought — also known as "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" — is made up of 14 principles, including ensuring the absolute power of the Chinese Communist Party, strengthening national security and socialist values, as well as improving people's livelihoods and well-being.

The chatbot was created primarily to demonstrate the development and practical applications in cybersecurity and IT research, according to the China Institute of Cybersecurity Affairs, which had launched the AI model for internal use.

The AI model would be able to generate report outlines on topics like AI development and productivity, according to the CAC magazine's WeChat post.

"Users can choose different categories of knowledge bases for intelligent question and answer. The professionalism and authority of the corpus ensure the professionalism of the generated content," the post said.

The AI model will also be able to create reports, summarize information and provide translations in Chinese or English for users who have access to it.

However, it's not clear if the Xi-trained chatbot will be meant for public use.

The unveiling of the chatbot comes as the U.S. and China are locked in a race for AI supremacy.

Though San Francisco-based OpenAI's generative AI model ChatGPT has been widely credited as one of the most important developments in the field, China too has ambitions to become the global leader in AI by 2030.

China's access to a population of 1.4 billion also allows the country to amass troves of data to train systems for facial recognition and autonomous driving.

Technology firms such as Alibaba and Baidu have already rolled out primarily Chinese-language AI models similar to ChatGPT for public and commercial use.

However, these AI models tend to be more restricted as they have to abide by China's strict censorship rules. This means that Chinese AI models will often not answer any politically sensitive questions posed to them.

### **"Educate the Masses to Change Their Minds"**

21 May 2024, Human Rights Watch

Since 2016, the Chinese government has dramatically accelerated the relocation of rural villagers and herders in Tibet. The government says that these relocations—often to areas hundreds of kilometers away—are voluntary and that they will "improve people's livelihood" and "protect the ecological environment."

This report, drawing on over 1,000 official Chinese media articles between 2016 and 2023 as well as government publications and academic field studies, shows that China's own media reports in many cases contradict the claims that all those relocated gave their consent.

The news articles instead indicate that participation in "whole-village relocation" programs in Tibet is in effect compulsory. The articles describe high levels of reluctance to relocate among many Tibetans from those villages. In one case, 200 households out of 262 in the village did not initially want to relocate to a new location which was nearly 1,000 kilometers away. In another village scheduled for relocation, all the residents except for a Chinese Communist Party activist initially disagreed with the plan to move the village. In all cases, the reports say these villagers

eventually gave their consent to move. Human Rights Watch has not found any case where a village or any of its members scheduled for relocation has been able to avoid being moved.

The official press reports indicate the extreme forms of persuasion—that is, coercion—used by officials to pressure villagers and nomadic people or nomads to agree to whole-village relocation. These methods include repeated home visits; denigrating the intellectual capacity of the villagers to make decisions for themselves; implicit threats of punishment; banning of criticism; and threats of disciplinary action against local officials who fail to meet targets. In some cases, officials of increasing seniority visited families at their homes to gain their “consent,” visits that sometimes were repeated over several years. Some official press reports and videos obtained by Human Rights Watch show officials telling residents that essential services would be cut to their current homes if they did not move. Others showed authorities openly threatening villagers who voiced disagreements about the relocations, accusing them of “spreading rumors” and ordering officials to crack down on such actions “swiftly and resolutely”—implying administrative and criminal penalties. This report includes three case studies that show in detail the timelines, objectives, arguments, and methods used to obtain the “consent” of residents of entire villages to relocate.

These coercive tactics can be traced to pressure placed on local officials by higher-level authorities who routinely characterize the relocation program as a non-negotiable, politically critical policy coming straight from the national capital, Beijing, or from Lhasa, the regional capital. This leaves local officials no flexibility in implementation at the local level and requires them to obtain 100 percent agreement from affected villagers to relocate.

In addition to whole-village relocations, there is also a second form of relocation in Tibet—that of individual households. This form of relocation typically involves officials selecting poorer households for relocation in areas presented as more suitable for income generation. While participants can decline to take part, Human Rights Watch found in many cases that officials provided families misleading information about the economic benefits of relocation to gain their consent. From previous projects, it should be evident to the officials that many rural people relocated would be unable to find sustainable work in their new environment.

Even surveys carried out by official scholars at relocation sites in Tibet—which tend not to criticize the government—variously concluded that many of those relocated “cannot find suitable jobs to support their families,” and “satisfaction with relocation is low.” A 2014 review of an earlier relocation

program in eastern Tibet found that even after 10 years, 69 percent of relocatees were still facing financial difficulties and 49 percent wished that they could move back to their original homes on the grasslands. False expectations created by officials who knowingly provide rural Tibetans misleading or false information about the economic benefit of relocation likely contributes to the dissatisfaction.

In both whole-village and individual-household relocations, Chinese law requires those who have been relocated to demolish their former homes to deter them from returning. Our research found that officials in Tibet are often enforcing this requirement. Official statistics suggest that between 2000 and 2025, the Chinese authorities will have relocated over 930,000 rural Tibetans (see Appendix I). Most of these relocations—over 709,000 people or 76 percent of these relocations—have taken place since 2016. Among these 709,000 people relocated, 140,000 are moved as part of the whole village relocation drives, 567,000 as part of individual household relocations

In this same period between 2000 and 2025, 3.36 million rural Tibetans have been affected by other government programs requiring them to rebuild their houses and to adopt a sedentary way of life if they are nomads, without necessarily being relocated.

Given that there are 4.55 million Tibetans living in rural areas in the People’s Republic of China, these figures suggest that most rural Tibetans have been impacted by Chinese government relocation or rehousing policies in the past two decades. Many of them have had to move or rebuild their homes more than once.

While such mass relocations of residents have been occurring elsewhere in poor rural areas in China, these drives risk causing a devastating impact on Tibetan communities. Together with current Chinese government programs to assimilate Tibetan schooling, culture, and religion into those of the “Chinese nation,” these relocations of rural communities erode or cause major damage to Tibetan culture and ways of life, not least because most relocation programs in Tibet move former farmers and pastoralists to areas where they cannot practice their former livelihood and have no choice but to seek work as wage laborers in off-farm industries.

The relocation program in Tibet contravenes international human rights law standards. International law prohibits “forced evictions,” which have been defined as the removal of individuals, families, or communities against their will from their homes or land without access to appropriate forms of legal or other protection. Forced evictions include those that lack meaningful consultation or compensation, and which do not consider “all

feasible alternatives" to relocation. Otherwise, lawful evictions must still be carried out in compliance with relevant international human rights law and "in accordance with general principles of reasonableness and proportionality."

As detailed below, Chinese government policies that pressure or coerce Tibetans to relocate do not meet these standards. Authorities do not explore "all feasible alternatives" prior to relocation, ensure that those evicted receive "adequate compensation," have a right to return where possible if dissatisfied, or other procedural protections.

### **China-proposed river ethics initiative wins support**

23 May 2024, China Daily, Hou Liqiang

International experts have spoken highly of a river ethics initiative that China proposed during the ongoing 10th World Water Forum in Bali, Indonesia, saying that it will help to realize the harmonious coexistence between humans and rivers, many of which have been jeopardized by human activities.

They made the remarks following the unveiling of the report "River Ethics and China's Practices" on Tuesday at the eight-day forum, which concludes on Saturday.

Underscoring river ethics as a new guiding philosophy to deal with the relationship between humans and rivers, the report compiled by the China Institute of Water Resources and Hydropower Research delves into the theoretical logic, the rules of practice and the development path of river ethics in China.

The report hopes that the nation's experiences will prove useful in overcoming the crisis involving rivers worldwide, which is currently challenging global sustainable development.

While unveiling the report, Minister of Water Resources Li Guoying said that in accordance with Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization and President Xi's perspective on water governance, developing river ethics means treating rivers as living entities and respecting their basic rights for survival and health.

"This perspective necessitates adjusting our values, moral codes, responsibilities and behavioral norms governing the interaction between humans and rivers," Li said, adding that the core objective of a river ethics initiative will be to uphold the harmonious coexistence between humans and rivers.

Cecilia Tortajada, a professor at the United Kingdom-based University of Glasgow's School of Interdisciplinary Studies, expressed her support for the China-proposed river ethics initiative, saying that she believes it will have positive impacts.

Such an initiative will not only improve the water quality in every river in China, but also offer important lessons for other countries, she said.

"Because what you need is the practices, and China is a very big laboratory," Tortajada said. "I have great expectations for this initiative from China, because it's going to be positive for China and also for the world."

Asit K. Biswas, a visiting professor at National University of Singapore's School for Public Policy, said that in the 21st century, when most rivers are overexploited, both in terms of quantity and quality, it is important to note what the ethical requirements are with regard to river management.

Rivers play an important role in people's lives by maintaining the ecosystem and improving people's socioeconomic conditions, so the question is what ethics human beings should have in order to live in harmony with nature, Biswas said.

In March last year, during the 2023 United Nations Water Conference, Li, the minister, proposed that the world should look into river ethics as one of the four important areas of water management.

Biswas said: "I'm glad this is being done, because the river has been mostly a neglected topic. It will be good to have some principles. What are they, let's say, 10 to 14 principles of river ethics, which we human beings should follow, so that rivers can exist in harmony with human beings and nature?"

Slobodan P. Simonovic, chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee of the International Conference on Flood Management, said that when discussing river ethics, it is fundamental to adopt a global view that doesn't prioritize humans over rivers, but sees them as interconnected elements of one complex system.

This perspective recognizes that rivers are not merely resources to be exploited for human benefit, but are dynamic ecosystems with their own intrinsic value and rights, he stressed.

"Just as humans have rights, proponents of environmental ethics argue that natural entities like rivers should also have (rights). ...This perspective sometimes is referred to as the river rights or the rights of nature," Simonovic said.

"And it recognizes rivers as living entities, deserving legal protection and respect," he added.

### **Thailand: 'Swap Mart' Targets Foreign Dissidents, Refugees**

17 May, 2024, Human Rights Watch

Thai authorities are assisting neighboring governments to take unlawful actions against refugees and dissidents from abroad, making Thailand increasingly unsafe for those fleeing persecution, Human Rights Watch said in a report released today. These targets of transnational

repression have gotten caught up in a “swap mart” in which foreign dissidents in Thailand are effectively traded for critics of the Thai government living abroad.

The report, “‘We Thought We Were Safe’: Repression and Refoulement of Refugees in Thailand,” details Thai authorities’ upsurge in repression directed at foreign nationals seeking refugee protection in Thailand. Foreign governments have subjected exiled dissidents and activists living in Thailand to harassment, surveillance, and physical violence, often with the cooperation and knowledge of Thai authorities. In a number of cases, Thai officials arrested asylum seekers and refugees and deported them without due process to their home countries.

“Thai authorities have increasingly engaged in a ‘swap mart’ with neighboring governments to unlawfully exchange each other’s dissidents,” said Elaine Pearson, Asia director at Human Rights Watch. “Thai Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin should break with this practice and prosecute Thai officials wrongfully collaborating with foreign governments acting on Thai soil.”



Suspected Uyghurs are transported back to a detention facility in the town of Songkhla in southern Thailand, March 26, 2014. © 2014 Andrew RC Marshall/Reuters

The term “transnational repression” describes efforts by governments or their agents to silence or deter dissent by committing human rights abuses against their own nationals or members of the country’s diaspora outside their territorial jurisdiction.

Human Rights Watch analyzed 25 cases that took place in Thailand between 2014 and 2023 and conducted 18 interviews with victims, their family members, and witnesses to abuses, along with representatives of local and international nongovernmental organizations. The governments responsible include member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as well as China and Bahrain, among others.

In one case, a Cambodian dissident who had fled to Thailand in July 2022, said he started receiving

letters from Cambodian officials urging him to defect from the main Cambodian opposition party. After he had received these letters for months, unidentified men attacked him in August 2023. “They did not say anything to me, they just came out and started beating me,” the Cambodian dissident said.

In recent years in Thailand, dissidents from Vietnam have been tracked down and abducted, Lao democracy advocates have been forcibly disappeared or killed, and a Malaysian LGBTI rights influencer was targeted for repatriation. Thai authorities have detained and unlawfully deported Chinese dissidents and refugees, seemingly at the request of the Chinese government. Thai authorities also detained a visiting professional football player from Bahrain with Australian refugee status, and nearly returned him to Bahrain.

At the same time, a number of Thai activists have been killed or disappeared in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. The mutilated bodies of two missing activists were later found floating in the Mekong River.

“Swap mart” arrangements increased under Thailand’s National Council for Peace and Order military government that came to power after the May 2014 coup and continued under the post-2019 government of Prime Minister Gen. Prayut Chan-ocha.

The Thai authorities, in addition to facilitating assaults, abductions, enforced disappearances, and other abuses, repeatedly violated the principle of nonrefoulement: the prohibition on returning anyone to a place where they would face a real risk of persecution, torture, or other serious ill-treatment, or a threat to life.

Thai authorities have arrested and summarily deported exiled critics and dissidents, even those with refugee status determined by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR). One Cambodian activist pleaded with Thai police, saying he would “be killed or put in jail ... if deported.” Yet Thai authorities forcibly returned him to Cambodia within days of his arrest.

Thailand’s actions violate customary international law as well as the UN Convention against Torture and other treaties that Thailand has ratified barring refoulement. The actions also violate Thailand’s Act on Prevention and Suppression of Torture and Enforced Disappearances, which came into effect in February 2023. It states that “no government organizations or public officials shall expel, deport, or extradite a person to another State where there are substantial grounds for believing that the person would be in danger of torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, or enforced disappearance.”

The Thai government should thoroughly and impartially investigate alleged harassment, threats, surveillance, and forced returns from Thailand by



foreign governments against migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Thailand and the role of Thai officials in those actions, Human Rights Watch said. "Prime Minister Srettha should act to restore Thailand's deserved reputation as a country that is a safe haven for dissidents from abroad," Pearson said. "He should immediately order a full and transparent investigation into arbitrary arrests, violent assaults, and forced returns of refugees and political dissidents.

### **Chinese nationalist groups are launching cyber-attacks – often against the wishes of the government**

14 May, 2024, The Conversation, Lewis Eves

The UK's national security agency, MI5, warned in April that British universities participating in military research are targets for cyber-attacks by foreign states. More recently, news broke of a cyber-attack against the UK's Ministry of Defence, which exposed the personal details of 270,000 armed forces personnel. China is the main suspect behind these attacks.

China is often presented as a monolithic entity, entirely at the whim of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). However, the reality is more complex. Many Chinese cyber-attacks and other kinds of digital interference are conducted by Chinese nationalist groups.

Some of these groups are funded by and act under the direction of the CCP. The 50 Cent Army (五毛党), for example, is a group who post pro-CCP messages on social media. Its name is derived from reports that the CCP pays recruits 0.5 yuan (US\$0.69) per post. But many of these groups operate independently. There are even cases of Chinese nationalist groups engaging in online warfare against the wishes of the CCP.

The fact that cyber-attacks are being launched independently of the CCP and against its directives suggests that China's nationalist movement is escaping the government's societal controls. This could become a headache for China's president, Xi Jinping, as the number of cyber-attacks grows.

China's nationalist movement is very sensitive to what it considers insults to the Chinese nation. This is due to the careful construction of Chinese nationalism through stories like the "century of humiliation", a period from roughly 1839 to 1949 in which China was exploited and victimised by foreign imperialist powers.

Chinese nationalists now act against what they perceive to be renewed attempts by foreign powers to again humiliate China. They take action through

"online wars" against those who they believe pose a threat to China's interests.

In 2016, Taiwan elected Tsai Ing-wen, an anti-Beijing candidate, as president. During and after the election, a group of predominately young, female cyber-nationalists known as the Little Pinks (小粉紅) waged a "meme war" against Taiwan.

This involved thousands of Little Pinks posting a deluge of pro-Beijing memes on the social media profiles of President Tsai and numerous Taiwanese news outlets. The memes emphasised China's claim that Taiwan is a Chinese province and not an independent nation state.

Some cyber-nationalist groups have gone a step further by engaging in hacktivism. This involves targeting institutions and organisations through cyber-attacks to pursue the nationalist agenda.

In 2008, an informal group of hacktivists called the Red Hacker Alliance (中国红客联盟) attempted a denial-of-service attack against US media company CNN. The attack was in response to CNN's reporting on anti-Beijing protests in Tibet, which has been occupied by China since 1950. It caused the company's website to be briefly unavailable in some parts of Asia.

In another example, a group called the Honker Union (紅客) launched cyber-attacks against the Philippines in 2014. Triggered by the attempted arrest of Chinese fishermen in a disputed area of the South China Sea, the Honker Union hacked into the website of the University of the Philippines. Hackers posted pro-Chinese slogans and a map showing China's territorial claims on the university's homepage.

The CCP's societal control

The CCP leans into nationalist sentiment to legitimise its regime, presenting itself as the vanguard of the Chinese nation. But this reliance on nationalism has given China's nationalist movement considerable influence. The CCP cannot be seen to contradict its nationalist credentials by constraining nationalist activity too heavily.

As a result, cyber-nationalists have escaped the CCP's societal controls, such as its ability to direct China's nationalist movement through propaganda. In doing so, cyber-nationalists undermine the CCP's authority and occasionally contradict its foreign policy.

In 2020, the CCP called for restraint among nationalist groups following foreign criticism of China's crackdown on Hong Kong. However, cyber-nationalists still undertook an anti-foreign smear campaign on social media. Even the Communist Youth League, a nationalist organisation with formal links to the CCP, took part against the CCP's instruction.

As part of this campaign, hackers also launched cyber-attacks such as hijacking the Twitter account of the Chinese embassy in Paris. The hackers posted a picture of the US as the personification of death visiting Hong Kong.

The embassy quickly deleted the image and apologised to France and the US. But the incident speaks to a CCP that is struggling to control cyber-nationalists who are evading its societal controls and are willing to hijack state propaganda infrastructure to pursue their goals.

There have also been hacker cyber-attacks directed against the Chinese state, usually coinciding with periods of discontent with the CCP. In 2014, one group briefly seized control of a television network in the eastern city of Wenzhou and broadcast nationalistic and anti-CCP messages. This cyber-attack was made in protest of the detention of Wang Bingzhang, a nationalist activist and political dissident.

Another group hacked into a Shanghai police database in 2022, leaking 23 terabytes of personal information that the state had collected on the Chinese people as part of its programme of mass domestic surveillance. The information was later made available for sale on online forums from an anonymous hacker referred to as "ChinaDan".

In the west, we assume that Chinese cyber-attacks reflect a malicious Chinese state. The reality is more complex. As cyber-nationalists continue to take matters into their own hands, increasing numbers of cyber-attacks also reflects a major domestic problem for the CCP – one that showcases the limits of its societal controls.

### **Xi Stresses Breaking New Ground in Ideological, Political Education**

12 May 2024, Women of China

President Xi Jinping has stressed efforts to continuously break new ground in ideological and political education at schools in the new era.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks in an instruction on the development of ideological-political courses for schools.

Xi said that the CPC Central Committee has always made developing ideological-political courses in schools a priority for education since the 18th CPC National Congress and the Party's leadership in this regard has been fully strengthened.

Developing ideological-political courses on the new journey of the new era should follow the guidance of the Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, and the fundamental mission of fostering virtue should be carried out, Xi said.

He underscored the importance of developing a system of textbooks with a focus on the Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, and integrating political education across all levels from elementary schools to universities.

Xi stressed the need for efforts to uphold fundamental principles and break new ground to develop ideological-political courses, and to make the courses more targeted and appealing.

He stressed that Party committees and leading Party members groups at all levels should make it a priority to develop ideological-political courses.

Schools of various types should consistently break new ground in ideological and political education in the new era, and foster talented individuals who are loyal to the Party, patriotic and dedicated, and capable of shouldering the mission of realizing national rejuvenation, he said.

Xi's important instruction was conveyed at a meeting on boosting the development of ideological-political courses for schools held in Beijing on Saturday. Ding Xuexiang, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, attended the meeting and delivered a speech.

Ding, who is also vice premier, called for thorough study and implementation of Xi's important instruction and urged continuous efforts to push forward the reform and innovation of ideological-political courses.

Stressing the importance of helping students better understand national conditions and consolidate their ideals and faith, Ding said the mechanism for guaranteeing proper status and salaries for teachers of the courses should be improved.

### **How China's latest government overhaul is shaping up, and what it says about the Communist Party's priorities**

12 May 2024, SCMP, William Zheng

Since taking the helm of the Communist Party in 2012, President Xi Jinping has constantly been overhauling China's massive system of state and party organs to reflect Beijing's shifting priorities.

In the latest restructuring plan, rolled out in the spring of 2023, Beijing moved to assert more direct party control over a wide range of key policy areas, including science and technology, the financial sector and social stability.

A year later, the nature and scale of the restructuring is starting to take shape as new agencies covering these areas have been set up by central and local governments.

Looking closely at their operations provides an opportunity not just to see how they operate in

practice, but also helps shed more light on Beijing's policy priorities and the challenges it faces.

For example, the establishment of new financial regulatory bodies by both central and provincial governments highlights the sense of urgency around tackling financial risk, while the newly established National Data Administration will play a key role in China's plans to develop artificial intelligence by managing data resources.

The top Hong Kong and Macau policy office will also report directly to the party's Central Committee, rather than the State Council, the country's cabinet, to improve coordination with other branches of government as Beijing seeks to tighten its control over the city.

The overhaul is an "important part of the ruling Communist Party's effort to channel nationwide resource-to-technology self-reliance, while strengthening the party's control over financial and social risks", as it faces an increasingly hostile West, according to Alfred Wu, an associate professor with the National University of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy.

"In China's party and state-led governance model, setting up party commissions or government bureaus are usually the best way to influence the resource allocation on priorities as it is trying to shift the key economic growth engine from property to technology," he said.

"It is a painful and long process. China hopes to use the party-led finance model to pump more money into research and development, while keeping an eye on social stability because of higher unemployment."

The efforts to ensure stability extend all the way down to the grass roots, where social work departments – which have to handle petitions and grievances from the public – are being established at county level, the only new bodies to operate at such a low level.

While departments supervising economic matters only make sense on a larger scale, the opposite is true for social stability, according to Xie Maosong, a senior researcher at the National Institute of Strategic Studies at Tsinghua University.

"It has to reach the grass roots level to know what is wrong on the ground and take immediate action," said Xie.

At the central level, Beijing appointed Wu Hansheng, a veteran party administrator, as head of the Social Work Department in July 2023.

At a meeting in February, Wu and his lieutenants set out this year's key tasks, telling provincial social control teams to quickly formulate plans to find ways to better handle petitions and listen to grass-roots grievances and suggestions. They were also urged to

deploy more staff to identify and defuse any potential social risks.

The central department is also tasked with asserting the party's leadership over various sectors of society, including industry federations and party branches in private companies. It also aims to extend the party's reach into the gig economy and among the growing number of self-employed people.

Most of the provincial officials who attended the event were the secretaries of local new economy and new social organisation work committees, which have been established since 2016 to extend the party's reach into the private sector and new internet industries, where the party previously had a limited reach.

A Zhejiang cadre said building a social organisation network across the country is still a work in progress.

"We are still in the process of clarifying our new lines of reporting, finding duplicate functions and streamlining them. But the instruction from the top is very clear, get it done before the end of the year – and they won't accept excuses," he said.

The first new body to be established was the National Administration of Financial Regulation, which was set up in May last year – indicating the leadership's belief there is an urgent need for better oversight of the financial sector.

In March last year Beijing also said it would replace local financial regulatory bodies with the provincial outposts of the National Administration of Financial Regulation in a clear sign of Beijing's distrust of local governments when it comes to tackling the problem – especially since giving them free-rein over regulation is seen as a major source of corruption.

Most of the regional financial regulatory heads have been sent from central offices in Beijing

As part of this drive another body, the Central Financial Work Commission, headed by Premier Li Qiang, was set up later in the year to design, coordinate and supervise financial polices for better stability and development.

A political scientist from Nanjing University said the leadership has grave concerns about financial risk and corruption, because the damage it can cause to ordinary people's lives is "nuclear grade".

"If you compare the damage from different sectors ... financial sector corruption is definitely going to lead the chart as they can influence the flow of or have access to the whole financial markets worth trillions of yuan.

"While other officials are taking bribes in thousands or millions of yuan, the financial sector's corruption can easily reach billions, leaving big holes and major headaches in the system," he said.

He cited the case of Lai Xiaomin, the former chairman of Huarong, one of China's largest state-controlled asset management firms, who was

executed in 2021 for taking almost 1.8 billion yuan (US\$277 million) worth of bribes – a crime the supreme court said had a “particularly severe” social impact.

The political scientist said the government shake-up showed “Beijing is very clear about this now. The financial sector shall not have its own agenda. It shall just serve its role of moving capital to where the party wants it to go”.

Three regional officials involved in the overhaul said the new local financial bodies will only operate in provincial capitals and a handful of major cities.

“So in Guangdong, you will see a provincial financial regulatory bureau and two municipality level bureaus in Guangzhou, the provincial capital, and Shenzhen, a city under separate state planning. That is all,” a Guangdong official said.

An official in Guizhou concurred. “We will only have a provincial financial regulatory body and municipal financial regulator in our provincial capital Guiyang. Many cadres working in the financial area will be redeployed, especially those in smaller cities,” he added.

An official involved in the institutional overhaul in Shanghai, China’s financial and commercial centre, said the overhaul is aimed at removing the responsibility for developing markets from the municipal financial office to focus on regulation.

“The financial works office’s job was to serve local governments and financial institutions, coordinate financial resources, help to obtain more credit to finance local development projects, and assist local companies to go public.

“Now it is different. The central government’s priority for us is to identify potential financial risks within our jurisdiction and manage them before it blows up,” said the Shanghai official.

“It is not just changing the plate outside our office. It requires a drastic change in how we run the bureau, our mentality, how to regulate the interactions between officials and the financial institutions to avoid corruption etc. We are just embarking on it.”

When it comes to data management the implementation at a provincial level is more patchy.

AI is seen as the next major area of competition between China and the US, and data is a vital resource for developing and training the technology.

After the launch of the National Data Administration, 20 out of the mainland’s 31 provinces, regions and municipalities have so far set up their own data management offices to fit with Beijing’s blueprint to develop China’s data infrastructure and integrate and share data resources.

The plan will see national hub nodes set up in some of the country’s key economic hubs, such as the Yangtze and Pearl River Deltas as well as around

Beijing, and in less populated areas including Inner Mongolia, Gansu and Ningxia.

Except for Ningxia, all other provinces and regions mentioned in the plan have already announced new data agencies, led by directors with professional backgrounds in computers and big data.

Some provinces – Shaanxi, Hebei, Inner Mongolia and Guangdong – have also included “government services” in the name of their data agencies, suggesting a clear expansion in their role to allow residents to have one-stop access to government services.

The most mysterious of the new party organs are those set up to coordinate scientific development, with little information being released about their operations across the country.

The Central Science and Technology Commission was set up to oversee the sector from the top, but the only public reference to this new party body is a statement on the Ministry of Science and Technology’s website in July that said cadres had studied the outcome of its first meeting.

Unlike the other newly established party organs, even the leadership of this body is unknown, something analysts said may be a sign of China’s concerns about scrutiny from the West and may even indicate it has links to the military.

“China needs to avoid attention from the West so that it can push forward its science and tech development agenda with relatively fewer obstacles and intervention,” said Tsinghua’s Xie,

He noted that China’s ambitious tech development and talent attraction plans – such as the Made in China 2025 blueprint and Thousand Talent Plan – has been used by the West to track the new industries China is betting on and its international talent recruitment, so “staying low-key is the natural response”.

Information about science bodies on the provincial levels is also very limited. As of the end of April, only Henan and Inner Mongolia had announced the establishment of their own science commissions, which were chaired by senior officials.

National University of Singapore’s Wu said it is still too early to say if the overhaul is effective as such drastic organisational changes need time to clear up any confusion or internal disputes they may cause.

“Many companies take years to complete their merger and acquisition process, not to mention mega-Chinese party and state machines which have faced three major reshuffles since Xi came to power.” Xi’s three rounds of institutional reform – announced in 2013, 2018 and last year – have all aimed to centralise power in the hands of party apparatchiks and streamline the ever-ballooning bureaucracy to improve its efficiency and effectiveness.

“Deciding on the organisational structure and the staffing are probably the easiest parts of the latest reshuffle. It can be done in two years. Going forward, the bigger challenge is for the new agencies to prove themselves,” Wu said.

### Senior Chinese leaders’ tours round country offer clues to economic policy agenda ahead of key meeting

11 May 2024, SCMP, Vanessa Cai

Several senior Chinese officials have been touring the country this week, offering some clues as to what will be top of the agenda at a key policy meeting that will set out the country’s general economic direction.

The four emphasised technological self-reliance, social stability and high-quality development during the trips, the first made by members of the senior leadership after the announcement that the third plenum would be held in July after an unexplained delay.

It is a tradition for senior officials to make domestic inspection tours before a plenum, a party gathering that will announce goals to be followed up by government agencies with specific policies.

This week, four of the seven members of the Politburo Standing Committee – Premier Li Qiang, the country’s top lawmaker Zhao Leji, top political adviser Wang Huning and first Vice-Premier Ding Xuexiang – were touring the country while President Xi Jinping was in Europe with other senior officials.

Li visited Xinjiang between Tuesday and Thursday, saying the northwestern region should strengthen international exchanges and promote its role as a trade link between inland provinces and other countries, state news agency Xinhua reported.

His itinerary included visits to local companies, where he stressed the need to support the development of industries showcasing local strengths such as energy and equipment manufacturing. He also said the region should promote stability.

Li’s trip followed Xi’s call to accelerate the development and opening-up of western China during a visit to Chongqing last month. The area – including Chongqing and 11 provinces and autonomous regions – is considered strategically important for energy security and national defence.

On Friday, the premier travelled to the eastern province of Anhui, where he stressed the importance of technological self-reliance and innovation.

That was also a focus for vice-premier Ding Xuexiang during his three-day trip to northeastern China’s Liaoning province that concluded on Thursday. He visited the capital city Shenyang and port city Dalian, where he highlighted the need to develop the advanced manufacturing sector.

Ding visited a university, several tech companies and a research lab. He said business should play a stronger role in scientific innovation and collaboration between enterprises, academia and research institutes should be promoted.

Wang Huning, the party’s No 4 official and former ideology chief, travelled to southern China’s Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region between Monday and Wednesday.

He said the region, which has one of China’s highest proportion of non-Han ethnic groups, needs to enforce Xi’s vision of “forging a strong sense of the community of the Chinese nation” that calls for greater integration of minorities.



Wang Huning stressed the importance of implementing Xi Jinping’s vision for integrating ethnic minorities during his visit to Guangxi region. Photo: Xinhua

This has also been a theme in his inspection trips last year to places such as Xinjiang, home of the Uygur population, Tibet and Yunnan.

The third plenum is traditionally used by the Communist Party to set out the country’s economic strategy for the next five to 10 years. July’s meeting is expected to cover a wide range of areas, from the economy to social development.

When announcing the date last month the Politburo, a key decision-making body, emphasised the risks “lurking in key areas” of the economy and the need to advance reforms and gain a strategic advantage over foreign competitors.

It has not spelled out the July meeting’s agenda, saying only that the Central Committee would discuss “further comprehensive reforms” and pushing forward “Chinese modernisation”.

The third plenum will last for up to five days and will be attended by the 376 full and alternate members of the Central Committee, the party’s top governing body.



## **‘Resist temptations’: China’s top spy agency warns overseas staff are being targeted for hi-tech secrets**

10 May 2024, SCMP, Phoebe Zhang

China’s top intelligence agency has warned that overseas entities have been approaching and tricking Chinese personnel stationed in their countries to steal China’s hi-tech industrial secrets.

In a post on its official WeChat account on Friday, the Ministry of State Security warned that the methods used by foreign spy agencies can be “quite deceptive” and overseas Chinese employees should take precautions.

When such entities identify overseas Chinese personnel overseas, they usually approach them in three stages, the ministry said.



Chinese Ministry of State Security app on WeChat.  
Photo: Handout

First, they create a “chance encounter”, where they pretend to be friendly and helpful to their targets. Then, they make frequent contact with their targets, invite them to dinners, and share information about their lives to gain trust. Finally, when the targets have lowered their guard, the spies trick or threaten them to sell state secrets, according to the post.

When stationed in an unfamiliar environment far from families and friends, the Chinese staff may be inclined to socialise, the ministry said, but cautioned they should be calm and rational and avoid risks.

“They should stay on guard about the motivations others may have when they make friends, have a strong awareness to keep secrets and resist temptations,” the ministry said.

Over the past year, the ministry has been more active on social media, warning the public about threats of foreign spies, and urging people to report suspicious activity.

The posts have raised alarms on a range of risks, including underwater spyware found in Chinese waters, espionage disguised as consultations and overseas students being approached to obtain information. China’s revised counter-espionage law,

which came into effect last July, expands both the definition of spying and the investigative powers of the country’s national security agencies. An amended state secrets law that took effect in May added a dozen new clauses that expand the depth and reach of its coverage.

The ministry had previously disclosed “classic examples” of people stationed overseas who were persuaded to spy.

In April, the ministry discussed the case of Zhang Xiangbin, a translator with a Chinese ministry who was stationed in a “foreign country”. He was approached by a spy, who befriended him and later paid him for intelligence.

For years, Zhang worked as a spy in the host country and had two children with a government officer in that country, the state security ministry said.

Zhang later quit his job when he realised Chinese intelligence might have been on to him. Before leaving, he took 5,200 files and documents, many of which were designated as secret.

In 2019, Zhang was sentenced to death with a two-year reprieve.

## **Australian study says China uses global apps, games for propaganda**

10 May 2024, VOA, Phil Mercer

An Australian study claims that China’s monitoring of global internet users’ online habits — a practice that has made TikTok controversial in the United States — extends far beyond the popular social media app to numerous other platforms and even online games.

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute, a research organization that receives funding from the Australian government and others overseas, said in a May 2 report that Beijing’s propaganda chiefs are forging ties with Chinese tech companies to gather personal data from a wide range of social media apps or platforms and popular online games.

They include ride-sharing app DiDi, the action game Genshin Impact, and Temu, the popular online marketplace.

The Australian study claims that China’s ambition is to harvest “strategically valuable” data from media, gaming, artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies.

It states that China is “working to extend its influence abroad to reshape the global information ecosystem ... to strengthen its grip on power, legitimize its activities and bolster China’s cultural, technological, economic and military influence.”

There has been no response, so far, from Chinese authorities. Beijing has previously accused the Australian government of “anti-China hysteria” over various geopolitical and trade disputes.

Samantha Hoffman, the lead author of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute report, told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation this week that data obtained from apps, platforms and games could be valuable to China.

"That could be data on the way that users make decisions. [With] Temu, it could be preferences that indicate the likes and dislikes of particular demographics," she said. "If China is trying to shape the way that the world perceives and understands truth and reality, then this data will help to make those efforts more successful over time."

The report urged policymakers to "develop robust defenses and countermeasures to safeguard against future information campaigns orchestrated by Beijing."

It also asserts that much attention has been given to the Chinese-owned platform TikTok because of concerns that the user data it collects could be shared with Chinese authorities. It cautions, however, the problem "runs much deeper than just TikTok."

TikTok's Chinese owner, ByteDance, has said it will mount a court challenge in the United States to what it called an "unconstitutional" law making its way through Congress that could require the platform to be sold or banned in that country.

ByteDance has denied collusion with the Chinese government.

Marina Zhang, an associate professor at the Australia-China Relations Institute at the University of Technology Sydney, told VOA she thinks the Strategic Policy Institute report is exaggerated.

"[The] Chinese propaganda machine is huge, but to link all social media apps [to] this propaganda machine is a bit of overstretching," she said.

Zhang said she believes technological collaboration, and not confrontation, is in China's best interests.

"If segregation is going to happen and if reports like this [are] going to happen, China will be isolated from the rest of the world," Zhang said. "So, we do not want to see a total technological decoupling between China and the West in terms of not just applications but also eventually in technological infrastructure. That is not going to be good for anybody."

Last year, Australia said it would ban TikTok on government devices, including cell phones, because of security and surveillance fears.

### **Senior official with China's new financial regulator targeted in corruption probe just a week into the job**

08 May, 2024, SCMP, William Zheng

A senior official from China's new financial regulatory body has been detained by the country's

top anti-corruption watchdog, according to official announcements.

The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) said on Tuesday that Ren Chunsheng, leader of the preparatory team for the Complaint Mediation Centre of the National Financial Regulatory Administration (NFRA), was under investigation because he was "suspected of serious violations of discipline and law" – a euphemism for corruption.

Ren, 55, appears to have joined the administration earlier this month, serving at the agency for about a week before his detention. He is the first senior official at the new financial regulator to be targeted in an anti-corruption investigation.

The NFRA was established in March of last year as part of a major overhaul of Communist Party and state organs.

As part of that overhaul, Beijing established a powerful Central Financial Commission, led by Premier Li Qiang, to decide the general direction of financial regulation. The NFRA was founded to serve as the execution and enforcement arm of the commission's decisions.

The NFRA's Complaint Mediation Centre will be a key mechanism to coordinate the handling of consumer and market complaints about financial institutions' products and unfair practices and to deal with actions that infringe on consumers' rights and interests.

Ren stepped down as the party secretary and chairman of the Shanghai Insurance Exchange (SHIE) in late April, a position he had held since July 2021.

One Shanghai official who knew Ren said friends had not been able to reach him since his departure from SHIE.

SHIE, an insurance service platform launched in June 2016, raised 2.24 billion yuan (US\$310 million) in capital and aimed to become the main exchange for Chinese and overseas insurance companies to register and trade their insurance and reinsurance products.

Before his stint at SHIE, Ren was the party secretary and chairman of China Insurance Investment Co, Ltd, a position he assumed in February 2019.

Ren has spent most of his career in top Chinese financial regulatory authorities. Before his appointment to China Insurance Investment group in 2019, he was the director of the Insurance Fund Supervision Department of the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission, which was abolished and replaced by the NFRA during the overhaul last year.

While there, he was mainly responsible for monitoring insurance fund risk and providing early warnings. His team carried out on-site and off-site inspections of insurance company investments.

China's anti-corruption authority has set its sights on China's financial system in recent years. In the first four months of 2024, more than 20 senior financial officers were detained by the CCDI, according to a tally on the disciplinary watchdog's website.

The highest ranking financial official caught so far this year has been Li Jiping, 69, former vice-president of China Development Bank. The CCDI announced his detention on March 13, more than eight years after he retired.

The tally also shows that in 2023, the CCDI announced the detention of more than 100 cadres in China's banking, insurance, securities and other finance-related fields. Nearly 70 per cent of the financial officials investigated were from state banks, with "using bank loans for personal gains" the most common accusation against them.

### **New rules let China's state security police check people's devices**

May 8, 2024, RFA, Qian Lang

China's state security police will be given sweeping powers to search electronic devices including smartphones and laptops from July 1, as part of a nationwide campaign to ensure "national security," a broad term often used by the government to include detailed economic data and political dissent.

The documents issued by the Ministry of State Security on April 26 empower its officers to gather "electronic data" relating to an investigation including "mobile phone text messages, emails, instant messages and group chats," along with "documents, images, audio and video, apps and ... log records" from electronic devices.

Police may "make inquiries" simply by presenting their police ID card, and may "collect evidence" if at least two officers present their ID card, according to the rules on administrative cases.

"The collection and extraction of electronic data shall be carried out by two or more investigators," the orders read.

However, police can investigate purely to determine "basic information about the suspect," and even whether an illegal or criminal act has taken place.

Billed by the ruling Chinese Communist Party's official Legal Daily newspaper as a set of guidelines for implementing the "national security concept," the documents come amid an ongoing nationwide campaign to encourage people to spot any kind of behavior that could "endanger national security," including being on the lookout for foreign spies in their daily lives.

In its report on the new rules, the nationalistic Global Times newspaper mentioned the campaign, citing the cases of Canadian nationals Michael Kovrig and

Michael Spavor as examples of foreign spies operating in China.

Similar rules were issued governing investigations run by market regulatory agencies on April 4.

Stop and search

Legal scholar Lu Chenyuan said the new rules mean that state security police officers can stop people and search their devices without the need for a warrant, or even an ongoing criminal investigation.

"This is very bad, because they can actually check people's cell phones as part of administrative law enforcement," he said. He was referring to a type of law enforcement that goes after people who have allegedly broken the law, but whose infractions aren't deemed serious enough to warrant a full criminal prosecution.

Dissidents and rights lawyers have previously been initially held under an administrative sentence of up to 15 days, at which point police either transfer them into "residential surveillance at a designated location" or place them under criminal detention pending further investigation.

Administrative sentences have also been widely used to target petitioners, internet users who post the wrong thing on social media, and people who took part in the November 2022 "white paper" protests across China.

Lu said the state security orders will likely contribute to an atmosphere of fear in China, and encourage people to censor themselves more than they already do.

"I think their purpose is to create a situation where everyone feels as if they could be in danger," Lu said. "They want people to carry out strict self-censorship, for example, not being in contact with anyone outside the country."

He said the authorities could also be looking for people with encrypted messaging apps like Signal or Telegram installed on their phones.

An academic who gave only the surname Liu for fear of reprisals agreed, saying the move is part of the current "national security" campaign.

"They want to push this idea of national security to everyone, to create a pervasive atmosphere of fear in everyone's daily lives," Liu said.

Border checks already happening

Anecdotal evidence from people who frequently travel in and out of China suggests that police at the borders are already carrying out spot checks of people's phones when they cross the border.

A Hong Kong resident who gave only the surname Kong for fear of reprisals said she saw border guards examining the mobile phone of a woman at Futian Port over the weekend.

"As I was going through immigration in Shenzhen, I noticed two female border guards checking a woman's mobile phone," Kong said. "They were

asking her if she had any other phones because she had more than one with her."

She said she had seen officers checking people's phones recently at airports in Nanjing and Hangzhou, too.

"They look at what's on your phone, what photos are there," Kong said. "I cleaned up my phone that day, deleting any content that could be highly sensitive."

A Shanghai resident who gave only the surname Shao for fear of reprisals said he had also spotted customs officials checking a man's phone at Shanghai's international airport on his way home from Japan.

"I saw a Chinese man being stopped by customs, who looked at his phone and then let him go," Shao said. "So it seems they didn't find anything problematic on his phone."

It was unclear whether the new rules will mean that such checks will be more frequent in future.

Repeated calls to customs authorities in Shenzhen and Shanghai rang unanswered during office hours on Monday.

### **Former Chinese defence minister Wei Fenghe emerges after months of speculation**

08 May, 2024, SCMP, William Zheng

A floral tribute at the funeral of a senior official on Monday suggests China's former defence chief and rocket army veteran Wei Fenghe may be politically safe, after his absence from state events sparked months of speculation about his fate.

Wei's name was spotted on a wreath at the funeral of Ouyunqemag, 81, who served as vice-chairwoman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee from 2008-2013.

In a prime-time news bulletin on state broadcaster CCTV, Wei's tribute was visible among those from other former state councillors at the side of the funeral hall, with wreaths from President Xi Jinping and other incumbent officials in the middle.

Wei, who headed the PLA Rocket Force from its formation on December 31, 2015, as part of Xi's military overhaul, disappeared from the public eye after his successor, Li Shangfu, was abruptly sacked as defence minister in October last year, without explanation.

Li, who like Wei spent most of his career in the PLA's rocket wing, was also stripped of his rank as a state councillor and removed from top decision-making body the Central Military Commission (CMC).

Wei's indirect reappearance indicates he may have escaped the purge of the People's Liberation Army's top brass, including commanders of the rocket force – which manages China's nuclear arsenal – that followed Li's disgrace.

Direct and indirect appearances in official settings are important indicators of political fate in China's opaque system, where little information is given away.

Wei's absence from an official National Day reception last year was the first sign that he may be in trouble. He was also not included in a list of around 130 retired senior officials who received Lunar New Year greetings from the Communist Party leadership in February.

The annual formality is usually reserved for retired senior officials who have achieved state councillor rank or above.

His predecessors – former defence ministers Chang Wanquan, Liang Guanglie, Cao Gangchuan and Chi Haotian – all featured in the list released by state news agency Xinhua.

The PLA purge included Zhou Yaning and Li Yuchao, the rocket force commanders who succeeded Wei after his promotion to defence minister in 2018, a position he held until his retirement in 2023.

Both men were removed from positions in China's top legislative body, the National People's Congress, in November, along with seven senior PLA officers, including two of their deputies and a head of the rocket force's equipment development programme.

In its first communique of 2024, released in February, the NPC Standing Committee confirmed that all nine were involved in corruption investigations.

The PLA is yet to fully iron out the aftermath of the purges. Defence Minister Dong Jun – who took over from Li in December and is the first navy chief in the role – has yet to be named as a state councillor, or given a place on the CMC.

All previous defence ministers have received the political status of membership on the CMC, which is chaired by Xi.

The military has been one of the main targets of Xi's far-reaching anti-corruption campaign. Two of the most prominent to fall were Guo Boxiong and Xu Caihou, both former CMC vice-chairmen. Guo was jailed for life for bribery in 2016. Xu died of cancer in 2015 while facing court martial.



## British lawmaker – and China critic – denied entry to Djibouti

07 May 2024, , RFA, Sonam Lhamo Singeri and Tashi Wangchuk



Conservative MP Tim Loughton from the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China, speaks during a press conference in central London on March 25, 2024.

British lawmaker Tim Loughton, who was deported from the small East African nation of Djibouti in April, has warned that the move serves as more proof of China's global influence in targeting those like him who are vocal critics of Beijing's policies.

Djibouti, located on the Red Sea across next to Ethiopia, is home to China's first overseas military base, and is heavily indebted to China.

Authorities in Djibouti questioned Loughton, who was scheduled to meet with the British ambassador there for a debrief on his recent visit to neighbor Somaliland, for over seven hours on April 8 before he was told he would not be allowed entry.

"This is a further warning that China poses a serious threat not just to those within China's borders, but those beyond it as well," he told Radio Free Asia.

Loughton, a Conservative member of parliament and former children's minister, was one of seven British parliamentarians sanctioned by Beijing in 2021 for criticizing human rights abuses in China – which Beijing referred to as spreading "lies and disinformation."

He said the experience gave him more impetus to speak out against the human rights abuses suffered by Tibetans, Uyghurs and others in China.

"Certainly, it's a further indication of just how far the tentacles of the Chinese Communist Party extend well beyond China around the world, and those of us who have been prepared to speak out are subject to the clutches of those tentacles, apparently even in countries as remote as Djibouti," he told RFA Tibetan.

But the incident pales in significance to "the constant harassment, torture and violence" that many people inside China face, particularly Uyghurs, Tibetans and

those from Hong Kong, where there has been a clampdown on freedom amid the imposition of a strict new national security law, Loughton said.

"We will continue to speak out in the British Parliament to highlight China's abuses at home and overseas," he said.

China critic

Loughton is a leading member of the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China, an international cross-party group of lawmakers from over 18 democratic countries working towards a collective response to Chinese trade, security and human rights policies.

He is also co-chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Tibet, which has highlighted China's record on human rights abuses, and in 2019, introduced the Reciprocal Access Bill in the House of Commons designed to bar entry to the UK for Chinese officials found to block freedom of travel to Tibet by British citizens.

Loughton, who traveled to Somaliland as part of a British parliamentary delegation, said the visit itself was successful but that China was a frequent subject of discussions because of its close ties with Djibouti.

About 2,000 Chinese troops are permanently stationed at the military base, which appears large enough to dock a Chinese aircraft carrier, he said.

China has invested heavily in the country and is also the biggest creditor to the highly indebted Djibouti government, Loughton said.

"So, basically, what China wants, Djibouti tends to jump, and that became very clear with what happened to me," he added.

Loughton said he had all the necessary requirements for entry into Djibouti, but that when he presented his passport, he was questioned extensively and asked about his occupation.

"When I revealed that I was a British member of parliament, then things turned decidedly frosty," he said. "I was planted in the naughty corner in the arrivals lounge. ... I was then rather rudely put into a room which had doors locked behind me, and I was left there for several hours, not knowing exactly what was going on."

Authorities eventually told Loughton that he was not allowed into the country and that he would be put on the first plane out.

Even the British ambassador's deputy, dispatched to the airport to help him, couldn't persuade authorities to change their minds.

"There was no reason for me not to be allowed to go into Djibouti," Loughlin said.

"Clearly, some of the comments that the delegation had made expressing our concerns about the influence of China in the area had been picked up, and, clearly, those sanctioned British parliamentarians are on a blacklist," he said.



## A tale of two slogans

07 May 2024, RFA, Chen Zifei

Judicial bodies in China no longer serve the people, but instead pledge to serve 'the overall situation.'

Emblazoned in huge gold characters at the gate of the ruling Chinese Communist Party headquarters at Zhongnanhai, the words "to serve the people" has a different meaning in China depending on whom you talk to.

The phrase is often echoed by supporters of late supreme leader Mao Zedong, and often used sarcastically to highlight official wrongdoing by people with grievances. It's now being quietly ditched by the country's top judicial bodies in favor of the much more nebulous "to serve the overall situation."

A May 2 article signed by China's top prosecutor Ying Yong in the Communist Party's ideological magazine Qiushi was titled "Serve the overall situation, deliver justice to the people, take responsibility for the rule of law."

The article came as the Supreme People's Procuratorate and other judicial bodies also replaced the slogan "Serve the People" on official documents and in public buildings with the words "Serve the Overall Situation," according to social media posts in recent weeks.

Some comments quipped that the "overall situation" refers to the "boss," while others played on a character in the word for "situation" that is also in the word for "bureau."

"What bureau is more important than the people?" one Netease user commented sarcastically on a blog post about the slogan change.

The phrase "To serve the people" comes from a 1944 speech by late supreme leader Mao Zedong, and was intended to describe idealistic Communist Party officials and People's Liberation Army soldiers who are willing to do anything to bring about a better society, known at the time as the "New China."

"If we have shortcomings, we don't fear criticism from others, regardless of who it is pointing it out, because we serve the people," says the speech.

"The Chinese people are suffering. We have the responsibility to save them, and we must work hard." 'Safeguarding the status' of the Party



A screenshot shows an article on the news channel Jinri Toutiao discussing the change in slogans. (RFA)

The phrase has since become something like a national motto, inscribed, often in Mao's own calligraphy, in big gold letters or large red characters on official buildings, including the entrance to Zhongnanhai.

It has also been turned around as a form of criticism of government corruption and wrongdoing, particularly by the army of ordinary Chinese who seek redress through official channels as petitioners.

In 2008, a caller to a RFA Mandarin talk show said the tainted baby formula scandal that sickened hundreds of infants showed that "Chinese officials do not serve the people."

In 2009, former People's Liberation Army soldier-turned-whistleblower Zhang Shijun accused the ruling party of hypocrisy for claiming that the army served the people after he wrote about being sent to Beijing in 1989 to enforce martial law during the pro-democracy movement on Tiananmen Square.

More recently, the phrase popped up during three years of strict zero-COVID restrictions that included grueling urban lockdowns, mass quarantine camps and compulsory daily testing regimes, this time to criticize the white-clad "enforcers" who at times welded people into their own apartments in a bid to prevent local outbreaks from the virus.

U.S.-based rights lawyer Wu Shaoping said the judicial agencies and courts once used the slogan "to serve the people" far more frequently, and that the move highlights a shift in attitude at the very top.

"The people have been booted out ... and they have brought in a bunch of evil laws like the Patriotic Education Law, the Counterespionage Law, and national security laws to serve the Chinese Communist Party's overall interests, calling it the rule of law," Wu said.

"The people are increasingly losing out, so the overall situation means they are willing to sacrifice lives to ensure their own safety," he said.

Independent political commentator Chen Daoyin said there wasn't much difference between the two phrases in practice, because the slogan "to serve the people" is rarely implemented in practice.

"A realistic way of seeing this might be that ... safeguarding national security is the top priority right now, which means safeguarding the status of the Communist Party regime," Chen said. "That is their fundamental interest."

'Anything can be the overall situation'

Feng Chongyi, a professor at the University of Technology in Sydney, agreed, saying that the claim that the ruling party served the people had always been a dubious one.

"To serve the people has always been a lie and a scam," Feng said. "The overall situation is a very pragmatic idea, because anything can be the overall situation."

"Under Mao Zedong, it would have meant maintaining Mao's absolute power, while in the wake of Deng Xiaoping's suppression of the Tiananmen Square protests, it would have meant the dictatorship of the Communist Party," he said.

"Today, the overall situation is the one-man dictatorship [of Xi Jinping], which means that the party will destroy whatever it needs to destroy, and strip people of whatever rights they have to maintain it," Feng said.

The topic has also prompted a number of comments on social media as people tried to figure out what the new phrase actually means.

"Some netizens have quipped that the overall situation ... is that some people have wealth beyond the imagination of most people, but they have to keep it secret," blogger "Looking at History, Looking at Reality," wrote on the Netease blogging platform.

"Meanwhile, some people are so poor that they struggle to get enough to eat, but they have to be kept a secret too."

The blog post quoted another answer as saying: "Some people have amassed a large amount of wealth through various means and methods, and through family relationships, and they need to hide it and even transfer their wealth out of the country, to avoid public resentment."

"Of course, these are joke answers, but I personally think there's some truth in it," the blogger wrote.

### **Warrantless Phone Searches Allowed Under New Chinese National Security Regulations**

07 May 2024, RFA

On April 26th, China's Ministry of State Security announced two law enforcement regulations which state that local law enforcement officers will be granted the power to inspect electronic devices. This means that, beginning on the implementation date of

July 1st, tourists visiting China may have their phones or laptops checked by local officers. Customs officers in Shenzhen and Shanghai have already started randomly checking phones and laptops of incoming travelers.

The new "Administrative Law Enforcement Procedures" and "Criminal Case Procedures" regulations allow state security officers, with approval from superiors at the municipal level or above, to legally inspect individuals' and organizations' electronic devices, facilities, applications and tools. In emergencies, officers only need approval from municipal-level superiors to inspect someone's devices on the spot after showing their police or investigator credentials.

A Ms. Jiang returning from Shenzhen told Radio Free Asia that she saw customs officers checking a female tourist's phone at the border, asking if she had any other phones. Mr. Shao from Shanghai said he witnessed customs officers searching a man's phone after returning from Japan recently.

A Chinese legal scholar Lu Chengyuan said the regulations aim to create an atmosphere of self-censorship and fear of contacting foreigners or using encrypted messaging apps like Signal, violating constitutional free speech rights. He criticized the decision to allow administrative law enforcement officers to search phones without first obtaining a judicial warrant, calling it a blatant violation of privacy rights.

Another scholar, Mr. Liu, said that extending the justification of national security into people's everyday lives has created an omnipresent atmosphere of state security terror. The regulations lack clarity on what qualifies as an "emergency" allowing officers to search phones.

### **Macron, Xi call for worldwide 'Olympic truce' during Paris Games**

06 May 2024, Politico

Chinese President Xi Jinping and French President Emmanuel Macron called for "a truce" in Ukraine and other global conflicts during the Paris Olympic Games.

"The world is far from being tranquil and, as a permanent member of the United Nations, China calls for a worldwide truce during the Olympic Games," Xi said Monday during press statements after a marathon day of talks in Paris.

Xi is on a two-day state visit to France, which also takes him to the Pyrenees where Macron enjoyed childhood holidays with his grandmother. It's the Chinese leader's first visit to Europe since 2019.

Hungary and Serbia — two countries that have signaled their closeness to Moscow — are next on Xi's itinerary.

Sitting alongside Xi at the Elysée Palace, Macron thanked his Chinese counterpart for backing his idea of a temporary truce. "I thank you for showing your desire during our talks to ask all parties to have an Olympics truce," he said.

The French president also hinted a possible opportunity to work toward a ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine. "Maybe this could be an opportunity to work toward a sustainable resolution [of conflicts] in the full respect of international law," he said.

Macron had previously called for an 'Olympic truce' during the upcoming Paris games in the face of ongoing international conflicts including the war in Ukraine.

Talks of a truce, however, go against the signals coming from the battlefield in Ukraine, where Russian forces have taken advantage of Ukraine's dwindling supplies in recent months while also reportedly gearing up for a possible offensive in the coming months. A French diplomat said a truce could help start a more political process, but noted that European demands on territorial integrity would remain unchanged.

Xi and Macron also discussed China's ongoing support for Russia's leader Vladimir Putin, amid repeated calls from France for the Asian powerhouse to use its influence to halt Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

With heavy sanctions on Russia impacting the country's trade with the United States and the EU, China now supplies Russia with the lion's share of its consumer goods as well as key technologies for the battlefield. The two sides enjoy what Xi has called a "no-limits partnership."

Macron, meanwhile, welcomed Chinese "commitments" to "abstain from selling any weapons" to Russia and "closely control the export of dual-use equipment," saying that such statements were "reassuring."

Xi in turn warned Ukraine's backers against focusing too much on Beijing's support for Moscow, hinting at Washington's role in the conflict. "We oppose those who use the crisis and throw the responsibility on a third party, and call for a new Cold War," he said.

Earlier in the day, Xi, Macron and their wives attended an official welcome ceremony at the Invalides monument in Paris, during which the French Republican Guard played the national anthems of the two countries. They also reviewed the troops and exchanged pleasantries about the features of the 17th century monument.

The Chinese leader held three-way talks with Macron and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen that focused on the brewing trade war between the EU and China. During opening comments, von der Leyen warned that Europe "would

not waver from taking action" to defend its interests as it pursues several investigations into suspicions of unfair trade practices in China.

## China has jailed more journalists than any other country

04 May 2024, Tibetan Review

The People's Republic of China is the world's largest prison for journalists, and its Communist party-state conducts a campaign of repression against journalism and the right to information worldwide, said Paris-based global press watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF), releasing its 2024 World Press Freedom Index on May 3.

Although China's ranking has improved to 172nd out of 180 countries – compared to 179th last year – it is still the world's largest jailer of journalists, with more than 100 currently detained, the group said. Those ranking below China include Bahrain, Vietnam, Turkmenistan, Iran, North Korea, Afghanistan, Syria, and Eritrea in that order, with the group's analysis being based on political, economic, legislative, social, and security indicators.

The group has noted that the Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party sends a detailed notice to all media – all state-owned or controlled – every day that includes editorial guidelines and censored topics. The state-owned China Global Television Network (CGTN) and Radio China International (RCI) spread the regime's propaganda all around the world.

This is because to the ruling regime, the media's function is to be the party's mouthpiece and to impart state propaganda. Independent journalists and bloggers who dare to report "sensitive" information are often placed under surveillance, harassed, detained, and, in some cases, tortured.

Journalists with the state media are kept on a tight leash. They are required to download the "Study Xi, Strengthen the Country" propaganda application that can collect their personal data in order to receive and renew their press cards.

The group said that to further silence journalists, the government accuses them of "espionage", "subversion", or "picking quarrels and provoking trouble", three "pocket crimes", a term used by Chinese law experts to describe offences that are so broadly defined that they can be applied to almost any activity.

Besides, independent journalists can also be legally placed in solitary confinement for six months under "Residential Surveillance at a Designated Location" ("RSDL") in China's "black prisons", where they are deprived of legal representation and may be subjected to torture.

The group accuses President Xi Jinping, in power since 2012, of having restored a media culture worthy of the Maoist era, in which freely accessing information has become a crime and to provide information an even greater crime.

While China's state and privately-owned media are under the Communist Party's ever-tighter control, the administration creates more and more obstacles for foreign reporters.

The Chinese regime uses surveillance, coercion, intimidation and harassment to keep independent journalists from reporting on issues it deems "sensitive", the group said.

The report was released on the day designated by the United Nations as the World Press Freedom Day.

### **Chinese Communist Youth League Reports Membership of 74 Million**

03 May 2024, News CN

On May 3rd, the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League announced that, as of the end of December 2023, there were 4.167 million Communist Youth League members and 4.316 million Communist Youth League organizations across the country. In 2023, a total of 4.605 million new members were recruited.

The youth league has 3,000 local committees, 193,000 grassroots-level committees, and 4.12 million branches. There were 1.905 million school organizations with 38.245 million members; 910,000 enterprise organizations with 7.21 million members; 360,000 organizations in government agencies and public institutions, along with 4.419 million members; 942,000 organizations in urban streets, townships, residential communities, and administrative villages, with 21.737 million members; and 199,000 organizations within societal groups and other fields, with 2.556 million members.

### **China's amended secrets law sparks fears over widening state powers**

01 May 2024, RFA, Jing Wei and Chen Zifei

Law broadens the definition of what makes a 'secret' while new rules extend state security police powers.



Soldiers dressed as ushers stand guard in front of the Great Hall of the People before the opening session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) in Beijing, China, Saturday, March 3, 2012.

Recent changes to the way the Chinese government will investigate cases involving "state secrets" and sensitive information have sparked concerns that foreign nationals and companies could be a target of a renewed focus on security under ruling Communist Party leader Xi Jinping, analysts told Radio Free Asia.

China's newly revised State Secrets Law, which takes effect on Wednesday, sets higher security requirements for companies and introduces the concept of a "work secret," while a slew of guidelines from the Ministry of State Security gives new powers to state security police to investigate Chinese citizens outside China, and arrest them if they return.

"Everyone is definitely feeling the chilling effect now," U.S.-based current affairs commentator Li Hengqing told RFA Mandarin. "The more the Chinese Communist Party keeps going with this, the more it will discourage foreign businesses and entrepreneurs from investing in China."

"This runs entirely counter to preferential policies that would encourage foreign investment."

The Law on Safeguarding State Secrets was revised and adopted by the National People's Congress Standing Committee on Feb. 27, the latest in a slew of new security legislation to be passed by Beijing in recent months.

The move follows a number of police raids last year on foreign consultancy firms including Mintz Group and Bain & Co, prompting concerns from foreign investors that Beijing's widening national security focus could hurt investor confidence.

Taiwan's government warned its citizens on Tuesday to avoid non-essential travel to China, saying the amended law has "greatly increased the risk of potentially breaking the law."

"The risks for foreign institutions operating and investing in China will also put pressure on non-profit or academic and scientific research exchanges and cooperation," the Taiwanese government's Mainland



Affairs Council said, warning that conversations or any collection of information could run afoul of the new law, describing its definition of a "work secret" as vague and unpredictable.

According to the amended law, only the Ministry of State Security and military agencies have the power to decide what constitutes a state secret.

'Everything is seen as a secret'

Xia Ming, a professor of politics at New York's City University, said any foreign company operating in China will need to carry out market research, putting it at risk of violating China's growing body of security legislation.

"The first thing any company investing in China needs to do is carry out market research," Xia told RFA in a recent interview. "But China regards all kinds of data as confidential, because it touches on the political security [of the ruling party]."

"They think that even real economic data can be interpreted in a way that is politically unfavorable to the regime, so everything is seen as a secret," he said.

Li said the ongoing insistence on "national security" under Xi Jinping suggests that the current administration is willing to sacrifice economic growth on the altar of regime stability.

"Everything is done with the stability of the regime in mind," Li said. "They don't admit that this will come at the expense of the economy, but actually they don't care much about that, nor about the welfare of the people."

Xia said none of the recent amendments appear to target those higher up who have access to highly classified documents.

Instead, they are aimed at ordinary people or foreigners who might get hold of sensitive information, he said.

'An invisible expansion of powers'

Independent political commentator Chen Daoyin said the new provisions from the Ministry of State Security massively expand the powers of state security police to dictate the actions of organizations throughout China, if it deems that "national security" is at stake.

"State security agencies will be able to go into other organizations to carry out activities and provide training," Chen said. "If some organizations aren't doing enough to protect national security, they can tell them to do better."

"This is an invisible expansion of the powers of state security agencies ... making their presence felt in all areas," he said.

Exiled human rights lawyer Wu Shaoping agreed.

"State security police can hold the Sword of Damocles and use it to extract confessions from criminal suspects, even if they choose not to talk during interrogation," Wu said.

The effects of the new regulations will also be felt far beyond China's borders, he warned.

"If a Chinese citizen goes abroad and makes comments critical of the Chinese Communist Party, or blows the whistle on some scandal, or leaks information that the Chinese government considers secret, state security police will be able to arrest him if he one day returns to China," Wu said.

"Through these provisions, the Chinese Communist Party is engaging in long-arm law enforcement on foreign soil, and reaching out its tentacles to Chinese living overseas," he said.

## April

### China Vows Reforms at Long Delayed Party Conclave Amid Challenging Economy

30 April 2024, US News

A paramilitary police officer stands guard, on the day of the opening session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), in front of the Great Hall of the People, in Beijing, China March 4, 2024. REUTERS/Tingshu Wang/File Photo

BEIJING (Reuters) -The Chinese Communist Party's central committee will gather in July for a key meeting known as a plenum, the third since the body of elite decision makers was elected in 2022, focusing on reforms amid "challenges" at home and complexities broad.

Plenums are important events on China's political calendar that require the attendance of all of the party's central committee, comprising 205 members and 171 alternate members with President Xi Jinping at the helm.

The central committee typically holds seven plenums between party congresses, which are held once every five years. The current central committee members were elected at the last party congress in October 2022.

Further deepening reforms and promoting the modernisation of China will comprise the main agenda of the third plenum, state-run Xinhua news agency reported on Tuesday, citing the party's elite political bureau, or politburo, during a regular meeting.

Third plenums have been typically held in the autumn since the 1990s. The party was widely expected to hold one in either October or November 2023, but it did not.

"The meeting had been expected to happen late last year but was postponed without explanation," said Julian Evans-Pritchard, head of China economics at Capital Economics.



"We should get a better sense of the leadership's medium-term reform priorities during the third plenum."

The plenum will open amid a subdued economy, with the massively indebted property sector, once accounting for a quarter of gross domestic product, a major drag on household sentiment.

The economy still faces many challenges, with "effective demand" still lacking, the pressure on enterprises sizable, and risks and hazards in key areas numerous, Xinhua reported, citing the politburo meeting.

"Domestic circulation is also not smooth, and the complexity, severity and uncertainty of the external environment has obviously increased," Xinhua reported, adding China's economic foundation remained stable.

### 'CHINA COLLAPSE THEORY'

China has not collapsed as predicted by the "China collapse theory," nor will it peak as forecast by the "China peak theory," Xi said in March.

"I have repeatedly emphasised that reform and opening up are crucial tools for contemporary China to catch up with the times. China's reform will not pause, and its opening-up will not cease," he said.

"We are planning and implementing a series of significant measures to comprehensively deepen reform."

Third plenums have typically focused on reforms, after the end of the Cultural Revolution in the late 1970s. Some closed-door meetings have left a long-lasting and historical impact on the economy.

The third plenum in December 1978 under Deng Xiaoping initiated China's economic reforms, igniting the transformation of the world's most populous nation from a centrally planned backwater to a global economic powerhouse.

In November 2013 the central committee at a third plenum vowed to let markets play a "decisive" role in allocating resources in the economy.

While a third plenum in February 2018, held atypically early that year, urged the party to "unite closely" around the central committee with Xi at the "core", and proposed the removal of a constitutional clause limiting presidential service to two terms.

Days later, China's largely rubber-stamp parliament voted to remove presidential term limits, allowing Xi to stay in office indefinitely.

(Reporting by Ryan Woo; Editing by Kim Coghill and Michael Perry and Miral Fahmy)

## China's national political advisory body holds leadership meeting

29 April 2024, CGTN



The 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference holds its 18th Chairperson's Council meeting in Beijing, China, April 29, 2024. /Xinhua

The 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), the national political advisory body, held its 18th Chairperson's Council meeting in Beijing on Monday. Wang Huning, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the CPPCC National Committee, presided over the meeting and delivered a speech.

Wang stressed the importance of acknowledging the western region's significant role in China's overall reform, development and stability. He urged efforts to conduct in-depth research and active consultation to facilitate the advancement of the western region's large-scale development in the new era.

He also called on political advisors to solidly carry out CPC discipline education and ensure strict Party self-governance within the national political advisory body.

It was decided at the meeting that the Standing Committee of the 14th CPPCC National Committee will convene its seventh session from June 4 to 6.

During the meeting, a document on organizing study and research activities for members of the Chairperson's Council was deliberated and approved.

## China to try former Tibet propaganda chief for corruption

25 April 2024, Tibetan Review

China has charged with corruption an official who was for many years responsible for promoting its official line on Tibet and human rights, including with a stint as the propaganda chief of Tibet Autonomous

Region, before rising to be the top legislator of Shanghai, official Chinese and other media reports cited prosecutors as saying Apr 24.

The prosecutors have accused Dong Yunhu, 61, of using his positions, such as head of the seventh bureau of the State Council Information Office, head of the publicity department of the Communist Party of China Xizang [Tibet] autonomous region Committee, chairman of the Shanghai Municipal Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, to seek benefits for others, reported China's official chinadaily.com.cn Apr 24.

The report said he also used his power and status to seek undue benefits for others through other civil servants; that in return, he accepted a large amount of property and money. Prosecutors have said he should be held criminally responsible for the crime of taking bribes.

Dong's alleged crimes date back to 1999, when he was in charge of planning and publicising Beijing's official message on human rights and Tibetan affairs as the bureau chief at China's State Council Information office, reported the scmp.com Apr 24, citing prosecutors.

The corruption was alleged to have continued in other leadership roles.

Dong was stated to have trained as a philosopher and started his career at the Communist Party school, where he managed its School of Marxism and Human Rights Research Centre in the 1990s.

The report said he has published several books on human rights, including a 2011 study of the history and functions of human rights centres in various countries, and co-authored a compilation of facts and statistics about Tibet in 2008.

Dong's leadership role was reported to have begun at China's State Council information office in 1999, where he served as the office director for the China Society for Human Rights Studies, a state-led research body.

In 2011, he was posted in Tibet autonomous region to manage communication and propaganda work there. He went on to take up the same role in Shanghai in 2015, later becoming head of its legislative body.

He was indicted in Hefei, a city in Anhui province, an announcement published on the website of the Supreme People's Procuratorate was cited as saying. He was first placed under investigation for suspected corruption in July last year, making him the first ministerial level official to be purged after a major Communist Party reshuffle at the 20th party congress in Oct 2022, the report said.

Dong was expelled from the Communist Party of China, and removed from his public posts in Dec 2023. Later, he was arrested, and his case was handed over to procuratorial organs for review.

He is a native of Xianju, Zhejiang province. He spent much of his career working in publicity departments before he was transferred to the Shanghai Municipal People's Congress earlier this year, said the chinadaily.com.cn report.

### Publicize the wealth and corruption of the CCP leadership

21 April 2024, Sunday Guardian

Global investigation into the wealth and corruption of the CCP leadership will show that the CCP's leaders are billionaires with untold wealth in New York, Switzerland, Dubai, London, Paris, and countless other locations.

A curious but often unreported fact about the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is that they are rich. The leadership is Communist, but also extremely wealthy. No Communist should be wealthy, it is like being a married bachelor, and the CCP are expert at hiding their wealth. Precisely how did the CCP leadership gain this wealth on their nominal salaries is an important issue for the global community to explore and, especially, for the Chinese people to know.

In an important effort in this regard, United States Senator Marco Rubio has inserted language into U.S. law which tasks the intelligence community of the United States to produce an unclassified—and thus publicly available report—on the wealth and corrupt activities of the leadership of the CCP. This includes the General Secretary of the CCP, Xi Jinping, and senior leadership officials of the Central Committee, the Politburo, the Politburo Standing Committee, and regional Party Secretaries. The Congressional Research Service (CRS) will also research this and produce a study to which all people around the globe will have access. The answers to these investigations are certain to be startling and capture the corrupt nature of the CCP. It underscores that the CCP rules China, but it is not the legitimate government of China. The CCP is illegitimate for three reasons. First, because they were formed and nurtured by the Communist International, and their seizure of power in 1949 was made possible by Stalin with his full backing and support in the wake of the defeat of Japan.

Second, as with the other poison fruits of the Bolshevik Revolution, because they seek to sustain the tyranny of the failed ideology of Marxism-Leninism on the Chinese people. The dependence upon this imported Western ideology means that at root the CCP's ideology of Marxism-Leninism, and its Chinese idioms, Maoism and later "Xi Jinping Thought," are illegitimate for China.

This ideology should be thought of for what it is: the last surviving form of Western colonialism, and

despite the CCP's efforts, they cannot hide the fact that they are the product of this. The "Century of Humiliation," that defined Western imperialism in China from the First Opium War (1839-1842) to the CCP's victory (1949) in fact has not ended. More accurately given the CCP's colonial origins, China will soon realize its second century of humiliation. This causes a legitimacy crisis in China that provides justification for the Chinese people to labour to overthrow the CCP. Its fall would permit China to evolve into a polity which is in accord with the historical political culture of China. As a product of Western intellectual thought, Marx, Engels, and Lenin, the CCP lacks even the legitimacy of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911/1912) who were foreign, Manchu rather than Han, but who ruled successfully in accord with China's dynastic ideology. Third, the CCP is vulnerable because of its abhorrent and contemptible leadership and the accelerated misrule of Communist dictator Xi Jinping. It possesses odious rulers who have forced China to endure decades of misrule. Seventy years of tyranny and wars against the Chinese people have led to scores of millions killed by the Chinese regime and the recognition by the Chinese people that the regime rules for itself, not for the people.

To call attention to the tyrannical and corrupt nature of CCP leaders, states can employ their resources to reveal the details of the corruption to the Chinese people and the world. This may be accomplished by employing their intelligence communities on this topic. Journalists may also find the topic worthy of investigation. Media, perhaps most importantly social media, may highlight the CCP's wealth and corruption to publicize and inform global populations.

Moreover, the community of nations may come together to identify the sources and location of the wealth of the CCP. What Sen. Rubio has started may be broadened. There could be a global initiative to document the wealth of the CCP leadership. Global investigation into the wealth and corruption of the CCP leadership will reveal the outlines of that base regime. No doubt, it will find that the CCP's leaders are billionaires with untold wealth in New York, Switzerland, Dubai, London, Paris, and countless other locations. While that has been long suspected, the revelation of the facts will be important for the Chinese people and the world to know.

The impact of this research would be magnified if other states, such as Australia, India, Japan, and EU members did as well. In Europe, Italy, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the United Kingdom, among others, have taken important steps to highlight the risks of the PRC's economic warfare against the EU, and might provide the European anchor of such a global effort.

Efforts to de-legitimize and undermine the CCP are important for three reasons. First, strategically, the most effective strategy to defeat the CCP's ambition and to target the CCP's demise. The CCP's legitimacy crisis is at hand. They failed, as all Communist governments do. The Chinese people know it, the Party does, and likely Xi himself sees the truth.

Second, by accurately identifying its weaknesses, such as the obscene and ill-gotten wealth of its leadership, policies may be developed that assist its fall and permit states like India, Japan, and the United States to prepare for its demise. The ideological crisis of legitimacy, the increasing paranoid rule of Xi and ever-tightening circles of fear among the Party leadership provide important paths to the fall of the CCP. Accordingly, the study of the wealth and corruption of the CCP leadership contributes to its legitimacy crisis and hastens the end of the regime.

Third, exposing its corruption is essential for the global community to recognize its illegitimacy and that the CCP beyond the bounds of acceptable behaviour in international society. Thus, openly planning for a post-Communist China is an appropriate global response. The world has done this before. For instance, sanctioning the apartheid regime of South Africa while supporting Nelson Mandela in his struggle against the regime was ultimately successful. India, of course, led in this noble effort.

These actions that the global community, the Chinese Diaspora, and people of goodwill around the world may undertake will place the Party under pressure.

Knowing how many billions Xi, his family, and Party comrades have in overseas banks, properties, and other assets is significant to reveal the true corrupt nature of the CCP leadership, with specific amounts and locations documented. That will allow the victims of the CCP to move to seize those assets. Equally, it will allow the Chinese people and the world to see proof of the CCP's gross misrule and abuse of the country and the Chinese people. Bold actions may spark the events that lead to their overthrow.

### **China sees foreign threats 'everywhere' as powerful spy agency takes center stage**

21 April 2024, Nectar Gan, CNN

In a slick video marking the National Security Education Day, China's top spy agency has a stern message for Chinese people: foreign spies are everywhere.

As ominous music plays, a broad-faced, beady-eyed man disguises himself as a street fashion photographer, a lab technician, a businessman and a food delivery driver – he even sets up an online

honey trap – to glean sensitive state secrets in various places and industries.

"In the sea of people, you may have never noticed him. His identity is changeable and his whereabouts are hard to find," a narrator says. "They are everywhere, cunning... and sneaky, and they may be right here in our lives."

Eventually, Chinese police catch the spy in a dramatic ambush after state security authorities receive multiple tip-offs from the public.

"They can disguise as anyone. But among the crowds you and I together are protecting national security," the narrator concludes. "We 1.4 billion people are 1.4 billion lines of defense."

The three-minute video is the latest propaganda push by China's powerful civilian spy agency, the Ministry of State Security (MSS), to mentally arm the Chinese public against what it sees as the growing threat of foreign espionage.

Under Xi Jinping, China's most authoritarian leader in decades, the country's notoriously secretive spy agency has drastically raised its public profile and broadened its remit.

From a shadowy organization without any discernable public face, the MSS has been transformed into a highly visible presence in public life.

In Chinese cities, posters and slogans promoting national security are now a common sight on sidewalks, subway trains, campuses and billboards. On social media, the ministry commands a massive following with near-daily commentaries, short videos or even comic strips sounding the alarm about supposedly ubiquitous threats to the country.

### **Whistleblower alleges UN's 'dangerous favours' to China, Covid cover-up**

17 April 2024, India Today

The whistleblower's allegation includes charges of two UN General Assembly presidents being bribed by China, harassment of NGO delegates by China, and editing of UN report on Covid-19.

A former employee of the United Nations' Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Emma Reilly, has levelled serious allegations against the organisation. Reilly claimed that the OHCHR has been granting "dangerous favours" to the Chinese government, which she believes are part of China's broader strategy to use the UN for its national interests.

The written evidence was published by the UK Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee. The evidence was submitted to it as part of its inquiry into international relations in the multilateral system. The Committee's inquiry focuses on how countries engage with multilateral organizations, whether

through influencing them, working around them, or obstructing them.

Reilly's allegation includes charges of two UN General Assembly presidents being bribed by China, harassment of NGO delegates by China, and editing of a UN report on Covid-19. Reilly alleged that during the two-year negotiation of the Sustainable Development Goals, China paid bribes to two successive Presidents of the UN General Assembly.

These presidents "ultimately oversaw the process and had significant influence over the final texts put to the Assembly", the evidence mentions.

In one of the posts on X, Reilly also tagged Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the UN, and said he "fought hard" to keep quiet. "He knew he was breaking his own rules when he fired me - his Ethics tsar told him so," she wrote.

Additionally, Reilly claims that China imposed a secret condition on UN agencies, stipulating that funds provided by China cannot be spent in countries that have diplomatic ties with Taiwan.

Advance information on human rights activists

According to Reilly, the Chief of the Human Rights Council Branch in OHCHR, a French national, was secretly sharing advance information with China about human rights activists planning to attend the Human Rights Council.

"UN officials at all levels deliberately lied to member states, including the UK delegation, who enquired about the UN policy of handing names – including of UK citizens and residents – to the PRC (People's Republic of China) without their knowledge or consent".

Repercussions for NGO delegates

Reilly's evidence included chilling accounts of the consequences allegedly faced by NGO delegates whose names were shared with China in advance by the UN Secretariat. These delegates reported harassment, arbitrary arrests, house arrests, disappearances, torture, and in some cases, death of family members in detention.

One delegate, who attended only a side event, later returned to China and died in detention, Reilly claimed.

Additionally, China reportedly issued an Interpol red notice against an NGO delegate.

On Covid-19 reports being edited

Reilly alleged that reports from both the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on the origins of Covid-19 were edited to downplay the possibility of a laboratory leak.

Reilly's evidence was submitted before the UK Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, which held its first evidence session in the inquiry on April 16.



## China's spy agency encourages people to see spies everywhere

16 April 2024, RFA

China's top spy agency is cranking up its propaganda campaign warning of foreign "spies" to mark National Security Education Day, in a bid to get more people to inform on each other and steer clear of anything linked to the West, analysts said this week.

Introduced by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2015, National Security Education Day is observed every April 15 to raise public awareness about safeguarding China's national security, a core interest of the government.

The feared Ministry of State Security released a video detailing its "top 10" list of major espionage cases and a list of cases based on tip-offs from members of the public, including the "hostile foreign forces" that Beijing claims are behind the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong, and calling for greater public awareness of foreign "espionage" activities.

Part of the video features a Chinese-American shown to confess to allegedly being recruited as a spy by U.S. intelligence, who appealed to his sense of patriotism and "fooled" him into betrayal.

The man, surnamed Liang, goes on to say he regretted it greatly and warns readers: "I want to tell all Chinese people: Their (American) sweet words are fake."

The man is in his 70s and is said in the video to have been sentenced to life in prison in China in 2023.

Elastic definitions

The Chinese authorities have typically employed a highly elastic definition of what constitutes a state secret, and national security charges are frequently leveled at journalists, rights lawyers and activists, often based on material they post online.

"Comprehensive measures are needed in terms of raising awareness of safeguarding national security," the ministry, which included a top 10 list of public tip-offs, as well as details of "awards" handed out to people who made "significant contributions."

The video warned that university teachers and students were targets for foreign infiltration, mirroring international allegations about China's activities on overseas campuses.

Beijing also promoted National Security Education Day education in far-western Tibet and Uyghur-populated Xinjiang, where authorities impose particularly heavy-handed control to suppress what Beijing says are growing separatist – and in the case of Xinjiang, terrorist – threats.

Chinese nationals abroad were also warned to be vigilant.

"Through various means such as emotional solicitation, seduction and corruption, financial purchase and offering help, overseas spies have tried every means to recruit and instigate Chinese officials, researchers and Chinese personnel working overseas, posing a serious threat to China's national security," the film warned.

Claims of foreign espionage

Amendments to the Counter-Espionage Law in April 2023 further broadened the scope of material that can be used to back up allegations of spying, including the kind of data that could be gathered for market analysis.

They also give authorities new powers to access corporate facilities and electronic equipment, which have already been used to target foreign consultancies.

Feng Chongyi, a professor at the University of Technology in Sydney, said claims of foreign espionage are there to help shore up Communist Party leader Xi Jinping's grip on power.

"They want to keep eyes on everyone, everywhere, and watch everyone," Feng said. "They feel they don't have enough people to do this, despite already having around four million police officers, which is quite a lot."

"So, they need to mobilize the masses and give them the right to enforce the law and do the authorities' dirty work for them," he said. "That means people informing on each other, setting people against each other, and everyone watching everyone else."

In January, police arrested the head of a foreign consultancy firm as an alleged British spy, with one newspaper warning that there are "007s" everywhere in real life – a reference to the fictional British secret agent James Bond whose code name is 007.

The ministry list features Canadian nationals Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig, along with Belizean national Henley Lee, who was accused of funding the 2014 Occupy Central pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong, also known as the Umbrella Movement. Lee was paraded on state TV in a heavily stage-managed confession in 2021 and accused of "funding hostile elements in the U.S., colluding with foreign anti-China forces to intervene in Hong Kong affairs, and funding the implementation of criminal activities that endangered our national security," in connection with the 2014 Hong Kong protests.

Spavor and Kovrig were among eight Canadian nationals detained in China within weeks of the arrest of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou in Vancouver in December 2018. All three were released almost simultaneously after Meng made a deal with U.S. investigators over allegations that she broke U.S. sanctions, ending her house arrest.

The party's grip on power



Veteran journalist and political commentator Hu Ping said the "national security" campaign is a political tool that will help ensure the stability of the regime.

"What they are doing is trying to get everyone to inform on each other," Hu said. "It claims to be about national security, but actually it puts the interests of the Communist Party's grip on power above everything else."

Hu warned that such an approach will cause "widespread panic" and put a huge strain on interpersonal relationships.

"That atmosphere is entirely conducive to the authorities' control over the people ... and could lead to a large number of false claims and miscarriages of justice," he said.

Veteran journalist Tang Jingyuan said the ministry's lists were carefully curated to give the impression that anything that has to do with the West is suspicious.

"It replicates the tactics of class struggle from the Mao era," Tang said in a reference to Mao Zedong, influential Chinese leader and founder of the People's Republic of China, whose revolutionary ideology shaped the country's history from 1949 to 1976.

"The aim is to create an atmosphere that is anti-Western, or at least wary of the West ... and that keeps its distance from foreign countries," she said.

#### Hong Kong

Authorities in Hong Kong, which recently added a second national security law to its statute book, staged a series of lavish ceremonies to mark the day, which critics say has become a focal point for "brainwashing" of Hong Kongers by the ruling Chinese Communist Party amid an ongoing crackdown on public dissent.

Beijing's envoy to Hong Kong, Central Liaison Office director Zheng Yanxiong warned that the government would fight back, using "tit-for-tat cognitive warfare" against critics of the Safeguarding National Security Law, which extended an ongoing crackdown on dissent and political opposition in the city begun in the wake of the 2019 protest movement.

"Some ill-intentioned foreign forces have been bad-mouthing China and Hong Kong ... and even some renowned Western media have jumped on the bandwagon, slandering and smearing," Zheng said, in a reference to criticism of the new law, known as Article 23, in the media.

Current affairs commentator Sang Pu said Beijing is continuing to claim that Hong Kong is a "base" from which "foreign forces" will try to infiltrate the rest of China, despite the fact that the majority of opposition politicians and activists are either behind bars or overseas now.

"It's all a kind of packaging, and is definitely not factual," Sang said of the claim. "They claim that

large amounts of money have poured into Hong Kong since June 2019, but it's all fake news."

"They want to shift everyone's focus from the tyranny, incompetence and corruption of the Chinese Communist Party and the Hong Kong government to 'infiltration by foreign forces,'" he said.

#### Tibet

In monasteries, schools, and villages in Lhasa, capital of the Tibet Autonomous Region, authorities emphasized the need to protect state secrets, promptly report any activities threatening national security, and defend the country and resist aggression.

Authorities also stressed the ban on communication with the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, and the exiled Tibetan community, considered by China as "separatist groups," and on restricting the sharing of domestic information with the outside world, a source inside Tibet told Radio Free Asia.

Experts on the region said the measures were initiated without any legal basis and were intended as a suppression tool to be used against Tibetans and other ethnic minorities.

"The Chinese government asserts that national security education strengthens the totalitarian power of the Chinese Communist Party," said Dawa Tsering, director of the Tibet Policy Research Institute in Dharmasala, India. "In the interests of the party, Tibetans are often accused of national security violations and breaking the law."

China's National Security Education Day initiatives include official interpretations and terminologies, such as "state power, ruling power of the state, unitary sovereignty and complete territorial integrity," but in Tibet, they primarily refer to banning contact with the Dalai Lama, he said.

Every year, there are reports of Tibetans who have been arrested, arbitrarily detained, disappeared or sentenced for alleged involvement in national security violations in Tibet.

The arrests and sentencing of Tibetans for such alleged crimes underscore Beijing's continuing drive to destroy the influence of men and women whose views of life in Tibetan regions of China go against official Chinese narratives.

#### Xinjiang

In Xinjiang, to the north of Tibet, officials are broadcasting a national security education public course for 10 days, according to an April 14 statement on the website of the Department of Justice of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

"Through a variety of online and offline propaganda and education activities, we will further promote the overall national security concept to be deeply rooted in the hearts of the people and build a common national security defense line," the statement said.

Other activities were held in specific areas of the vast region, home to more than 11 million Uyghurs.

National security themes were promoted on educational billboards and banners in the People's Park in Ghulja, called Yining in Chinese, capital of the Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, beginning on April 7. On the same day, authorities held a publicizing activity on the laws and regulations on overall national security and border security was held in Tajik township of Pishan county in Hotan prefecture.

The Hongmiaozi police station under Shaibak district's Bureau of Public Security in Urumqi, Xinjiang's capital, held a public lecture on China's Cybersecurity Law and Anti-Espionage Law in many communities on April 13.

On the same day, the Public Security Bureau in Akesu prefecture held a police camp where children learned about security awareness to improve their ability to recognize acts that endanger national security.

Translated by Luisetta Mudie and by Tenzin Palmo for RFA Tibetan. Edited by Roseanne Gerin and Malcolm Foster.

### **It helped China enforce zero-Covid. Now the community 'grid' network is going 'professional'**

11 April 2024, Phoebe Zhang, SCMP

A 'basic system of professional community workers' must be built within five years, Communist Party and State Council say in joint notice

Network will aim to 'maintain social stability and consolidate the party's long-term rule', as Beijing continues drive to strengthen central control



President Xi Jinping, whose inspection trips regularly include community work sites, has called on party cells at the community level to become real "fortresses" and build a real connection with people on the ground. Photo: Weibo/Xinhua

China has rolled out new rules to strengthen its nationwide network of community workers, the group that was once key to enforcing its "zero-Covid" strategies on the ground.

The stronger network would aim to "maintain social stability and consolidate the party's long-term rule", China's cabinet and the ruling Communist Party's central decision-making body said in a joint notice released on Wednesday.

According to the State Council and the party's Central Committee, a "basic system of professional community workers" must be built within five years. Workers' political awareness and skills must also be enhanced, with secure pay, the document said.

It comes amid a drive in recent years to strengthen central control, as Beijing seeks ways to minimise risk and conflict down the line to the lowest levels of governance to ensure social stability.

Last year, the Ministry of Public Security pledged to deploy more officers to police stations, and rural and urban residential communities, to defuse the risk of social unrest.

President Xi Jinping's trips around the country regularly include community work sites. He has also called on party cells at the community level to become real "fortresses" against challenges to the party's rule and build a real connection with people on the ground.

According to Wednesday's notice, community workers are those who take part in party-building, social management and services at the grass-roots level. They are either assigned to the posts from other state-related bodies or recruited from within the community.

Existing community "grid" workers, such as those recruited during the Covid years to track public movement, could also be incorporated into the teams if they had the required qualifications, the notice said.

The top priority in hiring should be a "political standard", in that the workers "follow the party's lead, obey laws and disciplines, and are enthusiastic to serve the people".

The notice set a target of 18 community workers for every 10,000 residents, encouraging each region to recruit people from nearby neighbourhoods, with priority given to college graduates and military veterans.

The teams will serve the community in a "grid" system, carrying out door-to-door visits to pair with residents in need of help and run errands for them if needed.

In return, the workers will be paid wages on a par with the local average and enjoy social security benefits. There will also be awards for those taking

part in emergency or natural disaster rescue and recovery missions.

The “grid” system is the government’s decades-old social management and surveillance tool, which divides cities and counties into smaller zones. The person in charge of each zone must report to the local government regularly, and be ready to take the blame if things go wrong under their watch.

During the Covid-19 lockdowns, with their border and movement controls, the grid system became even more active. “Grid controllers” were tasked with reporting unusual activities to their superiors, keeping an eye on residents’ health and ensuring food and medicine supply as entire communities were locked down.

But concerns were also raised about the invasion of privacy and overzealous enforcement.

As local governments imposed stringent anti-pandemic restrictions, grid workers sometimes took unduly radical measures to carry out orders on keeping transmissions down. People complained of workers breaking into their homes to disinfect the furniture, and even putting down pets.

### **Chinese Communist Party Suffocates Christians; The West Should Take Heed.**

08 April 2024, Uzay Bulut, Europe Conservative

Wang Yi, a Christian pastor in China, regularly asked during his sermons that Chinese President Xi Jinping and his regime repent of their sins. He also publicly stated the Church should be separate from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). In response, he and his wife, Jiang Rong, were arrested by Chinese authorities along with over 100 members of his church. Pastor Wang led the Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu. At the time of his arrest, the church had hundreds of worshippers.

A closed trial was held in December 2019 and Pastor Wang was given no access to a lawyer. He was sentenced to nine years in prison for engaging in the “subversion of state power” and “illegal business activity,” also known as “crime of fraud.” The pastor was stripped of his political rights for three years and fined 50,000 yuan (\$6.9k USD).

According to ChinaAid, an international Christian human rights organization,

At the height of the Sinicization of Christianity, Wang Yi released ‘A Declaration for the Sake of the Christian Faith,’ which over 400 house church pastors and leaders signed with their real names. This document resulted in his arrest.

The U.S. State Department’s Office of International Religious Freedom issued a statement regarding Pastor Wang on October 20, 2023:

Pastor Wang has not been given permission to speak to his family by phone or receive visits from them in

the past two years. He has only been allowed to see his wife once since his initial arrest. It is unacceptable that the Chinese government is denying him regular in-person visits and communication with his family, including phone calls, and that he has not been allowed a Bible, notebook or pen.

Pastor Wang remains imprisoned. Meanwhile, the CCP’s crackdown on Christians continues.

On 12 January 2024, another pastor in China, Kan Xiaoyong, was sentenced to fourteen years in prison for “using superstition to undermine the law,” and engaging in business “fraud.” His wife, Wang Fengying, was sentenced to four years. A co-worker, Chu Xinyu, was sentenced to ten years. Another three defendants received three-year verdicts. According to the Bitter Winter, which covers religious liberty and human rights related issues in China, those heavy prison sentences aim at “destroying the successful Discipleship Home Network.”

Bob Fu, a Chinese-American pastor and founder of ChinaAid, explains that, in China, this accusation called “crime of fraud” is common. A Christian who tithes by putting an offering in a church’s donation box might be arrested for engaging in “the crime of fraud.” Pastors who preach online, or those Christians who donate online to churches, also face these accusations.

“Hundreds or perhaps thousands of house church leaders have been arrested and charged with the so-called crime of ‘business fraud.’ Simply, the Communist Party has criminalized tithing and offering,” Fu said. “Their logic is that [these churches] are an illegal, unregistered organization. They do not use the word ‘church.’ They do not refer to the church as a ‘religious institution’ so that they will not be criticized by the foreigners; so they use this so-called business crime or fraud.”

On 26 January 2024, ChinaAid published a report entitled “Crime of Fraud: A New Era of Persecution against Christians by the Chinese Communist Party”: For decades, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has sought to dismantle Christian churches who refuse to register with the government-run Three Self Patriotic Movement. In the name of Sinicization, that is recreating religion to better align with Party ideals, Christians have been targeted with repeated arrests, raids, and harassment at the hands of authorities. The CCP ushered in a new era of persecution beginning in 2018 by charging pastors, church leaders, and other Christians with crimes of fraud.

Since 2018, explains ChinaAid, the charges would often follow these steps:

Authorities prohibit house churches from being registered as legal entities. They accuse house churches of being illegal groups. They accuse house church leaders of being illegal clergy and label house churches’ collection of offerings as fraud.

Many churches and pastors, as well as Christian individuals, are victims of false fraud charges. Evangelist Chen Lijun, for instance, was arrested on August 13, 2022 in Luanchuan county. This was simply because he purchased some Christian books online. He was quickly charged on suspicion of fraud.

In its 2023 report, ChinaAid shed light on the CCP's open oppression of Christians in the ongoing campaign referred to as the "Sinicization of Christianity." According to the report, Sinicization aims to undermine and disband churches, replacing Christian faith with Communist Party loyalty. The Sinicization of Christianity is codified into Chinese law.

The persecution of churches and Christians in China, according to the report, takes place through the oppression of churches and interruption of regular church activities. It further includes opposing Christianity, restricting evangelism, and suppressing social activities, persecution of justice-seeking Christians in public spheres, persecution in economic, social, cultural, and academic spheres, and fraud charges against house churches for receiving tithes and offerings. "Few Christians and churches, if any at all, were left untouched by the persecution efforts of the Chinese government," says the report.

Another way China attempts to "Sinicize" Christianity is by changing or rewriting the Bible. CBN News reported in 2023:

China's ruling regime announced in 2019 its plans to release a new translation of the Bible that will include Confucian and Buddhist principles.

"This new translation ... would really support the Communist Party," explained Todd Nettleton, the spokesman for The Voice of the Martyrs (VOM)—a persecution watchdog serving Christians.

One example of a Bible passage rewritten by the CCP is John 8. This Bible story centers on Jesus' love and corrective compassion for a woman caught in adultery. In the real version from the Bible, Jesus says, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her," after which the crowd begins to leave. Then Jesus tells her, "Go now and sin no more." In a version reportedly found in a Chinese textbook published in September 2020, the crowd disperses, but the text falsely claims that "When everyone went out, Jesus stoned the woman himself."

Tina Ramirez is the president of Hardwired, an organization vocally critical of the Chinese Communist Party. She said that the CCP's rewriting of the Bible is an attempt to force Christians to leave their faith. A full list of ChinaAid's past annual reports shows an increase in persecution cases over the years.

Pastor Fu further explains that, in China's government-sanctioned churches, pastors are forced to pledge absolute allegiance to Xi Jinping's thoughts. The pastor should install a Communist Party flag and place a picture of Xi Jinping behind the pulpit. Before service starts, the Communist national anthem should be sung. If none of these steps occur, then the regime says the church is not compatible with socialism and communism. As a result, church pastors are intimidated, and some are even arrested. Fu says that the Chinese Communist Party prescribes that those under 18 years old, students, Communist Party members, communist Youth League members, and civil servants are not allowed to enter any church building. This prohibition includes state-controlled churches as well. China has entered the period of the worst persecution against Christians in the 40 years since the cultural revolution, Fu concludes.

This persecution targets Christian children as well. A 2020 report by the human rights NGO Jubilee Campaign, entitled "China Bans Faith for All Children," describes the religious freedom violations that Christian, Tibetan Buddhist, Uyghur, and Falun Gong children face in China. According to the report,

Christian children are punished, threatened, excluded, and rebuked for their families' and their own religious affiliation ... Christian children under the age of 18 years are prohibited from attending religious worship services and events ... They are prohibited from receiving religious education and face persecution for revealing their religious affiliation in school.

Christian children and their teachers are forced into anti-religious and pro-atheist indoctrination excursions and programs ... Christian families are wary of private worship as a result of the government's multi-faceted crackdown on religion.

In May 2018, for instance, 13-year-old Wang Chenyang (pseudonym) of Zhucheng, Shandong Province, was restricted from attending his school's Children's Day festival performance because he was a Christian. Wang reported that, after finalizing the rehearsal on the day of their performance, the school's principal informed the class that any student with a religious affiliation would be prohibited from participating in the performance.

China has managed to deploy artificial intelligence and facial recognition to track Christians. The Communist Party deploys facial recognition cameras in churches. If they refuse, they are shut down. Jin Mingri, also known as Ezra Jin, was the pastor of the Zion Church of Beijing, one of the city's largest house churches with nearly 1,500 members. In 2018, it refused to install surveillance cameras in its sanctuary, so the authorities shut down the church

and placed the pastor under house arrest. Reuters reports that the church is now banned and its materials have been confiscated.

According to Open Doors, an organization that monitors Christian persecution on a global scale, there are over 96 million Christians in China. Open Doors reports:

The Chinese Communist Party's goal is to make sure churches don't fall out of line with official viewpoints. In the case of official churches, this means they are encouraged to praise and pledge allegiance to the Communist Party and its ideology. ... Most churches are monitored and can be shut down without warning.

The CCP is persecuting Christians through many methods, including but not limited to rewriting the Bible, refusing to recognize churches as places of worship, impoverishing church communities by accusing them of "illegal business activities," prohibiting children under 18 from attending church, forcing Christian children and their teachers into pro-atheist indoctrination activities, placing surveillance cameras even on the pulpits of churches, allowing only one state-controlled church to operate within exceedingly strict limits, shutting down house churches, jailing pastors for refusing to worship the communist party ideology. Is this the type of persecution that is coming to Western nations? Given the hostility towards Christianity of many left-wing and woke political parties and organizations in the West, Western Christians should take heed.

### Li Qiang: Middleman for Xi?

03 April 2024, Natalie Liu, VOA News

Speculation has been spreading about the future, role, and place in China's power structure of Premier Li Qiang since the unexplained cancellation of a routine press conference he was expected to hold last month. It was arguably the biggest news about Li, a figure largely unknown to the outside world, since he took office a year ago.

Analysts tell VOA that to better know Li, it is important to understand his place in China's leadership structure – highly centralized under Communist Party General Secretary Xi Jinping's tight rule – and the two men's past together, which stretches back two decades.

#### Path to premiership

Li was born in 1959 in a rural area of China's coastal province Zhejiang. His family is rooted in the farming communities of Zhejiang, and Li started out working as an industrial laborer at the age of 17 after he graduated from high school.

His background differs sharply from that of his boss, Xi Jinping, whose father was one of China's first

generation of Communist Party leaders. His background is also different from that of his immediate predecessor, Li Keqiang, who studied at the prestigious Beijing University and whose father was a local party official.

Li Qiang's climb within the ranks of the Chinese Communist Party began after studying at an agricultural college in his home province. After graduating in 1982, Li did not work in factories or in the rural communities again.

From 2000 to 2002, Li presided over the Zhejiang provincial bureau of commerce. In 2002, at age 43, he rose to become the youngest Communist Party secretary of Wenzhou, known to be a capital of entrepreneurs, in his native Zhejiang province.

That same year, Xi Jinping moved from Fujian, another coastal province, to lead Zhejiang as its party secretary, directly overseeing Wenzhou and other municipalities.

It was during Xi's tenure in Zhejiang, from 2002 until he left for Shanghai in 2007, that the two men had opportunities to know each other. From 2004 to 2005, Li served as the chief of staff to Zhejiang's provincial Communist Party committee, essentially Xi's chief of staff. His portfolio soon expanded to include membership in the provincial Communist Party standing committee, deputy provincial party secretary, head of the provincial political and legal affairs committee, and governor of Zhejiang.

Li was promoted to party secretary in neighboring Jiangsu province in 2016 and a year later to party secretary of Shanghai. He was placed in the premiership in March 2023.

"It is fair to say that all of his later promotions happened thanks to Xi," Xia Ming, a China-born political science professor at the City University of New York, said in a phone interview with VOA.

#### Wenzhou model

"It's worth noting that Li is closely tied to what is known as the 'Wenzhou model,' which resembles what is known in the West as liberal economics," Xia added.

What enabled the private entrepreneur-led "Wenzhou model" to succeed, Xia said, was local Communist Party officials' non-interference at the time, which stands in contrast with the party's heavy-handedness today.

"Now that Li has joined Xi's cabinet, whatever model he might have been tied to will have to succumb to the Xi model," Hu Ping told VOA. Hu Ping is a native of China's south-central Sichuan province and received his degrees from Beijing University in the 1980s, before entering into exile in the United States. Hu Ping is editor emeritus of China Spring magazine.

Steve Tsang, author of *The Political Thought of Xi Jinping*, explained to VOA in a phone interview from



London how he sees the Xi model: "What Xi Jinping is trying to do is to create one country, one people, one ideology, one party, one leader," Tsang said.

Unlike Li Keqiang, who landed the job due to support from party elders, Tsang added, Li Qiang was hand-picked by Xi and is expected to do Xi's bidding.

While Li Qiang's appointment to succeed Li Keqiang is seen as an attempt to solidify the above model, there were signs that Li Qiang's ties with the Chinese business community from his years working in Zhejiang, Jiangsu and Shanghai might be tapped to help Xi solve some of the country's economic challenges.

Potential mediator

The Economist reported in March of last year that Li Qiang had a hand in persuading one of China's most famous businessmen, Jack Ma, to return to China. Ma, like Li, a native of Zhejiang, had reportedly fallen out with Xi amid crackdowns on private enterprises and Ma's increasing popularity, both at home and abroad. Ma was said gone into self-imposed exile in Japan.

Li was "trying to reassure wealthy private entrepreneurs that, though they should know their place, they are still valued by the party," according to the article.

Despite assurances to Ma and private entrepreneurs, China's economy continues to face big challenges, including falling foreign direct investment and outflow of capital.

Li Qiang's predecessor, Li Keqiang, was known for his straight talk on China's economy and calling for a more domestic welfare-centered approach, in contrast to the state power-centric and expansionist model put forth by Xi.

In May 2020, Li Keqiang told reporters at the National People's Congress press conference that more than 40 percent of China's population of 1.4 billion live on \$143 a month, remarks seen as a rebuke of the official line that poverty has been eliminated all throughout the country under Xi's leadership.

Li Keqiang even developed an index for measuring China's economic growth that was deemed more reliable than local government figures because it looked at railway cargo volume, electric consumption and loans disbursed by banks.

Li Qiang, who stepped into Li Keqiang's role a year ago, is widely seen as a Xi protégé whose key job is doing the bidding of China's leader. Whether that might include other mediation efforts on behalf of Xi in China's political and economic power struggles remains to be seen.

"To be a middleman, or power broker, you need to have a certain amount of sway on both sides," said City University of New York's Xia Ming. Putting his

loyalist credentials aside, Xia said Li is also under pressure to show his ability to take care of the Chinese Communist Party's pocketbook.

Mao Zedong's old saying that political power grows out of the barrel of a gun has since been amended, Xia adds. To stay in power, the money bag is a key factor as well.

### **Xi's article on putting people first to be published**

03 April 2024, Xinhua

BEIJING – An article by Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, on putting the people first will be published on Monday.

The article by Xi, also Chinese president and chairman of the Central Military Commission, will be published in this year's seventh issue of the Qiushi Journal, a flagship magazine of the CPC Central Committee.

It is a collection of excerpts from Xi's relevant discourses between November 2012 and December 2023.

The article stresses that the people are the creators of history and true heroes, highlighting the original aspiration and mission of Chinese Communists to pursue happiness for the Chinese people and rejuvenation for the Chinese nation.

Standing on the people's side represents the fundamental political stance of the CPC, and it is what distinguishes a Marxist political party from other political parties, says the article, adding that everything the Party does is to realize, safeguard, and advance the fundamental interests of the greatest possible majority of the people.

The article lauds the people as the decisive force in building China into a great modern socialist country in all respects and emphasizes a people-centered development philosophy.

It is important to ensure that the gains of modernization benefit all the people fairly, says the article, calling for more notable and substantive progress in promoting common prosperity for all.

# March

## CPC leadership reviews disciplinary inspection report

31 March 2024, ECNS

The Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee met on March 21-22 to review a comprehensive report on the second round of disciplinary inspection missions of the 20th CPC Central Committee. Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, presided over the meeting.

It was noted at the meeting that the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core has attached importance to disciplinary inspection work, and has arranged two rounds of such inspection missions since the 20th CPC National Congress, which had covered all centrally-administered enterprises. It was pointed out at the meeting that Party-building work in centrally-administered enterprises and relevant government departments had been strengthened, with new achievements in terms of the Party's full and rigorous self-governance. But there are still some problems that must be taken very seriously from a political standpoint and addressed earnestly.

Inspections and rectifications followed must be taken as the pivot for promoting high-quality development and exercising full and rigorous Party self-governance. Organization and leadership must be strengthened to see that key parties assume their primary responsibilities, and problems, tasks, and responsibilities must be put on a list, so as to ensure that every problem has a solution and feedback. Oversight over inspections and rectifications must be strengthened, key officials and events be placed under tight scrutiny to make sure that every case is addressed as required. An accountability system must be established for rectifications to ensure that those who are perfunctory or cheat in the rectifications will be strictly held to account.

It was emphasized at the meeting that state-owned enterprises (SOE) are the crucial material and political foundation for socialism with Chinese characteristics. It is imperative to uphold and consolidate Party's leadership, and thoroughly study and put into practice Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. SOEs must perform their duties and fulfill their missions in a down-to-earth manner, and must uphold General Secretary Xi Jinping's core position on the CPC Central Committee and in the Party as a whole, and uphold the Central Committee's authority and centralized, unified leadership. They must ensure both development and security, be vigilant against

potential dangers, be prepared to deal with worst-case scenarios, resolutely prevent and mitigate risks and ensure high-quality development with high-level safety.

It is imperative to make advances in exercising full and rigorous Party self-governance, with rigor being maintained for the work in every aspect. Oversight of "top leaders" and leaderships must be strengthened, and crackdown on corruption must continue to be carried out with a high hand. Cases must be studied and used for promoting rectification of conduct and Party governance so that the soil and conditions that breed corruption will be eliminated.

It is imperative to conscientiously implement the Party's organizational line for the new era and strengthen the building of leaderships, ranks of officials, talent pool as well as grassroots Party organizations. What has been achieved from disciplinary inspections must be put to good use. It is also essential to conduct in-depth research on common and deep-seated problems discovered in disciplinary inspections, further improve the related systems and mechanisms, and tackle not only symptoms but also root causes.

## China spy agency fingers consultancies as espionage threat

31 March 2024, VOA News

China's Ministry of State Security issued a fresh warning this week about overseas spy agencies and what it says are their efforts in recent years to obtain state secrets under the disguise of consulting agencies.

The six-minute video released Thursday on the ministry's official WeChat social media account reenacts what it says was a real case where overseas spy agencies instructed a consulting firm to steal classified information from a Chinese company seeking to invest abroad.

The release of the video comes as Chinese leader Xi Jinping met this week with American CEOs in a bid reassure them that China remains open for business, despite concerns about its economy and worrying signals from the authoritarian government.

Over the past year, foreign investment in China has shrunk as supply chains shift to other countries while Chinese authorities have rolled out a new anti-espionage law and used exit bans to keep business executives and others from leaving the country. It has also carried out raids on consulting and due diligence firms.

During the same period, the Ministry of State Security has ramped up its use of social media to raise the alarm about foreign spies.

Its latest video – the fourth since it launched its social media account last year – has the feel of a spy

thriller with dramatic music and fast-paced video elements and graphics.

It tells the story of an executive at a Chinese company who is pressed by a consulting firm representative on a string of questions, including the company's total profit, the technical parameters of its products, and how its products are used by the Air Force.

In a WeChat post released with the video, the ministry warned about the national security risks that consultancy agencies pose.

"The seemingly normal investigation conducted by consulting firms are in fact attempts to illegally acquire our commercial secrets and efforts to suppress our advantageous industries," the ministry wrote, adding that these consulting firms are accomplices to foreign spy agencies aiming to infiltrate key sectors in China.

Intimidation campaign against Chinese citizens

Some experts say the video is tailored to the Chinese audience rather than foreign investors since the video is purely in Mandarin and features the arrest of a Chinese national working for a foreign consulting firm.

The purpose of the video is "to inform and intimidate Chinese citizens by telling them that the government is watching them," said Dennis Wilder, a former U.S. national security official. He added that the campaign will likely create a chilling effect among Chinese citizens, especially those working for foreign companies.

Over the last year, Chinese authorities have raided several American companies' offices in China and detained some of their Chinese employees. Companies affected include due diligence firm Mintz Group, business consulting firm Capvision, and management consultancy Bain & Company.

Chilling effect for new foreign businesses

While the campaign focuses on Chinese citizens, Wilder said Beijing's efforts to safeguard national security will also create a chilling effect for foreign businesses trying to enter the Chinese market.

Unlike big foreign companies with an established presence in China, such as Apple or Qualcomm, he said companies that have no presence in China need to conduct due diligence. "They have to understand what their counterparts in China are all about, but if they can't conduct due diligence, they won't invest in China," he told VOA in a video interview.

A survey conducted by foreign business groups in 2023 suggests foreign companies are increasingly pulling investments and operations out of China. Survey data show that only 45% of American companies view China as their primary or among their top three investment destinations while 66% of the companies surveyed by the European Union

Chamber of Commerce in China said they found operating in China has become increasingly difficult. Despite foreign companies' lack of confidence in the Chinese market, some analysts say the Chinese government thinks efforts to safeguard national security and enhance foreign investors' confidence in the Chinese market are not mutually contradictory.

"Beijing believes that while they try to attract more foreign businesses to invest in China, they also should ensure key national interests, such as core data or key infrastructure won't be easily obtained by foreign businesses," said Hung Chin-fu, a political scientist at National Cheng Kung University in Taiwan.

He said Beijing's approach will be met with deep suspicion among foreign businesses. "At a time when the Chinese government has laid out many red lines in the name of national security, investing in China will be like walking on thin ice for foreign companies," he told VOA by phone.

As foreign businesses will likely remain hesitant to increase their investment volumes in China, Wilder thinks Chinese leaders may have different views on whether to prioritize efforts to attract more foreign investment or the need to safeguard national security. "For Xi Jinping, I think if he has to choose between foreign investment and economic growth and what he perceives as national security, he will always come out on the national security side," he told VOA. But for other Communist Party leaders who must consider economic growth, such as Chinese Premier Li Qiang, Wilder thinks their consideration will be different from Xi's.

### U-M study reveals how China's local bureaucrats struggle for power through negative media coverage

19 March 2024, Michigan News

Recent research on China's factional competition uncovers how local bureaucrats, who are connected to influential national leaders, strategically use the media to criticize members of rival factions, harming their promotion prospects and weakening their factions.

Led by Ji Yeon (Jean) Hong, associate professor of political science at the University of Michigan, the research analyzed millions of media reports in Chinese national and regional newspapers spanning from 2000-2014, along with information on the political networks of elite Chinese bureaucrats. It mapped out patterns of behavior among local bureaucrats in leveraging negative media coverage to attack political rivals.

Given the limited freedom of local media on criticizing local governments, provincial leaders linked to strong national leaders, such as Politburo Standing Committee members, encouraged local

media to cover negative political incidents such as corruption investigation in other provinces.

More importantly, when reporting on others, provincial leaders are more likely to target provinces connected to weaker national political leaders. The bigger the power gap between the national leaders, the more frequent the negative reporting is.

"This suggests that factional competition encourages strong factions to attack weaker factions more frequently than the reverse," Hong said. "This often leads to power consolidation, strengthening strong factions and weakening weaker factions."

The research further explores the consequences of such negative news coverage on the promotion prospects of provincial leaders. It finds that these negative reports indeed harm the reported-on cadres and their factions.

Specifically, news reports on corruption substantially reduce the promotion chances of the reported-on province's party secretary, the top local political leader, who is likely to hold political responsibility and suffer a substantial disadvantage if more corrupt cadres are caught within his or her region. While leaders of provinces where the media reports on other provinces' corruption cases enjoy a higher probability of promotion.

Even though the Chinese personnel system, including promotion, demotion and allocation of party cadres, is not transparent, one of the factors that the Communist Party formally emphasizes in cadre evaluation is public perception. Without an electoral mechanism, it is not straightforward to elicit the public's evaluation of a cadre or its governance, but the media strongly affect public opinion in China. In such circumstances, the media role is critical.

The research covers the period ranging from the end of the Jiang Zemin administration to the beginning of Xi Jinping's regime. The Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao administrations, which constitute the bulk of the period under analysis, are not typically framed as a period in which one faction or one top leader dominated others. Furthermore, during this period intellectuals within the party actively debated the possibility of intraparty democracy.

"This implies that the recent personalization of power in China's central politics might not be a unique feature of the current leadership, but an outcome of latent behavioral patterns in China's elite politics," Hong said.

This study is published in the April 2024 issue of Political Science Research and Methods.

**Detailed measures stipulate place name translation from foreign language must not compromise China's territorial claims, sovereign rights**

16 March 2024, Global Times

China's Ministry of Civil Affairs on Friday published implementation measures addressing the management of geographical names, which detailed the requirements for translation of place names in ethnic minority or foreign languages into Chinese characters.

Set to take effect from May 1, 2024, the implementation measures stipulated in Article 13 that "place name in foreign language that may harm China's territorial claims and sovereignty rights shall not be directly quoted or translated without authorization."

Translation of place names in foreign languages or minority languages should comply with standards formulated by related organs of the State Council. The standard translations are made public through notices, the national database for geographical names and official publications on geographical names, according to the implementation measures.

The measures released on Friday also clarified that names of a person, company or trademark should not be used as geographical names and specified the general rules and procedures of naming or renaming localities.

The State Council issued a revised regulation on place names in April 2022, which is applicable to naming, renaming, usage, cultural protection and other management on geographical names within Chinese territories.

Analysts noted the newly released implementation measures are made in accordance with the revision.

Zhi Zhenfeng, a research fellow with the Institute of Law at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, told the Global Times on Saturday that geographical names are not only directly related to administration and everyday life, but also carry legal and sovereign implications.

Standardization of name translation helps confirm the scope of a geographical name refers to and all administrative rights and public geographical services (mapping and navigating, weather forecast, etc) are based on that, Zhi explained.

As China still has disputes over some territories with certain neighboring countries, the use of geographical names of places in disputes directly relates to sovereign rights. Using the incorrect translation or non-standard translation could cause confusion and encroach China's territorial integrity, Zhi stressed.

Analysts mentioned the example of maritime disputes in the South China Sea with countries like the

Philippines. When referring to islands and reefs concerned, the use of standard translation is a firm declaration of sovereignty and transliteration of foreign names means concession of legal rights.

The Ministry of Civil Affairs standardized the names of 11 places in Zangnan (the southern part of Southwest China's Xizang Autonomous Region) in Chinese characters, Tibetan and pinyin in April 2023.

Experts told the Global Times that the move is meaningful in safeguarding national sovereignty, maintaining peace in border regions and managing border-related matters at a legal level. Using standard place names helps raise awareness of Chinese territory.

The April 2023 issuance was the third list of standardized geographical names in Zangnan published by the ministry. The first list of the standardized names of six places in Zangnan was released in 2017, while the second list of 15 places was issued in 2021.

### What to expect at China's 'Two Sessions' amid sagging economy, party drama

03 March 2024, Aljazeera



The Chinese government's Two Sessions are taking place in Beijing [File: Mark R Cristino/Pool via Reuters]

China's "Two Sessions" kick off in Beijing on Monday with the meeting of the National People's Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC).

The event brings together China's political elite, as well as leaders in business, tech, media, and the arts. Known as lianghui in Chinese, the concurrent meetings are an annual fixture of China's legislative agenda and run for approximately two weeks.

During the period, legislators will approve new laws, political appointments, and government work reports detailing the progress of various departments such as the Ministry of Finance and the National Development and Reform Commission.

What are the major developments to watch?

During last year's Two Sessions, delegates officially approved Xi Jinping for an unprecedented third term as president.

This year, the event is likely to be dominated by China's lagging economy, which is grappling with slowing growth, deflation, massive debt and falling exports.

One of the most important events to watch will be Premier Li Qiang's delivery of the annual work report, which will review the government's accomplishments and set goals for 2024.

Li is expected to set an economic growth target of about 5 percent for 2024 and discuss headline issues from China's falling birth rate to the future of tech and artificial intelligence (AI) regulation.

A number of key appointments could also be made.

Over the past year, 11 members of the NPC's Standing Committee – the legislature's 175-member permanent body – have been removed, including Minister of Foreign Affairs Qin Gang and Minister of Defence Li Shangfu.

Those who were removed had ties to the military, including the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Rocket Force, which oversees China's nuclear and conventional ballistic missiles.

What is the difference between the two sessions?

The NPC and the CPPCC are both Chinese state institutions that are technically separate from the Communist Party of China (CCP), but much of their work is dictated by it.

On paper, the NPC is officially China's highest legislative body with nearly 3,000 members representing the country's provinces, autonomous regions, big cities, the PLA and the People's Armed Police. The NPC also has delegates representing self-governing Taiwan, which is claimed by the CCP even though Beijing has never exercised control over the island.

During the NPC, delegates review progress on policy goals and vote to approve new legislation and senior political appointments, although most delegates in reality have little political power.

The NPC Standing Committee is widely viewed as more powerful than the legislature in practice, despite being technically subordinate, as it meets regularly between legislative sessions.

"The NPC is not a parliament in the sense of a democratic parliament where the representatives are elected through fair elections. Its deputies are elected by a small portion of the Chinese population under the guidance of the Communist Party," Adam Ni, co-editor of the China Neican newsletter, told Al Jazeera.

"That is to say, the deputies of the NPC are at least acceptable to the party."

The CPPCC, which meets at the same time and brings together 2,000 plus delegates from across China and



the diaspora, is a political advisory body that functions as more of a public relations exercise.

Delegates are not necessarily members of the CCP, although the meeting is part of its "United Front" efforts to align different actors on common causes and spread China's influence.

CPPCC delegates include leaders in tech, the arts, media, and leaders from semi-autonomous Hong Kong and Macau.

"The CPPCC performs several functions, including facilitating elite networking and directing policy advice from outside the party to the party-state. It operates as a means of trade, where the Communist Party provides access to the system and recognition through granting membership, while the elites sitting on the body gain access to policymakers and receive recognition," Ni said.

Is the NPC just a 'rubber stamp' parliament?

The NPC is often referred to as a "rubber stamp" parliament or legislature, as its main function is to formally approve premade decisions and it features little, if any, overt debate.

China watchers say that the NPC is still important to watch.

It can incorporate limited popular input on issues that are not considered too sensitive and, on rare occasions, has featured displays of dissent.

Most famously, one-third of delegates in 1992 voted against or abstained from approving the Three Gorges Dam, a controversial project to dam the Yangtze River.

"People refer to the NPC as a 'rubber stamp' because it has never voted down any bill, work report, budget, or nomination presented to it. But that unduly narrow focus on the NPC's vote outcomes alone, in my view, ignores the important role played by the thousands of NPC delegates in representing citizen interests on a range of politically non-sensitive issues," Changhao Wei, a fellow at Yale Law School's Paul Tsai China Center, told Al Jazeera.

While you will not hear delegates debating on the floor, individual delegates and bodies such as the NPC Standing Committee can shape legislation as it is being drafted and provide input on issues like the national budget.

Delegates can also submit individual bills calling on the NPC to act on important issues of the day.

In 2022, delegates submitted multiple bills focusing on women's rights and domestic violence in response to public outrage over the case of a trafficked woman with mental health issues who was found chained up by her husband.

While these bills were not debated publicly, they would not have gone unnoticed within the government either, Wei said.

Ni said although the CPP maintains an ironclad grip on power, the party is not a monolith, "but contains a multitude of interest groups and networks".

"There are also non-party groups and personnel involved in the lawmaking process," Ni said.

"We shouldn't discount their agency, eg, advocates of women's rights, environmentalists, because they can have an impact. But the influence and power of non-party individuals and groups are constrained by the political structure, where the party monopolises the instruments of state power."

### China's premier won't meet the press after 'two sessions' for first time in 3 decades

04 March 2024, South China Morning Post

For the first time in three decades, the Chinese premier will not host a press conference at the end of the annual parliamentary sessions, which began in Beijing on Monday.

It will also be scrapped for future years of the current National People's Congress' term barring exceptional circumstances, said Lou Qinjian, spokesman for the NPC, China's top legislative body. The press conference – first held in 1988 and established as a customary practice in 1993 – is one of the most anticipated events of the annual "two sessions", when the top political advisory body and legislature meet.

It is one of the rare occasions when a top Chinese leader takes questions from local and international media. Those questions are often tightly scripted and chosen in advance, but it offers the outside world a chance to hear directly from a high-ranking official on policy directions.

In particular, it has been seen as a platform for China to indicate its diplomatic priorities, not only in terms of the questions selected but also which country's media they come from.

It also makes the premier a more familiar face globally than other Chinese leaders – including the president and Communist Party secretary – who seldom talk directly to outside media.

But Lou said that after a review, the leadership had decided to scrap the press conference since it often overlapped with similar events during the two sessions.

Premier Li Qiang will deliver the government work report to the NPC on Tuesday morning, followed by two written reports from the National Development and Reform Commission and the Ministry of Finance outlining plans and the budget.

"It should be said that society's major concerns have been specifically addressed in the [government] reports," Lou said on Monday. "They will be publicised so that the media and the public can learn about their content easily."

There will be at least three press conferences during the two sessions, including one given by Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

Observers said that while the change might come as a surprise, it was in line with China's political development.

"The party's leadership has been firmly established over the past decade. The State Council's role is now mainly about implementing the party's decisions," according to veteran China watcher Wang Xiangwei, a former editor-in-chief of the South China Morning Post.

"The role and status of the premier, who heads the State Council, is therefore adjusted accordingly."

He said that was already reflected in arrangements for state leaders meeting the chief executives of Hong Kong and Macau on duty visits.

Previously the chief executives held separate meetings with the president and the premier. But last year they reported only to the president, with the premier sitting in on the meeting.

"It is also a reflection of Li Qiang's pragmatism. He focuses on major policy directions, which are all clearly spelled out in his work report," Wang said. "He doesn't think an additional press conference is necessary as the ministers are in a better position to elaborate on detailed policies, and they will all have press conferences."

But he said the Chinese leadership could bring back the practice in future if it was deemed necessary.

Another observer, who spoke on condition of anonymity, agreed it reflected the change in power dynamics in China.

"The premier's job is now mainly to do with the economy and social affairs. However, the questions asked at the presser are usually about foreign affairs and China's grand strategy," the observer said.

"It would be strange for Li to answer those questions as foreign affairs are increasingly centralised in the hands of the party chief, President Xi Jinping."

While the foreign minister nominally reports to the premier, Wang stepped into the role from a higher rank after Qin Gang was sacked from the job without explanation in July. Wang reports directly to Xi.

The observer said Li could also have decided not to hold the press conference as a way to show loyalty to Xi, so that more focus is on the president.

But Wang said there could be a negative impact.

"This is still the only opportunity for a top Chinese leader to have live televised interaction with foreign media. Even though it is a highly scripted event, it's a chance for everyone who is interested in China – particularly foreign investors – to hear directly from the Chinese leadership," he said.

"This will be an opportunity missed for China to explain itself, and it may increase the perception of

China's lack of transparency. It will have a huge impact on China's image to the outside world when it comes to openness."

Alfred Wu, an associate professor at the National University of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, said the change was likely to be part of revisions made by the cabinet to its work rules a year ago, noting that an amended version of the related law would be endorsed during the NPC session.

"[This] clearly shows the fundamental changes in China's party-government relationships in the past few years," he said.

The revised work rules state that the cabinet will closely follow instructions from the party leadership, and provisions related to government transparency were removed.

"It will have only taken a year from the revision of the internal work rules to the revision of the guiding law," Wu said. "Li Qiang is certainly pushing this very hard to show his loyalty."

Jens Eskelund, president of the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China, expressed regret that the premier's press conference was cancelled.

"Transparency and engagement with international media are important for enabling the global audience to understand China's priorities and its assessment of the domestic and global situation," he said. "We hope the press conference will be reintroduced next year."

David Lie Tai-chong, a Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference member from Hong Kong, said he believed the press briefing was dropped as part of efforts to "streamline" the two sessions.

### **China's top political advisory body concludes standing committee session**

02 March 2024, Xinhua

The 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), or China's national political advisory body, closed the fifth session of its standing committee Saturday in Beijing. Wang Huning, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the CPPCC National Committee, hosted the closing meeting and delivered a speech.

Praising the concrete progress the CPPCC National Committee has made over the past year, Wang noted that the year of 2024 marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and the founding of the CPPCC.

The CPPCC should carry on its fine tradition, stay committed to its political responsibility, actively offer advice and build up consensus for advancing Chinese modernization as well as pool wisdom and

strength for fulfilling the national economic and social development goals, Wang said.

He also called for efforts to ensure the upcoming second session of the 14th CPPCC National Committee be held successfully.

The meeting reviewed and adopted documents including a draft agenda and the schedule of the annual session, a work report of the Standing Committee of the CPPCC National Committee, and a report on how the proposals from political advisors have been handled since the first session of the 14th CPPCC National Committee.

These documents will be submitted to the annual session for review.

### **Intrigue swirls about possible reshuffles as China's parliament convenes**

02 March 2024, The Guardian

Thousands of delegates are due to arrive in Beijing this weekend for China's most high-profile political gathering, a closely observed series of meetings that will lay out the government's policy blueprint for the year ahead.

The event, known as the "two sessions", begins on Monday as China's parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC) convenes alongside a separate but parallel meeting of the country's top political advisory body, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

The nearly 3,000 NPC delegates can amend the constitution, enact new legislation, approve the government budget and fill vacancies in state offices. But in reality the NPC is a rubber-stamp parliament. It has never voted down any item on the agenda, and the Communist party (CCP) holds the ultimate power over the state.

Nevertheless, it is a keenly watched political event. The premier, Li Qiang, will present the government work report, which lays out its plans for the year ahead, including the GDP growth target. And while no changes are expected to the position of Xi Jinping, who was granted a norm-busting third term as president at last year's NPC, personnel changes may be announced, after months of uncertainty about who is responsible for some of China's most important government departments.

The most significant changes are at the offices of the foreign minister and the defence minister. Speculation around the fates of Qin Gang, the former foreign minister, and Li Shangfu, the former defence minister, has swirled since the two men were removed without explanation from their positions last year, in a season of turbulence for China's government.

Qin has not been seen since in public since June, leading to rumours about his fate. This week Qin was removed as a NPC delegate, concluding his eradication from the levers of China's government.

Unlike other delegates who were "dismissed" from parliament, the official notice said Qin had resigned. James Palmer, a deputy editor of Foreign Policy, said in his China Brief newsletter that this indicated Qin's "fall from grace has been relatively cushioned".

Qin was replaced as foreign minister by his predecessor, Wang Yi, who is also the director of the more powerful CCP foreign affairs commission. Many experts believe that Wang's reappointment was intended to be temporary, with a replacement expected to be announced at this year's NPC. A likely candidate is Liu Jianchao, a senior party cadre who has travelled extensively in recent months to participate in diplomatic meetings.

Li, the former defence minister, was recently removed from the website of the CCP's central military commission.

The demotions of Qin and Li have left vacancies on the state council, China's cabinet. Li's vacancy may be filled by his replacement as defence minister, Dong Jun. But it is far from certain that Dong or any new foreign minister will be appointed to the state council.

Neil Thomas and Jing Qian, researchers at the Asia Society Policy Institute, said in a recent analysis that if the spots remained vacant, it "could suggest a higher degree of mistrust and paralysis at the centre of Xi's leadership and a poorer outlook for China's attempts to both manage tensions with the west and lead the global south".

Observers will be paying close attention to the government work report, which Li will deliver on Tuesday. He is expected to announce a relatively modest GDP growth target likely to hew closely to 2023's target of 5%.

There may be some modest fiscal support, although not the deep structural reform or more aggressive stimulus that many economists say is necessary to recharge China's struggling economy. That is because Xi's third term as China's leader has been characterised by a focus on national security, even at the expense of economic growth or business confidence.

Underlining this, on 27 February the NPC standing committee, which meets when the NPC is not in session, revised the law on state secrets, expanding the scope of sensitive information to "work secrets". The update requires government agencies to protect information that may not be a state secret but "would cause a definite adverse impact after leaking".

Although the law only applies to state institutions, Thomas and Qian said the widened scope of sensitive information "could affect firms that deal with China", meaning more uncertainty for businesses in China.

### **China's Xi Jinping calls for 'loyalty and honesty' from younger officials as morale runs low**

02 March 2024, South China Morning Post

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Friday urged young and middle-aged officials to be loyal, honest and "keen on reform and innovation" in an effort to rally morale and encourage unity in the face of economic and social risks.

"[Young and middle-aged officials] must actively practice loyalty and honesty towards the party, and must make their political stance clear," Xi said, according to state news agency Xinhua.

He called on young cadres to strictly uphold the Communist Party's political discipline and rules, show honesty and maintain a high degree of unity with the party at all times.

The message was conveyed at the opening ceremony of a training programme for young and middle-aged officials on Friday at the Central Party School in Beijing, where Xi urged party organisations to nurture reliable and qualified successors.

"[Party members] should be strong promoters of good and clean political ecology ... resolutely oppose privileged thoughts and privileged behaviours, and maintain the political integrity of the party," Xi added.

He also called on them to guard against major risks and solve prominent problems.

Xi emphasised that young party members should be "selfless" and dedicate themselves to improving people's well-being. They should also be "keen on reform and innovation and dare to confront difficulties", he said.

Xi has previously highlighted the importance of innovation in China's modernisation path, saying it should be given a prominent position in overall development, according to an excerpt published last year in *Qiushi*, the party's theoretical journal.

"Chinese-style modernisation is an exploratory undertaking with many unknown areas that the country is required to boldly explore through reform and innovation, and we should never rigidly cling to an idea or approach without considering the reality of the situation," Xi said, according to the journal.

Morale is running low among China's public servants as Xi's sweeping anti-corruption campaign has increased the pressure on rank-and-file cadres, while the risk of social unrest is growing because of the country's economic slowdown.

Chen Daoyin, a political analyst and former professor at Shanghai University of Political Science and Law, noted that it was "party tradition" to train young and middle-aged officials at the Central Party School, where cadres learn to fill key party and state positions.

"The points emphasised in Xi's speech this year suggest prevalent problems among young and

middle-aged officials, including the lack of a sense of responsibility and capability and low awareness of their roles," Chen said.

In January, Xi warned that the party should continue to fight corruption and other problems with "tenacity, perseverance and precision".

Later that month, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, China's top anti-corruption body, revealed that around 110,000 party officials faced disciplinary action last year.

China's former foreign minister Qin Gang and former defence minister Li Shangfu were also stripped of their titles and state councillor positions last year. The reasons for their dismissals have not been revealed publicly.

### **China economy gaining momentum despite calls for hardline US stance: senior diplomat**

02 March 2024, South China Morning Post

China's economy is gaining momentum towards recovery and high-quality development as it becomes a "modern socialist country in all respects", a senior Chinese diplomat said on Friday, even as he denigrated American critics calling for hardline policies against the Asian giant.

The comments by Qian Jin, China's deputy consul general in New York, come as the administrations of Presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping seek to stabilise relations and build on good will following their November summit in California amid escalating US rhetoric ahead of the nation's presidential election in November.

"Some people have been hyping up [the] so-called 'China threat', advocating cutting China off from chips, slapping new sanctions," said Qian in prepared remarks.

"The stabilising momentum in China-US relations should not be disrupted by domestic politics."

Friday's statement, one of several over the past year by Beijing officials aimed at boosting investor and consumer confidence in China's struggling economy, was released amid a slew of headwinds.

Qian knocked detractors who voice "concerns and doubts" about China's economic development and who use such phrases as "struggling for momentum", "lack of drive" and "dragging down the world".

"This is further from the truth," he said. "The ship of China's economy is breaking turbulent waves of the global economy and moving steadily forward."

Qian argued critics should note that Beijing achieved its 5.2 per cent growth target in 2023.

In addition, China's economy remained a strong engine of global growth, he said, and planners had avoided "massive stimulus" for short-term gain given "sound and solid fundamentals".

Beijing has sought to project confidence as it tries to right its economic ship. Its swooning property market is a grave concern, accounting for some 25 per cent of the country's economy and about 70 per cent of household wealth.

On other fronts, local debt levels are mounting, and youth unemployment stood at 15 per cent in December. Last summer, the total surpassed 20 per cent, after which China's National Bureau of Statistics temporarily stopped releasing figures, citing a need to change how the index was calculated. Furthermore, deflationary fears have intensified, and consumers during the closely watched Lunar New Year period stayed cautious.

While the number of domestic tourists was up 34 per cent during the major annual holiday over last year – and 19 per cent above 2019 pre-coronavirus pandemic levels – average spending per person was nine per cent below 2019.

"In short, Chinese households are readily partaking in the service economy but remain frugal in their spending," said Michael Hirson of 22V Research, a New York-based investment research firm.

"Cautious household spending and investing has been a key factor behind weak domestic demand since the post-Covid reopening and we see few catalysts to reverse it any time soon," added Hirson, who served as the US Treasury Department's attaché in China from 2013 to 2016.

Qian countered that the economy was stable, saying 2023 grain output fell only slightly below 2022 levels, R&D spending held strong and a shift was under way to new sources of growth.

China continued to welcome foreign investors, he added, while electric vehicles, batteries, solar panels and new energy developments remained promising. Some economists noted overcapacity concerns, however.

The country's domestic EV sales could grow 25 per cent to 9.44 million units this year, according to a forecast by Citic Futures. That is down from annual growth rates of 31 per cent last year and 89 per cent in 2022.

Beijing has sought to tackle the mounting economic uncertainties, vowing to embark on a host of pro-growth policies. "Proactive fiscal policy must be moderately strengthened and improved in quality and efficiency," according to a statement from the Politburo on Thursday.

In a meeting with US business executives in Beijing on Wednesday, Chinese Premier Li Qiang touted the "huge demand potential" in advanced manufacturing, urbanisation, consumption upgrading and green energy transformation. He did so even as he criticised any move to decouple the two economies.

On trade, prospects for China look mixed, analysts said, as 2023 exports fell, the US has maintained its insistence on restricting exports of high-end semiconductors and other key technologies and Europe grows warier of Beijing's ambitious EV plans, which the continent has viewed as a threat to its own efforts.

But Qian said better Sino-American trade relations were mutually beneficial.

"Decoupling between us will not work and will produce no winner," the diplomat said. "For Chinese companies in the US, unreasonable tariffs, sanctions and suppression are most unwanted."

Beijing's bid to bolster confidence with foreign investors comes amid steep stock market declines – partially reversed after recent government intervention – and plunging sentiment.

According to an American Chamber of Commerce in South China survey released on Tuesday, 63 per cent of US firms in China were looking to reinvest in China, down 5 percentage points.

The same survey found that only 11 per cent of non-American foreign firms planned to reinvest in China, down sharply from last year's 71 per cent.

Trade tensions are also weighing on the economy. More than 60 per cent of American firms and over half of Chinese firms in the South China AmCham survey said they had been negatively affected by tariffs both from Beijing and Washington, with 85 per cent expecting bilateral trade tensions to worsen.

The low level of trust and ongoing mudslinging between the world's two largest economies was evident in this week's annual US assessment of China's membership in the World Trade Organization.

Washington accused Beijing of a "state-directed, non-market approach" and an array of non-market practices targeting industries for global market domination, according to the 80-page report.

The US added that China's socialist market economy "has turned decidedly predatory".

Beijing quickly denied the charges, countering Washington relied on "discriminatory" industrial policies that disrupt global supply chains and used "smear tactics and blame-shifting methods to cover up its violations and sabotage".

Qian on Friday contended doubters would be proved wrong. "The Chinese economy can handle ups and downs," he said. "The overall trend of long-term growth will not change."



## Further fall from grace for disappeared former foreign, defence ministers in opaque world of China

01 March 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Mar01'24) – China said Feb 27 that the resignation from the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) by the months-long disappeared former foreign minister Qin Gang had been accepted, without any information on his whereabouts or current status. China also said Feb 27 that it's also months-long disappeared defence minister Li Shangfu had been removed from the Party Central Military Commission (CMC).

"Tianjin Municipal People's Congress Standing Committee has decided to accept Qin Gang's resignation as a delegate to the 14th NPC," reported China's official Xinhua news agency Feb 27. The decision came ahead of the opening of the NPC's 2024 session on Mar 5.

Qin, China's former envoy to the United States, took the office of foreign minister in Jan 2023. He disappeared from public view in Jun 2023 and was formally banished from his position as a state councillor in October.

Qin rose to power due to his personal relationship with Chinese leader Xi Jinping, and his downfall has left many questions unanswered. Some experts have even described him as Xi's most loyal servant, noted newsweek.com Feb 27.

Beijing has yet to officially explain Qin's dismissal as foreign minister, after he was removed from the post only six months into the role. The mystery around Qin's disappearance since June continues as various theories about his fate have been put forward, the report noted.

Meanwhile, it is also not clear when exactly Li Shangfu was removed from China's key military command body, said the scmp.com Feb 27.

Li, who had not been seen in public since late Aug 2023, was removed as defence minister and state councillor without explanation at a meeting of the NPC Standing Committee in Oct 2023. He had only been in the post for months.

The CMC is a parallel system for the party and the state, with the same membership. Li had already been removed from the state CMC in October, the report noted.

It added that Li is still a member of the party's Central Committee and retains his seat in the legislature.

Last year also saw a number of senior generals being removed from their commands, prompting speculation that President Xi Jinping's anti-corruption drive was deepening in the military. They included the leadership of the People's Liberation Army Rocket Force who are responsible for the country's nuclear arsenal.

Nine of those commanders were also stripped of their seats in the legislature in Dec 2023, with the NPC saying this month that they were suspected of "violations of discipline and the law", usually a euphemism for corruption, the report noted.

Also, the fate of Li's predecessor Wei Fenghe remains uncertain after he did not appear on a list of senior officials who received Lunar New Year greetings from the leadership – a common courtesy. Wei has not been seen in public since then.

Besides, the new Defence Minister, Dong Jun, a former head of the navy, has not yet been given the rank of state councillor or a seat on the CMC, something all previous defence ministers have received, the report noted.

## February

### China's embattled former foreign minister steps down as a lawmaker

27 February 2024, NBC News

Qin Gang was dismissed in July in one of China's biggest political surprises in years. He has yet to reappear publicly.

China's former foreign minister, Qin Gang, who has been missing from public view since June, has resigned from the national legislature, state media reported Tuesday.

Qin was dismissed as foreign minister in July, in one of China's biggest political surprises in years.

The 57-year-old served for only seven months before he disappeared from public view last June. The government announced a month later that he had been dismissed from his post. He has yet to reappear publicly.

Qin was replaced as foreign minister by his predecessor, Wang Yi.

According to a notice by the National People's Congress Standing Committee, the Tianjin Municipal People's Congress accepted Qin's resignation as a delegate to the upcoming annual parliamentary session.

Official websites no longer list Qin as a member of the State Council, China's Cabinet, but there has been no mention of whether he has been excluded from China's ruling Communist Party.

His disappearance came during a series of dismissals at the top echelons of the party that included former Defense Minister Li Shangfu and other top military officials.

Signs of overt political friction are extremely rare in China, especially since President Xi Jinping tightened his control over the country's politics, partly through

an anti-corruption drive that purged scores of his presumed rivals.

Qin's and Li's ousters are believed to be part of a broader effort to reduce security vulnerabilities amid China's increasing competition with the United States and its allies.

The National People's Congress, China's rubber-stamp parliament, is to convene its annual session in early March and is expected to focus on the country's ailing economy.

China's economy expanded by 5.2% last year but is forecast to slow sharply this year, bogged down by a property crisis, high youth unemployment and massive local government debt.

The Wall Street Journal reported in September, citing people familiar with a briefing, that Qin was ousted over an extramarital affair he had during a previous posting as ambassador to the U.S. An investigation was focused on whether his conduct had compromised China's national security, according to the Journal.

### **Leaked document trove shows a Chinese hacking scheme focused on harassing dissidents**

22 February 2024, Wisconsin Public Radio

A large trove of more than 500 sensitive technical documents posted online anonymously last week details one Chinese technology company's hacking operations, target lists and marketing materials for the Chinese government.

The majority of the operations appear to be focused on surveilling and harassing dissidents who publicly criticize the Chinese government, including on global social media platforms like X, formerly known as Twitter.

Target lists reveal victims from at least 14 governments from Pakistan to Australia, as well as academic institutions, pro-democracy organizations in places like Hong Kong, as well as the military alliance NATO. The company was also bidding for work to surveil the minority Uyghur population in Xinjiang, a broader Chinese government program that major global human rights' organizations around the world have heavily criticized. There are even pictures of custom devices used for spying, such as a recording device disguised as a power bank.

Cybersecurity researchers are still investigating different components of the leak, which was shared to the open source development website popular with programmers, called GitHub. However, experts from top U.S. cybersecurity companies including Google's Mandiant and Sentinel Labs have shared preliminary analysis of the contents of the leak, believing the documents to be authentic.

"We have every reason to believe this is the authentic data of a contractor supporting global and

domestic cyber espionage operations out of China," said John Hultquist, the chief analyst for Mandiant Intelligence, a part of Google Cloud. "This leak is narrow, but it is deep. We rarely get such unfettered access to the inner workings of any intelligence operation. We are working hard to learn as much as we can and put it to good use."

The state-affiliated company, called i-Soon, is known to be one of many contractors and subcontractors who compete for opportunities to perform hacking and surveillance operations for different Chinese government agencies. The company is currently facing litigation from another Chinese contractor called Chengdu 404, a company that the U.S. government has publicly linked in court documents to hacking operations for the state. It appears i-Soon may have done subcontracting work with Chengdu 404.

In previous public materials, i-Soon has noted relationships with China's Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of State Security, and People's Liberation Army, among others. The company is publicly known for providing cybersecurity trainings around the country from its base in Shanghai.

But beyond what's publicly known, the details in the leak give internal insights into how an increasingly competitive marketplace for hacking operations within China functions. It's unclear if all the claims made in marketing materials included in the leak are true, such as the ability to break into devices manufactured by top U.S. companies like Apple and Microsoft. However, it's clear that the company is heavily invested in automating the ability to constantly monitor platforms like X and Facebook. Those platforms, unlike the popular WeChat, are not controlled by the Chinese government, making them popular with dissidents.

There are also details in the leak concerning internal pay scales and other bureaucratic details of contracts with the Chinese government. There is a note, or "ReadMe" document, included on the GitHub page where the leak is hosted, where the purported source of the leak claims to be dissatisfied with the company's policies. That could indicate the source being a disgruntled employee, though it's also possible the leak is the result of an intelligence operation or the work of a competitor.

While the contents of the leak are not entirely surprising, they're especially helpful to specialists and researchers, who continue to review the contents. In particular, individual documents can help researchers fact-check their assumptions about who was responsible for previously discovered breaches.

## **China revamps discipline inspection rules to ensure Xi Jinping's instructions are carried out**

22 February 2024, South China Morning Post

China's ruling Communist Party has revamped a set of rules to bolster its discipline inspections, making it a top priority to check whether cadres have fully implemented instructions from President Xi Jinping.

The party's Central Committee has released revised regulations on inspection work and issued a directive asking all regions and government agencies to strictly comply, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported on Wednesday.

According to Xinhua, the revisions were approved at a January 31 meeting of the party's 24-member Politburo and circulated within the party on February 8.

The revised regulations include a new clause that defines inspection work as the "political supervision" of party organs from the top down, according to the full text released by Xinhua.

A newly added paragraph at the beginning of the document states that the inspection work's "fundamental task is to resolutely safeguard the core status" of Xi, as well as his authority and leadership.

Another new section explains that the party's inspection team shall, as its top priority, check on the implementation of "major decisions and arrangements of the party's Central Committee, especially the implementation of General Secretary Xi Jinping's important speeches and important instructions".

The revisions also removed three articles detailing specific corruption and disciplinary issues to watch for, which had been a top priority in the previous version, and summarised them in a single paragraph that appears after the section about implementing Xi's instructions.

Xie Maosong, a senior researcher at the National Institute of Strategic Studies at Tsinghua University in Beijing, said the revisions made it clear that inspection work was now largely focused on how closely China's different regions and government departments were following and executing Xi's grand plan.

"Beijing has learned a lot in the inspection work of the past decade and clearly wants to make sure previous cases in which the local government ignored Xi's repeated instructions do not happen again," said Xie, who is also a senior fellow at the Taihe Institute, a Beijing think tank.

Discipline inspection, which involves sending teams of senior inspectors to screen local disciplinary problems, has been a powerful tool for the party under Xi's leadership since 2012.

The practice gives corruption busters access to various state and party organs and state-owned enterprises so they can proactively search for leads

on corruption. It has been credited by Beijing for uncovering many high-profile corruption cases.

The rules on discipline inspection were last revised in 2017.

"The focus has clearly been changed to checking on the political and work alignment of regions and government departments," Xie said, noting that the revisions added that a key principle of inspection work was to "focus on the party's central task and serve the big plan".

He said that meant that when Beijing issues new directions, its inspectors will make sure party and state organs recalibrate their work, leading them in the right direction.

The new code casts the inspection net wider. Under the revised rules, key state-owned enterprises, especially financial institutions, and state-run tertiary institutions will be targets for inspection, along with party committees in government agencies.

It also gives the inspectors much wider access to local government departments – including those for propaganda, security, auditing, finance, statistics and petitions – to support inspection work when necessary.

Tsinghua's Xie said this showed Beijing was determined to get accurate information and curb inflated official statistics.

"That is why the new code asked the inspectors to go directly to the ground for information, so they can spot misleading numbers from local governments and rectify them accordingly," he said.

The party made falsification of data a disciplinary violation in December, and last month Beijing sent stern warnings calling the practice "the biggest corruption in the statistical sphere".

## **China's would-be powerhouse Hunan wants officials to 'emancipate their minds'**

19 February 2024, South China Morning Post

Communist Party officials in Hunan province in central China have kicked off a campaign which recalls Beijing's reversal of the Maoist political and economic doctrines of the last century, in a move that analysts say will have limited political implications.

According to a notice made public on Sunday, provincial cadres at all levels are taking part in the campaign, which started in early February and will continue until the end of March.

The campaign's name – "large-scale discussions on emancipating the mind" – was a clear reference to the party's efforts to kick off much-needed market reforms after the death of leader Mao Zedong in 1976.

President Xi Jinping, who came to power in 2013, revived the slogan to call for effective local governance and it was also in evidence on Sunday in

the northeastern province of Heilongjiang, where top cadres used it in a pledge to drive growth.

Deng Xiaoping, who took over as leader in December 1978, made “emancipate the mind” his signature slogan as he paved the way for more than 40 years of reform and opening up.

Later Chinese leaders also used the slogan to urge the country to reflect on the lessons of Mao’s governance, especially during the Cultural Revolution – a decade of political and social upheaval that almost paralysed the national economy, and only ended after his death.

The latest “emancipating the mind” campaign is fundamentally different from the 1970s and 1980s, according to Chen Daoyin, a political commentator and former professor at Shanghai University of Political Science and Law.

“The biggest difference is their political orientations: the emancipation of the mind movement by Deng Xiaoping was to break the 10-year ideological imprisonment of the Cultural Revolution,” Chen said.

“Now in Hunan, it basically aims to strengthen Xi’s Thought and better serve Xi’s goals.”

Chen noted that the Hunan campaign adopted only the first part of Deng’s three-part proposition – “emancipate the mind, seek truth from facts, unite and look forward”.

As such, the campaign would not make a major difference because all discussions were confined within existing policy priorities, without seeking more fundamental breakthroughs, he said.

The Hunan notice placed strong emphasis on effectively reviving the economy, as well as paying homage to Xi’s teachings.

The discussions, taking place throughout the province, address problems with local cadres, including “lack of confidence in development” and “insufficient spirit of responsibility”.

At the same time, the campaign aimed to fundamentally reverse the “addiction” that leads to many officials simply relying on GDP growth for evaluations, the notice said.

Through the discussions, problems such as raising loans regardless of risks, investing blindly on projects, cheating on data, and “lying flat” to evade making mistakes should be resolved, it said.

Xie Maosong, a senior researcher at the National Institute of Strategic Studies at Tsinghua University, said Hunan’s campaign was “a tactical attempt” to re-energise China’s massive bureaucracy.

Many officials have been accused of “lying flat” – the phenomenon commonly known in the West as “goblin mode”, which describes workers who put in just enough effort to keep their jobs and no more.

“After a decade of anti-corruption and disciplinary campaigns, many officials are in risk-aversion mode,” Xie said.

They were unwilling to take responsibility, push development initiatives or incentivise private sector growth “as they are afraid of making mistakes or facing supervision checks”.

“It seems that Hunan is trying to trailblaze a way to give its officials more freedom to act and more tolerance of their probable mistakes,” he said.

China’s economy is facing multiple challenges, including a prolonged property market downturn, a local government debt crisis, and weak demand, as well as heightened geopolitical tensions.

The International Monetary Fund expects the Chinese economy to grow by 4.6 per cent this year, before slowing to 4 per cent in 2025, despite last year’s higher than expected growth of 5.2 per cent.

Hunan – which has ambitions to become the most “important advanced manufacturing highlands of the country” – achieved 5 trillion yuan (US\$702 billion) in economic volume last year at a GDP growth rate of 4.6 per cent.

The province – which has set a growth target of around 6 per cent for this year – is at a “critical stage of comprehensively deepening reform and opening up and promoting high-quality development”, according to the notice.

“More than at any time in history, Hunan needs to break the ice with ideas to lead reform breakthroughs.”

According to the notice, discussions should abide by the guidance of the party’s Central Committee and Xi, as general secretary, and focus on removing obstacles that hinder development, as well as other issues to “prevent and resolve various major risks”.

The notice also called on the province’s cadres to create a better business environment for private enterprises, and to help them solve funding and payment delays, as well as other difficulties.

The notice said the campaign was taking in all levels of the party, starting with the grass-roots members and spreading to county, city and provincial levels of the party’s organs, as well as companies and schools.

At the upper echelons, Hunan’s senior provincial officials would hold discussion panels and make inspection tours, it said.

Alfred Wu, an associate professor with the National University of Singapore’s Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, said that under Deng the slogan “emancipate the mind” was about relaxing socialist thought and adopting international norms.

But now, he said, it meant that officials would try every possible avenue to deliver the high-quality growth Xi wanted.

According to Wu, the specific mention of inflated growth numbers and a “lying flat” attitude among officials in the announcement could be a signal from Hunan party boss Shen Xiaoming.

Wu said Shen could be signalling that he had the political will to address these stumbling blocks, but also that he wanted the province's officials to come up with workable ideas.

### **Chinese firm behind local 'news' websites spreading Beijing propaganda in 30 countries**

18 February 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Feb18'24) – China appears to have co-opted, through the agency of a Beijing public relations firm, more than 100 websites in 30 countries in Europe, Asia and Latin America to push its propaganda information at local levels. The outlets are seen to be disguised as local news outlets, but push unmitigated Chinese Party-state propaganda, suggests Reuters Feb 8, citing Toronto-based digital watchdog Citizen Lab Feb 7.

The propaganda material is interspersed with news aggregated from local news outlets and Chinese state media, the watchdog's research report was stated to show.

"While the campaign's websites enjoyed negligible exposure to date, there is a heightened risk of inadvertent amplification by the local media and target audiences, as a result of the quick multiplication of these websites and their adaptiveness to local languages and content," researcher Alberto Fittarelli has said in the report.

The sites' contents were stated to sway between conspiracy theories, often about the United States or its allies – such as a piece blaming American scientists for "leaking" Covid-19 – to articles attacking Beijing's critics.

Citizen Lab has said the campaign began in mid-2020 and traced the network to public relations firm Shenzhen Haimaiyunxiang Media Co., Ltd., also known as Haimai.

One of the websites in the campaign was stated to be Roma Journal, "which looks every bit like a local Italian news outlet: headlines discuss the Italian prime minister's political prospects, a hot air balloon festival in a northern province and a book launch.

"But a 'press releases' button at a corner of its homepage leads to a range of Chinese state media articles on topics such as China's contribution to the global economic recovery and its push towards technological innovation."

What is more, much of the content on the sites Citizen Lab found was seen to be sourced from a press releases service called Times Newswire, which analysts at cybersecurity firm Mandiant last year found to be at the centre of a separate Chinese influence operation that targeted US audiences.

The report cited experts tracking such operations as saying while online influence campaigns are increasingly common as powerful people and

governments around the world seek to manipulate public opinion, China remains one of the biggest sources of such drives alongside Russia and Iran.

Notably, Chinese influence operations have increased and expanded well beyond Asia, social media giant Meta said in a report in Nov 2023, calling it "the most notable change in the threat landscape" since 2020.

The report said Citizen Lab dug deeper into the network it found after a series of such websites popped up in South Korea and Italy.

It said that South Korea's National Cyber Security Center (NCSC) – part of the country's national intelligence agency – exposed 18 of the sites in a report in Nov 2023, also linking the operation to Haimai.

### **State education leaders urged to investigate whether CCP is infiltrating K-12 schools**

10 February 2024, ABC News

WASHINGTON (CITC) – A parents' rights group is pressing more than 30 state education leaders to investigate whether the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is attempting to infiltrate their schools.

The letter penned Thursday by Parents Defending Education (PDE) targets 34 state superintendents. Each of the 34 states were found to have school district contracts linked to the CCP, according to PDE. The letter follows a recent House hearing on the CCP's "cyber threat" to national security, during which Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi, D-Ill., said "CCP hackers" were able to access an electric grid in Texas to install malware. PDE is now warning officials that the "infiltration of American infrastructure and institutions" extends to public education.

That should frighten people," Alex Nester, an investigative fellow for PDE, told Crisis in the Classroom (CITC).

PDE determined that 143 U.S. schools have "fostered relationships" with the CCP and affiliated entities. Most notably, Thomas Jefferson High School in Virginia was discovered to have received more than \$1 million from such entities after agreeing to help a Beijing high school adopt its premier STEM research. "They took that back to China and opened a string of schools that are called the Thomas Schools that are based off our model," Nester told CITC. "It's like they don't even need to steal our IP anymore, they don't even need to do this under the table, we're freely handing an adversarial foreign nation the blueprints."

Thomas Jefferson was later instructed by Virginia's education department to sever all ties with CCP-connected donors.

Nester says PDE is now choosing to alert state officials because most tend to assume national



security is the responsibility of the federal government.

And it certainly is, but there are definitely steps that local leaders, including state superintendents, can take," she told CITC. "Do an investigation, look through emails, look at your servers, do checks for malware, for viruses, anything that could have been embedded from an adversarial foreign nation."

In its letter, PDE notes that the CCP's interest in American education is "not for the benefit of the American children," but "part of the communist regime's long-term strategy to soften American and global sentiments toward its own political goals."

### **BASF to speed up exit from Xinjiang ventures after Uyghur abuse reports**

10 February 2024, Hong Kong Free Press

German chemicals giant BASF said Friday it would accelerate its exit from two joint ventures in China's Xinjiang region after allegations that its local partner violated the rights of the Uyghur minority.

Staff from Markor, with which BASF was working in the region, were alleged to have been involved in rights abuses of the members of the mostly Muslim group, broadcaster ZDF and news outlet Der Spiegel reported last week.

BASF had already announced at the end of last year plans to exit the joint ventures, which manufacture the chemical butanediol, due to commercial and environmental concerns.

But it said in a statement that it would speed up its exit following recent reports that "contain serious allegations that indicate activities inconsistent with BASF's values".

"BASF will accelerate the ongoing process to divest its shares in the two joint ventures in Korla" a town in the northwestern region, it said.

BASF said it had no indication that employees of the joint ventures were involved in rights violations, only staff of its local partner.

According to last week's reports, Markor staff had taken part in visits to homes of Uyghur families in order to spy on them.

Reports about the visits were sent to Chinese authorities in 2018 and 2019, which led to the incarceration of many Uyghurs, they said.

BASF said that the situation in Xinjiang had always been part of its assessment when looking at the joint ventures, but that regular audits had not found any evidence of human rights violations.

Rights groups have long accused Beijing of a widespread crackdown on minorities in Xinjiang, including forced labour and detention camps.

Beijing denies allegations of abuse and insists its actions in Xinjiang have helped to combat extremism and enhance development.

BASF has been ramping up its presence in China in recent years, and is building a 10-billion-euro (\$10.8-billion) chemical complex in the southern province of Guangdong.

It has fiercely defended its investments there, with chief executive Martin Brudermueller in 2022 warning against "China-bashing" over Germany's business ties to the world's number two economy.

Xinjiang is home to numerous factories that supply multinational companies, including big-name Western brands.

Another German company, Volkswagen, faced accusations of using forced labour at its factory in Xinjiang. But the automaker said in December that an audit it had commissioned found no evidence.

### **China's Political Power List Hints at Fate of Disappeared Official**

09 February 2024, NewsWeek

China's former Defense Minister Wei Fenghe was absent from a prominent list of retired Chinese political figures, fueling speculation about his fate.

Wei was missing from an official list of prominent retired officials published by the Chinese Communist Party that acknowledges the central figures of the Chinese political system. State broadcaster China Central Television broadcasted the list as part of Lunar New Year greetings.

Wei's predecessors, Chang Wanquan, Liang Guanglie, Cao Gangchuan, and Chi Haotian, were present on the list published on Wednesday, as first reported on Thursday by Hong Kong newspaper South China Morning Post. Newsweek independently confirmed that Wei Fenghe didn't appear on the list of prominent retired Chinese political figures.

In recent months, several leading military leaders from the People's Liberation Army's Rocket Force have also been replaced in recent months without explanation. Experts believe there is an extensive anti-corruption-related investigation currently underway in China's military and diplomatic circles, Newsweek previously reported.

Wei served as the defense minister of China from March 2018 until January 2023, replaced by former Defense Minister Li Shangfu. Wei officially retired that month.

He also previously served as the commander of Xi's elite Rocket Force, in charge of Beijing's nuclear arsenal, which has been mired in corruption allegations in recent months.

The scrutiny of Wei's absence from the list comes as China's leading military and diplomatic figures,

including the former Foreign Minister Qin Gang and Foreign Defense Minister Li Shangfu, have disappeared from public view without explanation.

Qin and Li were officially removed from the State Council, China's chief administrative authority, according to state broadcaster CCTV, in October 2023. No official explanations were provided for their dismissal.

Newsweek reached out to the Chinese embassy in Washington, D.C., via email for comment on Wei's absence from the list.

Earlier in the year, Chinese leader Xi Jinping called the problem of corruption within the Chinese political system an ongoing effort.

"After 10 years of unrelenting and powerful anti-corruption efforts in the new era, we have achieved an overwhelming victory and have comprehensively consolidated our achievements. However, the situation remains dire and complex," Xi told the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection members, the Communist Party's highest supervisory body.

Ou Si-fu, a research fellow and division director at the Institute for National Defense and Security Research, Taiwan's top military think tank, told Newsweek in a recent interview that corruption in the People's Liberation Army remains rampant.

"During the last two decades, Beijing has poured many budgets and resources into defense modernization. Owing to a shortage of transparency, many officials have cut a big slice of this defense fat for private purposes," Ou said.

### **China's increasing political influence in the south Pacific has sparked an international response**

09 February 2024, The Conversation

Taiwan elected Lai Ching-te, also known as William Lai, to be its next president on January 13. His election marks the continuation of a government that promotes an independent Taiwan.

Just two days later, the Pacific nation of Nauru severed ties with Taiwan and transferred its diplomatic allegiance to Beijing.

More recently, on January 27, Tuvalu's pro-Taiwan prime minister, Kausea Natano, lost his seat in the nation's general election. Natano's finance minister, Seve Paeniu, who is aiming for the prime ministership himself, was returned to his seat. In his campaign, Paeniu pledged to review Tuvalu's relationships with China and Taiwan.

These examples indicate China's growing influence in the south Pacific, a region that the world's major powers are competing for influence over. But why is the region significant? And how are these major powers exerting their influence there?

Preventing recognition of Taiwan

Taiwan has been governed independently since 1949. But Beijing believes it should be reunited with the rest of China. It is not an option for states to diplomatically recognise both China and Taiwan – China forces them to choose.

For decades, the Chinese government has used a combination of carrots and sticks to pressure such states into transferring diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China.

China has, for example, imposed significant political, diplomatic and economic sanctions on countries that continue to formally recognise Taiwan. In 2022, China curbed imports from Lithuania to punish the country for allowing Taiwan to open a de facto embassy in the country.

But China also offers states – and their governing elites – economic and political incentives for withdrawing diplomatic recognition of Taiwan. It has, in the past, used its influence in the UN and other international organisations to block assistance or elect specific people to international positions.

Nauru's change of diplomatic position, and the political debate unfolding in Tuvalu, should be understood as part of China's longstanding effort to prevent and reduce recognition of Taiwan as a sovereign state.

But they are a significant step forward for China. Nauru has a leading position in the Pacific Islands Forum – the main political decision-making body for the region – so the country's change of stance could lead to wider formal diplomatic changes in the south Pacific.

China, of course, has legitimate economic and political interests in the south Pacific too. It is a vital export market for natural resources from Pacific island states and is a key source of incoming tourism. According to Chinese statistics, total trade volume between China and Pacific island states grew from US\$153 million (£121 million) to US\$5.3 billion (£4.2 billion) between 1992 and 2021.

Competing for influence

Nauru's decision is another diplomatic setback for Taiwan, which is now formally recognised by just 11 countries. However, this is not in itself a serious concern for the US, Australia and their allies.

They all formally recognise China, while at the same time maintaining close, informal links with Taiwan. Their focus is on trying to limit the depth of Chinese political and economic influence over Pacific island states and elsewhere in the Asia-Pacific region. The US is concerned that growing Chinese political influence may ultimately result in it enjoying significant military presence in the region.

The Pacific region encompasses the US state of Hawaii, multiple US territories, and is also home to several crucial US military bases. So, the US has

made an effort to enhance its diplomatic relations in the region by providing financial support for initiatives around climate change adaption, sustainable fishing and economic growth.

However, increased tension between China and the west over the past decade has made it increasingly challenging to reign in Chinese influence. China has been asserting its primacy in and around Taiwan in the South China Sea, and has increasingly exerted military pressure.

China's struggle for influence in the region now also includes taking opportunities to challenge previously undisputed western security dominance in the south Pacific. In 2022, China put forward a proposal for a diplomatic, economic and security agreement with the region. The agreement was, however, later abandoned due to resistance from some Pacific island nations at the urging of the US and Australia.

US strategy in the south Pacific

When president, Donald Trump launched a number of deals with Pacific islands including Nauru, Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, Palau and Micronesia. However, Trump's strategy for a "free and open Indo-Pacific" had limited success. This was not only due to his confrontational posture towards China, but also to his threatening and protectionist "America first" rhetoric.

Joe Biden's comparatively measured diplomacy has seen more success. In 2022, the Biden administration announced its "Pacific partnership strategy".

The initiative included a commitment of US\$810 million in development aid across the Pacific island region. And in May 2023, the US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, stated that he would work with Congress to provide over US\$7.2 billion to support the region.

Since then, the US has recognised the Cook Islands and Niue as independent, sovereign nations, increased its diplomatic footprint in the region and has committed strongly to work with the Pacific Islands Forum to promote a "democratic, resilient and prosperous Pacific islands region".

The shift of diplomatic ties from Taiwan to China does not mean that Pacific island nations want to reduce their ties with the west. But the US, Australia and their allies will need to invest a lot more in diplomatic, economic and security assistance if they want to counter China's growing influence there.

### **Chinese security agencies tell students studying abroad to beware risk from foreign spies**

07 February 2024, South China Morning Post

China's top spy agency has warned Chinese students to be alert to the risk from foreign spies when studying abroad.

The warning from the Ministry of State Security comes amid a sweeping national security drive.

In a post on the ministry's WeChat account it told the story of a "real case" involving a Chinese graduate who, it claimed, had secured a place from a "top ranking" foreign university despite failing the Chinese college entrance exam in 2006.

It said the student, identified only by the surname Zhang, had been "severely punished" for his role in leaking Chinese scientific research after graduating.

The ministry did not say where Zhang had studied, but it said he had been responsible for liaising with Chinese students abroad and had done well in his studies, which brought him to the attention of a senior figure in the university.

This individual was then said to have put Zhang in touch with two people who turned out to be foreign spies and convinced him to provide intelligence on Chinese international students and other "sensitive information" in return for money.

The account said these spies had secured Zhang a job in a Chinese research institution in China, even though he did not have the correct credentials, and told him to appear to be helpful to his colleagues to collect information.

The State Security Ministry said Zhang had "squandered his promising future" by giving in to the foreign intelligence agency's "emotional manipulation and monetary temptation".

It warned the public to be alert to national security risks and "uncover the hidden motives behind various seemingly innocent interactions" while studying and travelling abroad.

In recent months the Chinese authorities have heightened their focus on risks to national security, with the state security ministry becoming more active on social media to warn of the threat from foreign spies.

Last year, State Security Minister Chen Yixin said the country must "proactively defend" against foreign spies to strengthen national security and the Communist Party's leadership.

A new counter-espionage law came into effect in July 2023, which expanded both the definition of spying and the investigative powers of national security agencies.

Although China and the United States recently pledged to boost academic exchanges as part of a wider effort to improve relations, Chinese students in America are still at risk of being caught up in the wider tensions between the countries.

Recently China accused the US authorities of harassing Chinese students on arrival at Washington's Dulles airport, subjecting them to

lengthy questioning and trying to turn them into spies.

According to China's education ministry, more than 8 million students have studied abroad in the period between 1978 and the end of 2021, with the US, Britain and Singapore as the most popular destinations.

### **China expands visa exemption policy to attract more foreigners**

04 February 2024, RFA

China has expanded its visa-free entry policy for tourists and business travelers from more than a dozen European and Asian countries, opening up its borders further in recent months as it struggles to shore up foreign interests to help arrest an economic slowdown.

In January, the Chinese government announced that it would provide unilateral visa exemption for Ireland and Switzerland and introduce a mutual visa exemption for Singapore for 30 days. Additionally, from March 1, China and Thailand will also allow permanent visa exemption for citizens of both sides. In the past six months, Beijing has implemented a visa-free policy to tourists from Brunei, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Malaysia.

While the number of foreign tourist arrivals has jumped nearly seven times to 35.5 million last year from 4.5 million in 2022, it's still a far cry from the 98 million recorded in pre-pandemic 2019, according to China's National Immigration Administration.

But foreign nationals would be hesitant to travel to China for several factors: the high cost of air tickets, the inconveniences upon arrival without a Chinese mobile phone number – which is needed for mobile payment apps as many businesses and restaurants do not take cash – as well as being closely surveilled and controlled by the authorities.

"I recently returned to China and the biggest inconvenience was that overseas credit cards are difficult to use in China. China's WeChat Pay or Alipay require a Chinese domestic WeChat account to install," an Australian citizen surnamed Yang lamented to Radio Free Asia.

"Moreover, without a mobile phone number in China, I can't even hail a taxi. I have to ask someone to hail one for me every time."

Yang said another issue was the close surveillance he endured.

After registering for accommodation with the neighborhood police station – a requisite – the neighborhood committee cadres would come to verify, and also inform him they knew of his comings and goings from the residence.

"It was nothing more than a warning to me: the Public Security Bureau is closely monitoring my every move and deliberately putting pressure on me."

Not only was Yang under close surveillance, but his work partners were not spared either.

"I used my Australian mobile phone in China to make a call to a boss in Zhejiang to discuss possible cooperation. A few hours after the call, the lady was summoned to the police station. The police told her that it was an overseas fraud call and made a record. She was so scared that she never dared to answer my call again."

Yang added he was scarred from the experience and would try to avoid going to China, which he described as "a hysterical country."

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A CCTV security surveillance camera overlooks a street as people walk past in Beijing, China. (Thomas Peter/Reuters)

Costly airfares and politics

A woman who works in the United States and only gave her name as Angela said the air ticket price from the U.S. to China remains high, although a slight decline allowed her to return last month.

Angela said that compared to her experience three years ago, the Chinese government has stepped up its controls on the people.

"One thing that makes it very inconvenient is: everywhere I go, I am being checked for my identity – be it to get on the high-speed rail, book a ticket for a tourist attraction, and even to register a shared bike account. The purpose of this is probably to collect and control information and capture everyone's whereabouts, but it is very annoying."

Separately, a travel agent in the U.S. who only gave her surname Cai noted that middle-aged and elderly overseas Chinese are reluctant to travel to China because of the political environment.

"It's not that we don't do business in the Chinese market – now is not the right time, whether it is political or other factors."

Beijing is trying to rebuild its international image and trust with the international community, and the visa-free policy was one of the measures to improve relations with foreign countries, said Riley Walters, a

senior researcher on international economics at the Hudson Institute, a Washington-based think tank.

"The slowdown in the economy and stock market has made China's demand for foreign investment high. Relaxing visa restrictions will also help the tourism industry," Walters said.

But how effective Beijing's visa-free policy will be in shoring up foreign investment remains to be seen.

Ralph Weber, a professor from the European Center for Global Studies at the University of Basel in Switzerland, believes the policy will have a limited effect on attracting business travelers.

"Investors are hesitant to go to China because they feel uneasy. They're worried about what's happening in China, like the espionage laws. So the impact created by the visa-free policy is not worth mentioning. I can't imagine a Swiss business traveler thinking, 'Wow, I now don't have to pay for a Chinese visa, so I'm going to invest in China.' That's not the logic," Weber said.

China's actual foreign direct investment fell 8% to 1.13 trillion yuan (US\$159 billion) last year, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

### China to strengthen propaganda control on discussion of ethnic minority issues

03 February 2024, Tibetan Review

Sounding the urgency to realise President Xi Jinping's vision of "forging a sense of community of the Chinese nation," a top policy office of the Communist Party of China (CPC) has pledged to tighten control of ethnic minority-related discussions on the internet and in print. The aim is to stamp out what the office calls ideological risks related to the minorities especially in Xinjiang and Tibet, reported the scmp.com Feb 2, citing the Communist Party's theoretical journal Qiushi on Feb 1.

The article, written under the byline of the Communist Party leadership group at the National Ethnic Affairs Commission, the office responsible for drafting and implementing laws regarding China's policies towards its ethnic minority groups, has called for greater oversight of public opinion and discussion around ethnic minority groups and related issues online.

The article is stated to refer to "risks" arising from ethnic minority communities and to call for what is called "the responsibility mechanism of ideology work" to be implemented.

"[We must] resolutely fend off the infiltration of the 'three forces'," referring to terrorism, separatism and religious extremism. "[We must] further regulate publication related to ethnic minority groups," the article is quoted as saying.

The commission has called for greater supervision, for officials to "promptly and appropriately" address



grievances involving issues related to ethnic minority groups, and to “absolutely uphold the bottom line of preventing regional and systemic risks in the ethnic regions”.

In addition to a call for greater control, the article is stated to endorse more resources being put into art – such as in publications, on stage and visual arts – which could help ethnic minority groups identify more deeply with Chinese culture.

“[We] should aim to make the internet the biggest contributor to strengthening the awareness of the community of the Chinese nation,” it is quoted as saying.

The remarks are seen to have come as Beijing stresses the need to realise President Xi’s vision of “forging a sense of community of the Chinese nation”, which advocates for greater integration of ethnic minority groups and putting the interests of the Chinese nation first.

The report notes that grievances relating to ethnic minority groups have long been a major source of tension in Chinese society, particularly in Xinjiang and Tibet.

While Beijing has largely tamped down the intensity of those tensions in recent years by tightening its grip on the regions’ security and culture policies, its measures have attracted massive criticisms for human rights abuses, the report said.

It bears noting that major issues highlighted in these criticisms have included re-education camps and forced labour incarceration of around a million mostly Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang and the forced enrolment of around a million Tibetan children in forced colonial schools designed to Sinicize them.

Given these foreign criticisms, the article in Qishui has said China’s external communication around its ethnic minority groups was not effective, claiming Beijing “has a valid point but not able to effectively communicate it”.

Without naming any countries, it has said this was because of some countries’ “hegemonic dominance”.

The article has noted that in recent times Beijing had stepped up efforts in the hope that its global communication would better align with its narrative.

The report says that one example of this is Beijing’s dramatically increased use since last year of “Xizang” rather than “Tibet” in its English articles in Chinese state media. It sees the term “Tibet” as being linked in international discussion to the region’s spiritual leader-in-exile, the Dalai Lama.

## January

### China’s anti-corruption watchdog says 110,000 Communist Party officials faced disciplinary action last year

30 January 2024, South China Morning Post

About 110,000 Chinese Communist Party officials faced disciplinary action last year as part of the ongoing drive to clean up the party’s act, according to the country’s top anti-corruption body.



Security personnel patrol near the Id Kah Mosque in Kashgar in western China's Xinjiang region. (file photo)

The figures published by the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) on Sunday represent a 13 per cent increase in the number of cases compared with the previous year.

There is little sign of Beijing easing up on its latest crackdown more than a year after the

party’s national congress in October 2022, when President Xi Jinping began an unprecedented third term as China’s paramount leader and filled most key positions with his loyalists.

Last year saw the commission launching corruption probes into a 45 senior officials, a record number, according to a tally by the Post.

Other signs suggest that more senior figures under also under investigation. Apart from last year’s shock removal of Qin Gang as foreign minister and Li Shangfu as defence minister after just months in their jobs, nine senior military officials were abruptly dismissed by China’s national legislative body, the National People’s Congress.

Despite previously hailing an “overwhelming victory” against corruption, Xi told the CCDI’s annual planning event earlier this month that the party must continue to fight graft and other problems with “tenacity, perseverance and precision” to transcend “the historical cycle of rise and fall”.

The CCDI said last year’s disciplinary cases covered breaches of the eight rules on official conduct that Xi laid down soon after taking over as head of the party in late 2012.

These rules, enforced by the CCDI, are intended to ensure a thrifty and responsible working style for officials and cover everything from a ban on

extravagant banquets and receptions to avoiding unnecessary meetings and red tape.

Of those punished, more than 41,000 officials fell foul of the watchdog for failing to carry out their duties properly by “failing to take responsibility” or “paying lip service” to their orders. The watchdog particularly highlighted failures to implement development or environmental protection policies – two of Xi’s main priorities.

A further 40,000 were punished for receiving expensive gifts, money or attending lavish meals and celebrations, while another 10,000

were reprimanded for issuing or receiving benefits without approval.

In publishing the figures, the commission also warned party officials that they must closely follow the disciplinary rules – especially in the build-up to Lunar New Year, which begins on February 10.

“[We will] strengthen warnings and deterrents, and educate and guide party members and cadres so they will celebrate the festival in a clean manner,” it said.

Beside disciplinary action, several provinces including Guangdong, Anhui, Henan, Zhejiang and Fujian have adopted a policy of naming and shaming officials who are slacking off from performing their duties in recent months.

Deng Yuwen, a former deputy editor of Study Times, the official newspaper of the Central Party School where cadres are trained, said Xi had not let up on the anti-corruption crackdown because the disciplinary apparatus was his most powerful tool for forging a clean and efficient team to steer the country ahead. “China’s party-state system does not allow any opposition parties that can keep the ruling party in check, and there is little media freedom too,” he said.

He said the “eight rules” discipline campaign began with a focus on curbing rampant extravagance among party officials, but it was now trying to ensure that policy priorities were implemented by turning the spotlight onto those who neglected their duties.

“Many officials switched to goblin mode [refusing to perform tasks they do not want to do] after the anti-corruption campaign as they think they can better survive the purge if they don’t do anything,” said Deng, who is now living in the United States. “But Xi is backing up his harsh corruption crackdown with a tough official conduct rectification campaign to ensure no one can slack off. All have to get up and march in his direction.”

## China ‘gamed’ UN human rights review, experts say

29 January 2024, RFA

A Chinese diplomat said the majority of the 428 recommendations it received were ‘constructive.’

A top Chinese diplomat said Beijing would “earnestly study” 428 recommendations for addressing human rights submitted by U.N. members, calling them “objective and balanced.”

But leading experts said China “gamed” the once-every-five-year “universal periodic review” to avoid scrutiny of its rights abuses. Chen Xu, China’s ambassador to the U.N. offices in Geneva, said following the adoption of the report that he was happy with the many recommendations by 141 countries, and that Beijing would release its positions on each of the suggestions next month.

“The report just adopted is, in general, objective and balanced, and has reflected the statements and the recommendations during the meeting,” Chen said in remarks to the council. “We believe the majority of the comments and recommendations are constructive.”

Tuesday’s three-hour review session descended into farce, with the unusually high number of participating countries meaning each only had 45 seconds to provide an assessment of a country that has been accused of possible crimes against humanity by a U.N. body.

Under this process, each of the 193 U.N. member states has their rights record reviewed on a rolling five-year basis.

A report by Reuters said Chinese diplomats had in the lead-up to the session lobbied countries to turn up with soft-ball assessments.

Gaming the system

The many contributions during Tuesday’s session worked to draw attention away from

some of the worst claims of rights abuse in China, including the treatment of Uyghurs, Tibetans and Hong Kongers.

While Western nations including the United States, Finland, Canada, Switzerland and the United Kingdom focussed on China’s treatment of Tibetans and Uyghurs in the country’s west during their 45 seconds, many countries offered praise for things like legal system reforms.

William Nee, the research and advocacy coordinator for the Washington-based Chinese Human Rights Defenders, said Beijing had used its diplomatic heft to water-down legitimate criticism of its human rights record by inundating the process with friendly voices. “This time, they tried to game the process,” Nee told Radio Free Asia. “There was an intense lobbying campaign for countries to ask

questions that essentially the Chinese government wrote in advance. There were a lot of softball questions and very easy questions."

Nee added that some countries' recommendations even appeared to poke fun at the global condemnation of the China's treatment of Tibetans and Uyghur citizens, the latter of whom the U.S. government says are the victim of an ongoing campaign of genocide.

Russia, he noted, said China should "improve gradually people's sense and ability of using standard spoken and written Chinese language in Xinjiang," referring to the far- western region where Uyghurs live.

Venezuela, meanwhile, said China must "firmly oppose the politicization" of human rights "under the pretext of issues related to Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Xizang," the latter of which is the new official romanized name for Tibet adopted by the Chinese government.

"If we look at the advanced questions submitted, it seems as though some of those questions could have been drafted by the Chinese government, to be quite blunt," said

Kai Müller, executive director and head of U.N. advocacy at the International Campaign for Tibet.

Nothing new

Sophie Richardson, the former China director at Human Rights Watch, told RFA that China openly flouted U.N. requirements to allow input from independent civil society groups into the self-report it submits.

"There's a long list of ways the Chinese government tried to game the process this time around, which has to start with the way it tried to game the process the last time around," Richardson said, pointing to China's boasting of its fidelity to recommendations made in 2018.

China that year accepted 284 of the 346 recommendations made by some 150 countries. But many of those, Richardson said, were the ones that were "vague or meaningless, or in fact encouraged the Chinese government to keep committing human rights violations."

"Beijing has held that up as real progress," she said, even though "five years later, we know it is committing atrocity crimes."

But China's "gaming" of the review process did not entirely wipe out opportunities for countries to speak out about their legitimate concerns.

There was a heightened focus, for example, on the plight of Tibetans and Uyghurs, with the number of recommendations related to Tibet increasing to 24 from 10 in 2018. Likewise, the number of countries mentioning Tibet in their floor speeches doubled from nine to 20.

"The dramatic increase in the number of U.N. member states who spoke out for Tibet ... speaks to the existential threat China's assimilationist policies pose to the Tibetan people," said Lhadon Tethong, the director of the Tibet Action Institute.

Campaign for Uyghurs executive director Rushan Abbas said the 30 countries who called out human rights abuses against

Uyghurs showed that the world was no longer being fooled by China's denials.

"This significant outcry, despite China's persistent lies and outright denial, stands as a testament to the commitment to human rights and justice," Abbas said. "It also sends a powerful message that the international community will not be swayed by false narratives in light of the mounting evidence exposing the crimes of the PRC."

China has until Feb. 9, 2024 to provide its initial written response to each of the recommendations, including whether it accepts them, and has until Feb. 16 to finalize its statements and response.

### **China's Communist Party vows to take on 'new and old challenges' in People's Daily article based on Xi Jinping's speech**

26 January 2024, South China Morning Post

The Communist Party of China has pledged to maintain a tight grip on discipline within its ranks as it faces "new and old challenges" to its rule.

An article in party mouthpiece the People's Daily said these problems would not go away any time soon, and resolving them would be "a long and arduous process".

"There is always the possibility that some old problems will rebound. If we relax even a little bit, they will resurface, while new problems are still emerging," the article said.

It ran under the byline "commentator of the People's Daily" – indicating direct endorsement from the senior party leadership.

It was also the fifth official piece elaborating on a speech delivered by President Xi Jinping to the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection – the party's top corruption watchdog and disciplinary body.

The "four dangers" will threaten the party's power for a long time, the article warned, referring to the official term covering lax

discipline, incompetence, popular disconnect and corruption.

This comes as graft fighters report a record number of internal investigations of senior officials, more than a year after the party's 20th national congress

where Xi began a third term as leader amid a show of even firmer support for him.

In his work report to the congress, Xi said the party had “waged a battle against corruption on a scale unprecedented in our history” and “achieved an overwhelming victory”.

But high-profile officials continue to fall. Apart from the shock removal of foreign minister Qin Gang and defence minister Li Shangfu, both the shortest-serving in their positions, the party also launched corruption probes into a record high 45 senior officials last year, according to a tally by the Post.

Anti-corruption officers have pointed to a wide range of misconduct for those probes, including corruption, snubbing instructions from the senior leadership, political disloyalty and irresponsible use of public funds.

Two weeks ago, Xi reiterated his call for the party to find ways to transcend “the historical cycle of rise and fall”.

Addressing hundreds of top discipline inspectors gathered for the CCDI’s annual meeting in Beijing on January 8, Xi emphasised the “strategic question” facing the party’s 98 million members.

“As the world’s largest Marxist ruling party, how can our party successfully break free from the historical cycle of rise and fall and ensure that it will never change its nature, convictions or character?” he was quoted as saying by state media.

Thursday’s article said the Chinese Communist Party must draw painful lessons from many other “large parties and parties with a long history” that had failed, but did not offer any specific examples.

“They were once full of vigour and vitality, but some have fallen apart or disappeared, some

have weakened and are approaching their end, while some are in deep trouble. These are very regrettable and thought provoking [lessons],” it said. Brian Wong, assistant professor of philosophy at the University of Hong Kong, cited Beijing’s tracking of communist powers around the world.

Beijing had kept a watchful eye on events such as the decline and fall of the Soviet Union, the changes in Eastern Europe, and the “falling apart” of revolutionary parties, such as in Cambodia, Wong said.

“On the other hand, Beijing also recognises that the socioeconomic inequalities giving rise to great instability in advanced liberal democracies point towards the need to redress these inequalities [in communist states] and [enforce] internal party discipline.” The People’s Daily article also said China’s unique situation made it impossible for it to follow the paths of other countries. “Unique problems can only be fundamentally solved by relying on the party’s internal strength”, it said.

China’s ruling party sees strict enforcement of discipline as a way to sustain its public appeal. Xi relaunched the Mao-style “self-revolution” slogan in 2015 with this in mind, and has since repeatedly emphasised this as the only way forward to keep the people’s support.

A People’s Daily report on the January 8 meeting hailed the “courage” in carrying out self-revolution as “the most distinctive character and greatest advantage” of the party.

The concept, often metaphorised as a “blade turned inward”, is a response to concerns about the impact of corruption on the party.

It mainly involves a rigorous system to oversee all officials, building a competent disciplinary supervision team, and a better combination of carrot and stick to steer officials away from temptation.

The People’s Daily article also warned of the “four major tests” faced by the party with regard to governance, reform and opening-up, the market economy and the external environment.

The latest data released by the CCDI on Thursday showed 610,000 cadres had been reprimanded last year, a 3 per cent increase over 2022, while 49 ministerial rank officials faced disciplinary action, compared with 53 the previous year.

A political researcher at Tsinghua University in Beijing said Xi’s speech to the CCDI and the People’s Daily commentary showed the anti-corruption drive would not be removed from the president’s priority list for “a very long period of time”.

“The ‘old problems’ [in the article] refer to the corruption that took place before ... Xi came to power, primarily caused by vibrant economic growth and more lax party discipline,” the Tsinghua researcher said, declining to be named as he was not authorised to speak to the media.

“The new problems can refer to those who fall prey to increased infiltration from the West, as China and the West are competing on many fronts, and those who refuse to implement Xi’s policy directions or engage in pointless formalities and bureaucracy while Xi wants to see results.”

### China tests new ethnic assimilation policy on Uyghurs

26 January 2024, RFA

The measure aims to further replace Uyghur culture with that of Han Chinese, experts say.

Northwest China’s Xinjiang region is the first area to implement a government policy promoting integration among ethnic groups to achieve President Xi Jinping’s goal of establishing a unified national identity, Chinese media reported.



The regulation calls for the creation of mixed housing, themed venues and cultural parks, and sports and cultural activities that highlight characteristics of Chinese culture and promote zhonghua minzu – a single Chinese nationality that transcends ethnic divisions.

The policy has raised concern among China watchers and scholars, who say its goal is to further erase the cultural identity of Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples and subsume them into the dominant Han Chinese culture.

The measure, known as the “Regulation for Promoting Interaction, Communication, and Integration Between Ethnic Groups,” went into effect on Jan. 1 in the Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, a nearly 270,000-square-kilometer (104,000-square-mile) multiethnic area that borders Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Russia, according to a Jan. 16 report by China’s People’s Daily.

A mix of Han Chinese, Kazakhs, Uyghurs, Kyrgyz and other ethnicities live there.

Ili is serving as a test for the policy before the Chinese government rolls it out in other parts of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, experts say.

‘Ethnic genocide’

The policy implemented in the prefecture’s capital Ghulja “aims to dismantle the Uyghur mentality, submerging them within the Chinese population and ultimately eradicating their existence,” said Ilshat Heseni Kokbore, vice chairman of the executive committee of the World Uyghur Congress.

“It serves as a continuation of ethnic genocide, systematically dismantling Uyghur culture through this approach,” he said. “I fear that similar measures will soon be applied in Kashgar, Aksu, Kucha, Korla and numerous other locations.”

Adrian Zenz, director of China Studies at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation in Washington, said the regulation aims to “formalize a policy of assimilation and population dilution” for national security reasons.

“Many of the outlined regulations are not entirely new, but they formalize a policy of assimilation and population dilution, which makes this new initiative very significant,” said Zenz who has spent years documenting China’s human rights abuses against Uyghurs and has written about Beijing’s measures to dilute the ethnic Uyghur population in Xinjiang.



Children play soccer in front of a gate with a mural depicting Uyghur musicians in Urumqi, capital of northwest China’s Xinjiang region, April 21, 2021, during a government organized trip for foreign journalists. (Mark Schiefelbein/AP)

Leo Maillet, a doctoral student in the Faculty of Oriental Studies at the University of Geneva, expressed concern that Uyghur historical neighborhoods, traditions and culture could disappear at an even faster rate. This policy “comes with not only symbolic, but also physical violence of replacing Uyghur spaces by Chinese spaces,” he said, as it implies that Chinese traditional architecture and cultural centers will replace Uyghur traditional teahouses, mosques and marketplaces – a destruction of both architectural forms and social forums.

“And in this sense, I think it does not only fit the definitions of genocide, but also the definitions of ecocide in the way that it is not only distracting Uyghurs as a group, but also the Uyghur region,” Maillet said.

The policy was approved by the Standing Committee of the People’s Congress of Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture on Aug. 25, 2023. It received approval from the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region on Nov. 23.

Niyaz Hashim, known as Niyazi Asim in Chinese, director of the Standing Committee of the People’s Congress of Ili Prefecture, told state-run People’s Daily that the regulation was a result of President Xi’s instructions on “consolidating the sense of community among the Chinese nation,” stemming from his several visits to Xinjiang since he was elected general secretary of the Communist Party in November 2012. “The regulation is primarily designed to create unity among the Han Chinese ethnicity and various ethnic groups,” he was quoted as saying.

Symbolic location

Ili prefecture’s capital Ghulja, called Yining in Chinese, has deep symbolic significance for Uyghurs as the site where the East Turkistan Republic was founded.



On Nov. 7, 1944, Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples rebelled against Chinese rule in Ghulja and declared independence as a separate republic five days later. The rebellion was crushed by the Chinese Communists, but Uyghurs still prefer to call their homeland East Turkistan.

Ilshat Hasan Kokbore said he believes that the integration regulation signals that Beijing's genocidal policy against Uyghurs and other Muslims has entered a new stage.

The Chinese government selected Ili prefecture given its role in expressing and preserving Uyghur nationalism, history, nationality, culture and religion, and now wants to eradicate Uyghur identity and aspirations for independence, he said.

"Instead, they seek to impose the zhonghua ideology," he told RFA. "The

ultimate goal of China is uniting not only the Uyghurs, but all ethnic groups, into a single nation."

To this end, local government authorities in Xinjiang already have doubled the Han Chinese population in Xinjiang, arbitrarily detained Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples, destroyed religious structures and historical records, and forced Uyghurs to speak Chinese.

The regulation in Ili prefecture took effect weeks before China's Universal Periodic Review – a comprehensive review of its human rights record – at the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland. During the review, Chinese government representatives on Jan. 22 defended Beijing's policies in Xinjiang, while the U.S. representative to the United Nations condemned its ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity there.

Despite China's denial of rights violations and assertions of normalization and development in Xinjiang, Western states continue to raise alarms about continuing repression, arbitrary detentions and enforced disappearances of Uyghurs and others.

### **China in overdrive to defend its UN-battered rights record ahead of review report**

25 January 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Jan25'24) – As the United Nations Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group at Geneva prepared to finalize on Jan 26 its recommendations on the basis of its Jan 23 hearing, China has put itself in an overdrive to defend its record. This followed news reports and reports by rights groups that despite its efforts to stymie discussions, China received scathing criticism for its record especially in Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong, with a record number of participants expressing serious concern on the situation in Tibet.

China claimed that more than 120 countries "spoke highly" of its "human rights progress". They "fully acknowledged China's effort and historic achievements in advancing and protecting human rights," said China's official Xinhua news agency Jan 24, citing the country's foreign ministry spokesperson that day.

The remark from spokesperson Wang Wenbin had come in response to a question from a representative of an official Chinese media group, the Hubei Media Group, during a regular press conference, who asked: "Representatives attending the meeting spoke highly of China's human rights development path and historic achievements in human rights cause. Can you share more details with us?"

Also, China's official chinadaily.com.cn Jan 25 published an open letter addressed to the President of the UN Human Rights Council, signed by a total of 73 so-called Chinese civil society organizations. The open letter criticized Tibetan and other groups that had contributed reports or made presentations during the review hearing. It accused them of having "spread false information and cause trouble on a large scale, with the purpose of attacking and smearing China."

The open letter especially named "so-called International Federation for Human Rights, International Campaign for Tibet (Xizang) and Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy". It accused them of "inciting other countries to attack and criticize China" on issues "such as colonial boarding school system", "repression of Tibetan Buddhism", "systematic attacks on the Tibetan language", "limit the rights to freedom of opinion and expression and freedom of peaceful association and assembly", "denial of the legal rights of detainees and prisoners", and "torture and other forms of ill-treatment".

The open letter maintained that the success of the reports of these groups at the review "will

significantly impact the credibility of the Human Rights Council, seriously disrupt the enthusiasm and expectations of normal participation by countries worldwide and global NGOs in the working mechanisms of the Human Rights Council, greatly harm the sentiments of the 1.4 billion people in China including Xizang, and severely misguide the global populace's accurate understanding and international public opinion of Xizang."

The open letter especially focused on the reports on the situation in "Xizang", the term China recently began to use in place of "Tibet" in furtherance of its policy-objective of Sinicizing the Tibetan identity of the Tibetan Plateau region.

Apparently seeking a set of recommendations that would praise rather than call for improvement in its human rights record, the letter said: "We strongly urge the Human Rights Council to remember the original intention and mission of establishing the universal periodic review mechanism, eliminate confusing noises, prevent lies and false accusations impacting the Council's consideration of significant human rights issues with genuine practical significance."

The open letter's long list of "civil society" signatories included a number of educational and research centres, especially from the Tibetan regions, as well as chambers of commerce and an assortment of other entities, all of them government-backed or government-run.

### **Open letter from Chinese Civil Society Organizations to the President of the United Nations Human Rights Council**

24 January 2024, China Daily

Dear President of the UN Human Rights Council,  
As a crucial organ of the United Nations General Assembly aimed at promoting and protecting human rights, the Human Rights Council plays a pivotal role in advancing global

human rights development. We sincerely admire this role and express high appreciation for your commitment to upholding guiding principles such as universality, impartiality, objectivity, non-selectivity, as well as constructive international dialogue and cooperation in your work.

We have noticed, over the past period, organizations including the so-called International Federation for Human Rights, International Campaign for Tibet(Xizang) and Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, have been using the platform of the Human Rights Council to spread false information and cause trouble on a large scale, with the purpose of attacking and smearing China. They fabricated lies such as "colonial boarding school system" "repression of Tibetan Buddhism" "systematic attacks on the Tibetan language" "limit the rights to freedom of opinion and expression and freedom of peaceful association and assembly" "denial of the legal rights of detainees and prisoners" "torture and other forms of ill-treatment", attempting to manipulate the Human Rights Council into making biased statements on the issue of Xizang, inciting other countries to attack and criticize China. These practices of distorting right and wrong completely ignore the history and reality of Xizang, disregarding the tremendous achievements in the development of human rights in Xizang, lacking basic objectivity and truthfulness. Once successful, it will significantly

impact the credibility of the Human Rights Council, seriously disrupt the enthusiasm and expectations of normal participation by countries worldwide and global NGOs in the working mechanisms of the Human Rights Council, greatly harm the sentiments of the

1.4 billion people in China including Xizang, and severely misguide the global populace's accurate understanding and international public opinion of Xizang. We strongly oppose

the maliciously fabricated and baseless accusations, object to the politicization, instrumentalization, and stigmatization of human rights in Xizang.

In today's Xizang, governments at all levels and people of all ethnicities are making efforts to promote political stability, social harmony, economic development, national unity, religious harmony, rule of law, and ecological well-being. They are working to ensure more comprehensive protection of basic human rights. The people of Xizang have firsthand experiences of these efforts, and many foreign media outlets that have visited Xizang have also provided extensive and objective coverage.

Rumors originate from schemers, thrive among the foolish, and cease with the wise. We strongly urge the Human Rights Council to remember the original intention and mission of establishing the universal periodic review mechanism, eliminate confusing noises, prevent lies and false accusations impacting the Council's consideration of significant human rights issues with genuine practical significance. We call for the respect of legitimate information provided by member states and the making of objective, rational, and fair judgments.

### **China's ethnic affairs officials urged to promote integration of minority groups**

24 January 2024, South China Morning Post

China's ethnic affairs officials have been asked to boost efforts to promote the integration of the country's ethnic minority groups in the new year.

The Tuesday meeting brought together senior ethnic affairs policy directors from around the country and outlined goals for China's ethnic affairs policies.

Beijing has stressed the need to enforce President Xi Jinping's vision of "forging a sense of community of the Chinese nation", which calls for greater integration of ethnic minority groups.

The meeting noted that efforts should be made to "build a system of historical materials, a system of discourse and a system of theories on the community of the Chinese nation" and to "scientifically reveal

the reasons, theories and philosophies of the formation and development of the Chinese nation”.

It called for efforts to launch cultural products and exhibits that “reflect the commonality of the Chinese nation” to “fully demonstrate Chinese cultural heritage”.

It also outlined the goal of addressing risks and “hidden dangers” in the field of ethnic affairs and safeguarding ethnic unity and stability.

The meeting noted that ethnic affairs offices across China should “have a sense of responsibility and urgency” and “thoroughly implement” the latest decisions by Communist Party leaders on ethnic affairs. Ethnic grievances were once a major source of tension in Chinese society, especially in Tibet and Xinjiang. Beijing has largely brought down the intensity of those tensions in recent years, but has been widely criticised for the security and cultural policies that were used during the process.

At a Politburo study session in October, President Xi Jinping noted the need to promote the party’s work in guiding ethnic minority groups. He emphasised the importance of educating ethnic minority groups about party history, theories and policies and to further integrate them into the Chinese nation.

“Efforts should be made to let people cultivate awareness that people from all ethnicities are in the same community, where they share weal and woe and stick together through thick and thin,” he was quoted as saying at the time by state news agency Xinhua.

In Tuesday’s meeting, Pan Yue, party chief of the National Ethnic Affairs Commission, said efforts should be made “to open up a brand new situation of high-quality development of the party’s work on ethnic affairs in the new era”.

The commission is responsible for drafting laws regarding China’s policies towards its ethnic minority groups as well as implementing those laws and regulations.

Pan is also a deputy head of the United Front Work Department, the body responsible for liaising with non-party groups, overseeing the country’s ethnic and religious issues and overseas Chinese affairs.

The Tuesday meeting also called for efforts to make economic development “a process of forging a sense of community of the Chinese nation”.

It also emphasised “strengthening the party’s centralised and unified leadership on ethnic affairs” to promote “strong synergy for the party’s work on ethnic affairs in the new era”.

## Western countries use UN-backed review to press China on its treatment of activists and minorities

23 January 2024, ABC27

GENEVA (AP) — Western countries used a regular U.N.-backed review of China’s human rights record Tuesday to press Beijing to do more to allow freedom of expression, protect the rights of ethnic minorities and to repeal a national security law in Hong Kong that troubles independent activists.

China’s ambassador in Geneva, Chen Xu, led a delegation from some 20 Chinese ministries for the “universal periodic review” conducted under the U.N. Human Rights Council. He stressed China’s progress in poverty eradication, said citizens engage in “democratic elections” and gave assurance

that freedom of religious belief is safeguarded.

“China upholds respect for and protection of human rights as a task of importance in state governance,” Chen said through an interpreter. “We have embarked on a path of human rights development that is in keeping with the trend of the times and appropriate to China’s national conditions and so-called historic achievements in this process.”

“We uphold the people-centered philosophy and strive to deliver a better life for all the people,” he said.

An extraordinarily high number of more than 160 countries — some critics of Beijing, some allies — registered to take part in the discussion. That meant each country had a maximum of 45 seconds to speak, forcing some ambassadors into what at times felt like a speed-reading exercise.

China’s delegation had a total of 70 minutes to make its case.

The review process, which encourages constructive recommendations over sharp criticism, nevertheless gave way to firm, if not scathing, advice to China from some leading Western countries, while some of China’s friends rallied to its defense.

Ambassador Leslie Norton of Canada urged China to end “enforced disappearances targeting human rights defenders, ethnic minorities and Falun Gong practitioners.” Falun Gong is a spiritual movement.

Czech Ambassador Vaclav Balek said China needed to stop “the criminalization of religious and peaceful civil expression” and “cross-border kidnappings and intimidating Chinese citizens living abroad.” Slovenian Ambassador Anita Pipan recommended that China “establish a moratorium on the death penalty.”

U.K. Ambassador Simon Manley called for a halt to the prosecution of Jimmy Lai, a former Hong Kong publisher who is on trial for alleged national security violations, and an

end to the forced repatriation of North Koreans who fled into China.

Kozo Honsei, Japan's deputy permanent representative in Geneva, called for better protection of the rights of minorities in Tibet and northwestern China's Xinjiang region. U.S. Ambassador Michele Taylor presented a list of concerns, concluding with, "We condemn the ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang and transnational repression to silence individuals abroad." Some independent organizations and the United States have accused China of genocide against minority Muslim Uighurs in Xinjiang, but no U.N. bodies have affirmed that. China lashed out at a 2022 report by the U.N.'s then-human rights chief citing possible crimes against humanity committed in the region.

The hearing offered a wide-ranging look at the human rights situation in China. Bolivia's envoy commended China's efforts to reduce deforestation, Burundi's representative urged China to improve access to health care in central regions and to better housing in Hong Kong and Macao, and Iran praised China's "national action plan for human rights."

First secretary Ilia Barmin of Russia's diplomatic mission advised China "to consistently improve the understanding and capacity of citizens to use standard spoken and written Chinese in Xinjiang."

Many developing-world countries praised China's policies on issues like poverty reduction and economic development policies while also offering suggestions to Beijing. Frankye Bronwen Levy, political affairs counselor for South Africa, called on China to strengthen an anti-domestic violence law passed eight years ago.

Hilary Power, the Geneva director of Human Rights Watch, called it "utterly shameful" that many countries opted to "use their platform at the U.N.'s top human rights body to praise Beijing's rights record, or stay silent in the face of well-documented grave crimes."

The "universal periodic review" puts all U.N. member states up for scrutiny – at times sharp – by other countries roughly every five years. The 3 1/2-hour discussion aims to offer constructive criticism and to yield a written report with recommendations. On Monday, countries examined Saudi Arabia's rights record.

At China's last review in 2018, the United States and other countries voiced concerns about its treatment of Muslim Uighurs in Xinjiang.

Groups that included Falun Gong practitioners, Uighurs and pro-Tibet activists held small demonstrations outside the U.N. Geneva compound during Tuesday's discussion. Inside, roughly 100

activists from nongovernmental groups attended the session or watched it from a "spillover room" in the vast complex, officials said.

Another advocacy group sent representatives to speak out against the forced repatriation from China of women from North Korea who fled the nation under leader Kim Jong Un's rule.

### China's human rights record criticised at UN as it faces rare scrutiny of policies

23 January 2024, The Guardian

The UK, the US and several other countries criticised China's human rights record on Tuesday as the country was subjected to rare scrutiny of its policies at the United Nations.

The UK called on China to "cease the persecution and arbitrary detention of Uyghurs and Tibetans and allow genuine freedom of religion or belief and cultural expression without fear of surveillance, torture, forced labour or sexual violence", while the US said China should "release all arbitrarily detained individuals" and cease the operation of "forcible assimilation policies including boarding schools in Tibet and Xinjiang".

The UK also recommended that the national security law in Hong Kong be repealed and specifically called for the prosecution of the pro-democracy activist Jimmy Lai to be dropped.

The recommendations were made as part of the UN Human Rights Council's universal periodic review, a mechanism by which the 193 UN member states review each others' human rights records every five years.

Each country at the UN headquarters in Geneva was given 45 seconds to make recommendations based on China's human rights records since 2018. In that period, huge protests against the tightening grip of the Chinese Communist party (CCP) in Hong Kong prompted the imposition of a national security law that critics say criminalises dissent, and there has been increased international scrutiny of the human rights situation in Xinjiang, as well as growing concern about transnational repression as activists in the US, the UK and other countries have been targeted by Chinese authorities or agents.

Responding to the recommendations, China's UN ambassador, Chen Xu, said concerns were caused by "misunderstanding or misinformation".

Chen said: "A few countries groundlessly accuse and smear China, based not on facts but on ideological bias and unfounded rumours and lies."

Tuesday's meeting was the first time China has been through the review process since the UN's report on Xinjiang was published in August 2022. The long-delayed report, which was written by the outgoing

human rights commissioner Michelle Bachelet, found China was committing “serious human rights violations” against Uyghurs in Xinjiang. Beijing described it as “disinformation”.

Several countries brought up China’s policies in Xinjiang during Tuesday’s meeting. The region, along with Tibet, has become a

byword for Beijing’s repressive human rights policies, particularly towards religious and ethnic minorities.

Human rights activists said that the fact that several countries mentioned Tibet in this year’s review bucked a recent trend of the region not being spoken about on the international stage.

Many smaller countries, or countries that are economically dependent on China, praised China’s rights record, in particular its success at lifting tens of millions of people out of poverty since 2018.

Ethiopia said it “applauds China for improving the criminal litigation system”, while Iran said: “We appreciate the economic programmes implemented by the government of China with the aim of promoting social, cultural and economic rights.”

Bhutan, a small, landlocked country between India and China that has recently been warming its relationship with Beijing, said: “We commend the significant progress in poverty alleviation and the achievement of the poverty reduction target of the 2030 agenda ahead of schedule.”

Speaking after the UN session, Sophie Richardson, a former China director for Human Rights Watch, said: “We increasingly hear Chinese government rhetoric in the recommendations made by governments, I think indicating a level of control over the process or influence over the process, and that’s problematic.”

Zumretay Arkin, the spokesperson for the World Uyghur Congress, criticised central Asian countries for failing to speak out against the abuse of Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other minorities in Xinjiang and said: “Muslim-majority countries have failed the Uyghurs.” China’s foreign ministry has been approached for comment.

### **Xi Jinping urges loyalty from China’s courts and law enforcers to ‘defuse’ social and financial risks**

15 January 2024, South China Morning Post

Chinese President Xi Jinping has urged the country’s judicial and law enforcement authorities to safeguard national security, calling on the courts, prosecutors and public security authorities to “defuse” social and economic risks, and for their continued loyalty to the Communist Party.

Xi’s instructions were delivered during a two-day national conference over the weekend for the

country’s zhengfa departments – the political and legal authorities responsible for domestic security.

The instructions were delivered at the virtual meeting by Chen Wenqing, the head of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission, a party body that oversees all security-related matters, according to state news agency Xinhua. Xi did not address the meeting in person.

In his instructions, Xi said judicial and law enforcement departments should “uphold the absolute leadership” of the party, and use their development to support and serve China’s modernisation.

He said they should provide strong security guarantees for “the comprehensive advancement of the construction of a strong nation and the great cause of national rejuvenation”.

Beijing has been placing growing significance on national security, especially over the past year. Xi has also repeated the significance of security issues at high-level meetings.

Xi urged the departments to “resolutely safeguard national security” and “prevent and resolve major security risks”.

He also called for efforts to “resolutely maintain social stability” and “correctly handle internal conflicts among the people”, noting that the “Fengqiao experience in the new era” should be upheld and developed.

The “Fengqiao experience” refers to a mechanism for mobilising the masses to settle

social conflicts at the grass-roots level without needing to involve higher legal bodies. The concept dates back to the times of Mao Zedong and has been promoted by Xi as an integral part of improving social governance. Xi also stressed the need to maintain order in the socialist market economy, and improve the business environment based on the rule of law.

He called for strengthening the party’s political construction of the judicial and law enforcement departments to “forge a loyal, clean and responsible iron army”.

Public Security Minister Wang Xiaohong presided over the meeting, which was also attended by Zhang Jun, president of the Supreme People’s Court, and Ying Yong, procurator-general of the Supreme People’s Procuratorate.

The meeting also focused on emerging economic crimes, and punishment for offenders who disrupt the country’s socialist market economy, such as by violating financial management rules, financial fraud, and infringing on intellectual property rights, according to state media reports.



Participants also discussed the need to step up a crackdown on telecoms fraud and cross-border gambling.

### **China Builds Spy Stations in Mountains on Disputed Border**

15 January 2024, Newsweek

China has been building new radar and electronic warfare facilities in the mountains along its long, disputed border with India, recent satellite imagery revealed.

An expansive radome—a structure housing radar and other signals intelligence equipment—is under construction at Lake Mansarovar in its southwestern Tibet region, according to stills captured this month.

The facility appeared to be equipped with dedicated solar arrays to ensure a sustained power supply, photographs from Sinergise's Sentinel Hub website showed. The service hosts images from the Sentinel-2 satellite of the European Union's Copernicus Earth observation program.

China and India have been locked in an escalated military standoff for nearly four years since a deadly border clash in the summer of 2020, itself a result of their decades-long unsettled Himalayan boundary. The buildup of military infrastructure is thought to be part of the People's Liberation Army's broader strategy of enhancing its intelligence gathering and electronic warfare capabilities, with both forces deployed in the mountainous regions throughout the year.

In a report last September, Kartik Bommakanti, a senior fellow with the Observer Research Foundation think tank in New Delhi, described the PLA's electronic warfare regiment as multifaceted, capable of electromagnetic attacks and jamming, long-distance electronic surveillance, as well as cyber operations and communications near the border.

The regiment had a similar setup to Russia's reconnaissance and fire system, suggesting that the Chinese military units would likely provide support to artillery and air defense brigades within the PLA Ground Force.

India, however, is far from idle. Air Chief Marshal Vivek Ram Chaudhari of the Indian Air Force has disclosed ambitious plans to bolster frontier defenses with locally produced military technology. They would include mountain radars that would extend India's vision deep into neighboring territory, he said last fall.

It is part of an India's air force modernization program that will also include the introduction of autonomous combat and reconnaissance drones in the coming years.

Other capabilities will include long-range surface-to-air missile systems, fighter jets, helicopters, and

ballistic missiles, Chaudhari said in his briefing, which emphasized New Delhi's desire to reduce its traditional reliance on foreign hardware in favor of enhancing its domestic defense industry.

Addressing concerns regarding the Chinese military buildup across the 2,300-mile Line of Actual Control, Chaudhari said India was constantly monitoring developments with intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. The Center for International and Strategic Studies, a think tank in Washington, D.C., reported on the construction of another listening post in an analysis published in November 2022.

The new radome, first captured by satellites in late 2021, sits atop a mountain peak north of Lake Mansarovar and houses high-frequency towers and at least one support building, with the groundwork for other structures already underway.

The CSIS report speculated that the radome could serve signals intelligence collection and satellite communications, supplementing another existing facility by Pangong Tso Lake on the disputed border, near the valley where Chinese and Indian soldiers fought in 2020.

### **China's patriotic education law a bad news for ethnic minority areas**

06 January 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Jan06'24) – China ushered in the year 2024 with the implementation of its Patriotic Education Law, which was adopted by its rubberstamp parliament in Oct 2023. The sweeping new law aims to get families, schools, companies, international institutions, and especially religious centres and ethnic minority areas, to deepen patriotism in the Communist Party of China (CPC)-state.

In particular, the law is seen as being directed at cracking down on people embracing ideas of liberal democracy and human rights. In the case of ethnic minority regions, it will give a new fillip to the ongoing assimilation drive being carried out in the name of Sinicization of religion, education, and so forth.

Under the new law, schools must include patriotic education in their curriculum, while companies must do so in their operations, such as business management and staff training. Parents should also “include love of the motherland in family education”, says the law.

Besides, measures will be taken to strengthen patriotism among residents in Hong Kong and Macau, beef up publicity and education on unifying China, and strengthening communication with overseas Chinese and Taiwan residents, noted the [straitstimes.com](https://www.straitstimes.com) Jan 4.

As in the case of schools, the new law requires religious groups and places of religious activities to conduct patriotic education, with the aim to strengthen national awareness among clergy and believers and guide religions to align with socialist society, noted the voanews.com Jan 5.

Late last month, on Christmas Eve, China's top political adviser, Wang Huning, delivered a stern message to Christian leaders, urging "strict" management of religious affairs and unwavering allegiance to the Communist Party's vision for Christianity, the report noted.

Outlining a clear vision for the future of Christianity in China, Wang has made it clear that religious leaders must "adhere to the direction of Sinicization of Christianity."

The Sinicization campaign applies, of course, to all religions and, all the more, to the ethnic minority areas where the focus will be on assimilation.

Besides, under the new law, insulting national symbols such as China's flag, emblem and the country's heroes and martyrs will attract punishment. Assistant Professor Dylan Loh at the Nanyang Technological University's Public Policy and Global Affairs programme has said the law came about as the CPC had "identified risks, particularly among some disenfranchised and politically apathetic youths".

"It is clearly unacceptable to depart from CPC hagiography and ideology, such as embracing Western ideas of democracy, freedom of speech.

"But now it is increasingly a problem for the party that people don't care and want to make as much money as possible. That, seen through the party's eyes, is also equally threatening for the legitimacy and longevity of the party," the straitstimes.com report quoted the China expert as saying.

The report noted that reactions to the new law have been mixed, with netizens leaving both supportive comments and questions on whether love for a country should be enforced.

Some netizens have also taken a dig at party officials with family members who have migrated to the United States or are currently studying there, and asked if that is patriotism. Some parents have expressed concern that students' learning will be affected by the changes.

A parent in Beijing, named only as Mrs Fan, has said she was concerned that any changes will "affect the development of critical thinking skills in schools"; that schools may not allow probing questions about Chinese history.

Even Mr Li Yong, 42, a project manager at a state-owned enterprise and who supports the new law, sees a downside in the changes, saying, "I guess if there's one thing I'm worried about, it is that the new

law will mean more homework for my daughter. She is busy enough at school."

### **'No one is safe': China purges record number of senior officials in 2023, with more 'tigers' likely to fall**

03 January 2024, South China Morning Post

China's battle against corruption set new records last year, with the ruling Communist Party's anti-corruption watchdog launching probes into 45 senior officials, according to a tally by the South China Morning Post.

The record number of investigations came five years after Chinese President Xi Jinping declared a "crushing victory" in his war on corruption, a sweeping crackdown that was launched in 2013. The ongoing probe signals that he has little interest in letting up on an effort to clean up China's officialdom while pushing authorities ever harder to implement his policies.

The number of senior-level investigations launched in 2023 jumped by 40 per cent compared with 2022, when the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) – China's top anti corruption agency – recorded

32 investigations into high-ranking officials, based on official announcements by the CCDI. Most of the subjects who were placed under investigation – sometimes referred to as "tigers" – belonged to a pool of officials known as "centrally managed cadres", meaning they held ranks at the deputy ministerial level or above. A smaller number of them held slightly lower ranks but occupied key positions in important sectors.

Unlike their subordinates who are managed and supervised by the local branches of the party's organisation and disciplinary agency, the group of senior officials are under direct management of the Communist Party's Central Organisation Department, its top personnel body. If any wrongdoing is found, they would face top level investigations from the CCDI.

Twenty-seven of the 45 senior cadres who had faced detention by the disciplinary watchdog were found to have retired from their positions when they faced investigation, according to further research.

Deng Yuwen, a former deputy editor at the Study Times, official newspaper of the Central Party School where cadres are trained, said the fact that most of the CCDI's investigations focused on retired officials signalled that the probes uncovered more misconduct before Xi took power, and that such retirements would not allow the individuals to avoid further investigation.

"Among the officials arrested in recent years, not many were caught for corruption in their current positions. Most of the problems occurred in the past few years, or even more than 10, 20 years ago. The CCDI is no longer following the previous unspoken rule that retired officials will be spared from investigation," he said.

"Now, no one is safe. As Xi digs deeper, he just finds more problems that accumulated over the past three decades due to rapid economic development and lax party discipline. And there is no sign of him stopping the digging."

A total of 294 senior officials have been sacked by the CCDI in the 11 years since the anti-corruption campaign was launched, according to the Post's count.

However, this number does not include most of the corruption probes in the Chinese military, which conducts its own investigations through the Discipline Inspection Commission. The agency, which operates within China's top military command – the Central Military Commission (CMC) – led by Xi, operates under extreme secrecy.

Beijing announces such cases very selectively, as it did for the investigations of former CMC deputy chairmen Xu Caihou and Guo Boxiong during Xi's first presidential term. They were the highest ranking officers in the People's Liberation Army to be targeted since the anti-corruption drive began.

Before 2023, the most senior officials investigated in a single year by the CCDI had been in 2014, when 38 individuals were targeted.

In 2020, 18 officials were placed under investigation. But since then, the annual tally has been rising: 25 high ranking officials were investigated in 2021, and 32 in 2022.

On Saturday, the National People's Congress, China's top legislative body, announced the dismissal of nine generals.

Five of the officers were either past or current top commanders in the PLA Rocket Force, a key component of the country's nuclear arsenal. They included Li Yuchao, who had commanded the rocket force from January last year until he was replaced in July, and his former deputy, Zhang Zhenzhong.

Beijing has not confirmed if any of the nine men were under investigation for alleged corruption, although some were reportedly being probed earlier last year. A political researcher at Peking University said there were many obvious signs that suggest that China's "tiger hunt" will expand even further in 2024.

"We have the removal of [former foreign minister] Qin Gang and [former defence minister] Li Shangfu. We also saw the National People's Congress just officially dismiss nine PLA generals, indicating a sweeping investigation in the military has got preliminary results," said the researcher, who

declined to be named due to the sensitivity of the matter.

No reasons have been provided for the dismissals of Qin and Li, who were both stripped of their positions last year.

"I suspect only a tiny amount of information regarding these cases will be released to the public, just for minimal formalities."

The CCDI will begin its third plenum from next Monday to lay out the work priorities in the new year for tens of millions of discipline inspectors across the country.

### **China's cadres urged to connect with the masses as part of education campaign, but some question its methods**

02 January 2024, South China Morning Post

After hearing complaints about local water quality in the southeastern city of Hefei, the provincial party boss visited the neighbourhood to take a sip from the tap – as reporters and camera crews looked on – to assure residents it was safe to drink.

The gesture by Anhui province's Communist Party secretary Han Jun was one of several covered by state-run media in recent months to show how party leaders have put into practice President Xi Jinping's teachings about connecting with the masses.

According to the Anhui Daily, Han's unannounced visit to the community was an example of how senior cadres had "put people's interests first" by visiting residents to address their grievances – an idea Xi first promoted 35 years ago when he became party chief of the city of Ningde in the southeastern province of Fujian.

To mark the anniversary of the practice, Xi's teachings have been promoted as part of an education campaign for cadres. In late December, hundreds of officials gathered in Beijing to attend a forum chaired by Politburo member Li Ganjie, with similar events held around the country.

However, while cadres are studying and imitating Xi's ideas on how to connect with the masses, which have been dubbed the "four downs" in a reference to going "down to the grass roots", some question the effectiveness of the methods and the education campaign.

A video of Anhui party boss Han taking a swig of Hefei tap water attracted plenty of "thumbs up" reactions on social media. But the 47,000 comments posted below the clip included many who appeared confused, with some asking how Han could check the quality of the water by drinking it.

Alfred Wu, associate professor at the National University of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, also questioned Han's actions, noting

that testing water quality was not part of the professional skills or job duties of a provincial party secretary.

Xi's ideas on the "four downs" have been widely taught among the party's rank and file. The teachings include bringing the party's policy down the masses, as well as receiving petitions from the people and working among the masses and at the grass-roots level.

An official who took part in the education campaign in Fujian province and asked to remain anonymous said the latest round of training, which began in September, focused on officials at the prefecture and county level with a closer working relationship with local communities.

When asked about the education campaign, responses from junior officials ranged from supportive to dismissive.

"I do believe the 'down to grass roots level' campaign is effective in solving people's problems," said a recent university graduate who is now a civil servant in the northern province of Jilin.

"I took part in a campaign to promote production safety for businesses such as the use of firefighting equipment," said the civil servant, who also asked to remain anonymous. "I think our visits did help enhance people's knowledge in this regard." Others rejected the visits to local communities as publicity stunts or political shows.

One local civil servant in the southwestern province of Sichuan said, "What's the point of conducting such investigations?"

"We were all told about them in advance so everything was well prepared ahead of the visits," she said.

"It only adds to the burden of us grass-roots civil servants because we have to prepare all the documents and materials for these investigations by the senior cadres."

Wu of the National University of Singapore said there might be a gap between what top leaders in Beijing envisioned for the campaign and the reality on the ground.

"It can be a beautiful vision when the campaign is launched but cadres in the grass roots level may see it differently," Wu said.

"The Chinese [governance] system is very top-down and sometimes local cadres only want to appease their bosses and check the box, independent of whether the problems are solved," he added.

Compared with previous political drives, the latest education campaign, which is expected to end this month, has emphasised regular visits by senior cadres to the masses as part of the doctrine of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.

In November, the Central Commission of Discipline Inspection, the party's top disciplinary body, published an article warning cadres that they must take the investigation mandate seriously and avoid "ills such as formalism" – a term that refers to performing duties in a perfunctory manner – that would add to the burden of junior cadres.

Li Chuncheng, a professor at the School of International Relations and Public Affairs of Fudan University in Shanghai, said party elites could better address problems such as formalism by having the disciplinary watchdog supervise grass-roots inspections and visits by officials.

"There are two inspection mechanisms that can be used to regulate formalism," Li said.

"The first is to incorporate formalism into the scope of inspection work of the disciplinary inspection commission. The second one is to set up a dialogue channel between policymakers [at the top] and the cadres responsible for implementation [at the lower level]."

"But the disciplinary commission now only oversees disciplinary matters and there is no dialogue mechanism in the current bureaucracy."

Wu said it would be hard to assess how effective the campaign had been without independent studies or public polls.

"I think Xi wants to use the campaign as a tool to increase his prestige and popularity among the cadres and the people, but it's hard for us to verify if Xi's goal is achieved with the lack of poll results in China," Wu said.

# TIBET DIGEST 2024

FOUNDATION FOR  
**Non-violent  
Alternatives**  
To inform and shape policy on Tibet and the region



## PROTESTS, DETENTIONS AND OTHER NEWS FROM THE PRC

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## Highlights China's human rights violations in Tibet-2024

30 December 2024, The Tibet Post, Tenzin Lhadon

### PROTESTS, DETENTIONS AND OTHER NEWS FROM THE PRC

Chinese government forcefully crackdown Tibetan peaceful protestors for protecting their land and river from construction mega dam on them and force to shift Monasteries and Villages, shutting down famous Tibetan-run schools and Monastery schools, forcefully to take out young monks out of the Monasteries schools and forcefully to put in the Chinese colonial style boarding school. China also detains arrest, imprison and even kill Tibetans for merely exercise basic rights and freedom, practice religion.

Around 300 Tibetans gathered in front of the Dege county government building on February 14, 2024 to protest against the construction of the largest hydroelectric power plant in their region and the forced displacement of their homes and monasteries. Hundreds of Tibetans begged the Chinese authorities to halt the construction of the Kamtok dam on the Drichu River in the Gege region. However, instead of listening to the Tibetans, the Chinese police and army arrested hundreds of Tibetans and severely beat them, on February 22, 2024.

Chinese government has forcibly shut down the most popular school, the Gangjong Sherig Norbu School , where Tibetan students from three provinces of Tibet come to study and where the graduates are well-trained students who do excellent work in Tibetan societies. The teachers and students cried so hard that they could not control their sadness at the closure of their beloved school after 30 years.

Chinese police killed a Tibetan monk by torturing him while in detention. Chinese police detained a Tibetan monk named Losel from Sera monastery in Lhasa, Tibet, in May 2024, on suspicion of sharing information about Tibet with Tibetans in exile. He died as a result of the beatings, ill-treatment and torture he suffered during his detention.

A Tibetan man named Damdul died in November 2021, after being brutally tortured by Chinese police while in the detention. He had been arrested on March 5, 2021, for sharing the teachings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama on Chinese social media and for keeping photos and CDs of His Holiness in his home in Lhasa, the Capital of Tibet.

Chinese authorities sentenced a Tibetan monk named Lobsang Tashi from Kriti monastery to three years in prison, in a secret trial, at the end of 2021,

over allegedly contacting prayers for those who died during the Covid-19 pandemic, and making offerings (money offering to pray) to offices of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Kirti Rinpoche for the deceased. China has conducted major crackdowns on religious freedom in all parts of Tibet, continued over the years, and 269 Tibetan people were placed under investigation for allegedly involving in so-called "illegal spiritual practices", on March 25, 2024 and those arrested may face prison terms ranging from 5 to 17 years.

Chinese authorities arrested a well-educated young Tibetan monk named Tenzin Chenrab and writer from Nyakchu County, in eastern Tibet, in September 2023, for possessing a photo of Tibet's spiritual leader, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and several e-books in his phone. Tenzin Chenrab's 53-year-old mother dead after not hearing his only son for long time. Chinese authorities murdered a girl named Tsedon , a second-year undergraduate in Tibet University in Lhasa, Tibet, on January 15, 2024. She was detained by Chinese police in Ritso Township, Nyemo County, central Tibet, on December 26, 2023 with explaining reason for detention. After 21 days in detention, the police informed her family that she was dead and refused to return her body to the family members.

Chinese authorities arrested a Tibetan monk called Jampa Choephel from Rebgong County, in March, 2024, for posting the teachings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama on his social media platform (Wechat). After five months in detention, he was sentenced by a Chinese court last month to one and a half years in prison.

A Tibetan woman named Tsering Tso , arrested by the Yushu police on June 29, 2024, accused of 'endangering social stability', interrogated and detained for 10 days, then released on July 8, 2024. Who had exercised her rights and criticised the Chinese authorities for their racial discrimination against Tibetans and for posting videos on the social media app about the incident. This is six times she has been detained by Chinese authorities.

Chinese authorities have banned Tibetans from entering the Atsog Moastery in Dragkar County, northern Tibet. But on April 9, 2024, hundreds of Tibetans circled the monastery to pray and bid farewell to the soon-to-be-demolished temple. This is because the monastery will be demolished to build a huge dam on the Yellow River near the monastery.

Chinese authorities from WeChat Company have indiscriminately shut down the "Great Sheep-fold ," a popular blog in the Tibetan language on WeChat on April 2, 2024, which contained over 10,000 pieces directly related to the cultural heritage and humanistic literature of Tibet.

Chinese authorities arrested a Tibetan monk called Lobsang Thamke in June, 2023, for allegedly publishing Tibetan books from outside Tibet and contacting Tibetans in exile.

China detains a young Tibetan, Tsoewo Tsering , after he openly denounced the illegal extraction of sand by a Chinese company (Anhui Xianhe Construction Engineering Co, Ltd) in Tibet, on the banks of a river in Tsa-Ri-Ma Township of Gakog County, Ngaba, Tibet, on October 15, 2024.

Tibetan language rights activist Tashi Wangchuk detained again by Chinese authorities on October 22, 2024, over allegedly spreading misinformation about China and making accusations against government policy in his videos on the social media. He was released after 15 days in detention.

The Chinese government has issued a statement warning Tibetans that Tibetans, particularly monks on early April, 2024, cannot do anything related to His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, including keeping and hanging a picture of him and praying for him, cannot perform religious rituals after his death and cannot disrupt the process of his reincarnation by China.

CCP force Tibetan officials to sign a pledge not to practice religion, on January 22, 2024. Chinese authorities in Wolong Township, Wenchuan County, eastern Tibet, forced Tibetan officials to sign a pledge: "not to believe in religion, not to participate in religious activities, never to promote or spread religion anywhere and always to listen to the Chinese Communist Party, be grateful to the Party, follow the Party".

On December 14, 2024, Chinese authorities in Gonghe County, northeastern Tibet, arrested well-known Tibetan entrepreneur and Internet celebrity Sonam Choedup , whose Internet name is Aga Gelek Tsang (better known as Aga Gelek), along with his partners and friends, including Kunsang Dorjee, Tenpa, Tsenthar Gyal and Tashi Loden, in the name of China's "sweep away the black and eliminate the evil" political campaign. The entrepreneur has helped many Tibetan students, disabled students and small Tibetan entrepreneurs. He has also participated in charity work and disaster relief operations, making substantial donations.

### **Chinese authorities torture Tibetan village head to death amid crackdown on Tibetan Language**

25 December 2024, ANI

Chinese authorities have wrongfully arrested over 20 Tibetans and tortured to death a Tibetan village head Gonpo Namgyal, who was subjected to months of severe torture, including repeated electric shock sessions during his detention, as per a report in Tibet.net.

The Central Tibetan Administration reported that Namgyal, a village head in Ponkor township, Darlag County, located in the Tibetan region of Amdo (now part of Qinghai, Sichuan, and Gansu provinces) tragically died on December 18. His death comes after over seven months of inhuman treatment in custody, where he was held for participating in a cultural campaign led by the Tibetan Language Association.

The crackdown in May 2024 followed the launch of the "Pure Mother Tongue" campaign, spearheaded by the association under the leadership of Khenpo Tenpa Dhargye, a Tibetan Buddhist teacher.

The campaign aimed to preserve the Tibetan language, which has been increasingly threatened by Chinese policies promoting Mandarin as the dominant language. The Chinese government arrested Khenpo Tenpa Dhargye and Gonpo Namgyal, along with several others, accusing them of "endangering state security." They were taken to Golog Prefecture headquarters for detention, reported by the Central Tibetan Administration.

While Gonpo Namgyal was eventually released due to ill health, he passed away within three days of his release. During the preparation of his body for cremation, it was discovered that many of his internal organs had been burned, presumably due to the electric torture he endured while in custody.

Khenpo Tenpa Dhargye, a close associate of the revered Lama Jigme Phuntsok, had been a vocal advocate for the preservation of Tibetan culture, including language and traditional practices. His arrest and the ongoing uncertainty surrounding his condition have deeply concerned Tibetan communities in the region, prompting widespread religious prayers and ceremonies for his health and safe release.

The Chinese government's continued persecution of influential Tibetan figures like Khenpo Tenpa Dhargye and Gonpo Namgyal reflects its broader effort to suppress Tibetan identity and resistance. These actions are seen as part of a systematic attempt to undermine Tibetan culture and language in favour of a "Chinese national unity consciousness," at the cost of basic human rights for Tibetans.

### **China's top procuratorate orders arrest of former senior political advisor**

24 December 2024, Global Times

China's Supreme People's Procuratorate (SPP) has ordered the arrest of Wu Yingjie, a former member of the Standing Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), for suspected bribe-taking, the SPP said Tuesday.

Wu was also former head of the Committee on

Culture, Historical Data and Studies of the CPPCC National Committee.

The case was transferred to procuratorial authorities for examination and prosecution following the conclusion of an investigation by the National Commission of Supervision.

The handling of the case is underway.

### **China: Five years on, activists jailed in 'cruel' 2019 crackdown must be released**

23 December 2024, Amnesty International

It is time to step up demands for the Chinese government to release human rights defenders detained after attending a social gathering five years ago, Amnesty International said today.

In December 2019, a number of human rights activists met in the southeastern city of Xiamen for a dinner and discussion of social issues. From the 26th of that month, and over the weeks that followed, Chinese authorities forcibly disappeared human rights lawyer Ding Jiaxi and legal scholar Xu Zhiyong until they re-surfaced in government detention.

Amnesty International considers both men prisoners of conscience and has consistently advocated for their immediate and unconditional release.

"The Xiamen crackdown epitomizes the Chinese authorities' all-out assault on civil society and the cruelty with which they treat peaceful rights advocates," said Sarah Brooks, Amnesty International's China Director.

At least five other activists were also targeted, and detained, for their affiliation with the gathering. In the months that followed, all seven activists were reportedly held in "residential surveillance at a designated location" (RSDL), a form of secret incommunicado detention that places detainees at increased risk of torture and other forms of ill-treatment.

"Over the past five years, Xu Zhiyong and Ding Jiaxi – along with several of their companions – have endured arbitrary detention, torture and unfair trials, merely because they attended a private gathering and discussed the civil society situation and current affairs in China."

Following closed-door trials, on 10 April 2023 Xu Zhiyong and Ding Jiaxi were sentenced to 14 and 12 years in prison respectively for "subverting state power". In October 2024, Xu Zhiyong began a hunger strike to protest his treatment in prison, which included being harassed by fellow cellmates, apparently at the behest of prison officials.

"The continued imprisonment of Xu Zhiyong and Ding Jiaxi is an outrage, and the international community must ramp up pressure on the Chinese

government to address this injustice and secure their release," Sarah Brooks said.

The Chinese authorities must immediately release Ding and Xu and stop punishing all those who participated in the Xiamen gathering.

Both Ding and Xu have been the subject of recommendations to Chinese authorities by multiple governments and by UN officials, including High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk. Yet concrete actions to demand access to these individuals or to increase the consequences to Chinese authorities for their crackdown on human rights defenders have not materialized.

"The harsh sentences meted out to Xu and Ding are meant to send a message: that to fight to defend one's rights is unacceptable to the Chinese government. Yet they persisted, and now their family members carry on advocating for their release with that same conviction."

Ding Jiayi's wife, Sophie Luo, told Amnesty International ahead of the fifth anniversary of the Xiamen gathering: "I know that attending a private gathering does not violate any laws, and these citizens should not be imprisoned for even a day. Therefore, I will fight tirelessly for the dismissal of this case." A support group active online coordinated by activists in and outside of China is collecting messages and prayers to share with Xu, despite censorship and the risk of government retaliation.

"The Chinese authorities must immediately release Ding and Xu and stop punishing all those who participated in the Xiamen gathering. The grim picture painted by their continued imprisonment should galvanize international condemnation for China's crackdown on civil society," Sarah Brooks said.

Xu Zhiyong and Ding Jiayi were prominent members of the New Citizens' Movement, a loose network of activists founded by Xu in 2012 to promote government transparency and expose corruption. Both had been jailed previously due to their advocacy; Ding served three and a half years and was released in October 2016, while Xu – whose sentence was slightly longer – was released in 2017. Xu and Ding appealed their 2023 convictions, but in November 2023, the Shandong Provincial High Court upheld the verdict and sentence against them. Both have now requested a second appeal.

In jail, Ding and Xu have been deprived of fundamental rights, including access to reading and writing materials; have severe restrictions on their right to communicate with family and friends; and have reported challenges seeking medical care. Possibly in response to his hunger strike, the Chinese authorities allowed Xu to meet with his lawyer on 26 November 2024. It appears that Xu has since stopped his hunger strike.

Human rights defenders in China continue to face intimidation, harassment, arbitrary detention, as well as torture and other ill-treatment for defending human rights and exercising their freedoms of expression and association. Such retaliation often also extends to their family members and colleagues. As in many cases of Chinese activists, friends and family of Xu and Ding have faced threats and harassment for speaking out. For years, Xu was not only prevented from seeing his family but lacked legal counsel of his choosing; three lawyers appointed by his family withdrew from representing Xu, reportedly due to threats and intimidation from Chinese authorities.

Other human rights activists targeted in connection with the Xiamen gathering include:

- Chang Weiping was sentenced to three and a half years in prison; he has served his sentence and was released in July 2024 but remains subject to a travel ban
- Li Qiaochu received a sentence of three years and eight months; she has served her sentence and was released in August 2024 but remains subject to a travel ban plus two years of deprivation of political rights
- Zhang Zhongshun was sentenced to four and a half years in prison in November 2024
- Dai Zhenya and Li Yingjun were released on bail after spending time in RSDL, and they are also subject to a travel ban.

Amnesty International considers a prisoner of conscience to be any person imprisoned solely because of their political, religious or other conscientiously held beliefs, their ethnic origin, sex, colour, language, national or social origin, socio-economic status, birth, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or other status, and who has not used violence or advocated violence or hatred in the circumstances leading to their detention.

### **Prominent Tibetan activist detained for two weeks amid Chinese discrimination**

21 December 2024, ANI

A prominent Tibetan rights activist, Tsering Tso, was detained for two weeks in Qinghai province from November 29 to December 13 on charges of "spreading false information" and "causing trouble" via social media, as reported by Radio Free Asia. The 39-year-old has long been outspoken against Chinese authorities, advocating for equal rights for Tibetans and exposing discrimination faced by her community.

Radio Free Asia reported that Tso, who operates a travel business in Tibet and across China, has been detained or harassed multiple times in the past five years. Her recent detention stemmed from a video

she posted in November 2024, in which a police officer at the Public Security Bureau in Trika County, also known as Guide in Chinese, denied her passport application, claiming she had a criminal record.

Tso's social media posts frequently criticise Chinese authorities for their discriminatory practices, particularly regarding the treatment of Tibetans.

Upon her release, Tso expressed defiance, stating, "The laws in Qinghai differ from those in China. Each time I report on the police force's discriminatory practices and violations of their disciplinary rules, they exert their power to detain and pressure the whistleblower on false charges arbitrarily." Tso has been a vocal critic of the challenges Tibetans face in running businesses in their homeland, accusing local officials of corruption and abusing their power for personal gain.

In October 2023, two videos surfaced showing Tso highlighting the difficulties Tibetans face in obtaining business licenses and accusing local leaders of corruption. She also raised concerns over the unfair treatment of two Tibetan monks, who were subjected to additional scrutiny and required to obtain extra permits during their pilgrimage, while Chinese tourists were not. Earlier this year, Tso endured a 10-day detention for "endangering social stability" after speaking out against these discriminatory practices.

Tso's activism reflects the ongoing struggle for equal rights for Tibetans, who continue to face systemic discrimination under Chinese rule.

### **Testimony of a Chinese human rights defender: inside China's brutal prison system**

18 December 2024, HRIC

"Killing someone here is as meaningless as killing a dog. We wouldn't even need to bury you. We'd just take you straight to the crematorium and burn you. It's very near here, you know."

HRIC has translated the harrowing testimony of Xie Wenfei (谢文飞), a Chinese human rights defender whose courage and suffering expose the horrifying depths of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) oppression. His statement was originally published in commemoration of Human Rights Day (10 December 2024). Xie, born in 1977 in Hunan Province, is known for his involvement in the Southern Street Movement, which advocates for democratic reform in China. His commitment to human rights has cost him his freedom, his health, and very nearly his life. In his statement, translated in full below, Xie depicts in graphic detail the brutal consequences faced by human rights defenders, pro-democracy activists, and intellectual dissidents who dare to confront the authority of the CCP.

On 29 April 2020, Xie published an article commemorating Lin Zhao, a dissident executed during the Cultural Revolution for her criticisms of Mao Zedong. By the evening, he had been seized. Xie was detained by the police in Chenzhou, Hunan, on charges of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble," a deliberately vague and politically motivated accusation which the CCP levies against activists and critics. Thereafter, Xie was plunged into a nightmare of state-sanctioned physical violence, psychological torment, degradation and dehumanization in China's detention centers and prisons. Xie's testimony offers a stark reminder of the CCP's disdain for basic human rights, and the chilling lengths it will go to in silencing political opponents.

Xie's story demonstrates clearly why international actors—including governments, civil society organizations, and human rights defenders—must not look away. We must continue to hold the CCP accountable for its violations. The prison abuses described by Xie reveal the darker realities of a government which not only tramples on fundamental principles of human dignity but seeks to legitimize its authoritarian model under the guise of global leadership. This is not just China's problem—it is a global problem. If Beijing is allowed to normalize this system while positioning itself as a global leader, it will embolden other authoritarian regimes and undermine the very foundations of international human rights. We cannot let China rewrite the rules. China's authoritarian practices must not become further normalized on the world stage.

Xie's testimony not only chronicles the inhumane treatment he suffered but also serves as a powerful reminder of the price paid by those who resist the CCP. Beijing's official narrative of 'progress' and 'prosperity' rings hollow when confronted with testimonies like Xie Wenfei's, which reveal a system built on brutality, silence, and fear. This is the truth behind the propaganda. His closing reflection, quoting Alexis de Tocqueville, reminds us that the treatment of prisoners reveals the true measure of a society's civilization. What does this say about China under the CCP? And what does it say about us if we fail to act?

On Human Rights Day, I want to share my personal experiences as a human rights defender.

On the morning of 29 April 2020, I published an article titled A Memorial for Lin Zhao. [Editor's note: Lin Zhao, 1932–1968, was a prominent Chinese dissident who was imprisoned and later executed for her criticism of Mao Zedong's policies during the Cultural Revolution.] That same evening, two burly men dressed in black (each weighing about 90 kilograms, as I estimated) ambushed me. They were hiding in the dark, waiting. When I tried to avoid them, they seized me, and without saying a word,



pinned me to the ground. They held me there for a long time. Once I was taken to the case-handling center, I noticed that their T-shirts bore the words "Branded Ironhead" on the chest.

What human rights can we speak of?

On 28 May 2022, I was transferred from the Zixing Detention Center along with 146 others to Chenzhou Detention Center. In Cell 401, because I refused to squat, one brute took advantage of my unguarded moment and slapped me sharply across the face. I kicked him away without hesitation, but this led immediately to a group of thugs attacking me. I was forced to fight back in self-defense.

Unexpectedly, a person nicknamed "Director Li" entered the room and, again catching me off guard, slapped me hard in the face. (This surprised me because, despite having been detained in several detention centers previously and serving over six years in prison, I had never been struck by a police officer before.) After he left, at least seven or eight thugs, emboldened by his implicit encouragement, swarmed and overwhelmed me. I was beaten until I was dizzy, my head pounding as if it would explode. Multiple lumps formed on my scalp. The whole world seemed to spin, and I could barely stay upright.

Deputy Director Li later took me to the interview room. When I requested medical treatment for my injuries, he coldly refused. He then ordered me back to Cell 401. I replied bitterly that they might as well beat me to death. His reply? "Killing someone here is as meaningless as killing a dog. We wouldn't even need to bury you. We'd just take you straight to the crematorium and burn you. It's very near here, you know." (This was the first time I learned just how close the crematorium was.) My head throbbed so severely it felt as though it was about to burst, like the torment Sun Wukong, the Monkey King, endured when the monk Tang Seng chanted the tightening spell in *Journey to the West*. Writhing on the floor in pain, I succumbed to a combination of rage and despair and collapsed.

Li ordered that I be dragged into solitary confinement in Cell 6011. When I woke up, I found myself lying on a concrete floor with a puddle of water beside me. My head was near the toilet. My socks were worn through, and the only "bed" in the room was a single wooden plank cemented to the wall.

For several days, my head continued to ache intensely, and the lumps on my scalp showed no signs of subsiding. I pressed the alarm button repeatedly for four days, requesting medical attention, but I was ignored. A three-day hunger strike didn't bring any results either. No one admitted I had been beaten.

What human rights can we speak of?

On 30 May 2023, I was transferred from the Zixing Detention Center to Chenzhou Prison. Upon our arrival, they forced the 14 of us from Zixing to strip naked and perform squatting frog jumps in unison. I refused. Within an hour of arriving, I was confined to a 0.18-square-meter iron cage on the second floor of the reception center. The indoor temperature that day was 30°C, and for over eight hours, I was given only a small spoonful of water, no food, and my clothes were drenched with sweat.

That evening, I was transferred to a "high-security" area on the fifth floor, where, for two weeks, I was confined to a 0.7-square-meter iron cage for over 15 hours a day. For six consecutive days, I was not allowed to bathe, and for several days, I was denied both water and access to the toilet. I started a hunger strike. This changed nothing.

In front of over a dozen people (eight in iron cages and several wearing green vests), Warden Liang declared: "This person (referring to me) should be locked up tightly. Don't give him water. Don't let him use the toilet. Just make sure he doesn't die here."

Outraged, I requested to be put on a tiger bench—a notorious torture device—as both an act of defiance and a way to expose the system's cruelty. Within two hours, my "wish" was granted. After less than ten minutes on the tiger bench, my hands swelled up, sweat poured from my head, forming a stream, and my clothes were drenched. The bench, designed for someone 10 centimeters taller than me, required them to forcibly stretch me forward to cuff my hands, which was extremely painful and exhausting. Onlookers could see that my condition was dire.

Several hours after being released from the tiger bench, my right thumb was numb, and I couldn't move it properly for five days. Even two months later, it still felt as though connected to a low-voltage electric current.

What human rights can we possibly speak of?!

On 8 June 2023, in a document required by the prison, I wrote: "Since my arrival at Chenzhou Prison on 30 May, I have not been treated as a human being. Regardless of whether I am an ordinary person, a detained prisoner, a political prisoner, or even someone convicted of the gravest crimes, I am a human, and therefore I am entitled to the most basic human rights. Individual human dignity is an integral part of humanity's collective dignity, and the latter is composed of the former. Even if a prison aims to 'reform' individuals, it cannot do so at the cost of trampling on and sacrificing human dignity."

On 25 June 2023, I was transferred to Changsha Prison in Hunan province. My two boxes of books were not allowed inside, and even my attempt to bring in a single copy of 300 Tang Poems and *Collected Annotations of the Four Books* was rejected under the guise of a "zero possessions" policy. This

was a supervisory measure personally introduced by Prison Director Lei Jianhua, designed to showcase his ultimate authority.

In early July, a fellow prisoner, aged 42, from Liuzhou, Guangxi, who arrived at the detention center on the same day as me, died. No one was held accountable; nothing happened. For nearly two months in the detention center, we were forbidden to read or write. I requested three times to borrow Records of the Grand Historian from the bookshelf but was denied each time.

On 21 August 2023, after being assigned to the Fourth Division, I was subjected to the punishment of being pinned to the corridor floor for five days in a row - all because I had refused the arbitrary command to squat. This punishment was carried out as a display to "make an example" of me and my disobedience. On 27 August 2023, I was beaten by both prisoners and officers for refusing to sing "red songs" as ordered. [Editor's note: These are revolutionary propaganda songs glorifying the Chinese Communist Party and its leaders, often used as a tool of political indoctrination.] Officer Xie, the tallest officer in the division, kicked me violently, and told me: "Because this is a political matter, I can hit you, and I won't face any consequences. Go ahead and complain to the Commission for Discipline Inspection; complain to the procuratorate, or even the prison director—I don't give a shit."

What human rights can we speak of?

On 29 August 2023, I was denied access to the toilet for so long that when I was finally permitted during a group break, it took me 20 minutes to urinate in broken intervals. I was verbally punished by an officer that same day.

Then, every morning and afternoon when water was distributed, I was only allowed one-third to half the usual amount. I was permitted to use the toilet only once each morning and afternoon. Fortunately, a slightly kind-hearted "Aunt Wu" ensured the punishment was not strictly enforced. A week later, I was returned to "normal" access, but the rule of only being allowed to fetch water twice a day remained in effect until my release on 29 October 2024. Every morning and afternoon, I endured thirst for two to three hours before I could drink hot water. My severe prostatitis went untreated. From 21 August to 30 December 2023, I and others filed requests to use the toilet a total of eight times, five of which were outright denied.

What human rights can we possibly speak of? This was worse than being an animal.

In the 16 months I served at Changsha Prison, I read only five books—less than what I read in one month at Heyuan Prison. Either I was prohibited from reading or I had no time or energy to do so. My six-

year practice of calligraphy was forcibly ended—I was never even allowed to touch a writing brush.

As I wrote in a letter to Director Lei, which will never receive a reply: from the moment my two boxes of books were left outside Changsha Prison's gate, my prison life became a nightmare. For someone like me, who has read for over a decade, having books to read makes even hell bearable. Conversely, being deprived of books makes even heaven feel like hell. My thanks to the prison education office for providing me with Francis Fukuyama's Political Order and Political Decay on 8 March 2024, after I was beaten on 3 March and left with no avenue for complaint. It slowly brought me back to life.

Before the strict implementation of the "9511" system in August 2024, we worked over 60 hours per week for 13 months. [Editor's note: "9511" refers to a prison management system in which prisoners are required to work 9 hours per day for 5 days a week, devote 1 day to study or "re-education," and are permitted 1 day of rest.]

After moving to the new Changsha Prison site on 23 March 2024, we were forced to work extra night shifts for over a month. Personally, I was fortunate to endure only one such shift; however, among the 170+ other prisoners in my group, dozens were forced to work night shifts daily. Those who failed to complete required tasks faced a range of different punishments.

At the new site, in pursuit of so-called "dining order," our meals—served in stainless steel trays—were placed on stainless steel tables before our shifts ended. By the time we ate, the food was stone cold, even in March, when many prisoners still wore winter clothes due to poor health. My complaints yielded no improvement. I remembered how, over a decade ago, the pigs we raised at home had their swill warmed for them— they never ate cold.

As a human rights defender, I was reduced to a state worse than that of pigs.

What human rights can we speak of?

Many may cite Article 7 of the People's Republic of China's Prison Law, which ostensibly guarantees prisoners' rights and dignity. But any clear-headed person knows how far we are from achieving a rule-of-law society—if anything, we are moving further away from it.

Furthermore, Director Lei openly stated at an assembly that our identity "is that of criminals, what people normally refer to as 'bad people' (I strongly protest this statement and will demand a public apology from Director Lei when the time is right). We are here 'to be punished.'" He even boasted that Changsha Prison was already the best in China, the number one in Hunan. If it were any better, Dickens-inspired citizens dissatisfied with everyday life would flock here.

Under Director Lei's "enlightened leadership," marked by his tyrannical authority, few dared to file complaints. Even if they did, as in my case—when I was beaten, I wrote to the procurator stationed at the prison, and requested to meet my lawyer Zhang Lei—the complaint was torn up before my eyes.

"In Chinese prisons, especially in Changsha Prison, do not speak to me of human rights!"

This is Changsha Prison's resounding declaration!

French thinker Alexis de Tocqueville once said:

"The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by examining its prison system."

Oh, how these words ring true.

### **Rights group urges China to release jailed Tibetan activist**

17 December 2024, UCA News



A Tibetan protester shouts slogans from a police vehicle after being detained near the Chinese embassy during a demonstration in New Delhi on October 1, 2024, against the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. (Photo by Sajjad HUSSAIN / AFP)

A leading human rights group in Asia has urged China to unconditionally release a Tibetan environmental activist who was jailed after he published a video on illegal sand mining in Sichuan Province.

The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), in a Dec. 16 statement, expressed "deep concern" over China imposing an eight-month jail term on environmental activist Tsogon Tsering.

The rights group asked the Chinese government "to immediately and unconditionally release" Tsering.

Tsering was jailed on Oct. 27, accused of "disturbing social order" after he published the video on illegal sand and gravel mining in Tsaruma village, Kakhog County, Ngaba Prefecture.

The group said Tsering's social media account was taken down, and all search terms related to his name were blocked. His whereabouts remained unknown until his sentencing.

Tsering's case is similar to Anya Sengdra's, who is serving a seven-year sentence after exposing illegal mining in Gade County in the Golog Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

Earlier in 2024, four Tibetan environmental activists were arrested in a village in Chamdo Prefecture for raising concerns about alleged illegal land grabbing by Chinese authorities, the statement said.

The group's executive director Mary Aileen Diez-Bacalso expressed "solidarity with the people of Tibet," who face socio-cultural repression and environmental challenges.

Chinese authorities have been targeting Tibet and its people since 1950s, when China annexed Tibet, claiming it to be an integral part of Chinese territory. "Fearing retaliation and reprisals, Tibetans including environmental human rights defenders and journalists – have been effectively silenced, allowing China to govern the region with total impunity," the rights group alleged.

Chinese authorities continue to "criminalize legitimate expressions of concern over Tibetan people's fundamental freedoms" under the guise of national security and ethnic unity, the rights group said.

It asked the Chinese government to stop the arrest and imprisonment of Tibetan environmental rights defenders peacefully advocating for their rights.

It also demanded that China adhere to international human rights standards, such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

### **Tibetan environmental activist sentenced to 8 months in prison**

02 December 2024, RFA

Tsogon Tsering made a rare public appeal against the illegal extraction of sand and gravel mining from a local river.



Tsogon Tsering, a Tibetan from Tsaruma village in Kyungchu county in southwestern China's Sichuan province, calls for authorities to take action against illegal sand and gravel mining taking place since May 2023 on the Tsaruma River. (Image from citizen video via WeChat)

A Tibetan environmental activist from China's Sichuan province has been sentenced to eight months in prison, after he made a rare public appeal to authorities over a company he accused of illegally

extracting sand and gravel from a river, two Tibetan sources told RFA.

Tsogon Tsering, 29, from Tsaruma village in Ngaba prefecture, called Aba in Chinese, openly posted a 5-minute video in which he held up his government ID card and accused Anhui Xianhe Construction Engineering Co. of the illegal activity along the Tsaruma River since May 2023.

On Oct. 27, the Kyungchu County People's Court charged Tsering with "disturbing social order" and "provoking trouble and picking quarrels" for raising concerns about the environmental impact of the sand and gravel extraction, including reduced water levels, soil erosion and risk to homes located near the river, the sources said.

Until the news of his sentencing last week, Tsering's whereabouts and condition had remained unknown since "a day or two after" Oct. 20, when authorities had summoned him a second time on the pretext of investigating the matter and detained him. Authorities initially summoned Tsering and other villagers for questioning on Oct. 18, just two days after Tsering made the online public appeal – a rare move in Tibet, where speaking out against authorities or state-approved projects often leads to reprisals. At the time, they were all released back to their homes, but Tsering was detained.



A view of an area where sand and gravel are being illegally extracted from the Tsaruma River in Kyungchu county, southwestern China's Sichuan province, in an image posted on WeChat by Tibetan resident Tsongon Tsering, Oct. 15, 2024. (Tsongon Tsering/WeChat)

Tsering is currently being held in Kyungchu County Prison and faces continued investigation and threats of extended sentencing, the sources told RFA.

"Authorities have also indicated to the family that the eight-month-long prison sentence is not final, emphasizing that they will continue to investigate the matter completely before making a conclusive ruling," one of the sources said.

Speaking out

Tsering's detention is an example of the risks Tibetans face for speaking out and the swift action authorities take to silence those who raise concerns

about environmental degradation in their communities, especially when linked to Chinese companies.

Other Tibetan environmental defenders, such as Anya Sengdra, have faced persecution for their activism. In 2019, Chinese authorities sentenced Sengdra to a seven-year prison term on charges of disturbing social order after he complained online about corrupt officials, illegal mining and the hunting of protected wildlife.

"Authorities are treating Tsering's environmental advocacy as criminal activity and accusing him of stirring up social unrest for personal vendettas," said the second source. "His family and locals are under heavy surveillance and restrictions on sharing information about his case."



A view of the results of illegal sand and gravel extraction along the Tsaruma River in Kyungchu county, southwestern China's Sichuan province, in an image posted on WeChat by Tibetan resident Tsongon Tsering, Oct. 15, 2024. (Tsongon Tsering/WeChat)

Authorities acted quickly after Tsering's video became popular on Chinese social media, shutting down his WeChat account and censoring all search terms related to his name on the platform.

The video, which gained significant attention online, had been widely shared by other platform users, but those posts were taken down as well, so that all related content had been censored by Oct. 17.

In the video, Tsering describes Anhui Xianhe Construction Engineering's extensive mining operations and repeated appeals made by Tibetans to local authorities to take action against the company for causing environmental harm.



# November

## China sentences veteran journalist on espionage charges

29 November 2024, NPR, Emily Feng

China has sentenced a longtime Chinese state media journalist to seven years in prison on charges of espionage, in a case press freedom advocates have criticized as opaque and politicized.

Dong Yuyu, 62, had been detained while lunching with a Japanese diplomat at a Beijing hotel in February 2022 and held for half a year in a secret location before being formally charged with espionage, a charge he denied, his family says.

The 7-year sentence, delivered in a Beijing court on Friday, came after months of delays in Dong's sentencing. As in all cases China deems related to national security, Dong's trial was held in secret, with no press or family present, and the court provided no records of the testimony or evidence to the public.

"Yuyu is being persecuted for the independence he has demonstrated during a lifetime spent as a journalist," his family said in a statement.

On Friday, Dong's lawyers and family were allowed in court for the sentencing judgement, which was read aloud but not shared in writing. The sentencing accused Dong of inappropriately sharing information with two Japanese diplomats, including its then-ambassador to China, according to a statement from Dong's family.

Well-known among academic and diplomatic circles for his liberal writings and scholarship, Dong worked for decades as a journalist and editor at Guangming Daily, a Communist Party-run publication. He often traveled abroad and met with foreign experts in China, exchanges he always disclosed but which his family now believes may have led to his arrest.

"He is the epitome of the kind of people-to-people exchanges that China has been working so hard to establish and maintain for the past 30 years," the National Press Club, an advocacy organization based in Washington, said in a statement after Dong's trial concluded in 2023. "That era is now over."

More than 60 academics, former diplomats, and journalists have signed an open letter protesting his arrest.

From 2006-2007, Dong studied at Harvard University after receiving its prestigious Nieman journalism fellowship. In 2010, he was a visiting fellow at Japan's Keio University, and in 2014 he spent the year as a visiting professor at Hokkaido University.

He wrote openly on how he believed China's ruling Communist Party could improve its governance but was no dissident or revolutionary. In 2002, the state-administered All China Journalists Association gave Dong an award for a commentary piece he authored which praised the achievements and plans of the Communist Party.

"Yuyu will now be known as a traitor in his own country, instead of being recognized as someone who always fought for a better Chinese society," his family said.

## Tibetan whistle-blower sentenced to eight months for exposing illegal sand mining

28 November 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup



Screen grab of Tsongon Tsering

Tsongon Tsering has reportedly been sentenced to eight months in prison for protesting illegal sand mining in his village Tsaruma in Kakhog (Chinese: Hongyuan) County, Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, according to the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD).

On October 27, the Kyungchu County People's Court convicted Tsering on the charge of "disrupting social order," a widely criticized accusation often used by Chinese authorities to silence dissent. Tsering, who is currently being held at Kyungchu County Prison, had been detained incommunicado after his video exposing the mining activities went viral on Chinese social media.

Tsering posted a five-minute video on Oct. 14 revealing large-scale illegal sand and gravel mining operations conducted by Anhui Xianhe Construction Engineering Company. He used a "real-name complaint" method, showing his ID card while narrating how the mining, under the pretext of road construction, caused significant environmental destruction.

He documented the environmental destruction and accused local authorities of failing to enforce existing regulations. His video gained traction on Chinese social media, prompting local government bodies to pledge an investigation.

However, Tsering was summoned multiple times to government offices before being detained. Sources



report that he is currently held in Kyungchu County Prison, where his family is barred from contacting him. The heightened restrictions imposed by Chinese authorities in Ngaba have deepened fears for his safety, especially given China's record of detaining activists on fabricated charges.

The illegal mining operations, which began in May 2023, led to severe soil erosion, water pollution, and risks to homes near the river. Villagers repeatedly filed complaints with local and regional authorities, including the Kakhog County Environmental Protection Bureau and the Ngaba Prefecture Water Affairs Bureau, but received no meaningful response. In April 2024, the Ecological Environment Bureau of Kakhog County acknowledged in a written statement that the company had engaged in illegal activities and imposed fines. However, activists, including Tsering, argued that these measures were superficial and aimed at deflecting criticism rather than addressing the damage.

Tsering's arrest paints a broader picture of crackdown on Tibetan activists and whistleblowers who challenge Chinese authorities or expose corruption. TCHRD has noted a rise in fabricated charges and incommunicado detentions across Ngaba, contributing to an atmosphere of fear and repression.

"Tsering's case is a stark reminder of the risks faced by individuals who stand up for their communities," TCHRD stated. "His sentencing is not just an attack on him but a message to all Tibetans that dissent will not be tolerated."

### **Renowned Tibetan writer and intellectual, Rongwo Gendun Lhundup released from Chinese prison but remains under strict surveillance**

27 November 2024, TCHRD

On 9 November, a respected Tibetan writer and intellectual, Rongwo Gendun Lhundup was released from a Chinese prison. While Tibetan writers, artists, intellectuals, and activists inside and outside Tibet celebrated his release on social media, the reality remains grim. Like all former Tibetan political prisoners convicted on trumped-up charges, Rongwo Gendun Lhundup, despite being released, is placed under heavy surveillance and restrictions.

Born in 1974 to a nomadic family in Rebkong (Ch: Tongren) City, Malho (Ch: Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province, Rongwo Gendun Lhundup embraced monastic life at a young age. He began his studies at Darzing Monastery before continuing at Rongwo Monastery in Rebkong, Labrang Tashi Kyil, and Serta Larung. He served as a teacher alongside his academic pursuits, nurturing countless monastic and lay students.

Rongwo Gendun Lhundup has been a dedicated educator for over two decades, mentoring nearly a thousand students while contributing to preserving and promoting Tibetan literature and culture. With the rise of the internet, he became a widely recognised blogger, poet, and cultural critic, writing under various pen names such as 'Za' (Planet/Celestial Body), 'Ge Nyon' (Mad Monk), and 'Lham Kog' (Shoe). His literary contributions, spanning creative writing, editing, and teaching, established him as a pivotal figure in modern Tibetan intellectual discourse. However, his visibility and influence also made him a target of the Chinese authorities, resulting in repeated interrogations and detentions.

On 2 December 2020, Rongwo Gendun Lhundup was detained by Chinese authorities. A year later, on December 2021, the Xining Intermediate People's Court sentenced him to four years in prison on charges of "inciting separatism" coupled with two additional years of deprivation of political rights, reflecting the ongoing criminalisation of Tibetan intellectuals who challenge oppressive policies and advocate for the preservation of Tibetan identity and culture.

On 6 June 2013, in honour of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's birthday, Rongwo Gendun Lhundup composed a poem titled "O Noble One of the Pig Year, I Ask of You," dedicated to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, born in the Pig Year of 1935 according to the Tibetan horoscope.

Brimming with longing, joy, and sorrow, the poem evoked the sacred bond between a guru, His Holiness the Dalai Lama and his disciples, Tibetans inside Tibet waiting for his return.

O One Born in the Pig Year, I Ask You

Rongwo Gendun Lhundup

O One Born in the Pig Year, I Ask You

Where is your homeland?

Where is your palace?

We whisk the dust from your golden yellow throne,  
with trembling hands.

When might you,

With your white hair, swaying with compassion,

With your white smile moved by sorrow,

When will you return, riding a white cloud?

O One Born in the Pig Year, I Ask You,

Wherever you may emerge,

Please save my people,

Please save my culture and religion.

With bent knees and swaying head,

Containing all sorrows within,

Sometimes releasing cold, long breaths,

Fingers pressed to heart,

Lifting your seventy-year-old body with force,

Heedless of day and night, summer and winter,

We have watched you journey on.

We too, with bowed heads,

In a manner unseen by others,  
Are praying for your long life.

Literary journey from Rebkong to national recognition

In 1990, he and his friend Tse Mindrol and other writers published the first private journal called 'Ser Zam' (Golden Bridge) in Rebkong. This was among the first private journals in the Tibetan region. Around that time, he and his friend, the poet Tse Mindrol, also published two poetry collections under the joint title 'Drong Yak Ki Hurdra' (The Roar of the Wild Yak) Within this collection, his writing was titled 'Kangling Kyawo' (The Gray Kangling.) Kangling is a Tibetan word for a trumpet or horn made out of a human tibia or femur, and it is used in Tibetan Buddhism for various chöd rituals and funerals performed by a chöpa. The two illustrated poetry volumes became a topic of widespread discussion. In particular, a romantically written poem in the book beautifully documenting his journey to Serta was highly appreciated by everyone for both its easy comprehension and perfect poetic qualities.

He published 'Lha Chenpoi Nyenngag' (The Poetry of the Great Deity), a category of high brow Tibetan poetry. When the 'Jang Lung' (The Ancient Green Breeze) Newspaper interviewed Rongwo Gendun Lhundup, he mentioned that his second poetry collection should be considered more like a practice rather than a turning point in poetry for which he was being credited with.

In contrast, his new poetry collection 'Trenghwa Nakpo' (The Black Rosary) consisted of forty-one poems written over nearly a decade of experimenting with a new style of poetry writing. Between 'The Poetry of the Great Deity' and 'The Black Rosary,' Rongwo Gendun considers 'The Black Rosary' a better poetic achievement.

On 26 October 2009, his poem 'Gom Shey' (Meditation Song) won China's second National Snow Ornament Literary Award. Later, he published a poetry collection titled 'Mitsey Yangta', (The Melody Horse of Life), mainly consisting of metered poetry.

Subsequently, he published 'Lekpham Karpo' (The White Volume) and 'Khorwa', (Samsara.) Before his arrest, he wrote and published a serial novel called 'Drawai Zintho' (Monk's Diary) online. On 30 December 2019, 'Monk's Diary' won one of China's major National Ethnic Literary Awards, although it is currently deleted and censored online.

An author called 'Lham Kog' (Shoe) wrote many influential articles on the largest Tibetan blogs and most popular websites. During this period, literary circles and enthusiasts were trying to determine who 'Lham Kog' was. Only later was it confirmed that he was the famous writer Rongwo Gedun Lhundrub from Rebkong, Amdo.

On 19 November 2024, he published a poem titled 'Shipar Gyurchig' (May It Be Auspicious) online, and many Tibetans who admire him are sharing it through social media. His published works include six volumes of poetry: 'The Gray Kangling,' 'The Poetry of the Great Deity,' 'The Black Rosary,' 'The Melody Horse of Life,' 'The White Volume,' and 'Samsara.' There is also gossip in the literary circles that he has several other books in different genres, such as fiction and essays, but these have not yet been published.

The release of Rongwo Gendun Lhundup is a reminder of the many Tibetan writers and intellectuals suffering detention and persecution under China's oppressive cultural assimilation policies. China must uphold the purported promises of free speech its constitution Article 35 and immediately put a stop to its draconian control over information, stifling fundamental right to freedom of expression and dissent through harsh regulations, often leading to imprisonment and torture.

The systemic repression and malpractices of the Chinese state not only strips Tibetans of their voices but also forcibly suppresses independent publications through widespread censorship.

Rongwo Gendun Lhundup must be allowed to live freely without surveillance or harassment. This fundamental right has been denied to others, such as Tashi Wangchuk, who, despite his initial release, faced surveillance, beatings, only to be imprisoned again. The same fate must not befall Rongwo. His freedom, and the freedom of all Tibetans, must be safeguarded.

### Two influential Tibetans released from Chinese prison

20 November 2024, Free Tibet



Undated old photos of Karma Samdup (left) and Gendun Lhundup (right)

Environmentalist Karma Samdup and writer Gendun Lhundup have been released from prison

Prominent Tibetan philanthropist and environmentalist Karma Samdup has been released on Monday from Shayar Prison in East Turkestan, and Gendun Lhundup, a prolific writer also known by his pen name Lhamkok, was released last weekend.

Karma, 56, was a businessman in antique objects who was sentenced to 15 years on 24 June 2010 under falsified charges of grave robbing and dealing looted relics. He was in poor health while in prison.

Fifty-year-old Gendun was arrested on 2 December 2020 and known to have been sentenced to prison for four years, and two more years of “deprivation of political rights” for inciting separation – an accusation routinely used by the Chinese authorities against Tibetans critical of or suspected to be critical of the communist party-state. It is not known which prison he had been kept in.

Karma Samdup is from Dampa Village (ཐོམ་པ་གྲོང་ཁྱེད་) in Samphel Township (བསམ་པེལ་རྫོང་གྲོང་ཁྱེད་) of Gonjo County (གོང་ཇོ་རྫོང་གྲོང་ཁྱེད་) in Kham region. Born in 1974 in the Rebgong nomadic region, Gendun was a teacher at Rongwo Monastery. Since 1994, he has published numerous books. In October 2020, two months before his arrest, he published a book entitled Khorwa and urged fellow Tibetans to support it. He claimed that the book presents the truth as it is without bowing to orders.

### **Tibetan language rights activist Tashi Wangchuk detained again for “slanderous” videos on Chinese TikTok**

14 November 2024, ICT

Chinese authorities detained prominent Tibetan language rights activist, Tashi Wangchuk, on October 20, 2024, for his language rights activism on Chinese social media platforms. The Yushul (Chinese: Yushu) City Public Security Bureau (PSB) accused Tashi of publishing “fabricated” and “slanderous” videos on platforms such as Douyin (TikTok) and Kuaishou to “slander government agencies” and challenge government decision-making.

Tashi was held for 15 days and released on November 4, 2024. This detention follows his previous five-year prison term from 2016 to 2021 on charges of “inciting separatism,” after his appearance in a New York Times article and video documentary in November 2015 documenting his efforts to petition the Chinese government for Tibetan language protection.

Despite surveillance and punitive measures, Tashi has continued his language rights activism after his release from prison. In August 2023, he was attacked by masked men, presumed to be affiliated with the authorities, in his hotel room in

Darlag (Chinese: Dari) County, Golog (Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai, while conducting research on the status of the Tibetan language in the area.

The recent detention was specifically related to Tashi’s social media activities. According to an Administrative Penalty Decision notice from the Yushul City Public Security Bureau, obtained by the International Campaign for Tibet, Tashi was charged with publishing “fabricated” and “slanderous” videos on Douyin and Kuaishou since June 2024. The PSB alleged that Tashi, using Douyin ID 241933 under the nickname Yushu Tashi, had been posting video clips that “seriously disrupt the cyberspace environment and social public order”.

The PSB alleged Tashi’s language rights activism “provoked disturbances” and imposed an administrative penalty of 15 days of administrative detention in accordance with Article 26(4) of the Law of the People’s Republic of China on Public Security Administration Punishments.

Article 26(4) provides for detention of individuals who commit “Other acts of provocation” that disturb public security or disrupt social order. This broad provision allows Chinese police significant discretion in detaining individuals by misusing the law to suppress activism and free speech.

With a firm belief in his right to freely express himself and advocate for Tibetan language rights in accordance with Chinese and international laws, Tashi refused to sign the Yushul City PSB decision notice that imposed 15 days of detention for his activism. The PSB noted his defiance in a handwritten note on the decision notice. Since his release on Nov.4, Tashi is reportedly under surveillance by the Chinese authorities.

Yulshul City PSB Administrative Penalty Decision notice imposing 15 days detention to Tashi Wangchuk



Notice of release from detention on Nov.4 issued by Yulshul Detention Center

## **Tibet, Sera Monastery Monk Persecuted to Death in Detention**

11 November 2024, Bitter Winter, Lopsang Gurung

38-year-old Losel was charged with sharing information about Tibet with foreigners, detained, and brutally beaten.

Last week, relatives confirmed to human rights activists that a monk from Sera monastery called Losel (also spelled Loser or Lose) died last month due to severe beatings in jail. Dharamshala-based "Tibet Times" was the first to mention the story.

Losel's family didn't know his whereabouts or condition until police returned to them his body in Lhasa on October 21.

Losel, aged 38, was from Tsoto Village in the Phenpo area of Lhasa. Previously known as Kalden, he joined Sera Monastery as a child. He pursued monastic studies at this prominent monastery.

Detained in May 2024, Losel faced allegations of gathering and disseminating information regarding conditions in Tibet to foreign contacts. He was held by Chinese authorities and underwent interrogations accompanied by brutal beatings that severely damaged his health.

Authorities reportedly did not provide medical care, which resulted in his death within the detention facility.

## **Chinese official ruined by crypto investments gets life in prison for selling state secrets**

11 November 2024, The Record, Alexander Martin

Chinese authorities announced on Friday that a public servant who found himself with large debts due to failed cryptocurrency investments had been sentenced to life in prison for selling state secrets to an unidentified foreign intelligence agency.

According to a post on Baidu by the Ministry of State Security (MSS) – the Chinese Communist Party's secret police and intelligence agency – the official, pseudonymised as Wang Moumou, was recruited after posting online about his financial difficulties.

Wang "posted on an online forum seeking a part-time job due to heavy debts, openly stating his identity as a public servant," stated the MSS.

"Soon, he was contacted by an overseas individual who offered a substantial reward in exchange for "paid information" such as production tasks and research progress from his workplace," the agency added.

It said Wang initially "provided a small amount of internal information in exchange for the reward" before he began to consider "how 'a few photos and documents could bring in a lot of money,' [and] his

rationality gradually faded. His greed and the hope of getting away with it took over, and his illicit activities grew bolder and bolder."

According to the MSS, Wang provided "top-secret and confidential national information to foreign parties," for which he received "over 1 million yuan (\$138,000) in espionage funds through methods such as virtual currency recharge and trading."

The organisation Wang was employed by was not disclosed. The MSS described it as a "certain classified institution" (某涉密单位) an intentionally ambiguous phrase which is typically used to cover a range of national security entities, from the MSS itself through to research departments.

In the MSS post on Baidu, it stated that Wang's workplace "did not strictly enforce security management protocols and protective measures, creating an opportunity for him to steal and leak classified information to foreign intelligence agencies."

It stressed to Chinese citizens that if they suspect espionage activities, they were encouraged to promptly report the incident via a number of routes.

Although the Ministry of State Security is called a ministry, unlike other Chinese government departments its logo does not feature the five stars of the People's Republic of China flag, but the Communist Party's hammer and sickle.

While the total headcount of the agency is not publicly known, it is believed to be the largest intelligence agency in the world with estimates suggesting more than 100,000 employees based in a large number of relatively autonomous branches located throughout China.

Alongside its internal security work, the MSS has been accused of cyber operations targeting Chinese dissidents abroad, as well as of stealing intellectual property to benefit Chinese companies domestically, and targeting political institutions to gain strategic intelligence.

## **Jailed Tibetan Community Leader Denied Retrial**

11 November 2024, CTA

Anya Sengdra has already served 6 years of a 7-year prison sentence.

-by Radio Free Asia, 8 November 2024

Chinese authorities in Tibet have denied to retry an environmental activist who is serving a seven-year sentence for campaigning against government corruption, his lawyer said on social media.

Anya Sengdra, 53, a resident of Kyangchu township in Gade (in Chinese, Gande) county in the Golog (Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture has already served six years of his sentence for "disturbing social order" after he complained online about corrupt



officials, illegal mining and the hunting of protected wildlife.

He was convicted and sentenced in 2019, and has attempted to appeal the decision twice before, his lawyer Lin Qilei said in a post on X on Tuesday.

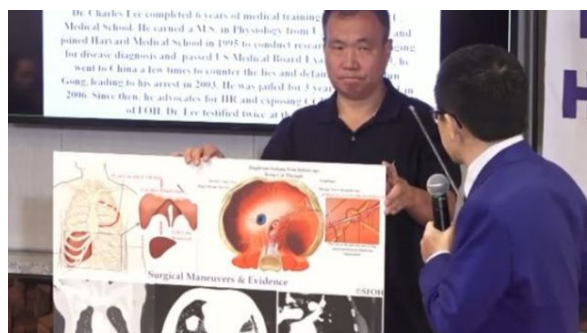
"This marks the third appeal for a retrial submitted to the Sixth Circuit Court of the Supreme People's Court in Xi'an," Lin said on X.

"As usual, I filled out the necessary forms and waited in line. After some time, a judge came out and informed me that they had decided not to review Sengdra's case," Lin said. "He advised me not to return to the court regarding this matter in the future." Click here to read more.

### Cheng Peiming: Organ Harvesting Survivor Slandered in China and Threatened in the US

08 November 2024, Bitter Winter, Marco Respinti

The press conferences of the Falun Gong practitioner mightily disturbed the CCP. It launched a slander campaign in China and tried to harass Cheng even in the US.



Cheng's press conference in Washington DC, August 9, 2024.

Falun Gong practitioners, Uyghurs, and others have denounced for years that organs are forcibly taken from prisoners of conscience and used for transplants. The People's Republic of China has mobilized its fellow travelers, including academics, anti-cultists, and religionists, around the world to claim that "organ harvesting" is just Falun Gong propaganda (ignoring parallel reports by Uyghurs and others).

The fact that the European Parliament through Resolution 2022/2657 of March 5, 2022, has officially stated that reports of organ harvesting are believable has not stopped the pro-Chinese propaganda. On the other hand, there is increasing evidence that the organ harvesting issue is now being discussed in China, despite the severe censorship trying to eliminate any online reference.

Cheng Peiming, a Falun Gong practitioners who escaped to the U.S., is the first-known survivor of China's forced organ harvesting. This year, he

shared his survival story of organ harvesting prohibition at public events nationwide, including panel discussions and documentary screenings. He detailed his imprisonment for practicing Falun Gong and the forced organ harvesting he endured. Upon request of Falun Gong, two Australian medical experts, both college professors, also examined Cheng, corroborating his testimony with findings that confirm parts of his liver and lung were indeed removed.

Cheng's press conferences were impressive. "The Diplomat" wrote in August that "Cheng Pei Ming's testimony offered a rare and disturbing glimpse into the horrors faced by prisoners of conscience in China."



Cheng showing his scars at the Washington press conference. Screenshot.

The testimony of Cheng is making inroads in China too through clandestine channels. This led the Chinese Communist Party to mobilize the China Anti-Xie-Jiao Association, which is directly controlled by the Party and claims to be the largest anti-cult organization in the world (the claim is probably true). The Association prepared a report that was shared by the China Court Network, "China Youth Daily," and other official sources.

Note that these are Chinese websites for domestic Chinese consumption. Very few people read them abroad. The fact that they felt the need to attack Cheng Peiming shows that his story has gained traction in China, managing to break through the censorship. The rebuttal is based on alleged statements by Cheng's relatives (including his sister, who says she believes the authorities and the jail personnel), doctors, and prison staff, but is contradicted by the medical examinations of the victim in the West. Under what kind of pressures the victim's sister and other relatives may have been put in China is also easy to guess.

Cheng has also filed reports with the U.S. authorities about the harassment he is a victim of in the United States. On November 2, 2024, between 4:00 AM and 6:00 AM, unidentified individuals broke into his New York home, forcing the garage door bolt open and leaving two doors unlocked and ajar. Deep tire tracks were found in the backyard, while his security



cameras and alarms were offline from 1:12 AM to 6:18 AM. Cheng filed a police report at 11:15 AM. The break-in followed several attempted attacks on Cheng and his vehicle over three months. After an October screening of the documentary film "State Organs" in Delaware, where Cheng spoke, his car was keyed. Twice, nails were found in his tires. One incident resulted in a tire burst while he was driving, but luckily no one was injured.

### **China said to intensify crackdown on Tibetan monks, religious education**

02 November 2024, CTA

Those who attempted to escape have faced severe consequences, treated 'like criminals' and subjected to further restrictions.

Chinese authorities have intensified their crackdown on Tibetan Buddhism, forcibly relocating hundreds of young monks from Kirti Monastery to state-run boarding schools in Ngaba County, Sichuan Province.

Reports indicate that these students, aged 6 to 17, are subjected to prison-like conditions, where they receive instruction solely in Mandarin. They are prohibited from leaving the school grounds or contacting their parents, Radio Free Asia (RFA) reported.

Those who attempted to escape have faced severe consequences, treated "like criminals" and subjected to further restrictions.

In July, the closure of the monastic school at Kirti Monastery left over 1,000 young monks without their educational institution, as they were transferred to state-run "colonial-style" boarding schools. Around the same time, Lhamo Kirti Monastery in Dzoge County also closed its school, affecting more than 600 students.

Authorities coerced parents into signing agreements that committed their children to government-run institutions, where they would receive state-sanctioned "patriotic education."

Beijing's regulations on religious affairs dictate that students at monastic schools must be at least 18 years old, demonstrate patriotism, and comply with national laws. Tibetan advocates view these measures as part of a broader campaign to eradicate the Tibetan language, suppress Tibetan culture, and enforce "patriotic education," which requires loyalty to China and the ruling Communist Party in all aspects of life, reported RFA. [Click here to read more.](#)

### **Undisclosed Arrests of Four Tibetans Sweep Through Ngaba as Chinese Authorities Target Monks, Civilians**

01 November 2024, CTA

Since early September 2024, monks Lobsang Samten and Lobsang Trinley (or Trinpo) from Kirti Monastery, and civilians Tsering Tashi and Wangkyi, among others, have been secretly arrested by the Chinese authorities in Tibet's Ngaba County, traditionally part of Amdo province. Since their incommunicado detention, their whereabouts and wellbeing remain unknown.

The recent detainees include Lobsang Samten, 53, a senior monk from Khangsar (Ch: Kangsai) in Golog's Chigdril County, who serves as junior chant master at Kirti Monastery and holds the Karampa (Geshe) title. Lobsang Samten was among 300 monks detained in a 2011 mass arrest at Ngaba monastery, according to Tibetan media sources. Also detained was Lobsang Trinley (also known as Trinpo), 40, from Rong Kharsa (Ch: Kuasha) in Ngaba County, a third-year Vinaya student at Kirti Monastery who organizes ritual ceremonies. Among civilian detainees are Wangkyi, 43, a mother of four currently residing in Ngaba County, and her brother Tsering Tashi, 41, both children of Kalko (Tib: ཀལ་ཁོ་) and Jigje Tso (འཇིགས་བྱེད་འཛོཾ་) from the Haritsang family of Rong Kharsa. Sources indicate multiple members of the Haritsang family have been detained over alleged connections with Tibetans residing in India. All detainees' current whereabouts remain unknown. Reports indicate intensified surveillance and restrictions across Ngaba region, with particular focus on Kirti Monastery and surrounding areas. A pattern of undisclosed detentions has emerged, with released detainees prohibited from sharing any information about their arrests, charges, or places of detention, which severely limits public knowledge of Chinese authorities' enforcement and unlawful actions against Tibetans.



Undisclosed Arrests of Four Tibetans Sweep Through Ngaba as Chinese Authorities Target Monks, Civilians.

Chinese authorities have mandated all monks under 18 years of age in the Ngaba area to leave their monasteries and attend Chinese government-run boarding schools. Kirti Monastery's preliminary studies institute, previously home to over 1,400 Tibetan students and teachers, now retains only about 100 students aged 18 or older, with the rest of the facility shut down.

Moreover, throughout Ngaba County and Prefecture, new education policies require all subjects except language classes to be taught exclusively in Chinese at residential schools. These measures are part of a broader policy using both administrative and coercive methods to restrict the transmission of Tibetan language, religious practices, and cultural identity to younger generations.

The Chinese authorities must immediately end these arbitrary detentions and provide accurate information regarding the whereabouts of the four Tibetans who are currently missing. The Central Tibetan Administration last September raised serious concerns on the reports of authorities' have forcibly removal of over 1,700 young monks from three monasteries in Ngaba – Kirti Monastery and two monasteries in Dzoge County – and their forcible enrolment in Chinese government-run boarding schools without consent from the children or their parents.

– Filed by the UN, EU, and the Human Rights Desk, Tibet Advocacy Section, DIIR

## October

### Authorities Arrest Four Tibetans in Ngaba County for Contacting Outsiders

30 October 2024, CTA

China's government restricts communication between Tibetans and those outside the region, saying it undermines national unity.

Chinese authorities have arrested four Tibetans from Ngaba county in Sichuan province, accusing one monk from Kirti Monastery of making dedication prayer offerings outside Tibet and two laypersons of maintaining contact with Tibetans outside the region, two sources told Radio Free Asia.

The arrests in early September come close on the heels of monastic school closures at Kirti Monastery in Ngaba county and Lhamo Kirti Monastery in Dzoge county, as well as the forced transfer of over 1,600 students, aged 6-17, from the Buddhist schools into state-administered "colonial style" boarding schools. More than 1,000 students were affected by the closure of the school at Kirti Monastery.

In the wake of the school closures, authorities have intensified surveillance and imposed tight restrictions on Tibetans in Ngaba county, including a crackdown on communication with the outside world.

"After the school closures in July, a high-ranking official from China's United Front Work Department was stationed in Ngaba county for several months, implementing even stricter control measures over both the monastery and the local community," the first source told RFA on the condition of anonymity for safety reasons.

Of the four arrested in September, two are Buddhist monks – Lobsang Samten, 53, and Lobsang Trinley, 40 – from Kirti Monastery. Samten was arrested for allegedly contacting someone outside Tibet for the purpose of dedicating prayers, while the reason for Trinley's arrest is still unclear, said the sources.

The Chinese government restricts communication between Tibetans and their family members and friends abroad, saying it undermines national unity.

Tibetans, in turn, have decried surveillance by Beijing, saying Chinese authorities are violating their human rights and trying to eradicate their religious, linguistic and cultural identity. [Click here to read more.](#)

## Tibetan monks' phones seized after accusations of sharing news about school closures

24 October 2024, RFA

China has shut down 2 schools linked to monasteries in Sichuan province.



Taktsang Lhamo Kirti Monastery is seen in an undated photo. (Citizen photo)

Chinese authorities are confiscating the cell phones of Tibetan Buddhist monks in Sichuan province, accusing them of having shared news about the recent closure of schools linked to monasteries, two sources with knowledge of the situation said.

Under Chinese government rules, ethnic Tibetans are banned from contacting or sharing news with people outside the region.

Traditionally, many Tibetan children are sent to schools at monasteries to be educated in the Tibetan language in regular subjects as well as in Buddhism. But Chinese authorities have closed schools at the Lhamo Kirti Monastery in Sichuan's Dzoge county and the Kirti Monastery in Ngaba county, claiming that the young monks were too young to receive monastic education.

The closure of the Lhamo Kirti Monastery school former affected nearly 600 students.

Instead, parents were required to enroll their children in state-administered residential schools, where the instruction is in Mandarin.

Suspicious that monks were sharing news about the closures with the wider world, authorities have been checking their phones since Oct. 1, said the sources who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal. Those found to have done so had their phones confiscated.

Authorities also have held frequent meetings with monastery management to emphasize the need for monks to study regulatory rules for Buddhist monasteries, citing religious affairs regulations and the prohibition of "separatist activities" by monks, they said.

"Despite the closure of the monastic schools, strict controls have been imposed, and restrictions have

intensified with authorities claiming the spread of information about the monastic school's closure to the outside world is a serious issue," the first source said.

"Officials are also conducting regular meetings with monastery staff, prohibiting 'separatist activities' and enforcing strict adherence to state regulations," he said.

According to Beijing's regulations on religious affairs, students at monastic schools must be 18 or older, display patriotism and be compliant with national laws.

Tibetan advocates see these regulations as part of broader government efforts to suppress Tibetan culture and enforce "patriotic education."

Founded in 1986, the Lhamo Kirti Monastery school initially offered three classes held in the monastery's hall and monks' residences.

In 1993, a separate school called Taktsang Lhamo Tibetan Culture School was established, but it faced interference from the Chinese government when officials ramped up restrictions on the study of the Tibetan language and Buddhist philosophy, ultimately leading to its closure.

The monastery's primary school later reopened and served novice monks under the age of 18 and children from nearby nomadic areas.

In July 2024, authorities issued new orders requiring the closure of the school. Families were compelled to sign agreements ensuring that their children would be enrolled in government-run schools, where they would undergo state-approved "patriotic education."

## China cracks down on 'uncivilised' online puns used to discuss sensitive topics

23 October 2024, The Guardian, Helen Davidson

Campaign targets wordplay and memes that are often used by people to get around censorship controls

China's internet regulators have launched a campaign cracking down on puns and homophones, one of the last remaining ways for citizens to safely discuss sensitive subjects without recriminations or censorship.

The "clear and bright" campaign is targeting "irregular and uncivilised" language online, particularly jokes, memes, and wordplay, the Cyberspace Administration of China and the ministry of education announced this month.

"For some time, various internet jargons and memes have appeared frequently, leaving people more and more confused," said an editorial by the Communist party mouthpiece, the People's Daily.

"They also form a hidden erosion on the daily communication and ideological values of minors, which can easily lead to adverse consequences."

China's online spaces are strictly monitored and censored. Some sensitive topics and terms are strictly banned, such as references to the Tiananmen massacre, or criticism of President Xi Jinping. Insulting individuals or China generally is also frowned upon.

In response, users have adapted, using funny or obscure references and in-jokes to get around the censorship. Many rely on homophones, using phrases that sound very similar in Mandarin, but were written with different Chinese characters, such as the word for "paratrooper" (sǎn bīng) instead of "idiot" (shǎ bī).

Authorities are in a near-constant race to catch new ways of describing Xi without mentioning him, which in the past have included a series of three arrows to represent the tones in his full name, or references to Winnie-the-Pooh because of suggestions Xi resembles the character.

Commenters will also often use the term "your country" to criticise Communist party (CCP) rule, instead of the CCP's commonly used "my country", as a protest that the CCP's China is not their China. One Chinese academic told the Guardian that instead of openly discussing concerns about government policies, colleagues would instead share links to allegorical poems or historical references.

State media has also suggested the new campaign intends to target even benign-sounding puns, giving as an example the phrase "rainy girl without melons" (yǔ nǚ wú guā) which is often used in place of "it's none of your business" (yǔ nǚ wú guān).

The People's Daily noted the quick turnover for online memes, and urged authorities and social media platforms to not allow "obviously ambiguous" new words to spread quickly without "rectification". "A wave of bad jokes will have disappeared, and a new wave of bad jokes may be on the way," it wrote.

### Condemned Uyghur official dies in prison in China's Xinjiang region

22 October 2024, RFA

Shirzat Bawudun, once a senior government official, was sentenced to death in 2021.

A Uyghur man who once served as a high-ranking government official in western China's far-western Xinjiang region has died in prison four years after he was sentenced to death for "separatism" and "terrorism," a prison official and a person with knowledge of the situation said.



Former Uyghur official Shirzat Bawudun admits to acts of separatism and terrorism in a "confession" broadcast on April 9, 2021. (Image from CGTN video)

Shirzat Bawudun is a former deputy secretary of the ruling Chinese Communist Party's Political and Legal Affairs Committee in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, or XUAR.

He was detained in November 2018 on suspicion of being "two-faced" and was officially arrested the following month after authorities determined he had committed a crime.

Bawudun and another high-ranking Uyghur official, Sattar Sawut, were given two-year suspended death sentences in 2021 in a stunning decision that critics said showed that even Uyghurs loyal to the Communist Party couldn't escape persecution in Xinjiang.

It was unclear when Bawudun passed away. But a source familiar with the situation who wished to remain anonymous for security reasons told Radio Free Asia that when family members requested a video meeting with him in late July, authorities informed them that he had died in prison.

Relatives are shocked by the news of his death, which they described as mysterious, according to the source. During their last video call in March, family members didn't observe any signs of illness or physical weakness, the source said.

Workers at the prison were notified of Bawudun's death, but the cause wasn't disclosed, a staff member at Turpan Dahiyan Prison in eastern Xinjiang told RFA last week.

The source familiar with the situation said authorities didn't tell family members about how and when he died. They were only told that Bawudun died in prison and that they shouldn't submit any more visitation requests, the source said.

Bawudun's arrest came amid a campaign of extralegal incarceration that saw up to 1.8 million Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities held in a vast network of internment camps beginning in early 2017. Bawudun and Sawut were the first high-ranking government officials to be given death sentences.



Bawudun had also served as a director of the region's High Court and was a member of the XUAR Political Consultative Conference.

According to the limited information shared by XUAR's High Court in 2021, Bawudun was accused of "long-term planning to split the country," "participating in the East Turkistan Islamic Movement" and "providing illegal intelligence to people outside" China.

### **Overcrowding reported at China detention centers amid economic downturn**

21 October 2024, VOA, Lin Nai- Chuan

Reports of overcrowded detention centers in China are spreading on the country's social media platforms as Chinese law enforcement cracks down on both petty and serious crime.

Analysts say China's increasing economic challenges from the slowing economy to unemployment and a massive property crisis, are all contributing to higher crime rates and in turn an increase in detainees at detention centers.

In one video posted on October 9 on the Chinese social media platform Xiaohongshu, Beijing-based lawyer Zhao Haidong describes a recent visit to the city's Fengtai Detention Center.

"In some of the smaller rooms there are around 20 people, in bigger rooms around 30 or 40 people," he said, adding that the number of detainees was much more than in previous years.

In another video published in August, Wang Rui, a lawyer in Sichuan, says he found 20 people detained in a 12-person room. The detainees had to sleep sideways together on a 30-foot-long bed. Wang reports that China is looking to expand its detention center infrastructure.

One Chinese human rights lawyer who asked to speak anonymously with VOA citing security concerns said he had witnessed similar circumstances.

The lawyer said he recently visited an insurance agent who was detained in Hebei province on allegations of "corruption." Describing the conditions, the lawyer said, "There are 28 people living in a detention room of more than 10 square meters, and a dozen square meters can only accommodate about 7-9 people."

VOA reached out to all three detention centers for comment on the reports of overcrowding. The Fengtai Detention Center refused to comment and said reporters must visit the center in person and present their press credentials before its liaison office would speak with them.

The detention center in Hebei also refused to comment over the phone and the center in Sichuan did not respond to a request for information.

Detention centers are designed to hold individuals awaiting trials and those who are arrested for petty crimes serving three or fewer months of jail time. Their overcrowding has become a problem as China has increasingly arrested more people in violation of the law.

According to official statistics from the Supreme People's Procuratorate of China, 367,000 people were approved for arrest in the first half of 2024, an increase of 18.5% over the previous year. Reports also show that China has prosecuted over 761,000 people this year, an increase of almost 7%.

On China's social media platforms, lawyers cite two reasons for the increase: a tougher crackdown on crime and worsening economic hardships.

Shen Yanan, a lawyer in Shandong province, says actions that were previously tolerated are now being targeted for arrest.

These include illegal transactions, trade disputes, pornography, gambling, fishing and collecting protected wild herbs, reported lawyer Sun Lianwei on her social media accounts.

Many online lawyers attribute the rise in arrests to increasing economic pressures and note that financial crimes have increased because of the pressure of mortgages, car loans and work.

Lin Zhanhui, assistant professor at Feng Chia University in Taichung, said that China's expansion of the definition of national security, heightening levels of social stability maintenance and changing standards for illegal behavior are the reasons for overcrowded detention centers.

"The CCP [Chinese Communist Party] is constantly expanding its criminal crackdown, through the so-called rule of law. [In addition to] maintaining stability for economic crimes, mass protests and political issues [must] be stabilized through national security laws," Lin told VOA.

Taiwanese democracy activist Lee Ming-che, who has firsthand experience in Chinese prisons, believes local government corruption could also be playing into the increase in arrests.

"With China's economic stagnation, and detention centers need to survive, local governments may be detaining more people [to] raise revenues and cracking down in these crimes that used to be overlooked," Lee said.

In China, inmates can pay to upgrade their meals and buy daily necessities. More inmates lead to more sales, increasing the revenue for the detention center and local government.

Lin Zhanhui has also observed local governments in China using "rule by law" as a means of bringing more money into local coffers. Such methods include short-term detentions and fines, he said.

Additionally, Lin agreed with the assessment of lawyers online in China that economic shifts,



including rising youth unemployment, corporate layoffs, factory closures and general employment struggles were contributing to the rise in overall crime.

Given the rising costs of living in China, some people, he says, could even see arrest as a means to get free meals provided in detention centers.

Facing harder times and more stringent laws, online legal influencers say it is the responsibility of individual citizens to avoid arrest. That is a frequent reminder that lawyers give in videos posted on social media.

"And here, I want to remind everyone: before you do anything [illegal], be sure to think twice, think twice and then think twice again," lawyer Shi Chuang says.

### **Falun Gong Practitioner Persecuted to Death 5 Days After Arrival in Notorious Prison**

21 October 2024, Bitter Winter, Shen Xiang

The 60-year-old Ren Changbin had just arrived in Heilongjiang's Shuangyashan Prison when his sister was informed he had "accidentally" died.



Ren Changbin. From X.

In Heilongjiang Province, Falun Gong practitioner Ren Changbin was tortured to death on September 28, 2024, merely five days after his incarceration in the notorious Shuangyashan Prison, where torture is routinely practiced.

Ren Changbin was born in 1964 in Jiamusi City in Heilongjiang Province. He previously worked at the Jiamusi Gongnong Glass Factory before retiring and later joined the Jiamusi Jianxing Ready-Mixed Concrete Company.

On September 14 and 15, 2023, a special anti-xie jiao (the Chinese name for banned "organizations spreading heterodox teachings," sometimes less correctly translated as "evil cults") squad of the Jiamusi Public Security Bureau raided several private homes, arresting some thirty Falun Gong practitioners and their families.

Among them, Ren Changbin was arrested by the police at his home on the evening of September 14. He was accused of being active in a xie jiao, a crime punished by Article 300 of the Chinese Criminal

Code. On July 25, 2024, he was sentenced to three years in prison by the Jiamusi Xiangyang District Court.



The notorious Shuangyashan Prison. From X.

Ren Changbin was transferred to Shuangyashan Prison on September 23, 2024. He was tortured to death just five days later, on the 28th, at the age of 60.

On September 28, 2024, at 8:00 a.m., Ren Changbin's sister was informed by the prison that he had died unexpectedly. When his family inquired about the cause of death, the prison authorities did not clarify, vaguely mentioning that he may have fallen while taking a shower. They were told that Ren Changbin's body had been sent to the funeral home. Ren Changbin's sister quickly gathered family members and hurried to the funeral home. There, they observed a stitched wound on his head, bruised eyes, body injuries, and hurt feet, all unmistakable signs of torture. Ren Changbin joins a long list of Falun Gong practitioners tortured to death in Chinese jails.

### **In rare appeal, Tibetan calls for company to stop digging up river**

20 October 2024, RFA, Dolkar and Choegyri



Tsongon Tsering, a Tibetan man from Tsaruma village in Kyungchu county in China's Sichuan province, calls for authorities to take action against illegal sand and gravel mining taking place since May 2023 on the Tsaruma River. (Image from citizen video via WeChat)

Chinese authorities have since shut down Tsongon Tsering's WeChat account. A Tibetan from Sichuan

province has made a rare public appeal on Chinese social media, calling on authorities to take action against a company that he accuses of illegally extracting sand and gravel from a local riverbed, Tibetan sources with knowledge of the situation said. In a 5-minute video posted on WeChat on Oct. 15, Tsongon Tsering from Tsaruma village in Kyungchu county said Anhui Xianhe Construction Engineering Co.'s digging has caused severe soil erosion and a drop in water levels in the Tsaruma River.

Such public appeals are rare due to fear of reprisals from the government for speaking out against authorities or state-approved projects.

Authorities have since shut down his account and blocked search terms related to his name on WeChat, a popular Chinese social media platform, said two sources from inside Tibet, who like others in this report, declined to be identified out of fear of retribution.

Tsering's case illustrates how authorities silence Tibetans who accuse Chinese companies of violating environmental regulations or harming the environment.

In the video, Tsering says Tibetan residents had made repeated appeals before local authorities for action against the company for causing environmental harm, but to no avail.

"The Anhui Xianhe Construction Engineering's business office has been illegally extracting sand and stones from the river in Tsaruma Village during their road construction work," he says in the video while holding up his ID card.

"The large-scale and indiscriminate extraction of sand from the river has led to serious soil erosion in the surrounding area and is posing a threat to the foundations of residents' homes," he continues.

Tsering's video, which gained significant attention online, was also widely shared by other users on the platform but even those were taken down and all related content censored by Thursday, Oct. 17, the two sources said.

Sources from the region said they fear Tsering, who hails from Ngaba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, will face punishment for his public criticism of authorities.

Four other sources inside Tibet confirmed Tsering's statement that the sand extraction from the local river has caused environmental harm and that locals had reported the issue to various government departments at the village and county levels.

They also provided photos and videos as evidence of the damage, but no action had been taken, said the sources.

Tsering's video, which had around 10,000 views in a day's time, received more than 500 comments from netizens, the majority of whom expressed support for his appeal and called for environmental protection

and for the Chinese state media and authorities to address the issue.

Tsering also tagged official Chinese media outlets in his post to draw their attention.

**Affects the Yellow and Yangtze**

In the video, Tsering explained that the Tsaruma River, where the extraction is taking place, is linked to the Yangtze and Yellow River systems, two of China's most important.

"The pollution of these river sources and the protection of local ecosystems and biodiversity are deeply interconnected issues," he said. "Moreover, this directly affects the water resources of Asia and the conditions of the high-altitude frozen soil."



A sand mining operation is seen along the Tsaruma River in Kyungchu county in Sichuan province, China, in this image posted Oct. 15, 2024, by Tibetan resident Tsongon Tsering. (Image from citizen video via WeChat)

On Oct. 17, a source told RFA that following Tsering's online appeal, the Kyungchu County Development and Reform Office had promised a thorough investigation into the matter.

An official from the Ngaba Prefecture Ecological Protection Office said his office was aware of the issue and investigating it in collaboration with the Sichuan Provincial Ecological Environment Monitoring Office, Chinese state media reported.

The agencies would release their findings soon, he said.

"Although environmental protection policies were introduced many years ago, implementation issues persist in our area," said Tsering in the video.

**Brushing it under the rug**

In it, he confirms that the county's Ecological Environment Bureau responded to his complaint in April 2024, confirming that the construction company had extracted sand and stones from the river and that it had been fined.

But Tsering said the response merely covers up for the relevant business enterprise and tried to brush the problem under the rug.

"They have addressed minor issues while avoiding the major ones, and have not taken any action to restore the ecological environment or manage the soil erosion situation," he said. "They have simply erected barriers around the endangered house foundations and considered the matter resolved."

Anhui Xianhe Construction Engineering, registered in China in June 2012, is involved in various construction projects including road construction, urban development, hydropower projects and environmental protection works.

RFA Tibetan could not reach the company for comment.

### **Yunnan, Update on Brother Chang Hao: Sentenced, Liberated, and Detained Again**

18 October 2024, Bitter Winter, Li Xiosi

The popular preacher was baptizing new Christians with famous Pastor John Cao when the police raided the gathering on October 15.



Brother Chang Hao (left) and Pastor John Cao (right). From X.

“Bitter Winter” has devoted several articles to Yunnan preacher Chang Hao, the “Christian anti-COVID mask man” who became popular by distributing masks inscribed with Bible verses, an initiative that mightily disturbed the authorities.

In April 2023, police raided Brother Chang Hao’s small rural church in Zhenxiong County, Zhaotong City, Yunnan Province. They confiscated Bibles, Christian books, and the famous anti-COVID masks with the Bible verses.

On November 7, 2023, the prosecutor brought the case against Brother Chang Hao to the Zhenxiong County People’s Court. According to Chinese law and procedure, a verdict was typically expected within two months, and no later than within three months. This period ended in February. Despite a document stating Chang Hao would be detained only until February 10 if no verdict was issued, he remained in jail without a verdict even after that date.

However, he was finally sent to trial and sentenced to one year and one month in jail for “picking quarrels and provoking trouble,” a catch-all charge against religionists who operate independently of the CCP-controlled religious bodies.

Counted from when he was first detained, the term of one year and one month expired on May 14, 2024, and Chang Hao was released on that date. However, he was kept under surveillance.

On October 15, 2024, Chang Hao gathered local believers in Zhenxiong County to celebrate the baptism of fifteen new Christians, some of them coming from Hunan with Pastor John Cao (Cao Sanqiang), another well-known and persecuted figure in the house church movement.

The police raided the event. Pastor Cao and Brother Chang with dozens of Christians were taken to the police station. All were eventually released except Brother Chang, who was notified he will remain in administrative detention for twelve days. What will happen next remains unclear.

### **China's ruling against Tibetan activist highlights Beijing's poor human rights record**

11 October 2024, ANI

For over two years, a Tibetan woman named Gonpo Kyi has been fighting for the release of her falsely accused brother, Dorjee Tashi.

Last month, a Chinese court ruled against her, putting justice for her younger brother even further out of reach. The court determined that the Public Security Bureau's (PSB) detention of Gonpo Kyi was lawful under Chinese law.

The International Campaign for Tibet has expressed concern over the oppressional activities adopted by the Chinese administration against Gonpo Kyi.

The PSB argued that Gonpo's activism expressed through prostration, meditation, posting flyers, and lying down in the street interfered with the work of the Tibet Autonomous Region Higher People's Court.

As a result, the PSB's 10-day detention of Gonpo was deemed valid, the return of confiscated materials (an A4 sign and a white cloth banner) was denied, and her claim for monetary compensation was dismissed. Gonpo Kyi, also known as Gontey (Chinese: Gongde), has been actively seeking justice for her younger brother Dorjee (Duoji Zhaxi) since June 2022. Dorjee received a life sentence in 2010 after being framed as a “secessionist” in the aftermath of the Chinese government's crackdown on mass Tibetan protests in the spring of 2008, and he is currently imprisoned in the notorious Drapchi Prison.

He was arrested following widespread protests across Tibet that challenged Chinese rule and was suspected of providing clandestine support to Tibetan demonstrators and of having alleged connections with the Tibetan exile community.

On September 24, 2024, the Chengguan District Court in Lhasa dismissed all five counts of Gonpo Kyi's complaint against the district's PSB. She had filed the lawsuit in March 2024, primarily claiming that her ten-day detention for peacefully advocating for her brother's release violated her rights.

Since its illegal occupation in the 1950s, China has



aimed for the complete sinicisation of Tibet, oppressing its people for over six decades. Since June 2022, Gonpo has been at the forefront of persistent efforts to seek justice for her brother. Her approach has evolved from appeals to authorities in Beijing over the past decade to more public forms of protest, including sit-ins in front of the Tibet Autonomous Region Higher People's Court in Lhasa. Gonpo's public advocacy reveals growing frustration with the lack of progress through official channels and a willingness to risk personal consequences to draw attention to her brother's case.

Tibetans in Tibet face severe restrictions on fundamental human rights, living under the constant surveillance of the Communist Party, which punishes or imprisons those who do not comply with its unfavourable policies and agendas, as reported by The Geneva Daily.

"I have petitioned the court in Lhasa for a retrial of Dorjee Tashi's case under the law of the country, but they have refused. The police have detained, dragged, and beaten me multiple times. I'm currently in poor health due to these beatings. My right to request a retrial for my brother feels powerless. Until the Lhasa Court addresses my appeal, I will persist," Gonpo stated.

Although the initial political charges against Dorjee were eventually dropped, he was later charged with "loan fraud."

In May 2010, the Lhasa Intermediate People's Court sentenced him to life imprisonment and permanent deprivation of political rights. Throughout her years of public advocacy, the PSB has subjected Gonpo to beatings, detentions, forcible removal from protest sites, and threats of severe consequences, all aimed at silencing her efforts.

### **Tibetan singer arrested for 'patriotic song' released early from prison**

07 October 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup



Golok Palden in an undated photo (Photo/Tibet Times)

A Tibetan singer who was sentenced to three years in prison by Chinese authorities for performing a

patriotic song has reportedly been released early, but remains under strict surveillance and restrictions. Golok Palden, from Yostag village in Dhimda township of Golok Padma County, was released on September 25, several months before completing his original prison term. Sources indicate he has been explicitly warned against singing any more patriotic songs.

The singer was initially imprisoned in November of the previous year after performing the song "I Am the Messenger of the Emperor" online. His arrest and sentencing were carried out secretly by Chinese authorities.

According to Tibet Times, which cited an anonymous Tibetan source from Tibet, Palden's release came without prior notice to his family. While the reasons for his early release remain unclear, reports suggest he is being closely monitored and followed by authorities.

Concerns about Palden's health have emerged, as many prisoners released early by Chinese authorities often face medical issues and cases of death in detention are common in Chinese prisons. However, due to restrictions preventing him from meeting with villagers and the secretive nature of his release, his current health condition cannot be verified.

Prior to his arrest, Palden had established himself as a respected figure in Tibet's traditional music scene. In 2022, he achieved sixth place in a traditional singing competition organized by Minthang Sermo and gained popularity for his online release "Missing Mother." His social media following exceeded 98,000 at the time of his arrest.

Chinese authorities continue to implement severe restrictions on Tibetan cultural expression, with numerous artists, writers, and intellectuals facing arbitrary detention and harsh sentences. Singers Pema Trinley and Chakdor from Meuruma nomadic village were secretly sentenced by a Chinese court in Ngaba in February 2013, having been detained in July 2012 shortly after releasing their album "Agony of Unhealed Wounds," which addressed sensitive topics including self-immolation protests and contained songs praising Tibetan religious leaders.

The crackdown extends beyond musicians and include writers and cultural advocates. Tibetan writer and poet Gendun Lhundrup, known for his cultural preservation efforts and his poetry anthology "Khorwa," was arrested in the so called Qinghai province in 2020. Other notable cases include Tashi Wangchuk, sentenced to five years in 2018 for language advocacy, and singer Lhundrub Drakpa, who received a six-year sentence in June 2020 for his song "Black Hat" after spending over a year in pre-trial detention without legal representation. The pattern of suppression continues with the confirmed

detention of prominent scholar Rongwo Gangkar in early 2021, following his disappearance for over a year.

### **Former Tibetan political prisoner Thupten Yeshi passes away at 74 in Lhasa**

02 October 2024, Phayul



Former Tibetan political prisoner Thupten Yeshi in an undated photo (Photo/VOA)

Thupten Yeshi, a former political prisoner who spent an aggregate of 15 years in the infamous Drapchi prison for allegedly leading the 1992 protest in Gyama Township, Meldrogungkar County, has reportedly passed away at the age of 74 in Lhasa, Tibet's capital. The 1992 protest was the first in the County since 1987, marking a significant moment in Tibetan resistance.

Thupten Yeshi was arrested on July 6, 1992, alongside four other farmers—Kunchok Lodroe, Lhundup, Sonam Rinchen, and Sonam Dorjee—following a bold protest in Gyama Township, Meldrogungkar County. On June 30, 1992, a large meeting of around 1,200 people, including local leaders, convened in the township. The four farmers disrupted the gathering, unfurling a 2.5-meter-long Tibetan national flag and shouting slogans such as “Free Tibet,” “Chinese Leave Tibet,” and “Long Live His Holiness the Dalai Lama.”

They were swiftly arrested, and Thupten Yeshi was later apprehended as the alleged ringleader. He was initially detained for 13 days at Meldrogungkar County Detention Centre before being secretly transferred to Gutsa Detention Centre, east of Lhasa. There, he endured nearly three months of interrogation, torture, and inhumane treatment.

On October 20, 1992, following severe torture during interrogation at Gutsa, the Lhasa People's Intermediate Court convicted all five on charges of “counter-revolutionary plot” and “inciting reactionary propaganda.” Sonam Dorjee and Kunchok Lodroe were sentenced to 13 years in prison, while Thupten Yeshi, Lhundup, and Sonam Rinchen each received 15-year sentences.

Sonam Rinchen, in his twenties at the time, died in 1999 while still in prison, after suffering partial paralysis due to repeated torture. Kunchok Lodroe was released on medical parole in 1996.

On November 20, 1992, the group was transferred to Drapchi Prison. Thupten Yeshi was immediately placed in solitary confinement for reciting Mani prayers and refusing to “reform.” In February 1999, he developed severe renal problems and blisters all over his body, leading to a 17-day stay at Xizang Military Hospital near Drapchi. Despite not fully recovering, he was returned to prison in poor health. Thupten Yeshi was finally released in 2007 after completing his 15-year sentence.

## **September**

### **China targets high-ranking officials who read banned books**

21 September 2024, RFA, Zhu Liye

The crackdown on restricted content could upend a system that once gave senior officials a more global education.

China's Communist Party is clamping down on the secret hobby of some high-ranking officials: reading banned books, a series of state media reports suggest.

Officials from glitzy Shanghai to poverty-stricken Guizhou have been accused in recent months of “privately possessing and reading banned books and periodicals,” according to state media reports, which typically surface when the officials are probed by the party's disciplinary arm.

Senior officials have traditionally enjoyed privileged access to materials banned as potentially subversive for the wider population, via the “neibu,” or internal, publishing system, former Communist Party officials told RFA Mandarin in recent interviews.

Now it appears that President Xi Jinping is coming for their personal libraries and private browsing habits in a bid to instill the same ideas in all party members regardless of rank.





A man walks past posters about Chinese political books displayed at the Hong Kong Book Fair in Hong Kong, July 18, 2012. (Philippe Lopez/AFP)

During the 1966-76 Cultural Revolution, any foreign book could be considered a "poisonous weed that promotes the bourgeois lifestyle."

Books banned since 2000 have typically been works about recent Chinese history or inside scoops on senior leaders, including memoirs from Mao Zedong's personal physician, late ousted premier Zhao Ziyang and a book about the later years of Mao's trusted premier Zhou Enlai.

Overseas publications are often banned or tightly controlled in China, either online, or via a complex process of political vetting by the authorities, including a 2017 requirement that anyone selling foreign publications in China must have a special license.

**Wider knowledge makes better leaders**

Former Party School professor Cai Xia said officials were generally allowed to read whatever they liked until the turn of the century. The arrangement encouraged officials to broaden their perspective, making them better leaders.

"Politics, like art, requires imagination," Cai said.

"Because experience shows that the more single-minded and closed-off the thinking of the Communist Party, especially the senior cadres, the narrower their vision and the poorer their thinking, and the harder it is for them to grasp the complex phenomena and situations that have emerged in China's rapid development," she told Radio Free Asia.

Wider reading encourages deeper thought, which helps China "to move forward," she said.

Du Wen, former executive director of the Legal Advisory Office of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region government, said the purge of readers of banned publications is worrying.

"This phenomenon is so scary, because it sends the message that there is no independence in the ranks of the Chinese Communist Party," Du said. "Even dialectical materialism and critical thinking have become evidence of guilt."

Nearly 20 officials have been accused of similar infractions, Du said, basing the number on his observation of media reports.

Officials have been tight-lipped about the names of the books and periodicals these officials were reading, yet the accusations keep coming.

**Those targeted**

In November 2023, the party launched a probe into former Zhejiang provincial Vice Gov. Zhu Congjiu, accusing him of losing his way ideologically.

In addition to making off-message comments in public, Zhu had "privately brought banned books into the country and read them over a long period of time," according to media reports at the time.

In June 2023, the Beijing branch of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection expelled former state assets supervisory official Zhang Guilin for "possessing and reading books and periodicals with serious political issues," alongside a slew of other alleged offenses including "engaging in power-for-sex and money-for-sex transactions."

Many of those targeted have been in the state-controlled financial system, while some have been concentrated in the central province of Hunan and the southwestern megacity of Chongqing, according to political commentator Yu Jie.

"Interestingly, a lot of officials in the political and legal system, national security and prison systems, which are responsible for maintaining stability and persecuting dissidents, are also keen on reading banned books," Yu wrote in a recent commentary for RFA Mandarin, citing the case of former state security police political commissar Li Bin.

In Hubei province, the commission went after one of their own in party secretary Wang Baoping, accusing him of "buying and reading books that distorted and attacked the 18th Party Congress."

"Monitoring what people are reading shows the authoritarian system's determination and ability to maintain its power and to destroy any resources that could be subversive and any doubts about the legitimacy of the authorities' rule," Yu wrote in a Chinese-language commentary on May 28.

"Xi Jinping's ... goal is to turn more than 80 million party members into marionettes or zombies, and follow him, like the Pied Piper, in a mighty procession that leads to hell," he said.

**Categories**

Zhang Huiqing, a former editor at the People's Publishing House, told RFA Mandarin that "gray" books were allowed to be published under the watchful eye of the party's Central Propaganda Department, which also reviewed and vetted foreign-published books for translation into Chinese, for distribution as "neibu" reading material.

Divided into categories A, B and C, where A was restricted to the smallest number of officials,

"reactionary" books were those that could potentially cause people to challenge the party leadership, and they were once distributed in a highly controlled manner, Zhang said.

Du Wen said that while he was an official in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region government, he had access to a slew of foreign news outlets not usually sold on the streets of Chinese cities, including Bloomberg, The New York Times, The Washington Post and newspapers published in democratic Taiwan.

"These were all allowed because if you want to do research, you have to understand what's going on overseas," Du said. "How can you research something if you don't understand the situation?"

Yet recent changes to party disciplinary regulations have brought more publications into the danger zone.

Nowadays, any publication not entirely in line with orthodox Marxism-Leninism or the official view of Communist Party history is likely to be seen as "reactionary," as is any information about China's highest-ranking leaders, both past and present, according to a senior figure in the Chinese publishing industry who spoke to RFA Mandarin on condition of anonymity.

"There's a lot of randomness and contingency that affects whether something winds up being labeled as reactionary," the person said. "It also depends on the level of understanding and personal ambition of the person in charge of an investigation."

And times change, making it hard for officials to stay on the right side of the rules.

"A book that was reactionary yesterday may not be reactionary today, and vice versa," the person said.

Public hotline

Typically, Chinese publishing houses take direct instructions from the General Administration of Press and Publication and its provincial branches about what they can and can't publish.

But a public hotline and a highly cautious attitude in recent years has meant that a book can be banned on the basis of a single phone call from a concerned individual.

The senior publishing industry figure said one work of non-fiction was canned on the say-so of the widow of a senior cadre because she didn't like the way her late husband was portrayed. The man had only played a minor role in the book.

"All of our editing, proofreading, binding, design, printing, marketing and distribution work was wasted," the person said. "We had already printed several thousand copies of the book, but we had to send them to be pulped."

The Chinese Communist Party's internal rule-book entry on what constitutes a banned book offense has

been amended three times since 2015, with categories being added each time.

Article 47 of the original regulations issued in 2003 warn: "Anyone who brings reactionary books, audio-visual products, electronic reading materials and so on into the country from abroad shall be criticized and educated; if the circumstances are serious, they will be given a warning or a serious warning; more serious offenses will be disciplined by removal from party post, probation or expulsion from the party."

Since 2015, the rules have been updated three times to include anyone "reading privately, browsing or listening" to banned material, which now includes "online text, images and audiovisual material."

Another senior media figure who requested anonymity said the key factor that makes a book reactionary these days is whether or not it tells the truth, especially about the Chinese government.

"Actually, the most reactionary thing is the truth," the person said, "because the truth could shake the foundations of party rule."

### Chinese police 'stalling' after school attack on dissident's son

18 September 2024, RFA, Qian Lang

Poet and artist Wang Zang is barred from talking to the media, while his wife says police are dragging their feet.

Police in the southwestern province of Yunnan have refused to set up a case file after the son of dissident poet Wang Zang was sent to hospital following an attack by older students at his high school, according to the boy's parents.

Wang Nianci, 15, was hospitalized following an attack by four older boys at the Zixi High School in Yunnan's Chuxiong region at around 9:30 p.m. local time on Sept. 12, Wang Zang's wife Wang Li told RFA Mandarin service in an interview on Wednesday.

The boys surrounded Wang Nianci in the bathroom, beating him and leaving with a fractured skull and broken nose, according to a CT scan carried out at the hospital, she said.

The attack came after authorities slapped a gag order, travel ban and round-the-clock surveillance on Wang Li and the couple's children as part of a nationwide "stability maintenance" operation during the National People's Congress in Beijing last year.

Wang Zang and Wang Li were both jailed behind closed doors in May 2020 by the Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture Intermediate People's Court, which found them guilty of "incitement to subvert state power" after they gave interviews to foreign media organizations.

Wang Zang said he was unable to comment on Wednesday, as he was banned from speaking to the

media following his release from prison in May at the end of his four-year jail term. Wang Li was released in 2022 after serving a two-and-a-half year jail term. "The police made it clear to me the day before yesterday that I'm not allowed to give interviews," he said. "I have asked my wife to talk to you about this."

Wang said the couple had gotten a call at around 10 p.m. on Sept. 12 and rushed to the school, where they were asked by school officials to wait in the security guard room.

"They wouldn't let us in to see my son's injuries [at first]," she said. "When he came out, his nose and face were swollen and his hands were covered in blood."

'We're still waiting'

The couple took Wang Nianci to the local police station to report the incident, where police took their statement, before calling in the four alleged attackers, but issued no official documents regarding the case, Wang Li said.

According to the medical report from the Chuxiong People's Hospital, a copy of which was shared with RFA Mandarin, Wang Nianci had sustained a fracture to the parietal bone, which forms part of the skull, and suffered from headaches as a result of that trauma.

But police didn't seem to take the attack very seriously, and suggested instead that her son leave the school he is currently enrolled in, Wang Li said.

"We asked them to open a case file, but they kept saying we had to wait," she said. "We're still waiting."

"We were supposed to meet with the police from the local police station today, but we haven't received a call from them yet, so it's still unclear what's happening," she added.

Last year, the couple called for a police investigation into the drowning death of Wang Zang's two-year-old nephew, which Wang Li said had occurred in "suspicious circumstances," but no further information about the tragedy has been forthcoming. In May 2020, police in Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture arrested both Wang Zang and Wang Li for "incitement to subvert state power," with the charges citing his poetry, essays, interviews with foreign media, and performance art since his earlier release from prison in 2015.

Wang's earlier sentence came after he posted a performance art selfie in support of Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement, and he was subjected to torture and mistreatment while in Beijing's No. 1 Detention Center, his lawyer said at the time.

In the photo, Wang holds up an umbrella, a symbol of the 2014 Occupy Central movement, and makes a middle-finger gesture.

## Chinese dissidents cut off from families at Mid-Autumn Festival

18 September 2024, RFA, Chen Zifei

The authorities often use family separation as a way to punish critics of the ruling Chinese Communist Party.



Chang Weiping is seen before (L) and after (R) he went to prison in undated photos.

The Mid-Autumn Festival is usually a time of family reunions in China, but the country's prisoners of conscience have scant hope of seeing their loved ones face-to-face any time soon, relatives told RFA Mandarin in recent interviews.

Chen Zijuan, the U.S.-based wife of rights attorney Chang Weiping, said that while her husband was released in July following a prison term for taking part in a gathering of dissidents in Xiamen in December 2019, he remains under a travel ban, and can't be with them.

Mid-autumn festival takes place around the autumn equinox in September, and involves family gatherings to eat mooncakes, light lanterns and admire the full moon. The moon also symbolizes togetherness for people forced to be apart, with countless poems dedicated to moon-viewing and feelings of loss or nostalgia.

Mid-Autumn Festival, traditionally a harvest celebration, starts on the 15th day of the eighth lunar month, when the moon appears at its roundest and largest.

This year's Mid-Autumn Festival fell on Tuesday and coincided with worldwide viewing of the supermoon eclipse.

But not everyone in China is in a position to take part.

"In recent years, the Chinese Communist Party has increasingly used family separation as a form of punishment for dissidents," Chen told RFA Mandarin ahead of the festival. "Even two years after his release, I'm not optimistic. I think they'll claim that his departure would endanger national security."

"It's very damaging for a family not to be able to see each other over a long period of time," she said. "They just want to make you suffer — it's also a way to intimidate everyone else in society."

For the spouses and children of political prisoners, national holidays, when everyone else is meeting up with loved ones, are the hardest and saddest times.

"I worry about him — he looks thinner and kind of sallow," she said of Chang. "He has lost his lawyer's license, and it's hard for him to get by now that he has lost his career."



Chen Zijuan (L) and Chang Weiping (R) pose together with their son in an undated photo taken before Chang's imprisonment. (Chen Zijuan)

"He is very anxious right now, and doesn't know what he can do," Chen said. "I don't have a good solution — all I can do is take good care of the kids; at least he doesn't have to worry about us any more."

'They just cut you off'

Meanwhile, the U.S.-based wife of jailed rights attorney Ding Jiaxi, who is currently serving a 12-year jail term for subversion after taking part in the Xiamen gathering, said she misses her husband very much, and is very worried about his health in prison.

"I worry about his health on a daily basis," Luo Shengchun told RFA Mandarin in a recent interview. "He has high blood pressure and needs to take medication."

"In China now, the way the authorities do things is not to tell you anything, not to respond to anything, and not to pass on any information — they just cut you off," she said.

Luo has appealed to her local Congress representative, but the Chinese government won't discuss Ding's situation with them either, she said.

But she still gets letters from Ding, who was jailed in 2023 alongside prominent rights activist Xu Zhiyong, and says he is her inspiration.

"I feel his influence from his letters and his actions — I believe in the resonance of souls," Luo said.

And she refuses to buckle despite the pressure of spearheading a public campaign to support her husband.

"I won't let them succeed in silencing Ding Jiaxi and Xu Zhiyong's voices, and I won't let them turn me into someone who weeps every day," Luo said.

"I am a total believer in non-violent resistance," she said. "The more the Chinese Communist Party tries to stop me from doing something, the more I will do it."

Xu's partner, the feminist activist Li Qiaochu, has since been released from prison.

Ahead of the Mid-Autumn Festival this year, she posted a photo of herself and Xu together in a moon-shaped frame to social media, calling on people to write to him in prison to offer their support during the festival, according to Luo.

### Political Shakeup at China's Top Social Sciences Institute Over Alleged Dissent

16 September 2024, China Scope

The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) has reportedly experienced a "political earthquake" in its Institute of Economics. The entire leadership was replaced due to allegations of "inappropriate discussions about the central government." This marks another political incident at CASS following an "espionage case" over a decade ago.

The event was triggered by the alleged misconduct of Deputy Director Zhu Hengpeng, leading to a complete overhaul of the institute's leadership. Zhu, 55, was also the director of CASS's Public Policy Research Center, focusing on public hospital reforms and medical security systems.

By the end of last month, the institute's director, party secretary, and deputy directors were all replaced. The CASS Party Committee appointed new leadership, including Gong Yun as party secretary, Li Xuesong as director and deputy party secretary, and Song Hong as deputy director.

CASS, China's highest academic institution for philosophy and social sciences research, also serves as a central think tank and ideological center. This incident follows a previous espionage case involving two CASS researchers over a decade ago.

Beijing officials frequently emphasize that CASS is "first and foremost a political organ, with political nature as its primary attribute and political consciousness as its foremost requirement."



## China's Economic Protests Give President Xi Jinping a Headache

28 August 2024, Bloomberg

China's slowdown is presenting a fresh headache for President Xi Jinping: more protests.

Instances of dissent rose 18% in the second quarter compared with the same period last year with economic grievances making up nearly two-thirds of cases. That's according to a new report from China Dissent Monitor at Freedom House, a US advocacy group.

So far, labor and real estate are the key pain points. Protests were often driven by stalled housing projects, sudden company closures or lack of liquidity, the inability to pay wages, or even local government's problems with providing adequate benefits for retirees, the project's lead said.

The figures don't capture the whole picture — researchers observed a new campaign to scrub content on video platforms early this year, and they also incorporated a new source of data in June. But it does provide a rare snapshot of the mood on the ground in some parts of the country.

China's Top 10 Cities for Economic Protest:

Dissent events in Guangdong province reflect strains in manufacturing hub Source: Freedom House's China Dissent Monitor

In tightly controlled and heavily surveilled China, protests don't present an existential threat to its leader. They're typically small scale, sporadic and don't directly criticize Xi. This means they're unlikely to prompt Beijing to take bolder steps to support the economy.

But they are a problem for local officials responsible for resolving the disputes with concessions, suppression or a mix of both. The bigger issue is that the demonstrations are symptomatic of the economic malaise taking its toll across the country.

People everywhere are feeling the pinch — and it's even weighing on demand for the most accessible of goods. This week's disappointing earnings results are another red flag. They prompted record-breaking stock selloffs in China's biggest consumer companies, the online retail giant PDD Holdings and the beverage firm Nongfu Spring.

The big picture is a nearly four-decade rise in living standards appears to be stalling in China.

And for Xi, that means he's not just dealing with the fallout from a sluggish economy but the much thornier question of how to govern as the country's boom comes to an end.

A demonstrator holds a sign reading "There is faith in our soul" during a protest against Covid restrictions in Beijing in November 2022. Source: Bloomberg

## Tibetan woman arrested for spreading rumours about closure of Ragya Sherig Norbuling school

22 August 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup

Zomkyi in an undated photo (Photo/Tibet Times)

Chinese authorities have reportedly arrested a Tibetan woman for allegedly spreading rumours about the recently closed Ragya Sherig Norbuling school.

Tibet Times, a Tibetan media based in Dharamshala reported that a woman named Zomkyi, a relative of a former student of Sherig Norbu School was arrested by Nagchu County police. She was accused of spreading rumours about the closure of Sherig Norbu School on social media. Her whereabouts since her arrest remained unknown.

A Tibetan source from Tibet informed TT that approximately one week before the closure of Ragya Sherig School, Zomkyi was detained by authorities for several days on charges related to an argument with local government officials. Additionally, on June 14, she received an order from the local police station restricting her movement. The source also indicated that Zomkyi typically showed disinterest in political education.

The Ragya Gangjong Sherig Norbuling school in the so called Golog Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture was closed by Chinese authorities on July 14. The private institution, established in 1994 by Ragya Jigme Gyalsten, was shut down, ending its 30-year operation as a Tibetan educational institution. The closure of the school led to expressions of disappointment and discussion among Tibetans both inside and outside Tibet.

Months before the closure of the school, on April 12 the school encountered multiple lawsuits and pressure from the Communist Party Secretary of Golok and other officials, who had been planning to close the school for several years. A student association, formed in 2018 to preserve the Tibetan language, was also sued for using the jewel and lion emblems from the banned Tibetan National Flag as their logo.

The school's founder, Jigme Gyaltsen, was accused of corruption and accepting bribes in his roles as chairman of the Snow Land Pastoral Association and the Qinghai-Tibet Trade Association. These charges



were brought to trial, and on June 28, Jigme Gyaltsen was acquitted of all charges.

### **Feds accuse Tiananmen Square pro-democracy activist of secretly working for China's intelligence agency decades later**

21 August 2024, CBS

Federal prosecutors in New York filed criminal charges against a Chinese dissident living in the U.S., accusing him of covertly working for China's intelligence agency, the Ministry of State Security, and spying on pro-democracy activist groups, according to a criminal complaint obtained by CBS News.

Yuanjun Tang once protested against the Chinese Communist Party during the 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstrations, court documents said, and fled to Taiwan and the U.S. But prosecutors alleged decades later, he agreed to work for China's intelligence agency in a bid to see his family living in mainland China.

Investigators said Tang first sought opportunities to visit his family in 2018 and was ultimately introduced to an unnamed intelligence officer. The two allegedly began communicating and the Chinese intelligence agent pushed Tang to collect "information about PRC Dissidents, pro-democracy events, and the political asylum process," according to court documents.

The Chinese intelligence officer also paid members of Tang's family after the pair entered the alleged partnership, prosecutors said.

Tang is accused of passing on information about events planned in New York to commemorate the Tiananmen Square massacre in 2021 and a year later, he allegedly provided the Chinese intelligence officer with information about an unnamed Congressional candidate's campaign team and fundraising. The candidate was also a Chinese dissident and human rights activist.

Court records alleged Tang also helped the agent monitor a group chat used by Chinese dissidents living in the U.S. "The group consisted of approximately 140 members, including confirmed PRC Dissidents such as the Congressional Candidate and a known PRC Dissident based in Flushing," investigators wrote.

Tang is charged with three counts, including acting as an agent of a foreign government and making false statements to investigators.

The FBI interviewed Tang in July 2023 and extracted data from five of his phones, an online account used by the Chinese intelligence officer, and Tang's computer. They recovered text and audio messages that Tang allegedly exchanged with the Chinese intelligence officer, photos and videos of pro-

democracy events, screenshots of conversations between dissidents, and "a Chinese-language copy of the FBI's Transnational Repression Threat Intimidation Guide."

In one of the messages — sent on June 3, 2023, the Chinese intelligence officer allegedly urged Tang to "work harder."

"Work harder this month. You have to send over some new stuff with utmost priority," the message directed, court documents revealed.

According to investigators, Tang traveled to mainland China or Macau on at least three occasions between 2019 and 2023 to allegedly meet with the Chinese intelligence officer. During a 2022 meeting, prosecutors said the agent installed a "bug" in one of Tang's cellphones that "caused any photo, screenshot, or voice memorandum generated or captured on the Compromised Phone to be immediately transmitted" to the officer.

Prosecutors alleged Tang had not notified the U.S. federal government about his work for China's intelligence agency as required by law. He was arrested on Wednesday.

The Justice Department charged numerous individuals tied to transnational repression cases in recent years. Communities of dissidents and pro-democracy activists living in the U.S. have long been targets of China's intelligence agency, which uses the families of the activists still living in the mainland as a form of coercion as prosecutors alleged occurred in Tang's case.

Earlier this month, a jury in New York convicted a naturalized U.S. citizen of Chinese dissent who led a pro-democracy group of secretly working with Chinese intelligence officers to surveil dissidents.

And last year, the FBI arrested two defendants on charges that they set up and operated an illegal Chinese police station in the middle of New York City in order to influence and intimidate dissidents critical of the Chinese government in the U.S.

A lawyer for Tang was not immediately identified.

### **Another Chinese Young Man Confronts CCP, Calls for Xi Jinping's Resignation**

17 August 2024, ChinaScope

Recently a Chinese young man has attracted attention by calling for the ouster of Xi Jinping using a wifi router to spread his message.

On August 14, Su Yutong, a Chinese freelance writer living in Germany, released a video on the web and stated: "A young person from China who has been promoting the movement to dismantle the Great Firewall (CCP's internet censorship/blockade system) was imprisoned in a psychiatric hospital on political charges. This morning, I received this video showing that he has once again confronted the CCP." In the video, the young man shouted: "Oppose the CCP's

internet censorship and control of speech," "No privileges, we want equality," and "We need freedom of speech and internet freedom." The video was recorded outdoors. The young man hoped that Chinese people would be able to "see the true face of the CCP." The young man also mentioned that, in the past, he had used routers and other equipment to broadcast messages such as "Xi Jinping, step down." The authorities issued a warrant for him as a "political criminal," ransacked his home, and confiscated his equipment including routers, laser sound systems, transmitter modules, and mobile phones.

On August 16, Su Yutong posted again on the X platform again, identifying the young man as Yan Zhongjian, born in February 1999. Su received a message from a friend entrusted by Yan: the friend and Yan had agreed that, if Yan could not be contacted for a certain period of time, the friend would release Yan's personal information and call on netizens to show concern and support for him.

The young man followed in the footsteps of several other dissidents in recent history. For example, in October 2022 Peng Lifa posted banners and played recordings denouncing the Chinese Communist Party and asking for the ouster of Xi Jinping. On July 30 of this year, Fang Yirong posted similar messages on an overpass in Hunan Province (see this ChinaScope briefing).

### **The First Known Survivor of CCP's Forced Organ Harvesting Speaks Out in Washington, DC**

15 August 2024, ChinaScope

Cheng Peiming, a 58-year-old Chinese man from Northeast China, is regarded as the first known survivor of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP's) program of forced live organ harvesting from prisoners of conscience. On August 9, at a forum in Washington, D.C., he publicly shared his experience in which the Chinese authorities forcibly removed his organs twenty years ago.

Cheng stated that he was repeatedly detained and tortured by the CCP for practicing Falun Gong. In 2002 he was sentenced to eight years in prison. In July 2004, in a state of good health, he was dragged from prison to a hospital where guards tried to make him sign a form of consent for surgery. When he refused to sign, the guards knocked him down and anesthetized him. When he woke up three days later, Cheng found himself handcuffed to a bed with a 35-centimeter-long incision on his chest. In 2006, prison guards again took Cheng to a hospital. He said, "They had no reason for any surgery, so I knew I would be killed." He managed to escape while the guards were sleeping. Cheng spent the

next nine years hiding in China and managed to flee to Thailand in 2015. Four years ago, with assistance from the U.S. government, he came to America through the United Nations refugee program. When media reports on China's forced organ harvesting practices first emerged in 2006, Cheng realized that this was what had happened to him. It was only after arriving in the U.S. that transplant specialists confirmed through scans that part of his liver and left lung had been removed. Cheng said that he still cannot feel certain parts of his chest and struggles daily with severe pain throughout his body. In 2019 an independent tribunal in London ("The China Tribunal") ruled that the CCP has committed crimes against humanity through its continuous harvesting of organs from minority groups, including Falun Gong practitioners. Two years later, a United Nations human rights expert reported that, in addition to Falun Gong practitioners, other minorities, including Uyghurs, Tibetans, Muslims, and Christians detained in China, had also become targets of forced organ harvesting. In June of this year the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Falun Gong Protection Act, aimed at compelling the CCP to end its persecution of Falun Gong and the forced harvesting of organs from detained practitioners.

### **China tries 11 Mongol herders for defending traditional land**

06 August 2024, UCA News

Police arrest a herder in Urad Front Banner in Mongolia. (Photo:<https://smhric.org>)

The families of nearly a dozen herders branded "criminals" and standing trial in Inner Mongolia have accused local Chinese authorities of aiding and abetting a mining company to illegally occupy their traditional grazing lands.

The trial which has dragged on for more than 90 days is expected to end next week.

In a statement, the families said they "have lived on the grasslands of Urad Front Banner and maintained a pastoralist way of life for generations," the Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center (SMHRIC) reported on Aug. 5

"Jiranhoyor [their head] has appealed to the relevant [authority] multiple times. The destruction of grassland has never been resolved. Now, these 11 herders have become 'criminals' overnight," the families added.

Jiranhoyor is the former head of the Taigiin-Enger Gachaa of Bayanhuaa Township who led the local herders to defend their legal rights, the families said. The Bayannuur League Public Security Bureau also reportedly arrested Sumyaa, Sumbur,

Daichin, Munkhsumbur, Nars, Naranbat, Hurwaa, Wei Meili, Hong Wuyi, and Aldart for the first time in August 2020 and detained them multiple times since. The herders have been detained for periods ranging from 37 days to 18 months without “legal due process,” the SMHRIC said.

Photographs and videos posted on the SMHRIC website showed sick and elderly herders being taken into custody in wheelchairs and some being handcuffed and shackled to hospital beds.

The herders have been defending the alleged illegal occupation of their lands and environmental destruction by multiple Chinese mining companies, including Huo Tuo Mine, for more than a decade, the SMHRIC said.

In a statement issued in 2020, the Bayannuur security bureau called the herders “gangs” and alleged they were “long engaged in evil deeds and illegal activities,

seriously sabotaging the local economy, disturbing public orders, and creating adverse social effects.” Urnaa, a daughter of Jiranhoyor, told SMHRIC that her father and the other herders were only protesting the mining companies for illegally occupying and destroying their grazing lands.

“As mining companies beating up and abusing local herders become commonplace, herders from our community often gathered together to block the mining trucks,” Urnaa said.

“These peaceful and legal activities are now labeled as ‘crimes,’” Urnaa lamented.

Urnaa pointed out that Jiranhoyor was diagnosed with bladder cancer before his arrest in 2020 and he had to undergo several surgeries and chemotherapy before he was arrested again for the second time in 2021.

Sumyaa, Urnaa’s mother, was detained for more than 17 months for signing the petition against the mining company.

Sumbur, a herder, who has been suffering from serious rheumatoid arthritis was handcuffed and shackled on a hospital bed during the detention, according to photos and video footage shared by Urnaa, SMHRIC said.

“Sumbur was not even able to walk and hold a teacup by himself. But he was taken away in a wheelchair by the police,” Urnaa alleged.

Naranbat, another local herder, was the longest-serving detainee at the Urad Front Banner Detention Center.

The center in a release notice said Naranbat was released on bail pending trial on Dec. 1, 2022, after serving an 18-month detention without trial, SMHRIC said.

Reportedly, the local public prosecution authorities have revised the indictment against the 11 herders

four times in over four years due to insufficient evidence and legal basis.

The latest revision took place on July 25 during the most recent trial.

Meanwhile, Jiranhoyor’s family members alleged that the mining companies had bribed the local police and authorities.

SMHRIC pointed out that Chinese authorities have accelerated the resource extraction from Southern Mongolia which has prompted giants like Shenhua and Changqing to arrive in the country.

Allegedly, many have opened mines without the consent of locals sparking tensions in the region.

In 2011, a large-scale protest erupted after a Mongolian herder was brutally killed by a Chinese coal-hauling truck.

Thousands of herders were arrested and detained, and their leaders have been imprisoned, SMHRIC said.

### **Activist of Hunan bridge banner, White Paper Movement missing**

06 August 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

Fang Yirong, a Chinese protester known for his recent demonstration on a bridge in Hunan Province, China, is missing. On July 30, Fang unfurled a banner demanding “freedom, democracy, and elections” and condemning Chinese President Xi Jinping as a “dictator” and an “authoritarian traitor.”

A pre-recorded video, widely circulated on August 2 on X (formerly Twitter), showed Fang introducing himself as a “young participant in the White Paper Movement” but does not directly reference the Hunan banner protest. In the video, Fang states, “Last summer, I posted comments supporting democracy on Telegram and was targeted by the Chinese Communist Party’s National Security Department. Since then, the National Security Department has subjected me to brutal and inhumane mind control persecution. I am posting this video now to prove that I am no longer afraid of them. Tyranny is inevitably terrifying, but authority cannot crush the human spirit. Xi Jinping can continue to persecute us, but he cannot stop the ideas of democracy from taking root and sprouting in the hearts of the Chinese people again and again. The waters of the Yangtze River will not flow backward. I hope the Chinese people can soon be free from tyranny and lead better lives. After doing this, I might be officially declared mentally ill by the Chinese Communist Party. I might also die in prison, but I will not regret it.”

In another post on X, journalist and China expert Jennifer Zeng translated a letter by Fang Yirong,

which was posted online. In the letter, Fang detailed the political persecution he faced from the Chinese Ministry of Public Security, describing “daily surveillance, intimidation, and harassment” by agents. He wrote, “I participated in poster-posting activities at the end of the White Paper Revolution out of my dissatisfaction with the dictatorial tyranny of the Chinese Communist Party. I have also spoken out against the dictatorship and feudal rule of Xi Winnie (Xi Winnie-the-Pooh) on the internet many times. Eventually, I was exposed for plotting rebellion within the CCP’s black police entrapment group, the ‘White Paper Matrix.’ Since July last year, I have been suppressed and persecuted by the vicious government.”

The banner unfurled by Fang Yirong on the Hunan bridge carried slogans strikingly similar to those displayed during the October 2022 Sitong Bridge protest in Beijing’s Haidian district by Peng Lifa, who was immediately detained. The slogans read, “No COVID test, we want to eat. No restrictions, we want freedom. No lies, we want dignity. No Cultural Revolution, we want reform. No leaders, we want votes. By not being slaves, we can be citizens.” Another banner urged residents to strike from school and work to “remove the dictator and national traitor Xi Jinping.” These acts of dissent are unusual in China, where free speech and criticism are heavily suppressed, and protests often provoke a strong response from authorities. Observers note that the emergence of such banners reflects growing discontent with the Chinese Communist Party’s stringent control over public expression, particularly following the implementation of the ‘Zero COVID’ policy. This policy has sparked sporadic demonstrations against Xi Jinping and the CPC’s governance.

### **Fate of Drepung monastery monk remains uncertain after 17 years of disappearance**

04 August 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

Kunchok Nyima in an undated photo (Photo/RFA)

Kunchok Nyima, a monk from Drepung Monastery, has been missing for 17 years following his arrest by Chinese authorities on April 11, 2008, according to Radio Free Asia (RFA). His whereabouts currently remain unknown. He was detained for his alleged involvement in a peaceful protest by the monks of Drepung Monastery in 2008.

According to the report, the Lhasa Intermediate People’s Court sentenced Kunchok Nyima to 20 years in prison. Despite repeated inquiries from his family members and villagers, authorities have consistently refused to disclose any information

regarding his whereabouts or condition, maintaining strict secrecy about his status.

A source within Tibet reported that over two years after Kunchok Nyima’s disappearance, he was sentenced to prison in June 2010. Despite efforts by his family and relatives in Dzoge County, who have connections with the authorities, to inquire about his status, they were eventually told that he had been transferred to Lhasa and was no longer under the jurisdiction of Dzoge County. The authorities expressed that they had no further options in the matter.

Kunchok Nyima originally hailed from Thebo in Amdo (Ch. Qinghai). He travelled to central Tibet for his studies and subsequently joined Drepung Gomang Monastery. There, he became a teacher and attracted numerous students from all three provinces of Tibet. On March 10, 2008, approximately 300-400 monks from Drepung Monastery held a peaceful protest on Barkhor Street to commemorate the 49th anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising against China’s illegal invasion of Tibet. Reports indicate that the monastery was subsequently surrounded by local military and police forces, and the monks were subjected to beatings and tear gas. Over 50 monks were arrested during the incident, according to reports.

### **Protest banner against Xi Jinping in China calls for freedom and democracy**

01 August 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup

A protest banner appeared on an overpass in Xinhua County, Hunan province, China on Tuesday calling for freedom and democracy. The banner hung over a bridge called for freedom and democracy, criticizing Chinese President Xi Jinping as a “dictator” and an “authoritarian.” The message, translated by British-Chinese journalist Cindi Yu, read: “freedom, democracy, elections, protest school, protest work, protest authoritarian traitor Xi Jinping”.

This act of dissent is unusual in China, where free speech and criticism are heavily suppressed. Protests are often met with a strong response from authorities. Observers say that the emergence of this banner reflects a growing discontent with the CPC’s strict control over public expression, particularly since the implementation of the ‘Zero Covid’ policy. This policy has led to sporadic demonstrations against Xi and the CPC’s governance.

In recent years, there have been several instances of public unrest in China. In October 2022, two banners appeared hung over a busy overpass in the capital Beijing. One reads: “Go on strike. Remove dictator and national traitor Xi Jinping.” The other read “Say no to covid test, yes to food. No to

lockdown, yes to freedom...Don't be a slave, be a citizen."

In November 2022, large-scale riots erupted in Zhengzhou and Guangzhou, with protesters clashing with police and demanding changes to strict covid restrictions. In Zhengzhou, workers at Foxconn's iPhone plant protested company policies and Xi's regime, while residents of Guangzhou voiced their discontent with lockdown measures.

China's history of suppressing dissent includes events such as the 2008 Tibetan uprising and the 1989 Tiananmen square protests. The 2008 Tibetan uprising was marked by severe repression where hundreds of Tibetan monks gathered in Lhasa to protest and mark the 49th anniversary of a previous Tibetan uprising against Beijing's rule. The protesters sought the release of fellow Drepung monks, who were reportedly detained while attempting to celebrate the

U.S. Congressional Gold Medal to the Dalai Lama. Rights groups reported more than 140 deaths, while Chinese authorities claimed the death toll was just 22. The crackdown on the Tiananmen Square protests in April-May 1989 remains infamous. Millions of people gathered in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, demanding greater freedoms. In response, the Communist Party of China (CPC) imposed martial law, deploying military forces on June 3-4 to end the movement. Estimates of the death toll vary widely, ranging from 200 to 10,000, with reports of severe violence against protesters.

## July

### Job losses, protests present difficulties for Chinese Communist Party

27 July 2024, VOA

Job losses and wage cuts from China's economic downturn are hitting key industries, according to the South China Morning Post, and analysts say the situation could lead to political difficulties for the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

Rights groups say the situation has triggered a sharp increase in protests and strikes around the country – not enough to threaten the rule of the CCP or President Xi Jinping, but enough that an analyst sees a "hidden danger" for Chinese authorities unless they can rejuvenate the economy.

Mr. Wang, in his early 40s, lives in Bao'an District, Shenzhen, in southern China. He was formerly employed at a well-known business travel platform but was laid off earlier this year. He prefers not to disclose his full name or the company's name due to the matter's sensitivity.

Wang tells VOA, "In the area of business travel software, our company is at the forefront of China in terms of R&D and sales, and it is also one of the top 500 private enterprises in China. But now many companies have run out of money, our sales have plummeted, and the layoffs finally fell on our group of old employees."

He compares China's economic slowdown to a high-speed train suddenly hitting the brakes, and everyone on the train hitting the ground, even those better-off, like himself.

China's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate has been dropping since hitting 10.6% in 2010, well before the COVID pandemic, which cut growth to 2.2% in 2020, according to the World Bank.

The global lender says growth bounced back to 8.4% in 2021 but then fell to 3% in 2022 before a moderate recovery to 5.2% in 2023. The World Bank expects China's growth rate to drop back below 5% this year.

Several Chinese workers VOA talked with said they were unprepared for the economy to slow so quickly. Two large IT companies laid off Mr. Liu in Guangzhou in the past two years, and his life has turned gloomy. He also prefers not to disclose his full name due to the matter's sensitivity. Still struggling to find a job, Liu has a second child, and his wife was diagnosed with early-stage breast cancer.

"When I was laid off for the first time, I got decent severance pay because I had worked there for a long time," says Liu. "Later, when I came to a large company, I was laid off again, and I felt that I was quite unlucky. Fortunately, we don't have too much debt."

According to South Morning China Post's (SCMP) July analysis of the annual reports of 23 top Chinese companies, 14 of them carried out large layoffs in 2023, with technology and real estate companies among the worst hit amid a glut of empty buildings.

The online newspaper reports that one company, Poly Real Estate, laid off 16.3% of its workforce in the past year, or 11,000 people; Greenland Holdings, a Shanghai-based real estate company, also saw a 14.5% drop in the number of its employees.

The SCMP reports online retail giant Alibaba cut 12.8% of its workforce, or about 20,000 jobs, in the 2023 fiscal year, while technology conglomerate Tencent's headcount fell 2.8% in 2023 to about 3,000, and in the first quarter of 2024, the company laid off another 630 people.

In addition, Chinese internet tech firms ByteDance, JD.com, Kuaishou, Didi Chuxing, Bilibili and Weibo have all conducted layoffs this year.

China's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) is painting a rosier picture this month, calling employment and the national economy "generally



stable" and citing "steady progress." In June, it showed only a 0.2% drop in urban jobs compared with the same period last year.

The NBS also claimed China's lowest youth unemployment rate this year, 13.2%, after it removed students from the calculation. The new methodology was introduced after China hit a record high 21.3% youth unemployment in June 2023, prompting authorities to suspend publication of the statistic.

Chen Yingxuan, a policy analyst at the Taiwan Institute of National Defense and Security Studies who specializes in Chinese unemployment, tells VOA that Beijing's job worries have shifted from fresh graduates and the working class to middle class and senior managers.

She says many have faced salary cuts or layoffs to reduce costs and increase efficiency as China struggles with a weak housing market, sluggish consumption, high government debt, foreign investment withdrawals, and trade barriers.

Even people with relatively stable incomes, such as workers at state-owned enterprises, are feeling the pinch.

Ms. Zhang, who works for a state-owned commercial bank in Guangzhou and prefers not to disclose her full name due to the matter's sensitivity, says many bank employees are seeing paychecks shrink.

"State owned banks such as China Construction Bank and Agricultural Bank of China, or joint-stock banks, are now cutting salaries, let alone urban commercial banks in many places," she tells VOA. "Salary cuts already started last year, and it seems to be worse this year."

She projects the cuts will be 20% to 30% by the end of the year.

In July, China's 31 provincial-level administrative regions issued regulations calling for party and government organs to "live a tight life," focusing on budget cuts and reductions in public spending.

Analysts say further job and wage cuts could lead to intensified protests and strikes, leading to greater instability.

Rights group China Labor Bulletin (CLB) in 2023 counted 1,794 strike incidents in China, more than double the number in 2022.

In the past six months alone, the group documented about 1,200 incidents in protest of the wage cuts, unpaid wages, unforeseen layoffs, and unfair compensation, a more than 50% increase from the same period in 2023.

CLB estimates "only 5% to 10% of all collective actions of workers have been recorded," suggesting many more protests are taking place.

But Chen of the Taiwan Institute of National Defense and Security Studies says the wage cuts and unemployment have not yet been severe enough to

spark large-scale protests that threaten the power of the ruling party or President Xi.

"Although there has been an increase in protests, they are still relatively sporadic. There are no large-scale incidents, and local governments can easily quell them," she says. "So, for the legitimacy of the CCP and Xi's third term, it is more of a hidden danger than an imminent crisis."

While protests in China are usually by working class people, Wang notes the economic pain is spreading to other, more influential groups.

"Whether for blue-collar, white-collar, or even gold-collar workers, the economic losses are now very large," says Wang. "The worse the economy and the more emergencies there are, the more the CCP will suppress it with high pressure. It's a vicious circle, where people suffer more, and stability is more costly."

Meanwhile, analysts say Chinese authorities are struggling to come up with a plan to reverse the unemployment and wage cutting trend.

The communiqué of the Third Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, released on July 18, mentioned employment only once, saying "it is necessary to improve the income distribution system and the employment priority policy."

### **Rights group urges forced labour investigation, especially in mining industry, in Tibet**

23 July 2024, Tibetan Review

China is using its so-called "rural surplus labour transfer" policy, sometimes carried out under a broader regime policy of "poverty alleviation through labour transfer", to potentially subject Tibetan farmers and herders to forced labour. And the risk of forced labour is rising in Tibet, specifically in its mining industry, as China's hunger for the territory's rich resources, especially those related to the renewable energy sector and the 'green energy transition', keeps growing, said a new report by New York-based Human Rights Foundation posted on its hrf.org website Jul 22. The report said available information taken from official sources and published reports warrant independent investigations of the true situation there.

China's claim is that by facilitating the transition of workers in subsistence industries, such as herding and farming, to sectors with more "profitable" jobs, such as mining, the regime can grow key industrial sectors while also providing jobs to workers who are at risk of being "left behind" in Tibet's economic growth. While this is ostensibly meant to promote societal progress, the industrialization of Tibetan lands and recruitment of local communities also disrupt traditional Tibetan livelihoods and raise

questions about the extent to which Tibetans freely participate in the recruitment process, the report said.

It pointed out that this forced resettlement and sedentarization makes formerly self-sufficient farmers and nomads dependent on the regime's markets and social support programmes to survive, hindering their customary way of life.

Due to China's imposition of especially tight ban on access to Tibet, direct evidence, including testimonies, cannot be obtained. Nevertheless, certain parallels can be drawn between Tibet and the Uyghur Region in terms of policy terminology and implementation. The rural surplus labour transfer policies of Tibet contain the same key phrases (*tifa*) as those in the Uyghur Region, the report pointed out.

"*Tifa*" are CCP-approved terms that are euphemisms for specific and often sinister policies, and function like codewords. They refer to various, strictly-defined policies, and it is mandatory for regime officials to use *tifa* whenever discussing such policies and their implementation, to ensure total conformity in policy implementation. In both Tibet and the Uyghur Region, *tifa* for rural surplus labour transfer include language, such as "labour absorption", "surplus rural labour transfer", "labour export", "transfer employment", and other such phrases, the report noted.

Besides, both in Xinjiang and Tibet, employment is arranged by the state and local cadres go from door to door to recruit villagers, making the process strongly likely to be coercive in nature.

The report cited two case studies in Tibet.

Zijin Mining Group Ltd., a state-owned Chinese company that mines gold, lithium, and copper, own two mines in Tibet. It was previously linked to forced labour practices in Xinjiang. It owns and runs the Julong Copper Mine, and the Lakkor Tso lithium mine in Tibet. Julong is one of the largest copper mines owned by China and is expected to operate until 2067, the report noted.

The report said an Apr 2023 article published by state media described how Julong, along with another mining company (Tibet Huatailong) and the Chikang Village Party Committee, engaged in trainings and that "labourers were exported".

Besides, in 2018, Julong Mine exported 38 labourers, according to Menba Township's 2018 poverty alleviation objective. This document mentioned that such labour export was done with the support of Maizhokunggar (Tibetan: Maldrogungkar) County's government and the human resources and social security bureaus, the report said.

The second case study is on China Gold International Resources, a mining company based in Canada and

owned by China. It is the parent company of Tibet Huatailong, which owns and operates Jiama mine, one of the biggest copper-gold polymetallic mines in Tibet. The parent company was stated to have cited in its 2018 Annual Report Tibet Huatailong's employment of 377 Tibetans as a case study of how the company "has absorbed and arranged" employment of local Tibetan farmers and herders – echoing the *tifa* associated with labour transfer programmes.

Indeed, Tibet Huatailong was stated to have engaged in this example of possible labour transfer in accordance with a government poverty alleviation scheme as outlined in the Lhasa City government's Thirteenth Five-Year Plan Characteristic Industry Development Plan (2017). In another instance, Tibet Huatailong was stated to have spoken of having "absorbed" 435 farmers and herdsmen by 2020 – the word "absorb" being a key indicator that this employment may have been implemented as part of a labour transfer programme.

A strong indication that forced labour is being implemented in Tibet could be seen from the fact that a Jan 2023 Chinese law applying to the entire Tibetan Autonomous Region states that if Tibetans refuse to accept state-arranged employment three times, the regime will reduce or suspend subsistence allowances on which many Tibetans have come to depend for survival. This financial penalty, though not directly mentioned in rural labour transfer policies, should be examined as an additional potential risk factor for state-imposed coercive labour conditions in Tibet, the report said.

Other mines based in Tibet should also be investigated, such as the Luobusa chromite mine. This mine's parent company, Tibet Mining, published a 2020 Social Responsibility Report which explicitly admits to concentrating "surplus labour" and engaging in the "relocation" of households in Qamdo in the context of governmental poverty alleviation laws. Tibet Mining's own parent company, Baowu, also describes Tibet Mining as engaging in labour transfer and has even been linked to forced labour in the Uyghur Region, the report noted.

## US: China still arresting 'thousands' each year for practicing faith

26 June 2024, RFA, Alex Willemyns

Buddhists, Christians, Muslims and Falun Gong followers are targeted.

Chinese authorities continue to arrest "thousands" of people a year for practicing their faith in ways that undermine the primacy of the Chinese Communist Party, a new U.S. State Department report says.

Released by Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Wednesday, the 25th annual Report on International Religious Freedom says China's constitutional guarantees to religious freedom are obstructed by regulations that "require clergy to pledge allegiance to the CCP."

The report says Chinese authorities have recently begun a campaign to enforce those regulations, after a September 2023 "administrative measure" was issued that requires religious centers to fall into line.

Under the measure, all places of worship must "uphold the leadership of the CCP, implement 'Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics,' and promote the 'Sinicization' of religion," it says.

Those who do not comply are "tortured, physically abused, arrested, disappeared, detained, sentenced to prison, subjected to forced indoctrination in CCP ideology," the report adds, noting that charges or accusations against the faithful are often "vague or insubstantial."

A "lack of transparency" from Chinese authorities makes exact arrest and imprisonment numbers impossible to discern, it continues, but "estimates of those imprisoned during the year [2023] for their religious beliefs ranged from the low thousands to more than 10,000."

A little more than half of Chinese are atheist or religiously unaffiliated, the report says, while 18.2% of the population identify as Buddhist, 5.1% as Christian, 1.8% as Muslim and 21.9% follow folk religions.

Only five religions – Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism – are officially recognized in China and allowed to openly be practiced, which must be done under the banner of corresponding state-sanctioned groups closely monitored by the authorities.

Worldwide decline

Speaking at the launch of the report, Blinken noted a recent Pew survey that found worldwide religious freedom was at its lowest ebb since the polling company began tracking the issue in 2007.

He noted that the United States was not immune from the issue.

"Since Hamas's horrific terrorist attack on Israel on Oct. 7, and the subsequent conflict in Gaza, both anti-semitism and Islamophobia have increased significantly across the globe," Blinken said.

"Here in the United States, reports of hate crimes and other incidents targeting both Muslims and Jews have gone up dramatically."

But he said official repression of religion was different, and pointed China's ramping up of forced Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhists and the "genocide and crimes against humanity that China is committing against the predominantly Muslim Uyghurs in Xinjiang."

The campaign is part of a broader campaign to force non-Han Chinese to assimilate into what Beijing considers to be mainstream culture: Chinese authorities in the past year have, for instance, banned Tibetan students speaking their native language and prohibited them from taking private classes outside the state-run schooling system.

Rashad Hussein, the U.S. ambassador at large for international religious freedom, told the launch that the campaign against the Uyghurs "follows decades of persecution of religious communities, from Tibetan Buddhists, to Christians to Falun Gong practitioners." Hussein noted the crackdown against Falun Gong, which Beijing considers a cult and is now headquartered in rural New York, took place 25 years ago, with many adherents fleeing from China.

"We now even see [China] attempt to reach across its borders to target individuals and silence critics, such as the reports of Chinese authorities engaging in transnational repression against predominantly Muslim Uyghurs, Tibetans, Falun Gong and many more," he said.

He noted a similar phenomenon was taking place in Myanmar, where the military junta is increasingly targeting the Rohingya Muslim minority in the country's east as well as those practicing Christianity.

Liu Pengyu, a spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in Washington, called the accusations in the report inaccurate and accused the U.S. State Department of trying to interfere in domestic Chinese affairs.

"The Chinese government protects citizens' freedom of religious belief in accordance with the law. People of all ethnic groups in China are fully entitled to the freedom of religious belief as prescribed by law," he said, adding that China has "nearly 200 million religious believers."

"We urge relevant parties to stop using the so-called religious issues to meddle in China's internal affairs," he said.

## After Escaping China by Sea, a Dissident Faces His Next Act

23 June 2024, The New York Times, John Yoon

The dissident's lone regret after his 200-mile escape across the Yellow Sea was not taking night vision goggles.

Nearing the end of his jet ski journey out of China last summer, Kwon Pyong peered through the darkness off the South Korean coast. As he approached the shore, sea gulls appeared to bob as if floating. He steered forward, then ran aground: The birds were sitting on mud.

"I had everything — sunscreen, backup batteries, a knife to cut buoy lines," he recalled in an interview. He was prepared to signal his location with a laser pen if he became stranded and to burn his notes with a lighter if he were captured. He also had a visa to enter South Korea, and had intended to arrive at a port of entry, he said, not strand himself on a mud flat.

It wasn't enough.

Mr. Kwon, 36 and an ethnic Korean, had mocked China's powerful leader and criticized how the ruling Communist Party was persecuting hundreds of pro-democracy activists at home and abroad. In response, he said, he faced an exit ban and years of detention, prison and surveillance.

But fleeing to South Korea did not offer the relief he expected. He was still hounded by the Chinese state, he said, and spent time in detention. Even after he was released, he was in legal limbo: neither wanted nor allowed to leave.

It would take 10 more months for Mr. Kwon to be permitted to leave South Korea. Days before he flew out on Sunday, he returned to the mud flat where he haplessly came ashore off Incheon last summer and recounted for the first time publicly the details of his meticulously planned journey.

Court documents from his criminal case in South Korea, past interviews with his friends and family and a statement from the Incheon Coast Guard last year corroborated many of the details in his account. On a Yamaha WaveRunner purchased with the equivalent of \$25,000 in cash, withdrawn from several banks to avoid tipping off the police, Mr. Kwon set off on the morning of Aug. 16 from the foggy coast of the Shandong Peninsula.

He said he wore a black life jacket and motorcycle helmet for the journey, where he crashed into 10-foot waves and dodged floating rice wine bottles. As his skin burned from the summer sun, he fell into the sea twice, losing his sunglasses.

He refueled using the five barrels of gas that he had tied to the WaveRunner. For himself, he had five bottles of water and five ham and tuna sandwiches.

He navigated using a marine compass and a smartphone he had acquired from someone else.

His first glimpse of land came as the setting sun gave the islands off South Korea a warm glow. What was supposed to take eight hours turned to 14. By the time Mr. Kwon arrived in Incheon, the pink sky he had stopped to admire had faded to black.

He did not see any boats or ships on guard, he said, even as he entered a heavily militarized area that the navy monitors for activity, including defectors from North Korea.

Mr. Kwon — who speaks Chinese, English and some Korean — called the local police for help. For an hour, he waited while trying to fend off mosquitoes by walking around his watercraft in beige Crocs.

That night, he said, the Incheon Coast Guard and the South Korean Marine Corps rescued him, detained him and began investigating him along with the South Korean National Intelligence Service.

South Korea rarely accepts refugees, and the authorities served him a deportation order. But over the next months, he was also banned from leaving the country as he fought a criminal charge of unlawful entry, which can be punished with up to five years in prison.

He said that he wondered how things might have unfolded had his arrival gone as planned.

South Korean prosecutors did not lift the exit ban they imposed on Mr. Kwon until his criminal case was finished this month. He said he planned to apply for asylum in the United States or Canada. His flight on Sunday was bound for Newark.

"I want to live my own life," he said. "I want to live in peace for a while."

Mr. Kwon, whose Chinese name is Quan Ping, is from a city in the northeastern Chinese province of Jilin, near the border with North Korea. He has visited South Korea, his grandfather's birthplace, regularly since childhood. He spent his college years in the United States, where he went by Johnny, participated in Iowa State University's Army R.O.T.C. program and took flying lessons, he said.

He studied aerospace engineering at the university for a few years and returned in 2012 to China, where he ran an online clothing brand and traded cryptocurrencies. He continued traveling widely, touring Lebanon and Syria as an aspiring photojournalist, he said.

He first drew the ire of the Chinese authorities when he began criticizing the Communist Party online. In 2016, he posted on social media about antigovernment protests he had attended in Hong Kong, a Chinese territory. He wore a T-shirt calling China's leader, Xi Jinping, "Xitler."

Chinese authorities arrested Mr. Kwon that year and sentenced him in 2017 to 18 months in prison for "inciting subversion of state power," a charge

frequently leveled against dissidents and human rights lawyers.

After his release in 2018, the police tapped his communications, tracked his movements and periodically interrogated him, he said. State agents, he added, were alarmed by his contact with the leaders of the 1989 Tiananmen Square uprising, including Wang Dan, once one of China's most wanted men.

"I couldn't live a normal life," he said.

China's Ministry of Public Security did not respond to a request for comment.

Mr. Kwon grew desperate to leave as the police investigated his family and friends. He said his plans to leave China by sea were inspired in part by the 1994 movie "The Shawshank Redemption" and by Lindsay Warner, an explorer who circumnavigated Australia on a Jet Ski. He decided South Korea was his only viable option.

He left behind his e-commerce and crypto operations, as well as his friends, family members and a girlfriend.

After the rescue from the mud flat, Mr. Kwon said, investigators seemed baffled by his story and interrogated him, threatened to torture him and denied his request for a lawyer. The Incheon Coast Guard, which led the investigation, said in a statement that "there were no human rights violations" during the investigation.

In court, Mr. Kwon argued that he was a political refugee and had intended to arrive legally at the Incheon Port, less than a mile from the mud flat, with a tourist visa. A judge found him guilty of unlawful entry in November, handing down a suspended one-year prison sentence with a two-year probationary period.

The verdict released Mr. Kwon from custody but not from legal limbo. Immigration officials imposed an exit ban as prosecutors appealed the judge's decision.

While living in his parents' house in Ansan, south of Seoul, Mr. Kwon went to the gym, read books about crypto trading and volunteered at an English language school for adults. He said he also befriended a group of Nigerian refugees by joining their soccer club.

But he didn't let his guard down. He stuck to the routines he had developed in China: constantly checking for security cameras, and using encrypted texting apps and signal-blocking Faraday bags.

Lee Dae-seon, a South Korean activist who has helped Mr. Kwon, said that he has warned Mr. Kwon of the dangers of China's overseas police effort, known as Operation Fox Hunt, in which Chinese dissidents living abroad have been forcibly repatriated.

South Korea's National Intelligence Service confirmed with Mr. Lee that he and Mr. Kwon were targets of the operation, Mr. Lee said. The N.I.S. did not respond to a request for comment.

"It is not safe for him to continue living in South Korea," Mr. Lee said.

In May, an appeals court dismissed prosecutors' appeal, as well as Mr. Kwon's lawyers' efforts to have his sentence reduced. Mr. Kwon decided not to pursue the case further so that he could leave the country quickly, and prosecutors lifted the travel ban, said Sejin Kim, his lawyer.

At the mud flat, Mr. Kwon said he was looking forward to leaving and starting a new business venture. He said some of his friends and relatives live in the United States and Canada. He is traveling to the United States on a visa for visitors.

"I want to start my second life," he said.

An immigration law specialist said that while a case for seeking asylum in the United States appeared to be strong, a decision could take years. Mr. Kwon would also have to demonstrate a "well-founded fear" of additional persecution should he be deported to China, said the specialist, Yael Schacher, of Refugees International, a nonprofit in Washington, D.C.

At Incheon Airport on Sunday, he said goodbye to his parents and friends in South Korea, where he would be barred from returning for five years because of his criminal record.

He disappeared into the security line, a ticket for seat 17A in hand, and with his Chinese passport and his South Korean deportation order in the black tactical backpack he had brought on his escape from China. He confirmed that he had boarded his plane by telephone.

"I'm happy, sad," he said minutes before his flight was set to take off. "And angry," he added, "that it took me so long to leave South Korea."

At shortly before 10 p.m., the flight status display showed that his plane had departed.

### **China's political refugees remain at risk long after leaving country**

20 June 2024, RFA, Wang Yun

On World Refugee Day, asylum-seekers share their stories about being persecuted – and fear of being sent back.

Chinese nationals are seeking political asylum in ever larger numbers, but face transnational repression from China and lack of understanding from foreign authorities as they flee persecution, refugees and those who help them told RFA Mandarin in recent interviews.



A Chinese activist who supported an online free speech campaign that saw its leader arrested in Laos and is "terrified" of being sent back to China is now facing deportation from Denmark after her asylum application was rejected by authorities there.

Liu Dongling fled China in 2018 when her son was refused an education by authorities after she helped victims of forced evictions to apply for compensation through legal channels, she told RFA Mandarin in an interview recorded two days before World Refugee Day, June 20.

She said the authorities claimed they couldn't be sure from the evidence she submitted that she was at risk if she went back to China.

But Liu says she knows otherwise, citing repeated phone calls from a state prosecutor from her home city of Zhengzhou.

"I gradually realized that this Gaoxin District People's Procuratorate official called Li Hongbin had been put in charge of my case, relating to when I was helping others with their [forced eviction complaint] cases," Liu said. "I realized that the fact that he kept calling me put me in danger."

Who is a refugee?

The United Nations defines a refugee as someone who legitimately fears persecution due to their race, religion, nationality, belonging to a social group or having a certain political opinion, and is unwilling to return to the country for those reasons.

Yet foreign governments have been repeatedly criticized by rights activists for repatriating asylum-seekers who are then arrested and jailed on their return to China.

China also actively works to force its overseas dissidents to return home, sparking international concern over the Chinese Communist Party's "long-arm" law enforcement operations, which have included running secret police "service stations" in dozens of countries, according to the Spain-based rights group Safeguard Defenders.

Liu, who started writing for the overseas Chinese-language website Boxun after leaving China, also cites the forced repatriation of rights activists Dong Guangping and Jiang Yefei by authorities in Thailand around the time she left China.

"I was told by a colleague at Boxun ... that a lot of Boxun journalists had been detained in China, and that some had even been detained in Thailand," Liu said. "So I got more and more terrified."

Captured in Laos

Liu had also been a vocal supporter via X of an anti-censorship movement started by Lao-based activist Qiao Xinxin, who was later detained and forcibly repatriated.

Qiao, whose birth name is Yang Zewei, went missing, believed detained on or around May 31, 2023 in Vientiane, after launching an online campaign to end

internet censorship in China, known as the BanGFW Movement, a reference to the Great Firewall, according to fellow activists.

His family were later informed that he is being held in a juvenile detention center in Hunan's Hengyang city in another example of China's cross-border law enforcement activities

Qiao had lived in Laos for several years before launching the BanGFW Movement, yet was believed to have been detained by Chinese police in Vientiane.

Radio Free Asia contacted the Danish Refugee Council by email about Liu's case, but had received no reply by June 19. Danish Repatriation Council official Tina Fjorside confirmed on Tuesday that Liu had now entered a process that will result in her forced repatriation.

Immigration jails are 'hell on earth'

Thailand-based political dissident Li Nanfei told RFA Mandarin that he's now basically stuck in the country, playing an ongoing game of cat-and-mouse with Thai immigration authorities, and trying to stay out of their detention centers.

"Immigration detention centers are like hell on earth," Li said. "Human rights violations are very common, inmates are packed in very densely, and there is frequent violence."

Li spent his savings on bailing himself out of his last spell in detention, where he ran into plenty of other refugees on the run from China.

"The immigration prisons would hold onto them for a long time," he said. "Some people were held there for more than 10 years. Some even died in there."

Figures released by the United Nations' refugee agency UNHCR in June 2022 showed that while around 12,000 Chinese nationals sought asylum overseas in 2012, the year that Xi took office as Communist Party general secretary, that number had risen to nearly 120,000 by 2021.

The U.S. remains the most popular destination, accepting 88,722 applicants from mainland China last year. Australia took 15,774 asylum-seekers in the same year, figures showed.

New York-based current affairs commentator Ma Ju, who runs a refugee relief station offering two weeks of free food and accommodation to Chinese asylum-seekers in the city, said the refugees just keep on coming, despite the hazards of overland travel to the border with Mexico, known in Chinese as "walking the line."

"A very high proportion, about 80%, are here because of political, religious or ethnic [persecution]," Ma said. "A lot of ethnic minorities like Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Hui Muslims, Mongolians and Tibetans are there because of their religion or ethnic identity."

The vast majority can't live a life of any dignity back home in China, Ma said.

"They were in pain and misery every day – there's nothing there for them, no dignity," he said, adding that only a small minority of refugees are basically there for what he termed "economic reasons."

In San Francisco, artist and rights activist Xiang Li has formed a group to help refugee women through art. Most of them are Chinese women.

"Some have psychological trauma and need treatment," Xiang said. "We haven't gotten to the point of offering counseling yet, but there is a kind of mutual support we can offer, which is sometimes even more effective."

### Chengdu Early Rain Church Member Detained for Commemorating Tiananmen

06 June 2024, Qi Junzao

Fu Lijun cautiously posted only music and a prayer on June 4. It was enough to go to jail.

While around the world on June 4 many commemorate the anniversary of the bloody June Fourth Incident, i.e., the mass killing of students in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, of June 4, 1989, any remembrance of the event is strictly forbidden in China. Search engines have been manipulated to disable searches for "June Fourth Incident" or "June 4 Tiananmen Square." Actually, those who commemorate in any way the June 4 Incident may go to jail.

That this is not only a theoretical risk was confirmed by what happened on June 4 this year to Fu Lijun, a member of Chengdu Early Rain Covenant Church, whose Pastor Wang Yi (not a relative of the chief of Chinese Foreign Affairs with the same name) was sentenced to nine years in jail in 2019. Officially, the Early Rain Church has been liquidated, but in fact members continue to meet in private homes, under continuous police harassment.

In the early morning of June 4, Fu Lijun posted on WeChat Moments music intended to commemorate the June Fourth Incident and a prayer. There was no criticism of the CCP.

However, this was enough to mobilize the police, which acted immediately. At 7 a.m. on June 4, agents of Chengdu National Security Bureau knocked at Fu's door, and he was taken away.

He was informed that he will be administratively detained for five days, until June 10. This may seem a lesser penalty, although nobody should spend time in jail for posting music and prayers on social media. However, those who have been placed once in administrative detention in China may expect continuous surveillance for years, police harassment, and serious problems in the workplace.

## May

### Chinese lawyers decry official supervisory interferences during court trials

19 May 2024, Tibetan Review

While it is an all too well-known fact that the very idea of an independent judiciary is anathema to the Communist Party of China-state's approach to delivering justice, many lawyers in the country were still shocked to see a judge of a county court in Qinghai province receiving real-time instructions from his supervisors in the middle of a trial earlier this month, according to the scmp.com May 19.

About an hour into the trial on May 11 at the Tianjun (Tibetan: Themchen) county court in Haixi (Tsonub) Mongol and Tibetan autonomous prefecture, the presiding judge suddenly adjourned the proceedings, the report said, citing a public letter published on the microblogging site Weibo by a group of lawyers who were defending clients in the case.

"Afterwards, we accidentally found the criminal court judge of the Haixi intermediate court and the director of the Tianjun county court were remotely giving instructions in a WeChat group," the letter was quoted as saying, referring to a messaging and the social media platform.

One of the lawyers involved in the trial, Liu Zheng of the Beijing Zebo Law Firm, took a photo of the judge's computer screen, which displayed a WeChat group that included several judicial officers and staff of local courts, the report said, citing the liberal-leaning newspaper Southern Weekly.

The photo was stated to show the county court director Fan Xuhua saying in the group chat: "You don't have to communicate with him about it."

Following it, Hasi Chaolu, president of the criminal court at Haixi intermediate court – the court that will hear the case if it is appealed – was stated to have directed the county court judge to "just interrupt" and "be tough, don't speak randomly".

The public letter was stated to have condemned these actions of the judicial and court staff, saying, "Their actions blatantly sabotage our legal system where the appeal court's decision is the final one, and those involved should be probed for malpractice or even criminal activity."

The Qinghai provincial prosecutor's office and the Qinghai Higher People's Court have said they will investigate after the lawyers reported the incident to them.

On the other hand, the Haixi intermediate court has issued a notice on Weibo, saying the lawyer had disobeyed court discipline in taking the photo.

It was also reported to have said the case belonged to one of four categories that could seek “key supervision”, and that Haixi had followed protocols in its instructions to a lower court. It has only admitted that the manner of instruction was irregular. Still, many lawyers around the country have spoken up to say they disagreed with the Haixi court after the incident went viral online.

Wang Cailiang, a Beijing-based criminal lawyer, has written on Weibo, “The superiors’ instruction sabotaged the court’s right to independently exercise judicial power,” saying, “if a court and its superior could collude in a lawsuit ... then why do we need evidence? Why do we need the law?”

He has said that when the higher court’s supervision weakened, cases are wrongly decided and not corrected on appeal. Others have said the Haixi court had abused the idea of “key supervision”.

Are regards the four types of cases in which could require “key supervision”, a document issued by the Supreme People’s Court in 2021 was stated to have listed them as: complex and sensitive cases, cases that might affect social stability, those that might have a conflicting judgment with a similar case, and if the judge was reported to have engaged in illegal conduct during the trial.

When a case is classified as one of these four types, the presiding judge may supervise certain aspects that need attention during a trial, such as demanding a report on case progress, evaluating the results, reviewing case files or sitting in on a trial, the report said.

However, “if the judges directly gave instructions or interfered with the case, then they are not following protocol,” Lao Dongyan, a prominent China policy critic and law professor with Tsinghua University, has said during a live-streamed discussion on Weibo earlier this month with the Hongfan Institute of Legal and Economic Studies, a private liberal think tank.

Well-known lawyer Xu Xin has written on WeChat that such incidents were quite common, and that he had experienced or heard of at least four. These included one in Zhangzhou Intermediate People’s Court in Fujian province ten years ago and one in Zoucheng, Shandong province, in 2022.

### **Ms. Rei Xia’s Speech at the 16th Annual Geneva Summit for Human Rights and Democracy**

18 May 2024, Yibao

Editor’s Note: Ms. Xia is a Chinese dissenter and a former political prisoner. As a brave young human rights activist, she was detained and tortured by CCP solely for her outspokenness during the White Paper Movement in 2022 and her white paper Halloween costume in 2023. Citizen Power Initiatives for China is proud to arrange for Ms. Xia to deliver

her powerful speech at the 16th Annual Geneva Summit for Human Rights and Democracy on May 16, 2024.

Here is her speech script:

Imagine one day you wake up to realize that you’ve turned into a caterpillar, with your short limbs barely touching the ground, your eyes blindfolded, and your tongue cut off. You’re trapped inside an empty cement room and can’t feel anything except cold air flowing over your skin. A giant incandescent lamp hangs over your head; so bright that you can see a red halo when you close your eyes. You can hear people talking around you and water flowing through the ground. You know this is only an illusion created by your devastated brain. But you are grateful to hear anything – even if it’s not real.

That was my life inside a Chinese detention center after the ‘white paper protest’ in 2022. They threw me in solitary confinement twice, for a total of 65 days. When they finally released me, I was in a state of schizophrenia, with slurred speech.

Now, I tell my story as a queer feminist activist in China and survivor of extreme police brutality by the CCP regime.

When the COVID-19 pandemic broke out in 2020, I was living in Scotland, pursuing an undergraduate degree. I moved back to Shanghai to wait out the pandemic and dove into feminist and LGBTQ activism. Almost immediately, I could tell that Chinese authorities saw us as a threat to their pro-masculine ideology. Police would shut down anything with even a hint of feminism or queerness.

But it wasn’t until 2022 that I had my first direct encounter with the state apparatus. It started with the Xuzhou Chained Woman Incident. You almost certainly remember the video if you saw it online. It showed a woman imprisoned inside a dirty cellar, chained to the wall by her neck. Her so-called husband in the video had raped her repeatedly and forced her to give birth to nine children over 20 years. The video went viral online.

Initially, local officials denied her being a victim of human trafficking, saying that her marriage was legal. Without proper investigative reporters, we the grassroots feminists had to find our way to uncover the truth. It turned out that she had been kidnapped and sold since 1996. We were not at all surprised, as we knew that her experience was just a tiny window into the pervasive and systematic human trafficking of women in China.

But the secret police wanted to stop us. They forcibly disappeared visitors to her village. They found me & my friends and threatened us to stay away. Also, they took down everything we posted online. As a result, we had to be creative in bypassing the censorship machine. We repost other people’s posts before they were deleted. We’d blur and distort text

into photos, and translate them into minor languages so AI couldn't read them.

As marginalized groups, we had always practiced to make our voices heard. We had to act in a way that is completely decentralized, both spontaneous and loosely connected at the same time. That's why feminists and queer activists could play a major role in the white paper protest, as characterized by its lack of leading role and highly spontaneous.

Throughout the year, the sense of anger and powerlessness didn't go away. In April, the government mandated COVID lockdowns in Shanghai. Many people were forcibly taken away for isolation, and many others died at home from starvation and suicide.

In November, a building fire killed 10 Uyghur people in Urumchi. And this wouldn't have happened without China's strict zero-COVID policy. It turned out to be the last straw.

In major cities across China, people gathered on the street to commemorate the deceased Uyghurs. We brought candles and flowers. We held up blank paper to symbolize the power of silence and mock the censorship. No words were written on the paper, but all the accusations are in our hearts. They destroyed our language long ago, and self-censorship is embedded in the way that we speak. But, here at the protest, we felt each other's physical presence for the first time.

When I was on the street with other protesters, I lost control of myself and cried so hard. The last time China saw widespread protests was still in 1989.

We were lost and disorganized, like newborn babies experiencing fresh air outside the womb. But I could feel the fearlessness among us, and our oppressed emotions finding their way out onto the street. Here in Shanghai, for the first time, we shouted out Voldemort's name: 'Down with Xi Jinping, Down with CCP.'

The police showed up in full force, blocking the roads, randomly beating up people, and arresting them away. I was also arrested and thrown onto their bus. I saw people screaming in panic attacks, their faces covered in bruises and dripping with blood from open wounds. We were forced to hand over our phones and passwords. Anyone refusing to do so was beaten into submission.

At the police station, they took our fingerprints, scanned our irises, and stripped us naked for examination.

After my release, I learned from my friend that she was beaten severely at the police station. Along with her, there was a girl beaten to concussion, another being kicked hard in the stomach. I did not think much and decided to post this on Twitter. It was a moment when keeping silent meant abandoning

one's conscience. One day later, police knocked on my door and took me away in front of my mom.

I was charged with "Picking Quarrels and Provoking Troubles," a common crime used against political activists. They sent me to the detention center and threw me into solitary confinement for 37 days. I couldn't shower, read, write, or speak to anyone. They took away my glasses so I could barely see my surroundings. During the day, I sat cross-legged on a wooden board. Every minute felt like an hour. On the sleepless nights, with the incandescent lamp on, every single minute felt like a year. There were four surveillance cameras in my cell, two in the front, and two at the back, just above the squat pit I used as a toilet. But losing my basic privacy couldn't even compare to the torture I endured just waiting for time to pass. I experienced auditory hallucinations. I lost my sense of time, and I could barely see the line between life and death.

This is the price for speaking out in China. It's not strange to see China ranks second to last on the World Press Freedom Index, because any journalist with dignity ends up living in jail.

After my release, I had 1 year of border control. Police harassed me constantly. They evicted me from my apartment and forced me to a mental hospital for psychiatric evaluation. I couldn't tell my friends what happened to me because I knew the CCP retaliation would fall on them as well.



At the summit, Xia once again raised the symbol of the White Paper Movement—a blank sheet of paper—to protest the tyranny of the CCP regime

Throughout the year, I felt like I was suffocating in a bigger cell. That's why I took to the streets again during Halloween, my clothes covered in layers of white paper. It was my way of commemorating the white paper protest and mourning our loss during the three-year lockdowns that the regime now refused us to discuss.





(Xia's white paper costume in the Halloween parade on the streets of Shanghai in November 2023, one year after the White Paper Movement, led to her second detention by the CCP's secret police)

This time, I was arrested by Guobao, or the secret police, and the rule of law does not restrict them at all. They forbid me from having a lawyer and threatened my mom as well. They beat me, molested me, and tied me to a wooden sleeping board for three days. They also threatened to rape me, shave my head, and detain me for months longer. They forced me to record a staged confession which I refused. 28 days later, I was released and forbidden to enter Shanghai again.

It is still traumatizing to speak about my experience, diving back into the enduring pain inside the single cell. But I've never regretted going onto the street, nor do I regret speaking up against police violence. My courage doesn't come from within myself. It comes from my fellow Chinese human rights defenders, feminists, queer activists, and countless ordinary people that stood together on the streets during the white paper protest.

China's crackdown continues today. Feminist and queer activities have almost entirely disappeared from the public eye. Journalists & lawyers waste away in jail. Their ethnic cleansing of Uyghurs and Tibetans continues.

And Uyghur participants of the White Paper protest are still in jail, including Kamile Wayit and Yashar Shohret. Director Chen Pinlin still waits for his sentence after producing a documentary on the white paper protest.

They hope us to forget. They hope us to turn a blind eye to what is happening in our own land. Above all, they hope us to live in fear. But our voices will not be silenced. And our own existence will never be censored

## China Tries to Erase the History—of 2022

May 15, 2024, Bitter Winter, Hu Zimo

Keeping filmmaker Chen Pinlin in jail is part of a massive effort to cancel all traces of the victorious fight of students and citizens that compelled the CCP to abandon the "Zero COVID" policy.



The protests in Shanghai after the Urumqi fire, November 2022. From Chen Pinlin's documentary.

There are many ways in which the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) tries to erase history. What may seem futile to the non-Chinese readers of "Bitter Winter" may actually work in China. All traces and references to the Tiananmen Square June Fourth Incident of 1989 are carefully cancelled. The event does not exist in textbooks about China's history and even Internet searches about the incident are blocked. Of course, the CCP cannot prevent the world outside China to remember and celebrate June Fourth. But its efforts are not entirely fruitless as many Chinese born in the 21st century have never heard of the event.

The CCP is now engaged in an even more ambitious endeavor. It tries to cancel all traces of something that did not happen 35 years ago—not to mention older crimes and massacres of Chairman Mao's times—but in 2022. The massive effort is worth following, as it confirms that what some called the White Paper Revolution of 2022 is a subject of both embarrassment and great concern for the CCP.

It all started on November 24, 2002, and it started in Urumqi, Xinjiang, with a tragedy that in a few hours

gave the lie to both the rosy propaganda about happy Uyghurs singing and dancing their gratitude to the CCP and the black propaganda depicting Uyghurs as terrorists. China woke up on November 25 with a feeling that Uyghurs were simply fellow suffering human beings.

What had happened in the night between November 24 and 25 was a fire that had erupted in an 18-storey building inhabited by Uyghur families in Xinjiang's capital, Urumqi. Some trapped inside the building were able to post terrifying images on social media. As Uyghurs commentators writing in "Bitter Winter" noted on the first anniversary of the tragedy,



"The screams of mothers and children coming out of the fire spread through the buildings to Urumqi and reached the world via the internet; but no one could help them. Because this was the period when the region was under lockdown with China's plan to reduce the COVID to zero, and therefore the doors of buildings and houses were locked from the outside. Moreover, since the parents and husbands of some of those who burned in the fire were in prisons and camps, women and children in the buildings did not have the physical strength to break down the doors."

This was the proverbial drop that broke the camel's back. Students first in the main cities of China, many other citizens later, not only took to the street to protest on behalf of the suffering Uyghurs. They had enough of the idiotic and ineffective "Zero COVID" policy, that had condemned them to the worst lockdown in the world without stopping the pandemic and causing many local tragedies that did not reach the mediatic impact of the Urumqi fire.

Chinese started gathering spontaneously in streets named after Urumqi in Shanghai, Beijing, and many other cities, lighting candles, praying, sometimes (but not often and not always) even shouting anti-CCP slogans. When the police arrived and told them that holding signs was a crime, they started holding pieces of white paper, showing to the world that claiming their freedom of expression and writing anything on them was something the CCP would not tolerate. Some tried to persuade the police officers to join their fight. CCP officials came and told the crowd that they were manipulated by "foreign forces." They were ridiculed, with the students telling them that the only "foreign forces" they had been exposed to in school were Marx and Engels.

As the days passed, Xi Jinping realized that the protest would not go away. He had two alternatives, replicating the June Fourth incident of 1989 and killing thousands in multiple cities, or abandoning the Zero COVID policy. We will never know, at least will not know for many years, what deliberations within the CCP led Xi to choose the second alternative, just as we will not know for long how many really died in the Urumqi fire.

What we know is that by December 2022, Zero COVID was gone, and on January 8, 2023, Xi proclaimed that COVID-19 was no longer, and he had defeated it. The attempt to transform a defeat into a victory did not fool many. Not surprisingly, the sudden re-opening after the harsh lockdown caused an outbreak of the virus and, again, casualties whose numbers we may never know. Certainly, crematoriums were unusually busy for months.

More dangerous than the COVID deaths for the CCP was the fact that, unlike in 1989, a popular protest had succeeded, and the government had to renounce

a policy it had just declared beneficial, successful, and irrevocable. Perhaps, if one protest succeeded, other protests may succeed too. In fact, after 2022, public protests on a variety of subjects are becoming more common in China. Each time they are called unprecedented and surprising, but soon they will become routine.

What happened in 2022 was important, and Xi and the CCP may have seen the writing on the wall. They decided the wall should be cleaned immediately. With patience, the authorities are scouting all possible Internet repositories of stories and images of what happened in 2022 and erasing them. The emblematic story of this campaign concerns filmmaker Chen Pinlin, who goes under the nickname Plato and posted on YouTube (which is blocked in China) a documentary on the protests in Shanghai. He called the documentary "Not the Foreign Force." He was arrested in January 2023, charged in February with "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" (a serious crime in China), and kept in jail.



Protesters continued to demand the end of the "Zero COVID" policy. From Chen Pinlin's documentary movie.

Is the CCP afraid of the 2022 movement? The answer is yes. Did 2022 change China forever? We don't know yet. While some anti-regime slogans were heard, they did not dominate the protests. Subsequent popular demonstrations all focused on limited, often local grievances. Even 2002 did not aim at overcoming the CCP regime. Its aim was to eliminate the Zero COVID policy. We should not read too much in the new spring of popular protests in China. But we should not ignore them either. Perhaps one day some event or movement will arise, able to coordinate the local protests into a national claim that oppression should cease.

### **A growing number of Chinese Indonesians are winning political offices**

May 14 2024, VOA News, Devianti Faridz

This October, 45-year-old Kevin Wu will serve in the Jakarta House of Regional Representatives for the first time, becoming part of a minority of ethnic Chinese elected officials in the Indonesian legislative

body. Wu has been a staunch advocate for Chinese-Indonesian rights since 2008 and helped to establish a Buddhist house of worship in the predominantly Muslim country. Now, he is an entrepreneur who advocates for small businesses.

"If we witness injustice, we have two choices – to accept our fate or to strive and hope for change. I chose to do the latter," he said.

Wu said he was inspired to fight for Chinese-Indonesian rights by late President Abdurrahman Wahid, who was known for his support for ethnic and religious tolerance.

x In February, nearly 205 million Indonesians were eligible to cast their votes in the country's presidential and parliamentary elections. According to the last census in 2010, 1.2% of Indonesia's total population is of Chinese ethnicity, at over 2.8 million people.

Johanes Herlijanto, chairman of the Indonesian Sinology Forum, a group that seeks to promote Indonesia-China relations, said that in this election he saw more names of Chinese-Indonesian politicians vying for the 500 seats in the national Parliament as well as in the District Representative Council, Provincial Council and Local Council than there were during the parliamentary elections in 2019.

Herlijanto said that political activism among the Chinese-Indonesian community strengthened in the last 26 years, since the Jakarta riots in May 1998 that saw many Chinese Indonesians being persecuted. He said he has seen more Chinese Indonesians serving in public offices ranging from regent, mayoral and legislative.

Herlijanto explained that there have been organizations that provided political education to Chinese Indonesians since the late 1990s.

"This allowed Chinese Indonesians who previously were uncomfortable, to be involved in politics, to now being elected and actively improving public welfare as politicians," he said.

For decades, under President Suharto, many Chinese Indonesians faced discrimination, persecution and social restrictions, such as being banned from using their Chinese names, practicing their traditional beliefs, showcasing Chinese culture and having their full citizenship recognized.

It was only after former President Wahid came into power in October 1999 that government discrimination against Chinese Indonesians was abolished with the issuance of Presidential Decree No. 6, which protected minority rights. Wahid – commonly known as "Gus Dur" – was the former head of Indonesia's largest Islamic organization, Nahdlatul Ulama, and had Chinese, Arab and Javanese ancestry.

Wu joined the Indonesian Solidarity Party, or PSI, in 2024, founded by a Chinese Indonesian TV news

anchor-turned-politician, and said he was attracted to the party's dynamic "start-up"-like work environment and idealistic approach to politics. Wu is also a member of the Young Entrepreneurs Association and the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"I am keen to support industries that open up more job opportunities, offer quality human resources development programs and ease the application process for business permits and industries," he told VOA.

Daniel Johan, 52, a Buddhist, has been a legislator for the past decade and will serve his third five-year term for the Indonesian Renaissance Party, PKB, in October 2024. He said Gus Dur, and another PKB leader, Muhaimin Iskandar, both inspired him.

Johan is active in the Chinese Clans Association of Indonesia and shared with VOA that it took months of working in the community for his constituents, who are mostly Muslims in West Kalimantan, to trust and vote for a Chinese Indonesian politician.

"This term, I will be working on issues regarding food security, food independence and how to improve the management of natural resources and better monitor the implementation of the Mineral and Coal Production Law," he said.

Although political activism and involvement is on the rise in the Chinese Indonesian community, politicians and leaders of Chinese associations in Indonesia are still aware that stereotypes remain, especially in rural areas.

Herlijanto said that the campaign teams for all three presidential candidates in the recent elections had Chinese Indonesian supporters, "so taking on divisive identity politics is not a prudent political strategy."

However, the tides could turn against ethnic and religious minorities if divisive identity politics were to be used again in future elections. Herlijanto noted the case of former Jakarta Governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, a Chinese-Christian governor known as "Ahok," who was sentenced to two years in prison in 2017 under Indonesia's blasphemy law, based on claims he insulted the Quran during his campaign for reelection. Ahok denied wrongdoing.

"Although radicalism based on religious beliefs, or a narrowed interpretation of nationalism, has faded in recent years, its re-emergence is possible and is an issue Chinese Indonesians are cautious about. That's why it's important for Chinese Indonesians to be inclusive, strive for equality and welfare and show that we stand for all Indonesians," said Herlijanto.

I Wayan Suparmin, head of the Indonesian Chinese Association in Jakarta, said Chinese Indonesians must strive to be more inclusive in their surroundings and better understand that in a community everyone's lives are truly intertwined. A notion that Johan agrees with, "Moving forward, Chinese-Indonesian politicians need to be more sincere,

humble and avoid being deceitful or scandalous. The majority of people can sense politicians' sincerity and intentions."

## April

### Children not spared in China's persecution of human rights defenders' families

23 April 2024, Tibetan Review

The practice of collective punishment dates from the days of Mao Zedong's dictatorship and it continues to this day in a China which claims to practice what is sought to be called a globally superior "whole process people's democracy". Whatever this Communist Party of China's "theoretical breakthrough" jargon means, there is very little to praise it when it punishes severely even children of those who have dared to be critical of the governing dispensation.

Releasing its annual report on the situation of human rights defenders in China in 2023 on Apr 15, If I Disobey, My Family Will Suffer: Collective punishment of human rights defenders' families in China, the US-based Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD) has highlighted Chinese authorities' punitive measures against human rights defenders' families, including even newborns.

"Chinese authorities are punishing their families, including young children to penalize human rights defenders, rights lawyers, themselves. Even the Chinese law provides no legal basis for this perverse practice, which is forbidden in international law," CHRD Director Renee Xia has said.

"The most heart-breaking part in really inflicting so much pain is the harm done to children. Children growing up from a young age watching their parents being mistreated and persecuted leaves a long-term psychological trauma."

The report is based on testimony from a dozen people affected by collective punishment last year, and redacted certain identifying details to protect them from official reprisals.

"While this report focuses on 2023, Chinese authorities have used these tactics for decades, inflicting tremendous harm with impunity," it said.

"Seeking redress often triggers more police harassment, brutality, and baseless legal prosecutions," it added.

It said authorities threatened and harmed the children of rights advocates, including by imposing foreign exit bans, forcing them to drop out of school and detaining them in psychiatric wards and orphanages.

"The Chinese Communist Party's collective punishment of human rights defenders' families is an

informal or hidden policy carried out by government authorities," the report cited one activist as saying.

In one severe case, He Fangmei – an imprisoned campaigner for vaccine safety and for victims of defective vaccines – had her young children placed in a psychiatric hospital following her and her husband's detentions.

After He gave birth, her newborn child was also placed in the institution, the report said.

Likewise, the family of human rights lawyer Wang Quanzhang was subjected to intense harassment, and his young son denied education through official pressure on schools. The boy's mother Li Wenzu – also an activist – has said that last month he was once again forced out of a school he had been attending for just 10 days after police showed up there.

The report also shed some light on the fate of Peng Lifa, an activist who disappeared after he placed banners denouncing President Xi Jinping and the country's Covid policies.

"To prevent his family from speaking out, Chinese police have... put members of his family and relatives under surveillance, and cut off all contact with each other and the outside world," the report said.

CHRD is a network of Chinese and international activists promoting human rights and empowering rights defenders in China.

### China reveals it executed scientist for spying in 2016 in documentary about 'shocking' cases

15 April 2024, William Zheng, SCMP



Huang Yu's case featured in a government-produced documentary aired on state television. Photo: CCTV

- Programme on state television discloses new details and punishments from espionage cases as part of a campaign marking National Security Education Day

- State security ministry releases details of researcher Huang Yu, who was executed for selling 'core secrets' to an unnamed foreign intelligence agency

Authorities in Beijing have revealed that a Chinese scientist who was convicted in 2015 of selling state secrets to foreign spy agencies was executed in 2016, one of several "shocking" spy cases.

The death sentence and execution were disclosed in a new documentary produced by the Ministry of State Security, China's top counter-espionage agency, which profiled 10 prominent spy cases from the past.

The documentary – Led by Innovation, National Security Sharpens the Sword – which was aired on Sunday by state broadcaster CCTV and has been posted to the ministry's social media page, is part of a campaign to mark the annual National Security Education Day.

The event, which is promoted by various local governments, including Hong Kong and Macau, is also intended to remind the public to remain vigilant about national security threats and report suspicious acts.

According to the documentary, Huang Yu, then a researcher at a top secret communication system development project, sent a note to "the website of a certain country's spy agency" containing classified Chinese military codes.

Huang was bitter after being removed from a unit that was working on the project due to poor work performance and had indicated he wanted to defect, the report said.

After the authenticity of the codes had been confirmed, Huang was recruited by the unnamed foreign spy agency and given training in Hong Kong and Bangkok. The documentary said he not only sold "core secrets" through his work, but also duped his wife – an employee at the same institution – into copying confidential material so he could pass it on in return for additional payments.

Huang was said to have leaked "a shocking amount" of confidential information about the communication systems used by the Communist Party, government agencies, the military and industries such as finance and telecoms. These included design, technical specifications, secret algorithms, source codes and programmes, the documentary said.

Huang was handed the maximum penalty for spying that caused "serious harm" to China's national security and was executed in May 2016.

The documentary also revealed new details about a former researcher from Taiwan who had been stealing secrets from mainland China while based in the Czech Republic.

Cheng Yu-chin, who was sentenced in 2022 to seven years in prison for espionage, "long had Taiwan independence ideas" and had been recruited by Taiwan's intelligence agency while studying for his PhD in Prague, the programme said.

Cheng had been paid NT\$2.76 million (US\$85,467) by the Taiwanese government to steal intelligence-related research reports and identify potential infiltration targets during multiple visits to the mainland, according to the documentary.

Cheng had previously worked as an assistant to Cho Jung-tai, the former secretary general of the Taiwan cabinet, who has been selected to be the island's next premier.

The documentary also profiled the case of Lee Henely Hu Xiang, a businessman from Belize who was sentenced in 2021 to 11 years in prison for helping to fund the Hong Kong protests, as well as the cases of the "two Michaels" – Canadians Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig – who were detained in China in 2018, in apparent retaliation for the arrest in Vancouver of Meng Wanzhou.

Meng, the former chief financial officer of Chinese telecoms equipment giant Huawei Technologies had been detained in Canada on a US warrant, which the documentary said showed how China had fought the West's long-arm jurisdiction and efforts to undermine the country's political stability.

Quoting media reports that Spavor reached a C\$7 million (US\$5 million) settlement with the Canadian government in March this year, the documentary said Canada's "slander" in labelling their cases as "arbitrary detentions" had been "self-defeating".

The documentary concluded with what Chinese regulators have called a "rectification" of Shanghai-based consultancy firm Capvision Partners. The due-diligence company had been raided by authorities last year over national security risks in areas such as defence, technology, energy and resources, and medicine.

China said some of Capvision's clients had close relationships with foreign governments and military intelligence agencies.

"After foreign countries mastered this important and sensitive information, they implemented precise sanctions on a series of Chinese companies, causing significant harm to our country's industrial development and economic security," the programme said.

Chen Yixin, the state security minister, reiterated the ministry's priorities in an article published on Monday in the Communist Party's top theoretical journal Qiushi.

He said China's national security agencies will focus on major and outstanding risks, including "anti-subversion, anti-hegemony, anti-separatism, anti-terrorism, and anti-espionage struggles".

Also on Monday, a commentary in the Communist Party mouthpiece People's Daily said China has made breakthroughs in safeguarding national security in the past decade, making it a leading country "with the best sense of security".

"We have withstood and fought back against extreme external suppression and containment, and on a series of major issues involving Hong Kong, Taiwan, Xinjiang, Tibet, maritime affairs, and human rights, we have fought hard and won one tough battle after another," it said.

### China's top legislator meets DPRK top leader

14 April 2024, China.org

Zhao Leji, chairman of China's National People's Congress Standing Committee, met with Kim Jong Un, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) and president of the State Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) here on Saturday.

Zhao, also a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, is heading a Chinese party and government delegation on an official goodwill visit to the DPRK.

Zhao extended to Kim the kind regards and good wishes of General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee Xi Jinping.



Zhao Leji, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of China's National People's Congress Standing Committee, meets with Kim Jong Un, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) and president of the State Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in Pyongyang, the DPRK, April 13, 2024. Zhao is heading a Chinese party and government delegation on an official goodwill visit to the DPRK. (Xinhua/Liu Weibing)

Zhao said that appointed by General Secretary Xi and the CPC Central Committee, he is heading the Chinese party and government delegation to pay an official goodwill visit to the DPRK and attend the

opening ceremony of the "China-DPRK Friendship Year," and that he was warmly received by the WPK and the DPRK government.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and the DPRK, and the journey of the past 75 years epitomized good neighborliness and friendship as the two countries stood side by side, fighting together and sharing a common destiny and common development, he said.

Under the new situation, China is ready to work with the DPRK, in accordance with the lofty will of the top leaders of both parties and both countries and common aspirations of the two peoples, to push the China-DPRK relationship for greater development, Zhao said.

Zhao pointed out that the China-DPRK friendship, established and cultivated meticulously by the elder generations of revolutionists of both parties and both countries, has withstood various tests of the changing international situation and is an invaluable asset of the two countries.

Zhao said that the CPC and the Chinese government have always treated the China-DPRK relations from a strategic height and long-term perspective, and it is China's unwavering policy to maintain, consolidate and develop the China-DPRK traditional friendly and cooperative relations.

China is willing to work with the DPRK, under the strategic guidance of the top leaders of both parties and both countries, to promote bilateral practical and mutually beneficial cooperation to attain new achievements, continue to strongly support each other and safeguard the shared interests of the two countries, he said.

China stands ready for close coordination with the DPRK to ensure the success of all activities of the "China-DPRK Friendship Year," he added.

China, in accordance with the strategic plan laid out at the 20th CPC National Congress, is comprehensively advancing the building of a strong country and the great cause of national rejuvenation through Chinese modernization, Zhao stressed.

China is willing to intensify coordination in development and deepen bilateral cooperation with the DPRK, and to continuously enrich China-DPRK relations, he said.

Kim asked Zhao to convey his sincere greetings and best wishes to General Secretary Xi.

Kim said that appointed by General Secretary Xi and the CPC Central Committee, the Chinese party and government delegation's visit to the DPRK and attendance at the opening ceremony of the "DPRK-China Friendship Year" fully demonstrate General Secretary Xi's friendliness over DPRK-China relations and strongly demonstrate the profound and unbreakable foundation of bilateral ties.



Kim extended his warm congratulations over the development achievements that China has made in the pursuit of its socialist cause under the strong leadership of General Secretary Xi and the CPC.

He stressed that the DPRK-China relations have boasted a profound historical tradition, having withstood various tests and been passed on from generation to generation.

Kim said that it is the unwavering policy of the WPK and the DPRK government to consolidate and develop the traditional friendly and cooperative relations between the two countries. The DPRK-China relationship is continuously developing to new and higher stages in line with the demands of the new era, he added.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of bilateral diplomatic ties and the "DPRK-China Friendship Year," and the DPRK stands ready to work with China to strengthen cooperation in various fields, increase exchanges of experience in state governance, deepen traditional friendship, and write a new chapter for bilateral ties, he said.

Upon leaving Pyongyang, the Chinese party and government delegation was seen off at the airport by officials including Choe Ryong Hae, a member of the Presidium of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the WPK and chairman of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly of the DPRK.

On Saturday afternoon, Zhao visited and extended his regards to staff members of the Chinese embassy and representatives of overseas Chinese in the DPRK.

### **Covering China brings surveillance, harassment, report finds**

11 April 2024, NewsGram

Reporting conditions in China have improved since the global pandemic but foreign journalists still face obstacles including visa problems, surveillance and harassment, according to a new survey.

Covering China brings surveillance:- Reporting conditions in China have improved since the global pandemic but foreign journalists still face obstacles including visa problems, surveillance and harassment, according to a new survey.

The annual survey by the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China, or FCCC, found that 81% of respondents said reporting conditions have "somewhat" improved, but nearly all the journalists said the reporting environment does not meet international standards.

Key issues remain, including difficulty in obtaining long-term visas, which leaves foreign news bureaus understaffed; reporters being obstructed by police or

other officials while on assignment, and harassment when reporting in Xinjiang and border regions.

The FCCC each year surveys more than 155 correspondents from Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America. Its latest report is based on 101 responses to that survey which looks at working conditions for foreign media.

A spokesperson for China's embassy told VOA via email that the FCCC members "account for less than half of the foreign journalists in China, which means it cannot represent all of them," and that China has made efforts to support foreign media.

Referring to the FCCC as an "illegal organization, never recognized by China," the email added that Beijing is "against using the freedom of the press as an excuse to smear China with false information."

In response to concerns over visas, the spokesperson said, "In 2021, China and the US reached some common grounds. China has implemented what's been agreed, while the US has not fully delivered."

Accessing visas is one of the main difficulties cited in the survey. About one-third of respondents said their bureaus remain understaffed because of difficulty in extending or successfully applying for new visas.

Chinese authorities have mostly issued short-term visas. In 2023, only one U.S. outlet was able to get accreditation, the FCCC found. And Canadian media have had no resident reporter in China for four years.

Respondents said that as pandemic restrictions eased, they have returned to an uncertainty over what stories will result in surveillance or trips being cut short.

Four out of five of those surveyed said they experienced interference and harassment, and more than half reported being blocked from reporting or filming by police or other officials.

Nearly all those who reported from Xinjiang or Tibet said they experienced increased harassment. But journalists who reported or tried to travel to other border regions in the country also reported harassment.

After Xinjiang, the area with the most reported obstacles was the border with Russia, with 79% of journalists trying to report from there experiencing difficulties.

One journalist at a European outlet, whom the FCCC does not name, described being followed by several vehicles during a reporting trip to a town along the Russian border.

"They did not interfere during any of our interviews, although they did reach out to at

least one interviewee afterwards. When we checked into our hotel, the hotel staff

referred to us as 'the journalists state security had warned them about' earlier," the reporter said.

Similar experiences were reported by journalists who traveled to Inner Mongolia. The FCCC detailed three cases of plainclothes individuals warning people to not speak with journalists or of following news crews. The FCCC in its report notes, "Foreign journalists are, according to China's own regulations, free to report on a wide range of topics and speak to whomever they want."

The survey showed an increase in journalists being "invited for tea" – a tactic where Chinese officials invite foreign media to an informal meeting. During the meetings, journalists are asked about their coverage and while the FCCC says the exchanges are usually "cordial," it notes they can be used as a form of intimidation.

Surveillance is another concern, with respondents seeing more sources declining interviews or requesting anonymity.

Nearly all those surveyed said they believe they are targeted with digital surveillance through communication apps or that their homes or offices are bugged. Four of those surveyed said that officials referenced information that could have been known only if the authorities had access to private accounts or devices.

The FCCC says the restrictions and harassment prevents media from reporting a more balanced and nuanced picture of life in China.

"The result is coverage of China that cannot fully capture its massively complex dynamics," the FCCC said in its report. "Correspondents, restricted in where they can travel and with whom they can speak, no longer have the luxury of delving deeply into topics and painting a nuanced picture of the country. The result is coverage of China that is narrower in scope and less representative."

China has a poor press freedom record, ranking 179 out of 180 countries, where 1 shows the best environment, on the Press Freedom Index.

Media watchdog Reporters Without Borders, which compiles the index, said China is conducting a "campaign of repression against journalism and the right to information worldwide." VOA/SP

### **China and Thailand to Carry Out Joint Moon Exploration**

05 April 2024, Xinhua

On April 5th, China's National Space Administration and Thailand's Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation jointly signed a "Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation for Exploration and Peaceful Utilization of Outer Space" as well as a "Memorandum of Understanding for Cooperation on an International Lunar Research Station."

Xinhua reported that "China and Thailand will establish joint committees and working groups to strengthen cooperation in the fields of space exploration, space applications, building space capacity. This will be done through joint space projects, scientific exchange programs, personnel training plans, data and information exchange, and organization of joint thematic workshops and scientific seminars."

"China's Chang'e-7 mission [planned for 2026] will reportedly carry a 'Global Space Weather Monitoring' device developed by Thailand. This will be the first time a Thai scientific instrument enters deep space from Earth orbit. China's Chang'e-8 mission [planned for 2028] provides opportunities for international collaboration, with the ability to carry payloads of 200 kilograms. Thailand has submitted several applications regarding lunar surface robots and scientific payloads. The applications are currently being processed."

"China has already signed space cooperation agreements with more than 10 countries and international organizations."

### **China Accused of Buying Off Strategic Island Nation With Bottled Water**

03 April 2024, NewsWeek



Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu speaks at the United Nations climate summit in Dubai on December 1, 2023. China has been accused of buying off the Maldives with a million bottles of water, causing a fresh controversy over the strategic island nation. KARIM SAHIB/AFP VIA GETTY

China has been accused of buying off the the strategic Indian Ocean island nation of the Maldives with a million bottles of water from melting Tibetan glaciers.

"The Chinese Xizang [Chinese name for Tibet] Autonomous Region has extended a generous donation of 1500 [tonnes] drinking water to the Maldives, aimed at alleviating water shortages on the islands," Public Service Media, the state broadcaster of the Maldives, reported on March 27.

However, some social media users alleged that China's donation was for the personal use of Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu.

"It wasn't announced officially because Muizzu wanted to use this at Muleeaage [the official residence of the Maldives president]," one user from the Maldives said on X, formerly Twitter.

"We are not aware of the specifics you mentioned, and please refer to competent authorities for your specific question," the Chinese Embassy in Washington, D.C., told Newsweek in a reply by email. The Maldives' foreign ministry didn't reply to Newsweek's request for comment by publication time.

Muizzu, who came to power last year, has increasingly adopted a pro-China position while relegating the Maldives' traditional ties with India. The U.S. has taken note of Beijing's growing influence in the Maldives, a strategic island nation that sits on the critical waterways connecting the Indian Ocean to the Middle East and Africa. The Maldives' foreign ministry has denied the allegations, saying that the drinking water was a donation by Yan Jinhai, the chairman of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, rather than a gift to Muizzu, AFP reported on March 29. Yan, a senior Chinese politician in charge of Tibet, visited the Maldivian capital, Malé, in November 2023 to boost ties between China and the Maldives, the Maldivian President's Office said last year. "Produced within the pristine mountains of the Xizang Autonomous Region, the bottled water donation signifies a gesture of solidarity and support from China to the Maldives during times of need," Public Service Media, Maldives' state broadcaster reported on March 27.

The U.S. opened its first embassy in the Maldives in 2023 to boost its presence in the Indian Ocean region, while recognizing the importance of Maldives.

"The United States is committed to strengthening cooperation with the Maldives, a key partner in ensuring a free, open, secure, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region," U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia, Donald Lu, told the Press Trust of India in February.

The Maldives faces a shortage of fresh water while also living with the threat of rising sea levels caused by global warming.

"The only available natural water resources are rain and groundwater, both of which are highly vulnerable to climate change," Abdulla Naseer, the Maldives' former Minister of State for Environment, Climate Change and Technology, told the United Nations in March 2023.

China donated five seawater desalination systems to the Maldives to help with the drinking water

shortage, Chinese state media outlet China Daily reported on March 17

## China court jails 'tortured' rights activist Xu Qin for four years

01 April 2024, RFA



Veteran Chinese rights activist Xu Qin is seen in an undated photo.

Authorities in the eastern Chinese province of Jiangsu have handed a four-year jail term to veteran rights activist Xu Qin, after repeatedly delaying her trial and sentencing despite concerns over her deteriorating health, and amid reports of torture from a prominent rights group.

The Yangzhou Intermediate People's Court sentenced Xu, a key figure in the Wuhan-based China Rights Observer group founded by jailed veteran dissident Qin Yongmin, to four years' imprisonment on March 29 for "incitement to subvert state power," a charge frequently used to target peaceful critics of the ruling Chinese Communist Party, the Civil Rights and Livelihood Watch rights website reported.

It quoted Xu as telling the sentencing hearing: "I'd like to thank everyone for their care and support, and also thank my husband for his help and support. Regardless of whether it's futile or not, I must appeal. This is my right." An award-winning activist in a number of high-profile human rights cases, including that of detained human rights lawyer Yu Wensheng, Xu was detained under "residential surveillance at a designated location" in 2021, a form of incommunicado detention rights groups say puts detainees at greater risk of torture and mistreatment. Her family told RFA in earlier interviews that Xu is a stroke and heart attack survivor who suffers from high blood pressure, among other ailments.

But according to the Civil Rights and Livelihood Watch rights website, many of Xu's health problems were caused by her torture and mistreatment in detention. "During her detention and interrogation, Xu Qin was brutally tortured to extract a confession, and was held in solitary confinement for a long period of time," the website said in a report about her sentencing published on Sunday. "Xu already

suffered from multiple health problems including stroke, heart attack and hypertension, and as a result [of the torture], she was left paralyzed and unable to stand," it said.

Since she was locked up in the detention center, Xu has started using a wheelchair, according to her lawyer.

Xu told the court on Friday that she would appeal the sentence, which came after more than two years in pretrial detention at the Yangmiao Detention Center in Yangzhou city, where she held intermittent hunger strikes in protest at a loss of communications privileges as well as a months-long ban on meetings with her lawyer, Civil Rights and Livelihood Watch said. Repeated calls to Xu's lawyer rang unanswered during office hours on Monday.

Trial was delayed

Xu's trial was delayed several times following her initial detention in May 2021, with the authorities citing only "unavoidable circumstances."

But her family says it was delayed due to her refusal to provide the state security police with a "confession."

The trial was eventually held on Nov. 7, 2022, but the verdict and sentencing were also repeatedly delayed until now.

New York-based rights lawyer Chen Chuangchuang, who also heads the U.S. branch of the banned China Democracy Party, said Chen has always been an extremely tenacious activist.

"The trial was held a long time ago, but the verdict and sentencing were delayed multiple times, which is a deliberate form of torture used by the Chinese Communist Party," Chen told RFA on Monday.

Chen said that one of the purposes of the authorities' repeated delay in pronouncing the sentence was to get Xu Qin to plead guilty, and that she had been especially targeted due to her association with Qin Yongmin.

According to the Weiwanwang rights website, the charges against Xu listed her participation in Qin's China Rights Observer and its sister organization Rose China as evidence against her.

Qin was sentenced in July 2018 to 13 years' imprisonment for "incitement to subvert state power," the latest in a string of long sentences for his peaceful dissent and attempts to build the banned China Democracy Party.

A contemporary of exiled dissident Wei Jingsheng, Qin was sentenced to eight years in prison for "counterrevolutionary propaganda and subversion" in the wake of China's Democracy Wall movement in 1981.

He served a further two years' "re-education through labor" in 1993 after he penned a controversial document titled the "Peace Charter."

Qin then served a 12-year jail term for subversion after he helped found the China Democracy Party in 1998 in spite of a ban on opposition political parties. Xu was honored with the Lin Zhao Freedom Award for her human rights advocacy in 2022, and the Oscar China Freedom Human Rights Award last month.

Translated by Luisetta Mudie. Edited by Roseanne Gerin.

## March

### CPC leadership reviews disciplinary inspection report

31 March 2024, ECNS

The Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee met on March 21/22 to review a comprehensive report on the second round of disciplinary inspection missions of the 20th CPC Central Committee. Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, presided over the meeting.

It was noted at the meeting that the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core has attached importance to disciplinary inspection work, and has arranged two rounds of such inspection missions since the 20th CPC National Congress, which had covered all centrally-administered enterprises. It was pointed out at the meeting that Party-building work in centrally-administered enterprises and relevant government departments had been strengthened, with new achievements in terms of the Party's full and rigorous self-governance. But there are still some problems that must be taken very seriously from a political standpoint and addressed earnestly.

Inspections and rectifications followed must be taken as the pivot for promoting high-quality development and exercising full and rigorous Party self-governance. Organization and leadership must be strengthened to see that key parties assume their primary responsibilities, and problems, tasks, and responsibilities must be put on a list, so as to ensure that every problem has a solution and feedback. Oversight over inspections and rectifications must be strengthened, key officials and events be placed under tight scrutiny to make sure that every case is addressed as required. An accountability system must be established for rectifications to ensure that those who are perfunctory or cheat in the rectifications will be strictly held to account.

It was emphasized at the meeting that state-owned enterprises (SOE) are the crucial material and political foundation for socialism with Chinese characteristics. It is imperative to uphold and



consolidate Party's leadership, and thoroughly study and put into practice Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. SOEs must perform their duties and fulfill their missions in a down-to-earth manner, and must uphold General Secretary Xi Jinping's core position on the CPC Central Committee and in the Party as a whole, and uphold the Central Committee's authority and centralized, unified leadership. They must ensure both development and security, be vigilant against potential dangers, be prepared to deal with worst-case scenarios, resolutely prevent and mitigate risks and ensure high-quality development with high-level safety.

It is imperative to make advances in exercising full and rigorous Party self-governance, with rigor being maintained for the work in every aspect. Oversight of "top leaders" and leaderships must be strengthened, and crackdown on corruption must continue to be carried out with a high hand. Cases must be studied and used for promoting rectification of conduct and Party governance so that the soil and conditions that breed corruption will be eliminated.

It is imperative to conscientiously implement the Party's organizational line for the new era and strengthen the building of leaderships, ranks of officials, talent pool as well as grassroots Party organizations. What has been achieved from disciplinary inspections must be put to good use. It is also essential to conduct in-depth research on common and deep-seated problems discovered in disciplinary inspections, further improve the related systems and mechanisms, and tackle not only symptoms but also root causes.

### **China spy agency fingers consultancies as espionage threat**

31 March 2024, VOA News

China's Ministry of State Security issued a fresh warning this week about overseas spy agencies and what it says are their efforts in recent years to obtain state secrets under the guise of consulting agencies.

The six-minute video released Thursday on the ministry's official WeChat social media account reenacts what it says was a real case where overseas spy agencies instructed a consulting firm to steal classified information from a Chinese company seeking to invest abroad.

The release of the video comes as Chinese leader Xi Jinping met this week with American CEOs in a bid reassure them that China remains open for business, despite concerns about its economy and worrying signals from the authoritarian government.

Over the past year, foreign investment in China has shrunk as supply chains shift to other countries while Chinese authorities have rolled out a new anti-

espionage law and used exit bans to keep business executives and others from leaving the country. It has also carried out raids on consulting and due diligence firms.

During the same period, the Ministry of State Security has ramped up its use of social media to raise the alarm about foreign spies.

Its latest video – the fourth since it launched its social media account last year – has the feel of a spy thriller with dramatic music and fast-paced video elements and graphics.

It tells the story of an executive at a Chinese company who is pressed by a consulting firm representative on a string of questions, including the company's total profit, the technical parameters of its products, and how its products are used by the Air Force.

In a WeChat post released with the video, the ministry warned about the national security risks that consultancy agencies pose.

"The seemingly normal investigation conducted by consulting firms are in fact attempts to illegally acquire our commercial secrets and efforts to suppress our advantageous industries," the ministry wrote, adding that these consulting firms are accomplices to foreign spy agencies aiming to infiltrate key sectors in China.

**Intimidation campaign against Chinese citizens**

Some experts say the video is tailored to the Chinese audience rather than foreign investors since the video is purely in Mandarin and features the arrest of a Chinese national working for a foreign consulting firm.

The purpose of the video is "to inform and intimidate Chinese citizens by telling them that the government is watching them," said Dennis Wilder, a former U.S. national security official. He added that the campaign will likely create a chilling effect among Chinese citizens, especially those working for foreign companies.

Over the last year, Chinese authorities have raided several American companies' offices in China and detained some of their Chinese employees. Companies affected include due diligence firm Mintz Group, business consulting firm Capvision, and management consultancy Bain & Company.

**Chilling effect for new foreign businesses**

While the campaign focuses on Chinese citizens, Wilder said Beijing's efforts to safeguard national security will also create a chilling effect for foreign businesses trying to enter the Chinese market.

Unlike big foreign companies with an established presence in China, such as Apple or Qualcomm, he said companies that have no presence in China need to conduct due diligence. "They have to understand what their counterparts in China are all about, but if



they can't conduct due diligence, they won't invest in China," he told VOA in a video interview.

A survey conducted by foreign business groups in 2023 suggests foreign companies are increasingly pulling investments and operations out of China. Survey data show that only 45% of American companies view China as their primary or among their top three investment destinations while 66% of the companies surveyed by the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China said they found operating in China has become increasingly difficult. Despite foreign companies' lack of confidence in the Chinese market, some analysts say the Chinese government thinks efforts to safeguard national security and enhance foreign investors' confidence in the Chinese market are not mutually contradictory.

"Beijing believes that while they try to attract more foreign businesses to invest in China, they also should ensure key national interests, such as core data or key infrastructure won't be easily obtained by foreign businesses," said Hung Chin-fu, a political scientist at National Cheng Kung University in Taiwan.

He said Beijing's approach will be met with deep suspicion among foreign businesses. "At a time when the Chinese government has laid out many red lines in the name of national security, investing in China will be like walking on thin ice for foreign companies," he told VOA by phone.

As foreign businesses will likely remain hesitant to increase their investment volumes in China, Wilder thinks Chinese leaders may have different views on whether to prioritize efforts to attract more foreign investment or the need to safeguard national security. "For Xi Jinping, I think if he has to choose between foreign investment and economic growth and what he perceives as national security, he will always come out on the national security side," he told VOA. But for other Communist Party leaders who must consider economic growth, such as Chinese Premier Li Qiang, Wilder thinks their consideration will be different from Xi's.

### **U-M study reveals how China's local bureaucrats struggle for power through negative media coverage**

19 March 2024, Michigan News

Recent research on China's factional competition uncovers how local bureaucrats, who are connected to influential national leaders, strategically use the media to criticize members of rival factions, harming their promotion prospects and weakening their factions.

Led by Ji Yeon (Jean) Hong, associate professor of political science at the University of Michigan, the research analyzed millions of media reports in Chinese national and regional newspapers spanning

from 2000-2014, along with information on the political networks of elite Chinese bureaucrats. It mapped out patterns of behavior among local bureaucrats in leveraging negative media coverage to attack political rivals.

Given the limited freedom of local media on criticizing local governments, provincial leaders linked to strong national leaders, such as Politburo Standing Committee members, encouraged local media to cover negative political incidents such as corruption investigation in other provinces.

More importantly, when reporting on others, provincial leaders are more likely to target provinces connected to weaker national political leaders. The bigger the power gap between the national leaders, the more frequent the negative reporting is.

"This suggests that factional competition encourages strong factions to attack weaker factions more frequently than the reverse," Hong said. "This often leads to power consolidation, strengthening strong factions and weakening weaker factions."

The research further explores the consequences of such negative news coverage on the promotion prospects of provincial leaders. It finds that these negative reports indeed harm the reported-on cadres and their factions.

Specifically, news reports on corruption substantially reduce the promotion chances of the reported-on province's party secretary, the top local political leader, who is likely to hold political responsibility and suffer a substantial disadvantage if more corrupt cadres are caught within his or her region. While leaders of provinces where the media reports on other provinces' corruption cases enjoy a higher probability of promotion.

Even though the Chinese personnel system, including promotion, demotion and allocation of party cadres, is not transparent, one of the factors that the Communist Party formally emphasizes in cadre evaluation is public perception. Without an electoral mechanism, it is not straightforward to elicit the public's evaluation of a cadre or its governance, but the media strongly affect public opinion in China. In such circumstances, the media role is critical.

The research covers the period ranging from the end of the Jiang Zemin administration to the beginning of Xi Jinping's regime. The Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao administrations, which constitute the bulk of the period under analysis, are not typically framed as a period in which one faction or one top leader dominated others. Furthermore, during this period intellectuals within the party actively debated the possibility of intraparty democracy.

"This implies that the recent personalization of power in China's central politics might not be a unique feature of the current leadership, but an outcome of

latent behavioral patterns in China's elite politics," Hong said.

This study is published in the April 2024 issue of Political Science Research and Methods.

**Detailed measures stipulate place name translation from foreign language must not compromise China's territorial claims, sovereign rights**

16 March 2024, Global Times

China's Ministry of Civil Affairs on Friday published implementation measures addressing the management of geographical names, which detailed the requirements for translation of place names in ethnic minority or foreign languages into Chinese characters.

Set to take effect from May 1, 2024, the implementation measures stipulated in Article 13 that "place name in foreign language that may harm China's territorial claims and sovereignty rights shall not be directly quoted or translated without authorization."

Translation of place names in foreign languages or minority languages should comply with standards formulated by related organs of the State Council. The standard translations are made public through notices, the national database for geographical names and official publications on geographical names, according to the implementation measures.

The measures released on Friday also clarified that names of a person, company or trademark should not be used as geographical names and specified the general rules and procedures of naming or renaming localities.

The State Council issued a revised regulation on place names in April 2022, which is applicable to naming, renaming, usage, cultural protection and other management on geographical names within Chinese territories.

Analysts noted the newly released implementation measures are made in accordance with the revision. Zhi Zhenfeng, a research fellow with the Institute of Law at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, told the Global Times on Saturday that geographical names are not only directly related to administration and everyday life, but also carry legal and sovereign implications.

Standardization of name translation helps confirm the scope of a geographical name refers to and all administrative rights and public geographical services (mapping and navigating, weather forecast, etc) are based on that, Zhi explained.

As China still has disputes over some territories with certain neighboring countries, the use of geographical names of places in disputes directly relates to sovereign rights. Using the incorrect

translation or non-standard translation could cause confusion and encroach China's territorial integrity, Zhi stressed.

Analysts mentioned the example of maritime disputes in the South China Sea with countries like the Philippines. When referring to islands and reefs concerned, the use of standard translation is a firm declaration of sovereignty and transliteration of foreign names means concession of legal rights.

The Ministry of Civil Affairs standardized the names of 11 places in Zangnan (the southern part of Southwest China's Xizang Autonomous Region) in Chinese characters, Tibetan and pinyin in April 2023.

Experts told the Global Times that the move is meaningful in safeguarding national sovereignty, maintaining peace in border regions and managing border-related matters at a legal level. Using standard place names helps raise awareness of Chinese territory.

The April 2023 issuance was the third list of standardized geographical names in Zangnan published by the ministry. The first list of the standardized names of six places in Zangnan was released in 2017, while the second list of 15 places was issued in 2021.

**What to expect at China's 'Two Sessions' amid sagging economy, party drama**

03 March 2024, Aljazeera



The Chinese government's Two Sessions are taking place in Beijing [File: Mark R Cristino/Pool via Reuters]

China's "Two Sessions" kick off in Beijing on Monday with the meeting of the National People's Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC).

The event brings together China's political elite, as well as leaders in business, tech, media, and the arts. Known as lianghui in Chinese, the concurrent meetings are an annual fixture of China's legislative agenda and run for approximately two weeks.

During the period, legislators will approve new laws, political appointments, and government work reports detailing the progress of various departments such as

the Ministry of Finance and the National Development and Reform Commission.

What are the major developments to watch?

During last year's Two Sessions, delegates officially approved Xi Jinping for an unprecedented third term as president.

This year, the event is likely to be dominated by China's lagging economy, which is grappling with slowing growth, deflation, massive debt and falling exports.

One of the most important events to watch will be Premier Li Qiang's delivery of the annual work report, which will review the government's accomplishments and set goals for 2024.

Li is expected to set an economic growth target of about 5 percent for 2024 and discuss headline issues from China's falling birth rate to the future of tech and artificial intelligence (AI) regulation.

A number of key appointments could also be made.

Over the past year, 11 members of the NPC's Standing Committee – the legislature's 175-member permanent body – have been removed, including Minister of Foreign Affairs Qin Gang and Minister of Defence Li Shangfu.

Those who were removed had ties to the military, including the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Rocket Force, which oversees China's nuclear and conventional ballistic missiles.

What is the difference between the two sessions?

The NPC and the CPPCC are both Chinese state institutions that are technically separate from the Communist Party of China (CCP), but much of their work is dictated by it.

On paper, the NPC is officially China's highest legislative body with nearly 3,000 members representing the country's provinces, autonomous regions, big cities, the PLA and the People's Armed Police. The NPC also has delegates representing self-governing Taiwan, which is claimed by the CCP even though Beijing has never exercised control over the island.

During the NPC, delegates review progress on policy goals and vote to approve new legislation and senior political appointments, although most delegates in reality have little political power.

The NPC Standing Committee is widely viewed as more powerful than the legislature in practice, despite being technically subordinate, as it meets regularly between legislative sessions.

"The NPC is not a parliament in the sense of a democratic parliament where the representatives are elected through fair elections. Its deputies are elected by a small portion of the Chinese population under the guidance of the Communist Party," Adam Ni, co-editor of the China Neican newsletter, told Al Jazeera.

"That is to say, the deputies of the NPC are at least acceptable to the party."

The CPPCC, which meets at the same time and brings together 2,000 plus delegates from across China and the diaspora, is a political advisory body that functions as more of a public relations exercise.

Delegates are not necessarily members of the CCP, although the meeting is part of its "United Front" efforts to align different actors on common causes and spread China's influence.

CPPCC delegates include leaders in tech, the arts, media, and leaders from semi-autonomous Hong Kong and Macau.

"The CPPCC performs several functions, including facilitating elite networking and directing policy advice from outside the party to the party-state. It operates as a means of trade, where the Communist Party provides access to the system and recognition through granting membership, while the elites sitting on the body gain access to policymakers and receive recognition," Ni said.

Is the NPC just a 'rubber stamp' parliament?

The NPC is often referred to as a "rubber stamp" parliament or legislature, as its main function is to formally approve premade decisions and it features little, if any, overt debate.

China watchers say that the NPC is still important to watch.

It can incorporate limited popular input on issues that are not considered too sensitive and, on rare occasions, has featured displays of dissent.

Most famously, one-third of delegates in 1992 voted against or abstained from approving the Three Gorges Dam, a controversial project to dam the Yangtze River.

"People refer to the NPC as a 'rubber stamp' because it has never voted down any bill, work report, budget, or nomination presented to it. But that unduly narrow focus on the NPC's vote outcomes alone, in my view, ignores the important role played by the thousands of NPC delegates in representing citizen interests on a range of politically non-sensitive issues," Changhao Wei, a fellow at Yale Law School's Paul Tsai China Center, told Al Jazeera.

While you will not hear delegates debating on the floor, individual delegates and bodies such as the NPC Standing Committee can shape legislation as it is being drafted and provide input on issues like the national budget.

Delegates can also submit individual bills calling on the NPC to act on important issues of the day.

In 2022, delegates submitted multiple bills focusing on women's rights and domestic violence in response to public outrage over the case of a trafficked woman with mental health issues who was found chained up by her husband.

While these bills were not debated publicly, they would not have gone unnoticed within the government either, Wei said.

Ni said although the CPP maintains an ironclad grip on power, the party is not a monolith, "but contains a multitude of interest groups and networks".

"There are also non-party groups and personnel involved in the lawmaking process," Ni said.

"We shouldn't discount their agency, eg, advocates of women's rights, environmentalists, because they can have an impact. But the influence and power of non-party individuals and groups are constrained by the political structure, where the party monopolises the instruments of state power."

### **China's premier won't meet the press after 'two sessions' for first time in 3 decades**

04 March 2024, South China Morning Post

For the first time in three decades, the Chinese premier will not host a press conference at the end of the annual parliamentary sessions, which began in Beijing on Monday.

It will also be scrapped for future years of the current National People's Congress' term barring exceptional circumstances, said Lou Qinjian, spokesman for the NPC, China's top legislative body. The press conference – first held in 1988 and established as a customary practice in 1993 – is one of the most anticipated events of the annual "two sessions", when the top political advisory body and legislature meet.

It is one of the rare occasions when a top Chinese leader takes questions from local and international media. Those questions are often tightly scripted and chosen in advance, but it offers the outside world a chance to hear directly from a high-ranking official on policy directions.

In particular, it has been seen as a platform for China to indicate its diplomatic priorities, not only in terms of the questions selected but also which country's media they come from.

It also makes the premier a more familiar face globally than other Chinese leaders – including the president and Communist Party secretary – who seldom talk directly to outside media.

But Lou said that after a review, the leadership had decided to scrap the press conference since it often overlapped with similar events during the two sessions.

Premier Li Qiang will deliver the government work report to the NPC on Tuesday morning, followed by two written reports from the National Development and Reform Commission and the Ministry of Finance outlining plans and the budget.

"It should be said that society's major concerns have been specifically addressed in the [government]

reports," Lou said on Monday. "They will be publicised so that the media and the public can learn about their content easily."

There will be at least three press conferences during the two sessions, including one given by Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

Observers said that while the change might come as a surprise, it was in line with China's political development.

"The party's leadership has been firmly established over the past decade. The State Council's role is now mainly about implementing the party's decisions," according to veteran China watcher Wang Xiangwei, a former editor-in-chief of the South China Morning Post.

"The role and status of the premier, who heads the State Council, is therefore adjusted accordingly."

He said that was already reflected in arrangements for state leaders meeting the chief executives of Hong Kong and Macau on duty visits.

Previously the chief executives held separate meetings with the president and the premier. But last year they reported only to the president, with the premier sitting in on the meeting.

"It is also a reflection of Li Qiang's pragmatism. He focuses on major policy directions, which are all clearly spelled out in his work report," Wang said. "He doesn't think an additional press conference is necessary as the ministers are in a better position to elaborate on detailed policies, and they will all have press conferences."

But he said the Chinese leadership could bring back the practice in future if it was deemed necessary.

Another observer, who spoke on condition of anonymity, agreed it reflected the change in power dynamics in China.

"The premier's job is now mainly to do with the economy and social affairs. However, the questions asked at the presser are usually about foreign affairs and China's grand strategy," the observer said.

"It would be strange for Li to answer those questions as foreign affairs are increasingly centralised in the hands of the party chief, President Xi Jinping."

While the foreign minister nominally reports to the premier, Wang stepped into the role from a higher rank after Qin Gang was sacked from the job without explanation in July. Wang reports directly to Xi.

The observer said Li could also have decided not to hold the press conference as a way to show loyalty to Xi, so that more focus is on the president.

But Wang said there could be a negative impact.

"This is still the only opportunity for a top Chinese leader to have live televised interaction with foreign media. Even though it is a highly scripted event, it's a chance for everyone who is interested in China –

particularly foreign investors – to hear directly from the Chinese leadership,” he said.

“This will be an opportunity missed for China to explain itself, and it may increase the perception of China’s lack of transparency. It will have a huge impact on China’s image to the outside world when it comes to openness.”

Alfred Wu, an associate professor at the National University of Singapore’s Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, said the change was likely to be part of revisions made by the cabinet to its work rules a year ago, noting that an amended version of the related law would be endorsed during the NPC session.

“[This] clearly shows the fundamental changes in China’s party-government relationships in the past few years,” he said.

The revised work rules state that the cabinet will closely follow instructions from the party leadership, and provisions related to government transparency were removed.

“It will have only taken a year from the revision of the internal work rules to the revision of the guiding law,” Wu said. “Li Qiang is certainly pushing this very hard to show his loyalty.”

Jens Eskelund, president of the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China, expressed regret that the premier’s press conference was cancelled.

“Transparency and engagement with international media are important for enabling the global audience to understand China’s priorities and its assessment of the domestic and global situation,” he said. “We hope the press conference will be reintroduced next year.”

David Lie Tai-chong, a Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference member from Hong Kong, said he believed the press briefing was dropped as part of efforts to “streamline” the two sessions.

### **China's top political advisory body concludes standing committee session**

02 March 2024, Xinhua

The 14th National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), or China’s national political advisory body, closed the fifth session of its standing committee Saturday in Beijing. Wang Huning, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the CPPCC National Committee, hosted the closing meeting and delivered a speech.

Praising the concrete progress the CPPCC National Committee has made over the past year, Wang noted that the year of 2024 marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China and the founding of the CPPCC.

The CPPCC should carry on its fine tradition, stay committed to its political responsibility, actively offer advice and build up consensus for advancing Chinese modernization as well as pool wisdom and strength for fulfilling the national economic and social development goals, Wang said.

He also called for efforts to ensure the upcoming second session of the 14th CPPCC National Committee be held successfully.

The meeting reviewed and adopted documents including a draft agenda and the schedule of the annual session, a work report of the Standing Committee of the CPPCC National Committee, and a report on how the proposals from political advisors have been handled since the first session of the 14th CPPCC National Committee.

These documents will be submitted to the annual session for review.

### **Intrigue swirls about possible reshuffles as China's parliament convenes**

02 March 2024, The Guardian

Thousands of delegates are due to arrive in Beijing this weekend for China’s most high-profile political gathering, a closely observed series of meetings that will lay out the government’s policy blueprint for the year ahead.

The event, known as the “two sessions”, begins on Monday as China’s parliament, the National People’s Congress (NPC) convenes alongside a separate but parallel meeting of the country’s top political advisory body, the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference.

The nearly 3,000 NPC delegates can amend the constitution, enact new legislation, approve the government budget and fill vacancies in state offices. But in reality the NPC is a rubber-stamp parliament. It has never voted down any item on the agenda, and the Communist party (CCP) holds the ultimate power over the state.

Nevertheless, it is a keenly watched political event. The premier, Li Qiang, will present the government work report, which lays out its plans for the year ahead, including the GDP growth target. And while no changes are expected to the position of Xi Jinping, who was granted a norm-busting third term as president at last year’s NPC, personnel changes may be announced, after months of uncertainty about who is responsible for some of China’s most important government departments.

The most significant changes are at the offices of the foreign minister and the defence minister. Speculation around the fates of Qin Gang, the former foreign minister, and Li Shangfu, the former defence minister, has swirled since the two men were removed without



explanation from their positions last year, in a season of turbulence for China's government.

Qin has not been seen since in public since June, leading to rumours about his fate. This week Qin was removed as a NPC delegate, concluding his eradication from the levers of China's government.

Unlike other delegates who were "dismissed" from parliament, the official notice said Qin had resigned. James Palmer, a deputy editor of Foreign Policy, said in his China Brief newsletter that this indicated Qin's "fall from grace has been relatively cushioned".

Qin was replaced as foreign minister by his predecessor, Wang Yi, who is also the director of the more powerful CCP foreign affairs commission. Many experts believe that Wang's reappointment was intended to be temporary, with a replacement expected to be announced at this year's NPC. A likely candidate is Liu Jianchao, a senior party cadre who has travelled extensively in recent months to participate in diplomatic meetings.

Li, the former defence minister, was recently removed from the website of the CCP's central military commission.

The demotions of Qin and Li have left vacancies on the state council, China's cabinet. Li's vacancy may be filled by his replacement as defence minister, Dong Jun. But it is far from certain that Dong or any new foreign minister will be appointed to the state council.

Neil Thomas and Jing Qian, researchers at the Asia Society Policy Institute, said in a recent analysis that if the spots remained vacant, it "could suggest a higher degree of mistrust and paralysis at the centre of Xi's leadership and a poorer outlook for China's attempts to both manage tensions with the west and lead the global south".

Observers will be paying close attention to the government work report, which Li will deliver on Tuesday. He is expected to announce a relatively modest GDP growth target likely to hew closely to 2023's target of 5%.

There may be some modest fiscal support, although not the deep structural reform or more aggressive stimulus that many economists say is necessary to recharge China's struggling economy. That is because Xi's third term as China's leader has been characterised by a focus on national security, even at the expense of economic growth or business confidence.

Underlining this, on 27 February the NPC standing committee, which meets when the NPC is not in session, revised the law on state secrets, expanding the scope of sensitive information to "work secrets". The update requires government agencies to protect information that may not be a state secret but "would cause a definite adverse impact after leaking".

Although the law only applies to state institutions, Thomas and Qian said the widened scope of sensitive information "could affect firms that deal with China", meaning more uncertainty for businesses in China.

### **China's Xi Jinping calls for 'loyalty and honesty' from younger officials as morale runs low**

02 March 2024, South China Morning Post

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Friday urged young and middle-aged officials to be loyal, honest and "keen on reform and innovation" in an effort to rally morale and encourage unity in the face of economic and social risks.

"[Young and middle-aged officials] must actively practice loyalty and honesty towards the party, and must make their political stance clear," Xi said, according to state news agency Xinhua.

He called on young cadres to strictly uphold the Communist Party's political discipline and rules, show honesty and maintain a high degree of unity with the party at all times.

The message was conveyed at the opening ceremony of a training programme for young and middle-aged officials on Friday at the Central Party School in Beijing, where Xi urged party organisations to nurture reliable and qualified successors.

"[Party members] should be strong promoters of good and clean political ecology ... resolutely oppose privileged thoughts and privileged behaviours, and maintain the political integrity of the party," Xi added.

He also called on them to guard against major risks and solve prominent problems.

Xi emphasised that young party members should be "selfless" and dedicate themselves to improving people's well-being. They should also be "keen on reform and innovation and dare to confront difficulties", he said.

Xi has previously highlighted the importance of innovation in China's modernisation path, saying it should be given a prominent position in overall development, according to an excerpt published last year in *Qiushi*, the party's theoretical journal.

"Chinese-style modernisation is an exploratory undertaking with many unknown areas that the country is required to boldly explore through reform and innovation, and we should never rigidly cling to an idea or approach without considering the reality of the situation," Xi said, according to the journal.

Morale is running low among China's public servants as Xi's sweeping anti-corruption campaign has increased the pressure on rank-and-file cadres, while the risk of social unrest is growing because of the country's economic slowdown.

Chen Daoyin, a political analyst and former professor at Shanghai University of Political Science and Law, noted that it was "party tradition" to train young and middle-aged officials at the Central Party School, where cadres learn to fill key party and state positions.

"The points emphasised in Xi's speech this year suggest prevalent problems among young and middle-aged officials, including the lack of a sense of responsibility and capability and low awareness of their roles," Chen said.

In January, Xi warned that the party should continue to fight corruption and other problems with "tenacity, perseverance and precision".

Later that month, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, China's top anti-corruption body, revealed that around 110,000 party officials faced disciplinary action last year.

China's former foreign minister Qin Gang and former defence minister Li Shangfu were also stripped of their titles and state councillor positions last year. The reasons for their dismissals have not been revealed publicly.

### **China economy gaining momentum despite calls for hardline US stance: senior diplomat**

02 March 2024, South China Morning Post

China's economy is gaining momentum towards recovery and high-quality development as it becomes a "modern socialist country in all respects", a senior Chinese diplomat said on Friday, even as he denigrated American critics calling for hardline policies against the Asian giant.

The comments by Qian Jin, China's deputy consul general in New York, come as the administrations of Presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping seek to stabilise relations and build on good will following their November summit in California amid escalating US rhetoric ahead of the nation's presidential election in November.

"Some people have been hyping up [the] so-called 'China threat', advocating cutting China off from chips, slapping new sanctions," said Qian in prepared remarks.

"The stabilising momentum in China-US relations should not be disrupted by domestic politics."

Friday's statement, one of several over the past year by Beijing officials aimed at boosting investor and consumer confidence in China's struggling economy, was released amid a slew of headwinds.

Qian knocked detractors who voice "concerns and doubts" about China's economic development and who use such phrases as "struggling for momentum", "lack of drive" and "dragging down the world".

"This is further from the truth," he said. "The ship of China's economy is breaking turbulent waves of the global economy and moving steadily forward."

Qian argued critics should note that Beijing achieved its 5.2 per cent growth target in 2023.

In addition, China's economy remained a strong engine of global growth, he said, and planners had avoided "massive stimulus" for short-term gain given "sound and solid fundamentals".

Beijing has sought to project confidence as it tries to right its economic ship. Its swooning property market is a grave concern, accounting for some 25 per cent of the country's economy and about 70 per cent of household wealth.

On other fronts, local debt levels are mounting, and youth unemployment stood at 15 per cent in December. Last summer, the total surpassed 20 per cent, after which China's National Bureau of Statistics temporarily stopped releasing figures, citing a need to change how the index was calculated.

Furthermore, deflationary fears have intensified, and consumers during the closely watched Lunar New Year period stayed cautious.

While the number of domestic tourists was up 34 per cent during the major annual holiday over last year – and 19 per cent above 2019 pre-coronavirus pandemic levels – average spending per person was nine per cent below 2019.

"In short, Chinese households are readily partaking in the service economy but remain frugal in their spending," said Michael Hirson of 22V Research, a New York-based investment research firm.

"Cautious household spending and investing has been a key factor behind weak domestic demand since the post-Covid reopening and we see few catalysts to reverse it any time soon," added Hirson, who served as the US Treasury Department's attaché in China from 2013 to 2016.

Qian countered that the economy was stable, saying 2023 grain output fell only slightly below 2022 levels, R&D spending held strong and a shift was under way to new sources of growth.

China continued to welcome foreign investors, he added, while electric vehicles, batteries, solar panels and new energy developments remained promising. Some economists noted overcapacity concerns, however.

The country's domestic EV sales could grow 25 per cent to 9.44 million units this year, according to a forecast by Citic Futures. That is down from annual growth rates of 31 per cent last year and 89 per cent in 2022.

Beijing has sought to tackle the mounting economic uncertainties, vowing to embark on a host of pro-growth policies. "Proactive fiscal policy must be moderately strengthened and improved in quality

and efficiency," according to a statement from the Politburo on Thursday.

In a meeting with US business executives in Beijing on Wednesday, Chinese Premier Li Qiang touted the "huge demand potential" in advanced manufacturing, urbanisation, consumption upgrading and green energy transformation. He did so even as he criticised any move to decouple the two economies.

On trade, prospects for China look mixed, analysts said, as 2023 exports fell, the US has maintained its insistence on restricting exports of high-end semiconductors and other key technologies and Europe grows warier of Beijing's ambitious EV plans, which the continent has viewed as a threat to its own efforts.

But Qian said better Sino-American trade relations were mutually beneficial.

"Decoupling between us will not work and will produce no winner," the diplomat said. "For Chinese companies in the US, unreasonable tariffs, sanctions and suppression are most unwanted."

Beijing's bid to bolster confidence with foreign investors comes amid steep stock market declines – partially reversed after recent government intervention – and plunging sentiment.

According to an American Chamber of Commerce in South China survey released on Tuesday, 63 per cent of US firms in China were looking to reinvest in China, down 5 percentage points.

The same survey found that only 11 per cent of non-American foreign firms planned to reinvest in China, down sharply from last year's 71 per cent.

Trade tensions are also weighing on the economy. More than 60 per cent of American firms and over half of Chinese firms in the South China AmCham survey said they had been negatively affected by tariffs both from Beijing and Washington, with 85 per cent expecting bilateral trade tensions to worsen.

The low level of trust and ongoing mudslinging between the world's two largest economies was evident in this week's annual US assessment of China's membership in the World Trade Organization.

Washington accused Beijing of a "state-directed, non-market approach" and an array of non-market practices targeting industries for global market domination, according to the 80-page report.

The US added that China's socialist market economy "has turned decidedly predatory".

Beijing quickly denied the charges, countering Washington relied on "discriminatory" industrial policies that disrupt global supply chains and used "smear tactics and blame-shifting methods to cover up its violations and sabotage".

Qian on Friday contended doubters would be proved wrong. "The Chinese economy can handle

ups and downs," he said. "The overall trend of long-term growth will not change."

### Further fall from grace for disappeared former foreign, defence ministers in opaque world of China

01 March 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Mar01'24) – China said Feb 27 that the resignation from the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) by the months-long disappeared former foreign minister Qin Gang had been accepted, without any information on his whereabouts or current status. China also said Feb 27 that it's also months-long disappeared defence minister Li Shangfu had been removed from the Party Central Military Commission (CMC).

"Tianjin Municipal People's Congress Standing Committee has decided to accept Qin Gang's resignation as a delegate to the 14th NPC," reported China's official Xinhua news agency Feb 27. The decision came ahead of the opening of the NPC's 2024 session on Mar 5.

Qin, China's former envoy to the United States, took the office of foreign minister in Jan 2023. He disappeared from public view in Jun 2023 and was formally banished from his position as a state councillor in October.

Qin rose to power due to his personal relationship with Chinese leader Xi Jinping, and his downfall has left many questions unanswered. Some experts have even described him as Xi's most loyal servant, noted newsweek.com Feb 27.

Beijing has yet to officially explain Qin's dismissal as foreign minister, after he was removed from the post only six months into the role. The mystery around Qin's disappearance since June continues as various theories about his fate have been put forward, the report noted.

Meanwhile, it is also not clear when exactly Li Shangfu was removed from China's key military command body, said the scmp.com Feb 27.

Li, who had not been seen in public since late Aug 2023, was removed as defence minister and state councillor without explanation at a meeting of the NPC Standing Committee in Oct 2023. He had only been in the post for months.

The CMC is a parallel system for the party and the state, with the same membership. Li had already been removed from the state CMC in October, the report noted.

It added that Li is still a member of the party's Central Committee and retains his seat in the legislature.

Last year also saw a number of senior generals being removed from their commands, prompting speculation that President Xi Jinping's anti-corruption drive was deepening in the military. They included

the leadership of the People's Liberation Army Rocket Force who are responsible for the country's nuclear arsenal.

Nine of those commanders were also stripped of their seats in the legislature in Dec 2023, with the NPC saying this month that they were suspected of "violations of discipline and the law", usually a euphemism for corruption, the report noted.

Also, the fate of Li's predecessor Wei Fenghe remains uncertain after he did not appear on a list of senior officials who received Lunar New Year greetings from the leadership – a common courtesy. Wei has not been seen in public since then.

Besides, the new Defence Minister, Dong Jun, a former head of the navy, has not yet been given the rank of state councillor or a seat on the CMC, something all previous defence ministers have received, the report noted.

## February

### China's embattled former foreign minister steps down as a lawmaker

27 February 2024, NBC News

Qin Gang was dismissed in July in one of China's biggest political surprises in years. He has yet to reappear publicly.

China's former foreign minister, Qin Gang, who has been missing from public view since June, has resigned from the national legislature, state media reported Tuesday.

Qin was dismissed as foreign minister in July, in one of China's biggest political surprises in years.

The 57-year-old served for only seven months before he disappeared from public view last June. The government announced a month later that he had been dismissed from his post. He has yet to reappear publicly.

Qin was replaced as foreign minister by his predecessor, Wang Yi.

According to a notice by the National People's Congress Standing Committee, the Tianjin Municipal People's Congress accepted Qin's resignation as a delegate to the upcoming annual parliamentary session.

Official websites no longer list Qin as a member of the State Council, China's Cabinet, but there has been no mention of whether he has been excluded from China's ruling Communist Party.

His disappearance came during a series of dismissals at the top echelons of the party that included former Defense Minister Li Shangfu and other top military officials.

Signs of overt political friction are extremely rare in China, especially since President Xi Jinping tightened

his control over the country's politics, partly through an anti-corruption drive that purged scores of his presumed rivals.

Qin's and Li's ousters are believed to be part of a broader effort to reduce security vulnerabilities amid China's increasing competition with the United States and its allies.

The National People's Congress, China's rubber-stamp parliament, is to convene its annual session in early March and is expected to focus on the country's ailing economy.

China's economy expanded by 5.2% last year but is forecast to slow sharply this year, bogged down by a property crisis, high youth unemployment and massive local government debt.

The Wall Street Journal reported in September, citing people familiar with a briefing, that Qin was ousted over an extramarital affair he had during a previous posting as ambassador to the U.S. An investigation was focused on whether his conduct had compromised China's national security, according to the Journal.

### Leaked document trove shows a Chinese hacking scheme focused on harassing dissidents

22 February 2024, Wisconsin Public Radio

A large trove of more than 500 sensitive technical documents posted online anonymously last week details one Chinese technology company's hacking operations, target lists and marketing materials for the Chinese government.

The majority of the operations appear to be focused on surveilling and harassing dissidents who publicly criticize the Chinese government, including on global social media platforms like X, formerly known as Twitter.

Target lists reveal victims from at least 14 governments from Pakistan to Australia, as well as academic institutions, pro-democracy organizations in places like Hong Kong, as well as the military alliance NATO. The company was also bidding for work to surveil the minority Uyghur population in Xinjiang, a broader Chinese government program that major global human rights' organizations around the world have heavily criticized. There are even pictures of custom devices used for spying, such as a recording device disguised as a power bank.

Cybersecurity researchers are still investigating different components of the leak, which was shared to the open source development website popular with programmers, called GitHub. However, experts from top U.S. cybersecurity companies including Google's Mandiant and Sentinel Labs have shared preliminary analysis of the contents of the leak, believing the documents to be authentic.

"We have every reason to believe this is the authentic data of a contractor supporting global and



domestic cyber espionage operations out of China,” said John Hultquist, the chief analyst for Mandiant Intelligence, a part of Google Cloud. “This leak is narrow, but it is deep. We rarely get such unfettered access to the inner workings of any intelligence operation. We are working hard to learn as much as we can and put it to good use.”

The state-affiliated company, called i-Soon, is known to be one of many contractors and subcontractors who compete for opportunities to perform hacking and surveillance operations for different Chinese government agencies. The company is currently facing litigation from another Chinese contractor called Chengdu 404, a company that the U.S. government has publicly linked in court documents to hacking operations for the state. It appears i-Soon may have done subcontracting work with Chengdu 404.

In previous public materials, i-Soon has noted relationships with China’s Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of State Security, and People’s Liberation Army, among others. The company is publicly known for providing cybersecurity trainings around the country from its base in Shanghai.

But beyond what’s publicly known, the details in the leak give internal insights into how an increasingly competitive marketplace for hacking operations within China functions. It’s unclear if all the claims made in marketing materials included in the leak are true, such as the ability to break into devices manufactured by top U.S. companies like Apple and Microsoft. However, it’s clear that the company is heavily invested in automating the ability to constantly monitor platforms like X and Facebook. Those platforms, unlike the popular WeChat, are not controlled by the Chinese government, making them popular with dissidents.

There are also details in the leak concerning internal pay scales and other bureaucratic details of contracts with the Chinese government. There is a note, or “ReadMe” document, included on the GitHub page where the leak is hosted, where the purported source of the leak claims to be dissatisfied with the company’s policies. That could indicate the source being a disgruntled employee, though it’s also possible the leak is the result of an intelligence operation or the work of a competitor.

While the contents of the leak are not entirely surprising, they’re especially helpful to specialists and researchers, who continue to review the contents. In particular, individual documents can help researchers fact-check their assumptions about who was responsible for previously discovered breaches.

## China revamps discipline inspection rules to ensure Xi Jinping’s instructions are carried out

22 February 2024, South China Morning Post  
China’s ruling Communist Party has revamped a set of rules to bolster its discipline inspections, making it a top priority to check whether cadres have fully implemented instructions from President Xi Jinping.

The party’s Central Committee has released revised regulations on inspection work and issued a directive asking all regions and government agencies to strictly comply, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported on Wednesday.

According to Xinhua, the revisions were approved at a January 31 meeting of the party’s 24-member Politburo and circulated within the party on February 8.

The revised regulations include a new clause that defines inspection work as the “political supervision” of party organs from the top down, according to the full text released by Xinhua.

A newly added paragraph at the beginning of the document states that the inspection work’s “fundamental task is to resolutely safeguard the core status” of Xi, as well as his authority and leadership.

Another new section explains that the party’s inspection team shall, as its top priority, check on the implementation of “major decisions and arrangements of the party’s Central Committee, especially the implementation of General Secretary Xi Jinping’s important speeches and important instructions”.

The revisions also removed three articles detailing specific corruption and disciplinary issues to watch for, which had been a top priority in the previous version, and summarised them in a single paragraph that appears after the section about implementing Xi’s instructions.

Xie Maosong, a senior researcher at the National Institute of Strategic Studies at Tsinghua University in Beijing, said the revisions made it clear that inspection work was now largely focused on how closely China’s different regions and government departments were following and executing Xi’s grand plan.

“Beijing has learned a lot in the inspection work of the past decade and clearly wants to make sure previous cases in which the local government ignored Xi’s repeated instructions do not happen again,” said Xie, who is also a senior fellow at the Taihe Institute, a Beijing think tank.

Discipline inspection, which involves sending teams of senior inspectors to screen local disciplinary problems, has been a powerful tool for the party under Xi’s leadership since 2012.

The practice gives corruption busters access to various state and party organs and state-owned enterprises so they can proactively search for leads



on corruption. It has been credited by Beijing for uncovering many high-profile corruption cases. The rules on discipline inspection were last revised in 2017.

"The focus has clearly been changed to checking on the political and work alignment of regions and government departments," Xie said, noting that the revisions added that a key principle of inspection work was to "focus on the party's central task and serve the big plan".

He said that meant that when Beijing issues new directions, its inspectors will make sure party and state organs recalibrate their work, leading them in the right direction.

The new code casts the inspection net wider. Under the revised rules, key state-owned enterprises, especially financial institutions, and state-run tertiary institutions will be targets for inspection, along with party committees in government agencies.

It also gives the inspectors much wider access to local government departments – including those for propaganda, security, auditing, finance, statistics and petitions – to support inspection work when necessary.

Tsinghua's Xie said this showed Beijing was determined to get accurate information and curb inflated official statistics.

"That is why the new code asked the inspectors to go directly to the ground for information, so they can spot misleading numbers from local governments and rectify them accordingly," he said.

The party made falsification of data a disciplinary violation in December, and last month Beijing sent stern warnings calling the practice "the biggest corruption in the statistical sphere".

### **China's would-be powerhouse Hunan wants officials to 'emancipate their minds'**

19 February 2024, South China Morning Post  
Communist Party officials in Hunan province in central China have kicked off a campaign which recalls Beijing's reversal of the Maoist political and economic doctrines of the last century, in a move that analysts say will have limited political implications.

According to a notice made public on Sunday, provincial cadres at all levels are taking part in the campaign, which started in early February and will continue until the end of March.

The campaign's name – "large-scale discussions on emancipating the mind" – was a clear reference to the party's efforts to kick off much-needed market reforms after the death of leader Mao Zedong in 1976.

President Xi Jinping, who came to power in 2013, revived the slogan to call for effective local governance and it was also in evidence on Sunday in

the northeastern province of Heilongjiang, where top cadres used it in a pledge to drive growth.

Deng Xiaoping, who took over as leader in December 1978, made "emancipate the mind" his signature slogan as he paved the way for more than 40 years of reform and opening up.

Later Chinese leaders also used the slogan to urge the country to reflect on the lessons of Mao's governance, especially during the Cultural Revolution – a decade of political and social upheaval that almost paralysed the national economy, and only ended after his death.

The latest "emancipating the mind" campaign is fundamentally different from the 1970s and 1980s, according to Chen Daoyin, a political commentator and former professor at Shanghai University of Political Science and Law.

"The biggest difference is their political orientations: the emancipation of the mind movement by Deng Xiaoping was to break the 10-year ideological imprisonment of the Cultural Revolution," Chen said.

"Now in Hunan, it basically aims to strengthen Xi's Thought and better serve Xi's goals."

Chen noted that the Hunan campaign adopted only the first part of Deng's three-part proposition – "emancipate the mind, seek truth from facts, unite and look forward".

As such, the campaign would not make a major difference because all discussions were confined within existing policy priorities, without seeking more fundamental breakthroughs, he said.

The Hunan notice placed strong emphasis on effectively reviving the economy, as well as paying homage to Xi's teachings.

The discussions, taking place throughout the province, address problems with local cadres, including "lack of confidence in development" and "insufficient spirit of responsibility".

At the same time, the campaign aimed to fundamentally reverse the "addiction" that leads to many officials simply relying on GDP growth for evaluations, the notice said.

Through the discussions, problems such as raising loans regardless of risks, investing blindly on projects, cheating on data, and "lying flat" to evade making mistakes should be resolved, it said.

Xie Maosong, a senior researcher at the National Institute of Strategic Studies at Tsinghua University, said Hunan's campaign was "a tactical attempt" to re-energise China's massive bureaucracy.

Many officials have been accused of "lying flat" – the phenomenon commonly known in the West as "goblin mode", which describes workers who put in just enough effort to keep their jobs and no more.

"After a decade of anti-corruption and disciplinary campaigns, many officials are in risk-aversion mode," Xie said.

They were unwilling to take responsibility, push development initiatives or incentivise private sector growth “as they are afraid of making mistakes or facing supervision checks”.

“It seems that Hunan is trying to trailblaze a way to give its officials more freedom to act and more tolerance of their probable mistakes,” he said.

China’s economy is facing multiple challenges, including a prolonged property market downturn, a local government debt crisis, and weak demand, as well as heightened geopolitical tensions.

The International Monetary Fund expects the Chinese economy to grow by 4.6 per cent this year, before slowing to 4 per cent in 2025, despite last year’s higher than expected growth of 5.2 per cent.

Hunan – which has ambitions to become the most “important advanced manufacturing highlands of the country” – achieved 5 trillion yuan (US\$702 billion) in economic volume last year at a GDP growth rate of 4.6 per cent.

The province – which has set a growth target of around 6 per cent for this year – is at a “critical stage of comprehensively deepening reform and opening up and promoting high-quality development”, according to the notice.

“More than at any time in history, Hunan needs to break the ice with ideas to lead reform breakthroughs.”

According to the notice, discussions should abide by the guidance of the party’s Central Committee and Xi, as general secretary, and focus on removing obstacles that hinder development, as well as other issues to “prevent and resolve various major risks”.

The notice also called on the province’s cadres to create a better business environment for private enterprises, and to help them solve funding and payment delays, as well as other difficulties.

The notice said the campaign was taking in all levels of the party, starting with the grass-roots members and spreading to county, city and provincial levels of the party’s organs, as well as companies and schools.

At the upper echelons, Hunan’s senior provincial officials would hold discussion panels and make inspection tours, it said.

Alfred Wu, an associate professor with the National University of Singapore’s Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, said that under Deng the slogan “emancipate the mind” was about relaxing socialist thought and adopting international norms.

But now, he said, it meant that officials would try every possible avenue to deliver the high-quality growth Xi wanted.

According to Wu, the specific mention of inflated growth numbers and a “lying flat” attitude among officials in the announcement could be a signal from Hunan party boss Shen Xiaoming.

Wu said Shen could be signalling that he had the political will to address these stumbling blocks, but also that he wanted the province’s officials to come up with workable ideas.

### **Chinese firm behind local ‘news’ websites spreading Beijing propaganda in 30 countries**

18 February 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Feb18’24) – China appears to have co-opted, through the agency of a Beijing public relations firm, more than 100 websites in 30 countries in Europe, Asia and Latin America to push its propaganda information at local levels. The outlets are seen to be disguised as local news outlets, but push unmitigated Chinese Party-state propaganda, suggests Reuters Feb 8, citing Toronto-based digital watchdog Citizen Lab Feb 7.

The propaganda material is interspersed with news aggregated from local news outlets and Chinese state media, the watchdog’s research report was stated to show.

“While the campaign’s websites enjoyed negligible exposure to date, there is a heightened risk of inadvertent amplification by the local media and target audiences, as a result of the quick multiplication of these websites and their adaptiveness to local languages and content,” researcher Alberto Fittarelli has said in the report.

The sites’ contents were stated to sway between conspiracy theories, often about the United States or its allies – such as a piece blaming American scientists for “leaking” Covid-19 – to articles attacking Beijing’s critics.

Citizen Lab has said the campaign began in mid-2020 and traced the network to public relations firm Shenzhen Haimaiyunxiang Media Co., Ltd., also known as Haimai.

One of the websites in the campaign was stated to be Roma Journal, “which looks every bit like a local Italian news outlet: headlines discuss the Italian prime minister’s political prospects, a hot air balloon festival in a northern province and a book launch.

“But a ‘press releases’ button at a corner of its homepage leads to a range of Chinese state media articles on topics such as China’s contribution to the global economic recovery and its push towards technological innovation.”

What is more, much of the content on the sites Citizen Lab found was seen to be sourced from a press releases service called Times Newswire, which analysts at cybersecurity firm Mandiant last year found to be at the centre of a separate Chinese influence operation that targeted US audiences.

The report cited experts tracking such operations as saying while online influence campaigns are increasingly common as powerful people and governments around the world seek to manipulate

public opinion, China remains one of the biggest sources of such drives alongside Russia and Iran.

Notably, Chinese influence operations have increased and expanded well beyond Asia, social media giant Meta said in a report in Nov 2023, calling it "the most notable change in the threat landscape" since 2020.

The report said Citizen Lab dug deeper into the network it found after a series of such websites popped up in South Korea and Italy.

It said that South Korea's National Cyber Security Center (NCSC) – part of the country's national intelligence agency – exposed 18 of the sites in a report in Nov 2023, also linking the operation to Haimai.

### **State education leaders urged to investigate whether CCP is infiltrating K-12 schools**

10 February 2024, ABC News

WASHINGTON (CITC) – A parents' rights group is pressing more than 30 state education leaders to investigate whether the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is attempting to infiltrate their schools.

The letter penned Thursday by Parents Defending Education (PDE) targets 34 state superintendents. Each of the 34 states were found to have school district contracts linked to the CCP, according to PDE. The letter follows a recent House hearing on the CCP's "cyber threat" to national security, during which Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi, D-Ill., said "CCP hackers" were able to access an electric grid in Texas to install malware. PDE is now warning officials that the "infiltration of American infrastructure and institutions" extends to public education.

That should frighten people," Alex Nester, an investigative fellow for PDE, told Crisis in the Classroom (CITC).

PDE determined that 143 U.S. schools have "fostered relationships" with the CCP and affiliated entities. Most notably, Thomas Jefferson High School in Virginia was discovered to have received more than \$1 million from such entities after agreeing to help a Beijing high school adopt its premier STEM research. "They took that back to China and opened a string of schools that are called the Thomas Schools that are based off our model," Nester told CITC. "It's like they don't even need to steal our IP anymore, they don't even need to do this under the table, we're freely handing an adversarial foreign nation the blueprints."

Thomas Jefferson was later instructed by Virginia's education department to sever all ties with CCP-connected donors.

Nester says PDE is now choosing to alert state officials because most tend to assume national security is the responsibility of the federal government.

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And it certainly is, but there are definitely steps that local leaders, including state superintendents, can take," she told CITC. "Do an investigation, look through emails, look at your servers, do checks for malware, for viruses, anything that could have been embedded from an adversarial foreign nation."

In its letter, PDE notes that the CCP's interest in American education is "not for the benefit of the American children," but "part of the communist regime's long-term strategy to soften American and global sentiments toward its own political goals."

### **China's Political Power List Hints at Fate of Disappeared Official**

09 February 2024, NewsWeek

China's former Defense Minister Wei Fenghe was absent from a prominent list of retired Chinese political figures, fueling speculation about his fate.

Wei was missing from an official list of prominent retired officials published by the Chinese Communist Party that acknowledges the central figures of the Chinese political system. State broadcaster China Central Television broadcasted the list as part of Lunar New Year greetings.

Wei's predecessors, Chang Wanquan, Liang Guanglie, Cao Gangchuan, and Chi Haotian, were present on the list published on Wednesday, as first reported on Thursday by Hong Kong newspaper South China Morning Post. Newsweek independently confirmed that Wei Fenghe didn't appear on the list of prominent retired Chinese political figures.

In recent months, several leading military leaders from the People's Liberation Army's Rocket Force have also been replaced in recent months without explanation. Experts believe there is an extensive anti-corruption-related investigation currently underway in China's military and diplomatic circles, Newsweek previously reported.

Wei served as the defense minister of China from March 2018 until January 2023, replaced by former Defense Minister Li Shangfu. Wei officially retired that month.

He also previously served as the commander of Xi's elite Rocket Force, in charge of Beijing's nuclear arsenal, which has been mired in corruption allegations in recent months.

The scrutiny of Wei's absence from the list comes as China's leading military and diplomatic figures, including the former Foreign Minister Qin Gang and Foreign Defense Minister Li Shangfu, have disappeared from public view without explanation.

Qin and Li were officially removed from the State Council, China's chief administrative authority, according to state broadcaster CCTV, in October

2023. No official explanations were provided for their dismissal.

Newsweek reached out to the Chinese embassy in Washington, D.C., via email for comment on Wei's absence from the list.

Earlier in the year, Chinese leader Xi Jinping called the problem of corruption within the Chinese political system an ongoing effort.

"After 10 years of unrelenting and powerful anti-corruption efforts in the new era, we have achieved an overwhelming victory and have comprehensively consolidated our achievements. However, the situation remains dire and complex," Xi told the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection members, the Communist Party's highest supervisory body.

Ou Si-fu, a research fellow and division director at the Institute for National Defense and Security Research, Taiwan's top military think tank, told Newsweek in a recent interview that corruption in the People's Liberation Army remains rampant.

"During the last two decades, Beijing has poured many budgets and resources into defense modernization. Owing to a shortage of transparency, many officials have cut a big slice of this defense fat for private purposes," Ou said.

### **China's increasing political influence in the south Pacific has sparked an international response**

09 February 2024, The Conversation

Taiwan elected Lai Ching-te, also known as William Lai, to be its next president on January 13. His election marks the continuation of a government that promotes an independent Taiwan.

Just two days later, the Pacific nation of Nauru severed ties with Taiwan and transferred its diplomatic allegiance to Beijing.

More recently, on January 27, Tuvalu's pro-Taiwan prime minister, Kausea Natano, lost his seat in the nation's general election. Natano's finance minister, Seve Paeniu, who is aiming for the prime ministership himself, was returned to his seat. In his campaign, Paeniu pledged to review Tuvalu's relationships with China and Taiwan.

These examples indicate China's growing influence in the south Pacific, a region that the world's major powers are competing for influence over. But why is the region significant? And how are these major powers exerting their influence there?

Preventing recognition of Taiwan

Taiwan has been governed independently since 1949. But Beijing believes it should be reunited with the rest of China. It is not an option for states to diplomatically recognise both China and Taiwan – China forces them to choose.

For decades, the Chinese government has used a combination of carrots and sticks to pressure such states into transferring diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China.

China has, for example, imposed significant political, diplomatic and economic sanctions on countries that continue to formally recognise Taiwan. In 2022, China curbed imports from Lithuania to punish the country for allowing Taiwan to open a de facto embassy in the country.

But China also offers states – and their governing elites – economic and political incentives for withdrawing diplomatic recognition of Taiwan. It has, in the past, used its influence in the UN and other international organisations to block assistance or elect specific people to international positions.

Nauru's change of diplomatic position, and the political debate unfolding in Tuvalu, should be understood as part of China's longstanding effort to prevent and reduce recognition of Taiwan as a sovereign state.

But they are a significant step forward for China. Nauru has a leading position in the Pacific Islands Forum – the main political decision-making body for the region – so the country's change of stance could lead to wider formal diplomatic changes in the south Pacific.

China, of course, has legitimate economic and political interests in the south Pacific too. It is a vital export market for natural resources from Pacific island states and is a key source of incoming tourism. According to Chinese statistics, total trade volume between China and Pacific island states grew from US\$153 million (£121 million) to US\$5.3 billion (£4.2 billion) between 1992 and 2021.

Competing for influence

Nauru's decision is another diplomatic setback for Taiwan, which is now formally recognised by just 11 countries. However, this is not in itself a serious concern for the US, Australia and their allies.

They all formally recognise China, while at the same time maintaining close, informal links with Taiwan. Their focus is on trying to limit the depth of Chinese political and economic influence over Pacific island states and elsewhere in the Asia-Pacific region. The US is concerned that growing Chinese political influence may ultimately result in it enjoying significant military presence in the region.

The Pacific region encompasses the US state of Hawaii, multiple US territories, and is also home to several crucial US military bases. So, the US has made an effort to enhance its diplomatic relations in the region by providing financial support for initiatives around climate change adaption, sustainable fishing and economic growth.

However, increased tension between China and the west over the past decade has made it increasingly

challenging to reign in Chinese influence. China has been asserting its primacy in and around Taiwan in the South China Sea, and has increasingly exerted military pressure.

China's struggle for influence in the region now also includes taking opportunities to challenge previously undisputed western security dominance in the south Pacific. In 2022, China put forward a proposal for a diplomatic, economic and security agreement with the region. The agreement was, however, later abandoned due to resistance from some Pacific island nations at the urging of the US and Australia.

US strategy in the south Pacific

When president, Donald Trump launched a number of deals with Pacific islands including Nauru, Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, Palau and Micronesia. However, Trump's strategy for a "free and open Indo-Pacific" had limited success. This was not only due to his confrontational posture towards China, but also to his threatening and protectionist "America first" rhetoric.

Joe Biden's comparatively measured diplomacy has seen more success. In 2022, the Biden administration announced its "Pacific partnership strategy".

The initiative included a commitment of US\$810 million in development aid across the Pacific island region. And in May 2023, the US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, stated that he would work with Congress to provide over US\$7.2 billion to support the region.

Since then, the US has recognised the Cook Islands and Niue as independent, sovereign nations, increased its diplomatic footprint in the region and has committed strongly to work with the Pacific Islands Forum to promote a "democratic, resilient and prosperous Pacific islands region".

The shift of diplomatic ties from Taiwan to China does not mean that Pacific island nations want to reduce their ties with the west. But the US, Australia and their allies will need to invest a lot more in diplomatic, economic and security assistance if they want to counter China's growing influence there.

### **Chinese security agencies tell students studying abroad to beware risk from foreign spies**

07 February 2024, South China Morning Post

China's top spy agency has warned Chinese students to be alert to the risk from foreign spies when studying abroad.

The warning from the Ministry of State Security comes amid a sweeping national security drive.

In a post on the ministry's WeChat account it told the story of a "real case" involving a Chinese graduate who, it claimed, had secured a place from a "top

ranking" foreign university despite failing the Chinese college entrance exam in 2006.

It said the student, identified only by the surname Zhang, had been "severely punished" for his role in leaking Chinese scientific research after graduating.

The ministry did not say where Zhang had studied, but it said he had been responsible for liaising with Chinese students abroad and had done well in his studies, which brought him to the attention of a senior figure in the university.

This individual was then said to have put Zhang in touch with two people who turned out to be foreign spies and convinced him to provide intelligence on Chinese international students and other "sensitive information" in return for money.

The account said these spies had secured Zhang a job in a Chinese research institution in China, even though he did not have the correct credentials, and told him to appear to be helpful to his colleagues to collect information.

The State Security Ministry said Zhang had "squandered his promising future" by giving in to the foreign intelligence agency's "emotional manipulation and monetary temptation".

It warned the public to be alert to national security risks and "uncover the hidden motives behind various seemingly innocent interactions" while studying and travelling abroad.

In recent months the Chinese authorities have heightened their focus on risks to national security, with the state security ministry becoming more active on social media to warn of the threat from foreign spies.

Last year, State Security Minister Chen Yixin said the country must "proactively defend" against foreign spies to strengthen national security and the Communist Party's leadership.

A new counter-espionage law came into effect in July 2023, which expanded both the definition of spying and the investigative powers of national security agencies.

Although China and the United States recently pledged to boost academic exchanges as part of a wider effort to improve relations, Chinese students in America are still at risk of being caught up in the wider tensions between the countries.

Recently China accused the US authorities of harassing Chinese students on arrival at Washington's Dulles airport, subjecting them to lengthy questioning and trying to turn them into spies.

According to China's education ministry, more than 8 million students have studied abroad in the period between 1978 and the end of 2021, with the US, Britain and Singapore as the most popular destinations.



## China expands visa exemption policy to attract more foreigners

04 February 2024, RFA

China has expanded its visa-free entry policy for tourists and business travelers from more than a dozen European and Asian countries, opening up its borders further in recent months as it struggles to shore up foreign interests to help arrest an economic slowdown.

In January, the Chinese government announced that it would provide unilateral visa exemption for Ireland and Switzerland and introduce a mutual visa exemption for Singapore for 30 days. Additionally, from March 1, China and Thailand will also allow permanent visa exemption for citizens of both sides. In the past six months, Beijing has implemented a visa-free policy to tourists from Brunei, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Malaysia.

While the number of foreign tourist arrivals has jumped nearly seven times to 35.5 million last year from 4.5 million in 2022, it's still a far cry from the 98 million recorded in pre-pandemic 2019, according to China's National Immigration Administration.

But foreign nationals would be hesitant to travel to China for several factors: the high cost of air tickets, the inconveniences upon arrival without a Chinese mobile phone number – which is needed for mobile payment apps as many businesses and restaurants do not take cash – as well as being closely surveilled and controlled by the authorities.

"I recently returned to China and the biggest inconvenience was that overseas credit cards are difficult to use in China. China's WeChat Pay or Alipay require a Chinese domestic WeChat account to install," an Australian citizen surnamed Yang lamented to Radio Free Asia.

"Moreover, without a mobile phone number in China, I can't even hail a taxi. I have to ask someone to hail one for me every time."

Yang said another issue was the close surveillance he endured.

After registering for accommodation with the neighborhood police station – a requisite – the neighborhood committee cadres would come to verify, and also inform him they knew of his comings and goings from the residence.

"It was nothing more than a warning to me: the Public Security Bureau is closely monitoring my every move and deliberately putting pressure on me."

Not only was Yang under close surveillance, but his work partners were not spared either.

"I used my Australian mobile phone in China to make a call to a boss in Zhejiang to discuss possible cooperation. A few hours after the call, the lady was summoned to the police station. The police told her that it was an overseas fraud call and made a

record. She was so scared that she never dared to answer my call again."

Yang added he was scarred from the experience and would try to avoid going to China, which he described as "a hysterical country."

China has expanded its visa-free entry policy for tourists and business travelers from more than a dozen European and Asian countries, opening up its borders further in recent months as it struggles to shore up foreign interests to help arrest an economic slowdown.

In January, the Chinese government announced that it would provide unilateral visa exemption for Ireland and Switzerland and introduce a mutual visa exemption for Singapore for 30 days. Additionally, from March 1, China and Thailand will also allow permanent visa exemption for citizens of both sides. In the past six months, Beijing has implemented a visa-free policy to tourists from Brunei, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Malaysia.

While the number of foreign tourist arrivals has jumped nearly seven times to 35.5 million last year from 4.5 million in 2022, it's still a far cry from the 98 million recorded in pre-pandemic 2019, according to China's National Immigration Administration.

But foreign nationals would be hesitant to travel to China for several factors: the high cost of air tickets, the inconveniences upon arrival without a Chinese mobile phone number – which is needed for mobile payment apps as many businesses and restaurants do not take cash – as well as being closely surveilled and controlled by the authorities.

"I recently returned to China and the biggest inconvenience was that overseas credit cards are difficult to use in China. China's WeChat Pay or Alipay require a Chinese domestic WeChat account to install," an Australian citizen surnamed Yang lamented to Radio Free Asia.

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A CCTV security surveillance camera overlooks a street as people walk past in Beijing, China. (Thomas Peter/Reuters)

#### Costly airfares and politics

A woman who works in the United States and only gave her name as Angela said the air ticket price from the U.S. to China remains high, although a slight decline allowed her to return last month.

Angela said that compared to her experience three years ago, the Chinese government has stepped up its controls on the people.

"One thing that makes it very inconvenient is: everywhere I go, I am being checked for my identity – be it to get on the high-speed rail, book a ticket for a tourist attraction, and even to register a shared bike account. The purpose of this is probably to collect and control information and capture everyone's whereabouts, but it is very annoying."

Separately, a travel agent in the U.S. who only gave her surname Cai noted that middle-aged and elderly overseas Chinese are reluctant to travel to China because of the political environment.

"It's not that we don't do business in the Chinese market – now is not the right time, whether it is political or other factors."

Beijing is trying to rebuild its international image and trust with the international community, and the visa-free policy was one of the measures to improve relations with foreign countries, said Riley Walters, a senior researcher on international economics at the Hudson Institute, a Washington-based think tank.

"The slowdown in the economy and stock market has made China's demand for foreign investment high. Relaxing visa restrictions will also help the tourism industry," Walters said.

But how effective Beijing's visa-free policy will be in shoring up foreign investment remains to be seen.

Ralph Weber, a professor from the European Center for Global Studies at the University of Basel in

Switzerland, believes the policy will have a limited effect on attracting business travelers.

"Investors are hesitant to go to China because they feel uneasy. They're worried about what's happening in China, like the espionage laws. So the impact created by the visa-free policy is not worth mentioning. I can't imagine a Swiss business traveler thinking, 'Wow, I now don't have to pay for a Chinese visa, so I'm going to invest in China.' That's not the logic," Weber said.

China's actual foreign direct investment fell 8% to 1.13 trillion yuan (US\$159 billion) last year, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

#### China to strengthen propaganda control on discussion of ethnic minority issues

03 February 2024, Tibetan Review

Sounding the urgency to realise President Xi Jinping's vision of "forging a sense of community of the Chinese nation," a top policy office of the Communist Party of China (CPC) has pledged to tighten control of ethnic minority-related discussions on the internet and in print. The aim is to stamp out what the office calls ideological risks related to the minorities especially in Xinjiang and Tibet, reported the scmp.com Feb 2, citing the Communist Party's theoretical journal Qiushi on Feb 1.

The article, written under the byline of the Communist Party leadership group at the National Ethnic Affairs Commission, the office responsible for drafting and implementing laws regarding China's policies towards its ethnic minority groups, has called for greater oversight of public opinion and discussion around ethnic minority groups and related issues online.

The article is stated to refer to "risks" arising from ethnic minority communities and to call for what is called "the responsibility mechanism of ideology work" to be implemented.

"[We must] resolutely fend off the infiltration of the 'three forces'," referring to terrorism, separatism and religious extremism. "[We must] further regulate publication related to ethnic minority groups," the article is quoted as saying.

The commission has called for greater supervision, for officials to "promptly and appropriately" address grievances involving issues related to ethnic minority groups, and to "absolutely uphold the bottom line of preventing regional and systemic risks in the ethnic regions".

In addition to a call for greater control, the article is stated to endorse more resources being put into art – such as in publications, on stage and visual arts – which could help ethnic minority groups identify more deeply with Chinese culture.

"[We] should aim to make the internet the biggest contributor to strengthening the awareness of the

community of the Chinese nation,” it is quoted as saying.

The remarks are seen to have come as Beijing stresses the need to realise President Xi’s vision of “forging a sense of community of the Chinese nation”, which advocates for greater integration of ethnic minority groups and putting the interests of the Chinese nation first.

The report notes that grievances relating to ethnic minority groups have long been a major source of tension in Chinese society, particularly in Xinjiang and Tibet.

While Beijing has largely tamped down the intensity of those tensions in recent years by tightening its grip on the regions’ security and culture policies, its measures have attracted massive criticisms for human rights abuses, the report said.

It bears noting that major issues highlighted in these criticisms have included re-education camps and forced labour incarceration of around a million mostly Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang and the forced enrolment of around a million Tibetan children in forced colonial schools designed to Sinicize them.

Given these foreign criticisms, the article in Qiushi has said China’s external communication around its ethnic minority groups was not effective, claiming Beijing “has a valid point but not able to effectively communicate it”.

Without naming any countries, it has said this was because of some countries’ “hegemonic dominance”. The article has noted that in recent times Beijing had stepped up efforts in the hope that its global communication would better align with its narrative.

The report says that one example of this is Beijing’s dramatically increased use since last year of “Xizang” rather than “Tibet” in its English articles in Chinese state media. It sees the term “Tibet” as being linked in international discussion to the region’s spiritual leader-in-exile, the Dalai Lama.

## January

### **China’s anti-corruption watchdog says 110,000 Communist Party officials faced disciplinary action last year**

30 January 2024, South China Morning Post

About 110,000 Chinese Communist Party officials faced disciplinary action last year as part of the ongoing drive to clean up the party’s act, according to the country’s top anti-corruption body.



Security personnel patrol near the Id Kah Mosque in Kashgar in western China's Xinjiang region. (file photo)

The figures published by the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) on Sunday represent a 13 per cent increase in the number of cases compared with the previous year.

There is little sign of Beijing easing up on its latest crackdown more than a year after the party’s national congress in October 2022, when President Xi Jinping began an unprecedented third term as China’s paramount leader and filled most key positions with his loyalists.

Last year saw the commission launching corruption probes into a 45 senior officials, a record number, according to a tally by the Post.

Other signs suggest that more senior figures under also under investigation. Apart from last year’s shock removal of Qin Gang as foreign minister and Li Shangfu as defence minister after just months in their jobs, nine senior military officials were abruptly dismissed by China’s national legislative body, the National People’s Congress.

Despite previously hailing an “overwhelming victory” against corruption, Xi told the CCDI’s annual planning event earlier this month that the party must continue to fight graft and other problems with “tenacity, perseverance and precision” to transcend “the historical cycle of rise and fall”.

The CCDI said last year’s disciplinary cases covered breaches of the eight rules on official conduct that Xi laid down soon after taking over as head of the party in late 2012.

These rules, enforced by the CCDI, are intended to ensure a thrifty and responsible working style for officials and cover everything from a ban on extravagant banquets and receptions to avoiding unnecessary meetings and red tape.

Of those punished, more than 41,000 officials fell foul of the watchdog for failing to carry out their duties properly by “failing to take responsibility” or “paying lip service” to their orders. The watchdog particularly highlighted failures to implement development or environmental protection policies – two of Xi’s main priorities.

A further 40,000 were punished for receiving expensive gifts, money or attending lavish meals and

celebrations, while another 10,000 were reprimanded for issuing or receiving benefits without approval.

In publishing the figures, the commission also warned party officials that they must closely follow the disciplinary rules – especially in the build-up to Lunar New Year, which begins on February 10.

“[We will] strengthen warnings and deterrents, and educate and guide party members and cadres so they will celebrate the festival in a clean manner,” it said.

Beside disciplinary action, several provinces including Guangdong, Anhui, Henan, Zhejiang and Fujian have adopted a policy of naming and shaming officials who are slacking off from performing their duties in recent months.

Deng Yuwen, a former deputy editor of Study Times, the official newspaper of the Central Party School where cadres are trained, said Xi had not let up on the anti-corruption crackdown because the disciplinary apparatus was his most powerful tool for forging a clean and efficient team to steer the country ahead.

“China’s party-state system does not allow any opposition parties that can keep the ruling party in check, and there is little media freedom too,” he said.

He said the “eight rules” discipline campaign began with a focus on curbing rampant extravagance among party officials, but it was now trying to ensure that policy priorities were implemented by turning the spotlight onto those who neglected their duties.

“Many officials switched to goblin mode [refusing to perform tasks they do not want to do] after the anti-corruption campaign as they think they can better survive the purge if they don’t do anything,” said Deng, who is now living in the United States.

“But Xi is backing up his harsh corruption crackdown with a tough official conduct rectification campaign to ensure no one can slack off. All have to get up and march in his direction.”

### **China ‘gamed’ UN human rights review, experts say**

29 January 2024, RFA

A Chinese diplomat said the majority of the 428 recommendations it received were ‘constructive.’

A top Chinese diplomat said Beijing would “earnestly study” 428 recommendations for addressing human rights submitted by U.N. members, calling them “objective and balanced.”

But leading experts said China “gamed” the once-every-five-year “universal periodic review” to avoid scrutiny of its rights abuses.

Chen Xu, China’s ambassador to the U.N. offices in Geneva, said following the adoption of the report that he was happy with the many recommendations

by 141 countries, and that Beijing would release its positions on each of the suggestions next month.

“The report just adopted is, in general, objective and balanced, and has reflected the statements and the recommendations during the meeting,” Chen said in remarks to the council. “We believe the majority of the comments and recommendations are constructive.”

Tuesday’s three-hour review session descended into farce, with the unusually high number of participating countries meaning each only had 45 seconds to provide an assessment of a country that has been accused of possible crimes against humanity by a U.N. body.

Under this process, each of the 193 U.N. member states has their rights record reviewed on a rolling five-year basis.

A report by Reuters said Chinese diplomats had in the lead-up to the session lobbied countries to turn up with soft-ball assessments.

**Gaming the system**

The many contributions during Tuesday’s session worked to draw attention away from some of the worst claims of rights abuse in China, including the treatment of Uyghurs, Tibetans and Hong Kongers.

While Western nations including the United States, Finland, Canada, Switzerland and the United Kingdom focussed on China’s treatment of Tibetans and Uyghurs in the country’s west during their 45 seconds, many countries offered praise for things like legal system reforms.

William Nee, the research and advocacy coordinator for the Washington-based Chinese Human Rights Defenders, said Beijing had used its diplomatic heft to water-down legitimate criticism of its human rights record by inundating the process with friendly voices.

“This time, they tried to game the process,” Nee told Radio Free Asia. “There was an intense lobbying campaign for countries to ask questions that essentially the Chinese government wrote in advance. There were a lot of softball questions and very easy questions.”

Nee added that some countries’ recommendations even appeared to poke fun at the global condemnation of the China’s treatment of Tibetans and Uyghur citizens, the latter of whom the U.S. government says are the victim of an ongoing campaign of genocide.

Russia, he noted, said China should “improve gradually people’s sense and ability of using standard spoken and written Chinese language in Xinjiang,” referring to the far-western region where Uyghurs live.

Venezuela, meanwhile, said China must “firmly oppose the politicization” of human rights “under the pretext of issues related to Xinjiang, Hong Kong and



Xizang,” the latter of which is the new official romanized name for Tibet adopted by the Chinese government.

“If we look at the advanced questions submitted, it seems as though some of those questions could have been drafted by the Chinese government, to be quite blunt,” said Kai Müller, executive director and head of U.N. advocacy at the International Campaign for Tibet.

Nothing new

Sophie Richardson, the former China director at Human Rights Watch, told RFA that China openly flouted U.N. requirements to allow input from independent civil society groups into the self-report it submits.

“There’s a long list of ways the Chinese government tried to game the process this time around, which has to start with the way it tried to game the process the last time around,” Richardson said, pointing to China’s boasting of its fidelity to recommendations made in 2018.

China that year accepted 284 of the 346 recommendations made by some 150 countries. But many of those, Richardson said, were the ones that were “vague or meaningless, or in fact encouraged the Chinese government to keep committing human rights violations.”

“Beijing has held that up as real progress,” she said, even though “five years later, we know it is committing atrocity crimes.”

But China’s “gaming” of the review process did not entirely wipe out opportunities for countries to speak out about their legitimate concerns.

There was a heightened focus, for example, on the plight of Tibetans and Uyghurs, with the number of recommendations related to Tibet increasing to 24 from 10 in 2018. Likewise, the number of countries mentioning Tibet in their floor speeches doubled from nine to 20.

“The dramatic increase in the number of U.N. member states who spoke out for Tibet ... speaks to the existential threat China’s assimilationist policies pose to the Tibetan people,” said Lhadon Tethong, the director of the Tibet Action Institute.

Campaign for Uyghurs executive director Rushan Abbas said the 30 countries who called out human rights abuses against Uyghurs showed that the world was no longer being fooled by China’s denials.

“This significant outcry, despite China’s persistent lies and outright denial, stands as a testament to the commitment to human rights and justice,” Abbas said. “It also sends a powerful message that the international community will not be swayed by false narratives in light of the mounting evidence exposing the crimes of the PRC.”

China has until Feb. 9, 2024 to provide its initial written response to each of the recommendations,

including whether it accepts them, and has until Feb. 16 to finalize its statements and response.

### **China’s Communist Party vows to take on ‘new and old challenges’ in People’s Daily article based on Xi Jinping’s speech**

26 January 2024, South China Morning Post

The Communist Party of China has pledged to maintain a tight grip on discipline within its ranks as it faces “new and old challenges” to its rule.

An article in party mouthpiece the People’s Daily said these problems would not go away any time soon, and resolving them would be “a long and arduous process”.

“There is always the possibility that some old problems will rebound. If we relax even a little bit, they will resurface, while new problems are still emerging,” the article said.

It ran under the byline “commentator of the People’s Daily” – indicating direct endorsement from the senior party leadership.

It was also the fifth official piece elaborating on a speech delivered by President Xi Jinping to the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection – the party’s top corruption watchdog and disciplinary body.

The “four dangers” will threaten the party’s power for a long time, the article warned, referring to the official term covering lax discipline, incompetence, popular disconnect and corruption.

This comes as graft fighters report a record number of internal investigations of senior officials, more than a year after the party’s 20th national congress where Xi began a third term as leader amid a show of even firmer support for him.

In his work report to the congress, Xi said the party had “waged a battle against corruption on a scale unprecedented in our history” and “achieved an overwhelming victory”.

But high-profile officials continue to fall. Apart from the shock removal of foreign minister Qin Gang and defence minister Li Shangfu, both the shortest-serving in their positions, the party also launched corruption probes into a record high 45 senior officials last year, according to a tally by the Post.

Anti-corruption officers have pointed to a wide range of misconduct for those probes, including corruption, snubbing instructions from the senior leadership, political disloyalty and irresponsible use of public funds.

Two weeks ago, Xi reiterated his call for the party to find ways to transcend “the historical cycle of rise and fall”.

Addressing hundreds of top discipline inspectors gathered for the CCDI’s annual meeting in Beijing on January 8, Xi emphasised the “strategic question” facing the party’s 98 million members.



"As the world's largest Marxist ruling party, how can our party successfully break free from the historical cycle of rise and fall and ensure that it will never change its nature, convictions or character?" he was quoted as saying by state media.

Thursday's article said the Chinese Communist Party must draw painful lessons from many other "large parties and parties with a long history" that had failed, but did not offer any specific examples.

"They were once full of vigour and vitality, but some have fallen apart or disappeared, some have weakened and are approaching their end, while some are in deep trouble. These are very regrettable and thought provoking [lessons]," it said.

Brian Wong, assistant professor of philosophy at the University of Hong Kong, cited Beijing's tracking of communist powers around the world.

Beijing had kept a watchful eye on events such as the decline and fall of the Soviet Union, the changes in Eastern Europe, and the "falling apart" of revolutionary parties, such as in Cambodia, Wong said.

"On the other hand, Beijing also recognises that the socioeconomic inequalities giving rise to great instability in advanced liberal democracies point towards the need to redress these inequalities [in communist states] and [enforce] internal party discipline."

The People's Daily article also said China's unique situation made it impossible for it to follow the paths of other countries. "Unique problems can only be fundamentally solved by relying on the party's internal strength", it said.

China's ruling party sees strict enforcement of discipline as a way to sustain its public appeal.

Xi relaunched the Mao-style "self-revolution" slogan in 2015 with this in mind, and has since repeatedly emphasised this as the only way forward to keep the people's support.

A People's Daily report on the January 8 meeting hailed the "courage" in carrying out self-revolution as "the most distinctive character and greatest advantage" of the party.

The concept, often metaphorised as a "blade turned inward", is a response to concerns about the impact of corruption on the party.

It mainly involves a rigorous system to oversee all officials, building a competent disciplinary supervision team, and a better combination of carrot and stick to steer officials away from temptation.

The People's Daily article also warned of the "four major tests" faced by the party with regard to governance, reform and opening-up, the market economy and the external environment.

The latest data released by the CCDI on Thursday showed 610,000 cadres had been reprimanded last year, a 3 per cent increase over 2022, while 49

ministerial rank officials faced disciplinary action, compared with 53 the previous year.

A political researcher at Tsinghua University in Beijing said Xi's speech to the CCDI and the People's Daily commentary showed the anti-corruption drive would not be removed from the president's priority list for "a very long period of time".

"The 'old problems' [in the article] refer to the corruption that took place before ... Xi came to power, primarily caused by vibrant economic growth and more lax party discipline," the Tsinghua researcher said, declining to be named as he was not authorised to speak to the media.

"The new problems can refer to those who fall prey to increased infiltration from the West, as China and the West are competing on many fronts, and those who refuse to implement Xi's policy directions or engage in pointless formalities and bureaucracy while Xi wants to see results."

### **China in overdrive to defend its UN-battered rights record ahead of review report**

25 January 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Jan25'24) – As the United Nations Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group at Geneva prepared to finalize on Jan 26 its recommendations on the basis of its Jan 23 hearing, China has put itself in an overdrive to defend its record. This followed news reports and reports by rights groups that despite its efforts to stymie discussions, China received scathing criticism for its record especially in Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong, with a record number of participants expressing serious concern on the situation in Tibet.

China claimed that more than 120 countries "spoke highly" of its "human rights progress". They "fully acknowledged China's effort and historic achievements in advancing and protecting human rights," said China's official Xinhua news agency Jan 24, citing the country's foreign ministry spokesperson that day.

The remark from spokesperson Wang Wenbin had come in response to a question from a representative of an official Chinese media group, the Hubei Media Group, during a regular press conference, who asked: "Representatives attending the meeting spoke highly of China's human rights development path and historic achievements in human rights cause. Can you share more details with us?"

Also, China's official chinadaily.com.cn Jan 25 published an open letter addressed to the President of the UN Human Rights Council, signed by a total of 73 so-called Chinese civil society organizations. The open letter criticized Tibetan and other groups that had contributed reports or made presentations

during the review hearing. It accused them of having “spread false information and cause trouble on a large scale, with the purpose of attacking and smearing China.”

The open letter especially named “so-called International Federation for Human Rights, International Campaign for Tibet (Xizang) and Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy”. It accused them of “inciting other countries to attack and criticize China” on issues “such as colonial boarding school system”, “repression of Tibetan Buddhism”, “systematic attacks on the Tibetan language”, “limit the rights to freedom of opinion and expression and freedom of peaceful association and assembly”, “denial of the legal rights of detainees and prisoners”, and “torture and other forms of ill-treatment”.

The open letter maintained that the success of the reports of these groups at the review “will significantly impact the credibility of the Human Rights Council, seriously disrupt the enthusiasm and expectations of normal participation by countries worldwide and global NGOs in the working mechanisms of the Human Rights Council, greatly harm the sentiments of the 1.4 billion people in China including Xizang, and severely misguide the global populace’s accurate understanding and international public opinion of Xizang.”

The open letter especially focused on the reports on the situation in “Xizang”, the term China recently began to use in place of “Tibet” in furtherance of its policy-objective of Sinicizing the Tibetan identity of the Tibetan Plateau region.

Apparently seeking a set of recommendations that would praise rather than call for improvement in its human rights record, the letter said: “We strongly urge the Human Rights Council to remember the original intention and mission of establishing the universal periodic review mechanism, eliminate confusing noises, prevent lies and false accusations impacting the Council’s consideration of significant human rights issues with genuine practical significance.”

The open letter’s long list of “civil society” signatories included a number of educational and research centres, especially from the Tibetan regions, as well as chambers of commerce and an assortment of other entities, all of them government-backed or government-run.

**Open letter from Chinese Civil Society  
Organizations to the President of the United  
Nations Human Rights Council**

24 January 2024, China Daily

Dear President of the UN Human Rights Council,  
As a crucial organ of the United Nations General Assembly aimed at promoting and protecting human

rights, the Human Rights Council plays a pivotal role in advancing global human rights development. We sincerely admire this role and express high appreciation for your commitment to upholding guiding principles such as universality, impartiality, objectivity, non-selectivity, as well as constructive international dialogue and cooperation in your work. We have noticed, over the past period, organizations including the so-called International Federation for Human Rights, International Campaign for Tibet(Xizang) and Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, have been using the platform of the Human Rights Council to spread false information and cause trouble on a large scale, with the purpose of attacking and smearing China. They fabricated lies such as "colonial boarding school system" "repression of Tibetan Buddhism" "systematic attacks on the Tibetan language" "limit the rights to freedom of opinion and expression and freedom of peaceful association and assembly" "denial of the legal rights of detainees and prisoners" "torture and other forms of ill-treatment", attempting to manipulate the Human Rights Council into making biased statements on the issue of Xizang, inciting other countries to attack and criticize China. These practices of distorting right and wrong completely ignore the history and reality of Xizang, disregarding the tremendous achievements in the development of human rights in Xizang, lacking basic objectivity and truthfulness. Once successful, it will significantly impact the credibility of the Human Rights Council, seriously disrupt the enthusiasm and expectations of normal participation by countries worldwide and global NGOs in the working mechanisms of the Human Rights Council, greatly harm the sentiments of the 1.4 billion people in China including Xizang, and severely misguide the global populace's accurate understanding and international public opinion of Xizang. We strongly oppose the maliciously fabricated and baseless accusations, object to the politicization, instrumentalization, and stigmatization of human rights in Xizang.

In today's Xizang, governments at all levels and people of all ethnicities are making efforts to promote political stability, social harmony, economic development, national unity, religious harmony, rule of law, and ecological well-being. They are working to ensure more comprehensive protection of basic human rights. The people of Xizang have firsthand experiences of these efforts, and many foreign media outlets that have visited Xizang have also provided extensive and objective coverage.

Rumors originate from schemers, thrive among the foolish, and cease with the wise. We strongly urge the Human Rights Council to remember the original intention and mission of establishing the universal periodic review mechanism, eliminate confusing

noises, prevent lies and false accusations impacting the Council's consideration of significant human rights issues with genuine practical significance. We call for the respect of legitimate information provided by member states and the making of objective, rational, and fair judgments.

24 January 2024

Organizations

### **China's ethnic affairs officials urged to promote integration of minority groups**

24 January 2024, South China Morning Post

China's ethnic affairs officials have been asked to boost efforts to promote the integration of the country's ethnic minority groups in the new year.

The Tuesday meeting brought together senior ethnic affairs policy directors from around the country and outlined goals for China's ethnic affairs policies.

Beijing has stressed the need to enforce President Xi Jinping's vision of "forging a sense of community of the Chinese nation", which calls for greater integration of ethnic minority groups.

The meeting noted that efforts should be made to "build a system of historical materials, a system of discourse and a system of theories on the community of the Chinese nation" and to "scientifically reveal the reasons, theories and philosophies of the formation and development of the Chinese nation".

It called for efforts to launch cultural products and exhibits that "reflect the commonality of the Chinese nation" to "fully demonstrate Chinese cultural heritage".

It also outlined the goal of addressing risks and "hidden dangers" in the field of ethnic affairs and safeguarding ethnic unity and stability.

The meeting noted that ethnic affairs offices across China should "have a sense of responsibility and urgency" and "thoroughly implement" the latest decisions by Communist Party leaders on ethnic affairs.

Ethnic grievances were once a major source of tension in Chinese society, especially in Tibet and Xinjiang. Beijing has largely brought down the intensity of those tensions in recent years, but has been widely criticised for the security and cultural policies that were used during the process.

At a Politburo study session in October, President Xi Jinping noted the need to promote the party's work in guiding ethnic minority groups. He emphasised the importance of educating ethnic minority groups about party history, theories and policies and to further integrate them into the Chinese nation.

"Efforts should be made to let people cultivate awareness that people from all ethnicities are in the same community, where they share weal and woe and stick together through thick and thin," he was

quoted as saying at the time by state news agency Xinhua.

In Tuesday's meeting, Pan Yue, party chief of the National Ethnic Affairs Commission, said efforts should be made "to open up a brand new situation of high-quality development of the party's work on ethnic affairs in the new era".

The commission is responsible for drafting laws regarding China's policies towards its ethnic minority groups as well as implementing those laws and regulations.

Pan is also a deputy head of the United Front Work Department, the body responsible for liaising with non-party groups, overseeing the country's ethnic and religious issues and overseas Chinese affairs.

The Tuesday meeting also called for efforts to make economic development "a process of forging a sense of community of the Chinese nation".

It also emphasised "strengthening the party's centralised and unified leadership on ethnic affairs" to promote "strong synergy for the party's work on ethnic affairs in the new era".

### **Western countries use UN-backed review to press China on its treatment of activists and minorities**

23 January 2024, ABC27

GENEVA (AP) — Western countries used a regular U.N.-backed review of China's human rights record Tuesday to press Beijing to do more to allow freedom of expression, protect the rights of ethnic minorities and to repeal a national security law in Hong Kong that troubles independent activists.

China's ambassador in Geneva, Chen Xu, led a delegation from some 20 Chinese ministries for the "universal periodic review" conducted under the U.N. Human Rights Council. He stressed China's progress in poverty eradication, said citizens engage in "democratic elections" and gave assurance that freedom of religious belief is safeguarded.

"China upholds respect for and protection of human rights as a task of importance in state governance," Chen said through an interpreter. "We have embarked on a path of human rights development that is in keeping with the trend of the times and appropriate to China's national conditions and so-called historic achievements in this process."

"We uphold the people-centered philosophy and strive to deliver a better life for all the people," he said.

An extraordinarily high number of more than 160 countries — some critics of Beijing, some allies — registered to take part in the discussion. That meant each country had a maximum of 45 seconds to speak, forcing some ambassadors into what at times felt like a speed-reading exercise.

China's delegation had a total of 70 minutes to make its case.

The review process, which encourages constructive recommendations over sharp criticism, nevertheless gave way to firm, if not scathing, advice to China from some leading Western countries, while some of China's friends rallied to its defense.

Ambassador Leslie Norton of Canada urged China to end "enforced disappearances targeting human rights defenders, ethnic minorities and Falun Gong practitioners." Falun Gong is a spiritual movement.

Czech Ambassador Vaclav Balek said China needed to stop "the criminalization of religious and peaceful civil expression" and "cross-border kidnappings and intimidating Chinese citizens living abroad." Slovenian Ambassador Anita Pipan recommended that China "establish a moratorium on the death penalty."

U.K. Ambassador Simon Manley called for a halt to the prosecution of Jimmy Lai, a former Hong Kong publisher who is on trial for alleged national security violations, and an end to the forced repatriation of North Koreans who fled into China.

Kozo Honsei, Japan's deputy permanent representative in Geneva, called for better protection of the rights of minorities in Tibet and northwestern China's Xinjiang region. U.S. Ambassador Michele Taylor presented a list of concerns, concluding with, "We condemn the ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang and transnational repression to silence individuals abroad."

Some independent organizations and the United States have accused China of genocide against minority Muslim Uyghurs in Xinjiang, but no U.N. bodies have affirmed that. China lashed out at a 2022 report by the U.N.'s then-human rights chief citing possible crimes against humanity committed in the region.

The hearing offered a wide-ranging look at the human rights situation in China. Bolivia's envoy commended China's efforts to reduce deforestation, Burundi's representative urged China to improve access to health care in central regions and to better housing in Hong Kong and Macao, and Iran praised China's "national action plan for human rights."

First secretary Ilia Barmin of Russia's diplomatic mission advised China "to consistently improve the understanding and capacity of citizens to use standard spoken and written Chinese in Xinjiang."

Many developing-world countries praised China's policies on issues like poverty reduction and economic development policies while also offering suggestions to Beijing. Frankye Bronwen Levy, political affairs counselor for South Africa, called on China to strengthen an anti-domestic violence law passed eight years ago.

Hilary Power, the Geneva director of Human Rights Watch, called it "utterly shameful" that many countries opted to "use their platform at the U.N.'s

top human rights body to praise Beijing's rights record, or stay silent in the face of well-documented grave crimes."

The "universal periodic review" puts all U.N. member states up for scrutiny – at times sharp – by other countries roughly every five years. The 3 1/2-hour discussion aims to offer constructive criticism and to yield a written report with recommendations. On Monday, countries examined Saudi Arabia's rights record.

At China's last review in 2018, the United States and other countries voiced concerns about its treatment of Muslim Uyghurs in Xinjiang.

Groups that included Falun Gong practitioners, Uyghurs and pro-Tibet activists held small demonstrations outside the U.N. Geneva compound during Tuesday's discussion. Inside, roughly 100 activists from nongovernmental groups attended the session or watched it from a "spillover room" in the vast complex, officials said.

Another advocacy group sent representatives to speak out against the forced repatriation from China of women from North Korea who fled the nation under leader Kim Jong Un's rule.

### **China's human rights record criticised at UN as it faces rare scrutiny of policies**

23 January 2024, The Guardian

The UK, the US and several other countries criticised China's human rights record on Tuesday as the country was subjected to rare scrutiny of its policies at the United Nations.

The UK called on China to "cease the persecution and arbitrary detention of Uyghurs and Tibetans and allow genuine freedom of religion or belief and cultural expression without fear of surveillance, torture, forced labour or sexual violence", while the US said China should "release all arbitrarily detained individuals" and cease the operation of "forcible assimilation policies including boarding schools in Tibet and Xinjiang".

The UK also recommended that the national security law in Hong Kong be repealed and specifically called for the prosecution of the pro-democracy activist Jimmy Lai to be dropped.

The recommendations were made as part of the UN Human Rights Council's universal periodic review, a mechanism by which the 193 UN member states review each others' human rights records every five years.

Each country at the UN headquarters in Geneva was given 45 seconds to make recommendations based on China's human rights records since 2018. In that period, huge protests against the tightening grip of the Chinese Communist party (CCP) in Hong Kong prompted the imposition of a national security law that critics say criminalises dissent, and there has

been increased international scrutiny of the human rights situation in Xinjiang, as well as growing concern about transnational repression as activists in the US, the UK and other countries have been targeted by Chinese authorities or agents.

Responding to the recommendations, China's UN ambassador, Chen Xu, said concerns were caused by "misunderstanding or misinformation".

Chen said: "A few countries groundlessly accuse and smear China, based not on facts but on ideological bias and unfounded rumours and lies."

Tuesday's meeting was the first time China has been through the review process since the UN's report on Xinjiang was published in August 2022. The long-delayed report, which was written by the outgoing human rights commissioner Michelle Bachelet, found China was committing "serious human rights violations" against Uyghurs in Xinjiang. Beijing described it as "disinformation".

Several countries brought up China's policies in Xinjiang during Tuesday's meeting. The region, along with Tibet, has become a byword for Beijing's repressive human rights policies, particularly towards religious and ethnic minorities.

Human rights activists said that the fact that several countries mentioned Tibet in this year's review bucked a recent trend of the region not being spoken about on the international stage.

Many smaller countries, or countries that are economically dependent on China, praised China's rights record, in particular its success at lifting tens of millions of people out of poverty since 2018.

Ethiopia said it "applauds China for improving the criminal litigation system", while Iran said: "We appreciate the economic programmes implemented by the government of China with the aim of promoting social, cultural and economic rights."

Bhutan, a small, landlocked country between India and China that has recently been warming its relationship with Beijing, said: "We commend the significant progress in poverty alleviation and the achievement of the poverty reduction target of the 2030 agenda ahead of schedule."

Speaking after the UN session, Sophie Richardson, a former China director for Human Rights Watch, said: "We increasingly hear Chinese government rhetoric in the recommendations made by governments, I think indicating a level of control over the process or influence over the process, and that's problematic."

Zumretay Arkin, the spokesperson for the World Uyghur Congress, criticised central Asian countries for failing to speak out against the abuse of Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other minorities in Xinjiang and said: "Muslim-majority countries have failed the Uyghurs."

China's foreign ministry has been approached for comment.

## Xi Jinping urges loyalty from China's courts and law enforcers to 'defuse' social and financial risks

15 January 2024, South China Morning Post

Chinese President Xi Jinping has urged the country's judicial and law enforcement authorities to safeguard national security, calling on the courts, prosecutors and public security authorities to "defuse" social and economic risks, and for their continued loyalty to the Communist Party.

Xi's instructions were delivered during a two-day national conference over the weekend for the country's zhengfa departments – the political and legal authorities responsible for domestic security.

The instructions were delivered at the virtual meeting by Chen Wenqing, the head of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission, a party body that oversees all security-related matters, according to state news agency Xinhua. Xi did not address the meeting in person.

In his instructions, Xi said judicial and law enforcement departments should "uphold the absolute leadership" of the party, and use their development to support and serve China's modernisation.

He said they should provide strong security guarantees for "the comprehensive advancement of the construction of a strong nation and the great cause of national rejuvenation".

Beijing has been placing growing significance on national security, especially over the past year. Xi has also repeated the significance of security issues at high-level meetings.

Xi urged the departments to "resolutely safeguard national security" and "prevent and resolve major security risks".

He also called for efforts to "resolutely maintain social stability" and "correctly handle internal conflicts among the people", noting that the "Fengqiao experience in the new era" should be upheld and developed.

The "Fengqiao experience" refers to a mechanism for mobilising the masses to settle social conflicts at the grass-roots level without needing to involve higher legal bodies. The concept dates back to the times of Mao Zedong and has been promoted by Xi as an integral part of improving social governance.

Xi also stressed the need to maintain order in the socialist market economy, and improve the business environment based on the rule of law.

He called for strengthening the party's political construction of the judicial and law enforcement departments to "forge a loyal, clean and responsible iron army".

Public Security Minister Wang Xiaohong presided over the meeting, which was also attended by Zhang Jun, president of the Supreme People's Court,



and Ying Yong, procurator-general of the Supreme People's Procuratorate.

The meeting also focused on emerging economic crimes, and punishment for offenders who disrupt the country's socialist market economy, such as by violating financial management rules, financial fraud, and infringing on intellectual property rights, according to state media reports.

Participants also discussed the need to step up a crackdown on telecoms fraud and cross-border gambling.

### **China Builds Spy Stations in Mountains on Disputed Border**

15 January 2024, Newsweek

China has been building new radar and electronic warfare facilities in the mountains along its long, disputed border with India, recent satellite imagery revealed.

An expansive radome—a structure housing radar and other signals intelligence equipment—is under construction at Lake Mansarovar in its southwestern Tibet region, according to stills captured this month.

The facility appeared to be equipped with dedicated solar arrays to ensure a sustained power supply, photographs from Sinergise's Sentinel Hub website showed. The service hosts images from the Sentinel-2 satellite of the European Union's Copernicus Earth observation program.

China and India have been locked in an escalated military standoff for nearly four years since a deadly border clash in the summer of 2020, itself a result of their decades-long unsettled Himalayan boundary.

The buildup of military infrastructure is thought to be part of the People's Liberation Army's broader strategy of enhancing its intelligence gathering and electronic warfare capabilities, with both forces deployed in the mountainous regions throughout the year.

In a report last September, Kartik Bommakanti, a senior fellow with the Observer Research Foundation think tank in New Delhi, described the PLA's electronic warfare regiment as multifaceted, capable of electromagnetic attacks and jamming, long-distance electronic surveillance, as well as cyber operations and communications near the border.

The regiment had a similar setup to Russia's reconnaissance and fire system, suggesting that the Chinese military units would likely provide support to artillery and air defense brigades within the PLA Ground Force.

India, however, is far from idle. Air Chief Marshal Vivek Ram Chaudhari of the Indian Air Force has disclosed ambitious plans to bolster frontier defenses with locally produced military technology. They would include mountain radars that would extend

India's vision deep into neighboring territory, he said last fall.

It is part of an India's air force modernization program that will also include the introduction of autonomous combat and reconnaissance drones in the coming years.

Other capabilities will include long-range surface-to-air missile systems, fighter jets, helicopters, and ballistic missiles, Chaudhari said in his briefing, which emphasized New Delhi's desire to reduce its traditional reliance on foreign hardware in favor of enhancing its domestic defense industry.

Addressing concerns regarding the Chinese military buildup across the 2,300-mile Line of Actual Control, Chaudhari said India was constantly monitoring developments with intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance.

The Center for International and Strategic Studies, a think tank in Washington, D.C., reported on the construction of another listening post in an analysis published in November 2022.

The new radome, first captured by satellites in late 2021, sits atop a mountain peak north of Lake Mansarovar and houses high-frequency towers and at least one support building, with the groundwork for other structures already underway.

The CSIS report speculated that the radome could serve signals intelligence collection and satellite communications, supplementing another existing facility by Pangong Tso Lake on the disputed border, near the valley where Chinese and Indian soldiers fought in 2020.

### **China's patriotic education law a bad news for ethnic minority areas**

06 January 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Jan06'24) – China ushered in the year 2024 with the implementation of its Patriotic Education Law, which was adopted by its rubberstamp parliament in Oct 2023. The sweeping new law aims to get families, schools, companies, international institutions, and especially religious centres and ethnic minority areas, to deepen patriotism in the Communist Party of China (CPC)-state.

In particular, the law is seen as being directed at cracking down on people embracing ideas of liberal democracy and human rights. In the case of ethnic minority regions, it will give a new fillip to the ongoing assimilation drive being carried out in the name of Sinicization of religion, education, and so forth.

Under the new law, schools must include patriotic education in their curriculum, while companies must do so in their operations, such as business management and staff training. Parents should also

“include love of the motherland in family education”, says the law.

Besides, measures will be taken to strengthen patriotism among residents in Hong Kong and Macau, beef up publicity and education on unifying China, and strengthening communication with overseas Chinese and Taiwan residents, noted the straitstimes.com Jan 4.

As in the case of schools, the new law requires religious groups and places of religious activities to conduct patriotic education, with the aim to strengthen national awareness among clergy and believers and guide religions to align with socialist society, noted the voanews.com Jan 5.

Late last month, on Christmas Eve, China’s top political adviser, Wang Huning, delivered a stern message to Christian leaders, urging “strict” management of religious affairs and unwavering allegiance to the Communist Party’s vision for Christianity, the report noted.

Outlining a clear vision for the future of Christianity in China, Wang has made it clear that religious leaders must “adhere to the direction of Sinicization of Christianity.”

The Sinicization campaign applies, of course, to all religions and, all the more, to the ethnic minority areas where the focus will be on assimilation.

Besides, under the new law, insulting national symbols such as China’s flag, emblem and the country’s heroes and martyrs will attract punishment. Assistant Professor Dylan Loh at the Nanyang Technological University’s Public Policy and Global Affairs programme has said the law came about as the CPC had “identified risks, particularly among some disenfranchised and politically apathetic youths”.

“It is clearly unacceptable to depart from CPC hagiography and ideology, such as embracing Western ideas of democracy, freedom of speech.

“But now it is increasingly a problem for the party that people don’t care and want to make as much money as possible. That, seen through the party’s eyes, is also equally threatening for the legitimacy and longevity of the party,” the straitstimes.com report quoted the China expert as saying.

The report noted that reactions to the new law have been mixed, with netizens leaving both supportive comments and questions on whether love for a country should be enforced.

Some netizens have also taken a dig at party officials with family members who have migrated to the United States or are currently studying there, and asked if that is patriotism.

Some parents have expressed concern that students’ learning will be affected by the changes.

A parent in Beijing, named only as Mrs Fan, has said she was concerned that any changes will “affect the development of critical thinking skills in schools”; that schools may not allow probing questions about Chinese history.

Even Mr Li Yong, 42, a project manager at a state-owned enterprise and who supports the new law, sees a downside in the changes, saying, “I guess if there’s one thing I’m worried about, it is that the new law will mean more homework for my daughter. She is busy enough at school.”

### **‘No one is safe’: China purges record number of senior officials in 2023, with more ‘tigers’ likely to fall**

03 January 2024, South China Morning Post

China’s battle against corruption set new records last year, with the ruling Communist Party’s anti-corruption watchdog launching probes into 45 senior officials, according to a tally by the South China Morning Post.

The record number of investigations came five years after Chinese President Xi Jinping declared a “crushing victory” in his war on corruption, a sweeping crackdown that was launched in 2013. The ongoing probe signals that he has little interest in letting up on an effort to clean up China’s officialdom while pushing authorities ever harder to implement his policies.

The number of senior-level investigations launched in 2023 jumped by 40 per cent compared with 2022, when the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) – China’s top anti corruption agency – recorded 32 investigations into high-ranking officials, based on official announcements by the CCDI.

Most of the subjects who were placed under investigation – sometimes referred to as “tigers” – belonged to a pool of officials known as “centrally managed cadres”, meaning they held ranks at the deputy ministerial level or above. A smaller number of them held slightly lower ranks but occupied key positions in important sectors.

Unlike their subordinates who are managed and supervised by the local branches of the party’s organisation and disciplinary agency, the group of senior officials are under direct management of the Communist Party’s Central Organisation Department, its top personnel body. If any wrongdoing is found, they would face top level investigations from the CCDI.

Twenty-seven of the 45 senior cadres who had faced detention by the disciplinary watchdog were found to have retired from their positions when they faced investigation, according to further research.

Deng Yuwen, a former deputy editor at the Study Times, official newspaper of the Central Party School

where cadres are trained, said the fact that most of the CCDI's investigations focused on retired officials signalled that the probes uncovered more misconduct before Xi took power, and that such retirements would not allow the individuals to avoid further investigation.

"Among the officials arrested in recent years, not many were caught for corruption in their current positions. Most of the problems occurred in the past few years, or even more than 10, 20 years ago. The CCDI is no longer following the previous unspoken rule that retired officials will be spared from investigation," he said.

"Now, no one is safe. As Xi digs deeper, he just finds more problems that accumulated over the past three decades due to rapid economic development and lax party discipline. And there is no sign of him stopping the digging."

A total of 294 senior officials have been sacked by the CCDI in the 11 years since the anti-corruption campaign was launched, according to the Post's count.

However, this number does not include most of the corruption probes in the Chinese military, which conducts its own investigations through the Discipline Inspection Commission. The agency, which operates within China's top military command – the Central Military Commission (CMC) – led by Xi, operates under extreme secrecy.

Beijing announces such cases very selectively, as it did for the investigations of former CMC deputy chairmen Xu Caihou and Guo Boxiong during Xi's first presidential term. They were the highest ranking officers in the People's Liberation Army to be targeted since the anti-corruption drive began.

Before 2023, the most senior officials investigated in a single year by the CCDI had been in 2014, when 38 individuals were targeted.

In 2020, 18 officials were placed under investigation. But since then, the annual tally has been rising: 25 high ranking officials were investigated in 2021, and 32 in 2022.

On Saturday, the National People's Congress, China's top legislative body, announced the dismissal of nine generals.

Five of the officers were either past or current top commanders in the PLA Rocket Force, a key component of the country's nuclear arsenal. They included Li Yuchao, who had commanded the rocket force from January last year until he was replaced in July, and his former deputy, Zhang Zhenzhong.

Beijing has not confirmed if any of the nine men were under investigation for alleged corruption, although some were reportedly being probed earlier last year. A political researcher at Peking University said there were many obvious signs that suggest that China's "tiger hunt" will expand even further in 2024.

"We have the removal of [former foreign minister] Qin Gang and [former defence minister] Li Shangfu. We also saw the National People's Congress just officially dismiss nine PLA generals, indicating a sweeping investigation in the military has got preliminary results," said the researcher, who declined to be named due to the sensitivity of the matter.

No reasons have been provided for the dismissals of Qin and Li, who were both stripped of their positions last year.

"I suspect only a tiny amount of information regarding these cases will be released to the public, just for minimal formalities."

The CCDI will begin its third plenum from next Monday to lay out the work priorities in the new year for tens of millions of discipline inspectors across the country.

### **China's cadres urged to connect with the masses as part of education campaign, but some question its methods**

02 January 2024, South China Morning Post

After hearing complaints about local water quality in the southeastern city of Hefei, the provincial party boss visited the neighbourhood to take a sip from the tap – as reporters and camera crews looked on – to assure residents it was safe to drink.

The gesture by Anhui province's Communist Party secretary Han Jun was one of several covered by state-run media in recent months to show how party leaders have put into practice President Xi Jinping's teachings about connecting with the masses.

According to the Anhui Daily, Han's unannounced visit to the community was an example of how senior cadres had "put people's interests first" by visiting residents to address their grievances – an idea Xi first promoted 35 years ago when he became party chief of the city of Ningde in the southeastern province of Fujian.

To mark the anniversary of the practice, Xi's teachings have been promoted as part of an education campaign for cadres. In late December, hundreds of officials gathered in Beijing to attend a forum chaired by Politburo member Li Ganjie, with similar events held around the country.

However, while cadres are studying and imitating Xi's ideas on how to connect with the masses, which have been dubbed the "four downs" in a reference to going "down to the grass roots", some question the effectiveness of the methods and the education campaign.

A video of Anhui party boss Han taking a swig of Hefei tap water attracted plenty of "thumbs up" reactions on social media. But the 47,000 comments posted below the clip included many who appeared

confused, with some asking how Han could check the quality of the water by drinking it.

Alfred Wu, associate professor at the National University of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, also questioned Han's actions, noting that testing water quality was not part of the professional skills or job duties of a provincial party secretary.

Xi's ideas on the "four downs" have been widely taught among the party's rank and file. The teachings include bringing the party's policy down the masses, as well as receiving petitions from the people and working among the masses and at the grass-roots level.

An official who took part in the education campaign in Fujian province and asked to remain anonymous said the latest round of training, which began in September, focused on officials at the prefecture and county level with a closer working relationship with local communities.

When asked about the education campaign, responses from junior officials ranged from supportive to dismissive.

"I do believe the 'down to grass roots level' campaign is effective in solving people's problems," said a recent university graduate who is now a civil servant in the northern province of Jilin.

"I took part in a campaign to promote production safety for businesses such as the use of firefighting equipment," said the civil servant, who also asked to remain anonymous. "I think our visits did help enhance people's knowledge in this regard."

Others rejected the visits to local communities as publicity stunts or political shows.

One local civil servant in the southwestern province of Sichuan said, "What's the point of conducting such investigations?"

"We were all told about them in advance so everything was well prepared ahead of the visits," she said.

"It only adds to the burden of us grass-roots civil servants because we have to prepare all the documents and materials for these investigations by the senior cadres."

Wu of the National University of Singapore said there might be a gap between what top leaders in Beijing envisioned for the campaign and the reality on the ground.

"It can be a beautiful vision when the campaign is launched but cadres in the grass roots level may see it differently," Wu said.

"The Chinese [governance] system is very top-down and sometimes local cadres only want to appease their bosses and check the box, independent of whether the problems are solved," he added.

Compared with previous political drives, the latest education campaign, which is expected to end this

month, has emphasised regular visits by senior cadres to the masses as part of the doctrine of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.

In November, the Central Commission of Discipline Inspection, the party's top disciplinary body, published an article warning cadres that they must take the investigation mandate seriously and avoid "ills such as formalism" – a term that refers to performing duties in a perfunctory manner – that would add to the burden of junior cadres.

Li Chuncheng, a professor at the School of International Relations and Public Affairs of Fudan University in Shanghai, said party elites could better address problems such as formalism by having the disciplinary watchdog supervise grass-roots inspections and visits by officials.

"There are two inspection mechanisms that can be used to regulate formalism," Li said.

"The first is to incorporate formalism into the scope of inspection work of the disciplinary inspection commission. The second one is to set up a dialogue channel between policymakers [at the top] and the cadres responsible for implementation [at the lower level]."

"But the disciplinary commission now only oversees disciplinary matters and there is no dialogue mechanism in the current bureaucracy."

Wu said it would be hard to assess how effective the campaign had been without independent studies or public polls.

"I think Xi wants to use the campaign as a tool to increase his prestige and popularity among the cadres and the people, but it's hard for us to verify if Xi's goal is achieved with the lack of poll results in China," Wu said.

# TIBET DIGEST 2024

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## MILITARY AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

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## MILITARY AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

### China completes building highest-altitude, largest-capacity hydropower project in Yellow River basin in Qinghai

30 December 2024, Tibetan Review

China said Dec 30 that it was set to complete today the final testing of the second unit of the Maerdang Hydropower Station, the highest-altitude and largest-capacity hydropower project under construction in the Yellow River basin, located in Qinghai province. The first unit was put into operation in April this year. There are no available details about the relocation of local Tibetans from the building of this major dam project which began in 2011 at Marteng (Chinese: Maerdang) in Ragya (Lajia) Town of Machen (Maqen) County, Golog (Guoluo) Prefecture.

A research on the Longyangxia reservoir, also in Qinghai province, by Jarmila Ptackova from the Oriental Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague, Czech Republic, in 2016 stated that the building of other dams in the province – Bingling, Jishixia, Dahejia, Huangfeng, Banduo, Yangdian, Maerdang, Shitouxia and Nazixia – will require the further relocation of 51,855 people by 2020.

On Dec 31, the five turbine generators, including four 550,000-kilowatt units and one 120,000-kilowatt unit, will be put into operation to generate electricity, reported China's official globaltimes.cn Dec 30, citing China Group Media.

Located at an average altitude of 3,300 metres, the hydropower station has a total installed capacity of 2.32 million kilowatts. To harness the power of the fast-flowing water, the Maerdang Hydroelectric Station was built in a steep canyon, the report said.

Located in a nature reserve, the report claims that the construction of the hydropower station aimed to minimize its impact on local wildlife, providing some details about measures that had been taken for the purpose.

"Due to its challenging high-altitude terrain, the Maerdang Hydropower Station only began construction in recent years. Its completion and operation represent a major technological milestone," Lin Boqiang, director of the China Centre for Energy Economics Research at Xiamen University, has said.

## **China approves Tibet mega dam that could generate 3 times more power than Three Gorges**

26 December 2024, SCMP, Holly Chik

Hydropower project on Yarlung Tsangpo River could get unprecedented investment to tackle daunting engineering challenges

China has approved the construction of a colossal hydropower project on Tibet's longest river that could generate three times more energy than the Three Gorges Dam, state news agency Xinhua reported on Wednesday.

The mega hydropower project, set to be built on the Yarlung Tsangpo River in Tibet autonomous region, presents unprecedented engineering challenges.

Total investment in the dam could exceed 1 trillion yuan (US\$137 billion), which would dwarf any other single infrastructure project on the planet.

The report did not specify when construction would begin, or where it would take place.

The Yarlung Tsangpo flows across the Tibetan Plateau, carving out the deepest canyon on Earth and falling a staggering 7,667 metres (25,154 feet), before reaching India, where it is known as the Brahmaputra River

The dam will be built in one of the rainiest parts of mainland China.

The project is expected to generate nearly 300 billion kilowatt-hours (kWh) of electricity annually. By contrast, the Three Gorges Dam, which now has the world's largest installed capacity, was designed to produce 88.2 billion kWh.

In 2020, Yan Zhiyong, then chairman of state-owned Power Construction Corporation of China, said the location on the Yarlung Tsangpo was one of the most hydropower-rich areas in the world.

"The lower reaches area features a vertical drop of 2,000 metres over a 50km (31 miles) distance, representing nearly 70 million kilowatts of resources that could be developed – that is more than three Three Gorges Dams with an installed capacity of 22.5 million kilowatts," he said.

To harness the hydropower potential of the river, four to six 20km-long tunnels must be drilled through the Namcha Barwa mountain to divert half of the river's flow at about 2,000 cubic metres per second.

Additionally, the project site is located along a tectonic plate boundary where earthquakes may occur, and the geology of the plateau differs significantly from that of the plains.

According to a 2023 report, the hydropower station is expected to generate over 300 billion kWh of electricity each year – enough to meet the annual needs of more than 300 million people.

Xinhua said the hydropower project would prioritise environmental protection.

"Through extensive geological exploration and technical advancements, a solid foundation has been laid for the science-based, secure and high-quality development of the project," it said.

The dam would also drive the development of nearby solar and wind energy resources, adding to the region's clean energy base, Xinhua reported.

"This represents a major move in China's green and low-carbon energy transition," the report said.

"It is also of great importance to advancing the country's strategy for carbon peaking and carbon neutrality and to coping with global climate change."

Beijing first announced plans to build the dam in 2020, raising concerns in India about its impact on the country's water and food security. Some also worry that China could weaponise water by using it to cause floods or induce droughts.

However, a 2023 study by scientists at Tsinghua University's department of hydraulic engineering said the project could benefit China, India and Bangladesh if the countries were to cooperate.

The researchers said reservoir storage could increase the minimum water flow during the dry season and add one to four navigable months per year for the Indian portion of the river.

Using reservoir storage to manage flood peaks can reduce flood-affected areas by as much as 32.6 per cent in India and 14.8 per cent in Bangladesh, according to the study.

"The construction of [a] mainstream cascade hydropower system with reservoir storage would have enormous benefits for hydropower development, waterway navigation and agricultural production in the Yarlung Tsangpo-Brahmaputra River basin," they wrote in the peer-reviewed *Journal of Hydrology: Regional Studies*.

## **Satellite images show huge construction activity on Chinese side near Arunachal Pradesh**

21 December 2024, Eastern Sentinel

Amid ongoing debates between the state government and anti-dam activists, villagers over the Siang Upper Multipurpose Project, recent satellite images from Google Maps reveal significant construction activities near the Chinese-occupied Tibet region, close to Indian territory (Arunachal Pradesh). These developments are occurring on the left bank of the Yarlung Tsangpo River, known as the Siang River in Arunachal Pradesh and the Brahmaputra in Assam.

In his recent visit to Boleng in Siang district, Chief Minister Pema Khandu reiterated that the Siang project is a central initiative and will be executed to counter potential threats from China. Khandu revealed that China has approved the construction of a massive project capable of generating 60,000 MW of power on the Yarlung Tsangpo, just upstream from

its entry point into India at Tuting in Upper Siang district.

Satellite images depict extensive activities near the left bank of the Yarlung Tsangpo, including heavy machinery, excavators, cylindrical structures, and blue painted camp-like formations. As per the Google Map, the construction site lies approximately 5km from the nearest ITBP post in Gelling, Upper Siang, 5.75 km from Gelling village the last Circle HQ in Tuting under Upper Siang District, 1.62 km from the McMahon Line, 35 km from Medog town in the Nyingchi region of the Tibet Autonomous Region, China.

However, the images also show significant earth-cutting work, road formations, and landslides, although the exact purpose of these activities remains unclear. The presence of massive vehicles and camps has fueled speculation about China's alleged mega-dam construction project, as claimed by CM Khandu in his recent speech, or could be a road development project near McMahon Line.

CM Khandu also added that, the Chinese government, which is not signatory to the International Water Conventions, intends to divert the water from the multiple water reservoirs to be created under the project to dry regions of Tibet and elsewhere in the country.

"In such a scenario it is inevitable that volume of water in Siang river will drastically get reduced so much so that during winters you will be able to cross the mighty Siang on foot. If China releases water from their dams all of a sudden, a trail of unimaginable destruction will sweep through the Siang belt, Assam and Bangladesh," said CM in his recent speech at Boleng.

Reiterating that Arunachal Pradesh has about 50% of the country's hydropower potential, Khandu informed that the 12500 MW that would be generated from the projects for which MoUs have been signed with PSUs will generate about Rs 10000 crores annually for the state exchequer.

"Please be informed that the 12500 MW, I am mentioning does not include the Siang project. We do not know yet the amount of power that this project will generate if at all executed," Khandu added.

### **New flight to connect Tibet's capital with Singapore**

20 December 2024, RFA, Lobe Socktsang and Tenzin Norzom

Experts see move as part of China's strategy to wield greater influence in Southeast Asia.



The sky is reflected in glass windows as women in traditional dress sit outside of Lhasa Gonggar International Airport in Lhasa in Tibet Autonomous Region, May 31, 2021. (Mark Schiefelbein/AP)

Come Christmas Day, Tibet's capital will see its first flight to Singapore take off from Lhasa Gonggar International Airport in a move the Chinese government says is aimed at boosting tourism, economic growth and fostering cultural exchanges.

This is the second international flight to be launched from Lhasa. In December last year, China allowed Nepal's Himalaya Airlines to resume international flights linking Lhasa with Kathmandu.

West Air, a unit of China's state-owned HNA Aviation Group, will operate three round-trip flights per week that connect the Tibetan plateau with the Southeast Asian island nation via a transit stop at the southwestern Chinese city of Chongqing, the company said in a statement.

Additional international routes from Lhasa to Hong Kong and other destinations are also expected to be launched early next year, according to the regional civil aviation administration office of the Tibet Autonomous Region, or TAR.

The opening of international air routes will enhance Tibet's "international visibility, attracting more domestic and foreign tourists to explore the region, and it will also further expand the regional tourism market," said Wang Yueyue of the TAR's Culture and Tourism Department.

#### **Southeast Asia influence**

Analysts believe the move to add a flight to Singapore — one of the most supportive partners in China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative — is in line with Beijing's efforts to strengthen ties with Southeast Asian nations and exude more influence in the region.

The initiative is a Chinese development strategy to improve trade, infrastructure, investment links and regional integration between Asia, Africa and Europe.

"As a major economy in the region, Singapore offers China significant economic leverage and connectivity advantages, which can help solidify Beijing's influence across Southeast Asia," Sana Hashmi, a postdoctoral fellow at the Taipei-based Taiwan-Asia Exchange Foundation, told Radio Free Asia.

In a statement, West Air said the new route will serve as a bridge linking western China and the ASEAN region, creating an “air corridor” for the development of a new land-sea corridor in the west.

“Looking ahead, West Air will expand its investments in ‘Belt and Road’ countries and open additional routes to meet growing passenger demand while supporting national strategies and regional development,” the company added.

Chinese government officials have repeatedly emphasized the importance of Tibet to China’s Belt and Road initiative, citing Tibet’s geographical advantages and serving as a ‘gateway to South Asia.’

Foreign Minister Wang Yi in 2021 also made promises to support Tibet’s opening-up and deepen its cooperation with neighboring countries to jointly contribute to Belt and Road projects.

**Tibet travel challenges**

But international tourists going to Lhasa must still obtain special Tibet travel permits, in addition to a Chinese visa – and other permits if going elsewhere in the TAR.

“While additional flight connectivity is useful, it does not address the essential issue about traveling to and from Tibet which is government scrutiny and travel permits,” said Manoj Kewalramani, a fellow in China studies at Bengaluru, India-based Takshishila Institution.

China and Singapore implemented a visa-free entry policy, with up to 30 days of stay allowed for their citizens traveling for family, tourism or business purposes.

But to enter Tibet, they must possess a Tibet travel permit, which tour operators obtain by submitting applications on their behalf.

Foreign tourists must also stick with group tours. Independent travel in Tibet is prohibited.

For travel outside Lhasa city to other parts of the TAR such as Shigatse or Shannan, visitors are required to apply for an additional permit referred to as the Aliens’ Travel Permit, issued by the Public Security Bureau.

For travel to border areas or sensitive military zones such as Mount Kailash or Lake Manasarovar in Ngari region, visitors require a Military Area Entry Permit and a Foreign Affairs Permit, issued by the respective offices in Lhasa.

Travel to other sensitive areas requires an additional permit from the local cultural antiquities department.

### **China has expanded its nuclear force and strengthened ties to Russia, the Pentagon says**

19 December 2024, AP News, Lolita C. Baldor

China is expanding its nuclear force, has increased military pressure against Taiwan and

has strengthened its ties with Russia over the past year, according to a Pentagon report Wednesday that details actions accelerating key areas of conflict with the United States.

The report, however, also notes that the recent rash of corruption allegations within China’s powerful Central Military Commission, which oversees the People’s Liberation Army, is hurting Beijing’s military growth and could slow its campaign to modernize.

The impact, said a senior defense official, is a bit of a mixed bag because while there has been progress in some programs, China has slid back in others.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe the U.S. assessment, warned that Beijing is working toward developing a more diverse and technologically sophisticated nuclear force. While the expected number of nuclear warheads has maintained consistent growth, China is broadening its targeting abilities.

Beijing is going to be able to go after more and different types of targets, do greater damage and have more options for multiple rounds of counterstrikes, the official said. The U.S. is urging China to be more transparent about its nuclear program, while also warning that America will defend its allies and take appropriate steps in response.

According to the report, which provides the annual U.S. assessment of China’s military power and is required by Congress, China had more than 600 operational nuclear warheads as of May, and the U.S. expects it will have more than 1,000 by 2030.

The Chinese Embassy, in response, said China has always “firmly adhered to a nuclear strategy of self-defense,” follows the no-first-use nuclear policy and maintains its nuclear capabilities at the minimum level required for national security.

Liu Pengyu, the embassy spokesman, said such annual reports by the Pentagon are “filled with ‘Cold-War’ thinking and zero-sum game mentality, which China firmly opposes.”

The Biden administration has worked to maintain a balance with China, building up the U.S. military presence in the Asia-Pacific region to be ready to counter Beijing while also encouraging increased communications between the two countries at the diplomatic and military levels.

That uptick in talks has coincided with a decrease in coercive and risky intercepts of U.S. aircraft since late 2023, compared with the previous two years. China still, however, does what the U.S. military considers “unsafe” flights near American and allied forces in the region.

The Pentagon’s national defense strategy is built around China being the greatest security challenge for the U.S., and the threat from Beijing influences

how the U.S. military is equipped and organized for the future.

The corruption within the PLA has resulted in at least 15 high-ranking officials being ousted in a major shakeup of China's defense establishment.

"This wave of corruption touches every service in the PLA, and it may have shaken Beijing's confidence," the report said.

In June, China announced that former Defense Minister Li Shangfu and his predecessor, Wei Fenghe, were expelled from the ruling Communist Party and accused of corruption. Last month, another senior official, Miao Hua, was suspended and put under investigation, according to China's Defense Ministry.

The U.S. report points to a persistent increased military presence by China around Taiwan, the self-governing island that China claims as its own. It said China's navy has been in the region more and that there have been increased crossings into the island's air defense identification zone and major military exercises in the area.

Just last week, a large deployment of Chinese navy and coast guard vessels in the waters around Taiwan triggered alarm as Taiwanese officials said it looked like China was simulating a blockade. Officials have said there were as many as 90 ships involved in what Taiwan described as two walls designed to demonstrate that the waters belong to China.

Taiwan split from communist China in 1949 and has rejected Beijing's demands that it accept unification. China says it will do so by force if necessary, and leaders have said they want to be ready to do so by 2027. Beijing also has demanded that Washington not interfere with the Taiwan issue, citing that it is an internal matter.

The United States is obligated under domestic law to help defend Taiwan and give it weapons and technology to deter invasion.

The island democracy has been the chief source of tension between Washington and Beijing for decades and is widely seen as the most likely trigger for a potentially catastrophic U.S.-China war.

More broadly, the report concluded that the PLA continued its drive to develop greater military capabilities but "made uneven progress toward its 2027" milestone for modernization.

One area of expansion, the report said, is with unmanned aerial systems, which officials said are "quickly approaching U.S. standards."

Regarding Russia, the report said China has supported Russia's war against Ukraine and sold Russia dual-use items that Moscow's military industry relies on. Dual use items can be used for both civilian and military purposes.

## China has improved military infrastructure and training along LAC: US report

19 December 2024, The New Indian Express, Mayank Singh

In addition to continued PLAA deployments to the Indian border and Burma, the PLAA conducted multiple large-scale exercises in training areas throughout the country.

The US Department of Defence, in its latest report, said that China has improved its training and infrastructure along the Line of Actual Control aimed at long-term sustenance of the troops along the de-facto borders.

Mentioning the People's Liberation Army, the Report says that the PLAA continued to improve its methods and standards of training combined arms units. Training encompassed individual to collective soldier events integrating reconnaissance, infantry, artillery, armour, engineers, and signal units.

In addition to continued PLAA deployments to the Indian border and Burma, the PLAA conducted multiple large-scale exercises in training areas throughout the country.

The 2024 report to the US Congress on the military and security developments involving the People's Republic of China (PRC) covers security and military developments involving the PRC through early 2024.

The report, to elaborate its point about the Chinese actions along the LAC linking it with the military infrastructure spruce-up, gives the background of China's tensions with India along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

LAC - a disputed border between the PRC's western provinces and India's northern provinces—sparked a standoff between PRC and Indian forces in mid-May 2020, which escalated on June 15, 2020, after a skirmish ensued in the Galwan Valley between the Indian Army and PLA forces that ended with 20 Indian soldiers and four PRC soldiers dead.

The two sides agreed to tactical pull-backs from most of the contested areas in early 2021 but standoffs continued at two locations in Ladakh on the Western Sector of the LAC.

In late 2022, PRC and Indian forces engaged in an unarmed clash near Tawang along the Eastern Sector of the LAC separating Tibet and the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh.

This was the first such clash since the 2020 skirmish although local commanders quickly defused the clash and the overall standoff did not substantively escalate.

"These engagements coincide with a significant and sustained escalation in military infrastructure to support a long-term presence on the LAC," says the DoD.



In late 2023, India hosted the 20th round of commander-level meetings with the PLA. Both sides agreed to maintain communication and dialogue through military and diplomatic channels.

In 2020, PLA Special Operations Forces (SOF) from the Tibet Military Region were deployed to the border with India following clashes between PRC and Indian forces along the LAC, the report adds.

Currently, there has been disengagement from all standoff points in Eastern Ladakh with the latest being those at the Depsang and Demchok in October.

The PRC has defined its core interests, says the report, as issues so central to its national rejuvenation that the official position on them is not subject to negotiation or compromise and this also includes the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh.

The PRC began using the term in 2003, initially in reference to sovereignty issues regarding Taiwan and later Tibet and Xinjiang. In 2009, the senior PRC official for foreign affairs publicly defined the elements of core interests: 1) preserving the PRC's political system, 2) defending the PRC's sovereignty and territorial claims, and 3) promoting the PRC's economic development.

The list of core interests has grown over the last decade with President Xi increasingly using the terms of a national security law passed in 2015 to extend the formal status of "core interest" to territorial disputes in the South China Sea (SCS), the Senkaku Islands, and the northeastern Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh.

On the Chinese Military, the report mentions that the Western Theater Command (WTC) is oriented toward India and counterterrorism missions along the PRC's Central Asia borders.

"The WTC focuses on Xinjiang and Tibet Autonomous Regions, where the CCP perceives a high threat of separatism, terrorism, and extremism. The WTC is geographically the largest theater command in the PRC and is responsible for responding to conflict with India, border interactions with Central Asian states, and what the PRC refers to as the "three evil forces" of terrorism, separatism, and extremism in Tibet and Xinjiang.", it says.

The WTC's primary focus is on securing the PRC's border with India. In recent years, differing perceptions between India and the PRC regarding border demarcations have facilitated multiple clashes, force buildups, and military infrastructure construction.

In June 2020, PLA and Indian patrols clashed in Galwan Valley—the most violent clash between the two countries in 45 years. The PLA has not drawn down its positions or troop numbers since the 2020 clash and has built infrastructure and support

facilities to maintain multiple BDE deployments along the LAC.

WTC and Indian commanders have held 21 corps commander-level talks since the 2020 clash.

Adding about the modernisation, the PLA has sought to modernize its capabilities and improve its proficiencies across all warfare domains, is "to become a joint force capable of the full range of land, air, and maritime as well as nuclear, space, counter space, electronic warfare, and cyberspace operations.

Despite its progress, the force still has significant deficiencies including in commander proficiency, long-distance logistics, and urban warfare." Added the report.

## November

### Chinese military conducts patrol near disputed Scarborough shoal

29 November 2024, RFA

China's air-and-sea patrol took place as a U.S. carrier strike group entered the South China Sea.

The Chinese military held a large-scale maritime and airspace patrol near the Scarborough shoal, a disputed reef in the South China Sea known in China as Huangyan Dao, citing "instability" created by "certain countries."

Scarborough Shoal, known as Bajo de Masinloc in the Philippines, is about 125 nautical miles (232 kilometers) from the main Philippine island of Luzon. China now effectively controls it, even though a landmark international arbitration case in 2016 rejected Beijing's claims to most of the South China Sea.

The People's Liberation Army, or PLA, Southern Theater Command, responsible for the contested waterway, said in a statement on Thursday that navy and air forces were taking part in the "routine training" which included reconnaissance and early warning; and maritime and airspace patrol near the shoal.

The Philippines has not reacted to the news but in the past Manila has repeatedly protested against what it saw as "China's bullying."

Also on Thursday, a U.S. aircraft carrier strike group entered the South China Sea, according to ship-tracking data obtained and analyzed by Radio Free Asia.

Data from the MarineTraffic website show the nuclear-powered USS Abraham Lincoln, or CVN-72, transited the Singapore Strait and entered the South China Sea on Thursday morning before moving

northeast. Unusually, the ship has its automatic identification system, which shows its location, turned on.

‘Stirring up trouble’

The Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group also includes Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer USS Frank E. Petersen Jr., and destroyers USS Spruance and USS Michael Murphy.

The destroyers have just visited Thailand and Singapore, and are now “underway conducting routine operations in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations,” the U.S. Navy said.

USS Abraham Lincoln is the fifth aircraft carrier of the Nimitz class that comprises the largest warships in the world. The U.S. 7th Fleet is the U.S. Navy’s largest forward-deployed fleet with a continuous presence in the Indo-Pacific for more than 75 years.

The navy said in a news release that the fleet “routinely interacts and operates with allies and partners in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region.”

In its statement, the PLA Southern Theater Command criticized “certain countries from outside the region” that were “stirring up trouble” and creating instability in the South China Sea but did not name any country.

It reiterated that China has “indisputable sovereignty” over Huangyan Dao and its surrounding waters, and that Chinese troops would “resolutely” defend national sovereignty and maritime rights.

### **Western China railroad work progressing smoothly, boosting shared growth**

26 November 2024, China Daily

When builders from China Railway No 4 Engineering Group Co Ltd (CREC4) started their work in Gansu province on a railway project in 2022, a young woman of the Tibetan ethnic group approached the technicians, asking, “What is that device you are using?”

The technicians from CREC4 Seventh Engineering were surveying the terrain in Luchu county under Gannan Tibetan autonomous prefecture, preparing to help build the Xining-Chengdu railway, which links Northwest China’s Qinghai and Gansu provinces with Sichuan province in Southwest China.

Seeing the young lady tending her herd, they explained to her the uses of the survey tool and its role in helping construct the railway, which traverses the county sitting on the eastern edge of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.

The CREC4 staff members officially started their work on Oct 26, 2022, embarking on their six-yearlong task, with 255 managerial employees and 1,376 construction workers, said Guan Lei, Party secretary

for the first division of CREC4’s railway project for the Xining-Chengdu railway.

“We also brought 398 pieces of mechanical equipment into our construction site,” he said, noting that his preliminary research showed the task to be an arduous one, as their bid sits at an elevation of some 3,500 meters above sea level, with some sites surpassing 3,700 meters.

“We have to spare every effort in properly building this national railway infrastructure,” Guan said.

Some months into his work, Guan made a mini-movie – On the Xining-Chengdu Railway, It is No Longer Cold – detailing his colleagues’ combat with the cold weather (-30.6 C at extremes) and the high altitude, which brings a lack of oxygen.

“Despite the cold wind which blows over the plateau, and the snow which falls at an early date, we have progressed well in accordance with our schedule,” he said.

Khamdrug Tso is a native of Lhamosi town in Luchu county and joined the CREC4 project team in July 2022 upon her graduation from Sichuan Vocational and Technical College.

Her dedication to her job in materials management has won her widespread praise from colleagues.

“My sincere thanks go to the CREC4 project department, which not only helps me master my skills, but also hands me 6,300 yuan (\$869) each month for my salary, helping improve my family’s income,” she said.

To express her thanks, she brought her friends of the Tibetan ethnic group to an evening party at the project department during the Dragon Boat Festival in 2023, performing traditional Tibetan dances for participants.

Wangchen Tso, a member of the Tibetan ethnic group who is divorced with three children and works as a cleaner for the CREC4 project department, found an anomaly on her kidney during a CREC4 medical examination for staff members.

After undergoing timely treatment at a hospital, Wangchen is now recuperating at home, and the managerial staffer from the CREC4 project department went to comfort her with gifts.

She said she was grateful to the CREC4 project department for her physical examination, which enabled her to have timely treatment, and her income from her job can help her and her three children live better lives.

In addition to building the railway, CREC4 employees help locals of the Tibetan ethnic group overall, said Xing Jiang, an office director from CREC4 Seventh Engineering.

Xing said they leased local machinery and equipment and improved the standardization of local machinery leasing; bought local foodstuffs, hardware and specialty products to enrich local incomes; hired

locals to help train engineering and technical personnel; set up shared bookstores and health checking posts to boost local culture; and planted more trees to help improve the local environment.

Chigyung Tashi is Party secretary of Lhamosi town and often pays visits to the CREC4 project department to help solve related problems.

It is expected that the Xining-Chengdu railway will extend for 183.47 kilometers in Gansu, including 69.65 km in Luchu, which will have three stations – Luchu, Tsecha and Lhamosi.

"With the new railway, our town will witness faster rural vitalization," he said, adding that the unit is doing a lot of work for them.

Xing said they are working harmoniously with local colleagues in their daily construction job and in their recreational activities.

One get-together for a drill with the local police and a joint signing ceremony for safety enhancement among the CREC4 staff members this year allowed those from various ethnic groups to develop warm memories, he said.

### **China opposes using Taiwan question as excuse to strengthen military deployment**

25 November 2024, Global Times, Yang Sheng and  
Liu Xuanzun

The Chinese foreign ministry on Monday expressed opposition to relevant countries using the Taiwan question as an excuse to strengthen military deployment and heighten tensions, as the US is reportedly going to deploy missile units on islands of Japan and the Philippines as part of "contingency plans for a possible future emergency involving Taiwan."

When asked to comment on a report by Japanese media on US plan to work with Japan on contingency plans for a possible future emergency involving Taiwan, including deploying missile units on islands of Japan and the Philippines, Mao Ning, a spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory, and the Taiwan question is China's internal affair.

"The key to upholding cross-Straits peace and stability is to remain committed to the one-China principle. China firmly opposes relevant countries using the Taiwan question as an excuse to strengthen military deployment in the region, heighten tensions and confrontation, and disturb regional peace and stability."

According to Kyodo News on Monday, quoting sources familiar with Japan-US relations, the US military will set up "temporary bases along Japan's southwestern Nansei island chain and the Philippines" to deploy missile units, and the

deployment will be "incorporated in the first joint operation plan for the US and Japan" to cope with a "contingency" involving the Chinese mainland and the island of Taiwan to be formulated in December.

Chinese observers said the deployment matter seems familiar - Japanese media disclose "explosive news" against China but neither Japanese nor US officials respond, which could be their "double act" to test China's reaction while exaggerating regional tensions.

Li Fei, a professor at the Taiwan Research Center at Xiamen University, told the Global Times that the US and its allies like Japan have always tried to test China's bottom-line on the Taiwan question by gradually strengthening their military deployments or military activities in the region, to encourage Taiwan separatists and hype tensions, and also set obstacles for China's reunification efforts. "This is just an old trick with no surprise, and China is prepared," Li said.

Due to the provocations by the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) authorities and the US in recent years, the Chinese military forces have conducted a series of military drills in recent years, and "the more they provoke, the more opportunities will be provided for the Chinese mainland to strengthen its military preparations to solve the problem," Li noted.

The US Marine Littoral Regiment, which possesses a multiple-launch High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), will be deployed along the island chain stretching from the Japanese prefectures of Kagoshima and Okinawa toward the island of Taiwan, according to the sources, Kyodo News reported.

The Japan Self-Defense Forces is expected to mainly engage in logistical support for the US marine unit, including supplying fuel and ammunition. The US Army will deploy the Multi-Domain Task Force's (MDTF) long-range fire units in the Philippines. The MDTF is designed to operate in a multi-domain environment, including air, land, water, space, cyber, and information, according to Kyodo News.

Known in short as HIMARS, the US-made High Mobility Artillery Rocket System has been a focus in media reports due to its deployment in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. It is characterized by its high mobility, high accuracy and long range, but is having lackluster performances recently because the Russians have found counters to it, Fu Qianshao, a Chinese military expert, told the Global Times on Monday.

One counter is drone reconnaissance, and once the HIMARS is spotted, the drone will summon fire strikes to destroy the HIMARS before it relocates, Fu said, noting that another counter is electronic interference. The Washington Post reported in May that many US-

made satellite-guided munitions including HIMARS failed to withstand Russian jamming technology. Fu further noted that if the HIMARS is to be deployed on Japanese islands, it will not have enough space like on the Russian-Ukraine battlefield.

Islands have complicated terrains and elevations, and it will not be as easy to become mobile. Another point is that islands have limited defense depths, which means that no matter how the HIMARS maneuvers, it cannot leave the area entirely, so once it is locked on by drones, it will very likely get attacked, Fu said. "On the other hand, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) forces can launch attacks from the vast depths on the mainland."

Also, the HIMARS is less capable than its Chinese counterparts, Fu noted. Even if the HIMARS to be deployed on the Japanese islands is equipped with the ATACMS tactical missile, the PLA's long-range rocket systems can still outrange it, Fu said.

According to the Kyodo report, the US Army will also deploy the Multi-Domain Task Force's long-range fire units in the Philippines.

Fu said the US' military deployment plan aims to blockade key channels for PLA vessels to enter the West Pacific, such as the Miyako Strait and the Bashi Channel. If these countries dare to launch attacks with weapons like HIMARS, the PLA will launch counterattacks, and their chances of survival will be very low.

The external forces must understand that interfering in the Taiwan question is a dead end, and their military deployment plan cannot change China's capability and determination over the Taiwan question, Fu said.

### **Tibetan Art Museum wins Supreme Award for Structural Engineering Excellence**

15 November 2024, The Engineer

An art museum constructed on the site of a 1960s concrete factory at an altitude of 3,800m has been awarded the 2024 Supreme Award for Structural Engineering Excellence.

The Institution of Structural Engineers (IStructE) awarded the accolade to Tongji Architectural Design (Group) Co., Ltd for their work on the Tibetan Art Museum in Lhasa, Tibet.

Located on the world's highest plateau, the Tibetan Art Museum sits in a remote and ecologically sensitive environment, which presented a number of unique challenges.

A key challenge of the project was upgrading the existing factory buildings, which had insufficient concrete strength, to meet modern seismic standards. Tongji's solutions included strategic strengthening, the installation of damping systems, and base isolation, all designed to work seamlessly with the original

structures. According to IStructE, this approach minimised the need for new construction, significantly reducing the environmental impact on the Tibetan Plateau.

Judged across four key pillars - Planet, People, Process, and Profession - IStructE said the Tibetan Art Museum stood out for its commitment to sustainability, minimal intervention, and seismic resilience. The judges praised the project as an 'inspiring example of transformative reuse and seismic strengthening in a challenging environment'.

In addition to the supreme award, 10 other projects were recognised for their contributions to structural engineering, showcasing excellence in areas including innovation, social impact, and sustainability. All winning projects demonstrated the integration of environmentally friendly solutions, with a particular focus on reducing embodied carbon in construction.

In a statement, Professor John Orr, chair of the judging panel and chartered member of the IStructE, said: "A massive congratulations to the Tongji team. Their work on the Tibetan Art Museum exemplifies the critical role that structural engineers play in shaping the future, with the ability to address complex social and environmental challenges. Their ingenuity and precision in seismic retrofitting are truly commendable.

"This year's awards also recognised a wealth of other inspiring projects, all characterised by their intelligent use of materials, circular design principles, and low-carbon construction. Our judging framework, focused on key attributes, highlights how structural engineers are driving innovation towards a safer, more sustainable built environment."

The winners were announced on November 8, 2024 during the awards ceremony in London. A full list of winners and project highlights can be found [here](#).

### **EU has 'conclusive' proof of armed drones for Russia being made in China: sources**

15 November 2024, SCMP, Finbarr Bermingham

The European Union has "conclusive" evidence that armed drones are being produced for the Russian military in China's western Xinjiang region and has demanded answers from Beijing, several diplomatic sources have confirmed.

EU foreign ministers will discuss the intelligence at a meeting in Brussels on Monday, with some of the bloc's 27 member states calling for serious consequences for what would be considered a major uptick in China's support for Russia's military.

While it is unclear at this stage whether this was approved by Beijing, several sources suggested that it would be difficult to conduct business of this nature without the go-ahead from the central government.

"We have had reports from intelligence sources on the existence of a factory inside China producing drones that are shipped to Russia, and used in the war in Ukraine, but we don't have more than that," said a senior EU official.

Multiple EU diplomats, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the evidence was "conclusive", "credible" and "convincing", and that there would need to be serious consequences for Beijing.

The senior EU official, however, said three points still needed to be firmly established before it decided on a course of action.

The first is to confirm the basic information in the intelligence, that the factory is producing drones for Russia. The second is whether those drones had been shipped yet. The third is "the level of knowledge of the Chinese authorities".

"It is difficult to believe that this is happening without the knowledge of the [Chinese] authorities - we are putting that question to them," the official said, adding that it had been raised with the Chinese ambassador to the EU.

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, China has maintained that it is neutral and not a party to the war. Several sources said the new evidence showed that Beijing was definitively on Moscow's side and could no longer claim neutrality in the conflict.

One senior diplomat said the findings would show that China has "always said that you want to be neutral - you are not neutral... you are feeding the beast".

The senior official would not be drawn on specific action the bloc might take in response, but pointed to recent history for examples of how it might move.

"If we finally confirm that there is a transfer of drones, that will have consequences - the same it had with Iran," said the senior EU official, referring to the bloc's sanctioning of Tehran for providing substantial military support to Moscow's war effort.

"We have taken action against all countries cooperating militarily with Russia, first with Belarus, then with Iran... and we are working on DPRK sanctions," they added, referring to North Korea's growing support for Moscow.

For the whole of the war's duration, the EU has urged China to condemn Russia's invasion and insisted that providing military support to Russia would be a "red line".

While there have long been concerns about China's provision to Russia of Western-sanctioned dual-use items - that is, those with both civilian and military uses - the direct supply of arms would take the support to a new level, sources said.

"Now we are apparently a different situation, in which the second part of the story could happen,"

the senior official said, referring to Beijing crossing the "red line"

The Europeans have raised the matter with Beijing and are ready to take decisive action to punish China if the response is not satisfactory, according to several sources. The senior EU official confirmed that it had reached out to the Chinese ambassador in Brussels and that there would be no deadline on talks, given the severity of the matter.

In September, a Reuters report citing European intelligence agencies found that IEMZ Kupol, a subsidiary of Russian state-owned arms company Almaz-Antey, developed and flight-tested a new drone model called Garpiya-3 (G3) in China with the help of local specialists.

In an update to the Russian defence ministry, the company said it could "produce drones at scale at a factory in China so the weapons could be deployed in the 'special military operation' in Ukraine", the term Moscow uses for the war, Reuters reported.

The development comes at a moment of severe strain in the EU-China relationship, with clashes on everything from geopolitics to trade.

While some have suggested that Donald Trump becoming US president again could usher in a period of relative calm in EU-China ties, as it did in 2017, Beijing's close relations with Moscow are likely to make that difficult.

Brussels could ramp up sanctions on Chinese firms over the matter, one diplomat said, while others speculated that it could resort to more serious actions, suggesting that it had a "full toolbox" of punitive measures to pick from.

Thus far, the EU has sanctioned a relatively small number of mainland China or Hong Kong-headquartered companies for allegedly funnelling goods made in Europe to Russian military buyers. These dual-use goods had been sanctioned by European authorities, therefore re-exporting them to Russia is banned under EU law.

The Chinese mission to the European Union did not respond immediately to a request for comment.

Last month, the United States imposed sanctions on two Chinese drone suppliers and their supposed Russian partners for collaborating on the production of Moscow's "Garpiya series" long-range drones.

"The Garpiya, designed and produced in the People's Republic of China in collaboration with Russian defence firms, has been used to destroy critical infrastructure and has resulted in mass casualties," the US State Department said.



## China's largest air show takes off with fighter jets, attack drones

12 November 2024, Index Journal, Michael Zhang

Fighter jets and attack drones took centre stage as China's largest air show officially opened on Tuesday, an opportunity for Beijing to showcase its growing military might to potential customers and rivals alike.

China has poured resources into modernising and expanding its aviation capabilities as it faces off against the United States and others around regional flashpoints like Taiwan.

Record numbers of Chinese warplanes have been sent around the self-ruled democratic island, which Beijing claims as its territory, over the past few years. The star of Airshow China, which showcases Beijing's civil and military aerospace sector every two years in the southern city of Zhuhai, is the new J-35A stealth fighter jet.

Video from state media showed the warplane rearing up into the air, engines roaring, before flipping upside down and speeding away as spectators on the ground excitedly cheered.

Its inclusion in the airshow suggests it is nearly ready to enter operation, which would make China the only country other than the United States to have two stealth fighters in action, experts said.

The J-35A is lighter than China's existing model, the J20, and looks more similar in design to a US F-35.

A group of J20s also performed a display flight on Tuesday morning, in a diamond formation across the sky. State news agency Xinhua quoted military expert Wang Mingzhi as saying the combination of the two models greatly enhances the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF)'s "ability to conduct offensive operations in high-threat and contested environments".

For the first time, a PLA naval jet will be present at the airshow, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

The J-15T's design suggests it may be intended for use on China's newest aircraft carrier, the Fujian.

Another key piece of hardware making its debut is the HQ-19 surface-to-air missile system, designed to intercept ballistic missiles and hypersonic glide vehicles, according to state media.

- Drone zone -

The airshow features a dedicated drone zone for the first time, reflecting their increased prominence in warzones, including Ukraine.

The SS-UAV – a massive mothership that can release swarms of smaller drones for intelligence gathering, as well as strikes – will be on display in Zhuhai, according to the South China Morning Post.

In October the United States unveiled sanctions targeting China-based companies linked to the

production of drones that Russia has deployed in Ukraine.

Moscow and Beijing have deepened military and defence ties since Russia's invasion of its neighbour three years ago, and the secretary of its Security Council, Sergei Shoigu, is due to visit Zhuhai.

Russia's Su-57, a stealth jet with a distinctive grey-and-white mosaic pattern, also took to the skies on Tuesday.

In another display, soldiers descended on ropes from helicopters.

This year the show's focus is squarely on the military sector, as it coincides with the 75th anniversary of the PLAAF, but China's burgeoning space industry will also be showcasing developments.

A model of a homegrown reusable space cargo shuttle will debut at the show, Xinhua reported on Monday. Named Haoloong, the shuttle is designed to be launched on a commercial rocket, and then dock with China's space station Tiangong.

"It can re-enter the atmosphere, fly and land horizontally at a designated airport, allowing for recovery and reuse," Xinhua said.

Beijing has poured huge resources into its space programme over the past decade in an effort to catch up to traditional space powers the United States and Russia.

## China's Advanced firing range and probable SIGINT facilities near in Shigatse( Tibet Autonomous Region)

10 November 2024, Resonant News, Dr Y Nithiyanandam

This report finds that a sophisticated PLA firing range near Shigatse is being used for high-altitude target practice and weapon calibration. Secondly, it finds evidence of probable SIGINT systems that can listen to a range of signals, including military and submarine communications, from vast distances.

Backstory

Have you ever wondered what an advanced firing range looks like? While media reports often mention the PLA conducting sophisticated drills "somewhere" in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), this report offers the first detailed glimpse, captured through satellite images, of such a site and its major components. It can show how the landscape has evolved chronologically.

But it's not just about the firing range. Are you curious about what kind of technology China might use for signal intelligence (SIGINT), navigation, or space situational awareness? In the second part of the report, we reveal two massive SIGINT facilities located near Shigatse along the Yarlung Tsang Po River.

This report focuses on a significant military site—likely

a firing range—and two SIGINT facilities situated just 200 km from the Doklam plateau, 150 km from India's border with Sikkim, and 30 km from the Shigatse dual-use airport. This location underscores China's intense military preparations, where a variety of air-to-ground and ground-to-ground weapons are tested and complex target simulations are carried out. The proximity of these sites to disputed areas, including Bhutan and India's Arunachal Pradesh, makes them critical points of interest, mainly as they sit directly along an aerial path over contested territories. The ongoing developments highlight the increasing operational readiness of the PLA forces and the expanding SIGINT infrastructure in this sensitive region.

#### Part I: The firing range

Firing ranges at high altitudes is essential for maintaining precision in weapon systems and calibrating older equipment, ensuring optimal performance in these unique environments. The thinner air impacts projectile trajectories, making calibration adjustments critical. Regular target practice helps recalibrate systems for use under reduced air resistance, which affects range and accuracy. For instance, the PLA's high-altitude drills in Tibet tested long-range artillery and rocket systems for precision in low-oxygen, cold conditions. Such drills improve accuracy and integrate new and old systems for combat readiness in plateau regions. In addition to ground artillery, air-to-ground firing is also crucial in high-altitude environments. The reduced air density can alter the trajectory of air-launched munitions, making it essential for air forces to adapt targeting systems and techniques to ensure accurate strikes. Air-to-ground training at high altitudes allows for better coordination between aircraft and ground forces, enhancing the overall effectiveness of operations. This type of training ensures that aircraft can accurately deliver munitions, even under challenging conditions, which is vital for maintaining control over strategic high-altitude regions.

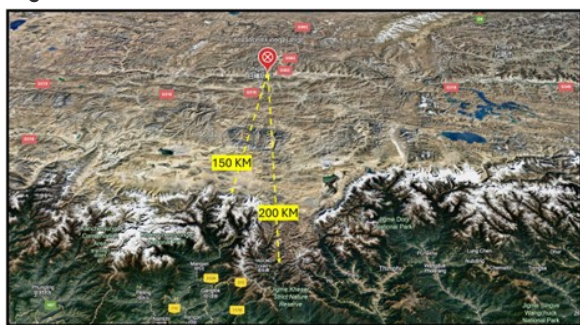


Figure 1 shows the location of the firing range and the distance from nearest LAC with India and Doklam plateau, respectively.

The firing range is situated at the coordinates 29°22'17"N 88°57'32" E in the flood plain of the

Yarlung Tsang Po River between the confluence of two streams. The site is positioned adjacent to Highway G349, which is only 400 metres north of the firing range, and near Highway G562, which is located 12 kilometres to the east. This range is probably used for air-to-ground target practice by fighter jets and drones operating from the Shigatse dual-purpose airport or artillery firing. Its strategic location at an altitude of 3850 meters (approximately 12,631 feet) serves to assess the accuracy of targeting at higher elevations.



Figure 2 depicts the satellite image of the site in 2015, prior to its transformation into a firing range. The image showcases natural features apart from a road.

Large dunes, dried-up streams, and muddy tracks were the area's defining features prior to 2016. However, from July to August 2016, the landscape underwent a first sign of transformation. The initial development was the construction of a small-scale runway, measuring 200 by 50 metres, made of concrete. Subsequently, an artificial water channel was established along the western perimeter of the site, initially serving as a barrier.



Figure 3 highlights the key features observed on the site between August 2016 and July 2017. The 2016 image shows limited features, whereas the 2017 image reveals the presence of actual target markings

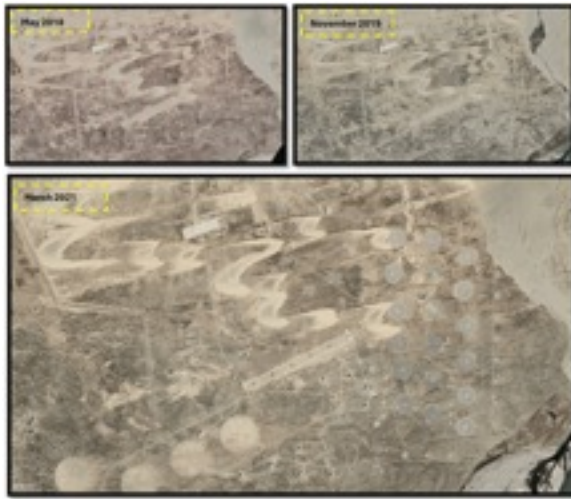


Figure 4 illustrates the rapid developments in the firing range following the Doklam Standoff, along with the phased advancements from 2018 to 2021.

While the initial sign of construction was mushrooming in the second half of 2016, the wide range of markings on the ground evolved rapidly after the Doklam Standoff. It was a 3.13 sq. km firing range during the Doklam stand-off, which expanded to 5 sq. km in 2021. The markings are probably used to calibrate and practice on different weapon systems, possibly for air-to-ground and ground-to-ground operations. The other parts of the range are well connected with the road network, mostly demarcated muddy tracks.

The target pin surfaces are smoothed using loose soil, possibly mined from the adjacent riverbed. Over the five years from 2016 to 2021, the firing range seems to have become a testing ground for various weapons used by the PLA in high-altitude operational environments.

Within the firing range

Let us now dive into the various target simulations and markings observed inside the firing range through the lens of satellite imagery.

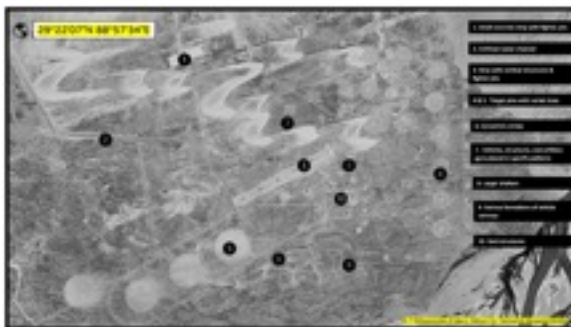


Figure 5 displays the monochrome image of firing range features labelled with numbers 1-10: 1. Small concrete strip with fighter jets; 2. Artificial water channel; 3. Strip with vertical structures in a uniform pattern and with fighter jets; 4 & 5. Target pins with varied sizes; 6. Concentric circles; 7. Vehicles, structures, and artillery guns placed in specific

patterns; 8. Large shelters; 9. Various formations of vehicle convoys; 10. Permanent structures.

#### 1. A concrete strip with fighter jets



Figure 6 of the concrete strips during different periods: 2021-2024. Read the image clockwise. The pictures of the top row are from before 2024, and the bottom row is from 2024. Numbers 1-4 show various arrangements of fighter jets, and a new extended strip is highlighted in the yellow box—images credits: Maxar, ESRI and Google earth.

Small concrete strips can be observed with fighter jets positioned in various places at different times, with the number of planes changing periodically. These planes, resembling the Su-30 series, appear to be decoys or old, non-functional models likely used for target practice and formation exercises. The strip is probably connected to a road network for moving the planes. Some images show destroyed planes, while others display new sets, indicating ongoing activities in the area. Despite the presence of fighter jets and other nearby assets, the strip is significantly smaller (200\*50 metres) than a typical runway required for take-off and landing, reinforcing the idea that the site is primarily used for target practice. An extension piece of the concrete strip will be developed in 2024, containing hardened kinds of simulated targets.

#### 2. Artificial water channel

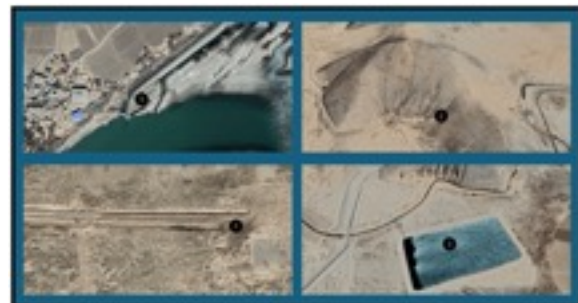


Figure 7 depicts an artificial water channel that carries water to the firing range from 35 km. The markings are explained as follows: 1. The diversion from the main Yarlung Tsan Po River; 2. The channel passes through the mountain via a tunnel; 3. The water is diverted and stored in an artificial pond; 4. The channel ends in the firing range—images Credits: Maxar & Google Earth.



A narrow channel, approximately 3 metres wide, flows into the firing range, where it ends abruptly. This channel originates from a place called Sequi, located roughly 35 Km to the east of the site. It carries freshwater diverted from the Yarlung Tsangpo River, providing an essential water supply to various villages and regions along its path.

This channel may offer a purer freshwater source than the water available in downstream areas. Along its route, the water is stored in numerous artificial reservoirs or ponds, which may serve purposes such as irrigation and domestic use for the communities it passes. The water primarily moves via natural gravity, travelling across the landscape and navigating through several barrages, confluences of larger rivers, and smaller streams. Remarkably, at one point, the channel even cuts through a mountain via a tunnel, showcasing significant engineering effort.

What is particularly puzzling is the rationale behind transporting this water over such long distances and through challenging terrain, which involves tunnelling through mountains, crossing dried riverbeds, and constructing bridges. Why the water is sourced from so far upstream, rather than utilising more accessible local water resources right next to the firing range through methods like pumping remains unclear. The reasoning behind this intricate water transport system is still a mystery, leaving questions about its intended purpose and the motivations behind its design unanswered.

### 3. levelled strip



Figure 8 depicts a levelled strip with vertical structures and decoy planes positioned for target practice. Images credits: Maxar, Google Earth and ESRI.

A levelled strip, measuring 1300 metres in length and 50 metres in width, is in the centre of the firing range. On one side of the strip, there is a section measuring 140 metres in length and 30 metres in width, where dummy aircraft were positioned. In 2018, two aircraft were placed in this area, pointed in a specific direction and good condition. However, satellite images from 2021 reveal that the aircraft has sustained damage. One appears to have been dislocated, with parts scattered along the direction of the hit. Subsequent photos show the aircraft becoming increasingly disoriented and displaced

over time, indicating that target practice has been conducted regularly.

Additionally, the strip is dotted with vertical structures arranged into five distinct clusters, each spaced approximately 200 metres apart. Each cluster contains five vertical pillars: two in the front row and three in the second row. The land around the clusters has been levelled and paved with concrete, and vehicles have occasionally been spotted next to the clusters. There are five clusters with 25 vertical pillars on this strip extending east to west. Meanwhile, another five clusters with 25 vertical pillars are evident in the linear structure from north to south. Below the strip are two more clusters, each with ten vertical pillars.

While the vertical pillars have remained intact over the years, the condition of the aircraft and their wreckage has varied, with vehicles appearing intermittently in the area.

### 4-6. Target pins of varied size



Figure 9 shows target pins of different sizes numbered as follows: 1. 50 m radius; 2. 100 m radius 3. 15 m radius with two concentric circles 4. 15-radius with three concentric circles, each with an interval of 5 m. Images credit: Maxar & Google Earth.

At the firing range, circular target markers of various sizes are observed. The site had a circle with a 100-meter radius and rectangular markings around it in November 2017. Initially, there were also four 50-meter radius circles and some concentric circles in the southeastern corner.

Post-Doklam, significant changes were noted. By 2021, the number of large circles increased to four, each with a 100-meter radius and distinctive (+) marking. Furthermore, 18 circles with a 50-meter radius and several smaller circles with a 15-meter radius, all marked centrally, were also present. In addition, six of the 15-meter radius circles included concentric rings at 5, 10, and 15 metres within them. This arrangement has been consistently maintained, with annual upkeep. Occasionally, the orientation of the markings is adjusted. Craters within the circles are subsequently filled as part of site redevelopment, indicating that regular target practice is conducted. These targets are not merely superficial but reinforced to endure sustained firepower. The circles with markings probably indicate air-to-ground targeting simulations and ground-to-ground calibration of weapons.

Most of the circular targets are concentrated on the eastern and southern sides of the range, with rivers bordering both ends of the area.

## 7. Array of structures

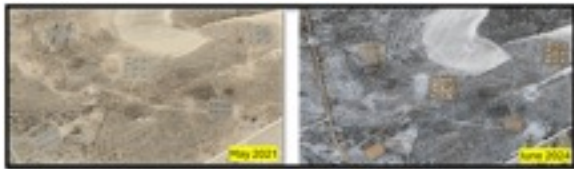


Figure 10 shows the array of structures placed in a linear network. The patches are connected to the artery of roads. The images of two different periods indicate the changes in the position of objects. Images credit: Maxar & Google Earth.

A network of roads that resemble arteries connects the various target patches set up in this area. There are over ten distinct patches, some situated near dunes, possibly providing protection. Each patch contains a group of structures spaced evenly apart, typically by 8 to 10 units. The number of structures in each patch varies, ranging from 8 to 10, and they are positioned in different orientations.

Some structures resemble individual houses, while others resemble probable artillery units. Notably, the number and arrangement of these structures are inconsistent across satellite imagery from different periods. These patches are located centrally within a firing range and may be used for various target practice simulations.

### 8-10. Mix of functional objects and decoys

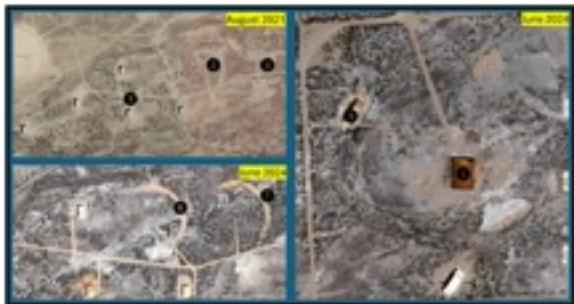


Figure 11 shows the imagery of vehicle decoys and structures placed in the southwest part of the firing range. The number 1 indicates individual target structures, 2&3 vehicles placed in various positions, and four, a concrete structure resembling a hangar. Images credit: Maxar & Google Earth.

The image highlights several large individual structures positioned at various points along the roads and road extensions. It also shows target simulations, including vehicle convoys arranged linearly. Notably, a significant structure marked as number 4 in the June 2024 image appears to be a large aircraft hangar, possibly constructed with durable materials and serving as a storage facility or a simulated target like a hangar.

The structures are identified as follows: number 1 refers to individual structures, numbers 2 and 3 represent individual vehicle convoys, while numbers 4 and 5 denote larger structures, potentially simulated targets or storage areas. Numbers 6 and 7

indicate recent changes in the convoys' positions and placement.

Comparing the August 2000 image with the June 2024 image reveals variations in the positions of these structures. Notably, some of these structures are active, not merely decoys. The vehicles and specific structures emit electronic signals, suggesting they are functioning units rather than static or inactive targets. This part of the firing range in the southwest section appears highly active, likely simulating scenarios that change periodically based on operational requirements.

### 11. Few other features

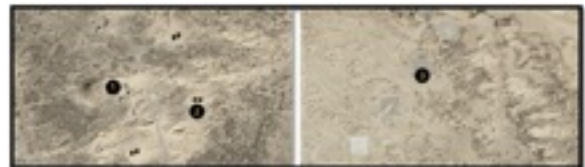


Figure 12 shows the 2021 satellite images of a few minor features, and the numbers indicate the following: 1. Mobile launcher 2. Pairs of radars, 3. Launchpads. Images credit: Google Earth.

In addition to the main features previously described, there are a few more minor, unmarked elements worth noting. Three pairs of radars are positioned adjacent, along with two pairs of mobile launchers, all within an area of approximately 1,000 square metres. The radars are spaced less than 10 metres apart, and the launchers are about 10 metres apart, suggesting they might serve as decoys rather than active operational units.

Four concrete pads are visible outside the firing range on the northwest side near a river junction. Despite having markers and roads connecting them, the purpose of these patches is unknown.

Scattered throughout the area are several destroyed structures, with damaged objects and simulated features related to air operations and ground infrastructure. These appear to be used as targets during training exercises.

### The monitoring station

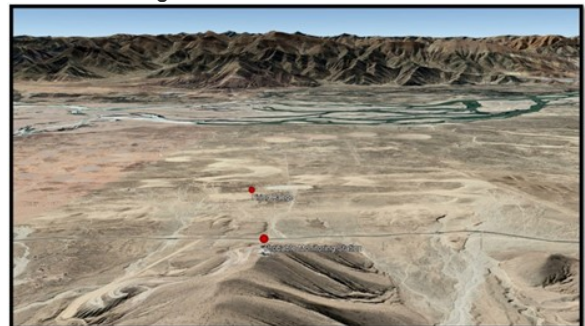


Figure 13 illustrates the 3D view of a potential monitoring station established to provide an aerial perspective of the range. Images credit: Maxar & Google Earth.



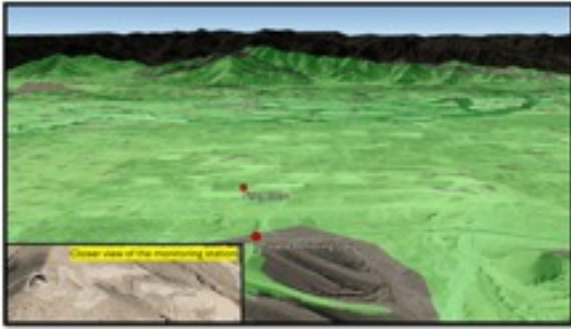


Figure 14 shows the 3D result of the view shed geospatial analysis carried out for the firing range and a closer look at the monitoring station. Images credit: ESRI, Maxar & Google Earth.

The Probable Monitoring Station is located at 4025 metres, right next to the highway and facing the centre of the firing range, which is at 3835 metres. This elevated position gives the station a clear view of the firing range.

View shed Geospatial analysis helps to determine the coverage area using 3D data, with the results displayed in green. The green areas represent the visible areas from the highest point. Considering the station's location, elevation, antennas, road construction, and existing facilities, this is likely a monitoring station for regular firing exercises.

Is this an active firing range?

While studying the developments in the firing area, a big question remains: When were these sites active in the past, and are they still functional today? We used techniques adopted in our previous studies based on remote sensing inference to find some answers. These findings reveal some interesting things, which are explained below.

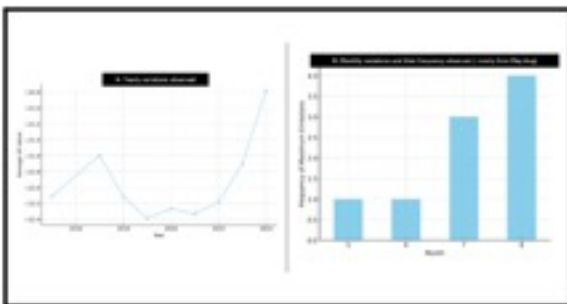


Figure 15 illustrates the potential activities conducted at the firing range. A shows the year-on-year changes, and B shows the frequency and season during which the firing range operations were most frequent.

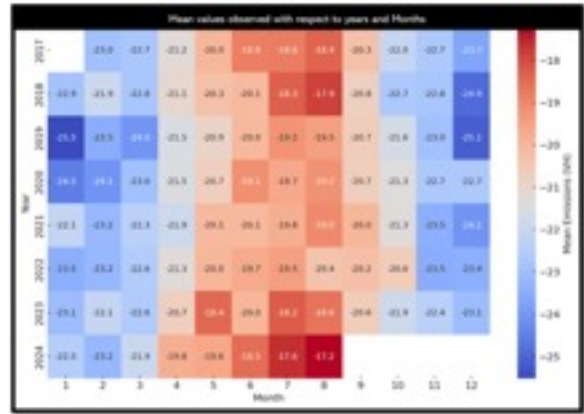


Figure 16 illustrates the highest signal emissions (interference) detected from space in various periods and months since 2017.

A space-based approach to monitor ground activity instead of relying on traditional SIGINT methods is used. This allowed us to observe changes throughout the year. In 2017, certain areas of the range were highly active, but from 2018 to 2021, the activity gradually decreased. From 2023, the activity began to increase again, sometimes holding steady until early 2024 before declining slightly. However, overall activity levels remained high. The range is most active from May to August, with August seeing the highest usage, followed by July. Over the years, operations have primarily occurred between May and August, with occasional activity extending into September. August is consistently the busiest month, although shifting patterns may reflect weather changes or other schedule factors.

It is important to note that the above analysis is based on observations of specific sections of the firing range. It relies on limited open-source satellite imagery, which may not fully or accurately reflect the actual extent of exercises conducted. Corroboration with additional intelligence sources is recommended for a more comprehensive and accurate interpretation.

Part II: Probable signal intelligence (SIGINT) facilities While exploring places around the firing range, we noticed some interesting structures. These might be advanced signal intelligence facilities with broader utilisation and military importance beyond the firing range.

Site A



Figure 17 shows a massive circular feature related to signal intelligence. Images credit: Maxar & Google Earth

The site is situated about 6 km west of the firing range and 38 km west of Shigatse Airport, at an elevation of 3,840 metres. Positioned along the banks of the Yarlung Tsangpo River, directly across from Shigatse City, the feature has an approximate radius of 180 metres and a circumference of around 1,134 metres.

The physical characteristics of site A without fingerprinting it are as follows:

#### Circle and Antenna Placement:

- First Inner Circle: The innermost circle, located 50 meters from the centre, is populated by 40 evenly spaced antennas around its circumference.
- Middle Circle: The middle circle, sitting 100 meters from the centre, acts as a boundary for the area between the inner and outermost circles.
- Last Outer Circle: The outermost circle, situated 170 meters from the centre, contains 40 antennas along its circumference, completing the outermost layer of the structure.

#### Radial Divisions:

The area between the centre point and the inner circle and between the inner and middle circles is divided into five segments by radial lines extending from the centre. These lines create distinct zones within these circles. Further, the image shows the structure divided into 16 equal segments by radial lines extending from the middle circle to the outer perimeter, creating additional distinct areas.

#### Central Elevated Structure:

At the centre of the feature is an elevated circular structure with a radius of 8 meters, constructed in 2018. This central feature stands out prominently within the design.

#### Site Development History:

- The site was initially a flat riverside area before construction began in June 2017. The first construction phase occurred in the middle of this space, where a small, circular, elevated structure was

built.

- By mid-2018, the land had been cleared and levelled, with the outer circle completed first. Following June 2018, more sections were marked out, and the full-fledged antenna system was rapidly developed.

- Throughout 2018, additional circular divisions were completed, and the antennas were systematically installed in their respective positions, forming the comprehensive structure seen in the image.

#### Inference:

The physical features seen were similar to those of SIGINT systems around the world, which suggests that this might be a circularly disposed antenna array (CDAA) system used for high-frequency direction finding (HFDF).

Criteria	Circularly Disposed Antenna Array (CDAA)	Observed Geometry in the Image
Concentric Circles	CDAA often have multiple concentric rings of antennas for signal reception from different directions.	The image shows at least two concentric circles with evenly spaced antennas.
Radial Symmetry	CDAA exhibit radial symmetry to allow equal signal coverage in all directions.	Radial symmetry is present, with lines dividing the circle into equal sectors.
Uniform Spacing	Antennas in CDAA are usually uniformly spaced around each concentric circle to ensure even signal distribution.	Antennas are evenly spaced along the rings in the observed structure.
Sector Division	Sectors created by radial lines in CDAA may correspond to specific signal directions or coverage areas.	The radial lines create sectors, potentially representing directional segments.
Design Complexity	CDAA can be very complex, with multiple rings and varying distances between antennas for precise signal capturing.	The observed structure appears more straightforward, with two main antenna rings and straight radial lines.

Table 1 Compares the observed geometry of typical CDAA (compiled from various sources of documents) and the object identified near the firing range.

The CDAA system, created during the Cold War, is a tool used to intercept and locate signals. The US military has widely used it to find signal sources worldwide. The Soviets also developed similar systems back then. The CDAA works best between 3 and 30 MHz using two circles that scan signals in all directions to find the best way to intercept transmissions. This system is more compact than large antenna farms, which need much space and must be moved around in different directions.

Many countries have used this system, and recent studies show that China is now using old World War II tools to find and listen to signals from various directions. One study, mentioned in a CSIS document, highlights China helps to build such a facility in Cuba to listen to military activities in the United States.

Since the HFDF system relies on skywave propagation through the ionosphere, it can intercept signals over vast distances, sometimes spanning continents.

In the meantime, another site connected to SIGINT has been identified and is referred to as Site-B.

#### Site B



Figure 18 shows a semi-circular feature related to signal intelligence. Images credit: Maxar & Google Earth.

A facility with a control centre in the middle and three semi-circular boundaries containing antennae is located between the firing range and the CDAA system. It is approximately 4 km from the firing range and 1.3 km from the CDAA system, at an elevation of 3800 m. The first construction phase began in early 2017, during which the control centre was being developed and the road connecting this site from the highway was laid out. The satellite image of May 2018 shows that construction was halfway completed, but it was expedited and finished by the end of 2018. The control centre is covered with high walls, indicating its importance. Communication dish antennas are also present.

#### Main Structure:

- A rectangular central building, likely housing control equipment, sits at the top of the image, surrounded by a perimeter fence with road access from the upper left.

#### Antennae Layout:

- Multiple antennae extend from the central structure in a radial pattern, forming clusters that create semi-circular patterns around the facility.

#### Semi-Circular Pattern:

The antennae are organised in semi-circles:

- Inner Semi-Circle: The first semi-circle closest to the building contains approximately nine evenly spaced antennae.
- Middle Semi-Circle: The second semi-circle contains approximately 18 antennae, extending further outward.
- Outer Semi-Circle: The final, outermost semi-circle contains around 33 antennae, making the rods longer and covering a wider area.

#### Orientation:

- The central structure is positioned at the top (North), with the antennae spreading in a fan-like formation toward the southern part of the installation (facing south).

#### Number of Antennae:

- The three semi-circles collectively contain approximately 60 antennae, with increasing length as they move outward.

#### Overall Layout:

- The radial pattern suggests the array is designed for focused data collection, possibly for military, astronomical, radio frequency monitoring, or scientific research purposes.

#### Inference:

Given the physical features of the antenna array, there are some possibilities that it could be a Very Low Frequency (VLF) system. VLF systems typically require extensive infrastructure to support highly long wavelengths (3–30 kHz), often consisting of tall masts or extensive wire arrays spread over vast areas. The semi-circular arrangement of this array, with clusters of approximately 9, 18, and 33 antennae in progressively larger arcs pointing towards one direction, suggests a design for signal directionality rather than omnidirectional VLF communication. Given the size of the system, this may be designed for 1 MHz – 1 kHz; however, it may vary.

The radial, organised pattern could be an adaptation to maintain precision in transmitting or receiving low-frequency signals. If this array were intended for VLF applications, the layout could represent a more modern or compact version, where multiple concentric rings of antennae help focus or distribute very low-frequency signals for specific tasks—primarily used for long-distance communication, particularly with submarines or applications requiring signals to penetrate through water or ground. Due to their low frequency, these signals are robust but limited in data capacity.

#### Notable developments in a nearby village



Figure 19 shows the developments in the village next to the critical SIG-INT facilities over the period. Images credit: Maxar, ESRI & Google Earth.

As we analyse the activities at the firing range and the SIG-INT facilities, it's crucial to consider the surrounding areas. Shigatse, a city with a significant military presence, was previously studied for infrastructure developments at Shigatse airport, Heliport developments, and changes in its urban area. This time, we will focus on Dalongda, the nearest village to the examined sites, located just above the firing range and signal intelligence facility.

Significant changes have occurred in this village over time. In 2018, a structure storage facility was constructed, and it has recently transformed into an entire military complex. This indicates ongoing developments and the establishment of supporting facilities in the vicinity.

Parting shot

While firing ranges are a standard component of military operations, their significance intensifies when the People's Liberation Army (PLA) conducts activities near the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with India. This highly militarised area has fighter jets, UAVs, helipads, and a robust military presence. Still, it is also aligned with critical locations like the Doklam Plateau and India's 'Chicken Neck' corridor. The proximity of such sensitive regions underscores the importance of these developments. Construction and militarisation activities, particularly since 2018, align with shifting geopolitical priorities. By 2021, much of the infrastructure was completed, with further refinements observed up to 2024, including the reconstruction of targets and the introduction of new shelters and decoys. Although some equipment, such as fighter jets, may not be fully functional, electronic intelligence systems indicate ongoing operational readiness. The precise positioning of radars, shelters, and convoy targets suggests evolving tactical strategies to replicate real-world combat scenarios. The type of weapon being used in the firing range is unclear. Typically, firing ranges have targets at a distance, so it's not clear whether air-to-ground or ground-to-air weapons are being used. However, it's possible that precision weapons are being tested using UAVs and that precise ground-to-ground weapons are being calibrated.

Meanwhile, the SIGINT infrastructures mapped in the report are vital for aviation, space situational awareness, air operations, and, most importantly, military signal intelligence. These systems intercept both high- and low-frequency signals, with the HFDF capturing signals bouncing off the ionosphere and the VLF systems monitoring ground-based propagation extending as far as the Bay of Bengal, tracking potential marine and naval activities. This facility is likely part of a more extensive, global network of similar installations designed to monitor intrusions and gather intelligence on military and civilian operations. Though the exact nature of its operations remains uncertain, the infrastructure appears fully operational and continually expands. Many might wonder why China would invest in these seemingly outdated signal intelligence systems, which most of the world has moved away from. However, recent developments, such as a 2024 CSIS report detailing China's construction of a similar facility in Cuba to monitor U.S. military activities, indicate this is part of China's broader strategy. This network of

installations reflects a deliberate investment in traditional signal interception, possibly augmenting modern technologies.

The proximity of this facility to critical areas near the LAC highlights its strategic importance. While geospatial data suggests it could serve as both a firing range and a signal intelligence hub, further intelligence corroboration is necessary for a complete understanding of its function. The fact that China continues to maintain and operate these facilities demonstrates their importance in modern intelligence operations, where the fusion of old and new systems provides comprehensive surveillance capabilities. The proximity to crucial military zones only adds to the significance of this installation in regional and global military dynamics.

These developments underscore the PLA's extensive preparations and highlight the need for effective countermeasures. Understanding the scale and nature of these exercises is crucial for assessing the PLA's military readiness and crafting appropriate responses. This facility's presence in such a geopolitically sensitive region reinforces its role as a key player in China's strategic intelligence operations, making it a significant factor in regional stability and global security.

#### **Exclusive: Chinese researchers develop AI model for military use on back of Meta's Llama**

01 November 2024, Reuters

Top Chinese research institutions linked to the People's Liberation Army have used Meta's publicly available Llama model to develop an AI tool for potential military applications, according to three academic papers and analysts.

In a June paper reviewed by Reuters, six Chinese researchers from three institutions, including two under the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) leading research body, the Academy of Military Science (AMS), detailed how they had used an early version of Meta's Llama as a base for what it calls "ChatBIT". The researchers used an earlier Llama 13B large language model (LLM) from Meta (META.O), opens new tab, incorporating their own parameters to construct a military-focused AI tool to gather and process intelligence, and offer accurate and reliable information for operational decision-making.

ChatBIT was fine-tuned and "optimised for dialogue and question-answering tasks in the military field", the paper said. It was found to outperform some other AI models that were roughly 90% as capable as OpenAI's powerful ChatGPT-4. The researchers didn't elaborate on how they defined performance or specify whether the AI model had been put into service.



"It's the first time there has been substantial evidence that PLA military experts in China have been systematically researching and trying to leverage the power of open-source LLMs, especially those of Meta, for military purposes," said Sunny Cheung, associate fellow at the Jamestown Foundation who specialises in China's emerging and dual use technologies, including AI., opens new tab

Meta has embraced the open release of many of its AI models, including Llama. It imposes restrictions on their use, including a requirement that services with more than 700 million users seek a license from the company.

Its terms also prohibit use of the models for "military, warfare, nuclear industries or applications, espionage" and other activities subject to U.S. defence export controls, as well as for the development of weapons and content intended to "incite and promote violence".

However, because Meta's models are public, the company has limited ways of enforcing those provisions.

In response to Reuters questions, Meta cited its acceptable use policy and said it took measures to prevent misuse.

"Any use of our models by the People's Liberation Army is unauthorized and contrary to our acceptable use policy," Molly Montgomery, Meta's director of public policy, told Reuters in a phone interview.

Meta added that the United States must embrace open innovation.

"In the global competition on AI, the alleged role of a single, and outdated, version of an American open-source model is irrelevant when we know China is already investing more than a trillion dollars to surpass the US on AI," a Meta spokesperson said in a statement.

## October

### China's leader has a new military secretary, state TV video of rocket force visit suggests

26 October 2024, SCMP, Sylvie Zhuang

Signs are that Fang Yongxiang, 58, seen by Xi Jinping's side on at least two military visits, is the new CMC general office director

Xi Jinping appears to have a new military secretary, going by state footage of the Chinese president's recent inspection visits to People's Liberation Army units.

Lieutenant General Fang Yongxiang, 58, was part of the group accompanying Xi during his visit to an unspecified brigade of the elite PLA Rocket Force last week.

Footage released by state broadcaster CCTV on Saturday showed Fang standing at arm's length as Xi talked to several top commanders at the base in the southeastern province of Anhui.

A close-up shot showed Fang, along with General Zhang Youxia, China's most senior uniformed military official, to be the only two generals next to Xi not wearing the rocket force uniform.

Fang was also seen by Xi's side in CCTV footage of his visit in April to the Army Medical University in the southwestern city of Chongqing.

That clip showed Fang standing next to He Weidong, the second-ranked vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), the body in charge of China's armed forces. Zhang is the first-ranked vice-chairman at the CMC, which is headed by Xi.

Fang is also an alternate member of the Communist Party's Central Committee, the country's top policymaking body.

Xi is generally accompanied on troop visits by his military secretary – the director of the CMC's general office, which oversees the commission's day-to-day operations.

Fang's inclusion in Xi's visit entourage suggests he is now CMC general office chief.

Personnel changes in the Chinese military are generally not officially announced and are only publicly confirmed much later than the actual appointments.

The role of military secretary was previously held by Zhong Shaojun, according to state media reports. CCTV footage of a military meeting in August showed Zhong seated with an armband bearing the logo of the National Defence University, the top PLA academy.

According to state news agency Xinhua, Fang was appointed a member of the PLA's election committee last month and will lead voting work for the entire military.

Fang is a native of Xiamen in Fujian, the southeastern province where Xi rose through the ranks in the 1980s and 90s.

Fang's military career started in 1989 after he graduated from the PLA's Army Infantry Academy. His career in Fujian overlapped Xi's time there by more than a decade.

Xi was appointed Xiamen's deputy mayor in 1985 and served as provincial governor from 1999 to 2002.

Fang started as a platoon leader and a company commander at the 31st Group Army, a division under the PLA's Eastern Theatre Command, which oversees the Taiwan Strait and the East China Sea.

He progressed through various leadership roles to become the 31st Group's political director and then a member of its core leadership standing committee in 2014.



He also led political and party work at the Eastern Theatre Command from 2015 to 2017, before being named Communist Party chief of the 81st Group Army Unit. The unit is a division under the PLA's Central Theatre Command headquartered in Beijing that protects the capital and supports the other four theatre commands.

In 2018, he was promoted to vice-minister at the newly set up Ministry for Veterans Affairs, a post he held until 2022.

In July that year Fang called on all veterans to oppose "the use of extreme moves to petition, and the staging of mass gatherings".

His comments at the ministry's first ever press conference came after several large-scale rallies by former servicemen and women seeking better retirement benefits. The ministry was established to better handle welfare for China's 57 million former armed forces personnel.

In 2022, Fang was made political commissar of the Southern Theatre Command, which covers key regions including the resource-rich and disputed South China Sea.

### **Xi Jinping Inspects Rocket Force Unit, Emphasizes Combat Readiness and Party Leadership**

24 October 2024, China Scope

Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, inspected a Rocket Force unit on the 17th, emphasizing the need to strengthen crisis awareness and combat readiness.

During his visit to a Rocket Force brigade in Hefei, Xi observed weapons equipment demonstrations and troop training exercises. In his remarks, Xi stressed maintaining absolute Party leadership over the military and ensuring troops follow orders from the Party Central Committee and Central Military Commission.

He also emphasized strengthening grass-roots Party organizations, investigating and dealing with corruption issues, enhancing combat preparedness and operational capabilities, and adapting to modern warfare changes by focusing on new equipment, skills, and tactics.

The visit came shortly after China's "Joint Sword-2024B" military exercises near Taiwan on the 14th, and following Xi's inspection of Dongshan Island in Fujian province, a location with historical military significance in cross-strait relations. Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission Zhang Youxia accompanied the inspection. The timing of these visits – to Dongshan Island and then the Rocket Force – appears significant given recent military activities in the region.

### **Border town in Xizang sees rapid growth in cross-border trade, tourism under favorable national policies**

06 October 2024, Bastille Post

Benefiting from various favorable national policies, Gyirong, a charming Chinese town nestling in an area bordering Nepal, has witnessed rapid growth in cross-border trade and tourism, boosting local residents' income.

It is about 820 km west of Lhasa, capital of southwest China's Xizang Autonomous Region, and lies about 131 km from the Nepalese capital Kathmandu.

The Himalayas have cut open five north-south rift valleys in Xigaze under Xizang. The valley where Gyirong is located is the westernmost and longest of them all, stretching approximately 93 km.

The valley has served as a crucial transportation route between the hinterland of the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau and South Asia. Historically, it has functioned as a combination of an "official road" and a "commercial road."

In addition to its long history, the small town has undergone significant changes in the new era. Today, a land port has been built on the ancient commercial site.

In 1961, Gyirong port attained approval for opening. It was declared a second-class land port in 1972 and was upgraded to a national first-class land port in 1987. Thanks to the Belt and Road Initiative, the volume of border trade at the Gyirong port has steadily grown. In 2017, the port was designated as an international port, thereby allowing access to individuals from third countries besides China and Nepal.

During the week-long National Day holiday which started on Tuesday, the inbound and outbound passengers at the Gyirong port have significantly increased, with a noticeable rise in cross-border trade among border residents.

Dawa Phuntsog, who has been working at the Gyirong port for eight years, has noticed a significant surge in workload over the past two years. "One aspect is that the volume of business has increased, and the other is that the personnel structure has become more diverse. Previously, it was only the border residents, and travelers from Nepal and other regions of China. After becoming an international port, there are more people from third countries besides China and Nepal. In terms of trade volume, there used to be mainly general merchandise. However, recently, with the export of new energy vehicles, highland drinking water, and some agricultural and sideline products, I think the variety has become more diverse," he said.

After graduating from her university, Nangsa chose to return to her hometown. She started by promoting

her hometown through short videos on social platforms and then progressed to selling Nepalese products. As the pioneer of livestreaming e-commerce in Gyirong, she has transitioned the fervor of Sino-Nepalese border trade from offline to online. The source of income for villagers is becoming increasingly diversified.

Nangsa said that Xizang is a microcosm of China's achievements in construction and development, as well as a comprehensive window of Chinese modernization.

"Look at the development in Gyirong now, it's a microcosm of the country's opening up. I believe all of this signifies a more open, confident, and inclusive China," she said.

From January to August this year, the total import and export value in Xizang exceeded 7 billion yuan (about 1 billion U.S. dollars), with the Gyirong port surpassing 2.5 billion yuan (about 0.36 billion U.S. dollars).

## September

### China confirms 'successful' intercontinental ballistic missile test

25 September 2024, RFA

Beijing says its first ICBM test in decades was routine and not aimed at any country.

The Chinese military said that it successfully launched an intercontinental ballistic missile, or ICBM, into the Pacific Ocean on Wednesday, its first such test in more than 40 years.

ICBMs are primarily designed to carry nuclear warheads, and China's latest generation ICBM – Dongfeng-41 (DF-41) – has an operational range of between 12,000 kilometers and 15,000 kilometers (7,500- 9,300 miles), which means it can reach the U.S. mainland.

China's defense ministry said in a statement that the People's Liberation Army Rocket Force successfully launched an ICBM carrying a training simulated warhead into the high seas of the Pacific Ocean early on Wednesday.

#### China tests intercontinental ballistic missile

China fired an intercontinental ballistic missile into the Pacific Ocean.



"It accurately landed in the designated sea area," the ministry said.

It was not clear what type of ICBM was tested.

The ministry said that the launch was a routine arrangement of the force's annual military training, "in line with international law and international practice, and is not aimed at any specific country or target."

China's first publicly known ICBM test launch was in May 1980 when it fired at least two missiles into the South Pacific as a gesture of deterrence to the Soviet Union but since then the PLA has not announced any further test.

In its 2023 China Military Power report, the Pentagon said that China had completed construction on at least 300 ICBM silos in 2022. It also said that as of May 2023, it had more than 500 operational nuclear warheads, and that number would likely grow to more than 1,000 by 2030.

The intercontinental missile test sends a strong signal to the world that China is determined to build up its nuclear capabilities, analysts said.

"A significant factor is to respond to growing international skepticism about the internal stability and combat readiness of China's Rocket Force," said Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Senior Fellow Zhao Tong, adding that in recent years, international public opinion has focused on issues of corruption within the Rocket Force, equipment quality problems, and leadership changes.

Some U.S. officials even argue that, given those issues, the Chinese military is unlikely to conduct large-scale military operations in the foreseeable future, Zhao said.

"For China's political leaders, such international doubts have a highly negative impact on the perception of China's military power. Chinese leaders are very concerned that Western skepticism about China's military capabilities might lead to more aggressive containment or suppression policies, or even proactive military provocations from Western nations."

#### 'New era of nuclear competition'

China's Xinhua News Agency said relevant countries had been notified about Wednesday's test launch in advance but it did not elaborate.

Taiwan's ministry of national defense said it had recorded "intensive" Chinese missile firing activities but did not provide further details.

This month, China's neighbor North Korea has also conducted several short-range ballistic missiles.

Meanwhile, Beijing has protested against the deployment of U.S. Mid-Range Capability missile system Typhon in the Philippines since April, saying it undermined peace and stability in the region.

With the ICBM test, China is sending the signal that it is going to continue to build up its global nuclear capabilities, said Richard Fisher, a senior researcher who specializes in Asian military affairs at the International Assessment and Strategy Center, a U.S. think tank.

"China's ICBM test is another reminder that the world is moving into a new era of nuclear weapon competition, and in order to deter China and Russia, it is necessary – vitally necessary – for the United States to increase its nuclear arsenal," he told Radio Free Asia.

Wang Weizheng, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Adelphi University, said the missile launch was China's way of expressing dissatisfaction with recent developments in the Indo-Pacific.

"With President Biden announcing that he will not seek re-election and having only about three months left in his term, Xi Jinping seems intent on delivering a stern message to the U.S. before a new president is elected," the political science professor told RFA,

"Xi wants the U.S. to recognize the reality that China's strategic weapons capabilities are no longer what they once were."

### **China builds laser communication ground station for massive satellite data transmission**

16 September 2024, Global Times

A laser communication ground system with a 500mm-caliber antenna was successfully deployed Sunday on the Pamir Plateau in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, which is expected to significantly enhance the country's capacity for massive satellite data transmission.

The system, developed by the Aerospace Information Research Institute (AIR) of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, marks the end of relying solely on microwave ground stations for satellite data reception.

With the rapid advancements in China's aerospace technology, the volume of data generated by satellite detection is growing exponentially. The current inability to transmit this massive amount of data promptly has become a significant problem, limiting the efficient utilization of China's space resources, said Li Yalin, a senior engineer of AIR.

Satellite-to-ground laser communications have abundant spectrum resources and a wider bandwidth, about ten times to nearly a thousand times wider than that of microwave communications. Additionally, this equipment is lighter, the system size is smaller, and it has lower power consumption. Li said it can address the growing demand for efficient and reliable transmission of information gathered by satellites.

However, weather conditions and atmospheric

turbulence significantly affect the performance and availability of space-to-ground laser communications. Therefore, selecting an appropriate site can greatly mitigate the impact of complex and unstable atmospheric conditions.

The atmospheric conditions in the Mount Muztagata region on the Pamir Plateau are excellent, with high visibility and a dry and low rainfall climate, allowing for year-round space-to-ground laser communication operations, said Wang Jianping, another senior engineer of AIR and chief of the remote-sensing satellite ground station in Kashgar.

Facilities were constructed at 4,800 meters and 3,300 meters above the sea level, and the system will be operated remotely.

"Our team traveled about 300,000 kilometers on the Pamir Plateau to select the site of the station, and we faced tremendous difficulties," said Wang. Recently, the project team successfully completed the first operational trial of daytime space-ground laser communications.

Huang Peng, a researcher with AIR and director of China Remote Sensing Satellite Ground Station, said the normalized operation of the newly built station will provide valuable engineering experience in satellite-ground laser communications, laying a solid foundation for planning China's next-generation massive satellite data transmission system.

AIR is planning and evaluating the feasibility of a laser communication ground station network to overcome the adverse weather conditions and improve the reliability of laser communications, according to Huang.

### **China mulls national military training for children, college students**

13 September 2024, RFA

The ruling Chinese Communist Party wants to cultivate the next generation of recruits to prepare for war.



Kindergarten children in military uniforms hold toy guns at a park in Dongyang city, Zhejiang province, China, Oct. 25, 2013.

China's National People's Congress is considering amendments to the law that would expand compulsory military training at universities and 'national defense education' in high schools.

Under the amendments, branches of the People's Liberation Army will be stationed in colleges, universities and high schools across the country to boost a nationwide program of approved military education and physical training to prepare young people for recruitment, state news agency Xinhua reported on Sept. 10.

"The second draft of the revised bill clarifies that ordinary colleges, universities and high schools should strengthen military skills training, hone students' willpower, enhance organizational discipline, and improve the level of military training," the agency said in a summary of the amendments.

China has long had a culture of military training in schools and universities, with military-style boot-camps for kids on vacation and 'defense education bases' catering to corporations and tour groups. The authorities in Hong Kong have also imposed such training on former young protesters, alongside "patriotic education."

People's Armed Forces departments already exist at every level of government, in schools, universities and state-owned enterprises to strengthen ruling Chinese Communist Party, or CCP, control over local militias, guard weapons caches and find work for veterans.

After decades of relative invisibility throughout the post-Mao economic boom, they are once more mobilizing to build militias in big state-owned companies and consolidate party leadership over local military operations.

But analysts say the amendments, if adopted, will standardize these activities under guidelines laid down by the CCP's military arm, in a bid to create more potential recruits as part of preparations for war. While Chinese citizens have an obligation to serve in the People's Liberation Army on paper, this hasn't been implemented since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

#### 'Glorious' military service

Under the planned amendments, high schools will also be obliged to teach children about military service, and create an atmosphere in which military service is seen as "glorious," Xinhua said.

Primary and junior high schools are included in the plan, which calls on them to "combine classroom teaching with extracurricular activities," according to the China News Service.

"Students in colleges and high schools are required to offer compulsory basic military training, while junior high schools may also organize such activities," the report said.

According to a report in the Legal Daily newspaper, the amendments aim to build a nationwide program of military training that connects schools at all levels and of all types.

They also guarantee funding for these activities, which will include military camps and "national defense education bases," the paper said.

"They want students to know about national defense, an awareness of who the enemy is, at a much younger age," Shan-Son Kung, an associate researcher at Taiwan's Institute for National Defense and Security Research, told RFA Mandarin in a recent interview.

"[They also] want kids to get basic military training, which is being extended lower down the system, so as to universalize basic military knowledge," he said. "The aim is to step up preparations for a future war, so that there will be more conscripts available following the passing of the Mobilization Law."

The National Defense Mobilization Law of the People's Republic of China took effect on July 1, 2010, with the aim of setting up a nationwide structure for national defense mobilization.

Currently, the Chinese military mostly relies on recruitment, and most of the standing army are professional soldiers, Kung said.

"In the next few years, we could see growing tensions between China and the United States, and China may look to strengthen its economic and military mobilization as well as the frequency and scope of exercises sooner rather than later," Kung said. "They may be making advance preparations for a large-scale war."

#### 'Educational brainwashing'

China already requires graduates in fluid mechanics, machinery, chemistry, missile technology, radar, science and engineering, weapons science and other technical disciplines to join the People's Liberation Army.

Taiwan-based Chinese dissident Gong Yujian said the Chinese Communist Party is aware that it may face great difficulty in recruiting young people to the military, given the shrinking of that age group due to the one-child policy, so it's stepping up pro-military propaganda while they're still young.

"They need to cultivate high school students to be loyal to the party and patriotic, and worship the People's Liberation Army," Gong said. "It's educational brainwashing."

"That way, they can join up after graduation and boost the People's Liberation Army's recruitment figures," he said.

Gong said he still has memories of some military training exercises from when he was in high school.

"When we were in school, we had seven days' military training, but it was just a formality," he said.

"The local armed police force sent soldiers to our

school to teach the students how to march, and how to fold a blanket."

"But we didn't even so much as touch a firearm," he said.

### **Construction begins on 1.1 GW solar project in Tibet**

11 September 2024, PV Magazine, Patrick Jowett

JA Solar has supplied its n-type DeepBlue 4.0 Pro modules for a 1.1 GW solar installation in Tibet. The project is believed to be the world's largest combined animal husbandry facility and solar array now under construction.

Construction has begun on a 1.1 GW solar project in Tibet, China.

The project includes two sites combining animal husbandry and solar power, located in Angduo Township, Mangkang County, and Gongjue Township, Latuo County, in eastern Tibet. China Huadian Corp. is funding the project.

Once operational, the sites will work in conjunction with hydropower stations along the upper reaches of the Jinsha River. A JA Solar spokesperson told pv magazine that the project will generate 6.518 billion kWh of electricity per year.

"It will effectively maintain soil and water, increase land green coverage, improve the local ecological environment and promote animal husbandry, achieving a coordinated development of economic growth and environmental protection," added the spokesperson.

The projects are among the first to integrate wind, solar, hydropower and energy storage in the region. The installation in Angduo Township is also believed to be the largest animal husbandry and complementary solar project under construction in the world.

JA Solar supplied its n-type DeepBlue 4.0 Pro solar modules for the project. The company said the modules have passed tests for IEC standards, thresher, salt mist corrosion, ammonia corrosion, dust and sand, non-uniform snow load, and wind tunnel conditions. They were also demonstrated outdoors in Mohe, Heilongjiang province – one of China's coldest regions.

The company's DeepBlue 4.0 Pro modules were previously used in a 200 MW project in Chamdo, Tibet, which was connected to the grid in November 2023. In March of this year, the module received the highest + Rating Certificate in the Frontrunner Plus Cold Climate Field Test from the China General Certification Center.

Earlier this year, the Chinese authorities switched on 50 MW of solar, paired with 40 MWh of battery storage, in southeastern Tibet.

### **Exclusive: US expected to send senior Pentagon official to China military forum**

04 September 2024, Reuters, Idrees Ali and Laurie Chen

The United States is set to send Michael Chase, the deputy assistant secretary of defence for China, Taiwan and Mongolia, to China's top annual security forum in mid-September, a U.S. official told Reuters.

The choice of Chase has not been previously reported. He is more senior than the U.S. official who attended the Xiangshan Forum last year, but his rank is in line with historical norms for the Pentagon.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for China Chad Sbragia attended the forum in 2019.

There is some hope that this could signal deeper working-level engagement with China amid regional disputes. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Chase's expected attendance was not unprecedented, but sent a message that the United States prioritises engagement at the military level with China even at a time of heightened tensions.

More than 90 countries and international organisations plan to send delegations to the Sept. 12-14 forum in Beijing, Chinese state media reported Wednesday.

Washington sent Xanthi Carras, China country director in the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense, when the forum resumed last year after a three-year hiatus due to the pandemic. It was a sign of thawing military ties; however Carras' title is of a lower rank than Chase or Sbragia.

Chase co-chaired U.S.-China military talks in Washington in January – the first such working-level talks since 2022, when most bilateral military engagement was suspended after then-U.S. Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan.

Taiwan and the South China Sea remain contentious flashpoints in the U.S.-China relationship, with both sides unwilling to compromise on "core issues". U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said no new agreements had been reached on the South China Sea during a visit to China last week.

China has repeatedly criticised U.S. deployments in the Asia-Pacific region, including the placement of long-range missiles in the Philippines, as well as U.S. arms sales to democratically governed Taiwan, which China considers its own territory, over the strenuous objections of Taipei.

Meanwhile the U.S. has raised concerns over China's "aggressive" actions in the South China Sea, its frequent military manoeuvres in the air and waters surrounding Taiwan, and what it says is the opacity of China's nuclear buildup.

Official nuclear talks were halted by Beijing in July in protest over U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. But both sides



have agreed that U.S. Indo-Pacific Command leaders would soon speak by phone to their counterparts in China's southern theatre command, which covers its southern seas.

## August

### Chinese military's new focus: Winning wars against "strong enemies, opponents"

24 August 2024, Hindustan Times

Beijing, From its decades-old doctrine of winning local wars, China's military is shifting its focus to winning wars against "strong enemies and opponents," a top defence official has said, amidst the mounting challenges Beijing faces on multiple fronts, including from the US. President Xi Jinping has also directed the People's Liberation Army to improve its strategic ability to defend the country's sovereignty and development interests. Celebrating the 120th anniversary of Deng Xiaoping, widely hailed as the paramount leader and the architect of modern China who rebuilt the country after the disastrous Mao Zedong era, Xi not only praised his outstanding contributions to the ruling Communist Party of China, the country and the world but also highlighted his emphasis to build a modern military. "The best way to honour Deng is to continue advancing the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics that he initiated," Xi, said in his address to a meeting held to mark Deng's birth anniversary.

He also recalled that Deng had highlighted the need to build the PLA into a strong, modernised and well-organised force, and to have fewer but better troops. Xi, also the Commander-in-Chief of the PLA, on Thursday told the military to improve its "strategic ability to defend national sovereignty, security and development interests," the Hong Kong-based South China Post reported.

Significantly, at a PLA commemoration, Miao Hua, a member of the Central Military Commission, the military's top decision-making body headed by Xi, said: "In the new journey, we should ... focus on strengthening capabilities to defeat strong enemies and opponents."

Earlier on Wednesday, an article in the official PLA Daily said Deng had made the strategic judgment that "world wars can be postponed or avoided" in the 1980s, but China now faced "great changes unseen in a century."

"We must ... always maintain strategic clarity on the possible risks of war, make full preparations for

military struggle, effectively deter war and resolutely win the war."

The latest directive to the PLA to win wars against "strong enemies and opponents" is regarded as a major course correction for the Chinese military considering the mounting challenges China faces on multiple fronts.

Until recently, the CPC's directive to the PLA was to develop the ability to win local wars considering China's long-festering border dispute with India besides maritime disputes involving the disputed South China Sea and East China Sea with Japan.



China's relations with Taiwan, which Beijing claims is part of its own, have also worsened in recent times. China claims most of the South China Sea while the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan counter its claim.

As recently as in 2022, in his speech at the Party congress, Xi had set "victory in local wars" as a goal and told the PLA to "improve training and preparation for war in all aspects and improve the ability of the army to fight and win."

"We will strengthen the normal and diversified use of military forces, carry out military struggles with determination and flexibility, shape the security posture, contain crises and conflicts, and win local wars," he said then.

Analysts said the strategic shift from winning local wars to defeating "strong enemies and opponents" was in line with Beijing's thinking about the risks it faces and its increasing focus on security, particularly in the face of the growing rivalry between China and the United States on multiple fronts.

## The Middle Of Nowhere: Introducing China's 5 Most Remote Airports

21 August 2024, Simple Flying

China is the third-largest country in the world by area, following only Russia and Canada. With its vast expanse and diverse terrain, China is home to some of the most remote and isolated regions on Earth. From the towering peaks of the Himalayas to the barren Gobi Desert and the distant islands of the South China Sea, these far-flung corners present unique challenges for connectivity and transportation. Yet, within these remote areas lie vital lifelines: airports that serve as the only gateways to the outside world.

In a country as vast, geographically diverse, and sparsely populated as China, these remote airports play a crucial role in connecting people and places. They provide essential access to economic opportunities, medical services, and cultural exchange, often bridging the gap between isolation and integration.

This article explores five of China's most remote civilian airports, each situated in some of the most desolate and rugged terrain imaginable. From the frozen plateaus of Tibet to the distant islands of the South China Sea, these airports are more than just transportation hubs—they are symbols of human resilience and the relentless drive to connect even the most distant parts of the world.



*Illustrated by Su Wu / Map: Ministry of Natural Resources of the People's Republic of China*

Haixi Huatugou Airport (HTT)

The airport in the Hoh Xil (Kekexili) region

Haixi Huatugou Airport (HTT) is located at the border between Qinghai Province and the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in China, in the northern part of the famous Hoh Xil (Kekexili) region. Administratively, the airport belongs to Haixi Mongolian and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai Province. Situated at an elevation of 2,906 meters, Haixi Huatugou is a high-altitude airport and is classified as a 4C-grade domestic regional airport. Construction of Haixi Huatugou Airport began in 2012, and three years later, on June 26, 2015, the airport officially commenced operations. The airport is positioned in the northernmost part of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. The surrounding area, particularly Mangya City, is known as an oil town, thanks to the discovery of petroleum in the 1950s. Haixi Huatugou Airport does not have a railway connection, and the nearest major cities are reachable only by long road trips. The airport is situated on a key transportation route between Qinghai Province and Xinjiang.

According to the Baidu Navigation, it takes about 15 hours (1,300 kilometers) by road to reach Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang, 19 hours (1,700 kilometers) to reach Kashgar, and 14 hours (1,250 kilometers) to reach Xining, the capital of Qinghai Province.

Currently, China Eastern Airlines is the sole carrier operating at Haixi Huatugou Airport, offering three direct routes to different destinations. These include flights to Xining, with four flights per week; to Dunhuang, also with four flights per week; and to Delingha, with three flights per week. All routes are served by Airbus A319 aircraft.

Yushu Batang Airport (YUS)

An airport on the edge of the Tibetan Plateau  
Yushu Batang Airport (YUS) is located at the intersection of Qinghai Province, Tibet Autonomous Region, and Sichuan Province, in the northeastern part of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. With an elevation of 3,950 meters, it is classified as a high-altitude airport and ranks as the seventh-highest airport in the world. The airport is a 4C-grade domestic regional airport.

In 2007, China approved the construction of Yushu's civil airport, and work commenced the same year. On August 1, 2009, Yushu Batang Airport officially opened, with its inaugural flight operated by China Eastern Airlines on the Xi'an-Xining-Yushu route using an Airbus A319 aircraft.

Just over eight months after the airport's opening, a 7.1-magnitude earthquake struck Yushu on April 14, 2010, severing road connections and leaving Yushu Batang Airport as the only viable route for disaster relief. In the 24 days following the earthquake, the airport facilitated 490 rescue flights, transported 17,051 rescue personnel, delivered 2,174.86 tons of

relief materials, and evacuated 2,133 injured individuals. Yushu Airport is situated in a river valley in the southern part of Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai Province. The airport lacks railway connections, and the nearest major cities are far from easy reach by road. The airport is located roughly midway between Xining, the capital of Qinghai Province, and Lhasa, the capital of Tibet Autonomous Region. By road, it takes about 11 hours (810 kilometers) to reach Xining and 19 hours (1,000 kilometers) to reach Lhasa.

Currently, three airlines operate regular passenger routes at Yushu Batang Airport. Tibet Airlines offers two daily flights to Xining; China Eastern Airlines operates one daily flight to Xining and one to Chengdu; and Capital Airlines provides two daily flights to Xining. All three airlines use Airbus A319 aircraft on these routes.

#### Qamdo Bangda Airport (BPX)

World's 2nd highest airport in Hengduan Mountains  
Qamdo Bangda Airport (BPX) is nestled among the eastern mountains of China's Tibet Autonomous Region, at an elevation of 4,334 meters. This high-altitude airport is the second-highest airport in the world and is classified as a 4C-grade military-civilian dual-use regional airport. Qamdo Bangda Airport's runway length is 5 kilometers, which is also the longest civil airport in China.

The construction of Qamdo Airport was approved in 1969 during the Cultural Revolution, but it wasn't until nearly a decade later, in 1978, that Qamdo Bangda Airport was completed and became operational. The construction process was arduous, claiming the lives of 89 workers. Initially, the airport was used exclusively by the Air Force as a military airport. However, in 1992, a military-civilian expansion project commenced, and on April 28, 1995, Qamdo Bangda Airport officially opened for civil aviation services.

Situated in the Hengduan Mountains, Qamdo Airport is located in a narrow valley between the Nujiang (Salween) and Lancang (Mekong) rivers, in an area known for its treacherous terrain. The airport lacks railway connections, and access by road is limited to two routes: a northern route that takes about two and a half hours (123 kilometers) to reach Qamdo (Changdu) City, and a southern route that takes about an hour (50 kilometers) to reach the famous G318 National Highway. From there, travelers can head west for 21 hours (1,060 kilometers) to reach Lhasa, or east for 18 hours (930 kilometers) to reach Chengdu.

Currently, three airlines operate regular passenger routes at Qamdo Bangda Airport. Tibet Airlines offers flights to Lhasa, Xi'an, Chengdu, and Chongqing, with one to two flights daily on each route. Air China's Southwest branch operates two

daily flights to its base in Chengdu, while West Air, a subsidiary of Hainan Airlines Group (HNA Group), offers one daily flight to its base in Chongqing. All three airlines use Airbus A319 aircraft for these routes.

#### Sansha Yongshu Airport (YXG)

An airport 1370 km from mainland China

Sansha Yongshu Airport (YXG) is located on Yongshu Island in Sansha City, Hainan Province, China. Yongshu Island also serves as the administrative center of the Nansha District within Sansha City. Sansha Yongshu Airport is the southernmost airport in China and is classified as a 4C-grade military-civilian regional airport.

Sansha City was established in 2012, and the construction of Sansha Yongshu Airport began in 2014. On January 6, 2016, the airport successfully conducted its first civil aviation test flight. The test flight was carried out by China Southern Airlines and Hainan Airlines, using an Airbus A320-200 and a Boeing B737-800 from their Haikou Meilan International Airport base. The flights also carried some relatives of the military personnel stationed on Yongshu Island. Although Sansha Yongshu Airport is technically a military-civilian airport, due to national defense considerations, China has not developed large-scale tourism in the Nansha Islands. As a result, ordinary Chinese citizens cannot purchase tickets to fly to Sansha Yongshu Airport.

Currently, Sansha Yongshu Airport only operates occasional flights to Haikou, the capital of Hainan Province. To purchase tickets, one must provide a valid reason, such as visiting military personnel stationed on the island.

In addition, China has three other airports on the islands under Sansha City's control, located on Yongxing Island, Zhubi Reef, and Meiji Reef. Among these, Sansha Yongxing Airport (XYI) on Yongxing Island in the Xisha Islands is also a military-civilian airport, while the other two airports on Zhubi Reef and Meiji Reef are currently military airports with no civil aviation flights.

Sansha Yongxing Airport (XYI) is located on Yongxing Island in Sansha City, Hainan Province, China. Yongxing Island also serves as the administrative center of Sansha City in Hainan Province. Sansha Yongxing Airport is classified as a 4C-grade military-civilian airport. In April 1991, Yongxing Island's military airport was completed and opened. In 2012, Hainan Province applied to expand Yongxing Island Airport to serve both military and civilian purposes. On December 22, 2016, Sansha Yongxing Airport officially began civil aviation operations, with Hainan Airlines operating a government charter flight route from Haikou to Sansha using a Boeing B737-800.

The runway at Sansha Yongxing Airport is 3,000 meters long and 50 meters wide, capable of accommodating aircraft up to the size of a Boeing B737-800.

Ngari Gunsa Airport (NGQ)

The most remote airport in Tibet



Ngari Gunsa Airport (NGQ) is located in the Ali region of China's Tibet Autonomous Region, sitting at an elevation of 4,274 meters above sea level. Classified as a high-altitude airport, it ranks as the third-highest airport in the world. The airport is situated 44 kilometers from the administrative center of Gar County in the Ali region. It officially opened for operations on July 1, 2010, with its inaugural flight operated by Air China's Southwest branch using an Airbus A319 on the Chengdu-Lhasa-Ali route.

The Ali region, with an average elevation of 4,500 meters, is located in western Tibet, approximately 1,600 kilometers from Lhasa, the capital of Tibet Autonomous Region. This area is where the Himalayas, Gangdise, and Karakoram mountain ranges converge. Ali is renowned for its unique natural scenery and cultural sites, most notably Mount Kailash and Lake Manasarovar, considered as sacred places by Buddhists. However, due to challenging transportation conditions, reaching these remote landmarks has long been difficult for travelers. In terms of transportation, the Ali region lacks railway connections and is accessible by only three main roads: one leading north over the Kunlun Mountains to Kashgar in Xinjiang, one heading east to Chamdo, and one extending southeast to Lhasa. According to the Baidu Navigation, the distances from Ali to Kashgar and Lhasa by road are approximately 1,300 kilometers and 1,450 kilometers, respectively, with travel times averaging around 24 hours.

Currently, Ngari Gunsa Airport (NGQ) offers two regular passenger routes: one to Lhasa and another to Kashgar. The Lhasa route is operated by Tibet Airlines using Airbus A319 aircraft, with three to four flights daily. The Kashgar route is serviced by Lucky Air using Boeing 737-700 aircraft, with one flight daily.

China's remote airports are vital connections for some of the country's most isolated and challenging areas. These airports do more than just link distant

regions to the rest of the world—they provide crucial access to services, support local communities, and help integrate these far-flung places into the nation. From the high mountains of Tibet to the far-off islands of the South China Sea, these airports are lifelines that keep even the most remote corners of China connected.

## China Revises Military Personnel Benefits Regulations for 2024 Implementation

14 August 2024, ChinaScope

China's State Council and Central Military Commission have announced revised "Regulations on Preferential Treatment for Military Personnel," effective October 1, 2024. The new regulations aim "to ensure state support for military personnel, inspire their dedication to defending and building the country, strengthen national defense and military modernization, and make military service a respected profession."

Key revisions include:

1. Emphasis on "Communist Party leadership" and establishment of principles for military personnel benefits. The benefits are to "balance treatment with contribution, spiritual with material rewards, and care with service."
2. Adaptation to new national defense and military requirements via "clarification of benefit recipients, of management systems, and of financial responsibilities between central and local governments."
3. Enhancement of support measures for military personnel: ensuring access to social security, public services, and appropriate benefits. This includes increasing compensation for families of honored deceased personnel and inviting beneficiaries to major ceremonial events.
4. Improvement of service procedures and capabilities: improved processes for one-time compensation payments as well as refinement of disability rating assessments.

The revised regulations stress the importance of "dynamically adjusting benefit standards to align with economic and social development and military needs." They also "establish care and assistance mechanisms, particularly for beneficiaries facing special difficulties."

## China eyes anti-drone technology as key to future battlefield success

11 August 2024, SCMP, Amber Wang

China's military and private manufacturers have been urged to ramp up efforts to produce anti-drone weapons after seeing how effective they have been in the Ukraine war.



The People's Liberation Army has been watching closely how the technology has been employed on the battlefield, and has been testing its own capabilities in regular exercises.

The official military newspaper, The PLA Daily, has reported on some of these drills, the most recent being carried out in Kunming, the capital of Yunnan province.

Another article in May highlighted some of the technology being studied, including Britain's DragonFire, a high-powered laser weapon that was successfully tested in January.

The military has also published regular articles about the use of the technology in conflicts such as Ukraine and Gaza.

One article in June argued that "through the study of local wars in recent years, it is found that foreign militaries usually adopt detection, electronic jamming ... and other means to implement anti-UAV [unmanned aerial vehicle] operations, and often achieve good results".

It went on to call for the building of "smarter and higher-efficiency" anti-drones systems for the Chinese military.

Earlier this year, Globe Weekly, a magazine published by China's state news agency Xinhua, said in an article about Israel's air defences, that "whichever side can effectively counter the other side's use of drones can better seize the initiative on the battlefield".

According to a report by the Pentagon last year, the PLA's air defence unit concentrated on improving its tactical air defences against low-flying and suicide drones in 2022.

Drones have played a key part in the war in Ukraine, with both sides using them for reconnaissance and attacks on enemy troops.

But counter drone systems – whether they involve the use of missiles or jamming – are just as important on the battlefield.

The technology could also prove vital in any conflict in the Taiwan Strait, where the United States has threatened to deploy thousands of drones if mainland forces attack the island.

Admiral Samuel Paparo, the new head of the US Indo-Pacific Command, told the Washington Post in July the US had plans to create an "unmanned hellscape" in such an event.

Meanwhile, the Taiwanese authorities are developing their own anti-drone defences, budgeting NT\$4.98 billion (US\$156 million) this year to spend on the technology.

On the Chinese mainland, there is a thriving domestic market for the technology.

One employee at Jindowin, a firm in Nanjing that specialises in anti-drone technology, said the market

was "booming", and Russia's war against Ukraine had been the turning point for domestic producers.

"Our business is impacted by international situations, such as the Russia-Ukraine war during which drones have been widely used. Our country's drones are amazing, and once there is a spear, there must be a shield," they said.

China has been steadily tightening restrictions on exports of drone technology that has military uses following repeated Western accusations it is tacitly supporting Russia's war effort.

But the Jindowin worker said the company had no overseas market and its products were mostly used for domestic security.

China imposed some of the strictest bans on civilian drones around the time of political events of various levels and there is strong domestic demand for drones to be used on such occasions.

The employee also said the country's economic system gave it an advantage by providing all elements of the supply chain, which helped to reduce costs and produce "high-quality and low-price products".

### Tibetan prefecture marches toward modernization

09 August 2024, China Daily

After quitting her job in an auto parts company in a big city, Yeshe Lhamo decided to return to her rural hometown in the Northwest China plateau province of Qinghai two years ago to open a cafe.

Renowned for its yak butter coffee, the 90-square-meter cafe has become popular among tourists, and makes a profit of 20,000 yuan (\$2,800) a month.

Yeshe Lhamo, 27, who hails from Maqen county, in the Golog Tibetan autonomous prefecture, said that as the "hope of my family, I used to study hard to break free from the confines of the mountains", but she now

realizes those efforts gave her the means to "come back and build our hometown even better".

Established in 1954, the prefecture, at an average altitude of 4,200 meters, is nestled deep in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.

The harsh environment, with steep mountains, vast grasslands, thin air and an average annual temperature of – 4 C, made life difficult for the locals, who mainly relied on herding for a living and horses for transportation.

Despite the challenging natural conditions, the past 70 years have seen a remarkable turnaround for Golog. The prefecture now boasts over 13,000 kilometers of roads, ensuring connectivity to every town and village. It also has an airport, and expressways have been built in recent years.



There have also been 205 farming and animal husbandry industrial bases set up in the prefecture, starkly contrasting with the days when locals lived a nomadic lifestyle.

Through industries like animal husbandry and tourism, the prefecture, with a population of 222,000, achieved a GDP of 6.72 billion yuan last year.

The transformation from tents to apartments and from nomadic herdsmen to settled residents exemplifies Golog's journey from a state of backward feudal serfdom to thriving socialist modernization, said Ye Wanbin, head of the prefecture.

The progress was achieved through hard work. Zhou Wangzhong, deputy director of the prefecture's transport bureau, said building roads in Golog means digging tunnels in mountains and crossing permafrost areas.

"The construction workers had to endure the harsh conditions of high altitude," Zhou said. "No matter how difficult, the roads must be built because they symbolize hope for prosperity for our herdsmen."

As the prefecture advances toward modernity, residents have placed unprecedented emphasis on education, with their children benefiting from improved school facilities and resources.

Ngoje Nyima, who leads a herding life with his two children in Baima county, said that his greatest regret was dropping from school to go herding. Now, he is determined to ensure his children receive a good education. "I want them to go to school and not follow the old path of herding," he said.

With assistance from Shanghai, as part of a national scheme in which developed eastern regions support less developed western regions, Golog has built new schools across the prefecture, with teachers coming from Shanghai to support the teaching efforts.

"In our pastoral area, the most beautiful architecture is mostly schools," said Qi Yaqiong, president of a primary school in Madoi county.

The school has received 21.3 million yuan for the construction of the teaching building, sports ground and other facilities.

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in late 2012, 3.8 billion yuan has been spent on education infrastructure projects in Golog, resulting in the construction, upgrade and expansion of 135 schools, a news conference on the 70th anniversary of the prefecture's founding was told last month.

Students from families who were previously registered as poverty-stricken and later lifted out of poverty no longer drop out of school.

"After I graduate from university, I believe my hometown will be even better, and I will choose to go to places where I am needed most, becoming a

teacher," said Nedong Lhamo, a senior high school student.

### **Pidu District in China's Chengdu leads way in urban- rural integrated development**

03 August 2024, Bastille Post

Pidu District of Chengdu, capital of southwest China's Sichuan Province, stands at the forefront of promoting the integrated development between urban and rural areas, constantly seeking new avenues for shared prosperity by harmonizing urban and rural functions and industries.

Pidu District, the birthplace of the ancient Shu civilization and the source of the agricultural civilization of the upper reaches of the Yangtze River, has a historical and cultural DNA rooted in agricultural prosperity.

In recent years, Pidun has created a model of modern agricultural and rural development, treating the city and countryside as interconnected entities. The approach optimizes spatial layouts to create a business-friendly and livable countryside.

In China's Sichuan Cuisine Industrial City, based on the Pixian Douban intellectual super-property which has a brand value of 66.109 billion yuan, over a hundred enterprises have been engaged in intelligent production and manufacturing, driving innovation and reaping the benefits of urban-rural integration.

"In fact, it is a very traditional industry. We used to rely heavily on the operating experience of the staff. In order to ensure a more stable product quality, the whole production process is now standardized and we are also using a lot of intelligent equipment, including intelligent systems, to achieve traceability of our entire production process. This helps improve the competitiveness of the company. We are also committed to solving the local employment problem, focusing on the welfare of frontline production staff, including income improvement," said Ni Tiaoyuan, manufacturing manager of NGM biotechnology company.

China's Sichuan Cuisine Industrial City is the first industrial park named after a local cuisine. Over 19 years of development, it has insisted on technological empowerment, continuously enhanced its research and development, and supply chain management capabilities, and created more than 12,000 jobs.

"We support leading enterprises to establish chili, bean, pepper planting bases in Gansu, Xinjiang or Guizhou, so as to play the role of upstream and downstream drivers. We have also actively integrated into the new consumption industry, attracting tourists and promoting the integration of urban and rural exchanges from multiple perspectives," said Yang Li, deputy director of the

Management Committee of Sichuan Cuisine Industrial City of China.

In Donglin Art Village of Pidū District, many agricultural, cultural and tourism integration projects have become Instagram-worthy places, attracting many visitors.

"My house is in Chengdu. I'm meeting a friend today. Usually everyone is very busy at work, so for the weekend, they would like to find a place to relax with friends. I checked online and found that the environment here is quite good, with good views of the countryside. People can be close to the countryside and enjoy the wonderful scenery. Outside the courtyard, there is a swimming pool. It is a great place to take pictures. So today, I have come here with my friend for afternoon tea," said Zhou Dan, a visitor. Chen Guo, president of Dezhiyuan Rice and Garlic Specialized Cooperative, reflected on the company's efforts on boosting the integrated development of urban and rural areas.

"After working in Shanghai for more than ten years, I wanted to return to my hometown for work. Donglin Art Village is relatively close to the city, and at the right stage to be developed. I am engaged in industrial analysis and regional planning, and I am very familiar with agriculture. I chose Donglin Village as I thought it is more suitable. Our company is engaged in the agricultural and service industry sector. It has more than 50 employees, and the vast majority of them come from the village. In addition, millions of yuan are paid for labor in agriculture every year, constituting the income of nearby villagers working in the fields. Our company is also a perfect example of rural revitalization efforts to boost personal income growth, which reflects the integration of urban and rural areas in China," said Chen.

The communiqué issued by the Third Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) underscores the integration between urban and rural areas and called for efforts to promote the two-way flow and equal exchanges between urban and rural areas, with the aim of reducing urban-rural disparities and promoting prosperity and common development.

Taking advantage of regional advantages and characteristics, Pidū District is working hard to realize the idea that a city improves people's lives, while the countryside contributes to their happiness.

By harnessing the power of technology, Paralympic swimmers are gaining unprecedented insights into their performances, which empowers them to chase their dreams of gold in Paris and beyond.

One such device, resembling a fishing rod handle, is being used to measure the instantaneous speed, acceleration, and power of athletes as they move through the water. Attached to the athlete's body on

one end and held by researchers on the other, the device transmits real-time biomechanical data to a computer, allowing athletes and coaches to optimize speed distribution.

"The device is connected to the end that I hold by a cord. The chip inside can connect to my computer, allowing us to calculate the distance the cord is pulled each frame, and from that, the acceleration. It can help us analyze the change in velocity over the cycle," said Li Shudong, a teacher at Ningbo University's School of Sports Science.

A more AI-driven system is added for more analysis, with underwater and poolside cameras automatically capturing and stitching together multi-angle footage. Advanced AI models then track key body points and provide objective feedback on the athlete's speed, angles, and trajectories, helping coaches and athletes identify areas for improvement.

"For example, when an athlete enters the water like this – his body forms a 'banana shape' – he will feel an obviously increased drag. The solution is to make the body slightly less than 180 degrees at the point of entry, allowing for a more streamlined entry," Li said in explaining how the system works.

For athletes like Zhang Li, who was born with cerebral palsy and relies only on her arms to propel herself through the water, these technologies are game-changers. Zhang claimed six golds and one silver medal at the Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2021 Paralympics, and is now using the cutting-edge system to strive for faster results.

"The margins between us in the same disability class are just fractions of a second. The technology allows us to more clearly and objectively compare and identify where we can improve, and where we are left behind," said Zhang, a member of China's 2024 Paralympic swimming team.

These advancements are also benefiting visually impaired athletes, like Yang Bozun, a five-time Paralympic swimmer who will be competing in Paris. Yang now trains with the added assistance of earphones, which allow his coach to provide instant feedback and instructions on his movements and timing while in the water.

"Even in the pool, the instructions from the coach come through the earphones clearly. If they notice something off with my movement, they can immediately remind me, and I can correct it at once. Knowing when to accelerate, when to slow down, when to turn, and when to sprint to the wall – this real-time feedback has reduced a lot of injuries. It's a warm comfort for us athletes," said Yang.

## China's defence spending dwarfs rest of Asia combined, likely to be close to US

20 July 2024, Tibetan Review

China's economic growth may have hit a stubborn roadblock since hitting the Covid-19 pandemic brakes in 2020. Nevertheless, the country spent more on defence than the rest of Asia combined last year as President Xi Jinping progressed toward his goal of building a military to rival the United States, noted [newswatch.com](https://www.newswatch.com) Jul 19, citing a peace research report.

This is based on estimates released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in an April report, which compared China's military budget with the continent's next eight-largest defence spenders.

China is now stated to boast more warships than the US and to be rapidly building its stockpiles of nuclear warheads and ballistic missiles.

SIPRI's estimate is reported to show that China's military spending totalled nearly \$296.4 billion in 2023, more than three times the defence budget of the second-largest spender in the region, India, at \$83.6 billion. The two countries have been in a border standoff across eastern Ladakh since mid-2020.

The other 'big' spenders in Asia are stated to be Japan (\$50.2 billion), South Korea (\$47.2 billion), Taiwan (\$16.6 billion), Singapore (\$13.2 billion), Indonesia (\$9.5 billion), Thailand (\$5.8 billion) and the Philippines (\$5.5 billion).

China also lays claim over more than 90% of the South China Sea maritime territory, riding roughshod over international law-based rights of other countries. Besides, it engages in grey zone warfare tactics against Taiwan, which it has vowed to annex, including by naked armed invasion if necessary.

The report notes that during a session of its rubber-stamp parliament in March, China announced a 7.2% increase in its defence budget for the year, bringing it to \$236.1 billion.

But the country's actual defence spending is believed to be far higher than its as well as SIPRI reports. In fact, the Washington, DC-based American Enterprise Institute (AEI) has estimated, accounting for unreported expenditures, that China's 2022 military budget was about \$711 billion, nearly equal to that of the US.

Xiao Liang, a researcher for SIPRI's Military Expenditure and Arms Production Programme, has said in the institute's report, "China is directing much

of its growing military budget to boost the combat readiness of the People's Liberation Army."

SIPRI generally considers national data accurate unless there is compelling evidence to the contrary. Estimates are made when official data does not align with SIPRI's definition or lacks consistent time series coverage, the report said.

## Beijing promises joint facility, but builds full army base in Tajikistan

16 July 2024, The Economic Times, Dipankar Roy Chaudhury

New Delhi: China may have duped Tajikistan by establishing a full-scale military base instead of a joint counter-terror facility in collaboration with the host's interior ministry as originally planned.

As reports emerged alleging that China has created a full-scale military base in the Central Asian country bordering Afghanistan, both China and Tajikistan recently denied the existence of a secret military base near Tajik-Afghan border.

However, ET has learnt that the Chinese military base, located in a remote mountainous area at an altitude of 13,000 feet, includes observation towers and hosts troops from China.

The purported counter-terror base was built following developments in Afghanistan and the agreement for the same may have been signed in 2021, sources said.

Both Russia and India have big stakes in Tajikistan. Any Chinese military facility in Central Asia, particularly in Tajikistan close to the Afghan border and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), is a matter of concern for India as well as Russia.

While Russia has retained a military base in Tajikistan, India has worked closely with the country in the past to address terror threats in the region.

India operated out of Ayni air base in Tajikistan (near capital Dushanbe) and even deployed Sukhois, but later this facility was wound up. Between 2002 and 2010, India spent nearly \$70 million to renovate the air base, extending the runway to 3,200 metres and installing state-of-the-art navigational and air defence equipment.

During the Cold War, Ayni served as a major base for the Soviet military in the region.

## President Xi Jinping purges PLA generals in massive military overhaul

14 July 2024, Hindustan Times, Shishir Gupta

As per a list of officers facing purges in China compiled by HT through open-source intelligence,

close to 52 top generals have faced the axe since 2014.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has been on a strident campaign to rid the country's armed forces of corruption and has powered through with major military reforms.

Since he took over as powerful general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) on November 15, 2012, and as the chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), Xi has conducted large-scale purges in the Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA). In this period, he fired two defence ministers and at least two vice chairmen of CMC, in addition to a large number of top officers on grounds of corruption, inefficiency, political rivalry and for resisting reforms in the PLA.

On June 19, addressing a political-military conference at Yanan, Jinping acknowledged that there were "deep-seated problems" in the Chinese military's politics, ideology, work style and discipline. He was quoted by state-run CCTV saying, "There must be no hiding place for corrupt elements in the army."

Another list compiled by HT shows that no less than 65 top PLA officers/ commissars/ commanders/ directors have been purged since 2012, with eight other generals being investigated for corruption and allied charges but not punished.

In fact, a report published in PLA daily in 2015 showed that in just two years, since 2013, 4,024 officers of the rank of Lt Colonel and above, including 82 generals, were the subject of anti-corruption inquiries. As a result of which 21 commanders and 144 officers were demoted and at least 77 were reprimanded.

Generals like Xu Caihou, who was vice chairman of CMC, was expelled from the party in June 2014 on charges of corruption but the charges were dropped after he passed away in March 2015. Another vice chairman Gen Guo Boxiong was purged by chairman Xi in July 2015.

Defence ministers Wei Fenghe and Li Shangfu were expelled from the Communist Party on charges of accepting gifts and facilitating benefits.

According to China watchers in India, the likely reason for purges in PLA, PLA Navy, Air Force or Rocket Forces is that during President Xi's first term, officers close to or appointed by the previous Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao administrations were at higher echelons of PLA leadership – a position that meant they could exercise influence even after their political mentors went out of power – and that it was to check this that Xi replaced them.

Another key reason for the purge, they said, was the widespread rampant corruption in the PLA as viewed by Xi when he took over as chairman of CMC. In December 2012, Xi emphatically claimed that the

PLA should be absolutely loyal to the party, absolutely clean and absolutely reliable. At the first meeting of the CMC under his leadership, Xi stated that the Chinese military, which controls the guns, cannot be a hiding place for corrupt figures.

The third reason for the purge, they added, was the inefficiency and opposition of top commanders to Xi's modernisation and mechanisation of the PLA.

With Xi determined to make PLA a world-class military rivalling the American armed forces, a large number of generals who were proving to be a hindrance or had performance deemed not up to the mark were fired by paramount leader Xi.

### **China redefining air power with huge stealth fighter rollout**

10 July 2024, Asia Times, Gabriel Honrada

J-31B and J-20 fighters will boost carrier aviation, long-range maritime strike and deep penetration capabilities vis-a-vis US and India

China is on a roll with its rapid deployment of advanced fifth-generation fighters, potentially revolutionizing its airpower versus potential adversaries such as the US and India.

This month, Nikkei reported that China's new stealth combat aircraft, the J-31B, is expected to be deployed on its third aircraft carrier, the Fujian. Nikkei mentions that the fifth-generation fighter jet, revealed by Shenyang Aircraft Industry Group in late June, is designed for aircraft carrier use and will enhance the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) air and sea strategies.

The report says that the J-31B, which is more challenging to detect by radars and capable of coordinating with drones, is a significant upgrade from the current fourth-generation Shenyang J-15.

It says that the Fujian, China's largest aircraft carrier, is equipped with an electromagnetic catapult, allowing jets to carry more fuel and weapons, thus expanding their operational area and combat capabilities.

Nikkei notes that the J-31B is seen as a competitor to the US F-35 Lightning II and is part of China's ongoing efforts to increase its deployment of fifth-generation fighter jets, including the Chengdu J-20.

Janes reported last month that the PLA Air Force (PLA-AF) has significantly bolstered its fleet with the advanced Chengdu J-20 "Mighty Dragon" fifth-generation stealth fighters. Janes says that over 11 months leading up to July 2023, the PLA-AF incorporated over 70 J-20s, bringing the total to approximately 195 aircraft.

It notes that this expansion has enabled the replacement of older fourth-generation fighters like the Shenyang J-11s and Sukhoi Su-27SK/UKBs across multiple air brigades. The report also says that as of

May 2024, the PLA-AF operated 12 air brigades equipped with J-20s, with three fully outfitted with the stealth fighter.

Jane's notes that the J-20's enhanced capabilities, such as airborne early warning and control (AEW&C), underscore its growing importance within the PLA-AF.

The Janes report points out that China's strategic deployment of the J-20s aligns with its objective to concurrently strengthen its five theater commands. It says recent satellite imagery indicates the presence of J-20s in the Eastern, Western, and Southern Theater Commands, with the Eastern Theater Command conducting aerial operations around Taiwan and projecting air power over the East China Sea.

Janes also notes that the increasing presence of J-20s near India, as observed at Shigatse Peace Airport in Tibet, suggests a strategic shift in China's military posture.

The J-31B may replace China's carrier aviation workhorse, the J-15. In November 2022, Asia Times pointed out that Chinese media have derisively referred to the aircraft as a "flopping fish" because of its minimal range and weapons payload.

The J-15's flight tests on the ski-ramp carrier Liaoning have shown that it can only travel up to 120 kilometers from the carrier when carrying heavy weapons. Additionally, if the J-15 is loaded with fuel, it can only carry up to 2 tons of weapons, even though its capacity is 12 tons.

The design of the Liaoning and Shandong aircraft carriers' ski ramps presents a significant challenge for launching aircraft weighing over 26 tons unless the aircraft has more powerful engines. Implementing the electromagnetic aircraft launch system (EMALS) on China's third aircraft carrier, the Fujian, may allow it to use newer aircraft types such as the J-31B. On capability, the South China Morning Post (SCMP) mentioned this month that in addition to stealth, the J-31B features weapons bays on both sides, noting that such a feature could significantly increase its combat capabilities.

SCMP says that each weapons bay can carry two missiles, distinguishing the J-31B from the US F-22 and China's J-20, which have side weapon bays but can carry only one missile in each. It notes that the J-31B's added weapons payload can increase its combat capabilities in close-range fighting.

As for armaments, Brandon Weichert notes in an article this month for The National Interest (TNI) that the J-31B has an active electronically scanned array (AESA) radar, an electro-optical targeting system and a helmet-mounted display system.

Weichert mentions that the J-31B can carry an assortment of munitions, such as the PL-10 and PL-15 air-to-air missiles (AAM), various guided bombs, and

air-to-ground missiles (AGM). He says that while many dispute China's claims about the J-31B, the aircraft may be a decent counterpart to the US F-35.

As for the J-20, a February 2017 China Power report says that opinions vary about the J-20's role, ranging from the aircraft being a long-range interceptor for aerial engagements to a long-range strike aircraft designed to penetrate enemy air defenses and destroy critical infrastructure.

The report says that the J-20 could target intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) aircraft and aerial tankers with long-range AAMs in an interceptor role. In a strike role, it says that possible targets could include airfields, command centers, and other military installations.

Furthermore, the report says that the J-20's stealth and range could enable it to threaten US warships and that J-20s in a maritime strike role may be a more significant threat than short-range air superiority fighters.

Newsweek mentioned in an article last month that China's deployment of J-20 fighters at Shigatse and H-6 bombers at Hotan in the Taklamakan Desert raises the threat to India in its Sikkim-Arunachal Pradesh region.

While the Newsweek report says that India's S-400 surface-to-air missiles (SAM) and Rafale fighters can challenge China's J-20, the J-20's stealth capabilities must be factored into its air threat wargames.

Despite China's advances in fifth-generation fighters, such developments may be overrated while China may still face significant challenges in developing such sophisticated aircraft.

Owen Sirrs says in a 2020 Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs article that as political regimes may flaunt sophisticated military equipment for prestige reasons, China is no exception and that alarmist conclusions about the J-31B should not be drawn from limited glimpses at a distance.

Sirrs says that while China has made significant strides in fighter aircraft design, it is still behind in critical technologies such as jet engines.

In line with that analysis, Alex Hollings says in a February 2024 TNI article that a stealth fighter's performance relies heavily on its engine's power, and only the US can build high-end jet engines in quantities enough to equip a high-end fighter fleet.

Hollings notes that while China and Russia are fielding new jet engines such as the WS-15 and AL-51, new US technologies like adaptive cycle engines with advanced composites and ceramics may maintain the US's lead in jet engine production.

Sirrs also points out that a modern fighter integrates avionics, weapons systems, electronic countermeasures, radar, and other systems, not just one piece of cutting-edge technology.



Lastly, Sirrs says that China's J-20 and J-31B may face obsolescence problems as they employ technology developed by the US more than two decades ago. He adds that advances in aviation technology, such as sensors and combat drones, could render China's stealth fighters obsolete in a war scenario.

### Satellite images show China's new bunker near Pangong Lake in eastern Ladakh

10 July 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

The situation at Indo-Tibetan border near Ladakh may escalate after China reportedly constructed extensive underground bunkers and hardened shelters at a crucial base, according to satellite images by BlackSky, a US-based firm. These images show Chinese military build-up at Sirjap, an area claimed by India, located over 120 km southeast of the Galwan Valley, the site of a brutal skirmish in June 2020.



Satellite images by BlackSky reveal China's extensive military build-up near Pangong Lake (Photo/Hindustan Times)

The satellite images show China's preparation for a long-term presence with eight sloping entrances to large underground bunkers and five entrances to smaller bunkers intended for ammunition and fuel storage. Additionally, hardened shelters for armoured vehicles have been established at Sirjap Post, which serves as a headquarters, just 5 km from the Line of Actual Control (LAC) at the Indo-Tibet border.

There has been no immediate response from New Delhi or Indian officials regarding the images. A former Indian Army commander who served in the Pangong Lake region, speaking anonymously to Hindustan Times, remarked, "In today's battlefield, everything can be pinpointed using satellites or aerial surveillance platforms. We have no such underground shelters on our side. Tunnelling is the only way out to create better defences."

"Without underground shelters, weapons and stores are sitting ducks for air strikes with precision-guided munitions. The Chinese are pioneers in tunnelling activities and no hi-tech is required for these

structures, just civil engineering skills and funds. Otherwise, we have to invest in more air defence equipment," he added.

The developments at Pangong Lake have emerged at a time when, before the start of the standoff on the LAC in May 2020, this region was almost completely devoid of human habitation. However, India has since constructed roads, bridges, tunnels, airfields, and helipads for military logistics. India's Border Roads Organisation (BRO) completed 125 infrastructure projects worth Rs. 3,611 crore in 2023-24.

The activity at Pangong Lake coincides with increased Chinese operations at the Shigatse airbase in Tibet on May 30. Satellite images from that period showed six J-20 and eight J-10 jets at the Shigatse airbase. Shigatse airbase is 300 km from India's Hasimara base, which hosts Rafale jets. Analysts believe China's J-20 deployment aims to counter the Indian Air Force's (IAF) Rafales, among the most advanced aircraft in the IAF's arsenal.

### Exclusive: India races to build power plants in region claimed by China

09 July 2024, Reuters

India plans to spend \$1 billion to expedite the construction of 12 hydropower stations in the northeastern Himalayan state of Arunachal Pradesh, two government sources said, a move that could raise tensions with China that lays claims to the region.

The federal finance ministry under Nirmala Sitharaman recently approved up to 7.5 billion rupees (\$89.85 million) in financial assistance to each hydropower project in the northeastern region, the sources said.

Under the scheme, about 90 billion rupees will likely be allotted for the 12 hydropower projects in Arunachal Pradesh, said the sources, who have direct knowledge of the matter.

The scheme is likely to support northeastern states and help them finance equity holdings in the projects they host. Having state governments on board generally helps in expediting regulatory clearances, locals rehabilitation and negotiations on sharing electricity with the host state.

The plans for the hydropower stations are expected to be announced in the 2024/2025 federal budget that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government will unveil on July 23, the sources said, declining to be named as the information remained confidential.

The Indian finance and power ministries and China's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to Reuters' requests for comment.

Last August, the government awarded contracts to state-run firms NHPC (NHPC.NS), opens new tab,

SJVNL (SJVN.NS), opens new tab and NEEPCO for the construction of the 11.5-gigawatt-capacity plants entailing an estimated investment of \$11 billion, as part of a broader project to develop infrastructure in the border region.

None of the companies responded to a request for comments.

These power plants were earlier enlisted with private sector firms, but remained non-starters due to various reasons.

India has built less than 15-gigawatt hydropower plants in the last 20 years, while installations of new coal and other renewable sources of energy were nearly 10 times of the new hydropower projects.

India and China share a 2,500 km (1553.43 mile) largely un-demarcated border, over which they fought a war in 1962.

India says Arunachal Pradesh is an integral part of the country, but China claims it is a part of southern Tibet, and has objected to other Indian infrastructure projects there.

The Indian government is pushing projects in the eastern region following reports that Beijing could construct dams on a section of the Brahmaputra river, known as the Yarlung Tsangpo in China, that flows from Tibet through Arunachal Pradesh.

India is concerned that Chinese projects in the region could trigger flash floods or create water scarcity.

Both countries are working to improve infrastructure along their border regions since clashes in western Himalayas left 20 Indian and at least four Chinese troops dead in 2020.

Last week, India Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar met his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Kazakhstan where the two agreed to step up talks to resolve issues along their border.

(\$1 = 83.4710 Indian rupees)

### **China's military sends troops to Laos for 2-week joint military drills**

09 July 2024, RFA

Chinese troops have arrived in Laos for a two-week exercise with the Lao military on the outskirts of Vientiane, just weeks after a similar training in Cambodia that's part of a push by Beijing to strengthen ties with Southeast Asian countries.

Some 300 Chinese troops and about 900 Lao military personnel are participating in the Laos-China Friendship Shield-2024 exercise, which began on July 5, according to Lt. Col. Santi Chanthalangsonge, who directs training for Laos' armed forces.

Most of the Chinese participants and military equipment arrived on the newly constructed Laos-China railway, which was funded mostly through loans from Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative.

"Participants will focus on technical cooperation and how to use armed vehicles and weapons," Santi Chanthalangsonge told local media on July 5.

"The Chinese side might have weapons and experiences that can be shared with us," he said.

"The drill will help strengthen our military ties, organize and modernize our armed forces."

The exercises at the Kommadam Military Academy will last until July 18, he said.

'China's backyard'

The two militaries also held exercises in May 2023, when they trained for a joint attack on transnational armed crime syndicates operating in a mountain jungle environment.

Laos also participated in military exercises in China's Guangdong province last November that included the militaries from Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam.

Laos' dire economic conditions and its large national debt – most of which is owed to China – means that it realistically can't hold military exercises with anyone else, according to Prof. Adisorn Semyaem, a researcher on Lao studies at Thailand's Chulalongkorn University.

"The drill could affect its ties with Vietnam. It won't be easy for Laos. Laos and Vietnam share the same border," he said. "But Laos is also in China's backyard."

China has been seeking closer military-to-military cooperation with its regional neighbors to respond to what it calls "interference" from the United States and its allies.



Soldiers unload military vehicles at Phonhong Railway Station in Laos' Vientiane province on July 2, 2024. (Yi Ding/Xinhua via Getty Images)

The United States conducts annual war games in Indonesia and Thailand, and in April it held a large-scale drill with its mutual defense treaty partner, the Philippines.

In May, Chinese troops went to Sihanoukville in Cambodia to take part in the largest ever bilateral military exercise between those two countries.

Chinese warships have also been spotted since December at a new Chinese-built pier at Cambodia's Ream Naval Base. Cambodia has repeatedly denied

that China is being given exclusive military access to the base.

### The First Electrified Railway in Tibet: Achievements and Prospects

07 July 2024, Railway Supply

The commissioning of the first electrified railway in the Tibet Autonomous Region in southwestern China has become a significant event for both the region and the entire country, this is reported by the railway transport news portal Railway Supply.

Three years since the opening of the Lhasa-Nyingchi line on June 25, 2021, the China Railway Qinghai-Tibet Group reported that over 3 million passengers and more than 783,000 tons of cargo have been transported.

Ukrzaliznytsia launches a new project: UZ Energo  
This achievement indicates significant changes in the region's transportation infrastructure and economy.

#### Transportation Advantages

The Lhasa-Nyingchi line, stretching about 435 kilometers, has reduced travel time between these two important points from 5 to 3.5 hours, greatly enhancing accessibility and convenience for locals and tourists.

The high-speed Fuxing electric trains operating on this line reach speeds of up to 160 km/h, making travel not only fast but also comfortable.

Notably, over 90% of the route runs at an altitude of more than 3000 meters, which is a unique engineering feat.

#### Economic Development and Tourism

In 2023, the city of Nyingchi was visited by more than 13 million tourists, generating revenue of 11.6 billion yuan (about 1.6 billion US dollars).

The development of railway infrastructure has opened new opportunities for tourism, improved the quality of life for residents, and contributed to the creation of new jobs.

The railway has also played a crucial role in the transportation of local goods, handicrafts, and agricultural products, fostering regional business and economic growth.

#### Construction of the Sichuan-Tibet Railway

The Lhasa-Nyingchi line is part of the ongoing Sichuan-Tibet railway project, which will span over 1600 kilometers.

The first section of this railway, Chengdu-Ya'an, was put into operation in December 2018.

### **SOF Pic of the Day: People's Armed Police Tibet Special Warfare Detachment – Guardians of the Roof of the World**

07 July 2024, SOFREP, Guy D. McCardle



Elite operatives from the PAP Tibet Special Warfare Detachment demonstrate their readiness and tactical prowess in high-stakes urban combat scenarios.

For today's SOF Pic of the Day, I've found a rather unusual photo for you. It's not every day we talk about the Tibetan People's Armed Police (PAP).

The People's Armed Police (PAP) Tibet Special Warfare Detachment, often called the Tibet Special Police, plays a crucial role in maintaining security and order in one of the world's most challenging regions. Operating in Tibet's high-altitude, rugged terrain, this elite unit is tasked with counterterrorism, riot control, and other special operations that demand exceptional physical and mental resilience.

#### Origins and Structure

The PAP Tibet Special Warfare Detachment was formed to address the unique security needs of the Tibet Autonomous Region. Given Tibet's strategic significance and the potential for unrest, this unit was established to provide a rapid response force capable of handling a wide range of security challenges.

The unit is part of the larger People's Armed Police Force, which operates under the dual leadership of the Central Military Commission and the State Council of China.

Make no mistake, these are Chinese warriors.

Training for the PAP Tibet Special Warfare Detachment is intense and tailored to the harsh conditions of the Tibetan Plateau. Recruits undergo rigorous physical conditioning to cope with the thin air and extreme weather. High-altitude acclimatization is a crucial part of their training regimen, which includes long-distance marches, mountain climbing, and survival skills.

The detachment is also trained in various aspects of modern warfare, including counterterrorism, urban combat, and hostage rescue. It is equipped with advanced weaponry and tactical gear, ensuring it is prepared for any situation. Specialized training in snow and ice combat and high-altitude marksmanship sets it apart from other units.

#### Operations and Responsibilities

The PAP Tibet Special Warfare Detachment's primary responsibility is to maintain stability and security in Tibet. This includes counterterrorism operations to neutralize threats posed by separatist groups and extremists. The unit also plays a vital role

in riot control, ensuring that protests and demonstrations do not escalate into violence.

One of their key missions is to protect critical infrastructure and important landmarks, such as the Potala Palace and Jokhang Temple. These sites are not only of cultural and historical significance but also potential targets for terrorist attacks.

#### Challenges and Adaptability

Operating in Tibet presents unique challenges. The high altitude can cause altitude sickness, fatigue, and decreased performance, even for well-trained soldiers. The extreme cold and unpredictable weather further complicate their operations. Despite these challenges, the PAP Tibet Special Warfare Detachment has proven adaptable and resilient.

Their ability to conduct operations in such a demanding environment is a testament to their rigorous training and dedication. The unit continuously evolves its tactics and strategies to address emerging threats and changing regional conditions.

#### International Perception and Controversy

The presence and activities of the PAP Tibet Special Warfare Detachment are not without controversy. Human rights organizations have criticized the unit's involvement in suppressing protests and unrest in Tibet. Allegations of excessive force and human rights abuses have drawn international condemnation.

China, however, maintains that the detachment is essential for maintaining stability and combating terrorism in a volatile region. The government argues that the unit's actions are necessary to ensure the safety and security of both Tibetans and Chinese nationals in the area.

#### Conclusion

The PAP Tibet Special Warfare Detachment symbolizes China's commitment to maintaining control and security in Tibet. Its operations in one of the most challenging environments on Earth highlight its unique capabilities and resilience. While its role is often mired in controversy, this elite unit's critical importance in safeguarding the region's stability cannot be denied.

As geopolitical tensions continue to evolve, the PAP Tibet Special Warfare Detachment will remain a key player in China's strategy for the Tibetan Plateau, embodying the delicate balance between security and human rights in one of the world's most contentious regions.

### **Satellite images reveal China's military build-up near Pangong Lake, India's western border**

07 July 2024, First Post, Prakriti Jash

The developments at Pangong Lake coincide with new images indicating increased Chinese military

activity at Shigatse air base, a dual-use high-altitude airport in the Tibet Autonomous Region's second largest city, and the disputed Doklam tri-junction, the site of a 73-day standoff between Indian and Chinese troops in 2017

According to satellite pictures, China's military is preparing for the long haul in the area surrounding Pangong Lake in eastern Ladakh, having built subterranean bunkers to store weapons and fuel, as well as hardened shelters for armoured vehicles at a crucial base in the region.

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) post at Sirjap, hidden among mountains on the northern bank of Pangong Lake, is the headquarters for Chinese forces stationed around the lake. It was established in an area claimed by India and is around 5 km from the Line of Actual Control (LAC). Until the start of the LAC conflict in May 2020, this region was nearly entirely free of human settlements.

The station, which will be erected between 2021 and 2022, will have subterranean bunkers that may be used to store missile systems, fuel, or other supplies, according to photos given by BlackSky, a US-based company capable of obtaining photographs 15 times each day with its satellites. One photograph, taken on May 30, clearly depicts the eight sloping entrances to a massive subterranean bunker. A smaller bunker with five entrances is positioned near the bigger one.

Aside from many big command buildings, the site contains reinforced shelters and covered parking for armoured vehicles stationed in the region. According to experts, these shelters are designed to shield cars from air assaults using precision-guided weapons.

On the condition of anonymity, a BlackSky analyst said the base hosts an expanse of armoured vehicle storage facilities, test ranges, and fuel and munitions storage buildings. According to the analyst, the base's current construction comprises artillery and other defensive positions fortified by enormous berms and connected by a vast network of roads and trenches that are not apparent on publicly available mapping apps.

The outpost is located somewhat more than 120 km southeast of Galwan Valley, the location of a deadly combat in June 2020 that killed 20 Indian soldiers and at least four Chinese forces.

There was no immediate response from Indian officials to the photographs. A former Indian Army general who deployed in the region surrounding Pangong Lake, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said China's expanded development of subterranean infrastructure made perfect military sense.

According to those familiar with the situation, India has built a number of roads, bridges, tunnels, airfields, and helipads around its borders for military



movement and logistics support since the stalemate began in 2020.

India's infrastructure development has focused on improving troops' living conditions and amenities, as well as protecting weapons and equipment in forward regions. This border infrastructure drive has been fueled by greater investment and the rapid implementation of important projects to assist military operations.

In 2023-24, the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) completed 125 infrastructure projects totaling ₹3,611 crore, including the Sela tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh.

The developments at Pangong Lake coincide with new images indicating increased Chinese military activity at Shigatse air base, a dual-use high-altitude airport in the Tibet Autonomous Region's second largest city, and the disputed Doklam tri-junction, the site of a 73-day standoff between Indian and Chinese troops in 2017.

While satellite photographs from earlier this year showed roughly half a dozen Chengdu J-20s, China's most sophisticated stealth combat fighter, at the Shigatse facility, a BlackSky image dated May 30 showed six J-20s parked next to eight Chengdu J-10 multi-role combat jets on the centre apron.

The Shigatse facility is around 300 km from the Indian Air Force's (IAF) Hasimara base in West Bengal, which contains a squadron of Rafale combat planes. Experts think China's deployment of J-20s is aimed at combating the IAF's Rafales, which are among its most modern aircraft.

While some J-20s have been deployed in Xinjiang, the majority of these planes have been stationed in China's coastal and interior regions, and their deployment in Tibet signals a significant shift, according to analysts. A more recent satellite image from June 30 showed at least two J-10 planes on the centre apron of the Shigatse Air Base.

Satellite photographs of the Doklam plateau show China maintaining an extensive network of roads that connect military equipment near the disputed boundary with India. A large number of military vehicles were discovered in a satellite photograph from April, both in the rear base and forward

### **Chinese crews drill through Xinjiang glacial area for 'super-long' highway tunnel**

06 July 2024, SCMP, Coy Li

Huge boring machine to cut passage for crucial north-south link providing vital connection to Central Asia.

A Chinese construction team in charge of excavating a tunnel in one of the longest mountain ranges in the world has embarked on the most challenging part of

the mega project – slicing several kilometres through a glacial area.

The 15.7km (9.8 mile) long West Tianshan Super-long Tunnel is part of a major highway connecting southern and northern areas of China's vast western Xinjiang region. It is expected to help boost trade and tourism and provide a vital link to Central Asia under the Beijing-led Belt and Road Initiative.

The construction team on Wednesday launched a domestically built tunnel boring machine (TBM) to drill the main passageway for the tunnel, state news agency Xinhua reported.

#### **G219 Zhaosu-Wensu Highway Project**

The 1,800 tonne machine, dubbed "Wensu", was designed and developed by the state-owned China Communications Construction Company. It is 235 metres (771 feet) long and has a diameter of 8.83 metres, making it the widest such machine in use among the tunnel boring projects currently under way at Tianshan, according to Communist Party mouthpiece People's Daily.

About two-thirds of the 2,500km Tianshan range – which stretches into Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in Central Asia – is located in Xinjiang. Its average altitude is about 4,000 metres (over 13,000 feet).

The West Tianshan tunnel will be China's first to cut a straight path through a glacial area. More than three-quarters, or nearly 12km, will run through rock under 1km of ice, with some sections under as much as 2.4km of ice.

Wensu is also the most advanced TBM to traverse the Tianshan range, a seismically active region with average temperatures of about minus 23 degrees Celsius (minus 10 Fahrenheit) in the winter. The geological conditions present unique safety and environmental challenges for tunnel boring, including water inrush, rock bursts and variable ground temperatures, Xinhua reported in April.

Construction on the tunnel started in September and is scheduled for completion in 2026. The project is the most important segment of the 237km Zhaosu-Wensu or G219 highway, connecting Zhaosu county in northern Xinjiang to Wensu county in the south, according to People's Daily.

Due to open to traffic in 2027, the highway will be part of a major transport route linking China to Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan, as well as a key connection between Xinjiang and Tibet.

China has started work on several highways and tunnels in Xinjiang in recent years, including the Tianshan Shengli tunnel – a crucial section of the 1,300km Urumqi-Yuli Expressway linking the regional capital to Yuli county in central Xinjiang.



The 22.1km passage will be the world's longest such tunnel when the highway opens to traffic late next year.

### **Poised along the Indian border, Chinese troops are there for the long haul**

02 July 2024, ANI

The bloody combat operations occurring in Ukraine and Gaza, plus the tensions heating up in the South China Sea, dominate news headlines and make it easy to forget that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) - China's armed forces - continues to strengthen its position along China's southern border with India.

In the Annual Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community, published earlier this year, border tensions between China and India merited only a single paragraph amidst all the other conflicts, threats and tensions that currently abound in the world.

Nonetheless, the report assessed that "The shared disputed border between India and China will remain a strain on their bilateral relationship."

It continued, "While the two sides have not engaged in significant cross-border clashes since 2020, they are maintaining large troop deployments, and sporadic encounters between opposing forces risk miscalculation and escalation into armed conflict."

In April this year, the Strategic Studies Institute of the US Army War College published an in-depth report examining PLA activity along the mountainous border in Aksai Chin opposite India in 2020-21. The author, Dennis Blasko, primarily considered how the PLA rapidly moved troops into the region as violence flared between Chinese and Indian troops in Galwan Valley on 15-16 June 2020. However, Blasko, a former US defence attache in Beijing and Hong Kong, also provided a useful assessment of current and future conditions along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

He assessed, "Barring negotiations with the Indian military and government to withdraw out-of-area combat troops, the PLA appears ready to maintain its deployments near the LAC in Aksai Chin and on the border at Doklam indefinitely."

He continued: "In the case of Aksai Chin, due to the challenges of transporting large mechanized units over long distances, rotations of units into and out of the region will likely occur after a prolonged tour of duty (perhaps six months to a year or more). The situation has taken the form of PLA border operations against Vietnam following the 1979 war until 1987, albeit with fewer troops and less actual combat and artillery bombardment."

He pointed out that the Chinese army's "extended border reinforcement operations serve both political

and military purposes, and provide the units and staffs in the Western Theater Command with real-world operational and logistics experience that cannot be achieved through routine peacetime training".

Unfortunately, little is known about how PLA units prepare for, assemble and travel to and from their home bases to the LAC. Once in position, these units are sustained by supply depots more than 1,600km away. Incidentally, the Western Theater Command defends nearly half of China's landmass with just a quarter of the PLA ground force's total troops. The theater command possesses two group armies, plus the Xinjiang and Tibet Military Districts, which are equipped unlike any other PLA provincial military district.

Blasko made heavy use of Google Earth satellite coverage of the Aksai China area in his research for the US Army War College, and because some imagery is not up to date, he could not provide a reliable assessment of current deployments. He said, "Although China's state media continues to report on units on the 'front line' or in 'battle positions' in the Karakoram region (without specifying Aksai Chin), it has done so without revealing the total number of troops deployed or their exact locations."

Nonetheless, the former US officer assessed that "enough fortified positions were constructed in the various PLA-controlled sectors since the spring of 2020 to support a full division-size deployment - or roughly 10,000 personnel - on top of the two border defence regiments (approximately 5,000 personnel) already assigned to the region. Further, these units are reinforced by engineer, artillery and support elements (probably numbering several thousand more personnel)."

In all, he calculated the PLA has approximately 20,000 soldiers arrayed over 400km front in Aksai Chin, in a zone reaching back more than 32km from the LAC.

Furthermore, "This number may be higher during the period in which an out-of-area unit that has spent time on the LAC rotates out and is replaced by a fresh unit entering the area. Nonetheless, the 20,000 figure is a considerably smaller estimate of PLA personnel deployed in the disputed region than the 40,000-60,000 frequently asserted in non-Chinese media."

Perhaps comfortingly, Blasko concluded that 20,000 troops scattered across such a broad front is "inadequate to conduct a large-scale offensive across the difficult terrain delineated by the LAC". Any offensive would necessitate a build-up of units and supplies if the PLA were to attempt a substantial incursion beyond the border. For defensive operations, PLA doctrine recommends a divisional front that is 15-20 km wide and 20-30 km deep. For

offensive operations, that front would sharpen to be some 5-8km wide and 4-8km deep. Obviously, the disposition of Chinese troops along the LAC is nowhere close to that at present and, even at the peak of tensions in mid-2020, the front was in fact some 160km wide from Galwan Valley to Rechin La. At that time, the PLA's combined-arms regiment deployed to Galwan was lined up in a valley less than quarter of a mile wide, and separated by more than 50km from the nearest combat unit. Likewise, two combined-arms regiments in the south deployed over a 40km front, separated by Pangong and Spanggur Lakes, so they could not mutually support each other via land manoeuvres.

Of course, the terrain in that rugged, high-altitude part of the world does not favour large-scale armored or mechanized combat operations. This is because mountains and valleys channel advances and prohibit lateral movement.

Asked about the terrain, Blasko told ANI: "I just don't think they want to pack too many troops and vehicles into such bad terrain, because they'd just make lucrative targets if fighting actually starts - lucrative to air, missile or artillery attack. In a prolonged conflict, this is light infantry terrain where people will be trying to gain control of ridges, hilltops and areas for long-range observation. In most areas, the new tanks and armored personnel carriers and everything else would really be constricted. This is a very, very tough place to operate, even when you have air and artillery support."

Blasko also pointed out in his detailed report that "PLA units have been positioned to consolidate and hold territory, to conduct patrols and protect construction projects, and to create 'facts on the ground', similar to the reef expansion operations in the

South China Sea a decade ago." Indeed, the PLA is "prepared to stay in the region for as long as it takes for the two governments to negotiate a solution."

Actually, there are many similarities between China's aggressive modus operandi along the Indian border and its nefarious reef-building and territory-grabbing activities in the South China Sea.

Speaking of which, the confrontation between the China Coast Guard (CCG) and the Philippines near Second Thomas Shoal on 17 June came precipitously close to armed conflict. It was the most serious confrontation ever recorded between the two sides, as CCG personnel attempted to prevent resupply of the Philippine military garrison on the beached BRP Sierra Madre vessel there. Chinese personnel operated extremely close to the grounded ship at Second Thomas Shoal, and then proceeded to wield knives and an axe, and ram a Philippine boat in an action that resulted in a Philippine sailor losing a thumb. China seized a Philippine rubber

dinghy and confiscated firearms during the confrontation.

China claimed that the CCG exercised restraint and acted "professionally and reasonably" in this skirmish, despite extremely contrary video evidence released by Manila. China's violent actions so close to the Sierra Madre, just short of boarding it, demonstrate how it is escalating tensions and testing Manila's red lines. In fact, its seizure of another military's boat could perhaps legally be construed as an act of war.

Earlier this year, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr warned that the Philippine-US Mutual Defense Treaty could be invoked if a civilian or serviceman is killed in these fiery exchanges in the South China Sea. Beijing is presently flirting with that possibility.

The Philippine personnel under attack on 17 June were from the Naval Special Operations Command, and they could easily have fought back against the lesser-trained CCG. The Philippines thus exercised remarkable restraint, and its troops also refrained from firing warning shots. This is because Manila is wary of China baiting it into escalatory behavior. On 23 June, Marcos told personnel watching over the South China Sea that the Philippines is "not in the business to instigate wars".

Unfortunately, however, this whole incident reinforced to Beijing how Manila is reticent about escalating tensions, and that the US is reluctant to get more heavily involved. China's probes are discovering that Philippine red lines are quite stretchy and flexible. Of course, China uses the same probing tactics along the LAC, but India has demonstrated that only ongoing and robust action can dissuade China from its bullying provocations.

Doklam along the Sino-Indian border was another site where Indian and Chinese troops clashed in 2017, and Blasko highlighted how the situation there exhibited similar, but smaller, characteristics. The American observed: "Based on my analysis of Google Earth imagery, the Tibet Military District light combined-arms brigade located in Yadong County has established protected positions to reinforce border defence units stationed along the border with Bhutan. But likely only one reinforced combined-arms battalion at a time of the combined-arms brigade is deployed on about a one-mile-wide front at Doklam to a depth of about three miles. Forward-deployed units are supported by the brigade's artillery battalion operating from newly built hillside bunkers to the rear."

After the Galwan Valley clash, units from the Xinjiang Military District reinforced the two border defense regiments already stationed in Aksai Chin. Over the next six months, the PLA established fortified defensive positions along the LAC. The latter activity was known as the 506 Special Mission, and since

then has involved ongoing rotational deployments. Blasko shared: "Until a negotiated political settlement is reached, the Western Theater Command is prepared to sustain the rotation of units into and out of the region in the largest near-combat deployment since the end of the border conflict with Vietnam in 1987."

China has been feverishly beaver away on creating new infrastructure, such as two bridges it put across the narrowest part of Lake Pangong. One bridge is estimated to be 6m wide and the other 11m wide, able to support the movement of troops, equipment and supplies. China has also been building a road from the bridge to the Moldo garrison and PLA base camp behind Lake Spanggur, which would facilitate faster tactical deployments of troops.

To better prepare troops for living in such high-altitude areas, the PLA Tibet Military Command and the Department of Highland Military Medicine of the PLA Army Medical University launched a pilot program for low-pressure hypoxia cabin acclimation training for recruits before they deploy.

According to Chinese media, this training has improved acclimatization and permitted operational deployments in shorter periods of time. The PLA has even created "vegetable factories" at altitudes as high as 5,270m to provide border defence troops with fresh greens.

Asked earlier whether further border confrontations could happen along the Sino-Indian border, Blasko told ANI, "Yes, I think there's a possibility of conflict, especially as small units come into close proximity with each other. There are probably a lot of low-level people on both sides looking for a fight." (ANI)

## June

### Xi eyes military supremacy as he reorganises China's armed forces

24 June 2024, Aljazeera, Frederik Kelter

China has been giving the democratic island of Taiwan – and the rest of the world – an indication of its growing military prowess in recent months.

In the run-up to Taiwan's elections in January, the island's information sphere was bombarded with coordinated cyberattacks and disinformation campaigns.

Beijing claims Taiwan as its own and has not ruled out the use of force to bring the island under its control.

Following the inauguration of the Taiwanese government last month, Chinese military might was on full display as the Chinese armed forces

surrounded Taiwan in two days of drills during which Chinese state media released an animated video showing missiles raining down on major Taiwanese cities.

After the exercises, a Chinese military spokesperson said the country's armed forces remained fully prepared, highly vigilant and ready to take resolute action when it came to Taiwan.

Later in May, China's newest and most advanced aircraft carrier also sailed out from Shanghai on its first sea trials – placing the Chinese navy second only to the United States in the number of aircraft carriers in its fleet.

But despite the relentless demonstration of the military's increasing sophistication, some analysts wonder how much confidence Chinese President Xi Jinping has in his armed forces.

Last week, Xi told a military conference that there were "deep-seated problems" throughout the armed forces and change was necessary.

His comments followed a ceremony in April where he unveiled the largest reorganisation of the Chinese military in almost 10 years.

"It came as a shock, and it shows that Xi is not satisfied with the existing structure and the current capabilities of the Chinese military," Yang Zi, a PhD student at the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, told Al Jazeera.

Purges and corruption

For many observers, the most unexpected element of the reorganisation was the elimination of the Strategic Support Force (SSF).

"There have been problems, purges and corruption probes in other divisions of the military," Christina Chen, a research fellow at the Taiwanese security think tank Institute for National Defense and Security Research (INDSR), told Al Jazeera.

"But we haven't heard of similar trouble within the Strategic Support Force, so there was little indication leading up to this announcement that the SSF was in line to be reorganised."

Xi was himself involved with the creation of the SSF, which was unveiled at the last major Chinese military restructuring in 2015.

The SSF was an elite body tasked with accelerating the development of armed forces' space and cyber warfare capabilities and improving data sharing across services and theatres by 2020

But by mid-2019, a white paper from China's Ministry of Defence found that SSF progress had been slow even as advanced data and intelligence were expected to play an ever more decisive role in future conflicts.

The end of the SSF indicates a loss of faith in the ability of the 2015 reforms to prepare for such conflicts and suggests the Chinese leadership will be

playing an even greater role in military modernisation, according to Chen.

Instead of the SSF, the fields of space, information and cyber warfare are being placed within their own divisions directly under the supervision of the Central Military Commission, which Xi chairs.

The new structure will be vital in helping the Chinese military “fight and win in modern warfare,” Xi said when he announced the reforms.

Modern warfare is a field currently dominated by the United States military, said Chen, who sees the reorganisation as a further indication of Beijing’s determination to catch up with Washington.

Beijing and Washington find themselves on opposite sides in several disputes in the South China Sea, the East China Sea and the Taiwan Strait.

Washington has accused Beijing, which has been involved in a number of confrontations with the Philippines at several contested reefs, of threatening regional peace with its aggressive conduct, while Beijing has accused Washington of meddling in Asian affairs that do not concern it.

“Xi’s long-term goal is to surpass the United States militarily and make China the leading military power in the region and the world,” Chen said.

‘Ruthless adaptability’

The military reorganisation comes amid what has been described as the biggest purge in Chinese military history, with key leaders being fired or disappearing from view.

Much of the upheaval has taken place within the armed forces elite Rocket Force, which oversees Beijing’s tactical and nuclear missiles and was supposed to be among the military’s most capable units.

“The Rocket Force purges of last year showed that the Chinese armed forces are not as ready for prime time as we have previously imagined,” RSIS’s Yang said.

Prominent figures have disappeared as well. The defence minister, Li Shuangfu, who previously served as a deputy commander of the SSF and was considered a Xi loyalist, went missing last year.

Beijing confirmed that Li had been removed in October, nearly two months after he disappeared from view.

The fact that high-ranking officers and officials seemingly close to Xi have not been spared in the purge underlines the shifting landscape of loyalty and power in Chinese elite politics, according to Shaoyu Yuan, a scholar of Chinese studies at Rutgers University in the US.

“Individuals removed might have initially risen under Xi’s patronage but their dismissal signals a recalibration of loyalty and trust as his strategic vision and his perception of potential threats evolve,” Yuan told Al Jazeera.

In Yang’s view, the purges and the recent military reorganisation suggest that Xi has little faith in the commanders who have risen through the ranks in recent times, or in the previous reforms, even though he played a key role in their promotions and the structural changes.

While that might raise questions about Xi’s choices, Yuan said the Chinese president’s reactions to his lack of faith demonstrate his ruthless adaptability as well as his willingness to recalibrate his approach to maintain control and pursue his vision.

“His determination to eliminate any structures or individuals that do not align with his current strategic objectives regardless of their past contributions may reinforce his image as a decisive leader who prioritises the present needs of the state over past allegiances,” he said.

Yuan adds that in the power dynamics around the president, loyalty must be continually earned.

“This approach can create a cycle where trust is perpetually conditional, driving the need for constant reaffirmation of loyalty,” he said.

At a recent military conference, Xi stressed that military officials, especially those at senior levels, had to have the courage to put aside their prestige and acknowledge their shortcomings.

“They must deeply self-reflect ... make earnest rectifications, resolve problems at the root of their thinking,” he said.

RSIS’s Yang expects that there will be a greater emphasis on political work within the armed forces, building on last year’s focus on Xi Jinping Thought, the president’s political, economic and social philosophy, throughout the Communist Party.

Such political work could take time away from crucial military training, according to Yang, or encourage talented officers to keep their heads down to avoid the risk of being targeted in any future purges.

“He [Xi] has no qualms about shaking things up and letting heads roll,” Yang said. “But in the end, only time will tell whether these changes will actually enhance the Chinese military’s combat capabilities.”

### **China is snapping up land near military sites — Washington needs to act ASAP**

23 June 2024, The New York Post

In yet another front where the Biden administration is blithely ignoring US national security, a bombshell Post report last week revealed that Chinese entities have bought up land around 19 military bases nationwide.

The danger’s obvious: Beijing can easily use surveillance tech, like drones or trackers, to monitor movements in and out of bases, among other spying. And that’s plainly the intent: Sun Guangxin, a former People’s Liberation Army general with close ties to

the Chinese Communist Party, owns about 40% of Chinese-owned US land; over a few years starting in 2016, notably, he bought up \$110 million worth of land next to Laughlin Air Force Base in Val Verde County, Texas.

His plan to run a "wind farm" there was foiled by the Lone Star Infrastructure Act, blocking businesses associated with "hostile nations" from accessing the state's energy grid.

Texas isn't the only state fighting back: In 2023, 15 states passed laws regulating foreign ownership of US land; 20 more states are looking to do the same this year.

But why isn't the Biden administration doing more?

Yes, President Biden last month signed an executive order forcing a Chinese-owned Bitcoin mining firm to sell land near F.E. Warren base, which houses intercontinental ballistic missiles, in Cheyenne, Wyo. He could do the same to kick CCP-connected owners off all farmland near military sites.

Several lawmakers have tried to get ahead of this problem on a national level.

Last year, Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-Wash.) reintroduced a bill to require the prez to prohibit entities associated with China's government from buying US agricultural land (which is virtually all the sites in question; Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-NY) and Sens. Jon Tester (D-Mont.) and Mike Rounds (R-SD) have introduced legislation to block China, Russia, Iran and North Korea from doing so.

But all these bills are dying in committee.

Congress should pass a law ASAP; in the meantime, Biden needs to start rolling back the CCP's slow, methodical invasion.

Probably, it is time for an indigenous assessment of Chinese military developments on a regular basis.

### **Central Military Commission Tells PLA to Tighten Budget**

23 June 2024, China Scope

Due to the sliding economy, Beijing has been asking local governments to keep tight budgets. Now it has also asked the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to do the same.

China's Central Military Commission recently issued a document titled "Measures on Building the Military with Hard Work and in Thrifty Way, to Improve the Military's Quality and Efficiency." The document states that "building the military with hard work and in a thrifty way is the fine tradition of the communist party and military," and "must not be abandoned at any time or under any circumstances." It urged the military to "firmly establish the mindset of living with a tight budget, meticulously calculate and manage all endeavors with thrift." According to the website of

China's Ministry of Veterans Affairs, the document emphasizes the need to "adopt concepts such as resource constraints, cost-effectiveness, integration of support, performance management, and systematic governance, to enhance the operational efficiency of military systems and the utilization efficiency of defense resources."

### **Xi signals further military purges to eradicate corruption**

22 June 2024, VOA, William Yang

Speaking at China's first military political work conference in a decade this week, Chinese President Xi Jinping reiterated the need for the military to eliminate corruption and strengthen its loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party. He also warned of "deep-seated issues" in the military's politics, ideology, work style and discipline.

"The gun barrels should always be in the hands of those who are loyal and reliable to the party and there must be no place for corrupt elements to hide in the military," Xi said in his remarks, according to China's state broadcaster CCTV.

In a lengthy overview, Xi urged the military to enhance the thoroughness of its ideological transformation by following the Communist Party's theories, improving the leadership of party organizations, and eradicating conditions that may allow corruption to thrive.

Chieh Chung, a military researcher at the National Policy Foundation in Taiwan, said the remarks show that "Xi wants to emphasize the importance for the military to be loyal to the party and his leadership while signaling his concerns about how corruption affects the military" and its capabilities.

Xi "hopes the warnings can help accelerate the development of advanced technologies and equipment," Chieh told VOA by phone.

Since last July, China has ousted more than a dozen top military commanders, including former defense minister Li Shangfu, and leaders of the People's Liberation Army's Rocket Force.

While the Chinese government hasn't publicly linked their removals to corruption, some foreign media outlets and experts see their removal as part of the extended anti-corruption campaign Xi initiated since he came to power in 2012.

Reuters reported last September that Li was facing an investigation related to the procurement of military equipment.

The removal of top military leaders not only highlights the prevalence of corruption; it also raises other questions.

"Since corruption has hampered Russia's ability to supply its military in the Ukraine war, it raises the question of whether the Chinese military's



capabilities have been compromised by corruption or not," Lin Ying-yu, a military expert at Tamkang University in Taiwan, told VOA by phone.

There is also a concern about the impact Xi's persistent attempts to eradicate corruption will have on the military internally.

"When a former defense minister can be abruptly removed from his position without any clear explanation, it will create a deep sense of fear within the military because no one knows when they might be the next one to be purged," said Su Tzu-yun, a military expert at the Taipei-based Institute for National Defense and Security Research.

Su said this is part of the Communist Party's strategy of "ruling with terror," which allows Xi to concentrate decision-making power on the top leadership within the party.

"While tackling corruption in the military is important to Xi, the anti-corruption campaign has become a political tool for him to consolidate his control over the military," Su told VOA by phone.

In January, the state-run People's Liberation Army Daily published an opinion piece that emphasized the importance of implementing Xi's instructions for the military and extending the party's governance to the grassroots level.

"By strengthening the supervision of military personnel, it builds a firm first line of defense for soldiers to comply with the rules and refuse to be corrupted," said the opinion piece run by the PLA Daily.

While Xi looks to consolidate control and build loyalty, both Chieh and Su see other potential side-effects such as the promotion of unqualified leaders and the impact that could have on the military's capabilities and readiness.

"When Beijing puts so much emphasis on loyalty to the party, it could reduce the military's combat capabilities and make the military huge but weak," Su said.

Xi's expressed desire to continue cracking down on corruption also means the Chinese military may need to go through a period of adjustment, Chieh said.

"Normally, the military's combat capabilities will decrease following several rounds of purges, so I expect the Chinese military to go through a tough period of adjustment and reorganization over the next few years," he told VOA.

And while top officials in the U.S. have repeatedly highlighted 2027 as the year that the Chinese military aims to possess the capabilities to invade Taiwan, Chieh thinks the purges and Xi's remarks at the political work conference suggest the PLA may be hard pressed to achieve that goal.

"Since the Chinese military's command system and the rocket force's capabilities may not have reached the goal set by the top leadership due to rampant

corruption, I think this makes it even less likely for the Chinese military to have the capabilities required to invade Taiwan by 2027," he said.

### **China Sends Advanced Fighter Jets to Contested Border with India, Satellite Images Show**

09 June 2024, MSN, Samyarup Chowdhury

Recent satellite images have shown China deploying advanced J-20 stealth fighter jets at the Shigatse Air Base near a contested border with India.

Knewz.com has learned that the Shigatse Air Base, a dual-use airport, is located around 93 miles from the Indo-China border in the mountainous state of Sikkim. The satellite images, shared by All Source Analysis, show six Chengdu J-20 fighter jets, also known as the "Mighty Dragon," kept under protective tarps and a KJ-500 Airborne Early Warning and Control Aircraft stationed at the air base. The Economic Times reported that the Indian Air Force is already aware of the deployment of the Chinese fighter jets.

Nearly 190 miles on the other side of the contested border lies the Indian Air Force (IAF) base in Hasimara, in the Indian state of West Bengal, which is currently the home of the Air Force's second squadron of 16 Rafale fighter jets.

The deployment of the stealth fighter jets near the border was first noticed towards the end of May 2024, with Indian news outlet NDTV commenting that it has "major military implications for India."

"The forward presence of the J-20 in Tibetan airfields is a clear and present threat to the Indian Air Force. This erodes the advantage enjoyed by IAF assets like the Rafale and imposes caution against the PLAAF [Chinese Air Force]," Sameer Joshi, former Indian Air Force pilot and CEO of NewSpace Research, said in a statement to the outlet.

"This capability, combined with an increase in the available numbers of modern fighters in the Chinese inventory, clearly negates the numerical advantage in modern jets that the IAF has enjoyed for some time."

The satellite images shared by All Source Analysis also show the deployment of at least eight J-10 fighter jets at the Shigatse Air Base.

"Multiple images collected over the course of the same day indicate these aircraft arrived at the air base on 27 May 2024, preceded by the arrival of a Y-20 transport aircraft for the probable deployment of ground crew and support equipment," the analysis from the organization read.

"The J-20 aircraft are not known to be permanently based at Shigatse and deployments near the Indian border are a rare occurrence."

NDTV pointed out in its report that the Shigatse airport is located at an altitude of 12,408 feet, making it one of the highest air bases in the world.

"The deployment of the J-20 shows its ability to operate from the harsh environment of ultra-high altitude Tibetan air bases," the outlet noted.

The 2,100-mile border between India and China, known as the Line of Actual Control, has been the center of constant military dispute between the two countries, with both sides making continuous efforts to reinforce their troops deployed on the border.

According to Newsweek, military tensions over the border erupted in a confrontation between the two forces in 2020, claiming the lives of 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers.

December 2022 saw another significant clash between the two sides, this time in the Tawang sector of the state of Arunachal Pradesh on the eastern tip of India. BBC noted that the rising tensions and sporadic conflicts between India and China would also have an "economic fallout as China is one of India's biggest trading partners."

It is worth noting that the growing hostility on political the boundary has also strained the ties between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

### **China to boost rail links to Xinjiang and Tibet, with eye on supply chains and energy security**

03 June 2024, SCMP, William Zheng

China will step up construction of strategic railroad links in the autonomous regions of Xinjiang and Tibet in the coming years to strengthen its hold over its westernmost regions, according to a senior Chinese rail planner.

"The rail network layout still needs to be improved. There are still many places in the western regions left undeveloped, and the major strategic channels for entering and exiting Tibet and Xinjiang need to be strengthened," said Liu Wenxian, a senior official with China Railway Group's planning department.

In an interview with The People's Rail, a newspaper affiliated with the state-owned rail operator, Liu said the priority was to "strengthen the construction of strategic links and effectively guarantee the implementation of major national strategies".

"[We will] focus on strengthening strategic trunk channels, such as those from Xinjiang to Tibet, and fill in the 'blanks' in railway networks in key western regions so as to comprehensively improve the multidirectional connectivity between Xinjiang, Tibet and the inland," Liu was quoted as saying.

Liu said this was part of China's plan to strengthen transport links to ensure energy and supply chain security.

Beijing has "big plans" for Xinjiang and Tibet, according to a Tsinghua University researcher who studies ethnic minority issues in China.

"Xinjiang is the gateway for the strategic China-Europe freight trains, while the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau is extremely important to China's western border security," said the researcher, who declined to be named due to the sensitivity of the topic.

"Beijing has painstakingly restored the order and security in these two regions in the past decade. Now it is time to extend the transport networks into these regions so that people-to-people exchanges can happen and goods from these regions can be sold to other parts of China. These are prerequisites for further integration."

Liu said that by 2025, China's modern railway infrastructure would be complete, with its rail network reaching 165,000km (102,526 miles), including 50,000km of high-speed rail lines.

He said China aimed to expand its rail network by 20235 to about 200,000km, of which about 70,000km would be high-speed railway.

China leads the world in high-speed railway development. According to Statista, China had 40,474km of high-speed rail lines in 2022, more than double the combined length of the next 10 countries. The United States ranked 11th in high-speed rail lines, with only 735km, but it still operates the world's largest railway network with over 220,000km in total. China ranked second in terms of total rail network length, with about 159,000km in 2023.

Liu said by the end of next year, China's rail network would cover 99.5 per cent of cities a population of more than 200,000, while the high-speed rail network would cover more than 97 per cent of cities with a population over 500,000.

Liu also said the resilience, safety and reliability of railway infrastructure would be improved, and that China's railways needed to respond better and faster to natural disasters and climate change.

However, this vision faces major financial challenges as China Railway Group has paid for the massive expansion with borrowings.

As of last year, its debt rose to 6.13 trillion yuan (US\$846 billion), with operating profits of only 330 million yuan.

China has taken the rare step of sharply increasing fares on four major bullet train lines recently – a move widely seen as an attempt to restore profitability of its debt-ridden high-speed network.

## China reported to have boosted offensive air capabilities along Tibet-border with India

01 June 2024, Tibetan Review



Even as it keeps downplaying the seriousness of the standoff with India along the occupied-Tibet- Ladakh border, insisting that the two sides can resume normal bilateral ties without being bogged down by it, China keeps strengthening its military capability in preparation for any possible conflict. It has now deployed its most advanced J-20 stealth fighters at an airfield in Tibet in the eastern sector facing India, amid the continuing military confrontation along the entire Line of Actual Control (LAC), which is into its fifth year now, reported the timesofindia.com May 31.

The report cited latest commercial satellite imagery as showing the People's Liberation Army-Air Force (PLAAF) had deployed six J-20 fighters at the Shigatse dual-use airport, which is barely 155 km from the LAC and close to Doklam near the Sikkim-Bhutan-Tibet tri-junction, in addition to the several J-10 jets and a KJ-500 AEW&C (airborne early-warning and control) aircraft already present there. "Multiple (satellite) images collected over the course of the same day indicate these aircraft (J-20s) arrived at the air base on May 27, preceded by the arrival of a Y-20 transport aircraft for the probable deployment of ground crew and support equipment," All Source Analysis, which looks at geospatial intelligence, has said in a post on "X".

The report cited a senior Indian defence establishment official as saying the twin-engine J-20 fighters "are probably at Shigatse for high-altitude trials". The PLAAF has been regularly deploying J-20s at its airfields in the western sector like the Hotan airfield in Xinjiang, which is around 240-km from the LAC, since the military confrontation erupted in eastern Ladakh in May 2020, the report said.

India too has taken steps to strengthen its military preparedness. Apart from the Sukhoi-30MKI fighters based at Hasimara, Chabua and Tezpur in the eastern sector, the IAF also has a squadron (18 jets) of its latest French-origin Rafale omni-role jets deployed at the Hasimara air base in West Bengal,

with the other one at Ambala for the western front with Pakistan, the report said.

China touts the Chengdu J-20 as the effective answer to the world's only fully-operational and proven fifth-generation jets like the American F/A-22 Raptors and F-35 Lightning-II Joint Strike Fighters.

The report said China had offset some of its air combat disadvantage due to high-altitude terrain constraints by deploying additional fighters, bombers, reconnaissance aircraft and drones after upgrading its airfields like Hotan and Kashgar in Xinjiang; Gargunsa, Shigatse, Bangda, Nyingchi and Hoping in occupied Tibet, among others. China has also constructed new runways as well as extended older ones, along with building new hardened shelters, fuel and ammunition storage facilities at these airfields.

At Hotan, for instance, the PLAAF is reported to have recently deployed two new JH-7A fighter-bombers and three Y-20 heavy-lift aircraft, among others, to add to the almost 50 J-11 and J-7 fighters, five Y-8 and Y-7 transport aircraft and KJ-500 AEW&C aircraft already present there.

## May

### China's PLAAF Deploys Stealth J-20, J-10 Fighters At Shigatse Air Base Just 150 Km From Indian Border

30 May 2024, The EurAsian Times, Sakshi Tiwari

After China deployed the J-20 Mighty Dragons in a cross-strait show of force against Taiwan, the stealthy Chinese fighter appeared just 150 kilometers from the Indian border, also known as the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

A set of satellite images obtained by 'All Source Analysis' shows at least six J-20 fighter jets stationed at the Chinese Shigatse Air Base, located just over 150 kilometers from the LAC.

The satellite imagery (shown below) appears to have been obtained by Planet Labs on May 27. In addition to the six J-20 stealthy fighters, at least eight J-10 aircraft and one KJ-500 Airborne early warning and control aircraft can also be seen parked at the air base in Shigatse, which is close to the eastern sector of the LAC.

The airport is one of the highest in the world and functions as a dual-use airport. At the time of writing this report, the Indian military had not taken cognizance of the deployment. However, experts noted on social media that the Indian side remained aware of these deployments, which have not been uncommon since the 2020 stand-off began.

The deployment of the J-20s at Shigatse is significant. It is located less than 300 kilometers from Hasimara Air Base in West Bengal, home to the Rafale fighter jets of the Indian Air Force (IAF). Indian military bloggers expressed alarm over the deployment, highlighting the gap between the two air powers. India, unlike China, does not have a fifth-generation aircraft in its arsenal.

The IAF has strategically deployed the Rafales in Hasimara so that they can be quickly scrambled in case of a threat at the border with China.

The Rafales are believed to be one of the strongest systems in the IAF's inventory against the Chinese threat that refuses to die down. Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria, former Indian Air Force (IAF) chief, recently pointed out that China deployed five times more J-20 stealth fighters than India's then newly-procured Rafale jets during the standoff.

Although this is not the first time J-20s have appeared at an airbase near the Indian border, it has been flagged as one of the biggest deployments in recent memory. The aircraft were photographed on multiple occasions at the Hotan airbase in Xinjiang.

The Chinese PLA Air Force first deployed J-20 jets close to Indian territory at the height of the conflict in 2020. According to government sources, the J-20s were reportedly spotted flying from the Hotan airbase in China's Xinjiang province, where strategic bombers and other fighters were stationed. This move came in response to the perceived threat posed by India's Rafale jets, which had begun conducting night flying exercises at the time.

In June 2022, for instance, the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) stationed around two dozen frontline combat aircraft at Hotan, including the J-11 and the J-20 stealth fighter jets, as previously reported by EurAsian Times.

#### J-20s Continue To Project Power

The J-20s have become synonymous with the Chinese assertion of power. This was on display recently when the PLA Eastern Command published a video of J-20s in action, emphasizing the aircraft's "cross-strait" lethality.

The video was published right after the unprecedented military drills launched by the PLA as "punishment" for new Taiwan President Lai Ching-te's inaugural speech on May 20, in which he reiterated his commitment to Taiwanese independence and sovereignty. China has repeatedly called the new Taiwanese President a "separatist."

The Chinese fifth-generation stealth jets, the J-20 Mighty Dragons, are projected as major assets in any potential conflict the country may have to contest. The PLAAF has already positioned a few J-20s in all five theatre commands. By 2026, each command will have at least one to two J-20 brigades.

China has recently announced that the J-20 will be modified to carry nuclear weapons.

The J-20, which has nearly replaced previous PLAAF aircraft as the workhorse, is believed to have sophisticated electronics. It has sensors to help pilots make the best tactical and combat judgments. The recently released video made this clear, and it also underlined the Chinese military's evolving—and now entrenched—belief in "intelligentized combat."

The J-20 is meant to function as a "sniper" in warfare, eluding fighter screens and taking out susceptible targets like airborne early warning planes and air-to-air refueling tankers with near-invisibility.

The Chinese media, however, continues to assert that the Rafale was a generation behind the J-20. It lacked stealth capability and would "find it very difficult to confront a stealth-capable" J-20. The comparison between the two jets has been debated by discerning analysts who believe that the two aircraft are built for performing completely different sets of roles.

Earlier, in one of the simulation drills against India, conducted in 2020, Beijing claimed to have shot down 17 Rafale fighters using J-20 stealth jets. A Chinese pilot belonging to the Wang Hai Air Group under the PLA Eastern Theater Command, along with his colleagues, claimed to have shot down Rafale fighters. The Wang Hai Air Group is the first air wing that is using the J-20 fighter jets.

Nonetheless, some Indian officials and experts continue to assert that the Rafale has an impressive combat history and the ability to perform different roles, which puts it above the J-20s. The J-20 is still in the inception stage, while the Rafale has been combat-proven for 20 years in Iraq, Afghanistan, Mali, Libya, and Syria.

It is almost ironic that while the Chinese J-20s are currently sitting close to the Indian border, the Indian Rafales have flown to the United States to take part in the US Red Flag military exercises to bolster their combat capability and hone dogfighting skills.

## Incredible new £34bn train line that's 1,012 miles long and will cut journeys by 35 hours

26 May 2024, Express



When complete, the full length will be around 1,012 miles long (Image: Getty)

This extensive new higher-speed railway, when completed, will reduce travel times of about 48 hours to just 13.

When fully complete, the line will connect Chengdu (in Sichuan, China) and Lhasa (in Tibet), meaning the full length will be around 1,012 miles long and will become the shortest railway connection between the areas.

The Sichuan-Tibet Railway began back in 2014, and currently two sections of the line - from Chengdu-Ya'an and the Nyingchi-Lhasa - are operational. The former opened in 2018, with the latter following three years later.

The third section, linking Ya'an to Nyingchi, began construction in November 2020, and is expected to continue until the early 2030s.

The railway will officially be a "higher-speed rail" (HrSR), also known as a high-performance rail, with train speeds higher than conventional rail, but not as high as high-speed rail services including that which connects Tokyo and Osaka in Japan. This will be the region's first electrified railway and the first higher-speed rail on the plateau. The first section, at 87 miles long, has a design speed of 124mph, while the second, at 270 miles long, runs at 99mph. This reduces travel time between Lhasa and Nyingchi from about five to about three and a half hours, while journeys between Shannan and Nyingchi now can be completed in about two hours as opposed to six by car.

The incomplete section, which will be a staggering 628 miles long, is expected to run at speeds between 75 and 124mph. In total, it will cut travel time from about 48 hours to 13 hours.

This railway will be the second line into the Tibetan region, the first being Qinghai-Tibet, which was a notoriously challenging network to construct,

opening in 1984 and 2006. While the previous network was deemed sufficient to support the rather small resident population of 3.5 million, compared with 1.4 billion in China, there were higher requirements for transport to access Tibet's rich resources. The new railway line was pitched in 2011. Allegedly, there are over 100 types of minerals found in Tibet, with currently only 22 developed and utilised. Tibet has also been described as the "water tower of Asia", having extremely rich hydropower resources, expected to reach 200 million kilowatts. It was also deemed to be conducive to promoting exchanges and economic development between Tibet and Eurasian countries, and have major impacts on tourism.

## Guangming Daily: the Importance of Chinese-Built International Communications Platforms

13 May 2024, Theory.gmw.cn

Guangming Daily published an article saying that it is important for China to build its own international communications platforms.

"With the advancement of technology, international communication now presents a new characteristic: "platformization." It is transitioning from "individual content going overseas" to "communication platforms going overseas." International communication is entering an era of platformization. The core of the success or failure of international communication in this era of platformization lies in the ability to control the communication platforms. However, current international communication platforms are in a state of monopoly [by Western powers] and opposition [to China]. Western countries (led by the U.S.) are monopolizing communication platforms through technological advantages and are thus able to wield so-called "hostile" communication platforms to gain advantages in political discourse. This puts other countries in a situation where they have no platforms to use. Thus, the creation of such communications platforms is an important facet of [China's plan to] build international communications capabilities. [Such Chinese-built platforms] would provide an important means to break through Western platform monopolies and through opposition from Western platforms. It is evident that the enhancement of cultural soft power relies on the support of international communication platforms."



## China launches new satellite into space

May 12 2024, China.org



A Long March-4C rocket carrying the satellite Shiyao-23 blasts off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwest China, May 12, 2024. [Photo/Xinhua]

China on Sunday launched a Long March-4C rocket, placing a satellite in space.

The rocket blasted off at 7:43 a.m. (Beijing Time) from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwest China and sent the satellite Shiyao-23 into preset orbit.

The satellite will mainly be used for space environment monitoring.

It was the 522nd flight mission of the Long March series rockets.

## China militarizing its entire population in new defence build-up?

07 May, 2024, Tibetan Review

China appears to have embarked on a campaign to militarise its entire population as its economy falters while having adopted bullying or combative tactics to assert its outlandish South China Sea, Taiwan, and India-Tibet border claims. The Communist Party of China apparently hopes that this campaign will be good for ensuring its continued hold on political power at a time when its history of cataclysmic policy failures – dating from the Great Leap Forward Movement, through the decades-long draconian one-child policy, to the recent years-long heart-renting Covid-lockdown measures – threatens to overshadow the success of its economic opening up policy.

The country has proposed a new legislative measure that would require military training at high schools and universities in order to promote awareness of national defence in children as young as elementary school.

The aim is to teach all members of society the “theory, knowledge and skills associated with national defence,” asia.nikkei.com May 7 cited draft

revisions to the National Defence Education Law as saying.

The report pointed out that the move to amend the law for the first time since 2018 had come amid rising tensions with the US over Taiwan and the South China Sea. Some universities have already allowed students to train with live ammunition and tanks.

The draft had its first reading by the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress late last month, has been opened to public comment, and could be enacted as early as this year, the report said.

The draft is said to call for instilling some degree of national defence awareness among elementary school children. Middle schoolers are to learn basic knowledge and skills, while high school and university students would undergo mandatory military training. This education and training would be guided by the government and the People’s Liberation Army.

Once implemented, local governments would need to include defence education costs in their budgets. Besides, state agencies, universities and other organizations would be held accountable for violations of the law.

“The aim is to make the public aware that war could break out and to make it easier to mobilize them in the event of an emergency,” Masafumi Iida, who specializes in Chinese foreign and security policies at Japan’s National Institute for Defence Studies, has said.

With regard to Taiwan – which China threatens to annex should it move to declare independence, though it is already independent – Fuzhou University in China’s Fujian Province, located across the strait from Taiwan, hosted a military skills competition in July. About 500 university students from around the province competed in target shooting, hand grenade throwing and first aid, the report said.

Besides, China Central Television (CCTV) was stated to have reported on an exercise involving tanks and armoured personnel carriers at a university in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. Some schools have new students experience crawling through mud or firing rocket launchers, the report said.

Another aim of expanding national defence education is said to be to recruit tech talent. Expertise in fields such as artificial intelligence, robotics and space are in great demand as China rushes to modernize its military. Xi has designated such “emerging areas” in March and called for strengthening the military’s capacity in them, the report noted.

“For Chinese university leaders, one basis for earning the approval of the Communist Party is how many good students their schools can send to the military,” Iida has said.

The People's Liberation Army Daily was stated to have reported that the number of Chinese university students applying to join the military in 2020 had topped 1.2 million, a roughly sixfold increase over seven years. Local government programmes are stated to provide incentives for signing up. Beijing, for example, offers assistance with tuition, medical insurance and employment after discharge from the military.

### **China's next defense buildup: mandatory military training for students**

07 May 2024, Nikkei Asia, Yukio Tajima

China wants to promote awareness of national defense in children as young as elementary school under proposed legislation that would require military training at high schools and universities.

The aim is to teach all members of society the "theory, knowledge and skills associated with national defense," according to draft revisions to the National Defense Education Law.

The move to amend the law for the first time since 2018 comes amid rising tensions with the U.S. over Taiwan and the South China Sea. Some universities have already allowed students to train with live ammunition and tanks.

The draft had its first reading by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress late last month and has been opened to public comment.

The draft calls for instilling some degree of national defense awareness among elementary school children. Middle schoolers are to learn basic knowledge and skills, while high school and university students would undergo mandatory military training. This education and training would be guided by the government and the People's Liberation Army.



Universities are a growing source of recruits for China's military. (CCTV)

Local governments would need to include defense education costs in their budgets. State agencies, universities and other organizations would be held accountable for violations of the law.

"The aim is to make the public aware that war could break out and to make it easier to mobilize them in

the event of an emergency," said Masafumi Iida, who specializes in Chinese foreign and security policies at Japan's National Institute for Defense Studies.

Deliberations on the amendments will continue in the Standing Committee, which in principle meets every two months. The legislation could be enacted as early as this year.

Across the strait from Taiwan, Fuzhou University in China's Fujian Province hosted a military skills competition in July. About 500 university students from around the province competed in target shooting, hand grenade throwing and first aid.

China Central Television (CCTV) reported on an exercise involving tanks and armored personnel carriers at a university in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. Some schools have new students experience crawling through mud or firing rocket launchers.

China's government has also sought to attract talent from medical schools across the country. President Xi Jinping urged students and staff during a visit to the Army Medical University in Chongqing in March to serve the battlefield and work to build a "world-class army medical school."

Another aim of expanding national defense education is recruiting tech talent. Expertise in fields such as artificial intelligence, robotics and space are in great demand as China rushes to modernize its military. Xi designated such "emerging areas" in March and called for strengthening the military's capacity in them.

"For Chinese university leaders, one basis for earning the approval of the Communist Party is how many good students their schools can send to the military," Iida said.

China's revised conscription rules, which went into effect in May 2023 in China, specify university students as eligible for calling up. Universities are tasked with recruiting students for military service. Under the revised rules, students can be drafted either in their hometown or at their school.

The People's Liberation Army Daily reports that the number of Chinese university students applying to join the military in 2020 topped 1.2 million, a roughly sixfold increase over seven years. Local government programs provide incentives for signing up. Beijing, for example, offers assistance with tuition, medical insurance and employment after discharge from the military.

### **China takes measures against 12 U.S. military-linked firms**

22 May 2024, Reuters, Liz Lee

China said on Wednesday it had taken measures against 12 companies involved in the U.S. military-industrial complex and their senior executives, in

response to the U.S. arming of Taiwan and sanctions on Chinese companies.

The U.S. companies included units of Lockheed Martin, Raytheon and General Dynamics, China's Foreign Ministry said.

The measures, which include freezing assets in China and banning senior executives from entering the country, took effect from Wednesday, it added.

The action follows U.S. "indiscriminately imposing unlawful unilateral sanctions on a number of Chinese entities on the basis of so-called Russia-related factors," the ministry said in a statement.

China said the U.S. had "ignored its objective and impartial position in the Ukrainian crisis", and had instead "engaged in unilateral bullying and economic coercion".

The ministry said the U.S. has also continued to sell arms to Taiwan, which "seriously violates" the one-China principle and joint communiqués between both countries, and "seriously undermines" China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

## April

### China Ramps Up Military Activity In Tibet And Xinjiang | Why It Matters To India?

30 April 2024, MSN

The Chinese People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) has been active in the Tibetan plateau in recent weeks, carrying out a para-dropping exercise in Golmud. A dozen PLA servicemen took off in a Y-20 transport aircraft around the time of the Chinese New Year from Golmud, in Qinghai, in the northern part of the Tibetan plateau, and the drop was 60 km to the east. It is another sign that the PLA aspires to be functional in Tibet throughout the year, including in the winter months, when it is bitterly cold. More recently, at the Hotan airfield, in Xinjiang, where there is a substantial presence of the PLAAF, three Y-20 aircraft, a large plane for military transportation, were seen. Besides, Hotan has, as usual, a large number of fighters—about 50. About half of them are the J-11, the twin engined air superiority fighter similar to the Russian Sukhoi-27 and about two decades old, and the J-7, which is an older aircraft, similar to the Russian MiG-21. Besides, a few JH-7As, a fighter bomber, are present along with a KJ-500, an airborne early warning system. Similarly, on the eastern side, at Luliang, in Yunnan, the Chinese have placed a KJ-500 along with a dozen J-11 fighters and two Y-20 heavy-lift transport aircraft. Once again, these are signs that the Chinese are strengthening their armed forces. With summer coming, the Chinese have also begun setting up new

radars in the Pangta and Bamda airfields. These are in the east, opposite North-east India and Pangta, is less than 200km from the line of actual control.

### Xi shakes up China's military in rethink of how to 'fight and win' future wars

27 April 2024, CNN

China has rolled out the largest restructuring of its military in almost a decade, focusing on technology-driven strategic forces equipped for modern warfare, as Beijing vies with Washington for military primacy in a region rife with geopolitical tensions.

In a surprise move last week, Chinese leader Xi Jinping scrapped the Strategic Support Force (SSF), a military branch he created in 2015 to integrate the People's Liberation Army's space, cyber, electronic and psychological warfare capabilities as part of a sweeping overhaul of the armed forces.

In its place, Xi inaugurated the Information Support Force, which he said was "a brand-new strategic arm of the PLA and a key underpinning of coordinated development and application of the network information system."

The new force would play an important role in helping the Chinese military "fight and win in modern warfare," he said at a ceremony last Friday.

At a news conference on the same day, a spokesperson for China's Defense Ministry appeared to suggest the SSF was effectively broken into three units – the Information Support Force, the Aerospace Force and the Cyberspace Force – which will answer directly to the Central Military Commission, the body at the top of the military chain of command headed by Xi.

Under the new structure, the PLA now consists of four services – the army, navy, air force and the rocket force – plus four arms: the three units spun off from the SSF and the Joint Logistic Support Force, according to ministry spokesperson Wu Qian.

Experts on the Chinese military say the reorganization enhances Xi's direct control over the PLA's strategic capabilities and underscores China's ambitions in better mastering AI and other new technologies to prepare for what it calls the "intelligentized warfare" of the future.

The restructuring follows Xi's sweeping corruption purge of the PLA last year, which ensnared powerful generals and shook up the rocket force, an elite branch overseeing China's fast-expanding arsenal of nuclear and ballistic missiles.

The Information Support Force will be led by top generals from the now-defunct SSF.

SSF deputy commander Bi Yi was appointed commander of the new unit, while Li Wei, the SSF's political commissar, will take the same role in the

Information Support Force, according to state-run news agency Xinhua.

There was no mention of any new appointment for SSF commander Ju Qiansheng, who last year spurred speculation when he disappeared from public view amid a flurry of military purges before eventually resurfacing at a conference in late January.

'Better visibility'

Longtime PLA watchers say the latest reorganization is unlikely the result of the recent corruption purges, but rather a reflection that the SSF wasn't an ideal organizational format for the Chinese military.

"It shows that the SSF was not a satisfactory arrangement. It reduced Xi's visibility of important functions and did not really improve coordination between space, cyber, and network defense forces," said Joel Wuthnow, a senior research fellow at the Pentagon-funded National Defense University.

Before its disbandment, the SSF had two principal units – the Aerospace Systems Department overseeing the PLA's space operations and reconnaissance, and the Network System Department tasked with cyber, electronic and psychological warfare capabilities.

"I think the new structure will give Xi better visibility into what is happening in space, cyberspace, and network management. These functions will now be supervised at his level and not through the Strategic Support Force, which served as a middleman," Wuthnow said.

The lack of such visibility could bear high risks, especially during times of heightened tension and deep distrust between Beijing and Washington.

Last year, the US shot down a Chinese surveillance balloon after it traversed the continental United States. The incident caused a fresh crisis between the two powers and plunged bilateral relations into a deep freeze for months.

Though US intelligence officials said the balloon was part of an extensive surveillance program run by the Chinese military, Xi may not have been aware of the mission.

US President Joe Biden said last June that the Chinese leader didn't know about the balloon and was "very embarrassed" when it was shot down after it floated off course into American airspace.

James Char, a research fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore, said the conduct of strategic reconnaissance during the spy balloon incident would have been under the purview of the SSF's Aerospace Systems Department.

"That was one of the roles and responsibilities of the PLASSF," he said.

It is unclear if the balloon incident contributed to Xi's decision to disband the SSF.

Wuthnow, of the National Defense University, said the newly created Information Support Force will likely take charge of communications and network defense for the PLA.

"Getting these things right is of huge importance for the PLA in any future conflict, and they have been paying close attention to these functions and probably drawing lessons for their own organization from the war in Ukraine," he said, referring to Russia's ongoing invasion of its neighbor.

"So it makes sense that the [Central Military Commission] chairman would want to play a more direct role in that area."

'Intelligentized warfare'

The latest shake-up is likely the result of an ongoing review of how the military can better meet the strategic objectives of the ruling Chinese Communist Party, according to Char.

"I suppose the reorganization better reflects the importance the PLA has placed on speeding up the development of intelligentized warfare" brought by a new round of technological and industrial advancement, he said.

The concept of "intelligentized warfare" drew attention in a 2019 Chinese defense white paper that highlighted the military application of cutting-edge tech such as AI, quantum information, big data and cloud computing.

"The landscape of international military competition is undergoing historic changes. New and high-tech military technologies with information technology as the core is advancing with each passing day, and there's a prevailing trend to develop long-range precision, intelligent, stealthy or unmanned weaponry and equipment," the white paper said.

"War is accelerating its evolution in form towards informationized warfare, and intelligentized warfare is on the horizon."

The creation of the Information Support Force as a new branch directly under the Central Military Commission also underscores the importance of information dominance in modern warfare.

A commentary in the PLA Daily, the Chinese military's official mouthpiece, described network information technology as "the biggest variable" in enhancing combat capability.

"Modern wars are competitions between systems and structures, where control over information equates to control over the initiative in war," it said.

The emphasis on information dominance and "intelligentized warfare" also has significant implications for any potential future conflict in the Taiwan Strait.

China's Communist Party views Taiwan as part of its territory, despite never having controlled it, and has vowed to take control of the island – by force if necessary.



Char said in the event of a Taiwan conflict, the Information Support Force “would likely take over as the tip of the spear in supporting the PLA’s attempts to dominate the information space before Beijing’s adversaries can do so.”

### Xi Jinping unveils newest branch of Chinese military

21 April 2024, Global Nation

President Xi Jinping on Friday unveiled the newest branch of the Chinese military, the Information Support Force of the People’s Liberation Army, calling it a vital power in modern warfare.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, conferred the new force’s flag to its commander Lieutenant General Bi Yi and political commissar of the unit General Li Wei



President Xi Jinping unveils on Friday the newest branch in the Chinese military — the Information Support Force of the People’s Liberation Army. Xi conferred the new force’s flag to its commander Lieutenant General Bi Yi and political commissar of the unit General Li Wei in Beijing. XINHUA

at the force’s establishment ceremony at the CMC headquarters building in Beijing.

The president gave his instructions to the Information Support Force, ordering it to strive to become a powerful and modernized unit. He said that establishing the Information Support Force is a major decision by the CPC Central Committee and the CMC, aiming to build a strong PLA, and a strategic step in establishing a new structure of services and improving the military system with Chinese characteristics.

“This is of profound and far-reaching significance to the modernization of national defense and the armed forces and to the military’s fulfillment of its missions and tasks in the new era,” Xi said. “The Information Support Force is a brand-new strategic branch of the PLA and a key pillar of the integrated development and use of the network information system. It plays an important role and bears great responsibility in

promoting the PLA’s high-quality development and the ability to fight and win in modern warfare.”

The president ordered that the new force must be absolutely loyal to the Party. He stressed that the unit must focus on its core task of using information assets to support combat operations. It must maintain information flow, integrate information resources, protect information security and must integrate deeply into the military’s joint operation system.

The commander-in-chief also urged the new force to boost innovation, strengthen coordination and integration among different systems, cooperate with other forces, and bolster the sharing of assets. It must form a network information system which can support modern combat operations and has Chinese characteristics, Xi noted.

According to a decision made by the CMC, the Information Support Force is directly led by the CMC, and the official designation of the Strategic Support Force, which was founded in December 2015 to take charge of space, cyberspace and electronic warfare operations, is canceled.

Meanwhile, the leadership and structures of the PLA Space Force and the PLA Cyberspace Force have been rearranged accordingly, said the CMC.

The announcement also marked the first time China has confirmed the existence of the Space Force and the Cyberspace Force, which were widely believed to be major parts of the Strategic Support Force.

Senior Colonel Wu Qian, a spokesman for the Defense Ministry, told reporters at a news conference on Friday evening that with the latest overhaul, the PLA now has four services, namely the Ground Force, the Navy, the Air Force and the Rocket Force, and several sub-branches including the Space Force, the Cyberspace Force, the Information Support Force and the Joint Logistic Support Force.

In response to a question about the newly declassified Space Force, Wu said that building the force is of great significance in strengthening the capability to safely travel to outer space, openly and peacefully develop space resources, and enhance governance and crisis management in space.

“China’s space policies are clear and plain. We are always committed to the peaceful utilization of space and stand ready to work with all countries with the same commitment to strengthen exchanges, deepen cooperation and contribute to lasting peace and common security in space,” the spokesman said.

When asked whether the Cyberspace Force is used for “militarizing the internet”, Wu said cybersecurity remains a global challenge and poses a severe threat to China.

“Developing the Cyberspace Force and tools for cybersecurity and defense is important for reinforcing national cyberspace defense, promptly detecting and countering network intrusions and



maintaining our cybersovereignty and information security," he said.

### **Xi orders China's biggest military reorganization since 2015**

21 April 2024, Japan Times

Chinese leader Xi Jinping has ordered what amounts to the biggest reorganization of the nation's military since 2015 in a move that affects the force in charge of capabilities including cyberwarfare.

China will terminate the Strategic Support Force, which was created more than eight years ago to enhance capabilities in space, cyber, political and electronic warfare, the official Xinhua News Agency reported Friday.

Xi is in turn creating a new branch called the Information Support Force. The aerospace and cyber units previously under the Strategic Support Force will now be organizationally parallel to the newly created Information Support Force, the Defense Ministry said in a statement. The aerospace unit will improve China's capability to use space and step up the management of space crises, the ministry said.

The restructuring comes as the world's second-largest economy faces off with the U.S. in a fight for global influence, with cyberwarfare emerging as a key battleground. The U.S., U.K. and New Zealand accused China last month of sponsoring malicious cyber activity in targeting democratic institutions.

Reiterating the Communist Party's leadership over the army, Xi said that the new force will provide "key support in coordinating the construction and utilization of the cyber information system."

Li Wei, the political commissar from the now-defunct Strategic Support Force, will take that same role with the Information Support Force. He pledged to "resolutely" listen to Xi's instructions. The new commander of the Information Support Force is Bi Yi, state television CCTV reported.

The changes are aimed at better adapting China's military to the "informatization" conditions of modern warfare, said Cao Weidong, a retired senior researcher at the PLA Naval Research Academy. The restructuring will lead to "better deployment" of satellite systems, cyberspace, and when conducting electronic warfare, Cao told reporters on the sidelines of the West Pacific Naval Symposium in Qingdao.

The previous commander of the Strategic Support Force was Ju Qiansheng, whose disappearance had spurred speculation that he was linked to the broader turmoil in China's military leadership that's unfolded over the past year. While Ju has recently resurfaced, state media hasn't made clear his current position.

The latest revamp follows a sweeping purge by Xi of the military establishment last year. U.S. intelligence

experts viewed that move as a response to the discovery of widespread corruption in the military, including in the Rocket Force, which manages the country's expanding nuclear arsenal.

Former Defense Minister Li Shangfu was ousted from his role without explanation in October. China named Dong Jun, a navy veteran, as the new defense chief in December.

### **Chinese Ministry of State Security: 'Military Fans' at High Risk of Becoming Espionage Targets**

20 March 2024, RFA

China's Ministry of State Security has issued another stern warning about the potential national security threats posed by military enthusiasts, or "military fans." The ministry says this group is a high-risk target for espionage, theft of secrets, and leaks involving military matters.

In an article titled "Another Reminder for 'Military Fans'" published earlier this month, the ministry outlined several specific risks pertaining to this community's activities. The article states that military fans could inadvertently "guide" foreign intelligence operations by revealing sensitive military information, their online military forums and groups could become channels for overseas theft of secrets, and individual military fans could become targets for "screening and enticement" by foreign personnel acting as "insiders."

On March 7th, the ministry's official WeChat account delved deeper into the risks involved. The WeChat post noted that Chinese military fans obsessively track developments of advanced weapons and equipment, closely following details such as equipment quantities and models, troop locations, and aircraft serial numbers. They establish databases compiling this sensitive information and share it on websites, constantly expanding and refining the available data. "As time goes by, this information will become increasingly rich and professional, to the point of endangering military security," the Ministry of State Security warned.

This is not the first time that Beijing has raised alarms about the activity of military fans. On December 23rd of 2023, the Ministry cautioned fans against leaking information on construction progress, technical specifications, or deployment details of new military equipment. The Ministry's communication at that time stated that violations could result in prison sentences of 3 to 7 years. China's security establishment clearly views information gathering and sharing by these military enthusiasts as a critical risk to be proactively addressed.

## Xi Jinping tightens grip on China's military with new information warfare unit

19 April 2024, Financial Times

China has established a new information warfare department under the direct command of its top military body as it begins its largest restructuring of the armed forces in more than eight years. The shift of information warfare to the direct command of the Central Military Commission – the top Communist party and state organ that controls the People's Liberation Army – would hand Chinese leader Xi Jinping even more direct control over the military, analysts said. The Information Support Force will aim to "speed up military modernisation and effectively implement the mission of the people's armed forces in the new era", Xi said at a ceremony in Beijing on Friday. It will be removed from the Strategic Support Force, which was set up eight years ago as a new PLA branch combining information, cyber and space warfare departments under Xi's previous military restructuring, said a statement from the PLA Daily military news service. The space and cyber forces would also be brought under a new command structure, it said, de facto abolishing the Strategic Support Force. Under the SSF, the information forces had been in charge of collecting technical intelligence and providing intelligence support to regional military chiefs. Joe McReynolds, China security fellow at the Jamestown Foundation, said: "When the SSF was created, they rearranged existing capabilities under a new command structure. We guessed at the time that might be transitional, and that has now come to pass." Beijing's efforts to further strengthen the PLA are closely watched as China challenges US dominance in the Indo-Pacific region and wields its growing military power to intimidate various neighbours in territorial disputes. Xi's last major PLA restructuring in 2015 moved critical functions such as logistics, training and mobilisation directly under the command of the CMC, which he chairs. Combining cyber, information and space forces under the SSF was viewed as an attempt to create similar direct control. But experts on the Chinese military said that leaders had unwound that structure as a result of an incident last year in which a Chinese surveillance balloon was shot down by the US, as well as corruption investigations into generals and a failure to achieve synergies across the different divisions within the SSF. The military leadership has been experimenting with smaller reorganisations in recent years, suggesting that the 2015 reforms were not complete. "The relative success of the functions they moved under the CMC has convinced them that they will have the control they want," McReynolds said. He added that Beijing was focused on cutting out layers of

command and enabling top leaders to speak directly to tactical forces in wartime if needed. Bi Yi, a veteran army general, was appointed commander of the new Information Support Force, and Li Wei named as its political commissar. The latter position wields power equal with the commander as the Communist party seeks to enforce absolute loyalty and ideological correctness in the force, which belongs to the party rather than the state.

## NASA chief warns of Chinese military presence in space

17 April 2024, VOA News



FILE - A Long March-2C rocket, carrying the Einstein Probe satellite, lifts off from the Xichang Satellite Launch Center in Xichang in China's Sichuan province, Jan. 9, 2024. The head of the U.S. space agency said China is using its civilian program to mask military objectives.

China is bolstering its space capabilities and is using its civilian program to mask its military objectives, the head of the U.S. space agency said Wednesday, warning that Washington must remain vigilant.

"China has made extraordinary strides especially in the last 10 years, but they are very, very secretive," NASA administrator Bill Nelson told lawmakers on Capitol Hill.

"We believe that a lot of their so-called civilian space program is a military program. And I think, in effect, we are in a race," Nelson said.

He said he hoped Beijing would "come to its senses and understand that civilian space is for peaceful uses," but added: "We have not seen that demonstrated by China."

Nelson's comment came as he testified before the House Appropriations Committee on NASA's budget for fiscal 2025.

He said the United States should land on the moon again before China does, as both nations pursue lunar missions, but he expressed concern that were Beijing to arrive first, it could say: "OK, this is our territory, you stay out."

The United States is planning to put astronauts back on the moon in 2026 with its Artemis 3 mission. China says it hopes to send humans to the moon by 2030.

Nelson said he was confident the United States would not lose its "global edge" in space exploration.

"But you got to be realistic," he said. "China has really thrown a lot of money at it and they've got a lot of room in their budget to grow. I think that we just better not let down our guard."

### **China's latest Military Buildup in Tibet: China's Provocation does not end with just Cartographic Aggression**

16 April 2024, Indian Defence Review

Amidst the thawing snows and the onset of spring in the Himalayan Border Region, the possibility of a military confrontation between India and China looms ominously. Since March, China's expansive military buildup in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and the Tibetan areas has been disconcerting, marked by a rapid boost in troop size and military logistic infrastructure development.

This includes the upsurge in deploying thousands of newly recruited soldiers and officers from Mainland China into TAR and the Western Theater Command (WTC) as part of 2024 PLA's Spring recruitment drive. Additionally, lately, China has urgently sped up the construction of its military infrastructure projects, notably the recent boost of 417 Key Roadways Projects for a logistic system based on three-dimensional transportation networks in TAR of Airports, Railway, and Roadway.

China's aggressive move has been interpreted as a response towards India's induction of 10,000 soldiers and the strategic infrastructure upgrade, especially the Sela Tunnel, in the border areas along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Since 2017, Beijing has renamed a total of 62 different areas in Arunachal Pradesh as an integral part of the territorial jurisdiction of Southern Tibet "Zangnan". Apart from dismissing such actions as a gimmick or illogical, India should study the likely future implications of such actions by China and take pre-emptive steps to dissuade the PLA. The 62 renamed places of sovereign Indian territories as being integral to so-called "South-Tibet" is part of the "Three Warfares" strategy to gradually build up domestic and international opinion of their extraterritorial claims.

The current upsurge in militarization efforts by India has garnered significant attention, as covered by CNN and other foreign media "A high-altitude (Sela Tunnel) is the latest flashpoint in India-China border tensions". It seems that such news does not highlight China's ever-growing and non-stop construction of multiple strategic tunnels, bridges, and roads across the LAC with the like of the latest 417 Key Roadway construction announcement after March, which will

fuel further disputes and threaten India's security and sovereignty.

China's proactive role in exacerbating tensions along the borders with India extends beyond territorial renaming. By bolstering its military size and infrastructure development across highly sensitive border areas, China is indicating its potential aim to assert pressure and dominance on India and therefore strategically escalate the border conflict.

Between March 16th and 31st, 2024, the Chinese PLA's WTC initiated a substantial drive to induct newly recruited PLA soldiers, primarily from Mainland China. The newly recruited soldiers during PLA's Spring recruitment of first half of 2024 were mobilized and transported into TAR, and Tibetan areas incorporated in Qinghai, Gansu, and Sichuan Provinces within WTC. Other Tibetan areas, specifically the Dechen (Diqing) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture also witnessed an influx of newly recruited soldiers.

In addition, China carried out the direct selection and recruitment of officers for the Tibet Military Region (TMR), targeting mainly fresh graduates with science and engineering backgrounds majoring in Hindi language, aircraft design and engineering, aircraft manufacturing engineering, aircraft power engineering, computer science and technology, network engineering and nursing, and other academic majors. The Chinese PLA's recruitment targets depict China's focus on bolstering military infrastructure construction, cyber operation, and linguistic capabilities, particularly across the LAC.

Assessing Tibetan's presence and participation within the Chinese PLA stationed in TAR

A growing concern among defense analysts in India relates to the increasing number of Tibetans recruitment within the Chinese PLA's forces following the violent 2020 Galwan Clashes.

Major areas within the WTC lie in the territory of the traditional areas of Tibet, which were occupied in the 1950s and subsumed into PRC as TAR (Outer Tibet) and Tibetan areas within Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan Province (Inner Tibet). Although Tibetan traditional areas constitute the largest area within WTC spanning across the whole of the Tibetan Plateau, there are only meager numbers of Tibetan soldiers inside the Chinese PLA.

Recent census data from the China Statistical Yearbook of 2021, recorded a total Tibetan population within the PRC as 7,060,731 people, mainly inhabiting the traditional areas of Tibet, constituting modern-day TAR (Outer Tibet) and Incorporated Tibetan areas (Inner Tibet) absorbed into the four neighboring Chinese provinces. Out of more than 7 million Tibetans, only 7487 Tibetans are recorded as being active servicemen in the PLA,

according to China's Seventh National Census in 2020.

Since the Chinese PLA's annexation and its subsequent occupation of Tibet in the 1950s, Tibetans continuously have been at the worst end of systemic repression, leading to a reluctance among Tibetan youth to enlist in the army. The declining number of applicants for military conscription in TAR indicates the lack of support for an army that had stolen and deprived Tibetans of their freedom and sovereignty.

In 2018, there was a total of 6,697 people applying for military conscription from the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). Since then, the number of applicants from TAR for military conscription has shown a declining trend, with the decreasing numbers to 5,800 in 2020, declining to 3800 in 2021, and a slight increase to 4400 during 2022, as per local reports. Among the total permanent population of 3,648,100 in TAR as per the Seventh Chinese Census in 2020, there were 443,370 Han Chinese and 66,829 non-Tibetan ethnic Chinese.

Therefore, it is likely that Han Chinese and other ethnic groups may constitute a significant portion of the applicants during military conscription since there is a lack of Tibetan participation.

Even Lhasa, the most populated city in TAR with a total permanent population of 867,891 people in 2020, had only 472 applicants during the spring 2022 military conscription. Not all 475 applicants are necessarily Tibetan, since Lhasa was recorded as the city with the most Han Chinese populations in 2020.

Out of the total population in Lhasa, there were 233,083 Han-Chinese and 25,953 non-Tibetan ethnic groups permanently settled in the area. Similarly, Zhanda (Zanda) County bordering India's Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand and the closest border county to New Delhi, witnessed only two Tibetan applicants for 2024 spring recruitment out of a total population of 8,454 people.

Contrary to the growing claims of increasing numbers of Tibetans within the PLA, the majority of the soldiers and officers within the Tibet Military Region and other WTC areas are Han Chinese or other non-Tibetan ethnic groups from Mainland China.

**Recent Strategic Infrastructure Expansion: Massive 417 Key Roadway Construction Projects underway**  
The uptick in the deployment of the newly recruited soldiers in the TAR is supplemented by an intense infrastructural development plan intended to strengthen the Chinese PLA's logistical and transportation capabilities. The recent unveiling of 417 Key roadway construction projects in TAR is strategically designed to bolster China's military

prowess, particularly in reaction to the construction of the Sela Tunnel near Eastern LAC Sectors by India. On March 22, the Transportation Department of the TAR announced an extensive plan of 417 roadway construction projects scheduled for completion within this year.

As per the official announcement, the key projects targeting TAR border areas of 2024 included:

- G4218 Lhasa to Shigatse Airport section construction project.
- G109 Golmud to Nagqu section quality improvement project.
- Implementation of 281 administrative village access projects and the addition of 175 administrative villages to have access to hardened roads.
- Major quality improvement projects of the G318 Highway including reconstruction of the Wada (Lengqu River) Section.
- To start all projects within the "14th Five-Year Plan"

In addition to the 417 Roadway construction projects, China has announced two other strategic infrastructure plans in recent months, which further significantly boost their transportation logistic network and military readiness. On February 1, the "Key Construction Project Plan for Region in 2024" issued by TAR's Development and Reform Commission, unveiled 187 Key construction projects with a planned investment of 151.8 Billion Yuan. Earlier on January 11, TAR's government announced an 80 billion yuan (\$11.2 billion) investment plan to boost key infrastructure such as airports, railways, and highways in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). Within the 80 Billion Yuan Investment, China executed three major roadway projects mainly on the India-china border, comprising the construction of the Metok (Medog) to Chayu (Zayu) section of National Highway G219, ;an upgrade and renovation of National Highway G318, ; and the opening of the entire Lhasa-Shigatse (Lashi) Expressway to traffic was proclaimed.

Concurrently, the prefectural level administration across TAR has also intensified infrastructure construction projects in recent months. For instance, in Ali Prefecture, bordering Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand State, 340 Key Construction Projects for 2024 with a 72.424 Billion Yuan total investment were recently announced.

According to the TAR's governmental work report of 2024, the region's border infrastructure, especially the road transportation network has undergone major upgrades, with 97% of Border Towns and 87% of Xiaokang Border Villages now having access to hardened roads. Earlier reports highlighted that by the end of 2023, a total of 123,00 Kilometers of roadway had been opened for traffic.

This massive roadway project marks a major progression towards realizing an extensive three-dimensional transportation network, with the nexus of Roadways, Railways, and Airports. Thereby linking every remote and border area of TAR with Mainland China and neighboring countries such as Nepal and Bhutan. This strategic design comes under the directives outlined in “The 14th Five-Year Plan for the National Economic and Social Development of the Tibet Autonomous Region, Outline of the plan and long-term goals for 2035” issued on January 24, 2021.

As reiterated by Chinese officials, the main objective of the three-dimensional transportation network in TAR is to establish a modern military logistic system designed to ensure long-term stability and peace in the region.

Conclusion

The recent clashes between India and China along LAC borders and the PLA Navy presence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), along with their strategic competition for geopolitical influence over South Asia, have increased the specter of a conflict between the two major powers in Asia.

China’s stern warning to India against escalating border tensions with the induction of 10,000 soldiers and strategic Sela Tunnel construction across the LAC constitutes a duplicity and hypocrisy in its behaviour. Rather than de-escalating border tensions, China’s recent actions suggest the opposite. Its aggression against India does not end with the remaining areas of the sovereign Indian territories. Under the guise of disengagement and de-escalation, Beijing is rapidly bolstering its military power and strategic build-up in TAR with the recent deployment of fresh PLA recruits into TAR and ramping up its logistic infrastructures.

Highest Altitude Airport in the World 2024, List of Top-10

12 April 2024, Current Affairs

As air travel continues to connect the world, airports play a crucial role in facilitating global mobility. However, some airports operate under extreme conditions, situated at breathtaking altitudes where thin air and challenging weather conditions pose unique challenges for pilots and engineers alike. In this article, we delve into the realm of high-altitude aviation to explore the top ten highest altitude airports in the world as of 2024.

Highest Altitude Airport in the World 2024

As of 2024, Daocheng Yading Airport (DCY) in China remains the world’s highest-altitude airport, situated at 4,411m elevation. It serves as the vital link to the stunning Yading Nature Reserve, just 6km away. With a single runway stretching 4,200m long and 45m wide, and a compact 5,000m<sup>2</sup> terminal,

the airport operates under special protocols due to its extreme altitude. Aircraft adhere to reduced speeds during takeoff and landing, while passengers are encouraged to acclimate to the high altitude beforehand.

Top-10 Highest Altitude Airports in the World By 2024

Highest Altitude Airports in the Wor			
Rank	Airport	Location	Altitude (in f
	Daocheng Yading	China	14
	Bangda	T i b e China	14
	Kangding	China	14
	Ngari Gunsa	China	14
	El Alto International	Bolivia	13
	Captain Nicolas	Bolivia	12
	International Airport		
	Yushu Batang Airpoi	China	12
	Inca Manco ( Peru		12
	International Airport		
	Shigatse Peace Airp	China	12
	Syanboche Airport	Nepal	12

World’s Highest Airport – Daocheng Yading Airport  
Location: China

Altitude: 14,472 feet

Since 2013, Daocheng Yading Airport in China has claimed the title of the highest airport globally, standing at an altitude of 4411 meters above sea level. Its runway stretches 4,200 meters long and 45 meters wide, while the terminal covers 5000 square meters, notable for its UFO-like design. This airport serves as a remarkable feat of engineering amidst the challenging high-altitude terrain of the Tibetan Plateau.

Second Highest Altitude Airport of the World – Bangda Airport

Location: China

Altitude: 14,219 feet

The second-highest airport globally is Bangda Airport, located in Qamdo, Tibet, at an elevation of 4,334 meters above sea level. Renowned for its extraordinary altitude, it features the world’s longest publicly used paved runway, stretching 5,500 meters. This extensive runway is vital to accommodate large aircraft, compensating for



reduced engine and aircraft performance during takeoff and landing at such extreme altitudes.

### Third Highest Airport in the World – Kangding Airport

Location: China

Altitude: 14,042 feet

The third-highest airport globally is Kangding Airport in China, nestled in the western province of Sichuan. Situated at 4,280 meters above sea level, it stands as a testament to engineering at extreme altitudes. Kangding Airport serves as a crucial gateway to the region, facilitating air travel amidst challenging mountainous terrain. Its strategic location aids in connecting travelers to the picturesque landscapes of the Tibetan Plateau.

### Chinese military researchers zero in on AI-driven navy, space combat to ‘win future wars’

10 April 2024, South China Morning Post

Study Times, a key Communist Party paper, publishes series by PLA experts on emerging weapons technology to take strategic high ground

Monday’s articles come as Xi Jinping underlines need to ‘boldly innovate’ during country’s ‘military struggle’

Researchers in China’s armed forces have prioritised key areas of military technologies, including AI-driven naval warfare and aerospace combat capabilities, expanding on President Xi Jinping calls for “bold innovations” in advanced technology.

In a series devoted to Xi’s concept of developing “new quality combat power”, Study Times, a publication under the Central Party School of China’s Communist Party, published articles on Monday by various People’s Liberation Army (PLA) researchers stressing that such technologies had become the strategic high ground in military dominance and were essential to winning on future battlefields.

Xi has repeatedly pushed the PLA to develop hi-tech and advanced capabilities to win a modern war. In a meeting in March he urged officials to “boldly innovate and explore new types of combat force construction and applications, and liberate and develop new quality combat power”.

The authors said the role of artificial intelligence was a priority for “new combat forces”, and that it was a “clear trend” that AI-powered military systems would be a “key variable in changing the rules of war”.

The authors discussed how AI technology was changing the nature of military command and decision-making, saying it could process and analyse large amounts of data to help make faster decisions, and in some cases, independently make complex tactical decisions and operations. Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and unmanned drone boats were also becoming more prevalent, they said.

After Xi last month urged forces to prepare “for the military struggle at sea”, the articles discussed how “unmanned intelligent combat will deeply change the deployments of naval forces, prompting changes in battle concepts and accelerating the evolution of combat”. The authors also explored how massive drone networks could assess situational awareness during sea battles, process data with cloud computing, and use advanced algorithms to form adaptive command, assault and logistic chains. AI-controlled drones could also be used for tasks such as air refuelling, communications relays, electronic countermeasures for reconnaissance and surveillance, swarm bombing and decoy deployment, they said. The flexibility and cost-effectiveness of AI-integrated drones would upend traditional naval theories, one researcher wrote, and “new methods of warfare at sea, such as unmanned attrition warfare and unmanned guerrilla warfare, will gain new asymmetric advantages”. In another article, researchers focused on the expansion of “new military realms”, in which “electromagnetic space, cyberspace and aerospace” would become the “new frontiers of military struggle”. “History has proved that whoever can effectively grasp and use the right to control a certain space through the development of new combat forces will gain a great advantage in future military competitions,” the article said.

The researchers also singled out circumstances that they thought would compel China’s space combat force to modernise, and warned that the PLA must avoid situations “in which core technologies are controlled by others as soon as possible”.

“We must have a deep understanding of the important role of emerging tech and new combat forces in modern warfare, be aware of new fields of technology, and understand the potential of new combat capabilities to see the future battlefield clearly and win future wars,” they said.

### Longest Runway In The World: A Brief Guide To China's Rikaze Peace Airport

07 April 2024, Simple Flying



Rikaze Peace Airport (RKZ) is one of the highest airports and has the world's longest runway. Higher altitude airports in China and Bolivia pose challenges

due to thin air and low oxygen levels. Airbus A319 aircrafts are used for high-elevation airports, equipped with special features for operations.



First opened as a purely military facility in 1973, Rikaze Peace Airport (RKZ) became a dual-use military and civilian airport in 2010 following a 532 million yuan expansion. Serving Shigatse in the Tibet Autonomous Region of China, Rikaze Peace Airport (RKZ) is one of the highest elevations in the world at 12,408 feet above sea level.

While it is not the world's highest airport, it is tied with Ulyanovsk Vostochny Airport (ULY) in Russia for having the world's longest runway at 16,000 feet long.

Higher altitude airports are:

- Daocheng Yading Airport (DCY) in China is 14,566 feet above sea level.
- Changdu Bangda Airport (BPX) in China is 14,219 feet above sea level.

Other high altitude airports can be found in South America

Before the massive building boom in China, the world's highest runways were in South America and included the following airports:

- El Alto International Airport (LPB) in Bolivia is 13,326 feet above sea level.
- Captain Nicolas Rojas Airport (POI) in Bolivia is 12,913 feet above sea level.

Why do high-elevation airports need long runways?

At 5,400 feet above sea level, Denver International Airport (DEN) in Colorado has long posed challenges to pilots, but things start to deteriorate further once you get above 6,500 feet. Airports above this height are more challenging due to lower air density and lower levels of oxygen. Compared to sea level, airports at high elevations have thinner air, which affects how aircraft perform, because the air is less dense. When it flows over the wings, it produces less lift. Likewise, less oxygen in the air reduces the amount of thrust from the engines. These two factors combined force pilots to carefully calculate takeoff and landing distances along with the plane's rate of climb. Another factor that often comes into play is that high-altitude airports have unpredictable weather that changes rapidly, as is the case at Rikaze Peace Airport (RKZ) in Tibet.

The weather at Rikaze Peace Airport (RKZ)

The climate at Rikaze Peace Airport (RKZ) consists of a dry monsoon-influenced continental type. The summers are hot and humid due to the East Asian monsoons, while the winters are cold, dry, and windy due to the sizable Siberian anticyclone. The area is often subjected to sand storms blowing across the Mongolian steppe from the Gobi Desert during the spring. The autumn, just like spring, is relatively short and dry with very little rain. Rikaze Peace Airport (RKZ) is 26.7 miles from Tibet's second-largest city, Shigatse, in Jiangdang Township. In 2020, Xigazê, or Rikaze as it is called in Tibetan, had a population of 798,153. According to the aviation flight tracking website, Flightradar24 Peace Airport (RKZ) has no international flights but does serve three airports in China, which are:

- Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport (CTU) has ten flights per week operated by Tibet Airlines using Airbus A319 aircraft.
- Chongqing Jiangbei International Airport (CKG) has three flights per week by West Air (China) using Airbus A319 aircraft.
- Xi'an Xianyang International Airport (XIY) has six flights per week by China Eastern Airlines using Airbus A319 aircraft.

Ulyanovsk Vostochny Airport (ULY) is used by large cargo planes

At only 253 above the sea, Ulyanovsk Vostochny Airport (ULY) in Ulyanovsk Oblast in Russia has a long runway because it is a base for large load cargo operator Volga-Dnepr Airlines.

Rikaze Peace Airport (RKZ) has a 48,000 square feet terminal building and added a second 9,843-foot runway, which is used by the People's Republic of China military to test its high-altitude long-endurance Guizhou WZ-7 Soaring Dragon unmanned aerial reconnaissance drones.

Why airlines use the Airbus A319 to fly to Rikaze Peace Airport (RKZ)

The Airbus A319 is one of the few aircraft certified for high-altitude airport operation by the Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA). When operating from high-elevation airports, there are two main elements that come into play: engine thrust and passenger oxygen requirements.

Because of the air density at high elevations, Airbus has fitted some A319s with a thrust bump that increases the takeoff/go-around (TOGA) thrust by 10%. The thrust bump buttons are activated by pushing two red buttons on the back of the thrust levers.

For higher altitude airports, the oxygen mask drop levels and a greater passenger oxygen capacity needs to be changed. The Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) requires all planes

using high-altitude airports to carry a 55-minute supply of oxygen.

The usual amount of oxygen is 15 minutes, which is more than enough time for pilots to take the aircraft to lower levels. When flying over high mountainous terrain in Tibet, a pilot would need more time to get the aircraft to a flight level where oxygen was not needed.

#### About Tibet Airlines

Headquartered in the Lhasa, Tibet Autonomous Region, Tibet Airlines commenced flights on July 26, 2011. Its inaugural route was from Lhasa Gonggar Airport (LXA) to Ngari Gunsa Airport (NGQ). Later in the same year, Tibet began to fly direct flights between Lhasa, Beijing, and Shanghai. According to the aviation data and statistics website, ch-aviation Tibet Airlines serves 55 domestic destinations within China using a fleet of 45 aircraft.

The aircraft in the Tibet Airlines fleet are

- 27 x Airbus A319-100s
- 7 x Airbus A319-100Ns with 13 to be delivered
- 6 x Airbus A320-200s
- 5 X A330-200s

China set to become the world's largest air force, top US military official warns

April 1, 2024

<https://interestingengineering.com/military/china-worlds-largest-air-force>

Navy Adm. John Aquilino characterized the modernization of China's military as "the biggest threat since World War 2."

China is set to become the world's largest air force and could replace the United States, a top US military official warned. According to Navy Adm. John Aquilino, head of the US Indo-Pacific Command, China's military modernization is "the biggest threat since World War 2."

"What we all have to understand is we haven't faced a threat like this since World War 2. The largest military, and again as Senator Wicker said, the world's largest Navy, soon to be the world's largest Air Force. So, the magnitude, scope and scale of this security challenge cannot be understated," Aquilino said in a testimony on Capitol Hill on March 21.

"Our adversaries have become increasingly aggressive and emboldened. The PRC's unprecedented military buildup and campaign of course of actions destabilize the region and they challenge our values and the institutions that support a free and open Indo-Pacific," he added. In his last testimony as the Commander of US Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM), Aquilino noted that PLA's aviation has undergone a significant transformation since 2021. "Combined, the PLA Air Force (PLAAF) and PLAN Aviation constitute the largest aviation force in the Indo Pacific. Over half of

the PLA's operational fighter force is 4th and 5th generation, enabling longer-range A2/AD and counter-air operations across the western Pacific Ocean. The PLA is also developing a stealth bomber that can cover the Second Island Chain and the Western Pacific," he wrote in a March 18 statement. Catching up with the US economically and technologically

Furthermore, the military official also pointed out that the US can't just spend money to stay ahead because "China is catching up economically and technologically."

"While modernization of the force and the development of new concepts are essential to our ability to deter, we need to move at the speed and pace required to address the rapidly evolving security environment," he wrote.

In a 2023 assessment of Chinese military capabilities, the Pentagon highlighted that when considering the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) and Navy together, they possess over 3,150 aircraft excluding trainer versions and unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), of which approximately 2,400 are combat aircraft, including fighters, strategic bombers, tactical bombers, multi-mission tactical, and attack aircraft. "The PLAAF is rapidly catching up to Western air forces. The PLAAF continues to modernize with the delivery of domestically built aircraft and a wide range of UASs," reads a key takeaway from the report. Meanwhile, the US Air Force, though currently at its smallest size in recent years, maintains approximately 4,000 aircraft that are not trainers or drones. Moreover, additional aircraft are operated by the Navy, Marine Corps, and Army, collectively numbering several thousand more, The EurAsian Times reported.

#### **China set to become the world's largest air force, top US military official warns**

01 April 2024, Bojan Stojkovski, Interesting Engineering

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## March

### Chinese military's security chief Wang Renhua elevated to top rank of general

29 March 2024, South China Morning Post

- Promotion could give Wang and the CMC Political and Legal Affairs Commission, which he heads, more power, observer says
- President Xi Jinping presented him with a certificate of order at a ceremony in Beijing on Thursday, according to state television



General Wang Renhua heads the commission that oversees the military's courts, procuratorates and prisons. Photo: CCTV

President Xi Jinping has promoted the PLA's security chief to the rank of general, a departure from recent practice that comes amid a purge of military leaders. Wang Renhua, head of the Central Military Commission's Political and Legal Affairs Commission, was elevated to the highest rank for officers in active service on Thursday.

Wang, 62, is the third security chief of the People's Liberation Army since a major overhaul of the military in 2015. He took up the job in late 2019 and was promoted to lieutenant general.





Xi Jinping (front row, centre) poses for a photo with top military brass and two newly promoted generals, Wang Renhua (back row, left) and Xiao Tianliang (back row, right), in Beijing on Thursday. Photo: Xinhua

He becomes the first general to serve in this position since the overhaul – his predecessor Song Dan was a lieutenant general when he was security chief, as was Li Xiaofeng before him.

It comes as the ruling Communist Party is ramping up a campaign targeting corruption in the military. In December, nine PLA generals – including a number of senior members of the PLA Rocket Force responsible for China's nuclear arsenal – were dismissed from the top legislature.

Meanwhile, Li Shangfu – who has not been seen in public since August – was sacked as defence minister and state councillor in October, without explanation. Li was also removed from the CMC last month.

Others include aerospace company chairman Feng Jiehong, who resigned from the legislature in February. Li Zhizhong, a lieutenant general who was deputy commander of the PLA's Central Theatre Command, was also dismissed from the legislature.

Wang heads the commission that oversees the military's courts, procuratorates and prisons. It is responsible for formulating laws and regulations related to the military, including those protecting the rights of personnel.

Lu Li-shih, a former instructor at the Taiwanese naval academy in Kaohsiung, said Wang's promotion could give both him and the commission more power. "[This] means the elevation of his commission and military courts and military prosecutors' office – not just a promotion for [Wang]," he said.

Lu added that the promotion would also give the commission more authority in the trials of senior generals.

Xi – who is also chairman of the CMC – presented Wang with a certificate of order to elevate him to the top rank at a ceremony in Beijing on Thursday, state broadcaster CCTV reported.

Xiao Tianliang, president of the PLA's National Defence University, was also promoted to general, in line with past practice.

Wang, who is originally from Sichuan province, has previously served as director of the political unit at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in the Gobi Desert, and as deputy head of the PLA Ground Force political work department. In 2017, he became chief of the graft-buster of the PLA Navy's East Sea Fleet. As PLA security chief, Wang is also a member of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission, a party body that oversees all security-related matters. Prior to the 2015 military overhaul, PLA security chiefs were generals who were also in charge of the CMC's Commission for Discipline Inspection – the graft-buster responsible for investigating alleged wrongdoings by military officers.

### Chinese Ministry of State Security: 'Military Fans' at High Risk of Becoming Espionage Targets

20 March 2024, RFA

China's Ministry of State Security has issued another stern warning about the potential national security threats posed by military enthusiasts, or "military fans." The ministry says this group is a high-risk target for espionage, theft of secrets, and leaks involving military matters.

In an article titled "Another Reminder for 'Military Fans'" published earlier this month, the ministry outlined several specific risks pertaining to this community's activities. The article states that military fans could inadvertently "guide" foreign intelligence operations by revealing sensitive military information, their online military forums and groups could become channels for overseas theft of secrets, and individual military fans could become targets for "screening and enticement" by foreign personnel acting as "insiders."

On March 7th, the ministry's official WeChat account delved deeper into the risks involved. The WeChat post noted that Chinese military fans obsessively track developments of advanced weapons and equipment, closely following details such as equipment quantities and models, troop locations, and aircraft serial numbers. They establish databases compiling this sensitive information and share it on websites, constantly expanding and refining the available data. "As time goes by, this information will become increasingly rich and professional, to the point of endangering military security," the Ministry of State Security warned.

This is not the first time that Beijing has raised alarms about the activity of military fans. On December 23rd of 2023, the Ministry cautioned fans against leaking information on construction progress, technical specifications, or deployment details of new military equipment. The Ministry's communication at that time stated that violations could result in prison sentences of 3 to 7 years. China's security



establishment clearly views information gathering and sharing by these military enthusiasts as a critical risk to be proactively addressed.

### **China's South Asia 'bridgehead' needs urgent infrastructure boost to aid security, mineral exploration**

08 March 2024, South China Morning Post

China should address an urgent need for infrastructure construction in a strategically important part of its southwestern Tibet autonomous region – seen as a “bridgehead” to South Asia – to enhance national security and mineral exploration, according to the head of one of its largest aluminium producers. “As a base for China’s mineral resources reserve, [Ngari prefecture] is an important transport and logistics hub in the western part of the country,” said Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference delegate Duan Xiangdong during the ongoing “two sessions” in Beijing.

“There is an urgent need [for the region] to enhance its infrastructure, such as electricity and transport.” Located in the remote and high-altitude western region near India, Ngari prefecture grapples with a challenging terrain and harsh climate, which has hindered logistics and infrastructure development, further constraining its economic progress.

While the region had made progress in mineral exploration that has contributed to China’s reserves of strategic mineral resources over the past few years, progress has been crippled by inadequate infrastructure, Duan added.

“Currently, the electrical grid capacity in the region is insufficient to meet the demands of its economic and social development, particularly given the absence of railway lines,” he said, according to the Aluminum Corporation of China official website on Tuesday.

He added that the region’s administrative centre is over 1,200km (746 miles) from the nearby railway stations.

“Relying solely on road transport results in long distances, high costs and low efficiency, thereby compromising the region’s ability to support the security and development of the country’s border area,” Duan added.

He called for “concurrently advancing” infrastructure construction and mineral resource exploration to “turn its resource advantages into economic strengths”.

Beijing has put energy self-reliance and security high on its agenda, ramping up domestic exploration and mining for critical minerals amid growing geopolitical tensions that risk its status in the global supply chain. Duan suggested speeding up power grid construction in northwest Tibet, increasing electricity purchase from other regions and enhancing the transmission

capacity of power interconnections with the neighbouring provinces of Sichuan and Qinghai.

To address the logistics challenges, Duan proposed accelerating the construction of the northern line of the Xinjiang-Tibet railway.

Tibet plans to complete building 4,000km of railway lines by 2025, according to its 14th five-year plan, with the section between the city of Xigaze – also known as Shigatse – and Lake Pelku expected to begin operation next year.

The government and relevant enterprises should also work together to improve the green, efficient and sustainable exploration and utilisation of strategic mineral resources in the prefecture, added Duan.

Beijing has increased investment in Tibet, initiating a project to establish the world’s highest computing data centre in its capital city of Lhasa, which will span over 645,000 square metres (6.9 million sq ft). The 11.8 billion yuan (US\$1.6 billion) project, which completed its first phase of construction in 2020, is expected to produce an annual revenue of 10 billion yuan, according to the state-backed Xinhua News Agency.

## **February**

### **China moved military forces in disregard of agreements: Jaishankar on border row in eastern Ladakh**

26 February 2024, Tribune India

India and China are rising and the two countries, in the process, are changing the world order, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Monday.

Jaishankar, citing talks between leadership of the two countries in Mamallapuram and Wuhan, said India tried to maintain an “equilibrium” in the ties through diplomacy, but the relations took a different turn following China’s military build-up along the Line of Actual Control in 2020 in violation of laid down norms.

The external affairs minister, speaking at a media summit organised by the TV9 Network, described the rise of India and China as “significant” in the global geopolitical scenario.

“If you were to list three or four really big things which have changed in the last 20-25 years, I think most people would agree it would be the rise of China and the rise of India,” he said, replying to a question.

“You can say China started it much earlier because our own politics here delayed the era of reform. That’s okay. What’s done is done. But there is no question, both countries are rising and for world politics, this poses a very interesting problem,” he said.

"The problem is this: both are changing the world order by their rise. So each one has an impact vis-a-vis the world. But they also happened to be neighbours. So their relationship is also changing while it is changing vis-a-vis the rest of the world," Jaishankar added.

The external affairs minister argued that the situation, therefore, is making it "very complicated to create an equilibrium". They were part of "equilibrium maintenance exercise", Jaishankar said when specifically asked about the informal summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in the Chinese city of Wuhan in 2018 and Mamallapuram in 2019.

"We tried to maintain that equilibrium naturally—first through diplomacy. So what you saw in Wuhan and Mamallapuram, etc was that equilibrium maintenance exercise," he said.

"But what happened in 2020 was, China for whatever reason chose to move military forces in disregard of agreements. That called for a different response for the equilibrium," he said.

"The logical thing for us to do, which is what we did, was we moved our forces and in a very big way. So from 2020, you have an equilibrium, one part of which is the military posture in the border areas, one part of it today obviously is the political relationship impacted by this border situation," he said.

"One part of it is also the economic measures that we have taken," he added.

Jaishankar said the Modi government believes that interests of the country's working class, small enterprises and small industries must be protected against "unfair competition".

"Our effort today is to build our deep strengths. We have to build our digital capabilities, our telecom, our manufacturing, our pharma industry, our health self-sufficiency, our defence industry, our ability to deploy on the border which you can only do if you build infrastructure," he said.

Jaishankar suggested that India's annual average expenditure on the border with China was about Rs 3,500 crore till 2014.

Today, it is almost Rs 15,000 crore, he said.

There was a neglect of the border infrastructure, he said, adding "you cannot defend the border if you do not build infrastructure there".

### **Military diplomacy in focus amid mega peacekeeping exercise**

26 February 2024, The Nation

With powerful nations sending high-level defence delegations to Kathmandu, Nepal's military diplomacy is in full swing.

Nepal Army is hosting the fourth edition of Exercise Shanti Prayas, which brings more than

1,100 military personnel from 17 nations. Admiral John Aquilino, who leads the United States Indo-Pacific Command, arrived in Kathmandu via New Delhi on Saturday to observe the exercise sponsored by the Nepali and US armies.

Shanti Prayas is a multinational peacekeeping exercise hosted rotationally by the Nepal Army and the US Indo-Pacific Command.

Observers say having good military-to-military relations contributes to the improvement of overall bilateral and multilateral relations between Nepal and respective countries.

Adm Aquilino is scheduled to visit the Birendra Peace Operations Training Centre (BPOTC) in Panchkhal on Sunday, said Nepal Army spokesperson Brigadier General Krishna Prasad Bhandari. He is also scheduled to meet President Ramchandra Paudel, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Purna Bahadur Khadka, Chief of the Army Staff General Prabhu Ram Sharma and senior government and military officials, on Monday, according to the sources.

In New Delhi, Aquilino addressed the Raising Dialogue and held talks with the External Affairs Minister of India S Jaishankar, among other Indian officials. Jaishankar wrote about his meeting with the admiral on the social media platform X (formerly Twitter). The minister said that he had a good conversation with Aquilino on strategic affairs.

Prime Minister Dahal inaugurated the Exercise Shanti Prayas-IV on February 20. The event will continue till March 4. Rachel Schiller, the US deputy assistant secretary for programs and operations under the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, attended during the opening ceremony.

Shanti Prayas-IV is designed to improve peacekeeping capabilities, strengthen military-to-military cooperation, and enhance the core peacekeeping competencies of all participants by the UN doctrines. The militaries of Nepal, the US, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Fiji, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Uruguay, and Vietnam are participating in the effort, according to the Nepal Army.

After the Shanti Prayas concludes, a high-level delegation led by a lieutenant general of the Chinese People's Liberation Army is due to arrive in Kathmandu. The agenda of the March visit is yet to be fixed, according to sources at the Ministry of Defence.

There are some pending issues with China like military procurement, installation of an ammunition plant for the Nepal Army, another joint military exercise, training for Nepali Army officials, and

military-to-military cooperation, sources privy to the developments said.

"The Chinese side has informed us that the PLA delegation will be led by a lieutenant general. The two sides are finalising agendas and issues," said a defence official informed on the matter.

Chinese Major General Yue Ande of the Tibet Military Command of the PLA visited Kathmandu in August last year. In talks held with Gen Sharma, the two sides discussed holding the pending joint military drills, among other issues.

When Nepal Army chief Sharma visited China in October-November last year to attend the Beijing-Xiangshan Forum, he held talks with Chief of Staff Gen Liu Zhenli of the Central Military Commission (CMC) of the Chinese Army and visited Chinese Army's different units and training centres in Xi'an, Shanghai and Guangzhou.

However, Nepal Army spokesperson Brig Gen Bhandari said that he has no information about the PLA delegation's Nepal visit.

Moreover, several Indian Army officials and delegations have also visited Kathmandu and held talks with General Sharma and other senior military and government officials.

In the context of the Indo-Pacific, Shanti Prayas is a remarkable event at a time when regional bodies like SAARC have stalled, said retired Maj Gen Purna Silwal. The participation of India and other democratic countries in this particular multilateral military exercise is significant.

"In terms of participation, the event this year is the biggest of its kind in Nepal. As the army is the country's only stable institution, all major and middle powers want to have good relations with it," said Silwal. "If the relations between the armies are good, other relations will automatically improve. This will further stabilise and cement bilateral ties."

Nepal Army is capable of handling geopolitical rivalry, and such military exercises and arrivals of individual military delegations from various countries are not targeted against any nation, Silwal added.

After Nepal became the highest troops contributing country to UN peacekeeping, this is another milestone for us, said Silwal. "This achievement will boost our confidence."

### **CCP Expands Military Recruitment, Especially in Rural Areas**

13 February 2024, ChinaScope

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is expanding its military recruitment, particularly in rural areas.

Recently-leaked CCP recruitment documents state that the CCP's recruiting focus should be on college students, while also recruiting widely in the countryside, "leaving no dead zones" (no unrecruited rural areas). For those Chinese citizens

who leave their city of residence to travel for work or school, it is mandatory that they register with the military regarding their travel plans. Expert observers believe this expanded recruitment activity is preparation for large-scale war.

The CCP is focused on recruiting college graduates, who are suitable for adaptation to modern information warfare. Rural recruits are also targeted to provide a large pool of soldiers whose casualties may have less immediate economic and political impact. There are reports that the CCP has been recruiting discharged soldiers back into service only 5 years after they leave the military, as well as relaxing requirements to allow military service by people with criminal records.

New military recruitment regulations enacted in May 2022 have enabled this expansion. The new regulations include allowing retired soldiers to re-enlist, as well as directives to recruit students with high-tech skills. The CCP has completed a nationwide military service registration covering the country's entire population, signaling preparation for war.

According to expert Yuan Hongbing, a Chinese legal expert living in exile in Australia, the CCP under Xi Jinping is waiting to see what will happen in the 2024 US presidential election. The CCP believes that, regardless of who wins, the result will divide America for years, creating a window of opportunity for the CCP to attack Taiwan. Yuan says China's war preparations are likely focused on seizing this window of time in 2025-2027. Expanded recruitment from rural areas in particular will provide "cannon fodder" for large-scale combat operations against Taiwan planned for this period.

### **DEFENSE/9 Chinese military aircraft cross median line: Taiwan defense ministry**

14 February 2024, Focus Taiwan

Taipei, Feb. 14 (CNA) A total of 14 warplanes and drones sent by the Chinese People's Liberation Army were detected in waters near Taiwan on Wednesday afternoon, with nine of them crossing the median line of the Taiwan Strait, according to Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense (MND).

The 14 aircraft dispatched by the Chinese military starting at 1 p.m. included Shenyang J-16 fighter jets, Shaanxi Y-8 transport aircraft, and unmanned aerial vehicles, the MND said.

Among them, nine crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait and entered Taiwan's air defense identification zone (ADIZ) off the north and southwest of the country in tandem with patrolling activities carried out by Chinese military vessels in the areas, the MND said.

The MND said that it had monitored the situation closely and "employed appropriate forces," such as

scrambling fighter jets, dispatching military vessels, and readying coastal missile systems.

The median line of the Taiwan Strait served for decades as a tacit border, but the Chinese military has more flagrantly sent aircraft, warships, and drones across it since former United States House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan in early August 2022.

Since the beginning of 2024, Beijing has also begun sending balloons over Taiwan, according to the MND.

An ADIZ is a self-declared area in which a country claims the right to identify, locate, and control approaching foreign aircraft but is not part of its territorial airspace as defined by international law.

### **China 'Targets' India In Its Latest Military Venture; Works On '007 Drones' To Fight Indian Army At LAC**

05 February 2024, The EurAsian Times

Special Agent 007, aka James Bond of the British intelligence agency MI-6, is the most renowned special agent in the world. The agent carries out the most complex and life-threatening missions with finesse and has a knack for surviving against all odds.

Real life, however, is not that predictable.

Keeping this in mind, the Chinese military and scientists have started the task of developing drones that can replace special agents in the coming decade to carry out high-risk military operations overseas without risking human life.

A unit of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has been working in the bustling city of Chengdu in southwest China along with a team of scientists to develop these complex drones to execute operations in foreign countries.

China's stated position is that it does not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, and its military's overseas operations have always been cloaked in secrecy.

However, with human operators come the risk of being captured by adversaries and wreaking havoc with the military plans. The research to replace human agents in special operations using technology is indicative of how the Chinese approach to espionage will pan out in the future.

In a recent paper published in the Fire Control & Command Control journal, the PLA's 78092 unit discusses a fictitious special operation overseas. The theoretical plan intends to serve as a guideline for Chinese companies and researchers working on drone technology.

As reported by the South China Morning Post, the operation is set in 2035 when a small-scale conflict erupts between China and one of its neighbors, with whom it shares a border.

Without naming the country, the paper mentions that a river with an average depth of 30 meters runs along its border. Incidentally, the River Brahmaputra (known as Yarlung Tsangpo in China) flows from Tibet to India.

In the case study, both countries decided to stick to using small arms, small boats, drones, and anti-aircraft guns to avoid escalation. In this scenario, the UAV would be required to traverse long distances, dive deep underwater, and remain submerged for long periods, awaiting the opportune moment. When required, it will re-emerge from the water to throw a punch before going beneath the water surface again.

The Chinese military's special mission entailed targeting the enemy's critical command and logistics hub that lies along a river, some 40 kilometers inside from the border.

The Chinese armed forces, for this mission, require a drone that can operate both alone and in swarms; it should be able to fly as well as navigate river depths to avoid detection by the adversary and should be able to maneuver to avoid obstacles both in the air and in the water.

The PLA wants to give more teeth to the drones by making them able to operate with precision and beyond visual range without human intervention. They should be able to hover over the battlefield to assess the damage and take further action if required. It should be able to pursue fleeing enemy combatants and return to Chinese territory by annihilating the enemy in totality.

#### **China Leads Drone Innovation**

China has long ensconced itself at the forefront of drone innovation. More than 80 percent of commercial drones in the world are made by Chinese companies. Shenzhen-based DJI commands 70 percent of the world's consumer drone market alone. Now, China is carefully factoring unmanned systems into its military planning. A 2019 China defense white paper stated that "there is a prevailing trend to develop long-range precision, intelligent, stealthy or unmanned weaponry or equipment" and added that "intelligent warfare is on the horizon."

Since then, Beijing has been able to develop strike-capable and non-weaponized systems for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) missions. In the 2000s, a drone was synonymous with American MQ-9s, but a 2018 Department of Defense report concludes that China "is closing the gap with the US Air Force across a spectrum of capabilities, gradually eroding longstanding US technical advantages."

Its Wing Loong and Caihong (CH) series have helped China's military exports, particularly to the Middle East and North Africa. Its fleet of reconnaissance drones includes the High-Altitude

Long Endurance (HALE) Soaring Dragon and Cloud Shadow.

While the Chinese military has not demonstrated drone strikes, it has deployed UAVs in non-combat scenarios. But its ambition is fast changing.

CH-5 is almost identical to Reaper. It is larger than the Reaper, but its payload capacity is roughly 1200 kg, which is 500 kg less than that of the Reaper. Like other Chinese aerial platforms, CH-5 is limited by its engine. But it boasts an operational endurance of 60 hours, which is more than double the Reaper's fly time of 27 hours.

The development of the latest version in the series CH-7 stealth drone is expected to finish this year.

In 2023, Chinese researchers developed a new method of enabling UAVs to maneuver, acquire, and potentially attack targets in global-positioning-system (GPS) "denied" environments. The drone proposes to use "image-based visual servoing" (IBVS) to "lock on" to hostile assets. This method, the researchers suggest, can be used to acquire targets, even quickly moving ones.

This technology is likely to find application in military drones. Till now, human operators have been required to give the "kill command." But increased use of Artificial Intelligence and drone autonomy, like the ability to work in GPS-denied areas, means humans will soon be taken out of the chain of command.

## January

### China's defence ministry spokesperson says India border issue 'left over from history'

25 January 2024, Reuters

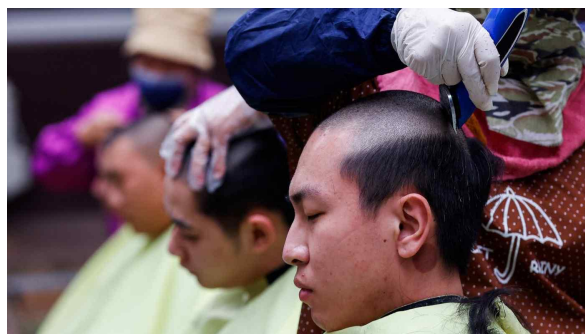
BEIJING, Jan 25 (Reuters) - A Chinese defence ministry spokesperson said on Thursday that India-China border tensions were "an issue left over from history and not the whole of China-India relations".

"It is unwise and inappropriate for the Indian side to insist on linking the border situation with bilateral relations," spokesperson Wu Qian told a monthly press briefing.

A senior Indian official told Reuters earlier this month that India could ease its heightened scrutiny of Chinese investments if the two countries' border remained peaceful, the first signal that the four-year-old curbs could be lifted.

### Taiwan begins extended one-year conscription in response to China threat

25 January 2024, Nikkei Asia



The first batch of new Taiwanese recruits get their heads shaved at the start of their year of compulsory military service in Taichung on Jan. 25. The previous conscription period was four months. © Reuters

TAICHUNG, Taiwan (Reuters) - The first batch of new recruits began serving their one-year compulsory military service in Taiwan on Thursday after the conscription period was extended from four months due to government concerns about China's rising military threat.

President Tsai Ing-wen announced the extension in late 2022.

China has ramped up military, diplomatic and economic pressure on Taiwan to assert its sovereignty claims, including almost daily Chinese air force missions near the island over the past four years.

At a recruitment center in the central Taiwanese city of Taichung, a group of young men gathered in the morning cold to be inducted as dogs checked their bags for drugs and barbers shaved their heads before they changed into army fatigues.

"It is our shared responsibility to adjust the structure of the military and improve combat power. It is also a foundation for us to strengthen our military power," officer Lien Chih-wei told reporters.

Taiwan's army said in a statement that it expected a total of 670 conscripts to join in the first batch under the newly extended service.

"In the face of a complex international environment, it is our first priority to build the strong will to resist the enemy," it said.

"The extension of compulsory service to one year will not only enhance immediate combat effectiveness, but will also improve the quality of reserve personnel, strengthen mobilization energy, and enhance the overall combat effectiveness of national defense."

Tsai has described the previous military system, including training reservists, as inefficient and insufficient to cope with China's rising military threat, especially if China launched a rapid attack on the island.



Conscripts will undergo more intense training, including shooting exercises, combat instruction used by U.S. forces, and operating more powerful weapons including anti-tank missiles and Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, according to previously announced plans.

Yin Hsin-shih, 18, said he was a "little bit excited" to be joining up.

"For the country, it will provide the needed defense power given that our neighboring country is a great threat to our nation," he said, referring to China.

The United States, Taiwan's most important international backer and arms seller despite the lack of formal diplomatic ties, has welcomed the conscription reform as part of Taiwan's efforts to boost its ability to defend itself.

However, the period of service in Taiwan is still shorter than the 18 months mandated in South Korea, which faces a hostile and nuclear-armed North Korea.

After Taiwan announced the extension in 2022, China criticized Taiwan for seeking to use the Taiwanese people as "cannon fodder."

Taiwan's government rejects Beijing's sovereignty claims and says only the Taiwanese people can decide their future.

### **Map Shows China's Latest Military Moves Around Dangerous Flashpoint**

23 January 2024, NewsWeek

China this week kept up its military maneuvers in the sea and airspace around Taiwan, including near-daily probing flights by Chinese warplane into the island's air defense identification zone.

Since January 1, 26 Chinese warplanes have been detected inside Taiwan's ADIZ, according to the Defense Ministry in Taipei. The Taiwanese government also has been following increasingly numerous balloons—suspected weather-monitoring devices—which have flown close to the island or at times directly through its airspace in recent weeks. Their precise purpose was unknown.

Beijing claims Taiwan as its own despite Taipei's strong rejections. Successive Chinese leaders have sought to entice or coerce the island and its 23 million people into a future political union, and all have refused to rule out the use of force to achieve the ultimate goal of "national unification."

The aerial pressure campaign conducted by the Chinese People's Liberation Army aircraft began in the fall of 2020 after the administration of former President Donald Trump dispatched cabinet-level officials to Taiwan. China's warships joined the maneuvers in August 2020, following the historic and high-profile visit to the island by then-House Speaker Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA).

Chinese warplanes also began crossing the Taiwan Strait's median line at higher frequencies than in decades past.

The most recent activity, however, remains modest and appeared to speak to a wait-and-see response to the presidential election victory this month of Taiwan's Vice President Lai Ching-te, a staunch China skeptic who was Beijing's least favorite candidate in the three-way contest.

Lai's win on January 13 means the governing Democratic Progressive Party will remain in power for a third consecutive presidential term. Lai has pledged to maintain the status quo across the Taiwan Strait, but China's officials continue to accuse his party of pushing for the island's formal independence—a political red line for Beijing and a move not supported by the United States, Taipei's strongest international backer.

In the week to January 22, Taiwan recorded 19 PLA aircraft incursions into its ADIZ, the Defense Ministry data showed.

Since the ministry began publishing ADIZ activity in September 2020, the Chinese military has flown about 4,800 warplanes sortied around Taiwan, according to a database maintained by U.S.-based analysts Gerald C. Brown, Benjamin Lewis and Alex Kung.

Although China carried out a major intrusion into Taiwan's ADIZ last week with 11 sorties in a 24-hour window, January's 36 sorties to date could result in the lowest level of monthly activity since August 2021, when Taipei recorded 34 sorties, Lewis told Newsweek.

An ADIZ is a self-declared buffer zone drawn over international airspace. In Asia, it is also used by China, Japan and South Korea, whose governments expect passing military aircraft to declare their presence.

Taiwan's Defense Ministry last week began using a new map to illustrate the ADIZ intrusions, which remain outside of the island's territorial airspace. Observers said the government was reducing transparency by removing the estimated flight paths of Chinese planes and drones.

China watchers say the military maneuvers aim to undermine the Taiwanese government's de facto control of surrounding sea and airspace, exhaust Taiwan's armed forces, and inflict a psychological toll on its public.

Lai, who contested the presidency against Hou Yu-ih of the main opposition Kuomintang party and third party candidate Ko Wen-je of the Taiwan People's Party, has vowed to continue Taiwan's policies of strengthening its self-defense and bolstering its democratic institutions in the face of increasing pressure from Beijing.

China has labeled Lai and his running mate, Taiwan's former representative to Washington, Hsiao Bi-khim, Taiwan independence advocates, although both insist Taiwan's people seek no change to the island's political status.

Lai, who said he remained open to dialogue with Beijing, was elected with just over 40 percent of the votes, while all three parties currently hold respective meaningful shares of the island's legislature, with neither capturing a majority.

Lai and Hsiao will be inaugurated this May.

### **Over 700 Chinese border outposts connected to national power grid, boosts defense capability**

14 January 2024, Global Times

Under a nationwide upgrade program, more than 700 Chinese frontier outposts have connected to the national power grid, a move experts said on Sunday that has boosted the Chinese military's capabilities in border defense, including improving the living conditions of troops and the deployment of advanced, power-consuming weapons and equipment.

The Logistic Support Department of the Central Military Commission has worked together with the National Energy Administration and carried out power grid constructions for border defense troops in batches, taking advantage of the country's latest round of rural power grid overhaul and upgrade, China Central Television (CCTV) reported on Saturday.

By the end of 2023, more than 700 remote outposts of border defense companies were successively connected to the national power grid, CCTV reported.

Since then, Chinese defense outposts have formed an energy support system relying mainly on electricity from the grid, which is supported by fuel, solar energy and wind energy, the report said.

This has further elevated the Chinese military's border management and control capabilities by making the power supply to military equipment more secure and reliable, border defense energy consumption cleaner and environment-friendly, in addition to improving living conditions for troops stationed along border areas as well as their combat readiness, according to the report.

China is a vast country and shares long borderlines with many neighboring nations across various and complex terrains, including high altitude plateaus, rugged mountains, dry deserts and remote islands, where border defense conditions are harsh and infrastructure construction costs are high, analysts said.

But living conditions and infrastructure construction are vital to border defense, as they significantly contribute to the troops' combat readiness, according

to a Chinese military expert who used to serve in Southwest China's Xizang Autonomous Region.

Having stable power supply through the national power grid has many merits, ranging from the use of household appliances to military weapons and equipment, the expert said, noting that in modern military activities, many advanced equipment, like radar systems, require stable energy in large volumes.

Since many border defense outposts are established in remote, unpolluted regions with little human activity, using electricity from the national power grid to replace burning fuel as much as possible can also contribute to the protection of the natural environment, the expert added.

A group of Global Times reporters recently visited the "Model Border Battalion on the Plateau" in Xizang and the "5592" watchpoint, the Chinese People's Liberation Army's highest post at which soldiers are stationed.

In the season of heavy snow and freezing cold, the soldiers at the border frontlines remain steadfast while on duty in the snowy mountains, a testament not only to their spirit of sacrifice and dedication but also to the strong logistical support provided by the military.

### **India in rush to outbuild China while continuing talks to avoid border conflict**

13 January 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Jan13'24) – As the dispute between India and China along Tibet's border continues to simmer, the two countries are trying to outbuild each other to enhance their relative advantages in the event of the outbreak of a conflict, said a newsweek.com report Jan 12. It was earlier reported by thewire.in Jan 7 that India's Northern Army Commander Lt Gen Upendra Dwivedi had reiterated that the situation on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China in Ladakh, which had seen tensions after the ingress by Chinese troops in May 2020, was "stable but sensitive and not normal".

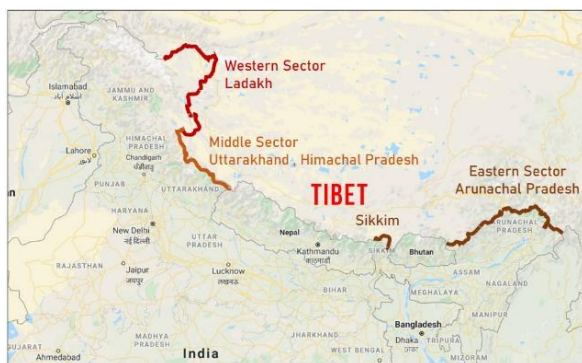
India has lagged behind China in the border infrastructure building contest by decades but has been speeding things up under the BJP-led government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In contentious regions along the 2,100-mile LAC, the Indian government had earmarked some 90 connectivity projects, Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, a political analyst at the Observer Research Foundation in New Delhi, had written in The Diplomat magazine last month.

In Arunachal Pradesh, on the northeastern border with Chinese-ruled Tibet, where the two forces last clashed just over one year ago, 36 projects are planned. And Ladakh in the west, bordering Xinjiang, will benefit from 26, Rajagopalan has said.

On the other side of the border – in occupied Tibet – China is also hurriedly constructing new roads in Xinjiang, a so-called dual-use infrastructure that will similarly facilitate the movement of People’s Liberation Army troops in the event of a conflict, the report noted.

Two Chinese highways, the G216 and the G695, are slowly nearing completion as the two Asian giants remain poised at higher readiness levels since their deadly night standoff in Ladakh’s Galwan Valley in Jun 2020.



Map of the Line of Actual Control.

The United States has been supporting India in monitoring China’s moves in occupied Tibet. The report said that for three and a half years, India has been supported by US intelligence-gathering operations as it watched the PLA’s movements in the tense border areas. It added that the United States had also transferred technology to boost India’s defences against China’s territorial expansion in the immediate neighbourhood.

India has reported notable progress in its border infrastructure-building efforts especially in Ladakh. In its year-end review, India’s Defence Ministry said over 370 miles of highway were completed in 2023, with significant progress on the India-China(occupied Tibet) border and other operationally critical areas in the country’s north. Several other major undertakings were stated to be approaching completion.

India’s late push for strategic infrastructure is a direct response to the military standoff that began in May 2020, just before the Galwan Valley melee, with a full resolution still elusive despite ongoing negotiations, the report noted.

Lt Gen Rajeev Chaudhry, the director general of India’s Border Roads Organization, has told the ANI news agency last year that the urgency of the projects—focused squarely on Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh—was aimed at securing a strategic edge over China.

Meanwhile, the report also cited India’s army chief, Gen Manoj Pande, as saying this week that New Delhi was continuing to push China to restore the status quo ante on the border situation.

“Currently, our attempt is to continue the talks with the Chinese army to go back to the pre-April 2020 status quo. Our first aim is to achieve that,” Pande has said during a press conference on Jan 11.

Dwivedi had sounded positive about the about 20 rounds of border talks held with China on the Ladakh border standoff, with the Northern Army Commander saying there had been a “persistent approach from both sides” and “we are looking at [ways so] that mutual concerns are addressed”.

### Communist Party diplomat Liu Jianchao, on US visit, urges ‘correct’ understanding of China

10 January 2024, South China Morning Post

As China feels the heat of Washington-led “de-risking” efforts amid Western concerns about Beijing’s economic coercion and military aggression, a senior Chinese Communist Party official is visiting the US with a mission to encourage a “correct” perception of his country.

“We’re here to promote dialogues between the governments, legislators and political parties of the two countries, as we believe communication is the only way of increasing common understanding,” Liu Jianchao, who leads the Chinese Communist Party’s diplomatic arm, said on Tuesday in New York at an event hosted by the Council on Foreign Relations. Stressing a “correct” and “good” understanding of China’s “strategic intentions”, Liu said that as the country becomes more powerful militarily and economically, its aim was to “deliver a better life for all the Chinese people”.

He said a “mutually beneficial cooperation” would be possible between the two global powers if it’s understood that China does not have “any hidden agenda” or the goal of “overtaking” the US.

After completing his engagements in New York, including a meeting with United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres on Tuesday, Liu is expected to visit Washington before heading to San Francisco.

Since taking office in June 2022, Liu has held two meetings in Beijing with Nicholas Burns, the US ambassador to China, and visited countries in Asia, Africa and Europe.

Liu, 59, said that there was “no talk” about returning to the confrontational Wolf Warrior diplomacy and that Chinese diplomats were working to forge “warm and cooperative” ties with countries around the world to create a “favourable international environment” for China’s “high-quality development”.

He said Beijing would “keep its door open” and create a “market-oriented and rules-based” business environment that meets an “international standard”, hoping that, in return, Washington would keep its

markets open and provide Chinese companies with "a non-discriminatory business environment".

His remarks came after outgoing foreign direct investment in China exceeded inflows in the third quarter of 2023, the first time that has happened since 1998.

In August, US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said several American companies told her China was becoming "uninvestable" and "too risky" because of new national security regulations.

But Liu said "there should not be unnecessary rhetoric" about foreign businesses leaving China because of "anti-espionage" or other "necessary" laws.

"The US has even stricter anti-espionage tools," he said, adding that China was ready to convince foreign investors that it remained a country with "good opportunities".

Liu has faced criticism in the West for his role in the Chinese Communist Party's "anti-corruption" efforts and accusations of transnational repression.

On Tuesday, he said China had received help from the US Justice and Homeland Security departments in extraditing "criminal suspects" on the "basis of the US law".

### **US and Chinese military officials meet in Washington**

10 January 2024, RFA

U.S. and Chinese military officials met in Washington this week for their first face-to-face talks in more than two years, as the world's two major powers waded further into a detente after nearly a year of animosity.

The status of Taiwan, which derailed U.S.-Chinese relations nearly 18 months ago, was high on the agenda, with the democratic island that Beijing claims as its territory set to hold a pivotal election this weekend.

Michael Chase, deputy assistant secretary of defense for China, met Maj. Gen. Song Yanchao, deputy director of international military cooperation in China's Central Military Commission, on Monday and Tuesday, according to a statement from the Pentagon.

It was the first Defense Policy Coordination Talks since 2021, with China's military leaders refusing to speak with their U.S. counterparts following then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's August 2022 trip to the self-governing island of Taiwan.

Direct military-to-military talks were only restored after U.S. President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping's summit in San Francisco in November during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting.

The Pentagon said that the two military officials "discussed regional and global security issues" and

that Chase "highlighted the importance of maintaining open lines of military-to-military communication in order to prevent competition from veering into conflict."

U.S. defense officials last year criticized Chinese military leaders for refusing to pick up the phone amid a surge in near-accidents between military ships and jets over the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait. Chase also "reaffirmed that the United States will continue to fly, sail, and operate safely and responsibly wherever international law allows," the Pentagon said, referring to U.S. "freedom of navigation" operations through the South China Sea, which China claims as its territory.

Red lines

China's military said in its own readout that it was "willing to develop a sound and stable military-to-military relationship with the U.S. side on the basis of equality and respect" as agreed upon in San Francisco.

But it added Washington "needs to take seriously China's concerns and do more things that contribute to the growth of the mil-mil relationship," such as reducing its "military presence" in the South China Sea.

"The Chinese side underscored that the U.S. side should fully recognize the root cause of maritime and air security issues, strictly discipline its troops on the ground, and stop manipulating and hyping-up relevant issues," the Chinese readout said.

It added that Beijing "will not make any concession or compromise on the Taiwan question" and called for America to "stop arming Taiwan."

Taiwan is scheduled to hold a presidential election on Saturday, with the incumbent Vice President Lai Ching-te, who has described himself as a "pragmatic worker for Taiwan independence," a front-runner to replace President Tsai Ing-wen, who cannot run for a third term.

The opposition Kuomintang, meanwhile, has pledged to work more closely with Beijing if it wins back power after eight years out of office.

Pentagon spokesman Pat Ryder said Tuesday that American policy on Taiwan "will remain the same regardless of which party is in power" and that U.S. officials would work "with whomever Taiwan voters elect."

"We strongly support Taiwan's free and fair elections, which we view as a model for democracy not only in the region but also globally, and the United States does not take sides in Taiwan's elections," Ryder said. "We're committed to fair treatment of the candidates."

Tinderbox

Whatever inroads have been made toward a detente, the lasting disagreements over the status of



Taiwan and the South China Sea seem destined to throw a spanner in the works for relations.

In its analysis of the talks, for instance, China's state-run Global Times said the meeting "signifies China's genuine efforts to stabilize relations," but that American leaders should tread carefully.

"It is important for the U.S. to understand China's strong message against colluding with Taiwan secessionists, particularly in the lead-up to Taiwan's regional leader election," it said, referring to the presidential election, and threatening "harsh measures from [the] Chinese mainland."

In that situation, it said, "the U.S. will also be put in [a] dilemma."

Such threats may soon be put to the test, with Taiwan's next leader – particularly if Lai wins – likely to float an invitation for a delegation of American lawmakers to visit the island for the inauguration ceremony.

At a preview of Taiwan's election hosted by Politico on Wednesday, Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi, a Democrat from Illinois who serves as his party's ranking member on the House Select Committee on China, demurred when asked if he would sign-on to such a delegation.

The lawmaker, who was part of Pelosi's controversial 2021 trip to Taiwan, instead alluded to the official U.S. policy on whether it would defend the island in the case of an invasion by mainland China.

"You know, I think I'm gonna have to maintain a little bit of strategic ambiguity here," Krishnamoorthi said.

### **US lists China among 'Countries of Particular Concern' for severity of religious repression**

09 January 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Jan09'24) – As recommended by the country's Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) in its annual report released Apr 2023, the United States has on Jan 4 designated China, along with 11 other countries that included North Korea and Pakistan, as "Countries of Particular Concern" for engaging in and tolerating "particularly severe violations of religious freedom." Announcing the Religious Freedom Designations, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said that advancing the freedom of religion or belief has been a core objective of US foreign policy ever since Congress passed and enacted the International Religious Freedom Act in 1998.

"As part of that enduring commitment, I have designated Burma, the People's Republic of China, Cuba, the DPRK, Eritrea, Iran, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan as Countries of Particular Concern for having engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom," Blinken has said in a press statement posted on the State Department website.

The USCIRF's recommendations were for 17 countries to be designated as "Countries of Particular Concern". It had also recommended 11 others for being designated as "Special Watch List Countries" for "engaging in or tolerating severe violations of religious freedom."

Blinken has said "Governments must end abuses such as attacks on members of religious minority communities and their places of worship, communal violence and lengthy imprisonment for peaceful expression, transnational repression, and calls to violence against religious communities, among other violations that occur in too many places around the world."

He has called the challenges to religious freedom across the globe "structural, systemic, and deeply entrenched."

But he has expressed confidence that "with thoughtful, sustained commitment from those who are unwilling to accept hatred, intolerance, and persecution as the status quo we will one day see a world where all people live with dignity and equality."

The International Religious Freedom Act requires the President, who has delegated this function to the Secretary of State, to designate as "countries of particular concern," countries that commit systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom.

### **China to spend \$11bn on Tibetan infrastructure this year**

08 January 2024, Global Construction Review

The Chinese government is to spend \$11.3bn on infrastructure in Tibet's western Xizang Autonomous Region this year, Xinhua reports.

The investment, equal to more than a third of the region's GDP, is seen as central to the region's development.

Yan Jinhai, chairman of Xizang's regional government, said the money would be mainly spent on transport projects including railways, roads and as many as 10 airports, where work will be begun or will continue in 2024.

As well as transport, Yan mentioned the development of renewable energy sites.

According to China Daily, the region aims to achieve GDP growth of 8% and total fixed-asset investment growth of 13% in the coming year, with similar increases in the income of the population.

The Tibetan Review comments that the investment is in line with China's grand strategy of "improving frontier security amid heightened border tensions with India in recent months".

Beijing is also concerned with winning support from the residents of the region. There is a Tibetan independence movement, centred on the Dalai Lama,



and in the past, China's conduct in Tibet has attracted allegations from the US over suppression of Tibetan Buddhism.

### **China sanctions 5 US defense companies in response to US sanctions and arms sales to Taiwan**

07 January 2024, AP News

BEIJING (AP) — China announced sanctions Sunday on five American defense-related companies in response to U.S. arms sales to Taiwan and U.S. sanctions on Chinese companies and individuals.

The sanctions will freeze any property the companies have in China and prohibit organizations and individuals in China from doing business with them, the Foreign Ministry said in a statement posted online.

It was unclear what impact, if any, the sanctions would have on the companies, BAE Systems Land and Armaments, Alliant Techsystems Operations, AeroVironment, Viasat and Data Link Solutions. Such sanctions are often mostly symbolic as American defense contractors generally don't sell to China.

The Foreign Ministry said the U.S. moves harmed China's sovereignty and security interests, undermined peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and violated the rights and interests of Chinese companies and individuals.

"The Chinese government remains unwavering in our resolve to safeguard national sovereignty, security and territorial integrity and protect the lawful rights and interests of Chinese companies and citizens," the ministry statement said.

The announcement was made less than a week ahead of a presidential election in Taiwan that is being contested in large part over how the government should manage its relationship with China, which claims the self-governing island as its territory and says it must come under its rule.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry did not specify which arms deal or which U.S. sanctions China was responding to, though spokesperson Wang Wenbin had warned three weeks ago that China would take countermeasures following the U.S. government's approval of a \$300 million military package for Taiwan in December.

The deal includes equipment, training and equipment repair to maintain Taiwan's command, control and military communications capabilities.

The U.S. said the sale would support the modernization of Taiwan's armed forces and the maintenance of a credible defense. "The proposed sale will improve the recipient's capability to meet current and future threats by enhancing operational readiness," a news release from the Pentagon's Defense Security Cooperation Agency said.

Taiwan is a major flashpoint in U.S.-China relations that analysts worry could explode into military conflict between the two powers. China says that U.S. arms sales to Taiwan are interference in its domestic affairs.

The Chinese military regularly sends fighter planes and ships into and over the waters around Taiwan, in part to deter the island's government from declaring formal independence. An invasion doesn't appear imminent, but the constant military activity serves as a reminder that the threat is ever-present.

The U.S. switched diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China in 1979, but it is bound by its own laws to ensure that Taiwan has the ability to defend itself. America and its allies sail warships through the Taiwan Strait, a 160-kilometer (100-mile) -wide waterway that separates the island from China.

The year in which the U.S. switched diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China has been corrected to 1979.

### **Pakistan in Talks with China to Acquire J-31 Stealth Fighters**

05 January 2024, Indrastra

As per the latest media reports, Pakistan is currently in discussions to procure Chinese-built Shenyang FC-31 Gyr Falcon, also known as the J-31 mid-sized twinjet 5th-generation stealth fighter, a move that could potentially recalibrate the balance of air power within the region. The J-31 bears striking similarities to the American F-35 and F-22 aircraft and, if acquired, may replace earlier versions of the American F-16 in Pakistan's air fleet, according to sources within the defense and security establishments.

Recent statements attributed to Pakistan Air Force (PAF) Chief Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Babar indicate ongoing negotiations with China for the acquisition of the J-31 stealth fighter aircraft. Babar highlighted that groundwork for this acquisition has been laid, signaling an imminent inclusion of these advanced fighters into the PAF's arsenal.

Pakistan already operates various Chinese-manufactured aircraft, notably the JF-17 'Thunder,' jointly manufactured in Pakistan and also adopted by Nigeria in 2021. With approximately 150 JF-17s in its fleet and the acquisition of 25 J-10C 'Vigorous Dragon' fighters in 2022, Pakistan appears to strategically enhance its air capabilities, mirroring India's procurement of 36 French-made Rafale fighter jets.

The prospect of integrating the J-31 into Pakistan's air force could prove a significant boost for the nation, particularly as India presently lacks a stealth fighter. While India is actively developing its indigenous Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA), its induction is not anticipated before 2030. Air Marshal

Anil Chopra, Director-General of IAF's Center for Air Power Studies (CAPS), emphasized that the J-31 remains in its developmental phase, distinct from China's more established J-20 stealth aircraft, of which approximately 150 units have been produced. He highlighted the J-31's smaller size, primarily designed as a potential naval variant for operations from aircraft carriers.

Retired Air Marshal Diptendu Choudhury acknowledged past concerns with Chinese-made aircraft but noted China's continuous development and deployment of such technology. He pointed out that China's persistence in refining its aviation capabilities not only challenges the US but also contributes to projecting superior Chinese aviation capabilities.

Regarding the potential impact on the regional power balance, Choudhury suggested that while the acquisition of the J-31 might not drastically alter the dynamics immediately, it would undoubtedly enhance the quality of Pakistan's air power. He emphasized the significance of newer generation jets and the importance of their ratio in defining air superiority.

Approximately 60-70% of the People's Liberation Army Air Force's fleet comprises 4th and 5th-generation fighters, similar to the trajectory India aims to pursue. This emphasizes the need for the Indian Air Force to expedite its modernization efforts to maintain regional parity.

Reports tracing back to 2007 indicate that China acquired confidential information on the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter and F-22 Raptor, which reportedly aided in the development of the J-31 or FC-31 stealth aircraft. Earlier versions closely resembled the F-35, but subsequent images reveal a more elongated structure reminiscent of the F-22, suggesting evolving design adaptations.

# TIBET DIGEST 2024

FOUNDATION FOR  
**Non-violent  
Alternatives**  
To inform and shape policy on Tibet and the region



## CYBER SECURITY

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## China activates 'freedom in Tibet' propaganda triggered by US-Dalai Lama meet in Dharamshala

26 June 2024, The Print, Sana Hashmi

## CYBER SECURITY

India has avoided using the so-called Tibet card in the past but even this issue isn't off the table now as New Delhi works with the US to address the China factor.

The portrayal of Tibet Autonomous Region on Chinese social media, especially after the meeting between US lawmakers and the Dalai Lama in Dharamshala, underscores heightened Chinese insecurity about potential unrest in Tibet and US interest. This carefully managed discourse surrounding Tibet suggests orchestrated efforts, mirroring Beijing's approach in Xinjiang to present these autonomous regions as prosperous and enjoying religious freedom, countering Western human rights concerns.

A cursory search of Tibet, referred to as Xizang by China, on several Chinese social media platforms presents a picture of a thriving tourist destination with robust infrastructure and Tibetans freely practising their religion. However, according to the Central Tibetan Administration, this portrayal is far from reality. Allegations persist of China suppressing religious freedoms in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR).

The stark contrast between Chinese social media and official discourse and the perspectives of Western governments and Tibetans-in-exile is evident, especially highlighted by the visit of a bipartisan delegation of United States' lawmakers led by Republican Rep. Michael McCaul to meet the 14th Dalai Lama.

Chinese media platforms are flooded with articles, posts, and videos promoting Tibet as a burgeoning tourist destination. This narrative emphasises the TAR enjoying 'autonomy and freedom', highlighting Beijing's initiatives in promoting Tibetan welfare and developing infrastructure.

To counter the US narrative on Tibet, Chinese media has extensively covered the rare visit by a European Union delegation for the 39th EU-China Human Rights Dialogue to the TAR. This visit occurred just days before US lawmakers' visit to Dharamshala. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) highlighted the EU delegation's visit, stating that it deepened their understanding of the actual situation in Tibet.

Despite Beijing's strict grip over Tibet, reactions from Chinese officials and social media users to the US lawmakers' delegation visit to Dharamshala reveal deep-seated anxieties. Tibet remains a core issue for China. Lin Jian, a Chinese MFA

spokesperson, emphasised, 'Tibet (Xizang) as an integral part of China since ancient times', categorising it as 'an internal matter' and warning against 'external interference' (read the US).

'US meddling in China's internal affairs'

Nancy Pelosi, the former Speaker of the US House of Representatives, drew notable reactions from China with her fiery remarks, despite discussions on Tibet being heavily censored. Pelosi is widely disliked among Chinese officials and social media users, perceived as anti-China, at least since her outspoken criticism of China's handling of the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989. From her August 2022 visit to Taiwan to her recent trip to Dharamshala, discussions about her have been largely negative. Numerous posts on Chinese social media platforms have disparaged her, with a commentary in Guangming Daily accusing Pelosi of harbouring anti-China sentiments, attributing her motives to seeking attention and benefiting from tarnishing China's image.

A commentary on Baidu asserted that after over emphasising the Taiwan card, the US is now highlighting the Tibet issue, suggesting that the lawmakers visit and the Resolve Tibet Act aimed to split China. The author argues that despite China's firm stance on sovereignty and territorial integrity as non-negotiable core interests, both the United States and India (given New Delhi's permission for the lawmakers' visit) continue to hype these sensitive issues, thereby deliberately provoking tensions.

The discourse in China regarding the India-US coalition's stance on Tibet remains relatively underreported. The prevailing narrative continues to be about accusing the US of meddling in China's internal affairs, specifically in Tibet. A commentary suggested that US concerns, possibly influenced by the People's Liberation Army's powerful Xi'an H-6 twin-engine jet bombers in Tibet, may have prompted this shift in focus towards Tibet.

Whether it is Tibet or Taiwan, the perception in China is that the US is trying to leverage every possible option to hinder China's rise, using these sensitive issues as bargaining chips. Zhu Weiqun, former head of the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, suggests that "the more the US discusses Tibet, the more it reveals their support for the Dalai Lama, which he views as revisiting past issues." However, Zhu believes Washington's attempt to play the Tibet card will be futile due to the region's stability.

Interestingly, Russia's state-controlled RT posted on Weibo that the Joe Biden administration is expanding US influence in Asia, sparking controversy by selling weapons to Taiwan and raising concerns over Tibet. Whether supporting Taiwan's or Tibet's

independence, the administration's goal appears to be dividing China and impeding its rapid development. The RT post also claimed that even Russian President Vladimir Putin recently cautioned that NATO, led by the US, views Asia as a permanent strategic focus, posing a significant threat to regional countries, including Russia. This post gained widespread circulation on Weibo, underscoring Moscow's alignment with Beijing on core issues important to the latter and highlighting concerns over increasing US influence in Asia.

While discussions on Weibo and other social media platforms have echoed past accusations of the US using the Tibet issue to meddle in China's internal affairs, much of the scholarly community has noticeably refrained from addressing Tibet's geopolitical dynamics. Despite several Tibetan studies centres established in Chinese universities, many have transformed into propaganda platforms selectively focusing on ecological issues, environmental concerns, and infrastructure development. This deliberate shift aims to divert attention from Tibet's geopolitical relevance and the suppression of Tibetan religious and human rights.

### **Chinese hackers have stepped up attacks on Taiwanese organizations, cybersecurity firm says**

24 June 2024, AP News

A suspected Chinese state-sponsored hacking group has stepped up its targeting of Taiwanese organizations, particularly those in sectors such as government, education, technology and diplomacy, according to cybersecurity intelligence company Recorded Future.

In recent years, relations between China and Taiwan, a self-governed island across the Taiwan Strait that Beijing claims as its territory, have deteriorated. The cyberattacks by the group known as RedJuliatt were observed between November 2023 and April 2024, during the lead up to Taiwan's presidential elections in January and the subsequent change in administration.

RedJuliatt has targeted Taiwanese organizations in the past, but this is the first time that activity was seen at such a scale, a Recorded Future analyst said, speaking on condition of anonymity out of safety concerns.

The report said RedJuliatt attacked 24 organizations, including government agencies in places like Laos, Kenya and Rwanda, as well as Taiwan.

It also hacked into websites of religious organizations in Hong Kong and South Korea, a U.S university and a Djiboutian university. The report did not identify the organizations.



Recorded Future said RedJuliatt accessed the servers of those places via a vulnerability in their SoftEther enterprise virtual private network (VPN) software, an open-source VPN that allows remote connections to an organization's networks.

RedJuliatt has been observed attempting to break into systems of more than 70 Taiwanese organizations including three universities, an optoelectronics company and a facial recognition company that has contracts with the government.

It was unclear if RedJuliatt managed to break into those organizations: Recorded Future only said it observed the attempts to identify vulnerabilities in their networks.

RedJuliatt's hacking patterns match those of Chinese state-sponsored groups, according to Recorded Future.

It said that based on the geolocations of IP addresses, RedJuliatt is likely based out of the city of Fuzhou, in China's southern Fujian province, whose coast faces Taiwan.

"Given the close geographical proximity between Fuzhou and Taiwan, Chinese intelligence services operating in Fuzhou are likely tasked with intelligence collection against Taiwanese targets," the report said.

"RedJuliatt is likely targeting Taiwan to collect intelligence and support Beijing's policy-making on cross-strait relations," the Recorded Future report said.

Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not immediately comment.

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson dismissed the allegations.

"I don't know the specifics of what you mentioned, but I can tell you that it's not the first time the company you mentioned has fabricated disinformation on so-called Chinese hacking operations. There is absolutely no professionalism or credibility to speak of in what the company does," the spokesperson, Mao Ning, said.

Microsoft reported in August last year that RedJuliatt, which Microsoft tracks under the name Flax Typhoon, was targeting Taiwanese organizations.

China has in recent years stepped up military drills around Taiwan and imposed economic and diplomatic pressure on the island.

Relations between Taiwan and Beijing worsened further after the election in January of Taiwan's new president Lai Ching-te, who China has deemed a "separatist," after he said in his inauguration speech that Taiwan and China were not subordinate to each other. Like his predecessor Tsai Ing-wen, Lai has said that there is no need to declare Taiwanese independence because it is already an independent sovereign state.

Like many other countries including the U.S., China has been known to engage in cyberespionage. Earlier this year, the U.S. and Britain accused China of a sweeping cyberespionage campaign that allegedly hit millions of people.

Beijing has consistently denied engaging in any form of state-sponsored hacking, instead saying that China itself is a major target of cyberattacks.

According to Recorded Future, Chinese state-sponsored groups will likely continue to target Taiwanese government agencies, universities and critical technology companies via "public-facing" devices such as open-source VPN software, which provide limited visibility and logging capabilities.

Companies and organizations can best protect themselves by prioritizing and patching vulnerabilities once they become known, Recorded Future's threat intelligence analyst said.

### **Geologists raise concerns over possible censorship and bias in Chinese chatbot**

24 June 2024, The Guardian, Amy Hawkins

Geologists have raised concerns about potential Chinese censorship and bias in a chatbot being developed with the backing of the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS), one of the world's largest scientific organisations and a Unesco partner.

The GeoGPT chatbot is aimed at geoscientists and researchers, particularly in the global south, to help them develop their understanding of earth sciences by drawing on swaths of data and research on billions of years of the planet's history.

It is an initiative from Deep-time Digital Earth (DDE), a largely Chinese-funded programme founded in 2019 to enhance international scientific cooperation and help countries to realise the UN's sustainable development goals.

Part of the underlying AI for GeoGPT is Qwen, a large language model built by the Chinese tech company Alibaba. One of those who had tested a pre-release version of the chatbot, Prof Paul Cleverley, a geologist and computer scientist, claimed in an article recently published in the Geoscientist, the magazine of the Geological Society, the UK's professional association for geologists, that GeoGPT had "serious issues around a lack of transparency, state censorship, and potential copyright infringement".

Responding to the article, DDE representatives Michael Stephenson, Hans Thybo, Chengshan Wang and Ishwaran Natarajan said the chatbot also used Meta's Llama, another large language model, and that during testing they had not noticed any state censorship, which they said was "unlikely" given that

the system was “based entirely in geoscience information”.

The DDE academics said: “Problems with GeoGPT have been largely solved, but the team will be working to improve the system even more. It must be stressed that at present GeoGPT has not been released and is not in the public domain.”

David Giles, a professional geoscientist, said it was “blatantly untrue” that a system based on geoscience data could be free of sensitive information.

Tests on Qwen, part of GeoGPT’s underlying AI, reveal geoscience-related questions can produce answers that appear to be influenced by narratives set by the Chinese Communist party.

For example, when asked how many people have died in a mining operation in Ghana run by the Shaanxi Mining Company, Qwen says: “I’m unable to provide current or specific information about events, including mining accidents, as my knowledge is based on data up until 2021 and I don’t have real-time access to news updates.”

The same question posed to ChatGPT, the chatbot developed by the US company OpenAI, produces the answer: “The Shaanxi Mining Company in Ghana has experienced multiple fatal incidents, resulting in a total of 61 deaths since 2013. This includes a significant explosion in January 2019 that alone claimed 16 lives.”

It is not clear what kind of answer GeoGPT, which is still in development, would give to this question.

Dr Natarajan Ishwaran, the head of international relations for DDE, said: “The team building GeoGPT has full independence. We can assure you that GeoGPT – currently in an exploratory phase and not yet open to the public – will not be affected by any state censorship.”

He added that users would be able to choose between using Alibaba’s Qwen or Meta’s Llama as the model for GeoGPT.

Geoscientific research and data include commercially and strategically valuable information about deposits of natural resources such as lithium, which are vital for the green transition.

Giles said there was a risk that a Chinese-developed platform could “filter” information to withhold content that was useful for “mineral reconnaissance”.

He added: “China is very aggressively looking for minerals across the globe. There is a strategic advantage and an economic advantage in looking for mineral reserves.”

An article published in 2020 by Chen Jun, an academic at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said DDE, the scientific programme that created GeoGPT, would “help enhance China’s detection and security capabilities in global resources and energy”.

Stephenson, Thybo, Wang and Natarajan, from DDE, said the 2020 article aimed “to encourage

Chinese scientists to get involved in international science programmes” and was “purely the opinion of the author”, not of DDE or the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Mohammad Hoque, a senior lecturer in hydrogeology and environmental geoscience at the University of Portsmouth, said “one danger” of using a Chinese language model for academic research was that “there will be some bias, because they have to obey local laws”.

GeoGPT’s terms of use state that prompting the chatbot to generate content that “undermines national security” and “incites subversion of state power” is prohibited. The terms of use also state that it is governed by the laws of China.

Hoque said GeoGPT had a greater obligation of transparency because it was developed under the auspices of an international research collaboration. “The most important thing would be to know what data they use to fine-tune and train [GeoGPT]. We have an expectation to know under IUGS.”

John Ludden, the president of the IUGS, said the GeoGPT database would be made public “only if the IUGS is satisfied that the appropriate governance is in place”.

Ishwaran said when GeoGPT opened to the public its training database would be made available “to those who wish to have it”.

Geologists interviewed by the Guardian said the extent of DDE’s links to China were not widely known among professionals. According to a planning document published in 2021, the multimillion-pound project is “almost 99%” funded by sources in China.

The programme is part of the IUGS, an international NGO representing more than 1 million geoscientists in 121 countries, including the UK’s Geological Society. Its secretariat is based in Beijing and receives “tremendous” financial and logistical support from the Chinese government, according to the organisation’s 2023 annual report.

Ludden said: “The best thing for science is to be open and share data. DDE does this for geological data if openly available [and] will lead to inward investment in any nation ... [and] discoveries in research.”

### **Hackers for hire: How the Chinese Communist Party is trying to monitor the entire world**

21 June 2024, ITVX, Debi Edward

In February, a leak from an anonymous source lifted the lid on China’s network of state-affiliated hackers. Hundreds of chatlogs and files from a company called iSoon (AnXun) were uploaded to an open-source code database.

The documents gave a rare insight into an inherently clandestine industry, so analysts and journalists pored over the details.

The cache of documents showed professional hackers were paid to infiltrate national databases in more than 20 countries. The company's website presents an array of cyber-attack services it can provide.

It was clear work was being done on behalf of China's public security bureaus and even its military, indicating the Chinese state operates a hackers-for-hire industry.

There were several references to the UK: In one log we found what looked like a shopping list of British government agencies and organisations.

It named Chatham House and the charity Amnesty International as targets of interest. And the Foreign Office was mentioned as being of particular value.

序号	发布时间	区域	商品名称	价格	状态	备注
10	2024-03-11	数据与信息	3月美国市面新出数据41万条等金融、自动发货	380	243 : 6	151小时 3804 打开
32	2024-03-21	数据与信息	3月21日更新, 美国投资管理商净源用户数据51万	380	290 : 6	151小时 4743 打开
33	2024-03-21	数据与信息	3月份美国在线赌博平台41万条数据自动	350	293 : 6	151小时 4808 打开
34	2024-01-09	数据与信息	1981553 2024年美国巴克金融教育数据, 52万条开盖	399	213 : 6	151小时 3181 打开
36	2023-12-11	数据与信息	1881854 12月, 美国ASOS电商平台用户50万条, 开盖	499	1 : 580	5 : 2 125小时 10626 打开
38	2023-01-19	虚拟货币	739533 10美元面值10000张外币假证护照少数量等	10	0.0013	38 881 : 16 6 31小时 16427 打开
37	2020-08-23	卡料/CVV	589674 2020美国亚马逊2020亚马逊数据解密解密	19.9	0.0042	4 286 : 34 6 51小时 5259 打开
39	2023-04-03	虚拟货币	1881343 26套假护照PSD模板美国各州美国加拿大澳洲等	50	2 : 589	45 273小时 10146 打开
39	2023-11-16	数据与信息	1884215 美国奢侈品手表Watchmeall品牌数据	299	2 : 125	10 88小时 1854 打开

Screenshot of 'Chang'an' a Chinese dark net website used to trade hacked information.

In the months since the British government has named and shamed Chinese state-affiliated actors as being behind several cyber-attacks on the UK, it has sanctioned two individuals and one company.

Last month, Chinese hackers were linked to an attack on the private contractor that runs the Ministry of Defense (MoD) payroll.

At the start of the general election campaign, MI5 and MI6 said the country should be on high alert for cyber-attacks from hostile states mentioning China, along with Russia and North Korea.

A group of Russian hackers is demanding a ransom after infiltrating NHS computer systems last week, and on Friday started to publish allegedly sensitive data online.

We set out to track down the Chinese entities named by the British government for cyber campaigns against our MPs, the MoD and the electoral commission.

In Wuhan, at the official headquarters of Xiaoruizhi, a company sanctioned by the UK there has no physical evidence that it even exists.

At its registered address, we found a company with a completely different name.

We asked at the security gate but the guard couldn't or wouldn't tell us anything about Xiaoruizhi.

At a human resources company in the city from where Xiaoruizhi workers are known to have been

recruited, we were invited in for tea while they checked out the details we had given them.

A woman who at first appeared willing to help came back to tell us that her boss was travelling and so she couldn't help us at that time.

The change in her demeanour suggested she'd been told to send us away.

Naturally, it ended up being online where we picked up a trail, leading us into China's shady network of hackers.

On the dark web, we gained access to sites where one hacker claimed to be selling data from register to vote UK. The sales sample also included usernames, emails and passwords, with references to the Universal Credit and immigration systems.

Several pages showed the financial information of British citizens and one from a casino company showed the credit details of almost half a million people.

It was shocking to see such sensitive information traded by sinister actors on the Chinese dark web.

On the dark web forums, it appeared that many Chinese hackers were vying for assignments in foreign countries, suggesting there is a growing marketplace for datasets from countries around the world.

This backs up what we saw in the i-Soon leak, where it looked like foreign intel was being hacked anticipating there would be interest in it from clandestine services in China.

Nigel Inkster a former Deputy Director of MI6 believes both private and public datasets are being weaponised. He is now the Senior Advisor for the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) on Cyber Security and China.

He told us there has been too much naivete in dealing with China, saying: "China is uniquely, promiscuous and voracious in terms of the kinds of information it is, seeking to collect.

"And this means governments need to rethink, what it is that requires, protection because, the reality in today's world is that, data sets that we hitherto have not considered very, important may actually be more important than we think and make us more vulnerable."

Bringing together publicly available information, a rare bank of leaked data and expert analysis, we built a picture of China's giant cybersecurity industry. At its roots are hackers who are being trained at what we assess are hundreds of specialist facilities.

Graduates are given the guarantee of a job in a complex web of private and state-owned enterprises. They operate directly, or indirectly with domestic public security bureaus or for the mighty Ministry of State Security which runs foreign intelligence. The MSS acts on the orders of the Chinese communist government.

There are almost 4,000 cyber security companies operating in China, in a market worth £5 billion a year, and growing.

Many of those companies are private cyber security contractors, like i-Soon, who are helping the Chinese government scale up their cyber operation capability, offering the country a major manpower advantage and potential scope, compared to Western rivals.

It has already given China the edge when it comes to data collection through hacking means.

We travelled to Taiwan to meet with experts from Team T5, a cyber security company.

In Taiwan, cyber-attacks from China are a persistent threat and we had spoken to Team T5 earlier in the year when they were tracking Chinese cyber threats during the Taiwanese elections.

One of their lead analysts, Charles Li believes too many people just see one-off cyber-attacks that don't appear to achieve much.

But he says it is all part of a wider, long-term strategy to know the enemy and build a data bank that can be used against them.

"They realised, it is very hard for China to fight with us in traditional areas like, land, sea or airspace. And so if they can dominate the cyber war, it means, they have this, chance to fight with these Western countries. So that's their long-term strategy."

We asked Team T5 to show us an example of one of the most common methods used by hackers to target individuals, like members of parliament.

They ran me through a mock email phishing exercise whereby I received an email which looked like it had been sent by an economic think-tank in Taipei, following up on my interest in the Taiwanese election. The email was formal and polite, and those writing it had clearly been monitoring my reporting to be able to mention specific details which made it look more legitimate. It contained a link to a PDF with the economic information which they said might be of interest.

When I clicked on the PDF, sure enough, it had articles with useful information, and there was no sign to be that in the background all the data on my computer was being transferred to my (in this case fake) cyber attacker.

With the information they could get from my computer, they could easily access my company and anyone I'd been in communication with.

It's a very common tactic but Chinese hackers have made it more sophisticated by selecting and monitoring targets very carefully so that when they strike it has a greater chance of success.

There was no response to our requests for interviews or a statement from the relevant Chinese government departments.

In the past, the Foreign Ministry has condemned the UK for politicising the issue of cyber security and dismissed any hacking accusations as lies.

The Chinese Communist Party appears to have an ambition to monitor the whole world, using all the manpower at its disposal.

### **China's local governments shut down social media accounts as budgets shrink**

24 May 2024, SCMP, William Zheng

Once a key tool in China's campaign to spread its message to the public, government-run social media accounts are being shut down amid a squeeze on public finances.

The online platforms of government agencies at all levels are being consolidated, reversing more than a decade of feverish development that led to many redundant apps and sites.

Local officials and analysts said the trend showed local governments must scale back development and merge functions as a result of institutional reform, shrinking funds, and rising fatigue among the low-level cadres tasked with maintaining the platforms.

The video player is currently playing an ad. You can skip the ad in 5 sec with a mouse or keyboard

Dozens of cities in the provinces of Guangdong, Sichuan, Yunnan, Hunan, Shaanxi, Shandong and Jiangsu, as well as Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, have announced plans so far this year to cut back on government department websites, social media accounts and smartphone applications, research by the Post shows.

One of the latest to do so is Longgang district in the southern megacity of Shenzhen. In the first week of May, it announced that web services for its land supervision and state-owned assets bureaus would be shut down, as both bodies had been merged into other agencies.

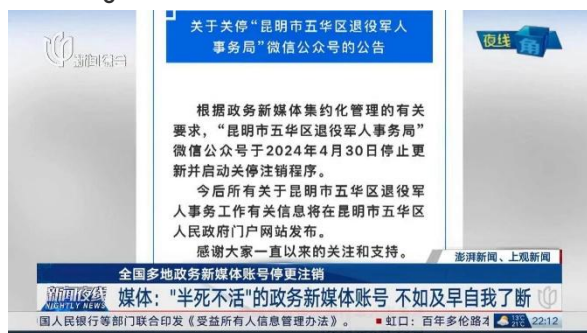
That same week, Guangxi shut down the website and social media accounts of its sugar industry development office. This has been absorbed into the Guangxi Development and Reform Commission, the region's top economic planning agency.

On April 28, the city of Bazhong in Sichuan province said it would shut down the website and social media accounts of its rural revitalisation bureau, financial work bureau and government services and public resource service centre, as they had been merged into other government bodies.

Some others to exit the internet include the Wuhua district veterans' affairs bureau in the city of Kunming, the Yuhua district market supervision bureau in Changsha, the Zhenxing subdistrict of the city of Jinan, the Weiyang district culture, tourism and sports bureau in Xian, the Linwei district judicial bureau in Weinan, Shaanxi province, and the urban management bureau of Nanjing's Jiangning district.



While these offices continue to exist, their websites, social media accounts and smartphone apps have been absorbed by higher-level municipal agencies, according to the announcements.



The WeChat account of the Wuhua district veterans affairs bureau in the southwestern city of Kunming announces its closure in late April, as China's local governments streamline their online information services. Photo: SMG

The streamlining efforts come less than six months after the Cyberspace Administration of China issued a directive ordering local governments to consolidate "similar and duplicate functions", as many online platforms were white elephants or even "zombies" controlled by internet trolls.

A Shenzhen official involved in a few municipal web platforms said the frenetic pursuit of online engagement had caused "lots of stress to the ground staff".

"After posting content to our account, we have to mobilise our colleagues and friends to help us to click on them. I even ask my parents and grandparents for help," she said, adding that consolidation was "indeed necessary".

"Many are happy to see the consolidation efforts. I hope one day we will not need to sit for the whole day to post and click on repetitive content."

Ma Liming, an associate professor at Jinan University's school of journalism and communication, echoed those views in an interview with Chinese media earlier this week.

"It is becoming way too complex as even subdistrict-level governments need to have their own government affairs new media platforms," Ma told Cnwest.com, the official news portal of Shaanxi province.

"For grass-roots staff without media-related backgrounds, maintaining these zombie accounts has become a burden.

"[And] is this really convenient and beneficial to the people if they need to follow a lot of accounts for government information services?"

Reductions in staff headcounts at local government agencies have also made the situation worse, as many have had to cut contract workers who are typically responsible for noncore functions such as updating websites and social media accounts.

Earlier this month, the Post reported that Chinese regional governments had cut thousands of positions in recent years.

The Chinese government started ramping up its online presence from November 2009, when Yunnan's provincial propaganda department started using the microblogging platform Weibo to respond to public concerns about a massive protest triggered by sudden rent increases at a wholesale market in the provincial capital Kunming.

Local government affairs websites and social media accounts quickly became popular, especially after the State Council, China's cabinet, released an official instruction in 2013 recognising that these platforms could help to strengthen government transparency and credibility.

According to China's official Internet Development Report released on March 26, more than 146,000 government bodies had an official presence on Chinese social media platforms as of the end of last year.

Some government agencies, such as the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission – the Communist Party's top security body – and Shenzhen's health commission, created popular social media accounts by using internet slang, cartoons and short videos to deliver their messages. But many local government accounts have become neglected, with some taken over by hackers or internet trolls.

The Weibo account of the urban management team of Wuhan's Wulijie subdistrict was found to have published a number of posts soliciting surrogacy and even prostitution from 2017 to 2019. The local government did not respond until 2021, saying the account had been hacked by criminals.



# TIBET DIGEST 2024

FOUNDATION FOR  
**Non-violent  
Alternatives**  
To inform and shape policy on Tibet and the region



## SINO- INDIAN RELATIONS

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## China creates a new county made up largely of India-claimed Aksai China

29 December 2024, Tibetan Review

Even as the two countries struggle, with some amount of success in recent times, to normalize their bilateral relations in the face of longstanding border issues, China has created two new counties in Xinjiang of which one is made up mainly of Indian territory it illegally occupied in Aksai Chin after it annexed Tibet in the middle of the last century.

The People's Government of northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region had announced the establishment of two new counties in the region – He'an County and Hekang County – reported the [deccanherald.com](https://www.deccanherald.com) Dec 29, citing China's official Xinhua news agency this week.

"The establishment of the counties, both administered by Hotan Prefecture, has been approved by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council," Xinhua was quoted as saying.

Hongliu and Xeyidula townships have been declared as the "county seats" (administrative headquarters) of He'an and Hekang respectively.

The report noted that the He'an county encompasses a large part of the 38000 sq km of areas India accuses China of illegally occupying in Aksai Chin.

The [deccanherald.com](https://www.deccanherald.com) report said that while India has not yet officially reacted to it, sources in New Delhi have remarked that such unilateral moves by China would not have any bearing on the bilateral negotiations to resolve the boundary dispute.

## SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS



The report said the Chinese move came just 10 days after the Special Representatives of the two nations restarted the boundary negotiation, which had been stalled for almost five years.

The Special Representatives of New Delhi and Beijing for boundary negotiations – India's National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign

Minister Wang Yi – met in the capital of the communist country on Dec 18.

They held the 23rd round of boundary negotiations, thus restarting a process that remained stalled for five years after the Chinese People's Liberation Army's aggressive moves along the Line of Actual Control and the Indian Army's counter-deployment in Apr-May 2020 led to a military stand-off in eastern Ladakh.

Apart from the about 38,000 sq km of India's territory in Aksai Chin, which borders eastern Ladakh, Pakistan ceded to China about 5,180 sq. km of India's territory in Saksgam Valley in 1963.

Beijing, on the other hand, claims the Arunachal Pradesh state of India as part of the territory of China and calls it "Zangnan" (south Tibet), on the basis of its claim of sovereignty over occupied Tibet.

### **China expresses condolences over death of India's former PM Singh**

27 December 2024, Xinhua

China expresses deep condolences over the passing of former Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said on Friday.

"China expresses sincere sympathies to the Indian government and people as well as to Mr. Singh's family," Mao said during a daily press briefing.

"Mr. Singh was a veteran statesman and renowned economist of India, who contributed significantly to the development of China-India relations," Mao said. During his tenure, China and India announced the establishment of a strategic and cooperative partnership for peace and prosperity and agreed on the political parameters and guiding principles for the settlement of the boundary question, Mao said. Singh died at 92 Thursday after a prolonged illness. He served two consecutive terms as prime minister of India from 2004 to 2014.

### **Recent Sino-India pact being implemented effectively, says China**

27 December 2024, The Shillong Times

China's Defence Ministry on Thursday said that the Chinese and Indian militaries are "comprehensively and effectively" implementing the agreement to end the standoff at eastern Ladakh and "steady progress" has been made.

Chinese Defence Spokesperson Senior Colonel Zhang Xiaogang made the remarks during a media briefing here while answering a question on the December 18 Special Representatives talks.

"At present, the Chinese and Indian militaries are comprehensively and effectively implementing the

border-related solutions reached between the two sides, and steady progress has been made," he said. He said that in recent times, based on the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries, China and India have maintained close communication on the border situation through diplomatic and military channels and achieved great progress.

Following the October 21 agreement between India and China, Special Representatives for border question NSA Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met here and held a comprehensive dialogue on the implementation of the agreement and restoration of the relations which were frozen since the standoff began in April 2020.

In October, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping met in Kazan, Russia, on the sidelines of the BRICS summit and approved the Oct 21 agreement.

Col Zhang said that bringing China-India relations back on the right track serves the fundamental interests of the two countries and the two peoples.

"The Chinese military is ready to make concerted efforts with the Indian side to faithfully implement the important consensus of the two leaders, conduct more exchanges and interactions, and promote China-India mil-to-mil relationship, in a bid to jointly safeguard lasting peace and tranquillity in the border areas," he added.

### **India-China ties in 2024: Military standoff with India ends in Ladakh, long freeze over**

25 December 2024, Deccan Herald

Throughout the over four-year crisis, bilateral trade was not impacted. In fact, it continued to boom.

Beijing: It was a breakthrough year in India-China ties after a near freeze in their ties for over four years – the longest since the 1962 war – with an agreement to end the eastern Ladakh military standoff.

After "amassing of a large number of troops by China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh" in April-May 2020, as External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said in a recent statement in Lok Sabha, resulting in the Galwan valley clash in June 2020, there had been a breakdown in the relations between the two Asian giants.

The post-1962 war chill lasted till the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Beijing in 1988.

This time, the two countries held periodic talks between the top commanders and through the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC), resulting in disengagement in stages from four points – the Galwan Valley, the

Pangong Lake, Hot Springs, and Gogra – in eastern Ladakh by creating buffer zones.

Finally, on October 21, India and China firmed up an agreement on patrolling and disengagement of troops along the LAC in eastern Ladakh at the remaining friction points of Depsang and Demchok.

The agreement led to the first structured meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the BRICS summit at Kazan in Russia soon after, their first in five years.

Subsequently, Jaishankar met Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of the G20 meeting in Brazil in November where they reached an understanding that the Special Representatives (SRs) and the Foreign Secretary-level mechanisms will be convened soon.

Constituted in 2003 to comprehensively address the vexed dispute of the India-China border spanning to 3,488 kms, the Special Representatives mechanism is headed by NSA Doval and Foreign Minister Wang.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh too met his Chinese counterpart Dong Jun at the ASEAN Defence Ministers' meeting in Vientiane in Laos in November.

After the 23rd SR dialogue between Doval and Wang in December, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the extensive talks focussed on a "positive" direction for cross-border cooperation, including resuming the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra and border trade, while the Chinese side said a six-point consensus, including continuing to take measures to maintain peace at borders and promote healthy and stable development of relations, was reached between the two sides.

While there was no clarity from China on why it moved its troops near the LAC in 2020, equally puzzling is the timing for the agreement to bring down the border tensions with India, months ahead of the 75th anniversary of their diplomatic relationship.

But Beijing, in recent months, appeared to be mellowing down after its economy struggled to reverse its slowdown, weighed down by issues such as property crisis and rising unemployment.

Throughout the over four-year crisis, bilateral trade was not impacted. In fact, it continued to boom.

The bilateral trade, according to Chinese official figures, totalled USD 138.2 billion in 2023, with Chinese exports climbing to USD 122 billion and Indian exports to China standing at USD 16.2 billion. India's trade deficit with China amounted to USD 105.8 billion last year.

The trade deficit in the first six months of this year climbed to USD 41.89 billion, with Chinese exports totalling USD 50.35 billion against India's exports to China USD 8.46 billion, according to data from the Indian Embassy in Beijing.

In 2025, amid stubborn attempts by the US and EU to restrict Chinese exports with heavy tariffs, China looks to push its exports as well as investments in India, especially electric vehicles.

Experts here see the trade expansion with India, currently the fastest growing economy in the world, also as a new avenue to partly offset its likely damages in the Trump 2.0 era.

China also recalibrated its foreign, trade and military policies ahead of this year's US Presidential elections, especially after President-elect Donald Trump vowed to enhance tariffs over and above what he imposed against China in his first tenure.

Officials here say there is considerable concern in Beijing that India-US relations under Trump's Presidency will pick up further momentum, especially the Quad grouping comprising the US, India, Australia and Japan, which China perceives as an alliance aimed at containing it.

Besides India, China also sought to recalibrate frayed ties with Australia and Japan.

Meanwhile, as China marked 75 years of communist party rule, a crucial meeting of the ruling Communist Party in July adopted a resolution for comprehensive reforms to lift the sluggish growth by achieving socialist modernisation by 2035.

President Xi, who continued to crack the corruption whip on the ruling Communist Party and the military officials, asked them in January to turn the knife inwards and carry the anti-graft campaign without any mercy.

Xi's anti-graft campaign in the military has drawn global attention, which his critics say enabled him to consolidate his hold on power.

China also announced to raise its retirement age from January 2025 after its population dipped for a second consecutive year. The demographic crisis was further highlighted as China's marriage registrations in the first half of 2024 fell to a record low since 1980, not to mention the reduced number of kindergartens and drop in the number of children enrolled in them.

In June, Chinese spacecraft Chang'e-6 successfully touched down in the South Pole-Aitken Basin - the far side of the Moon, in the first endeavour of its kind in human history to collect samples from the rarely explored terrain and brought back the soil.

Meanwhile, Tibet and Arunachal Pradesh continued to be contentious issues as China celebrated the 65th year of its takeover of Tibet.

In March, the Joe Biden administration recognised Arunachal Pradesh as Indian territory. Biden also signed into law the 'Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act' in July, triggering a sharp response from Beijing.

## India not on same page with China on 'bifurcating' border issue at Special Representatives meeting in Beijing

21 December 2024, Tibetan Review

While not denying it as such, India has distanced itself from China's claim that the two sides reached a six-point consensus and a commitment to a 'package' deal on the boundary question at the Dec 18 Beijing meeting of their special representatives – India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi.

There was no joint statement after that meeting and China's claim about the two sides having agreed to bifurcate the boundary issue from the "overall development of bilateral relations" is clearly opposed to India's stand.

India's position remains that stabilizing the border situation is the basis for the restoration of normal ties between the two countries.

The Chinese statement, issued Dec 18 night, received wide publicity in the Indian media, which talked about a "six-point consensus" and highlighted the fact that Indians may again be able to undertake the Kailash-Mansarovar pilgrimage in western Tibet soon.

China stopped the pilgrimage in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but never reopened it after bilateral ties plummeted in the wake of eastern Ladakh Galwan valley clash of the troops from the two sides that year.

The clashes led to the two sides escalating their military presence in the region, with the bilateral relationship severely affected in the process.

While both special representatives gave a "positive direction" towards the resumption of the pilgrimage, they have differed on the issue of prioritizing the normalization of the border situation, according to the print in Dec 20.

The Indian statement asserted that border ties are the cornerstone for determining the overall ties between the two countries. Furthermore, it makes no mention of a "six-point consensus", the report said.

"We put out the details of issues discussed in our press release. The two sides have reaffirmed their commitment to exploring a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable framework for the settlement of the boundary question in accordance with the political parameters and guiding principles agreed in 2005," the report quoted India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal as saying during a regular media briefing Dec 20.

The meeting between Doval and Wang was the first between the two in the special representatives' format since 2019.

China has been pressing New Delhi to normalize overall bilateral ties, including with the resumption of

direct flights between the two countries and the issuance of visas to Chinese nationals – both of which have been affected since the clashes at Galwan.

But Jaiswal has clarified that it is a "step-by-step" process before all parts of the relationship get restored.

The political processes of normalisation between the two Asian neighbours began after an agreement was reached on Oct 21, 2024 to disengage at the friction points in Eastern and Southern Ladakh.

Subsequently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping held a bilateral meeting on the margins of the BRICS summit in the Russian city of Kazan on Oct 23, 2024, the report noted.

## China building ability to 'fight and win wars' post 2020 standoff with India: US report

20 December 2024, First Post

The US Department of Defence's latest report submitted to the US Congress says China has strengthened its ability to 'fight and win wars' in a huge push after the 2020 military standoff with India



Following the 2020 military standoff with India along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), China has enhanced its development capabilities and concepts to strengthen its ability to "fight and win war" against a "strong enemy," the US Department of Defence has said in its latest report to the US Congress.

In the report that covered the military and security developments involving the People's Republic of China (PRC) through early 2024, the US also revealed that China has not scaled back its military presence along the LAC in eastern Ladakh region. It said there was significant and sustained escalation in military infrastructure in the region.

"The Western Theatre Command's (WTC) primary focus is on securing the People's Republic of China border with India. In recent years, differing perceptions between India and the PRC regarding border demarcations have facilitated multiple clashes, force buildups, and military infrastructure construction," report said, referring to the developments along the LAC since the India-China military standoff.



The report further claimed that China has strengthened its training and infrastructure aimed at long-term sustenance of the troops along the LAC.

The report cited the Galwan clash of June 2020, saying that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) "has not drawn down its positions or troop numbers since the 2020 clash and has built infrastructure and support facilities to maintain multiple Brigade deployments along the LAC".

"These engagements coincide with a significant and sustained escalation in military infrastructure to support a long-term presence on the LAC," the report said, referring to the developments on the LAC since the standoff.

On October 21 this year, the Indian government announced that India and China reached an agreement on disengagement and the resumption of patrolling from Demchok and Depsang in eastern Ladakh, the last two friction points of the 2020 standoff, returning to the status quo of pre-April 2020.

The US report also observed that since 1998, China has settled 11 land-based territorial disputes with six of its neighbours. It also said that the PRC, in the last decade, used a "more coercive" approach to deal with disputes over maritime features, rights to potentially rich offshore oil and gas deposits, and border areas.

The report said that the PLA has continuously been improving its methods and standards of training combined arms units. "Training encompassed individual to collective soldier events integrating reconnaissance, infantry, artillery, armor, engineers, and signal units," it said.

It also pointed out that in addition to continued deployments on the Indian border and in Myanmar, the PLA conducted multiple large-scale exercises in training areas throughout the country.

The report also pointed out that in 2020, PLA Special Operations Forces from the Tibet Military Region were deployed on the LAC with India following clashes between Chinese and Indian troops in eastern Ladakh.

### **'What if China suddenly releases water?' Arunachal Chief Minister asks protesters against major dam project**

20 December 2024, Tibetan Review

Seeking to reason with those protesting against the proposed hydropower project on the Siang river, Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu has on Dec 19 said the aim of the project is to counter possible threats posed by China with its 60,000 MW hydropower project in upstream Tibet on the Yarlung Tsangpo river just before it enters Tuting in Upper Siang.

"In case, China releases water from their dams all of a sudden, a trail of unimaginable destruction will sweep through the Siang belt, Assam and Bangladesh.

"It is also inevitable that the volume of water in the Siang river will drastically get reduced during the winters so much (so) that you will be able to cross the mighty Siang on foot. Would you like such a situation? I certainly won't," the deccanherald.com Dec 19 quoted Khandu as saying, addressing a function at Boleng in Siang district.

"We are optimistic that with the progress being made through bilateral talks with China, relations will improve; but we cannot remain complacent and be prepared for the unseen," he has added.

He has said China, which is not a signatory to the International Water Conventions, intends to divert the water from the multiple water reservoirs to be created under the project to dry regions of Tibet and elsewhere in the PRC.

The Siang Upper Multipurpose Project, Khandu has said, has been proposed by New Delhi to maintain natural flow of water in the Siang river throughout the year and flood modulation in case of water release by China.

The Yarlung Tsangpo is called the Siang in Arunachal Pradesh and the Brahmaputra in Assam.

Khandu's comments came amid strong protests led by several civil society organisations against possible adverse impact of the proposed hydro power project on the Siang river. The protesters have refused to allow the National Hydro Power Corporation (NHPC), a federal Public Sector Undertaking, to carry out a pre-feasibility study for the major project. Khandu has rejected reports that central forces will be used by the government to forcibly execute the project.

"We are a democratic country. We do not believe in forcing projects on our own people. We believe in taking into confidence the last man in the queue."

He has also said, according the etvbharat.com Dec 19, "If you don't want a dam, if you don't want a hydropower project, there won't be. Chapter closed".

"But," he has added, "The case at hand is not about a hydropower project. It's about a Multipurpose Project, a project of national importance and envisioned by the Government of India and the Niti Aayog."

The NITI Aayog (lit. 'Policy Commission'; abbreviation for National Institution for Transforming India) serves as the apex public policy think tank of the Government of India, and the nodal agency tasked with catalyzing economic development. It was established in 2015 to replace the country's Planning Commission.

## China ready to enhance mutual trust with India at border talks, foreign ministry says

17 December 2024, Reuters



Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian speaks during a press conference in Beijing, China March 20, 2024. REUTERS/Tingshu Wang/File Photo Purchase Licensing Rights

China is ready to work with India to enhance mutual trust through dialogue and communication, and manage differences with sincerity and integrity, the foreign ministry said on Tuesday.

Lin Jian, a ministry spokesperson, made the remarks when asked about the upcoming talks between Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Indian National Security Adviser Ajit Doval this week on border issues.

Wang and Doval are set to meet in Beijing on Wednesday in a resumption of talks under their "special representatives dialogue" mechanism since deadly border clashes soured ties four years ago.

"China stands ready to work with India to implement the important consensus reached by the two countries' leaders, respect each other's core interests and major concerns... and bring bilateral relations back to a stable and healthy development track at an early date," Lin said at the ministry's regular press briefing.

Chinese President Xi Jinping met Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Russia in October just days after the two countries reached a deal on patrolling their disputed frontier to end a four-year military stand-off.

Both leaders agreed to boost communications and resolve conflicts and differences, directing their officials to take further steps to stabilise all aspects of bilateral ties.

Relations between the nuclear-armed neighbours have been strained in recent years, after at least 20 Indian soldiers and four Chinese troops were killed in hand-to-hand combat in the Galwan Valley in 2020.

Ties had remained frozen since, with their trust eroded by repeated border stand-offs.

Wang last met Doval in September in St Petersburg, Russia, with the two agreeing to redouble efforts to ensure complete disengagement on the contested frontier.

## India's Spending on Defense To Deter China

18 December 2024, The Heritage Foundation, Wilson Beaver

In a move that signals India's growing commitment to strengthen its own security, the country's Cabinet Committee on Security, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, recently approved two new deals that will significantly enhance its defense capabilities. These deals include the construction of two nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSNs) and the acquisition of 31 Predator drones (MQ-9B) from U.S. defense-contractor General Atomics. Both are smart strategic decisions that underscore India's willingness to safeguard its interests, strengthen its capacity, and modernize its defense architecture.

New Delhi has an eye on China, of course. As Beijing continues to assert its influence and military presence across the Indian Ocean and beyond, India's investments in undersea warfare and unmanned aerial systems are timely and necessary. However, the procurement of SSNs and the acquisition of MQ-9Bs are more than just a response to China's rise. They represent India's broader ambition to act as a key player in the Indo-Pacific's security architecture.

China's Ambitions Are Endangering the Pacific Islands

The Indian Navy, already operating nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines, has long advocated for the additional procurement of nuclear-powered attack submarines. This project, which is estimated to cost an initial \$5.4 billion, will make the Indian Navy far more capable of defending its interests in the Indian Ocean.

Nuclear-powered submarines are the apex predator of undersea warfare and offer a versatile offensive capability for conventional warfare and force projection. Australian defense policymakers entered into the AUKUS agreement with the United States in order to purchase nuclear-powered attack submarines based on a similar analysis.

India has long recognized the importance of indigenous defense manufacturing and self-reliance under the "Make in India" initiative, and the procurement of SSNs represents a new frontier that enhances India's defense capabilities while simultaneously reducing dependency on foreign suppliers such as the Russian Akula-class SSN, which India previously leased until 2021.

Moreover, the SSNs are critical for the Indian Navy to match the growing power of the Chinese People's

Liberation Army Navy, which has 12 nuclear-powered submarines and continues to expand. The nuclear-powered attack submarines will allow India to conduct extended patrols, including around the Strait of Malacca and in the South China Sea.

America's Allies Need To Increase Defense Spending  
Also significant is India's decision to purchase 31 Predator Drones from the United States, valued at approximately \$3.99 billion. The MQ-9B purchase, which includes 16 Sky Guardian and 15 Sea Guardian High Altitude Long Endurance (HALE) Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS), will enhance intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities of India's armed forces.

These advanced MQ-9B drones will also provide India the capacity for precision strikes on strategic targets. Most importantly, this deal reflects India's deepening defense partnership with the United States, which has been growing steadily through bilateral channels and multilateral initiatives such as the Quad.

This acquisition comes at a time when the Indian Ocean is increasingly becoming a theater of strategic competition, particularly with China's expanding naval footprint and its aggressive maritime ambitions. Amid growing concerns over illicit maritime activities and the presence of Chinese surveillance vessels in the Indian Ocean, the MQ-9B drones will give India an ability to monitor and respond swiftly to increased Chinese aggression. These Predator drones will further enable real-time intelligence gathering and targeted operations throughout the vast Indian Ocean.

By enhancing its undersea warfare capabilities and expanding its surveillance and strike potential, India's recent two deals represent concrete steps to safeguard its maritime interests, protect critical sea lanes, and strengthen its role as a key player in the region.

### **23rd Meeting of the Special Representatives of India and China**

18 December 2024, MEA

The 23rd Meeting of the Special Representatives (SRs) of India and China, respectively Shri Ajit Doval, National Security Advisor of India, and Mr. Wang Yi, Member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and Minister of Foreign Affairs, was held in Beijing on 18 December 2024.

2. The SRs met in accordance with the decision taken during the recent meeting between Prime Minister Modi and President Xi Jinping in Kazan for them to meet at an early date to oversee the management of peace & tranquillity in border areas and to explore a

fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable solution to the boundary question.

3. The SRs reiterated the importance of maintaining a political perspective of the overall bilateral relationship while seeking a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable framework for settlement of the boundary question, and resolved to inject more vitality into this process.

4. This was the first meeting of the SRs since frictions had emerged in the Western Sector of the India-China border areas in 2020. The SRs positively affirmed the implementation of the latest disengagement agreement of October 2024, resulting in patrolling and grazing in relevant areas.

5. Both SRs underlined the importance of maintaining peace and tranquillity in the border areas to promote overall development of the India-China bilateral relationship. They emphasised the need to ensure peaceful conditions on the ground so that issues on the border do not hold back the normal development of bilateral relations. Drawing on the learnings from the events of 2020, they discussed various measures to maintain peace and tranquillity on the border and advance effective border management. They decided to use, coordinate and guide the relevant diplomatic and military mechanisms towards this purpose.

6. The SRs exchanged views on bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest. They provided positive directions for cross-border cooperation and exchanges including resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, data sharing on trans-border rivers and border trade. They agreed on the salience of stable, predictable and amicable India-China relations for regional and global peace and prosperity.

7. NSA called on H.E. Mr. Han Zheng, Vice President of the People's Republic of China.

8. NSA invited Mr. Wang Yi to visit India at a mutually convenient date to hold the next round of SR meeting.

### **Successful Modi-Xi meeting signifies new beginning of India-China ties: senior CPC official**

11 December 2024, The Economic Times

The "successful" meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping in Russia in October "signified a new beginning" of India-China relations, a senior minister of the ruling CPC has said. Liu Jianchao, Minister of the International Department of the Chinese Communist Party of China (CPC) was referring to the Modi-Jinping meeting at Kazan in Russia on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Russia while speaking with the Indian envoy to China, Pradeep Kumar Rawat, on Tuesday, official media said on Wednesday.

The restarting of China-India relations meets the fundamental interests of the 2.8 billion people of the two countries, corresponds to the common expectations of the Global South and is also in line with the correct direction of history, he said.

Liu said China is willing to strengthen friendly exchanges with all political parties in India, jointly implement the important consensus reached by leaders of the two countries, and promote the early return of bilateral relations to a stable and healthy development track.

Modi and Xi met at Kazan on October 24 after the two countries reached an agreement to end the over four-year military standoff at Eastern Ladakh during which the relations between the two countries were virtually frozen.

During their meeting, their first in five years, the two leaders endorsed the agreement on patrolling and disengagement along the LAC in eastern Ladakh and instructed the Special Representatives for the boundary mechanism to meet to discuss further steps. After their meeting, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi met on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Brazil followed by the Working Mechanism for Consultation & Coordination on China-India Border Affairs (WMCC).

### **Indian opposition raises doubts over India-China border deal**

11 December 2024, SCMP, Biman Mukherji

Despite opposition concerns, analysts expect the deal to proceed driven by economic necessity and a desire to enhance trade between the two Asian giants

India's opposition has raised concerns about potential territorial concessions under the country's recent border agreement with China, increasing political scrutiny of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government as it works to ease tensions with Beijing. The controversy erupted after Foreign Minister S Jaishankar's parliamentary statement on December 4 outlining the disengagement of troops from the border following the deadly 2020 Himalayan border clash.

On Sunday, Jairam Ramesh, a senior leader of the main opposition Congress Party, slammed the agreement in parliament as going against India's national interests.

"We want to go back to the status quo of April 2020 ... thereafter we will be looking at disengagement, de-escalation and normal management of the LAC (Line of Actual Control), referring to the India-China border," Ramesh was quoted as saying by the Hindu

newspaper, hinting that India may have seceded land in the deal.

However, analysts say opposition pressure is unlikely to derail the thawing of relations between the two Asian giants, who have been pulling back troops since late October after years of being locked virtually eyeball-to-eyeball at two positions on the border.

"I don't really think that any charges, until substantially proven, will have any impact whatsoever on this government," said Yashwant Deshmukh, an independent political commentator. "If the government has decided to go ahead with talks with China, they will go ahead and at this point of time, the opposition is not really in a position to accuse this government of any wrongdoing."

Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) strengthened its mandate by an unexpected victory in state elections in the politically strategic state of Maharashtra last month, he said. The victory followed another surprising win in the northern state of Haryana in October.

The losses have weakened the Congress party, which was gaining momentum after scoring crucial victories in the BJP's heartland Hindi-speaking provinces, resulting in the BJP losing its outright majority in the summer parliamentary elections.

"After the huge loss in Maharashtra, I think the opposition, particularly the Congress, will need a lot of steam together in order to bring any narrative against the BJP NDA government," Deshmukh said.

Sino-Indian relations are on the mend. A reset to pre-pandemic levels is a good start

Uday Chandra, analyst

Sino-Indian relations are on the mend. A reset to pre-pandemic levels is a good start

The border disengagement has raised hopes for improved China-India trade relations, which could have widespread ramifications throughout Asia, especially with incoming US President Donald Trump's threat to raise import tariffs.

India and China have not had direct flights for four years since the border tensions, while New Delhi's increased scrutiny for visa applications from Chinese citizens has hampered cooperation in sectors such as electronics manufacturing.

"Sino-Indian relations are on the mend. A reset to pre-pandemic levels is a good start," said Uday Chandra, an assistant professor of government at Georgetown University.

In May, China appointed senior diplomat Xu Feihong as its new ambassador to India, filling an 18-month vacancy in the backdrop of tense bilateral relations. "The next step should be direct flights resuming. I anticipate that, with business lobbying, this is likely in 2025," Chandra said.

"I doubt the Opposition [in India] will play a significant role in this phase of diplomacy. Opposition unity remains elusive anyway," Chandra said.

Mamata Banerjee, leader of the All Trinamool Congress Party, which holds significant influence in West Bengal, recently staked a claim for the leadership position of the opposition alliance INDIA Bloc, triggering a war of words with the Congress party and raising concerns about opposition unity.

**Economic need**

Chandra said the economic imperative to strengthen India-China relations will enhance political engagement.

"Economics continues to trump politics. After the US election, India and China are working out how to live and trade peacefully together. It is an alternative model of international relations as the West sinks into democratic crises," Chandra said.

Experts say global supply chains could be disrupted and reshaped if the incoming Trump administration implements its campaign pledge of a 60 per cent import tariffs on China and 10 per cent on other nations.

Earlier this month, the US president-elect threatened a 100 per cent tariff on Brics countries, which includes China and India, if the 11-member group were to create a rival currency to the US dollar. Such a Brics currency has been discussed for over a year without any significant progress.

"There are strong incentives for both [China and India] to trade intensively, even in the absence of any policy developments," said Jamus Lim, associate professor of economics at ESSEC Business School Asia-Pacific.

The most obvious reason for the two countries to trade is "that they are both large economies, located close to each other," he said, noting that the two countries specialise in fairly distinct exports.

The main reason for trade between the two countries, he said, is their proximity as large economies that specialise in different exports. India excels in the services sector, particularly information technology, while China focuses on manufacturing.

"Now, with further normalisation of bilateral political relations, and the frictions arising from impediments to trade that are likely to result from the Trump administration, I anticipate a continued, steady expansion of trade between these two emerging market giants," he said.

## **Chinese company to set up plant in Punjab to manufacture robotic agricultural tools**

09 December 2024, Dunya News

A Chinese company has agreed to set up robotic agricultural equipment manufacturing plants in Punjab.

An agreement was signed between the Chinese company AI Force Tech and the Punjab government during Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz's visit to China.

She had a meeting with the founder and CEO of the AI Force Tech Dr Han and briefed him on agricultural reforms her government planned to implement in Punjab. She assured the Chinese company of cooperation for setting up robotic agricultural machinery manufacturing plant in Punjab.

Earlier, Chief Minister Maryam inspected the latest agricultural tools and expressed her determination to introduce them in Punjab to revolutionise agriculture sector.

A delegation from AI Force Tech will soon visit Punjab at the invitation of Chief Minister Maryam.

**MARYAM'S FIRST OFFICIAL VISIT TO ANY COUNTRY**

Earlier, on Sunday, Maryam Nawaz held a meeting with a high-level delegation of the Communist Party of China in Beijing.

On this occasion, she expressed her desire to make Punjab economically sound in collaboration with China.

At the Beijing Airport, she was welcomed by six senior representatives of the Communist Party of China.

She is the first Pakistani woman chief minister to visit China.

Senator Pervez Rashid, Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Minister for Information and Culture Azma Bokhari, Minister for Transport Bilal Akbar, Minister for Agriculture Ashiq Hussain Kirmani are part of the delegation.

During her trip, she will visit Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong. The visit will focus on exploring cooperation in the fields of Information Technology (IT), healthcare, and industry.

Maryam Nawaz will also meet prominent Chinese leaders and key government officials during her visit.

## **China, India vow to learn lessons of deadly 2020 border clash, keep talking to avert rerun**

06 December 2024, SCMP, Maple Leung

Calls for openness mark first WMCC talks since both sides withdrew from face-off points along disputed western Himalayan border



India and China have pledged to reflect on the lessons learned from their border stand-off in 2020, while emphasising the need for regular communication to prevent a recurrence.

The resolution came at the first diplomatic talks under a key dialogue mechanism since both sides withdrew from two face-off points along their disputed western Himalayan border.

"The two sides positively affirmed the implementation of the most recent [troop] disengagement agreement which completed the resolution of the issues that emerged in 2020," a statement from the Indian foreign ministry said after the 32nd meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) on India-China Border Affairs, held in New Delhi on Thursday.

The issues of 2020 refer to a series of stand-offs that summer along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) separating Indian-controlled Ladakh and Chinese-controlled Aksai Chin. Matters came to a head with clashes in the Galwan River valley that left dozens of Indian troops and at least four Chinese soldiers dead, plunging bilateral ties to their lowest point in decades.

To prevent such incidents in the future, both sides emphasised the need for "exchanges and contacts at the diplomatic and military levels through established mechanisms", according to New Delhi.

The Chinese foreign ministry also highlighted the importance of leveraging the border negotiation mechanism, and maintaining open diplomatic and military channels.

The two sides agreed to take measures to further ease the situation along the border, it said.

The meeting focused on making preparations for the next round of border talks at the "special representative" level, and maintaining communication through diplomatic and military channels for sustainable peace and tranquillity in the border area, according to the Chinese readout.

The Indian statement said the next meeting of the special representatives would be held "in accordance with the decision of the two leaders in their meeting in Kazan" on October 23, when Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi met on the sidelines of the Brics summit.

The summit came days after India said it had reached a deal with China on patrolling the frontier in eastern Ladakh to end the four-year military stand-off, signalling an easing of tensions.

Thursday's meeting in the capital was co-chaired by Hong Liang, director general of the Chinese foreign ministry's Department of Boundary and Ocean Affairs, and Gourangalal Das, joint secretary for East Asia from the corresponding Indian ministry. The pair also led the 31st round of the WMCC talks held in Beijing in August.

At the 30th round, also held in New Delhi, both sides sought to promote the healthy and stable development of ties and "turn the page" on the border issue at an early date.

On Tuesday, Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said that both countries would consider "other aspects" of bilateral ties in a calibrated manner now that troops had pulled back from the last two face-off points on their Himalayan border.

"Recent developments that reflect our continuous diplomatic engagement since then have set our ties in the direction of some improvement," Jaishankar told lawmakers in New Delhi.

"The conclusion of the disengagement phase now allows us to consider other aspects of our bilateral engagement in a calibrated manner, keeping our national security interests first and foremost."

### **As relations improve, Indian foreign minister outlines three principles for engaging with China**

05 December 2024, Tibetan Review

India's External affairs minister S Jaishankar has on Dec 3 informed the Lok Sabha, the lower house of parliament, that India-China relations had improved, and emphasized government's commitment to engaging with the country, according to the hindustantimes.com Dec 3.

He has also informed the country's lawmakers that recent military and diplomatic talks had resolved border issues, including the October patrolling agreement for areas along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh.

He has also informed the Rajya Sabha, the upper house, on Dec 4 that peace and tranquillity in border areas is a pre-requisite for development of bilateral relationship with China, and the two sides will be discussing de-escalation and effective management of activities in these areas in the coming days, according to the timesofindia.com Dec 5.

In his Rajya Sabha statement on "Recent Developments in India's Relations with China", Jaishankar has said China was in "illegal occupation" of 38,000sqkm of Indian territory in Aksai Chin as a result of the 1962 conflict while Pakistan had "illegally" yielded 5,180sqkm of Indian territory to China, which has been under Chinese occupation since 1948.

He has further explained: "While there is a Line of Actual Control, it doesn't have a common understanding in some areas. We remain committed to engaging with China through bilateral discussions to arrive at a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable framework for boundary settlement."

In his identical statement in the Lok Sabha, Jaishankar has further said, "Keeping our national

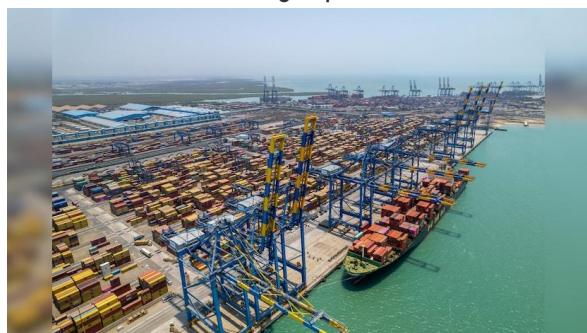
security interests foremost, in my recent meeting with foreign minister Wang Yi, we reached an understanding that the special representatives and the foreign secretary-level mechanism will be convened soon."

He has outlined three key principles to be upheld in all circumstances for engagement with China: "one: both sides should strictly respect and observe the Line of Actual Control (LAC); two: neither side should attempt to unilaterally alter the status quo; and three: agreements and understandings reached in the past must be fully abided by in their entirety".

### **India's success in capturing 'China-Plus-One strategy' limited: NITI report**

04 December 2024, Business Standard

It said that India is seen as an attractive destination for companies looking to shift their bases out of China and this shift offers the country a chance to enhance its manufacturing capabilities



In recent years, it said, India's share in global trade has fallen for labour-intensive sectors. | Representational Image: Bloomberg

India has seen limited success so far in capturing the 'China Plus One strategy', while Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, and Malaysia have become bigger beneficiaries, according to a report of government think tank Niti Aayog.

It said that factors such as cheaper labour, simplified tax laws, lower tariffs and pro-activeness in signing Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) have played a critical role in helping these countries expand their export shares.

The US has implemented stricter export controls and higher tariffs on Chinese goods to limit China's growth and expenditure towards technological progress.

This has led to a fragmentation of global supply chains, prompting multinational corporations to seek alternatives to Chinese manufacturing.

It said that India is seen as an attractive destination for companies looking to shift their manufacturing bases out of China and this shift offers the country a chance to enhance its domestic manufacturing capabilities, particularly in high-tech industries.

"However, India has seen limited success so far in capturing the China Plus One strategy so far," said the report - 'Trade Watch Quarterly'.

In recent years, it said, India's share in global trade has fallen for labour-intensive sectors despite significant endowment.

"China is the main competitor in several key product categories highlighting the need for India to enhance competitiveness in these products. India has a solid foothold in developed markets like the USA, UK, and Germany, across top product categories but there are opportunities to explore emerging markets," it said.

It also said that several studies assessing the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) identify African and Asian countries as the "most" vulnerable to its effects.

CBAM (or carbon tax), is aimed at preventing carbon leakage and will apply to high-risk imports such as cement, iron and steel, aluminium, fertilizers, electricity, and hydrogen starting January 2026. It requires the purchase of CBAM certificates, reflecting the carbon emissions linked to these goods.

For India, the iron and steel industry, representing 23.5 per cent of its EU exports, faces the highest exposure under CBAM, it added.

"Indian firms may incur tariffs of 20-35 per cent, leading to higher costs, reduced competitiveness, and lower demand in the EU market. Additionally, compliance costs will rise due to the need for detailed emissions reporting," the report said.

The European Union (EU) is India's second-largest trading partner. In 2023-24, the EU accounted for 17.4 per cent (\$ 76 billion) of the country's total exports.

## **November**

### **Patrolling Agreement with China Implemented: MEA tells Lok Sabha**

30 November 2024, The Wire

From April-May 2020, Indian and Chinese troops had been at a stand-off at multiple points of the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) informed parliament on Friday (November 29) that the patrolling arrangement agreement with China, reached a month ago for Depsang and Demchok, has been "implemented," while the terms of disengagement at earlier friction points in Eastern Ladakh border stand-off remain unchanged.

From April-May 2020, Indian and Chinese troops had been at a stand-off at multiple points of the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh, sparking several clashes including a hand-to-hand fight in June that

claimed the lives of at least 20 Indian soldiers and four Chinese soldiers.

Following multiple rounds of diplomatic and military negotiations, disengagement was achieved at around four friction points, resulting in the establishment of 'buffer zones'.

However, progress on resolving the two remaining points at Depsang and Demchok had remained elusive, till last month.

On October 21, India first announced that a "patrolling agreement" had been finalised for these two last friction points. Two days later, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping held their first formal talks in five years in Kazan, Russia on the sidelines of the BRICS summit.

Since then, the foreign and defence ministers of both countries have met twice in separate engagements to advance the process of normalising ties.

Earlier on November 2, India had said that "verification patrolling" had commenced in Depsang and Demchok.

The Chinese defence ministry said on Thursday (November 28) that the "Chinese and Indian militaries are implementing the solutions reached by the two sides on border-related issues, and progress is going smoothly".

In a written answer in Lok Sabha on Friday, Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh said for the first time on Friday that the October 21 agreement has been "effected and implemented" on the ground.

"India and China reached agreement on patrolling arrangements along the Line of Actual Control in India-China border areas in Depsang and Demchok on 21 October 2024, leading to disengagement. It has been agreed therein that patrolling activities and, wherever applicable, grazing will resume as per longstanding practice before friction started in these areas. The agreement has since been effected and implemented as per modalities and timelines agreed," Singh said.

The statement also clarifies that the conditions set for the resolution of earlier friction points, which included the establishment of buffer zones, remain intact.

"The terms of the agreements reached before October 21, 2024, continue to apply in the relevant areas of Eastern Ladakh," Singh added.

At the earlier friction points, both sides had reportedly agreed to withdraw an equal distance from the area and suspend patrolling until overall de-escalation and troop withdrawal were completed.

## China, India find common ground for 'strategic recalibration' in post-clash thaw

29 November 2024, SCMP, Cyril Ip

De-escalation of border tensions has paved the way for engagement on other issues, including pressures from the West, analysts said

The thaw in China-India relations began with a pact to disengage troops at their disputed border in the Himalayas, laying the groundwork for a reunion between President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Brics summit in October.

### Advertisement

Last week, the two countries' defence chiefs held talks in Laos and committed to cooperation – the latest in a series of moves that analysts have called a "strategic recalibration" in response to pressures from the West.

As Beijing seeks to reform the global economic architecture and New Delhi pursues its multidimensional foreign policy, their visions have proven more complimentary than conflicting since a bloody border clash in June 2020 plunged ties to historic lows.

Numerous rounds of negotiations have taken place in the past four years, but it took October's accord on military disengagement to restore both countries' troop positions to pre-crisis locations in the border region of Ladakh.

According to Chietigj Bajpae, a senior research fellow for South Asia in the Asia-Pacific Programme at Chatham House, the agreement followed "a recognition by New Delhi that it had backed itself into a corner after the clashes".

"De-escalation of border tensions [was] a prerequisite to engagement on other issues, including the economy," said Bajpae, author of *China in India's Post-Cold War Engagement with Southeast Asia*.

Bajpae said "economic and strategic compulsions" faced by the Asian giants played a role in their reconciliation, including a potentially volatile relationship with the US from next year when president-elect Donald Trump begins his second term. Tightening foreign investment restrictions in Western countries had also prompted China to seek stable relations and deeper engagement with the Global South, of which India is a key member, he said.

"India's tensions with the West, on issues ranging from relations with Russia to Canada, also reaffirmed the need for New Delhi to maintain a multidimensional foreign policy."

Will India and China's new border deal lead to long-term peace in the disputed Himalayas?

Veteran journalist Kalinga Seneviratne, who lectures at the Shinawatra University in Bangkok, said New Delhi was vexed by Washington's "concerted

pressure” to halt India’s long-standing trade with Russia after the invasion of Ukraine.

There had also been a perception in India that the US had quietly supported Canada over its recent frictions with India, sparked by the killing of a prominent Sikh activist in June, he said.

Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Canadian citizen who advocated for an independent Khalistan, was shot outside a temple in Surrey, British Columbia. India has strongly denied involvement in his death and recently accused Canada of sheltering violent extremists.

“The spat with Canada over its alleged harbouring of Sikh ‘terrorists’ and accusation of Indian diplomats being involved in the murder of a Sikh community leader in Canada has spurred some anti-Western sentiment in India, especially in the media.”

According to Seneviratne, despite attempts by Beijing and New Delhi to improve relations, some efforts have been slowed by “strong sentiments among Indians that the Chinese cannot be trusted”.

Seneviratne noted that when asked by Western journalists about the Chinese “threat”, Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar had repeatedly referred to the two countries’ shared history.

“For the past two years or so, [Jaishankar] has kept on pointing to the two countries being ancient civilisations that have lived peacefully next to each other for 5,000 years,” he said.

Seneviratne, author of *Geopolitics and the Media in Asia and the Pacific: Pulling in Different Directions*, said that widely circulated Western media in India “played a big role in fomenting Sinophobia”.

“But Indians are not fools, they can clearly see the plot,” he said.

According to Seneviratne, when it comes to reforming global architecture, “India and China, along with Russia and Brazil, are on the same wavelength”.

He added that India’s business sector pushed New Delhi to mend fences with Beijing by lifting trade restrictions imposed after the 2020 dispute.

Bajpai said there was growing recognition by India that it could not meet its ambitions to emerge as a global manufacturing hub without sourcing components and raw materials from China.

“Indian corporations have been lobbying to relax visa rules and investment restrictions [and] Indian companies are also seeking ways to help Chinese companies enter the Indian market, although investment restrictions will remain in place for politically sensitive sectors,” he said.

In Seneviratne’s view, Beijing also wants India to play a more active role in the Brics grouping of developing economies and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation to avoid its mission of

“reforming the global economic architecture” being spoiled.

“For Brics to succeed, India and China need to cooperate. Both countries see themselves as leaders or spokespeople of the Global South – if they can do it together, that will be a formidable alliance,” he said.

Colombo-based journalist and researcher Rathindra Kuruwita said there had been signs in recent years that the containment policies imposed on China by the West might be applied to India as its economic prowess grew – hence the “strategic recalibration” by both countries.

“The evolving global order, characterised by shifting alliances and emerging blocs like Brics, has underscored the importance of collaboration between India and China. Both countries aim to assert their influence in multilateral forums, making improved bilateral ties strategically advantageous.”

According to Kuruwita, progress in China-India relations can be expected in the resumption of direct flights and other areas of people-to-people exchanges, as emphasised by Wang Yi, the Chinese foreign minister.

“Simplification of visa processes is likely, aiming to boost tourism, business travel, and academic exchanges. Both sides have also discussed improving cooperation in media by enabling the exchange of journalists, fostering better mutual understanding,” Kuruwita said.

Seneviratne noted that Beijing and New Delhi had been “very strict” over granting visas for academic exchanges between the two countries.

“There needs to be more interaction between them ... Visa liberalisation may help,” he said, adding that opportunities for student exchanges should be increased.

### **Armies making great progress in implementing settlement: China**

29 November 2024, The Hindu, Dinakar Peri

“We also look forward to harmonious dance between the Chinese dragon and Indian Elephant with concerted steps,” says Chinese Defence Ministry spokesperson Wu Qian

Stating that the Armies of India and China are implementing the settlement reached between the two countries for disengagement and resumption of patrolling at Demchok and Depsang in eastern Ladakh, the Chinese Defence Ministry said on Thursday (November 28, 2024) that they were making “great progress.”

Sources in the know said the frequency of patrolling would be a maximum of one patrol a week by each side in Depsang and Demchok. Talks are continuing between the two sides for resumption of patrolling in



other five friction points where buffer zones are in place following disengagement.

Last week, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh met his Chinese counterpart Admiral Dong Jun in Laos on the sidelines of the 11th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus. The meeting came in the backdrop of the disengagement and the meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the BRICS summit.

during a press conference in Beijing on November 28, 2024. | Photo Credit: AP

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Implementation of agreement with India to disengage troops going 'smoothly': Chinese Foreign Ministry

Last week, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh met his Chinese counterpart Admiral Dong Jun in Laos on the sidelines of the 11th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus. The meeting came in the backdrop of the disengagement and the meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the BRICS summit.

'Positive meeting'

On the meeting between the two leaders, he said they had a "positive and constructive" meeting and agreed to implement the important consensus reached between the top leaders and promote stable relations between the two countries. "Now, we are making great progress," Sr Col Wu said.

During the meeting, Mr. Singh called for reflecting on the lessons learnt from the unfortunate border clashes of 2020, "take measures to prevent recurrence of such events and safeguard peace and tranquillity along the India-China border" and both sides agreed to work together towards a road map for rebuilding mutual trust and understanding.

The spokesperson said the two militaries should strictly abide by the recent common understandings reached by the two sides to de-escalate tensions at the border areas, make efforts to bring down the tensions and focus on enhancing mutual trust and exchanges between the two countries. "We hope the two sides can seize the opportunity and build new

momentum to make new progress in the military-to-military relations," he added.

The two sides have since completed disengagement from Depsang and Demchok, the last two remaining friction points of the 2020 stand-off, and have resumed coordinated patrolling. On November 4, the Indian Army announced that it had patrolled one of the five patrolling points in Depsang, PP 10 and shortly after the Chinese People's Liberation Army too resumed patrolling.

### **China looks forward to harmonious dance between the Chinese dragon and Indian elephant with concerted steps: defense spokesperson**

28 November 2024, Global Times

A Chinese Defense Ministry spokesperson on Thursday expressed hope for China and India to seize the opportunity and the good momentum of the two countries' defense minister's recent positive and constructive meeting to make new progress in the military-to-military relationship.

Spokesperson Wu Qian made the remarks at a regular press conference on Thursday, when asked to comment about information on the website of the Indian Defense Ministry on November 20. Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh stated recently during his meeting with Chinese Defense Minister Admiral Dong Jun in Vientiane, Laos, that a friendly relationship between India and China, the two most populous countries, will have a positive impact on global peace and prosperity, and the two countries should focus on cooperation rather than conflict.

Wu said that Dong met with his Indian counterpart in Vientiane, Laos, on the afternoon of November 20, and the meeting was positive and constructive.

The two sides agreed to deliver on the important consensus reached by the two state leaders and promote a stable development of the mil-to-mil relationship; to strictly abide by the recent common understanding reached by the two sides and make efforts to deescalate tensions in the border areas; to focus on enhancing mutual trust and conduct more exchanges and interactions between the two militaries, Wu noted.

"We hope our two sides can seize the opportunity and the good momentum to make new progress in the mil-to-mil relationship. We also look forward to a harmonious dance between the Chinese dragon and the Indian elephant with concerted steps," Wu said.



## **Centre Approves ₹ 28,229 Crore For 1,637 Km Arunachal Frontier Highway Along LAC**

28 November 2024, NDTV

The ambitious project to be built at an estimated cost of ₹ 40,000 crore is seen as a move to counter China's aggression in Arunachal Pradesh, besides contributing to the socio-economic development of the border state.

The Centre has sanctioned ₹ 28,229 crore for constructing the 1,637 km Arunachal Frontier Highway connecting 12 districts of the state along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) on the India-China international border, a top official said.

The ambitious project to be built at an estimated cost of ₹ 40,000 crore is seen as a move to counter China's aggression in Arunachal Pradesh, besides contributing to the socio-economic development of the border state.

The highway is being constructed along the 'India-Tibet-China-Myanmar' border and the road project will be as close as 20 km from the LAC and international borders.

It will start from Bomdila and pass through Nafra, Huri and Monigong towns, which are closer to the LAC or the McMahon Line, and conclude in Vijaynagar near the India-Myanmar border.

"The Centre has sanctioned ₹ 28,229 crore for the Arunachal Frontier Highway, which will connect 1,683 villages. The national highway being built parallel to the MacMohon Line will be completed by 2027," Chief Engineer of Border Roads Organisation (BRO) and head of Project Brahmanak, Subhash Chandra Lunia, said.

He said work is under progress for constructing the 198 km stretch (Tato-Tuting) of the Arunachal Frontier National Highway-913.

After 2014, the budget for BRO's work in various states has been doubled for road development and maintenance as compared to the previous years, the official said.

Stating that work is underway on projects under the Brahmanak Project in Arunachal Pradesh, Lunia said construction and maintenance of road infrastructure is being done in Siang, Upper Siang, West Siang and Shi-Yomi districts along with maintenance of four roads in Assam's Dhemaji district.

In 2022-23 and 2023-24, the Brahmanak Project constructed a 100-metre span arch bridge on Siom River on Along-Yingkiong road. The construction of Siom bridge was completed in a record time of 180 days and opened for traffic, he said.

Lunia also said that from the day of establishment of the Brahmanak Project till today, construction of 17 roads has been completed, whose total length is 496 km.

Along with this, the construction of 42 permanent bridges and 11 modular bridges has also been completed.

The official also said the BRO has always been at the forefront of construction of roads/bridges in favourable and unfavourable weather conditions for the last many years in the state.

Under Brahmanak Project, BRO is committed to provide all-weather connectivity to the soldiers as well as the public.

## **China outpaces India in nuclear aircraft carrier race with new breakthrough**

25 November 2024, Business Standard

Reports of a prototype reactor in Sichuan shed light on Beijing's long-term ambitions to expand its naval power

China appears to be advancing its plans for a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, a South China Morning Post report from Sunday indicated, citing reports of a prototype nuclear reactor sparking renewed attention on Beijing's aspirations to project naval power globally.

Unlike conventional carriers, nuclear-powered ones can operate for extended periods without refuelling, providing them with greater range and the capacity to carry more fuel and weapons for their aircraft.

What do we know about China's prototype nuclear reactor?

On November 11, the Associated Press reported that a prototype reactor for a large surface warship had been constructed at a mountain site near Leshan in Sichuan province. Research, conducted by the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in California and provided to the news agency, suggested that China's 701 Institute, which oversees aircraft carrier development, had acquired reactor equipment "intended for installation on a large surface warship".

This conclusion was drawn from publicly accessible documents, including an environmental impact report identifying the project as "national defence-related", and satellite imagery captured between 2020 and 2023 that showed the development of reactor-related facilities.

Currently, the United States (US) operates 11 nuclear-powered carriers, while France has one, the Charles de Gaulle.

China's ambitions for a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier have long been speculated upon, with many seeing it as a critical step towards equipping the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy with blue-water capabilities. The Associated Press report may be the clearest indication yet that Beijing is pursuing this goal.

What about India's aircraft carrier plans?

This comes as India continues to counter Beijing's growing military presence in the Indian Ocean, a concern expected to persist despite the recent thaw in relations following the October Line of Actual Control (LAC) patrolling agreement.

In May, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh announced that India would soon begin constructing its third aircraft carrier. Singh made these remarks in reference to the pending Indian Navy proposal to construct another indigenous aircraft carrier of the same size as the INS Vikrant, which weighs 45,000 tonnes and was commissioned in September 2022.

Currently, the Indian Navy operates two 45,000-tonne aircraft carriers: the INS Vikramaditya and the INS Vikrant. Both are conventionally powered and utilise ski-jump ramps to assist with aircraft take-offs. The INS Vikrant, India's first indigenous carrier, was constructed by Cochin Shipyard Ltd, while the INS Vikramaditya was acquired from Russia and has been operational since 2014.

These carriers can each accommodate 25-30 fixed-wing aircraft along with 10 helicopters. Given that the proposed third aircraft carrier will match the size of the INS Vikrant, it is expected to have a similar air wing capacity.

India had earlier considered building a 65,000-tonne third carrier, the Indigenous Aircraft Carrier-2 (IAC-2), with a projected air wing of 54 fighters. Discussions had also included the possibility of equipping the ship with nuclear propulsion and electromagnetic catapults.

However, the current plans strongly suggest that India's third carrier will be conventionally powered.

What are the capabilities of nuclear-powered carriers?

If realised, a nuclear-powered carrier would enable the PLA Navy to carry out "smooth deepwater aircraft operations", Yoon Suk-joon, a senior fellow at the Korea Institute for Military Affairs and an expert on Chinese naval systems, told the South China Morning Post.

Yoon noted that nuclear propulsion not only allows sufficient operating speed unaffected by sea conditions and ample power supply, but also ensures the safety of aircraft take-off and landing systems. This, he added, would provide the Chinese navy with the confidence to keep its carriers operational in open seas.

He explained that nuclear power could enable speeds of up to 30 knots, or 55 kilometres per hour (km/h), enhancing the efficiency of advanced aircraft launch systems.

Collin Koh, a senior fellow at the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore, reportedly highlighted the potential for such carriers to undertake "global voyages" without frequent

refuelling. "We are not just looking at the Chinese operating the carrier just within the region," Koh observed.

He speculated that such a reactor would likely be intended exclusively for use on carriers, emphasising the "long-term Chinese ambition" it represents. While such vessels could play a critical role in flashpoints like the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait, Koh noted their likely deployment on a broader scale, starting with the Indian Ocean.

He also pointed out that China's first overseas military base in Djibouti on the Horn of Africa is large enough to host an aircraft carrier.

What do we know about China's rapid naval modernisation?

The PLA Navy, already the largest in the world, aims to operate six carriers by 2035 as part of its aggressive modernisation drive. Its newest and third carrier, the Fujian, is undergoing sea trials and is the first non-US carrier to feature an advanced electromagnetic catapult launch system, which allows for higher-frequency aircraft launches.

According to Koh, China's carrier programme is evolving rapidly, with the Fujian's successor – referred to as the Type 004 – expected to be of a similar or larger size. Should the reactor project prove successful, future Chinese carriers "will all be nuclear-powered", he reportedly added.

In March, Yuan Huazhi, political commissar for the PLA Navy, confirmed that work on a fourth carrier was in progress, with an announcement on whether it would feature nuclear propulsion expected "soon".

What are the strategic implications?

Alex Bristow, senior analyst at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, told the South China Morning Post that nuclear-powered carriers would solidify the PLA Navy's status as a "first-tier" rival to the US Navy.

While noting that an aircraft carrier's chances of survival in a major US-China conflict were "debatable", Bristow said that they could still play an important role in other scenarios, enabling Beijing to signal strength and exert force, particularly against weaker adversaries.

### **Resumption of Kailash-Mansarovar pilgrimage discussed during recent India-China foreign ministers' meeting**

20 November 2024, Tibetan Review

While China said it discussed the resumption of direct flights, exchange of journalists, and facilitation of visa issuance process during its foreign minister Wang Yi's meeting with Indian External Affairs Minister EAM S Jaishankar on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Brazil's Rio de Janeiro on Nov 19,

India says it also discussed steps to resume the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra pilgrimage.

A press release issued by the Indian foreign ministry said the two sides discussed steps to resume the Kailash-Mansarovar Yatra pilgrimage.

Mansarovar is a freshwater lake in eastern Tibet near Mount Kailash, and both are places of pilgrimage attracting Hindu and other devotees from India and neighbouring countries.

"Among the steps discussed were the resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra pilgrimage, data sharing on trans-border rivers, direct flights between India and China, and media exchanges," the press release read.

The two leaders also discussed maintaining peace and tranquillity at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), following a recent thaw in ties after PM Narendra Modi and Chinese leader Xi Jinping met in Russia's Kazan on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit, reported the wionews.com Nov 19.

"The Ministers recognized that the disengagement in our border areas had contributed to the maintenance of peace and tranquillity. The discussions focused on the next steps in India-China relations. It was agreed that a meeting of the Special Representatives and of the Foreign Secretary-Vice Minister mechanism will take place soon," the press release said.

Stating India's position on global and regional issues, the Indian foreign ministry also said, "EAM said that we are strongly committed to a multipolar world, including a multipolar Asia. Where India is concerned, its foreign policy has been principled and consistent, marked by independent thought and action. We are against unilateral approaches to establish dominance. India does not view its relationships through the prism of other nations."

The Kailash-Mansarovar pilgrimage stopped in 2020 after the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. The year also saw Sino-India relation plummet after the Galwan Valley clash in eastern Ladakh. As a result, the officially organized pilgrimage never resumed, with Indians wishing to take privately arranged pilgrimage through Nepal also being effectively prevented by China.

### **Need to focus on cooperation, not conflict: Rajnath tells Chinese minister**

20 November 2024, Business Standard

Emphasises confidence building between India and China through de-escalation

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh met his Chinese counterpart, Admiral Dong Jun, in Vientiane, Lao Peoples' on Wednesday – i.e. November 20 – on the sidelines of 11th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus that begins on Thursday.

This was the first meeting between the two defence ministers following the recent disengagement agreements. It is also the first meeting since Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the BRICS summit.

Rajnath Singh also met his Malaysian counterpart Dato Seri Mohamed Khaled Bin Nordin and the Defence Minister of Laos, General Chansamone Chanyalath in Vientiane on Wednesday, on the sidelines of 11th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) Plus.

ADMM-Plus is a regional security platform for the ten ASEAN member states: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. In addition there are eight dialogue partners (India, US, China, Russia, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand) to strengthen security and defence cooperation.

Rajnath said that amicable relations between India and China, the two largest nations in the world, would have positive implications for global peace and prosperity. Considering that both countries are neighbours, Rajnath mentioned that "we need to focus on cooperation rather than conflict".

Rajnath called for learning lessons from the Sino-Indian border clashes of 2020, safeguarding peace and tranquillity, and preventing the recurrence of such incidents along the India-China border.

The Indian defence minister said he looked forward to greater trust and confidence building between the two sides through de-escalation. Both sides agreed to draw up a roadmap for rebuilding mutual trust and understanding.

Earlier in the day, the Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh arrived at Vientiane on a three-day visit. He will attend the 11th ADMM-Plus meeting on Thursday and address the forum on regional and international security issues.

Rajnath Singh said that amicable India-China relations would be good for global peace and prosperity. He said there was a need to focus on cooperation rather than conflict.

China's foreign minister meets Indian counterpart, calls for resumption of direct flights

19 November 2024, Reuters

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi met his Indian counterpart Subrahmanyam Jaishankar on Monday in Rio de Janeiro, a statement from his ministry said on Tuesday, during which he called for the resumption of direct flights between the two countries.

Wang also talked of the need for "more mutual trust and less suspicion," between the regional rivals, the statement added. The countries last month began implementing an agreement to end a military

standoff on each side of the disputed Himalayan border.

Wang also urged the Indian side to step up cooperation on exchanging journalists and facilitating visas.

### **EAM Jaishankar Emphasizes De-escalation as Next Step in Sino-Indian Relations After Disengagement**

16 November 2024, Republic World

Jaishankar says disengagement with China along the LAC is complete, with de-escalation as the next step, but cautions against expecting a reset in ties.

The disengagement part of the "problem" with China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh has been put at rest and the focus should now be on de-escalation, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Saturday.

#### **Disengagement and Its Implications**

Jaishankar said it is "reasonable" to expect some improvement in the relations between India and China following the final round of disengagement but hesitated to say that there could be a reset of the ties.

"I see disengagement as disengagement; nothing more, nothing less. If you look at our current situation with China, we have an issue where our troops are uncomfortably close along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) which required us to disengage," he said at the HT Leadership Summit.

The understanding between India and China on October 21 was the last of the disengagement agreements, Jaishankar said.

"So that with its implementation, the disengagement part of the problem is at rest," he said.

#### **India-China Ties: No Reset Yet**

Jaishankar's remarks came in response to a question on whether the disengagement of troops by the two sides last month was the beginning of a reset of the Sino-Indian ties.

The external affairs minister said the current situation of the relationship does not warrant such a conclusion.

Indian and Chinese militaries completed the disengagement exercise in Demchok and Depsang in eastern Ladakh along the LAC last month after the two sides reached an agreement to resolve the festering border row.

The two sides also resumed patrolling activities in the two areas after a gap of almost four-and-a-half years.

#### **Next Step: De-escalation**

In his remarks, Jaishankar said de-escalation should be the next step following the completion of the disengagement process.

"Where the disengagement will lead us, it is a reasonable supposition that there will be some improvement in the ties," he said.

#### **Differing Views on China within the Government**

On the overall India-China ties, Jaishankar delved into various factors and said it is a "complicated" relationship.

To another question on whether the economic and security wings of the government have divergent views on China as this year's Economic Survey appeared to pitch for greater economic engagement with the neighbouring country, Jaishankar said there could be different points of view but overall relationship is guided by a policy decision.

"I think an accurate way of looking at it is that in every government, different ministries have different responsibilities, and flowing from that responsibility, they have a point of view," he said.

"You referred to an Economic Survey. In effect, there would be a national security survey which you may not see in public, which would have a national security point of view," he said.

Jaishankar said the external affairs ministry is an integrator of all points of views and takes an overall balanced approach.

"If somebody has a point of view, then we look at that point of view. We don't say you can't have that point of view, but a point of view at the end of the day is not a policy decision," he said.

#### **India's Political Stability and Global Impact**

To a separate question, the external affairs minister said the world is looking at India's political stability, especially at a time when most countries in the world are facing political instability.

"At such a time, being elected three times in a row in a democracy is not an ordinary thing," he said about the result of the parliamentary election this year.

#### **US Election and Global Engagement**

On Republican leader Donald Trump's victory in the US presidential election, Jaishankar said it reflected a lot about the US.

"This US election tells us a lot about America. It tells us that many of the concerns and priorities that won Donald Trump a first term have become more intense, not gone away," he said.

The external affairs minister also said he does not think that the US would turn its back on the world.

"If you are the number one power, you have to remain engaged with the world, but the terms you are offering to the world are going to be different from the terms which were there," he said.

#### **Ambitious India-US Partnerships**

The external affairs minister said ambitious projects like the India-US initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET) are unlikely to be impacted under the new government in Washington.

"I think we are going to see that as a structural trend and, my own sense is, if President Trump is determined to make America more competitive and brings to it a strong element of business viability, I think such an America will actually look for partners with whom it can work in a complementary fashion," he said.

#### India's Role in Russia-Ukraine Conflict

On the Russia-Ukraine conflict and India's efforts to find a peaceful solution to it, Jaishankar said a solution cannot be found on the battlefield.

"What we have been trying to do is to have conversations, in good faith, with the understanding that common points or convergences in those conversations, if the other party was comfortable, we were prepared to share it with the other side," he said.

"We have not put forward a peace plan. We do not think it is our business to do that. Our business is to try to find a way of bringing these two countries to a point where they are able to engage, because, at the end of the day, they have to engage with each other," he said.

### **China accused of trying to stifle India's growth with export restrictions**

16 November 2024, Tibetan Review

While the Oct 21 deal on eastern Ladakh disengagement and patrolling with China was hailed by some in India as a "breakthrough", the two countries still have a lot of ground to cover before normalizing their overall bilateral ties, as is evident in their ongoing trade frictions.

In its latest attempt to curb India's industrial growth, China has imposed export restrictions on essential minerals and machinery, ranging from gallium and germanium, critical for solar power and semiconductors, to tunnel-boring machines (TBMs) used in infrastructure projects like metro construction, reported [swarajyamag.com](#) Nov 15.

In Aug 2023, China imposed tight controls on the export of gallium and germanium to countries including India, the US, and Japan. These minerals are vital for India's rapidly growing renewable energy sector, especially in the production of solar cells and modules.

China, the world's largest supplier, has now cut off access to these crucial resources, jeopardizing India's ability to meet its solar power production targets, the report said.

India currently circumvents China's ban by rerouting the shipment of these supplies through Dubai's Jebel Ali port. Dubai-based traders or companies lease or import machinery from China, then re-export them to India, the report said.

However, the rerouting process has inflated project costs by as much as 10%. Besides, what was once a 15-day shipping cycle is now stretching to three months, causing significant delays. Furthermore, additional costs arise due to logistics, warehousing, and financing, all of which strain the already tight budgets for strategic infrastructure projects in India, the report noted.

Apart from other costs as well arising from the payment system and so forth, spare parts, often sourced through third-party intermediaries, add to the financial burden.

Besides, experts caution that the current workaround is unsustainable in the long term. Relying on Dubai as a middleman is a temporary fix to China's economic bullying, the report said.

Experts argue that India must focus on building domestic manufacturing capabilities for these vital components. Only then can India fully decouple its reliance on foreign suppliers, especially when China's restrictions may continue to disrupt supply chains in the future, the report said.

During a Delhi Metro ride late last month, India's Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal informed visiting German Vice Chancellor Robert Habeck that New Delhi may halt the purchase of German-made tunnel boring machines if issues such as China blocking sales continued. This conversation, shared in a video that went viral on social media platform X, underscoring India's concerns over critical infrastructure supplies.

Goyal explained that India currently buys tunnel boring machines from Herrenknecht, a German company. However, recent complications had arisen as China, a key production base for Herrenknecht, had obstructed the sale of these machines to India, noted [newsx.com](#) Oct 28.

India, on its part, was recently reported to have stopped importing manufactures from Nepal, and possibly other countries, if they included Chinese components.

### **Rajnath Singh, Chinese counterpart likely to meet for 1st time after border truce**

14 November 2024, India Today

India China Relations: The meeting comes as the Indian and Chinese armies completed the first round of joint patrols in Demchok and Dopsang along the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh following disengagement in these areas.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is expected to meet his Chinese counterpart Dong Jun next week, in what could be the first interaction at the ministerial level between the two nations after the Line of Actual Control (LAC) disengagement at eastern Lakakh. The



meeting will take place on the sidelines of the ASEAN Defence Ministers Plus (ADMM-Plus).

Earlier this month, India and China conducted a joint patrol at the friction points of Demchok and Depsang in eastern Ladakh, following a recent troop disengagement in the area. Both sides have agreed to a weekly coordinated patrol to manage tensions that have simmered since the 2020 clash in the Galwan Valley.

India, on October 21, announced that it reached an agreement with China on patrolling along the LAC, marking a breakthrough in ending the over four-year-long military standoff, which began following the deadly clashes between the troops of both countries in June 2020 in Galwan.

The ADMM-Plus is an annual meeting that will see participation from defence ministers of eight nations, including Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Russia, and the United States. The last meeting between Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his Chinese counterpart took place in April 2023 in India. Then Chinese Defence Minister Li Shangfu travelled to Delhi for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's defence ministers' meeting. The border issue was the main focus of the meeting.

Before the 2023 meeting, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh met with then Chinese Defence Minister General Wei Fenghe in Moscow during the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation meeting in 2020. This meeting occurred months after the deadly clashes in Galwan, Eastern Ladakh, in June of that year, which left 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers dead.

The upcoming talks in Laos are expected to witness discussions related to regional stability and border issues, building on the framework established by the LAC agreement.

As both nations navigate a complex bilateral relationship marked by border tensions and diplomatic negotiations, the meeting between Rajnath Singh and Dong Jun could play a crucial role in maintaining dialogue and promoting mutual understanding.

Earlier last month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Chinese President Xi Jinping in Russia on the sidelines of the BRICS summit just after the LAC agreement was signed.

### **Nepal's exports to India suffer due to latter's concern about Chinese components**

11 November 2024, Tibetan Review

India's ties with today's seemingly China-beholden Nepal is not as friendly as it historically used to be, while the India-China ties are far from normal, with the Oct 21 Depsang and Demchok patrolling deal being only the first step in a long and arduous

process. But whatever may be the case, manufacturers and exporters in Nepal say they are in a dilemma over trade with India following restrictive measures imposed on their goods by New Delhi which wanted to ensure they were free of Chinese components, reported the kathmandupost.com Nov 10.

The Nepali government is silent on the issue even though the goods have not been sold to India for months, the report said.

In 2020, the Indian government asked the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) to prescribe mandatory standards for imported goods in line with international quality norms. The move was stated to be aimed to prevent Chinese goods from entering India from any of its neighbours.

India-China relations plunged to their nadir since 1962 in mind-2020 following the Galwan valley clash in Ladakh in which 20 Indian and at least four Chinese soldiers lost their lives.

India imposed a series of economic measures against China, which included banning a large number of popular Chinese mobile apps. India also imposed import restrictions on more than 370 Chinese products, the report noted.

The report cited "insiders" as saying India does not want any products from Nepal that have Chinese components, including Nepal's hydroelectricity, greatly worrying Nepal's top exporters.

The BIS deals with the marking and certifying of goods, incorporating quality standards and information on international norms to be followed while importing.

Sanitary pads and diaper factories, for example, used to operate 12 hours a day when the demand in India boomed, but due to the export obstacles, factories have reduced operating hours by 4 hours, Dol Raj Adhikari, president of the Nepal Sanitary and Diaper Association, has said. Adhikari owns the AG Health Industries Private Limited that produces sanitary pads and diapers in Bhairahawa.

According to the association, Nepal used to export three truckloads of sanitary pads and diapers daily. There are 29 sanitary pads and diaper factories in Nepal, large and small, employing 6,000 workers, the report said.

Likewise, a big consignment of Goldstar shoes failed to get export clearance after India refused to issue the BIS certificate, putting Nepal's home-grown shoemaker on the brink, the report said.

The BIS certificate issue is stated to have put the industries in Rupandehi in a big dilemma. "They were opened to export goods to India," Thakur Kumar Shrestha, president of the Siddhartha Chamber of Commerce and Industry, has said, adding, it has negatively impacted both the industries and Nepal's trade.

He has said factories were either running at half capacity or getting shut down, with workers being laid off.

Exports from the cement makers in Rupandehi—such as Arghakhanchi Cement, Sarbottam Cement, Palpa Cement, and Balaji Cement—have completely stopped for nearly two months, the report said.

Except plywood, the export of all the listed goods that require a BIS certificate has come to a halt, Shrestha has said. “India has neither renewed the certificate nor provided a new one.”

Plywood has been given until Mar 2025 for certification-free export, the report said.

Out of 80 plywood factories, 52 had deposited charges to obtain the BIS certificate. However, after completing the process in June, the inspection team from India has not provided a BIS certificate so far, Hom Prasad Ghimire, president of the Nepal Plywood Manufacturers Association, has said. The plywood industry employs 25,000 workers across Nepal.

Posh Raj Pandey, chairman of the South Asia Watch of Economics, Environment and Trade, has said lack of coordination among government agencies and frequent changes of bureaucrats had put the issue on the back burner.

### **Indian Army denies reports China is causing deadlock in coordinating Depsang patrolling**

09 November 2024, Tibetan Review

The Indian Army has on Nov 7 dismissed media reports that military talks between India and China on the modalities of patrols had reached a deadlock in eastern Ladakh's Depsang, saying no roadblocks or objections had been faced. It called the media reports “speculative and bereft of facts”. However, the tribuneindia.com said Nov 7 that it stood by its Nov 6 news story.

In a post on X on Thursday (Nov 7), the Additional Directorate General of Public Information of the Army said some reports on Wednesday and Thursday had speculated about roadblocks in the disengagement process in Depsang and Demchok after an agreement between India and China last month.

“It is unambiguously stated that the disengagement at Depsang and Demchok has been completed and implementation of consensus, as agreed to, is being undertaken in a planned manner that includes resumption of patrolling to traditional patrolling areas. There are no roadblocks/objections from either side that have been faced in this process,” the ndtv.com quoted the Army as saying.

“The articles published in this regard are speculative and bereft of facts. The concerned media houses are requested to verify and authenticate facts before

publishing such sensitive articles and exercise due editorial discretion so that no unsubstantiated or misleading information is propagated,” the post was further quoted as saying.

The report also quoted India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar as having said earlier, “We reached an agreement on patrolling, and we have gone back to the 2020 position. With that, we can say the disengagement with China has been completed... There are areas which, for various reasons after 2020, they blocked us, we blocked them. We have now reached an understanding which will allow patrolling as we had been doing till 2020.”

Earlier, in its Nov 6 report, the tribuneindia.com said, citing unnamed sources, that the two sides had reached a deadlock over the “extent and routes of patrolling” at Depsang along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). It said this had happened during the two sides' negotiations on the modalities of patrols at patrolling points (PPs) 10, 11, 11-A, 12 and 13 on the eastern edge of Depsang.

The report said the Chinese side had raised two issues. Firstly, it had reservations about the Indian Army going full extent on the PPs 10 and 11 routes. Secondly, it had reservations about the extent (distance) of patrol on PPs 11A, 12 and 13.

In its clarification, the tribuneindia.com said Nov 7: “The Army, in its response, has not said patrolling has started on all routes in Depsang. The news item did not question consensus or disengagement process. It only said China was delaying modalities. It did not say the Indian Army was ‘not abiding’ by the consensus.”

### **'Other steps could happen': EAM Jaishankar on India-China ties after LAC disengagement**

03 November 2024, Times of India

External affairs minister S Jaishankar said Sunday that India and China have made “some progress” in disengaging along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), calling it a “welcome” move that could lead to further positive steps in the relationship. His remarks come after Indian and Chinese troops recently completed disengagement at two major friction points—Demchok and Depsang Plains—in eastern Ladakh.

The minister said that following a recent meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in Russia, plans were set for further discussions involving India's national security advisor and the foreign ministry. “So that's where things are,” he noted, adding that the disengagement “opens up the possibility that other steps could happen.”

“In terms of India and China, yes, we have made

some progress,” Jaishankar said during an interaction with the Indian diaspora in Brisbane. “Our relations were very, very disturbed for reasons all of you know. We have made some progress in what we call disengagement, which is when troops were very close to each other, with the possibility that could lead to some untoward incident.”

The disengagement process, which saw Indian forces beginning verification patrolling at Depsang and Demchok on Friday, is seen as a significant step towards resolving lingering border issues from the 2020 standoff. The LAC had seen large deployments of Chinese troops, a move countered by India, and this increase in forces on both sides contributed to heightened tensions.

“There are very large numbers of Chinese troops deployed along the Line of Actual Control who were not there before 2020. And we, in turn, have counter-deployed,” Jaishankar added.

This new agreement on patrolling and disengagement was formalised after several rounds of talks, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri had earlier said, marking a potential breakthrough to end the four-year standoff along the LAC. The Galwan Valley clash in June 2020 had deeply strained relations between the two countries, making disengagement and talks essential steps in normalising ties.

Jaishankar, in Brisbane on the first leg of a two-nation tour, also addressed global issues, including conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, expressing concern over their impact on global stability. Highlighting India’s role in promoting diplomacy, he said Prime Minister Modi had been actively involved in discussions with leaders of Russia and Ukraine. “We are trying to do something in both,” Jaishankar stated, emphasising India’s commitment to a diplomatic resolution in both regions.

On the Middle East, he said that India is attempting to prevent further escalation of tensions, pointing out the challenges in mediating between Iran and Israel due to a lack of direct communication. “At the moment, the effort is more to prevent the conflict from spreading,” he said, hinting at India’s involvement without divulging specific details.

Touching upon the Quad alliance, Jaishankar explained that the grouping of India, Australia, Japan, and the United States is focused on a broad agenda that includes maritime security, connectivity, and climate forecasting, among other areas. “You have four democracies, four market economies, four countries with a strong record of global contributions,” he said, underscoring the Quad’s broader purpose.

During his Australian visit, Jaishankar will inaugurate India’s fourth consulate in the country and co-chair the 15th Foreign Ministers’ Framework Dialogue with

Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong in Canberra.

### **China is building new villages on its remote Himalayan border. Some appear to have crossed the line**

05 November 2024, CNN World, Simone McCarthy and Nectar Gan

High in the mist-shrouded Himalayas, a winding mountain road opens to a clearing in the pine forested valley, revealing rows of uniform Tibetan-style houses, each topped with a Chinese flag.

Construction is booming in this remote place. Piles of logs and other building materials line the road. On a nearby hillside, cranes tower over rising housing blocks.

“They are building resettlement houses here,” says the Chinese travel vlogger who captured these scenes last year, speaking into his phone on a roadside. “When people live and settle here, it undeniably confirms that this is our country’s territory.”

But the village – known as Demalong and formally founded in March last year with a community of 70 families, according to a government notice seen in the footage – is not only located in territory claimed by the world’s ascendent superpower.

It is one of a string of Chinese settlements that also fall well within the border shown on official maps of Bhutan – a Buddhist kingdom of fewer than 1 million people that’s never agreed on a formal international border with China.

For centuries, herders looking for summer pastures were the main presence in this harsh and inhospitable region some 14,000 feet (4,200 meters) above sea level in the eastern Himalayas. But now, there is a growing population as the Chinese government incentivizes hundreds of people to settle there from across Tibet, the region of China that borders Bhutan.

Those settlements show another, quieter front in China’s expanding efforts to assert its control over disputed, peripheral territories – also playing out in the South and East China Seas – as Chinese leader Xi Jinping seeks to bolster national security and enhance China’s position over its rivals.

Bhutan and China have been holding yet-unresolved border talks for decades. Looming in the backdrop of those discussions is India, China’s biggest regional rival and Bhutan’s close diplomatic ally.

The nuclear-armed neighbors have previously gone to war and more recently engaged in a series of skirmishes over their disputed 2,100-mile (3,379-kilometer) border, which straddles Bhutan – and, in Beijing’s eyes, makes the small Himalayan nation all the more critical to its national security.

CNN has reviewed satellite images provided by Earth data company Planet Labs, as well as Chinese government notices, state media reports, and social media footage, which together reveal extensive development in a valley China calls the Jigenong, or Jakarlung in Tibetan. Locations of the construction were provided to CNN by modern Tibet studies expert Robert Barnett of SOAS University of London. CNN has geolocated four officially named villages and a fifth settlement using satellite images and videos in state and social media.

A comparison of China's official map of the Tibet Autonomous Region and Bhutan's national map published in its 2023 Statistical Yearbook show this development is located in territory claimed by both countries.

Bhutanese authorities, however, have repeatedly rejected previous reports of Chinese encroachment, including in a foreign media interview last year when then-Prime Minister Lotay Tshering "categorically" denied that China had been building in Bhutan's territory.

In response to a request for comment from CNN about the construction and its territorial claims, Bhutan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade said there were "no Chinese settlements" in its northern district of Lhuntse, where CNN identified the villages.

"The map of Bhutan covering the northern border will be finalized in accordance to the demarcation of the Bhutan-China border," the ministry's statement said. It also pointed to the two countries' boundary talks and said Bhutan was "confident that the northern border will be finalized in the near future." China's foreign ministry did not deny building villages in disputed territory when approached by CNN for comment on the construction.

"China's construction activities in the border region with Bhutan are aimed at improving the local livelihoods," a ministry statement said. "China and Bhutan have their own claims regarding the territorial status of the relevant region, but both agree to resolve differences and disputes through friendly consultations and negotiations."

New research shared in advance with CNN by a team led by SOAS' Barnett extensively tracks the Chinese construction of what the researchers classified as 19 "cross-border villages" and three smaller settlements since 2016.

The construction has taken place in border regions in northeast Bhutan and the west of the kingdom – near the disputed border between India and China, according to the research. The findings, also described by Barnett in *The Diplomat*, add to his 2021 *Foreign Policy* magazine report on earlier construction in the same northern area – and

document what the latest research describes as a new "surge" in building there since early last year. Archival research by Barnett suggests Bhutan's claims in this northern region stretch back much farther than China's, he says. An official Chinese map from 1980 seen by CNN also shows the northern area as part of Bhutan.

"China, as the most powerful player in the relationship, seems to be conducting an experiment about whether it can more or less decide for itself whether or when it is entitled to take ownership of territory disputed with a neighbor ... and how and if the international community will respond," Barnett told CNN.

#### High-altitude rivalry

The blurry boundaries through the Himalayan peaks and plateaus separating China and its southern neighbors are often relics of imperial era agreements and nomadic routes – now charged with the nationalist rhetoric and military might of New Delhi and Beijing.

Landlocked by both, Bhutan has long navigated carefully between India – its largest development and trading partner, which until 2007 effectively controlled its foreign policy – and China, an economic and military giant with whom it has no formal diplomatic ties.

Bhutan's place in their dispute was thrown into the spotlight in 2017, when the kingdom accused the Chinese army of building a road "inside Bhutanese territory" in the Doklam area, near a strategic and disputed junction between all three countries along Bhutan's west.

Then, Indian troops moved into the area to block China – sparking a tense, 73-day standoff that threatened to pitch the rivals into conflict.

Though not part of India's territorial claims, Doklam is close to the so-called "chicken's neck," or Siliguri Corridor, a vital artery between New Delhi and its far northeastern states. China claims Doklam has been its territory "since ancient times."

Ultimately diffused, the incident was one more reminder for Beijing of the volatility of the unresolved border.

India and China reached an agreement on military disengagement along a section of their disputed border earlier this month – in a step toward easing tensions there.

However, strengthening its position in that rivalry has been a driving force for Beijing, experts say, as it extends its foothold in lands traditionally claimed by Bhutan – and enlists its citizens to relocate there to press its counterclaim.

CNN has reached out to India's Ministry of External Affairs for comment on the Chinese construction.

"Knowing India has a strong presence in Bhutan, China naturally becomes vulnerable in the bordering

region,” said Rishi Gupta, assistant director at the Asia Society Policy Institute in New Delhi.

“This vulnerability compels China to enhance its influence in Bhutan and assert its territorial claims more aggressively, seeking to counterbalance India’s strategic partnerships in the area.”

One year prior to the 2017 standoff, Beijing was already starting a major bid to bolster its claims by building roads and villages in the Jakarlung valley – along another China-Bhutan frontier far to the northeast of Doklam.

The buildup follows what observers say were long-standing efforts by China to convince Bhutan’s leaders to cede their claims in the west around Doklam – in exchange for Beijing giving up its claims to the northern areas.

In 2016, China founded Jieluobu, its first official village in the Jakarlung valley. Two years later, Jieluobu was branded a model “border xiaokang village” – one of hundreds of such villages built or upgraded in recent years along China’s western and southern frontiers.

The “xiaokang” – or “moderate prosperity” – villages along China’s borders have been billed as part of Beijing’s scheme to eradicate poverty and improve living conditions in its far-flung frontiers.

But experts say these villages are also part of Xi’s vision to use civilian settlements to solidify control of China’s border, amid perceived threats of foreign encroachment and infiltration – and a growing obsession with security.

“Only when there are people can the border remain stable,” the leader is often quoted as saying by officials in frontier regions.

By 2022, more than 600 “border xiaokang villages” – including Jieluobu – had been completed in Tibet, boosting its border population by 10.5%, the regional government said in its annual work report.

“It is no doubt that the villages are aimed to strengthen China’s territorial claims and control of the border regions, especially the disputed areas,” said Yun Sun, director of the China program at the Stimson Center think tank in Washington.

“Once the Chinese villagers are there, China has causes for stationing troops and performing administrative control. The strategy has a long history in China, tracing back as early as the Han dynasty,” she said.

No place anybody would choose

Chinese construction that began in the Jakarlung valley in 2016 has ramped up since last year relative to earlier periods, according to the research by SOAS’s Barnett, based on satellite imagery.

In the west, construction began around 2019 but appeared to have stopped after 2022, the research found. For that reason, CNN’s reporting has focused

on development in the area along Bhutan’s northern border.

As of this summer, more than 2,000 residential units – estimated to have space for thousands of people – had been built in multiple settlements across both areas, according to the report.

That buildup has also been supported by an expanding network of roads, which geointelligence researcher Damien Symon says have progressed south from China into Bhutan over recent years.

“None of the roads connect into Bhutan, they start from the Chinese border and end in forest areas. There is no connectivity to existing Bhutanese roads or villages,” said Symon, of analysis collective The Intel Lab, who in a December 2023 report for London-based think tank Chatham House tracked new Chinese construction “across the contested border with Bhutan” in the north.

Road access is crucial for new settlements in the Jakarlung valley, which Chinese reports say used to be cut off from the outside world by heavy snow for half the year.

“These are not places anybody would normally choose to relocate to, because they are either extremely high or extremely exposed to the elements,” Barnett said.

To populate the cold, damp valley, officials in Tibet entice settlers from across the region with spacious new homes and generous subsidies.

In Jieluobu, the Tibetan herders moved into two-story houses with courtyards. Residents aged 16 and older are eligible for an annual subsidy of more than 20,000 yuan (about \$2,800), state media reported. Patriotic education is part of everyday life in Jieluobu. In 2021, the village held 150 study sessions on Xi’s speeches, party policies and history, Mandarin Chinese and border defense, state media reported. Since then, the village has also undergone a major expansion.

Meanwhile, in the southeastern part of the valley, Demalong has added 235 new homes since last year and aims to build a kindergarten and a clinic, according to government statements. It also has a military compound, the travel blogger’s video shows. In between Jieluobu and Demalong, China has constructed more settlements along the valley, recently completing two new villages: Qujielong and Semalong. CNN has also geolocated a fifth settlement that has yet to be named in official notices. Since late September, a new wave of residents has moved into Demalong, Jieluobu, Semalong and Qujielong from as far as Nagqu, a city in northern Tibet some seven hours’ drive away, according to a local government notice and videos shared by relocatees on Chinese social media.

The new families, arriving in long columns of vans, coaches and trucks escorted by police cars, were



greeted by red banners and traditional Tibetan dances, social media footage shows.

'No intrusion'

Bhutan has repeatedly denied that Chinese construction has taken place in its territory.

Asked in March last year about reports of China building in the kingdom's north, then-Prime Minister Lotay Tshering told Belgian outlet La Libre, "We are not making a big deal of it because it's not in Bhutan."

"We have said categorically that there is no intrusion as mentioned in the media," he said. "This is an international border and we know exactly what belongs to us."

In a separate interview with India's The Hindu about six months later, the former prime minister, whose government was replaced in elections earlier this year, reiterated that "there are no real differences between China and Bhutan, but there is an un-demarcated border dating back to Tibet-Bhutan ties," referring to the period before Tibet's 1951 official annexation by Beijing.

As early as 2020, Bhutan's ambassador to India said there was "no Chinese village inside Bhutan," following Indian media reports about such development in the kingdom's western borderlands.

That appears to be in sharp contrast to recent decades when Bhutan repeatedly protested what it claimed were incursions into its territory by Chinese soldiers and Tibetan herders. In 1997, Thimphu told Beijing that Tibetan herdsman had been intruding into the Jakarlung valley and even constructed sheds there, according to Bhutan's National Assembly records cited by Barnett.

In a 1998 pact, the two countries agreed to maintain the status quo in the border region as they continue talks to resolve the "boundary question."

Observers say Bhutan's rhetoric on this issue has become increasingly opaque in recent years, and some wonder whether the kingdom's muted comments are because it's already reached a tacit understanding with China to give up some territorial claims.

Others suggest Bhutan's priority may be to keep relations stable so they can finally reach a deal – with the potential to ease the uncertainty of the countries' power imbalance and bring the economic benefits of normalized ties.

"Most Bhutanese would love to see the borders demarcated and settled and a new chapter of friendly relations with China," said Bhutanese scholar Karma Phuntsho.

But while Bhutan remains "keen to solve the border issues with China," the remote border areas have little impact on Bhutanese peoples' livelihoods, so, "the countries are taking time to reach the best mutually beneficial solutions," he added.

Other observers take a more pointed view.

The Bhutanese "have realized that they have no way in which they can get back anything which the Chinese have occupied, and they lack the capacity ... to police the border, let alone the military capacity to retrieve anything from the border," said Manoj Joshi, a distinguished fellow at the Observer Research Foundation in New Delhi.

"So at one level, they have taken the position that they will try and resolve the border issue ... pending that settlement, they don't want anything to come up."

Despite the negotiations over the decades, the kingdom has already shed land to China.

Bhutan's official maps have lost a parcel of land to its northwest and the Menchuma valley and plateau in its northeast, according to Barnett. That northwest parcel, which includes Kula Kangri mountain, is often cited as covering some 400 square kilometers (154 sq miles).

In its response to CNN, Bhutan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade said these two areas "are not inside of Bhutan."

"These areas fall north to the traditional boundary between Bhutan and China," its statement said.

Bhutanese Foreign Minister Tandi Dorji, left, and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi meet in Beijing in October 2023.

Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs

In 2021, Bhutanese and Chinese officials agreed to a "road map" to expedite settling their border. They picked up formal talks last October for the first time since the Doklam standoff, with Bhutan's foreign minister making a rare visit to Beijing.

There, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi assured counterpart Tandi Dorji that Beijing was ready to "fix and develop China-Bhutan friendly relations in legal form."

In its response to CNN, China's foreign ministry said the "two sides are actively seeking a boundary demarcation arrangement that is acceptable to both, in accordance with the principle of fairness, rationality, mutual understanding and mutual accommodation."

Regardless of how each side defines the location of these developments, they appear to be part of a long-term plan for China to strengthen its position and apply pressure along the yet un-demarcated border.

This year, a local government chief from a county in Tibet has visited the villages in the Jakarlung valley at least twice to inspect construction projects and check in with residents.

During a visit in April, the official reminded local cadres and residents of their mission.

“(We’re) lacking oxygen but not spirit, enduring hardship without fear, overcoming higher altitudes with an even higher sense of purpose,” he said, quoting a 2020 speech by Xi.

### **Relationship between India and Tibet is centuries old: CM**

05 November 2024, The Arunachal Times, Prem Chetry

“The relationship between India and Tibet is centuries old, and it is our responsibility to maintain and continue this relationship,” said Chief Minister Pema Khandu during the consecration and inauguration of the newly constructed Dukhang, the prayer hall of Thubchog Gatsel Ling (TGL) monastery, by His Holiness, the 104th Gaden Tripa-the throne holder of Gaden Monastery of the Gelug sect, Jetsun Lobsang Tenzin Palzangpo, from Gaden Monastery in Mundgod, Karnataka, here on Monday.

The Chief Minister further stated, “Monasteries are of great significance; we must learn the Bhoti script to understand more about the religion. The Nalanda tradition of Buddhism is important, as it went to Tibet and descended to Arunachal Pradesh.”

“I believe the Buddhist community of the Himalayan region has a strong devotion to the religion; however, this devotion needs to be transformed into wisdom, for which learning the Bhoti language, the Tibetan script, is essential,” he added. He noted that “Bhoti teachers have now been added to schools, and children are studying Bhoti.” He also announced that a scholarship provision will be introduced soon to support monks and nuns.

Also present on the occasion were Penpa Tsering, Sikyong of the Central Tibetan Administration, Government in Exile; Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel; and Member of Parliament Geshe Atuk Tseten of the Central Tibetan Administration, Government in Exile.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering, in his address, said, “Use the monastery as a center of learning and align your mind with the teachings of Buddha. Since we lost our country in 1959, a series of misfortunes has befallen Tibet, followed by natural and man-made disasters, especially during the ten years of the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, when six thousand monasteries were destroyed across China and Tibet.” The Sikyong further expressed hope that the new monastery will ensure the continuity of the religion and impart spiritual wisdom among the masses in the region.

His Holiness Jetsun Lobsang Tenzin Palzangpo, in his address, said, “The consecration and inauguration have been completed; now what remains is to improve and continue the teachings of Buddha. The

main goal from now on is to impart and practice the teachings of Buddha.”

“First and foremost is our health. If we are physically unwell, we cannot carry out our activities, so we need to take good care of it. Hence, we can use our bodies for good causes,” he added.

“His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama, always guides us. Proper upbringing of children is necessary, whether at school, at home, or in monasteries; we must take care of children’s upbringing,” His Holiness added.

Earlier, His Eminence, the 12th Guru Tulku Rinpoche of the monastery, said, “The monastery was established by my predecessor, the 11th Guru Tulku Rinpoche, and it has been a center of spirituality. The monastery will serve as a center of learning.”

MP Tapir Gao, while congratulating the people, said, “The monastery will serve to disseminate the teachings of Buddha, not only in Arunachal Pradesh but to the entire world.”

The foundation stone of the new prayer hall was laid by His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama, in 2017. Devotees from neighbouring Bhutan, MLAs from Tawang and West Kameng districts, and heads of departments also witnessed the ceremony.

### **Union minister Rijiju interacts with Chinese soldiers in Arunachal as eastern Ladakh disengagement set for completion**

02 November 2024, Tibetan Review

In a culmination of the ongoing disengagement process in eastern Ladakh, India’s federal government minister Mr Kiren Rijiju has on Nov 1 interacted with soldiers of China’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA) near Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh along the India-Tibet border.

The interaction occurred when Rijiju, the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs as well as of Minority Affairs, and who belongs to the state, visited an Indian Army post on the occasion of Diwali. He celebrated India’s Hindu New Year festival of lights with Army jawans posted in Bumla on Oct 31.

The minister posted a video on X, formerly Twitter, where he could be seen talking to three PLA soldiers with the help of an interpreter.

He praised the kind of infrastructure built and other development works being carried out by the Indian government along the international border.

“After talking to Chinese soldiers and seeing the infrastructures, everyone will feel proud of India’s border development now,” the PTI news agency quoted him as saying Nov 1.

Rijiju’s interaction with the PLA soldiers came about 10 days after India’s Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said that an agreement was finalised between India

and China for a resolution of the issues that arose in 2020 in eastern Ladakh.

The agreement established a protocol on patrolling after disengagement of troops along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh, a breakthrough to end the more than four-year standoff there.

Following the completion of the disengagement process at the two friction points in eastern Ladakh, the Indian Army began patrolling at Demchok on Nov 1. Patrolling at Depsang, the other friction point where the disengagement process is almost complete, will commence soon, reported the indianexpress.com Nov 2 and the hindustantimes.com Nov 1.

The agreement, reached on Oct 21, marked a significant development in the pursuit of reduced tension along the LAC in eastern Ladakh since the fierce clash in the Galwan Valley in Jun 2020 that marked the most serious military conflict between the two sides in decades. The ties between the two Asian giants had nosedived following the clash.

### **Indian and Chinese border troops exchange Diwali sweets after Depsang and Demchok disengagement**

01 November 2024, Tibetan Review

On the occasion of Diwali, India's Hindu New Year festival of light, on Oct 31, Indian and Chinese troops have exchanged sweets on five locations along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), including two in Ladakh. It came a day after the two sides completed military disengagement from the Depsang and Demchok areas in eastern Ladakh, in line with an Oct 21 patrolling arrangement deal.

The deal was hailed in India as the beginning of the normalization of bilateral ties which plunged to their nadir in the middle of Jun 2020 when troops from the two sides clashed in the Galwan valley of India's Union Territory of Ladakh, resulting in the admitted deaths of 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers.

The exchange of Diwali sweets took place at Chushul Maldo and Daulat Beg Oldi in Ladakh, Banchha (near Kibutu) and Bumla in Arunachal Pradesh, and Nathula in Sikkim, reported the ndtv.com Oct 31.

The patrolling deal called for removal of military personnel and infrastructure, including temporary camps, from the Depsang plains and Demchok, and the withdrawal of troops to pre-Apr 2020 positions. They were the last two spots from which China had adamantly refused to withdraw its troops in a series of both diplomatic and military talks.

The deal will end nearly four years of military and diplomatic tension triggered by skirmishes and violent clashes in the Pangong Lake and Galwan regions in May-Jun 2020, the report hoped.

The completion of the ongoing disengagement verification process – to cross-check to ensure that the two sides have, indeed, withdrawn their troops as agreed – will be followed by steps to de-escalate the border situation, and the discussion of managing the borders, to be then followed by the normalization of bilateral ties.

All this depends on the restoration of trust between the two sides, which was severely dented by China's violation of a series of written agreements, as repeatedly noted by India's External Affairs Minister Mr S Jaishankar.

Jaishankar declined to give a timeline for the de-escalation, saying only it would not happen till Delhi is sure that its Beijing counterparts had honoured their side of the deal, the report noted.

De-escalation still remained a concern in other areas, including the Gogra-Hot Springs area in Ladakh, after Indian and Chinese forces backed down in September last year. China continues to hold large swathes of Indian territory to the north, in the Depsang plains area, the report said.

"After de-escalation, how to manage the borders will be discussed," Jaishankar has said.

Experts have cautioned India that China's current climb-down may be temporary, driven by its current economic difficulties and the resultant internal turmoil, and so not to normalize bilateral ties too quickly, as being sought by China.

Ambassador Xu Feihong of China has said that the meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Russia on Oct 23 was very important. They "reached many important understandings" which will be "the guidelines for the further development of relations between our two countries."

"I hope that, under the guidance of this consensus, our relations will be moving forward smoothly in the future and they will not be restricted or interrupted by specific disagreements

between our two sides," moneycontrol.com Oct 31 quoted the ambassador saying on the NDTV news channel.

He has said he was "looking forward" to a future resumption of direct flights between India and his home country, which had remained suspended since 2020, something China has been seeking for some time.

Xu has also voiced optimism for increased collaboration between India and China across diverse sectors, such as trade, education, and scientific research. He emphasized that sustained progress in these domains would strengthen partnerships and mutual understanding between the two nations, contributing to a more cooperative

regional environment, [zeenews.india.com](https://zeenews.india.com) Oct 30 cited Xu as saying.

India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has described the border disengagement as a "major achievement" after years of diplomatic and military efforts. Addressing soldiers at Meghna Stadium in Tezpur, Assam, Singh has emphasized that the success was made possible by the dedication and bravery of India's armed forces.

"This is not a small development. After prolonged efforts, we have reached a consensus with China," [ddnews.gov.in](https://ddnews.gov.in) Oct 30 quoted Singh as saying, ahead of celebrating Diwali with the Indian troops in Tezpur.

## October

### Indian And Chinese Troops Gift Sweets At Contested Border

31 October 2024, Barron's

Indian and Chinese troops exchanged boxes of sweets on Thursday at two points on their contested high-altitude border, a week after the leaders of the Asian rivals held a rare meeting.

China and India, the world's two most populous nations, are intense rivals and have accused each other of trying to seize territory along their unofficial divide, known as the Line of Actual Control.

However, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi met on the sidelines of a BRICS gathering in Russia on October 23, the pair's first formal meeting in five years.

In their meeting, Xi said they should "strengthen communication and cooperation", while Modi said "mutual trust" will guide ties with China.

It signalled a potential thaw between the nuclear-armed neighbours since clashes between their troops in 2020 over their border, which killed at least 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers.

On Thursday, photographs released by the Indian army showed soldiers shaking hands and handing gift-wrapped boxes of sweets in the rugged icy mountains of Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh, to mark India's Hindu festival of lights, Diwali.

After the 2020 clashes, more than 20 rounds of military talks were held.

Both sides pulled back tens of thousands of troops and agreed not to send patrols into a narrow dividing strip.

But two major points remained with troops and tanks on both sides staring at each other.

On October 21, days before Xi and Modi met, a deal was struck to pull back a few hundred soldiers

deployed at forward positions, a term dubbed "disengagement", and resume military patrols.

An Indian army official who was not authorised to speak to journalists confirmed that "sweets were exchanged between troops of India and China at several border points on the occasion of Diwali".

Rajnath Singh, India's defence minister, said Thursday that New Delhi's "efforts will be to move the matter beyond disengagement", but added that that "will have to wait a little longer", the Press Trust of India news agency quoted him as saying.

India is wary of its northern neighbour, and disputes over their 3,500-kilometre (2,200-mile) frontier have been a perennial source of tension.

### Rajnath Singh to celebrate Diwali with soldiers at Bum La Pass in China border

29 October 2024, Arunachal Observer

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will visit Tawang district on October 31 to celebrate Diwali with soldiers posted along the India-China border, highly placed official sources told this daily on Monday.

Set against the stunning backdrop of the eastern Himalayas, Tawang has long symbolized India's commitment to securing its borders. Singh's visit comes at after India-China agreement on disengagement of deployed forces in Ladakh and both neighbouring nations achieved a breakthrough in patrolling the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh.

In recent years, Tawang has become one of the focal points of friction, especially in areas like Yangtse, where troops of Indian Army and China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) has clashed in December 2022 leading to injuries on both sides.

During this incident, Indian Army had successfully prevented PLA soldiers from advancing their patrols into the Yangtse, reinforcing India's control over the sensitive region.

After the incident, both sides actively engaged in dialogue to de-escalate tensions around Yangtse. According to sources within the defence establishment, there is an emerging proposal to allow PLA patrols in designated areas, aiming for a controlled and mutually agreeable presence on both sides.

This diplomatic effort underscores a potential breakthrough in easing tensions in this disputed sector, as India and China seek ways to balance security with stability.

Before Singh's visit, Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu and Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein would also welcome the Indian Air Force's Uttarakhand War Memorial car rally that will reach Tawang on October 30. Diwali, a major Hindu

festival, this year will be celebrated from October 29 to November 3.

The Defence Minister's move is to boost up the morale of soldiers who guard the frontier against all odds in inhospitable freezing locations. He had celebrated Vijaydashami on 24.10.23 with troops at Bum La Pass and extended his wishes to the troops. He had commended the soldiers for securing the borders in sub-minus temperatures at an altitude of 15,000 feet above sea level. Singh had emphasized the need to strengthen the country's security apparatus and highlighted the efforts being made by the government to enhance indigenous production of defense equipment. He also visited the 4 Corps Headquarters at Tezpur in Assam and reviewed the operational readiness of the troops.

Bum La, a border pass between China's Tsona County in Tibet and India's Tawang district, is 37-km away from Tawang district HQs Tawang, an agreed Border Personnel Meeting point for security forces of China and India also serves as a trading point between Arunachal Pradesh and Tibet since 2006.

The Bum La Pass road is historic as the PLA had invaded India during the 1962 Sino-India War and the pass had witnessed one of the fiercest battles, known as Battle of Bum La Pass. Arunachal Pradesh alone shares 1,129-km of total 3,488-km Indo-China border.

### **India: Border issues far from fully resolved, normalizing China ties to take time**

28 October 2024, Tibetan Review

India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said Oct 26 that the breakthrough agreement with China on patrolling arrangement along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh's Demchok and Depsang plains does not mean that all issues between the two countries have been resolved. However, the disengagement allows us to look at the next step, the PTI news agency Oct 27 cited him as saying.

Apart from that, normalizing relations will naturally take time and requires rebuilding a degree of trust and willingness to work together, Jaishankar has said at an event in Pune.

He has explained that when Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Chinese President Xi Jinping at Kazan in Russia on the sidelines of the BRICS summit, it was decided that the foreign ministers and National Security Advisors of the two countries would meet and see how to move forward.

"The latest step (of disengagement) was the Oct 21 understanding that patrolling will take place in Depsang and Demchok. This will allow us now to look at the next step. It is not like everything has been resolved but the disengagement which is the

first phase we have managed to reach that level," Jaishankar has said.

While China's huge border infrastructure advantage in Tibet had given its People's Liberation Army the upper hand thus far, Jaishankar has said India has made great stride in recent years on its side of the border.

Over the decade, India improved its infrastructure, he has said, adding that part of the problem is that in the earlier years, the border infrastructure was really neglected.

"Today we have put in five times more resources annually than there used to be a decade ago which is showing results and enabling the military to actually be effectively deployed. The combination of these (factors) has led to where it is," he has said.

The Oct 21 deal on patrolling along the LAC in eastern Ladakh was a major breakthrough in ending the over four-year-long military standoff.

Since 2020, the situation on the border has been very disturbed which understandably negatively impacted the overall relationship. Since Sep 2020, India has been negotiating with the Chinese to find a solution, Jaishankar has said.

Emphasizing the immediate issues to be resolved before talking about any long-term settlement, Jaishankar has said one of the immediate pressing issues is disengagement because troops are very, very close to each other and the possibility of something happening existed.

Then there is de-escalation because of troop buildup on both sides, he has added.

And then "there is a larger issue of how you manage the border and negotiate the boundary settlement. Right now everything that's going on is concerning the first part which is disengagement," he has explained.

Meanwhile, following the agreement, the two countries have begun troop disengagement at the two friction points at Demchok and Depsang Plains in eastern Ladakh and this process is likely to be completed by Oct 28-29. This will be followed by the resumption of patrolling from both sides in accordance with the protocol reached during the Oct 21 deal.

Similar deal has not been reached on the other three or so troubled Tibet-border areas in Ladakh on which there has only been withdrawal of troops with moratorium on patrolling and creation of buffer zones reportedly on the Indian side as temporary solutions.



## India and China disengaging at Ladakh border after reaching a patrolling deal

25 October 2024, Tibetan Review

In a promising start to the implementation of a patrolling arrangement reached between them recently, India and China have begun the disengagement of their troops at two critical friction points in the Eastern Ladakh sector – Demchok and Depsang Plains.

The development comes after India and China successfully negotiated an agreement to resolve their ongoing military standoff in eastern Ladakh, which began in 2020.

Disengagement process at the LAC started within hours after the two sides reached an agreement to end the nearly four-year military stand-off in eastern Ladakh. Some temporary tents from Depsang and Demchok have already been removed by both the countries, reported the firstpost.com Oct 25.

Apart from this, some temporary structures have also been dismantled in the area, with Indian soldiers moving back to the west side of the Charding Nala, and Chinese personnel retreating to the east side of the Nala, the report said.

The temporary posts and structures which were erected at both the face-off sites after May 2020 were now being dismantled in a “controlled manner as part of the modalities worked out by the tactical commanders on the ground,” the timesofindia.com Oct 25 cited its sources as saying.

It further cited the sources as saying the dismantling and pullback by the troops will take around a week’s time, following which, the local commanders will verify it physically on the ground before the coordinated patrolling begins.

There are about 10 to 12 temporary structures and around 12 tents on both sides, all of which are set to be removed. Once all tents and temporary structures have been fully removed, a joint verification process will begin, both on the ground and through aerial surveys, said Indiatoday.com Oct 25.

The Chinese army reduced the number of their vehicles in the area, and the Indian army also withdrew some troops in the area. After this process is completed, patrolling is expected to resume in Depsang and Demchok within the next 4-5 days, the report cited sources as saying.

The ongoing process is also in keeping with India’s Defence Minister Rajnath Singh’s remark Oct 24 that a “broad consensus” had been achieved to restore the “ground situation” in certain areas based on the principles of equal and mutual security.

The announcement of the deal, made by India on Oct 21, marked a major breakthrough, although experts have struck a note of caution, given China’s well established record of not abiding by deals.

The current disengagement process, carried out by local commanders, is being done as per broad terms decided at a senior level, the CNN-News18 Oct 25 cited sources as saying.

As per the “patrolling arrangements” deal, Chinese troops will no longer block Indian soldiers at the “Bottleneck” area in the strategically-located Depsang Plains, which is around 18-km inside what India considers its own territory, said the timesofindia.com report.

“The aim is to ensure no clashes and violence takes place.”

Discussions on the four buffer zones, including Galwan, have not yet taken place, said the Indiatoday.com report.

The announcement of the border patrolling deal was followed, on Oct 23, by a meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the 16th Brics Summit in Kazan city of Russia.

The two leaders issued directions to revive various bilateral dialogue mechanisms, signalling attempts to normalise ties that were affected by the mind-2020 military clash at Galwan in eastern Ladakh.

## Two Nepalese nationals arrested in Lucknow for digital fraud linked to Chinese operative

25 October 2024. Times of India

In a late-night operation, the Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force (STF) arrested two Nepalese nationals in Lucknow for their involvement in extensive digital fraud operations using fake documents, especially ‘digital arrest’.

The suspects, Saroj Khanal from Dharan, Sunsari, and Shivram Rimal from Kathmandu, were apprehended near Saroj Hospital on Dubagga Road. They were reportedly meeting someone to arrange a bank account for transferring funds obtained through scams.

STF said that the two were connected to Chinese native Ben who is currently based in Nepal.

STF officials revealed that the duo was using fake identities, posing as Indian nationals Rahul Kumar and Pankaj Sridhar, with fabricated addresses in Lucknow’s Avash Vikas Yojna area. During the arrest, the STF seized two Nepalese passports, ID cards, forged Indian Aadhaar cards, and mobile phones.

Deputy SP of STF, Deepak Kumar Singh stated that the STF had been receiving multiple reports over the past few months about a gang posing as senior officials from various law enforcement agencies, including the Police, ED, and CBI. These individuals would intimidate victims, threatening them with false legal charges, including the concept of ‘digital arrest.’

“Further investigation revealed that Khanal and

Rimal were connected to an individual named "Ben" from China, currently based in Nepal. Initially, they had collaborated with Ben in Dubai before returning to Nepal, where he introduced them to cybercrime. Operating in India with fake Aadhaar cards, they opened bank accounts and obtained SIM cards used for scamming activities. Ben facilitated their operations by transferring scammed money into these accounts and covering their living expenses in India through cryptocurrency commissions," said Singh.

The STF is now investigating other gang members and bank accounts linked to this extensive fraud operation. The electronic devices seized during the arrest will undergo forensic examination. A case has been registered at Para Police Station in Lucknow, with further legal actions in progress.

### **China and India should manage their differences, Xi tells Modi in first formal talks in 5 years**

24 October 2024, NBC News

The two leaders' meeting on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Russia came after a deal to resolve a four-year military standoff over their disputed Himalayan border.

Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi agreed on Wednesday to boost communication and cooperation between their countries and resolve conflicts to help improve ties that were damaged by a deadly military clash in 2020.

The two leaders met on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Russia for their first formal talks in five years, signaling that ties between the Asian giants have begun to recover from the diplomatic rift caused by the clash along their disputed Himalayan frontier.

India and China, two of the world's biggest economies, have maintained strong trade ties despite the military and diplomatic tensions. The rapprochement is expected to boost Chinese investment in India.

India said the two leaders have directed their officials to take further steps to stabilize all aspects of bilateral ties.

The Xi-Modi meeting in the city of Kazan came two days after New Delhi said it had reached a deal with Beijing to resolve the four-year military standoff in the Himalayan region of Ladakh, although neither side has shared details of the pact.

The two sides should strengthen communication and cooperation, resolve conflicts and differences, and realize each other's development dreams, Chinese state broadcaster CCTV reported Xi as telling Modi.

Modi put forward ideas for improving and developing bilateral relations, to which Xi agreed in principle, CCTV added without elaborating.

In response, Modi told Xi that peace, stability, mutual trust and respect were crucial for relations.

"We welcome the agreement on the issues that had come up over the last four years," Modi told Xi in comments aired on India's state broadcaster Doordarshan.

"It should be our priority to maintain peace and tranquility on the border. Mutual trust, mutual respect and mutual sensitivity should be the basis of our relationship," Modi said.

Relations between the world's two most populous nations – both nuclear powers – have been strained since a clash between their troops on the largely undemarcated frontier in the western Himalayas left 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers dead in 2020.

The neighbors have added tens of thousands of troops and weapons along the icy frontier over the last four years.

Modi and Xi had not held formal bilateral talks since then, although both participated in multilateral events. Their last bilateral summit talks were held in October 2019 in the southern Indian town of Mamallapuram.

The two spoke briefly on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Bali in November 2022. They spoke again on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Johannesburg in August 2023 but released different versions of the conversation, suggesting they didn't see eye to eye.

Xi skipped the G20 summit hosted by New Delhi the following month, a decision seen as another setback to relations.

Diplomatic efforts gained momentum in recent months after the two countries' foreign ministers met in July and agreed to step up talks to ease the border tensions.

India had made improving the wider political and damaged business ties contingent upon finding a solution to the border standoff.

New Delhi had increased the scrutiny of investments coming from China, blocked direct flights between the two countries and had practically barred issuing any visas to Chinese nationals since the Ladakh clashes.

Speaking in Kazan, Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said there was hope for better India-China relations.

"As we have maintained during the last four years, the restoration of peace and tranquility on the border areas will create space for ... normalization of our bilateral relations."

## Amid Modi-Xi meet, Indian Army opens museum to counter China's claims about Arunachal Pradesh

23 October 2024, Deccan Herald, Sumir Karmakar

'This unique institution recognizes and showcases the martial, cultural, and heritage prowess of Arunachal Pradesh and celebrates the historical linkages of this ancient region with Bharatvarsh,' said Arunachal Pradesh CM Khandu.

Guwahati: Indian Army on Wednesday opened a museum in Arunachal Pradesh's Dirang district, one of the theatres of the 1962 Sino-India War, in order to display the frontier state's ancient ties with "Bharatvarsh" and counter China's repeated claims over the state.

This coincided with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's bilateral meeting with his Chinese counterparts Xi Jinping during the BRICS Summit in Russia.

The museum displays 343 traditional heirlooms dating back to the Neolithic period, many ancient artefacts, catalogue highlighting the bravery of the local heroes and Indian soldiers who had sacrificed their lives while fighting against the Chinese troops during the 1962 war, beside other items.

"This location of the Museum, at Nyukmadung is of special reverence to all of us as it proudly marks the sacrifice, bravery and honour of the Indian Army during the 1962 war along with the camaraderie and compatriotism of local people. This museum is not just a repository of artefacts, heirlooms and memories but a living bridge between the past and future," Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu said, after inaugurating the museum.

The museum, named as Kameng Culture and Heritage Museum, is situated at Nyukmadung village in Dirang district, situated atop 1,600 meters.

"This unique institution recognizes and showcases the martial, cultural, and heritage prowess of Arunachal Pradesh and celebrates the historical linkages of this ancient region with Bharatvarsh," said Khandu. Khandu hoped that the museum would place Nyukmadung and Dirang on the country's tourist map, boosting religious and adventure tourism. "It will not only contribute to the local economy but also foster a deeper understanding of the region's cultural canvas on the national and global stage." The Indian Institute of Heritage curated the museum.

Khandu expressed gratitude to the Army's Sela Brigade, 16 Madras and 18 Sikh Light Infantry, who worked hard to deliver the project. A film by Captain Praveen Chaturvedi, CEO, Moonlight Pictures and his team, was also screened during the event that highlighted the deep-rooted connection of Arunachal Pradesh and Bharat, said a statement issued by the Chief Minister's Office, on Wednesday evening.

India has repeatedly rejected China's claims over Arunachal Pradesh. China, on the other hand, reacted sharply to infrastructure development projects taken up by India in Arunachal Pradesh claiming that the region was part of its South Tibet province.

## A Modi-Xi Meeting Could Signal a Thaw Between India and China

23 October 2024, The New York Times, David Pierson, Valarie Hopkins and Alex Travelli

A meeting between the two leaders comes just two days after they settled a tense border dispute in the Himalayas. But experts said their long-term geopolitical rivalry would persist.

China's top leader, Xi Jinping, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India met officially for the first time in more than five years on Wednesday at a summit of emerging market countries in Russia, raising the prospect of a potential thaw between the two Asian powers.



From left, Xi Jinping, China's top leader, President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia and Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India at the BRICS summit in Kazan, Russia, on Wednesday. Credit...Sergey Bobylev/BRICS-Rossia2024.ru, via EPA, via Shutterstock

The session came two days after China and India reached a deal on patrolling their shared Himalayan border, the site of a deadly clash between Chinese and Indian forces in 2020. Relations between Beijing and New Delhi have been frosty ever since, with India drawing closer to the United States through a regional security grouping called the Quad.

In separate statements, both Mr. Xi and Mr. Modi highlighted the need for the neighboring countries to address their differences peacefully.

Mr. Xi told Mr. Modi a rapprochement was "in the fundamental interests of both countries," according to Chinese state media, adding that China and India should "set an example for developing countries."

Mr. Modi called for “stable, predictable and amicable” relations between the two nations, the world’s most populous, saying it would have “a positive impact on regional and global peace and prosperity,” according to India’s Ministry of External Affairs.

Both leaders underscored their desire for a more “multipolar” world, an inference to the current global order, where the United States dominates, wielding what China and India regard as unfair influence.

The meeting between Mr. Xi and Mr. Modi took place at the 16th annual BRICS summit, a group of non-Western countries whose acronym stems from its earliest members: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. It expanded this year to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates, growing to represent almost half the world’s population.

Established as a counterweight to U.S.-led forums like the Group of 7 and intended to give developing countries more influence, BRICS has struggled to speak with a unified voice. That, in no small part, is because of the competing interests of its two biggest members.

China wants to use the grouping to weaken the dominance of the United States and burnish its credentials as a leader of the so-called Global South. India also claims leadership of the Global South, but unlike China, remains firmly nonaligned and does not want BRICS to develop into an explicitly anti-Western body.

Experts said little would change within BRICS as a result of China and India’s moving to ease tensions. Beijing has ambitions to be the pre-eminent power in Asia.

“The thaw between India and China will not fundamentally alter the dynamics of BRICS because while the détente between the two Asian giants is in the interest of both players, their long-term geopolitical rivalry will remain,” said Stewart Patrick, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

India “has no desire to replace U.S. hegemony for Chinese hegemony,” Mr. Patrick continued, “and it is disinclined to have BRICS become an anti-Western bloc.”

During a round table session earlier on Wednesday, leaders of the BRICS conference discussed a range of issues, including creating financial platforms outside the reach of the U.S. dollar. President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia offered a proposal to create a BRICS grain exchange that could evolve into a commodities exchange. Russia is the world’s largest wheat exporter, and its war in Ukraine, another top grain exporter, sent prices soaring in 2022.

While improved ties between China and India could make BRICS a more cohesive group, a lasting thaw is

anything but assured. Analysts warned that the border deal struck this week could fall apart, as details remained murky about how the two sides would patrol the disputed area, considered some of the least habitable terrain in Asia.

For China, easing tensions with India would help drive a wedge between New Delhi and Washington. It would also provide Beijing with one less headache at a time when it is struggling to turn around its sputtering economy, which has been battered by a property crisis.

As for India, a lasting border deal would come as a relief for Mr. Modi’s government, which took the largely symbolic step of banning dozens of Chinese apps, including TikTok, after the clash in 2020. Since then, Mr. Modi has tried to deflect attention from the conflict. He refused to take questions about it in Parliament.

Smoother relations with China will leave India in a position straddling geopolitical forces within Asia. Washington has been courting New Delhi as a strategic counterweight to China, as it seeks to corral various states, most of them democracies, into a ring of defensive arrangements around Asia.

Indian foreign policy has long been defined by its overlapping and sometimes contradictory set of friends. It is the only country that sits inside both the Quad – the loose, defense-oriented club where it joins the United States, Japan and Australia – and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which is dominated by China and Russia. The Shanghai group also includes Pakistan, India’s fiercest foe.

The United States has been working to tighten its ties with India for about 25 years. That has accelerated under both the Trump and Biden administrations, as India has been drawn into greater and greater economic, technological and military coordination with Washington. In the latest example, India signed a \$3.5 billion deal last week to buy American Predator drones.

### **China’s Xi and India’s Modi meet after border accord between two countries**

23 October 2024, Aljazeera

Narendra Modi and Xi Jinping hold talks on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in the Russian city of Kazan.

Chinese President Xi Jinping and India Prime Minister Narendra Modi meet on the sidelines of the BRICS summit [China Daily via Reuters]

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping have held their first formal talks in five years, a sign that icy relations are thawing after a deadly military clash in 2020.

The two leaders met on Wednesday on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in the Russian city of Kazan, the Indian government and Chinese state media said.

The meeting comes days after the two countries agreed a deal to resolve a four-year military standoff on their disputed Himalayan border.

Xi and Modi shook hands against a backdrop featuring their national flags, and both stressed the importance of handling their disputes.

The Chinese leader said the two countries were at a crucial stage of development and "should carefully handle differences and disagreements and facilitate each other's pursuit of development aspirations."

"It's important for both sides to shoulder our international responsibilities, set an example for boosting the strength and unity of the developing countries, and contribute to promoting multi-polarisation and democracy in international relations," Xi said.

The clash in 2020 on the largely undemarcated frontier of Ladakh in the western Himalayas killed 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers.

Relations between Beijing and New Delhi were strained as a result, with both sides beefing up their military presence along their shared border.

Modi and Xi had not held formal talks since although they were present at a number of multilateral events. Their last summit talks were held in October 2019 in the southern Indian town of Mamallapuram.

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The two spoke briefly on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Bali in November 2022. They spoke again on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Johannesburg in August last year.

Xi skipped the G20 summit hosted by New Delhi the following month, a decision seen as another setback to their relations.

Diplomatic efforts gained momentum in recent months after foreign ministers of the two countries met in July and agreed to step up talks to ease the border tensions.

The standoff had resulted in New Delhi increasing the scrutiny of investments coming from China, blocking direct flights between the two countries and barely issuing any visas to Chinese nationals.

The pact agreed to this week related to military patrols along the frontier. But the announcement on Tuesday did not explain whether it covered the

length of the border or just points where the clashes occurred in 2020.

Border tensions are a thorny issue between Beijing and New Delhi. China claims India's eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh in its entirety, considering it part of its Tibet region, and the two fought a border war in 1962.

### **China confirms pact with India to 'resolve' conflict over disputed border**

22 October 2024, Aljazeera

China has confirmed reaching a deal with India over their disputed border in the Himalayan region, a day after New Delhi said it had struck an agreement with Beijing for military patrols along the frontier.

But the announcement on Tuesday did not explain whether the pact covered the length of the border or just points where the two sides have been involved in a standoff since 2020.

Relations between the world's two most populous, nuclear-armed neighbours have been strained since clashes between their troops on the largely undemarcated frontier in the western Himalayas' Ladakh region four years ago killed 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers.

Since the skirmish in 2020, both sides pulled back tens of thousands of soldiers and agreed not to send patrols into a narrow strip surrounding the Line of Actual Control, which is an unofficial division about 3,488km (2,167 miles) long in the Himalayas, with China claiming a considerably shorter section.

It separates Chinese and Indian-held territories from Ladakh in the west to India's eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, which China claims in its entirety considering it part of its Tibet region.

In 1962, Chinese troops crossed the frontier with India during a dispute over the border's demarcation, sparking a four-week-long war. China retained Aksai Chin, a strategic corridor linking Tibet to western China.

"Recently, China and India have maintained close communication through diplomatic and military channels on issues relating to the China-India border," China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman Lin Jian told a news briefing in Beijing on Tuesday.

"At present, the two sides have reached a solution to the relevant issues, which China views positively," Lin said.



## Arunachal's Siang valley dam project on fast track to counter China threat

21 October 2024, Business Standard

The project has been facing protests from the local population which fears severe ecological impact because of the construction of the dam.

With an eye on China developing a mega hydro project in the vicinity of Arunachal Pradesh, the Centre has accelerated the development of its colossal dam in the Siang upper valley, which will be the country's biggest to date. The recently announced financial assistance by the Union Cabinet for hydropower (or hydel) projects is aimed at the initial project management of the Siang upper valley dam, said senior officials.

The proposed project has a three-pronged agenda – flood management, water flow correction, and power generation as a by-product. State-owned hydropower major NHPC has been entrusted with developing a detailed project report (DPR) and project feasibility report (PFR). According to estimates by NHPC, the dam will have the capacity to generate 10-12 gigawatts (Gw) of hydropower, making it the largest hydel project in India. The projected cost is expected to be Rs 1 trillion, said officials.

NHPC executives said while discussions were ongoing among different central ministries, such as power, Jal Shakti, and the state of Arunachal Pradesh, the latest fund infusion by the Centre has kick-started the project. In August, the Union Cabinet approved Rs 4,136 crore for the northeastern states to develop hydropower projects worth 15 Gw. Last month, the Cabinet also approved Rs 12,461 crore for creating "enabling infrastructure" for upcoming hydropower projects and Pumped Storage Projects (PSPs) in the country.

Officials indicated that funds from these two allocations would be directed towards the PFR for the Siang valley project and to conduct awareness programmes for the locals. An emailed questionnaire to the NHPC spokesperson remained unanswered until the time of going to press.

The project has been facing protests from the local population, which fears severe ecological impact due to the construction of the dam. According to local reports, data collection efforts by NHPC have been thwarted by locals who are apprehensive that the project will harm aquatic ecology. NHPC, however, is advocating for the project on the grounds of national security and the adverse impact of the Chinese dam. In 2021, the People's Republic of China approved the construction of the 60 Gw Motong hydropower station on the Yarlung Tsangpo, which falls in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). The Yarlung river connects with the Brahmaputra (Siang in Arunachal)

river on the Indian side. According to initial studies by NHPC and the state government, water flow to India can be reduced by up to 80 per cent due to China's project. In a recent presentation, authorities also hinted at the possibilities of China using it as a 'water bomb' or even to induce floods in Indian territory.

The Siang river has previously witnessed flash floods at least three times due to breaches in dams on the Chinese side. A recent official presentation by NHPC said: "It is estimated that 40 billion cubic meters (BCM) of water may be diverted by the Chinese project. The total annual yield at the Siang Upper Project is around 112 BCM. During the lean season, the flow may reduce by about 60 per cent at Pasighat and 25 per cent at Pandu (Guwahati) without the Upper Siang Project."

The presentation also said that the project would neutralise the adverse effects of reduced lean season water availability. "The project is mainly aimed at flood moderation and ensuring water security in the area. The hydropower generated would be essential in meeting peaking power requirements," officials said. Around 12 per cent of the total energy generated from the project would be provided for free to the state of Arunachal Pradesh.

The project was first conceptualised in 2018 by the Ministry of Jal Shakti as an irrigation-cum-power project. Lack of funds and support from the state government, coupled with local protests, caused no progress, said officials. Some officials also indicated that the rehabilitation of the local population continues to be a major challenge, as they fear loss of jobs and arable land for cultivation, especially rice. The 3 Gw Dibang Valley hydro project on the Siang river has faced years of protests over similar concerns.

**What's at stake**

**Project significance:** Largest hydropower project in India with a capacity of 10-12 Gw

**Estimated cost, storage capacity:** Rs 1 trn; 14-15 bn cubic meter

**Strategic importance:** Aimed at flood management, water security, and mitigating risks posed by China's 60 Gw Motong project on Yarlung Zangbo

**Funding boost:** Recent approvals of over Rs 16,000 crore by the Union Cabinet for hydropower and allied infrastructure in the Northeast

**Key concerns:** Loss of arable lands, displacement of heritage tribal lands and communities

**National security focus:** Project seeks to counter potential diversion of 40 bn cubic meters of water by China and mitigate risks of flash floods by Chinese dam breaches

## India calls out China's non-transparent subsidies that stifle competition at WTO meet

19 October 2024, Tibetan Review

While India's border problem with China is serious enough to render it a hindrance to the normalization of their overall bilateral ties, the former also has grave concerns over the business practices of the latter. The country has made known this fact during a WTO meeting. Indian officials pointed out that China's policies not only affect Indian exporters but also threaten the stability of the broader international trading system, reported the [psuconnect.in](https://psuconnect.in) Oct 19.

The officials have put under scrutiny China's non-transparent subsidies that lead to an influx of low-priced, inferior goods into the country, adversely affecting local industries.

The report said India strongly criticized China's trade policies, labelling them as unfair and harmful to equitable global trade practices, raising issues related to China's state subsidies, intellectual property violations, and market access barriers that hinder Indian businesses.

India's position was stated to reflect increasing frustration with China's aggressive trade tactics that disrupt competition. Its officials have noted that these policies not only impact Indian exporters but also pose a threat to the stability of the wider international trading system.

During the discussions, India called for enhanced transparency and accountability from China, urging the WTO to address practices that breach trade agreements. The Indian delegation highlighted the necessity for a level playing field and advocated for reforms within the WTO to ensure that all member countries comply with fair trade practices, the report noted.

The ongoing dialogue at the WTO was stated to underscore the rising tensions in international trade, particularly among major economies, with India reflecting its commitment to assert its rights on the global stage.

## China urges India to handle Taiwan issue cautiously after Mumbai office opening

17 October 2024, Reuters

China urged India on Thursday to handle Taiwan issues with caution and avoid interference in the improvement of Sino-India relations following the opening of another Taiwan de facto consulate in Mumbai.

China opposes moves by any countries it has ties with to engage in official contacts with Taiwan, said Mao Ning, a foreign ministry spokesperson, at a regular news conference.

The Taiwanese government opened its third representative office in India on Wednesday, Taiwan's official Central News Agency reported, adding to existing offices in New Delhi and Chennai. The video player is currently playing an ad.

00:12Cyclone Dana dumps rain on eastern India as it makes landfall

The opening came amid ongoing efforts from China and India to ease tensions and resolve conflicts on their Himalayan frontier, a point of contention that has strained bilateral ties.

China, which views democratically-governed Taiwan as its own territory, staged a new round of war games around the island earlier this week.

Taiwan's government rejects China's sovereignty claims and Beijing's claim of the right to speak for and represent the island on the international stage "China has lodged solemn representations with the Indian side," Mao said.

"The one-China principle is a serious political commitment made by the Indian side and the political foundation of Sino-Indian relations."

China urges India to strictly abide by its commitments, handle Taiwan-related issues prudently and properly, and refrain from conducting any form of official exchanges with Taiwan, she added.

## Satellite pics show new Chinese settlement under construction near Pangong Lake

14 October 2024, India Today, Shivani Sharma

Satellite imagery accessed by India Today shows significant Chinese construction activity, 38 km from the 2020 standoff point, raising fresh concerns over border infrastructure.



New Chinese settlement near Pangong Tso. (Satellite image @ 2024 Maxar Technologies via India Today)

As India and China continue diplomatic efforts to ease tensions along the border, recent satellite imagery reviewed by India Today reveals the ongoing construction of a large Chinese settlement near the north bank of Pangong Tso Lake.

The settlement is located approximately 38 kilometres east of one of the 2020 standoff points

between Indian and Chinese forces, though it lies outside India's territorial claims. Pangong Tso, the world's highest saltwater lake, straddles India, China-administered Tibet, and the disputed border between them.

The satellite images, captured on October 9 by US-based Maxar Technologies, show rapid construction over an area of about 17 hectares. Situated near Yemagou Road at an elevation of 4,347 meters, the site is bustling with construction and earth-moving machinery. According to Y Nithiyanandam, Professor & Head of the Geospatial Research Programme at the Takshashila Institution, "More than 100 buildings, including residential structures and larger administrative buildings, are being built. Open spaces and flattened land suggest possible future use for parks or sports facilities."

He also pointed out a 150-meter-long rectangular strip in the southeast corner, speculating it could be prepared for helicopter operations.

Analysis of open-source satellite imagery indicates that construction began in early April 2024 on a riverbed sloping towards the lake. The settlement appears to be divided into two parts, possibly distinguishing between administrative and operational zones, according to military sources.

Shadow analysis of the structures reveals a mix of single and double-story buildings, with smaller hutments nearby, likely accommodating six to eight people each. Two larger structures may serve as administration and storage facilities. The layout, designed in staggered rows rather than straight lines, suggests an intention to reduce vulnerability to long-range attacks.

The settlement's location behind high peaks further enhances its strategic advantage, limiting visibility from nearby areas. "The surrounding high peaks obscure the site from land-based surveillance equipment," Nithiyanandam noted. Military sources speculate that if used for military purposes, the settlement could function as an "ad-hoc forward base," reducing reaction times for Chinese forces.

#### A SETTLEMENT FOR TIBETAN NOMADS?

Nature Desai, an observer of the Indo-Tibetan frontier, offers another interpretation. He suggests that the settlement could be intended for Tibetan nomads, identifying the site as Changzun Nuru, a historic campsite mentioned in Swedish geographer Sven Hedin's Central Asia Atlas: Memoir on Maps. Desai argues that the design is more consistent with the style of permanent housing built for Tibetan nomads by the Chinese government over the past two decades, rather than typical Xiaokang-style border defence villages.

If so, this would be the first such settlement close in the area, reflecting China's ongoing efforts to settle Tibetan nomads permanently. China could frame this

development as "a long-awaited gift to its loyal nomads along the Indian frontier," Desai noted.

Nithiyanandam pointed out that while the proximity to a water source likely resolves water supply issues, the settlement's energy needs will likely rely on renewable sources. The rapid pace of construction suggests that residential buildings are nearing completion, and significant progress has been made over the past six months. However, the settlement's completion timeline could be impacted by extreme weather conditions in the coming months.

### India expresses cautious optimism in Tibet-border talks with China

13 October 2024, Tibetan Review

India's Defence Minister, Mr Rajnath Singh, has on Oct 11 expressed cautious optimism about ongoing diplomatic-military talks with China, while emphasizing that troop disengagement was key to resolving tensions.

India remains "cautiously optimistic" about the ongoing diplomatic-military talks with China to resolve the troop standoff in the eastern Ladakh border with Tibet, business-standard.com Sep 12 quoted Singh as saying Oct 11.

Singh has also expressed full confidence in the Indian Army's ability to handle any situation should tensions escalate along the border.

Speaking at the Army Commanders' Conference in Gangtok, capital of the Tibet-border state of Sikkim, Singh has made it clear that progress of discussions with China would be contingent on "actual progress" being made on the ground, specifically with the disengagement of troops in eastern Ladakh.

While China is said to be stubbornly reluctant to withdraw from the two remaining conflict points in eastern Ladakh, namely Depsang and Demchok, India has been advocating for a phased process, starting with troop disengagement there. This should be followed by de-escalation and eventually the withdrawal of the 50,000 Chinese troops stationed along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the region, if normalcy in bilateral ties are to be restored.

Singh has spoken by video conference, which was chaired by General Upendra Dwivedi, Chief of the Army Staff, from Sukna in Darjeeling as he could not travel to Gangtok as scheduled due to bad weather. The choice of Gangtok as the conference location was stated to be symbolic, signalling India's readiness in the eastern sector, where China has also increased its military presence by deploying 90,000 additional troops.

General Dwivedi had earlier this month described the situation along the LAC as "stable but sensitive and not normal", noting that "trust has become the biggest casualty" in India's relationship with China.

He has added that while political-diplomatic efforts had generated some “positive signalling” in recent months, implementation depended on military commanders on the ground.

Given this situation, the Indian Army will continue to maintain its forward positions in preparation for the fifth consecutive winter in the harsh terrain of eastern Ladakh, Arunachal Pradesh, and Sikkim, the report said.

Singh has called on the Indian armed forces to continuously modernise and adapt to emerging threats.

On Oct 12, Singh inaugurate several Border Road Organization projects in Sikkim, including 22 roads, 51 bridges, and two additional projects, totalling Rs 2,236 crore. These include 19 projects in Jammu and Kashmir, 18 in Arunachal Pradesh, 11 in Ladakh, nine in Uttarakhand, and six in Sikkim, the report added.

### **India launches major strategic infrastructure projects and plans, procurements as China threat simmers**

13 October 2024, Tibetan Review

As India’s trust-deficit towards China on the border issue continues amid continuing standoff in eastern Ladakh, the country has announced more major strategic infrastructure projects to achieve parity with the developments on the occupied Tibet side of the border. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Oct 12 virtually inaugurated 75 infrastructure projects “dedicated to the nation” from Sherathang, near the Indo-Tibet border, most of them in the Tibet-bordering states, reported eastmojo.com Oct 12.

India has also approved plans for the launch of 42 spy satellites and plans to procure over 20,000 new-generation anti-tank guided missiles (ATGMs), along with 1,500 launchers and simulators, for the Indian Army, according to latest media reports.

The 75 projects launched by Mr Singh were stated to include 51 bridges, 22 roads, and two miscellaneous projects, aimed at strengthening connectivity in critical regions.

The road projects were stated to include four for Sikkim, seven for Jammu and Kashmir, three for Arunachal Pradesh, two for Ladakh, besides two for Rajasthan and one each for one for Nagaland and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

The 51 bridges were stated to cover key locations, including 14 for Arunachal Pradesh, 12 for Jammu and Kashmir, nine for Ladakh, and others spread across Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Mizoram, and Sikkim.

Those in Sikkim were stated to include the upgradation of the Sherathang-Kupup road, which plays a crucial role for the armed forces, offering an

alternative route from East Sikkim to the Siliguri corridor. In Ladakh, the newly constructed Hemiya Bridge on the Leh-Loma road will improve connectivity to Dungti, the report said.

Singh has inaugurated the projects virtually from Sukna Military Base as inclement weather prevented his planned personal attendance. Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Golay, along with other state dignitaries, has attended the ceremony at Sherathang.

Meanwhile the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) led by PM Narendra Modi has quietly approved the phase III of the Space Based Surveillance (SBS-III) for launching an array of spy satellites in low earth and geostationary orbits.

“CCS on Monday gave the approval for launching 52 satellites under the SBS-III project, which would cost around Rs 27,000 crore,” the timesofindia.com Oct 12 quoted a source in the ISRO, India’s space agency, as saying.

“If India is able to launch satellites at this scale, threats to the country can be better mitigated,” the source has said. The recent Cabinet clearance to purchase 31 weaponised Predator drones from US-based General Atomics will add more teeth to the surveillance capability of the SBS-3 mission.

Also, India’s Defence Ministry has issued a Request for Information (RFI) to procure over 20,000 new-generation anti-tank guided missiles (ATGMs), along with 1,500 launchers and simulators, for the Indian Army, reported indiatoday.in Oct 11.

This initiative is aimed at enhancing the Army’s operational capabilities to effectively target and destroy tanks and other armoured vehicles, the report said.

These ATGMs are expected to operate in diverse terrains, including plains, deserts, high altitudes up to 5,500 meters (18,000 feet), as well as coastal areas and islands.

The requirement is that the new-generation missiles must function effectively in both day and night conditions, adapting to various weather scenarios such as rain, fog, humidity, and dust. Additionally, they are required to operate in extreme temperatures ranging from -45°C to 45°C.

And the ATGMs should be able to neutralize a range of targets, including enemy tanks, armoured personnel carriers, low-flying helicopters, concrete structures, and other weapon platforms.

They will be strategically deployed along India’s western border with Pakistan and the northern border with Chinese ruled Tibet, the report said.

The move is a step toward bolstering the Indian Army’s capabilities in modern warfare.



## India 'cautiously optimistic' about border talks with China: Rajnath Singh

12 October 2024, Business Standard, Rimjhim Singh

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh expressed cautious optimism about ongoing diplomatic-military talks with China, emphasising troop disengagement as key to resolving tensions

India remains "cautiously optimistic" about the ongoing diplomatic-military talks with China to resolve the troop standoff in eastern Ladakh, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Friday. However, he also expressed full confidence in the Army's ability to handle any situation should tensions escalate along the border.

Speaking at the Army Commanders' Conference in Gangtok, Singh emphasised that the progress of discussions with China is contingent on "actual progress" being made on the ground, specifically with the disengagement of troops in eastern Ladakh. India has been advocating for a phased process, starting with troop disengagement at the two remaining conflict points in Depsang and Demchok. This would be followed by de-escalation and eventually the withdrawal of the 50,000 Chinese troops stationed along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the region.

The defence minister's comments come against the backdrop of concerns about China's inconsistent actions, as the People's Liberation Army made several incursions into eastern Ladakh in April-May 2020, despite diplomatic assurances.

Although Singh was scheduled to attend the conference, chaired by General Upendra Dwivedi, in person, bad weather forced him to address it via videoconference from Sukna in Darjeeling. The choice of Gangtok as the conference location, near the China border, was symbolic, signalling India's readiness in the eastern sector, where China has also increased its military presence by deploying 90,000 additional troops.

Earlier this month, General Dwivedi cautioned that "trust has become the biggest casualty" in India's relationship with China, describing the situation along the LAC as "stable but sensitive and not normal". He added that while political-diplomatic efforts have generated some "positive signalling" in recent months, implementation depends on military commanders on the ground.

In preparation for the fifth consecutive winter in the harsh terrain of eastern Ladakh, Arunachal Pradesh, and Sikkim, the Army will continue to maintain its forward positions. Meanwhile, the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) is working to improve India's border infrastructure, attempting to close the gap with China.

Rajnath Singh to inaugurate BRO projects in Sikkim today

On Saturday, Rajnath Singh is set to inaugurate several BRO projects in Sikkim, including 22 roads, 51 bridges, and two additional projects, totalling Rs 2,236 crore. These include 19 projects in Jammu and Kashmir, 18 in Arunachal Pradesh, 11 in Ladakh, nine in Uttarakhand, and six in Sikkim.

Defence minister Singh highlighted the need for the armed forces to prepare for "asymmetric warfare", a lesson underscored by current global conflicts. He noted that unconventional and asymmetric warfare, including hybrid war, will be integral to future conflicts, and added that the forces should continuously modernise and adapt to emerging threats.

## EXPLAINED: Is China taking away people's passports?

08 October 2024, RFA, Luisetta Mudie

Beijing steps up travel curbs on Communist Party members and state employees amid concerns they won't return.

The ruling Chinese Communist Party has been gradually stepping up controls on officials' personal trips overseas since pandemic restrictions ended, with many working in state organizations required to hand in their passports for "safekeeping," amid concerns that they may not return.

The party's disciplinary arm warned members earlier this year not to make overseas trips without getting the approval of their employer first, on pain of "severe disciplinary punishment."

Those who don't have a valid private passport may not be allowed to apply for one, while those who do are being told to hand them over on pain of disciplinary action, according official documents and people within the government system.

In July, Radio Free Asia reported that the authorities were stepping up travel restrictions on teachers, schoolchildren and state-owned bank staff ahead of summer vacation by requiring them to hand over their passports or ask permission before leaving the country.

A recent report in the Financial Times also quoted teachers as saying they were being told to hand in their passports.

Is this a new development?

Teachers were being ordered to hand in their passports as early as 2018, with authorities in the southeastern province of Fujian, the eastern province of Shandong and the northern region of Inner Mongolia warning them that any plans for overseas travel must first get government approval.



Similar warnings were issued to teachers, schoolchildren and state-owned bank employees ahead of the summer vacation this year, too.

Official websites have been warning of travel restrictions on employees of the Chinese state since President Xi Jinping took power in 2012, but travel curbs intensified during the three years of the zero-COVID policy, when people started leaving the country in droves in a phenomenon called the "run" movement.

Arriving air passengers in the southern city of Guangzhou told Radio Free Asia in May 2022 that border police had stepped up controls on incoming Chinese citizens, questioning them about their overseas activities and confiscating their passports.

In April of the same year, police in the central province of Hunan ordered local residents to hand over their passports, promising to return them "when the pandemic is over," amid a massive surge in people looking for ways to leave China or obtain overseas immigration status.

Who is affected by the travel restrictions?

The Chinese Communist Party's 99 million members are barred from obtaining foreign nationality or permanent residency in another country, and from applying for private passports without prior approval, according to a post on the official website of its Central Commission for Discipline Inspection.

They must also submit details of their proposed itinerary when taking private trips, and not deviate from the agreed route or engage in unauthorized activities, it said.

Officials in government departments, employees of state-owned companies and banks, and children have all been issued with warnings over private overseas travel in recent years, covering a large swathe of the population.

Travel bans have long been used by the Chinese authorities to target religious minorities and ethnic groups.

In 2022, Christians in eastern China told RFA Mandarin they were finding it harder to gain approval for their private passport applications, with applications rejected after Entry-Exit Bureau officials discovered the family's religious beliefs.

Passport recall orders and restrictions on new applications have been used to limit overseas travel by mostly Muslim Uyghurs since the beginning of the century, while similar restrictions have also been imposed on Tibetans under Xi's rule.

But restrictions are also sometimes extended to all citizens, should the government deem it necessary, as happened during the zero-COVID years.

Why is the government imposing such bans?

"Firstly, they're afraid that people will leave and never return," the wife of a high-ranking executive in a state-owned enterprise in the northeastern province

of Jilin, who gave only the surname Liu for fear of reprisals, told RFA Mandarin in a recent interview.

The number of people fleeing China to seek asylum in the United States spiked sharply in 2023, as people made the grueling and dangerous overland trip to Mexico through Central America.

But there are also concerns that sensitive information could leak to overseas media or security services, as China's secret police step up warnings about potential foreign spies everywhere.

"Particularly those who work in government departments, who know more of the details about the Chinese Communist Party's internal operations," Liu said. "They strictly prohibit people from disclosing that kind of detail abroad."

Liu said her husband, who recently took a less demanding role at the company, is still subject to travel restrictions as a state employee.

"He may no longer be a leader ... but he's not retired yet, so they won't let him have a passport," she said, adding that the government is likely worried that officials will contribute to capital outflows by taking their money with them. "When people leave China, so does their money," Liu said.

A recent op-ed in the state-backed Shenzhen Special Zone Daily warned that state employees "must not keep hold of his passport for the sake of his own convenience, and must not take chances and conceal his overseas travel itinerary."

"Unauthorized illegal travel abroad is not a trivial private matter, but a major public matter related to discipline ... and political consciousness," the Feb. 8, 2024, article said.

### **"Ready to enhance communication with India, increase mutual trust": Chinese Foreign Ministry**

08 October 2024, ANI

After President Droupadi Murmu sent messages to Chinese President Xi Jinping on the 75th anniversary of China, Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning emphasised the country's willingness to strengthen communication and mutual trust with India, aiming to promote a stable development of the China-India relationship.

The remarks by Mao came while she was addressing a regular press briefing on Tuesday.

Responding to the congratulatory message sent by President Murmu to Chinese President Xi on the 75th Anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, Mao said, "Recently, leaders of neighbouring countries in Asia, including Indian President Droupadi Murmu, sent messages or letters of congratulations to President Xi Jinping on the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. We express our appreciation for that."

She further said, "China attaches importance

to President Murmu's remarks on the China-India relations. We stand ready to enhance communication with India, increase mutual trust and jointly promote the sound and steady development of China-India relations."

Notably, on September 27, President Murmu in her message emphasised the significance of fostering peaceful and stable relations, stating, "As two large neighbours with many common developmental challenges and shared regional interests, it is important that we work towards peaceful and stable relations between our two countries."

In her communication, President Murmu expressed a desire to enhance bilateral cooperation, saying, "I look forward to working with you to realise a mutually beneficial relationship and leverage our respective strengths for the benefit of people of both countries and the region and world."

Meanwhile, elaborating further on the disengagement process going on between India and China, Mao said that the two nations have successfully disengaged in four key areas, including the Galwan Valley. She said, "China and India maintain close communication on issues concerning the border areas through diplomatic and military channels, and the two countries have realised disengagement in four areas in the Western sector of the China-India border, including the Galwan Valley."

"The situation on the China-India border is currently stable on the whole. At the recent 31st meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on China-India Border Affairs (WMCC), the two sides further narrowed down differences, expanded common understandings and agreed to find early resolution to the situation on the border," Mao added further.

Earlier on September 13, Mao had spoken about the disengagement process and said, "In recent years, front-line armies of the two countries have realised disengagement in four areas in the Western sector of the China-India border, including the Galwan Valley. The China-India border situation is generally stable and under control."

### **New air force chief calls for India to 'catch up' with China on defence tech**

07 October 2024, SCMP, Enoch Wong

Air Chief Marshal Amar Preet Singh says the country is lagging behind its neighbour on technology and production of equipment

The new Indian Air Force chief has warned that the country has fallen behind China on defence technology and equipment and says it needs to "catch up".

Air Chief Marshal Amar Preet Singh made the remarks at a press briefing in New Delhi on Friday, days after taking up the role and ahead of the 92nd anniversary of the air force on Tuesday.

Singh pointed to a delayed order of supersonic fighter jets being built by state-owned Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, saying none of the 83 Tejas Mark-1A combat aircraft that were promised this year had been delivered, according to The Hindu.

"I am very confident that as far as the human angle is concerned – as far as our people behind the machines are concerned – we are way ahead of [China]," Singh was quoted as saying.

"We were ahead of [China] in technology some time back, but we have lagged and need to catch up," he said.

"As far as production rates are concerned, we are way behind. We need to catch up with that. And that will happen over time. It cannot happen overnight."

India and China have a long-running dispute over their undemarcated 3,488km (2,167-mile) border, known as the Line of Actual Control. Tensions worsened after a clash in the Himalayan border area in 2020 in which at least 20 Indian and four Chinese troops were killed – the first deadly skirmish between the two sides in at least 45 years.

Meanwhile, China has been rapidly modernising its air force fleet. That includes the J-20 fifth-generation fighter jet with stealth and supersonic cruise capabilities.

According to Air and Space Forces Magazine, China currently produces more than 100 J-20s every year, solely for domestic use.

China's air force is said to have more than 300 J-20s in service, with recent reports that some of the fighter jets have been deployed near the border with India, in Tibet and Xinjiang.

Testifying before Congress in March, the former head of the US Indo-Pacific Command, Admiral John Aquilino, said China could soon have the world's largest air force due to its modernisation efforts.

India has also been trying to modernise its air force but despite efforts to become more self-reliant it remains heavily dependent on imported weapons and equipment.

It currently has a fleet of 31 fighter jet squadrons but the target is 42 – a number that could be revised up given the military's shift in focus from Pakistan to China, Indian news magazine The Week reported on Friday, citing an anonymous senior air force official.

Singh's remarks follow a number of air force incidents in recent months. In September, a Mikoyan MiG-29 fighter jet crashed in Rajasthan during a routine night training mission. Three months earlier, a Sukhoi Su-30 MKI fighter jet went down in Maharashtra. In both incidents the pilots managed to eject safely. In April, a remotely piloted aircraft

crashed during a training sortie in Rajasthan in April, and the previous month a Tejas light combat aircraft crashed in a student hostel compound in the same state – the pilot also ejected safely.

### **Jaishankar refutes Chinese incursion claims in Arunachal Pradesh**

06 October 2024, Arunachal24

Speaking at The Conclave 2024 in New Delhi, Jaishankar responded sharply, “China entered the border in 1959! What are you talking about?”

External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar, on Saturday, refuted claims of a recent Chinese incursion into Arunachal Pradesh, highlighting India’s steadfast patrolling along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Speaking at the Conclave 2024 in New Delhi, Jaishankar responded sharply, “China entered the border in 1959! What are you talking about?”

The EAM reiterated that India’s patrolling along the LAC, particularly in Arunachal Pradesh, has remained robust for over a decade. “There’s been no major change in the last five to tens years or maybe even longer,” he said.

China has persistently claimed Arunachal Pradesh as its own, further attempting to assert its stance by renaming 30 locations in the state earlier this year. India, however, firmly rejected these actions, stating, “Assigning invented names will not alter the reality that the state will always be an integral and inalienable part of India.”

On India’s diplomatic ties with Bangladesh, Jaishankar stressed the importance of maintaining sturdy relations amid potential political disruptions. “In every country, in politics, there are changes... Foreign policy should plan for this change,” he explained, adding that the India-Bangladesh relationship has significantly deepened over the last decade.

Jaishankar also addressed India’s long-standing bid for a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), calling the process “complicated.” He noted, “More and more countries today accept that there should be change and that India should be one of the countries.” The EAM, however, acknowledged that further work, persuasion, and negotiation are still needed to achieve this goal.

Meanwhile, the External Affairs Minister is set to lead a delegation to Pakistan for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit which will be held in Islamabad on October 15 and 16. The visit will mark the first high-level visit from India to Pakistan in about ten years.

### **China’s restrictions drive Indians to undertake helicopter Mt Kailash pilgrimage from own country**

05 October 2024, Tibetan Review

As the Mt Kailash–Lake Mansarovar Yatra for Indian pilgrims has continued to remain closed or prohibitively regulated since 2020 both for government-organized travellers and those wishing to make the trip privately from Nepal, The Uttarakhand Tourism Department has on Oct 3 resumed providing aerial pilgrimage for them, reported thestatesman.com Oct 3.

The pilgrimage has remained closed for Indian visa holders since 2020 due to various reasons, beginning with the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent travel restrictions following clashes between the two border armies along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh.

In Nepal, the prohibitive restrictions on Indian pilgrims were previously reported to have ruined the business of the country’s tourism industry catering to them annually.

The first batch of five pilgrims – who were from Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Punjab – paid obeisance to the abode of Lord Shiva in Tibet for the first time from Indian soil on Oct 3.

The Old Lipulekh Peak, which offers a clear view of Mt Kailash, was discovered a few months ago by a team of officials from the Uttarakhand Tourism Department, the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP). Following this discovery, the Uttarakhand Tourism Department made the necessary preparations to launch a five-day, four-night tour package. The mode of darshan was aerial via helicopter, taking sorties from Pithoragarh to Gunji and back, the report said.

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has said, “The implementation of the Mt Kailash pilgrimage plan from Indian soil demonstrates the commitment of both the state government and the central agencies. Now, Shiva devotees need not wait for their turn to begin the Kailash-Mansarovar Yatra and can pay their respects from Indian territory.”

### **India’s renewed push for permanent UN Security Council seat faces persistent China roadblock**

03 October 2024, SCMP, Amy Sood

India’s chances remain poor due to tensions with China, but more support from Global South nations could boost its bid, analysts say

India has renewed its long-standing bid for a permanent position in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as it seeks to represent the Global

South, but resistance from China is expected to continue to present a significant hurdle.

For decades, India has been pushing for a seat at the table with the UNSC's five permanent members, also known as the P5 – United Kingdom, China, France, Russia and the United States.

The council – which held its first session in 1946 – represents the victor nations of World War II and is responsible for maintaining international peace and security among the UN's 193 member states.

China, the only Asian member of the council, has remained outwardly opposed to admitting India to the exclusive group.

In his address at the United Nations General Assembly last Saturday, India's External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar called for a "more representative" UN.

"Large parts of the world cannot be left behind when it comes to deciding the key issues of our times," he said, reflecting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's previous critique of the current council's skewed representation.

In July last year, Modi said: "How can we talk of it as a primary organ of a global body, when entire continents of Africa and Latin America are ignored? How can it claim to speak for the world when its most populous country, and its largest democracy, is not a permanent member?"

Last week, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron publicly endorsed India's bid to join the council. And during a visit by Modi to the US last month, US President Joe Biden said Washington recognised a need to reform global institutions to "reflect India's important voice".

Russia has also backed India's effort, with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov saying in July that his country was in support of India getting a permanent seat on the council.

However, analysts caution that India's chances of joining the UNSC remain slim due to its escalating tensions with China, stemming from a territorial dispute in the Himalayas and ongoing competition for regional influence.

"China is the only Asian power in the UNSC, so it definitely would not want a big competitor like India there," said Dhananjay Tripathi, an associate professor in the Department of International Relations at South Asian University in New Delhi.

Beijing would like to maintain its position as the only Asian country with a permanent seat on the council, he added, noting it was unlikely that there would be any "fundamental changes" in its relations with India that would change this view.

Veto power

The five permanent members of the council have veto power to single-handedly block any UN resolutions.

China has previously used this blocking power in support of Pakistan over the Kashmir conflict with India.

Analysts say this presents a challenge for India, which aims to assert itself as a leading global power, maintain influence in the Asia-Pacific, and position itself as a champion of the Global South.

"India has wanted to play a certain role in world politics that at times can get curtailed because it's not a part of the UNSC's permanent membership," Tripathi said. "On some issues, India feels that it has to be on the high table to defend its interest in world politics."

For China, the issue also lies in its perception that India is growing closer to the West and, more specifically, the US, according to Srikanth Kondapalli, dean of the School of International Studies and a professor of China studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University in India.

"If India joins the Security Council with veto power, there may be concerns it may not side with China on certain issues," he said. "As of now, the five countries don't have to accommodate any other countries when it comes to a vote."

Tripathi said more clarity was needed from the other permanent members on whether they supported India's bid to join the UNSC with or without veto powers.

"If India joins without the veto power, it may not be able to play a vital, critical or relevant role in the UNSC," he added.

Alongside India, the other members of the "Group of Four" countries – Germany, Japan and Brazil – have also sought permanent seats on the UN body.

While China has said it supports reforms to give developing nations "a greater say", it has stopped short of providing specific proposals or naming countries.

Last year, China's top diplomat Wang Yi said reform should "increase the representation and voice of developing countries, allowing more small and medium-sized countries to have more opportunities to participate in the decision-making of the council".

Analysts suggest that another factor fuelling China's resistance to India's membership is that both countries see themselves as champions of the Global South, competing for greater influence in the region. Kondapalli said while the "China factor is unlikely to go away", India could strengthen its bid by further aligning itself with countries in the Global South.

"But China could be a spoiler in this by convincing some countries not to align with India," he said. "It very much depends on India's ability to convince these countries."

Tripathi concurred, saying that greater support from Global South countries would also allow India to

“put more pressure” on the current council members for more immediate reform.

“There is a closer eye on India now more than ever as a growing economic power ... how India engages with its neighbours, whether it is playing a constructive role in the issues that are critical to the region will all be very important,” he said.

### **India: Tension with China to remain amid trust deficit, continuing border standoff**

04 October 2024, Tibetan Review

So long as the forward deployments of militaries on the border continues, which resulted from China’s violation of a series of signed agreements, tension in bilateral relations will remain, India’s External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said Oct 1.

China has recently been trying to sweet talk India into restoring normal bilateral ties while keeping talks ongoing on the continuing border standoff amid heavy deployment of troops and relentless building of strategic infrastructure.

Speaking at an event hosted by Carnegie Endowment in the US, Jaishankar has said: “In terms of our relationship with China, I think it’s a long story, but the short version is that we have agreements on how to keep the border peaceful and tranquil, and those agreements were violated by China in 2020. And ...because we have forward deployments of our militaries, there are resultant tensions. And until those forward deployments are addressed the tensions would continue. If the tensions continue, it casts a natural shadow over the rest of the relationship. So our relationship hasn’t been built for the last four years.”

India and China have been in a territorial face-off since 2020 after the Chinese Army transgressed into multiple areas from the Galwan Valley to the Finger area along the Pangong Lake, noted the ndtv.com Oct 3.

The standoff at the border is continuing as multiple rounds of military and diplomatic discussions did not reap results, the report said.

Jaishankar earlier said the two sides had carried out 75% of the disengagement in eastern Ladakh after a series of talks at various levels but that the trust deficit continued to remain due to China’s propensity to renege on signed agreements and its unwillingness to carry out the remaining disengagements for restoring the pre-2020 border situation.

### **India cites ‘trust deficit’ to continue winter troop deployment on China-ruled Tibet-borders**

01 October 2024, Tibetan Review

With the huge trust deficit with China continuing along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), India is going full steam ahead with preparations to maintain its forward deployment of troops for the fifth successive winter in the forbidding terrain of eastern Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh-Sikkim, reported the timesofindia.com Sep 30.

With this decision., India has continued to avoid falling into China’s trap of the waiting game, thereby maintaining its strategic troops deployment and preventing the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) from making any further unjust advancements, said zeenews.india.com Sep 30.

Dismissing the significance of the possible suggestions of “progress and narrowing of differences” following recent political-diplomatic talks, top sources in India’s defence establishment have told the timesofindia.com that “the trust deficit on the ground with the PLA remains very high”.

They have pointed to the way China continues to strengthen its forward military positions as well as build “permanent defences” and infrastructure all along the 3,488-km LAC. “It is quite clear the PLA will not be returning to its peacetime locations in the near future,” the sources have added.

As the Indian Army transitions from “the summer to winter posture”, with massive “winter stocking” underway for the additional troops forward deployed along the frontier, General Upendra Dwivedi and the commanders-in-chief of the force’s seven commands will also review the operational situation at a meeting to be held in Gangtok (Sikkim) on Oct 9-10, the report said.

Talk of a possible breakthrough in the military confrontation in eastern Ladakh has been fuelled by a flurry of bilateral political-diplomatic talks over the last couple of months. These included the 30th and 31st meetings of the Working Mechanism for Consultation & Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) on Jul 31 and Aug 29, which were followed by a meeting between national security advisor Ajit Doval and Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi on the side-lines of a BRICS meet at St Petersburg on Sep 12.

However, in the end, there was no change in China’s position, which was made explicit when the rival military corps commanders held their 21st round of talks way back on Feb 19. At that time, China again rebuffed India’s push for defusing the two major continuing face-offs at the strategically-located Depsang Plains, which is towards the crucial Daulat Beg Oldie and Karakoram Pass in the north, and the



Charding Ninglung Nallah track junction near Demchok, the report said.

Besides, "disengagement at Depsang and Demchok, if it happens, will only be the first step. Till the subsequent de-escalation and de-induction of troops take place for restoration of status quo ante, the threat will remain," a senior officer has said.

As the situation now stands, the creation of buffer zones after the earlier troop disengagements at Galwan Valley, Pangong Tso-Kailash Range and Gogra-Hot Springs up till Sep 2022 as well as the confrontation at Depsang and Demchok has meant that Indian troops cannot access 26 of their 65 patrolling points (PPs), which begin from the Karakoram Pass in the north and go down to Chumar in the south in eastern Ladakh, the report said.

"Even the buffer zones were meant to be only temporary arrangements. China continues to make unreasonable demands and is playing the long waiting game. India has to be careful about not falling into China's trap," the officer has said.

There is said to be a growing realization, as the military stalemate persists, that only politico-diplomatic talks can break the deadlock.

"If the two sides agree to a broad framework, the actual disengagement modalities at Depsang and Demchok can be worked out at the military level," the officer has added.

\* \* \*

India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has on Sep 28 taken a veiled dig at China during his address at the United Nations General Assembly, stating that the sanctioning of global terrorists by the United Nations should not be impeded for political reasons.

He was obviously referring to China's repeated moves over the past several years to prevent the UN security Council from sanctioning Pakistan based terrorists when sought by India and other countries.

"Terrorism is antithetical of everything that the world stands for. All its forms of and manifestations must be resolutely opposed. The sanctioning of global terrorists by the United Nations should also not be impeded for political reasons," timesnownews.com Sep 28 quoted Jaishankar as having said.

## September

### Jaishankar Puts China And Pakistan On Blast at the U.N.

28 September 2024, India Today

India's external affairs minister Dr S. Jaishankar rebuked Pakistan and China during his address at the U.N. He made it clear that India will not back down in the face of aggression and provocations. He drew attention to the role of Pakistan in fostering terrorism and China's assertive tactics, the Foreign Minister emphasized that India's patience has its limits and actions have repercussions.

Dr Jaishankar also replied to Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's speech, in which he raised the Jammu and Kashmir issue. He said "A dysfunctional nation coveting the lands of others must be exposed and must be countered. We heard some bizarre assertions from it at this forum yesterday. So let me make India's position perfectly clear. Pakistan's cross-border terrorism policy will never succeed. And it can have no expectation of impunity. On the contrary, actions will certainly have consequences. The issue to be resolved between us is now only the vacation of illegally occupied Indian territory by Pakistan. And of course the abandonment of Pakistan's longstanding attachment to terrorism."

Though not named directly, China was a clear target in the Minister's speech when he spoke about the erosion of trust in international processes. "Any connectivity that flouts sovereignty and territorial integrity acquires strategic connotations," he warned, a likely reference to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its contentious projects in the region.

### China sends 'deterrent message' with missile intercept test near Indian border

28 September 2024, SCMP

China's missile intercept test near the Indian border is a clear message of deterrence for its neighbour, observers say, as the two sides step up diplomatic talks over their long-running territorial dispute.

The test was part of a live-fire exercise involving surface-to-air missile operations on the Karakoram Plateau, state news agency Xinhua reported on August 29.

It was conducted by the People's Liberation Army Xinjiang Military District, which is responsible for the Chinese side of the border in the western region.

A subsonic cruise missile was successfully intercepted at an altitude of 5,300 metres (17,390 feet) for the first time during the exercise, showing that the

interceptor missile was stable and effective in harsh conditions, according to the report.

The specific location of the test was not disclosed, nor is it known when the test took place, but analysts say its proximity to the border suggested it was part of a deterrence strategy.

China and India share an ill-defined, contested border – known as the Line of Actual Control – that spans some 3,488km (2,167 miles).

Their border dispute has been the most contentious aspect of relations for decades. Tensions worsened after a clash in 2020 in a disputed Himalayan border area in which at least 20 Indian and four Chinese troops were killed – the first deadly skirmish between the two sides in at least 45 years.

Lin Minwang, deputy director of Fudan University's Centre for South Asian Studies in Shanghai, said the PLA had been testing weapons and equipment in China's border plateau region since 2020 amid tensions along the frontier with India, and the latest test was in line with that practice.

"It carries a certain deterrent message. To avoid war, we must first possess the capability to fight," Lin said. He said strains in the relationship had shown signs of easing this year.

"Both sides are intensifying efforts to reach an agreement on border issues as soon as possible," he said. "[But] it is impossible for China to meet India's demands ... in this context, the test signifies to India that China possesses military capabilities – and the choice now lies with India."

State media reported the missile intercept test on the same day that China and India held their 31st meeting on border affairs in Beijing, during which they agreed to strengthen dialogue and maintain peace along their border.

During talks in St Petersburg two weeks later, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Indian national security adviser Ajit Doval agreed to work together to create the conditions needed to improve bilateral relations.

Song Zhongping, a Chinese military commentator, said the PLA test could be seen as a "guarantee of strength" to support those talks.

"The goal was to intercept all incoming targets, whether they're subsonic or hypersonic [missiles]," Song said. "Negotiations without that guarantee of strength are unlikely to produce results."

The test is likely to heighten concerns in New Delhi, according to Rajeev Ranjan Chaturvedy, an associate professor with Nalanda University's School of Historical Studies in India.

He said the test had "significant implications for regional security dynamics" and suggested that China was "actively enhancing its military capabilities, focusing on creating a more

sophisticated arsenal that improves its overall lethality and effectiveness".

"The strategic objective behind such advancements appears to be a shift towards damage limitation, particularly through the deployment of missile defence systems," Chaturvedy said.

He said the timing of the test amid ongoing dialogues between the two sides could prompt India to reassess its defence priorities. "The emphasis on building a more robust deterrent force is imperative, as it could catalyse an arms race in the region," he added.

India could be compelled to accelerate its own military capabilities, including developing hypersonic missiles, long-range air-launched cruise missiles and nuclear ballistic missile submarines, according to Chaturvedy.

### China demanding patrolling right in Indian held Arunachal territory?

28 September 2024, Tibetan Review

China has been demanding patrolling access to two Indian held areas of Arunachal Pradesh during the past four years of discussions on restoring the pre-2020 situation in the eastern Ladakh border region, according to the [tribuneindia.com](https://tribuneindia.com) Sep 28. It suggested that China tried to create an eastern Ladakh-like situation there too, to prevent India's patrolling of its own Tibet-border territory.

The two spots – one in the Yangtse area north-east of Tawang, where the two sides had a deadly clash in Dec 2022, and the second in central Arunachal along the Subansiri river valley – have been firmly under Indian control for decades, the report said.

The Chinese side was stated to have been making the demand during the 21 rounds of talks held over the past four years, to discuss the dispute on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh which arose from China's incursions in 2020.

Chinese troops have since been denying access to Indian troops to "patrol points" 10, 11, 12 and 13 (also known in military jargon as PP) on this part of the LAC. All of these originate from "the bottleneck", a geographical feature on the eastern flank of the 972 sq km Dapsang plateau, the report said.

Indian government sources, speaking to The Tribune on the condition of anonymity, have said the Chinese demands were "unreasonable" and "devoid of logic". "The last Indian Army patrol to the PP areas was (undertaken) in Jan 2020," a source has said.

The report cited Indian government sources as reiterating that the so-called Chinese demand to allow its troops to patrol the two spots in Arunachal Pradesh was not a "quid pro quo", as both had been in Indian control for decades.

On the other hand, the issue of patrolling PP 10, 11, 12 and 13 in eastern Ladakh is a dispute that

cropped up in Apr 2020. Ever since, the two armies have been locked in a military standoff, the report noted.

India's External Affairs Minister Mr S Jaishankar, speaking at an event in the US on Sep 24, referred to the problems of India's loss of access to the patrolling areas in eastern Ladakh after the Chinese incursion in 2020.

"The main issue right now is the patrolling," Jaishankar said, pointing out that the patrolling arrangements since 2020 had been disturbed. He went on to describe the India-China relationship as "significantly disturbed" as a result of it.

The report cited Indian military sources as separately confirming that since Apr 2020, Chinese troops had not allowed Indian soldiers to patrol areas PP 10, 11, 12 and 13. Indian side had patrolled there until the Chinese incursions.

China tried to achieve eastern Ladakh-like situation in Arunachal Pradesh too in 2022. After the Dec 2022 clash at Yangtse, Defence Minister Singh had told Indian Parliament: "The PLA (People's Liberation Army) troops on Dec 9 tried to transgress the LAC in Yangtse area of Tawang sector and unilaterally change the status quo."

There were also face-offs in the Yangtse area in the past, a major one being in Oct 2021, the report noted. The Chinese attempt was to get access to the top of the 17,000-foot-high peak that provides a commanding view on both sides of the LAC. India has remained in firm control of the top and its access routes from its own side, the report said.

Elsewhere in Arunachal Pradesh, the two armies have had face-offs in the past at the second spot, in the Subansiri valley in central Arunachal.

Over the past 21 rounds of talks, India was stated to have been suggesting to China a graded three-step process for resolving the Eastern Ladakh issue. The first involves disengagement of troops within close proximity to each other in grey zones along the LAC and getting back to positions as on Apr 2020. The next two steps – de-escalation and de-induction – entail pulling back troops and equipment to the pre-Apr 2020 levels, the report added.

### **China calls India's conquest, naming of Arunachal peak after 6th Dalai Lama 'illegal'**

27 September 2024, Tibetan Review

On the basis of its claim that Tibet "belongs" to it and, by extension, Arunachal Pradesh too, China has called the recent scaling of a hitherto unclimbed peak in the Indian state by a team of Indian mountaineers and its naming of it after the 6th Dalai Lama of Tibet "illegal".

A team of 15 members from the National Institute of Mountaineering and Adventure Sports (NIMAS)

successfully climbed the 20,942-foot-high, previously unclimbed peak in a 15-day expedition and named it as the "Tsangyang Gyatso Peak".

NIMAS, based in Dirang, Arunachal Pradesh, operates under the ministry of defence, noted the hindustantimes.com Sep 27.

In a press release, the defence ministry stated that naming the peak after the 6th Dalai Lama pays homage to his enduring wisdom and significant contributions to the Monpa community and beyond.

China has condemned the entire exercise, calling it "illegal and null and void".

While noting he was not aware of the entire exercise, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian has told a media briefing, "Let me say more broadly that the area of Zangnan is Chinese territory, and it's illegal, and null and void for India to set up the so-called 'Arunachal Pradesh' in Chinese territory. This has been China's consistent position."

"Zangnan" is Chinese for "southern Tibet". China claims that the state belongs to it on the basis of its claim over Tibet. India recognized Tibet as an autonomous region of the People's Republic of China but denies that this includes Arunachal Pradesh also. India has not yet reacted to China's remarks but has maintained that Arunachal Pradesh was an integral part of India and assigning "invented" names does not alter this reality, noted indiatoday.in Sep 27, referring to China's renaming of places in the state in recent years.

Meanwhile, Arunachal Chief Minister Mr Pema Khandu has extended his wishes to the NIMAS team for its achievement.

"Led by Director Ranveer Jamwal, they've successfully summited an untamed peak in the Gorichen Massif of Mon Tawang Region of Arunachal Pradesh, reaching an impressive 6,383 meters!" he wrote on X.

### **Renaming of Arunachal peak illegal: China**

27 September 2024, TOI, Prabin Kalita

Days after an Indian mountaineering team scaled an unnamed and unconquered peak in Arunachal Pradesh's Tawang region and named it after the sixth Dalai Lama, a furious China on Thursday hit out at what it called an illegal operation in "Chinese territory".

A team of 15 mountaineers from the National Institute of Mountaineering and Adventure Sports (NIMAS) in Dirang successfully scaled the peak last Saturday, and named it "Tsangyang Gyatso Peak" in honour of Tsangyang Gyatso (17th-18th century CE), the sixth Dalai Lama, who was born in Tawang.

While the Army sends several adventure expeditions, many see these as dual-purpose endeavours aimed also at rebuffing the claims of China on Arunachal

Pradesh. China insists on calling the Indian state 'Zangnan'.

Naming the peak after the 6th Dalai Lama would not have also gone down well with the Chinese who have tried to belittle the significance of the institution which serves as a reminder of Tibet's existence as an independent entity before it was grabbed by Beijing. A defence ministry statement saying the choice of name of the 6th Dalai Lama is a tribute to his timeless wisdom and his profound contributions to the Monpa community and beyond, seemed to rub it in.

When asked for his reaction, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian told a media briefing in Beijing: "I'm not aware of what you mentioned."

"Let me say more broadly that the area of Zangnan is Chinese territory, and it's illegal, and null and void for India to set up the so-called 'Arunachal Pradesh' in Chinese territory. This has been China's consistent position," he said.

### **Reached 'some consensus' with India: Chinese military on disengagement process in Ladakh**

27 September 2024, The Hindu

China and India were able to "reduce differences" and build "some consensus" on disengaging troops from friction points to end the standoff in eastern Ladakh and agreed to maintain dialogue to reach a resolution acceptable to both sides at an "early date", the Chinese Defence Ministry said on Thursday (September 26, 2024). Under the guidance of two leaders, China and India have maintained communication with each other through diplomatic and military channels, including between two foreign Ministers and China's Foreign Minister and India's National Security Advisor, and through the border consultation mechanisms, Mr. Zhang Xiaogang said. Both China and India, through talks, were "able to reduce their differences and build some consensus besides agreeing to strengthen dialogue to accommodate each other's legitimate concerns", Mr. Zhang, a spokesperson for the Ministry of National Defence, told a media briefing in Beijing. "The two sides agreed to reach a resolution at an early date acceptable to both sides," he said.

He was replying to a question on the talks between the two countries on disengagement from the remaining friction points especially Demchok and Depsang to end the over four-year-long military standoff in eastern Ladakh resulting in a freeze of relations between the two countries.

Mr. Zhang referred to the meeting between External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi as well as the recent meeting on the sidelines of the BRICS meeting in Russia between Wang and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval.

On September 3, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning, while commenting on the talks between Wang and Doval, said the "front-line armies of the two countries have realised disengagement in four areas in the Western sector of the China-India border, including the Galwan Valley". In his reply to the question, Mr. Zhang didn't comment on the progress of the disengagement from the remaining areas including Depsang and Demchok but said both sides will continue to consolidate the outcomes.

"We will continue to consolidate the outcomes we have reached and respect bilateral agreements and confidence-building measures to safeguard peace and tranquillity at the border," he said.

His comment respecting bilateral agreements came as Jaishankar, while addressing an event hosted by the Asia Society and the Asia Society Policy Institute in New York on Tuesday (September 24, 2024), said there were a series of agreements between the two countries that went into greater and greater detail on how to make sure the border remained peaceful and stable. "Now the problem was in 2020, despite these very explicit agreements, we saw that the Chinese - we were all in the middle of Covid at that time - moved a large number of forces in violation of these agreements to the Line of Actual Control. And we responded in kind," he said.

Meanwhile, Li Jinsong, Director-General of the Department of Asian Affairs of the Foreign Ministry, met with Indian Ambassador to China Pradeep Kumar Rawat here, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said, without providing any details.

### **China's high-altitude heliports in Tibet a sobering reminder of threat to India along LAC**

26 September 2024, The New Indian Express

The military dynamics of Tibet are undergoing a fresh change with the construction of high-altitude helicopter infrastructure in the area.



An under-construction heliport in Gar County The Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) presents unique challenges for air infrastructure superiority, with its high altitude and rugged terrain. While the expansion of airports and deployment of fighter jets and sophisticated radar systems have been



traditional measures of this superiority, a less recognised but equally critical aspect is China's increasing rotary-wing capabilities at extreme altitudes.

Our research reveals that nearly 90% of heliports in the TAR are located at elevations between 3,300 and 5,300 m (10,000–17,400 ft), with 80% concentrated above 3,600 m. These advancements signal that China's once-significant limitations in helicopter operations at such altitudes are swiftly diminishing.

China's critical military infrastructure at higher altitudes is rapidly expanding in the challenging environment of the TAR. A vital part of this expansion is the proliferation of high-altitude heliports and helipads, which are quickly becoming crucial nodes in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) ground and air operations strategy.

These helipads, strategically placed near the Line of Actual Control (LAC) between India and China, disputed areas with Bhutan, and critical infrastructure like surface-to-missile (SAM) sites and military barracks, serve as logistics hubs. Their role in facilitating rapid troop and equipment movement underscores their strategic significance.

The figure above shows the distribution of 109 helipads based on their elevation. Surprisingly, only two helipads are positioned at an elevation of 780 to 2600 m. However, 32 helipads are located between 2700 and 3600 m, 44 helipads between 3700 and 4300 m, and 25 helipads between 4400 and 4700 m. Six more helipads are positioned at elevations between 4800 and 5400 m. These helipads exhibit a wide range of elevations, from a minimum of 780.50 m to a maximum of 5374 m, with an average elevation of approximately 3930 m.

Once considered to be a handicap in PLA's air operation, China's high-altitude capabilities have seen a significant and rapid expansion. This development underscores the urgency of the situation and the growth of the PLA's air operations in a way that cannot be ignored.

A new approach of extending heli strips to allow Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) to land on strips shorter than 1,000 m highlights China's forward-thinking military infrastructure, making these sites useful for both helicopters and UAVs.

Over the past decade, the PLA has substantially invested in helicopter infrastructure, which has increased its operational capability. These expenses are not merely reactions to disputes like the 2017 Doklam standoff or the 2020 Galwan Valley clash. Instead, they are a calculated approach aimed at guaranteeing long-term gains in a zone where the topography and elevation seriously challenge the PLA's troops.

For example, the Z-20 and Z-8L helicopters have been specially built to operate under the difficult circumstances of the Tibetan plateau, highlighting China's will to overcome the obstacles presented by the hostile surroundings.

Modernising and Expanding: A Strategic Choice

While the rate of heliport construction is slower than the growth of airfields, it reflects the PLA's approach of aggressively expanding its military infrastructure. Some of the heliports studied in our research are undergoing infrastructure upgrades/expansion, while a few are newly established.

### India displays battle readiness as eastern Ladakh standoff continues amid Chinese buildup

25 September 2024, Tibetan Review

As China continues its military and strategic infrastructure buildup in occupied Tibet while refusing to pull back from eastern Ladakh to restore the pre-2020 border situation, India has sought to make clear its readiness to defend its territorial integrity. On Sep 22, the Indian Army troops displayed multiple tactical tank exercises in the icy heights of Nyoma in eastern Ladakh, reported [newindianexpress.com](https://www.newindianexpress.com) Sep 24.

The exercises, carried out by the armoured unit, saw modern war horses T-90, T-72 and BMP-2 pass through rapid enemy assault in the undulating surface of the valley. Nyoma stands at a height of about 13,700 ft and is around 30 km inside the Line of Actual Control (LAC), the report said.

Speaking about the T-90 tank, soldier tradesman Manoj Kumar has said, "We are fully prepared to destroy our enemy at this altitude. It can be deployed anywhere and remove its obstacles to cross the area. It is capable of deep-fording (a technique used to cross deep water by driving a vehicle on the riverbed, lakebed, or seabed)."

"This is one of the best tanks in the world. We are very proud that this tank is being manufactured in India," he has said, adding, it is effective in any weather condition, day and night.

Also, this tank, which is fitted with a 1000-hp engine, can cross any obstacles anytime. It can be deployed in deserts and marshy land.

Speaking about the tank's combat capability, the report said India's front-ranking Bhisma T-90 tank is equipped with 'hunter killer' capabilities – combat power, reconnaissance capability, and survivability.

The LAC runs through eastern Ladakh for 832 km and is dotted with open valleys. The Indian Army had to induct a significant number of T-72 and T-90 tanks in operational areas, gaining tactical surprise over the adversary, forcing it on the back foot, the report noted.



## India rules out joining world's largest trade deal, accuses China of 'very opaque' trade practices

22 September 2024, CNBC, Lee Ying Shan

India's commerce minister rejected the idea of joining the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, the world's largest trade deal, maintaining that it is not in the country's interest to be part of a free trade agreement with China.

"India is not going to join the RCEP because neither did it reflect the guiding principles on which ASEAN was started, nor is it in the nation's interest to do a free trade agreement with China," India's Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal told CNBC's Tanvir Gill in an interview.

The RCEP deal was signed in 2020 by 15 Asia-Pacific countries — which makes up out 30% of global GDP — and came into force in January 2022. The countries are the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and five of their largest trading partners, China, South Korea, Japan, Australia and New Zealand.

Negotiations for the RCEP started in 2013 and initially included India, which some members viewed as a counterbalance to China. However, in 2019, India chose not to join RCEP, citing unresolved "core interest" issues. Back then, India did not expand on what some of those core unresolved interests were.

Goyal noted that at that time, India already had a free trade agreement with ASEAN, Japan and Korea, as well as a bilateral trade with New Zealand worth \$300 million.

"It was not in our farmers' interest, RCEP did not reflect the aspirations of our small and micro medium industries and sector, and in some form, was nothing but a free trade agreement with China," he said.

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"It was not in our farmers' interest, RCEP did not reflect the aspirations of our small and micro medium industries and sector, and in some form, was nothing but a free trade agreement with China," he said.

"Certainly nobody back home would like to have an FTA with [a] non-transparent economy, very opaque in its economic practices, where both trading systems, political systems, the economy — the way it is managed — is completely different from what the democratic world wants."

Goyal also accused China of using the World Trade Organization's policies to its advantage, flooding various economies with goods at low prices which often do not meet quality standards.

From solar panels to cars to steel, China has recently been churning out more goods in an economy that has been slow to absorb, resulting in a surge of cheap exports to foreign markets.

### Semiconductor ambitions

The minister also made a strong case for India to become a Taiwan "plus one" semiconductor country. "China Plus One" is a phrase used to describe a supply chain strategy that sees companies diversifying manufacturing and sourcing, by continuing operations in the mainland while also expanding into other countries. This approach aims to reduce risks linked to complete reliance on a single country's market or supply chain.

Spinning off that idea, Goyal thinks India can become an alternative place in the region for companies that want to diversify outside of Taiwan for semiconductors.

"We are encouraging [the] semiconductor industry in a big way. We started building up the ecosystem, which is essential before we can see more and more foundries coming into the country for the actual chip making," Goyal said.

"We expect the demand for semiconductor products to be about \$100 billion by 2030, and will grow exponentially thereafter," he said, adding that interest in India's semiconductor industry is expanding "by leaps and bounds."

India aims to establish itself as a major chips hub similar to the U.S., Taiwan, and South Korea, actively seeking foreign companies to set up their operations in the country.

Earlier this year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated three semiconductor plants, bringing the total count of plants under development

in India to four. One of those plants is a joint venture between Tata Electronics and Taiwan's Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp. The plant, which is set up in Dholera, Gujarat state, is expected to deliver its first batch of semiconductors by late 2025 or early 2026.

Asked if India can be Taiwan's "plus one" in the semiconductor space, Goyal said that his country's size, democracy and rule of law means it is a "safe harbor."

"It provides an alternative where you will always have a youthful population in life, huge demand, and you will have the rule of law to back it. I think that's a very compulsive case," he said.

The world recognizes that excessive concentration in any one region is fraught with serious risks, Goyal added.

India's chip strategy has two main components: attracting foreign companies to establish operations and invest in the country, as well as forming partnerships with other major semiconductor nations, such as the U.S. In 2021, the government approved a \$10 billion incentive program for the sector, which is also available to foreign companies.

As of 2024, Taiwan, the world's chipmaking powerhouse, is expected to hold around 44% of global market share, followed by China with 28% and South Korea with 12%, according to a report. The U.S. and Japan account for 6% and 2%, respectively.

The authors of the report, Taiwan consultancy Trendforce, said Taiwan's global capacity share in advanced manufacturing processes is expected to decrease to 40% by 2027, while South Korea's could see a 2% decline. In the same time period, China's is expected to increase by 3% to 31%. "When you see from the lens sitting outside the country, you don't realize how difficult it is to compete against a non-transparent economy," the minister continued, in reference to China.

### **China welcomes more Indian investments, ambassador says**

20 September 2024, Reuters

China would welcome more Indian investments and commodities in the Chinese market and also hopes that India will provide a "sound business environment" for Chinese firms in the country, Beijing's ambassador to India, Xu Feihong, said on Thursday.

The comments signal a willingness from Beijing to forge deeper economic ties with New Delhi that have been strained since a deadly clash between their troops on a Himalayan frontier in 2020.

India heightened scrutiny on Chinese investments after the clash and created new layers of red tape

for Indian firms with Chinese stakeholders. But the Indian government is now looking to loosen some of these restrictions as its firms struggle to scale up manufacturing.

Ambassador Xu, speaking at an event in New Delhi, said that China is also willing to advance cooperation with India on science and technology, and hopes India will take measures to resume direct flights and facilitate visas for Chinese citizens.

He said China would welcome more Indian commodities and investment by Indian enterprises, adding, "It is hoped that the Indian side could provide sound business environment for the Chinese enterprises in India".

China continues to be India's biggest source of goods and was the largest supplier of industrial products last year. India's trade gap with China fell briefly after the border clash but later doubled to \$85 billion as of March 2024.

### **Indian minister cites Tibet-border progress with China, cites a host of other difficulties in bilateral ties**

13 September 2024, Tibetan Review

India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said Sep 12 that roughly 75% of the "disengagement problems" with China in the eastern Ladakh border area with Chinese-ruled Tibet had been sorted out, citing this as a progress. However, he has added that the bigger issue remained the increasing militarization of the frontier and the complex relationship between the two sides on a host of other issues as well.

India's relations with China cannot become normal until peace and tranquillity is restored on the border between the two countries, thestatesman.com Sep 12 cited him as reiterating.

The minister has said the two countries had negotiated for the last four years in the aftermath of the Jun 2020 clashes in the Galwan Valley that killed 20 Indian troops.

That year, Jaishankar has said, China moved a large number of troops to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) "in violation of multiple agreements for some reason, which is not entirely clear to us".

So, "the first step to that (solving the border stand-off) is disengagement... We have made some progress. You can say roughly 75% of the disengagement problems have been sorted out," he has said.

He has said the border confrontation had affected the entirety of the bilateral relationship.

"Because, you cannot have violence at the border and say the rest of the relationship is insulated from it. Trade has got affected. The exchanges have gotten affected. It is not normal," theprint.in Sep 12

quoted him as saying, speaking with Jean David-Levitte, the former French permanent representative to the United Nations at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP), a think-tank.

Jaishankar was visiting Switzerland from Sep 12 to 13, following a two-day stop in Germany.

India took a series of measures after the Galwan Valley clash. It banned a large of Chinese apps in a series of announcements, including the highly popular and profitable short video app TikTok. It also tightened restrictions on Chinese investments in India. Besides, India is yet to lift the Covid-era restrictions of direct flights to China, while the number of visas issued to Chinese citizens has fallen to 5,500 in 2023 from nearly 2,00,000 in 2018, the report noted.

The minister has also called trade ties between India and China "very unfair," saying the imbalance was extremely high. In 2023-2024, India imported \$101.74 billion worth of goods from China, while exporting only about \$16.66 billion – nearly a \$85 billion deficit.

"We do not have the market access there. They have much better market access in India. We have concerns in various areas – in technology, telecommunications, digital. We also monitor what happens in the Indian Ocean," Jaishankar has added.

He has said any "radical change" of presence in the Indian Ocean would require India to scrutinize it under its "security calculus".

The external affairs minister indicated that the relationship could improve if there is a resolution to the border row. "We hope that if there is a solution to the disengagement and there is a return to peace and tranquillity, then we can look at other possibilities," firstpost.com Sep 12 quoted him as saying.

### **India, China agree to redouble efforts for complete disengagement along border**

12 September 2024, Reuters

India and China agreed to redouble efforts to ensure complete disengagement on the contested Himalayan frontier, New Delhi said on Thursday after India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval met China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Russia.

"Both sides agreed to work with urgency and redouble their efforts to realize complete disengagement in the remaining areas," the Indian government said in a statement.

### **China occupied land the size of Delhi in Ladakh': Rahul Gandhi makes big claim, attacks PM Modi**

11 September 2024, Business Today

Rahul Gandhi's claims that China has occupied Indian territory in Ladakh are not new.

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday made a huge claim regarding the occupation of land in Ladakh by Chinese troops. While attacking the Modi government, Gandhi said that the Chinese troops have occupied land the size of Delhi in Ladakh.

"Well, if you call having Chinese troops in 4,000 square kilometres of our territory handling something well, then maybe we've got Chinese troops occupying land the size of Delhi in Ladakh," Gandhi said while speaking at the National Press Club in Washington DC.

He went onto India's handling of the situation a "disaster". Claiming that the media does not question the government on the same, Gandhi asked: "How would America react if a neighbour occupied 4,000 sq kms of your territory? Would any president be able to get away with saying that he's handled that well?"

Rahul Gandhi also seized this opportunity to attack Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "So I don't think PM Modi handled China well at all. I see no reason why Chinese troops should be sitting in our territory," the Gandhi scion said.

Gandhi's claims that China has occupied Indian territory in Ladakh are not new. Last year, Rahul Gandhi accused PM Modi of lying to the opposition over the Indo-China border situation in Ladakh. He also repeated his claim that China has snatched Indian territory.

Modi told leaders of all political parties that neither has anyone entered nor is anyone present in Indian territory. The Prime Minister also told the leaders that no Indian post was captured.

Earlier this year, the Congress accused the Modi government of giving a "clean chit" to China and asserted that the encroachment will be halted decisively when the party comes to power.

At the time, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh claimed that the Prime Minister and Home Minister are denying that China has occupied around 2,000 sq km of Indian territory.

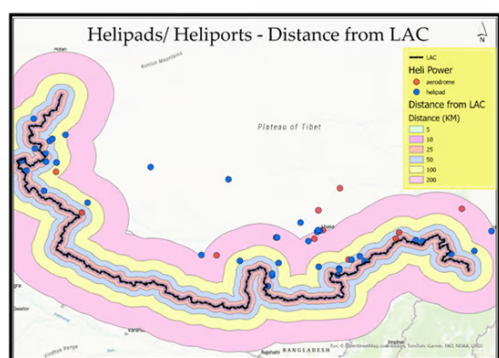
He further said the Chinese have taken over 26 out of 65 patrolling points in Ladakh, while adding that China has built complete villages 50-60 km deep inside Arunachal Pradesh. Ramesh said that this fact was confirmed by satellite imagery and the issue was also raised by BJP MP Tapir Gao in the Lok Sabha.

The statement came after Union Home Minister Amit Shah said that China could not encroach upon a "single inch" of land under the Modi dispensation.

He also claimed that people will never forget how former PM Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said "bye-bye" to Assam and Arunachal Pradesh during the 1962 Indo-China war.



Heliport in Lhasa



The figure above shows helipads/heliports and aerodromes located 5, 10, 25, 50, 100, and 200 km from the LAC. The spacing of these heliports highlights their strategic importance.

Heliport concentrations close to the LAC and other disputed regions highlight their importance in supporting ground operations and preserving a continuous military presence in disputed territory. Combining these heliports with other military installations, such as radar stations and Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) sites, can create a dense network of military capabilities that can be rapidly mobilised in response to any border escalation.

These heliports' proximity to the Indian border allows the PLA to quickly deploy hop-on, hop-off forces in case of a confrontation, matching Indian defences in high-altitude locations with supply lines and logistics. Over the years, China may have a significant advantage over its neighbours if it keeps constructing such infrastructure at this rate. This underscores China's long-term approach to defending its territorial claims and establishing hegemony by incorporating these heliports in a more extensive military infrastructure network.

These advances will impact the strategic calculus in the Himalayan borderlands, serving as a sobering reminder of how the threat is changing for India along its northern front. As the PLA keeps improving its capacity in Tibet, India must react with similar steps to guarantee it is ready to handle the difficulties

presented by China's growing military presence in the Himalayas.

An under-construction heliport near Qugaer Jiamu, located northeast of Pangong Tso Lake.

## India has to change its policy if it wants to attract more Chinese investment: China Daily editorial

11 September 2024, China Daily

There have been positive signs of improving China-India economic relations recently, as evidenced by Indian officials talking about easing restrictions on Chinese investment, and New Delhi making moves to expedite visa approvals for Chinese technicians.

Rajeev Chandrasekhar, India's minister of state for electronics and information technology, said recently that his country is "open" to investments from China, while Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said "we are not closed to business from China".

New Delhi has also launched a new portal to streamline the issuing of business visas for Chinese technicians whose expertise is key to India's manufacturing facilities that use Chinese machinery. These developments are encouraging considering how trade and investment between the two giant neighbors have been disrupted due to the restrictive measures New Delhi adopted after a deadly clash between the two countries' border troops in June 2020.

Since then, India has banned hundreds of Chinese apps including TikTok on the grounds of addressing national security concerns, and launched so-called regulatory investigations against major Chinese high-tech companies such as Xiaomi and Oppo.

The crackdown has disrupted the previously good economic relations India had with China.

The seeming softening of attitude by New Delhi toward Chinese investment may have been made out of expediency, as declining foreign investment is likely to pose a challenge to India's economic ambition to become a developed country by the middle of this century.

Foreign direct investment in India plummeted by more than 40 percent to \$28 billion last year, according to a report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, compared with an annual average of around \$40 billion in recent years. Analysts attributed the decline in FDI inflows to red tape and India's discriminatory economic policies.

Yet a recent survey by India's chief economic adviser suggested that boosting FDI inflows from China in nonsensitive sectors such as solar panels and battery manufacturing, where India lacks expertise, "appears more advantageous than relying on trade" for its economy to achieve sustained growth.



India's exports to China, its largest trading partner, stood at \$16.65 billion last year, while imports from the country reached \$101.75 billion, leaving a trade deficit of more than \$85 billion.

Despite the tensions in bilateral relations and India's curbs on Chinese investment, China continues to play an irreplaceable role in India's economic development. For example, China has remained the biggest supplier of components and parts for the development of India's booming electronic and automobile industries, hallmarks of India's economic success. All this attests to the resilience and potential of economic and trade cooperation between the two countries.

China views India as an important investment destination and has expressed interest in expanding its investment footprint in various sectors in India, and it continues to promote and encourage bilateral investment cooperation between the two countries.

Increased trade and investment from China can help boost India's economy. However, despite the increasing calls to attract more investment from China, India's Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal insisted there is no "rethinking" to support Chinese investments in the country.

Since the two countries are not rivals or threats to each other but partners in cooperation and development, creating opportunities for each other benefits both sides.

New Delhi should work to strengthen its economic partnership with China, and provide a fair, just, transparent and nondiscriminatory business environment for Chinese investment.

### **Indian foreign minister Jaishankar says "not closed to business from China"**

10 September 2024, Reuters

India is not "closed to business from China", but the issue is in which sectors the country does business with Beijing and on what terms, foreign minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said in Berlin on Tuesday. Ties between the nuclear-armed Asian giants have been strained since clashes between their troops on their largely undemarcated Himalayan frontier left 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers dead in 2020.

India subsequently tightened its scrutiny of investments from Chinese companies and halted major projects.

However, government officials, including Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, have recently backed suggestions to allow more Chinese investment in the country.

The latest annual economic survey released in July suggests that to boost its global exports, India can either integrate into China's supply chain or promote foreign direct investment (FDI) from China.

"We are not closed to business from China...I think the issue is, which sectors do you do business and what terms do you do business? It's far more complicated than a black and white binary answer," Jaishankar said at a conference in Berlin.

Reuters reported in July that India could ease restrictions on Chinese investment in non-sensitive sectors such as solar panels and battery manufacturing where New Delhi lacks expertise and which hinders domestic manufacturing.

Diplomatic and military talks to end the military standoff in the Himalayas have made slow progress.

Along with investments scrutiny, India has also virtually blocked visas for all Chinese nationals since 2020, but it is considering easing them for Chinese technicians, as it had hindered investments worth billions of dollars.

### **Mere painting of marks does not mean China encroached our land: Rijiju**

09 September 2024, Business Standard

The union minister's comments came amidst reports that the PLA allegedly entered inside Indian territory in the Anjaw district of Arunachal Pradesh last week and they were camping in the Kapapu area



But we will not allow anyone to come near the Line of Actual Control: Union Minister Kiren Rijiju | (Photo: PTI)

Amidst reports of incursion by China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) in Arunachal Pradesh, Union Minister Kiren Rijiju on Monday said the mere painting of marks in undemarcated locations doesn't mean the areas have been encroached upon.

Rijiju, who hails from Arunachal Pradesh, also said that overlapping of patrolling by Indian and Chinese forces does take place in the undemarcated areas along the Sino-Indian border but that does not lead to encroachment of Indian territory.

The union minister's comments came amidst reports that the PLA allegedly entered inside Indian territory in the Anjaw district of Arunachal Pradesh last week and they were camping in the Kapapu area of the district for some time.



Pictures of bonfires, painting of rocks and Chinese food materials found at the site have been shared on social media, the reports said.

"China can't take our land. Overlapping of patrolling does take place in the undemarcated areas. They are not allowed to construct anything permanent. There is strict vigil from our side. Mere painting of marks in undemarcated locations doesn't mean the areas have been encroached on," Rijiju told PTI here.

The union minister said India has been building infrastructure along the border and that will continue.

"But we will not allow anyone to come near the Line of Actual Control," he said.

The latest incident came at a time when the Indian army continues to engage in a stand-off with the PLA in Ladakh. The stand-off has been going on since April 2020.

India shares a 3,400 km-long Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh. China continues to claim that Arunachal Pradesh has "always been" its territory, a claim India termed as "absurd" and "ludicrous".

China, which terms Arunachal Pradesh as South Tibet, routinely objects to Indian leaders' visits to the state to highlight its claims. Beijing has also named the area as Zangnan.

India has repeatedly rejected China's territorial claims over Arunachal Pradesh, asserting that the state is an integral part of the country.

New Delhi has also dismissed Beijing's move to assign "invented" names to the area, saying it did not alter the reality.

## August

### Foreign minister Jaishankar underlines India's special problem with China

31 August 2024, Tibetan Review

India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has on Aug 31 noted that there is a general China problem being debated in many countries of the world, and India is not the only one facing issues with it. However, India's problems with China are particularly significant, extending beyond the shared concerns of the international community, [timesofindia.com](https://timesofindia.com) Aug 31 cited Jaishankar as saying during a conversation with Pranab Dhal Samanta at the ET World Leaders Forum in Delhi.

"There is a general China problem, apart from our own difficult situation in the border. We are not the only country in the world which is having a debate about China. Go to Europe, and ask them what is today among your major economic or national

security debates? It's about China. Look at the United States (of America). It's obsessed with China, and rightly so in many ways. So, the fact is let's not make out as though it's only India which has a China problem." Elaborating on it further, Jaishankar has said, "Decades ago the world decided to overlook problems in China. Now everyone has a problem. India has a special China problem, over and above the world's China problem. Because there is a general problem, apart from our border situation, the sensible thing to do is take precautions which a country like India should be taking."

He has said one of these precautions is to scrutinize Chinese investments in India.

"It has never been the government's position that we should not be having investments from China or doing business with China. But on the investment issue it is common sense that investments from China would be scrutinized. I think the border, and the state of relations between India and China call for it."

And he has stressed the importance of carefully examining investments originating from China before granting approval. He has noted that even countries without shared borders with China are subjecting Chinese investments to increased scrutiny, although the level of examination may vary.

The minister emphasized the delicate balance between economic considerations and national security, remarking, "There is a thin line between economics and national security in most cases," reported [business.bbc.com](https://business.bbc.com) in Aug 31.

The minister's remarks came as both India and China spoke positively about the atmospherics of the 31st meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation & Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) which was held in Beijing on Aug 29 and their desires and goals. However, India again differed from China by its insistence that normalizing the border situation was prerequisite for resuming normal overall ties.

China and India held six rounds of WMCC meetings on border affairs in 2020 following the Galwan Valley border skirmish on Jun 15, 2020. Except for that year, since the first WMCC meeting on border affairs started in 2012, the two sides have held WMCC meetings on border affairs one to three times a year, China's official [globaltimes.cn](https://globaltimes.cn) Aug 31 cited analysts as saying. It cited the analysts as also saying that the recent frequent interactions signalled that both sides were actively seeking to accelerate a resolution to the border standoff and to get bilateral relations back on track.

## India, China discuss situation along LAC to narrow down differences and find resolutions

29 August 2024, Times Of India

The ministry of external affairs said that India and China held a discussion over the situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) on Thursday and decided to jointly uphold peace and tranquillity on the ground. MEA said that a 'frank, constructive and forward-looking exchange of views' took place at the 31st meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation & Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) in Beijing.

The Indian delegation was led by Gourangalal Das, joint secretary (East Asia) while the Chinese delegation was led by Hong Liang, director general of the boundary & ocean affairs department of the Chinese ministry of foreign affairs. The two sides narrowed down their differences and sought to find early resolution of the outstanding issues. For this, they further agreed for intensified contact through diplomatic and military channels.

### Indian solar panels face US scrutiny for possible links to China forced labor

27 August 2024, Reuters, Lewis Jackson and Nichola Groom

U.S. Customs and Border Protection has detained nearly \$43 million in shipments of electronics equipment from India since October under a 2022 law banning goods made with forced labor, according to agency data, representing a new focus for the trade enforcement agency.

While CBP does not specify what types of electronic equipment it has detained, polysilicon, a raw material in solar panels, is identified as a high-priority sector in the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA), and solar panels have historically made up most of the stopped shipments in that category, according to industry sources.

The CBP did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The law bans goods made in China's Xinjiang region where Chinese authorities are reported to have established labor camps for ethnic Uyghur and other Muslim groups.

China denies any abuses.

No Indian electronics shipments were detained under the UFLPA in previous years.

Nearly a third of the detained Indian electronics shipments were denied, according to CBP. By comparison, just 5.4% of shipments from top U.S. solar component suppliers Malaysia, Vietnam and Thailand were denied entry over that period.

The Indian detentions represent a small share of the

\$3 billion in electronics shipments CBP has stopped at the border under the UFLPA in the last two years.

But they are a setback for Indian producers seeking to cast themselves as an alternative for U.S. solar project developers weary of navigating tariffs and UFLPA enforcement delays on panels made by mainly Chinese companies.

"If the solar cells for Indian panels are coming from China, then there is likely a good reason why detentions of Indian products may be increasing," said Tim Brightbill, a trade attorney with Wiley Rein LLP. "My sense is that Customs and Border Protection did not realize for a while that many Indian solar panels contained Chinese solar cells, and therefore the UFLPA risks were (and are) high."

Imports of solar products from India have soared in recent years, hitting \$2.3 billion last year, according to

U.S. trade data.

In the second quarter of 2024, India accounted for 11% of U.S. panel imports, more than double its share in the previous quarter, according to S&P Global Market Intelligence.

As recently as 2018, the U.S. was not importing any solar panels from India.

The increased scrutiny of Indian shipments is a reflection of the border agency's recent efforts to broaden UFLPA enforcement beyond just the biggest China-based solar panel makers, which have replaced their Chinese polysilicon suppliers with sources from the United States and Europe in a bid to avoid their shipments being detained, according to a trade attorney.

"Indian module manufacturers found an opportunity to import more at a time when the Chinese manufacturers were being held up because of UFLPA," Richard Mojica, a trade attorney with Miller & Chevalier in Washington said.

Waaree Technologies (WAAR.BO), opens new tab and Adani Enterprises (ADEL.NS), opens new tab are the top Indian solar suppliers to the U.S. market.

A spokesperson for Adani confirmed that some of its shipments had been detained and that all had been released.

"This outcome reaffirms that our products imported into the U.S. fully comply with UFLPA regulations, reinforcing customer confidence in the quality, reliability and legal adherence of our products and manufacturing," the spokesperson said.

Waaree did not respond to requests for comment. Following the guidance from two foreign ministers' meetings in Astana and Vientiane in July 2024, both sides engaged with a goal to narrow down differences and find an early resolution to outstanding issues. To achieve this, they decided to intensify contact through both

diplomatic and military channels. "In the meantime, they decided to jointly uphold peace and tranquillity on the ground in border areas in accordance with relevant bilateral agreements, protocols and understandings reached between the two Governments. It was reiterated that restoration of peace and tranquility, and respect for LAC are the essential basis for restoration of normalcy in bilateral relations," MEA said in a press release. Additionally, the leader of the Indian delegation called on the vice minister in the Chinese ministry of foreign affairs. This meeting builds upon the previous WMCC meeting held last month.

### **Ladakh herders seek mechanism for return of yaks straying across Tibet border**

20 August 2024, Tibetan Review

Villagers in Ladakh have rounded up yaks that had strayed from across the Tibetan side of the international border but there is no mechanism for returning them, or getting back their own herd that had previously strayed to the other side, reported greaterkashmir.com Aug 19.

Konchok Stanzin, a politician and a former executive Councillor for Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, has tweeted that these yaks, numbering 40, from Tibet were found on Dzomolung Demchok valley. He has on Aug 19 posted videos and pictures which he said were of "Chinese" yaks that had strayed to the Indian side.

Konchok Stanzin has said that people from the Indian side in Ladakh too had lost their yaks some years ago, after they strayed into Tibet, but never got them back. He has urged the governments of India and China to initiate a mechanism that would facilitate the returning of these animals.

### **Jaishankar says China, Pakistan not invited to join Voice of Global South summit**

18 August 2024, Hindustan Times

India's relations with China and Pakistan are currently at an all-time low, and both countries were also not part of the 2 earlier Voice of Global South Summits. China and Pakistan were not part of the Voice of Global South Summit hosted virtually by India on Saturday, and the meeting was joined by leaders and ministers of 123 countries to discuss key challenges facing developing countries.

Several countries raised the conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine during the day-long summit, external affairs minister S Jaishankar told a media briefing. The countries that raised the situation in Gaza expressed

concern at the civilian casualties and emphasised the need to put in place a ceasefire and resume negotiations, he said.

Responding to questions, Jaishankar said both China and Pakistan were not invited to the third edition of the summit hosted by India. In the case of China, he said, "Were they invited, the answer is no."

India's relations with China and Pakistan are currently at an all-time low, and both countries were also not part of the two earlier Voice of Global South Summits held last year.

The summit was joined by a total of 123 countries, including India. Twenty-one countries participated in the leaders' session, while 118 ministers joined various sessions devoted to issues such as digital, trade, and health. A total of 34 countries participated in the two sessions for foreign ministers. The issue of reforming the United Nations also figured in the summit, with Jaishankar saying there is a need to reconcile many different ideas for the proposed reforms and then give UN members the ability to make a choice. There should be text-based negotiations, and countries should be allowed to vote on the future of the UN, he said.

"We are not going to get perfect unity among 190 odd countries in the world...nor do we expect it...We feel that process has been unduly and unfairly blocked," Jaishankar said.

With India's capabilities and economic heft set to grow, the country will have to cope with more responsibilities and expectations, especially from countries of the Global South, he said.

### **China Threatens To Snatch Disputed Areas On India- China Border, Indo-Pacific Using PLA-Backed 'Civilian Soldiers'**

16 August 2024, The EurAsian Times

China, the world's second-most populous nation, is advancing its global ambitions through land and sea

strategies. These efforts aim to expand territory and increase trade dominance without resorting to direct conflict. A key aspect of this approach involves using civilian forces as indirect support for military objectives.

Known for its expansionist policies, China is not only focused on becoming a world superpower but is also strategizing on how to seize neighboring lands without engaging in direct conflict. To achieve this, the Chinese military takes indirect support from civilian forces, who are often used as a shield by the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

Examples of this include the "Xiaokang" border defense villages and the Maritime Militia, which are nontraditional forces involved in gray-zone

operations. These operations—employing nontraditional methods to achieve security objectives without provoking armed conflict—are frequently discussed in military literature. Let’s explore in detail how civilian forces are used to support China’s military efforts on both land and sea.

#### Border Defense On Land: “Xiaokang” Villages

On its land borders, particularly along the disputed Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Middle and Eastern sectors of the India-China border, China has implemented the “Xiaokang” border defense village initiative.

The term “Xiaokang” translates to “moderately prosperous.” The Xiaokang initiative is designed to populate the 21 Himalayan border counties, including Nyingchi, Shannan, Shigatse, and Ngari prefectures. The plan includes the construction of new Xiaokang houses, infrastructure, and public service facilities in these areas to strengthen and enrich the border regions of Tibet.

This initiative involves villages in Tibet, including Zhuangnan, Yarao, Kuiqiongmen, and Majiduncun, which commonly feature military or dual-use facilities. Notably, the Xiaokang border plan seeks to populate these areas with individuals loyal to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), creating a civilian border force through China’s military-civilian fusion strategy, which has been increasingly emphasized under Xi Jinping’s leadership.

Over the past five years, China has developed more than 600 villages along its border with India in the Tibet Autonomous Region. Since 2019, China has been building villages along the LAC, and while many of these were initially unoccupied, they have recently seen new residents.

Some of these villages are located along the LAC, opposite the Lohit Valley and the Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh, a region administered by India but largely claimed by China as “South Tibet.” By populating and re-populating these border areas, China appears to be strengthening its territorial claims by establishing a “settled population” in disputed regions.

China is rapidly upgrading these dual-use villages along disputed borders. New roads and what may become small security outposts are being constructed between these remote villages. Given China’s focus on military-civilian fusion, these Xiaokang border villages are expected to serve as forward posts for troop deployment.

The extensive network of roads and the active civilian force near the border would function as a defense force, providing resources and support in the event of border skirmishes, effectively turning these villages into extended troop cantonments near the LAC. These villages, often accompanied by military and dual-use infrastructure, serve as a “Gray Zone” tool

for China to assert and defend its claims in disputed areas. Commercial satellite images reveal the rapid and significant progress China is making in these border villages despite the harsh environment.

Media reports indicate that these complexes include barracks, perimeter walls, and radome/communications towers, suggesting the likely presence of China’s military, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). It is also possible that these facilities are operated by the paramilitary People’s Armed Police (PAP). Under China’s Land Borders Law, both the PLA and PAP share responsibility for defending China’s borders from armed attacks or other encroachments. Maritime Strategy: The Maritime Militia

At sea, China employs its Maritime Militia to support the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) in asserting territorial claims, particularly in the South China Sea. The Maritime Militia is often described as a shadowy armada, a fleet of vessels that appear to be ordinary fishing boats but can mobilize for military purposes. The Maritime Militia has existed for decades, but under President Xi Jinping’s leadership, it has become more professional, better equipped, and increasingly militarized. Officially, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) defines its militia as “an armed mass organization composed of civilians retaining their regular jobs,” serving as a component of China’s armed forces and an “auxiliary and reserve force” of the PLA. The Maritime Militia operates independently of the PLA Navy and China Coast Guard (CCG). It consists of citizens working in the marine economy who receive training from the PLA and CCG to perform tasks such as border patrol, surveillance, reconnaissance, maritime transportation, search and rescue, and supporting naval operations during wartime.

The Maritime Militia is composed of two main forces. The first is a ‘Professional Fleet’ of at least 100 purpose-built boats that appear to be fishing vessels but are stronger and equipped with military-grade technology.

The second fleet, known as ‘The Spratly Backbone Fishing Vessels’ (SBFV), consists of actual fishing boats drafted into China’s missions. These boats operate out of ports in Hainan and Guangdong. The professional fleet can fish when needed, but they often remain inactive and then cluster together at disputed locations. SBFV crews receive lucrative government fuel subsidies for militia missions.

The United States, a treaty ally of the Philippines, has repeatedly accused China’s Maritime Militia of violating international law to enforce China’s expansive and unlawful maritime claims. By deploying vessels in groups, China seeks to challenge the rules of freedom of navigation, bolster

its maritime claims, secure vital resources, and extend its economic influence globally.

China's overtly civilian distant-water fishing (DWF) fleets, affiliated to varying degrees with government agencies, have come under growing international scrutiny. These fleets are often visible on satellite tracking platforms, swarming around disputed areas. Crews in both the professional and SBFV fleets are believed to include civilian fishers, sailors, and ex-military personnel recruited through Chinese government training programs. When engaged in militia activities rather than genuine fishing, these vessels typically operate with smaller crews of about five to six members, according to The Guardian report. According to a research report published by International Law Studies, China's Maritime Militia is a key instrument for peacetime power projection in the region, particularly as it guards China's audacious maritime claim to over 90 percent of the South China Sea.

The philosophical foundation of this militia lies in the concept of the "people's war," which integrates civilian and military sectors. China believes that using a civilian militia composed of fishing vessels is a less provocative way to advance its strategic goal of regional hegemony.

During armed conflict, these vessels could conduct reconnaissance, gather intelligence for the PLAN, and engage in military deception, jamming, sealift, ship repair, and emergency rescue. The militia is also armed and may participate in more challenging maritime security operations, such as boarding foreign-flagged fishing vessels in contested waters.

#### Military-Civil Fusion Strategy

Both the Xiaokang villages and Maritime Militia exemplify China's "military-civil fusion" strategy, which aims to integrate civilian and military sectors for national objectives.

This approach is formalized in China's Land Borders Law, which emphasizes the role of local governments and civilian populations in border defense and security and urges them to "strengthen the construction of mass defense forces to maintain border security."

A 2021 article in the official PLA Daily highlights the importance of enhancing border infrastructure and encouraging people of all ethnic groups to settle in border areas, protect their homeland, and develop their communities. This focus on integrating civilian villages into the military framework is a clear example of China's "military-civil fusion" strategy, which seeks to merge the country's economic and military development to advance national objectives. Through these initiatives, China seeks to advance its territorial ambitions and global influence while minimizing the risk of direct military confrontation. This strategy represents a significant challenge to

neighboring countries and international norms in both land and maritime domains.

### Message to China? PM Modi says India's progress doesn't come with crisis for anyone, we are land of Buddha

15 August 2024, First Post

In his Independence Day address, without making any specific references, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India will 'defeat all those with bad intentions with our good intentions'

India's progress does not come with any crisis for anyone and the world shouldn't be concerned about the country's growing strength, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday against the backdrop of geopolitical turbulences in various parts of the world.

In his Independence Day speech from the ramparts of the iconic Red Fort, Modi said India is facing "countless" challenges both "within and outside" and that the country will neither "falter nor get tired" in dealing with them.

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Without making any specific references, he said India will "defeat all those with bad intentions with our good intentions." "There are challenges within as well as outside. As we become stronger and our influence increases, the challenges too will increase," he said. "The challenges from outside will increase but I want to tell everyone that India's progress does not bring crisis for anyone," he said.

"We are the land of the Buddha, war is not our path and because of this, the world shouldn't be concerned about India's progress," he said.

"I assure the world community that you should understand India's traditions and its history of thousands of years, don't think of us as a crisis." The prime minister said there should not be any concern over the country's development.

"I want to tell the countrymen that no matter how many challenges we face, it is in the nature of India to challenge the challenge," Modi said.

"We will neither falter, nor get tired, nor stop, nor bow down. We will leave no stone unturned to fulfil our resolutions, to change the fate of 140 crore countrymen, to realise the dreams of the nation.

"I assure you that we will defeat all those with bad intentions with our good intentions," Modi said without elaborating.

Modi's remarks came against the backdrop of India's frosty ties with China following the border row in eastern Ladakh that erupted in 2020.

#### Advertisement



The prime minister spoke about the situation in Bangladesh. But his address was largely devoid of any other foreign policy issues.

### **Eye on China & Pakistan, India fast-tracks deal for 31 US 'hunter-killer' drones**

14 August 2024, Times Of India, Rajat Pandit

With both China and Pakistan bolstering their fleets of armed drones, India is fast-tracking negotiations for the acquisition of 31 weaponised MQ-9B 'hunter-killer' remotely-piloted aircraft from the US, with the somewhat ambitious aim to ink the mega deal by November-December this year.

Techno-commercial discussions for the inter-governmental contract for the 31 armed high-altitude, long endurance drones "are in an advanced stage now", with 15 Sea Guardians earmarked for Navy and

8 Sky Guardians each for Army and IAF, defence ministry sources told TOI.

This comes at a time when China, which continues the military confrontation in eastern Ladakh for the fifth year running now, has stepped-up supplies of its armed Cai Hong-4 and Wing Loong-II drones to Pakistan. "Pakistan has sought 16 more armed CH-4 drones from China. It already has seven CH-4 drones in the Army and 3 in Navy," a source said. The MQ-9B Reaper or Predator-B drones, designed to fly for around 40 hours at altitudes over 40,000-feet for surveillance and armed with Hellfire air-to-ground missiles and smart bombs for precision strikes, are considered far superior to Chinese armed drones.

The operational utility of the MQ-9B drones has been reinforced by extensive ISR (intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance) missions being undertaken by the two unarmed Sea Guardian drones – taken on lease from US firm General Atomics – both over the vast Indian Ocean Region (IOR) as well as along the 3,488- km Line of Actual Control with China. While the US has put a price tag of \$3.9 billion (over Rs 33,500 crore) for the 31 weaponised MQ-9B drones and associated equipment, including 170 Hellfire

missiles, 310 GBU-39B precision-guided glide bombs, navigation systems, sensor suites and mobile ground control systems, the Indian negotiating team is working to bring the costs down.

"The price and terms offered by the US govt and General Atomics to other countries is being taken into account. All efforts are underway to conclude the deal within this calendar year after the final nod from the cabinet committee on security," a source said. Under the deal, the drones will be assembled in India, while General Atomics will also source some components from Indian companies as well as set up

a global MRO (maintenance, repair, overhaul) facility here.

"Since General Atomics cannot give transfer of technology for the varied sub-systems it sources from other companies, it will provide expertise and consultancy to DRDO and other entities to develop such advanced drones indigenously," the source said. The armed forces hope to induct the first 10 MQ-9B drones within a couple of years of the contract being inked, though it will depend on General Atomics' production capacity. The rest will come in batches every six months.

The plan is to deploy the fighter-size drones at ISR command and control centres at Arakkonam and Porbandar for the Indian Ocean region and Sarsawa and Gorakhpur for the land borders. "With their long- distance hunting and killing capabilities, such drones are required at a time when China's naval forays into the IOR are only going to increase further," an officer said.

### **Minor Indian-Chinese troops skirmish along Ladakh border reported**

13 August 2024, Tibetan Review

It is not clear how often skirmishes are taking place between the two sides along the Tibet-India border Line of Actual Control (LAC), if at all. However, one reported incident has taken place on Aug 12 morning in the Burtse area in the Durbuk Sector of Ladakh.

Sticks were used freely by both sides during the confrontation that took place at 4 am, reported thestatesman.com Aug 12.

The trouble started with the Chinese troops reportedly burning two RCC (Reinforced Cement Concrete) huts on the Indian side of the LAC. This was followed by a faceoff between the Indian and PLA troops of China, the report said.

The minor skirmish was stated to have taken place near the LAC pillar point 12 while India was replacing an Armoured Battalion from the area.

Tension has been prevailing between the Indian and Chinese Armies since Jun 2020 when troops from the two sides got engaged in a brutal physical

confrontation without the use of firearms in the Galwan valley. It resulted in the death of 20 Indian soldiers. China belatedly admitted that four of its soldiers died, although intelligence reports said the figure was much higher.

India and China have held at least 20 rounds of military talks and 13 rounds of foreign office led discussions but there is no let-up in the tensions, the report said.

## China, Pakistan Try To Derail India, G4 Nations' UN Security Council Bid

13 August 2024, NDTV

China's Permanent Representative Fu Cong also threw in criticism against India and the G4, saying that there were "a few countries and interest groups who pursue their own selfish and small-circle interests when it comes to Council reform".

The lack of adequate geographic representation in the UN Security Council is responsible for its failures, and giving Africa permanent membership will be essential to make the highest decision-making body effective, R. Ravindra, charge d'affaires of India's UN mission has said.

Speaking on behalf of the G-4, the group of India, Brazil, Germany and Japan, on Monday at an open debate of the Council on reforming itself, he said, "A primary reason for the underperformance of this critical institution remains the non-representation of Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and the under-representation of Asia-Pacific in the permanent category".

"We are convinced that African representation in both permanent and non-permanent categories will be an indispensable part of UNSC reform for a more representative and effective Council," he said.

The meeting of the Council was convened by Sierra Leone, which holds the rotating presidency, to push Africa's case for reforming the Council to give the continent better representation.

Sierra Leone's President Julius Maada Bio said, "Despite being home to over 1.3 billion people, and the 54 African countries making up 28 per cent of the total membership of the UN," Africa continues to suffer from the historic injustice of being deprived of permanent seats at the Council.

"Nearly 80 years after its creation, the Council has been stuck in time" – 1945 when the UN was created while most of Africa was under the colonial yoke perpetuating the injustice, he said.

"Africa demands two permanent seats in the UN Security Council and two additional non-permanent seats" to the existing three, he said.

Mr Ravindra said, "We as G-4 continue to support fully these legitimate demands and aspirations from the people of Africa" and its relationship with the continent "is anchored in trust and mutual respect and is focused on ensuring that Africa finds its rightful place in a new age of reformed multilateralism".

"It is also inconceivable that Africa which constitutes over 70 per cent of the UNSC's agenda items under discussions, does not get a permanent voice at the horse-shoe table" at the Council chamber, he said.

Mr Ravindra said the Inter-governmental Negotiations (IGN) for Council reforms should expedite text-based negotiations so that it can

proceed with the reform process in time for the 80th anniversary of the UN next year.

He said that at the summit of G-20 last year under India's leadership, Africa was given membership in the group of the major industrialised and emerging economies, which was also noted by Bio.

Bio said that Africa's claim should be treated as a "special case" and given priority in reforming the Council in time for the 80th anniversary next year.

Many speakers at the meeting also emphasised Africa's case for special expedited treatment in the reform process mired for decades by opposition by a small group of countries that call themselves Uniting for Consensus (UfC) hoping to detach the continent from the controversies involving other countries.

India, its G4 partners that work together to expand the Council, and other countries have counted on Africa's case for reform to break the stalemate.

But the calls for treating Africa as a "special case" ahead of the Summit of the Future in September and the UN's 80th anniversary next year seek to make the reform a piecemeal effort – if it happens at all.

Marco Romiti, a Minister Counsellor in the UN Mission of Italy which heads the UfC, spoke out against adding more permanent members.

Munir Akram, the permanent representative of Pakistan, which is also a member of UfC, opposed expanding permanent membership but said that Africa can be considered a special case and be given long-term seats in the Council.

But he, too, was firm against adding permanent members.

Bio was asked outside the Council chamber at his meeting with the media how he hoped to overcome the UfC opposition.

He said Africa has a very compelling case and that is what we are pushing for.

"We don't consider the opposition," he said. "We have a genuine case and that is what we are pushing. We know that there are others ... it is a total reform, but we are talking for Africa".

He said he was confident that it was only a matter of time before Africa got its due.

"The gatekeepers will find it difficult to let us in, but as you can see, there is already willingness and as you can see we are gradually inching towards the next steps in order to be able to reach our goal," he said.

Mr Akram took a dig at India and the G4 saying, "Africa is critically different from the demand of four states for permanent membership for themselves".

China's Permanent Representative Fu Cong also threw in criticism against India and the G4, saying that there were "a few countries and interest groups who pursue their own selfish and small-circle interests when it comes to Council reform".

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that the "cracks" in the Council's "foundation are becoming too large to ignore".

"They are contributing to deadlock, stalemate and stagnation around today's most pressing crises and they are feeding a broader crisis of credibility and legitimacy that is affecting multilateralism itself," he said.

"We cannot accept that the world's preeminent peace and security body lacks a permanent voice for a continent of well over a billion people – a young and rapidly growing population – making up 28 per cent of the membership of the United Nations," he said.

### **Civil 'guardians': China quietly builds villages near border with India, other countries to press territorial claims**

10 August 2024, Money Control

The New York Times conducted a comprehensive mapping and analysis of settlements along China's border to create the first detailed visual depiction of how China has strategically transformed its frontier regions through the establishment of civilian outposts. On a once empty land nestled deep within the Himalayas, Chinese officials built 'Qionglin New Village' and paid people to move there from other settlements, according to a report by The New York Times. It lies a mere three miles from a contentious zone.

This nearby area has become a flashpoint of tension, with substantial military deployments and confrontations between Chinese and Indian forces fueling apprehensions of an impending border conflict.

Xi Jinping, the President of China, calls people living in these areas as "border guardians". The villagers of Qionglin serve as de facto guardians on the periphery of China's territorial assertion over Arunachal Pradesh, India's easternmost state, the NYT report added.

Qionglin is only one of many such villages that have surfaced recently.

The New York Times conducted a comprehensive mapping and analysis of settlements along China's border to create the first detailed visual depiction of how China has strategically transformed its frontier regions through the establishment of civilian outposts.

"The mapping reveals that China has put at least one village near every accessible Himalayan pass that borders India, as well as on most of the passes bordering Bhutan and Nepal," according to Matthew Akester, an independent researcher on Tibet, and Robert Barnett, a professor from SOAS University of London, reported NYT.

These civilian settlements serve a dual purpose. They provide critical infrastructure – roads, internet connectivity, and electricity – that could facilitate rapid military deployment to the border if needed. Additionally, the villagers act as eyes and ears in these remote regions, deterring intrusions and potential defectors.

India, meanwhile, has launched its own initiative dubbed "Vibrant Villages Programme." This program seeks to reinvigorate hundreds of settlements along the frontier.

Last year, the government had approved Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP) as a centrally sponsored scheme for comprehensive development of select villages in 46 blocks in 19 districts of abutting northern border in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand and UT of Ladakh.

Last month, Union home minister Amit Shah reviewed the implementation of the 'Vibrant Villages Programme' at a high-level meeting in the national capital and stressed the need to provide employment opportunities to local residents as well as increase connectivity to prevent migration from border villages. Amit Shah further emphasized that the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) and Army deployed around the border villages should encourage the purchase of local agricultural and handicraft products through cooperatives, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said in a statement.

### **China still to acknowledge having custody of 2 Arunachal men missing from border for nearly 2 years**

04 August 2024, Tibetan Review

Two men from the state of Arunachal Pradesh missing for nearly two years from a remote location along India's border with Chinese ruled Tibet are still untraceable. They are believed – in fact, known – to be in the custody of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), which has so far not acknowledged having them in custody, reported the PTI news agency Aug 4.

Batelum Tikro (35) and his cousin Bainsi Manyu (37) went missing from the Chaglagam area in Anjaw district on Aug 19, 2022 while looking for medicinal herbs at a high altitude area. They never returned home and could not be traced.

"I have come to know that they were detained by the Chinese army," Mr Tikro's brother Dishanso Chikro has told PTI over phone.

Chikro has said he approached the local army authorities several times seeking information about his brothers.

"I am told that the issue was raised by the Indian Army with their Chinese counterparts. But no response has come so far," he has said.

"The Chinese side has not yet acknowledged that the youths are in their custody. But I am told that they are still alive," Anjaw MLA and State's Women and Child Development Minister Dasanglu Pul has said.

Mr Chikro had also lodged two missing-person complaints at the local Hayuliang police station saying, "Some fellow villagers might have last seen them at border areas on Aug 24, 2022", adding, "but since then there has been no sign of the whereabouts of the duo".

Mr Tikro, who belongs to Doiliang, is unmarried while Manyu, who hails from Many Chiprogam of Anjaw district, is married and has two very young children. "I have no idea what was the response of the Chinese side at the flag meetings (when the matter was raised). The parents of the men keep telling us to do something. But we are helpless so far. We hope that they will return home safe and soon," Anjaw district Zila Parishad Chairman Soblem Pul has said.

While this is not the first time residents of Arunachal Pradesh have gone missing along the border or been detained by China's PLA, in most cases, such people returned home after a few days or weeks, the report noted.

This is the first time persons missing along the border have not returned home for almost two years.

India shares a 3,400-km-long Line of Actual Control (LAC) with Chinese occupied Tibet, from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh.

India has repeatedly rejected China's claim that Arunachal Pradesh is southern (or south) Tibet and part of its territory.

### **China ready to work with India to bridge gap between people of the two countries: Chinese diplomat**

02 August 2024, The Hindu

Recently Indian Coast Guard and Indian Navy jointly rescued a Chinese mariner.

Chinese Consul General in Mumbai Kong Xianhua has said his country is ready to work with India to bridge the gap between the people of the two neighbours, recalling the Indian help during the Sino-Japanese war. The senior diplomat on August 1 visited the Indian Coast Guard Headquarters (West) to express gratitude to the maritime security agency for saving Chinese

mariners over the past two years, an official statement said.

Mr. Kong met Inspector General Bhisham Sharma, Commander of Indian Coast Guard (West), and said

Tibet Digest December - January 2024

China is ready to work with India to bridge the gap between the people of the two countries and strengthen friendship.

"... our two peoples will walk together like brothers and sisters," he said.

The Indian Coast Guard and Indian Navy have jointly carried out a successful rescue mission to evacuate a Chinese mariner who was critically injured and suffering heavy blood loss on July 24, the statement said.

"The Indian Coast Guard responded immediately to the medical emergency. The rescue team overcame the strong wind and high waves to evacuate him to hospital. Thanks to the Indian Coast Guard's prompt rescue and professional treatment, the mariner recovered very well and has already been back to China," Mr. Kong said.

"Today I come here on behalf of the Chinese Consulate General in Mumbai to express my heartfelt gratitude to you and all the officers and pay my highest tribute to the Indian Coast Guard," Mr. Kong told IG Sharma. Mr. Kong recalled that in 1938, an Indian medical team went to China to help Chinese people fight against Japanese aggression.

Dr. Kotnis, one of the doctors who was from Solapur (in Maharashtra), sacrificed his life for the great cause of Chinese people's liberation. Many Chinese people also gave their firm support for India's independence, the diplomat said.

In the current context, these rescue missions carried out by the Indian Coast Guard are of great significance and will strengthen the friendship between the two neighbours, he said. "A Chinese idiom goes 'compassion knows no borders'".

He said the Indian Coast Guard has saved three Chinese mariners in the consular district of the Consulate General alone over the past two years.

Mr. Kong said, "These rescue missions not only fulfil the (Coast Guard's) motto of 'Vayam Rakshamah' (we protect), but also demonstrate the common philosophy of People First, Life First in both China and India." IG Sharma said that over the past decade, the Indian Coast Guard has saved 27 Chinese citizens.

### **China's Pangong Tso bridge in Tibet seen as meant to alter India-border status quo**

02 August 2024, Tibetan Review

After two back-to-back meetings between their foreign ministers during the month, India and China held their latest round of foreign-office led border talks on Jul 31. Both sides have spoken of the talks in

positive terms but different hues while reporting no progress. Meanwhile China has completed the construction and began using a strategic 400-metre

bridge, connecting the northern and southern banks of the Pangong Tso (Lake) inside the India-claimed lines in eastern Ladakh.

Indian military veterans have expressed apprehension that China's latest move confirmed their fears that the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) was forcing India to accept the new status quo in the region, the report said.

It also cited security experts as saying the lake-bridge would give China "a strategic edge" in the region as it would allow PLA troops to speedily move between the north and south banks of the lake.

"It is a matter of extreme concern for India. The bridge enhances connectivity between China's forward and depth forces, underscoring Beijing's commitment to solidifying its territorial claims against India by modifying the landscape to its advantage," the report quoted a former major general as saying.

"It has also confirmed our fears that the PLA seems to be forcing India to accept the new status quo in the region," the unnamed former major general has said. The report also quoted a retired colonel as saying the Chinese army "has fortified its positions at multiple transgression points in eastern Ladakh".

"The PLA is forcing India to agree to its reinterpretation of the Line of Actual Control (LAC). India's capitulation has made restoration of the pre-Apr 2020 status quo difficult," he has said.

"Previously, the PLA had to navigate the lake's entire eastern section to reach conflict zones, a lengthy detour that hampered their response time in an active conflict zone," the [financialexpress.com](#) Jul 30 quoted Damien Symon, a satellite imagery expert and researcher with The Intel Lab, as saying.

The bridge is expected to reduce the travel distance between the lake's banks by approximately 50-100 kilometres, significantly cutting travel time, the report said, citing [ndtv.com](#).

The Jul 31 discussions held in New Delhi under the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination were the first to take place in India after the 2020 Galwan clashes, said [thewire.in](#) Jul 31. It added that there was no sign of a breakthrough again as India and China met for the working mechanism's 30th round of talks.

While their public statements have not indicated any change in their positions, the frequency of their meetings has raised speculation of a thaw, the report said.

In its press release, India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the "discussion at the meeting was in-depth, constructive and forward-looking".

It also stated that both agreed to "maintain the momentum through the established diplomatic and

military channels," that they also "reviewed the current situation along the [LAC] with a view to finding an early resolution of the outstanding issues."

It added that the two sides "agreed on the need to jointly uphold peace and tranquillity on the ground in the border areas in accordance with relevant bilateral agreements, protocols and understandings reached between the two governments."

On its part, the Chinese foreign ministry stated that based on the "important consensus" reached by the recent meeting between the two countries' foreign ministers, the two sides agreed to "focus on specific issues related to the China-India border, take care of each other's reasonable concerns, and reach a solution acceptable to both sides as soon as possible". The press note further stated that the two sides agreed to "strengthen the construction of negotiation mechanisms, accelerate the negotiation process, and achieve a turning point in the border situation as soon as possible".

India's aim in holding these talks is to achieve "complete disengagement" along the LAC. However, China has characterized the meeting's agenda as promoting the "transition of the border situation into a normalized phase of control", report noted.

Indian and Chinese troops have disengaged from some places along the LAC after the 2020 clashes after a series of talks at different levels, but the Chinese have refused to undertake any disengagement at two places, namely Demchok and Depsang plains, where soldiers on both sides continue to be in a faceoff situation.

India's position remains that overall bilateral ties cannot return to normalcy until the border issue is resolved. On the other hand, China insists that the border issue should not overshadow their broader relationship.

India's fear might be that accepting China's position would only lead to further Salami slicing of its territory by continued creeping intrusions by Chinese troops.



## Tensions raised as China expands military presence along India's vast northern border

29 July 2024, Black Sky

The unprecedented arrival of China's most advanced fighter jets in Tibet is just one example of how the Chinese military's continued expansion along India's contested northern border raises tensions in a decades-long standoff high atop the Himalayas. With the ability to monitor the most important national security and economic locations and events at scale, BlackSky recently provided a revealing look into how China is asserting its military posture in this vast, mountainous region.

Published in the Hindustan Times, BlackSky's rare, time-diverse satellite images and AI-driven analytics show the first presence of Chinese J-20 stealth fighters parked at a Tibetan airfield, advanced artillery and defensive infrastructure north of Pangong Lake and a winding network of roads giving China access across Bhutan's disputed Doklam plateau. These images were captured as recently as May 31.

The region's latest developments fuel long-standing disagreements over competing territorial claims that led to the 1962 China-India war. The still unresolved conflict resulted in a 3,380km (2,100 miles) contested border where the nuclear-armed countries collectively maintain an estimated 100,000 troops. Occasional violent skirmishes between the two militaries, the most recent of which occurred in 2022, have caused deaths on both sides. The unforgiving terrain, ranging in elevation from 3,600 to 6,400m (12,000 to 21,000 feet), and extreme cold temperatures, reaching minus 40 C in winter, make security a unique challenge.

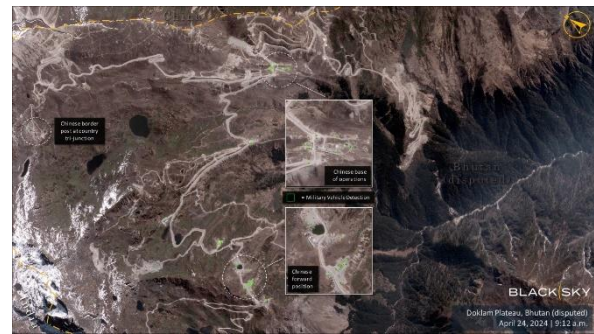
Tibet's Shigatse Air Base



BlackSky imagery and automated detection identified six Chinese Chengdu J-20 stealth fighters parked adjacent to eight Chengdu J-10 jets on the central apron at Tibet's Shigatse Air Base on May 30. The base is less than 150km from India's northern border in Sikkim. Introduced in 2017, the J-20 is a dual

engine, multirole fighter featuring low radar observability and precision strike capabilities designed for air superiority.

Bhutan's Doklam Plateau



China maintains an elaborate network of roads connecting military infrastructure across the Doklam plateau in territory dually claimed by Bhutan that also borders northern India. Military vehicles detected by BlackSky's automated analytics are positioned at various locations along the plateau, including China's tri-junction border post, base of operations and forward position. In 2017, Chinese and Indian troops engaged in a 72-day standoff over China's Doklam road construction.

Sirijap, Pangong Tso, Ladakh



Nestled among the mountains along the northern shore of Pangong lake in the disputed Indo-Chinese border region of Ladakh, China's Sirijap military complex hosts an expanse of armored vehicle storage facilities, test ranges and fuel and munitions storage buildings. Sirijap's current state of development features artillery and other defensive positions reinforced by large berms and connected by a wide-reaching network of roads and trenches that are not visible on publicly available mapping applications. The Sirijap complex is located 126 km southeast of the Galwan Valley, the site of a lethal 2020 skirmish between Indian and Chinese soldiers. The Hindustan Times quotes an unnamed former Indian Army commander on the military rationale for China's construction of underground facilities.

"In today's battlefield, everything can be pinpointed using satellites or aerial surveillance platforms. We have no such underground shelters on our side. Tunneling is the only way out to create better defences," he said. "Without underground shelters, weapons and stores are sitting ducks for air strikes with precision-guided munitions. The Chinese are

pioneers in tunneling activities and no hi-tech is required for these structures, just civil engineering skills and funds. Otherwise, we have to invest in more air defence equipment," he added.

This collection showcases the power of BlackSky's real-time monitoring of multiple sites over an entire region, delivering actionable insights from dynamic change at scale to enhance situational awareness.

### India-China relations under the Modi 3.0 government

23 July 2024, IISS

India is gambling that it can both steal a page from China's playbook, earn China's consideration and maintain stability on favourable terms.

On 4 June, Narendra Modi was re-elected as prime minister of India for a third consecutive term – unprecedented in 62 years. By reappointing his foreign minister and national security advisor, Modi has signalled his desire for continuity in India's statecraft.

However, among India's key bilateral ties, those with China will merit significant attention and possibly adaptation. As the relationship between Asia's largest nuclear-armed militaries and economies by 2025 appears increasingly distant and tense, where is it headed? Mutually exclusive prosperity and security

India-China ties are troubled by an unsettled border, an unequal trade relationship, China's strategic ties to Pakistan, and a broadening political-strategic disagreement over each other's perceived rightful place in Asia and beyond. The relationship has suffered from a lack of strategic trust since a June 2020 border clash, which unmade much of the letter and spirit of the border-management regime that had been patiently negotiated, designed and agreed to over a generation. The war in Ukraine has brought China closer to Russia, India's historic defence partner.

The result is a complex relationship which tends towards tension over cooperation. This has not always been the case. During the course of the 1990s and until 2013, India and China agreed to set aside their differences on the border and focus on their economic development, each involving the other on secondary issues such as terrorism or Afghanistan.

Despite sharing the goal of avoiding another border war akin to that of 1962, national interests began to diverge. Coinciding with lower economic growth prospects, President Xi Jinping pursued an assertive foreign-policy and security agenda by focusing on promoting global technology champions and its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), as well as acquiring advanced dual-use technologies and

securitising its economy at home. This created insecurity for India.

India has concurrently considered itself a rising global economic force able to leverage its strategic partnerships in Asia and beyond. Since the end of the coronavirus pandemic, India has gained confidence from its status as the world's fastest growing major economy, while China's own economic prospects defied optimism. India's ambitions evolved from seeking to be the 'plus-one' of multinationals' China-focused strategies to being a preferred, 'trusted' middle-weight supplier in global supply chains in order to ride the 'decoupling' trend that is partly hollowing out China's prosperity. India's 'Make in India' policy epitomises its ambitions to grow its services and industry, using foreign capital to eventually boost exports.

Breaking the deadlock

Thus, India under Modi, who as leader of Gujarat State once cited China's Guangdong province as an example for achieving growth, appears increasingly to be trying to outdo China at its own economic and strategic game. This is designed to change China's perception of India without becoming 'revisionist'. India seeks leverage by showing its strength: setting conditions for dialogue based on the pre-2020 border conditions; restricting official contacts and visas; renaming localities in disputed territory; investing in border infrastructure and defence; limiting dependency on Chinese imports to fuel its own rise, to the benefit of supply chains with the Quad and other countries; strengthening its nuclear second-strike capability; and letting select irritants develop. India hopes the sum of these calibrated and restrained actions will pressure China to recognise India's global rise, while staying below China's threshold for an adverse, counter-productive response.

China, for its part, is focused on its rivalry with the US. China often sees India as having diminishing international agency of its own, as a result of that contest. The existence in Washington of a bipartisan consensus on both China and India, the relevance of Modi's warm relations with Donald Trump, and the fact that US Indo-Pacific strategy hinges on India's support for Washington's objectives in the region all drive much of the thinking in Beijing about India. China is paying particular attention to US-India cooperation on emerging and disruptive technologies, as well as naval logistics. India's now larger population and promising economy are attractive to Chinese exporters, but may also worry China. The GDP gap between India and China continues to grow in the latter's favour, feeding its belief that its terms alone can direct the relationship.

Exceptions to India and China's zero-sum rivalry are few and shrinking. Suggestions of 'India-China-plus-one' projects appear out of date as both compete for the Global South's attention. Both countries are investing in national technological capacities to enhance their prosperity and security in space, cyber and underwater maritime domains, leaving little room for cooperation. This carries global implications. Their convergence within BRICS on promoting their currencies is challenged by India's rejection of the BRI and New Delhi's consideration of a US-led sanctions policy on Ukraine. Dissuading Russia from using nuclear weapons in Ukraine or combatting climate change also appear as rare areas of agreement.

Meanwhile, third countries feel they have to choose between India and China, undermining both countries' claims to a benign rise. Other risks abound. The militarising border remains unstable and incident prone. Accidents in the Indian Ocean or South China Sea could occur as long as there is no dialogue or agreement to prevent or manage such incidents. The rise of technology ties with Taiwan, which India is increasingly displaying as a symbol of its independent statecraft, is becoming a major area of misunderstanding. Meanwhile, both countries are building up domestic expectations for their national-development goals set for 2049 for China and 2047 for India.

Strategic communication and understanding

Amid these tensions and wider geopolitical uncertainty, as well as both optimism and distrust of some dialogues with China, the two countries need to find a format for establishing and maintaining dialogue – to set and update expectations – without seeing this as an undue reward for the other. Xi and Modi held two highly personalised informal summits in 2018 and 2019. But Xi declined to attend Modi's 2023 standout G-20 summit. After a hiatus of over two years, their two top national-security officials met in 2022, 2023 and July 2024, but the meetings are unlikely to have been proportionate to the relationship's needs, not least because 'disengagement' at two border points is still a pending objective.

China needs to better understand how India's conduct reflects its motives for engaging, competing, balancing and deterring China. India wants China to show more sensitivity to its interests. One Indian official has explained that there is little point 'aiming for the moon while we remain in a ditch'.

Modi's lack of attendance at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in July 2024 does not close the door to future engagement with Xi. Xi's failure to send his personal congratulations upon Modi's re-election may be the latest clue that managing any 'loss of face' matters most to the two

leaders who have never criticised each other in public. Yet Xi's reference to India in a June 2024 speech on cooperation could be a conciliatory response to Modi's own display of optimism during his re-election campaign. India and China have an interest in maintaining strategic communications to avoid any inadvertent flare-ups which could distract them from their peaceful rise. One possible route is to establish new confidence-building measures. Only the two countries, between themselves, can make that determination of the need – or not – for any form of new 'guardrails', before relaying this to the rest of the world.

### **Arunachal lawmaker raises serious concern over China's mega dam construction in occupied Tibet**

20 July, 2024, Tibetan Review

A state lawmaker of Arunachal Pradesh has on Jul 19 warned New Delhi that China's ongoing building of a mega dam in neighbouring occupied Tibet's border area of Metog posed grave potential hydrological threats to India. The river could be diverted and the flow of its volume machinated to cause floods in India, Ninong Ering, a BJP MLA and a former union minister, has said.

Yarlung Tsangpo is known as Siang after it enters Arunachal Pradesh and Brahmaputra in the neighbouring state of Assam. The main channel of this river is the Jamuna, which flows through Bangladesh before joining the Bay of Bengal, noted the [economicstimes.com](https://www.economicstimes.com) Jul 20.

Participating in the motion of thanks to the governor's address in the state assembly, Ering, a former union minister of state for minority affairs, has said, "We cannot trust our 'neighbour'. You never know what they can do. They can either divert the entire river flow drying up our Siang or release water at once causing unprecedented floods havoc downstream."

He has added that the construction of the 60,000-megawatt dam could also affect the other downstream country Bangladesh.

The MLA from Pasighat West assembly constituency has expressed support for India's construction of dams with storage capacity to check floods in the region and noted that there is no water treaty between India and China so far.

Pointing out that "hydropower is Arunachal Pradesh's only resource," Ering has called for those opposing the construction of dams in state to be consulted beforehand so that the interest of the affected people could be taken care of.

Earlier, the state's Chief Minister, Mr Pema Khandu, had in September stated that New Delhi had proposed to construct a large barrage on the Siang river to keep the area secure in view of the potential



threat from the huge dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo river being built by China in occupied Tibet.

"In case of release of excessive water, we need to have big structures to protect ourselves from floods. The Centre, too, has expressed concern about the position of the Siang river once the Chinese project is completed. We have to keep Siang alive. If there is diversion of water by China, massive land erosion will take place," Khandu had said.

Reuters reported earlier this month, on Jul 9, that India was planning to spend \$1 billion to expedite the construction of 12 hydropower stations in the state.

China responded the next day by claiming India's development activities in the area were "illegal and invalid". It calls the state 'Zangnan' (South Tibet) on the basis of its baseless claim of sovereignty over occupied Tibet. The state is the birthplace of Tibet's 6th Dalai Lama. The current territory of Arunachal Pradesh was delineated as part of India in a 1914 convention at Shimla involving representatives of British India, Nationalist China and Tibet. Communist China rejects this convention, while India has recognized Tibet as an autonomous region of China since 1954.

#### **Take up China's under-construction mega dam issue with Centre: Ering**

20 July 2024, Arunachal Observer

Former Union Minister and sitting BJP Pasighat West MLA Ninong Ering on Friday expressed concern over under-construction mega dam by China near Arunachal Pradesh border and urged the state Govt to take up the issue with the Centre.

Participating in the motion of thanks to the governor's address in the Assembly, Ering said that the dam might pose serious threat of a flood-like situation in Arunachal Pradesh, located down stream. "Not only India, the construction of the dam might also affect Bangladesh," Ering said, adding "People cannot trust China. We never know what they can do. They may either divert the entire river flow drying up Sian River feeding the Siang belt or release water all of a sudden causing unprecedented floods and havoc downstream."

Ering, who quit the Congress and joined the BJP earlier this year, said that with the motto of 'Nation First', people's interest and their safety and the country's security cannot be negotiated.

Noting that there is no water treaty between India and China, Ering suggested that it was high time for a proper water treaty with the neighbouring country to protect downstream section and flood plains of the state in particular and other downstream states of the country in general.

"Hydropower is key resource of this state and it would help the country to a great extent in fulfilling energy security," he said.

China has announced to build a mega dam on Yarlung Tsangpo River in Medog, near the international border, According to various reports,.

Tsangpo River is known as Siang in Arunachal Pradesh and Brahmaputra in Assam and Jamuna in Bangladesh and it flows through the neighbouring Bangladesh before joining the Bay of Bengal.

Chief Minister Pema Khandu had in September last year proposed to the Centre construction of a large barrage on Siang River to keep the area secure in view of the potential threat from the huge dam on Yarlung Tsangpo River.

Lawmaker Ering is right as highlighted in Beyond the Horizon Colum on July 13 edition of this daily- China plans super-dam on Brahmaputra River: Will it spell water disaster for India and Bangladesh?

"China built one of its biggest projects ever: The Three Gorges Dam in 2003. While this monumental undertaking was steeped in controversy, many argued that its ability to deter routine catastrophic floods along Yangtze River, known as Brahmaputra in Arunachal Pradesh and generate clean energy resulted in an overall net good for the nation.

China is embarking on yet another ambitious project now to construct the world's first "super-dam" on Yarlung Tsangpo River, which is a high-altitude section of the Brahmaputra that flows through China-controlled Tibet to India and Bangladesh. This colossal undertaking aims to capitalise on the Tsangbo's deep canyons – measuring more than twice the depth of the colossal United States' Grand Canyons – to provide an estimated 60 million kilowatts of hydropower. This is more than three times the hydroelectric power generated by the Three Gorge power stations!

However, while some tout the super-dam as an excellent clean energy solution, many others express concern about the environmental and social costs surrounding the project. The Three Gorges Dam itself led to the woeful displacement of nearly 1.5 million riverbank residents, and created significant regional ecological disruptions.

Impact on India: Unfortunately, the new project's location on the Brahmaputra River, flowing downstream to India and Bangladesh, adds another layer of tension to the subject. Both India and Bangladesh rely heavily on the Brahmaputra's water and are thus anxious about leaving the flow of the river in China's control.

Considering that the Brahmaputra accounts for nearly 30% of India's freshwater resources, many have raised concerns about China's tinkering with the Yarlung dam upriver. And it certainly does not help that China's intent to divert a portion of

Brahmaputra's water to arid parts of North China has remained a well-known point of contention between the two nations in the past.

Reports have also indicated that a "twin disaster" may be looming for India if the new dam is actually built. As the super dam engulfs the flow of Brahmaputra River, some assert that India could stand to face acute shortages due to weakened flow in the winter season. Conversely, if China releases excess water from the structure during its monsoons, future flash foods could become a more frequent sight for India downriver.

China had made history by unveiling the Lianghekou mega hydroelectric power plant, almost the size of Eiffel Tower and the highest in the country. It is a gigantic construction that boasts an average altitude of 3,000 meters, putting it above all other power plants in China. It is located on the Yalong River in Garzê, in the southwest of the country. Moreover, its total planned installed capacity is three million kW.

This construction started almost 10 years ago in October 2014 and those in charge of it finished it only in 2023. Going by the numbers, the approved investment is around 66.5 billion yuan, equivalent to 9.449 billion euros. The design of the reservoir allows it to reach almost 11 billion cubic meters (m<sup>3</sup>), specifically 10,800, as reported by Yalong River Hydropower Development Company Ltd (YLHDC), the breakwater dam at the highest point rises 295 meters, bringing it to the very level of the Eiffel Tower (which stands at about 300 m excluding the antenna). The hydroelectric power plant integrates, among other things, spillways, a ventilation tunnel and a subway power plant.

The state news agency Xinhua reports that the hydropower plant will be a turning point in the supply of Sichuan and development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt and the Chengdu-Chongqing economic circle.

### **India Considers Easing Visa Restrictions for Chinese Technicians**

17 July 2024, KNN

In a significant shift from its stringent stance following the 2020 Himalayan border clash, India is reportedly considering a relaxation of visa restrictions for Chinese technicians.

This move comes as the country grapples with mounting economic losses and delays in manufacturing sectors heavily reliant on Chinese expertise.

Sources within the Indian government reveal that the trade ministry is spearheading efforts to expedite visa approvals for Chinese technical personnel.

The foreign ministry, despite initial reservations stemming from the four-year diplomatic chill between

the two nuclear-armed nations, is said to be viewing the proposal "positively."

The potential policy shift is driven by domestic industry concerns and aligns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ambitious plans to boost local manufacturing.

According to industry estimates cited by the Economic Times, the electronics manufacturing sector alone has suffered production losses of approximately USD 15 billion over the past four years due to visa-related delays.

The proposed fast-track visa process aims to reduce approval times from the current one-year wait to less than a month. This would particularly benefit 14 key sectors covered by a USD 24 billion scheme to enhance high-tech electronics production.

The new visas would allow Chinese technicians to stay for up to six months, primarily to operate and maintain Chinese-made machinery in Indian factories.

Government data indicates that between November 2023 and April 2024, India received nearly 1,600 visa applications for Chinese technicians, underscoring the urgent need for their expertise in industries ranging from telecommunications to steel production and solar panel manufacturing.

This potential thaw in visa policy represents a delicate balancing act for India. While seeking to protect its economic interests and manufacturing goals, the country must navigate the complex geopolitical landscape that has defined Sino-Indian relations since the 2020 border tensions.

As the situation develops, observers note that this move could signal a broader reassessment of India's approach to Chinese engagement, potentially paving the way for increased economic cooperation while maintaining strategic caution.

The Indian government has yet to make an official announcement, and spokespersons for the trade, home, and foreign ministries have not responded to requests for comment at the time of reporting.

### **China's continued blocking of Kailash-Mansarovar pilgrimage in Tibet violates bilateral agreements**

15 July 2024, Tibetan Review

For the fifth consecutive year since 2020, both the official routes for the holy Kailash-Mansarovar pilgrimage for Indians has remained closed. And the private route through Nepal, which was re-opened last year by China, is also practically unavailable to Indians due to onerous rules that especially targets them, as reported earlier by the Nepali media.

Covid-19 rules remain the ostensible reason for the suspension of the pilgrimage to Mt Kailash, the holy abode in western Tibet of the Hindu God Lord Shiva. However, the reason for the continued closing of the



pilgrimage routes in a world free of Covid restrictions could only be attributed to the souring of bilateral relations since Galwan Valley clash in eastern Ladakh between Indian and Chinese border troops.

India signed two agreements with China, in 2013 and 2014, to open two official routes for Indian pilgrims. Both make it clear that China cannot unilaterally terminate the agreements without prior notice, noted news18.com Jul 15, citing copies of the agreements obtained from India's Ministry of External Affairs in response to a RTI application.

The first one, dated May 20, 2013, was signed between then Foreign Minister Salman Khurshid and Wang Yi, then Foreign Minister of China. This opened the Lipulekh Pass route for the yatra. The second agreement was signed by Sushma Swaraj as Foreign Minister with Yi on Sep 18, 2014 to start the Nathu La Pass route for the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra.

Both the agreements were valid for a period of five years, and to be automatically extended for a further period of five years at a time. Either side could give a notice to the other in writing, six months ahead of the date of expiry, if it intends to terminate the protocol.

The first agreement permits Indian pilgrims to visit Mt Kailash and Mansarovar through Lipulekh Pass, a Mt Kailash-viewing point in Uttarakhand state, by commercial tour operators and travel agents. "The Chinese side agrees to provide necessary facilities and support to these pilgrims as well in accordance with its domestic laws and regulations," the agreement was quoted as saying.

The second agreement allows Indian pilgrims, who go through tour operators and travel agents, to enter or exit "China" through the Nathu La Pass from Sikkim. The implementation of modalities of this route was through diplomatic channels.

The third option for Indians was to enter Tibet from Nepal through private operators there. China opened its borders from the Nepal side last year, but tightened rules for foreigners, especially Indians, and put multiple restrictions, including hiking the fee, making it practically impossible for Indians to go to Mt Kailash through Nepal. Nepali tour operators have expressed dismay that the virtual ban on Indian pilgrims had ruined their business.

In all cases, Indians needed visas from China to visit Mt Kailash and Mansarovar, a requirement which did not exist when Tibet was free until the first half or so of the last century.

This year in January, 38 Indians were the first to take a chartered flight, 'Kailash Mansarovar Darshan Flight', from Nepalgunj in Nepal to get aerial darshan of Mt Kailash from 27,000 feet in the air, the report said.

And now, India has also developed a spot in its territory at Lipulekh peak in Dharchula of Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand, from where Mt Kailash can soon be clearly viewed from a distance of just 50 km.

Earlier this month, the Uttarakhand government announced that pilgrims would be able to view Mt Kailash from this spot from Sep 15 this year. This will involve a vehicle drive up to Lipulekh and a trek of about 800 metres on foot to reach the vantage point to view the holy spot.

China objects to India's Arunachal dam projects with 'South Tibet' claim

11 July 2024, Tibetan Review

China has claimed Jul 10 that India had no right to carry out development projects in the latter's Tibet-border state of Arunachal Pradesh, claiming it is Zangnan (South Tibet) and part of its territory.

The remark has come from China's Foreign Ministry in response to a Reuters report on New Delhi's plans to speed up hydropower projects in the border state. "South Tibet is China's territory," Reuters Jul 10 quoted a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman as saying in a statement.

India's development activities in the area "illegal and invalid", devdiscourse.com Jul 10, likewise, quoted the strongly worded statement as saying.

The previous Reuters report said Jul 9 that India planned to spend \$1 billion to expedite the construction of 12 hydropower stations in the northeastern Himalayan state. The territory was delineated as part of India in a 1914 convention at Shimla involving representatives of British India, Nationalist China and Tibet.

Communist China rejects this convention while India has recognized Tibet as an autonomous region of China since 1954.

### **Indian and Chinese diplomats to meet soon as border dispute continues to freeze bilateral ties**

11 July 2024, Tibetan Review

With each side looking for the other side to make concessions, the Sino-India border dispute along Chinese occupied Tibet, and, as a result of it, the turbulence in overall relations between India and China appear to be set to remain prolonged.

Still, diplomats from India and China will soon meet to make yet another attempt to reach an agreement on mutual withdrawal of troops from the remaining face-off points along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh, reported deccanherald.com Jul 4. The stumbling block remains China's stubborn refusal to withdraw its troops from their 2020 incursion

areas, claiming the territory belongs to it on the basis of its claim over occupied Tibet.

The decision followed a meeting between India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the sideline of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Astana, Capital of Kazakhstan, on Jul 4 when they agreed that the bilateral Working Mechanism on Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) on border affairs should hold another meeting soon.

The report cited a press release issued by the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi as saying the two ministers also agreed the military commanders of both sides would continue to meet to take forward discussions to "resolve the remaining issues" along the LAC in eastern Ladakh.

However, India has effectively reiterated its rejection of China's oft repeated insistence that the two sides normalize bilateral ties while talks for the settlement of the heavily deployed border standoff continues with no apparent end in sight.

"Discussed early resolution of remaining issues in border areas. Agreed to redouble efforts through diplomatic and military channels to that end. Respecting the LAC and ensuring peace and tranquillity in the border areas is essential," Jaishankar posted on X (formerly Twitter) after meeting Wang, adding: "The three mutuals – mutual respect, mutual sensitivity, and mutual interest – will guide our bilateral ties."

Though protracted negotiations have led to mutual withdrawal of troops from some of the face-off points along the LAC, like Galwan Valley, the northern and southern banks of Pangong Tso, Gogra Post, and Hot Springs, the stand-off could not be resolved completely so far.

Herders in Ladakh have complained that as a result of the already agreed withdrawals of troops, swathes of grazing land over which they had freely roamed for ages with their herds had become off-limits as they had been declared demilitarized zones. Besides, the report noted that Chinese PLA troops deployed in Depsang, well inside the territory of India along the LAC, were continuing to block the Indian Army's access to Patrolling Points 10, 11, 12, 12A, and 13. It added that a face-off is also continuing in Demchok.

China's position thus far is that the mutual withdrawal of troops by the Chinese PLA and the Indian Army from Patrolling Point 15 (Gogra-Hotsprings area) in Sep 2022 marked the restoration of normalcy along the LAC in eastern Ladakh.

The claim seen as an attempt by China to subtly build up pressure on India to accept the "new normal" in the Depsang and Demchok areas. The report said Wang reiterated this during his meeting with Jaishankar.

However, India has refused to budge, insisting that China must vacate its troops from these areas to restore the pre-2020 status quo.

In this matter, India's China policy and its stance on the boundary issues have remained unchanged in the past few years, and there are no major adjustments or substantial changes from the Indian side to be seen at present, China's official globaltimes.cn Jul, 5 cited Long Xingchun, a professor at the School of International Relations at Sichuan International Studies University, as saying.

"India has been demanding that China make concessions regarding the border issues," Long has asserted.

### **China says India has no right to develop contested border region**

09 July 2024, VOA

India has no right to carry out development in the area China calls South Tibet, China's Foreign Ministry said on Wednesday in response to a Reuters report on New Delhi's plans to speed up hydropower projects in the border state.

"South Tibet is China's territory," a foreign ministry spokesman said in a statement.

It said India had no right to carry out development there and the establishment of what India calls Arunachal Pradesh on Chinese territory is "illegal and invalid."

Reuters reported on Tuesday that India plans to spend \$1 billion to expedite the construction of 12 hydropower stations in the northeastern Himalayan state.

India's Foreign Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment on China's statement.

India says its remote state of Arunachal Pradesh is an integral part of the country, but China says it is a part of southern Tibet, and has objected to Indian infrastructure projects there.

Last week, India Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar met his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Kazakhstan where the two agreed to intensify efforts to resolve issues along their border.

### **Satellite Images show China building infrastructure in area which it is illegally occupying since Nehru's time**

08 July 2024, Organiser

Setting the information right for the Congress leaders and those spreading fake news, it is important to mention that China's build up at the LAC is taking place in that area, which it has been illegally occupying since the time of then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru

Recent satellite imagery has unveiled significant military infrastructure development by China in the area surrounding Pangong Lake in eastern Ladakh, an area it has illegally occupied since the era of former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) base at Sirjap, situated amidst mountains on the northern shore of Pangong Lake, serves as the headquarters for Chinese troops in the vicinity. It resides in an area claimed by India, approximately 5 km from the Line of Actual Control (LAC). Until the standoff on the LAC began in May 2020, this area was nearly uninhabited.

Constructed during 2021-22, the base features underground bunkers for storing weapon systems, fuel, and supplies, as revealed by satellite images from BlackSky, a US-based firm. An image from May 30 distinctly shows eight sloping entrances to a sizable underground bunker and a smaller bunker with five entrances. The base also includes large buildings for headquarters operations and hardened shelters designed to protect armored vehicles from air strikes using precision-guided munitions.

An analyst from BlackSky, speaking on condition of anonymity, noted, "The base hosts an expanse of armored vehicle storage facilities, test ranges, and fuel and munitions storage buildings." The current state of development includes artillery and other defensive positions reinforced by large berms, interconnected by an extensive network of roads and trenches not visible on publicly available mapping applications.

The base is situated approximately 120 km southeast of Galwan Valley, where a fierce clash in June 2020 resulted in the deaths of 20 Indian soldiers and at least four Chinese troops.

A former Indian Army commander, who served in the Pangong Lake region, commented, "In today's battlefield, everything can be pinpointed using satellites or aerial surveillance platforms. We have no such underground shelters on our side. Tunnelling is the only way out to create better defenses."

He added, "Without underground shelters, weapons and stores are sitting ducks for air strikes with precision-guided munitions. The Chinese are pioneers in tunnelling activities, and no hi-tech is required for these structures, just civil engineering skills and funds. Otherwise, we have to invest in more air defense equipment."

Since the standoff began in 2020, India has significantly enhanced its border infrastructure, constructing roads, bridges, tunnels, airfields, and helipads for military mobility and logistics support. India's infrastructure development has focused on better living conditions and improved facilities for soldiers, as well as the protection of weapons and equipment in forward areas. This push has been

propelled by increased spending and swift execution of strategic projects, with the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) completing 125 infrastructure projects valued at Rs 3,611 crore in the fiscal year 2023-24, including the Sela tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh.

The developments at Pangong Lake coincide with increased activity by the Chinese military at the Shigatse air base in Tibet and the contentious Doklam tri-junction. Satellite images from earlier this year showed about half a dozen Chengdu J-20 stealth combat jets at Shigatse, and a more recent image from June 30 revealed at least two J-10 jets on the central apron.

The Shigatse base, approximately 300 km from the Indian Air Force's (IAF) Hasimara base in West Bengal, houses a squadron of Rafale combat jets. Experts believe China's deployment of the J-20s aims to counter the Rafales, among the IAF's most advanced aircraft. The shift of J-20s from China's coastal and inland provinces to Tibet underscores the strategic importance of the region.

On the Doklam plateau, satellite imagery reveals China's maintenance of an intricate network of roads linking military infrastructure along the disputed border with India. A significant presence of military vehicles was observed at both a rear base and a forward position in an April satellite image.

In light of these developments, it is crucial to clarify that China's current build-up at the LAC is in an area it has been illegally occupying since the tenure of then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. This historical context is vital for setting the record straight amidst misinformation and political discourse.

### **PLA Readies for Extended Conflict with India as Global Crises Intensify**

04 July 2024, Republic, Yuvraj Tyagi

The US Intelligence Community's Annual Threat Assessment highlights the ongoing strain in Sino-Indian relations.

Despite the world's focus on Ukraine, Gaza, and the South China Sea, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) continues to fortify its position along China's southern border with India. The Annual Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community acknowledges the persistent strain in Sino-Indian relations due to their disputed border, albeit briefly amidst global conflicts. The report noted that significant cross-border clashes have not occurred since 2020, but large troop deployments on both sides remain. The potential for sporadic encounters raises the risk of miscalculation and escalation into armed conflict. In April 2024, the Strategic Studies Institute of the US Army War College published an analysis of PLA activities in

Aksai Chin during 2020-21, providing insight into the ongoing military standoff.

The PLA rapidly deployed troops to Aksai Chin following the Galwan Valley clash in June 2020. Dennis Blasko, a former US defence attache, assessed that the PLA is prepared to maintain its deployments near the Line of Actual Control (LAC) indefinitely. This strategy serves both political and military purposes, offering real-world operational experience that routine peacetime training cannot match. However, the PLA faces sustaining its forces in the remote, high-altitude region. Supply depots are located more than 1,600 km away, requiring complex and prolonged logistical efforts. The Western Theater Command, responsible for nearly half of China's landmass, oversees these operations with a fraction of the PLA's total ground forces.

#### Strategic Significance of PLA's Border Operations

The PLA's fortified positions along the LAC support a significant deployment, estimated at 20,000 troops across a 400 km front. This force includes additional engineers, artillery, and support elements. Despite the substantial presence, Blasko argues that the terrain's rugged nature and logistical constraints limit the PLA's ability to conduct large-scale offensive operations.

The PLA's border operations serve as a deterrent, creating "facts on the ground" and reinforcing China's territorial claims. Similar to its activities in the South China Sea, these operations are designed to consolidate control and maintain a long-term presence. The PLA's construction of infrastructure, such as bridges over Lake Pangong, underscores its commitment to enhancing mobility and readiness along the border.

#### Parallel Tensions in the South China Sea

The South China Sea remains a flashpoint, exemplified by the recent confrontation between the China Coast Guard (CCG) and the Philippines near Second Thomas Shoal. This incident, which saw the CCG seizing a Philippine boat and injuring a sailor, highlights China's aggressive tactics. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. warned that the Philippine-US Mutual Defense Treaty could be invoked if such provocations lead to casualties.

China's assertive actions in both the South China Sea and along the Sino-Indian border reflect a broader strategy of territorial consolidation. The PLA's activities in Aksai Chin mirror its island-building campaigns, demonstrating a willingness to escalate tensions to secure strategic advantages.

#### Implications for Sino-Indian Relations

Blasko's analysis suggests that while the PLA is not positioned for a large-scale offensive, the risk of localized skirmishes remains high. The PLA's presence serves as a constant reminder of the unresolved border dispute, complicating diplomatic

efforts. Both India and China must navigate this precarious situation, balancing military readiness with the need for dialogue.

In conclusion, the PLA's fortified positions along the LAC represent a significant challenge for India's strategic planning. The ongoing military buildup, logistical complexities, and potential for conflict underscore the importance of sustained diplomatic engagement. As global attention remains divided, the Sino-Indian border will continue to be a critical focal point in regional security dynamics.

China has been feverishly working on new infrastructure, including two bridges over Lake Pangong. These bridges facilitate the movement of troops, equipment, and supplies, indicating a long-term commitment to maintaining and potentially escalating its presence. The construction of a road from the bridge to the Molde garrison and PLA base camp behind Lake Spanggur further enhances their logistical capabilities.

Additionally, the PLA Tibet Military Command and the Department of Highland Military Medicine of the PLA Army Medical University have launched a pilot program for low-pressure hypoxia cabin acclimation training for recruits before deployment. This training has improved acclimatization, permitting operational deployments in shorter periods.

#### Sustainability Measures for High-Altitude Deployments

To sustain troops in high-altitude areas, the PLA has established "vegetable factories" at altitudes as high as 5,270m to provide fresh greens to border defence troops. These measures demonstrate the PLA's commitment to ensuring the well-being and operational efficiency of its forces in challenging environments.

Blasko's report highlighted the PLA's preparedness to maintain these operations indefinitely. Until a negotiated political settlement is reached, the Western Theater Command is prepared to sustain the rotation of units into and out of the region in the largest near-combat deployment since the end of the border conflict with Vietnam in 1987.

Blasko acknowledged the possibility of future border confrontations, especially as small units come into proximity with each other. The challenging terrain favours light infantry operations over large-scale mechanized combat. This environment complicates large-scale offensive operations, making defensive posturing and territorial consolidation more feasible for the PLA.

## **India, China foreign ministers agree to work on border issues**

04 July 2024, Reuters

India's Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar met his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on Thursday in Kazakhstan where the two agreed to step up talks to resolve issues along their border, New Delhi said in a statement.

India and China share a long Himalayan border, much of it poorly demarcated, and relations between the two countries have been sour since a military standoff in July 2020 when at least 20 Indian soldiers and four Chinese troops were killed.

India said Jaishankar met Wang on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in Astana where they agreed that "prolongation of the current situation in the border areas is not in the interest of either side."

The two agreed to enhance meetings between their diplomatic and military officials "to resolve the remaining issues at the earliest," the Indian foreign ministry said in a statement.

China and India should properly handle their differences and ensure relations advance on a stable track, a Chinese foreign ministry statement quoted Wang as saying during the talks.

"We must maintain a positive mindset, properly handle and control the situation in the border areas on the one hand, and actively resume normal exchanges on the other hand," Wang said.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who began his third straight term last month, said in April that the two countries should urgently address the "prolonged situation" on their border.

Both countries have fortified positions and deployed extra troops and equipment along the border since 2020. The nuclear-armed nations have been uneasy neighbours for decades after a bloody border war in 1962.

"He (Jaishankar) reaffirmed the importance of fully abiding by relevant bilateral agreements, protocols, and understandings reached between the two governments in the past," New Delhi's statement said. The two countries have previously agreed to maintain dialogue through military and diplomatic channels.

## **At SCO Summit, PM Modi's speech takes a veiled swipe at China, Pakistan**

04 July 2024, Hindustan Times

Jaishankar, delivering a speech on behalf of PM Modi at SCO Summit, highlighted the issue of combating terrorism, which was one of the "original goals" of SCO

NEW DELHI: The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) should address issues such as respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and non-discriminatory trade rights in the context of connectivity projects, India said on Thursday in a thinly veiled swipe at China.

Delivering a speech on behalf of Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the SCO Summit in the Kazakhstan capital of Astana, external affairs minister S Jaishankar pointed to mutual respect for territorial integrity, non-interference in internal affairs and non-use of force being the basis for the foreign policies of the nine members of the bloc.

The remarks came against the backdrop of India's opposition to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) since a key part of it passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), and its concerns about China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Indian officials have pointed in the past to the lack of a level playing field in projects under the BRI.

The text of Modi's remarks to the SCO Summit noted that economic development requires robust connectivity, which can facilitate trust between societies. "Respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity is essential for connectivity and infrastructure projects. So too are non-discriminatory trade rights and transit regimes. The SCO needs to deliberate seriously on these aspects," the text said.

The SCO is a principle-based organisation and consensus drives the approach of its member states. It is "particularly noteworthy that we are reiterating mutual respect for sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, equality, mutual benefit, non-interference in internal affairs, non-use of force or threat of use of force as a basis for our foreign policies", the text added.

The speech also highlighted the issue of combating terrorism, which was one of the "original goals" of the SCO. "Many of us have had our experiences, often originating beyond our borders. Let us be clear that if left unchecked, it can become a major threat to regional and global peace," the text said, in an apparent reference to India's concerns about cross-border terror from Pakistan.

The world community must isolate and expose countries that harbour terrorists, provide safe havens and condone terrorism, and cross-border terror requires a "decisive response" and terror financing and recruitment must be resolutely countered.

The speech also referred to challenges such as climate change and the proper use of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence. India is working towards a committed reduction in emissions, transition to alternate fuels, adoption of electric vehicles and building climate-resilient infrastructure. It is also among countries to formulate a national



strategy on AI and is working within the SCO framework on a roadmap for AI cooperation.

The Indian side expressed its condolences at the recent death of Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash while congratulating Iran on attending the SCO Summit as a member of the bloc. It also congratulated President Aleksandr Lukashenko on Belarus becoming a new member of the SCO.

The SCO, which was established in June 2001, includes Belarus, China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. India was represented at the summit in Astana by Jaishankar following Modi's decision to skip the meet.

## June

### Xi invokes Panchsheel as key to end today's global conflicts

30 June 2024, Times of India

BEIJING/DELHI: Chinese President Xi Jinping on Friday highlighted the relevance of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, which gained traction with the Non-Aligned Movement, to end the present-day conflicts and sought to expand influence in the Global South amid its tussle with the West.

Xi, 71, invoked the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, termed as Panchsheel by India, at a conference in Beijing to mark its 70th anniversary and also sought to juxtapose them with his new concept of Global Security Initiative envisaging a shared future for mankind.

The Panchsheel pointers were first formally enunciated in the Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between the Tibet region of China and India signed on April 29, 1954, according to the MEA.

No Indian official was reported to have participated in the conference on Friday. The invitees included former Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa and several politician and officials from various countries that have close ties with China.

The five principles formed part of the legacy of the then PM Jawaharlal Nehru and his Chinese counterpart Zhou Enlai in their unsuccessful quest to find a solution to the vexed boundary issue.

"The Five Principles answered the call of the times, and its initiation was an inevitable historic development. The Chinese leadership in the past specified the Five Principles in their entirety for the first time, namely, 'mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity', 'mutual non-aggression', 'mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs',

'equality and mutual benefit', and 'peaceful coexistence'," Xi said.

"They included the Five Principles in the China-India and China-Myanmar joint statements which jointly called for making them basic norms for state-to-state relations," Xi said.

The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence were born in Asia but quickly ascended to the world stage. In 1955, over 20 Asian and African countries attended the Bandung Conference, Xi recalled.

The Non-Aligned Movement that rose in the 1960s adopted the Five Principles as its guiding principles, he said.

"The Five Principles have set a historic benchmark for international relations and international rule of law," he said, highlighting their relevance to ending the present-day conflicts.

### Indian tank sinks while crossing river near China border, killing 5

29 June 2024, VOA

Five Indian soldiers were killed when a military tank they were traveling in sank while crossing a river in the remote region of Ladakh, which borders China, officials said Saturday.

The tank sank early Saturday due to sudden increase in the water levels of Shyok River during a military training activity, according to an Indian army command center statement. It said the accident took place in Saser Brangsa near the Line of Actual Control that divides India and China in the Ladakh region.

Defense Minister Rajnath Singh called it an "unfortunate accident."

"We will never forget exemplary service of our gallant soldiers to the nation. My heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. The nation stands firm with them during this hour of grief," Singh wrote on the social platform X.

The Indian and Chinese militaries have been locked in a standoff in Ladakh since May 2020, when they clashed along their land border in the region, with 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers killed.

The skirmish turned into a long-running standoff in the rugged mountainous area, where each side has stationed tens of thousands of military personnel. New Delhi and Beijing have held a series of diplomatic and military talks to resolve their worst military conflict in decades.

The border dispute between India and China dates to the 1950s, and the two sides fought a war over it in 1962.

## **EXCLUSIVE | India Has Legitimate Say in Dalai Lama Selection, China Just Wants to Control Tibet**

19 June 2024, News18, Manoj Gupta

Indian officials have questioned that when PRC continues to use various derogatory terms like 'wolf in a monks robe' for the Dalai Lama, why are they interested in seeking the control of the reincarnation of a man they so despise?

Amid talks of the 14th Dalai Lama's successions, sources in India have lashed out at China for trying to control the reincarnation by saying its approval is necessary for the candidate. Sources have said only India has a legitimate say in the Dalai Lama selection and that China was confusing the world and wants to control Tibet.

Sources said that being invited to an enthronement much like an oath taking ceremony of current times does not mean giving official legitimacy to the leader in question as the local people and those believing in him have already put him in the role of leadership. "This would mean those leaders from nations who had come to PM Narendra Modi's oath taking ceremony have given him official legitimacy to govern India for the next 5 years, certainly not," sources said.

Indian officials have questioned that when PRC continues to use various derogatory terms like 'wolf in a monks robe' for the Dalai Lama, why are they interested in seeking the control of the reincarnation of a man they so despise?

The first Dalai Lama was born in 1391 and the People's Republic of China was established in 1949. "How can they have claim over an institution that precedes their formation," sources questioned. The Dalai Lama had formally set up the institution of the Ganden Phorang in 1642 which is before the PRC was formed.

PRC's Founding Father Chairman Mao had infamously said 'Religion is poison' taking it from the Marxist maxim of 'Religion is Opium to the masses' when he met the Dalai Lama in 1956. This is a dictum even followed by the current Communist leadership in China led by President Xi Jinping. Hence, the question is as to why the CCP is so interested in controlling Buddhism in Tibet. The cultural revolution is a standing example and its impact remains large as religions and traditions including Tibetan Buddhism were destroyed and ravaged by the Communist Red Guards.

The abduction by the CCP of the current 11th Panchen Lama gives a clear indication of how Beijing has and continues to control Buddhism, but has failed.

**ORDER NUMBER 5 MENTIONED BY CHINESE SPOKESPERSON**

People's Republic of China under the Communist Party of China called for Tibet's invasion in 1949 and it was only in 2007 that they came up with 'Order number 5', which is a set of rules and regulations by Beijing to confirm the reincarnations of high lamas practising the Tibetan tradition of Buddhism. If the process laid out by PRC in the order number 5 is so vital to them, why did the PRC only introduce this order in 2007 and not immediately during the years post occupation?

No Tibetan law or religion demanded the establishment of the Order number 5. This order was introduced to control and strangle the practice of Buddhism, Indian sources said. Order number 5 is to control Buddhism, not to promote it.

Indian officials have stated that the PRC has no legitimate role in Tibet. While they thought controlling Buddhism was one way, but they have failed miserably as numerous monks and nuns have been fleeing Tibet. Since coming to power, Xi Jinping had made it his mission to sinicize the Tibetan tradition of Buddhism and he has done this by carrying out previous policy mentioned above (Order number 5) and also enforcing Tibetan Buddhist Institutes in Tibet to adopt and adhere to 'Xi Jinping thought of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era'.

### **CURRENT SITUATION OF TIBETAN BUDDHISM**

The current monastic education in Tibet stifles proper education and debates. The number of monks/nuns have been restricted, displaying a portrait of His Holiness in a monastery or even possessing one is a punishable offense. A source said, "Namkyi, who escaped exile recently, highlighted to us all how by her carrying a picture of the Dalai Lama and calling for his return branded her as a political prisoner and she was sentenced."

Recent incidents like the Larung Gar demolition, destruction of Buddhist Statue in Drago County, all indicate how the current communist leadership from Beijing views Buddhism and the Dalai Lama. Yet, still they claim to have legitimacy over the Dalai Lama which is "confounding".

### **INDIA**

India has a more legitimate say when it comes to the Dalai Lama as Buddhism originated and spread from India to the rest of the world. The Buddhism that the Dalai Lama teaches and other practices are by and large from the Nalanda tradition of Buddhism.

A statement by the Ministry of External Affairs must be made stating that India will support and endorse the 15th Dalai Lama in accordance with the processes set forth by the current 14th Dalai Lama and that it would strongly oppose outside interference and influence in matters related to his succession as it is a purely religious matter and it is for the Tibetans to decide for themselves; and should

the 15th Dalai Lama wish to be in India, then he too shall be an honoured guest just like the 14th Dalai Lama and the Government of India shall provide all the support as offered to the current Dalai Lama to the 15th Dalai Lama. India should be seen as the main unifying force in safeguarding the sanctity of the succession process which will remove doubts and anxiety from the minds of Tibetans. In this context, the Government of India must publicly endorse the statement of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, on the issue of his reincarnation made on September 24, 2011.

### **India plans Tibet renaming tactic to foil China's water diplomacy with Maldives**

17 June 2024, India Today, Pradip R. Sagar

The military is apparently awaiting the government's go-ahead for the move aimed at countering Beijing's geopolitical narratives

Geopolitical manoeuvring between China and India, particularly over the sensitive issues of water resources and territorial claims, highlights the complex dynamics of the region. China's recent gesture of gifting water to the Maldives from the Tibetan glaciers, while promoting water conservation campaigns in Tibet, has once again drawn attention to its strategic objectives vis a vis environmental concerns arising out of its actions.

China's alleged exploitation of Tibet's water resources, coupled with its attempts to alter the narrative through renaming and territorial claims, has met with opposition from India. In response, New Delhi has considered similar tactics, including renaming places in Tibet, as a form of diplomatic retaliation.

The strategic implications of these actions extend beyond mere symbolism, reflecting the broader competition for influence and control in the Himalayan region. With both countries vying for dominance and asserting their respective narratives, tensions persist, necessitating a careful balance of diplomatic and strategic manoeuvres.

As India weighs its response and the Narendra Modi government considers its options, the situation underscores the delicate balance of power and the imperative of strategic foresight in navigating complex geopolitical challenges.

In a heightened effort to woo the Maldives, China has gifted 3,000 metric tonnes of water from the Tibetan glaciers to the island nation, in two separate batches in March and May. The move has put China in a peculiar situation. Incidentally, on March 20, barely a week before the first consignment of water was sent, China had unveiled the country's water conservation regulations.

Effective from May 1, the regulations aim to provide a legal guarantee for China's water security, the advancement of ecological progress and high-quality development. Adhering to the vision that "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets", China has taken multiple steps to protect its water resources and restore harmonious ecological systems.

Beijing, in a social media campaign, has been asking residents across Tibet to conserve water. Multiple social media posts claim that in Sa'gya County, Tibetans are urged to conserve water "this at a time when bottled water companies allegedly exploit the pristine waters of Tibet for profit at the cost of ecological damage.

However, China observers claim that Tibet's water resources are comparatively in higher quantity vis-à-vis China. Beijing has been exploiting these resources, which are extremely vulnerable to climate change, biodiversity, and species housing rare flora and fauna, as well as the intangible Buddhist heritage associated with the rivers in Tibet.

The majority of Chinese bottled water companies, such as Nongfu Spring, in alleged nexus with cadre of the Communist Party of China (CCP) in Tibet, are exploiting the water resources of the plateau region. This is in addition to existing and proposed river water transfer projects.

Observers feel that while New Delhi has donated potable water to the Maldives in the past, it has not damaged the fragile ecology of the Himalayas for such procurement for Male.

It is claimed that China's move to send "glacial water" from Tibet to the Maldives also serves its ulterior political motive of getting Male to help formalise Tibet's name as the Beijing-preferred 'Xizang', and let the world accept the former in the years to come, as has been the case with East Turkestan, now called 'Xinjiang'.

China has been pushing narratives by changing the names of the places, including Arunachal Pradesh, multiple times. China claims Arunachal as its territory by referring to it as 'Zangnan' or southern Tibet. China has rechristened 30 locations in Arunachal with Chinese and Tibetan names. New Delhi has consistently rejected China's attempts to rename places in Arunachal, asserting that the state is an integral part of India.

Barely a couple of months before the G20 leader's summit in New Delhi last September, Beijing had played mischief by releasing a new map that asserted territorial claim over Arunachal and Aksai Chin in Ladakh. In the 2023 edition of China's 'standard map', uploaded by its ministry of natural resources on the website of its standard map service website, Aksai Chin and Arunachal are among the

south and south-east Asian territories marked within the Chinese borders.

In retaliation, the Indian military has planned similar tactics by changing the names of close to 30 places in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), backed by extensive historical research. However, the Indian military is awaiting a go-ahead from the newly formed Modi government 3.0 before escalating matters. South Block officials believe this is the only way to counter the narrative as China only understands the 'fit for tat' language.

### **India should recalibrate its position on China, says president of Tibetan government in exile**

16 June 2024, The Week, Namrata Biji Ahuja

PENPA TSERING HAS been closely watching China's military drills in the Taiwan Strait, renaming of villages in Arunachal Pradesh and the aggression in Ladakh. The president of the Tibetan government in exile in Dharamsala has trashed China's claims over Indian territory, citing the 1914 Simla Agreement that defines the border between India and Tibet to which Tibetans were signatories. "Tibetans are happy with that," he says. Excerpts from an interview:

“ As long as you keep giving more business to China, it will keep growing. And right now, there is no sign of China attempting to make a move towards more openness and becoming a responsible partner in the global community. ”

Q/ China's military drills in the Taiwan Strait have spurred concerns about a potential armed conflict in the Indo-Pacific region.

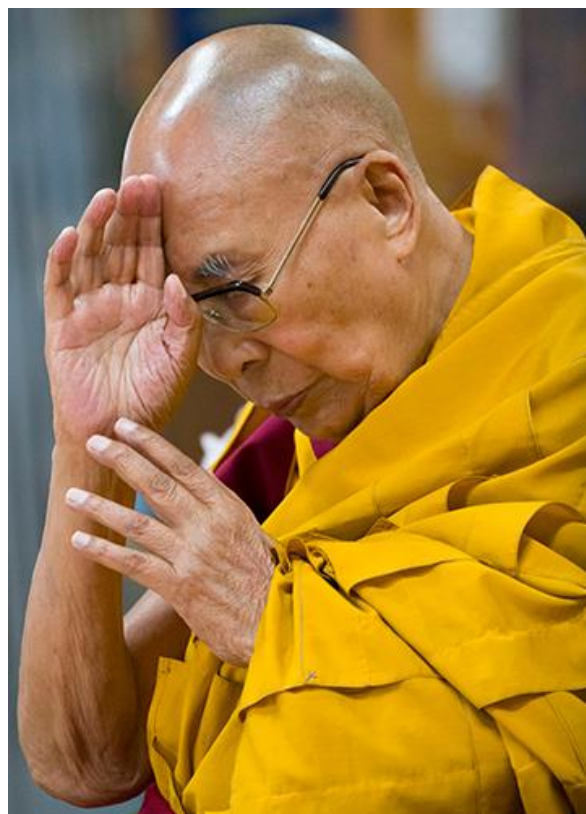
A/ Some years ago, when China announced air defence identification zones, I told our American friends that if the Chinese can claim the air they will claim anything underneath that. This is exactly what is happening, and it is not just the endeavour of reunification or invasion of Taiwan. Look at the whole of South China Sea or East China Sea, alongside Japan and Taiwan. China is giving Chinese names to all these territories. This is to redefine history, remove the historical background and claim these territories as its own. Though China denies territorial hegemonic ambitions, the world knows better.

But I tell the Taiwanese that China is not ready to attack them yet. Xi Jinping keeps moving the generals and commanders from one place to another in a very short period of time. There is no time for the generals to build relations with cadres. A general and the second-in-command do not trust each other. Then there are political commissars who oversee their work and they also do not trust each other. It is good for Xi to ensure that there is no military coup against

him, but it is not enough to fight a war. You need synchronisation among the cadres and also between the different arms of the military.

China is the only country that spends more money on internal security than external security threats, which demonstrates the deep distrust between the rulers and the ruled.

These are serious vulnerabilities aside from the economic wars that China is going through and the pivoting towards the Global South, which is also a huge competition for India. The question is how much purchasing power does the Global South have? And if China floods all the Global South countries with cheap products, it will kill all their small and medium-scale industries. Many already have realised the impact of Chinese investments in their countries. For example, all the African countries are now restructuring their loan repayment. And the level of debt economies that China has created around the maritime Silk Road and the taking over of strategic locations are known to people who understand China. Unfortunately, the Global South still has to learn more. They have very little understanding of China's motivation.



Dalai Lama | AP

Q/ How do you assess the border dispute between India and China?

A/ Way back in 1949, just after communism took over China, it invaded Tibet. Now, it claims parts of the Indian territory as southern Tibet and Arunachal Pradesh. But we Tibetans were signatories to the 1914 Simla Agreement that defines the border between India and Tibet through the McMahon Line. We are happy with that. But China's claim over all

these territories in Arunachal Pradesh or in Ladakh is based on what it claims to be Tibet's territory. It has now started renaming all territories, including those in Arunachal Pradesh. Therefore, the question now is whether the Tibetan interest and the Indian interest aligns or not.

India has been following the One China policy for decades. The only change now is that India does not keep repeating it. And, as I always say, India knows best. We also understand that India or any country will not leave aside its national interest for the interest of Tibet. But I think India tried its best to reach out to China, create a better atmosphere, both in political and business relationships. Unfortunately, China is pushing India more towards the west because of its behaviour.

Q/ Should India be worried about China's ambitions?

A/ The question is whether China needs India and the western world more or the democratic world needs China more. As long as you keep giving more business to China, it will keep growing. And right now, there is no sign of China attempting to make a move towards more openness and becoming a responsible partner in the global community. Particularly in Europe and America, you get this feeling that you cannot make China more powerful than what it already is. Chinese investments are growing in space technology, military, quantum computing, artificial intelligence and the Belt and Road Initiative, and creating debt economies around the world. So maybe it is time for India to recalibrate its position on China. Beijing respects only strength, not weakness.

We follow a non-violent approach to resolve the China-Tibet dispute through the Middle Way policy espoused by the Dalai Lama (in pic), which can only be understood if we understand the polarities that exist.

Q/ The US Senate has passed the Resolve Tibet Act, urging the Chinese government to engage in dialogue with the Dalai Lama or Tibetan leaders to resolve the China-Tibet dispute. How significant is this development?

A/ We have been working closely with the US Congress over the past two years to move this bill called the Resolve Tibet Act, which talks about countering China's disinformation on Tibetan history. And we are almost there. The bill was passed by the House Foreign Affairs Committee in November 2023, and this February it was passed on the House floor with 392 votes in favour. In April, it was unanimously moved in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and it recently went through the Senate. When it becomes a law in the US, it will become an important tool for us to reach out to other

governments to counter China's false narrative that Tibet is part of the People's Republic of China.

We follow a non-violent approach to resolve the China-Tibet dispute through the Middle Way policy espoused by the Dalai Lama, which can only be understood if we understand the polarities that exist. One polarity is to understand the historical status of Tibet as an independent state, and the other polarity is the present situation of Tibet under the repressive communist government. The historical status has not been pushed as much as we would have liked to and China, on the other hand, has been asking every country to say that Tibet is part of PRC. That is why the law is important to explain to governments that if they keep parroting what the Chinese want them to say then it is against the law because if they support negotiations between Representatives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Chinese government, then they cannot contradict themselves by saying Tibet is part of PRC, because that removes the very ground for negotiation.

Q/ The Dalai Lama turns 89 next month. As the political head of the Tibetan government in exile, what is your focus today?

A/ I have been travelling a lot to visit all the Tibetan settlements over the last two years. I promised my people that I would visit every single community two times in five years. We created a platform called the Voluntary Tibet Advocacy Group, where every Tibetan can join in advocating for Tibet. And this has been gaining ground now. One of our challenges is to prepare our younger generation for future leadership. Another challenge is to identify future challenges and make sure that those challenges are not there even before we reach there. Even though His Holiness keeps reassuring us that he will live for another two decades and more, we have to keep the community together, communications going on and reach out to the international community. I tell our Chinese friends, let us see whether Chinese Communist Party outlives the Dalai Lama or His Holiness outlives CCP.

Q/ Do you think it is time the Indian government openly declared that the Dalai Lama's successor will be chosen by the Dalai Lama himself or the Tibetan government in exile?

A/ To some extent it is taken for granted as to where India stands on this, whether it says it vocally or not. I am sure the Indian government is concerned about these issues and developing its own strategy. I believe that it is not going to happen during my tenure. His Holiness will definitely live long. But, at the same time, just as every government has its protocols, we are also preparing protocols. Whenever that eventuality happens, it will be revised by successive Sikyongs or Kashag (cabinet) members at that time.



I am sure that the Indian government will also be seriously thinking about this even though I have not had concrete conversations about this. But I think it is understood that these are definitely matters of concern. Fortunately for the Tibetans, because of His Holiness's leadership, we enjoy bipartisan, bicameral support on Tibet in the US. Even in the Indian Parliament, we have an all-party Indian parliamentary group for Tibet and all the successive governments have followed similar policies on Tibet. Of course, they are more vocal when they are in the opposition and less vocal when they are in government, but they all have the same thinking and support for Tibet.

### **'Unwarranted': India slams China, Pakistan for mentioning J&K in joint statement**

13 June 2024, Times of India

The ministry of external affairs on Thursday condemned the references of Jammu and Kashmir in the China-Pakistan joint statement calling it 'unwarranted'. In response to media queries on references to Jammu & Kashmir in the China-Pakistan Joint Statement, spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said: "We have noted unwarranted references to the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir in the joint statement between China and Pakistan of 07 June 2024.

We categorically reject such references. Our position on the issue is consistent and well-known to the concerned parties. The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and the Union Territory of Ladakh have been, are and will always remain integral and inalienable parts of India. No other country has the locus standing to comment on the same."

"The same joint statement also mentions activities and projects under the so-called China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, some of which are in India's sovereign territory under forcible and illegal occupation by Pakistan," New Delhi's statement read.

The MEA said it resolutely opposes and rejects any moves by other countries to reinforce legitimise Pakistan's illegal occupation of these territories, impinging on India's sovereignty and territorial integrity."

China and Pakistan recently released a joint statement after Shehbaz Sharif talked with Chinese President Xi Jinping on the Kashmir issue.

The joint statement said both China and Pakistan underscored the importance of maintaining peace and stability in South Asia, the need for resolution of all outstanding disputes, and their opposition to any unilateral action. "The Pakistani side briefed the Chinese side on the latest developments of the situation in Jammu and Kashmir. The Chinese side reiterated that the Jammu and Kashmir dispute is left

over from history, and should be properly and peacefully resolved in accordance with the UN Charter, relevant UN Security Council resolutions and bilateral agreements," the statement said.

### **China ready to improve bilateral ties with India and work on border dispute**

12 June 2024, The Economic Times

China said it is ready to collaborate with India to improve bilateral relations and mentioned that their border disputes "should be handled properly." This statement comes close on the heels of Narendra Modi returning to Prime Minister's chair for record-equalling third straight term though with a reduced majority.

According to a post on X by the Chinese embassy's spokesperson in India, China also highlighted that a stable relationship is "in the interest of both countries and conducive to peace and development in this region and beyond."

"China and India are important neighbouring countries. Relevant border issues should be handled properly. A sound and stable #ChinaIndia relationship is in the interest of both countries, and conducive to the peace and development in this region and beyond. China is willing to work with India to push forward bilateral relations in the right direction," the Spokesperson of Chinese Embassy in India wrote.

The embassy's statement comes a day after India's External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar reaffirmed his commitment to "finding a solution for the border issues" with China.

India will focus on resolving the remaining issues along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China, Jaishankar said on June 11. This comes amid the over four-year border dispute in eastern Ladakh that has significantly strained ties between the two Asian giants. Shortly after taking charge of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) for a second term, Jaishankar, referring to cross-border terrorism from Pakistan, said efforts will be made to address the challenge and that it "cannot be the policy of a good neighbour." India-China relation after border clashes China and India's relationship has been fraught since deadly border clashes in 2020, which resulted in at least 20 Indian soldiers and an undisclosed number of Chinese casualties. Despite multiple rounds of diplomatic and military negotiations aimed at easing tensions, relations remain tense.

Recently, Chinese Premier Li Qiang congratulated PM Modi on his re-election, but President Xi Jinping has not yet extended his congratulations, highlighting the ongoing strain between the two nations.

Meanwhile, a Chinese government spokeswoman last week criticised an exchange over X between Modi

and the government of Taiwan, which China claims as its territory.

"We noted the results of India's general election and extend congratulations on the victory of the BJP led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the National Democratic Alliance," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a media briefing here.

A healthy and stable China-India relationship is in the interest of both the countries, and conducive to the peace and development in this region and beyond, Mao said while responding to a question by the official media seeking China's comment on Modi's win.

China stands ready to work with India to act in the fundamental interests of the two countries and the two peoples, bear in mind the overall interest of our ties, look to the future and advance bilateral relations on a healthy and stable track, she said.

**India blocks Chinese money**

Since 2020, India has tightened restrictions on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from countries sharing land borders, mainly targeting Chinese investments. This policy change followed the Covid-19 outbreak and increased tensions at the Ladakh border. Consequently, Chinese automakers such as EV giant BYD have faced hurdles in expanding their investments in India.

BYD also proposed a joint venture with India's Megha Engineering, one of the biggest buyers of electoral bonds, but this plan was rejected by the home ministry.

In the four years since the rule change, the government has received around 450 applications from Chinese companies, rejecting 180 of them. Approximately 70 applications have been approved, including some from entities considered essential for iPhone production. Currently, about 200 proposals are pending with the government.

### **After Modi's election win, China calls for 'stable' relations with India**

05 June 2024, AA, Riyaz ul Khaliq

China expresses readiness to work with India to 'steer development of bilateral relations on a healthy and stable track'

China on Wednesday called for "stable" relations with India after Prime Minister Narendra Modi claimed third term win in general elections, state media reported.

"A sound and stable China-India relationship serves the common interests of both sides and is conducive to peace and development of the region and the world at large," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning told reporters in Beijing.

Modi on Tuesday evening claimed a win for the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in the seven-phased general elections.

According to official results, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won 240 seats in the 543-member lower house of parliament, while the main opposition Indian National Congress got 99 seats.

The BJP, however, remained short of the 272-seat majority on its own.

Tuesday's results, however, showed the NDA alliance won over 272 seats, the number required to form the government, while the opposition alliance secured over 230 seats.

Felicitating Modi on his win, Mao said: "China is ready to work with India to proceed from the fundamental interests of the two countries and the two peoples, bear in mind the overall situation and the future, and steer the development of bilateral relations on a healthy and stable track."

India and China have counterclaims in Arunachal Pradesh state of the South Asian nation while the two Himalayan neighbors are engaged in a border tussle in the Ladakh area of the disputed Jammu and Kashmir.

## **May**

### **Modi's uncoordinated approach on Tibet gives China the advantage**

29 May 2024, Himal SouthAsian



A Tibetan monk holds a picture of the Dalai Lama at a 2024 event in Delhi to mark the 65th anniversary of the 1959 Tibetan uprising. India appears to adopt multiple policies on Tibet and Tibetans – some proactive, others not. Photo: IMAGO/Zuma Wire

This story is part of 'Modi's India from the Edges', a special Himal series presenting Southasian regional perspectives on Narendra Modi's decade in power and possible return as prime minister in the 2024 Indian election. To read the series and support Himal's work on it, click here.

In April this year, India's prime minister, Narendra Modi, outlined his priority on India-China relations:

in an interview to Newsweek. "It is my belief that we need to urgently address the prolonged situation on our borders so that the abnormality in our bilateral interactions can be put behind us," Modi said. The very next day, a spokesperson for China's foreign ministry responded to the comment, saying, "The boundary question does not represent the entirety of China-India relations, and it should be placed appropriately in bilateral relations and managed properly."

This latest public exchange between India and China draws attention to an unstated but critical issue between the two countries – Tibet. The "borders" or the "boundary question" are nothing but references to the Indo-Tibetan border, which became a point of contention between the Asian behemoths after the Chinese takeover of Tibet in 1959. In less than a month, in the wake of India's ongoing general election, Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) may form a government in New Delhi for a third consecutive time, or the Indian National Congress and its allies may cause a major upset and take power. The new Indian government, however it is constituted, will have to contend with a poor near-term outlook for India-China relations, with Tibet continuing to be the elephant in the room.

### **'China allegedly invaded India in 1962': Congress' Mani Shankar Aiyar sparks row with remark**

29 May 2024, Business Today

The fallout from Aiyar's remarks saw Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh take to X to announce Aiyar's subsequent unreserved apology for his choice of words. Ramesh explained that the veteran leader had apologised for mistakenly using the term 'alleged invasion'.

Senior Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar sparked a fresh controversy by saying that China "allegedly" invaded India in October 1962. This statement has led to criticism from the ruling BJP, which condemned it as a "brazen attempt at revisionism".

The fallout from Aiyar's remarks saw Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh take to X to announce Aiyar's subsequent unreserved apology for his choice of words. Ramesh explained that the veteran leader had apologised for mistakenly using the term 'alleged invasion'.

Acknowledging Aiyar's age, Ramesh emphasised that the party had distanced itself from the original phrasing used by Aiyar during his speech at the book launch event 'Nehru's First Recruits' held at the Foreign Correspondents' Club in Delhi.

During the event, Aiyar recounted a personal anecdote about his application to the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) and shared his experience of being denied entry amid speculations linking him to leftist

ideologies. These statements, however, raised eyebrows and invited criticism from various groups, including from within his own party.

Realising the gravity of the situation, Aiyar later sought to clarify his stance, admitting that his choice of the term 'alleged' was inappropriate, particularly during an election period.

In response, BJP IT cell chief Amit Malviya lambasted Aiyar's comments as an attempt to whitewash history and criticised Congress leaders for their supposed favourable stance towards China.

While noting Aiyar's subsequent apology, Jairam Ramesh also criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his handling of recent Chinese invasions, highlighting past instances of Chinese aggression towards India.

Aiyar's recent statement adds to a string of controversial remarks he has made in the past, including urging India to respect Pakistan for its nuclear capabilities. These comments have sparked backlash from political leaders, with Prime Minister Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah condemning Aiyar's views.

### **The Chinese strategy of 'resettlement villages' aims at colonising LAC**

27 May 2024, First Post, Mahesh Ranjan Debata

Beijing seeks to settle Uyghurs, Tibetans, and Gorkhas along the nearly 3,500 km long Line of Actual Control from west to east through 'resettlement villages' or border defence villages

The People's Republic of China (PRC) has surprised the world many times with its skullduggery. India too has fallen prey to the Chinese perfidy in 1962, further in 2020. The latest Chinese trickery is all about the sinister design to settle Uyghurs, Tibetans, and the Gorkhas along the nearly 3,500 km long Line of Actual Control (LAC) from the western sector to the eastern sector through 'resettlement villages' or border defence villages (Xiaokang). China's central government has planned several hundred resettlement villages along its border with various countries, but the main target at present is India.

The Chinese policy of resettling Tibetans along the India-China border in Tibet, especially along the LAC in Arunachal Pradesh, is not a new phenomenon. The Chinese are pursuing, even forcing Tibetans on their battlefield with India. During an interaction with some villagers from Koyul village near Hot Spring in Ladakh Union Territory, which has been one of the friction points along the India-Tibet border, this author found an authentic local source of information in 2018 about the establishment of resettlement villages.

Similarly, there are reports in international news media that China is mulling over forcing the Uyghurs and other ethnic minority groups to settle down along Xinjiang's border with Ladakh as part of its specific plan to checkmate the overarching Indian presence along the Xinjiang-Ladakh part of LAC following the Galwan clashes on June 20, 2020. The Chinese may claim this strategy as a counterbalance against what the Indian public, media, intelligentsia, and defence veterans have been vociferously calling for since the Galwan incident—the use of the “Uyghur card” to put the Chinese on the back foot.

But what is more disturbing and a matter of grave concern is the apprehension in the Indian psyche that the brave Gorkhas, who have been the mainstay of the Indian military for decades, may be used as a shield along the LAC, especially on the eastern flank. China wants to take advantage of the issues related to Gorkhas's unhappiness and resentment after the Indian government announced the Agniveer scheme for a short stint in the Indian Army and the subsequent announcement by the Nepal government in 2022 not allowing the Nepalese citizens, especially Gorkhas, to join the Indian defence establishment. This is a golden opportunity for China to fish in the troubled waters. It will not fail to inject venom in the Gorkhas' minds to show hatred for India and use them against India.

No Chinese plan is devised without a strategy. The Chinese pretext in this context is that both Tibetans and Gorkhas, being acclimatised to the inclement weather and high altitude, will be a better bet than the mainland Han Chinese soldiers for mountainous warfare with India. The Chinese strategy is to provoke a war between Indian soldiers and the Tibetans, or Gorkhas, deployed along the border as the first line of defence. China will not leave any stone unturned to instigate India deliberately, as it has been doing for the last seven decades, for minor skirmishes that can turn into full-fledged war. If any war occurs in the future along the LAC, no Han Chinese soldier will be killed, but the poor and innocent soldiers on the front, be they Uyghurs, Tibetans, or Gorkhas, will be killed.

Chinese propaganda mechanisms will not fail to spread rumours about India's treachery against the Tibetans and Gorkhas. If India shows any consideration for Tibetans or Gorkhas during the war, it will lose badly. This will be a win-win situation for the Chinese, at least on the domestic front, but it will be an irreparable loss for India. For instance, the Chinese government will get a reprieve from the ire and resentment it faced on the home front after the Galwan clash that led to the deaths of several Chinese soldiers.

India will lose the considerable goodwill it has been enjoying amongst the Uyghurs, Tibetans, or Gorkhas

across the globe. But the grand Chinese design will be to use the Gorkhas to create instability along the border and inside India, exactly the way it has done in the Indian hinterland (Kashmir) with the help of Pakistan. The same may be recreated in West Bengal (especially Darjeeling), Northeastern states, Uttarakhand, and Sikkim, where a substantial population of Gorkhas live. Since there has been demand for a separate Gorkhaland out of the Indian state of West Bengal, Chinese efforts will be to exacerbate the situation further by providing men, money, and materials. Now, with the help of another South Asian state, Nepal, which has not a very amicable relationship with India at the present juncture, it will not hesitate to create internal instability in India. Earlier, for over seven decades, China had been using the South Asian nation of Pakistan to vitiate the atmosphere in Kashmir.

India will now face huge challenges on multiple fronts. The Chinese will ensure India curries the disfavour of the Tibetans and Gorkhas, who have been culturally, spiritually, and emotionally close to India. Particularly, the Gorkhas, who have had a strong bond with Indians for the last few centuries and who have been part of the Indian military, contributing immensely and sacrificing their lives for India, would nurse a grudge against India. By doing this, the Chinese are following in letter and spirit one of the teachings of Chinese philosopher Tsu Nzu, “killing your enemies without losing a single bullet,” described in his masterpiece, *The Art of War*. Two important points can be made here. China will set India right along the border by putting her at risk of taking any action against Tibetans and Gorkhas. Further, the old-age ties between India and Tibetans and India and Gorkhas will be severed.

If the Chinese government becomes successful in its plans and strategy against India, the disturbances and internal instability India endured in Kashmir for over seven decades (till August 2019) will reverberate with a new tone and tenor, jeopardising India's security and stability. It is high time the Indian government pondered this critical state of affairs. The Indian government and its defence establishment must find a counter-strategy to deal with the Chinese design. Military intelligence and thinkers must understand Chinese strategies and accordingly prepare the necessary defence against them. The Indian government has strategised its Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP) in 2023 in response to China's Xiaokang initiative for the comprehensive development of some sensitive villages along the LAC, such as Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, and Ladakh Union Territory. The government must ensure that it does not lose its most important constituency against China, the Tibetans. Further, the Gorkhas should not fall into

Chinese hands, which is not going to augur well for India.

## China Is Upgrading Dual-Use Villages Along Its Disputed Indian Border

May 16 2024, China Power, Jennifer Jun and Brian Hart

In the desolate and inhospitable Himalayas, China is constructing and expanding hundreds of “xiaokang” (小康) villages along its hotly disputed border with India.<sup>1</sup> These villages, often accompanied by military and dual-use infrastructure, are an important “gray zone” tool enabling China to assert and defend its claims near disputed areas. Commercial satellite images provide a glimpse into China’s activities and show that China is making rapid and significant progress on these border villages despite the harsh environment.

In July 2017, the government of China’s Tibet Autonomous Region announced plans to construct hundreds of border villages and accompanying infrastructure as part of a major push to develop China’s remote border regions. Between 2018 and 2022, the region reportedly built 624 villages, and work has continued on additional villages. Many of these are clustered along the eastern sector of the Line of Actual Control (LAC), the de facto border separating China and India. The eastern sector borders Arunachal Pradesh, a state administered by India but largely claimed by China as “South Tibet” (藏南).

Capturing high-resolution satellite imagery in this region is challenging due to heavy cloud cover, but images from recent months have enabled the analysis of four locations within a small 65 square kilometer (km<sup>2</sup>) area. These locations—Zhuangnan, Majiduncun, Yarao, and Kuqiongmen—were chosen to represent different development phases and types, including military, civilian, and dual-use infrastructure. Together, these sites serve as a microcosm of developments underway along much of the 3,500-km border.

Just seven kilometers northwest of the LAC sits the border village of Zhuangnan (庄南), where a likely military or paramilitary facility has undergone significant work in recent years.

Historical satellite images show a walled complex with at least eleven buildings built there by 2019. By 2020, however, seven of the buildings were razed and new buildings were built.

Additional work was done there in the years that followed. Satellite imagery from October 22, 2022, shows an upgraded walled complex encircling four buildings that appear to be barracks, as well as

another large building and a radome or communication tower.



Use the slider to compare images. View October 22, 2022, [image](#) and December 31, 2023, [image](#).

More recent images show two additional complexes being developed near the main complex since 2022. In an image from December 31, 2023, a new facility is visible due south of the main complex. It features high walls surrounding six buildings with vehicles throughout. Imagery also shows yet another new complex with a perimeter wall encircling a small, green-roofed building. Given its proximity to the nearby facilities, walled perimeter, and irregular shape, the green-roofed building is likely dedicated to observation or operational support.

The barracks, perimeter walls, and radome/communications tower located at these complexes indicate the likely presence of China’s military, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). It is also possible these facilities are operated by the paramilitary People’s Armed Police (PAP). Under China’s Land Borders Law, these two forces share responsibility for defending China’s borders from armed attacks or other encroachments.<sup>2</sup>

While the exact purpose of these facilities is unclear, their position so close to the LAC suggests they may offer the PLA or PAP a vantage point for monitoring activities along this area of the border.

### Expanded Village and Likely Military Activity at Majiduncun

Approximately 2 km north of Zhuangnan—and less than 10 km northwest of the disputed border, is the relatively large village Majiduncun (马及墩村), which has been significantly improved over the past two years.<sup>3</sup>

Majiduncun previously comprised a smaller number of buildings and two helipads, but by November 2018 the area started to be razed to make way for new building complexes. Imagery from October 22, 2022, shows village construction was still underway, with several of the new grey-roofed buildings to the north already complete.

Imagery captured about a year later, on November 8, 2023, shows the village’s new buildings externally completed, with well-paved roads throughout the area. Notably, the two existing helipads are still present. Given the region’s mountainous terrain,



helipads play a key role in facilitating the swift movement of people, equipment, and supplies in the area, especially during emergencies.



View October 22, 2022, image and November 8, 2023, image.

On the northern edge of the village is a likely PLA or PAP facility that shows signs of continued activity. The facility includes a gated entrance, a satellite dish, and changing numbers of likely military heavy trucks in the parking lot over the past year.

The presence of military or dual-use facilities is a common feature within xiaokang villages. China's Land Borders Law codifies border defense into the responsibilities of border area governments, calling for them to "strengthen the construction of mass defense forces [群防队伍] to maintain border security." Furthermore, a 2021 article in the official newspaper PLA Daily emphasizes the "need to strengthen the construction of border infrastructure and encourage people of all ethnic groups to root themselves in the border areas, guard the homeland, and build their hometowns" in this region.

This emphasis on leveraging civilian villages to support the military bears the hallmarks of China's "military-civil fusion" (军民融合) strategy, which aims to fuse together China's economic and military development to support overall national objectives.

It is also indicative of China's efforts to use gray zone tactics to advance its strategic and security interests in disputed areas while staying below the threshold of armed conflict. By building civilian villages, China can increase the population of remote border areas, adding legitimacy to its territorial claims. This simultaneously creates the necessary infrastructure to better support military and police forces, which, in turn, helps to protect local civilians from perceived threats across the border.

#### New Village at Yarao

Situated approximately 26 km northwest of the border is another example of one of China's xiaokang villages, called Yarao (亚绕). Roughly 30 buildings were constructed at Yarao between 2018 and early 2022, but work there accelerated in 2022. Satellite imagery shows that at least 65 new buildings of identical shape were built between March and November 2022. Workers also added a new road leading to two new helipads due east of the village.



View March 6, 2022, image and November 2, 2022, image.

The images available in November show that some of the new buildings at Yarao were not yet roofed, but more recent imagery analyzed by the authors shows that the buildings were externally completed by December.

The speed of construction at Yarao is a testament to China's capacity to rapidly build infrastructure to support new xiaokang villages. China's progress is particularly impressive given the inhospitable terrain of the Himalayas. Yarao sits at a breathtaking 3,900 meters above sea level, where the thin air can pose health risks, and harsh temperatures and weather can create logistical challenges.



#### New Potential Military Outpost at Kuqiongmen

Between these far-flung villages, China is constructing new roads and what may become small security outposts. One such potential location is visible near Kuqiongmen (亏穷们), approximately halfway between Majiduncun and Yarao.

Satellite imagery from March 13, 2020, shows a winding road along a steep hillside more than 3,700 meters in elevation leading to a small, blue-roofed building with a courtyard.

The original building was externally completed in early 2018 and then razed sometime between March 2020 and March 2022. Satellite imagery captured on November 16, 2023, shows significant work underway to expand the grounds formerly occupied by the building. Visible in the image are construction vehicles, equipment, and likely gabion walls to support continued hillside excavation. Along the road to this construction site, areas were cleared for open-air storage of construction materials and equipment.

It is not yet clear what kind of facilities will be built here but given the location's remoteness from other villages and its position on a hillside overlooking a valley, it is likely that this location could serve as a military or police outpost.



View March 13, 2020. [image](#) and November 16, 2023. [image](#).

## Conclusion

The four locations analyzed here comprise only a meager swath of the expansive disputed border. China has built hundreds of villages along the border in recent years, and it continues to expand and upgrade both civilian and military infrastructure in the area.

China is not alone in developing infrastructure along the border. Alarmed by China's border buildup, India also launched its own program to build villages in Arunachal Pradesh and other border states

However, China has demonstrated an enormous capacity to develop these regions, and India will find it challenging to keep pace with China.

China will continue developing these areas to support its strategic objectives. As it does, analysts should continue to observe China's activities to stay informed about its evolving approach and capabilities in the region.

## Open airing of serious differences belie border settlement hopes as China's new envoy arrived in India

16 May 2024, Tibetan Review

As China finally appointed an ambassador to New Delhi after keeping the post vacant for 18 months, the two sides have reiterated their complaints against and criticisms of each other on the four-year-old border standoff in eastern Ladakh, belying hopes, if any, for a new determination to resolve the issue at an early date.

India's External Affairs Minister, Mr S Jaishankar, reiterated New Delhi's desire for a resolution of remaining issues with China in a recent interview, highlighting that normal bilateral ties depended on peace and tranquillity at the border.

But while expressing a seemingly positive stance, Jaishankar indicated that the remaining (border) issues mainly revolve around "patrolling rights and

patrolling abilities," decried China's official [globaltimes.cn](http://globaltimes.cn) May 13.

This is because China has repeatedly opposed this stance of India, arguing that the border issue need not be a hindrance to normalizing bilateral ties in other areas.

The report said Chinese scholars and military experts, reflecting the official line, strongly objected to these remarks, "cautioning that they effectively annex the current disputed areas into Indian territory, constituting a severe infringement of Chinese sovereignty."

The report complained that Jaishankar had made the remarks during an exclusive interview with the PTI news agency, emphasizing that resolving border issues is a foundation on which the relationship between the two countries can come back to normal. What the report took as "seemingly positive" was the fact that Jaishankar had commented on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks to the Newsweek magazine last month that the border situation needed to be addressed urgently and that stable and peaceful ties between India and China were important for not just the two countries but for the entire region and the world.

Hu Zhiyong, a research fellow with the Institute of International Relations at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, has called on China to remain highly vigilant on Jaishankar's remarks. His "patrol rights" remarks actually incorporate the current disputed areas between China and India into Indian territory, severely infringing upon Chinese sovereignty, the report cited Hu as saying.

Hu is of the view that while Modi downplays the Chinese-Indian border issue, Jaishankar adopts a tougher stance, indicating that the softening of Modi's attitude may be only for the sake of domestic elections, a stratagem to woo a group of swing voters. He has accused Jaishankar of deliberately provoking China.

Zhang Junshe, a Chinese military expert, has accused Jaishankar of blaming China for the current border standoff. "It's quite obvious that the current border issues are entirely caused by India's continuous provocations in recent years. As long as India stops provoking, the problem can calm down." He wanted both parties to "place the border issue in an appropriate position within their bilateral relations."

If India attempts to use the border issue as leverage against China, it won't work because China is equally determined to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity, Zhang has maintained.

The report noted that Chinese ambassador-designate to India, Xu Feihong, had said during an interview on May 10 that the Chinese side believed that China-India ties should not be defined by any single issue

or area, and the boundary question is not the entirety of the relationship.

The report also noted Xu's remark that China was ready to work with India to accommodate each other's concerns, find a mutually acceptable solution to specific issues through dialogue at an early date, and turn the page as soon as possible.

But given China's hardline expansionist position, calling for "a mutually acceptable solution to specific issues" appears to be a devoid of any meaning.

Meanwhile, Jaishankar has reiterated India's position on May 14, saying the deployment of forces at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China (ie, occupied Tibet) was "abnormal" and the security of the country should not be disregarded.

Speaking at an event organised by the Indian Chamber of Commerce in Kolkata, Jaishankar has said India responded to the Galwan Valley clash by counter-deployment of forces there.

"In 2020, the Chinese, in violation of multiple agreements, brought a large number of forces to our border and they did it at the time when we were under Covid lockdown," news18.com May 14 quoted Jaishankar as saying.

#### **Jaishankar on India-China standoff: 'Abnormal deployment along LAC'**

15 May 2024, Hindustan Times

External affairs minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar on Tuesday described the deployment of forces at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China as 'abnormal', adding that the security of the country should not be disregarded.

"After 1962, Rajiv Gandhi went to China in 1988 in many ways that was the key step towards normalising the ties (with China)...there was a clear understanding that we will discuss our boundary differences but we will maintain peace and tranquillity on the border. And the rest of the relationship will carry on," the minister was quoted by PTI as saying at an event in Kolkata.

"What changed now is what happened in 2020. In 2020, the Chinese, in violation of multiple agreements, brought a large number of forces to our border and they did it at the time when we were under COVID lockdown," Jaishankar said. The minister asserted that India responded by counter deployment of force and for four now, the forces have been deployed ahead of the normal base positions at Galwan. "This is a very abnormal deployment along the LAC. Given the tension between the two countries... As Indian citizens, none of us should disregard the security of the country...it is today a challenge", he said. There is also an economic challenge, he said, which is due to "neglect of the manufacturing and infrastructure sectors in the

previous years. "Why is Indian business buying so much from China... Is it good to be so dependent on some other source?" Jaishankar added. The relations between India and China are strained since the June 2020 clashes in Galwan valley.

Last week, Jaishankar had said that New Delhi hopes for a resolution of the remaining issues with Beijing. The minister asserted that a return to normal bilateral ties hinges on peace and tranquillity at the border.

"We would hope that there is a resolution of the remaining issues out there. These issues mainly pertain to patrolling rights and patrolling abilities there," Jaishankar had told PTI.

#### **China is India's top trade partner, enjoys a huge trade surplus**

12 May, 2024, Tibetan Review

Despite what India has been saying about the normalization of its overall ties with China being subject to the resolution of the ongoing four-year-old border standoff in eastern Ladakh, trade between the two countries has been rising, and in China's favour.

China has emerged as the largest trading partner of India with \$118.4 billion two-way commerce in 2023-24, slightly edging past the US, said a PTI news agency report May 12, citing data from economic think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI).

The US was the top trading partner of India during 2021-22 and 2022-23.

China continues to enjoy a huge trade surplus with India. The data were stated to show that India's exports to China rose by 8.7% to \$16.67 billion in the last fiscal. The main sectors which recorded healthy growth in exports to that country include iron ore, cotton yarn/fabrics/made-ups, handloom, spices, fruits and vegetables, plastic and linoleum. Imports from China increased by 3.24% to \$101.7 billion.

"This growth in imports led to an expanding trade deficit in India, rising from \$53.57 billion in FY2019 to \$85.09 billion in FY2024, highlighting concerns over stagnant exports amidst rising imports," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava has said.

#### **China's new envoy to India appears accommodating, but belittles border standoff issue**

12 May, 2024, Tibetan Review

China's new envoy to India, who arrived in New Delhi on May 10, appears to have expressed willingness on the part of his government to be accommodating in talks on settling the ongoing, nearly four-year-old border standoff in eastern



Ladakh. India has accused China of bring inflexible, trying to create a new border status quo by refusing to withdraw its troops from new patrolling areas they have been in occupation since its mid-2020 incursions.

China is ready to work with India to “accommodate” each other’s concerns and find a mutually acceptable solution to “specific issues” through dialogue at an early date, the PTI news agency May 11 cited Xu Feihong as saying.

The report cited Xu, 60, as saying he regarded his posting in New Delhi as an “honourable mission and a sacred duty” to improve and advance the bilateral ties.

“China is ready to work with India to accommodate each other’s concerns, find a mutually acceptable solution to specific issues through dialogue at an early date, and turn the page as soon as possible,” Xu has said.

The post of the Chinese ambassador in New Delhi has been lying vacant for 18 months before the appointment of Xu, who ranks as an Assistant Minister.

Relations between the two countries hit a new low ever since the eastern Ladakh border standoff erupted on May 5, 2020, following a violent clash in the Pangong Tso (lake) area. The two sides have so far held 21 rounds of Corps Commander-level talks to resolve the standoff, the report noted.

India has been pressing the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) to disengage from the Depsang and Demchok areas, persistently making it clear that there could not be a restoration of normalcy in bilateral relations so long as the border situation remained abnormal.

The report cited the Chinese military as saying that so far, the two sides had agreed to disengage from four points, namely the Galwan Valley, the Pangong Lake, Hot Springs, and Jianan Daban (Gogra).

Earlier, in what was seen as a softening of India’s tone or stand on its defiant posture on the tense Tibet-border situation with China, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said the two sides should “urgently address the prolonged situation on our borders so that the abnormality in our bilateral interactions can be put behind us”.

“I hope and believe that through positive and constructive bilateral engagement at the diplomatic and military levels, we will be able to restore and sustain peace and tranquillity in our borders,” Modi had added in an interview published Apr 10 by the US magazine Newsweek.

Xu has referred to these remarks from Modi, saying “I noted Prime Minister Modi’s comments on the importance of China-India ties, and the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson responded to that right afterwards.”

However, Xu has then referred to China’s oft repeated stand, which India has pointedly rejected so far. “The Chinese side always believes that China-India ties should not be defined by any single issue or area; the boundary question is not the entirety of the relationship.

“Speaking at the Indian Council of World Affairs in September 2014, President Xi Jinping said that we must not focus our attention only on differences and forget about our friendship and cooperation, still less should we allow the differences to stand in the way of our development and interfere with the overall growth of bilateral relations,” Xu has said.

### **Indian Embassy in China holds first meeting with students hit hard by COVID visa bans**

05 May 2024, The Economic Times

The Indian Embassy here has held its first interactive session with the Indian students who suffered the most during the three-year COVID-19 period following China’s visa bans prolonging their academic periods for several years.

Around 80 old and new students from more than 13 Chinese universities took part in the “welcome and interaction ceremony” held on May 4. Indian Ambassador to China Pradeep Kumar Rawat, and Counsellor Nitinjeet Singh interacted with the students and heard their grievances and experiences during Saturday’s meeting.

The meeting also included a detailed presentation by Amit Sharma, Second Secretary (Education) on various services offered by the Embassy, Dos & Don’ts for students, the Embassy posting on X said.

Until the coronavirus struck China in early 2020 over 23,000 Indian students mostly studying medicine in Chinese universities constituting the second-highest number of foreign students after Pakistan.

Currently, the numbers reportedly come down to around 10,000 across China.

Chinese medical universities became preferred destinations in the past as private medical colleges in India charged exorbitant fees while admissions to government institutions became extremely competitive.

However, they have to write the Foreign Medical Graduates Examination in India to qualify for practice in India.

When COVID-19 struck China, most of the Indian students left for home at the height of lockdowns and could not return until early last year due to China’s visa bans and restrictions.

Many of them started returning in the latter part of 2022 while the Chinese universities began a new intake of students last year.

Some of the old students in their media interactions said they are shattered by China’s COVID visa

bans and feel that Beijing could have handled the crisis more compassionately taking into consideration the impact of the restrictions had on their academic careers and meagre budgets as most of them hail from middle-class backgrounds.

Saturday's meeting was the first held by the Indian Embassy here to step up its interactions with the students considering their plight and the issues they faced.

During the height of the COVID visa bans, the Embassy actively pursued with China to permit the early return of the students considering the damage the delay caused to their studies.

Students said they were told at the meeting to remain cautious and disciplined strictly abiding by the local laws.

According to recent reports, three Indian students were under detention in China on charges of criminal offences.

## April

### Chinese military on PM Modi's border remarks: 'Situation generally stable'

26 April 2024, India Today

The Chinese military, reacting to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent comments on the India-China border row, said the present situation was "generally stable". It also said both countries had "effective" communication to resolve the standoff in eastern Ladakh.

The Chinese military on Thursday said the situation along the India-China border "at present" is "generally stable" and both sides have maintained "effective" communication to resolve the military standoff in eastern Ladakh.

Defence Ministry spokesman Senior Colonel Wu Qian was reacting to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent interview with Newsweek magazine. PM Modi had expressed hope that through positive and constructive bilateral engagement at the diplomatic and military levels, India and China will be able to restore and sustain peace and tranquillity at their borders.

"At present, the situation in the border areas between China and India is generally stable," Wu said.

"Both the sides have maintained effective communication through diplomatic and military channels had positive constructive dialogue and achieved positive progress," he said while responding to a question on PM Modi's remarks and also Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's reported comments that India will continue to have dialogue

with China to resolve the standoff at the border areas.

Wu said that "both sides have agreed to reach a mutually acceptable solution as soon as possible" to resolve the standoff.

In his interview, Modi said that for India, the relationship with China is important and significant. "It is my belief that we need to urgently address the prolonged situation on our borders so that the abnormality in our bilateral interactions can be put behind us. Stable and peaceful relations between India and China are important for not just our two countries but the entire region and world," he said.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning in her response to Modi's interview on April 11 said sound and stable China-India relations serve the interests of both countries and are conducive to peace and development in the region and beyond.

Relations between India and China are frozen except for trade ever since the eastern Ladakh border standoff erupted on May 5, 2020, following a violent clash in the Pangong Tso (lake) area. The eastern Ladakh standoff has resulted in a freeze of bilateral ties on all fronts except trade.

The two sides have so far held 21 rounds of corps commanders-level talks to resolve the standoff.

According to the Chinese military, the two sides so far agreed to disengage from four points, namely the Galwan Valley, the Pangong Lake, Hot Springs, and Jianan Daban (Gogra).

India is pressing the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to disengage from the Depsang and Demchok areas, maintaining that there cannot be restoration of normalcy in its relations with China as long as the state of the borders remains abnormal.

### China may say whatever they want, but Sikkim is part of India: CM PS Tamang

26 April 2024, Northeast Now

Sikkim chief minister Prem Singh Tamang-Golay has reaffirmed the territorial integrity of India, saying that the Himalayan state is an integral part of the country.

Sikkim CM PS Tamang-Golay was reacting to the territorial claims made by China on the Himalayan state.

"Sikkim is an inseparable part of India," said CM PS Tamang-Golay.

The Sikkim chief minister added: "Regardless of any claims China make, we are an integral part of the vast Indian nation. Even if they make baseless claims, there is no truth to them."

He made this remark while on a "religious visit" to Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh on Thursday (April 25).



CM Tamang said: "This visit of mine is purely for religious purposes. I am here to seek blessings from His Holiness the Dalai Lama."

### **India takes big step to counter China snooping threat from surveillance cameras**

16 April 2024, India Today

The government has amended the compulsory registration order for CCTV cameras sold in India to make testing of their 'essential security parameters' mandatory

After a series of deliberations on how to check alleged snooping by Beijing through a web of Chinese-origin CCTV cameras installed across India, including government and military establishments, the Union government has come out with safety guidelines keeping national security as top priority.

To date, the Indian government had no mechanism to check the installation of these Chinese-origin surveillance cameras, as the certification for such devices in use in the country only looked into aspects such as fire hazard or durability, and not security or snooping threats.

But early last week, the Union ministry of electronics and information technology (MeitY) amended the compulsory registration order (CRO) for CCTV cameras sold in India. This amendment makes the testing of 'essential security parameters' of all CCTV cameras mandatory. Given the massive network of such cameras, the new regulation comes into effect on October 9 this year, thereby allowing manufacturers sufficient time to adapt.

Prioritising national security in such matters is crucial, especially given the sensitive nature of government and military establishments. Setting up guidelines to monitor and certify these surveillance cameras on the security aspect is a prudent move.

India is estimated to have over two million surveillance cameras, installed at every nook and corner. Out of these, around a million cameras made by Chinese companies are installed in various government institutions, posing a serious risk of snooping. It is suspected that CCTVs being deployed in most Indian government projects are of Chinese origin—imported from China and supplied as Made in India. This is a threat to national security.

It is estimated that the market penetration of Chinese CCTVs is over 80 per cent for domestic and over 98 per cent for government installations. As experts say, countries no longer need to send spies across the border. Such suspect CCTVs become the eyes of any country aiming to do mischief. Such cameras are the best tool for technical intelligence. The unchecked proliferation of such devices across India is a grave security risk.

The cover story of INDIA TODAY magazine's March 6, 2023 edition had unravelled the threat of China snooping on India through hundreds of thousands of such surveillance cameras, with security experts flagging serious concerns about the security threat.

In last week's notification, dated April 9, MeitY made the testing of 'essential security parameters' of CCTV cameras mandatory. The notification also mandates that test reports from Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)-recognised labs, such as the Standardisation Testing and Quality Certification, would need to be submitted by manufacturers.

Reacting to the guidelines, Lieutenant General Rajesh Pant (retired), former national cyber security coordinator for India's National Security Council and also chairman of the Cyber Security Association of India, told INDIA TODAY that the proliferation of CCTVs in the country without any security checks had created a major vulnerability for national security, since most of these devices were imported from the country of concern. This has led to remote surveillance and loss of data. "The notification by MeitY is a long-awaited and welcome step by the government to ensure that essential security parameters are built into these devices. I hope this is extended to all IoT (internet of things) devices in the future," Lt Gen. Pant said.

### **PM spells out India's position on China**

16 April 2024, The Statesman

In a recent interview to Newsweek, the Prime Minister, discussing Indo-China relations, commented, "For India, the relationship with China is important and significant. It is my belief that we need to urgently address the prolonged situation on our borders so that the abnormality in our bilateral interactions can be put behind us. I hope and believe that through positive and constructive bilateral engagement at the diplomatic and military levels, we will be able to restore and sustain peace and tranquillity on our borders." These words coming from Mr Narendra Modi, especially when electioneering is gaining steam, are profound. This is possibly the first time that the PM has hinted at rapprochement with China. Till now central ministers took credit for the performance of the army in the ongoing standoff, while insisting on no loss of territory. External Affairs minister S Jaishankar had repeatedly stated that bilateral ties cannot be normal unless the border situation reverts to pre-April 2020. PM Modi has adopted the same approach, while supporting dialogue.

The PM had thus far maintained silence, while avoiding an embarrassing situation resulting from him and President Xi Jinping being present on a common platform. The conduct of the SCO (Shanghai

Cooperation Organization) summit in online mode as also the nonpresence of Mr Xi at the G-20 worked to his benefit. The PM even refused to meet the Chinese foreign minister, Wang Yi, on his visits to India. India also rejected calls by China to rebuild relations placing the border issue at an 'appropriate place' while concentrating on other aspects of the relationship. Simultaneously, India is expending resources to boost its military capabilities and infrastructure to close the gap with China.

The recent conduct of the Agni 5 test with MIRV technology, demonstrated that India is an equal and not a nation which could be pressured or bullied. India's military deployment along the LAC matches China's, confirming that India will not back down. The PM's message was that while India is extending a hand of friendship it possesses the capability to respond in case of any misadventures. To assuage Chinese misconceptions, the PM also spoke of the Quad. He mentioned, "Quad is not aimed against any country. Like many other international groupings, SCO, BRICS and others, Quad is a group of likeminded countries working on a shared positive agenda." He added, "The Quad has established itself as an important platform for ensuring peace, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific." The message was evident. Apart from countering China's continuous prattle that the Quad is a military alliance created to contain it, PM Modi confirmed that India will remain its member and be allied to the West, while balancing its ties with others. The message could not have been more subtle.

These signals from the nation's top leadership were assessed by the Chinese. Since India is in the midst of elections, there is unlikely to be any forward movement from Beijing. PM Modi's statements for normalization of ties come at a time when relations between the two nations are sliding downhill. Further, tensions in the East and South China Seas as also the Taiwan strait are at an all-time high. China has, for the third time, issued its own list of names for places in Arunachal Pradesh, strongly condemned by India.

The Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson, Mao Ning, stated "China noted PM Modi's remarks." She added, "China and India are in close communication through diplomatic and military channels to address issues related to the border situation, and have achieved positive progress." She parroted the Chinese line, "We hope that India will work with China to place the boundary question appropriately in bilateral relations and manage it properly, and put the relationship on a sound and steady track."

The Global Times, Beijing's mouthpiece, in an editorial termed PM Modi's remarks as 'rare,' mentioning, "Modi's direct statement, especially his clear position, is quite rare and carefully timed,

hence receiving exceptional attention from the public." It added, "Modi's interview has sent out quite positive signals regarding China-Indian relations." It further mentioned that China believes that the statement may not be too 'pleasing' to some in Washington. Beijing assumes that Washington desires Indo-China ties remain tense as it backs their Indo-Pacific strategy.

As per the Global Times, 'being in conflict would squeeze resources needed for development (for India).' Possibly the Chinese are hinting that the current deployment is the new normal and should be accepted. For China to pull back to pre-April 2020 positions could be considered a setback. Internally, the PM's statement was criticized by the Congress. Its spokesperson, Jairam Ramesh, tweeted, 'the Prime Minister's reaction to the China issue is not only disgraceful but also disrespectful to our martyrs who made the supreme sacrifice in defending our borders.' PM Modi also clarified that India will compete with China in the economic field. He mentioned, "We believe that when a country with one-sixth of the world's population adopts global standards, it will have a big positive impact on the world. We have major global manufacturing entities setting up shops in India. India is now globally considered most suited for manufacturing world-class goods at competitive cost.

Apart from producing for the world, the vast Indian domestic market is an added attraction." Evidently, India is proving to be the destination that companies exiting China wish to embrace. The forthcoming visit of Elon Musk and talks of a plant in India has China concerned. Sending a message to Pakistan on non-interference, PM Modi mentioned, "I won't comment on matters internal (incarceration of Imran Khan) to Pakistan." The Pakistani government reciprocating appears unlikely. There were no comments from Islamabad on PM Modi's statement.

India is clear. While it seeks dialogue and desires normalization of ties, it will not bow down. Its capability, development and trained armed forces send a firm message that it is not a pushover. For China, facing tensions in the East and South China seas, as also the straits of Taiwan, alongside a receding economy, peace with India is to its advantage. PM Modi's message has been received in Beijing. It is now for them to respond. Unless they display positivity, tensions would remain. Further, India will compete with China by offering better sops to global manufacturers. (The writer is a retired Major-General of the Indian Army.)

## India takes big step to counter China snooping threat from surveillance cameras

16 April 2024, India Today

The government has amended the compulsory registration order for CCTV cameras sold in India to make testing of their 'essential security parameters' mandatory.

After a series of deliberations on how to check alleged snooping by Beijing through a web of Chinese-origin CCTV cameras installed across India, including government and military establishments, the Union government has come out with safety guidelines keeping national security as top priority.

To date, the Indian government had no mechanism to check the installation of these Chinese-origin surveillance cameras, as the certification for such devices in use in the country only looked into aspects such as fire hazard or durability, and not security or snooping threats.

But early last week, the Union ministry of electronics and information technology (MeitY) amended the compulsory registration order (CRO) for CCTV cameras sold in India. This amendment makes the testing of 'essential security parameters' of all CCTV cameras mandatory. Given the massive network of such cameras, the new regulation comes into effect on October 9 this year, thereby allowing manufacturers sufficient time to adapt.

Prioritising national security in such matters is crucial, especially given the sensitive nature of government and military establishments. Setting up guidelines to monitor and certify these surveillance cameras on the security aspect is a prudent move.

India is estimated to have over two million surveillance cameras, installed at every nook and corner. Out of these, around a million cameras made by Chinese companies are installed in various government institutions, posing a serious risk of snooping. It is suspected that CCTVs being deployed in most Indian government projects are of Chinese origin—imported from China and supplied as Made in India. This is a threat to national security.

It is estimated that the market penetration of Chinese CCTVs is over 80 per cent for domestic and over 98 per cent for government installations. As experts say, countries no longer need to send spies across the border. Such suspect CCTVs become the eyes of any country aiming to do mischief. Such cameras are the best tool for technical intelligence. The unchecked proliferation of such devices across India is a grave security risk.

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Reacting to the guidelines, Lieutenant General Rajesh Pant (retired), former national cyber security coordinator for India's National Security Council and also chairman of the Cyber Security Association of India, told INDIA TODAY that the proliferation of CCTVs in the country without any security checks had created a major vulnerability for national security, since most of these devices were imported from the country of concern. This has led to remote surveillance and loss of data. "The notification by MeitY is a long-awaited and welcome step by the government to ensure that essential security parameters are built into these devices. I hope this is extended to all IoT (internet of things) devices in the future," Lt Gen. Pant said.

## Indian Army celebrates 40 years of 'Operation Meghdoot' on Siachen Glacier

13 April 2024, The Economic Times

The Indian Army marked a significant milestone as it commemorated 40 years since the commencement of its presence on the strategically vital Siachen Glacier. Known as 'Operation Meghdoot', this operation has been a remarkable journey of technological progress and logistical advancements.

**Technological Progress and Infrastructure Development**

Over the last four decades, significant efforts have been made to enhance infrastructure and habitat on the Siachen Glacier. One notable advancement is the improvement in mobile and data connectivity, with the introduction of VSAT (Very Small Aperture Terminal) technology. This technology has revolutionized communication on the glacier, providing troops with crucial data and internet connectivity.

**Enhanced Supply Chain and Logistics**

The introduction of heavy-lift helicopters and logistic drones has significantly improved the supply of essential resources to personnel stationed at isolated posts, especially during harsh winter conditions. This includes ensuring the availability of clothing, mountaineering equipment, and rations.

**Improved Living Conditions and Connectivity**

Recent initiatives have focused on improving connectivity, leading to advancements in the supply chain. This has ensured that personnel stationed at forward posts in the Northern and Central Glaciers now have access to fresh rations and vegetables.

### State-of-the-Art Medical Infrastructure

The Siachen Glacier now boasts state-of-the-art medical infrastructure, including telemedicine nodes established by ISRO. These facilities provide critical medical support not only to troops but also to the local populace and tourists in the Nubra Valley.

### Recognition of Sacrifices and Immortal Spirit

The Indian Army, in a press release, acknowledged the sacrifices of its brave soldiers and the immortal spirit that has characterized its long deployment in Siachen.

### Operation Meghdoot's Unique Significance

Launched in 1984 to secure the Siachen Glacier in Jammu and Kashmir, 'Operation Meghdoot' was unique as it involved the first assault on the world's highest battlefield. The result was the Indian troops gaining control of the entire Siachen Glacier.

Operation Meghdoot, launched on April 13, 1984, by the Indian Army and Indian Air Force (IAF), marked a pivotal moment in securing the Siachen Glacier, a strategically crucial region dominating Northern Ladakh. The operation involved airlifting Indian Army soldiers, with IAF helicopters operating in the area since 1978, including the first landing of an IAF helicopter on the glacier in October 1978.

The need for Operation Meghdoot arose due to Pakistan's cartographic aggression in Ladakh, allowing foreign mountaineering expeditions in Siachen. Intelligence inputs about impending Pakistani military action prompted India to secure strategic heights on Siachen, deploying troops via airlifts and air-dropping supplies to high-altitude airfields.

### IAF's Role and Evolution in Operation Meghdoot

The IAF played a crucial role in supporting Operation Meghdoot, initially focusing on transport and helicopter aircraft for troop and material transport. Gradually, the IAF expanded its role, deploying fighter aircraft like the Hunter, MiG-23s, and MiG-29s, operating from high-altitude airfields at Leh and Thoise. This expanded role included fighter sweeps and simulated strikes over the glacier, boosting morale and deterring adversaries.

In 2009, the IAF inducted Cheetal helicopters, re-engineered for high-altitude operations, and in 2013, showcased its capabilities by landing a Lockheed Martin C-130J Super Hercules at Daulat Beg Oldie, the world's highest airstrip near the line of actual control in Ladakh. Today, a variety of IAF aircraft, including Rafale, Su-30MKI, Chinook, Apache, and others, support Operation Meghdoot.

### IAF's Lifeline Role in Extreme Conditions

Operating in the highest battlefield globally, IAF helicopters are the lifeline for Indian troops, providing crucial support in emergencies, logistics supply, and evacuating the sick and wounded from the glacier. Their operations set records in human

endurance, flying, and technical proficiency, showcasing the IAF's commitment and skill in supporting the four-decade-old military operation on the Siachen Glacier.

As the Indian Army celebrates 40 years on the Siachen Glacier, it reflects not only on the progress made in technological advancements and logistical improvements but also on the sacrifices and dedication of its personnel. 'Operation Meghdoot' stands as a testament to India's commitment to safeguarding its borders and ensuring the well-being of its troops in one of the world's most challenging terrains.

### China has not occupied any Indian land, claims S Jaishankar

13 April 2024, Scroll

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar claimed on Friday that China has not occupied any of India's land, but said that the situation along the Line of Actual Control remains "competitive, sensitive and challenging", The Indian Express reported.

The Line of Actual Control is the de facto demarcation between Indian and Chinese-held territory.

Jaishankar, during a press meet in Pune, said that India and China earlier never had troops on the Line of Actual Control, and both armies deployed forces away from it on their respective sides.

The minister said that China had brought its troops forward in some locations along the Line of Actual Control in 2020. "In response, we also advanced our units and a standoff ensued," he said. "After that, the two armies continue to battle for supremacy... But there is no encroachment."

The minister added: "China has tried to bring its troops to the upper part of the mountainous areas along the LAC [Line of Actual Control] but the Indian Army also responded to it in the same manner."

However, in January last year, a senior police officer posted in Leh said in a research paper that India has lost access to 26 out of 65 patrolling points in the eastern Ladakh region. Leh Senior Superintendent of Police PD Nitya had said that Indian security forces were no longer able to patrol 26 patrolling points located between the Karakoram Pass and the Chumur region in eastern Ladakh – a major flashpoint of border conflicts between India and China. A report by the United States Department of Defense on October 19 said that China continued to develop large-scale military infrastructure, including an airport, along the Line of Actual control in 2022 despite holding talks with India on resolving border disagreements. Border tensions between India and China have increased since June 2020 when a major face-off between Indian and Chinese soldiers took

place in Galwan Valley of Ladakh. The clashes, which took place at multiple locations along the Line of Actual Control, had led to the deaths of 20 Indian soldiers. Beijing had said that the clash left four of its soldiers dead. Tensions had flared at multiple friction points, with both countries stationing tens of thousands of troops backed by artillery, tanks and fighter jets. Since the Galwan clashes, China and India have held several rounds of military and diplomatic talks to resolve the border standoff.

### **China says 'great positive progress' made to resolve border row with India**

12 April 2024, Times of India

Chinese foreign ministry official on Friday said that China and India have made "great positive progress" to resolve the border standoff, with both sides maintaining close communication throughout the process.

This statement by foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning was elaborated on China's response to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent comments in which he said that for New Delhi, ties with Beijing are important and the "prolonged situation" at the borders should be addressed urgently.

PM Modi, in an interview with Newsweek magazine, expressed optimism that through constructive engagement at diplomatic and military levels, both countries can achieve peace and tranquillity at the border.

In response to a question on PM Modi's interview to Newsweek, Mao said, "About the border issue, I can tell you that China and India are remaining in close communication through diplomatic and military channels and great positive progress has been made."

"We also believe that a healthy China and India relations serve the interests of the two countries," she said.

"China hopes that India will work in the same direction with China to properly manage the differences and promote the bilateral relations forward on a healthy stable track," Mao added.

This was China's response for the second time in two days to PM Modi's interview. "It is my belief that we need to urgently address the prolonged situation on our borders so that the abnormality in our bilateral interactions can be put behind us," the Prime Minister said in his interview.

"Stable and peaceful relations between India and China are important for not just our two countries but the entire region and world," PM Modi said.

The Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson reiterated China's stance on the border issue and said, "Sound and stable China-India relations serve the interests of

both countries and are conducive to peace and development in the region and beyond."

On the boundary question, she clarified China's oft-repeated stand that it does not "represent the entirety of China-India relations, and it should be placed appropriately in bilateral relations and managed properly".

India, on the other hand, has maintained that there cannot be restoration of normalcy in its relations with China as long as the state of the borders remains abnormal. Both countries have engaged in close communication through diplomatic and military channels, making progress towards addressing the border situation, Mao said.

"We hope that India will work with China, approach the bilateral relations from a strategic height and long-term perspective, keep building trust and engage in dialogue and cooperation, and seek to handle differences appropriately to put the relationship on a sound and stable track," she added.

The recent interactions between China and India come against the backdrop of the standoff in eastern Ladakh since May 5, 2020, following clashes in the Pangong Tso (lake) area.

The two nations have conducted multiple rounds of talks to ease tensions, agreeing to disengage from certain points. However, India continues to urge China to disengage from additional areas to normalize relations fully.

The two sides so far agreed to disengage from four points, namely the Galwan Valley, the Pangong Lake, Hot Springs, and Jianan Daban (Gogra), as per the Chinese military.

India urges the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to withdraw from Depsang and Demchok regions, stressing that there cannot be restoration of normalcy in its relations with China as long as the border remains tense.

### **Naam ke vaaste, let's call Tibet dalailabad**

11 April 2024, The Economic Times

Rajnath Singh, wearing his semiotician's pagdi at an election rally at Namsai in Arunachal Pradesh on Tuesday, made an excellent suggestion, without actually suggesting it - changing names of Chinese provinces. The defmin was actually making a point about how Beijing continuously referring to Arunachal Pradesh as 'Zangnan' makes the Indian state as much a Chinese territory as giving Indian names to Chinese provinces will make them 'Indian'. But to sidestep Singh's version of the Bard's 'What's in a name?' reasoning, we think it's a great idea to Indianise those proper nouns 'up there'. The exercise can jolly well start with Tibet - or, as the Chinese call it, 'Xijiang Autonomous Region' - being named



Dalailabad. Guangdong would, in the spirit of Gurgaon, be Guangram. Shanghai can be shanghaied into Bheemtalaiya, for no reason other than it sounds robust. Instead of calling Beijing 'Peking' again, the Chinese capital can sound rather piquant if renamed Jijingapatnam. If the nomenclatura from the Muddle Kingdom are outraged, they can be calmly told that this isn't about challenging Chinese territory by aggressive proper nouncing, but it's just how the world's most populous country's citizens will call these places. After all, the French calling Deutschland 'Allemagne' and English-speakers calling it 'Germany' don't threaten the Deutsche.

**In Newsweek interview, PM Modi speaks on India-China border dispute: 'We need to urgently address...'**

10 April 2024, Hindustan Times



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping(MEAIndia)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has stressed the need to urgently address the “prolonged situation” on the disputed India-China border to normalise the bilateral ties between the two countries, according to a report. In an interview with Newsweek magazine, PM Modi underscored that stable and peaceful relations betw“I hope and believe that through positive and constructive bilateral engagement at the diplomatic and military levels, we will be able to restore and sustain peace and tranquility in our borders,” he said.On the topic of competing with China, Prime Minister Modi highlighted India's economic reforms and positioned the nation as an attractive choice for businesses seeking to diversify their supply chainHe pointed out key reforms such as the Goods and Service Tax, corporate tax reduction, bankruptcy code, and labour law reforms, which have significantly improved India's ease of doing business.

“We are striving to make our regulatory framework, our taxation practices as well as our infrastructure at par with global standards,” Modi said.“We believe that when a country with one-sixth of the world's population adopts global standards in these sectors,

it will have a big positive impact on the world,” he added.He highlighted initiatives such as the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes across 14 sectors, including electronics, solar modules, medical devices, and automobiles, to bolster India's manufacturing capabilities.

"Given our strengths, India is now globally considered most suited for manufacturing world-class goods at competitive cost. Apart from producing for the world, the vast Indian domestic market is an added attraction. India is a perfect destination for those who want to set up trusted and resilient supply chains," he said. Prime Minister Modi is seeking a rare third term in office the country starts voting for seven-phase Lok Sabha elections on April 19.

**China's Neighbor Sends Russian-Made Air Defense Missiles to Border**

10 April 2024, News Week

India is set to deploy Russian-made man-portable air defense systems, or MANPADs, along its disputed border with China, even as Moscow and Beijing reaffirm their shared opposition against common adversaries in the West.

"The Igla-S systems are under procurement for the new authorized air defense formations for high mountainous terrain along the northern border," Indian news outlet The Print reported on Monday.

The Indian army first began using the Soviet-designed MANPADS in 2021. New Delhi is acquiring more of the shoulder-fired missiles amid a four-year military standoff with Beijing, which began after the deadly Galwan Valley skirmish in June 2020.

Since then, the two Asian giants have stationed thousands of soldiers at the Line of Actual Control. The de facto boundary in the Himalayas has separated India and China since a bloody border war in the 1960s.



A Russia-made Igla-S man-portable air defense system, or MANPADS, is seen in images published on manufacturer Rosoboronexports's website. India

will deploy Russia-made Igla-S MANDPADS on the border with China.

Leaders in Russia and China have further strengthened their countries' strategic partnership in recent years amid heavy scrutiny since the start of the Russia-Ukraine war two years ago. The United States recently told its NATO allies that Beijing's material support for Moscow was growing to significant levels, although Chinese officials say the country remains a neutral party.

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, a Swedish think tank, said Russia was India's biggest source of defense imports last year, accounting for 36 percent of all arms purchases, according to a March report.

Despite that, however, the period from 2019-2023 was the first time since 1960-1964 that Russia's arms sales accounted for less than half of India's overall imports, SIPRI said.

Weapons manufactured by China and India have been found on the battlefields of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. Igla-S MANDPADS also have been used by Ukrainian forces to shoot down Russian aircraft.

The Russian and Chinese foreign ministries and the Indian External Affairs Ministry did not immediately respond to separate written requests for comment before publication.

India's upcoming deployment of Igla-S systems to its border with China, despite Beijing's friendship with Moscow, suggests the Kremlin leadership is unable to dictate terms on weapons sales, subject matter experts believe.

"The general public is not privy to the actual terms of the contract, but over the years, the general impression is that Russia does not impose any preconditions on the use of its weapons," said Nandan Unnikrishnan, a distinguished fellow at the Observer Research Foundation think tank in New Delhi and the former Moscow bureau chief of the Press Trust of India news agency.

"So far Russia-China relations haven't visibly impacted the India-Russia defense partnership," Unnikrishnan told Newsweek.

India recently sold the BrahMos missile system, jointly developed with Russia, to the Philippines, a U.S. treaty ally locked in a territorial dispute with China.

The Philippines will deploy land-based and anti-ship variants of the missile system along its coastline to counter Beijing's assertiveness in the South China Sea.

"As the world's fastest supersonic cruise missiles, the BrahMos missiles will provide deterrence against any attempt to undermine our sovereignty and sovereign rights, especially in the West Philippine Sea," Delfin Lorenzana, the Philippines' former defense minister, said one year ago, referring to the section of the

South China Sea that falls within the Philippines exclusive economic zone.

Christopher Clary, an associate professor at the State University of New York, told Newsweek that India may worry about China's leverage over Russia and its future implications.

"I've seen little evidence Russia seeks to censor the arms it makes available to India in order to appease their Chinese partner. Yet India must be concerned that in the event of a serious China-India conflict, Beijing would put enormous pressure on Russia to halt spares and ammunition destined to India," Clary said.

"Even with acquisitions like [the Igla-S], what remains an open question is whether India will invest in sufficient munitions to fight a long war. The war in Ukraine showcases how expensive and exhausting long wars can be," Clary added.

### Why are there three Chinese spy ships in the Indian Ocean Region?

10 April 2024, Hindustan Times



Xiang Yang Hong 01

High endurance Chinese surveillance vessel Xiang Yang Hong 01 is anchored 600 miles west of Andaman Islands (middle of Bay of Bengal) in international water.

After deploying maritime coercion in South China Sea against ASEAN countries, at least three Chinese survey and surveillance vessels are in Indian Ocean Region (IOR) as part of PLA Navy's expansionist objective to launch carrier task force patrols by 2025 through mapping the Indo-Pacific region. As of now, high endurance Chinese surveillance vessel Xiang Yang Hong 01 is anchored 600 miles west of Andaman Islands (middle of Bay of Bengal) in international water conducting trials of high endurance autonomous underwater vehicles, which can stay at the depths of nearly 12 kilometers for three months mapping the ocean bed and collect oceanographic data for future submarine operations. The XYH 01 entered the Bay of Bengal on March 7-8 night and continues to be stationed in the area. Another Chinese survey ship Xiang Yang Hong

03 is employing unmanned systems for ocean observation and hydrographic surveying 350 miles of Maldives with the friendly Muizzu regime in power in Male. While the Indian Navy is monitoring the movements of these Chinese vessels in international waters, the main purpose is to validate ocean models for future deployment of naval assets in the IOR like aircraft carriers. The XYH 03 entered the IOR some three months ago and continues to operate outside Maldives. A third surveillance ship Da Yang Hao is lying 1200 miles south of Port Louis in Mauritius with the 45th PLA anti-piracy escort force operating south west of the Capital at 550 miles. The 46th anti-piracy task force of PLA is operating off the Gulf of Aden albeit there is no news of Chinese vessels intercepting any Somalian pirates or neutralizing any Houthi missiles. As no action can be taken against these vessels operating in international waters, fact is that the PLA is exercising its sea legs for future global naval footprint and courting nations in Indo-Pacific and Africa to influence their maritime policies in the name of defence cooperation. The Chinese Song class submarine was in Karachi harbor in late 2023 and apparently did the 'bottoming' operations off the Makran coast. Given that India will face maritime coercion from China in the coming years, the Indian Navy will have to acquire unmanned underwater drones and long endurance submarines for deterrence operations. An Indian submarine in equatorial waters can play havoc with the adversary as the difference between the surface ocean temperature and sub-surface temperature is high leading to total internal reflection. This means that the Indian submarine will be seen (if at all) at a ghost location rather than its actual position. It is precisely for this very reason that the Chinese PLA collects ocean temperature, salinity, sound, velocity, sediment characteristics, and sea bottom profile in the IOR.

### **China may disrupt elections in India using AI, warns Microsoft**

08 April 2024, Economic Times

Software giant Microsoft has issued a warning regarding China's potential use of artificial intelligence (AI) to disrupt elections in several countries, including India, the US, South Korea. According to Microsoft Threat Intelligence insights, China is likely to utilize AI-generated content to advance its interests, particularly in the upcoming major elections.

The report from Microsoft Threat Analysis Centre (MTAC) highlights the looming threat, stating, "With major elections taking place around the world this year, particularly in India, South Korea, and the United States, we assess that China will, at a

minimum, create and amplify AI-generated content to benefit its interests."

While the probability of such content significantly impacting election outcomes remains low, Microsoft predicts that China's ongoing experimentation with augmenting memes, videos, and audio could prove more effective in the future. The Lok Sabha elections in India are scheduled between April 19 and June 4, with South Korea holding its elections on April 10, and the United States preparing for its presidential election in November. The warning from Microsoft follows reports of China's alleged dry run with the presidential election in Taiwan, where it November.

Microsoft anticipates that Chinese state-backed cyber groups, along with North Korean involvement, will target high-profile elections in 2024. The report emphasizes the potential involvement of Chinese cyber and influence actors in influencing these elections through the creation and dissemination of AI-generated content via social media platforms.

"While the impact of such content in swaying audiences remains low, China's increasing experimentation in augmenting memes, videos, and audio will continue – and may prove effective down the line," Microsoft stated.

attempted an AI-generated disinformation campaign in January. The report mentions a Beijing-backed group named Storm 1376, also known as Spamouflage or Dragonbridge, which was highly active during the Taiwanese election.

Moreover, there has been a rise in the use of AI-generated TV news anchors, a tactic reportedly employed by Iran as well. These AI-generated anchors disseminate misinformation, including unfounded claims about individuals' private lives. Microsoft disclosed that the news anchors were created using the CapCut tool developed by Chinese company ByteDance, the owner of TikTok.

The emergence of AI as a tool for influencing elections underscores the evolving landscape of cybersecurity and the challenges faced by authorities in combating disinformation campaigns orchestrated by state-backed actors. As nations gear up for crucial electoral processes, vigilance against such threats remains paramount to safeguarding the integrity of democratic processes worldwide.

### **Chengdu as Bharatnagar and Kunming as Modinagar?**

07 April 2024, Arunachal Times

Just a week back, China audaciously released a fourth list of 30 new names of various places in Arunachal Pradesh, which include 12 mountains, four rivers, one lake, one mountain pass, 11 residential areas, etc.

Earlier, on 2 April 2023, China renamed 11 places in Arunachal with Chinese names. Before that also, China renamed six places in Arunachal in 2017, followed by renaming 15 places in 2021. The renamed places include mountains, rivers and places like Mechukha, Manigong, Tawang, Sela, Walong, etc. China regularly claims Arunachal as southern Tibet or 'Zangnan'.

China regularly issues stapled visas to officials and sportspersons from Arunachal planning to visit China. In a few cases, such as the one that happened with me, China said that visa is not required to visit China. China regularly objects to visits by central ministers or senior officials to Arunachal.

China traces back this dispute to the McMahon Line. The 890-km-long McMahon Line demarcates the eastern border between India and China, and follows the watershed principle running along the highest ridges, starting from Bhutan to the trijunction of India, China and Myanmar.

The McMahon Line was created during the Shimla Agreement of 1914. The British Indian representative was Henry McMahon, then secretary in the Indian foreign department, Tibet was represented by Lama Lonchen Shatra, and the Chinese representative was a diplomat named Ivan Chen. After almost a year of negotiations, the McMahon Line was initially presented on 22 April, 1914, along with an attached map. On 25 April, 1914, the Chinese representative submitted a memorandum with a number of objections to the boundaries between Inner Tibet and Outer Tibet and Inner Tibet and China. There were no objections by the Chinese representative on the border between Tibet and India. Thereafter, on 27 April, 1914, the Chinese representative initialled both the documents and the map without any objections. However, the actual agreement documents were kept secret till 1937, when the McMahon Line was first published in a Survey of India map. If the Chinese representative had no objections to the border between Tibet and India and had initialled the documents and the map during the Shimla Agreement of 1914, why are the Chinese still claiming Arunachal as 'southern Tibet'?

This claim is bogus, hegemonic and not supported by documents and facts.

Arunachal is mentioned in the ancient Indian epics Mahabharata, Kalika and Bhagavad Purana (10th century AD). Having studied Chinese language and hailing from Arunachal, it may be firmly stated that the people of Arunachal, comprising many tribes, are culturally, traditionally, linguistically, and racially different from the Han Chinese. Arunachalis are patriotic Indians and have never been a part of mainland China.

Why does China continue this aggressive behaviour, especially with respect to Arunachal? Isn't it time for

us to give back to China? The government of India should start issuing stapled visas to a few Chinese officials. Another way could be to rename Chinese cities like Chengdu as Bharatnagar, Kunming as Modinagar, and Nyingchi as Arunnagar. (The contributor is retired Group Captain, Indian Air Force)

## US 'strongly opposes' China's renaming of areas along disputed Indian border

07 April 2024, The Star

Washington has criticised Beijing's list of 30 new names for places along the 1,865-mile (3,000km) disputed Himalayan border between China and India, formally known as the Line of Actual Control, as yet another "unilateral attempt" to reassert its territorial claims.

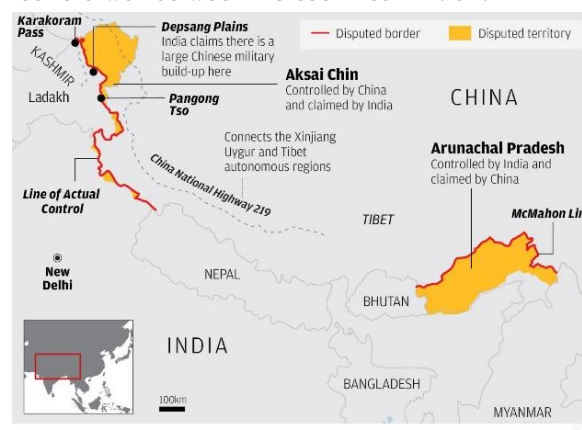
"The United States strongly opposes any unilateral attempts to advance territorial claims by incursions or encroachments, military or civilian, across the Line of Actual Control," a US State Department representative said on Tuesday.

On Sunday, the Post first reported about the Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs' fourth list of "standardised" names for places, including mountains, rivers, residential areas in the Indian-administered Arunachal Pradesh state, which China calls Zangnan and claims as part of the Tibetan autonomous region. After the report was picked up by several Indian news outlets, New Delhi's foreign affairs ministry rejected Beijing's "senseless attempt" at "inventing" names and "altering reality".

The two nuclear-armed neighbours have held 21 rounds of military-level talks since 2020, when at least 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers were killed in a fight along the border.

No breakthrough was achieved during the latest meeting in February as both sides agreed to keep communicating while also positioning extra troops and equipment.

Disagreements over the poorly demarcated border led to a war between the countries in 1962.





Last month, a tunnel inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Arunachal Pradesh became the latest flashpoint. As India and China traded warnings and made overlapping claims of national sovereignty, Washington openly sided with its Indo-Pacific partner New Delhi – angering Beijing.

“The United States recognises Arunachal Pradesh as Indian territory,” a State Department representative said in a press briefing. Beijing then accused Washington of trying “to provoke and take advantage of other countries’ conflicts to serve its selfish geopolitical interests”.

Arunachal Pradesh, located on India’s eastern tip, is claimed in its entirety by China. The state shares historical ties with Tibet and is home to the Tawang Monastery, where the sixth Dalai Lama was born in 1683. Buddhists account for the fourth-largest religious group there, following Christians, Hindus and a mix of other local religions.

US sharing of intelligence with India in China border clash seen as pivotal

After being largely neutral on the dispute for decades, the US in recent years has strengthened its cooperation with New Delhi, including a more active role in sharing intelligence as part of its Indo-Pacific strategy to check Chinese activity in the region.

In its October 2022 National Defence Strategy, the administration of President Joe Biden pledged that it would support US allies and partners when they encounter “acute forms of grey zone coercion” from China’s “campaigns to establish control over the East China Sea, Taiwan Strait, South China Sea and disputed land borders such as with India”.

Real-time intelligence provided by the US about Chinese positions along the disputed line prepared India to successfully ward off a potential Chinese military “incursion” in December 2022, marking the first time Washington passed on key information on Chinese strength along the Sino-India in advance to its Indian counterparts.

### **Ban order compels climate activist Sonam Wangchuk to call off Tibet-border March**

07 March 2024, Tibetan Review

Well-known Ladakh-based Indian climate activist Mr Sonam Wangchuk has called off his planned Apr 7 march at the head of his supporters to the Chinese-occupied Tibet’s border. He wanted to “avoid any sort of confrontation with the law-enforcing agencies,” reported deccanchronicle.com Apr 6. He has said the purpose of staging the march had already been achieved in any case while vowing to continue the agitation for statehood.

Wangchuk, 57, had announced last month that he would lead around 10,000 people of Ladakh in a march to the Chinese occupied Tibet’s border to

showcase the extent of the Ladakhi land lost to Chinese encroachment in the north and how the local farmers and shepherds were losing prime pastureland to huge industrial plants in the south.

Wangchuk, a Magsaysay Award winner and the founding-director of the Students’ Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh, has also said, after ending a 21-day hunger strike on Mar 26, that the agitation to demand statehood for Ladakh will be intensified in coming weeks.

Ladakh is currently a Union Territory, after being a part of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir for many decades. Ladakhis find the Union Territory status to be inimical to their interests.

The decision to call off the march followed an Apr 5 order by the Leh District Magistrate Santosh Sukhadeve, imposing prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the CrPC (Criminal Procedure Code), banning holding of processions, rallies and marches in the district without his prior approval “to prevent any breach of peace, disturbance to public tranquillity and danger to human life.”

The Union Territory status means that Ladakh is ruled by the central government through a Lieutenant Governor appointed by it, like in the case of the nation’s capital New Delhi whose embattled Aam Aadmi Party government too has been demanding full-statehood for it.

Also, Ladakh’s Additional Director General of Police Darshan Singh had ordered the suspension of mobile data of 3G, 4G and 5G and public Wi-Fi 5G facilities temporarily “in the interest of maintenance of public peace, and law and order” in the Union Territory, the report said.

The decision to call off the march was stated to have been announced by the Leh Apex Body (LAB) at a press conference on Apr 6 in which Wangchuk also took part. Its leaders have also said they had, in any case, already achieved their objective of creating awareness among the people of the country about the plight of farmers, who are allegedly losing prime pastureland to huge industrial plants in the south and to “Chinese encroachments”.

The report quoted Wangchuk also as saying: “We are concerned about national security and the peaceful atmosphere. Secondly, our aim to generate awareness in the country about the ground situation in Ladakh has been achieved, so we are withdrawing the proposed border march in the interest of people and to avoid confrontation with the law-enforcement agencies.”



## China developing 175 more security villages in Tibet near India-border?

06 April 2024, Tibetan Review

China is set to develop 175 more border villages on the occupied-Tibet side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) facing the northeast Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. These settlements will be in addition to the 628 "Xiaokang" or "prosperous villages", otherwise seen to be meant to serve as border security villages, near the LAC, reported [tribuneindia.com](https://tribuneindia.com) Apr 5, citing unnamed sources.

The move is reported to be seen in India as being designed to bolster territorial claim under a 2005 bilateral accord and to enhance military preparedness for future possible armed conflicts.

This move is part of a larger effort to construct 900 LAC villages, including 200 near the Indian boundary, which will function both as monitoring points and potential military bases in conflict scenario with India, the report said.

China could be looking to build a strong legal defence under the Border Defence Cooperation Agreement (BDCA), 2005, with India. Article VII of BDCA says "the two sides shall safeguard due interests of their settled populations in the border areas". So as and when a situation arises to demarcate the LAC, these "settled populations" villages are not likely to be disturbed, the report cited sources as saying, adding Indian villages facing these new settlements were currently very thinly populated.

In terms of military preparedness, China has undertaken extensive infrastructure development projects in Tibet and in areas near the LAC. Its current, 14th Five Year Plan (2021-2025) includes expansion of the Nyingchi phase of the Sichuan-Tibet railway line, preliminary work on the Hotan-Shigatse and Gyirong-Shigatse rail lines and the Chengdu-Wuhan-Shanghai high speed railway network, the report noted.

The plan is said to include upgrading the national highways G-219 and G-318, both running parallel to the LAC with India. The G-219 runs opposite the Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh borders while the G-318 runs opposite Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim borders, the report noted.

Beijing's dual goals of promoting the integration of Tibet into China and ramping up infrastructure development are seen as a strategy aimed at deepening Chinese influence and asserting its power in the region.

The report further noted that last week, in an attempt to cover up the "capture" of Tibet, the Chinese conducted celebratory ceremonies on its side of the LAC and labelled them as the "65th anniversary of democratic reform" in Xizang (Tibet). The illegal

dissolution of the Tibetan government headed by the Dalai Lama took place on Mar 28, 1959. The celebratory ceremonies focused on two sites north of Arunachal Pradesh and one spot north of Sikkim, it added.

## US Reacts After China Renames Neighbor's Territory

08 April 2024, News Week

The U.S. strongly opposed China's renaming of 30 locations inside India's Arunachal Pradesh, as Beijing's push to further its territorial claims is escalating tensions between the two Asian giants.

"The United States strongly opposes any unilateral attempts to advance territorial claims by incursions or encroachments, military or civilian, across the Line of Actual Control," a U.S. State Department official said on Tuesday, according to Hong Kong newspaper the South China Morning Post.

The U.S. comment on China's renaming policy came as Beijing has recently escalated its claim over Arunachal Pradesh by calling the area part of its territory "since ancient times."

China's Ministry of Civil Affairs on March 30 issued "standardized" names of places in Mandarin and Tibetan for locations inside Arunachal Pradesh. The list of 30 names included places with rivers, mountains, a lake and residential areas.

The renaming effort was China's fourth attempt to use cartographic renaming of locations in Arunachal Pradesh to further its territorial claims.

China claims the area as part of Zangnan, or South Tibet, based on historical rights. In the past, China has released official maps showing the region as part of its territory and issued separate visas to Indian citizens from Arunachal Pradesh to further its sovereignty claim.

The two countries fought a bloody war in the 1960s over the region, and their 2,100-mile-long disputed mutual border remains a thorny issue. Since June 2020, China and India have been locked in a new military stand-off with thousands of soldiers deployed across from each other in the Eastern Ladakh region. The military officials from the two sides have met 21 times so far as part of a special effort to defuse tensions in the frigid Himalayan region.

Beijing has used a similar approach to extend claims in disputed islands in the South China Sea, giving Mandarin names to maritime features.

A Chinese military spokesperson recently issued a stark statement to solidify the claims on Arunachal Pradesh.

"Zangnan has been China's territory since ancient times. This is an undeniable fact," Col. Wu Qian, China's defense ministry spokesperson, said on March 28.

Newsweek contacted China's embassy in New Delhi and India's Ministry of External Affairs for comment. "China has persisted with its senseless attempts to rename places in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. We firmly reject such attempts," a spokesperson from India's External Affairs Ministry said on Tuesday.

"If today I change the name of your house, will it become mine? Arunachal Pradesh was, is and will always be a state of India. Changing names does not have an effect," Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, India's external affairs minister, said on Monday, according to the Indian newspaper The Hindustan Times.

Observers believe the renaming attempt seeks to strategically further Beijing's territorial claims.

"It does bare China's mala-fide intent, and its larger designs: renaming places in Arunachal, showing Arunachal within China on new maps, putting roadblocks to the entry of sportspersons from Arunachal. This is part of its plan to change the cultural markers of Tibet, which it has begun calling Xizang," Kalpit Mankikar, a China fellow at the New Delhi-based think tank the Observer Research Foundation, told Newsweek in an interview.

"The renaming of Mago (China renamed it as Moguo) in the eastern Tawang sector in Arunachal Pradesh is a signal to India that China is taking note of India's recent announcement to build a frontier highway opposite its border as it will be the starting point of India's new strategic border road." Nature Desai, an open-source analyst and observer of China-India relations, told Newsweek in an interview. "Then there is the longest freshwater lake in Arunachal Pradesh, which was renamed," Desai told Newsweek.

### India's remote Ladakh protests against Beijing-Delhi squeeze

05 April 2024, Nikkei Asia



Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk staged a three-week hunger strike seeking protections for India's remote Ladakh region. © AP

Thousands braved sub-zero temperatures across India's remote Ladakh in recent weeks as they march for statehood and safeguards to protect a Himalayan

region they say is increasingly squeezed by China and their own government.

Residents say Ladakh's glaciers and sensitive ecology are at risk due to Chinese encroachment and India's industrial and military buildup in the aftermath of a deadly 2020 border standoff.

The latest demonstrations stem from a 2019 decision to strip neighboring Jammu and Kashmir – claimed by both India and Pakistan – of its autonomy, resulting in Ladakh being separated from Indian-controlled Kashmir.

Delhi pledged to give Ladakh's mostly indigenous population safeguards for tribal people, but the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party hasn't followed through, critics said.

Among them is climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, who recently staged a three-week hunger strike, living on just water and salt.

"We are losing land, left, right and center," Wangchuk said in a video message to supporters. "The shepherds are losing their pasture land to China, which is encroaching from the north. The Chinese have captured huge chunks of Indian land in the last few years."

China has taken up more than 4,000 square kilometers of land, according to some critics. Wangchuk is planning another demonstration this weekend.

"To show the ground reality we're planning a border march of 10,000 Ladakhi shepherds to show live footage of how much of the pasture land has been taken over," he said.

China has repeatedly renamed places in another Indian border region, Arunachal Pradesh, which Beijing claims as its own. This month, China criticized Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's trip to the northeastern state

Earlier this year, a video surfaced on social media purportedly showing Chinese soldiers intercepting Indian shepherds in Ladakh and claiming the area belongs to Beijing.

In 2020, deadly clashes between Indian and Chinese soldiers erupted in Ladakh's Galwan Valley, leaving two dozen Indian and four Chinese soldiers dead after close-quarter fighting with clubs and rocks.

Since that clash, thousands of soldiers have been deployed on both sides of the de facto border, the Line of Actual Control (LAC). India and China have been building infrastructure at breakneck speed near the LAC as several rounds of talks between their militaries failed to ease tensions.

Delhi, meanwhile, has built a massive military infrastructure across the region, while signing at least 10 agreements with outside companies to develop Ladakh's natural resources.

These developments are stirring fears about outside influence and the impact on a fragile environment.

"They [the government] are planning to set up big industries in this fragile area, and if that happens it will be a disaster for this region," said Padma Stanzin, head of the Ladakh Students' Environmental Action Forum (LEAF).

With no significant progress on reducing border tensions, the region is at risk of stepped-up conflict, warns Praveen Donthi, a senior analyst at the International Crisis Group.

"There are around 50 to 60,000 troops on both sides of the border, which means that the border is live, unlike the pre-2020 phase," Donthi added. "There is a possibility of accidental escalation with far-reaching consequences."

India's Ministry of External Affairs said the countries are negotiating to reestablish calm in Ladakh.

"The discussions we had there [in Beijing] built on the previous rounds seeking complete disengagement in the remaining areas along the LAC in eastern Ladakh as an essential basis for the restoration of peace and tranquility in the India-China border areas," ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

Wang Wenbin, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson, said China viewed the border squabbles as something that can be resolved.

"China has stressed multiple times that the boundary question does not represent the entirety of China-India relations, and it should be placed appropriately in the bilateral relations and managed properly," Wenbin told a press conference last month.

Donthi, the ICG analyst, said a political solution was crucial to ease tensions.

"It is an intractable problem and one of the longest-running border crises in the world," Donthi said.

"There is a need for political leadership to take the initiative to resolve the crisis."

### **Assam CM proposes Tit-for-Tat response to China's gimmick**

03 April 2024, Phayul



Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma  
(Photo /Maktoob media)

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma suggested on Tuesday that India should rename 60 Tibet Digest December - January 2024

places in the occupied Tibet in response to recent actions by Beijing renaming 30 places in Arunachal Pradesh.

Speaking to journalists after a BJP election meeting in central Assam's Karbi Anglong, Sarma emphasized the need for reciprocity, stating, "My request to the Government of India is that we should give 60 geographical names for the Tibetan area of China. It should be always tit for tat but I do not want to comment because it is a policy decision of the Government of India, but if they name 30, we should name 60."

Pema Khandu, the Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, labelled China's actions as "another gimmick," expressing strong condemnation "Being a proud citizen of Bharat and a native of Arunachal Pradesh, I strongly condemn this act of naming places within Arunachal Pradesh which has been an inalienable integral part of India. Proud citizens and patriots of Arunachal Pradesh are rejecting such antics," he wrote on X (formerly Twitter).

Two days after Beijing assigned Mandarin and Tibetan names to 30 more places in Arunachal Pradesh of India, New Delhi dismissed the move as "senseless". "China has persisted with its senseless attempts to rename places in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. We firmly reject such attempts," Randhir Jaiswal, the spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), said in New Delhi.

China had earlier renamed six places in Arunachal Pradesh of India in Mandarin and Tibetan in April 2017, 15 more places in December 2021 and 11 more places in April 2023. Beijing claims 90,000 sq. km of areas in Arunachal Pradesh of India as part of the territory of China and calls it Zangnan or south Tibet.

Beijing also claims a 2,000 sq. km area in the Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. New Delhi claims that China is illegally occupying about 38,000 sq. km of India's territory in Aksai Chin, which borders eastern Ladakh. Pakistan also ceded about 5,180 sq. km of India's territory in 1963 to China.

In April-May 2020, China initiated a provocative and unilateral action aimed at altering the status quo along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), the de facto boundary between occupied Tibet and India, particularly in eastern Ladakh. This move involved the deployment of a substantial contingent of troops from the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA). In response, the Indian Army was compelled to deploy additional forces to counter China's attempts to encroach upon Indian territory and push the LAC further westward.

Negotiations led to the withdrawal of front-line troops by both the Indian Army and the Chinese PLA from some areas. However, the standoff persisted at several points along the LAC. China has claimed that

the mutual withdrawal of troops from Patrolling Point 15 (Gogra-Hot springs area) in September 2022 signalled the return to normalcy along the LAC in eastern Ladakh. This claim seems intended to pressure India into accepting the current situation in the Depsang and Demchok areas, where the Chinese PLA still restricts the Indian Army's access to several patrolling points along the LAC.

In December 2022, Indian Army soldiers prevented an attempt by the Chinese PLA to alter the status quo near Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh. China's continued efforts to assert territorial claims in the region signifies ongoing challenges to India's sovereignty as per critics, amid broader geopolitical tensions between the two nations.

### **India rejects China's renaming of 30 places in Himalayan border state**

02 April 2024, Reuters

NEW DELHI, April 2 (Reuters) - India rejected China's renaming of about 30 places in its northeastern Himalayan state of Arunachal Pradesh on Tuesday, calling the move "senseless" and reaffirming that the border province is an "integral" part of India.

Beijing says Arunachal Pradesh, which it calls Zangnan, is a part of South Tibet - a claim New Delhi has repeatedly dismissed. China similarly ratcheted up tensions a year ago by giving Chinese names to 11 locations in the state.

Troops of the nuclear-armed neighbours engaged in minor scuffles along their disputed frontier in the state in Dec. 2022, and tensions eased after extensive military and diplomatic talks.

Yet the state is frequently the cause of friction between the Asian giants whose ties have nosedived since a bloody border clash between their troops in the western Himalayas in 2020.

China, in a statement on Saturday, said it had standardised the names of about 30 places in what it calls South Tibet, "in accordance with the relevant regulations on place name management of the State Council".

"Assigning invented names will not alter the reality that Arunachal Pradesh is, has been, and will always be an integral and inalienable part of India," foreign ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said on Tuesday.

On Monday, Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar told reporters that "changing names will not do anything".

"If I change the name of your house, does it become my house?" he said.

Last month, following a visit by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the state to inaugurate infrastructure projects, China had said it was

opposed to his activities in the region. India termed the arguments "baseless".

The U.S. also weighed in on the issue, saying it recognised Arunachal Pradesh as Indian territory and "strongly opposed" any unilateral attempts to make claims on it by military or civilian "incursion or encroachments".

China had opposed these remarks, saying the matter "has nothing to do with the U.S.".

India and China share a 3,800 km (2,400 mile) border - much of it poorly demarcated - over which they also fought a bloody war in 1962.

Twenty Indian soldiers and four Chinese troops were killed in hand-to-hand combat in 2020, prompting both countries to fortify positions and deploy extra troops and equipment along the border.

Reporting by Sakshi Dayal; Additional reporting by Bernard Orr in Beijing; Editing by YP Rajesh and Michael Perry

### **China gives its own name to 30 more places in Arunachal Pradesh in cartographic extension of its Tibet rule**

01 April 2024, Tibetan Review

In yet another provocative move, asserting cartographic sovereignty over the northeastern Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh on the basis of its occupation rule over Tibet, China has on Mar 30 declared its own names for 30 more places in the territory it calls Zangnan (or southern part of Tibet).

The Ministry of Civil Affairs released the fourth list of standardized geographical names in Zangnan, reported China's official globaltimes.cn Mar 30, citing the ministry's official website. It said the announcement was for "30 additional publicly used place names in the Zangnan region".

The report did not list those names. However, according to the scmp.com Mar 31, the latest renaming covered 11 residential areas, 12 mountains, four rivers, one lake, one mountain pass and a piece of land, all given in Chinese characters, Tibetan and pinyin, the Roman alphabet version of Mandarin Chinese.

It noted that the ministry had last standardized the names of 11 places in Zangnan, using Chinese characters, Tibetan and pinyin, in Apr 2023. That was the third list since 2017 when six placenames were announced, which was followed by the second list with 15 placenames in 2021.

The latest list followed the ministry's publication on Mar 15 of implementation measures on Mar 15 for the management of geographical names, which detailed the requirements for the translation of place names in ethnic minority or foreign languages into Chinese characters.



The measures, which will take effect from May 1, 2024, stipulate in Article 13 that “place names in foreign languages that may harm China’s territorial claims and sovereignty rights shall not be directly quoted or translated without authorization.”

And it was made clear that translation of placenames in foreign languages or minority languages should comply with standards formulated by related organs of the State Council, China’s cabinet or council of ministers. Standard translations are made public through notices, the national database for geographical names and official publications on geographical names, according to the implementation measures.

This meant that “Tibet” should be referred to as “Xizang”, “Arunachal Pradesh” as Zangnan”, “Mt Everest” as “Qomolangma”, and so forth.

The report also noted that the State Council had issued a revised regulation on placenames in Apr 2022, applicable to naming, renaming, usage, cultural protection and other management on geographical names within Chinese territories.

### **China renames 30 places in Arunachal Pradesh; Jaishankar says it means nothing**

01 April 2024, Hindustan Times

“If today I change the name of your house, will it become mine?” S Jaishankar said, asserting that Arunachal Pradesh was, is and will be a state of India

China has rechristened 30 locations in Arunachal Pradesh with Chinese and Tibetan names as part of its continuing efforts to assert claims over the north-eastern Indian state. This is the fourth time that China unilaterally changed the names of locations in the state. The new names will be reflected on official Chinese maps later this year. The renaming comes days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Arunachal where he inaugurated the Sela Tunnel built at an altitude of 13,000 feet, an infrastructure project that is set to ease the movement of troops in the mountainous region.

India has repeatedly rejected the renaming of places in the past and dismissed claims over Arunachal, which Beijing has claimed is part of the southern region of Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), called “Zangnan”.

“China may repeat its baseless claims as many times as they want. That is not going to change the position. Arunachal Pradesh was, is and will always remain an integral and inalienable part of India,” external affairs ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said last week after Beijing protested Modi’s visit.

The change in names will not have any impact on the places in the Indian state but is a marker of the state of ties between the two Himalayan neighbours.

Asked about the latest move, external affairs minister S Jaishankar told reporters: “If today I change the name of your house, will it become mine? Arunachal Pradesh was, is and will always be a state of India. Changing names does not have an effect”.

Renaming of locations

China’s civil affairs ministry (MCA) released the new list of names on Saturday, Chinese state media reported.

Beijing last standardised the names of 11 places in Arunachal Pradesh using Chinese characters, Tibetan and pinyin, which is the standard romanisation of Mandarin characters, on Chinese maps in April 2023.

Earlier, China renamed places in the Indian state in April 2017, and in December 2021.

“Set to take effect from May 1, 2024, the implementation measures stipulate in Article 13 that ‘place names in foreign languages that may harm China’s territorial claims and sovereignty rights shall not be directly quoted or translated without authorisation,’” the state-run Global Times tabloid reported, quoting the government notice on the latest renaming.

“The renaming covered 11 residential areas, 12 mountains, four rivers, one lake, one mountain pass and a piece of land,” the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported, adding: “The new list includes more parts of the disputed area than the three previous renamings over the past seven years.”

Bill Hayton, associate fellow at the Chatham House Asia-Pacific programme and author of books on China and Vietnam, told HT last year that China’s practice of renaming places in disputed areas is an effort to “inculcate a sense of anxiety about the perceived loss of territory”.

This dates back at least to the 1920s. Much of these claims are specious and demonstrate some misunderstandings of East Asian history. These misunderstandings have left a dangerous legacy in the modern era,” Hayton had said.

In 2017, China changed the name of locations in Arunachal Pradesh on April 13, a day after Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama left Arunachal Pradesh following a high-profile nine-day visit. Beijing calls the Dalai Lama a splittist, and says he wants to create an independent country of Tibet.

India and China have been locked in a standoff in the Ladakh sector since early May 2020, sending bilateral ties plummeting to their worst in decades. Both sides have deployed thousands of troops and heavy armament along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).



A deadly clash at Galwan Valley in June 2020 left 20 Indian soldiers and at least four Chinese troops dead – the first fatalities along the LAC since 1975.

### **Tensions mount as India deploys 10,000 additional troops along its contested border with China**

01 April 2024, WSWs

As the India-China border conflict approaches its fifth year, New Delhi has “forward” deployed an additional 10,000 troops along its disputed border with China in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, Indian states that abut western Tibet.

This escalation heightens the risk of an all-out war between the nuclear-armed rivals. It was clearly coordinated with Washington, which Indian officials revealed last summer has pressed New Delhi to detail what support it would provide the Pentagon should the US go to war with China. It comes as the US is inserting itself ever more obtrusively in the India-China border dispute and is intensifying economic, diplomatic and military-strategic pressure on China, through Taiwan and its major treaty allies in Asia, Japan, South Korea and the Philippines.



Tanks on the banks of Pangong Tso lake region, in Ladakh along the India-China border on Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2021. [AP Photo/India Army via AP]

Since May 2020 tens of thousands of Indian and Chinese troops have been arrayed against each other along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), the undefined border between the two countries. On several occasions, Indian and People’s Liberation Army troops have clashed where Chinese-held Aksai Chin meets Indian-held Ladakh, in what is far and away the most significant border conflict between the world’s two most populous countries since they fought a brief border war in 1962. In June 2020, 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers were killed in hand-to-hand combat. In August of that year several thousand Indian forces captured “strategic heights” unopposed in an action that Indian government officials later conceded could easily have resulted in a major clash with Chinese troops and a rapid escalation to war. After a further skirmish in

December 2022, New Delhi boasted that its forces had been able to repel what it claimed was a Chinese advance thanks to “real-time” intelligence from the US.

The situation remains highly volatile. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Hindu supremacist Bharatiya Janatha Party (BJP) government have used the border conflict to dramatically expand India’s bilateral, trilateral and quadrilateral military-strategic ties with Washington and its principal Asia-Pacific allies Japan and Australia, thereby further consolidating India’s role as a junior partner and frontline state of US imperialism in its war drive against China.

The new deployment of troops to Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh was announced as External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar was ending a March 5-8 visit to South Korea and Japan, where he emphasized enhanced military collaboration.

The troops are being relocated from the country’s western border with Pakistan, underscoring that New Delhi now views China, not its historic rival Pakistan, as its principal adversary. They are in addition to the 50,000 troops that Indian and China have each forward deployed since 2020 along the border, as well as sizeable numbers of tanks, warplanes and artillery. On both sides, there are continuous efforts to construct new fortifications, airstrips, roads, tunnels, bridges and rail links aimed at facilitating the swift movement of troops and supplies to the inhospitable Himalayan border region.

Despite nearly two-dozen rounds of bilateral talks, the most recent on February 19, the standoff continues, with each side stressing the other must pull back.

China’s response to India’s latest provocation has been relatively muted. Mao Ning, a spokesperson for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, stated that it would “not be conducive to easing tensions” and that “China is committed to working with India to safeguard the peace and stability of the border areas.”

## **March**

### **China gives its own name to 30 more places in Arunachal Pradesh in cartographic extension of its Tibet rule**

31 March 2024, Tibetan Review

In yet another provocative move, asserting cartographic sovereignty over the northeastern Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh on the basis of its occupation rule over Tibet, China has on Mar 30

declared its own names for 30 more places in the territory it calls Zangnan (or southern part of Tibet). The Ministry of Civil Affairs released the fourth list of standardized geographical names in Zangnan, reported China's official globaltimes.cn Mar 30, citing the ministry's official website. It said the announcement was for "30 additional publicly used place names in the Zangnan region".

The report did not list those names. However, according to the scmp.com Mar 31, the latest renaming covered 11 residential areas, 12 mountains, four rivers, one lake, one mountain pass and a piece of land, all given in Chinese characters, Tibetan and pinyin, the Roman alphabet version of Mandarin Chinese.

It noted that the ministry had last standardized the names of 11 places in Zangnan, using Chinese characters, Tibetan and pinyin, in Apr 2023. That was the third list since 2017 when six placenames were announced, which was followed by the second list with 15 placenames in 2021.

The latest list followed the ministry's publication on Mar 15 of implementation measures on Mar 15 for the management of geographical names, which detailed the requirements for the translation of place names in ethnic minority or foreign languages into Chinese characters.

The measures, which will take effect from May 1, 2024, stipulate in Article 13 that "place names in foreign languages that may harm China's territorial claims and sovereignty rights shall not be directly quoted or translated without authorization."

And it was made clear that translation of placenames in foreign languages or minority languages should comply with standards formulated by related organs of the State Council, China's cabinet or council of ministers. Standard translations are made public through notices, the national database for geographical names and official publications on geographical names, according to the implementation measures.

This meant that "Tibet" should be referred to as "Xizang", "Arunachal Pradesh" as Zangnan, "Mt Everest" as "Qomolangma", and so forth.

The report also noted that the State Council had issued a revised regulation on placenames in Apr 2022, applicable to naming, renaming, usage, cultural protection and other management on geographical names within Chinese territories.

### **China continues to harp on its claim over Arunachal Pradesh**

26 March 2024, The Economic Times

China on Monday continued to claim that Arunachal Pradesh has "always been" its territory, notwithstanding India dismissing Beijing's claim as

"absurd" and "ludicrous". On Monday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian reiterated China's claim reacting to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's assertions on Saturday, dismissing China's repeated claims on Arunachal Pradesh as "ludicrous" and that the frontier state was a "natural part of India".

"This is not a new issue. I mean China has laid claim, it has expanded its claim. The claims are ludicrous to begin with and remain ludicrous today," Jaishankar said in response to a question on the Arunachal issue after delivering a lecture at the prestigious Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS) of the National University of Singapore (NUS).

"So, I think we've been very clear, very consistent on this. And I think you know that is something which will be part of the boundary discussions which are taking place," he said.

Lin, replying to a question from the official media seeking his reactions to Jaishankar's comments, said the border between India and China has never been settled.

"The China-India boundary has never been delimited and is divided into the eastern sector, the middle sector, the western sector, and the Sikkim section", he said.

"Zangnan (the Chinese name for Arunachal Pradesh) in the eastern sector has always been China's territory," he said. China had all along exercised effective administrative jurisdiction over the area "until India's illegal occupation", which he claimed is a "basic fact that cannot be denied".

"In 1987, India formed the so-called 'Arunachal Pradesh' on China's territory under India's illegal occupation. China issued a statement right then to firmly oppose it and stress that India's move was illegal and null and void. China's position remains unchanged," Lin said.

This is the fourth time this month China spoke about its claim over Arunachal Pradesh.

Beijing said it has lodged a diplomatic protest with India over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Arunachal Pradesh on March 9 reiterating its claim over the area.

China, which claims Arunachal Pradesh as South Tibet, routinely objects to the Indian leaders' visits to the state to highlight its claims. Beijing has also named the area as Zangnan.

China's defence minister has also claimed that Arunachal Pradesh was part of Chinese territory, a claim dismissed by the Ministry of External Affairs last week.

### **China's State Media Reacts After India Predicts Prolonged Border Tensions**

20 March 2024, News Week

Chinese state media sharply reacted to comments by India's Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, who has called China a challenge for the "foreseeable future."

"India has an excessive suspicion and paranoia toward China's rise. Seeing China as the 'most formidable' challenge makes no sense and has no chance of success for India. India does not need to 'fear' the so-called 'China challenge' China and India can and should be partners, avoiding becoming opponents, and certainly not enemies," Chinese state media outlet Global Times said on X, formerly Twitter, on Tuesday.

China and India now consider each other geopolitical rivals, as Washington has backed New Delhi as a bulwark against Beijing in the Indo-Pacific region. China and India have been locked in a four-year-long military standoff, which began in June 2020. The beginning of the stand-off in 2020 saw the first clash between the armies of China and India in over four decades.

"The unsettled borders with China and the rise of China will remain the most formidable challenge that India and Indian armed forces will face in the foreseeable future," Chauhan said at an event organized by a university in India's Pune on Monday, Indian news channel NDTV reported on Tuesday.

Newsweek contacted India's Ministry of Defense for comment.

"The occupation of Tibet by China, made them a new neighbor, and a partition of India created a new nation that thrived on hostility and hatred towards us," Chauhan added.

At least 50,000 soldiers on the Chinese and Indian sides are immediately facing each other in the Eastern Ladakh region since the stand-off began in 2020. At the same time, there is known to be a far more extensive deployment of troops in the rare areas of the Line of Actual Control.

Based on reports from the Indian media, the Indian Army now has between 150,000 and 200,000 soldiers facing China. The People's Liberation Army is said to have an equally large deployment of soldiers, up to 200,000 troops from the Xinjiang and Tibet Military Regions, Newsweek had reported earlier.

Bloomberg recently reported that India had deployed an additional 10,000 troops to the border with China after freeing the soldiers from the Western border with Pakistan.

Meanwhile, China's defense ministry recently responded to India's additional troop deployment and the inauguration of the Sela Tunnel in the Arunachal Pradesh region along the border with China.

"Zangnan is China's inherent territory, and China never recognizes and firmly opposes India's illegal

establishment of the so-called 'Arunachal Pradesh,'" Senior Colonel Zhang Xiaogang, spokesperson of the Ministry of National Defense, said on March 15. "We require the Indian side to cease any action that may complicate the boundary question, and earnestly maintain peace and stability in the border areas," Zhang added.

### **Arunachal Pradesh 'inherent part of China's territory', claims Chinese military**

17 March 2024, The Economic Times

The Chinese military has reiterated its claim over Arunachal Pradesh, calling the area an "inherent part of China's territory", days after India rejected Beijing's objection to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the state. The Chinese Defence Ministry spokesman Senior Colonel Zhang Xiaogang said that the southern part of Xizang (the Chinese name for Tibet) is an inherent part of China's territory, and Beijing "never acknowledges and firmly opposes" the "so-called Arunachal Pradesh illegally established by India", official media here reported.

Zhang made the remarks in response to India's enhancement of its military readiness through the Sela Tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh, according to a report posted on the Chinese Defence Ministry's website on Friday.

China, which claims Arunachal Pradesh as South Tibet, routinely objects to Indian leaders' visits to the state to highlight its claims. Beijing has also named the area as Zangnan.

India has repeatedly rejected China's territorial claims over Arunachal Pradesh, asserting that the state is an integral part of the country. New Delhi has also dismissed Beijing's move to assign "invented" names to the area, saying it did not alter the reality.

On March 9, Prime Minister Modi dedicated to the nation the Sela Tunnel built at an altitude of 13,000 feet in Arunachal Pradesh that will provide all-weather connectivity to strategically located Tawang and is expected to ensure better movement of troops along the frontier region.

The Rs 825 crore tunnel, constructed on the road connecting Assam's Tezpur to West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh, is being billed as the longest bi-lane road tunnel in the world at such an altitude.

The Sela Tunnel will provide for better movement of troops and weaponry to various forward locations along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China, according to Indian military officials.

"The Indian side's actions contradict the efforts made by both sides to ease border situations and are not conducive to maintaining peace and tranquillity in the border areas," Zhang said, referring to Modi's visit.

He said that the current border situation is generally stable, with effective diplomatic and military communication between the two sides on border issues of common concern.

Zhang urged India to "stop actions that complicate the border issue and to earnestly maintain peace and stability in the border area."

He "stressed" that the Chinese military remains highly alert in defending national sovereignty and territorial integrity, according to the report.

Zhang's reaction follows China's foreign ministry spokesperson's remark on Monday about lodging a diplomatic protest with India over Modi's recent visit to Arunachal Pradesh.

India "strongly rejected" China's objection and asserted that the state "was, is, and will" always be an integral and inalienable part of India.

External affairs ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in New Delhi that the Chinese side was made aware of this "consistent position" on several occasions.

Jaiswal said China's objection to such visits will not change the reality that Arunachal Pradesh "was, is, and will always be an integral and inalienable part of India."

"Indian leaders visit Arunachal Pradesh from time to time, as they visit other States of India. Objecting to such visits or India's developmental projects does not stand to reason," he said.

"Further, it will not change the reality that the State of Arunachal Pradesh was, is, and will always be an integral and inalienable part of India," Jaiswal said.

### **US Intelligence Report Warns of Potential Armed Conflict Between India and China**

15 March 2024, The Wire

The report underscored the strained relationship between India and China citing sporadic encounters between their militaries as a risk for miscalculation and escalation.

US intelligence agencies have raised concerns over a potential armed conflict between India and China amid escalating tensions and large troop deployments along the disputed border in a report released on Monday (March 11).

The report, released by the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), underscored the strained relationship between India and China, citing sporadic encounters between their militaries as a risk for miscalculation and escalation.

"The shared disputed border between India and China will remain a strain on their bilateral relationship. While the two sides have not engaged in significant cross-border clashes since 2020, they are maintaining large troop deployments, and sporadic encounters between opposing forces risk

miscalculation and escalation into armed conflict," the report said.

It also pointed out China's ambitions to establish overseas military bases, particularly in Sri Lanka and Pakistan. This move is seen as part of China's broader strategy to project power and safeguard its interests beyond its borders, the Hindustan Times reported.

India, Pakistan and a fragile global order

While a calm persists following a cease-fire with Pakistan along the Line of Control (LoC) in early 2021, the report warns that any provocations from Islamabad could lead to armed conflict between the two neighbours.

The report also highlights the fragile global order, pointing to China's military expansion plans, aggressive cyber operations, and potential interference in the upcoming 2024 US presidential elections. Alongside these concerns, the assessment mentions ongoing conflicts such as the Israel-Hamas war and the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

India-China standoff

Both India and China have amped up efforts on infrastructure projects near the border since a military standoff with China in Ladakh sector of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) began in May 2020.

Close to 50,000 troops from each side have been stationed in the area and India has made it clear that bilateral relations cannot be normalised till there is peace and tranquility in the border areas, the Hindustan Times report said.

In continuation of these efforts, Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently inaugurated the Sela tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh, enhancing all-weather connectivity to the strategically important region of Tawang.

India reportedly lost about 1,000 square kilometres of area in Ladakh to Chinese control in 2020, as per intelligence inputs provided to the Union government. Since then, twenty-eight rounds of negotiations between the two countries have failed to resolve the deadlock.

While China has publicly staked their claim on parts of Arunachal Pradesh, renaming some towns, details about physical confrontation with Indian soldiers were never made public. Former chief of Army Staff, General M.M. Naravane's memoirs were also withheld for revealing how the Modi government left the Army to its own devices when hostilities at Galwan broke out.

### **Trustworthiness-challenged China criticizes India's Tibet-border redeployment move**

12 March 2024, RTV

In light of its latest assessment of threats posed by an expansionist China from across occupied Tibet, India has freed nearly 10,000 soldiers from its western



border to redeploy them under a new command to its 532-km border in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh states, according to media reports Mar 8.

China responded by saying the move was “not conducive to easing tensions” between the two sides, reported Reuters Mar 8. Meanwhile, India has faulted China’s breach of long-standing written agreements for the current border turmoil.

In addition, an existing contingent of 9,000 soldiers, already designated to the Chinese occupied Tibet border, will be brought under the newly created fighting command, reported Bloomberg Mar 7.

The two countries are still at loggerheads along at least two remaining unresolved sectors along the Tibet-border region in nearby Ladakh region following a violent night clash in mid-June 2020 that, however, did not involve the use of firearms. Twenty Indian soldiers and at least four Chinese troops were killed in that clash.

Both militaries have fortified positions and deployed troops and equipment there in the last few years.

However, the two countries have also agreed to maintain dialogue through military and diplomatic channels, and on Feb 19 held a constructive 19th army commander-level meeting for restoring normalcy in this western section of their border dispute.

“China is committed to working with India to safeguard the peace and stability of the border areas,” Mao Ning, a spokesperson for the Chinese foreign ministry, has said “We believe that India’s practice is not conducive to safeguarding peace and is not conducive to easing tensions,” she has added, referring to the news of India’s redeployment of its border troops.

“India’s increase in military deployments in border areas does not help to calm the situation in the border areas or to safeguard peace and safety in these areas.”

The Indian Army and defence ministry have declined to comment on the redeployment news. However, speaking at an event hosted by a TV channel, Defence minister Rajnath Singh has said: “We are working continuously towards keeping the morale of the soldiers high... They are equipped, capable and ready to give a befitting reply to anyone who casts an evil eye on India.”

Meanwhile, in Japan, India’s External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said Mar 7 that China had not observed longstanding written agreements with India. “For example, ... between 1975 and 2020, which is really 45 years, there was no bloodshed on the border, and in 2020, [that] changed,” timesofindia.com Mar 8 quoted Jaishankar as saying. “We can disagree on many things, but when a country actually sort of does not observe written agreements with a neighbour, I think, you have

caused ... because ... then raises a question mark about the stability of the relationship and frankly, about intentions,” Jaishankar has said in response to a question.

India and China share a 3,800-km frontier, a legacy of the latter’s annexation of Tibet and the former’s acceptance of the occupied territory as an autonomous region of China in a 1954 trade agreement.

### **China protests against India tunnel opening, warns it will only complicate border issue**

12 March 2024, South China Morning Post

Beijing has lodged a diplomatic protest with New Delhi after Prime Minister Narendra Modi officially opened a tunnel built in territories along the two countries’ disputed Himalayan border, weeks ahead of general elections in the South Asian state.

Modi paid a visit on Saturday to the contested region – known as Arunachal Pradesh to India and South Tibet, or Zangnan to China – where he inaugurated the Sela tunnel connecting Tezpur in Assam and Tawang in Arunachal.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said on Monday that India had “no right to arbitrarily develop the area of Zangnan in China”. The move “will only complicate” the boundary question and “disrupt the situation” in the border areas.

“The area of Zangnan is Chinese territory. The Chinese government has never recognised the so-called Arunachal Pradesh, illegally set up by India and firmly opposes it.” Wang said “solemn representations” had been made.

“China strongly deplores and firmly opposes the Indian leader’s visit to the east section of the China-India boundary,” he said, adding that the border question has “yet to be solved”.

The tunnel, built at an altitude of 13,000 feet (3,960 metres), is expected to facilitate India’s movement of troops and weaponry to forward locations along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) – the disputed 3,440km (2,100 miles) de facto border.

Modi’s announcement came weeks after the 21st round of corps commander-level talks between the two sides in late February – described by China as “positive, in-depth and constructive” and by India as “held in a friendly and cordial atmosphere”.

Both sides said at the time that they had agreed to keep communicating through the relevant military and diplomatic mechanisms, and were committed to maintaining peace on the ground in the border areas.

China and India have been locked in a military stand-off since their fatal border clash in June 2020 but the dispute dates back to 1962, when the two sides fought a war over the contested boundary.



Modi, who has overseen a decisive tilt towards Washington, is widely expected to secure his third term in the April-May polls, with more than 945 million people set to vote.

During his prime ministership, Modi has elevated military ties and accelerated partnerships with the US, Japan and Australia through the Quad – a strategic security dialogue that Beijing has slammed as an “Indo-Pacific Nato”.

In July, Modi refused to support Beijing’s landmark Belt and Road Initiative at the virtual Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit.

A few weeks later, he and Chinese President Xi Jinping met briefly on the sidelines of the Brics summit in August for their first direct conversation in a year. In September, Xi skipped the Group of 20 summit in India.

China has been without an ambassador to India for 16 months. The post has been vacant since the most recent incumbent Sun Weidong was promoted to a foreign vice-ministership in November 2022.

China warns that increasing Indian troops at border won't ease tensions

08 March 2024, The Economic Times

Senior Indian officials, requesting anonymity due to the confidentiality of the discussions, revealed that a unit of 10,000 soldiers previously deployed to the western border is now assigned to safeguard a segment of the frontier with China, a Bloomberg report said.

An existing group of 9,000 soldiers, initially designated for the disputed Chinese border, will now fall under the newly established fighting command. This unified force will protect a 532 km (330.57 miles) border section dividing China's Tibet region from India's northern states of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh.

Souring Ties

Beginning on May 5, 2020, Chinese and Indian troops were involved in aggressive confrontations, face-offs, and skirmishes at various locations along the Sino-Indian border. These incidents occurred near the disputed Pangong Lake in Ladakh, the Tibet Autonomous Region, and the border between Sikkim and the Tibet Autonomous Region. Additional clashes took place in eastern Ladakh along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

In late May, tensions escalated when Chinese forces raised objections to Indian road construction in the Galwan River valley. On September 7, 2020, shots were fired along the LAC for the first time in 45 years, with both parties attributing blame to the other. Indian media also reported that Indian troops had fired warning shots at the People's Liberation Army (PLA) on August 30, 2020.

Ties between India and China deteriorated following

confrontation, and there has been limited improvement since. Despite engaging in as many as 21 rounds of military-diplomatic talks, progress has been incremental. In response to the strained relations, India has enacted laws aimed at discouraging Chinese investments and business enterprises within the country.

In 2021, India deployed an extra 50,000 soldiers to monitor its border with China, responding to heightened tensions following a deadly clash the previous year that resulted in the unfortunate loss of at least 20 Indian soldiers, significantly straining diplomatic relations.

Subsequently, both China and India have taken steps to enhance military-related infrastructure, relocating missiles and aircraft to their respective border regions, alongside the additional deployment of troops.

### India-China relations: Foreign Minister S Jaishankar highlights decades of peace shattered by 2020 conflict

07 March 2024, The Telegraph

Longstanding agreements are not being necessarily observed, raising question marks about the stability of the environment in which we all operate: Jaishankar

Taking a dig at China, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday said Beijing has not observed longstanding written agreements with India and blamed it for the bloodshed at the borders in 2020, the first in more than four decades.

Speaking here at the inaugural Raisina Roundtable in Tokyo, an event by the think tank, Jaishankar also spoke about how he expected a change in Russia’s direction towards the rest of the world and it may likely want multiple options in Asia.

On a two-day trip to Japan, Jaishankar elaborated on the changing world order, saying, “There is a reality of a very big power shift in the Indo-Pacific. When there are very big shifts in capabilities and influence and presumably ambitions, then there are all the accompanying ambitions and strategic consequences.” “Now, it's not an issue whether you like it or you don't like it. There's a reality out there, you have to deal with that reality,” he said and added, “Ideally, we would assume that everybody would say, okay, things are changing, but let's keep it as stable as we can.” “Unfortunately, that's not what we have seen in the last decade of our own experience in the case of China, for example, is between 1975 to 2020, which is really 45 years, there was no bloodshed on the border, and in 2020, changed,” he said.

“We can disagree on many things, but when a country actually sort of does not observe written agreements with a neighbour, I think, you have

caused ... because ... then raises a question mark about the stability of the relationship and frankly, about intentions," Jaishankar said in response to a question.

The eastern Ladakh border standoff erupted on May 5, 2020, following a violent clash in the Pangong Lake area.

The ties between the two countries nosedived significantly following the fierce clash in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 that marked the most serious military conflict between the two sides in decades.

India has been maintaining that its ties with China cannot be normal unless there is peace in the border areas.

"We see it in conflict in Europe, in disregard for international law in Asia, and in the ongoing developments in the Middle East and often in the weaponisation of the normal," he said earlier in his prepared address.

"Longstanding agreements are not being necessarily observed, raising question marks about the stability of the environment in which we all operate," he said, referring to the 1993 Border Peace and Tranquillity Agreement (BPTA) and the 1996 agreement on "Confidence Building Measures in the Military Field Along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas".

Answering a question after his speech, he said, "That is why for India, in a changing world, our own equilibrium, our own balances with other countries are changing as well. They don't have to be acrimonious, but the balance is changing." The External Affairs Minister had on March 2 in Delhi raised a similar point while speaking at an interactive session of a think tank. "China must adhere to border management pacts and there has to be peace and tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) for improvement in Sino-India ties," Jaishankar asserted amid the lingering military face-off in eastern Ladakh.

In his remarks, in an apparent reference to India's increasing economic strength, he said, "We cannot become, in GDP, from number 11 to number five and (expect) everything remains the same. It will not remain the same." "But how to create new equilibriums ... in a less frictional manner ... I think that today, the management of the global order, some of us are trying to help. Some of us have other approaches to countries in various sectors and also that broadens the spectrum," the Minister added.

The Minister also made an interesting comment about Russia and its changing approach. Pointing out how, during the last two years, Russia's relationship with the West has broken down because of the Ukraine conflict, he said, "Economically, it means that a lot of access Russia had to the Western world is no longer there and historically, Russia has always put a

premium that is the main axis for them." "So you actually have today the prospect that Russia is turning more and more towards Asia. It can also turn to other continents but I would say Asia is the most dynamic possibility for them," he observed.

The flow of Russian trade of investments of resources, and available collaborations towards Asian destinations will not be a short-term trend and continue for some years, he added.

"So I expect, actually, almost like a change in Russia's direction towards the world and I think it has very interesting implications for us in Asia, because like any big power Russia will also want multiple options," Jaishankar added.

### **China-India ties remain adrift as wait for Chinese envoy to New Delhi drags on**

04 March 2024, South China Morning Post

China has been without an ambassador to India for 16 months – despite the importance Beijing attaches to its relationship with New Delhi, where foreign policy is mainly focused on its periphery and the interactions of major powers, observers said.

The post has been vacant since the most recent incumbent Sun Weidong was promoted to a foreign vice-ministership in November 2022.

The gap – the longest since 1976 – has coincided with a sharp deterioration in relations, with the two countries locked in a military stand-off since the fatal clash at their disputed Himalayan border in June 2020.

Observers said the long period without a Chinese ambassador to India was highly unusual, adding that the appointment of a new envoy would be viewed positively on both sides as a crucial step towards building trust.

Wang Dehua, an expert on India at the Shanghai Municipal Centre for International Studies, said the long absence of a top Chinese envoy had laid bare the damage caused by the border tensions to ties between the world's two most populous nations.

"That's something very rare in the history of Sino-Indian relations, which for many is an ominous sign and makes it difficult for both sides to manage their differences, especially when ties are at a low point," Wang said.

"While it is true that New Delhi is unlikely to ever become Beijing's friend, China still needs to try its best to have good relations with India ... or at least woo it away from the US on strategic issues, such as trade and Washington's Indo-Pacific strategy. After all, the US and Japan remain our top opponents."

According to Wang, it was "imperative" for Beijing to fill the vacancy, a move that would help China stabilise ties with its nuclear-armed Himalayan neighbour in the midst of its intensifying geopolitical and ideological feud with the US-led West.

Top candidate for the post is tipped as Xu Feihong, who until December served as assistant foreign minister for administrative and financial affairs. He was removed after an almost three-year stint, without explanation or an announcement of his next position. Hong Kong newspaper Sing Tao Daily reported rumours that the move was intended to pave the way for 59-year-old Xu, a former ambassador to Afghanistan and Romania, to take up the New Delhi posting.

And in January, Indian news site The Wire reported that Xu's appointment as China's envoy was being finalised, citing unnamed sources who claimed the news "has been conveyed about the candidate" to New Delhi.

Neither Beijing nor New Delhi has confirmed the appointment.

Liu Zongyi, a senior fellow with the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies' South Asia and China Centre, said an early appointment would be much-needed good news to help arrest further decline in the already strained ties.

Despite his lack of direct involvement in managing Indian affairs, compared to Sun and his predecessor Luo Zhaohui, Xu would be a good candidate for the role, according to Liu.

Both Sun, currently foreign vice-minister in charge of Asian affairs, and Luo have extensive regional experience, including stints as China's top envoy to Pakistan, and are considered experts in South Asian affairs.

But Liu pointed out that Xu – who served as China's ambassador to Afghanistan from 2010-13 – would not be the first top envoy to New Delhi to lack direct experience with the South Asian nation.

Luo's predecessor Le Yucheng – a Russian expert who was posted to India in 2014, shortly ahead of President Xi Jinping's first official visit to New Delhi – did not have any Indian experience either, he said.

On return to Beijing after their stints in India, Luo and Sun were both promoted to foreign vice-minister positions, while Le served as deputy to China's then top ranking diplomat Yang Jiechi, also a vice-ministerial role.

Liu said that all three former Chinese ambassadors had been serving as assistant foreign ministers when they got the New Delhi job, putting Xu's appointment – if confirmed – in line with past arrangements.

But he cautioned against expectations of a quick turnaround in Sino-Indian ties, which were at a "critical juncture", amid signs of further geopolitical division between them on top of their border impasse and in the midst of intensifying US-China rivalry.

"I don't think the border dispute is too complicated to be resolved, and the key is whether both sides are able to demonstrate their willingness to work

together towards a mutually acceptable solution, especially on the part of New Delhi," Liu said.

"But even if the border issues can be resolved, I am not optimistic that bilateral ties could be improved any time soon."

According to Liu, Beijing is also concerned about India's hyping of China as a threat and its increasingly restrictive policies against Chinese investment, as New Delhi seeks to decouple economically from its neighbour and replace it in the global supply chain as the world's factory.

Xu's previous experience in financial affairs might prove useful if the veteran diplomat were posted to New Delhi, Liu said.

A Bloomberg report this week said a study by London-based Fathom Financial Consulting found that India has made headway in its efforts to increase its market share of electronics exports – through tax cuts and other incentives – previously dominated by China.

The two countries wrapped up another round of commander-level border talks last week, seeking a mutually acceptable solution "at the earliest possible time" in a bid to "turn the page" on the tensions, the Chinese defence ministry said.

Beijing expressed similar hopes in December, at the start of this latest round of diplomatic talks with New Delhi on the border issues.

However, after 21 rounds of military-level talks and 28 rounds of diplomatic dialogue, there is little sign of any quick solution, let alone "a complete disengagement" of Chinese and Indian troops along the Line of Actual Control in Eastern Ladakh.

Neither side appears ready to back down on the highly charged border issues, with Beijing and New Delhi each accusing the other of stalling the situation. Meanwhile, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has overseen a decisive tilt towards Washington, elevating military ties and accelerating partnerships with the US, Japan and Australia through the Quad – slammed by Beijing as an "Indo-Pacific Nato".

While Xi and Modi briefly discussed the border situation in August on the sidelines of the Brics summit – their first direct conversation in a year – bilateral ties have largely remained deadlocked.

In a move widely seen as a snub to New Delhi, Xi skipped the Group of 20 summit in India in September, after Modi refused to support Xi's signature Belt and Road Initiative at the virtual Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in July.

### **China urges Indian media to uphold One China policy, berating a Taiwan foreign Minister interview**

04 March 2024, Tibetan Review

China wants the media in India to follow its so-called One China policy after the television channel NewsX aired on Feb 29 an interview with Taiwan's foreign minister Joseph Wu. The Communist Party of China (CPC)-state has never ruled Taiwan but considers the latter a renegade province and vowed to "reunify" it, including by armed invasion if necessary.

In a statement issued Mar 1, the Chinese embassy in India claimed the interview provided "a platform for advocating Taiwan independence and disseminating false information," which it deemed a serious violation of the One-China principle.

China's One-China principle asserts that there is only one China in this world and Taiwan is part of it, and the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) is its sole legal representative. It requires all countries having diplomatic relations with it to abide by this principle.

However, India has for years refrained from including the One-China nomenclature in joint statements after meetings with leaders of China due to the latter's claim on Arunachal Pradesh and pro-Pakistan position it has adopted on the Kashmir issue. China has also repeatedly angered India by preventing the UN from sanctioning terrorists who had attacked it and were being protected by Pakistan.

The Chinese embassy statement stressed that the One-China principle is widely accepted and forms the political foundation for diplomatic ties between China and countries worldwide.

It urged the "Indian media to uphold China's sovereignty and territorial integrity."

Responding strongly to the Chinese statement, the Taiwan Foreign Office has said, "Neither India nor Taiwan is part of the PRC and we're not its puppets.

"We're both democracies with free and vibrant presses that can't be dictated to. Beijing should worry about its own economic slump, not bullying its neighbours," the statement has added.

India-Taiwan relations, while unofficial, have gradually strengthened in recent years, driven by economic, strategic, and cultural factors. Despite not having formal diplomatic ties, the two sides have sought to enhance bilateral trade and investment through various mechanisms. Taiwan's technological expertise in areas like chipmaking aligns with India's goals of promoting innovation and digitalisation, noted news18.com Mar 3.

The report said that less than a month ago, the Taipei Economic and Cultural Centre in India – Taiwan's de facto embassy in India – and the India Taipei

Association (ITA) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on labour cooperation.

### **India to open 'strategically important' navy base near China-friendly Maldives**

03 March 2024, South China Morning Post

India's navy has said it is bolstering forces on "strategically important" islands close to the Maldives, with a new base set to open just days before Male starts sending home Indian forces.

Relations between India and the Maldives have soured since pro-China President Mohamed Muizzu won elections last year after promising to expel Indian forces.

India is suspicious of China's growing presence in the archipelago nation, which straddles key east-west international shipping routes, and the new base will extend New Delhi's "operational surveillance" of the area, the navy said in a statement late Saturday.

Muizzu has asked India to withdraw 89 security personnel based in the Maldives to operate reconnaissance aircraft, with the first batch due to leave by March 10 and all to depart within two months.

The new base, opening March 6 on India's Lakshadweep islands, will turn an existing small detachment into an "independent naval unit", according to the navy's statement.

India's Lakshadweep islands lie about 130 kilometres (80 miles) north of the Maldives, with the new naval base on the island of Minicoy situated at their closest point.

India's navy already has a base on the Lakshadweep island of Kavaratti, but the new base will be about 258 kilometres (160 miles) closer to the Maldives.

"Minicoy is the southernmost island of Lakshadweep, which straddles the vital sea lines of communications," the navy said.

It said the base will boost anti-piracy and anti-narcotic operations, and was part of a policy to "incrementally augment security infrastructure at the strategically important" islands.

### **India, China in 'constructive communication' to settle Ladakh standoff: Chinese military**

01 March 2024, The Economic Times

China and India have maintained "constructive communication" to find a mutually acceptable solution to resolve the standoff in eastern Ladakh, the Chinese military has said, underlining that Beijing attaches "great importance" to ties with New Delhi to jointly maintain peace at the borders. The Indian and Chinese troops are locked in a standoff in certain friction points in eastern Ladakh even as the two sides completed disengagement from several areas

following extensive diplomatic and military talks.

"The two sides had positive, in-depth and constructive communication on resolving the border issues of each other's concern and agreed to reach a mutually acceptable solution at an early date," Ministry of National Defence spokesperson Senior Colonel Zhang Xiaogang told the Chinese media at a press briefing here on Thursday, referring to the commander-level talks held on February 19 between India and China.

"China attaches great importance to the China-India military-to-military relations and hopes that India and China will work towards the same goal, enhance mutual trust, properly settle differences and jointly maintain peace and tranquillity in the border areas," he was quoted as saying by China Military Online, the official news portal of the Chinese Defence Ministry.

The talks held on February 19 were the 21st round of talks between the two militaries to resolve the eastern Ladakh logjam, which will enter its fourth year in May this year.

The Chinese military action in May 2020

resulted in the Galwan Valley clash that marked the most serious military conflict between India and China in decades.

According to the Chinese military, the two sides have so far agreed to disengage at four points – the Galwan Valley, the Pangong Lake, Hot Springs, and Jianan Daban (Gogra) – contributing to the de-escalation of tensions along the border.

But the talks were deadlocked over reaching a similar agreement at Depsang and Demchok, where the Indian side strongly pressed for resolution of two lingering issues.

Both sides issued separate press releases on the 21st round of talks.

A press release issued by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on the latest talks said the two sides agreed to maintain communication on the way ahead through the relevant military and diplomatic mechanisms.

"The discussions built on the previous rounds, seeking complete disengagement in the remaining areas along the LAC (Line of Actual Control) in eastern Ladakh as an essential basis for the restoration of peace and tranquillity in the India-China border areas," it said in a statement.

The MEA said the two sides shared their perspectives on this in the talks held in a "friendly and cordial" atmosphere.

"The two sides have agreed to maintain communication on the way ahead through the relevant military and diplomatic mechanisms. They also committed to maintain peace and tranquillity on the ground in the border areas in the interim," it said.

In Beijing, China's Ministry of National Defence said the two militaries conducted positive, in-depth, and constructive communication on resolving border issues of mutual concern.

Both sides agreed to continue communication through military and diplomatic channels, guided by the important consensus of the leaders of the two countries, to reach an acceptable solution as soon as possible and "turn the page" in the border situation, the Chinese readout on the 21st round of talks said.

The eastern Ladakh border standoff erupted on May 5, 2020, following a violent clash in the Pangong Lake area. The Eastern Ladakh standoff has resulted in a virtual freeze of bilateral ties on all fronts except trade.

India is pressing the People's Liberation Army to disengage from the Depsang and Demchok, maintaining that there cannot be restoration of normalcy in its relations with China as long as the state of the borders remains abnormal.

## February

### 'Mind games ...': Jaishankar warns against China's bid to derail bilateral ties

23 February 2024, Times of India

NEW DELHI: India and China face significant challenges in maintaining a balanced relationship, external affairs minister S Jaishankar said on Friday. Speaking at the Raisina Dialogue, Jaishankar noted that China's immediate issue was departure from established norms, leading to the border dispute in eastern Ladakh. During his address, Jaishankar cautioned against China's "mind games" and attempts to limit discussions to bilateral matters, emphasizing that India should assert its rights and consider other global factors to achieve a favourable equilibrium.

On the economic front, Jaishankar referred to Goldman Sachs' projections that by 2075, both India and China could become \$50 trillion plus economies. The minister was responding to a question on whether the two countries would manage to find an equilibrium or a balance in their frosty relations.

"Here is the immediate issue which is: From the late 1980s, we had an understanding on the border precisely because it suited both of us. Now there was a departure after almost 30 years. A departure on their side in terms of how they behaved on the border. And there was a pushback from our side," he said.

"I think arriving at an equilibrium, then maintaining those and refreshing those is going to be one of the biggest challenges for both countries. It is not going



to be easy," he noted.

The external affairs minister said "mind games" will be played which would be that it is "just between the two of us".

"The other 190 odd countries do not exist in our relationship. That will be the mind game which will be played. I do not think we should play it," he said.

In terms of the two economies, Jaishankar acknowledged that China had a head start and a more intensive and robust growth trajectory. However, he emphasized that economic growth patterns suggest that both countries will eventually flatten out, with India's growth surpassing China's.

"I am not in denial of what the numbers today suggest. But if one looks for an example in Goldman Sachs predictions which is that we will both really by around 2075 end up as \$50 trillion plus economies and will be the two closest to each other," he said.

### **'Ladakh stand-off led India to cite China as No. 1 threat'**

13 February 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Feb13'24) – India may still be flummoxed by the audacity of the Chinese army intrusion into eastern Ladakh in mid-2020, especially as regards the level of authority at which the decision was taken, but it has enabled the country to be more aware of and outspoken about where its actual threat lies, theprint.in Feb 11 cited former Army chief Gen Manoj Naravane as saying.

Four years since the Chinese intrusion, which led to a continued standoff but subsequent pullback to their side, the question why they did it still confounds the Indian defence and security establishment, the report said.

While noting that only time will tell at which level the decision was taken to stir tensions with India at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), Naravane has said it worked out well for India because it was now more aware of where the actual threat is.

"Why they did what they did is a question which continues to confound us. Especially because they did it when the world was in the claws of the Covid pandemic," Gen Naravane has said Feb 10, speaking at the WordsCount literature festival held at the Mayo College in Ajmer, Rajasthan.

Given the nature of the Chinese system, it is very unlikely that the decision to do what they did was taken at a local level, that is, by some miscalculation by the Battalion Commander, the report cited him as saying.

"Had to be something which had to be coordinated much higher up. Whether that much higher up is at the level of their Western Theatre Command or right up to the Politburo (of the Chinese Communist Party), that time will tell," he has said.

Speaking at the annual event hosted by author and scriptwriter Advaita Kala, he has added, "But what has happened is not a bad thing. Because for a very long time, we were shying away from calling out China as the No. 1 threat".

And he has continued: "We were always hoping that by being decent and conciliatory and agreeing to what they are saying, they would return that favour in full measure and also give us the respect that is due. So obviously that was not coming... as a result of activities of 2020, we are more focused now on where the threat actually lies."

### **'Beijing tried to...': Amit Shah likens LAC standoff to 1962 Indo-China war in Lok Sabha**

10 February 2024, Live Mint

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday spoke on the India-China border dispute along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh and said that Beijing was attempting a repeat of the 1962 war with India. While speaking in Parliament, Amit Shah reiterated the Union Government's stand that India has "not lost out on any territory" in the military standoff against the Chinese troops.

"China tried to do what it did in 1962," news agency PTI quoted Amit Shah as saying in Lok Sabha. "Our leadership displayed resolve and not an inch of India's land was lost," he added.

Congress-led Opposition parties have attacked the PM Modi-led Union government on the issue and claimed that Chinese troops have encroached on India's territory.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Johannesburg and discussed the de-escalation of tensions along the LAC. "In a conversation with President Xi Jinping of China, PM highlighted India's concerns on the unresolved issues along the LAC in the western sector of the India-China border areas," India's Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra said.

After the meeting, China also released a statement emphasizing the need to properly handling the border issues. "President Xi stressed that improving China-India relations serves the common interests of the two countries and peoples, and is also conducive to peace, stability, and development of the world and the region," the statement said.

"The two sides should bear in mind the overall interests of their bilateral relations and handle properly the border issue so as to jointly safeguard peace and tranquility in the border region," it added. India-China LAC standoff

The tense standoff between Indian and Chinese troops commenced in the latter part of April-May 2020. The confrontation culminated in a violent clash in the Galwan Valley on the night of June 15, resulting in casualties on both sides. Twenty Indian

soldiers were killed in the violent clashes, the first instance in over four decades where lives were lost in a border dispute along the Line of Actual Control. Since then, both India and China's Army have been conducting meetings at the Corps Commander level and disengagement has taken place in some sectors, but the status quo before April 2020 still looks far.

### **Budget for cultural bodies linked to Tibetans slashed to Rs 20 crore**

06 February 2024, The Economic Times

The Centre has slashed budgetary allocation for Tibet House, the Dalai Lama's cultural centre and other Buddhist institutions.

The budget for such bodies under the cultural ministry has been reduced from ₹50.19 crore in the current financial year to ₹20.19 crore for the next fiscal. Government sources claimed the budget has been allocated as per the demands made by them.

The list includes Tibet House, Centre for Buddhist Cultural Studies Tawang Monastery, Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, International Buddhist Confederation and GRL Monastic School Bomdila.

It also includes bodies such as Vrindavan Research Institute, Asiatic Society (Mumbai), Thanjavur Maharaja Serfoji Sarasvati Mahal Library, Central Library and Connemara Public Library.

In the last fiscal, budget for these institutes was ₹71.51 crore, reduced to ₹50.19 crore for the current fiscal.

When contacted, BJD MP Sujeet Kumar, who heads When contacted, BJD MP Sujeet Kumar, who heads the All-Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet, said, "It is unfortunate. Reduction in budgetary allocation especially for Tibet House, Tawang Monastery and Namgyal Institute is worrisome as these institutes work in preserving and protecting the Tibetan culture, which is under attack from China. The government of India should have enhanced the support," Kumar said.

## **January**

### **India's top civilian honour to Taiwanese business leader seen as message to China**

28 January 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Jan28'24) – In what is seen as a message to China, India has awarded its third highest civilian honour, the Padma Bhushan, to Taiwan's Liu Young-way, the Chief Executive Officer of Foxconn. The move will send a very strong

message to the Communist Party of China, said a firstpost.com news report Jan 26.



Togdan Rinpoche, the spiritual and political leader from Ladakh, belonged to the Drikung Kagyu order of Kagyupa, was awarded the Padma Bhushan posthumously. (Photo courtesy: TRN)

Another recipient, albeit posthumously, is Togdan Rinpoche (1938 – May 24, 2023) of Ladakh, who an indiatimes.com report said Jan 16 was an ally of Tibet's exiled spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama is despised by China, which calls him a separatist, even though he only seeks regional autonomy for his Tibetan homeland.

The 66-year-old Liu will receive the accolade in a ceremony later this year, with the presentation to be made by the President of India. The announcement of the 132 recipients across various Padma categories was made on the eve of India's Republic Day of Jan 26.

In a message to Beijing, India for the first time conferred one of its highest civilian awards upon a person from Taiwan on Thursday (Jan 25) said the scmp.com Jan 26.

The recognition comes at a time when Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been trying to attract foreign investors and portray India as Asia's next manufacturing hub amid efforts by the US and its allies to move supply chains away from China.

Foxconn, the world's biggest maker of electronic components, said recently that it planned to build a chip packaging and testing plant in India with HCL Group, a local tech firm.

In November, Foxconn – a leading supplier for American tech titan Apple – announced investments in India worth US\$1.6 billion to diversify away from China.

The report noted that in 2019, the company initiated the production of Apple's iPhone XR at its manufacturing facility in India. Building on this milestone, by 2023, the same facility had expanded its capabilities to include the manufacturing of the latest iPhone model, the iPhone 14.

Meanwhile, New Delhi has encouraged the island's top semiconductor firm, Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC), to establish a fabrication plant in India, the report noted.

In a sign of deepening unofficial ties, trade between India and Taiwan surged from just over US\$1 billion in 2001 to US\$7 billion in 2021, the report said.

Another Padma Bhushan awardee in Togdan Rinpoche. He had served as the Head Lama for Ladakh for all Tibetan Buddhist lineage, is the most senior Lama of the Drikung Kagyu Yogi lineage, and one of the most senior Lamas in Nyingma tradition, according to his official website.

The award is seen as a recognition of the Drikung Kagyu sect by the Centre; Togdan Rinpoche was also instrumental in preserving the Bhoti (Tibetan) language, the [indiatimes.com](https://www.indiatimes.com) report cited officials as saying.

### Apprehensions in India as Chinese Survey Ship Heads to Maldives

29 January 2024, VOA

NEW DELHI — A Chinese research ship due to dock in the Maldives has raised apprehensions in India, where concerns have been growing about the potential military use of the data collected by such vessels.



FILE - Maldives' president Mohamed Muizzu leaves his inauguration ceremony in Male, Nov. 17, 2023. He vowed to expel Indian troops deployed in the strategically located archipelago, in his first speech to the nation after being sworn into power.

The Maldives foreign ministry said last week that it has given permission to the ship, Xiang Yang Hong 3, following a request by China to “make a port call, for rotation of personnel and replenishment.” It said the ship will not be conducting any research in Maldivian waters.

The announcement comes at a time when diplomatic tensions have spiked between India and the Maldives following the election of President Mohamed Muizzu, who is seen as pro-China.

The Maldives gave clearance to the ship weeks after India’s other small neighbor in the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka placed a one-year moratorium on foreign research ships entering its waters.

The suspension was put in place apparently due to objections raised by India after at least two Chinese research and surveillance ships docked in the island nation in the last year and a half. Last year, the

research ship Shi Yan 6, conducted a maritime survey in Sri Lankan waters.

Analysts say New Delhi’s concerns about Chinese research ships such as the one due to dock in the Maldives in the coming days arise from fears that the data collected could be used to deploy Chinese submarines in the region.

“Our suspicion is that this vessel, although it is an oceanographic research vessel, is gathering information that could be used by China to expand its undersea military operations and improve its anti-submarine warfare capabilities, as it studies the Indian Ocean environment, the seabed, temperature profile, eddies, currents, etc. That means China will have an edge militarily in the Indian Ocean in times to come,” Abhijit Singh, Head of Maritime Policy Initiative at the Observer Research Foundation in New Delhi told VOA.

Amid rising geopolitical tensions, the Indian Ocean has become a hugely strategic waterway for India and China, the Asian giants whose rivalries have deepened following a four-year long military standoff along their Himalayan borders.

“Beijing has profound interest in the Indian Ocean because vital sea-lanes of communication pass through here carrying energy, oil, trade etc. What they are doing is reconnoitering the high seas, studying the hydrographic or hydrological conditions because their submarines will operate here one day,” India’s retired navy chief Arun Prakash told VOA. “China is preparing the ground for a major maritime deployment in the years to come So it is of concern to India.”

The Maldives and Sri Lanka are placed strategically along key shipping routes. Although the Maldives foreign ministry said that the Chinese ship, Xiang Yang Hong 3 would not be conducting research, analysts said that was unlikely to reassure New Delhi.

“Once the vessel is there, it is very hard for Maldives to make sure that it is not doing the work it intends to do,” according to Singh.

A report by the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies released earlier this month said that Chinese surveys in the Indian Ocean have “clear military value - especially to submarine operations.”

According to the report, China, whose surveying operations had been concentrated along its periphery in the South China Sea and Western Pacific Ocean, has also set its sights on the Indian Ocean.

“While scientific and commercial benefits may accrue from Chinese oceanographic research, these activities may also prove crucial for the PLA [People’s Liberation Army] in expanding its operational reach

and capabilities in the Indian Ocean," the report said.

"This expansion poses a significant challenge to key regional players like India, as well as to the United States and its allies."

Following the report's release, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning, said that China's marine scientific research fully complied with the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea.

"We hope that the relevant parties will take an objective view of China's marine scientific research activities and refrain from speculating through colored glasses," Mao said on January 11.

In the Maldives, permission to the Chinese vessel was granted weeks after both sides committed to stronger ties during a visit this month by the Maldivian president, Muizzu, to Beijing.

"The Chinese are going to leverage these growing ties with Maldives by conducting surveys in these waters," said Singh.

Indian Ocean countries such as Sri Lanka and the Maldives have witnessed a geopolitical tug of war between India and China for a strategic presence over the past two decades.

"The Maldives has always been a welcoming destination for vessels of friendly countries, and continues to host both civilian and military vessels making port calls for peaceful purposes," the Maldivian foreign ministry said last week, referring to the Xiang Yang Hong 3 visit.

"The deployment of such research ships in the Indian Ocean is going to increase, it is not going to get any less in the years to come," said Prakash.

### India parades domestic weapons amid China border tensions

27 January 2024, Nikkei Asia

New Delhi eyes expanded defense industry to develop its military power



India's Republic Day parade in New Delhi on Jan. 26 featured a display of the country's growing defense industry. © AP

NEW DELHI -- India showcased domestically produced weapons during a military parade on

Friday, an apparent show of strength toward China amid a border dispute.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and members of his cabinet attended the event in New Delhi celebrating the 75th Republic Day, a holiday commemorating the 1950 adoption of the constitution.

French President Emmanuel Macron was the chief guest. His invitation was in response to France inviting Modi to attend Bastille Day festivities in Paris on July 14 last year.

Featured in the parade was the Prachand stealth helicopter, designed and manufactured by the state-owned defense contractor Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL). The NAG anti-tank missile system, developed by India's Defence Research and Development Organisation, was also on display.

Warplanes running on biofuel re-enacted the massive Tangail airdrop that occurred during the 1971 war with Pakistan. Women personnel from the army, navy and air force marched in a show of diversity and empowerment.

The domestic defense industry has expanded rapidly under Modi's Made In India Initiative. The government has allocated 5.94 trillion rupees (\$71.4 billion) to this year's defense budget, roughly double the amount when Modi first came to power in 2014.

India is now fourth in the world in defense spending, behind the U.S., Russia and China.

Because of the war in Ukraine, weapon supplies from Russia have become prone to delays. India is Russia's largest weapons importer, with about 45% of its arms procurement coming from Russia.

One factor driving the rush to boost defense capabilities is a growing sense of alarm in New Delhi toward signs of China's territorial expansionism. In 2020, the two countries engaged in a border clash that produced fatalities on both sides for the first time in 45 years.

The Maldives, which has historically maintained close ties with India, elected a new president last year who is known to be pro-China. A Chinese observation vessel will reportedly make a port call at the Maldives capital of Male early next month, which has put India's military on alert.

India suffered a military failure during the Sino-Indian War in 1962. That experience positioned the modernization of the military and the development of a homegrown defense industry as a matter of sovereignty and survival.

But China's defense budget is triple that of India's, and the number of India's military personnel falls short of China. Without any major military alliances, India is enhancing defense ties with Western countries and with Russia to counter pressure from China.



During the summit Thursday between Modi and Macron, the two sides apparently affirmed plans to advance bilateral defense cooperation, which would include the transfer of submarines and other advanced military tech. French aerospace firm Safran is collaborating with India on the production of warplane engines, according to reports.

Western countries in turn are keen to deepen relations with India to push back against China's military buildup.

In June, U.S. President Joe Biden hosted Modi in a state dinner. General Electric and HAL signed an agreement toward manufacturing engines for the Indian-made Tejas combat aircraft following the dinner.

In November, Washington and New Delhi agreed to jointly manufacture the Stryker armored vehicle in India.

Western nations seek to drive a wedge between India and Russia, but New Delhi is maintaining ties with Moscow in light of its reliance on Russian oil and weapons.

In December, Indian Minister of External Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow. Modi has expressed his intentions to visit Russia this year.

Last April, the Indian government said it has established defense industrial corridors in the states of Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Uttar Pradesh is due to manufacture the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile co-developed with Russia.

By expanding access to global markets such as Europe, India looks to develop its domestic defense industry supply chain and create jobs.

"I would say there is a greater realization that if India has to elevate its profile, it can't be dependent on arms imports," said Sameer Patil, senior fellow at the Observer Research Foundation, an Indian think tank. "It can develop its military capability, but it won't be recognized as a military power if it doesn't have a robust domestic industrial interface."

### **China reiterates 'historical legacy' to continue holding up resolution of Ladakh border dispute**

26 January 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Jan26'24) - China has responded with what amounted to saying a polite "no" to India's suggestion that it could ease its heightened scrutiny of Chinese investments if peace is restored at the two countries' border along occupied Tibet. The boundary dispute is a "legacy issue" and it is "unwise" to link the border issue with the overall relations as it does not represent the whole picture of the bilateral relations, Reuters Jan 25 cited a Chinese defence ministry spokesperson as saying.

Senior Colonel Wu Qian made the remarks at a media briefing in Beijing in response to a question on

India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's reported statement that China violated the bilateral consensus in 2020 and assembled a large number of military forces along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), resulting in the conflict in the Galwan Valley, reported the PTI new agency Jan 25.

The report noted that the India-China relations had remained frozen since May 2020 when the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) amassed troops in eastern Ladakh that led to a deadly clash between the two militaries at the Galwan Valley in Jun 2020, resulting in the deaths of 20 Indian soldiers and at least four Chinese military personnel.

Wu has repeated Beijing's claim that the Galwan Valley lies on the Chinese side of the western sector along the LAC and the relevant incident happened when the Indian side violated the consensus and made unilateral provocations. "Therefore, the responsibility entirely lies with the Indian side," he has maintained.

India has been pressing the PLA to disengage from the Depsang and Demchok areas in eastern Ladakh. While India has maintained that there cannot be restoration of normalcy in its relations with China as long as the state of the borders remains abnormal, China continues to press India to delink the border issue and bilateral relations and work for normalcy.

Wu has sought to make the point that in the past three years, the two countries had maintained communication and coordination through military and diplomatic channels.

The two militaries held 20 rounds of Corps Commanders level meetings and agreed to disengage from four points mainly the Galwan Valley, the Pangong lake, Hot Springs and Jianan Daban (Gogra) contributing to the de-escalating tension along the border, he has asserted.

"The border dispute," Wu has insisted, "is a legacy with India but that does not represent the whole picture of the bilateral relations."

"Therefore, it is unwise and inappropriate for the Indian side to link the border issue with the overall relations. It goes against the shared interests of the two countries.

"We hope the Indian side can work with the Chinese side to enhance strategic mutual trust, properly handle differences and safeguard peace and tranquillity in the border areas."

Meanwhile, differences remain unresolved over pulling back of troops from the Depsang plains areas and Charding Nullah near Demchok in eastern Ladakh. Talks remain deadlocked over the resolution of disputes at Depsang, a 972-sq-km plateau where the two sides have issue over troop positions, especially at 'bottleneck' on the eastern edge of Depsang, the tribuneindia.com earlier reported Aug 15, 2023.



India has been objecting to the PLA deliberately blocking Indian patrols on this specific patrolling route in Depsang, the report said.

## China and India Compete for Influence in War on Border

26 January 2024, Newsweek

China and India have found themselves embroiled in a battle for influence in neighboring Myanmar as a guerrilla war rages in the tropical jungles behind their shared borders.

The Burmese civil war had been simmering since a military coup in February 2021 toppled Aung San Suu Kyi's democratically elected government. The conflict has taken on a new dimension with recent revelations of Indian fuel and weapons sales to mysterious entities behind Myanmar's junta.

Both Beijing and New Delhi have lent some form of support to the military government next door. They both seek to prevent fighting from spilling over, while also want to ensure the regime does not completely fall under the other camp's influence. The situation is further complicated as fighting has spread to ever more of Myanmar with the junta's forces under increasingly intense pressure from the insurgent groups.

The regional rivalry between the two Asian giants, who have their own long-running disagreements at their contested Himalayan border, doubtless is part of the equation. However, with vital economic and strategic interests in Myanmar, China is making a point of talking to both the junta and some of the insurgent factions — many of which are ethnically based.

The United Nations last month estimated that the civil war had already sent thousands of refugees fleeing into neighboring countries and displaced nearly 2 million people within Myanmar itself.

The situation in war-torn Myanmar remains fluid, with or without India-China competition, but the conflict's resolution may yet determine the region's balance of power.

The India-Myanmar-China border

India has called for the restoration of democracy in the country, but it remains entangled in a complex web of relationships with the ruling powers. A separate U.N. report last May said Indian entities had dispatched \$51 million worth of military-related exports to Myanmar since the junta took power.

This month, the Frontier Myanmar magazine in Yangon said the state-owned Indian Oil Corp., known for its history of supplies to Myanmar's military, had sold over \$3.7 million worth of fuel, including more than \$1.5 million in navy-grade

diesel, to a Burmese consignee known simply as "The Master."

Since the company established a trade link with Myanmar in 2017, it has shipped \$284 million worth of fuel, oil, gasoline, and related materials to the country, mostly to Myanmar Chemical and Machinery, a firm accused of brokering arms deals for the military junta, and whose director, Aung Hlaing Oo, has been sanctioned by the United States, Canada and Britain since 2022, according to the news outlet.

Indian Oil Corp. ceased shipments of oil refinement products to the Myanmar company shortly after the sanctions, but it continued to send fuel, Frontier Myanmar said.

Myanmar risks becoming a pawn in a geopolitical chess match involving multiple stakeholders whose decisions could have far-reaching implications.

Angshuman Choudhury, an associate fellow at the New Delhi think tank Center for Policy Research, said India's support for Myanmar's junta hinges on preserving influence and balancing China's presence in the country.

"However, in my opinion, this is a miscalculation as the junta is thoroughly unpopular in Myanmar, and the ground reality has dramatically changed in the last few months in favor of the pro-democracy resistance," Choudhury told Newsweek. "The junta is in no position to protect Indian strategic, political, and economic interests in Myanmar, including along the borders."

"If Delhi really wants to offset the Chinese presence, it should have ideally opened communication channels with armed groups close to its borders while speaking up more clearly in favor of a federal democracy in Myanmar and keeping its contact with the junta to a bare minimum," Choudhury said.

"As the biggest democracy in the region, that would have significantly boosted India's image—and hence political leverage—in Myanmar, projecting it as a real alternative to China, whose authoritarian style of governance doesn't cohere with the pro-democracy revolution," Choudhury added.

The junta, meanwhile, could try to limit any outside attempts to engage with the Three Brotherhood Alliance rebels, according to Aparna Pande, a research fellow at the Washington, D.C.-based Hudson Institute think tank.

In an October analysis for the Geopolitical Intelligence Services website, Pande wrote: "The regime is aware of the strategic competition between India and China and will seek to play one against the other to obtain benefits from both."

"Beijing's support for the junta has never been unconditional. When the junta infringed upon China's core national interest—in eliminating cyber scam operations—China had every reason to want to slap

the junta on the wrist. But that punishment is not unlimited. China is not aimed at pushing the junta out," said Yun Sun, director of the China Program at the Stimson Center think tank in Washington, D.C.

Sun told Newsweek that Beijing does not necessarily view New Delhi's support for the junta as detrimental to its interests.

"The competition in Myanmar has not been between China and India. Instead, in the Chinese view, it has been between China and the U.S.," Sun said. "China does not see India as having as many resources or the will to wage those resources in Myanmar."

The fuel trade is merely one facet of India's alliance with Myanmar's government since the coup d'etat nearly three years ago, but observers said that relationship should be made more transparent.

Daw Yadanar Maung, a spokesperson for the Justice For Myanmar activist group, told Frontier Myanmar that New Delhi was complicit in the junta's actions by legitimizing it. Indian Oil Corp. should disclose "the importer and end-user" of its fuel because it risks landing in the hands of the Myanmar Navy, Yadanar Maung said.

On the ground, the rebel offensive known as "Operation 1027"—initiated in late October—has rattled Myanmar's military, which has lost key outposts and border crossings near China and India. Aside from refugees, Burmese junta troops have also been sighted fleeing into India, China, and Thailand.

"The junta was wrong to assume that ethnic armies would crumble under pressure. In fact, the 2021 coup exacerbated ethnic minority anxieties and pushed even signatories of the 2015 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement—signed by Naypyidaw and nearly 10 different rebel groups—to the jungles," Avinash Paliwal, a reader in international relations at SOAS, University of London, wrote in the Foreign Affairs magazine this week.

In recent months, the situation at the border with India has rapidly deteriorated amid intense fighting. In November, New Delhi issued a travel advisory, urging Indian nationals to avoid nonessential visits to Myanmar and cautioning Indians already residing in the country to avoid violence-affected regions.

On Thursday, a Myanmar military aircraft overshot the runway at Lengpui Airport in India's northeastern Mizoram state, injuring at least 14 people on board. The plane was there to repatriate soldiers who had escaped conflict zones.

According to Myanmar's local news outlets, more than 250 soldiers crossed into India this month alone after armed opposition groups seized control of military outposts near the border. The Indian government is sending them back.

The Chinese and Indian foreign ministries did not return Newsweek's requests for comment before publication.

## China has not filled India Ambassador's post in over one year

22 January 2024, The Sentinel

China has yet to appoint its ambassador to India, some 15 months since the post fell vacant. The last Chinese Ambassador in Delhi was Sun Weidong, who left in October 2022 after three years on the job and became a Vice Foreign Minister in Beijing on his return. China-India relations plunged to a new low in the modern histories of the Asian neighbours in June, 2020, following clashes in the Galwan River valley that killed at least 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers.

The decades-old border dispute, which led to a war in 1962, has seen skirmishes in the past three years amid a troops build-up and partial pullback.

The delay in appointment is a sign that the bilateral relationship remains frosty. But the reason being increasingly cited is China's internal affairs.

A diplomatic source said while the common perception is linked to the current state of Sino-Indian relations, the process of selecting a candidate from within China's foreign service is taking time because the Delhi posting requires seniority (as does the role in some other capitals).

Both Chinese and Indian foreign policy analysts agreed China would be cautious about who to pick but their explanations differed.

"It is a vice-ministerial-level job, an important post, so they need to find the right person," said Hu Shisheng, director, Institute for South Asian Studies, at a Beijing-based think-tank on international relations. "This is not related to the bilateral situation. It is a domestic issue."

At present, no other country in South Asia has the Chinese ambassador's post empty. "An Indian ambassador to China can be selected from the joint secretary and above levels (Indian government hierarchy) but the Chinese ambassador's post (in India) is of a vice-ministerial level. Compared with years ago, the job's bureaucratic rank is higher today," said Srikanth Kondapalli, dean, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi.

There is not a dearth of senior candidates, he said, but India's approach to China has "changed" and there might be few takers for the job among Chinese diplomats.

"The Galwan incident and follow-up have made the bilateral relationship sensitive," he said, adding that a new appointee would have an uphill task.

According to a non-diplomatic source, last year, "the Chinese government had nearly found a new ambassador to India but the idea was later dropped" amid internal changes such as the removal

of Qin Gang from the post of foreign minister and Li Shangfu from the post of defence minister.

The probability of China announcing a new ambassador to India in the immediate future appears less likely, owing to domestic preoccupation: the "two sessions" - China's annual legislative meetings in March, as well as India's general elections between April and May.

"Not naming a new ambassador doesn't mean that China does not take India seriously," said Qian Feng, director of research, National Strategy Institute, Tsinghua University, Beijing. "China has its internal process and will be careful about this appointment." For China-India relations to thaw, China has to create the right conditions, Kondapalli said.

"India is saying, go back to where you came from (pre-2020), remove the troops - de-escalate and disengage and then we can talk about resetting relations." Hu said the Galwan clash continues to be a sensitive issue in the bilateral relationship but both countries have "learned big lessons". The India-China disputed border is categorised in three sections: eastern, middle and western.

"The eastern and middle sections are more or less clear in terms of each other's positions and the Line of Actual Control but there are many 'grey areas' in the western section, with overlapping claims," Hu said, adding that "with mutual understanding, both sides have disengaged in some of the hotspots other than Demchok and the Dapsang Plains".

China views the border dispute as a "leftover" problem of British colonialism in the region and wants to go about business as usual with India in other fields. India has been more vocal about its non-acceptance of that position since 2020.

"We wish India understands that the resolution of the border dispute should not be seen as a prerequisite for improving general bilateral relations," said Qian. (IANS)

### **Chinese research vessel heads to Maldives, could concern India**

22 January 2024, Reuters

NEW DELHI, Jan 22 (Reuters) - A Chinese research vessel is on its way to the Maldives, according to an Indian military official and an independent researcher, as new Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu deepens ties with Beijing, distancing from New Delhi.

It is likely to raise concern in New Delhi, which has previously viewed the presence of such vessels close to its shores, including in Sri Lanka in 2022, as problematic.

These vessels are not military ships, officially, but India and others worry about the military use of their research.

Relations between traditional friends New Delhi and Male have soured since President Muizzu took office in November riding an 'India Out' campaign.

Both New Delhi and Beijing vie for influence on the tiny Indian Ocean nation but the new government in Male is pivoting towards China and has asked India to withdraw its nearly 80 troops stationed there.

The Chinese vessel is en-route to Male, open source intelligence researcher Damien Symon wrote on social media platform X, saying Xiang Yang Hong 03 "is entering the Indian Ocean Region, displaying its destination as Male, the vessel is expected to run an ocean survey operation in the Indian Ocean Region raising concern in #India".

An Indian military official confirmed Symon's finding and said they are monitoring its movement.

The Maldivian president's office, India's foreign ministry and China's defence ministry did not respond to requests for comment.

New Delhi has in the past flagged similar visits by other Chinese research vessels with its other littoral neighbour Sri Lanka, which has denied permission for such vessels to dock on its ports since 2022.

In 2019, India expelled another Chinese research vessel from its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) after it entered without permission.

A senior Indian security official said China's research vessels are "dual use" which means the information gathered by them can be used for both civilian and military purposes, including the deployment of submarines.

Both the Indian military and security officials spoke on the condition of anonymity as they were not authorised to speak publicly on the subject.

Earlier this month, state-affiliated Chinese media warned against calling its maritime research in the Indian Ocean Region a threat, after an American think tank said China's navy could "leverage the insights gained from these missions" for deployment of naval forces.

Vietnam and Indonesia have previously claimed that similar Chinese research vessels had entered their EEZ.

### **India urged to properly handle ties with China**

20 January 2024, China Daily

Beijing on Friday slammed New Delhi for linking the border issue with economic and trade cooperation, saying that the settlement of the border situation should not affect the normal development of bilateral ties.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning made the remarks after a senior Indian official told Reuters that India could ease its scrutiny of Chinese investments if the border remains peaceful.

There have been doubts that India has some hidden considerations behind its discriminatory measures

and selective law enforcement against Chinese companies, Mao said.

The Indian official's claim proved that the doubts are not entirely unfounded, she added.

Noting that the situation on the border area remains stable, Mao said the border issue between China and India is left over from history and should be appropriately placed in bilateral ties and also properly handled.

In recent years, trade volume between the two countries has witnessed continuous growth, exceeding \$100 billion for years despite India's curbs on Chinese investments.

The facts have demonstrated the resilience and potential of economic and trade ties between the neighbors, Mao said.

China hopes that India will fully understand the mutually beneficial nature of economic and trade cooperation, and provide a fair, just, transparent and nondiscriminatory business environment for Chinese enterprises to invest and operate there, she said.

### **Fresh Details of India-China Skirmishes on Ladakh Border Emerge**

19 January 2024, The Wire

New Delhi: Clashes which occurred between India and China on the Line of Actual Control in Galwan in 2020, claiming lives of 20 Indian soldiers and at least four Chinese soldiers, caused a significant disruption in ties between the two countries. But it has emerged that this was not the last time the two nuclear, Asian neighbours were involved in violent clashes in the past three years.

Fresh details about clashes were revealed at the investiture ceremony of the western command of the Indian Army. These details revealed how China had attempted to violently overthrow at least two Indian Army checkpoints.

The news comes in the same week when the army chief General Manoj Pande has said that situation on the China border is "stable, yet sensitive".

What is this new information?

The Indian Army every year announces gallantry awards on Independence and Republic Days. These awards are given away in investiture ceremonies that are held at a later date.

One such investiture ceremony was conducted, where the western command of the Indian Army gave away medals in the honour of soldiers for their brave deeds.

While three Army personnel involved in the skirmishes along the LAC were awarded Sena Medals on January 26, 2023, the others were conferred the awards on August 15 last year. The citations, however, came into the public domain only during the investiture ceremonies.

These citations revealed crucial details about skirmishes between the Indian Army and Chinese army, which is the People's Liberation Army or PLA. Not only that, it also revealed how an Indian major crossed over to the "enemy" side and was able to provide 120 hours of live feed of military movement on the other side, from deep inside the Chinese territory.

These awards were held for honouring the deeds which occurred between September 2021 and November 2022.

The first major revelation was that of a clash at Sikh Light Infantry Post on January 7, 2022. Here, Chinese troops attacked a post manned by troops of the Sikh Light Infantry. A soldier from the unit, Raman Singh, displayed extreme courage in hand-to-hand combat, repulsing the attack, injuring four PLA soldiers, and seizing their weapons.

The attack on January 7, 2022 was not known before.

Other than this, on November 27, 2022, the PLA initiated an attack on a post manned by J&K Rifles. Citations revealed that 50 PLA soldiers were trying to cross LAC and capture the Atari post.

A Junior Commissioned Officer, Baldev Singh successfully led his troops in repulsing the attack and was wounded in the process. The citations at the awards ceremony revealed that Baldev Singh singlehandedly injured 15 PLA soldiers.

He was awarded the Sena Medal for Gallantry.

Apart from these two attacks on Indian Army posts, there were some covert operations.

Lieutenant Colonel Pushmeet Singh of the 19 J&K Rifles played a crucial role in thwarting the plans of the PLA. Undertaking a patrol along the LAC, Lt. Col. Singh's actions led to a significant standoff. Through negotiations spanning two days with a local PLA commander, he successfully reinforced Indian positions and de-escalated the tense situation. The details of this operation, including the specific date, have been intentionally withheld.

Then, on September 16, 2022, Lieutenant Colonel Yogesh Kumar Sati, a member of the 31 Armoured Division, engaged in a high-altitude special mission as part of Operation Snow Leopard. His task was to navigate challenging terrain while avoiding detection by the enemy.

A particularly intriguing operation, named 'Operation Dorji', unfolded under the command of Major Sourav Kumar from the 15th Battalion of the Kumaon Regiment. Maj. Kumar conducted multiple covert missions deep within the Chinese territory. His covert patrol team established a covert surveillance post aimed at securing the Siliguri corridor, also known as the "Chicken's neck." Maj. Kumar executed Operation Dorji remained in enemy territory and gathered crucial information.

Virtual blackout of information about India-China ties As this "new" information about at least two Chinese attacks on Indian soil was revealed, The Indian Express reported that the Army is now deliberating on keeping details of critical operations out of citation announcements of gallantry award winners in investiture ceremonies.

While acts of gallantry will continue to be highlighted in citations, the newspaper said that specific details of operations and the dates these were conducted may not feature in investiture ceremony announcements until the operations concerned are declassified.

The army chief's has called the situation on the China border is "stable, but sensitive".

External affairs minister S. Jaishankar has maintained that India's relations with China remain abnormal, or certainly not normal. But, other than that, there has been a continual lack of information, briefings to the press or debates in Parliament on China. Ministers do not even name China. The prime minister, in an all-party meeting in 2020, said "no one had ever entered Indian territory and there was no one inside." All this again, without naming China. No details were ever given about the skirmishes that took place between PLA and the Indian Army. Jaishankar also met his Chinese counterpart in Goa on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation event.

According to a research paper tabled at the annual Director Generals of Police Conference organised by the Intelligence Bureau, by a police officer, we may have lost access to 26 out of the 65 Patrolling Points that mark the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh. The paper was not discussed at the conference, which was attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah, but the government made sure the paper was taken off the web.

The Hindu reported in 2020, that about 1,000 square kilometres of area in Ladakh along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) is now under Chinese control, as per intelligence inputs provided to the Centre.

As reported by The Wire, former chief of Army Staff, General M.M. Naravane's memoirs have been withheld for revealing how the Modi government left the Army to its own devices when hostilities at Galwan broke out.

In August 2019, after India repealed Article 370 of the Indian Constitution and announced Aksai Chin as a Union Territory, China registered their protest against the same.

Aksai Chin is territory in Ladakh, which both India and China stake their claims. Post that, that multiple clashes occurred along the LAC. The clashes that have been reported include the one at Pangong Tso on May 5, Sikkim on May 9 and at Galwan Valley on June 15, 2020.

Since then, negotiations have been ongoing between India and China. While China has publicly staked their claim on parts of Arunachal Pradesh, renaming some towns, details about physical confrontation with Indian soldiers were never made public.

The latest details about the violent clashes along the LAC depict strategic acumen, and courage of Indian Army personnel operating in challenging and often undisclosed circumstances.

The removal of the gallantry awards video from YouTube highlights the high level of secrecy involved in the cross-border matters and also raises questions about Indian government's unwillingness to reveal the details about the actual situation between India and China. Twenty-eight rounds of negotiations between the two countries have failed to resolve the deadlock.

### **Exclusive: India could ease China investment curbs if border stays calm**

19 January 2024, Reuters

DAVOS, Switzerland, Jan 18 (Reuters) - India could ease its heightened scrutiny of Chinese investments if the two countries' border remains peaceful, a senior Indian official said in the first signal that the four-year-old curbs could be lifted.

Border tensions, the biggest irritant to relations between the nuclear-armed Asian giants, have eased, which could lead to improved investment ties, top industrial policy bureaucrat Rajesh Kumar Singh told Reuters on Wednesday at the annual World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Switzerland.

In 2020, India tightened scrutiny on investments from companies based in countries it borders, adding a layer of vetting and security clearances.

The move was widely seen as retaliation for a clash between Chinese and Indian troops on their disputed, 3,800-km (2,400-mile) Himalayan frontier that killed at least 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers, their worst military conflict in decades.

The curbs have disrupted billions of dollars of investments between the world's two most-populous countries, halting planned projects including from Chinese automakers BYD (002594.SZ), opens new tab and Great Wall Motor (601633.SS)

The investment rules "could change once our relationship there stabilises because I think the border issues that we've had - the border has stabilised", Singh, secretary at the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, said in an interview. "On the investment side also, if things go well, I'm sure we can resume normal business."

He did not give a timeframe for a possible easing.

Asked if India's message was that Chinese investments depend on a peaceful border, Singh said, "You can't have somebody nibbling at your



border while at the same time having red-carpet treatment for investments from there."

The investment curbs, he said, were a slight "step back" from India's broader opening to foreign investment in recent years. India has significantly reduced hurdles for inbound investment, lowering or scrapping foreign ownership caps in many sectors and granting automatic approvals.

China's foreign ministry responded to Singh's comments on Friday, saying the resolution process of the border situation should not affect the normal development of relations between both countries.

"China has always believed that the China-India border issue is an issue left over from history and should be placed in an appropriate position within the bilateral relationship and properly handled," ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said when asked at a regular news briefing.

Mao added that China hopes that India will "fully understand the mutually beneficial nature of China-India economic and trade cooperation" and sought from India a "fair, just, transparent and non-discriminatory business environment" for Chinese companies to invest and operate there.

Despite the border problems, China is India's largest source of imports, with bilateral trade rising 32% since tensions flared to nearly \$114 billion in the fiscal year that ended in March.

Indian and Chinese troops clashed twice in 2022 even as peace talks were ongoing. New Delhi and Beijing, which fought a brief border war in 1962, have held a series of diplomatic and military talks to resolve the conflict.

The two neighbours must find a way to step back from potential confrontation in the western Himalayas, Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said in June.

But, Singh said, "In the last year or so, there haven't been any incidents. So I'm expressing the general hope from the business community that things will, you know, stabilise and improve."

A mechanism to review foreign investments from all countries, resembling those in the United States and Australia, is an option India could eventually consider, Singh said, adding no decision has been taken as India would want to maintain a "welcoming environment" for investments.

### **China's Visa Revolution: Over 180,000 Visas Issued to Indian Citizens in 2023**

19 January 2024, BNN

The Chinese embassy in India issued over 180,000 visas to Indian citizens in 2023, as part of an initiative to strengthen bilateral ties and enhance mutual exchanges.

In an unprecedented move, the Chinese embassy in India issued over 180,000 visas to Indian citizens in 2023, easing their travel to the neighboring nation. This initiative, part of an ambitious endeavor to reinforce bilateral ties and promote mutual exchanges, symbolizes a significant step forwards in the complex relationship between these two Asian giants.

#### **Revolutionizing the Visa Process**

Revamping the visa application tradition, the Chinese embassy has introduced several innovative measures. These include the abolition of the online appointment requirement, an exemption from mandatory fingerprinting, and a temporary slash in visa fees. These modifications are aimed at streamlining the process and making it more efficient for Indian applicants, thereby encouraging more individuals to consider China as their choice of destination for travel, business, or study.

#### **The Power of Reciprocity**

While this move marks a significant stride in China's approach towards India, it comes with an unspoken expectation of reciprocity. The spokesperson for the Chinese embassy has urged India to reciprocate by resuming regular visa channels for Chinese citizens. The appeal for mutual action underscores the importance that China places on people-to-people and cultural exchanges as crucial elements in fostering a positive relationship between the two nations.

#### **Anticipating a Two-Way Exchange**

The spokesperson's comments suggest a palpable anticipation that the simplified visa process for Indians will be echoed by similar conveniences for Chinese citizens traveling to India. The expectation is that this will facilitate greater interaction and understanding between the citizenry of the two nations, thus helping to bridge the gap that has historically characterized Sino-Indian relations.

As diplomacies evolve, it is the human element that often serves as the catalyst for change. In this case, the ease of travel could potentially unlock the door to stronger bilateral ties, heightened cultural exchange, and a deeper understanding between two of the world's most populous nations.

### **'Normal relations with China impossible if...': EAM S Jaishankar on India-China ties**

13 January 2024, Live Mint

Border dispute between India and China will continue to impact the relations between the two nations on different fronts like trade, economic, etc, clarified External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Saturday.

While addressing a meeting, S Jaishankar said that he has made it clear with Beijing that unless there is

no firm solution on the border, and the forces will remain face-to-face, there is no possibility of normal relations between the two nations.

"I have explained to my Chinese counterpart that unless you find a solution on the border, if the forces will remain face-to-face and there will be tension, then you should not expect that the rest of the relations will go on in a normal manner, it is impossible," he said while speaking at 'Manthan': Townhall meeting in Maharashtra's Nagpur on Saturday.

During the interaction, Jaishankar discussed a range of issues related to Indian diplomacy. He also spoke about India's attempt to secure membership in the UNSC.

'World doesn't give things easily, sometimes you have to take it'

While talking about India's efforts to secure a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), S Jaishankar said that over the time, more countries are showing their support for India for the UNSC.

"With each passing year, the world feels that India should be there, and I can feel that support. The world does not give things easily and generously, sometimes you have to take it," he said.

On being asked about India's participation in groupings like QUAD and BRICS, S Jaishankar beautifully explained how it is important to maintain ties with different nations in diplomacy.

"Because we are independent, we need to learn how to manage our interests by dealing with different people," said EAM Dr S Jaishankar.

To build an understanding among the public about India's foreign policy, J Shankar mentioned how people in common life try to maintain a friendly relationship with two people who might have some grudges for each other so that no one feels bad. "Just like how people visit different parties to maintain good relations with other people, I follow the same practice for India's foreign policy," said Jaishankar.

### **'New Delhi should stay more open-minded': China amid Maldives- India 'derogatory' remark row**

08 January 2024, Live Mint

Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu has landed in China, to strengthen bilateral ties with Beijing. Muizzu, who is regarded as "pro-China", skipped a visit to India and visited China, unlike his predecessors. The China visit by the Maldivian President comes amid a row with India, wherein three ministers made 'derogatory' remarks on Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his Lakshadweep visit.

On Monday, China's state media Global Times, in an editorial, mentioned Muizzu's visit to the East Asian Nation, and referred to India's diplomatic row with the Maldives, and called for an "open-minded" approach to looking at South Asian issues.

As Indians boycott Maldives in retaliation to the derogatory remarks made on PM Modi, China highlighted in the editorial that since 2010 they have been the Maldives' largest source of tourists for 10 consecutive years.

Ties between India and Maldives took a hit when Muizzu defeated his India-friendly predecessor Ibrahim Mohamed Solih in the presidential run-off held in September.

The editorial by Global Times says China has always treated the Maldives as an equal partner and respected its sovereignty.

"It also respects the friendly and cooperative relationship between the Maldives and India, fully aware of the importance for Male to maintain good relations with New Delhi. Beijing has never asked Male to reject New Delhi because of the conflicts between China and India, nor does it view cooperation between the Maldives and India as unfriendly or a threat," the Chinese state media editorial said.

"It (China) is also willing to carry out trilateral cooperation between China, India and the Maldives. New Delhi should stay more open-minded, as China's cooperation with South Asian countries is not a zero-sum game," it said.

Muizzu's predecessors in the recent past visited India first, considering the wide-ranging bilateral ties and the Maldives' proximity to India, followed by China which has expanded its influence in the island nation by investing in major infrastructure projects there.

Muizzu, who was sworn in as President in November, chose Turkiye as his first destination for a foreign visit soon after his election followed by the UAE where he met Prime Minister Modi on the sidelines of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28) on December 1 and discussed the progress of the wide-ranging bilateral ties.

"Under normal circumstances, when a new leader comes to power, they arrange their visits based on the importance and urgency of the matters to be dealt with. President Muizzu broke tradition by visiting Turkey for his first official overseas visit instead of India," Global Times said.

The Maldives is India's key maritime neighbour in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and occupies a special place in its initiatives like SAGAR' (Security and Growth for All in the Region) and the Neighbourhood First Policy' of the Modi government. The Maldives' proximity to India, barely 70 nautical miles from the island of Minicoy in Lakshadweep and

300 nautical miles from the mainland's western coast, and its location at the hub of commercial sea lanes running through the Indian Ocean gives it significant strategic importance.

### **'Boycott' Maldives call: President Mohamed Muizzu's 'India-out' policy and pro-China tilt**

07 January 2024, Hindustan Times

The Maldives government later on Sunday distanced itself from derogatory remarks made by Shiuna against Modi, after former Maldives president Mohamed Nasheed urged President Mohamed Muizzu to distance the government from such comments. He said India is "instrumental" in Maldives' security and prosperity and asked Muizzu to give assurance to New Delhi that the comments don't reflect government policy.

Muizzu, who in November last year took over as president of the Indian Ocean nation made up of more than a hundred islands dotted with luxury resorts, had issued an election pledge to remove a small contingent of some 75 Indian military personnel in the country and alter the Maldives's "India-first" policy. Live Updates on row over Maldives minister's remarks

A tweet by Maldives deputy minister of youth empowerment Mariyam Shiuna days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Lakshadweep has triggered a massive social media backlash, with many Indian celebrities, including actor Akshay Kumar and ex-cricketer Aakash Chopra, joining the calls to boycott the island nation.

Zahid Rameez, a member of the Progressive Party of Maldives Senate, also made controversial remarks on Modi's recent Lakshadweep visit. In one of his social media posts, he asked if India could offer better services than the Maldives.

Maldives president to visit China on January 8

Muizzu is scheduled to visit China on Monday, January 8, the Chinese foreign ministry said in a statement. Chinese President Xi Jinping invited him, China's foreign ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said on Friday.

Asked to comment on Thursday about talk of President Muizzu making a state visit to China, New Delhi said the matter was out of its hands.

"It is for them to decide where they go and how they go about their international relations," ministry of external affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said, adding that he had no update on the removal of Indian military personnel from the islands.

While both New Delhi and Beijing are vying for influence in the region, Muizzu's government is considered to be leaning towards China.

The Maldives owes China about \$1.3 billion, according to the latest International Monetary Fund

(IMF) data. China is the Maldives's largest external creditor, accounting for about 20 per cent of its total public debt.

"President Muizzu seems disinclined to continue engaging India. His actions seem directed at creating distance between Male and Delhi. He also seems keen on a close friendship with China, which should be concerning to India," Abhijit Singh, head of the Maritime Policy Initiative at the Observer Research Foundation think tank in New Delhi, told news agency Reuters.

"The president's trip to Beijing, before a visit to New Delhi, is a signal - as clear as any - that India is low on priority for this regime," he added.

'India-out' policy of President Muizzu

Unlike most of his predecessors who have visited India first after being elected, Muizzu has opted for an 'India-out' policy by choosing Turkey as his first foreign destination.

He later met Modi in the United Arab Emirates on the sidelines of COP28. The two countries have set up a core group to discuss the withdrawal of Indian troops. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke with foreign minister Zameer on Thursday, the state department said in a statement.

"The Secretary reaffirmed the United States' commitment to strengthening cooperation with the Maldives, a key partner in a free, open, secure, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region," it said.

Actions taken by Maldives under Muizzu's leadership

- In a departure from its usual participation, the Maldives abstained from attending a meeting of the NSA-level Colombo Security Conclave, despite being a member-state alongside India, Sri Lanka, and Mauritius.
- Muizzu, in a reversal of his predecessor Solih's 'India First' policy, pledged to alter the Maldives' stance and opted to withdraw Indian military personnel from the island nation.
- Further signalling a shift, the Maldives chose not to renew the hydrography cooperation agreement with India, allowing it to expire on June 7, 2024.
- Originally signed in 2019, this agreement permitted India to conduct hydrographic surveys in the Maldives' territorial waters, encompassing mapping of underwater surfaces and studying reefs, lagoons, coastlines, and other physical features.

### **'Indeed, a major power': China's Global Times article praises India's strides under PM Modi**

04 January 2024, Business Today

India's domestic and foreign situation has changed tremendously compared to four years ago and it has

achieved outstanding results in economic development and social governance, said an article published in China's state-run Global Times.

The article authored by Zhang Jiadong, director of the Center for South Asian Studies at Fudan University, said India has made great achievements in economic development and its economy has gained momentum and is on track to becoming one of the fastest-growing major economies.

Jiadong said he recently visited India twice, marking his first visit in four years. During the talk with Indian representatives, he said, their attitude toward Chinese scholars was more relaxed and moderate, instead of being stubborn at times. With its rapid economic and social development, he said, India has become more strategically confident and more proactive in creating and developing a "Bharat narrative". In the diplomatic sphere, the author found, India has rapidly shifted toward a great power strategy. Jiadong said since Prime Minister Narendra Modi assumed power, he has advocated for a multi-alignment strategy, promoting India's relations with the US, Japan, Russia, and other countries. "Now, India's strategic thinking in foreign policy has undergone another change and is clearly moving toward a great power strategy," he said.

The Chinese professor noted India's stand on the Russia-Ukraine conflict and said New Delhi has distanced itself from the West and aligned itself more closely to the developing world. At the same time, he said, India's reservations about Western powers have significantly diminished, and its activities within Western countries have become more frequent, extending beyond organising large-scale diaspora events.

Jiadong referred to the country's first "Knowledge India Visitors Programme", which was organised by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations in December 2023. The programme brought together more than 77 scholars from 35 countries. During the programme, he said, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar emphasised the importance of building a strong "Bharat narrative" and explained the "Bharat narrative" in terms of economics, development, politics, and culture.

The professor said India no longer only regards cultural tradition as a channel to achieve its own interests or as a symbol to attract foreign tourists, but also sees it as one of the pillars of India's status as a great power. He said India has always considered itself a world power, but it has only been less than 10 years since New Delhi shifted from multi-balancing to multi-alignment, "and now it is rapidly transforming toward a strategy of becoming a pole in the multipolar world".

Jiadong said that India is indeed a major power, and rapid changes in internal and external strategies

pose challenges to both itself and the international community. "It appears that a transformed, stronger, and more assertive India has become a new geopolitical factor that many countries need to consider," the author said in his concluding point.

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To inform and shape policy on Tibet and the region



## CHINA IN THE REGION

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# China-Bhutan

## Bhutan and China Border Meeting Shows China's Use of Coercive Tactics in Land Disputes

25 August 2024, The Atlas News

*Bhutanese Foreign Affairs and External Trade Minister Tandi Dorji*

shaking hands with Chinese Foreign Affairs Vice Minister Sun Weidong after signing Agreement that outlined the responsibilities of the Joint Technical Team for delimitating boundary during the 25th

## CHINA IN THE REGION



Round of Boundary Talks between China and Bhutan  
Bhutanese and Chinese delegations held the 14th Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on China-Bhutan Boundary Issues in the Bhutanese capital city of Thimphu from August 20th to the 22nd. The EGM was co-chaired by Hong Liang, China's Foreign Affairs Ministry (FAM) Department of Boundary and Ocean Affairs' Director General, and Letho Tobhen Tangbi, Secretary General for the International Boundaries of Bhutan and Head of the Bhutanese Expert Group.

The 14th Expert Group Meeting on China-Bhutan Boundary Issues

Both sides "reviewed the positive progress" made in negotiations between the countries regarding demarcating the boundary in recent years. The delegations had "friendly, candid, and constructive discussions" on topics of mutual concern and interest, such as the implementation of the Three-Step Roadmap. The two sides also discussed the Joint Technical Team on the Delimitation and Demarcation of China-Bhutan Boundary's second meeting and the implementation of the Cooperation Agreement on the Functions of the Joint Technical Team on the Delimitation and Demarcation of the China-Bhutan Boundary. The talks were held in a "cordial and friendly atmosphere," reflecting the cooperative and friendly relations between China and Bhutan.

Previous Meetings on Boundary Issues

Since 1951, Bhutan shares a 296-mile (477-kilometer) border with China along the western, northern, and eastern sides of the country. However, the two countries dispute the ownership of four territories in the western, three in the northern, and one in the eastern areas of Bhutan. The country claims the Beyul Khenpajong and the Menchuma Valley in the north; Doklam, Dramana and Shakhatoe; Sinchulungpa and Langmarpo Valley; Yak chu and Charithang chu in the west; and Sakteng in the east. In the 1980s, Bhutan gave up its claim to Kula Khari, saying its original claim was due to a mapping error.

Bhutan and China held previous meetings and consultations to solve the border issue. In October 2023, the 25th Round of Boundary Talks between China and Bhutan was held in Beijing, China. FAM Vice Minister Sun Weidong led the Chinese delegation, while Foreign Affairs and External Trade Minister Tandi Dorji led the Bhutanese group. Both sides had “in- depth discussions on the boundary negotiations” and noted the progress that the EGMs made since the 24th Round of Boundary Talks held in 2016. Sun and Tandi commended the expert groups “for the work done and agreed to build on the positive momentum.”

*Photo of Bhutanese delegation, led by Bhutanese Foreign Affairs and External Trade Minister Tandi Dorji, and Chinese delegation led by China Foreign Affairs Vice Minister Sun Weidong leading the Chinese delegation during the 25th Round of Boundary Talks between China and Bhutan*

The leaders also signed the Cooperation Agreement between the Government of the People’s Republic of China and the Government of the Kingdom of Bhutan on the Responsibilities and Functions of the Joint Technical Team on the Delimitation and Demarcation of the China-Bhutan Boundary. The team were created during the 13th EGM to assist the Expert Groups to implement the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Three-Step Roadmap. Both sides agreed “to continue working together to simultaneously push forward the implementation of all the steps of the roadmap. The “discussions were held in a warm and friendly atmosphere,” and both sides exchanged views on “enhancing bilateral relations and matters of mutual interest.” The Bhutanese delegation visited Chinese cultural and historical sites during the visit.

In August 2023, the two countries held the 13th EGM on the China-Bhutan Boundary Issues in Beijing. Hong and Tangbi led the delegations and co-chaired the meeting. Both sides had “candid, friendly, and constructive discussions” on the continuous implementation of the MOU on the Three-Step

Roadmap for Expediting the China-Bhutan Boundary Negotiations that built on the “consensus reached at the 12th EGM.” Bhutan and China agreed “to expedite and take simultaneous steps to implement” the Three- Step Roadmap. The 13th EGM resulted in the establishment of the Joint Technical Team (JTT) on the Delimitation of the China-Bhutan Boundary. The JTT also held its first meeting on the sidelines of the 13th EGM. Both sides agreed to maintain the “positive momentum of frequent EGMs,” to hold the 14th EGM “as soon as possible,” and to maintain “communication on holding the 25th Round of China-Bhutan Boundary Talk.” Bhutan and China Border Dispute

The border dispute between Bhutan and China began in 1912 when the Qing Dynasty was abolished and replaced with the Republic of China (RoC) and Tibet declared independence. The RoC maintained the Qing Dynasty’s claims to both Tibet and areas along the Tibetan Bhutan border. The People’s Republic of China chose to maintain the RoC’s claim to the territories after it won the Chinese Civil War in 1949 and annexed Tibet in 1951. During the 1950s, China published maps that identified the Bhutanese territories as belonging to China to support their claims. The China government also began to send People’s Liberation Army (PLA) soldiers and Tibetan herdsman to enter the disputed areas to pressure the kingdom to enter direct negotiations instead of relying on India to represent its interests. However, Bhutan began to represent itself in various international forums after it became a United Nations member in 1971.

In 1974, Bhutan invited the Chinese ambassador to India to attend the coronation of Jigme Singye Wangchuk to symbolically restart relations. The kingdom also gradually relinquished its claims to Kula Khari, a 154 square mile (398 square kilometer) area located along its border with China throughout the 1980s. Both countries also began talks to establish a bilateral relationship in 1983. In 1984, Bhutan and China began to hold annual meetings to solve the border issues. China and Bhutan discussed the possibility of trading Jakarlung and Pasamlung regions for the Doklam, Gieu, and Sinchulumpa areas in 1996, with Bhutan accepting the agreement as a general plan. However, the two countries signed an agreement where China confirmed its respect for Bhutan’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, with both sides agreeing to build up ties based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence in 1998.

Beginning in the mid-1990s, the incursions by Tibetan herdsman into the northern areas became significantly more aggressive, with reports of cattle theft, illegal timber harvests, and herdmen forcing Bhutanese herders to pay large taxes for grazing

permissions. In 2004, the incursions by PLA soldiers also escalated tensions because they conducted patrols deeper into the disputed territory of Beyul Khenpajong. China ordered the construction of six roadways near the disputed areas along Bhutan's western border, with four of them crossing into the country. While China stopped construction of the roads after Bhutanese authorities protested, they resumed building in 2005. The two sides also did not hold any ESMs or other discussions about the border for a three-year period beginning in 2006. During this time, however, PLA soldiers conducted approximately 38 incursions along Bhutan's western borders, with Bhutan lodging at least seven diplomatic protests.

In 2012, a Chinese survey team conducted the first land and resources survey in Beyul Khenpajong, with construction beginning in 2013 after Bhutan rejected China's offers of economic aid in return for renouncing their territorial claims. In 2015, China began construction of the first road in the region that crossed into Bhutan via the Namgung La mountain pass. During this time, China also established at least four villages in the Beyul Khenpajong and Menchuma Valley. China resumed construction of a roadway near the Doklam Plateau that would reach the Indian border in 2017. The Indian military responded on behalf of Bhutan by deploying soldiers to stop the roadway's construction that led to a two-month standoff. The standoff ended when China agreed to stop construction efforts and both countries agreed to pull their troops from the area.

In 2020, China objected to the Global Environmental Facility giving Bhutan a grant for the Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary. The sanctuary is located in eastern Bhutan, and China never included the territory in the dispute until it raised an objection. The two countries signed the MoU for the Three-Step Roadmap to expedite boundary negotiation discussions in 2021, which saw little progress because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2017 Doklam Standoff.

**Recent Meeting Illustrates China's Use of Coercive Tactics and Bhutan's Ability to Not to Yield to Their Use**

The dispute illustrates how China uses coercive tactics to gain leverage over Bhutan and force the country to give up territories that it views as having a strategic advantage in the region. China will use the dispute to increase its regional influence by forcing Bhutan to establish a diplomatic relationship with the country in return for concessions. China employs a variety of tactics to gain enough leverage against Bhutan to force the country to relinquish its claims to the four territories along its western border. The country views these lands as providing the country a

strategic advantage versus India because it is located next to the Siliguri Corridor.

The corridor is a stretch of land that measures 12 to 14 miles (20 to 22 kilometers) at its narrowest point and connects India with the northeastern portion of the country. China's control over the Doklam Plateau area would allow the PLA to cut off the northeastern states from the rest of India during a conflict between the two countries over disputed areas along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). The PLA units could capture and secure the disputed areas along the LAC while mitigating the Indian military's ability to respond and reinforce units in the area.

China decided to build villages and infrastructure in the northern areas to force Bhutan to accept its terms to end the dispute. For example, China knows that Bhutan would never trade land in the Beyul Khenpajong area because of its spiritual importance to Tibetan Buddhism and the monarchy. China included Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary in the dispute in an effort to increase the pressure on Bhutan.

China hopes that increasing the amount of land it includes in the overall dispute would eventually force the Bhutanese government to accept its terms. However, the ESMs and discussions held between the two countries illustrate Bhutan's unwillingness to accept China's terms because of the potential fallout that might occur. Bhutan would need to consult with India before signing any agreement that involves the transfer of western territories, especially Doklam. India understands the Siliguri Corridor's strategic importance and wants to prevent any agreement because it would swing the strategic advantage to China in the LAC dispute.

Bhutan would not agree to any agreement that ends the border dispute if it meant it compromises its neutrality and becomes aligned with China. For example, Bhutan understands that tying the border agreement with establishing diplomatic relations is part of the country's efforts to increase influence in the South Asia region. China would significantly increase its influence in Bhutan if the two countries established diplomatic relations with each other, which the country would use to deepen ties.

However, Bhutan understands that if the country establishes diplomatic relations with China, India will pressure it to do the same. Bhutan's decision would place the kingdom in an unfavorable position because it could no longer rely on the argument that it is a neutral country. The kingdom used the neutrality principle to govern interactions with China and India, but also with other countries, such as the United States. The foreign policy change regarding neutrality would place Bhutan in a position where it would need to choose between aligning with China or India

## **New township reported coming up in Lhokha in China's Tibet-border build-up**

April 29, 2024, Tibetan Review

China is strengthening infrastructure close to the line of actual control (LAC) in occupied Tibet, with a major construction project taking place for a new township in Shannan (Tibetan: Lhokha), in south-eastern Tibet, reported the timesnownews.com Apr 28.

A new project is coming up in Luobusha (Tibetan: Lhunpo Zhol Township in Nagartse County) in Shannan Prefecture, a sparsely-populated part of Tibet, with less than four lakh people living in an area of about 80,000 sq km. Importantly, it is about 125 km from the LAC, roughly north of Arunachal Pradesh, the report said.

The housing project is reported to involve the construction of 164 houses to be begun next month to be ready by the end of next year. The report saw this as more evidence of China's increased emphasis on infrastructure build-up close to the LAC. A housing project could of course be for civilians and if necessary, for soldiers, it said.

The report also said that with the onset of spring, work on military infrastructure and training had begun in earnest. These were stated to include:

- The 84th aviation brigade was involved in an exercise involving the Z-19 and Z-18 helicopters.
- The 84th air defence regiment was involved in missile firing in the Aksai Chin area
- The 99th Air Brigade participated in flight training of the J-16 aircraft, a fighter similar to the Indian Air Force's Sukhoi-30. The Chinese air force began using it about ten years ago and is one of its frontline fighters.

Besides, a new 4-km road track was reported to be under construction in the Shaksgam area, which could become "pucca" in the future and may be used to link up with a labour camp in the area.

Reports have also been cited as saying infrastructure in Tashigang (Zhaaxigang), east of Ladakh, in western Tibet, was being upgraded. Located close to Tashigang is Shiquanhe (Tibetan: Sengge Khabab, the main town and administrative seat of Ngari Prefecture); here too, the upgradation of military infrastructure was reported to be evident.

Meanwhile, new Chinese dual-use 'Xiaokang' border villages are also regularly being built and older ones being "populated" along the disputed stretches of the LAC, especially in the eastern sector, to reinforce PLA positions as well as lay claim to territory, reported the timesofindia.com Apr 29.

Previous reports have noted that China has been building as many as 628 such border defence villages to fortify the borders of occupied Tibet with India and Bhutan over the last few years.

"All this clearly indicates PLA will continue to permanently station troops in forward locations along the LAC, even if eventually there is some sort of disengagement at the two major persisting face-off sites at Depsang and Demchok in eastern Ladakh," the report quoted an unnamed Indian source as saying.

There are currently 50,000 to 60,000 PLA troops with heavy weaponry forward deployed in the western (Ladakh) and central sectors (Uttarakhand, Himachal) as well as 90,000 soldiers in the eastern one (Sikkim, Arunachal), the report noted.

## **Chinese academic warns Bhutan's India-bonhomie is inimical to Tibet-border talks**

30 March 2024, Tibetan Review

The heightened level of bonhomie seen in India-Bhutan relations in recent times has prompted a Chinese academic to warn that it could have "obvious and direct" impacts on China's efforts to resolve its long-running occupied-Tibet border dispute with the Himalayan kingdom. During his visit to Bhutan last week, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi reaffirmed a partnership that "is not limited to land and water". He doubled India's Five-Year Plan assistance to Bhutan to more than \$1 billion; was hosted a private dinner by King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck at his Lingkana Palace; and became the first foreigner to be honoured with the Order of the Druk Gyalpo, or Dragon King, Bhutan's most prestigious civilian award.

Modi's Mar 22-23 trip came just a week after Bhutan's Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay, newly elected in Jan 2024, held talks in Delhi with top Indian leaders.

Tshering Tobgay's predecessor Lotay Tshering was seen as being overly anxious to settle the Tibet-border dispute with China, which likely involves land swaps that would gravely compromise India's security concerns, although he sought to allay any such concern.

Anyhow, Lotay Tshering made it clear that the border dispute could be settled soon – in the next two or so rounds of talks between the two sides – which was seen as having given rise to misgivings in New Delhi. But in light of recent developments, Lin Minwang, deputy director of the Centre for South Asian Studies at Fudan University in Shanghai, has said the impact on Chinese-Bhutan border talks could be "obvious and direct". "We have seen some momentum since 2020 and the negotiations have achieved significant progress," the scmp.com Mar 29 quoted Lin as saying. "The two sides are (a)waiting for an opportunity of breakthrough but now I think there could be some changes."

But it has never been clear how far the border negotiations had advanced since neither Beijing nor Thimphu disclosed details. Nevertheless, the report noted that in an interview with The Hindu last year, then-Bhutanese prime minister Lotay Tshering – considered a China-friendly figure – had said that the two countries were “inching towards the completion” of a three-step road map on boundary delineation. A land swap involving the Bhutan-controlled Doklam area was stated to be among the proposals, although Bhutan made it clear that any such talks should necessarily involve India as an interested party.

China first proposed a “package deal” in 1996 to trade Jakarlung and Pasamlung for a smaller tract of disputed area around Doklam, Sinchulumpa and Gieu, but Bhutan backed off. In 1998, the two sides instead signed an agreement to pause negotiations, pending further talks, the report noted.

Reflecting Beijing’s thinking and hope, Lin has said the territorial disputes between China and Bhutan were “not that big in principle”.

“The core issue is if Bhutan has made up its mind to resolve the disputes – and if it is willing to defy India.”

Despite Bhutan’s assurances, India is seen as being deeply wary of any land swap, which would give China a strategic advantage in the Doklam plateau. The plateau is close to the Siliguri Corridor a strip of land that is around 20km (14 miles) wide at its narrowest point that connects India’s eight northeastern states as well as a part of West Bengal to the rest of the country. Such a swap could expand India’s vulnerabilities to the Chinese in occupied Tibet, with the two Asian powers already at loggerheads over their disputed Himalayan borders stretching over more than three thousand kilometres. After comments by Lotay Tshering (prime minister from 2013 to 2018 on a possible land swap with Beijing, there were discussions in India about whether Thimphu was struggling to reach a deal without Delhi’s backing; and the former prime minister had to clarify that there was no change in position by Bhutan, the report said.

In broader terms, while India’s relation with China has remained soured since the 2020 violent border clashes along the Ladakh border, the latter has steadily pushed for closer ties with other South Asian nations, including Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal, hosting their leaders in Beijing and financing a number of infrastructure projects in the region.

## China-East Turkestan December

### China’s United Front takes Taiwanese youth on Xinjiang trips

27 December 2024, RFA, Ha Syut and Ray Chung



A delegation of Taiwanese businesspeople visits northwestern China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, Aug. 2024. (China News Service)

Organizers are accused of ‘whitewashing’ the Chinese Communist Party’s human rights record in the Uyghur homeland.

China’s United Front influence and outreach operations are recruiting children and young adults in democratic Taiwan for heavily subsidized tours to the northwestern region of Xinjiang, in a bid to distract them from widespread human rights abuses in the region, according to commentators and government officials.

The Chinese Communist Party, which has never ruled Taiwan, insists that the island submit to “unification” under Beijing’s rule, whether by through its soft power and propaganda operations, or by military force, if necessary.

Its “soft power” operation has already targeted the island’s social media influencers and celebrities with paid junkets, while key ally and former Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou met with Chinese President Xi Jinping in April, throwing his political influence behind Beijing’s narrative that Taiwan is a renegade Chinese province rather than a sovereign country.

Now, it seems Beijing is going after children and younger people directly, enlisting them on tours to Xinjiang that take participants on a whistle-stop tour of the Chinese Communist Party’s favorite stereotypes about the millions of Turkic-speaking Uyghurs and Kazakhs who live there, complete with dancing Uyghurs and barbecued meat.

The Xinjiang Provincial Federation of Taiwan Compatriots, a United Front organization based in Urumqi, recently advertised a nine-day tour to



Xinjiang on Taiwan's PTT Bulletin Board discussion forum, calling for participants aged 16-40.

When Radio Free Asia contacted the organizers, they said participants would only need to pay NT\$24,800 (US\$755) per person, with "tour fees, transportation, accommodation and insurance all covered by the Chinese hosts."

As well as travel documents, participants would need to share their Taiwanese ID card numbers, their educational background, their company and department, an emergency contact and a mobile phone number before they could be accepted onto the trip, they said.

'Find out for themselves'

Meanwhile, the Taiwanese volunteer nonprofit group Waker, which sends volunteers around the world, has been criticized on social media for sending groups of volunteers to Xinjiang, with some comments accusing them of whitewashing the mass incarceration of millions of Uyghurs in "re-education" camps and forced labor facilities since 2017.

Waker replied to the comments on Instagram and Facebook, saying it "had never heard of anyone being exploited" in Xinjiang, and called on people to travel to Xinjiang to "find out for themselves."

The charity has close ties to the Chinese Communist Party, according to reports in Chinese state media. Its founder Shen Yangyang is the daughter of former Kuomintang general Shen Tsui, and has been running "poverty alleviation" programs in remote rural areas of China since 2004.

The group will soon be led by Shen's son Chu Yung-Hsiang, who led a 46-member youth delegation to Xinjiang in November under the aegis of the Straits Economic and Cultural Interchange Association that was also attended by Chinese Communist Party United Front officials.

'Spiritual unity of compatriots'

Taiwan has never been ruled by Beijing, nor formed part of the People's Republic of China, and is formally governed by the Republic of China government, formed after the 1911 fall of the Qing Dynasty under Sun Yat-sen, which later fled to Taipei after losing the civil war to Mao Zedong's communists on the mainland.

While China insists on eventual "unification" with Taiwan, by armed invasion if necessary, the majority of Taiwan's 23 million people have no wish to give up their democratic way of life to submit to Chinese rule.

China has threatened the death penalty for supporters of Taiwan independence, while Taipei says Beijing has no jurisdiction over the actions of its citizens.

A recent public opinion poll from the Institute for National Defense and Security Research showed that

67.8% of respondents were willing to fight to defend Taiwan in the event of a Chinese invasion.

China's aim is to underline the "spiritual unity of compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait," and Beijing sees "uniting Taiwan compatriots and winning the hearts and minds of Taiwanese people" as a "fundamental driving force for unification," according to an Oct. 16 article by politics professor Wu Guoguang for the Asia Society.

"Ordinary Taiwanese citizens are viewed as 'family members' of an imagined reunified China, Taiwan's political elites who oppose Taiwanese independence are 'friends,' and whoever supports independence are 'enemies'," Wu wrote.

Planting an illusion

Taiwanese national security analyst Shih Chien-yu said the trips are a way of undermining the reporting of China's human rights abuses in Xinjiang.

"These people may have heard about the re-education camps in Xinjiang, and they may have heard the idea that this is genocide," Shih told RFA in a recent interview. "But when they visit, they won't see any of these things."

"That will plant the illusion that nothing bad ever actually happened in Xinjiang, which is exactly what the Chinese Communist Party wants them to think," he said.

Waker hadn't responded to repeated requests for comment by the time of writing.

The Taiwan government's Mainland Affairs Council said it continues to be concerned about such trips, which it termed "false exchanges" masking United Front infiltration.

"The Chinese Communist Party is trying to lure people from Taiwan, particularly young people, to China on sightseeing trips ... to whitewash its human rights abuses," it said in a response to a query from RFA.

"The public shouldn't cooperate with this United Front propaganda by the Chinese Communist Party for personal gain, nor belittle the sovereign status of our country," it said.

Yet, the trips still seem popular.

In May, a 46-member delegation of Taiwan's Industrial and Commercial Construction Research Association visited Xinjiang on an "exchange," Chinese state media reported.

They were warmly welcomed on May 18 by Li Fuqiang, deputy director of the United Front Work Department of the Xinjiang Party Committee.

Hsiao Yu-lin, leader of the visiting delegation, said the group could "get a sense of the great socioeconomic achievements Xinjiang has made."

"I ... recommend more Taiwan compatriots visit Xinjiang to further promote in-depth exchanges and integration," Hsiao was quoted as saying in an official report.

Political agenda

But not everyone just swallows Beijing's narrative, hook, line and sinker.

Hsiao Hau-yu took a two-week trip to Xinjiang in 2019 while he was in high school at the invitation of Beijing's Taiwan Affairs Office, alongside about 40 students from Hong Kong and Macau, with a similar itinerary to those recently advertised for young people.

"The itinerary was very full, with less than an hour of free time after lunch or dinner," Hsiao remembered in a recent interview with RFA Cantonese. "They took us to a vineyard to see some big, very beautiful grapes, and some very happy local farmers who gave us Xinjiang barbecue."

But Hsiao also spotted a political agenda, with propaganda suggesting that Xinjiang had been settled by majority Han Chinese from ancient times, and plenty of assurances that the region was "very safe."

"Their strong desire to create a sense of security made me nervous," Hsiao said. "The police were carrying pretty big weapons on the street, and we had to go through a security detection scan to go onto public transportation or into our hotel."

"I still remember there was a guy in sunglasses I'd never seen before following behind the whole time on our trip to the ancient city," he said. "I don't know who he was, but he followed us and made sure we didn't break away from the group."

He said he was told that the security measures were to prevent "terrorist" attacks, and warned participants not to have private contact with any residents of the region.

On a trip to a local school, he still remembers a general sense of unease, and in particular a slogan written up on the blackboard by students: "Where darkness arises, sweep it away; where evil arises, eliminate it; where chaos arises, govern it."

"It's hard to imagine that this was written by a child of maybe 10 or 12 years old," he said. "They were writing this stuff before they could even speak Mandarin well."

He said Taiwanese could still benefit from such trips, if they don't lose their capacity to think critically.

"I still think we should go if we have the chance," he said. "Just don't accept everything they try to tell you."

### **Digging of 46 illegal wells by Chinese migrants threatens Xinjiang's ecological balance: Report**

25 December 2024, ANI

The discovery of 46 illegal wells dug by Chinese migrants in the remote Xinjiang region has heightened tensions with Uyghur residents and disturbed the region's ecological balance, as reported by Radio Free Asia.

Water disputes have long been a point of contention between native Uyghurs and Chinese settlers, particularly in regions controlled by the state-run Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC), known as Bingtuan.

This organisation, which is responsible for land development, border security, and maintaining stability in the region, is predominantly made up of Han Chinese.

The issue came to light after residents in Korla, Xinjiang's second-largest city, raised alarms about a surge in illegal wells on the city's outskirts. These wells reportedly dug to irrigate cotton and vegetables, have drained vital underground water reserves.

Authorities launched an investigation after the complaints were filed. A source in Xinjiang, speaking anonymously for security reasons, confirmed that 46 illegal wells were uncovered this year in Korla alone.

The individuals responsible for drilling the wells are primarily from the 29th Battalion of the Bingtuan's 2nd Division, along with other Chinese settlers residing in a nearby economic development zone.

Despite ongoing efforts to address the issue, a police officer involved in the investigation told Radio Free Asia that legal proceedings have been slow, and suspects were released after brief questioning. The officer added that authorities used "stability" and "unity" to justify the lack of punitive action.

The difficulty in holding the perpetrators accountable stems from the fact that many of the individuals involved are Han Chinese, complicating the legal process. The Bingtuan, which has played a key role in promoting Han Chinese dominance in Xinjiang, is seen as a major factor in the marginalisation of Uyghurs and other indigenous ethnic groups.

Tensions are already high, and the illegal wells have further strained relations between the two communities, amplifying existing grievances over water access and resource distribution in the region.

### **Reinvestigation: Better lives in Xinjiang villages refute "forced labor" allegations**

26 December 2024, Xinhua

When Zhou Jin'an returned to the village he once worked in for years in southern Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, he was warmly received by the villagers, who shook hands with him and invited him to their homes for a chat over tea.

Zhou used to be a member of the residential work team in that village. Such teams are groups of personnel, either from regional government departments or state-run enterprises, dispatched to poor rural areas to help boost local development.

Earlier this year, The Economist published an article claiming that work teams in Xinjiang villages sought to compel local Uygur farmers to seek alternative employment. However, such allegations, hyped by Western media in recent years, unravel when one observes the interactions between local farmers and Zhou and his colleagues.

**"THEY HELPED EVERY HOUSEHOLD"**

In early 2015, Zhou, who works for a state-run company, was dispatched to work in a village in Yutian, a county on the southern edge of the Taklamakan Desert and among the last counties in Xinjiang to eliminate absolute poverty in late 2020.

At that time, Zhou could not imagine he would work and live for over eight years in villages in Yutian. Almost all residents there are Uygur farmers, who traditionally earn a living by growing wheat, corn, and roses and raising sheep and poultry.

"We brought agricultural experts to guide the villagers in farming. We built vegetable greenhouses and a small processing plant for local produce, such as roses and cistanche, a Chinese herbal medicine. We would help all households that had difficulties. That was what we were there to do," said Zhou.



This photo taken on Nov. 6, 2024 shows villagers drying cistanche deserticola, a Chinese herbal medicine, near Daliyabuyi Village, Yutian County of northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. (Xinhua/Chen Shuo)

Zhou was part of an eight-member team working in a village of around 1,600 residents. One daily routine was visiting households so that he could get to know what assistance they needed.

Since many middle-aged and elderly villagers were not fluent in Mandarin, Zhou's Uygur colleagues would translate for him. Sometimes, younger members of the household would translate. Rayila Matturzi was one of them.

The 25-year-old, the eldest of four siblings, was a high school student when Zhou and his colleagues came to work in her village.

With her mother farming at home and her father doing construction work, Rayila's parents brought in a limited income, while her younger brother was diagnosed with epilepsy, a chronic disease that requires long-term treatment.

"The work team did so much for my family. They contacted a hospital for my younger brother, funded his treatment and my studies, and always came to see us with things like flour, meat, and the medicines my brother needed. And it was not just for my family. They helped every household in the village," said Rayila, now a senior student majoring in English at a university near Urumqi, Xinjiang's capital.

She was especially grateful to Zhou. "Every time Uncle Zhou came to my home, he would ask about my life and studies and encourage me. He would say, 'If you need any help, just tell me.' I really liked sharing my stories with him. All the villagers think he is a great man," she said.

To support Rayila's family, Zhou helped her mother secure a part-time job as a cleaner, providing an additional source of income. Earlier this year, through a friend's recommendation, Rayila's mother began working as a cook at her son's school, where the canteen staff are all from low-income households, as part of a program to support these families.

"My family is much better off now. All the villagers are better off now. Everything in the village has been improved – the roads, the houses, the school, the health facilities," said Rayila. "Without the work team, there would not have been such great changes."

Tuersun Aibai, an associate professor at the School of Journalism and Communication at Xinjiang University, who has been studying social changes in southern Xinjiang, said that those work teams have been serving the local people and boosting the development of rural areas "with a pure intention and concrete achievements."

The recognition and support of local people of all ethnic groups testifies to that, he added.

**"EVERYONE WANTS A BETTER LIFE"**

Rayila was surprised by Western media allegations that work teams in Xinjiang villages forced "reluctant farmers to leave and do other forms of work."

"That is ridiculous. We earn money on our own and spend it for ourselves. Everyone wants a better life," she said. "The work team would help those looking for a job to find one that matches their skills. But we don't need to be 'forced' to work. Why would they talk about us like that?"

Rayila noted that Uygur people, particularly the younger generation, are keen to seek employment instead of relying solely on farming at home. "Most villagers want to find a job nearby or in the county town. Some young people even explore

opportunities in big cities or other provinces," she said.

Official statistics show that the Uygur population in Xinjiang, concentrated in the southern part of the region, increased by 16.2 percent to 11.62 million from 2010 to 2020. Yan Xueqin, an associate professor at the School of History and Society at Xinjiang Normal University, said most of the Uygur population had long been farmers despite scarce arable land in southern Xinjiang, where the landscape features vast deserts and mountains.

"The per capita arable land in southern Xinjiang has become even smaller, and the added value of farm products there is still low. Farming alone cannot help improve the living standards of the local people. That's one reason locals seek other forms of work to supplement their incomes," Yan said in a report.

Yan's team surveyed 3,028 rural Uygur households in southern Xinjiang in 2020 and 2021 and found that their incomes had improved and diversified, with wage incomes making up the highest proportion at 41.5 percent, followed by household-based farming incomes at 33.7 percent.

Across China, rural residents have long been moving in huge numbers to cities and towns to work. The trend has gained momentum among the Uygur population, with a younger generation more fluent in Mandarin, better educated, and willing to seek opportunities in more developed areas.

Rayila has observed the trend. "A young couple in my village who once worked in Hubei (a central Chinese province) asked me to help them improve their Mandarin," she said. "They told me that they wanted to return to work and live there because they enjoyed working and living in a developed city."

Zhou noted the changes in the lifestyles of his fellow Uygur villagers. "With higher incomes, people now like to refurbish their homes, enjoy better food and dress well, and want to provide their children with a better education and brighter future," he said.

### Chinese surveillance tech firm Dahua exits projects in Xinjiang

24 December 2024, SCMP

The company was added to a US trade blacklist in 2019 on claims it aided in human rights abuses in Xinjiang

China's video surveillance equipment maker Zhejiang Dahua Technology said that it and its subsidiaries have agreed to terminate or exit five projects they signed with local governments in China's Xinjiang region, a stock exchange filing showed on Monday. Some of the projects, awarded between 2016 and 2017, have been terminated in advance, while others were still in operation, Dahua said in a filing to the Shenzhen Stock Exchange.

Tibet Digest December - January 2024

The company will cease operating the projects and proceed with asset disposal and debt resolution works, it said. Dahua did not give a reason for the withdrawal.

Dahua's statement came after another Chinese surveillance camera manufacturer, Hikvision, said earlier this month it had exited contracts with five local governments in Xinjiang. It also did not say at the time why it was pulling out.

The US added Dahua and seven other tech firms to its trading blacklist in 2019 for allegedly being "implicated" in "repression and hi-tech surveillance" against Uygurs and other members of Muslim minorities in Xinjiang.

Dahua had said the US decision lacked "any factual basis."

The Chinese government has repeatedly rejected allegations of human rights abuses in Xinjiang and has criticised or targeted companies for removing firms operating in the region from their supply chains.

### Illegal wells in Xinjiang spark tension and dry up the land

24 December 2024, RFA, Shohret Hoshur

Fighting over water resources has been a source of friction between Uyghurs and Han Chinese.



Workers maintain a cotton field of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, in Alar, northwestern China's Xinjiang region, China March 26, 2021. (China Daily via Reuters)

The discovery of 46 illegal wells dug by Chinese migrants in the far western region of Xinjiang has intensified tension with Uyghur residents and disrupted the ecological balance of the region, people with knowledge of the situation told Radio Free Asia.

Fighting over water resources has been a source of friction for years between native Uyghurs and Chinese settlers in areas under the control of the state-run Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, or XPCC, called Bingtuan in Chinese.

Authorities investigated after residents in Korla, or Kuerle in Chinese, the second-largest city in Xinjiang, complained about the proliferation of wells on the

outskirts of the city, a source in Xinjiang said, asking not to be identified for security reasons.

The wells, dug to grow cotton and vegetables, have drained vital underground reserves, he said.

As a result, authorities discovered 46 illegally drilled holes this year alone in Korla, a policeman in Bayingholin prefecture's Public Security Bureau who had participated in this case in its early phase told Radio Free Asia.

The residents accused of drilling the holes without a permit are from the 29th Battalion of the Bingtuan's 2nd Division and Chinese settlers living in an economic development region on the outskirts of Korla, the officer said.

"We have been working on water management, water control, and identifying water wells since February, and we continue to work on those issues," the police officer said.

Little accountability

But legal authorities have slowed down reviewing the cases, and the suspects were released after brief questioning, the Uyghur source said, with officials using "stability" and "unity" as excuses to let them go.

Authorities could not hold all perpetrators accountable because the activities likely involved Han Chinese, he said.

The Bingtuan is a state-run economic and paramilitary organization of mostly Han Chinese who develop the land, secure borders and maintain stability in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, or XUAR, where about 12 million mostly Muslim Uyghurs live.

Made up of 14 divisions, the Bingtuan is one of the foremost institutions of Han dominance and marginalization of Uyghurs and other indigenous ethnic groups in the region, according to the Uyghur Human Rights Project.

The well-drilling began in 2012 when demand for cotton surged, the Uyghur source told RFA.

Those who stole the water conducted their activities at night using advanced technology to pump it from a depth of 200 meters, or about 660 feet, he said.

"Since they drill these wells in a forested area, a place that people hardly go, it was hard to discover their illegal activities," the Uyghur source said.

It costs about 150,000 yuan (US\$20,600) to drill a well and make it operational, he said, an amount that Uyghurs would not likely be able to come up with.

Though the issue has sparked friction many times before, the government has protected the Han Chinese residents, he said.

The policeman initially said there were some Uyghurs among those held responsible, but when pressed for further information, he said most of those who drilled

the illegal wells were Chinese who had settled in the area, including Bingtuan workers.

Staff at relevant government organization in Korla contacted by RFA declined to answer questions, but did not deny that Chinese settlers there had stolen water.

Drying up the land

The growing dependence on groundwater in the Korla area since the 1990s has reached a level that is disrupting the ecological balance, said the source familiar with the situation.

"We must control this or it will lead to a further decline in groundwater levels," he said. "In some areas of our protective forests, the Euphrates poplars are withering and drying up."

Peyzulla Zeydin, an ecological devastation researcher from Korla who now lives in the United States, told RFA that the misuse of water resources, including underground water, has severely impacted the region's protective forests over time.

"In the 1990s, when we dug water wells, we could find water at just 10 meters," he said. "Now, even at 30 meters, we can't find water."

"It's getting worse because the underground water recycling system has been disrupted," Zeydin said. "One of the main causes of the declining water levels is the growing population and the over-expansion of farmland. This has interrupted the natural underground water replenishment cycle."

Zeydin said research indicates that the Bingtuan's 1st Division battalions in the Korla area have overused and controlled the water resources there, leading to the drying up of Euphrates poplar trees along the lower streams of the Tarim River.

"The water level is dropping every day, and it has now reached a depth of 100 meters [330 feet]," he said.

### **Chinese agricultural products linked to Uyghur forced labour, report suggests**

21 December 2024, ANI

Chinese exports of agricultural products such as tomatoes, chilli peppers, and marigolds from the Xinjiang region are tainted by forced labour and land transfers from Uyghur peasants to Chinese businesses, as highlighted by a new research report.

According to Radio Free Asia, the 136-page report, authored by Adrian Zenz and I-Lin Lin from the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, highlighted the forced assimilation and political indoctrination of Uyghur workers involved in the cultivation of these products.

The report also exposes the role of major Western companies, including Kraft Heinz, Nestle, PepsiCo, Del Monte, McCormick, Unilever, and L'Oreal, which



import these goods. The goods often enter supply chains through intermediaries, obscuring their origins. The report identified 72 international companies and 18 Chinese firms that either have production in Xinjiang or are linked to the region's agricultural supply chains.

Adrian Zenz, one of the researchers, told Radio Free Asia that the extensive use of forced labour and coerced land transfers in Xinjiang is directly serving the Chinese government's political goals, including the long-term transformation of the Uyghur population. These practices are also contaminating global supply chains.

Zenz emphasised in an interview with RFA, "It means that we have a much bigger system of forced labour and forced land transfer that is affecting many agricultural communities in Xinjiang and is directly serving the political goals of the regime to achieve political long-term transformation of these populations and taint the supply chains as a result."

Among the implicated Chinese companies are COFCO Tunhe Tomato, Xinjiang Chalkis (which processes tomatoes and fruits), and Chenguang Biotech Group, a high-tech firm specialising in plant-based ingredients. These companies have subsidiaries in the United States and Europe, further complicating the traceability of their products.

The report also draws attention to the ongoing human rights abuses in Xinjiang, including the mass detainment of Uyghur Muslims and the use of forced labour. It states that Xinjiang is home to the world's largest state-imposed forced labour system, with up to 2.5 million Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities at risk of coerced labour. (ANI)

### West urged to lift Xinjiang sanctions

18 December 2024, ECNS

International experts are urging Western countries, including the United States, to lift sanctions against the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, claiming the measures are based on unsubstantiated allegations of "forced labor" and have caused widespread job losses.

The comments were made on Monday during the International Symposium on Employment and Social Security in Xinjiang, held in Urumqi, the regional capital. More than 210 representatives from 44 countries, regions and organizations attended the event.

According to Xinjiang's regional government, by the end of 2023, sanctions had disrupted operations at more than 100 local enterprises. Sanctioned textile and garment factories were forced to cut production or shut down entirely, resulting in significant layoffs. Despite the challenges, Xinjiang continues to trade with 192 countries and regions, officials said.

Erkin Tuniyaz, chairman of Xinjiang's regional government, described employment as fundamental to improving livelihoods and said the region is committed to protecting workers' rights under the law.

"Some anti-China forces have ignored these facts and spread baseless accusations about so-called 'forced labor,'" Erkin said. "These unilateral sanctions are despicable acts, and their motives are becoming increasingly clear to the international community."

The sanctions have particularly affected Xinjiang's cotton, textile, tomato, photovoltaic and chemical industries, all of which are highly mechanized, officials said.

Experts at the symposium argued that allegations of "forced labor" are based on internet rumors and statements from anti-China groups, lacking legal or factual basis.

Alena Douhan, the United Nations special rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures, criticized the sanctions and said they represent a reversal of the burden of proof.

"Anything associated with Xinjiang is now accused of being linked to 'forced labor,' and the accused must prove their innocence," Douhan said via video link. "I call on the sanctioning parties to lift and suspend all unilateral sanctions applied to China, its nationals and companies without the authorization of the UN Security Council."

Mark Levine, a U.S. sociologist and professor at Minzu University of China, said the claims contradict his own experiences in Xinjiang.

"I have seen how the Chinese government has worked to improve the lives of its people over the past 19 years," said Levine, who has lived in China since 2005 and has visited Xinjiang three times. "Through my travels to cities and the countryside, I witnessed the successful eradication of extreme poverty."

Li Juan, director of the legislative affairs committee of the regional people's congress, said the sanctions target basic industries essential to Xinjiang's development.

"Unilateral sanctions under the pretext of 'forced labor' are depriving people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang of their right to employment," Li said.

### China Demolishes Uyghur Business Landmark in Xinjiang

15 December 2024, Shia Waves

Reports emerged that the Chinese government has demolished the Rebiya Kadeer Trade Center in Urumqi, Xinjiang, a significant site for Uyghur culture and commerce, VOA revealed on Friday.

Once home to over 800 mostly Uyghur-owned businesses, the center had been vacant since 2009. Local business owners were reportedly ordered to vacate the area prior to the demolition, which was conducted without public announcement.

This action has drawn condemnation from Uyghur rights activists, who view it as part of China's ongoing efforts to suppress Uyghur identity and heritage. The demolition coincides with increasing international scrutiny of China's policies in Xinjiang, with allegations of mass detentions and cultural erasure being labeled as crimes against humanity.

Rebiya Kadeer, the center's namesake and a prominent Uyghur rights advocate, described the demolition as a calculated effort to erase her legacy. After being imprisoned for her activism, Kadeer has lived in exile in the U.S. since 2005, continuing her fight for Uyghur rights. She reported that her family members have faced persecution, including detention, as a result of her activism. The Chinese government.

county – in the heart of the Taklimakan – using micro-organisms to transform a local saline lake into a usable water source.

Last year, the investors began cultivating about 2 million pearl oysters, and they aim to begin selling their first pearls during the second half of 2025.

According to local media, Xinjiang's unique climate – with its huge temperature swings between night and day, and its long hours of sunshine – is excellent for pearl farming, as the pearls develop a rich lustre and texture.

The cultured pearls also have a side benefit of helping improve the water quality of local lakes, reducing water treatment costs for aqua farms in Xinjiang.

Xinjiang produced 184,000 tonnes (405.7 million pounds) of aquatic products worth 3.86 billion yuan (US\$530 million) last year, according to local government data.

By 2025, the local government predicts that the output value of Xinjiang's entire aquaculture industry will reach about 20 billion yuan.

## November

### China wants to turn Xinjiang's vast deserts into a string of pearls

29 November 2024, SCMP, He Huifeng

Millions of pearls are already being harvested in the Taklimakan Desert, as China tries to turn the arid region into a hub for aquaculture

Millions of pearls are being artificially cultivated in the deserts of the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, as China pushes forward with an ambitious plan to turn the arid region into a hub for aquaculture.

The pearl farming project was first launched in 2022, but only recently attracted public attention in China when a video of a local farmer showing off a fistful of pearls went viral on social media, state news agency Xinhua reported.

Chinese authorities have been encouraging private investment in aquaculture across China's northwestern provinces since 2017, with companies using innovative techniques to convert the water inside the region's saline-alkaline lakes into artificial seawater.

Salmon, lobster, shrimp and tilapia are already being farmed on an industrial scale in lakes dotted across the Taklimakan Desert – a vast desert in Xinjiang known as the "Sea of Death" – and "produced in Xinjiang" seafood is being used by restaurants in many Chinese cities.

Now, efforts are under way to harvest pearls in the area. Investors from southern China have reportedly established a seafood breeding base in Qiemo

### Uniqlo criticised in China after BBC report of CEO's Xinjiang comments

29 November 2024, SCMP, Eduardo Baptista and Casey Hall

Casual wear giant Uniqlo is facing a storm of online criticism in China after a BBC report quoted the chief executive of its owner as saying the company does not source cotton from the far western region of Xinjiang.

The British Broadcasting Corporation published an interview on Thursday with Tadashi Yanai, the chief executive of Fast Retailing (9983.T), opens new tab, in which it asked him if the Japanese retailer sourced cotton from the region.

The report went viral on Chinese social media platform Weibo on Friday, with several users slamming the company and some saying they would stop buying its products.

"With this kind of attitude from Uniqlo, and their founder being so arrogant, they're probably betting that mainland consumers will forget about it in a few days and continue to buy," one user wrote. "So, can we stand firm this time?"

In the interview, Yanai initially responds to the BBC's question saying, "We're not using," before interrupting himself to say he did not want to continue his answer as it was "too political".

Fast Retailing did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The issue of sourcing from Xinjiang, where rights groups and the U.S. government accuse China of abuses against the Uyghur population, has been a

geopolitical minefield for foreign firms with a large presence in China.

Beijing denies any abuses in the region, the origin of the vast majority of Chinese-produced cotton.

In 2021, Uniqlo's rival, H&M, faced a consumer boycott in China for a statement on its website that expressed concern about accusations of forced labour in Xinjiang and said it would no longer source cotton from there.

H&M saw its stores removed from major e-commerce platforms and its store locations moved from map apps in China as it bore the brunt of consumer anger at companies refusing to source cotton from Xinjiang. Other Western brands such as Nike, Puma, Burberry, Adidas and more were also caught up in the controversy.

In September, China's commerce ministry launched an investigation into PVH, the parent company of Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger.

In a statement it said PVH was suspected of "unjustly boycotting" Xinjiang cotton and other products "without factual basis".

PVH has said it will respond in accordance with relevant regulations, media reported.

In 2020, Fast Retailing said it did not make any products in Xinjiang. However, Yanai has refrained in recent years from discussing the subject in other media interviews, saying Uniqlo wanted to stay neutral.

China is Fast Retailing's biggest overseas market and it has more than 900 stores on the mainland. Greater China, including Taiwan and Hong Kong, accounts for more than a fifth of its revenue.

Ben Cavender, managing director at Shanghai-based China Market Research Group said Uniqlo's sales had held up well during the current weakness in its economy.

But that Chinese consumers would vote with their wallets if they felt a brand was being disrespectful to their country or culture, he added.

"It's too soon to tell if there will be lasting damage but losing even a small number of consumers over this will not be helpful, given how challenging things are for the apparel industry right now."

Asked about Yanai's reported comments at a press briefing on Friday, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said she hoped "companies can eliminate political pressure and bad interference and independently make business decisions in line with their own interests".

### **Xinjiang's forced labour: Volkswagen and Uniqlo's take a step back**

28 November 2024, PIME Asia News

New supply chain regulations adopted by the United States and the European Union are forcing many

companies to take a stand on the issue of Uyghur exploitation. The German automaker sold its controversial Urumqi plant "for economic reasons", but it is still renewing its business plans in China. The Japanese clothing brand says that it does not use cotton from Xinjiang.

After BASF, Volkswagen too has decided to leave Xinjiang, in the wake of accusations that Uyghurs have been used as forced labour in building a test track for cars. Yesterday's announcement by the German carmaker officially cites "economic reasons" related to plans to reorganise its presence in China.

This marks an important victory for groups fighting for the rights of the Muslim minority, which has been subjected to harsh repressive government policies in Xinjiang, China's westernmost province, for more than ten years.

For Volkswagen, China is a key market, currently selling four out of every 10 cars produced in its plants globally. But it now finds itself caught up in the clash between China and the European Union over tariffs on imports of electric cars, as well as with its own internal crisis.

In Xinjiang, the automaker was facing the Forced Labour Regulation adopted by the European Union on 19 November; although much less clear-cut than the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act adopted by the United States in 2021, it would still have put the Urumqi plant in difficulty.

In addition, as AsiaNews reported a few weeks ago, the study commissioned by Volkswagen that exonerated its Chinese subsidiary from forced labour charges turned out to be deeply flawed, since it was impossible to investigate freely in the region.

In the end, Volkswagen decided to sell the plant that it opened in Xinjiang in 2012 at Beijing's request, and the related track; both will go to Shanghai-based SMVIC, a company that deals with tests on cars produced in China.

In the meantime, the German car manufacturer has extended until 2040 a joint venture with Saic Motor, its Chinese partner. The agreement provides for 18 new Volkswagen and Audi car models to arrive on the market by the end of the decade, 15 exclusive to the local market.

The goal is to recover positions by returning to sell four million cars a year in China by 2030, a market share of 15 per cent. Far from Xinjiang, but certainly inside the People's Republic.

The sale of the German automaker's plant does not, however, end the broader question of Uyghur slave labour in products that flood markets around the world.

According to the Coalition to End Forced Labour in the Uyghur Region, the apparel and footwear industry is one sector heavily dependent on unfree labour since Xinjiang accounts for about 23 per cent

of the world's cotton production, but is also involved in making solar panel components and growing tomatoes.

Meanwhile, Uniqlo, a Japanese casual wear designer and retailer, announced for the first time that it does not use cotton from the Uyghur region in its products.

This step is clearly dictated by new regulations, which are forcing many groups present on international markets to address any ambiguity concerning their workers; this is especially the case with existing US legislation, which requires companies to prove that their supply chains are not linked to Uyghur forced labour.

A few days ago, the Biden administration added another 29 groups to its Entity List, which covers companies whose imports are not allowed into the United States under the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act.

Overall, more than 100 companies have already been excluded from the US market suspected of using Uyghur forced labour, in sectors ranging from agriculture and mining to steel and digital technologies.

Uniqlo's statement is significant because its founder and president Tadashi Yanai had always refused to speak on the matter, until now that it, claiming that he wanted to remain "neutral" in the trade war between the United States and China.

The Japanese's company strong presence in the Chinese market weighs heavily on what might happen, especially since it has more stores in China than in Japan itself. This has raised fears that that its stance on the Xinjiang issue might have negative repercussions, sparking, for example, nationalist boycotts, like with other major brands in the sector.

### **Great wall of Taklamakan: China surrounds its largest desert with giant green belt**

28 November 2024, SCMP, Victoria Bela

Just completed multi-decade project in Xinjiang region is intended to help prevent desertification and boost local economies

China's largest desert, and the world's second-largest sand-shifting desert – is now surrounded by a green belt of various trees and shrubs, as well as a solar-based sand blocking technology.

The encirclement of the Taklamakan Desert in China's northwestern Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region – an area about the size of Germany – is meant to prevent sandstorms and protect local infrastructure, as well as boost regional economic opportunities.

The green belt – which stretches 3,050km (1,900 miles) – was completed on Thursday after the final batch of several types of vegetation was planted in

Yutian county at the desert's southern edge, according to state media.

Sand-shifting deserts like the Taklamakan are dominated by wind-driven sand dunes and frequent sandstorms, which can affect weather, agriculture and human health.

About 85 per cent of the 337,600 sq km (130,350 square mile) desert is covered by shifting sand dunes, earning the Taklamakan the label "sea of death".

"The wind and sand action on the edge of the desert is extremely strong, and the sand dunes expand outward," Lei Qiang, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Sciences Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography, told state-owned news site The Paper.

Lei said the effort to "lock" the edge of the desert using green belts and solar-based sand control measures such as solar panels, would protect the ecology while safeguarding railways and roads.

It took 40 years to construct the first 2,761km of the green belt. In November last year, efforts were begun to close the remaining 285km around the desert, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

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An army of 600,000 people worked to plant species such as desert poplar, red willow and saxaul trees to complete the final stretch of the belt.

Lei said some of the species, such as the medicinal plant desert hyacinth, could produce economic spin-offs.

Green belts are being deployed around the world to combat desertification and desert expansion, such as the Great Green Wall initiative, which stretches 8,000km across Africa's Sahara Desert.

In 2022, a new rail link – the Hotan-Ruoqiang railway – went into service to help integrate the desert region with the rest of the country.

The 2,712km loop is the world's first circumnavigation of a desert and now connects various cities around the Taklamakan, transporting minerals and specialties like walnuts and red dates to the rest of China.

In October, the China Three Gorges Corporation announced plans to build a new energy project in the Taklamakan to supply 8.5 gigawatts of solar and 4GW of wind power, according to another report by The Paper.

Construction is expected to be completed within four years and complement energy storage and coal-fired power projects.

Xinjiang has abundant sources of clean energy including solar and wind, and in the first half of this year it ranked first in China for installed capacity of new energy, according to the State Council.

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Now that the Taklamakan Desert green belt is completed, Lei said work would continue to improve its efficiency and quality.

### Uyghur exiles accuse Xinjiang's leader of repression beyond borders

26 November 2024, VOA, Kasim Kashgar

Exiled members of China's Uyghur minority group accuse Beijing of human rights violations and say the Communist Party chief in the Xinjiang region where most of them are from has been more heavy-handed in his approach toward them than his predecessor.

Members of the largely Turkic Muslim minority group said they had hoped Ma Xingrui, with his technocratic background, might moderate the region's hardline stance, but three years into his current position, observers said the opposite is happening in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in northwest China.

"Under Ma's watch, arbitrary detentions have persisted, and forced labor has expanded, especially in Belt and Road projects," said Abduweli Ayup, a Norway-based Uyghur activist. China's Belt and Road Initiative is a global infrastructure and trade endeavor that has lasted for more than 10 years.

Ayup also said that under Ma, 240 Uyghurs who sought refuge in cities such as Shanghai and Beijing were forced to return to Xinjiang.

"These individuals were arrested and forcibly returned to Xinjiang, where their fates remain uncertain," Ayup told VOA, citing information from trusted sources from China.

Obtaining and verifying information from inside China has been challenging due to the government's tight control over communications and the people's fear of repercussions for disclosing sensitive details.

Despite the risks, Uyghurs from within and outside of China rely on discreet networks and encrypted messaging to get the word out, often at great peril, according to Ayup and other exiles.

Activists said they notice during Ma's tenure, he has not only upheld but intensified the internment of over 1 million Uyghurs, turning temporary detentions into long-term imprisonments.

The United States and Canada have accused China of genocide. The European Union and rights organizations have condemned China's policies against the Uyghurs and described Beijing's approach as crimes against humanity.

Chinese authorities deny allegations of repression in Xinjiang, framing their policies as efforts to combat "terrorism, extremism and separatism."

"China is a law-based country. Judicial departments handle cases in accordance with law," Liu Pengyu, spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in

Washington, wrote in a response to a VOA request for comment.

Repression extends beyond Xinjiang

Observers said Beijing's narrative sharply contradicts firsthand accounts and international reports that accuse China of human rights abuses, including mass detentions and cultural erasure.

Some Uyghurs have tried to move out of Xinjiang and away from the scrutiny of Chinese officials within the region. But the crackdown has spilled beyond Xinjiang's borders, targeting Uyghurs in other parts of China, Ayup said.



One such case involves Irpan Yarmemet, a Uyghur content producer who was arrested in Shanghai in September for traveling to Turkey eight years ago to study. Ayup said Yarmemet was living in Shanghai for fear of arbitrary detention in Xinjiang. After his arrest, he was detained in Xinjiang. It is unknown whether he is charged or convicted of a crime.

"His hopes of staying safe by avoiding Xinjiang were dashed," Ayup said. "The recent arrests and forced returns show that the crackdown under Ma Xingrui has no geographical boundaries."

The human cost

Uyghur exile Madina Mehmet, now living in the Netherlands, said leaving China was a matter of survival.

In 2012, she enrolled at Beijing Foreign Studies University but was forced out after just a year.

"They kept pressuring me to remove my headscarf," Mehmet said. "They wouldn't let me live in peace. I couldn't take it anymore."

She eventually secured a university scholarship in Turkey, where she lived and studied for eight years. She then moved to the Netherlands. However, Beijing's reach continued to haunt her.

"While I was in Turkey, Chinese officials demanded proof that I was a student there," she said. "Even now, they interrogate my mother in Urumqi, asking for my address and details about my life in the Netherlands." Urumqi is Xinjiang's capital.

Mehmet said her relatives have also been scrutinized for their travels. She said almost a decade ago, her sister, Mihray Mehmet, cousin and aunt had either studied or traveled to Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, all countries Beijing has deemed sensitive.

In late 2021, Madina Mehmet said, the three women were detained in Urumqi. They were falsely accused



of being “connected to terrorist organizations,” said Mehmet.

Rights groups reported that Uyghurs who had visited a sensitive country prior to 2017 would be scrutinized for possible arrests and interrogations.

“My sister was an exceptional student,” Mehmet said of her sister, who was attending Xinjiang Medical University when her academic aspirations were derailed by state harassment over her headscarf.

“Teachers humiliated her by forcibly removing it in front of her classmates,” Mehmet said. Mihray Mehmet eventually left university to study in Egypt – a decision later used to justify her detention.

VOA asked the Chinese Embassy in Washington about Mihray Mehmet’s case, and Liu responded by saying, “I have not heard about the case you mentioned.”

Last year, Madina Mehmet’s aunt was released from detention, but her sister and cousin were sentenced to at least seven years in prison.

“They’ve committed no crime,” Mehmet told VOA. “My sister’s children – just 3 and 5 years old when she was arrested – are growing up without their mother.”

Despite the risks of speaking out, Madina Mehmet refuses to stay silent.

“I want the Chinese government to release my sister and cousin,” she said. “They deserve to be free, to raise their children, to live without fear.”

**Targeting prominent Uyghurs**

Rehmutulla Semet, the vice chair of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Xinjiang and a prominent real estate developer, was also a target of China’s Xinjing policies. He was sentenced to 19 years in prison in 2021 on charges of “assisting terrorist activities” and “gathering a crowd to disrupt public order,” according to a source who requested anonymity out of fear of reprisal.

Sources close to Semet fear retaliation and request not to be revealed but told VOA the charges are false. They said he was targeted due to his ethnicity, social status and wealth.

Since Ma’s arrival in Xinjiang, Semet’s assets, valued at more than \$400 million, have been seized. Some of his assets were auctioned off on platforms such as Douyin, China’s domestic version of TikTok.

“One of his signature buildings, the Gold Coin Hill Building, a high-rise in Urumqi, was among those auctioned off,” a source told VOA. “He owned similar buildings in other major cities in the region, all of which were officially confiscated by the government this past August.”

Ayup said such prosecutions are part of a broader pattern of stripping influential Uyghurs of their wealth and silencing dissent.

Mehmet and Ayup are part of a growing number of Uyghur exiles who are calling for international accountability and action.

“The world must act – justice for Uyghurs is long overdue,” Mehmet said.

## **School Stampede In China's Xinjiang Injures 14**

18 November 2024, Barron’s

A stampede at a middle school in China’s northwestern Xinjiang region has left 14 people injured, according to local authorities.

The incident occurred at around 3:25 pm (7:25 am GMT) on Monday at the No. 8 Middle School in Kashgar, a statement on a social media account affiliated with the city government said.

A student fell in front of a door as pupils were moving between a dormitory and a teaching building, “causing a stampede”, the statement said, without giving further details.

It said three people were “seriously injured and are being treated with all-out efforts”.

A further 11 people were “lightly injured and are being kept in hospital for observation”.

Authorities are investigating the cause of the incident, the statement said.

Located around 4,000 kilometres (2,500 miles) from Beijing, the ancient Silk Road city of Kashgar is the cultural heartland of China’s Uyghur minority.

The ruling Communist Party is accused of committing grievous human rights abuses against the Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang, which the United States and lawmakers in some other countries have called a “genocide”.

Beijing vociferously denies the allegations, arguing that its policies in Xinjiang have helped to curb religious extremism and boost economic development.

## **Trump’s China Hawks Are Also Uyghur Advocates**

15 November 2024, Foreign Policy, Amy Mackinnon and Lili Pike

The president and his advisors might clash over human rights in China

U.S. President-elect Donald Trump’s selection of two outspoken critics of China’s crackdown on Uyghurs to serve in top foreign-policy roles in the next administration has been welcomed by Uyghur advocates. But it could also serve as a future flash point with the president-elect.

Sen. Marco Rubio, Trump’s nominee to serve as secretary of state, and Rep. Mike Waltz, his national security advisor, have both sought to use their clout as lawmakers to condemn China’s persecution of

Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in its northwestern Xinjiang region.

"Having engaged with both offices, I'm hopeful for the future," said Rayhan Asat, a human rights lawyer as well as a senior legal and policy advisor with the Strategic Litigation Project at the Atlantic Council. Asat is of Uyghur heritage, and her brother, Etkar Asat, is imprisoned in China. "Their strong records in leading and sponsoring legislation on Uyghur rights speak for themselves."

In 2021, Waltz called for the United States to boycott the Beijing Winter Olympics the following year over China's human rights record, likening the event to the infamous 1936 Summer Games that were held in Nazi Germany.

Rubio has long been a champion of human rights in China. He co-sponsored the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act in 2021, which assumes that all goods from Xinjiang are produced using forced labor, unless proven otherwise, and bars them from being imported to the United States. It is widely regarded as the U.S. government's most assertive action to date to address the repression in Xinjiang, which has seen more than a million people detained since 2017. The Chinese government stopped publishing data on the number of prosecutions in Xinjiang in 2021.

"He is a sturdy, sober member of Congress who has worked for a long time on China and human rights issues," said Sophie Richardson, who served as the China director at Human Rights Watch from 2006 to 2023.

Beijing sanctioned Rubio in 2020 alongside Texas Sen. Ted Cruz and others in response to the United States sanctioning Chinese officials over human rights abuses in Xinjiang.

Although the first Trump administration took a number of important steps to respond to China's crackdown in Xinjiang, including issuing sanctions and designating it as a genocide, such actions seem to have been driven by administration officials as opposed to the president himself. Rubio's and Waltz's strong convictions on human rights in China could thus prove to be a point of tension in a second Trump administration.

John Bolton, one of Trump's former national security advisors, said in his book *The Room Where It Happened* that during a 2019 meeting between Trump and Xi, at which only the two leaders and their interpreters were present, the U.S. president told his Chinese counterpart that his efforts to incarcerate the Uyghurs was "exactly the right thing to do," according to the U.S. interpreter. Trump has denied the allegation.

In 2020, Trump told Axios that he had held off imposing U.S. Treasury sanctions on Chinese officials involved in the crackdown out of concern that doing so could disrupt ongoing trade talks. At the time, the

Trump administration had put export restrictions on Chinese government entities and Chinese companies deemed complicit in the abuses in Xinjiang as well as visa restrictions on Chinese Communist Party officials deemed responsible, but it had not yet taken the step of applying harsher Treasury Department sanctions. Trump had also that week signed into law the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act, which requires the president to file a report to Congress identifying all individuals responsible for the human rights abuses in Xinjiang, in order to determine future sanctions.

"There were certainly people in the administration who I think cared about these issues deeply," said Richardson, who is now a visiting scholar at Stanford University's Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law, "but I think the president's posture certainly undercut the credibility that the administration could expect on human rights."

Another wrinkle for Rubio and Waltz is close Trump ally Elon Musk, whose electric vehicle company Tesla has a "gigafactory" in Shanghai and opened a showroom in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang, in 2022. Rubio condemned the latter at the time, writing on X, "Nationless corporations are helping the Chinese Communist Party cover up genocide and slave labor in the region."

### **Uyghur advocates press for stronger enforcement of forced labor laws and Xinjiang recognition**

13 November 2024, The Print

After President-elect Donald Trump's victory, leaders within the Uyghur American community are urging the US to refocus on the human rights violations in Xinjiang, the north-western region of China where Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities have faced severe oppression.

Advocates are calling on Trump to build upon his administration's earlier actions on behalf of Uyghur rights, citing the positive impact of his first-term policies in challenging China's abuses. Under Trump, the U.S. officially classified China's actions in Xinjiang as genocide, imposing sanctions on Chinese officials and entities linked to widespread human rights violations, including mass detentions, forced labour, and sterilizations as reported by Voice of America.

Despite China's denial of these allegations, framing its policies as efforts to combat extremism and terrorism, Nury Turkel, senior fellow at the Hudson Institute and former chairman of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, highlighted the strong bipartisan support for Uyghur rights in the US. According to the report he emphasized that these issues have broader national security implications, noting, "Uyghur rights concerns extend beyond typical human rights issues. They have profound

national security implications tied to America's long-term economic and strategic security." Turkel expressed cautious optimism that the incoming Trump administration would continue its efforts, building on key actions such as the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act and the genocide designation.

He stated, "I am hopeful that the new administration will take meaningful actions to address the urgent issues facing Uyghurs, as it did in the past."

Uyghur American leaders are urging the Trump administration to further intensify sanctions on Chinese officials and entities implicated in the abuse of Uyghurs, aiming to strengthen the US response. Turkel anticipates that additional sanctions will help confront these atrocities.

The report further stated that Rushan Abbas, executive director of the Campaign for Uyghurs, also stressed the need for robust enforcement of the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act of 2021. He argued that addressing the ongoing genocide is not only a foreign policy issue but also a matter of preventing U.S. complicity in China's use of forced labour.

"Uyghurs are suffering a genocide, and Americans must understand that addressing this atrocity isn't just about foreign policy; it's about stopping the US from becoming complicit by purchasing Chinese goods linked to forced labour," Abbas said.

He added, "It's about preventing China from using Americans' hard-earned money to further its imperial goals and weaken the United States, while also resisting foreign pressure on US soil."

Salih Hudayar, prime minister of the East Turkistan Government in Exile, echoed similar sentiments, urging the Trump administration to formally recognize Xinjiang, or East Turkistan, as an occupied nation.

He argued that an independent East Turkistan would challenge China's growing dominance in Central Asia and the Indo-Pacific, thus protecting both American and global interests. Hudayar also proposed the appointment of a special US coordinator for Uyghur issues, signaling strong US support for Uyghur and minority rights in the region. Despite these calls for action, Uyghur American advocates remain concerned that economic and strategic ties with China could overshadow human rights concerns.

Turkel noted that various advocacy groups have shaped the U.S. response to Uyghur issues, with climate activists seeking closer collaboration with China on environmental matters, pro-engagement China experts urging a more conciliatory approach to US-China relations, and business interests concerned about the risks of heightened tensions.

"These pressures have led to a more measured stance on Uyghur-related policies," Turkel said.

He added that while acts like the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act under the Biden administration were steps forward, broader geopolitical and economic concerns often overshadow Uyghur rights.

In addition to addressing human rights violations within China, Uyghur American leaders are calling for action against China's transnational repression, particularly covert operations aimed at intimidating Uyghur Americans.

Abbas emphasized the need for swift US action to counter these repressive tactics, including China's covert police stations and agents that monitor and intimidate Uyghur Americans and Chinese dissidents living in the US. He also urged the administration to prioritize securing the release of Uyghur detainees in China.

"China continues to detain Uyghur American family members and community leaders as a means of silencing Uyghurs living abroad," Abbas explained, noting that many are forced to self-censor to protect their loved ones. He called for a strong US effort to secure the release of these detainees and put an end to the repressive tactics used by China against the Uyghur diaspora.

### **China uses London travel show to promote its narrative of Xinjiang in the West**

08 November 2024, RFA, Erkin Tarim

Human rights groups criticize the move, noting that Uyghurs there still face abuse by Beijing.

China used a London travel show to promote its narrative of Xinjiang in the West and encourage tourism in the far-western region, despite the government's ongoing repression of the nearly 12 million mostly Muslim Uyghurs who live there.

The event sparked criticism from human rights activists, who have spoken out against Beijing's efforts to falsely show foreign visitors that Uyghurs in Xinjiang are thriving.

The Bureau of Culture and Tourism of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region staffed a booth called "Xinjiang is a good place" at the World Travel Market trade show in London on Nov. 5-7.

Attendees could learn about "the most magical charm of Xinjiang" and "experience the diverse ethnic culture," said a description of the booth on the trade show's website.

Staff handed out coupons for hotels, scenic spots and ski resorts to participating guests to encourage more international visitors to travel to Xinjiang, a report in the Chinese state-run Global Times said.

The exhibition was part of a larger presentation on "high-quality tourism development in China."

Rights groups, including the Uyghur Human Rights Project based in Washington, have denounced such

trips as “genocide tourism,” accusing China of sanitizing its violations of human rights in the region. They have cautioned Western travel companies not to participate in this kind of tourism and criticized the World Travel Market for providing a platform for China to portray a whitewashed image of the situation in Xinjiang.

Rights groups also have accused the Chinese government of using the event as a stage to cover up and justify what the U.S. government and the parliaments of several Western countries have deemed a genocide and crimes against humanity.

Their accusations are based on credible reports of widespread and systematic human rights violations, including mass detentions, cruel and inhuman treatment or punishment, forced sterilizations of women, and the forced separation of children from their parents.

Nicholas Bettles, head of strategic partnerships at World Travel Market London, declined to comment. The trade show’s press officer, Becca Krug, did not respond to an email request for comment.

Portraying Xinjiang as ‘great success’

Henryk Szadziewski, research director at the Uyghur Human Rights Project and co-author of a report on tourism in Xinjiang said China was using the travel fair to try to show the world the “success” of its “Xinjiang policy” in stabilizing the region.

He said this was the first time China sent Xinjiang tourism officials to the World Travel Market, which holds six annual business-to-business events across four continents.

The Chinese government uses tourism as a proxy to show visitors “very carefully curated parts of the region and then reporting back to the world that the region is now a great success,” Szadzieski said.

More than 10 domestic tourism enterprises from Xinjiang along with eight other Chinese provinces and cities, made their debut at the World Travel Market, China’s Global Times reported.

“As ‘China Travel’ heats up thanks to visa-free policies, Xinjiang welcomes visitors to experience its magnificent landscapes and appreciate the beauty of the region,” Guli Abulimu, director of Xinjiang’s Department of Culture of Tourism, was quoted as saying.

The China Daily, another state-run media outlet, said “the intangible cultural heritage, literary and creative products, and tourism brochures showcased at the Xinjiang booth captivated numerous international exhibitors, immersing visitors in the allure of Xinjiang.”

“Their enthusiasm and keen interest in Xinjiang’s tourism offerings sparked collaborative efforts to further enhance the region’s appeal,” the report said.

Radio Free Asia called China’s National Tourist Office in London, but staffers refused to comment on the criticism by human rights groups.

A staff member working at the trade show dismissed rights groups’ warnings about travel to Xinjiang amid the repression of Uyghurs there as “misleading news from certain media outlets.”

Rahima Mahmut, the U.K. director of the World Uyghur Congress and executive director of the group Stop Uyghur Genocide, said showcasing Xinjiang at the World Travel Market was part of the Chinese government’s image-building campaign.

“For the past seven years, the Chinese government has been widely seen as carrying out genocide,” she said. “In an attempt to counter this perception, they claim there is no such thing happening and invite people to take a tour to see the ‘real’ Xinjiang.”

“They argue that Uyghurs have their own culture, speak their own language, and sing their own songs,” Mahmut said. “In reality, they are creating false narratives to try to repair their image.”

### **Civil group calls for accountability from China over human rights violations in Xinjiang**

04 November 2024, Jurist, Matteo Piccioli

The International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) recalled on Monday the need for further action to hold China accountable for grave rights violations in Xinjiang.

The ISHR calls for the Chinese government to ensure timely implementation of the recommendations made by the the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in addition to permitting investigations in the region. It also calls on the UN Human Rights Council to install a “monitoring and reporting mechanism on the human rights situation” to ensure the participation of UN bodies for transparency and the protection of human rights.

In its August 2022 landmark report, the OHCHR affirmed that the Chinese government had committed serious human rights violations through an anti-terrorism law system that imposes restrictions with discriminatory components on Uyghurs. The report holds China accountable for “restrictions on religious identity and expression, as well as the rights to privacy and movement,” which hinders the human rights protected under international law.

The allegations of cases of disappearances of members of the Uyghur and other Muslim ethnic minority communities in the Xinjiang region grew in 2017. A year later, the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances reported a surge of cases of re-education of Uyghur members with the pretext of “countering religious extremism” in the region.

China has, since the publication of the report, denied and rejected the allegations. Its allies similarly argued that the allegations are an “interference in China’s internal affairs.” Raphaël Viana David, ISHR’s China program manager responded:

It is deeply regrettable when States engage in double standards and fail to uphold universal human rights. We are dismayed that while 60 States from the global South were prepared to express solidarity and support a Pakistani-led statement regarding Israel’s abuses in Lebanon, 80 States from the same world region were prepared to abandon such principles and the rights of Uyghur Muslims and other minorities by signing statements which greenlight China’s grave human rights abuses.

Recently various states have also remarked on the need for further action to ensure human rights protection. The OHCHR released a statement in August 2024 updating information on the initial assessment. In this report, the UN agency recognized again the government’s inaction to protect human rights and the persistence of wrongful policies. Similarly a month later, a group of countries labelled as the “Xinjiang Core Group” released a joint statement urging China to free “all individuals arbitrarily and unjustly detained in Xinjiang, urgently clarifying the fate and whereabouts of missing family members, and facilitating safe contact and reunion.”

## October

### China’s idyllic Xinjiang grasslands hid a salty soiled secret that’s been solved

28 October 2024, SCMP, Mandy Zuo

Years of research have yielded productive plains that offer China more food security in the face of geopolitical upheaval and extreme weather

Nationwide efforts to convert salty soil into arable grasslands have extended to a high-elevation part of China’s Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region where a quartet of mountains converge and the arid climate has long quelled attempts to cultivate crops.

After eight years of intensive work in the region’s Pamir Plateau, about 1,300 hectares (3,200 acres) of salt-affected desert in Tashkurgan Tajik county have been transformed into productive plains, the official People’s Daily reported over the weekend.

The announcement came as Beijing has been sowing the seeds of agricultural security to ensure that 1.4 billion Chinese people continue to have adequate food supplies while geopolitics affect trade supplies and an influx of extreme weather events wreak havoc on farmlands.

With a vegetation coverage rate exceeding 85 per cent, and a hay yield of more than 4,500kg (9,920 pounds) per hectare, the achievement is reportedly the first large-scale success in cultivating high-quality forage across the dry and salty lands of the plateau.

The breakthrough will relieve demand pressure on high-altitude livestock feed and allow for the natural grasslands to recuperate, Professor Xi Linqiao, deputy chief scientist of Xinjiang’s high-quality-forage production initiative and a professor with the region’s Tarim University, was quoted as saying.

Tashkurgan, with 418,000 hectares of natural grassland, supports 250,000 livestock, including the Tashkurgan sheep and Pamir yak, both designated as national genetic resources.

But with poor natural pasture growth due to climate conditions forcing the county to import hay from other areas, the county launched its saline-soil reclamation project in 2017 and built a research team in partnership with several local institutions. People’s Daily said the team managed to lower the pH level, a measure of acidity, from 9.5 to approximately 8 using acid-base balancing agents and halophilic bacteria – extremophilic organisms that thrive in high salt conditions.

The initiative also included irrigation infrastructure, eco-restoration, and innovative “dry seeding, wet germination” techniques to maximise irrigation effectiveness, addressing the region’s uneven terrain. Reclaiming and improving this portion of saline-alkali land could significantly expand usable land

“Reclaiming and improving this portion of saline-alkali land could significantly expand usable land”

-Wang Guangzhou, China Agricultural University

With decades of urbanisation and economic expansion reducing China’s arable land, the reclamation of saline-alkali soil has gained national importance as a vital reserve for agricultural use. Efforts to transform saline land into productive farmland have intensified across China in recent years.

In a paper published in September, Professor Wang Guangzhou from China Agricultural University said that China had about 36.7 million hectares of saline land, of which 12.3 million hectares have agricultural potential while 6.67 million hectares could be converted into farmland.

“Reclaiming and improving this portion of saline-alkali land could significantly expand usable land, boost grain production and safeguard national food security,” he wrote.

Local media reports illustrate the success of these initiatives, as seen in Tangshan, Hebei province, where about 80 per cent of the city’s saline land had been transformed into arable land by the end of 2022.



## China hosts World Media Summit in Xinjiang amid human rights concerns

17 October 2024, VOA, Kasim Kashgar

China hosted its sixth World Media Summit this week in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang, in northwestern China. Organizers say more than 500 participants from 208 leading media organizations participated in the event, which was cohosted by state-run Xinhua News Agency and the Xinjiang regional government. The three-day summit, which ended on Thursday, focused on "Artificial Intelligence and Media Transformation."

Chinese media highlighted the potential benefits of global AI collaboration, but the choice of Xinjiang as the event's venue was criticized by activists concerned about China's alleged human rights abuses in the region.

Adrian Zenz, director of China studies at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, told VOA he believes organizers chose Urumqi to draw attention away from human rights concerns in Xinjiang.

"This event appears to be designed to normalize the situation in Xinjiang, making Xinjiang a location for discussing modern technology and developments," Zenz said in an emailed response.

"As Erkin Tuniyaz [chairman of the region] told the media at the event, 'Xinjiang is open for business.' This points to the current strategy of Xinjiang's [Chinese Communist] party secretary Ma Xingrui to focus on economic development and technological modernization," Zenz told VOA.

Zenz said that this is "an integral part of Xinjiang's strategy to present itself as a modern, developed and safe region — showcasing the alleged success of China's 'deradicalization' measures."

In Xinjiang, China faces numerous allegations of human rights abuses against Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslim minorities, including mass detentions and forced labor. Since 2017, more than 1 million people have reportedly been detained in internment camps, with human rights groups estimating that more than half a million have been sentenced through unfair trials.

The U.S. has labeled these actions as genocide, imposing sanctions on Chinese officials and companies. The Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, enacted in 2022, bans products from Xinjiang unless proven free of forced labor.

China denies these claims, asserting that the camps serve as vocational training centers to combat extremism. However, satellite imagery, survivor testimonies and leaked documents contradict these assertions, resulting in widespread global condemnation.

Summit reactions

Originally launched in 2009, the World Media Summit was initiated by the Chinese state-run Xinhua News Agency, with participation from leading international media organizations such as The Associated Press, Reuters and Russia's TASS, according to Xinhua.

Some attendees at this year's session dismissed allegations of human rights violations in Xinjiang as "fake news," according to a Xinhua report.

"Actually, what I found during my visit to Xinjiang was amazing. Because in the media, we hear about fake news about Xinjiang. But when we came to the field and we see the development of Xinjiang, it's amazing," Waref Komaiha, president of the Silk Road Institute for Studies and Research, told Xinhua.

Representatives from global media organizations, including Reuters, participated in the summit.

Ling-Sze Gan, Reuters head of media sales for the Asia Pacific, said at the summit's opening, "We are particularly excited about the potential of generative AI ... augmenting our journalists with machines to supercharge their ability to do their jobs."

Uyghur activists voice concerns

Uyghur activists condemned the summit, calling it an endorsement of China's policies in Xinjiang.

Mamtimin Ala, president of the Washington-based East Turkistan Government in Exile, or ETGE, which seeks the independence of Xinjiang from China, criticized the involvement of major media organizations.

"It is disheartening that these esteemed media organizations have chosen to partake in a Chinese propaganda event. Their presence provides unwarranted legitimacy to China's colonial and genocidal policies in East Turkistan," he said in a statement posted on the organization's website.

Uyghur activists refer to the region of Xinjiang as East Turkistan, a name tied to the area's historical and political background. Xinjiang, which means "new frontier" in Chinese, is the official name used by the Chinese government.

Similarly, ETGE's foreign affairs chief Salih Hidayar voiced concern that the summit could further China's global propaganda efforts.

"We fear that events like this summit, coupled with China's geopolitical influence, will lead to an even more extensive campaign of media manipulation and propaganda aimed at transforming global perceptions of its atrocities in East Turkistan," Hidayar told VOA.

## Former political advisor of Xinjiang arrested for suspected bribe-taking

15 October 2024, Xinhua

Dou Wangui, a former senior political advisor of northwest China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous

Region, has been arrested on suspicion of taking bribes, the Supreme People's Procuratorate (SPP) said in a statement on Tuesday.

The case was handed over to prosecutors for examination and prosecution following the conclusion of an investigation by the National Commission of Supervision, the SPP said.

Dou was formerly a member of the leading Party members group of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Regional Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and vice chairman of the committee.

Further investigation into this case is still underway.

### **Rights groups blast Skechers over new store in Xinjiang**

10 October 2024, RFA, Jijil Kashgary

Controversial Hong Kong actor Donnie Yen appears at a glitzy mall opening.

Rights groups are condemning U.S. footwear and apparel company Skechers as it used the star power of martial arts actor Donnie Yen to open a new store in Xinjiang despite allegations that ethnic Uyghurs in China's far west are used for forced labor.

In a video Yen posted to Instagram, crowds inside a glitzy shopping mall in the regional capital of Urumqi clamored to catch a glimpse of the Hong Kong actor, who is a Skechers brand ambassador – and is known to have pro-China sympathies.

The company promoted its Sept. 28 Urumqi store opening heavily on Chinese social media, and Yen encouraged his nearly 130 million followers on Weibo to visit the outlet and explore its "comfortable treasures," Voice of America reported.

The brand is big in China: Of Skechers 5,200 retail stores worldwide, China has the most with more than 940.

But the big promotional event – and opening a store in Urumqi – showed that Skechers was "completely tone deaf" to concerns about the use of Uyghur forced labor in Xinjiang, said Jewher Ilham, the forced labor project coordinator at the Worker Rights Consortium.

"Skechers isn't yet taking seriously the need to extricate its business from the Uyghur region, even after it was previously linked to forced labor by U.S. Customs and other institutions," Ilham said.

The United States has taken a strict stance on the issue. Under the 2021 Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, imports from Xinjiang are banned from entering the United States unless they are certified as not made with forced labor.

In June 2022, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security added Skechers supplier Dongguan Oasis Shoes Co., Ltd., to a list of companies suspected of using Uyghur slave labor.

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute issued a 2020 report titled "Uyghurs For Sale" which found that 83 global companies and brands, including Skechers, were directly or indirectly benefiting from the use of Uyghur forced labor in 27 factories in China from which they sourced products.

'Distasteful'

Skechers has been identified as a company within that risk, said Henryk Szadziwski, research director at the Uyghur Human Rights Project in Washington.

"For me, even if the question of forced labor is in dispute, the very fact that you're opening a shop [and] profiteering in a region where there's ongoing crimes against humanity, I'd have to question the decision of Skechers here and ask them what kind of ethical guidelines and clearance were made to make this decision," he told Radio Free Asia.

"So, it's not just the forced labor," he said. "[In] this region are ongoing crimes against humanity, and [Skechers'] decision is to open a shop and make money. That's very distasteful."

When RFA contacted Jennifer Clay, vice president of corporate communications at Skechers, for comment, her assistant said Clay was traveling and "too busy to deal with that right now."

Yen, whose breakout film in the West was "Ip Man" in 2008, is a controversial figure because of his pro-China comments. He most recently appeared in "John Wick 4" in which he had a prominent role along with American actor Keanu Reeves.

His appearance at the Oscars in Hollywood in March 2023 prompted protesters to gather outside the venue, criticizing him for his lack of support for Hong Kong's 2019 pro-democracy movement, which he had called "a riot." Some critics even called on event organizers to disinvite Yen.

Many Hong Kongers have boycotted Yen's movies over his pro-Beijing stance during the 2019 protests against the erosion of Hong Kong's promised freedoms and judicial independence that saw pitched battles between protesters armed with bricks, Molotov cocktails and other makeshift weapons against fully equipped riot police who fired rubber bullets and tear gas.

### **EU Parliament urges China to release Uyghur doctor Gulshan Abbas, economist Ilham Tohti**

10 October 2024, ISHR

The European Parliament adopted today an urgent resolution condemning Beijing's persecution against Uyghurs, demanding the release of prominent figures Gulshan Abbas and Ilham Tohti. Following this landmark call, Abbas' daughter, Ziba Murat, and

ISHR urge EU leaders to step up EU action on the fate of Uyghurs at the United Nations.

The European Parliament (EP) in session in Strasbourg adopted a landmark motion urging the People's Republic of China (PRC) to 'immediately and unconditionally release Ilham Tohti and Gulshan Abbas, as well as those arbitrarily detained in China' and whose cases have been mentioned by the European Union (EU) at the Human Rights Council.

The text lays out a strongly-worded demand that the PRC halts its 'repression and targeting of Uyghurs', including forced sterilisation, birth prevention measures, the destruction of Uyghur identity and other abuses 'which amount to crimes against humanity and a serious risk of genocide'.

The EP lamented that 62-year-old retired doctor Gulshan Abbas is 'serving a 20-year sentence on fallacious terrorism-related charges relating to activities of her sister, a defender of the human rights of persecuted Uyghurs in the PRC'.

The resolution also regretted that Uyghur economist Ilham Tohti, winner of the EP's 2019 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, was sentenced to life imprisonment on charges of 'separatism' despite striving to 'foster dialogue between Uyghurs and Han Chinese'.

This resolution reflects a growing global consensus and the mounting diplomatic pressure on China to release all wrongfully imprisoned individuals in the Uyghur region, like my mother.

Ziba Murat, daughter of detained Uyghur doctor Gulshan Abbas

Today's resolution was adopted by an overwhelming majority of 540 out of 610 voting members of the European parliament (MEPs), with only 23 oppositions and 47 abstentions.

In September, ISHR joined Dr. Abbas' daughter, Ziba Murat, in an advocacy mission to engage extensively with MEPs leading to today's historic resolution.

Dr. Abbas has been arbitrarily detained since 2018, and held incommunicado most of that time. In June 2024, UN experts sent a letter to the Chinese authorities and later released a statement on Dr. Abbas' situation. Under mounting pressure from UN bodies and Western governments, Beijing finally disclosed Dr. Abbas' whereabouts, sentence, and stated date of release, scheduled for 2038.

This was the first written acknowledgement that the Chinese authorities are holding Dr. Abbas ever since her abrupt forced disappearance six years ago. However, China failed to address UN experts' request for disclosure of detailed information on her health, of her court judgment and evidence used to convict her.

My mother is a medical professional who devoted her life to helping people and saving lives. She is a

non-political, warm-hearted and loving mother. The charges against her are preposterous and baseless. My mother is suffering the consequences because her family in the United States spoke out against the Chinese government's unfair treatment of Uyghurs. This is a clear example of kin punishment and transnational repression.

Ziba Murat

Dr. Abbas was forcibly disappeared on 10 September 2018, in retaliation for her sister Rushan Abbas' public advocacy in the United States against the persecution of Uyghurs in China a few days prior.

She has multiple health concerns which require medication and medical attention, including severe high blood pressure, back pain often leading to immobilisation, osteoporosis, and recurring migraines. Both her eyes have undergone multiple surgeries and require monitoring.

In March 2023, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention released an authoritative, quasi-judicial opinion determining her detention to be arbitrary and calling for her prompt release. The EU also raised her case during its latest human rights dialogue with China in June 2024.

This EU resolution and UN actions follow a concerted campaign of global advocacy, including by Dr. Abbas' relatives, who have remained in the dark about her fate for six long years. It is also indisputable evidence that when governments and UN experts press Beijing publicly on individual cases, in a coordinated and sustained fashion, the wall will eventually crack. It is not time to give in: it is now the moment for global actors to step up pressure until Dr. Abbas is released on medical parole.

Raphaël Viana David, ISHR's China Programme Manager

On 11 September 2024, Murat addressed the UN Human Rights Council on behalf of ISHR to call for Dr. Abbas' release and urge the Council to 'step up monitoring and reporting and hold the [Chinese] government accountable for gross violations of international law' – watch a recording of the statement [here](#).

Stepping up UN monitoring and reporting

The EP's motion 'strongly condemns the PRC for not implementing the recommendations of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)' and urges Beijing to 'allow the OHCHR independent access to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region'. It further encourages the OHCHR to issue a 'comprehensive situational update and an action plan for holding the PRC accountable'.

We now expect EU Members States to measure up to the Parliament's motion and to demonstrate leadership and commitment to supporting Uyghurs through bold global action. This includes leading a

joint statement on China at the ongoing UN General Assembly session and ensuring a united EU position around it. It is deeply regrettable that four EU members – Greece, Cyprus, Malta and Hungary – have refused since 2019 to align with their peers and endorse such statements at high-level UN fora.

Raphaël Viana David

The EU parliament text calls on EU Member States to suspend extradition treaties with the PRC and Hong Kong and 'respect the non-refoulement principle'. It further urges EU governments to 'address the transnational repression of Chinese dissidents and Uyghurs on their territory and prosecute individuals responsible'.

EU Member States must exert persistent and coordinated pressure on China to implement UN expert recommendations and ensure that individual cases are prioritised in bilateral and multilateral talks. They should not shy away from demanding my mother's release. She is innocent and must be released.

Ziba Murat

On 27 August 2024, in a rare public statement on the matter, the OHCHR stressed that 'many problematic laws and policies' documented in its 2022 Xinjiang report remain in place, that abuses still need to be investigated, and that fear of reprisals against sources and lack of access to information hinder the OHCHR's monitoring of the situation.

The Office further echoed its urgent calls on China to release all those arbitrarily detained, to clarify the status and whereabouts of those disappeared, and to fully review the legal framework governing counter-terrorism, national security and minority rights.

### **Chinese vice premier urges bolstering Xinjiang's development**

08 October 2024, The State Council

Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng on Monday urged efforts to bolster Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC) to boost Xinjiang's development.

He, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, made the remarks at a meeting celebrating the XPCC's 70th founding anniversary in Urumqi, capital of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

The vice premier led a central delegation to Xinjiang for the occasion.



Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, delivers a speech at a meeting celebrating the 70th founding anniversary of Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC) in Urumqi, capital of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on Oct. 7, 2024. The vice premier led a central delegation to Xinjiang for the occasion. A congratulatory letter sent by the CPC Central Committee, the State Council and the Central Military Commission was read out at the meeting. [Photo/Xinhua]

Entrusted by Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, He extended congratulations and greetings to people from various ethnic groups of the XPCC on behalf of central authorities.

A congratulatory letter sent by the CPC Central Committee, the State Council and the Central Military Commission was read out at the meeting.

The XPCC was founded in 1954 by demobilized military personnel in Xinjiang and has over the past seven decades made pivotal contributions to boosting Xinjiang's development, strengthening ethnic unity and social stability, as well as guarding the borders, according to the letter.

He said the XPCC has blazed a new trail of land reclamation and development under the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics over the past 70 years. Generations of people from the XPCC have made tremendous sacrifices and contributions, and have accumulated many valuable experience, the vice premier said.

He called on the XPCC to fully tap its strengths in maintaining stability and defending border areas to serve Xinjiang's social stability, foster new industrial and sci-tech drivers to promote high-quality development, and leverage the reform and opening-up to construct the region into a "golden channel" between Asia and Europe and a bridgehead for China's westward opening up.

### **For Companies in China, Pulling Out of Xinjiang Poses 'Messy Dilemma'**

04 October 2024, The New York Times

Beijing's investigation of the parent of Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger, which stopped buying goods from Xinjiang, has put global firms in a difficult position.

An investigation by China of an American clothing retailer has escalated concerns among foreign companies about their dependence on Chinese supply chains and the future of their operations in the country.

China's Ministry of Commerce said last week that it was investigating PVH, the corporate parent of the Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger brands, for allegedly taking "discriminatory measures" against products from Xinjiang, a region in China's far west that produces a fifth of the world's cotton.

At issue is whether PVH violated Chinese law by pulling back from purchasing cotton or garments from Xinjiang, where researchers have cited evidence of forced labor, mass arrests and confinement to re-education camps among the region's predominantly Muslim ethnic groups, particularly the Uyghurs.

The investigation has made clear that China will not tolerate companies that shun Xinjiang. That puts some multinationals in a legal vise grip because a growing number of governments, including the United States and the European Union, restrict or ban imports from Xinjiang.

The case is the first time Beijing has wielded a rule it put in place four years ago, known as the Unreliable Entity List, against a company for complying with another country's prohibition on goods from Xinjiang.

"Since this investigation is the first of its kind, companies in all sectors have been forced to reassess what it means for them," said Sean Stein, the chairman of the American Chamber of Commerce in China. "Many are seeing higher risk," he added.

For companies, the PVH investigation adds to the public relations problems that doing business in Xinjiang can bring — inside and outside China.

In 2021, H&M, Nike and other brands faced a damaging backlash from consumers in China after the companies said they would break ties with Xinjiang. This spring, several global automakers became the focus of a congressional investigation for buying parts from a supplier flagged by the U.S. government for participating in forced labor programs tied to the region.

Many international companies are heavily dependent on Chinese suppliers. From cars to solar panels, China is the world's largest manufacturer by far. More than 90 percent of China's cotton is produced in Xinjiang.

"European companies find themselves increasingly caught between a rock and a hard place," the

European Union Chamber of Commerce in China said in a statement. "If they cease operations in, or sourcing from, regions like Xinjiang they may face a severe backlash from both government and consumers in China," the chamber continued. "If they stay, they risk negative consequences from their home and other international markets."

Western companies have already grown warier of China because of geopolitical issues. Larry Fink, the chief executive of BlackRock, one of the world's largest asset management companies, said at a conference on Tuesday that global companies needed to re-evaluate investments in China because it is the biggest economic supporter of Russia, which is waging war on Ukraine.

The PVH investigation could provide another reason for companies to shift away from China, according to advisers for global companies.

"It is a serious and growing concern for many multinational corporations and may aggravate the incentive to decouple," said Lester Ross, the partner in charge of the Beijing office of Wilmer Hale, a law firm.

Companies in joint ventures with Chinese firms in Xinjiang are particularly stuck. Such arrangements are hard to change without official approval. The Chinese government, typically quick to push back against criticism, has made clear it wants foreign companies to stay in Xinjiang, a poor region that it wants to develop.

BASF, the German chemical giant, started trying to sell its stakes in both of its Xinjiang manufacturing joint ventures to its state-owned partner in late 2023. Last week, BASF said the sales had not been completed and were "subject to negotiations and required approvals of the relevant authorities."

Volkswagen, the German automaker, said in February that it was examining "the future direction" of its small joint venture in Xinjiang, where the staff and scale of operations had already shrunk considerably. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded by saying companies should "cherish the opportunity to invest and develop in Xinjiang."

VW has yet to announce any changes.

PVH was given 30 days to respond to the government's claims. If PVH is found to have violated China's laws, penalties could include fines and travel limits on PVH employees, or even a halt to the company's exports from China, the ministry said.

In recent years, human rights groups and corporate responsibility organizations have pushed retailers, in particular, to avoid purchases from Xinjiang.

In July 2020, PVH said that within 12 months, it would stop buying garments, fabric and cotton from Xinjiang. The company responded last week to the Ministry of Commerce announcement by saying, "As



a matter of company policy, PVH maintains strict compliance with all relevant laws and regulations in all countries and regions in which we operate.”

PVH said this week that it had no further comment.

The Ministry of Commerce has not explained the timing of its decision to begin investigating PVH, which came against a backdrop of persistent trade frictions between the United States and China.

In the United States, the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act bans all imports from Xinjiang unless the importer can prove that the goods are not tainted by forced labor. The United States also has a separate ban on any imports that contain even traces of Xinjiang cotton or tomatoes, two crops grown mainly on state-owned farms that researchers have linked to human rights abuses.

Companies in the European Union and Canada must comply with a patchwork of national regulations that ban the import of goods made by forced labor.

China has banned independent investigations of labor conditions in Xinjiang and has cracked down broadly on due diligence firms, making it almost impossible for companies to prove how their goods were produced.

Nury Turkel, a lawyer and senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, a think tank, said repression and forced labor involving minorities were continuing, both within Xinjiang and around China.

China has stopped publishing the number of people sent to re-education camps. Those detainees have not been released but instead transferred to prisons, fields or factories, he said.

Mr. Turkel said the United States needed to work with more countries to ban Xinjiang products, and toughen penalties for companies that violate bans.

The U.S. Commerce Department declined to comment. The White House did not respond to a request for comment.

Senator Ron Wyden of Oregon, the Democratic chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, said the Chinese government was “trying to harass and intimidate” American companies that were complying with U.S. law.

“The United States must not let this bogus investigation stop our country from cracking down on China’s ongoing human rights abuses,” he said.

The Chinese government denies that human rights abuses have taken place. The government also portrays programs to send rural Xinjiang residents to jobs in distant factories as an effort to alleviate poverty, not forced labor.

Steve Vickers, a former senior Hong Kong police officer who runs a corporate security consulting firm there, said companies “are now caught in the middle of what is truly a messy dilemma.”

## September

## Beijing’s Transnational Repression of Dissidents: From Bad to Worse

26 September 2024, Bitter Winter

That the repression exerted by the Beijing’s communist regime on Uyghurs has extended beyond the borders of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), employing a strategy of transnational repression to target the diaspora communities worldwide, is today a known fact.

This involves a variety of tactics aimed at silencing, intimidating, or surveilling abroad individuals who are critical of the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) policies or who advocate for Uyghur rights.

Recently, Paris-based international human rights organization Reporters Without Borders (RSF) shared the testimony of a Uyghur journalist exiled in the United States whose friends who are still in the PRC were detained in retaliation for his work.

The exiled journalist’s story illustrated the transnational repression carried out by the CCP to extend censorship beyond its borders. International news reporter Kasim Abdurehim Kashgar, who left China for the US in 2017 due to the Chinese regime’s intense repression in the XUAR, said Uyghur journalists like him find no escape from the CCP, even in exile. According to the report by RSF, following Kashgar’s emigration, those in his entourage in the PRC were interrogated and, in some cases, imprisoned.

“The Chinese authorities wanted me to stop my investigations and work for the regime’s propaganda. In the months following my refusal, at least twelve people with whom I had worked in a language school were arrested and questioned about me. Some were even sentenced to up to seven years in prison,” the exiled journalist, who investigates crimes committed against Uyghurs for the American public media Voice of America (VOA), explained. The journalist said one of his friends was sentenced to nine years in prison, while four of his former colleagues were sentenced to seven years’ imprisonment on obscure charges, and only one was released, while the fate of the others remains unknown.

Working under a pseudonym for many years, the journalist revealed his identity in the documentary “From Fear to Freedom: A Uyghur’s Journey” broadcast by VOA in June last year. As per the RSF report, that reporter’s mental health suffered as his close circle was targeted by the Chinese authorities. “After learning about their detention, I developed anxiety and depression,” Kashgar said. “I am asking the authorities to release them because they have nothing to do with my work,” he added.

Kashgar remains determined to continue his investigations, despite the pressure. Through

extensive research, he discovered his former colleagues were being detained. "It took me three years to reveal their arrests. I only decided to go public recently, when I had gathered solid evidence from five different and unrelated sources," Kashgar told RSF.

Commenting on the matter, RSF Asia-Pacific Bureau Director Cédric Alviani said the journalist's chilling testimony "illustrates the full extent of the transnational repression carried out by the Chinese regime to prevent exiled journalists from revealing the atrocities it is committing in Xinjiang." He added: "The international community must mobilise to protect journalists making the difficult decision to go into exile, as well as their families who remain in China."

Also, in 2024 the police of the PRC arrested two journalists from the Kazakh minority working for the local public channel Xinjiang Television, as well as several other journalists whose identities have not yet been confirmed, reports RSF. The organization counts at least 79 detained individuals among journalists and press freedom activists, including renown Sakharov prize winner Ilham Tohti.

In fact, the PRC is ranked 172nd out of 180 countries in RSF's 2024 World Press Freedom Index. And according to a report by the Washington-based human rights group Freedom House, the parts of the Chinese communist party-state apparatus involved in transnational repression are as diverse as the targets and tactics of the campaign.

The importance of extending the party's grip on overseas Chinese and ethnic minority exiles originates with the highest echelons of the CCP, Freedom House said. "Besides CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping's own advancement of sweeping anti-corruption campaigns, leaked speeches from other members of the Politburo high up in the security apparatus are explicit about the priority that should be given to the 'overseas struggle' against perceived party enemies," the report added.

VOA recently reported that many exiled Uyghurs in the United States claimed the Chinese regime has ramped up transnational repression against them, using their relatives who still live in China to threaten them into silence abroad. VOA reported that the United States' domestic intelligence and security service Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is aware of such activity targeting Uyghurs and other ethnic minority groups in the US.

"Tactics and patterns morph with advancements in technology," the FBI said in a statement to VOA. These acts, "often identified as transnational repression," represent "severe violations of international norms, US law, and individual rights and freedoms. TNR conducted by any government, against any person including Uyghur Americans, is

unacceptable," the federal police agency was quoted as saying by VOA.

Earlier in May this year, UK-based human rights group Amnesty International reported some Chinese and Hong Kong students studying in Europe and North America claimed they were being photographed and followed at protests in their host cities, while many said their families in China had been targeted and threatened by police in connection with the students' activism overseas.

But this transnational repression, a grave violation of human rights, extending the reach of its authoritarian control beyond its borders, not only affects Uyghurs but also poses broader challenges to global human rights and international diplomacy.

Addressing these issues requires coordinated international action, robust support for Uyghur advocacy, and continued scrutiny of Beijing practices, as all experts on the PRC say. As the situation evolves, the global community's response will play a critical role in shaping the future of Uyghur rights and freedoms.

### **China: Free Uyghur Economist Ilham Tohti From Life Sentence**

23 September 2024, HRW

Sakarov Prize Winner in Solitary Confinement, Denied Family Visits

The Chinese government should quash the conviction and release Ilham Tohti, the prominent Uyghur economist and government critic, on the 10th anniversary of his sentencing, Human Rights Watch said today.

In 2014, the Xinjiang People's High Court convicted Professor Tohti on politically motivated charges of "separatism" and sentenced him to life in prison. His family has not been allowed to visit him since early 2017 and he is believed to have been in solitary confinement since his arrest.

"The life sentence for Ilham Tohti marked the beginning of the Chinese government's severe crackdown on the Uyghur region in 2014," said Maya Wang, associate China director at Human Rights Watch. "Tohti's life imprisonment for his peaceful criticism and torturous solitary confinement reflects the Chinese government's heightened repression and relentless abuses against Uyghurs."

Tohti, 54, was teaching at Central University of Nationalities of China when he established "Uighurs Online," a website aimed "to provide Uyghurs and Hans with a platform for discussion and exchange" in late 2005. The Chinese government shut down the website in 2008 and sentenced the manager, Gheyret Niyaz, now 65, to 15 years in prison in 2010 for "endangering state security."

At least six of Tohti's students, Abduqeyum Ablimit, Perhat Halmurat, Akbar Imin, Mutellip Imin, Shohret Nijat, and Atikem Rozi, are believed to have been sentenced to between three-and-a-half and eight years in prison in 2014, based on a document leaked to Xinjiang Victims Database. It is unclear whether they were released when their sentences ended.

In May 2014, the Chinese government launched the "Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Terrorism" in Xinjiang. Since late 2016, the Chinese authorities have dramatically increased its repression in the region, targeting Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims living there with policies that amount to crimes against humanity.

They include mass and arbitrary detention, unjust prolonged imprisonment, forced labor, family separation, violation of reproductive rights, torture, and the use of transnational repression. In 2022, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a report concluding that these abuses "may constitute ... crimes against humanity."

Tohti was awarded the European Parliament Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in 2019. On the 10th anniversary of Tohti's imprisonment, the European Union issued a statement calling for "the immediate and unconditional release of Tohti and other human rights defenders, lawyers, and intellectuals who are arbitrarily detained in China."

The Chinese government's harsh crackdown on Uyghurs includes the mass detention and imprisonment of intellectuals, the backbone of Uyghur culture and society. They are among more than half-a-million Uyghurs who were sentenced between 2017 and 2021 to prison terms without due process. Among them are the retired physician Gulshan Abbas, sentenced to 20 years in prison, the prominent anthropologist Rahile Dawut, sentenced to life, the writer and literary critic Yalqun Rozi, 15 years, and the literature professor Abduqadir Jalalidin, 13 years.

The authorities continue to detain and imprison Uyghurs on vague charges, though precise information is limited due to the severe government control of information in the region. On September 19, Radio Free Asia reported that Tohti's prison guard, Ghopur Abdurreshit, 51, was sentenced to seven years in prison for disclosing information related to Tohti's health.

"Foreign governments should counter the Chinese government's false claim that there are no abuses in Xinjiang by demanding the release of Ilham Tohti and the hundreds of thousands of other Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims who remain arbitrarily imprisoned," Wang said. "The UN Human Rights office should promptly issue a comprehensive update on the current situation in Xinjiang and present an

action plan to hold the Chinese government accountable."

## **The Uyghur Democratic Reform Movement Needs Unity and Support**

23 September 2024, Bitter Winter

We the undersigned are a group of Uyghur scholars, professors, and intellectuals exiled around the world due to the Chinese government's brutal repression of ethnic culture, religion, human rights, democracy, and freedom.

Seven years into Beijing's atrocities in our homeland—which the United States and 11 other parliaments have declared amount to genocide, and the United Nations has affirmed may constitute crimes against humanity—we wish to stress the increasing urgency for action, and a deep need for unity and support for the Uyghur cause. To this end, we call on all democratic leaders, international organizations, and allies to reaffirm their support for Uyghur organizations, and stand with us to fight for justice and freedom.

This autumn is a pivotal moment for the Uyghur democratic movement in exile. On October 24-27, the World Uyghur Congress (WUC) will hold its eighth General Assembly in Sarajevo, gathering over 150 delegates from dozens of countries to elect its leadership and form a consensus on strategy. This exercise of a free and fair election, undertaken once every three years, demonstrates its commitment to democratic values, and stands in sharp contrast to Beijing's imposition of totalitarian rule in our homeland.

Like many elections worldwide, including those held in over 70 countries this year, our process will face challenges. As autocratic regimes like China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran threaten global democracies, the Uyghur movement must overcome similar obstacles. We aim to strengthen democratic reforms, promote social cohesion, and embrace diversity. While division is a constant threat, our resilience lies in our ability to reform and grow. Since its founding in 2004 by a group of leaders, WUC has evolved into a global force of hundreds of Uyghur activists and supporters. Since 2017, it has implemented reforms, improving structure and leadership roles.

Through WUC's leadership, Uyghur organizations have leveraged scholarly research and witness testimony to focus increased attention on Beijing's crimes, leading to official recognition of the genocide, government bans on forced labor products, and company divestments from tainted supply chains. In addition, the WUC has taken several legal actions in different jurisdictions to hold China accountable. They have reminded countries of their obligations under the Rome Statute to protect

victims of the genocide, and to combat China's transnational repression. They have encouraged nations to grant safe harbor to victims, such as Canada's recent decision to accept 10,000 Uyghur refugees. And they have pressed policymakers to address the atrocities in key lawmaking bodies in the UN, EU, U.S. Congress, and the parliaments of Canada, the UK, and EU countries.

WUC's efforts to expose Beijing's repression have inspired other victim groups, from Tibetans and Falun Gong to Hongkongers and the Taiwanese. By fostering solidarity and inclusivity, WUC has become a model for constructive collaboration among oppressed groups fighting for freedom and democracy. It has mobilized the Uyghur diaspora, strengthened ties with other groups affected by Beijing's repression, and deepened collaboration with Uyghur Academicians and Uyghur researchers, notably during the Uyghur Tribunal, when we, the Uyghur scholars and many university students voluntarily edited and translated more than 10,000 pages of evidentiary documents.

These successes have caught the attention of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which has increasingly devolved into fear, consternation, and paranoia. In the past year alone, it spent significant resources organizing over 400 delegations and sending more than 5,000 handpicked individuals on propaganda tours to the Uyghur region, many of whom were chosen for their willingness to echo China's narrative abroad.

Such successes are made only by great sacrifice. For decades leaders of Uyghur organizations, both at WUC and elsewhere, have endured targeted attacks by the CCP, from Interpol "red notice" arrest warrants to harassment, blackmail, and even death threats, putting immense strain on their lives, livelihoods, and families.

As WUC becomes a more significant threat to the CCP, we have also seen increasing efforts to undermine the organization's credibility by exploiting individual shortcomings or amplifying slander campaigns against Uyghur organizations and their leaders. These developments are deeply concerning, as they threaten to discredit the broader movement and drain vital energy from our community, at a time when we need all the strength, we can muster to expose the CCP and pursue accountability for its crimes.

Like all human beings, Uyghur leaders are not immune to making decisions that may not yield the best outcomes. What matters is to identify core issues, introduce internal and external mechanisms to strengthen the organization's ability and legitimacy. We believe that is precisely what WUC is committed to doing right now and will continue to do under each new generation of leaders.

As we fight against China's deception with limited resources, financial constraints, and the pain of having family members held hostage by the regime, it is essential to maintain a long-term perspective. Over 20 years, the Uyghur diaspora has built the WUC, securing important but fragile successes. Now, more than ever, we must support and protect this vital organization, which continues to be a strong voice for Uyghurs and a lifeline for the community.

As Uyghur scholars devoted to preserving our ethnic culture, we call on all leaders in the international community to support WUC, to welcome its ongoing democratic reforms. It is crucial for the WUC to take further steps internally by implementing structural reforms, creating a transparent and accountable framework in areas such as law, professional ethics, work efficiency, technology dissemination, and public services. This will enable the WUC to more effectively advance democracy and protect Uyghur rights. In unity against China's oppressive policies, and to contribute to the global movement for democracy. In the face of significant threats and challenges, we must continue to advance WUC's democratic reforms, working alongside the new generation of leaders within the organization.

With high hope for the future, we here rededicate ourselves to the cause, and stand ready to cooperate closely, provide support, and face any difficulties that may lie ahead to achieve justice and freedom for the Uyghur people.

First and Last name (City and Country):

Prof. Dr. Alimcan İnayet, İzmir, Türkiye  
Prof. Dr. Erkin EMET, Ankara, Türkiye  
Prof. Dr. Alimzhan Tilivaldi, Almaty, Kazakhstan  
Dr. Muhtar Abdurahman, Tokyo, Japan  
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### **Xi Jinping stresses cultivating more high-caliber officials for Xinjiang**

21 September 2024, CGTN

Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, has stressed cultivating more loyal, upright, responsible and high-caliber officials for Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

Xi, also Chinese president and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks in an instruction upon the 70th anniversary of a training program for ethnic officials in Xinjiang under the Party School of the CPC Central Committee.

Xi pointed out that the training program has played an important role in strengthening the ranks of officials, boosting economic and social development, promoting social stability and long-term security in Xinjiang over the past 70 years.

Emphasizing the need to fully and faithfully implement the Party's policy for the governance of Xinjiang, Xi urged efforts to foster a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation throughout the process of the training program.

It is important to strengthen research on the basic theories and key issues of ethnic affairs and improve the quality and effectiveness of the training program, Xi said.

Xi's instruction was read out by Chen Xi, president of the Party School of the CPC Central Committee and National Academy of Governance, at a symposium held on Saturday to mark the 70th anniversary of the training program.

### **China tried to influence MPs to vote against Uyghur genocide motion, documents show**

18 September 2024, National Post

After the vote the People's Republic of China began efforts to 'build profiles on a number of MPs' who supported the motion

OTTAWA – Chinese government officials tried to influence Canadian MPs to vote against a 2021 motion condemning China's genocide of Uyghurs and even looked to build "profiles" on certain parliamentarians after the vote.

That's according to a summary of intelligence by Canadian security agencies and departments that was tabled at the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference (PIFI) on Wednesday.

The document reveals that People's Republic of China (PRC) officials made "initial" efforts to influence an unspecified number of MPs to vote against the motion recognizing the country's treatment of its Uyghur and other Turkic Muslim minorities as "genocide."

The motion ultimately passed unanimously in the House of Commons. But after the vote, the document states the PRC began efforts to "build profiles on a number of MPs" who supported the motion.

"This research may have informed the PRC's decision to impose economic sanctions on some of those MPs or may have informed other actions," reads the unclassified summary of intelligence produced for the inquiry.

Those were just some of the examples of suspected or confirmed foreign interference efforts by China against Canadian MPs brought up during Michael Chong's testimony on Wednesday.



The Conservative MP also revealed that in October last year he was approached by an individual in the street offering him “political support, assistance with elections, and political advice here on (Parliament Hill),” he told the inquiry.

The twist: he realized shortly after that the individual was Haiyan Zhang, a former senior analyst at the Privy Council Office who was fired for being a suspected Chinese spy in 2003.

But when Chong raised the encounter with government officials and asked if Zhang was still a potential “national security threat,” he was told they had destroyed all files regarding Zhang.

“It’s another example of the government failing to provide information to members of Parliament to help them protect themselves against potential threats to Parliament and to our democracy,” Chong told reporters after his testimony.

Chong has been a key figure in the government’s controversial handling of foreign interference since 2023, when *The Globe and Mail* revealed that Canadian intelligence agencies knew for at least two years that the PRC had been collecting information about Chong as well as his family members in Hong Kong.

On Wednesday, the inquiry showed Chong a CSIS issues management brief dated May 31, 2021, that revealed that he and then Conservative MP Kenny Chiu were the target of foreign interference attempts by PRC officials.

A summary of redacted information in the 2021 brief shows CSIS already knew that China was interested in Chong’s relatives in the PRC, though the MP only found out in media reports in the spring of 2023.

It was only in the hours following the publication of the story that Chong was offered a briefing by the prime minister, his staff and the CSIS director on PRC activities targeting him and his family.

Chong was outraged that he wasn’t informed by the government for years and described the Liberals’ handling of foreign interference to date as “gross negligence.”

“I think they should be providing this information because it will allow those parliamentarians to take actions, to protect themselves, to be situationally aware. I think that’s so important,” he said Wednesday.

He was also shocked to find out that the information in 2021 was provided by the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service to then Public Safety Minister Bill Blair, but that Blair never read it for undisclosed reasons.

“It’s inconsistent with the practice of this government, or alternatively, it’s alarming incompetence not to be reading and actioning intelligence that is being sent up the chain,” Chong said.

Chong said the government needs to release “much more” information about foreign interference to the public than it has in recent years.

He pointed to the fact that the government still hasn’t significantly changed how foreign interference threats are shared with Canadians despite years of media revelations.

“We’re buried in a mountain of process,” he said. “This is not how our institution should function. This is not how Parliament should work. This is not how the government of Canada should treat threats to our national security. We’re buried under process. This should have been dealt with a long time ago.”

### **Uyghur-American politician calls out lack of global attention towards Xinjiang human rights crisis**

17 September 2024, Indian Narrative

The Foreign Affairs and Security Minister of the East Turkistan Government-in-Exile, Salih Hudayar, called out the lack of global attention on the human rights crisis in China’s Xinjiang province, and said the perception of the province receiving substantial media and US policy attention is misleading.

In a post on social media platform X, Hudayar said, “The claim that Xinjiang is a focus on intense media and U.S. policy attention is far from the truth. Let’s be clear: Occupied East Turkistan—our country’s true name—gets little to no media and policy attention.”

Emphasising a disparity in international support between Tibet and East Turkistan, Salih stated, that while Tibet’s government in exile receives extensive financial, training, and even diplomatic support, the Uyghurs don’t get this recognition.

“Unlike Tibet, which is rightly recognized as an occupied nation, not as “Xizang,” East Turkistan remains buried under China’s propaganda. Tibet has had U.S. support with a Special Coordinator at US State Department since 1997, backing their right to self-determination,” the minister stated

“Tibet’s government in exile and movement receives extensive financial, training, and even diplomatic support. Meanwhile, our people face Uyghur genocide with no similar recognition of our nation as occupied nor any dedicated support. The world must stop turning a blind eye to China’s brutal campaign of colonization, genocide, and occupation in East Turkistan,” he added.

Salih’s post came as a reaction to a news article stating that Xinjiang has garnered significant media coverage and become a key focus of US policy in recent years.

Salih Hudayar is a Uyghur-American politician dedicated to the cause of East Turkistan’s independence. He established the East Turkistan National Awakening Movement and has been at the

forefront of efforts advocating for the restoration of East Turkistan's independence.

East Turkistan is a region in Central Asia that is the traditional name used by many Uyghurs and their supporters to refer to what is officially known as Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

The Xinjiang and Uyghur issue centers on the complex and contentious situation in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China.

The Uyghurs are a predominantly Muslim ethnic minority group with distinct cultural, linguistic, and religious practices. In recent years, there have been widespread reports and allegations of human rights abuses by the Chinese government against Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang.

These allegations include mass detentions in so-called "reeducation camps," extensive surveillance, forced labor, and the suppression of religious and cultural practices. The Chinese government describes these measures as part of a counter-terrorism and de-radicalization effort aimed at combating extremism.

However, international human rights organizations and some governments have criticized these actions as severe human rights violations and cultural repression.

### **China's Xinjiang accelerates development of 'Air Silk Road'**

12 September 2024, Emirates News Agency

Urumqi Diwopu International Airport in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region added or resumed four international passenger and cargo routes in the first week of September, according to relevant authorities.

According to Xinhua News Agency, these air routes are a direct flight from Urumqi to Moscow; a direct tourist charter flight from Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia to Urumqi; a direct cargo flight from Urumqi to Baku in Azerbaijan and a direct flight from Urumqi to Armenia.

Since the beginning of this year, Xinjiang, which is located in the core area of the Belt and Road, has added or resumed eight international passenger routes and nine international cargo air routes, promoting transport connectivity and accelerating the expansion of the "Air Silk Road".

So far, Urumqi Diwopu International Airport has opened international passenger routes from Urumqi to 20 regions in 16 countries including Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan.

There are 13 international cargo transport routes from this airport covering 12 countries in Central Asia, South Asia, West Asia and Europe. The main imported commodities include camel milk, clothing, shoes and boots, cherries and the main export

commodities are fresh-cut flowers, medicines, and clothing, among other items.

### **China ramping up transnational repression, Uyghur exiles in US say**

11 September 2024, VOA, Kasim Kashgar

Many exiled Uyghurs in the U.S. say China has ramped up transnational repression against them, using their relatives who still live in China to threaten them into silence abroad.

"I've been targeted online with fake accounts. ... Chinese trolls even registered for a webinar using fake emails and posted my home address, saying, 'We are watching you,' " Elfidar Iltebir, president of the Uyghur American Association, a rights group, told VOA last week in a phone interview.

The harassment prompted her to increase her home security. Iltebir said the repression has intensified, especially over the past two years.

"People are afraid to come out and advocate, fearing for their families' safety," she said.

From 2017 to 2020, she said, nearly every Uyghur American had at least one family member detained in Xinjiang, spurring many to activism. But as China increased pressure on these exiles, many of them are thinking twice about their activist work.

She described a climate of fear within her organization. "Some of our supporters now ask if they can help behind the scenes, afraid to be seen publicly," Iltebir said. Chinese agents, sending messages through Uyghur relatives in Xinjiang, "tell us not to attend political or cultural events, not to join any organizations, to stay away from activists.

"They even dictate who to invite to weddings. I've seen community members receive these orders."

VOA reached out to the Chinese Embassy in Washington for comment on the allegations of transnational repression targeting Uyghur Americans. The embassy did not respond to multiple inquiries.

However, the FBI says it is aware of such activity targeting Uyghurs and other ethnic minority groups in the United States.

"Tactics and patterns morph with advancements in technology," the federal police agency said in a statement to VOA. "These acts – often identified as transnational repression (TNR) – represent severe violations of international norms, U.S. law, and individual rights and freedoms. TNR conducted by any government, against any person including Uyghur Americans, is unacceptable."

The agency says it has worked to raise awareness of the problem among state, local and university law enforcement partners and has conducted training to help vulnerable communities recognize repressive tactics and examples of transnational harassment. It

also provides resources in 60 languages, including in Uyghur.

Iltebir detailed her organization's work with the FBI to support the estimated 10,000 to 15,000 Uyghur Americans in combating China's transnational repression.

China, Uyghurs and human rights

Uyghurs are a largely Muslim minority group. Approximately 12 million Uyghurs live in China's northwestern Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, where accusations of mass detention, forced labor and other human rights abuses have drawn global attention and condemnation.

In recent years, the U.S., U.N., European Parliament and rights organizations have condemned China or its policies in the Uyghur region. Some have accused Beijing of committing genocide and crimes against humanity.

Allegations include the arbitrary mass imprisonment of Uyghurs and other Muslim and Turkic groups, forced labor, forced sterilization, family separation and other abuses.

China denies any wrongdoing in the region, labeling the targeted Uyghurs as extremists, terrorists and separatists and justifying its policies as necessary measures to combat terrorism and separatism.

Fear and anonymity

Fear often keeps exiles from speaking out or enabling the media to confirm accusations.

One such U.S.-based Uyghur rights activist is a man who came to the U.S. for his education. He spoke to VOA on the condition of anonymity, fearing retaliation and increased harassment of his family members in Xinjiang.

In 2017, he said, his sibling and extended family were arbitrarily detained in Xinjiang.

"The only thing I was obsessed with was my academic work," he said, but the detentions forced him into activism.

After joining a Washington-based rights group advocating for human rights in China, including the Uyghurs, in 2019, he began receiving intimidating social media messages from Chinese authorities.

"I started receiving all sorts of intimidation from [Chinese] police through WhatsApp and other social media platforms," he recalled. "They even invited me to a third country to meet them there. I never agreed."

Despite the evolving nature of these tactics, he said, the harassment has never ceased.

"I have submitted details of these incidents to the FBI at least 15 times in the past and provided them with all the details of the communications I've received over the past few years," he said.

But ultimately, he said, the FBI can do nothing because the harassers are based outside the U.S.

However, the agency has taken legal action against China's transnational repression schemes in the U.S.

In a case last month, Wang Shujun of New York was found guilty of acting as a covert Chinese agent. The FBI said he supported transnational repression by posing as a member of a pro-democracy group while feeding Beijing information about its members.

Political response

"Chinese Communist agents should not be able to threaten and intimidate American residents without consequences, anywhere – especially and including here in the United States," said Republican U.S. Representative Chris Smith, chairman of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, in an email to VOA on Tuesday.

Smith emphasized that while the FBI has made efforts, "more can and must be done to stop transnational repression and abuse."

According to the FBI, China has long targeted diaspora communities, particularly what China describes as the "five poisons" - groups seen as threats to Chinese Communist Party rule, including Uyghurs, Tibetans, democracy activists, Falun Gong practitioners and Taiwanese independence advocates.

"The PRC has used proxies, including private investigators, to harass dissidents in the U.S.," the FBI told VOA.

Despite the challenges, Iltebir remains determined to speak out.

"We cannot be silenced. If we don't speak out, who will? Seeing non-Uyghurs stand with us inspires me to continue this fight for freedom, justice and human rights," she said.

### China bishop leads patriotic education tour in Xinjiang

09 September 2024, UCA

Bishop Zhan Silu went to Uyghurs to preach doctrines promoted by the ruling communist party, alleged Bitter Winter

An Italy-based human rights and religious liberty magazine has accused a Catholic bishop in China of organizing a "patriotic education" tour for priests to the controversial Xinjiang region.

The study tour led by Bishop Zhan Silu of Xiapu from Aug. 18-26 to Xinjiang can be seen as an example of how religious personnel of the five state-sanctioned religions are deployed as propaganda agents, Bitter Winter said.

The magazine alleged that the tour was part of the study and practice of "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for the New Era," an ideological doctrine promoted by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

During the tour, Silu had emphasized that “Xinjiang is an inseparable part of China’s territory,” calling the ethnic groups there “blood-related family members of the Chinese nation,” according to the Bitter Winter.

“Religious personnel should be politically dependable and study and preach Xi Jinping’s thought diligently,” Silu was quoted as saying by the Bitter Winter.

Earlier in January, Chinese authorities had ratified a law on “patriotic education,” aimed at promoting CCP’s massive domestic propaganda effort.

The state-approved religious groups had issued detailed guidelines on how the clergy are expected to cooperate in this propaganda system.

Silu “has not changed his political proclivities,” the Bitter Winter alleged pointing out that he was excommunicated by the Vatican for 18 years because of his appointment by Chinese government authorities.

The matter of bishop appointments in China has been a bone of contention between Beijing and the Vatican.

While Beijing insists that it must approve bishop appointments as a matter of its national sovereignty, the Vatican argues that these appointments fall under the pope’s authority to choose the successors of Christ’s apostles.

Silu’s appointment was approved by the Vatican and his excommunication was lifted as part of a China-Vatican deal in 2018, the Bitter Winter said.

The magazine pointed out that Silu and his group may not have succeeded in persuading and converting anyone to the “CCP gospel.”

Xinjiang has gained international attention for the alleged mass incarceration of ethnic groups including Muslim-majority Uyghurs.

It is estimated that some 1.8 million Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims have been detained under flimsy pretexts during mass detentions that began more than seven years ago in 2017.

### **Travel warning issued over CCP Xinjiang efforts**

06 September 2024, Taipei Times, Chen Yun, Chung Li-hua and Jonathan Chin

The Executive Yuan yesterday warned against traveling to or doing business in China after reports that Beijing is recruiting Taiwanese to help conceal the use of forced Uighur labor.

The government is aware that Taiwan-based influencers and businesses are being asked to make pro-Beijing content and offered incentives to invest in the region, Executive Yuan acting spokeswoman Julia Hsieh (謝子涵) told a news conference.

Taiwanese are urged to be aware of the potential personal and reputational harm by visiting or operating businesses in China, Hsieh said, adding that agencies are fully apprised of the situation.

A national security official said that former Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) members who served under former president Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) are to lead a delegation of Taiwanese investors to Xinjiang on Sept. 19.

China since last month has been arranging for business groups to tour the region in a move to evade international outcry over China’s use of forced Uighur labor and support for the Russian war effort in Ukraine, the official said on condition of anonymity.

Beijing officials “encourage Taiwanese entrepreneurs to establish a presence or facilitate the flow of logistics through Central Asia,” the source said. “The purpose is to conceal the point of origin labels on their products and draw investments for cotton.”

Chinese Communist Party regional head Ma Xinrui (馬興瑞) is overseeing these activities, the official said.

Taiwanese investments might help Beijing’s efforts to stabilize its flagging economy, especially the real-estate sector and capital flows, they said.

State-affiliated studios produce content on daily life, consumer goods and tourism pushing narratives that deny instability in Hong Kong and mass incarceration of Uighurs in Xinjiang, they said.

These studios are followed by up to 130 million people on social media and the introduction of artificial intelligence allowed some to generate the same content in 40 to 50 languages, the official said.

On Tuesday, Oakland University associate professor of journalism and public relations Su Chiao-ning (蘇巧寧) told a conference in Washington that Taiwanese are being co-opted in Beijing’s cognitive warfare activities.

Beijing is accused of committing human rights abuses including torture, compulsory institutionalization and sexual violence against incarcerated Uighurs, Su said, citing a UN report on China’s alleged crimes of humanity dated 2022.

Travel content promoting the beautiful rustic landscape and simple honest folk of Xinjiang is flooding Taiwanese social media amid a violent Chinese campaign to wipe out the Uighur language and culture, she said.

The spread of propaganda created by the communist regime’s apologists is a dangerous trend for Taiwan, Su said, adding that the government must do more to promote public awareness about Beijing’s influence on media.

The MAC yesterday said there has been a significant rise in content produced by influencers designed to

promote Xinjiang as an ideal destination for travel and investment.

"We are still trying to understand the real motives behind this so-called 'Xinjiang fever,'" MAC Deputy Minister Liang Wen-chieh (梁文傑) told a news conference.

Some of the promotional content about Xinjiang is attempting to whitewash Beijing's human rights record in the region, Liang said.

"Due to human rights issues, clothes made from Xinjiang-grown cotton is now boycotted by many countries in the international community. Those seeking business opportunities there should be aware of the situation," he said.

If Internet celebrities received funding from the Chinese government to produce videos or other content, they could be contravening the Anti-Infiltration Act (反滲透法) for receiving instructions, sponsorships or petitions from hostile foreign forces to disrupt social order, disseminate false information and interfere in elections in Taiwan, he added.

## August

### China deflects after UN renews calls to investigate Xinjiang abuses

30 August 2024, VOA, William Echols

On August 27, United Nations human rights chief Volker Turk renewed calls for Beijing to strengthen

protections of minorities in China's northwestern Xinjiang region and to fully investigate "allegations of human rights violations, including torture."

The appeal comes nearly two years after the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) released a report, which found Beijing's treatment of Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in China "may constitute international crimes," particularly "crimes against humanity."

In response, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said China was ready to have a "constructive exchange" with the OHCHR, but warned it to "refrain from being used by political forces aiming at containing and vilifying China."

Lin then repeated a well-worn Chinese propaganda talking point that people in Xinjiang were enjoying historic levels of happiness and prosperity.

"People of all ethnic groups in China are equal and their legitimate rights and interests are fully protected," Lin said. "Xinjiang today enjoys social stability and economic growth and the people there live a happy life."

That is false.

While China has invested billions of dollars to develop resource-rich Xinjiang and turn it into a driver of economic growth, those efforts have been coupled with grave human rights abuses.

A wide body of evidence suggests Chinese authorities have subjected Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang to mass internment, forced sterilization, torture, sexual violence, forced labor, religious repression and other forms of cultural erasure.

At the heart of this repressive system are Beijing's internment camps, where the government has detained an estimated 1.8 million people in Xinjiang. China portrays those detention facilities as vocational training centers aimed at eliminating poverty and extremism.

But U.S. lawmakers have shared ample documentation that Chinese authorities use the camps to subject detainees to "forced labor, torture, political indoctrination, and other severe human rights abuses."

China claimed it has since closed those facilities after the individuals who passed through them succeeded in finding better work.

In April 2021, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) identified 385 detention sites through a years-long process using satellite imagery, construction contracts, government documents and eye-witness testimony.

ASPI said China built or expanded those 385 facilities between 2017 and 2021.

There is evidence authorities have shuttered some of those facilities, although Beijing's strict control of

media and the lack of government transparency complicates verification efforts.

To verify the ASPI's claims, an Agence France-Presse (AFP) team traveled to 26 of the 385 documented sites.

In their report, published in September 2023, AFP said

10 of the 26 sites "appeared operational," but authorities did not grant them access, thwarting attempts to "identify anyone who was indisputably incarcerated."

International news crews attempting to report on the ground in Xinjiang have repeatedly faced roadblocks. Further complicating verification efforts, China regularly targets the family members of Uyghur activists who speak out against rights abuses. In August, Tahir Imin, a U.S.-based Uyghur activist, told VOA that authorities had prosecuted six of his former business associates, and 28 of his family members, because of their "association" with him.

In June, a U.N. human rights expert said that China had detained Gulshan Abbas, a Uyghur doctor in



Xinjiang, six days after her sister criticized the persecution of Uyghurs at an event in Washington D.C.

The U.N. expert said the Chinese government sentenced Abbas to 20 years on unfounded terrorism-related charges to retaliate for her sister's activism.

Six Uyghur reporters from Radio Free Asia, a VOA sister organization, stated dozens of their family members had been detained and sent to camps "for ill-defined reasons."

"Beijing's brazen refusal to meaningfully address well-documented crimes in Xinjiang is no surprise, but shows the need for a robust follow-up by the UN human rights chief and UN member states," said Maya Wang, associate China director at Human Rights Watch.

### **China willing to engage with UN rights body on Xinjiang**

28 August 2024, VOA, Kasim Kashgar

China says it is ready to engage with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, or OHCHR, after the U.N. body called this week for a comprehensive review of Beijing's laws and policies in Xinjiang.

Speaking at a regular briefing on Wednesday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said, "China is willing to engage in constructive exchanges and cooperation" with OHCHR but added that a review should be conducted "on the basis of mutual respect." China and its policies in Xinjiang have been a persistent point of tension in recent years for the international community and Beijing. The Chinese government has been blamed for incarcerating more than 1 million Uyghurs in Xinjiang, with some accusing it of genocide, a charge that Beijing strongly denies.

In a 2022 report, Michelle Bachelet, then-U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, detailed alleged abuses in Xinjiang. The report cited abuses such as mass arbitrary detentions and forced labor and concluded that these practices might amount to crimes against humanity. The report also urged the Chinese government to address these violations and implement meaningful reforms.

On Tuesday, just days ahead of the anniversary, OHCHR released an update to the report and renewed its call for a thorough review of China's laws, especially those impacting ethnic and religious minorities in Xinjiang.

Ravina Shamdasani, spokesperson for U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk, urged Beijing to conduct a "full review, from the human rights perspective, of the legal framework governing

national security and counterterrorism," and called for enhanced protections against discrimination for minorities, including in Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong. "We understand that many problematic laws and policies remain in place in Xinjiang," Shamdasani said. China says the measures are necessary to combat extremism, terrorism and separatism.

While Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said China was willing to engage, he also warned against the "politicization of human rights and divisive confrontational actions."

The U.N. has been actively raising individual cases of concern with the Chinese government, urging the release of arbitrarily detained individuals and seeking clarity on the status of those whose families are inquiring about them.

Shamdasani emphasized the high commissioner's commitment to continuing engagement with China and advocacy on behalf of victims. "Our goal remains to improve human rights protections for all individuals on the ground," she added.

**Calls for accountability**

Rayhan Asat, a human rights lawyer and nonresident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, described the high commissioner's update as a crucial acknowledgment of China's failure to implement U.N. recommendations or halt its repressive policies against Uyghurs.

"Despite the high commissioner's years of engagement, progress remains absent as the laws underpinning mass imprisonment remain in place," Asat told VOA. "The need for a renewed approach, combining public and private pressure, is evident." Asat is a co-author of a study released earlier this month by the Genocide Studies Program at Yale University. The report says China's mass imprisonment of Uyghurs constitutes both a crime against humanity and a crime of genocide.

The Yale report estimates that if this mass incarceration in Xinjiang continues, Uyghurs could suffer a cumulative 4.4 million years of incarceration. Asat's brother, Ekpar Asat, who has been arbitrarily imprisoned by Chinese authorities in Xinjiang, is among the many cases studied in the report. Ekpar, a Uyghur media tech entrepreneur, was detained in 2016 after returning to China from a U.S. State Department exchange program. He was later sentenced to 15 years in prison on charges of "inciting ethnic discrimination and ethnic hatred."

In a statement on Tuesday, Human Rights Watch urged the U.N. and its member states to intensify their efforts to pressure the Chinese government to end its abuses in Xinjiang.

"Beijing's brazen refusal to meaningfully address well-documented crimes in Xinjiang is no surprise but

shows the need for a robust follow-up by the U.N. human rights chief and U.N. member states," Maya Wang, associate China director at Human Rights Watch, said in the statement.

"Contrary to the Chinese government's claims, its punitive campaign against millions of Uyghurs in Xinjiang continues to inflict great pain," she said.

Raphäel Viana David, China program manager at the International Service for Human Rights, welcomed the high commissioner's commitment to working with civil society and advocating for the implementation of all

U.N. recommendations to China.

"Beijing does not get to cherry-pick: U.N. human rights findings are indivisible and, altogether, chart the only genuine path forward for China to achieve meaningful human rights change," he said in a statement on the ISHR website.

David added that any deviation from adhering to U.N. recommendations is deceitful and demonstrates a lack of commitment to being a responsible global actor. "We believe that the OHCHR needs to fulfill its mandate in a just and objective manner, respect countries' sovereignty,

respect facts, conduct constructive dialogue and cooperation with countries," Lin said.

He also highlighted China's historical achievements in human rights in Xinjiang.

"Xinjiang today enjoys social stability and economic growth, and the people there live a happy life," he said. "It is at its best in history, where people of all ethnic groups are working together for a better life."

Persistent concerns

The U.N. Human Rights Office's latest call for reform follows a June visit by a U.N. human rights team to China, where they engaged with authorities on counterterrorism policies and the criminal justice system. Despite those discussions, concerns persist. "Allegations of human rights violations, including torture, need to be fully investigated," the update stated. The OHCHR still faces challenges related to limited access to information in Xinjiang and risks of reprisals against those engaging with the United Nations.

"We continue to follow the current human rights situation closely, despite these challenges," Shamdasani noted.

### **China's Xinjiang officials want to build 'strategic barrier for geopolitical security'**

27 August 2024, SCMP

Authorities in Xinjiang have vowed to make stability and security their top priority and to turn the far western region into a "strategic barrier" against geopolitical risks, according to official media.

The Xinjiang committee of China's ruling Communist Party made the pledge in a statement at the end of its annual plenary session – attended by the top party and government officials from the region – on Saturday.

"[We should] make social stability the top priority and improve the system and mechanisms for maintaining national security," according to the statement published in Xinjiang Daily, the mouthpiece of the regional party committee.

It said Xinjiang should also improve "the legal and work routines for counterterrorism and maintaining stability", along with public security and stability on the border.

The Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region shares borders with countries including Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

China has been accused of human rights abuses in Xinjiang, including that at least 1 million Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities were held in mass internment camps. Beijing has denied the claims, saying the centres were for "vocational training" and that its policies in the region are aimed at cracking down on terrorism and extremism.

In Saturday's statement, the committee also said it would better support the modernisation of the military, improve mechanisms to fight foreign interference in Xinjiang, and build the region into "a strategic barrier to maintain national geopolitical security" for China. It called for the sense of identity and community to be strengthened among all ethnic groups, with more efforts needed to publicise, educate, research and interpret the idea of the Chinese nation's "one common community".

The party's regional committee also said the legal framework for governing religious affairs should be improved.

On developing the region, it said oil and gas exploration and development should be accelerated, with more efforts towards clean and efficient use of coal, developing green energy, and exploration of strategic mineral resources.

The committee also urged the regional government to speed up development of a free-trade pilot zone and projects linking to Central Asia.

In addition, the statement echoed a pledge made last week by Yin Bai, who heads the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission that oversees security and law enforcement in China, to prevent and resist "colour revolutions".

Yin told state news agency Xinhua that "safeguarding political security" and strengthening national security would be the commission's top priority. He also stressed the need for efforts to counter terrorism, maintain stability and "fight against separatism and infiltration".

With China locked in an escalating rivalry with the United States, Beijing is increasingly focused on national security.

An entire section of a policy document released in July after the third plenum – a key party meeting – is devoted to “modernising” national security, which the leadership sees as the “pivotal foundation” for China’s development.

The regional committee on Saturday also approved a decision to expel former Xinjiang deputy security chief Ma Guoqiang from the party, according to Xinjiang Daily. Ma, 51, was placed under investigation for corruption in August last year. He has mostly worked in Xinjiang’s Aksu prefecture, where a dozen officials have been investigated for corruption in recent years. In March, Dou Wangui – Ma’s former boss in Aksu and vice-chairman of Xinjiang’s political advisory body – was also placed under investigation for graft.

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### **China: two years after Xinjiang findings, UN Rights Chief reports ‘limited access to information’, ‘reprisals’ against activists**

27 August 2024, ISHR

A spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, issued today a rare public statement on his Office’s work on China, marking two years since the release of its groundbreaking report on the grave human rights situation in the Uyghur region (Xinjiang).

In a public statement on 27 August, the Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR) stressed its engagement and recommendations in areas where it has been pushing for responses and results from the Chinese government, including on Xinjiang, Tibet,

Hong Kong, and individual cases ‘of particular concern’ in mainland China.

This includes a renewed call on Beijing to ‘take prompt steps to release all individuals arbitrarily deprived of their liberty, and to clarify the status and whereabouts of those whose families have been seeking information about them.’

‘I welcome Volker Türk’s strong endorsement of the Xinjiang report. One day is a day too long for victims like my mother. This must be an urgent wake-up call for all countries to take concrete and swift action to hold China accountable for its long list of documented human rights violations, starting at the UN Human Rights Council.’

Ziba Murat, activist and daughter of arbitrarily detained Uyghur doctor Gulshan Abbas

Two years ago, on 31 August 2022, former High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet released a long-awaited report determining the possible commission of ‘crimes against humanity’ against Uyghurs and other Muslim peoples by Chinese authorities. While the UN report already concluded that conditions were in place for ‘serious violations to continue and recur,’ mounting documentation by UN expert bodies and civil society have confirmed the serious deterioration of the human rights situation in the Uyghur region and across China since 2022.

In today’s statement, the OHCHR underscored that ‘many problematic laws and policies remain in place’ and that allegations of human rights violations, including torture, must be ‘fully investigated’. The Office also called for a ‘full review’ with a human rights emphasis of the legal frameworks governing Chinese policies related to national security, counter-terrorism and minority rights. All of these have remained in place despite extensive concerns, including in the 2022 report, that authorities have weaponised such tools to target Muslim individuals, but also Tibetans, human rights defenders and journalists, and to clamp down on civil society space across mainland China and Hong Kong.

The Chinese government also maintains widespread and systematic restrictions, including through laws, policies and practices described in the UN report, that severely impact the intergenerational transmission of culture, language and religion of Uyghurs and Tibetans.

Beijing has perpetually attempted to present the Xinjiang report to other countries as an isolated initiative. Yet, since its release, further findings by widely-respected UN expert bodies have confirmed and expanded on its findings. Two impartial UN expert committees have called for the report’s full implementation: the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in their unprecedented November 2022 Urgent Action Decision on Xinjiang,

and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) in their May 2023 review of China. In December 2022, at least 15 UN experts also recalled numerous report findings in a strongly-worded letter to the government, laying out seven benchmarks for immediate action, yet expectedly rejected by Beijing.

'We welcome the High Commissioner's commitment to work with civil society and advocate for the implementation of all UN recommendations to China. Beijing does not get to cherry pick: UN human rights findings are indivisible and, altogether, chart the only genuine path forward for China to achieve meaningful human rights change. Any step away from it is deceitful and a proof of lack of willingness to be a responsible global actor.'

Raphäel Viana David, ISHR China Programme Manager Crucially, the OHCHR stated it continues to 'follow closely the situation,' but reported 'difficulties posed by limited access to information and the fear of reprisals against individuals who engage with the United Nations.' The High Commissioner's Office also committed to advocating on behalf of victims and engaging with civil society 'to seek tangible progress in the protection of human rights for all in China.'

'After two years, High Commissioner Türk's update that the Office is committed to tangible change in China is heartening. Yet, China has not implemented any OHCHR recommendations, and independent investigations are still limited or blocked. Victims like my brother Ekpar Asat, who endured three years in solitary confinement, and families facing China's psychological warfare can't wait any longer. Türk's work and engagement with China must fully acknowledge these realities.'

Rayhan Asat, Uyghur human rights lawyer

Further evidence of the absence of good faith from Beijing in its engagement with the UN include an increased rejection rate of recommendations during its last UN human rights peer-review in January 2024 – including all related to the Xinjiang report and UN Treaty Bodies – and its unwillingness to provide unrestricted access to the whole territory for UN Special Rapporteurs listed in the Xinjiang report.

China also remains among the top perpetrators of reprisals against those cooperating, or seeking to cooperate with the UN, and has increased transnational repressive tactics to try silencing activists and victims abroad. In June 2024, two UN experts condemned the continued enforced disappearance of Uyghur doctor Gulshan Abbas, recalling the Xinjiang report's findings of a pattern of reprisals 'against family members of Uyghurs in exile who had engaged in advocacy.'

'Beijing has done its best to discredit the report, even touring foreign officials through Xinjiang, avoiding

substantial discussion about the UN's findings,' added Raphäel Viana David. 'The High Commissioner's message places the Xinjiang report at heart of his engagement with Beijing. The onus is now on China to take meaningful steps forward and on the Human Rights Council to closely monitor until it does so,' Viana concluded.

In June 2020, June 2022 and September 2022, over 40 UN experts jointly rang the alarm at China's human rights crisis, urging the Human Rights Council to establish a monitoring and reporting mechanism on the country's rights situation.

Last June, ISHR and three rights groups jointly released translations of the Xinjiang report in the five remaining UN official languages.

ISHR urges:

The Chinese government to adopt a roadmap with a clear timeline for the implementation of recommendations from the OHCHR Xinjiang report and other UN human rights mechanisms, and for its meaningful reengagement with UN bodies, including by allowing unrestricted access to the whole territory for UN independent experts for adequate investigation and by putting an immediate end to all acts of reprisals as reported by the UN;

ISHR further calls on:

The Human Rights Council to establish a monitoring and reporting mechanism on the human rights situation in China, with a view to uphold the integrity of its mandate and put an end to China's exceptionalism.

The High Commissioner to continue monitoring the human rights situation in China, to publicly report about it, including on the implementation of the Xinjiang report and any restrictions in accessing information, and to publicly advocate on individual cases.

### **China: Update on the work of UN Human Rights Office**

27 August 2024, OHCH

Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Ravina Shamdasani.

In response to questions in relation to our work on China, particularly as we approach two years since the publication of our Office's assessment on human rights in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region on 31 August 2022, here is an update.

The High Commissioner and the Office have had detailed exchanges with the Government of China on a range of critical issues, such as counter-terrorism laws and policies, criminal justice, other policies of concern that impact on the human rights of ethnic and religious minorities, including in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and the Tibet

Autonomous Region, equality and non-discrimination, as well as national security and human rights concerns in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

Notably, in June this year, a UN Human Rights team visited China and engaged in dialogue with the authorities, specifically on counter-terrorism policies and the criminal justice system. In particular, on Xinjiang, we understand that many problematic laws and policies remain in place, and we have called again on the authorities to undertake a full review, from the human rights perspective, of the legal framework governing national security and counter-terrorism and to strengthen the protection of minorities against discrimination. Allegations of human rights violations, including torture, need to be fully investigated.

We hope to continue our active engagement with the Government, as well as with civil society actors, to seek tangible progress in the protection of human rights for all in China.

We are also continuing to follow closely the current human rights situation in China, despite the difficulties posed by limited access to information and the fear of reprisals against individuals who engage with the United Nations.

We have continued to raise with the Government individual cases of particular concern, calling on the authorities to take prompt steps to release all individuals arbitrarily deprived of their liberty, and to clarify the status and whereabouts of those whose families have been seeking information about them.

We are continuing to advocate for implementation of these and other recommendations made by us, as well as those made by other human rights mechanisms and during the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review process.

The High Commissioner is committed to sustained engagement with the Government of China and to advocating on behalf of victims – always guided by the goal of helping improve human rights protections for the people on the ground.

### **China's Xinjiang region emerges as a Powerhouse of international trade**

26 August 2024, Pakistan Today

BEIJING: Having overcome multiple challenges, China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region is now presenting a scene of diversified development, with new high-quality productivity, micro- and macro-economy, art, culture, faith and social values meeting the needs of all social classes.

"Big shoutout for local and central governments of China for channelizing a slew of resources to make Xinjiang a powerhouse of international trade, logistic & economic corridor and resounding hub of all

ethnic groups," according to Pakistan's 9-member media delegation that toured the Xinjiang last week, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday.

The delegation visited Xinjiang counter-terrorism and counter-extremism exhibition, Xinjiang Islamic Institute, Xinjiang Software Park, Tianshan Cloud Computing, Xinjiang Art Theatre "Mukam", Xinjiang International Grand Bazar, China-Kazakhstan International Cooperation Center, Khorgos, Jinyi international trade group, Ili general' mansion, Shaanxi mosque, Kazanqi Ethnic culture street, Chabuchar Daily, Uzonbrak resettlement village of Chabuchar and Ili Yimuxin Dairy company, The members of the delegation comprehended phases of the ongoing deeper transformation of Xinjiang in all spheres of life.

They observed that Xinjiang's economic turnaround is no less than a miracle. It reflects the unflinching resolve of the Chinese leadership to make things happen, one of the delegates expressed.

They applauded Xinjiang Software Park dubbed as a bridge connecting China and abroad for cultural and economy.

Xinjiang inheriting the glory of the past one thousand years, the ancient Silk Road is awakening around the corner of a new era, setting an unprecedented starting point of prosperity for Xinjiang.

With the further implementation of China's Belt and Road Initiative, Xinjiang is brimming with development opportunities like never before.

Because of its unique strategic position as a westward gateway, location and industrial agglomeration benefits, barrage of fortunes are available for Pakistan enterprises in Xinjiang Software Park, delegation was informed.

Delegations also witnessed enormous government support for development of Uyghur performing art in the shape of Xinjiang Uyghur Muqam Art which is a comprehensive art integrating singing, dancing, and music, widely prevalent in Uyghur communities across northern and southern Xinjiang.

Meanwhile Xinjiang International Grand Bazar mesmerized delegation with its unique historical architecture, traditional facade of shops, medieval pathways and shades of many ethnic groups.

There are two huge buildings in Grand Bazaar, and the exterior of the building is khaki, which is very thick, and the characteristic pillars and domes are quite beautiful.

Delegation also saw a mosque on the south side of the square, and there are many Muslims come here to pray every day, which are full of Islamic style.

The Silk Road tower is the most famous scenic spot in Xinjiang Grand Bazaar, which has also left a very deep impression on the delegation members.

Paintings and exhibitions on all the layers of the tower, which show the history of the Silk Road.



The interior of Xinjiang Grand Bazaar is a huge market, where numerous traders sell Xinjiang's special commodities such as dried fruits, clothing, attar, Yingjisha knives, handicraft and other various products, and that is quite worth to visit.

"The whole international Grand Bazaar is the most ethnic place in Urumqi," according to Mr. Xin from the Information office of Urumqi.

### **The Sunday Story: Arresting Your Brothers and Sisters**

25 August 2024, NPR

In the Xinjiang region of western China, the government has rounded up and detained at least hundreds of thousands of Uyghurs and other Muslim ethnic groups. Many haven't been heard from in years, and others are still desperately searching for their families. Western governments have called this crackdown a cultural genocide and a possible crime against humanity.

NPR Correspondent Emily Feng has been reporting on Uyghurs inside and outside of China for years. In this episode, she profiles two Uyghur men who have found themselves sometimes unwilling actors within the Chinese state's systems of control over Uyghurs. As they work to silence others, they sometimes find themselves silenced as well.

Additional Context:

- Listen to Emily Feng's 2022 reporting, "The Black Gate: A Uyghur Family's Story" part one and part two.
- For more on the history of the Uyghur people, listen to the episode "Five Fingers Crush The Land" from NPR's Throughline podcast.

### **Hundreds of Uyghur scientists imprisoned in China, rights group says**

23 August 2024, VOA, Kasim Kashgar

Index on Censorship, an organization that promotes freedom of expression globally, is featuring the silencing of scientists and science around the world in the next issue of its publication. One country where scientists and intellectuals, especially those who are Uyghur, have disappeared over the years is China.

In recent years, the Uyghur rights organization Uyghur Hjel্প has documented more than 200 cases of Uyghur scientists and other science professionals being imprisoned in China, according to Abduweli Ayup, founder of the Norway-based group.

Among the most prominent is Tursunjan Nurmamat, who received his graduate and postgraduate education in the United States. Nurmamat, who is from the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in

northwestern China, specialized in molecular biology and was working as a science editor when he disappeared in 2021.

In addition, he translated English nonfiction books about science and scientists into the Uyghur language. He used his well-known pen name, Bilge, for these translations, which he published on his social media accounts in China.

One of Nurmamat's former employers, Shanghai's Tongji University, confirmed with Radio Free Asia reporters in July 2021 that he had been arrested and had been under investigation since April that year. In response to VOA's request for more information, Liu Pengyu, spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in Washington, wrote, "I am not aware of this specific case, thus having nothing to share. China is a law-based country, and I believe the judicial and law enforcement institutions perform their jobs in accordance with law."

Just before Nurmamat's arrest by Xinjiang police, he announced his new role as a science editor at Cell Press, a publisher of scientific journals headquartered in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

"When I last spoke with him before his forced disappearance, he said he was 'stuck and couldn't leave,' " said a friend who is an exiled Uyghur now living in Canada. The Canadian Uyghur, along with several other exiled Uyghurs in the U.S. who knew Nurmamat before his disappearance, shared with VOA details about his situation. They expressed concerns about his well-being in Chinese custody and requested anonymity because of fears for their families in Xinjiang.

Joseph Caputo, head of media and communications at Cell Press, confirmed to VOA that Nurmamat had a brief tenure at the organization but did not provide further details on his current situation.

"No one outside the Chinese government knows his current location or the length of his sentence, similar to many other cases involving Uyghur intellectuals," Uyghur Hjel্প's Ayup told VOA in a phone interview. Uyghur rights organizations say China has been increasing its crackdown on Turkic-speaking Uyghurs in Xinjiang since 2017 with human rights abuses that include arbitrary detention of over 1 million individuals, forced labor, sterilization of women and torture.

China's treatment of Uyghurs has been labeled as genocide by the U.S. and several Western parliaments. The United Nations human rights office has suggested these actions may amount to crimes against humanity. China denies these accusations, saying Xinjing-related policies are established in the context of combating violent terrorism and separatism, and it accuses the U.S. and Western anti-China forces of spreading disinformation.

### Censorship of Uyghur science

Ayup described Nurmamat's case as a key example of the broader censorship affecting Uyghur science and scientists.

"The Chinese government has targeted Uyghur scientists like [Nurmamat] who have studied abroad and experienced democratic freedoms," Ayup told VOA. "His work, including translations and science materials in Uyghur, made him a target."

Ayup noted that by translating and writing extensively in Uyghur about science, Nurmamat directly challenged China's efforts to suppress the Uyghur language in education.

Over the past two decades, Uyghurs have observed that Chinese authorities have gradually removed the Uyghur language from science-related subjects in K-12 schools and universities in Xinjiang.

Ayup also compared Nurmamat's case to that of Tashpolat Tiyp, a prominent Uyghur geographer and former president of Xinjiang University, where Nurmamat completed his bachelor's and master's degrees.

Tiyp disappeared in 2017, four years before Nurmamat's arrest, while traveling from Beijing to Berlin for a scientific conference. Since then, there has been no information on his whereabouts or the charges against him.

"Even the Xinjiang University website has removed his record from its list of historic presidents, though it still lists a former president who fled to Taiwan in 1949," Ayup noted.

### Dangers of US education

Nurmamat began his doctoral studies in molecular biology at the University of Wyoming in fall 2009, then moved to the University of California for a fellowship, which he completed in 2018.

During the fellowship, Nurmamat traveled to Xinjiang in summer 2017 for a job interview at Shihezi University. He took his wife, Nurimangul, and their U.S.-born 5-year-old daughter, Tumaris, with him to China, in hopes of landing a job back in China after his

U.S. fellowship.

"At the airport, he was interrogated by Chinese officials, and the Chinese passports belonging to him and his wife were confiscated. Their daughter, who held a U.S. passport, was the only one spared from the interrogation," a friend said.

After weeks of questioning, Chinese authorities allowed Nurmamat to return to the U.S. to finish his fellowship but imposed strict conditions: His wife and daughter, an American citizen, had to stay in China. "He was also required to promise that he would return to China once his fellowship concluded," the friend added.

### Dangerous return

Following the completion of his fellowship in 2018, Nurmamat voiced significant apprehensions about returning to China.

"I'm still really worried. Shihezi University keep asking me to return; but I'm scared to return after my experience in the last summer," he confided to his friend in the U.S. via a messaging app on April 11, 2018, a screenshot of which was shared with VOA. "My family wasn't able to join me. I'm hoping they will be able to get their passport back and join me in the U.S."

Despite these fears, Nurmamat returned to China in summer 2018, aiming to secure the release of his wife, a Xinjiang University graduate. She had been under house arrest since 2017 and was later detained in an internment facility, known as a "vocational training center," which holds over a million Uyghurs, according to his friend.

"Nurmamat thought that keeping his promise to the Chinese authorities would help free his wife and their U.S.-born daughter," the friend said.

But instead of returning directly to Xinjiang, where his wife was detained, Nurmamat took a research position at Tongji University in Shanghai. He believed Shanghai would be safer and hoped to eventually reunite with his family. But his efforts proved futile, as he eventually followed the path of other Uyghur intellectuals before him, with arrest and detention.

### China's Uyghur policies a 'racialised atrocity crime', Harvard law scholar finds

22 August 2024, The Guardian, Peter Hessler

The Chinese government has imposed 4.4 million years of cumulative imprisonment on ethnic Uyghurs in its far-western Xinjiang region, a new report has found.

The report, titled Uyghur Race as the Enemy and published by the Yale Macmillan Center's Genocide Studies Program, finds high rates of incarceration are part of "racialised atrocity crimes" occurring in China against Muslim minorities.

It demands urgent action from governments to prevent genocide and ensure "the Uyghurs' ability to continue existing as a people".

The Uyghurs are a mostly Muslim, Turkic ethnic group, whose culture and language are distinct from China's ethnic Han majority.

Since 2017, Chinese authorities have waged the "People's War on Terror", which they say is aimed at stamping out Islamic extremism.

At least 1 million Uyghurs and other Muslim ethnic minorities are estimated to have been detained extrajudicially in detention camps, which Beijing says are vocational training centres.

The study's lead author Rayhan Asat, a Harvard law scholar and senior fellow with the Atlantic Council,

told the ABC that the researchers set out to establish: "What is the Chinese government's understanding of extremism?"

Cases analysed in Ms Asat's report, based upon Chinese court documents, reveal "cruel and disproportionately harsh" punishments for alleged support for terrorism or extremism.

In June 2019, a Xinjiang court sentenced Zahir Memet to 15 years' imprisonment for "wearing long clothes, covering her face, and wearing a hijab" between May 2010 and May 2015, against the advice of the village officials.

"In another case that we looked at, they said 'this person is financing terrorism' basically [because] they bought a ring for their son in Türkiye," Ms Asat said. "In another case, they sent tuition fees to their kids who were studying overseas."

Having connections to Uyghurs abroad, including in Australia, has commonly been cited as a factor for being targeted by Chinese authorities for imprisonment.

World's 'highest incarceration rate' in Xinjiang

The report's cumulative sentencing of 4.4 million years figure was based on available data about prosecutions, which showed the average prison sentence handed to Uyghurs in the region was 8.8 years. Xinjiang legal authorities reported that between 2017 and 2021, a total of 540,826 individuals were prosecuted in the region.

"That makes China, especially the Uyghur region, basically the highest incarceration rate in the entire world," Ms Asat said.

Xinjiang authorities have since stopped publishing this court data, meaning these were in fact conservative figures, she said.

In China's opaque legal system, it is difficult to ascertain who is behind bars after formal prosecution and who is detained extrajudicially.

The country's official prison population is reported to be 1.69 million.

According to World Prison Brief at the University of London, however, this figure only accounts for sentenced prisoners in Chinese Ministry of Justice prisons, excluding pre-trial detainees and those held in administrative detention as well as those in camps in Xinjiang.

The Associated Press previously reported that in one county in China's Uyghur heartland alone, one in 25 people had been sentenced to imprisonment on terror-related charges.

While journalists and activists routinely became the enemy of the Chinese state, Ms Asat said, soaring rates of incarceration showed the entire Uyghur population had become enemies.

Ms Asat, whose own brother is serving a 15-year prison sentence, said that when a Uyghur is imprisoned in China, "the whole family goes in with

them" — such is the level of trauma experienced by the community.

Australian Uyghur community leader Ramila Chanisheff said "every Uyghur that lives in Australia" has a family member or friend in Xinjiang "who they have lost connections with, who they don't know their situation or whereabouts".

"It's simply because they are Uyghur. China is just wanting to erase them completely, and this is the way to do it."

Earlier this year, Human Rights Watch reported that Chinese authorities had changed the names of some 630 villages, to remove cultural or religious references, in an effort to erase Uyghur culture.

Mosques across China have been demolished or altered, including the removal of minarets, as part of authorities' drive to "Sinicise Islam".

From extra-legal jailing to authoritarian 'lawfare' While the Chinese government has consistently denied human rights abuses in Xinjiang, large amounts of evidence have been gathered by journalists, human rights groups, academics and the United Nations.

A report by the UN human rights chief released in 2022 corroborated previous findings from major human rights groups, concluding that "arbitrary and discriminatory detention of members of Uyghur and other predominantly Muslim groups ... may constitute international crimes, in particular crimes against humanity".

International scrutiny had driven Chinese authorities away from extrajudicial detention towards forms of "lawfare" and weaponising criminal prosecutions, Ms Asat said.

"Chinese authorities have continued to try to justify their patently illegal conduct by calling it the opposite," wrote former China director at Human Rights Watch, Sophie Richardson, in a piece published by The Diplomat in response to the research.

"The tactic is designed to minimise international scrutiny and discourage the pursuit of accountability." Ms Asat said that little had been done by the UN human rights office since its landmark findings in 2022.

"With China opening up, after the COVID lockdown, we see everybody is going to China ... as if this is doing business with a normal, democratic regime," she said. "To see the prime minister of Australia, going and shaking hands, smiling for the cameras, with the very people that are imprisoning my people. That's been very difficult.

"There cannot be business as usual with the Chinese government."

The UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery concluded in 2022 that forced labour among

Uyghur, Kazakh and other ethnic minorities in sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing had occurred in Xinjiang.

For years, trade unions and human rights groups have demanded Australia ban the import of goods such as textiles or solar panels suspected of being made with Uyghur forced labour.

Ms Chanisheff said the Albanese government should impose sanctions on Chinese officials involved in human rights abuses in Xinjiang – just as Australia had done for officials from Russia, Myanmar and Iran.

"We are sick of our government, our foreign minister and our now prime minister being sympathetic or empathetic. We're sick of the words when we've got millions of people disappearing," she said.

"Australia claims that we are the strongest partner for China, but what kind of friend do you have when you know they're committing genocide, ethnic cleansing

– and you're quiet about it?"

A spokesperson for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade said: "Australia has consistently condemned human rights violations against the Uyghurs and other ethnic and Muslim minorities in Xinjiang and across China."

The spokesperson said that at the UN Human Rights Council in January 2024, Australia called on China to "repeal legislation and cease practices which discriminate against Uyghurs on the basis of race or religion, cease arbitrary detention, coercive labour transfer and family separation programs; and end restrictions on movement and on rights to enjoy their own culture and language".

### 7 brothers from prominent Uyghur family confirmed jailed in Xinjiang

19 August 2024, RFA, Shohret Hoshur

China arrested them on flimsy charges during mass incarcerations that started in 2017.



A man walks towards the entrance of a vocational and technical school believed to be a detention facility in Jiashi county, Kashgar Prefecture, China's northwestern Xinjiang region, July 15, 2023.

Seven brothers from a prominent Uyghur family in Kashgar have been sentenced to terms ranging from nine to 17 years for charitable work "supporting Uyghurs" and overseas trips, as part of the ongoing mass incarceration campaign against the mostly Muslim group that started in 2017, three people with knowledge of the situation said.

The Obulqasim brothers – Abdusalam, 45; Abduhelil, 47; Mametsidiq, 49; Yusupjan, 51; Memmettursun, 54; Pazil, 56; and Sabir, 62 – were businessmen active in construction materials, electrical appliances and other products.

They were detained and imprisoned amid mass arrests of Uyghurs and are serving their sentences in prisons in Kashgar and Urumqi, the sources said.

"They are one of the richest families in Kashgar," said Abduweli Ayup, founder Uyghur Hjelp, also known as Uyghuryar, a Norway-based nonprofit organization that documents Uyghurs who have been arrested and imprisoned. He said he confirmed through his information network that the seven brothers were all jailed.

They are among the estimated 1.8 million Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims detained under flimsy pretexts during mass detentions that began more than seven years ago, as Chinese authorities rounded up businesspeople, clerics, intellectuals and those who had traveled abroad years before or who taught the Quran to youngsters.

Claiming they were fighting separatism and terrorism, China has clamped down harshly on Uyghurs, penalizing those who communicated with Uyghurs outside of Xinjiang or offered financial support.

Though Chinese authorities long prohibited Uyghurs from traveling abroad, there was a brief period after 2010 when they were encouraged to obtain passports after international pressure.

But later, authorities deemed suspicious those who did obtain passports or merely applied for them and subsequently detained in camps and prisons.

Active businessmen

Their father, Obulqasim, now deceased, sold and repaired watches in Kashgar. The brothers started businesses selling various goods at the city's Id Kah Market, a prime business district.

Over the years they established the Aq Orda Trade Center, selling construction materials and electrical appliances, according to Ayup. They also owned stores in Kashgar.

Pazil expanded the family business into cargo shipping, establishing a presence in Central Asia and Turkey, and became a leading Uyghur businessman. The brothers were also involved in the hotel industry.

The seven brothers were sentenced in May 2019 and received prison terms of 17, 13, 11 or nine years, said a security guard from Kashgar Prison's employee residence building.

Five of the brothers, including Abduhelil and Pazil, are serving their sentences at Kashgar Prison, also known as Yerken Peylu Prison. The other two are in jail in Urumqi, Xinjiang's capital, he said.

**Targeted for supporting Uyghurs**

Pazil and Yusupjan were accused of "supporting Uyghurs" through charitable work, while the others either traveled abroad or displayed "ethnic hatred and discrimination," the security guard said, referring to discrimination against Han Chinese.

Their arrests came at a time when many Uyghur businessmen were targeted for their charitable activities, Ayup added.

"I heard they were collecting money for people," the prison security guard said. "Starting from 2000, they had been a key family to be under watch."

The brothers helped other Uyghurs get jobs in Kashgar, performed charity work to benefit orphans and the poor, and contributed to children's education, Ayup said.

Pazil and Yusupjan were detained for their charity work and for their connections with Uyghur expatriates during their business operations in the cargo shipping business, he said, citing people with knowledge of the situation.

Their financial assistance to expatriate Uyghurs in need while doing business abroad was later labeled as "supporting" Uyghurs, said another source with knowledge of the situation, who did not want to be identified for fear of retribution by authorities.

They were accused of supporting Uyghurs abroad, and three other brothers were accused of ethnic hatred and discrimination, the guard said.

Authorities disclosed the details of their sentences to their families after their arrest, as there were no prior announcements or notifications about their detention," said the security guard. Another brother, Abduhelil, a filmmaker and entrepreneur, was first arrested in October 2017, held in a pretrial detention for more than 18 months and sent to a "re-education" camp, RFA reported this July. His films promoted Uyghur culture.

Authorities released Abduhelil in December 2019, but rearrested him in September 2023 for "inciting separatism" for promoting Uyghur culture in his films. He is serving a 15-year sentence in Kashgar Prison.

### **China diverting world attention away from Xinjiang crisis, says Swedish Uyghur Committee**

**16 August 2024, The News Mill**

The Svenska Uyghur Kommitten (SUK), generally known as the Swedish Uyghur Committee, on Thursday said that China has been creating a facade of development to divert the world's attention away from its abuses in East Turkistan. The

committee said in a statement that China's invasion and occupation of East Turkistan is a 'dark lesson in global manipulation'.

In the statement posted on X, the SUK said, "Since 1949, China's invasion and occupation of East Turkistan have not just been a blueprint for colonization and genocide against the Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples; they've been a dark lesson in global manipulation. Through economic leverage and a meticulously crafted facade of modernization, China has convinced much of the world to turn a blind eye to its crimes, all the while presenting itself as a pillar of stability on the world stage.

Claiming it to be a bitter irony, the same statement by the SUK stated that China has been using all of its tools to build a narrative away from the brutal reality of the Xinjiang region.

The statement said, "This is a bitter irony, the very tools China uses to commit and conceal its human rights abuses propaganda, economic coercion, and diplomatic double-speak are now exported as part of its global influence. But behind this facade lies the stark reality of a people fighting for survival. The international community, including nations like Sweden, cannot afford to remain complicit in this charade".

The SUK urged the world that addressing the genocide and occupation tactics of China is necessary but is not enough. They demanded that the world must support the struggle of East Turkistan people for independence.

The statement stated, "It is the only path that guarantees the survival of our people. Independence is not just a moral imperative, it is a strategic necessity in the face of a regime that has proven time and again its willingness to erase entire cultures to achieve its ends".

The world's policymakers and diplomats, do not be fooled by the veneer of progress that China projects, the statement said.

The statement added that one must understand that supporting East Turkistan's independence is not just about standing against oppression—it's about rejecting the global spread of a model that prioritises power over people.

The survival of East Turkistan is a test of whether we will allow autocracy to rewrite the rules of international conduct, or whether we will stand firm in defence of human rights, freedom, and the truth, the statement by the SUK added.

### **Report highlights systematic repression, human rights violations of Uyghurs in Xinjiang by China**

**16 August 2024, Indian Narrative**

A recent report by Yale University has highlighted the precarious living conditions of Uyghur Muslims in the



Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) under Chinese repression.

Uyghurs have been facing deteriorating conditions in the Xinjiang region. Beijing has also intensified its crackdown on those who speak out against human rights abuses.

The report has underscored that China's extensive imprisonment of Uyghurs constitutes both a "crime against humanity" and a "genocide," representing a dangerous scale of lawfare.

It has detailed severe inconsistencies and deficiencies in China's legal system, including excessive punishments, widespread prosecutions, and unusually high incarceration rates. The analysis reveals how China's authoritarian framework undermines both domestic and international legal standards.

The Yale report also highlighted how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has adapted its tactics to evade international scrutiny while continuing its persecution of Uyghurs.

It stated that the scale of imprisonment, unprecedented since World War II, represents the extreme reach of what scholars term "authoritarian legality" and poses a grave concern for global humanity.

The report estimates that if mass imprisonment persists, the Uyghur population could endure a cumulative total of 4.4 million years of imprisonment. Furthermore, the report also highlighted that among 13,114 records with prison sentences (excluding 25,155 without), the average prison term is approximately 8.80 years.

Earlier, a February 2022 report from the Xinjiang High People's Procuratorate revealed that 5,40,826 individuals were prosecuted in the region from 2017 to 2021.

However, with the Xinjiang court ceasing to release new data, the actual number of prosecutions is likely much higher with the missing data of 2022, 2023 and 2024.

The report also raises alarms about China's

reeducation or labelled as suspicious are likely convicted, positioning the XUAR with the highest imprisonment rate in the world at 2,095 per 1,00,000 citizens.

### Turkish journalists on China-sponsored Xinjiang tour give positive reports

15 August 2024, VOA, Kasim kashgar

Turkish journalist Erdal Emre shared his impressions about a recent media tour of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in northwestern China.

"Our #Xinjiang trip with journalist friends from 8 media outlets has concluded. It was a trip where we learned a lot. We will be writing about our impressions. We extend our sincere thanks to our Chinese colleagues for their hospitality," Emre wrote on the social media platform X on Wednesday.

Emre was part of a group of 11 Turkish journalists who participated in the "Media Trip in Xinjiang: Always More to Discover," a nine-day event co-sponsored by Guangming Online and the Xinjiang Cyberspace Affairs Commission.

The tour covered Urumqi, Ili, Aksu and Kashgar, cities in the north and south of Xinjiang, with the journalists closely monitored by Chinese authorities.

Guangming Online, the digital arm of the state-controlled Guangming Daily, operates under the direction of the Chinese Communist Party. The Xinjiang Cyberspace Affairs Commission, a regional government department, is responsible for overseeing internet censorship and online content management in Xinjiang.

Image campaign

Guangming Daily reported that the initiative aimed to "vividly showcase a beautiful Xinjiang" marked by "unity, harmony, prosperity, progress, security and ecological well-being."

Zhang Jun, director of the Xinjiang Cyberspace Affairs Commission, said in the news report that the goal was to counter criticism and promote a positive image of the region.

"We hope that everyone will come to understand Xinjiang through seeing it with their own eyes, tell the story of Xinjiang in different languages, and share a true Xinjiang with the world," Zhang said in the report. China's efforts to host international journalists in Xinjiang are part of its response to allegations of

human rights abuses. These allegations include mass detentions, which the U.S. has labeled as genocide and the U.N. as crimes against humanity. Reports indicate that Uyghurs and Turkic Muslims face forced indoctrination, abuse, labor and sterilization in these facilities.



conviction rate for Uyghur Muslims, which exceeds 99.9 per cent. Nearly all Uyghurs arrested for

*FILE - Protesters chant slogans as they hold posters and pictures of victims during a protest against China's brutal crackdown on ethnic Uyghurs, in front of the Chinese Consulate in Istanbul, Turkey, Nov. 30, 2022.*

This strategy aligns with Chinese President Xi Jinping's directive from July 2022 to enhance external propaganda efforts. Xi stressed the importance of using various platforms to "tell the story of Xinjiang" and present the region in a favorable light, advocating a multifaceted approach to bolster China's global influence and shape perceptions of Xinjiang.

According to Abdürreşit Celil Karluk, professor of international relations at Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University and visiting fellow at the University of Sheffield's School of East Asian Studies, China strategically spends money to try to influence Turkish public opinion through media channels.

The campaigns target a country that hosts one of the largest and most politically active Uyghur diasporas in the world. Rights groups estimate there are 50,000 to 75,000 Uyghurs living in Turkey.

"Media giants such as CRI Türk and CGNT Türk, which are directly linked to China, broadcast in Turkish 24 hours a day," Karluk said. CRI Türk is owned by China Radio International, which is a state-owned broadcaster controlled by the Chinese government.

#### Diverging narratives

In a video posted Tuesday by the Chinese Embassy in Turkey, Tunç Akkoç, founder of digital media organization Harici, expressed surprise at what he perceived as a stark contrast between his experience in Xinjiang and the reports from Western media.

"It is totally a different impression and a different reality from what we hear, especially from some Western media," Akkoç said.

Mustafa Birol Güger of the Cumhuriyet daily newspaper remarked that the smiling faces he observed at an Urumqi bazaar suggested to him that the populace was content.

"If you want to check the level of stress in a country, you should go to public places and look at the face of the people," Güger said. "In Urumqi, in the grand bazaar today, everyone was smiling, so that means they are happy, and if they are happy, we are happy, too. What I see is completely different from what is being told in the media."

Asli Atasoy, host of the CGTN Turkish channel's program "Chasing the Dragon," on Monday shared a blog post on Turkish news site T24 detailing her visit and an interview with Muhterem Sherif, the imam of the Noghay mosque in Urumqi. CGTN, or

China Global Television Network, is a Chinese state-owned media outlet.

Sherif is quoted as saying that Uyghurs "are very satisfied" with the Chinese government's religious policies.

#### Opinion shaping

Karluk, the international relations professor, said that with sponsored trips like this, China aims to persuade nationalist and conservative groups in Turkey, traditionally supportive of Uyghur rights, to change their stance.

"China is also attempting to influence more nationalist conservative groups in line with its own discourses by taking them to China as part of packaged programs, particularly given the growing anti-Westernism, especially anti-Americanism, in Türkiye most since 2016," he said in an email.

#### Economic compromise

Yalkun Uluyol, a Uyghur rights advocate, views the Chinese sponsorship of Turkish journalists as part of China's strategy to present a favorable narrative and obscure human rights abuses.

"Similar to previous efforts, China tries to whitewash ongoing abuses and gain international legitimacy," Uluyol said.

Uluyol argues that Turkey's concerns for Uyghurs are being overshadowed by economic interests, citing a \$1 billion deal with China's electric carmaker BYD and the resumption of direct flights between Istanbul and Urumqi after an eight-year hiatus as emerging evidence of Turkey's shift from criticism to accommodation of China's Uyghur policy.

### **Uyghur rights group condemns China for destroying 16,000 mosques in Xinjiang**

15 August 2024, News Intervention

The East Turkistan National Movement (ETNM), a US-based organization dedicated to advocating for the rights of Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang, has issued a strong statement condemning China for its systematic destruction of Uyghur culture and heritage. The organization is urging the international community, human rights authorities, and activists to take decisive action against Beijing's oppressive policies.

In a statement released on X (formerly Twitter), the ETNM accused the Chinese government of demolishing over 16,000 mosques and converting other religious sites into bars and clubs. "The Chinese government is executing a calculated strategy to annihilate the identity of the East Turkistan nation to ensure its occupation of East Turkistan continues. In a blatant attempt to erase our historical and cultural roots, Beijing has demolished over 16,000 mosques, desecrated religious sites by turning them into bars and clubs, and destroyed countless historic Uyghur neighborhoods," the ETNM said. "These acts of

cultural destruction are designed to break the spirit of our people and erase our Turkic and Islamic



heritage from existence.”

*Demolition of 16,000 Mosques in Xinjiang (Photo - X)*

The ETNM also criticized Muslim-majority countries, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and Central Asian Republics for their silence in the face of China’s campaign against Uyghur Muslims. The organization accused these entities of turning a blind eye to the atrocities in Xinjiang and, in some cases, even supporting China’s actions.

A 2021 report by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) supported ETNM’s claims, revealing through satellite imagery that significant damage has been done to over 20 percent of the region’s mosques, with many being demolished or repurposed.

Xinjiang has become one of the most heavily monitored regions in the world, with extensive use of facial recognition technology and other surveillance methods. There is substantial evidence, including satellite imagery, of large-scale internment camps in the region. These facilities, described by the Chinese government as “re-education” camps, are considered by international observers and human rights organizations to be detention centers aimed at erasing the identity of East Turkistan and its people.

The ETNM’s call to action is a plea for the world to recognize and confront the ongoing cultural genocide in Xinjiang and to support the Uyghur people in their fight for survival and freedom.

### **Uyghur Prison Sentences Total 4.4 Million Years**

14 August 2024, National Review, Jimmy Quinn

A new analysis from Yale University attempts to put a number on the staggering cost of the Chinese Communist Party’s campaign against Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities in Xinjiang.

As Beijing has modified its campaign from that of a program of mass arbitrary detentions to one where it comes up with a bogus legal basis for imprisoning



individuals, Chinese courts have sentenced residents of Xinjiang to a cumulative 4.4 million years in prison, the report, released this week, found.

“This type of legalized form of repression is profoundly alarming — it is no less widespread nor humane than the former,” stated the report, from the Genocide Studies Program at Yale’s MacMillan Center.

“In fact, one might consider it even more harmful precisely because its veil of legal legitimacy renders it elusive to international scrutiny and legalizes human rights abuses.”

The anti-Uyghur program was brought to public attention in the late 2010s — culminating in the U.S. State Department’s designation in 2021 of the abuses as genocide. Since then, international scrutiny has lagged as Beijing has sought to reframe foreign perceptions of its rule over Xinjiang.

With the completion of campaigns to raze mosques, or otherwise convert them in such a way for access by Han Chinese, and other efforts to turn the region’s cities into tourist destinations, Beijing has welcomed visitors to the region. The party’s broader effort to add the perception of legal legitimacy to the mass detentions is part of this overhaul.

To reach the 4.4 million estimate, researchers — led by Rayhan Asat, a human-rights lawyer who campaigns for the release of her brother, Ekpar, from the camps

— consulted data from the Xinjiang Victims Database, an initiative that pulls together information on over 62,000 specific victims from multiple sources including leaked Chinese law-enforcement documents.

They looked at 13,000 cases that listed a prison sentence, finding that the average sentence was 8.8 years, then multiplied that number by the 540,000 individuals the Xinjiang High People’s Procuratorate said it prosecuted from 2017 to 2021.

The report says the Xinjiang victims dataset reflects only a fraction of the true size of the prison program and that the “actual numbers are far more significant.” And while the Chinese authorities make public criminal records in other parts of the country,

records from almost 90 percent of cases in Xinjiang are not public, it said.

The existence of this mass detention program, of course, is already widely known, if attention to the ongoing atrocities has flagged in the years that have followed the U.S. genocide determination. But the 4.4

million figure is new and noteworthy because it helps to measure the party's employment of a legalistic charade, which is one less-known detail of the crackdown.

Like other aspects of the atrocities against Uyghurs, this advances Beijing's effort to eliminate a people. "If the Uyghur population continues to be barred from maintaining their communities, it is only a matter of time before full ethnic incapacitation is realized and the damage is irreversible," the report concluded.

### **Xinjiang starts water diversion for China's longest inland river**

13 August 2024, Global Times

*An aerial drone photo taken on Aug. 12, 2024 shows water flowing through the populus euphratica forests in the lower reaches of Tarim River after being released from the Daxihaizi Reservoir in Yuli County, northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on Monday began discharging water from a reservoir into the Tarim River, China's longest inland river, as part of an ongoing ecological conservation project in the region. (Photo: Xinhua)*

### **Uyghur-American politician calls for enhanced cooperation to address independence struggles in China, PoGB**

10 August 2024, Indian Narrative

In a significant push for greater unity and action, Salih Hidayar, a prominent Uyghur-American politician known for advocating for East Turkistan independence, has emphasized the need for increased collaboration to tackle the independence struggles of regions under Chinese and Pakistani control.

In a post on X, Salih stated, "Yesterday, a significant gathering took place at the National Press Club at Washington DC, bringing together representatives of East Turkistan, Gilgit Baltistan, and Tibet. We convened to address the ongoing independence

struggles of Tibet and East Turkistan, alongside the political challenges facing Gilgit Baltistan."

In his post, Salih emphasized that the struggles of people go beyond mere human rights issues, encompassing profound political challenges with far-reaching geopolitical implications for both regional and global security and freedom. He also noted that discussions revealed a fundamental cause of our nations' suffering: Chinese imperialism and expansionism.

Salih stressed the critical importance of enhanced cooperation and advocacy to tackle these challenges. He underscored that restoring independence to East Turkistan and Tibet is crucial not only for reclaiming our territories but also for protecting the rights and survival of our people.

Likewise, he highlighted that reuniting Gilgit-Baltistan with India is key to safeguarding the rights and future of its residents.

Salih stated, "This meeting marks an important step in uniting our voices and advancing our shared goals on the global stage. We are committed to working together to counter Chinese expansionism and to secure a future where our nations can thrive in freedom and peace."

The Uyghur people, a predominantly Muslim ethnic group, have long sought independence or greater autonomy from China.

The region, officially known as Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, has been the focus of intense international scrutiny due to reports of human rights abuses, including mass detentions in so-called "re-education camps" and forced labour.

Similarly, Tibet, home to the Tibetan Buddhist community, has also experienced longstanding tensions with the Chinese government. The Dalai Lama, Tibet's spiritual leader, fled to India in 1959 following a failed uprising against Chinese rule. Tibetans continue to seek greater autonomy and the preservation of their cultural and religious practices. The Chinese government maintains strict control over the region, with significant restrictions on religious freedom and political dissent. On the other hand, various local political parties and activist groups in PoGB continue to advocate for greater autonomy of the region. These groups often organize rallies, write petitions, and engage in political dialogue to push for their demands.

### **Exclusive: Uyghur activist says former business partners sentenced in Xinjiang**

06 August 2024, VOA, Kasim Kashgar

First row, middle: Tahir Imin; left: Yashiq Ahmed; right: Nurmemet Imin. Second row, first on the right:





Rashidin Gheyret; second: Elkem Ilhamjan; third: Dawut Osman. (Photo courtesy of Tahir Imin)

Tahir Imin, a 42-year-old U.S.-based Uyghur activist and former political prisoner from China, tells VOA that he recently learned that six of his former business associates in Xinjiang were sentenced for allegedly attempting to split the country.

"I've learned from two sources that the sentences, handed down in early 2024 by the Urumqi Intermediate People's Court, were linked to their association with me," Imin told VOA. "One received 15 years, while the others got 12."

Information in Xinjiang is tightly controlled, making it extremely difficult to get details about court proceedings. Imin — the founder of the Washington-based Uyghur Times and a member of the Washington-based Uyghur Human Rights Project — said his sources were unable to share documents for fear of retaliation from the Chinese government. Among those charged, he added, was the nephew of a top party official in Xinjiang.

The Urumqi Intermediate People's Court is in the capital of Xinjiang, which is home to nearly 12 million predominantly Muslim Uyghurs. The U.S. and other countries have accused China of genocide in Xinjiang, where more than 1 million Uyghurs are believed to be detained in facilities that Beijing describes as vocational training centers.

China says the measures are necessary to combat extremism, terrorism and separatism. Some people have been detained for practicing their religion or for their contacts with overseas individuals who are speaking out about China's policies in Xinjiang.

When reached for comment on the case, Liu Pengyu, a spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in Washington, told VOA he had not heard of the cases mentioned by Imin.

"China is a law-based country where laws must be observed and those who violate the law must be held accountable," Liu said in an email to VOA. "If the sentencing is linked to accusations of 'attempting to split the country,' please refer to Article 103 of the Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China." Article 103 of the Chinese Criminal Law states that people who "organize, plot or carry out the scheme

of splitting the State or undermining national unity" face life imprisonment or at least 10 years.

The sentences of 12 to 15 years for Imin's former associates suggest they might have been charged under this article. Not the first time Imin believes the news about his former associates is part of China's broader strategy of transnational repression against activists like himself.

It is not the first time this has happened to him, he said.

"Previously, I discovered that 28 of my family members were sentenced to prison simply because of their relationship to me," he said. "I am deeply concerned about my daughter, who was forced to denounce me, and my estranged wife, who was forced to divorce me."

Imin told VOA that he has not heard from his wife or daughter in years and has no way of knowing whether they are alive or living freely.

"That leaves me with a constant sense of guilt and sorrow," he said.

Imin and the six sentenced business associates — Ismail Kerim, Elqem Ilham, Dawut Osman, Yashiq Ahmed, Nurmemet Imin and Rashidin Gheyret — founded Xinjiang Ottuz Oghul Import and Export Trading Co., Ltd. in 2014.

Imin left China in March 2017, first relocating to Israel before settling in Washington. After moving to the U.S., he lost touch with his former associates and began speaking out against alleged abuses in Xinjiang. As a result, his associates severed contact with him, leaving him unable to track the fate of the company they once shared.

VOA was able to find details about his import-export firm on Chinese company search websites. According to Alibaba's 1688 business-to-business website, the company and its associates registered with the Urumqi Municipal Administration for Market Regulation on May 14, 2014, with Tahir Imin listed as the representative and chairman and the other sentenced individuals in administrative roles.

Imin says his former associates all had separate businesses, with their joint company serving as a collaborative venture.

"We were all well-educated and focused on business and social improvement," Imin said. "Our company's motto was development, cooperation and social responsibility."

Family ties

Ilham, one of the former business associates who was sentenced, is a nephew of Kaiser Abdukerim, the current vice chairman of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, according to Imin.

VOA couldn't independently verify the connection between Ilham and Abdukerim. Despite multiple calls to a number listed on the Xinjiang government website, the calls went unanswered.



Abdukerim has long been a vocal supporter of the Chinese government's policies in Xinjiang. At the United Nations in 2018, as president of Xinjiang Medical University, he defended the government's policies, calling them social progress even as allegations of mass detentions and human rights abuses were growing.

In March 2023, as vice chairman of Xinjiang, Abdukerim claimed on CGTN that international criticism of Xinjiang was an attempt to interfere in China's internal affairs.

#### Restricted access

According to information collected by the Xinjiang Victims Database, which documents individuals affected by China's policies in Xinjiang, all of Imin's former colleagues were arrested in July 2021 on charges of problematic association. They later attended a hearing in March of 2023. Imin's update about their sentencing is the latest on their status.

According to Gene Bunin, curator of the Xinjiang Victims Database, access to court verdicts and legal documents is highly restricted with the government now requiring users who want to access them to use Chinese platforms such as WeChat or AliPay.

"The other reason is that, even when accessible, they [Chinese authorities] generally did not post any of the sensitive cases, which is the vast majority of criminal cases for Xinjiang," Bunin told VOA.

He said that in a study he carried out in 2018, only 7,000 of 70,000 criminal cases in Xinjiang had verdicts posted.

"This rate, of around 10%, was by far the lowest in the country, as for most provinces/regions at least 60-70% of the verdicts were posted," said Bunin. "Of the 7,000 visible, almost all were for standard crimes that would be recognized anywhere in the world (drunk driving, theft, robbery, rape, murder, etc.), with essentially no political/religious cases."

According to a Human Rights Watch report released in 2022 that was based on Xinjiang government data, more than half a million people had been prosecuted since 2017.

### **Xinjiang authorities target Uyghurs cadres in 'dark forces' crackdown**

01 August 2024, RFA, Shohret Hoshur

The measure is meant to purge government workers deemed disloyal to China.

Authorities in a central Xinjiang city have detained more than 70 Uyghurs officials after purging them for being "two-faced" — part of a larger operation to investigate and jail those deemed disloyal to China and the Chinese Communist Party, police said.

Authorities in Korla, the second-largest city by population in Xinjiang, told Radio Free Asia they had

so far investigated over 200 Uyghurs deemed problematic, as part of a nationwide "dark forces" crackdown on the mostly Muslim group that began on July 15, police said.

The term "two-faced" is used by authorities to describe Uyghur officials who do not willingly follow directives, exhibit signs of disloyalty or show sympathetic tendencies toward other Uyghurs in northwestern China's Xinjiang region where the ethnic group faces repression.

"Since the beginning of the crackdown on 'dark forces,' more than 200 suspects have been investigated, [and] 76 of them were determined to be two-faced," said a police officer on duty at the People's Government building in Korla.

The crackdown is the latest of a series of ongoing measures to suppress what China deems "ethnic separatist forces," "terrorist forces" and "religious extremism" in Xinjiang, home to more than 11 million Uyghurs.

It is also in keeping with policies to fully meld Uyghurs into the Chinese nation and deepen ideological control over the region.

#### Reexamination method

The crackdown was initiated by Xinjiang's "Combating Dark and Evil Forces" working group, which held a meeting on July 14, according to a Xinjiang TV report. The group said authorities would "identify and punish those who do not fulfill their duties in key areas using the reexamination method." Xinjiang authorities first used the "reexamination method" in 2016 to purge Uyghur writers, artists and researchers by finding "problems" in their previous works that raised questions about their loyalty to China, and subsequently punished them.

Authorities in Korla have operated under a state of emergency since the end of 2023 and have maintained that status since the beginning of the crackdown on "dark forces," said the officer on duty at the People's Government building.

"In meetings we were told that the main targets were two-faced-people," he said. "There have been a lot of two-faced people detained since we started the attack on 'dark forces.'"

While the "attack on dark and evil forces" in Chinese provinces mainly targets gangs and criminals, authorities in Xinjiang go after Uyghurs in political and government positions, especially top Uyghur cadres, state employees and Chinese Communist Party members, according to Chinese media reports.

During the "dark forces" crackdown in Hotan, a major oasis town in southwestern Xinjiang called Hetian in Chinese, authorities investigated and punished leading cadres deemed "two-faced" for purportedly protecting "national separatists" and "religious extremists."

Authorities in Xinjiang have targeted ordinary Uyghurs during previous “reexamination” operations, jailing them for “religious extremism” for practicing their Muslim faith or studying or teaching the Quran, the central religious text of Islam, to others, even if the activities occurred a decade or two earlier.

## July

### China executes ‘slow-motion genocide’ in Tibet, Xinjiang, conference told

25 July 2024, The Washington Times

Obliteration of two peoples' identities, cultures, is accelerating.

TOKYO — Dorjee Tseten is 41 but has never set foot on his home country's soil.

“My family escaped Tibet, but 1.2 million Tibetans have lost their lives over the last seven decades through military occupation, famine and while escaping,” said Mr. Tseten, a member of Tibet's parliament in exile. “Every family has this kind of story.”

It hits him hardest when he views TV news. “When I hear of the killing of innocents, it reminds me of what is happening in Tibet,” he said.

Bloody conflicts raging in the Gaza Strip, Sudan and Ukraine generate loose talk of genocide. For those at the International Religious Freedom Summit Asia in Tokyo last week, the discussion was precise and the target clear in what many said was the Chinese communist regime's quiet, de facto policy of genocide in Tibet and Xinjiang.

“The term ‘genocide’ is sometimes misused to get attention,” said Robert Rehak, the Czech Republic's special envoy for Holocaust issues, interfaith dialogue and freedom of religion. “It may not be the mass killing of a huge number of people, but if the long-term aim is to end a nation, you can call it genocide.”

Conference sponsors included Freedom House, the Family Research Council and The Washington Times Foundation.

Though Beijing does not operate death camps or fill mass graves, the central government's policy toward the people of the two regions represents “slow-motion” genocide, experts say.

“Not every massacre or war crime is a genocide,” said Marco Respinti, director of Bitter Winter, a magazine focused on religious liberty and human rights. “To have a genocide, you have to have the intention to destroy an entire portion of humankind, you have to make a project to do that and you have to make tools you need.”

Chinese leaders angrily denounce the charge of genocide. They are particularly furious that the Trump administration and then the Biden administration formally declared Beijing's policies against the local ethnic Muslim Uyghur population of Xinjiang a genocide.

“There has never been so-called genocide, forced labor or religious oppression in Xinjiang,” Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told a meeting of the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2021. “Such inflammatory accusations are fabricated out of ignorance and prejudice. They are simply malicious and politically driven hype and couldn't be further from the truth.”

Long, slow process

Neither a sudden event nor a shock policy, genocide usually builds over a long period.

Xinjiang, which many Uyghurs call Eastern Turkestan, was occupied by China in 1949. Tibet was annexed by force in 1950. Natives of both say the ruling Chinese Communist Party's policies of cultural liquidation have accelerated since President Xi Jinping took office in 2013.

In 2014, Mr. Xi was said to have expressed surprise and unhappiness on a visit to the Xinjiang city of Kahsgard.

“Some reports said he asked, ‘Why are Uyghurs still Uyghurs?’” said Omer Kanat, president of the Uyghur Human Rights Project. “He criticized officials ... and they decided to forcefully assimilate the Uyghur people.”

Systemic assimilation policies “turned into genocide in 2017,” Mr. Kanat said.

“One of the most current, pressing human rights issues” facing Tibetans – forced indoctrination of children – began to be enforced after 2016, Mr. Tseten said.

“The CCP is conducting three genocides,” said Sam Brownback, the U.S. ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom during the Trump administration. He added a Han Chinese group to the Tibetans and Uyghurs.

Targeting the faithful

China's critics say that, just as the Nazis exterminated followers of Judaism, Beijing is targeting those with strong religious identities: Tibetan Buddhists, Uyghur adherents of Islam, and Chinese Falun Gong, which combines Buddhist and Taoist teachings with breathing and meditation exercises.

“It makes sense that authoritarian regimes fear faith,” said Katrina Lantos Swett, co-chair of the Tokyo religious freedom summit. “What they need is control of their populations, but if people have acquired convictions, they are much harder to control.”

According to Chinese regulations, “all religious venues should have permissions, all [religious] teachers should have certifications and have ‘Xi Jinping ideology,’” said Tsewang Gyalpo Arya, the Dalai Lama’s representative for Japan and East Asia. “Where is the religion?”

Ethnic identities and religious practices are replaced with uniform identities and party-approved practices. Among the worst abuses are torture, disappearances and organ harvesting. More mainstream methods of control include heavy police presence and mass detentions in camps.

“The purpose of the camps is to break lineage, roots and connections to origins – to eliminate the Uyghurs as an ethnic identity in China,” said Mr. Kanat. He estimates that “tens of thousands” from all walks of life have been incarcerated.

Since 2016, Tibetan children as young as 5 have been wrenched from their families and placed in “colonial boarding schools.”

“When children come out, their connection with their families has changed,” said Mr. Tseten. “They can’t speak Tibetan, they forget their traditions and are not able to communicate with their families.

“Some of them even become critical of their grandparents,” he said. “They ask them, ‘Why don’t you know Chinese? Why are you not like other Chinese?’”

Technology and repression

To prevent free expression and free assembly, “authoritarian regimes have technologies they only dreamed of in the past,” Mr. Brownback said.

A security web that synchronizes high technologies, from CCTV camera networks to spyware embedded in personal digital devices, allows for ubiquitous and never-resting artificial intelligence monitoring of the population.

“Families cannot communicate with each other,” said Ilham Mahmut, chairman of Japan’s Uyghur Cultural Center. “People got skeptical about each other, even within the family.”

He said he speaks from personal experience. “The last time I communicated with my mother was in April 2017. She said, ‘Please don’t call me. I’ll call you if something happens.’”

Along with the human cost comes repression in the physical space. Structures central to religious culture, notably mosques and monasteries, are being destroyed or repurposed.

Speakers at the Tokyo gathering urged citizens to demand action from their governments. The U.N. Human Rights Office warned in 2022 that China may be committing crimes against humanity. The Dutch government has joined the U.S. in labeling Beijing’s policies genocidal.

Other countries need to add pressure, particularly from inside China’s region. “We’ve got to have

strong Asian democracies stand up,” Mr. Brownback said.

Mr. Respinti said those who plan and implement the genocidal policies should be held to account, but the clock is ticking.

“In 10 or 20 or 30 years, you won’t have identifiable religious or ethnic groups, and it will be ‘mission accomplished,’” he said. “When they can’t practice their religion or can’t speak Tibetan or Uyghur or do not understand it, when it is just the standardized language and culture of China, what’s left?”

Mr. Tseten, born overseas, said he dreams of a Tibetan homeland he has never seen.

“I know where my village is and what it looks like. I live with the memory of Tibet through my parents and grandparents,” he said. “Deep down, I feel one day I will go, when the people in my village and across Tibet will be free from fear to practice what they want, to continue to do what their forefathers have done.”

### **Xinjiang authorities intensify reporting requirements for Uyghur visitors**

23 July 2024, RFA

The measure allows Chinese authorities to monitor Uyghurs’ movements in China’s far-western region.

Authorities in at least two areas of Xinjiang have aggressively ramped up a requirement in recent months that Uyghurs report guests in their homes to police in as little as 10 minutes to two hours of their arrival, three Uyghur township government cadres told Radio Free Asia.

The requirement was first implemented in June 2015 and has been increasingly emphasized by the government of Ma Xingrui who took over as Communist Party secretary of Xinjiang in December 2021, they said.

The requirement is one of several draconian surveillance policies implemented by Chinese authorities to monitor Uyghurs’ movements amid ongoing human rights abuses in Xinjiang that the United States and some Western parliaments have said amount to genocide and crimes against humanity. China has denied the accusations.

Comments posted online by some Uyghur netizens attributed Chinese authorities’ concern about Uyghur gatherings to the government’s tyranny, while others say they believe the main reason is to conceal information about the ongoing genocide in Xinjiang.

A resident of Yengisheher county in Kashgar prefecture was detained at the Yapchan village police station with his wife for forgetting to report a relative from Ghulja who arrived for a visit earlier this month, said a person with knowledge of the situation, giving a recent example of the stepped-up measures.

The pair were released the next day after a night of interrogation, and their guest ended the visit earlier than planned and returned home, he said.

The guest said, "It's like this everywhere," implying that similar practices are in effect in Ghulja where he lives, the person added.

A local police officer contacted by RFA acknowledged the couple's arrest and release.

Police in Guma county of neighboring Hotan prefecture said the system of reporting newly arrived guests to police was being more rigorously adhered to than it was in the past.

A police officer in the county's Kokterak township said residents there must report out-of-town guests to authorities within two hours of their arrival and neighbors within one hour of their arrival.

An officer in the county's Choda township said residents must report guests to the police within 10 minutes, and that if they failed to report them within 30 minutes, they would be held responsible, though he didn't elaborate.

"If the guests stay for more than half an hour they need to be reported," he said. "It's the same for any number of guests. Starting from the beginning of this year, this policy has been strict."

Adult and teenage visitors as young as 14 must be reported, he added.

He said he didn't believe that any Uyghurs who failed to report visitors had been taken in for "re-education."

### **Uyghur rights organization bashes China for atrocities in Xinjiang**

23 July 2024, India Narrative

The Uyghur community residing in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) has been facing atrocities inflicted by China for decades.

East Turkistan Svenska Uyghur Kommitten (SUK), a Uyghur rights organization, lamented China's brutality towards the children of the Uyghur community in a statement released on Sunday.

The statement also claimed that the 'Convention on the Rights of the Child' (CRC), a UN human rights law for child rights and protection, has not been able to protect the basic rights of over a million Uyghur children who still suffer in XUAR.

In a post on 'X', the organization said, "The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is a cornerstone of international human rights law, intended to protect the fundamental rights of children globally. Yet, the ongoing atrocities faced by over a million Uyghur children under Chinese occupation, colonisation and genocide starkly expose the CRC's limitations and failures in enforcement."

The SUK statement further stated, "Over one million Uyghur children have been forcibly abducted by the

CCP from their families, who are detained in concentration camps or prisons. Stripped of their familial support, these defenceless children endure severe human rights abuses. They are subjected to physical and psychological torture, forced labour, organ harvesting, sexual violence, and systematic indoctrination designed to erase their cultural and religious identities and brainwash them into loyal Chinese citizens."

While referring to the laws of CRC to protect children, the SUK mentioned saying, "The CRC explicitly mandates the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and abuse, while safeguarding their rights to education, cultural identity, and familial bonds."

"The CCP's flagrant violations of these rights in East Turkistan represent a profound failure of the CRC to protect these vulnerable children. This situation demands urgent international attention and action to uphold the principles of the CRC and defend children from such egregious human rights abuses," it said.

"The international community's silence and inaction in the face of these atrocities constitute a grave moral and legal failure. The credibility of the CRC is at stake; without decisive action, it risks becoming a mere declaration of intent rather than a robust framework for child protection. Immediate and coordinated diplomatic, economic, and legal measures are essential to hold the CCP accountable and halt these violations" the statement further added.

The statement also urged that the global community must use its power to ensure that the rights and dignity of Uyghur children are restored and protected.

Anything less is a betrayal of the CRC's core principles and an abdication of our shared responsibility to protect all children, irrespective of geopolitical considerations.

"The dire plight of Uyghur children demands nothing less than a united, powerful, and unyielding response from the international community," the statement read.

### **International pressure builds on China for human rights violations in Xinjiang, Tibet**

21 July 2024, Times of India

Human rights advocates have stressed the need for solidarity and measures to ensure accountability for human rights violations in Xinjiang and Tibet, requiring urgent international attention and action.

The situation in Xinjiang and Tibet is seen as a humanitarian crisis, and human rights activists have emphasised the need for support for independent investigations for human rights violations.

United Nations bodies, including the Human Rights Council, have repeatedly raised concerns and called on China to allow independent observers access to Xinjiang to investigate allegations of human rights violations.

Governments and parliaments of various countries, including Canada and the United States, have made statements and passed resolutions condemning China's actions in Xinjiang and Tibet.

These actions underscore international concern and solidarity with affected communities. In 2009, the Canadian Parliament had also passed a non-binding motion declaring China's actions against Uyghurs in Xinjiang as genocide.

Recently, in a groundbreaking ruling, the Court of the Citizens of the World (CCW) delivered a verdict against China for its alleged perpetration of genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang (East Turkistan) and Tibet.

The tribunal, convened in the Hague, Netherlands, from July 8 to 12, marked a significant moment in international justice as it addressed accusations of systematic atrocities committed by Beijing.

Representatives of the East Turkistan Government in Exile (ETGE), speaking on behalf of the Uyghur and Tibetan communities, welcomed the tribunal's decision as a pivotal step towards accountability.

ETGE underscored the historical context of East Turkistan as an area with aspirations of independence, now subjected to what they describe as Beijing's relentless campaign to suppress dissent and assimilate the region into a unified Chinese nation.

ETGE took to X, and stated, "The Judge underscored that international law mandates the recognition of the right to self-determination. He concluded that China systematically planned and executed acts of genocide and crimes against humanity targeting Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples and Chinese dictator Xi Jinping is directly responsible for the crimes. The Judge further highlighted that the ongoing Uyghur Genocide is a "continuous vigorous attack aiming to completely annihilate the Uyghur community."

During the hearings, harrowing testimonies from survivors and experts painted a bleak picture of life in Xinjiang, where reports of mass internment camps, forced labour, and coercive assimilation have drawn global condemnation.

Similar accusations were levied against China's policies in Tibet, where Tibetan culture and autonomy have long been targets of Chinese state control.

The findings of such tribunals can have significant moral and political weight, influencing public opinion, international diplomacy, and calls for accountability.

While the CCW may not have the enforcement

power of a national court or an international judicial body, its rulings can contribute to the broader discourse on human rights and potentially spur further action by other entities, including governments and international organisations.

### On Eid Al-Adha, calls for action highlight Uyghur and Turkic Muslims' plight in Xinjiang

17 July 2024, The Economic Times

As Muslims around the world celebrate Eid al-Adha, organizations advocating for the rights of Uyghur and Turkic Muslims in East Turkistan (Xinjiang province of China) have issued poignant messages calling for global solidarity and action.

"On this sacred #EidAlAdha, we reflect on faith and resilience. We implore the global #Muslim community to stand with the #Uyghur/Turkic Muslims of occupied #EastTurkistan, who face genocide and are denied their faith. Unite in prayer and action for their dignity and independence," the message reads.

Similarly, the East Turkistan National Movement also conveyed Eid Al-Adha greetings, urging the global community to remember those suffering under Chinese occupation.

"As you gather with loved ones to celebrate this sacred holiday, please remember and pray for the Muslims in occupied #EastTurkistan, who are facing colonization and genocide under Chinese occupation," the organization posted.

They further called for collective action, stating, "Stand with us in demanding an end to China's relentless persecution, and join us in our call for justice, liberation, and the restoration of the East Turkist people's dignity, faith, and independence."

The East Turkistan National Movement has been at the forefront of efforts to end what it terms the "ongoing Uyghur Genocide," promoting democracy, political and human rights, and striving to restore East Turkistan's freedom and independence.

Their messages on this significant Islamic holiday aim to mobilise support from the global Muslim community and beyond, emphasising the urgent need for international intervention.

The situation in East Turkistan, officially known as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region by China, has been a critical human rights issue.

Reports of mass detentions, forced labour, and severe restrictions on religious practices have drawn widespread condemnation from human rights organisations and governments worldwide.

Despite these efforts, the Chinese government has consistently denied accusations of genocide and human rights abuses, asserting that their actions in the region are aimed at combating extremism and promoting economic development.



The Eid al-Adha messages from the East Turkistan Government in Exile and the East Turkistan National Movement serve as a stark reminder of the ongoing struggles faced by Uyghur and Turkic Muslims.

As they celebrate this holy occasion, these organisations urge the international community to unite in prayer and action to support their quest for justice, freedom, and the preservation of their cultural and religious heritage.

### China bans Muslim Eid holiday rites for Uyghurs in Xinjiang

16 July 2024, Genocide Watch

Their aim was to promote the Sinicization of the Muslim group, observers say.



Men dance in front of the Id kah Mosque after Eid al-Fitr morning prayers in Kashgar, northwestern China's Xinjiang region, June 5, 2019.

On an important Muslim holiday last month, police and security officials in China's far-western region of Xinjiang set up camps to keep an eye on Uyghurs, took Uyghurs to see communist-themed films, and visited Uyghur homes to make sure they weren't practicing Muslim religious activities.

The moves around the Qurban Eid, also known as Eid al-Adha or the Feast of the Sacrifice, which fell on June 17 this year in Xinjiang — one of two official Muslim holidays in China — appeared to be attempts to undermine the observation of the Muslim holy day, outside experts said.

Chinese authorities are trying to weaken Uyghurs' ethnic and religious identity and forge their loyalty to the Chinese state and the Communist Party, while maintaining security, the experts said.

"It looks like they are trying to Sinicize Eid," said Erkin Ekrem, a professor at Hacettepe University in Ankara, Turkey, and vice president of the World Uyghur Congress.

"The Chinese government is trying to change the Eid customs, prayers and traditions [by] making Uyghurs consume food along with Chinese people [and]

adding Chinese elements to the Eid festivals, thereby removing the Muslim Eid elements," he added.

Before 2017, when the Chinese government started cracking down on religious activities in the predominantly Muslim region, men would observe the holiday by visiting mosques for special prayers, cooking meals, spending time with relatives and welcoming guests to their homes.

Since then, authorities have also forbidden Islamic dress for women, beards for men, and Muslim names for children. They have also prevented Uyghurs from fasting during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan and encouraged the consumption of pork and alcohol, which Islam forbids.

Chinese national consciousness

On the eve of Eid, Ma Xingrui, Communist Party secretary of Xinjiang, visited communities in Urumqi, the region's capital, and asked residents to strengthen Chinese national consciousness and insist on the Sinicization of Islam.

Public security officers celebrated the holiday with Uyghurs and other ethnicities in Xinjiang and promoted "the common consciousness of the Chinese nation," the Xinjiang Daily reported on June 19.

The Keriye County Public Security Bureau in Hotan invited teachers at area primary schools, students and parents on June 16 to participate in social activities at a police camp to "build strong Chinese national consciousness and celebrate Eid," the report said.

On the same day, police in Qitai county in the Changji Hui Autonomous Prefecture invited Uyghur "relatives" with whom they had been paired up under a previous monitoring program to visit a museum to watch communist-themed films.

On June 17, members of the Public Security Bureau in the prefecture's Manas county visited Uyghur homes and danced with residents, who had no choice but to join in, the news report said.

"The police showed their concern for the public by their actions and also planted the seeds of national unity deep in everyone's hearts," it said.

Assimilation policies

Henryk Szadziwski, director of research at the Uyghur Human Rights Project, said public security agents interfere in Muslim holidays like Eid al-Adha to push assimilationist policies in Xinjiang.

Uyghur identification with Turkic culture along with a belief in Islam and related social and political values are considered a threat because they are outside the control of the Chinese state, he told Radio Free Asia.

"China's policies are intended to weaken those kinds of affinities outside which are beyond the borders of China and to ensure Uyghurs allegiances are pinned to the Chinese state and, of course, the Chinese Communist Party," Szadziwski said.

But the Chinese government separates Islam in China from Islam in the rest of the world, Erkin Ekrem of the World Uyghur Congress said.

"In China, the Sinicization of Islam is being carried out vigorously," he told RFA. "They are trying to create a nation away from Islamic beliefs and customs."

"Deemphasizing the religion adding in this secular Chinese national consciousness [is] meant to delink Eid al-Adha from its religious origin," he said. "That is one of the aims here."

### **China destroying mosques, erasing Islamic identity from Xinjiang: Report**

16 July 2024, Indian Narrative

Hundreds of mosques and Islamic shrines have been destroyed by China in recent years, as Beijing aims to erase the Islamic culture associated with the Xinjiang province and forcefully assimilate the Uyghurs with their Han Chinese culture, a report by The Economist stated.

World Uyghur Congress reacted to the report, citing the findings of the report.

"Since the 16th century most Uyghurs have practised Islam. But China has no interest in this later period. Instead, officials are trying to erase it. In recent years they have destroyed hundreds of mosques and Muslim shrines across [East Turkistan]," the WUC post on X read.

The report titled 'China is using archaeology as a weapon' elaborated how the state is unearthing ancient justifications for its rule over Xinjiang

China has destroyed hundreds of mosques and Muslim shrines across Xinjiang. The museum in Kashgar barely mentions Islam, save for signs claiming that it was forced on Xinjiang and that the Uyghurs "are not Muslim by nature".

The report cited a Buddhist stupa in Kashgar, an oasis city in the far-western region of Xinjiang. The stupa and a temple next to it were probably built some 1,700 years ago and abandoned a few centuries later. Chinese archaeologists started excavating the site in 2019. They have dug up stone tools, copper coins and fragments of a Buddha statue.

The archaeologists also claim to have found clear proof that Xinjiang has been part of China since ancient times.

The report cited official statements, which claim that artefacts discovered at Mo'er temple are similar to those dug up thousands of miles to the east in areas dominated by the Han, China's majority ethnic group. Parts of the temple were built in a "Han Buddhist" style. And its architectural features suggest that it was visited by a famous 7th-century monk from

central China called Xuanzang. He is known for spreading Buddhism in the country.

"These claims may sound academic, but China's government is using them to justify its brutal rule over Xinjiang," the report stated.

China's security campaign was at its peak in 2018-19, during which around a million Uyghurs and other Muslim residents of Xinjiang passed through camps where they were forcibly assimilated into Han Chinese culture. Critics accuse China of "cultural genocide." Officials say they are trying to stamp out religious extremism.

Moreover, if the inhabitants of Xinjiang have always been Chinese, then accusations of forced assimilation make no sense, the report added.

Last month China organised a conference in Kashgar that focused on the discoveries made at Mo'er temple and other sites.

Pan Yue, head of the state's Ethnic Affairs Commission, said they prove that there is no separation between the culture of Xinjiang and Chinese culture. Those who criticise China's policies in the region reveal their "ignorance of history" and are peddling "baseless narratives", he added.

However, experts are of the opinion that actually it is China's narrative that looks 'dodgy'.

James Millward of Georgetown University, says the country's ancient dynasties had an on-and-off military foothold in what is now Xinjiang. But from the 8th century to the early 18th century, they had little influence. Then in 1759 China's final dynasty, the Qing, conquered the region and turned it into a colony. That is what the Communist Party inherited when it came to power in 1949.

Sites like Mo'er temple are fascinating, but do little to strengthen China's claims. They demonstrate the globalising effect of the Silk Road, a network of trade routes that linked China with Central Asia and Europe. Just as money and commodities flowed along the road, so did religions such as Buddhism, picking up aspects of local cultures along the way. Many of the Uyghurs' ancestors were indeed Buddhist. But that hardly means Xinjiang was culturally or politically part of China. After all, Buddhism originally came from India.

Since the 16th century, most Uyghurs have practised Islam. But China has no interest in this later period. Instead, Beijing's officials are trying to erase it.

The ruins across Xinjiang are surrounded by buildings with sloping roof tiles and red doors, mimicking those of Beijing's Forbidden City. The style is appropriate, said a Han construction worker. Buddhist culture is part of Han culture, he claimed, and Xinjiang has been part of China for thousands of years, the report added.

## CCP's Anniversary Marred by Outcry Over Xinjiang 'Genocide'

12 July 2024, Genocide Watch

On the 103rd anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the party is facing severe criticism from human rights organisations and ethnic groups for alleged human rights abuses in Xinjiang, also known as East Turkistan.

The Swedish Uyghur Committee highlighted the grim legacy of the CCP on social media, condemning what they describe as the party's "ruthless invasion, occupation, and colonisation" of East Turkistan.

The committee's post on Twitter, now known as X, stated, "On #CCP's 103rd anniversary, remember their legacy stained by blood: Ruthless invasion, #occupation, and #colonisation of #EastTurkistan accompanied by their ongoing #genocide against Uyghurs/Turkic peoples."

The post further accused the Chinese government of subjecting millions of East Turkistani people, including Uyghurs, to severe human rights violations. These allegations include torture, execution, organ harvesting, starvation, indoctrination, sexual assault, and forced labour in concentration camps.

The committee also highlighted the forced sterilisation of pregnant Uyghur women, the killing of unborn children, and the abduction of over a million Uyghur children by the CCP for what they termed "horrific abuse," including organ harvesting.

The Swedish Uyghur Committee's post emphasised that the anniversary should not be viewed as a celebration but rather as a reminder of the "monstrous cruelty" perpetrated by the CCP and the "world's complicit silence."

The CCP, which has ruled China since 1949, often uses its anniversary to highlight its achievements and reaffirm its commitment to socialism with Chinese characteristics. However, the party's actions in Xinjiang have drawn widespread international condemnation. Numerous reports and testimonies from survivors have detailed the extent of the abuses, leading many to label the situation as genocide.

As the CCP marks its 103rd anniversary, the voices calling for justice for the Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples in Xinjiang grow louder, demanding accountability and an end to the ongoing human rights abuses. (ANI).

### Ancient Buddhist temple in Xinjiang stirs controversy

10 July 2024, RFA

Outside experts dispute Chinese historians' claims it's from the Tang Dynasty and shows Chinese influence.

Two earthen pillars, eroded by sand, in barren terrain are all that's left of an ancient Buddhist temple in the far-western Chinese region of Xinjiang. Chinese historians and archaeologists assert that a 7th century Chinese empress ordered the construction of the Mor Temple – known locally as Mora, or "chimney" in the Uyghur language – one of the earliest Buddhist sites in the region.

The ruins show China's influence in shaping the history and culture of the region – home today to 11 million mostly Muslim Uyghurs – going back centuries, state-run media said.

"They are a powerful testimony to the diversity, unity and inclusiveness of Chinese civilization," according to a June 3 report by the China News Service.

But experts outside China dispute those claims, saying the Mor Stupa, or pagoda, and other temple structures were built in more of an Indian style.

And it's highly unlikely that Wu Zetian, empress from 690-705 CE during the Tang Dynasty, was involved in the construction of pagodas because it was hundreds of miles away from her court in central China, they say.

Instead, the Chinese government-backed research may be driven more by Beijing's efforts to expand its cultural influence in the region, where it is actively seeking to Sinicize Uyghur culture and Muslim practices, they said.

"Empress Wu, the famous female emperor of that time, was avidly promoting Buddhism but not necessarily was she promoting it out in Xinjiang," said Johan Elverskog, a professor of history at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, and author of the book *A History of Uyghur Buddhism*.

"There is no way that the Tang was involved in building things that far to the west," he said.

Before Islam

Before Islam arrived in China in the 7th century, Buddhism did flourish in what China today calls Xinjiang, or "New Territories" – but which the Uyghurs refer to as East Turkistan, the name of the Uyghur nation that briefly existed in the mid-20th century.

Western archaeologists and Buddhism researchers believe that Buddhism began to spread to Xinjiang during the Kushan Empire, which controlled the western and northern Tarim Basin in southern Xinjiang and ruled over parts of what is today Afghanistan, Pakistan and India between the 1st century BCE and the 3rd century CE.

Some historical documents show Buddhism spread to the region from Afghanistan and northern Pakistan, Elverskog said, while other documents indicate that the Kingdom of Khotan, in present-day Hotan, adopted Buddhism as the official state religion in the 2nd and 3rd centuries.

Archaeological digs at the Mor Temple — about 30 kilometers (19 miles) northeast of Kashgar — since 2019 have determined that the original complex was built in the 3rd century, according to the China News Service report.

It said that elements of Chinese architecture appeared between the 7th and 10th centuries, indicating the prevalence of Chinese Buddhism.

Artifacts discovered around the site reflect Indian and Central Asian Buddhist traditions as well as the influence of the Central Plains, an area along the Yellow River that is believed to be the cradle of Chinese civilization, it said.

But Elverskog said that while there was a Chinese military presence in the region during the Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE), no Buddhist temples were built.

'United' by Chinese culture

The idea that Uyghur culture, including its ancient Buddhist history and structures, should be supplanted by Chinese culture was summed up in a speech by Pan Yue, head of the State Council's National Ethnic Affairs Commission, at an international forum on Xinjiang's history and future held in June in Kashgar.

"Although Xinjiang's culture is diverse, it exists in unity, and the most important factor that unites them is Chinese culture," said Pan, who has been in his role since June 2022.

"Xinjiang should be studied from the perspective of the common history of the Chinese nation and the multipolar unity of the Chinese nation, and Xinjiang should be understood from the perspective of a region where many cultures and religions coexist and ethnic groups live together," he said.

Kahar Barat, a Uyghur-American historian known for his work on Buddhism and Islam in Xinjiang, said there was "absolutely no Chinese influence" in the Buddhist culture of places like Kashgar and Kucha, another city that once had many Buddhist temples.

He said Kashgar and Kucha were part of the Hindu-Greek Gandhara Buddhist culture that existed in present-day Pakistan from the 3rd century BCE to the 12th century CE.

"They call it the Gandhara art," he said. "It's the Gandhara culture created by the Buddhism developed in Kashmir and Pakistan. Therefore, the Buddha paintings and temples in Hotan, Kashgar, Kucha have the influence of Gandhara culture."

Furthermore, Buddhist temples during the Tang Dynasty were modeled after those in India, making it an exaggeration to say that the Mor Stupa and other temple structures reflected the architectural style of that era, he said.

"Pavilion-style construction is a style of India Buddhism," he told RFA. "Hence, all the pavilions in China are inspired by these styles. The building styles

in the Han Dynasty were later influenced by Buddhist vihara-style construction."

Elverskog agreed that the Mor Temple was built in Indian style.

"It's obviously based on precedence in northwest India," he said. "That was the main source of the Buddhist culture in Hotan and particularly coming from India. ... So the Buddhism, the iconography, the artwork, was heavily based on northwestern Indian models."

Xia Ming, a political science professor at the College of Staten Island in New York, said China's interpretation of historical Uyghur Buddhism as part of Chinese Buddhism shows the tendency of the Chinese Communist Party to seek its current legitimacy from Chinese dynasties dating back thousands of years.

"If you look at the thousands of years of Chinese history," he said, "you will see that the Chinese Communist Party will pick and choose any historical node and talk about it if it is useful to them."

### **China, UAE hold 2nd annual air force drill in Xinjiang**

10 July 2024, AA, Riyaz ul Khaliq

Falcon Shield-2024 joint training exercise to continue till late July, says Chinese Defense Ministry

China and the United Arab Emirates are holding the second annual joint air force drill in the Xinjiang region.

According to China's Defense Ministry, the annual Falcon Shield-2024 joint training exercise between the Chinese and UAE air forces has been ongoing in the northwestern Xinjiang province since late June and will continue until late July.

The training between the two air forces aims to "enhance mutual understanding and trust, deepen exchanges and cooperation, improve strategic cooperation, and achieve common goals and expectations of both sides," the ministry said on Wednesday.

Last year, the Falcon Shield-2023 joint training exercise was held in August in the same province.

Meanwhile, Chinese and Lao troops are holding the China-Laos Friendship Shield-2024 joint military exercise in the Lao capital Vientiane.

In another joint military exercise, Chinese troops Tuesday held an opening ceremony of the China-Belarus Eagle Assault-2024 drill in the southwestern city of Brest in Belarus, along the border with Poland.



## Uyghur Muslim Genocide: ETGE slams, exposes PRC globally for 'barbaric' human rights abuses in Xinjiang

08 July 2024, Organiser

On the 15th anniversary of the Uyghur Muslim massacre in Xinjiang, the East Turkistan Government in Exile and its foreign minister along with the Swedish Uyghur Committee (SOC) have staged protests at an international level urging the government to pressurize China to place a complete halt on the ongoing genocide in western China.

The representatives of the East Turkistan Government in Exile (ETGE) and the Swedish Uyghur Committee (SUC) on July 6, 2024, organised protests in Amsterdam, Netherlands, Stockholm and Sweden highlighting the increasing number of atrocities being perpetrated by the CCP authorities onto their Uyghur Community.

The protests by these Uyghur rights organisations were organised on the sidelines of the commemoration of Uyghur massacre. During the protests in Amsterdam's Dam Square, the Foreign Minister of ETGE, Salih Hundayar urged the Dutch government to put pressure on the Chinese government to immediately stop the ongoing genocide upon the Uyghur community.

"We urge the government to act against China's ongoing campaign of colonisation, genocide and occupation. We want them to support the people of East Turkestan to get their rights to independence and right to human dignity. The restoration of East Turkestan's independence is the only way to ensure that their human rights, their resistance and their human dignity are guaranteed," Hundayar said.

The minister further noted that China has refused to implement and respect the fundamental rights of the East Turkistani people. "Unfortunately, despite a lot of countries criticizing China and even the United Nations stating that China has been committing crimes against humanity and has refused to implement and respect the fundamentals of the East Turkestan people," he said.

The minister added that the only way to ensure our human dignity is by restoring independence. "By doing so, they have once again showed that they intend to continue pursuing objectives to completely eradicate the people of East Turkestan. Hence the only way to ensure their human dignity is by restoring their independence, he added.

In another protest led by the Swedish Uyghur Committee outside the Swedish Parliament, a protestor recalling the China's genocidal acts during the Urumqi Massacre of 2009, said, "On that unfortunate day, hundreds if not thousands of Uyghurs were massacred and tens of thousands were arrested across East Turkestan. Since then, the

Chinese occupational forces have implemented an even more oppressive surveillance driven police state laying a groundwork of ongoing genocide.

The protestor further referred to Chinese so-called operation of Peoples War in the East Turkestan initiated in 2014 which has marked an even more systematic pattern of genocide.

The protestor lamented that the Uyghurs and other similar communities of the larger Turkestan homeland such as Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Tajik in Xinjiang have been subjected to mass interment in concentration camps and prisons where they endure forced mitigation, indoctrination, torture, rape, organ harvesting and executions. "Many are enslaved in factories and forced labour camps under abhorrent conditions and the scope of the genocide is staggering.

During the 2016-17, the Chinese regime forcibly collected DNA voice prints and retina scans from over 36 million individuals aged between 12 to 65. They have been forcibly sterilised and over a million Uyghur children have been separated from their families and have been placed in state run facilities to be raised as loyal Chinese citizens. The protestors continued that over 60,000 mosques and other cultural sights have been destroyed in an attempt to erase native Uyghur culture.

## Uighur culture being erased as Beijing tightens grip on Xinjiang, 15 years after Urumqi riots

09 July 2024, Asia News Network, Miho Tamura



Armed personnel stand guard from an armored vehicle at the entrance of a bazaar in Urumqi, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, in early June. PHOTO: THE YOMIURI SHIMBUN

A report released in February by The Jamestown Foundation, a U.S. research institute, said that authorities in the autonomous region were taking away farmland from Uighur smallholders and that "surplus laborers" were being transferred.

Friday marked 15 years since deadly riots involving Han Chinese and the Uighur ethnic minority in Urumqi, the capital of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in western China.

In late June 2009, Uighur and Han laborers clashed at a toy factory in Guangdong Province, thousands of kilometers away in southeastern China, in an



incident that left two Uighurs dead. When Urumqi residents protested on July 5, demanding to know the truth behind the incident, some of them clashed with police. According to Chinese authorities, 197 people died in the ensuing riots and at least 1,700 were injured.

Today, on the pretext of combatting terrorism, the Chinese Communist Party continues to tighten its grip over the region despite U.S. and European criticism that Uighurs are being used for forced labor. As a result of China's policy, the unique culture and customs of Uighurs are being erased.

Vast cotton fields could be seen on both sides of the road about one hour's drive west from Urumqi. As the stifling heat blazed down one day in early June, Uighur men wearing straw hats silently toiled away in the fields.

After driving for about another hour, I arrived in Shihezi. This city is a major base of operations for the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, a paramilitary organization responsible for defending remote regions and bringing land under cultivation. The corps was established in 1954 as an organization of farmer-soldiers predominantly of Han ethnicity, and Han Chinese now account for about 90% of Shihezi's population.

Cotton has become one of the corps' most important industries. However, the United States blocked imports of cotton from the region in 2021 due to concerns that Uighurs placed in mass internment camps were being mobilized for cotton production. In the name of alleviating poverty, the administration of Chinese President Xi Jinping has promoted labor transfers in which Uighurs were moved to work as laborers, and some reportedly are engaged in such agricultural work as picking cotton.

A report released in February by The Jamestown Foundation, a U.S. research institute, said that authorities in the autonomous region were taking away farmland from Uighur smallholders and that "surplus laborers" were being transferred. The report also stated that forced labor had become "less visible" and "institutionalized."

A museum in central Shihezi that showcases the corps does not mention of the situation surrounding these labor transfers. The museum is filled with exhibits trumpeting the region's development and declares that the corps established cotton spinning factories and achieved great advances. Although the exhibition touches on "harmony" between the Han and Uighurs, visitors to the museum were mostly Han. Not a single Uighur could be seen.

Village names changed

Assimilation policies are moving forward in remote parts of the autonomous region. During a visit to Kashgar in the western part of the region in early June, a large, celebrated bazaar had been

surrounded by a fence and its Islamic-style signs had been removed.

In 2022, authorities announced the bazaar would be relocated because the facility had become dilapidated. Even today, heavy machinery is still busily demolishing what remains.

"I've shopped at this place for many years," a Uighur man said. "It's such a pity."

The Chinese flag whips in the breeze above the famous Id Kah Mosque in Kashgar. Many Han tourists were around the mosque, which no longer has an air of religious solemnity.

Beijing, concerned that terrorists from Afghanistan or elsewhere might infiltrate the country, has strengthened policies like these in the remote regions. There is smoldering discontent with the oppressions in places such as Kashgar, where Uighurs make up about 80% of the population. The central government remains highly vigilant due to concerns that the remote regions could become hotbeds for terrorist organizations.

In June, the international human rights organization Human Rights Watch announced that the names of about 630 villages in the autonomous region had been changed by authorities since 2017 to reflect government propaganda. One such new name is Unity. The majority of these affected villages are in Kashgar and other districts, which are home to many Uighurs. The original names had religious or cultural meanings to Uighurs and, according to Human Rights Watch, the changes are part of a broader Chinese government effort to "erase culture and religious expressions" of Uighurs.

### 15 years after Xinjiang unrest, China fends off criticism of hardline rule

05 July 2024, Nikkei Asia, Kenji Kawase

Beijing cements support from like-minded states, cushioning West's condemnation.



Uyghur women protest in front of policemen in Urumqi on July 7, 2009. The unrest, which started two days earlier, prompted a harsh crackdown and led to much stricter governance in the Xinjiang region. © Getty Images

Fifteen years ago in Urumqi, the capital of China's northwestern Xinjiang region, thousands of ethnic

Uyghurs took to the streets to demand equal treatment and rights as those enjoyed by Han Chinese.

Xinjiang would never be the same.

The protests, which erupted on July 5, 2009, ended in what is considered one of the most severe crackdowns by Chinese authorities. By the end of three days of unrest, 197 people were dead, mostly Uyghurs, according to the official account.

The uprising prompted Beijing to adopt a much tougher line in governing Xinjiang – a hardening that reverberates to this day in the government's international relations.

The July 2009 protests originated as a plea against the perceived failure of the authorities to seriously investigate an earlier incident, in which a false rumor triggered an attack against Uyghurs by Han Chinese at a factory in the southern province of Guangdong. Several ethnic Uyghurs were killed in that dispute.

Dolkun Isa, president of the Munich-headquartered World Uyghur Congress, released a statement on Thursday, calling the suppression of the protests a "massacre" that "stands as one of the darkest episodes in the history of the Uyghur people." He added that Beijing's "harsh crackdown on the protest marked a pivotal turning point, intensifying the repression of the Uyghur people," which he described as a "genocide" against the mostly Muslim group.

China has long denied such allegations. But the violence a decade and a half ago forced the Chinese government to scramble to contain the fallout, as photos and footage spread worldwide, drawing unwanted international scrutiny of its treatment of ethnic minorities.

At the time, then President Hu Jintao aborted a tour in Italy, skipping a meeting with the G8 countries, which had not yet booted Russia over its illegitimate annexation of Crimea in 2014. China had been invited to Western leaders' annual gathering as a dialogue partner.

The state-owned Xinhua news agency reported rather candidly that Hu had to "cut short his stay in Italy ... due to the situation in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region." The Portugal leg of Hu's trip was also canceled.

Fast-forward 15 years, and China remains haunted by charges of human rights violations in Xinjiang and attempts to strip away the region's Uyghur identity. But it has also found support from certain segments of the international community in fending off criticism, while it claims credit for promoting Xinjiang's economic development.

In late June, China convened the eighth China-Eurasia Expo in Urumqi, showcasing 6,000 products. On Tuesday, the expo's secretariat said the fair had

attracted nearly 250,000 visits, leading to 395 contracts worth 615.55 billion yuan (\$84.67 billion).

Meanwhile, current President Xi Jinping is on the road to two of the three former Soviet republics that directly border Xinjiang – Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. Both states have dismal human rights records of their own, but China has built friendly ties on shared economic interests and mutual political needs. This was on full display in the joint statement between China and Kazakhstan on Wednesday, signed by Xi and his counterpart President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit.

"Both sides stressed that the significance of maintaining political security is grave," the statement says. The two governments are "staunchly opposed to external forces interfering in internal affairs and politicizing human rights issues and applying double standards." The duo confirmed they would strengthen their "eternal comprehensive strategic partnership."

In the SCO's Astana Declaration, adopted Thursday, all members reaffirmed their determination "to strike against terrorism, separatism and extremism." The summit also churned out a separate document outlining a three-year action plan among member states to coordinate in fighting these three forces, from 2025 and 2027.

Most SCO members have similar low rankings on the Cato Institute's latest human freedom index of 165 countries and regions. China sits at 149th, while Kazakhstan is in 104th place and Tajikistan in 139th. Kyrgyz Republic, the other direct Xinjiang neighbor that Xi skipped this time, ranks 90th.

China has long justified its hardline policies in Xinjiang as a fight against terrorism, especially since Xi took the helm.

Xi in 2014 implemented the so-called "Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Terrorism" in the region, while expanding the notion of "national security" by introducing the concept of a "holistic approach" including 20 elements, from defense, economic and finance to culture, science and technology. The crackdown escalated in 2017 when internment camps were established in the name of countering extremism.

The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights published a report on Xinjiang in 2022, concluding that Beijing's stated drive against terrorism and extremism "may constitute international crimes, in particular crimes against humanity."

The latest communique by G7 leaders gathered in Italy last month once again said the seven Western democracies "remain concerned by the human rights situation in China, including in Tibet and in Xinjiang." The Chinese government categorically rejects the criticism and describes the internment facilities as "reeducation centers."

Elaine Pearson, Asia director at Human Rights Watch, praised the publication of the U.N.'s report two years ago as a "landmark moment for highlighting the gravity of human rights violations in Xinjiang," while adding that it is up to the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk to "make full use of that report to improve the situation for Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang."

Sarah Brooks, China director at Amnesty International, said that this year's "second anniversary of the report's release should be an opportunity to build momentum for an independent international mechanism to monitor, report on and investigate allegations of severe human rights violations, including crimes against humanity in Xinjiang."

Brooks stressed, "No state, no matter how influential, should be shielded from accountability for human rights violations."

Turk, at the opening of the 56th session of the U.N. Human Rights Council on June 18, said he has "continued to engage with China on a range of human rights issues, including the serious concerns my office identified in the Xinjiang region."

He revealed that his staff recently visited Beijing "to discuss, among other things, problematic provisions in China's counterterrorism and criminal laws." Turk expressed hope that such dialogue "will contribute to concrete improvements in all human rights."

Yet China continues to push back, insisting the Xinjiang issue is "in essence about safeguarding the national sovereignty, security and unity." In a report submitted to the U.N. council, Beijing said it had gained support from close to 100 countries and, without naming names, urged "certain countries to abandon ideological bias and to stop politicizing and weaponizing human rights issues."

The document was adopted by the council's working group on Thursday in Geneva, with 98 mainly Western recommendations rejected. The proposals that were denied included implementing the 2022 high commissioner's Xinjiang report, which Beijing calls "completely illegal and void."

The World Uyghur Congress, in its statement on Thursday, once again called on the international community to hold China accountable. "The failure of the international community to scrutinize the Chinese government's actions [allows] for China to continue to implement policies that perpetrate crimes against humanity and genocide in East Turkistan," it said, using its term for the region.

## China's Xinjiang Communist Party chief urges 'unwavering' terror crackdown

06 July 2024, SCMP, Kinling Lo

Party secretary Ma Xingrui's call for sustained 'high-intensity crackdowns' follows latest military-police joint exercise in western border region.

The Communist Party chief of China's Xinjiang region has called on security personnel to "unwaveringly" uphold the authorities' "high-intensity crackdown on terrorism".

The call from Ma Xingrui came as the western border region completed its latest military-police joint exercise.

"Social stability must be at the forefront" of "strengthening stability and boosting development", Ma told police officers in Xinjiang on Friday.

"[Our] approach towards high-intensity crackdowns has to remain unwavering," Ma was quoted as saying by Xinjiang Daily, an official newspaper.

"[We] have to eliminate all terrorist threats at the initial stage, and push forward with normalising counterterrorism work."

Ma also called for stronger border security and a "society-wide" ability to control risks. Eliminating political, economic and ideological "risks" were important to ensure the prevention of "structural risks", he said.

The Xinjiang Uyghur autonomous region is home to nearly 26 million people, more than half of them from ethnic minority groups, including the mainly Muslim Uyghurs and Kazakhs.

China's years-long crackdown on extremism among Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang has sparked allegations of human rights abuses and sanctions from the United States and other countries. Beijing denies accusations of repression and has hailed its policies in managing ethnic conflicts, combating terrorism and relieving poverty as successful. However, it has continued to step up security measures as part of a campaign to normalise counterterror work.

The latest military-police drills took place in "southern Xinjiang", in the Kunlun Mountains bordering India and Pakistan, according to Xinjiang Daily. The specific location or dates of the exercise were not reported.

Around 3,000 security personnel took part, the report said, including those from the People's Liberation Army, the paramilitary People's Armed Police, the quasi-military Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, and immigration control and public security agencies.

Helicopters, unmanned aerial vehicles, as well as armoured and assault tanks were used in the exercise, according to state media.

During the drills, personnel practised arresting targeted terrorists, preventing the return and infiltration of terrorists, and combating terrorism in high-altitude regions, footage broadcast by Xinjiang Television showed.

In 2016, Beijing imposed security measures in Xinjiang that it said aimed to crack down on terror attacks following decades of ethnic tensions and unrest. But the measures led to allegations of widespread human rights abuses, including that at least 1 million Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities were held in mass internment camps.

Beijing maintains the centres are for “vocational training”.

The Xinjiang government has in recent years focused on promoting economic development, especially trade links with its neighbouring Central Asian countries, and also sought to improve its international image.

During a visit to the regional capital Urumqi in August, President Xi Jinping doubled down on “social stability” as a top priority for Xinjiang, calling for greater efforts against terrorism and religious extremism while also pushing economic development.

### **'Western misinformation regarding Xinjiang' addresses allegations of a genocide**

04 July 2024, WLNS

Recent discussions and reports on the situation in Xinjiang have sparked global debate and divergent viewpoints. The United Nations Human Rights Report of August 31, 2022, has categorized the events in Xinjiang as “crimes against humanity,” a classification that notably does not meet the stringent criteria for genocide under the UN Genocide Convention. This stance echoes an earlier assessment by Amnesty International in 2021, which similarly refrained from labeling the situation as genocide.

Despite these nuanced distinctions, the issue has remained contentious, particularly fueled by ongoing assertions from some Western nations and media outlets. The United States, for instance, has been vocal in affirming allegations of genocide in Xinjiang, a stance that aligns with previous US State Department reports and statements from President Biden. These claims have persisted amidst broader geopolitical tensions and strategic interests.

Critics argue that the narrative of genocide in Xinjiang is selective and based on cherry-picked evidence, disregarding countervailing facts such as China's assertions in its White Paper that a significant number of Uyghur detainees have been released, efforts to provide vocational training within detention centers, and the implementation of de-radicalization programs in line with international norms.

Moreover, global opinion on the matter reflects a stark divide between Western countries and those in the Global South, including numerous Muslim-majority nations. While Western nations have predominantly endorsed the genocide narrative, a substantial portion of the international community remains skeptical, viewing the issue through geopolitical lenses rather than purely humanitarian concerns.

Significantly, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), representing 57 member states, has expressed support for China's efforts in Xinjiang, including visits to rehabilitation facilities, reflecting a divergent perspective from Western assertions of genocide.

Amidst these debates, critical voices have emerged questioning the underlying motives and agendas driving the genocide narrative. Some analysts argue that geopolitical strategies, including efforts to contain China's influence, play a significant role in shaping international perceptions of Xinjiang. These perspectives highlight broader geopolitical dynamics and selective prioritization of human rights issues on the global stage.

It is essential to approach discussions on Xinjiang with a commitment to factual accuracy and transparency, avoiding sensationalism and political manipulation. The complexity of the issue underscores the importance of balanced dialogue and comprehensive understanding, respecting diverse viewpoints within the global community.

This press release aims to provide a balanced perspective on the Xinjiang issue, acknowledging divergent global viewpoints while emphasizing the need for factual accuracy and transparency in discussions.

### **Committee to Protect Journalists demands release of two Kazakh journalists in Xinjiang**

03 July 2024, The Print

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has demanded Chinese authorities release Kazakh journalists – Kairat Domalin and Kuandyk Koben, who have been arrested from Xinjiang region and stop harassing members of the media fraternity.

In a statement, the CPJ said that the Chinese authorities arrested Domalin and Koben in Urumqi a city in Xinjiang in April this year, and the arrests were reported in June by the Atajurt Kazakh Human Rights, a human rights organization based in Kazakhstan. Both of the journalists were employed at the local state-run television network Xinjiang Television in Urumqi.

According to the statement, CPJ has not yet received any information regarding the charges that resulted

in the arrest of Domalin and Koben. However, the arrest of Koben might be linked to his work related to historic buildings of Xinjiang that have been intentionally ignored by the Chinese government.

While raising the same matter, Iris Hsu, CPJ's China representative stated, "Chinese authorities must free Kazakh journalists Kairat Domalin and Kuandyk Koben. It's time for China to cease its campaign of harassing and arbitrarily detaining press members of the Muslim ethnic minorities and release all imprisoned journalists."

Domalin was a TV presenter for the program "Zholashy" (Traveler) on the Xinjiang Television network, and Koben produced, directed, and presented Kazakh-language documentaries and more than 20 award-winning television programs, the CPJ statement claimed. In addition, the call of CPJ to the Public Security Department of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region regarding the safety of the journalists had also gone unanswered.

Previously, CPJ in a report released in 2023 found out that China remains the worst place when it comes to arresting journalists, especially from ethnic minorities.

According to CPJ's latest annual prison census, with at least 44 behind bars as of December 1, 2023. Many journalists held were ethnic Uyghurs from Xinjiang.

Meanwhile, international human rights organisations, the United Nations, and several governments of the state have blamed China and its authorities for its severe crimes against humanity and ongoing genocide in the Xinjiang region, particularly for repressing the region's Muslim ethnic groups. (ANI)

### **No Uyghurs from Xinjiang went on Hajj pilgrimage, data shows**

02 July 2024, RFA, Gulchehra Hoja

The apparent lack of participation is another example of China's repression of Uyghurs, experts say.

No Uyghurs from China's far-western region of Xinjiang were among the Muslims from China who went on this year's Hajj, according to data from the Islamic Association of China and a Uyghur living abroad who went on the pilgrimage to Mecca.

All told, more than 1.8 million people participated in this year's Hajj, which fell between June 14-19, according to Saudi Arabian officials, including 1.6 million foreign pilgrims.

Muslims in China need government permission to make the pilgrimage, which as one of the Five Pillars of Islam is required of all Muslims once in their lives, if health allows.

As of early June, 1,053 pilgrims – 769 from China's Gansu province and 284 from Yunnan province –

were registered to go on the Hajj, according to the website of the Islamic Association of China. No Uyghurs or other Muslims from Xinjiang were included in the tally.

Last year, 386 pilgrims from Ningxia province and other places in China participated, but none from Xinjiang.

The last time any pilgrim from Xinjiang was reported by the association was in 2016.

Abdusalam Teklimakan Haji, a Uyghur in Turkey who went on the Hajj this year and is a member of the board of the International Union of Eastern Turkistan Organizations, said he saw no Uyghurs from Xinjiang among the Chinese delegation, although he did see some ethnic Hui Muslims carrying Chinese flags.

Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, which oversees the pilgrimage, allows about 1,000 pilgrims per million people from each country around the world, he said. With an estimated population of 11 million Uyghurs in Xinjiang – which Uyghurs prefer to call East Turkistan – at least 11,000 Uyghurs should be allowed to perform the Hajj.

Radio Free Asia tried contacting the Islamic Association of China and other departments in Xinjiang administrating the relevant affairs for comment, but received no response.

Repressing religion

The apparent lack of Uyghur participation suggests Chinese authorities are not permitting any Muslims from Xinjiang from going on the pilgrimage, and reflects Beijing's wider repression of Uyghur culture and religious practice, activists and experts say.

Since 2017, China has severely restricted most religious practices among Uyghurs, including praying in mosques, reciting the Quran and fasting during the holy month of Ramadan, in the name of squelching religious extremism and terrorism.

"The Chinese government's targeted restrictions and repression on Uyghur people's religious activities, such as pilgrimage, prayer and fasting, are part of its genocidal policies against Uyghurs," said Ma Ju, an analyst of Islam based in New York City.

"Although China is giving opportunities to a small number of Hui Muslims to perform Hajj so that they can attract the attention of the world, especially the Muslim world, we know that their religious freedom is also restricted," he said.

"There is no religious freedom for any citizen in China," Ma said.

Just before the start of this year's Hajj season, the Chinese government boosted its propaganda campaign for the Muslim world, experts said.

At the beginning of June, the Chinese Consulate General in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and the Xinjiang Overseas Friendship Association jointly



organized a music night in Dubai called "Xinjiang is a Good Place."

China has held similar events in Kuwait, Turkey, Egypt and other Muslim-dominated countries, emphasizing that they respect the freedom of cultural and religious belief in Xinjiang.

Although the events featured Uyghur dancers and singers, no Uyghurs were a part of the Chinese delegation to Mecca.

### **Chinese authorities arrest 2 ethnic Kazakh TV journalists in Xinjiang**

02 July 2024, CPJ



Armed police officers stand guard on a street in Kashgar in China's Xinjiang region on May 4, 2021. CPJ called on Chinese authorities to release ethnic Kazakh journalists Kairat Domalin and Kuandyk Koben, who were arrested in the region in April 2024. (Photo: Reuters/Thomas Peter)

Chinese authorities must immediately release ethnic Kazakh journalists Kairat Domalin and Kuandyk Koben, who were arrested in China's Xinjiang region, and cease harassing members of the press, the Committee to Protect Journalists said Tuesday. Chinese police arrested Domalin and Koben in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang region, in April, according to the U.S. Congress-funded Radio Free Asia (RFA). The arrests were first reported by Atajurt Kazakh Human Rights, a human rights organization based in Kazakhstan's biggest city, Almaty, in June. They both worked as Kazakh-language television journalists for the local state-run television network Xinjiang Television in Urumqi.

CPJ was unable to confirm what, if any, charges the pair face or other details about their arrest. According to RFA, Koben's arrest may be linked to his work on a historic building in Xinjiang that the government has intentionally neglected.

"Chinese authorities must free Kazakh journalists Kairat Domalin and Kuandyk Koben," said Iris Hsu, CPJ's China representative. "It's time for China to cease its campaign of harassing and arbitrarily

detaining press members of the Muslim ethnic minorities and release all imprisoned journalists."

Domalin was a TV presenter for the program "Zholaushy" (Traveler) on Xinjiang Television network, and Koben produced, directed, and presented Kazakh-language documentaries and more than 20 award-winning television programs.

CPJ's call to the Public Security Department of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region went unanswered.

Serikzhan Bilash, founder of Atajurt Kazakh Human Rights, told CPJ that Koben's brother asked the organization to remove a May 10 YouTube video asking for information from the public about Koben's arrest, fearing that the video would "complicate" Koben's detainment.

According to the RFA report, "several" Kazakh journalists for the state-owned newspaper Xinjiang Daily, along with a few Kazakh editors from different magazines, were also arrested. CPJ could not independently verify these arrests.

China was the world's worst jailer of journalists, according to CPJ's latest annual prison census, with at least 44 behind bars as of December 1, 2023. Many journalists held were ethnic Uyghurs from Xinjiang.

Human rights groups, the United Nations, and foreign governments have accused Chinese authorities of crimes against humanity and genocide in the Xinjiang region as authorities harshly repress the region's Muslim ethnic groups.

### **CCP's anniversary marred by global outcry over Xinjiang 'genocide'**

01 July 2024, The Print

On the 103rd anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the party is facing severe criticism from human rights organisations and ethnic groups for alleged human rights abuses in Xinjiang, also known as East Turkistan.

The Swedish Uyghur Committee highlighted the grim legacy of the CCP on social media, condemning what they describe as the party's "ruthless invasion, occupation, and colonisation" of East Turkistan.

The committee's post on Twitter, now known as X, stated, "On #CCP's 103rd anniversary, remember their legacy stained by blood: Ruthless invasion, #occupation, and #colonisation of #EastTurkistan accompanied by their ongoing #genocide against Uyghurs/Turkic peoples."

The post further accused the Chinese government of subjecting millions of East Turkistani people, including Uyghurs, to severe human rights violations. These allegations include torture, execution, organ harvesting, starvation, indoctrination, sexual assault, and forced labour in concentration camps.

The committee also highlighted the forced sterilisation of pregnant Uyghur women, the killing of unborn children, and the abduction of over a million Uyghur children by the CCP for what they termed “horrific abuse,” including organ harvesting.

The Swedish Uyghur Committee’s post emphasised that the anniversary should not be viewed as a celebration but rather as a reminder of the “monstrous cruelty” perpetrated by the CCP and the “world’s complicit silence.”

The CCP, which has ruled China since 1949, often uses its anniversary to highlight its achievements and reaffirm its commitment to socialism with Chinese characteristics. However, the party’s actions in Xinjiang have drawn widespread international condemnation. Numerous reports and testimonies from survivors have detailed the extent of the abuses, leading many to label the situation as genocide.

As the CCP marks its 103rd anniversary, the voices calling for justice for the Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples in Xinjiang grow louder, demanding accountability and an end to the ongoing human rights abuses. (ANI)

## June

### Canadian ambassador’s visit to Xinjiang draws China’s ire

25 June 2024, RFA, Jewlan

Jennifer May raised concerns about human rights violations against Uyghurs.

Canada’s ambassador to China expressed concern over documented human rights violations against Uyghurs with top officials during a visit to Xinjiang, sparking criticism from the Chinese Embassy in Canada that said her concerns were based on “fabricated rumors and reports with ulterior motives.”

Ambassador Jennifer May visited the far-western region on June 19-22 and met with Xinjiang Party Secretary Ma Xingrui and other senior regional government officials, according to a statement issued by Global Affairs Canada, the government department that manages diplomatic relations.

Very few Western diplomats have visited Xinjiang in recent years. It was the first visit to the region by a Canadian diplomat in 10 years. Last August, a group of diplomats from Mexico, Pakistan, Iran and other countries visited the region as part of a government-sponsored tour.

May went to Xinjiang as part of Canada’s diplomatic engagement with China and to raise concerns “over credible reports of systematic violations of human

rights occurring in Xinjiang” affecting Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples, the statement said.

Specific concerns included restrictions on Uyghur-language education and the forced placement of Uyghur children in boarding schools, it said, but did not provide detail about the places May visited or what she saw.

In February 2021, Canada’s House of Commons passed a motion declaring the Chinese government’s mistreatment of Uyghurs – including the arbitrary detention of Uyghurs in state-sponsored camps, the use of Uyghur forced labor, the suppression of Uyghur religious practices, and the forced sterilization of women – a genocide.

May also repeated Canada’s calls for China to allow U.N. independent experts unfettered access to all regions of the country, including Xinjiang, the statement said.

“Until an independent investigation team can visit, assess the situation, and release an unbiased report, Canada is signaling that China’s propaganda and staged displays showing Uyghurs as content are ineffective and disregarded,” said Memet Tohti, executive director of the Ottawa-based Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project.



Jennifer May, Canada’s ambassador to China, appears on CTVNews, June 18, 2024. (CTVNews screenshot)

A 2022 report by the then-U.N. Human Rights Chief Michelle Bachelet, who visited Xinjiang, found that China’s mass detentions of Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities in the region may constitute crimes against humanity. Uyghur rights groups criticized the tightly organized trip as a staged tour.

Beijing has denied accusations of severe rights violations.

May’s visit coincided a call by international human rights organizations and Uyghur advocacy groups on June 20 for the U.N.’s current human rights chief, Volker Türk, to provide a public update of measures taken by the Chinese government and his office to address the situation in Xinjiang.

‘Same old rhetoric’

On Monday, the Chinese Embassy in Canada issued a statement saying that Canada “repeated the same

old rhetoric, expressing so-called concerns based on fabricated rumors and reports with ulterior motives, without mentioning what Ambassador May really saw and heard in Xinjiang."

The embassy urged Canada to be objective and unbiased and to show Canadians what May saw during her visit. It also said that Xinjiang enjoys social stability, economic prosperity, ethnic unity and religious harmony.

"Human rights of people of all ethnic groups, including their right to use and advance their own ethnic languages, are fully protected," the embassy said.

"Canada has repeatedly made unwarranted remarks about other countries' human rights situation, while turning a blind eye to its own racial issues," the embassy went on to say, citing systemic racial discrimination and unfair treatment of indigenous people, homeless people whose rights are not protected, and racial discrimination against Black civil servants in the federal government.

Canada has long upheld human rights protections and has voiced its concerns about them periodically, said John Packer, a law professor and director of the Human Rights Research and Education Centre at the University of Ottawa.

"This has been a contentious part of the relationship because China does not share the same perspective and considers these issues a matter of internal affairs, feeling it is inappropriate for Canada to raise them," he told Radio Free Asia.

Because Canada and China are parties to international treaties, including human rights agreements such as the U.N. Charter and the Genocide Convention, they are bound by certain multilateral standards, making it legitimate to discuss such matters in international forums and in bilateral relations, Packer said.

### **Sinicization in Xinjiang: CCP authorities kill Uyghurs, sell 'halal organs' to run medical transplant industry**

24 June 2024, Organiser

As an integral part of the Sinicization of non-Chinese communities, including the Turkic minorities and the Uyghurs, in Xinjiang, the cruel Chinese authorities are forcibly killing Uyghurs and selling their organs to run a lucrative medical transplant mission and meet its demands besides regular detention and torture placing PRC at a high position in human rights abuses

The situation regarding the treatment of Uyghurs in China is deeply concerning and has raised serious allegations of human rights abuses, including forced organ harvesting. In March, during a US congressional committee hearing, experts had

claimed that Chinese authorities had gathered genetic information from the Muslim Uyghur minority, with the aim of supporting a forced organ transplant programme targeted at attracting Muslim medical tourists from Gulf states.

In a post on X, Uyghur-American politician Salih Hundayar stated, "China has inaugurated a "Children's Organ Transplant Centre." As part of the Uyghur genocide, China has been harvesting Uyghurs' organs and selling them as "halal organs." Since 2014, nearly a million Uyghur children have been forcibly separated from their families. Is this another step in China's ongoing Uyghur Genocide and notorious organ harvesting practices?"

There have been allegations and reports from various sources, including human rights organisations and testimonies from individuals, suggesting that Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslim minorities in Xinjiang have faced severe repression, including forced labour, mass detention, and possibly forced organ harvesting. These claims are serious and demand thorough investigation and accountability.

According to the Minnesota-based non-profit organisation 'World Without Genocide', Uyghurs are reportedly being killed for their organs to meet the demands of a lucrative transplant industry valued at approximately USD 1 billion annually. These allegations are serious and have been raised by various human rights organizations, investigative journalists, and testimonies from individuals who claim to have been affected or have knowledge of such practices.

However, due to the secretive nature of the Chinese government and limited independent access to Xinjiang, verifying these claims with concrete evidence remains challenging. International bodies and governments have called for investigations into these allegations, emphasising the need for transparency and accountability from Chinese authorities. Advocacy groups continue to monitor the situation closely and push for international scrutiny to ensure the protection of human rights and dignity for all individuals affected.

### **China changes names of 630 Uyghur villages in Xinjiang: report**

24 June 2024, RFA, Gulchehra Hoja

It's another way of erasing Uyghur religion, history and culture, a human rights group says.

China has changed the names of about 630 Uyghur villages to Mandarin words such as "Harmony" and "Unity" to promote ethnic harmony in Xinjiang, a report by a human rights group found,

The move is "part of Chinese government's efforts to erase the cultural and religious expression" of the

more than 11 million predominantly Muslim Uyghurs living in China's far-western Xinjiang region, New York-based Human Rights Watch, or HRW, said in its June 18 report.

"How these village names are being kind of erased and replaced shows how dystopian the whole project of the Chinese government in the Uyghur region is," Maya Wang, acting China director at HRW.

"It's about repressing people and ... the past, and erasing the future, and erasing what they can imagine as a possibility for their own children or grandchildren," she said.

The results came after HRW and Norway-based Uyghur Hjelp scraped names of villages in Xinjiang from the website of China's National Bureau of Statistics.

All told, China changed the names of 3,652 of 25,000 Uyghur villages in Xinjiang between 2009 and 2023, but most of these changes have been mundane, such as correcting numbers or the way the names were written, they found.

But 630 of the changes were more dramatic and religious, cultural or historical in nature. And most renamings occurred between 2017 and 2019, when the Chinese government's repression escalated in the region, the report said, but they appear to be continuing.

'Erasing symbols'

For example, Aq Meschit, or "White Mosque," village in Akto county, Kizilsu Kyrgyz Autonomous Prefecture, was renamed Unity village in 2018.

The same year, Hoja Eriq, or "Sufi Teacher's Creek," village in Aksu Prefecture was rechristened Willow village.

And Dutar, a village named after a Uyghur musical instrument, in Qaraqash county of Hotan prefecture, was renamed Red Flag in 2022.

The Chinese government has used the village renamings along with other tactics, including the banning of hijabs for women, beards for men, and Muslim names for children, to wipe out Uyghur culture and to humiliate the ethnic group, Wang said. "On a very fundamental level, erasing the symbols of people, the language and culture is about erasing who they are and teaching them to fear," she said.

The village renamings are also part of the greater set of serious rights abuses and crimes against humanity involving the detentions of an estimated 1.8 million Uyghurs and other Turkic people in "re-education" camps, torture, forced labor, sexual violence and the forced sterilization of woman, Wang said.



Uyghur children play in a square where a propaganda poster shows Han Chinese and Uyghurs posing together in a photograph with the words 'Hotan City Unity New Village Unity Square' at the Unity New Village in Hotan, northwestern China's Xinjiang region, Sept. 20, 2018. (Andy Wong/AP)

Campaign for Uyghurs, a Washington-based Uyghur advocacy group, condemned the village renamings.

"The names, which have now been changed to empty CCP [Chinese Communist Party] slogans, once reflected our long history and rich culture and have been in our homeland for hundreds of years," said Rushan Abbas, the group's executive director, in a statement.

"Although the CCP appears to celebrate Uyghur culture by showcasing elements like our music and dance, these displays are nothing but hollow propaganda masking the regime's ongoing and systematic suppression of cultural and religious expression," Abbas said.

In response to such measures, foreign governments, especially those in Muslim-majority nations, can put pressure on the Chinese government to stop its abuses involving religious and ethnic minorities and condemn such behavior, said Ibrahim Hooper, national communications director for the Council on American-Islamic Relations in Washington.

## Human rights groups call for UN update, action on China's Xinjiang

20 June 2024, VOA

Human rights groups on Thursday called for the United Nations to act and provide more updates on a report published nearly two years ago about a range of rights violations in China's remote western region of Xinjiang.

The report, issued in August 2022, found that actions taken in Xinjiang may have constituted "crimes against humanity." It also highlighted what it called highly "credible" abuses, including "torture, forced sterilization, sexual violence and forced separation of children."

China called the report a "farce" and a politically motivated attempt to smear its reputation.



Now, nearly two years later and with few updates, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the International Service for Human Rights and the World Uyghur Congress issued a statement Thursday calling for action by U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk.

"The ongoing absence of public reporting by the high commissioner to follow up the atrocity crimes documented by his own office risks undermining the trust placed in his office by victims and survivors," the statement said.

Türk mentioned Xinjiang Tuesday when he presented his global updates at the 56th session of the U.N. Human Rights Council. In his update, Türk said he "continued to engage with China on a range of human rights issues, including the serious concerns my office identified in the Xinjiang region."

Rights groups, however, say that did not go far enough.

In their statement, the rights groups said Türk did not provide "any specifics about his engagement with the government, a substantive update on the situation in Xinjiang, nor an assessment of the implementation of the report recommendations by his office."

The rights groups added, "It's up to the U.N. high commissioner to make full use of that report to improve the situation for Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang."

Rights groups have been working together since 2018 to "push the Human Rights Council and other U.N. bodies to document and respond to growing evidence of atrocity crimes in China and to disseminate these findings globally."

On Thursday they also said that the U.N. had failed to make the report available in any language other than English, adding that they have provided their own unofficial translations in the body's other official languages: Arabic, French, Russian, Spanish and Chinese.

### **Religious and cultural mentions removed from names of China's Xinjiang villages**

19 June 2024, NBC News

The name changes appear to be part of a Chinese government attack on the cultural identity of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities, Human Rights Watch said in a report.



Police officers walking past the Id Kah Mosque in Kashgar, a city in China's western Xinjiang region, in 2018. Bloomberg via Getty Images file

Authorities in China's western Xinjiang region have been systematically replacing the names of villages inhabited by Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities to reflect the ruling Communist Party's ideology, as part of an attack on their cultural identity, a report released by Human Rights Watch said Wednesday.

About 630 villages in Xinjiang have had their names changed to remove references to Islam or the Uyghurs' culture and history, according to the group's report, done in collaboration with the Norway-based organization Uyghur Hjelp.

The report compared the names of 25,000 Xinjiang villages as listed by the National Bureau of Statistics of China between 2009 and 2023.

Words like "dutar," a traditional Uyghur string instrument, or "mazar," a shrine, have been removed from the names of villages, and replaced with words such as "happiness," "unity" and "harmony" — generic terms often found in the Communist Party's policy documents.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry did not immediately respond to faxed questions about the report and its policies in Xinjiang.

Xinjiang is a vast region bordering Kazakhstan that is home to about 11 million Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities. In 2017, the Chinese government launched a campaign of assimilation that has included mass detentions, alleged political indoctrination, alleged family separations and alleged forced labor among other methods.

As part of the crackdown, more than 1 million Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and other ethnic minorities were estimated to be held in extralegal internment camps. The Chinese government at the time described the camps as "vocational training centers" and said they were necessary to curb separatism and religious extremism.

The U.N. Human Rights Office in 2022 found accusations of rights violations in Xinjiang "credible" and said China may have committed crimes against humanity in the region.



The changes to the names of Xinjiang villages included removing mentions of religion, including terms such as “Hoja,” a title for a Sufi religious teacher, and “haniqa,” a type of Sufi religious building, or terms such as “baxshi,” a shaman.

References to Uyghur history or to regional leaders prior to the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 have also been removed, according to the report.

“The Chinese authorities have been changing hundreds of village names in Xinjiang from those rich in meaning for Uyghurs to those that reflect government propaganda,” said Maya Wang, acting China director at Human Rights Watch. “These name changes appear part of Chinese government efforts to erase the cultural and religious expressions of Uyghurs.”

The Chinese government wants to “erase people’s historical memory, because those names remind people of who they are,” said Abduweli Ayup, a Uyghur linguist based in Norway and founder of Uyghur Hjelp.

Most of the village name changes occurred between 2017 and 2019, at the height of the government crackdown in Xinjiang, according to the report.

### **Uyghur woman re-sentenced for teaching youth the Quran**

18 June 2024, RFA, Shohret Hoshur

Heyrinisa Memet had just completed a 10-year prison term after a 2014 crackdown.

Soon after completing a 10-year prison term, a Uyghur woman was sentenced to another 14 years in jail for attempting to split China by teaching the Quran to teenagers, authorities with knowledge of the situation said.

Heyrinisa Memet, in her mid-40s, had been previously sentenced during a crackdown in 2014 after a “terrorist attack” in Xinjiang that Chinese authorities blamed on separatist Uyghur Muslims.

Within days of her release, she was sentenced again on June 11 for activities back in 2014 – providing religious instruction to youth at the request of her neighbors – the director of security of Zulkum village in Kashgar prefecture said, insisting on not being identified for fear of reprisal.

“Her crime was teaching religious content to kids,” he said. “She wasn’t changing those kids’ ideology, she was just teaching them religious content.”

In recent years, Chinese authorities have punished large numbers of Uyghurs in Xinjiang for religious offenses, including teaching the Quran to children, according to leaked Chinese government documents, data compiled by Uyghur rights groups, and

accounts of former detainees from “re-education” camps.

Authorities have criminalized such activities because they believe that Uyghurs use religion to incite subversion of state sovereignty, endanger social stability, and advocate religious extremism, terrorism and ethnic separatism.

Memet was one of three people from Zulkum village sentenced at closed-door trials in Makit county of Kashgar prefecture on June 11, according to the village security director and to an officer at the village police station.

Two other Uyghurs from the community who had finished serving prison sentences were tried anew as well, said the village security director, who like others in the report, declined to be named so as to speak freely.

“It’s been one and a half years since their release,” he said. “There was no problem, but they were arrested only because they were in prison before.”

They were sentenced to 18 years in prison for listening to audio recordings or watching videos, he said.

“There was no mention of extremism, but they were keeping those audio and videos,” the village security director said. “They were accused of having hatred towards Han Chinese people, but there was no evidence.”

Authorities informed their families that their previous “education” was not sufficient, so they were taken away for further “education,” he said.

Previous sentence

The village security director went on to say that authorities first sentenced Memet when she was swept up in a crackdown following a “terrorist attack” on a market in Xinjiang’s capital Urumqi on May 22, 2014.

On that morning, five assailants in two sport utility vehicles drove into a busy street market, tossing out explosives and mowing down the mainly Han Chinese shoppers before colliding with each other and exploding. More than 40 people, including four of the assailants, were killed, and over 90 others injured.

The attack occurred amid a string of violent incidents in Xinjiang that officials blamed on separatist Uyghur Muslims.

At the time, activists said the violence was being driven by authorities’ restrictive and discriminatory policies directed at Uyghurs, and the belief that only Han Chinese migrants were benefiting from economic growth in the region.

A police officer in Makit county told Radio Free Asia that some of the Uyghurs sentenced during the 2014 crackdown had completed their terms, but were transferred to jail upon release.

Some were kept in jail for a month, some for a year, and others were sentenced again, he said. Among them were three people from Zulkum village who were sentenced up to 18 years in prison, he said, but could not provide further details.

### **Former senior Xinjiang official expelled from CPC, public office**

17 June 2024, Xinhua

Li Pengxin, former deputy secretary of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Regional Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), has been expelled from the CPC and dismissed from public office over serious violations of Party discipline and laws.

The decision was made following an investigation by the CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) and the National Commission of Supervision (NCS) with the approval of the CPC Central Committee, according to a statement released by the CCDI and NCS on Monday.

The investigation found that Li had lost his ideals and convictions, and was dishonest about his problems in the face of Party inquiry, the statement said.

Failing to abide by the central Party leadership's eight-point decision on improving conduct, he attended banquets and accepted vehicle and driver services that could affect the fair execution of his official duties, according to the investigation findings. He was found to have accepted money and valuables, and taken advantage of his former position to seek benefits for others in mineral exploitation projects, enterprise operations and job adjustment and promotion, which are in violation of relevant regulations.

According to the statement, Li's actions constituted serious duty-related violations, and he was also suspected of taking bribes, the statement said.

Li's illicit gains will be confiscated, and the case will be transferred to the procuratorial organs for examination and prosecution in accordance with the law, according to the statement.

### **China promotes Xinjiang, epicentre of human-rights abuses, as tourist destination**

17 June 2024, ANI

China's Xinjiang region, which has been under the scanner for violating human rights, has now been shown as a far more idyllic view of the region as instructed and funded by Xi Jinping government to promote it as a tourist destination through a television drama, the Wall Street Journal reported.

According to the United States, China's far western Xinjiang region is often associated with detention

camps and a wide network of security checkpoints to control Uyghurs and other mostly Muslim minorities.

However, Beijing has been for years now, denying Western allegations of human-rights violations in Xinjiang, with China portraying the region as infected by a violent strain of religious extremism that needs to be eradicated.

"To the Wonder," the television drama depicting Xinjiang as a land of beauty and wide-open steppes rather than a dangerous backwater inhabited by potential terrorists, the Wall Street Journal reported. Meanwhile, now, China's propaganda system is promoting a far more idyllic view of the region at least for a domestic audience, as reported by Wall Street Journal.

Recently, a Chinese television drama, "To the Wonder," about the love between a Han Chinese writer and a Kazakh man, has grabbed the country's attention, dominating social media and sparking a Xinjiang tourism boom.

The show "To the Wonder" is part of a ramped-up effort to showcase Xinjiang as a beautiful land instead of a dangerous land occupied with potential terrorists.

Moreover, their strategy has proven successful, especially among young, urban Chinese looking for escape from their hectic lives, reported Wall Street Journal.

"To the Wonder" is one of the most popular drama series this year on the Chinese internet and the state broadcaster, attracting more than 100 million viewers online within a week of its release in early May.

The head of tourism in the small Xinjiang town of Altay, where the show is set, said that the bookings there have increased 370 percent since the show began.

The show has been funded by the state and heavily promoted by their official media, is based on a popular memoir published in 2010 by Li Juan, about her family's hardships among Kazakh nomads in northern Xinjiang.

The director, Teng Congcong, is known for work with a focus on women and she told the local media that she saw potential in Li's book for another female portrait, Wall Street Journal reported.

Li was born in a Xinjiang paramilitary compound in 1979, when Beijing sent young Han Chinese to help develop the remote area. She spent most of her childhood in Altay.

Last year, the National Radio and Television Administration selected the show for state funding.

Notably, one of the criteria was that projects must "tell the China story well."

The show, co-produced by the state broadcaster and video platform iQiyi, also highlighted a new business model for Chinese authorities, with local officials

tapping into the popularity of dramas filmed in their regions to promote tourism.

The radio and television administration further encouraged platforms to use algorithms to promote the shows, stating, "Positive energy should generate massive traffic".

However, the promotion has mostly targeted young Chinese, but the show was included in the Canneseries, an international television festival held annually in Cannes, France, and is also airing in Kazakhstan this month.

The Xinjiang official account on X, promoted the show in English-language tweets, saying it represents the "freedom, grandeur and beauty of northern Xinjiang."

Human-rights concerns in Xinjiang, covering the one-sixth of China's land territory, have been one of the focal points of US-China tensions, reported Wall street journal.

The Chinese government has been targetting Uyghurs and other minorities with mass detention and omnipresent surveillance as part of a campaign of forcible assimilation, which has also encouraged marriages between Han Chinese and minority members.

Additionally, some governments, rights groups and researchers have also alleged that the Chinese authorities are employing forced labor in Xinjiang as part of the campaign.

The US law bans imports linked to the region and their lawmakers label Beijing's treatment of Uyghurs as a form of "genocide".

China's government, however, has portrayed the assimilation campaign as an effort to fight religious extremism and terrorism.

According to the officials, the efforts to relocate rural residents to factories help improve their income and living standards, Wall street Journal reported.

Daria Impiombato, an analyst at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, a Canberra-backed think tank, said that the authorities are trying to sell a more "docile and lovable" image of China's frontier regions.

Impiombato also co-wrote a report on how Chinese authorities have begun to enlist women as "frontier influencers" in propaganda efforts around troubled regions such as Xinjiang and Tibet, wall Street Journal reported.

Xinjiang's propaganda department has planned to spend 308 million yuan, or roughly USD 43 million, on culture tourism and communications and media this year, which is more than 60 per cent of its total budgeted spending and 27 per cent more than it spent on such items in 2020.

The boosting tourism helps the Chinese government bring Xinjiang into the mainstream, making it just like any other place in China, Impiombato said.

Traditionally, minorities have been depicted in official Chinese media as either living in backward conditions or glorifying how much better their lives have become under the Communist Party leadership.

"To the Wonder" is a more nuanced portrayal. It shows the everyday struggles of the herders and their love of nature and their livestock.

In one of the scenes, with little cash on hand, a Kazakh family insists on paying a debt with a camel, as reported by Wall Street Journal.

However, a few scenes remind the audience of the reality of life in Xinjiang, such as when two Kazakh men have to hand over their pocket knives to use public transportation.

The Human Rights Watch released a report in February, stating that it found that Chinese authorities are coercing Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims away from their homes and into jobs in factories and warehouses around China.

Earlier in May, Thea Lee, the deputy undersecretary for international affairs at the US Labor Department said that the forced labourers are being transferred from Xinjiang to elsewhere in China in growing numbers. (ANI)

### **China's ethnic policy chief slams 'ignorance of history' in Xinjiang assimilation claims**

16 June 2024, The Star, Yuanyue Dang

China's top ethnic policy official has dismissed claims that Xinjiang is being "assimilated" into Chinese culture as "ignorance of history".

Pan Yue, director of the National Ethnic Affairs Commission, made the remarks during a keynote speech on Wednesday at an international forum in Kashgar, a city in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region that was once part of the ancient Silk Road.

His comments come as Beijing continues to promote its new ethnic integration policies and defend measures taken in the vast western region home to the mainly Muslim Uygur minority.

"There is an inaccurate narrative in the international community that separates Xinjiang culture from Chinese culture and even sets them against each other. But a large amount of archaeological evidence tells us that Xinjiang has been an important part of the Chinese cultural sphere since ancient times," Pan said.

"There is also an international narrative that contradicts the facts and portrays Xinjiang's relationship with Chinese culture as 'assimilation'. This is ignorance of Chinese history."

The people of ancient western regions far from central China – some small states ruled by nomadic peoples rather than the Han Chinese who later became the majority of the Chinese population –

"have also been co-creators of Chinese culture", Pan said.

These regions include what is now the Xinjiang region, as well as the Tibet autonomous region to its south and parts of central Asia.

After thousands of years of "migration, settlement, trade and marriages", "Xinjiang and central China [now] eventually belong to a single political community", Pan said, adding that Islamic culture represented only one part of Xinjiang's "diverse religious culture".

Xinjiang has a population of about 26 million, close to two-thirds of which is made up of ethnic minorities, including Uyghurs and Kazakhs.

Ethnic tensions, particularly in Xinjiang and Tibet, have been a challenge for the government. Controversial governance measures in place in Xinjiang since 2016, in response to once-frequent violent attacks there, have led to allegations of human rights abuses, which Beijing denies.

Pan's comments were in line with Beijing's push over the past decade for a "sense of community for the Chinese nation".

The concept was introduced by President Xi Jinping in 2014. At a meeting in 2021, he said that building this sense of community should be at the heart of all ethnic minority policies and urged local authorities to take more proactive measures.

The measures include promoting the use of "standard spoken and written Chinese", meaning Mandarin, and reinterpreting Chinese history to say that China's 55 ethnic minorities had created civilisation with the Han Chinese majority since ancient times.

The International Forum on the History and Future of Xinjiang, which opened on Wednesday, was jointly organised by several universities in Beijing and Xinjiang.

Official media reported that more than 100 experts from China, the United States, Australia, Germany, Italy, Hungary, Egypt, Russia, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and other countries attended the event in Kashgar, where the remains of a third century Buddhist temple were discovered recently.

Archaeologists said the Buddha statues unearthed at the site bore the characteristics of those from central China, a claim in line with Beijing's historical narrative.

A university textbook edited by Pan, published in February, has been described by experts as the most direct articulation of China's ethnic integration policy as laid down by Xi a decade ago.

The book argues that all ethnic groups have accepted the concept of zhonghua, or Chinese culture or civilisation, since ancient times. It also cites political divisions and "social cleavages" in the West to justify Beijing's policy of ethnic integration.

"Neither the harmonising 'melting pot' policy nor the ultra-diverse model of ethnic governance works," the book says.

Similar views were expressed in Pan's speech. He said China had not experienced "religious wars", "colonial expansion" or "cultural export" for thousands of years, and could "maybe provide a reference for the ethnic and religious conflicts that still exist in the world today".

In recent years, the Xinjiang government has also sought to improve its international image through outreach efforts.

It has frequently hosted visits by foreign envoys, media delegations, religious figures and academics, and sent officials to promote the region in Central Asia and Africa.

### **Xinhua Headlines: "Forced labor" lies bring "forced unemployment" in Xinjiang**

07 June 2024, Xinhua

What Aminam Tulladin wants above all else is her old job back.

Recalling her workdays just a few years ago, she described the moment she received her first pay check as "an elating moment."

Now, the 26-year-old from northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region is a housewife struggling to make ends meet.

"I'm yearning to go back to work," she said.

Starting in 2017 as an intern at a textile processing company in Qingdao, a coastal city in eastern China, Aminam Tulladin was more than thrilled to hear that her boss, Xu Caifeng, decided to move their company to her home county, Shache, in southern Xinjiang.

One year later, her hard work was rewarded with a promotion to team leader and a decent salary of over 3,000 yuan (about 421.9 U.S. dollars) a month. Back then, the company, Shache Xiongying Textile Co., Ltd., employed nearly 1,000 staff with orders mainly coming from Europe and the United States, logging an annual sales revenue of 15 million yuan.

As their business continued to grow, Xu and her husband channeled more money into the company and built a second-phase workshop in the latter half of 2019.

The future seemed bright and promising. Never could they have imagined that their fates would take a sudden turn just because of some lies fabricated by someone a million miles away.

**"FORCED LABOR" OR "FORCED LAYOFFS?"**

Soon after the completion of the new workshop, Xu became concerned when their incoming orders gradually dwindled, and eventually, their European and U.S. business nearly came to a halt, rendering

the new workshop "idle from the moment it was built."

It took them a while to finally discover the reason. "It turned out that our factory was mentioned in a report written by Adrian Zenz, who accused factories in Xinjiang of 'forced labor,'" said Xu.

Under the guise of an academic study, Zenz concocted a series of "research reports" related to Xinjiang, wantonly discrediting the region.

In one report, he made the groundless claim that hundreds of thousands of ethnic minority workers in Xinjiang were "forced" to pick cotton by hand, urging the international community to issue temporary sanctions against any production containing cotton from Xinjiang.

Back in 2018, with a view to expand into the European and U.S. markets, Xiongying applied for and obtained a BSCI (Business Social Compliance Initiative) human rights certification.

BSCI representatives stayed at Xiongying for a week, conducting an extensive review of the company's daily production and the lives of its employees. "None of them raised any concerns," Xu recalled.

Now the once bustling community with modernized workshops has almost turned into a ghost town. Only half of the machines on the second floor of the three-story factory remain operational, and fewer than 100 employees remain to fulfill the meager orders that trickle in.

Aminam Tulladin and many other ethnic minority employees had to quit their jobs due to the decrease in orders.

"We obtained this certification to secure more orders, but instead, what we got are production halts and sanctions..." Xu's voice trailed off as she fought back tears.

Xiongying is just a microcosm of numerous companies affected by the U.S. sanctions against Xinjiang.

More than half of the farmers in Xinjiang grow cotton to make a living, and the textile industry creates nearly one million job opportunities across the region. Shache, where ethnic minorities constitute over 95 percent of its population, used to have nearly 100 textile enterprises, but today fewer than one-fifth remain operational.

In recent years, Western media has kept hyping Xinjiang-related issues, fabricating "forced labor" in its cotton industry, and Washington signed the so-called "Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act" into law.

Ostensibly to safeguard "human rights" under the guise of combating "forced labor," the law has only caused "forced unemployment" that led to poverty in and outside Xinjiang.

Even outside the region, like in the central Chinese province of Hubei, about 1,000 natives of Xinjiang

had to quit their jobs from the local non-woven fabric sector and move back home, though none of them had worked against their will.

In a recent interview, a Chinese manufacturer-exporter who had to lay off all his Xinjiang employees because of the act, quoted a stark ultimatum from his American clients: "As long as you have one single worker from Xinjiang, we cannot work with you."

"WHAT WILL OUR FUTURE BE LIKE?"

Also starting as an intern, Aminam Iminniyaz, 26, has worked at Xiongying for six years.

"The job is close to home and offers competitive wages, and has good benefits," she said.

Though plummeting orders forced Xu and her husband to lay off the majority of their employees, the wages of those who stay have remained unchanged.

"What will our future be like if the company doesn't thrive? I fear that our current livelihoods could be at risk," said Aminam Iminniyaz. "Many people have lost their jobs. I feel very angry."

Also subject to sanctions is Hoshine Silicon Industry Co., Ltd., a world-leader in silicon manufacturing. In June 2021, Hoshine and four other solar energy companies in Xinjiang were included in the "entity list" by the United States and subjected to unjustified sanctions. The reason given was that these companies violated the human rights of ethnic minorities and engaged in the purported "forced labor."

Its subsidiary in Ganquanpu Economic Development Zone in the regional capital Urumqi has also been affected.

"It's a huge blow to us," said Cheng Yufeng, general manager of the subsidiary. "We lost almost all our customers in the United States and many customers in other regions such as Europe, racking up billions of yuan in losses."

In Hoshine's project in Turpan, nearly 10,000 ethnic minority employees make up 70 percent of its total workforce. The proportion is 50 percent and 20 percent in its factories in Shihezi and Urumqi, respectively. The fate of companies subject to unfair sanctions is closely intertwined with the lives and incomes of the local ethnic minority group.

"NO 'FORCED LABOR' AT ALL!"

In 2020, 10 natives of Moyu County in Hotan came to work at Saurer Xinjiang Intelligent Machinery Co., Ltd., in Urumqi. Munarwan Nur, now 28 years old, is one of them.

Recalling her initial days in Urumqi, Munarwan Nur said: "I wasn't used to it at first. I dared not talk too much as my Mandarin was not good."

But now, this cheerful, cosmopolitan young woman, effortlessly switches between her native Uyghur language and Mandarin.



In July last year, Munarwan Nur and her husband purchased a home in Urumqi. They plan to bring their two children to the city for their schooling this summer.

"Now, I've got a clear goal in life, and I'm highly motivated," she said.

From Moyu to Urumqi, Munarwan Nur's journey is backed by the regional government's efforts from 2018 to 2020 to provide employment opportunities and facilitate poverty alleviation for those who are willing and capable to work in 22 deeply impoverished counties across the four prefecture-level regions in southern Xinjiang.

Through technical training and employment, these individuals were given the opportunity to improve their lives. Unfortunately, these efforts have also been unjustly labeled as "forced labor."

Zenz, the so-called German scholar, said in a report that poverty alleviation is an extremely intrusive combination of forced or at least involuntary training and labor, inter-generational separation and social control over family units.

"Our decision to stay or leave is completely voluntary," said Munarwan Nur. Out of the 10 employees who initially joined Saurer, seven have already left. Some have chosen to find jobs near their home to better take care of their families, while others went back to farming. "Our contracts, benefits and salaries are exactly the same as our Han colleagues. We have weekends and holidays off, and get paid for extra working hours," said Abuduwali Abila, also from Moyu.

Abuduwali Abila, 39, a father of four, is responsible for sorting goods at the factory. When asked about his income, he took out his phone and showed Xinhua his bank statements, which showed a deposit of 68,000 yuan for the year 2023. In comparison, the per capita disposable income of residents in Xinjiang that year was 28,947 yuan.

When asked if he felt compelled to stay at the company, Abuduwali Abila said: "I won't leave unless they asked me to. Where can you possibly find 'forced labor' like this?"

### **Uyghur brothers shot dead on same day in Xinjiang prison**

06 June 2024, RFA, Shohret Hoshur

They were involved in a scuffle with a security guard who killed them, officials and police say.



People stand in a guard tower on the perimeter wall of the Urumqi No. 3 Detention Center in Dabancheng in northwestern China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, April 23, 2021.

Two Uyghur inmates — biological brothers — were working in a vegetable field at Qarabughra Prison in Xinjiang's Kunes county in early May, when a security guard grabbed one of them by the leg and began dragging him.

The older brother, Sidikjan Ablikim, 35, rushed over to Ablehet, 33, to free him, according to police and prison officers with knowledge of the situation.

An argument ensued, and the brothers physically clashed with the guard, while a third inmate intervened.

The guard then pulled out his gun and shot and killed the Abilkims, the police and prison officials said.

Little is known about the brothers other than that they were from Atush, transliterated as Artux or Atush, the capital of the Kizilsu Kyrgyz Autonomous Prefecture in northwestern China's Xinjiang region.

RFA was unable to find out further details, the reasons for their arrest or the duration of their sentences.

"Situations like this come up rarely," said an officer who has worked at the Qarabughra Prison for 25 years. "There hasn't been anyone who died in the fields [while performing labor] due to a conflict, besides them."

Expanded to handle more inmates

Qarabughra is one of the oldest prisons and largest detention centers in Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, the prison officer said.

In 2017, as Chinese authorities began detaining Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims en masse in Xinjiang in an effort to eliminate what they said was "terrorism" and "religious extremism," Qarabughra Prison was expanded to handle inmates brought in from other parts of the region.

As part of the crackdown, Chinese authorities ordered Uyghur students studying in Egypt and other predominantly Muslim countries to return to Xinjiang where they were promptly arrested for the purported "crime" of studying abroad.

Some of the students were tried in Atush, their hometown, and sent to Qarabughra Prison in Kunes

county. However, it is unknown whether the Ablikim brothers had studied abroad and were arrested upon return.

RFA contacted relevant authorities in Kunes county and Ghulja city, called Yining in Chinese and capital of Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, for more information on the brothers and their deaths.

A Kunes county police officer, who declined to be identified because he wasn't authorized to speak to the media, said the prison had released the bodies of the two inmates.

The officer knew this because he worked as a security guard along the roads where the vehicle carrying the dead prisoners passed.

Because the brothers died the same day, the officer said he had assumed they had been involved in a fatal accident. However, he did not ask his boss about it, because it was not his job to inquire about the identities of the dead or their cause of death.

"Both are deceased, and they were both from Atush," he said. "Another inmate was hospitalized from that conflict."

Information about the incident was not reported at an official meeting, and because of the tragic nature, news of it was spread by word of mouth among the others who knew about the Ablikims' argument with the guard and their subsequent shootings, the officer from the Kunes county police said.

Other officials contacted by RFA declined to comment, stressing that any matters related to the prison were confidential.

### Exiled Uyghur journalist links Urumqi arrests to his reporting

05 June 2024, VOA, Liam Scott



Kasim Kashgar, center front, is photographed with, from right, Semet Ababekri, Abdukadir Rozi, Akber Osman, Mirkamil Ahmed and Mehmud Abdukeyum, during a school party in Urumqi in August 2015. (Photo courtesy of Kasim Kashgar)

Former colleagues of exiled Uyghur journalist Kasim Kashgar have been imprisoned in China's Xinjiang region, seemingly over their connection to the Washington-based reporter.

Those convicted are Mirkamil Ahmed, Semet Ababekri, Abdukadir Rozi, Mehmud Abdukeyum and

Akber Osman. Each has been sentenced to at least seven years in prison, Kashgar said.

Kashgar, who reports for Voice of America, says he learned of the convictions from an acquaintance in May.

At VOA, Kashgar regularly covers Uyghur human rights issues. He believes his former colleagues — who worked with him at the language school he founded in Xinjiang's capital Urumqi — were targeted due to their association with him.

"Their 'mistake' was their past proximity to someone now affiliated with a U.S. news agency covering Uyghur-related news," Kashgar said.

It's unclear when the convictions occurred, since the Chinese government rarely publicizes that kind of information. It's also unclear what the exact charges are.

Kashgar said he learned from sources familiar with the cases that all five were accused of having been recruited by Kashgar to become members of the World Uyghur Congress, or WUC.

Headquartered in Munich, the WUC advocates for Uyghur human rights internationally. But Beijing views it as a separatist organization.

The Chinese government regularly uses bogus charges of separatism and terrorism as an excuse to target Uyghurs, according to human rights groups.

Kashgar said his contact with the WUC is limited to interviews as part of his VOA coverage.

In an emailed statement to VOA, the spokesperson at China's Washington embassy said, "China is a country ruled by law" where all ethnic groups "enjoy equality."

"Xinjiang's judicial organs pursue social fairness and justice, which are the values of the rule of law," the spokesperson said. The email went on to repeat the common government narrative that Beijing's policies in the region are for counterterrorism purposes.

Some advocates say the recent convictions underscore the extent of arbitrary detentions in Xinjiang, which many Uyghurs prefer to call the Uyghur Region or East Turkestan.

"It demonstrates that, first of all, this kind of arbitrary detention, and also retaliation by association, has not stopped at all, despite the fact that the government is claiming otherwise," Zumretay Arkin, the WUC's spokesperson and advocacy manager, told VOA.

In the region, the Chinese government stands accused by foreign governments and human rights groups of committing genocide and crimes against humanity against the majority-Muslim Uyghur ethnic group. Beijing has long denied any wrongdoing in the region.

Kashgar fled Chinese surveillance and repression in his homeland in 2017 for the United States. He started work for VOA in 2019.

The journalist says he faced Beijing-backed harassment over his work in the form of transnational repression. Earlier this year, he learned from sources that the Chinese government had officially labeled him a “key person involved in terrorism.”

But verifying such information is difficult. Experts say Beijing intentionally makes it difficult to confirm such reports.

The situation involving his former colleagues extends back to March 2021, when Kashgar received a phone call from a childhood friend in Xinjiang.

After being jailed multiple times, the friend had been forced to become an informant for China’s Ministry of State Security intelligence agency, Kashgar said.

Now, the intelligence agency wanted Kashgar to spy for them, the friend said. Kashgar declined.

In the weeks that followed, Kashgar learned that five former employees had been disappeared by Chinese security officials.

Human rights groups estimate that around 1 million to 2 million Uyghurs have been held in the region’s mass internment centers.

Kashgar said he knows of at least seven other former employees arrested in Xinjiang, but it’s unclear whether any of them have been convicted.

This kind of story is common for Xinjiang, according to Arkin. To retaliate against vocal Uyghurs in the diaspora, the Chinese government has a pattern of targeting their family, friends and colleagues who still live in the region.

“This really has been, in my opinion, one of the most successful ways of silencing the diaspora,” Arkin said. “Because you’re facing this constant dilemma, because you’re putting the lives of your relatives, your family and friends at risk, you’re constantly wondering if your work is worth it.”

Arkin said she has heard of other cases of Uyghurs in Xinjiang being questioned over alleged links to the WUC. “It’s used as a tool of fear – inside, but also outside,” she said.

In the diaspora, it’s likely intended to make exiled Uyghurs too scared to be involved with groups like the WUC out of fear of potentially putting their loved ones in Xinjiang at risk, Arkin said.

Learning of his former colleagues’ convictions has taken a toll, Kashgar said.

“It was very difficult to go to sleep and concentrate, focus on anything. It still gives you a lot of stress. But I want to seek justice for them,” he said. “I don’t want to be feeling guilty. But at the same time, there’s some sort of that emotional side that hits me, because those former colleagues never, ever committed any sort of crime.”

A 2022 report by the United Nations Human Rights Office determined that the extent of arbitrary detention of Uyghurs in Xinjiang may constitute crimes against humanity.

## May

### Mosques demolished, texts censored: How China is repressing Muslims in Xinjiang

28 May 2024, Times of India

NEW DELHI: The Chinese government's crackdown on the Islamic faith, particularly among the Uyghur Muslim population in Xinjiang, has garnered significant international attention and condemnation due to human rights abuses and allegations of cultural genocide.

In a recent investigation, UK's Sky News has shed light on China's increasing control over Islamic practices within the country.

The report underscores the mounting restrictions and surveillance faced by Muslims, particularly in regions with significant Islamic populations.

One poignant scene described in the report occurs in a cold, dusty part of central China, where a local Muslim leader stands alone in the courtyard of a small mosque. "Religion is dying," he laments, highlighting the severe constraints imposed by the Chinese government on religious activities.

The report details how the Chinese authorities have intensified efforts to monitor and restrict Islamic practices, including demolishing mosques, banning religious attire, and censoring Islamic texts. This crackdown is part of a broader campaign to align religious practices with the state's ideology and to curb any potential dissent.

The Chinese authorities have taken numerous steps to curb the practice of Islam:

**Demolition of mosques:** Many mosques have been demolished, particularly those that do not conform to the government's architectural standards or those deemed too conspicuous.

**Banning religious attire:** Traditional Islamic attire, such as headscarves and long beards, has been banned in certain areas. This is part of an effort to assimilate Muslims into the broader Han Chinese culture.

**Censoring Islamic texts:** The government has also censored Islamic texts, removing any content that could be perceived as promoting extremism or dissent. This includes altering the Quran and other religious literature to fit the state's narrative.

**Surveillance and Repression**

The report highlights the extensive surveillance network that monitors Muslim communities. High-tech surveillance systems, including facial recognition cameras, are prevalent in areas like Xinjiang, home to a significant Uyghur Muslim population. These systems track individuals' movements and behaviors, ensuring strict compliance with the government's

regulations.

#### Impact on daily life

The restrictions have permeated all aspects of daily life for Muslims in China. Religious education for children has been heavily regulated, with many religious schools being shut down. Additionally, community leaders and imams are required to attend government-run re-education programs to ensure they propagate state-approved messages, the Sky News report said.

The international community has responded with concern over China's treatment of its Muslim population. Human rights organizations have condemned the actions, calling for greater transparency and respect for religious freedoms. The Chinese government, however, maintains that these measures are necessary to combat extremism and ensure national security.

### **In Xinjiang, China's security chief calls for 'normalisation of counterterrorism'**

27 May 2024, SCMP

China's top security official Chen Wenqing has called for the "normalisation" of counterterrorism efforts in Xinjiang, where a crackdown on extremism among Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities has been under way for years.

During a visit to the far western region from Wednesday to Sunday, Chen said authorities must "insist on cracking down on terrorist crimes in accordance with the law and make efforts to promote the normalisation of counterterrorism", state news agency Xinhua reported on Sunday.

Chen is a member of the Communist Party's elite decision-making body the Politburo, and secretary of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission, which oversees the country's law enforcement agencies.

In Xinjiang, Chen visited the region's capital, Urumqi, as well as Kashgar and the Kazakh prefecture of Ili. He urged local officials to "always give top priority to maintaining social stability" and to "accurately prevent and crack down on violent terrorist crimes", according to Xinhua.

The report said Chen visited Khorgos, a town in Ili on the border with Kazakhstan, and the Tashkurgan Tajik autonomous county in the region's southwest, which borders Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan. He told law enforcement officials to "strongly defend border security".

A day after the visit, the Ministry of Public Security said in a statement on Monday that China had not seen a terrorist attack in more than seven years.

Decades of ethnic tensions and unrest in Xinjiang prompted Beijing to impose measures in 2016 that it said were aimed at cracking down on terrorist

attacks. But the measures have led to allegations of widespread human rights abuses, including that at least 1 million Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities were held in mass internment camps. Beijing denies the claims and has said the centres were for "vocational training".

Xinjiang authorities have claimed an "overwhelming victory" over terrorist attacks, but security remains a major concern.

In its annual work report in January, the Xinjiang government stressed that the region would maintain a "tough stance" to safeguard social stability, meaning combating terrorism.

A white paper released by the State Council Information Office the same month praised Xinjiang's anti-terrorism measures as improvements in China's legal system over the past decade.

It highlighted Xinjiang's de-radicalisation regulations, introduced in 2017 and revised in 2018, which list behaviours considered extremist by the authorities including growing an "abnormal" beard and wearing a veil.

In August, President Xi Jinping said "social stability" was a top priority for the region's authorities when he visited Xinjiang, and he called for more efforts to combat terrorism and religious extremism, as well as stressing the need for economic development.

In recent years, the Xinjiang government has tried to improve its image by touting economic development and inviting foreign media on carefully choreographed tours to promote the region.

### **A decade of uncertainty: the fate of detained Uyghur refugees in Thailand**

12 May, 2024, VOA

Dozens of Uyghurs who fled China a decade ago and have been indefinitely detained in Thailand are getting conflicting explanations from the U.N. refugee agency and Thai authorities on why their cases are still in limbo.

"If we speak out about our condition or our situation here, it will attract media attention, the world will know, Thai authorities will find out. Then our situation here will worsen, and we might lose all communication with the outside world," said one detainee in a rare interview with VOA.

"That's why we refrain from speaking out for the time being," added the man, asking to be identified only as Ahmad.

Ahmad said Uyghur detainees do not have phones to communicate with the outside world but said they sometimes can borrow a phone from a new detainee. That's how Ahmad and others were able to communicate with VOA.

Rights organizations accuse Beijing of repressive policies that amount to human rights violations and



even genocide against Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities, which China has repeatedly denied.

Ahmad said Uyghurs who escaped China in 2014 with the help of traffickers crossed into Thailand and were arrested by Thai authorities for illegally crossing the border. They have been held in immigration detention since then.

"We fled repression in China," Ahmad said. He added that he and other Uyghurs in Thai detention feel they have been "abandoned" by the world over the past decade.

Over the years, there have been several news reports on the plight of the Uyghurs in Thai detention, but so far, their situation has stayed the same.

"The world has heard our appeals, but the rules of the United Nations and other [international] organizations have not yet worked in our favor," he said.

UNHCR vs. Thai authorities

Earlier this month, an investigation by The New Humanitarian news agency obtained documents that showed the Thai government in 2020 petitioned the U.N. refugee agency, or UNHCR, "to play a more active role in resolving the Uyghurs' indefinite detention, and that agency staff advised against doing this."

UNHCR spokesperson Babar Baloch stated that due to confidentiality constraints and a desire not to undermine efforts to resolve this sensitive matter, the UNHCR cannot publicly elaborate on its approach to addressing the situation.

"Despite requests, however, at no stage have we been permitted to access the group or engage with them for the purpose of facilitating solutions. We are engaged in close discussions with the Thai authorities," Baloch told VOA in an email. "UNHCR has and continues to proactively raise this issue with the Thai authorities."

Thailand has not ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention and does not have laws that give refugees legal status, but according to the UNHCR, Thailand hosts 82,400 refugees from Myanmar in temporary shelters.

Life in detention

A rights activist familiar with the situation in Bangkok, who requested anonymity due to fear of reprisals from Thai authorities, said 43 Uyghurs are being detained at the Suan Phlu Immigration Detention Center in Bangkok. Additionally, five Uyghurs who attempted to escape immigration detention and were later arrested are imprisoned in Thailand.

"At least five to six people live in a room measuring four meters wide and eight meters long," the activist said. "There are around 25 rooms on each floor of the five-story detention building, with one toilet and

shower in each room," and the detainees sleep on the floor.

The activist said when the Uyghurs first crossed the border into Thailand 10 years ago, there were more than 350 of them.

"Initially, with humanitarian assistance from Turkey, over 170 women and children were taken to Turkey and settled in the city of Kayseri in 2015," the activist told VOA. "Subsequently, Thai authorities handed 109 mostly male Uyghur refugees to China weeks later," leaving more than 50 Uyghurs still awaiting their fate in Thai detention.

"After Thai authorities deported 109 Uyghurs to China, Uyghurs in Turkey protested and stormed the Thai consulate in Istanbul, which made Thai authorities very uncomfortable with the Uyghur issue," he said. "Since then, Thailand has been reluctant to deal with the rest of the Uyghur refugees."

At the time of publication, Thai officials had not responded to numerous requests for comment from VOA.

Last year, Human Rights Watch reported that two Uyghur refugees in their 40s died while in Thai immigration detention and called on Thailand to "end the indefinite detention" of Uyghur asylum seekers from China.

According to a February letter to Thai authorities from a group of United Nations special rapporteurs, the deaths of two Uyghur refugees last year brought the total number of Uyghur deaths in Thai immigration detention centers to five, including two minors.

"We would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning the detention conditions of 43 Uyghur migrant individuals that may amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or even torture," the letter said.

### **'Significant' Volume of Xinjiang Cotton Mislabeled as US or Brazilian**

10 May, 2024, Sourcing Journal, Jasmin Malik Chua

A recent report reveals that a significant amount of cotton from Xinjiang is being falsely labeled as American or Brazilian. Despite bans on Xinjiang cotton due to forced labor concerns, 19% of more than 820 tested samples in the United States contained Xinjiang cotton, highlighting ongoing struggles to combat forced labor in global supply chains. The study, conducted by Applied DNA Sciences, used isotopic testing to identify the mislabeled cotton. Concerns persist about Xinjiang cotton's presence in global trade, prompting calls for increased testing and collaboration to address human rights and regulatory issues.



## **Jailed Uyghur official highlights Chinese-Uyghur land disputes**

10 May, 2024, RFA

A former Uyghur government official in Xinjiang, China, received a 10-year prison sentence for siding with local farmers who refused to surrender their farms to Chinese developers without adequate compensation, Radio Free Asia recently reported. RFA said this case reflects broader disputes over land rights amid allegations of coercion by Chinese developers.

## **INTERVIEW: Lawyer debunks China's historical narrative of control over Xinjiang**

08 May, 2024, RFA, Alim Seytoff

In an interview with Radio Free Asia, international lawyer and inner Asia expert Michael van Walt disputed China's claim over Xinjiang, using history as proof. He said Xinjiang, which Uyghurs call East Turkistan, has not been continuously under Chinese rule for 2,000 years, rejecting China's unified state narrative. Van Walt described Beijing's territorial claims as colonialism.

Dozens of Uyghur refugees who fled China 10 years ago remain detained in Thailand and face uncertain futures amid conflicting explanations from Thai authorities and the U.N. refugee agency, UNHCR. One activist told VOA about dire living conditions and deaths in detention, urging an end to indefinite incarceration and swift international action. Rights organizations accuse Beijing of repressive policies against Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities, which China has repeatedly denied.

## **1 in 26 Uyghurs jailed, accounting 1/3 of China's prison population: Uyghur Human Rights Project report**

04 May 2024, ANI

An annual report by a Uyghur advocacy group revealed ongoing persecution in China's far-western Xinjiang province, with an estimated 1 in 26 Uyghurs jailed, accounting for a third of China's prison population, 3.5 times the world's highest rate of imprisonment.

A new Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP) report indicates that Uyghurs, Turkic and other non-Han peoples in the Uyghur Region account for more than a third (34 per cent) of China's estimated prison population, despite making up only one per cent of China's overall population. When accounting for the total regional population, the Uyghur region has the highest prison rate in the world at an estimated 2,234 per 100,000.

Tibet Digest December - January 2024

A UHRP Insights column by Ben Carrdus, UHRP Senior Researcher, and Peter Irwin, UHRP Associate Director for Research & Advocacy suggests that Uyghurs, Turkic and other non-Han peoples in the region are imprisoned at a rate of 3,814 people per 100,000.

In comparison, Han people throughout China are estimated to be imprisoned at a rate of 80 per 100,000. In other words, Uyghurs and other non-Han people in the Uyghur Region are estimated to be imprisoned at just over 47 times the rate of Han people.

"The actual situation in Xinjiang may even be worse," said UHRP senior researcher Ben Carrdus, who wrote the report.

The findings are based on information from Xinjiang High People's Procuratorate annual reports, which prosecutes criminal defendants, as well as data from the website of China's Ministry of Justice. The report estimates that a total of 578,500 Uyghurs or other Turkic people were in jail as of 2022.

The report indicates that Uyghurs experience higher death rates in prison than other ethnic groups in China, though death penalty figures are not publicly available because they are considered a state secret. The UHRP believes Uyghurs receive severe sentences, such as at least 10 years in prison for minor actions like studying the Quran or teaching it to children, so that the rate of death sentences among them may be higher.

The situation of Uyghur persecution in China is deeply concerning and has drawn international attention. The Uyghurs are a predominantly Muslim ethnic minority group primarily located in the Xinjiang region of China. Reports and testimonies from various sources, including human rights organisations, indicate widespread human rights abuses and repression targeting the Uyghur population.

These abuses include arbitrary detention in internment camps, forced labour, cultural and religious suppression, mass surveillance, and torture. The Chinese government has consistently denied allegations of mistreatment, instead portraying its actions as counter-terrorism measures aimed at maintaining stability and security in the region.

The international community has called for an independent investigation into the situation in Xinjiang, however, the issue remains complex due to China's geopolitical influence. (ANI)

## **China: Phone Search Program Tramples Uyghur Rights**

04 May, 2024, Human Rights Watch

Police in the Xinjiang region of China rely on a master list of 50,000 multimedia files they deem

“violent and terrorist” to flag Uyghur and other Turkic Muslim residents for interrogation, Human Rights Watch said today. A Human Rights Watch forensic investigation into the metadata of this list found that during 9 months from 2017 to 2018, police conducted nearly 11 million searches of a total of 1.2 million mobile phones in Urumqi, Xinjiang’s capital city of 3.5 million residents. Xinjiang’s automated police mass surveillance systems enabled this phone search.

“The Chinese government’s abusive use of surveillance technology in Xinjiang means that Uyghurs who simply store the Quran on their phone may trigger a police interrogation,” said Maya Wang, acting China director at Human Rights Watch. “Concerned governments should identify the technology companies involved in this mass surveillance and social control industry and take appropriate action to end their involvement.”

Human Rights Watch has repeatedly raised concerns about China’s approach to countering acts it calls “terrorism” and “extremism.” China’s counterterrorism law defines “terrorism” and “extremism” in an overly broad and vague manner that facilitates prosecutions, deprivation of liberty, and other restrictions for acts that do not intend to cause death or serious physical harm for political, religious, or ideological aims.

The Human Rights Watch searches found a total over 1,000 unique files on about 1,400 Urumqi residents’ phones that matched those on the police master list. The analysis of these matched files revealed that over half of them – 57 percent – appear to be common Islamic religious materials, including readings of every surah (chapter) of the Quran, the central religious text of Islam.

The list is part of a large database (52GB) of over 1,600 data tables from the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region leaked to the United States media organization the Intercept in 2019. The Intercept reported that Urumqi police conducted surveillance and arrests from 2015 to 2019 based on texts of police reports that were part of this database.

The master list of multimedia files that Human Rights Watch examined is located in a different part of the same database and has not been previously reported on or analyzed. Some of the numbers in this reporting have been rounded up so that the authorities cannot identify the source of the leak.

The analysis of the metadata of this master list reveals photo, audio, and video files that contain violent content, but also other material that has no evident connection to violence. The media files contain materials that:

- Are violent or gruesome, including content depicting beheadings or forms of torture that

appear to have been carried out by armed groups such as Mexican and other drug cartels, Chechen fighters, or the Islamic State (ISIS);

- Involve foreign organizations, including the East Turkistan Independence Movement, which the Chinese government labels a separatist group; the World Uyghur Congress, a group run by Uyghur exiles; and a Uyghur-language broadcasts by Radio Free Asia, a US government-funded media outlet;
- Contain pro-democracy audiovisual content such as the “Gate of Heavenly Peace,” a documentary about the Chinese government’s Tiananmen Square massacre of student-led protests in 1989;
- Mention the names of cities in Syria, including documentaries about Syrian history and two 2015 episodes of a popular Chinese-language travel show, “On the Road” (侣行), that include references to the Syrian conflict; Human Rights Watch also found another related list in the database that has the same MD5 hashes – the unique signature of these files. This list apparently contains the search result of the Jingwang Weishi app, a surveillance application. The search results spanned 9 months between 2017 and 2018. This data shows the app surreptitiously conducted nearly 11 million searches involving a total of 1.2 million phones and found a cumulative total of 11,000 matches of over 1,000 different files on 1,400 phones.
- The Human Rights Watch analysis of the file names and the police’s own labeling, or coding, of the approximately 1,000 files found that:
  - 57 percent of the 1,000 files are common religious materials, including readings of every chapter (surah) of the Quran.
  - Nearly 9 percent of the matched files include violent content, including crimes committed by members of the Islamic State (ISIS);
  - 4 percent of the matched files include calls for violence, for example by urging “jihad;”
  - 28 percent of the matched files cannot be identified based on the available information alone (for example, the file name and police labels).

Human Rights Watch further analyzed those 1,400 phones that were flagged by police:

- Nearly 42 percent of phones contained violent or gruesome material;
- 12 percent of phones contained common Islamic religious material;
- 6 percent of phones contained files that are overtly political, such as an anthem to “East

Turkistan” – the name some Turkic Muslims use to refer to the region that the Chinese government calls “Xinjiang” – videos about the Syrian war, and pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong;

- 4 percent of phones contained files that call for violence, such as “jihad;”
- 48 percent of phones contained files that Human Rights Watch could not identify.

International law obligates governments to define criminal offenses precisely and to respect the rights to freedom of expression and thought, including holding views considered offensive. Criminalizing mere possession of material deemed extremist even if the accused has no intent to use it to cause harm to others is a particularly severe threat to freedom of belief, privacy, and expression. These rights are guaranteed under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which China has signed but not ratified.

The United Nations Human Rights Council should urgently establish an independent, international investigation into grave rights violations and the suppression of fundamental freedoms in Xinjiang by the Chinese government against Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims, Human Rights Watch said. An unprecedented number of UN independent human rights experts and hundreds of nongovernmental organizations from around the world have recommended such action.

“The Chinese government outrageously yet dangerously conflates Islam with violent extremism to justify its abhorrent abuses against Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang,” Wang said. “The UN Human Rights Council should take long overdue action by investigating Chinese government abuses in Xinjiang and beyond.”

For additional details about the situation and findings, please see below.

**Abuses in Xinjiang and the Role of Mass Surveillance**

The Chinese government’s Counterterrorism Law does not comport with international human rights standards and has been frequently abused.

In May 2014, the Chinese government began the “Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Terrorism” (严厉打击暴力恐怖活动专项行动) in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region against Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims. Since 2017, this abusive campaign, which conflates the peaceful religious and cultural expressions of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims with terrorism, has significantly escalated.

During this period, Human Rights Watch has documented mass arbitrary detention, pervasive surveillance, and attempts at cultural and religious erasure that amount to crimes against humanity across the region. A groundbreaking 2022 report by

the UN human rights office similarly found that these crimes “may constitute ... crimes against humanity.”

What is central to these crimes is the use of new technologies, including the mass collection of biometric data from Turkic Muslims, artificial intelligence, policing apps, and big-data systems to monitor the entire population. These systems flag people as potentially “untrustworthy” using broad and arbitrary criteria, such as using too much electricity, and send their names to the police. The police then interrogate and often detain them in so-called political education camps or sentence them to prison terms following perfunctory, closed trials without access to lawyers. As of September 2022, an estimated half-million people remained in prison following the crackdown. Since 2017, Human Rights Watch and other organizations have uncovered many of these systems, but the precise relationships among them remain unclear. This database is part of a police surveillance system named iTap, built for the Urumqi Police Department by the Chinese surveillance tech company Landasoft (蓝灯), according to the Intercept. Landasoft’s chief executive officer claimed that the company wanted to be the “Chinese version of Palantir,” the US company that is providing profiling and analytic capabilities to law enforcement and intelligence agencies globally.

With massive amounts of information on each individual, and the integration of their contacts, location, vehicle information, financial accounts and internet accounts – all without their consent – the software allows the police to monitor every resident of Urumqi, including uncovering people’s hidden relationships through network analysis.

This research has shown for the first time that iTap is receiving data from the Jingwang Weishi and Fengcai apps. Human Rights Watch wrote to Landasoft on April 4 about this database but has not received a response.

Various media have increasingly reported that police are conducting abusive checks on people’s phones throughout China, such as to find out who carried out the December 2022 “white paper” protests – where individuals used blank signs to signal opposition to the government’s strict Covid-19 measures or the Chinese Communist Party’s authoritarian rule. The government has also conducted such checks in Tibetan areas to pursue the government’s aggressive assimilationist policies. In these cases, though, it appears that the police are conducting manual checks, swiping through people’s phones.

The Chinese government has also increasingly required people throughout China to install various government and Communist Party apps purportedly for fighting online fraud, controlling the Covid pandemic, and spreading its ideology. Many of these

apps collect copious amounts of personal data, including location information, health data, and other identifying information such as national ID numbers, with little transparency on how the data is used and stored.

At the same time, Chinese authorities have also made app stores remove apps they dislike, such as censorship circumvention apps, encryption apps, and religious apps, including a prominent Quran app used by millions of people around the world.

**Methodology: Authenticating the Leaked Database**

The master list that Human Rights Watch found in the leaked database contains a list of about 50,000 rows as of March 2018, with each entry containing metadata such as filename, size, filename extension (such as mp3) and the file's MD5 hash – a unique signature of the file the police use to identify files on residents' phones.

Human Rights Watch has found that the MD5 hashes in this list match those in lists previously reported by two other organizations, which separately conducted investigations into two of Xinjiang's policing apps that the authorities used during crackdowns:

- In February 2018, the US-based organization Open Technology Fund (OTF) reverse engineered Jingwang Weishi (净网卫士), an app that Urumqi police forced local residents to install. The Open Technology Fund found that in addition to extracting the phone's various identifying information such as its brand and model, IMEI (International Mobile Equipment Identity), IMSI (International Mobile Subscriber Identity), and MAC (Media Access Control) address and phone number, the app also searches the target's phone against a list of MD5 hashes and automatically reports any files deemed "dangerous" to the authorities.
- In July 2019, the New York Times reverse engineering efforts revealed another list of MD5 hashes extracted from another app named Fengcai, which the Xinjiang police routinely installed on travelers' phones at border crossings. This list contained 73,314 unique MD5 hashes. The vast majority of the hashes that Human Rights Watch examined can also be found in this list, which suggests that in the span of one year, between 2018 and 2019, Xinjiang police had added over 21,000 items to the list of "violent and terrorist" multimedia files. Only 29 files in the Human Rights Watch list were not in the list that the New York Times analyzed.

The fact that this same list of 50,000 files is included in two distinct Xinjiang-specific policing apps, as well as in this leaked database, suggests that the Xinjiang authorities use this same list as a master list to

determine whether a resident has what they deemed to be "violent and terrorist files" on their device.

In regards to the related list in the leaked database that has the same MD5 hashes as the master list, Human Rights Watch determined that it contains the search results of the Jingwang Weishi app based on the fact that its format perfectly matched the output format described in Open Tech Fund's reverse engineering of that app. The search results contain the unique identifying information – IMEI, IMSI, MAC addresses – of every phone searched and, if found, a record of the name, size and file type of the "violent and terrorist" file.

**Punishing the Possession of 'Extremist' Material**

Many of the people arbitrarily detained and imprisoned in Xinjiang were rounded up for possessing "violent" or "terrorist" multimedia materials, according to information in leaked official lists of such individual and previous Human Rights Watch interviews with family members and former detainees.

A leaked list of over 2,000 detainees held in a political education camp from Aksu prefecture that Human Rights Watch obtained in 2018 showed that about 10 percent (over 200) of the people on the list were being held for "terrorism" or "extremism" because they had downloaded or shared such "violent and terrorist" multimedia content, or for being related to someone who had downloaded or shared such content.

In 2018, a Uyghur interviewee told Human Rights Watch that one of his fellow detainees held in a police detention center cell during the crackdowns was a 60-year-old man who had sent an audio of an Islamic religious teaching to his daughter, who passed it to a friend. The father and daughter received six-year and three-year prison sentences, respectively, and alleged that detainees in these facilities were tortured.

### **Uyghurs have highest rate of imprisonment in world: report**

02 May 2024, RFA, Irade

An estimated 1 in 26 Uyghurs have been jailed, accounting for a third of China's prison population.

An estimated one in 26 Uyghurs in China's far-western Xinjiang region are behind bars, the world's highest rate of incarceration, according to a report by a Uyghur advocacy group.

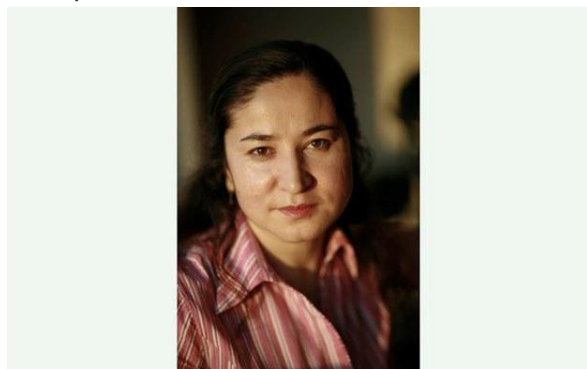
Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples there are imprisoned at an estimated rate of 3,814 per 100,000 people – 47 times higher than China's overall rate of 80 per 100,000, the group said.

That's also more than three times higher than in El Salvador, which has the world's highest known incarceration rate at 1,086 per 100,000 people,

according to the April 25 report by the Uyghur Human Right Project, or UHRP.

All told, 578,500 Uyghurs or other Turkic people were in jail as of 2022, the group estimates. That's just over one-third of China's total prison population, even though they comprise only 1% of China's overall population. That figure is likely the same or higher today, the group says.

A prominent imprisoned Uyghur is Rahile Dawut, a Uyghur folklore expert and ethnographer convicted in December 2018 for "splittism" and sentenced to life in prison.



Rahile Dawut poses for a photo in Urumqi, capital of northwestern China's Xinjiang region, in August 2006. Dawut, a prominent Uyghur scholar specializing in Uyghur folklore and traditions, was sentenced to life in prison on the charge of 'splittism.' (Lisa Ross via AP)

Another example is Gulshan Abbas, a retired Uyghur doctor and the sister of Rushan Abbas, a former Radio Free Asia employee and current executive director of Campaign for Uyghurs. She was sentenced to a lengthy prison term on "terrorism" charges after she disappeared along with another relative in September 2018.

The U.S. State Department has said that Dawut and other Uyghur intellectuals have been unfairly imprisoned for their work to protect and preserve Uyghur culture and traditions.

The report's findings are based on data from annual reports from the Xinjiang High People's Procuratorate — which prosecutes criminal defendants — and information published on the website of China's Ministry of Justice, covering the period 2017-2022. During that period, one in every 26 Uyghurs or members of other Turkic ethnicities in Xinjiang was incarcerated.

Many of those imprisoned have been convicted of crimes related to practicing Islam, such as studying the Quran when they were young or teaching it to others.

Reality may be worse

The actual situation in Xinjiang may even be worse, said UHRP senior researcher Ben Carrdus, who wrote the report.

"These are just people who have been put in prison. It doesn't include people who might still be in

internment camps," he told Radio Free Asia, referring to the estimated 1.8 million Uyghurs and others arbitrarily detained in what the Chinese government said were vocational training centers.

The camps were, in fact, places where Uyghurs were subjected to political indoctrination and severe human rights abuses, including torture, the forced sterilization of woman and forced labor.

China claims that the camps have been closed.

When China says it's ruled by law, it actually means that the law is whatever the Chinese Communist Party wants it to be, Carrdus said.

"Using laws doesn't mean they are using justice. What they've done is use the instruments against the Uyghur people," he said. "Thousands and thousands of people have been sentenced to prison mostly through the courts where China has used very unjust rules."

The report indicates that Uyghurs experience higher death rates in prison than other ethnic groups in China, though death penalty figures are not publicly available because they are considered a state secret.

The UHRP believes Uyghurs receive severe sentences, such as at least 10 years in prison for minor actions like studying the Quran or teaching it to children, so that the rate of death sentences among them may be higher.

John Kamm, executive director of the U.S.-based human rights group The Dui Hua Foundation, emphasized the importance of highlighting the number of Uyghurs in prison to attract the attention of international media and governments in hope that they will push for their release.

Carrdus urged the international community not to forget the Uyghurs.

"I can say that with 100% confidence, things are not getting better," he said, adding that although authorities in Xinjiang have been closing down the internment camps, they've been sending Uyghurs to prisons instead.

### US labor official calls on companies to exit China's Xinjiang

01 May 2024, Reuters

WASHINGTON, April 30 (Reuters) - International companies cannot responsibly operate in Xinjiang and should leave the western Chinese region due to forced labor concerns, a U.S. Labor Department official said on Tuesday.

The U.S. government says Chinese officials continue to commit genocide and crimes against humanity against Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang, and rights groups have pressured Western companies there to audit their operations over forced labor concerns.



China's government vehemently denies allegations of abuses.

Thea Lee, deputy undersecretary for international affairs at the Labor Department, told a U.S. congressional hearing that Beijing had made it "essentially illegal" to conduct independent human rights audits in Xinjiang.

"If it is impossible to do that, then the only responsible thing to do is not to operate in that atmosphere," Lee told the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, without naming individual companies.

China's embassy in Washington said in an emailed statement that the allegations of forced labor were "nothing but a lie concocted by the U.S. side in an attempt to wantonly suppress Chinese enterprises."

Chinese officials have acknowledged "vocational training centers," in Xinjiang, but say were intended to curb terrorism, separatism and religious radicalism. They have also said the "Sinicisation" of Islam in the country is inevitable.

On Feb. 9, German chemicals giant BASF (BASFn.DE), opens new tab said it would sell its stakes in two joint ventures in Xinjiang, after rights groups documented abuses including forced labor in detention camps.

Volkswagen (VOWG\_p.DE), opens new tab too has said it was in talks with its joint venture partner in China over the future direction of its business activities in the region.

Beijing in 2017 launched a harsh security crackdown in Xinjiang. Some experts say alleged mass internment of Uyghurs peaked in 2018, but that abuses have continued with labor transfers becoming more prominent.

Still, China's government has sought to make Xinjiang a heavy industry hub, and it is important for the processing of aluminum and for producing auto parts, solar components and other goods that make their way into global supply chains.

The U.S. Congress has passed laws to pressure China over its Xinjiang policies, including the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act that bars imports from the region. The Department of Labor does not set rules on how U.S. companies can operate in China.

Lee said China's transfer of Uyghur laborers to other parts of the country had been growing, but that it was difficult to verify the extent of the program.

"I have not seen an effective way to address the challenges of monitoring the labor transfer program of workers outside of Xinjiang," Lee said.

She said data on Chinese websites is periodically removed, and that there is no free access to workplaces to assess workers' origins.

## April

### UN expert states Xinjiang and Tibet situations are components of Chinese Colonisation process

19 April 2024, MyInd

The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity, in partnership with the World Uyghur Congress and Uyghur Human Rights Project, convened a conference in New York titled 'Beyond Concentration Camps: Forced Assimilation and China's Colonial Boarding Schools' to discuss the cultural assimilation of the Uyghur community in East Turkestan.

Social activists, human rights advocates, representatives, and delegates from the World Uyghur Congress, as well as the Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity, a US-based social organisation, were among the speakers at the conference.

During the press conference, Fernand De Varennes, former UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, highlighted China's strategic efforts to systematically dismantle Uyghur civilisation and culture through its implementation of residential schools.

In his statement, De Varennes remarked that the situation in China, including Xinjiang and Tibet, extends beyond mere human rights violations to encompass a systematic process of colonisation, erasure, and elimination of cultures and peoples.

He suggested that Han nationalism drives this process, leading to significant breaches of international human rights standards, particularly affecting Tibetans, Uyghurs, and potentially other minorities.

While emphasising the UN's actions concerning cultural destruction, the former UN Special Rapporteur noted that several independent experts, including the former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, have published numerous reports, communications, and responses addressing allegations of extensive violations. Many individuals within the UN community express deep concern regarding the magnitude and severity of the human rights abuses occurring.

He mentioned the huge internment of between one and two million Uyghurs and other minorities in large arbitrary detentions. This is possibly the largest detention of civilians since the Second World War. It affected around 10 to 20 percent of the adult population in Xinjiang at the time.

De Varennes highlighted that Chinese authorities in Tibet and Xinjiang have implemented systems subjecting Tibetans and Uyghurs to forced labour, potentially amounting to a modern form of slavery. He expressed shock at the scale of this phenomenon,

citing the work of Tomoya Obokata, a Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery.

The UN Special Rapporteur highlighted China's state-run boarding school system in Xinjiang, which fails to educate children in their mother tongue and separates a large number of mainly Uyghur children from their families. He finds this practice surprising, shocking, and unacceptable, resembling a modern form of systematic cultural genocide.

According to the former UN Rapporteur, what's happening in Xinjiang and Tibet is not just massive human rights violations, but intentional colonisation. Allegations include sterilisation of Uyghur and minority women, the banning certain Muslim names, and restricting Islamic teachings. Books on Uyghur culture and literature are banned, even poetry books in Uyghur.

Destruction of mosques, historical sites, and cemeteries is part of erasing the people's presence systematically. This is deliberate, aiming to erase civilisation, people, and their history from the territory.

### China bans Uyghurs from using social media apps

18 April 2024, RFA



The main gate of a Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps building in Manas County, northwestern China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, April 17, 2021. (Charlie Qi via Wikipedia)

Authorities in Xinjiang have banned Uyghurs from using social media apps including Chinese-owned TikTok and tools to circumvent censorship, according to a video released from Chinese police, in what experts say could be the beginning of another major crackdown on the region's 11 million mostly Muslim Uyghurs.

A video notice about the ban was released April 8 by the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, a state-run economic and paramilitary organization also known as Bingtuan that has played a key role in suppressing the Uyghurs.

Violators face arrest, a fine of 15,000 yuan, or US\$2,100, and a 40-point deduction under China's social credit system, which affects people's access to

credit and business opportunities, according to the video.

In addition to TikTok, people are forbidden from downloading and using X, formerly Twitter, and YouTube, and buying and selling on the cryptocurrency platform Bitcoin, it said.

The announcement "suggests a significant likelihood of another round of mass oppression by China," said Ilshat Hassan Kokbore, vice chairman of the executive committee of the World Uyghur Congress.

Bingtuan police also warned against using virtual private networks, or VPNs, or server accelerator cards, which get around China's "Great Firewall" of government internet censorship.

Authorities are also broadcasting the warning against using foreign websites and apps across radio stations, televisions and social media platforms in Xinjiang, said a foreign businessman who works in the region, but declined to be named for fear of retribution.

Chinese police are conducting impromptu checks of phones in Uyghur homes and hotels, leading to abductions, he said.

Pivotal role in oppression

Bingtuan police and armed security forces participated in the mass arrests and detentions of Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities in internment camps and prisons that began around 2017, which the United States and some Western parliaments have labeled a genocide.

A December 2023 report by the Uyghur Human Rights Project on the police surveillance structure in Xinjiang identifies the People's Armed Police and the Bingtuan as the primary perpetrators of the Chinese Communist Party's genocide against the Uyghurs.

The latest ban came after a special meeting recently convened by Xinjiang's Communist Party Committee, which stressed the need for "strictly maintaining secrecy related to Xinjiang."

Sophie Richardson, former director of China affairs at Human Rights Watch, said the new ban could indicate the failure of Chinese policies in Xinjiang.

"If the Chinese government really thought its policies were working well in the region, these kinds of threats and constraints simply wouldn't exist," she said.

Surveillance apps

The new cyber restrictions are nothing new in Xinjiang.

By 2016, Chinese police had forced people in the region to install government surveillance apps on their cellphones and computers.

The following year, the Chinese government began a large-scale arrest operation based on WeChat activity records of Uyghurs and other Muslim ethnic groups.

According to news reports, China has amassed comprehensive information on Uyghurs in a large database and can monitor and track them around the clock.

Geoffrey Cain, a senior research fellow and policy director of the Tech Integrity Project and author of the book "The Perfect Police State," said crackdowns always "start with apps," but he added that the CCP itself has mastered the use of apps to collect data on China's entire population.

"They learned to do it with the use of concentration camps, and to put people in those concentration camps they used mass data gathering from their apps," he told RFA.

Chinese public security authorities have required Uyghurs with personal computers and smartphones to install "anti-fraud" spyware on devices.

Now if someone tries to download foreign social media apps such as X or to use a VPN, the software immediately alerts police, who have the authority to freeze users' bank accounts and terminate their phone service, Cain said.

Forcing people in Xinjiang and the rest of China to install spy apps shows that Chinese authorities are worried about political stability and they want to create a total security state by seeing "every person's thinking, every person's ideology," he said.

Denying the Uyghur genocide

Kokbore pointed out that Chinese government officials widely use social media platforms such as TikTok, X and Facebook to deny the Uyghur genocide.

"China is putting efforts to conceal the ethnic genocide in the Uyghur region by tightly controlling information and punishing Uyghurs arbitrarily," he said.

Kokbore also noted the presence of X accounts with Uyghur profile photos that promote the Chinese government's narrative of Uyghurs living happy lives under Chinese policies. Chinese reporters then use such platforms to conceal the atrocities.

Some U.S. lawmakers and government officials have determined that TikTok, a subsidiary of Chinese company ByteDance, poses a threat to U.S. national security.

The U.S. House of Representatives on March 13 passed legislation that will ban TikTok in the United States unless its parent company can find a buyer for it. To become law, the bill must clear the Senate, where other efforts to ban the short-video app have stalled.

Translated by RFA Uyghur. Edited by Roseanne Gerin and Malcolm Foster.

## C House Reps urge crack down on companies benefiting from Chinese forced labor

17 April 2024, AXIOS



Reps. Mike Gallagher and Raja Krishnamoorthi talk with reporters in the U.S. Capitol on March 13. Photo: Tom Williams/CQ-Roll Call, Inc via Getty Images

Two House members urged the State Department Wednesday to step up its diplomatic efforts to ensure companies that benefit from the forced labor of Uyghurs in China can't access global markets.

Why it matters: The U.S. has sought to crack down on companies believed to be complicit in the Chinese government's human rights abuses towards Uyghur Muslims and other minorities in Xinjiang province.

Now, the leaders of the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party are calling for the U.S. to get allies on board as well.

The big picture: Last month, the European Council and European Parliament struck a provisional deal to ban products made with forced labor from being imported into the EU market.

Yet the select committee has learned that certain EU members are considering voting against the ban, committee chair Mike Gallagher (R-Wisc.) and ranking member Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-Ill.) wrote in a letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken Wednesday.

Failing to pass the ban would mean products made by Chinese "state-sponsored forced labor programs will continue to have unfettered access to European markets."

They will also have a higher likelihood of entering the U.S. via Europe, they added.

State of play: "We therefore urge the State Department to intensify and elevate its global diplomatic efforts to address PRC state-sponsored forced labor programs," the two lawmakers wrote.

Initial efforts should "prioritize engagement" with EU partners, including Germany and Italy, ahead of a prospective vote on the import ban.

The lawmakers gave the State Department until April 30 to answer a series of questions regarding their efforts to engage allies on the topic.

Zoom out: The U.S. passed the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA) in Dec. 2021, banning all



imports from Xinjiang unless companies can prove with "clear and convincing evidence" that the products are not made with forced labor.

A bipartisan group of lawmakers last year raised calls for increased transparency around the enforcement of UFLPA, following reports that products from Xinjiang were still coming into the U.S. The Trump administration in Jan. 2021 declared China's campaign of mass internment, forced labor and forced sterilization of Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang to be a genocide.

### US lawmakers relaunch Uyghur caucus

17 April 2024, RFA

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Uyghur activists present two U.S. lawmakers with accolades for their long support for Uyghurs on April 16, 2024, at the Capitol building in Washington. From left to right: Nury Turkel, commissioner of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, Rishat Abbas, chairman of the Uyghur Academy International, Rep. Chris Smith, (R-NJ), Elfidar Iltebir, president of the Uyghur American Association, Rushan Abbas, executive director of the Campaign for Uyghurs, Rep. Tom Suozzi (D-NY), Omer Kanat, executive director of the Uyghur Human Rights Project, Dolkun Isa, president of the World Uyghur Congress, and Ablikim Idris, executive director of the Center for Uyghur Studies.

The Congressional Uyghur Caucus is back.

Though the caucus never disbanded, the activities of the bipartisan group of U.S. lawmakers slowed to a trickle after its chair, Rep. Tom Suozzi, a Democrat from New York, retired from his district, which Republican Rep. George Santos then won in the 2022 midterms.

Shortly after his shock win, Santos' personal biography was proved to be a series of lies by a New York Times report. He was then expelled from the House of Representatives in December, less than a year after taking his seat, which paved the way for Suozzi to return.

The former attorney said he was pleased to be back at work.

"We just do not hear about the Uyghurs enough, and I am excited to come back to Congress to work with you to make sure that we let more people know what is happening," he said at an event Tuesday on Capitol Hill relaunching the Congressional Uyghur Caucus.

The most pressing priority of the revamped caucus, Suozzi said, would be to more widely spread awareness of the plight of Uyghurs in China's far-west, whom the U.S. government says are subject to

an ongoing genocide and are often detained in forced-labor camps.

Beijing, though, says the Muslim minority were only taken to vocational training centers, most of which it says are now shuttered.

"We have to figure out how, as a team, can we make this part of the national conversation, and the global conversation?" Suozzi said on Tuesday. "There's no question of the abuse. There's no question about how horrific it is. There's no question that it's being done."

"There's no question it would rise to the level of the things that would most offend most people – if they were educated about it," he added. "but we can't get it to be part of everyday conversation."

'Looking askance'

Rep. Chris Smith, a Republican from New Jersey who chairs the Congressional-Executive Commission on China and will be a co-chair for the Congressional Uyghur Caucus, said the caucus had a lot of work left over from when it was last working at full steam.

"To think that, as we meet," Smith said, "there's a genocide going on this very minute."

He accused both the White House and the State Department of "looking askance" at the genocide when it served their diplomatic ends, such as the current warming of ties with Beijing.

"That's usually both parties: Once they get the White House, human rights become an asterisk on a bunch of talking points when they meet with foreign leaders like [Chinese President] Xi Jinping," he said. "It's brought up, but it's not brought up in a way that is meaningful."

Smith said he wanted to see the caucus push the passage of the Uyghur Policy Act, which would force the U.S. State Department to place a Uyghur speaker in every American consulate in China and include Uyghurs in outreach programs in Muslim countries.

He also said the Senate should take up a bill that passed the House in a 414-2 vote last year that would place sanctions on Chinese officials involved in forced organ harvesting, which Uyghur activists say is rife in far-western Xinjiang region where most of the minority live.

"The Uyghurs are suffering from this in a horrible way," Smith said. "We've got to get it done. I'm almost at a point of outrage."

He added the bill was now "sitting idly languishing, collecting dust over in the U.S. Senate," and that he did not believe organ harvesting "gets raised" properly by diplomats in meetings with Chinese officials.

Also attending the event was Rep. Jennifer Wexton, a Democrat from Virginia whose district in the state's north is home to many Uyghurs.

Wexton, who was previously one of the most outspoken members of the caucus, is now set to retire at the end of the current congressional term after being debilitated by progressive supra-nuclear palsy, a disease she described as "like Parkinson's [disease] on steroids."

Using an assisted speaking app on her phone, Wexton said she hoped the revamped caucus was able to pass legislation that would help end the "gut-wrenching" situation taking place in the Xinjiang region.

"We have made great strides in this fight," she said. "But as all of you know, it is far from over. While I may not be serving in Congress for much longer, I want you to know that I will not give up this fight."

Edited by Malcolm Foster.

The story was updated to correct Nury Turkel's title in the photo caption.

## China finds foreign support for Xinjiang policies as region seeks to boost economic ties

11 April 2024, Yuanyue Dang, SCMP



Foreign diplomats attend a conference hosted by Xinjiang officials in Beijing on Wednesday. The event coincided with Eid ul-Fitr, the Muslim festival that marks the end of the fasting month of Ramadan. Photo: Xinhua

- Envoys from 49 countries attend event hosted by Xinjiang officials, with many saying they hope to strengthen cooperation under belt and road strategy
- Xinjiang aims to expand its international influence as it faces allegations of human rights abuses and forced labour – accusations Beijing has denied

Ambassadors from more than 20 countries showed support for China's policies in Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region and vowed to develop closer economic ties with the far western area as it seeks to expand its international influence amid human rights abuse allegations.

While attending a reception in Beijing on Wednesday, the ambassadors from South Africa, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Iran, Syria and Turkey told



Xinjiang authorities that they hoped to strengthen economic ties with the region.

More than 50 diplomats from 49 countries, including 21 ambassadors, attended the reception. It was the largest of several similar events organised by Xinjiang officials in recent years.

The most senior Chinese official present was Xinjiang Communist Party chief Ma Xingrui, who is also a member of the Politburo, the party's elite decision-making body.

The event coincided with Eid ul-Fitr, the Muslim festival that marks the end of the fasting month of Ramadan.

Xinjiang is home to 25.85 million people, 14.93 million of whom are members of ethnic minority groups, including the Muslim Uygurs and Kazakhs.

Beijing has been accused of human rights violations and forced labour in Xinjiang – accusations it has denied. The Xinjiang government has become more proactive in recent years in promoting the region's economic development, especially its status as a core area of China's Belt and Road Initiative, in the hopes of improving its international image.

Turkish ambassador to China Ismail Hakki Musa said that Xinjiang, as a core part of the belt and road strategy, could play a role in the Middle Corridor, also called the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR), an Ankara-backed Eurasian trade route.

China's Uygurs, who speak a Turkic language, share cultural and linguistic ties with Turkish Muslims. Relations between Beijing and Ankara were once strained over Xinjiang but have eased in recent years as a result of closer economic relations.

Kazakhstan's ambassador to China, Shakhmat Nuryshv, said Xinjiang had a "special place" in his country's ties with Beijing. Around 1.6 million ethnic Kazakhs live in Xinjiang.

Central Asian countries are a priority for Xinjiang authorities in developing external relations.

These countries, most of which became independent in the early 1990s with the collapse of the Soviet Union, were once blamed as the source of separatist sentiments in Xinjiang because of their shared cultural similarities with ethnic minority groups there.

However, China's ties with Central Asia have warmed over the past decade as Xinjiang's security situation has improved and countries in the region have played a growing role in the belt and road – Beijing's ambitious plan to build global trade and infrastructure links.

In a speech at the reception, Syrian ambassador to China Muhammad Hassanein Khalil Khaddam decried the "lies of some Western countries", referring to allegations of human rights abuses in Xinjiang.

Syria has increased its cooperation with China in the face of Western sanctions as Beijing has strengthened ties with Moscow, an ally of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Assad travelled to China in September – his first visit since the Syrian civil war broke out in 2011.

Mohsen Bakhtiyar, Iran's ambassador to China, said his country "links China and the West through Xinjiang", adding that there were great opportunities for cooperation between Iran and Xinjiang in areas such as energy and minerals.

Pakistan's ambassador to China, Khalil-ur-Rahman Hashmi, said Islamabad hoped to deepen cooperation with Xinjiang in trade, investment and other areas. In recent years, China and Pakistan have also strengthened their cooperation in counterterrorism.

The ambassador from South Africa also made a speech and envoys from Cuba, Saudi Arabia, Azerbaijan, Dominica, Georgia, Qatar and Serbia attended the event.

Xinjiang has sent multiple official delegations abroad in the past two years, and the region has frequently hosted foreign envoys, religious representatives and media figures.

In 2021, Xinjiang hosted more than 40 envoys from over 30 African countries in the regional capital of Urumqi.

In late January, Xinjiang for the first time invited foreign diplomats to attend the annual sessions of the region's legislature and political consultative conference in Urumqi – its most important political event of the year. The diplomats who attended were mainly from countries that belong to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, a China-led regional security and economic grouping.

Wednesday's reception was also attended by several senior Chinese officials responsible for Xinjiang, religious and foreign affairs as well as officials from Xinjiang in charge of ideology and foreign affairs.

Erkin Tuniyaz, Xinjiang's regional government chairman and one of the officials sanctioned by the US for alleged human rights abuses, said the region had protected religious freedom, particularly the "healthy and orderly development" of Islam.

Chen Xiaodong, China's vice-minister of foreign affairs, said Beijing would "actively promote" Xinjiang's opening to the outside world. He added that he hoped the envoys would promote Xinjiang to the world and resist "lies about forced labour".

### **With feasts and patrols, China tries to keep Uyghurs from fasting**

05 April 2024, Shohret Hoshur, RFA



Uyghurs and other members of the faithful pray during services at the Id Kah Mosque in Kashgar in northwestern China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, as seen during a government organized visit for foreign journalists, April 19, 2021.

During Ramadan, Chinese authorities have been using a mix of festivals and surveillance to keep the mostly Muslim Uyghurs in the far western region of Xinjiang from fasting, praying and observing the Muslim holy month that ends next week.

In the city of Atush, officials told Radio Free Asia that they organized arts events and outdoor feasts and distributed free food during the month. They also held communal meetings in the early evenings to coincide with sundown, when Muslim families typically gather to eat after the daylong fast in a practice called iftar.

Police in the northwestern city of Ghulja conducted street patrols and home inspections to see if residents were fasting. They also banned residents from gathering on the streets to prevent them from meeting for dinner together.

"It is prohibited to do iftar together and prayer together," a police officer in Ghulja told RFA. "We tell them fasting is not allowed. We also pay attention [to see] if they are visiting their relatives during iftar."

In the regional capital Urumqi, a traffic police officer said designated officers had been tasked with monitoring taxi drivers to ensure they were not fasting or praying during the month.

A flurry of social media videos coming out of Xinjiang this month showed Uyghurs singing Chinese songs and gathered around outdoor tables with beer bottles on top. RFA could not independently verify when the videos had been taken or who had shot them, but their intent seemed to be to promote eating, dancing and entertaining – not prayer and fasting.

#### Squelching Islam

Due to Chinese censorship and severe restrictions placed on Xinjiang residents talking with journalists, it is nearly impossible to obtain candid comments from Uyghurs on the ground about these events.

But Uyghur advocates and experts outside China say that for years Beijing has been trying to restrict and

discourage Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities in the region from observing Ramadan and practicing Islam in general – all in the name of fighting religious extremism and terrorism.

Chinese authorities began banning Muslims in Xinjiang from fasting during Ramadan in 2017, when they began arbitrarily detaining an estimated 1.7 million Uyghurs in "re-education" camps amid larger efforts to diminish their culture, language and religion.

The restriction was partially relaxed in 2021 and 2022, allowing people over 65 to fast, and police reduced the number of home searches and street patrol activities. But in 2023, authorities ordered all Muslims in Xinjiang to not fast and even used spies to report on those who did.

"The Chinese Communist Party has been aggressively carrying out its campaign of eliminating the religious beliefs of the Uyghur people during the holy month of Ramadan," said Ablikim Idris, executive director of the Washington-based Center for Uyghur Studies.

"During this month of prayer and fasting, Chinese authorities have been organizing political indoctrination sessions, singing and dancing, as well as other entertainment for Uyghurs in order to eradicate their faith in Islam from their hearts," he said.

"Their goal is to trample on the millennial-long faith of Uyghurs and turn them into a people without God and religion."

#### Evening gatherings about social order

A police officer in Atush contacted by RFA Uyghur said authorities have been tasked with coordinating various activities and events – some overseeing security, while others perform surveillance or organize art shows.

We "have been working tirelessly, without any breaks, operating 24 hours a day," she said.

The security director of a village in Upper Atush told Radio Free Asia that since the beginning of Ramadan, residents have had to gather at the village meeting hall in the early evenings.

"We have been advertising legal rules and holding weekly study events for the community," he said.

During events attended by city and political officials, there were no explicit speeches banning Ramadan or fasting. Instead, lectures were delivered on maintaining social order and stability and eating meals regularly to maintain one's health, some officials said.

Officials also gave farmers agricultural training until about 7 p.m., as well as offered health advice and explained the importance of loyalty to China and how stability contributes to its prosperity, he said.

When RFA asked officials and police about whether distributing free food during Ramadan had prompted discontent among Uyghurs, they said that community

"awareness" had increased, thereby negating any dissatisfaction.

They attributed this "progress" to the significant role played by the Chinese Communist Party and the government in shaping public sentiment.

"I didn't observe any disagreement over the food distribution," said a village security chief.

"I believe there are no longer people with outdated ideologies," she said. "Everyone has embraced progressive ideals, thanks to the efforts of our party and nation. People accept modernity and embrace advanced ideologies."

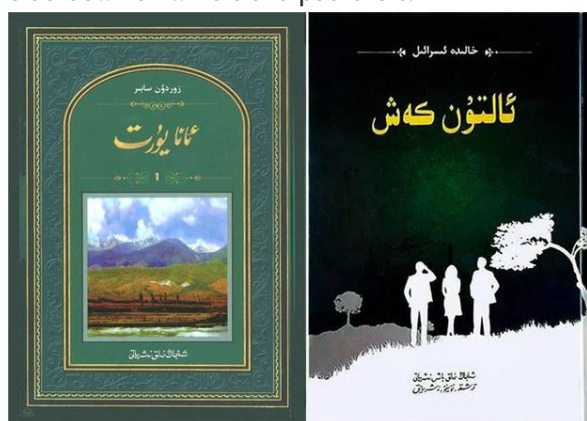
Translated by RFA Uyghur. Edited by Roseanne Gerin and Malcolm Foster.

## March

### Uyghur publisher jailed for books on Uyghur independence, identity

23 March 2024, RFA

Erkin Emet was arrested in July 2018 during a crackdown on writers and publishers.



Erkin Emet was arrested and jailed for publishing 'Altun Kesh,' or 'Golden Shoes,' (R) by Halide Israel and marketing Zordun Sabir's 'Ana Yurt,' or 'Motherland.'

A prominent Uyghur who published books about Uyghur cultural identity and China's persecution of the Uyghurs has been sentenced to prison, according to a Norway-based foundation and officials in Xinjiang.

Erkin Emet, 65, on a list of detained intellectuals in Xinjiang compiled by Uyghur Hjelp Foundation based in Norway, was taken into custody in July 2018, according to the organization's founder, Abduweli Ayup.

Emet's family said authorities accused him of inciting ethnic separatism and that he is serving a prison term, according to a source in Kashgar, asking not to be identified for security reasons.

However, his whereabouts and the length of his sentence are unknown, the source said.

Through confidential channels, Ayup discovered that Emet was most likely arrested for his involvement in

the publication or dissemination of two books in particular.

The first was the novel "Altun Kesh," or "Golden Shoes," by Halide Israel, about the persecution of Uyghurs during China's 1966-76 Cultural Revolution and the importance of holding onto Uyghur identity. Emet also sold copies of Zordun Sabir's "Ana Yurt," or "Motherland," which chronicles the Uyghur victory over Chinese nationalist forces in the early 1940s and the establishment of the second East Turkestan Republic, in existence from 1944 to 1949.

Crackdown on intellectuals

Emet was arrested during a crackdown known as "Hui Tou Kan," or "Looking Back," a police officer who works near the Xinjiang's Health Publishing House in Urumqi, where Emet used to work, told Radio Free Asia.

At that time, Chinese authorities were detaining Uyghur intellectuals, including writers and publishers, in internment camps or prisons for producing works viewed as harboring separatist tendencies.

Material written or published by prominent Uyghurs was scrutinized, even though it had previously received government approval.

"During Hui Tou Kan, they investigated all previously published books," said an official at Xinjiang's Political Law Office in Urumqi, the region's capital.

The most problematic book related to his arrest was "Altun Kesh," he said.

Another source said that his involvement in the sale of "Ana Yurt" was also behind his arrest.

Bookstore manager

Emet, who has two children and several grandchildren, first served as deputy director of the Kashgar branch of Xinhua Bookstore in the 1990s, according to Ayup, whose group is also known as Uyghuryar.

Emet was the first bookstore manager to order 5,000 copies of "Ana Yurt," which sold out quickly, he said. "He opened multiple large bookstores in different counties of Kashgar, expanded the Kashgar Xinhua Bookstore, and diversified its offers with different categories, which proved to be successful," Ayup told RFA.

Emet was appointed director of the Kashgar Uyghur Publishing House at the end of 2010.

There he published notable works, including Hojamuhemmed Muhammad's eight volumes of poetry collections and was instrumental in getting Halide Israel's "Kechmish," or "Tales of the Past," and "Altun Kesh" published, Ayup said.

In May 2018, Emet moved to Urumqi to become director of Xinjiang's Health Publishing House, where he worked with Qurban Mamut, a renowned retired Uyghur editor at the Uyghur Civilization Journal, according to Ayup.

Two months later, Emet was arrested.

Mamut, father of RFA journalist Bahram Sintash, was arrested later and sentenced to 15 years in prison, Ayup said.

### **Human rights activist exposes Chinese oppression of Uyghurs in Xinjiang at UNHRC**

22 March 2024, ANI

Social and human rights activist Shunichi Fujiki in his intervention during the 38th meeting of the 55th General Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, shed light on the barbarity faced by the Uyghur community in Xinjiang due to Mainland China's actions.

During his intervention, Fujiki expressed grave concern about the ongoing systematic human rights abuses against Uyghurs in Xinjiang.

He highlighted China's refusal to grant access to the region, hindering independent verification of reports on systemic discrimination, mass arbitrary detention, and forced labour.

Despite these challenges, a growing body of evidence, including extensive research by NGOs, journalists, and academics, reveals a disturbing pattern of systematic human rights violations.

In his intervention Fujiki outlined China's efforts to erase the unique Uyghur identity and culture, citing mass detentions in "vocational training centers" that serve as de facto internment camps.

These facilities subject individuals to political indoctrination forced labor, and attempts at cultural assimilation.

He referenced a 2023 report by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which raised concerns about mass surveillance, restrictions on religious practices, and forced sterilizations.

Shunichi also Fujiki urged the UNHRC to take immediate action. He called for free access to Xinjiang for observers, including UN human rights experts, the release of arbitrarily detained individuals, and a comprehensive investigation into allegations of torture, forced labour, and cultural assimilation.

Additionally, Fujiki appealed to member states to enact legislation banning the import of goods produced with forced labor in Xinjiang. He emphasized the urgent need for decisive actions, as the Uyghur community continues to suffer under oppressive conditions. (ANI)

**So-called 'forced labor' in Xinjiang is one of the most notorious laws of the 21st century, aiming to destabilize Xinjiang: FM**

15 March 2024, Global Times



This photo taken on Oct 12, 2023 shows farmers harvesting cotton in Korla, northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. Photo:Xinhua

The US' so-called Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA) is one of the most notorious laws of the 21st century. It is essentially a tool used by US politicians to destabilize Xinjiang and curb China's development, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said on Friday, responding to US suspension of garment imports from the Philippines on suspicion that cotton used is involved in "forced labor" in Xinjiang.

So-called "forced labor" in Xinjiang is the lie of the century concocted by anti-China forces to create forced unemployment and poverty in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, Wang Wenbin, spokesperson for the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said on Friday during a routine press conference.

"Such a lie is a tool used by US politicians to destabilize Xinjiang and curb China's development," said Wang.

Wang shared several examples during the press conference, which clearly showed that what the US has done on Xinjiang violated human rights under the banner of "human rights protection."

One example was a private clothing company in Xinjiang, which employed more than 2,200 people as of the end of 2018, with ethnic minority employees accounting for more than 95 percent. However, due to the impact of the US and Western sanctions, the main partners of the company have cancelled all orders in 2019, resulting in direct losses of over 10 million yuan (\$1.4 million) and a reduction in employees to less than 500 people. At present, most of the factory and equipment owned by the enterprise remains idle, and it is barely able to maintain its operation through domestic orders.

Another example is a Xinjiang hair ornament production enterprise which saw its order volume decrease by 40 percent in 2023 compared to the previous year, after being sanctioned by the US. The company's production and operations have continued to deteriorate.

While it used to produce 50 million hair ornament products annually, with an annual export volume reaching \$30 million in 2022, it also made a great



contribution to solving local employment.

Wang also cited a villager living in Xinjiang's Kashi, who found a job in a wholly foreign-funded enterprise doing trade in Central China's Hunan in September 2019, with a monthly salary of 5,000 yuan. In 2020, due to the impact of the US sanctions, the enterprise canceled the labor contract with the villager, which forced the villager to return to his/her hometown to make a living, and the monthly income was greatly reduced.

In addition, for the sake of so-called compliance, some US companies have unilaterally terminated the supply of medical products purchased from Xinjiang, seriously affecting the right to life and health of the Xinjiang people, Wang noted.

"Facts have proved that the so-called UFLPA is in essence a tool used by US politicians to destabilize Xinjiang and curb China's development. It not only seriously infringes on the human rights of the people in Xinjiang, but also seriously disrupts the stability of the global industrial and supply chain, and seriously undermines international economic and trade rules. It is one of the most notorious evil laws of the 21st century," the spokesperson said.

Wang also called on the international community to firmly resist the wrongful actions of the US, which smears other countries, interferes in their internal affairs, oppresses their enterprises and stifles their development under the pretext of "human rights." China will continue to firmly safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese enterprises.

### China pushes 'Sinicization of Islam' in Xinjiang as Ramadan arrives

12 March 2024, RFA

Xinjiang's Communist Party secretary says it is an 'inevitable trend.'

While global leaders from U.S. President Joe Biden to U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan issued well wishes to the more than 1.8 billion Muslims worldwide at the start of Ramadan this week, China's president remained silent.

Xi Jinping failed to acknowledge Ramadan, one of the most sacred times for Muslims, despite the 11 million-strong mostly Muslim Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples who live in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, as well as the roughly 7 million other Muslims in China.

Chinese authorities have cracked down on Uyghurs in Xinjiang for decades, claiming they are prone to religious extremism and separatism. The Chinese government says it wants to make Islam "compatible" with Chinese culture by ensuring it aligns with traditional Chinese values defined by Beijing.

Ramadan began less than a week after Ma Xingrui, China's Communist Party secretary in Xinjiang, discussed the "inevitability" of the Sinicization of Islam, with Uyghur rights organizations expressing concern about possible crackdowns on Muslims during Ramadan, which runs from the evening of March 10 to April 9.

"Everyone knows the need for Sinicization of Islam in Xinjiang," he said at the National People's Congress in Beijing on March 7, according to a VOA report. "This is an inevitable trend."

Since 2017, China has restricted or banned religious rituals among the Uyghurs in an effort to eliminate "religious extremism" amid a larger crackdown on Muslims that resulted in the mass detention of nearly 2 million of them. Authorities have also demolished mosques and committed severe rights violations in Xinjiang, amounting to genocide and crimes against humanity, according to the U.S. government and others.

In 2023, authorities banned Uyghurs in many parts of the region from praying in mosques and their homes during Eid al-Fitr, the holiday marking the end of Ramadan. Only senior citizens were allowed to pray in mosques under heavy police surveillance.

The previous Ramadan, authorities in Kashgar paid Muslim Uyghur men to dance outside Xinjiang's most famous mosque to celebrate the end of the holy month. The performance was filmed and released by state media ahead of an anticipated visit by the U.N. human rights chief.

"To the Uyghurs enduring the ongoing genocide, Ramadan is synonymous with extreme suffering, pervasive surveillance and unyielding oppression," Rushan Abbas, executive director of Campaign for Uyghurs, told Radio Free Asia.

"This year, the situation is further inflamed by Ma Xingrui's audacious remarks about the inevitability of the Sinicization of Islam in East Turkistan," she said, using the Uyghurs' preferred name for Xinjiang.

Religions must adapt

The concept of the Sinicization of Islam was first introduced by Xi Jinping during the National Religious Work Conference in April 2016, when he emphasized the need for religions to adapt to a socialist society and advocated for the integration of religious beliefs with Chinese culture, Xinhua News agency reported.

In 2017, the Chinese government began detaining Uyghurs and other Muslim en masse in large "re-education" camps and prisons, in part to eradicate "religious extremism."

During the National Religious Work Conference in 2021, Xi made "adhering to the Sinicization of religions" a main objective. He emphasized the need for training more personnel with Marxist views on



religion and collecting believers around the Chinese Communist Party, according to Xinhua News Agency. American political analyst Anders Corr said Ma Xingrui's comments indicate little change in Beijing's goal of bringing Islam and other religions under the control of the Chinese Communist Party, or CCP.

During an August 2023 visit to Xinjiang, Xi Jinping urged government officials to enhance the Sinicization of Islam in Xinjiang and to suppress illegal religious activities. He also emphasized the importance of maintaining stability through efforts directed against terrorism and separatism, according to media reports.

Turghunjan Alawidin, a member of the East Turkistan Scholars Union, said the Sinicization of Islam will completely transform the religion in China.

"The statement that the Sinicization of Islam is an unavoidable trend essentially implies the eradication of Islam," he told RFA.

"China has a history of hostility towards Islam and has targeted the religious beliefs of Uyghurs," he said. "Chinese authorities seem to acknowledge that erasing Uyghur religious beliefs is necessary to gain compliance; thus, they are actively suppressing Islam."

Hu Ping, a U.S.-based China analyst and former chief editor of the pro-democracy journal "Beijing Spring," said that the Sinicization of Islam implies the CCP's systematic alteration and control of the religion.

Historical precedent

Ma Ju, an ethnic Hui scholar based in the U.S., said China's efforts to Sinicize Islam has historical precedent, noting a failed attempt during the transition from the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) to the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).

Now, Xi Jinping is treating the issue as one of Chinese nationalism, he said.

"The primary objective of Sinicizing Islam is the complete eradication of the Muslims in China," he said. "Ma Xingrui's recent visit to Beijing and his public declaration that the Sinicization of Islam is inevitable sends signals to the world that China intends to persist in ethnic and cultural genocide in the Uyghur region."

Ma Xingrui's concern about the "three forces" — a political phrase referring to ethnic separatism, religious extremism and violent terrorism in Xinjiang — is "self-defeating and undermines the effectiveness of past anti-terrorism efforts," Ma Ju said.

But Anders Corr said that the Chinese government uses the phrase as justification for its oppression of the Uyghurs.

"Beijing is still using the excuse of terrorism to bring Islam under its control and commit genocide against Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims," he said. "There

is little to no recent evidence of extremism in Xinjiang."

### EU reaches deal on forced labour ban, with China's Xinjiang in its sights

05 March 2024, South China Morning Post

The European Union reached a provisional agreement on Tuesday to ban goods made using forced labour, advancing legislation that was broadly written with China in mind.

The ban, which still needs to be approved by the European Parliament and the Council — made up of EU member states — will target specific economic sectors in places where state-imposed forced labour exists, based on a database drawn up by the European Commission.

China is not named in the documentation, given the need to comply with World Trade Organization rules. But the initial proposal was driven by widespread allegations of state-sponsored forced labour in the Chinese region of Xinjiang, which Beijing denies.

Nonetheless, unlike a US ban which specifically targets goods made in Xinjiang, it will apply to products from all over the world, including the EU.

Negotiators clashed over who would administer the ban, with its global remit expected to be a drain on resources. Commission sources on Tuesday said member states would need to afford them more staff to enforce the ban, "otherwise this is just headlines". As part of an early-morning deal reached by lawmakers from the parliament and council diplomats, the commission will investigate companies' supply chains if suspicions are flagged outside the EU. Individual member states will investigate instances within the union.

"It is appalling that in the 21st century slavery and forced labour still exist in the world," said Pierre-Yves Dermagne, the deputy prime minister of Belgium, which holds the rotating EU presidency, prioritised the ban.

"This hideous crime must be eradicated and the first step to achieve this consists in breaking the business model of companies that exploit workers."

If an investigation finds that forced labour is present in a supply chain, authorities can demand the goods be withdrawn from sale and confiscated at the borders. Goods considered critically important will not be destroyed, but detained until the forced labour is traced to be eradicated.

As well as drawing up a list of suspected regions, the commission will identify products in which forced labour is considered a higher risk. In these instances, importers and exporters will have to submit extra details to EU customs, for example related to the manufacturer and supplier.

Samira Rafaela, a lawmaker who led negotiations on the deal, said it was “groundbreaking in the field of human rights”.

“It will prevent forced labour products from entering our market. And it has several references to remediation. It is a step forward in achieving fair trade and cleaning up supply chains, while prioritising human rights.”

However recent history suggests its passage is not guaranteed: last week, EU member states, including Germany and Italy, torpedoed a piece of legislation that would have required companies to provide forensic audits of the human rights records of their suppliers, including in China.

The dramatic collapse of the corporate sustainability due diligence directive came at the same stage of the legislative flow, after EU members had preliminarily approved it. The Belgian government is now scrambling to salvage the law before the EU elections in June.

Since a UN Human Rights Office report on Xinjiang in 2022 found the Chinese government may have committed crimes against humanity in the region, the EU has been under pressure to enact legislation on forced labour.

Campaigners demanded that like the US, the EU place the burden of proof on importers who would be responsible for ensuring there is no forced labour in their supply chains – something the proposed risk-based legislation does not do.

Adrian Zenz, a German researcher at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, whose work on Xinjiang has been widely-cited by Western legislators, said it would be better to have “no legislation” than what the EU has proposed.

“In the Xinjiang case, it would be better to have no legislation, because then there would be no illusion that the EU has done something. It’d be better to not have anything ... if you can’t do something that’s properly effective, it’s better to not have it at all,” he said.

The issue of human rights in China hit headlines in Europe recently when the German chemicals giant BASF announced it would prematurely divest from joint ventures in Xinjiang following reports that its business partners were involved in abuses.

Pressure is mounting on German car company Volkswagen to follow suit, after a German newspaper last month reported what it said was evidence of the carmaker’s involvement in forced labour in the region.

### **China’s foreign ministry brings in new press official from Xinjiang**

15 March 2024, South China Morning Post

China’s foreign ministry has appointed a new senior press official whose previous role was in Xinjiang – a

flashpoint in ties with the West – as Beijing steps up efforts to push its own narrative to the world.

Career diplomat Lin Jian has been named as deputy director general of the ministry’s press unit, which releases information on diplomatic events and foreign policy.

The announcement was made on the ministry’s website on Friday, with Lin now holding the same administrative title as foreign ministry spokespeople Wang Wenbin and Mao Ning.

Lin has just finished a stint in the far western region of Xinjiang, where for several years he was Communist Party chief at the foreign office of state-run paramilitary organisation the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps.

During his time at XPCC, some of its top leaders were sanctioned by the United States and other Western nations in 2020 and 2021 over alleged human rights abuses against Uygurs and other Muslim ethnic minorities in the region.

Lin was not among those sanctioned, but the list included XPCC party secretary Wang Junzheng, who is now the party chief of Tibet.

The European Union also imposed sanctions on XPCC’s public security bureau, accusing it of running detention centres and violating the human rights of Muslim ethnic minority groups.

Lin, who is from Wuhan in Hubei, started his career in Europe. After graduating with a major in English from Beijing Foreign Studies University, he was sent by the foreign ministry to study in Denmark, according to Chinese media reports. He went on to work at the Chinese embassy in Copenhagen.

Lin, who is from Wuhan in Hubei, started his career in Europe. After graduating with a major in English from Beijing Foreign Studies University, he was sent by the foreign ministry to study in Denmark, according to Chinese media reports. He went on to work at the Chinese embassy in Copenhagen.

He took up the post in Xinjiang after that, in late 2020. During his time at XPCC, Lin took part in talks seeking to boost exchanges in trade and tourism between Xinjiang and Hong Kong, according to a 2022 report on the website of the Hong Kong government’s Beijing office.

Beijing’s treatment of ethnic minority groups in Xinjiang has drawn mounting criticism from the West, with allegations it detained a million Uygurs and members of other Muslim minorities in re-education camps and forced them into labour.

Those claims have been strongly denied by Beijing, which says its security measures in the region are intended to counter terrorism and extremism.

## February

### **BASF to speed up exit from Xinjiang ventures after Uyghur abuse reports**

10 February 2024, Hong Kong Free Press

German chemicals giant BASF said Friday it would accelerate its exit from two joint ventures in China's Xinjiang region after allegations that its local partner violated the rights of the Uyghur minority.

Staff from Markor, with which BASF was working in the region, were alleged to have been involved in rights abuses of the members of the mostly Muslim group, broadcaster ZDF and news outlet Der Spiegel reported last week.

BASF had already announced at the end of last year plans to exit the joint ventures, which manufacture the chemical butanediol, due to commercial and environmental concerns.

But it said in a statement that it would speed up its exit following recent reports that "contain serious allegations that indicate activities inconsistent with BASF's values".

"BASF will accelerate the ongoing process to divest its shares in the two joint ventures in Korla" a town in the northwestern region, it said.

BASF said it had no indication that employees of the joint ventures were involved in rights violations, only staff of its local partner.

According to last week's reports, Markor staff had taken part in visits to homes of Uyghur families in order to spy on them.

Reports about the visits were sent to Chinese authorities in 2018 and 2019, which led to the incarceration of many Uyghurs, they said.

BASF said that the situation in Xinjiang had always been part of its assessment when looking at the joint ventures, but that regular audits had not found any evidence of human rights violations.

Rights groups have long accused Beijing of a widespread crackdown on minorities in Xinjiang, including forced labour and detention camps.

Beijing denies allegations of abuse and insists its actions in Xinjiang have helped to combat extremism and enhance development.

BASF has been ramping up its presence in China in recent years, and is building a 10-billion-euro (\$10.8-billion) chemical complex in the southern province of Guangdong.

It has fiercely defended its investments there, with chief executive Martin Brudermueller in 2022 warning against "China-bashing" over Germany's business ties to the world's number two economy.

Xinjiang is home to numerous factories that supply multinational companies, including big-name Western brands.

Another German company, Volkswagen, faced accusations of using forced labour at its factory in Xinjiang. But the automaker said in December that an audit it had commissioned found no evidence.

## January

### **China tests new ethnic assimilation policy on Uyghurs**

26 January 2024, RFA

The measure aims to further replace Uyghur culture with that of Han Chinese, experts say.

Northwest China's Xinjiang region is the first area to implement a government policy promoting integration among ethnic groups to achieve President Xi Jinping's goal of establishing a unified national identity, Chinese media reported.

The regulation calls for the creation of mixed housing, themed venues and cultural parks, and sports and cultural activities that highlight characteristics of Chinese culture and promote zhonghua minzu – a single Chinese nationality that transcends ethnic divisions.

The policy has raised concern among China watchers and scholars, who say its goal is to further erase the cultural identity of Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples and subsume them into the dominant Han Chinese culture.

The measure, known as the "Regulation for Promoting Interaction, Communication, and Integration Between Ethnic Groups," went into effect on Jan. 1 in the Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, a nearly 270,000-square-kilometer (104,000-square-mile) multiethnic area that borders Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Russia, according to a Jan. 16 report by China's People's Daily.

A mix of Han Chinese, Kazakhs, Uyghurs, Kyrgyz and other ethnicities live there.

Ili is serving as a test for the policy before the Chinese government rolls it out in other parts of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, experts say.

'Ethnic genocide'

The policy implemented in the prefecture's capital Ghulja "aims to dismantle the Uyghur mentality, submerging them within the Chinese population and ultimately eradicating their existence," said Ilshat Hesen Kokbore, vice chairman of the executive committee of the World Uyghur Congress.

"It serves as a continuation of ethnic genocide, systematically dismantling Uyghur culture through this approach," he said. "I fear that similar measures will soon be applied in Kashgar, Aksu, Kucha, Korla and numerous other locations."

Adrian Zenz, director of China Studies at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation in Washington, said the regulation aims to “formalize a policy of assimilation and population dilution” for national security reasons.

“Many of the outlined regulations are not entirely new, but they formalize a policy of assimilation and population dilution, which makes this new initiative very significant,” said Zenz who has spent years documenting China’s human rights abuses against Uyghurs and has written about Beijing’s measures to dilute the ethnic Uyghur population in Xinjiang.



*Children play soccer in front of a gate with a mural depicting Uyghur musicians in Urumqi, capital of northwest China's Xinjiang region, April 21, 2021, during a government organized trip for foreign journalists. (Mark Schiefelbein/AP)*

Leo Maillet, a doctoral student in the Faculty of Oriental Studies at the University of Geneva, expressed concern that Uyghur historical neighborhoods, traditions and culture could disappear at an even faster rate.

This policy “comes with not only symbolic, but also physical violence of replacing Uyghur spaces by Chinese spaces,” he said, as it implies that Chinese traditional architecture and cultural centers will replace Uyghur traditional teahouses, mosques and marketplaces – a destruction of both architectural forms and social forums.

“And in this sense, I think it does not only fit the definitions of genocide, but also the definitions of ecocide in the way that it is not only distracting Uyghurs as a group, but also the Uyghur region,” Maillet said.

The policy was approved by the Standing Committee of the People's Congress of Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture on Aug. 25, 2023. It received approval from the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region on Nov. 23.

Niyaz Hashim, known as Niyazi Asim in Chinese, director of the Standing Committee of the People's Congress of Ili Prefecture, told state-run People's Daily that the regulation was a result of President Xi's instructions on “consolidating the sense of community among the Chinese nation,” stemming from his

several visits to Xinjiang since he was elected general secretary of the Communist Party in November 2012. “The regulation is primarily designed to create unity among the Han Chinese ethnicity and various ethnic groups,” he was quoted as saying.

Symbolic location

Ili prefecture's capital Ghulja, called Yining in Chinese, has deep symbolic significance for Uyghurs as the site where the East Turkistan Republic was founded.

On Nov. 7, 1944, Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples rebelled against Chinese rule in Ghulja and declared independence as a separate republic five days later. The rebellion was crushed by the Chinese Communists, but Uyghurs still prefer to call their homeland East Turkistan.

Ilshat Hasan Kokbore said he believes that the integration regulation signals that Beijing's genocidal policy against Uyghurs and other Muslims has entered a new stage.

The Chinese government selected Ili prefecture given its role in expressing and preserving Uyghur nationalism, history, nationality, culture and religion, and now wants to eradicate Uyghur identity and aspirations for independence, he said.

“Instead, they seek to impose the zhonghua ideology,” he told RFA. “The ultimate goal of China is uniting not only the Uyghurs, but all ethnic groups, into a single nation.”

To this end, local government authorities in Xinjiang already have doubled the Han Chinese population in Xinjiang, arbitrarily detained Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples, destroyed religious structures and historical records, and forced Uyghurs to speak Chinese.

The regulation in Ili prefecture took effect weeks before China's Universal Periodic Review – a comprehensive review of its human rights record – at the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland. During the review, Chinese government representatives on Jan. 22 defended Beijing's policies in Xinjiang, while the U.S. representative to the United Nations condemned its ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity there.

Despite China's denial of rights violations and assertions of normalization and development in Xinjiang, Western states continue to raise alarms about continuing repression, arbitrary detentions and enforced disappearances of Uyghurs and others.

### **China's Xinjiang posts robust foreign trade growth in 2023**

25 January 2024, Xinhua

URUMQI, Jan. 25 (Xinhua) – The foreign trade of northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous



Region saw a yearly increase of 45.9 percent in 2023, local customs authorities said Thursday.

The region's total imports and exports last year surpassed a historic 357 billion yuan (about 50.25 billion U.S. dollars), according to Urumqi Customs.

In 2023, the import and export between Xinjiang and the five Central Asian countries, namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, increased by 50 percent year on year, accounting for 79.4 percent of Xinjiang's total foreign trade.

The region engaged in trade with 192 countries and regions worldwide last year. Its trade with Malaysia, South Africa, Qatar and Algeria also posted robust growth.

Private enterprises in Xinjiang showed a strong performance in foreign trade during the same period, with their trade value soaring 48.4 percent year on year, accounting for 93.2 percent of the region's total.

The region has seen growing competitiveness in the export of labor-intensive products and electromechanical products.

Xinjiang is located at the heart of the Eurasian continent and serves as an important transportation hub in the core region of the Silk Road Economic Belt.

"Xinjiang's opening up faces significant opportunities in 2024," said Li Qinghua, deputy director of the Urumqi Customs.

Leveraging on the development of the Xinjiang Pilot Free Trade Zone and other favorable policies, the potential of Xinjiang's foreign trade field is being further activated, Li added.

### About 1,000 Tourists Trapped in China's Xinjiang After Avalanches

17 January 2024, NTD

BEIJING—Around 1,000 tourists remain stranded in a remote holiday village after avalanches hit China's northwestern Xinjiang region with meters-high snow, state TV reported on Tuesday.

Road access to Hemu village, a scenic destination near the borders of Kazakhstan, Russia, and Mongolia where the tourists were trapped, has been cut off by avalanches for several days now. The village is situated in Xinjiang's Altay Prefecture where continuous snowfall in some areas has lasted 10 days, it said.

The heavy snowfall triggered dozens of avalanches along large sections of highways in the Altay mountains leading to the Kanas scenic area, Chinese state media outlets reported over the weekend.

Snow brought by the avalanches reached as high as seven meters in some parts and in many, was higher than snow clearing equipment, CCTV said.

### Experts denounce trips to Xinjiang as 'genocide tourism'

12 January 2024, RFA

The Chinese government has thrown open the door for tourists to Xinjiang. Or at least those it deems worthy of an invite.

While officials previously let in diplomats, journalists and those considered "friends of China," they are now presenting the restive far-western region as a tourist destination of sorts in a bid to remove some of the tarnish from China's image as a human rights violator in the far-western region in the eyes of the international community.

Nearly 400 delegations and groups consisting of more than 4,300 people from various countries and international organizations visited the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in 2023, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said at a press conference on Jan. 5.

Visitors included government officials, diplomats, religious figures, experts, scholars, and journalists as well as ordinary travelers, he said. Unlike travel in the rest of China, however, visits remain by invitation only and visitors are led on government-sponsored tours.

These include trips to mosques and heritage sites "to see how Xinjiang's traditional culture is protected," Wang said. "They went to local factories, businesses and farms to learn about Xinjiang's production and development, and visited ordinary households where they saw the happy life of people of various ethnic groups."

"Seeing is believing," he said. "People are not blind to the truth. For certain countries, they are comfortable telling lies about genocide and forced labor in Xinjiang.... Xinjiang will keep its door open to the world."

The move comes as China gets ready for its fourth Universal Periodic Review, or UPR — a Human Rights Council mechanism that calls for each U.N. member state to undergo a peer review of its human rights records every 4.5 years. The review is scheduled to be held in Geneva, Switzerland, on Jan. 23.

Authorities have tightly controlled who enters Xinjiang, where harsh repression of Uyghurs and other Muslims in recent years has amounted to genocide and crimes against humanity, according to the United States, the United Nations, the parliaments of other Western countries and human rights groups.

Authorities in Xinjiang have detained an estimated 1.8 million Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims, destroyed thousands of mosques and banned the Uyghur language in schools and government offices. China has said that the "re-education camps" have been closed and has denied any policy to erase Uyghur culture.



A recent CBS documentary on China's "rebranding" effort shows surveillance cameras and facial recognition devices monitoring Uyghurs. The name of the ancient town of Kashgar appears in Chinese as "Kashi" on signs and billboards, while the 15th-century Id Kah Mosque – closed to local Muslims since 2016 – has been transformed into a tourist attraction.

Through the scripted travel junkets, the Chinese government is spreading a narrative that Uyghurs live happy lives to cover up Beijing's severe human rights violations in Xinjiang, experts on the region said. Foreign visitors, in turn, have perpetuated the narrative through photos and posts on their social media accounts.

Criticism from rights groups

The dissemination of propaganda and China's efforts to enhance the image of Xinjiang have sparked criticism from human rights groups.

Claudia Bennett, a legal and program officer at Human Rights Foundation, said the orchestrated visits conceal the harsh realities of forced family separations, arbitrary detentions of millions in concentration or forced labor camps, and thousands of Uyghurs living in exile and forcibly rendered stateless.

"In a strategic effort to legitimize its colonization of the Uyghur region, the Chinese Communist Party carefully organizes propagandist visits for diplomats, journalists and religious scholars," she told Radio Free Asia. "These tours are designed to whitewash the CCP's gross human rights violations."

The U.S.-based Uyghur Human Rights Foundation, or UHRF, called the visits "genocide tourism" in a report issued last Aug. 30, saying that they help China conceal genocide and crimes against humanity occurring in Xinjiang.

Dolkun Isa, president of the World Uyghur Congress, took the criticism of the junkets a step further.

"Collaborating with China's propaganda equates to complicity in genocide – a grave crime," he said. "Humanity will not forget, and the Uyghur nation will not forget. Those involved will be held accountable before history."

Travel and excursion propaganda to portray life in Xinjiang as normal is part of "Beijing's current strategy," explained Adrian Zenz, an expert on China's policies in Xinjiang.

"They are showing Uyghurs and Uyghur culture, but not real and free people or culture, but a hollowed out version, a mummified version, like a CCP museum," said Zenz, director of China studies at the U.S.-based Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation.

With the U.N.'s UPR session on the horizon, there can be little doubt that Beijing is touting the visits as a way to counter criticism of its policies in Xinjiang,

said Sophie Richardson, former China director at Human Rights Watch.

The main problem with the UPR, however, is that there are no penalties for failing to comply or to correct abuses, Richardson added.

"Beijing has proven just how easy it is to manipulate the process to keep independent civil society, both inside and outside China, out of the process ... and to submit a national report that is breathtakingly dishonest in its claims to upholding human rights."

### **CCP Pilots Ethnic Interpenetration Policy in Xinjiang**

10 January 2024, ChinaScope

The Xinjiang Daily reported on December 14, 2023 that the Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture in Xinjiang has enacted "Regulations on Promoting Interaction, Communication, and Integration among Various Ethnic Groups." Consisting of 19 articles, the legislation aims to commingle diverse ethnic groups together. This would serve as a pilot implementation of the "ethnic interpenetration" policy endorsed by the Chinese Communist Party in 2014.

Critics pointed out that forcing various ethnic groups to live and mix together plays to the CCP's policy of eliminating minority ethnic cultures and implementing more complete control populations living in China. For example, when members of the Han ethnic group (the majority population in China) are imported to Xinjiang and mixed with the Uyghur ethnic group, the Han people's acceptance of CCP culture will naturally manifest itself in daily life and thereby reduce the religious and cultural cohesion of the Uyghur people.

Per the CCP's ideology, forcible mixing of different ethnicities and cultures is used to foment conflicts between those cultural and ethnic groups. This aids the CCP in "inciting struggle among the people," e.g. provoking conflicts between the Han and Uyghur ethnicities. The resulting instability and incohesion makes it easier for the CCP to implement control. Such ethnic interpenetration policies also enable the CCP to more conveniently organize intelligence operations and strengthen surveillance over minority ethnic groups.

### **China's Xinjiang region says all new religious buildings must 'reflect Chinese characteristics'**

05 January 2024, South China Morning Post

China's Xinjiang region has announced a new set of religious rules that say all new places of worship must reflect "Chinese characteristics and style".

The far-western region is home to large numbers of the mainly Muslim Uyghur majority, and the

regulations say specifically that any mosque renovations that would change the existing layout or functions must be approved by the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region authorities.

The revised version of the region's regulations on the management of religious affairs was announced on Thursday by the official Xinjiang Daily newspaper. The changes will come into force in February. The rules state: "Newly built, renovated, expanded or rebuilt religious venues should reflect Chinese characteristics and culture in aspects such as architecture, sculpture, paintings [and] decorations." They also say for the first time that interpretations of religious doctrine must "meet the requirements of contemporary China's development and China's outstanding traditional culture".

The new rules also contain fewer references to "extremism" and "terrorism" compared with the previous version issued in 2014, but still emphasise the need to combat "separatism".

China has been accused of systemic human rights violations against the region's minorities, including the extensive use of re-education camps and forced labour, as well as tearing down large mosques and other Muslim sites.

The accusations have prompted a series of sanctions from the United States and other Western countries, while the United Nations said in a report that its actions "may constitute international crimes, in particular crimes against humanity".

China has denied human rights abuses in the region and says its policies are designed to counter extremism and terrorism. It has also said that Xinjiang has experienced "huge economic development" and "significant achievements on human rights" in the past decade.

It has also faced claims that it has ordered mosques around the country to remove features such as Arabic-style domes and minarets and replace them with traditional Chinese features.

A spokesman for the Xinjiang regional government told reporters in 2021 that some mosques in the region had been renovated or moved to ensure they are "safer" and "more reasonably located".

The central government in Beijing has rarely commented about alterations to mosques, but in June 2022 a prime-time news report by the state broadcaster CCTV hailed the removal of a mosque's domes in Xining in Qinghai province as a successful example of "protecting traditional heritage".

China has long-standing policies to control religious activities, with Xinjiang facing some of the tightest controls.

In recent years there has been a push to "Sinicise" religion, while President Xi Jinping has also repeatedly stressed the importance of fostering a

sense of Chinese identity among the country's minority groups.

Xinjiang's new rules also impose new controls on large-scale religious gatherings, which will require approval from the local government at least one month in advance.

Meanwhile, religious content posted online must be screened by the regional government, and religious bodies and institutions must also report changes in significant personnel to the local authorities.

However, the new rules do ease some restrictions, including a ban on any donations from individuals or overseas groups to religious groups in Xinjiang.

They now say that donations of more than 10,000 yuan (US\$1,400) of this kind must be reported to the authorities.

### **Xinjiang issues revised regulations on religious affairs**

04 January 2024, Global Times

Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on Thursday issued revised regulations on religious affairs management, adding in a number of new clauses and a new chapter regarding the management of religious schools. The regulations emphasize the freedom of religious belief, noting that no organization or individual shall induce or coerce locals to believe or not believe in any religion.

Experts said the regulations truly reflect the freedom to believe or not believe in any religion and take into account a series of recent issues that the region has encountered by being more detailed and accurate. What's more, it clearly bans violent extremist forces from using religion as a pretext to forcibly convert people to a particular faith, which essentially prevents these forces from luring the public into engaging in acts of terrorism.

The regulations were passed by the Standing Committee of the People's Congress of Xinjiang on December 22, 2023, and will come into effect on February 1. The total nine chapters and 78 clauses include the management of religious organizations, religious venues, religious activities, and religious properties, reported Tianshannet, the region's largest media outlet, on Thursday.

The newly revised regulation stated that no organization or individual shall use religion to engage in activities that divide the country, spread religious extremism, incite ethnic hatred, carry out terrorism, undermine national unity, disrupt social order, or harm the physical and mental health of citizens, nor shall anyone use religion to obstruct the implementation of state administration, judiciary, education, and other systems.

If anyone discovers illegal religious organizations, preachers and activities, they should promptly report

to the local township governments, subdistrict offices, or relevant departments of religious affairs, according to the regulations.

According to the Constitution, China is a country that upholds religious freedom, ensuring that individuals have the right to choose whether or not to have religious beliefs, Wang Jiang, deputy director of the Institute of China's Borderland Studies, Zhejiang Normal University, told the Global Times on Thursday. Under the framework of the Chinese Constitution and the laws and regulations related to religions, the Xinjiang region has further refined the legal framework regarding this sector, Wang said. Xinjiang has witnessed the presence of violent terrorism that uses religion as a tool. These groups falsely claim to enforce religious beliefs, but their true intention is to coerce individuals into participating in terrorist activities. They manipulate the sincere religious sentiments of ordinary people and misguide them. It is crucial to establish relevant regulations to address the issue in this context, according to Wang.

The new version of the regulations specifies that newly constructed or renovated or expanded religious venues should reflect Chinese characteristics and style in terms of architecture, sculpture, painting, decoration and other aspects.

It also stipulates that religious schools should follow the path of Chinese characteristics in their educational approach, operate in accordance with the law, and improve the quality of education.

Religious schools should be established by religious organizations of the autonomous region, the regulation said. The schools should cultivate patriotic religious personnel, correctly interpret religious doctrines, and train in-service religious clergy.

Global Times reporters recently paid a visit to the Xinjiang Islamic Institute in Urumqi together with 15 representatives from Pakistani media and think tanks. Established in June 1987, the institute currently has a student body of around 1,000 people and is the only religious higher education institution in Xinjiang with eight branch campuses.

"Everyone has heard so many of the propaganda stories against Xinjiang," Moiz Farooq, an executive editor of Daily Ittehad Media Group, told the Global Times. "Now finally we have seen the truth, and it is great to say that seeing is believing."

"It is very happy for me to see the Muslims in Xinjiang are enjoying all the freedom," he said. "They have freedom to practice religion over here, with the best facilities in the institute." Xinjiang residents who practice Islam and wish to go on a pilgrimage abroad shall follow the relevant regulations of the country and the region, and the China Islamic Association will organize pilgrimage activities, according to the regulations.

The foreign delegates expressed their appreciation for China's efforts in preserving the region's traditional culture, creating a harmonious and prosperous life for local people of different ethnic groups and those with religious belief, and fighting against terrorism and extremism, the Global Times has learned.

As of 2023, more than 100 foreign delegations have visited Xinjiang to experience the unique charm of this beautiful region, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said while refuting Western smears, noting that those who have actually visited the region highly praised its significant achievements in economic and social development, and appreciated the Chinese government's great efforts in protecting the multi-ethnic culture of the Xinjiang region and ensuring people's freedom of religious belief.

### China says 456,000 Uyghurs newly hired this year in Xinjiang

02 January 2024, RFA

China says that 456,000 people were newly employed during the first 10 months of the year in its far-western Xinjiang region, evidence it said showed that Beijing was successfully promoting economic development to create a "happy and harmonious" Uyghur society.

Authorities are seeking "full employment" in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, or XUAR, as a key economic strategy to alleviate poverty, the Chinese-controlled Tengritagh Network said on Dec. 25.

"Employment signifies a stable source of income, and a stable source of income paves the way for the desire to consume," said the report, which said 456,000 people had been added to the workforce.

But Uyghur experts and activists said many of the jobs amounted to forced labor of people who had been detained – or were still detained – in a vast network of "re-education" camps where their human rights were routinely abused.

Authorities are relying on the forced labor to maintain surveillance of these people, said Ilshat Hesën Kokbore, vice chairman of the executive committee of the World Uyghur Congress.

"This involves ensuring that they are not idle, but engaged in various sectors," he told RFA.

"The primary objective of such arrangements is to subject them to Chinese surveillance and control throughout their workday, ultimately aiming at eradicating the Uyghur nation," Kokbore said.

Individuals compelled to work in factories in Xinjiang or in Chinese provinces are not voluntary participants, he said. Instead, local authorities are using coercive measures, and many receive only a

fraction of regular wages – which is internationally recognized as forced labor, he said.

China desperately needs Uyghurs to fill these jobs, which lack technical complexity and are less favored by Chinese workers, experts said.

"We consistently organize farmers and herdsmen for employment based on enterprise needs," said the head of Pichan county's public employment service center, responsible for employing 100 farmers from Lamjin village.

Adrian Zenz, director of China Studies at the U.S.-based Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation and an expert on the Xinjiang region, highlighted the presence of two crucial factors when discussing the origins of this type of forced labor in the Uyghur region.

First, Uyghurs and other Muslims detained in vocational internment camps have been shifted to forced labor either in factories on the camp compound or to plants in nearby locations, he said. They eventually will be moved to other work locations and up in the other labor transfer scheme.

The second scheme, related to China's poverty alleviation policy, places Uyghur rural surplus laborers in labor transfer programs that are not directly linked to internment camps.

This course of recruitment, coercive military-style training in closed facilities, is not always consistent, because the training takes place in different forms and shapes, with the goal being to place them in low skilled, labor-intensive manufacturing, Zenz said.

"They could end up working in the same factory as internment camp workers," he said.

The Chinese government promotes forced labor in Xinjiang to try to eradicate absolute poverty and maintain social stability, Zenz said.

"It's to keep [ethnic] minorities busy, and factories more easily controlled rather than scattered factories," he said. "They are also a place of indoctrination and mandatory ongoing training, often times with family separation."

Instead, the CCP becomes the family becomes the main locus of control in society, he said.

"People are also taken out of their communities," Zenz said. "They're uprooted from communities and live on secure factory compounds, so there's a lot of government intrusion going on here in this scheme."

# China & Hong Kong

## December

**Explained: 6 Hong Kong activists against whom arrest warrants have been issued**

24 December 2024, The Indian Express

A reward of \$1 million Hong Kong dollars (around \$130,000) has also been announced for information leading to arrests of activists based in the UK and Canada.

As part of its larger crackdown on activists in recent years, Hong Kong's Deputy Commissioner of Police (National Security) announced on Tuesday (December 22) that wanted notices were issued against "six anti-China disruptors who have fled overseas."

The National Security Department of the police force also said \$1 million Hong Kong dollars (around \$130,000) will be awarded for information leading to their arrests. Several national security offences, such as secession, subversion and collusion with foreign forces, have been cited as grounds for the warrants.

Such notices have been issued in the past as well, following protests in 2019-20 against the increasing control of mainland China's government on the political system of Hong Kong. The six people named in the latest warrants range from political activists based overseas for the last few decades, to young students.

Tony Chung, 23

Chung was the former leader of the now-defunct pro-independence group Studentlocalism.

In 2021, he was sentenced under Hong Kong's national security law of 2020, which criminalised calls for the city's secession from China. At the time, he was the youngest person to be sentenced under it for a term of around three years. Following his release in 2023, he fled Hong Kong to seek asylum in the UK, going against the supervision order imposed on him.

He later told the BBC that he was thrown into a situation that was "an even bigger and more dangerous prison" than the one he had left. The police also reportedly asked him to report the whereabouts of other pro-democracy activists in Hong Kong.

Carmen Lau, 29

Lau is a former district councillor and current activist with the US-based Hong Kong Democracy Council in the UK.

She told Radio Free Asia in an interview this year that she fled the city in 2021 amid a “crackdown on political opposition and dissent”.

Over time, she said, “We are seeing so many Hong Kong communities and organizations springing up in the U.K., and everyone is finding their role, finding different things to work on.”

Notably, the UK held control of Hong Kong for 99 years until 1997. Under the terms of the Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984, it handed over the city to China on the condition that for the next 50 years (from 1997 to 2047) its economic and political autonomy should be retained. These historical ties have led many in Hong Kong to turn to the UK for asylum and immigration.

Chloe Cheung, 19

Cheung is a Communications and Media Assistant at the Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong, which is based in the UK. The organisation recently amplified a post on X, which was critical of the recent warrants.

It said Chloe left Hong Kong at the age of 15. “Instead of attending university after graduation, she dedicated her youth to the movement” and campaigned for political prisoners in Hong Kong, it added. Cheung has also been involved in forming activist groups in Leeds, UK.

Dr Chung Kim-wah, 62

Chung was previously a senior member of the independent polling organisation Hong Kong Public Opinion Research Institute.

A short profile from the University of Oxford notes: “Dr Kim Wah Chung is a retired academic who has been teaching and doing research in Hong Kong for more than 30 years before his retirement in 2020. He then became the Deputy CEO for the Hong Kong Public Opinion Research Institute for two years before he moved to UK, in ‘exile’ as some would say, in late April 2022. He has extensive knowledge of public administration, social policies, social welfare and social development of Hong Kong and China.” He delivered a talk at the university in 2024. According to the South China Morning Post, Chung was accused of having “repeatedly advocated the city’s independence between May and June on a social media platform and called for sanctions against Beijing and Hong Kong between 2020 and 2023.”

Joseph Tay, 62

Tay is a co-founder of the Canada-based NGO HongKonger Station.

According to his LinkedIn profile, since 2021 his radio show has also been broadcast daily nationwide “to a total of 81,680 people identified

“Hong Konger” as their ethnic origin, while 213,855 people listed their place of birth as Hong Kong.” He is currently campaigning to be a candidate in the upcoming Canadian elections from the Conservative Party.

SCMP reported he was “charged with inciting secession and collusion with foreign forces after he allegedly posted videos calling for international sanctions on social media platforms via his channel between July 2020 and June this year.”

Victor Ho, 69

Ho is a YouTuber and was earlier a journalist and has been based in Canada for the last few years. He came under the radar of Hong Kong authorities when he, along with some activists, announced elections to a “Hong Kong Parliament”.

According to Canadian media organisation Global News, Ho said the goal was to establish a parliament that “can truly reflect the will of Hong Kongers”, criticising China’s influence in Hong Kong’s electoral process.

In 2014, students led protests in Hong Kong against China’s attempt to change the voting system in elections. Authorities said they would first screen the candidates who could contest in the polls. Ultimately, the proposal did not come into force.

### **US report says Hong Kong becoming ‘nearly indistinguishable’ from Chinese cities, as Beijing condemns ‘arrogance’**

23 December 2024, HKFP

“The façade of an alternative system of political governance that was promised to last 50 years... has withered away as Hong Kong becomes nearly indistinguishable from any other neon-lit city on the Chinese mainland,” the report read.

A US report which alleged that Hong Kong’s unique system had been “withered away,” leaving it “nearly indistinguishable” from mainland cities, has been condemned by the local government and Beijing.

The Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) – a US government body monitoring human rights conditions in China – published its annual report on Friday. It said violations of human rights are “most brutally implemented in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, Tibet, and Hong Kong.”

“The façade of an alternative system of political governance that was promised to last 50 years... has withered away as Hong Kong becomes nearly indistinguishable from any other neon-lit city on the Chinese mainland,” the report read. “Indeed, Hong Kong officials may now be more zealous than their mainland counterparts in enforcing national security laws.”

In response, the Commissioner’s Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Hong Kong said in a



Chinese-language statement on Saturday that the “so-called report” was a tactic which “grossly interferes” in the internal affairs of mainland China and Hong Kong.

The Office said the report “fully exposed the ignorance, prejudice, and arrogance of certain U.S. politicians.”

“No matter how many such reports the U.S. side throws out, they cannot shake the prosperous and stable situation in Hong Kong...” the statement has read.

Separately, in a Saturday statement, the Hong Kong government said the report “smack[s] of despicable political manipulation with ill intentions.” It warned the US side against “interfering” in Hong Kong affairs.

Rights abuses

The CECC report pointed to “the arbitrary application of national security laws” and an “ongoing criminal prosecution” against Hong Kong pro-democracy activists based on national security and sedition laws.

The report named pro-democracy media tycoon Jimmy Lai, former chief editor of defunct media outlet Stand News Chung Pui-kuen, human rights lawyer and activist Chow Hang-tung and student activist Joshua Wong as figures who had been prosecuted after they “peacefully exercised their rights.”

Lai is still on trial for two counts of taking part in a “conspiracy to collude with foreign forces” under Beijing’s security legislation. Wong – last month – was sentenced to 56 months in jail under the same legislation along with 44 democrats. Chow, meanwhile, is awaiting her national security trial.

In late September, Chung Pui-kuen was jailed for one year and nine months under the sedition law, the first such conviction of journalists since the former British colony returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

Separately, the CECC also raised concerns that some foreign judges had resigned from Hong Kong’s highest court this year, and that Hong Kong police issued warrants for at least 13 overseas-based Hong Kong activists.

The report also highlighted that a Hong Kong court had granted a government application to demand social media platforms to take down a protest song. And US tech giant Google’s YouTube blocked access to more than 30 videos of Glory to Hong Kong for viewers in Hong Kong.

The fact that annual vigils in Victoria Park commemorating the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown were no longer held was also another example of a human rights concern listed by the CECC.

In response, the Hong Kong government said the report “ignores the severe national security threats posed by the riots and the Hong Kong version of [a]

‘color revolution’ in 2019,” adding that all national security laws in Hong Kong were established to “safeguard national sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity.”

“The laws also better safeguard the fundamental rights and freedoms of the residents of the HKSAR and other people, including those doing business, in the city,” the statement read. It added: “The relevant laws have set out clear definitions and criminal elements which will not affect regular exchanges between Hong Kong residents and people here for business with foreign countries.”

### Xi Jinping tells Hong Kong’s John Lee country has ‘very high expectations’

19 December 2024, SCMP, Natalie Wong and Emily Hung

Chinese President Xi Jinping has met Hong Kong’s leader for the second time in a week, telling him the country has “very high expectations” of the city and urging officials to go “all out” to boost the economy. The pair spoke at a closed-door meeting on Thursday afternoon in Macau, as Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu joined Xi on the second day of his visit to the casino hub for celebrations marking the 25th anniversary of the city’s return to Chinese administration.

“The country has very high expectations of Hong Kong. [I] hope Lee and the administration will govern firmly and steadily, make all-out efforts to boost the economy and strive for development and create a brighter future for Hong Kong,” Xi said, according to the Xinhua News Agency.

Xi also reportedly told Lee that Hong Kong and Macau should “learn from each other” and “strengthen exchanges and cooperation”, as the implementation of the “one country, two systems” governing principle entered a new stage.

Lee voiced his gratitude to Xi and stressed his determination to lead Hong Kong’s economic advancement, improve livelihoods and integrate the city further into the Greater Bay Area.

The president’s chief of staff, Cai Qi, and Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office director Xia Baolong also attended the meeting.

Lau Siu-kai, a consultant with the semi-official Chinese Association of Hong Kong and Macau Studies think tank, said the brief meeting – the second in a week between Xi and Lee – underscored Beijing’s expectations of Hong Kong.

“Lee must attach great importance to President Xi’s requirements, implement the central government’s instructions and guidance and do a better job in order to gain the trust and confidence of the central government,” Lau said.

Lee made a four-day duty visit to the capital last week, briefing Xi and Premier Li Qiang about Hong Kong's economic and political situation on Friday.

The city leader was urged to actively seek reforms and generate fresh economic momentum through innovation, after Xi endorsed Lee's efforts to safeguard national security and bolster Hong Kong's international influence.

On Thursday evening, Lee, Financial Secretary Paul Chan Mo-po and Secretary for Justice Paul Lam Ting-  
kwok joined the president at a gala dinner held at the East Asian Games Dome in Taipa. Lee spoke briefly with incoming Macau leader Sam Hou-fai.

The Hong Kong leader also greeted former Macau chiefs Edmund Ho Hau-wah and Fernando Chui Sai-on.

Lee has likened the relationship between Macau and Hong Kong to that of brotherhood, saying the two cities could seek greater collaboration, adding there would be plenty of opportunities to discuss the relationship with Sam in the future.

### **China Customs seizes Hong Kong geography textbook said to wrongly depict Chinese borders**

17 December 2024, HKFP, Irene Chan

China Customs said the books "are suspected of endangering China's national unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity."

A thousand copies of a geography textbook which was said to have incorrectly depicted China's borders have been seized by China Customs before they were exported to Hong Kong.

The Chinese authority said on its official WeChat account on Friday that the publications were seized at the Huanggang checkpoint, which is on the border of Hong Kong and Shenzhen, after customs personnel found the books inaccurately showed China's boundaries.



Personnel of China Customs check and seize 1,000 copies of a geography textbook in Huanggang checkpoint in late 2024. Photo: China Customs.

According to the authority, the maps shown in the textbook did not accurately draw the borders near the Aksai Chin area, those near the South Tibet area, and did not include the Diaoyu Islands, including Chiwei Yu, islands in the South China Sea,

and a U-shaped boundary line which consist of 10 dashes showing waters claimed by Beijing in the South China Sea.

Both Aksai Chin and South Tibet lie on China's border with India, and are also claimed by New Delhi, while the disputed Diaoyu Islands are claimed by Taiwan and controlled by Japan, where they are known as the Senkaku Islands. Additionally, Beijing's claims to much of the economically important South China Sea are also subject to competing claims from neighbouring countries and have been ruled to have no legal basis by an international court.

China Customs said the books "are suspected of endangering China's national unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity."

It added: "Maps are the primary representation of a country's territorial boundaries, reflecting the scope of national sovereignty... Any printed materials and publications that do not comply with China's regulations on the content of publicly available maps are strictly prohibited from entering or leaving the country."

The statement also published the map from the textbook, highlighting the areas that were said to inaccurately depict China's borders.

Ming Pao reported that the textbook was titled HKDSE Exam Series Getting 5\*\* in 9 Weeks: Geography, which was first published in 2018 by the Hong Kong Educational Publishing Company.

The textbook was not on the Education Bureau's recommended textbook list and therefore had not been assessed by the authority.

In response to HKFP, the bureau said it had asked all local schools to get the Chinese standard map from the Chinese government website if they need to produce maps for teaching purposes.

"If schools find that teaching resources involve serious crimes, unethical conduct, have the potential to be illegal, or contain information and content that pose risks to or are detrimental to national security, they should immediately remove or cease using them," the authority said in a Chinese written response.

It added that publishers should "continuously review national maps and related text" in textbooks and should immediately revise them if the information was not up to date.

HKFP has also reached out to the publisher for comment.

Updated Chinese standard Map

In March, China Customs tore a page from a Hong Kong history textbook being carried by a student as they exited Hong Kong, saying the page contained a map inaccurately showing Chinese borders, HK01 reported.

The map in the history book was said to have presented Diaoyu Dao as Diaoyu Tai, a name used

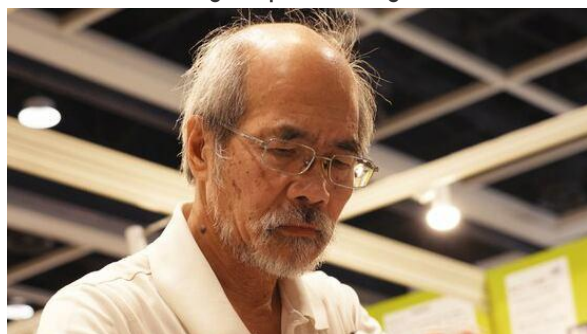
by Taiwanese authorities, and had not includes the U-shaped 10-dash line.

Citing the publisher, HK01 reported that the book had been printed before Chinese authorities updated the Chinese Standard Map in August 2023, and therefore it had not had enough time to revise the textbook, get it reviewed by the Education Bureau and reprint it.

### **Hong Kong officials learn neighborhood surveillance from China**

05 December 2024, RFA, Wei Sze and Dawn Yu

The city will be carved into subdistricts, with volunteers watching for potential signs of unrest.



Current affairs commentator Johnny Lau in an undated photo. (Wei Sze/RFA)

Hong Kong is sending district councilors and other local officials to mainland China to learn how the ruling Chinese Communist Party uses local networks of volunteers to monitor the population and target potential unrest before it happens.

China's "red armband" brigade of state-sanctioned busybodies have been dubbed the biggest intelligence network on the planet by social media users, and have supplied information that has also led police to crack major organized crime, according to state media.

Neighborhood committees in China have long been tasked with monitoring the activities of ordinary people in urban areas, while its grid management system turbo-charges the capacity of officials even in rural areas to monitor what local people are doing, saying and thinking.

These local forms of surveillance and social control are known in Chinese political jargon as the "Fengqiao Experience."

Now, it looks as if Hong Kong will be adopting similar measures, according to the city's Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs, Alice Mak, who confirmed that 18 local officials had already been to the eastern province of Zhejiang to study the system. "Through classroom study and on-the-spot understanding of the practical methods of the Fengqiao Experience ... district councilors understand that regional governance requires strengthening

communication with citizens, understanding their emergencies, difficulties and worries, as well as the early detection and resolution of citizens' problems," Mak told the Legislative Council on Wednesday.

She said the Fengqiao Experience will be implemented in Hong Kong by newly introduced "care teams," and that further training is in the pipeline.

In July 2021, China empowered local officials at township, village and neighborhood level to enforce the law, as well as operating a vastly extended "grid management" system of social control in rural and urban areas alike.

According to directives sent out in 2018, the grid system carves up neighborhoods into a grid pattern with 15-20 households per square, with each grid given a dedicated monitor who reports back on residents' affairs to local committees.

Hong Kong's care teams are also expected to help the authorities inform the public, as well as reporting the views of the public to the government, according to a 2022 document announcing their deployment.

#### **Detecting grievances**

Current affairs commentator Johnny Lau said the ongoing crackdown on public dissent under two national security laws isn't enough for the authorities, who want to nip any signs of potential unrest in the bud.

"The authorities are taking the big-picture view that there will be a lot of public grievances given the current economic problems," Lau told RFA Cantonese in a recent interview. "It's clear that more grassroots work will have to be done to prevent any outbreak of such grievances."

He said the District Councils, which now contain only members judged "patriotic" following recent changes in the electoral system, will be the mainstay of the new approach, with the care teams staying in touch with local residents in neighborhoods.

But he said there are also plenty of technological options for keeping an eye on what people are up to.

Former pro-democracy District Councilor Cheung Man-lung said the care teams won't necessarily be effective if people don't trust them, however.

"Community work is always based on public trust in those in positions of responsibility," Cheung said. "If people don't trust them, then there'll be a lot of problems [with this approach]."

Cheung said he hasn't seen much of his local care team, despite the bursting of a water main in his neighborhood recently.

Chief Executive John Lee, who was "elected" unopposed following changes to the electoral rules in 2022, first announced the establishment of care teams in his October policy address of that year,

saying they would “take part in community-building” across Hong Kong’s 18 districts.

The government would carve up districts into sub-districts, and seek to engage local organizations and groups, including young people and ethnic minorities to take part in community building, he said.

The first care teams, chosen for their patriotism and willingness to follow the government’s lead, were deployed in Tsuen Wan and Southern districts in 2023.

The government changed the rules governing District Council election after the 2019 poll resulted in a landslide victory for pro-democracy candidates that was widely seen as a ringing public endorsement for the pro-democracy movement despite months of disruption and clashes.

## November

### China resumes multiple-entry visas for Shenzhen travellers to Hong Kong

29 November 2024, Reuters

China has eased visa restrictions for Shenzhen residents visiting Hong Kong, allowing multiple entries into Hong Kong per year beginning from Dec. 1, Xinhua reported on Friday.

Each stay is for up to seven days, the official news agency said, with the multiple-entry visas valid for one year at a time.

The announcement reinstates a multiple-entry policy from 2009 that was tightened in 2015 when China began allowing Shenzhen residents to go Hong Kong only once a week.

The stricter policy was aimed at quelling anger in Hong Kong over traders making trips up to several times a day to take advantage of lower taxes by buying goods for resale in the mainland.

Hong Kong said the resumption of the more lenient entry policy is expected to benefit a number of tourism-related industries such as retail and catering.

Hong Kong leader John Lee had proposed further enhancements to Beijing on mainland residents’ tourism visits to Hong Kong in a policy address last month pledging measures to boost the city’s economy.

Visa rules for residents in Zhuhai, another city in southern Guangdong province, were also eased, allowing once-a-week entry to Macao for trips of not more than seven days. This would take effect on Jan. 1, Xinhua said.

Zhuhai residents were previously allowed entry to Macao once every two months.

### Hong Kong’s AI efforts connect China and rest of the world amid geopolitical tensions

27 November 2024, SCMP

Chief technology officer at Hong Kong Productivity Council says city remains an important launching pad for international AI firms

Hong Kong plays a major role in the artificial intelligence (AI) industry in terms of connecting mainland China and the rest of the world amid geopolitical headwinds, according to a senior executive at the Hong Kong Productivity Council (HKPC).

“At the moment, we are artificially creating a barrier between the US and mainland China, and that will stifle the development of technology,” Lawrence Cheung Chi-chong, HKPC’s chief technology officer, said in an interview on the sidelines of an AI conference organised by the council on Tuesday.

“A lot of times for us, we don’t know whether we should reach out to our Western counterparts to work with them,” Cheung told the South China Morning Post. “Because even if they have interest to work with us ... they may not have the freedom to [do so]. And that is sad in a way.”

“So from a scientist’s point of view, it has been difficult over the past few years, particularly in the AI area,” he said.

Cheung’s comments reflect how Hong Kong, in recent years, has been caught in the crossfire of trade tensions and escalating tech rivalry between the US and China.

Washington in August last year announced plans to restrict US firms from investing in Chinese companies, including those in Hong Kong and Macau, in three areas: semiconductors, quantum computing technologies and certain AI systems.

Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu last month said that Washington’s plan to clamp down on outbound investments in China would also harm US businesses and residents, citing the US\$271.5 billion the country had earned through trade with the city over the past decade.

Lee warned that the US will ultimately “reap what it sows”.

Nvidia, the world’s leading supplier of AI processors, has already been barred by Washington from selling its most advanced chips to China, which has left many domestic tech firms scrambling to find alternative products.

From July 9, ChatGPT creator OpenAI had developers on the mainland and in Hong Kong blocked from accessing its services.

Still, Cheung pointed out that Hong Kong remains an important launching pad for international AI firms



looking to access the Chinese market and for mainland companies that aim to expand overseas. HKPC – a statutory body under Hong Kong's Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau – has also been pushing for AI to be adopted across local industries such as manufacturing and logistics, according to Cheung.

He said HKPC is currently developing an AI model named Industrial GPT, which aims to incorporate "sufficient industrial data", making it useful for small-to medium-sized manufacturers in Hong Kong. Industrial GPT, which is expected to be ready in one to two years, will be trained at the AI Supercomputing Centre at Cyberport.

"At the moment, I think we will be using both [Chinese and Western computing solutions to build Industrial GPT]," Cheung said. "But we'll see how the current geopolitical situation will develop and pan out."

The Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics, a Hong Kong-based AI research centre under the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said last week that it has advanced the development of its medical AI models by using Huawei Technologies' Ascend processors, as access to Nvidia's high-end chips remains restricted.

### **From VOA Mandarin: Beijing redefines 'Hong Kong people governing Hong Kong'**

27 November, VOA Mandarin

A senior Chinese official has reinterpreted the principle of "Hong Kong people governing Hong Kong," a cornerstone of the "one country, two systems" framework established during the 1997 handover. Zhang Yong, deputy director of the Legal Affairs Committee of the National People's Congress of China, said Tuesday that Hong Kong's governance involves not only its residents but also the Central Government in Beijing.

See the full story here.

### **Anti-China separatists in HK sentenced, sending clear message to West's interference**

22 November 2024, Global Times, Lawrence Ma

The sentencing of the 45 separatists sends a very clear and unequivocal message to those 2019 rioters and their supporters that national security should be taken seriously, and I am sure they will be deterred. I am confident that these former participants will certainly think twice in the future when they are tempted by financial reward or enticed by a foreign power to endanger national security.

### **Hong Kong democracy activist Jimmy Lai denies inciting hatred towards China in trial**

21 November 2024, Hindustan Times

Pro-democracy activist Jimmy Lai said on Thursday he was against violence and had not sought to incite hatred against China and Hong Kong authorities by calling for protests to defend basic rights, speaking in his second day of testimony in a landmark national security trial.

Lai, 76, a British and Hong Kong citizen and a founder of the now-shuttered pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily, is considered one of the most high-profile prisoners under a national security law imposed by China in June 2020.

Lai is testifying in the same week a Hong Kong court sentenced 45 leading democracy activists to jail terms of up to 10 years under the same law.

Under questioning, Lai was asked about three articles, including one he wrote in 2019 in which he warned that if an extradition law was passed, another "June 4th massacre" could happen in Hong Kong referring to the killings by Chinese soldiers of demonstrators in and around Beijing's Tiananmen Square in 1989.

Lai told the court he had feared Hong Kong's rule of law would be compromised if a proposed law allowing extraditions to mainland China were enacted, and so called on people to come out and protest.

Lai denied seeking to incite hatred against the Chinese government.

"I just convinced them to come out and demonstrate," he told the court. "No, I didn't ask them to, you know, there's no hate here, no hatred here."

Earlier, Lai sought to counter allegations that he colluded with foreign forces chiefly the United States "to impose sanctions or blockade, or engage in other hostile activities" against the Hong Kong and Chinese governments.

Lai has pleaded not guilty to two charges of conspiracy to collude with foreign forces and a charge of conspiracy to publish seditious material. If convicted, he could face up to life imprisonment under the national security law.

He has been detained in solitary confinement since December 2020.

Lai was also asked on Thursday about a series of WhatsApp messages he wrote in 2020 in the run-up to the national security law. The messages regarded an executive order by then U.S. President Donald Trump to eliminate special treatment for Hong Kong given moves by authorities to smother the city's autonomy.

Lai admitted sending to his colleague and friends via WhatsApp a copy of the executive order.



At the time, Trump also said he would impose sanctions on people behind the crack-down.

Lai denied asking Apple Daily's ex-associate publisher Chan Pui-man to compile a "shitlist" of Hong Kong officials who should be sanctioned.

"That would be ridiculous," he told the court, when asked whether he asked former Democratic Party chairman Lee Wing-tat to make such list.

On the first day of his testimony, Lai denied seeking to use his international connections to influence the policies of other governments, including the U.S., towards China and Hong Kong.

Lai also told the court that while he supported peaceful protests, he was against violence of any kind.

He also said he went into the newspaper business given his belief in the core values of Hong Kong, namely the rule of law and desire for freedom.

"The more information you have, the more you are in the know, the more you are free," he said.

The U.S. government has condemned Lai's prosecution and called for his release, with his case shaping up as a possible point of friction between the United States and China when Trump returns to office in January.

### **China's vice premier vows to boost Hong Kong competitiveness, says stimulus push has 'benefited' the city**

19 November 2024, CNBC Africa

Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng on Tuesday vowed to boost Hong Kong's competitiveness by investing in the city's innovation and delivering supportive financial policies.

Speaking at the third Global Financial Leaders Investment Summit, hosted by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, He reiterated Beijing's commitment to "explore and implement" measures aimed at building Hong Kong as an "international financial center." That's according to CNBC's translation of his spoken Mandarin.

Beijing's stimulus measures have already "benefited" Hong Kong, said He, who oversees a key economic and financial policymaking body. "The upward trajectory of the economy is more certain."

To strengthen its financial industry, Hong Kong needs to leverage measures from mainland China as well as its global connections, Li Yunze, minister of China's National Financial Regulatory Administration, said in a panel following He's speech.

Almost 80% of mainland businesses that seek an offshore listing would go to Hong Kong, Li said, stressing the city's future "has always been intertwined with" China.

During the same panel, Wu Qing, head of China's securities regulator, said that Hong Kong will

continue pursuing policies that attract more foreign investment.

Some of the world's largest banks have moved to scale back operations and cut jobs in Hong Kong and mainland China amid a prolonged dearth in listing and deal-making activities.

An exodus of capital made the city's Hang Seng the worst-performing major index last year, marking fourth straight years of decline. And Hong Kong's stock market saw proceeds from initial public listings (IPOs) and follow-on share sales shrink 16% in the first six months this year, compared to a year ago, according to LSEG data.

Still, operators of Hong Kong's stock exchange have pointed to signs of pickup in the third quarter as Beijing unveiled a raft of stimulus measures to bolster its flagging economy.

Vice premier He, a close confidant of President Xi Jinping, has been tasked with tackling China's government debt crisis and protracted property downturn, which have strained the regions financial stability and stunted economic growth momentum.

Earlier this month, Chinese authorities took further steps to attract foreign investment, including lowering the capital threshold for foreign investors holding a non-controlling stake in an enterprise. Under the new regulations, foreign individuals are now allowed to invest in publicly-listed companies.

PBOC governor Pan Gongsheng also said in a meeting on Nov. 7 that that China would continue to implement accommodative monetary policy and bolster ties between domestic and foreign financial markets. Representatives from 11 foreign institutions including HSBC, Standard Chartered and Citigroup attended that meeting, according to a statement.

### **Chinese Vice-Premier He Lifeng urges Hong Kong to be 'self-assertive' on 3 paths to reform**

19 November 2024, SCMP, Cannix Yau and Fiona Sun

State leader says city should deepen financial reforms, expand cooperation and opening up and dovetail with national developments

Chinese Vice-Premier He Lifeng has pledged Beijing's backing for Hong Kong to strengthen its standing as an international financial centre, urging the city to be self-assertive amid geopolitical uncertainties and to press on with reforms as he set out three directions to unleash its full potential.

Opening the three-day Global Financial Leaders' Investment Summit on Tuesday, the state leader spelled out three areas of focus for Hong Kong's financial sector. First, it should deepen reforms and innovate to boost competitiveness; second, expand cooperation and opening up; and third, dovetail its plans with national developments to further

strengthen the foundation of Hong Kong's future financial development.

"The unprecedented changes in the world are accelerating. Global political and economic landscapes are undergoing profound adjustments. There are more and more variants and uncertainties," he said.

"Regardless of how the external environment changes, we will focus on ourselves. We [will] respond to external uncertainties with self-assertiveness.

"It is hoped that Hong Kong will make use of this critical period, understand changes accurately, respond to them scientifically, and seek them out proactively."

He added that Hong Kong should embrace and uphold the "Lion Rock Spirit", a reference to a well-known symbol of the city's resilience.

"Be enterprising, work hard for continuous enhancement in financial development, and continue to consolidate and enhance [the city's] status as an international financial centre," he said at the landmark industry summit for the world's top financial leaders.

Speaking at the summit too, a panel of top mainland financial officials highlighted Hong Kong's key role in the opening up and development of the mainland, stressing much more could be done to boost its standing.

Among them, Wu Qing, the chairman of the China Securities Regulatory Commission, revealed that commodities might be added to stocks, bonds, options and wealth management products currently tradeable on the Connect scheme, a mechanism that allows global investors and mainland players to tap into each other's markets via Hong Kong.

Discussions at the summit, organised by the city's de facto central bank, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, were set against the backdrop of growing uncertainties about the global economy and Sino-US ties with Donald Trump as the next president. Another key underlying concern centred on Hong Kong's attempts to overhaul its economy and restore investor confidence after sluggish growth was revised downwards to 2.5 per cent for this year.

With several top Chinese regulatory officials attending the summit, investors were also watching for signs of Beijing's next moves to re-energise the country's economy, after an announcement earlier this month discussed a massive stimulus package to tackle local debt and property woes.

The vice-premier began by setting out all that the mainland was doing to boost Hong Kong's financial sector, from improving the policy environment to supporting more quality enterprises to list in Hong Kong.

It would also expand mutual market access for stocks, bonds, financial management and interest rate swaps and consolidate its position as a global offshore renminbi centre and improve the mechanism for regular issuance of treasury bonds, among a host of measures, he said.

"To accelerate the development of our country into a financial powerhouse requires Hong Kong to become an even stronger international financial centre," he said.

On reform and innovation, He said Hong Kong was already known for being innovative and stressed that being "steadfast on the path" was "the only way to make further progress".

He emphasised the central government's support for Hong Kong in its effort to strengthen the banking sector, promote inclusiveness and attractiveness of the capital market, expand the bond market and enrich offshore renminbi offerings.

It also supported the city's efforts to deepen its international asset management centre and wealth management centre capabilities and go bigger on new industries such as green finance, fintech and data finance and family office business.

On expanding cooperation and opening up, the state leader pointed out that internationalisation was a distinctive advantage of Hong Kong under the "one country, two systems" model of governance and its common law system, adding that the city must attract talent to its shores.

"We have to draw on the experience of financial reform and the city remains at the forefront of financial development," He said.

The vice-premier also highlighted Hong Kong's prominent links with the rest of the world and its strategic advantages, advising the city to leverage its unique ability when it came to opening up and attracting foreign capital.

"Hong Kong has our support in its bid to keep its characteristics, give full play to its strengths, develop more exchanges with the world, expand international financial cooperation, leverage on emerging markets, and attract more international capital, first-class organisations and talent to come."

On dovetailing with national developments, the vice-premier assured that central authorities would strengthen the foundation of Hong Kong's financial development as the city linked the rest of the country to the outside world, and again emphasised its prominent strategic position.

He pointed out that central authorities had supported Hong Kong's enhancement of its role as an international investment and financial platform for the Belt and Road Initiative and as a key node in terms of capital flows.

The state leader called on Hong Kong to make good use of the Greater Bay Area to enhance and expand

its financial services. The bay area refers to Beijing's ambitious initiative to turn Hong Kong, Macau and nine mainland cities into an economic powerhouse. In their speeches, the state leader and top mainland financial officials were upbeat about Hong Kong's prospects, offering messages to bolster its standing and coming a few months after Beijing adopted a milestone resolution at its third plenary session in July to further deepen reform and advance Chinese modernisation.

Li Yunze, the minister of the National Financial Regulatory Administration, said: "We will do our job as the regulator as we faithfully implement policies and measures to support Hong Kong's long term prosperity and stability."

He added that the administration would encourage more mainland banks and insurers to set up their headquarters in Hong Kong.

"[Stimulus measures] are paying off," said Zhu Hexin, the deputy governor of the People's Bank of China, adding that authorities would continue to create a favourable business environment for foreign investors and business leaders coming to the country. Among those in the audience was Qi Bin, the former vice-president of China's sovereign wealth fund, who has been newly appointed as a deputy director of the central government's liaison office in Hong Kong. Commenting on his Facebook page, Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu, who was en route home from the Apec meeting in Peru, welcomed He's remarks, saying they reflected Beijing's support for Hong Kong as an international financial centre.

"The government will use this summit to tell Hong Kong's story to international financial leaders, and will continue to reform the financial sector, consolidate and enhance Hong Kong's status as an international financial centre, and give full play to Hong Kong's unique advantages of being backed by the motherland and connected to the world," he wrote.

At the summit, Financial Secretary Paul Chan Mo-po said Hong Kong was seeking opportunities everywhere, including by joining hands with sister cities in the bay area.

"We're building on strong foundations. Hong Kong is blessed with world-class scientific research capabilities, a vibrant start-up network and growing technological collaborations in the Greater Bay Area," he said.

Chan also sought to dispel misconceptions about the outflow of funds, saying bank deposits in the city had risen by more than 13 per cent, or US\$250 billion, since the beginning of 2022 until September this year while investors from overseas accounted for more than half of its total assets under management. He later pledged on his Facebook page that he would continue to spearhead financial regulators and

relevant government departments to fully implement He's three suggestions with a view to actively contributing to the nation's financial development.

Analysts said the vice-premier's remarks showed the central government's firm support in strengthening the city's status as a global financial hub and restoring investors' confidence.

Regina Ip Lau Suk-yee, convenor of the Executive Council, the government's key decision-making body, said Hong Kong should get on with reform because the speed of development was slow and the cost was still too high.

"We can't rely on just one old trick – mass tourism. We must upgrade and enhance Hong Kong's own attractions," she said.

Ip said Hong Kong was still a long way behind New York in terms of the "breadth and depth" of its financial market. "We need to do more work to promote the vitality of our stock markets and connectivity with global capital markets," she said.

Lawmaker Johnny Ng Kit-chong said He had a clear upbeat message, urging Hong Kong to consolidate its status as an international financial centre.

"He emphasises the importance of Hong Kong to Beijing, which is beneficial to restoring foreign investment and investors' confidence."

### **After long legal battle, Hong Kong's 47 democrats brace for sentencing**

18 November 2024, Reuters, James Pomfret and Jessie Pang

A Hong Kong court will this week sentence 45 democratic campaigners in a major national security trial, with potentially heavy jail terms poised to further damage the financial hub's once lively pro-democracy movement, critics say.

In May, 14 of the 47 democrats were found guilty of the charge of conspiracy to commit subversion, and two were acquitted. Earlier, 31 had pleaded guilty, hoping for reduced sentences.

The U.S. has described the trial and its guilty verdicts as "politically motivated", opens new tab, while demanding the defendants be released.

Hong Kong authorities say the legal process has been impartial, while condemning critical comments from Western democracies as baseless and "malicious smearing".

On Tuesday, three national security judges hand-picked by the government for this trial will conclude the legal saga that began with the democrats' arrests in January 2021. Jail terms are expected to range from several years for participants to possible life imprisonment for principal offenders.

The charges of conspiracy to commit subversion followed unofficial primary elections held in July

2020 to maximise the democrats' chances of winning a majority in an upcoming legislative council election. The convictions have silenced some of the most popular and determined pro-democratic voices, according to an examination of social media posts and interviews with lawyers and relatives of half a dozen defendants.

"This case has swept away the entire pro-democracy camp in Hong Kong," said Emilia Wong, the girlfriend of one of the defendants, Ventus Lau.

Prior to the trial, the democrats had existed in the space promised when Hong Kong returned from British to Chinese rule in 1997 under a "one country, two systems" formula granting the city wide-ranging freedoms denied to those in mainland China.

But critics say this model suffered with China's imposition of a national security law in July 2020 after pro-democracy protests swept the city a year earlier.

### **Hong Kong leader updates Xi Jinping on city's progress at Apec summit in Peru**

17 November 2024, SCMP, Edith Lin

Hong Kong's John Lee met Chinese president on at least four occasions during visit to South America for Apec summit

Hong Kong's leader took the opportunity to update Chinese President Xi Jinping on the city's economy and development as they met several times during the Apec summit in Peru, with Xi offering his encouragement, the chief executive has said.

Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu also said on Saturday (local time) that Xi used the event in Lima to discuss China's agricultural development, Peru's culture and agricultural resources, and highlight the potential of the Beijing-funded Chancay Port in the South American country.

"President Xi has always been caring about Hong Kong. I have reported to him [Hong Kong's] situation regarding [the] economy and development. He is well-versed [in] our development and has given me encouragement," he said.

"We also talked about the role and contribution of the construction and the operation of the port of Chancay in Peru because it is a new development that will facilitate trade in goods, logistics and also the shipping industry. It will also help [the] supply chain."

The port is one of the Belt and Road Initiative's signature projects in Latin America. The initiative, endorsed by Xi in late 2013, aims to improve trade and economic integration spanning economies around the world.

Lee said he was "very much impressed and inspired" by his discussions with Xi and expressed gratitude for his continuous care and guidance.

Lee met Xi on at least four occasions during the Hong Kong leader's stay in Lima, where the city leader oversaw the signing of a free-trade deal with Peru and attended the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) summit. The pair entered the conference venue in the Lima Convention Centre together to attend the Apec Economic Leaders' Retreat with representatives from other economies.

Before the meeting started, Xi and Lee were seen smiling and chatting. They also sat next to each other at a round table discussion.

As Vietnamese President Luong Cuong greeted Xi for about a minute, Lee stood to the side, listened and shook hands with the Southeast Asian leader.

Xi and Lee also flanked Peruvian President Dina Boluarte in the first row for a group photo of leaders and representatives from 21 economies. The trio had brief exchanges before the photo shoot.

During the gala dinner for Apec leaders at the Peruvian Presidential Palace on Friday night (local time), Xi engaged in several exchanges with Lee as they watched cultural performances.

Lee also welcomed Xi upon his arrival at Jorge Chavez International Airport on Thursday (local time). The pair shook hands and had a brief exchange.

It is understood that Lee did not have separate meetings with Xi on the summit's sidelines, which is not unusual.

Financial Secretary Paul Chan Mo-po, who represented the US-sanctioned city leader at the Apec summit in San Francisco last year, chatted with Xi twice for several minutes.

Lee did not meet Xi separately during the Apec summit in Thailand in 2022, which was the Hong Kong leader's first overseas trip since taking office.

Lee told the press at the time that he had briefed Xi about Hong Kong's situation and understood that leaders had tight schedules.

In 2016, Xi met then city leader Leung Chun-ying on the sidelines of the Apec summit, also held in Peru, to warn that Hong Kong had no room for independence under the "one country, two systems" governing principle.

### **Mainland further eases travel to Hong Kong and Macao**

15 November 2024, China Daily

China has taken another step to expedite residents' trips between the Chinese mainland and the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions by introducing "certificate free" clearance for travelers.

The National Immigration Administration said in a statement on Friday it has chosen the Shenzhen Bay Port and the Gongbei Port, both in Guangdong province, to exercise the new approach.

From Wednesday, residents in the mainland aged 14 years and above, who hold a valid travel document to Hong Kong and Macao, as well as an endorsement for multiple-entry to Hong Kong or Macao, will be able to pass the two ports without showing the paperwork.

Instead, they need to undergo fingerprint and facial checks for clearance, the administration said.

The case is the same for Hong Kong and Macao residents aged 14 and above, who hold a valid mainland travel permit, including non-Chinese residents.

The measures are introduced to further facilitate travel between the mainland and Hong Kong and Macao, the administration said, adding that the measures do not apply to mainland residents who hold a permit for exit and entry for public affairs.

### **China hawk Rubio likely to take hard line on Hong Kong but Beijing well prepared: experts**

14 November 2024, SCMP, Natalie Wong and Willa Wu

Donald Trump's pick for US secretary of state previously had a key role in getting bills against Hong Kong passed

Marco Rubio, picked by US President-elect Donald Trump to be the country's top diplomat, is expected to amplify Washington's hawkish policies toward Hong Kong even as Beijing is better prepared to mitigate the potential impacts, analysts and officials in the city have said.

The 53-year-old Florida senator, named by Trump on Wednesday as his choice for secretary of state, was previously sanctioned by Beijing and is banned from entering the country. He is one of China's harshest critics in the US and was behind bills to sanction Hong Kong officials and close the city's trade offices on American soil.

With another China hawk joining the incoming administration, political observers and officials said they expected that Trump's top picks would lead Washington to step up confrontations with Beijing in a variety of areas.

Rubio, also an outspoken politician on Hong Kong affairs, is likely to adopt a tough stance in potential talks with the Chinese government regarding jailed former media tycoon Jimmy Lai Chee-ying.

"Rubio will be a key executor of foreign policies of Trump, who sees China as a major rival in semiconductors and other technologies," said Wilson Chan Wai-shun, co-founder and director of policy research at the Pagoda Institute think tank.

"He is likely to amplify certain policies, for example sanctions and restrictions, to cover Hong Kong and maximise the impacts [to contain China]."

Rubio paying attention to Hong Kong issues was widely known since 2014, when he supported protesters in the Occupy movement calling for greater democracy. The movement paralysed parts of the city for 79 days.

The Republican senator had called on the Obama administration to "make clear to China that it must abide by its international commitments regarding Hong Kong's status".

At the height of the 2019 anti-government protests in Hong Kong, Rubio wrote an op-ed published in The Washington Post, saying the US should not "watch from the sidelines" and had "more than just a 'nuclear option' of ending Hong Kong's special status under US law".

Rubio also played a key role in steering the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act through Congress in 2019, passed via a fast-tracked process with bipartisan support. The bill reviewed the city's special trade relationship with the United States and allowed for the sanctioning of mainland Chinese and Hong Kong officials deemed to have undermined human rights.

The senator was in turn sanctioned twice by China in 2020. The first instance was in retaliation for US measures against senior mainland officials over the treatment of the Uyghur ethnic minority group. The second was after mainland and Hong Kong officials were sanctioned following Beijing's imposition of the national security law in Hong Kong.

Chan, an international relations expert, said China's sanctions against Rubio would prompt him to adopt a tougher stance during possible appeals to Beijing regarding the high-profile cases of Lai and the 47 activists accused of violating the national security law.

Forty-five of the 47 opposition figures have been found guilty of taking part in a conspiracy to commit subversion in relation to their roles in an unofficial primary election four years ago, and will be sentenced on Tuesday.

Lai is expected to take the witness box the next day to defend himself against foreign collusion and sedition charges in a separate case.

"As a top China hawk familiar with Hong Kong's advocacy in the Senate, Rubio must be a key person to be involved in any potential high-level talks. Already sanctioned by Beijing, he will have no reservations in pushing his agenda," Chan said.

Before he was elected, Trump had vowed that he would "100 per cent" get Lai, the imprisoned founder of the defunct Apple Daily newspaper, out of the country.

Chan said he also expected that Rubio would help Trump in plugging the trade "loophole" of Hong Kong, seen as a key port to bypass US sanctions against authoritarian regimes.



He added that Rubio would put more Hong Kong companies on the US' trade restriction list, known as the Entity List, for violations against regulations that prevent dual-use technologies from reaching Russia. Lawmaker Rock Chen Chung-nin predicted that Hong Kong would experience some "spillover effects" from the new US administration's policies targeting China. "Possible attacks from the US on Hong Kong might include undermining the city's status as an international financial centre and placing more restrictions on Hong Kong businesses to invest in their market," he said.

But Chen said the outlook for Hong Kong was not all gloom and doom as the country was well-prepared for possible anti-China tactics from Trump's return to office.

Apart from restrictions on trade, Rubio was also behind several other bipartisan bills relating to Hong Kong, including one that facilitated Hongkongers securing refugee status in the US in response to the national security law, and another that could lead to the closure of Hong Kong's three economic and trade offices in the country.

The bipartisan Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office (HKETO) Certification Act, which passed the House in September, must now clear the full Senate, Congress' upper chamber, before it can be sent to Trump to be signed into law.

Regina Ip Lau Suk-yee, convenor of the government's key decision-making Executive Council, said Rubio's views were based on "fundamental misunderstandings" about Hong Kong and its high degree of autonomy as enshrined in the Basic Law, the city's mini-constitution.

She urged Rubio to visit Hong Kong after he was appointed to lead the US State Department, to see the true situation in the city rather than relying on the views of a small minority of Hongkongers who had a "twisted" view of the "one country, two systems" governing principle.

Ip, also a lawmaker and chairwoman of the New People's Party, earlier said she was planning a visit to Washington next year and hoped to meet local officials and US Congress members.

## October

### Hong Kong inmate denied early release under security law 'treated unfairly', court told

22 October 2024, SCMP, Brian Wong

Adam Ma's lawyers argue in court that Correctional Services Department failed to provide timely reasons in support of decision

A Hong Kong man convicted of inciting secession has complained of procedural unfairness over the prison service's refusal to grant him early release under the domestic national security law.

Adam Ma Chun-man's lawyers said on Tuesday that the Correctional Services Department had failed to provide timely reasons in support of a decision on March 23 this year to deny him a good behaviour reduction on his five-year sentence.

They told a High Court hearing their client was only given a day to consider whether he would make any "representation" over the decision made by the commissioner of correctional services under the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance.

It was only after Ma filed a written statement on March 25 that he received a prison committee's "summary of consideration" in relation to the refusal, the court heard.

Ma, a former food delivery worker, has lodged an application for judicial review asking the court to order his immediate release from Tong Fuk Correctional Institution on Lantau Island.

The prison service has denied Ma early discharge on the grounds that a contrary decision would not be in the nation's interests.

As a general rule, a prisoner's sentence can be cut by a third for good conduct while in custody.

But the ordinance, mandated under Article 23 of the Basic Law, the city's mini-constitution, stipulates that a prisoner convicted of national security offences "must not be granted remission" unless the commissioner is satisfied the move will not compromise national security.

A prison committee tasked with assessing inmates convicted of a national security offence concluded that "no information shows that if remission is granted to Mr Ma, he will not be detrimental to national security".

It said it had considered Ma's behaviour in jail, rehabilitation progress and psychological assessment. It noted that he "was not enthusiastic in participating in rehabilitation programmes" and "would not reveal his genuine feelings".

The department's Superintendent Lo Ho-kuen, who was called to testify in court over the circumstances of Ma's complaint, said an English summary of the committee's explanation was available as early as March 23, the day the ordinance took effect.

Lo acknowledged that he made no attempt to ask his supervisor for a copy for Ma's reference and opted to deliver the decision to the inmate verbally the same day.

"I did not ask [my supervisor] in that way, as it was not required of me," Lo said.

He said Ma appeared emotionally disturbed by being denied early release, and the department

decided to send him to hospital fearing “something might happen that night”.

But the superintendent maintained the prisoner was still capable of filing a complaint against the decision despite a lack of any reference material.

Steven Kwan Man-wai, for Ma, argued the decision was in breach of his client’s legitimate expectations for early release, as he was told verbally as early as February he could leave jail on March 25.

Kwan also highlighted the department’s “practice” of granting one-third remission to prisoners in general unless disciplinary offences were committed while behind bars.

That contention failed to convince Mr Justice Alex Lee Wan-tang, who is among the few jurists hand-picked by the city leader to adjudicate national security cases.

Lee pointed to a lack of evidence suggesting the department routinely reduced prisoners’ sentences without thorough consideration.

He noted the commissioner “simply had no power” to refer a national security offender’s case to a statutory supervision board under the Security Bureau for consideration of early release if the required threshold was not met.

The judge also stressed he could not substitute himself for the commissioner in making decisions on national security threats.

The hearing continues on Wednesday.

Ma, known as the “second-generation Captain America” for dressing as the Marvel character in anti-government protests, was convicted and jailed for promoting Hong Kong independence through the chanting of slogans in public and in media interviews.

The act is banned by the national security law imposed by Beijing in June 2020, which also criminalises subversion, terrorism and collusion with foreign forces.

### **Beijing urges HSBC to keep backing mainland China and Hong Kong’s development push**

19 October 2024, SCMP, Jeffie Lam

Xia Baolong, Beijing’s point man on Hong Kong affairs, issues call in meeting with HSBC group chairman Mark Tucker

Beijing’s point man on Hong Kong affairs has called on HSBC to continue contributing to both the country’s development and the financial hub’s economy in a meeting with group chairman Mark Tucker in the nation’s capital.

Xia Baolong, director of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office (HKMAO), praised the financial services giant for its optimism towards the development of the country in the Friday meeting. He

also underscored Beijing’s support for maintaining Hong Kong’s “unique status and strengths”.

Britain’s foreign secretary, David Lammy, started his two-day visit to the country on the same day, calling for dialogue to fully resume between London and Beijing.

In the Friday discussion, which was also attended by HKMAO executive deputy director Zhou Ji, Xia called on HSBC to continue to play to its strengths, actively participate in the country’s high-quality development and opening-up, and contribute to Hong Kong’s prosperity.

“Xia emphasised it is China’s long-standing national policy to ensure the comprehensive, accurate and unswerving implementation of the ‘one country, two systems’ governing principle,” the office said.

“The central government will always fully support Hong Kong in maintaining its unique status and strengths, maintain a free, open and regularised business environment and create better conditions for enterprises from different countries and regions to develop in Hong Kong.”

Peter Wong Tung-shun, non-executive chairman of the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, and David Liao, co-chief executive of HSBC Asia-Pacific, were among those in the delegation led by Tucker.

Lau Siu-kai, a consultant at Beijing’s semi-official think tank, the Chinese Association of Hong Kong and Macau Studies, said the meeting was part of the central government’s bid to help attract and retain foreign companies that do business in the city amid heightened geopolitical tensions.

“The United States and some European countries have been calling on Western companies not to invest in Hong Kong,” Lau said. “Beijing wants to send a strong message that Hong Kong remains a good place for business and that the political changes over the past few years should not be a deterrent.”

He added that the timing reinforced Xia’s message as the meeting coincided with the visit by Lammy, who said engagement with China was “pragmatic and necessary”.

Last November, Xia also met British-owned conglomerate Swire Group in Shenzhen, praising it for its long-term presence in Hong Kong and its support for one country, two systems.

He similarly urged the company to contribute to the country’s development.

Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu at the time lauded Xia’s meeting with Swire, saying it would help improve understanding regarding policy directions and help to encourage investment.

## **China heightens surveillance in Hong Kong; critics and citizens on alert**

10 October 2024, ANI

Hong Kong city's police have started a campaign under which the authorities would install thousands of cameras in the city to elevate their surveillance capabilities.

Despite consistently being ranked among the world's safest big cities, police in Hong Kong have cited crime as the reason for deeper penetration of CCTVs in the city which critics believe have the possibility of being equipped with powerful facial recognition and artificial intelligence tools, CNN reported.

Hong Kong police had previously set a target of installing 2,000 new surveillance cameras this year, and eventually increasing the number over the years. CNN noted that the police in Hong Kong aim to eventually introduce facial recognition to these cameras, security chief Chris Tang told local media in July - adding that police could use AI in the future to track down suspects.

In a statement to CNN, the Hong Kong Police Force said it was studying how police in other countries use surveillance cameras, including how they use AI. But it's not clear how many of the new cameras may have facial recognition capabilities, or whether there's a timeline for when the tech will be introduced.

Hong Kong held disruptive protests in 2019 to complain about the Chinese mainland government interfering with the freedoms of the city and tightening measures under the garb of national security. The new laws brought in place have been used to jail activists, journalists and political opponents, and target civil society groups and outspoken media outlets.

Fears of mainland-style surveillance and policing caused notable angst during the 2019 protests, which broadened to encompass many Hong Kongers' fears that the central Chinese government would encroach on the city's limited autonomy.

Justifying the attempt to increase surveillance in Hong Kong, the local newspapers said that Hong Kong saw 3 per cent increase in crime in the country. In their statement, police told CNN the new cameras would only monitor public places and delete footage after 31 days. They will follow existing personal data privacy laws, as well as "comprehensive and robust internal guidelines," police said, without elaborating on what those guidelines entailed.

Chinese government is known for its surveillance actions that have often been used to disrupt critics of the Chinese Communist Party.

Despite the CCP routinely assuring that technology will not be misused, it has been time and again seen to be used in more repressive ways, with

Xinjiang, a Muslim-majority Uyghur population area of China being routinely surveyed with invasive technologies. (ANI)

## **Hong Kong and mainland China broaden trade agreement to support local firms' expansion across border**

10 October 2024, HKPF, Hillary Leung

The expansion of a trade services deal under the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) will benefit Hong Kong's role as an international finance and commercial centre, said the New People's Party.

Hong Kong has broadened a trade agreement with China, a move that will help local firms in sectors such as tourism and banking expand into the mainland market.

Financial Secretary Paul Chan and China's Ministry of Commerce representative Li Yongjie signed an agreement on Wednesday to expand a trade services deal under the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA).

The expansion introduces "new liberalisation measures" such as relaxing qualification requirements for Hong Kong professionals, as well as easing restrictions on the export of services to the mainland Chinese market.

The measures cover around half a dozen sectors including financial services, telecommunications, television and tourism, and come as Hong Kong's economy continues to lag behind the pre-pandemic era.

"The further liberalisation measures under the CEPA Amendment Agreement will enable Hong Kong firms and professional sectors to go into the mainland market a lot easier," Chan told reporters after the signing ceremony.

Businesses are keen to expand into the mainland, Chan said, adding that the agreement would create a "very positive impact on Hong Kong."

Under the expanded arrangement, which will come into effect next March, television dramas produced in Hong Kong can be broadcast during prime time in mainland China upon approval. In the financial services sector, Hong Kong financial institutions will no longer have to meet the asset requirement of US\$2 billion before investing in shares of insurance companies across the border.

'Breakthroughs'

Signed in 2003, free trade deal CEPA aimed at promoting joint economic prosperity in Hong Kong and mainland China through strengthening trade cooperation across industries. An agreement on the trading of services was made in 2016.

Under CEPA, Hong Kong and mainland China do not apply tariffs to each other's exports of services. They also encourage mutual recognition of professional qualifications and promote the exchange of talent.

Before the latest amendment, the most recent modifications were made in 2019, when authorities on both sides agreed to liberalisation measures in sectors such as financial services, legal services and film.

Wednesday's announcement on the further expansion was welcomed by industry groups and political parties, who said it would give Hong Kong firms greater access to the mainland market.

"The amendment not only provides greater development opportunity for Hong Kong's strategic service industries but also further integrates the Greater Bay Area," the Federation of Hong Kong Industries' chairperson Steve Chuang said in a statement.

Regina Ip, the chairperson of the pro-Beijing New People's Party, said there were several "breakthroughs" in the amendment. She highlighted the scrapping of a rule requiring companies to have at least three years of experience to qualify for benefits under CEPA, as well as the lifting of restrictions for Hong Kong firms.

The new amendment will significantly benefit Hong Kong's role as a financial, commercial and professional services centre, the party's statement read.

### **Hong Kong plans to install thousands of surveillance cameras. Critics say it's more proof the city is moving closer to China**

05 October 2024, CNN, Jessie Yeung

Glance up while strolling through parts of downtown Hong Kong and, chances are, you'll notice the glassy black lens of a surveillance camera trained on the city's crowded streets.

And that sight will become more common in the coming years, as the city's police pursue an ambitious campaign to install thousands of cameras to elevate their surveillance capabilities.

Though it consistently ranks among the world's safest big cities, police in the Asian financial hub say the new cameras are needed to fight crime – and have raised the possibility of equipping them with powerful facial recognition and artificial intelligence tools.

That's sparked alarm among some experts who see it as taking Hong Kong one step closer to the pervasive surveillance systems of mainland China, warning of the technology's repressive potential.

Hong Kong police had previously set a target of installing 2,000 new surveillance cameras this year, and potentially more than that each subsequent year.

The force plans to eventually introduce facial recognition to these cameras, security chief Chris Tang told local media in July – adding that police could use AI in the future to track down suspects.

In a statement to CNN, the Hong Kong Police Force said it was studying how police in other countries use surveillance cameras, including how they use AI. But it's not clear how many of the new cameras may have facial recognition capabilities, or whether there's a timeline for when the tech will be introduced.

Tang and the Hong Kong police have repeatedly pointed to other jurisdictions, including Western democracies, that also make wide use of surveillance cameras for law enforcement. For instance, Singapore has 90,000 cameras and the United Kingdom has more than seven million, Tang told local newspaper Sing Tao Daily in June.

While some of those places, like the UK, have started using facial recognition cameras, experts say these early experiments have highlighted the need for careful regulation and privacy protections. Hong Kong police told CNN they would "comply with relevant laws" and follow strong internal guidelines – but haven't elaborated in depth on what that would look like.

And, some critics say, what sets Hong Kong apart from other places is its political environment – which has seen an ongoing crackdown on political dissent, as it draws closer to authoritarian mainland China.

Following unprecedented and often violent anti-government protests that rocked the city in 2019, local and central authorities imposed sweeping national security laws that have been used to jail activists, journalists and political opponents, and target civil society groups and outspoken media outlets.

Hong Kong's leaders have said the laws are needed to restore stability after the protests in the nominally semi-autonomous city, and argue their legislation is similar to other national security laws around the world.

"The difference is how the technology is being used," said Samantha Hoffman, a nonresident fellow at the National Bureau of Asian Research who has studied China's use of technology for security and propaganda.

Places like the United States and the UK may have problems with how they implement that technology, too – but "this is fundamentally different... It has to do specifically with the system of government, as well as the way that the party state... uses the law to maintain its own power," said Hoffman.

What this means for Hong Kong

Hong Kong has more than 54,500 public CCTV cameras used by government bodies – about seven

cameras per 1,000 people, according to an estimate by Comparitech, a UK-based technology research firm.

That puts it about on par with New York City and still far behind London (13 per 1,000 people), but nowhere near mainland Chinese cities, which average about 440 cameras per 1,000 people.

Fears of mainland-style surveillance and policing caused notable angst during the 2019 protests, which broadened to encompass many Hong Kongers' fears that the central Chinese government would encroach on the city's limited autonomy.

Protesters on the streets covered their faces with masks and goggles to prevent identification, at times smashing or covering security cameras. At one point, they tore down a "smart" lamp post, even though Hong Kong authorities said it was only meant to collect data on traffic, weather and pollution.

At the time, activist and student leader Joshua Wong – who is now in prison on charges related to his activism and national security – said, "Can the Hong Kong government ensure that they will never install facial recognition tactics into the smart lamp post? ... They can't promise it and they won't because of the pressure from Beijing."

Across the border, the model of surveillance that protesters feared is ubiquitous – with China often celebrating the various achievements of its real-time facial recognition algorithms, and exporting surveillance technology to countries around the world.

According to an analysis by Comparitech, eight of the top 10 most surveilled cities in the world per capita are in China, where facial recognition is an inescapable part of daily life – from the facial scans required to register a new phone number, to facial recognition gates in some subway stations.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the government mandated a QR "health code" to track people's health status, which in some places required facial scans.

But the technology has also been used in more repressive ways.

In the far-western region of Xinjiang, Beijing has used cameras to monitor members of the Muslim-majority Uyghur population. And when unprecedented nationwide protests broke out in late 2022 against the government's strict Covid policies, police used facial recognition along with other sophisticated surveillance tools to track down protesters, The New York Times found.

"(China's) public security surveillance systems ... tend to track lists of particular people, maybe people with a history of mental illness or participation in protests, and make a note of people who are marked as being troublesome in some way," Hoffman said.

The systems then "track those specific people across the city and across its surveillance network."

"I think it's fair to anticipate that the use of CCTV and facial recognition technology in Hong Kong will begin to look a lot like those in mainland China over time," she said.

Hong Kong police have argued the cameras help fight crime, pointing to a pilot program earlier this year of 15 cameras installed in one district. Already, those cameras have provided evidence and clues for at least six crimes, Tang told Sing Tao Daily – and police will prioritize high-risk or high-crime areas for the remaining cameras.

The first five months of this year saw 3% more crimes than the same period last year, Sing Tao reported.

In their statement, police told CNN the new cameras would only monitor public places and delete footage after 31 days. They will follow existing personal data privacy laws, as well as "comprehensive and robust internal guidelines," police said, without elaborating on what those guidelines entailed.

When considering AI-equipped cameras, "the police will definitely comply with relevant laws," the force added.

But several experts interviewed by CNN cast doubt on whether those existing laws, written decades ago with broad exemptions for police, will be enough.

Steve Tsang, director of the SOAS China Institute at the University of London, warned that the new cameras could be "used for political repression" if they are employed under the "draconian" national security law.

Unless authorities assure the public that the cameras won't be used for that purpose, "this is likely to be a further step in making Hong Kong law enforcement closer to how it is done on the Chinese mainland," he said.

How to regulate facial recognition

Other experts argued it's far too soon to say what the impact will be in Hong Kong, since authorities have not laid out in detail how they would use the technology.

"Hong Kong law doesn't, in all measures, mirror what happens in mainland China," said Normann Witzleb, an associate professor in data protection and privacy at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, But that's why it's all the more important for authorities to address a raft of yet-unanswered questions, he said.

For instance, it remains unclear whether Hong Kong will deploy live facial recognition that constantly scans the environment, or whether the tech will only be applied to past footage when certain crimes occur or when legal authorization is granted.

Witzleb also raised the question of who would have the power to authorize the use of facial recognition, and what situations may warrant it. Would it be used



to prosecute crime and locate suspects, for example – or for other public safety measures like identifying missing people?

And, Witzleb added, will police run the technology through their existing image databases, or use it more broadly with images held by other public authorities, or even publicly available imagery of anyone?

"It's important to design guidelines for those systems that take proper recognition of the potential benefits that they have, but that also acknowledge they're not foolproof, and that they have the potential to interfere with (people's) rights in serious ways," Witzleb said.

Regardless of how facial recognition might be used, both Hoffman and Witzleb said the presence of that technology and the increased number of security cameras may make Hong Kongers feel less free under the ever-watchful eye of the police.

"When you feel like you're being monitored, that affects your behavior and your feelings of freedom as well," Hoffman said. "I think that there's an element of state coercion that doesn't need to have to do with the effectiveness of the technology itself."

### **Amnesty International recognizes three activists as prisoners of conscience**

02 October 2024, Amnesty International

Amnesty International today designated three prominent human rights defenders from Hong Kong and mainland China as prisoners of conscience.

Human rights lawyers Chow Hang-tung and Ding Jiaxi, along with the free media advocate Jimmy Lai, are all currently imprisoned solely because of their peaceful human rights activism. Amnesty International has called for their immediate release.

"As the Chinese government touts progress on its measures to promote human rights, the stories of these three human rights defenders demonstrate a starkly different reality inside the country," said Sarah Brooks, Amnesty International's China Director.

"Meeting with diplomats; discussing politics; complaining about unfair treatment in police custody; talking with friends over dinner: these are all things that can get you jailed in today's China.

"The ongoing detentions of Chow, Ding and Lai demonstrate the continuing failure of the authorities in China to uphold their international obligations, and their prosecution lays bare the cowardice of state officials who cannot accept criticism, whether from international experts or from their own citizens."

Jimmy Lai and Chow Hang-tung have both been targeted amidst a broader dismantling of human

rights and civic space in Hong Kong since the introduction of a Beijing-imposed National Security Law (NSL) in 2020. Ding Jiaxi, as with many human rights defenders in mainland China, is the direct victim of the authorities' overly broad and vague 'national security-related' laws that justify convictions in secret trials and lengthy jail sentences.

Amnesty International considers a prisoner of conscience to be any person imprisoned solely because of their political, religious or other conscientiously held beliefs, their ethnic origin, sex, colour, language, national or social origin, socio-economic status, birth, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or other status, and who has not used violence or advocated violence or hatred in the circumstances leading to their detention.

Jimmy Lai

Nearly 200 police raided Lai's Apple Daily newspaper shortly after the NSL was enacted. He was arrested along with several newspaper executives, and eventually charged with "colluding with foreign forces" under the NSL, and with sedition. Apple Daily closed in June 2021 following another police raid and the freezing of its assets, in what Amnesty International called a "flagrant attack on press freedom".

Lai faces a maximum sentence of life imprisonment in his ongoing national security trial. Hong Kong courts have already convicted Lai on four separate cases involving "unauthorized assemblies", for his engagement in peaceful protest – including attending a Tiananmen Square vigil. He has also been prosecuted for alleged "fraud"; as a result, Lai is already serving combined prison sentences which will see him spend nearly seven years unjustly behind bars.

Lai, who will turn 77 in December, has reportedly been held in solitary confinement, and there are serious concerns about his health, especially following the cancellation of his appearance in court in early June 2024. Those concerns are exacerbated by the lengthy delays in his NSL trial; begun in December 2023. After a long adjournment, it is currently expected to continue in November 2024.

Chow Hang-tung

Chow was charged in 2020 for participating in a peaceful vigil commemorating protesters killed in the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown, and charged again in 2021 after she asked people on social media to light candles in memory of the victims. She was jailed for 22 months for daring to commemorate their lives.

Chow also faces a potential 10-year prison sentence for "inciting subversion" under the NSL over her role as former leader of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China, which organized the city's annual Tiananmen candlelight vigil for 30 years.

By designating Chow, Lai and Ding as prisoners of conscience, we stand with all those unjustly detained for saying out loud what they believe to be true.

Sarah Brooks

Despite her imprisonment, Chow has continued to use her legal knowledge to defend rights, including in 2022 to secure the lifting of reporting restrictions on bail hearings. Most recently, Chow mounted a legal challenge to rules that require women – but not men – to wear long trousers year-round in Hong Kong prisons, where temperatures regularly exceed 30 degrees Celsius in summer. In the past, Chow has suffered retaliation for such advocacy, including repeated periods of solitary confinement.

"Amnesty International and many others have highlighted the dangerous human rights flaws in the Hong Kong's National Security Law. But rather than taking steps to repeal the law, the Hong Kong government has instead doubled down by ramming through an equally-repressive local national security legislation (referred to as 'Article 23') in March of this year – increasing jail times for peaceful activism, even if it happens outside Hong Kong or mainland China," Sarah Brooks said.

Ding Jiayi

Ding was sentenced to 12 years in prison for "subverting state power" in April 2023. He is one of dozens of lawyers and activists targeted after attending an informal gathering held in the city of Xiamen in 2019, at which they discussed current affairs in China. Activist and legal scholar Xu Zhiyong, who had also attended the meeting, was sentenced to 14 years by the same court on the same charges.

Ding was held incommunicado, including in "residential surveillance at a designated location", for more than a year after being taken away on 26 December 2019. He was subjected to torture and other ill-treatment during detention, including long hours of interrogation and being bound to an iron "tiger-chair" with his limbs contorted for more than 10 hours per day for many days. For nearly four years, from his initial detention until his transfer to prison following his sentencing, Ding was not allowed access to pen and paper.

He reportedly faces serious restrictions in prison, including the withdrawal of "yard time". His right to communication is strictly limited to letters from direct family members, telephone calls are prohibited and he has limited access to reading materials.

"As part of its strategy to avoid scrutiny, the Chinese government routinely justifies ruthless repression – and rebuts efforts to hold authorities accountable for it – by describing it merely as 'internal affairs'. This is why the stories of Jimmy Lai, Chow Hang-tung and Ding Jiayi are so important. Theirs are the 'internal

affairs' the Chinese authorities tell us don't deserve attention, dignity or justice," Sarah Brooks said.

"By designating Chow, Lai and Ding as prisoners of conscience, we stand with all those unjustly detained for saying out loud what they believe to be true. All three – along with the many others imprisoned in Hong Kong and mainland China solely for their beliefs – must be immediately and unconditionally released."

## September

### Prison sentences to Hong Kong journalists highlight China's suppression of opinion

27 September 2024, ANI

China continues to suppress the people who raise views critical of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). In the latest attempt at suppressing freedom of expression, China gave a jail sentence to journalists on sedition charges.

Two journalists belonging to a closed Hong Kong news site were sentenced to prison on Thursday for sedition charges. These journalists were former Stand News journalists Chung Pui-Kuen and Patrick Lam who were found guilty and fined last month for conspiring to publish and reproduce seditious articles VOA News reported.

The sentenced journalists had received sentences of 21 and 11 months respectively. However, Lam among the two had been immediately released due to medical reasons. Chung, Stand's former editor-in-chief, and Lam, the outlet's former acting editor-in-chief, both have denied all charges against them since their offices were first raided in 2021.

The same news report claimed that Chung aged 54, and Lam aged 36, had already spent more than 300 days in pretrial detentions. However, employees of the news website run by the sentenced journalists and the journalism fraternity claim that the news organization was a liberal one and followed long-standing principles and ethics of journalism.

According to the VOA News report Ronson Chan, a former editor at Stand News, said "I'm happy that Patrick Lam could be released at once, with the judge giving the sentence for the appropriate period, but I still feel sorry Chung needed to go back to jail for 10 months. He created a very good and liberal platform for us, journalists, and the staff of Stand News. We enjoyed a very good freedom of news and freedom of press. We had our own view to make what we thought was valuable to do. It seems Mr. Chung is the only person to pay for our liberalism and freedom."

Additionally, the Hong Kong Journalists Association said that the sentences given to these journalists expose the "real risks" for journalism in the region. A statement released by the organization over the matter stated

"The two men's convictions and sentences reflect the ongoing decline of press freedom in Hong Kong and the real dangers media workers in the territory are facing while performing their duties."

The VOA report added the statement of Aleksandra Bielakowska member of the Paris-based organization Reporters Without Borders stated that the sentences constitute "Yet another nail in the coffin for press freedom in Hong Kong, dangerously laying another red line for journalists in the city. Deliberately targeting independent media and its journalists has left a huge void in Hong Kong's media landscape that will be very difficult to rebuild. There are still a few independent media that try to keep up operations, but they are already tremendously afraid for their safety. This verdict is only underlining the reality that judges and courts are not fulfilling [their] duty of protecting residents but have become a political tool, used to threaten those who dare to speak independently, including journalists."

The VOA News report claimed that organizations like Stand News are among Hong Kong's last remaining media outlets which openly criticize the government. Organisations like these were aggressively attacked by the Beijing-backed political crackdown on pro-democracy protests in 2019.

After 2019, Beijing had imposed a National Security Law which had provisions of banning any secession, subversion and foreign interference. This law has resulted in arrests of at least 28 journalists and press freedom advocates out of which 10 still remain jailed. Moreover, this crackdown has forced shut shutdown of more than a dozen media outlets.

"There is nothing wrong with safeguarding national security, but allowing journalists to speak out and enabling society to speak freely is necessary to maintain Hong Kong's prosperity and stability and is also an important part of promoting the city's international image. Officials may insist that Hong Kong's press freedom is unhampered, but the public knows the truth." Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA) said in a statement.

As a result of suppression acts like these Hong Kong's international press freedom ranking has nosedived in recent years, to the 135th place in the Reporters Without Borders rankings for 2024 which once ranked at 18 in 2002, according to the group. (ANI)

### **China calls on Hong Kong tycoons to help kickstart national economy**

27 September 2024, RFA, Ng Chi Ping

Tibet Digest December - January 2024

But the city's business families, many from Shanghai and Ningbo, have scant trust for the Chinese Communist Party.

The ruling Chinese Communist Party has called on Hong Kong's leader to mobilize the city's wealthiest families into kick-starting economic growth, although signs that any are answering the call have been thin on the ground.

Xia Baolong, who heads the ruling party's Hong Kong and Macao Work Office, "expressed the hope that all sectors of Hong Kong society, especially the business community and entrepreneurs, will unite as one and seize the opportunity to strive for economic development," the city's Chief Executive John Lee told reporters following a Sept. 20 meeting with Xia, as he attended an investment cooperation conference in Beijing.

Hong Kong's business community should "transform their love for their country and for Hong Kong into concrete and practical action, and work together to promote Hong Kong's ... prosperity," Xia told Lee during the meeting.

Xia's call to action echoes recent policy moves from Beijing to find a role for the private sector in boosting flagging economic growth, under Chinese President Xi Jinping's concept of "public-private partnerships," which analysts have warned could be a disguised asset grab by the government.

It also comes after Xi wrote to the descendants of the "Ningbo Gang" – wealthy Hong Kong families with roots in the eastern port city of Ningbo – in July, calling on them to "contribute to the dream of the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation," state media reported.

They included Anna Pao, eldest daughter of the late shipping magnate Sir Pao Yue-kong, and Ronald Chao, eldest son of the late industrialist Chao Kuang-piu, families whose business operations formed the backbone of much of Hong Kong's growth under British colonial rule.

Lee said the private sector in Hong Kong "are not bystanders, but participants, contributors and beneficiaries" of the city's economic rewards.

'Serve the country'

But commentators said there hasn't exactly been a big rush to respond to Beijing's call for investments on the part of Hong Kong's entrepreneurs.

The city's richest man, Li Ka-shing, has instead been stepping up his investments in the United Kingdom, with his CK Infrastructure Holdings acquiring a wind farm portfolio in from Aviva Investors for £350 million (US\$450 million) in August, renewable power generator UU Solar for £90.8 million (US\$122 million) in May, and natural gas distributor Phoenix Energy in April.

Exiled Hong Kong businessman Elmer Yuen, whose family hails from Ningbo, said Beijing has repeatedly called on Hong Kong's tycoons to "serve the country."

But he said there is unlikely to be much response, given that few business families from Ningbo and Shanghai trust the Chinese Communist Party.

"You can lump all of us together, us Shanghainese, most of whom are from Ningbo, and say that we have absolutely zero trust in the Chinese Communist Party," Yuen said.

"Maybe a small number of people will invest, but the rest already know who they're dealing with."

According to Xia Ming, professor of political science at the City University of New York, Lee is being tasked by Beijing to step up integration with neighboring Guangdong province and Macau, and provide a much-needed shot in the arm for the sluggish Chinese economy.

"Policy in today's Hong Kong is clearly about how to perfectly integrate Hong Kong into what Xi Jinping calls the China rejuvenation strategy, which is basically about controlling the economy," Xia told RFA Cantonese in a recent interview. "[Lee's aim] is to more perfectly integrate Hong Kong into China's accelerated regression."

Xia said the overall aim is to integrate Hong Kong into the mainland Chinese economy and "ultimately sell Hong Kong off to Beijing and to Xi Jinping."

"The goal of Xi Jinping's reforms is not that mainland China will become more like Hong Kong, but that Hong Kong will become more like Yan'an," he said in a reference to the revolutionary wartime base of Mao Zedong's communists.

Stimulus measures

The call for investments came as Chinese leaders announced a slew of stimulus measures to boost demand for real estate, including lower mortgage rates, fewer restrictions on buyers and tax cuts as part of "a new model" for real estate development.

On Tuesday, China's central bank, top securities regulator and financial regulator announced a raft of monetary stimulus, property market support and capital market strengthening measures to boost "high-quality economic development," state news agency Xinhua reported.

The top economic meeting, attended by Xi, also called on officials to "foster a favorable environment for the development of the non-public sector," with efforts made to boost consumption among low- and middle-income groups.

China has also extended a helping hand to Hong Kong in the form of pandas, with a ceremony at the Hong Kong International Airport on Thursday to welcome An An and Ke Ke, described by Lee as "just entering adulthood and full of energy" and likely to be a successful draw for tourists.

The giant pandas will live in a newly refurbished suite at the Ocean Park theme park complete with climbing frames and more plants.

"Citizens will join in welcoming the two giant pandas to Hong Kong, and the whole city is looking forward to it," Lee told reporters on Tuesday, adding that images of the pandas will be added to the Oct. 1 National Day drone and light show over Victoria Harbour.

Hong Kong is expecting an influx of up to 1.2 million mainland Chinese tourists to mark the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, Lee said.

"We hope that everyone can celebrate the 75th anniversary of National Day together, and also bring in many business activities to increase business and tourism revenues," he said.

### **Hong Kong man jailed 14 months under new security law for 'seditious' online statements**

21 September 2024, HongKong PF, James Lee

Au Kin-wai, 58, on Friday became the third person to be sentenced under Article 23 after pleading guilty to one count of "knowingly publishing publications that had a seditious intention" over statements he made online.

A Hong Kong court has convicted a third person under a new security law, sentencing him to one year and two months in prison for sedition over statements made on social media platforms.

Au Kin-wai, 58, appeared before Chief Magistrate Victor So at the West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts on Friday, where he pleaded guilty to one count of "knowingly publishing publications that had a seditious intention" over statements he made online. He was charged on June 21 over posts on social media platforms Facebook, X, and YouTube calling for the dissolution of the Chinese Communist Party, and for Chinese president Xi Jinping and Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee – both of whom he dubbed "dictators" – to step down.

He also invoked a Cultural Revolution-era slogan: "Revolution is no crime, to rebel is justified."

Au was charged under the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance, known locally as Article 23. Separate to a national security law imposed by Beijing in 2020, the new legislation came into effect on March 23 after it was fast-tracked by the city's opposition-free legislature. An early attempt to pass Article 23 in 2003 ended in failure after mass protests.

Au's lawyer Steven Kwan said on Friday that he would withdraw a constitutional challenge on the law's limitations on free speech, after the city's top court last month allowed a similar challenge but not

on the grounds that the sedition law imposed a disproportionate restriction on free speech.

#### Limited effect

Kwan on Friday contended that the court had to consider the minimal impact of Au's actions, saying that most of Au's 200-odd posts were repetitive, and that he only had about 20 followers on all four of his social media accounts. The counsel asked the court not to give too much weight to the protection of society as a sentencing factor, considering the defendant's limited reach.

However, So ruled that the court had the power to consider public safety in sentencing, as the concept fell within the scope of national security. The fact that Au made the posts with accounts under his real name was an indication that he had no regard for the law, So ruled.

"The element of deterrence in sentencing aims to prevent others from copying the crime... which is a general sentencing principle long established," So said.

So set the starting sentence at 18 months and added three months for further deterrence, having taken into account Au's prior conviction for sedition last December. Au was afforded a one-third sentence discount – the maximum given to a defendant for a timely guilty plea – bringing his sentence down to 14 months.

#### Third Article 23 conviction

Au is the third person to be sentenced for sedition under Article 23. On Thursday, Chung Man-kit was jailed for 10 months after pleading guilty over "seditious" bus graffiti, and Chu Kai-pong was sentenced to 14 months for sedition over wearing a T-shirt with 2019 protest slogan.

Under Article 23, sedition carries a maximum penalty of seven years in jail, or 10 years if the offender is found to have colluded with an "external force." The offence was previously punishable by up to two years in prison for a first offence, and up to three years for re-offenders.

The new legislation also raised the threshold for the early release of those imprisoned for offences endangering national security. Typically, prisoners can trim a third off their sentence for good behaviour.

The law has been criticised by rights NGOs, Western states and the UN as vague, broad and "regressive." Authorities, however, cited perceived foreign interference and a constitutional duty to "close loopholes" after the 2019 protests and unrest.

## US lawmakers call on China to free Hong Kong Catholic, democracy advocate Jimmy Lai

20 September 2024, NCR Online

Abipartisan, bicameral group of lawmakers gathered Sept. 18 to call for the immediate release from prison of prominent Hong Kong Catholic, philanthropist and media mogul Jimmy Lai, who is facing a trial on what they called bogus charges.

Lai, who founded the now-defunct pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily, protested in favor of democratic freedoms – such as freedom of the press and expression – in Hong Kong, which was designated a Special Administrative Region of China in 1997, when British rule of that region ended after more than 150 years. Following pro-democracy protests in 2019, China implemented a purported national security law the next year, which critics have said has been used to silence the Chinese Communist Party's critics.

Under that law, Lai was arrested in August 2020 and has been imprisoned since December 2020. He pleaded not guilty to the charges and faces life in prison.

U.S. lawmakers have called those charges trumped up and evidence the Chinese Communist Party is seeking to silence dissent.

Sen. Ben Cardin, D-Md., chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said lawmakers were seeking to draw attention to Lai ahead of the first day of the U.N. General Assembly's high-level general debate Sept. 24. The 79th session of the General Assembly opened Sept. 10.

"We've got all a lot of world leaders in New York, they're there in one place," he said. "Jimmy Lai's story needs to be told."

Lai's son, Sebastien Lai, who was in Washington at the lawmakers' event, said his father faces indignities in prison including solitary confinement.

"For his strong Catholic faith, he is denied Communion," the younger Lai said of his father.

The event featured several Catholic lawmakers who have been critical of the Chinese government including former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., who still represents her state's 11th Congressional District, which includes most of San Francisco, and Reps. Chris Smith, R-N.J., and Jim McGovern, D-Mass.

Acknowledging Smith in the audience, Pelosi said, "What's beautiful about this issue is that it has always been strongly, unequivocally bipartisan in the House and in the Senate."

"The freedom of speech is the biggest, biggest defender of democracy, because it sheds light on what is happening, and that's why Jimmy, to me, was ... so courageous to do it, because he knew what the consequences could be, because they knew how



powerful his voice has been, is and will continue to be in the future," Pelosi said. "So it's an honor for me to be with each and every one of you and others who have been working on this issue."

Smith thanked Pelosi for her efforts toward Lai's release and Hong Kong's freedom. He argued, "Injustice need not be forever."

"The time will come and I hope, will come soon, if we are resolute, if we use every lever at our disposal, every way of trying to influence Xi Jinping and his really murderous Chinese Communist Party" that Lai's release could be secured, Smith said.

McGovern issued a similar message, arguing Hong Kong's story "is still being written."

"For the government of the People's Republic of China and its newest puppet, the Hong Kong government, criminalizing the exercise of human rights is a sign of weakness," McGovern said. "It is a sign of fear. It means you don't think you can win the battles of ideas, the battle for the hearts and minds of your people. It means you are elevating power over the well-being of your people."

On its website, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, a bipartisan religious freedom watchdog, said Lai's imprisonment "inhibits religious freedom advocacy."

### **Hong Kong man sentenced to 14 months in jail for 'seditious' T-shirt**

19 September 2024, Aljazeera

Chu Kai-pong is the first person to be convicted under Article 23, the China-ruled city's tough new national security law.

A Hong Kong man has been sentenced to 14 months in jail for wearing a T-shirt and a mask with protest slogans deemed "seditious", the first person to be convicted under the city's tough new national security law.

Chu Kai-pong, 27, was sentenced on Thursday at the West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts, having pleaded guilty earlier in the week to one count of "doing acts with seditious intention", an offence carrying a maximum penalty of 10 years in jail under the new legislation, known as Article 23.

Chu was arrested for wearing a T-shirt reading "Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times" and a yellow mask printed with "FDNOL" – shorthand for another pro-democracy slogan, "five demands, not one less" – on June 12, a date marking the fifth anniversary of the city's huge pro-democracy protests in 2019.

The 2019 protest movement was the most concerted challenge to the Hong Kong government since the former British colony returned to Chinese rule in 1997. It waned because of widespread arrests, the

exile of democracy activists, the COVID-19 pandemic and China's imposition of an earlier security law in 2020.

Referring to the 2019 protests, Chief Magistrate Victor So – a judge handpicked by the government to hear national security cases – said on Thursday that Chu "took advantage of a symbolic day with the intention to reignite the ideas behind the unrest".

In January, the judge had sentenced Chu to three months in jail for wearing a similar T-shirt at the airport and possessing publications deemed seditious. He noted that Chu's "subsequent act" showed the "deterrent effect of his previous sentence was insufficient".

#### **Quelling dissent**

The sedition offence was created under British colonial rule, which ended in 1997, but was seldom used until Hong Kong authorities revived it in 2020 after the protests.

With the protests quashed, China imposed a national security law on the city in mid-2020 to quell further dissent.

The new national security law – the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance, also known as Article 23 – came into force in March.

The revised law augments the offence of sedition to include inciting hatred against China's communist leadership, upping its jail sentence to a maximum penalty of 10 years if the sedition is conducted in collusion with an "external force".

Critics, including Western nations such as the United States, say Article 23 will further erode freedoms and silence dissent in Hong Kong – a finance hub once considered one of the freest territories in China. As of this month, 303 people have been arrested under the two security laws, with 176 prosecuted and 160 convicted.

### **Hong Kong man jailed for 10 months under new security law over 'seditious' graffiti left on back of bus seats**

19 September 2024, Hong Kong FP, James Lee

Chung Man-kit pleaded guilty to three counts of "doing with a seditious intention an act or acts that had a seditious intention" over messages written on the back of bus seats in March and April.

A Hong Kong man charged under Hong Kong's new security law has been sentenced to 10 months in jail after pleading guilty over writing "seditious" graffiti on bus seats.

Chung Man-kit appeared before Chief Magistrate Victor So at the West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts on Thursday, where he entered a guilty plea for three counts of "doing with a seditious intention an act or acts that had a seditious intention." He was then sentenced to 10 months in jail.

The 29-year-old also faced two property damage charges, which were dropped on Thursday.

Chung was arrested on June 23 on suspicion of "writing words with seditious intention on multiple occasions on the back of bus seats on different public buses in March and April" in contravention of the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance.

The offending phrases, written between March 23 and April 21, included the 2019 protest slogan "Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times," and others advocating independence, including "Hong Kong independence, the only way out." The former was ruled capable of inciting secession during the city's first trial under a Beijing-imposed security law in 2021.

The court on Thursday heard that Chung admitted to writing the slogans under police caution. In a recorded interview, he said that he was aware that the slogans he wrote were widely used during protests five years ago.

Chung also said that he had written the slogans as he believed he had the right to criticise the government and to exercise his right to free speech, even though he knew there was a risk that he would be prosecuted for endangering national security.

So ruled that Chung had written statements endangering national security and advocating Hong Kong independence on multiple occasions. He added that although the slogans were written on seats towards the back of the bus, they were still visible to the public. Society would "fall into chaos" if he was not stopped, So ruled.

So handed down a partial concurrent sentence for the three offences starting at 15 months, then discounted to 10 months after taking into consideration Chung's guilty plea.

Homegrown security law

Article 23 targets treason, insurrection, sabotage, external interference, sedition, theft of state secrets and espionage. It was fast-tracked through the city's opposition-free legislature earlier this year and enacted on March 23, two decades after an attempt to pass similar legislation failed after mass protests in 2003.

The legislation was criticised by rights NGOs, Western states and the UN as vague, broad and "regressive." Authorities, however, cited perceived foreign interference and a constitutional duty to "close loopholes" after the 2019 protests and unrest. Under Article 23, sedition carries a maximum penalty of seven years in jail, or 10 years if the offender is found to have colluded with an "external force." The offence was previously punishable by up to two years in prison for a first offence, and up to three years for re-offenders.

## Musical "Patriotic Education" in Hong Kong

12 September 2024, Bitter Winter

"Patriotic Education" is the name of the most massive campaign of domestic propaganda in the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) recent history. Hong Kong is regarded as being particularly in need of this medicine, which is at the same time reluctant to take.

A "Working Group on Patriotic Education" has been established, with pro-CCP legislator Lee Wai-king (Starry) as its leader. The Working Group has both "official members" and "non-official members." However, the "non-official members" are officially listed in its official web page as well.

One of the "non-official members" is veteran singer Kwong Mei-wan (Cally), another well-known CCP loyalist.

It seems that the CCP believes in music as a tool of "Patriotic Education" in Hong Kong. With great fanfare, a song by Cally Kwong has been launched both in a regular and a karaoke version. The song, called "Our Home," was introduced at a press conference of the Working Group on Patriotic Education on September 3, to coincide with the the 79th anniversary of the Victory Day of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. The lyrics hail the unity of all Chinese around the Beijing government and its leaders.

Last month, the Working Group on Patriotic Education inaugurated a new thematic gallery at the Hong Kong Museum of History, presenting the necessity and alleged benefits of the repressive National Security Law.

The National Security Gallery also teaches children through cartoons to become "young guardians of National Security." For example, a video shows a beetle who violates the National Security rules and ventures away from the Butterfly Garden (China), ending up in a hostile land (the West, or a mental locus where Western ideas prevail). There, the beetle is about to be eaten by a huge spider (Western imperialism). Happily, armed with the National Security Law, the young Guardians of National Security from the Butterfly Garden come and save it. The beetle cries profusely and promises that it will always respect National Security Law in the future. A good lesson for young Hongkongers...

## China's central government will 'expand' Hong Kong's role in Belt and Road Initiative

11 September 2024, SCMP, Kahon Chan and Edith Lin

Officials at Belt and Road Summit throw support behind city, while Vietnam's deputy prime minister calls for more two-way exchanges with Hong Kong.

The central government has pledged that Hong Kong will play a bigger part in the Belt and Road Initiative, with mainland Chinese officials throwing their weight behind the city's "irreplaceable" role in financial and professional services at a high-level conference.

Beijing made the assurance at the opening of the Belt and Road Summit at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre on Wednesday, where the newly appointed deputy prime minister of Vietnam, Nguyen Hoa Binh, also called on city authorities to promote two-way tourism and business links with his country.

Li Yongjie, China's deputy international trade representative, said in opening remarks that the Ministry of Commerce would further "expand the space" for Hong Kong to participate in joint developments in the Belt and Road Initiative, Beijing's push to link economies across Asia, Europe, Africa and South America into a China-centred trade network.

"We will jointly promote practical cooperation projects to further elevate Hong Kong's participation in the Belt and Road Initiative and continue to support mainland and Hong Kong businesses to strengthen information exchanges and deepen cooperation on belt and road projects," she said.

Listing the areas in which Beijing would support Hong Kong in expanding into overseas markets, Li said: "We will continue to guide Hong Kong businesses to leverage their international advantages in service industries such as finance, the legal sector, shipping and accounting, and provide high-level professional services for overseas economic and trade cooperation zones, foreign investment and contracting projects."

She added that Hong Kong would also receive support from Beijing to secure more free trade and investment protection agreements with other jurisdictions, and to enter the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) "as soon as possible".

Nguyen, who also delivered a keynote speech at the opening session, said Vietnam had consistently and actively participated in key international cooperation frameworks, including the belt and road plan, noting his country shared many characteristics with Hong Kong in innovation, sustainable development strategies and effective use of scientific advancement. "Building on this important foundation, we look forward to Hong Kong's more active and greater contribution to connecting the 'two corridors, one belt' framework [of Vietnam] with the Belt and Road Initiative [of China]. Hong Kong can leverage its role as a gateway to enhance connectivity and cooperation between Vietnam and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area," he said.

The two corridors, one belt strategy was first mooted by Vietnam in 2004 to cover infrastructure projects supported by China.

Nguyen, who was appointed Vietnam's deputy prime minister in late August, also listed five priorities for collaboration between his country and Hong Kong: cooperation in financial services, promotion of bilateral trade, high tech investment, infrastructure connectivity and people-to-people exchanges.

"I appreciate Hong Kong's support for skilled Vietnamese workers and hope that the Hong Kong government will further facilitate links between the people and businesses of both sides, [including] promote two-way tourism," Nguyen added.

The ninth edition of the two-day summit drew about 6,000 participants from around 70 countries and regions, according to Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu.

The city chief underscored Hong Kong's strengths as a global hub for financial and professional services, and pointed to the potential of emerging economies covered by the Belt and Road Initiative.

"Between 2013 and 2023, Hong Kong's external trade with belt and road economies other than the mainland surged by almost 60 per cent, 3.8 times the growth rate of our trade with all economies," he said.

"Last year, belt and road economies accounted for more than 43 per cent of Hong Kong's external trade with the rest of the world, other than the mainland. That value was less than a third in 2013. These figures reflect the enormous potential and promise of the Belt and Road Initiative."

Also present at the summit was a 300-strong delegation representing 38 of China's state-owned enterprises, led by Gou Ping, vice-chairman of the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission.

Gou said Hong Kong "effectively served" the country's needs as an important "partner and bridge" for state enterprises to participate in belt and road developments, and played an "irreplaceable" role in Chinese firms' international project investments and financing, as well as the offshore yuan business, professional services support, and economic and trade exchanges.

"[Hong Kong's] network of friends has further expanded and the areas of cooperation have continued to grow and deepen. The momentum for cooperation has become more robust, forming a new pattern of high-quality external exchanges. We believe that in the new golden decade of the Belt and Road Initiative, Hong Kong will play a greater role in connecting the world," Gou said.

Elsewhere at the summit's policy dialogue session, senior officials from other Southeast Asian nations expressed interest in collaborating with Hong Kong.

Lim Lork Piseth, Cambodia's secretary of state of commerce, said Hong Kong would contribute significantly upon joining RCEP, the world's largest free-trade pact, noting his country could work with the city to develop standards and protocols in customs clearance.

Rachmat Kaimuddin, Indonesia's deputy coordinating minister for maritime and investment affairs, echoed city leader John Lee's previous remarks, saying Hong Kong could play a big role as a "superconnector" in helping his country seek foreign investment and support.

### **Stand News Editors Convicted of Sedition by Hong Kong Court, Marking Setback for Freedom of Press in Hong Kong**

09 September 2024, China Scope

During the 2019 "Anti-Extradition" protests in Hong Kong, local media outlet Stand News featured extensive coverage of the events. On August 29 the Hong Kong District Court found the former and acting editors of the media outlet guilty of "conspiracy to publish seditious publications." The judge delivered the verdict but postponed sentencing to September 26, allowing the defendants to be temporarily released on bail. This case marks the first time that senior members of a news organization in Hong Kong have been convicted of "sedition" since the city's handover to China.

The Hong Kong Journalists Association condemned the ruling, stating that it represents a serious setback for freedom of the press.

In December 2021, Hong Kong's National Security Department froze Stand News' assets, worth HKD 60 million (US\$ 7.7 million), forcing the media outlet to cease operations.

### **German Activist For Tibet Issues Says Denied Entry To Hong Kong**

08 September 2024, Barron's

A German working on Tibet rights issues was denied entry into Hong Kong this weekend, he said, after he tried to fly into the city from Beijing – at least the second activist turned back this year.

David Missal, of the Berlin-based advocacy group Tibet Initiative, posted on social media platform X Sunday that he was grilled for hours by officials before being denied entry.

"After 13 sleepless hours under immigration examination... I was told that I could not enter the city and was eventually allowed to take a plane to Vietnam," Missal, the group's vice executive director, wrote.

"I was able to travel to China within the visa-free policy, but not to (Hong Kong)," Missal said, adding that his luggage was also searched.

China last year granted visa-free entry to Germans and a few other European passport holders, allowing them to transit through the mainland for up to 15 days.

Earlier this year, international media watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said one of its representatives was stopped and questioned when she tried to enter Hong Kong, before being deported.

Missal told AFP some colleagues – including him – had their visa applications to mainland China rejected in the past, but that he had studied in Hong Kong in 2018 and 2019.

He added that his trip – initially planned for China, then Hong Kong and Vietnam – was "not work-related" as he was on vacation.

Hong Kong's immigration department said it "does not comment on individual cases".

The department "acts in accordance with the laws and policies in handling each immigration case", it said.

The former British colony was once considered one of the freest territories within China.

After massive and at times violent democracy protests in Hong Kong in 2019, Beijing imposed a sweeping security law to quash dissent.

Earlier this year, Hong Kong authorities enacted a second law to punish more security crimes – drawing condemnation from Western nations including the United States about the curbing of freedoms in the city.

## **August**

### **Hong Kong has 'irreplaceable' role in country's reform efforts: senior Beijing officials**

26 August 2024, SCMP, Kahon Chan and Natalie Wong

Commerce minister Wang Wentao and key legal official Shen Chunyao brief political elites on third plenum resolution in Hong Kong session.

Beijing has affirmed Hong Kong's "irreplaceable" role in furthering the country's reforms and opening up as the nation strives to become a modern socialist state, urging the city to contribute by refining its strengths and bolstering its international connectivity. Commerce minister Wang Wentao on Monday also pledged measures to elevate Hong Kong's status as

a global financial hub amid fierce regional competition as he briefed hundreds of officials, lawmakers and business leaders for 2½ hours on the spirit of the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee. He was joined by Shen Chunyao, chairman of the Legislative Affairs Commission of the National People's Congress Standing Committee.

It was the first time senior Beijing officials had held a large session in Hong Kong, broadcast live to the public, about the country's five-yearly top-level Chinese Communist Party meeting, when state leaders decide blueprints to guide development.

In his speech, the commerce minister said President Xi Jinping had stressed that only an open China would become a modern China, and one of the resolution's focuses was to "improve the high-level opening-up system and mechanism" of the country, which would offer Hong Kong greater opportunities.

Pointing to a letter sent by Xi earlier this month to Hong Kong entrepreneurs with roots in Ningbo, Wang also said the city had enjoyed a role in the country's reform and opening up "in the past, present and future".

"Hong Kong's position in the process of nationwide reform and opening up, as well as modernisation, is unique," Wang said at the Convention and Exhibition Centre in Wan Chai.

"The contributions made by Hong Kong compatriots are significant and their role is irreplaceable."

Hong Kong should strengthen its unique status and advantages by becoming a part of the country's drive for reform, while "proactively" aligning with national strategies, such as the Greater Bay Area blueprint and the coming 15th five-year plan, which is due to start in 2026, he said.

But Wang also pointed to areas where Hong Kong was falling short. The city still needed certain "reforms" to overcome restrictions in rolling out the Southbound

Travel for Guangdong Vehicles scheme to further unleash the potential of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge, he said, noting its traffic was dwarfed by that of the Shenzhen-Zhongshan link that opened in June. "Especially in the face of major changes unprecedented in a century, Hong Kong's strategic position has become increasingly prominent, and it must serve as a superconnector and super value-adder connecting the world with the support of the motherland," he added.

Noting Hong Kong's many "shiny golden brands", such as its free economy and legal system boasting the highest standards, Wang stressed the city remained the country's most important investment channel, noting 60 per cent of mainland China's accumulated foreign investment had originated or gone through the city as of the end of 2023.

Shen, who also chairs the Hong Kong Basic Law Committee, told the political elites gathered in the venue that one of the central ideas of the third plenum resolution was achieving "Chinese modernisation" through high-quality development and further reform and opening up.

He said that during his two days in Hong Kong he saw first-hand the enthusiasm of residents in grasping the country's major policy plans.

"I have a feeling that Hong Kong compatriots in all aspects are very concerned about ... the major deployments and the great spirit of the central authorities and the country, eager to find out what are Hong Kong's statuses and roles in them," he said. "This is one very encouraging phenomenon."

Businessman Iron Sze Wing-wai asked Wang and Shen about Beijing's plans to elevate Hong Kong's role as an international financial hub.

The commerce minister said that in addition to further reform measures from Beijing, "national power and strength are the greatest support for Hong Kong's financial industry".

Wang pledged to support the city in leveraging its strength in three aspects. The first was helping more Hong Kong companies join trade fairs and help mainland products find markets overseas.

The second was strengthening the city's connections with countries under the Belt and Road Initiative and supporting Hong Kong's accession to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, a trade pact that covers a third of world's population.

The third was offering further support by Beijing for Hong Kong's deepened participation in the digitalisation of trade in the bay area and green economy by tapping its strengths in supply chain and asset management.

The bay area is Beijing's plan to link Hong Kong, Macau and nine other southern Chinese cities into an economic powerhouse, while the Belt and Road

Initiative aims to create a China-centred trade network that spans more than 100 countries.

The push to turn Hong Kong into a global talent hub was another focus of the resolution, which also called on the city to bolster its standing as an international finance, maritime and trade centre.

In response to the remarks by the Beijing officials, Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu said Hong Kong must reform itself through innovative measures to seize development opportunities, especially amid a complicated international landscape.

Lau Siu-kai, a consultant for the semi-official Beijing think tank, the Chinese Association of Hong Kong and Macau Studies, said the central government expected Hong Kong's financial system to contribute to the internationalism of the renminbi and connect more mainland businesses with overseas ones.



"Hong Kong now plays an even more pivotal role in helping Chinese firms expand overseas – less towards the West and more towards a diversified network of nations," he told the Post.

He added that innovative reforms within Hong Kong's system proved it had an "irreplaceable" role as they would guide the country's broader reform efforts.

### In Hong Kong, Xi has completed where Deng left off

23 August 2024, SCMP, Alex Lo

The city's destiny was always about unification and integration, not democratisation or meeting Western expectations.

It's the 120th anniversary of Deng Xiaoping's birth, and people are, again, arguing whether Xi Jinping has betrayed the legacy of the great reformer (mostly the Western narrative) or is really his true heir (the official Chinese version).

Let me add my two cents about the two paramount leaders with respect to the political development of Hong Kong up till now.

To save you from the suspense, let me lay my cards on the table. I think Deng inadvertently created the democratic opposition movement in Hong Kong, which was not necessarily a good thing in the long run, and which Xi has now neutralised, which is not necessarily a bad thing, also in the long run.

Consider this statement from the first of a series of articles in this newspaper.

Referring to Deng, it said, "The 'chief architect' of the greatest economic liberation programme in history was also the man who demanded that the Communist Party 'unwaveringly uphold the dictatorship of the proletariat', nipping the country's democracy movement in its bud."

That's true as far as it goes.

The most controversial act of Deng's extraordinary career was his political decision made in 1989 to end the Tiananmen protests.

In the lead-up to the crackdown on June 4, the student and worker protesters formed bonds and connections with their counterparts from Hong Kong who subsequently helped many of the mainland student leaders escape from mainland China to overseas destinations via the so-called Operation Yellow Bird. Tiananmen would turn many in Hong Kong into political activists; not a few would end up forming the Democratic Party (originally the United Democrats) and the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China. The alliance was the chief organiser of the annual Tiananmen vigil in Hong Kong until it was banned in recent years.

The colonial government turned a blind eye to Yellow Bird even though technically it was human smuggling. That activism laid the foundation of the Hong Kong indigenous opposition, a movement that was moderate for a time. Subsequently, though, from the 2010s, it became more radical, anti-China and anti-Chinese, in a movement sometimes called localism. Its most extreme expression was to claim independence for Hong Kong from the rest of China. That was never going to end well for the city.

Back then, Deng believed if he did not suppress the Tiananmen protests, it would lead to the collapse of the Communist Party's leadership, and, in the worst-case scenario, even civil war. But once suppressed, the mainland's democratic struggle was exported to Hong Kong. Paradoxically, Deng inadvertently recreated what he faced on the mainland in an anxious city awaiting reunification with the motherland.

Tiananmen triggered the democratic opposition movement, and the electoral reforms deliberately introduced by the last colonial governor, Chris Patten, gave it institutional support to bargain with Beijing. But it was ultimately the "one country, two systems" governing principle, Deng's brainchild, that made it possible for the opposition to grow and flourish in Hong Kong, despite his obvious intention that "one country" itself should never be compromised.

That was mostly thanks to the constitutional guarantee of 50 years of no change and eventual full electoral franchise. Because of the severe post-Tiananmen crackdown, confidence in post-1997 handover Hong Kong was at an all-time low.

Both the British and the Chinese had every incentive to make sure the power transition worked out – for very different reasons.

To restore and maintain public confidence, for the next quarter of a century, the opposition was given a free hand in such extraordinary circumstances, at least until 2020, to operate in ways that even democratic countries were unlikely to tolerate. These included lobbying foreign Western governments to punish

Hong Kong and mainland Chinese officials and to introduce trade policies that would hurt the local economy.

One country, two systems and its 50-year guarantee were supposed to prepare the city to integrate fully, over time, with the rest of the country, while maintaining Hong Kong's unique capitalist features. Instead, Hong Kong eventually drifted away from the "one country" part.

The opposition was acceptable to Beijing as long as it accepted a gradualist approach to expanding the franchise and stayed patriotic, meaning the

acknowledgement of “one China”, hardly a tough demand. But from the early 2010s, both independence and/or an immediate transition to full universal franchise emerged to take over the once more moderate opposition movement by a post-1997 group of youngsters.

As a result, in 2015, following the Occupy protests of the previous year, the opposition rejected Beijing’s offer of a version of universal suffrage. All the while, separatism and antagonism – against mainlanders, not just the communist Chinese state – were growing. It all came to a head in the riots of 2019, arguably the worst in local history.

It was always understood that once the red line – when Hong Kong became ungovernable – was crossed, the central government would crack down. From the time Xi first took office, he has been firm about it. The die was cast after 2019.

And so, it eventually led to Beijing’s imposition of the national security law to put an end to the protest chaos and an overhaul of Hong Kong’s political system to ensure that only those deemed “patriots” would be elected or appointed to public office, which effectively neutralised the opposition.

In the past quarter of a century, both China and the West wanted to preserve one country, two systems in toto, for very different reasons, of course. But their political demands and economic imperatives proved incompatible after 2019.

It is therefore inevitable that Hong Kong today is caught up in the great power rivalry, if not a second cold war.

But that’s a price Beijing and Xi are all too ready to pay, and a fight they have certainly won. With minimal suppression, the integration of Hong Kong with the mainland has been sped up by a quarter of a century. Despite Western media demonisation, the response of local authorities was no worse than that of the US government to the Capitol “insurrection” in January 2021 or in Britain during widespread city riots earlier this month.

In fact, when compared with the British crackdown on “hate” speech, which now seems to include anti-government messages online, Hong Kong has been pretty lenient.

Hongkongers now spend their weekends shopping and dining on the mainland, even to the detriment of local businesses!

The arc of Hong Kong’s modern political history can be traced either through its failed democratisation in the style dictated by the West, or through its reunification with the nation after more than a century and a half of Western imperialism and reintegration through a tumultuous time in the 21st century.

The latter is the Chinese story that both Deng and Xi had worked to complete. That crucial chapter is now nearly finished.

### **A History Museum Shows How China Wants to Remake Hong Kong**

23 August 2024, The New York Times, Tiffany May

A new exhibit calls for the city’s residents to be patriotic, loyal to the Chinese Communist Party and ever vigilant to supposed threats to the state.

The Hong Kong Museum of History was the place to go to understand the city’s transformation from fishing village to a glittering metropolis. It housed a life-size replica of a traditional fishing boat and a recreation of a 19th-century street lined with shops. That exhibit, known as “The Hong Kong Story,” is being revamped. People have instead been lining up for a splashy new permanent gallery in the museum that tells a different, more ominous story about the city – that Hong Kong is constantly at risk of being subverted by hostile foreign forces. The exhibit features displays about spies being everywhere and footage of antigovernment street protests in the city that were described as instigated by the West.

As he kicked off the exhibition this month, John Lee, the Beijing-backed leader of Hong Kong, made clear that its overarching purpose was to be a warning to the city. “Safeguarding national security is always a continuous effort. There is no completion,” he said. The gallery, which is managed by Hong Kong’s top national security body, opened to the public on Aug. 7. The exhibit points to a new aspect of the Hong Kong government’s crackdown on the city after antigovernment protests in 2019 posed the greatest challenge to Beijing’s rule in decades. The authorities have introduced security laws to quash dissent in the years since. They are now pushing to control how people will remember the recent political turmoil.

In the government’s telling, the protests were not organic expressions of the residents’ democratic aspirations, as the city’s opposition activists have said, but part of an ongoing plot by Western forces to destabilize China.

The national security exhibit opens with a short video highlighting the unfair treaties of the 19th century that

forced China to cede Hong Kong to the British, as well as the Japanese occupation of the city during World War II. Describing the protests in 2019, the video highlighted footage of protesters hurling Molotov cocktails. “Law and order vanished,” the narrator said. Then it credited new national security laws imposed by Beijing in the crackdown that followed, for turning the tide “from chaos to order.”

The exhibit displayed the battered shields, helmets and boots used by the riot police who quashed protests. It listed the casualties and damage purportedly inflicted by the protesters: 629 police officers injured and more than 5,000 Molotov cocktails thrown by violent protesters.

There was no mention of the tear gas, rubber bullets, beanbag rounds and pepper spray deployed by the police. The display did not mention the attack on protesters at a subway station by a mob armed with sticks and poles, and the police's slow response to that violence.

"One point of this exhibit is to stoke fears of social 'turmoil' and 'chaos' so as to persuade Hong Kongers to embrace the social stability that the Chinese Communist Party purports to offer," said Kirk Denton, an emeritus professor at Ohio State University and author of a book about the politics of history museums in modern China.

Winnie Lu, 61, a Hong Kong resident who works in sales and who was visiting the museum on a recent weekday, said that the exhibit reminded her of how hard it was for her to get to work during the protests, when demonstrators blocked roads and paralyzed the subway. "Without national security, how can ordinary people live a good life?" she said.

In many ways, the national security exhibit appeared to take a page out of the Chinese government's playbook after the Chinese military's brutal suppression of the 1989 Tiananmen Square pro-democracy movement left widespread disillusionment. In the months and years that followed, the authorities pushed an intensive patriotic education campaign in mainland China that cast Japan as an enemy of the Chinese people and the Communist Party as the sole engine of progress in Chinese history.

Rowena He, a senior research fellow at University of Texas, Austin, and a historian of the Tiananmen massacre who used to teach in Hong Kong, said that the new exhibit about national security was part of a broader "history manipulation" campaign by Beijing after the Tiananmen crackdown. The Chinese leadership wants to imprint the "official account of history into national memory, emphasizing China's victimhood at the hands of the West and Japan," she said.

In the name of patriotic education, the government in Hong Kong is also turning the Museum of Coastal Defense, a military museum that has historically centered on semi-ruined British fortifications, into a memorial to China's war with Japan in World War II. It will rename it the Hong Kong Museum of the War of Resistance and Coastal Defense, referring to the war by the phrasing China uses: "The Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression." The government also plans to build a

museum focused on Chinese achievements, the history of the Communist Party and the founding of the People's Republic.

The new national security exhibit adds to broader concerns about a chilling effect imposed by China's crackdown on the opposition, which has led to the arrests of dozens of veteran democracy activists under national security charges. Public libraries have pulled books associated with local pro-democracy figures or movements. Gatherings to remember the victims of the 1989 Tiananmen massacre in Beijing have been banned, and a sculpture that was a memorial of it was removed. Academics have also come under pressure; Ms. He, a Canadian citizen, was recently denied a visa to return to her job as an associate professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Some Hong Kongers have been concerned about what they see as the government's efforts to rewrite the past. When the Museum of History's permanent exhibit, "The Hong Kong Story," closed for renovations in 2020, visitors filled the gallery, fearing that the authorities would use the planned revamp to erase the city's colonial history and its references to the annual candlelight vigils commemorating Tiananmen victims, now deemed sensitive.

Experts said that the exhibit at the history museum sought to bind Hong Kong ever more closely to Chinese history. The authorities have also organized patriotic study tours to mainland China and revamped the curriculum in schools to counter a rising local identity distinct from the mainland.

Some of the new displays at the national security exhibit closely resemble that which would be found in similarly themed museum exhibits on the mainland. A floor-to-ceiling Chinese flag hung on crimson walls. Next to it was a 13-foot long replica of an oil painting depicting Mao Zedong as he proclaimed the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 at Tiananmen Square.

### **Conference on promoting China's peaceful reunification held in Hong Kong**

21 August 2024, Xinhua

The 2024 Overseas Chinese World Conference for Promoting Peaceful Reunification of China was held Tuesday in Hong Kong.

Wang Huning, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, sent a congratulatory letter to the conference.

Wang said in the letter that compatriots in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan as well as overseas

Chinese have long been opposing "independence" and promoting reunification. They have contributed to fostering exchanges across the Taiwan Strait in various fields, deepening the international community's commitment to the one-China principle and working toward China's peaceful reunification.

Wang encouraged compatriots in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan as well as overseas Chinese to keep pace with the trends of history, safeguard the overall interests of the Chinese nation and join hands in opposing "Taiwan independence" and promoting reunification.

Shi Taifeng, a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and head of the United Front Work Department of the CPC Central Committee, attended the event, stressing that the conference, gathering compatriots at home and abroad, will help advance the cause of opposing "independence" and promoting reunification.

Themed "Unswervingly promoting China's peaceful reunification and striving to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation," the conference was hosted by the Hong Kong Association for Promotion of Peaceful Reunification of China and attended by over 1,200 representatives.

The conference adopted the 2024 Hong Kong Declaration.

### **Beijing admits Hong Kong-flagged ship destroyed key Baltic gas pipeline 'by accident'**

12 August 2024, SCMP

Beijing has admitted that a Chinese-owned ship damaged a critical Baltic Sea gas pipeline running between Estonia and Finland last October, but says it was an accident.

The South China Morning Post understands that the Chinese authorities conducted an internal investigation and recently communicated the results to governments in the European countries.

The Chinese-language report said the accident was the result of a strong storm.

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Both countries are still carrying out a joint criminal inquiry centred on the NewNew Polar Bear, a container ship that was flying the Hong Kong flag at the time of the event. Its registered owner is the Chinese mainland firm NewNew Shipping Line.

While it is understood that the report is circulating in various ministries, it is not submissible as official evidence in the investigations. Authorities in both

capitals urged Beijing to respond to their urgent requests for information on the ship.

A spokeswoman for the Estonian prosecutor said the document had not been sent to that office and that it "can't be used as evidence in an Estonian criminal investigation" in any case.

"We submitted a legal aid request to the Chinese authorities to gather evidence from the vessel and its crew," said Kairi Kungas, its head of public relations.

"In order to execute the legal aid request, the Chinese authorities can carry out the investigative operations by themselves or involve Estonian investigators, although all activities conducted on Chinese territory must conform to local legislation.

"The Chinese authorities have not provided a response on executing the legal aid request as of yet."

Finnish border guards captured an image of the NewNew Polar Bear in October last year. Photo: Reuters alt=Finnish border guards captured an image of the NewNew Polar Bear in October last year. Photo: Reuters>

A spokeswoman for the Finnish National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) declined to confirm whether it had received a document, but said its own inquiry was ongoing.

"During the investigation, co-operation with the Chinese authorities has been done and among others NBI has submitted a request for legal assistance to the competent Chinese authorities," said Anna Zareff, NBI's head of communications, in a written statement. "It must be stated that the investigation is still ongoing and final conclusions, what was behind these incidents (technical failure-negligence/poor seamanship- deliberate act), can be made only after all necessary investigative measures have been finalised and this will still take some time," her statement said.

The Chinese foreign ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

Speaking to Estonian media on Monday, the country's foreign minister Elina Valtonen said: "We constantly cooperate with China and exchange information, but we do not go into details, because the investigation is still in progress."

Authorities in the two EU member states have said that the ship dragged its anchor along the seabed, slicing through a crucial gas cable and also damaging two telecoms cables running between the two countries on the night of October 7 or morning of October 8.

Statements from Finnish investigators at the time described a "1.5 to 4 metre-wide [5-13ft] dragging trail" leading to the "point of damage in the gas pipeline".

"In the distance of a few metres from the gas pipeline damage point, there was an anchor which is

believed to have caused the wide dragging trail and the damage itself," the October 24 statement said. It added that once the anchor was lifted, there were "traces in it which indicate it had been in contact with the gas pipeline".

The 77km (48-mile) Balticconnector pipeline is a key source of energy for Finland.

Sources said the Chinese-language report claimed to have been conducted in line with International Maritime Organization rules.

The Chinese Ministry of Justice has yet to respond to detailed queries from Estonia and Finland. It is understood there has been willingness voiced to comply with the European probes at a later date.

That assurance came in response to comments by Estonia's state prosecutor Triinu Olev in May that Beijing had yet to provide any information.

"We need to collect additional evidence to determine whether the damage was caused intentionally or by accident," Olev said at the time.

After the incident, the NewNew Polar Bear sailed to St Petersburg, and was subsequently photographed in the Arkhangelsk region of Russia, before eventually docking in Tianjin.

Last November, the Finnish authorities said Beijing had pledged to fully cooperate with the investigation and in January then-president Sauli Niinisto held what Helsinki described as "constructive" talks with Chinese leader Xi Jinping about the damaged pipeline.

The October incident came at a time of heightened suspicion among Baltic states towards China, largely due to its close ties with Russia in the wake of the invasion of Ukraine. This closeness towards Moscow has also caused a more general deterioration in relations with the European Union.

The damage to the pipeline also raised further alarm about the vulnerability of undersea infrastructure.

It followed the destruction of the Nord Stream 1 and 2 gas pipelines connecting Russia and Germany in September 2022 in a series of explosions that have yet to be explained.

### **Exclusive | Hong Kong should work with mainland China to host 'Belt and Road Games', Regina Ip says**

09 August 2024, SCMP, Connor Mycroft, Jeffie Lam and Edith Lin

Top government adviser says city must also reposition itself in new geopolitical landscape and tap emerging markets such as Middle East.

Hong Kong should work with neighbouring mainland Chinese cities to host an inaugural "Belt and Road Games" to help strengthen ties among more than

100 countries in the China-centred trade network, a top government adviser has said.

Regina Ip Lau Suk-yee, convenor of the government's key decision-making Executive Council, said on Friday that the city should also tap emerging markets such as the Middle East while repositioning itself in a new geopolitical landscape by helping the country find common ground globally.

Delivering a keynote address at the Post's Redefining Hong Kong conference, lawmaker Ip said the Belt and Road Initiative gave the city a "convenient entry point" to other markets and that she had urged the government to help host a sporting competition bringing together member countries.

"I have recommended to the chief executive that Hong Kong should work in conjunction with other cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area to host the first Belt and Road Games, [which can be] just like the Commonwealth Games," said Ip, who is also the chairwoman of the New People's Party. "Riding on its stunning achievements in the Paris Olympics, Hong Kong should take the lead in using mega events in sports to build friendships, strengthen connectivity, spur innovation and stimulate growth." The Commonwealth Games, established in 1930 as the British Empire Games, are open to 74 nations and territories and have been staged in Australia, Canada, England, India, Jamaica, Malaysia, New Zealand, Scotland and Wales.

#### **Advertisement**

Speaking to the Post after the conference, Ip said Hong Kong would have to team up with other cities in the Greater Bay Area to leverage existing and coming sporting facilities such as Kai Tak Sports Park. "When it comes to hosting these large-scale sports Games, the first thing you need to build are the facilities, but we already have that," she said.

The Kai Tak project, expected to open early next year, is the city's largest ever sports infrastructure scheme. It includes a 50,000-seat main stadium with a retractable roof, a 10,000-seat indoor sports centre, a 5,000-seat public sports ground and 14 hectares of landscaped open space.

The bay area is the central government's scheme to link Hong Kong, Macau and nine cities in neighbouring Guangdong province, including Guangzhou and Shenzhen, into an economic powerhouse.

In Guangzhou, the Guangdong Olympic Stadium is one of the mainland's largest sports facilities by capacity, with seating for more than 80,000 people. It is undergoing renovations ahead of next year's 15th National Games, which will be jointly hosted by Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau.

The Shenzhen Universiade Sports Centre, which hosted the 2011 edition of what is now known as the



FISU World University Games, has a capacity of more than 60,000.

Ip acknowledged that the government would first need to get Beijing's approval before the proposal could move forward, but she said he believed that hosting such an event would help to create a "new sports industry" in Hong Kong.

"So I think it is very good for Hong Kong and our region, whether economically, culturally, and from the point of view of connecting hearts and minds," she said.

Lobo Louie Hung-tak, senior lecturer of health and physical education at the Education University of Hong Kong, said a "Belt and Road Games" would be good for cultural exchanges but the government had to consider the capacity of local sports facilities and many other factors.

He said Hong Kong would have an edge for hosting events such as sailing and windsurfing because of its coast, as well as for organising football and rugby matches at Hong Kong Stadium and Kai Tak Sports Park.

"It involves logistics arrangements and a huge amount of resources. It also depends on the number of sports events and the time needed," Louie said.

"A city cannot host Games for too long as people have to go to work and they may complain.

"As the city is co-hosting the National Games next year, it will serve as a good opportunity to check if Hong Kong has the ability to hold Belt and Road Games." He said the government also had to consider the views of Hong Kong residents, who might have little interest in sports events that were popular in the Middle East and Western Asia, such as wrestling.

In her keynote speech, Ip also said Hong Kong should readjust its role and positioning in a new geopolitical landscape, and be fearless amid hostility from some in the West.

"Despite geopolitical tensions, Hong Kong should strengthen its separate systems' characteristics, both in substance and in message, and mobilise its vast resources in and outside government to reach out to its traditional developed world partners in North America, Europe, Asia and Australia," she said.

"The constant drumbeat of sanctions and the twisted narrative on Hong Kong should not deter us from engagement. Through fearless engagement, discussing, debating and arguing face to face, the real Hong Kong story will be told."

Conceding it might not be easy to "move the mountain of Sino phobia", she argued the city should make the most of its knowledge of Western culture, values and norms as well as its extensive network to "help China build common ground with Western countries and reduce misunderstandings".

But Ip said the city should also look beyond the English-speaking world, with which it had previously prioritised business ties.

"It is high time for Hong Kong to reorient itself to the diverse and multicultural, non-English-speaking sphere, whether in the Middle East, eastern Europe or elsewhere," she said.

"It should start by broadening its language skills and cultural mindsets, so that it can dive deep into building meaningful relationships with people and businesses from different parts of the world."

She said the city was an inalienable, but different, part of China.

Hong Kong could use its common law system and protection of fundamental rights and freedoms to contribute to the nation by "being different", she said, adding the city could show the world the success of the "one country, two systems" governing principle.

### **Hong Kong secondary students may soon be schooled in 'Xi Jinping Thought'**

08 August 2024, Global Voices

Curriculum guidelines recommend teaching Xi Jinping thought in a new subject

The political ideology of China's leader Xi Jinping could soon be taught to Hong Kong secondary school students, according to curriculum guidelines for new subject Citizenship, Economics and Society.

The new subject, which will be introduced to first-year secondary students when the school year starts next month, highlights the teaching of national security and national identity. On Wednesday, the Education Bureau issued curriculum guidelines for the subject, stating that it should include content related to patriotic education. The document reads:

[Patriotic Education] helps students understand the development of our country and the importance of the close relationship between the Mainland and Hong Kong to the development of our society, thereby cultivating students' sense of nationhood, affection for our country and sense of national identity.

Citing China's patriotic education law, which came into effect on January 1 and covers Hong Kong and Macau as well as mainland China, the guidelines provide five "examples" of topics for students to learn as part of patriotic education. Among them were: Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, broadly known as Xi Jinping Thought; socialism with Chinese characteristics; and national security and national defence.

Xi Jinping Thought is recommended for third-year secondary students as part of a module called "Our

Country's Political Structure and Its Participation in International Affairs."

The push for patriotic education has been part of Xi's ideological campaign, as he has sought to unify and educate members of the Communist Party of China according to his doctrine.

When asked how much students should learn about Xi Jinping Thought, Ranny Yau, the principle of TWGHs Kap Yan Directors' College and chairman of a committee responsible for reviewing the new subject, told Ming Pao on Thursday that junior secondary school students were expected to know more about China.

"It is unnecessary to single out and highlight some content that may worry teachers," Yau said in Cantonese.

Xi Jinping Thought was added to the curriculum from primary schools to graduate programmes in mainland China from 2021.

The government announced it would replace Life and Society with a new subject named Citizenship, Economics and Society in 2022.

A document about the Citizenship, Economics and Society subject handed out by the Education Bureau in October 2022 lacked a learning objective including in the Life and Society curriculum: "to understand, appreciate, respect and reflect on the values and attitudes that underpin the local society, including rights and responsibilities, freedom, rule of law, social justice, democracy."

### **Xi Jinping sends rare letter urging Hong Kong entrepreneurs to play major role in China's reform**

**01 August 2024, SCMP, Willa Wu**

Chinese president thanked city's business leaders with Ningbo ancestry for their support after they wrote to him about their contributions.

President Xi Jinping has taken a rare step to engage the business community as he urged Hong Kong entrepreneurs with familial ties in a mainland port city to make greater contributions to the nation's modernisation, a move experts see as a way to show confidence in the faltering private sector.

Xi's remarks on Tuesday were in a letter written in response to Hong Kong business leaders who are descendants of pioneering Ningbo-born entrepreneurs of the city.

They include Anna Pao Pui-hing, eldest daughter of the late shipping magnate Sir Pao Yue-kong, and Ronald Chao Kee-young, eldest son of the late industrialist Chao Kuang-piu.

Xi expressed gratitude to the businesspeople for their continued support of their hometown and country, including establishing businesses and schools, while asking them to leverage their respective strengths

and actively take part in the country's reform and opening up.

The president's reply coincides with the 40th anniversary of late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping's 1984 call to mobilise the global "Ningbo bang" – usually formed by merchants – to develop Ningbo. In Chinese, bang means a cluster of people who are bonded together by the same goals and ideals.

Ningbo, a city in Zhejiang province, where Xi served as party secretary from 2002 to 2007, is known as an important port and an industrial hub in China.

The Ningbo merchants have earned their name as "Ningbo bang" after helping establish China's first modern bank, stock exchange, insurance company, post office, fashion school and various speciality factories spanning cosmetics and food additives to matches and soap.

The "Ningbo bang" in Hong Kong, which includes shipping magnate Pao and late entertainment magnate Run Run Shaw, has long been hailed a pioneer in advancing China's reform and opening up in the 1980s.

The late Pao and Chao Kuang-piu, father of Ronald Chao, had also been received by Deng over various investment and economic activities on the mainland. In his letter, Xi noted that for many years, the Hong Kong entrepreneurs with Ningbo ancestry had a "homeland affinity" and patriotic spirit passed on from "generation to generation".

He also acknowledged the group's active engagement in innovation, entrepreneurship as well as philanthropy and education.

Xi said that the building of a strong country and rejuvenating it through modernisation required all Chinese to unite and work together.

"[I] hope you will continue to leverage your respective strengths, proactively integrate into China's reform and opening up, make new contributions to Chinese modernisation, and contribute to the realisation of the Chinese dream of great national rejuvenation," he wrote.

In response, Ronald Chao thanked Xi for his encouragement to the next generation with Ningbo ancestry, adding his father only made the contribution that every Chinese should have made in his life.

Chao said Hong Kong was presented with both opportunities and challenges as it entered a new stage.

"We will continue to inherit the spirit of loving the country and Hong Kong from the past generation, work hard in our own fields, serve and contribute to the needs of Hong Kong and the country, and better integrate into the overall development of the country," he said in a statement.

Xi's open letter was issued at a critical time when more Hong Kong entrepreneurs were losing

confidence in the city's economic prospects, said Simon Zhao, the associate dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Beijing Normal University & Hong Kong Baptist University United International College.

Zhao added that Hong Kong's momentum in attracting foreign investment, both on its own and as a bridge to help the mainland attract foreign investment, was also weakening.

"Xi's letter sends a signal of reassurance and encouragement that the central government cares about them and needs them to be confident enough to stay in Hong Kong for development and sustained investment," he said.

Peng Peng, executive chairman of the Guangdong Society of Reform think tank, said Xi had shown his commitment to prioritising economic development in the second half of the year.

Peng also cited how the report by state-owned news agency Xinhua about the letter had mentioned Deng Xiaoping, a subtle yet significant sign of Xi's determination to continue the reforms Deng had embarked on.

Later this month, on August 22, is also the 120th birthday of the late paramount leader.

China's economy has slowed down in recent years from double-digit growth in 2010 to around 5 per cent currently. Over 95 per cent of Chinese business entities are from the private sector, making it the major growth driver.

Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu said Xi's letter showed the leader's "affirmation and sincere encouragement" for Ningbo-linked merchants in the city to redouble their patriotic acts and contributions to the country's development.

"The inspiring letter has instilled a steadfast confidence in not only the mentioned businessmen, but also Hong Kong entrepreneurs in different places of the country, to continue leveraging their strength to contribute to the country," Lee said in a statement issued on Thursday night.

The Hong Kong leader also pledged to unite all business and civil forces to integrate into the nation's development, contributing to a stronger country and its rejuvenation.

William Lee Tak-lun, president of the International Ningbo Merchant Association and one of the entrepreneurs penning the letter, told the Post that they sent it to Xi about two weeks ago.

According to him, their letter was a report of what they did in the past twenty years in terms of boosting Hong Kong's economy and people's livelihood, as well as their commitment to serve the city and the country. "We are surprised that he replied to us so soon, which is a big encouragement to us," Lee said,

adding most of the entrepreneurs are the second and third generation of Ningbo businessmen.

"The president has asked us to do more. We will as always," Lee said.

Since the mainland's reform and opening up in the 1980s, the Ningbo group in Hong Kong donated over 6 billion yuan (US\$830 million) to support the mainland's scientific, educational, cultural, health and public welfare undertakings.

They have also contributed to the economy and society by attracting investments and driving the opening up of the country.

The last time Xi wrote to individual business leaders was a decade ago when he replied to 30 Fujian entrepreneurs to mark the 30th anniversary of the province's leaders' appeal to decentralise enterprises. Xi used a Hokkien metaphor "hard work equals victory" in the letter to encourage them.

In his previous letters to Hong Kong, Xi had engaged with students from Pui Kui Middle School in July 2023, calling on them to build a stronger nation.

He also responded to 24 of Hong Kong's leading scientists and university professors who wrote to him in 2017 to "express their pressing hope to make a contribution to the motherland".

## July

### Hong Kong probes scandal of fake degree certificates from China

11 July 2024, RFA, Alice Yam and Ha Syut

Educational recruitment agencies are able to produce fake documents exactly like the real thing, an official says.

Authorities in Hong Kong are probing allegations that mainland Chinese students are using fake academic credentials to enroll in a prestigious MBA program, sparking fears of falling standards in the city, whose officials are keen to attract migrants from mainland China in the wake of a mass wave of emigration.

As many as 30 applicants to the University of Hong Kong Business School have been found to have used fake documents supplied by a higher education agency, some of them for American universities, Business School Dean Cai Hongbin told the financial news site Caixin in a recent interview.

The revelations come amid growing concern that official willingness to encourage inward migration from mainland China to boost the city's economy could be having a negative impact on the reputation of its colleges and universities, which has already been hit by a compulsory patriotic education program.

"As fraudulent academic qualifications seriously affect student admission by local higher education institutions and Hong Kong's hard-earned international reputation, the [government] and all sectors of the Hong Kong community deeply resent such acts and have zero tolerance towards the matter," Hong Kong's Secretary for Education Christine Choi told the city's legislature in a recent statement.

While police arrested a man and a woman on June 26 and July 3 on suspicion of using fake documents, the university is now asking students to resubmit their academic qualifications, as HKU Business School Dean Cai warned that the fake degrees were mostly found in applications that used a "guaranteed admission" service from an academic agency.

At least 30 students are believed to have used fake documents as part of the "guaranteed admission" service that costs applicants 500,000 yuan apiece, Cai told Caixin.

"Their ability to make fake academic qualifications is astonishing," the July 4 article quoted Cai as saying. "The University of Hong Kong has carried out spot checks as part of this review of academic qualifications."

Cai said many of the fake documents weren't distinguishable from the genuine article, right down to letterhead, envelope, paper quality and other details.

An online search for the keyword "guaranteed admission" in Chinese found several companies offering such services, including a website called Gabroad, which offers "Guaranteed admissions to Top 20 schools" including Harvard, claiming a 100% success rate.

The same site also offers such services for universities in Hong Kong, including the University of Hong Kong and the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Full refunds are offered to anyone who isn't offered a place, regardless of grades and test scores.

Falsifying or supplying fraudulent academic qualifications carries a maximum jail term of 14 years in Hong Kong.

Any violations will result in "decisive disciplinary action" against the students concerned, including expulsion, while offenders will also likely be prosecuted, Choi said in a June 26 written reply to the Legislative Council.

Education and immigration

The HKU Business School is a highly competitive school, receiving more than 24,000 for taught postgraduate programs in 2023, and only awarding places to 2,600 of them, according to Caixin.

All masters students at the school are now being required to resubmit undergraduate degree certificates, transcripts and other materials, the article said.

Year-long taught masters are particularly sought after by mainland students, because they are a quick way to secure the right to remain in the city for at least a year and look for work, offering a pathway to permanent residency.

Hong Kong's Chuhai College of Higher Education, which once struggled to recruit enough bachelor's degree students to balance the books, had more than 1,500 students in September 2023 after launching a range of taught, one-year masters courses and promoting them aggressively on mainland social media platforms like Xiaohongshu, according to an investigation by RFA Cantonese.

"Chuhai College in Hong Kong is known as a master's mill, because a lot of middle-class people from mainland China come here to take a one-year master's ... during which they can get a Hong Kong ID card for their kids," according to one video circulating on Xiaohongshu in recent weeks.

"A lot of influencers and agents promote the college as a one-stop shop for education and immigration," the video says.

While Chuhai College once had close ties with the government of Taiwan, it has recently repackaged itself as a "red" school, setting up a research institute to study ruling Chinese Communist Party leader Xi Jinping's influence and infrastructure program known as the Belt and Road.

Taiwanese national security researcher Shih Chien-yu said he once worked as a lecturer at Chuhai College for many years, and confirmed that it has a reputation for not being too picky about who gets admitted.

"Chuhai College doesn't check very carefully whether applicants meet admission criteria," Shih told RFA Cantonese in a recent interview. "There is strict training and guidelines regarding assessment of student performance, but I don't think it gets implemented in accordance with those standards."

Chuhai College is now on track to upgrade to university status, if it can attract similar numbers of students next academic year.

The College hadn't responded to inquiries about its strategy or admissions policies by the time of writing. However, a statement on its website says the school "has always followed the principles of fair selection, transparent procedures and merit-based admissions when recruiting for both undergraduate and master's courses."

## Rich Chinese return to Hong Kong as Singapore steps up scrutiny

09 July 2024, The Business Times



HONG Kong is winning back wealthy Chinese by rolling out the red carpet for the rich while rival Singapore scrutinises foreign money.

The Chinese territory is expected to welcome about 200 high-net-worth individuals this year after five years of millionaires skipping town, according to data provided by intelligence firm New World Wealth and immigration consultancy Henley & Partners, thanks to initiatives including family office tax concessions and visa and residency programmes. At the same time, the fallout from a blockbuster S\$3 billion money laundering case has put the city's family offices and wealthy immigrants under the microscope.

It's a shift from the pandemic years when Hong Kong's strict quarantine and political upheaval led to mainland Chinese flocking to Singapore. Now, private bankers, service providers and insurers are saying Hong Kong business is picking up, while Singapore's stepped-up money laundering rules are putting some customers off.

Hong Kong's assets under management grew 2.1 per cent to HK\$31 trillion (S\$5.4 trillion) in 2023. Driven by a strong performance of private banking and wealth management, net fund inflows jumped more than three times to nearly HK\$390 billion last year, Financial Secretary Paul Chan wrote in his blog this month. In 2022, private banking and wealth fund inflows slumped about 80 per cent.

Private bankers and service providers who spoke to Bloomberg News requested not to be named because the information discussed was private.

Under a microscope

In Singapore, the fallout from the money-laundering case means some banks are re-doing their know-your-customer process, and rich Chinese in Singapore are under a microscope, according to two private bankers. Their clients are frustrated with the process and the questions being asked, they said.

The Monetary Authority of Singapore in April introduced a digital platform to share customer information to combat money laundering. Since then, a service provider in Hong Kong said it received more than 15 inquiries from wealthy Chinese seeking to move or set up family offices in the city. Half those inquiries already resulted in actual business, they said.

"For many of the mainland billionaires, because they don't like the arbitrary government interventions or government checks or threats to their personal wealth, that's why they wanted to move money out of China," said Zhiwu Chen, professor of finance at the University of Hong Kong. "If Singapore would do as many checks and tighter regulations as the mainland, then why would they want to go there?" Chen said he knows billionaires who have "warmed up" to basing more of their family office business in Hong Kong as their enthusiasm for Singapore has waned.

In Hong Kong, business at the China desks of private banks has picked up while the pace of growth at the same groups in Singapore has slowed, meaning less money is moving to Singapore, according to two senior private bankers.

Pull, capital

Hong Kong has benefited from the reopening of its borders in 2023. The city has efficient connections to Shenzhen and the surrounding Greater Bay Area via its high-speed rail line. That's attractive for wealthy Chinese who want to be able to closely monitor onshore businesses.

"Despite the political changes in Hong Kong and a number of challenges associated with that, there remain meaningful reasons for wealth and business owners to develop and maintain connections to Hong Kong," said Philip Marcovici, who consults with global families and financial institutions on wealth and taxation.

The city's introduction of the top talent visa programme targeting high-income earners and university graduates is paying off, with more than 68,000 applications approved since its introduction in 2022. 95 per cent of those are from mainland China, according to government data.

One of the recipients is Wang, a tech worker from Chongqing in southwest China. Having a Hong Kong identity card allows him to travel more easily to the US and other places for work, he said.

Many of his friends were worried about the future direction of Chinese government policy during Covid and sought residence elsewhere, looking for more neutral ground amid rising geopolitical tensions. While there's a narrative that Hong Kong is becoming more like China, he said it remains more open, particularly for capital flows.



"Hong Kong is still a good place for business people," he said, particularly "if you want to travel a lot or move your money freely."

Pick up

According to the two senior private bankers, revenue in Hong Kong already grew by double digits this year, driven by Chinese clients. Most clients have assets of US\$5 million to US\$10 million and are not in the ultra-rich category, another private banker said.

It's still difficult for Chinese nationals to move money offshore and billionaire wealth creation is hampered by a sluggish market for initial public offerings in Hong Kong.

But Chinese money that was going to Singapore is now headed to Hong Kong, another senior banker said. That's supported by data including sales of insurance products popular with wealthy Chinese from the mainland, which jumped 63 per cent to HK\$15.6 billion in the first quarter compared to the same period in 2023.

In June 2021, the government set up the Family Office Hong Kong team to encourage the growth of the city's wealth management industry. Since then, about 64 family offices have been established or expanded their business, with 49 coming from the mainland, according to government data.

Money laundering

Still, revelations from Singapore's money laundering scandal are also triggering concerns in Hong Kong that some of the new arrivals have something to hide.

A plan that offers residency to people who invest HK\$30 million in Hong Kong has attracted over 250 applications since its March launch through May month-end. According to official data, nearly 200 are from from Guinea-Bissau and Vanuatu, countries where cash for residency programmes have been used by financial criminals.

Chinese nationals holding passports from Vanuatu, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Turkey were among those convicted in Singapore's money laundering scandal. "It creates doubts about money laundering," said Alicia Garcia Herrero, chief economist for Asia-Pacific at Natixis.

Hong Kong's financial secretary Chan wrote in his blog in July that more than 340 applications have been received for the residency plan since launch and if approved, they are likely to bring more than HK\$10 billion to Hong Kong.

Migrations

To be sure, Singapore remains a popular destination for migrating millionaires. It is forecast to welcome a net 3,500 millionaires this year, the third most globally, according to Henley & Partners.

But Hong Kong's population of millionaires is finally forecast to rebound after losing about 500 to

migration in 2023, according to Andrew Amoils, head of research at New World Wealth, Henley's research partner.

"Despite a tough past decade, Hong Kong is still one of the world's top millionaire hubs," said Amoils. There is "definitely a turnaround there", he said.

### **China grants 5-year travel visa for Hong Kong, Macau residents; all details here**

01 July 2024, Times of India

Non-Chinese permanent residents of Macau and Hong Kong will soon be able to apply for five-year travel permits to enter mainland China starting from July 10, as announced by Beijing.

This move is expected to encourage foreign companies and talent to settle in these cities. The National Immigration Administration stated on Monday that permit holders would be able to use self-service clearance at control points after completing procedures such as fingerprinting.

These multi-entry permits will allow entry into the mainland for short-term purposes including investment, tourism, visiting relatives, seminars, business, and exchanges. Permit holders can stay for up to 90 days per visit, though they are not permitted to work, study, or engage in news gathering activities.

As per the reports, applications are open to all eligible residents, regardless of nationality or occupation, through China Travel Service (Holdings) in Hong Kong and Macau. Successful applications will result in permits being issued within 20 working days.

The application fee is HK\$260 (US\$34), while renewals or replacements on the mainland will cost 230 yuan (US\$32). The central government aims to facilitate people-to-people exchanges between Macau, Hong Kong, and the mainland, thereby supporting the integration of both cities into the broader national development framework.

Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu emphasised that this new policy, announced on the 27th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to Chinese rule, showcases the country's support for Hong Kong. Lee highlighted that many non-Chinese permanent residents have deep roots in Hong Kong and are eager to take advantage of the opportunities presented by China's rapid development.

Lee expressed confidence that this permit would provide significant convenience for international talent working in Hong Kong, allowing easier northbound travel. He noted that the lack of restrictions on nationality or occupation shows Hong Kong's unique status under the 'one country, two systems' principle and enhances its international

character and diversity. This, in turn, is expected to attract companies and talent from around the world. This new travel permit is part of a series of more liberal visa measures granted by Beijing to Hong Kong since early 2023. Other measures include launching and expanding the Greater Bay Area exit endorsement for talent in Beijing and Shanghai, extending business visit durations in Hong Kong from seven to 14 days, and introducing multiple-entry 'northbound' visas for foreign employees in the city.

## June

### Man charged under new Hong Kong security law over 'seditious' social media posts remanded in custody

21 June 2024, Hong Kong Free Press, James Lee

Social media posts said to be made by Au Kin-wai allegedly involved the words "Revolution is no crime, to rebel is justified," a slogan dating back to China's Cultural Revolution.

A man has been charged under Hong Kong's new security legislation over the publication of "seditious" statements on social media.

Au Kin-wai, 58, did not apply for bail and was taken into custody after he appeared before Magistrate Don So at the West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts on Friday morning.

The social media posts allegedly involved the words "Revolution is no crime, to rebel is justified," a slogan dating back to China's Cultural Revolution, the court heard.

Au, who faces one count of "knowingly publishing publications that had a seditious intention," was not required to enter a plea.

So, handpicked by the government to preside over national security court cases, adjourned the hearing to August 7 to allow the police to look through two phones, a desktop computer, and three laptops seized from Au's home, The Witness reported.

Social media posts

According to a charge sheet provided by the Judiciary, Au had allegedly published seditious statements and images on social media platforms including YouTube, Facebook, and X between March 23 and June 19.

He allegedly made those posts to incite "hatred, contempt or disaffection against the "fundamental system of the state established by the Constitution of the People's Republic of China" as well as Hong Kong's executive, legislative, or judicial authority, and its constitutional order.

It was also alleged that Au intended to "incite any other person to do an act that does not comply with the law of [Hong Kong] or that does not obey an order issued under the law of [Hong Kong]."

Separate to the 2020 Beijing-imposed law, the passage of the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance, known locally as Article 23, was fast-tracked by the city's opposition-free legislature earlier this year after legislation failed in 2003. It came into effect on March 23.

The law has been criticised by rights NGOs, Western states and the UN as vague, broad and "regressive." But authorities have cited perceived foreign interference and a constitutional duty to "close loopholes" after the 2019 protests and unrest.

A 27-year-old man last Friday became the first person to be charged under Article 23. He was denied bail over wearing a t-shirt with a banned protest slogan and a yellow mask printed with statements allegedly intended to incite hatred, contempt or disaffection against the "fundamental system of the state established by the Constitution of the People's Republic of China."

### Hong Kongers embrace politics in UK, but some still fear Beijing

21 June 2024, Reuters, Alun John

For Richard Wong, 25, who moved to Britain from Hong Kong two years ago, it "feels strange" taking part in a free election, exercising exactly those rights that he once fought for, knowing that his friends back home no longer can.

"Back in Hong Kong we tried so hard to get democracy and then lost it. And I moved here, and we are actually practicing democracy, but in a very different context," said Wong, who has been knocking on doors as a volunteer for an opposition Labour party candidate in next month's UK general election.

"I still have friends spending their time in prison and I'm ... doing this at the other end of the world."

Since 2021, more than 180,000 Hong Kongers have moved to Britain under a special visa programme set up in response to a crackdown on dissent in their homeland, a former British colony handed back to Beijing in 1997.

China says the crackdown was necessary to restore stability after months of sometimes violent protests in 2019.

When Britain left Hong Kong it offered a limited form of British nationality to residents, which means the Hong Kongers, unlike many newcomers from elsewhere, arrive with the right to vote in the UK.

Britain's national election next month is the first chance they will have to participate in the central

ritual of democracy in their adopted home. Many are passionate about the opportunity.

"I know the power of votes. I think if we have that power we should utilise it," said Carmen Lau, a campaign coordinator for Vote for Hong Kong 2024, a group rallying Hong Kongers in the UK to participate in the British election.

Before she moved to Britain, Lau was elected a Hong Kong district councillor in 2019, but later disqualified for refusing to take an oath of loyalty to the territory's mini constitution.

With relations between Britain and China at a low ebb, amid accusations from London that Beijing had intimidated a foreign national on British soil and counter claims of spying activities, some Hong Kongers are still fearful China's reach.

Lau said at cultural events many attendees wore masks and avoided cameras because they were afraid their family back in Hong Kong would be harassed.

"The right to vote is precious, and more Hong Kong people are moving to the UK and we're concerned about China's control and spies, so there is a need to speak out," said one Hong Konger in the UK, Kate, 33, who declined to give her full name as she was fearful of reprisals.

### **China's intelligence agency says trial of Hong Kong 47 a 'major test' of national security, rule of law**

19 June 2024, Hong Kong Free Press, Hans Tse

The Ministry of State Security said the verdict in the trial of the 16 defendants who pleaded not guilty to conspiring to commit subversion was a deterrent to "anti-China forces and foreign forces."

China's intelligence agency has called the landmark case involving 47 Hong Kong pro-democracy figures a "major test" of national security and rule of law.

The Ministry of State Security on Tuesday also said the verdict in the trial of the 16 defendants who pleaded not guilty to conspiring to commit subversion was a deterrent to "anti-China forces and foreign forces."

"Those who dare to challenge the bottom line of China's national security will be severely punished by the law," the ministry said in a Chinese-language post on WeChat.

Thirty-one defendants had earlier pleaded guilty to taking part in the conspiracy over their roles in an unofficial primary election in 2020. The High Court last month found 14 others guilty and acquitted two after a trial that lasted 118 days.

Tuesday's remarks marked the first time the ministry, which is in charge of the country's intelligence activities, weighed in on the city's largest national security case to date. The court is set to hear

mitigation pleas from the 45 defendants convicted under the Beijing-imposed security law from June 25.

"Among the 45 people that were convicted, there were instigators of 'black-clad violence,' participants of the illegal 'Occupy Central' campaign, and leaders of anti-Hong Kong organisations," the ministry said, referring to the 2014 civil disobedience campaign also known as the Umbrella Movement and the protests and unrest in 2019.

"A criminal and wicked idea brought them together and led them on a path of no return," it added.

The ministry singled out former law professor Benny Tai, the key organiser of the primary election, as the "chief culprit" of the scheme that it said was directed at sabotaging the functioning of the city government and overthrowing state power. Tai was among those who pleaded guilty.

"The anti-China forces led by Benny Tai... through illegally trying to obtain a majority in the Legislative Council and vetoing the government budget indiscriminately, would create a crisis in governance," the ministry said.

Although a key argument of the defence was that the power to veto the government budget is written into Hong Kong's mini-constitution the Basic Law, the three judges presiding over the case ruled that the abuse of such power would create a "constitutional crisis" and therefore would be illegal.

The ministry praised the lengthy trial as it "balanced the need to safeguard national security and to protect the rights and freedoms of the defendants." Most of the 47 democrats have been detained since being taken into police custody on February 28, 2021, ahead of a marathon bail hearing.

The judgement had set out clear rulings of major legal disputes under the security law, the ministry said. "The court's rulings clarified the definition and regulation of 'subversion'... It would serve as an important reference to future [national security] cases and have far-reaching implications," it added.

Western governments including the UK, the EU, and Australia condemned the verdict. The US had already imposed sanctions on six Chinese and Hong Kong officials in response to the arrests in 2021, with a congressional committee urging further sanctions to be imposed following the verdict.

The ministry said such calls amounted to interfering in China's internal affairs and were "serious violations of international laws and common principles governing international relations."

They would only make people aware of foreign forces' "despicable scheme of leveraging Hong Kong to suppress China," it added.

The defendants are expected to receive sentencing after their mitigation hearings, which could carry up to life behind bars.

Last week, the Department of Justice said it had filed an appeal against the acquittal of barrister Lawrence Lau, but not that of social worker Lee Yue-shun. Both Lau and Lee are former district councillors.

Beijing inserted national security legislation directly into Hong Kong's mini-constitution in June 2020 following a year of pro-democracy protests and unrest. It criminalised subversion, secession, collusion with foreign forces and terrorist acts – broadly defined to include disruption to transport and other infrastructure. The move gave police sweeping new powers and led to hundreds of arrests amid new legal precedents, while dozens of civil society groups disappeared. The authorities say it restored stability and peace to the city, rejecting criticism from trade partners, the UN and NGOs.

Since then, 128 people had been convicted under the security law, according to the security bureau.

### **17 people jailed up to 5 years, 10 months over attempted escape from besieged Hong Kong campus during 2019 protests**

18 June 2024, Hong Kong Free Press, Kelly Ho

Seventeen people have received jail sentences ranging from one year and eight months to five years and 10 months after they were convicted over dramatic rope escapes from a besieged Hong Kong university during the 2019 protests.

District Judge Lily Wong on Tuesday meted out prison terms to 17 people who were involved in daring attempts to flee the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) in mid-November 2019.

Dozens of protesters shimmied down ropes from a footbridge to flee the campus in Hung Hom, which was surrounded by the police amid violent clashes between protesters and officers. Some people drove cars and motorcycles to pick up the protesters, and many vehicles were intercepted by police as they tried to leave the scene.

Lin Bin, Chan Chun-fung, Mak To and Lee Man-hei, who pleaded guilty to rioting before the trial began, were each jailed for three years and eight months. A charge of perverting the course of justice earlier levelled against them was put on court file and was not pursued by the prosecution.

The remaining defendants were convicted of intending to pervert the course of justice after trial.

Ng Wai-nam, Leung Cheuk-fung, Leung Wing-yan, Lau Shuk-wa, Tom Wong, Lam Yam-to, Cheok Yuen-yi and Lai Ching-yin were also found guilty of rioting. All but Cheok were sentenced to 70 months behind bars. Cheok's jail term was reduced to 60 months because she was a minor at the time of the offence.

Ho Ying-kit, Sin Wang-chun, Lam Sze-nga and Cheung Chung-hee, who only faced the perverting justice offence, were each jailed for 20 months.

Chan Chun-yeung, who pleaded guilty to an additional charge of dangerous driving, was given a two-year prison term.

The case originally involved two more defendants, who were earlier sentenced to a training centre.

In jailing the defendants, Wong said the authorities had issued daily warnings urging the public not to go to PolyU. The defendants had been "stubborn" and ignored such warnings, the judge said, concluding that they must have been on the side of the "black-clad" protesters.

"They agreed with the violence," Wong said in Cantonese, adding that some defendants who had been PolyU students were responsible for "destroying their school campus."

The judge went to say that the defendants had tried to evade arrest with their escape attempt, which "seriously undermined the administration of judicial justice."

Under Hong Kong laws, rioting is punishable by up to ten years in prison, although jail terms meted out by the District Court are capped at seven years.

Tuesday's sentencing was held in the court's largest courtroom, designed to hold up to 50 defendants and in which the view of the dock is partially restricted. Those sitting in the seats on the right-hand side of the courtroom must rely on a video livestream to get a clear view of the judge and the defendants.

As a result, family members and friends of the defendants had to stand up from their seat or swarm to the back of the counsels' desk to wave at their loved ones. Some also made a heart gesture with their hands.

Protests erupted in June 2019 over a since-axed extradition bill. They escalated into sometimes violent displays of dissent against police behaviour, amid calls for democracy and anger over Beijing's encroachment.

Demonstrators demanded an independent probe into police conduct, amnesty for those arrested and a halt to the characterisation of protests as "riots."

### **Three arrested in Hong Kong for 'insulting' Chinese anthem at World Cup qualifier**

07 June 2024, The Guardian

Police say spectators 'turned their backs toward the pitch and did not stand for the playing of the national anthem'

Three people have been arrested for turning their backs and remaining seated when China's national anthem was played prior to Hong Kong's home World Cup qualifier against Iran, police have said.

Football spectators in Hong Kong used to boo the Chinese anthem as a show of political discontent, but the government banned the practice in 2020 as part of a wider crackdown after huge democracy protests in the city.

At Hong Kong Stadium on Thursday, police said, two men and a woman were arrested because they “turned their backs toward the pitch and did not stand for the playing of the national anthem”.

“Police stressed that anyone who publicly and intentionally insults the national anthem in any way commits a crime,” a police statement said.

The three arrested were between the ages of 18 and 31. If convicted they face up to three years in jail and a fine of HK\$50,000 (£5,000/US\$6,400).

Hong Kong’s hopes of reaching the next stage of qualifying for the 2026 World Cup were already over and they went on to lose the game to Iran 4-2.

Hong Kong is a special administrative region of China but competes in its own name in many international sports, including football.

During the politically tumultuous 2010s, the Hong Kong team became a vessel for civic pride and occasionally anti-government sentiment.

At the time, the Chinese national anthem was routinely drowned out by boos before Hong Kong matches, enraging local and mainland officials.

Soon after Beijing imposed a sweeping national security law on Hong Kong in 2020, the finance hub passed a separate local law criminalising insults towards the anthem.

### **Heavy security in China and Hong Kong on 35th anniversary of Tiananmen crackdown**

**04 June 2024, NPR**

Checkpoints and rows of police vehicles lined a major road leading to Beijing's Tiananmen Square on Tuesday as China heightened security on the 35th anniversary of a bloody crackdown on pro-democracy protests.

China has long quashed any memory of the killings, when the Chinese government ordered in the army to end the months-long protests and uphold Communist rule. An estimated 180,000 troops and armed police rolled in with tanks and armored vehicles, and fired into crowds as they pushed toward Tiananmen Square.

The death toll remains unknown to this day. Hundreds, if not thousands are believed to have been killed in an operation that started the night before and ended on the morning of June 4, 1989.

The crackdown became a turning point in modern Chinese history, ending a crisis in favor of Communist Party hardliners who advocated for control instead of political reforms.

The economy boomed in the ensuing decades, turning a once impoverished country into the world's second largest economy, but societal controls have been tightened since party leader Xi Jinping came to power in 2012.

Across China, the event remains a sensitive and taboo subject that is heavily censored, and any mention or reference on social media is erased.

It was just another day in the Chinese capital, with hundreds of tourists lining the streets leading to gates to enter Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City, the former imperial palace that sits across from the north side of the square. Those who lost family members in the crackdown are generally prevented from gathering or grieving in public.

Asked by a foreign journalist for comment on the 35th anniversary during a daily foreign ministry briefing on Monday, spokesperson Mao Ning shrugged off the event.

“The Chinese government has long since come to a clear conclusion on the political disturbance that took place in the late 1980s,” she said, without elaborating.

Tiananmen Mothers, a group formed by families of the victims, made an online appeal to the Chinese government to publish the names and numbers of those who died, grant compensation to the victims and their relatives and pursue the legal responsibility of those responsible.

“The June 4 tragedy is a historical tragedy that the Chinese government must face and explain to its people, and some people in the Government at that time should be held legally responsible for the indiscriminate killing of innocents,” the group said in a letter signed by 114 family members and published on its website, which is blocked in China.

Tiananmen memorials have also been scrubbed out in Hong Kong – for years the only place in China where they could take place. On Tuesday, a carnival organized by pro-Beijing groups was held in a park that for decades was the site of a huge candlelight vigil marking the anniversary.

Police used a new national security law to arrest eight people over the past week for social media posts commemorating the crackdown, including Chow Hang-tung, a former organizer of the vigil. Several pro-democracy activists told The Associated Press that police had inquired about their plans for Tuesday.

Officers were out in force in Causeway Bay, a bustling shopping district close to the park where the vigil was held. Police briefly detained a performance artist the previous evening in the same neighborhood.

Some Hong Kong residents remembered the event privately, running 6.4 kilometers (4 miles) on Monday – a reference to the June 4 date – and



sharing Tiananmen-related content on social media. The British consulate posted a photo on the social media platform X showing a smartphone's flashlight turned on with "VIIV," the Roman numerals for 6/4, printed on it.

An independent bookstore, which displayed "35/5" on its window – a roundabout reference to the date of the crackdown as May 35th – wrote on Instagram that police officers were stationed outside the shop for an hour on Sunday, during which they recorded the identity details of customers.

Hong Kong's leader John Lee did not answer directly when asked Tuesday whether residents could still publicly mourn the crackdown. He urged residents not to let down their guard against any attempts to cause trouble.

"The threat to national security is real," Lee said at a weekly briefing. "Such activities can happen all of a sudden and different people may use different excuses to hide their intention."

Commemorative events have grown overseas in response to the silencing of voices in Hong Kong. Vigils were planned in Washington, D.C., London, Brisbane and Taipei among other cities this year, as well as a growing number of talks, rallies, exhibitions and plays.

### **China and Hong Kong reportedly detain dissidents before Tiananmen Square anniversary**

03 June 2024, The Guardian, Helen Davidson

Events marking 35 years since troops ended peaceful protest with deadly violence are banned in China and Hong Kong

Chinese and Hong Kong authorities have arrested or put under surveillance several dissidents before the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre this week, according to human rights groups.

On 4 June it will be 35 years since Chinese soldiers shut down a weeks-long peaceful protest with violence, killing anything from several hundred to several thousand people.

Commemorative events are planned in cities around the world, including Tokyo, London, Taipei and New York – where a museum dedicated to the massacre was opened last year – but not in the country where it occurred.

The event has been banned from public acknowledgment in China, prompting those who want to commemorate or discuss it to find creative ways to get around censors to avoid persecution.

Human Rights Watch said several individuals connected to the 4 June remembrance had been put under surveillance or temporarily moved from their homes by authorities. Among them were Zhan Xianling, a founding member of the Tiananmen Mothers group of victims' relatives, the human rights

lawyer Pu Zhiqiang, and the Guizhou student leader Ji Feng.

Mentions of the anniversary are largely impossible on China's strictly controlled internet and media. Even obscure references in photos, words and dates are often blocked from social media posts.

Famous photographs, such as that of the "tank man", are banned, but so too are images or mentions of yellow rubber ducks after the toy became a popular replacement image. In 2022, one of China's most popular shopping influencers was abruptly taken off air after a cake shaped like a tank was briefly shown on his live stream.

In the lead-up to the anniversary, some platforms and institutions appeared to be removing any opportunity for memorial posts. On its Weibo account on Friday, World of Warcraft said its website would be undergoing maintenance from 3-5 June, and users would be unable to log in or leave messages. On Saturday, a secondary school in Shanxi issued a notice to staff telling them not to post on social media until notified, and that assembly and religious activities were banned on 4 June, according to "Teacher Li", who runs an information-sharing and activism-monitoring account on X.

For three decades, the largest Tiananmen memorial event was held in Hong Kong, but under a tightening crackdown by the city's government against the pro-democracy movement, that too has been banned. Attempts to organise candlelit vigils across the city and in homes have resulted in arrests.

Last week, Hong Kong police used a new national security law to arrest seven people, accusing them of publishing messages with seditious intent ahead of an "upcoming sensitive date".

The police searched homes and seized electronic devices. "Those who intend to endanger national security should not imagine that they can avoid police pursuit anonymously online," the police said.

One of the women arrested was already in prison. Local media identified her as Chow Hang-tung, a prominent barrister and human rights activist who has been jailed on other charges.

Chow's case is the subject of a documentary that will be screened at a 4 June event in Japan on Tuesday. She had been an organiser of Hong Kong's Tiananmen Vigils, with the since-disbanded Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China. However, in December 2022, she and others were charged with "inciting others to take part in an unauthorised assembly". Chow was acquitted, but that was then overturned by the court of appeal in January.

"The Chinese government is seeking to erase memory of the Tiananmen massacre throughout China and in Hong Kong," said Maya Wang, the acting China director at Human Rights Watch. "But

35 years on, the government has been unable to extinguish the flames of remembrance for those risking all to promote respect for democracy and human rights in China."

The introduction of two new national security laws since 2020 have driven a climate of fear and self-censorship in Hong Kong, where activists, media, and others say it is not clear where the red lines are for authorities.

In its most recent issue, Hong Kong's Christian Times newspaper published mostly blank space on its front page. It also did not publish it online as usual, saying it could not do so because of "circumstances".

In an editorial, the paper, which in the past has often published articles about the Tiananmen anniversary, said society had become "restrictive", and it could only "respond to the current situation by turning paragraphs into blank squares and white space".

"Even a prayer that originates from historical memories may arouse 'concern'," it said.

"Facing history honestly is not to perpetuate grievances, nor to smear and incite, but to give future repentance and reconciliation a solid foundation."

## May

### **'Hong Kong 47' trial: 14 activists found guilty of conspiracy to commit subversion**

30 May 2024, The Guardian, Helen Davidson

Western governments condemn verdict in biggest case since introduction of national security law

Fourteen people have been found guilty of subversion by a court in Hong Kong in the biggest case against pro-democracy campaigners – against a group known as the "Hong Kong 47" – since China imposed a national security law to crush dissent.

A panel of judges handpicked by Hong Kong's government found that the convicted people – one organiser and 13 candidates, almost all of them former politicians – had committed the national security offence of "conspiracy to subvert state power" by holding unofficial election primaries in 2020.

The 10-month trial finished in December, more than 1,000 days after the cohort were first arrested. Among the guilty are former lawmakers and activists including the politician Helena Wong, the veteran campaigner Leung "Long Hair" Kwok-hung, the journalist Gwyneth Ho, and the Hong Kong-Australian dual national Gordon Ng.

Condemnation from rights groups and western governments was swift. Human Rights Watch's

acting China director, Maya Wang, said the convictions showed "utter contempt for both democratic political processes and the rule of law. All Hong Kong wanted was a chance to freely elect their government. Democracy is not a crime, regardless of what the Chinese government and its handpicked Hong Kong court may say."

Australia's foreign minister, Penny Wong, said Canberra was "deeply concerned" by the verdicts and maintained "strong objections" to the broad application of national security legislation to target opposition and civil society.

The UK's minister for the Indo-Pacific, Anne-Marie Trevelyan, said: "Today's verdict will only further tarnish Hong Kong's international reputation. It sends a message that Hongkongers can no longer safely and meaningfully participate in peaceful political debate."

Two defendants, Lawrence Lau Wai-chung, a former district councillor, and Lee Yue-shun, a former social worker, were acquitted. The pair had run as candidates in the primaries and theirs are the first acquittals to be granted after a prosecution under the 2020 national security law (NSL). The justice secretary's legal team said he would appeal against the acquittals, and the judges agreed to extend most of the pair's stringent bail conditions in the meantime.

The 16 people were the only ones to plead not guilty from a group of 47 charged in early 2021 after mass dawn raids on their homes and offices by national security police. Most of the group have been in jail ever since. The 31 who pleaded guilty, including four who testified for the prosecution, are still awaiting the outcome of their cases. The judges had decided to complete the trial of the others before moving on to sentencing.

The 45 convicted campaigners face sentences of up to life in prison.

On Thursday morning all 16 defendants sat in the docks behind a glass panel as the three-judge panel announced the verdict.

Outside court the acquitted men thanked their supporters and urged people to maintain their concern over the other defendants. Lau, a barrister, also urged people to pay close attention to the "reasoning, logic, [and] perspectives of our judges" shown by the verdict.

The judgment, published online, said the cohort's plan to gain a majority in Hong Kong's legislative council – in order to block budgetary bills and force the resignation of the chief executive if she did not agree to the pro-democracy movement's demands – was a violation of Hong Kong's mini-constitution, the Basic Law.

Any act that would "seriously interfere in, disrupt or undermine the performance duties and functions of

the government was clearly an act which would endanger national security in Hong Kong", it said. It also set a significant precedent in finding that non-violent acts, like the primaries, could be considered subversion under the wording of the NSL.

The pre-election primaries were held on 11 and 12 July 2020, organised by Benny Tai, a legal scholar and activist who was also an organiser of the 2014 "umbrella movement" protests, for which he served four months of a 16-month prison sentence.

They were not the first primaries to be held in Hong Kong, including by pro-establishment camps, but they occurred less than a fortnight after the introduction of the NSL, imposed by Beijing to help Hong Kong's authorities crush the remaining pro-democracy movement after mass protests in 2019.

In the days prior, the Hong Kong minister Erick Tsang warned in an interview that the primaries could violate the NSL. But organisers went ahead, and more than 600,000 Hong Kong residents took part, in what was widely interpreted as an act of protest against the government crackdown.

The election that the primaries were preparing for was later postponed by the government, ostensibly because of the pandemic. By the time it was rescheduled, the government had overhauled the electoral system to ensure that only pro-Beijing "patriots" could run.

Thursday's guilty verdicts had been largely expected, but outside the court, supporters wept. Hundreds had attended the hearing, some lining up overnight to secure a seat. Grandma Wong, a well-known activist, waved a Hong Kong flag outside and shouted in protest.

One supporter had arrived at 4am. "I want to go inside to show my support [for the defendants]," she said. "This is a case about the election and I think the government is putting some unreasonable charges against them, and it's not acceptable."

She declined to give her name for fear of being identified, but said she was not worried about attending court in support of the pro-democracy figures. "It's our right to have an open court and to go inside and listen."

The case has been widely criticised by human rights and legal groups and foreign governments. It has been accused of being politically motivated, and of denying procedural fairness with a judge-only trial that stretched out over the course of months with repeated delays.

The Hong Kong government crackdown has left the city with essentially no active political opposition. Scores of people have been arrested or jailed, others scared into silence. Many have fled overseas, including some who were facing charges. The Hong Kong government has issued large bounties for several "fugitives", leading several countries hosting

exiled Hongkongers to tear up their bilateral extradition agreements.

### Hong Kong trade offices 'keep an eye' on 'anti-China' activities

21 May 2024, RFA, Kit Sung and Kwong Wing

A top adviser in the Hong Kong cabinet appears to confirm that the offices are engaged in political espionage.

The role of Hong Kong's overseas Economic and Trade Offices has changed, and should include "keeping an eye" on 'anti-China' activities, a top government adviser has said, appearing to confirm claims that the offices have been targeting pro-democracy activists on foreign soil.

Regina Ip, a former secretary for security who is currently convenor of the city's Executive Council, or cabinet, made the comments after British Police three men with spying for the Hong Kong authorities, accusing them of running surveillance and other operations targeting exiled democracy activists on U.K. soil.



Pro-democracy demonstrators, seen wearing masks depicting former British consulate worker Simon Cheng, gather outside the British Consulate-General building in Hong Kong on Nov. 29, 2019.

Hong Kong and Chinese officials typically refer to pro-democracy activists at home and overseas as "anti-China" forces, accusing them of trying to undermine the government with the help of foreign powers.

Ip appeared to refer to those activists in an interview with Hong Kong's Now News on May 18.

"A group of anti-China members in [the U.K. Parliament] and some Hong Kong exiles are causing trouble there, often introducing bills against the city and even calling for sanctions," she said.

"The [trade office] must pay attention, probably by gathering intelligence," she said in comments reported by the English-language South China Morning Post newspaper. "Such so-called gathering of intelligence means merely paying attention to these developments."

Ip's comments came as Bill Yuen, an office manager at the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in London who holds dual Chinese and British nationality, prepares to appear at the Old Bailey on May 24 charged with "assisting a foreign intelligence service" and "foreign interference" under the National Security Act 2023.

Yuen's co-defendants, Peter Wai, 38 and Matthew Trickett, 37, face similar charges, and the trio stand accused of forcing and entering a property in the U.K. and of targeting exiled Hong Kong activists on British soil, according to the Metropolitan Police.

The accusations come amid growing concerns over Chinese Communist Party infiltration of all aspects of British life, and warnings from Hong Kongers in exile over growing acts of violence by Beijing supporters and officials alike.

More than economic activities

Political commentator Benson Wong said Ip's comments will likely damage the reputation of the trade offices.

"Regina Ip's comments ... seem to confirm that some staff working in the London office aren't engaged in economic and cultural activities," Wong said.

"It's still unclear whether the Economic and Trade Office will be required to abide by certain commitments, or even have some of its privileges canceled," he said.

U.S.-based exiled activist Anna Kwok, who heads the U.S.-based Hong Kong Democracy Council, said the Hong Kong offices have long spied on overseas activists wherever they are located.

"We've always had good reason to believe that the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices are carrying out a lot of activities including monitoring Hong Kongers, not just in the U.K., but in the United States as well," she said.

"We've heard in the past few years of Economic and Trade Offices monitoring Hong Kongers in the United States," said Kwok, who has an arrest warrant and a bounty on her head issued by Hong Kong's national security police.

"The simplest example is that when we go to a demonstration, people we suspect are employees of the Economic and Trade Offices take photos of everyone there to identify them."

"One person told us that he was asked about the Hong Kong Democracy Council at a very ordinary dinner by a member of staff at the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, including personal information about the Council's members," Kwok said.

Kwok said the Hong Kong Democracy Council will step up its campaign for a bill banning the offices to be introduced to Congress.

Gathering intelligence

Meanwhile, Regina Ip said foreign consulates in Hong Kong likely also engage in such activities.

"I believe that each of the consulates based in Hong Kong is gathering intelligence. Some of the intelligence is publicly available, [such as] TV programmes, media and online information," she said.

"If our personnel are making similar collection efforts at the [trade offices], why would it be against the law? I really do not understand," Ip said.

U.K.-based Hong Kong activist Simon Cheng, who has reported being followed on April 9 in central London by unidentified people speaking Mandarin, said Ip should know the difference between a consulate and Hong Kong's trade offices, which aren't regulated by the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

"Some countries allow the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices a quasi-diplomatic status, but that's up to the host country to allow them that courtesy," Cheng said. "Some countries may do this according to agreements signed with the Hong Kong government, but such agreements aren't regulated by the Vienna Convention either."

"Such diplomatic courtesies can easily be revoked unilaterally," he said.

Cheng, a former trade representative for Scotland based at the British consulate in Hong Kong who was detained and tortured by Chinese state security police during the 2019 protest movement, said consulates have teams of staff dedicated to gathering news and information about their host country or city, but such newsgathering is part of legitimate attempts to understand the places they are posted to, and to get a feel for public opinion there.

China's ambassador to the United Kingdom Zheng Zeguang expressed "serious concerns" to the British government about the spying accusations on May 15, saying the case had been "fabricated" to "smear and attack" the Hong Kong government.

"All those accusations are groundless and slanderous," Zheng said in comments posted to the embassy website, accusing the British police of "wantonly harassing, arresting and detaining" Chinese citizens in the U.K.

Eleven people including Yuen, Wai and Trickett were arrested in a nationwide operation but eight were later released without charge, the Metropolitan Police said on May 13.

"This constitutes a grave provocation against China and severely contravenes basic norms of international relations. It is totally unacceptable," Zheng said.

**YouTube agrees to remove videos of banned Hong Kong protest song**

15 May 2024, VOA



YouTube says it will block access in Hong Kong to videos of performances of a banned protest song.

Hong Kong's Court of Appeal ruled last week that "Glory to Hong Kong," which emerged as an anthem for protesters during the massive anti-government protests in 2019, is illegal to sing or play in the city. The ruling said the song's composer intended for the song to be used as a "weapon."

There was no immediate comment from the government in Hong Kong.

The ban covers anyone who either broadcasts or distributes the song with the intention of promoting Hong Kong's independence or misrepresents it as the city's official anthem. Hong Kong is a semi-autonomous city.

YouTube said in a statement Wednesday that it will block access in the Chinese city to 32 videos of the song, which the court deemed was "prohibited content."

"We are disappointed by the Court's decision but are complying with its removal order," the online video sharing service said. The company said it shared concerns with human rights organizations about the chilling effect the ban would have on free speech online, and that it is considering options to file an appeal.

A search for the 32 videos in Hong Kong resulted in a message saying they were "not available on this country domain due to a court order."

The song has mistakenly been played at sporting events as the official anthem of Hong Kong. The city does not have its own anthem, instead using mainland China's official anthem "March of the Volunteers."

The appeal court's ruling overturned a previous decision issued last year by the High Court, which cited free speech concerns. The government went to court last year to have the song banned after Google and other internet service providers refused to remove it from their search results.

YouTube and Google are owned by California-based Alphabet.

The ban is the latest action taken by the government to silence dissenting voices since Beijing passed a sweeping security law for Hong Kong in 2020 in response to the protests. The law punishes anyone believed to be carrying out terrorism, separatism, subversion of state power or collusion with foreign forces.

Since the law took effect, hundreds of pro-democracy advocates have been arrested, tried and jailed, and the city's once-vibrant civil society has been stifled.

George Chen, the co-chair of digital practice at the Washington-based business and policy consultancy Asia Group, said the ban could hurt Hong Kong's reputation as a global financial hub if officials

pressure online platforms on a daily basis to remove content, as it could raise questions about its willingness to allow the free flow of information.

Some information for this report came from The Associated Press, Reuters, Agence France-Presse.

### **Beijing adds 8 mainland Chinese cities to Hong Kong solo traveller scheme, with residents in parts of Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang and Tibet to benefit**

11 May 2024, SCMP, Cannix Yau and Jeffie Lam

People from eight mainland Chinese cities in remote regions such as Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang and Tibet will be able to visit Hong Kong without the need to join group tours after Beijing announced it would further expand a solo traveller scheme to boost the tourism sector.

The National Immigration Administration said on Saturday residents in the cities would be able to apply to visit from May 27.

The eight cities are all provincial and regional capitals: Taiyuan in Shanxi; Hohhot in Inner Mongolia; Harbin in Heilongjiang; Lhasa in Tibet; Lanzhou in Gansu; Xining in Qinghai; Yinchuan in Ningxia; and Urumqi in Xinjiang.

Under the Individual Visit Scheme, tourists can apply for a visa which allows them to stay in Hong Kong or Macau for up to seven days at a time. They can choose from single-entry or double-entry visas valid for three months or a year.

Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu expressed gratitude to Beijing for further expanding the scheme, which brought the number of cities covered to 59.

"I thank the central government for its keen concern for Hong Kong and its full support ... The central government once again actively responded to the Hong Kong government's suggestions," he said.

Lee said at the end of last month that he would urge Beijing to expand the scheme.

"[The expanded scheme] covers all provincial capital cities across the country, carrying great significance for boosting Hong Kong's tourism industry and overall economic development, and promoting people-to-people ties between mainland and Hong Kong residents," he said on Saturday.

Lee noted the eight newly added cities all had large populations, high levels of consumption and had recorded rapid economic growth.

He added the move would bring in a huge amount of tourism dollars.

"Further expansion of the individual travel scheme will effectively boost the economic activities of Hong Kong's tourism, retail, catering, hotel and related industries, bringing a large amount of revenue, and at the same time promoting two-way travel between



Hong Kong and different provincial capital cities," he said.

Tourism minister Kevin Yeung Yun-hung also pledged to strengthen coordination and maintain communication with relevant agencies and the industry.

"We'll strive to establish and enhance direct flight capacity between Hong Kong and the eight cities, while ensuring the smooth operation of border control points, tourist facilities, hotels and public transport networks to welcome tourists," he said.

Authorities announced the move just two days after Xia Baolong, the director of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, told Yeung that the local administration must revitalise its offerings amid "profound changes" in the market and treat every corner of the city as a potential spot to lure visitors.

The sector has been struggling to recover, with the number of trips to the city over the Labour Day "golden week" holiday earlier this month hitting just two-thirds of pre-pandemic levels.

The growing trends of mainland visitors making only day trips to the city or choosing to spend their nights in cheaper hotels across the border have also added to the pressure.

Beijing expanded the scheme in February to add tourists from Xian and Qingdao, although the move generated a lukewarm response.

Some residents in the two cities said the arrangements did not change much, suggesting individual travellers who held group tour visas had made independent trips to Hong Kong for years. Travel agents also said there had been no jump in bookings.

Pang Yiu-kai, chairman of the Hong Kong Tourism Board, called the latest expansion a "gift" for the sector, saying Beijing's decision to update the scheme twice in three months reflected its "full support and confidence" in the city.

He said the eight newly added cities had a combined population of more than 33 million.

"With the new measures facilitating visitor arrivals to Hong Kong, the city will be able to tap into a broader range of source cities and explore new sources of visitors," Pang said.

The Tourism Board said it would immediately step up promotional activities in these cities, including partnering with mainland social media platforms, the travel trade and airlines to promote the latest offerings.

Hong Kong Tourism Association executive director Timothy Chui Ting-pong also hailed the move as a "big gift" from Beijing and said it would provide a great boost to the industry, which was a key driver for the city's economic recovery.

"They are all wealthy cities with good spending power. In the past there might not be many chances

for them to travel outside. Hong Kong may be their first cross-border destination in recent years," he said.

"These groups of additional mainland tourists will definitely stay overnight in Hong Kong, with many expected to use up the seven days allowed under the visa."

Chui also described the expanded scheme as a "strategic move" as it would prove helpful for the city's role as an aviation hub and a gateway for new groups of mainland tourists to travel to the rest of the world for business purposes.

"It will prompt local airlines to strengthen their capacity and extend their aviation network to provide more direct flights between Hong Kong and these mainland destinations," he said. "This will definitely enhance Hong Kong's role as an international aviation hub."

The Airport Authority said it currently had direct flights with four of the eight additional cities, adding that airlines were planning to start scheduled flights to and from Harbin and add more flights to and from Urumqi next month.

But Simon Lee Siu-po, an honorary fellow at the Asia-Pacific Institute of Business at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, took a less optimistic view of the scheme's expansion, saying the new initiative would not bring tremendous benefits.

"There will be some positive effects. But the mainland economy continues to be sluggish with shrinking purchasing power," he said. "It may not produce an immediate result and the impact will only be short term."

Lee said Hong Kong should avoid relying on mainland authorities for more sweeteners under the solo travel scheme, adding it should focus on strengthening its competitiveness and attraction to overseas tourists.

### **Hong Kong court ban on pro-democracy anthem 'Glory to Hong Kong' sparks new fears over heightened censorship in Hong Kong**

08 May 2024, HongKong Watch

Today a Hong Kong appeals court approved the Hong Kong government's application to ban the pro-democracy anthem 'Glory to Hong Kong', overturning a lower court ruling in July 2023 that rejected the government's bid due to free speech concerns. The judgement comes in the wake of the enactment of the Safeguarding National Security Bill, known as "Article 23 legislation", in Hong Kong, which will further criminalise internationally-guaranteed rights and freedoms in the city.

Three Court of Appeal judges ruled that the government's injunction was "necessary" to remove "problematic videos" from online platforms. This

follows numerous incidents at international sporting events in which 'Glory to Hong Kong', popularised during the 2019 protests, has been mixed up with the People's Republic of China's anthem 'March of the Volunteers'.

The injunction will prohibit anyone from "[b]roadcasting, performing, printing, publishing, selling, offering for sale, distributing, disseminating, displaying or reproducing in any way" the song and its lyrics "with the intent of...inciting others to commit secession," "with a seditious intention," or "in such a way...as to be likely to be mistaken as the national anthem" of Hong Kong, "suggest that the [Hong Kong Special Administrative Region] is an independent state... with intent to insult the national anthem." The injunction will apply to "any internet-based platform or medium" and their global operations.

When the Hong Kong government first bid to ban 'Glory to Hong Kong' last year, Hong Kong Watch led more than 24 civil society organisations in writing a joint letter to Daniel Ek, CEO of Spotify, Tim Cook, CEO of Apple Inc, Sundar Pichai, CEO of Alphabet Inc and Google LLC, Linda Yaccarino, CEO of Twitter Inc, and Mark Zuckerberg, CEO and Chairperson of Meta Platforms Inc., urging them to oppose the injunction that will effectively ban intermediaries from broadcasting or distributing online, including on YouTube, the 2019 protest song. The letter emphasised how the injunction will have a disastrous impact on the rights to freedom of expression and access to information not only in Hong Kong, but also globally.

Benedict Rogers, co-founder and Chief Executive Officer of Hong Kong Watch, said:

"It is profoundly disturbing and revealing that the Hong Kong authorities find a song a threat to their security. Hong Kong Watch remains gravely concerned about the implications of this injunction that will be used to censor 'Glory to Hong Kong' in Hong Kong and around the world. This case has dire implications for internet freedoms and the operation of internet service providers and technology firms such as Google and Apple.

We urge the international community to respond to this act of censorship by calling out the dangers of the city's national security laws that do not defend national security, but safeguard the authorities' increasing repression of the rights and freedoms of individuals. Business is not as usual in Hong Kong."

## April

### China says Hong Kong must 'tightly hold' national security line to safeguard development

15 April 2024, Reuters

China's top official on Hong Kong affairs said the city should "tightly hold" onto the bottom line of national security to safeguard development, in a speech coming weeks after the enactment of sweeping new security laws.

"To move towards governance and prosperity, we need to tightly hold onto the bottom line of national security in order to safeguard the high quality development of Hong Kong," said the director of Beijing's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, Xia Baolong, in a speech to mark an annual national security day.

Hong Kong in March enacted a new national security law, also known as article 23, that updates or introduces new laws to prohibit treason, sabotage, sedition, the theft of state secrets and espionage, with jail terms of up to life imprisonment.

Xia, however, sought to emphasise that the law posed no threat to investors, at a time when the city has faced Western criticism of a protracted crackdown on dissent, and has struggled economically and financially.

"For the general public of Hong Kong and foreign investors, this law is the protector of their rights, freedoms, property and investment," Xia said.

"Investors from all over the world can come to Hong Kong to invest in new businesses bravely and without concerns," he added. "Hong Kong remains the best place in the world to do business and make money and achieve your dreams."

Some foreign governments including the United States and Britain, however, have criticised the new law as fresh tool for authorities to clamp down on dissent. The legislation adds to another national security law China directly imposed on Hong Kong in 2020 in response to mass pro-democracy protests.

Beijing, however, says the laws are necessary to safeguard the city's stability and prosperity.

The U.S. Consulate General in Hong Kong said on Saturday that visitors to the city should "exercise increased caution" with the State Department updating its travel advisory

recently, saying people needed to "exercise a high degree of caution in Hong Kong due to the risk of arbitrary enforcement of local laws".

The security laws have so far been used to jail scores of leading Hong Kong democrats including Joshua

Wong, while liberal media outlets and civil society groups have been shut down.

More than 290 people have been arrested under the Beijing imposed national security law so far. Of these, 174 people and five companies have been charged, including prominent China critic and businessman Jimmy Lai – who is currently on trial and could face life imprisonment.

Reporting by Jessie Pang, James Pomfret and Joyce Zhou; Writing by James Pomfret; Editing by Michael Perry

## March

### Article 23: China hits back at criticism of Hong Kong's hardline new security law

21 March 2024, The Guardian

China has accused western governments and the United Nations of slander after they criticised Hong Kong's new national security law, which was rushed through the city's pro-Beijing parliament this week.

The law, known as Article 23, covers newly defined acts of treason, espionage, theft of state secrets, sedition and foreign interference. Critics said it was ushering in a "new era of authoritarianism", would further erode the rights and freedoms of residents, and would scare off international business and investment.

US state department deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel said on Tuesday the US believes the law has the potential to accelerate the closing of a once open society. Patel said the crimes outlined in the legislation are poorly defined and that Washington was analysing the potential risks to US citizens and American interests.

The UK, Australia, Japan, Canada and the UN also lodged concerns, while the EU said in a statement the new law had the potential to "significantly" affect the work of its office in the city, as well other organisations and companies.

But the criticisms were dismissed by Beijing's diplomats. Liu Pengyu, spokesperson for the Chinese embassy in the US, said the new law was "legitimate, lawful and beyond reproach".

Liu said it was aimed only at "a tiny minority of individuals that are involved in offences seriously jeopardising national security".

"Foreign institutions, enterprises and personnel's normal activities will be fully protected," he said, saying the US criticism was unfair because it too has many domestic national security laws.

At a regular ministry of foreign affairs press briefing on Wednesday, spokesperson Lin Jian said China's leadership "strongly deplore and firmly oppose individual countries and organisations' slandering

and smears against the safeguarding national security bill of Hong Kong".

Lin said the law "upholds the fundamental principle of respecting and protecting human rights and protects in accordance with the law the rights and freedoms which the residents of Hong Kong enjoy".

The law was passed unanimously in Hong Kong's opposition-free parliament on Tuesday, after an unusually short 12-day legislative process and a limited public consultation period of just one month. Hong Kong's chief executive, John Lee, had called for the law to be processed "at full speed".

Authorities said the vast majority of responses from the public were positive, and dismissed many of the negative submissions as coming from "overseas anti-China organisations" or fugitives.

Emily Lau, a veteran pro-democracy politician and former legislator, told the Guardian on Thursday she felt the low number of negative responses were likely due to "self-censorship" in the city, after a years-long crackdown on opposition. "My feeling is there are people who have other views but dare not speak out," she said.

Jeffrey Wasserstrom, a professor of Chinese history at the University of California, said the new law seemed to be the government adding "more levers" to their crackdown.

### China Tightens Grip On Hong Kong, Issues New National Security Law Bill

09 March 2024, Business World

Hong Kong on Friday published its draft of a new national security law, a document some lawyers said broadened what could be considered sedition and state secrets, with tougher penalties for anyone convicted of those crimes and several others.

The draft, which includes new laws encompassing treason, espionage and external interference, is being closely watched by foreign diplomats and businesses who fear it could further dent freedoms in the financial hub, which has already been subjected to a China-led crackdown on dissent that has sent many pro-democracy politicians and activists into jail or exile.

The Legislative Council started debating the bill on Friday amid tight security and several members of the largely pro-Beijing body said they expected it to be passed into law before mid-April.

Hong Kong leader John Lee had earlier urged lawmakers to pass the bill "at full speed".

"The geopolitics have become increasingly complex, and national security risks remain imminent," a government statement said.

Some lawyers analysing the draft said that at first glance, elements of the revised sentences for some listed offences are similar to Western ones but some

provisions, such as those for sedition and state secrets, are broader and potentially tougher. The bill includes sentences of up to life imprisonment for treason, insurrection and sabotage, 20 years for espionage and 10 years for crimes linked to state secrets and sedition.

The European Union, in a statement to Reuters, said it had made clear in a diplomatic note its "grave concerns" over the far-reaching provisions in the bill on "external interference" and the law's extra-territorial reach.

A spokesperson for the US State Department said the United States is closely monitoring the development of the so-called Article 23 legislation, "and its implications for US citizens and companies operating in Hong Kong."

"We have serious concerns that if authorities rush forward with enacting proposed Article 23 legislation without adequate public consultation or incorporating checks and balances, the law will be used to continue suppressing dissent and erode the human rights and fundamental freedoms for people in Hong Kong," the official said.

The draft bill noted some rights provisions.

"Human rights are to be respected and protected, the rights and freedoms, including the freedoms of speech, of the press and publication, the freedoms of association ... are to be protected," the bill read.

Some investors said the desire to fast-track the bill was concerning.

"The fact they are rushing through Article 23 shows concern about public opposition. The business community is going to be unhappy unless there are guardrails protecting individual rights," Andrew Collier, managing director at Hong Kong-based Orient Capital Research, told Reuters.

Simon Young, a law professor at the University of Hong Kong, also said the broad definitions of crimes, especially those linked to foreign interference and collusion, could prove challenging to firms.

"It may well be that businesses or groups that have some connection with foreign governments might fall under the radar as an 'external force'", Young said.

### **China removes Hong Kong affairs veteran Zhang Xiaoming from senior role at top advisory body**

02 March 2024, South China Morning Post

Zhang Xiaoming, Beijing's former top official on Hong Kong and Macau affairs, has been removed as deputy secretary general of China's top political advisory body.

The decision was endorsed on Saturday at the close of a two-day meeting of the Standing Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), state broadcaster CCTV reported.

The CCTV report was brief and did not give the reason for the removal but did refer to him as "comrade", a title reserved for Communist Party members.

He remains a member of the CPPCC and the party, a source told the South China Morning Post.

### **China's 'two sessions' 2024: Hong Kong delegates to raise ways to keep city unique, help mainland companies go global**

02 March 2024, South China Morning Post

Hundreds of Hong Kong politicians and tycoons are heading to Beijing on Sunday for China's biggest annual political gatherings and will meet top officials and policymakers face to face with few Covid-19 curbs in place for the first time in four years.

This year's meetings of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and National People's Congress (NPC) will see the country's elites moving around freely without masks after four years of strict Covid-19 pandemic arrangements, although everyone must still do a pre-event nasal swab test.

Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu will leave for Beijing on Monday to attend the opening meeting of the NPC, the national legislature, the following day and will also call on central ministries to enhance cooperation and exchange, according to the government.

Lee will also witness the signing of cooperation documents between the Hong Kong Jockey Club and the National Health Commission and the Health Bureau, respectively, on strengthening the training of healthcare talent and commencing projects on prevention and response against local communicable diseases.

He would be joined on the trip by financial services chief Christopher Hui Ching-yu and health minister Lo Chung-mau, a government spokesman said on Saturday.

Known as the "two sessions" meetings, or lianghui, the gatherings come at a time when mainland China and Hong Kong are grappling with sluggish economies and need fresh moves to reinvigorate growth in the face of domestic and external challenges.

The Hong Kong delegates have prepared hundreds of proposals to raise at the meetings, many centred on ideas to attract more mainland tourists, strengthen cross-border integration, and how the city can help mainland companies go global.

Proposals on Hong Kong competitiveness

"The keyword is unique," said CPPCC Standing Committee member Henry Tang Ying-yen, who is chairman of the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority and a former chief secretary.

"If Hong Kong became another Shanghai, Hong Kong would no longer be unique and would become

a burden to the central government. We must not be a burden to the central government,” he told the Post. Tang came up with seven proposals to boost the city’s competitiveness, building on its strong financial and legal systems and market, and complementing the country’s pursuit of high-quality development.

To attract more visitors, he will propose raising the duty-free shopping limit for mainlanders from the current 5,000 yuan to 30,000 yuan. He said the idea had the support of two-thirds of the 200 Hong Kong CPPCC members.

The city’s largest pro-Beijing party, the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong, has 30 proposals for the central government, including one to “streamline the vetting process” of the stock exchange to encourage more quality mainland companies to list in the city.

The Liberal Party’s Nick Chan Hiu-fung, a delegate to the NPC, said Chinese firms had been affected by historically high inflation rates in Europe due partly to soaring energy prices and some “irresponsible self-serving yet inflation-exporting monetary policies” in the West.

He wants Beijing to promote Hong Kong’s professional services, especially in dispute resolution and the insurance and marine sectors, among mainland businesses.

He said mainland firms might not be aware that they did not need to rely only on “the Western club” for services related to foreign trade and going global.

“Why not think about Hong Kong’s better and cheaper services?” he asked.

Delegates from the Business and Professionals Alliance will be seeking Beijing’s support to promote Hong Kong as a “one-stop professional service platform” for the Belt and Road Initiative, a national development blueprint aiming to link China with the rest of Asia, Europe and Africa.

What to watch for in meetings

Political analysts said there were some things to look out for when the meetings started. The CPPCC, China’s top political advisory body, has its opening session on Monday.

China is still facing multiple headwinds particularly after property investment fell by 9.6 per cent last year. This was despite last year’s economic growth of 5.2 per cent meeting the target of “around 5 per cent”.

The country’s growth targets and government work reports to be unveiled next week will be seen as the first report card for Premier Li Qiang and other state leaders who took up their new roles a year ago.

These announcements, together with the state leaders’ closed-door exchanges with Hong Kong delegates, will also provide clues to Beijing’s strategies and priorities for the city in the coming year.

Lau Siu-kai, a consultant from the semi-official Chinese Association of Hong Kong and Macau Studies think tank, said some key issues expected to surface during the two sessions meetings were linked to Hong Kong: the mainland’s downturn in the real estate market, stagnant domestic consumption and the lack of foreign investment.

“These are not purely economic problems,” he said. “They were aggravated by suppression and smears by US-led foreign powers. Beijing has to ensure Hong Kong, as an externally oriented economy, will not be susceptible to undesirable influence by foreign forces.”

He said he expected that national security would continue to be a priority in the central government’s consideration of Hong Kong-related policies, even though the city had been calm since Beijing imposed the national security law in 2020.

National security and Hong Kong’s role

The year ahead is expected to be pivotal for the US-China relationship, and observers of the two sessions will be looking for signals from Beijing on this front.

Last year saw a series of high-level bilateral meetings, yet long-standing tensions continue to pose risks.

Washington’s export controls on high-end semiconductors and chipmaking tools to China have no sign of easing.

The latest crossfire occurred on Friday, over Hong Kong’s draft national security legislation, a requirement under Article 23 of the Basic Law, the city’s mini-constitution.

After a US State Department spokesman declared that the proposed legislation would weaken the rights and freedoms of Hong Kong people, Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning shot back that Washington’s view was “completely naked political manipulation”.

But veteran China watcher Johnny Lau Yui-siu said he did not expect the Article 23 legislation to be raised at any group discussions attended by Hong Kong delegates, possibly reflecting Beijing’s preference that mainlanders not pay attention to the draft law.

He said he felt it was more urgent for top leaders to discuss how to make use of Hong Kong to boost foreign direct investment into the country, after reports suggested that last year’s total was 82 per cent lower than in 2022 and the lowest since 1993.

“Maintaining Hong Kong’s position as an international financial centre is becoming more important than ever to attract overseas investors amid the ongoing geopolitical challenges,” he said.

“But this could be tougher than ever, especially if Beijing continues to emphasise national security in the city.”



## China urges U.S. to stop interfering in Hong Kong affairs

01 March 2024, Xinhua

China urges the United States to respect China's sovereignty and immediately stop interfering in Hong Kong affairs, a Foreign Ministry spokesperson said on Friday.

In a press statement, the spokesperson of U.S. Department of State said that the United States is closely monitoring the implications of Hong Kong's national security legislation under Article 23 of the Basic Law for U.S. citizens, investments, and companies operating in Hong Kong and is concerned by the definitions of "state secrets" and "external interference" and the extraterritorial reach of Article 23, alleging that Article 23 would undermine the "one country, two systems" framework.

In response, spokesperson Mao Ning told a daily news briefing that China strongly deplores and firmly opposes the U.S. statement.

Mao noted that completing the legislation on Article 23 of the Basic Law and plugging loopholes to safeguard national security is the constitutional responsibility of the government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) and what must be done for the lasting stability and security in HKSAR and the sound implementation of One Country, Two Systems in the long run.

The just concluded public consultation has shown that the Hong Kong society has reached strong consensus to complete the legislation, Mao added.

The legislation on Article 23 targets a handful of criminals gravely endangering the national security and protects in accordance with law the rights and freedoms which the residents of Hong Kong enjoy under the Basic Law and the provisions of relevant international covenants as applied to Hong Kong, according to the spokesperson.

"Foreign citizens, investments, and companies operating in Hong Kong will also be protected in accordance with law," Mao said.

The extraterritorial effect of Article 23 is in strict compliance with international law and the common practices of all countries and regions, Mao said, adding that "state secrets" and "external interference" are defined with full consideration given to HKSAR's realities and the common practices of all countries. "The legislation is legitimate, lawful and beyond reproach."

The past three years since the Law of the PRC on Safeguarding National Security in the HKSAR was formulated and came into force are a period when Hong Kong has restored order and is set to thrive again, and when the international community cast a vote of confidence in Hong Kong's prospects, Mao said, adding that after the Article 23 legislation is

completed, Hong Kong's high-quality development and high-standard opening up will be better guaranteed and Hong Kong residents and international investors will benefit from it.

"The United States has issued troves of laws safeguarding its own national security but thrown dirt on and labeled the legislation on Article 23 of the Basic Law. This is out-and-out political manipulation and hypocritical double standards," Mao said.

Hong Kong is China's Hong Kong and Hong Kong affairs are purely China's internal affairs, which no country is in any position to point fingers at or interfere in, she stressed.

"We urge the United States to respect China's sovereignty, observe the principles guiding international law and the basic norms governing international relations, and immediately stop interfering in Hong Kong affairs which are China's internal affairs," Mao said.

## February

### Hong Kong is now over, says China's former good friend

13 February 2024, RFA

Once seen as a good friend of China's and former chairman of Morgan Stanley in Asia, Stephen Roach has said Hong Kong is over, attributing the city's "demise" to its domestic politics, China's structural problems and global developments namely worsening U.S.-China tensions.

"It pains me to admit it, but Hong Kong is now over," Roach wrote in a commentary in the Financial Times on Monday.

"Since the handover to China in 1997, the Hang Seng index has been basically flat, up only about 5%. Over that same period, the S&P 500 has surged more than fourfold; even mainland China's underperforming Shanghai Composite has far outdistanced the Hong Kong bourse."

Roach said the turning point for Hong Kong's decline was when former Chief Executive Carrie Lam introduced the extradition bill that triggered large-scale democratic demonstrations in 2019. Beijing's subsequent imposition of the national security law in 2020 "shredded any remaining semblance of local political autonomy," and cut the 50-year transition period to full Chinese takeover by half, he pointed out.

With the political change came an economic downturn on the back of waning confidence in the business and investment environment, as well as the legal framework, as reflected by foreigners, firms and even locals leaving the city.

According to Roach, Hong Kong's decline was due to a confluence of three factors. The first being local politics. A relatively stable environment was shaken by the 2019-2020 protests, which resulted in the Beijing-centric national security law.

Second was China's economic structural problems. While the Hong Kong stock market has always played a leveraging role in the mainland economy, the Chinese economy has recently "hit a wall". Structural problems, especially with high debt, deflation and an aging population, compounded by the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic and the real estate crisis, have weighed on the Hong Kong market.

Global developments are also not helping, primarily the worsening U.S.-China rivalry since 2018. In addition, the United States' "friendshoring" campaign has put pressure on Hong Kong's Asian allies to choose sides between the U.S. and China, driving a wedge between the city and its trading neighbors.

A "shock bomb"

Financial commentator Ngan Po Kong described the commentary as a "shock bomb" which could prompt others to re-evaluate the political risks of doing business in Hong Kong, given Roach wasn't just an investment banker, but holds sway in economic, political and business circles.

"Roach has been a 'great friend' of China's for many years. He is basically optimistic about China's economic reform and opening up, whether it is political or financial market performance. You can say he is a representative of the mainstream voice on Wall Street, an important voice that represents investment banks and financial institutions," Ngan said in a Radio Free Asia Cantonese talk show.

Separately, the American law firm Latham & Watkins LLP, is cutting off access to its international database for its Hong Kong lawyers this month, according to a separate FT report, citing unnamed sources familiar with the matter

The report said the move underscores the growing difficulties for multinational companies operating in Hong Kong, which made its name as an international financial hub, and comes after Beijing imposed anti-espionage and data laws restricting information flows out of China. The law firm is also separating the Hong Kong database from the rest of Asia to create a new database shared with the Beijing office, the report said.

Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee has vowed to complete legislation of Article 23 of the Basic Law – Hong Kong's mini constitution – with laws to prohibit acts of treason, secession, sedition and subversion against Beijing. Public consultation for the draft law ends this month.

## China says Messi's absence in Hong Kong match beyond 'realm of sports' as fury builds

08 February 2024, Reuters

HONG KONG, Feb 8 (Reuters) - Chinese state media, Hong Kong politicians and some fans swiftly condemned Argentine player Lionel Messi's participation in a match in Japan on Wednesday after staying on the bench just days earlier in a highly anticipated game in Hong Kong.

Many in the financial hub were dismayed on Sunday when the 36-year-old did not come onto the field during a much hyped Inter Miami match in front of a sell-out crowd, with fans demanding answers and a refund.

Miami head coach Gerardo "Tata" Martino said Messi was deemed unfit to play in Sunday's friendly in Hong Kong, but he came on as a 60th minute substitute against Vissel Kobe on Wednesday.

China's state-controlled Global Times said Messi's absence posed many questions on the differential treatment for Hong Kong.

"The match in Hong Kong became the only one in Messi's six pre-season friendly matches on this trip where he was absent. The situation ... has magnified these doubts and suspicions on the integrity of Inter Miami and Messi himself."

Some mainland fans travelled 12 hours from Xinjiang to Hong Kong to see Messi, the Global Times wrote, with the disappointment of the government and fans "entirely understandable. The impact of this incident has far exceeded the realm of sports."

Messi apologised to his Chinese fans on Weibo, a Chinese platform similar to X, just ahead of the game on Wednesday, saying it was a real shame he was not able to play in Hong Kong due to an injury.

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Hong Kong's Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau said in a statement that, like the fans, it was very disappointed that Messi could not play in Hong Kong due to injury.

"However three days later, Messi was able to play actively and freely in Japan ... the government hopes the organisers and teams can provide reasonable explanations."

Sports lawmaker Kenneth Fok said the incident "sprinkled salt wounds" on Hong Kong fans, while senior government advisor Regina Ip wrote on X that "Hong Kong people hate Messi, Inter-Miami and the black hand behind them, for the deliberate and calculate snub to Hong Kong."

Scott Wong, a 26-year-old cadet pilot, said that if Messi comes back to play in Hong Kong he would think twice before getting tickets, in case he is injured again. "All the backlash Inter Miami got, plus Messi, I think he feels like he needs to make up for it. That's why he promised to come back and play the game again."

### **China's Xi Jinping hails progress in integrating Hong Kong and Macau in speech ahead of Lunar New Year**

08 February 2024, South China Morning Post

Beijing has succeeded in further supporting the integration of Hong Kong and Macau with the mainland over the past year, Chinese President Xi Jinping said ahead of Lunar New Year.

Xi made the remarks at a state Lunar New Year gathering in Beijing on Thursday morning, according to official news agency Xinhua.

The annual gathering was hosted by Premier Li Qiang and attended by many serving and retired senior officials and generals, as well as a number of prominent scholars.

As he did in previous years, Xi mentioned Hong Kong and Macau, as well as Taiwan, in his speech.

"We have actively supported the better integration of Hong Kong and Macau into the overall development of the country," Xi said.

On Taiwan, he said Beijing had "strongly opposed separatist acts of Taiwan independence and interference by foreign forces, and resolutely defended the country's sovereignty, security and development interests".

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Domestically, he said the task of reform, development and maintaining stability in 2023 was "difficult and heavy".

Beijing regards Taiwan as part of its territory, to be reunified with the mainland by force if necessary. Most countries, including the United States, do not recognise Taiwan as an independent state, but Washington opposes any attempt to take the self-ruled island by force and is committed to supplying it with weapons.

In his speech, Xi described the international environment as "extraordinarily complicated", but he praised China's diplomacy in 2023, saying it had "brought certainty and positive energy to a world of change and chaos".

Domestically, he said the task of reform, development and maintaining stability in 2023 was "difficult and heavy".

He said a "good political ecology" had been consolidated over the past year by deepening the struggle against corruption.

An earlier tally by the Post showed that China's anti-corruption watchdog launched investigations into a record 45 senior officials last year, the most since Xi launched his anti-graft campaign in 2013.

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Xi also said Beijing had "resolutely implemented" a shift in Covid-19 control measures and promoted "economic recovery and development".

China lifted most of its Covid-19 restrictions in late 2022 and reopened its borders in early 2023. But its recovery lacked momentum as the economy was weighed down by a sluggish stock and property market and massive local debt.

Looking ahead to 2024, Xi said Beijing would "strengthen economic vitality, prevent and reduce risks, and enhance public expectations, so as to consolidate and strengthen the trend of economic recovery and improvement".

## **January**

### **China and Hong Kong broaden investment and financing links**

24 January 2024, Business Times

HONG Kong announced several measures to deepen financial links with China – including facilitating real estate purchases and expanding the Wealth Connect programme – to further integrate the city with the mainland.

Financial Secretary Paul Chan and other Hong Kong officials outlined six new measures on Wednesday (Jan 24), including opening China's onshore repo market and allowing bonds issued by the Chinese state as well as its policy banks as qualified collateral for the Hong Kong Monetary Authority's (HKMA) Renminbi Liquidity Facility.

Regulators also agreed to allow greater sharing of creditor information to facilitate cross border financing and to deepen the programme for the digital yuan, according to joint statements.

"These policies will further support Hong Kong's role as a key offshore RMB centre and a further rise of foreign holding of China onshore bonds," said Becky Liu, a strategist at Standard Chartered, in a note.

Authorities are stepping up to further financially integrate Hong Kong to the mainland after the city has struggled to regain momentum following years of strict Covid policies and the imposition of a national security law in 2020 that caused thousands to emigrate.

Starting from Feb 26, about 50 financial institutions will be eligible to pledge yuan-denominated onshore bonds as collateral with the HKMA. The de facto central bank said it will continue to explore more usage of onshore bonds.

From the same date, Wealth Connect will allow individual investments to be raised to 3 million yuan (S\$563,197) from 1 million yuan, and more funds will become eligible. Chinese and Hong Kong brokers will also be able to pair up to sell wealth management products for the first time, and financial institutions will be allowed to advise clients rather than just execute their trades.

The expansion is coming amid turmoil in both the mainland and Hong Kong markets as China's economy struggles. Chinese and Hong Kong stocks had lost more than US\$6 trillion in market value since a 2021 peak, but have rallied this week as Chinese officials signalled they would cut reserve rates and more forcefully support the market.

Hong Kong has been expanding its financial links with China over the past years, including setting up Stock and Bond Connects to allow cross-border investments. Wealth Connect, launched in 2021, allows for investments in the Greater Bay Area, a region of 70 million people that includes Hong Kong and megacities in the southern mainland such as Shenzhen and Guangzhou.

### **Hong Kong should allow mainland Chinese travellers from more cities to visit on individual trips, industry figures say**

15 January 2024, South China Morning Post

Hong Kong should allow visitors from more mainland Chinese cities to come on individual trips to increase the number of tourists staying overnight and strengthen the sector, industry representatives have said.

Alan Chan Chung-yee, the chief operations officer of the Miramar Group, which runs two hotels locally, on Monday noted that daily flights and train services operated between Hong Kong and 26 mainland

cities yet they were not covered by an official scheme for individual visitors.

"They comprise 17 cities that can be reached via the high-speed rail link and nine other cities that have direct flights to Hong Kong," he told a radio programme. "If we do not expand the coverage of the scheme, we are wasting these services."

The Individual Visit Scheme, introduced in 2003, allows residents from 49 mainland cities to visit Hong Kong in an individual capacity instead of with tour groups.

Expansions to the scheme have been debated over the years, with past officials citing concerns over sufficient infrastructure and potential disturbances to Hongkongers' daily lives because of an uptick in visitors. The scheme has not added any new cities since 2007.

"It has been 16 years since we last expanded the scheme, and the population of the cities that are currently covered only accounts for 30.1 per cent of the country's overall population," Chan said. "We have not tapped into the individual travel market yet."

The 26 cities serviced by daily flights and trains would add an extra 10.6 per cent of the country's population to the scheme, he said.

Separately, lawmaker Edward Lau Kwok-fan agreed the individual travel scheme should be expanded to more major cities such as Harbin, as its further distance meant visitors were likely to spend more days in Hong Kong if they came.

"Visitors from the mainland remain our main source of tourists," he said at a Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (DAB) press conference on Monday.

"Whether they choose to stay overnight or leave the same day, we believe they still have spending power. We should take advantage of that and continue to improve our connectivity with the mainland," he said. He added now was the "right time" to reintroduce the multiple-entry visa scheme for Shenzhen residents, which was halted in 2015 due to overcrowding and parallel trading issues, with the goal of eventually expanding it to the rest of the Greater Bay Area and Guangdong province.

Hong Kong welcomed 34 million visitors last year, with the figure from the Tourism Board for December reaching 65 per cent of the pre-pandemic level.

Economist Andy Kwan Cheuk-chiu said he did not foresee parallel trading problems, which were observed in previous years when the visa was still in place, returning.

"The spending habits of mainland tourists have changed and shopping here is not as attractive," he said. "If it was still a problem, we would have seen hints of it by now."

Chinese University economist Terence Chong Tai-leung agreed, saying: "That was nearly 10 years ago. They can easily find duty-free shopping in other places like Hainan Island [now]."

Both welcomed expanding the individual travel scheme to more cities as well, noting the city's slower-than-expected tourism recovery.

Other economists had previously poured cold water on the schemes in terms of their economic benefits, saying social conflicts could return along with more tourists.

Hong Kong Tourism Board executive director Dane Cheng Ting-yat said recently that it would be unrealistic to expect the number of tourists to reach a record 65 million recorded in 2018, which would "affect tourism experience and push up prices".

The city's largest source of tourists in 2023 was still the mainland, which accounted for more than 26.7 million. The fastest recovering markets were in Southeast Asia.

The number of travellers from the Philippines and Thailand in December were at 116 per cent and 106 per cent of pre-pandemic levels, respectively.

Half of all visitors last year chose to stay overnight, which was higher than before the pandemic.

Chan said the city had enough hotel rooms and border checkpoints to handle a larger number of individual visitors from the mainland.

"Sixteen years ago, there were not enough hotel rooms," he said. "We have 92,000 hotel rooms now and more than 100,000 rooms including guest houses. Last year, there were an average of 17,000 unoccupied hotel rooms per day, which is enough to handle more mainland cities.

"We have also opened many checkpoints in the past 16 years, such as Shenzhen Bay and Liantang-Heung Yuen Wai."

Tourism sector lawmaker Perry Yiu Pak-leung also said hotels could cope with more visitors staying overnight.

"During the New Year's countdown, not all hotels were full, except for those that offered a close view to the fireworks, which were almost full," he said.

"We hope to attract more overnight visitors so that our hotel and service industries can continue to develop in a more stable manner,"

He added that the city should host more events to attract tourists during non-peak seasons and organise more cultural tours to encourage visitors to stay the night.

Yiu said last year's visitor figure had exceeded his expectations, which showed that the industry was recovering. But the average occupancy rate at hotels stood at about 80 per cent as the industry was still facing a staff shortage, he noted.

At the DAB press conference, lawmaker Holden Chow Ho-ding said city authorities should also look

into expanding its tourism pool by looking to untapped international markets such as the Middle East.

Lawmaker Vincent Cheng Wing-shun said the government should take better advantage of mega events to attract visitors, such as football superstar Lionel Messi's visit to Hong Kong next month with Inter Miami CF.

"The streets should be filled with football promotions right now, but I don't see it," he said.

### Hong Kong crackdown turns Taiwan against China doctrine

15 January 2024, Times of India

TAIPEI: The fate of Hong Kong loomed over this weekend's Taiwan election, with Beijing's clampdown on freedoms in the finance hub turning voters firmly against China's doctrine of "one country, two systems".

Massive city-wide protests kicked off in Hong Kong in 2019, bringing hundreds of thousands of people to the streets demanding greater autonomy from China. Riot police suppressed the at times violent protests, and Beijing enacted a draconian national security law the following year to quell dissent – effectively silencing opposition voices in Hong Kong's once- raucous civil society.

A one-hour flight away in democratic Taiwan, voters watched the news in horror and overwhelmingly cast their ballots for President Tsai Ing-wen in the 2020 election.

Her campaign frequently invoked Hong Kong as a warning of what might lie ahead should China take control of Taiwan, as Beijing claims the island as its territory and has consistently vowed "unification".

Four years on, Hong Kong's current state – quietened with much of civil society slashed and many democracy activists and lawmakers fled abroad – has cemented Taiwanese opinions on China's doctrine governing the former British colony.

"Hong Kong is a case example of the failure of 'one country, two systems' for Taiwanese," Ivy Kwek of the International Crisis Group told AFP.

"A lot of Taiwanese look at Hong Kong and they really see that this is not the kind of (system) they would ever be able to accept."

You Sian-ming, a former police officer and now a travel agency manager, was firm as he declared his opposition to the Chinese doctrine.

"'One country, two systems' is just a lie told by the Chinese Communist Party when they wanted to take Hong Kong back," You told AFP, referring to Hong Kong's handover to China from Britain in 1997.

"It's a play of words to cover up their actual intention."

- Three parties reject -



China has never ruled out the use of force to seize Taiwan, and Chinese President Xi Jinping has in recent years upped the rhetoric of "unification".

But it remains deeply unpopular in democratic Taiwan, which for decades has had its own government, military, flag, and – as more than 90 percent of Taiwanese see it – identity.

The Chinese doctrine of "one country, two systems" permeated the political conversation in the lead-up to Saturday's poll – with all three presidential candidates firmly voicing their opposition to it.

Even the opposition Kuomintang – regarded as having the friendliest ties to Beijing and which campaigned on the platform of fostering closer cooperation with the mainland – resoundingly rejected it.

Kuomintang supporter You said he doesn't like the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), whose candidate Lai Ching-te comfortably won the top seat Saturday.

But he scoffed at being part of "one country" with China.

"Taiwan is Taiwan. We have our own land, our own government and our own army. I am loyal to only one country and it's called the Republic of China, Taiwan," the 58-year-old told AFP.

Rita Lo, a service industry worker in her 50s, said she cannot accept Taiwan becoming part of communist China in any manner.

"I don't like rule by force. If we become part of China, we won't be able to keep our democracy and our way of life," she said, adding: "Look how miserable Hong Kong has become".

'Not one country' -

The election saw many Hong Kong tourists visiting Taiwan to see the election, with some attending rallies and listening to Taiwanese argue over the different candidates.

"It feels like Hong Kong in 2019 when many people would come out for what they believed," said Gor Gor, 24, who attended DPP's final rally.

She added that whoever the Taiwanese chose, it should be a candidate that would not "let Taiwan morph into another Hong Kong".

Nearly 90 percent of Taiwanese support maintaining the status quo, in which the island neither declares formal independence – as it would enrage China – nor gets enfolded into the mainland.

"I just want to maintain the status quo, meaning not getting any worse but at the same time I am not eager to improve the relationship," said construction worker Mike, 28.

And if China wants "one country, two systems"?

"We are not in, because we are not one country," he said.

## **Hong Kong, mainland China in talks over bringing back multiple-entry visas for Shenzhen residents before Lunar New Year: government source**

11 January 2024, South China Morning Post

Talks are under way between Hong Kong and mainland China to resume a multiple-entry visa scheme for Shenzhen residents before Lunar New Year, a government source has said, with the retail sector praising the potential move as a boost for the economy.

But the insider on Thursday also said a final decision had not been made yet, as many cross-border measures required further discussion with mainland officials.

"It's possible [to resume the scheme before Lunar New Year]," the source said. "The government remains open to any measures that can help promote the city's tourism industry."

The talks were held as the director of Beijing's liaison office in Hong Kong, Zheng Yanxiong, went to Guangzhou to meet Guangdong party secretary Huang Kunming and the province's governor, Wang Weizhong, to exchange views on ways to enhance cooperation and boost development of the Greater Bay Area.

Huang said he hoped the liaison office would continue to guide and support Guangdong in collaborating with Hong Kong to promote construction of the bay area, according to a statement from the office.

He added efforts should be made to strengthen the "hard connectivity" of infrastructure and the "soft connectivity" of systems and rules, accelerate the integration of the bay area market, deepen industrial and technological cooperation, and join hands in building a high-level talent hub in the region.

Zheng said they would continue to act as the "super liaison officer" and "super server", and work with Guangdong to deepen cooperation in fields such as the economy, trade, science and technology. The bay area is Beijing's scheme to link Hong Kong, Macau and nine Guangdong cities into an economic powerhouse.

Lawmaker Michael Tien Puk-sun said he expected Hong Kong would bring back the visa scheme ahead of the holiday period in February, which would allow visitors from neighbouring Shenzhen to travel to the city more than the current once a week.

But Tien, who is also the convenor of political group Roundtable, said the negotiations could be complicated by Shenzhen not wanting to lose spending to Hong Kong.

"It's something Hong Kong really wants, but it becomes a concern for Shenzhen as both sides need to boost their economy," he said on a radio show. "If half of their population comes to Hong Kong to spend, this reduces their domestic consumption."

The multi-entry visa scheme was introduced in 2009 to allow Shenzhen residents to make as many trips as they wanted to Hong Kong within a year. It was replaced by once-a-week visit permits in 2015 amid concerns over parallel trading and Hong Kong's capacity to handle surges in single-day visitors.

"But now the situation is not balanced," Tien said. "Hongkongers can go to the mainland as frequently as they wish, but mainlanders can only come once a week."

He added that the current entry restrictions caused the city to lose out on tourist dollars over peak holiday periods, as many mainland visitors made day trips but could not return soon after they left.

He referred to a recent incident where thousands of mainland visitors became stranded as they tried to return home from Hong Kong on New Year's Day.

"Rooms were expensive or sold out, so mainland tourists had to leave," he said. "But after they leave, they cannot re-enter the city. So even if the government organises many events throughout the holidays, tourists cannot come back to participate."

More flexible entry requirements are not the only moves in the spotlight to boost tourism numbers and retail sales.

North district councillor Ko Wai-kei echoed recent calls by Starry Lee Wai-king, the city's sole delegate to the nation's top legislative body, for the central government to increase the duty-free goods allowance for mainland visitors returning home from 5,000 yuan (US\$702) to 30,000 yuan.

According to Chinese customs data, items exceeding the 5,000 yuan duty-free concession will be taxed from 13 to 50 per cent.

A 20 per cent duty is set to be levied on personal items, such as bags, watches and clothes, while jewellery, tobacco products and alcohol will be taxed at 50 per cent.

Tien raised the visa issue at a Legislative Council meeting on Wednesday, saying that while Hongkongers had been flocking to the mainland, the number of visitors coming from across the border had decreased significantly, which had dealt a heavy blow to local consumption.

Raistlin Lau Chun, acting secretary for culture, sports and tourism, told lawmakers the government had been in close communication with mainland authorities, but had nothing to add "at this stage".

The Hong Kong Department Stores and Commercial Staff General Union said a survey of 392 members between December 28 and January 5 showed that almost 70 per cent supported the resumption of the multiple-entry scheme, as the move would boost the local retail sector.

More than 65 per cent of members supported expanding the visa scheme to other parts of the Greater Bay Area, and half agreed the

government should manage crowds better to prevent traffic jams and pedestrians blocking roads.

Lam Chi-chung, chairman of the Electrical and Audio Visual Trades Employees Association, told the same radio show on Thursday that the industry supported the return of multiple-entry visas, even if consumer habits had changed and mainland tourists were no longer spending as heavily.

"They will publicise their positive experience in Hong Kong on social media and promote the city to their friends, who might want to come and see for themselves," he said. "This is helpful to Hong Kong's tourism."

Ko welcomed the news of the talks and said he believed the issue of parallel trading would not resurface after the relaxation.

"During the pandemic, many of these parallel trading businesses folded and workers switched jobs. The variety and price of goods available on the mainland are also competitive, I believe the demand for parallel traded items has fallen."

### **China Urges Countries to Fully Respect Fact that Hong Kong Has Returned To China: FM Spokesperson**

05 January 2024, Macau Daily Times

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson this week urged relevant countries to fully respect the fact that Hong Kong has already returned to China and abandon their colonial mentality.

Spokesperson Wang Wenbin made the remarks at a daily press briefing when asked to comment on a Hong Kong-related statement recently issued by countries including the United Kingdom and the United States in the name of "Media Freedom Coalition".

Noting this is a smear against press freedom in Hong Kong, an attack on the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government's legitimate law enforcement and a move to embolden those who are anti-China and engaged in destabilizing Hong Kong such as Jimmy Lai, Wang said China deplores and firmly rejects this so-called statement from a handful of countries in the name of "Media Freedom Coalition".

The cases of Julian Assange and Edward Snowden have already shown the world that the so-called "freedom of press" is just a tool some countries use to attack and smear others, Wang said.

"These countries care little about the freedom of press when their selfish interests are involved. They made irresponsible remarks on matters concerning Hong Kong in the name of freedom of press only because they are not happy that Hong Kong is prospering, and they still hope to keep their past privileges and influence in Hong Kong but to no avail," Wang said.

Wang said Hong Kong follows the rule of law, and all laws in Hong Kong must be observed and those who break the law must be held accountable.

"Since the national security law entered into effect in Hong Kong, Hong Kong has restored order and is set to thrive.

The rule of law has been upheld and justice served. The lawful rights and freedoms including the freedom of press and freedom of speech of Hong Kong residents have been protected in a safe and stable environment under the rule of law," Wang said.

The spokesperson said that the number of international media outlets and journalists in Hong Kong has increased from before the national security law was introduced. "This is a fact that could not be denied by any unbiased person," he added.

"In recent years, over 100 countries spoke up in multilateral fora, including the third committee of UNGA and Human Rights Council, to voice their support for China in various ways on matters concerning Hong Kong. This fully shows that the world is not blind to the truth," Wang said.

"Any attempt to interfere in Hong Kong affairs in the name of the freedom of press is doomed to fail," he said.

the number of books indicated the detained practitioners intended to distribute them to others, which called for heavier penalties.

While four women were prosecuted separately, the two men, Sun and Guo, were tried in the Yakeshi City court and received their sentences on September 23, 2024. That defense arguments were not examined seriously was something so obvious that even the Hulunbuir Intermediate Court had to agree uncharacteristically with the defendants and order a retrial.

However, the retrial ended with the sentences confirmed. The defendants appealed again but this time the Hulunbuir Intermediate Court did not hold a public hearing. It decided in chambers on September 23, 2024, that the appeal was rejected.

This decision remained unknown to the defendants' relatives until last week. They hired lawyers to know more but they were told that they cannot visit their clients at the Yakeshi City Detention Center.

The case was plagued by repeated irregularities. The only certainty is that Sun and Guo should spend long years in jail just for having being caught with Falun Gong literature in their homes.

## China- Mongolia

### Heavy Jail Sentences Against Falun Gong Practitioners in Southern Mongolia

05 November 2024, Bitter Winter, Yang Feng

Amid claims of legal irregularities, two men got respectively seven and seven and a half years for keeping books of the banned movement in their homes.

We should not become accustomed to it. Spending seven years or more in a Chinese jail just for practicing one's faith and (perhaps) sharing it is not "normal." Considering also how prisoners of conscience are mistreated in Chinese prisons, these verdicts are just unacceptable. Yet, they are now so frequent that the world scarcely pays attention.

Trials are also conducted in a cavalier way. This was the case for two Falun Gong practitioners of Yakeshi City, Inner Mongolia, Sun Wentian and Guo Changsuo, sentenced respectively to seven and a half and seven years in jail after a strange trial.

Sun and Guo were part of a group of six Falun Gong practitioners whose houses were raided by the Yakeshi City Public Security on April 8 and 19, 2023. Police claimed that they found "several" Falun Gong books in their homes. Although a list of the books was never provided, the police claimed that

### After 'Xizang' for 'Tibet', is it 'Northern frontier' for 'Inner Mongolia'?

04 September 2024, Tibetan Review

After a new insistence on using the Chinese term "Xizang" (western treasure) to refer to Tibet (and Tibet Autonomous Region) even in English-language media, party authorities in China are now calling for the phrase "northern frontier culture" rather than "Mongolian" for China's Inner Mongolia region, said US-based journal Foreign Policy in its weekly China Brief email service Sep 3.

The linguistic change may signal another target in ongoing attempts by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to crush minority cultures in (People's Republic of) China, especially those in the border regions, the report said.

The report noted that until 1911, all of Mongolia was under the control of the Qing Empire, which also ruled China. Out of ecological and cultural concerns, the Qing's Manchu rulers blocked Han Chinese settlement in Mongolia.

However, after the 1850-64 Taiping rebellion and the resulting sharp decline in Qing power, Han settlers flooded into Inner Mongolia. And the region continued to remain under Chinese control.

On the other hand, the present-day Mongolia became a Soviet satellite and later on an independent country.

The report noted that although clashes between Han Chinese and Mongols left tensions that lasted

through the 1966-76 Cultural Revolution, until recently, Inner Mongolia was seen as a model of relative peace and assimilation.

However, in the last four years, educational changes have targeted Mongolian language and culture, and protests in the region in 2020 were met with repression, the report noted.

### China tries 11 Mongol herders for defending traditional land

06 August 2024, UCA News



Police arrest a herder in Urad Front Banner in Mongolia. (Photo:<https://smhric.org>)

The families of nearly a dozen herders branded "criminals" and standing trial in Inner Mongolia have accused local Chinese authorities of aiding and abetting a mining company to illegally occupy their traditional grazing lands.

The trial which has dragged on for more than 90 days is expected to end next week.

In a statement, the families said they "have lived on the grasslands of Urad Front Banner and maintained a pastoralist way of life for generations," the Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center (SMHRIC) reported on Aug. 5

"Jiranhoyor [their head] has appealed to the relevant [authority] multiple times. The destruction of grassland has never been resolved. Now, these 11 herders have become 'criminals' overnight," the families added.

Jiranhoyor is the former head of the Taigiin-Enger Gachaa of Bayanhuaa Township who led the local herders to defend their legal rights, the families said. The Bayannuur League Public Security Bureau also reportedly arrested Sumyaa, Sumbur, Daichin, Munkhsumbur, Nars, Naranbat, Hurwaa, Wei Meili, Hong Wuyi, and Aldart for the first time in August 2020 and detained them multiple times since. The herders have been detained for periods ranging from 37 days to 18 months without "legal due process," the SMHRIC said.

Photographs and videos posted on the SMHRIC website showed sick and elderly herders being taken

into custody in wheelchairs and some being handcuffed and shackled to hospital beds.

The herders have been defending the alleged illegal occupation of their lands and environmental destruction by multiple Chinese mining companies, including Huo Tuo Mine, for more than a decade, the SMHRIC said.

In a statement issued in 2020, the Bayannuur security bureau called the herders "gangs" and alleged they were "long engaged in evil deeds and illegal activities, seriously sabotaging the local economy, disturbing public orders, and creating adverse social effects." Urnaa, a daughter of Jiranhoyor, told SMHRIC that her father and the other herders were only protesting the mining companies for illegally occupying and destroying their grazing lands.

"As mining companies beating up and abusing local herders become commonplace, herders from our community often gathered together to block the mining trucks," Urnaa said.

"These peaceful and legal activities are now labeled as 'crimes,'" Urnaa lamented.

Urnaa pointed out that Jiranhoyor was diagnosed with bladder cancer before his arrest in 2020 and he had to undergo several surgeries and chemotherapy before he was arrested again for the second time in 2021.

Sumyaa, Urnaa's mother, was detained for more than 17 months for signing the petition against the mining company.

Sumbur, a herder, who has been suffering from serious rheumatoid arthritis was handcuffed and shackled on a hospital bed during the detention, according to photos and video footage shared by Urnaa, SMHRIC said.

"Sumbur was not even able to walk and hold a teacup by himself. But he was taken away in a wheelchair by the police," Urnaa alleged.

Naranbat, another local herder, was the longest-serving detainee at the Urad Front Banner Detention Center.

The center in a release notice said Naranbat was released on bail pending trial on Dec. 1, 2022, after serving an 18-month detention without trial, SMHRIC said.

Reportedly, the local public prosecution authorities have revised the indictment against the 11 herders four times in over four years due to insufficient evidence and legal basis.

The latest revision took place on July 25 during the most recent trial.

Meanwhile, Jiranhoyor's family members alleged that the mining companies had bribed the local police and authorities.

SMHRIC pointed out that Chinese authorities have accelerated the resource extraction from Southern



Mongolia which has prompted giants like Shenhua and Changqing to arrive in the country. Allegedly, many have opened mines without the consent of locals sparking tensions in the region. In 2011, a large-scale protest erupted after a Mongolian herder was brutally killed by a Chinese coal-hauling truck. Thousands of herders were arrested and detained, and their leaders have been imprisoned, SMHRIC said.

**A Letter to UN Special Rapporteur on the  
Independence of Judges and Lawyers by the  
Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information  
Center**

20 May 2024, SMHRIC

Her Excellency Ms. Margaret Satterthwaite United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers OHCHR-UNOG

Your Excellency Ms. Margaret Satterthwaite,  
We write to you once again, following up on our previous correspondence from last autumn. We trust this letter finds you well. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to you for your impactful visit to Mongolia last autumn, followed by your insightful report. Your efforts have undoubtedly shed light on the critical need to fortify judicial independence and uphold human rights within the country.

As a coalition of organisations, comprising individuals of Mongolian heritage residing abroad and advocating for the rights of our respective Mongolian heritage communities, we are deeply troubled by the worsening state of democracy, civil rights, and judicial independence in Mongolia. Our collective concern extends to the enduring adverse impact on individuals of Mongolian heritage residing outside Mongolia, particularly those under the jurisdictions of authoritarian regimes such as China, Russia, and others. It is therefore imperative that we address these pressing issues to safeguard the rights and well-being of our communities. Currently subjected to colonisation and authoritarian rule, our communities face further adversity due to Mongolia's deteriorating democracy and the encroaching influence of authoritarianism from its immediate neighbours.

Recent developments indicate grave interference in electoral processes by the Mongolian People's Party (MPP), led by Prime Minister Oyun-Erdene Luvsannamsrai, in anticipation of the upcoming parliamentary elections. The actions of the MPP appear aimed at solidifying their victory and severely kinking dissent. Political interference in the judiciary, reminiscent of old Communist tactics, is intensifying. This interference has led to a

crackdown on journalists and citizens under the guise of national security, utilising restrictive tort laws excessively and abusively. Of particular concern is the ease with which individuals, including journalists, can be charged with crimes such as defamation against the Prime Minister, the President, and infringement of others' rights, in effect stifling dissent and criticism. Prime Minister Oyun-Erdene Luvsannamsrai has gained notoriety for exploiting these laws to suppress dissenting voices. The erosion of democratic values and principles is evident, with the use of tort laws to silence dissent posing a grave threat to freedom of expression and the rule of law in Mongolia.

We urge the international community, including your esteemed office, to intensify efforts to closely monitor the situation in Mongolia and to take decisive action to address our concerns. Specifically, we call for condemnation of political interference in the judiciary, advocacy for the protection of journalists and freedom of the press, support for initiatives promoting transparency and accountability, and consideration of targeted sanctions against individuals responsible for human rights abuses. Finally, we call upon the international community to bring pressure on the Mongolian government to uphold the rule of law abiding by international conventions of freedom and justice.

Furthermore, we draw your attention once again to the case of Mr. Munkhbayar Chuluundorj, whose unjust imprisonment symbolises the broader challenges facing Mongolia's judiciary system as well as the transnational repression exerted by the government of the neighbouring People's Republic of China (PRC). Mr. Chuluundorj's journalism, which includes critiques of the Chinese government's treatment of Mongols in China and the Mongol-Sino relationship, has long irritated the Communist authorities in Peking. The timing of his arrest, closely following the Prime Minister's return from Peking, begs the question of whether it was truly coincidental. An especially alarming recent development in this case is the suspension of legal licenses of two of Mr. Chuluundorj's attorneys without due process, terminating their ability to earn a living in their profession. Additionally, it is worth noting that aside from the potential persecution of Mr. Chuluundorj at China's behest, the Prime Minister harbours personal animosity towards Chuluundorj due to his outspoken criticism of the Prime Minister's politics and conduct, as well as calls for his resignation. We implore you to prioritise this case and utilise your platform to advocate for Mr. Chuluundorj's release and the restoration of justice.

Thank you for your attention to these urgent matters. We trust in your dedication to upholding the principles of democracy, freedom, and justice, and



eagerly anticipate your continued efforts to support the democratic aspirations of the Mongolian people.

Sincerely,

Altan Seseg - Buryat Folk Dance Ensemble,  
USABuryaad Mongol United Association Inc.,  
USACommittee of Buryat Independence,  
USACongress of the Buryat People, USAHazara  
Organization for Peace and Equality (HOPE),  
USAIinner Mongolia People's Party's,  
JapanInterMongol Network, USAKalmyk Mongolian  
Buddhist Center, USAMongol Heritage Foundation,  
USAOirat-Kalmyk People's Congress, USASouthern  
Mongolian Human Rights Information Center,  
USATusgaar Buryad Mongolia, USAWorld Mongol  
Federation - Europe, SwedenWorld Mongol  
Federation - Japan, JapanWorld Mongol Federation -  
USA, United StatesZerd - Mongol Folk Music Group,  
USA

### China recruits Mandarin-speaking teachers to move to Inner Mongolia

06 May 2024, RFA, Qian lang



Mongolians protest against China's plan to introduce Mandarin-only classes at schools in the Chinese province of Inner Mongolia, at Sukhbaatar Square in Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia on September 15, 2020.

Chinese authorities in the northern part of Inner Mongolia are hiring teachers from across China, offering attractive packages to encourage fresh graduates who are native Mandarin speakers to settle in the region, according to recent recruitment notices.

The move appears to be part of a nationwide move to eradicate the use of Mongolian in primary and secondary education, overseas activists said.

Primary and secondary schools across the region were ordered to end Mongolian-medium instruction and to offer only Chinese-medium teaching from Sept. 1, 2023.

Authorities in Otog Front Banner, a county-like administrative division outside Ordos city, are looking to recruit 40 high-school teachers of Chinese, math,

science, English as well teachers of history, geography and "ideology and politics," according to a recruitment ad dated April 25 posted to the Gaoxiaojob.com jobs board.

They are also looking for 30 primary school teachers, nine to teach Chinese, with other vacancies available for teachers of math, English, science and other subjects, the notice said.

It added that successful applicants from top-tier universities can expect to receive a "resettlement allowance," with accommodation provided. Applicants must be under 30 years of age, according to the ad.

Similar advertisements have also been posted by authorities looking for 70 primary and secondary teachers to fill posts in Ordos city, and 20 people to teach preschool in Shilingol Banner, near the border with the independent country of Mongolia.

The recruitment drive comes as Inner Mongolia Vice Gov. Bao Xianhua called in a signed opinion article in the ruling Chinese Communist Party's official mouthpiece, the People's Daily, for "a team of teachers with excellent skills, providing a strong guarantee for the building of a strong regional education system, who will write the next chapter of the modernization of Inner Mongolia, Chinese-style."

Phasing out Mongolian

Activists said the move is part of the government's bid to erase Mongolian language and culture from the region's schools.

It comes as schools complete the phasing out of Mongolian in favor of Mandarin as a medium of instruction for non-language classes including history, math and science — a policy that sparked mass protests by parents and students followed by a regionwide crackdown when it was announced in September 2020.

An ethnic Mongolian teacher from Shilingol League who gave only one name, Tana, said that ethnic Mongolian teachers in the region's primary and secondary have been left out in the cold by the switch to Mandarin across the board, and are struggling with delivering class in their second language.

"It's a bit easier in primary schools, but junior high school teachers who used to teach in Mongolian are suddenly having to teach in Mandarin," Tana said.

"This generation of teachers finds it very hard to teach certain subjects now that they suddenly have to teach in Chinese."

Tana said her school had informed teachers who are unable to make the transition to Mandarin would need to retire early or be redeployed in the pastoral team.

"They called a meeting of ethnic Mongolian teachers and said that either we have to teach in Chinese, or take jobs in the dormitories or the canteen," she said.

Nearly impossible expectation

Ordos-born Yang Haiying, a professor at Japan's Shizuoka University who has written a history of the "genocide" of ethnic Mongolians during the political violence of the Chinese Communist Party's 1966-76 Cultural Revolution, said it's almost impossible for many native speakers of Mongolian to suddenly switch to teaching their subjects in Mandarin.

"They are expected to teach chemistry in Chinese. Equations, physics, theory, etc.," he said. "This is tantamount to forced layoffs, because [the government] knows very well that the ethnic Mongolians won't be able to do this."

The fact that authorities in the region are recruiting heavily for the next academic year suggests that many ethnic Mongolians have either left, or are on their way out of, the workforce.

"They're recruiting from the rest of China for young people to bring their families, which is a disguised settlement program," Yang said.

Japan-based ethnic Mongolian activist Haas, who goes by a single name, said the aim is to marginalize ethnic Mongolians, who were trained in their native language to teach in that language.

"The Chinese Communist Party's policy is not to allow them to stay on [in their posts]," Haas said. "They want to separate them from mainstream society, because the authorities fear they will obstruct the policy when it comes to be implemented."

"So they're trying to kick all of the ethnic Mongolian teachers out."

'Colonial policy'

Authorities began merging Chinese-medium and Mongolian-medium schools across the region, forcing around 1 million ethnic Mongolian children from rural areas into more than 2,000 boarding schools, according to a Feb. 21, 2024, report by the head of the New York-based Southern Mongolia Human Rights and Information Center, Enghebatu Togocho. "[The] boarding school system ... is an integral part of China's overall colonial policy of wiping out the language, culture and identity of the entire Southern Mongolian population as a whole," the report said, adding that it had gone hand-in-hand with government policies aimed at ending Mongolian herders' nomadic way of life.

"Now the Chinese government is targeting the Southern Mongolians' last defense of national identity that is the language," Enghebatu Togocho wrote. "From kindergartners to college students, from teachers to professors, from ordinary herders to party members, the entire [ethnic] Mongolian population is subjected to [a] massive training program."

During the "training" sessions, ethnic Mongolians are condemned for expressing their ethnic identity, for singing Mongolian songs and wearing Mongolian

clothes, as well as for not having enough Han Chinese friends or being nice to Chinese people, he said.

Instead, they are expected to embrace Han Chinese language, culture and traditions.

## China – Nepal

### December

#### Nepal, China universities sign collaboration agreement

30 December 2024, Kathmandu Post

Lumbini Buddhist University and Beijing Language and Culture University to work together on cultural exchange, language education, and research.

Lumbini Buddhist University and Beijing Language and Culture University have signed a collaboration agreement in the presence of Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli.

At an event held at the Prime Minister's official residence in Baluwatar, officials from Lumbini Buddhist University and Beijing Language and Culture University exchanged the agreement documents.

As per the agreement, both universities will collaborate on cultural exchange, language teaching, and research initiatives. Additionally, a Nepal Institute of China will be established in Beijing, and a China Institute of Nepal will be set up in Lumbini.

This agreement builds on an earlier understanding between Nepal and China to promote volunteer-based Chinese language teaching during PM Oli's official visit to China from December 2–5.

Speaking on the occasion, Prime Minister Oli, who is also the Chancellor of Lumbini Buddhist University, expressed happiness over the growing academic and cultural ties between Nepal and China. "The two nations share a centuries-old bond, and this collaboration marks another step forward in strengthening our relationship," Oli said.

The event was attended by National Planning Commission member Geeta Kumari Paudyal Adhikari, Lumbini University's Registrar Dr Tilak Ram Acharya, and officials from the Chinese Embassy in Nepal, among others.

## Himalayan Yak: No more treasure for mountain people as Tibet restricts trade

24 December 2024, The Kathmandu Post, Ananda Gautam

Due to the restrictions that started since Covid, yak population has risen significantly, causing a burden for herders along the Nepal-China border.



Nupu Sherpa of Tokpegola, situated around 4,100 meters above sea level in Mikwakhola Rural Municipality in Taplejung, sold 20 yaks in Tibet, China, back in 2019.

He earned Rs110,000 per head, as there were no border restrictions on taking yaks to the Chinese market.

Sherpa and five other herders in Thudam, Sankhuwasabha, a higher pass known as a centre for yak herding, used to sell yaks by crossing the Chinese border.

During the pre-Covid period in 2019, the last time they traded yaks to Tibet, they brought Rs5 million each.

But since then, they have not been able to export yaks to Tibet.

"While trading in Tibet at that time, the 1 Chinese yuan was equivalent to Rs16," said Sherpa. "I have heard that the rate has increased, but sadly, we cannot sell yaks anymore."

Sherpa currently owns 75 yaks, and all are mature enough to be sold. Normally, yaks have a life expectancy of 15-20 years, and after that, they turn thin and old. So, the commercial value of yak is at the age of 12.

"The old yak does not fetch a good price, so selling them while they are still valuable is important," said Sherpa. Now, to make ends meet, Sherpa has been making dog chews from yak milk.

In the upper reaches, when the market in Tibet was open and vibrant, yaks were used as pack animals. "But now, rearing yaks has become a burden for many people," said Sherpa.

Nearly 180 households like Sherpa's have the same problem—no market access.

According to the Yak Farmers Federation, Taplejung, each family is rearing between five to 400 yaks.

Sherpa, also president of the federation, said that their only alternative is to let yaks die.

Yak farmers have requested Netra Prasad Sharma, chief district officer, to raise the issue with the officials on the other side of the border.

Accordingly, on December 14, a meeting was held between the key officials of Taplejung and Dinggye County in southwest Tibet.

"We have raised the issue, including to allow trade of agricultural products. It was the main agenda from our side at the meeting, but Tibet showed reluctance to resolve the issue faced by Nepalis living at the Nepal-China border point," said Sharma.

During the meeting, the Chinese representative said that Beijing would make the decision regarding livestock trade and that they would make requests to the higher authority.

"We are hopeful the issue will be addressed," said Sharma.

The border people tried to export yak, milk, dog chew and ghee on different occasions but were returned, said Sharma.

Kimathanka in Sankhuwasabha and 13 other trans-Himalayan trade points along the Nepal-China border were reopened in May after four years of closure.

In May, then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Narayan Kaji Shrestha reached Tibet through the Kimathanka border point, and Vice-chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Region Silang Nima jointly opened the traditional trading points amid a function in the Tibetan town of Chentang.

They announced the reopening of 14 of the 21 trading points in various districts along Nepal's mountain range.

Chinese authorities closed the border passes in January 2020 to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, which severely disrupted the livelihoods of Nepalis living in remote mountain villages close to Tibet.

"We have raised the issue at Nepal's home ministry," said Sharma.

The locals who lost one of the crucial markets after Covid-19 were hopeful that the reopening of the border in May for people and trade movements would revive the yak trade.

The residents in far-flung northern borders believe that the trade restrictions have also affected Tibet.

Mingma Diki of Olangchung Gola said her family would buy yak calves from Tibet, rear them in Nepal and sell them back to Tibet after they matured.

"It's strange that free trade with Tibet has stopped altogether."

Locals suspected that China might have stopped the yak trade due to lumpy skin disease that spread in

Nepal in 2023. The first outbreak of lumpy skin disease in Nepal started in June 2020. By 2023, more than 48,000 cattle have died from the disease that has affected all of the country's 77 districts. More than 3,000 livestock were affected by lumpy skin in Taplejung, according to the Livestock Service Office.

Tibet, however, has not officially made any statement about stopping yaks from coming from Nepal.

"We submitted a special proposal on this issue, but Beijing declined it," said Chheten Sherpa Lama, ward chairman of Phaktalung rural municipality, who was in the Nepali delegation with chief district officer Sharma, to Tibet as a translator.

The population of yak has been increasing and causing additional burden to farmers, said Lama.

"Feeding yaks is becoming increasingly difficult, and fodder shortages are adding to our hardship."

As per the District Livestock Office statistics, there are around 8,000 yaks in Taplejung.

The federation said that even if a yak is priced at Rs50,000, Taplejung has yaks worth Rs400 million.

Around 60 percent of yaks are at the age to be sold.

Locals of the mountain region have been rearing yaks at 3,000 to 5,000 metres as their traditional occupation. They are reared particularly in the higher passes of Sirijunga, Phaktalung, Mikwakhola, Meringden and Phungling.

According to the locals, yaks have also become prey to snow leopards, bears and wolves.

**China-Nepal railway to be a game changer,  
transform Nepal from landlocked to landlinked:  
former envoy**

23 December 2024, People's Daily Online, Yin Yeping

The China-Nepal cross-border railway project will be a game changer in the trans-Himalayan region connecting not only Nepal and China but also China and South Asia as a whole, Leela Mani Paudyal, a former Nepali ambassador to China, told the Global Times in an exclusive interview.

The remarks came as China-Nepal ties have been further strengthened after the visit of Nepali Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli to China earlier this month. During the visit, important consensuses were reached, including a pledge to "steadily advance the feasibility study of the Jilong/Keyrung-Kathmandu Cross-Border Railway, and planning to hold the 9th Working Meeting on China-Nepal Railway Cooperation," per a joint statement.

The Chinese side will continue to help Nepal train professionals in the field of railways. Both sides also expressed their readiness to sign the memorandum of understanding on building the Trans-Himalayan Multi-

Dimensional Connectivity Network, according to the joint statement.

Talking about the significance of this project for China-Nepal bilateral trade and Nepal's economic development, Paudyal said that "the railway will enable Nepal to utilize the transit facility available to Nepal via China... The railway will transform Nepal from a landlocked country to land-linked one," the former envoy said.

China-Nepal bilateral trade has seen robust growth. From January to November 2024, it amounted to 13.50 billion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 18.1 percent, according to the latest data released by China's General Administration of Customs. Both imports and exports saw steady growth.

Given what has already been achieved, there is still potential for bilateral trade to be further boosted after the railway project is launched, the former Nepali ambassador said, adding that the railway will help link some of Nepal's industries to the value chain of Chinese production. "The railway will certainly boost trade and investment in Nepal," he said.

The railway project will not only support trade but also tourism, Paudyal said, as Nepal has become a popular travel destination for many Chinese visitors. According to data from the Nepali tourism authority, in November alone, at least 114,501 tourists visited the country, 9,458 of whom were from China.

During the Nepali Prime Minister's visit to China, the Chinese side expressed support for Nepal's declaration of 2025 as Nepal Visit Year in China, the Xinhua News Agency reported, indicating closer ties in the tourism sector between China and the South Asian country.

In a previous interview with the Global Times, Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Chen Song said that the China-Nepal railway comprises both a Chinese and Nepali section, and both sides were accelerating efforts to promote the project.

Meanwhile, Southwest China's Xizang Autonomous Region is steadfastly promoting the Xigaze-Jilong section of the railway according to its 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25), which includes planning and building a stretch of railway at Jilong Port, Chen said, noting that related projects will constantly enhance the autogenic capacity of Nepal's economy and give wings to Nepal's development.

The railway project is just one example of growing China-Nepal bilateral cooperation. Paudyal said that China's support for Nepal's development efforts is commendable.

"Both the Belt and Road Initiative and Chinese support were aimed at facilitating the socio-economic development of Nepal; therefore, we reject any attempt to make this development initiative a geopolitical issue," Paudyal said, referring to some



foreign media reports smearing China-Nepal cooperation.

### Nepal embraces China's BRI

18 December 2024, The Pioneer, Parul Chandra

Nepal's deepening ties with China through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) have set alarm bells ringing in New Delhi

India has cause for extreme worry. In yet another indicator of China's growing sway over Nepal, the two are moving forward to implement Beijing's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in the Himalayan nation. India is not only opposed to this in principle on grounds of sovereignty but also fears it will enable China to increase its already considerable inroads into Nepal.

If 2017 marked Nepal's initial step to coming on board the BRI with an MoU, the year 2024 marks a giant leap for the Himalayan nation in that direction. A framework agreement for cooperation on the BRI was signed during Nepalese PM K P Sharma Oli's visit to China in early December, apart from nine other pacts. With the strategically located Himalayan nation having become a hub for Great Powers contestation, the US too would be uneasy with the latest Beijing-Kathmandu tango. While the US had managed to get Nepal on board its own Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compact to fund Kathmandu's power and transport infrastructure, the BRI seems far broader. Kathmandu is trying to play down the framework as just a continuation of the 2017 MoU. The framework, however, underlines Kathmandu and Beijing's renewed push for the BRI, an initiative on which New Delhi harbours deep suspicions for what it perceives as China's hegemonic ambitions through debt-trap diplomacy. Sovereignty is another major concern, with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), another project under BRI, passing through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

India is certainly worried about PM Oli-led Nepal once again moving into China's sphere of influence. The CPN-UML leader is widely seen as being pro-China, and bilateral ties with India were prickly during his previous stints as the PM. India has yet to host Oli since he took charge as PM in July this year for the fourth time, with him first heading for Beijing, in a break from the tradition of visiting New Delhi. Also, showing scant regard for New Delhi's sensitivities, the Oli government recently allowed 220 Buddhist monks from China to travel to Lumbini, the birthplace of Gautam Buddha even as the Nanhai Buddhism Shenzhen roundtable was being held in Kathmandu.

Oli delivered the inaugural address at this roundtable. There were also reports the China-

appointed Panchen Lama would travel to Lumbini, though it did not eventually happen.

The Oli government's encouragement of Beijing's concerted moves to claim Buddhism as a shared heritage will not go down well with New Delhi, which has been making its efforts to build on its shared Buddhist heritage with Nepal.

Kathmandu's thrust on greater economic cooperation with Beijing – the BRI is part of this endeavour – would also whittle down India's influence over Nepal. The BRI framework agreement, incidentally, also envisages the opening of branches of Chinese banks and financial institutions in Nepal. India has traditionally had deep economic linkages with Nepal, nurtured in no small measure due to reasons of geography – the two neighbours share a long and porous 1,751-km-long border.

This, along with the landlocked nature of Nepal, has helped India become its largest trading partner. During the 2022-23 fiscal, bilateral trade was pegged at \$8.85 billion. This included \$8 billion of exports from India to Nepal, with \$840 million of exports in the reverse direction. As per the Nepal Rastra Bank, India's share in Nepal's trade accounted for 64.1% in 2022-23. PM Oli sees cooperation on BRI as a means to forge closer economic ties with China, with the framework agreement resolving to deepen the economic partnership by "injecting new momentum to trade, infrastructure and connectivity cooperation".

Not a single project under the BRI rubric has been executed in Nepal since the 2017 MoU. Nepal would be hoping that the 10 initial projects, including those meant to boost regional connectivity, will now see the light of day. India has its work cut out and should ensure it does not come across as overbearing. India's approach in the Kalapani-Lipulekh-Limpiyadhura border dispute, where New Delhi ignored Kathmandu's request for foreign secretary-level talks, is a case in point.

It led Oli, in his earlier stint as the PM, to cock a snook at New Delhi by changing his country's map showing the disputed territories as part of Nepal.

Neither did New Delhi show respect due to a close neighbour when it decided to give a quiet burial to the joint 2018 Eminent Persons Group (EPG) report, which suggested that the 1950 Treaty of Peace And Friendship be replaced with a new one?

Nepal has also been unhappy with India's refusal to give overflight rights for aircraft using the Chinese-built Gautam Buddha International Airport in Lumbini.

India would do well to remember that its domineering approach only serves to alienate a close neighbour further and push it into China's ever-willing embrace. India should not lose sight of its strategic imperatives.



## Chinese class restarted for Nepali journalists

16 December 2024, Xinhua

The Chinese class was relaunched on Monday for 40 Nepalese journalists from different media outlets.

In addition to basic Chinese language knowledge, special courses catering to journalistic work were offered as well, said Li Shuangcheng, director of the Confucius Institute at Kathmandu University.

Addressing the opening ceremony held at the Confucius Institute situated in Lalitpur, Li noted that Chinese cultural elements were integrated into the course, allowing the learners to appreciate the charm of Chinese culture and enhance their comprehensive understanding of Chinese society and people.



Li Shuangcheng, director of the Confucius Institute at Kathmandu University, addresses the opening ceremony of a Chinese class for Nepalese journalists at the Confucius Institute in Lalitpur, Nepal, Dec. 16, 2024. The Chinese class was relaunched on Monday for 40 Nepalese journalists from different media outlets. (Photo by Sulav Shrestha/Xinhua)

Kishor Shrestha, chairman of the Nepal-China Media Forum, recalled that the Chinese class was first started in May 2019 and had to be halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sharing his own experiences, Shrestha urged the learners to learn both the Chinese language and characters, stressing that Chinese is becoming an international language gradually.

"The Chinese language is one of the most spoken languages in the world and I'm really excited to be a part of this class," said Shristi Kafle, one of the learners.

"I believe that if I master this language, it will help me understand China, Chinese history and Chinese society better, and it will also help me to enhance my reporting skills about China," she added.

Kishor Shrestha, chairman of the Nepal-China Media Forum, speaks at the opening ceremony of a Chinese class for Nepalese journalists at the Confucius Institute in Lalitpur, Nepal, Dec. 16, 2024. The Chinese class was relaunched on Monday for 40 Nepalese journalists from different media outlets.

(Photo by Sulav Shrestha/Xinhua)

## Nepal media note absence of Beijing's Panchen Lama

16 December 2024, Free Tibet

Gyaltzen Norbu, was reportedly due to travel to a Chinese-organised Buddhist conference in Nepal

Over the weekend, Nanhai Buddhism Shenzhen Roundtable took place in Nepal. 220 Chinese Buddhist monks arrived on a chartered flight for the Chinese-organised Buddhist events in Kathmandu and Lumbini.

Tibet watchers were paying particular attention to this delegation after reports last week that the Chinese-imposed Panchen Lama, Gyaltzen Norbu, would be among them.

One report in the online newspaper Nepal Aaja, suggested that Gyaltzen Norbu would arrive in Nepal on 14 December. The article noted that the visit of Beijing's Panchen Lama was "part of China's effort to extend its influence over Buddhist communities in South Asia", with the Chinese government appearing to be "leveraging cultural and religious diplomacy to reinforce its soft power." Reports from Nepal over the weekend state that Gyaltzen Norbu never made the trip to Nepal. These follow reports last week from Nepal that the government of Nepal itself blocked the trip.

The Kathmandu Post reported that due to the sensitivity of Gyaltzen Norbu's visit, the Government of Nepal told the Chinese embassy that he would not be welcome, citing Nepal's "neutrality on religious matters". The Chinese embassy has since denied that it was ever the intention for Gyaltzen Norbu to travel to Nepal.

Security sources quoted in Nepalese media even raised the possibility that Gyaltzen Norbu may attempt to enter Nepal with an assumed identity or in disguise, risking a geopolitical crisis. Rigorous checks were therefore carried out on each passenger.



The Monastery of World Peace, Lumbini, credit Kushal Kafle

Nepal is located between Chinese-occupied Tibet and India, with Lumbini located close to the Indian

border. Lumbini is also significant as the birthplace of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha.

The Kathmandu Post article last Thursday quoted Lyarkal Lama, vice-chairman of the Lumbini Development Trust, who said that the Panchen Lama “has been trying to visit Nepal for the past ten years [...] He is such a powerful person, he can come here only with the permission of our prime minister.”

Born in 1990 and raised in Beijing, Gyaltsen Norbu has been promoted as the 11th Panchen Lama by the Chinese government since 1995, when he was enthroned at Tashilhunpo Monastery in Shigatse.

At 16, he addressed the 2006 World Buddhist Forum in 2006, which was the first major international religious conference in the People’s Republic of China since its founding in 1949. Ten years later, he returned to Shigatse, the historic seat of the Panchen Lama, to carry out the Kalachakra, a major religious teaching. It was the first time in half a century that the Kalachakra initiation had been held in occupied Tibet.

While Beijing has attempted to promote Gyaltsen Norbu, he remains widely rejected among Tibetans, who instead continue to demand information about Gedhun Choekyi Nyima.

Gedhun Choekyi Nyima was identified by the 14th Dalai Lama as the Panchen Lama in 1995 but was detained by Chinese authorities days later and has not been seen since. He had only recently turned six years old, making him the world’s youngest political prisoner.



Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the 11th Panchen Lama, missing since 1995

The enforced disappearance of the Panchen Lama and Beijing’s appointment of its own Panchen Lama are part of a broader strategy by the Chinese

Tibet Digest December - January 2024

government to exert control over Tibetan Buddhism, which is central to Tibet’s identity and closely intertwined with the struggle against its occupation.

Monks and nuns have been at the forefront of protests against the occupation and human rights abuses, notably in the 2008 Tibetan uprising, where one of the key catalysts was a march by 200 monks from Labrang Monastery.

The Chinese government closely regulates Tibetan monasteries, which are required to display loyalty to the Chinese state and the Chinese Communist Party. CCP members have stated on numerous occasions that the Chinese government is the ultimate authority on aspects of Tibetan Buddhism such as reincarnation and the identification and certification of Tibetan lamas and religious teachers. This includes the Panchen Lama and also the lineage of the Dalai Lama.

Chinese officials have stated clearly that Beijing’s control over the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama is strategic. In 2015 Zhu Weiqun, then the Chairman of China’s Committee for Ethnic and Religious Affairs, wrote in the state-run Global Times that the succession “is first and foremost an important political matter” adding that “whoever has the name of Dalai Lama will control political power in Tibet.”

“For this reason,” Zhu concluded, “since historical times, the central government has never given up, and will never give up, the right to decide the reincarnation affairs of the Dalai Lama.”

Despite the public rejection, Nepal’s Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli inaugurated the Chinese-organised event on Friday and was recently in China to sign a Belt and Road Initiative Framework Agreement.

The government of Nepal also continues to prevent any visit from the 14th Dalai Lama, a point reiterated by a senior security official in Nepal: “We have not allowed the Dalai Lama to come to Nepal. By the same token, we also can’t allow a similar China-backed religious figure to visit Nepal.”



Gyaltsen Norbu conducting the Kalachakra in Shigatse, Tibet, in 2016

Nepal is likely to continue to come under pressure from its larger neighbours. Rishi Gupta, Assistant Director of the Asia Society Policy Institute, wrote on Friday: “While the government of Nepal may have

refused entry to the Panchen Lama this time [...] this decision is far from a permanent safeguard.” He concluded that the “risk of Nepal becoming a staging ground for Beijing’s Sinicisation efforts remains alarmingly real.”

Following the reports that Gyaltsen Norbu was visiting Nepal, Free Tibet joined its partners in the Tibet movement in drafting a letter to Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, urging him to disinvite him. The letter was also submitted by Tibetans to Nepalese embassies around the world, including the UK embassy in London. The letter can be read [here](#).

### **Controversial monk behind attempts to bring China-appointed Panchen to Nepal?**

15 December 2024, Tibetan Review

While the Government of Nepal permitted the holding of the Nanhai (South China Sea) Buddhism Shenzhen Roundtable in the country, but pointedly rejected any idea of the China-appointed Panchen Lama Gyaincain Norbu attending it, Lyarkar Lama, the controversial Vice Chairman of the Lumbini Development Trust, kept looking to bring him to the conference, according to Nepali media reports.

The visit has been halted, but the issue has raised critical questions, particularly about the role of Lyarkar Lama in facilitating such a controversial visit, noted [nepalaja.com](#) Dec 13.



It said that despite preparations by Chinese stakeholders to bring the “Panchen Lama” to Lumbini, senior government officials actively worked to address the issue’s sensitivity and prevent the visit. This situation has placed a spotlight on Lyarkar Lama, who has been criticized for his involvement in managing the arrangements for the “Panchen Lama’s” visit, the report said.

The report cited Lyarkar Lama’s history as one fraught with legal, moral, and professional controversies, making his role in the Lumbini Development Trust highly contentious.

Earlier, on Dec 15, 2015, Kathmandu police discovered 14 bullets in Lyarkar Lama’s locker at the Nepal Investment Bank. The possession of such items by a Buddhist monk raised severe legal and ethical concerns, the report said.

His appointment as Vice Chairman of the Lumbini Development Trust was stated to be equally controversial.

Nepal’s Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Civil Aviation regulations say individuals with proven criminal records are ineligible for such positions. Nevertheless, the then Tourism Minister Sudan Kirati recommended Lama for the role, and the appointment was approved by the cabinet under Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda).

It was at that time reported by the [kathmandupost.com](#) Aug 6, 2023, that Lama was appointed to the post (for a five-year term) despite the fact that he had earlier been charged with several crimes, including foreign employment fraud, possession of illegal firearms, accumulating property disproportionate to his known source of income, and possession of dual citizenship and passport.

He was stated to be a central committee member of the CPN (Maoist Centre) headed by Prachanda.

Before that, he was CPN-UML member, and became the state minister for finance in the Jhala Nath Khanal-led government in 2011. The party had made him a lawmaker under the proportional representation category after the first Constituent Assembly election.

However, he was reported to have resigned from the post on Apr 21, 2011, just 11 days after assuming office, after he ran into controversy for possessing a Nepali citizenship certificate, an Indian passport and a Tibetan refugee identity card.

The report continued that he then quit the UML and later joined Prachanda’s Maoist party, which in Feb 2015 made him a lawmaker.

He was also, earlier, appointed the chairman of the then Monastery Management and Development Committee (later renamed as the Buddhist Philosophy Promotion and Monastery Development Committee), by the Nepali Congress in 2001-02, the report said.

### **Li Qiang Holds Talks with Prime Minister of Nepal KP Sharma Oli**

13 December 2024, Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the United States of America





On the morning of December 3, 2024, Premier Li Qiang of the State Council held talks with Prime Minister of Nepal KP Sharma Oli, who is on an official visit to China, at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

Li Qiang said that China and Nepal are traditional friendly neighbors linked by mountains and rivers. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations nearly 70 years ago, China-Nepal relations have maintained sound and steady development. In 2019, in particular, the bilateral relationship was elevated to the strategic partnership of cooperation featuring ever-lasting friendship for development and prosperity, which has driven the vigorous expansion of exchanges and cooperation in various fields between the two sides and brought tangible benefits to the two peoples. President Xi Jinping will meet with Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli to make a new strategic plan for further deepening bilateral relations. China is ready to work with Nepal to follow through on the important common understandings reached between the leaders of the two countries, continue to consolidate and deepen political mutual trust, push for deeper development of bilateral relations and cooperation, and build an even closer China-Nepal community with a shared future to provide more benefits to the two peoples.

Li Qiang pointed out that China firmly supports Nepal in exploring a development path suited to its national conditions, and is ready to work with Nepal to enhance the synergy of development strategies, leverage the leading role of high-quality Belt and Road cooperation in bilateral cooperation, and actively expand two-way trade and investment, and strengthen connectivity through ports, roads, railways, airlines and telecommunications, adding impetus to Nepal's transformation from a "land-locked country" to a "land-linked country". China encourages competent Chinese enterprises to invest and do business in Nepal and is ready to import more quality products from Nepal. Li Qiang called on the two sides to successfully hold a series of commemorative activities through joint efforts to

mark the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations next year, deepen people-to-people exchanges and sub-national cooperation in tourism, education and medical care, and promote better understanding and amity between the two peoples. China supports Nepal in playing a greater role in international and regional affairs and is ready to fortify coordination and cooperation with Nepal in multilateral fields.

KP Sharma Oli said that under the strong leadership of President Xi Jinping, China has made great achievements in promoting Chinese modernization, high-quality development, and poverty alleviation. The all-round friendly relations between Nepal and China are based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and have grown from strength to strength, setting a fine example of friendly relations between countries with different social systems and of different sizes. Nepal's determination to abide by the one-China principle will not waver, and it will not allow any force to use Nepal's territory for anti-China activities. Nepal believes that Taiwan and Xizang are inalienable parts of China and Xizang-related affairs are China's internal affairs. Nepal appreciates China's long-term support for Nepal's economic and social development and has always regarded China as a reliable partner. Nepal is ready to take the opportunity of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations next year to further strengthen high-level exchanges with China, consolidate traditional friendship, promote practical cooperation in connectivity, trade, investment, energy, agriculture, tourism, healthcare, people-to-people exchanges and other fields, jointly address common challenges such as climate change, and strengthen coordination on multilateral affairs, so as to achieve greater development in bilateral relations. After the talks, Premier Li Qiang and Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli jointly witnessed the signing of a number of bilateral cooperation documents on economy, technology and trade.

Prior to the talks, Li Qiang held a welcoming ceremony for KP Sharma Oli at the North Hall of the Great Hall of the People.

Wu Zhenglong attended the above activities.

### **Nepal shoots down the prospect of Panchen Lama's visit**

12 December 2024, The Kathmandu Post, Anil Giri

Foreign ministry told Chinese Embassy the Lama would not be allowed due to Nepal's neutrality on religious matters.

Last week, there was an undercurrent of tension in certain diplomatic circles in Kathmandu after information of the China-backed Panchen Lama visiting Nepal was leaked. Beijing has projected Panchen Lama as the successor to Dalai Lama, a

characterisation rejected by Western countries as well as Tibetans refugees in exile.

According to three government officials from different ministries and agencies, as soon as the information of the Panchen Lama's likely visit in mid-December—to attend a function in Lumbini and later an event in Kathmandu—was leaked, officials from Home and Tourism ministries started poring over the list of each and every passenger travelling in chartered flights from Chengdu to Lumbini via Air China. (The tip-off was that he would be travelling via Air China.)

The Panchen Lama was supposed to fly to Lumbini directly from Beijing, along with his security guards and other officials. As of Wednesday evening, no new approval has been sought to land an aircraft in Lumbini with Beijing as its point of origin. Instead, a pre-approved flight on the route was cancelled on the same day, said officials at the Ministry of Tourism.

The Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation gave the approval to organise the religious function in Lumbini and in Kathmandu under the banner of Nanhai Buddhism Round Table-2024.

"We could not spot his name anywhere but he might have multiple passports with multiple names and identities," one home ministry official who was involved in the verification process said. "There are several ways to disguise identity and so we were cautious as well as alert."

Even on Wednesday morning, Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak, Home Secretary Gokarna Mani Duwadi, and acting foreign secretary Amrit Bahadur Rai, among other senior officials, were engaged in a verification process to ascertain whether the Panchen Lama, whose name is Gyaincin Norbu, was actually travelling to Nepal to attend some function.

"He [Panchen Lama] has been trying to visit Nepal for the past ten years and he especially wanted to come here on Buddha Jayanti," Lyarkal Lama, vice-chairman of the Lumbini Development Trust, told the Post. "He is such a powerful person, he can come here only with the permission of our prime minister." Lyarkal will be in Lumbini on December 14 where a special religious function is being held. "As the Panchen Lama is a high-profile Chinese leader equivalent in rank to the Chinese vice president it was impossible for us to give him security," said Lyarkal. "Such security arrangements are a matter to be settled between two governments."

Lyarkal said that the Panchen Lama's visit could add to Nepal's geopolitical challenges and as such he might not visit this time.

After pressure started piling up on the government from both in and outside the country, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs wrote a diplomatic note to the Chinese Embassy and sought a clarification on

whether the Panchen Lama was actually visiting Nepal. It also said that the government would not permit him to visit Nepal due to its policy of maintaining neutrality in religious matters.

"We have not allowed the Dalai Lama to come to Nepal," a senior security official said. "By the same token, we also can't allow a similar China-backed religious figure to visit Nepal." The Dalai Lama as well as the Panchen Lama have tried to visit Nepal several times in the past but each time the Nepal government has stopped them from coming.

The Dalai Lama has the backing of Western countries and most of the Tibetan communities in exile, even though China calls him a "separatist".

The foreign minister communicated via the Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu that it cannot permit Norbu, the Chinese Communist Party-backed Panchen Lama, to visit Lumbini to attend a religious function on December 14, said a senior foreign ministry official.

"At least I have not heard about this," Home Minister Lekhak told the Post. "There is no information on his visit."

But it was Lekhak who first came to know about the Panchen Lama's impending visit to Kathmandu and communicated the same to Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba when she was part of Prime Minister KP Oli's delegation in China.

At least 227 Chinese monks and officials of the Buddhist Association of China are arriving in Lumbini on chartered Airbus A330 flight later this week. (The Post has seen the flight details.) The Chinese side had asked for the permission for the chartered flight with the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal on November 18.

Security sources told the Post that they had the information that the Panchen Lama was likely to visit Lumbini in disguise by hiding among the 227 Chinese monks and officials. If this happened, they feared, it could create a diplomatic and geopolitical crisis.

Four persons aware of this development told the Post that as soon as Prime Minister Oli landed in China on December 2, a communication was received that an Air China chartered flight was coming from Chengdu to Kathmandu in mid-December carrying VIP Buddhist monks.

Later, the information was forwarded to Home Minister Lekhak and Tourism Minister Badri Pandey. Then, Home Minister Lekhak called Foreign Minister Deuba in Beijing to inform her that the China-backed Panchen Lama was visiting Nepal—reportedly, with Prime Minister Oli himself giving the permission for his visit.

After this, Foreign Minister Deuba spoke to Prime Minister Oli and later told Nepali officials that the prime minister was in fact unaware of the Panchen Lama's visit and he had given no such permission.



The Lumbini Development Trust also flagged the matter with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After the trust wrote a letter to foreign ministry about a possible visit of the Panchen Lama to Nepal, the ministry had sent a diplomatic note to the Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu and sought details of the visit.

The Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu denied that the Panchen Lama was visiting Kathmandu. The government of Nepal also told the Chinese Embassy that it will not allow him to visit for multiple reasons, said foreign ministry officials familiar with the development. Bishnu Rimal, chief political advisor to the Prime Minister Oli, said the information that the Panchen Lama is visiting Nepal is "one hundred percent false."

Foreign Minister Deuba, who is currently on a tour of Europe, told the Post over the phone that news about the visit of the Panchen Lama to Nepal is absolutely incorrect and the government would not allow him to come. "He is not coming," she said. "When we sought clarification from the Chinese Embassy, it also denied that he was coming."

Deuba added, "As soon as we got the information about this, we enquired about it with the Chinese Embassy. Even the home minister and other senior officials were trying to fix the issue but they could not verify that the particular person was coming."

On Tuesday, a 10-member delegation of Chinese monks led by Yin Shun, vice president of the Buddhist Association of China, arrived in Kathmandu and left for Lumbini to lay the ground for the visit of other dignitaries.

They will later join at a function in Kathmandu named 2024 Nanhai Buddhism Round Table on Friday, according to an invitation sent by the Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu.

The 2024 Nanhai Buddhism Round Table will convene on December 13, 2024, reads the Chinese Embassy notice sent to the media.

The event, which will be attended by Buddhists from 20 countries, will end on Sunday.

Correction:

An earlier version of this report erroneously mentioned Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as the China-appointed Panchen Lama. In fact, Nyima was appointed by the Dalai Lama. The name of China-appointed Panchen Lama is Gyaincain Norbu. The report has been corrected.

### **Panchen Lama to make rare visit to Nepal after Tibet trip, reports say**

12 December 2024, SCMP, Sylvie Zhuang

The trip, which has not been confirmed by Beijing or Kathmandu, comes months before the Dalai Lama is expected to unveil a succession plan

The Panchen Lama, Tibet's second highest religious figure who sits on China's top political advisory body, will make a rare visit to Nepal, according to Nepalese media reports.

It comes just months before the Dalai Lama, the exiled spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, is expected to reveal a succession plan. That plan is likely to be contested by Beijing, which sees the Dalai Lama as a separatist pushing for Tibetan independence.

Gyaincain Norbu – the Panchen Lama chosen by Chinese authorities – will visit Nepal on a four-day trip from Saturday to attend the South China Sea Buddhism Round Table, news site Nepal Aaja reported on Tuesday.

The visit to Nepal, which is home to a large population of ethnic Tibetans, has not been confirmed by either the Chinese or Nepalese governments.

It follows a visit to China last week by Nepal's Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli, when he told Chinese Premier Li Qiang that Kathmandu regards Tibet and Taiwan as inalienable parts of China and that Tibet-related affairs are China's internal affairs.

The purpose of the Panchen Lama's visit is "religious harmony", an official with the Nepalese government's Lumbini Development Trust told news site My Republica on Wednesday.

The Panchen Lama is a member of the Standing Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, as well as vice-president of the state-backed Buddhist Association.

He has just spent five months in Tibet promoting traditional Chinese culture and national unity, state news agency Xinhua reported last week.

Nepal will be just his second foreign trip after a visit to Thailand in 2019.

It comes as the Dalai Lama could soon unveil a succession plan. He has previously said that he would address the issue of his reincarnation – a constant source of tension between Beijing and the Dalai Lama – after he turns 90 in July.

Beijing has accused the Nobel peace laureate of being a "separatist" and of inciting unrest among Tibetans in China in the 1980s and in 2008. There are also concerns that the Dalai Lama's death may trigger social tensions.

The People's Liberation Army seized Tibet in 1950, a year after the Communist Party won the Chinese civil war. The Dalai Lama fled a failed uprising against Chinese rule in 1959 and has lived in exile in India since then.

According to Tibetan Buddhist tradition, when the Dalai Lama dies, he will be reincarnated as a young child. This child must be found through a series of searches and rituals.

The next Dalai Lama must also be recognised by the current Panchen Lama. After the previous Panchen Lama died in 1989, a government-led search team identified a child as his reincarnation through a ritual in 1995 – but the Dalai Lama has refused to recognise the current Panchen Lama.

The Dalai Lama previously proposed ending his reincarnation, which would avoid Beijing's involvement in the matter. But Beijing has insisted that his reincarnation must follow Chinese law.

### **BRI Cooperation Framework made public**

10 December 2024, The Rising Nepal

The Framework for Belt and Road Cooperation signed between Nepal and China on December 4 during Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's China visit has been made public on Tuesday.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs released the document of the BRI Cooperation Framework.

As stated in the document, the BRI Cooperation Framework was formulated to establish a structured basis to undertake further negotiations on the projects.

"The two sides shall respect each other's sovereignty and common interests and work together to improve people's livelihoods through mutually beneficial and win-win cooperation. This Cooperation Framework will accord due consideration to the developmental stages of China and Nepal, with particular emphasis to Nepal's specific development requirements and priorities," according to the document released.

On cooperation principle, joint consultation for common development, pragmatic cooperation for meaningful effects and policy environment for increased investment have been highlighted.

Likewise, the two sides have concluded this Cooperation Framework to establish and deepen economic partnership to promote the common development of China and Nepal by injecting new momentum to trade, infrastructure and connectivity cooperation by accelerating the development of priority projects; to realize the mutual interests shared by the two sides to give effect to the MoU by providing a structured guidance to undertake negotiations for the implementation of the prospective projects and to identify and develop projects that fall within the scope of the area of cooperation.

The Chinese side will support Nepal's development efforts under the framework of jointly building the Belt and Road, by providing technical and financial assistance. The two sides will work to ensure technical support, and aid financing modalities that suit the need of the two sides and of the requirements for sovereign initiated projects. "The two sides will conduct objective analysis of technical, financial,

commercial and economic feasibility and ensure value for money for the prioritized projects. The two sides will continue to call upon international multilateral financial development institutions or mechanisms to provide more financial support for promoting connectivity and development," the Cooperation Framework states.

Similarly, Nepal and China agreed to jointly build the Trans-Himalayan Multidimensional Connectivity Network through the construction of ports, roads including bridges and tunnels, railways, aviation infrastructure, telecommunication projects, electricity transmission lines to upgrade the level of connectivity.

Tokha-Chhahare Tunnel, Hilsa-Simikot Road Project, Kimathanka-Khandbari Road and Kimathanka Bridge and Integrated Check Post Project, Nepali section of the China-Nepal Cross-Border Railway Project, Amargadhi City Hall Project, Jilong-Rasuwasgadhi-Chilime 220 KV Cross Border Power Transmission Line, Madan Bhandari University of Science and Technology, Kathmandu Scientific Center and Science Museum, China-Nepal Friendship Industrial Park and Jhapa Sports and Athletics Complex have been listed as the projects to be developed in the BRI Cooperation Framework.

### **Nepal's leader visits Beijing, joint statement uses 'Xizang' to refer to Tibet**

06 December 2024, RFA, Tenzin Pema and Tenzin Norzom

Use of China's preferred term is seen as a warning sign for Tibetans.



Nepal's prime minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli, center, and his wife Radhika Shakya prepare to depart the Tribhuvan International airport in Kathmandu, Dec. 2, 2024. (Aryan Dhimal/AFP)

Nepal referred to Tibet as "Xizang" in a statement issued after its new Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli completed a four-day visit to Beijing this week, his first trip outside the country after his election – not India, as is traditionally the case.

Xizang is a term promoted by Beijing, but Tibetan advocates say it is yet another attempt by China to erase their distinct cultural heritage.

Both moves highlight China's growing influence in Nepal – and its hopes to reap the economic benefits of closer ties to Beijing, experts and Tibetan advocates said.

"The joint declaration between Nepal and China in which the word 'Xizang' is used instead of Tibet shows the lengths to which Nepal is willing to go to appease China," said Sriparna Pathak, an associate professor of China studies at the O.P. Jindal Global University in Haryana, India, and a former consultant at India's foreign ministry.

"This is a complete disregard of the Tibetan cause, the struggle and the history," she told Radio Free Asia.

"This does not augur well at all for Tibetans living in Nepal."

China experts cite the promises of millions of dollars of Chinese investment as a reason for the Nepalese government restricting Tibetan activities in the country.

Oli's extended visit, which ended Thursday, also included an agreement related to China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative, or BRI, a grand plan to boost global trade through infrastructure development.

In other signs of China's influence, Nepali police regularly detain Tibetans in Kathmandu for "questioning" during high profile visits by Chinese officials.

Authorities also increase surveillance on Tibetan refugee settlements during cultural celebrations like the Tibetan New Year or the birthday of Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama.

#### Stalled BRI projects

In the joint statement issued this week by Nepal and China, the two sides emphasized the importance of "law enforcement cooperation."

China said it is "willing to provide support for Nepal to the best of its capacity through capacity building, including trainings in the field of combating cyber crimes, and assistance of police supplies."

Nepal signed an initial agreement to join the BRI in 2017, but highway construction and other projects have stalled since then.

Oli's visit included the signing of a framework agreement to get those projects off the ground with feasibility studies.

China has previously promised to transform Nepal from a "landlocked nation into a land-linked hub."

Nepal, in turn, has reaffirmed its allegiance to China, particularly on issues related to Taiwan and Tibet, with the use of Xizang in official documents as the latest example.

#### 'Serving Beijing's agenda'

The term "Xizang" was first used in official Chinese government diplomatic documents in 2023. Chinese Communist Party scholars had advocated for the use

of "Xizang," which they have said would help promote China's legitimate occupation and rule of Tibet.

In this week's joint statement, Nepal "reiterated that Xizang affairs are internal affairs of China, and that it will never allow any separatist activities against China on Nepal's soil."

That was another example of China "using its power to make a smaller country serve its political agenda," said Tencho Gyatso, president of Washington-based International Campaign for Tibet.

"Whatever name is used does not alter the fact that the Tibetan people are suffering under China's misrule," she told RFA.

#### Economic diplomacy

The previous prime minister, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, visited Beijing in September 2023.

The joint statement issued afterward only referred to Tibet – not Xizang – but it did state that Nepal would "never allow any separatist activities against China on Nepal's soil."

Similarly, just after Xi Jinping's visit to Nepal in 2019, Nepal reiterated its "determination on not allowing any anti-China activities on its soil."

"Over the years, the space for Tibetans in Nepal has continued to remain constrained," said Manoj Kewalramani, a China Studies fellow at Bengaluru, India-based Takshashila Institution.

"I think this trend is likely to continue. Beijing has always used economic diplomacy to serve such political ends," he said. "These are among the strings that come with Chinese money."

The BRI framework cooperation agreement highlighted Nepal's preference for grants instead of loans to fund the projects. That issue delayed the signing of the deal for a day, but both countries eventually agreed on Wednesday to a combination of grants and loans in the framework.

Critics have accused China of "debt diplomacy" – trapping nations with financial liabilities for major infrastructure projects they can ill-afford and which then could be leveraged for Beijing's political benefit.

### **Nepal's Multimillion-Dollar Pilgrimage Industry Crumbles Under China's Tibet Restrictions**

07 December 2024, Republic, Yuvraj Tyagi

Nepal's tourism faces a severe setback due to declining tourist arrivals, primarily caused by China's continued ban on Indian pilgrims entering Tibet.

Nepal's tourism industry faces a severe downturn as a significant decline in Indian tourist arrivals continues, attributed in part to China's ban on Indian pilgrims entering Tibet for the Kailash-Manasarovar pilgrimage. According to a report by Kathmandupost.com on December 2, 2024, Nepal

Tourism Board officials highlighted that the ongoing restrictions have dealt a devastating blow to the nation's economy, particularly its tourism-dependent sectors.

For decades, Nepal served as a gateway for Indian pilgrims travelling to Mount Kailash and Lake Manasarovar, sacred destinations in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Bonism. Despite the reopening of Nepal-Tibet border points in May, Beijing has maintained strict restrictions on Indian nationals wishing to undertake this pilgrimage. Analysts believe these restrictions stem from lingering geopolitical tensions between India and China, leaving Nepal caught in the crossfire of strained bilateral relations.

#### Impact on Nepal's Economy

The disruption of the Kailash-Manasarovar pilgrimage has wreaked havoc on Nepal's tourism economy. The pilgrimage, typically held from April to October, once brought an influx of Indian tourists, generating significant revenue for multiple sectors, including tour operators, hotels, airlines, and helicopter services.

"The absence of Indian pilgrims has devastated the multimillion-dollar businesses of hotels, porters, and transport operators," said Basu Adhikari, Managing Director of Touch Kailash Travel and Treks, a report by Kathmandu Post stated.

The downturn has created a ripple effect, pushing businesses to the brink of collapse. Many stakeholders have urged urgent action to address the financial shortfall and support affected communities.

#### Broader Challenges in Nepal's Tourism Sector

China's restrictions are not the only hurdles facing Nepal's tourism industry. Rising airfares have made travel to Nepal cost-prohibitive for many potential visitors. Additionally, a spate of high-profile bus and aeroplane accidents has raised safety concerns, further deterring international travellers.

These compounded challenges have significantly reduced visitor arrivals, exacerbating the financial strain on an industry already grappling with the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Stakeholders warn that without immediate intervention to enhance safety standards and reduce travel costs, Nepal risks losing its foothold as a favoured destination for global travellers.

#### Diversifying Nepal's Tourism Offerings

In response to the crisis, Nepal is working to diversify its tourism sector by promoting alternative attractions and experiences. However, stakeholders agree that the potential reopening of Tibet to Indian pilgrims remains pivotal to reviving the industry.

The Kailash-Manasarovar pilgrimage has long been a cornerstone of Nepal's tourism revenue. Its absence underscores the urgent need for long-term strategies to reduce dependency on pilgrimage

tourism. Efforts are underway to promote Nepal's adventure tourism, heritage sites, and eco-tourism opportunities.

#### A Difficult Path to Recovery

The future of Nepal's tourism industry depends heavily on China's willingness to lift its ban on Indian pilgrims travelling to Tibet. Without this critical source of revenue, Nepal faces an uphill battle in stabilizing its tourism-dependent economy.

Beyond geopolitical factors, Nepal must address internal issues, including safety concerns and high travel costs, to regain the trust of international visitors. The current crisis highlights the fragile nature of Nepal's tourism sector and its vulnerability to external influences.

While stakeholders remain hopeful for a resurgence, Nepal's path to recovery will require concerted efforts from the government, private sector, and international partners. The lifting of restrictions on the Kailash-Manasarovar pilgrimage could serve as a turning point, revitalizing the industry and bringing much-needed economic relief to the nation.

### Nepal PM Oli reaffirms 'One China' policy, bans anti-China activities

05 December 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon



Nepal PM K.P. Oli and Chinese President Xi Jinping at the State Hall in Beijing on Dec. 3, 2024 (Photo/Getty)

Nepal's Prime minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli, on Tuesday, reiterated the country's strong commitment to the 'One China' policy, stating that no anti-China activities will be permitted on Nepali soil. Oli made these remarks during an official visit to China, where he met with Chinese President Xi Jinping at the State Hall in Beijing.

In the meeting, Oli emphasized Nepal's position that issues concerning Tibet and Taiwan are internal affairs of China and that both regions are integral to Chinese sovereignty. The leaders discussed a wide range of bilateral topics, including connectivity, industrial and infrastructural development, medical and agricultural cooperation, trade and tourism, investment, science and technology, disaster management, sports, and poverty alleviation. Krishna Prasad Dhakal, spokesperson for Nepal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, disclosed that the discussions culminated in the signing of a nine-point agreement encompassing several Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs).

The agreements include projects like the Tokha-Chhare tunnel to connect Nepal with the Tibet border, reconstruction of the Basantpur Durbar damaged in the 2015 earthquake, export of buffalo meat, deployment of Chinese language teachers, cash assistance worth \$41 million, and initiatives in economic and technical cooperation, as well as media exchanges.

Oli, a pro-China leader and chair of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), has consistently praised Xi Jinping's policies, particularly in poverty alleviation and development. However, the deepening ties between Nepal and China have sparked concerns over the treatment of Tibetan refugees in Nepal, whose rights have been increasingly curtailed in recent years.

A 2023 report by the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) and the Asian Dignity Initiative, titled *Languishing in Limbo: Tibetan Refugees in Nepal*, revealed a marked deterioration in the rights of Tibetan refugees. The report highlighted that Nepal's economic dependence on China, tied to its adherence to the 'One China' policy, has led to restrictive measures such as halting the issuance of Refugee Cards (RCs), banning cultural and religious celebrations, and prohibiting public commemorations of the Dalai Lama's birthday.

This is not the first time Oli has affirmed Nepal's commitment to the 'One China' policy. He made similar statements in October 2024 during a high-level meeting in Kathmandu with a Chinese delegation led by Chen Jining, a senior Communist Party official. Similar commitments were also expressed during Xi Jinping's 2019 visit to Nepal and Oli's 2018 official trip to China.

Oli, serving his fourth term as Prime Minister since succeeding Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) in July, has visited Beijing twice during previous terms. In a break from tradition, his first visit during his new term was to China instead of India, reportedly due to the absence of an invitation from New Delhi. The visit occurs against the backdrop of stalled Belt and Road

Initiative (BRI) projects between Nepal and China, originally signed in 2017 with much enthusiasm but with little progress to date.

## November

### Nepal Foreign Minister to visit China tomorrow to lay grounds for PM Oli's visit

27 November 2024, ANI

Nepal's Foreign Minister, Arzu Rana Deuba, is set to embark on an official visit to China from tomorrow, Nepal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced on Wednesday.

The Ministry said that Rana will be holding a meeting with Chinese counterpart during her three-day visits along with the preparatory talks about Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's expected visit on the first week of December.

"Foreign Minister is scheduled to hold a bilateral talk with Wang Yi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of China on 29 November 2024. The two leaders will have comprehensive discussions on matters of mutual interest between the two countries including the preparation of the upcoming official visit of Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli to China," the release stated. Nepal PM Oli is expected to visit China from December 2, which he had announced during a public gathering in the capital Kathmandu last week. It comes at a heel when debate about signing the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) pact needs to be signed or not. The Nepali Congress and the CPN-UML government, led by Prime Minister Oli himself, have not been able to build trust over the issue.

Nepali Congress, the largest party in the federal parliament and the ruling coalition member on Wednesday also advised Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli to proceed cautiously with China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), arguing that the projects should not increase Nepal's debt burden.

The party conveyed this message during a high-level meeting held at party president Sher Bahadur Deuba's residence in Budhanilkantha on Wednesday. Top Nepali Congress leaders, including Foreign Minister Arzu Rana, Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak, and party spokesperson Prakash Sharan Mahat, were in attendance.

Mahat, who served as Foreign Minister when Nepal signed the BRI Framework Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2017, clarified the Nepali Congress's stance to reporters after the meeting.

"We have no reservations about implementing BRI projects," he said. "But taking on unsustainable debt is not acceptable. The projects must align with the



country's financial capacity and long-term interests." Nepal has identified nine projects under the BRI, including tunnel construction, road development, and a railway connection to the northern border with China.

Mahat said that the Nepali Congress is in favour of seeking assistance from China, including grants and technical support, but warned against dependency on loans that could strain the national economy.

Highlighting Nepal's delicate geopolitical position, Mahat stressed the need for balanced foreign policy. "China is Nepal's neighbour, and we must maintain excellent and friendly relations with them. However, agreements should prioritize Nepal's national interests, ensuring long-term benefits for the country," he said.

The BRI initiative, introduced by China in 2014, is an ambitious global infrastructure project aiming to enhance connectivity. Nepal became part of the initiative after signing the MoU on May 12, 2017.

However, concerns about the financial implications of such large-scale projects have been a point of debate among policymakers. President Deuba and other senior Congress leaders reiterated the importance of Nepal maintaining strong ties with both China and India, focusing on agreements that bolster national interests regardless of changes in political leadership.

The Nepali Congress's recommendations now rest with Prime Minister Oli, who holds the authority to make the final decision on moving forward with the BRI projects. As Nepal navigates its involvement in this ambitious initiative, balancing opportunities with economic prudence will remain a key challenge.

### **Nepal readies new BRI deal ahead of PM's China visit**

26 November 2024, The Kathmandu Post, Anil Giri

Chinese Ambassador Chen irked by Prime Minister Oli's public remarks on loans, media's debt trap accusations.

Seven years after the signing of the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Nepal and China could ink another framework for cooperation on the BRI during Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's upcoming visit to China in the first week of December.

A Cabinet meeting on Monday approved the China visit of Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba, which starts Thursday. She will be accompanied by some foreign ministry officials during the visit and meet Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Friday in Beijing, according to a minister.

Nepal and China had signed the first framework (Memorandum of Understanding) on the BRI in May 2017, but not a single project under it has been

implemented. The new framework will prevail over the 2017 agreement in case of disputes or conflicts.

Both sides are now preparing to sign the second framework, an extended version of cooperation document that explicitly focuses on seeking grants from China to fund the projects identified therein.

A top government official told the Post that the document which was prepared by the four-member Nepali Congress and CPN-UML taskforce has landed for final approval at the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This Nepali version of the framework on jointly building BRI projects has inputs from various government agencies and the Nepali Congress in particular.

"If Prime Minister Oli and Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba agree to it, the text prepared by the Nepali side will be sent to the Chinese side for final approval. If they also approve, the document will be signed during Oli's meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing on December 3 or 4," said the source.

Prime Minister Oli, who is under pressure even from within his party, other leftist parties, and China itself, to sign a BRI-related agreement, has now set aside the BRI implementation plan initially proposed by the Chinese side in early 2020. Instead he has prepared this new counter document titled "Framework for Cooperation on jointly building the BRI," which will be shared with the Chinese side after the Cabinet's approval.

According to a foreign ministry official, during a meeting with Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba on Sunday, Chinese ambassador to Nepal Chen Song had criticised Prime Minister Oli and the Nepali media for commenting on various issues of Nepal-China relations.

Ambassador Chen expressed displeasure over Prime Minister Oli's remarks at a rally in Durbarmarg, where Oli, in front of thousands of people, declared that Nepal would not seek loans from any country. Oli, at the rally on Friday, had also declared that his visit to China would be successful on multiple fronts.

The Chinese envoy was also unhappy with certain media reports in Nepal and India commenting on the latest status of Nepal-China relations, Oli's upcoming visit, and accusations of a debt trap, an official who was present at the meeting told the Post.

The manner in which the Chinese ambassador expressed his dissatisfaction prompted the Nepali side to come to some kind of agreement with China, said officials and leaders in the know. They were trying to explain why Nepal became ready to sign an amended version of the BRI implementation plan. Oli had received a green signal from the Nepali Congress, a key ally in the government, to modify the BRI implementation plan into a new framework for cooperation. This four-member taskforce amended

several clauses proposed by the Chinese side, according to ruling party leaders, who refused to divulge the actual content.

A meeting between Oli and Congress chief Sher Bahadur Deuba last Tuesday had decided to revise the text of the BRI implementation plan. The title of the document was also changed from "Implementation Plan of the BRI" to "Framework for Cooperation on Jointly Building the BRI," according to a pair of Congress and UML leaders.

Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba told the Post that the Congress and UML leaders are in the final stages of negotiations on the framework document. The agendas and joint communique of the visit are yet to be finalised.

Prime Minister Oli is scheduled to visit China on December 2, while Foreign Minister Deuba will head for China on Thursday to lay the groundwork for his trip.

On Monday, Oli consulted former prime ministers and foreign ministers at his office and sought advice on Nepal-China relations. While most spoke in favour of strengthening ties with China and maintaining balance with neighbours and major powers, they did not offer any concrete suggestions for the visit.

They were divided on the type of cooperation and assistance Nepal should seek, while some advised that Nepal's focus should be on implementing past accords and agreements rather than signing new ones.

Several Congress leaders including Dr Shekhar Koirala and former foreign minister NP Saud have been saying that Nepal should not sign an "umbrella agreement" or an agreement covering "comprehensive" issues and that Nepal should not align with any powers.

According to leaders privy to the revised draft, the document retains the areas that were proposed in the BRI implementation plan, but has modified and expanded the content.

The new draft has sections on cooperation background; cooperation principles (joint consultation for common development, pragmatic cooperation for meaningful effects, market orientation with government guidance); cooperation priorities (transport, connectivity and logistic cooperation, trade industrial capacity and investment cooperation); and economic and financial sector cooperation.

Other areas covered are education, science and technology cooperation; intellectual property, measurement, standards, and conformity assessment cooperation; agriculture, forestry and water conservation sector; energy saving and environment protection; geosciences sector; customs clearance;

health sector cooperation; and cultural and tourism exchange.

Both the texts—the one from 2017 and the current one—have provisions for cooperation mechanisms.

The new document prioritises grants for sovereign-initiated projects, as instructed by Oli and Deuba.

Earlier China had proposed several financing modalities for BRI projects depending on their financial viability. These included multi-channel funding, innovation of financing models and diversified financing tools.

"The two sides will explore the possibilities of implementing new and innovative project financing instruments, as appropriate, such as public private partnership and blended financing," according to the BRI implementation plan proposed by the Chinese side.

Ahead of the visit of Prime Minister Oli to China, there was widespread interest about whether Nepal will sign the plan originally proposed by Beijing. A second issue was whether Nepal would accept loans. Despite reservations from different quarters and communist party leaders, after intense pressure from the Congress, the prime minister had made it clear in public forums as well as during Monday's consultations with former prime ministers and foreign ministers that Nepal is not going to take loans to finance BRI projects.

During Monday's meeting, some former foreign ministers including NP Saud had cautioned the prime minister not to sign a comprehensive implementation plan of the BRI. "But there was a tacit understanding even within the Congress that we needed to make some kind of an arrangement on the BRI so that the party could continue in the government," said one Congress leader. "As we have not seen the content of the new cooperation framework, we cannot comment on that."

On the day, Congress chief Deuba had discussed the new framework agreement with Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba and Nepali Congress General Secretary Gagan Thapa. Later, the Congress chief flew to Janakpur where he reiterated that while Nepal should accept grants under the BRI, it should avoid taking loans.

"Our debt is now 41 percent of the GDP, which is alarming," said Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba. "The private sector can take loans but the government is not in a position to do so."

### **Security deals related to Tibet-border on agenda of Nepali PM's visit to China**

23 November 2024, Tibetan Review

As Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli of Nepal prepares to visit China from Dec 2, proposed items on his agenda under consideration include a proposal to

sign an agreement related to boundary management and security cooperation agreed during Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Nepal in 2019, reported the kathmandupost.com Nov 23.

The report cited an official as saying the implementation agreement between the governments of China and Nepal on the Boundary Management System is also part of the agreement, with a copy of the proposed agreement having already been submitted to the House of Representatives.

Also on Oli's agenda is stated to be a plan to sign a memorandum of understanding between the Ministry of Public Security of China and Nepal's Ministry of Home Affairs on the establishment of a Boundary Contact System at three levels.

The Chinese side—and especially security officials from Tibet—has for long been pushing for Nepal to accept the boundary contact system at federal, provincial and local levels, the report said.

Another proposal is said to include signing a memorandum of understanding on law enforcement cooperation between Nepal and China, with provisions for Chinese support in immigration and security on the Nepali side of the border.

The reports cites a long list of items on Oli's China visit agenda, topped by some key cross-border infrastructure and connectivity projects, including joint projects under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Among the proposals exchanged between the two sides is China's offer of a \$20 million grant as budgetary support to Nepal, even as the latter's Ministry of Finance expressed dissatisfaction with the amount, the report said.

The report cited officials from various ministries as saying Nepal was preparing a long list of projects to be developed under the framework of the BRI as well as other cross-border infrastructure and connectivity-related projects. This also includes implementing projects agreed during past high-level visits.

The funding modality of these projects is yet to be discussed, the report cited officials as saying, adding that the final list would be handed over to the Chinese.

Nepali Congress, the main coalition partner of Oli's CPN (UML), is known to be opposed to the latter's willingness to accept normal funding for the BRI projects being insisted upon by China, as it entails high interest rates and the danger of debt trap.

### **My visit to China won't harm Nepal's ties with India: PM Oli**

21 November 2024, Asia News

Traditionally, Nepali prime ministers have made India their first port of call after assuming office. However, after failing to receive an invitation from

India for several weeks, PM Oli went to New York to attend the 79th session of the UN General Assembly where he met Indian PM Modi, Chinese FM Yi, and several other world leaders.

Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli said that his upcoming China visit will not hurt Nepal's ties with India.

Speaking at the concluding session of the Kantipur Conclave in Kathmandu on Thursday, the prime minister, who is set to visit China in the first week of December, stated there is no reason for his visit to harm relations with India just because he is going to China first than India.

"We are a sovereign nation and we have never said that we won't visit India," the prime minister said, adding, "We choose to go where it is convenient."

Traditionally, Nepali prime ministers have made India their first port of call after assuming office. However, after failing to receive an invitation from India for several weeks, the prime minister went to New York to attend the 79th session of the UN General Assembly where he met Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi, and several other world leaders.

"I went to the US to attend the UN General Assembly because the UN is [headquartered] in the US, where I met several world leaders, but it does not mean that I wanted to visit the US first," said Oli, adding, "We are surrounded by two great neighbours and we have to maintain good relations with them."

"And my visit to China will not damage our relations with India. Our relations with India are deep, historical, based on culture and tradition, and predate the formation of modern states. We are sovereign nations and make foreign trips as per our convenience," said Oli.

Oli was speaking at the Kantipur Conclave's concluding session moderated by Kantipur Editor-in-Chief Umesh Chauhan on Thursday.

During the interaction, Oli discussed a range of domestic issues including the country's economy, national politics, issue of constitution amendment, relations between the federal and provincial governments, and the arrest of Rastriya Swatantra Party chairman and former deputy prime minister Rabi Lamichhane, among other things.

Responding to the ongoing street protests by Rastriya Swatantra Party supporters opposing the arrest of their party chief, and the calls by some groups calling for the restoration of monarchy and dissolution of the current constitution, the prime minister said he is ready for any kind of open discussion on these issues.

He said he welcomes dialogues on the future of the political system, but won't allow the constitution to be torn down.

Oli also defended the progress made over the last three decades (since the restoration of democracy in 1990), highlighting significant strides in infrastructure. "Road networks have now reached 98 percent of the country."

On the arrest of Lamichhane, who is in police custody on charges of cooperatives fraud, the prime minister stated that he cannot protect Lamichhane if he had committed wrongdoings.

"The court will look into his case...if someone makes mistakes and blames others, it is unacceptable," said Oli.

Oli also gave some background on how he had helped Lamichhane and hired him as a television anchor when he was jobless. "I gave him the job, and he later joined politics," said Oli, adding that he would not tolerate corruption.

I favoured him, but I never thought that Rabi was involved in cooperative scam," said Oli, and claimed that he was initially against forming the parliamentary probe, but Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Lamichhane himself requested such a probe.

Rastriya Swatantra Party's protests and demonstrations "aimed at pressuring the court" are unacceptable, Oli said, adding, "Let the law take its course."

The prime minister also dismissed the allegations that the government was working on a new law on political parties to facilitate party splits. "There is a void so we have to bring a new law," he said, adding "The UML does not need to be the largest party to claim the premiership." It is believed that the government wants to make party splits easier, because the UML wants to merge dissident groups in a few parties including the CPN (Unified Socialist) and the Janata Samajbadi Party into its fold.

Speaking at the conclave, the prime minister said the government will bring laws to support provincial governments.

"We will review the constitution. We will enact laws. We will provide them [provinces] the required rights."

### **BRI debate drags on as Chinese envoy lobbies Congress**

19 November 2024, The Kathmandu Post, Anil Giri

The conundrum over signing of the Implementation Plan of the Belt and Road Initiative during Prime Minister KP Oli's upcoming China visit persists. Two key ruling parties—the Nepali Congress and the CPN-UML—remain at odds over several proposals in the implementation plan.

Besides holding regular communications with Prime Minister Oli and senior UML leaders, Chinese Ambassador Chen Song has intensified diplomatic lobbying within the Nepali Congress in order to

drum up support for the signing of the implementation plan during Oli's visit, which is scheduled for the first week of December. An official announcement of the visit, however, is yet to be made.

Recently, according to Congress leaders, the Chinese envoy has met Congress Vice President Purna Bahadur Khadka, senior leaders Shekhar Koirala, Bimalendra Nidhi, and Minendra Rijal, among others, to get the desired support.

Oli and his party have expressed their intent to sign the BRI implementation plan, but the Congress remains wary about signing such a document. The party, however, recognises the BRI and is keen to develop connectivity and infrastructure projects on a project-by-project basis.

During his first visit to China in 2018, Prime Minister Oli had proposed 35 projects under the BRI and these were later whittled down to nine at China's request, an office bearer of the Nepali Congress said. "We want to follow the same modality of negotiating individual projects under the BRI, and the investment model should be decided through such negotiations," he said.

Congress General Secretary Gagan Thapa said the party's position on BRI projects is clear. "Be it a loan or a grant, we prefer negotiating individual projects with China."

Several Congress leaders familiar with the BRI implementation plan document have said that Nepal should not sign any document with broader strategic and geopolitical implications.

The draft of the BRI implementation plan seen by the Post reads: "As per the understanding reached during Chinese President Xi Jinping's state visit to Nepal in October 2021, the two sides decided to, on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence, the UN charter and principles of good neighbourliness, elevate Nepal-China Comprehensive Partnership of Cooperation Featuring Ever-lasting Friendship to Strategic Partnership of Cooperation Featuring Ever-lasting Friendship for Development and Prosperity."

The draft document further says "the two sides also decided to strengthen the all-round cooperation and promote the overall development of the bilateral relations and based on consensus reached at the highest political level."

Prime Minister Oli and Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba met on Monday to discuss the BRI implementation plan before giving their final word to the Chinese side.

Officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Finance urged the political leadership to quickly decide on the plan, with Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba heading to China on November 28 to meet her Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in

Beijing on November 29. The two sides are expected to finalise the agenda of Prime Minister Oli's visit and the agreements and MoUs to be signed.

"We are waiting for the political leadership to take a final call," a joint secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said. "A counter proposal will be sent, seeking some amendments to the implementation plan."

"We have reservations as the document mainly reflects Chinese priorities rather than ours. The plan should be such that we too can own it up and be able to derive tangible benefits. We want to see our projects, priorities and terms reflected in any discussion on the BRI," said an official at the Ministry of Finance, and his ideas were seconded by another official at the foreign ministry.

Officials at the two ministries said they want to narrow down differences between Nepal and China on the BRI implementation plan and propose changes in areas such as cooperation among law enforcement agencies, cooperation in science and technology, and a common position between Nepal and China in international forums.

Under the "cooperation principles" in the draft agreement, the Chinese side has proposed joint consultation for common development where both sides will uphold the spirit of the Silk Road, respect each other's sovereignty and core national interests, and work together to improve people's livelihoods through mutually beneficial cooperation.

The Chinese side has proposed several initiatives under the subtitles "pragmatic cooperation for meaningful effects" and "market orientation with government guidance" and offered to jointly develop the Trans-Himalayan Multi Dimensional Connectivity Network through the construction of ports, roads (including bridges and tunnels), railways, aviation infrastructure, telecom projects, and electricity transmission lines.

"The two sides will utilise existing China-Nepal intergovernmental consultation and cooperation mechanisms for advancing cooperation under the BRI, and carry out the China-Nepal cross border railway project, including tunnels along the roads (Kerung-Kathmandu) after the accomplishment of feasibility study," the Chinese proposal reads.

It also mentions that the two sides will cooperate on the construction of cross-border road and tunnel projects, dry ports, integrated check posts, a China-Nepal friendship industrial park, and enhance cross border economic cooperation.

During Oli's visit, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs plans to sign a memorandum of understanding for the construction of the Tokha-Chhahare tunnel project, with Nepal's Ministry of Finance and China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA) as signatories.

Similarly, the Chinese side has proposed co-building the 'Air Silk Route', which will involve close communication on traffic rights agreements, the development of and opening of additional air routes, and the enhancement of aviation logistics infrastructure. "Both sides aim to expedite efforts to implement relevant transit transport agreements by improving infrastructures, procedures and coordination," said the draft plan.

Under the subtitle "Trade, industrial capacity and investment modality," the plan proposes enhancing cooperation in bilateral trade and trade infrastructure, improving border cargo facility, promoting e-commerce, promoting capacity building, and sharing best practices and innovative experiences.

"The two sides will strengthen cooperation in energy development by doing feasibility studies, building cross-border transmission lines and carrying out power trade for the utilisation of energy resources," said the plan where it is also stated that the Chinese side will facilitate Nepal's participation in the China International Import Export Expo and similar expos.

Under the title "Economic and financial sector cooperation," the Chinese side will support Nepal's development efforts under the BRI by providing financial and governmental assistance. Both sides will, under the Guiding Principles on Financing the Development of the Belt and Road Principles and green investment principles for the BRI, explore various financing cooperation modalities.

The financial institutions of the two countries will be mobilised, innovative financial models will be developed, and the opportunity for the utilisation of diversified financing tools will be explored to finance bilateral projects.

"The two sides will explore the possibilities of implementing new and innovative project financing instruments, as appropriate, such as public private partnership and blended financing," states the plan document seen by the Post.

The plan also proposes a long list of cooperation models between the central banks of Nepal and China, including the possibility of trading in local currencies for bilateral trade transactions.

Other areas of cooperation identified in the BRI implementation plan include education, science and technology; intellectual property, measurement, standards and conformity assessment cooperation; agriculture, forestry and water conservation sector; energy saving and environmental protection; geosciences sector; customs clearance; health sector cooperation; and cultural and tourism exchange.

The Chinese side has proposed numerous new projects and programs under the framework of BRI and other forums. It also stated that the leaders of the two countries will continue to meet, and close



communication will be maintained between the government sectors of the two countries at multilateral and bilateral events—an approach that, according to Nepali officials, the Nepali side has objected to.

The plan will be effective from the date of signature and will remain in effect for five years, upon the expiry of which it will be automatically renewed for successive five-year periods unless either side notifies the other side in writing of its intention to terminate it—at least three months before its expiry.

Amrit Rai, spokesman of the foreign ministry, said the status of the BRI implementation plan is under discussion at the top political level and he thus has no updates. He added that the ministry has been receiving dozens of project proposals from line ministries in lieu of Prime Minister Oli's impending China visit.

### China's BRI rattles Nepal's ruling coalition

13 November 2024, The Annapurna Express,  
Kamal Dev Bhattarai

The China factor risks widening the rift between the Congress and the UML

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has once again unsettled Nepal's coalition government, formed in July. Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli is preparing for an official visit to China, but two key coalition partners—the CPN-UML and the Nepali Congress (NC)—remain divided on advancing BRI projects. While Oli, who leads the UML, advocates for BRI projects, the NC opposes taking loans under BRI, fearing it could lead Nepal into debt.

Since 2022, the NC has consistently communicated its opposition to financing BRI projects through loans, a stance championed by NC President Sher Bahadur Deuba during his tenure as prime minister. Conversely, the UML and other leftist factions argue that Nepal should make headway on BRI to balance its acceptance of the US-backed Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and to maintain geopolitical equilibrium.

To reconcile these differences, Prime Minister Oli is negotiating with the NC. Currently, there are three major issues regarding BRI. First is the signing of the BRI implementation plan, which was drafted during former Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal's visit to China in September last year.. Second, although Nepal has proposed four projects under BRI, the coalition partners have yet to agree on an investment model. Third, Nepal has requested China to waive the loan for constructing the Pokhara International Airport, where alleged corruption in the airport's construction has also become a point of contention.

To date, Nepal has only signed a BRI framework agreement in 2017, outlining general directions for

the initiative. However, debates have since persisted, particularly around China's claim that certain infrastructure projects, like the Pokhara airport, are part of BRI, a claim rejected by Dahal's administration. Additionally, Nepal wants Chinese grants for BRI projects, but China's official position states that BRI funding only involves loans, not grants, facilitated by the Chinese government. Nepal has proposed that, if loans are necessary, the interest rates should align with those of the World Bank and other international lenders.

The 2017 BRI agreement outlines cooperation in policy exchange, connectivity, trade, financial integration and people-to-people interactions. Although the agreement allows for flexibility in cooperation areas, the debate in Nepal has focused largely on infrastructure and financial arrangements. A recent 2023 Chinese white paper describes BRI as a joint venture rather than a form of foreign aid, emphasizing collaborative development. "The principle of extensive consultation signifies that the BRI is not a solo endeavor by China, but a collaborative effort involving all stakeholders. The principle of joint contribution highlights that the BRI is not one of China's international aid programs or a geopolitical tool, but a collaborative effort for shared development."

According to the MoU signed in 2017, the BRI does not include grants and primarily involves loans, with a possible contribution from Nepal. Nevertheless, the framework agreement does leave room for mutual agreements on funding sources.

The document states: "Adaptation of appropriate modes of cooperation for mutual benefit to support development and implementation of major programs in the BRI and provisions of investment, financing and technological support for these programs through mutually agreed sources of funds, and strengthening of exchange and cooperation to ensure program's sustainability and safety."

There is also contention regarding China's integration of numerous activities under the BRI umbrella. However, the 2017 framework does explicitly include areas like cultural exchange, media, health, tourism, agriculture, parliamentary visits and cross-border exchanges—reflecting the current scope of China's involvement in Nepal. Thus, while BRI has become a significant component of bilateral cooperation, other forms of collaboration can still occur outside BRI's framework.

Comparing China's current engagement with the BRI document, there is a common ground between the two countries. In that sense, it seems that Nepal is already a part of BRI and scores of programs are in progress under the BRI. But it does not mean that bilateral cooperation can happen only under the BRI. The document has clearly mentioned that even if the

MoU signed in 2017 is terminated, it will not affect any ongoing projects between two countries.

As for the BRI implementation plan and project selection, officials indicate that these steps primarily signify another principle agreement, not one that includes financing details or loan agreements. A senior UML leader said, "It's similar to the 2017 MoU, without raising the loan concerns voiced by the Nepali Congress." Although a final investment structure may not be concluded during Oli's visit, there could be a consensus to include specific projects under BRI, though the NC may resist finalizing these agreements.

The China factor is a sensitive issue that risks widening the rift between NC and UML leaders. Oli is actively engaging with NC and Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba to manage these differences. Tensions between the NC and China have escalated recently, driven by the NC's stance on alleged border encroachments in Humla and its critical position on BRI. Additionally, external pressures may be influencing the NC to limit Nepal's engagement with China, complicating the situation further. NC leaders have openly stated that BRI should also follow the model of MCC, which involves primarily US grants with minimal Nepali investment.

### **Prime Minister's prioritizing of China visit becomes political issue in Nepal**

18 November 2024, Tibetan Review

Nepal's ruling coalition partner CPN-UML has condemned remarks made by former prime minister and the CPN (Maoist Centre) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal regarding Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's upcoming visit to China. The issue arises from the fact that the planned trip is a departure from the established tradition where the Prime Minister first visits the country's historical ally India after assuming office.

In an interview with Indian newspaper The Hindu earlier this week, Dahal claimed that Oli was "playing the China card" in relation to his planned trip, noted the kathmandupost.com Nov 16.

Oli is scheduled to make a five-day official visit to China from Dec 2 to 6 at the invitation of his Chinese counterpart, Li Qiang, although an official announcement is awaited, the report said.

Oli's breach of tradition was also covered in an indianexpress.com report on Nov 3, and it was not clear whether he had received an invitation from India before approaching Beijing for his China trip.

The kathmandupost.com report cited the ruling UML party as calling Dahal's accusation "baseless, irresponsible, and damaging to Nepal's sovereignty and foreign policy".

"Nepal does not require external approval for its diplomatic relations," UML Secretary Raghubir

Mahaseth, who also heads the party's foreign affairs department, has said in a statement. He has maintained that Oli's visit is a reflection of Nepal's independent foreign policy, not a "card diplomacy" as Dahal suggested.

The UML was also stated to have stressed the importance of maintaining balanced relationships with both India and China for Nepal's development and prosperity. The party has warned that Dahal's comments could jeopardise Nepal's strong and equitable ties with both nations.

Oli is seen as the most pro-China of Nepali leaders and has on occasions taken pot-shots at New Delhi, including during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The UML statement was further cited as saying Dahal's comments undermined Nepal's sovereignty and national pride, suggesting Dahal was "using political manoeuvres that compromise the nation's integrity."

Still, many have described Oli's decision to go to China in his first bilateral visit after assuming office in mid-July as his preference for the northern neighbour and fear the move may irk the southern neighbour, the report noted.

In general, Nepali prime ministers traditionally chose New Delhi as their first bilateral visit after assuming the office, the report added.

"We are a sovereign nation and we have never said that we won't visit India," Oli himself was quoted as saying. "We choose to go where it is convenient."

Dahal led a collation government with Oli's UML until he was ousted when the latter ditched it to partner with Nepali Congress and other, small parties in mid-July this year.

Meanwhile, amid reports of discord within the UML leadership, Dahal has expressed confidence that his party will be back in power again.

"Our party is the government in waiting. The government that will be formed by overthrowing this one will be ours, so there is nothing to worry about," english.khabarhub.com Nov 16 quoted him as saying, speaking at a meeting of the Maoists' Kavre-Kathmandu Liaison Committee that day.

### **CPN-UML Condemns Former PM Prachanda's Remarks on PM Oli's China Visit**

17 November 2024, Radio Nepal Online

The Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) (CPN-UML) has strongly condemned remarks made by former Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, leader of the CPN-Maoist, in a recent interview with The Hindu. Dahal accused Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli of "using the China card" and labelled his decision to visit China as "proof of immaturity."

In a statement issued on Thursday, CPN-UML's Secretary and Chief of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Raghuraj Mahaseth, termed the comments baseless and irresponsible. He argued that they undermine Nepal's sovereignty and disregard its independent foreign policy.

The party emphasized that Nepal's diplomatic decisions are a sovereign matter and require no external validation. It further accused Dahal of jeopardizing Nepal's balanced relationships with its neighbours, India and China, with his remarks.

The statement highlighted PM Oli's leadership in maintaining Nepal's neutral and pragmatic foreign policy, which aligns with principles of non-alignment and peaceful coexistence. The CPN-UML also called on Dahal to retract his statements and apologize for what it described as a breach of diplomatic decorum. The controversy has sparked debate over Nepal's foreign policy amid efforts to maintain balanced ties with its neighbors.

### **Chinese VP offers help to overcome security challenges in Pakistan**

14 November 2024, The Express Tribune  
Shehbaz vows to root out terrorism from country.

Chinese Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang offered to work with Pakistan to overcome security challenges and further expand Pak-China cooperation during a meeting with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on the sidelines of the COP29 Climate Action Summit on Wednesday.

On Tuesday, Reuters quoted sources as saying that Beijing is pushing Islamabad to allow its own security staff to provide protection to thousands of Chinese citizens working in Pakistan during the bilateral talks after a car bombing in Karachi killed two Chinese engineers on October 6.

In the Baku meeting, the prime minister and the Chinese vice premier discussed bilateral cooperation in various fields. During the meeting, Shehbaz highlighted the steps taken by the government for the security of the Chinese nationals in Pakistan.

He also highlighted the steps taken by the government to completely eradicate the menace of terrorism and reiterated that the government was committed to root out terrorism from the country, according to a press release issued by the Prime Minister Office Media Wing.

Last month's airport bombing in Karachi killed two Chinese engineers, the latest in a string of attacks against the Beijing's interests. The attacks have worried China, which has pushed Pakistan to begin formal negotiations for a joint security management system.

Reuters spoke to five Pakistani security and government sources with direct knowledge of the previously unreported negotiations and demands.

"They (Chinese) want to bring in their own security," one official, who sat in on a recent meeting, said on condition of anonymity.

Talking to The Express Tribune, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal said that the events which occurred in the recent past were the acts of terrorism, which aimed at disrupting the Pakistan-China relations and stop the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

However, he added that both the countries were in contact with each other to deal with the security related issues and agree on a framework. "It is possible for both the countries to improve the security situation of the Chinese citizens," he said.

The minister cautioned against speculations on the issues related to the security, stressing that the security system would be made more effective where necessary. "Speculations about the security of Chinese citizens must be avoided," he said.

"The Chinese citizens working in Pakistan are our guests. Providing security to Chinese nationals in Pakistan is our primary responsibility," he added. "Where necessary, the security system will be made more effective," he said.

Climate finance

Prime Minister Shehbaz visited Baku on Tuesday and Wednesday to participate in the "World Leaders' Climate Action Summit" of the 29th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29).

Addressing the summit on Wednesday, Shehbaz sensitised the global community on the risks posed by climate change and the vulnerabilities of developing countries. He called for grant-based climate finance that should not add to the debt burden of the developing nations.

"I strongly feel, that climate finance must be grant-based and not an addition to the debt burden of vulnerable developing countries. Here is the opportunity that the COP29 should make an understanding loud and clear that we will have to fulfil those financial pledges of COP27 and COP28," he said.

"Ten years ago in Paris, we had failed to stop the rise in emissions and catastrophic global warming. The Paris pledges made 10 years ago have yet to see the light of the day," he added. He highlighted the devastation faced by the people of Pakistan caused by the climate change-induced floods in 2022.

To meet the needs of the populations hit by the impacts of climate change and avert such devastations in the future, Shehbaz reiterated his call for the fulfilment of the pledges made in previous COP summits.

"Without climate justice, there can be no real resilience and I don't want other countries to face what Pakistan faced in 2022. Pakistan is a resilient, hardworking and responsible nation. We are fully

committed to becoming part of the global climate solutions," he assured.

Shehbaz told the summit that Pakistan was going through a renewable energy revolution. He mentioned last year's a comprehensive National Adaptation Plan and this year's the National Carbon Market Framework.

"But we cannot do it alone. Pakistan needs international support to deliver on its climate ambition," he said. "We believe that COP29 can transform into Finance COP by restoring confidence in scaling up climate finance," he remarked.

On the sidelines of the summit, Shehbaz also held a meeting with the Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev and discussed bilateral matters with him. Later in the day, Prime Minister Shehbaz left Baku for Islamabad.

### **Nepal PM picks Beijing over New Delhi for maiden visit, urged to bolster economic ties**

14 November 2024, SCMP, Bibek Bhandari

K.P. Sharma Oli's visit reflects Nepal's intention to strengthen ties with China and rebalance traditionally India-centric relations



Nepal Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli is preparing for an official visit to China in early December, signalling his country's interest in strengthening ties with its northern neighbour, with experts noting its potential to rebalance Kathmandu's historically India-centric foreign policy.

Nepal's newly appointed leaders traditionally make India their first foreign trip, however, Oli did not receive the invitation from New Delhi usually extended after the formation of a new government.

Oli formed a coalition government between his Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) and the Nepali Congress in July after his predecessor Pushpa Kamal Dahal, known as Prachanda, lost a vote of confidence in parliament in July.

Nepal has not officially announced the prime minister's visit from December 2 to 6, despite Beijing's invitation. The deputy chairman of Oli's party said during a meeting this week, the trip will

"emphasise on implementing the high-level agreements" signed between the two countries and prioritising Nepal's national interests.

Oli's visit is being closely watched in New Delhi, though analysts say the trip is less about breaking traditions – Prachanda visited China before India in 2008 – and more about sending a signal to its southern neighbour.

While Nepal has closer ties with India historically and culturally, a notable shift occurred after India objected to the country's new constitution and enforced an unofficial blockade in 2015, pushing Nepal to seek help from China for fuel.

Geeta Kochhar, assistant professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University's Centre for Chinese and South East Asian Studies in New Delhi, said though India-Nepal relations are "steady", issues like border disputes and nationalist rhetoric need to be addressed to prevent them from becoming long-term problems. She described India's decision not to invite Oli as a "schedule issue" of India Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who did meet Oli on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in September.

"There is a certain kind of hesitancy on the Indian part to immediately invite Oli because he is always creating some theoretical or practical problems for India-Nepal relations," she said. "In the name of nationalism, he has given authority to publish new notes to China with the new map."

In October, Nepal granted a contract for printing 100-rupee banknotes with its controversial map to a Chinese company. India has rejected Nepal's map, released in 2020, with territories that Kathmandu claims as its own.

She said Nepal should balance the relationship with the two countries and gain equally from both sides in terms of economic and infrastructure development.

Those issues are likely to be discussed in Oli's Beijing visit.

The two countries have agreed to several important projects, including road expansions, hydropower developments, and a railway from Tibet to Kathmandu under China's Belt and Road Initiative established in 2017. However, announcements of non-belt and road projects as Belt and Road Initiative ventures from China have often caused confusion.

Last year, former foreign minister NP Saud informed parliament that the Belt and Road Initiative project implementation plan was "at a stage of discussion", with no projects executed in Nepal.

Amish Raj Mulmi, author of *All Roads Lead North: Nepal's Turn to China*, said while the Chinese have been clear about the Belt and Road Initiative, Nepal needs to understand that it is not project-specific but a policy mechanism.

"Nepal has not done adequate homework in understanding what the Belt and Road Initiative entails," he said. "Nepal's position that Belt and Road Initiative has to be project specific is contrary to how the Chinese have defined it."

Since signing the Belt and Road Initiative agreements, Nepal's exports to China fell annually by 16.7 per cent from US\$27.5 million in 2017 to US\$11 million in 2022, according to the Observatory of Economic Complexity. However, customs data shows exports to China increased by 77 percent in 2023, rising from US\$9.7 million in 2022 to US\$17.5 million.

Mulmi says the decline in Nepali exports after signing the Belt and Road Initiative indicates that Nepal is not taking advantage of the project's connectivity and has failed to invest economically in its relationship with China.

Mulmi also added that China should help operationalise key infrastructure projects, referring to the Pokhara International Airport built with a US\$200 million Chinese loan, which has yet to see any scheduled international flights since its 2023 opening. Local media reports indicate that Nepal is seeking to convert the loan into a grant during Oli's visit to China.

"Nepal will have to take the relationship with China – this matter to India as well – beyond the political side of affairs," he said. "China relations cannot be dictated by political aspects."

Analysts say Nepal should use Oli's visit to bolster economic ties.

Huang Zhengduo, director of the Center of Nepal Studies at the Institute of South Asia Studies of Sichuan University, said Nepal has the potential to become a transport link between India and China. The proposed railway would reduce Nepal's dependence on India and help promote trade and tourism.

Huang highlighted the Nepali prime minister's domestic significance, as Oli needs Chinese resources to fulfil his development-related political promises. Choosing China for his first trip indicates Oli's intention to balance relationships with both Delhi and Beijing, Huang said.

"Oli wants to send a clear signal that China-Nepal relations are at least as important as Nepal's relations with India.

"Given the increasing involvement of India and the United States in Nepal and their desire to counter Chinese influence in Nepal, Oli's visit to China undoubtedly represents a phased failure of these intentions."

### **China should show magnanimity and waive off the Pokhara airport loan**

11 November 2024, The Kathmandu Post

Tibet Digest December - January 2024

Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli is preparing to visit China in the first week of December. It will be his first bilateral visit after assuming the office in mid-July. Nepali prime ministers generally go to New Delhi first. Sudheer Sharma, former editor-in-chief of Kantipur daily, has recently published a pair of books on Nepal-China relations—'Himalpari ko Huri' and 'Bhikshu, Byapar ra Bidroha'. He also frequently writes on Nepal's relations with its two big neighbours. The Post's Thira Lal Bhusal sat down with Sharma on the eve of Oli's China visit.

Prime Minister Oli is all set to visit China next month. Many find it curious that he decided to go to Beijing first before visiting New Delhi. How do you see this development?

Traditionally, Nepali prime ministers have given high priority to visits and engagements with our two neighbours—India and China. This is natural. Generally, the prime ministers first visited India and then went to China. I believe Prime Minister Oli tried to do the same. We see regular engagements with New Delhi at various levels. Prime Minister Oli had met his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York in the last week of September. In August, Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba visited India and met Prime Minister Modi and her counterpart S Jaishankar, among other key officials there. But Delhi has yet to extend the invitation to the prime minister. So he seems to have decided not to defer his foreign visits for long and chose to visit Beijing first.

We have to see this in two perspectives. Prime Minister Oli is visiting China at the invitation of Chinese Prime Minister Li Qiang and he is also going to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping. Even in the past, Oli developed good relations with Chinese leaders. So, there are expectations that he may make the visit fruitful. An equally important concern is whether this visit impacts our relations with the southern neighbour India. I think the prime minister should focus on implementing the agreements reached during his previous visits to Beijing and during Chinese leaders' Nepal visits. He should be mindful of not irking the southern neighbour while reaching any agreement with the northern one. I believe the prime minister is conscious of this.

India often seems anxious about Chinese involvement in Nepal. Do you see any risk of this visit increasing the distance between Oli and India?

Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal visited China first after he became prime minister in 2008. Even in the past, some Nepali prime ministers including Tanka Prasad Acharya went to China on their first official visit. This is not unusual. The two prime ministers—Oli and Modi—recently met in New York. India doesn't seem ready to intensify bilateral engagements with



Nepal immediately. So it is natural for the prime minister to increase engagements with China, without taking any steps that could provoke India. We should stop seeking Indian signals when dealing with China, and vice versa. We should maintain parallel relations with both the neighbours without antagonising any side.

In this context, what should be the prime minister's priorities during his China visit?

We have to end our chronic problem of signing agreements and not implementing them. We make announcements and forget them. There are also some infrastructure projects China pledged to develop but there is little progress. So the prime minister should draw the Chinese leadership's attention and press them to complete the projects on time. Some important projects such as Mugling-Pokhara and Narayanghat-Butwal road upgradation by the Chinese side have been slow, causing hardships to people. Even such issues should be communicated to the political level. Also, there are several commitments made by the Chinese government but left unimplemented. This creates an impression that China makes big promises but doesn't keep them.

Prime Minister Oli often highlights the Tokha-Chhahare road upgrade project under Chinese support but there is no satisfactory progress. Progress on preparing the detailed project report (DPR) on Nepal-China cross-border railway is unclear as well. Nepal expected some substantive support from China to make the Pokhara international airport financially feasible. Some concrete steps are needed to operate this airport. There are reports that the government has requested China to convert the loan taken to develop the airport into a grant and the prime minister will push for this during his visit. It will be an achievement if the prime minister succeeds in this.

In the course of writing your recent books, you extensively interacted with Chinese officials and experts, as well as with their Nepali counterparts. What are the major factors delaying the projects? Is it lack of preparation on the Nepali side or is there any problem on the Chinese side?

First, we [Nepalis] sign agreements but don't work seriously to implement them. This is true in the case of agreements with other countries as well. We are negligent. Red tape is another problem. Third, China gives less priority to small countries like Nepal as it has so many big issues with other countries. We have to constantly follow up with them to speed things up. In the past, the two sides agreed to open more border points. This should be expedited. The people-to-people relations on the border areas were historically based on social interactions at the community level. People used to trade, marry those

from the other side and interact in various ways. Of late, despite progress on infrastructure development, social engagement has been hindered. This should be rectified and new border points should be opened at Dolpa, Mustang, Gorkha, Dolakha, Taplejung, and Sankhuwasabha. We should think beyond the Capital-centric approach. This will help strengthen relations at the people's level and give alternatives in our connectivity. We should put connectivity at the core of our relations with the two neighbours.

In the past decade, we have made good progress in improving connectivity with India. A study report has been prepared on the Raxaul-Kathmandu railway project. We are building an expressway linking Kathmandu and the southern belt of the country. Integrated check posts (ICPs) have come into operation along Nepal-India border points. Cross border electricity transmission lines have been built and we have increased energy trade with India. We have thus progressed in deepening connectivity with India. We lack reliable north-south highways. Therefore, the prime minister should make connectivity a major agenda of his China visit.

Given the lacklustre performance of past projects, can we be optimistic about big cross-border infrastructure projects under Chinese help?

Nepal and China have committed to run some projects under the Trans-Himalayan Multi Dimensional Connectivity Network (THMDCN) concept. A key component of this concept is to upgrade connectivity between Kathmandu and Kerung that includes roads as well as a railway. The concept also envisions operating other border points. The railway project requires more study and investment and needs to consider various other factors. For now, we should prioritise opening the aforementioned border points. The Korala border point at Mustang has huge potential. Nepal is making a road that connects Mustang with the Sunauli border point with India.

Centuries ago, people from Banaras used to travel to Tibet via Mustang through this route. It can be revived and made a trilateral trade route between Nepal, India and China. Similarly, Limi in Humla, Olangchugola in Taplejung, among others places, can be developed as alternative routes. As far as Kerung-Kathmandu connection is concerned, let's first give priority to building a reliable highway. The railway project should be developed with a broader understanding between Nepal, India and China. Beijing will develop such a big project only with the big Indian markets in mind. More importantly, there are some signs of improvements in India-China relations. We have to use this as an opportunity.



Hemanta Shrestha/TKP

There are differences in the way we work and the Chinese do and there are systemic and linguistic differences as well. These factors are often blamed for lack of progress in development activities carried out with Chinese support. Can Nepalis work closely with Chinese, just like we do with Indians?

Until a decade ago, several projects developed under Indian support were left in limbo. In 2015, India imposed a blockade against Nepal and that sparked anti-India sentiment. Then, India expedited several projects. This drastic change became possible as the political leadership in India realised its mistake and showed the commitment to improve things.

But the same thing is not happening with China because there is a "great wall" between Nepal and China when it comes to understanding each other. The Chinese haven't understood Nepali context. The northern neighbour should be more open and liberal in helping Nepal. Second, Nepal should also stop approaching China only when our relations with India sour. We have left this impression on the Chinese psyche. First, we should be clear about what exactly we want from China, forge consensus among major political forces and hold talks with the Chinese leaders. Then, we should be equally committed to implementing the agreements reached this way. People now take announcements of building big projects under Chinese support as propaganda. Therefore, this time the prime minister should stress on pushing the pending projects. The prime minister should tell them that even the projects announced during President Xi's visit have not progressed and that has created a bad impression of China in Nepal. There are some differences between the coalition partners—the CPN-UML and the Nepali Congress—about the funding modality of projects under the Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI). Do you think this may cause a problem?

The UML wants to expedite the BRI projects while the Congress has insisted that we should accept only grants and not loans under the BRI. The prime minister should clear such dilemmas and come up with common views before he leaves for Beijing. Once they come up with a common view on such key

issues, it will give a positive and strong message. The Chinese side will take it more seriously because the strong government led by the two largest parties can implement bilateral agreements.

We have instances of Nepal's political parties standing for and against important projects funded by other countries. This was seen in the case of the US-funded Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), and China's BRI. Moreover, in the past, the Chinese leaders created an impression that they preferred working with communist parties and leaders. This is neither in the interest of Nepal nor of China.

There are also discussions on signing the BRI implementation plan during the visit. What are the things Nepal should be careful about while signing BRI-related agreements?

Trying to get grants instead of loans is in itself good. But there is no need to be prejudiced against the BRI per se. Nepal reportedly wants to include some points specifying waivers in specific projects. We should be very careful while signing project-based agreements. For instance, what will be the conditions and funding modality of a project, will it be developed under grants or loans etcetera. All our technical experts and other brains should be engaged while signing project-based agreements and specifying conditions and other nitty-gritty to ensure that we will not have unnecessary liability and debt burden in the future.



Hemanta Shrestha/TKP

Over time, Nepal has rightly adopted a steadfast position saying that we don't join a strategic alliance proposed by any country. It stayed away from the US government's State Partnership Programme (SPP) and China's Global Security Initiative (GSI) as well as from India's security umbrella. But we can't be isolated in development initiatives. We have to take support from India, China, the US and other countries based on our needs.

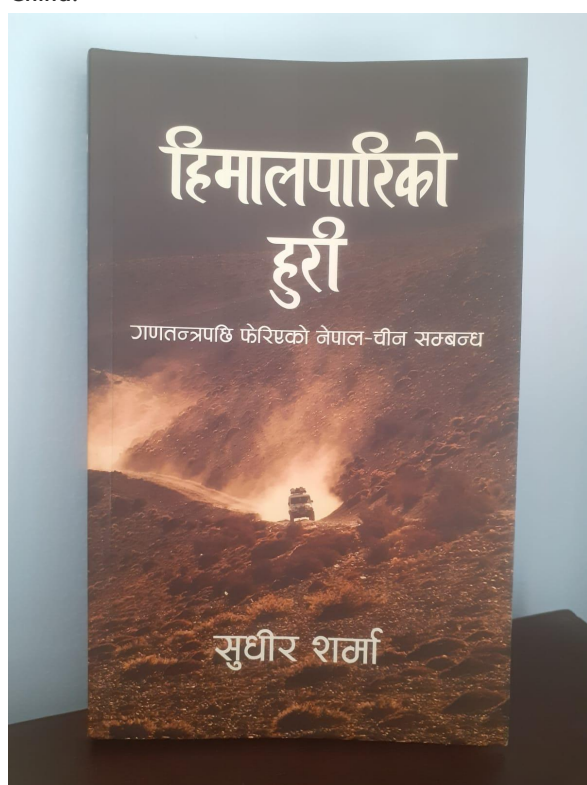
Do you think the Chinese side will show magnanimity on Nepal's requests, for instance on waiving off the loan to develop Pokhara international airport?

Though the Chinese ambassador to Nepal last year claimed the airport project to be under the BRI, the case is different because it was signed years before

we joined the BRI. And, converting that loan into a grant is not a big deal for China. They should show magnanimity given the support we have been providing to China for a long time. If you see things historically, Nepal has helped China by suppressing Khampa revolt, preventing free Tibet movements on our soil and showing a steadfast commitment to One-China policy. China, which is now prosperous, should definitely show magnanimity and waive off loan of Pokhara airport. They shouldn't see relations with Nepal through a purely transactional lens.

In your book, you describe 2008 as a watershed after which the engagements between Nepal and China increased drastically. But why couldn't we benefit from the northern neighbour in terms of development?

The Chinese side looks more interested in increasing engagement. They like to showcase their development before foreigners. But more than lavish hospitality, we need substantive support from the neighbour, which has emerged as the world's second-largest economy. But we should be clear about what we want from our engagements with China.



The Nepali side doesn't present its proposals clearly. On certain issues, our politicians give mixed signals. This time, if this government of two largest parties reaches a certain agreement with China and remains committed to implement it, other forces can't hinder it. The same approach can be replicated while dealing with India, the US, Japan or other friendly countries.

Is difficult geography still a barrier in developing cross-border infrastructure projects and deepening relations between Nepal and China?

In our textbooks we read that the Himalayan range is a natural barrier between the two countries. In my book 'Bhikshu Byapar ra Bidroha', I have explored and described how people from Nepal and northern India had been traversing through these mountains and there were interactions and engagements between the people in this part of the world since the 5th and 6th centuries. So, the mountains weren't barriers even at that time. Now technology has made things easier. We have to think about how to connect with these two big economies. We have multiple east-west highways. Now we need north-south highways connecting the three countries that will help us reap benefits from India and China.

At present, relations between these two countries have improved and it is an opportunity for us. We have to forge understanding with both India and China if we have to materialise big projects based on trilateral agreement. One thing we can't accept is the concept of two-plus-one (India, China plus Nepal). That is unacceptable because it downgrades Nepal to a junior partner. We need trilateral agreements to develop mega connectivity-related and other investment projects but such agreements should be made on an equal-footing between the three countries.

### Chinese envoy: We support Nepal's infrastructure development

08 November 2024, The Himalayan, Rastriya Samachar Samiti

Chinese Ambassador to Nepal, Chen Song, expressed the Chinese government's readiness to support Nepal's development and prosperity.

Ambassador Song highlighted the harmonious relationship between Nepal and China and reaffirmed China's willingness to aid Nepal's development efforts.

Speaking at a program held today at Bhawani Vidyapeeth Secondary School in Falebas Municipality, Parbat, the ambassador underscored China's commitment to assisting in Nepal's growth and progress.

He noted that since the establishment of diplomatic ties, the two countries, connected by mountains and rivers, have consistently supported each other on matters of core interest.

Ambassador Song further pledged cooperation in upgrading Nepal's road, electricity, and education sectors, adding that China wishes for Nepal to become a self-reliant, advancing nation.

He also mentioned China's readiness to operationalize the Korala border crossing and emphasized ongoing Chinese support for infrastructure development at the crossing. Song expressed optimism that the bilateral relationship

would strengthen further with the opening of this border crossing.

### **China reported to have banned Nepal-Tibet borderland marriages**

05 November 2024, Tibetan Review



China has an issue with the people on the two sides of the Tibet-Nepal border marrying each other and has banned it but not bothered to explain why, according to thediplomat.com Nov 4. The people on the two sides of this border share ethnic, Buddhist cultural heritage and linguistic ties; but cross-border marriage doesn't exist anymore. The centuries-old borderlands marriage has been halted thanks to the Chinese side, the report said.

"Cross-border marriage was not an issue until 2008," the report quoted a Nepali local in Olangchung Gola village in Nepal's eastern Taplejung district, which borders Tibet and India, as saying. It was "halted from the Chinese side after 2012."

As a result, cross-border marriages, once the norm in Olangchung Gola, are now a rarity, the report said. While a Nepali from any part of Nepal can marry a Chinese in any part of mainland China, Beijing has forbidden cross-border marriages between people who live in the Tibet-Nepal borderlands, within walking distance of each other, and with strong linguistic and cultural ties. Beijing has provided no explanation for this policy, the report said.

Chumbe Sherpa, a former deputy chair of the erstwhile Olangchung Gola Village Development Committee (local government), has said that previously Tibetan women were drawn to Nepal as the latter was comparatively well-developed and the source of their food and other supplies. A marriage with a Nepali man was therefore an attractive option.

However, in recent decades, China has developed the Tibetan region, and the Tibetan border regions are more developed than the Nepali ones. Hence, the situation has reversed and commodities now flow into Nepal from Riu in Dinggye County of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). Almost all daily essentials being used by residents of Olangchung Gola are

now from TAR and sport Mandarin characters. Olangchung Gola is closer to Riu bazaar than Taplejung's district headquarters of Phungling bazaar, the report noted.

The report also said that even meeting relatives on the Tibet side of the border had become tougher post-pandemic. "We can't go to our relatives' homes on the other side," Chhilamo Lama, whose maternal house is on the Tibetan side, has said. She has "to stay at a quarantine-like home," where her "relatives come to meet and greet" her. "This was not the case in the past," she has said.

Trade and other relationships between the two sides on the borderland continued to be excellent, however, the report noted.

Local residents as well as security personnel view the Chinese positively. Madhab Khatri, the recently deployed Border Outpost chief of Nepal's Armed Police Force has said, "Chinese counterparts often ask if we need anything from them."

"We mostly go to Riu to sell our products and buy theirs. If we can't sell all our products in the Riu bazaar, Chinese policemen purchase our unsold items," Chhilamo Lama has told The Diplomat.

Also, Chheten Sherpa, a local leader of the Nepali Congress and a former local government member, has said that the Chinese are helpful and are eager to have better road connectivity with Nepal. Chinese-sent bulldozers and oil tankers with Chinese number plates are visible at Olangchung Gola bazaar.

And so, the big question is, when border trade and crossings have resumed, why are traditional borderland marriages being blocked? Why are marriages between people who have to fly long distances across the Himalayas permitted when those who live just within walking distance of each other are forbidden, the report asked.

## **October**

### **Nepal opens Lomanthang to all citizens travelling to Chinese ruled Tibet**

30 October 2024, Tibetan Review

Nepal has opened on Oct 30 a new immigration office at Lomanthang Rural Municipality-1, Nechung, of Mustang district in the Gandaki Province, to help streamline cross-border travel and operations at Korala Dry Port, reported the kathmandupost.com Oct 29 and 30.

Lomanthang, or Lo, the northern two-thirds of Mustang district, is culturally and linguistically Tibetan, while the southern third is called Thak, the homeland of Thakali people who speak a different



language and have a synthesis of Tibetan and Nepalese culture. It is 20 kilometres (12 miles) by unpaved road from a border crossing into Drongpa (Chinese: Zhongba) County of Shigatse City, Tibet.

The Nepalese Department of Immigration requires foreign visitors to Lomanthang to obtain a special permit and liaison (guide) to protect local tradition from outside influence as well as to protect their environment.

Previously, only Mustang locals with permits issued by the District Administration Office could cross the Korala border for trade. The new office now allows easier access for all Nepali citizens intending to travel through this point, the report said.

Inaugurating the new immigration office at Korala, Nepal's Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak has expressed optimism that the initiation will strengthen Nepal's bilateral ties with China.

"The immigration facility will be instrumental in easing the movement of citizens and fostering bilateral trade, further cementing the bond between Nepal and China," Lekhak has said.

The inauguration followed the installation of a prefabricated 10-room immigration and security post at the border, equipped with electricity, internet, and mobile phone connectivity. The government has extended the central transmission line to Korala and provided Nepal Telecom's internet services, the report said.

The Chinese side has also constructed essential infrastructure, including customs facilities, quarantine areas, accommodations, a laboratory, and truck parking. These facilities aim to enhance efficiency at the Korala dry port, for which the Nepal Intermodal Transport Development Board has prepared a detailed project report for further development, the report said.

Located at an altitude of 4,650 metres, the Korala border was officially inaugurated on Nov 13 last year in a joint ceremony between Mustang's Chief District Officer and an official from Shigatse City. Expansion of trade activities in this border has been deemed a landmark step towards economic prosperity by connecting with both northern and southern trade routes, the report said.

The report also said that following the commencement of the operation of the Korala border point, Nepal, India and China trade can now be operated through this route as well.

The Kaligandaki Corridor that reaches up to the Korala border point is connected with Siddhartha Highway in Syngja district and the road ends at the Sunauli border point with India in Rupandehi district. The route from Nepal-India border point at Sunauli to Nepal-Tibet border point at Korala through Siddhartha Highway and Kaligandaki corridor is

taken as a possible alternative trilateral trade route between the three countries, the report said.

### **Nepal entrusts China to print Rs 100 notes with map laying claim over Indian territory**

29 October 2024, Tibetan Review

Nepal under Prime Minister KPS Oli appears to be making common cause with China on its territorial dispute with India by awarding the contract for the printing of its controversial new Rs 100 note to a Chinese company. Oli is seen as the most pro-China Nepali leader and has in the past taken potshots at India as if to make that point.

Nepal has been laying claim over three Indian territories in the Indian state of Uttarakhand in the recent past – Limpiyadhura-Kalapani-Lipulekh. And its claim over the Limpiyadhura Pass area arises from its claim over Kalapani. The disputed area, a 370-square-kilometre stretch situated to the northwestern corner of Nepal, has been administered by India for hundreds of years.

The area is currently administration as part of Pithoragarh district in the Kumaon Division of the Uttarakhand state. However, Nepal has been claiming it since 1997, saying it lies within its Darchula district, Sudurpashchim Province.

Nepal added these regions to its map via a constitutional amendment in 2020, though they have been under Indian control for over 200 years, noted [zeenews.india.com](https://zeenews.india.com) Oct 29. Nepal shares a border of over 1,800 km with five Indian states – Sikkim, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal.

Oli's cabinet recently approved the inclusion of its new map with these three Indian territories on its new currency note of Nepali Rs 100. The printing of the notes will test Kathmandu's relations with India, the report noted.

The contract for printing the new currency notes has been awarded to China Banknote Printing and Minting Corporation. Nepal's central bank – Nepal Rashtira Bank – has issued its letter of intent to the Chinese firm on Oct 27, the report said.

Amid this development, Oli is planning to pay an official visit to China between mid-November and mid-December, though China is yet to extend an official invitation to him, the report said.

In Nepal's frequently changing alignment of parties in constant jostling for power, Oli assumed his fourth tenure as Prime Minister of Nepal in mid-July.

Oli held a meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in New York last month. During the meeting, he extended an invitation to Modi to visit Nepal, the report said.



Oli's Communist Party of Nepal (UML) is a coalition partner with Nepali Congress, which is seen as pro-India.

China lays claim to territories across much of India's northern borders with Tibet which the former annexed in 1951 through armed aggression.

Nepal's claim is based on the Sugauli Treaty signed with British East India Company in 1815. Under it, the India-western Nepal border is marked by the course of the Kali River, called the Mahakali downstream. But there was no map attached to it.

The Mahakali has two tributaries—one starting at Lipulekh and the other at Limpiyadhura further west. The treaty did not specify which of these two tributaries would be considered the Kali for the purpose of delineating the boundary. India says the Kali starts at Lipulekh, while Nepal says Limpiyadhura is the river's source, noted a Kathmandupost.com report Jun 4, 2020.

### **China-aided public welfare projects handed over to Nepal's community**

25 October 2024, Xinhua

A solar-powered community bathroom and a rooftop photovoltaic power generation facility constructed in the Kathmandu Valley with Chinese aid were handed over to the local community on Friday.

The bathroom in Lalitpur, a city in the valley, has hot water generated by solar energy and three shower rooms for males and females, respectively, and can accommodate some 100 people per day.

The bathroom is described as a sustainable development project, as the waste water is filtered for storage to flush bathroom toilets, a shop serving customers generates income, and job opportunities are created.

The rooftop photovoltaic power generation facility nearby has 36 kilowatts in total installed capacity and is expected to generate around 60,000 kWh of electricity per year, providing green power to the bathroom and the community.

Addressing the handover ceremony, Lalitpur Mayor Chiri Babu Maharjan expressed his gratitude for "this state-of-the-art" bathroom facility.

"Thank you very much for your good assistance and support," he said. "Hopefully, there will be a lot of avenues where we can work together."

Insufficient water supply and frequent power outage are challenges facing the Kathmandu Valley and other parts of Nepal.

The community bathroom is the first under the "Happy Community" program launched by the Chinese Embassy in Nepal, noted Ambassador Chen Song.

The two projects were constructed under the public welfare program implemented by the Yunnan

Commercial Representative Office in Kathmandu, Nepal.

The Chinese side is confident that it can implement more of such small yet smart people-centered programs which are popular with the Nepali people, Chen said at the handover ceremony.

In addition, the Chinese side has launched poverty reduction projects in rural Nepal, including cultivating vegetables in greenhouses, making clean drinking water available at schools and installing solar streetlights, added the ambassador.

### **CPC holds meeting of Nepali political parties, PM Oli reiterates 'no anti-China activities' stand**

21 October 2024, Tibetan Review

After a slowdown in activity for quite some time, the Communist Party of China (CPC) has resumed high-level visits to Nepal and received reassurance from Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli on Oct 20 that no 'anti-China activities' will be allowed in the country, reported the kathmandupost.com and the PTI news agency Oct 20.

Controversially, a CPC delegation has called a meeting of Nepali political parties having presence in the country's parliament without bothering to seek Kathmandu's permission.

The assurance was given as a reaffirmation of the Himalayan nation's commitment to China's 'One China' policy, said the PTI report.

The 'One China' policy usually refers to China's claim that there is only one China and Taiwan is part of it as a way to counter the latter's increasingly strident claim to be a separate sovereign entity. China claims that Taiwan is part of it and makes it mandatory for all the countries having diplomatic ties with it to follow the 'One China' policy.

However, in Nepal, the policy is more distinctively observed by cracking down on the Tibetan refugee community whenever it engages in any activity not approved by China. Besides, around 20,000 Tibetan refugees in the country have remained undocumented for decades as a result of pressure from China.

Oli, Chairman of the CPN (UML) and seen as the most pro-China leader of Nepal, has made the remarks in a meeting with a high-level Chinese delegation led by Chen Jining, a member of the Communist Party of China Central Committee. The meeting took place at his official residence in Baluwatar, Kathmandu.

Reaffirming Nepal's commitment to the 'One China' policy, Oli told the visiting delegation that no anti-China activities would be allowed to operate within Nepal's territory, the report said.

Oli has also expressed hopes for continued support from China for Nepal's economic development. He

has underscored the role of the CPC and President Xi Jinping's leadership in "alleviating poverty and driving holistic development in China" and expressed Nepal's interest in benefiting from such advancements.

Chen, who is also the Secretary of the CPC Qinghai Provincial Committee, has reiterated China's support for Nepal's "happiness and prosperity", adding Beijing will always respect decisions made by Nepal's political parties.

Chen's delegation was stated to include Peng Xiubin, director-general of International Department of CPC (IDCPC); Wang Zhizhong, director-general of Foreign Affairs Office (FAO), CPC Qinghai Provincial Committee; Liu Chang, deputy director-general of FAO, CPC Qinghai Provincial Committee; Zheng Dengke, director of Policy Research Office, CPC Qinghai Provincial Committee; Du DU Xiaoli, director of FAO, CPC Qinghai Provincial Committee; Zheng Youya, deputy director and Nepali Translator at IDCPC; Wang Siqi, deputy director at IDCPC; and Chen Yongpei, first-level principal staff member of IDCPC.

\* \* \*

Chen's delegation had arrived in Kathmandu on Oct 19. Until that day, Zhang Meizhi, member of the Standing Committee of the 14th National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, and vice chairperson of the Standing Committee of Hebei Provincial People's Congress (Vice Minister Level), was in Kathmandu, said the kathmandupost.com report.

The former arrived in Kathmandu on the day the latter left the country, the report said.

The Chen's CPC delegation was stated to have invited at least 15 leaders each from all Nepali political parties that were represented in the country's House of Representatives on Oct 20 to brief them about the outcome of the recent CPC Central Committee meeting held in Beijing.

Fourteen political parties are represented in Nepal's 275-strong House of Representatives and the delegations' visits were meant to strengthen party-to-party relationships between the two sides.

The Chinese side did not seek permission to hold the event, but informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about its plan to host the function, to be inaugurated by Narayan Dahal, chairman of the National Assembly, who was invited as the chief guest at the function, the report cited a ministry official as saying. The 20th Central Committee of the CPC had convened its third plenary session in Beijing from Jul 15 to 18 earlier this year.

Chen had started meeting with top Nepali political leaders soon after his arrival, including Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba and CPN

(Maoist Centre) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal, the report said.

### Chinese leaders meet top party leaders in Kathmandu

20 October 2024, The Kathmandu Post



Maoist Centre Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal is flanked by party leaders and the Chinese delegation at his residence in Khumaltar on Saturday. Photo: Dahal's secretariat

The CPC delegation will brief Nepali party leaders on the 3rd Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee.

After a slowdown in activity for quite some time, the Communist Party of China has resumed high-level visits to Nepal.

A delegation led by members of the CPC Central Committee and Chen Gang, who is also the secretary of CPC Qinghai Provincial Committee, arrived in Kathmandu on Saturday.

Until Saturday, Zhang Meizhi, member of the Standing Committee of the 14th National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, and vice chairperson of the Standing Committee of Hebei Provincial People's Congress (Vice Minister Level), was in Kathmandu.

The day Zhang left for China, Chen arrived in Kathmandu. Zhang met with Deputy Speaker Indira Rana Magar and went to Pokhara, according to security sources.

Rajendra Gautam, head of publicity department of the CPN-UML, and Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Chen Song, among others, received the Chinese delegation at Tribhuvan International Airport.

The CPC delegation led by Chen will brief the Nepali party leaders about the 3rd Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee on Sunday in Kathmandu, according to the itinerary. The IDCPC and CPC Qinghai Provincial Committee plan to co-host the briefing on the 3rd Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee at 14:30 pm on Sunday, at the Hotel Yak and Yeti in Kathmandu, said the invitation letter sent out to the various

political parties that are represented at the Federal Parliament of Nepal.

Narayan Dahal, chairman of the National Assembly, is invited as chief guest at the function.

According to the security sources, apart from Chen, the delegation includes Penng Xiubin, director-general of International Department of CPC (IDCPC); Wang Zhizhong, director-general of Foreign Affairs Office (FAO), CPC Qinghai Provincial Committee; Liu Chang, deputy director-general of FAO, CPC Qinghai Provincial Committee; Zheng Dengke, director of Policy Research Office, CPC Qinghai Provincial Committee; Du DU Xiaoli, director of FAO, CPC Qinghai Provincial Committee; Zheng Youya, deputy director and Nepali Translator at IDCPC; Wang Siqi, deputy director at IDCPC; and Chen Yongpei, first-level principal staff member of IDCPC.

The CPC has invited at least 15 leaders each from all Nepali political parties that are represented in the House of Representatives in a rare party briefing on Sunday to brief about the outcome of the recent party meeting held in Beijing.

Fourteen political parties are represented in Nepal's 275-strong House of Representatives.

The Chinese side did not seek permission to hold the event but informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about its plan to host the function to be inaugurated by Dahal, according to a ministry official. The 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China convened its third plenary session in Beijing from July 15 to 18 earlier this year.

Soon after Chen arrived in Kathmandu on Saturday, he started meeting with top political leaders, including Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba and CPN (Maoist Centre) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal. Shankar Pokhrel, general secretary of the CPN-UML, organised a dinner in honour of the visiting Chinese leaders on Saturday evening.

On Sunday, Chen and the Chinese delegation will meet Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli at his residence in Baluwatar and will brief Nepali leaders on the outcome of the recently held CPC's plenary session.

### **Chairman Prachanda stresses for implementation of agreements signed between Nepal, China**

19 October 2024, The Rising Nepal

CPN (Maoist Centre) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' has said that Nepal was willing to learn several things from the development of modern China.

During a meeting with the leaders of the Communist Party of China (CPC) at his residence in Khumaltar on Saturday, the former Prime Minister said that China's development is a learning for Nepal.

Likewise, Chairman Prachanda thanked the Chinese government, CPC and CPC Secretary General Xi

Jinping for China's support to Nepal's development priority.

On the occasion, he stressed the need to implement the agreements signed between Nepal and China during the high-level visit from China to Nepal in 2019.

Chairman Prachanda shared that Nepal was expecting effective operation of Nepal-China border points, advancement of railway construction, ensuring effective air connectivity and cooperation in the areas of health, education and others.

CPC Central Committee Member and CPC Secretary of Qinghai Province Committee Chen Gang, the leader of the Chinese delegation visiting Nepal, also shared his views on deepening Nepal-China relations.

Sharing that this was his first visit to Nepal, Gang said that the CPC has given importance to the relations of government and political parties based on their co-existence.

During the meeting, CPN (Maoist Centre) Senior Vice-Chairman Narayankaji Shrestha, Vice-Chairperson Pampha Bhusal, leaders Janardan Sharma, Shakti Bahadur Basnet and others were present.

Likewise, CPC Secretary of Qinghai Province Committee Chen Gang, Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Chen Song and others were present from the side of the Chinese delegation.(RSS)

### **CPC invites 15 leaders each from Nepali parties in House for its briefing in Kathmandu**

19 October 2024, The Kathmandu Post

The Chinese side did not seek permission to hold the event but informed Foreign Ministry about its plan, according to an official.

The Communist Party of China (CPC) has invited at least 15 leaders each from all Nepali political parties that are represented in the House of Representatives in a rare party briefing on Sunday. The International Department of the CPC sent the invitation to the Nepali political parties.

"The International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (IDCPC) and CPC Qinghai Provincial Committee presents its compliments to your party and has the honour to advise the following," reads the letter sent to one national party which was seen by the Post. "The IDCPC and CPC Qinghai Provincial Committee plans to co-host the briefing on the 3rd Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee at 14:30 p.m. on October 20th, at the Hotel Yak and Yeti in Kathmandu, Nepal."

Fourteen political parties are represented in Nepal's 275-strong House of Representatives. And there are two independent lawmakers.

National Assembly Chairman Narayan Dahal has been invited as chief guest in the function. The Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu had informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the function and the ministry allowed them to organise the programme without further consultation, said a joint secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"We are hearing of such practice for the first time in Nepal," a CPN-UML leader said. "Since they invited us, we have to attend the event but it is up to the government to decide whether the political party from another country should invite us for internal party meetings. It is up to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to decide."

But a joint secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that since China practices a different political system, the ministry did not reject holding such an event in Kathmandu.

In China, the CPC unilaterally runs the government, so the ministry did not urge them to stop the function, said the joint secretary. The Chinese side did not seek permission to hold the event but informed the ministry about its plan to host the function to be inaugurated by Dahal, according to the ministry official.

The 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China convened its third plenary session in Beijing from July 15 to 18 earlier this year. The session had endorsed several proposals related to development strategy of China, development and security, promotion of high-quality development, deepening reform in various sectors, advancing socialist democracy and rule of law, improving public communication and cultural work, safeguarding national security and social stability, promoting the development of national defense and the armed forces, advancing work related to Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan, pursuing major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics, and strengthening full and rigorous party self-governance, among others, according to the CPC document.

Arjun Thapa, head of the international department of Janata Samajbadi Party-Nepal, confirmed to the Post that his party has received an invitation to attend the briefing. But he said he is not participating. "Someone from the party including some half a dozen party leaders will attend the briefing," Thapa said.

"It's a kind of propaganda meeting," he added. But the letter sent by the Chinese side did not mention who from the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (IDCPC) and CPC Qinghai Provincial Committee will brief the Nepali leaders.

Earlier, in January end, Sun Haiyan, the vice minister of the International Liaison Department of the CPC, also did a similar kind of briefing to the second-rung leaders of the major Nepali political parties during a

consultative conference in Kathmandu between Nepali political leaders and the CPC.

In the meeting, Sun had accused that certain countries were trying to destabilise the good relations between Nepal and China, while some elements were also defaming the Belt and Road Initiative by calling it a 'debt trap'. But the theme of Sunday's briefing is 'Sharing the Opportunities Brought by Chinese Modernisation and Deepening the Trans-Himalaya Cooperation.'

"We cordially invite 15 representatives of your party/organisation to participate in this event," reads the invitation letter.

Meanwhile, China also donated seven electric vehicle cars to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Friday. But both sides have not released any formal statement about it.

"These cars were stuck at the Nepal-China border for a long time," said Amrit Bahadur Rai, spokesperson at the foreign ministry. "Finally, the Chinese side handed it over to us on Friday."

The seven electric vehicles were stuck in customs due to Nepali side's failure to pay the customs duty, another foreign ministry official said. "They were released after the finance ministry agreed to pay the tax amounting to over Rs10.5 million," the official said.

### **China expands territorial claims with new fence along Nepal-Tibet border**

19 October 2024, MyIndMakers

China has increased its territorial ambitions by building a fence along the Nepal-Tibet border. This new structure, reinforced with barbed wire and concrete barriers, clearly ignores the internationally recognised boundary between China and Nepal, extending deep into Nepalese territory. This action has raised concerns about China's growing disregard for sovereign borders.

Recent satellite images have revealed a large inscription near the fence, which reads "Long Live the Chinese Communist Party." This message stretches 600 feet across a hillside and is so enormous that it can be seen from space, serving as a clear act of intimidation towards Nepal and its neighbouring countries. The New York Times has reported on these satellite images, bringing further global attention to this incursion.

This incident mirrors previous reports of Chinese territorial aggression. In 2021, Nepalese lawmaker Jeevan Bahadur Shahi published a report detailing Chinese military encroachments in the Humla district, which borders China. The report claimed that Chinese forces had destroyed eight border pillars and built infrastructure deep within Nepal's territory.

However, the Nepalese government suppressed these findings due to pressure from Beijing. The details of this report later leaked to the BBC, sparking public outrage but resulting in no significant action from the government. Meanwhile, China has continued its expansionist policies, with reports indicating that over 11 regions along the Nepal-China border have been affected by similar land grabs. This latest fencing is consistent with China's long-standing "salami-slicing" strategy, which involves making small, incremental territorial gains that ultimately lead to significant land grabs.

China has employed this method in other areas, including the South China Sea and along the contentious India-China border. Recently, tensions have escalated along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh, where a standoff with Indian forces has continued for over four years.

Adding to regional tensions, China has also renamed locations in Arunachal Pradesh, claiming them as Chinese territory, a claim firmly rejected by India. Additionally, Chinese authorities have increased pressure on ethnic Tibetan Nepalis living near the border, reportedly coercing villagers to avoid public displays of the Dalai Lama's image under the threat of reprisals. This is part of a broader effort by China to suppress Tibetan culture and identity, extending its repressive measures into Nepalese territory.

Despite these clear violations of sovereignty, the Nepalese government has largely remained silent. The country's leadership, increasingly dependent on China for economic and ideological support, has chosen to overlook these encroachments to maintain good relations with Beijing.

China's ongoing border incursions in Nepal raise serious questions about the future of Nepal's sovereignty. It remains to be seen whether Nepal's leaders will find the courage to resist Chinese expansionism or continue to submit to pressure from Beijing. The global community should also pay attention; if China's actions in Nepal go unchallenged, they may encourage similar aggression in other regions, particularly in India and the South China Sea.

### **China fails to push BRI implementation plan in Nepal**

16 October 2024, ORF, Arpan Gelal

The Chinese intention seems clear—until Nepal signs the BRI Implementation Plan, Chinese cooperation in mega projects will remain in limbo.

The finalisation of the 'Implementation Plan' for the execution of projects under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has remained the central component of China's Nepal policy in the last few years. Recently, China has taken a more assertive stance to

portray the success of BRI in Nepal as not a single project under BRI has been executed in its immediate neighbour. Although the negotiation on BRI projects stuck soon after signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative in 2017, the push for the BRI Implementation Plan has remained the major agenda of all high-level visits from China in recent years.

China has taken a more assertive stance to portray the success of BRI in Nepal as not a single project under BRI has been executed in its immediate neighbour.

China had taken the Implementation Plan forward in early 2020 but negotiations on the plan saw minimal progress. The COVID-19 pandemic and firm stance of the then Nepali Congress (NC)-led government that the projects under BRI be funded through grants and concessional loans, rather than China's proposal for commercial loans, stalled the progress. After the general election in November 2022, with the formation of a left coalition government in Kathmandu, China intensified its efforts to advance the Implementation Plan. The joint statement issued during then Prime Minister Prachanda's visit to China in September 2023 mentioned that the two sides will accelerate the discussion to finalise the BRI Implementation Plan at the earliest. Soon after assuming office as Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Narayan Kaji Shrestha, an influential high-ranking CPN (Maoist-Centre) leader with a close ties to China, made a nine-day long visit to China, reportedly with the objective of finalising the Implementation Plan. The plan could not be signed; however, Shrestha expressed his commitment to finalize it soon.

The BRI Implementation Plan gained traction from across the spectrum in Nepal when the outgoing government under Prachanda expedited the final preparations to sign the document during the 16th round of the Nepal-China diplomatic consultation meeting last June. The text of the agreement forwarded by China was finalised by the National Planning Commission with inputs from the relevant ministries. On the eve of the consultation meeting, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs forwarded the draft of the plan for final approval to the prime minister's office. The lawmakers of Nepali Congress (NC) and Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) along with other parties strongly condemned the government's preparation to sign the plan without consultation with the opposition parties and wider consensus on the text of the plan. The government ultimately had to back off.

The joint statement issued during then Prime Minister Prachanda's visit to China in September 2023 mentioned that the two sides will accelerate the



discussion to finalise the BRI Implementation Plan at the earliest.

This stalled China's tendency to leverage the left government in Nepal to promote its agenda. China often uses left parties with close ideological inclination to advance its interests. This is evident from the fact that most of the infrastructure projects in Nepal have been contracted to Chinese firms under the left-led administrations in Kathmandu.

The recent realignment in the ruling coalition under CPN-UML chair KP Sharma Oli, with Nepali Congress taking the role of key alliance partner and control of the Foreign Ministry, signals uncertainty about any deal on the Implementation Plan soon. Although Beijing will make attempts to move forward with the plan through Oli and his confidants, the strong reservation of the Nepali Congress on the funding modality and governance mechanisms of the projects under BRI will impede further developments. At least, until the current coalition remains intact, BRI implementation in Nepal will remain on hold.

#### The fuss of Implementation Plan

After signing the MoU on cooperation under the BRI in 2017, Nepal proposed a list of 35 projects to implement under the initiative as early as 2018 under the KP Oli administration. The number of projects was eventually trimmed to nine after the insistence of the Chinese side to reduce the number to a single digit. The negotiations on the project selection and their funding and implementation modality could not move forward. Amid the deadlock, Nepal last year contracted a hydropower project proposed under BRI to an Indian contractor, and another is being awarded to an Indian state-owned enterprise.

Chinese rationale for seeking another agreement on BRI is puzzling. As per media reports, the recently finalised draft of the Implementation Plan includes a few priority sectors of cooperation under the BRI framework, lacking any details on the funding mechanisms and implementation modalities. Chinese officials contend that the Implementation Plan would open a pathway for advancing bilateral cooperation and serve as a catalyst for the implementation of projects under BRI in Nepal. However, it is unclear how yet another generic agreement without negotiations on project selection and funding mechanisms would facilitate the execution of projects.

Amid the deadlock, Nepal last year contracted a hydropower project proposed under BRI to an Indian contractor, and another is being awarded to an Indian state-owned enterprise.

While the lack of transparency is a generic feature of Chinese engagements in Nepal's infrastructure landscape, the bilateral BRI dealings have been shrouded in secrecy since the beginning. The initial MoU on BRI is still kept confidential by both

countries. Certain contentious provisions in the MoU came under scrutiny after a media house leaked the document in 2022. The recent outgoing government under Prachanda yet again took a similar step, concluding the draft of the Implementation Plan without deliberation, despite multiple calls from the lawmakers for parliamentary discussions. The left-led governments tend to override democratic norms, transparency, accountability, and processes while dealing with their Chinese counterpart, prioritising their ideological affinity with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). BRI hasn't remained an excuse.

#### China's unilateral claims

After joining the initiative in 2017 with much fanfare, BRI was seen as a panacea to solve Nepal's infrastructure deficit. The majority of Nepalis perceived BRI as a project-led infrastructure initiative with little realisation of strategic and geopolitical motives attached to it. China's unilateral labelling of certain projects in Nepal under BRI increased the scepticism and has prompted a more cautionary approach.

Last month, the ambassador of China to Nepal took to social site X (formerly Twitter) to make a controversial claim to announce a 'new batch' of BRI projects in Nepal. The two countries signed the letters of exchange during the visit of the Vice Chairman of China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA) for the initiation of four long-standing stalled projects, committed to be assisted by China. Earlier, the Chinese embassy had surprisingly announced Pokhara International Airport, built with a Chinese loan as a flagship project under the BRI. Nepali officials straightforwardly rejected the claim, given the loan negotiations for the airport began before the BRI was conceptualised in 2013.

China's unilateral labelling of certain projects in Nepal under BRI increased the scepticism and has prompted a more cautionary approach.

Amidst the stalemate in cooperation on large-scale infrastructure projects in recent years, China has expanded engagements through 'small yet smart' projects, allegedly under the BRI framework. In July 2023, the Communist Party of China (CPC) announced the 'Silk Roadster' platform coinciding with the tenth anniversary of BRI. Silk Roadster is stated to foster practical cooperation and people-to-people exchanges through training, skills development, scholarships and other short-term exchanges. Further, later the same year, the outcome document of the third BRI Forum for International Cooperation mentioned two smaller projects related to education and sanitation implemented by Chinese NGOs as a part of China's flagship initiative.

While Nepal officially mentions that not a single project has taken off in Nepal under the BRI due to unfinalised funding and implementation modalities,

China appears keen to categorise any bilateral engagements in Nepal as a part of the BRI initiative. China has publicly stated its intention to establish the neighbourhood as a demonstration zone for the success of the Belt and Road initiative along with other global initiatives, and as a strategically important neighbour, Nepal is a priority. For Beijing, ensuring the implementation of an agreement reached during President Xi Jinping's state visit to Nepal in 2019 has also been a matter of prestige. The agreement was aimed at accelerating the implementation of BRI within the broader framework of the Trans-Himalayan Multidimensional Connectivity Network. Further, China is eager to reaffirm its strategic influence to counter the US influence, particularly in light of its unsuccessful attempt to block the ratification of the Millennium Challenge Cooperation (MCC) compact in Nepal. China has publicly stated its intention to establish the neighbourhood as a demonstration zone for the success of the Belt and Road initiative along with other global initiatives, and as a strategically important neighbour, Nepal is a priority.

#### Conclusion

China claims BRI has been implemented in Nepal, while Nepal has asserted that none of the projects under BRI has materialised. The Chinese intention seems clear—until Nepal signs the BRI Implementation Plan, Chinese cooperation in mega projects will remain in limbo, and engagements will continue to be limited to certain small-scale projects. However, finalising the financial and implementation modalities, and China's willingness to accommodate Nepal's interests, particularly its preference for grants and soft loans on par with other multilateral financial institutions, will remain critical for the implementation of BRI. Although the initial optimism regarding BRI has gradually waned, BRI may still move forward if China shows flexibility to address Nepal's concerns. However, in current circumstances, BRI is bound to remain in limbo.

#### **China's economic and political ties with Nepal affecting lives of Tibetan refugee community**

14 October 2024, NorthEast Herald

China's growing influence in Nepal is no longer just a geopolitical concern; it has evolved into a critical human rights issue, directly impacting the Tibetan refugee community, according to an article published on online magazine Bitter Winter.

Writer of the article Tsering Passang, who is the founder and Chair of Global Alliance for Tibet and Persecuted Minorities, said he spent a month in Nepal over the past summer, visiting Tibetan refugee camps, where he witnessed the intensifying struggles

these refugees face as China's presence in the country becomes stronger.

The situation goes beyond economic development—it's a story of increasing repression, echoing the very circumstances that forced Tibetans to flee their homeland more than 65 years ago, Passang shared his experience.

One of the most visible signs of China's involvement in Nepal is the rapid transformation of the country's infrastructure.

From the introduction of Chinese-funded electric buses to the construction of airports in Lumbini and Pokhara, China's projects are reshaping the landscape and shifting public perception of China.

However, these economic developments come at a cost: the erosion of Nepal's sovereignty.

For years, Nepal has walked a fine line between India and China, maintaining a delicate balance in its foreign relations.

Yet, with an increasing number of Chinese-backed projects, concerns are growing about Nepal's long-term independence.

Despite the creation of new airports, foreign airlines remain cautious about using them, largely due to India's concerns about China's expanding role in Nepal's internal affairs.

As Nepal becomes more dependent on Chinese investments, its foreign policy risks tilting in Beijing's favor, potentially undermining its autonomy.

This shift in Nepal's geopolitical stance has even graver consequences for the 10,000 Tibetan refugees still living in exile in the country.

Having fled persecution and cultural suppression in Tibet after China's occupation, many Tibetans are now confronting similar restrictions in Nepal, where they had hoped to find safety, according to the article.

Expressions of Tibetan identity—whether through wearing a "Free Tibet" t-shirt, raising the Tibetan flag, or practicing traditional customs—are increasingly met with resistance.

Passang said that during his visit, he learned that local authorities, possibly under Chinese pressure, have begun restricting Tibetan cultural practices.

Events like Gorshey, once a public celebration of Tibetan heritage, are now forced underground in the Kathmandu Valley, he said, adding that the suppression of these cultural activities is a painful reminder of the repression Tibetans believed they had escaped.

Even the symbolic tradition of Lhakar (White Wednesday) is now in jeopardy.

This weekly movement, which began after the 2008 protests in Tibet, allows Tibetans to express pride in their identity by speaking their language, wearing traditional clothing, and supporting Tibetan-owned businesses.

Yet even these peaceful acts of cultural resistance are being stifled.

As China's influence deepens in Nepal, Tibetans are finding it harder to gather and celebrate their traditions without fear of reprisal, the article read.

What is particularly distressing is that the very freedoms Tibetan refugees sought in exile—freedom of expression, freedom from fear, and the preservation of their identity—are being stripped away.

The parallels between the repression they fled in Tibet and the growing pressure they now face in Nepal are becoming alarmingly clear.

This mounting threat to the rights of Tibetan refugees must be addressed on the global stage.

"The international community cannot remain silent. China's expanding role in Nepal is not just about infrastructure—it's about human rights and cultural survival," Passang wrote in the article.

"Tibetan refugees deserve the right to express their cultural identity without fear of persecution or interference," he added.

"Now is the time for action. Media outlets, human rights organizations, and governments worldwide must bring attention to this urgent issue," Passang mentioned.

"As China continues to reshape Nepal's political and social landscape, the global community has a responsibility to ensure that Tibetans in exile can live free from oppression and preserve their cultural heritage," he added. "Their struggle is not just about one displaced community—it is a fight for universal values like freedom, dignity, and the right to exist as a people."

"The struggle for Tibetan freedom continues," Passang noted.

He also urged the international community to stand with the Tibetan refugees in Nepal and recognize the growing threat of China's influence.

"Defending their cultural identity and their right to live free from oppression is a fight for the fundamental human rights we all hold dear," Passang wrote in the article.

### **Nepal Urges China to Share Data Required for Flood Management**

09 October 2024, NewsWire

More than 200 people have died in Nepal as a result of extreme weather conditions during this year's monsoon season. Incessant rain lashed much of eastern and central Nepal, causing devastating floods. The Kathmandu Valley was badly hit. On October 2, Nepal's government said 224 people had so far been confirmed dead, while more than 150 others were injured and 24 people were missing.

In addition to the loss of life, many homes, power plants, and roads have been damaged by floods and landslides.

"I've never before seen flooding on this scale in Kathmandu," said Arun Bhakta Shrestha, the climate and environmental risks lead at the Hindu Kush Himalayan knowledge center, part of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD).

The disaster serves as a reminder of Nepal's vulnerability to climate change, including the risks associated with melting glaciers.

In recent years, many glaciers in the Himalayan region have retreated, with melt water collection in glacial lakes. If these lakes burst, they have the potential to cause massive floods, endangering downstream communities.

And Nepal's Department of Hydrology and Meteorology claims that China has been withholding vital information on glacial lakes under its control in Tibet.

Department head Jagadishwor Karmacharya told the website Climate News that it is essential to obtain transparent information from the Chinese government in order to reduce the impact of floods.

Karmacharya said that China, Nepal, and India must collaborate to prevent disasters, adding that Nepal has been asking China for many years to supply data about its glacial lakes but China has not met promises to do so.

Tibet – which the People's Republic of China manages as the Tibet Autonomous Region – has sometimes been described by geologists as Asia's water tower. Many major rivers start there, which supply water to nearly two billion people downstream.

China is sensitive to external criticism that its governance of Tibet is marked by an irresponsible approach toward the environment.

"Poor environmental tactics have displaced Tibetan communities, destroyed religious sites, and degraded local ecosystems," according to International Campaign for Tibet President, Tencho Gyatso. In his view, climate change – as well as an expansive hydropower dam network, extractive industries, and grassland degradation – threaten sustainable water management of Tibet's water resources.

"China's occupation and isolation of Tibet creates a global blind spot, which puts at risk the lives and livelihoods of 1.8 billion people downstream," said Gyatso.

Earlier this year, a team of scientists published an article in the scientific journal *Nature Geoscience* that warned of the widespread societal and economic impact of expansion of the glacial lakes on the Tibetan Plateau.

The researchers said that “in the absence of hazard mitigation measures, lake expansion is projected to submerge critical human infrastructure, including more than 1,000 km of roads, approximately 500 settlements and around 10,000 sq km of ecological components, such as grasslands, wetlands and croplands.”

The scientists called for an international effort involving many countries, including China and Nepal, to address the problem.

### Chinese Communist Party's direct aid to Nepali parties comes under fire

06 October 2024, The Kathmandu Post

Observers ask—what if diplomatic missions from other countries follow suit?



Members of Nepali political parties receive the cheque of the grant at a function in Kathmandu recently. Photo Provided to the Post

A relief initiative launched by the International Department of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee on Friday for flood victims in Nepal, to be carried out through Nepali political parties, has drawn flak.

The Chinese Communist Party collaborated with the China Foundation for Rural Development Nepal Office to launch the initiative ‘Join hands to face the difficulties and overcome the difficulties together,’ aimed at providing humanitarian assistance to the flood-affected people in the Kathmandu Valley.

During the event, the relief materials were handed over to the representatives of various political parties of Nepal including the Nepali Congress, the CPN-UML and others.

Attendees included Wang Xin, counselor of the Chinese Embassy in Nepal, representatives from major political parties of Nepal, representatives from the China Foundation for Rural Development Nepal office and its partners, as well as local residents and government officials, said a press statement.

“In response to the disaster, the Central Committee of the CPC International Department quickly took action and supported flood-affected communities through Nepali parties,” the statement reads. “They collaborated with the China Foundation for Rural Development Nepal Office to launch the initiative ‘Join hands to face the difficulties and overcome the difficulties together and the International Department of CPC Central Committee action to comfort affected people in the 2024 Nepal flood disaster.”

It is rare for a foreign political party to provide direct aid and support to political parties in Nepal.

A leader who attended Friday's event told the Post that such practice does not do well for the host country and that it was not an event that required inviting representatives from various political parties.

“First, the amount was not significant,” said the leader requesting anonymity. “Second, extending direct support from foreign political parties to the political parties of another country is a very bad practice. But we were told by the party’s senior leaders to attend the event, so we went there but none of us were comfortable while receiving the support.”

At a time when the government has decided not to receive the support bilaterally from any country for the floods and landslide victims, receiving such donation from a political party of a foreign country sets a very wrong precedent, said the leader of a ruling party who attended the event on Friday.

“Now, if the Bharatiya Janata Party or Indian National Congress or any other political parties of other countries extend a similar kind of support to us, then what should we do?” the leader said.

According to the Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu, the relief materials including rice, blankets, food packages and other daily necessities worth Rs19.70 million were distributed to the households affected by the recent floods and landslide through Nepali political parties.

Former vice-chair of the National Planning Commission, Govind Raj Pokharel, has said that the support provided at the time of a disaster should be welcomed but that it should be received only through an effective and transparent one-door policy.

“If the BJP of India will give us cash, then should we accept it or not?” Pokharel said. “We have to be cautious while accepting such support.”

He also pointed out the need for a timely discussion about the policy of political parties about accepting support provided by other countries directly to them.

“Assistance at the time of disaster is welcome but such assistance should be accepted through one-door policy of the government,” Pokharel writes on X. “We need to think on time regarding political parties of other countries providing assistance to our political parties directly.”

After the launch of the emergency relief action, as many as 1,242 sets of carefully prepared relief supplies were swiftly distributed, including toothpaste, toothbrushes, towels, soap, sanitary pads, pressure cookers, plastic containers for packaging, blankets, mosquito nets, sleeping mats, water jar dispensers with mugs, rice, oil, lentil—essential items for the affected communities, said the Chinese Embassy.

Emergency family kits and food packages were distributed to 60 affected households during an event at Shree Mahendra Saraswati Sewa School in Teku, Kathmandu Metropolitan City-12.

Social media users have also criticised the manner in which the relief material was provided.

Vijay Kant Karna, a former ambassador, describes it as a very dangerous practice. Karna says that it gave opportunities for other countries' diplomatic missions to distribute anything to Nepali political parties. "I have never seen this practice before in Nepal," Karna writes on X.

### **China's withholding of vital information on glacial lakes in Tibet may have contributed to Nepal's flood disaster**

05 October 2024, Tibetan Review

Some 224 people had died, more than 150 others were injured and 24 missing as of Oct 2 due to disasters caused by incessant rain in much of eastern and central Nepal, including the capital Kathmandu, and China's withholding of vital information on glacial lakes under its control in Tibet could be partly responsible for it, according to thediplomat.com Oct 5.

In addition to the loss of life, many homes, power plants, and roads have been damaged by floods and landslides, serving as a reminder of Nepal's vulnerability to climate change, the report said.

"I've never before seen flooding on this scale in Kathmandu," Arun Bhakta Shrestha, the climate and environmental risks lead at the Hindu Kush Himalayan knowledge centre, part of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), has said.

Many glaciers in the Himalayan region have retreated in recent years, with melt water collecting in glacial lakes. These lakes could breach – and have breached – with the potential to cause massive floods, endangering downstream communities.

And Nepal's Department of Hydrology and Meteorology has expressed disappointment that China has been withholding vital information on glacial lakes under its control in Tibet, the report noted.

The report cited the department's head, Jagadishwor Karmacharya, as having told the website Climate

News that it is essential to obtain transparent information from the Chinese government in order to reduce the impact of floods.

Karmacharya has said that China, Nepal, and India must collaborate to prevent disasters. However, despite Nepal having asked it for many years to supply data about its glacial lakes, China has not met promises to do so.

Tibet has sometimes been described by geologists as Asia's water tower, with many major rivers starting there, supplying water to nearly two billion people downstream.

China's environmentally unsustainable development and related activities have partly been blamed for the worsening situation in Tibet, with devastating consequences both for the local Tibetan people and in downstream countries, including China itself.

"Poor environmental tactics have displaced Tibetan communities, destroyed religious sites, and degraded local ecosystems," Tencho Gyatso, President of Washington-based International Campaign for Tibet, has said.

"China's occupation and isolation of Tibet creates a global blind spot, which puts at risk the lives and livelihoods of 1.8 billion people downstream," she has said.

India too has been complaining about China's failure to provide hydrological data from Tibet that should enable it to take measures to avoid or minimize disasters.

### **Chinese Communist Party launches relief initiative for Nepal flood victims**

04 October 2024, The Kathmandu Post

Relief kits distributed to 60 affected households at kick-off event in Kathmandu.

The International Department of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee on Friday launched a relief initiative for flood victims.

It collaborated with the China Foundation for Rural Development Nepal Office to launch the initiative 'Join hands to face the difficulties and overcome the difficulties together,' providing humanitarian assistance to the flood-affected people in the Kathmandu Valley.

Emergency family kits and food packages were distributed to 60 affected households during an event at Shree Mahendra Saraswati Sewa School in Kathmandu Metropolitan City-12.

After the launch of the emergency relief action, 1,242 sets of relief supplies were swiftly deployed, including toothpaste, toothbrushes, towels, soap, sanitary pads, pressure cookers, plastic containers for packaging, blankets, mosquito nets, sleeping mats, water jar dispensers with mugs, rice, oil, lentils



—essential items for the affected communities, the department said in a statement. Many compassionate enterprises and individuals have expressed their willingness to provide material and financial assistance for the rescue efforts in Nepal, working together to help the Nepali people overcome this difficult time, it said.

### **Red Cross Society of China donates \$100,000 to disaster victims of Nepal**

02 October 2024, Republica

The Red Cross Society of China has donated \$100,000 to assist victims affected by the disaster in Nepal.

Chen Song, Chinese Ambassador to Nepal, handed over the amount to the Nepal Red Cross Society through the Ministry of Home Affairs on Wednesday. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, the funds have been transferred to the Nepal Red Cross Society through the home ministry for the assistance of victims affected by natural disasters such as floods, landslides and inundation.

Ambassador Song expressed the commitment that the Chinese government will provide additional support for the disaster victims. So far, the death toll from the recent floods and landslides has reached 228, with 25 people still missing in floods and landslides triggered by heavy rains.

## **September**

### **Nepal surveys damage after deadly floods kill at least 193 people**

30 September 2024, Aljazeera

Search and rescue teams in Nepal's capital have been picking through wrecked homes as floodwaters have started to recede.

Officials reported on Monday that the death toll from the monsoon floods and landslides had risen to 193 around the Himalayan nation. At least 31 others were missing and many others injured, police said.

Entire neighbourhoods in Kathmandu were inundated after the heaviest rains in more than two decades, with the capital temporarily cut off from the rest of the country after landslides blocked highways.

"Our focus is on search and rescue, including people who have been stranded on highways," said Ministry of Home Affairs spokesman Rishi Ram Tiwari.

Deadly floods and landslides are common across South Asia during the monsoon season, lasting from June to September, but experts say climate change is making them worse. The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, a Nepal-based

think tank, said the disaster had been made worse by unplanned urban encroachment around the Bagmati River, which courses through the capital.

Nepal's army said more than 4,000 people had been rescued using helicopters, motorboats and rafts.

Bulldozers were being used to clear nearly two dozen sections of main highways leading into Kathmandu that had been blocked by debris.

Nepal's weather bureau said preliminary data from stations in 14 districts measured record-breaking rain in the 24 hours to Saturday morning.

A monitoring station at the Kathmandu airport recorded about 240mm (9.4 inches) of rain, the highest since 2002.

The monsoon season brings 70-80 percent of South Asia's annual rainfall and is vital for agriculture and food production in a region home to about two billion people.

But monsoon rains also bring widespread death and destruction in the form of floods and landslides.

Experts say climate change has worsened their frequency and intensity.

More than 300 people have died in Nepal in rain-related disasters this year.

### **Nepalese Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli Meets with Wang Yi**

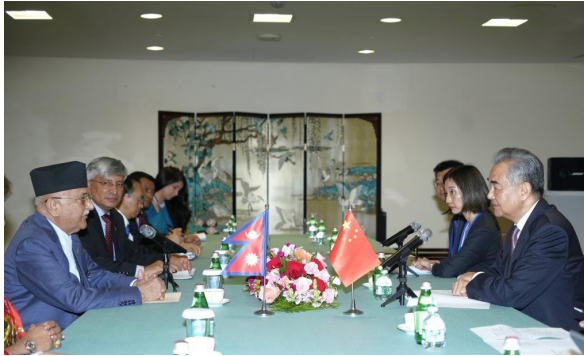
27 September 2024, MFA

On September 26, 2024 local time, Nepalese Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli met with Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York.

Wang Yi conveyed Chinese leaders' cordial greetings to Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli. He said, China and Nepal are linked by mountains and rivers with a shared future and have established a strategic partnership of cooperation featuring everlasting friendship for development and prosperity, which builds on history and heralds a bright future. China has always placed Nepal in an important position in its neighborhood diplomacy and is committed to building an even closer China-Nepal community with a shared future. Next year marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Nepal. The two sides should take this opportunity to push for more fruitful results from Belt and Road cooperation and other cooperation programs to benefit the two peoples.

Wang Yi said, China will, as always, support Nepal in safeguarding its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. China hopes that Nepal will find a successful development path suited to its national conditions. China appreciates Nepal's reiteration on

many occasions that it will not allow any force to use its territory for anti-China activities. China has decided to grant zero-tariff treatment on 100 percent of taxable items from the least developed countries that have diplomatic relations with China, which will facilitate the entry of more Nepalese specialty products to China. China welcomes Nepal's declaration in China of 2025 as the Year of Tourism in Nepal and is ready to work with Nepal to jointly plan a series of activities to promote people-to-people exchanges.



Nepalese Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli meets with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, on the sidelines of the 79th Session of the UN General Assembly, in New York, Sept. 26, 2024. (Xinhua/Wu Xiaoling)

#### **Nepal's Deputy PM, Chinese Vice Premier discuss bilateral relations; implementation of projects in time bound manner**

27 September 2024, PTI

Nepal's Deputy Prime Minister Bishnu Prasad Paudel and China's Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang agreed on accelerating the timely implementation of bilateral agreements, including key infrastructure projects like the Kathmandu-Kerung railway and cross-border transmission lines.

Nepal's Deputy Prime Minister Bishnu Prasad Paudel held a bilateral meeting with China's Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang where the two leaders discussed the entire gamut of bilateral relations, including the implementation of projects in a time-bound manner.

Paudel, who is also Nepal's Finance Minister, during Thursday's discussion stressed the need for working collectively to accelerate the implementation of agreements signed between the two governments in a time-bound manner, a Foreign Ministry statement said. Appreciating the excellent bilateral relations between the two countries, Ding stressed on the importance of practical cooperation between Nepal and China for mutual benefit.

The Chinese vice premier also responded positively to the proposal for time-bound implementation of the agreements, the statement said. "The two leaders further agreed to advance the projects under the

Trans-Himalayan Multi-dimensional Connectivity Network, particularly Kathmandu-Kerung railway, cross-border transmission line, Kimathanka-Hile, and Hilsa-Simikot roads," it said.

They also discussed the ways of enhancing cooperation in various sectors, including infrastructure, tourism, education, cultural exchanges, and people-to-people relations, the statement said.

Earlier, Paudel met China International Development Cooperation Agency Chairman Luo Zhaohui to discuss various aspects of Nepal-China development cooperation. During the meeting, Paudel highlighted the need to further deepen cooperation in the areas of infrastructure development, connectivity, trade and transport, and dry ports, among others.

Luo expressed support for the Chinese government in accelerating the ongoing projects as well as those relating to livelihood and good governance. The two leaders also discussed cooperation on agricultural and industrial parks as well as Madan Bhandari University of Science and Technology, according to the statement. Paudel, who was on a six-day visit to China, will return to Kathmandu on Saturday.

#### **China committed to building closer China-Nepal community with shared future: Chinese FM**

27 September 2024, Xinhua

China has always placed Nepal at an important position in its neighboring diplomacy, and is committed to building a closer China-Nepal community with a shared future, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Thursday.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, made the remarks at a meeting with Nepalese Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session in New York.

Wang said that China will continue to support Nepal in safeguarding its sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, and hopes Nepal will find a successful development path that suits its national conditions.

China's decision to grant zero-tariff treatment to 100 percent of tariff items of products from all the least developed countries having diplomatic relations with China will facilitate more Nepalese specialty products to enter China, Wang added.

For his part, Oli said Nepal firmly adheres to the one-China policy, and is committed to enhancing cooperation with China.

#### **Nepal, China see surge in border trade**

25 September 2024, People's Daily Online

Nepal-China trade through border routes rose around 70 percent during the first two months of Nepal's current 2024-25 fiscal year starting in mid-July, official figures showed.

Garments, footwear, electronic items, smartphones and electric vehicles are among goods imported from China through Rasuwagadhi and Tatopani border crossings ahead of Dashain and Tihar, two major festivals in Nepal which fall in mid-October and November.

"We're seeing good growth in trade through Rasuwagadhi border point in the last two months," said Rabindra Prasad Pyakurel, information officer at Rasuwa Customs Office.

"One obstacle to increasing trade through this route is, however, the poor road and customs infrastructure on the Nepal side," he told Xinhua.

### **China, Nepal launch joint military training**

23 September 2024, AA

Exercise to focus on counter-terrorism and disaster relief operations

China and Nepal began a joint military exercise Sunday in southwestern China's Chongqing Municipality.

It marks the fourth joint training session between the two countries' armed forces, with the last one held in 2019.

Under the theme of "joint counter-terrorism operations in urban blocks," the training involves activities such as small arms shooting for special operations, counter-terrorism squad tactics, drone operations, emergency rescue drills and comprehensive counter-terrorism exercises.

Scheduled to run until Oct. 1, the training also includes joint research and exchanges on disaster response strategies, particularly concerning earthquakes, avalanches and landslides.

Cultural exchange events will further promote mutual trust and understanding between the two military forces.

### **Nepal and China set to resume military drill**

10 September 2024, The Annapurna Express, Shambhu Kattel

Nepal and China are set to resume their joint military drill, which had been stalled since 2019 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The fourth edition of the drill will be held in China later this month. According to sources at the Nepali Army headquarters, the exercise will begin on Sept 21 and last for 10 days. Although China had been hesitant to restart the drill in the early years following the pandemic due to

strict health restrictions, it has now agreed to move forward.

Outgoing Army chief Prabhu Ram Sharma played a key role in reviving the joint drill between the Nepal Army and China's People's Liberation Army, according to officials. Army spokesperson Brig Gen Gaurav Kumar KC confirmed that discussions are ongoing to finalize the details, although he did not provide further specifics.

Sharma has reportedly proposed to the Chinese side that the dates for the exercise be confirmed before his retirement. Sharma officially retired on Monday, passing the leadership of the Nepali Army to Ashok Raj Sigdel. In preparation for the exercise, Sharma had earlier dispatched senior official Prem Dhoj Adhikari to Beijing for discussions. The final dates were set shortly after Adhikari's return.

The drill, known as the Sagarmatha Friendship exercise, first began in 2017, drawing attention from both New Delhi and Beijing. This year's edition will take place in Chengdu, China. Prior to 2017, while Nepal and China had engaged in training and exchanges, no joint military drills had been held between the two countries.

India, the US, and other nations have expressed concerns about the growing military cooperation between Nepal and China, viewing it through the lens of rising geopolitical tensions. Recently, China has introduced new global initiatives in both the development and security sectors, such as the Global Security Initiative (GSI), which has raised further apprehension in India and Western nations. Nepal, however, has informed China that it cannot be part of the GSI.

The Nepali Army maintains that these joint drills are routine, similar to the military exercises it conducts with other nations, including India and the US. For example, Nepal and India hold the Surya Kiran military drill annually, rotating the location between the two countries.

A special team from the Nepal Army, including an observer group led by senior official Pradeep Jung KC, will visit China to participate in the drill, which will focus on counterterrorism and disaster management. Each country will send a delegation of 18 members. The previous three editions of the drill were held in 2017, 2018, and 2019.

### **Nepal trade point of Khasa opens for cargo trucks to Kathmandu after 2 week closure**

04 September 2024, News On Air

In Nepal, the trade point of Khasa opens for cargo trucks to Kathmandu after closure for two weeks on Tuesday. Due to the construction of a tunnel in the Nyalam and Khasa regions of Tibet in China as part of the Chinese smart city project, goods containers to

Nepal were restricted from entering the Khasa border trade point with Nepal from August 30. The trade points north of Bagmati Province were opened, giving a sense of relief to traders in Nepal.

As Nepal's biggest festival, Dashain, is scheduled for next month, the restriction in these trade points stressed Nepali businesses whose consignments were in cargos to Kathmandu. Nepal's trade deficit with China remained negative at Rs 296.18 billion.

Since March, 14 trans-Himalayan trade points have reopened after four years that were closed during COVID-19 times, but there is no cross-border trade taking place from these points. Rasuwagadhi-Kerung and Tatopani-Zhangmu/Khasa are two international trade routes connecting Nepal and China. Tatopani-Khasa has historically been the main land route for trade with China.

The Rasuwagadhi-Kerung customs point was being used as an alternative route after the closure of the Tatopani-Khasa point in 2015.

## August

### China–Nepal strategic partnership stumbles over BRI and boundary issues

31 August 2024, East Asia Forum

In 2019, Xi Jinping visited Nepal and declared that China–Nepal relations would change from a comprehensive partnership to a strategic partnership. The focus of relations has shifted towards enhancing strategic and security. But neither country can come to an agreement on the two most important pillars of this new relationship, calling its sustainability into question.

These pillars are the Boundary Management System (BMS) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Xi proposed the BMS – which commits both countries to return people who are found crossing the border illegally. Nepal signed an agreement, but it has yet to be ratified. In 2017, Nepal signed the Memorandum of Understanding to join the BRI, but some point out Nepal's failure to implement projects. In June 2024, China and Nepal conducted two important meetings to discuss border-related issues and BRI implementation. The outcome of these meetings was

bleak, partially because of disagreements over the BRI and BMS.

On 20 June 2024, representatives of China and Nepal met in Beijing for a meeting of the Joint Expert Group to conduct a discussion related to border

issues, but did not produce a bilateral statement. The lack of a bilateral statement encourages speculation. One particular speculation is that this meeting failed to yield positive outcomes to resolve border issues, which could be because of the failure to reach a consensus on ratifying the BMS.

While the Chinese side pressed Nepal to ratify the BMS, Nepal urged China to follow the mandates of the boundary protocol, which require both sides to first engage in border investigation, then meet and resolve border issues and finally ratify the BMS. In Nepal, border inspection is a priority because there have been increased cases of encroachment, illegal construction and missing border pillars.

China's push for a BMS is driven by the need to establish a comprehensive security mechanism at the border as soon as possible, to guard the political stability of Tibet. Since the Tibetans' 2008 protest in Nepal, Chinese scholars and leaders have pushed for border pacification to be China's top priority in Nepal. Tibetans are one of the primary targets of the BMS. Reports claim that the BMS also sought to repatriate Tibetans fleeing Tibet within a week, though the content of the agreement is yet to be made public.

Following the border talk, on 26 June 2024 China and Nepal held the 16th Meeting of the Nepal–China Diplomatic Consultation Mechanism. Instead of joint statements, after the meeting Nepal made a press release, while China published news about the meeting. It is evident that a lack of agreement on the BRI is a major issue. For instance, the Chinese side mentioned the BRI twice in approximately 300 news reports. In contrast, Nepal's press releases do not mention the BRI at all.

The BRI has become a sensitive issue in Nepal. Nepal is reluctant to accept high-interest loans because it is wary of getting trapped in unsustainable debts owed to China, which has happened with Sri Lanka and other countries. In 2023 the above concerns spurred a controversy in Nepal, when the Chinese embassy mentioned that Pokhara International Airport was built under the BRI.

Some Nepalese lawmakers also expressed concern over the lack of transparency in the implementation of BRI projects. But China is not interested in providing grants, which has led to BRI diplomatic stagnation. Nepal also worries about maintaining strategic balance with India, which is Nepal's largest trading partner.

Amidst the contention over these issues, it is interesting to observe other aspects of the press releases. The Chinese side highlighted: 'The Nepali side reiterated its firm adherence to the one-China principle and will never allow any force to use its territory for anti-China activities'.

But this commitment, usually evident in press releases or joint statements, is missing from the Nepali side. Nepal only mentioned that 'Vice Minister Weidong appreciated Nepal's commitment to the One China Principle'. There is no mention of zero tolerance for anti-China activities, and no mention of Tibet or Taiwan as integral parts of China. This departure from tradition underscores contention in the relationship. With the change from bilateral relations to a strategic partnership, China's pressure to sign the BMS underlines its role in China's overall strategic and security objectives in Nepal. These two meetings revealed that the BRI and BMS constitute China's two most important diplomatic and security elements, driving its interest in Nepal.

Without consensus on these two issues, the strategic partnership between the two remains peripheral. Nepal's avoidance of mentioning the BRI and its commitment to anti-China activities is a small but significant gesture of resistance to China's hegemony. In July 2024, Nepal witnessed the formation of a new government that catapulted Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli, chairman of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), to the prime ministership in a coalition government with the Nepali Congress party. The Chinese government have already pressured Oli on the BRI.

But the situation is different this time. Nepali Congress has long been opposed to Nepal accepting BRI loans because of Nepal's high debt burden and argue Nepal should only accept BRI grants. Oli needs Nepali Congress support and will not be easily swayed by China, which further complicates the implementation of the BRI.

### **Nepal, China to issue five-year passes for Himalayan districts**

29 August 2024, The Kathmandu Post

Nepal and China have agreed to issue five-year entry and exit passes for people in 15 districts of northern Nepal abutting China. After incorporating Chinese feedback, the Department of Immigration, under the the Ministry of Home Affairs, has recently redesigned the entry/exit pass and come with an operating procedure, which was first approved on June 19 by the ministry.

The new arrangement, which is in line with the bilateral agreement and immigration regulations, will allow Nepali citizens living near the Chinese border to enter and exit from China's Autonomous Region, Tibet, states one of the objectives of the operating procedure issued by the government.

Nepali citizens living in northern districts who depend on Tibet for trade, pilgrimage, work, health checks and other daily activities, have long been complaining of hassles in visiting Tibet due to lack of mandatory passes.

However, this arrangement was suspended after the onset of Covid pandemic at the end of 2019. And after China started reopening 14 traditional entry points, some local units on the Nepali side started issuing temporary "China Departure and Entry Permits" locally. Now, to streamline the entry and exit permission, the Department of Immigration is all set to issue digital passes to residents of the 15 districts. However, Nepali citizens from other districts will need a visa to enter Chinese territory.

According to the operating procedure, the 15 districts where the passes would be distributed are Taplejung, Sankhuwasabha, Solukumbhu, Dolakha, Sindhupalchok, Rasuwa, Dhading, Gorkha, Manang, Mustang, Dolpa, Mugu, Humla, Bajhang and Darchula. Those 14 dedicated trading/entry/exit points between Nepal and China are Tiptala (Taplejung); Kimathnaka (Sankhuwasabha); Falak and Lapchi of Dolakha; Tatopani and Gumba of Sindhupalchok; Lazing and Chhekampar (Gorkha); Korala of Mustang; Hilsa (Humla); Nakcha (Mugu); Maringla Bhanjyang (Dolpa); Urai (Bajhang); and Tinkar of Darchula district.

According to the Department of Immigration, the entry pass will, however, not be issued immediately in Solukumbhu, Dhading, and Manang districts due to ongoing adverse weather conditions.

"A decision has already been made to issue digital passes. It is in the implementation process," said Koshahari Niraula, Director General at the Department of Immigration. "Necessary instructions have been given to the immigration and district administration offices for implementation."

Before 2007, Nepali and Chinese nationals from border districts could travel up to 30 kilometres inside each other's territory without restrictions. However, in January 2007, both sides reached a new agreement under which an identity card with one year validity was made mandatory, said noted cartographer Buddhi Narayan Shrestha. Now, both sides have developed a digital identity card.

Nepal and China first entered an 'Agreement on Trade and other Related Matters between the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) of China and Nepal' on September 30, 1956, which was last renewed on July 10, 2002.

The agreement says those wishing to travel to the other country must hold valid passports issued by the sending country and a visa issued by the receiving country. Inhabitants of the border districts shall hold exit-entry passes with photo-affixed ID cards for border trade, pilgrimage and to visit relatives and friends, according to the agreement.

Shrestha said those with the entry/exit passes are not allowed to travel beyond the border districts into the interior of the other country.



"Generally, the limit is 30 km from the borderline. And those with permits for pilgrimage can travel through the designated routes and allotted entry points. They are not permitted to stay in the border districts of the receiving country for more than a month. Either party has the right to refuse entry into its territory of anyone deemed persona non-grata," according to Shrestha.

A senior foreign ministry official confided to the Post that the Chinese side initially expressed some reservations about the proposed operating procedure, particularly the issuance of five-year passes to Nepali citizens in the 15 northern districts. They had also called for making the passes digital.

After considering the Chinese request, the foreign ministry official said that the home ministry had redesigned the new pass, revisiting some conditions that were initially proposed.

Niraula said the Chinese side has agreed to issue the pass for five years. "With their consent, we have finalised and issued the new operating procedure." According to one Home Ministry official, the ministry and the Department of Immigration agreed to incorporate biometric security features into the pass, as requested by Chinese officials. The new pass with biometric information is intended to curb illegal and criminal activities across the Nepal-Tibet border.

The five-year pass will be issued exclusively to Nepali citizens living in the 15 border districts, their siblings, and those who are married and living permanently in these districts.

Also, those who have migrated from other districts and are now permanently living in these 15 districts are eligible for the pass.

However, if someone gets married and migrates to another district, they will not get the pass.

To obtain the entry pass, one should fill out a form and provide required documents including a copy of the citizenship, a recommendation letter from the ward office, a migration letter if the service seeker has migrated from another district, a marriage certificate (for those coming from another district after marriage)

and a passport-sized photo, according to the operating procedure.

After verifying all the documents and information, the immigration office issues the permit, said the work plan. In case a district does not have immigration office, the service seekers should visit the district administration offices to receive the pass.

"The permit is not transferable and will remain valid for up to five years from the date of issuance. Once it expires, one should reapply. If the card is lost or destroyed, the same process should be followed to get a copy of the permit," according to the operating procedure.

Madav Sapkota, a CPN (Maoist Centre) lawmaker from Sindhupalchok district, lauded the development and said it will benefit the people living in bordering districts.

"The process was started when Pushpa Kamal Dahal was the prime minister, and now it is set to be formalised. Earlier, the Chinese authorities would issue one-year entry permits, and after Covid, they limited it to a day-long pass. If the entry process is simplified further, it will benefit the citizens from both sides even more," said Sapkota.

### **China-Nepal agricultural technology park launched in southern Nepal**

28 August 2024, Xinhua

Nepal Southern Agricultural Science and Technology Park was launched on Tuesday in the south-central city of Bharatpur to increase rice production in the South Asian country.

The park will improve Nepal's rice yield per unit area and increase grain production by conducting experimental demonstrations of Chongqing hybrid rice varieties and rice cultivation techniques in the country, said Wang Shijie, deputy chief of Chongqing municipal agriculture and rural affairs committee.

China and Nepal will also carry out cooperation in greenhouse vegetable cultivation and livestock and fish breeding in Kubhinde village of Nepal's Sindhupalchok district as well as in Jhapa district, Wang noted in addressing the launch ceremony.

The park was developed with the support of China-South Asian Countries Poverty Alleviation and Cooperative Development Center, which was officially launched in Chongqing in southwestern China in July 2021. The center aims to pool strength, integrate resources and exchange insights to support and help in the South Asian countries' economic development and livelihood improvement, thus jointly advancing poverty reduction.

Mayor of Bharatpur Renu Dahal described the park's launch as an important move toward poverty alleviation through innovation and sustainable development.

Agriculture is the backbone of Nepal's economy and provides livelihood to a large portion of the population, she noted at the launch ceremony.

"We believe that the project would help address challenges such as climate change, food security and sustainable agricultural development," she said.

The project is implemented by Nepal's Agriculture and Forestry University based in Bharatpur and Chongqing Academy of Agricultural Sciences.

Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Chen Song called the park a milestone in agricultural cooperation between the two countries.

Bharatpur is one of the most important traditional agricultural towns in Nepal with excellent natural conditions for agricultural development, while Chongqing has advanced agricultural sciences and abundant resources, and thousands of technical experts in the city could convert technology innovation into practical application, Chen said at the launch ceremony.

"Further agricultural cooperation could stimulate greater potential for Bharatpur, contributing to common development and shared prosperity for both cities and both countries," he added.

### **Benighat-Manaslu-China road brings promises of economic shift**

27 August 2024, Online Khabar

The Nepali public has almost forgotten the economic block that was imposed by India and protestors from Madhesh in 2015. However, the shift in the national economy after this six-month-long economic crisis has impacted many lives. There was a shift from Indian to Chinese trade in 2015, which led to the construction of multiple road networks connecting Nepal to China. One of those actions by the Government of Nepal during the 2015 economic blockade was letting the Nepal Army open a 180 km road linking China to Benighat via Gorkha's Sama Gaun. Another stretch of the same track passed through Chekampar village of TSUM, leading to China's Border. That's two roads to the Border of China, less than 50 km apart.

The construction project of the Benighat-China road was approved in January 2015, and the lower section from Benighat to Hawa Dada was done by the Departments of Road. The responsibility of a 120 km road section from Hawa Dada to the border was then handed over to the Nepal Army.

According to the Defence Ministry of that time, the army received Rs 35 million for opening the track back in 2017; after that, the army started the work. The construction was supposed to be completed in 2027.

#### **Importance of Benighat- China Road**

The long-due project of Benighat connecting the Border of Tibet opens a new trading route that is closer to Kathmandu Valley, Pokhara, and Chitwan, Nepal's three largest cities. The road goes via Samdo village of Darchre Rural Municipality directly into the Ruila Naka of Tibet.

Currently, the 108 km Araniko highway that connects Kathmandu to Kodak is the major trading route from Kathmandu to the world's major economy, China. Several factors, such as heavy traffic, poor road maintenance, landslides, political disputes at the Border, and many other factors, often cause trade to be blocked between Nepal and Tibet when we rely on the Araniko Highway only.

Thus, the need for a new highway connecting Nepal to Tibet, especially in the Western zone, closer to other large cities such as Pokhara and Chitwan, is going to play a big role in the import/ export business of Nepal and China. And this project is going to open up some new trade prospects.

#### **Challenges along the road**

The Nepali army commenced the construction of a 60- kilometre road in 2017. In five years, the army successfully opened an 18-kilometre-long section and handed it over to the Benighat-Arughat-Larkebhanyang Road Construction Task Force. Another 18.5 km of road track was also almost ready at the end of 2022.

Reports suggest that the road goes via the Ngula Dhajen Pass at a height of 5,093 m (16,709 ft), making it among the highest-altitude roads in Nepal. As the road section will be covered in thick snow for more than half of the year, construction is not easy.

Considering the remoteness of the Samagoan and TUSM area, logistical and engineering issues for cutting off such large cliffs and buildings through a narrow gorge are going to take a lot of work. Although the Nepal Army was supposed to complete the construction by 2027, it might take a few additional years before they are ready to hand over the complete road.

#### **Road and life of Manaslu/ TSUM Valley**

TSUM valley is one of the sacred valleys that Guru Rinpoche (also called Padmasambhava) created and named Beyul. In Buddhism, Beyul is a holy place where there will never be war among people, and everyone lives in perfect harmony with nature. Understanding the significance of such a holy place, the government of Nepal has kept TSUM valley as the restricted land of Nepal in an attempt to protect the traditions and culture of this pristine land.

For so many years, even a helicopter could not land in Manaslu without a special permit. So, having such a road network is going to greatly shift people's lifestyles.

Along with a national highway, many financial and social benefits come to the connecting villages. As a well-paved gravel road crosses the pristine TSUM valley, the locals have better access to trade, schools, hospitals, jobs, and more.

However, the locals are worried that it will be difficult to preserve the cultural and traditional values of the TSUM area after such exposure.

A local of Chhokung Paro village, Penarapsing, said, "We were never consulted if we wanted a highway to pass through our villages. They came up with a measuring tape, cut through our land, and ran dozers right next to our holy Monastery. How will we pray right next to the highway with continuous noise? The community's free, prior, and informed consent was not acknowledged while they

planned the construction, and the villagers are not happy with it." Another big concern is its impact on the trek tourism incomes of Manaslu and TSUM. Manaslu Trek is currently the third most crowded hiking route in Nepal, right after Everest and Annapurna. Now, as this road passes through the traditional trekking route, the tourism industry here is at severe risk. The dirt, noise, and pollution along the way will surely end Manaslu's tourism shortly.

The local government should start planning to build an alternative trekking route to the villages of Samagaun and TSUM Valley as soon as possible. However, even after an alternative trekking route, the tourists are likely to reduce the duration of the trek. The previously popular Annapurna Circuit Trekking Trail's deserted villages reflect the future of Jagat, Deng, Chumling and more. A long-term sustainable plan must be made to protect the culture and trekking tourism industry of TSUM before bulldozers and heavy trucks start to walk through these "Beyul".

### **Nepal Asks China to Wipe Away a Loan It Can't Afford to Pay Back**

23 August 2024, The New York Times

When Nepal's new international airport opened last year in one of the country's biggest cities, it was the type of landmark project expected to elevate the fortunes of one of Asia's poorest countries while deepening its ties with China, which built and financed the project.

But the Pokhara airport has become a symbol of another sort: the pitfalls of China's international infrastructure projects, which face criticism for sometimes costly and poor-quality construction that leaves borrower countries awash in debt.

On Thursday, Nepal's one-month-old government, led by the country's largest communist party, which has close ties to Beijing, formally asked China to convert a

\$216 million loan for the airport into a grant, wiping away the debt. It made the request during a visit by a Chinese delegation including Sun Weidong, China's vice foreign minister.

The airport has been beset by problems. A few weeks after it opened in January 2023, a domestic flight headed for the city crashed into a river gorge, killing 72 people. The airport has not attracted any regular international flights, dimming the financial outlook for the project. Over the last year, Nepal's anti-corruption agency and a parliamentary committee started investigations into the airport's construction.

Last year, The New York Times reported that China CAMC Engineering, the construction arm of a state-owned conglomerate, Sinomach, had inflated the

cost of the project and undermined Nepal's attempts to keep tabs on construction quality. Through its Belt and Road Initiative, a signature campaign of President Xi Jinping, China has extended more than \$1 trillion in loans and grants, according to some estimates, for international infrastructure projects. The initiative is part of Beijing's efforts to forge economic and diplomatic ties with other countries, while building a lucrative portfolio of construction work for its state-owned enterprises. But for some developing countries, the loans have become a financial albatross as they struggle to repay the debt.

In an interview on Friday, Bishnu Prasad Paudel, Nepal's deputy prime minister and finance minister, said it had made the request to China as "our neighboring country" because Nepal was still scrambling to revive its economy.

"We are hopeful," Mr. Paudel said, but he declined to elaborate.

The Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu, Nepal's capital city, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

If Beijing agrees to Nepal's request, it will be another indication of a strengthening relationship between the country's new government and China. In July, Nepal's biggest communist party joined forces with the Nepali Congress, the largest party in the country's Parliament, to create a coalition government, led by K.P. Sharma Oli. He forged a reputation for opposing the influence of India, Nepal's neighbor to the south and a regional rival to China, during three previous stints as prime minister. His government has wasted no time cozying up to Beijing. On Thursday, he overturned a ban on TikTok, the popular social media app owned by Chinese technology giant ByteDance, that his predecessors had imposed less than a year ago.

On the same day, Nepal also said the two countries had agreed to a series of development projects, including two to upgrade highways that connect to the Chinese border. They also agreed to build integrated check posts along the border between Nepal and China.

Nepal's economy, heavily reliant on overseas remittances and tourism, has struggled to recover since the pandemic. The international airport in Pokhara, a picturesque city in the foothills of the Himalayas, was seen as a way to bolster tourism and breathe new life into the economy.

But so far, the airport has failed to attract any commercial international flights, largely because India has refused to grant permission for its carriers to fly in and out of Pokhara. This has raised fears that the airport would not generate enough revenue to pay back the loan from the Export-Import Bank of China. Nepal is scheduled to start repayment of the loan in 2026.

At the same time, there are two investigations into the airport's construction. Nepal's Commission for the Investigation of Abuse and Authority is looking into reports of corruption by the Chinese construction company for compromising construction quality to maximize profit. Nepali officials are also accused of accepting kickbacks while awarding the contract to CAMC. A separate parliamentary committee was formed to investigate possible irregularities in construction.

CAMC did not respond to a request for comment about the investigations.

Binoj Basnyat, a retired Nepali general working as a researcher with Rangsit University in Thailand, said China would probably convert the loan to a grant because it wanted to build a strong relationship with Nepal's communist party. He also noted another benefit for China if it agreed to the request.

"The investigation into the corruption charges will quickly come to an end," Mr. Basnyat said. "Nobody will talk about that anymore."

### **In Nepal, the US and India Come Together to Counter China**

22 August 2024, The Diplomat

Nepal's new Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba is in India this week for a series of high-profile meetings. Deuba was originally scheduled to fly to New Delhi for a routine health checkup. But given the political circumstances surrounding India-Nepal relations, New Delhi upgraded her visit to an official trip, and Deuba even got a rare audience with India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Deuba's visit to India is her first foreign trip since taking charge of Nepal's Foreign Ministry last month under the country's new Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli. That detail is not by itself very significant: Since it became a republic 17 years ago, Nepal has seen a change of prime minister as many as 13 times — often a result of shifting alliances between the three major political parties in the country's divided parliament. Oli himself has now become prime minister for a third time. His two main rivals, Sher Bahadur Deuba (Arzu Rana Deuba's husband) and Pushpa Kamal Dahal, have each been prime minister for five and three terms respectively. None of them has ever completed a full term in office so far.

Yet, Deuba's trip to New Delhi is still significant. The last two times that he was in power, Oli pivoted hard toward China and ran up a long gamut of spats with India. He faced down an economic blockade from New Delhi, raked up old territorial disputes along the border, and signed a landmark agreement with Beijing to reduce his country's dependence on Indian trade routes. With Oli back in power, India is now trying to get out in front, especially as it faces a

series of politically unfavorable developments elsewhere in the neighborhood — from Bangladesh to the Maldives.

Nepal is important not just to India but also to the United States. Nestled between India and China in the strategically contested Himalayas, Nepal is an important player in checking China's influence in South Asia.

As in most other parts of Asia, the path to winning influence in Nepal runs through the economy. Much like the rest of the region, Nepal's economy suffered hard during the pandemic. Tourism revenue — a key driver of growth — dried up, causing trade imbalances and inflation. According to a government survey, unemployment stood at 12.6 percent in 2022-23 — up from 11.4 percent in 2017-18 before the pandemic. Not by coincidence, Nepal has become the unlikely source of the largest contingent of foreign mercenaries fighting for the Russians in Ukraine — as many as 15,000 of them, according to some reports. China has already entered and dominated the fray. Like other South Asian economies, Nepal sees economic ties with China as a way to break free from New Delhi's historic hegemony. In recent times, Chinese imports have surged while imports from India have declined. Earlier this year, Nepal and China teamed up to drill for oil in the former's territory as a way to reduce Nepal's dependence on oil imports from India — a key strategic objective for Kathmandu after New Delhi imposed an economic blockade on its fuel imports in 2015 over a political dispute. There have also been reports of possible projects under China's flagship Belt and Road Initiative.

But while Nepal pivots to China, the United States has not stood by idly. In recent years, Washington has tried to build its own presence in Nepal. In 2017, a \$500 million compact was signed to build critical infrastructure, including the facilitation of cross-border electricity trade between Nepal and India. Last week, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Verma was in Kathmandu, pledging \$100 million in military support.

Ordinarily, India is very sensitive to such activities in its neighborhood by major world powers. But in the wake of sundry disputes with Nepal and others in the region, New Delhi increasingly recognizes that it might not be able to ward off China's economic influence alone. That has created more space for the U.S. to coordinate with India in neighborhood relations. Perhaps tellingly, after Verma went to Nepal last week, he was warmly welcomed in New Delhi by India's Minister of External Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar.

For New Delhi, such collaboration with the U.S. has become increasingly pivotal. In recent years, India's rise as an emerging power has been accompanied



by testy relations with the neighborhood. Countries like Nepal have naturally pursued a policy of strategic autonomy by pivoting to China, to counterbalance India. Washington's entry into the region with economic assistance programs of its own will be to India's benefit.

### **Nepal government prepares to lift TikTok ban**

21 August 2024, Online Khabar

The government of Nepal is preparing to lift the ban on the popular social media platform TikTok, following persistent pressure from the Chinese government. The move comes after repeated inquiries and diplomatic interventions from the Chinese side, urging the Nepali government to reconsider its decision.

The Pushpa Kamal Dahal-led government introduced the Social Media Regulation Guidelines on November 9, 2023. These guidelines mandated that all social media platforms operating in Nepal must register locally and establish a contact point within the country. Just days later, on November 13, the Cabinet decided to ban TikTok, citing concerns over the platform's role in spreading social discord and violating social norms.

Before the ban was implemented, former Prime Minister Dahal consulted with major political parties, including the Nepali Congress and UML, which led to their tacit support for the decision. However, TikTok responded by sending a written commitment to adhere to all of Nepal's laws and regulations and requested the government to lift the ban.

#### **Chinese diplomatic pressure**

Despite TikTok's commitments, the ban remained in place, leading to diplomatic pressure from China. Chinese Ambassador to Nepal, Chen Song, raised the issue in almost every political meeting with Nepali officials, urging the government to reconsider the ban. Sources from the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers have confirmed that Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli has instructed officials to prepare the groundwork for lifting the ban. He emphasised that no social media platform should be banned outright and directed the Ministry of Communications and his advisory team to discuss TikTok's commitments and bring a proposal to the Cabinet for approval.

#### **Geopolitical considerations and global context**

The TikTok ban is not just a domestic issue but also ties into larger geopolitical dynamics. "Since the TikTok ban is also tied to geopolitics, there is some hesitation in making a decision," an official from the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers noted. However, the Prime Minister believes that the ban should not be prolonged, and a decision to lift it may come soon from the Cabinet.

Globally, TikTok has faced similar challenges. India imposed a complete ban on TikTok in 2020, while the United States has imposed limited restrictions. Over half of the US states, along with the federal government and various security agencies, have banned the app on employee devices. Currently, TikTok is partially or fully banned in more than 30 countries.

#### **TikTok's compliance and commitment to Nepal's Laws**

TikTok has made multiple appeals to the Nepali government to lift the ban. A week ago, TikTok's South Asia Public Policy and Government Relations Unit wrote to Minister for Communication and Information Technology Prithvi Subba Gurung, reiterating its commitment to complying with all of Nepal's laws.

After receiving TikTok's letter, which confirmed its acceptance of all legal provisions in Nepal, the Minister of Communication discussed the matter with the Prime Minister.

Earlier, on May 18, TikTok's Head of Public Policy and Government Relations for South Asia, Ferdous Mottakin, also wrote to the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers and copied the letter to the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Communications. The letter mentioned various efforts by TikTok to address the government's concerns and claimed that the ban had negatively impacted government revenue.

#### **TikTok's initiatives for content regulation and digital literacy**

In the nine months since the ban was imposed, TikTok has sent eight letters demanding the lifting of the ban. In response to the government's decision, TikTok committed on November 14 to appoint a focal point to directly address Nepal's concerns regarding content on its platform.

On December 5, 2023, TikTok further committed to enhancing content filtering and moderation by onboarding Nepali language resources and addressing issues with filtering inappropriate content in the Nepali language.

TikTok has also pledged to launch a nationwide internet safety and digital literacy campaign and to support digitising educational content for school and college students to improve educational outcomes. TikTok claimed that it has employed 60 people to oversee the compliance with its "Social Guidelines" in Nepal.

Additionally, TikTok stated that it has opened access to its "Trust and Safety Enforcement Tool (TSET)" for the Nepal government, enabling the reporting of any content that violates the law. TikTok registered as a digital service taxpayer in Nepal, claimed to have removed millions of videos from its platform that violated community guidelines.



Legal challenges against the ban

The TikTok ban has also led to legal challenges in Nepal. Several lawsuits were filed in the Supreme Court, claiming that the ban infringed on constitutional rights to freedom of speech and expression. On November 21, 2023, Judge Binod Sharma's bench issued a show-cause order to the government without granting an interim order. The next hearing for the case is scheduled for September 25.

As the government finalises its decision, it remains to be seen how the lifting of the TikTok ban will unfold and what implications it will have for Nepal's social media landscape and its relations with China.

### **Locals of Gorkha elated with reopening of Nepal-China border**

21 August 2024, The Annapurna Express

After a long wait, both the border points with Tibet of China have been opened.

The Ruila border point in Chumanbri Rural Municipality-1 and Nguila border point in Chumanbri Rural Municipality-7 of Gorkha have been opened, rural municipality Chairman Nima Lama informed.

Ruila border crossing has been open for 15 days and Nguila crossing for a month, Lama said.

The border points, closed by the Chinese side, were opened for a short time after five years.

Locals have been elated after the opening of the border crossings.

"Our border points have been opened. Now, the people can go to the Tibetan markets to buy daily essentials," Chetan Chumbel Lama of Chumanbri-7 said, adding, "We have been asked to bring citizenship and pass. Now, the villagers are preparing to go to Shyak of Tibet."

Though the border points are open, people are allowed to take only horses, not yaks, to transport goods.

Nguila border points were opened from Tuesday and Ruila from Wednesday.

During a meeting between the representatives of Chekampar and Tibetan officials, an understanding

was reached that the border points will be opened from May.

The Chinese side had closed all 14 border points including Nguila border in Chumanbri-7 and Ruila border in Chumanbri-1 after the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **Chinese drones to transport trash from Nepal's Mount Everest in groundbreaking initiative**

10 August 2024, The Express Tribune

The initiative aims to reduce the risks faced by Sherpas and improve waste management on the world's tallest peak.

This initiative announced by China's leading drone manufacturer, Da Jiang Innovations (DJI), aims to reduce the risks faced by Sherpas and improve waste management on the world's tallest peak.

Starting this autumn, heavy-lifting drones from DJI, will be used to transport trash from Ama Dablam, a 6,812-meter peak south of Everest.

This initiative announced by China's leading drone manufacturer, Da Jiang Innovations (DJI), aims to reduce the risks faced by Sherpas and improve waste management on the world's tallest peak.

Starting this autumn, heavy-lifting drones from DJI, will be used to transport trash from Ama Dablam, a 6,812-meter peak south of Everest.

The drones, which were successfully tested in April, can ferry up to 234 kg of waste per hour—a task that would typically take 14 porters six hours to complete. In spring 2025, these drones will be put to work on Everest, supplying ropes and ladders to Camp I at 5,943 meters and bringing garbage back to the base camp at 5,364 meters.

This initiative, supported by a tripartite memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee, the Khumbu Pasang Lhamu Rural Municipality, and Airlift Technology Pvt Ltd, is seen as a critical step in improving safety and environmental conditions on Everest.

"After a successful test in April, we plan to use drones commercially in the Everest region," said Jagat Bhusal, chief administration officer of the rural municipality that hosts Everest.

The drones, which produce a buzzing sound similar to a swarm of bees, offer a safer alternative to the treacherous work traditionally performed by Sherpas, particularly in the dangerous Khumbu Icefall.

The Khumbu Icefall, a notoriously perilous section of the climb to Everest's summit, has claimed nearly 50 lives since 1953, according to the Himalayan Database and government records.

The use of drones is expected to significantly reduce the number of dangerous trips Sherpas must make through the icefall, where avalanches and ice collapses are frequent.

Despite concerns that drones might reduce job opportunities for local Sherpas, Bhusal emphasized that the primary goal is to save lives.

"Yes, there are concerns that the machines may actually cut jobs. But our sole purpose is to reduce potential deaths in the Khumbu Icefall, the danger zone," he said.

Bhusal added that Sherpas would be trained to operate the drones, ensuring they remain an integral part of the operations.

The DJI FlyCart 30, the drone used in the tests, demonstrated its capability to transport up to 18 kg from Camp II and 30 kg from Camp I, although its performance varied with altitude.

The drones' introduction is part of a broader effort to address the growing waste problem on Everest, exacerbated by climate change and the increasing number of climbers.

During the 2024 spring climbing season, nearly 100 tonnes of garbage were collected from Everest and Lhotse, with the Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee (SPCC) managing 85 tonnes of waste from the base camp and higher camps.

The introduction of drones is expected to streamline waste collection and reduce the environmental impact on the mountain.

As the first commercial agreement under the MoU framework is set to be signed, the Khumbu Pasang Lhamu Rural Municipality has already invested Rs800,000 in the trial phase.

The use of drones is seen as a significant advancement in high-altitude waste management, offering a safer and more efficient solution to the challenges posed by Everest's extreme environment.

### **Chinese envoy to Nepal kicks up another row via social media**

05 August 2024, The Economic Times

The Chinese ambassador to Nepal kicked up another controversy through social media, drawing the ire of the local population. In the latest such instance, Chen Song faced criticism for passing a "joke" about a bus accident in Nepal.

On July 28, while reposting a news article titled "19 kg magnet, brought to search for the lost bus, is itself missing", he wrote on X, "Find the magnet then". He was referring to the July 12 accident, when a bus travelling from Kathmandu to Gaur and another coming from Birgunj to Kathmandu were swept away into the Trishuli river at Simaltal, Chitwan district of Nepal.

Out of 65 passengers, 62 were missing. The whereabouts of the buses and most of the passengers are still unknown. Upon the request of the Nepal government, India sent a 12-member diving team with magnets to assist in the search. The Chinese ambassador's comments appeared to be targeted not only at Nepal but also at the failure of the Indian team, according to Kathmandu-based people.

Nepali Congress MP Ramhari Khatiwada termed Chen's comments 'objectionable' and urged the foreign affairs ministry to seek clarification from the

ambassador. Sarvendra Nath Shukla, a lawmaker of the Loktantrik Samajwadi Party, criticised the Chinese ambassador without mentioning his name.

## **July**

### **As China drags feet on key project, Nepal says: 'No, thanks. Will fund it ourselves'**

24 July 2024, Money Control

Nepal has decided to upgrade Araniko Highway connecting Kathmandu with Kodari itself after the Chinese government delayed the release of an economic and technical package for the project promised nine years ago.

According to a report in The Kathmandu Post, Nepal has finally said "no, thanks" to China and is using its own money to upgrade the crucial highway.

In 2015, Chinese President Xi Jinping had promised then-Nepal President Ram Baran Yadav that Beijing will provide over 900 million RMB (\$123 million) during their meeting in Hainan.

The Chinese assistance would have helped upgrade the 115-km highway that connects Nepal with China. According to the report, a major chunk of the Araniko Highway was built by the Chinese government in the 1960s.

However, several sections of the highway were damaged by the April 2015 earthquakes.

Nepalese lawmaker Madhav Sapkota told The Kathmandu Post that China did not release the funds despite multiple reminders.

"This particular Chinese aid was renewed every year by the International Economic Cooperation Coordination Division of the Ministry of Finance, but despite numerous calls, requests and meetings, we haven't received the fund," he said.

He added that Nepal is allocating Rs 3.6 billion from its own budget to carry out maintenance work along a 26-km stretch of the highway and manage landslides based on a detailed project report prepared by the Department of Road.

Sapkota mentioned that he has dedicated much of his parliamentary career to advocating for the full reopening of the Tatopani border and facilitating cross-border movement of goods and people. "Recently, China seems to have recognized that the

Tatopani border point is more advantageous for trade than Keyrung," he said. "The true potential of the Tatopani border will be realized once the highway leading up to it is repaired to prevent occasional flooding and landslides."

He also noted that post-Covid automation by four large Chinese companies operating in Nepal, along with the use of loaders and machinery, has led to significant job losses for Nepalis.

### **Will Nepal's new coalition government tip the scales of India-China rivalry?**

21 July 2024, SCMP

Nepal will continue its delicate balancing act between India and China, according to observers, after political manoeuvrings saw a new government coalition formed and a new prime minister sworn in this week.

The changes bring a parliamentary shift away from the previous communist-dominated rule, after the Communist Party of Nepal – Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) left its alliance with the Communist Party of Nepal – Maoist to form a coalition instead with the centrist, India-leaning Nepali Congress – previously the largest opposition party.

As the new coalition now holds the balance of power, the move meant a change of leader. So Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli of the (CPN-UML) took office on Monday – the fourth time he has served in the position – in place of Pushpa Kamal Dahal, head of the Maoists.

For Nepal's neighbours, this means a shift from a government that was pro-Beijing to one that holds a mixture of allegiances between Beijing and New Delhi.

However, observers say that shift is unlikely to fundamentally change the status quo, as Kathmandu has economic and security dependencies on both Asian powerhouses.

According to Professor Lin Minwang, deputy director of the Centre for South Asian Studies at Shanghai's Fudan University, Nepal's foreign policy is one of "pragmatism".

"In fact, no matter who becomes Nepal's prime minister, Kathmandu's policy towards China and India is very unlikely to change," Lin said.

"Nepalese diplomacy in the past has always been a balance between China and India, which is one of its basic lines. There might be slight differences between India-leaning or China-leaning in different governments, but they would definitely not offend the other one just because they are more friendly to one country."

He added that Nepal's constantly shifting political landscape, with its frequent leadership changes, also

made it difficult to nurture any significant policy changes.

"This round of political change in Nepal is quite normal. Nepal hasn't seen a full-term government for a long time," he said. "Currently, Nepalese politicians have become less concerned with promoting their ideologies and more concerned over their party's interests."

In the past 16 years, Nepal has seen 14 such power shifts. Oli has been prime minister four times in 10 years; Dahal was prime minister three times.

Dr Amit Ranjan, a research fellow with the National University of Singapore's Institute of South Asian Studies, said that while Nepal could not afford to cross swords with either country, its pro-China and pro-India governance would be "interesting to watch".

"[The Nepali Congress] is considered to be pro-India and Oli is considered to be pro-China. So it will be interesting to see how they are moving," Ranjan said. The landlocked South Asian country has long been considered by India to be part of its sphere of influence. India borders Nepal on three sides and Kathmandu is heavily dependent on Delhi in terms of trade and energy supply.

India was also a key player in helping to end the Nepalese Civil War, which ran from 1996 to 2006 after Dahal's Maoists attempted to overthrow the Nepalese monarchy. It was Delhi that helped to strike a peace deal that saw the country successfully integrate communist parties into its political system.

Ranjan said that, historically, Nepal had been more dependent on India, with long-held close ties that China could not compete with.

But when Oli first became prime minister in 2015, he angered Delhi over a new constitution that split the country into seven states, resulting in protests by the Madhesi group, mostly of Indian origin, who said they were not getting enough territory. As a result, India imposed an economic blockade on Nepal, stopping medicines and other supplies getting into the country.

Oli is known as a friend of China and also expressed Nepal's willingness to cooperate with Beijing under the Belt and Road Initiative, a global infrastructure project that Delhi has been critical of.

While Nepal joined the initiative in 2017, no belt and road projects have been started as Kathmandu has yet to sign the implementation agreement with Beijing. The possibility of Oli signing the plan is Delhi's main worry, according to The Times of India. But Ranjan doubted that Oli would make any aggressive moves, given his new alliance with the India-leaning Nepali Congress.

"This is an unnatural alliance, as the two parties are completely different. They're polar opposites. They are not ideologically or politically aligned; they have

fought against each other. So it's very difficult to manage," he said.

Under the former government and the China-leaning Dahal, there were significant moves to align Nepal with China, with both Dahal and his foreign minister visiting Beijing.

According to Ranjan, while there was no problem with such actions under the previous alliance of two communist parties sharing the same ideologies, under the new coalition with the Nepali Congress, those days are now over.

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### **Chinese Ambassador meets Prime Minister Oli, discusses strengthening bilateral ties**

16 July 2024, Online Khabar

Chinese Ambassador to Nepal, Chen Song, met Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli on Monday, congratulating him on his recent assumption of office.

During the meeting, Ambassador Chen and Prime Minister Oli discussed ways to further strengthen the friendship and enhance cooperation between Nepal and China.

"We have agreed to expedite practical cooperation to further deepen our friendship," Ambassador Chen wrote on social media after the meeting.

This meeting marks an important step in the diplomatic relations between Nepal and China, highlighting both countries' commitment to bolstering their partnership.

KP Sharma Oli, the leader of the CPN-UML parliamentary party, was sworn in as Prime Minister on Monday, marking his return to office.

### **Outgoing Nepal PM Approved China Rail Deal Ahead Of Trust Vote: Report**

12 July 2024, NDTV

Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' lost the vote of confidence in Parliament on Friday after coalition partner Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) withdrew support.

A day before Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' lost a vote of confidence in Parliament, he gave a nod to an agreement to connect the Himalayan nation with China by rail under Beijing's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative.

Quoting government sources, the MyRepublica news portal said this decision carries more operational than political significance and aligns with Nepal's participation in Chinese President Xi Jinping's multi-billion-dollar pet infrastructure project.

"The Cabinet meeting held on Thursday decided to approve the 'Strengthening the Development Cooperation in Building the Trans-Himalayan Multidimensional Connectivity Network' agreement between Nepal and China," the report quoted Communication Minister and the government's spokesperson Rekha Sharma as saying.

However, a minister downplayed its immediate impact, stating, "This is an initial decision; details of project implementation and BRI modalities are yet to be finalised."

'Prachanda' lost the vote of confidence in Parliament on Friday after coalition partner Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) withdrew support for him, a development that will lead to the formation of a new government led by ex-prime minister K P Sharma Oli.

Prachanda received only 63 votes in the 275-member House of Representatives (HoR) and there were 194 votes against the motion. At least 138 votes are needed to win the vote of trust.

A total of 258 HoR members participated in the voting while one abstained.

Prachanda's move, made just before he departed from office, is viewed not only as progress towards implementing BRI projects but also crucial for initiatives like the Kerung-Kathmandu railway and broader infrastructure development along the Nepal-China border, the report said.

Earlier, ahead of signing a power-sharing agreement with UML, the Nepali Congress had resolved to "only accept grants and not loans under the BRI project". The government was also set to decide on implementing the 2017 BRI agreement with China, which has been pending at the cabinet.

The BRI has raised global concerns over China's debt diplomacy of extending huge loans to smaller countries for unsustainable infrastructure projects. The Hambantota port, which was funded by a Chinese loan, was leased to Beijing in a 99-year debt-for-equity swap in 2017 after Sri Lanka failed to pay off the debt.

### **Storms trap more than 130 near China's Tibetan border with Nepal**

10 July 2024, Reuters

More than 130 people including tourists were trapped in Tibet near China's rugged Himalayan border with Nepal on Wednesday after incessant rains unleashed landslides and floods, severing road links, according to Chinese state media.

Many sections of a major highway leading to the remote Tibetan town of Zhentang were either washed away by floods or blocked by landslides amid continuous rainfall since Sunday, Chinese state media reported.

So far, 342 stranded people have been evacuated to other towns by rescuers.

But at least 130 including tourists are still stranded in the vicinity of Zhentang, which lies at an altitude of about 2,000 metres (6,562 feet), due to blocked roads, rains, and "a lack of physical strength" because of the long distances that the stranded would need to traverse, according to state media.

Storms in the area through Thursday will create "a degree of difficulty" in rescue work, state media warned.

Moderate to heavy rainfall is expected in southwest China including parts of Tibet, Sichuan and Yunnan, according to national weather forecasters.

### **Nepal: Activists protest at China-built Pokhara Airport, denounce BRI as intervention tool**

08 July 2024, The Print

A group of protestors comprising locals and activists protested in front of China-built Pokhara International

Airport, denouncing the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as a tool to intervene in the Himalayan nation.

Over 200 people took part in the protest called by the Rashtriya Ekata Abhiyan or National Unity Movement, on Monday afternoon. The protest comes during the visit by a parliamentary committee to inspect and investigate claims of embezzlement at the time of construction of the airport which only operates domestic flights.

Rajendra Prasad Lingden, one of the members of the parliamentary committee met with the protestors at the site.

The protestors also organized a sit-in in front of the airport raising slogans demanding "Full operation of Pokhara International Airport", "Investigate the corruption during the construction of Pokhara International Airport", and "Convert the Chinese loan to grant" amongst others.

Binay Yadav, the chairman of the National Unity Movement, criticised China and alleged that the nation wants to capture the Pokhara International Airport. "China wants to capture the Pokhara International Airport as it did with the Hambantota port of Sri Lanka and Pakistan's Gwadar Port as this place has geological significance," Yadav said.

He added, "Nepal cannot pay back the pricy loans and interest. Embezzlement also needs to be investigated which were made during its construction."

The construction of Nepal's Pokhara airport, primarily funded and executed by Chinese companies, has raised concerns about the quality of work, the manipulation of oversight, and the burden of debt on Nepal.

Additionally, the airport's association with China's BRI has ignited diplomatic tensions with India, making it challenging for the airport to attract international flights.

The Pokhara airport serves as a stark example of the pitfalls associated with importing China's infrastructure development model, highlighting concerns about financial sustainability and transparency, all while fuelling geopolitical rivalries in the region.

On May 12, 2017, Nepal and China signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on bilateral cooperation under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative. The then Foreign Secretary of Nepal, Shanker Das Bairagi and Chinese Ambassador Yu Hong had signed the MoU.

Notably, on June 27, the lawmakers from the Nepali Congress warned the government against BRI loans and proceeded forward without consultation during the parliamentary meeting.

Opposition lawmaker and former foreign minister Narayan Prakash Saud, while addressing the house session, warned the government not to take loans



under the BRI of China. The former foreign minister rather suggested the government accept the grants but in line with the provisions that Nepal has with other countries.

"In regards to BRI, we should be clear that we should accept the grant like we have been doing with other countries. Talking about the loans, there are priorities that determine the need to take them; there should be potential plans, management of the finances, and a feasible market. Until and unless no feasible market has been ensured, big projects shouldn't be taken forward depending on the loans, if we move forward with it, then it would be a trap for ourselves," Saud said.

The former Foreign Minister also took a jibe at the government for recalling the ambassadors despite the dilute geopolitical situation and ongoing tension, claiming it has diluted the image of the nation. Lawmaker Saud also suggested the government make decisions about BRI only after holding consultations with the opposition and all the parties present in parliament. (ANI)

### **New round of China-Nepal customs exchange held for better cooperation**

08 July 2024, Xinhua

China-Nepal customs cooperation is expected to deepen following the conclusion of the weeklong exchange of the two countries' border customs, which ended Monday in Lhasa, the capital of southwest China's Xizang Autonomous Region.

A delegation of seven customs officers from Nepal, led by Ramesh Aryal, deputy director general of the customs department of Nepal's Ministry of Finance, started their visit on July 2. The event was the 33rd round of such mutual visits.

Under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative and the joint statement issued by the two countries, the two sides will promote cooperation in optimizing the business environment at ports and strengthening the supervision over import and export food safety, among other fields.

Aryal said China is an important trade partner of Nepal, with their bilateral trade accounting for 17 percent of Nepal's total.

In 2023, China's foreign trade with Nepal reached 12.69 billion yuan (about 1.78 billion U.S. dollars), up 15.6 percent year on year. Among them, the value of trade between Xizang and Nepal stood at 2.77 billion yuan, representing over one-fifth of the total.

### **Nepal PM Dahal faces crisis as key ally drops parliamentary support**

03 July 2024, Reuters, Gopal Sharma

Nepalese Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal faced a crisis on Wednesday after a key ally in his multi-party coalition withdrew support, pushing his government into a minority in parliament four months after the coalition was formed.

The liberal Communist Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) party, which withdrew support and was the biggest group supporting Dahal's government since March, also said eight ministers it had nominated to the coalition would resign.

Party officials said UML and opposition Nepali Congress party, the two largest groups in parliament, would unite to form a new coalition and replace the one headed by Dahal.

"The new alliance is for stability," UML's Pradeep Gyawali told Reuters, without providing details.

Nepal, a natural buffer between China and India, has long been beset with factional fighting and politicians' egos that have prevented the formation of stable governments. There have been 13 since 2008, when Nepal became a republic and a 239-year monarchy was abolished.

Dahal, 69, a former Maoist rebel chief, has changed allies thrice since becoming prime minister after parliamentary elections in 2022.

His Maoist centre party said Dahal would not resign but would face a vote of confidence in parliament as required within 30 days.

Prakash Sharan Mahat, a spokesman for the Nepali Congress party, said UML chief K.P. Sharma Oli, 72, and Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba, 78, would share the prime minister's post until the next election in November 2027.

### **Govt slammed for BRI agreement with China**

27 June 2024, The Himalayan Times

Former foreign minister and Nepali Congress lawmaker Narayan Prakash Saud assailed the government for conducting risky foreign policy vis-à-vis neighbors and powerful countries.

Speaking during the special hour of the House of Representatives, Saud said the prime minister mentioned during China's Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Sun Weidong's recent Nepal visit that the government could soon sign the Belt and Road Initiative agreement with China.

Stating that there had been no discussion with the opposition party on the BRI agreement, he said the way the government was dealing with neighbors and powerful countries had exposed Nepal's diplomatic capacity. The government had not consulted political parties, especially the opposition, on the level of talks it had been holding with the Chinese government on BRI.

He said foreign policy should be conducted on the basis of consensus among political parties. "Prithvi Narayan Shah had called Nepal a yam between two boulders, which meant two inanimate stones and one animate yam which is dynamic," Saud said and added that the way the government was conducting Nepal's foreign policy made Nepal a dynamite between two boulders. "If dynamite between two boulders explodes, it can damage the two boulders but, in that case, the dynamite will cease to exist," he added. Saud also assailed the government for recalling 11 Nepali ambassadors from foreign missions.

Another Nepali Congress lawmaker Rajendra Bajgain demanded that the government present the BRI agreement Nepal signed with China in Parliament. "The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), sometimes referred to as the New Silk Road, is China's major strategic program. On May 12, 2017, Nepal and China signed an MoU on the BRI. Why has that framework document not been made public yet?"

He said BRI cannot be a competitive program against Millennium Challenge Corporation, a grant project because China had a plan to provide soft loans for BRI projects at the high-interest rate of 2 to 4 percent. "The MCC was a grant, and it became a subject of parliamentary debate and was approved after a long tug-of-war. The BRI should also be a matter of parliamentary discussion," he added.

"We want to hear the government's view on the BRI funding modality. Nepal is serving internal and external debts amounting to 50% of its GDP. A country serving nearly one and a half trillion in debt cannot bear more." He said the World Bank and Asian Development Bank had been providing loans to Nepal at one percent or less interest rate. He said the country should not take loans from China. "The loan period from the World Bank and ADB is 40/50 years. The situation is that we are borrowing from the World Bank and ADB at an annual interest rate of 0.50% to 1%. China's interest rate ranges from 2% to 4%. In this scenario, we will fall into a debt trap." The BRI needs to be read and understood because it has five declared objectives, among which two are Policy Harmonization & Coordination, Bajgain said while adding that the two objectives of policy harmonization and policy coordination in BRI were not good for Nepal. "Policy Harmonization & Coordination means making the policies of different jurisdictions identical. How is this possible? We are not the same countries!"

"Two countries' policies cannot be similar," he added. Bajgain further stated, "As far as we know, the BRI MoU mentions that the Implementation Plan document does not include a signature clause. How

does the government intend to bypass the parliament and sign the BRI Implementation Plan?"

Saud said as the world was witnessing polarization from unipolarity to multipolarity, the world was witnessing conflicts in Europe, the Middle East, and the Asia Pacific region and there was a risk of Asia becoming embroiled in the conflict. At this juncture when we are supposed to adopt mature diplomacy and reliable conduct, we have recalled our ambassadors from 11 powerful countries, he added. He said the prime minister told the HoR that the government recalled Nepali ambassadors as they were appointed on the basis of political quota. Saud said that the government's move to recall ambassadors without any reason had diminished Nepal's credibility in the international community. Stating that new ambassadors were nominated by the government without any accepted criteria, he said one ambassadorial nominee declined the offer as he was not consulted prior to his nomination. Human rights activist Sushil Pyakurel, who was nominated ambassador to South Korea, declined the offer, saying he was not consulted prior to his nomination.

In an oblique reference to Rastriya Swatantra Party, Saud said that a political party had solicited applications from ambassadorial aspirants in the manner NGOs recruited their human resources and the move had undermined Nepal's prestige and diplomatic norms. He urged the government to withdraw its decision to recall Nepali ambassadors from foreign countries.

### **Nepal seeks Interpol help for two citizens held by China for allegedly helping Tibetans flee**

24 June 2024, Tibetan Review

Nepal has requested the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) to find the whereabouts of two of its youths from its border district of Gorkha, knowing fully well the duo had been called to Tibet on some pretext and then arrested by the Chinese police there. The initial Jun 9 and 12 media reports on their disappearance more than a month earlier suggested that they were suspected of having tried to help Tibetans to flee their Chinese ruled homeland.

It was not clear whether Nepal had raised the matter directly with the Chinese authorities in Tibet who were earlier reported to have admitted having them in coercive custody.

The District Police Office, Gorkha, on Sunday (Jun 23) submitted an application to Interpol urging it to trace the location of Rapke Lama and Karma Cheden Lama of Lama Gaun, Chumanubri Rural Municipality-7, Gorkha, who were nabbed by Tibet

police one-and-a-half month ago, reported theannapurnaexpress.com Jun 24.

The Interpol will search for them in coordination with Beijing-based Interpol, the report cited SP Basudev Pathak from the District Police Office as saying.

"The duo had gone to Bhajyupa to search for Yarsagumba on Apr 29, but they did not return home till late night. On May 16, outgoing ward Chairman Pasang Lama got a call from Shigatse Police Office, Tibet, and told him that the missing youths are under the control of Shigatse Police," the report quoted an application submitted by Karma Chetan's wife as saying.

The issue of the duo's disappearance was raised in parliament by on Jun 11 by Nepali Congress lawmaker Rajendra Bajgain who represents the Gorkha constituency.

Narrating the sequence of events of their disappearance, Bajgain had told parliament, "Some one and half months back, they received a call. ... The phone calls were made by Tibetans who were arrested by the Tibetan authorities. While receiving the phone calls, they were asked to come to Tibet. Then they were arrested after reaching there."

### **Nepali leaders reaffirm commitment to one-China principle**

17 June 2024, Xinhua

Nepal's Acting President Ram Sahay Prasad Yadav and Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda, in recent separate meetings with a senior Chinese political advisor, reiterated the country's commitment to the one-China principle.

While meeting with Vice Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Bateer in Kathmandu on Friday and Sunday respectively, they also vowed not to allow any force to use Nepal's territory to harm China's interests and voiced readiness to continue to deepen mutually beneficial cooperation with China in various fields.

The Nepali leaders expressed their appreciation of China's long-term and valuable support to Nepal's economic and social development.

For his part, Bateer said that as China and Nepal are close neighbors linked by the same mountains and rivers and enjoying a long-standing friendship, the Chinese side is willing to work with the Nepali side to implement the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries, expand exchanges and cooperation in various fields, and continuously deepen China-Nepal strategic cooperative partnership.

During his stay in Nepal from Friday to Monday, Bateer also met with Nepal's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Narayan Kaji Shrestha and

Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives Indira Rana.

### **No info on two Nepalis called and held by China on suspicion of helping Tibetans flee**

12 June 2024, Tibetan Review

Police in Chinese ruled Tibet lured and arrested two Nepali youths on suspicion of trying to help Tibetans flee their occupied homeland. And they have remained missing for the last one month and half, reported kathmandupost.com Jun 12, citing a Nepali lawmaker.

Rapke Lama and Karma Cheden from northern Gorkha district were arrested a month ago and their whereabouts are yet to be known, Nepali Congress lawmaker Rajendra Bajgain has said in Parliament on Jun 11.

"Two youths of Gorkha were detained by the Tibetan security officials but the government has been clueless," Bajgain has said. "I ask for an answer from the government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs." Stating his position on the issue on X (formerly Twitter), Bajgain has said, "The arbitrary arrest was made allegedly because they helped the Tibetans flee... But to reassure you, we do not play against China here and respect them as our close neighbour. We are only speaking for a better environment within the Himalayan border."

Narrating the sequence of events of their disappearance, Bajgain has told parliament, "Someone and half months back, they received a call. ... The phone calls were made by Tibetans who were arrested by the Tibetan authorities. While receiving the phone calls, they were asked to come to Tibet. Then they were arrested after reaching there."

He has expressed disappointment over the government's ignorance or indifference on the development. "The Nepal government is not aware of this incident. No one knows their condition, whether they are alive or not... I would like to draw the attention of the foreign ministry regarding this incident."

### **China's "Empty Airport" In Nepal Sparks Online Tensions; Envoy Intimidates Journalist For Reporting Pokhara Airport Loan**

03 June 2024, The EurAsian Times, Ritu Sharma

With no international flights, the Pokhara International Airport has become a \$215.96 million white elephant for Nepal. Made with Chinese loans, the high-interest rate is soon going to result in a debt problem for the Himalayan country.

A Nepali journalist was at the receiving end of China's 'Wolf Warrior' diplomacy for reporting on the project's pitfalls.

So far, information in the public realm has said that Nepal has to pay a 2 percent interest on the US \$215.96 million Chinese loan for building the Pokhara International Airport, which has also been built by Chinese firms. However, a senior Nepali journalist, Gajendra Budhathoki, quoted "a signed official document" that the actual interest rate is 5 percent.

Budhathoki posted on X a social media post asking the Chinese ambassador to Nepal, Chen Song, for clarification. In an acerbic response, the Chinese envoy asked for the journalist's apologies.

However, a senior Nepalese journalist has said he had a copy of a signed official document showing the actual interest rate is 5%. In seeking clarification on this anomaly in an online post on May 27, the Chinese ambassador to Nepal, Chen Song, severely scolded senior Nepalese journalist Gajendra Budhathoki, demanding that he apologize.

Song said in his post on X: "Worst lies that I ever saw. It is public information, yet you dare lie about it." In another post, he demanded an apology from Budhathoki, the chief editor of Taksar magazine, and also from "whoever the people you represent."

Budhathoki, in his response, asked Song not to "intimidate" him as he has proof.

Nepal's second-biggest airport, financed and constructed by China, was inaugurated with much fanfare in January 2023. The rate of interest for the loan was earlier reported to be 2 percent. But Budhathoki claims that he had the signed document for the loan agreement showing that the Export-Import Bank of China has given the loan at 5 percent.

The Economic Times has called the Chinese envoy's public spat with the Nepali journalist part of 'Wolf Warrior diplomacy', a brand of hyper-public diplomacy conducted by Chinese diplomats targeting the host governments.

Song's outburst has invited the ire of former diplomats and journalists in Nepal. "It is unusual for a foreign ambassador to demand an apology from a host country journalist for a social media post. He could refute or ask the government to clarify. The foreign ministry should remind the ambassador of the limits of 'public diplomacy' and risks of direct engagement," Acharya opined in his post.

**An International Airport With No Flights**

Around a decade ago, China agreed to give loans to build the airport. China's CAMC Engineering, the state-owned construction firm, built the airport. However, the airport has failed to attract any regular international flights, barring a few flights from China.

This has raised questions about how the airport will generate revenue to repay the Chinese loan. Kathmandu has been seeking Beijing to change the loan terms to ease the financial burden on the country, but China has not relented so far.

In November 2023, The New York Times published a report that the Chinese construction firm had inflated the cost of the project and undermined Nepal's efforts to maintain quality control, putting its business interests first. The report said that Nepal's Civil Aviation Authority, reluctant to ruffle feathers in Beijing, overlooked the firm's wrongdoings.

In the aftermath of the report, Nepal's Commission for the Investigation of Abuse and Authority raided the Pokhara offices of the Civil Aviation Authority and seized documents related to the project. An investigation has been launched to ascertain the allegations.

A preliminary report shows that narrow-body jets like the Airbus A320 and A319 have payload issues due to obstacles near the airport, which is a 25-minute hop from Kathmandu.

The report indicates that the Pokhara International Airport has a payload penalty ranging from 5 to 10 tonnes, depending on the temperature and distance. The permissible load for an A320 is 77 tonnes, but an A320 taking off from Pokhara will be allowed to carry a maximum load of only 68 tonnes.

This load restriction means that airlines either incur a loss while flying to Pokhara or raise fares to compensate for 50 percent of the seats that have to be left empty. China also pulled the airport into a geopolitical quagmire with India by unilaterally proclaiming it part of its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Nepal entered the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with China to facilitate transit transport, logistics, and related infrastructure development through cross-border projects, including railway, road, civil aviation, power grid, information, and communication.

Following the signing of the framework, Nepal initially listed 35 projects to be implemented under BRI; later, this number was whittled down to nine.

Even despite the Nepalese government's apprehensions about how the projects will be financed—through soft loans or grants—China has moved to unilaterally claim various projects to have been completed under the framework of BRI.

Last June, Song launched the WeChat Pay Cross-border Payment Service in Nepal during the first Dragon Boat Race Festival between the two countries in June 2023. He posted on X: "Warm congratulations on WeChat Pay Cross-border Payment Service Inauguration in Nepal. A new step forward in financial connectivity, one of the five "connectivities" under the BRI initiative."

The fate of the Pokhara International Airport resembles that of the Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport at Hambantota, which has earned the moniker of "world's emptiest airport."

The airport was built at the cost of US \$209 million, out of which China financed US \$190 million in the form of soft loans. With no flights, the cost of paying off this loan alone was nearly US \$ 17 million per year.

**China's Money – A Poisoned Chalice**

Countries around the world that have taken large loans to fund infrastructure projects are said to be spiraling down into a debt trap. Sri Lanka is a case in point. China has been lending money for infrastructure projects close to the market interest rate and, in most cases, has insisted on using Chinese firms and contractors.

China uses the loans to seek geopolitical leverage. A 2021 study analyzed over 100 debt financing contracts China signed with foreign governments.

The borrowing countries were bound with absolute confidentiality, and the contract also contained clauses against restructuring the loan from 22 major creditor nations known as the "Paris Club."

China also retained the right to demand repayment anytime and could use it to strong-arm countries to be in line regarding issues like Taiwan.

## June

### Govt slammed for BRI agreement with China

27 June 2024, The Himalayan Times

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Stating that there had been no discussion with the opposition party on the BRI agreement, he said the way the government was dealing with neighbors and powerful countries had exposed Nepal's diplomatic capacity. The government had not consulted political parties, especially the opposition, on the level of talks it had been holding with the Chinese government on BRI.

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animate yam which is dynamic," Saud said and added that the way the government was conducting Nepal's foreign policy made Nepal a dynamite between two boulders. "If dynamite between two boulders explodes, it can damage the two boulders but, in that case, the dynamite will cease to exist," he added. Saud also assailed the government for recalling 11 Nepali ambassadors from foreign missions.

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He said BRI cannot be a competitive program against Millennium Challenge Corporation, a grant project because China had a plan to provide soft loans for BRI projects at the high-interest rate of 2 to 4 percent. "The MCC was a grant, and it became a subject of parliamentary debate and was approved after a long tug-of-war. The BRI should also be a matter of parliamentary discussion," he added.

"We want to hear the government's view on the BRI funding modality. Nepal is serving internal and external debts amounting to 50% of its GDP. A country serving nearly one and a half trillion in debt cannot bear more." He said the World Bank and Asian Development Bank had been providing loans to Nepal at one percent or less interest rate. He said the country should not take loans from China. "The loan period from the World Bank and ADB is 40/50 years. The situation is that we are borrowing from the World Bank and ADB at an annual interest rate of 0.50% to 1%. China's interest rate ranges from 2% to 4%. In this scenario, we will fall into a debt trap."

The BRI needs to be read and understood because it has five declared objectives, among which two are Policy Harmonization & Coordination, Bajgain said while adding that the two objectives of policy harmonization and policy coordination in BRI were not good for Nepal. "Policy Harmonization & Coordination means making the policies of different jurisdictions identical. How is this possible? We are not the same countries!"

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Saud said as the world was witnessing polarization from unipolarity to multipolarity, the world was witnessing conflicts in Europe, the Middle East, and



the Asia Pacific region and there was a risk of Asia becoming embroiled in the conflict. At this juncture when we are supposed to adopt mature diplomacy and reliable conduct, we have recalled our ambassadors from 11 powerful countries, he added. He said the prime minister told the HoR that the government recalled Nepali ambassadors as they were appointed on the basis of political quota. Saud said that the government's move to recall ambassadors without any reason had diminished Nepal's credibility in the international community. Stating that new ambassadors were nominated by the government without any accepted criteria, he said one ambassadorial nominee declined the offer as he was not consulted prior to his nomination. Human rights activist Sushil Pyakurel, who was nominated ambassador to South Korea, declined the offer, saying he was not consulted prior to his nomination.

In an oblique reference to Rastriya Swatantra Party, Saud said that a political party had solicited applications from ambassadorial aspirants in the manner NGOs recruited their human resources and the move had undermined Nepal's prestige and diplomatic norms. He urged the government to withdraw its decision to recall Nepali ambassadors from foreign countries.

### **Nepal seeks Interpol help for two citizens held by China for allegedly helping Tibetans flee**

24 June 2024, Tibetan Review

Nepal has requested the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) to find the whereabouts of two of its youths from its border district of Gorkha, knowing fully well the duo had been called to Tibet on some pretext and then arrested by the Chinese police there. The initial Jun 9 and 12 media reports on their disappearance more than a month earlier suggested that they were suspected of having tried to help Tibetans to flee their Chinese ruled homeland.

It was not clear whether Nepal had raised the matter directly with the Chinese authorities in Tibet who were earlier reported to have admitted having them in coercive custody.

The District Police Office, Gorkha, on Sunday (Jun 23) submitted an application to Interpol urging it to trace the location of Rapke Lama and Karma Cheden Lama of Lama Gaun, Chumanubri Rural Municipality-7, Gorkha, who were nabbed by Tibet police one-and-a-half month ago, reported theannapurnaexpress.com Jun 24.

The Interpol will search for them in coordination with Beijing-based Interpol, the report cited SP Basudev Pathak from the District Police Office as saying.

"The duo had gone to Bhajyupa to search for Yarsagumba on Apr 29, but they did not return home till late night. On May 16, outgoing ward Chairman Pasang Lama got a call from Shigatse Police Office, Tibet, and told him that the missing youths are under the control of Shigatse Police," the report quoted an application submitted by Karma Chetan's wife as saying.

The issue of the duo's disappearance was raised in parliament by on Jun 11 by Nepali Congress lawmaker Rajendra Bajgain who represents the Gorkha constituency.

Narrating the sequence of events of their disappearance, Bajgain had told parliament, "Some one and half months back, they received a call. ... The phone calls were made by Tibetans who were arrested by the Tibetan authorities. While receiving the phone calls, they were asked to come to Tibet. Then they were arrested after reaching there."

### **Nepali leaders reaffirm commitment to one-China principle**

17 June 2024, Xinhua

Nepal's Acting President Ram Sahay Prasad Yadav and Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda, in recent separate meetings with a senior Chinese political advisor, reiterated the country's commitment to the one-China principle.

While meeting with Vice Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Bater in Kathmandu on Friday and Sunday respectively, they also vowed not to allow any force to use Nepal's territory to harm China's interests and voiced readiness to continue to deepen mutually beneficial cooperation with China in various fields.

The Nepali leaders expressed their appreciation of China's long-term and valuable support to Nepal's economic and social development.

For his part, Bater said that as China and Nepal are close neighbors linked by the same mountains and rivers and enjoying a long-standing friendship, the Chinese side is willing to work with the Nepali side to implement the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries, expand exchanges and cooperation in various fields, and continuously deepen China-Nepal strategic cooperative partnership.

During his stay in Nepal from Friday to Monday, Bater also met with Nepal's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Narayan Kaji Shrestha and Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives Indira Rana.

## **No info on two Nepalis called and held by China on suspicion of helping Tibetans flee**

12 June 2024, Tibetan Review

Police in Chinese ruled Tibet lured and arrested two Nepali youths on suspicion of trying to help Tibetans flee their occupied homeland. And they have remained missing for the last one month and half, reported [kathmandupost.com](https://kathmandupost.com) Jun 12, citing a Nepali lawmaker.

Rapke Lama and Karma Cheden from northern Gorkha district were arrested a month ago and their whereabouts are yet to be known, Nepali Congress lawmaker Rajendra Bajgain has said in Parliament on Jun 11.

"Two youths of Gorkha were detained by the Tibetan security officials but the government has been clueless," Bajgain has said. "I ask for an answer from the government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs." Stating his position on the issue on X (formerly Twitter), Bajgain has said, "The arbitrary arrest was made allegedly because they helped the Tibetans flee... But to reassure you, we do not play against China here and respect them as our close neighbour. We are only speaking for a better environment within the Himalayan border."

Narrating the sequence of events of their disappearance, Bajgain has told parliament, "Someone and half months back, they received a call. ... The phone calls were made by Tibetans who were arrested by the Tibetan authorities. While receiving the phone calls, they were asked to come to Tibet. Then they were arrested after reaching there."

He has expressed disappointment over the government's ignorance or indifference on the development. "The Nepal government is not aware of this incident. No one knows their condition, whether they are alive or not... I would like to draw the attention of the foreign ministry regarding this incident."

## **China's "Empty Airport" In Nepal Sparks Online Tensions; Envoy Intimidates Journo For Reporting Pokhara Airport Loan**

03 June 2024, The EurAsian Times, Ritu Sharma

With no international flights, the Pokhara International Airport has become a \$215.96 million white elephant for Nepal. Made with Chinese loans, the high-interest rate is soon going to result in a debt problem for the Himalayan country.

A Nepali journalist was at the receiving end of China's 'Wolf Warrior' diplomacy for reporting on the project's pitfalls.

So far, information in the public realm has said that Nepal has to pay a 2 percent interest on the US \$215.96 million Chinese loan for building the Pokhara International Airport, which has also been built by Chinese firms. However, a senior Nepali journalist, Gajendra Budhathoki, quoted "a signed official document" that the actual interest rate is 5 percent.

Budhathoki posted on X a social media post asking the Chinese ambassador to Nepal, Chen Song, for clarification. In an acerbic response, the Chinese envoy asked for the journalist's apologies.

However, a senior Nepalese journalist has said he had a copy of a signed official document showing the actual interest rate is 5%. In seeking clarification on this anomaly in an online post on May 27, the Chinese ambassador to Nepal, Chen Song, severely scolded senior Nepalese journalist Gajendra Budhathoki, demanding that he apologize.

Song said in his post on X: "Worst lies that I ever saw. It is public information, yet you dare lie about it." In another post, he demanded an apology from Budhathoki, the chief editor of Taksar magazine, and also from "whoever the people you represent."

Budhathoki, in his response, asked Song not to "intimidate" him as he has proof.

Nepal's second-biggest airport, financed and constructed by China, was inaugurated with much fanfare in January 2023. The rate of interest for the loan was earlier reported to be 2 percent. But Budhathoki claims that he had the signed document for the loan agreement showing that the Export-Import Bank of China has given the loan at 5 percent.

The Economic Times has called the Chinese envoy's public spat with the Nepali journalist part of 'Wolf Warrior diplomacy', a brand of hyper-public diplomacy conducted by Chinese diplomats targeting the host governments.

Song's outburst has invited the ire of former diplomats and journalists in Nepal. "It is unusual for a foreign ambassador to demand an apology from a host country journalist for a social media post. He could refute or ask the government to clarify. The foreign ministry should remind the ambassador of the limits of 'public diplomacy' and risks of direct engagement," Acharya opined in his post.

**An International Airport With No Flights**

Around a decade ago, China agreed to give loans to build the airport. China's CAMC Engineering, the state-owned construction firm, built the airport. However, the airport has failed to attract any regular international flights, barring a few flights from China. This has raised questions about how the airport will generate revenue to repay the Chinese loan. Kathmandu has been seeking Beijing to change the

loan terms to ease the financial burden on the country, but China has not relented so far.

In November 2023, The New York Times published a report that the Chinese construction firm had inflated the cost of the project and undermined Nepal's efforts to maintain quality control, putting its business interests first. The report said that Nepal's Civil Aviation Authority, reluctant to ruffle feathers in Beijing, overlooked the firm's wrongdoings.

In the aftermath of the report, Nepal's Commission for the Investigation of Abuse and Authority raided the Pokhara offices of the Civil Aviation Authority and seized documents related to the project. An investigation has been launched to ascertain the allegations.

A preliminary report shows that narrow-body jets like the Airbus A320 and A319 have payload issues due to obstacles near the airport, which is a 25-minute hop from Kathmandu.

The report indicates that the Pokhara International Airport has a payload penalty ranging from 5 to 10 tonnes, depending on the temperature and distance. The permissible load for an A320 is 77 tonnes, but an A320 taking off from Pokhara will be allowed to carry a maximum load of only 68 tonnes.

This load restriction means that airlines either incur a loss while flying to Pokhara or raise fares to compensate for 50 percent of the seats that have to be left empty. China also pulled the airport into a geopolitical quagmire with India by unilaterally proclaiming it part of its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Nepal entered the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with China to facilitate transit transport, logistics, and related infrastructure development through cross-border projects, including railway, road, civil aviation, power grid, information, and communication.

Following the signing of the framework, Nepal initially listed 35 projects to be implemented under BRI; later, this number was whittled down to nine.

Even despite the Nepalese government's apprehensions about how the projects will be financed—through soft loans or grants—China has moved to unilaterally claim various projects to have been completed under the framework of BRI.

Last June, Song launched the WeChat Pay Cross-border Payment Service in Nepal during the first Dragon Boat Race Festival between the two countries in June 2023. He posted on X: "Warm congratulations on WeChat Pay Cross-border Payment Service Inauguration in Nepal. A new step forward in financial connectivity, one of the five "connectivities" under the BRI initiative."

The fate of the Pokhara International Airport resembles that of the Mattala Rajapaksa

International Airport at Hambantota, which has earned the moniker of "world's emptiest airport."

The airport was built at the cost of US \$209 million, out of which China financed US \$190 million in the form of soft loans. With no flights, the cost of paying off this loan alone was nearly US \$ 17 million per year.

China's Money – A Poisoned Chalice

Countries around the world that have taken large loans to fund infrastructure projects are said to be spiraling down into a debt trap. Sri Lanka is a case in point. China has been lending money for infrastructure projects close to the market interest rate and, in most cases, has insisted on using Chinese firms and contractors.

China uses the loans to seek geopolitical leverage. A 2021 study analyzed over 100 debt financing contracts China signed with foreign governments.

The borrowing countries were bound with absolute confidentiality, and the contract also contained clauses against restructuring the loan from 22 major creditor nations known as the "Paris Club."

China also retained the right to demand repayment anytime and could use it to strong-arm countries to be in line regarding issues like Taiwan.

## May

### **'You dare to lie:' Chinese ambassador to Nepal snaps at senior journalist over Pokhara loan claim**

29 May 2024, The Print, Keshav Padmanabhan

Chen Song demanded an apology from Gajendra Budhathoki, chief editor of Taksar Magazine, for saying loan interest for Pokhara airport could be higher than reported.



Chinese ambassador to Nepal Chen Song. (Photo Credit: Chen Song twitter handle)

Chinese ambassador to Nepal, Chen Song, verbally sparred with a Nepali editor over his claim that the actual interest rate for the loan given by a Chinese bank to the Pokhara airport was much higher than previously reported.

Song retorted on X with an angry post: “Worst lies that I ever saw. It is public information, yet you dare lie about it.” In a different post, Chen demanded an apology from journalist Gajendra Budhathoki and also from “whoever the people you represent”.

On 27 May, Budhathoki posted that he had the signed document of the \$215.96 million loan agreement for the Pokhara International Airport, which shows the interest rate offered by the Export-Import Bank of China (Exim Bank) as 5 percent, despite public reports of it being 2 percent.

The Pokhara airport, first envisioned in 1975, was finally completed and inaugurated on 1 January, 2023 – after a 50-year wait for the second most populous city of Nepal. The project was made possible due to the \$215.96 million from the Exim Bank of China.

Opened to much fanfare, the airport has become emblematic of another of Beijing’s white-elephant development projects, saddling the local partner with high debt. There have been no international routes linked to the airport, for more than a year after it opened.

Another controversy surrounding the airport is whether it is part of China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) – the \$1 trillion “project of the century” envisioned by Chinese President Xi Jinping to develop two transport routes connecting China to the world.

Navita Srikant, a geopolitical and security analyst and an India-Nepal relations observer, said when the airport was inaugurated on 1 January 2023, the Chinese ambassador had called it “the flagship project of the China-Nepal BRI cooperation”.

“He reiterated this a few months later, after the successful landing of an international flight. Last summer, however, the then Nepalese Foreign Minister, N.P. Saud denied the above-made Chinese assertions and assured in his Parliamentary address that no project under BRI has been implemented thus far,” Srikant said.

Srikant added: “This is a loss of image for China – they have been promoting the BRI for so long but their first project in Nepal did not get that tag.”

The perceived loss of image due to the difficulties faced by the project could be attributed to the Chinese ambassador’s public defensiveness regarding the Pokhara airport, explained Shivam Shekhawat, a junior fellow at the Observer Research Foundation.

Speaking to ThePrint, Shekhawat added that the airport failing to “achieve the kind of traffic that was envisioned” is something that matters for Chinese public diplomacy in Nepal.

In recent months, the Nepalese government has been trying to convert the loan for Pokhara airport into a

grant, given that the project has not achieved its goals.

“During the recent nine-day trip of Nepali Foreign Minister Narayan Kaji Shrestha to China, discussions included negotiations to convert a portion of the loan to Pokhara Airport as a grant. From 2026, Nepal has to start repaying the loan, including the interest,” explained Srikant.

**Habitual offender**

This is not the first time that Song has pushed the boundaries of acceptable actions by a diplomat in a foreign country. At a public event in September 2023, Song asserted that India’s “policy” towards Nepal was not “friendly” while adding that New Delhi’s ties are also “not so beneficial” to the country, according to media reports.

“This Twitter spat and use of undiplomatic language hints at a certain BRI-related anxiety of China in Nepal. However, there is a sense that Chinese ambassadors have habitually crossed diplomatic norms in Nepal. Even previously, the statement on India-Nepal trade crossed the line way too far,” Srikant told ThePrint.

“The defensiveness, however, is not proportionate to the response made by the ambassador in a public verbal spat. No country would be okay with an ambassador attempting to intimidate their journalists,” added Shekhawat.

In 2020, the then-Chinese ambassador to Nepal, Hou Yanqui, interfered in the affairs of the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) and attempted to keep the party united during the political split occurring at the time.

### **After prolonged, tortuous Covid closure, China finally reopens 14 Tibet-Nepal border trade points**

26 May 2024, Tibetan Review

There is probably no other part of the world, including in China itself, where Covid-19 restrictions did not end years ago. To the local populations on the two sides of Nepal and Chinese-occupied Tibet border areas, the Covid pandemic restrictions ended only yesterday. China finally decided to reopen most of the border crossings from May 25, with the prolonged, tortuous delay in doing so begging explanations.

The two sides reopened their traditional border trade points on May 25, marking a step forward in enhancing bilateral economic and trade ties, reported China’s official Xinhua news agency May 25. Bilateral ties did not move forward thus far apparently because China failed to restore a left front government in Nepal by cobbling together a coalition of the country’s communist parties despite its strenuous efforts. But politics has once again brought together the two major communist parties of



Nepal to form the government at Kathmandu, with support from other, smaller parties.

The border points reopening ceremony took place in Zhentang (Tibetan: Drenthang, Ting-kye County) Township on the Tibet-Nepal border in the city of Shigatse, the report said.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Narayan Kaji Shrestha of Nepal and Vice-chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Region Silang Nima jointly opened the traditional trading points, reported the kathmandupost.com May 26.

The report said the leaders from the two sides announced the reopening of 14 of the 21 trading points in various districts along Nepal's mountain range after a gap of four years.

The report said Chinese authorities had closed the border passes in Jan 2020 to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, which hugely affected the Nepalis living in the remote mountain villages close to Tibet.

The report cited Shrestha as saying 14 trading points of Taplejung, Sankhuwasabha, Dolakha, Gorkha, Mustang, Dolpa and Darchula districts were reopened on May 25. He has added that the Chinese side would gradually reopen the remaining seven border points as well.

The minister has said talks had been going on at the diplomatic level for long on reopening the border points. "It was agreed during my China visit in March to reopen the 14 traditional border trading points," he has said, adding four such points were reopened in 2023.

The report said the border closure in early 2020 affected a large number of Nepali traders, seasonal workers and residents of several mountain districts. People of the settlements near the Tibet border had difficulties managing essential supplies as they could not travel to the otherwise more accessible markets across the previously open border.

For example, as a result of the border closure "people of several remote settlements in Bhotkhola had to buy food and other supplies from Khandbari, the district headquarters of Sankhuwasabha, paying heavily to transport them." But now "they can buy essential commodities from Dendang and Changa markets in Tibet," Wang Chhedar Bhote, chairman of Bhotkhola Rural Municipality in Sankhuwasabha, has said.

He has said the local unit and the district administration had repeatedly urged the Chinese authorities to reopen the border, but to no avail. But now "the residents of Kimathanka, Chyamtang, Chepuwa, Hatiya and other settlements of Bhotkhola will have a huge relief with the reopening of the border after four years," Bhote has said.

Besides, as a result of the prolonged border closure, hundreds of people on the Nepal side had been unable to meet their relatives in Tibet. People of

border villages of Tibet and Nepal have marital links. They will now be able to visit their relatives across the border, the report added.

Tibet traded with 175 countries and regions last year. Its imports from and exports to Nepal, its largest trading partner, totalled approximately 2.77 billion yuan (about 389.5 million US dollars), up 77.2% year-on-year, the report said, citing the customs bureau in Tibet's capital Lhasa.

## 2 schools rebuilt with China aid handed over to Nepal

16 May 2024, News CN

Two public schools rebuilt with Chinese assistance in Nepal's Dolakha district were handed over to local authorities on Thursday.

The new buildings have well-furnished classrooms, laboratories, computer labs, libraries, dormitories, halls and teacher rooms, noted Shankar Babu Shrestha, chairman of the district's education development and coordination unit.

"These buildings stand as the symbols of friendship between the two friendly nations," Shrestha said at the handover ceremony held in Dolakha. "Now it is our responsibility to manage, protect and use these facilities for the better education of our children."

The schools in Jilu and Singati of the district were damaged in the 2015 massive earthquake, and Sinohydro Bureau 6 Co., Ltd. under the Power Construction Corporation of China undertook their demolition and reconstruction under an assistance agreement signed by the governments of Nepal and China.



This photo taken on May 16, 2024 shows a scene during a handover ceremony for two public schools rebuilt with Chinese assistance held in Dolakha, Nepal. Two public schools rebuilt with Chinese assistance in Nepal's Dolakha district were handed over to local authorities on Thursday.

The schools in Jilu and Singati of the district were damaged in the 2015 massive earthquake, and Sinohydro Bureau 6 Co., Ltd. under the Power Construction Corporation of China undertook their demolition and reconstruction under an assistance



agreement signed by the governments of Nepal and China. (Photo by Nirana Raj Bana/Xinhua)

Two teaching buildings, one dormitory building and a canteen were built on each campus as the main part of the public school recovery project.

"China has been attaching special importance to our bilateral education and human resources cooperation," said Xie Yu, counsellor at the Chinese Embassy in Nepal.

Noting that China has built other schools in Nepal in recent years, Xie added that "Dolakha schools will also be a life changer for local kids, honoring China's enduring commitment to help Nepal to pursue prosperity and sustained development."

On the occasion, Sinohydro Bureau 6 Co., Ltd. donated bookshelves, books and schoolbags to the schools along with China Foundation for Rural Development and Yunnan Energy Investment Co., Ltd. of China.

The schools in Jilu and Singati have 874 and 570 students, respectively.



This photo taken on May 15, 2024 shows the newly-rebuilt Sarba Secondary School in Jilu of Dolakha, Nepal.

Two public schools rebuilt with Chinese assistance in Nepal's Dolakha district were handed over to local authorities on Thursday. The schools in Jilu and Singati of the district were damaged in the 2015 massive earthquake, and Sinohydro Bureau 6 Co., Ltd. under the Power Construction Corporation of China undertook their demolition and reconstruction under an assistance agreement signed by the governments of Nepal and China. (Photo by Nirana Raj Bana/Xinhua)

### China's hand seen in Nepal's new currency-note-map claims on Indian territory

05 May, 2024, Tibetan Review

India-Nepal ties may be headed for turbulence as the latter's new left front coalition government, long lobbied for by China, included as belonging to Nepal a set of three strategic pieces of territories in India bordering Tibet in a new map featured in its new Rs 100 currency notes.

Nepal's Prime Minister Pushpakamal Dahal 'Prachanda' decided to print the new map of Nepal, which includes the territory of Lipulekh, Limpiyadhura, and Kalapani in the Rs 100 denomination bank notes, reported the Indian news agency PTI May 4, citing government spokesperson Rekha Sharma.

"The cabinet approved to re-design the banknote of Rs 100 and replace the old map printed in the background of the bank note during the cabinet meetings held on Apr 25 and May 2," Sharma, who is also the Minister for Information and Communication, has said.

All the three contested, interconnected areas lying across western Tibet's Ngari region, have been fully under India's control over the past 60 years or so, with the people living in them being Indian citizens, paying taxes in India, and voting in the Indian elections, the report noted.

Nepal shares a border of over 1,850 km with five Indian states – Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand.

The three disputed areas cover a total of about 370 sq km (140 square miles), Nepalese officials have said.

Nepal's provocative move came despite the fact that in Jun 2023, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Nepalese counterpart vowed to resolve the boundary dispute under the spirit of friendship during the latter's visit to India.

The Kalapani area is strategically significant in South Asian diplomacy as it is at the tri-junction between India, Chinese occupied Tibet, and Nepal. Given that Nepal is a "buffer state" between China and India—both countries have power aspirations in the region, with ramifications on the relations between the three, noted eurasiantimes.com May 4.

The strategic Lipulekh pass connects Uttarakhand with Chinese occupied territory of Tibet. It is a strip of land on the northwestern edge of Nepal, lodged between Nepal, India, and Tibet. It is a far western point near Kalapani, another disputed border area between Nepal and India.



Nepal decided to print the new map of Nepal, which

includes the territory of Lipulekh, Limpiyadhura, and Kalapani in its new Rs 100 currency notes.

Nepal's claim to the Limpiyadhura Pass area arises from its claim over Kalapani as it lies adjacent to it in India across Tibet's Ngari border.

The entirety of the Limpiyadhura-Kalapani-Lipulekh area is under Indian administration as part of Pithoragarh district in the Kumaon Division of the Uttarakhand state. However, Nepal has been claiming it since 1997, saying it lies within its Darchula district, Sudurpashchim Province.

Nepal's claim is based on the Sugauli Treaty signed with British East India Company in 1815. Under it, the India-western Nepal border is marked by the course of the Kali River, called the Mahakali downstream. But there was no map attached to it. The Mahakali has two tributaries—one starting at Lipulekh and the other at Limpiyadhura further west. The treaty did not specify which of these two tributaries would be considered the Kali for the purpose of delineating the boundary. India says the Kali starts at Lipulekh, while Nepal says Limpiyadhura is the river's source, noted a Kathmandupost.com report Jun 4, 2020.

In 2020, India inaugurated an 80-km road to facilitate pilgrims visiting Kailash-Mansarovar in Tibet, which is around 90km from the Lipulekh pass. This road originates from Ghatiabgarh and terminates at Lipulekh Pass, the gateway to Kailash-Mansarovar. It was approved by the Indian Cabinet Committee on Security in 2005 and was made following recommendations of an inter-ministerial China Study Group.

The road has strategic value for India as it will be the first to provide connectivity to the Indian troops deployed on the Line of Actual Control with China in Uttarakhand.

The Lipulekh issue flared up in May 2015 when India and China agreed to develop the region for trade and transit. Kathmandu sent diplomatic notes to New Delhi and Beijing, alleging violations of Nepal's territorial integrity.

Then in 2019, India released a new political map showing the disputed territories within its international border. The Nepali public erupted in protests, seeking to amend the Nepali Constitution to include these disputed territories.

India-Nepal relations, which had been under strain since 2015 after India imposed an unofficial economic blockade on Nepal, degraded further, noted eurasiantimes.com May 4.

Then in 2020, Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India underscored the fact that his government had built a road via the disputed Lipulekh to Manas Khand, a gateway to the Mansarovar Hindu pilgrimage site in Tibet.

The speech aimed at the Hindu electorates in Uttarakhand state triggered protests in Nepal. It led

the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu to issue a press release on Jan 15, saying New Delhi's position has been "consistent and unambiguous."

This in turn was followed by Nepal's foreign ministry issuing a counter-statement on Jan 17, reaffirming Kathmandu's claim over Limpiyadhura, Lipulekh, and Kalapani, calling on India to cease unilateral construction or development works in those territories.

The then Indian Army Chief General MM Naravane (retired) hinted that the objections by the Nepalese government over the construction of a strategic link road in Uttarakhand on the border with Chinese-occupied Tibet could have been done at the "behest of someone else."

This implied suggestion of Chinese pressure led Nepal to raise the issue with India.

China considers Nepal a key partner in its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and wants to invest in Nepal's infrastructure as part of its grand plans to boost global trade.

In 2022, it offered Nepal a Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network which included blasting tunnels through the mountainous Tibetan plateau to build a railway line under its flagship BRI. But no BRI project has taken off so far, marred by delays over financing and other issues. As regards the railway project, a pre-feasibility study suggested that it would be "an engineering feat" and costly but not an "impossible task". But while Nepal insists on China building it as an aid project for fear of becoming debt-trapped otherwise, the latter insists that Kathmandu take a costly BRI loan from it for its building.

### **China pledges five-year development assistance for Nepal's Tibet-border districts**

May 3, 2024, Tibetan Review

The Chinese government of Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), which constitutes roughly the western half of Tibet proper, is to fund a five-year initiative in Nepal's northern border districts, offering different kinds of logistical and material support, mostly for social and economic development projects. The inhabitants of these districts are ethnically Tibetan or of Tibetan-origin, with most of them practicing Tibetan religion and culture.

The TAR government will provide 20 million yuan or around Nepali Rs 370 million each year under the initiative for the next five years, reported the kathmandupost.com May 3, citing officials familiar with the development.

In order to execute this initiative, the first preparatory meeting was held in Lhasa over Apr 23-24, co-chaired by Kamal Prasad Bhattarai, joint secretary of Nepal's Ministry of Federal Affairs and General

Administration of Nepal, and Baiman Yangzong, director general of the Foreign Affairs Office of the TAR government, the report said, citing a statement from Nepal's Consulate General in Lhasa.

The report noted that during his Nepal visit in Nov 2023, Wang Junzheng, the Party Secretary of TAR, had informed Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Narayan Kaji Shrestha that Lhasa would provide Nepal 20 million yuan for administrative reform and development needs in Nepal.

The assistance will be used to build schools and health posts, install solar electricity, and fund other small projects in the northern 15 districts of Nepal, a Nepali official who attended the meeting in Lhasa last week has said.

The districts have been named as Taplejung, Solukhumbu, Sankhuwasabha, Dolakha, Sindhupalchok, Rasuwa, Dhading, Gorkha, Manang, Mustang, Bajhang, Dolpa, Mugu, Humla and Darchula.

The two sides will meet twice in the first half of the year with focus on the projects' arrangements and twice in the second half of the year for the implementation and review of the implemented projects, the report said.

The statement has further said the two sides discussed enhancing support for improving the livelihood of the people residing in the border districts through various projects.

Nepal's Ministry of Local Development was stated to be currently compiling a list of projects needed in the 15 districts that share a border with Tibet.

The report noted that China has already been implementing small-scale aid projects in the northern border districts of Nepal, providing each district Nepali Rs 3 million for the development of village development committees (VDCs), then local administrative units, in the districts.

The report suggested that the initiative began in 2014 when China agreed to provide 10 million yuan (USD 1.63 million) annually from 2014 to 2018 through the TAR government in areas like health, education and road sectors to improve the livelihood of the residents in those districts.

Later in Apr 2019, during the state visit of the then Nepali president Bidya Devi Bhandari to China, the two countries signed the Northern Area Infrastructure Development and Livelihood Improvement Project (NAIDLIP), under which Beijing pledged to provide funds for implementing various development projects, which was estimated to be 20 million yuan, the report said.

## April

### Nepal Deputy Prime Minister Shrestha visits Tibet; calls for opening 14 traditional border points with China

31 March 2024, PTI

A press release said that Mr. Shrestha, during the meeting, reiterated the need for reopening of traditional border points.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Narayan Kaji Shrestha also underscored the importance of exporting products from Nepal during a meeting with Wang Junzheng, secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Tibet Autonomous Regional Committee of China.

Mr. Shrestha, who is on his first visit to China after taking over office earlier in the month, was in Lhasa on Friday as part of his trip from March 25 to April 1 when he also urged the Chinese side for its cooperation to address issues facing the residents along the Nepal-China borders. A press release from the Consulate General of Nepal in Lhasa said that Mr. Shrestha, during the meeting, reiterated the need for reopening of traditional border points for the promotion of trade and commerce as well as facilitating the movement of people.

He sought cooperation to make arrangements for the use of pastureland along the bordering areas, to provide entry passes for Nepali containers and electrification in Nepal's highlands, according to the MyRepublica news portal. He recalled an agreement to resume 14 Nepal-China traditional transits during his meeting with Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi in Beijing two days ago and expected the facilitating role on behalf of Tibet's administration to implement the understanding.

Mr. Shrestha also called on the Chinese side to make provisions for resuming the Kathmandu-Lhasa bus service, the report said. He also underscored the importance of exporting products, including Haylage, cooked buffalo meat, and medicinal herbs among others to further strengthen economic cooperation. Haylage is a type of nutritious animal feed.

"The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs further expressed the need to cooperate in the areas of infrastructure and connectivity including

the transmission lines to further strengthen the bilateral ties,” The Kathmandu Post newspaper reported, quoting the statement. The two leaders also discussed matters relating to expanding socio-economic cooperation, enhancing understanding and goodwill through high-level exchanges, consolidating the ongoing cooperation and exploring new areas of cooperation.

“Both the leaders discussed matters of mutual interest,” reiterated a post on X along with a photo by Nepal’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs late on Friday night after the meeting.

Earlier on March 26, the strategic partnership between the two countries was discussed during Shrestha’s meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang where China has also urged the new dispensation in Nepal to finalise the implementation plan for its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects that have struggled to make any headway due to continuous political changes in the Himalayan nation. Posting about the meeting on social media platform X, Ambassador Chen Song, the Chinese Ambassador to Nepal, said: “The two sides agreed to reopen 14 traditional border trade points immediately, strengthen practical cooperation between two counties in such fields as trade, investment, tourism, and advance the bilateral relations to a new height.” Shrestha is also expected to visit the holy pilgrimage site of Kailash Mansarovar in Tibet during his visit, it was announced earlier last week.

### **China exempts regular visa fee for Nepali travellers**

28 April 2024, Kathmandu Post

China has announced exempting visa fees for Nepali travellers with effect from May 1.

In order to promote the friendship and further facilitate the personnel exchange between China and Nepal, visa fees will not be charged from May 1, the Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu said in a statement on Sunday.

The exemption will apply to regular visa processing. However, express fees and service fees will be charged, according to the embassy.

Nepal had been requesting the northern neighbour to exempt visa fees for a long time. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Narayan Kaji Shrestha during his visit to China last month had requested the Chinese authorities to exempt visa fees.

Nepal has been waiving visa fees for Chinese nationals since 2016 and has been looking for reciprocal treatment from China.

### **Nepal-China economic relations high as Himalayas: Minister Bhandari**

29 April 2024, KhabarHub

Minister for Industry, Commerce and Supplies, Damodar Bhandari, has said the trade relations between Nepal and Tibet, the autonomous region of China, will find a new height in the days to come.

In his address to an opening of the 17th Nepal China (Tibet) Economic and Trade Fair organized by the Trade and Export Promotion Center at Bhrikutmandap today, the Minister said this.

He acknowledged China as a longstanding trade partner for Nepal. The trade and economic relations and cultural ties between Nepal and China are as towering as the Himalaya.”

The high terrains and challenging topography have never hindered the trade relations between Nepal and China, he said, adding that “ Our ancestors utilized such deemed challenges as opportunities to promote the trans-Himalaya trade relations when the means of modern transports were not available.”

He said Nepal and China always treat and recognize themselves as friends of happiness and sadness, adding that China’s stability, unity, and prosperity are always the wish of Nepal.

“Nepal is always committed to a One-China policy and I utilize this moment to reiterate Nepal’s commitments by heart, words, and actions to its unity and integrity,” the Minister said.

He expressed his hope that an escalating railway connectivity and economic boom in China will cross the Himalayas in the future. He also expected the support of China to reduce the increasing trade deficit of Nepal with the northern neighbour.

Expressing that the Fair will be an important means to promote trade between the two countries, he said, “I hope that this kind of trade fair will also help to increase trade between our two neighboring countries and will be beneficial for the business community to find new buyers, new markets and new business destinations.”

Deputy Head of the People’s Government of the Tibet Autonomous Region, Lan Fuquan, emphasized the trade relations between Nepal and Tibet. He suggested that businessmen of the two countries cooperate in import and export by establishing good business relations.

Secretary at the Ministry of Commerce Dinesh Kumar Ghimire said that trade relations between the two countries will accelerate if exports can be managed. He urged Chinese investors to establish industries here to produce export goods to reduce Nepal’s trade deficit with China.

Executive Director of Trade and Export Promotion Center, Sharad Bikram Rana said earlier that according to the Memorandum of Understanding



between Nepal and China (Tibet) dated 1990, the Fair is being held alternately with the Nepal Tibet Economic and Trade Fair with the aim of further expanding economic and trade relations between Nepal and China (Tibet).

He expressed his belief that Nepali exporters will use this Fair as an important opportunity to export their goods to China through the concessional system of zero customs rate and will have fruitful business with the business community in Tibet to promote their business.

The Fair, which started today, will continue till May 4. There are 50 Chinese and 15 Nepali business stalls in the fair.

About 40 types of exportable goods exported from Nepal to China are kept in the Nepali stalls.

### **Nepal and China sign two agreements in the presence of Finance Minister Pun**

26 April 2024, My Republica



Nepal and China have signed two agreements focused on human resources development and the improved bone marrow transplantation service.

These two important agreements were signed in the presence of Finance Minister Barshaman Pun during a ceremony at the Ministry of Finance.

One agreement related to human resources development cooperation for global development initiatives, was signed by Finance Secretary Madhu Kumar Marasini and Chairman of the China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA) Luo Zhaohui on behalf of their respective governments.

Another agreement focused on bone marrow transplant services was signed by Health Secretary Dr Roshan Pokharel and Luo Zhaohui of the CIDCA.

The CIDCA has been working on the formulation of China's foreign aid strategy standards related policy and planning and foreign aid reform agenda.

China had expressed commitment to provide support to initiate bone marrow transplant service in Nepal during Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal's visit to China in September 2023.

According to the agreement, China will provide financial assistance to BP Koirala Memorial Cancer Hospital in operating bone marrow transplant services.

Speaking on the occasion, Finance Minister Pun expressed gratitude to China for its ongoing support in Nepal's development. He anticipated further cooperation from China in the days ahead.

Minister Pun noted that Nepal and China have a deep, diverse and sustainable relationship as both the countries respect each other's development aspirations and sensitivity.

Finance Minister Pun laid emphasis on the need of implementing the remaining bilateral agreements signed during high-level visits between the two countries. Stating that they are now on the eve of the Third International Investment Summit, he expressed confidence that Nepal will get the commitment of significant Chinese investment during the summit.

Similarly, CIDCA's Luo Zhaohui, who led the Chinese delegation, stated that China values its friendship with Nepal and remains committed to supporting Nepal's development endeavors. He expressed commitment to implement every issue of agreements signed during the Nepal visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping, and Prime Minister Dahal's China visit.

Stating that they are now in Nepal in the context of the Third Nepal Investment Summit, Luo expressed his commitment to increase Chinese investment in Nepal during the summit.

### **Nepal-China Aid Project meeting held in Lhasa**

25 April 2024, KhabarHub

The first meeting of the Nepal-China Aid Project has been held in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet.

The Consulate General of Nepal in Lhasa said that in the meeting held on Wednesday, the focus was on the aid project to be conducted in Nepal.

In the meeting, both sides discussed forming a project coordination mechanism, choosing the format of projects, implementation and monitoring.

Both sides have agreed to hold two meetings in the middle of this year and to review the project implementation at the end.

In the meeting, both sides also agreed to increase cooperation in improving the living standards of the people of Nepal bordering Tibet, said the Consulate General.

In the meeting, the Nepali side was led by Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration, Kamal Prasad Bhattarai, while the Chinese side was led by a senior official of the Foreign Affairs Office of Tibet.

The next meeting will be held next month at a time convenient for both parties.

### **China-Nepal military relations: Risks and opportunities for India**

20 April 2024, ORF Online



On 9 March 2024, a Chinese military delegation headed by Major General Zhang Baoqun visited Nepal. They toured Nepalese military institutions and held discussions with Nepalese Army Chief Prabhuram Sharma on various proposals. The military delegation's arrival closely trailed a political delegation led by Sun Haiyan, Deputy Head of the Chinese Communist Party's International Liaison Department, which made its way to Kathmandu in January 2024. The consecutive visits, coupled with the existing political and military relations between China and Nepal, present a complex scenario.

The military delegation's arrival closely trailed a political delegation led by Sun Haiyan, Deputy Head of the Chinese Communist Party's International Liaison Department, which made its way to Kathmandu in January 2024.

These visits and the public statements of Chinese leaders in Kathmandu seem to project a durable China-Nepal relationship. However, beneath the surface, India's improving relations with Nepal have increased China's unease. It has spurred Chinese leaders to intensify their efforts to woo Nepal's political and military elite. This paper focuses on the military dimension and explores this delegation's proposals while evaluating China's predicament and India's prospects in Nepal.

#### Nepal-China military ties

China's military relations with Nepal have historically been among the weakest compared to its other South Asian neighbours, despite significant political, economic, and social engagements over recent decades. This underdevelopment persists due to structural factors, with the military aspect playing a pivotal role.

During the initial decades, military connections between China and Nepal were minimal. As the Commander-in-Chief of Nepal's Armed Forces, the Nepalese Monarch addressed most military issues raised by the Chinese. However, Nepal's transition to a republic in 2008 and anti-China protests preceding the Beijing Olympics, prompted China to diversify and strengthen its political and military engagements with Nepal. Nonetheless, this collaboration primarily focused on enhancing Nepal's military capabilities for UN peacekeeping, disaster management, and internal security, facilitated through grants, training, infrastructure development, and joint exercises.

China closed borders during 2020-23 and suspended all military engagements impeding material and personnel exchanges until mid-2023.

Despite these efforts, a lingering hesitation persists in their bilateral military interactions due to Nepal's enduring special military ties with India. These ties, characterised by frequent joint military exercises, material support, and the significant presence of

Gurkha soldiers and veterans, are substantial. They have posed challenges for China in establishing an equally influential military partnership with Nepal.

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic further strained China-Nepal military relations. China closed borders during 2020-23 and suspended all military engagements impeding material and personnel exchanges until mid-2023. Consequently, this unofficial blockade significantly impacted mutual trust, underscoring the fragility of military ties amidst broader geopolitical dynamics.

#### Post-COVID military cooperation

Following the relaxation of the COVID-19 restrictions in 2023, a Chinese military delegation led by Major General Yue Ande from the PLA's Tibet Military Command visited Nepal on 16 August 2023. During this visit, agreements were reached to revive the Sagarmatha joint military exercise series, and multiple seats were offered for Nepal Army (NA) officers in Chinese military training academies. China also offered four seats in the annual Defense and Strategic Studies Course at China's College of Defense Studies (CDS). This visit signalled a potential resurgence in bilateral military-to-military interactions.

The Zhang Baoqun delegation is the second one to visit Nepal within seven months. It aimed to bolster military cooperation by advancing an armoured personnel carrier (APC) procurement contract, proposing the installation of an ammunition plant, resuming Sagarmatha joint military exercises, inviting more NA officers for training in Chinese military institutions, and increasing overall military cooperation.

**Structural factors:** The camouflage At first glance Zhang's proposals appear harmless, seemingly designed to rejuvenate the military camaraderie between China and Nepal. However, it involves enhancing Chinese military influence in Nepal, potentially at India's expense.

For instance, the process to purchase the 26 APCs has been ongoing since the last few Nepalese administrations. The NA finally decided to purchase them from a US-blacklisted Chinese manufacturer, NORINCO, rejecting cheaper Indian bids. In 2023, accusations of corruption and price inflation emerged, leading to the current Nepal PM freezing the contract. Nonetheless, the NA has remained adamant about the decision based on its historical ties with the manufacturer. The Chinese delegations are therefore lobbying hard to convince the Nepalese Administration to conclude it early and ward off any other competitor.

Accusations of corruption and price inflation emerged, leading to the current Nepal PM freezing the contract. Nonetheless, the NA has remained

adamant about the decision based on its historical ties with the manufacturer.

Likewise, up to 2022, Chinese manufacturers were preferred ammunition suppliers to Nepal after it switched from its southern neighbour. However, the quality of Chinese ammunition remains subpar. Consequently, in 2022, Nepal decided to procure ammunition from an Indian company, SSS Defence. This Indian company outcompeted Chinese manufacturers in an open bidding contract. As anticipated, Zhang's delegation has proposed installing an ammunition plant for the NA, aimed at undermining the Indian re-entry into the NA's ammunition inventory.

Similarly, the Sagarmatha joint military exercise has been on hiatus since 2019, after being held twice in 2017 and 2018 with enthusiastic support from the KP Sharma Oli government. Oli's administration aimed to bolster its communist credentials with China and diminish India's influence within the NA. However, despite Oli's efforts, changing regional politics and military dynamics thwarted his objectives, leading to the suspension of the joint military exercise with China. Since August 2023, China has endeavoured to revive the joint exercise, without any success.

**Military training at the College of Defense Studies**  
China's PLA operates around 67 military academies, with nearly half providing training to foreign military personnel.[1] The College of Defense Studies (CDS), part of the PLA's National Defense University (NDU), is the primary institution for graduate-level international military education. Offering short and extended courses, the CDS aims to train officers and foster relationships with trainees from the global south. Its year-long Defense and Strategic Studies Course for Colonels and Brigadiers awards a master's degree to foreign officers, shaping the military elites of participating nations.

However, foreign military graduates are instructed at a satellite campus in northern Beijing, separate from their counterparts in the PLA NDU. This arrangement restricts their opportunities for interaction and relationship-building with PLA officers. Instructors at the CDS curtail discussion opportunities and adhere strictly to the official party line. This segregation between Chinese and foreign officer trainees, including officers from Nepal, combined with the lingering language barrier, constitutes a significant weakness of this training program.

India holds a longstanding advantage over China in the military sphere, which China struggles to diminish.

In contrast, Nepalese officers receive training in Indian academies alongside Indian officer trainees. This shared experience encompasses military language, culture, medium of instruction, and various other aspects, enriching their training and fostering

deep connections within the Indian system. Consequently, India holds a longstanding advantage over China in the military sphere, which China struggles to diminish.

#### Conclusion

The successive Chinese military delegations and their proposals signify a sustained effort to achieve three objectives. China aims to establish a connection between its military-industrial complex and the Nepalese Armed Forces. This entails fostering an extensive military material supply relationship, which would bind Nepal to China for an extended period, particularly for spare parts and service support functions.

Furthermore, China perceives that its focused efforts to strengthen the military capabilities of India's neighbouring countries will facilitate closer ties with them. The improved capabilities, combined with a military elite trained by China, are expected to boost these states' confidence in engaging in dialogue with India. Additionally, there is a possibility that they may be malleable to provoke disputes to divert Indian attention and undermine its capabilities.

The improved capabilities, combined with a military elite trained by China, are expected to boost these states' confidence in engaging in dialogue with India. Finally, the PLA is also delving into safeguarding China's economic interests and expanding its diplomatic relations. Thus, an improved military relationship will also facilitate China's other economic and political initiatives in Nepal. This includes addressing the sluggish progress in the Belt and Road Initiative.

India must elevate its efforts in Nepal, particularly concerning the Nepalese Armed Forces, to counteract these Chinese objectives. Leveraging its traditional strengths and resolving lingering issues can help India mitigate Chinese interference effectively.

#### Chinese Language Day observed in Nepal

19 April 2024, English News



*This photo shows learners performing a dance at an*

*event held to mark the 15th United Nations Chinese Language*

"Learning the Chinese language isn't just learning the language," said 15-year-old Shreyna Shrestha. "It's learning a lot of other skills as well, such as communication skills, and social skills."

KATHMANDU, April 20 (Xinhua) – Learners and teachers of the Chinese language gathered in the Nepali capital on Friday to sing songs and perform dances to mark the 15th United Nations Chinese Language Day.

Animation dubbing and poetry recitation were also performed by learners and teachers from the Confucius Institutes at Tribhuvan University and Kathmandu University and the Confucius Classroom at Learning Realm International School, co-organizers of the event.

Asha Ram Maharjan and his son Alok Maharjan sang a song in Chinese together.

The UN Chinese Language Day, which falls on April 20, is being observed around the world under the theme of "Chinese Language: Connecting Cultures Through the Bridge of Mutual Learning."

Saying all the learners "performed well," Chairman of Nepal Language Commission Gopal Thakur noted that the UN celebrates the Chinese Language Day as a means to promote multilingualism and cultural diversity in the organization and that the Chinese language is now one of the languages of employment among the Nepalese.

Thakur described the Confucius Institute as a "trustworthy institution" to promote mutual cooperation in the field of language and culture, adding "I expect such institutes will help reduce poverty to some extent in Nepal and wish them to flourish."

On the occasion, representatives from Qinghai Nationalities University, East China University of Technology, Hebei University of Economics and Business and Beijing International Chinese College, which are co-building the Confucius Institutes and the Confucius Classroom, voiced readiness to deepen cooperation in Chinese education.

The Chinese learning in Nepal has received strong support from the Nepalese government and people from all walks of life, Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Chen Song said, noting that more than 40 primary and secondary schools in the country have offered Chinese language courses as well.

"By learning Chinese, Nepali students and people from all walks of life have not only enhanced mutual understanding and friendship between the two peoples, but also injected new vitality into Nepal's cultural diversity and social development," Chen told the audience.

Asha Ram Maharjan learned Chinese six years ago, while his son Alok did it about one year ago, because it is good for their family business of statues. The Maharjans have been importing and exporting statues to Lhasa, the capital of China's Xizang Autonomous Region.

"I'm very happy to have a chance to sing a Chinese song," said the father.

Krishav Pant, 14, has studied Chinese for more than seven years and did well in past Chinese proficiency competitions.

"I believe that learning Chinese will help me get a scholarship in a college in China, which will help me go towards a brighter future and also help me learn about Chinese culture and learn about how China has become such a powerful nation and bring the technologies and ideologies to my country and help Nepal also develop just like China," he said.

For 15-year-old Shreyna Shrestha, she is getting more from learning Chinese.

"Learning the Chinese language isn't just learning the language," she said. "It's learning a lot of other skills as well, such as communication skills, and social skills."

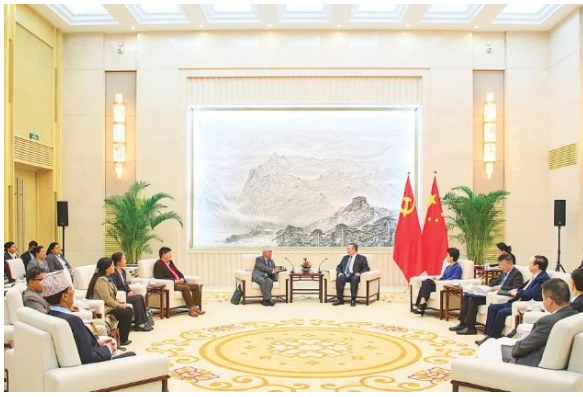
"So I think by learning Chinese, those skills of mine have definitely been furnished and even going to China in the future will be quite convenient for me due to my familiarity with the language and the culture. So I think learning Chinese has been really effective to me," she added.

### **Beijing's message: Won't tolerate anti-China activities in Nepal**

20 April 2024, Kathmandu Post

A senior leader of the Communist Party of China warned that Beijing will not tolerate any third-country activities in Nepal targeting China.

During a meeting on Thursday with the general secretary of the ruling CPN (Maoist Centre), Dev Gurung, who is currently in Beijing on a 10-day visit, Liu Jianchao, minister of the International Department of the CPC Central Committee (IDCPC), told Gurung and the Maoist delegation that Beijing will not tolerate any actions in Nepal by third countries targeted against China.



Maoist Centre politicians meet Chinese leaders in Beijing. Photo: Courtesy of IDCPC

The IDCPC is in charge of maintaining relations with political parties of other countries, especially fellow communist parties.

A jumbo delegation from the Maoist Centre is currently in China at the invitation of the IDCPC and it held talks with Liu and other leaders in Beijing on Thursday and Friday.

"We are in favour of world peace," Liu told Gurung and the visiting Maoist delegation. "If any country tries to act against China in Nepal, we will not tolerate it."

But Liu, who is being spoken of as the next foreign minister of China, did not name the country, Gurung told the Post over the phone from Beijing.

Earlier in January-end, Sun Haiyan, vice-minister of the IDCPC, made similar remarks in Kathmandu during a roundtable with major party leaders. Sun had alleged that some countries were trying to disrupt development cooperation between Nepal and China and defame bilateral relations.

"...Some criticise our relations. Some are trying to sabotage our bilateral relations and some have increased activity against China," Sun had said during a consultative conference in Kathmandu between Nepali political leaders and the Communist Party of China. Her statement had sparked a controversy in Nepal.

During their Thursday meeting, Gurung told Liu that Nepal is quite aware about the elements trying to destabilise Nepal-China relations and creating misunderstanding and conflict between the two countries.

"Their [Liu's] focus was mostly Western countries but he did not name any particular country," said Gurung, adding that Nepal's priority is stability and it will continue to focus on the principles of Panchasheel.

Besides discussing what China wants to see in Nepal, other issues included Nepal's failure to present a list of projects to be executed under the Belt and Road Initiative, according to Gurung.

Liu also proposed involving political parties and other channels including stakeholders to facilitate the

execution of various Chinese initiatives in Nepal, Gurung said.

This is the first-of-its-kind proposal from Beijing whose blueprint remains unknown.

Beijing is also displeased with the progress on the BRI, delays in implementing Chinese-funded projects in Nepal, and the slow progress of projects undertaken by the Chinese contractors and firms.

"We and our party thwarted attempts to destabilise our relations with China in the past, and the current government led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal will check such attempts in the future too," Gurung conveyed to the IDCPC team.

Besides Liu, other senior IDCPC leaders including Sun were present at the meeting.

"Liu said that any military or security activities in Nepal targeting China will not be tolerated. Any move by a third country inside Nepal targeting China is not acceptable to China," Gurung quoted Liu as saying.

Gurung said he assured the Chinese leaders that Nepal is committed to one-China policy and will not allow any activities detrimental to China's security interests.

In his remarks, Liu told the visiting Maoist delegation that Beijing is pleased with the new political equation in Nepal and stressed the need for unity among Nepal's leftists parties, said Gurung.

This is not the first time that China has encouraged unity among leftist parties in Nepal in general and pushed for unity between the CPN-UML and the CPN (Maoist Centre) in particular. In 2018, too, Beijing pushed for the unity between the UML and Maoist Centre.

The two parties merged to be the Nepal Communist Party, but that unity did not last beyond three years. Once again, Beijing is encouraging similar unity after the UML and the Maoist Centre partnered to form a new government in March first week after Prime Minister Dahal ended his alliance with the Nepali Congress.

But UML leaders have been dismissing the chances of a new leftist unity. Recently, UML Chairman KP Oli outright rejected the idea of unity between communist parties of Nepal.

"At present, unity among leftist parties is not a necessity," Oli said while addressing the UML's parliamentary party on Monday.

He, however, said that "there is a need for cooperation among the forces that are in favour of good governance and national unity." There is also an opposition voice in the Maoist Centre on the potential unity between the UML and Maoist Centre.

"We are pleased with the formation of government through partnership between UML, Maoist Centre and other communist parties," Gurung quoted Liu as saying.



"The unity between the two communist parties is good for the Nepali people. We want a stable communist government in Nepal," Gurung said, again quoting Liu.

"We want to see the leftist parties of Nepal united for the greater stability and prosperity of the country. We also believe that Nepal's prosperity lies in the hands of communist forces. We are always in favor of stability and development and stand ready to provide all possible support to Nepal," Gurung quoted Liu as saying at the meeting.

It is natural for any communist party in the world to favour unity among the communist parties in other parts of the world, Gurung said.

"Liu said, in recent years, under the joint leadership of President Xi Jinping and Nepali leaders, relations between the two countries have continued to develop," the IDCPC said in its statement released on Friday.

"The Chinese side supports the Nepali side in exploring a development path that suits its national conditions, and is willing to help Nepal prosper and develop."

"The CPC attaches great importance to its friendly relations with the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Center). Under the new situation, it is willing to expand exchanges between the two parties, deepen exchanges and mutual learning of experience in state governance and administration, and promote practical cooperation between the two sides in agriculture, investment, infrastructure, border trade and tourism through 'political party + [plus]' and other channels, so as to push China-Nepal relations to a new level," said the statement.

Liu in the meeting had expressed his displeasure at Nepal's failure to present a list of projects to be developed under the BRI and as per the agreements signed between two sides after 2016 including during the state visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Nepal in 2019 October.

Gurung thanked the Chinese side for its long-term support in safeguarding Nepal's sovereignty and independence and achieving economic and social development, according to the Chinese statement.

"The Nepali side firmly adheres to the one-China principle and does not allow any force to use Nepal's territory for anti-China activities. The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Center) highly admires the CPC's governance achievements and governance concepts, and is willing to further strengthen exchanges between the two parties, deepen theoretical exchanges, promote Nepal-China relations for healthy development, and promote regional peace, and development and stability," the IDCPC statement read.

## Nyingchi apples' first export to Nepal

13 April 2024, China Daily



Customs officers inspect apples loaded for export to Nepal at the Nyingchi Customs, Xizang autonomous region, on Wednesday. CHINA DAILY

More than 23 metric tons of fresh apples produced in Nyingchi of the Xizang autonomous region were exported to Nepal through Gyirong Port on Wednesday.

Xizang Shangcheng Health Industry Co, based in Nyingchi, dispatched its first shipment of apples to Nepal, which were valued at more than 194,100 yuan (\$26,800).

The company has signed an agreement to export 99 tons of apples from Nyingchi to Nepal. A second batch of 26 tons has been prepared and will be exported in the next few days, it said.

Renowned for their lustrous red appearance, high sugar content, excellent taste and pristine quality, Nyingchi apples have garnered favor among consumers.

A planting area reaching 2,520 hectares in 2023, an annual yield of approximately 15,000 tons and a production value of around 170 million yuan underscore their substantial export potential.

Lhasa Customs has been emphasizing the transformation of Nyingchi into a pioneering hub for reform and opening-up, and has explored international markets for superior products from Xizang.

By leveraging Nyingchi's geographical advantages, abundant resources and ecological strengths, customs has played a pivotal role in facilitating the successful export of apples, actively engaging in research and guiding companies to venture into international trade.

"We have tailored our support to meet the specific needs of companies, offering personalized business consulting and policy guidance," said Wang Cunrui, deputy director of the Nyingchi Customs under Lhasa Customs

"This has included assisting companies in orchard registrations for export, enhancing their quality



management systems for orchard management and production processes, and implementing streamlined customs clearance procedures, effectively reducing associated costs," said Wang.

Trucks laden with apples have set out from Nyingchi and are anticipated to grace the tables of Nepalese households in the coming days.

Li Longjing, head of Xizang Shangcheng Health Industry, expressed optimism about the future and said that customs provided them with extensive professional guidance across various aspects, instilling confidence in their efforts to explore the South Asian market.

"We anticipate exporting 1,000 tons of apples this year and have plans to expand our exports to include apple seedlings, edible fungi and other products," said Li.

This venture holds the promise of transforming small-scale fruit production into a significant industry, driving prosperity and increasing incomes for local communities in Xizang.

Looking ahead, Lhasa Customs is committed to focusing on establishing Nyingchi as a pioneering area for reform and opening-up in the region, thereby contributing to the region's sustainable economic development.

### **Nepal Sounds Alarm Over Chinese Encroachment, Calls for International Intervention**

April 12 2024, Yuvraj Tyagi, Republic World

China's construction of an embankment along the Nepal-Tibet border, diverting the Arun River and encroaching on Nepalese territory, has raised alarm in Nepal.

Kathmandu: China's recent encroachment into Nepalese territory along the Nepal-Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) border has sparked widespread concern and condemnation. The construction of a one-kilometer-long embankment along the Arun River in Kimathanka, a remote hamlet in the North-East of Sankhuwasabha district, has not only diverted the river's natural course but also resulted in the loss of approximately nine hectares of Nepali land. Furthermore, localities in the region now face the imminent threat of submersion during the rainy season due to this construction.

This latest incursion is part of a series of Chinese violations of Nepalese sovereignty that have escalated in recent years. Despite multiple reports and field reconnaissance by Nepalese survey teams confirming these encroachments, the Government of Nepal has yet to formally acknowledge them, possibly out of fear of antagonizing its northern neighbour. However, the lack of acknowledgement has only emboldened China to continue its aggressive expansionist agenda unchecked.

Nepal's struggle against Chinese aggression

China's encroachments extend beyond territorial violations and include a range of nefarious activities by Chinese nationals within Nepal. These include abuse of fair trade practices, wildlife smuggling, human trafficking, gold smuggling, ATM hacking, online fraud, and espionage. Recent data from Nepalese authorities reveal a significant increase in arrests of Chinese nationals for various crimes, highlighting the extent of China's illicit activities within Nepal.



One Chinese media publication had renamed Mount Everest (known in Nepal as Sagarmatha) as Mount Gomolangma, claiming it as part of the Chinese territory. This sparked outrage among Nepalese citizens. In another instance, China unilaterally laid a 150m-long wired fence in the Rui village of Gorkha District in 2020 and restricted the movement of Nepalese nationals in the area. The latest incidents came to light in 2022-23, when the construction of a Chinese road in Surkhang VDC in Mustang District of Gandaki Province was reported.

Diplomatically, Nepal has historically maintained a policy of non-alignment and neutrality, seeking to safeguard its sovereignty while engaging in constructive dialogue with its neighbours. However, China's aggressive behaviour poses a significant challenge to Nepal's diplomatic autonomy and regional stability. Beijing has primarily focused on infrastructural projects since the launch of the Border Roads Initiative. However, China's aggressive economic monopolistic ambitions created more trouble for its Himalayan neighbour. Nepal shares two border points with China and has seen an increasing presence of Chinese nationals in Nepal, a rapid increase since 2014-15 as Chinese-funded projects seemingly grew. By encroaching on Nepalese territory and engaging in illicit activities, China undermines Nepal's sovereignty and territorial integrity, threatening the delicate balance of power in the region.

A strategic buffer zone between India and China  
The strategic implications of China's actions in Nepal cannot be overstated. Nepal, nestled amidst the towering peaks of the Himalayas, serves as a vital buffer zone between India and China. Its rugged

terrain and geographical features act as a natural barrier, making direct territorial expansion challenging for both countries. Furthermore, Nepal's strategic location and diplomatic relations make it a crucial bridge between South Asia and East Asia, facilitating regional connectivity and economic cooperation.



Indian and Nepalese troops in joint Exercise Surya Kiran XV.

| Credit- ADGPI

Ultimately, the preservation of Nepal's sovereignty and territorial integrity is paramount. As a sovereign nation, Nepal has the right to defend its borders and protect its citizens from external threats. By standing firm against Chinese aggression and asserting its rights on the international stage, Nepal can safeguard its sovereignty and uphold the principles of peace, security, and stability in the region.

### Increased traffic at Tibet-Nepal border crossing

April 2024, International Campaign for Tibet

Chinese state media reported increased traffic at the Dram border, which connects Tibet and Nepal via the Nyalam Entry-Exit Border Inspection Station. According to reports, a total of 100,716 individuals and 4,450 vehicles have crossed the border since the beginning of the year, up to April 1, 2024.

This surge in traffic comes in the wake of the border's reopening on September 1 last year, following pandemic-related lockdown measures. Since then, a total of 234,634 people and 12,699 vehicles have crossed the border, as reported by Chinese state media.

Authorities have attributed the increase in traffic to heightened police deployment and expedited customs clearance processes for inbound and outbound passengers. While the traffic is largely associated with trade activities, the Dram border has undergone substantial regulation and fortification in recent years to prevent any attempts by Tibetans to seek asylum abroad. As a result, the number of Tibetan refugees has drastically decreased by 99% since 2008.

### Deputy PM Shrestha says he proposed new corridors to China

01 April 2024, Kathmandu Post

Are the stalled Nepal-China ties finally getting some momentum? Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Narayan Kaji Shrestha has some ideas on that score.

Shrestha says he has proposed building Nepal-China economic and development corridors with Chinese officials. The objective, he said, is to boost economic growth, trade, tourism, and connectivity between Nepal and three Chinese provinces that oversee and engage in various bilateral activities.

Shrestha, who returned home from China on Monday after a nine-day official visit at the invitation of his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi, said he had positive discussions with Chinese leaders and officials on the development of the corridors with three Chinese provinces—Tibet, Sichuan and Chongqing. These three provinces have made significant contributions to nurturing relations with Nepal, according to several Nepali politicians who have recently visited China.

Beijing has entrusted these provinces with engaging, promoting and expanding relations with Nepal under China's "peripheral diplomacy." Of late Nepal has seen a series of back-to-back high-level visits from these provinces, and when Nepali leaders visit China, their first destinations are Tibet, Sichuan and Chongqing.

"We had very positive discussions on developing economic and development corridors between Nepal and China," Shrestha said. "The focus of my visit was economic diplomacy. Nepal has been thinking about this new concept [the idea of corridors] after China introduced the Trans Himalayan Multi Dimensional Connectivity Network (THMDCN), which comprises economic and connectivity corridors to be developed under the Belt and Road Initiative."

The corridor starting from the Nepal-Tibet border will reach Chongqing through Sichuan province, Bishnu Pukar Shrestha, Nepali ambassador to China, told the Post over the phone from Beijing.

"If we can develop such a corridor, that would serve as an economic, trade and developmental vehicle between the two countries and open more vistas of cooperation. The concept is in a nascent phase, and it will take some time to develop its blueprint," said ambassador Shrestha.

Deputy Prime Minister Shrestha said a major achievement of his visit is the reciprocal visa waiver for Nepali citizens travelling to China.

"The Chinese are positive about it."

Nepal has been waiving visa fees for Chinese nationals since 2016 and has been looking for similar reciprocal treatment from China.

Although Deputy Prime Minister Shrestha said that China is ready to reopen the 14 traditional border points closed during the Covid pandemic, an official at the foreign ministry, requesting anonymity, said that is unlikely anytime soon.

While four traditional border points have already reopened since 2023, some are encountering difficulties, said officials.

"Reopening the remaining border points will involve technical challenges. But if they are reopened, it will be easier for our citizens living along the Nepal-China border to do business and sustain their livelihoods," said a member of Shrestha's delegation. During the visit, besides holding delegation-level talks with his Chinese counterpart, Deputy Prime Minister Shrestha also called on the chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), Wang Huning; vice minister of the International Department of the CPC Central Committee, Sun Haiyan; secretary of the Chongqing Municipal Party Committee of CPC, Yuan Jiajun; party secretary of CPC Tibet, Wang Junzheng; and Sichuan province governor Huang Qiang, among others.

DPM Shrestha, who is also the vice-chairman of the CPN (Maoist Centre), had an hour-long one-on-one with Wang and other CPC leaders. They discussed Nepal's political situation, among other things, according to a Nepali official who was part of the visit.

The Chinese leaders wanted to know if the government in Kathmandu would be stable after the entry of the CPN-UML in the ruling coalition, according to the official.

During his meeting with Shrestha, Chinese foreign minister Wang repeatedly emphasised the need for political stability, but Deputy Prime Minister Shrestha explained how Nepali political system is different from the Chinese one, the official said.

"In the Chinese system, one party rules from top to bottom and the decisions made by the leadership are implemented uniformly. But Nepali political system is different, and due to the composition of [hung] Parliament, governments change frequently," Shrestha told the Chinese leaders, according to the official.

"We have to face opposition parties too. But we are moving ahead with good planning."

During the visit, the Nepali side proposed elevating the existing foreign secretary-led bilateral mechanism

to the foreign minister level in order to discuss various aspects of Nepal-China relations on a regular basis.

Both sides are said to be positive on setting up the joint commission at the foreign minister level, similar to one Nepal has had with India for decades.

"But, while the Nepali side proposed the mechanism, the Chinese side has yet to officially respond," the official said.

The two sides also discussed finalising the long-due implementation plan for the Belt and Road Initiative. The draft of the plan was first proposed by the Chinese side in late 2019 and both sides have exchanged several comments and amendments.

"One of the main objectives of the visit was to finalise the BRI implementation plan, but that could not happen. We had already agreed on signing the BRI implementation plan during the prime minister's China visit last September," said Shrestha. "We revisited the issue."

"There is also a discussion about whether to take loans or grants under the BRI. Naturally our priority is grants, not loans. Building projects whether with loan or grant comes only in the third stage [following Nepal's selection of projects and then sharing of their details with China]. So we have to select projects carefully," Deputy Prime Minister Shrestha told reporters upon landing at the Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu.

Ambassador Shrestha said Nepal will discuss the project financing modality only after signing the BRI implementation plan.

"Once we give final touches to the BRI implementation plan, we will proceed to the signing stage. It will take some time, probably another two-three months," ambassador Shrestha said

"We have proposed different modalities for the implementation plan including grant and concessional loans. But we are not in a position to accept commercial and costly loans," added the ambassador.

According to a commentary published on China.com, a Chinese news portal, and widely shared in WeChat, a popular Chinese app, the goal of Shrestha's trip was to persuade China to convert the loan given to Nepal to build the Pokhara International Airport into a grant.

During his meeting with the Chinese leader, Shrestha said that if China does not transform the Pokhara airport loan into a grant, then Nepal will not be able to entertain high-interest loans from China in the future, according to the commentary.

The commentary also mentions the ongoing investigation by the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority into the Pokhara International Airport construction.

The Chinese commentary has termed Shrestha's request to convert the loan into grant as 'unreasonable'.

"Now some people in Nepal are claiming that if China does not agree, they will not consider subsequent high-interest loans. In fact, they are threatening us. If the loans are not converted into grants, Nepal may not continue to cooperate with China on the basis of the Belt and Road Initiative. And why is Nepal so bent on challenging China? Then we have to mention India. You know, when it learned that Nepal decided to strengthen cooperation with China, India put pressure on Nepal many times," stated the commentary in Mandarin.

The commentary further went to say that with the outbreak of the "India Quit" movement in Bangladesh and the Maldives' demand for India to withdraw its troops, and the fact that Nepal's pro-Indian Nepali Congress Party was kicked out of the Cabinet not long ago, the People's Liberation Army military delegation also visited the Maldives and Nepal from the beginning to the middle of this month.

"This series of events has intensified the uneasiness of the Modi government, fearing that another South Asian country will seek to escape India's control. Therefore, it cannot be ruled out that India once again coerced and induced Nepal to achieve the purpose of getting them to withdraw from the Belt and Road Initiative and stay away from China," stated the commentary. "Nepal used the BRI as a bargaining chip to blackmail us into waiving loans." "Perhaps it was because it could not withstand the Modi government's intrusion and finally chose to compromise," it added.

"At the same time, there is another possibility, that is Nepal feels that China and India are trying hard to compete for influence in South Asia... But once we agree on Nepal's request, other countries will inevitably follow suit, and won't we be roasted on the fire? Therefore, no matter what motivations Nepal has for wanting to default on China, we refuse to be taken advantage of," writes the Chinese news site in its commentary on Shrestha's visit.

During the visit, China committed to an enhanced level of cooperation in different sectors, said a press note issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after the visit. It said the two sides also agreed to expedite the implementation of the past accords and will resume regular meetings of the bilateral mechanisms. "China is also ready to provide its pasture areas to the Nepali farmers as per the agreement on trans-frontier pasturing by border inhabitants signed in 2012 and agreed for electrification in some rural areas of Nepal-China border. Both sides are also positive to conduct direct bus service between Kathmandu and Lhasa. We have also requested to

facilitate the export of cooked buffalo meat, haylage grass, plant-based medicinal products, vegetable fruits and other Nepali products," reads the press note.

Deputy Prime Minister Shrestha, during his meeting with Chinese leaders and officials, also requested China to set up a multi-functional lab on the Nepal-China border; sought the use of more Chinese capital and technology in Nepal's agriculture sector; proposed more flights to Kathmandu and Pokhara from different Chinese cities; and asked for greater participation of Chinese investors including high-level Chinese leadership at Nepal's third investment summit to be held on April 28 and 29 in Kathmandu, according to the press note.

The two sides are ready to work to expand cross-border railway as well as road and air connectivity, and expand the electricity grid so that connectivity between Nepal and China will increase, the note further said. The two countries have also agreed to come up with specific projects in areas like agriculture, tourism, hydropower and infrastructure.

### **'China positive to Nepal's request for free visa privilege to Nepali nationals'**

01 April 2024, My Republica

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Narayan Kaji Shrestha has made a request to China for granting free visas to Nepali nationals wishing to visit China. Minister Shrestha reported a favorable reaction from the Chinese authorities to this proposal. Upon his return to Kathmandu on Monday morning after a seven-day official visit to China, Minister Shrestha shared this information at a press conference held at Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA). He stated, "Since 2016, Nepal has been offering free visas to Chinese tourists. In the spirit of reciprocity, I have requested free visa provisions for Nepalis visiting China. The Chinese side has responded positively to our request."

Minister Shrestha's visit to China began on March 24, following an invitation from the Chinese Foreign Minister. The visit included several high-level meetings aimed at bolstering economic diplomacy between the two nations. "My primary focus was on enhancing our economic ties and interdependence with China for Nepal's development and prosperity. I proposed the idea of developing a development corridor linking Nepal with Tibet, Sichuan, and Chongqing in China as a pivotal initiative for our achievements. These discussions were centered around our current economic diplomacy priorities," he elaborated.

The talks also covered finalizing and implementing the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects. Minister Shrestha mentioned discussions on various

cooperative ventures, including allowing Nepalis in the border areas access to grazing lands in China's Tibet Autonomous Region, electrification of Nepali border villages, resumption of direct bus services between Kathmandu and Lhasa, and establishing multifunctional labs along the Nepal-China border. The Chinese side showed a positive stance on providing support for the export of Nepali agricultural products and improving the sector's productivity.

An agreement to increase flights between Kathmandu, Pokhara, and various Chinese cities was reached, aiming to boost trade, people-to-people relations, and tourism. Minister Shrestha highlighted the reopening of the Rasuwagadhi-Kerung, Tatopani-Zhangmu, Yari-Purang, and Nechung-Lizi (Korala) trade routes, with China agreeing to reopen 14 traditional trade points closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic as soon as possible.

Furthermore, both nations agreed to establish a joint commission at the foreign minister level to discuss and enhance the friendly relations between Nepal and China regularly.

### **New township reported coming up in Lhokha in China's Tibet-border build-up**

29 April 2024, Tibetan Review

China is strengthening infrastructure close to the line of actual control (LAC) in occupied Tibet, with a major construction project taking place for a new township in Shannan (Tibetan: Lhokha), in south-eastern Tibet, reported the timesnownews.com Apr 28.

A new project is coming up in Luobusha (Tibetan: Lhunpo Zhol Township in Nagartse County) in Shannan Prefecture, a sparsely-populated part of Tibet, with less than four lakh people living in an area of about 80,000 sq km. Importantly, it is about 125 km from the LAC, roughly north of Arunachal Pradesh, the report said.

The housing project is reported to involve the construction of 164 houses to be begun next month to be ready by the end of next year. The report saw this as more evidence of China's increased emphasis on infrastructure build-up close to the LAC. A housing project could of course be for civilians and if necessary, for soldiers, it said.

The report also said that with the onset of spring, work on military infrastructure and training had begun in earnest. These were stated to include:

- The 84th aviation brigade was involved in an exercise involving the Z-19 and Z-18 helicopters.
- The 84th air defence regiment was involved in missile firing in the Aksai Chin area

- The 99th Air Brigade participated in flight training of the J-16 aircraft, a fighter similar to the Indian Air Force's Sukhoi-30. The Chinese air force began using it about ten years ago and is one of its frontline fighters.

Besides, a new 4-km road track was reported to be under construction in the Shaksgam area, which could become "pucca" in the future and may be used to link up with a labour camp in the area.

Reports have also been cited as saying infrastructure in Tashigang (Zhaaxigang), east of Ladakh, in western Tibet, was being upgraded. Located close to Tashigang is Shiquanhe (Tibetan: Sengge Khabab, the main town and administrative seat of Ngari Prefecture); here too, the upgradation of military infrastructure was reported to be evident.

Meanwhile, new Chinese dual-use 'Xiaokang' border villages are also regularly being built and older ones being "populated" along the disputed stretches of the LAC, especially in the eastern sector, to reinforce PLA positions as well as lay claim to territory, reported the timesofindia.com Apr 29.

Previous reports have noted that China has been building as many as 628 such border defence villages to fortify the borders of occupied Tibet with India and Bhutan over the last few years.

"All this clearly indicates PLA will continue to permanently station troops in forward locations along the LAC, even if eventually there is some sort of disengagement at the two major persisting face-off sites at Depsang and Demchok in eastern Ladakh," the report quoted an unnamed Indian source as saying.

There are currently 50,000 to 60,000 PLA troops with heavy weaponry forward deployed in the western (Ladakh) and central sectors (Uttarakhand, Himachal) as well as 90,000 soldiers in the eastern one (Sikkim, Arunachal), the report noted.

## **March**

### **Nepal Deputy Prime Minister Shrestha visits Tibet; calls for opening 14 traditional border points with China**

31 March 2024, PTI

A press release said that Mr. Shrestha, during the meeting, reiterated the need for reopening of traditional border points.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Narayan Kaji Shrestha also underscored the importance of exporting products from Nepal during a meeting with Wang Junzheng, secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Tibet Autonomous Regional Committee of China.



Mr. Shrestha, who is on his first visit to China after taking over office earlier in the month, was in Lhasa on Friday as part of his trip from March 25 to April 1 when he also urged the Chinese side for its cooperation to address issues facing the residents along the Nepal-China borders. A press release from the Consulate General of Nepal in Lhasa said that Mr. Shrestha, during the meeting, reiterated the need for reopening of traditional border points for the promotion of trade and commerce as well as facilitating the movement of people.

He sought cooperation to make arrangements for the use of pastureland along the bordering areas, to provide entry passes for Nepali containers and electrification in Nepal's highlands, according to the MyRepublica news portal. He recalled an agreement to resume 14 Nepal-China traditional transits during his meeting with Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi in Beijing two days ago and expected the facilitating role on behalf of Tibet's administration to implement the understanding.

Mr. Shrestha also called on the Chinese side to make provisions for resuming the Kathmandu-Lhasa bus service, the report said. He also underscored the importance of exporting products, including Haylage, cooked buffalo meat, and medicinal herbs among others to further strengthen economic cooperation. Haylage is a type of nutritious animal feed.

"The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs further expressed the need to cooperate in the areas of infrastructure and connectivity including the transmission lines to further strengthen the bilateral ties," The Kathmandu Post newspaper reported, quoting the statement. The two leaders also discussed matters relating to expanding socio-economic cooperation, enhancing understanding and goodwill through high-level exchanges, consolidating the ongoing cooperation and exploring new areas of cooperation.

"Both the leaders discussed matters of mutual interest," reiterated a post on X along with a photo by Nepal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs late on Friday night after the meeting.

Earlier on March 26, the strategic partnership between the two countries was discussed during Shrestha's meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang where China has also urged the new dispensation in Nepal to finalise the implementation plan for its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects that have struggled to make any headway due to continuous political changes in the Himalayan nation. Posting about the meeting on social media platform X, Ambassador Chen Song, the Chinese Ambassador to Nepal, said: "The two sides agreed to reopen 14 traditional border trade points immediately, strengthen practical cooperation

between two countries in such fields as trade, investment, tourism, and advance the bilateral relations to a new height." Shrestha is also expected to visit the holy pilgrimage site of Kailash Mansarovar in Tibet during his visit, it was announced earlier last week.

### **China's anti-India, Tibet-pilgrimage restrictions ruining friendly Nepal's tourism industry**

22 March 2024, Tibetan Review

Beijing denied access to Mt Kailash in Tibet to nearly 50,000 Indian pilgrims seeking to travel there through Nepal last year and the situation does not seem likely to change, given the state of Sino-India relations, reported the kathmandupost.com Mar 22.

It was hoped that after Beijing opened the Hilsa border point, the gateway to Kailash Manasarovar, last April, the worst was over. However, this was dashed when the Chinese authorities in Tibet restricted Indian pilgrims' movement through the border. As a result, many entrepreneurs in Nepal's tourism industry were forced to close, leaving many people unemployed, the report said.

Even after Beijing reopened some border points to Nepal allowing people and trade movement, it has imposed restrictions, especially for Indian pilgrims, which many say is the fallout of the growing India-China geopolitical rivalry, the report said.

The restrictions were stated to have ruined the million-dollar business of scores of hotels, tour operators, porters, helicopter and airline companies. Around 15,000 tourists used to visit Kailash Manasarovar through the Hilsa border before the Covid pandemic. The border was closed for four years due to the pandemic and reopened in April last year.

Kailash Manasarovar Yatra is one of the most lucrative tour packages for Nepali tour operators and Hilsa is the major point of entry for it, the report said.

"We are expecting our business to be zero this year too. There is no sign of opening the border even as the season is to start after a week," Bijay Lama, a hotel entrepreneur, has said.

Before the Covid pandemic, there used to be a huge movement of Indian tourists on the Hilsa border, Karma Lama, another tourism entrepreneur, has said. "As a result, from porters to hotel operators and from airlines to local groceries used to be busy from early morning."

"We incurred heavy losses when the border was closed. But despite the reopening last year, the tourist movement has been almost zero," he has said. The report cited tour operators as saying that last year Chinese authorities in Tibet denied access to nearly 50,000 Indian pilgrims who had booked for the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra that included

journeying through different border points, including the Kathmandu-Lhasa flight.

In 2023, Nepal welcomed an all-time high number of Indian visitors, crossing the 300,000 mark for the first time. The major draw was the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra. But they were forced to reschedule their tour package and visit, instead, Nepal's holy places like Muktinath and Lumbini.

"Until China allows Indian pilgrims, there is little likelihood of tourists returning and business bouncing back," Yakyung Lama, a guard at Manasarovar Hotel in Hilsa, has said, adding he has been deployed to look after the hotel alone as there were no visitors.

### **Willing to work with new Nepali government, says Beijing**

07 March 2024, ANN

As a friendly neighbour and cooperative partner, China attaches great importance to Nepal-China relations and is willing to work with the new Nepali government to adhere to the five principles of peaceful coexistence, according to Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson.

China has said it is willing to work with the new Nepali government, a day after Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal ditched the Nepali Congress-led alliance and formed a new government with the support of CPN-UML, Rastriya Swatantra Party and Janata Samajbadi Party.

Speaking during a regular press briefing in Beijing on Tuesday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said, "China has noticed that Nepal has recently formed a new ruling coalition and reorganised its cabinet. We sincerely hope that all parties in Nepal will unite and cooperate to smoothly advance the work related to the formation of a new government and achieve political stability, economic development, and improvement of people's livelihood."

As a friendly neighbour and cooperative partner, China attaches great importance to Nepal-China relations and is willing to work with the new Nepali government to adhere to the five principles of peaceful coexistence, enhance traditional friendship, deepen pragmatic cooperation, and promote Nepal-China strategic cooperation for ever-lasting friendship oriented toward development and prosperity, she said.

The partnership will further develop and create more benefits for the people of the two countries, Mao added.

Nepal's other neighbour, India is yet to speak about the recent political development in Kathmandu.

### **Nepali ambassador to China interests in two sessions**

04 March 2024, ChinaDaily

This is the second time I will be attending the opening meeting of the annual session of the National People's Congress. The two sessions are China's important annual parliamentary meetings where the Chinese premier presents the annual report of the government of China.

The uniqueness of the two sessions is the presence of more than 2,000 deputies across the country showcasing the democratic parliamentary system of Chinese characteristics. I am also interested to learn about the target of China for 2024 in various areas including trade, investment, tourism, digital technology, science and innovation, green energy. Furthering the Belt and Road Initiative, Global Development Initiative and other initiatives would be another aspect of interest. I also look forward to the priority of the Chinese government toward its neighboring countries like Nepal in its approach to high-quality development and higher level of opening-up.

For the envoys attending it, the two sessions will be an opportunity to witness the solidarity and commitment of the Chinese government for development, progress and prosperity.

As a close and friendly neighbor, Nepal also looks forward to see how China prioritizes neighborhood policies and implements the South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation in areas such as economic cooperation, people-to-people relations, green and low-carbon development, artificial intelligence, digital economy, climate change and BRI implementation.

Enhancing trade, tourism, investment, people-to-people relations, connectivity and other areas of cooperation would be our prime interest. Therefore, the plan, program and targets in that direction will be our focus.

Digital economy is another particular area. Nepal is also leaping towards digital development. Cooperation on digital infrastructure, digital technology transfer, capacity building, e-governance infrastructure development, e-commerce and raising awareness about innovative digital technology will be more advantageous in Nepal. Such cooperation will be useful in the areas of aviation, tourism, service sectors and so on. Assistance to building smart city, robotic growth, IT based development in the areas of trade and data management would be more effective as well.

### **Nepal and China to renew talks on cross-border transmission lines**

03 March 2024, The Kathmandu Post

Building a pair of Nepal-China cross-border transmission lines will again be on the agenda of a bilateral Joint Working Group meeting scheduled for later this month, two officials of the Nepal Electricity Authority said.

The meeting of the Joint Working Group comprising representatives of the NEA and the State Grid Corporation of China is scheduled to be held in the northern neighbour in the last week of March.

When Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal visited China in September last year, the two sides had signed an agreement on building the Nepal section of the proposed 220kV Jilong/Kerung-Rasuwasadhi-Chilime cross-border transmission line with Chinese grant.

"The two sides will launch the construction of the Jilong/Kerung-Rasuwasadhi-Chilime 220kV cross-border power transmission line at an early date," said the joint statement issued during the visit.

The two sides agreed to build the first transmission line connecting the two neighbours. Without grid connectivity with the other neighbour, Nepal fully relies on India to import electricity in the dry season and export its excess power in the wet season.

In the meantime, around a dozen cross-border transmission lines including one of 400kV capacity with India are in operation while four 400kV cross-border grids extending southward are in the pipeline.

The Nepal section is 16 km from the China border to the Chilime hub, while the Chinese will have to build around 80km from the border on their side as well, according to the NEA officials.

"During the meeting, we will also request them to build the project on the Nepal side as agreed earlier," said Dirghayu Kumar Shrestha, chief of the transmission directorate at the NEA. "We expect them to build the power line on their sides at the earliest as well."

Even though the Chinese side agreed to fund the Nepal section of the project, there has not been a further study on the proposed Ratamate-Rasuwasadhi-Kerung Cross-Border Transmission Line since its capacity was brought down to 220kV from 400kV.

"As the alignment will be the same on the Nepal side, a little update on the existing detailed feasibility study of the Ratamate-Rasuwasadhi-Kerung line will be enough to build the Nepal section," said Shrestha. "We plan to request the Chinese side to conclude the detailed feasibility study on their side within six months."

While designing the project under 400kV capacity, the cross-border transmission line was supposed to carry 5,000MW power, according to the NEA.

"There will be a discussion on how to synchronise the two power systems to enable cross-border

transmission of power," said Komal Nath Atreya, chief of the Ratmate-Rasuwasadhi-Kerung Transmission Line Project, who has also been entrusted with coordinating with the Chinese side for building the proposed 220kV cross-border line.

Nepal also plans to propose another cross-border power line connecting the bordering village of Kimathanka in Sankhuwasabha district to the Chinese side. "We will convey to them that it is also our priority agenda," said Shrestha.

Kimathanka is located in Bhotkhola Rural Municipality of Sankhuwasabha in Koshi Province. "As several power projects are under construction on the Arun corridor, new cross-border transmission lines in eastern Nepal would help with the export of power from the projects in the region to China," said Atreya.

According to NEA officials, the two sides will also discuss powering up some of Nepal's bordering villages with the Chinese grid.

As per the joint statement issued after the prime minister's visit, the Chinese side agreed to positively consider Nepal's request for supplying grid power to electrify northern remote villages of Nepal from the Xizang (Tibet) Autonomous Region of China, and take overall consideration of providing equipment or technology on commercial terms.

Nepal had sought the neighbour's help to light up several bordering villages in around half a dozen districts.

Kimathanka in Sankhuwasabha, Lapchi in Dolakha, Chumubri in Gorkha, and Hilsa in Humla were some villages proposed for electrification with Chinese assistance, according to the NEA officials.

According to the power utility, over 5,000 households in several bordering villages are without electricity. Nepal had proposed using Chinese electricity as connecting the mountain villages to the domestic grid will be expensive because of the difficult terrain.

"The Chinese side has expressed its readiness to provide electricity to two bordering villages as a pilot initiative," said Atreya.

### **Nepal is ready to welcome back Chinese travelers**

01 March 2024, Beijing Review

On February 27, an event promoting exchanges between China and Nepal's tourism sectors was held at the Embassy of Nepal in Beijing. Some 100 industry insiders from the World Tourism Alliance, China Association of Travel Services and travel agencies in both countries were in attendance.

"The government of Nepal and the government of China have decided to jointly celebrate tourism," Bishu Pukar Shrestha, Nepal's ambassador to China, said in his welcome address. Highlighting the natural wonders, cultural heritage sites and unparalleled

hospitality of Nepal, he stressed that now is the perfect time to promote tourism between the two countries. "It is imperative that we add up the comprehensive and collaborative efforts to unlock the potential of tourism in Nepal," he said.

With high peaks, deep canyons and rolling hills, Nepal, a landlocked country lying along the southern slopes of the Himalayan mountain ranges, has always been a popular destination for trekkers, adventurers and yoga enthusiasts worldwide.

Before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, China was Nepal's second-largest tourist source market, the first being India. The pandemic, however, took a heavy toll on the inbound flow of Chinese tourists. In 2019, Nepal received a record 169,534 Chinese tourists. In 2022, that number fell to 9,599.

Things took a favorable turn in 2023, the year in which China fully reopened its borders. Last March, Nepal was added to China's list of approved outbound tourist destinations for Chinese citizens. Last November, a new land port serving as a gateway between southwest China's Xizang Autonomous Region went into operation. Several Chinese cities, including Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu, Chongqing and Lhasa, have also resumed direct flights with Nepal.



Representatives from the World Tourism Alliance, China Association of Travel Services and Chinese and Nepali travel agencies attend a tourism promotional event at the Embassy of Nepal in Beijing on February 27 (COURTESY PHOTO)

"In 2024, we will increase the capacity of our flights to accommodate 80,000 passengers traveling between China and Nepal," An Yongshen, general manager of Himalaya Airlines, said during the event. Himalaya Airlines, a joint venture between Nepal and China, was the first airline to resume direct flights between Beijing and Kathmandu, capital of Nepal, in January 2023. The airline is also planning to invite a group of Chinese travel and outdoor sports influencers to visit Nepal this March as a way of promoting local tourism on Chinese social media. With the gradual resumption of flights and tourism activities, hopes are high that arrivals from China will

foster cultural as well as business connections between the two countries. This is especially significant under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a strategy to boost global connectivity along and beyond the ancient Silk Road, first proposed by China in 2013.

"By jointly pursuing the BRI, China and Nepal have continued to foster ties, especially through tourism," Liu Shijun, vice-chair and secretary-general of the World Tourism Alliance, said. "I hope that we can all participate in strengthening the initiative and facilitating genuine connection between China and Nepal at a human level."

## February

### China's continued Covid closure of Nepal-Tibet border separates families, affects livelihoods

14 February 2024, Tibetan Review

The Covid-19 pandemic may have long ceased to be a matter of serious concern across the world, but not so to the Chinese government as far as its occupied Tibet's border area with Nepal is concerned. Officials in Tibet say they are still awaiting Beijing's permission to reopen the border, which was shut in Jan 2020 to tame the Covid pandemic, reported the [kathmandupost.com](https://www.kathmandupost.com) Feb 14.

The Chinese government closed Tiptala Bhanjyang near the Nepal-Tibet border in Taplejung amid the coronavirus threat in Jan 2020. Due to the protracted border closure, hundreds of locals in the northern villages of Taplejung have been unable to meet their relatives in Tibet for four years now, the report said.

The Riu settlement of Dinggye County of Tibet lies just across the border – 35 km from the border. "But I have not been able to visit my maternal home for the past four years. The way to my maternal village is inaccessible as the Nepal-China border remains closed for a long time," the report quoted Paten Sherpa, wife of Temba and a permanent resident of Olangchungola in ward 7 of Phaktanglung Rural Municipality, as saying.

Bhomo Sherpa of Mauwatar in Olangchungola share a similar ordeal. She was born in Tibet, married Bhujung of Nepal's Bhotkhola Rural Municipality in Sankhuwasabha district. The couple later migrated to Mauwatar and began rearing yaks. While they are happy with their income and three children's education, Bhomo's only complaint is that the border has become a barrier preventing her from meeting her parents in Tibet.

Before the pandemic, both Temba and Bhujung frequently visited Tibetan markets for trade, transporting various goods on yaks. During their



visits, they formed connections with Tibetan girls, whom they eventually brought back as life partners. "We never imagined that the border would close some day leaving us unable to visit our relatives," Bhujung has said.

"We have to walk for five to seven hours just to make a phone call to my maternal relatives in Rivu. It would take me less time to reach my maternal home than to get to Olangchungtola. But the closed border is a barrier in my way," Paten, who is in her mid-forties, has said.

Tsering Kipa, in her early seventies and living in Olangchungtola with her husband Dandu Sherpa, also has a strong desire to reunite with her maternal family in Tibet, the report said. But the close of the border remains an agonizing barrier standing in her way.

Chhete Sherpa Lama, ward chairman of ward 7 of Phaktalung Rural Municipality, has said there are at least 18 women in Olangchungtola and Yangma settlements who have their maternal homes in Tibet. He has said there are many Tibetan women married to Nepali men from Ghunsa, Phale, Mikkakhola among other settlements as well.

"We have discussions with the representatives of the (Dinggye County in Tibet) county. They tell us that the border will reopen once they get permission from the centre (Beijing). The government of Nepal should talk to the central government of China," Chhete has said, adding his own efforts thus far have been unsuccessful.

The report said trans-border trade and animal husbandry had been hugely affected by the border closure. People living near the Nepal-China border rely on Tibet for their daily essential commodities, as the area has yet to be connected to Nepal's national road network. Tibet also serves as a major market for them to sell a variety of products including medicinal herbs and domesticated animals, the report said.

### **Govt highlights special initiatives in cross-border trade with China: Prime Minister Dahal**

10 February 2024, Khabarhub



Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' inaugurating the Nepal Trans Himalaya Border  
Tibet Digest December - January 2024

Commerce Association's 24th General Assembly on Saturday/Photo: RSS

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' has asserted that his government has undertaken special initiatives in the operation of trade routes with China. Addressing the 24th general assembly of the Nepal Trans Himalaya Border Commerce Association, Prime Minister Dahal emphasized the increased priority given to the initiation and systematic management of international and commercial routes between Nepal and China.

He claimed that since becoming the Prime Minister for the third time, he has given more priority than ever to initiating and organizing international and commercial routes between Nepal and China.

The Prime Minister also revealed plans to open traditional trade routes, develop the DPR of the Tokha-Chhahare-Tunnel Way, and prioritize immediate advancements in relation to the construction of the Hilsa-Simikot road.

The President of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), Chandra Prasad Dhakal, also urged the government to prioritize the construction of the Kerung-Tatopani road, considering it crucial for cross-border trade.

Dhakal pointed out the comparative weakness of Nepal's road infrastructure leading to trade routes with China.

He expressed the need for the government to expedite and organize the first road network systematically, making it more convenient for business and trade with China.

### **Chinese Citizen Found Dead in Kathmandu Hostel: Investigation Underway**

04 February 2024, BNN

In a grim revelation from the heart of Kathmandu, a 47-year-old Chinese citizen, Bao Guanglai, was found dead at the Nepalaya Home Hostel in Thamel on February 3. Having resided there since January 10, Bao's death has sent shockwaves through the hostel's community and beyond. The hostel staff, who discovered the lifeless body, promptly notified the police.

**Police Investigation Underway**

Upon arrival, law enforcement embarked on initial investigations into the circumstances of Bao's demise. Thus far, nothing suspicious has been unearthed. Police officials have been meticulous in their probe, leaving no stone unturned to unravel the circumstances leading to this unfortunate event. Bao's recent use of medication has been noted, though its relevance to his death remains unclear.

**Chinese Embassy Notified**

In the wake of Bao's death, the Chinese embassy in Nepal has been informed. This marks an essential



step in the protocol, ensuring that the deceased's home country is aware of the tragic incident. It also enables them to provide any necessary support to the investigation and in dealing with the aftermath of the event.

#### Autopsy to Determine Cause of Death

With the cause of death still shrouded in uncertainty, Bao's body has been transferred to the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital in Maharajgunj. An autopsy is scheduled, aiming to shed light on the events leading to his sudden demise. The results of the autopsy will provide crucial insights into the actual cause of death.

While the investigation continues, this incident has thrown a spotlight on the safety of Chinese citizens in Nepal, sparking discussions and concerns among both local and international communities. As the story unfolds, the hope is that clarity will prevail, providing closure for all those affected by Bao's untimely passing.

## January

### Nepali leaders privately complain about China's aggressive public diplomacy

29 January 2024, Tibetan Review

(TibetanReview.net, Jan29'24) – In what is seen as an unprecedented move, visiting Chinese leaders have publicly claimed that certain countries were trying to destabilise the good relations between Nepal and China, while some elements were also defaming the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) by calling it a 'debt trap', reported the kathmandupost.com Jan 29. The occasion was a consultative conference in Kathmandu between Nepali political leaders and Communist Party of China, during which Nepal was also asked to improve its investment climate.

The report said that during an interaction with second-rung leaders of major political parties represented in the country's Parliament, Sun Haiyan, the vice minister of the International Liaison Department of the Communist Party of China, alleged that some countries were trying to disrupt development cooperation between Nepal and China and defame bilateral relations.

"...Some criticise our relations. Some are trying to sabotage our bilateral relations and some have increased activity against China," Sun was quoted as saying during the first conference of its kind.

The report said some Nepali leaders afterwards labelled Sun's statement as "belligerent", noting that Chinese leaders typically would not use such direct language in public discussions.



Leaders from the Communist Party of China during an interaction with Nepali politicians in Kathmandu. (Photo courtesy: Kathmandu Post)

Yes, they would use such 'direct and aggressive' language during private conversations, but never in public forums like this, the report cited two leaders who took part in the conference as saying.

"It seems the Chinese are not happy with the current state of relations with Nepal or the way they are being publicly projected, both in and outside Nepal," one of the participants has said.

"They may feel a threat from Nepal, or they could have sensed that some external forces are trying to create a rift between Kathmandu and Beijing."

Sun skillfully asked Nepali leaders to avoid being too close to Americans and Indians, a CPN (Maoist Centre) leader from the ruling coalition has said. "Earlier they used to convey such concerns behind closed doors, but now they are saying it in public."

Sun was stated to have asked a leader from each party to speak by focusing on three things: Nepal-China ties, and fostering and enhancing these ties in the changing context; the type of relations needed in the future; and the role Nepali political parties can play to strengthen bilateral ties.

But except for the most pro-China UML's General Secretary Shankar Pokhrel, no other leader was stated to have directly addressed Sun's topics. However, they all have committed to boosting relations with China, expressed Nepal's desire to benefit from China's economic growth, and reaffirmed their commitment to 'One China' policy as well as the BRI.

Sun has also complained about Nepal's investment climate, saying it was not favourable for investors, and urged party leaders to diversify infrastructure and facilitate Chinese investment.

Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Chen Song, has also spoken in a combative tone, asking why the same Chinese companies, which were completing projects in other countries within set deadlines, had been unable to do so in Nepal.

"We have to find out why projects undertaken by the Chinese are getting delayed," Chen has said, adding, "Is it only due to us? No. You have to assess it."

Chen also expressed concerns over "negative reporting on the BRI" and on Sino-Nepal ties but did

not specify which of the Nepali media was doing it, the report said.

These attacks have not gone down well with a UML leader who has told the Post "An ambassador should not speak so frivolously without clear evidence to back up his words. ... Making such unfounded statements is unbecoming of an ambassador. They should understand that Nepali media is free and they report by keeping in mind the fundamental interests of the country. The same is true of Nepali political parties."

### China says rivals trying to sabotage its ties with Nepal

29 January 2024, The Kathmandu Post

Visiting Chinese leader asserts BRI is not a debt trap and expresses concerns over investment climate.

In an unprecedented move, visiting Chinese leaders have publicly claimed that certain countries are trying to destabilise the good relations between Nepal and China, while some elements are also defaming the Belt and Road Initiative by calling it a 'debt trap'.

During an interaction with second-rung leaders of major political parties represented in Parliament, Sun Haiyan, the vice minister of the International Liaison Department of the Communist Party of China, alleged that some countries are trying to disrupt development cooperation between Nepal and China and defame bilateral relations.

"...Some criticise our relations. Some are trying to sabotage our bilateral relations and some have increased activity against China," Sun said during a consultative conference in Kathmandu between Nepali political leaders and Communist Party of China. The conference was the first of its kind to happen in Kathmandu.

Some Nepali leaders, after the conference, labelled Sun's statement "belligerent" and stated that the Chinese leaders typically would not use such direct language in public discussions.

Yes they would use such 'direct and aggressive' language during private conversations, but never in public forums like this, two leaders who took part in the conference told the Post. "It seems the Chinese are not happy with the current state of relations with Nepal or the way they are being publicly projected, both in and outside Nepal," one of the participants said.

"They may feel a threat from Nepal, or they could have sensed that some external forces are trying to create a rift between Kathmandu and Beijing."

She also quietly communicated to Nepali leaders not to take sides while pursuing foreign policy.

Sun skillfully asked Nepali leaders to avoid being too close to Americans and Indians, a CPN (Maoist Centre) leader said. "Earlier they used to convey

such concerns behind closed doors, but now they are saying it in public."

"We have good relations with political parties of Nepal, but some elements do not want to see them flourish," Sun said.

Second-rung leaders from all national parties and members of the international and foreign relations departments of major parties were present at the conference, where one leader of each party represented was asked to speak on Nepal-China ties. In her speech, Sun told party leaders to focus on three things: Nepal-China ties, and fostering and enhancing these ties in the changing context; the type of relations needed in the future; and the role Nepali political parties can play to strengthen bilateral ties.

Except for UML General Secretary Shankar Pokhrel, no other leader at the conference directly addressed Sun's topics, even as they committed to boosting relations with China, expressed Nepal's desire to benefit from China's economic growth, and reaffirmed their commitment to 'One China' policy as well as the Belt and Road Initiative.

Sun also expressed concerns over Nepal's investment climate, saying it is not favourable for investors, and urged party leaders to diversify infrastructure and facilitate Chinese investment.

Both before coming to Kathmandu and after she landed here, Sun held two separate rounds of talks with Chinese investors as well as Nepali traders doing business with China.

While complaining about growing geopolitical competition in Nepal, she tried to give a message that some powers do not want good relations between Nepal and China, but both sides have to maintain unity, trust and mutual relations so that they can collaborate in the face of challenges.

Without naming the US, Sun said that some are building alliances and fueling regional tensions.

"Some have increased their activities against China, and these external forces come and go, but Nepal-China relations should be strengthened. We are capable of addressing those challenges," Sun said without mentioning any specific geopolitical tensions in different parts of the world and their possible implications on the Sino-Nepalese ties.

Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Chen Song, while highlighting the details and economic status of cooperation between Nepal and China, stated that China is ready to invest in game-changing projects.

He queried the Nepali leaders about why the same Chinese companies, which were completing projects in other countries within set deadlines, have been unable to do so in Nepal.

"We have to find out why projects undertaken by the Chinese are getting delayed," said Chen, adding, "Is it only due to us? No. You have to assess it."

Sun had earlier said that there were other factors behind the Covid pandemic for the delay in projects. Ambassador Chen also expressed concerns over 'negative reporting on the BRI' by a section of the Nepali media. Chen said there is negative information about China and the BRI, "but we don't want to disclose where they are coming from." Also, he did not mention which media outlets have been spreading wrong messages about the BRI or Nepal-China ties.

"An ambassador should not speak so frivolously without clear evidence to back up his words," a UML leader told the Post. "Making such unfounded statements is unbecoming of an ambassador. They should understand that Nepali media is free and reports by keeping in mind the fundamental interests of the country. The same is true of Nepali political parties."

"Many wrong and negative messages are spreading in Nepali media. Several misleading and baseless news are there about Nepal-China relations. Very wrong messages are spreading outside about Nepal-China relations. BRI is a grant also, it is not entirely debt. Nepal's external debt is only three percent of its GDP, but there is misinformation circulating that Nepal is falling into a debt trap," he said.

Particularly in relation to the Pokhara International Airport built with a Chinese loan, some national and international media outlets have reported that the project could turn into a 'white elephant' due to Nepal's inability to pay back Chinese loan and interest.

While expressing his concerns over timely completion of China-funded projects or those undertaken by Chinese contractors, the Chinese envoy suggested major parties of Nepal to come together and collectively find a way out.

At the same time, the ambassador announced that China has approved 150 new scholarships for Nepali students at various Chinese institutions.

It was UML General Secretary Pokhrel who later tried to assuage Chinese concerns. "Not only the Chinese, other development partners and donors have also faced similar problems in Nepal," said Pokhrel.

"We need to resolve our structural problems that are hindering developmental efforts. There are ups and downs in international relations, but we are committed to advancing our relations with our neighbours. We accept their support and assistance. You need not be worried," said Pokhrel while suggesting Chinese leaders to complete the projects committed by them, be it road or rail or infrastructure related projects.

He told the Chinese leaders that Nepal expects commencement of committed projects, including the second Ring Road expansion (in Kathmandu), outer

Ring Road, hydropower projects, transmission lines, and the Tokha-Chhahare tunnel. Pokhrel also urged the government to take initiatives to execute projects under the BRI.

"If you have any confusion regarding our stance on international relations, it is our responsibility to give clarification," said Pokhrel. "Nepali leaders may compete during elections, but they also hold regular discussions and collectively reach nuanced conclusions on key issues."

Vice-chairman of the National Assembly Urmila Aryal, UML's Pokhrel, Nepali Congress leader Shashank Koirala, Shishir Khanal of the Rastriya Swatantra Party, Sagun Sundar Lawoti of the Rastriya Prajatantra Party as well as Arjun Thapa of Janata Samajbadi Party reaffirmed Nepal's commitment to One China policy. All of them said Nepal was prepared to benefit from China's economic success and to seek more of its support in Nepal's development endeavours.

Koirala said the Congress is willing to work with China in order to further Nepal's development initiatives.

### **Nepal & China to sign plan of Beijing BRI projects: Nepal's Deputy PM**

29 January 2024, The Economic Times

"Once we sign the implementation plan, we will move into the implementation phase," Shrestha, also the Minister for Home Affairs said while addressing an event here that is part of the Silk Road Youth Forum and South Asian Cooperation Conference.

KATHMANDU: Nepal and China will sign the implementation plan of the Belt and Road Initiative "very soon", Deputy Prime Minister Narayan Kaji Shrestha said on Saturday, nearly seven years after the two neighbours inked an agreement to undertake ambitious Beijing-backed infrastructure projects in the Himalayan nation.

"Once we sign the implementation plan, we will move into the implementation phase," Shrestha, also the Minister for Home Affairs said while addressing an event here that is part of the Silk Road Youth Forum and South Asian Cooperation Conference.

He said the two countries will sign the implementation plan of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) "very soon" without specifying any date.

His statement came as Sun Haiyan, a senior leader of China's ruling Communist Party, was visiting Nepal and meeting the country's top leaders.

The signing of the BRI implementation plan is the key to negotiate and execute the projects under the initiative.

Nepal and China signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the BRI in 2017. However, not a single project under the initiative, a pet project of

Chinese President Xi Jinping, has either been executed or negotiated.

The BRI, which aims to enhance connectivity and promote economic cooperation, has opened up new avenues for collaboration between the two nations, Shrestha said, adding that one of the cornerstones of Nepal-China cooperation is infrastructure development. "For nations like Nepal, nestled in the heart of the Himalayas, these initiatives open up possibilities for enhanced connectivity that can transform the economic landscape," he said.

"China's support in building critical infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, and energy projects, has been instrumental in propelling Nepal towards economic growth and stability," Shrestha said.

The signing of the BRI implementation plan between Nepal and China has been one of the prime agenda since early 2020 but an agreement has been elusive due to differences between the two sides over investment modality, The Kathmandu Post newspaper reported.

Meanwhile, speaking during an interaction programme with various political leaders of Nepal that was organised here, Sun Haiyan, the Vice Minister of the International Liaison Department of the Communist Party of China, urged the stakeholders of both nations to not get affected by the attempts by other countries to spoil ties between China and Nepal.

Without naming any nation, Sun said that countries come and go but it was the people of Nepal and China who were affected.

"There are other countries trying to play with the Nepal-China relations. They come and go. It is the people of Nepal and China who are affected by their activities," said Sun.

Sun, who is on a three-day visit to Nepal, said: "It is therefore necessary to move forward setting up targets. We have to work in unison to face the difficulties, and make cooperation more practical".

Senior leader of the ruling Nepali Congress Shashanka Koirala said that his party is willing to collaborate with China in the area of Nepal's development.

He also expressed gratitude to China for assisting the 2015 earthquake and also during the coronavirus pandemic.

The signing of the BRI implementation plan is the key to negotiating and implementing the projects under the initiative. Nepal and China signed the memorandum of understanding on BRI in 2017 but not a single project under the initiative has been implemented.

"Once we sign the agreement, we will move into the implementation phase," Shrestha said while addressing an event that is part of the Silk Road

Youth Forum and South Asian Cooperation Conference.

### Chinese Vice Minister Sun Haiyan arrives in Kathmandu

26 January 2024, My Republica

KATHMANDU, Jan 26: Chinese Vice Minister Sun Haiyan, representing the International Department of the Communist Party of China, has arrived in Kathmandu for a significant four-day official visit.

According to sources at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Minister Sun is leading a Chinese delegation engaging in meetings with key figures, including President Ram Chandra Paudel, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, and prominent leaders from various political parties.

This visit is anticipated to reinforce the bilateral ties between China and Nepal and foster collaborative discussions on matters of mutual interest.

The diplomatic engagement aims to further solidify the diplomatic relationship between the two nations. Earlier in the week, Minister Sun led a Chinese delegation that visited the Maldives, showcasing China's diplomatic outreach in the region.

### Communist unity top on agenda as Chinese flock to Nepal

19 January 2024, The Kathmandu Post

Barely a week after a delegation from Yunnan Province of China left the country, another Chinese contingent is currently in Lumbini.

Shi Yugang, deputy secretary of the Standing Committee of the Communist Party of China Yunnan Provincial Committee, recently wrapped up his Nepal visit after meeting Vice President Ramsahaya Prasad Yadav and some ministers.

The vice minister-level visit was officially a low-key exchange as Nepal at the time was busy hosting the External Minister of India S Jaishankar. As soon as the delegation from Yunnan concluded the Nepal visit, Master Yinshun, Vice President of the Buddhist Association of China, arrived on a chartered flight in Lumbini on Monday.

He met Lharkyal Lama, vice-chairman of the Lumbini Development Fund. Yinshun, who leads a delegation of 40 people, held talks with Lama about possible support for completing the Lumbini Development Master Plan, according to media reports.

What's more, another delegation from the International Liaison Department of the Communist Party of China led by Vice Minister Sun Haiyan is arriving on a three-day Nepal visit starting January 26. The purpose of the visit is said to be to

strengthen party-to-party relations through a joint consultative conference with Nepali political leaders. After China lifted Covid-related restrictions at the start of last year, the number of visits and junkets between China and Nepal saw a significant uptick. The reasons are many, said observers and leaders who have frequently hosted Chinese delegations to Kathmandu.

Coming from Beijing and other provinces of China are the delegates of the Chinese government, civil society, military, think tanks, and academia. On the other hand, the Chinese have sponsored the visits of over two dozen Nepali groups from different walks of life in the past one year.

Altogether, there have been over five dozen big and small delegations to and from China, a senior Nepali intelligence officer who keeps tabs on the engagements with the north, told the Post. The frequency of visits from China is many times those originating in Nepal, the officer said.

Besides Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, who was on an official visit, separate political delegations from the CPN-UML and the CPN (Maoist Centre), one parliamentary and several other small- and medium-sized delegations went to China.

Those visiting the northern neighbour included Deputy Speaker Indira Ranamagar, Deputy Prime Minister Narayan Kaji Shrestha, Chief Justice Bishowambhar Prasad Shrestha, Chief of the Army Staff General Prabhu Ram Sharma, besides several other ministers, political leaders, government officials and individuals.

Sun, who met UML Deputy General Secretary Pradeep Gyawali in November last year in China, is known as a Nepal hand in the International Liaison Department of the CPC. "Had an in-depth discussion on Nepal-China relations, new areas of cooperation between CPN-UML and CPC, and a review of the implementation process of previous agreements between the two governments," Gyawali had Tweeted after his meeting with Sun. During her upcoming visit, leaders of major political parties have been invited for a joint consultation conference on January 28 at Hotel Soaltee, Kathmandu.

"I am also invited to the event but I will be in Biratnagar on that date as I am busy with the National Assembly election," said Shekhar Koirala, a senior Nepali Congress leader. The Chinese side, in their communication to political leaders, has called for ten more leaders from each party to the event. Speakers will be given five minutes each to speak on ways to strengthen Nepal-China as well as party-to-party relations.

"I do not know much about why they are coming so frequently but we can say that they must have some concerns related to security and other [issues]. We need to be cautious," said Koirala.

Expressing his reservations over Prime Minister Dahal's recent statement on the Taiwan issue, Koirala said, we are surprised why the prime minister made such a statement on Taiwan's independence. The Nepali Congress has expressed its reservations over the Dahal administration's departure from one-China "policy" to one-China "principle" but has not made its position public.

On increasing foreign engagements in the country, according to Koirala, if the Nepali parties, state and government remain alert to—and conscious of—the nation's interests, no power can cause us any harm.

Days after the presidential election in Taiwan, the prime minister said Nepal upholds the "one-China principle" and stands against the "independence of Taiwan". Nepal, following the Sino-India war of 1962, has been supporting "One China", but after Prime Minister Dahal's visit in September last year there seems to be a departure from that policy to the "one-China principle".

"More and more Americans are coming, and the same with the Chinese. But Indians are not coming in the same number and frequency," said Koirala. "I see these visits as natural but the thing is we have to remain cautious and continue to promote our interests."

Given the relatively small size of Nepal's foreign ministry and the failure of successive governments to implement the diplomatic code of conduct, many such visits go unnoticed. "We do not know what transpires during these visits and meetings. Nor we know who sanctions these visits," a senior foreign ministry official said. "There is an increasing trend of foreigners inviting themselves to Nepal."

These visits from China have multiple meanings, reasons and objectives, according to leaders and individuals who have interacted with the Chinese delegations to Kathmandu.

One is geopolitical competition as the Chinese think that recent Indian and American engagements with Nepal have direct implications on their relations with Nepal, said Anand Pokhrel, a UML leader who runs a nongovernmental organisation and has hosted several Chinese delegations.

"The Chinese worry that Nepal has become a playground of big actors and players. The China-led Belt and Road Initiative is not making strides in Nepal due to the manoeuvrings of external forces, or this is what the Chinese believe," said Pokhrel. "The growing strategic alliance between India and the US, and its impact on Nepal-China relations, also seems to bother the Chinese."

After the formation of the Dahal government, Chinese suspicions have increased manifold, he added.

Much earlier, the passage of Washington's Millennium Challenge Corporation from the Nepal



parliament had given the Chinese a cause for concern, another UML leader who maintains contact with Beijing, told the Post.

"Of late, the Dahal government seems to have tilted towards India, resulting in unprecedented results in energy and other sectors, only adding to Chinese suspicions," the leader added. "The ultimate goal of the Chinese is a reunion between Dahal and UML Chairman KP Oli, which they want to happen before the next elections. They are now examining the possibility."

Mrigendra Bahadur Karki, executive director of the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS) at Tribhuvan University, echoes the UML leader's view that the quick succession of visiting delegations from China could mean they are exploring possible unity between the communist parties of Nepal—or more precisely to again bring Oli and Dahal together.

"They [Chinese] are trying to influence Nepali politics. They are exploring another modality of uniting the communist parties," said Karki. With Beijing's "encouragement", the UML and the Maoist Centre formed an alliance and jointly fought the 2017 parliamentary elections. Later, they merged the parties to form the Nepal Communist Party, which later dissolved following a 2021 verdict of the Supreme Court. The two communist leaders revived their respective parties, and now the original party has been split into three different forces.

"Earlier, between 2017 and 2022, the Chinese used their soft power, and tools like culture, language and optics to bring the two communist parties together. As that approach has failed, they are working with a different modus operandi this time," said Karki.

An aspiring superpower needs to have considerable influence in its own region, CD Bhatta, an observer of geopolitics in South Asia, said. China and other contending powers have scaled up their engagements and are trying to rally smaller states like Nepal behind them. This not only helps to advance their geopolitical goals but also to win the confidence of the nations through economic and other forms of cooperation.

"There is more to come," the aforementioned UML leader said. "The Chinese will continue with their visits and engagements until they feel more secure."

In the process, they want to pave the way for engaging with all three layers of government and implement past accords and agreements signed between Nepal and China, according to the leader. "Most importantly, they want to ensure there is no danger emanating from Nepal as other foreign forces compete here."

## **Nepal and China are close neighbors, trusted friends, and reliable partners: PM**

16 January 2024, My Republica

KATHMANDU, Jan 16: Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal has said that Nepal-China relations stand on the solid foundation of the 'Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence' and the two sides understand each other's aspirations and sensitivities and extend support to each other in times of need in the spirit of true friendship.

"Nepal and China are close neighbors, trusted friends, and reliable partners. We understand each other's aspirations and sensitivities and extend support to each other in times of need in the spirit of true friendship. Nepal firmly adheres to the one-China principle," PM Dahal stated.

"Our commitment is strong, unequivocal, straightforward, and unshakable. The change in domestic and external situations has not influenced and affected this principled position of Nepal," the PM said during the inaugural ceremony of the First Chinese New Year Celebrations in Kathmandu on Sunday.

On the occasion, PM Dahal said Nepal recognizes the Government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legal Government representing the whole of China, and Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory.

"We have already made our position clear on 'Taiwan Independence' in the joint statement issued during my recent visit to China," the PM reiterated.

The PM said Nepal is against "Taiwan Independence".

He also said that Nepal is committed not to allow any activities in our nation that are inimical to the interest of China.

Likewise, China also always stands firm in respect of Nepal's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and dignity, the PM believed.

On the occasion, the PM said that our two civilizations are connected not only by rivers and mountains but also by shared culture and people-to-people contacts and stated that people in both countries follow the Lunar Calendar and celebrate the Lunar New Year and that this is the best example of this.

In his speech, the PM also recalled the recent meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping during the PM's official China visit in September last year.

Likewise, the PM expressed his satisfaction towards the gradual implementation of the agreements and consensus reached during his recent China visit.

In regard to Nepal-China relations, the PM underscored that our common path was to promote the development of the international order in a more just and reasonable direction, safeguard the common interests of developing countries, and make an effort

in building a community with a shared future for humankind.

During the event, PM Dahal and Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Chen Song jointly unveiled the logo of the First Chinese New Year.

Also speaking at the event, Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Chen Song urged the Nepali side to benefit more from Nepal-China cooperation and pledged to support Nepal's development endeavors. He also pledged to forge partnership to implement Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Nepal.

The event was organized by the Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu, the Information Office of China's Yunnan Province and Foreign Affairs Office of Yunnan Province.

Present on the occasion, former Prime Minister Jhala Nath Khanal, ministers, senior leaders of different political parties, security officials, government officials, diplomats and a large number of Chinese communities living in Kathmandu.

### **Nepal committed in not allowing anti-Chinese activities, Dahal says**

14 January 2024, The Kathmandu Post  
Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal on Sunday said Nepal and China are close neighbours and reliable friends.

"Our relations stand on the solid foundation of the 'Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence'. We understand each other's aspirations and sensitivities and extend support to each other in times of need in the spirit of true friendship," said Prime Minister Dahal while addressing the inaugural ceremony of the First Chinese New Year celebrations 'Voices of Spring. Golden Dreams' in Nepal.

The prime minister said Nepal firmly adheres to the 'One China Principle'.

"Our commitment is strong, unequivocal, straightforward, and unshakable. The change in domestic and external situations has not influenced and affected this principled position of Nepal," he said. "Nepal recognises China is the sole legal government representing the whole of China, and Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory."

"We have already made our position clear on 'Taiwan Independence' in the joint statement issued during my recent visit to China."

The prime minister said Nepal is committed not to allow any activities that are inimical to the interest of China.

"We oppose external interference in the internal affairs of a country. Likewise, China also always stands firm in respect of Nepal's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and dignity," he said.

Dahal said civilisations in Nepal and China are connected not only by rivers and mountains but also by shared culture and people-to-people contacts.

Recalling his recent meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping during his official visit to China in September last year, the prime minister said he was glad to learn that agreements and consensus reached during the visit are being gradually implemented.

"I would like to underscore that our common path is to promote the development of the international order in a more just and reasonable direction, safeguard the common interests of developing countries, and make an effort to build a community with a shared future for humankind," he said.

"While the world we are living in today is undergoing profound and complex changes in recent times, it is cultural fabrics, social cohesion and human affiliations that closely connect us. I am confident, these connections between Nepal and China shall grow from strength to strength in the coming days."

## **China & Pakistan**

### **December**

#### **CPSC inaugurates 'China Corner' at ISSI library**

27 December 2024, Business Recorder

China Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organised the inaugural ceremony of "China Corner" at the ISSI Library.

The event was graced by Ambassador Syed Tariq Fatemi, Special Assistant to Prime Minister/Minister of State (Foreign Affairs), Pakistan Ambassador to China Khalil Hashmi and Shi Yuanqiang, Deputy Head of Mission at Embassy of China in Pakistan.

Ambassador Sohail Mahmood highlighted that ISSI has been serving as an important hub for research on China in Pakistan with multiple institutional collaborations with Chinese think tanks and universities. The ISSI is also a dialogue partner for the Pakistan-China Think Tank Forum with the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR) as part of the Joint Working Group of CPEC on International Cooperation.

During his remarks, Ambassador Khalil Hashmi stated that Pakistan-China relationship has surpassed the traditional construct of inter-state relations and is now a comprehensive and unique partnership built on mutual trust, mutual support and mutual respect as its foundational principles.

Shi Yuanqiang, Deputy Head of Mission at Embassy of China, emphasised that ISSI has made outstanding efforts to promote mutual understanding and

information about China. Chinese Embassy has been cooperating with ISSI and also contributed books and CDs for the "China Corner".

He added that Pakistan and China are all-weather strategic cooperative partners and iron-clad friends and that the friendship between the two countries has stood the test of time and is as solid as rock and as stable as Mount Tai. The salience of bilateral relationship is shared by highest level of leadership of both countries, and China is ready to work with Pakistan to help build a China-Pakistan community of shared future.

In his address, the chief guest, Ambassador Syed Tariq Fatemi, elaborated that there is something very fascinating about Pakistan-China relations that has perplexed scholars of international relations abroad for years. The history of both countries shows that despite huge differences between the people and philosophies of the two countries the relationship continued to strengthen.

Pakistan was among the first to recognise China, it was also the first to advocate for Chinese membership in the UN. In the shape of CPEC, Pakistan has been fortunate enough to be the first symphony in the Chinese orchestra of BRI.

To recognise the cooperation between two countries is not only good for the two countries but for the entire region. He added that the Chinese leadership had reaffirmed to the prime minister in their latest meetings that CPEC will not only continue to go forward but would also be enlarged and expanded. Earlier, in his opening remarks Dr Talat Shabbir, director CPSC, stated that the "China Corner" will provide comprehensive access to information and resources about China's governance model, economic policies, and diplomatic strategies. This repository will be a resource for fostering knowledge, dialogue, and collaboration.

### **Pakistan plans to acquire 40 planes of China's latest stealth fighter J-35: Report**

23 December 2024, The Economic Times

Pakistan plans to procure 40 jets of advanced Chinese stealth fighter J-35, which, if materialised, will mark the first export of China's latest jet, according to a media report on Monday. The sale would mark Beijing's first export of fifth-generation jets to a foreign ally and is expected to recalibrate regional dynamics, particularly in relation to Pakistan's rival India, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported.

The Post quoted Pakistan media reports stating that the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) had approved the purchase of 40 aircraft, expected to be delivered within two years, to replace its ageing fleet of American F-16s and French Mirage fighters.

The acquisition of new aircraft was pursued despite the serious economic crisis faced by Pakistan.

There is no official confirmation in Beijing or mention of such a deal in the official media here, though speculation is rife since the J-35, primarily regarded as a jet fighter meant for Chinese aircraft carriers, was exhibited at the prestigious annual air show at Zhuhai city last month attended by top PAF officials. The land-based version of J-35 was called J-31, according to previous reports. China is currently the only country in the region to have developed stealth aircraft.

PAF chief Air Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu said in January that "the foundation for acquiring the J-31 stealth fighter aircraft has already been laid", according to the Post report.

All weather allies, China and Pakistan, shared a deep military relationship shrouded in secrecy. Beijing has been helping the modernisation of all three wings of the Pakistan military as it modernised its own armed forces with billions of dollars of defence expenditure.

China has helped Pakistan to jointly develop and operate the J-17 Thunder fighter jet, the mainstay of the PAF.

China has delivered four advanced naval frigates to the Pakistan Navy in the last few years to enable it to play a bigger role along with its navy in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea.

The reports of Pakistan's plans to acquire China's latest fighter jets come in the backdrop of the visit of top PLA General Zhang Youxia to Pakistan last month, during which he held one-on-one talks with Pakistan's Army chief Gen Asim Munir.

Gen Zhang is Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), the overall command of the Chinese military headed by President Xi Jinping.

A readout issued by the ISPR after the talks said their engagements focused on "matters of mutual interest, regional security dynamics, measures for regional stability, and enhancing bilateral defence cooperation".

Gen Zhang's visit coincided with the arrival of 300 Chinese troops to Pakistan to take part in counter-terrorism drills.

According to Pakistan media reports, China is pressing Pakistan to allow its security firms to protect about 20,000 Chinese personnel working on the projects of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), who are increasingly coming under attacks from militant groups in Pakistan.

For its part, Pakistan says it has deployed over 30,000 military and para-military personnel to protect the Chinese workers.

Pakistan has been reportedly resisting Beijing's pressure to deploy Chinese troops over sovereignty concerns, according to the reports.

## **Pakistan slams U.S. official's remarks on its missile capabilities**

21 December 2024, Xinhua

Pakistan on Saturday slammed a senior U.S. official's statement on the country's missile capabilities and delivery means, calling it "unfortunate."

"The allegations are unfounded, devoid of rationality and sense of history. The recent spate of U.S. allegations towards a major non-NATO ally would be unhelpful for the overall relationship, especially in the absence of any evidence in this regard," said Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, spokesperson of Pakistan's Foreign Ministry.

Baloch said that Pakistan's strategic capabilities are meant to defend its sovereignty and preserve peace and stability in South Asia, and any irrational assumption of hostile intent from Pakistan by any other country, including the United States, is perplexing as well as illogical.

Pakistan has always sought to engage constructively with the United States on all issues, including the need to pursue a balanced approach to security and stability in the region, she said.

## **China, Pakistan wrap up counterterror drills amid concerns over attacks**

20 December 2024, SCMP, Hayley Wong

More than 300 PLA troops took part in the exercise, which was held as Beijing is pressing Islamabad to do more to protect Chinese nationals

China has wrapped up nearly three weeks of joint counterterrorism drills with Pakistan and signalled future "cross-border strategic projection" between the two militaries.

It comes as Beijing has stepped up pressure on Islamabad to do more to stop attacks targeting its nationals in the neighbouring South Asian country.

The People's Liberation Army sent troops to Pakistan for the exercise – dubbed Warrior-8 – which focused on "joint counterterrorism clearance operations", state broadcaster CCTV reported on Wednesday.

"Through this exercise, our strategic projection and inter-force combat capabilities were tested, laying the foundation for the upcoming cross-border strategic projection and joint combat missions," a PLA Air Force officer told CCTV.

The exercise, which finished on Saturday, also involved live-fire simulations, the use of drones for reconnaissance and counter-attack, as well as airborne assault, according to the report.

It included footage of troops disembarking from helicopters, and said missions had been coordinated

between the two militaries as well as between their air and ground forces.

The PLA sent more than 300 troops to Pakistan from its Western Theatre Command in mid-November, weeks after a suicide bombing near Jinnah International Airport in the southern city of Karachi killed two Chinese nationals.

The exercise was the two countries' eighth joint counterterrorism drill and their first since 2019. The Pakistan Army said the exercise was launched at a northwestern counterterrorism facility.

China has increased diplomatic pressure on Islamabad after a series of attacks in Pakistan targeting Chinese infrastructure and citizens in recent years.

After the Karachi attack, China's foreign ministry demanded efforts by Islamabad to "effectively close the security loopholes".

A ministry spokesperson said Islamabad should also introduce "more targeted measures to provide full protection for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the safety and security of Chinese personnel, projects and institutions in Pakistan".

Thousands of Chinese nationals are working on infrastructure projects in Pakistan as part of the economic corridor – a flagship Belt and Road Initiative project – and Beijing has also reportedly pushed Islamabad to allow its own security staff to provide protection for Chinese nationals there.

Reuters reported last month that Beijing had sent a written proposal to Islamabad with a clause allowing security agencies and military forces into each others' territory to assist in counterterrorism missions and conduct joint strikes. Neither side has confirmed the proposal.

Islamabad has carried out military offensives against separatist insurgents in Pakistan, including one in late November that killed four terrorists in three separate incidents in Balochistan province – home to major projects under China's belt and road scheme.

Those efforts are aimed at deterring militant groups like the separatist Balochistan Liberation Army, which has accused Pakistan's military of colonising the province with the help of China.

No groups have claimed responsibility for some of the attacks targeting China, including a suicide bombing near a Chinese dam project in Pakistan's northwest in March. Five Chinese engineers and their Pakistani driver were killed in that attack while they were on the way from their camp to the construction site in Dasu in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

## **China Refuses Nuclear 'Second Strike' Capability for Pakistan**

18 December 2024, The Defense Post, Inder Singh Bisht

China turned down Pakistan's request for a nuclear second-strike capability earlier this year in return for a military base in the strategic port city of Gwadar. The request was made during bilateral talks over the Chinese base interest, Drop Site revealed, citing sources.

According to the investigative outlet, Islamabad had already "privately" promised Beijing the facility in return for economic and military assistance.

The assistance has been framed as insulation against a potential US backlash in response to the decision. It includes modernization of Pakistan's military and intelligence capabilities to keep pace with traditional rival India.

Pakistan has strong economic ties with both the West and China and has sought to strike a delicate balance between the two.

Over a period of time, however, China has been projected as a more "natural ally" of Islamabad, necessitating greater integration with Beijing.

China is already Pakistan's biggest monetary lender and defense supplier.

However, Islamabad's latest request for a "second" nuclear strike capability has not gone down well with Beijing, according to Drop Site.

The chief concern over such a move is becoming a party to nuclear proliferation and potentially violating international laws.

China is classified a nuclear weapon state (NWS) under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which bars it from transferring nuclear weapons, technology, and material to a non-NWS state.

Despite possessing a proven nuclear arsenal, Pakistan is a non-NWS country as it is not a signatory to the NPT.

A violation of NPT could draw sanctions and economic and diplomatic consequences.

#### Nuclear 'Second-Strike' Capability

A nuclear "second-strike" capability is assured retaliation to a nuclear first strike. It is a perceived deterrence to an adversary's attempt to win a war with a decisive first nuclear strike.

"Second strike is designed to call a bluff and check a threat," Drop Site quoted military technology expert Kelsey Atherton as saying.

"If a country devotes significant resources to not just a nuclear arsenal, but a nuclear arsenal that can still be put into use even if some of it is destroyed, then the stakes of a first strike become too high to contemplate."

Pakistan's quest for the second-strike capability was reported soon after India's recent testing of a submarine-launched nuclear-capable ballistic missile (SLBM).

The 3,500-kilometer- (2,175 miles) range K4 SLBM was tested from the newly commissioned INS

Arighat, which is the country's second indigenous nuclear ballistic missile submarine.

An SLBM is considered the most reliable "second-strike" capability as it remains hidden from adversaries' sensors for longer, unlike the other branches of the nuclear triad: land-based nuclear missiles and air-launched assets.

The K4 is capable of striking all of Pakistan and most of China. A longer-range K5 with a range of 5,000 kilometers (3,107 miles) is also expected in the coming years.

Another mode of second strike could be a hardened underground silo, which could withstand even a nuclear strike.

#### Gwadar

China is investing billions in the South Asian country's infrastructure as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a key component of the larger Belt and Road Initiative.

The Gwadar deep-water port is at the end of a 3,000-kilometer (1,864 miles) land corridor connecting China's Xinjiang province to the Arabian Sea.

The corridor is designed to allow Chinese trade to bypass the vulnerable Malacca Strait, a narrow sea lane between Malaysia and Indonesia which could be blockaded by the US Navy during a conflict.

Not just an alternative to the Malacca choke point, a militarized Gwadar could allow China to impose its own blockades on Western energy shipments in the Middle East as a tit-for-tat move.

The city lies in the restive Balochistan province, which has been beset with protests and militant attacks for years.

A large part of the backlash is against the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which is perceived to be aiding the siphoning off of the province's natural resources.

Many Chinese nationals working on the project have been killed and injured in militant attacks, straining relations between the two strategic allies.

### CHINA: Pakistan, China's diplomatic relations deteriorates

17 December 2024, Daily Trust

Pakistan and China, long hailed as "all-weather allies," are experiencing significant strain in their diplomatic relations.

Beijing's growing frustration with Islamabad's inability to ensure the safety of Chinese nationals and projects within Pakistan has come to the fore.

This tension, marked by an unusually public diplomatic spat, reflects deeper issues in the partnership between these two nations, which have historically prided themselves on their strategic and economic alignment.



"As if Pakistan's government wasn't under pressure enough – with thousands of protesters on the streets and the capital Islamabad in lockdown amid calls to release former prime minister Imran Khan – relations with neighbouring China are also going from bad to worse," according to The Interpreter, an Australia-based think tank.

Recently, a rare diplomatic dispute has highlighted Beijing's increasing frustration over the safety of its citizens in Pakistan.

"It is unacceptable for us to be attacked twice in only six months," stated China's ambassador in Islamabad, Jiang Zaidong, in a notably candid reaction to remarks by a senior Pakistani politician perceived as downplaying the threat.

"President Xi [Jinping] cares about Chinese people's security and puts people's lives first," Jiang added. "He especially cares about the security of the Chinese people in Pakistan."

China and Pakistan share a relationship rooted in mutual interests, strategic necessity, and economic collaboration.

Since the 1960s, the two countries have fostered ties in various domains, including military cooperation, infrastructure development, and countering regional rivals, primarily India.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a cornerstone of China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), epitomizes the partnership.

Launched in 2015, CPEC has seen investments exceeding \$62 billion, promising infrastructure development, energy projects, and trade connectivity.

In return, China has reaped access to strategic ports like Gwadar and an economic corridor to the Arabian Sea.

However, the partnership has increasingly been tested, especially as security threats in Pakistan have escalated, directly impacting Chinese interests.

Beijing's anger stems primarily from repeated attacks targeting Chinese nationals and projects in Pakistan, particularly in the volatile Balochistan province.

Over the past few years, separatist groups like the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) have claimed responsibility for attacks on Chinese engineers, workers, and infrastructure.

These groups view China's investments in the region as exploitative, accusing it of neglecting local communities while profiting from the province's resources.

China's patience appears to be wearing thin. The lack of tangible progress in curbing attacks on its citizens and infrastructure projects has led to unusually pointed remarks from Beijing.

In recent months, the Chinese government has explicitly voiced concerns over Pakistan's inability to provide adequate protection.

In a rare public rebuke, Chinese diplomats criticized Pakistan's handling of security arrangements.

This comes amidst reports that Beijing has considered withholding further CPEC investments until tangible improvements are made.

Such a stance is unprecedented, considering China's historically cautious approach to publicly addressing issues with its allies.

The safety of its citizens has become a top priority for Beijing. Reports suggest that China has pushed for greater involvement in Pakistan's internal security measures, including deploying Chinese private security firms to protect its assets and nationals.

While Pakistan has allowed some degree of external security presence, such measures are often met with domestic resistance, complicating the situation further.

Beyond security, economic tensions have also emerged.

Pakistan's ongoing financial crisis has raised concerns about its ability to repay Chinese loans under CPEC.

Beijing, facing its own economic challenges post-COVID-19, appears reluctant to provide unconditional bailouts.

This has led to a more transactional dynamic in their relationship, replacing the earlier camaraderie with pragmatism.

Balochistan remains a flashpoint in the Pakistan-China relationship.

While the region is critical to CPEC, its socio-political challenges—ranging from separatist insurgency to local discontent—pose significant hurdles.

Pakistan's inability to address these issues undermines its credibility as a partner, frustrating Beijing.

China's growing interest in balancing its regional partnerships has also contributed to the evolving dynamic.

While Pakistan remains important, Beijing has been exploring closer ties with India, particularly in trade and technology.

This shift, however subtle, may signal a recalibration of China's South Asia strategy, further complicating its ties with Pakistan.

On the other hand, faced with mounting pressure, Pakistan has taken steps to reassure Beijing.

The Pakistani government has promised enhanced security measures, including establishing special security forces dedicated to protecting CPEC projects.

However, systemic challenges such as political instability, economic constraints, and persistent insurgency limit Islamabad's ability to deliver.

The Pakistani military, a key stakeholder in CPEC, has intensified efforts to secure Chinese investments. Joint

military drills and counterterrorism operations have been conducted to address security threats. Despite these measures, attacks continue, underscoring the complexity of the issue.

The growing rift between Pakistan and China raises questions about the future of their partnership.

While mutual interests remain strong, the relationship will likely see a shift from one based on unconditional support to a more conditional, performance-driven alliance.

The deterioration in Pakistan-China relations underscores the challenges of maintaining a strategic partnership amid growing security concerns.

For Pakistan, the stakes are high; losing China's support would significantly impact its economic and geopolitical standing, while for China, the situation serves as a cautionary tale about the risks of large-scale investments in volatile regions.

While the partnership is unlikely to collapse entirely, it is poised to undergo significant recalibration, according to experts.

### **CPEC Phase 2.0: Pakistan-China partnership enters new era with high-level engagements in Beijing**

15 December 2024, The Express Tribune

Contrary to slowdown rumors, recent developments signal renewed vigor strategic focus on advancing next phase of CPEC



NDRC spokesperson says the CPEC has made significant progress, as expressways, vocational schools and power plants funded by China have been put into operation in Pakistan. PHOTO: REUTERS/FILE

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative, remains the cornerstone of economic cooperation between China and Pakistan.

Contrary to rumors suggesting a slowdown, recent developments signal a renewed vigor and strategic focus on advancing the next phase of CPEC, dubbed CPEC Phase 2.0. This pivotal phase aims to redefine the framework of bilateral relations through deeper collaboration, advanced technological transfer, and transformative socio-economic projects.

Federal Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal, is spearheading Pakistan's engagement in a series of high-profile events in China, including the High-Level Seminar on CPEC 2.0 in Beijing and the 3rd Forum on China-Indian Ocean Region Development Cooperation in Kunming.

His participation underscores Pakistan's seriousness in revitalizing CPEC, addressing unresolved issues, and charting a robust roadmap for Phase 2.0, which envisions long-term prosperity for both nations.

#### **CPEC Phase 2.0: Strengthening Pakistan-China Ties**

At the heart of these engagements lies China's unwavering commitment to transforming CPEC into a strategic partnership that fosters growth, development, and connectivity.

Far from being sidelined, CPEC is evolving into a multi-dimensional framework with five key thematic corridors—Growth Corridor, Livelihood-Enhancing Corridor, Innovation Corridor, Green Corridor, and Opening-Up/Regional Connectivity Corridor.

These initiatives, proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping, align seamlessly with Pakistan's 5Es framework of Economy, Exports, Environment, Energy, and Equity, conceptualized under Ahsan Iqbal's visionary leadership.

China's eagerness to propel CPEC into Phase 2.0 is evident from its invitation to a 27-member high-level Pakistani delegation to Beijing. This delegation comprises seasoned professionals and experts from diverse fields who will receive specialized training to build their capacity for collaborative projects with Chinese counterparts.

This initiative reflects China's commitment to transferring cutting-edge technologies, modernizing Pakistan's infrastructure, and fostering a knowledge-based economy.

#### **Strategic Focus on Mutual Benefits**

During the preparatory orientation session in Islamabad, chaired by Ahsan Iqbal, the Minister stressed the importance of the delegation's mission, describing it as a "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity" to learn from China's transformative journey.

He highlighted how China has lifted over 800 million people out of poverty, achieving unparalleled economic progress. This remarkable transformation serves as an inspiring blueprint for Pakistan, which aims to replicate China's success through sustainable development and poverty alleviation initiatives under CPEC Phase 2.0.

The delegation's agenda includes key focus areas such as:

- Establishing an economic growth corridor with clear priorities.
- Advancing tech-driven industries and fostering innovation.
- Addressing poverty alleviation, education,

and healthcare through targeted socio-economic projects.

- Accelerating energy transitions and promoting sustainable economic models.
- Expanding exports and building global supply chain linkages.

This multifaceted approach aims to position Pakistan as a regional manufacturing and trade hub, serving as an economic engine for South Asia.

Minister Ahsan Iqbal's Role in Rebuilding Trust

Ahsan Iqbal's visit to China and participation in these critical engagements are expected to rebuild mutual trust and reassure Chinese leadership of Pakistan's commitment to CPEC.

The Minister has a proven track record in successfully implementing Phase 1 projects, particularly in infrastructure, energy, and Gwadar development. He has also been instrumental in advocating for the establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZs), paving the way for industrial relocation from China to Pakistan.

Chinese authorities have often acknowledged and praised Ahsan Iqbal's significant role in steering CPEC projects. His presence in Beijing will send a strong message about Pakistan's resolve to resolve outstanding issues from Phase 1, particularly regarding project security and operational challenges.

A key highlight will be his assurance to Chinese counterparts about prioritizing the security of Chinese nationals working in Pakistan, a critical concern for the Chinese government.

Charting the Path for Future Success

The seminar in Beijing, co-organized by Pakistan's Ministry of Planning and China's National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), will mark the official launch of CPEC Phase 2.0. This high-level event symbolizes the deep-rooted partnership between the two countries and their shared vision for a prosperous future.

With the emphasis on capacity building, this exercise aims to equip Pakistani experts with the skills and strategic vision needed to collaborate effectively with their Chinese counterparts.

The delegation's findings and recommendations will form the cornerstone of a comprehensive blueprint for CPEC Phase 2.0, ensuring its alignment with global sustainable development goals.

A Bright Future Ahead

CPEC Phase 2.0 represents a paradigm shift in Pakistan-China relations. With a focus on innovation, technology transfer, and sustainable development, this new phase promises to unlock Pakistan's economic potential and position it as a regional leader.

The visit of Ahsan Iqbal and the active participation of Pakistani experts in these high-level engagements

reflect Pakistan's unwavering commitment to the success of CPEC. Despite efforts to jeopardise this golden partnership, the China-Pakistan brotherhood is only becoming stronger.

As the two nations strengthen their partnership through initiatives like these, the world will witness CPEC Phase 2.0 emerge as a model of international cooperation and economic integration, benefiting not only China and Pakistan but the entire region.

### **China keen to invest \$1 billion in Pakistan to establish medical city**

14 December 2024, Times of India

A Chinese business delegation has met with President Asif Ali Zardari here and expressed interest in investing \$ 1 billion to establish a medical city in Pakistan, according to a media report. Pakistan has held strong bilateral relations with China which has supported it through many investments and development projects such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project which was termed as a "lifeline" for the country's economy.

The delegation of Chinese investors during a meeting with Zardari on Thursday outlined their plans to invest \$ 1 billion into creating the medical city in Karachi's Dhabeji Economic Zone which is outside Pakistan's biggest city and financial hub.

The medical city would be Pakistan's first fully integrated pharmaceutical and medical ecosystem.

Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (KATI) which is tasked with the running of the Dhabeji Economic Zone said in a statement that the pledge by the Chinese investors is an example of the growing economic ties between the two countries.

The meeting which was also attended by Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah and the Chinese Consul General was held after successful negotiations between the Sindh government and the conglomerate of Chinese investors.

President Zardari, according to the statement, highlighted the importance of fostering deeper economic and trade cooperation between Pakistan and China.

The statement said that the Chinese delegation also showed interest not only in the health sector but also in several other key areas, including agriculture, livestock, energy, transport, and manufacturing.

The President also told the government is committed to facilitate and provide cooperation to Chinese investments in Pakistan.

"We welcome Chinese investors and are determined to provide them with every possible support," he added.

The Sindh Chief Minister also told the investors that the government had introduced Chinese language

courses in the province to remove language barriers and enhance cultural ties between the two countries.

### **Pakistan Requested Nuclear Weapons Assistance From China in Talks Over Strategic Port**

13 December 2024, Drop Site, Murtaza Hussain and Ryan Grim

In bilateral talks this year, Pakistan asked China for a nuclear second-strike capability in exchange for the Gwadar Port—a demand that was rebuffed by China. Negotiations between the Pakistani military and China over the future use of a strategic port in the city of Gwadar have stalled over major demands made by Islamabad for support from Beijing, including the provision of a second-strike nuclear capability that would significantly upgrade Pakistan's nuclear weapons program.

The breakdown of talks with China comes amid a broader crisis facing the military, with public discontent over a failing economy, rigged elections, and the imprisonment of former prime minister Imran Khan triggering mass public protests in the capital this November. China has been long cited as a potential savior for the country's flailing economy. But, as Drop Site News has learned, that relationship appears to be in free fall over public and private disputes over security concerns, as well as China's demand to build a military base inside Pakistan.

Earlier this year, Drop Site reported on negotiations over the creation of a Chinese military base at the strategic Pakistani port city of Gwadar. According to classified Pakistani military documents, Pakistan had given private assurances to China that it would be permitted to transform Gwadar into a permanent base for the Chinese military.

As part of those ongoing talks, as Drop Site has learned from sources informed about the conversations, Pakistan's military-backed government has asked China to provide it sweeping concessions, including economic and military aid to insulate it from Western backlash over the strategically located port. But the request for a nuclear second-strike capability to be provided to Islamabad by Beijing goes well beyond previously known demands.

A second-strike capability is a highly prized form of military deterrent, as it allows a country to retaliate even if it suffers an attack that cripples other components of its nuclear triad. Possession of a second-strike capability is intended to deter hostile powers from attempting to win a war with a decisive nuclear first strike of their own, by guaranteeing that they would also face some form of nuclear retaliation regardless, whether from attacks carried out by nuclear-armed submarines or missiles stored in hardened silos.

"Second strike is designed to call a bluff and check a threat," said Kelsey Atherton, a military technology expert who has published on nuclear weapons, speaking generally. "If a country devotes significant resources to not just a nuclear arsenal, but a nuclear arsenal that can still be put into use even if some of it is destroyed, then the stakes of a first strike become too high to contemplate."

In the already select group of nuclear-armed countries worldwide, China is part of a small subset that maintains this capacity. According to sources with knowledge of the talks between Beijing and Islamabad, the demand for a second-strike capacity in exchange for Gwadar was deemed unreasonable by the Chinese side, leading to a stalling of negotiations. The failure to reach an agreement on the subject seems to have further soured the turbulent relations between the two allies and pushed back any agreement on militarization of Gwadar, despite Pakistan's repeated promises that it would be made available for Chinese use.

The ongoing talks between the two countries have taken place in a format known as the Consultation on Strategic Defense and Security Cooperation, or the 2+2 Dialogue. Previous rounds of 2+2 talks had been held in Beijing and the city of Urumqi, in China's Xinjiang region. The last round was held in Islamabad this January.

The Pakistani consulate in New York and the Chinese embassy in Islamabad did not respond to requests for comment for this story.

The Pakistani military has now found itself stuck with an increasingly difficult balancing act, as it attempts to maintain good ties with both the U.S. and China, even as the relationship between Beijing and Washington grows more and more hostile. With Donald Trump set to take office in the U.S. in January 2025, his expected hawkish stance on China and potential skepticism toward the Biden-era alliance with the Pakistani military junta could further complicate Pakistan's position and risk crucial support from both countries.

"The food is already on the plate"

The status of Gwadar, prized by China for strategic reasons, has long been a particular area of concern for the U.S., which is in the midst of a broad campaign to contain China in the Indo-Pacific region. The view held in Chinese security circles is that militarization of Gwadar is inevitable. Or, as a People's Liberation Army officer quoted in a 2020 study published by the U.S. Naval War College said, "The food is already on the plate; we'll eat it whenever we want to."

Beijing has pushed Pakistan hard to allow it access to Gwadar, currently the site of joint economic cooperation between the two countries, for military purposes—including, according to Drop Site's

sources, the ability to permanently station troops, military equipment, and resources for maintenance and logistics at the port.

Access to Gwadar would allow China to break free from U.S. naval blockades on its vital energy shipments in the Strait of Malacca, while potentially allowing the People's Liberation Navy to conduct its own blockades on Western energy shipments in the Middle East should a war break out.

In return for Gwadar, Pakistani officials taking part in the talks have asked Beijing to provide sweeping indemnification against any political, economic, and diplomatic blowback that Islamabad may suffer from the U.S. over granting the port to China, as well as support with modernizing its military and intelligence capacities to keep pace with rival India.

Yet it is the demand for second-strike capacity that reportedly antagonized China the most. Granting the demand would represent a major upgrade to Pakistan's own nuclear capability, but would also require China to become party to nuclear proliferation in the subcontinent and potentially violate international law.

As a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, China is classified as a nuclear-weapon state (NWS). The treaty explicitly prohibits NWS parties from transferring nuclear weapons, technology, or materials to any non-nuclear weapon state for the purpose of developing nuclear weapons. Pakistan, which is not a party to the NPT, is considered a non-nuclear-weapon state under the treaty framework.

A second-strike capability would be a huge and expensive augmentation to Pakistan's nuclear weapons program, entailing significant costs and technical complexity. Since the early 1990s, Pakistan has invested heavily in expanding and modernizing the nature of its nuclear arsenal, maintaining the fastest growing nuclear weapons stockpile in the world.

A 2016 report by the Carnegie Endowment for Peace noted that Pakistan's "ongoing arms buildup, continuing fissile material production, and investment in sea-based second-strike capabilities suggest a shift toward a complex deterrence posture rooted in the notion of maintaining a strategic balance," while citing retired senior Pakistani officers who stated, "a second strike capability is being developed by equipping the conventional submarines with nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles."

Providing nuclear weapons technology to another country would not only risk damaging China's global reputation, but also trigger likely diplomatic and economic consequences, including possible nonproliferation sanctions.

Despite longstanding security and political ties, relations between Pakistan and China have come under severe strain in recent years. In another

decision that reportedly infuriated Beijing, during a joint naval exercise last year known as Sea Guardians III, Pakistan did not allow Chinese ships to make a port call at Gwadar, in apparent deference to American sensitivity about China's presence at the site.

#### Protests and Insurgents

The 2+2 negotiations have taken place against the backdrop of a deteriorating political, economic, and social situation in Pakistan. Mass protests in Islamabad in November by supporters of former Prime Minister Imran Khan—who was deposed by Pakistan's military in 2022—paralyzed the capital for days, before a violent crackdown by the military killed an unknown number of protestors and dispersed the demonstrations. Militant and separatist violence in multiple provinces have also killed dozens of Pakistani security forces in recent months, while the country's leadership struggles to find solutions for widespread inflation and energy shortages.

The continued deterioration of Pakistan's relationship with China in this climate could cost it dearly. Pakistan today owes China billions of dollars in loans, Chinese energy companies power much of Pakistan, and, in the past few decades, Pakistan's major weapon purchases, including fighter jets and naval ships, have originated from China. So far these investments have not paid dividends for Pakistani citizens, who have continued to struggle with inflation and shortages despite China's increasingly visible footprint in the country. And terrorist factions in certain regions of the country have lashed out against China's presence, killing several Chinese engineers and citizens in repeated attacks.

In recent months, China has also aired rare public criticism of Pakistan over its failure to protect Chinese nationals in the country from terrorist attacks carried out by separatist insurgents in the province of Balochistan.

"China prioritizes the safety of its citizens globally," Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong said in a heated public exchange recently. "We cannot proceed with our projects if security concerns remain unresolved."

Balochistan is an important part of a major Chinese infrastructure project known as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), as well as the Gwadar port that China has sought to augment its own military capacity in the Indian Ocean. While CPEC was launched with grand promises of economic revival, it has so far proven to be a disappointment to both Islamabad and Beijing, partly due to ongoing militant violence and political instability inside Pakistan.

Militants in Balochistan have accused China of helping facilitate the exploitation of their province, by carrying out development projects aimed at



sapping its resources for the benefit of the government in Islamabad. They are also motivated by longstanding grievances with the Pakistani state, whom they accuse of neglecting their economic and political rights. The Baloch are an ethnic group spanning multiple countries in the region, including Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran, and insurgents have sought to secede and form a new state from these contingent parts. The insurgency in Pakistan is also believed to be supported by India, whom Pakistan also accuses of helping orchestrate terrorist attacks inside the country aimed at undermining foreign investment.

This week, Pakistani media reported that the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Planning Development was informed that Pakistan and China were entering into a joint security agreement to combat the terror attacks. Drop Site reported the existence of this proposed arrangement this September, in an article that was attacked by representatives of the Pakistani government at the time as fake news intended to harm the country's institutions.

The Pakistani military now finds it in a position where it is alienating its closest ally in Beijing, while also failing to reap meaningful benefits from the U.S., where the Biden administration has shown limited appetite for reengagement. A growing upsurge of criticism from lawmakers over the military's crackdown on democracy and imprisonment of Khan is now threatening to turn the country into a pariah in Washington, with little prospect that the incoming Trump administration will act to intervene in Pakistan's favor.

As the Pakistani government reels from these overlapping economic and political crises under military rule, it now faces the prospect of isolation from the majority of its own public, the U.S. government, and its closest foreign allies in Beijing. Far from helping guarantee its economic and security interests as had once been hoped, the stalled negotiations over Gwadar now threaten to add one more insolvable item to the military's growing list of dilemmas.

### **CM Maryam hails Pak-China ties as time-tested**

10 December 2024, Dunya News

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz on Tuesday said the friendship between China and Pakistan stood the test of time.

On the second day of her visit, she met with the Minister of International Department of Communist Party of China (CPC) Liu Jianchao. She thanked the minister for a warm welcome and praised the long-term vision of CPC.

She said due to the sincere efforts of the Chinese leadership, China has emerged as a leading economy at the international horizon.

The chief minister also highlighted the deepening connection between the people of both countries. She said their friendship demonstrated the ever-growing bond of masses in both sides of the aisle.

She expressed her appreciation for the huge success of China's rural sector and said Punjab would like to emulate that model. The CM her government would praise any cooperation of China to empower Punjab in models like local governance and rural development.

She, meanwhile, expressed her desire to focus on youth development to reap dividends.

### **Pakistan becomes third-largest buyer of Chinese solar panels**

09 December 2024, The Express Tribune

Pakistan imported 13 gigawatts of solar panels during the first half of the current fiscal year.

Pakistan's energy landscape is undergoing a dramatic transformation as the country becomes the third-largest importer of Chinese solar panels, fueled by soaring electricity prices and a growing shift toward renewable energy, according to a World Economic Forum report.

In a remarkable development, Pakistan's push toward solar adoption is rapidly accelerating, driven largely by market dynamics and external pressures, with minimal political backing.

As a result, Pakistan now ranks as the world's sixth-largest solar market, and is the third-largest buyer of Chinese-made solar panels, with imports surging to 13 gigawatts (GW) in the first half of 2024. The total expected imports for the year could reach 22GW, marking a significant leap forward in the country's transition to solar power.

The country's growing reliance on solar energy has been largely influenced by the dramatic rise in electricity tariffs, which have increased by 155% over the past three years. With grid electricity costs spiraling, many consumers, industries, and businesses have turned to solar power as a more cost-effective and reliable solution. This shift is reshaping the energy landscape and offering a glimpse into the future of energy use in emerging markets.

The surge in solar adoption has been significantly aided by China's overproduction of solar panels, which has driven down costs, making solar power more accessible to countries like Pakistan. Solar power now serves as an attractive alternative to the country's strained national grid, which has long struggled with reliability issues and inefficiencies.

In response to the growing demand for solar power, Pakistan has seen industrial, agricultural, and

residential sectors embrace solar energy in a big way. The first half of 2024 alone saw the import of 13GW of solar panels from China, with estimates suggesting total imports could reach 22GW by year-end. This marks a major milestone in Pakistan's energy transition, positioning the country as one of the fastest-growing solar markets globally.

The shift to solar energy has been largely market-driven, with little direct political intervention. While the Pakistani government has shown limited support for the transition, factors such as the rising cost of grid electricity and the overproduction of solar panels in China have played a key role in accelerating the shift toward solarization.

One of the driving forces behind the solar boom is the country's mounting electricity costs. With grid electricity prices having risen by more than 150% in just three years, many businesses and consumers have sought to reduce their reliance on the national grid by installing solar power systems. In addition to the financial incentives, the declining cost of solar panels, primarily driven by China's production surplus, has made solar power more affordable and accessible.

The rapid rise in solar adoption, however, comes with challenges. As more consumers and businesses disconnect from the national grid, the demand for grid electricity declines, pushing up the fixed costs that those who remain connected must bear. These rising capacity payments are straining Pakistan's already fragile financial system, contributing to further instability in the energy sector.

Pakistan's power grid, which has long been plagued by inefficiencies and underinvestment, is struggling to cope with the growing integration of solar power. The country's national grid, unable to provide consistent and reliable electricity, is facing the risk of further deterioration as more and more consumers abandon it in favor of self-generation via solar panels.

The need for grid modernization has become more urgent as solar power adoption accelerates. The integration of distributed renewable energy sources like solar is creating new challenges for Pakistan's electricity infrastructure, and experts warn that without significant upgrades, the national grid could face a downward debt spiral, exacerbated by the rising costs of capacity payments.

In addition to these challenges, the country's inconsistent energy policy, which has been marred by inefficiencies in electricity production, pricing, and regulation, is further deepening the energy crisis. Recent electricity price hikes, which some see as an alternative tax on consumers, have led to a sharp decline in grid electricity consumption, prompting more industries and businesses to turn to solar energy.

Despite these difficulties, Pakistan's energy transition offers significant lessons for other emerging economies. The country's experience demonstrates the importance of reducing reliance on traditional energy sources while balancing the need for grid stability and economic sustainability. With China playing a central role in Pakistan's solar energy shift, both as a key supplier of solar panels and an investor in the country's energy projects, the global nature of this transition is clear.

The momentum toward solar energy adoption in Pakistan has been further accelerated by falling battery costs, which are enabling more consumers to adopt solar-plus-storage solutions. This trend is expected to continue, with solar power expected to play an increasingly vital role in the country's energy mix.

However, experts warn that the rapid transition to solar energy, if not managed effectively, could have unintended consequences for the national grid. The growing reliance on distributed solar power systems is raising questions about the long-term viability of traditional state-run grids, which have been unable to meet the country's rising demand for energy.

Pakistan's experience highlights the urgent need for grid modernization, investment in smart energy infrastructure, and comprehensive market reforms to ensure the smooth integration of renewable energy sources. Additionally, as the global demand for clean energy continues to rise, emerging economies like Pakistan will need to rethink their energy strategies to avoid falling behind in the global race to decarbonize.

### **China, Pakistan flexing military muscle at anti-BRI militants**

04 December 2024, Asia Times, Richard S Ehrlich

Joint Warrior VIII exercise practices protecting Belt and Road Initiative projects from anti-Chinese insurgent attacks in Baluchistan

China's joint, three-week anti-terrorism exercise in Pakistan from November 20-December 11 aims to help defend Beijing's \$70 billion Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects against deadly anti-Chinese insurgents in Baluchistan province.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which includes upgrading Pakistan's north-south roads and Karakoram Highway to link Kashgar in China's landlocked Xinjiang province directly to Pakistan's hammerhead-shaped peninsula and port of Gwadar in Baluchistan on the Arabian Sea, close to the Persian Gulf, is under threat.

The CPEC is also expanding Gwadar's deep-water port so large Chinese vessels will have a much shorter route for shipping petroleum from the Persian Gulf to oil-hungry China. Currently, oil-laden ships

bound for China depart the Middle East through the Persian Gulf into the Arabian Sea and then route south around India toward Singapore.

To reach China's east coast ports, those ships must pass through the congested Malacca Strait, where US-backed Singapore monitors its narrow waters. Before docking in China, they then must sail up the South China Sea, which is wracked by US-China and regional rivalry to control its shipping lanes, islands and undersea resources.

The CPEC, however, would enable oil vessels from the Persian Gulf to stay in the Arabian Sea and unload their cargo at Gwadar for overland vehicle transport north to China's Xinjiang. "The deepening relationship between China and Pakistan through CPEC could strain US-Pakistani relations, driving Islamabad closer to Beijing," Washington-based Newlines Institute reported on November 14.

In addition to a sleek 1,860-mile (3,000-kilometer) highway and upgraded port, the CPEC projects at Gwadar include construction of a new Gwadar International Airport, a desalination plant, a coal-fired power plant, container berths and terminals for bulk cargo, grain, oil and liquified natural gas.

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) sent more than 300 special operations, army aviation and logistic support troops from its Western Theater Command to the Pakistan-China Joint Exercise, Warrior VIII, which ends on December 11, China Military online reported.

China's Western Command "guards the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with India and the China-Pakistan boundary," the Press Trust of India news agency reported on November 19.

## November

### **Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz set to visit China next month at special invitation**

30 November 2024, Dunya News

Maryam Nawaz Sharif is set to become the first woman chief minister of Punjab to visit China at a special invitation for next month, December.

The chief minister has formally received invitation from the ruling Communist Party of China. She has been invited for an official visit from Dec 8 to 15.

She will be flanked by a delegation during the eight-day trip when she will visit major cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong.

The invitation expresses a desire to enhance mutual cooperation between China's ruling party and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).

It also emphasises the promotion of deep mutual ties and friendship between the neighbouring countries.

During the visit, collaboration on matters related to information technology, healthcare, industry, smog, and climate change will be reviewed.

There will also be discussions on business and trade relations between the private sectors of Punjab and China.

During the visit, Maryam Nawaz Sharif will be briefed on China's development model, governance system, and the promotion of bilateral cooperation.

The Punjab CM will also meet prominent Chinese leaders and key government officials during the visit.

### **Pakistani exercises show how Chinese investments fuel military mission creep**

30 November 2024, The Washington Times

Port, transport projects with Islamabad face attacks from local insurgent groups

China's joint, three-week, anti-terrorism exercise in Pakistan, which kicked off November 20, is a stark illustration of an emerging new strategic reality.

While China's Communist leaders build up the country's military strength to challenge the global U.S.-established world order and to become the dominant power in East Asia, there are also more mundane reasons to beef up the power of the People's Liberation Army, such as protecting one's investment portfolio.

A major thrust of the new joint exercise is to help defend Beijing's \$70 billion Belt and Road Initiative projects, which have faced a series of deadly attacks by anti-Chinese insurgents in Pakistan's Balochistan province.

Under threat is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a massive infrastructure undertaking that includes upgrading Pakistan's north-south roads and Karakoram Highway, linking Kashgar in China's landlocked Xinjiang province directly to Pakistan's hammerhead-shaped peninsula and the port of Gwadar in Balochistan on the Arabian Sea, close to the Persian Gulf.

Drawing on Chinese investment funding through the Belt and Road Initiative, the CPEC has been expanding Gwadar's deep-water port so large Chinese vessels will have a much shorter route for shipping petroleum from the Persian Gulf back to the oil-ravenous domestic market.

Currently, oil-laden ships bound for China depart the Middle East through the Persian Gulf into the Arabian Sea, and then head south around India toward Singapore. To reach China's east coast ports, those ships must pass through the congested Malacca Strait, where U.S.-backed Singapore monitors its narrow waters.

Before docking in China, they then must sail up the South China Sea, which is the scene of mounting

U.S.-China tensions and clashing claims by China and countries around the region for control of shipping lanes, strategic islands, and undersea resources.

The Pakistan corridor, however, would enable oil vessels from the Persian Gulf to stay in the Arabian Sea and unload their cargo at Gwadar for overland vehicle transport north to China's Xinjiang region.

And that in turn has sparked new tensions with the United States, which has cultivated its own ties to Pakistan and watched with alarm as China's investment and security footprint in the country have grown in recent years.

"The deepening relationship between China and Pakistan through CPEC could strain U.S.-Pakistani relations, driving Islamabad closer to Beijing," the Washington-based Newlines Institute warned in an analysis published November 14.

Roads, ports, plants and airports

In addition to a sleek 1,860-mile highway and upgraded port, the CPEC projects at Gwadar include the construction of a new Gwadar International Airport, a desalination plant, a coal-fired power plant, container berths, and terminals for bulk cargo, grain, oil and liquefied natural gas.

To practice protecting that investment, China's People's Liberation Army sent more than 300 special operations, army aviation and logistic support troops from its Western Theater Command to the Pakistan-China Joint Exercise, Warrior VIII, which is set to run through December 11, China Military Online reported. In addition to protecting the corridor, China's troops are also being touted as a support force for Pakistan as it deals with jihadist and separatist threats within its own borders. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said on Nov. 20, as the exercises were just getting underway, that "China firmly supports Pakistan's effort of fighting terrorism." The 300 Chinese troops joined special operations forces from the Pakistan Army's Special Service Group (SSG).

"The exercise will focus on joint counter-terrorism clean-up and strike operations," Chinese-government-controlled Xinhua News Agency reported. "The two sides will engage in multi-level and mixed training across various specialties, and organize live troop drills in accordance with the actual combat process." China's Ministry of Defense said in its own statement that the exercise "aims to consolidate and deepen practical exchanges and cooperation between the two militaries, as well as to strengthen their joint anti-terrorism capabilities."

The drills began at Pakistan's National Counter-Terrorism Center in Pabbi, in mountainous northwest Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province which borders

Afghanistan near the Khyber Pass canyon, Radio Pakistan reported.

The Chinese troops and their equipment arrived in batches on Y-20 transport aircraft and marched onto Pakistan's tarmac in desert combat camouflage, including steel helmets topped with what appeared to be camera and telescopic lenses, according to online news videos.

They joined bearded Pakistani forces, similarly uniformed, at a joint flag-raising ceremony before deployment, field surveys, and setting up a command post.

But there is a subtext to the exercises, as China finds its workers and projects the target of a fierce separatist force that has long clashed with the central government in Islamabad.

"Significantly, the military drills, the eighth edition between the all-weather friends, are being held amid reports that China is pressing Pakistan to permit its forces to provide security for hundreds of Chinese personnel working in the \$70 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor," reported India-based Raksha Anirveda magazine which monitors defense and aerospace industries.

"The Baluch Liberation Army (BLA) along with the Islamic militant group Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) stepped up attacks against the Chinese nationals and the Pakistan military in Baluchistan and neighboring Khyber Pakhtunkhwa bordering the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan," the magazine said.

Ethnic insurgents have been fighting for decades for impoverished Balochistan's autonomy or independence. They claim Pakistan has carried out extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances in Balochistan in order to quash the rebellion, and exploits the province's natural resources while neglecting to provide the funds to develop the region's economy.

The insurgent forces have become increasingly anti-Chinese during the past 10 years, amid allegations that the province and Gwadar port will profit Beijing and Islamabad, but not Balochistan. Gwadar's port is administered by Pakistan's Maritime Secretary, and operated by the China Overseas Port Holding Co.

Hot, arid Balochistan borders similarly dry, bleak, undeveloped zones in southeast Afghanistan and southeast Iran. That Muslim-dominated triangle forms a Pakistan-Afghanistan-Iran tinderbox of competing feuds by tribes and governments.

Pakistani officials argue China's Belt and Road investments will benefit the very regions that are trying to undermine the projects now underway.

"CPEC will not only benefit China and Pakistan but will have a positive impact on Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asian republics, and the region," said

the Pakistan government's CPEC Secretariat on its website.

Beijing reportedly has pressed Islamabad to allow China's security forces to have boots on the ground to protect its workers, but Pakistan instead promised to boost security.

"Pakistan has decided to launch a comprehensive military operation to curb active terrorist organizations in the country's southwest Baluchistan province, the [Pakistani] Prime Minister's Office said in a statement," Xinhua reported on Nov. 21.

Difficult struggle

Pakistan and China however are expected to face difficulty upgrading Gwadar and the CPEC highway while grappling with bloody assaults by ethnic Baloch and other separatist forces.

In October, the separatist Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) claimed a suicide bombing that killed two Chinese engineers outside Karachi's international airport, 240 miles east of Gwadar.

"It is unacceptable for us to be attacked twice in only six months," an angry Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong publicly stated after the bombing.

The earlier attack killed five Chinese engineers working on China's Dasu Hydropower Project in March when a suicide bomber rammed their convoy in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

"We are solid in our commitment to the safety and security of Chinese nationals, institutions and projects overseas," the Chinese Foreign Ministry said at the time. "China and Pakistan have the resolve and capability to make the terrorists pay the price," the ministry's spokesman Mr. Lin said.

Also in March, security officials killed eight armed insurgents who were trying to enter the Gwadar Port Authority complex.

Pakistan has declared the Balochistan Liberation Army, the Balochistan Liberation Front and other Baluchi insurgents as terrorist organizations.

Balochistan's gold meanwhile has attracted China Metallurgical Group Corp (MCC), which opened gold mining sites in 2023 under Beijing's Copper-Gold Project in Baluchistan's Saindak region and nearby locations.

Baluchistan's natural resources also include oil, coal, and natural gas.

Balochistan's insurgents "perceive Chinese investments — the CPEC, in this case — as exploitative, on the grounds that the Balochi people allegedly have not benefited from socioeconomic development or improvement in their living conditions," Newlines Institute said. "In response, Beijing has demanded the Pakistani government conduct thorough investigations and increase security measures."

Pakistan said CPEC, which began construction in 2015, will streamline Balochistan's road, rail, port, air and data communication systems, attract

industries and agricultural development, improve medical facilities, vocational training, tourism, and create jobs.

The ambitious investment plans have even sparked an effort by Washington not to be left behind.

In September 2023, U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome "visited Gwadar's port and met with Port Authority Chairman Pasand Khan Buledi to learn about port operations and development plans, Gwadar's potential as a regional trans-shipment hub, and ways to connect with Pakistan's largest export market: the United States," the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad said in a statement at the time.

"In a meeting with Pakistan Naval West Command, Ambassador Blome discussed regional issues and emphasized a continued partnership in the years ahead," the embassy said.

Pakistani officials say they have tried to assure the U.S. that Gwadar will remain a commercial port open to all.

### **China, Pakistan talk security as they target terrorism against belt and road projects**

28 November 2024, SCMP, Meredith Chen and William Zheng

Top Chinese military official meets Pakistani counterpart in wake of attacks against Chinese interests in the South Asian country

China's top military official held security talks with his Pakistani counterpart on Wednesday amid joint counterterrorism drills in the wake of several attacks targeting Chinese interests and citizens in the South Asian country.

Zhang Youxia, vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), met Pakistani Chief of Army Staff Syed Asim Munir during a visit to Pakistan, vowing to strengthen ties as the two countries held their first joint anti-terrorism drills in five years.

Their talks focused on "regional security dynamics, measures for regional stability, and enhancing bilateral defence cooperation", according to Pakistan's military.

The Warrior-8 joint counterterrorism exercise began in Pakistan last week and will continue until mid-December, focusing on clean-up and strike operations.

China sent more than 300 troops from the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Western Theatre Command to take part, with the Chinese defence ministry saying the exercises were aimed at "testing and enhancing joint counterterrorism capabilities" and "consolidating and deepening pragmatic exchanges and cooperation" between the two militaries.



The ministry added that the drills involved “multilevel, multi-speciality integrated training” and simulating real combat scenarios.

The exercise comes in the aftermath of a string of deadly attacks targeting Chinese citizens and interests over the past year, attacks that have deepened concerns about regional security and overshadowed economic cooperation.

On November 19, when China unveiled the plan for the joint exercise, Islamabad announced a new military offensive against separatist insurgents in Balochistan.

Four terrorists were killed from November 20-22 in three separate incidents in Balochistan province, home to major projects under China’s Belt and Road Initiative, the Pakistan Armed Forces said.

Chinese military analyst Song Zhongping said joint counterterrorism exercises could deter terrorist groups and improve bilateral political and economic ties.

“China-Pakistan economic cooperation requires a strong security guarantee, as the security situation in Pakistan has been relatively complicated in recent years,” he said.

Song noted that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor – a flagship project under Beijing’s belt and road plan to grow global trade – had been particularly vulnerable to attacks and interference by local terror groups.

A suicide bombing outside Jinnah International Airport in Karachi killed two Chinese citizens and wounded another in early October. A separatist group, the Balochistan Liberation Army, has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Following the attack, China sent a task force to Pakistan and urged authorities to step up security measures and ensure the safety of Chinese citizens working on projects in the country.

The joint drill is the eighth in the Warrior series of exercises between the Chinese and Pakistani militaries and the first since 2019.

Song noted that the PLA had brought more unmanned devices to recent joint exercises, saying it was a way for China to showcase its military advancements while testing the equipment in different environments.

He added that the Ukraine war and other conflicts showed that unmanned equipment was crucial to counterterrorism operations and full-fledged military conflicts, and the PLA wanted to be a leader in this area.

On Tuesday, China concluded joint army training with Singapore focused on urban counterterrorism operations.

The drills, held in central China, featured window-breaking drones, wall-climbing robots, explosive ordnance disposal robots, and unmanned

reconnaissance and strike vehicles, according to the PLA’s official news portal.

Drones also featured heavily in joint exercises between China and Laos in July, according to state-owned Global Times. Those drills included training on drone countermeasures.

“China has a large amount of unmanned equipment already,” Song said. “It is necessary for the PLA to test it comprehensively in combat-like environments in these joint drills so we can improve it.”

Hong Kong-based military commentator Liang Guoliang said that unlike the US, which had taken a “high-end and expensive path” in its drone strategy, China “strives to develop both high-end and value-for-money drones”.

“The PLA has numerous drones and robot fighters with varying performance and quality,” Liang said.

“This will not only help the PLA to reduce casualties, but also greatly improve the combat effectiveness of Chinese soldiers.

“One soldier equipped with various unmanned equipment can take on many more enemies.

“By showcasing the latest unmanned weapons, China can help its neighbours to improve their understanding of the latest military tech and gain a better footing.”

### **Any attempt to harm Sino-Pak ties bound to fail: Chinese envoy**

28 November 2024, The Express Tribune

Says China's cooperation in Pakistan's development will continue unhindered

Consul General of People's Republic of China in Karachi, Yang Yundong has said that all-weather strategic cooperation between Pakistan and China has continued to deepen under the joint guidance and promotion of President Xi Jinping and Pakistani leaders.

Speaking at the media briefing at the consulate, organised to mark this year the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, Yundong said, iron-clad friendship between Pakistan and China is everlasting and ever-refreshing. The Pakistan-China relationship is of strategic significance. Any attempt to disrupt or undermine Pakistan-China cooperation is bound to fail.

He said, the two sides will continuously strengthen practical cooperation across various fields, jointly upgrade the CPEC and accelerate the construction of major projects in railways, highways, and ports. The two sides are ready to build Karachi-Hyderabad section in line with the modality of "implementing in a phased manner." The two sides will work together to refine and optimise the construction plan of Karachi-Hyderabad section and formulate financing and

implementation plans that are feasible and sustainable at the earliest.

The two sides will speed up the development of the auxiliary infrastructure of the Gwadar Port, steadily attract more cargo shipments to the port, find a solution to inadequate water and power supply at an early date, accelerate the development of the port's industrial zone, and solidly enhance connectivity between the port and other parts of Pakistan. The New Gwadar International Airport project aided by China has been completed.

Yundong said, China firmly supports Pakistan's efforts in combating terrorism and asks Pakistan to take targeted security measures to comprehensively safeguard the safety and security of Chinese personnel, projects and institutions in Pakistan, so as to create a safe and secure environment for the cooperation between the two countries. About China's achievement and remarkable social and economic development, the consul general said, China maintained an average annual economic growth rate of 8.9% for 45 consecutive years, increasing its economic scale by 47 times.

### **Rising Violence Threatens Chinese-Funded Projects In South And Central Asia**

27 November 2024, Radio Free Europe, Bashir Ahmad Gwakh and Frud Bezhan

Scores of multimillion-dollar Chinese-funded development projects dot South and Central Asia.

But rising violence is threatening to derail China's investments in the region, which is key to Beijing's global Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

In Pakistan, militants have killed seven Chinese workers so far this year. In Tajikistan, a Chinese worker was killed this month in the first attack of its kind.

The killing of Chinese nationals has highlighted the growing fighting capabilities of extremist groups in the region, which has long been a hotbed of militancy.

'The Chinese Are So Frustrated'

Thousands of Chinese nationals work in Pakistan, which is home to the \$60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), an integral part of the BRI.

To protect Chinese workers, Islamabad has created a special police force, installed hundreds of checkpoints, and erected numerous barriers around the megaprojects. But the measures have failed to curb the rising number of attacks on Chinese workers in recent years.

Experts have put that down largely to Pakistani security and intelligence lapses as well as the increasing capabilities of the Baloch Liberation Army,

the largest armed group in the southwestern province of Balochistan.

"China believes in safe investments, meaning they do not like conflicts around their projects," said Jalal Bazwan, a researcher at China's Zhejiang University. "The Chinese are so frustrated because of the inability of the Pakistan government to provide security that they will not invest in further projects," he added.

Balochistan, an impoverished but energy-rich region, is the site of dozens of Chinese-funded infrastructure, energy, and trade projects. The vast province borders Afghanistan and Iran and is home to Pakistan's Baluch ethnic minority, who accuse Islamabad of exploiting the province's natural wealth.

In October, the BLA killed two Chinese citizens in a bombing outside the airport in Pakistan's largest city, Karachi. In March, a suicide bomber drove an explosives-laden car into a bus carrying Chinese workers in northwestern Pakistan, killing five of them. No group claimed responsibility.

The fighting capabilities of the BLA, a separatist militant group, have increased in recent years.

Estimated to have around 5,000 fighters, the BLA has been boosted by the influx of U.S. weapons to Pakistan since the Taliban takeover of neighboring Afghanistan in 2021.

The BLA has also evolved in recent years, adopting tactics used by militant Islamist groups like suicide bombings. The BLA has also boosted its ranks by recruiting women.

Besides attacking Chinese nationals, the BLA has also rapidly increased its attacks on Pakistani security forces.

"Generous donations, tax and extortion of local projects, and the purchase of modern weapons have helped the BLA carry out more attacks with precision," said Bahot Baloch, a researcher on armed groups in Balochistan.

Experts say China is concerned that rising violence in Balochistan could disrupt its projects in Pakistan.

In a sign of Beijing's worries, China said on November 19 that it will send troops to Pakistan later this month for their first joint counterterrorism military exercise in five years.

Pakistan on November 19 announced plans to launch a new military offensive against militants in Balochistan.

"No doubt that the attacks have increased," said Abdullah Khan, managing director of the Pakistan Institute of Conflict and Security Studies think tank. "However, this will not deter China or make it wind down its projects and leave Pakistan. The billion-dollars investment is too big to pause. China is here to stay."

First Known Attack In Tajikistan

On November 18, one Chinese national was killed and four injured in a cross-border attack in Tajikistan's south, sources told RFE/RL's Tajik Service. The sources said the attackers crossed from Afghanistan. But it was unclear if they were criminals possibly involved in drug trafficking, a crime that is common in the area, or members of a militant group. The Chinese nationals were reportedly working at a gold mine in the Zarbuzi Gorge.

Significantly, the attack marked the first known incident resulting in the death of a Chinese national in Tajikistan, home to major Chinese-funded energy and transport projects.

The deadly attack underscored the persistent security concerns along Tajikistan's southern frontier. Dozens of extremist groups are active inside Afghanistan, including the Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K), the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), and Jamaat Ansarullah, which is comprised mainly of Tajik citizens.

Edward Lemon, a Central Asia expert at Texas A&M University, says China has long been concerned over the security of its operations in Tajikistan and it has invested significantly in bolstering the Tajik military and law enforcement.

"Rather than derailing China's investments in the country, I think this attack will only strengthen China's role in security in the country," he said. "We can expect further military aid, training, and potentially an expanded role for Chinese private security companies operating in the country to protect Chinese investments."

### **One killed, dozens injured in clashes with Imran Khan's supporters near Pakistan's capital**

26 November 2024, Reuters, Asif Shahzad

At least one police officer was killed and dozens of people injured in Pakistan as supporters of jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan clashed with security forces outside the capital Islamabad on Monday, officials and Khan's party said.

Authorities have enforced a security lockdown for the last two days after Khan called for a march on parliament for a sit-in demonstration to demand his release, while highways into the city have been barricaded.

One police officer was shot and killed, at least 119 others were injured, and 22 police vehicles were torched in clashes just outside Islamabad and elsewhere in the Punjab province, provincial police chief Usman Anwar said. Two officers were in critical condition, he said.

Khan's party said scores of its workers were also hurt.

It said the jailed leader's third wife, Bushra Bibi, and a key aide, Ali Amin Gandapur, who is the chief

minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, were leading a march that arrived almost inside Islamabad on Monday night.

The government has used shipping containers to block major roads and streets in Islamabad, with patrols of police and paramilitary personnel in riot gear.

Officials and witnesses said all public transport between cities and terminals had also been shut down in the eastern province to keep away the protesters,

Provincial Information Minister Uzma Bukhari said about 80 of Khan's supporters had been arrested.

Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif told local Geo News TV that the government sought talks with leaders of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party to calm the situation. "It was a sincere attempt I must say but it didn't yield any results," he said.

### **BULLET FOR BULLET**

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said security forces showed "extreme restraint" in confronting the protesters, some of whom he said had fired live rounds, while police only used rubber bullets and fired teargas canisters.

"It is easy to respond a bullet with a bullet," he said.

He said the government had offered Khan's party permission to hold a sit-in protest at an open field on Islamabad's outskirts, adding the party's leaders took this offer to Khan at his prison cell, but, "we haven't yet heard back on it."

Naqvi added the protesters would not be allowed to reach outside parliament, warning the government will be forced to use "extreme" steps if they did not budge, which could include imposing curfew or calling in army troops.

"We will not let them cross our red lines," he said

But Khan's party accused the government of using excessive violence to block the protesters and said hundreds of workers and leaders had been arrested.

"They are even firing live bullets," one of Khan's aides, Shaukat Yousafzai, told Geo News.

Reuters TV and local TV footage showed police firing teargas canisters at Khan's supporters, who were pelting them with stones and bricks.

The videos showed vehicles and trees ablaze along the main march just outside Islamabad as the protesters at some places pushed shipment containers to make their way.

The capital has bolstered security for Monday's arrival of the president of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko for a three day visit, a Pakistan prime minister office statement said.

Gatherings in Islamabad have been banned, while all schools in the capital and the adjacent city of Rawalpindi were to remain closed on Monday and Tuesday, the authorities said,

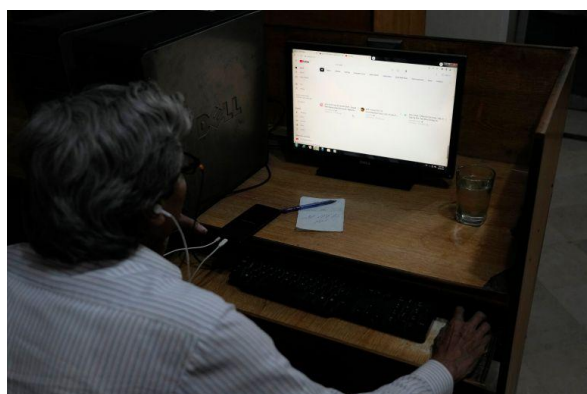
The protest march, which Khan has described as the "final call", is one of many his party had held to seek his release since he was jailed in August last year. The party's most recent protest in Islamabad, early in October, turned violent.

Voted out of power by parliament in 2022 after he fell out with Pakistan's powerful military, Khan faces charges ranging from corruption to instigation of violence, all of which he and his party deny.

### **Pakistan tests secret China-like 'firewall' to tighten online surveillance**

26 November 2024, Aljazeera, Abid Hussain

The new monitoring system could give the government unprecedented insights into citizens' online use. It could also slow down the internet.



The Pakistani government is deploying a national internet firewall, which experts fear can be used to surveil regular internet users [KM Chaudary/AP Photos]

Pakistan's government has deployed Chinese technology to build what some senior officials familiar with the project are calling a new, national internet "firewall" that will allow authorities to monitor online traffic and regulate the use of popular apps with greater control than before.

The project aims to upgrade the government's web monitoring capabilities at the country's main internet gateways, as well as at the data centres of mobile service and major internet service providers.

Senior executives from two internet service providers (ISPs) and an official from the country's security establishment told Al Jazeera that trials of this new firewall, installed as part of Pakistan's internet infrastructure, were responsible for a spate of complaints of poor internet connectivity in the country in recent months.

Officially, though, government officials, while acknowledging that they are tightening the country's online monitoring structure, have denied that this is to blame for slowdowns in internet speed.

The trial of the new firewall comes at a time of heightened political tensions in Pakistan. The

country's authorities have suspended mobile internet and blocked several VPNs amid a massive protest launched by supporters of former Prime Minister Imran Khan, who is under arrest since August 2023 over a spate of charges. The protesters, who have arrived in Islamabad despite court orders against their agitation, are demanding Khan's release. At least six security personnel have died in clashes with the protesters so far.

The new monitoring system – the trials started well before the latest protest march – cost between 20 to 30 billion rupees (\$72m to \$107m), according to officials aware of the project.

Since mid-July, internet users in Pakistan have reported frequent slowdowns, degraded service quality and occasional disruptions to multimedia features on WhatsApp, the widely used messaging app.

"The issues internet users faced in July were due to the firewall testing, which also affected WhatsApp's multimedia functions, such as sending photos, videos, voice notes and making audio/video calls," said a senior official from one of the country's leading ISPs. A firewall is a combination of hardware and software used by governments or organisations to control and monitor internet traffic, acting as a digital gatekeeper that decides what data to allow or block.

According to the ISP official, Pakistan's previous technology lacked the ability to manage applications or websites at a "granular level" – a capability that the recently acquired Chinese technology provides.

"The new firewall also allows specific features within an app or website to be blocked or throttled," he explained, citing the example of WhatsApp in several Middle Eastern nations, where users cannot make audio or video calls on the platform but can use other multimedia features.

A Ministry of Defence official, familiar with the new deployments, also confirmed that Pakistan had acquired a new "firewall system" from China, which was first tested in mid-July.

"Typically, such systems are tested in a sandbox environment to avoid widespread service disruptions," the official told Al Jazeera, requesting anonymity as he was not authorised to speak to the media.

However, Pakistan's internet infrastructure – such as fibre optics, network-related equipment, switches and routers – has been built using technology from a range of countries including France, Finland, the United States and China.

"Due to the diverse equipment in Pakistan's internet infrastructure, testing on a live system was necessary, leading to some initial connectivity and service issues," the official explained.

The official added that the new system has the ability to block VPNs and significantly enhance real-time

monitoring through a range of content filtering methods.

A VPN is a tool that creates a secure connection between a device and a network by encrypting internet traffic and masking the user's online identity. Pakistani authorities have long struggled with attempts to block specific articles, videos or other content online without needing to pull the plug on an entire website.

In a particularly notorious incident in 2008, Pakistan wanted to block a YouTube link that the government argued contained a blasphemous documentary. Instead, Pakistan ended up crashing YouTube globally.

The new system, the Defence Ministry official said, would be the first to help Pakistan get around that frustrating challenge. "Instead of blocking an entire platform like YouTube or a website, we can now restrict access to a single video or article," the official said.

Shifting explanations for internet slowdown

In July and August, when instances of internet slowdown were at their peak, the government offered a range of explanations: Excessive VPN use, faulty submarine cables, global internet collapse after an outage at the US cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike, a cyberattack and routine failures.

On August 15, following a parliamentary committee meeting, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Pakistan's minister for information technology, said she was "not aware" of any firewall testing but added that Pakistan was upgrading its existing "Web Management System" (WMS) due to cybersecurity threats.

"Every government in the world takes measures to implement cybersecurity measures. We previously had a WMS, and now there is an upgrade of the same," Khawaja told reporters.

Three days later, during a news conference, Khawaja robustly denied any allegations of government tampering with the internet, saying there was no order to "throttle" the web. She blamed excessive VPN use.

"A large number of people in the country now use VPN, which leads to pressure on the internet resulting in a slowdown," she told the media.

On August 21, Hafeez-ur-Rehman, a retired major general and the head of the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), the country's telecom regulatory body, told a group of parliamentarians that faults in one of the seven submarine cables connecting Pakistan to the global internet were responsible for the slow speeds.

Rehman firmly denied that the installation of a new monitoring system was behind the disruptions.

"Every country has some mechanism to monitor internet content or services. Whether you call it a

firewall, a web monitoring system, or content filtering, it exists everywhere. We are also upgrading our system, but it is not the reason for the slow internet," Rehman told parliamentarians during the meeting.

In a written response to Al Jazeera, the regulator reiterated that a WMS had been operational in the country for several years to "monitor and mitigate" illegal telecom activities, commonly known as grey traffic, but was not responsible for the degraded internet quality. "WMS is continuously upgraded to cater for the increasing usage of the internet. It has never caused a slowness in internet services," the PTA said.

Khawaja also submitted a response to the National Assembly on August 26 [PDF], in which she confirmed that the PTA was using a WMS for "internet content management", through which applications or websites were blocked in Pakistan.

Despite several attempts to contact Khawaja, the minister did not respond to Al Jazeera's questions regarding the capabilities, objectives, origins, procurement details, or costs of the new firewall – or any details about the WMS.

However, in a written response submitted to Pakistan's Senate, Khawaja said that the PTA, as the regulatory body, was not involved with the firewall project.

The "PTA is not involved in the funding, procurement, deployment, or operations of any firewall project at the national level," Khawaja said [PDF] on September 12, responding to questions from senators.

Confusingly, Khawaja has over the months used the terms "management" and "monitoring" alternatively on various occasions, while referring to the monitoring system which, according to the military official and the ISP executives Al Jazeera spoke with, has surveillance capabilities.

A 'national firewall' for 'national security'

Pakistan, a country of 241 million people, has nearly 140 million broadband users and 190 million mobile subscribers. However, it relies on just two major internet gateway points, both located in Karachi, the country's largest city and economic hub.

These gateways, operated by the state-owned Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) and private-sector firm Transworld Associates (TWA), are connected by seven submarine cables that provide internet connectivity.

According to a statement from the PTA in January, upgrades to Pakistan's web monitoring system at these gateways began in December 2023.

This announcement came after then-Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar revealed the imminent introduction of what he described as a "national firewall" to regulate the country's social media.



"We are working on technology-based solutions to address our challenges and threats," Kakar said in a late January interview, just before the February 8 general elections.

On the morning of February 8, the Ministry of Interior announced the closure of mobile internet services across the country to "maintain the law and order situation and to deal with potential threats".

But the first signs of a broader internet crackdown appeared on February 17, when users found themselves unable to access the social media platform X.

Simon Migliano, head of research at Top10VPN.com, an independent VPN review website, noted that after the X ban, VPN use in Pakistan more than doubled compared with the previous four weeks.

The newly elected government, led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, initially remained silent on the issue but later disclosed that X had been blocked under orders from the Interior Ministry for non-compliance with government directives to take down content.

"The decision to ban X was made to uphold national security, maintain public order, and preserve the nation's integrity," the ministry stated in its report to the Islamabad High Court in April.

While statements from various government officials continued to hint at the introduction of a new "firewall", it wasn't until mid-July that widespread internet service disruptions began. Users across the country reported sluggish speeds, degraded service quality and frequent connectivity issues.

Most notably, WhatsApp's multimedia services were disrupted, though text messaging on the platform continued without issues.

Arturo Filasto, co-founder of the Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI), confirmed that WhatsApp multimedia features had been "throttled" on July 17.

OONI data from August revealed similar interference, showing that internet traffic was "monitored" and that user attempts to connect with Signal, another encrypted communications app, were also impeded.

Jazz, the country's largest mobile service provider, acknowledged receiving complaints about degraded internet services.

"We have received reports of disruptions affecting some users on certain social media platforms. Our team is actively investigating the issue and remains committed to ensuring uninterrupted service," a Jazz spokesperson said in a statement emailed to Al Jazeera in early September.

Al Jazeera also reached out to more than two dozen officials across several ISPs, telecommunications companies and government departments. Only a few

responded, and those who did spoke on condition of anonymity, while most declined to comment.

Like a security checkpoint, slowdowns are inevitable. For nearly two decades, Pakistan has deployed monitoring hardware and software solutions, primarily to combat grey traffic and counter "offensive material" online.

The country has a longstanding ban on pornographic and blasphemous content. It also regularly issues content takedown requests to social media platforms under national laws.

In the 2010s, the government began seeking more sophisticated surveillance technologies, capable of intercepting mobile phone calls and monitoring internet activity.

In December 2018, Pakistan signed a five-year contract worth \$18m with Canadian firm Sandvine for a WMS.

The Sandvine WMS, like other similar surveillance systems, could perform various content filtering measures such as Uniform Resource Locator (URL) filtering, Internet Protocol (IP) filtering, Domain Name System (DNS) filtering and keyword filtering – all designed to manage the internet traffic passing through the WMS, which was installed on the country's internet gateway points.

However, the most powerful tool in its repertoire was Deep Packet Inspection (DPI) – a method that intercepts and analyses data transmitted over a network and is capable of decrypting and monitoring traffic between users and servers.

DPI works like an airport scanner, allowing authorities to look inside the data packets travelling across the internet and check their contents for sensitive information.

Monitoring systems like Sandvine "heavily rely on DPI", explained Haroon Ali, a cybersecurity expert and director at the Australian Cyber Corporation, a Sydney-based private organisation specialising in cybersecurity for businesses and government clients.

"DPI examines data packets at a granular level, identifying the type of traffic and allowing for blocking or deeper inspection based on the rules set within the WMS," Ali told Al Jazeera.

According to two employees at a major ISP, the Sandvine contract ended in November 2023: The system had struggled to handle Pakistan's growing internet traffic and increasing monitoring demands.

"The system became overloaded due to the constant addition of new rules. Each rule consumes bandwidth and capacity," one ISP employee told Al Jazeera.

Meanwhile, the Defence Ministry official said that the new firewall system being implemented will offer more advanced surveillance capabilities.

"The goal is to monitor everything without shutting down or restricting the entire system. A powerful DPI-enabled system can gather metadata from users,

even if their primary data traffic remains encrypted,” the official said.

Metadata, or “data about data”, includes crucial information such as a user’s network, device, timestamps and location, and plays a key role in identifying individuals.

WhatsApp, for example, collects various types of metadata, including timestamps, IP addresses, device information, timing of use, and sender and recipient details.

While metadata does not contain actual message content, and no WMS system can read the messages themselves, Ali, the cybersecurity expert, explained that metadata still holds enough information to compromise user anonymity.

“A WMS can be a powerful surveillance tool, using DPI to analyse metadata and potentially breach user privacy,” he said.

But the manner in which Pakistan plans to deploy the new system could inevitably slow internet speeds, warn some experts – not as a bug but as a feature.

Major websites and services like Google, Netflix and Meta store copies of frequently requested online content locally, reducing the need to fetch data from distant servers. That, however, means that a WMS that monitors only internet gateways to the country does not capture use details of locally stored data.

To get around that, a senior ISP executive said the new web monitoring system was being deployed not only at the country’s internet gateway but also at local data centres of mobile service providers and ISPs.

“Unlike the Sandvine system, the new DPI-based system is now capable of monitoring local internet traffic,” the executive added.

But to monitor local traffic, the new firewall will use what is known as an “in-line network”, which acts like a security checkpoint, where each data packet must be inspected and either allowed to pass or be blocked – as opposed to an alternative mechanism that simply observed and records traffic without interfering with its flow.

The use of an in-line network “will inevitably slow down internet speeds”, the ISP official said.

It could lead to “slower internet and delays, affecting real-time applications like video conferencing and degrading the overall user experience”, said Usman Ilyas, an assistant professor at the University of Birmingham.

So, why would any government employ an in-line network? The answer is simple, said Ilyas: This mechanism is necessary for surveillance and censorship.

Could VPNs be responsible for slow speeds?

Both the PTA and the IT Ministry have repeatedly denied that internet slowdown concerns are linked to the new firewall deployment or testing.

On September 6, the IT Ministry submitted a written response to the National Assembly, detailing three major submarine cable faults in 2024 that affected internet services in the country. The ministry said that all but one fault, which occurred in June, had been resolved.

Research by Bytes for All, an Islamabad-based organisation focused on information and communication technologies, recorded at least 15 major internet and mobile service disruptions in Pakistan this year.

Aftab Siddiqui, a senior manager at the Internet Society, an international advocacy group, also confirmed the cable fault disrupting Pakistan’s internet services in June, but added that this alone did not fully explain the widespread service degradation.

Often, he said, the government does not even explain reasons for slowdowns and disruptions, “showing a notable lack of transparency”.

Bytes for All also challenged Khwaja’s, the IT minister, claims blaming excessive VPN use for internet slowdowns, in a detailed technical report.

Published on August 27, the report contradicted Khawaja’s assertion, showing that using a VPN often improved internet quality.

The report further observed that this improvement in service quality suggested that a VPN allowed users to bypass “throttling or DPI measures”.

According to data by Top10VPN, Pakistan’s VPN use in July and August 2024 was 63 percent higher than in the same period in 2023. Migliano of Top10VPN said that the claim that excessive VPN use was causing internet slowdown was “absolutely absurd”.

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“Whether it is a case of ignorance or wilful misinformation is not for me to say,” he told Al Jazeera. While VPNs consume a marginally greater bandwidth than regular connections, “it is simply not possible for a VPN to impact the wider network beyond the device where it is installed”.

Meanwhile, Arturo Filasto, co-founder of OONI, said that the internet degradation data collected by his organisation was “very inconsistent” with the government narrative that a submarine cable cut could alone have caused the internet disruption suffered by the country.

“If that were the case, you would not see failures affecting only specific services but rather, many services indiscriminately,” Filasto explained. “What we see in the data is consistent with the hypothesis of this being the result of the rollout of newly acquired technology.”

Expanding internet control

Over the years, the Pakistani government has expanded its control over the internet, using both

technological means and legislation to regulate what users can access and consume.

But the latest attempt at a firewall comes at a time when the government has been accused by critics of particularly targeting former Prime Minister Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) – the country's most popular political party.

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Ironically, Khan's PTI government itself had authorised the purchase of the Sandvine WMS and was accused of censorship during its time in government, between August 2018 and April 2022.

According to Freedom House, a political advocacy group based in Washington, DC, during that time, Pakistan's net freedom score hovered between 27 and 25 out of 100.

Its latest 2024 Freedom on the Net report shows no improvement, with Pakistan scoring 27 out of 100, maintaining its "not free" status.

However, since Khan was removed from power two years ago through a parliamentary vote of no confidence, the party has faced a crackdown. Khan has spent 15 months behind bars facing numerous charges, and his party has faced mass arrests of leaders and workers, as well as online restrictions.

In December last year, PTI held a "virtual rally" as part of its election campaign, drawing more than 5 million views across social media platforms, with imprisoned Khan delivering a four-minute speech which was generated with the help of artificial intelligence.

Internet users reported service outages during livestreaming of the speech, a disruption confirmed by NetBlocks, an internet tracking company. The party's website remains inaccessible in Pakistan at the time of writing.

On November 24, PTI supporters launched a protest march towards Islamabad to seek Khan's release from jail, during which the government once again restricted access to VPNs while shutting down mobile internet services across the country.

WhatsApp multimedia services were also disrupted, leaving disgruntled users unable to download photos and videos, or exchange voice notes without VPNs. The restriction on services was also confirmed by Netblocks in a message on X.

Digital rights activist Farieha Aziz linked the "tremendous secrecy" and "palpable sense of urgency" surrounding the deployment of Pakistan's new firewall system to the country's political climate.

"This rush seems tied to the current political environment, aimed at controlling the flow of information and narrative building," Aziz told Al Jazeera.

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The urgency behind these secretive firewall trials also comes at a time when Pakistan's powerful military

has described threats from what it calls "digital terrorism".

The military, which has governed the country directly for more than three decades and continues to wield significant political and social influence, introduced the term earlier this year.

Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the military's media wing, claimed that "politically motivated and vested digital terrorism" was being used to spread despondency within the country.

"It is to sow discord among national institutions, especially the armed forces, and the people of Pakistan by peddling blatant lies, fake news, and propaganda," the military said in a press release in May this year.

The military's statement was widely interpreted as an allusion to PTI, a party which is considered technologically the savviest in the country and whose supporters often dominate social media narratives.

Party supporters have been targeted for running "anti-state digital campaigns" while raids on PTI offices, including its headquarters in Islamabad, have resulted in arrests on charges of "digital terrorism" and "false propaganda" via social media.

However, Aziz argued that the concept of "digital terrorism" had no legal standing.

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"This term was coined in a political context and holds no legal validity. The narrative being built around it suggests that it's more about controlling political discourse than addressing any genuine cybersecurity threats," she said.

Turning to China

None of this is entirely new, say analysts. During the PTI's tenure in government – the party was widely seen as close to the military at the time – numerous critics were arrested for their views on social media. Websites and pages were blocked, and social media platforms were pressured to remove content deemed to violate the "integrity, security and defence of Pakistan", among other reasons.

Under Khan, both the PTI government and the military began using the phrase "fifth-generation warfare", suggesting that "anti-state propaganda" was being spread against Pakistan on social media, necessitating a robust digital defence. It was a precursor to the concept of "digital terrorism".

But some things have changed.

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Previously, Pakistan relied heavily on Western technology for regulating its internet, using hardware and software solutions from companies like Sandvine, FinFisher, and Netsweeper. However, facing pressure from digital rights groups, many of these companies stopped providing services to Pakistan, leaving fewer options available.

As Pakistan's ties with China, its neighbour and closest ally, further strengthened, particularly following the launch of the \$62bn China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) infrastructure project, China has also emerged as its new technological partner.

During the last few years, the idea of replicating China's Great Firewall – its sophisticated internet censorship and surveillance system – also began to take hold within Pakistan's security establishment.

Any firewall is only as good as its ability to stop leakages. Like China, where only government-approved VPNs can legally be used to get around online barriers, Pakistan, too, is moving towards banning the use of "illegal" VPNs.

In its written response to Al Jazeera in September, the PTA said it was "in touch with stakeholders to adopt a viable solution to facilitate legitimate VPN usage while fulfilling its obligations under our laws".

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However, in early November, several VPN services became inaccessible in Pakistan for a few hours before being restored. PTA, the regulator, did not directly address the sudden outage, or the resumption.

Then, on November 15, the Interior Ministry asked the PTA in a letter to "block illegal VPNs" across the country, saying they were being used to "facilitate violent activities" as well as to access "pornographic and blasphemous content", both of which are banned in the country.

"Of late, an alarming fact has been identified, wherein VPNs are used by terrorists to obscure and conceal their communications," the letter by the ministry, seen by Al Jazeera, said.

#### Economic risks

While the vendors behind Pakistan's new firewall remain unconfirmed, analysts agree that the country's internet infrastructure is centralised and fairly restrictive.

According to Ilyas, the academic, Pakistan's censorship capabilities were modest before the latest disruptions began.

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"But the new system, rumoured to be deployed this year, is a lot less transparent and far more disruptive to productivity and user experience," he said.

Ali, the Sydney-based cybersecurity expert, explained that while many countries deploy web monitoring systems, they do so with legal oversight.

"Countries like the US or UK use similar systems, but they often have legal guardrails – such as court orders and procedural checks – to protect privacy and freedom of speech," he said.

Experts say there is little guarantee that Pakistan will ensure similar safeguards while using its new firewall.

For a country striving to improve its struggling economy with export revenue from its growing IT industry, the implications of a more intrusive firewall are economically significant, too.

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Any system that disrupts internet services, hampers business operations or raises privacy concerns could pose a serious threat to both private individuals and the broader business community, digital rights activist Aziz said.

"Pakistani businesses rely on global platforms for services like web hosting, and many have contracts requiring confidentiality. If the new system inspects network traffic, blocks VPNs, or imposes a registration regime, it could create more obstacles," she warned.

Pakistan then risks being perceived as an unstable and unattractive market for investment, she said – precisely at a time when Prime Minister Sharif and his team have been desperately wooing countries like Saudi Arabia, China and the United Arab Emirates for big-ticket projects.

"Lack of transparency, invasive technology and regressive policies are creating an environment where there is no guarantee of service, the rule of law is weak, and even court actions don't necessarily lead to relief," Aziz said.

"This doesn't bode well."

### **Pakistan's military to launch new offensive against separatist militants**

20 November 2024, Reuters, Asif Shahzad

Pakistan plans a new military offensive against separatist insurgents in southwestern Balochistan province, home to key Chinese Belt and Road projects, but it was not immediately clear if the plan would be a joint effort with its giant neighbour.

Following a string of deadly attacks that targeted its citizens in recent months, China has pushed to join security efforts to protect them, and on Tuesday unveiled a plan for joint counter-terrorism exercises in Pakistan.

The exercise, which both the sides called Warrior-VIII between the Pakistan Army and Peoples' Liberation Army of China, was launched at a northwestern Pakistani counter-terrorism facility, a Pakistani army statement said.

"The exercise is aimed at refining professional skills through joint training, besides harnessing (our) historic military-to-military relations," said the statement, largely echoing a Chinese defence ministry announcement the day before.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chaired a meeting of civil and military leaders who gave the go-ahead for the "comprehensive operation", his office said in a statement.

But it stopped short of saying whether the effort was limited to ground operations, or could involve the air force, and whether it was prompted by China's disquiet at the separatist attacks.

Pakistan's information ministry and the military did not immediately respond to requests for details on the nature of the offensive.

Asked whether China was involved in Pakistan's planned offensive against Balochistan insurgents, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said on Wednesday, "I do not understand the situation you mentioned."

He added: "As a matter of principle, China firmly supports the anti-terrorism efforts of the Pakistani side and is willing to deepen pragmatic cooperation with (it) in various fields to better benefit the two countries and (their) peoples..."

Pakistan's military already has a huge presence in the rugged region bordering Afghanistan and Iran, where insurgent groups have been fighting for a separate homeland for decades to win a larger share of benefits from the resource-rich province.

The military has long run intelligence-based operations against the insurgent groups, the most prominent being the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), which escalated attacks in recent months on the military and nationals from longtime ally China.

The region is home to Gwadar Port, built by China as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a \$65 billion investment in President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road infrastructure initiative to expand China's global reach.

In addition to the recent attacks, the BLA claimed a suicide bombing last month outside the international airport in the southern port city of Karachi that killed two Chinese engineers.

### **China's PLA Sends Troops To Joint Anti-Terrorism Exercise In Pakistan**

20 November 2024, Memri TV

The Western Theater Command of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) has sent troops to Pakistan to participate in a joint anti-terrorism exercise from late November to mid-December, amid reports that Beijing is increasingly concerned about recurring attacks by Baloch militants targeting its nationals working on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects, which exploit resources in Pakistan-controlled Balochistan. This clip is a video report about the exercise, published on November 20, 2024 on YouTube by China's CCTV Video News Agency.

Onscreen text: "The Western Theater Command of the Chinese People's Liberation Army have sent troops to Pakistan to participate in a joint anti-terrorism exercise from late November to mid-December."

Coded 'Warrior-VIII', the exercise will focus on joint counter-terrorism clean-up and strike operations.

"This year's exercise is the eighth joint exercise of the series between the Chinese and Pakistani militaries with the aim to consolidate and deepen practical exchanges and cooperation, as well as enhance the capability for conducting joint counter-terrorism operations."

Zhu Zhenlong, military official: "By taking advantage of the opportunity of joint air delivery, we carried out specialized intensive training of the troops, focusing on improving their joint delivery capabilities including refined measurement, containerized loading and formation under combat conditions."

Onscreen text: "More than 300 Chinese troops are taking part in the exercise."

Deng Yajun, military official: "This joint exercise exemplifies the strong trust and deep friendship between the two countries and their militaries. We will focus on the theme of joint anti-terrorism and continue to deepen exchanges with the Pakistani side in this field. We will work with the Pakistani military to analyze new trends and characteristics of terrorism and develop effective countermeasures."

### **China, Pakistan to hold first anti-terror drills in 5 years amid rising attacks**

19 November 2024, VOA, Ayaz Gul

China said Tuesday it will send troops to Pakistan later this month for the countries first joint counterterrorism military exercise in five years to enhance security cooperation with its South Asian neighbor and close ally.

The announcement follows reports that Beijing is pushing Islamabad to permit its security personnel to safeguard thousands of Chinese nationals working in Pakistan from deadly terrorist attacks. It also comes amid a spike in terrorist attacks against Pakistani security forces attributed to or claimed by the outlawed Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, commonly known as TTP.

On Tuesday, China's Defense Ministry said that the Pakistan-hosted "Warrior-VIII exercise is set to begin in late November and will run until mid-December "with the aim ... to enhance the capability for conducting joint counterterrorism operations," according to Chinese state media.

The ministry said the exercise will involve troops from the Western Theater Command of China's People's Liberation Army.

"The two sides will engage in multi-level and mixed training across various specialties and organize live troop drills in accordance with the actual combat process," according to the state media report.

China and Pakistan last conducted joint counterterrorism military drills in 2019.



## String of attacks

Last month, a suicide car bombing just outside the airport in the southern Pakistani port city of Karachi killed two Chinese engineers. The victims were returning to work after a holiday in Thailand on a project under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a multibillion-dollar extension of President Xi Jinping's global Belt and Road Initiative.

In March, a suicide car bomb attack in northern Pakistan killed five Chinese workers and their local driver.

The repeated targeting of its nationals reportedly angered China, prompting it to urge Pakistan to negotiate a joint security management system to ensure the safety of Chinese citizens in the country.

The Pakistani government has dismissed the alleged Chinese diplomatic pressure, however, as "media speculation" and an attempt "to create confusion" regarding Islamabad's relationship with Beijing.

"Pakistan and China have a robust dialogue and cooperation on a range of issues, including counterterrorism and security of Chinese nationals in Pakistan," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mumtaz Baloch told reporters last Thursday at her weekly news conference.

"We will continue to work with our Chinese brothers for the safety and security of Chinese nationals, projects, and institutions in Pakistan," she stated.

## Shaking ties

Baloch added that attempts to undermine the mutual trust and cooperation between the two countries will not succeed, nor will the two countries "allow any efforts or stories to derail the Pakistan-China strategic partnership."

Speaking at a seminar in Islamabad just days after the Karachi car bomb attack, Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong publicly questioned the host government's safety measures to deter threats to Chinese nationals.

"It is unacceptable for us to be attacked twice in only six months," Jiang stated. He urged Islamabad to take "effective remedial measures to prevent the recurrence of such terror acts and ensure that perpetrators are identified, caught, and punished."

Pakistan dismissed the Chinese envoy's remarks as "perplexing" and contrary to established diplomatic traditions between the neighbors.

The Pakistani response was unprecedented, and Jiang's public admonishment of Islamabad highlighted the strains arising from attacks on Chinese nationals that have resulted in the loss of at least 21 lives over the past five years.

## 'Afghan terror sanctuaries'

The joint drills between Pakistani and Chinese troops come amid a dramatic surge in deadly militant attacks on security forces and civilians in Pakistan, which authorities say are being orchestrated from

"TTP sanctuaries" in neighboring Afghanistan. The country's Islamist Taliban leaders reject the allegations.

Yue Xiaoyong, China's special envoy for Afghan affairs, visited Islamabad this week, where Pakistani officials reportedly shared with him evidence regarding TTP's presence in Afghanistan and the threat it poses to regional stability.

Neither Islamabad nor Beijing has commented on the media reports. A brief post-meeting Pakistani statement said the discussion centered on the Afghan situation, with both sides reaffirming "the vital role of neighboring countries for a peaceful and stable Afghanistan."

## Protection of Chinese nationals a recurring headache for Pakistan

17 November 2024, Deccan Herald, Rana Banerji

China has grown increasingly frustrated by the spate of attacks on its nationals working on various infrastructure and power generation projects in Pakistan under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) initiative.

Pakistan has traditionally described its relationship with China in almost reverential terms, often calling it "deeper than the seas and higher than the mountains." However, this sentiment was recently challenged when Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong labelled two attacks on Chinese nationals working in Pakistan, in March and October 2024, as "unacceptable," delivering a clear message to both Pakistan's civilian and military leadership.

Zaidong was speaking at the "China at 75: A Journey of Progress, Transformation & Global Leadership" seminar hosted by the Pakistan-China Institute on October 30. The think tank is headed by ex-Senator Mushahid Hussain, an erstwhile establishment favourite and prominent India baiter who has recently aligned his fortunes with ousted former Prime Minister Imran Khan. The Chinese diplomat's remarks were caustic enough to invite a sharp response from Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, the spokesperson for Pakistan's Foreign Office, a day later on October 31. She termed Zaidong's statement "surprising and not reflective of diplomatic traditions."

The bombing on October 6, 2024, involved a pick-up truck rigged with nearly 100 kg of explosives. The vehicle waited unchecked for about 40 minutes near the outermost security cordon of the heavily guarded Karachi airport before the driver rammed it into a car carrying two Chinese engineers returning to work on a project after a holiday in Thailand. Both engineers were killed, and several others injured. The separatist militant group Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) later claimed responsibility for the attack.

China has grown increasingly frustrated by the spate of attacks on its nationals working on various infrastructure and power generation projects in Pakistan under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) initiative. Officially launched by President Xi Jinping during his visit to Pakistan in April 2015 as part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the CPEC has brought an estimated 12,000 Chinese experts, engineers, and technicians to Pakistan. Their work spans projects like the development of Gwadar Port as a dual-use economic and naval hub, the construction of the Gomal Zam Dam in South Waziristan, the Neelum and Kohala hydroelectric projects in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), and the Diamer Bhasha Dam in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB).

Chinese technical experts have also been instrumental in keeping the strategically vital Karakoram Highway open by clearing landslides and building tunnels near Hunza Lake. However, Baloch separatists and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants have intermittently attacked Chinese workers, even kidnapping some. This has necessitated the deployment of two separate divisions of the Pakistan Army to provide security.

Previously known as the 'Karakoram Security Force,' one of these units has been rebranded as the 34 Infantry Division and is now tasked with securing the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa segments of the CPEC. Headquartered in Chilas (Gilgit-Baltistan), it operates under the supervision of X Corps in Rawalpindi. A second unit, the 44 Infantry Division, is stationed in Gwadar under XII Corps in Quetta, focusing on securing the Baluchistan and Sindh segments of CPEC. Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif has reportedly assured Chinese officials of better security measures during recent discussions at the Climate Summit in Baku (12-13 November). However, Islamabad's failure to deter these attacks appears to have angered Beijing, which is reportedly pressuring Pakistan to formalise a joint security management system. This arrangement could involve the long-term deployment of Chinese military personnel in Pakistan. When questioned by Reuters, Lin Jian, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, denied familiarity with such discussions, stating only that China would continue strengthening cooperation with Pakistan to maintain the security of its personnel, projects, and institutions. However, Pakistani security sources with direct knowledge of the negotiations have reportedly acknowledged receiving a written proposal from Beijing, which includes a clause permitting the deployment of military forces in each other's territory for counter-terrorism missions and joint strikes.

Last week, Pakistan's Interior Ministry announced that both sides had agreed to develop a joint strategy to prevent similar incidents. However, the

Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the information wing of the Pakistan Army, has refrained from commenting on the specifics of potential joint operations. A security official suggested that Pakistan prefers Chinese assistance in improving intelligence and surveillance capabilities rather than direct military involvement, indicating possible reluctance to allow a permanent Chinese military presence.

Responding to media queries during her weekly press briefing in Islamabad on 14 November, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch urged journalists "not to respond" to "media speculations based on unreliable sources" that she claimed were "motivated by an agenda to create confusion about the nature of this relationship." She echoed Lin Jian's assertion that both countries possessed "the resolve and capability to foil any attempt to harm China-Pakistan relations." Chinese military personnel have previously deployed temporarily in PoK and GB. However, a prolonged Chinese military presence in these regions could have adverse diplomatic and military repercussions for India, though it is unlikely to disrupt the ongoing détente along India's northern and northeastern borders.

Pakistan attracts Chinese investors with exclusive incentives in solar and EV sectors

17 November 2024, The Nation

Pakistan is set to attract Chinese investors with exclusive incentives in the booming solar and electric vehicle (EV) sectors, said Pakistan's Trade and Investment Counselor to China Ghulam Qadir.

Addressing the 4th Beijing International Engineering Procurement Conference & Exposition for Engineering Construction Supply Chain (EPC Expo), focused on sustainable trade between China and Pakistan, Ghulam Qadir emphasized that the Pakistani government has introduced special incentives designed to strengthen bilateral cooperation in green technology.

"These sectors are pivotal for Pakistan's sustainable future and present lucrative opportunities for Chinese businesses," Qadir noted according to a report carried by China Economic Net (CEN) on Friday.

He highlighted the potential for collaboration on high-impact projects, including streamlined licensing processes, tax breaks, and favorable import policies aimed at reducing setup costs and accelerating the transfer of EV and solar technology to Pakistan.

"Pakistan offers a consistent 10-year policy framework of tax exemption for import of plant, machinery, and equipment for new and BMRE for manufacturing of solar panels, parts & allied equipment's with equal treatment in sales tax for local manufacturers and importers and ten-year tax holidays. Bank financing loans at low interest rates

for setting up local manufacturing and international-standard in-country testing facilities/labs", he added. "Pakistan sees China as a vital partner in transforming its energy and transportation landscape," Qadir stated.

"Our combined efforts in solar power and electric vehicle development can not only meet shared climate goals but also fuel substantial economic growth in both countries."

He said that Pakistan aims for 30% of its local vehicle production to be electric by 2030 whereas comprehensive EV Policy 2020-2025 wherein incentives for local electric vehicle manufacturing are granted to the manufacturers and reduce reliance on imported fuel.

He highlighted potential projects and collaborations, including co-manufacturing initiatives, technology transfer agreements, and joint ventures designed to streamline production and reduce costs.

Qadir mentioned that as countries globally look toward greener solutions, Pakistan aims to leverage Chinese expertise and investment in EV and solar technologies to accelerate its energy transition.

It is to be noted that the 4th Beijing International Engineering Procurement Conference & Exposition for Engineering Construction Supply Chain was scheduled to be held at Beijing Beiren International Exhibition & Convention Center from November 14-16, 2024.

### **'Don't trust Pak soldiers': Xi faces flak for Chinese deaths in Pakistan**

14 November 2024, Business Standard, Bhaswar Kumar

Many Chinese companies in Pakistan have reportedly turned to Chinese security engineers to gather intelligence amid inadequate local security arrangements

Chinese President Xi Jinping is under mounting pressure to better secure his country's interests in volatile regions like Pakistan following a bomb attack by Pakistani separatists last month that killed two Chinese engineers, the Financial Times has reported.

Reflecting the challenges faced by Chinese workers in Pakistan, one businessman in the country's Punjab province told the Financial Times, "We don't trust that more Pakistani soldiers will keep us safe...". Instead, he said, "... We would prefer it was Chinese."

Stating that there's "not as much opportunity" in Pakistan and "the security is bad", the Chinese businessman reportedly added, "Many Chinese want to leave."

Many Chinese companies, facing security gaps in Pakistan, have reportedly turned to Chinese security engineers to develop plans, handle incidents, conduct background checks for local personnel,

gather intelligence, and manage armed local guards, underscoring the inadequacy of local security arrangements.

These concerns have come to the fore amid the rising threat to Chinese investments in Pakistan, particularly the \$62 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is a critical part of Xi's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Recent attacks by the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) have highlighted the risks, reportedly sparking debate over Beijing's inability to address these persistent security issues.

#### **Challenges with Local Security Measures**

Despite significant allocations by Pakistan to safeguard Chinese investments, including over 15,000 personnel deployed across two special security divisions and additional provincial police units, the measures have failed to meet China's expectations, said the report.

Noting that part of this protection is actually funded by China's defence ministry, the report said that incidents like the recent shooting of two Chinese workers in Karachi by a Pakistani security guard have underscored the limitations of local forces in ensuring safety.

Beijing's dissatisfaction with these arrangements has prompted internal directives for Chinese personnel to oversee security matters. Speaking to the Financial Times, Zhou Chao, a former security manager for the Lahore Metro Orange Line project, explained that Chinese companies often station Chinese officers at project sites while hiring hundreds of local guards to compensate for Pakistan's ban on armed foreign contractors.

According to Zhou, China's central government has issued an internal directive to "let Chinese take care of the security of Chinese". But, these efforts have been hindered by strict regulations that limit the capacity of Chinese private security firms to operate effectively abroad.

#### **Chinese Security Companies Face Constraints**

Chinese private security firms have been following their country's state-owned enterprises abroad to safeguard infrastructure and resource projects. While some expected these firms to evolve into global players akin to Blackwater or Wagner Group, the report said that they remain constrained by Beijing's tight grip on military and policing functions.

Pakistan, for its part, also does not allow foreign armed security contractors in the country, further compounding these challenges. As a solution, Zhou told the Financial Times, Chinese companies station Chinese security officers at the project company, "two at a time, and hire 400 to 500 local guards".

According to the report, many executives also rely on what it described as "Chinese security engineers" to design security frameworks, handle incidents, and

ensure intelligence-gathering to address risks on the ground.

#### **Diplomatic Push Amid Rising Casualties**

A suicide attack near Karachi's airport in October left two Chinese citizens dead and 10 others injured. The BLA has claimed responsibility for the attack.

The October bombing is the latest in a string of attacks that have pushed Chinese officials to adopt a firmer stance on security. During Chinese Premier Li Qiang's visit to Pakistan on October 15, in a joint statement, China "stressed the urgent need to adopt targeted security measures in Pakistan to jointly create a safe environment for co-operation between the two countries".

Days later, Chinese ambassador Jiang Zaidong described the attacks as "unacceptable" and warned that security concerns were becoming a "constraint to CPEC".

In the wake of the October blast, and the string of previous attacks, a Chinese executive reportedly said that Beijing has been in discussions with Islamabad about allowing Chinese security companies to operate in Pakistan. However, the executive added that Beijing has been "explicitly rebuffed" by Pakistan "several times".

Amid these developments, Chinese investments in Pakistan have declined sharply, according to the report. Citing the Frontier Services Group, it said that delays and cancellations of projects have increased due to instability, with many Chinese workers returning home. The group's 2023 annual report reportedly noted that employees of Chinese companies in Pakistan had been encouraged to leave due to safety concerns.

Noting that the challenges in Pakistan have amplified dissatisfaction among Chinese investors and workers, the news report quoted an executive at a large Chinese security firm as saying, "The government is failing to comprehensively solve this security problem."

#### **China pushing to deploy its own security staff to protect citizens in Pak: Report**

13 November 2024, Times of India

Beijing is pushing Pakistan to allow its own security staff to provide protection to thousands of Chinese citizens working in the South Asian nation, during talks after a car bombing in Karachi that was seen as a major security breach, sources said.

Last month's airport bombing in the southern port city that killed two Chinese engineers returning to work on a project after a holiday in Thailand was the latest in a string of attacks on Beijing's interests in Pakistan. The attacks, and Islamabad's failure to deter them, have angered China, which has pushed Pakistan to begin formal negotiations for a joint

security management system.

Reuters spoke to five Pakistani security and govt sources with direct knowledge of the previously unreported negotiations, and reviewed a written proposal sent by Beijing to Islamabad. "They (Chinese) want to bring in their own security," said one official, who sat in on a recent meeting, adding that Pakistan had not so far agreed to such a step.

A written proposal sent to Islamabad by Beijing, and forwarded to Pakistani security agencies for review, mentioned a clause allowing the dispatching of security agencies and military forces into each others' territory to assist in counter-terrorism missions and conduct joint strikes. The dispatching would be done after discussions, but Pakistani agencies were averse to the proposal, one official said.

Neither Beijing nor Islamabad confirmed the talks officially. The source, and two other officials, said there was a consensus on setting up a joint security management system, and that Pakistan was amenable to Chinese officials sitting in on security meetings and co-ordination. But there was no agreement on their participating in security arrangements on the ground. The first official said Pakistan had asked China for help in improving its intelligence and surveillance capabilities instead of direct involvement.

The nature of the Karachi bombing has angered Beijing: A pick-up truck rigged with nearly 100 kg of explosives waited unchecked for 40 minutes near the outermost security cordon of the heavily guarded airport before its driver rammed it into the vehicle carrying Chinese engineers, officials said. "It was a grave security breach," admitted one of the officials investigating the blast. Investigators believe the attackers had "inside help" in securing details of the itinerary and route.

#### **China to continue support for Pakistan's counter-terrorism efforts**

11 November 2024, Reuters

China will continue to support Pakistan in counter-terrorism operations, a foreign ministry spokesperson said on Monday, after two Chinese nationals were wounded in a shooting in the country's commercial hub Karachi last week.

China and Pakistan have the determination and ability to thwart all attempts to undermine China-Pakistan relations and make terrorists pay the price, spokesperson Lin Jian told a regular news conference in Beijing.

## **At least 26 people killed by bomb blast at southwestern Pakistan rail station**

09 November 2024, PBS

A suicide bomber blew himself up at a train station in restive southwestern Pakistan on Saturday, killing at least 26 people, including soldiers and railway staff, and wounding about 62 others, some critically, officials said.

The attack happened when nearly 100 passengers were waiting for a train to travel to the garrison city of Rawalpindi from Quetta, the capital of Balochistan province, according to Hamza Shafqaat, a senior government administrator.

When asked about a security breach that led to the bombing, Shafqaat told reporters that "it is usually very difficult to stop such suicide attacks."

However, Shahid Nawaz, who is in charge of security at Quetta's train station, insisted there was no breach as the attacker was disguised as a passenger and blew himself up among people at the station.

TV footage showed the steel structure of the platform's roof blown apart and a destroyed tea stall. Luggage was strewn everywhere. Most of the victims were taken to a state-owned hospital and some to a military one.

Wasim Baig, a spokesman for the health department and police said over a dozen soldiers and six railway employees were among the dead at the station, where a walk-through gate has been installed to check whether anyone is carrying explosives. Still, there are multiple other entrances to the station without such security.

A separatist group, the Balochistan Liberation Army, claimed the attack in a statement, saying a suicide bomber targeted troops present at the railway station. The outlawed BLA has long waged an insurgency seeking independence from Islamabad.

A senior superintendent of police operations, Muhammad Baloch, said separatists frequently attacked soft targets.

"When their people are arrested, they also attack in retaliation. We all have to fight this war. We are resilient. Our teams are here and trying to save as many lives as we can."

Police said some of the critically wounded passengers had died in the hospital, raising the death toll.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif denounced the bombing in a statement, saying those who orchestrated the attack "will pay a very heavy price for it," adding that security forces were determined to eliminate "the menace of terrorism."

Afghanistan's Foreign Ministry also condemned the bombing and expressed its condolences to the

families of the victims, as did the Russian Embassy in Islamabad.

Saturday's assault came a little over a week after a powerful bomb attached to a motorcycle exploded near a vehicle carrying police officers assigned to protect polio workers in the province, killing nine people, including five children who were nearby.

In August, the BLA carried out multiple coordinated attacks on passengers buses, police and security forces across Balochistan, killing more than 50 people, mostly civilians.

Oil- and mineral-rich Balochistan is Pakistan's largest but also least populated province. It is a hub for the country's ethnic Baloch minority whose members say they face discrimination and exploitation by the central government. Along with separatist groups, Islamic militants also operate in the province.

The BLA mostly targets security forces and foreigners, especially Chinese nationals who are in Pakistan as part of Beijing's multibillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative, which is working on major infrastructure projects. The group often demands the halt of all Chinese-funded projects and for workers to leave Pakistan to avoid further attacks.

Last month, the BLA claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing that targeted a convoy with Chinese nationals outside Karachi airport, killing two. Beijing has asked Pakistan to ensure the safety of its citizens working in Balochistan and other parts of the country.

## **PM visits Chinese embassy to condemn firing on Chinese nationals in Karachi**

06 November 2024, Pakistan Today

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday visited the Chinese Embassy to condemn the firing incident, in Karachi yesterday, in which Chinese nationals were injured and assured exemplary punishment to those involved in the incident.

Talking to Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong, the prime minister said that he came to condemn the yesterday's attack on Chinese nationals and to inquire after the health of those injured in the incident.

The prime minister assured the Chinese ambassador that those responsible in the incident would be apprehended soon and would be awarded exemplary punishment.

He further informed the Chinese ambassador that he was personally supervising the process of arresting those involved in the incident and bringing them to justice.

Moreover, he had directed to provide the best medical facilities to the Chinese citizens injured in the incident, he said, adding that it was a matter of



satisfaction that the health of the injured Chinese nationals was improving.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Minister for Interior Mohsin Raza Naqvi and Special Assistant to PM Tariq Fatemi accompanied the prime minister.

Prime Minister Sharif said that China was a long-standing friend of Pakistan and the attack on the Chinese nationals was a desperate attempt to damage Pakistan-China fraternal relations.

He reiterated that the security of Chinese nationals, working in Pakistan, was the top priority of the government.

The Chinese ambassador thanked the prime minister for his visit and hoped that he would play his role in bringing those responsible for the incident to justice soon.

### **Pakistan watches China-India border thaw with mixed feelings over Kashmir**

03 November 2024, SCMP, Tom Hussain

Pakistan is watching with a mix of relief and concern as its close ally China and arch-rival India seek to de-escalate a four-year stand-off along their disputed Himalayan border.

While Islamabad has remained officially silent on the recent military repositioning, analysts say the easing of tensions at the point in Kashmir where their three frontiers meet is welcomed news.

"Any development that contributes to the stability and security of the region will be welcome in Pakistan," said Maleeha Lodhi, a former Pakistani ambassador to Britain, the United States, and the United Nations.

De-escalation of Sino-Indian tensions is "good news for South Asia at a time when the situation is so fraught elsewhere in the world", she said.

India's Ministry of External Affairs announced an agreement with China on October 21 for "disengagement and resolution of issues" in border areas, following violent clashes that resulted in the deaths of 24 soldiers in June 2020.

The Chinese foreign ministry subsequently confirmed that both sides had "reached a solution" after "close communication" through diplomatic and military channels.

However, analysts say Pakistan remains frustrated by India's refusal to engage over their own border dispute in Kashmir.

Despite a ceasefire agreement in February 2021 aimed at reducing skirmishes along the contested border, diplomatic relations between the South Asian neighbours have remained largely frozen since 2019. In a rare visit, Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar attended a Shanghai Cooperation Organisation conference in Islamabad

last month, marking the first ministerial visit since 2015.

He did not engage in formal bilateral dialogue, but during an informal discussion, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar reportedly urged Jaishankar to allow India's cricket team to play in a major tournament Pakistan is hosting early next year.

India's Ministry of External Affairs later denied that such a request had been made, stating that "nothing of the sort" happened.

Islamabad understands that "shared concerns about India are one of the driving forces" of the China-Pakistan partnership, said Michael Kugelman, director of the South Asia Institute at the Wilson Centre, a Washington think tank.

He cautioned that any signs of a rapprochement between India and China could be "problematic" for Islamabad.

Yet with its own domestic crises, Pakistan has "enough to worry about at home" and may find some solace in the reduced likelihood of a renewed border clash between its two powerful neighbours, "at least for now", Kugelman said.

Farwa Aamer, director of South Asia Initiatives at the New York-based Asia Society Policy Institute, said Pakistan would closely monitor developments between China and India, while prioritising its own internal security issues that "must be addressed urgently".

This year, two suicide attacks by militants on Chinese nationals and Belt and Road Initiative projects have resulted in the deaths of seven Chinese citizens, prompting Beijing last month to advise its citizens against travel to Pakistan's western provinces of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In a public reprimand, China's ambassador to Pakistan, Jiang Zaidong, expressed frustration over the attacks, saying "it is unacceptable for us to be attacked twice in only six months".

He urged Pakistan to take action against "all anti-China terrorist groups", emphasising that "security is the biggest concern" for Beijing and crucial for the success of the US\$65 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

"Without a safe and sound environment, nothing can be achieved," the Chinese envoy warned.

Despite these challenges, analysts are confident China will maintain a close relationship with Pakistan given their economic and strategic alignment.

Pakistan Foreign Office spokeswoman Mumtaz Baloch responded to the Chinese ambassador's comments on Thursday, describing his remarks as "perplexing" and reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to the safety of its "Chinese brothers" within the South Asian nation.

Analysts say Pakistan lacks the political and economic clout necessary to compel India to engage in meaningful dialogue.

India sees "more advantages with knock-on effects from rapprochement with China than it does with Pakistan", Kugelman said.

While better relations with Beijing could enhance investment opportunities, India sees little advantage in expanding commercial ties with Islamabad and "isn't looking for these outcomes", he added.

Yogesh Gupta, a former Indian ambassador, said the "main problem" in the bilateral relationship was that Pakistan "resorts to terrorism to achieve its political objectives and the issue of Kashmir".

India has "paid a huge price to control terrorism" in Jammu and Kashmir and elsewhere, Gupta said, and "can't condone this problem".

"If Pakistan moves ahead on these issues, then a dialogue with India can take place," he added.

However, Pakistan has refused to accept any unilateral change to the status of Kashmir, over which it has fought two major wars with India. In 2020, New Delhi revoked the special status of the parts of Kashmir that it administers, ending the region's own laws and autonomy and sparking widespread protests.

Lodhi, the former Pakistani ambassador, said that the government of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had shown "no interest" in resuming talks with Islamabad, "apparently concluding that the absence of dialogue hurts Pakistan and not India".

Consequently, the recent easing of tensions between China and India is "unlikely to have a knock-on effect on Pakistan-India relations", she said.

Aamer noted that the diplomatic dynamics between India and China differ significantly from those with Pakistan. While both China and India have engaged in substantial border negotiations and share economic interests as major players in the Global South, similar motivations for dialogue with Pakistan have yet to emerge.

As both India and China continue work to address their border differences, former Indian ambassador Gupta emphasised that withdrawing troops from "eyeball confrontation" and resuming patrols would be essential for maintaining stability.

"This will help in the maintenance of peace, security, and good neighbourly relations," he said, although he acknowledged that it would "require a lot of patient handling on both sides"

Aamer said that such confidence-building measures from China and India help to signal that the situation in the region "isn't acutely tense", ultimately benefiting South Asia as a whole – "something that should be in the interest of all parties", she said.

## Pak missions in China to have 20 new trade posts

04 November 2024, The News, Mariana Baabar

Approval is given in an attempt to expand Pakistan's exports and reduce current trade deficit with China

There has been mixed reaction to the decision by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in which he has approved the setting up of 20 new trade posts at the Pakistan Embassy in Beijing and at the different consulates in China.

The approval was given by the prime minister at the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) meeting on November 2, in an attempt to expand Pakistan's exports and reduce the current trade deficit with China.

"It was during the Business Conference in Shenzhen during the visit of the prime minister when it was evident that with existing less than even modest human resource for investment and trade promotion, the goal of enhancing Pakistan's exports and a robust economic relationship with China will remain elusive," an official tells The News.

Almost all these posts are local (staff level) employees, but not confined to the Embassy alone. In fact these posts will be spread out not only to Pakistan Embassy in Beijing but also to Pakistan's four Consulates in Chengdu, Hong Kong, Guangzhou and Shanghai.

"The Pakistan Embassy will hire local staff as Trade Development Officers and Investment Officers. The Embassy needs this human resource because they are severely deficient in that," the official said adding that this decision has been conveyed to the different ministries in Islamabad.

However, while officials and diplomats The News contacted, welcomed these new decisions saying it will have far reaching results in trade ties with China, there were others who were not so easily convinced. Reacting to the decision by the ECC to create new trade posts in China, renowned economist Dr Kaiser Bengali completely disagreed. Earlier, he had resigned from the Austerity Committee, the high-powered committee for rightsizing in the federal government.

"How inane! Over 20 new trade offices to be set up in China to boost exports! More non-development expenditure! The key to exports is revival of industrial sector to produce more, better n cheaper, not creating more bureaucratic positions," he remarked on Twitter.

But officials insist that having staff with Chinese language skills and knowledge of local business scene, can be helpful in developing linkages with the local businesses. "Given the breadth of China (bigger than Europe) there is a need to reach out to various provinces and municipalities and these new staff will prove useful in reaching out to the breadth

of businesses across China", another official remarked.

## October

### Pakistan says China's remarks on safety of its citizens 'perplexing'

31 October 2024, VOA, Ayaz Gul and Sarah Zaman

Pakistan pushed back Thursday against China's criticism of the safety of Chinese personnel in the country, calling the comments "perplexing" and contrary to established diplomatic traditions between the neighbors.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mumtaz Baloch said at a weekly news conference in Islamabad that the government is dedicated to ensuring the security of Chinese nationals, projects, and institutions in Pakistan.

Baloch was responding to a rare public warning from the Chinese ambassador to the country, Jiang Zaidong, who urged Islamabad to take action against militants responsible for several deadly attacks on Chinese workers.

Jiang labeled the violence "unacceptable" and cautioned that it poses "a constraint" on Beijing's investments under its Belt and Road Initiative, or BRI.

"The statement of the Chinese ambassador is perplexing and is not reflective of the diplomatic traditions between Pakistan and China," Baloch said. "We will continue to engage with our Chinese brothers to reassure them of Pakistan's complete commitment to their security and well-being in Pakistan," she added.

Jiang, while addressing a seminar in Islamabad, referenced suicide car bombings in March and October of this year, which resulted in the deaths of seven Chinese personnel. It raised the number of Chinese workers killed in Pakistan to 21 since the countries launched a massive infrastructure project as part of the BRI about a decade ago.

"It is unacceptable for us to be attacked twice in only six months," the Chinese diplomat stated, speaking through his interpreter. He stressed the need for Islamabad to take "effective remedial measures to prevent the recurrence of such terror acts and ensure that perpetrators are identified, caught, and punished."

It is unprecedented for Pakistan to respond publicly to China's criticism, and it is extremely rare for the Chinese ambassador to admonish Islamabad for alleged security lapses against Chinese engineers and workers.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, or CPEC, considered the flagship project of the BRI, has brought more than \$25 billion in Chinese investment to enhance Pakistan's infrastructure, facilitating improved bilateral trade and further integrating the broader South Asian region.

Jiang urged Pakistan to take action against "all anti-China terrorist groups," stating that "security is the biggest concern" for Beijing. He added that "without a safe and sound environment, nothing can be achieved."

Baloch said investigations into attacks on Chinese workers are ongoing and said the findings have been communicated to Beijing. She did not elaborate.

CPEC has resulted in roads, highways, primarily coal-fired power plants, and the strategic deepwater Gwadar port on the Arabian Sea in the country's southwestern Balochistan province.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, while addressing Tuesday's seminar organized by the Islamabad-based independent Pakistan-China Institute, assured the Chinese ambassador that his country was taking action against terrorists and tightening the security of Chinese nationals.

Dar stated that Pakistan would share the progress with China in high-level talks next month.

"The Chinese are very clear; no matter how lucrative an investment is anywhere, if the security issue is there, they do not send Chinese personnel. Your country is the only exception," he told the audience, quoting Chinese leaders as telling Pakistani counterparts in recent meetings.

Critics argue that Pakistan's financial difficulties and political instability have discouraged China from making new investments in the CPEC.

After the launch of CPEC projects, Pakistan's military formed a specially trained unit of over 13,000 troops to safeguard the initiatives nationwide. But the attacks on Chinese nationals have led to doubts about the effectiveness of the military unit.

Most of the recent attacks on Chinese workers and engineers have been claimed by the Baloch Liberation Army, or BLA, a prominent separatist group waging insurgent attacks in Balochistan.

The group, which is made up of militants from the Baloch ethnic minority, accuses China of helping Pakistan exploit the province's natural resources and has been calling for Beijing to withdraw its CPEC and other investments.

Both countries reject the allegations, saying Baloch insurgents are on a mission to subvert development in the impoverished province and undermine Pakistan's close ties with China.

## Chinese envoy miffed at CPEC security lapses

October 30 2024, The Express Tribune



Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong says the strategic significance of China-Pakistan relations has become even more prominent. PHOTO: EXPRESS

In a rare public rebuff, the Chinese envoy to Pakistan on Tuesday said that two deadly terror attacks within only six months were unacceptable and the government should launch a crackdown against all anti-China terrorist groups.

Speaking at a seminar titled 'China at 75', Ambassador Jiang Zaidong further said that security was the biggest constraint to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and "without safe and sound environment nothing can be achieved".

The ambassador spoke twice during the seminar, organised by the Pakistan China Institute of stalwart politician Senator Mushahid Hussain. Jiang first spoke before the speech of Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, and then he used his right to reply after Dar's remarks on the security for the Chinese.

"It is very unacceptable for us to be attacked twice in only six months and these attacks have also caused casualties," Ambassador Jiang said. He added that Beijing hoped that the Pakistani side could further strengthen the security measures to protect Chinese personnel, institutions and projects.

"Pakistan should severely punish the perpetrators and crack down on all anti-China terrorist groups," said the ambassador during his second unusual intervention. "Security is the biggest concern for China and a constraint to CPEC in Pakistan."

Ambassador Jiang remarks came after Deputy Prime Minister Dar said in his speech that "Chinese are very clear no matter how lucrative an investment is anywhere if the security issue is there they do not send Chinese personnel. Your country is the only exception. This is what the Chinese leadership told the Prime Minister of Pakistan in my presence".

Ambassador Jiang clarified that "President Xi cares about Chinese people's security and puts people's lives first. He especially cares about the security of

the Chinese people in Pakistan. Every time when he meets with Pakistani leaders he asks for taking measures to ensure the security of Chinese personnel, institutions and projects", said the ambassador.

The terrorists have twice targeted Chinese nationals in the past six months, first in March and then again in October just 10 days before the visit of the Chinese Premier to Pakistan.

It is highly uncommon when a foreign diplomat used his right to reply after the speech of the foreign minister, indicating divergent views on security between the two nations.

Dar said that Pakistan was taking action against the terrorists and the progress would be shared during the next week's meeting between President Asif Zardari and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Ambassador Jiang said that during his exchanges with the leaders of the Pakistani side, Premier Li also emphasised the importance of security for economic development and cooperation. He emphasised that China would further deepen economic cooperation with Pakistan but "we hope that the Pakistani side could create a conducive and safe environment" for the Chinese people.

"President Xi always says that security is the guarantee of development and development is the guarantee of the security. With joint efforts, we could crack down on those terrorist groups," said Ambassador Jiang.

"There are an increasing number of attacks on the Chinese nationals because the Pak-China friendship has not been digested by certain powers of the world," Dar said. He added that despite these challenging times, in recent meetings, Pakistan and China had agreed to take CPEC to the next level by deepening cooperation in the areas of trade, industrialisation, digital economy, agriculture and renewable energy.

Dar also criticised the United States for its tactics to stop Beijing becoming a global economic power. "China will be the biggest economy in due course despite all the tools that have been used against it, including increasing tariffs on its products up to 200%, said Dar. "Increasing tariffs from 25% to 200% is nothing but politics to use unfair ways to stop China from becoming a global super economic power."

Dar also bitterly criticised the last Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government and former director general of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Faiz Hameed for the current deterioration in the security situation.

"We have to blame ourselves for the resurrection of terrorism" said Dar, while blaming the terror attacks on the PTI's policies of friendship with Afghanistan. "We have to blame ourselves for the cup of tea that we drank in Kabul," he added, referring to Lt-Gen



(ret'd) Faiz Hameed's visit to Kabul immediately after the Taliban takeover.

"We have to blame ourselves for 102 hardened criminals, who were involved in various crimes but were freed after the cup of tea", said Dar. "We have to take blame for 35,000 to 40,000 terrorists who had left Pakistan but came back after the last government opened borders with Afghanistan."

On the issue of Dr Aafia Siddiqui, who is incarcerated in an American jail, the deputy prime minister highlighted the government's efforts to persuade the American leadership to pardon her, but said that those efforts could not bear fruit.

He said Prime Minister Shehbaz sent a letter to the US president, requesting to pardon Dr Aafia on humanitarian grounds as the US presidents usually grant certain pardons before relinquishing the office. He added that a three-member committee had been formed to meet the US parliamentarians to lobby in favour of her pardon, release, and sending her back to Pakistan.

Coming to unabated Israel's barbarism in Gaza, he said that Pakistan was one of the rare countries which spoke vocally in favour of the Palestinian people and called for an immediate end to genocide, and implementation of the UNSC resolutions and ICJ rulings.

He said 48, 000 innocent Palestinian people had been killed with the majority of them being women and children and another 80,000 injured.

Expressing concerns over the attacks in Lebanon and Iran, he said Pakistan had sent 10 big consignments of relief goods to Gaza and had started hosting Palestinian medical students in Pakistan's public and private medical colleges to make them complete their education.

### **China warns security threats to its nationals impede BRI investments in Pakistan**

30 October 2024, VOA, Ayaz Gul

China has increased diplomatic pressure on close ally Pakistan to take action against the militants responsible for repeated attacks on Chinese workers, warning that the violence is "unacceptable" and poses "a constraint" on Beijing's investments under its Belt and Road Initiative, or BRI.

The rare public warning accusing Islamabad of consistent security lapses concerning Chinese workers was issued by Beijing's ambassador, Jiang Zaidong, while addressing a seminar in Islamabad this week. Analysts said the remarks reflect China's increasing frustration with the security risks facing its workers in the South Asian nation.

Jiang referenced suicide car bombings in March and October of this year, which resulted in the deaths of seven Chinese personnel. It raised the number of

Chinese workers killed in Pakistan to 21 since the countries launched a massive bilateral connectivity project as part of the BRI about a decade ago.

"It is unacceptable for us to be attacked twice in only six months," the Chinese diplomat stated, speaking through his interpreter. He stressed the need for Islamabad to take "effective remedial measures to prevent the recurrence of such terror acts and ensure that perpetrators are identified, caught, and punished."

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, or CPEC, considered the flagship project of the BRI, has brought more than \$25 billion in Chinese investment to enhance Pakistan's infrastructure, facilitating improved bilateral trade and further integrating of the broader South Asian region.

Jiang urged Pakistan to take action against "all anti-China terrorist groups," stating that "security is the biggest concern" for Beijing and "a constraint on CPEC" projects. He added that "without a safe and sound environment, nothing can be achieved."

The CPEC has built roads, highways, primarily coal-fired power plants, and the strategic deepwater Gwadar port on the Arabian Sea in the country's southwestern Balochistan province.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, while addressing Tuesday's seminar organized by the Islamabad-based independent Pakistan-China Institute, assured the Chinese ambassador that his country was taking action against terrorists and tightening the security of Chinese nationals.

Dar stated that Pakistan would share the progress with China in high-level talks next month.

"The Chinese are very clear; no matter how lucrative an investment is anywhere, if the security issue is there, they do not send Chinese personnel. Your country is the only exception," he told the audience, quoting Chinese leaders as telling Pakistani counterparts in recent meetings.

Critics argue that Pakistan's financial difficulties and political instability have discouraged China from making new investments in the CPEC.

Michael Kugelman, an expert on South Asian affairs based in Washington, told VOA that Beijing's security concerns have made it challenging for the mega project to regain momentum anytime soon.

"When the Chinese envoy publicly upbraids Pakistan for not providing proper security, you know there is a big problem," said Kugelman, who directs the South Asia Institute at the Wilson Center.

"I imagine the objective moving forward will be carefully working to maintain and advance existing projects but being cautious about agreeing to new ones until China feels less concerned about security risks," he added.

After the launch of CPEC projects, Pakistan's military formed a specially trained unit of over 13,000 troops



to safeguard these initiatives nationwide. But the attacks on Chinese nationals have led to concerns regarding the effectiveness of this military unit.

Hasnain Javed, a Beijing-based Pakistani foreign research associate, noted that China had never before publicly criticized Islamabad.

"This is a strong rebuttal and a serious dissatisfaction over the poor security around CPEC," Javed told VOA in written comments. "Now, when the military is the main guarantor, particularly for security, the Chinese seem to be running on low patience."

Most of the recent attacks on Chinese workers and engineers have been claimed by the Baloch Liberation Army, or BLA, a prominent separatist group waging insurgent attacks in Balochistan.

The group, which is made up of militants from the Baloch ethnic minority, accuses China of helping Pakistan to exploit the province's natural resources and has been calling for Beijing to withdraw its CPEC and other investments.

Both countries reject the allegations, saying Baloch insurgents are on a mission to subvert development in the impoverished province and undermine Pakistan's close ties with China.

The BLA, listed as a global terrorist organization by the United States, has lately intensified guerrilla attacks in Balochistan, killing hundreds of Pakistanis, primarily security force members, in recent months.

During his visit to Pakistan earlier in October, Chinese Premier Li Qiang also highlighted the significance of security for economic development and cooperation.

A post-visit joint statement quoted the Chinese side as stressing "the need and urgency to take targeted security measures in Pakistan to jointly create a safe environment for cooperation between the two countries."

### **Pakistan requests additional \$1.4 billion loan from China amid ongoing financial challenges**

27 October 2024, Live Mint

During a meeting with China's Vice Minister of Finance, Liao Min, Pakistan's Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb urged the Chinese side to elevate the limits under the Currency Swap Agreement to CNY 40 billion.

In a bid to address its persistent external financing issues, Pakistan has formally requested a supplementary loan of 10 billion yuan (CNY) (approximately USD 1.4 billion) from China.

The announcement was made on Saturday, underscoring the fiscal pressures the nation continues to face, the Express Tribune reported.

During a meeting with China's Vice Minister of Finance, Liao Min, Pakistan's Finance Minister

Muhammad Aurangzeb urged the Chinese side to elevate the limits under the Currency Swap Agreement to CNY 40 billion. As stated by the Ministry of Finance, Pakistan has already fully utilised the existing CNY 30 billion (USD 4.3 billion) Chinese trade facility for debt repayment and is now seeking to raise this limit by an additional CNY 10 billion, which translates to USD 1.4 billion based on current exchange rates.

The finance minister's appeal occurred on the sidelines of the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. If approved by Beijing, the total facility would amount to approximately USD 5.7 billion.

This request is not unprecedented; Pakistan has previously sought increases in its debt limit, but Beijing has declined these appeals in the past. Notably, this request follows closely behind China's extension of the current USD 4.3 billion (CNY 30 billion) facility for an additional three years. This extension was formalised during the recent visit of Chinese Prime Minister Li Qiang, which also saw the debt repayment period for Pakistan extended to 2027.

Pakistan has fully consumed the existing trade finance facility of USD 4.3 billion under the China-Pakistan currency swap agreement. Although the Ministry of Finance did not specify the reasons behind the new request, reports suggest that uncertainties regarding some pipeline loans have prompted the need for additional financial support.

In a parallel move to fill the financing gap, Pakistan accepted terms for a costly USD 600 million commercial loan. However, this decision raised concerns, leading the IMF to clarify that the loan was not tied to the requirements of Pakistan's USD 7 billion bailout package. Aurangzeb later informed the National Assembly Standing Committee on Finance that the government secured USD 600 million in financing at an 11 per cent interest rate for IMF program purposes.

The finance ministry confirmed that both ministers reiterated the strength of the all-weather strategic cooperative partnership between Pakistan and China. Originally signed in December 2011, the bilateral currency swap agreement (CSA) aimed to promote bilateral trade, foreign direct investment, and provide short-term liquidity support.

In the fiscal year 2021, the initial limit of the CSA was extended from 20 billion CNY to 30 billion CNY (USD 4.5 billion) for a period of three years, with maturity periods ranging from three months to one year, according to the central bank.

This is not the first instance of Pakistan seeking an increase in its loan limit from China; in November 2022, then-Finance Minister Ishaq Dar also requested an additional 10 billion yuan (USD 1.5

billion) due to delays in loans from other bilateral and multilateral creditors.

Pakistan has primarily utilised the Chinese trade finance facility to repay foreign debts and stabilise its foreign currency reserves, preventing potential market turmoil. The current USD 4.3 billion facility is part of the State Bank of Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves, which are approximately USD 11 billion. Additionally, China has extended USD 4 billion in SAFE deposits, which are included in these reserves, along with another USD 4 billion in commercial loans. Despite these supports, Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves remain insufficient to meet its debt obligations to China.

The finance ministry stated that Aurangzeb expressed gratitude to the Chinese government for its unwavering support in Pakistan's socio-economic development and assistance in securing the IMF's Extended Fund Facility (EFF).

Furthermore, the finance minister highlighted Pakistan's eagerness to learn from China's experience in economic reform and mentioned plans to issue an inaugural Panda bond in the Chinese market to diversify its financing options.

Aurangzeb also assured China of comprehensive security measures for Chinese workers in Pakistan. Both parties emphasised the importance of enhancing online payment settlements and integrating the two nations' payment systems, marking a collaborative step forward in their economic partnership.

### **Pakistan requests China to increase currency swap agreement limit to 40 billion Yuan**

27 October 2024, ANI

Pakistan Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has requested the Chinese government to raise the limits of the currency swap agreement to 40 billion Chinese Yuan, ARY News reported.

During a meeting with China's Vice Minister of Finance, Liao Min, in Washington, DC, Aurangzeb reaffirmed Islamabad's commitment to enhance the strategic partnership between Pakistan and China, as stated in a press release.

He expressed gratitude to the Chinese government for its steadfast support in Pakistan's socio-economic development and its assistance in securing the IMF's Extended Fund Facility (EFF), ARY News reported.

Aurangzeb indicated that Pakistan is keen to learn from China's economic reform experiences and welcomed Chinese automobile manufacturer BYD's decision to introduce electric vehicles in Pakistan.

He also informed the Chinese representatives about Pakistan's plans to launch its inaugural Panda bond in the Chinese market to diversify its financing options.

Tibet Digest December - January 2024

The finance minister assured that Pakistani authorities would provide robust security for Chinese workers and noted that many Chinese companies are interested in expanding their investments and creating more jobs in Pakistan, as per ARY News.

"Both sides emphasised the need for online payment settlements and integration of the two countries' payment systems," the statement read.

Meanwhile, the finance minister also met Andrew Torre, the Regional President for VISA, and commended the company's efforts in modernising Pakistan's payments ecosystem, including support for local payment platforms like 1Link.

Aurangzeb praised Visa's launch of the Financial Inclusion Card in partnership with Meezan Bank, emphasising the need for more routing options for clients and ensuring fair competition for domestic transaction processing, as per ARY News.

Additionally, Muhammad Aurangzeb met with Mohammad Kallala, the Global Head of Corporate and Investment Banking at Natixis. Kallala provided insights into Natixis' operations in sectors like infrastructure, renewables, transportation, aviation, telecom, and technology.

The two discussed potential partnerships with Gulf investors, especially from Saudi Arabia, to support financing and advisory services for investments in Pakistan. Kallala mentioned that the bank intends to collaborate with selected leading Pakistani companies to facilitate these investments.

Both parties agreed on the importance of ongoing engagement moving forward. (ANI)

### **Minister discusses cooperation initiatives with Chinese envoy**

25 October 2024, The News

Following the successful visit of Chinese Premier Li Qiang to Pakistan, a productive meeting was held between Jiang Zaidong, Ambassador of China to Pakistan, and Fahd Haroon, Minister of State/ Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Digital Media, along with their respective teams. The meeting focused on the role of media and digital outreach in supporting key China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) initiatives.

Minister of State and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Digital Media, Fahd Haroon (left) and Ambassador of China to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong pictured during a meeting – Supplied

Discussions highlighted opportunities to enhance trade, investment, and regional peace and security, as well as various areas of mutual interest that could further strengthen bilateral ties. Haroon expressed appreciation for the ambassador's kind invitation to

China and reiterated the commitment to the enduring friendship between Pakistan and China.

### **Pakistan Faces Brunt Of US Sanctions; A Total Of 26 Entities Blacklisted For Supporting Weapons Development In Iran, Pak, China**

23 October 2024, The Eurasian Times, Ashish Dangwal

The United States has added more than two dozen entities to its export blacklist, accusing them of supporting weapons and drone development programs in Iran and Pakistan, as well as aiding in the modernization of China's military.

The move, announced by the Commerce Department, targets 26 entities, primarily located in Pakistan (16), China (6), the United Arab Emirates (3), and Egypt (1).

These entities are said to have violated US export controls, been involved in "weapons programs of concern," or circumvented sanctions imposed on Russia and Iran. Their inclusion in the "Entity List" restricts their ability to obtain US-made items and technology without government approval.

"We are vigilant in defending US national security from bad actors," said Alan Estevez, Undersecretary of Commerce for Industry and Security, in a statement. He stressed that the US will hold accountable any entity that violates its export controls.

"Six entities under the destination of the PRC were added for acquiring US-origin items in support of the PRC's military modernization, dilatory and evasive conduct during end-use checks, and procurement of US-origin items for Iran's weapons of mass destruction and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) programs," the statement reads.

Among the companies blacklisted is Beijing Moreget Creative Technology, accused of acquiring US-origin items related to aviation simulation technology in support of China's military modernization.

This move reflects Washington's growing concerns over China's rapid military advancements, which the US sees as a threat to its global standing.

Additionally, Hong Kong-based Small Leopard Electronics and its associated company, Shenzhen Dragonfly Supply Chain, were added to the list for allegedly obstructing Commerce Department investigations.

Small Leopard was involved in a transaction supplying goods to an Iranian procurement network and had previously been on the Unverified List for failing to comply with on-site visits required to receive US-origin technology.

Three other companies, Detail Technology (HK), L-Tong Electronic Technology, and Shenzhen Jiachuang Weiye Technology, were also blacklisted

for their involvement in procuring US technology for Iran's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and drone development programs.

The US export blacklist is a powerful tool used to restrict the flow of American technology to foreign companies deemed threats to U.S. national security or foreign policy. Companies on this list are required to obtain a special license to access U.S. technology, a request that is typically denied.

Beijing, in response, has urged Washington to cease its "discriminatory and unfair measures" targeting Chinese companies. The U.S., however, remains firm in its stance, signaling that violations of export controls will not go unpunished.

#### **US Blacklists Pakistani Entities**

The latest additions to the US export blacklist include nine entities linked to Pakistan, which were flagged for operating as front companies and procurement agents for the Advanced Engineering Research Organization, a Pakistani firm that has been on the Entity List since 2014.

Additionally, seven more Pakistani companies were blacklisted for their role in supporting the country's ballistic missile development program.

"We will continue to cut off entities that seek to evade our controls and act contrary to US national security," said Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Export Administration Thea D. Rozman Kendler. "Programs such as Iran's WMD program, their unmanned aerial vehicle program, and Pakistan's ballistic missile program pose significant threats to the national security of the United States and will not be aided by US technologies."

Assistant Secretary for Export Enforcement Matthew S. Axelrod further clarified the U.S. approach to enforcement, stating that action would be taken against entities that engage in the transshipment of US items to support WMD and UAV programs in countries like Iran and Pakistan or to aid Russia's military efforts.

Axelrod added that any foreign entities obstructing US end-use checks would face serious repercussions. Earlier this year, the US imposed sanctions on three Chinese firms and one Belarus-based company for their involvement in Pakistan's missile development.

In a continued effort to curb Pakistan's ballistic missile capabilities, the US imposed additional sanctions in September on a Chinese firm linked to Islamabad's missile program as part of a broader non-proliferation initiative, as reported by the EurAsian Times.

At the time, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller revealed that Pakistan's National Development Complex (NDC) had collaborated with Beijing's Research Institute of Automation for Machine Building (RIAMB) to obtain equipment for

testing rocket motors for the Shaheen-3 and Ababeel missile systems.

Pakistan's Shaheen-III, a two-stage medium-range ballistic missile with a range of 2,750 kilometers, can carry both conventional and nuclear warheads. The Ababeel, with a range of 2,200 kilometers, is also designed for nuclear delivery. Both missiles form a key part of Pakistan's strategic arsenal.

The sanctions were imposed because these entities and individuals transferred equipment and technology governed by the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), aiding Category I missile programs in a non-MTCR country.

Despite opposing the sanctions, Pakistan has refused to join the MTCR, a pact India signed in 2016, which seeks to limit the proliferation of missile technology.

While the MTCR is not a formal treaty, its goal is to prevent the spread of WMDs by regulating the export of missiles and related technologies. The regime focuses on unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) capable of delivering significant payloads, as well as the hardware and technology associated with these systems.

Pakistan and China have consistently condemned these sanctions. Pakistan's Foreign Office spokesperson Baloch previously criticized the selective enforcement of non-proliferation principles, accusing certain nations of making exceptions to support their geopolitical allies.

In addition to Chinese and Pakistani companies, three entities based in the UAE and one in Egypt were blacklisted for procuring or attempting to procure US-origin parts in violation of US sanctions and export controls implemented after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

### **Pakistan gets 'promising response' from China over debt refiling: FinMin**

23 October 2024, The Tribune Express

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb meets Saudi, Turkish counterparts on sidelines of World Bank-IMF summit

Pakistan is advancing economic ties with China, Saudi Arabia, and Türkiye, as Federal Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb held high-level discussions on the sidelines of the World Bank-IMF Annual Meetings in Washington DC.

The meetings focused on debt reprofiling, trade cooperation, and joint ventures to strengthen Pakistan's economic prospects.

Aurangzeb revealed a "promising response" from China over Pakistan's request to reprofile its power sector debt, a move aimed at providing the country with breathing room to lower electricity prices.

"We have just started that discussion, and the response is encouraging," the minister

told Bloomberg, while stressing the importance of continuing structural reforms.

He noted that Pakistan seeks to extend the maturity of debt for nine power plants built by Chinese companies under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

China has already rolled over \$16 billion in debt from a total of \$26 billion in the current fiscal year.

Aurangzeb meets Saudi, Turkish FM's to boost trade and investment

In addition to these negotiations, Aurangzeb met with Saudi Finance Minister Mohammed Aljadaan to discuss enhancing bilateral trade and investment in key sectors.

Both ministers emphasised the historical bonds between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, agreeing to further cooperation in energy and other areas of mutual interest.

Aljadaan also shared insights into Saudi Arabia's energy reforms, offering valuable lessons for Pakistan as it seeks to overhaul its energy sector.

Aurangzeb also held discussions with Türkiye's Treasury and Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek, where he invited Turkish firms to explore mutually beneficial joint ventures (JVs) with Pakistani counterparts.

Highlighting the strong potential to increase bilateral trade, the minister praised Türkiye's experience in power sector reforms and expressed Pakistan's interest in learning from their success.

These discussions underscore Pakistan's strategic efforts to secure debt relief and deepen economic ties with key global partners, aiming to strengthen its economy and create new opportunities for trade and investment.

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### **Rise in violence against Chinese nationals in Pakistan threatens China's 'Silk Road' vision**

21 October 2024, ABC, Libby Hogan

When China's Premier Li Qiang visited Pakistan last week – the first such visit in over a decade – the talks focused on boosting security for Chinese projects.

China is spending billions of dollars on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor infrastructure project, which spans 3,000 kilometres and includes the strategic Gwadar Port in Balochistan, in the country's south-west.

It's hoped the project will create a new "Silk Road" shortening the trading route between China and the Middle East.

However, Chinese nationals working in Pakistan continue to be targeted by attacks from separatist groups, with nearly 100 killed in recent years.

Earlier this month, two Chinese engineers were killed by a suicide car bomb during an attack by the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) on a Chinese convoy in Karachi.

Who is behind the recent attacks?

The BLA, made up of militants from the Baloch ethnic minority, is the main group responsible for attacks on Chinese interests in Pakistan.

The terror group first came to prominence in the early 2000s after they claimed responsibility for a series of bombing attacks on the Pakistani authorities. However, its roots are believed to go back to the 1970s, with militants fighting the Pakistan government over the exploitation of local resources.

They say their goal is an independent state for the Baloch people in the Balochistan region.

In recent years, they have begun to target Chinese interests along with the Pakistan government.

Analysts note that these attacks have focused on people tied to China's projects, not random Chinese nationals.

A rise in violence targeting Chinese nationals

Imtiaz Gul, from the Islamabad-based Centre for Research and Security Studies, said that such attacks were part of a longstanding pattern.

"The targets have been directed at Chinese engineers, accountants, professionals [and] business executives over the last few years," he told the ABC.

However, he pointed out that it wasn't just the BLA.

He said groups like Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan and Islamic State Khorasan had also carried out attacks on Chinese interests in the region.

In March, five Chinese engineers were killed in a bombing linked to the Pakistani Taliban, though the group denied involvement.

He also noted there had been violent incidents unrelated to Chinese nationals, such as the gunning down of 21 coal miners, including four Afghans, in Balochistan this month.

"Regardless of who is behind these attacks, they are all instruments of terror, to destabilise the region," Mr Gul said.

Why is there opposition to Chinese investment projects?

Resentment against the Chinese presence in Balochistan comes from two main issues.

First, locals feel excluded from the economic benefits of projects like Gwadar Port.

Despite promises of fresh water and jobs, many say these have not materialised.

"We don't even have drinking water," said Mir Sadaat Baloch, a local teacher.

"I've sat in three meetings, and there is a lot of talk and not any action," he added.

Local fishermen are also frustrated with the restricted access to the sea and port expansion into their traditional fishing grounds, impacting their livelihoods.

Secondly, many believe their resources are being exploited without benefiting the province.

Balochistan, the largest province of Pakistan covering almost 44 per cent of the country's land mass, is resource rich yet it is also one of the poorest.

Analyst Sher Baz Khetran, a researcher at the Institute of Strategic Studies in Islamabad, said local communities felt they were not properly consulted before work began on the projects.

"Many Baloch people see it in black and white. They don't want the Chinese to invest anymore while their resources are exploited," Mr Khetran said.

Seema Khan, a professor at Deakin University, argues that the violence stems from broader political instability and lack of representation of Balochistan people, particularly in the lower house of Pakistan's parliament.

Raji Pillai Rajagopalan, a senior research fellow at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, said Pakistan was grappling with multiple challenges.

"The situation is highly uncertain, with a disturbing domestic political climate, issues with the Taliban and Afghanistan, a deteriorating law and order situation, and an economy in serious trouble," she said.

The Gwadar Port Authority did not immediately respond to questions about the lack of consultation or development around the port.

Accusations Pakistan used for proxy terrorism

Pakistan, meanwhile, blames foreign powers for stoking unrest.

"Pakistani authorities suspect the Balochistan Liberation Army, which has safe havens along Iran's border with Balochistan, is being used as a proxy by India," Syed Fazl-e-Haider, author of *Economic Development of Balochistan*, told the ABC.

India denies the claims.

Previously, India has directly accused Pakistan's powerful military intelligence agency of involvement in 2008's Mumbai attacks and high commission officials of espionage in Delhi.

According to Ms Rajagopalan, tit-for-tat accusations between the two countries are common.

"I haven't seen any convincing evidence that India is involved in any material sense in the Baluchi struggle," she told the ABC.





"Of course, Indian leaders have publicly supported Baluchis rhetorically, but I am not sure if they have followed up with actual assistance."

Ms Khan pointed to the economic rivalry between India and China and suggested regional actors may want to sabotage the China-Pakistan friendship.

"It's in a lot of foreign powers' interests to keep Pakistan unstable and to target economic partnerships," said Ms Khan.

India opposes China's Belt and Road infrastructure projects and is building its own alternate route via Afghanistan to Iran.

The head of media for Pakistan's armed forces has previously accused India of sponsoring banned UN-designated terrorist groups including Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, and the Baloch Liberation Army.

In 2016, Pakistani authorities arrested Kulbhushan Jadhav, an alleged Indian spy and naval officer who confessed to funding Baloch insurgents to carry out attacks in Pakistan.

*Pakistan has accused the BLA of being an instrument of proxy terrorism. (Reuters: Saumya Khandelwal)*

Mr Jadhav, operating under the alias Hussein Mubarik Patel, had been running a small business in the Iranian port city of Chabahar.

India's foreign ministry denied the allegations at the time, dismissing them as "fabricated" and "figments of imagination".

"This desperate attempt will find few takers as the international community is aware of Pakistan's tactics," India's foreign ministry spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said.

Local analysts were also sceptical that the recent Karachi attack was carried out without the help of specialised external expertise.

"To know the exact map coordinates, timing of vehicles and movements takes a lot of intelligence," said journalist Essa Naqvi.

"This organised militant activity is beyond the capacity of local indigenous people who are struggling to get electricity and a glass of clean drinking water."

Promises to bolster security

Following the meetings between the Pakistani and Chinese representatives — held on the sidelines of Eurasian security conference — Pakistan agreed to increase security for Chinese workers.

Pakistan would make "comprehensive efforts to ensure the safety and security of Chinese personnel, projects and institutions", a joint statement said.

However, Mr Naqvi criticised the focus on Chinese citizens, saying local needs were being ignored.

"I don't see any effort from the government to look at the safety, right to education, shelter and basic rights of citizens in Balochistan," he said.

"It is more about safety of Chinese citizens."

He added that corruption prevented investment benefits from reaching ordinary people.

How important is Pakistan for China's Belt and Road Initiative?

Despite the security threats, China's investment in Pakistan is crucial for the success of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Experts agree that the project is too important for China to abandon.

Gwadar Port, in particular, is central to China's regional ambitions, competing with major hubs like Iran and Dubai.

It was envisioned as the crown jewel of President Xi Jinping's infrastructure plan, linking China's Xinjiang region to the Arabian Sea, and shortening vital trade routes.

Ms Khan argues that Gwadar's strategic importance lies in its ability to bypass the Malacca Strait, to avoid any possible blockages.

"Once fully operational, it will firmly secure China's interests," she said.

"This port is vital for China's broader strategic aims, shaping relationships between superpowers in the region."

### Symposium held in Islamabad on China-Pakistan cooperation to drive modernization

20 October 2024, Xinhua

The Hong Ting Forum themed "Understanding China-Pakistan All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership and Chinese-style Modernization Development Path" has been held in Pakistan's federal capital city of Islamabad.

The symposium held on Friday drew about 100 participants, including diplomats, scholars, and media representatives. It was co-convened by Xinhua News Agency and the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), an Islamabad-based think tank.

Speaking at the event, Shi Yuanqiang, minister of Chinese Embassy in Pakistan, said that China is ready to share development opportunities with the rest of the world.

"China and Pakistan are good neighbors and all-weather strategic cooperative partners, and mutually beneficial cooperation benefits both countries," he added.

Masood Khalid, former Pakistani ambassador to China, said the third plenary session of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee has adopted a grand strategic blueprint for Chinese-style modernization.

"Pakistan greatly value our time-tested relationship with China, and both countries are tied in a relationship which is unbreakable," Khalid said, adding that Pakistan should learn from the development model of Chinese-style modernization to embark on the path of self-reliance and better benefit both nations and regional development.

Mudassar Iqbal, deputy director of Associated Press of Pakistan, said that China's approach to modernization is not only benefiting its own people but also contributing to global development.

"The ironclad friendship between Pakistan and China will enable the two countries to stand and move forward side by side and forge a future of shared prosperity and unshakable friendship," he added.

Hassan Daud Butt, senior advisor at the China Study Center of the Sustainable Development Policy Institute, an Islamabad-based think tank, said that Pakistan should fully utilize the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to expand cooperation with China in various fields such as industry, agriculture, science and technology, digital economy, green energy and technological innovation.

On the occasion, Khalid Mahmood, chairman of the ISSI Board of Governors, said efforts should be stepped up by the media and think tanks of Pakistan and China to contribute to deepening the all-weather strategic cooperative partnership between the two countries

### **Pakistan to increase security for Chinese projects as Beijing calls for urgent steps**

16 October 2024, Reuters

Pakistan has agreed to increase security for Chinese citizens and projects in the South Asian nation, a joint statement said on Tuesday, as Beijing called for urgent security measures following an escalation in militant threats in the country.

China has pumped billions of dollars into Pakistan over the years building infrastructure under the Belt and Road Initiative, while also running a strategic port and a major mine in the country.

But its citizens and projects have been attacked continuously by separatist militants fighting against what they call exploitation of the mineral-rich southwestern Balochistan province.

"The Chinese side underscored the need and urgency to take targeted security measures in Pakistan, to jointly create a safe environment for cooperation," said a joint statement on the visit of Chinese Premier Li Qiang.

Li arrived in Islamabad on Monday for a four-day visit- the first visit by a Chinese premier to Pakistan in 11 years - days after a suicide bombing in Karachi killed two Chinese engineers. It was the second attack on Chinese engineers in the country this year.

The visit coincides with a meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, a Eurasian security and political group.

The Pakistani side emphasised its firm commitment to enhancing security input and coordination as well as strengthening security measures, the statement, released by Pakistan's foreign office, added.

Pakistan will make "comprehensive efforts to ensure the safety and security of Chinese personnel, projects and institutions," the 30-point statement added.

Islamabad is under tight security for the duration of the Chinese premier's visit, which concludes on Thursday.

The joint statement also pressed on regional, economic and diplomatic cooperation between the two countries.

Both parties reaffirmed their commitment to an upgraded version of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor, a \$65 billion investment in the South Asian country under Chinese President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative.

### **China's Premier Li begins Pakistan visit amid rare strains in relations**

14 October 2024, VOA, Ayaz Gul

Chinese Premier Li Qiang began a four-day visit to Pakistan on Monday under tight security for bilateral talks and to attend the heads of government meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) hosted in Islamabad this week.

Pakistan is on high alert after a recent increase in deadly insurgent attacks nationwide, including a suicide car bomb attack in Karachi last week that targeted a Chinese convoy and resulted in the deaths of two Chinese engineers.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif received Li at a military air base outside the Pakistani capital before the two led their respective teams' delegations to review bilateral trade and progress on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Popularly known as CPEC, the Chinese-funded multibillion-dollar bilateral project is a key extension of Chinese President Xi Jinping's global Belt and Road Initiative.

The Pakistani government has declared a three-day public holiday in Islamabad and the adjoining garrison city of Rawalpindi. Schools and businesses

are closed, and troops and paramilitary forces have been deployed to ensure "foolproof security arrangements" for Li's visit and the two-day SCO summit starting Tuesday.

After holding delegation-level talks, Li and Sharif virtually inaugurated the CPEC-built international airport in Gwadar, a coastal city housing a Chinese-controlled deep-water port on the Arabian Sea.

"Under the strategic guidance of President Xi Jinping and the Pakistani leadership, our all-weather strategic cooperative partnership is constantly deepening. What we have is a unique and unbreakable iron-clad friendship that has stood the test of a changing international landscape," Li stated while addressing the ceremony broadcast live.

In his brief speech, Sharif thanked the Chinese premier for building the airport as a gift to Pakistan. "I want to assure you that I will work with you very closely ... to promote peace and security for the people of China in Pakistan," he added.

Neither side has commented on the reason for the virtual inauguration, but diplomatic sources cited heightened security concerns, particularly following the Karachi attack.

Li is the first Chinese premier to visit Islamabad in 11 years. The Sharif administration said the visit will help advance the development of CPEC and facilitate Chinese business expansion in the South Asian nation.

China has invested nearly \$25 billion over the past decade under CPEC, building large-scale infrastructure development projects in Pakistan such as roads, highways, power plants, the Gwadar seaport and the airport.

However, critics are skeptical about whether China would be keen to expand its business investments under CPEC, citing growing security threats to Chinese workers in Pakistan, among other challenges.

Militant attacks have killed at least 21 Chinese nationals since 2017. Last week's Karachi suicide bombing of Chinese engineers associated with a CPEC power plant prompted Beijing to ask its citizens not to visit Balochistan and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Both sit on Pakistan's border with Afghanistan and witness almost daily insurgent attacks.

On Monday, at least four police officers were killed when Islamist insurgents stormed a district police headquarters in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Authorities said that all five assailants were also killed in the ensuing exchange of fire.

Turning point

Mushahid Hussain, a former senator and head of the Islamabad-based Pakistan-China Institute, cautioned that the latest deadly attack on Chinese nationals was a severe blow and could be a "turning point" for

the "strategic partnership" between the two countries.

"China has huge investments in strife-torn Nigeria and Congo, but never have we witnessed ... murders of Chinese engineers and technicians ... as we see these recurring in Pakistan," Hussain noted.

Hussain described the Karachi attack as a "blatant breach of security" and echoed Chinese calls for Pakistani authorities to bring the perpetrators to justice urgently.

"China, our best friend, has been badly let down with their confidence shaken" despite Islamabad promising "foolproof security" for its Chinese guests, he stated.

Separatist militant group the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) claimed responsibility for the October 6 attack in Karachi, the capital of the southern Sindh province. The group has been waging deadly attacks in Balochistan, accusing China of helping Pakistan to exploit the region's natural resources, charges both countries reject as unfounded.

Information Minister Attaullah Tarar told reporters Monday that their government was doing all it could to ensure the security of the Chinese nationals in Pakistan. He stated that recent attacks on Chinese workers, including the Karachi bombing, "are being probed, and the prime minister is personally looking into it." In their post-attack meetings with Pakistani counterparts, Chinese officials appeared "furious" and pressed the host nation to "severely punish" the perpetrators and urgently enhance the security of Chinese nationals and projects, according to diplomatic sources privy to the discussions.

Husnain Javed, a Beijing-based Pakistani researcher, told VOA that CPEC-related debt and capacity payments for Chinese-built coal-fired power plants are the main hurdles in moving the project forward.

"Pakistan is looking to defer these payments for a period of 3 years with interest and penalty amount [growing]. ... We are far from CPEC phase 2," he stated in written comments.

Javed noted that growing security concerns for thousands of Chinese workers in Pakistan have added to the bilateral project challenges.

"The recent attack, I think, is the final nail in the CPEC coffin, as it heavily damaged the trust between the two countries. ... It's important to consider that these were no ordinary engineers," the researcher noted.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry said last week that a high-level team was sent to Islamabad after the attack. It "asked the Pakistani side to properly handle ensuing matters ... conduct thorough investigations, bring all the perpetrators to justice, and step up security measures to ensure the safety and security of Chinese personnel, institutions and projects."

## **China to work with Pakistan to protect Chinese personnel following attack**

10 October 2024, Reuters

China said on Thursday it would work with Pakistan to protect the safety and security of Chinese personnel, projects and institutions in Pakistan, following the killing of two Chinese engineers claimed by a separatist militant group on Sunday.

Mao Ning, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson, said she was not aware of reports that Pakistani authorities are seeking to curb movements of Chinese citizens during the Shanghai Cooperation Organization meeting next week because of a security risk from militant groups targeting them.

## **China's security agency vows to boost intelligence sharing after deadly attack in Pakistan**

09 October 2024, SCMP, Xinlu Liang

Ministry of State Security says Chinese bodies will 'guard against the infiltration of extremist violent ideologies'

China's top anti-espionage agency, the Ministry of State Security (MSS), has pledged to step up early warning and anti-terrorism intelligence cooperation following a deadly attack against Chinese nationals in Pakistan at the weekend.

In an editorial published on Wednesday, the ministry emphasised that combating terrorism was a "shared responsibility of the international community and a pressing priority".

Pakistan has been plagued by terrorism and has faced frequent attacks that threaten public safety and regional stability, according to the article.

It said the MSS firmly opposed all forms of terrorism and was committed to supporting Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts while working to thwart attempts to undermine relations between the two countries.

China's national security agencies would "adopt stricter measures and means to legally combat violent and terrorist activities, prevent foreign terrorist activities from extending into domestic territory and guard against the infiltration of extremist violent ideologies into the country," the MSS said.

"In regions concentrated with overseas interests, efforts will be made to enhance early warning systems for terrorist attack risks, strengthen emergency response to sudden incidents, and effectively protect the safety of overseas citizens, organisations and projects."

It said China would adopt a "multifaceted" approach to counterterrorism, and deepen international cooperation against terrorism, improve mechanisms

for anti-terrorism intelligence sharing, financial regulation, law enforcement cooperation and judicial assistance.

The statement came three days after a deadly attack was launched against Chinese nationals in Karachi by the separatist group, Baloch Liberation Army (BLA).

The attack, involving a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device, claimed the lives of two Chinese nationals and injured several others near Jinnah International Airport on Sunday night.

The Chinese government expressed "shock" and condemned the attack, urging Pakistan to enhance security measures and investigate thoroughly to ensure accountability.

Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said there would be a thorough investigation to apprehend those responsible, reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to protect Chinese nationals and infrastructure projects.

In a meeting on Tuesday with Liu Jinsong, head of the Asian affairs department at the Chinese foreign ministry, Khalil Hashmi, Pakistani ambassador to China, said his side would make every effort to improve security measures, enhance anti-terrorism cooperation with the Chinese side and strengthen the protection of Chinese personnel, projects and institutions in Pakistan.

The incident has reignited concerns about the safety of the US\$65 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship initiative under China's Belt and Road Initiative aimed at enhancing connectivity between China and the Arabian Sea.

However, Pakistan is grappling with an increasingly unstable security environment, particularly in its Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces.

In a statement on Monday, the Chinese embassy in Pakistan advised Chinese citizens to avoid travelling to Balochistan – a resource-rich region and crucial site for CPEC infrastructure developments – and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which have seen a surge in attacks targeting Chinese personnel and projects.

The BLA has in recent years intensified its assaults on projects associated with China, including launching a lethal attack on the Chinese consulate in Karachi in 2018 and multiple suicide bombings. The militant group claims Beijing is taking advantage of local resources in partnership with the Pakistani government.

The latest attack came just days before the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit is to be held in Islamabad.

Recent meetings among members of the security bloc have focused on strengthening regional security mechanisms to address mutual concerns.

In May, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi highlighted the necessity of joint operations and

intelligence exchanges to combat the rising tide of “three forces of evil” – terrorism, separatism and religious extremism.

### **China calls on Pakistan to ‘severely punish’ attackers after 2 Chinese die in Karachi**

07 October 2024, SCMP, Meredith Chen

Baloch Liberation Army finds targeting Chinese interests ‘a useful tool’ in its separatist campaign, says academic

The Chinese embassy in Pakistan has called on Islamabad to punish those responsible for a deadly attack on Chinese nationals near Jinnah International Airport in the southern city of Karachi on Sunday night.

At least two Chinese were killed and one Chinese and several Pakistanis were wounded on Monday morning.

China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Monday night that Beijing was “shocked” by the event.

“The Chinese side strongly condemns the attack and offers deep condolences for the victims,” it said.

“China calls on the Pakistan side to plug security loopholes and take specific action to protect the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and Chinese nationals ... in Pakistan.”

It added that China was willing to work with Pakistan to quash any attempt to undermine relations between the two countries.

The Chinese embassy said that around 11pm on Sunday a “terrorist attack” was launched on vehicles of a China-funded electric power company.

The regional government of southern Sindh province said on X that a tanker had exploded on the airport motorway. Pakistani broadcaster Geo News said at least 10 people were hurt in the blast.

The company employing the attacked workers is involved in the Pakistan Port Qasim Power Project, around 37km (20 miles) southeast of Karachi.

The project is part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a flagship project under Beijing’s multibillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative.

Separatist militant group Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) said it carried out the attack using a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device targeting “a high-level convoy of Chinese engineers and investors”.

The Chinese embassy demanded Islamabad “conduct a thorough investigation of the attack, and severely punish the perpetrators”.

“The Chinese embassy and consulates general in Pakistan strongly condemn this act of terrorism, express deep condolences for the victims from both countries, and extend sincere sympathies to the injured and their families,” it said, adding that the Chinese side had been working with Pakistani authorities in the aftermath.

In a post on X on Monday, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said he was “deeply shocked and saddened by last night’s tragic incident” and “strongly [condemns] this heinous act”.

“The perpetrators of this dastardly incident cannot be Pakistanis but are sworn enemies of Pakistan,” he said, adding that an investigation was under way to “identify them and bring them to justice”.

Other parts of the CPEC have also been attacked this year, targeting Chinese nationals and China-affiliated projects in the South Asian country.

In March, a suicide bomber rammed a vehicle into a convoy of Chinese engineers working on a dam in northwest Pakistan’s Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, killing five Chinese. Pakistan’s military claimed the assault was planned in neighbouring Afghanistan.

Before that, a naval airbase and a strategic port in the southwestern province of Balochistan, where China has invested billions in infrastructure projects, were attacked.

The BLA seeks independence for Balochistan, the province bordering Afghanistan and Iran. In August, it launched coordinated attacks there, killing more than 70 people.

The group specifically targets Chinese interests, particularly in the strategic port of Gwadar on the Arabian Sea, accusing Beijing of aiding Islamabad in exploiting the province. It has previously killed Chinese citizens working in the region and attacked Beijing’s consulate in Karachi.

According to Lin Minwang, deputy director of Fudan University’s Centre for South Asian Studies, the violence against Chinese interests is not likely to be resolved if China maintains a strict non-intervention policy, because Pakistan does not have the capacity to eradicate the terrorist groups.

“China has been caught in the conflict between Islamabad and the separatist militants, and targeting Chinese interests has become a useful tool for the BLA,” he said.

Lin said the issue had persisted for around two decades, with the number of attacks surging after the economic corridor was established and the China factor “grew increasingly important in Pakistan’s internal politics”.

The withdrawal of US troops from neighbouring Afghanistan, where they had conducted counterterrorism measures, also contributed to the increase in attacks, he said.

Lin said any intervention by China would test its military abilities abroad and depend on Islamabad’s willingness, which appeared to be lacking.

“With no party prepared, this situation is likely to persist” even though economic ties between the two countries appeared likely to stay strong



## **China sends 27 military aircraft, six naval vessels towards Taiwan**

07 October 2024, India Narrative

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence (MND) said that 27 Chinese military aircraft and six naval vessels were detected operating around Taiwan from 6 am (local time) on Sunday to 6 am (local time) on Monday.

According to Taiwan's MND, 19 of the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) aircraft crossed the Taiwan Strait median line in the country's northern, central, southwestern, and eastern Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ).

In a post on X, Taiwan MND stated, "27 PLA aircraft and 6 PLAN vessels operating around Taiwan were detected up until 6 a.m. (UTC+8) today. 19 of the aircraft crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's northern, central, and southwestern ADIZ. We have monitored the situation and responded accordingly."

This latest Chinese military activity adds to a series of similar provocations by Beijing in recent months.

On Sunday, the Taiwanese MND said that four Chinese military aircraft and six naval vessels were detected operating around Taiwan from 6 am (local time) on Saturday to 6 am (local time) on Sunday.

Two of the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) aircraft crossed the Taiwan Strait median line in the country's northern, central, southwestern, and eastern Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ), the statement added.

In a post on X, Taiwan MND stated, "4 PLA aircraft and 6 PLAN vessels operating around Taiwan were detected up until 6 a.m. (UTC+8) today. 2 of the aircraft crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait. We have monitored the situation and responded accordingly."

## **'Terrorist attack' near Karachi airport kills two Chinese nationals, embassy says**

07 October 2024, Reuters

Two Chinese nationals were killed in an explosion near the international airport of the southern Pakistani city of Karachi on Sunday night, the Chinese embassy in Pakistan said, in what it described as a "terrorist attack".

In a statement emailed to journalists, separatist militant group Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) claimed the explosion was an attack carried out by them using a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device targeting Chinese nationals, including engineers.

The Chinese embassy said a convoy from the Port Qasim Electric Power Company was attacked near the airport.

"The Chinese Embassy and Consulates General in Pakistan strongly condemn this terrorist attack, express deep condolences to the innocent victims of both countries and sincere sympathies to the injured and (their) families," the statement said, adding the Chinese side has been working with Pakistani authorities in the aftermath.

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said a Chinese national was also injured and that an investigation was underway.

"Pakistan stands committed to safeguarding our Chinese friends," he said in a statement on social media platform X. "We will leave no stone unturned to ensure their security and well-being."

Pakistan is preparing to host the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in the capital Islamabad, which was roiled by protests and clashes this weekend between police and supporters of jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan.

High-level Chinese representation and the first visit by an Indian foreign minister in a decade are expected at the summit next week, which authorities have vowed to secure.

Pakistan broadcaster Geo News reported at least 10 people were injured in Sunday's blast in addition to the fatalities. Karachi police did not immediately respond to request for comment.

The BLA seeks independence for the province of Balochistan, located in Pakistan's southwest and bordering on Afghanistan and Iran. In August, it launched coordinated attacks in the province, in which more than 70 people were killed.

BLA specifically targets Chinese interests - in particular the strategic port of Gwadar on the Arabian Sea, accusing Beijing of helping Islamabad exploit the province. It has previously killed Chinese citizens working in the region and attacked Beijing's consulate in Karachi.

Security issues have affected China's billions of planned investments, including under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor which is part of President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road.

In March, a suicide bomber killed five Chinese engineers working on a hydropower project in northern Pakistan. Authorities arrested militants they said were associated with the Pakistani Taliban, though that group denied being behind the attack.

## **Chinese modernization serves as model for Pakistan to promote economic development: Pakistani PM**

05 October 2024, Global Times

The unique Chinese modernization serves as a model for Pakistan to promote economic development, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said, extending congratulations on the 75th anniversary of

the founding of the People's Republic of China.

China has made remarkable achievements, and Pakistan desired to revamp its economy by emulating China's path of progress, which offers new opportunities for countries around the world, including Pakistan, Sharif said in an interview with Chinese media.

China believed in inclusiveness and multilateralism, a recipe for enhanced peaceful global interaction, bringing more understanding between various nations with enhanced economic cooperation, trade, investment and people-to-people exchanges, the prime minister said.

He said that 14 Palestinian factions have lately held a reconciliation dialogue in Beijing under the mediation of China, a testimony to China's positive role in promoting regional and world peace and development.

Speaking highly of Pakistan-China time-tested friendship, Sharif said that the friendship, based on mutual trust and respect, is exemplary in the world.

The two countries have always supported each other and have worked closely on the international stage to jointly strengthen the forces that promote regional and world peace as well as stability, he said.

Talking about the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project of the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative, the prime minister said that the project promotes socio-economic development of Pakistan.

Launched in 2013, the CPEC is a corridor linking the Gwadar Port in southwest Pakistan's Balochistan province with Kashgar in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, which highlights energy, transport, and industrial cooperation in the first phase.

Issues of road connectivity and electricity that greatly hindered Pakistan's economy in the past were resolved in the first phase, Sharif said, noting the CPEC has successfully entered a new phase of high-quality development, which focuses more on strengthening cooperation with China in such fields as agriculture, information technology and mining.

The prime minister underscored that Pakistan and China would continue to work together to further enhance economic cooperation and lift their unshakable and unique friendship to new heights.

### **Pakistan approves ₹45 billion for armed forces to protect Chinese interests**

04 October 2024, CNBC

The Pakistan government decided to provide an additional ₹45 billion budget for the armed forces mainly to strengthen their capacity to protect Chinese commercial interests in the cash-strapped country and manage the fencing along international borders.

Tibet Digest December - January 2024

The decision was taken in the meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet on Thursday, which was chaired by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, reported The Express Tribune.

The paper said that out of the ₹45 billion, an amount of ₹35.4 billion will be given to the military and ₹9.5 billion to the navy for various purposes.

The ECC considered and approved a proposal submitted by the Defence Division for a technical supplementary grant of ₹45 billion for the already approved projects of defence services during the current fiscal year.

It is the second major supplementary grant approved for the armed forces after the approval of the budget in June. Earlier, the ECC gave ₹60 billion for Operation Azm-e-Istehkam. These supplementary grants are over and above the ₹2.127 trillion defence budget.

Due to the increasing number of terror attacks, China has demanded the signing of an agreement on anti-terrorism cooperation to address its security concerns.

China has also proposed the establishment of a joint company to ensure the security of its citizens already working in Pakistan or will be engaged during the CPEC phase II.

Under phase I, both sides have completed 38 projects worth \$25.2 billion. Of these, 17 projects valued at \$18 billion were completed in the energy sector, according to the paper.

About 26 projects worth \$26.8 billion are in the pipeline and many of those have been included in CPEC phase II. However, the security concerns have slowed down work on these projects.

China has also proposed that a vehicle-mounted mobile securing equipment project should be included in phase II besides undertaking a project on ballistic protective vehicles, the paper reported.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a major infrastructure project in Pakistan, launched in 2015 as part of China's Belt and Road Initiative.

It aims to enhance economic connectivity between China and Pakistan by developing a network of roads, railways, pipelines and energy projects.

### **Chinese investment plays instrumental role in stabilizing Pakistan's economy: minister**

03 October 2024, People's Daily Online

Pakistan's Minister for Planning Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal said on Wednesday that Chinese investment and financial assistance have played an instrumental role in stabilizing Pakistan's

economy during challenging times, the ministry said in a statement.

Chairing a meeting here with senior government officials on enhancing cross-sectoral cooperation and formulating a comprehensive action plan to boost economic ties with China, Iqbal reiterated Pakistan's commitment to strengthening collaboration across various sectors.

Chinese projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) are a shining example of a shared vision for growth and modernization between the two countries, the statement quoted Iqbal as saying. Launched in 2013, CPEC, a flagship project of the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative, is a corridor linking the Gwadar Port in southwest Pakistan's Balochistan province with Kashgar in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, which highlights energy, transport, and industrial cooperation in the first phase, while in the new phase expands to fields of agriculture and livelihood, among others.

The minister also highlighted the essential role of all ministries in the successful implementation of CPEC, emphasizing that collaboration across government sectors is crucial to unlocking the full potential of the initiative.

Iqbal stressed the importance of interaction with the Chinese private sector to showcase Pakistan's potential as a prime destination for advanced business-to-business investments, the statement said.

The minister also underscored the urgency of achieving substantive advancements in priority sectors such as infrastructure development, road connectivity, information technology, agriculture, industrial cooperation, education, healthcare, water resources, energy, and artificial intelligence.

## September

### Zong expands its footprint in Gilgit Baltistan

30 September 2024, Trade Chronicle

Zong, Pakistan's leading cellular and digital services provider, has officially launched its network in Gilgit Baltistan, marking a significant milestone in the region's digital development. The launch event was held at the prestigious Gilgit Serena Hotel. It was graced by prominent dignitaries, including Mr. Ghulam Muhammad, Minister of Law and Tourism, Government of Gilgit Baltistan, who graced the event as the chief guest. The event, held on September 27th, celebrated the commercial activation of 59 4G sites across the region, with further expansion plans

slated for next year. Zong's presence in Gilgit Baltistan promises to empower local communities, enhance connectivity, and contribute to the area's socio-economic development.

The launch event was attended by distinguished guests, including Miss Suraya Zaman, Advisor IT, Government of Gilgit Baltistan, Mr. Gul Abid Wazir, Zonal Director PTA Gilgit, Mr. Ehsan ul Haq Assistant Zonal Director PTA Gilgit, Lt. Col. Muhammad Ali Ahmed, Commanding Officer of Special Communication Organization (SCO), and Riaz Ahmad, Secretary IT, Government of Gilgit Baltistan. Their participation underscores the strong collaboration between the public and private sectors in advancing digital infrastructure in the region.

Khawaja Shehzad Ullah, Executive Director of Sales & Distribution at Zong, highlighted the significance of connectivity in the region, stating, "We are thrilled to bring Zong 4G's high-speed internet to Gilgit Baltistan. This launch reflects our commitment to bridging Pakistan's digital divide, empowering local communities, boosting tourism, and supporting economic growth through our advanced technology and expansion plans."

Mr. Huo Junli, CEO of Zong, thanked the teams who made this expansion possible. In his message, he stated, "By enabling 4G services in Gilgit Baltistan, Zong is bridging connectivity gaps and fueling Pakistan's journey towards digital transformation. This step amplifies our role in enhancing the Belt and Road Initiative, as seamless communication is key to economic growth, cross-border trade, and regional integration. We proudly empower local communities, support tourism, and contribute to a brighter, more connected future for Pakistan and the broader region." He thanked Zong's strategic partner, the Special Communications Organization (SCO) and Pakistan's Telecommunications Authority (PTA) for playing a significant role in enabling the deployment of advanced communication networks in Gilgit Baltistan.

Zong's commitment to bringing digital services to the people of Gilgit Baltistan highlights the company's continued efforts to support the national digital agenda and drive inclusive connectivity in all regions of Pakistan.

### China to establish special agricultural industrial park in Pakistan

29 September 2024, Pakistan Today

LU'AN: China's Anhui Annongda Agricultural Science and Technology Company will collaborate with Pakistan to establish a Special Agricultural Industrial Park. In this connection, it inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Pakistan Carium Healthcare Innovation Company, marking the

beginning of a collaborative venture aimed at establishing the Park.

This is a move to bolster the essential oil sector in Pakistan. The partnership will focus on research and development in essential oil extraction, along with the cultivation of plants and herbs rich in essential oils and traditional medicinal properties, China Economic Net (CEN) reported.

The MoU underscores the shared commitment to harnessing Pakistan's natural resources and fostering innovative practices that will elevate the Pakistan's position in the global essential oil industry.

The collaboration aims for the production of high-quality, pure essential oils, catering to the burgeoning demand across sectors such as pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and wellness products.

As part of the initiative, they will cultivate stevia, Japanese mint and sweet potatoes, with the first batch of crops in the Park for the extraction of essential oils destined for the pharmaceutical industry.

Essential oils, renowned for their therapeutic properties, have witnessed a surge in popularity due to their diverse applications.

From aromatherapy and skincare to natural remedies, these oils have become an integral part of modern wellness routines.

Pakistan, with its diverse climatic conditions and soil, is ideal for growing herbs and plants that are rich in essential oils.

Under the partnership, Anhui Annongda will transfer state-of-the-art cultivation techniques to Pakistani farmers, which will not only enhance crop yields but also ensure sustainable and efficient production of high-quality essential oils.

The two companies also plan to establish a cutting-edge research laboratory specializing in advanced cell and tissue culture techniques.

The facility will serve as a hub for the propagation of new plant varieties, fruits and vegetables through cell and tissue culture, thereby increasing the diversity and quality of essential oil-producing plants and medicinal herbs.

### **Pakistan prepares over 70 projects for China's cooperation in CPEC phase II**

23 September 2024, Profit

Infrastructure, energy, and digital economy top the agenda in expanded China-Pakistan partnership .

Pakistan has finalized a list of over 70 projects for potential collaboration with China under the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

These projects, covering various sectors such as infrastructure, energy, trade, and technology, will be presented to the Chinese Prime Minister next month,

according to sources from the Ministry of Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives.

According to a media report, the Ministry highlighted that while CPEC's first phase has concluded successfully, the second phase aims to deepen cooperation between the two countries.

To advance CPEC's scope, Pakistan and China have agreed to focus on five new development corridors: growth, innovation, green development, livelihood improvement, and regional connectivity. These corridors are designed to broaden the scope of CPEC, making it more comprehensive and inclusive.

During his recent visit to China, the Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal held discussions with the Vice Chairman of the National Development and Reforms Commission (NDRC). The meeting resulted in an agreement to hold a high-level workshop aimed at aligning Pakistan's 5Es framework with the proposed five corridors and the eight-point agenda of President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative.

Among the key projects identified for collaboration are the follow-up technical support for the New Gwadar International Airport project, the second phase of the East Bay Expressway, and the realignment of the Karakoram Highway (Raikot-Thakot section).

The government is also keen on advancing the Main Line 1 (ML-1) railway project and the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR), both of which are seen as critical to boosting Pakistan's infrastructure.

Additionally, energy-related projects such as the GEIP LNG terminal and the upgrading and expansion of the National Refinery have been included in the proposed plans.

Pakistan is also looking to develop the Suki Kinari Hydropower Station and the Siyadik Copper Project, showcasing its focus on expanding the country's energy and mineral resources.

On the industrial front, projects like the Dhabeji Special Economic Zone and the Rashakai Industrial Park Project are being proposed to strengthen economic cooperation between the two nations.

The Omara Port ship repair project and agricultural initiatives, such as the buffalo breeding and dairy processing project, are also part of the wider cooperation framework.

In the fields of science and technology, Pakistan is seeking China's help in constructing the China-Pakistan Earth Science Research Centre and promoting the participation of five Pakistani universities in the China-Pakistan Belt and Road joint labs for disaster prevention.

Livelihood initiatives also feature prominently, with plans for a vocational and technical exchange program, the joint agricultural technology laboratory, and assistance for repairing flood-

affected houses in Pakistan. These projects aim to uplift communities while addressing critical climate change challenges.

The digital economy is another major focus, with Pakistan looking to partner with Chinese firms to develop digital infrastructure, enhance cooperation in software, cloud computing, and big data, and promote exchanges in network security.

The list of projects reflects Pakistan's efforts to further strengthen its economic ties with China, building on the success of the first phase of CPEC. The proposed projects are expected to bolster Pakistan's infrastructure, energy resources, industrial development, and digital transformation, while also enhancing regional connectivity and promoting sustainable development.

### **China emerges as stabilizing force in global affairs under CPC leadership: Pakistani president**

22 September 2024, People's Daily Online

China, under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC), has emerged as a stabilizing force in global affairs, bolstering the global economy and showing tremendous progress in the fields of science, innovation and technology, Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari said on Thursday at a ceremony celebrating the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

China is poised to achieve significant milestones in the coming decades, which would not only bolster its development but also reshape the global landscape in politics, economics and culture, Zardari said.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has helped Pakistan to transform its economy as the first phase of the project brought socio-economic benefits to the people.

"We are entering into the second phase of CPEC, which has huge potential for cooperation in agriculture, information technology, mines and minerals, and many other important areas of mutual interests," the prime minister said.

Speaking at the event, Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong said that China and Pakistan would further accelerate the construction of a closer China-Pakistan community of shared future in the new era, bringing more welfare to the peoples of the two countries and making greater contributions to the modernization of the world.

### **Pakistan's potential Brics entry seen as benefiting China at India's expense**

22 September 2024, SCMP, Junaid Kathju

Russia's support for Pakistan's bid to join 'China-centric' Brics could further enhance Beijing's clout in the bloc, analysts say

Russia's backing of Pakistan's entry into Brics has sparked a debate over India's stance on the matter, with analysts suggesting the inclusion could enhance China's influence within the bloc at New Delhi's expense.

Last week, Russia said it would support Pakistan's bid to join Brics – an intergovernmental organisation aimed at counterbalancing Western-dominated institutions – with both countries agreeing to boost trade and cultural ties.

"We are glad that Pakistan has applied ... We will support this," Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Overchuk said at a press conference in Islamabad on Wednesday following talks with Pakistani Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar.

Abhishek Sharma, a research assistant in the strategic studies programme at Observer Research Foundation, a Delhi-based think tank, said it was unlikely that India would support further expansion of Brics in the coming years.

"Even if the next tranche of membership happens down the line, it will be difficult for Pakistan to qualify for membership given the stringent criteria, procedures and rules that it is likely to have to qualify for," Sharma said, adding any new Brics member should have friendly relations with all existing members or substantial trade with member states.

"India sees the current Brics as a brand that represents the concerns of the developing world and the exemplifier of the multilateral order," he said. "With Pakistan's inclusion, if it happens, China's position will further consolidate, weakening India's standing in the group. This will erode the true characteristics of Brics."

Brics was formed in 2006 with Brazil, Russia, India and China as its founding members. South Africa joined in 2010 while Egypt, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia were granted full membership on January 1.

In November 2023, Pakistan submitted a request to join Brics this year. If successful, China might use Pakistan's entry to further Beijing's interests, Sharma said.

"India started its diplomatic initiatives such as the Global South Summit and got support for its cause from Western countries like the US, Italy and Germany, and groupings like the EU and G7, unlike China," Sharma said.



"Therefore, China sees India as a growing competitor in this space. Hence, with Pakistan's inclusion, China will try to block India's positions as a proponent of Global South interests," he added.

Saheli Chattaraj, an assistant professor of Chinese studies at Somaiya Vidyavihar University, said China started the process of expanding Brics when it served as the bloc's chair in 2022, a move supported by Russia.

"This move might have many implications. Brics as a grouping has often been a China-centric group, often primarily pursuing anti-US agendas," Chattaraj said.

"Russia's support for Pakistan to enter Brics means Pakistan would be a part of one of the greatest emerging economic cooperation groupings, which implies that China would also have more leverage to push its agendas within the grouping with one extra member's support," she added.

Russia will hold the Brics summit in Kazan from October 22 to 24. With the country holding the Brics presidency this year, Moscow would focus on furthering the bloc's partnerships in politics and security, the economy and finance, and cultural and humanitarian ties, Russian presidential aide Yury Ushakov told state news agency TASS in March.

As of 2023, the original five Brics countries represent 40 per cent of the world's population and 31.5 per cent of global gross domestic product, surpassing the G7 nations' 30.7 per cent share, according to a report published in March last year by the news analysis website countercurrents.org, citing data from the macroeconomic research company Acorn Macro Consulting.

Under Brics rules, leaders of the founding countries will decide on new membership applications after full consultation and consensus.

If India were to object to Pakistan's application, it was hard to see how the rules could be circumvented, said Antoine Levesques, a Research Fellow for South and Central Asian Defence, Strategy and Diplomacy at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). The pace of Islamabad's membership could be "slow and conditional", Levesques told This Week in Asia.

Pakistan had an interest in seeking closer ties with Russia and China, the latter of which was already one of its top trading partners even as it sought more engagement with the US, Levesques said.

In comparison, Brics was not a high priority for India with its activities in the bloc calibrated accordingly to accommodate its goals, he added.

"India will have by now well factored into its policy planning Pakistan's nearly year-old request for Brics admittance. Russia's DPM Overchuk's support to Pakistan, tempered by a clear reference to consensus, does not effectively leave India more exposed than a week ago," he said.

A key factor that would shape India's decision on the matter is its growing misgivings at being seen as supporting any initiatives linked to China's interests within Brics, according to Levesques.

"It is doubtful that India would seek to wholly support an initiative pleasing Moscow, which would enhance Beijing's standing and ... placing Moscow in an increasingly junior position to Beijing," he said.

Pakistan's Brics membership would therefore be seen as being counterproductive and self-defeating for India, Levesques added.

**Brics' expansion momentum**

More than 40 countries, including Iran, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Argentina, Algeria, Bolivia, Indonesia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Cuba, Democratic Republic of Congo, Comoros, Gabon and Kazakhstan have expressed interest in joining Brics, according to the bloc's 2023 summit chair South Africa.

Noting the reality of Brics expansion, former Indian diplomat Anil Trigunayat said China would push for Pakistan's inclusion, just as it has done for Islamabad's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

Delhi's reaction to Pakistan's potential inclusion depends on how Islamabad would address cross-border terrorism targeting India, according to Trigunayat.

Levesques suggested that India might sense an opportunity to allow Pakistan's admission to Brics as a step towards rebuilding their strained ties.

Walter Ladwig, a senior international relations lecturer at King's College London, said there was an emerging battle between India and China on the future direction of Brics, whether it should be a vehicle for advocating on behalf of the Global South or a means of pursuing anti-US agendas.

It would appear that Russia was showing less regard for Indian interests within the bloc regarding Pakistan's potential inclusion, he said.

"Pakistan's inclusion supported by Russia would seem to bolster China's vision ... you could not think of a better move than including Pakistan alongside India."

### **Pakistan set to strengthen counter-terrorism collaboration with China**

21 September 2024, Geo News

Both sides agree to conduct joint police and paramilitary forces exercises in Gilgit-Baltistan or Xinjiang

Pakistan and China have agreed to strengthen strategic cooperation in key areas, including counter-terrorism efforts, cross-border cooperation, and measures to combat smuggling.

The agreement was reached during a meeting between Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and a high-

level Chinese delegation led by the Minister for Political and Legal Affairs, Chen Mingguo, in Islamabad.

The Chinese delegation included Xinjiang's Deputy Secretary of the Committee of Parliamentary and Legal Affairs, the Executive Director General of Police, and the Vice President of the Xinjiang Police Academy.

During the meeting, both sides agreed to conduct joint police and paramilitary exercises in Gilgit-Baltistan or Xinjiang, with GB police officers set to train at the Xinjiang Police Academy.

In this regard, a Pakistani delegation, led by the Federal Secretary of Interior, will soon visit Xinjiang to enhance cooperation.

It was also agreed that comprehensive measures would be taken against terrorism, which is a global issue. Speaking on the occasion, Naqvi said that Xinjiang province is of vital importance for Pakistan in its relations with China.

He underscored that, besides being Pakistan's neighbour, Pakistan shares a 600-kilometre-long border with Xinjiang. "The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project also passes through Xinjiang and Islamabad aims to eliminate the smuggling of drugs, arms, and other goods," Naqvi said.

He noted that the visit of the Pakistani delegation to Xinjiang would open new avenues for strengthening cooperation. For his part, Minister Mingguo expressed a desire to enhance relations with Pakistan in all fields.

"Terrorism is a common problem and Xinjiang has suffered from it for many years," said Mingguo, highlighting that Pakistan could benefit from Xinjiang's counter-terrorism experience.

In March this year, at least six people, including five Chinese nationals, were killed after a suicide bomber rammed into a bus transporting staff working on the Dasu hydropower project in Bisham, Shangla district. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) found Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) responsible for the attack and arrested four key terrorists.

This was the second attack in the last three years on Chinese engineers working in the area. In July 2021, 13 people, including 9 Chinese nationals, two Frontier Constabulary personnel, and two locals, were killed when their coach was bombed in the Dasu area of Kohistan.

### **Chinese military officials vow 'unfettered commitment' to Pakistan in meeting with top general**

16 September 2024, Arab News

Two top Chinese military officials highlighted their country's "unfettered commitment" to standing in

solidarity with Pakistan, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Saturday, as they met with Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Sahir Shamshad Mirza during his visit to Beijing.

China and Pakistan's strategic partnership, rooted in decades of close ties, has expanded beyond defense cooperation to encompass infrastructure development and regional connectivity. Through projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the administration in Beijing has bolstered Pakistan's economy by billions of dollars of investment.

Simultaneously, Pakistan remains firmly committed to the One-China policy, underscoring its support to Beijing on key issues like Taiwan and Tibet, while China continues to deepen its defense ties with Pakistan, to serve mutual security interests.

"General Sahir Shamshad Mirza ... on an official visit to [the] People's Republic of China held separate meetings with General He Weidong, Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), and General Liu Zhenli, Chief of CMC Joint Staff Department, and delivered a talk in 11th Beijing Xiangshan Forum on the Role of Pakistan toward regional peace and stability," the ISPR said.

It informed that both sides appreciated the deep and historic relationship between Pakistan and China in multiple domains and acknowledged progress related to bilateral strategic and defense cooperation.

"The Chinese leadership ... reaffirmed their unfettered commitment to support Pakistan on its territorial integrity and sovereignty," the ISPR added. Just a day ago, the Pakistani general told a major forum in Beijing that CPEC was not just beneficial for his country's economy but also a "stabilizing force" for South Asia.

He also maintained that the strategic cooperation between the two countries was "a cornerstone for peace and stability" for a region fraught with security challenges.

### **Pakistan and China pursue corridor dream, despite risks**

13 September 2024, Dialogue, Atika Rehman

Recent attacks in Balochistan highlight security challenges for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, but both countries remain committed

More than 50 people were killed in late August during multiple attacks in Pakistan's impoverished southwestern province of Balochistan. Despite extensive infrastructure investments made in the region, mostly through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a decades-long insurgency has only intensified, raising concerns about the sustainability of ongoing and future investments.

The attacks in Balochistan follow a similar pattern. Separatist militant groups, such as the banned Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF), have long targeted Pakistani security forces and Chinese nationals, accusing them of exploiting the province's resources. In Gwadar, home to the port often hailed as the crown jewel of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), resentment is growing among local communities, particularly fishermen, who have protested against the construction and the lack of basic amenities like water and electricity in their city.

Despite these challenges, there is little evidence that either Pakistan or China will abandon CPEC, with policymakers from both countries continuing to tout it as a "game-changer". However, the reality on the ground is one that falls short of the lofty claims promoted by officials. Although some energy and infrastructure projects have been completed, CPEC is hardly the vibrant trade route it was billed to be.

Energy projects hit roadblocks

A key issue remains energy. Last year, Pakistan experienced an enormous blackout, a symptom of its creaky infrastructure and decades of underinvestment. Many of the CPEC energy projects, such as the Suki Kinari hydropower project and a coal power plant in Thar, were designed to address chronic energy shortages. Yet, according to Haneesha Issad, an energy finance specialist at the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA), the issues run far deeper than simply building more plants.

"The government currently owes Chinese IPPs capacity payments to the tune of a billion dollars," Issad told Dialogue Earth. "Any investor owed such a huge sum would be wary of further investments after this." She added: "There is also the issue of surplus capacity on the national grid and a shrinking consumer demand amidst slow economic and industrial growth. With the grid's inability to absorb any new power projects, there aren't many avenues for new investment opportunities opening up. From the Pakistan government's end, it doesn't have any more fiscal space to bring on any imported fuel-based new capacity, at least not on the traditional 'take or pay', fixed-price contractual model."

Given these constraints, Issad argues that "any new contracts on the same model will not be feasible for both sides."

CPEC: A multi-billion project in a struggling province  
Perhaps more importantly, CPEC projects have yet to deliver meaningful benefits to the people of Balochistan, a province that makes up 44% of Pakistan's land mass. According to the UNDP, Balochistan has the second highest headcount for multi-dimensional poverty out of all the provinces at

71.2%. It also has the lowest literacy rate in the country, especially among women.

Two energy projects under CPEC are located in Balochistan; both are troubled. The first, a 300 MW imported coal power project in Gwadar has yet to be built and there is speculation the project will be shelved due to financing challenges. Meanwhile, the China Power Hub Generation Company's 1,320MW coal-fired plant at Hub, has faced frequent liquidity problems, shattering investor confidence and leading to appeals for intervention from the Chinese ambassador to the prime minister.

Of the two road projects in Balochistan, the Khuzdar-Basima road has been built, but the second road from DI Khan to Zhob is not yet complete.

The BRI's flagship project, the Gwadar port, is operational but has, thus far, failed to attract significant economic activity. It remains far from the bustling transshipment hub officials envisioned would "connect South Asia to the world". Gwadar Airport, though reportedly complete, has yet to be inaugurated due to persistent security threats.

'We don't let saboteurs sabotage it'

Over the years, militant groups have frequently threatened China against pursuing its development objects in the region via video messages. These groups have carried out numerous attacks, including assaults on Chinese engineers, an attack on the Chinese consulate in Karachi and the killing of three Chinese teachers.

In response, both Pakistan and China have reaffirmed their commitment to counter-terrorism and continued development. Pakistan's defence minister, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, told Dialogue Earth: "The Chinese are invested and will not desert us. Of course, they have security concerns — it's not just financial for them, it also involves Chinese workers on the ground. From Khunjerab to Gwadar, Chinese workers are present, making it a serious matter."

Ahsan Iqbal, Pakistan's minister for planning and development, expressed a similar sentiment, adding: "The Chinese understand that these incidents are isolated and they know that the forces behind them are trying to disrupt CPEC. We won't let saboteurs succeed."

Nonetheless, the persistent militant attacks have added pressure on CPEC projects, according to security expert Amir Rana. He pointed out that a recent high-level meeting between Pakistan's army chief, the prime minister and Chinese president Xi Jinping featured security as "the foremost topic".

He said: "They returned [from China] and announced 'Azm-e-Istehkam' [a military operation] ostensibly in response to Afghanistan, but it also reflects Chinese interest in making Balochistan safe — where the threat is highest and attacks are frequent."

Rana added that resolving the insurgency in Balochistan and the ensuing militant attacks is far from straightforward: "It's complicated because it's not just a terrorist threat [and has] political elements." On Pakistan's response, he said "the political part of the resolution is missing."

A pivot towards 'Smart CPEC'

China, meanwhile, has adjusted its approach to investment in Pakistan in light of these challenges. Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, former secretary general of the Pakistan Democratic Movement coalition that governed the country from April 2022 to August 2023, noted that China had shifted away from large-scale infrastructure projects with long-term payoffs. "Earlier in the CPEC process there was joint identification, feasibility and due diligence of potential projects and investments. But then the Chinese focus shifted to smaller and sharper interventions with quick returns; which was sometimes referred to as 'smart CPEC', i.e. not large infrastructure projects with long gestation periods, but smaller ones with faster results," he explained.

At the third Belt and Road Forum in October 2023, president Xi placed great emphasis on "small yet smart" projects as part of BRI. These investments, focusing on a thousand small-scale livelihood programmes, aim to address local needs through targeted, manageable projects.

An Islamabad-based politician, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that Chinese business leaders had revealed unofficial instructions from their government to avoid investing in long-term projects. "They've been told to continue investing in Pakistan but to select projects that are near-ready or already operational with revenue streams. The direction changed after the slow pace and poor returns on existing projects," he said.

This pivot reflects a broader reset in China's overseas investment strategy, according to Isabel Hilton, founder of China Dialogue (which became Dialogue Earth in 2024) and visiting professor at King's College London. "Large-scale BRI investments peaked around 2017, as many of the projects became problematic for a number of reasons," she told Dialogue Earth. "Last year, the 10th anniversary of BRI was a relatively subdued affair and today Beijing stresses a different development model – the Global Development Initiative. Chinese banks and government entities have become much more cautious in their lending and finance policies and there is a much greater realisation that due diligence matters in a world of low growth and mounting levels of debt."

## **China shows interest to invest in Pakistan's diverse sectors**

10 September 2024, Radio Pakistan

A high level Chinese business delegation has evinced keen interest for investment in major sectors of Pakistan's economy and relocating Chinese industries here.

The expression was made by the delegation comprising four prominent Chinese business groups during their visit to Special Investment Facilitation Council in Islamabad today.

The delegation was apprised of potential investment opportunities in priority sectors including agriculture, livestock, Information Technology, energy, minerals, tourism and industry.

The delegation was also informed about the policy level measures taken by SIFC to improve the overall business environment in the country and salient features of industrial development in Pakistan.

The visit of the delegation will further stimulate the ongoing engagement between Pakistan and China under the Business to Business framework.

## **Pakistani scholars hail China's modernization, envision CPEC cooperation**

09 September 2024, Xinhua

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is beneficial for both countries as it creates many trade opportunities and helps Pakistan to speed up the industrialization drive, Nadira Panjwani, chairperson of the Karachi-based Karachi Council on Foreign Relations (KCFR), has said.

Addressing a seminar hosted by KCFR on Friday, the chairperson said the CPEC was a flagship project symbolizing tremendous potentials that exist for trade and regional connectivity.

The expert said friendship between Pakistan and China is unbreakable, adding that as the world undergoes transformative changes and the global geopolitical landscape evolves, the two countries need to strengthen cooperation and strive to build a more interconnected, peaceful and sustainable world.

Talking to Xinhua on the occasion, Habib Paracha, a member of KCFR and a film producer, said that China's modernization shows the world how a populous country alleviated poverty.

"Pakistan should make good use of its resource advantages and learn from China's experience to solve the problem of unbalanced development and gradually move toward modernization," he said.

Paracha said that agricultural cooperation between Pakistan and China should be broader, adding that it

would benefit the Pakistani people, and the two countries should continue to strengthen cultural exchanges to promote mutual understanding.

Speaking at the event, Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong said that China is willing to strengthen exchanges on state governance with Pakistan and work together to promote the modernization of both countries.

Launched in 2013, the CPEC, a flagship project of the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative, is a corridor linking Gwadar Port in southwest Pakistan's Balochistan province with Kashgar in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, which highlights energy, transport and industrial cooperation in the first phase, while the new phase expands to agriculture and livelihood, among others.

### **Pakistan committed to enhancing cooperation with China: foreign office**

09 September 2024, Xinhua

Pakistan has remained committed to deepening cooperation with China in various sectors, including agriculture, the Pakistani Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Thursday.

Spokesperson of Pakistan's Foreign Office Mumtaz Zahra Baloch emphasized the robust and multifaceted relationship between the two countries. Baloch said that bilateral cooperation in various sectors, including agriculture, has continued to grow steadily over the years.

"Pakistan and China are all-weather strategic cooperative partners, and our relationship is multifaceted," said the spokesperson.

According to official sources, the Pakistani government is working on training of 1,000 Pakistani agricultural experts in China under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

### **Pakistan resolves IMF issues to unlock \$7 billion loan**

13 September 2024, The Tribune, Shahbaz Rana

Board scheduled to meet this month, 37-month deal will mark beginning of a new journey.

Pakistan on Thursday announced that it had amicably resolved all outstanding issues with the International Monetary Fund paving the way for the approval of the \$7 billion loan this month, as it is also set to further tighten the noose around the necks of existing taxpayers after retreating against the traders.

The government has prepared amendments to deny the existing filers of the income tax returns the right to purchase assets if the value of their declared cash

balances and income is less than the cost of the new assets.

The step is being taken after the new Federal Board of Revenue chairman analysed the data of the existing less than six million filers of the income tax returns for the tax year 2024. It turned out that hardly 45,000 Pakistanis out of the six million income tax returns filers were showing annual income of more than Rs10 million.

"Thank God, all issues have amicably been resolved with the IMF and this month the IMF board will give final shape to these issues", said Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb on Thursday.

His statement brings to an end the uncertainty around the approval of the \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility that is pending for the final board nod for the past two months.

IMF spokesperson Julie Kozack said in Washington on Thursday that the board is scheduled to meet on September 25 to consider the approval of the \$7 billion loan package for three years' term.

Pakistan took longer than the anticipated time in securing rollover of the \$16 billion cash deposits and commercial loans and arranging another \$2 billion in commercial financing.

The new 37-month IMF deal approval will mark the beginning of a new journey, which will bring more economic difficulties but its implementation can provide stability.

Compliant taxpayers to pay more

The sources said that the government was working on a new piece of legislation to take measures for enhancing the tax collection, which is facing huge shortfalls against the agreed targets with the IMF.

The government believes that the majority of the existing nearly six million filers, mainly business individuals, associations of persons and companies, have under-declared their assets and incomes in the annual statements filed with the FBR, said the tax authorities. It has been decided that the people and the firms, already in the tax net, would be targeted to cough more revenues.

The government's decision to charge higher tax rates on the purchase of assets by non-filers is the core reason for a narrow tax base and low taxpayers by the filers. However, the government is still not willing to abolish this uncalled for category of the non-filers, which encourages people to stay away from the tax net.

The government is considering to amend the Income Tax Ordinance to target the majority of the existing nearly six million income tax return filers by either promulgating an ordinance or introducing a bill in the National Assembly, said the sources.

As per the proposal, despite being filers and taxpayers, individuals and firms having assets not worth buying homes, plots and cars would be denied



to purchase these assets, said the sources. They would also be denied the right to withdraw their cash balances from the banks, if their aggregate cash withdrawals are less than the amounts shown in their tax returns.

The FBR has proposed to implement these new stringent legal measures with effect from October 1, according to the government sources.

The government officials said that the FBR would give access to the information of the existing taxpayers to the government departments and the commercial banks to deny them the right to purchase the assets.

The proposals are being framed days after the government conceded to the retailers and exempted them from the legal requirement of disclosing their bank accounts and the details of the assets.

Pakistan's industrialists have already started establishing their businesses overseas and people are finding avenues to stay away from the heavy taxation that has broken the back of the salaried and business individuals. The salaried persons pay up to 39% of their gross salary in taxes while this ratio for business individuals is around 50% of their net income.

Despite the limited tax base and the burden being borne by these people, the government has the audacity to prepare and consider proposals to further tighten the noose around the existing taxpayers.

The FBR sources said that the government was also proposing to deny the right of investing in mutual funds and stock market to non-filers. According to another proposal, the non-filers may also be denied the right to purchase properties. But it is not clear whether the government can afford to implement this recommendation given the pressure by the strong lobbies.

The FBR believes that the existing taxpayers were not coughing up enough revenues. It is going to send them nudging notices, detailing their incomes, assets and the tax liabilities. The notices will go to the existing tax filers.

Civil servants first target

The sources said that in the first step, the income tax returns of the nearly two million federal, provincial and the state-owned enterprises employees would be pre-populated aimed at encouraging them to pay their due taxes.

The FBR plans to go after the business individuals who are already filers but according to its assumption they are not paying due taxes. There are 3.7 million filer business individuals, and 2.4 million of them did not pay income tax last year. Only 20,000 showed more than Rs10 million in annual income while another 921,000 showed less than Rs10 million in annual income.

Out of two million salaried class filers, about 630,000 were below the Rs600,000 annual income tax threshold, according to the FBR officials. There were about 15,000 salaried persons having annual income of Rs10 million or more and paid Rs93 billion in income tax, according to the FBR officials.

However, less than 1.3 million salaried individuals also declared less than Rs10 million annual incomes and paid Rs157 billion income taxes. These people are mostly middle to upper-middle income earners and are bearing the burden of the nation.

According to the tax authorities, there are 80,000 registered companies but less than 6,000 showed more than Rs10 million in annual income. These below 6,000 firms paid the 940 billion income tax, which is 99% of the total income tax paid by all the companies.

There were 47,000 companies that filed nil returns and another 26,000 that declared less than Rs10 million in annual income. The FBR is going to target these existing registered companies.

Likewise, out of nearly 100,000 associations of persons, less than 5,000 showed Rs10 million annual incomes. There were 60,000 such associations, which showed nil income. Less than 5,000 associations declared Rs10 million worth income people and paid Rs150 billion in income tax.

## August

**Pakistan relaxed rules to award \$2 billion contract to China for construction of Karakoram Highway: report**



30 August 2024, The Hindu

Chinese and Pakistani flag on entrance to Karakoram Highway | Photo Credit: Getty Images

Pakistan relaxed bidding rules to directly award a \$2 billion contract to China for the construction of a strategically important road, according to a media report on Friday. Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb-led Economic Coordination Committee of the Cabinet on Thursday approved to invoke a special rule to exempt the requirement for the

international competitive bidding to award a contract to Chinese firms for the construction of a section of the Karakoram Highway, The Express Tribune newspaper reported.

The Thakot-Raikot section of the highway is critical to keep China-Pakistan connected through the land route.

The committee considered a summary of the Ministry of Communications regarding the Execution of Framework Agreement between China and Pakistan on Realignment of KKH (Thakot-Raikot) under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), according to a statement by the Ministry of Finance.

After detailed discussions and deliberations, and in order to comply with the codal requirements, the committee allowed the Ministry of Communications and National Highway Authority to proceed with provisions of the Framework Agreement in accordance with provisions of rule-5 of Public Procurement Rules, 2004 for procurement of construction of realignment of KKH (Thakot-Raikot Section 241 KM) project under CPEC (Phase-II), it added.

Pakistan had signed the framework agreement for the construction of Thakot-Raikot section of Karakoram Highway in June during the visit of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to Beijing. China will give a \$2 billion loan for the project.

The existing road portion will be submerged due to the construction of the Diamer-Basha, Dasu, Azad Pattan and Thakot dams along the road.

According to the framework agreement, the Chinese companies will be responsible for the engineering design, procurement and construction (EPC) and supervision work. The identification of the Chinese companies for the project will culminate in selection of one company or a consortium after due negotiations on all technical and financial considerations with the Pakistani institutions responsible for the project, according to the agreement.

China will provide a list of the recommended Chinese companies and Pakistan will select one of those for the construction work. Pakistan will use Chinese equipment for the construction of the project.

The Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) law binds the government to give contracts through competitive bidding. However, the PPRA rule 5 states that whenever these rules are in conflict with an obligation or commitment of the federal government arising out of an international treaty or an agreement with a state, or any international financial institution the provisions of such international treaty or agreement shall prevail to the extent of such conflict. The committee also approved to relax competitive process conditions for hiring of foreign consultants for

the construction of Chakdara-Timergara road connecting Peshawar with Chitral.

The Export-Import Bank of South Korea has given a USD 49 million loan for the project but on the condition that the consultants will be hired as per its desire.

The Chairman ECC Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb directed that in future no foreign loans should be taken for those road projects, which cannot generate enough revenues to pay off these liabilities.

Pakistan's external financing position remains thin and the government took a couple of incentives to ease pressure on the foreign exchange reserves, according to the paper.

### **Deadliest Attack in Years Sabotages Pakistan's Security Promises to China**

29 August 2024, China Digital Times, Arthur Kaufman

This week, the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), a militant separatist group from Pakistan's southwestern province, claimed responsibility for a series of coordinated attacks that left 73 people dead across numerous provinces. While no Chinese citizens were targeted, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif claimed that the BLA wanted to "drive a wedge" between Pakistan and China and scare off Chinese investors from projects in Balochistan and other parts of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Saleem Ahmad and Saud Mehsud from Reuters reported on the scope of the attacks:

Pakistan's military said 14 soldiers and police and 21 militants were killed in fighting after the largest of the attacks, which targeted buses and trucks on a major highway.

Balochistan's chief minister said 38 civilians were also killed. Local officials said 23 of them were killed in the roadside attack after armed men checked passengers' IDs before shooting many of them and torching vehicles.

[...] Officials said militants also targeted police and security stations in Balochistan, Pakistan's largest province by area but least populated, killing at least 10 people in one attack.

[...] The [BLA] said four suicide bombers, including a woman from the southern port district of Gwadar, had been involved in an attack on the Bela paramilitary base. Pakistani authorities did not confirm the suicide blasts, but the provincial chief minister said three people had been killed at the base. [Source]

Pakistan witnessed 409 militant attacks in the first five months of 2024, leading to 414 deaths and 474

injuries, marking an 83 percent increase in attacks over the same period in 2023, according to the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies.

This week's attacks, the deadliest in years, reinforce the trend of a deteriorating security environment. Haroon Janjua from DW described the significance of these latest attacks, which experts view as a major escalation:

Analysts view the latest coordinated attacks as alarming due to their unprecedented scale and intensity, raising serious concerns about the security impacts.

"These are extremely significant attacks because of their scale – in terms of number of fatalities, the geographic scope of the attacks, and the wide range of targets, both civilian and security," Michael Kugelman, a South Asia expert at the Washington-based Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, told DW.

Kiyya Baloch, a journalist and commentator who has extensively covered Balochistan, said that Monday's attacks marked a new level of seriousness due to their meticulous planning and coordination.

"This indicates that the use of force by the state in Balochistan in the last two decades is not effective. It is backfiring and worsening the situation," Baloch told DW. [Source]

Abid Hussain from Al Jazeera described the message that the BLA was attempting to send via the attacks, along with their motivations:

The targeted attacks on workers from Punjab – Pakistan's biggest, most prosperous and most politically dominant province – also add to a growing pattern, said experts. As with multiple previous attacks on Chinese nationals and projects in the province, the separatist movement wants to send the message that outsiders are not safe in Balochistan, they said. "Besides the Chinese, Baloch nationalists also target specific groups such as security forces, Punjabi laborers, and workers involved in development projects. Their aim is to discourage these groups from coming to Balochistan to work on these initiatives," Malik Siraj Akbar, a Balochistan expert based in Washington, DC, said.

[...M]any in the province accuse the Pakistani state of systematically neglecting their needs and exploiting their resources, fuelling a sense of betrayal and deepening support for separatism.

"The nationalists are strongly opposed to the exploration of gold, minerals, and coal, seeing these activities as the exploitation of Balochistan's resources," Akbar said. "They often highlight images of coal trucks leaving the province as evidence of resources being extracted without benefiting the local population. This narrative helps to boost public support for their cause." [Source]

The CPEC and its flagship Gwadar port and free zone project, located in the resource-rich Balochistan province, are major investments by Chinese state actors that underpin the countries' bilateral

relationship. But local backlash to these projects has grown and made Chinese citizens targets of BLA attacks. Describing the insecurity-underdevelopment nexus in Balochistan, Abdul Basit wrote for The Diplomat about the neocolonial terms in which the BLA views China and the CPEC:

In its propaganda, BLA frames China's economic footprint in Balochistan as a neo-colonial project and compares it with the British East India Company which entered the Indian Subcontinent in 1608 as spice traders and gradually took over the entire region. In multiple statements after targeting Chinese nationals and projects in Pakistan, BLA has issued warnings to Beijing to roll back its development projects and leave the province.

BLA alleges that CPEC would give China control over Balochistan's mineral resources and strategic coastline through Gwadar's deep-sea port. BLA also accuses China of furthering the restive province's sense of economic marginalization that would reduce the Baloch community to a minority in their own province once Gwadar is fully developed as a modern city. Lacking technical skills and modern education, the Baloch fear that job opportunities in Gwadar will be grabbed by outsiders while sidelining them. Concurrently, Pakistan's worsening economic situation has also generated rumors that the country will offer Balochistan's resources to repay soaring Chinese loans, which have now risen to \$30 billion of Pakistan's

\$126 billion external debt. Such narratives strengthen the insurgent groups and allow them to recruit by leveraging the Baloch community's economic anxieties to perpetuate the conflict. [Source]

The attacks coincided with a meeting on Monday between Pakistani Army Chief Gen Asim Munir and visiting Commander of the People's Liberation Army Ground Forces Gen Li Qiaoming to discuss bilateral security cooperation. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian also told a regular news briefing that "China is ready to further strengthen counter- terrorism security co-operation with the Pakistani side in order to jointly maintain regional peace and security."

But it is unclear whether China's security cooperation will make a difference. In Wednesday's China-Global South Project newsletter, Eric Olander wrote: "China's in a bind because it's too deeply invested in Pakistan to pull out, but the South Asian country is clearly not stable enough for Beijing to add more money to the

\$60 billion that it's already spent building the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. It's going to have to make do with the status quo, which means more destruction and more bloodshed."

### **China strongly condemns attacks in Pakistan, says Chinese foreign ministry**

27 August 2024, Reuters

China strongly condemns the attacks in Pakistan and will continue to give strong support to the country in anti-terrorism action, a spokesperson for the Chinese foreign ministry said on Tuesday at a regular press briefing.

The attacks in Pakistan were the most widespread in years by ethnic militants fighting a decades-long insurgency to win secession of a resource-rich southwestern province, home to major China-led projects such as a port and a gold and copper mine.

### **Pakistan's Nishan-e-Imtiaz (Military) awarded to top Chinese general Gen Li Qiaoming**

27 August 2024, Deccan Herald

Gen Li Qiaoming received the Nishan-e-Imtiaz (Military) from President Asif Ali Zardari at a special ceremony at Aiwan-e-Sadr (President House). Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Army Chief Gen Asim Munir, service chiefs and parliamentarians attended the event. Commander of the Ground Forces of the People's Liberation Army of China General Li Qiaoming was on Tuesday conferred the Nishan-e-Imtiaz, one of the top honours in Pakistan, for his "unwavering commitment" in promoting close cooperation between the militaries of the two all-weather friends.

### **PM, Commander Ground Forces of PLA China discuss bilateral ties, defence relations**

27 August 2024, Pakistan Today

Commander of the Ground Forces of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China, General Li Qiaoming called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif here on Monday.

The prime minister extended a warm welcome to General Li and underscored that Pakistan and China are All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partners and trusted friends.

PM Shehbaz Sharif highlighted that the deep-rooted ties between the two nations enjoy broad public, political, and institutional support in Pakistan, making them indispensable for the progress and development of both countries.

ISLAMABAD: Commander of the Ground Forces of the People's Liberation Army of China, General Li Qiaoming calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif . INP

Expressing satisfaction at the deepening military-to-military exchanges, he noted that the defense and strategic ties between Pakistan and China are vital for peace and stability in the region as these relations form the foundation of their bilateral relationship.

In his remarks, General Li affirmed that China, as an iron brother, strategic partner, and reliable friend, places the highest priority on its relationship with Pakistan.

The PLA commander expressed China's desire to elevate their bilateral friendship to new levels of cooperation and collaboration. Recognizing the role of Pakistan's armed forces in promoting regional peace and stability and combating terrorism, General Li reiterated the PLA's commitment to further expanding its cooperation with Pakistan to enhance the capacity building of the two armed forces.

The two sides focused on various aspects of the Pakistan-China friendship, particularly the bilateral defense and strategic partnership.

Earlier, PLA Commander General Li Qiaoming visited the General Headquarters where he held a meeting with Chief of Army Staff Gen Asim Munir.

The meeting offered a forum for in-depth discussions on matters of mutual interest, regional security, military training, and strategies to improve bilateral defense cooperation, according to a statement from the ISPR.

Gen Asim Munir thanked the dignitary and reiterated how much Pakistan values its brotherly relations with China.

Earlier, in a formal show of deference and hospitality, General Li Qiaoming arrived at the General Headquarters, laid a floral wreath at Yadgar-e- Shuhada, and received a guard of honour by a well-groomed Pakistan Army detachment.

### **Pakistan's Balochistan, home to China-led projects, hit by militant attacks, 60 killed**

26 August 2024, SCMP

The attacks targeted police stations, railway lines, and vehicles on highways, with the Baloch Liberation Army claiming responsibility.

Separatist militant attacks on police stations, railway lines and highways in Pakistan's restive province of Balochistan, coupled with retaliatory operations by security forces, killed more than 60 people, officials said on Monday.

The most widespread assault by ethnic insurgents in years forms part of a decades-long effort to win

secession of the resource-rich southwestern province, home to major China-led projects such as a strategic port and a gold and copper mine.

"These attacks are a well thought out plan to create anarchy in Pakistan," Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said in a statement, adding that security forces had killed 12 militants in operations after the attacks on Sunday and Monday.

Pakistan's military said 14 soldiers and police, and 21 militants, were killed in fighting after the largest of the attacks, which targeted vehicles from buses to goods trucks on a major highway.

It was not immediately clear if that included the 12 militants the interior ministry confirmed dead.

Local officials said at least 23 passengers were killed in the attack, with 35 vehicles set ablaze.

Rail traffic with Quetta was suspended following blasts on a rail bridge linking the provincial capital to the rest of Pakistan, as well as on a rail link to neighbouring Iran, railways official Muhammad Kashif said.

Police said they had found six as yet unidentified bodies near the site of the attack on the railway bridge. Officials said militants also targeted police and security stations in Balochistan, which is Pakistan's largest province by area, killing at least 10 people in one attack.

Militant group the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) took responsibility in a statement to journalists that claimed many more attacks, including one on a major paramilitary base, though Pakistani authorities have yet to confirm these.

The BLA is the biggest of several ethnic insurgent groups that have battled the central government for decades, saying it unfairly exploits Balochistan's gas and mineral resources. It seeks the expulsion of China and independence for the province.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif vowed that security forces would retaliate and bring those responsible to justice.

General Li Qiaoming, commander of China's People's Liberation Army Ground Forces and Pakistan's army chief Asim Munir met on Monday, though a Pakistani military statement made no mention of the attacks.

"The meeting afforded an opportunity for in-depth discussions on matters of mutual interest, regional security, military training, and measures to further augment bilateral defence cooperation," it said.

Passengers killed

On Sunday night, armed men blocked a highway in Balochistan, marched passengers off vehicles, and shot them after checking their identity cards, a senior superintendent of police, Ayub Achakzai, told Reuters. As many as 35 vehicles, including trucks,

were set on fire on the highway in the area of Musakhail.

"The armed men also not only killed passengers but also killed the drivers of trucks carrying coal," said Hameed Zahir, deputy commissioner of the area.

Militants have targeted workers from the eastern province of Punjab, whom they see as exploiting their resources.

In the past, they have also attacked Chinese interests and citizens in the province, where China runs the strategic southern deep water port of Gawadar, as well as a gold and copper mine in its west.

The BLA said its fighters targeted military personnel travelling in civilian clothes, who were shot after being identified.

Pakistan's interior ministry said the dead were innocent citizens.

Six security personnel, three civilians and one tribal elder made up the 10 killed in clashes with armed militants who stormed a station of the Balochistan Levies in the central district of Kalat, police official Dostain Khan Dashti said.

Officials said police stations had also been attacked in two southern coastal towns, but the toll had yet to be confirmed.

Balochistan, which borders both Iran and Afghanistan, is Pakistan's largest province by size, but the least populated and remains largely underdeveloped, with high levels of poverty

### **Pakistan postpones opening of \$250 million China-funded airport over security fears**

23 August 2024, First Post

The planned opening on August 14 - Pakistan's Independence Day - was abruptly delayed following mass protests earlier this month that paralysed Gwadar, the city where the airport is located

Pakistan has postponed the opening of a nearly \$250 million China-funded New Gwadar International Airport (NGIA) due to security concerns.

According to Nikkei Asia report, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was due to attend the inauguration of New Gwadar International Airport (NGIA), close to a port at the center of the \$50 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

However, the planned opening on August 14 - Pakistan's Independence Day - was abruptly delayed following mass protests earlier this month that paralysed Gwadar, the city where the airport is located.

No new opening date has been announced for the \$246 million project, which got off the ground following a grant deal with Beijing in 2015.



"All the required work and prerequisite arrangements on [the New Gwadar] airport have been completed and it's ready for flight operations," Nikkei Asia quoted a government official familiar with the matter as saying.

The New Gwadar International Airport's opening has been delayed again, following an initial postponement last year, due to concerns over low flight demand amid ongoing militant attacks and separatist unrest.

The single-runway airport, located 45 kilometers from the Chinese-controlled Gwadar port, spans 4,300 acres and can accommodate large aircraft like the Airbus A380, making it Pakistan's largest airport by size, surpassing Islamabad's airport.

Gwadar's efforts to establish itself as a major hub have been underwhelming, with only three weekly flights to a smaller nearby airport from Karachi, many of which are canceled.

Despite anticipated direct flights from Chinese airlines, analysts doubt there will be a significant increase in demand, reported Nikkei Asia.

"The inauguration of NGIA is symbolic in nature because it is not commercially viable for any airline in the short term," Afsar Malik, an expert in airline economics, was quoted as saying.

Pakistani governments have long touted the multibillion-dollar investment with China as a means to transform Gwadar into the next Singapore.

However, on Monday, the prime minister ordered that half of all government sea cargo, originally slated for Karachi, be rerouted to Gwadar's port, underscoring its underutilisation.

There are concerns that Gwadar's new transport hub may become a white elephant, akin to Sri Lanka's Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport, which is often labeled the "world's emptiest international airport" due to sparse flight activity.

"Vanity projects are not new for the Chinese, they have built similar projects back home which have limited use," Nikkei Asia quoted Mohammad Shoaib, an assistant professor at Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad, as saying.

"The Chinese are biding their time and the NGIA can be of use once Gwadar kicks off. ... In the meantime, NGIA and old Gwadar airport can be used by other support missions from China," Shoaib added.

This month, Gwadar saw major protests by groups advocating for civil, political, and economic rights in Balochistan, where the China-funded port is located.

Beijing has become increasingly cautious about investing in Pakistan following a series of deadly attacks on its nationals. The country faces a rise in militant activity from both Islamist groups and separatists in Balochistan.

Islamabad, already struggling with a fragile economy, has pledged to enhance security for workers and launch new counterterror operations. Despite hopes that the new airport will attract more Chinese investment, skepticism remains about its impact on the largely impoverished local population.

## **Pakistan blames users for slow internet as firewall rumours grow**

19 August 2024, BBC, Kelly Ng

Pakistan has for weeks been experiencing painfully slow internet - but who, or what, is to blame is a matter for debate.

Activists say the state is building a China-style internet firewall as it looks to exert further control over the online space.

Officials have disputed these claims and instead blamed the widespread use of secure connections or VPN (virtual private networks) for the crawling speeds. Shutting down the internet to crush dissent is a familiar move in regulators' playbooks in Pakistan and other parts of Asia.

Since the riots sparked by former prime minister Imran Khan last year, the government has blocked social media platforms and throttled connection speeds as the battle for public support spilled over from the streets to the digital space.

The micro-blogging platform X has been blocked since the February elections due to "national security" concerns.

Mr Khan's party supporters are big users of X and he is the most popular Pakistani on the platform, with nearly 21 million followers.

But Minister of State for Information Technology Shaza Fatima said on Sunday that the government was not behind the recent slowdown.

She said her team has been "working tirelessly" with internet service providers and telcos to resolve the issue.

Ms Fatima said a "large population" had been using VPNs and "this strained the network, causing the internet to go slow".

She said reports that the state was behind the slow connections were "completely false".

However Ms Fatima said the government had been upgrading its systems to improve cyber security.

"It is the right of the government to [take such measures] given the cyber security attacks that this country has to go through," she said.

Activists however accuse the minister of "dodging criticism like a usual politician".

Shahzad Ahmad, director of local digital watchdog Bytes for All, told the BBC his organisation has "ample tech evident" to prove the existence of a firewall.

"It seems its purpose is to monitor online traffic... and limit dissemination [of information] in online spaces, particularly curbing political expression," Mr Ahmad said.

"Even if civil liberties don't matter, this is now about people's livelihood and the economy as well," said Farieha Aziz, co-founder of Bolo Bhi, a local non-profit that advocates for free speech online.

Business leaders and associations have warned that the slow connections could endanger Pakistan's business potential.

"The imposition of the firewall has triggered a perfect storm of challenges, with prolonged internet disconnections and erratic VPN performance threatening a complete meltdown of business operations," said the Pakistan Software Houses Association.

This could cost the IT sector up to \$300 million, the association said, calling it a "direct, tangible and aggressive assault on the industry's viability".

"A mass exodus of IT companies is not just a possibility but an imminent reality if immediate and decisive action is not taken," it said.

Activists have filed a petition before the Islamabad High Court, calling for access to the internet to be declared a fundamental right under Pakistan's constitution.

### **Pakistan-China friendship highlighted in Independence Day celebrations, two former diplomats awarded for contributions**

16 August 2024, Global Times, Dong Feng

The Embassy of Pakistan in China celebrated the 78th Independence Day of Pakistan in Beijing on August 14. Activities were hosted at the embassy. The friendship between China and Pakistan was also celebrated at an award ceremony.

Moreover, the Embassy of Pakistan in China hosted a Pakistan Civil Award Investiture Ceremony. Two representatives who contributed to the bilateral ties were awarded - Sha Zukang, former permanent representative of China to the UN in Geneva, who also served as president of the China-Pakistan Friendship Association, and Nong Rong, deputy director of the Hong Kong and Macao Work Office of the CPC Central Committee and Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council, who also served as the Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan. Ambassador Hashmi, on behalf of the President of Pakistan, conferred the prestigious "Hilal-e-Quaid-i-Azam" award.

In his remarks, the Ambassador extended heartfelt congratulations and paid a rich tribute to the contributions made by the two dignitaries. He highlighted the significant impact of their efforts on bilateral relations and beyond.

### **Embassy of Pakistan in China celebrates 78th Independence Day of Pakistan**

15 August 2024, Global Times, Dong Feng

Embassy of Pakistan in China celebrated the 78th Independence Day of Pakistan in Beijing on Wednesday. Activities were hosted at the embassy. The friendship between China and Pakistan was also celebrated at an award ceremony.

Early in the morning, officials and Pakistani community participated in a flag hoisting ceremony to celebrate the 78th Independence Day of Pakistan. Holding their national flags, Pakistani children smiled in the morning sunshine.

Messages from President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari, as well as Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif were extended to the audience.

In his keynote speech, Pakistan's Ambassador to China Khalil Hashmi said, "This day marks a celebration of our nation's enduring spirit, a testament to the sacrifices and unwavering resolve of our founding fathers, who paved the path for our freedom. As we unfurl our national flag today, let us reflect on the progress we have made and renew our commitment toward a prosperous and peaceful country." The ambassador also stressed the friendship between Pakistan and China. "Here

in China, we are privileged to witness the blossoming of a friendship that has grown alongside our nation's journey. The bond between Pakistan and China, characterized by mutual respect and a shared vision, is unparalleled in inter-state relations," he said. He also urged the attendees to contribute more to strengthen bilateral relations.

"We are resolved to further solidify this friendship. I call upon the Pakistani community in China to continue playing its vital role in strengthening this unique relationship," the ambassador noted.

Moreover, the Embassy of Pakistan in China hosted a Pakistan Civil Award Investiture Ceremony. Two representatives who contributed to the bilateral ties - Sha Zukang, former permanent representative of China to the UN and president of the China-Pakistan Friendship Association, and Nong Rong, deputy director of the Hong Kong and Macao Work Office of the CPC Central Committee and Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council and former ambassador of China to Pakistan - were awarded. Ambassador Hashmi, on behalf of the president of Pakistan, conferred the prestigious "Hilal-e-Quaid-i-Azam" award.

In his remarks, the ambassador extended heartfelt congratulations and paid a rich tribute to the

contributions made by the two dignitaries. He highlighted the significant impact of their efforts in bilateral relations and beyond. "I have the honor to witness and personally engage myself in the promotion of China-Pakistan friendship," Sha said.

Since the establishment of China-Pakistan diplomatic relations, Pakistan has been consistently supporting China in maintaining independence, national sovereignty and territory integrity. Pakistan has been consistently and firmly supporting China's social and economic development. At the same time, Pakistan has always been supportive of China's international initiatives and proposals, including the establishment and construction of a community of shared interests. "I take it, this support of Pakistan to China is most valued. This support cannot be measured in cash," Sha noted.

"We should take and we do, take this friendship, as radical assets of our peoples, particularly at a time when we are undergoing centenary changes in the world situation. To further promote the traditional friendship between China and Pakistan and deepen our solidarity and cooperation carries special important significance," He stressed. Nong also expressed his gratitude to the president of Pakistan for the honor and reaffirmed his commitment to further advancing the China-Pakistan relationship. "The friendship between China and Pakistan is higher than the Himalayas, deeper than the ocean, sweeter than honey, stronger than steel. The iron clad friendship between China and Pakistan is deeply rooted in the hearts of our two peoples," he said. Nong continued recalling the meetings between the state leaders of the two countries. "I have every confidence in the future of China- Pakistan relations and stand ready to continue to contribute to this friendship," said Nong. On the sideline of the activities, in an interview with the Global Times, Ambassador Hashmi also recalled the salience of the time-tested, all-weather friendship between China and Pakistan, describing it as a model of inter-state relations based on mutual respect, strategic trust, and a shared vision for global peace and development. Talking about developing and strengthening the China- Pakistan All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership, the ambassador said, "I think it's fair to say that there is no dimension that we have not touched bilaterally. So we work on the diplomatic front, on the political front, on defense, economic trade, investment, culture, education, agriculture, the science of technology, and people to people [exchanges]. In our relationship, our cooperation has even gone to space with the launch of a satellite."

He also highlighted investment opportunities in Pakistan.

"Right now we are very much focused on the economic side of the relationship because it's mutually beneficial in the sense that Chinese enterprises are small-, medium- and large-state-owned and private enterprises. They have a lot of expertise, they have a lot of management experience, technology and capital. They can invest in Pakistan." Talking about the outlook for cooperation between China and Pakistan in cultural heritage and cultural relics protection efforts, the ambassador said, "There's a lot of heritage from Buddhist sites that are in Pakistan that go back centuries and millennia." Pakistan has featured some artifacts in an exhibition at the Capital Museum in Beijing for three months. Taking popularity into account, the exhibition was also showcased at other locations such as Gansu Province and Shenzhen, Guangdong Province. "We are also starting a project that is looking at the two civilizations. The civilization that flourished along the Indus River in Pakistan and one of the most significant rivers in China - the Yangtze River. "Experts from the two sides - archaeologists and historians - are working together and they will undergo field visits while doing some research and this will lead to a book but also an exhibition and hopefully also a documentary," he introduced.

#### **China-built landmark hydropower project connects to grid, another milestone for China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, despite Western media's smears**

13 August 2024, Global Times

The first unit of the Chinese-built Suki Kinari Hydropower project in northwest Pakistan was connected to the power grid on Monday, the Xinhua News Agency reported, meaning the project, which was among the first under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) framework, has taken the most critical step toward full commercial operation. The launch of the landmark project, which is the largest overseas greenfield hydropower investment project by a Chinese enterprise, will further alleviate Pakistan's chronic electricity shortages, while injecting new impetus into the sustainable development of the regional economy, experts said. The project's launch comes as some Western media outlets have intensified efforts to badmouth China-Pakistan cooperation, the CPEC in particular, and the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), by bringing up old issues such as debt, which they claim may disrupt future cooperation.

Construction of the project, funded and developed by Energy China, started in January 2017 with a total investment of about \$1.962 billion. The power station

features four impulse turbine units, with a total installed capacity of 884 megawatts and a total reservoir volume of 13.45 million cubic meters, according to Energy China.

All units of the power station will be put into operation by the end of August, the company said. As a flagship project of the CPEC, the Suki Kinari Hydropower project boasts the largest impulse water turbine generator units and the deepest pressure shaft group in the world, meaning that it involved high construction standards.

The project will generate an average of 3.21 billion kilowatt-hours per year, saving about 1.28 million tons of standard coal annually and reducing carbon dioxide emissions by about 3.2 million tons.

More importantly, it will provide affordable, clean electricity to more than 1 million households in Pakistan.

Chinese experts said that the launch of this massive project is another milestone in the cooperation between China and Pakistan under the BRI. It serves as a living example of how the Chinese company has deeply participated in the sustainable development of Pakistan for the benefit of its social and economic development. "Helping Pakistan deal with its energy shortage has been an important task under the development of the CPEC since the beginning... while the heavy reliance on imported coal and high international coal prices are among the issues that have troubled Pakistan.

"The hydropower station offers an alternative choice to resolve many of these problems due to its ecologically friendly, affordable and sustainable nature," Liu Zongyi, director of the Center for South Asia Studies at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies, told the Global Times on Tuesday.

The launch is an important achievement in the new phase of the high-quality construction of the CPEC, which will further ease Pakistan's electricity crisis and provide tangible benefits to local living standards and economic development, Qian Feng, director of the research department at the National Strategy Institute at Tsinghua University, told the Global Times on Tuesday.

The launch comes amid negative coverage by foreign media outlets of China-Pakistan cooperation and the CPEC. One even used an intimidating headline saying that "China-Pakistan ties are at a crossroads," in hyping issues such as debt and security in the region. "Such negative commentary is not new... it has been ongoing since the inception of the CPEC," Qian said. He noted that these persistent negative claims by Western media outlets can underscore the critical importance of China-Pakistan cooperation in further building a China-Pakistan community with a

shared future. China is globally recognized for its

infrastructure capabilities. In terms of financing, projects under the BRI have benefited from favorable loans, which have significantly motivated Chinese enterprises to participate in development and construction.

This financing also helped Pakistan overcome funding constraints that are common among developing countries, experts said.

As a key flagship project under the BRI, the CPEC has brought \$25.4 billion in direct investment to Pakistan, created 236,000 jobs, built 510 kilometers of highways and generated more than 8,000 megawatts of electricity, among other achievements. All these have significantly boosted Pakistan's social and economic development, according to the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan.

As the CPEC enters a new phase in 2024, its 11th year, experts said that cooperation between China and Pakistan under the BRI will be further strengthened in sectors where they have complementary advantages. These sectors could include new energy, manufacturing and cross-border e-commerce, to further enhance regional connectivity and support Pakistan's sustainable development and improvement of livelihoods.

### **China, Pakistan: Rallies in Gilgit Baltistan interrupting cross-border trade and travel disruptions end as of Aug. 12 /update 1**

12 August 2024, Crisis24

Protests in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan, end as of Aug. 12, easing cross-border trade and travel disruptions with China.

Protests in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan, that were disrupting cross-border trade and travel with neighboring Xinjiang, China, have ended as of Aug. 12. Activists in Gilgit-Baltistan had staged disruptive sit-ins along a major section of the Karakoram Highway (National Highway 35) and outside the Sost Dry Port from July 24, affecting cross-border travel and trade near the Khunjerab Pass. Organizers were denouncing taxation on Chinese imports at the affected crossing and called off the action following successful negotiations with government officials.

Lingering localized transport and business disruptions, including shipping delays, are possible through Aug. 12 as operators clear backlogs.

## **Traders end protest against taxes at northern border pass linking Pakistan to China**

10 August 2024, Arab News

Traders in the northern Gilgit-Baltistan region on Sunday called off a 17-day sit-in protest against taxes

on imports at an important border pass linking Pakistan to China, following successful negotiations with the government that will pave the way for trade to resume at the key crossing. Trade and transportation at the high-altitude Khunjerab Pass connecting Pakistan and China remained suspended since July 26 after traders staged a sit-in protest at the Sost dry port against taxes on Chinese imports.

On July 20, the GB Chief Court declared illegal the collection of income tax, sales tax and additional sales tax by Pakistani revenue authorities on goods imported from China through the Khunjerab Pass. Protesters accused the federal government of violating the court's orders and collecting taxes on imports that arrived through the pass.

"The customs department has accepted the GB Chief Court's order and the unanimous resolution of the GB assembly," Imran Ali, president of the GB Chamber of Commerce and Industry, told Arab News via a text message.

"So now, we have announced to call off the protest." Muhammad Iqbal, president of the GB Importers and Exporters Association, said a three-member team representing the traders met GB Chief Minister Hajji Gulber Khan and Minister for Kashmir Affairs and GB Amir Muqam in Islamabad to resolve the issue. "And they promised to fulfill our demands after assurances with the FBR," Iqbal said. "From today, the border is open for all kinds of trade and transport." Bakhtiar Muhammad, a spokesperson for the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) said the customs department was willing to implement the GB court's interim order subject to the provision of monetary security during the case proceedings to safeguard government revenue.

"Traders finally agreed to provide post-dated cheques as security and customs negotiated a standard operating procedure for the clearance, to which they agreed," Muhammad said.

GB Information Minister Eman Shah shared details of the agreement, saying that local traders in GB would not be taxed for imports through the Khunjerab Pass. "However, a checkpoint will be installed at the Thakot Bridge by customs where all taxes will be applicable on imported things being transported to another region," he revealed.

Ninety-six percent of trade between Pakistan and China consists of China's exports to Pakistan, while Pakistan's share of exports to China is only 4

percent, as per the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP).

The main items imported from China into Pakistan include electronic items, shoes, garments and spare parts while Pakistan exports gemstones, dry fruits, medicinal herbs and some clothing items to the neighboring country.

## **Relations with US should be repaired but not at China's expense: Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif**

05 August 2024, The Indian Express

Sharif said that work was progressing fast in the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and also informed that during the recent visit of Chinese experts to Pakistan, there was positive movement in the promotion of cooperation in different fields.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said that Pakistan wants to repair ties with the US but not at the cost of its ties with China as no other country could do what Beijing was doing for his cash-strapped country.

The 72-year-old Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader made these remarks during a meeting with a group of journalists who had recently returned from an official visit to China at his Model Town residence here, according to the Dawn newspaper.

Sharif said that work was progressing fast in the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and also informed that during the recent visit of Chinese experts to Pakistan, there was positive movement in the promotion of cooperation in different fields.

Asked about the Pakistan-US relations, the prime minister said that the country needed to repair its relations with Washington as that was in its best interests but it shouldn't be at the expense of China.

"I think our relations with the US must be repaired, as it is very necessary for Pakistan... But it shouldn't be at the cost of China... and I had told (the Americans) recently in the presence of various dignitaries, including Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar," Sharif was quoted as saying.

"I also told them that similarly, the friendship with China is not at the cost of the US, as both have significance for us," he clarified.

Ties between the two countries soured after jailed former prime minister Imran Khan openly accused the US of orchestrating his downfall after he was removed through a vote of no-confidence in April 2022.

Prime Minister Sharif said he believed that whatever China was helping Pakistan accomplish, the US cannot do.



Sharif also spoke about his letter to Beijing requesting a debt re-profiling and said that if China agreed to give Pakistan five to seven years to pay back the loans, the government would be able to bring down inflation, including electricity prices, the Dawn reported.

The premier said their request is under consideration and he is hoping for a positive response from China. He also expressed his concern about the safety and security of Chinese nationals in Pakistan and assured that the government would use all its resources to ensure their well-being.

In March, five Chinese nationals were among six people killed when an explosives-packed vehicle rammed into their bus in Pakistan's troubled province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It was the second suicide attack on the personnel working on the China-backed hydropower project since 2021.

The Chinese were working on the Dasu hydropower project, which is about 300 km to the north of Islamabad. The 4,320 MW project is being constructed by the China Gezhouba with funding from the World Bank.

Thousands of Chinese personnel are working in Pakistan on several projects being carried out under the aegis of the USD 60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

### **What China is doing for Pakistan, no other country can do: PM**

05 August 2024, Dawn, Khalid Hasnain

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said on Sunday that whatever China was doing for Pakistan, no other country could do, and reiterated that relations with Washington should be repaired, but not at the cost of ties with Beijing.

The prime minister, who had a busy weekend, met with a group of journalists at his Model Town residence in Lahore. The journalists had recently returned from an official visit to China, undertaken on the invitation of the China Public Diplomacy Association.

Speaking on the occasion, PM Shehbaz said that work was progressing fast on the second phase of the China- Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and during the visit of Chinese experts to Pakistan, there was positive movement on the promotion of cooperation in different fields.

Talking about his letter to Beijing requesting debt re-profiling, he said that if China agreed to give Pakistan five to seven years to pay back the loans, the government would be able to bring down inflation, including electricity prices.

However, when asked if he had received any response so far, he said: "No... [our request] is under consideration".

"We hope for a positive response from China in this regard," he said.

When asked about Pakistan-US relations, the PM was of the view that the country needed to repair its relations with Washington, as that was in its best interests.

"I think our relations with the US must be repaired, as it is very necessary for Pakistan... But it shouldn't be at the cost of China... and I had told [the Americans] recently in presence of various dignitaries including Mr Ishaq Dar," he explained.

"I also told them that similarly, the friendship with China is not at the cost of US, as both have significance for us," he clarified.

The PM said he believed that whatever China was helping Pakistan accomplish, the US cannot do.

He was also very concerned about the safety and security of Chinese nationals in Pakistan, and assured that the government would use all its resources to ensure their well-being.

There is no place for politics of any kind on relations with a close friend like China, he remarked.

He said he was well aware of problems, including the inflation and energy prices, being faced by the public at large.

For this, he said, the government had taken Rs50 billion out of the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) and allocated it for relief in energy prices to those using up to 200 units of electricity.

The premier also appeared supportive for those using 400 units and said they should also be given such relief. "We are really worried about the energy prices. And we are reassessing our priorities concerning Independent Power Producers," he maintained.

Youn-i-Istehsal

Today (Monday), marks the fifth anniversary of India revoking Kashmir's special status. In commemoration, the country will observe Youn-i-Istehsal in solidarity with their Kashmiri brethren.

According to PTV News, PM Shehbaz Sharif is expected to visit Muzaffarabad, where he is expected to make an important policy statement.

While stressing continued support for the people of Kashmir for the realization of their right to self determination on the eve of Youn-i-Istehsal, PM Shehbaz said in his message that since 2019, "India has been trying to convince the world that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of its territory. However, international law, historical facts, moral principles and the situation on the ground deny India's baseless claims."

He said that efforts were being made in India to silence the genuine leadership of the Kashmiri people and muzzle the media.

The number of political prisoners remains in the thousands, while 14 political organisations have been outlawed, he said.

Harassment of innocent people, arbitrary detentions, and the so-called 'cordon and search operations have become a matter of routine.

The Indian forces are operating with impunity, according to them under different draconian laws, he added.

He saluted the indomitable courage of the Kashmiri people that has enabled them to withstand every Indian attempt to subjugate them.

"History has proven, time and again, that durable peace in South Asia remains contingent upon the

settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute. In the interest of lasting peace and security in South Asia, India must move from dispute denial to dispute resolution," he added.

### **China's reform policy opens up opportunities for global investment: Pakistani experts**

03 August 2024, Xinhua Net, Misbah Saba Malik

Pakistani officials and experts said on Friday that China's transformative economic journey has a global impact, and over the years, the country has not only eradicated poverty for millions but also opened up vast opportunities for international trade and investment.

Addressing an event titled "Global Opportunities in Deepening China's Reforms in the New Era," the Focal Person on the Development Projects of the Government of Pakistan, Asim Khan, said that China has made a remarkable journey of economic reforms, which have transformed the country into a global powerhouse.

He said that China's reforms have not only lifted millions of people out of poverty but also created unprecedented opportunities for global trade, investment, and cooperation.

China's growing influence in international affairs is undeniable and its contributions to global governance, climate change, and development financing have been noteworthy, and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), in particular, has the potential to reshape regional development and connectivity, he added.

"From Pakistan's perspective, we view China's BRI as a game-changer, and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a pilot project of the BRI, has transformed Pakistan's profile from a perceived safe haven for terrorism to an attractive destination for Chinese and global investment," he noted.

He hoped that Pakistan would attract more investments by relocating Chinese industries to Pakistan as there are tremendous opportunities for both countries to deepen their economic ties.

In his address, Khalid Taimur Akram, executive director of the Pakistan Research Center for a Community with Shared Future in Islamabad, said that China has been an engine of global growth for decades and will continue to be a key player in international development in the years to come.

China's steady economic progress and substantial potential in trade and investment are not only major positives for the current global economy, but also for the future, he added.

"China's ongoing reforms constantly shape new momentum and advantages for development, promote a new leap in productivity, and sustain the continuous high-quality growth of China's economy,

bringing new opportunities to countries around the world, particularly to the iron-clad friend Pakistan," the expert said.

Speaking at the event, Liaqat Ali Khan, head of policy in the Center of Excellence for CPEC in the country's Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, said that Pakistan can benefit from the second phase of CPEC as it provides the country with an opportunity to attract the labor-intensive and light engineering industries that are relocating due to the reform process in China.

He said that the participating countries of BRI should learn to understand the reform policies of China that lead to the country's economic transformation from the coastal regions to the inland and Western areas to ensure balanced development across the country.

Launched in 2013, the CPEC is a corridor linking the Gwadar Port in southwest Pakistan's Balochistan province with Kashgar in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, which highlights energy, transport, and industrial cooperation in the first phase, while in the new phase expands to fields of agriculture and livelihood, among others.

### **Pakistan PM writes to China for debt reprofiling as IMF loan approval nears**

02 August 2024, Arab News, Muhammad Ibrahim

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said on Friday he wrote a letter to the Chinese government requesting debt reprofiling as his administration seeks a \$7 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which has consistently focused on the country's debt obligations and energy sector issues. Last month, Pakistan reached a staff-level agreement with the IMF for a fresh loan, which it expects to be validated by the Fund's executive board later this month. The IMF has repeatedly

expressed concerns about Pakistan's plans to manage its escalating circular debt in the energy sector while also addressing its external financial obligations.

"I have written to China for [debt] reprofiling," the prime minister informed his cabinet ministers. Debt reprofiling is a financial strategy used to restructure a country's existing debt obligations. It involves extending the maturity dates of debt, reducing interest rates or altering other terms of the debt agreements to make repayment more manageable. The IMF previously raised concerns about Pakistan's external financing gaps, prompting the country to seek assistance from friendly nations like Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and China, which shored up its foreign exchange reserves by depositing significant amounts into the central bank. These nations also rolled over existing funds when

Pakistan requested it, thereby providing additional relief to its financial situation.

The prime minister pointed out his government had also sent Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb to China for talks on power sector debt relief. He said he had a detailed conversation with President Xi Jinping during his own visit to China, where Xi asked about Pakistan's plans to convert to coal-based projects under the multibillion-dollar joint economic corridor project.

Sharif told him it would help Pakistan save "\$500 million in investment, and annually, we will save \$1 billion, which will be a very significant thing." He maintained that his administration was aware of people's hardship amid rising power tariffs causing inflationary pressure. But he noted that it was taking steps to provide relief to power consumers, though it would take some time before these efforts produce the desired outcomes.

"Rome was not built in a day, and you cannot expect instant results," he added.

## July

### PM orders swift implementation of agreements with China

21 July 2024, Profit

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday directed the authorities to expedite the process of implementing the agreements and memoranda of understanding (MoUs) made with the Chinese government and Chinese companies, saying that any further delay would not be tolerated.

"China is a time-tested friend of Pakistan who helped Pakistan in every hour of need, said Mr Shehbaz

while chairing a review meeting regarding Pak-China cooperation at the PM House.

The prime minister pointed out that the transfer of the Chinese industry to Pakistan would help improve the country's overall economy, increase Pakistan's exports, and create new employment opportunities. During the meeting, the prime minister was briefed on the progress of different projects launched with Chinese cooperation.

The prime minister was told that the Sukkur-Hyderabad Motorway would be completed through a Public-Private Partnership.

It was informed that the plan to send 1,000 students for modern agricultural vocational training at government expense had been completed. The first batch of students was sent to China at the beginning of this academic year, while the next batch would be sent to modern Chinese agricultural universities after learning Chinese in Pakistan.

A comprehensive road map regarding the transfer of Chinese industries to Pakistan was presented at the meeting.

"Around 78 Pakistani companies have initially expressed deep interest in cooperation for the transfer of Chinese industries to Pakistan," the meeting was informed. The Board of Investment also presented a comprehensive report on the progress and action plan which was appreciated by the PM.

### Operation Azm-e-Istehkam: Pakistan Acts at China's behest

21 July 2024, Balochwana



Since Pakistan's occupation of Balochistan in 1948, the region has endured prolonged adverse treatment characterised by a series of military operations. Major military operations occurred in 1948, 1958-59, 1963-69, and 1973-77, and have been ongoing since 2004, resulting in thousands of deaths among the Baloch nation. These actions have led to widespread destruction of homes and livelihoods. The Baloch people have faced forced

disappearances, extrajudicial killings, and severe human rights abuses.

Despite its rich natural resources, Balochistan's benefits have been largely extracted by the Punjabi establishment, leaving the region with stagnated economic, cultural, and technological development. This systemic colonisation and exploitation have fuelled ongoing political movements and resistance among the Baloch people, who continue to demand an independent homeland. On the one hand, Pakistan vociferously calls for the independence of Kashmir and Palestine, while on the other, it is responsible for the deaths of thousands of fellow Baloch Muslims and the occupation of Balochistan.

The Pakistani government has received substantial funds from Western nations to tackle Islamic terrorism, ignoring the fact that Pakistan was and remains the only country in the modern era, apart from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), that was purely established in the name of political Islam. Chinese involvement in occupied Balochistan has worsened the situation for the Baloch nation. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has been developed on the suffering and bloodshed of the Baloch people. Both China and Pakistan are exploiting Balochistan's rich resources with impunity, prioritising their strategic and economic interests over the welfare of the local population.

China has covertly supported Pakistan's efforts to suppress the Baloch liberation movement due to its strategic interests in Balochistan. However, China is now openly demanding that Pakistan use its full might to crush Balochistan's democratic national struggle against Pakistani colonisation. Pakistan has launched a new military operation under the pretext of targeting the Pakistani Taliban and Islamic terrorists. However, the international community is aware that Pakistan has fostered and protected armed Islamist elements. How can a country whose very existence depends on political Islam counter its ideological allies?

Pakistan's current geography consists of three main areas: the former parts of India, such as Punjab and Sindh; the former independent state of Balochistan, which Pakistan colonised in 1948; and the former Afghan/Pashtun lands now part of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Indian Muslims, Punjabis, Sindhis, and Urdu-speaking migrants have experienced an identity crisis and have embraced Islam as their core identity. However, the Baloch have resisted the occupation of their country from the beginning, and despite the Pashtuns' religious conservatism, they have a strong cultural identity and historically see themselves as an extension of Afghanistan.

This is why the Pakistani state believes that the ethnic cleansing of the Baloch and Pashtun nations would cement its rule over occupied Balochistan and the

Pashtun lands. It is time for the international community, especially Europe and America, to hold Pakistan accountable for its crimes and stop the Pakistani military aggression initiated by the Chinese order.

### **Pakistan releases new anthem honouring China's 97th PLA anniversary**

21 July 2024, The Tribune

The song's lyrics poetically capture the essence of this friendship: "Oh Himalayas, your peaks seem insignificant compared to our bond, and your depths appear shallow next to the strength of our friendship. This musical tribute emphasizes that the friendship between Pakistan and China is a timeless journey—stronger than the Himalayas, sweeter than honey, and deeper than the sea. Both nations have consistently supported each other through every joy and hardship.

### **Fears rise of China supplying Pakistan dreaded chemicals for use against Baloch rebels**

19 July 2024, India Today, Pradip R. Sagar

The seizure by Indian customs of a dual-use chemical consignment covertly en route from Shanghai to Karachi has buttressed the suspicion.

In early May, customs authorities at the Kattupalli port in Tamil Nadu were stunned when they, based on intelligence inputs, seized a consignment shipped by Chengdu Shichen Trading Company Ltd, a Chinese firm, to Rohail Enterprises in Pakistan. It was the chemical Ortho-Chloro Benzylidene Malononitrile (CS), being carried by the vessel Hyundai Shanghai (sailing under the Cyprus flag) from Shanghai to Karachi.

CS gas, while commonly used in riot control, is regulated due to its potential use as a chemical weapon. Its dual-use (civilian and military) nature makes it particularly sensitive under the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Wassenaar Arrangement.

The seizure of the CS consignment highlights China's role in the global proliferation network. Beijing has had a history of producing dual-use technologies that, while ostensibly for civilian use, can be repurposed for military applications. This is particularly concerning given China's penchant to bypass international regulations and export controls. The most shocking aspect of the seizure and the investigation that followed is the banned chemical's potential to be used against Baloch rebels by Pakistani law enforcement agencies. The covert supply indicates China's move to safeguard its interests in Balochistan, which is part of the China-



Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Several CPEC projects in the region face opposition from local nationalist groups, with several incidents reported in the recent past.

The CS consignment issue has also raised a pertinent question about how China bypasses laws to dump banned items into Pakistan and acts as a key player in global proliferation networks, particularly for sanctioned states. The incident reveals the extent of China-Pakistan cooperation, especially in the realm of security and counterinsurgency. It also points to China's willingness to support the Pakistani law enforcement apparatus even if that means supplying controlled or banned substances.

Multiple European and US agencies are closely monitoring dual-use technology trading by China and Pakistan. One of the incidents is of Ilya Kahn, a tri-national resident of Brooklyn and Los Angeles who was arrested for a long-term scheme involving the illegal export of semiconductors from the US to sanctioned Russian military-linked businesses by utilising a network of companies in China and elsewhere.

In April this year, the US announced sanctions against three Chinese and Belarusian companies allegedly supplying missile technology to Pakistan. China is the main supplier of weapons and defence equipment for Pakistan's military modernisation programme.

The 2023 report of Germany's Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution highlights illegal procurement efforts by countries like Pakistan, Iran, North Korea and Syria, involving bypass countries like China and Turkey. The annual report states: "It's an old power bloc re-emerging. Under the leadership of China, Russia and Iran are working closely together in the area of proliferation. North Korea, Syria and Pakistan, countries that also show efforts to proliferate weapons of mass destruction, are part of this new alliance. However, they play a subordinate role in the position of supplier. China acts as a global buyer to circumvent the sanctions imposed on Russia, Iran, North Korea and partly on Pakistan."

Similarly, the Directorate of State Security and Intelligence (DSN) of Austria released the 'Constitutional Protection Report-2023'. Reviewing the global security scenario, the report emphasised on China's role in sourcing dual-use goods for Pakistan through fake companies and dealer networks. It said China occupies a special position in global proliferation. While Russia concluded bilateral arms agreements with Iran and North Korea in 2023, primarily in the production of drones, China acted as a global buyer for sanctioned states in the European market and Austria.

Pakistan traditionally maintains good relations with China and often relies on front companies and dealer networks on the Arabian Peninsula for procurement of dual-use goods from Europe. China became an even-more important trading partner for Pakistan in this segment in 2023.

The Austrian report added that Pakistan's proliferation attempts are increasingly being carried out via intermediaries in China. This approach makes it more difficult to combat proliferation as China itself is not sanctioned and the intermediaries to whom Austrian companies supply are usually civilian companies. The passing on of exported goods by the intermediaries is usually no longer subject to de facto control by Austrian exporters. China is thus becoming the global hub for sanctioned goods.

One example of this is microchips, which aren't essential for the Russian military industry alone. Since the Russian Federation does not have any significant chip production, it is dependent on foreign countries. According to open sources, the country managed to import sanctioned microchips worth more than \$500 million via China, and in particular the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. As customs data shows, some of the imported goods come from the production of a German chip manufacturer that also operates a subsidiary in Austria.

"Particularly in dual-use technologies, China is making goods originally developed for commercial purposes usable for military purposes. In this context, even supposedly harmless research collaborations or 'joint ventures' between China and Austria represent a proliferation risk that cannot be ignored," the Austrian report pointed out.

### **COAS Asim Munir lauds Chinese army at PLA's 97th founding day**

18 July 2024, Dunya News

Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Gen Asim Munir said on Thursday Pakistan-China relations were exceptional and had always weathered the vicissitudes of strategic environment with mutual trust and unwavering belief in each other's support.

The army chief expressed the sentiment at the 97th anniversary of the founding of Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) of China, hosted at the GHQ on Thursday.

Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong was the chief guest on the occasion. Maj Gen Wang Zhong, Defence Attaché, Chinese Embassy officials and officers from tri-services of Pakistan attended the event.

COAS Munir, while welcoming the Chinese guests, congratulated the PLA and praised its contribution to the Chinese defence, security and nation development.



"Relations between Pakistan Army and Peoples Liberation Army are strong and both militaries continue to engage in bilateral military cooperation, demonstrating the iron clad brotherhood between the two countries," the COAS said.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chinese ambassador thanked the COAS for hosting the event on the 97th anniversary of the founding of the PLA.

"Pakistani military has always been at the forefront of countering terrorism and has made great sacrifices for the peace and stability of Pakistan and the region," the Chinese ambassador remarked.

"We stand ready to work with our brethren to combat terrorism and firmly believe that no force can destroy the iron-clad friendship between China and Pakistan and the brotherhood between the two militaries," the ambassador said.

### **Pakistani entrepreneurs to attend China's int'l exhibition**

17 July 2024, Presnsa Latina

Islamabad, Jul 17 (Prensa Latina) A 25-strong entrepreneurial delegation from Pakistan will take part in the 8th China South Asia Exhibition, to be held in Kunming, China, on July 23-28, officials informed on Tuesday.

Khurshid Barlas, director of the Pakistan Association of Exhibition Industry, told reporters that the group consists of representatives of light engineering, textile, pharmaceuticals, solar energy, and other sectors.

He added that memorandums of understanding (MoUs) and agreements are expected to be signed with Chinese companies during the exhibition.

Barlas pointed out that the presence of Pakistani businesspeople and delegates from 80 other countries at the exhibition is one of the positive outcomes of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent visit to China.

### **Beijing reiterates calls for Pakistan to create 'safe' environment for Chinese workers and projects**

15 July 2024, Arab News

Beijing has reiterated its calls for Islamabad to create a "safe, stable and predictable" environment for Chinese workers, projects and institutions operating inside Pakistan and crack down on militant groups working against Chinese interests in the South Asian nation, Beijing's ambassador said on Sunday.

China is a major ally and investor in Pakistan but both separatist and religiously motivated militants have attacked Chinese projects over recent years, killing Chinese personnel. In the most high-profile recent attack, five Chinese workers were killed in a

suicide bombing in March. It was the third major attack on Chinese interests in Pakistan in a week.

In an interview to state-run Pakistani news agency APP, Chinese ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong said President Xi Jinping had discussed security challenges with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif when he visited China in June.

"President Xi Jinping made it clear that China supports Pakistan in firmly combating terrorism and hopes that Pakistan will continue to create a safe, stable and predictable business environment and effectively protect the safety of Chinese nationals, projects and institutions in Pakistan," the envoy said. Sharif had "promised" that Pakistan would "resolutely crack down on and severely punish the terrorists involved" in recent attacks and take all measures necessary to ensure the safety of Chinese personnel, projects and institutions in Pakistan, Jiang added.

Speaking about Sharif's visit, the envoy said its focus was on strategic and security cooperation and materializing an upgraded version of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in line with China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Under CPEC, Beijing has pledged over \$65 billion in investment in road, infrastructure and development projects in Pakistan as part of the Belt and Road scheme.

"Through Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit, the leaders of the two countries have drawn a blueprint, pointed out the path, and determined measures for the development of China-Pakistan relations in the new era," he said, adding that the two leaders had agreed on cooperation in various sectors including mining, development of offshore oil and gas resources, clean energy, artificial intelligence, science and technology, finance and space cooperation.

Consensus had been reached, the envoy said, on accelerating the Main Line-1 railways and Karakoram Highway projects, the year-round operation of the Khunjerab Pass, development of Gwadar Port and supporting Chinese companies to invest and operate in Special Economic Zones.

"At present, China-Pakistan cooperation is facing important opportunities for quality improvement and upgrading," Jiang said, "but also under the realistic pressure of climbing over obstacles."

### **Chinese ambassador highlights enhanced cooperation with Pakistan under Global South Initiative**

15 July 2024, The Express Tribune

Envoy shares region's global GDP share has increased from 24% to over 40% in 40 years.

Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong reiterated China's commitment to collaborate with Pakistan in actively implementing its Global South initiative aimed at common development and shared cooperation.

Recently, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced a series of measures benefiting Global South countries, including the establishment of a Global South research center, offering 1,000 scholarships under the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence Scholarship of Excellence, and providing 100,000 training opportunities over the next five years.

In an interview with APP on Sunday, Jiang expressed China's readiness to implement these measures for Pakistan and other countries. He emphasised that these initiatives demonstrate China's steadfast determination to foster development and revitalisation within the Global South.

Jiang underscored that China's Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence provide a framework to tackle global challenges and promote a shared vision of global peace, security, and prosperity.

He highlighted the significant economic contribution of the Global South, noting that its share in world economic growth over the past two decades has been as high as 80%.

Moreover, the region's global GDP share has increased from 24% to over 40% in the past 40 years.

Jiang emphasised that politically, the Global South countries are no longer merely silent participants on the international stage but are recognised as a pivotal force in transforming the international order.

He referenced President Xi's recent remarks at the Beijing Declaration of the Conference marking the 70th Anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, urging the Global South to lead in building a community with a shared future for mankind.

Pakistan's participation in this conference was noted, which saw high-level representation from over 100 countries.

The ambassador reiterated China's commitment to working with all nations to implement this initiative effectively, acting as a strong advocate for peace, development, and global governance. He stressed the importance of strengthening South-South and North-South cooperation to advance human progress.

Regarding China-Pakistan relations, the ambassador reaffirmed China's support for Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

He highlighted the outcomes of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent visit to China, focusing on strategic and security cooperation and the enhancement of the China-Pakistan Economic

Corridor (CPEC) under President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

The ambassador described Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit as achieving expected goals and fruitful results, providing a roadmap for enhancing all-weather strategic cooperation in the new era.

He outlined specific areas of cooperation agreed upon during the visit, including mining, development of offshore oil and gas resources, clean energy, artificial intelligence, science and technology, finance, and space cooperation. These initiatives, he noted, will inject new momentum into practical cooperation between China and Pakistan.

Jiang further emphasised President Xi's personal commitment to advancing China-Pakistan relations, especially through major projects like the Main Line-1 railways, the Karakoram Highway, year-round operation of the Khunjerab Pass, and development of Gwadar Port.

He highlighted the importance of Sino-Pakistani cooperation at international forums, particularly with China's presidency of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and Pakistan's upcoming hosting of the SCO's Council of Heads of Government meeting, alongside its non-permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council.

Regarding security cooperation, the ambassador expressed confidence in the joint efforts of relevant departments from both sides to elevate security cooperation to new heights.

He underscored the importance of creating a safe environment for the development of China-Pakistan relations, particularly following the terrorist attack on the Chinese convoy at the Dasu Hydropower Project in March 2024.

The ambassador reiterated President Xi's assurance of China's support for Pakistan in combating terrorism and urged Pakistan to ensure the safety of Chinese nationals, projects, and institutions within its borders. He acknowledged PM Shehbaz's commitment to cracking down on terrorism and providing necessary security measures.

### **Pakistan to approach China to restructure its \$15 billion energy debt**

09 July 2024, Business Standard

During the June 4-8 visit, Prime Minister Sharif requested President Xi Jinping to consider re-profiling the IPPs' debt and converting the imported-coal-fired power plants

Pakistan has decided to approach its all-weather ally China with a formal request to restructure its \$15 billion energy debt to help the cash-strapped country wriggle out of its financial woes.

"Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal and Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb would visit China this week," the Express Tribune newspaper quoted highly placed sources as saying.

"While Iqbal's visit was pre-planned, the finance minister is being sent as Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's special messenger," they added. Iqbal is scheduled to attend the Global Development Initiative forum to be held in China from July 11 to 13.

"As the finance minister's visit was not scheduled earlier, Pakistan's ambassador to Beijing has been instructed to arrange meetings with Chinese authorities," said the sources.

A Cabinet member, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed that the premier decided the issue of Chinese Independent Power Producers' (IPP) debt should be immediately taken up for re-profiling. According to the sources, the finance minister will carry a letter from Prime Minister Sharif requesting debt restructuring.

During the June 4-8 visit, Prime Minister Sharif requested President Xi Jinping to consider re-profiling the IPPs' debt and converting the imported-coal-fired power plants. Aurangzeb will seek approval for a mechanism to proceed, though Chinese authorities have repeatedly refused to restructure these deals.

The delegation would also formally convey Pakistan's request to convert Chinese-imported coal-fired power plants to local coal. They said there is a proposal for the government to help Chinese investors arrange loans from local banks to convert these plants to indigenous coal. The sources added that Habib Bank Limited (HBL) is also engaged in the process.

China has set up 21 energy projects in Pakistan with a total cost of \$21 billion, including about \$5 billion in equity. Chinese investors obtained loans for these projects at an interest rate equal to the London Interbank Offered Rate (Libor) plus 4.5 per cent.

Against the remaining Chinese energy debt of over \$15 billion, payments by 2040 would total \$16.6 billion, according to government sources.

The proposal involves extending debt repayments from 10 to 15 years. This would reduce the outflow of foreign currency by about \$550 million to \$750 million per annum and decrease prices by Rs 3 per unit.

According to the existing IPP deals, the current power tariff structure requires debt servicing repayments during the first 10 years, leading to a significant burden on consumers who are paying the interest and principal of these loans through higher tariffs.

"However, due to the extended repayment period, the country will also have to make an extra \$1.3 billion payment to China," sources said.

The Cabinet member stated that Pakistan needs immediate fiscal space and some room for reducing prices, although the overall cost would increase in the long run.

The government's economic challenges have multiplied, and it has not yet been able to conclude the International Monetary Fund (IMF) deal or lower electricity prices.

To secure the IMF deal, the government imposed a record Rs 1.7 lakh crores in additional taxes on Pakistan's lower, middle, and upper-middle-income groups.

Electricity prices were also approved to increase by 14 per cent to 51 per cent to collect another Rs 58,000 crores from residential and commercial consumers.

However, the Ministry of Finance has not been able to give a firm date for the staff-level agreement with the IMF. Finance Minister Aurangzeb, a former banker, hopes the deal may be reached this month.

Despite raising average base tariffs by around Rs 18 per unit over the past two years, the Power Division told the prime minister on Saturday that as of end-May, the circular debt owed to power companies had again increased to Rs 2.65 lakh crores, Rs 345 billion higher than the level agreed with the IMF.

The government has neither been able to give a firm date for the IMF staff-level deal nor reduce the cost of electricity and the circular debt.

Pakistani sources indicated that China might not grant further concessions in debt until resolving their over Rs 50,000 crores outstanding dues and ensuring security for Chinese nationals in Pakistan.

IMF bailout packages have hindered Chinese energy deals due to restrictions on repayments.

If China agrees to debt restructuring, the repayment period will be extended to 2040, including interest payments. According to Pakistani authorities, repayment would be \$600 million less this year and can be reduced to just \$1.63 billion after restructuring.

"For 2025, debt repayments would decrease from \$2.1 billion to \$1.55 billion a benefit of \$580 million," sources said. However, the upfront relief would result in more repayments from 2036 to 2040. In April, Prime Minister Sharif ordered all imported coal-fired power plants, including three Chinese plants, to convert to local coal to save \$800 million annually and reduce consumer rates by Rs 3 per unit. The finance and planning ministers will request Chinese approval for this project and propose financing with HBL.

## Pakistan, China enter new era of cooperation

07 July 2024, The Tribune

Focus on IT, minerals and mining, energy sectors to boost progress

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday said that a new era of cooperation with China commenced in the areas of information technology, communication, minerals and mining, and energy, which would boost economic progress, regional connectivity and bilateral ties.

Chairing a meeting to review the implementation of agreements and memoranda of understanding (MoUs) between the two countries reached during the PM's recent visit to China, the premier said that he would not tolerate any disruption in their implementation and would personally supervise the process.

Referring to the longstanding Pakistan-China friendship, he said that China had always supported Pakistan in difficult and hard times. "China has emerged as the strongest economic power and Pakistan can emulate its development," he added.

The PM observed that recently a delegation of Chinese shoe manufacturing companies visited Pakistan to discuss the relocation of their plants, adding that such companies had the capacity to invest about \$5-8 billion, the PM Office's media wing said in a statement.

He said that the local shoe manufacturers' association was in constant contact with the Chinese companies in that regard.

Moreover, PM Sharif said about 12 renowned Chinese companies related to the agriculture sector would be taking very active part in the Food and Agri Expo in Pakistan.

He reviewed progress on sending 1,000 Pakistani students on government scholarships to China for getting latest training in the agriculture sector.

The PM gave directives for sending students from the backward areas of Balochistan on a priority basis, besides other students from the four provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir on merit.

The meeting was apprised that owing to the agreements and MoUs signed during the prime minister's visit, more than 100 Chinese companies were in contact with their Pakistani counterparts for business and investment purposes.

The meeting was informed by the Ministry of IT on the progress made in imparting technical training, one-stop operation for business facilitation, smart governance and smart city project of Huawei.

The prime minister directed Wapda authorities for establishing a safe centre for foolproof security arrangements for the Chinese nationals working on

Dasu and Diamer Bhasha dams. He asked for immediate implementation of all the directives.

The prime minister was apprised of the progress on different projects related to communication infrastructure, electricity and Gwadar.

## Is China fueling Pakistan's nuclear ambitions against India?

04 July 2024, The Economic Times

A recent photograph from the 2023 Pakistan Day Parade rehearsals has provided new insights into Pakistan's advancing military capabilities. The image depicts a JF-17 Thunder Block II aircraft carrying what appears to be a Ra'ad-I air-launched cruise missile (ALCM). This marks the first public display of this specific configuration, signaling significant strategic developments.

China has played a crucial role in aiding Pakistan's military modernization. The JF-17 Thunder, developed jointly by Pakistan Aeronautical Complex and China's Chengdu Aircraft Industry Corporation, is poised to take over from the aging Mirage III and V aircraft in Pakistan's air force. With over 130 operational JF-17s, this partnership underscores the deepening defense cooperation between the two countries.

FAS Confirms Nuclear-Capable Ra'ad-I Missile on JF-17

The Federation of American Scientists (FAS) analyzed the image and confirmed the missile as a Ra'ad-I, Pakistan's sole nuclear-capable ALCM. "Notably, this was the first time such a configuration had been observed in public," stated the FAS report. The identification was made by comparing the missile's 'twin-tail' design to the Ra'ad-II's 'x-shaped' tail, introduced in 2017.

Detailed Analysis and Comparisons

The FAS conducted a thorough comparison with previous versions of the Ra'ad missiles displayed in Pakistan Day Parades from 2017 to 2024. Using Photoshop's Vanishing Point feature, they measured the length of the missiles at approximately 4.9 meters. This measurement, along with the tail fin configuration, confirmed that the missile on the JF-17 is likely a Ra'ad-I rather than the newer Ra'ad-II or the conventional anti-ship variant, Taimoor. The report by Eliana Johns of FAS provided detailed insights into these findings.

Ra'ad-I vs Ra'ad-II

To ascertain the specific missile type, experts compared the observed Ra'ad configuration with past displays of Ra'ad-I and Ra'ad-II missiles. Notably, the Ra'ad-I features a 'twin-tail' design, distinct from the 'x-shaped' tail fin introduced with the Ra'ad-II in recent years. Using advanced tools like Photoshop's Vanishing Point, analysts estimated the

Ra'ad missile's length at approximately 4.9 meters, consistent with previous Ra'ad-I specifications. This finding, combined with the tail fin configuration, strongly suggests the deployment of the Ra'ad-I ALCM on the JF-17 Thunder Block II.

#### Role of China in Pakistan's Military Advancements

China has played a crucial role in aiding Pakistan's military modernization. The JF-17 Thunder, developed jointly by Pakistan Aeronautical Complex and China's Chengdu Aircraft Industry Corporation, is poised to take over from the aging Mirage III and V aircraft in Pakistan's air force. With over 130 operational JF-17s, this partnership underscores the deepening defense cooperation between the two countries.

#### Strategic Shift and Modernization

The integration of the Ra'ad-I on the JF-17 represents a significant strategic enhancement for Pakistan. For years, Pakistan has relied on its Mirage aircraft for nuclear strike roles. However, budget constraints have forced Pakistan to repair and upgrade these aging planes. The induction of the JF-17, equipped with Ra'ad-I missiles, is expected to replace the Mirage aircraft and bolster Pakistan's nuclear deterrence capabilities.

#### Regional Implications and Impact on India

This development comes amidst a broader nuclear arms competition in South Asia involving India, China, and Pakistan. As India inducts Rafale jets capable of carrying nuclear weapons and advances its missile technology with MIRVs on Agni-P and Agni-5 missiles, Pakistan's enhancements with the JF-17 and Ra'ad-I underscore the intensifying arms race. The heightened tensions and development of short-range, lower-yield nuclear-capable systems by Pakistan raise concerns about regional stability and the potential for escalation in a conflict with India.

China and Pakistan have been cooperating in matters of defense. Additionally, Pakistan is developing other short-range, lower-yield nuclear-capable systems like the NASR (Hatf-9) ballistic missile, aimed at countering conventional military threats from India below the strategic nuclear level. These advancements, coupled with heightened regional tensions, raise concerns about an accelerated arms race and the potential for escalation in a conflict between India and Pakistan.

Islamabad currently holds 170 nuclear warheads as of 2024, and its nuclear warheads are stored separately from its missiles, assembling them only when necessary. This means that even if JF-17 jets are equipped with Ra'ad missiles, they are unlikely to carry nuclear warheads during patrols.

Pakistan's nuclear posture remains focused on countering India's conventional and nuclear capabilities. Unlike India, which has declared a No First Use policy, Pakistan emphasizes smaller, tactical

nuclear weapons to counter India's superior conventional forces. Pakistan's warhead designs primarily use highly enriched uranium (HEU), produced at facilities in Kahuta and Gadwal, Punjab. The revelation of the JF-17 Thunder Block II's nuclear capabilities, supported by China, highlights Pakistan's strategic shift in modernizing its air force. The integration of Ra'ad-I missiles signifies a significant enhancement in Pakistan's nuclear deterrence, impacting the regional power balance. As South Asia witnesses an accelerated arms race, the implications for regional stability and potential conflict escalation remain critical concerns.

## June

### Pakistan's new anti-terror initiative aimed at protecting Chinese projects: Report

25 June 2024, Hindustan Times

Islamabad recently approved a revitalised national counter-terrorism campaign known as 'Operation Azm-e-Istehkam'.

China's reported hesitation to invest in new projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) stems largely from concerns about the security of its citizens and assets in Pakistan.

This hesitation appears to have prompted the Pakistani government to take action, as Islamabad recently approved a revitalised national counter-terrorism campaign known as 'Operation Azm-e-Istehkam'.

According to a recent editorial in Dawn, the move underscores Pakistan's recognition of the importance of addressing China's security concerns, especially at a time when attracting foreign investment is critical for the country's economic development.

Speaking at a press conference in Lahore, Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif clarified that the main focus of operations under 'Azm-e-Istehkam' will be in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) and Balochistan.

He mentioned that a comprehensive plan detailing the framework for these operations will be announced in the coming days. Notably, Chinese citizens, workers, or projects have been targeted by violence or security threats within Pakistani territory.

These incidents have raised concerns about the safety and security of Chinese nationals and investments in Pakistan, particularly under projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Such attacks can have significant implications for bilateral relations between China and Pakistan, as well as for regional stability and economic cooperation.



However, military operations conducted by Pakistan frequently face allegations of human rights violations, which involve accusations of excessive use of force, arbitrary arrests, disappearances, and mistreatment of civilians in conflict zones such as Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and in areas affected by insurgency.

These allegations are often reported by human rights organisations and international observers, raising concerns about the protection of civil liberties and adherence to international humanitarian law.

Such reports can strain Pakistan's relations with the international community and prompt calls for accountability and reforms within the military and security forces.

### **Azm-e-Istehkam: China's wish is Pakistan's command**

24 June 2024, ORF, Sushant Sareen

The new operation Azm-e-Istehkaam is designed to curb Islamist terror networks and is clearly undertaken to allay the fears of China.

Military operations by Pakistan Army against Islamist radicals and terrorists are like the country's annual budgets: They all pretend to be aimed at solving the critical problems but they all falter because they never address the underlying structural causes that gave rise to the problem in the first place. And, quite like the budgets, military operations are often devised and designed not so much to address the principal problem as they are to satisfy and appease foreign players—the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in case of the budget, and increasingly China, in case of the anti-terror operations.

Yet another operation

Once again, Pakistan's hybrid regime has announced yet another military operation—Azm-e-Istehkaam (Resolve of durable stability)—to “combat the menaces of extremism and terrorism in a comprehensive and decisive manner”. Since 2007, this is the twelfth major anti-Islamist terrorist military operation, there have been many minor ones as well. Most of the earlier operations were of a tactical nature, focusing on a particular area that had become particularly troublesome. For instance, the Operation Rah-e-Rast and Rah-e-Haq were in Swat region, Sherdil was in Bajaur and Rah-e-Nijaat was in South Waziristan agency. The two big operations on a much broader front were the Zarb-e-Azb, which started in North Waziristan and then was extended to other regions, followed by Radd-ul-Fassad which was more an intelligence based operation to strike at terrorist networks which had spread throughout Pakistan. The new operation Azm-e-Istehkaam is aimed at curbing the Islamist terror networks which

have resurfaced with renewed vigour and virulence after the Afghan Taliban shattered the “shackles of slavery” of US and its allies, ironically enough with Pakistan's assiduous assistance.

The new operation Azm-e-Istehkaam is aimed at curbing the Islamist terror networks which have resurfaced with renewed vigour and virulence after the Afghan Taliban shattered the “shackles of slavery” of US and its allies, ironically enough with Pakistan's assiduous assistance. Ostensibly, it aims at “full-blown kinetic efforts of the armed forces [which] will be augmented by full support from all law enforcement agencies, empowered by effective legislation to address legal voids that hinder effective prosecution of terrorism-related cases and award of exemplary punishments to them [terrorists].” Every military operation bears the unique imprint of the Army chief: Gen Ashfaq Kayani was very cautious and worried about the blowback, and therefore preferred limited operations; Gen Raheel Sharif preferred an all-out kind of operations without bothering too much about consequences; Gen Qamar Bajwa preferred small, tactical, intelligence based operations. The next few weeks will give a good idea about the military approach of the current Army Chief Gen Asim Munir.

China gets what China wants

However, what is clear is that this is the third military operation that is being taken to assuage the Chinese. In 2007, the Lal Masjid operation which became the catalyst for the formation of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and led to a massive spike in terrorist activity inside Pakistan was launched after the Islamist radicals in the mosque raided a Chinese massage parlour and abducted the Chinese workers. The Chinese government is reported to have leaned very heavily on the then military dictator Pervez Musharraf to send in the Army to clean up the Lal Masjid. The Zarb-e-Azb operation was also prompted in part by Pakistan wanting to assure the Chinese that the operation was aimed at Uyghur militants. This latest operation has once again been forced on Pakistan by the Chinese. On 29 May, the Business Recorder newspaper reported that Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong told a visiting Pakistani delegation that was in Beijing to prepare for Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit about “the need for another Zarb-e-Azb against terrorist forces such as TTP, Majeed Bridge, BLA and others to crush them once and for all”. Recent attacks on Chinese—the latest being the suicide bombing in March of a bus carrying Chinese engineers working on the Dash dam project—had angered the Chinese who had been given repeated assurances by the Pakistanis of fool proof security.

Not only were Chinese investments in Pakistan under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

proving to be a loss-making venture, even the physical security of Chinese workers in Pakistan was in grave jeopardy. It was made clear to the Pakistanis that future Chinese investments were contingent on Pakistan getting its act together on providing security to the Chinese workers. During Shehbaz Sharif's visit to Beijing in June last, despite all the hyperbole that usually accompanies anything to do between China and Pakistan, there was very little outcome in substantive terms. Speculation has been rife that there is a visible cooling off in the bilateral relationship. The Chinese seemed to be losing interest in at least the economic side of things which was supposed to have added a new dimension to the security and strategic relationship when CPEC was initiated 10 years ago. For a couple of years now, the Chinese have been trying to impress on Pakistan that without political stability (Istehkaam) and security, there was no way that the CPEC projects could move forward. The same message was given by Xi Jinping during Shehbaz Sharif's visit. And just a day before the announcement of the new military operation, the visiting Chinese minister Liu Jianchao bluntly informed his Pakistani hosts that "security threats are the main hazards to CPEC cooperation...In the case of Pakistan, the primary factor shaking the confidence of Chinese investors is the security situation."

The Chinese have, for long, been trying to impress upon the Pakistanis that if they are unable to protect Chinese workers, China should be allowed to bring in their own security. But Pakistan has balked at this demand and reiterated assurances of providing complete security to all Chinese.

The Chinese have, for long, been trying to impress upon the Pakistanis that if they are unable to protect Chinese workers, China should be allowed to bring in their own security. But Pakistan has balked at this demand and reiterated assurances of providing complete security to all Chinese. However, things seem to be reaching the point where Pakistani assurances need to be backed by concrete action on ground. This is required not just to satisfy the Chinese who are critical because they are really the only economic game in town for Pakistan, but also to push back the alarming inroads made by the TTP and other armed groups, including Baloch separatists. With Pakistan's economy in a mess, it desperately needs both foreign and domestic investment. But given the political instability and the deteriorating security situation, neither domestic nor foreign investors are ready to invest in Pakistan. However, conducting a large scale anti-terrorist military operation will not be an easy option for a variety of reasons. Between a rock and a hard place

First, there is no political consensus behind such an operation. In the fractious political environment,

there are already carping sounds being made by the opposition. Add to this the fact that the civilian government does not really have the mandate to govern because they have come into power through a very controversial and tainted election. Second, a military operation is an expensive exercise. Although the defence budget has been increased by around around 18 percent, more money will need to be pumped into what is essentially both a war of attrition accompanied by some higher intensity combat. Third, if the military operations lead to greater violence, then it will spook most potential investors. The economic crisis is immediate and if there are major terror attacks then whatever negligible chance there is of the economy recovering will go up in smoke. Fourth, Pakistan is increasingly getting embroiled in what threatens to be an endless war, especially because the Afghan Taliban are unlikely to dump the Pakistani Taliban. Taking the war into Afghanistan to force compellence on the Afghan Taliban will mean a conflict that will suck Pakistan into the Afghan vortex.

Fifth, Pakistan has a fundamental ideological confusion in both state and society that militates against successfully fighting terrorism. It is not possible to extol the virtues of jihad against India, nurture and support terrorist organisations active against India, but fight against similar organisations that target Pakistan. Add to this the growth of fundamentalism and radicalism inside Pakistan, and it becomes even more difficult to prosecute this war. Soft-peddling and encouraging groups like the Bareilvi radicals of Tehrik-e-Labbaik and turning a blind eye to extremist ideology and indoctrination that is running rampant in society will only increase the complexity of the task of fighting terrorism. Pakistan Army just doesn't get it that the antidote of terrorism is not extremism. Finally, at a time when Pakistan has ramped up tensions against India—the recent terrorist attacks in Jammu are an example—can it afford a three active fronts, i.e., against India, Afghanistan and internal?

Pakistan has a fundamental ideological confusion in both state and society that militates against successfully fighting terrorism. It is not possible to extol the virtues of jihad against India, nurture and support terrorist organisations active against India, but fight against similar organisations that target Pakistan.

While the economic aspect could be addressed with assistance from the US (which appears to be cozying up to the idea of cooperating with Pakistan on the terrorism issue) and China, the bigger problem will be the political crisis which is likely to deepen in coming weeks with rising economic difficulties being faced by an already squeezed citizenry that is increasingly blaming the Pakistan Army and the

incumbent regime for much of its woes. On the flip side, the Pakistani state doesn't have the luxury of time to wait until the economic and political situation stabilises before it grabs the bull of terrorism by its horn. The longer it waits, the greater the ingress of the Taliban and the more difficult it will be to extirpate them.

### **Chinese minister urges closer ties to achieve development goals**

21 June 2024, The Express Tribune

Liu Jianchao says China-Pakistan friendship's foundation is public support

The senior Chinese minister conveyed these views during a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar in Islamabad.

Addressing the Pak-China Consultation Mechanism meeting, Liu expressed that the event marks a positive step towards strengthening the relationship between the two countries.

He stated that the development of China and Pakistan would bring mutual benefits and create new opportunities through bilateral agreements.

Liu stressed the foundation of the China-Pakistan friendship lies in public support and highlighted plans for media, student, and youth exchanges.

He mentioned that both nations' leaders had agreed on upgrading the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

He also pointed out the necessity of improving security conditions to attract more investment to Pakistan.

Dar stresses political unity on CPEC

Dar welcomed the Chinese delegation, stating that their visit would boost mutual trust. He noted that all political parties in Pakistan support CPEC, recognising it as a cornerstone of cooperation between the two countries.

Dar praised the socio-economic benefits CPEC has brought to Pakistan and reaffirmed the country's commitment to its further development.

Earlier, a Foreign Office (FO) spokesperson announced that Deputy PM Dar met with Liu Jianchao. Both sides appreciated CPEC's contributions to Pakistan's development and pledged to continue its successful implementation.

Liu reiterated China's special regard for Pakistan in its foreign policy and expressed a desire to strengthen their strategic partnership. The two sides expressed satisfaction with the progress of CPEC and agreed to enhance high-level engagements and communication on key regional and global issues.

### **China's minister reaches Pakistan today, will preside over meeting on CPEC**

20 June 2024, Dunya News

Minister of the International Department of the Communist Party of China Liu Jianchao will arrive here on Thursday (today) on a three-day visit to Pakistan.

Jianchao, who is also a member of the Communist Party's Central Committee will participate in third meeting of the Pakistan-China Joint Consultative Mechanism.

During the visit, Liu Jianchao along with the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister will co-chair the Third Meeting of the Pakistan-China Joint Consultative Mechanism of the Political Parties on CPEC.

He will also call on the senior civil and military leadership.

According to the Foreign Office, Minister Jianchao is visiting on the invitation of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar.

### **Pakistani PM Shehbaz Sharif highlights safety and economic cooperation with China**

06 June 2024, Global Times, Xie Wenting and Bai Yunyi

Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif made a strong commitment in Beijing on Thursday during a business reception event, stating that he would attach even greater importance to the safety of Chinese people in Pakistan than to the safety of his own children. He assured that Pakistan will make all necessary arrangements to protect Chinese people.

Shehbaz made the commitment at the Pakistan-China Friendship and Business Reception, which was held in Beijing on Thursday, with the participation of dozens of diplomats and businesspeople from both China and Pakistan. This event was part of the activities during Shehbaz's visit to China aimed at further enhancing cooperation and pushing forward the construction of the upgraded version of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

At the invitation of Chinese Premier Li Qiang, Shehbaz is paying an official visit to China from Tuesday to Saturday. This also marks his first visit to China since the establishment of the new Pakistani government this year.

At Thursday's event, Shehbaz recounted his first visit to China back in 1981 and hailed the remarkable development that China has achieved over the past decades, while stressing that Pakistan wants to learn from China's progress.

In an op-ed that Shehbaz wrote in the Global Times, he said that he viewed the visit as "a vital

opportunity to further strengthen cooperation between Pakistan and China across political, economic, trade, and investment domains."

"Personally, it will also be an opportunity for me to, once again, benefit from Chinese wisdom on issues of peace, security, and development," he wrote in the Global Times.

During this visit, in addition to leading a federal cabinet, he also led a huge business delegation.

At Thursday's event, Pakistani businessman Salim Ghaury told the Global Times that he is very excited to visit China with the prime minister and the business delegation.

"China is a friend; China is a big economy. Pakistan can learn from China's growth and how they achieved it. I think it is important that we come to China regularly and see what China has done and benefit from it," he told the Global Times.

Ghaury owns a software development company. According to him, China is the company's biggest market, and they have over 20 customers in the country, including some big companies. The company also runs a main office in China.

"We have Chinese engineers working for us, so we work together in Pakistan and China to develop software... I think there could be more cooperation with the Chinese software industry to research and develop better products," he said.

Hasan Farid, a postdoctoral fellow at Hohai University, performed a song celebrating the relationship between China and Pakistan at Thursday's event. Majoring in business administration, he told the Global Times that he hopes to land a job in China in the future, after being in China for seven years.

Farid believes that the prime minister's visit is a "very good opportunity, and the timing is really important for both Pakistan and China," as the visit demonstrates how serious the government of Pakistan is about CPEC and how much Pakistan is looking forward to attracting foreign investment, especially from China, which is Pakistan's all-weather strategic cooperative partner.

He said people in Pakistan are also looking forward to the development of the upgraded version of the CPEC, viewing it as a "game changer" that will help Pakistan and the region develop.

### **Terrorism and economy expected to top agenda at China-Pakistan talks as security concerns cloud belt and road**

02 June 2024, SCMP, Zhao Ziwen

- Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will head to China, where he will meet President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang

- Beijing is the South Asian country's key trading partner and investor, but Chinese-driven infrastructure projects have been targets of terror attacks

Counterterrorism cooperation and the economy are expected to be high on the agenda when Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif makes a five-day trip to China next week.

Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning confirmed on Friday that Sharif's trip, which starts on Tuesday, will include talks with President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang.

Sharif will also visit Guangdong province, China's economic hub, and the northwestern province of Shaanxi.

"Under the guidance of the leaders of the two countries, China and Pakistan have in recent years had close high-level exchanges, steadily advanced practical cooperation ... on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, and maintained sound communication and coordination in international and regional affairs," Mao said.

It is Sharif's first trip to China since starting his second term as prime minister in March. His visit comes amid concerns about security in Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan and northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces, the site of a number of major Chinese infrastructure projects under the multibillion-dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

In the latest in a string of attacks targeting personnel working on Chinese projects, five Chinese nationals and their Pakistani driver were killed in a suicide bombing on their way to the Dasu hydropower dam project in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in March.

Islamabad said it arrested 11 militants accused of being involved in the attack. It said the suicide bomber who targeted the Chinese convoy was an Afghan national.

One of the deadliest acknowledged attacks was in July 2021, when a suicide bomber on a bus killed 13 people, including nine Chinese workers in the province. More than 20 Chinese personnel were wounded in that attack.

Sharif's visit also comes as Pakistan faces a debt crisis and fiscal deficits.

According to data shared by the State Bank of Pakistan, the country's external debt reached around US\$130 billion in 2023 – double the figure in 2015.

Chinese debt accounts for 13 per cent of Pakistan's total foreign debt, said Zhao Shiren, China's counsel general in Lahore, while addressing a gathering of business leaders in March.

Zhu Yongbiao, a professor with the school of politics and international relations at Lanzhou University, said China's investment in Pakistan would weather the constant terrorism threats.

Zhu said that China was “generally satisfied” with Pakistan’s counterterrorism operations, but that both sides still needed to strengthen cooperation in the field.

“The main area [of the visit] is still economic and trade cooperation, in order to help Pakistan’s development and enhance its capacity of self-reliance.”

China is Pakistan’s key trading partner and investor, especially in the country’s infrastructure.

China’s mega project in Pakistan – the CPEC – is a flagship infrastructure project under the global Belt and Road Initiative and is designed to link China’s northwest Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region directly to the Arabian Sea and the oil-rich Middle East.

As of the end of 2022, the CPEC had brought in a total direct investment of US\$25.4 billion to Pakistan, official news agency Xinhua reported, citing data from the Chinese embassy in Islamabad.

It generated 236,000 jobs, helped construct 510km (317 miles) of highway, and contributed to the development of an 886km national power transmission network in Pakistan.

Afghanistan could be another topic discussed during the talks. China has started to lean on Afghanistan’s Taliban regime to prevent cross-border attacks on Chinese personnel and interests in neighbouring Pakistan, according to an earlier report from South China Morning Post.

The Post has learned that several Chinese diplomats in Islamabad and Kabul are seeking to persuade the Taliban to rein in Pakistani Taliban militants and prevent a surge in cross-border terrorism attacks.

Islamabad has accused Kabul of harbouring militants, but the Afghan regime has denied these claims.

## May

### China supports Pakistan in further investigating terror attack on Chinese: spokesperson

27 May 2024, Xinhua

China supports Pakistan in continuing investigation into a deadly terror attack on Chinese nationals and bringing to justice all the perpetrators, foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said on Monday.

China attaches great importance to the key progress made by the Pakistani side on the investigation, and will continue to work with Pakistan to strengthen security cooperation and ensure the safety and security of Chinese personnel, projects, and institutions in Pakistan, Mao said at a press briefing.

On March 26, a suicide bomber riding on an explosive-laden vehicle attacked a convoy of Chinese nationals heading towards a hydropower project,

killing five Chinese and their Pakistani driver in the Besham area of Shangla district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Pakistan’s National Counter-Terrorism Authority Coordinator Muhammad Tahir Rai said Sunday that security forces have arrested 11 suspects accused involved the attack.

Mao said that terrorism is a common enemy of humanity and a scourge against regional development and stability.

China calls on countries in the region to strengthen counter-terrorism cooperation, root out all terrorist organizations, remove their breeding ground, and protect the common security and development interests of all countries, she said.

### Chinese Propaganda in Pakistan: “Xinjiang Is Having Its Best Time in History”

24 May 2024, Bitter Winter, Massimo Introvigne

A seminar in Islamabad presented the region, where a genocide of Muslim Uyghurs is taking place, as a land where freedom of religion reigns.



Chinese diplomat Shi Yuangqiang addressing the seminar’s participants.

Several Parliaments in the Western world have acknowledged the persecution of Uyghurs and other Turkic people in Xinjiang as “genocide,” while the United Nations and the European Parliament stated that China is committing “crimes against humanity” in the region.

Yet, it was solemnly proclaimed in Pakistan that the “Xinjiang region is enjoying the best time in its history,” a provocative comment about a region whose inhabitants are targeted by crimes against humanity and genocide. The statement was uttered by the Chinese Deputy Chief of Missions (DCM) of Beijing’s Embassy to Pakistan, Shi Yuangqiang, at a seminar on “Dynamics of Xinjiang in Pakistani Perspective” hosted on May 18 in Islamabad by the Overseas Chinese Association Rawalpindi. It was as if German diplomats in Nazi times had tried to persuade their audiences that Jews in Germany were “enjoying the best time in their history.”



The seminar was attended by politicians and journalists. Shi particularly insisted that Uyghurs in Xinjiang "are enjoying the religious freedom that rejects the malicious propaganda campaigns of Western think tanks."

Shi praised Pakistan as one of the "best friends" of China and promised more economic support.

A sad but emblematic moment was where Uyghur children brought to the event had to lip sync in Chinese, i. e., pretend to be singing while in fact just moving their lips in synchronicity with pre-recorded songs.

This was an emblematic moment: Uyghur's youth cannot really sing their own songs, but they are admitted to lip sync the songs of their colonizers, while Pakistani VIPs applaud.

### **Pakistan scrambles for relief on \$15bn energy debt owed to China**

24 May 2024, Nikkei Asia, Adnan Aamir

UAE surprises with \$10 bn investment in promising sectors of economy.

Cash-strapped Pakistan is moving to restructure more than \$15 billion in power-plant debt owed to Chinese energy producers, in a move that threatens to dampen Beijing's appetite for future investment.

The South Asian nation is already on the hook for about \$1.9 billion in unpaid operating bills at 20 China-backed power plants across the country. Most were built under the \$50 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a key part of Beijing's globe-spanning Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

But Islamabad announced last weekend that it was seeking to restructure \$15.4 billion in loans linked to the construction of those China-funded plants.

Pakistan wants to extend the maturity of the loans by five years to save roughly \$2 billion in debt-servicing costs over the next several years, according to an official involved in the process who spoke on condition of anonymity because he is not authorized to speak with the media.

Delaying payment could give the government some wiggle room to avoid raising electricity prices in the midst of soaring summertime demand. An energy price hike last year triggered widespread protests.

The surprise announcement came as Pakistan negotiates another bailout package in the range of \$6 to \$8 billion with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which has called on Islamabad to stop subsidizing the energy sector.

"It reduces the [debt] burden [of Pakistan] when it comes to negotiating with the IMF," Aadil Nakhoda, an assistant professor of economics at the Institute of Business Administration (IBA) in Karachi, said of the restructuring plan.

Pakistan's investment prospects have been dim, hampering its low-growth economy. This month, Saudi crown prince Mohammed bin Salman delayed a visit that Islamabad had hoped would generate billions of dollars in business deals.

In a rare bit of good news, however, the United Arab Emirates announced Thursday that it would invest \$10 billion in promising sectors of Pakistan's economy, although more funding from China remains crucial.

Pakistan is aiming to get its proposed debt restructuring approved before Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif visits China next month. But observers said convincing Beijing could be difficult. The request comes amid tensions between the two countries after a series of deadly militant attacks on Chinese nationals and economic interests in Pakistan. Abdul Rehman, a Pakistan-based energy market expert, said Chinese officials will not agree to restructure the multibillion-dollar loans.

"China will give new loans, which can be used to repay the existing loans of power projects," Rehman said. "In this way, the debts will not be restructured and Pakistan's forex accounts will also get a breather."

Chinese companies have repeatedly called on Pakistan to settle its outstanding power bills, stoking fears that producers could suspend their operations to force Islamabad's hand. Pakistan is paying some of the operations' variable costs, such as fuel, and it is unlikely the Chinese companies would take such a drastic step, Rehman said. But "Chinese power producers' payment problems will surely affect future Chinese investment in Pakistan," he added.

This month, Chinese investors called for Pakistan to place funds in a foreign bank account to ensure that debts owed to power producers are paid on time. Pakistan has not accepted this demand, but it is under mounting pressure to placate them as a meeting of the Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) got underway Friday. The body makes decisions for the broader China-Pakistan investment framework, including about future funding and the suspension of existing projects.

"Given its burgeoning economic problems, Pakistan expects major investments from China at the next JCC meeting," another government official told Nikkei on condition of anonymity. "We fear that Pakistan's failure to honor commitments to pay Chinese power producers has made our investment pitch to China a very hard sell."

Interview: Pakistan firmly upholds one-China principle – president

22 May 2024, News CN, Deng Kaiyin, Jiang Chao, Zhang Jingyao

Pakistan abides by the one-China principle as the country always chooses to stand on the right side of history, Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari said during a recent interview with Chinese media.

Tuesday marks the 73rd anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan. Recalling the rapport between the previous generations' leaders of the two countries, Zardari said: "My late father-in-law, Pakistan's former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto told the nation to look east, to look towards China."

Zardari, who had visited China nine times during his first term as Pakistani president, said Pakistani people love China as "there is no conditionality between us." In the interview, the first one with foreign media after being re-elected as Pakistan's president for the second time in March, Zardari reaffirmed Pakistan's stance of upholding one-China principle, rejecting any form of "Taiwan-independence."

"Taiwan is part of China. There's no other way," the president said, adding that Pakistan will always stand with China and safeguard China's core interests.

Commenting on the development of Gwadar Port, a starting point of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Zardari said many things have been done in Gwadar port since the launch of the CPEC 11 years ago, noting that the port will always welcome investors from all over the world.

Zardari said Pakistan is encouraging more schools to adopt the Chinese language into their compulsory curriculum. Emphasizing the importance of strengthening people-to-people exchanges between the two countries, he called for more policies to facilitate the movement of people between the two countries.

Speaking highly of the development achievements made by the Chinese people, Zardari said that ensuring the continuation of policies is one of the key reasons behind China's success, adding that Pakistan hopes to be more involved in China's development process.

"Long live Pakistan-China friendship!" Zardari said in Chinese while concluding the interview.

### **Today is the 73rd anniversary of Pak-China diplomatic relation**

20 May 2024, Pakistan Today

In the limelight of international relations, there exists a thread woven with the deepest hues of solidarity and trust. Pakistan and China, bound by an unbreakable bond, stand as testament to the enduring power of friendship amidst the tumult of global politics.

From the towering peaks of the Himalayas to the bustling streets of Islamabad and Beijing, their

diplomatic embrace echoes with the whispers of shared history and common aspirations.

Pakistan and China's diplomatic journey, which commenced on the 21st of May 1951, has transcended time, evolving into a formidable alliance with each passing day and year. This cherished relationship, rooted in mutual recognition and respect, has blossomed into an All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership, epitomizing the unwavering commitment of both nations' leadership to propel it forward. Pakistan, among the first nations to embrace the People's Republic of China, holds China dear as its Iron Brother, while China, in turn, cherishes Pakistan as one of its closest friends and partners. This deep-seated camaraderie is underpinned by feelings of mutual trust, respect, and goodwill, fostering a regular exchange of high-level visits and strategic consultations between the two neighbors. Economically, China's stature as Pakistan's largest trading partner and a major investor, particularly in infrastructure and energy sectors, amplifies the bilateral synergy. The official launch of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project under President Xi Jinping's "One Road, One Belt" initiative, marks a significant milestone, elevating the bilateral relationship to unprecedented heights. CPEC, envisioned to enhance connectivity and infrastructure, has catalyzed monumental developments, fostering socio-economic prosperity and job creation across Pakistan. This transformative journey, facilitated by a robust mechanism of Joint Cooperation Committees and Working Groups, underscores the depth of commitment towards mutual progress and shared prosperity. As Pakistan and China continue to script a narrative of unparalleled friendship and cooperation, their enduring partnership serves as a beacon of hope, inspiring a more harmonious global community. Pakistan's diplomatic ties with China have stood the test of time, evolving into a robust alliance with multifaceted dimensions. Pakistan was one of the first countries to recognize the People's Republic of China, their relationship has grown from strength to strength. Throughout the years, their partnership has become a cornerstone of regional stability and economic growth.

In the early years, the two nations established their camaraderie on the foundation of countering common threats and challenges. As the geopolitical landscape evolved, their alliance served as a strategic counterbalance to the influence of neighboring India.

Moreover, China's substantial investments in Pakistan's infrastructure, including the transformative CPEC, have not only fueled Pakistan's economic

growth but have also deepened the bond between the two nations.

Over time, their collaboration expanded beyond economic ventures to encompass defense and security cooperation. With a shared commitment to combating terrorism and ensuring regional security, China and Pakistan have engaged in intelligence sharing and military exchanges. Pakistan's pivotal role in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) further solidifies their partnership, with CPEC emerging as a flagship project under this ambitious endeavor.

Their friendship extends beyond bilateral interests, manifesting in unwavering diplomatic support in international forums. Through thick and thin, China and Pakistan have stood by each other, forging a bond based on trust, respect, and mutual benefit. As they continue to navigate the complexities of global politics, the China-Pakistan relationship remains a beacon of stability and cooperation in an ever-changing world.

- 1949: The People's Republic of China was established.
- 1950: Pakistan becomes one of the first countries to recognize the People's Republic of China.
- 1951: Diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China are formally established.
- 1962: The Sino-Indian War strengthens Pakistan's ties with China as Pakistan supported China during the conflict.
- 1963: The Sino-Pakistani Agreement is signed, transferring territory from Pakistan-administered Kashmir to China.
- 1971: During the Bangladesh Liberation War, China supports Pakistan, leading to further strengthening of bilateral relations.
- 1978: China's reform and opening-up policies begin, leading to increased economic cooperation between China and Pakistan.
- 2013: China announces the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project, enhancing economic collaboration between the two countries.
- 2024: China and Pakistan celebrate the 73rd anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, highlighting the strong and enduring friendship between the two nations.

These milestones highlight the close and strategic partnership that has developed between Pakistan and China over the years. Further developments in Pakistan-China relations include ongoing military cooperation, cultural exchanges, and economic collaborations. The CPEC has emerged as a flagship project, aiming to enhance connectivity and promote economic development in Pakistan. Both countries continue to support each other on various international platforms, maintaining a strong strategic partnership. People-to-people exchanges, educational cooperation, and mutual support on

regional and global issues further cement the bond between Pakistan and China.

The bilateral relationship between the two countries remains vital for regional stability and economic development in the broader context of South Asia and beyond. Worth mentioning that Pakistan and China's diplomatic relations have evolved into a multifaceted partnership with several key aspects driving their enduring bond. Firstly, their strategic partnership stands as a pillar of regional stability, with both nations collaborating closely on security, defense, and counterterrorism efforts. Secondly, economic cooperation forms a cornerstone of their relationship, with China emerging as a major investor in Pakistan's infrastructure projects, notably through the CPEC.

Additionally, military cooperation between the two countries is robust, encompassing joint exercises, technology transfer, and defense collaboration. Diplomatically, China consistently extends support to Pakistan on various international platforms, while Pakistan aligns itself with China on matters of mutual interest. Finally, people-to-people ties foster cultural exchanges, educational collaborations, and tourism, strengthening the bond between the peoples of both nations beyond official channels. As Pakistan and China celebrate the 73rd anniversary of their diplomatic relations, these five aspects underscore the depth and resilience of their friendship, which continues to shape the geopolitical landscape of the region. This relationship goes beyond mere strategic cooperation; it embodies a deep-rooted friendship that has weathered the tests of time and emerged stronger. Their partnership is characterized by a shared commitment to fostering peace, stability, and prosperity in the region. The bond also extends beyond bilateral interests, manifesting in a robust diplomatic support system in various international forums. Whether it's advocating for each other's positions on critical issues or standing shoulder to shoulder in times of global challenges, the two countries exemplify the true essence of solidarity and collaboration. At its core, the friendship between Pakistan and China is built on a foundation of trust, respect, and mutual benefit. This symbiotic relationship allows both nations to leverage their respective strengths and resources for collective advancement. From infrastructure development projects like BRI & CPEC to joint military exercises, their collaboration spans across diverse sectors of mutual interest. In an ever-evolving geopolitical landscape, the enduring friendship between China and Pakistan serves as a beacon of stability and cooperation. As both countries navigate complex global challenges and opportunities, their shared commitment to each other highlights the importance of fostering genuine relationships in the realm of

international politics. By continuing to stand by each other through thick and thin, China and Pakistan set a commendable example for the world on how genuine friendship can transcend borders and contribute to a more harmonious global community. As we reflect on the remarkable journey of Pakistan-China diplomatic relations, spanning over seven decades, it becomes evident that the bond between these two nations is not merely defined by geography or shared interests, but by the enduring spirit of friendship and cooperation. With a border stretching over 5000 kilometers, their relationship stands taller than the mighty Himalayas, symbolizing the strength and resilience that characterize their partnership. Like the sweetness of honey, their relations are imbued with warmth and sincerity, transcending borders and cultural differences. As the old saying goes, "Iron brothers" indeed, their bond is unbreakable, and their commitment to each other unwavering. Through thick and thin, Pakistan and China have stood by each other, and their friendship will last forever, ever, a testament to the power of genuine camaraderie in shaping a brighter future for generations to come.

### **Pakistan, China on path to new heights of friendship**

13 May, 2024, The Nation, Shafqat Ali

Pakistan and China are on the path to new heights of friendship amid top Pakistani leaders continuing visits to Beijing and the proposed trip by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

The anticipation is palpable as Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar prepares for his journey to China today. The PM will also fly to China within days.

Beijing's unwavering support, manifested through financial aid and strategic partnerships, has been a cornerstone of Pakistan's economic stability in tumultuous times.

The recent extension of a multi-billion-dollar loan was not just a lifeline but a symbol of solidarity in the face of adversity.

The agenda for Dar's visit is ambitious yet crucial. Discussions of paramount importance include bilateral trade, cooperation, and the evolution of the monumental China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

This ambitious initiative, representative of President Xi Jinping's vision encapsulated in the Belt and Road Initiative, holds the promise of transformative change for both nations.

Against the backdrop of geopolitical shifts and regional dynamics, the dialogue between Dar and

his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, transcends mere diplomatic niceties.

It will delve into the heart of mutual interests and shared aspirations, exploring avenues for deeper collaboration in the face of evolving challenges.

For Pakistan, the spectre of financial obligations and security threats loom over the CPEC project, underscoring the delicate balance between ambition and pragmatism. Pakistan's commitment to fulfilling its end of the bargain is unwavering, but the road ahead is fraught with challenges.

As Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to China is on the anvil, the stakes are higher than ever. The 13th meeting of the joint cooperation committee on CPEC held the promise of accelerating progress and realizing shared ambitions. It was a testament to the enduring bond between Pakistan and China, forged in the crucible of mutual trust and shared aspirations.

### **China hands over data collected from Pakistan's first satellite mission on Chang'e-6 lunar probe**

11 May, 2024, People's Daily Online

China on Friday handed over the data collected from Pakistan's first satellite mission on the Chang'e-6 lunar probe to the Pakistan side, and together they unveiled the first image captured by the CubeSat, the Global Times learned from the China National Space Administration (CNSA) on Friday.

China has carried out four international projects with the Chang'e-6 probe, including the European Space Agency's lunar surface ion analyzer, France's radon detection instrument, Italy's laser corner reflector, and the first-ever CubeSat from Pakistan, the CNSA previously revealed.

The CubeSat, named iCube-Q, is a remote sensing satellite co-developed by Pakistan's national space agency SUPARCO and Shanghai Jiao Tong University. It was launched in early 2023.

The iCube-Q and the orbiter separated near the far side of the Moon in a 12-hour elliptical lunar orbit on Wednesday, and subsequently successfully captured the first image. The project achieved its goal of "successful separation and obtaining telemetry," marking the smooth completion of Pakistan's first-ever lunar project, the CNSA said.

Through this mission, the CubeSat successfully validated nano-satellite lunar orbit detection technology, and explored the cooperation model between China and Pakistan in lunar and deep space exploration, laying the foundation for deeper cooperation between the two sides in future missions. After its grand liftoff on May 3, the Chang'e-6 lunar probe on Wednesday entered its circumlunar orbit after performing a near-moon braking procedure.

Later, the Chang'e-6 probe will adjust the altitude and inclination of its circumlunar orbit with the

support of China's Queqiao-2 relay satellite, and implement the separation of the orbiter-returner combination from the lander-ascender combination. The latter will then make a soft landing on the lunar surface at the South Pole-Aitken Basin, which is widely considered by industry insiders to be one of the most challenging tasks in space exploration. A number of countries have struggled with this maneuver previously. Early in January, Japan's SLIM moon lander, took a tumble as it touched down on the lunar surface. This was described as a "success" by the Japanese space agency JAXA, even though the lander's solar panels were not angled properly to harness sunlight and power up the probe.

### India protests China's building of road in Ladakh territory ceded to it by Pakistan

03 May, 2024, Tibetan Review

India has lodged a strong protest to China last week over the latter's building of a road in Shaksgam Valley which belongs to it, and which also has the potential to threaten Indian defences in Siachen Glacier. This 5180 square-kilometre Indian territory was illegally ceded by Pakistan to China in 1963, noted the hindustantimes.com and other reports May 3.

India lodged its protest against China both in New Delhi and Beijing. Besides, road could be part of an alignment that links Karakoram Highway to Upper Shaksgam Valley, bordering the Siachen Glacier. India's ministry of external affairs (MEA) said India has never accepted the so-called China Pakistan Boundary Agreement of 1963 through which Pakistan unlawfully attempted to cede the area to China, and India has consistently conveyed its rejection of the same, noted the timesofindia.com May 3.

"We have registered our protest with the Chinese side against illegal attempts to alter facts on the ground. We further reserve the right to take necessary measures to safeguard our interests," the report quoted MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal as saying May 2.



India maintains that under the 1963 agreement, Pakistan illegally ceded to China 5,180 sq km of

Indian territory in Shaksgam Valley from areas illegally occupied by it in the Union Territory of Ladakh. It has also maintained that China continues to be in illegal occupation of approximately 38,000 sq kms of Indian territory in Ladakh for the past six decades, the report said.

The new road transverses through 16333 feet Aghil Pass and could provide an alternative alignment to Karakoram Pass via Upper Shaksgam and thereon to Khunjerab Pass in Northern Areas of Pakistan-Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

The hindustantimes.com report said the matter was of serious concern to India for if China extends the road to Upper Shaksgam Valley, then the Indian positions on Siachen Glacier will face twin threats – Pakistan in the South and China to the north. It is only logical to assume that the Indian Army will have to plan long term defences to deal with Chinese expansion in the Occupied Shaksgam Valley.

The report said that although the current road construction is a patch between two possible alignments in the long term, it is quite evident that China wants to link Lower and Upper Shaksgam valley through road and military outposts in order to pressurize Indian Army positions on Siachen Glacier and Saltoro Ridge.

India is stated to have been raising the issue of Shaksgam Valley in the Special Representative Dialogue on Boundary Resolution, the last of which was held in Dec 2019. This dialogue has, however, virtually been put on the backburner after Chinese PLA threw all the bilateral agreements out of the window and transgressed in East Ladakh in May 2020. India has no intention to allow Beijing to unilaterally impose the 1959 line on East Ladakh.

The report added that by lodging at least two protests in the past two years on road construction in Shaksgam Valley, India made it clear to China that it is right to protect its territory and will take measures to ensure that road construction is halted in the illegally occupied territory.

### China pledges five-year development assistance for Nepal's Tibet-border districts

03 May, 2024, Tibetan Review

The Chinese government of Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), which constitutes roughly the western half of Tibet proper, is to fund a five-year initiative in Nepal's northern border districts, offering different kinds of logistical and material support, mostly for social and economic development projects. The inhabitants of these districts are ethnically Tibetan or of Tibetan-origin, with most of them practicing Tibetan religion and culture.

The TAR government will provide 20 million yuan or around Nepali Rs 370 million each year under the



initiative for the next five years, reported the kathmandupost.com May 3, citing officials familiar with the development.

In order to execute this initiative, the first preparatory meeting was held in Lhasa over Apr 23-24, co-chaired by Kamal Prasad Bhattarai, joint secretary of Nepal's Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration of Nepal, and Baiman Yangzong, director general of the Foreign Affairs Office of the TAR government, the report said, citing a statement from Nepal's Consulate General in Lhasa.

The report noted that during his Nepal visit in Nov 2023, Wang Junzheng, the Party Secretary of TAR, had informed Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Narayan Kaji Shrestha that Lhasa would provide Nepal 20 million yuan for administrative reform and development needs in Nepal.

The assistance will be used to build schools and health posts, install solar electricity, and fund other small projects in the northern 15 districts of Nepal, a Nepali official who attended the meeting in Lhasa last week has said.

The districts have been named as Taplejung, Solukhumbu, Sankhuwasabha, Dolakha, Sindhupalchok, Rasuwa, Dhading, Gorkha, Manang, Mustang, Bajhang, Dolpa, Mugu, Humla and Darchula.

The two sides will meet twice in the first half of the year with focus on the projects' arrangements and twice in the second half of the year for the implementation and review of the implemented projects, the report said.

The statement has further said the two sides discussed enhancing support for improving the livelihood of the people residing in the border districts through various projects.

Nepal's Ministry of Local Development was stated to be currently compiling a list of projects needed in the 15 districts that share a border with Tibet.

The report noted that China has already been implementing small-scale aid projects in the northern border districts of Nepal, providing each district Nepali Rs 3 million for the development of village development committees (VDCs), then local administrative units, in the districts.

The report suggested that the initiative began in 2014 when China agreed to provide 10 million yuan (USD 1.63 million) annually from 2014 to 2018 through the TAR government in areas like health, education and road sectors to improve the livelihood of the residents in those districts.

Later in Apr 2019, during the state visit of the then Nepali president Bidya Devi Bhandari to China, the two countries signed the Northern Area Infrastructure Development and Livelihood Improvement Project (NAIDLIP), under which Beijing pledged to provide

funds for implementing various development projects, which was estimated to be 20 million yuan, the report said.

## April

### China Coast Guard holds second high-level meeting with Pakistani counterpart

26 April 2024, China Mail



The China Coast Guard (CCG) and the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA) held the second high-level meeting in Beijing on April 24. The meeting was co-chaired by Major General Yu Zhong, director general of CCG, and Rear Admiral Imtiaz Ali, director general of PMSA.

The two sides jointly reviewed the results of bilateral cooperation in recent years, and spoke positively of the effective implementation of the memorandum of understanding (MoU) on strengthening cooperation and exchanges in maritime law enforcement. They also conducted in-depth exchanges on issues such as personnel visits, information exchange, training exchanges, ship visits, joint exercises as well as joint combat against transnational crimes at sea, and exchanged views on topics of mutual concern.

The two sides vowed to further deepen practical maritime cooperation, jointly safeguard maritime security order, and play a positive role in promoting the China-Pakistan all-weather strategic cooperative partnership to a higher level.

### Former Pakistani PM Nawaz Sharif embarks on 'private visit' to China

23 April 2024, First Post

Accompanied by his grandson Junaid Safdar and personal staff, Sharif boarded a Chinese Southern Airlines flight from Lahore airport, as disclosed by the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), of which he is the supremo

Former Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif departed for China Monday evening for a five-day "private visit," maintaining a low-profile approach to the trip.

Accompanied by his grandson Junaid Safdar and personal staff, Sharif boarded a Chinese Southern Airlines flight from Lahore airport, as disclosed by the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), of which he is the supreme leader.

However, specific details of Sharif's agenda during his stay in China were not disclosed by the party.

Reports from local media suggest that Sharif intends to undergo a medical examination in China and engage in meetings with Chinese companies concerning development projects in Punjab, where his daughter Maryam Nawaz serves as chief minister. Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar is also said to be accompanying him. Speculation within PML-N circles hints at the possibility of Sharif being on a "special assignment" during his time in China.

Sharif never visited China in the past for medical reasons. He went to the United Kingdom on medical grounds in 2019 and stayed there in self-exile, before his return in 2023 after the fall of Imran Khan's government. His younger brother Shehbaz Sharif is leading a six-party coalition at the Centre.

After his dream of becoming prime minister for a fourth time shattered in the February election, Nawaz Sharif has been keeping a low profile.

### **Pakistan strikes \$200m deal with China for solar power conversion**

13 April 2024, Link News

Pakistan has signed a \$200 million Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with a Chinese firm to convert a thermal plant to solar power, as per a recent post by the Information Ministry.

The project will upgrade an existing thermal power plant to a 300 MW solar power plant through the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC).

Furthermore, it will generate 400m units of electricity per year at a significantly lower cost, reducing the per unit cost from Rs45 to Rs40.

Another key advantage of this project is that it will eliminate the need for Heavy Fuel Oil (HFO), resulting in an estimated savings of \$44m annually due to a reduction in import bills, offering attractive returns to stakeholders.

### **Growing Angst against China in Pakistan**

11 April 2024, Baltimore Post- Examiner

A terrorist group linked to the Taliban attacked a convoy of Chinese workers near Gilgit, killing the bus driver and five Chinese nationals. The Chinese are currently working on the Dasu and Diamer dams, which are being built on reclaimed land in Kohistan district and Gilgit-Baltistan.

Investigators revealed that the bus transporting the Chinese was neither bulletproof nor bombproof. Maryam Nawaz, Punjab's chief minister, has accused the Chinese of violating security protocols, and complicating security officials' efforts.

This was the third major attack in less than a week on Pakistan-based Chinese, exacerbating Islamabad's national security concerns. In 2021, nine Chinese engineers working on the Dasu power project were killed in a suicide attack, causing the Chinese company to halt operations for several months.

Both Pakistan and China suspect that Indians and Americans are sabotaging the Chinese interests in Pakistan. Thousands of Chinese are working on multibillion-dollar infrastructure projects in Pakistan as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The Chinese are also working on several megaprojects in Gilgit-Baltistan, a territory claimed by India.

The Chinese government has demanded a thorough investigation into the fatal explosion. As a precautionary measure, the Chinese also temporarily halted work on the Diamer Dam in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Pakistan accuses the Taliban regime in Kabul of sheltering terrorists who carry out cross-border attacks. These are the same terrorists that Pakistan trained to cause mayhem in Afghanistan and India, and they have now become an embarrassment to Pakistan's military rulers.

Whatever terrorist groups the militants belong to, they demand Sharia law in Pakistan and blame the Pakistani military for being a pawn of non-Muslim western powers.

Many Islamic terrorists also resent Chinese for gross human rights violations and the ongoing genocide against Muslim Uyghurs in China's Xinjiang province. China has the world's largest concentration camp, where more than a million Muslim Uyghurs are still imprisoned for demanding basic religious freedoms.

The Taliban do not approve of Pakistan's double standards, which support and encourage Sharia law in Afghanistan while viewing the same immutable and flawless Islamic system as harmful to their own country's interests.

Pakistani rulers who used the Taliban to promote terrorism west of the Durand Line forgot that the Taliban would eventually cross the Durand Line and expand their influence in the eastern areas as well.

So far, the Taliban have refused to recognize the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, and continue to claim the grand old Indus River as the original demarcation between the two nations.

Some analysts also believe that in the near future, the Taliban will request military equipment from India, indicating a failure in Pakistan's strategic policy.

Terrorist attacks aren't the only concern for Chinese interests in Pakistan. The people of Gilgit have periodically spoken out against Chinese exploitation of their mineral wealth and water bodies.

The glaciers and rivers of Gilgit provide more than half of Pakistan's water needs, and the Chinese are building large dams here to generate tens of thousands of megawatts of electricity, which will be transported to Punjab's industrial hubs.

Gilgit residents do not benefit from these projects because Pakistani decision-making bodies refuse to accommodate their voices. Pakistan's popularity is dwindling in Kashmir and Gilgit as its economic downturn appears imminent. The Pakistani army fears that local angst is weakening its control over the vital disputed territory, which also serves as the sole land link between Pakistan and its ally China.

As we speak, several political parties, civil society organizations, labor unions, and representatives from the mining, travel and tourism industries are protesting in Gilgit to express their dissatisfaction with the absence of autonomy and basic constitutional rights. They are also expressing anger at Pakistan's policy of illegally settling Pakistani citizens in Gilgit to change its ethnic identity.

Recently, an event took place at the Geneva-based United Nations Human Rights Council where the special rapporteur on minority issues, Nicolas Levrat, lambasted Pakistani authorities for undermining the interests of the people of Gilgit and imposing an alien political system to deny locals their inalienable rights over their lands.

According to Greek politician and former MEP Konstantino Bogdanos, the people of Gilgit lack basic rights. He chastised Pakistan for taking a securitized approach to the region, transforming it into a large prison. He said that the deliberate political marginalization of Gilgit is deeply alarming and no country can afford to keep its people disenfranchised and devoid of basic freedoms.

In a joint statement, Saudi authorities have asked Pakistan's visiting prime minister to resolve the Kashmir and Gilgit issues with India bilaterally. This is a major setback for Pakistani rulers who expect a third party to intervene to resolve this seven-decade-old chronic dispute.

Whether it's Islamic terrorists, Chinese or Pakistani land grabbers, Gilgit-Baltistan is bound to become the axis of international politics in the coming days.

### **Pakistan-China border reopens for tourism and trade after 4 months closure**

05 April 2024, Times of India

As per the latest development, Pakistan-China Khunjerab border opens for travel. If reports are to go by, following a closure lasting four months due to

harsh winter conditions, the Khunjerab border between Pakistan and China has reopened, ushering in renewed opportunities for both commercial ventures and tourism.

If records are to go by, typically, the bilateral agreement dictates the closure of the border from December 1 to March 31 annually, owing to the extreme cold and heavy snowfall during these months. With the reopening of this vital border crossing, there is optimism for an upsurge in bilateral trade and tourism activities between the two nations. While the closure period temporarily halted trade and tourism activities, it's noteworthy that the transportation of essential goods for Pakistan's development projects continued uninterrupted across the border. Moreover, alongside the reopening of the Khunjerab border, transportation activities have resumed in the border areas of Gilgit-Baltistan, particularly in Sost, and the Chinese city of Tashghargan. This development signifies a reinvigorated flow of commerce and connectivity between Pakistan and China, promising economic benefits and bolstering bilateral ties.

Situated at a towering altitude of 16,200 ft, Khunjerab Pass serves as the sole link between the two nations over this rugged mountain range. It marks the entry point of the highest paved international road into China, connecting the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China with Gilgit-Baltistan of Pakistan.

Functioning under a border protocol agreement inked between the two countries in 1985, Khunjerab Pass stands as the highest paved international border at 15,500 ft above sea level. Further reports suggest that the pass remains accessible for travel and trade purposes between April and November each year, further facilitating the socio-economic exchange between the regions.

Notably, on November 12, the Chinese Government had announced the closure of the Khunjerab Pass for four months during winter, just a month after agreeing to keep the high-altitude road open throughout the year, as per the reports.

## **March**

### **Six killed in suicide attack on Chinese engineers in Pakistan**

27 March 2024, Reuters

A suicide bomber rammed a vehicle into a convoy of Chinese engineers working on a dam project in northwest Pakistan on Tuesday, killing six people, police said, the third major attack on Chinese interests in the South Asian country in a week.

The first two attacks targeted a Pakistan naval air base and a strategic port used by China in the southwest province of Balochistan where Beijing is investing billions in infrastructure projects.

The engineers were en route from Islamabad to their camp at the dam construction site in Dasu in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, regional police chief Mohammad Ali Gandapur said.

"Five Chinese nationals and their Pakistani driver were killed in the attack," Gandapur told Reuters.

Dasu is the site of a major dam and the area has been attacked in the past. A blast on a bus killed 13 people, including nine Chinese nationals, in 2021.

Chinese engineers have been working on a number of projects in Pakistan with Beijing investing over \$65 billion in infrastructure works as part of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) under Beijing's wider Belt and Road initiative.

No one claimed responsibility for Tuesday's attack; there also had been no claim for the 2021 attack. Pakistan is home to twin insurgencies - one by Islamists and the other by ethnic militants seeking secession.

While Chinese interests are primarily targeted by the ethnic militants seeking to push Beijing out of mineral-rich Balochistan, they generally operate in the country's south and southwest - far from the site of Tuesday's attack.

Islamists mostly operate in Pakistan's northwest, the area where the convoy was attacked.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police have reached the spot and started relief operations.

A separate police source told Reuters the convoy was carrying staff of the construction firm China Gezhouba Group Company (CGGC) working on the Dasu hydropower project - the same company targeted in 2021.

Construction work ceased for months after that attack.

China's embassy in Pakistan demanded investigations into the attack.

"The Chinese embassy and consulates in Pakistan have immediately launched emergency work, demanding that the Pakistani side conduct a thorough investigation into the attack, severely punish the perpetrators, and take practical and effective measures to protect the safety of Chinese citizens," the embassy said in statement.

The embassy on Wednesday also warned Chinese citizens to stay abreast of the situation and strengthen security measures. It said China will work more resolutely with Pakistan to do its utmost to maintain the security of Chinese personnel, projects and institutions in Pakistan.

#### 'FOREIGN ELEMENTS'

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is expected to visit Beijing next week, according to a source in the Prime

Minister's Office, his first since taking office following February elections.

On Tuesday afternoon after the attack, Sharif went to the Chinese embassy to offer condolences to victims' families and the Chinese government, the embassy said on Wednesday.

A Pakistani military statement said the three attacks in the last week were aimed at destabilising the internal security situation, accusing "foreign elements" of aiding and abetting such incidents in Pakistan.

It said strategic projects and sensitive sites vital to Pakistan's economic progress were being targeted in an effort to sabotage it and sow discord between Pakistan and its allies, most notably China.

Pakistan's Indian Ocean port of Gwadar, on the route to key Gulf shipping lanes, is managed by China, while nearby naval air base Siddique is used to support security and development work, spearheaded by Beijing, in Balochistan.

Both were attacked in recent days by Baloch separatists.

Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar condemned Tuesday's attack and said Pakistan would continue to fight back against militants.

Pakistan's foreign office said the life and safety of Chinese nationals in Pakistan was of paramount importance.

"Pakistan will continue to work with our Chinese brothers in ensuring the safety and security of Chinese nationals, projects and institutions in Pakistan," it said in a statement.

#### **Pakistan assures IMF not to allocate additional budget for China-Pakistan Economic Corridor**

17 March 2024, The Economic Times

The Pakistan government has assured the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that it will not allocate an additional budget to settle the Pakistcurrency (PKR) 493 billion dues of Chinese power plants, The Express Tribune reported on Sunday.

This comes as the IMF questioned the efficacy of the power sector's anti-theft campaign in Pakistan.

The IMF inquired about the government's decision on the allocation of funds for the Chinese power plants over and above the budgeted amount of PKR 48 billion for this fiscal year, said officials of the Ministry of Energy.

They added that the IMF was informed there was no plan to approve additional funds for retiring the outstanding debt of the Chinese power plants.

The outstanding dues of power projects of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) alarmingly increased to a record PKR 493 billion or USD 1.8 billion as of the end of January 2024. The amount was PKR 214 billion or 77 per cent higher than June

last year.

The Pakistan-based news daily reported that the government also faced criticism about a record PKR 7 per unit increase in electricity prices in March due to the energy ministry's faulty policy of using expensive imported fuels, The Express Tribune reported quoting sources.

The loan lending organisation is in doubt about the government's claim of restricting losses due to the non-recovery of bills to PKR 263 billion in this fiscal year, as the amount has already almost reached PKR 200 billion in just seven months. This has serious implications for restricting the overall circular debt to PKR 2.31 trillion by June this year.

The build-up of Chinese debt violates the 2015 Energy Framework Agreement, which binds Pakistan to allocate sufficient money in a special fund to keep Chinese investors immune from the circular debt. However, the government is allocating only PKR 48 billion annually with a condition to withdraw a maximum of PKR 4 billion per month.

Sources said the IMF appeared sceptical about the long-term success of the government's anti-theft campaign and the military's involvement in monitoring the performance of power distribution companies.

Energy ministry officials said the IMF believes the anti-theft campaign can work only in the short term and the government needs to focus on digital monitoring of the power distribution network.

The government claimed it has recovered PKR 82 billion in this fiscal year because of its anti-theft campaign, although there is no publicly available breakup about recoveries from private and public sector consumers.

Sources said the IMF's view was that such measures can only be beneficial in the short term. The IMF also did not appear satisfied with the involvement of third parties in monitoring the anti-theft campaign, said the sources.

For the global lender, as such interventions could diminish the role of power distribution company management and their boards.

The low recovery of bills and high line losses contribute annually to PKR 589 billion in the circular debt build-up - a sum that the government recovers either through further price increases or budget subsidies.

For this fiscal year, the government estimates PKR 263 billion in losses due to lower bill recovery by power distribution companies. Despite the anti-theft campaign, in seven months, there has already been an increase of PKR 200 billion under this head.

Energy ministry officials claimed before the IMF that recoveries have increased to 92 per cent of the billed amount, marginally better than last year. They further

said recoveries would improve once billing increased during the summer period.

The energy ministry officials said the finance ministry would release over PKR 250 billion in subsidies this month to keep the circular debt flow at the agreed level for this fiscal year.

The IMF was informed that circular debt increased by PKR 378 billion during the first half, jumping to PKR 545 billion by end March. However, the government has agreed to keep the overall debt stock at PKR 2.310 trillion by settling the addition through the budget by June this year.

The Express Tribune reported that the government also faced IMF questions over a sharp monthly increase of PKR 7 per unit due to monthly fuel cost adjustment in electricity bills. The sharp increase highlighted mismanagement by the energy ministry, which failed to implement planned use of various fuels to keep prices low.

Sources said the IMF argued there was no justification for the PKR 7 per unit increase when the exchange rate was stable and global commodity prices did not change.

The energy ministry explained the government had to seek the price increase due to using expensive fuels during winter for electricity generation. High-speed diesel, furnace oil, and imported gas were used due to a faulty policy of allocating cheaper local gas to other sources.

Sources said the IMF has also sought a fresh timeline for ending agriculture tube-well subsidies in Balochistan. (ANI)

## Two Sessions fosters stronger Pak-China ties

05 March 2024, The Tribune

Pakistani experts have lauded the significance of the "Two Sessions" in fostering global economic stability in the context of jointly building the Belt and Road Initiative, particularly China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) initiatives.

They believe that the foreign policies and incentives for foreigners in China during these sessions are pivotal in enhancing economic cooperation and promoting sustainable development in the region.

Muhammad Asghar, a correspondent for the Associated Press of Pakistan in China, said that the strategic discussions held during the Two Sessions serve as a platform for fostering stronger ties between Pakistan and China.

"I'm attending different meetings and briefings during the six-day Two Sessions. I will focus on jointly building the Belt and Road Initiative President Xi Jinping launched a decade ago to build a community with a shared future," he stated.

"I am also looking forward to attending Foreign Minister Wang Yi media interaction and also the



opening and closing ceremonies of Two Sessions in the People's Great Hall," he added.

Shahid Afraz Khan, a foreign expert in Beijing, said that the strategic discussions and initiatives undertaken during these sessions serve as a testament to the strong partnership between China and the world and their commitment to sustainable economic development.

"Jointly building the BRI has become the biggest mega development project of the 21st century which is successfully negating the spillover repercussions of geopolitics, protectionism, unilateralism, war-theatre mentality, isolation, marginalisation and gearing the developing countries and Global South towards greater socio-economic integration," Pakistani expert Dr Mehmoodul Hassan Khan told CEN.

### **Ship from China to Pakistan stopped at Mumbai port; Indian agencies suspect nuclear link**

02 March 2024, Hindustan Times

Indian security agencies stopped a Karachi-bound ship from China at Mumbai's Nhava Sheva port suspecting a dual-use consignment that could aid Pakistan's nuclear and ballistic missile programme, officials said on Saturday, reported PTI.

Customs officials, acting on intelligence input, intercepted the Malta-flagged merchant ship, CMA CGM Attila, en route to Karachi on January 23. The consignment, featuring a Computer Numerical Control (CNC) machine manufactured by an Italian company, was thoroughly inspected during the operation.

What are CNC machines?

Computer Numerical Control (CNC) machine is a manufacturing device where computer software guides the movement of factory tools and machinery. This technology controls various complex machinery like grinders, lathes, mills, and CNC routers.

CNC machines ensure a level of efficiency, consistency, and accuracy that is unattainable through manual operation.

Concerns about CNC machines in nuclear programmes

Since 1996, CNC machines have been covered by the Wassenaar Arrangement, an international arms control regime aiming to prevent the spread of equipment with both civilian and military applications.

India, one of the 42 member countries, participates in the exchange of information regarding transfers of conventional weapons and dual-use goods and technologies.

The CNC machine was employed by North Korea in its nuclear programme.

A team from the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) examined the consignment

and verified its potential use in the neighbouring country's nuclear programme.

Officials said that the seizure aligns with efforts to prevent potential proliferation by Pakistan and China. The consignment was coming from China

The consignment, originating from China, detailed the consigner as "Shanghai JXE Global Logistics Co Ltd" and the consignee as "Pakistan Wings Pvt Ltd" in Sialkot, according to documents such as bills of loading. However, a more in-depth probe by security agencies revealed that the 22,180-kilogram consignment was shipped by Taiyuan Mining Import and Export Co Ltd, intended for Cosmos Engineering in Pakistan.

Cosmos Engineering is already on watchlist

Cosmos Engineering, a Pakistani defence supplier, has been under scrutiny since March 12, 2022, when Indian authorities intercepted a shipment of Italian-made thermoelectric instruments at the Nhava Sheva port.

Officials expressed concerns about Pakistan potentially using China as a conduit to obtain restricted items from Europe and the US, disguising identities to avoid detection. Worries have heightened over Chinese support for Pakistan's nuclear and missile programmes, highlighted by a 2020 case involving the concealment of an industrial autoclave, crucial for missile production, as industrial equipment on a Chinese vessel bound for Pakistan.

The ongoing investigation seeks to determine if the suspected Pakistani entities receiving these dual-use items are supplying them to the Defence Science and Technology Organisation (DESTO), responsible for much of Pakistan's defence research and development.

## **February**

### **Pakistan 'secures' \$2 billion loan rollover from China**

28 February 2024, The News

Rollover to support SBP depleting foreign reserves stand at \$8 billion

ISLAMABAD: In a major boost to the country's foreign exchange reserves, China has rolled over \$2 billion to Pakistan, Ministry of Finance sources told Geo News on Wednesday.

Pakistan has borrowed \$2 billion from China on a 7.1% interest rate, the sources said, adding that the loan was maturing in the week of March.

The sources said Pakistan paid Rs26.6 billion in the last fiscal year to China, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on the \$9 billion deposits that these three nations placed with the State Bank of Pakistan.

The rollover will support the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) depleting foreign reserves which stand at \$8 billion.

Last month, caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar wrote a letter to his Chinese counterpart Li Qiang, seeking the rollover of a \$2 billion loan.

In his letter to China's premier, the interim prime minister has requested that Beijing roll over Pakistan's \$2 billion loan for a year, sources had told Geo News.

PM Kakar, in his letter to the Chinese premier, also thanked the Chinese government for financial support, the finance ministry sources said.

The sources, citing the letter, stated: "China gave a loan to the government of Pakistan in a difficult economic situation."

A total of \$4 billion worth of funds in loans, as per the sources, has been kept as a safe deposit, which has reduced Pakistan's external payments burden.

Last year in May, Beijing came to Pakistan's rescue during its struggle to secure the critical pending loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as the Chinese government rolled over more than \$2 billion in debt.

The friendly neighbour had committed to help Islamabad meet two crucial debt repayments in June worth \$2.3 billion by providing fresh funds immediately after Pakistan was to make the payments.

"The refinancing of the commercial loans worth \$1.3 billion and a Chinese government loan of \$1 billion would help Pakistan avert immediate default," a senior government official told The News in May 2023.

Earlier last year, China had already rolled over some loans to Pakistan and Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang also reiterated Beijing's financial support for the country on a visit to Pakistan back in May last year.

### **Pakistan exports to South China increase by 16pc in 2023**

23 February 2024, The Nation

Pakistan's exports to South China have witnessed a significant surge of 16 percent during the year 2023. This remarkable achievement comes as a result of the strengthened trade ties between the two countries and Pakistan's ongoing efforts to diversify its export market, said Muhammad Irfan, Trade and Investment Counsellor Pakistan's Consulate in Guangzhou, China.

According to the latest data released by the General Administration of Customs of China (GACC), the total value of exports from Pakistan to South China reached a record high of \$973.21 million from January-December of 2023, compared to \$836.645

million in the previous year. This upward trajectory is a testament to the resilience and competitiveness of Pakistan's export sector.

Guangdong province imported \$379.011 million worth of goods from Pakistan in 2023, while Fujian province imported \$367.30 million. On the other hand, imports in the previous year were 248.532 million, up by 48 percent, followed by the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region's 86.790 million and \$80.164 million, up by 8 percent, in 2022. In 2023, Hainan province imported goods worth \$85.883 million, with a 56 percent increase, and in 2022, its imports were \$24.371 million, increased by 123 percent to \$54.227 million, he told China Economic Net (CEN).

He further said that the surge in exports to South China can be attributed to various factors, including the preferential trade agreement between Pakistan and China, known as the China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement (CPFTA).

This agreement has eliminated or significantly reduced tariffs on a wide range of goods, making Pakistani products more affordable and competitive in the Chinese market.

Due to the significant participation of Chinese participants in two major events held in Pakistan, the Food and Agriculture Exhibition and TEXPO 2023, Pakistan's exports to South China surged by 69 percent in the second half of 2023. The key sectors contributing to Pakistan's export growth in South China include textiles, leather products, seafood, and agricultural commodities. Sesame seed, rice textiles, and garments, in particular, have witnessed a significant surge in demand, as Pakistani textile manufacturers have managed to produce high-quality products at competitive prices Irfan mentioned.

He further said that the Pakistani government has also played a vital role in promoting exports to South China by providing various incentives and support to exporters. These include subsidised loans, export financing schemes, and trade exhibitions to showcase Pakistani products in the Chinese market. Furthermore, the geographical proximity of South China to Pakistan has facilitated the smooth flow of goods, reducing transportation costs and time.

This advantage has allowed Pakistani exporters to deliver their products more efficiently and gain a competitive edge over other countries. It is to be noted that the total exports of Pakistan to China from 2021-2023 increased by 1.4 percent on year-on-year basics.

Irfan added that the increase in exports to South China is beneficial for Pakistan's economy and helps in bridging the trade imbalance between the two countries. Historically, Pakistan has been heavily reliant on imports from China, and the export surge

has helped to reduce this dependency and create a more balanced trade relationship.

### **China Endorses 'Successful' Pakistan Polls With Big Thumbs Up to Army Amid Rigging Claims**

21 February 2024, News18

In what appears to be a clear endorsement of the February 8 polls, China has congratulated Pakistan on its 'successful elections,' even as controversy brews over alleged rigging. Speaking at a regular press conference on Monday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning commended Pakistan's handling of the polls.

"As a close and friendly neighbour, China fully respects the choice of the Pakistani people and sincerely hopes that relevant parties of Pakistan will work together to uphold political solidarity and social stability after the elections and jointly open up a brighter future for the development of the country," Ning said in response to a question posed by China News Service on Pakistan elections.

"China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic cooperative partners. China hopes to work with Pakistan to build on the traditional friendship, deepen practical cooperation in various areas, and accelerate the building of an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era for the benefit of the peoples of the two countries," the Chinese spokesperson added.

Answering a question about the absence of a decisive mandate, Ning said, "We noted that general elections in Pakistan are held in a generally steady and smooth manner and we fully respect the choice of the Pakistani people. We hope and believe that relevant parties of Pakistan will uphold solidarity, maintain stability and properly handle relevant issues to jointly open up a brighter future for the development of the country."

The statement is viewed as support for Pakistan's military establishment, countering US criticism of election integrity. "China's statement is out of turn to calm down the controversy going on due to election rigging," said top Pakistan govt sources. They told CNN-News18 that this endorsement challenges voices like Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Imran Khan, indicating China's preference for stability over democratic processes.

It also signals the approval of Army Chief Gen Asim Munir's leadership. While aimed at calming tensions in the debt-ridden country, China's intervention underlines its strategic interests in its "all-weather" partner. The move also highlights tensions between China and the US regarding democratic norms and regional influence, potentially impacting future diplomatic relations between the countries.

### **Pak-China friendship strengthening with passage of time: SCCI**

15 February 2024, Pakistan Today

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fuad Ishaq said there is no doubt that Pak-China friendship is unmatched which is further strengthening with the passage of time and its example, is that events are arranging on eve of new Chinese year across the Pakistan and everyone is participating in happiness of Chinese brother and sisters.

Fuad Ishaq was speaking at an event at China Window Peshawar and inauguration of a culture exhibition, arranged by students of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University Peshawar (SBBWUP), held in connection with China New Year here on Thursday.

The SCCI chief praised artwork and paintings of the students displayed during the exhibition and said citizens of Peshawar will get aware about Chinese culture through this event.

He said Pakistan and China are tied with strong trade, cultural and tourism relationships, and its example wasn't found anywhere in the world.

China and its people have always extended support to Pakistan in their difficult situation, he added.

Fuad Ishaq noted Pakistan and China relationship has touched new heights owing to unflinching leadership of the two countries and vigorous efforts initiated by government from both sides, particularly CPEC had further strengthened bilateral trade and economic cooperation between the two countries.

The chamber president opined that CPEC is a game changer, which would bring economic prosperity and development in the whole region and stressed the need for early completion of projects under CPEC.

He said technology transformation is highly crucial in CPEC.

The SCCI chief hoped both countries would take every possible measure to further improve bilateral trade and economic relations.

Fuad Ishaq appreciated the China Window for arranging events on eve of China New Year and said the Chinese Culture Centre in Peshawar will prove a milestone in strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries.

Later, the SCCI chief visited the culture exhibition and lauded artwork and paintings of students of SBBWU Peshawar.

On the occasion, Fuad Ishaq also distributed certificates among students of the SBBWU Peshawar.

### **Nepal's Office of Tibet Celebrates Losar**

14 February 2024, CTA

The Office of Tibet, Nepal held a Losar celebration on the third day of the first month of Tibetan lunar

calendar that falls on 12 February 2024 with the presence of chief guest Kyabje Chusang Rinpoche, special guest Representative Tsepri Lopan Tulku Ngawang Chokdup, Tibetan MPs and former Tibetan MPs, Secretary of the Office of Tibet, President of the Local Tibetan Assembly, Tibetan Settlement Officers, President of the Local Tibetan Freedom Movement and representatives of NGOs.

Also in attendance were abbots of monasteries, diplomats from Australia, USA, and others including monastics and laity. The celebration was observed without any restrictions by the government of Nepal. It concluded with the presentation of cultural performances at Srongsen Bhrikuti Boarding High School by the Nepal Tibetan Lhamo Association.

### **China remains Pakistan's top trade partner amid falling exports to US and EU**

13 February 2024, The News

KARACHI: Pakistan's exports to high-priced European and North American markets fell in the first half of the 2023/24 fiscal year, while China remained its top trading partner, data from the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) showed on Monday.

Exports to the United States, traditionally one of Pakistan's biggest markets, did not rank among the top 25 destinations in the six months to December, according to the TDAP review of external trade.

According to review, Chinese market remained the biggest market for the Pakistani, which imported 66 percent higher goods from Pakistan in July-December of this fiscal.

On the other hand, exports to United Kingdom (UK) posted growth of six percent in the first six months. The exports to most of the members of European Union (EU) countries showed negative growth in the period.

The review showed that exports to Germany fell by fourteen percent and exports to Netherlands sharply declined by 14.5 percent in the months under review. Exports to Italy posted negative growth of 5.3 percent and it fell by 1.2 percent to Spain.

Exports to France and Belgium posted negative growth of 7 and 9.5 percent respectively whereas exports to Denmark rose by nine percent during the period under review.

Country's exports to Middle East market showed mixed performance as the exports to Saudi Arabia recorded substantial growth of 27 percent, however fell by over five percent to United Arab Emirates.

In South Asian region, country's exports to Afghanistan fell by over five percent and down by over three percent to Bangladesh. Exports to Sri Lanka posted growth of two percent.

In Far East market, exports to Japan fell by over ten percent and were up by fifty six percent to Philippines. Exports to Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam showed growth of 190, 100 and 79 percent respectively.

In African market, exports to Tanzania were up by 47 percent and fell by 4.5 percent to Kenya in the first half of this financial year.

During the first half of this financial year, the total exports of the country recorded 5.17 percent growth to \$ 14.981 billion compared to \$14.244 billion in the corresponding period of last fiscal.

The major commodities exported included textile & leather, down by six percent, agro & food up by 39 percent, minerals & petroleum up by 9.5 percent, metals, gems & other precious metals up by 33 percent and chemical, fertilizer & pharma down by 18.8 percent in the first half of this financial year.

## **January**

### **Cash-strapped Pakistan seeks \$2 billion loan from China**

27 January 2024, The Economic Times

Cash-strapped Pakistan has sought financial assistance of USD 2 billion from its close ally China for a year, according to a media report on Saturday. Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar, in a letter, has requested his Chinese Premier Li Qiang to roll over the debt as soon as the deposit time for the loan from China is completed on March 23.

In his letter, Kakar expressed gratitude to China for its financial assistance to Pakistan during its economic crisis as the cash-strapped country has secured a safe deposit of a total of USD 4 billion in loans from China, reducing the country's mounting pressure on external debt payments and stabilising its foreign exchange reserves, The Express Tribune newspaper reported.

Earlier this month, the UAE rolled over Pakistan's maturing loan of USD 2 billion.

Apart from the UAE, Saudi Arabia has deposited USD 5 billion with the State Bank of Pakistan.

Following the loan rollover by the UAE, the interim government requested the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to dispatch a new mission this month for talks for the last loan tranche of USD 1.2 billion.

The IMF's next mission is critical for not only securing the last loan tranche but also for beginning negotiations for a new long-term programme.

While speaking to a private TV news channel recently, former finance minister Ishaq Dar said in case his party - the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz

(PML-N) - won the elections and formed the government, the decision about the new IMF programme would be made at the earliest.

Dar, the four-time finance minister of the country, added that in case his party decided not to enter the IMF programme, it would immediately start implementing the belt-tightening measures.

The IMF has made new adjustments in its fresh staff-level report about the available financing to Pakistan. The Washington-based lender has increased the projection of budget support loans to USD 3 billion but cut the project financing to USD 3.7 billion for this fiscal year.

The overall external financing requirements have been reduced to a little under USD 25 billion with minor downward adjustments in the current account deficit projections, the report said.

The report suggested the global lender had made a minor adjustment of USD 575 million in its current account deficit projection in comparison with July's estimates.

The IMF has now projected the deficit at USD 5.7 billion or 1.6 per cent of the GDP - an estimate that appeared on the higher end.

Pakistan is in economic ruin and awaiting a monumental financial default without long overdue structural reforms sought by global creditors such as the IMF and the World Bank, along with bilateral partners like China and the UAE.

The primary reason behind Pakistan's economic woes is its staggering debt levels, which, as of 2023, amount to nearly USD 125 billion owed to external creditors, with approximately one-third to China.

### **China stands ready to work with Pakistan to upgrade Cpec project: Report**

25 January 2024, Times of India

ISLAMABAD/BEIJING: China has said that it stands ready to work with Pakistan to upgrade the multi-billion dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (Cpec) project to deepen the political mutual trust between the two "all-weather" allies, a media report said on Thursday. Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar said after having achieved the first phase of the Cpec, Pakistan is benefiting from its early harvest projects while remaining engaged with China to execute the next phase.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin while answering a question during a briefing on Wednesday said, "China stands ready to work with Pakistan to deliver on the important common understandings between the leaders of the two countries, deepen political mutual trust, and expand practical cooperation."

China has said it is ready to work with Pakistan to

upgrade the Cpec and accelerate the building of an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era, the Dawn newspaper reported. The CPEC, which connects Gwadar Port in Pakistan's Balochistan with China's Xinjiang province, is opposed by India as it is being laid through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

About the recent visit of Chinese vice foreign minister Sun Weidong to Pakistan, Wang said, he called on President Arif Alvi, Prime Minister Kakar, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Chief of the Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir and foreign minister Jalil Abbas Jilani to have an in-depth exchange of views on bilateral relations and issues of mutual interest.

The spokesperson added that the Chinese minister also co-chaired the fourth meeting of the CPEC Joint Working Group on International Cooperation and Coordination with foreign secretary Syrus Sajjad Qazi.

"China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic cooperative partners," he said. China appreciates Pakistan's firm commitment to the One-China principle and supports Pakistan in defending its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, stability, development and prosperity.

In Islamabad, Prime Minister Kakar said that after having achieved the first phase of CPEC, Pakistan is benefiting from its early harvest projects while remaining engaged with China to execute the next phase.

"We have already achieved the CPEC's first phase and we are benefiting from its early harvest projects. We are entering the second phase. We do need more deliberations when it comes to the second phase," he said in an interview recorded by CGTN during his recent visit to Davos to attend the World Economic Forum.

The Chinese state-run news outlet ran the interview on Wednesday. Prime Minister Kakar said the CPEC's second phase required road and air connectivity around industrialisation projects.

"Both sides are engaged and we have developed a lot of connectivity - road, air and the rest of the connectivity corridor. We are benefiting from the ecosystem of doing trade with one another," he said. Asked how he saw the Chinese economy, the prime minister said: "I am always sanguine about it. There are 1.5 billion consumers and 1.5 billion producers... How can you divorce 1.5 billion people from 8 billion people? It has to remain connected."

### **China assures Pakistan of closer economic ties, support on efforts to defend 'territorial integrity'**

23 January 2024, South China Morning Post

China seeks stronger economic ties with Pakistan under the Belt and Road Initiative, and supports its



efforts to defend “territorial integrity”, a senior Chinese diplomat has said.

Foreign vice-minister Sun Weidong made the pledge during a visit to Pakistan days after it engaged in deadly tit-for-tat air strikes along the border with Iran.

Sun arrived in Islamabad on Saturday to attend a working group meeting on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a centrepiece of Beijing’s belt and road cooperation with the neighbouring country.

His three-day trip also included a series of talks with top Pakistani leaders and military chiefs, including President Arif Alvi, caretaker prime minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar and caretaker foreign minister Jalil Abbas Jilani. Pakistan is scheduled to hold general elections early next month.

Meeting Alvi on Monday, Sun said Beijing supported Islamabad in its defence of “sovereignty, independence, and territory integrity”, in what was a clear reference to the cross-border military assaults last week.

Later the same day, Sun told army chief General Syed Asim Munir that he acknowledged Pakistan’s efforts to promote regional peace and stability. He also travelled to Rawalpindi for talks with General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, chairman of Pakistan’s joint chiefs of staff committee.

The Pakistani army said the talks covered bilateral security, defence cooperation, and the “regional and international security environment”.

Pakistan on Thursday carried out missile strikes in Iran’s border areas, two days after Tehran staged its own cross-border air raid. Both sides said they were targeting separatist militant groups. The deadly attacks sparked fears of a wider spillover of the conflict in the Middle East and sparked a diplomatic stand-off between the neighbours.

But tensions have since eased, with full diplomatic ties resuming on Monday. Tehran also said Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian would visit Pakistan next week at Islamabad’s invitation.

Ma Zhaoxu, another Chinese foreign vice-minister, held a phone call with Iranian deputy foreign minister Ali Bagheri Kani on Sunday. They exchanged “views on bilateral relations, and regional and international issues of mutual interest and concern”, a statement from Beijing said, but did not reveal details.

Asked whether Beijing was playing mediator – given Ma’s phone call and Sun’s Pakistan trip – Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin on Monday said China maintained “close connections” with both countries, and was willing to continue to play a “positive and constructive role in improving the relationship” between them.

As China’s “iron brother”, a term indicative of their “all-weather strategic partnership”, Pakistan shares a close military connection with its more powerful neighbour and is the largest buyer of Chinese weapons.

During talks with Alvi, Sun also voiced support for Pakistan in promoting “stability, development and prosperity”, while pledging to create an “upgraded version” of the CPEC, according to the Chinese ministry.

The more than US\$50 billion flagship corridor is part of Beijing’s efforts to connect its landlocked western Xinjiang region to the Arabian Sea through Pakistan’s Gwadar port in Balochistan province – targeted by Iran in its January 16 raid.

The most high-profile belt and road plans in Pakistan revolve around the CPEC, which involves dozens of infrastructure projects, including Gwadar.

On Sunday, Sun co-chaired the fourth round of a high-profile meeting to review the CPEC, alongside the foreign secretary of Pakistan, Mohammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi. Previous meetings of the CPEC Joint Working Group on International Cooperation and Coordination were held in 2019, 2020 and 2022.

Sun and Qazi pledged to focus on information technology, science and technology, and agriculture for future development of the CPEC, Pakistan’s foreign ministry said.

The two countries also “rejected the disinformation campaigns and distorted reporting” on the CPEC, and pledged to “counter fallacious narratives and misinformation”.

Gwadar port is one of many CPEC projects in Pakistan’s largest but poorest region of Balochistan, bordering Afghanistan and Iran. The ethnic minority Baloch there have protested against China’s infrastructure plans and carried out deadly attacks against Chinese projects and personnel.

With the CPEC project at the centre of Islamabad’s conflict with Baloch separatists, Beijing has become increasingly worried about the security situation there.

Last year, China reportedly cited security concerns in turning down Pakistan’s call to invest in new CPEC projects related to energy, climate change, electricity transmission lines and tourism.

Calling on caretaker foreign minister Jilani in Islamabad on Monday, Sun emphasised Pakistan’s role as an “iron brother and reliable friend”, and an important part of China’s foreign policy.

Jilani emphasised the significance of the CPEC for Pakistan and thanked China for its support, while pledging that Pakistan would continue to strive to realise the corridor’s full potential for shared benefits.

## **China on mediation mission to 'bridge' differences between Pakistan and Iran**

22 January 2024, The Hindu

China maintains close communication with Iran and Pakistan, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said

China on January 22 said it is maintaining close contacts with Pakistan and Iran to "bridge their differences" after the two nations conducted airstrikes against each other last week.

The Foreign Ministry's statement came amidst the reported visit of Foreign Minister Sun Weidong to Pakistan on a mediation mission.

China on Thursday last offered to play a "constructive role" to ease tension between Islamabad and Tehran after Pakistan conducted "precision military strikes" against what it called "terrorist hideouts" in Iran's Sistan-Balochistan province that killed 9 people in the wee hours on Thursday. The attack was seen as retaliation to Iranian missile and drone attacks on Tuesday last which targeted two bases of the Sunni Baloch militant group Jaish al-Adl in Pakistan's unruly Balochistan province.

The attacks have put China in a piquant situation as Pakistan is an all-weather ally, while Iran is warming up to Beijing in recent years enabling China to expand its influence in the West Asia region. China also imports a considerable amount of oil from Iran.

China maintains close communication with Iran and Pakistan, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told a media briefing on Monday when asked by a Pakistani journalist about Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxu's phone call with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani on Sunday and the current visit of another Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong to Pakistan.

Mr. Sun was a former Ambassador to Pakistan and India.

Mr. Wang said Iran and Pakistan are friendly neighbours, and both are good friends of China.

"China is committed to upholding regional and international peace and stability, and supports Iran and Pakistan in continuing to bridge differences through dialogue and consultation," Mr. Wang said.

The spokesperson said China would like to continue to play a positive and constructive role in improving the relations between Iran and Pakistan based on the needs of the two countries.

## **Remaining works of peace process to be completed on consensus: PM Dahal**

21 January 2023, The Himalayan Times

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' has expressed the belief that the remaining works of the

peace process would be completed on the basis of consensus.

Addressing a special news conference organised at Tribhuvan International Airport upon returning home after attending the 19th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) today, he reiterated that the bill on Truth and Reconciliation Commission would be taken to its logical conclusion.

The PM stated that discussions are on with all sides and the remaining works of the peace process would be concluded through consensus immediately after the commencement of the upcoming session of the Federal Parliament.

"We have made preparations on the Truth and Reconciliation Bill after holding discussions with all. It has landed in the parliamentary committee after finalization from the sub-committee. It will be taken to the full house once the parliament session opens and concluded with priority," he said. Prime Minister Dahal said he is effortful to have the bill decided through consensus.

The Prime Minister said the government's works have been expedited and the ministers also have been directed to carry out works accordingly. "Ministers would be made to work providing them with target and we will take decisions accordingly if the responsibilities are not carried out in the right manner," he added.

According to the PM, although Nepal's bureaucracy is not weak in terms of efficiency and experience, there is some lacking when it comes to promptness, seriousness and courage to take initiation. He shared that he has been regularly holding discussions with the Chief Secretary, secretaries and the bureaucracy. Govt serious on recruitment of Nepali youths in Russian military force

Asked about the woes Nepali youths facing after their recruitment in the Russian Army, the PM said he was serious and sensitive to that issue.

"The government is very much serious and sensitive towards the reports that Nepali youths are recruited in the Russian force and mobilised in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. We don't have such policy on behalf of the government," PM Dahal added.

The PM stated that the government has no policy to allow Nepalis for their recruitment in the military force in any other countries except the past agreements made for India and England.

He also shared that a diplomatic note has been sent to Russia on this issue and the Foreign Minister has repeatedly talked about this agenda.

The PM added that Nepal's Foreign Minister held talks with Russian Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs at Kampala of Uganda during the 19th NAM Summit and was urged to send Nepali youths back home.

He said that talks were held regarding the youths killed in the war and the government has seriously taken the issue of compensation for them.

"Everyone should disseminate awareness among people. We should spread awareness stating that youth should not join the military service anywhere in name of seeking job against the State's policy, the spirit of the Constitution and against the spirit of our democratic national independence. We should further aware people saying this is not the way to leave the country by avoiding formal way. The government is serious. All should work on it (to stop)," the PM argued.

Likewise, the PM said that Nepal has taken Taiwan as an integral part of China since the beginning. "We are not in favour of policy of separation of Taiwan after accepting One-China Principle," PM Prachanda asserted.

Taiwan is China's part and Nepal is stuck to this policy since the beginning, according to the PM.

### **China's reopening border reflection of Pakistan's good economy, experts say**

15 January 2024, Pakistan Today

Looking back on the past year, one of the good things for Pakistan's economy was that China reopened its border, which is good not only for Pakistan's economy, but also for the global economy. This was stated by Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri, executive director of Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Pakistan and member of the Pakistan Climate Change Council said in an exclusive interview with China Economic Net (CEN).

"Take Pakistan as an example, as a close trade partner of China, Pakistan was able to increase its exports to China", he added.

In the 1st half of FY 2023-24 (July-December), Pakistan's exports to China surged by 66.4%, reaching US\$1.5458 billion, attesting to the tremendous potential of China as the second largest consumer market in the world.

"I'm quite optimistic about China's economy. The way it handles the risks in real estate has shown resilience. And the demand is there.

As the Chinese economy is taking up, Pakistan, as with many other countries that are economically interrelated with China, would be able to get the benefit of it", Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri told CEN.

In his opinion, technological advancement, innovation, and the booming service sector are driving China's economy and shaping its bright prospects.

"If we look at the electric vehicles, Chinese automakers have been able to supply more new energy vehicles than Tesla", he exemplified, adding that Pakistan can benefit from China's renewable energy experience, by setting up joint ventures for

example, to transition from a traditional economy to a climate-friendly and green economy.

"For long, it was seen that going green would have a negative impact on growth. That hypothesis is no longer valid. Now, countries, aware that the cost of protection is high, have to go green", he observed.

"But the cost of transition is high. So at the multilateral level, we should keep talking about climate justice and the historical responsibility of advanced economies", he suggested.

At the bilateral level, he said Pakistan needs to strengthen its technological and financial cooperation with China to benefit from China's experience in areas like climate-smart agriculture, digital technologies, big data and other smart practices.

"By harmonizing standards on both sides, crossing language barriers, facilitating government operations, promoting business-to-business context and people-to-people relationship, bilateral exchanges can be further promoted", he added.

Pak envoy visits China-Pakistan Economic, Cultural Exchange Center in Chengdu

14 January 2024, Associated Press of Pakistan

BEIJING, Jan 14 (APP): Pakistan Ambassador to China, Khalil Hashmi, visited the China-Pakistan Economic and Cultural Exchange Incubation Center in Chengdu, China.

The Incubation Center is a platform for economic, trade, and cultural exchanges between China and Pakistan, jointly created by the Consulate General of Pakistan in Chengdu and the Pakistan-Sichuan Chamber of Commerce.

During his visit, Hashmi paid special attention to the sale and market prospects of Pakistani goods exhibited in the centers, including carpets, clothes, and handicrafts.

"Pakistan's products are of excellent quality and have distinctive characteristics, making them highly favored by the local people," said Li Hongwu, Director of the Incubation Center and the Chairman of the Pakistan-Sichuan Chamber of Commerce, China Economic Net (CEN) reported.

"We are currently witnessing significant trading activities in agricultural and sideline products, which showcase the growing economic ties between our two countries. We have also received strong interest from several enterprises in the light industry and construction material sectors, who are keen on establishing partnerships with Pakistani counterparts."

Hashmi remarked, "I am particularly interested in the Chamber of Commerce's initiatives related to the establishment of industrial parks, cultural tourism, and the Lahore-Chengdu direct flight. These projects hold great potential for further enhancing our bilateral cooperation and connectivity."

Both parties also discussed cooperation to establish an e-commerce platform and organize exhibitions and sales events, which can further promote trade and cultural exchanges between the countries.

## China & Taiwan

### December

#### China's propaganda office taps Taiwanese god of cities as ally

25 December 2024, RFA. Huang Chun-mei

Cheng Huang, god of cities, is the latest deity to be co-opted in the cause of 'unification.'

The Chinese Communist Party's United Front Work Department is counting on a new ally in the fight to persuade Taiwan's 23 million people to give up their democratic way of life to be ruled by Beijing – Cheng Huang, the god of cities.

Officials in the southeastern province of Fujian, just across the Taiwan Strait from self-ruled Taiwan, invited hundreds of Taoists, temple representatives, scholars and experts to a lavish cultural exchange event last month, according to the provincial government's official website.

The event included seminars on Cheng Huang temples across Fujian as well as beliefs around the god in Taiwan, particularly in smaller towns on the island, the Nov. 14 report said.

Cheng Huang isn't the first supernatural being to be enlisted by the Chinese Communist Party in pursuit of its political goals, in this case, to control Taiwan, whether by soft power and propaganda or by military force if necessary.

China has already tried to co-opt the sea goddess Matsu, widely revered in Taiwan, as part of a United Front operation targeting millions of voters. And it has also encouraged the worship of the controversial Tibetan dharma protector Shugden, a move at loggerheads with the Tibetan Buddhist Gelugpa sect of the exiled spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama.

The United Front is a shadowy government agency in charge of seeking Chinese influence outside the country through individuals and often innocuous-sounding organizations.

The Chinese Communist Party embraces atheism and exercises tight controls over any form of religious practice among its citizens, requiring them to join government-backed governing bodies and to display

the Chinese flag, along with other demonstrations of loyalty to Beijing.

But apparently it isn't opposed to using religion to further its political objectives.

Religious cross-straits links

Cheng Huang emerged in Chinese folk belief as a spirit protector of city walls and moats, and later diversified into a more complex deity with his own following and underworld bureaucracy mirroring structures found in the land of the living.

"Cheng Huang culture is one of the important links connecting compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait," the report quoted Cheng Ming-hui of Taiwan's Wuji Sanching Temple as saying.

"I hope we can to hold more such activities in the future to further enhance the understanding and friendship between believers on both sides of the Taiwan Strait," Cheng said.

Taiwan has never been ruled by Beijing and is formally governed by the Republic of China government, formed after the 1911 fall of the Qing Dynasty under Sun Yat-sen, that later fled to Taipei after losing the civil war in 1949 to Mao Zedong's communists on the mainland.

While China insists on eventual "unification" with Taiwan, by armed invasion if necessary, the majority of Taiwan's 23 million people have no wish to give up their democratic way of life to submit to Chinese rule.

Ho Cheng-Hui, who heads Taiwanese civil defense organization the Kuma Academy, said China likes to cash in politically on religious devotion of any kind, citing its involvement in the cult of Matsu as an example.

"They are catering to the customs of the Taiwanese people, but with other motives behind it," Ho said.

"They call it religious exchange, but actually it's a United Front operation – scholars have defined it as the warfare of influence in recent years."

"Some Taiwanese take part in these so-called exchanges because of their religious feeling, or sense of the historical origins [of their beliefs]," he said.

"But that's not what's happening here."

He called on religious believers in Taiwan to become more aware of China's motives, "so as not to be used" by Beijing.

'Living chess pieces'

Wu Se-Chih, a researcher at Taiwan's Cross-Straits Policy Association, agreed.

"There is also a certain degree of United Front motivation," he said. "China will always try to leverage any United Front gains from the people of Taiwan."

Wu said the "deep connection between folk beliefs and local politics" in Taiwan also offers a channel for funds to flow into – and influence – the island's messily democratic political life.

The Chinese government has acquired a number of local temples in Taiwan in recent years, which he described as "living chess pieces" in Beijing's hands, to boost its influence in Taiwanese politics at a local level.

"These interest groups haven't been subjected to enough supervision," Wu said. "That's the main reason the Chinese Communist Party targets local temples."

And there are also personal risks involved for any religious believers traveling to China, according to Wu, who cited the recent detention of three elderly Taiwanese members of the I-Kuan Tao religion in Zhongshan city.

"Sometimes the red lines aren't very clear ... so people need to think twice and be vigilant, which is the best way to protect themselves," Wu said.

Chinese hackers attack Taiwan's legislature nearly a million times each month

24 December 2024, Tibetan Review

Apart from intimidating large-scale military drills and a propaganda onslaught, China has been attacking Taiwan with a relentless wave of cyber-attacks as well, averaging nearly a million hacking attempts each month on the latter's legislative Yuan alone.

Chinese hackers on average attack the Legislative Yuan (LY) 900,000 times a month, reported [taipetimes.com](https://www.taipetimes.com) Dec 23, citing the legislature's information technology (IT) department. The report said the Department's head Cheng Hui-pin made the remarks after Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Legislator Chung Chia-pin asked questions about the security and quality of the legislature's wifi service during the Judiciary and Organic Laws and Statutes Committee's review of the legislature's budget on Dec 12.

Chung has said the Legislative Yuan's network is connected to devices with sensitive information that could harm national security if the system is compromised, adding that the legislature's wifi is slow and experiences frequent outages.

He has said the department routinely reviews the legislature's cyberdefenses as required under the Cyber Security Management Act.

Following negotiations between the DPP and Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) members of the committee, the lawmakers have issued a resolution, demanding the IT department solve the issues without freezing its budget.

The IT department is directed to test all devices connected to the legislature's network for security and check audio equipment, lawmakers have said, adding that soundproofing should be installed in the chambers.

Taiwan reports 8 Chinese aircraft, six naval vessels around its territory

24 December 2024, ANI

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence (MND) on Tuesday reported the operation of eight Chinese military aircraft and five naval vessels. The aircraft and vessels were detected operating around Taiwan until 6 am (local time) on Tuesday.

Of the eight People's Liberation Army (PLA) aircraft, six of them crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's northern and southwestern Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ).

Sharing a post on X, MND wrote, "8 PLA aircraft and 5 PLAN vessels operating around Taiwan were detected up until 6 a.m. (UTC+8) today."

The post added, "6 of the aircraft crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's northern and southwestern ADIZ. We have monitored the situation and responded accordingly."

Meanwhile, following the White House announcement of arms sales and assistance to Taiwan, China's foreign ministry said that the "Taiwan issue" is the core of China's interests and the "first red line that cannot be crossed in China-US relations," Taiwan News reported.

Further, the ministry also accused the US of "playing with fire."

A spokesperson for China's Foreign Ministry on Sunday condemned the latest US arms package to Taiwan, stating that it "seriously violates the one-China principle and the three Sino-US joint communiques, especially the 'August 17' communique, seriously infringes on China's sovereignty and security interests, and seriously violates the US leaders' commitment not to support "Taiwan independence."

The spokesperson claimed that Washington's actions sent a "seriously wrong signal to the 'Taiwan independence' separatist forces."

Recently, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte also criticised China's stance towards Taiwan and said that "China is bullying Taiwan, and pursuing access to critical infrastructure in ways that could cripple societies."

He said, "We need to be clear-eyed about China's ambitions. China is substantially building up its forces, including its nuclear weapons - with no transparency and no limitations. From 200 warheads in 2020, China is expected to have more than 1,000 nuclear weapons by 2030. Its space-launch investments are skyrocketing. China is bullying Taiwan, and pursuing access to our critical infrastructure in ways that could cripple our societies." (ANI)



## Former Taiwan leader emphasises shared historical roots of island and mainland Chinese

25 December 2024, SCMP, Lawrence Chung

On his fifth student exchange programme, Ma Ying-jeou accuses ruling DPP of being behind unprecedented crisis in culture

Former Taiwanese leader Ma Ying-jeou has vowed to protect the island's deep-rooted cultural and historical ties with mainland China while accusing the ruling Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) of having a "misguided political agenda" in attempting to sever these links.

"In the past several decades, Taiwan has played a vital role in preserving and promoting Chinese culture. But today, Chinese culture in Taiwan faces an unprecedented crisis," Ma said at a seminar in Chengdu, Sichuan province, on Monday. "The DPP's political manipulations have steered Taiwan in the wrong direction of de-sinicisation."

The seminar, held at Chengdu's renowned Du Fu Thatched Cottage in the southwestern province, was co-hosted by the Ma Ying-jeou Foundation, the mainland's Taiwan Affairs Office's (TAO) Centre for Cross-Strait Research and Sichuan University.

It brought together high-ranking mainland officials, including TAO director Song Tao, academics and participants from both sides of the Taiwan Strait to discuss preserving Chinese cultural heritage.

In his speech, Ma highlighted the linguistic, cultural and historical commonalities shared across the strait, emphasising that people on both sides were descendants of Emperor Yan and the Yellow Emperor.

"Chinese civilisation is the world's only ancient culture to have endured 5,000 years without interruption," he said. "This is a testament to the combined efforts across the strait that have ensured Chinese culture not only survives but continues to thrive."

Ma highlighted the core values of Chinese culture, including reverence for history, gratitude and a deep sense of heritage. These traditions, he argued, had been the cornerstone of Chinese resilience over millennia.

"Most Taiwanese people maintain a strong sense of identity with Chinese culture and the Chinese nation," Ma asserted. "Any attempts by the DPP to promote de-sinicisation are bound to fail because Chinese culture is deeply rooted in the bloodline of its people."

He called on his generation to "take responsibility for correcting these missteps" and pledged to mobilise all efforts to "preserve this shared heritage despite today's unprecedented challenges".

Song echoed Ma's sentiments, describing Chinese culture as the "common root and soul" of

compatriots on both sides of the strait. He urged adherence to the "1992 consensus", opposition to separatism and resistance against foreign interference. The consensus, a point of contention spearheaded by the DPP, refers to an agreement that both sides recognise one China but with differing interpretations of its meaning.

Ma is leading students on a nine-day visit to mainland China to promote cross-strait cultural exchanges. They started in Harbin, Heilongjiang province, on December 18, and are set to end the trip in Sichuan before returning to Taiwan on Thursday.

It marks his fifth student exchange programme involving three groups from Taiwan and two from the mainland in the past two years.

Ma, who has positioned himself as a staunch defender of the island's shared heritage with the mainland, has long accused the DPP government of undermining centuries-old cultural ties for political gain.

Before leaving for Harbin on December 18, he emphasised that as a former leader, he is responsible for fostering exchanges and must "build a bridge of peace, transcend political hostilities and reflect the public's desire for cross-strait engagement".

However, Ma's efforts have drawn sharp criticism from Taiwan's pro-independence camp, which accuses him of aligning with Beijing's agenda and undermining Taiwan's sovereignty.

DPP lawmakers and politicians have said that by promoting these exchanges, Ma is playing into Beijing's hands and diminishing Taiwan's standing as a self-governed democracy.

Cross-strait relations have grown increasingly tense since the DPP's Tsai Ing-wen assumed the presidency in 2016 and rejected the one-China principle. Her successor, William Lai Ching-te, who took office in May, has further strained ties with Beijing by declaring that Taiwan and the mainland "are not subordinate to each other".

While Beijing views Taiwan as part of its territory and has not ruled out using force to achieve unification, most countries, including the United States, do not formally recognise Taiwan as an independent state. However, Washington opposes military aggression and supports Taiwan's self-defence through arms sales.

## Reunification is inevitable: TAO

25 December 2024, Taipei Times, Chen Yu-fu and Hollie Younger

The reunification of China and Taiwan is "non-negotiable," China's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) said today in response to an article by a Chinese academic suggesting that China would not set a

timetable for the annexation of Taiwan in the next four years.

China's focus for the next four years would instead be revitalizing the economy, and not deciding a time to invade Taiwan, the head of Beijing's Tsinghua University Department of International Relations Yan Xuetong (閻學通) wrote in an article for Foreign Affairs magazine on Friday last week.

The TAO today said it is the personal opinion of an academic.

Since 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), China's government and the Chinese people have committed to one day "resolve the Taiwan question" and "realize China's complete reunification as a historic mission and unshakeable commitment," it said.

The reunification of the motherland is non-negotiable for the great revival of the Chinese race, TAO spokesman Chen Binhua (陳斌華) said in a news release.

In Yan's article "Why China isn't scared of Trump," Yan said that US president-elect Donald Trump would take more extreme policies to limit China's development in his second presidential term, further destabilizing US-China relations.

However, China's leaders learned valuable lessons from Trump's first term in office and "do not look at Trump with fear," he wrote.

"As Trump courts an escalation in the trade war, his administration will likely ramp up military pressure on Beijing," especially in relation to the South China Sea, as Taiwanese independence remains "a source of friction between Beijing and Washington, but China and the United States are unlikely to go to war over it," he said, as Trump "will not want to get entangled in the matter of Taiwan."

China and the US would instead focus on rebuilding their economies and domestic reforms, he added.

### Experts sound alarm over low awareness of China threat among Taiwan's youth

21 December 2024, Focus Taiwan

A survey showing that less than 40 percent of young Taiwanese support regulating influencers in Taiwan linked to pro-China unification efforts has sparked concern among experts that the younger generation lacks vigilance in the face of threats from across the Taiwan Strait.

At a seminar in Taipei on Friday, the Asia-Pacific Elite Interchange Association (APEIA) released the results of a survey examining public views on China's United Front tactics targeting Taiwan and other recent cross-strait issues.



Experts in cross-strait relations, including Asia-Pacific Elite Interchange Association Secretary-General Arthur Wang (first right) and The Prospect Foundation Vice President Raymond Sung (third left), discuss the influence of China's United Front efforts at a seminar in Taipei Friday. CNA photo Dec. 21, 2024

The findings showed that 56.3 percent of all respondents agreed that laws should be amended to regulate Taiwanese influencers involved in China's United Front efforts. Meanwhile, 25.7 percent disagreed and 18 percent had no opinion.

Among respondents aged 20 to 24, only 37.9 percent agreed, significantly less than the 49.1-70.6 percent observed across other age groups.

The survey was carried out against the backdrop of China allegedly recruiting Taiwanese influencers to help carry out its United Front work. The revelations were highlighted by YouTuber Pa Chiung (八炯) in a documentary.

In the video, Pa Chiung interviewed Taiwanese rapper Chen Po-yuan (陳伯源), who described how he had worked with government agencies in China to promote his music before realizing he was being used to support a pro-unification agenda.

The United Front is a strategy used by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to influence and co-opt individuals or organizations to advance its political and strategic goals, including pushing for unification with Taiwan.

Arthur Wang (王智盛), secretary-general of the APEIA and an expert on cross-strait relations, described the comparatively low awareness of Chinese United Front efforts among young Taiwanese as a "warning signal."

"This suggests that to some extent... our young people have indeed lost their vigilance," Wang said, attributing the results to the influence of Chinese social media platforms and the prevailing perception that cross-strait exchanges are harmless.

He urged society to address the relatively low vigilance of Taiwanese young people in recognizing China's United Front efforts, particularly among

those with prolonged exposure to Chinese social media.

Following the same vein, Raymond Sung (宋承恩), vice president of the Prospect Foundation, said that the issue with influencers lies in the fact that most of their content focuses on topics such as fashion and makeup, which seem harmless and lifestyle-oriented. "However, on certain political issues, they (influencers) align with the narratives that China wants to promote," Sung said, adding that it might influence how Taiwanese youth perceive China.

The survey, commissioned by the APEIA, was conducted by DADI Opinion Research from Dec. 17 to 18 through telephone interviews with adults aged 20 and above in Taiwan.

According to the APEIA, 1,001 valid samples were collected, with a confidence level of 95 percent and a margin of error of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points.

### VOA Mandarin: China faces operational challenges if it were to invade Taiwan, US says

19 December 2024, VOA, Tina Chung

The U.S. Defense Department's annual report on China's military power, released this week, says the PLA is accelerating modernization, but it still faces several operational challenges in executing a rapid and decisive invasion of Taiwan.

[Click here for the full story in Mandarin.](#)

### Taiwan-Shanghai forum opens after military tensions

17 December 2024, RFA, Alan Lu

The forum is an avenue for contacts when top-level communications are frozen though some Taiwanese are skeptical.



Shanghai Vice Mayor Hua Yuan and Taipei Mayor Chiang Wan-an pose for a photo at the annual city forum in Taipei, Dec. 17, 2024. (Ann Wang/Reuters)

An annual forum between the cities of Shanghai and Taipei that is meant to promote dialogue across the Taiwan Strait has opened about six months late after

tensions including unprecedented Chinese sabre-rattling raised doubts that it could be organized this year.

The Shanghai-Taipei City Forum opened in the self-ruled island's capital on Monday with a visit by Hua Yuan, the deputy mayor of China's largest city, presided over by Taipei's mayor, Chiang Wan-an.

Chiang, in his opening remarks, acknowledged the recent tensions between Beijing and the island it regards as its territory and has vowed to take over by force if necessary.

Just last week, China's military deployed what one senior Taiwan official called a "staggering" array of ships and aircraft in the seas and skies around the island in a show of force that analysts said could be aimed at setting red lines for the incoming administration in the United States, Taiwan's main ally.

"I always say that the more tense and difficult the moment, the more we need to communicate," Chiang told the visiting Chinese delegates at the forum.

Chiang called for talks.

"More dialogue and less confrontation; more olive branches of peace and less sour grapes of conflict. More lights from fishing boats to adorn the sunset; less of the howls of ships and aircraft," said Chiang.

Chiang, a member of Taiwan's main opposition party, the Kuomintang, which traditionally advocates for closer cross-strait ties while rejecting accusations it is pro-Beijing, is widely seen as a possible presidential candidate.

The forum is an annual platform for dialogue and cooperation between the two cities. Established in 2010, it serves as a semi-official channel for communication, focusing on practicalities such as economic collaboration, tourism, education, culture, and public services.

The city-to-city is seen as a useful avenue for people-to-people exchanges, especially when official cross-strait communications are limited.

Entry bans

This year's forum was initially planned for July or August but was postponed as the tensions raised doubts about the schedule, until an agenda was finally drawn up late in the year.

The event has not been without its casualties.

As tensions surged last week with the Chinese show of force, Taiwan banned entry to Shanghai Taiwan Affairs Office Director Jin Mei and nine Chinese media personnel.

Assistant Professor of Taiwan's Shoochow University's Department of Political Science Chen Fang-Yu told Radio Free Asia that the forum, in principle, should be a "positive event," especially as it involves official exchanges from both sides.

"However, since 2016 China has unilaterally cut off all opportunities for official dialogue with Taiwan,"

he said, adding that Taipei seemed "urged" to host the forum this year.

Chen noted that Taipei Mayor Chiang had vowed in his 2022 election campaign that the forum would only be hosted when the Chinese Communist Party stopped sending military aircraft and vessels to harass Taiwan.

"Clearly, this goal has not been met," Chen said.

At the forum, Shanghai Mayor Hua called for practical cooperation between the two sides and said that Shanghai tour group trips to Taiwan would resume, although China has yet to fully restore the levels of tourism to the island seen before the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait have always been one family. We often come and go, getting closer and closer to each other," Hua told the forum.

However, Chen warned that the offer to resume tour groups from China could be seen as a Chinese tactic to promote its pro-unification agenda.

"It feels like they are treating the reopening as some kind of favor to Taiwan," Chen said, referring to the resumption of group tours.

### **China's new tactic against Taiwan: drills 'that dare not speak their name'**

13 December 2024, Reuters, Ben Blanchard, Yimou Lee and Angie Teo

Beijing has unveiled a new tactic on Taiwan, the democratic island it claims as its own, officials and experts say: large-scale drills with no fanfare to normalise a heightened military presence and let the U.S. know that China can act whenever it wants.

For four days this week, Taiwan went on alert in response to what it said was China's largest massing of naval forces in three decades around Taiwan and in the East and South China Seas.

China's military said nothing until Friday when it quoted ancient Chinese tactician Sun Tzu's Art of War, a favourite of the communist republic's founder Mao Zedong.

"Just as water retains no constant shape, so in warfare there are no constant conditions," the defence ministry said, a cryptic statement that neither confirmed nor denied that Beijing had been holding military exercises.

The initial silence was a departure from China's past practice of unleashing a massive propaganda push to coincide with war games around the island.

A senior Taiwan security official this week termed China's activities as "drills that dare not speak their name".

China's "Joint Sword-2024B" war games in October were accompanied by a flood of military and state media graphics and videos lambasting Taiwan's

President Lai Ching-te, a person Beijing denounces as a "separatist". One animation caricatured Lai with devil-like pointed ears.

Lai rejects Beijing's claims of sovereignty over Taiwan, saying only the island's people can decide their future.

Security sources had expected China to launch new drills to coincide with Lai's trip this month to the Pacific, where he stopped over in Hawaii and the U.S. territory of Guam. Beijing opposes any foreign engagements for Taiwan leaders.

"I clearly believe this is the beginning of the 'mid-stage' of normalisation," Chen Kuan-ting, a lawmaker for Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) who sits on parliament's foreign affairs and defence committee, told Reuters.

"Neighbouring countries have to be aware that if they don't respond accordingly, they themselves may become the next target."

Neither the United States nor Japan, Taiwan's two most important security partners, have confirmed the scale of China's military movements, although both expressed concern. Taiwan signalled late Thursday the activities had wound down by closing its emergency response centre.

One fear Taiwan has is of Chinese drills suddenly turning into an actual attack, and a Taiwan intelligence official said this week China was trying to wrongfoot them by keeping mum.

"By not announcing the drills in advance, they want to lower our alertness and catch everyone off guard when they keep appearing around Taiwan," senior defence ministry intelligence officer Hsieh Jih-sheng told reporters.

### **"CONTROL THE FIRST ISLAND CHAIN"**

Analysts say that Beijing's activities, conducted in near silence and followed by an opaque statement are meant to create confusion. "What's changed here is the scale of the exercise and lack of clarity from China about what was involved," said Drew Thompson, a former U.S. Department of Defense official and now a senior fellow at Singapore's S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies.

"This only underscores the lack of certainty of China's intentions."

China has over the last five years sent its warships and warplanes almost daily into the waters and air space around Taiwan, in what Taiwanese officials see as a creeping effort by China to "normalise" its military presence.

Taiwan's defence ministry said this time the naval deployment extended across the First Island Chain, which runs from Japan through Taiwan, the Philippines and on to Borneo, enclosing China's coastal seas.

Its control by China could prevent U.S. forces coming to Taiwan's assistance in the event of conflict.



"It's a tricky operation, showing on the one hand their dissatisfaction with Taiwan, and on the other showing the U.S. and its allies that it has military muscle, flying the flag, to show their ability to control the First Island Chain," said Su Tzu-yun, a research fellow at Taiwan's top military think tank, the Institute for National Defence and Security Research.

A regional security diplomat said the lack of any announcement ahead of time signalled the normalisation of war simulations around Taiwan.

"China seems to be more concerned with preventing or delaying an intervention into the First Island Chain, than with controlling the area around Taiwan," the diplomat said.

"One day they will have exercised all they need and feel fully confident to deal with anything that might occur during their aggression towards Taiwan."

### Chinese officials arrive in Taipei for rare visit

16 December 2024, Reuters

A delegation of Chinese officials led by a deputy Shanghai mayor arrived in Taipei on Monday for an annual city-to-city forum, a rare visit happening at a time of heightened Taiwan-China military and political tension.

China, which claims the democratically governed island as its territory, last week carried out large-scale military activities near Taiwan, and regularly sends fighter jets and warships into the skies and waters around the island.

Shanghai Vice Mayor Hua Yuan arrived at Taipei's downtown Songshan airport to attend Tuesday's Taipei-Shanghai City Forum, which was first held in 2010, and did not answer questions shouted at him by reporters.

A small group from the pro-independence Taiwan Republic Office shouted "Taiwan and China, separate countries" as he left the airport.

"There is no goodwill. The communist bandits continue to hold military drills," Chilly Chen, head of the group, told Reuters.

Taipei Mayor Chiang Wan-an, from the main opposition Kuomintang party that traditionally favours close ties across the strait although it denies being pro-Beijing, has said visits like this are needed more than ever at times of tension.

Chiang, who visited Shanghai last year for the same city forum, will host Hua at a banquet in the evening. Taiwan's government last week blocked some members of the Shanghai delegation from attending, saying given China's stepped up military threats it had to take into account "the overall situation" when granting permission for the visit.

Adding to the drama, Taiwan's government on Friday demanded China release three members of a Taiwanese religious group arrested while in the

country. China says they are suspected of organising an underground cult.

Taiwan's China-policy making Mainland Affairs Council said on Monday the government was showing goodwill by allowing the forum to take place even in the face of the "still serious situation across the Taiwan Strait".

Taiwan's government has called for new talks with China but Beijing refuses to engage with President Lai Ching-te, calling him a "separatist".

Lai says only Taiwan's people can decide their future.

### After Days of Military Activity, China Restates Its Hard Line on Taiwan

14 December 2024, G Captain

China's defense ministry on Friday broke its silence about days of military activities around Taiwan, saying it was entitled to stage exercises and the military would "not be absent" if required to fight separatist forces.

Taiwan's defense ministry on Monday went on alert and activated an emergency response center after reporting a surge in Chinese military activity, both nearby and more broadly in the East and South China Seas.

China's military had not announced any maneuvers. Beijing views democratically governed Taiwan as its territory – a claim rejected by Taipei, which says that only Taiwan's people can decide their future.

In a statement responding to a question on Taiwan President Lai Ching-te's recent visits to Hawaii and the U.S. territory of Guam, and whether or not China had held drills, China's defense ministry offered neither confirmation nor denial.

"Whether or not to hold exercises and when to hold them is a matter for us to decide on our own according to our own needs and the situation of the struggle," it said.

"Regardless of whether or not exercises are held, the People's Liberation Army will not be absent and will not be soft in its fight against independence and for reunification."

Any reliance on "foreign forces to seek independence" – the usual wording China uses to warn the United States off supporting Taiwan – would be severely punished and was "doomed to failure," the ministry added.

China has staged two rounds of war games around Taiwan so far this year, most recently in October, saying they were a warning against "separatist acts" and vowing to take further action if needed.

### TAIWAN SAYS CHINA'S THREAT IS EXPANDING

On Friday, Taiwan's defense ministry said China's threat towards the island had been evolving since



2022, when it began staging the current round of war games, from “detering Taiwan” to “impacting the First Island Chain,” an area that stretches from Japan through to Taiwan, along the Chinese coast and into the South China Sea.

“China’s long-term goal of deterring regional parties and disrupting the rule-based international order will not be endorsed by the international community,” it said in a statement.

The United States has repeatedly expressed concern about tensions in the Taiwan Strait, and once or twice a month sends military aircraft or warships on missions there.

Late on Friday, Taiwan’s defense ministry said a U.S. P-8A Poseidon reconnaissance and patrol plane had flown through the Taiwan Strait in the morning, the first such publicly acknowledged flight since Nov. 26. Security sources had expected China to hold drills to coincide with Lai’s U.S. trip, and also to send a warning to the incoming Trump administration about China’s red lines.

On Thursday, the de facto U.S. embassy in Taiwan said that Chinese military activity in the region was currently elevated but it did not see that as a response to Lai’s U.S. visit.

Later that day, Taiwan’s defense ministry said it had disbanded its emergency response center, signaling an end to the current round of Chinese military activities.

On Friday morning, the ministry said the number of Chinese military aircraft operating nearby was down sharply.

Taiwan’s coast guard said that nine Chinese coast guard ships off the coast had headed northwards after carrying out “undue” activities in recent days.

### **China jeopardised peace with its military threat: Taiwan Defence Ministry**

13 December 2024, India Narrative

Taiwan’s Ministry of National Defence (MND) on Friday released a rousing video highlighting Taiwan’s defence capabilities and informing of the threat posed by the Chinese military to Taiwan.

The video was shared by the Taiwanese Defence Ministry through a post on X.

“The threat posed by #PLA to Taiwan and the region has escalated from coercion to directly affecting the First Island Chain, undermining the rules-based international order. #ROCArmedForces continue to forge our capabilities and deter war”, the MND said.

The video showcased Taiwan’s defence capabilities, its weapons and the armed forces personnel in action, preparing and training.

“PRC has jeopardised the peace with its military threat, challenged the rule-based international order.

Its action will never earn the approval from the international community”, the video noted.

“To safeguard our territory, and sovereignty, and maintain regional security, the R.O.C. Armed Forces closely monitor our adversary and has adjusted reactions accordingly. We train at the moment, we face our opponent and keep up our work in force buildup. We forge our capabilities in rigorous training. Our faith is from our strength. We stand firmly to safeguard our national security”, the video said.

The video comes after the Chinese incursions near Taiwan’s territory have seen an uptick in recent times.

On Saturday, the MND reported that 12 Chinese military aircraft, 14 naval vessels and 9 official ships were detected operating near Taiwan until 6 am (local time). The details were shared by Taiwan’s Ministry of National Defence (MND) in a post on X. Earlier on Wednesday in a post on X, the MND said, “Confronting normalized #PLA provocations, apathy is not an option. #ROCArmedForces seize every training opportunity!”

Taiwan-China issue is a complex and longstanding geopolitical conflict centred on Taiwan’s sovereignty. Taiwan, officially known as the Republic of China (ROC), operates its own government, military, and economy, functioning as a de facto independent state.

However, China considers Taiwan a breakaway province and insists on the “One China” policy, which asserts that there is only one China, with Beijing as its capital.

This has fuelled decades of tension, especially since the Chinese Civil War (1945-1949), when the ROC government retreated to Taiwan after the Communist Party, led by Mao Zedong, took control of mainland China.

Beijing has consistently expressed its goal of reunification with Taiwan, using diplomatic, economic, and military pressure to isolate Taiwan internationally. Meanwhile, Taiwan, supported by a significant portion of its population, continues to maintain its independence.

### **Taiwan Flags Alarming Threat After China Deploys Largest Naval Fleet**

10 December 2024, StratNews Global

Taiwan is alarmed at the rise in Chinese military activities around its waters and airspace though China’s military has not announced any drills. China’s muscle flexing is seen as an expression of its anger over the U.S. visit of President Lai Ching-te.

China’s war games with Taiwan took a serious turn after Beijing deployed its largest navy fleet in regional waters in nearly three decades.

This is posing an alarming threat to the island nation, its Defence Ministry said.

Defence Ministry spokesperson Sun Li-fang said that the scale of the current Chinese naval deployment in an area running from the southern Japanese islands down into the South China Sea was the largest since 1996.

China had held war games around Taiwan ahead of the 1996 Taiwanese Presidential elections.

China's military is yet to comment and has not confirmed it is carrying out any exercises.

China, which views democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory over the island's rejection, had been expected to launch drills to express its anger at President Lai Ching-te's tour of the Pacific.

The tour which included stopovers in Hawaii and the U.S. territory of Guam, ended on Friday.

Taiwan's military raised its alert on Monday after saying China had reserved airspace and deployed naval and coast guard vessels.

"The current scale is the largest compared to the previous four," Sun said.

"Regardless of whether they have announced drills, they are posing a great threats to us."

Senior ministry intelligence officer Hsieh Jih-sheng said at the same Press conference there have so far been no live fire drills in China's seven "reserved" air space zones.

Of these, two are in the Taiwan Strait, but there had been a significant increase in Chinese activity to the north of Taiwan over the last day.

The number of Chinese Navy and Coast Guard ships in the region, was "very alarming".

He added that China was taking aim at not only Taiwan but other countries in the region as well.

A Taiwan security source told Reuters that the number of the Chinese Navy and Coast Guard ships in the region remained at 90.

China's deployment in the First Island Chain – which runs from Japan through Taiwan, the Philippines and on to Borneo, enclosing China's coastal seas – is aimed at area denial to prevent foreign forces from interfering, Hsieh said.

The ministry said that the Chinese Navy is building two "walls" in the Pacific.

While one is at the eastern end of Taiwan's Air Defence Identification Zone, the other is further out in the Pacific.

"They are sending a very simple message with these two walls: trying to make the Taiwan Strait an internal sea" of China, said Hsieh.

Earlier on Tuesday, the Defence Ministry said it detected 47 military aircraft operating around the island over the past 24

hours,

The ministry also detected a dozen Navy vessels and nine "official" ships, which refers to vessels from ostensibly civilian agencies such as the Coast Guard.

Of the aircraft, 26 flew in an area to the north of Taiwan off the coast of China's Zhejiang province, six in the Taiwan Strait and a further 15 to the island's southwest.

The ministry provided these details in a map in its daily morning statement on Chinese activities.

A senior Taiwan security source told Reuters that the Chinese aircraft simulated attacks on foreign naval ships and practised driving away military and civilian aircraft as part of a "blockade exercise".

Lai and his government reject Beijing's sovereignty claims, saying only Taiwan's people can decide their future.

China says the Taiwan issue is the "core of its core interests" and a red line the United States should not cross.

China has held two rounds of major war games around Taiwan so far this year.

### **Taiwan reports near doubling of Chinese warships nearby**

08 December 2024, Reuters

Taiwan's defence ministry said on Sunday that China had nearly doubled the number of its warships operating around the island in the previous 24 hours, ahead of what security sources expect will be a new round of war games.

China, which views democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory, has been angered by visits by President Lai Ching-te to Hawaii and the U.S. territory of Guam as part of a Pacific tour. Lai returned from the week-long trip on Friday night.

Beijing has held two rounds of war games around Taiwan this year.

In its daily morning report on Chinese military activities, Taiwan's defence ministry said there were 14 Chinese warships operating nearby, up from the eight it reported the previous day.

The ministry said it had detected four Chinese balloons flying over the Taiwan Strait, one of which had brushed the top of the island.

Weather will likely be a factor in China's decision on any war games, security sources say. Weather in the strait has been poor this weekend.

China's defence ministry did not answer calls to its news office seeking comment outside of office hours on Sunday.

But in a strongly worded commentary on its WeChat account on Sunday, China's Ministry of State Security said Lai's efforts to "use arms to seek independence" and cosy up to the United States were doomed to fail.

Taiwan's government is putting on a "false display of power" while the U.S. government is "acting in cahoots with gangsters and jackals" in supporting Taiwan, it said.

"No country, organisation or individual should underestimate the strong determination, firm will and powerful capacity of the Chinese government and people to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity," it said.

No one should presume they can "step out of line on the Taiwan issue without having to pay a price", the ministry added.

Lai and his government reject Beijing's sovereignty claims.

### **China slaps sanctions on 13 US military firms over Taiwan arms sale**

05 December 2024, Reuters

China has decided to impose sanctions on 13 U.S. military firms from Thursday, in response to the sale of U.S. arms to Taiwan, the foreign ministry said after the United States arranged for Taiwan's president to transit through its territory.

The step follows China's strong objection to the United States authorising a potential \$385-million sale of spare parts and support for F-16 jets and radars to Taiwan, which Beijing says undermines its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

China, which considers Taiwan its own territory and its President Lai Ching-te a dangerous separatist, opposes any foreign interactions or visits by the island's leaders.

Companies targeted by the sanctions include Teledyne Brown Engineering Inc, BRINC Drones Inc and Shield AI Inc, the foreign ministry said in Thursday's statement.

Other companies facing sanctions are Rapid Flight LLC, Red Six Solutions, SYNEXXUS Inc, Firestorm Labs Inc, Kratos Unmanned Aerial Systems Inc, HavocAI, Neros Technologies, Cyberlux Corporation, Domo Tactical Communications and Group W.

In addition, China will freeze the assets of six executives from five companies including Raytheon, BAE Systems and United Technologies, in China, and bar their entry to the country.

Chinese organisations and individuals are also prohibited from dealing with them.

### **Taiwan's Lai provokes China's ire with planned US visit**

30 November 2024, DW

Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te is to visit US soil during a seven-day trip that he says aims to enhance exchanges with Taiwan's allies. China has slammed the trip as a step toward independence from Beijing.

Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te set off on Saturday on a week-long trip to visit partners of his country that will include stopovers on US territory, much to the anger of Beijing.

The trip, Lai's first overseas since taking office, has provoked fierce threats from China, which sees the self-governing democratic island of Taiwan as its territory and opposes any international recognition of its sovereignty.

'New era of values-based democracy'

Lai's trip will see him make stopovers in Hawaii and the US territory of Guam, in addition to visits to partners in the South Pacific, including the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Palau.

The US is Taiwan's most important supporter, and is the top benefactor of the island's defense capabilities under the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act, even though Washington has no official diplomatic relations with Taipei.

Lai's trip follows the US's approval of the proposed sale to Taiwan of spare parts for F-16 fighter jets and radar systems, as well as communications equipment. In all, the deals are valued at \$385 million (£364 million).

Upon departing, Lai said: "I'd like to thank the US government for adhering to the principles of safety, dignity, comfort and convenience in facilitating the success of this trip," and that the trip "ushered in a new era of values-based democracy."

He said he wanted to "continue to expand cooperation and deepen partnerships with our allies based on the values of democracy, peace and prosperity."

The Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Palau are the only Pacific island nations among the 12 remaining allies that recognize Taiwan, with China persuading others to drop their support for Taipei by promising aid and investment.

Chinese condemnation

The Chinese Foreign Ministry has reiterated that it is against official interactions between the US and Taiwan, including any visits by Taiwanese leaders to US territory.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning described Lai's planned stopover in the US territory of Guam as "separatist actions."

"We have consistently opposed official exchanges between the United States and Taiwan ... and any

## **November**

form of the US condoning and supporting Taiwan independence separatists and their separatist actions," she said on Thursday.

Lai has in the past been branded a "separatist" by China, which has vowed to "resolutely crush" any attempts at gaining independence.

Beijing regularly conducts war games near the island in what is widely seen as an attempt at intimidation.

### **Pro-Taiwan Lithuania expels three Chinese diplomats**

30 November 2024, Tibetan Review

Lithuania has on Nov 29 asked three staff members of China's representative office, a type of diplomatic mission, to leave the country for being in violation of the Vienna Convention and Lithuanian legislation. No further details were provided.

China has already downgraded ties with Lithuania and pressured multinationals to sever links with the Baltic nation of 2.9 million people after it allowed Taiwan to open a de facto embassy there in 2021, noted Reuters Nov 29.

Declaring them as personae non gratae, Lithuania's foreign ministry has cited violations of the 1961 Vienna Convention, which outlines the rules of diplomatic law.

The Chinese diplomatic staff have been instructed to leave Lithuania within a week, the ministry has said in a statement, exacerbating sour relations between the two countries.

The latest development apparently had its beginning in March, when the chief of Lithuania's counter-intelligence said Chinese interference in this year's elections could not be ruled out due to the EU and NATO member's support for Taiwan.

In addition, a Chinese ship is suspected of being involved in damage to two undersea cables recently, one of which runs between Sweden and Lithuania, the report noted.

### **Foreign Minister Dr Rana off to China**

28 November 2024, RFA

The island's foreign minister called on China not to 'overreact' to Lai's foreign trip.

Taiwan President Lai Ching-te will visit Hawaii and the U.S. territory of Guam on a trip to the Pacific that will include stops in three diplomatic allies, media reported, after the government called on China not to "overreact" to his travels.

China views Taiwan as its territory and it objects to any country or organization treating it as a state. In particular, China gets infuriated by visits by Taiwan

leaders to the United States, and by visits by U.S. officials to Taiwan.



Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te arrives at a ceremony commemorating the war against Chinese forces on the frontline island in Kinmen, Taiwan, Aug. 23, 2024. (Ann Wong/Reuters)

Lai sets off on Saturday for visits to the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Palau, his first overseas trip since taking office on May 20. He would also visit Hawaii and Guam, Taiwan's Central News Agency, or CNA, reported on Thursday.

"The president will stay in Hawaii for two nights before visiting the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu, then transit through Guam before heading to Palau," CNA cited an unidentified government source as saying.

"During the layovers in the U.S., Lai plans to hold closed-door discussions with think tanks and meet with local Taiwanese communities," it said.

A spokesperson for China's defence ministry said China objected to the trip, the AFP news agency reported.

"We firmly oppose official interaction with China's Taiwan region in any form," the spokesperson, Wu Qian, told a press conference.

"The Chinese (military) shoulders the sacred mission of safeguarding national sovereignty... and will resolutely crush all secessionist attempts for Taiwan independence," Wu said.

Taiwan's foreign minister, Lin Chia-lung, speaking before the president's office announced the Hawaii and Guam stops on the trip, called on China not to use the Pacific trip as an excuse to stage military exercises.

"We call on Beijing not to use the long-standing practice [of Taiwan's presidents traveling overseas] as a pretense to overreact, for example, by holding military exercises that risk destabilizing cross-strait relations," said CNA in a separate report, citing Lin.

Reuters news agency on Wednesday reported that China would likely launch military drills near the island, using Lai's to the Pacific and the expected U.S. transit stop as a pretext, citing regional security officials. China launched intensive military exercises around Taiwan in 2022 after then U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi became the highest-ranking U.S. official in 25 years to visit Taiwan.

China also froze top-level military talks and other dialogue with the U.S. in response to the Pelosi visit. Chinese forces have held frequent drills in the air and seas around the island since then.

Beijing has over the years successfully swayed several of Taipei's diplomatic allies to shift their recognition to China. As of Nov. 28, only 12 countries maintained official diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

### **China could launch military drills near Taiwan over president's Pacific visit, sources say**

27 November 2024, Reuters, Yimou Lee and Ben Blanchard

China is likely to launch military drills in the coming days near Taiwan, using President Lai Ching-te's upcoming trip to the Pacific and scheduled U.S. transit as a pretext, according to assessments by Taiwan and regional security officials.

Lai will start a visit to Taipei's three diplomatic allies in the Pacific on Saturday, and sources told Reuters he was planning stops in Hawaii and the U.S. territory of Guam in a sensitive trip coming shortly after the U.S. election.

China, which views democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory and the most important issue in its relations with Washington, has a strong dislike of Lai whom Beijing calls a "separatist".

Lai's office has yet to confirm details of what are officially stop-overs in the United States, but is expected to do so shortly before he departs, sources familiar with the trip have previously said.

Beijing could conduct military manoeuvres around or shortly after Lai's trip which ends on Dec. 6, said four officials in the region briefed on the matter, who declined to be identified due to the sensitivity of the topic.

China's defence ministry did not respond to a request for comment, though the government has urged the United States not to permit Lai to transit.

Chen Binhua, spokesperson for China's Taiwan Affairs Office, said on Wednesday that Lai's transit stops were "essentially provocative acts that violate the one-China principle".

Taiwan's presidential office said in a statement that if China were to use Lai's trip as an excuse to launch military exercises, "it would be a blatant provocation of the status quo of peace and stability in the region".

Taiwan's defence ministry said in a separate statement any deliberate attempt to create tension in the Taiwan Strait would undermine peace and stability, which is not "the proper behaviour of a responsible modern country".

The White House did not respond to a request for comment.

China has already staged two rounds of major exercises around Taiwan this year to pressure Taipei, one in May and one in October, dubbed "Joint Sword - 2024A" and B, respectively.

China could "repackage" ongoing regular military activities in the South China Sea or the East China Sea, moving them closer to Taiwan and rebranding them "Joint Sword - 2024C," according to a Taiwan security official.

Beijing could expand the size of its regular "joint combat readiness patrol" that typically involves naval and air force drills near Taiwan during Lai's visit and launch a "targeted" exercise towards the end of the trip, the source said. China could "repackage" ongoing regular military activities in the South China Sea or the East China Sea, moving them closer to Taiwan and rebranding them "Joint Sword - 2024C," according to a Taiwan security official.

Beijing could expand the size of its regular "joint combat readiness patrol" that typically involves naval and air force drills near Taiwan during Lai's visit and launch a "targeted" exercise towards the end of the trip, the source said.

Between 20 and 30 Chinese naval vessels are involved in the ongoing military manoeuvres this week in the South China Sea, the source added.

### **'RED LINE'**

Beijing wants to show the incoming U.S. administration of President-elect Donald Trump that the first island chain is "China's sphere of influence" and Lai's trip could become a "pretext", the official said, referring to an area that runs from Japan through Taiwan, the Philippines and on to Borneo, enclosing China's coastal seas.

"Beijing hopes to draw a red line and establish its power" during the U.S. government transition and extend its sphere of influence, the official said, adding the military drills were meant for the United States and its allies.

A second source, a Taiwan-based regional security official, said the drills would probably be more limited in scope than the two earlier rounds this year given unstable winter weather conditions in the Taiwan Strait.

A third source, familiar with security assessments around Taiwan, said China could use exercises in the coming weeks to test the bottom line of the Trump administration.

Two of the sources said more favourable weather conditions may prompt an earlier or delayed display of force in the days around Lai's trip.

Taiwan presidents typically take advantage of stop-overs in the United States going to and from far-flung allies to give speeches and meet with friendly politicians. Lai will be visiting the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Palau, three of the 12 remaining countries maintaining official diplomatic ties with Taipei.



It would not be unprecedented for China to respond militarily to this trip. It did so in August of last year when then-Vice President Lai returned from the United States, and in April of last year upon then-President Tsai Ing-wen's return from California.

Lai and his ruling Democratic Progressive Party reject Beijing's sovereignty claims, saying only Taiwan's people can decide their future.

### **Taiwan reports Chinese balloon, first time in six months**

25 November 2024, Reuters

Taiwan's defence ministry on Monday reported that a Chinese balloon had been detected over the sea to Taiwan's north, the first time since April it has reported such an incident in what Taipei views as part of a pattern of harassment by Beijing.

Taiwan, which China claims as its own territory, complained that in the weeks leading up to its presidential election in January Chinese balloon activity took place at an "unprecedented scale".

It described the incidents as part of a Chinese pressure campaign - so-called grey-zone warfare designed to exhaust a foe using irregular tactics without open combat.

Taiwan strongly objects to China's sovereignty claims and says only the island's people can decide their future.

The ministry, in its regular morning update on Chinese military activities over the previous 24 hours, said the single balloon was detected at 6:21 p.m. (1021 GMT) on Sunday 60 nautical miles (111 km) to the north of Taiwan's Keelung port.

It then vanished some two hours later, having flown at an altitude of 33,000 ft (10,000 metres), but without crossing Taiwan itself, the ministry said.

China's defence ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

China has previously dismissed Taiwan's complaints about the balloons, saying they were for meteorological purposes and should not be hyped up for political reasons.

The potential for China to use balloons for spying became a global issue last year when the United States shot down what it said was a Chinese surveillance balloon. China said the balloon was a civilian craft that accidentally drifted astray.

### **PRC threatens regional stability: Taipei**

18 November 2024, Taipei Times, Lee I-chia

ONE LAST TALK: While Xi said that Taiwan was a 'red line,' Biden, in what is likely his last meeting with

Xi as president, called for an end to China's military activity around Taiwan

China's military intimidation and economic coercion against Taiwan are the main causes of tensions that are destabilizing peace in the Taiwan Strait, Taipei said yesterday while thanking US President Joe Biden for expressing Washington's firm stance of maintaining peace and stability in the region.

Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平) met on Saturday for their third meeting and their first talks in seven months on the sidelines of the APEC forum in Lima, Peru.

It was likely Biden's last meeting as president with Xi. During their conversation, Biden reiterated the US' opposition to any unilateral change to the "status quo" from either side, that it expects cross-strait differences to be resolved peacefully and that the world has an interest in peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

Biden also called for an end to destabilizing military activity by the People's Republic of China (PRC) around Taiwan.

Xi told Biden that the "Taiwan issue, democracy and human rights, pathways and systems, and development interests are China's four red lines that must not be challenged," according to state-run China Central Television.

"These are the most important guardrails and safety net for China-US relations," Xi said.

"The separatist actions of 'Taiwan independence' are incompatible with peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait," he added.

Xi also told Biden that Washington "should not intervene in bilateral disputes ... and not condone or support provocative impulses" in the South China Sea.

He also said that China's position on the war in Ukraine was "open and aboveboard" and that Beijing would not allow tensions on the Korean Peninsula to "descend into conflict or chaos," the broadcaster reported.

China would "strive for a smooth transition" in relations with the US and is ready to work with the incoming administration of US president-elect Donald Trump, Xi said.

In Taipei, the Mainland Affairs Council yesterday said that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) posed several challenges, including military intimidation and economic coercion, that affect security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region, and are part of an attempt to force others to accept Beijing's political views.

"Beijing wants to change the rules-based international order, and that has attracted widespread attention from the international community," it said. "This is also the main cause of

tensions in cross-strait relations and instability in the Taiwan Strait."

The council said that the government's cross-strait policy seeks steady, pragmatic and consistent relations with China, as well as the prosperity and development of the Indo-Pacific region, which has been affirmed by mainstream public opinion in Taiwan and the international community.

"In the face of the CCP's continued aggression toward Taiwan, we will stand firm in protecting the constitutional system of the Republic of China" (ROC), it said. "We will maintain the status quo and we will resolutely safeguard national sovereignty and dignity."

Beijing should pragmatically face the facts of the current situation across the Strait, abandon coercive claims and actions, and engage in meaningful dialogue with Taiwan's democratically elected government to resolve differences, it added.

China is the biggest destabilizing force in the Indo-Pacific region, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) said in a separate statement.

"The ministry also thanks the Biden administration for affirming the importance of maintaining peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region and for continuing to take concrete actions to maintain it," it said.

Those actions include a joint statement by Japan, South Korea and the US issued on Friday, which reiterated that "peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait is an indispensable element of security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region," it said.

The three countries also established the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat, responsible for coordinating and implementing their shared commitments, including working together to ensure the region is thriving, connected, resilient, stable and secure, it added.

The ministry also addressed a news release issued by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs that it said included misleading claims about Taiwan and Taiwan-US relations.

The MOFA reiterated that "the ROC and the PRC are not subordinate to each other."

"As the US and other countries have repeatedly pointed out, China, which continues its provocative military actions surrounding Taiwan, is the biggest source of tension that is undermining peace and stability in the region and posing a serious threat to global economic prosperity," the ministry said.

It said it welcomes the international community's concerns over China's efforts to threaten the "status quo" in the region and calls for peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

As a responsible member of the international community, Taiwan would implement its "four pillars of peace" plan to enhance its self-defense capabilities, it said.

Taiwan would also work with the US and like-minded countries to ensure peace, stability and prosperity in the Taiwan Strait and Indo-Pacific region, it added.

Additional reporting by AFP, Chen Yu-fu and Huang Ching-hsuan

### **Taiwan rebuts remarks made by China's Xi at APEC meeting with Biden**

18 November 2024, Focus Taiwan

Taiwan on Sunday rebutted remarks made by Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平) during his meeting with U.S. President Joe Biden at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Lima, Peru.

Xi's comments were "targeted, contrary to the facts, and deliberately setting limits on Taiwan-U.S. relations," according to a statement issued by the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC), Taiwan's top government agency in charge of relations with China.

During his meeting with the U.S. leader on Saturday (Peru time), Xi had named "the Taiwan question" – along with "democracy and human rights, China's path and system, and China's development right" – as "red line" issues for Beijing that "must not be challenged" by other countries.

Xi also mentioned Lai Ching-te (賴清德), Taiwan's president and leader of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), by name.

"If the U.S. side cares about maintaining peace across the Taiwan Strait, it is crucial that it sees clearly the true nature of Lai Ching-te and the DPP authorities in seeking 'Taiwan independence,' handles the Taiwan question with extra prudence, unequivocally opposes 'Taiwan independence,' and supports China's peaceful reunification," according to a readout of the meeting published by China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Sunday.

In response, the MAC said in its statement that the Taiwan government's cross-strait policies are "steady, pragmatic and consistent" and "recognized by Taiwanese mainstream public opinion and the international community."

"In the face of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) continued civil and military attacks on Taiwan, we will firmly uphold the constitutional system of the Republic of China [Taiwan's official name], neither be humble nor arrogant, maintain the status quo, resolutely safeguard national sovereignty and dignity, and strive to maintain peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and in the region."

"President Lai made it clear during his inauguration and National Day speeches that Taiwan will work with its democratic partners to hold up a 'democratic umbrella' to protect democratic partner countries

from the threat of authoritarian expansion and work together to promote world democratic peace and prosperity," the MAC said.

The MAC statement also criticized Beijing's "military intimidation and economic coercion" toward Taiwan and other countries in the Indo-Pacific region, noting that these actions had been the main cause of "tensions" and "instability to peace" in cross-strait relations.

"The Mainland Affairs Council calls on the Beijing authorities to pragmatically face the objective facts of the current situation across the Taiwan Strait, abandon coercive claims and actions, engage in meaningful dialogue with Taiwan's democratically elected and legitimate government to resolve differences, and jointly shoulder the international responsibility for maintaining regional security and global peace."

The White House also issued a readout of the Xi-Biden meeting on Sunday (U.S. time), in which the American president was described as telling the Chinese leader that "the United States' one China policy remains unchanged."

President Biden also "reiterated that the United States opposes any unilateral changes to the status quo from either side, that we expect cross-strait differences to be resolved by peaceful means, and that the world has an interest in peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait."

Biden also "called for an end to destabilizing PRC military activity around Taiwan" in his meeting with Xi, according to the White House.

### **Taiwan's business leaders are finding ways to reduce their exposure in China**

18 November 2024, NPR, Emily Feng

Amid geopolitical uncertainties, Taiwan has slashed its investment in China to the lowest level in nearly a quarter century as the island strives to "derisk" itself from its powerful neighbor.

MARY LOUISE KELLY, HOST:

President Joe Biden and Chinese leader Xi Jinping held their last official meeting over the weekend outside a summit in Peru. Once again, the issue of Taiwan came up. The Chinese government has long claimed the self-governed Asian island as its own territory and long said it will never renounce the use of force to resolve that issue if necessary. Well, in Taiwan, business leaders are finding ways to reduce their exposure in China. NPR's Emily Feng reports from the island.

EMILY FENG, BYLINE: If you're a fan of bubble tea, well, it was invented here in Taiwan, and a lot of the tapioca starch bubbles are still made here.

CHOU CHIAH-YU: (Speaking Chinese).

FENG: Including in this factory belonging to the Ditiantai company in southern Taiwan.

It smells like brown sugar.

Chou Chiah-yu, one of the managers, shows me around his bubble tea factory...

CHOU: (Speaking Chinese).

FENG: ...Which processes and rolls enough tapioca to make more than 600,000 pounds' worth of bubble tea bubbles a day. Ditiantai sells brown sugar-flavored bubbles to Japan, Europe, the U.S. and China. But that's starting to change.

CHOU: (Speaking Chinese).

FENG: Chou says Thailand is now their big focus...

CHOU: (Speaking Chinese).

FENG: ...Where labor costs are way lower and risks, in his view, are also lower.

(Speaking Chinese).

Unlike the previous generation of Taiwanese entrepreneurs, Chou is among the new generation, who sees opportunities outside China's gigantic consumer market. This is in part because of warnings from other entrepreneurs, or Taishang, as they're called locally.

CHOU: (Speaking Chinese).

FENG: Chou tells me other Taishang have warned him Chinese capital control laws make it very difficult to get money out of the country. It's a place with no guarantees.

CHOU: (Speaking Chinese).

FENG: Then Chou says, rather euphemistically, there are the political problems with China, meaning the risk of China seizing Taiwanese assets, blocking their imports or even invading Taiwan. Taiwanese firms are reacting to this risk. They slashed investment into China last year to the lowest in nearly a quarter century. Spending in China by Taiwan companies dropped nearly 40%, though this year it rebounded somewhat.

SCOTT KENNEDY: Taiwanese companies can be the canary in the mine.

FENG: This is Scott Kennedy, a China and Taiwan expert at the Washington-based think tank Center for Strategic and International Studies. He and his colleagues now do a survey each year of Taiwanese firms. This year, they found about over a third of firms had already moved some of their operations out of China.

KENNEDY: Uncertainty that comes with growing U.S.-China tensions, whether it's around tariffs or export controls.

FENG: But Kennedy stresses Taiwan is not decoupling from China entirely. Taiwanese manufacturers are only moving part of their businesses.

KENNEDY: They're moving somewhere between 11- and 25% of their business, so they are keeping a lot of their operations in China, but moving some of

them to new locales - Southeast Asia, India, back to Taiwan.

FENG: Chen Chern-Chyi, Taiwan's deputy economic affairs minister, says since 2016, Taiwan has been actively incentivizing the shift to South and Southeast Asia.

CHEN CHERN-CHYI: With respect to investment, it's like 130% compared to 2016. So we are of the view this is quite successful.

FENG: He says Taiwanese EMS, or electronics manufacturing companies...

CHEN: Almost all the major Taiwan EMS companies now, they have investment in India. They have investment in Vietnam.

FENG: With South and Southeast Asia being the focus, the Taiwanese trade and investment leaving China is not necessarily coming back to Taiwan, however. Chou at the Ditiandai bubble tea factory, for example, says he is avoiding China, but also avoiding expansion in Taiwan.

CHOU: (Speaking Chinese).

FENG: He says their clients around the world are already asking them to have a backup plan should China invade Taiwan. They want to know, if there's a war, can they still get their tapioca bubble tea balls?

### **Former Taiwan Navy officer praises Chinese military, sparks outrage**

16 November 2024, ANI

A retired Taiwan Navy officer has provoked widespread criticism after attending a military air show in Zhuhai, China, and publicly lauding the strength of China's air force and military advancements.

Retired Lieutenant Commander Lu Li-shih attended the International Aviation and Aerospace Exhibition, which began on Tuesday, where he was interviewed by reporters.

In a video that quickly circulated in Taiwan and China, Lu praised the military equipment on display, saying, "I want to share the truth and tell Taiwanese viewers how strong our China is." He also expressed admiration for "Chinese national integration and rejuvenation," Taiwan News reported.

His remarks have drawn sharp criticism from Taiwanese authorities and legislators. Legislator Lin Chu-yin called Lu's remarks "disgusting."

Meanwhile, Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence (MND) issued a statement urging retired officers to remain cautious in their words and actions to avoid harming Taiwan's reputation.

The MND clarified that since Lu retired as a lieutenant commander rather than a higher-ranked officer, he is not subject to penalties such as losing his pension or being stripped of his rank.

Tibet Digest December - January 2024

The Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) also condemned Lu's statements as "deeply regrettable." However, MAC Deputy Chief Liang Wen-chieh stated that the government does not intend to impose punitive measures against Lu, emphasising that Taiwan's policy opposes any commendation of China's military forces, which pose a threat to Taiwan, reported Taiwan News.

Despite the backlash, Lu appeared on CTI television on Thursday to reiterate his views. He praised China's military advancements and the confidence of its people while taking the opportunity to criticise Taiwan's military capabilities.

His remarks have further intensified the controversy, fuelling debate over the responsibilities of retired military personnel and their potential influence on cross-strait relations.

The situation has brought into question the extent to which retired officers should exercise caution in their public statements, particularly when such remarks have the potential to impact Taiwan's international standing.

### **Beijing urges US not to let Taiwan's William Lai transit through country**

15 November 2024, SCMP, Holly Chik

'Stop sending wrong signals to Taiwan independence forces,' Beijing's foreign ministry tells US, a day after similar message to Canada

Beijing has urged Washington not to allow Taiwanese leader William Lai Ching-te to transit via the United States, ahead of his reported plans to visit the Pacific islands.

This came a day after Beijing urged Ottawa to abide by its "one China" commitment, with Lai's predecessor Tsai Ing-wen reportedly scheduled to visit Canada next week.

Reuters reported on Friday that Lai was set to visit Taiwan's diplomatic allies in the Pacific in the coming weeks, with plans to stop over in the US state of Hawaii and possibly its Micronesian territory Guam, both home to major US military bases.

"Taiwan authorities use these so-called diplomatic ties to pull political agenda," Beijing's foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian said on Friday afternoon. "These actions are useless and would not shake the trend of the time that there is one China in the world."

"China consistently opposes the US arrangements [of such transits]," he said. "We urge America to abide by the one-China principle and the three joint communiques, not allow Lai to transit through the United States and stop sending wrong signals to Taiwan independence forces."

The three joint communiques on the Taiwan issue state that the US recognises the People's Republic of

China as the sole legal government of China, and it acknowledges Beijing's position that there is but one China, and Taiwan is part of China.

Details about Lai's visit, including the dates and names of countries to be covered, have not been released yet.

Taipei has formal ties with 12 countries, including the Pacific nations of Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Palau. Earlier this year, Nauru became the latest diplomatic ally to choose Beijing over Taiwan.

Beijing's foreign ministry also cited the one-China principle in expressing its opposition to Tsai's visit to Canada.

"China strongly opposes any visits by Taiwan separatists to countries that maintain diplomatic relations with China under any title," Lin said on Thursday.

"We urge relevant countries to uphold the one-China principle and safeguard the political foundation of bilateral relations through concrete actions," he said in response to a question from Reuters, which cited sources in its reporting on the coming visit.

Tsai, who completed her second and final term as leader of Taiwan in May, will deliver a speech at the Halifax International Security Forum starting on November 22 in Nova Scotia, eastern Canada, according to Reuters.

The website for this year's conference shows that the event is "by invitation only", but information on the agenda and speakers is not yet available.

Tsai visited the Czech Republic, France and Belgium last month, in her first overseas trip since stepping down. She spoke at a democracy conference in the Czech capital Prague, met European politicians and Taiwanese expatriates, and visited the European Parliament in Brussels.

The Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) in Beijing, which oversees cross-strait ties, said at the time that authorities in Taiwan were carrying out "Taiwan independence" separatist activities under various pretexts and deceiving the international community, according to state news agency Xinhua.

"We urge relevant countries to strictly abide by the one-China principle, handle the Taiwan issue prudently, not send wrong signals to the separatist forces and not provide any platform for them to spread their fallacies," TAO spokeswoman Zhu Fenglian said on October 9, days ahead of Tsai's three-nation trip.

Beijing sees Taiwan as part of China to be reunited by force if necessary and regards Tsai and Lai, both of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party, as separatists who promote independence for the island.

Most countries, including the United States and Canada, do not recognise self-governed Taiwan as an independent state. However, Washington opposes

any attempt to bring the island under Beijing's control by force and is legally committed to arming it for defence.

### **Taiwan detects spike in Chinese military activity around itself**

15 November 2024, ANI

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence (MND) reported Chinese military activity on Friday, detecting eight People's Liberation Army (PLA) aircraft, nine People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) vessels and one official ship.

The Ministry of Defence stated that the aircraft, vessels and the ship operating around Taiwan were detected up until 6 am (UTC+8).

According to their post on the social media platform X, "8 PLA aircraft, 9 PLAN vessels and 1 official ship operating around Taiwan were detected up until 6 a.m. (UTC+8) today. 4 of the aircraft crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's northern and southwestern ADIZ. We have monitored the situation and responded accordingly."

The Ministry said that it has monitored the situation and is responding accordingly.

China has increased its military activities around Taiwan by deploying aircraft and naval vessels since September 2020. It is using grey zone tactics to achieve its security objective.

The Taiwanese MND reported Chinese military activity on Thursday, detecting five People's Liberation Army (PLA) aircraft, and nine People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) vessels and one official ship.

Taiwan MND further added that nine of the aircraft crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's northern and southwestern Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ).

"5 PLA aircraft, 9 PLAN vessels and 1 official ship operating around Taiwan were detected up until 6 a.m. (UTC+8) today. 9 of the aircraft crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's northern and southwestern ADIZ. We have monitored the situation and responded accordingly," Taiwan MND said on X.

Earlier, Taiwan President Lai Ching-te convened a high-level national security conference in which he assured the public about the government's commitment to neutralising any threat to Taiwan's democracy and security after China staged a large-scale military drill around the island.

He made his remarks in response to the Chinese People's Liberation Army's (PLA) announcement of military drills, named "Joint Sword-2024B," in the Taiwan Strait and surrounding areas, which were described as a "stern warning" to advocates of Taiwan independence, according to the Taipei Times.



## **Taiwan businessman Tsao to sue Chinese officials over sanctions**

11 November 2024, Reuters

Taiwanese businessman Robert Tsao said on Monday he would sue in a Taiwan court senior Chinese officials over sanctions they had placed on him, saying he was seeking to counter China's intimidation of lawful activity.

China, which claims Taiwan as its own territory, last month said it would punish and sanction Tsao, the retired founder of chipmaker UMC (2303.TW), opens new tab, for alleged criminal and pro-Taiwan independence activities.

China's Taiwan Affairs Office said the "Black Bear Academy" that Tsao has helped fund was seeking to incite separatism that would endanger cross-strait ties.

Tsao, one of Taiwan's richest men who has pledged to provide millions to two civilian defence training programmes, told a press conference that China was threatening the lawful holding of political views in Taiwan and his personal safety.

The lawsuit will be lodged in a Taipei court against Song Tao, head of China's Taiwan Affairs Office, and also the office's spokesperson Chen Binhua.

Taiwan courts have no jurisdiction in China and senior Chinese officials do not visit the island.

China's Taiwan Affairs Office did not respond to a request for comment.

Cheng Wen-lung, one of Tsao's lawyers, said they knew neither Song nor Chen would come to Taiwan and there would be no way of enforcing any judgement, but the case was about sending a message to Beijing given it has been seeking to use legal means to put pressure on Taiwanese it does not like.

"Legally, we have to do this," Cheng said. "Taiwan is in a difficult spot, but we have to work hard. You cannot not do anything."

Tsao's team is also looking at suing in a U.S. court under that country's Alien Tort Claims Act.

China's announcement against Tsao came as the country's military staged a day of war games around Taiwan it said were a warning to "separatist acts". Taiwan's government rejects Beijing's sovereignty claims.

UMC says Tsao has nothing to do with the company any longer having retired a decade ago.

## **Taiwan indicts couple for promoting Chinese political agenda amid military tensions**

07 November 2024, ANI

The Taiwan prosecutors have charged a Taiwanese couple affiliated with a pro-China political party, promoting the Chinese political agenda and affecting Taiwan elections.

The Voice of America reported that the couple, Chang Meng-Chung and his wife, Hung Wen-ting have been indicted for promoting the agenda after receiving billions of dollars from the Chinese authorities.

According to Taiwan's Chiayi District Prosecutors' Office, the couple had violated Taiwan's Anti-Infiltration Act and election laws. They created radio and digital media propaganda for China after receiving 2.32 million dollars from Chinese officials for more than a decade.

The prosecutors claim that China's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) in Beijing and its Fujian Province branch have paid the couples who in turn promoted Chinese defence power and also urged Taiwan to surrender before the Chinese invasion. They further stated that the couples went to China and provided reports and plans for the promotions.

In response to persecution, Chang said, "Taiwan says it's democratic, but it's not democratic at all. The China Unification Promotion Party (CUPP) has always been championing cross-strait reunification, so what I said is the same as what the CUPP has always advocated."

The VOA reported that the couple could face 5 years of imprisonment and a fine of up to NT\$10 million.

Chao Fang-yi, a non-resident fellow at the Research Institute of Democracy, Security, and Emerging Technology in Taiwan, told VOA Mandarin that the use of the Anti-Infiltration Act is significant and said, "Actually, if China wants to give them money, it may be in a very obscure way, and it may be difficult to trace it," said Chao. "So, this time, there is clear evidence so it can be prosecuted. I think it's also a pretty powerful thing."

Recently in August, the Taiwan prosecutors charged three Taiwanese in connection with CUPP, developing a spy network to trespass the Taiwan army. (ANI)

## **Taiwan reports rise in Chinese military activity as US election nears**

03 November 2024, Reuters

Taiwan's defence ministry said on Sunday it had spotted 35 Chinese military aircraft, including fighters and bombers, flying to the island's south on the way to exercises in the Pacific, a second day in a row it has reported such activities.

China, which views democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory despite the strong objections of the government in Taipei, regularly sends its military in the skies and waters near the island seeking to enforce its sovereignty claims.

China's defence ministry did not respond to a request for comment on the missions, reported just days before Tuesday's U.S. presidential election.

The United States is bound by law to provide Taiwan with the means to defend itself, and its arms sales to Taipei, including a \$2 billion missile system announced last month, infuriate Beijing.

Taiwan's defence ministry said that from 9 a.m. (0100 GMT) on Sunday it had detected 37 Chinese military aircraft, including J-16 fighters, nuclear-capable H-6 bombers and drones.

Of those, 35 aircraft flew to Taiwan's southwest, south and southeast into the Western Pacific to carry out long-range training, the ministry said, adding it had sent its own forces to keep watch.

On Saturday, the ministry said China had carried out another "joint combat readiness patrol" with warships and aircraft near Taiwan.

China last month held large war games around Taiwan it said were a warning to "separatist acts", drawing condemnation from the Taiwanese and U.S. governments.

Beijing strongly dislikes Taiwan President Lai Ching-te, who took office in May, saying he is a "separatist". He says only Taiwan's people can decide their future and has repeatedly offered talks with Beijing but been rebuffed.

## October

### CCP attempts to extend jurisdiction

31 October 2024, Taipei Times

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) last month sentenced Taiwanese activist and Taiwanese National Party cofounder Yang Chih-yuan (楊智淵) to nine years in prison. Yang's case shows that China wishes to suppress political activists and organizers inside Taiwan. Yang once organized a political group to promote the concept of "one country on each side [of the Taiwan Strait]," mainly advocating for Taiwan's sovereignty and independence. This position is in direct opposition to Beijing's "one China principle."

Yang was arrested in China in August 2022, and in April last year was charged with "separatism," according to the CCP's "Anti-Secession" Law. His case has brought a sharp response from Taiwan, criticizing Chinese authorities' use of vague legal language to carry out its unjust ruling against Yang, and using the ruling to strike fear into Taiwanese.

The CCP in 2005 rubber stamped its "Anti-Secession" Law into existence, aimed at trying to forestall a Taiwanese declaration of formal, *de jure* independence or the implementation of any "separatist" activities.

The content of the law is vague, and the standards for defining a supposed crime are by no means clear, which has led to its abuse by the CCP. Party authorities are using this type of vague legal caprice to suppress and whisk away dissidents, even to the extent of prosecuting them for activities conducted overseas.

Yang's political activities were mostly carried out within Taiwan, and he never actually crossed into China to carry out any obviously "separatist" activities. Clearly, the CCP's legal interpretations have already stretched far beyond the bounds of its jurisdiction.

If China were to take over Taiwan, the CCP would use similarly opaque legalese to carry out political suppression of far more Taiwanese than just those with a background like Yang's. Taiwan is a diverse and free society. If the CCP handed down rulings on the illegality of opinion using the standards of its "Anti-Secession" Law, an integration of Taiwan into China's legal system would see anyone who advocates for Taiwan's sovereignty or carries out Taiwan independence-related activities facing the extreme likelihood of being defined as "Taiwan separatists." This would not only stifle Taiwan's political diversity, it would render Taiwanese unable to freely express their thoughts and opinions.

Taiwanese should realize the basic differences between the legal systems. In China, the rule of law is subject to political or party interference, and the CCP can use the legal system as a tool to suppress differences of opinion. Taiwanese who travel to China need to be especially mindful of their own words and actions, even within Taiwan, to keep themselves from unwittingly infringing on sensitive political topics, particularly those related to discussions of Taiwan's sovereignty or independence. The government should remind the public to carefully evaluate the necessity of travel to China, and remain aware of possible risks if they decide to go through with travel plans. Yang's plight is a wake-up call for Taiwanese that the tension between our government and China's is not just a matter of those who are part of the political echelons – this strain has extended into everyone's daily life.

Yang's case casts into sharp relief China's severe suppression of Taiwanese political workers, using vague legal language to attempt to extend China's jurisdiction to Taiwan. The CCP is abusing its own "Anti-Secession" Law to force people into a post-unification scenario, where similar laws could be used to mute Taiwan's diverse political voices, and

even arbitrarily charge Taiwanese with the so-called crime of supporting "Taiwanese independence." Taiwanese must be clear on the differences in the legal systems, ask themselves about the risks of traveling to China, and pay attention to what they have said and done to keep themselves from running into unjust treatment by China due to their political stances.

### **Taiwan issues warnings to Chinese coast guard vessels around Kinmen**

29 October 2024, Taipei Times

Taiwan yesterday issued warnings to four Chinese coast guard vessels that intruded into restricted waters around the Taiwan-controlled Kinmen Islands, according to the Coast Guard Administration (CGA). The four China Coast Guard ships were detected approaching restricted waters south of Kinmen at around 2 pm yesterday, the CGA's Kinmen-Matsu Branch said in a statement.

The CGA said it immediately deployed four patrol boats to closely monitor the situation.

When the Chinese ships with the hull numbers "14512," "14609," "14603" and "14602" separately entered the restricted waters off Fuhxing islet (復興嶼), Zhaishan (翟山), Sinhu (新湖) and Liaoluo (料羅) at 3 pm, the Taiwanese patrol boats broadcast warnings until they left the areas at 5 pm, it said.

The actions by the China Coast Guard only exacerbate the estrangement between people on two sides of the Taiwan Strait and impede cross-strait exchanges, the CGA said, adding it will continue to safeguard national sovereignty and uphold Taiwan's rights on the sea.

### **Taiwan reports Chinese 'combat patrol' after Beijing slams US arms deal**

27 October 2024, Reuters, Ben Blanchard and Ryan Woo

Taiwan's defence ministry said on Sunday that Chinese warplanes and warships had carried out another "combat patrol" near the island, after Beijing threatened to take countermeasures in response to a \$2 billion arms sale package by the United States.

The United States is bound by law to provide Chinese-claimed Taiwan with the means to defend itself despite the lack of formal diplomatic ties, to the constant anger of Beijing.

The Pentagon said on Friday the United States had approved a potential \$2 billion arms sale package to Taiwan, including the delivery for the first time to the island of an advanced air defence missile system battle-tested in Ukraine.

Taiwan's defence ministry said it had detected 19 Chinese military aircraft, including Su-30 fighter jets, carrying out a "joint combat readiness patrol" around Taiwan in conjunction with Chinese warships starting on Sunday morning.

It said the Chinese aircraft flew in airspace to the north, centre, southwest and east of Taiwan, and that Taiwanese forces were dispatched to keep watch.

China's defence ministry did not answer calls seeking comment outside normal office hours.

China stages such patrols around Taiwan several times a month, but this was the first since Beijing held a new round of full-blown war games near the island this month.

In a statement late on Saturday, China's foreign ministry said it strongly condemned and firmly opposed the latest U.S. weapons sales and had lodged "solemn representations" with Washington.

China urges the United States to immediately stop arming Taiwan and stop its dangerous moves that undermine peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, it added.

"China will take resolute countermeasures and take all measures necessary to firmly defend national sovereignty, security and territorial integrity," the ministry said, without elaborating.

China has over the past five years stepped up its military activities around democratically governed Taiwan, whose government rejects Beijing's sovereignty claims.

Taiwan's government has welcomed the new arms sale, the 17th to the island under U.S. President Joe Biden's administration.

"In the face of China's threats, Taiwan is duty-bound to protect its homeland, and will continue to demonstrate its determination to defend itself," Taiwan's foreign ministry said on Saturday, responding to the arms sale.

### **China vows to take 'countermeasures' over US and Taiwan \$2bn arms deal**

27 October 2024, The Guardian

Package includes Nasams air defence system that Taiwan says will help it in the face of China's frequent military manoeuvres

China will take "countermeasures" to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity, the government said, lambasting a \$2bn arms sale package by the United States to Taiwan.

The Pentagon on Friday said the United States had approved a potential \$2bn arms sale package to Taiwan, including the delivery for the first time to the island of an advanced air defence missile system battle-tested in Ukraine, including advanced surface-to-air missile systems and radar. The deal awaits approval by Congress.

In a statement late on Saturday, China's foreign ministry said it strongly condemned and firmly opposed the sales and had lodged "solemn representations" with the US.

China urges the US to immediately stop arming Taiwan and stop its dangerous moves that undermine peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, it added.

"China will take resolute countermeasures and take all measures necessary to firmly defend national sovereignty, security and territorial integrity," the ministry said, without elaborating.

The US is bound by law to provide Chinese-claimed Taiwan with the means to defend itself despite the lack of formal diplomatic ties, to the anger of Beijing. The Pentagon's Defense Security Cooperation Agency said the new sale consisted of \$1.16bn in missile systems, and radar systems worth an estimated \$828m.

The missile system sale is for three National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System (Nasams) medium-range air defence solutions that includes the advanced AMRAAM Extended Range surface to air missiles, it added.

"This proposed sale serves US national, economic, and security interests by supporting the recipient's continuing efforts to modernise its armed forces and to maintain a credible defensive capability," it said in a statement. "The proposed sale will help improve the security of the recipient and assist in maintaining political stability, military balance, and economic progress in the region."

Demand for Nasams has increased since the system was employed in Ukraine. Taiwan's defence ministry welcomed the announcement, noting the "proven" use of Nasams in Ukraine and saying it would help Taiwan's air defence capabilities in the face of China's frequent military manoeuvres.

China has over the past five years stepped up its military activities around democratically governed Taiwan, whose government rejects Beijing's sovereignty claims, including staging a new round of war games earlier this month.

Taiwan's government welcomed the new arms sale, the 17th of the Biden administration to the island.

"In the face of China's threats, Taiwan is duty-bound to protect its homeland, and will continue to demonstrate its determination to defend itself," Taiwan's foreign ministry said, responding to the arms sale.

Beijing's foreign ministry hit back in its statement late on Saturday, saying the latest arms package "seriously damages China-US relations, and endangers peace and stability" in the strait.

China has refused to rule out using force to bring Taiwan under its control.

In September, Beijing sanctioned US defence companies in retaliation for Washington's approval of the sale of military equipment to Taiwan.

### **Taiwan president 'won't yield an inch' in defense of island's territory**

25 October 2024, VOA

Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te said Friday the island will not cede an inch of its territory, as China maintains military pressure on Taipei to accept its claim of sovereignty.

Lai made the remarks during a visit to the Kinmen islands off China for the 75th anniversary of a victory over communist forces in the Battle of Guningtou.

It followed a fortnight of intense military activity in the Taiwan Strait – the sensitive waterway that separates China and Taiwan – with troops from both sides holding drills.

"(We) will not yield an inch of ground in Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu to firmly defend our homeland," Lai said in a speech, referring to the islands controlled by Taipei.

"The Battle of Guningtou lets us understand that democracy and freedom should not be taken for granted, but require the joint efforts of generations to defend them," Lai said.

Without naming China, Lai insisted that "any external forces" would not be allowed to change the future of the islands.

China's Communist Party has never ruled democratic Taiwan, but Beijing claims the island as part of its territory and has said it will never renounce the use of force to bring it under its control.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian brushed aside Lai's comments, insisting that China and Taiwan "will and must be unified in the end".

The dispute between Beijing and Taipei dates back to a civil war between Mao Zedong's communist fighters and Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist forces, which fled to Taiwan in 1949 following their defeat.

The nationalists scored a key victory over the communists in the Battle of Guningtou on the Kinmen islands.

Lai, who took power in May and has been more outspoken than his predecessor in defending Taiwan's sovereignty, earlier attended a somber ceremony for the battle and shook hands with veterans.

In his speech, Lai said Taiwan's "determination to defend our national sovereignty" and efforts "to maintain peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait" were unchanged.

He repeated his hope that China and Taiwan will "conduct dialogue and exchanges with parity, dignity and in a healthy and orderly manner".

Beijing severed high-level communications with Taipei in 2016 and has since ramped up military and political pressure on the self-ruled island.

China's large-scale war games around Taiwan on October 14 were followed by live-fire drills near the island on Tuesday, and the transiting of a Chinese aircraft carrier group through the Taiwan Strait a day later.

Taiwanese troops conducted live-fire drills on Penghu island in the waterway on Thursday, days after a US and a Canadian warship sailed through the narrow passage.

### **China Responds to Taiwan's Plea for Cross-Strait Peace with Military Pressure**

24 October 2024, United States Institute of Peace

In his first National Day speech as Taiwan's president, William Lai Ching-te called for regional peace while reaffirming that China and Taiwan "are not subordinate to each other." Though Lai's October 10 address was more restrained than past remarks, it was attacked by China's state media as "highly provocative." Days later, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) encircled Taiwan with record numbers of military aircraft and warships during a series of military "drills."

This follows a pattern from Beijing since Lai took office. In late June, China released a set of judicial guidelines to prosecute advocates of Taiwan independence, saying they could face the death penalty in extreme cases. By September, more than 2,000 PLA aircraft had been recorded entering Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone in 2024, the highest annual number of incursions to date. Taiwan's Digital Affairs Ministry reported over 90,000 cyberattack attempts targeting government infrastructure in August alone. From February to September, China's Coast Guard vessels entered restricted waters near Taiwan's outlying Kinmen Islands at least 40 times.

As China continues its pressure campaign against Taiwan and channels of cross-Strait communication continue to wither, the risk of miscalculation or unwanted escalation will likely grow in the months ahead. Going forward, the United States should encourage both sides to practice restraint.

USIP's Naiyu Kuo, Dan Spinelli and Jennifer Staats discuss Lai's approach to cross-Strait relations, how Beijing has challenged the new Taiwanese president since he took office and if the two sides are in a dangerous cycle of escalation.

What does Lai's speech reveal about his approach to cross-Strait relations?

Lai's speech repeated many of the key themes from his inaugural address this May. He signaled a strong commitment to Taiwan's autonomy by stressing that

the Republic of China (ROC, or Taiwan) and the People's Republic of China (PRC, or China) are not subordinate to each other and promising that he would "uphold the commitment to resist annexation or encroachment upon our sovereignty." Lai also emphasized that China "has no right to represent Taiwan," a stance frequently reiterated by Taiwan's foreign ministry to counter Beijing's efforts to exclude Taiwan from international fora. Yet Lai also suggested a potential framework for cross-Strait engagement. He appealed directly to China to cooperate with Taiwan on climate change, pandemic prevention and regional security, and called on Beijing to work with the international community to advance peace, security and prosperity.

Indeed, Lai may have been attempting to lower the temperature after a series of earlier provocative remarks that stoked Beijing's ire. Speaking to a domestic audience days before National Day, for example, Lai posited that the PRC could not be Taiwan's "motherland" because the ROC dates its founding to 1911, 38 years before the PRC's establishment in 1949. In September, he suggested that if Beijing were intent on reclaiming lost territory, it should pursue territorial claims in Russia that were ceded by the Qing empire. Both statements drew sharp criticism from Beijing's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO), and some domestic political opponents warned Lai was "provoking a war."

How did Beijing respond?

Although Taiwan's foreign ministry urged China to recognize the goodwill Lai expressed, Chinese state media rejected the notion that Lai's speech evinced "moderation" or "restraint," and instead claimed it was a continuation of what it labels Lai's "new two-state theory" and "separatist fallacies."

Two days after the speech, China's Ministry of Commerce issued a statement saying it is studying further trade measures against Taiwan, which could result in new tariffs or other forms of economic pressure. Early in the week that followed, the TAO announced sanctions against Puma Shen, Robert Tsao and Kuma Academy for allegedly engaging in "separatist activities." (Co-founded by Shen and funded by Tsao, Kuma Academy is a Taiwanese civil defense organization that trains civilians to respond to emergencies.)

On October 14, the PLA's Eastern Theater announced "Joint Sword-2024 B" drills and deployed fighter jets, drones and warships to encircle Taiwan and simulate a potential blockade. As part of the one-day exercise, China flew a record number of 153 Chinese military aircraft around Taiwan in a 13-hour period. When the PLA announced the start of the exercises, it neither provided advance notice nor indicated the duration of the exercises, which aims to



intimidate Taiwan psychologically and complicate Taiwan's defense preparedness.

The military exercises encircled Taiwan and included joint air and naval combat readiness patrols, a blockade of key ports north, south and east of Taiwan, and an assault on maritime and land targets. Law enforcement vessels also featured prominently, as China's Coast Guard (CCG) deployed 17 ships to patrol the waters surrounding Taiwan, the first time they have circumnavigated the island. In addition, four CCG vessels entered the restricted waters around the Matsu Islands for the first time.

Leaders in Beijing appear to see military action as the most effective tool for sending signals to Taipei, Washington and others in the region.

The pre-planned drills were shorter in timeframe but closer in proximity to Taiwan than the exercises conducted after House Speaker Pelosi visited the island in August 2022. The U.S. Department of Defense called the recent exercise "irresponsible, disproportionate, and destabilizing," and a State Department spokesperson said China's "response with military provocations to a routine annual speech is unwarranted and risks escalation."

The TAO justified the drills as punishment for Lai's alleged pursuit of "Taiwan independence." On October 15, TAO claimed that Lai's May inaugural speech, National Day address and remarks about the "motherland" were all responsible for escalating tensions, and warned that each provocation made by "separatists" in the name of "Taiwan independence" will be met with more intense countermeasures "until China's complete reunification is realized."

The intensified pressure aims to weaken Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party, intimidate the Taiwanese public and challenge the Taiwan government's autonomy to assert actual control over the island.

How can we avoid an escalation spiral?

Both Beijing and Taipei continue to blame the other for changing the status quo, and view their own statements and actions as necessary responses to provocation from the other.

Leaders in Beijing appear to see military action as the most effective tool for sending signals to Taipei, Washington and others in the region. Until it faces meaningful consequences for this coercion, China's political, economic, military and gray-zone pressures on Taiwan are likely to persist and possibly intensify as Beijing pushes its unification agenda and seeks to avoid appearing weak. Its incremental military actions, like the recent exercises, aim to pressure Taiwan without crossing red lines that would trigger significant international response.

Lai himself is also walking a tightrope. He must respond to critics, at home and abroad, who argue

that he is not doing enough to defend Taiwan, while also being mindful of concerns on the island that his provocative comments risk drawing Taiwan into unwanted war. At the same time, China's bellicose response to his more moderate remarks may lead Lai to believe there is nothing he can do to lower the temperature.

Without clear channels of communication, the two sides are often left guessing about the other's intentions or concerns without the ability to frankly address or resolve key issues that could lead to unwanted escalation or conflict. Given the increasingly tense situation, it is incumbent on U.S. political leaders to consistently oppose unilateral changes to the status quo from either side, reaffirm that Washington does not support Taiwan independence and call on all parties to resolve their differences peacefully, so as to not exacerbate the potential for crisis.

### **Taiwan unveils plans to cope with potential Chinese military blockade**

23 October 2024, VOA, William Zheng

Taiwan is stepping up efforts to strengthen its capabilities to respond to a potential military blockade by China, as Beijing increases military pressure on the democratically ruled island.

In a report outlining Taiwan's wartime food plan, which was submitted to parliament on Tuesday, the Ministry of Agriculture said it had maintained a three-month rice stockpile and ensured food and critical supplies were stored evenly across the island.

According to the ministry, the current rice stockpile can sustain Taiwan for seven months, and its fish feed inventory is enough to support fishing in ponds for over three months if sea fishing is not possible. The government said it is also drafting plans to prepare for rice rationing during wartime.

In the event of a Chinese military blockade, Taiwanese authorities said they would dedicate more farmland to grow rice and use additional ponds to grow aquaculture. The crops that Taiwan would prioritize growing in the event of war include sweet potatoes, soybeans and fresh vegetables. The ministry also plans to set up a task force to conduct a monthly inventory of the island's food resources.

Officials from Taiwan's Ministry of Economic Affairs also laid out plans to boost Taiwan's energy reserves and energy supply.

Hu Wen-chong, director of the department of state-owned enterprise management at Taiwan's Ministry of Economic Affairs, told lawmakers Wednesday that the government plans to set up three natural gas receiving stations to enhance the natural gas safety stock to more than 14 days. Taiwan currently has

enough stock to maintain natural gas supplies for eight days.

In the event of a natural gas shortage during wartime, Hu told lawmakers that the government could activate some decommissioned coal-fired power plants to support the island's energy supply needs.

Maintaining Taiwan's oil supply is another concern. Taiwan imports close to 70% of its oil from the Middle East, which some legislators worry could be affected if China pressures regional countries to halt exports to the island during a blockade. Hu said the island has diversified its oil procurement from other countries, such as the United States and Indonesia.

Analysts welcomed the preparations for a potential blockade but said Taiwan's wartime food and energy reserve plans were designed to cope with food natural disasters, such as typhoons and earthquakes.

"Wartime is different from natural disasters because there won't be threats posed by the Chinese military during an earthquake," Lin Ying-yu, a military expert at Tamkang University in Taiwan, told VOA by phone.

"For these plans to work in wartime scenarios, there is still a lot of room for improvement."

Su Tzu-yun, a military expert at the Taipei-based Institute for National Defense and Security Research, noted that Taiwan has been taking monthly inventories of critical supplies and storing these resources across the island for a long time.

"There are close to 1,000 grain silos of various sizes across Taiwan, and it has been conducting critical resource distribution drills during the annual Wan An air-defense exercise in July," Su said.

Natural gas accounts for around half of Taiwan's electricity, a crucial resource that Taiwan will not be able to import during a Chinese blockade. Su said figuring out ways to use the island's oil and coal stocks to supply electricity is important.

In a phone interview with VOA, Su cited a report from Taiwan's Energy Administration Act that said the island has about five months' worth of oil and coal reserve, with around 190 million tons of underground coal. Those resources could be used to supply electricity if Taiwan experiences a natural gas shortage during a Chinese blockade, Su said.

Chinese blockade "an act of war"

Over the past week, China has increased its military pressure on Taiwan, staging a one-day blockade-style military exercise around the island just days after Taiwan President Lai Ching-te's National Day speech on October 10.

In the speech, Lai said the People's Republic of China — China's official name — has no right to represent Taiwan, formally known as the Republic of China. Beijing views Taiwan as part of its territory.

China also began holding live-fire air and sea

drills near Niushan island off the southeastern Chinese province of Fujian on Tuesday.

On Wednesday, Taiwan's defense minister Wellington Koo said a Chinese aircraft carrier group sailed through the Taiwan Strait. The group was led by the Liaoning, China's oldest aircraft carrier. Taiwan's defense ministry said it was closely monitoring the Liaoning's movement.

Koo also said Beijing's "Joint Sword-2024B" exercise, which took place on October 13, fell short of the definition of an actual blockade since the Chinese military didn't impose no-flight and no-sail zones.

"If you really want to carry out a so-called blockade, which according to international law is to prohibit all aircraft and ships entering the area, then according to United Nations resolutions it is regarded as a form of war," he told journalists at Taiwan's parliament on Wednesday.

Koo added that since around one-fifth of global freight passes through the Taiwan Strait, a blockade imposed by China would have global consequences.

"The international community could not sit by and just watch," Koo told lawmakers during a legislative session on Wednesday.

Since August 2022, China has held at least four blockade-style military exercises around Taiwan and each exercise has served as a response to high-level political exchanges between Taiwan and the U.S. or important speeches delivered by Taiwan's president.

Lin at Tamkang University said while China is using these blockade-style military exercises to test its capabilities and improve coordination between different forces, they are also Beijing's way of responding to major political remarks in Taiwan.

"China is trying to signal that whenever the Taiwanese government makes important political remarks, Beijing will respond militarily," he told VOA.

Lin said Taipei should closely monitor Chinese military exercises and adjust or improve the military's defense and offense capabilities accordingly.

### **Taiwan says blockade would be act of war as China holds more drills**

23 October 2024, Aljazeera

Taiwanese defence chief says a blockade would have far-reaching consequences for international trade.

Taiwan's defence chief has warned that a Chinese blockade would be an act of war and have far-reaching consequences for international trade after

Beijing held military exercises to encircle the self-governed island.

Taiwanese Defence Minister Wellington Koo made his comments on Wednesday as the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) continued exercises near the democratically-ruled island after last week carrying out war games that included a simulated blockade.

"If you really want to carry out a so-called blockade, which according to international law is to prohibit all aircraft and ships entering the area, then according to United Nations resolutions it is regarded as a form of war," Koo said in remarks to reporters at parliament.

"I want to stress that drills and exercises are totally different from a blockade, as would be the impact on the international community," Koo added.

China claims Taiwan as its territory and has said it reserves the right to use force to bring it under its control, with the PLA regularly holding drills – including simulating blockading key ports and assaulting maritime and ground targets – around the island.

Taiwan, also known by its official name the Republic of China, has never been ruled by the People's Republic of China and rejects Beijing's sovereignty claims.

Beijing also asserts jurisdiction over the entirety of the Taiwan Strait, a 180km-wide (110-mile) waterway separating mainland China from Taiwan.

Taiwan and other members of the international community reject Beijing's claim, with the United States, Japan and several European countries asserting its status as an international waterway.

The US navy, in particular, regularly sails through the strait to maintain freedom of navigation rights.

Koo, who noted that one-fifth of global freight passes through the strait, said that the international community "could not sit by and just watch" if China were to impose a blockade.

Taiwan's defence ministry announced earlier on Wednesday that Chinese aircraft carriers, led by the Liaoning carrier, travelled north through the waterway after passing through waters near the Taiwan-controlled Pratas islands.

During the previous 24 hours, Taiwan's military detected 15 Chinese military aircraft and six navy vessels in the skies and waters around the island, the defence ministry said.

"The Liaoning is passing through the Taiwan Strait now, sailing north along the west of the median line and we are closely monitoring it," Koo said.

Taiwan has reported almost daily Chinese military drills around the island for the past five years, but activity has intensified since April's election of outspoken President William Lai Ching-te, whom Beijing has labelled a "dangerous separatist".

On October 14, Beijing launched large-scale military drills – code-named "Joint Sword-2024B" and involving the army, navy, air force and rocket force – in the Taiwan Strait and areas to the north, south and east of Taiwan.

Beijing said the drills, which came soon after Lai delivered his National Day speech on October 10, were issued as a "stern warning to the separatist acts of 'Taiwan Independence' forces".

### China holds live-fire drills on island closest to Taiwan

22 October 2024, BBC, Kelly Ng

China held a live-firing exercise from its territory closest to Taiwan one week after it launched a large-scale drill encircling the island.

Chinese military drills off the Taiwanese coast have intensified in recent years as its claims over the self-governed island have grown.

Beijing announced late on Monday that an area around Niushan – an island 105km (66 miles) from Taiwan – will be closed for drills for four hours from 09:00 local time (01:00 GMT) on Tuesday.

Taiwan's premier Cho Jung-tai said on Tuesday that China should not be conducting such exercises given their threat to regional stability.

"No matter how large the scale of the drill is, they should not be frequent and close to Taiwan," he told reporters. "This will only cause unnecessary tension." Although Taipei has called the drills routine, analysts believe China is likely sending a message given their proximity to Taiwan.

The exercises are also part of a wider campaign, which has seen Chinese ships and planes regularly cross into Taiwanese territory and airspace – a grey zone warfare tactic intended to normalise the incursions and weaken Taiwan over a prolonged period.

As the Chinese drills have intensified, so have manoeuvres by Taiwan's allies, mainly the United States.

For decades, the US Pacific fleet was the only foreign navy that regularly transited the Taiwan Strait that separates the two sides to assert its freedom of navigation.

But recently, other US allies, including Canada, Germany, Australia and Japan have been joining these patrols as part of what are called "high-visibility" operations.

The most recent was over the weekend, when the US and Canada sailed their warships through the waters.

Analysts say this represents increased signalling from China and the US. While Beijing is emphasising its claims over Taiwan, Washington is making clear its support for the island.

A US official, however, told the BBC that Washington is keen on lowering tensions with Beijing given the US's current focus on conflicts in the Middle East and Europe.

But the longer-term threat for the US still comes from China, the official said.

Last Monday, Beijing deployed a record number of 153 military aircraft, as well as warships and coast guard vessels to encircle Taiwan in an exercise designed to simulate an attack by land, sea and air.

This followed Taiwanese President William Lai's National Day speech on 10 October, where he pledged to "resist annexation or encroachment upon [Taiwan's] sovereignty".

China and Taiwan are "not subordinate to each other", he said, adding that China "has no right to represent Taiwan".

China has repeatedly vowed to take Taiwan by force if necessary. It has long seen Lai as a "troublemaker" advocating for Taiwan's independence.

### **Preparing for a Chinese blockade, Taiwan maps out wartime food plans**

22 October 2024, Reuters

Taiwan's government offered rare details on Tuesday of its wartime food plan, saying it is taking monthly inventories of crucial supplies like rice and making sure they are properly stored across the island in case of a Chinese blockade.

China, which views democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory, has over the past five years staged almost daily military activities around the island, including war games that have practised blockades and attacks on ports. Taiwan's government rejects Beijing's sovereignty claims.

China's latest war games around the island, carried out last week, included blockading key ports and areas, and assaulting maritime and ground targets, Beijing said.

In a report to parliament about preparations in case of a Chinese blockade, a copy of which was reviewed by Reuters, Taiwan's agriculture ministry said it has ensured that rice stock piles were above a three-month level as required by law and that food supplies were stored across the island in a bid to "lower attack risks".

The ministry said Taiwan's current rice stocks were enough to support the island for at least seven months and plans on rice rationing through supply stations across the island were being made in case of a food crisis.

During a blockade, more farmland will be used to grow rice, the ministry said, adding it will also prioritise growing sweet potatoes, soy beans and fresh vegetables as well as using more ponds for aquaculture.

In a scenario in which sea fishing is not allowed, the ministry said the island's fish feed inventory will be enough to support fishing in ponds for more than three months.

The ministry said it was planning to set up a task force to ensure food supply safety by taking a monthly inventory of the island's food resources.

Taiwan, a farming powerhouse during Japanese colonial rule from 1895 to 1945, depends on imports for the majority of its food needs as farm land was taken over for factories during rapid industrialisation starting in the 1960s.

Taiwan's food self-sufficiency rate in 2023 dropped to 30.3%, the lowest level in 18 years, according a previous report from the ministry.

In a separate report to parliament on preparations for the same scenario, the National Security Bureau said China's cyber forces were honing their skills to infiltrate key online infrastructure like telecoms in a bid to destabilise Taiwan with misinformation during a conflict with China.

### **China reiterate vow to use force over Taiwan as president Xi visits frontline island**

17 October 2024, Tibetan Review

China has on Oct 16 vowed never to commit to renounce the use of force to "reunify" Taiwan, a day after president Xi Jinping visited Dongshan island in Fujian province which lies across the economically prosperous and democratically self-ruled island. Both the events came after China subjected Taiwan on Oct 14 to massive war exercises as a "stern warning" to Taiwan "independence forces". All this followed Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te's vow to defend the island from any Chinese armed aggression during his national day address on Oct 10.

"We are willing to strive for the prospect of peaceful reunification with the utmost sincerity and endeavour," Reuters Oct 16 quoted Chen Binhua, spokesperson for China's Taiwan Affairs Office, as saying at a regular press briefing in Beijing. "But we will never commit ourselves to renouncing the use of force."

"No matter how many troops Taiwan has and how many weapons it acquires, and no matter whether external forces intervene or not, if it (Taiwan) dares to take risks, it will lead to its own destruction," he has added. "Our actions to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity will not cease for a moment."

Chen's remarks came a day after Chinese state media reported Oct 15 President Xi's arrival the previous day on Dongshan island where in 1953 China beat off an invasion attempt by Taiwan-based military of the Republic of China (ROC), the official name of Taiwan and which had ruled China from

1911 until its civil war loss to the communists in 1949. No armistice or peace treaty has ever been signed between the two sides.

Xi was stated to have urged officials in Fujian to promote cross-strait cultural exchanges and “enhance the ethnic, cultural and national identity of Taiwan compatriots.”

Taiwan’s ROC government, which for long claimed to be the legitimate government of China and even held its UN seat, with the veto power, until the 1970s, now rejects China’s sovereignty claims, saying only the island’s people can decide their future.

In his Oct 10 speech, Lai said China had no right to represent Taiwan, that the island was willing to work with the government in Beijing to combat challenges like climate change, striking both a firm and a conciliatory tone which Taiwan officials said was a show of goodwill.

But Chen, the Chinese spokesperson, said Lai had stuck to his “stubborn separatist position”, adding “There was no goodwill to speak of.”

Lai has repeatedly offered talks with China, only to be rebuffed by the latter.

China has over the past five years sent warships and warplanes in the waters and skies around Taiwan on an almost daily basis. It has also carried out large-scale war drills to cut off the island in shows of force to intimidate the island against making any move towards declaring independence.

### **China starts new round of war games around Taiwan**

14 October 2024, Aljazeera

Beijing begins manoeuvres in ‘stern warning’ days after President Lai’s first National Day speech.

China’s military has started a new round of war games with ships and aircraft near Taiwan, just days after the self-ruled democratic island marked its National Day.

The exercises, dubbed Joint Sword-2024B, began early on Monday and were a “stern warning to the separatist acts of ‘Taiwan Independence’ forces”, said Beijing, which claims the island as its own.

Captain Li Xi, the spokesman for the Chinese military’s Eastern Theatre Command, said the drills were focussed on “sea-air combat-readiness patrol, blockade on key ports and areas” and would also involve an “assault on maritime and ground targets”. The drills, he added, were a “legitimate and necessary operation for safeguarding state sovereignty and national unity”, and gave no date for their conclusion.

Taiwan’s Ministry of Defence expressed its strong condemnation of China’s “irrational and provocative actions” and said it had “dispatched appropriate forces to respond accordingly to protect freedom

and democracy, and defend the sovereignty” of Taiwan.

As of 8am (00:00 GMT), it said some 25 PLA aircraft and a total of 11 ships, including seven from the navy, were found operating around Taiwan.

President William Lai Ching-te promised to protect the island from external threats.

“I would like to reassure my compatriots that the government will continue to defend the democratic and free constitutional system, protect democratic Taiwan, and safeguard national security,” he wrote on Facebook.

In recent years, China has stepped up its military activity around Taiwan, which it claims as its own. The latest drills come just days after Lai gave his first National Day address on October 10, promising he would resist any “annexation or encroachment” and that Beijing had no right to represent the island’s 23 million people.

“It was widely anticipated that the PLA [People’s Liberation Army] would conduct military exercises following Lai’s National Day speech,” Bonnie Glaser, the managing director of the German Marshall Fund’s Indo-Pacific programme, told Al Jazeera. “The drills have the effect of demonstrating to the domestic audience that the CCP [Chinese Communist Party] has the resolve to defend Chinese territory. They are also intended to warn Taipei and Washington not to cross Beijing’s red lines.”

‘It will pass’

Beijing has not ruled out the use of force to bring Taiwan under its control and said the drills were a warning to the “separatist acts of Taiwan independence forces”.

It has condemned Lai, who was elected in January and took office in May, as a “separatist” and previously staged military exercises, Joint Sword-2024A, three days after his inauguration.

Lev Nachman, a professor of political science at the National Taiwan University in Taipei, said China’s latest actions were no surprise.

“While military threats are no small matter, we all knew the PRC [People’s Republic of China] would respond to Lai’s Double Ten Day speech with military threats of some sort,” Nachman wrote on X. “There is no need to panic or overreact. We all saw this coming. It will pass quickly.”

In his October 10 speech, Lai had also appeared to reach out to Beijing, expressing hope for “healthy and orderly dialogue and exchanges”, and urging Beijing to use its influence to help resolve conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine.

But China’s state-run Global Times, in an analysis of the speech published on Sunday, quoted analysts describing Lai’s speech as a “poison pill wrapped in cellophane”.



Other state media also accused Lai of promoting a "two-state" theory to describe Taiwan and China after he noted last week the different ages of the two governments. The People's Republic of China, which celebrated its National Day on October 1, is 75 years old, while the Republic of China, which celebrated on October 10 and is headquartered in Taipei, turned 113.

Kuang-shun Yang, the co-founder of the Taipei-based think tank US-Taiwan Watch, said the drills could be China testing the waters internationally at a time of global upheaval, citing the Russia-Ukraine war, the conflicts in the Middle East and threats from North Korea.

"We can see that the world has a lot of regional flashpoints that are ongoing and maybe Beijing sees this as ... an opportunity to test their will and see if the world's support for Taiwan is strong enough," he told Al Jazeera.

Beijing has sought to erase Taiwan from the international stage, blocking it from global forums and poaching its few remaining formal diplomatic allies.

The United States remains Taiwan's main international supporter and supplier of weapons.

It said it was "seriously concerned" at the latest military drills.

"The PRC response with military provocations to a routine annual speech is unwarranted and risks escalation," State Department Spokesman Matthew Miller said in a statement.

"We call on the PRC to act with restraint and to avoid any further actions that may undermine peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and in the broader region, which is essential to regional peace and prosperity and a matter of international concern."

### **China threatens Taiwan with more trade measures after denouncing president's speech**

12 October 2024, Reuters

China is studying further trade measures against Taiwan, China's Ministry of Commerce said on Saturday, two days after Beijing denounced a speech by Taiwan President Lai Ching-te.

The Chinese ministry said in a statement on its website that the Democratic Progressive Party, Taiwan's ruling party, had not taken any practical measures to lift "trade restrictions" on China.

"At present, relevant (Chinese government) departments are studying further measures based on the conclusions of the investigation into trade barriers from Taiwan" against China, it added.

Taiwan's China policy making Mainland Affairs Council said it regretted and "strongly protested" the move.

"Blatant economic coercion will only arouse the resentment of the Taiwanese people and cause the distance between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait to grow wider and wider," it said in a statement.

China, which views democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory, detests Lai as a "separatist". Lai and his government reject Beijing's sovereignty claims, saying only Taiwan's people can decide their future.

On Thursday at his keynote national day speech, Lai said the People's Republic of China had no right to represent Taiwan, but that the island was willing to work with Beijing to combat challenges like climate change, striking both a firm and conciliatory tone, drawing anger from China.

The Saturday announcement from China's commerce ministry could portend tariffs or other forms of economic pressure against the island in the near future.

China's Taiwan Affairs Office, which on Thursday said that Lai's speech promoted "separatist ideas" and incited confrontation, responded to the announcement by saying the fundamental reason behind the trade dispute was the "DPP authorities' stubborn adherence to the stance of 'Taiwan independence'".

"The political basis makes it difficult for cross-Strait trade disputes to be resolved through negotiation," it added.

In May, China reinstated tariffs on 134 items it imports from Taiwan, after Beijing's finance ministry said it would suspend concessions on the items under a trade deal because Taiwan had not reciprocated.

The Cross-Strait Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) between China and Taiwan was initially signed in 2010 and Taiwanese officials had previously told Reuters that China was likely to pressure Lai by ending some of the preferential trading terms within it.

### **Taiwan says four iPhone maker staff detained in China under 'strange' circumstances**

11 October 2024, NBC News

Four had been detained in China's Zhengzhou, home to a major Foxconn plant assembling Apple's iPhones, on suspicion of the equivalent of "breach of trust," Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council said.

Four employees of Taiwan's Foxconn, the world's largest iPhone assembler, have been detained in China under "quite strange" circumstances, Taiwan's government said.

Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council, in a statement to Reuters on Thursday, said the four employees had been detained in China's Zhengzhou, home to a

major Foxconn plant assembling Apple's iPhones, on suspicion of the equivalent of "breach of trust."

"The circumstances of this case are quite strange," it said.

The case may be connected to corruption and abuse of power by a small number of Chinese security officials, the council added, without giving details.

Foxconn declined to comment.

The Mainland Affairs Council said Foxconn had stated the company had "suffered no losses and that the four employees had done nothing to harm the company's interests."

"This has seriously damaged the confidence of companies. We call on relevant departments on the other side of the Taiwan Strait to investigate and deal with it as soon as possible."

Calls to China's Taiwan Affairs Office seeking comment outside of office hours went unanswered.

In June, Taiwan's government raised its travel warning for China, telling its citizens not to go unless absolutely necessary, following a threat from Beijing to execute those deemed "diehard" Taiwan independence supporters.

China claims democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory, over the strong objections of the government in Taipei.

Taiwanese businesses have invested billions of dollars in China since the country began landmark economic reforms four decades ago, drawn by a common culture and language and much lower costs.

### **US says Taiwan speech no justification for China military pressure**

10 October 2024, Reuters, Michael Martina, David Brunnstrom and Trevor Hunnicutt

China has no justification for using an annual national day speech by Taiwan as a pretext for military pressure, the United States said on Wednesday, ahead of scheduled remarks by the island's president that Taiwan officials say Beijing is likely to follow with military drills.

China has been using every possible means to cause "chaos", a Taiwan source said ahead of President Lai Ching-te's keynote address on Thursday, describing the context around it.

A senior U.S. administration official told reporters the Oct. 10 speech marking the 113th birthday of the Republic of China, Taiwan's official name, was no cause for Chinese military exercises.

"Even though we have not seen significant military activity or exercises following previous 10/10 speeches, we are prepared that Beijing may choose to use this as a pretext this year," the senior official said.

"Again, we see no justification for a routine annual celebration to be used in this manner. Coercive

actions like this against Taiwan and in the cross-Strait context, in our view, undermine cross-Strait stability," the official said.

China staged "punishment" war games around Taiwan shortly after Lai's May inauguration but has not announced any new Taiwan-related military drills. The Chinese embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The U.S. official said Taiwan had briefed diplomatic partners on Lai's speech, but that the content of his remarks were "entirely up to Taiwan officials."

Lai, who took office in May after winning election in January, is detested by China which calls him a "separatist". Beijing claims Taiwan as its own territory, a view Lai and his government reject.

China's military has significantly ramped up its activities around Taiwan in recent years and has never renounced the use of force to bring the island under its control.

National day in Taiwan marks the overthrow of the last Chinese dynasty in 1911 and the ushering in of the Republic of China. The defeated republican government fled to Taiwan in 1949 after losing a civil war with Mao Zedong's communists. No peace treaty or armistice has ever been signed, and Beijing has never renounced the use of force to bring Taiwan under its control.

Most Taiwanese believe China is unlikely to invade in the coming five years but do see Beijing as a serious threat to the island, a poll by Taiwan's top military think tank showed on Wednesday.

The U.S. and China had discussed in late August holding fresh talks between presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping, as both countries have sought to maintain stability in difficult bilateral relations.

The U.S. official did not offer new details on when such a leaders call might occur, and said it had been "tough to schedule" due to holidays and domestic issues in both countries.

### **No one can stop China's reunification: mainland slams Lai's separatist remarks**

10 October 2024, China Military

A Chinese mainland spokesperson on Thursday said that no individual or force can stop China's reunification, slamming Taiwan leader Lai Ching-te's latest separatist remarks.

Chen Binhua, a spokesperson for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, made the remarks in response to a speech Lai delivered in Taipei on Oct. 10.

Lai's speech continued to propagate the new "two states" theory and fabricate "Taiwan independence" fallacies, Chen said, adding that it has deliberately heightened cross-Strait tensions and gravely undermined peace and stability in the Strait.

Noting that the future of Taiwan lies in national reunification, Chen said that nothing Lai has said can change Taiwan's legal status as a part of China or the fact that both sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to one China.

Lai's remarks have demonstrated his unwavering "Taiwan independence" stance, along with his confrontational mindset and continuous provocations, Chen said.

Since 1949, due to the continuation of China's civil war and foreign interference, the two sides of the Taiwan Strait have been locked in a prolonged state of political confrontation, he noted.

However, Taiwan has always remained an inalienable part of China's territory, and Taiwan's people have always been members of the Chinese nation, Chen stressed.

The government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legal government representing the whole of China, including Taiwan, he added.

He noted that the current fight against separatist forces advocating for "Taiwan independence" is not a fight over political systems but a fight over the reunification or splitting of the motherland.

Lai is attempting to hijack Taiwan for his "Taiwan independence" aims, and his related provocations are the root cause of instability in the Taiwan Strait, which will bring disaster to Taiwan people, Chen said.

He emphasized the mainland's firm opposition to any separatist activities or external interference, calling for the promotion of cross-Strait exchange and cooperation, further integration, and the unwavering pursuit of national reunification.

### **Taiwan willing to cooperate with China, but not as subordinate to it as 'motherland'**

10 October 2024, Tibetan Review

Taiwan's president William Lai Ching-te has said the People's Republic of China (PRC) cannot claim to represent his Republic of China (ROC) which he has pointed out is older – having been founded on Jan 1, 1912 – hitting raw nerves in Beijing which has not ruled out armed invasion to "reunite" the two sides. China marked its 75th national day on Oct 1, and Taiwan its 113th on Oct 10.

Beijing has accused Lai of escalating hostility after his recent comments that the PRC could not be the island's motherland.

Zhu Fenglian, a spokeswoman for the mainland's Taiwan Affairs Office, has said Lai had not only tried to deceive and intimidate the Taiwan people, harming their interests, but was covering up his efforts to provoke separatism and damage cross-strait relations.

"Lai Ching-te's Taiwan independence fallacy is just old wine in new bottles, and again exposes his obstinate stance on Taiwan independence and his sinister intentions of escalating hostility and confrontation," the scmp.com Oct 9 quoted Zhu as saying.

But Lai, giving a keynote national address outside the presidential office in Taipei on his country's national day of Oct 10, has reiterated that the ROC – the island's formal name – and the PRC are "not subordinate to each other".

But such an assertion goes against the grain of China's claim that Taiwan, a "renegade province", belongs to it.

Nevertheless, Taiwan rejects the claim, saying it has never been a part of the PRC, which was established on Oct 1, 1949.

Taiwan, on the other hand, marks as its national day the anniversary of the 2011 revolution, known as the Xinhai Revolution, which toppled China's last imperial dynasty.

"On this land, democracy and freedom are growing and thriving. The PRC has no right to represent Taiwan," Reuters Oct 10 quoted Lai as saying.

Taiwan's determination to defend its sovereignty, maintain peace in the Taiwan Strait and seek equal and dignified talks with China all remain unchanged, he has added.

While holding out an offer of cooperation with China, Lai has made it clear, "I will also uphold the commitment to resist annexation or encroachment upon our sovereignty."

"We are willing to work with China on addressing climate change, combating infectious diseases, and maintaining regional security to pursue peace and mutual prosperity for the well-being of the people on the two sides of the Taiwan Strait," he has added.

Beijing has repeatedly denounced the Taiwanese leader as an "obstinate separatist" and has been angered by his attempts to reframe the relationship between the two sides.

He has promoted the concept of "mutual non-subordination", presenting Taiwan and the mainland as separate entities to cement a distinct Taiwanese identity, noted the scmp.com report.

The ROC government of China led by the Kuomintang, or Nationalist, forces, fled to Taiwan after their defeat by the communists in the civil war, and set up an interim government there under Chiang Kai-shek.

While Chiang had hoped to regain control of the mainland, Lai has added: "We will no longer attack the mainland, but we are also unwilling to be ruled by the Communist Party."

Taiwan's Kuomintang party, now the single largest in parliament, sees democracy and respect for human rights as preconditions for holding talks on a political

settlement between the two sides. Lai's Democratic Progressive Party, on the other hand, is seen as favouring a separate national identity for the island.

### **Most Taiwanese believe China unlikely to invade in coming five years, poll shows**

09 October 2024, NBC

Most Taiwanese believe China is unlikely to invade in the coming five years but do see Beijing as a serious threat to the democratic island, a poll by Taiwan's top military think tank showed on Wednesday.

Over the past five years or so, China's military has significantly ramped up its activities around Taiwan, which Beijing views as its own territory over the strong objections of the government in Taipei, and has never renounced the use of force to bring the island under its control.

The survey of around 1,200 people conducted last month by the Institute for National Defense and Security Research showed 61% of people think it was "unlikely or very unlikely" that China would attack Taiwan in the coming five years.

"Most people do not think China's territorial ambitions will manifest themselves in the form of attacking Taiwan," said Christina Chen, an INDSR researcher.

Taiwan's people are also concerned about other Chinese threats, including military drills and propaganda campaigns, she said.

"Most people see China's territorial ambitions as a serious threat," Chen said.

The poll presents a contrast to a warning by the head of U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, who said last year that Chinese President Xi Jinping had ordered his military to be ready to conduct an invasion of Taiwan by 2027.

"That means Taiwanese people are aware of the threat but remain calm and rational with the expectations of an imminent war," the INDSR said.

More than 67% of respondents to the poll said they would fight back if China attacked, but they were split almost evenly on whether Taiwan's armed forces were capable of defending the island, half expressing confidence and half no confidence.

Lee Kuan-chen, another INDSR researcher, said Taiwan's military should continue to boost its defense capacity to build public trust.

The poll also showed a split in opinion on whether the United States would help defend Taiwan.

While some 74% believed the U.S. government was likely to "indirectly" help Taiwan by providing food, medical supplies and weapons, only 52% thought the U.S. military would dispatch its armed forces to intervene, the poll showed.

Lee said Taiwan's government should be more transparent about Taiwan-U.S. security cooperation.

"That way, people will not have expectations that are too high or too low on U.S. assistance," Lee said.

U.S. President Joe Biden has upset the Chinese government with comments that appeared to suggest the United States would defend Taiwan if it were attacked, a deviation from a long-held U.S. position of "strategic ambiguity."

Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te said on Saturday that it is "impossible" for the People's Republic of China to become Taiwan's motherland because Taiwan has older political roots.

Lai, who took office in May, is condemned by Beijing as a "separatist". He rejects Beijing's sovereignty claims, saying that the island is the Republic of China, which traces its origins back to the 1911 revolution that overthrew the last imperial dynasty.

The republican government fled to Taiwan in 1949 after losing a civil war with Mao Zedong's communists who set up the People's Republic of China, which continues to claim the island as its "sacred" territory.

Taiwan's China policy making Mainland Affairs Council said it was an objective fact that since 1949 the People's Republic of China had never ruled the island.

Speaking at a concert ahead of Taiwan's national day celebrations on Oct. 10, Lai noted that the People's Republic had celebrated its 75th anniversary on Oct. 1, and it would be the Republic of China's 113th birthday on Thursday.

"On the contrary, the Republic of China may be the motherland of the people of the People's Republic of China who are over 75 years old," Lai added, to applause.

"One of the most important meanings of these celebrations is that we must remember that we are a sovereign and independent country," he said.

In response, the Chinese government said Lai is escalating tensions with "sinister intentions," saying that he continues to peddle a theory that the two sides of the Taiwan Strait are two separate countries.

"Lai Ching-te's Taiwan independence fallacy is just old wine in a new bottle, and again exposes his obstinate stance on Taiwan independence and his sinister intentions of escalating hostility and confrontation," China's Taiwan Affairs Office said in a statement.

"The Taiwan Affairs Office's remarks have made Taiwan's people see clearly that the Chinese communists regard themselves as the sole legitimate government of China and simply do not allow any room for the survival of the Republic of China," it said.

Lai, who is called a "separatist" by Beijing, is set to give a keynote speech in Taipei on Thursday.

## **China criticizes Taiwan president for his 'motherland' comment**

09 October 2024, NHK World

China has denounced Taiwan President Lai Ching-te for his remark that it is impossible for China to become the motherland of Taiwan's people.

A spokesperson for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council on Tuesday issued a statement about the remark Lai made on Saturday ahead of Double Tenth Day. Taiwan considers October 10 its national day.

Zhu Fenglian said Lai exposed his stubborn adherence to a "Taiwan independence" stance and his malicious intent to escalate hostility and confrontation.

Zhu expressed hope that many compatriots in Taiwan will staunchly oppose "Taiwan independence" and external interference.

China claims Taiwan as part of its territory, and is wary of Lai, labeling him a separatist.

Since he took office in May, China has intensified military pressure through exercises by its forces around Taiwan.

## **Communist China not the motherland, says Taiwan's president, because our republic is older**

07 October 2024, The Guardian

Lai Ching-te argues the reverse may be true because the Republic of China – the mantle that nationalists carried with them to Taiwan – predates the People's Republic

It is "impossible" for the People's Republic of China to become Taiwan's motherland because Taiwan has older political roots, the island's president has said.

Lai Ching-te, who took office in May, is condemned by Beijing as a separatist. He rejects Beijing's sovereignty claims, saying the island is a country called the Republic of China that traces its origins back to the 1911 revolution overthrowing the last imperial dynasty.

The Chinese nationalist government fled to Taiwan in 1949 after losing a civil war with Mao Zedong's communists. Mao set up the People's Republic of China, which continues to claim self-governed Taiwan as its territory.

Speaking at a concert ahead of Taiwan's national day celebrations on 10 October, Lai noted that the People's Republic had celebrated its 75th anniversary on 1 October and in a few days it would be the Republic of China's 113th birthday.

"Therefore, in terms of age, it is absolutely impossible for the People's Republic of China to become the motherland of the Republic of China's

people. On the contrary, the Republic of China may be the motherland of the people of the People's Republic of China who are over 75 years old," Lai added, to applause.

"One of the most important meanings of these celebrations is that we must remember that we are a sovereign and independent country."

China's Taiwan affairs office did not answer calls seeking comment outside office hours, the Reuters news agency said.

The Chinese president, Xi Jinping, in a speech on the eve of his country's national day, reiterated his government's view that Taiwan is its territory.

Lai, who will give his own keynote national day address on 10 October, has needled Beijing before with historical references. In September, he said that if China's claims on Taiwan were about territorial integrity then it should also take back land from Russia signed over by the last Chinese dynasty in the 19th century.

## **Taiwanese people ready to fight as China ramps up aggression, ambassador says**

05 October 2024, WFIN

Taiwan's top official in the U.S. is warning that China has ramped up its aggression toward the island, and that its people are ready to fight.

"Yes, of course," Alexander Yui, the Taiwanese representative to the U.S., told Fox News' Aishah Hasnie when asked whether the island's residents were willing to meet the moment, if China were to invade. "We've seen Ukraine."

Taiwan has been intensely watching the conflict in Eastern Europe as Kyiv's forces have battled a Russian invasion for more than two years.

Yui said he hoped to not need help from U.S. troops, which Ukraine also does not have, but suggested they would be eagerly accepted if offered.

"If your house is under fire, and they respond to help you with a bucket of water, would you say no?" Yui posed.

The diplomat said Chinese President Xi Jinping has escalated regional tensions since former President Donald Trump left office, but he stopped short of blaming the Biden administration for emboldening China.

"Xi Jinping has been emboldened because he wants to realize what he calls his China dream," Yui said. "It's not about which administration is in the United States . . . but rather, what are the thoughts of Xi Jinping?"

Taiwan's ministry of defense tracked eight Chinese military aircraft and two naval ships near the island earlier this week. The defense ministry said four of the eight planes crossed the median line dividing China and Taiwan's territory in the Taiwan Strait –



though Beijing, which claims ownership of Taiwan, does not recognize the geographic delineation.

A week prior, on Sept. 25, Taiwan's defense ministry said it had detected 43 Chinese military aircraft in a 24-hour period, with 34 having crossed the median line. The next day saw 41 Chinese military planes detected near Taiwan.

Xi is believed to be preparing his country for an invasion of Taiwan by 2027 – meaning the U.S. response would fall to whoever wins the presidency in November.

Asked if he had a message for Americans about Taiwan ahead of Election Day, Yui said it was a "peace-loving nation."

"We believe in democracy and freedom. We have to share the same values. And we want to be incorporated in the world, because we've been isolated for many decades due to the conflict that we have . . . with mainland China," he said.

### **China wants Taiwan to make mistakes and is looking for excuses to trigger a blockade, Taiwan's navy commander says**

04 October 2024, Business Insider

China is trying to force Taiwan into making mistakes and is looking for excuses to trigger a blockade, according to Taiwan's navy commander.

Adm. Tang Hua told The Economist that China is "slowly, but surely" ramping up its military presence around Taiwan and is ready to blockade Taiwan "at any time they want."

He described the tactic as an "anaconda" strategy meant to "squeeze the island."

"They give you extreme pressure, pressure, pressure," Tang said. "They're trying to exhaust you." At the same time, Tang said that Taiwan is focused on avoiding confrontation. "The PLA is trying to force Taiwan to make mistakes," he said, using the acronym for China's People's Liberation Army.

Concerns about a possible Chinese invasion of Taiwan have grown since Phil Davidson, then the US Indo-Pacific commander, said in 2021 that China could invade Taiwan by 2027.

Since then, military experts and former defense officials have made similar assessments, with variations on the timeline and approach.

Many point to China's rapid modernization of its armed forces over the past two decades and military drills around Taiwan.

According to recent updates shared by Taiwan's defense ministry, China's aircraft, vessels, and ships now operate around Taiwan almost daily, sometimes crossing the median line in the Taiwan Strait and causing its neighbor to scramble its planes. Experts from the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War said in May that an

aggressive Chinese coercion campaign – short of war but still threatening – was more likely than a full-scale invasion.

Even so, in its Global Peace Index 2023, the Institute for Economics and Peace estimated that a Chinese blockade of Taiwan would result in a \$2.7 trillion loss in world economic activity in the first year alone, equivalent to a 2.8% decline in global GDP.

Bloomberg's modeling, meanwhile, estimates that a total blockade of Taiwan and Western sanctions on China could result in a 5% worldwide GDP decline, with US GDP falling by 3.3% and China's by 8.9%.

Earlier this year, Taiwan's military leadership issued new rules of engagement around self-defense.

"We restrain our guys, not to provoke or escalate," Tang told The Economist.

According to an unofficial translation by the Lieber Institute for Law and Land Warfare at West Point, Taiwanese soldiers can launch attacks against a target that is clearly identified as a legitimate military objective and that displays clear hostile acts or intentions, as long as it is in keeping with the nature of the unit, the mission, and the specific tasks assigned by the superior.

Taiwan's defense minister, Wellington Koo, raised similar concerns last month, telling the Financial Times that it will become harder to spot early signs of a Chinese attack due to China's growing military activity around the country.

On Monday, as part of the 75th anniversary celebrations of the People's Republic of China, Chinese leader Xi Jinping pledged to achieve China's "complete reunification" with Taiwan.

"It is where the greater national interest lies, and it is what the people desire," he said, adding: "The wheel of history will not be stopped by any individual or any force."

### **Not subordinate to China, says Taiwan in response to Xi Jinping's "one-China principle"**

03 October 2024, The Economic Times

Taiwan's foreign ministry has made it clear that the country is not subordinate to China in response to China's President Xi Jinping's claim that "Taiwan is a sacred territory of China," Taiwan News reported. During his speech, Xi insisted on adherence to Beijing's "one-China principle" and the "1992 Consensus" and opposed Taiwan independence, while also saying Beijing would achieve "reunification" with Taipei.

In response, Jeff affirmed Taiwan's 23 million citizens uphold a free and democratic constitutional system, the Taiwan News reported.

Further, he added Taiwan's sovereignty must not be infringed upon and that it is opposed to annexation,

while the country's future must be determined by the Taiwanese.

Liu highlighted Taipei's calls for peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, the right to its own space in the global arena, and participation in international organisations.

He also hoped Taiwanese would no longer face interference when cheering for Taiwan's athletes at the Olympics.

On Monday, the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) called on China to "face up to the reality that the two sides of the Taiwan Strait are not affiliated with each other, rationally face the mainstream public opinion in Taiwan, and engage in pragmatic dialogue with Taiwan's democratically elected government." It called on Beijing to build goodwill to foster favourable conditions for the development of cross-strait relations.

The 'One China principle' is a position held by the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) that there exists only one sovereign state under the name China, with the PRC serving as the sole legitimate government of China, and Taiwan.

The 1992 consensus refers to the outcome of a meeting in 1992 between the representatives of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)-led People's Republic of China (PRC) in mainland China and the Kuomintang (KMT)-led Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan. They are often credited to creating a diplomatic basis between the two.

### **Xi vows to 'reunify' Taiwan, warns of 'rough seas' ahead, on low-key 75th National Day**

02 October 2024, Tibetan Review

Marking a subdued 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China on Oct 1 in the face of daunting, drawn-out economic challenges, and their adverse corollary effects, President Xi Jinping has vowed to "reunify" the self-governing democratic island nation of Taiwan. Earlier, in the run up to the anniversary, Xi had called for "consolidating and developing the unity of the Chinese nation" by "fostering a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation" in ethnic minority areas.

No festivities have been announced for the Oct 1 occasion, save for a flag-raising ceremony at Tiananmen Square, with an honour guard marching from the entrance of the sprawling palace that in past centuries was the home of Chinese emperors. The entirely state-controlled media ran constant reports on China's economic progress and social stability, with no mention of challenges ranging from a declining birth rate to the disruption in supply

chains that has harmed the largely export-driven economy, reported [indiatvnews.com](https://www.indiatvnews.com) Oct 1.

Like all his predecessors, Xi has reiterated his pledge to achieve "reunification" with Taiwan, underscoring his resolve to achieve the "complete reunification of the motherland."

China's ruling Communist Party claims Taiwan as its own, despite having never controlled it, and has vowed to "reunify" with the self-governing democracy, by force, if necessary, noted the [cnn.com](https://www.cnn.com) Oct 1.

"Taiwan is China's sacred territory. Blood is thicker than water, and people on both sides of the strait are connected by blood," Xi has told a banquet attended by more than 3,000 people, including officials, retired party leaders and foreign dignitaries.

But many in Taiwan view themselves as distinctly Taiwanese and have no desire to be part of Communist China.

But Xi does not care. "(We must) resolutely oppose 'Taiwan independence' separatist activities," he has said.

Xi has been China's most assertive leader on Taiwan in decades. He has ramped up the rhetoric and aggression against the democratic island – fuelling tension across the strait and raising concerns for a military confrontation with a series of large-scale military exercises.

On the situation within China, Xi has warned of "rough seas" ahead, saying, "The road ahead will not be smooth, there will definitely be difficulties and obstacles, and we may encounter major tests such as high winds and rough seas, or even stormy waves."

Xi has greatly tightened control over the CPC and Chinese people during his more than 10-year rule.

The world's second-largest economy and second most populous nation has struggled to bounce back after the Covid-19 pandemic and major issues in its housing sector – two of the biggest drivers of an economic downturn that is also affected by an ageing population and low consumer spending, noted [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com) Oct 1.

The banquet where Xi spoke was one of few events marking the 75th anniversary. This Oct 1 was a surprisingly muted affair, marked in Beijing only by a flag raising ceremony in Tiananmen Square. Past milestone years have seen opulent ceremonies and big military parades, the report noted.

On the eve of the Oct 1 anniversary, the [economist.com](https://www.economist.com) Sep 30 ran a commentary saying Fear of a Soviet-style collapse keeps Xi Jinping up at night, noting that China's Communists had now been in power longer than the Soviets.

While general security measures are routine in any country marking an occasion like the National Day, in China this goes much further. Police have been following rights activists and lawyers, detaining their

family members, or preventing them from entering Beijing, while the phones of outspoken journalist Gao Yu remained blocked ahead of the National Day holiday, rfa.org Sep 30 cited rights lawyers and activists as saying.

Rights activists in Wuhan, Shanghai, Changsha and other parts of China have also told RFA Mandarin that they had also been told by local authorities not to go anywhere during the National Day celebrations, and that they will be under close surveillance during the holiday period.

The moves form part of China's "stability maintenance" operations, which kick in ahead of politically sensitive dates or major events, in a bid to stave off potential threats to the ruling Chinese Communist Party before they can occur, the report said.

## September

### Taiwanese military report says China lacks full invasion force

27 September 2024, The Washington Times, Bill Gertz

An annual military report produced by the Taiwanese Defense Ministry concludes that the Chinese military has improved capabilities for conducting offensive landing operations on the island, but the People's Liberation Army still lacks sufficient forces to invade, according to a copy of the report obtained by Japan's Yomiuri newspaper.

The ministry report was submitted to the Taiwan legislature in August and described Chinese military combat drills in May targeting Taiwan shortly after President Lai Ching-te took office. According to the report, China's drills sought to promote division and confrontation in Taiwan and affect the morale of the military and the public. The May exercises also used the Chinese coast guard for patrols and inspections of vessels in waters east of Taiwan for the first time, said to be tests of a potential blockade during a military assault on Taiwan.

China has stepped up deployments of new types of anti-ship ballistic missiles and ultra-high-speed hypersonic missiles, which will provide opportunities for strikes against foreign military forces in the seas between the Chinese coast and what Beijing calls the "second island chain" — islands stretching from Japan to Guam, the report said.

The report also disclosed that the Chinese coast guard is being bolstered with new weapons and the addition of small warships from the Chinese navy.

But despite China's overall buildup, the report concludes that China's current capabilities are not sufficient to move large amounts of forces across the 100-mile Taiwan Strait that would be needed in a military strike. The lack of amphibious forces and supply capabilities for cross-strait warfare means the Chinese military is "not fully prepared to conduct a full-scale invasion on Taiwan," the report said.

A military source said one of the lessons China has learned from Russia's invasion of Ukraine is that an assault on Taiwan will be much more difficult than originally anticipated.

### China fails to promptly notify Taiwan on detention of citizens: MAC

27 September 2024, Focus Taiwan

For the past eight years the Chinese authorities have failed to observe cross-strait agreements and promptly inform its counterparts in Taiwan of cases where Taiwanese citizens have had their freedom of movement restricted in China, Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) said Thursday.

The notification mechanism regarding Taiwanese whose personal freedoms are restricted in China is part of past cross-strait agreements, MAC deputy head and spokesperson Liang Wen-chieh (梁文傑) said at a news conference.

"Since May 20, 2016 (the date when former President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) took office), the implementation of these cross-strait agreements has been disrupted by political interference from the Chinese authorities," Liang added.

He urged the Chinese authorities to fulfill their commitments in accordance with the original agreements.

One of the cross-strait agreements related to the notification mechanism is the Cross-Strait Joint Crime-Fighting and Judicial Mutual Assistance Agreement (the Agreement), established by the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) in Taiwan and the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS) in China. The SEF is a semi-official organization in Taiwan that handles technical matters in cross-strait relations and the ARATS is its Chinese counterpart.

According to Article 12 of the Agreement, both parties "agree to promptly notify the other side regarding persons whose personal freedom has been restricted."

In other words, when a Taiwanese citizen is detained in China, the Chinese authorities are required to promptly inform their Taiwanese counterparts. Similarly, Taiwan is required to do the same for Chinese citizens under similar circumstances.

Liang's remarks came in response to a statement made by China's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO)

spokesperson Zhu Fenglian (朱鳳蓮) at a Wednesday news conference, where she said the reason for the disruption in the implementation of cross-strait agreements are "well known" when addressing the case of Taiwanese citizen Kuo Yu-hsuan (郭宇軒).

Twenty-two-year-old Kuo is currently under investigation in China for his alleged involvement in fraud. He went missing soon after arriving in Shanghai on Aug. 27, and his friends and relatives have been unable to contact him since.

However, it was not until Sept. 23, when the TAO issued a news statement confirming Kuo was under investigation by relevant agencies in China due to alleged involvement in fraud, that his whereabouts were made known.

The MAC issued a news statement later on Sept. 23, expressing "strong dissatisfaction" with the Chinese authorities as Kuo's situation was not disclosed until almost one month after his apparent detention.

Liang said at the press conference that Kuo was likely detained since early September, and the absence of a proactive notification from the Chinese authorities led to concerns on the part of his family and media speculation.

"It wasn't until after the incident surfaced, when we made inquiries and even publicly demanded answers, that they (the Chinese authorities) revealed he is currently being investigated for fraud," he added.

Kuo's case clearly demonstrates the necessity of a notification mechanism, which provides both sides of the Taiwan Strait with more accurate information, Liang noted.

In terms of the number of cases notified by China to Taiwan since the Agreement came into effect in 2009, information on the MAC website shows that, as of the end of July this year the Chinese authorities have notified Taiwan of a total of 8,123 cases in which Taiwanese citizens were detained in China.

Of the 8,123 cases, the primary types of criminal cases involved were fraud, smuggling, dangerous driving, drug-related offenses, including both drug trafficking and drug use, and traffic incidents.

In addition, 4,203 of the total were notified from the end of May 2016 (around the time Tsai took office) to late May 2024 (around the time President Lai Ching-te (賴清德) took office), and zero cases from then until the end of July.

### **Taiwan opposition faces test over motion denying China's U.N. claim**

27 September 2024, Nikkei Asia

Taiwan's opposition faces a crucial test over a parliamentary motion mirroring recent international

statements denying China's interpretation of a historic United Nations resolution.

Some hope the main opposition Kuomintang (KMT) will come around to back the motion proposed by the ruling Democratic Progressive Party, which rejects Beijing's view of U.N. Resolution 2758. The resolution, passed in 1971, acknowledges the People's Republic of China as "the only legitimate representative of China to the United Nations." Beijing claims the resolution "confirmed" its "One China principle," which asserts that there is only one China and Taiwan is an "inalienable" part of it.

But the Australian and Dutch parliaments recently backed their own motions stating that this does not give China rights to Taiwan. With a growing number of governments and legal experts calling China's take a distortion, the pro-sovereignty DPP tabled its motion when the Taiwanese legislature recently reconvened.

The KMT demurred and dithered. After initially saying it "respects" the DPP's move, the party warned against "weaponizing" the motion and proposed its own motion to demand that the U.N. allow the Republic of China to "return."

As the senior party in the opposition coalition and the biggest in parliament, the KMT's position illustrates the deep divisions in Taiwan's political class over issues of statehood and foreign affairs. It also hints at KMT wariness of any moves that they suspect would dilute their ideology that modern Taiwan belongs to a greater Chinese polity. But if the KMT ultimately refuses to back the idea that the U.N. resolution does not determine Taiwan's status, it could undermine the willingness of foreign governments to support Taipei.

Some experts were taken aback by the KMT's stance. "Frankly, I'm baffled," said Bonnie Glaser, the managing director of the Indo-Pacific program at the German Marshall Fund of the United States. "I assumed that the KMT opposes the resolution because they don't want to offend China."

Glaser said that calling for the ROC to return to the U.N. is a "nonstarter" and that "it's the KMT's fault that it wasn't tested in 1971." This, too, "will irk China," she said. "So what are they up to? I don't get it."

Chinese nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek and his forces, which were exiled to Taiwan in 1949 after losing a civil war, were expelled from the U.N. in 1971 and had their seat taken by Communist China. For a long time, Chiang insisted that his KMT regime represented all of the Chinese ancien regime, rather than considering alternatives. In subsequent decades, the Taiwanese largely kept the old Chinese polity imposed on them but transformed into a democratic entity.

"The KMT's call for Taiwan to return to the U.N. as the Republic of China is not a serious proposal," said Raymond C-E Sung, vice president of the Taiwanese think tank Prospect Foundation and a scholar on international law. "It's an attempt to block the DPP's motion with a so-called alternative. Essentially, the KMT wants to block Taiwan's legislature from saying that the U.N. resolution doesn't involve Taiwan."

Sung told Nikkei Asia that in his view, the KMT "wants to change the international and domestic narrative – which is increasingly that the U.N. doesn't endorse China's claims over Taiwan – back to their camp. They insist on their own interpretation of the ROC constitution, and created a fantasy that ROC can return to the U.N. in the place of the PRC, as in the pre-1971 state of affairs."

Others have a more positive view.

Luke de Pulford, executive director of the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC) – a group of hundreds of lawmakers from 35 countries concerned about Communist China's threat to global democracy – said that "the fact that a cross-party conversation on 2758 is underway in Taiwan is unexpected and exciting."

IPAC lawmakers agreed during a summit in Taipei in July that Beijing's attempt to rewrite international law over Resolution 2758 was unacceptable, and potentially dangerous. "For that reason they resolved to campaign for their own governments to restate their policies on 2758, against Beijing's distortions. ... I know international politicians will be watching [Taiwan's debate] in the hope that consensus can be achieved."

The KMT and its scandal-hit ally the Taiwan People's Party collectively hold a narrow majority in the legislature and have sought to challenge Lai's agenda. But a backlash against some of their proposals and TPP leader Ko Wen-je's corruption and campaign finance scandals have created a sense of disarray inside their coalition.

Still, the two parties remain defiant, sending back the entirety of the government's 2025 budget proposal last week and repeatedly lashing out at President Lai Ching-te. The TPP has yet to state a clear position on the U.N. issue.

Opposition politicians and KMT-leaning intellectuals have criticized the DPP's proposal that Resolution 2758 does not involve Taiwan.

Huang Kwei-bo, a professor at National Chengchi University and a former KMT official, told local media that the DPP's motion "is simply unnecessary and not pragmatic."

Huang argued that "what should be unanimously resolved by the government and the opposition is that they neither recognize nor accept Resolution 2758." This position should be "adopted to safeguard the national integrity of the Republic of

China and highlight the shortcomings of global governance in which 23 million people in Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu were deprived of participation in the U.N. system."

But for many experts and observers, the top priority should be opposing China's use of force and coercion against Taiwan, not U.N. participation.

"The KMT's advocating bringing back the Republic of China's formula at the U.N. is switching the clock back to then-President Ma Ying-jeou's era," Sung cautioned. "It runs contrary to what the Australian and Dutch parliaments are saying recently."

DPP lawmaker Puma Shen, an expert in China's disinformation, warned that Resolution 2758 is merely the beginning of China's legal warfare against Taiwan. If Taiwan is to counter this, he argued, it needs to control the narrative.

"Taiwan's Legislative Yuan must swiftly reach a consensus on this issue to highlight the determination of Taiwanese society to defend the nation's sovereignty," Shen told Nikkei Asia. "Unfortunately, the KMT's position on this issue is still focused on competing with the People's Republic of China for the right to represent 'China,' while the DPP firmly stands on the position of 'two countries that are not subordinate to each other.'"

A Taiwanese diplomat, who declined to be named, insisted that "the problem of 2758 is Beijing's distortion, and not us."

"We have the right to fight back," the diplomat said. "Whether we can succeed is another matter. We can't let Beijing expand their 'One China principle' without pushbacks and kill our only remaining international space."

### China targeting Taiwanese military: expert

25 September 2024, Taipei Times

Beijing is using its "22 guidelines," designed to punish "die-hard" Taiwanese independence separatists, to target active-duty Taiwanese military personnel, a cross-strait expert said yesterday.

Similar tactics by China intended to threaten or harm morale are expected to increase in the coming weeks ahead of Double Ten National Day next month, Taiwan Thinktank researcher Wu Se-chih (吳瑟致) said.

The Chinese Ministry of State Security on Monday posted a message on WeChat accusing a hacker group called "Anonymous 64" of launching cyberattacks against China, Hong Kong and Macau starting earlier this year.

The group was seeking to seize control of Web sites, electronic billboards, and other devices and platforms to spread disinformation to sow division in



China and distrust in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the ministry said.

The ministry added that "Anonymous 64" is a front for the Taiwanese Ministry of National Defense's Information, Communications and Electronic Force Command, a claim the defense ministry denied.

The Chinese state security ministry also identified three people it said are members of the Taiwanese military, adding that it was investigating them for alleged involvement in the cyberattacks.

Beijing said the investigation was necessary to ensure that its anti-separatist guidelines are thoroughly implemented.

"This is a typical cognitive warfare tactic that China uses against Taiwan. Only this time, they are poisoning the well by pre-emptively claiming the hackers are from Taiwan," Wu said. "It serves no other purpose than to confuse Taiwanese, affect their morale and cause them to lose trust in their government."

The CCP's tactics to punish advocates of Taiwanese independence have had a limited effect and are more a formality, Wu said.

"It is likely that these tactics were rolled out to influence what President William Lai (賴清德) would say in his Double Ten National Day address next month and pressure the Democratic Progressive Party government," he said.

The government should closely watch whether the incident would serve as an example of how the CCP would incriminate Taiwanese for supporting Taiwanese independence, namely by distributing photographs of people that they allege have committed crimes without providing specific evidence, he said.

"The difference this time is that none of the three people are on the list of 'die-hard' separatists or have political influence. It shows that active-duty military personnel could be incriminated based on the anti-separatist guidelines," he said.

### **China are the real hackers not us, Taiwan says after cyber accusations**

24 September 2024, Yahoo Finance

China are the real hackers not Taiwan and accusations from Beijing of a Taiwanese hacking group are fake news, senior government officials said in Taipei on Tuesday.

China's national security ministry said on Monday a Taiwan military-backed hacking group called Anonymous 64 has been carrying out cyberattacks against targets in China, urging people to report "anti-propaganda sabotage."

It also named three Taiwanese it said were part of the group and published their pictures.

Democratically governed Taiwan, which China claims as its own territory, frequently complains it is a victim of Chinese hacking and disinformation, but it is rare for Beijing to turn the tables and make the accusation back at Taipei.

Speaking to reporters at parliament, Taiwan Defence Minister Wellington Koo said it was China who was the main hacker around the globe.

"China is the first country when it comes to daily cyber attacks, doing it against Taiwan and countries with similar democratic ideals. They are the real originators," he said.

China's accusations are untrue, Koo added.

"As for what they have publicised, the military has the conviction to defend the country and will not shirk from doing so because of this, and nor will it have a chilling effect."

Also speaking at parliament, Premier Cho Jung-tai said China was spreading fake news to attack Taiwan.

"We must respond forcefully to fake news accusations against us," Cho said.

China has never renounced the use of force to bring Taiwan under its control. Taiwan's government rejects Beijing's sovereignty claims, saying only the island's people can decide their future.

China detests Taiwan President Lai Ching-te and calls him a "separatist". It has rebuffed Lai's repeated offers of talks.

### **China urges vigilance against Taiwanese cyberattacks**

23 September 2024, Reuters, Joe Cash and Ben Blanchard

China's national security ministry said on Monday a Taiwan military-backed hacking group called Anonymous 64 has been carrying out cyberattacks against targets in China, urging people to report "anti-propaganda sabotage."

Taiwan's defence ministry denied the allegations, saying China was the real disturber of the peace with its cyber attacks and military harassment.

Since the beginning of this year, Anonymous 64 - which China's national security ministry said belonged to Taiwan's cyber warfare wing - has sought to upload and broadcast "content that denigrates the mainland's political system and major policies," on websites, outdoor screens and network TV stations, it said in a blog post.

Taiwan frequently accuses Chinese groups of seeking to spread online disinformation or carry out cyberattacks across the democratically governed island. China claims sovereignty over Taiwan and has ramped up military and political pressure against over the past five years to assert its claims.

The Taiwan defence ministry's Information, Communications and Electronic Force Command said China's accusations were untrue.

"The current enemy situation and cyber threats are severe," it said in a statement. "The Chinese communist military and forces that coordinate with it continue to use aircraft, ships and cyber attacks to harass Taiwan and are the originators of undermining regional peace."

Taiwan's government rejects Beijing's sovereignty claims.

The hacking group's X account said it was set up in June 2023 and showed screenshots of efforts to broadcast videos likening Chinese President Xi Jinping to an emperor, marking the second anniversary of protests against Beijing's strict COVID curbs and commemorating the 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstrations.

One video was an address from an Anonymous 64 member wearing the Anonymous hacking group's Guy Fawkes mask in the style of the graphic novel and film V for Vendetta.

Neither the X site nor the blog post from China's national security ministry said whether Anonymous 64 had any affiliation with the international hacking group.

Reuters was not immediately able to verify where the group was based or whether they had actually carried out the hacking attacks they were accused of. In the blog post published on its official WeChat account, the national security ministry said its investigation into the group had found many of the websites Anonymous 64 claimed to have accessed were fake or had little no traffic. Posts showing it having infiltrated numerous university and media websites had been photoshopped, the ministry added.

The security ministry published screenshots of the group's X account with heavily redacted text. It also said it had opened a case against three members of Taiwan's cyber warfare wing.

"We advocate that netizens should not believe in or spread rumours and should promptly report cyberattacks or cases of anti-propaganda activity to the national security authorities," the blog post said.

### **China blocks Taiwan executive from returning home**

19 September 2024, Nikkei Asia, Thompson Chau

Incident seen fueling further Taiwanese concerns about doing business in China

A senior executive at one of Taiwan's top industrial conglomerates has been barred from leaving China, heightening concerns about the risks of traveling there amid tense cross-strait relations.

The unidentified Formosa Plastics Group official was questioned after landing in Shanghai via a flight from

Taipei on Sept. 1, according to local media. The Taiwanese government confirmed the incident but declined to comment further, citing the individual's safety.

After being released following interrogation, the executive was not allowed by Chinese authorities to return to Taiwan, according to the Central News Agency here.

The company did not comment on the case.

The case, which hit the news the same night that China announced tariffs on dozens of Taiwanese goods, will likely spark widespread alarm in the Taiwanese business community, which had previously been less affected by the Chinese government's crackdown on individuals who defend Taiwan's sovereignty.

Chinese authorities have in recent years stepped up military aggression and political pressure toward Taiwan, an island democracy that Beijing claims as its own territory. But rarely has it targeted the business community.

During Taiwan's presidential campaign last October, China launched an investigation, which concluded with a \$2,800 fine, into contract-manufacturing giant Foxconn after founder Terry Gou joined the race as an independent.

"While it remains unknown why this business executive was subjected to border restrictions, China's actions send a clear message: Anybody can be subject to Beijing's rule by law," said Marcin Jerzewski, a Taipei-based fellow at Visegrad Insight, referring to the term that China often uses to attack Taiwanese individuals who support their own sovereignty. "Intimidation and coercive actions do not merely target a few 'die-hard secessionists.'"

Jerzewski said this is a typical example of China's instrumental use of laws to achieve political objectives – also known as lawfare – as one aspect of Chinese interventions in Taiwan.

"But this strategy might push Taiwanese people even farther away from China due to the increased risks associated with cross-strait travel," the analyst told Nikkei Asia.

China announced late Wednesday that it would end tariff exemptions on 34 agricultural products from Taiwan, effective Sept. 25. The items include fresh fruits, papaya, coconuts, vegetables and aquatic products, according to a statement from the Chinese government's Customs Tariff Commission. Taiwan's Ministry of Agriculture estimated that China's move will affect about \$1 million a year in tariffs.

The Chinese government has in recent years banned, or raised tariffs on, a growing list of Taiwanese products, such as pineapples, grouper fish and wax apples, as part of a broader pattern of economic coercion.

In response to the detention of Taiwanese people in China, the Mainland Affairs Council – Taiwan's top body in charge of relations with Beijing – has repeatedly reminded people to assess the risks before visiting.

The recent number of cases shows that Taiwanese people going to China "to engage in academic, economic, cultural, religious or visiting relatives and friends and other exchange activities" have been questioned and have had their personal freedom restricted by the Chinese authorities without explanation, the council warned last year.

It also urged Beijing to "immediately stop the bad and unreasonable detention behavior and treat each other with courtesy." This will "promote healthy and orderly exchanges" between Taiwan and China, it said.

Formosa Plastics, headquartered in the southern port city of Kaohsiung, manufactures and sells plastics and owns a diverse range of businesses and subsidiaries. With a market capitalization of 307.15 billion New Taiwan dollars (\$9.5 billion), it is one of the region's leading industrial giants.

Soon after Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te took office in May, China swiftly encircled Taiwan and outlying islands with military drills as a warning to Taiwanese sovereignty.

China's leadership has refused to engage with Taiwan's elected government since the pro-sovereignty Democratic Progressive Party took over in 2016. It has sought to undermine the DPP, including through backing opposition politicians and giving them a platform. China has also stopped recognizing maritime boundaries in the Taiwan Strait that both sides had respected for decades.

Taiwan will 'never succumb,' official says amid intensifying pressure from Beijing

12 September 2024, Hong Kong Free Press

Faced with the "unprecedented pressure, our determination to safeguard our sovereignty and democratic system has never been so strong. This is our bottom line," Chiu Chui-cheng said at a defence forum in Taipei.

The head of Taiwan's top China policy body said Thursday that the democratic island will never surrender in the face of intensifying pressure from a "more aggressive" Beijing.

China claims Taiwan as part of its territory and has said it would never renounce the use of force to bring the self-ruled island under its control.

Beijing has ramped up military and political pressure on Taipei in recent years, sending warplanes, drones and naval vessels around the island on a near-daily basis.

The head of Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council – which manages China-related issues – said on Thursday that Beijing's "attempts to erase the sovereignty of the Republic of China (Taiwan)" have threatened peace and stability across the region.

But faced with the "unprecedented pressure, our determination to safeguard our sovereignty and democratic system has never been so strong. This is our bottom line," Chiu Chui-cheng said in an English-language speech at a defence forum in Taipei.

"On this point, there is no room for compromise. We never succumb to the sabre-rattling and intensifying pressure from China. Taiwan never surrenders."

Chiu also warned that Chinese leader Xi Jinping's policy towards Taiwan will "only become more assertive and aggressive" as he hopes to achieve "national unification" with Taiwan.

"This ambition is no doubt the root causes of risks in the Taiwan Strait," he said.

China maintains a military presence around Taiwan, as well as the nearby South China Sea, as Beijing has increasingly pressed on its territorial claims.

On Thursday, Taipei's defence ministry said 29 Chinese military aircraft, eight naval vessels and one official ship were detected in a 24-hour window ending at 6 am (2200 GMT Wednesday).

In May, three days after Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te was sworn into office, Beijing conducted war games to simulate a blockade of the island.

Lai – whom Beijing regards as a "dangerous separatist" – rejects China's claim of Taiwan, just as his predecessor Tsai Ing-wen did.

He has repeatedly made overtures to restart dialogue with Beijing – which were severed after Tsai came to power in 2016 as relations plunged – to no avail.

Chiu reiterated Thursday that Taiwan is willing to talk with Beijing "without any political preconditions on the basis of mutual respect, dignity, and equality".

"We hope the leaders of the other side will display wisdom and flexibility towards a win-win future for both sides of the Taiwan Strait."

### **China says it is verifying email tipoffs about Taiwan 'separatist' activity**

11 September 2024, Reuters

China's government said on Wednesday it would carefully review email tipoffs it has received about Taiwan "separatist" activity, adding that "good people" have nothing to worry about, drawing a rebuke from Taipei that Beijing was simply lying.

China claims democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory, over the strident objections of the government in Taipei.

Beijing has been stepping up its campaign against those it accuses of being "separatists", including in

June threatening to execute "diehard separatists", and in August announced an email address where people could report tipoffs about the crimes committed by such people.

Asked at a routine news conference in Beijing how the new email system was working, Chen Binhua, spokesperson for China's Taiwan Affairs Office, reiterated that their measures targeted only a very small minority.

"After the establishment of the mailbox for reporting diehard Taiwan independence elements, people on both sides of the Taiwan Straits have responded with practical actions," he said.

This is a reflection of the "common aspirations" of people on either side of the strait, Chen added.

"We will carefully verify and screen the clues we receive," he said. "We will never let a single Taiwan independence element off the hook, but we will never wrongly accuse good people either."

Taiwan's China-policy making Mainland Affairs Council said Beijing's claims to be targeting only a small number of people was "obviously a lie" given its vague definition of being an independence supporter.

"We call on the mainland side to stop repeatedly intimidating and threatening the Taiwanese people," it said in a statement.

Taiwan's government, which says only the island's people can decide their future, has condemned China's new campaign, and warned against all but absolutely necessary travel to the country. China says that is alarmist nonsense.

China has a particular hatred of Taiwan President Lai Ching-te, inaugurated in May, but has not placed him on its list of "hardcore separatists", unlike Vice President Hsiao Bi-khim, Defence Minister Wellington Koo and some others in his administration and party.

"Taiwan independence is a scourge, a dead end; it won't come to pass," Chen said, speaking of Lai's first 100 days in office.

Lai has repeatedly offered talks with Beijing but been rebuffed, and also repeatedly warned of the danger Taiwan faces from its giant neighbour and the need to strengthen their defences.

### **China accuses Taiwan president of 'hunting down' rivals like Ko Wen-je**

11 September 2024, Nikkei Asia, Thompson Chau

China has accused Taiwan's president of persecuting Beijing-leaning rivals, days after the leader of the second-largest opposition party was detained amid swirling corruption allegations.

"Since the Lai Ching-te administration came to power, it has repeatedly manipulated judicial and administrative means, used public weapons for private purposes, opposed party members and dissenters, and created 'green terror' on the island,"

Chen Binhua, spokesman for China's Taiwan Affairs Office, told reporters on Wednesday.

The representative of China's top body in charge of relations with Taiwan was replying to a question about his assessment of the scandals plaguing Ko Wen-je, leader of the Taiwan People's Party.

The TPP and its larger opposition partner, the Kuomintang (KMT), have been a thorn in the side of the pro-sovereignty Lai's fledgling administration. But Ko and his party have found themselves fighting for their political future after he was arrested last week in connection with a real estate deal during his past stint as mayor of Taipei.

Hours before his arrest, Ko portrayed himself as the victim of a witch hunt in an interview with Nikkei Asia.

Chen's "green terror" comment was a reference to the White Terror period when the KMT regime, exiled from China, imposed brutal authoritarian rule across Taiwan after 1949.

Comparisons between the Democratic Progressive Party's elected government presiding over a free society and the martial law era are not uncommon among more radical opposition figures in Taiwan, despite obvious differences. During the White Terror, dissidents and civilians were jailed, tortured and executed, and prosecutors did not need a court's permission to detain people.

Ko, who is also embroiled in a campaign finance scandal that prompted him to take a leave of absence from the party's leadership, accused Taiwan's judiciary of being "political tools" of the government in his interview with Nikkei Asia. He also took aim at Taiwan's submarine program, intended as a deterrent against China, and questioned the defense ministry's plans to locally manufacture seven more subs, although he pledged to support raising the defense budget.

Chen accused Lai of trying to "hunt down people from all walks of life who do not support the DPP and do not agree with 'Taiwan independence' in order to pursue the personal interests of one person and one party, and to remove obstacles for them to implement 'Taiwan independence.'"

Ko has argued that China and Taiwan are "one family" and voiced support for economic pacts with Beijing during the campaign for the January elections.

Chen did not provide evidence to substantiate his accusations against Lai. The president, who has been invited for an interview with Nikkei Asia, has on TV emphasized the importance of an independent judiciary in which the executive cannot intervene. Other politicians, including a DPP minister in Lai's administration, have also faced finance scandals recently and been held in custody.

Beijing weighed in on the Ko drama after months of lashing out at Lai's administration through a combination of military incursions and political coercion. Days after Lai took office in May, Chinese forces swiftly encircled Taiwan and its outlying islands with military drills -- underscoring the Communist Party's threat to the Asian democracy and tech powerhouse, which it claims despite never having ruled.

The drills were only one in a series of actions that have raised alarm about Chinese intentions. China's leadership has refused to engage with Taipei's elected government since the DPP took over in 2016. It has sought to undermine the DPP, including by backing opposition politicians and giving them a platform. China has also stopped recognizing maritime boundaries in the Taiwan Strait that both sides had respected for decades.

"I want to emphasize again that 'Taiwan independence' is a countercurrent to history and a dead end; reunification is the historical trend and the right path," Chen said.

The spokesperson added, "No matter how the situation on the island changes, no matter who is in power, it cannot change the fact that both sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to one China, and it cannot change the relationship between the two sides."

Advocates of "Taiwan independence" are defined in Taiwan, the U.S. and much of the world as those who want to remove Taiwan's current Republic of China constitution and polity, and officially declare the island as a de jure sovereign state.

In China, however, the term is increasingly used to describe anyone who supports the status quo and rejects subjugating Taiwan under President Xi Jinping's China, including Lai and his allies.

### **US House passes bill to financially deter aggression against Taiwan**

10 September 2024, Taipei Times, Fion Khan and Kayleigh Madjar

The US House of Representatives yesterday unanimously passed the Taiwan Conflict Deterrence Act, which aims to disincentivize Chinese aggression toward Taiwan by cutting Chinese leaders and their family members off from the US financial system if Beijing acts against Taiwan.

The bipartisan bill, which would also publish the assets of top Chinese leaders, was cosponsored by Republican US Representative French Hill, Democratic US Representative Brad Sherman and seven others.

If the US president determines that a threat against Taiwan exists, the bill would require the US Department of the Treasury to report to Congress on funds held by certain members of the Chinese

Communist Party (CCP), including how they were acquired.

The treasury must then "prohibit significant transactions" between US financial institutions and the officials, and potentially their immediate family, with allowance for exceptions.

It still needs to be approved by the US Senate to become law, but with less than two months before the presidential and congressional elections, it is not clear it is to become law this year.

"If we want to see the world's communist and autocratic dictatorships change course, we must expose their wealth, corruption and financial privilege of their elites to the citizens suffering daily under their rule," Hill said in remarks during deliberation of the bill.

"This bill goes beyond just naming and shaming. It will also cut off access to the US financial system for those CCP officials and their immediate family," he said.

"It is time for China to give up the idea of intimidating the people of Taiwan and to recognize that America's response will involve the military, will involve broad-based economic response, and will involve very personal economic disclosures and response. That is the way to prevent what could cause an incredible disruption in the world and even possibly a world war," Sherman added.

In Taipei, Minister of Foreign Affairs Lin Chia-lung (林佳龍) today expressed gratitude toward the US Congress for using a "creative and effective way" to deter Chinese military aggression toward Taiwan.

"This kind of legislation allows us to jointly deter Chinese Communist expansion and to uphold peace in the Indo-Pacific region, especially cross-strait stability and security," Lin said.

The bill was part of a package of legislation in the US Congress this week aimed at China.

The US House yesterday also voted to bar new drones from Chinese drone manufacturer DJI from operating in the US.

The bill, which still needs to be approved by the US Senate, would prohibit the company's products from operating on US communications infrastructure.

It would not prevent existing DJI drones from operating in the US.

DJI, which sells more than half of all drones in the US, opposes the bill that it said "restricts the ability of US drone operators to buy and use the right equipment for their work, solely on the basis of the equipment's country of origin."

Another bill approved yesterday would bar the US Department of Homeland Security from buying batteries from six Chinese companies, including CATL.



The US House is also expected to vote later this week on tightening rules barring US electric vehicles tax credits with Chinese content.

### **China's harsh sentencing of Taiwanese activist sparks tensions in cross-strait relations**

10 September 2024, Lokmat Times

Efforts to maintain exchanges between Taiwanese and Chinese citizens are facing severe challenges following China's harsh sentencing of a Taiwanese activist.

Analysts warn that Beijing's decision to jail Yang Chih-yuan, a political activist, to nine years in prison under secession charges will have an effect on Taiwan's civil society, Voice of America reported.

According to the report, on September 6, China's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) confirmed that a court in Wenzhou had sentenced Yang under accusations of secession, stating that he was involved in organizations advocating for Taiwan's independence. "His acts are egregious and the court reached the decision according to law," the office said in a statement. Yang, who was arrested in 2022 while teaching and participating in competitions for the board game Go, was accused of long-standing involvement in secessionist activities.

Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council (MAC), overseeing cross-strait exchanges, condemned the ruling, urging Beijing to reveal the verdict and evidence. "Beijing is trying to use Yang's case to intimidate Taiwanese people under the pretext of penalizing Taiwan's independence," the MAC said in a statement last week.

VOA further states that this is the first time China has used secession charges against a Taiwanese individual. It follows China's introduction of 22 new guidelines in June aimed at punishing so-called "die-hard Taiwan independence activists," with potential sentences reaching the death penalty.

Observers believe Yang's case is a troubling signal that Beijing is adopting a more hardline stance against Taiwan. "This shows that Beijing means business when it comes to using legal instruments to crack down on what it regards as 'separatism,'" said J Michael Cole, a senior fellow at the Global Taiwan Institute. He noted that the case will inevitably dampen civil society exchanges between the two sides.

In response to China's growing hostility, Taipei has postponed the scheduled visits of two academic delegations from Xiamen University. While some Taiwanese media claim the delay is due to "obstacles" imposed by local authorities, the MAC maintains that it is part of routine procedures.

China, however, wasted no time twisting the narrative, with the state-run Global Times accusing

Taiwan of deliberately blocking the delegations. This deliberate mischaracterization is yet another example of Beijing's aggressive tactics to shift blame onto Taiwan while it continues its campaign of intimidation.

The tension has also affected other platforms of communication, such as the annual Shanghai-Taipei City Forum. The event, one of the few remaining opportunities for Taiwanese and Chinese officials to meet, has yet to schedule a 2024 gathering. The absence of such exchanges only highlights Beijing's refusal to engage with Taiwan diplomatically, focusing instead on divide-and-conquer strategies within Taiwanese society.

China's increasing military pressure against Taiwan under President Lai Ching-te's leadership reflects Beijing's desire to suppress any notion of Taiwanese sovereignty. "Such delays serve as a clear reminder that even lower-level engagement is difficult to sustain when one side rejects core aspects of the other's existence," said Timothy Rich, a political scientist at Western Kentucky University.

Beijing's relentless pressure is not just military. The sentencing of Yang Chih-yuan is part of a broader effort to suppress pro-independence sentiment within Taiwan. By criminalizing legitimate advocacy, China is attempting to stifle dissent and sow fear among Taiwanese activists and citizens alike.

However, this strategy risks further alienating Taiwan. As Cole pointed out, Beijing's refusal to engage in formal dialogue with Taipei while keeping doors open to interactions with other elements of Taiwanese society is a calculated effort to divide and weaken Taiwan's unity. Yet, this heavy-handed approach may ultimately backfire, as it deepens mistrust and fuels resentment toward Beijing's authoritarian grip.

### **Taiwan detects increase in Chinese military activity near its territory**

08 September 2024, Business Standard

In response to China's military action, Taiwan sent aircraft and naval ships and deployed coastal-based missile systems to monitor PLA activity

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence (MND) said that it detected seven Chinese military aircraft, six naval vessels, one official ship and two of the aircraft entered its Air Defence Identification Zone from 6 am (local time) on Saturday to 6 am (local time) on Sunday.

Of the seven Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), two aircraft crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait and entered Taiwan's southeastern and southwestern Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ).

Taiwan's MND said that it has monitored the situation and responded accordingly.

In response to China's military action, Taiwan sent aircraft and naval ships and deployed coastal-based missile systems to monitor PLA activity.

In a post on X, Taiwan's MND said, "7 PLA aircraft, 6 PLAN vessels and 1 official ships operating around Taiwan were detected up until 6 a.m. (UTC+8) today. 2 of the aircraft crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's eastern ADIZ. We have monitored the situation and responded accordingly."

On Saturday, Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence said that nine Chinese military aircraft, seven naval vessels operating around Taiwan from 6 am (local time) on Friday to 6 am (local time) on Saturday.

According to Taiwan's MND, one of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) aircraft crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait and entered Taiwan's eastern Air Defence Identification Zone.

In a post on X, Taiwan's MND said, "9 PLA aircraft, 7 PLAN vessels and 1 official ships operating around Taiwan were detected up until 6 a.m. (UTC+8) today. 1 of the aircraft crossed the median line. We have monitored the situation and responded accordingly."

This latest incident adds to a series of similar provocations by China in recent months. China has increased its military activities around Taiwan, including regular air and naval incursions into Taiwan's ADIZ and military exercises near the island.

### **Exclusive: Staff member at US consulate general in China openly spreads 'Taiwan independence' rhetoric**

07 September 2024, Global Times

A staff member responsible for translation at a US consulate general in China has repeatedly spread rhetoric related to "Taiwan independence" during public activities, deliberately translating "the People's Republic of China" as "the Republic of China," a source familiar with the matter told the Global Times. The source added that the person, if she insists on behaving in such a way, is certainly unwelcome by the Chinese people.

According to the source, after the Chinese side pointed out the mistake, the US staff member refused to admit and instead accused the Chinese side of slander. In contact with Chinese personnel, this US staff member repeatedly issued extreme remarks such as "Taiwan is an independent country."

She even aggressively pushed local Chinese officials on foreign affairs during external events, displaying an arrogant demeanor, the source said.

The aforementioned source told the Global Times that "A staff member dispatched by the US government to China has behaved in such an inappropriate manner. It raises questions about

whether the issue lies with her personally or with the lack of discipline within the US diplomatic missions in China."

But one thing is certain – her words and actions have offended Chinese society, violated the US government's commitment to the one-China principle, and breached both the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations and the Consular Convention between the People's Republic of China and the United States.

The person, if she insists on behaving in such a way, is certainly unwelcome by the Chinese people, the source said.

### **Taiwan court sentences three retired officers for spying on China's behalf**

07 September 2024, Business Standard

Taiwan News reported that Chang, Chou, and Yueh reaped benefits from China for their business.

Taipei District court sentenced three retired officers Taipei District court sentenced three retired officers from the Military Intelligence Bureau (MIB) to prison on the charge of forming a spy ring to collect sensitive information on China's behalf, Taiwan News reported.

The Taipei District Court verdicts can still be appealed. Former Major General Yueh Chih-chung was sentenced to 10 months in jail, retired Colonel Chang Chao-jan received a prison term of 18 months, and ex-Colonel Chou Tien-tzu was sentenced to 14 months. Ex-Colonel Wang Ta-wang was found not guilty, as per Taiwan News report on Friday.

Taiwan News reported that Chang, Chou, and Yueh reaped benefits from China for their business, and were invited on free trips, according to prosecutors. A national security official in the Chinese province of Guangdong told them to form a spy ring and collect secret information from Taiwan.

Chang was accused of arranging a trip to China for Wang, who revealed personal background information about colleagues to the Chinese officials. After completing their investigation, prosecutors decided to charge the suspects with breaking the National Security Act by forming a spy organization and the National Intelligence Work Act by leaking secrets, Taiwan News reported.

On August 30, the Taiwanese Supreme Court sentenced a father and son duo for eight years in prison on the charge of enticing active military officers to pass on secret information about the annual Han Kuang drills to China.

The Supreme Court rejected final appeals on August 29. The two suspects, surnamed Huang, first came into contact with Chinese intelligence officials in 2015 when they were doing business in Xiamen.

As per Taiwan News, the duo recruited two officers in separate air defence and missile units, Yeh and Su. The group passed on eight secret documents about the Han Kuang exercises. They delivered the information personally to China or sent images and graphics by messaging softwares.

## August

### Residents of Nepal's 15 northern districts to get five- yearly Tibet entry-exit passes

31 August 2024, Tibetan Review

Normal life appears to have finally resumed for the people living in 15 districts of northern Nepal near Chinese occupied Tibet's border with the two countries having agreed to issue five-year entry and exit passes for them, according to kathmandupost.com Aug 29. Most of these people are ethnically Tibetan or of Tibetan-origin. It is not clear whether people on the Tibetan side of the border will be issued similar passes.

Nepali citizens living in northern districts who depend on Tibet for trade, pilgrimage, work, health checks and other daily activities, have long been complaining of hassles in visiting Tibet due to lack of mandatory passes, the report said.

The permit system was suspended after the onset of Covid pandemic at the end of 2019. After China finally started reopening 14 traditional entry points recently, some local units on the Nepali side started issuing temporary "China Departure and Entry Permits" locally. Now, to streamline the entry and exit permission, the Department of Immigration is all set to issue digital passes to residents of the 15 districts. However, Nepali citizens from other districts will need a visa to enter "Chinese" territory, the report explained.

The 15 districts where the passes would be distributed are listed as Taplejung, Sankhuwasabha, Solukumbhu, Dolakha, Sindhupalchok, Rasuwa, Dhading, Gorkha,

Manang, Mustang, Dolpa, Mugu, Humla, Bajhang and Darchula.

And the 14 dedicated trading/entry/exit points are listed as Tiptala (Taplejung); Kimathnaka (Sankhuwasabha); Falak and Lapchi of Dolakha; Tatopani and Gumba of Sindhupalchok; Lazing and Chhekampar (Gorkha); Korala of Mustang; Hilsa (Humla); Nakcha (Mugu); Maringla Bhanjyang (Dolpa); Urai (Bajhang); and Tinkar of Darchula district.

However, Nepal's Department of Immigration will not immediately issue the entry pass in Solukumbhu,

Dhading, and Manang districts due to ongoing adverse weather conditions, the report said.

The five-year pass will be issued exclusively to Nepali citizens living in the 15 border districts, their siblings, and those who are married and living permanently in these districts. Those who have migrated from other districts and are now permanently living in these 15 districts are also eligible for the pass, the report said. Before 2007, Nepali and Chinese nationals from border districts could travel up to 30 kilometres inside each other's territory without restrictions. However, in Jan 2007, the two sides reached a new agreement under which an identity card with one-year validity was made mandatory. Now, both sides have developed a digital identity card.

The report noted that Nepal and China first entered an 'Agreement on Trade and other Related Matters between the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) of China and Nepal' on Sep 30, 1956, and it was last renewed on Jul 10, 2002.

A Home Ministry official of Nepal has said the ministry and the Department of Immigration had agreed to incorporate biometric security features into the pass, as requested by Chinese officials. The new pass with biometric information is intended to curb illegal and criminal activities across the Nepal-Tibet border, the report added.

Earlier, the Chinese authorities would issue one-year entry permits, and after Covid, they limited it to a day- long pass. If the entry process is simplified further, it will benefit the citizens from both sides even more," Madav Sapkota, a CPN (Maoist Centre) lawmaker from Sindhupalchok district, has said.

### 100 days into the job, Taiwan's new leader is cutting mainland ties by reframing history

31 August 2024, SCMP

William Lai Ching-te's first 100 days as leader of Taiwan have been evaluated not only on the basis of his handling of local affairs, but also in relation to the self- governed island's heightened tensions with mainland China.

Cross-strait relations have deteriorated significantly since Lai took office on May 20, according to analysts,

who say he has actively sought to sever Taiwan's historical ties with the mainland.

His predecessor Tsai Ing-wen, also of the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), employed a strategy of ambiguity in dealing with the mainland during her eight years in office. However, the more assertive Lai is seen to have taken a clear and decisive stance.

His promotion of the "mutual non-subordination" theory to define Taiwan's relationship with Beijing

has raised concerns among observers, who fear it could further strain cross-strait ties and potentially lead to conflict.

In his three major speeches on cross-strait relations since taking office, Lai has consistently stressed his view that the two sides of the Taiwan Strait are no longer connected.

"The Republic of China and the People's Republic of China are not subordinate to each other," Lai said in his inauguration speech, referring to the official names of the two sides.

According to analysts, Lai has sought to use these speeches to project a permanent disconnect, reframing the two sides of the strait as adversaries rather than kin.

"In contrast to Tsai, who adopted a strategic ambiguity approach by maintaining the Act Governing the Relations Between the People of Taiwan and the Mainland to avoid overly provoking Beijing, Lai chose to make it clear that the two sides are not subordinate to each other," said Wang Kung-yi, head of the Taiwan International Strategy Study Society, a think tank in Taipei.

Promulgated in 1992, the act governs visits and exchanges of people between Taiwan and the mainland.

Although Tsai also promoted the island's independence, Wang said that by maintaining the cross-strait relations act that still binds the two sides together, she managed to give Beijing the impression that she did not seek to overly offend.

But Lai has simply abandoned the act and directly touted the "mutual non-subordination" concept to wipe out the historic cross-strait link, Wang said.

Addressing the centennial celebration of the Whampoa Military Academy in Kaohsiung on June 16, Lai said: "Despite drastic changes over the past 100 years, we firmly believe that wherever the Republic of China is, there is the spirit of Whampoa." Lai made no mention of the late Kuomintang (KMT) leader Chiang Kai-shek, who headed the academy when it was first established in the southern mainland city of Guangzhou in 1924.

The academy was relocated to Taiwan shortly after the civil war, when Chiang's defeated forces retreated to the island and set up an interim government there in 1949.

"Only those who fight for the survival, development and security of the Republic of China and its people are true graduates of the academy; those without such ambition are false ones," Lai said.

Last week in Quemoy – a Taiwanese defence outpost also known as Kinmen – Lai addressed a ceremony to mark the 66th anniversary of the start of the 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis, also known as the "August 23 Artillery Battle".

"We are no longer trying to retake mainland China, but we are also unwilling to be ruled by the Chinese Communist Party," Lai said.

"When the artillery battle happened, I wasn't born yet, and the Democratic Progressive Party hadn't been established either. Clearly, China's intention to take over Taiwan is not directed at any particular person or political party in Taiwan, nor is it about what anyone has said or done."

The battle in 1958 saw communist forces shelling the nearby islands of Quemoy and Matsu – another Taiwanese defence outpost close to the mainland – in an attempt to take control of Taiwan.

Beijing sees Taiwan as part of China to be reunited by force if necessary. Most countries, including Taiwan's main international backer, the United States, do not recognise Taiwan as independent, but Washington is opposed to any attempt to take the self-governed island by force and is committed to supplying it with weapons.

Beijing sees Lai, leader of the DPP, as a "separatist" who could bring war to the Taiwan Strait and has stepped up military intimidation since he was elected to succeed Tsai in January.

"In his June address to the Whampoa Military Academy, Lai stressed that although the academy was set up 100 years ago in Guangzhou, it is now in Kaohsiung, and the Whampoa spirit only exists in Taiwan rather than in mainland China," Wang said.

"Lai attempted to strike a delicate balance between acknowledging the academy's historical roots in mainland China and promoting a distinct Taiwanese identity," Wang added, saying he also sought to erase the legacy of Chiang, who had deep historical links with the mainland and whose influence still lingered within the military.

Huang Kwei-bo, a professor of diplomacy at National Chengchi University in Taipei, said Lai's August 23 speech was part of an ongoing attempt to decouple Taiwan from mainland China.

"In the case of the August 23 Artillery Battle, Lai sought to lead the public to believe that the battle was a conflict between 'democratic Taiwan and communist China,' whereas in reality, it was the extension of the Chinese civil war between the KMT and the [Communist Party]," Huang said.

Like the mainland, Taiwan was under one-party rule in 1958. The KMT is now the main opposition party in Taiwan.

Huang said Lai's remarks that China's attempt to take the island was "not directed at any particular person or political party in Taiwan" suggested that Beijing's wish to seize Taiwan had nothing to do with the ruling DPP's promotion of independence.

However, Lai I-chung, president of the Prospect Foundation, a government think tank, said that Lai's

remarks aimed to assert that Taiwan had “long since moved beyond the historical perspective of the Chinese Civil War”.

“The artillery battle should not be viewed as an extension of that civil war,” he said, adding the island’s leader sought to “break free from the Chinese civil war framework in Taiwan’s cross-strait discourse, anchoring it instead in the broader national context”. Additionally, his remarks aimed to shift society away from an outdated historical viewpoint, urging Taiwanese to realise that Taiwan is now of global significance, Lai I-chung said.

“The Taiwan Strait issue is not merely a matter between Taiwan and China but a challenge faced by the entire world, and Taiwan is not facing it alone.” James Yifan Chen, a professor of diplomacy and international relations at Tamkang University in New Taipei, said Lai’s cross-strait policy rhetoric appeared to be more separatist than Tsai’s because of Lai’s repeated emphasis on how the two sides were not subordinate to each other.

“Lai is also framing a different concept which denies [Taiwan’s] past legacies on the mainland to push for more obvious separation as a historical revisionist,” Chen said.

Timing is also important. Lai is promoting his ideology during the “vacuum period” of the US presidential election, when Americans typically pay less attention to the words and actions of a Taiwanese leader, according to Chen.

“I think US national security adviser Jake Sullivan and China’s top diplomat Wang Yi would definitely talk about this [but] the US worries more about the Middle East and the South China Sea now, and cross-strait issues do not appear on its alert radar,” he said.

Li Zhengguang, dean of the Taiwan Research Institute at Beijing Union University, said that from the mainland’s perspective, Tsai Ing-wen was more inclined towards “soft confrontation” while Lai’s provocations on the issue of Taiwanese independence have surpassed hers.

He warned that if Lai continued to push the “Taiwan independence historical narrative” to sever cross-strait ties or adopted a “hard confrontation” approach in cross-strait relations, the mainland will undoubtedly respond with “hard measures” to seek unification.

“This is evident from earlier actions such as the mainland issuing judicial documents to punish stubborn Taiwan independence elements, the People’s Liberation Army exercises targeting Taiwan, and the normalisation of law enforcement patrols by the mainland coastguard in the waters around Quemoy,” he said.

Sullivan’s just-concluded visit to Beijing also sent “a clear signal” that the US wanted to cooperate with the mainland to improve risk management regarding Taiwan, Li said.

### **China lacks the ability to invade, but has options**

31 August 2024, Taipei Times

China lacks the ability to “fully” invade Taiwan as it does not have the equipment, but is bringing online advanced new weapons and has other options to threaten Taiwan, such as inspecting foreign cargo ships, the Ministry of National Defense (MND) said yesterday.

In an annual threat assessment of China sent to lawmakers, a copy of which was reviewed by Reuters, the ministry said Beijing continues to hone skills such as joint command operations.

“However, the use of tactics and strategies against Taiwan is still limited by the natural geographical environment of the Taiwan Strait and insufficient landing equipment and logistic capabilities,” it said. China “does not yet fully possess the formal combat capabilities for a comprehensive invasion of Taiwan,” it added.

However, China is speeding up development of a slew of new weapons, such as the H-20 bomber and hypersonic missiles, beefing up the number of nuclear warheads and trialing new tactics, the ministry said. The report said that in May, when China staged war games around Taiwan shortly after President William’s Lai (賴清德) inauguration, China Coast Guard ships were sent for the first time on interception and inspection drills off the east coast. China’s aim with the drills was to practice cutting off communication with the outside world and blockade Taiwan, and boarding foreign cargo ships is an option China could take, short of open conflict, the ministry said.

The Chinese Ministry of National Defense did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

At a regular news briefing in Beijing on Thursday, the Chinese ministry said that as long as the Democratic Progressive Party “engages in ‘Taiwan independence’ [efforts], there will be no peace.”

“The more they provoke, the faster they will perish,” Chinese Ministry of National Defense spokesperson Wu Qian (吳謙) told reporters.

Taiwan’s proposed defense spending is to rise faster than expected economic growth next year, as Taipei

builds more missiles, submarines and other weapons to deter China.

“Peace achieved by strength is true peace,” Lai told officers at the defense ministry yesterday. “We will continue to improve our self-defense capabilities and



show the world that we are united as a nation and are determined to protect our country."

### **Hundreds of Taiwanese 'disappear' in China over past 10 years**

30 August 2024, RFA, Haung Chun-mei and Jing Wei

Rights groups call for better safeguards for all victims of 'enforced disappearance.'



Victims of enforced disappearance in China (L to R) rights attorney Gao Zhisheng, retired university professor Sun Wenguang, 2022 bridge banner protester Peng Lifa, and the 11th Panchen Lama.

More than 800 nationals of democratic Taiwan have "disappeared" over the past 10 years in China, which has long used forced disappearances to silence and control its own dissidents and rights activists, rights groups said on Friday.

Figures compiled by the Taiwan Association for Human Rights and several other non-government groups showed that 857 Taiwan nationals have been "forcibly disappeared or arbitrarily arrested" in China, activists told a joint news conference in Taipei. They include publisher Li Yanhe (pen name Fu Cha), detained in Shanghai since April 2023, democracy activist Lee Ming-cheh, who served a five-year jail term in Hunan province for "attempting to subvert state power," and businessman Lee Meng-Chu, jailed for nearly two years for "espionage" after he snapped photos of People's Armed Police personnel at a Shenzhen hotel at the height of the 2019 Hong Kong protests.

Speaking on the United Nations' International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, Taiwan Association for Human Rights chief Eeling Chiu called on China to fulfill its obligations under international human rights law.

"China should ... immediately release those who have been forcibly disappeared or arbitrarily detained," Chiu told journalists, calling on the Taiwan authorities

to ratify United Nations conventions against torture and enforced disappearances as soon as possible.

"[They should also] actively assist the families of those who have been arbitrarily arrested and detained in China and set up assistance mechanisms for them," she said.

Activist Wang Chia-hsuan of a petition group in support of Li Yanhe, or Fu Cha, said Li was born in China but had permanent residency in Taiwan at the time of his disappearance, having lived in Taipei for more than a decade.

He has been incommunicado for 527 days, and has been detained on suspicion of "incitement to secession," Wang said.

He called on Taipei municipal authorities to step up efforts to communicate with the Chinese authorities regarding Li's case.

Lee Ming-cheh told the news conference that his disappearance and subsequent jailing put huge pressure on his family back home.

"Collaborators with the Chinese government in Taiwan warned my wife off talking to Taiwanese NGOs or speaking out publicly about my case, saying they would allow her to travel to China to visit me [if she complied]," he said.

"If she spoke publicly about my case, she wouldn't be allowed to go to China," Lee said, accusing the Chinese government of abusing current crime cooperation agreements with Taiwan to persecute its residents.

Negotiating is key

Ruling Democratic Progressive Party lawmaker Puma Shen said the Taiwanese authorities could do a better job of negotiating in the early stages of such cases.

"Government officials ... should call on China for more appropriate handling of [such] cases," Shen said. "If that doesn't happen, then we should cut off communication [with China]."

"If we continue to communicate past that point, there will be no deterrence at all ... and it will send the message that it's OK if our people keep disappearing," he said.

Meanwhile, Taiwanese lawmaker Hung Shen-han warned that it's not only Taiwanese who are at risk of arbitrary arrest and "disappearance" in China.

"The risk to individuals of being disappeared and prosecuted in China don't just apply to Taiwanese," Hung said, adding that some democratic countries have issued travel advisories to their citizens on the matter.

"The Chinese government uses its laws, along with various undemocratic and unsupervised practices, to threaten the personal safety of people from all countries who go to China," he said.

"Chinese citizens themselves face the same problem." Geng He, the U.S.-based wife of human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng said it has been seven years since he "disappeared" on Aug. 13, 2017.

"Gao Zhisheng has been missing for seven years and 17 days, with no news or explanation, neither verbal nor written," she told RFA Mandarin in a recent interview.

"They deploy the whole state apparatus in its entirety to target people like Gao Zhisheng who speak the truth and work on behalf of the people," Geng said. The couple's entire family has also been affected, she said.

"My entire family's ID cards have been confiscated for the past 15 years now," Geng said. "This has caused great inconvenience to my family in terms of their ability to work, go about their lives, access medical treatment and travel."

"They're being controlled to death," Geng said. "Basically, they can't leave their homes."

Gao's sister died by suicide in May 2020, while his brother-in-law also took his own life after being forced to beg the authorities to "borrow" his own ID card so he can access his cancer medication.

Veteran rights lawyer Bao Longjun said the authorities have also "disappeared" his wife Wang Yu, also a prominent rights attorney, on several occasions in recent years. She was incommunicado for several hours on Wednesday during the trial of rights lawyer Yu Wensheng and activist Xu Yan in Suzhou.

"I feel like it's about ruling the country through terror," Bao told RFA Mandarin. "There is no legal basis for [enforced disappearances]."

"If you are even slightly disobedient, they will immediately bring state power to bear, forcibly restricting your freedom, and controlling you to achieve what they think is stability," he said.

Uyghurs and Tibetans

Chinese authorities have also forcibly disappeared Uyghurs and Tibetans in the far-western part of mainland China.

An estimated 1.8 million Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims have been detained in Xinjiang under flimsy pretexts during mass incarcerations that began more than seven years ago in an effort by Chinese authorities to prevent religious extremism, separatism and terrorism.

Former Xinjiang University President Tashpolat Teyip, who himself vanished in 2017 amid rumors he had run afoul of China's increasingly hardline policies in Xinjiang, told RFA that he has had no news about his brother, Nury, who also fell victim to an enforced disappearance.

Teyip, who now lives in the U.S. state of Virginia, said he has lost faith in the United Nations and international human rights organizations which did little to help except release a statement.

"I haven't received any information from them regarding my brother — whether he's alive or not, whether he was executed or not," he said.

Rights groups and the Tibetan government-in-exile expressed "serious concern" on Friday over the enforced disappearances of Tibetans in Tibet and called on the Chinese government to release credible information on the whereabouts and well-being of those who have been arbitrarily detained.

The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy highlighted a "disturbing trend" of underreporting of the number of Tibetans who are victims of enforced disappearances as China cracks down more heavily with restrictions and heightened surveillance in Tibet. The rights group has documented more than 63 known cases of Tibetans subjected to enforced disappearance in Tibet over the past four years, but said the underreporting likely had to do with fear of reprisals.

In February 2024, Tibetan performer Gyegjom Dorjee, who sang publicly about the exiled Dalai Lama's return to Tibet and blasted Chinese leaders as "false," was arrested in China's Sichuan province. In March, Chinese police arrested Pema, a Tibetan monk from Kirti Monastery, for staging a solo protest while holding a portrait of the Dalai Lama on the streets of Ngaba county in Sichuan province.

And on May 28, the Chinese authorities arrested Rabgang Tenzin who hoisted the Tibetan national flag on the rooftop of his home in Tibet's Chamdo prefecture as part of a consecration ceremony.

On Friday, the U.S. Congressional Executive Commission on China and the Tibetan government in exile urged Beijing to reveal the whereabouts of one of the highest Tibetan Buddhist leaders, the 11th Panchen Lama, or Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, as one of the "most prominent enforced disappearance cases." He was abducted by Chinese authorities in May 1995, just days after the Dalai Lama recognized the then six-year-old as the 11th reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, the second-highest spiritual leader in the largest sect of Tibetan Buddhism.

'An egregious human rights violation'

The whereabouts and well-being of disappeared Tibetans remain unknown, despite repeated attempts by family members to get information about them, causing them, government officials and rights groups said.

"Enforced disappearance is an egregious human rights violation that inflicts the trauma of indeterminate detention or disappearance on its victims, whom all too often are targeted for their dissent or advocacy for human rights and democracy," said U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a statement on Friday.

"Families of those forcibly disappeared also suffer immensely, not knowing where their loved ones are, or whether they are alive or dead," he said. "The agony that enforced disappearance inflicts on the victims and their families is unimaginable."

According to the U.N.'s official website, enforced disappearances are "frequently" used by authorities around the world as a way of spreading terror.

Hundreds of thousands of people have vanished during conflicts or periods of repression in at least 85 countries around the world, plunging their families into "mental anguish" and dire economic hardship, it said.

The disappeared are particularly vulnerable to torture, while women are at risk of sexual violence, a U.N. page explaining the concept said.

The practice violates a slew of fundamental human rights, including the right liberty and security, the right not to be subjected to torture or inhumane treatment, and the right to a fair trial, it said.

### **Taiwan sentences 8 military officers on charges of spying for China**

27 August 2024, Phayul. Tsering Dhundup

The Taiwan High Court sentenced eight Taiwanese military officers to prison on charges of spying for China in exchange for financial gain on Thursday. The sentences range from 18 months to 13 years, marking one of Taiwan's largest espionage cases in recent years.

The Taiwan high court stated that the defendants were involved in collecting intelligence for China, leading to the leak of important secrets. The defendants were reportedly motivated by financial incentives. The court also noted that an individual named Chen Yuxin contacted and recruited the defendants at key military sites to form a spy network for China. Chen is believed to have fled to China.

The defendants were accused of planning to fly a CH-47 Chinook military helicopter to a Chinese aircraft carrier in the Taiwan Strait and of creating a video indicating their intention to surrender to Beijing in the event of war, as reported by Taiwan's Central News Agency. According to Timothy Heath, a senior international defence researcher with the RAND Corporation, the consequences could have been severe if Taiwan's authorities had not intervened.

According to Taiwanese authorities, this sentencing is the latest in a series of espionage cases involving Chinese efforts on the island. Russell Hsiao, executive director of the Global Taiwan Institute, highlighted a shift in Chinese espionage tactics, noting that the convicted agents in this case were relatively younger

than those in prior cases, which often involved older retirees from the military.

Hsiao also pointed out that while older targets were often motivated by ideology and financial gain, the recent cases appear to be driven primarily by financial motives. He observed that the sentences in this case are more severe than in previous cases, potentially serving as a deterrent.

China claims Taiwan as its territory and has increased military and political pressure in the Taiwan Strait. Espionage between the two sides has been ongoing for decades. Liu Pengyu, a spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in Washington, stated that this issue concerns the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, which he described as belonging to the same China.

Hsiao mentioned an upward trend in espionage cases involving Taiwanese military personnel over the past decade. Taiwan's Control Yuan, the government's oversight branch, confirmed this trend, noting a significant increase in the number of espionage-related cases uncovered by Taiwan's military security units. From 2011 to 2023, there were 40 espionage cases, involving 113 military and civilian personnel, and numerous top secrets were leaked.

### **Taiwan condemns China for disrupting regional peace**

27 August 2024, Focus Taiwan

Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) strongly condemned China on Tuesday after a Chinese aircraft infringed on Japanese airspace earlier in the day.

The action seriously violated Japan's sovereignty and heightened regional tensions, MOFA said in a statement.

Chinese military aircraft and ships have continuously intruded into Taiwan's and Japan's air defense identification zones and exclusive economic zones, MOFA said.

Furthermore, China has partnered with Russia to frequently carry out military exercises in the East China Sea and South China Sea, in attempts to change the status quo through military prowess. Their expanding military actions have posed serious threats to countries in the Indo-Pacific region, said MOFA. MOFA called for China to exercise restraint and refrain from disrupting peace in the Taiwan Strait.

Taiwan will also strengthen its self-defense and work with like-minded countries to stop the expansion of authoritarianism, MOFA said.

## **Taiwan bans concert by Chinese rapper over insulting 'Taipei, China' promotional materials**

26 August 2024, FOX4

Taiwan has cancelled a planned Taipei concert by a Chinese rapper after he used the insulting term "Taipei, China" in promotional materials.

Wang Yitai's scheduled Sept. 14 concert has been scrapped and the performer from the southwestern city of Chengdu banned from the island, the Taiwanese government's Mainland Affairs Council announced late Sunday.

The term is insulting because it describes Taipei, the island's capital, as a Chinese city under Beijing's rule, echoing the government's position on eventually annexing Taiwan by force if necessary and denigrating the island's lively democracy.

Not widely known outside China, Wang is signed to a rap label in Chengdu, a city with a lively arts scene that has become famous for eclectic performers and venues. It's also home to the rap group CD Rev, which won international notoriety for hard-line nationalist tracks including ones that compare Taiwan to the semi-autonomous Chinese city Hong Kong and made obscene and misogynist references to former President Tsai Ing-wen.

China regularly bans Taiwanese artists, many of whom are popular in the mainland, for any sign of support for the ruling Democratic Progressive Party that favors the island's de-facto independence from China.

While Taiwan regularly welcomes Chinese artists and its government considers musical interactions in a positive light, the Mainland Affairs Council said that "cross-strait exchanges should be conducted based on the principles of reciprocity and mutual respect, and any publications or promotions that belittle Taiwan's status will not be tolerated."

While Taiwan's official name is the Republic of China, after the government that fled to the island in 1950 amid civil war, it is widely known simply as Taiwan, and competes at the Olympics as "Chinese Taipei" in deference to Beijing, whose pressure has reduced the island's number of formal diplomatic allies to just 12.

## **U.S. national security advisor to raise Taiwan on upcoming China trip**

25 August 2024, Focus Taiwan

A senior White House official told reporters on Friday that the U.S. will raise concerns about China's "destabilizing" military, diplomatic and economic pressure on Taiwan when National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan meets China's foreign minister in Beijing next week.

Sullivan will travel to Beijing for meetings with the People's Republic of China's (PRC) foreign minister, Wang Yi, between Aug. 27-29, according to the White House.

"I expect in these conversations next week we're going to raise concerns about the PRC's increased military, diplomatic, and economic pressure against Taiwan," the official told reporters in a press briefing phone call early on Friday morning (U.S. Eastern Time).

"These activities are destabilizing and risk escalation," the official said, without elaborating.

"And we're going to continue to urge Beijing to engage in meaningful dialogue with Taipei."

Reiterating the Biden administration's commitment to the United States' "One China" policy – in which the U.S. recognizes the PRC as the sole legal government of China but only acknowledges Beijing's claim that Taiwan is a part of China – the official said the U.S. "oppose[s] unilateral changes to the status quo from either side."

"We expect cross-strait differences to be resolved peacefully," the official added.

"Everything that we have seen come out of Taipei indicates that the current leadership remains committed to maintaining status quo and peace and stability," the official said, referring to President Lai Ching-te's (賴清德) calls for dialogue with Beijing since assuming office in May.

The official also said that "the economic impact of instability in the region would be overwhelming" and there is a "global stake in continued peace and stability and status quo."

Sullivan has met with Wang four times over the last year and a half, according to the White House.

The trip next week comes in advance of the U.S. presidential election in November and amid tensions between Washington and Beijing over China's growing assertiveness in the Asia-Pacific region.

## **Chinese Planners Push Creation of Post-Takeover 'Shadow Government' for Taiwan**

23 August 2024, National Review, Jimmy Quinn

The plan comes from a team at Xiamen University's Cross-Strait Institute of Urban Planning and was published earlier this month, then translated by the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Xiamen, which is located in China's Fujian province, is only a few miles away from the Taiwanese island of Kinmen. The Xiamen University paper states that the Chinese regime would need to move more swiftly in Taiwan than it did after the 1997 handover of Hong Kong by the United Kingdom. "The depth and breadth of the takeover will be far greater than in

Hong Kong in 1997, so preparing plans for the comprehensive takeover of Taiwan after 'reunification' is already an urgent matter," the Xiamen academics wrote.

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Taiwan after 'reunification' is already an urgent matter," the Xiamen academics wrote.

They proposed the creation of a "Central Taiwan Work Committee" that the government would set up "as soon as possible," then send to Taiwan after annexation. It would study "post-takeover policies such as the application of laws, currency conversion, mainland-Taiwan infrastructure integration, customs, international travel, and screening of military personnel, civil servants, and teachers."

The three purposes of that committee would be to bolster the Chinese regime's understanding of Taiwanese institutions and how they could be adopted or changed after takeover, galvanize the efforts of Beijing's political allies in Taiwan's current political system akin to how the Communist International supported the CCP, and "smooth the impact of regime change" by working with Taiwanese elites to help craft Beijing's plans for the takeover.

The paper's mention of Beijing's allies in Taiwan seems to be a nod at the CCP's extensive "united front" influence operations and espionage campaigns in the country, though it also notes that these "anti-Taiwan independence forces" have grown less influential in recent years.

The plan also calls for the immediate creation of a "Taiwan Governance Experimental Zone" in Xiamen or nearby Nan'an City, both of which the paper notes are adjacent to Kinmen and have mountains and a culture similar to that of that Taiwanese island. The experimental zone would simulate Taiwan's political structure, enacting policies such as the elimination of the traditional Chinese characters used in Taiwan but not mainland China and the phasing out of Taiwan's currency.

The Chinese authorities would also train CCP cadres in the experimental zone, primarily consisting of

retired Taiwanese soldiers, civil servants, and teachers.

The Xiamen University paper is just the latest indication that Beijing would govern the island with an iron fist, in the event of its absorption by the mainland, and although it was published by academics, it is consistent with previous Chinese-regime statements. Increasingly, Chinese-government officials have spoken about how Beijing would rule over the island after annexation, with China's ambassador to France Lu Shaye in 2022 stating that the party would carry out a widespread "reeducation" campaign

Last year, the party's prominent Chinese People's Political and Consultative Conference body purportedly passed a resolution urging the Chinese authorities to craft a "Taiwan Province Separatist Forces Blacklist," which would include the names of prominent Taiwanese individuals to execute.

The author of that resolution, who posted to social media about the CPPCC's vote to approve it, also called for the execution of Taiwanese president

William Lai, who was the country's vice president at the time.

Then, earlier this month two Chinese agencies – the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council and the Ministry of Public Security – posted a list of "diehard 'Taiwan independence' secessionists" to their websites, according to the Global Times, an English-language propaganda organ.

The members of that list include Taiwanese vice president Bi-Khim Hsiao, national security council secretary-general Joseph Wu, and several other Taiwanese officials.

### **China's 'growing authoritarianism' poses a global challenge, Taiwan's President Lai warns**

21 August 2024, CNBC, Lee Ying Shan

Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te has cautioned that China's "growing authoritarianism" will not stop with the island, and that it poses a challenge at the "global level."

Lai was speaking at the annual Ketagalan Forum, a dialogue focusing on security issues in the Indo-Pacific. It was attended by representatives from several countries including the U.S., India, Japan, Australia and Canada.

"We are all fully aware that China's growing authoritarianism will not stop with Taiwan, nor is Taiwan the only target of China's economic pressures," Lai said, adding that this authoritarianism is becoming "more aggressive."

"It's now a challenge at the global level," Lai emphasized, calling for countries to cooperate and curtail China's efforts.



His comments come as China has been ramping up military activity in the South China Sea.

"China intends to change the rules-based international order. That is why democratic countries must come together and take concrete action," the Taiwanese president said.

Last weekend, China's Ministry of Transport said it carried out a maritime patrol and law enforcement operation in the Taiwan Straits aimed at "enhancing traffic management and emergency rescue capabilities."

In May, after Lai was sworn in, China's military conducted two days of drills around Taiwan as an act of "punishment" to the island's "separatist acts."

Tensions between China and the Philippines have also been escalating in the Spratly Islands for months. Recently, vessels from the two countries collided near the disputed Sabina Shoal in the South China Sea.

Following the vessel collision, Beijing's actions drew condemnation from Philippine allies, with the U.S. reaffirming its mutual defense pact with the Philippines.

"Such actions are intended to intimidate China's neighbors and undermine regional peace and stability," said Lai.

China had dismissed the outcome of Taiwan's elections in January that brought Lai to power, saying the ruling Democratic Progressive Party did not represent the mainstream public.

Beijing maintains that the democratically governed island of Taiwan is part of its territory.

China's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to CNBC's request for comment.

Taiwan's defense spending is reportedly set to climb 7.7%, outpacing the island's GDP growth.

#### **China confident of 'reunification' with Taiwan: CCP official**

20 August 2024, Alarabiya

Beijing is confident about "complete reunification" with self-ruled Taiwan, a senior Chinese Communist Party official said Tuesday at a Hong Kong conference promoting China's reunification.

The annual conference – held in Hong Kong for the first time in 14 years – was attended by more than 1,200 pro-China politicians and public figures from the mainland, Hong Kong, Taiwan and overseas, according to organizers.

"Today, we are closer to... realizing the great rejuvenation of the people of China than at any other time in history, and more confident and more capable than ever to complete reunification," said Shi Taifeng, who heads the United Front Work Department (UFWD).

China claims self-ruled Taiwan – which has its own government, military and currency – as part of its territory.

Beijing has said it would never renounce the use of force to bring Taiwan under its control.

The UFWD is responsible for engaging with minor ethnicities, religious groups and overseas Chinese on issues related to Hong Kong, Macau, Tibet, Xinjiang and Taiwan.

Tuesday's "Promoting Peaceful Reunification of China" was organized by an umbrella council under the department.

Beijing considers Tibet, a Himalayan region, and northwest Xinjiang province – home to a largely Sunni Muslim Uyghur population – as inalienable parts of its territory, while Hong Kong and Macau are classified as "special administrative regions."

In his speech, Shi said the current situation in the Taiwan Strait is "grave and complex," blaming it on the government of Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te and his Democratic Progressive Party's "wanton incitement of cross-strait confrontation."

"But the time and situation are always on the side of those who advocate national reunification," he said.

"We must... uphold the fighting spirits, dare to shoulder our responsibility and... always stay vigilant to the movements of the Taiwan independence forces and external interfering forces."

Among the attendees were leaders of minor pro-unification political parties in Taiwan, such as the New Party and the Labour Party.

China maintains a near-daily military presence around Taiwan with fighter jets, drones, and naval vessels.

Beijing also launched war games around the island days after Lai was sworn into office.

It regards him as a "dangerous separatist" for his views of maintaining Taiwan's sovereignty.

Within Taiwan, the issue of "unification" is deeply unpopular for the Taiwanese population, according to regular surveys done by National Chengchi University. The most recent one, published in June, shows that around one percent of people support "unification as soon as possible," while nearly 90 percent want to maintain the status quo.

#### **Tensions Rise: Taiwan Monitors Increased Chinese Military Activities**

19 August 2024, Devdiscourse

Taiwan detected eight Chinese aircraft and nine vessels near its territory on Monday, with four aircraft crossing into its Eastern Air Defense Identification Zone. The Taiwanese Ministry of Defence monitored the situation and took responsive

measures, highlighting ongoing Chinese military provocations in the region.

Taiwan's Ministry of Defence reported the detection of eight Chinese aircraft and nine vessels around its territory on Monday. Notably, four of these aircraft crossed the median line, entering Taiwan's Eastern Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ). Taiwan responded by monitoring the situation closely.

In an official statement shared on X, Taiwan's MND disclosed that the intrusion was part of a pattern. Earlier, on Sunday, seven Chinese military aircraft and

15 naval vessels were detected between 6 a.m. Saturday and 6 a.m. Sunday, with some crossing the median line and entering Taiwan's northern and southeastern ADIZ.

In response to these incursions, Taiwan deployed aircraft, naval ships, and coastal-based missile systems to monitor the People's Liberation Army (PLA) activities. The recent incidents are seen as a continuation of China's increased military operations around Taiwan, including frequent air and naval incursions and nearby military exercises.

Chinese military aggression has been on the rise since former U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to

traffic management and emergency rescue capabilities in the strait to ensure the safety of vessels, facilities and personnel," Xinhua reported.

A new media website under China Central Television also reported that the operation reached 2 nautical miles east of the central part of the Taiwan Strait, while the southernmost point reached the Taiwan Shoal, claiming to cover "a wider area than in previous years."

The Taiwan Shoal, situated southwest of Penghu County and near the median line of the Taiwan Strait, falls within Taiwan's exclusive economic zone, encompassing approximately 8,800 square kilometers with a water depth ranging from 8 to 40 meters, according to the National Academy of Marine Research.

The report also mentioned that the operation was "a further extension of regularization," with the relevant departments in China having established a big data system for more comprehensive management of the strait.

Commenting on the issue, Su Tzu-yun (蘇紫雲), a research fellow at Taiwan's government-funded think tank, the Institute for National Defense and Security Research, said Beijing's move to include the Taiwan Shoal and waters near Penghu as part of the patrol

Taiwan in 2022. Taiwan has operated independently since 1949, but China views the island as part of its territory, advocating for reunification by force if necessary.

This month alone, Taiwan has tracked over 300 PLA aircraft and about 200 Chinese ships. Since September 2020, China has employed 'grey zone' tactics, characterized by incremental escalations that avoid large-scale direct confrontations.

### **Chinese vessels patrol Taiwan Strait to close jurisdictional gap: Experts**

19 August 2024, Focus Taiwan, Hsieh Yi-hsuan and Sunny Lai

A patrol and law enforcement operation carried out by official Chinese vessels in the Taiwan Strait could indirectly expand Beijing's jurisdiction to the median line of the strait, as a way of eliminating jurisdictional gaps, experts have told CNA.

The operation, jointly launched by the Chinese Ministry of Transport's Fujian Maritime Safety Administration and its East China Sea rescue bureau, was conducted from Saturday to Sunday, after China's three-and-a-half-month fishing moratorium concluded on Aug. 16, according to China's state-run Xinhua News Agency.

The operation involved three public service ships, lasted 30.5 hours and covered a total distance of 413 nautical miles, with the aim being to "enhance

area may indirectly lead to an expansion of jurisdiction to the strait's median line, indicating an attempt to turn the strait into "quasi-internal waters."

According to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Taiwan Strait is not considered internal waters (waters on the landward side of the baseline), the Chinese authorities therefore have adopted a "salami slicing" strategy to gradually assert jurisdiction over the Taiwan Strait, Su said.

Criticizing the operation as indirectly eroding the sovereignty of the Republic of China (Taiwan's official name), Su predicts that such actions could occur more frequently in the future and their scope be gradually expanded.

Chieh Chung (揭仲), a researcher at the Taiwan-based Association of Strategic Foresight, said that the operation reflected China's view of the Taiwan government as a "local government" with no authority to issue laws governing traffic in the strait.

"On one hand, the Chinese Communist Party is trying to eliminate the gap in jurisdictional areas, and on the other, it is denying our laws and orders through these actions," Chieh said.

The Chinese authorities have been pushing a legal battle in the Taiwan Strait since June 2022, with the key objective being to claim jurisdiction over most of the strait, Chieh said.

He cited the example of the Kinmen speedboat incident, during which China's Taiwan Affairs Office

said "there is simply no such thing as so-called 'prohibited or restricted waters.'"

According to Taiwan's Coast Guard Administration (CGA), prohibited waters and restricted waters are designated by the Ministry of National Defense in accordance with the Act Governing Relations between the People of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area, with waters around the Taiwan-held Kinmen and Matsu Islands being delineated using a polygonal method.

Under the act, no Chinese vessels, civil aircraft or other means of transportation are allowed to enter Taiwan's restricted or prohibited waters, including those in the outlying islands.

Regarding the patrol and law enforcement operation carried out by the three Chinese vessels, Taiwan's CGA said Sunday that the three ships briefly crossed the median line by 3.2 nautical miles at 12:25 p.m. on Saturday before heading back towards China.

### **MAC criticizes China's claim of uncovering over 1,000 Taiwanese spy cases**

15 August 2024, Focus Taiwan, Sunny Lai

Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) said Thursday that China's claim of detecting more than 1,000 cases

of espionage by Taiwanese spies was a means of achieving "goals" set by high-level Chinese authorities. If the Chinese authorities' claim is not a boast, then it suggests that they are abusing their power to detain people, MAC deputy head and spokesperson Liang Wen-chieh (梁文傑) said at a press conference.

He was referring to an article published Tuesday on the social media account of China's Ministry of State Security, which said that its authorities had "uncovered more than 1,000 cases of espionage by Taiwanese spies," without providing any details.

A large number of espionage networks established by Taiwanese spies in China have been destroyed, while "Taiwan independence leaders" such as Yang Chih-yuan (楊智淵) have been arrested, dealing a "severe blow and strong deterrence" to Taiwan independence forces, according to the article titled "Resolutely Fight against Taiwan-related Separatism and Espionage." Yang, one of the founders of the Taiwanese National Party, was the first Taiwanese to be prosecuted and arrested for the crime of "secession" in China and has been in custody there since August 2022.

On Thursday, Liang said the approach taken by the Chinese Communist Party over the years has been very simple, with the high-level authorities setting

certain targets, and the subordinates working to achieve those "goals."

"Historically, whether it's the Anti-Rightist Campaign, the Cultural Revolution, the Great Leap Forward, or others, it has always been the same [approach]," Liang added.

Regarding Yang's arrest, Liang said the MAC has been in contact with his family and now has "a better understanding of his current situation" but cannot disclose any detailed information, as it has to respect his family's wishes.

Liang said Yang's political stance has often been fluid, aligning sometimes with the ruling Democratic Progressive Party and at other times with the opposition Kuomintang, which means it is difficult to categorize his views.

"Before his arrest, he was teaching Go in China and participating in some Go competitions," Liang said. "It is quite absurd that someone like him can be labeled as a leading advocate of Taiwan independence, just to achieve those [Chinese] 'goals.'"

### **China says it 'destroyed large network' of Taiwanese spies**

14 August 2024, RFA, Taejun Kang

Beijing has uncovered more than 1,000 espionage cases by Taipei, its spy agency says.

China has "destroyed" a large network of Taiwanese spies in the mainland and uncovered more than 1,000 espionage cases undertaken by Taiwan, China's

security ministry said as it vowed to fight "separatism."

"The cases involved espionage activities and leaking state secrets," said the Ministry of State Security, China's counterintelligence agency, in a post on its official WeChat account.

The ministry cited the case of Taiwanese citizen Yang Zhiyuan, who was arrested in 2022.

"His arrest dealt a serious blow to pro-independence separatist forces and had a strong deterrent effect," the ministry said in its post on Tuesday, calling Yang a "Taiwan independence" leader.

Yang was detained in August 2022 in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province, on suspicion of engaging in "separatist activities" and endangering China's national security.

He was reportedly handed over to prosecutors in April the following year and is now facing trial in a Chinese court.

"We will resolutely fight against Taiwanese separatism and espionage," the ministry said, adding that it would destroy any attempt to seek Taiwanese

independence. Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council, which is responsible for cross-strait affairs, said in response to a query from RFA Mandarin that the announcement by the Chinese security department illustrated its use of "vague and unclear laws" to detain people from Taiwan who do not conform with the political ideology of China's ruling Communist Party.

The arrests also hindered a healthy interaction between the two sides, the council said, while reiterating its advice to Taiwan people to carefully consider the necessity of traveling to the mainland.

#### Arrests of Taiwanese

The Chinese ministry also lashed out at Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party authorities, warning that "those who are willing to work with them will be shattered under the wheels of history."

China regards Taiwan as a renegade province that should be reunited with the mainland, by force if necessary. The democratic island has been self-governing since it effectively separated from mainland China in 1949 after the Chinese civil war.

China has dialed up diplomatic and economic pressure on the island since former president Tsai Ing-wen's administration came to power in 2016. Tsai and her party refuse to acknowledge that Taiwan and the mainland belong to "One China."

President Lai Ching-te, who is also a DPP member who came to power after a January election, is also viewed with suspicion by China's Communist Party.

There have been several other cases in recent years of people from Taiwan who have been imprisoned in mainland China on espionage charges.

Researcher Cheng Yu-chin was jailed for seven years in prison in 2022 on espionage-related charges. He was a former aide to Taiwan's former president Tsai.

Taiwanese activist Lee Ming-che was sentenced to five years in a mainland Chinese prison for subversion of the state before being released in 2022, while Taiwanese businessman Lee Meng-chu was jailed on espionage charges after being arrested in Shenzhen in 2019 for taking photos of armed police officers.

In June, China issued guidelines on criminal punishment for "diehard Taiwanese separatists," who attempt or incite secession, with penalties up to death.

Chinese authorities also recently released a list of 10 "diehard Taiwanese separatists," including Vice President Hsiao Bi-khim and former DPP chairman Su Tseng-chang.

## China says it uncovered over 1,000 Taiwanese espionage cases in recent years

13 August 2024, AA, Serder Dincel

Country's State Security Ministry says it destroyed 'large number of spy intelligence networks'

China Tuesday said it has uncovered more than 1,000 cases of Taiwanese espionage in recent years.

The State Security Ministry said these cases were exposed through a series of special operations and pledged to maintain pressure on Taiwan's "pro-independence forces," according to a report by South China Morning Post.

It said that the cases included espionage and the theft of state secrets, adding that it destroyed "a large number of spy intelligence networks" established by Taiwanese operatives in mainland China.

The ministry said it continued to "strike hard" against alleged spying activities.

China considers Taiwan its "breakaway province," while Taipei has maintained its independence since 1949.

## China lists Taiwanese independence supporters it wants people to denounce

08 August 2024, The Guardian, Helen Davidosn

Beijing website asks for information about supposed 'crimes' of 'secessionist' current and past Taiwan officials.

China's government has called for people to denounce "diehard secessionists" and give information about their "criminal activities" as it intensifies its legal and rhetorical intimidation of Taiwan.

The Taiwan affairs office and ministry of public security this week launched new webpages with lists of 10 current and former officials in Taiwan who have been named as "diehard" separatists.

The site includes a prominently displayed email address and urges people to report "the clues and

crimes" of those on the list, as well as "new 'Taiwan independence' diehards who commit serious crimes". China's ruling Communist party (CCP) claims Taiwan is a province of China and has vowed to annex the territory, by force if necessary. Taiwan's democratically elected government and a growing majority of its people reject the prospect of Chinese rule, and both sides have been preparing for a potential war in coming decades.

The 10 names – which had been previously announced in 2021 and 2022 – including Taiwan's vice-president, Hsiao Bi-khim, the former foreign

minister and now head of Taiwan's security council, Joseph Wu, Wu's deputy, Lin Fei-fan, and senior officials from the ruling Democratic Progressive party. The new site and tipline are part of a broader escalation by Beijing against Taiwan and those who maintain that it is not and will not become a part of the People's Republic of China. Official state media said the pages, which also included legal documents and government statements, "present the legal foundation for such actions".

China's hawkish state media tabloid, the Global Times, said the publication of the 10 names served as "both as a deterrent and as a clear message that the criminal justice measures are aimed at a small number of diehard individuals who engage in or incite secession activities, and do not target the majority of Taiwan compatriots".

In June the CCP said "ringleaders" of independence efforts would face the death penalty under Chinese laws. It issued new guidelines for Chinese courts, prosecutors and public and state security bodies to "severely punish Taiwan independence diehards for splitting the country and inciting secession crimes in accordance with the law, and resolutely defend national sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity", according to state media.

"The sharp sword of legal action will always hang high," Sun Ping, an official from China's ministry of public security, told reporters in Beijing.

Taiwan's leaders rejected Beijing's claim that its laws had any jurisdiction over Taiwan, which has its own government, legal system, currency and military.

"The government appeals to our country's people to feel at ease and not to be threatened or intimidated by the Chinese Communist party," Taiwan's mainland affairs council said at the time.

### **Beijing should set up 'shadow government' ready to run Taiwan, academics say**

08 August 2024, SCMPv, Amber Wang

In an article on social media, mainland Chinese research institute says a plan is needed for

'comprehensive takeover' of the island after unification.

A mainland Chinese research institute has suggested Beijing set up a "shadow government" so that it is ready to govern Taiwan after unification.

The proposal from the Cross-Strait Institute of Urban Planning at Xiamen University was made in an article recently posted to social media network WeChat that was later taken down.

"It is imperative to prepare a plan for the comprehensive takeover of Taiwan after unification,"

the research institute said in the article, which sets out a proposed power transition for the island.

It also said the complex international environment – including the potential re-election of Donald Trump as US president in November – could accelerate Beijing's unification timeline, without elaborating.

The article offers a rare glimpse of the discussions going on in mainland China over the future of self-ruled Taiwan, which Beijing sees as part of its territory and to be brought under its control – by force if necessary.

Most countries do not recognise Taiwan as an independent state but oppose any attempt to seize the island.

The Xiamen research institute – part of the university's architecture and civil engineering school – confirmed that it wrote the article and said it would be reposted later, but declined an interview request. Two mainland Chinese academics who focus on Taiwan were sceptical about the proposal which they said was not practical.

The institute suggested in the article that a "Central Taiwan Work Committee" be set up to function as a "shadow government" that could be ready to assume control of the island's administration at any moment. It said the committee should look at issues such as applicable laws, currency conversion and infrastructure integration between the two sides.

Its role would also include uniting anti-independence forces on the island and encouraging Taiwanese to take part in discussions on the takeover plan.

"As the mainland's military strength grows, the difficulty of unification itself is decreasing, and effective control after unification will become increasingly important," the article said.

Relations between Beijing and Taipei remain strained after William Lai Ching-te, from the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party, took over as Taiwan's leader in May.

Beijing has for decades proposed a "one country, two systems" model to govern Taiwan but has never released a detailed plan about how it would be done. Chinese President Xi Jinping called for a "two systems" solution on Taiwan in 2019, saying Beijing would

consider the island's reality, as well as views and proposals from both sides.

Beijing elaborated on that in a white paper in 2022, saying Taiwan would have a "high degree of autonomy" as a special administrative region after unification, and that its social system and way of life would be respected. It did not say whether there would be changes to Taiwan's political system.

Taipei has rejected the proposal.



In the article, the Xiamen institute also suggested that Taiwan governance pilot zones be set up on the mainland and that new systems planned for Taiwan should draw on lessons learned from Hong Kong.

"The recent unrest in Hong Kong shows that the one country, two systems approach of fully accepting the existing system is not necessarily suitable for Taiwan," the article said. "Taiwan should aim to fully integrate into the mainland from the beginning."

It said the pilot zone could be established in coastal cities such as Xiamen and Quanzhou in Fujian, which are across the strait from Taiwan and share similar language and culture.

The institute said the zones could be used to simulate the post-unification governance model – including for elections, language and education – to put policies to the test and train the cadres who will run the island. "Hong Kong's role as a model [for one country, two systems] has become a lot less persuasive on the island," the article said, noting that a new model was needed.

While Beijing insists that the one country, two systems framework has been successful in Hong Kong, Taiwan's three main political parties have all rejected the plan, citing its failure in the city.

### **Taiwan condemns China's guidelines on punishing 'stubborn independence supporters'**

07 August 2024, Taiwan News, Kelvin Chen

Beijing releases additional legal document on 'Taiwan independence elements'

Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) blasted China's release of an additional guideline on "Punishing Stubborn Taiwan Independence Elements" on Wednesday (Aug. 7).

China is preventing the positive development of healthy cross-strait exchanges, MAC said, per Liberty Times. Beijing should pursue policies that "are conducive to positive interactions between both sides," it added.

In its new guideline, China listed 10 previously blacklisted Taiwanese, including Su Tseng-chang (蘇貞昌) and Joseph Wu (吳釗燮). Beijing previously issued a document in June listing the legal procedures for dealing with Taiwan Independence supporters. One of

the provisions called for the death penalty for those found guilty of "splitting the country." Other punishments include life or fixed-term imprisonment of more than 10 years.

MAC Minister Chiu Chui-cheng (邱垂正) said on Tuesday that China has been waging legal wars against Taiwan since it passed the Anti-Secession Law

in 2005. Beijing has no jurisdiction over Taiwanese, Chiu added.

### **Taiwan celebrates badminton victory against China, without political symbols**

05 August 2024, Reuters, Richa Naidu and Ann Wang

Taiwan supporters celebrated their country's first gold medal at the Paris Games on Sunday during a badminton doubles final that took place without their national flag, as security staff enforced International Olympic Committee rules.

Lee Yang and Wang-Chi-Lin retained their title by beating China's Liang Weikeng and Wang Chang in front of euphoric Taiwanese supporters, but some of them saw their banners confiscated and had to rub out their face paint.

"I want to cheer for them," said Mina Syue, a 28-year-old engineer from Taiwan who said her banner had been confiscated after the guards checked the message with translation software.

Syue's banner was in the colours of Taiwan's flag – a red background with 'Taiwan you're the best!' written in blue and white.

IOC rules prohibit flags or signs that include political messages or support countries that are not participating at the Olympics.

Taiwan competes at the Olympics as Chinese Taipei to avoid objections from China, which claims the democratically governed island as its own territory. Taiwan's government rejects Chinese sovereignty claims.

A Taiwanese family of four told Reuters they had painted the Taiwanese flag on their faces but were made to wash it off before they could enter the arena. During the match spectators cheered 'Taiwan' each time their team scored a point. At least one supporter managed to sneak in the Taiwanese flag and wave it from the stands.

#### **UNITING TAIWAN**

After the match, Taiwan supporters celebrated the gold medal victory chanting "Taiwan Taiwan" and "Taiwan number 1".

Taiwanese freelance artist Peng Cheng-yang had bought a last-minute ticket and travelled from Germany to see the match when he found out Taiwan would be playing China.

"It's a political action to be here, to show we are a country, to support our people. We don't need the flag

- it's the people that is important," he said, adding he was "moved".

Taiwan President Lai Ching-te said on Facebook that "the Lin-Yang team faced strong opponents and fought all the way to the end, uniting and inspiring

Taiwan!" When asked about the Taiwanese president's Facebook post, Lee and Wang paused for several seconds looking uncomfortable.

"Very tough question. We thank all the support we have received and will continue to work hard. We will put out better performances in the future," Wang said. Spectator Christina Chang, a Taiwanese education worker living in New York, said that she was very proud of the Taiwan players but that she clapped for the silver medallists too.

"It is not a political symbol. I'm excited as it's our first gold medal but the Chinese deserved the silver too - that's the beautiful thing about the Olympics," she said.

Isa Zhang, a 35-year-old China supporter living in Paris, said that although the team she was rooting for came second she was happy with the result because "China, Chinese Taipei - it's all the same for me."

At Taipei's main train station, supporters held a party to watch the final at 10 p.m. local time where they were able to stridently show their support with Taiwanese flags and political colours.

"It is an honour to have our flag represented in an important event ... I hope one day we can bravely hold our flag in an international event without (it) being snatched away," said Danny Tsai, 36, a local resident in the crowd.

### **Taiwan joins international parliamentary alliance countering China**

05 August 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundop

The Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC) has officially welcomed Taiwan as a member during its fourth annual summit held in Taipei on July 30.

The announcement was made by IPAC Executive Director Luke de Pulford during a press conference. He revealed that ruling Democratic Progressive Party Legislator Fan Yun and opposition Taiwan People's Party Legislator Chen Gau-Tzu would serve as co-chairs of the Taiwan legislature within the alliance. According to the IPAC official website, each legislature in IPAC is led by two co-chairs from diverse political backgrounds.

In a statement, IPAC expressed strong support for Taiwan's meaningful participation in international organizations, "Its [Taiwan's] formal inclusion in the Alliance was welcomed as a historic result by all delegates."

This year's summit was attended by 49 politicians from

24 countries, reflecting the growing international

concern about China's policies. Established in 2020, IPAC focuses on reforming countries' policies towards the People's Republic of China. It also unites lawmakers worldwide, promoting democracy and

addressing threats to the rules-based and human rights systems posed by the rise of China.

With Taiwan's inclusion, IPAC now comprises over 250 cross-party members from 40 countries, including Australia, Canada, Japan, and the United Kingdom. Previous summits were held in Rome (2021), Washington DC (2022), and Prague (2023). Taiwan was a central focus of this year's summit, with speeches by Taiwan President Lai Ching-te and Vice-President Hsiao Bi-khim, emphasizing the need for a "democratic umbrella" to defend Taiwan and preserve the international rules-based order.

China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson, Lin Jian, criticized the move, stating, "This so-called alliance has maliciously hyped up issues related to China. Spreading lies and rumours about China, and has no credibility whatsoever. There is only one China in the world, and Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory. The Taiwan question is purely China's internal affair that brooks no interference by any external forces."

Reports emerged before the conference that eight lawmakers from at least five countries had received pressure from Chinese diplomats to avoid attending the summit. These attempts to dissuade foreign parliamentarians were condemned by the organizers as "massively overstepping" and acts of bullying. In a statement, the organisers condemned China's action stating "The PRC's actions around IPAC's Summit are yet another example of their brazen efforts to curtail other nations' democratic privileges and negate Taiwan's rights to engage in legitimate diplomatic exchanges". The statement further stated "In response to the PRCs intimidation, IPAC has decided to bring forward its announcement of our largest ever enlargement, welcoming six new countries to the Alliance: Colombia, Iraq, Malawi, Solomon Islands, The Gambia and Uruguay".

### **Taiwan says Macau's 'One China' demand blocks envoy's visa**

02 August 2024, The Straits Times

Taiwan said it's having difficulty sending staff to its representative office in Macau because the special administrative region's government is demanding that they sign a commitment to the "One China Principle" to get a visa.

A Taiwan official who was set to be posted to the Macau, which China resumed sovereignty over in 1999, couldn't get a visa, Mr Liang Wen-chieh, deputy

head of Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council, said at a briefing on Aug 1.

He urged Macau to remove the obstacle and deal with the issue in a friendly manner, but added that

Taiwan will “prepare for the worst,” without elaborating.

At issue is Macau’s demand that Taiwan officials commit to the “One China Principle” which states that there is only one China, ruled by the Beijing-based Communist government, and that Taiwan is an inalienable part of the country. That position is anathema to Taiwan, a democratic and self-ruled island, which argues it has the right of self-determination and that it has never been under the sovereignty of the People’s Republic of China.

The dispute echoes a similar spat that led to Taiwan recalling seven representative officials from Hong Kong in 2021, leaving only local Hong Kong employees to handle affairs in the city. It also underscores China’s efforts to undermine international recognition of Taiwan, where President Lai Ching-te this week called for democracies around the world to stand up to Beijing.

At present, there are just two Taiwanese staff remaining in the Macau office, meaning Taiwan has to remotely assist with consular services, Mr Liang said. Macau and Hong Kong have both closed their representative offices in Taipei in 2021. That move came amid souring cross-strait relations and claims that Taiwan was interfering in Hong Kong affairs. Relations between China and Taiwan have worsened over the past decade, with Beijing stepping up pressure on the island after Mr Lai was elected in January to succeed Ms Tsai Ing-wen, also of the Democratic Progressive Party. After a deadly boat incident in February, China’s coast guard started to “normalise” patrols near Taiwan’s offshore islands near China.

China also held large-scale military drills around Taiwan a few days after Mr Lai took office in May, and then fleshed out a law targeting supporters of Taiwan independence in June. In response to this, Taiwan raised its travel alert for China in late June, urging its citizens to avoid non-essential trips.

But there has been some progress. Beijing and Taipei on July 30 agreed to resolve the boat incident. And separately, Taiwan’s United Daily News reported on Aug 2 that a Taiwanese angler held by China in another incident will return to Taiwan on Aug 7.

### **Taiwan detects 29 Chinese aircraft, 10 naval vessels near its territory**

01 August 2024, Indian Narrative

Taiwan’s Ministry of National Defence said that 29 Chinese military aircraft and 10 naval vessels were

detected operating around the nation from 6 am (local time) on Tuesday to 6 am (local time) on Wednesday. Of the 29 People’s Liberation Army

(PLA) aircraft, 13 crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait and entered Taiwan’s northern, central, southwest, and eastern Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ). Taiwan sent aircraft and naval ships and deployed coastal-based missile systems to monitor China’s military activity.

In a post on X, Taiwan’s Defence Ministry said, “29 PLA aircraft and 10 PLAN vessels operating around Taiwan were detected up until 6 a.m. (UTC+8) today. 13 of the aircraft crossed the median line and entered Taiwan’s southwestern and southeastern ADIZ. We have monitored the situation and responded accordingly.” Earlier on Wednesday, Taiwan’s Ministry of National Defence said that 25 Chinese military aircraft and 10 naval vessels were detected operating around Taiwan from 6 am (local time) on Tuesday to 6 am (local time) on Wednesday.

This latest incident adds to a series of similar provocations by China in recent months. China has increased its military activities around Taiwan, including regular air and naval incursions into Taiwan’s ADIZ and military exercises near the island. The Taiwan Strait, separating Taiwan from mainland China, has been a frequent area of contention, with Beijing viewing Taiwan as a breakaway province and asserting sovereignty over the island.

The latest incident comes amid heightened regional security concerns and underscores Taiwan’s ongoing vigilance in defending its airspace and territorial integrity against Chinese military activities.

Amid rising tensions across the Taiwan Strait, China has increased its military presence and conducted frequent drills in the region. The manoeuvres are seen as part of Beijing’s ongoing pressure campaign against Taiwan, which China views as a renegade province.

## **July**

### **China pressures lawmakers from 6 countries not to attend conference in Taiwan**

28 July 2024, ABC News

Lawmakers from at least six countries say Chinese diplomats are pressuring them not to attend a China-focused conference in Taiwan

Lawmakers from at least six countries said Chinese diplomats were pressuring them not to attend a China-focused conference in Taiwan, in what they described as efforts to isolate the self-governed island.

Politicians in Bolivia, Colombia, Slovakia, North Macedonia, Bosnia and one Asian country that declined to be named said they were getting texts,

calls and urgent requests for meetings that would conflict with their plans to travel to Taipei. China vehemently defends its claim to Taiwan and views it as its own territory to be annexed by force if necessary.

The conference begins Monday and is being held by the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China, or IPAC, a group of hundreds of lawmakers from 35 countries concerned about how democracies approach Beijing. IPAC has long faced pressure from the Chinese government: Some members have been sanctioned by Beijing, and in 2021 the group was targeted by Chinese state-sponsored hackers, according to a U.S. indictment unsealed earlier this year.

But Luke de Pulford, the alliance's director, said the pressure from Chinese officials the past few days has been unprecedented. During past IPAC meetings in other locations, lawmakers were approached by Chinese diplomats only after they concluded. This year, the first in which IPAC's annual meeting is taking place in Taiwan, there appeared to be a coordinated attempt to stop participants from attending.

The Associated Press spoke to three lawmakers and reviewed texts and emails sent by Chinese diplomats asking whether they were planning to participate in the meeting.

"I'm Wu, from Chinese Embassy," read a message sent to Antonio Miloshoski, a member of parliament in North Macedonia. "We heard that you got an invitation from IPAC, will you attend the Conference which will be held next week in Taiwan?"

In some cases, lawmakers described vague inquiries about their plans to travel to Taiwan. In other cases, the contact was more menacing: One lawmaker told AP that Chinese diplomats messaged the head of her party with a demand to stop her from going.

"They contacted president of my political party, they ask him to stop me to travel to Taiwan," said Sanela Klarić, a member of parliament in Bosnia. "They're trying, in my country, to stop me from traveling ... This is really not OK."

China routinely threatens retaliation against politicians and countries that show support for Taiwan, which has only informal relations with most countries due to Chinese diplomatic pressure. Klarić said the pressure was unpleasant but only steeled her determination to go on the trip.

"I really am fighting against countries or societies where the tool to manipulate and control peoples is fear," said Klarić, adding that it reminded her of threats and intimidation she faced while suffering through wars in Bosnia in the 1990s. "I really hate the feeling when somebody is frightening you."

The Chinese Foreign Ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

De Pulford called the pressure "gross foreign interference."

"How would PRC officials would feel if we tried to tell them about their travel plans, where they could and could not go?" de Pulford said, using the acronym for China's official name, the People's Republic of China. "It's absolutely outrageous that they think that they can interfere in the travel plans of foreign legislators."

Lawmakers from 25 countries were expected to attend this year's meeting, including Japan, India and the U.K., and IPAC said in a statement that some would meet with high-level Taiwanese officials. The Taiwanese Foreign Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Last week, Beijing criticized Taiwan for its annual Han Kuang military drills, saying that Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party was "carrying out provocations to seek independence."

"Any attempt to whip up tensions and use force to seek independence or reject reunification is doomed to failure," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told reporters.

China has been peeling off the island's diplomatic allies, often with promises of development aid, in a long-running competition between the two that has swung in Beijing's favor in recent years. The Pacific Island nation of Nauru switched recognition to Beijing earlier this year, a move that reduced Taiwan's dwindling number of diplomatic allies to 12. But China's at-times heavy-handed approach has also alienated other countries.

In 2021, Beijing downgraded relations and blocked imports from Lithuania, a member of both the EU and NATO, after the Baltic nation broke with diplomatic custom by agreeing that a Taiwanese representative office in its capital of Vilnius would bear the name Taiwan instead of Chinese Taipei, which other countries use to avoid offending Beijing. The following year, the EU adopted a resolution criticizing Beijing's behavior toward Taiwan and took action against China at the World Trade Organization over the import restrictions.

The pressure over the IPAC meeting was also triggering backlash.

Bolivian Senator Centa Rek said she submitted a letter of protest after a Chinese diplomat called her and told not to go to Taiwan, saying the island was run by an "imposter president" and that the meeting was hosted by an organization "not accepted within the terms of the policy of mainland China." When Rek refused, the diplomat said he would report her decision to his embassy, which Rek interpreted as a "veiled threat."

"I told him that it was an unacceptable intrusion, that I would not accept an order or intrusion from any government," Rek said. "These were personal

decisions and that it seemed to me that he had gone beyond all international political norms.”

Most of the lawmakers targeted appear to be from smaller countries, which de Pulford, the alliance’s director, said was likely because Beijing “feels that they can get away with it.” But he added that the coercive tactics have only made participants more determined to take part in the summit.

Miriam Lexmann, a Slovakian member of the European Parliament whose party head was approached by Chinese diplomats, said the pressure underscored her reason for coming to Taiwan.

We want to “exchange information, ways how to deal with those challenges and threats which China represents to the democratic part of the world, and of course, to support Taiwan,” she said.

### **Taiwan jails citizen doing business in China for spying on Tibetans, independence activists**

25 July 2024, Tibetan Review

In what is seen as an unusual case, a court in Taiwan has tried and jailed a citizen running business in China for spying on Taiwanese and Tibetan independence activists in his home country. Fang Hsiang, in his seventies, has served as the head of a business association in Hainan for Taiwanese businessmen in China and has been jailed with his associates, reported newbloommag.net Jul 24.

The report said Fang and his associates were accused of spying on associates of former president Chen Shui-bian, Tibetans in Taiwan, and Taiwanese government officials whose work pertains to Tibetans.

Fang was stated to have been recruited as a spy after becoming acquainted with a man surnamed Hou, the apparent director of the National Security Department of Hainan province, which is part of China’s Ministry of State Security. The ministry is the principal civilian intelligence, security and secret police agency of the People’s Republic of China, responsible for foreign intelligence, counterintelligence, and the political security of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

Upon returning to Taiwan, Fang recruited several individuals. This included a man surnamed Chen working in the Mongolian and Tibetan Cultural Centre in Taipei, which is part of the Ministry of Culture. At one point, Chen recorded a conversation with the director of the centre to try and gain information on Tibetan groups in Taiwan and what coordination exists between the government and such groups as pertaining to refugee policy, the report said.

Associates of Fang were stated to have been flown to China to meet with Hou at various points.

Fang was sentenced to five and a half years in jail, while Chen was sentenced to three years in jail. However, Fang’s wife, a Chinese national, was not sentenced due to lack of evidence, the report said.

Fang and his associates’ case is seen as unusual because the most common Chinese espionage cases that one hears about in Taiwan involve former Taiwanese military officers who meet with Chinese counterparts. This may involve passing along details of Taiwan’s defence, or classified information. KMT lawmakers such as Legislative Yuan defence committee co-chair Ma Wen-chun have also been accused of leaking the details of confidential defence programmes to China, such as regarding Taiwan’s domestic submarine programme, the report noted.

It is actually not hard for the Chinese government to gain intelligence on Taiwan which is, after all, a free and open democratic society. Still, it is unclear to what extent civil society groups are surveilled or monitored, except that this does occur, the report noted.

### **China’s New Non-Military Offensives against Taiwan**

24 July 2024, Global Taiwan Institute

Since the election of Lai Ching-te (賴清德) as the president of the self-governing democracy of Taiwan, officially known as the Republic of China (ROC, 中華民國), Beijing has been turning the screws on the island-nation—and not just in the military domain. National security officials from Taiwan are now sounding the alarm about a noticeable shift in the Chinese multi-domain pressure campaign against the island democracy. Indeed, multiple indicators are pointing to a more aggressive turn in Chinese Communist Party (CCP, 中國共產黨) General Secretary Xi Jinping’s (習近平) approach to Taiwan in the months ahead.

While a change in Beijing’s strategy was already visible in the latter half of Tsai Ing-wen’s (蔡英文) second term—particularly in the military space—recent activities in the non-military space—in the areas of diplomatic/political, legal, information/united front, and economic measures—are perhaps most troubling. Additionally, they are broadly indicative of a comprehensive shift in Beijing’s overall approach from deterring Taiwan’s independence to compelling its unification with the People’s Republic of China (PRC, 中華人民共和國)—by military force if necessary.

#### **Diplomatic and Political Pressure**

On the diplomatic front, Beijing is currently going after Taiwan’s 12 remaining diplomatic partners. Since 2016, Taiwan’s international diplomatic



presence has steadily diminished, from 22 diplomatic partners to only 12. Just days after Lai's unprecedented presidential victory—which represented the first time that a political party won three consecutive terms for president in Taiwan—Beijing flipped the small Pacific nation of Nauru.

Taiwan's last dozen diplomatic partners are vulnerable to PRC enticement and coercion to varying degrees. Although the current president of Paraguay—Taiwan's last remaining diplomatic partner in South America—has expressed strong personal support for continuing ties with Taiwan, Paraguay stands as a potentially acute reminder that many of these last remaining steadfast diplomatic partners are seemingly always one election away from switching recognition.

While Beijing's diplomatic successes against Taiwan are clear, Taipei has made important advancements in raising its international visibility and political engagement with other like-minded partners on the world stage with the support of like-minded friends. Therefore, it is unsurprising that Beijing is now putting more emphasis on not only enticing but pressuring Taiwan's non-diplomatic partners to downgrade political ties and support cross-Straits "reunification." Indeed, Beijing appears to no longer seek a political endorsement from other countries for its "One-China Principle" (一個中國原則), but is now pressuring other countries to take action that actively supports the PRC's position on "reunification."

In the past, some countries that maintain diplomatic relations with the PRC have been asked to have Taipei move its representative office from the capital to other locations, or to put pressure on Taipei's local representative offices to remove any reference to the Republic of China or Taiwan from the name of their de facto embassies. China has also continued to pressure countries with which it has diplomatic ties to deport Taiwan nationals accused of criminal activities to the PRC rather than back to Taiwan.

Countries that have recently established unofficial ties or have increased their political ties with Taiwan also find themselves increasingly in the cross-hairs of Beijing's diplomatic offensive—the cases of Lithuania and the Czech Republic are prime examples of this. Other pressure tactics could include applying sanctions against people and other entities for engaging with Taiwan, limiting the consular activities of Taiwan's foreign missions, and restricting government contacts with Taiwanese counterparts and supporters of Taiwan.

The fact that British lawmaker Conservative MP Tim Loughton from the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China was denied entry to Somalia in April 2024 is potentially instructive of Beijing's future tactics in this space. In such instances, not only are Taiwanese lawmakers and persons sanctioned or wanted by

Beijing singled out, but also other lawmakers from third countries who have run afoul of Beijing's policies on Taiwan. Such persons could be potentially denied entry or surveilled in third countries, which are either allied or significantly influenced by Beijing.

#### Propaganda and United Front Work

In addition to diplomatic pressure, the CCP is also ramping up its political warfare activities, particularly in the areas of overt united front work and propaganda directed against Taiwan's central government and ruling party. This is particularly noteworthy in the CCP's attempts to co-opt Taiwan's key opposition parties. In addition to existing ties with the Kuomintang (KMT, 中國國民黨), the CCP showed interest in the Taiwan People's Party (TPP, 台灣民眾黨) throughout the presidential campaign—and particularly after the elections, in which the TPP walked away with a decisive minority of seats in the Legislative Yuan.

Since beginning his post as KMT vice chairman in October 2021, Andrew Hsia (夏立言) has led the official party channel for dialogue to China at least eight times. Notably, there has been a plethora of other cross-Straits exchanges headed by various factions of the KMT that began in 2024. The delegation that raised the most eyebrows is perhaps the one led by Fu kun-chi (傅崐冀)—an influential power broker among local factions of the KMT and the current caucus whip for the KMT. In April—just a month before the inauguration—Fu brought a delegation of local faction members to China. Local factions are instrumental in influence peddling during local elections. Although there have been insinuations of collusion because of the correlation in the timing between these visits and the controversial reform measures adopted by the opposition parties immediately after the inauguration, it should be noted that the authorities have not yet provided clear and convincing evidence of a conspiracy.

Chinese disinformation and propaganda also remain rampant in Taiwan's information space. Taiwanese national security officials are particularly concerned by AI-enabled efforts spreading disinformation on social media platforms, including Chinese-owned platforms like Douyin (抖音, TikTok) and Xiaohongshu (小紅書) that have large user bases in Taiwan. Additionally, so-called "local collaborators"—with the support of traditional media—are increasingly parroting the CCP's talking points, thereby increasingly blurring the line between what may be legitimate political opposition and Chinese government propaganda.

Russian propaganda disinformation tactics and narratives used against Ukraine are also increasingly

more visible in the Chinese approaches to Taiwan. This is indicative of the increasing cross-pollination of Chinese and Russian disinformation and malign influence tactics. One recent example was a disinformation case concerning the fabricated news carried by a major news outlet about US pressure on Taiwan to establish a biowarfare lab in Taiwan, which appeared intended to stoke American skepticism among the general public. As Chinese support for Russia's invasion of Ukraine continues and the Chinese-Russian "unlimited partnership" grows, there will likely be more sharing of tactics, techniques, and procedures in Chinese malign influence activities in Taiwan.

#### A New Feature: Lawfare

The most notable feature in the PRC's new multi-domain offensive against Taiwan is the use of a suite of lawfare measures, which include the application of law enforcement instruments intended to extend the claimed jurisdiction of Chinese authorities and constrain that of the Taiwanese authorities.

#### Extra-Territorial Applications of Domestic Law

Specifically, there are clear signs that Beijing is broadening the application of the Anti-Secession Law (ASL, 反分裂国家法). Since its passage in 2005, the ASL was primarily used as a rhetorical instrument for the legal justification of China's use of military force against Taiwan. On June 21, based on the ASL and other legal measures, the PRC promulgated the "Opinions on Punishing the Crimes of Splitting the Country and Inciting Splitting the Country by 'Taiwan Independence' Diehards," (關於依法懲罰「台獨」頑固分子分裂國家、煽動分裂國家犯罪的意見), which could apply criminal punishment, even the death penalty to "secessionists" in absentia. In particular, the guidelines specify actions that constitute the "crimes of secession" and "incitement to secession," including:

1. "Initiating or establishing organizations, plans, or programs aimed at promoting Taiwanese independence.
2. Attempting to alter Taiwan's status through legislative means or referendums.
3. Seeking international recognition of Taiwan as an independent entity.
4. Using one's job or influence, such as in government, education, or media, to misrepresent or falsify the history of Taiwan's status as part of China.
5. Consistently taking part in or playing a major role in activities that support Taiwanese independence."

This could be seen as Beijing's response to what it views as internationalization and increased external interference in the Taiwan issue in recent years. As written, the excessively broad law notably does not

limit the application of these laws by geographical scope of citizenship, which could presumably include both ROC citizens and non-ROC citizens. These guidelines signal a new phase in the PRC's new multi-domain offensive against Taiwan and its supporters and represent an especially nefarious form of lawfare. As it stands, it could be a particularly gross application of transnational repression by plausibly justifying, under its domestic law, the forcible repatriation of persons to the PRC—and further signal the "Hong Kongization" of Taiwan in terms of the application of domestic law and regulations.

Legalization of its "One-China Principle" through UNGA Resolution 2758

In addition to the application of domestic legal measures to extend PRC jurisdiction over Taiwan and its administered territories, China has also been more aggressively forcing its distorted interpretation of UN General Assembly Resolution 2758 in an attempt to legalize its "One-China Principle." In its statement declaring the switch in its recognition of the PRC, the government of Nauru cited UNGA Resolution 2758 as a legal basis for supporting its decision. Moreover, civil society groups applying to join international organizations have been barred from admission due to the misleading application of UNGA Resolution 2758.

#### Hostage Diplomacy

As the PRC seeks to increasingly extend its laws and jurisdiction over Taiwan and its people, in a report delivered to the Legislative Yuan, Tsai Ming-yen (蔡明彥), the director of the National Security Bureau (NSB, 國家安全局)—Taiwan's premier intelligence agency—revealed how "in the past 12 months, 15 Taiwanese have been detained or undergone trials after entering China and the two special administrative regions, while 51 have been interrogated by border officers—and the number is increasing." The NSB director also noted with concern that the number of cases concerning national security investigations involving PRC covert influence has been increasing in recent years—raising the specter of potentially more extraordinary measures.

#### Maritime Law Enforcement and Civil Aviation for Contesting and Limiting Territorial Jurisdiction

Beijing is using the unilateral application of its domestic law and regulations as a form of lawfare to constrain the legal space of the Taiwan government—and deter other countries from engaging with it. These measures seem intended to limit the Taiwan government's agency, and represent Beijing's efforts to deny the existence of the ROC and the objective reality that the ROC and PRC are two separate jurisdictions.

The Chinese authorities are not issuing new laws per se and Beijing's legal claims over Taiwan have not

changed. Still, the PRC is beginning to enforce these claims—with implications for other competing claimants with territorial disputes with China. Similar to how the PRC has begun to suddenly and arbitrarily enforce certain regulations on Taiwanese companies operating in China for coercive political purposes, it is now increasingly utilizing the China Coast Guard (中国海警局)—a paramilitary force used for maritime law enforcement that is directed by the Central Military Commission (CMC, 中央軍事委員會), and increasingly deployed with the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN, 中國人民解放軍海軍)—in patrols around Taiwan—in order to enforce its maritime and territorial claims over Taiwan. Some of these activities by purportedly non-military vessels include increasingly encroaching upon the 12 nautical miles of territorial waters claimed by Taiwan, conducting maritime surveillance around Taiwan, detention of ROC citizens for alleged illegal fishing, forced inspection of civilian vessels, and PRC civilian intrusion into the harbors. Indeed, the PRC appears to be shifting from a previous stance of tacit acknowledgment that the PRC and ROC are two separate jurisdictions toward denying it.

#### Economic Coercion

In the economic sphere, Beijing leans heavily on coercive economic tools through a combination of targeted suspension of preferential tariff terms, selective bans of imported goods, expanded import restrictions on a range of products beyond just agricultural and aquatic goods, arbitrary regulatory enforcements targeting select companies for their political activities, and the sanctioning of individuals and organizations. Although such measures do not yet represent a significant departure from the PRC's longstanding strategy, Beijing will likely dial up these tactics to apply even greater pressure on Taiwan's new leadership in the years to come.

#### Conclusion

The intensification of these non-military measures is broadly indicative of a comprehensive shift in Beijing's overall approach from one of deterring Taiwan's independence to compelling its unification with the PRC. Beijing does not appear to have abandoned its desire for "peaceful reunification," and it would prefer to annex Taiwan without the use of military force.

However, in a review of the Chinese measures taken from 2016 to now, Beijing's current stance represents a departure from its prior stance of tacitly acknowledging the separate jurisdictions of the PRC and ROC, to now seemingly deny this objective fact. Although these gray zone actions are non-kinetic by operational standards, if the PRC's actions to systematically erode the ROC's legal space with such activities go unchallenged and take on other more challenging forms—compounded by its aggressive

military activities—the situation could escalate and become dangerous. It bears noting that such PRC lawfare tactics are likely intended to provoke a response (or inability to respond) from the United States and Taiwan. If not properly managed, these tactics could drive a wedge between Taiwan's new leadership and the United States. Going forward, clear communication between Washington and Taipei is essential and any response on either side must be carefully calibrated.

With the US election slated for November, Beijing is unlikely to dramatically scale up its actions in the coming months lest it raise the Taiwan issue into a national election issue. What is visible now is likely only a preview of the actions to follow. Vigilance is paramount.

The main point: While a change in Beijing's strategy was already visible in the military space during the latter half of Tsai Ing-wen's second term, recent activities in the non-military space (diplomatic/political, legal, information/united front, and economic) are troubling and broadly indicative of a comprehensive shift in Beijing's overall approach from deterring Taiwan's independence to compelling its unification with the PRC.

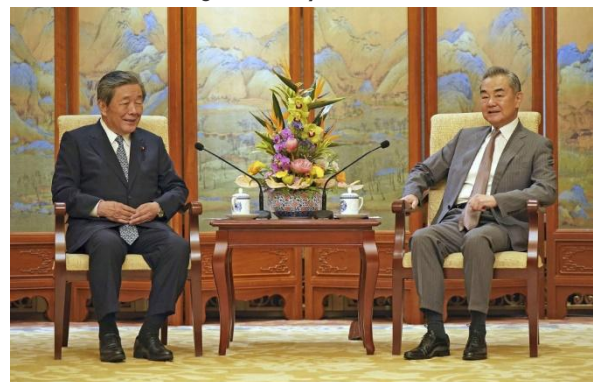
#### China's Wang complains about Japan lawmakers' visits to Taiwan

23 July 2024, Kyodo News

China's top diplomat Wang Yi complained Tuesday about Japanese lawmakers' visits to Taiwan, noting that more of them travel there than to the mainland, which claims the self-ruled democratic island, a senior Japanese ruling party member said.

Hiroshi Moriyama, a veteran House of Representatives lawmaker and chief of the Liberal Democratic Party's decision-making general council, told reporters that Wang expressed the concern to him during a meeting in Beijing.

The top diplomat also warned that the Taiwan Strait is "not a political showground," urging Tokyo to be cautious in its words and deeds and ensure that the Taiwan issue will not damage or shake the foundation of Sino-Japanese relations, according to the Chinese Foreign Ministry.



Hiroshi Moriyama (L), chairman of the General Council of Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party, and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi hold talks in Beijing on July 23, 2024. (Pool photo) (Kyodo) ==Kyodo

Moriyama, who made a five-day trip to China through Tuesday, said factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic have prevented many Japanese Diet members from visiting the mainland, but he believes "as many ruling and opposition lawmakers as possible should come to China" for in-person exchanges of views.

Wang said Japanese politicians, including young parliamentarians, are welcome to visit China frequently, the ministry said.

Only a handful of Japanese lawmakers have visited China since Beijing lifted COVID travel curbs in early 2023.

By contrast, a number of parliamentary delegations have traveled to Taiwan, including 31 Diet members who attended the May 20 inauguration ceremony of President Lai Ching-te. It was one of the largest delegations from Tokyo to have attended such an event there.

Wang also called for Moriyama's cooperation in resolving a bilateral dispute over Japan's release of the treated radioactive water from the crippled Fukushima nuclear power plant, which began in August last year, prompting China to impose a total import ban on Japanese seafood, the senior LDP member said.

Wang pointed out that the top priority is to establish a long-term international monitoring mechanism to ensure the full and effective participation of China and other stakeholders, the ministry said.

On Monday, Moriyama agreed with Liu Jianchao, head of the Chinese Communist Party's International Department, to work toward restarting regular talks between the two countries' ruling parties at an early date, possibly later this year.

The last such talks were held in Japan in October 2018.

China and Taiwan have been governed separately since they split in 1949 due to a civil war. Beijing opposes official interaction between Taiwan and countries with diplomatic relations with the mainland.

### **Von der Leyen is 'playing with fire' over Taiwan, China warns after her re-election**

19 July 2024, Euro.News, Jorge Liboreiro

Beijing has taken issue with the political guidelines of Ursula von der Leyen, which call for the status quo in the Taiwan Strait to be respected.

The re-election of Ursula von der Leyen as European Commission president has already triggered the first international spat: China has denounced the political guidelines of her second mandate for containing "gross interference" in the country's internal affairs.

"Playing with fire on Taiwan is highly dangerous," Wang Lutong, the director general for European affairs at the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said on Friday, one day after the Commission chief clinched a majority in Strasbourg.

"Meddling and even trying to join forces is by no means a right choice for Europe."

Lutong's recriminations refer to a small passage in von der Leyen's re-election manifesto that commits her executive to work closely with Japan, Korea, New Zealand and Australia to address "common challenges in cyber, space and in the secure supply of critical minerals and technologies."

"This includes our collective efforts to deploy the full range of our combined statecraft to deter China from unilaterally changing the status quo by military means, particularly over Taiwan," she writes in her 30-page long document.

The reference adds nothing new and simply repeats von der Leyen's well-known stance: Beijing should refrain from any activity that can forcefully alter the decades-long stalemate in the Taiwan Strait, including a military invasion that many fear is inevitable.

But for China, any statement favourable to Taiwan is a red line that no country, whether ally or adversary, must cross.

The People's Republic of China (PRC) considers Taiwan, whose formal name is the Republic of China (RoC), as a breakaway province that needs to be reconciled with the mainland. Taipei rejects this view and argues the island, after years of building up its democratic institutions, is a de facto independent nation.

Taiwan's new president, William Lai, has offered to resume bilateral contacts but insists the RoC and the PRC will never be subordinate to each other. His outspoken views have increased tensions with Beijing, which considers Lai an "instigator of war."

The EU does not recognise Taiwan and has no embassy in Taipei. However, the two sides conduct relations at a lower level on a variety of topics, such as renewable energy, security, research, data protection, human rights and, most importantly for Brussels, semiconductors, a crucial industry where the island enjoys an unbeatable edge.

These ties have intensified in recent years, partly in response to the sharp deterioration in EU-China relations, and are expected to expand during von der Leyen's next mandate.

In a statement, Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs congratulated the president on her re-election and

"expressed appreciation for her high level of support and concern for peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait."

"In the future," the statement says, "Taiwan will also further collaborate with the European Union to safeguard the rules-based international order and jointly open a new chapter in their friendly and mutually beneficial cooperation."

### **Taiwan's Blunt-Talking Leader Faces China's Backlash**

16 July 2024, The New York Times, Chris Buckley and Amy Chang Chien

The long-smoldering tensions between China and Taiwan have been entering a more precarious phase. In recent months, Beijing has threatened to severely punish Taiwanese citizens who challenge China's claim to the island. More Chinese jets have buzzed the skies near it. Chinese Coast Guard ships have sailed near Taiwan's outer islands.

And both sides have dug deeper into their opposing political positions.

When Lai Ching-te became Taiwan's president in May, he vowed to stick with the China policies of his predecessor, Tsai Ing-wen. Ms. Tsai sought to avoid confrontation even as she defended Taiwan's right to self-rule and rejected Beijing's assertion of sovereignty.

Yet Mr. Lai, while keeping Taiwan's basic policy toward China unchanged, has been blunter in rebuffing its demands. Ms. Tsai, a former trade law specialist, chose her words about China with care. Mr. Lai, who rose as a more plain-spoken politician, sees a need to more sharply lay out Taiwan's separate status.

"In his judgment, there's nothing to be gained from being ambiguous — the conclusion is that Beijing is going to press them, no matter what," said David Sacks, a fellow for Asia studies at the Council on Foreign Relations who analyzes relations between Taiwan and China.

"For decades, cross-strait relations really lay on ambiguities and not saying what you really think, but I think that a lot of that is being eliminated," Mr. Sacks said. "There's less room for maneuverability."

This shift does not mean that war or regional crisis looms. China's leader, Xi Jinping, is focused on fixing its economy and has indicated that he wants to keep tensions with the United States, Taiwan's security partner, in check. Chinese leaders also still hope to absorb Taiwan peacefully, and they have maintained contacts with the island's opposition Nationalist Party, which favors closer ties with Beijing.

But China's pressure tactics are likely to present Mr. Lai with hard choices about how and when to push back or exercise restraint.

"In this new chapter, it's like the tensions become the norm," Chen Kuan-ting, a lawmaker from Mr. Lai's Democratic Progressive Party, said in an interview.

"Trying to contain us and squeeze us tighter, trying to get us like this," Mr. Chen said, bracing his arms into a tightening hold. "It's not a hug."

Taiwan's leader speaks his mind.

Mr. Lai is the second president in a row from the Democratic Progressive Party, which has turned to Western partners to hold China at bay.

A former mayor and lawmaker, Mr. Lai rose in the defiant traditions of his party. Even before Mr. Lai's election, Beijing reviled him for describing himself in 2017 as a "pragmatic worker for Taiwan's independence," words meant to signal that he would defend Taiwan's autonomy without pursuing formal independence.

Still, officials in Beijing seemed taken aback by how starkly he drew a line between Taiwan and China in his high-profile May inauguration speech, several analysts said.

In the speech, Mr. Lai asserted that dialogue with Beijing is only possible if the two sides negotiate as separate equals, not — as Beijing wants — based on the idea that each side accepts that it is part of one Chinese nation.

Past Taiwanese presidents have also said that China and Taiwan should treat each other as distinct equals. But Beijing took more umbrage this time, partly because he said so in his inauguration speech, a manifesto for his four-year term, said Bonnie S. Glaser, an analyst of Taiwan and China at the German Marshall Fund of the United States.

"He just wanted to convey clearly that the two sides of the strait — they're two separate states," Ms. Glaser said. "He wants to, basically, begin his four years setting that as the base line, and telling the Chinese that they have to accept it."

In an interview with Time magazine, Mr. Lai set out his position: "According to international law, we are already a sovereign and independent country."

He wants Taiwan's military to be better prepared.

Mr. Lai's supporters say his clearer position is part of an effort to bring more urgency to building up Taiwan's resilience against threats from China.

His new defense minister, Wellington Koo, has signaled that he wants to shake up the armed forces. He started by putting an end to ceremonial formalities like goose-step marching in parades.

Mr. Lai has vowed to continue Taiwan's military buildup, and some experts argue that the island should lengthen conscription — already extended recently to 12 months — to amass enough well-trained troops to deter Beijing.

Military exercises in Taiwan last summer. Mr. Lai has promised to continue Taiwan's military buildup. Credit...Lam Yik Fei for The New York Times



While China's leader, Mr. Xi, has dismissed speculation that he has a plan to invade Taiwan in the coming years, many Taiwanese officials are convinced that their island will be vulnerable unless it quickly steps up preparedness. The upcoming presidential election in the United States adds another element of unpredictability to the tensions.

"The situation is heading in the direction of greater conflict," I-Chung Lai, the president of the Prospect Foundation, a think tank affiliated with the Taiwanese government, said at a seminar in Taipei this month. "Fundamentally, we can't see any final balancing point."

China is putting the squeeze on Taiwan.

More than 300 Chinese military aircraft flew near Taiwan in June, the second-highest monthly count since Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense began regularly issuing such data in 2020, according to PLATracker, a site that analyzes the data.

China has sent groups of coast guard ships into waters off Kinmen, a Taiwan-controlled island near the Chinese coast, more than 30 times in recent months, eroding a longstanding understanding against such incursions. The forays began after two Chinese fishermen died in the area in February, when their boat capsized as they tried to flee the Taiwanese Coast Guard.

Chinese military officials have said that they will not be letting up.

"If Taiwan independence tries to take one step forward, we'll take one step forward with our retaliatory measures, until full unification of the motherland is achieved," Senior Col. Wu Qian, a spokesman for China's Ministry of National Defense, said in a brief interview last month in Singapore.

For all that military swagger, Chinese leaders seem concerned that their warnings are not having the desired effect on opinion in Taiwan, said Lyle J. Morris, a senior fellow in the Center for China Analysis under the Asia Society. "I see increasing worry that Beijing's levers of influence over Taiwan are narrowing," he said, citing comments from Chinese officials.

That anxiety, Mr. Morris added, seemed to partly motivate China's release of legal guidelines last month that raised the threat of imprisonment — even execution, in extreme cases — for people deemed to be "Taiwan independence die-hards."

### **Taiwan Steps Up Alertness After Detecting Test-Firing by China's Missile Unit**

14 July 2024, Military.com

In this image from a video released by Taiwan Coast Guard Administration, a Taiwanese Coast Guard Administration member calls out on the megaphone

for a Chinese Coast Guard ship at left to leave from the area around Kinmen County, Taiwan, Thursday, July 11, 2024. Taiwan's Coast Guard Administration says they chased away four Chinese Coast Guard ships that were trespassing into the restricted waters near the outlying islands of Kinmen County. (Taiwan Coast Guard Administration via AP)

Taiwan's Defense Ministry said Saturday it was monitoring "waves of test-firing" by China's missile unit in a region more than 1,600 kilometers (1,000 miles) from the self-ruled island and that its air force stepped up its alertness.

China views the democratic island as a breakaway province that should be reunified with the mainland.

It is not immediately clear whether the tests were related to China's harassment of Taiwan. In recent years, China has ramped up its military activities around the island, which is ruled by the Democratic Progressive Party.

In May, Taiwan's newly elected President Lai Ching-te said in his inauguration speech that he wants peace with China and urged it to stop its military threats and intimidation of the island.

It is not immediately clear whether the tests were related to China's harassment of Taiwan. In recent years, China has ramped up its military activities around the island, which is ruled by the Democratic Progressive Party.

In May, Taiwan's newly elected President Lai Ching-te said in his inauguration speech that he wants peace with China and urged it to stop its military threats and intimidation of the island.

China's military has displayed a strong show of force toward Taiwan since Wednesday, when the U.S. new top envoy to Taipei promised that Washington would help the island defend itself.

Taiwan's Defense Ministry said Thursday it had detected 66 warplanes around the island and that dozens flew across the median line in the Taiwan Strait, the de facto boundary between the two sides. On Saturday, 30 warplanes were also detected around Taiwan over a 24-hour period, with 20 crossing the median line.

The U.S., like most countries, does not recognize Taiwan. But it is the island's main partner and is bound by U.S. laws to provide it with the means to defend itself. Less than a month ago, the U.S. State Department approved the sale to Taiwan of missiles and drones for an estimated \$360 million.

Meanwhile, Chinese state broadcaster CCTV reported that Russian warships arrived at a port in Zhanjiang city, in Guangdong province, on Friday for joint naval drills. The military exercise will include anti-missile exercises, sea strikes and air defense, CCTV said. It is expected to last until around mid-July.

The exercise aims to demonstrate the armies' capabilities in jointly tackling maritime security threats and preserving peace and stability regionally and globally, China's defense ministry said Friday. It would further deepen the strategic partnership of both sides "for the new era", it said.

Earlier this week, NATO allies called China a "decisive enabler" of Russia's war against Ukraine in their most serious rebuke of Beijing. They also expressed concerns over Beijing's nuclear arsenal and its capabilities in space.

The sternly worded final communiqué, approved by the 32 NATO members at their summit in Washington, makes clear that China is becoming a focus of the military alliance. The European and North American members and their partners in the Indo-Pacific increasingly see shared security concerns coming from Russia and its Asian supporters, especially China.

In response, China accused NATO of seeking security at the expense of others and told the alliance not to bring the same "chaos" to Asia. Its foreign ministry maintained that China has a fair and objective stance on the Ukraine issue.

#### **Taiwan says record number of Chinese warplanes detected amid NATO summit**

11 July 2024, Aljazeera

Taiwan's Defence Ministry says 56 Chinese aircraft crossed sensitive median line as Beijing carries out military drills.

Taiwan has said it is watching China's military movements after detecting the most Chinese warplanes near the island in a 24-hour window so far this year, as Beijing conducts drills that are coinciding with the NATO summit in Washington, DC. Taiwan's Ministry of Defence said in a statement on Thursday that "66 PLA aircraft and seven PLAN vessels operating around Taiwan were detected up until 6am [22:00 GMT Wednesday] today".

Of those, 56 aircraft crossed the sensitive median line that bisects the narrow 180-kilometre (112-mile) waterway separating the self-governing island from mainland China, according to the ministry.

Taiwan's Defence Ministry also released two pictures of a Chinese J-16 fighter and a nuclear-capable H-6 bomber, which it said were taken recently.

"The military has a detailed grasp of the activities in the seas and waters around the Taiwan Strait, including of the Chinese communists' aircraft and ships," ministry spokesperson Sun Li-fang said.

On Wednesday, Taiwanese officials announced that China's Shandong aircraft carrier had passed close to the Philippines on its way to military exercises in the Pacific.

The Philippines military said it had received reports of a China-Russia exercise taking place in the Philippine Sea without directly referencing the Shandong.

Taiwan, which Beijing considers part of its territory, has complained of a sharp uptick in Chinese military activity in recent years as Beijing seeks to put pressure on the island's Democratic Progressive Party government, which has advocated strengthening Taiwanese identity and forging closer relations with the international community.

Beijing has labelled Taiwanese President William Lai Ching-te a "dangerous separatist" and said the island should be "reunified" with the Chinese mainland by force if necessary.

In a communique released on Wednesday, NATO leaders said China has acted as a "decisive enabler" of Russia's war against Ukraine and poses systemic challenges to Europe and its security.

A spokesperson for the Chinese mission to the European Union accused NATO of "hyping up the so-called China threat" and said the declaration is full of "obvious lies and smears".

#### **Taiwan soldier charged with leaking military secrets to China**

09 July 2024, The Straits Times

A Taiwanese sergeant has been indicted for allegedly photographing and leaking confidential defence information to China, prosecutors said on July 9.

Beijing claims self-ruled Taiwan as its territory and has ramped up military and political pressures on the island in recent years.

The sergeant, surnamed Chen, worked at a navy training centre and was recruited by an unspecified number of people who "collected intelligence for mainland China" via messaging apps in 2022, said the Taiwan High Prosecutors' Office.

"Between April 2022 and February 2023, he photographed secret national defence information in (the counties of) Pingtung, Yilan and other places with his mobile phone," the office said in a statement. "(He) sent the information four times via Line and Telegram... for a total illegal gain of NT\$170,000 (S\$7,060)."

The office said Chen was charged with violating the Criminal Code of the Armed Forces and the Anti-corruption Act.

When asked to comment on the indictment, Defence Ministry spokesman Sun Li-fang said the military had worked with national security units on the case.

"In recent years, the CCP's (Chinese Communist Party's) infiltration has indeed posed a very serious threat to the military. The threat is no less than...

threats posed by missiles or aircraft and ships," he told reporters.

China maintains a near-daily presence of warships, drones and fighter jets around Taiwan, and earlier in 2024 had launched war games following the May 20 inauguration of Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te. Beijing regards him as a "dangerous separatist" due to his defence of Taiwan's sovereignty.

In pre-recorded footage for a military television programme that aired on July 9, Mr Lai warned soldiers at an air force base in central Taichung city to be vigilant.

"China's infiltration and spying will not stop," he said, dressed in military fatigues.

"You must always be vigilant, pay attention to your own information security, and do not fall into traps."

The sergeant's indictment was the latest in a recent string of spying cases.

In April, a father and son duo were jailed for eight years for collecting confidential military information and trying to develop a spying "organisation" for Beijing. AFP

### **Taiwan probes senior official who deals with China over bribery suspicions**

06 July 2024, Reuters

Taiwan prosecutors said on Saturday they were investigating a senior official and member of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) who deals with China on suspicion of bribery. He said he had done nothing wrong.

Cheng Wen-tsan is head of the Straits Exchange Foundation under the China-policy making Mainland Affairs Council that deals with day-to-day issues like accidents involving Taiwanese in China. The foundation is technically private because the governments in Beijing and Taipei do not recognise each other or have any official relations.

Prosecutors in the northern Taiwanese city of Taoyuan, where Cheng was mayor from 2014-2022, said he had been summoned for questioning on Friday on bribery suspicions and that they had applied to a court to detain him.

It did not give details of the allegations against him.

Cheng, in a statement issued via his lawyer and released by the foundation, denied wrongdoing.

"I have not committed any illegal acts, and I will cooperate with the judicial investigation. I hope to clarify the truth and prove my innocence as soon as possible," he said.

Taiwan's presidential office said it respects the judiciary and hopes investigators will clarify the matter as soon as possible.

### **Taiwan reports more Chinese military activity, calls for de-escalation**

05 July 2024, Reuters

Taiwan on Friday reported renewed Chinese military activity nearby with another "combat patrol" as the government called on Beijing not to escalate tensions after the seizure of a Taiwanese fishing boat.

China, which views democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory, has stepped up its pressure over the past four years, both militarily and politically.

On Tuesday, Chinese officials boarded and detained a Taiwanese fishing boat for illegally operating in the country's waters, in what a senior Taiwan official said may be act of psychological warfare.

Taiwan's defence ministry said that starting just before 7 a.m. (2300 GMT) on Friday, it had detected 26 Chinese military aircraft, including J-16 fighters, carrying out a "joint combat readiness patrol" with Chinese warships.

The Chinese aircraft flew into airspace to the north, centre and southern part of Taiwan, the ministry said. Taiwan has detected at least 127 Chinese military aircraft operating near the island since the start of this month.

China's defence ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Speaking to reporters earlier on Friday, Taiwan Premier Cho Jung-tai said fishermen should raise their alert level and not do anything that could be considered illegal.

"At the same time, I also want to ask the Chinese side not to escalate with any the use of any excessive measures, because this can easily cause tension and unnecessary confrontation which is extremely unnecessary," he added.

### **Firms weigh removing Taiwan staff from China after death penalty threat**

04 July 2024, Reuters, Laurie Chen

Some foreign companies are considering moving Taiwanese employees out of China after Beijing said it could impose the death penalty on "diehard" Taiwan independence separatists, said four people familiar with the matter.

The new guidelines have caused some Taiwanese expatriates and foreign multinationals operating in China to scramble to assess their legal risks and exposure, said the people, who include a lawyer and two executives with direct knowledge of the discussions.

"Several companies have come to us to assess the risks to their personnel," said the lawyer, James Zimmerman, a Beijing-based partner at the Perkins

Coie law firm. He declined to identify the companies or industries for confidentiality reasons.

"The companies are still concerned that there may be some grey areas such as whether a benign social media post or voting for a particular political party or candidate in Taiwan elections could be interpreted as engaging in pro-independence activities," Zimmerman said.

Reuters has previously consulted Perkins Coie on unrelated matters in China.

Some 177,000 Taiwanese were working in China as of 2022, according to the most recent Taiwan government survey. Taiwanese staff are employed by many multinationals in China, given their linguistic abilities and cultural familiarity with the country.

Many more work for the myriad Taiwanese firms that operate in China and have, by the Taiwan government's estimate, invested more than \$200 billion since 1991, helping fuel China's growth to become the world's second-biggest economy.

Some foreign corporations operating in China have held meetings with employees on safety, said the two executives, who asked not to be named due to the sensitivity of the matter.

Another source, who was briefed on the matter, said some Taiwanese staff in China have received and accepted the option to leave the country.

#### 'EXTREME MINORITY' SUBJECT TO DEATH PENALTY

China views democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory. Taiwan President Lai Ching-te rejects Beijing's sovereignty claims, saying only Taiwan's people can decide their future. He has denounced China's new guidelines.

The June 21 guidelines criminalise promoting Taiwan's entry to international organisations where statehood is a condition, having external official exchanges and suppressing parties, groups and people that promote "reunification".

Also illegal are "other acts that seek to separate Taiwan from China" – phrasing that allows Beijing to interpret the rules broadly, according to legal experts.

Among "the ringleaders or those who have committed serious crimes", the guidelines say, "if the harm to the country and the people is particularly serious and the circumstances are particularly bad, they may be sentenced to death."

The regulations do not further specify who might be subject to the death penalty.

Asked for comment on how companies and Taiwanese employees are reacting to the guidelines, China's foreign ministry told Reuters in a statement: "Using criminal law measures to punish criminal separatist elements and uphold the country's core interests is a common practice for all countries.

"It needs to be emphasised that the relevant legislative document targets the extreme minority of diehard 'Taiwan independence' elements and their separatist activities, and does not implicate the vast majority of Taiwan compatriots," the ministry said.

China's Taiwan Affairs Office did not respond to a request for comment. Last week it said the vast majority of Taiwanese have nothing to worry about and can come "in high spirits".

Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council, which oversees relations with Beijing, told Reuters in a statement: "The government reminds Taiwanese businesspeople and Taiwanese employees in mainland China that they must pay more attention to their personal safety now. The risk is indeed increasing."

Last week the council urged Taiwanese people to avoid all non-essential travel to China, Hong Kong and Macau as a result of the new regulations.

The council said last month that eight retired Taiwanese military and police officers had been detained in China over the previous year. Last year it warned that Taiwanese academics were being detained and interrogated upon entry to China, even if they were on formal exchange programmes.

#### 'REVIEWING THE RISK DAILY'

One of the executives who spoke to Reuters – a senior official who works with Taiwan investors in China – said his phone lit up after China announced the new guidelines as people discussed what they could mean for their work.

He said the guidelines add to the uncertainty of doing business in China, coming on the heels of such measures as China's anti-espionage law and its national security law for Hong Kong.

The second executive, who works for a large multinational whose Taiwanese executives frequently go on business trips to China, said they had been having regular meetings with senior managers to assess the danger and whether to withdraw those working in the country.

"It's not yet gotten to the stage of deciding not to send them there, but we are reviewing the risk daily," the executive said.

Wen-Ti Sung, a fellow at the Atlantic Council's Global China Hub, said the guidelines would force foreign companies to "either move their operations out entirely to keep Taiwanese talent or they stop hiring Taiwanese talent."

That would mean that "even fewer Taiwanese will be working or living in China, thereby making Beijing's attempts to win over their hearts and minds even harder," Sung said.

Beijing condemns Taiwan's Lai as a "separatist" and staged war games shortly after his May inauguration. Taiwan has complained of ramped up Chinese pressure since Lai won the election in January, including ongoing military actions, trade

sanctions and coast guard patrols around Taiwan-controlled islands next to China.

Lai has repeatedly offered talks with China but been rebuffed.

## June

### China presses Global South leaders to support Taiwan 'reunification'

24 June 2024, Nikkei Asia, Ken Moriyasu

When Chinese Premier Li Qiang visited Malaysia last week, Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said that his country firmly supports China in "achieving national reunification."

Support for China's "reunification" with Taiwan was not a phrase that Anwar used when he met Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing in March 2023, at least according to the Chinese readout. But Anwar joins a list of Global South and other leaders who have recently mentioned "reunification" in their meetings with Li or President Xi Jinping – a trend that has not gone unnoticed by Western analysts.

"Beijing is no longer satisfied with deterring Taiwan independence. Xi Jinping is now seeking to promote reunification," said Bonnie Glaser, the managing director of the Indo-Pacific program at the German Marshall Fund of the United States.

China has long made its diplomatic relationships contingent upon its partners' acknowledgment that there is only "one China." But its recent engagements with some other countries suggest it increasingly demands more than that.

During a state visit to China in April, Surinamese President Chandrikapersad Santokhi said that Suriname will continue to "unswervingly support China in achieving national reunification." Some, like King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain, have said they support "peaceful reunification."

But others, like Equatorial Guinea President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who both had state visits in May, said they support "complete reunification" without adding conditions on how that should take place.

For Malaysia's part, when it established diplomatic relations with China in May 1974, it said it recognizes the People's Republic of China as the sole legal government of China, and "acknowledged" Beijing's position that Taiwan is an inalienable part of Chinese territory.

That Malaysia did not "recognize," "support" or "endorse" that position on Taiwan was in line with the "One China" policies of other nations around the world. The U.S. holds that there is but one entity

called "China," but leaves ambiguity over sovereignty. U.S. presidents have repeatedly reassured Chinese leaders that Washington does not support Taiwan independence.

But Anwar's explicit support for "reunification" appears to be one step closer to Beijing's position. Communist China has never controlled Taiwan, but considers the island part of its territory and has refused to rule out taking it by force.

Some leaders, such as Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Bahrain's King Hamad, Egypt's Sisi and Equatorial Guinea's Teodoro Obiang have also expressed support for a One China "principle," a subtle but important choice of word that implies endorsement of Beijing's stance that Taiwan is a province of China.

Analysts in Washington say they started to take note of the shifting rhetoric around last fall, ahead of Xi's meeting with U.S. President Joe Biden in Woodside, California, in November.

Rush Doshi, who until recently served as the National Security Council deputy senior director for China and Taiwan, said, "This is [China's] response to the United States enlisting its allies and partners to speak publicly about the importance of peace and stability in the [Taiwan] Strait."

Most Western leaders are not playing Xi's game. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken simply told Xi in April that the U.S. adheres to the One China policy.

But in January, Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar told visiting Premier Li in Dublin that Ireland always abides by the One China "principle" and that he "hopes that China will achieve peaceful reunification at an early date," according to the Chinese readout. Varadkar later corrected the record, stating the One China "policy" of Ireland, a European Union member, had not changed.

Some analysts say that last month's inauguration of Taiwan's new pro-sovereignty President Lai Ching-te may fuel Xi's drive to press more leaders to publicly support "reunification."

Russell Hsiao, executive director of the Global Taiwan Institute in Washington, said Anwar's statement is "one of many troubling signs of the more aggressive turn in Xi's approach to Taiwan we could expect to see more in the years to come, as Beijing turns the screws on the Lai administration."

This shift in Beijing's strategy began in the latter half of former President Tsai Ing-wen's second term, Hsiao said. "Beijing is no longer simply seeking political endorsement from other countries of its 'One China principle,' but for them to take action that actively supports its position on 'reunification.'"

While it would be more challenging for China to force major powers to concede to this position, "it would be harder for smaller countries to resist



Beijing's pressure," Hsiao said. "What this change means in practical terms requires careful and close observation."

But Doshi was confident that support from Global South countries would only go so far.

"China may get countries to support unification, but does that mean those countries support war? No, none of them want that. The global economic cost would be too great," he said.

### **China threatens death penalty for Taiwan independence 'diehards'**

22 June 2024, The Guardian

Beijing ramps up pressure over 'crime of secession' while Taipei says China has no jurisdiction over Taiwan and urges its people not to be intimidated. China has threatened to impose the death penalty in extreme cases for "diehard" Taiwan independence separatists, a ratcheting up of pressure even though Chinese courts have no jurisdiction on the democratically governed island.

China, which views Taiwan as its own territory, has made no secret of its dislike of President Lai Ching-te, who took office last month, saying he is a "separatist", and staged war games shortly after his inauguration.

Taiwan has complained of a pattern of ramped up Chinese pressure since Lai won the election in January, including ongoing military actions, trade sanctions and coast guard patrols around Taiwan-controlled islands next to China.

The new guidelines say China's courts, prosecutors, public and state security bodies should "severely punish Taiwan independence diehards for splitting the country and inciting secession crimes in accordance with the law, and resolutely defend national sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity", according to China's state-run Xinhua news agency.

The notice Beijing released on Friday specified the death penalty for "ringleaders" of independence efforts who "cause particularly serious harm to the state and the people", Xinhua said.

Other leading advocates could face jail terms ranging from 10 years to life.

The new guidelines – to take effect from Friday – were being issued in accordance with laws already on the books, including the 2005 anti-secession law, Xinhua said. That law gives China the legal basis for military action against Taiwan if it secedes or seems about to.

Sun Ping, an official from China's ministry of public security, told reporters in Beijing the maximum penalty for the "crime of secession" was the death penalty.

"The sharp sword of legal action will always hang high," she said.

Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council denounced Beijing's move, urging its people not to be threatened by China.

"The Beijing authorities have absolutely no jurisdiction over Taiwan, and the Chinese communists' so-called laws and norms have no binding force on our people," it said in a statement on Friday. "The government appeals to our country's people to feel at ease and not to be threatened or intimidated by the Chinese Communist party."

The guidelines detail what is considered a crime worthy of punishment, including promoting Taiwan's entry to international organisations where statehood is a condition, having "external official exchanges" and "suppressing" parties, groups and people that promote "reunification".

The guidelines add a further clause to what could be considered a crime – "other acts that seek to separate Taiwan from China" – meaning the rules can be broadly interpreted.

Lai has repeatedly offered to hold talks with China but has been rebuffed. He says only Taiwan's people can decide their future.

China has taken legal measures against Taiwanese officials before, including imposing sanctions on Hsiao Bi-khim, Taiwan's former de facto ambassador to the US and now the island's vice-president.

Such punishments have little practical effect as Chinese courts do not have jurisdiction in Taiwan, whose government rejects Beijing's sovereignty claims. Senior Taiwanese officials, including its president, also do not visit China.

### **China's reunification is 'unstoppable', says Beijing's top man on Taiwan affairs**

15 June 2024, SCMP, Xiamen and Hayley Wong

Beijing has "firm determination, sufficient confidence and strong capability" to destroy any efforts by Taiwanese separatists, mainland China's top political adviser and No. 4 official told a forum aimed at boosting exchanges with the island's mainland-friendly camps.

"No matter how the situation in the Taiwan Strait changes, the fact that both sides belong to one China cannot be denied," Wang Huning said in his opening speech at the annual Straits Forum on Saturday, held in the southeastern port city of Xiamen in Fujian province.

"The historic trend of China's renaissance and reunification is unstoppable."

Wang is Beijing's top man on Taiwan affairs and a member of the Politburo Standing Committee, the Communist Party's top decision-making body. He is also chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the country's top advisory body.

Beijing sees Taiwan as part of China to be reunited by force if necessary. Most countries, including the United States, Taiwan's top weapons supplier, do not recognise the island as an independent state. However, Washington is opposed to any attempt to take Taiwan by force and is committed to arming it.

Fujian is located just to the west of the Taiwan Strait and is the closest part of the mainland to Taiwan, both geographically and culturally.

Despite Taipei's warnings that the forum is a "united front tool", Taiwan's main opposition party, the Kuomintang (KMT), sent a delegation led by vice-chairman Sean Lien Sheng-wen. Beijing has described the forum as the biggest platform for cross-strait "people-to-people exchanges".

Beijing's Taiwan Affairs Office said it expected over 7,000 attendees from Taiwan to join some 50 events during the week-long forum on grass-roots governance, youth exchanges, and cultural and economic exchanges.

Chang Li-shan, chief of Taiwan's Yunlin county, also attended the forum and was invited to speak at the opening ceremony, drawing criticism from Taipei's Mainland Affairs Council. Chiu Chui-cheng, the council's minister, expressed "displeasure" over local officials joining the events.

The opening event on Saturday was hosted by Song Tao, director of mainland China's Taiwan Affairs Office. Fujian party chief Zhou Zuyi was among the other high-ranking officials there.

In his speech, Wang said the foundation, "driving force" and development of cross-strait relations all depended on the people.

He urged people on both sides to "resolutely oppose Taiwan independence and foreign interference" and "jointly push cross-strait relations back on the right track".

The KMT's Lien said at least 60 per cent of Taiwan's population "disagreed with the elected government's speeches and actions on Taiwan independence", as reflected in the island's presidential and legislative elections this year.

He called on the two sides to "reduce hostile words and practices" so that "people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait will not have any doubts or uneasiness about the interactions between the two sides".

"We must also not be kidnapped by a few extreme people with ulterior motives, let alone be misled by some extreme remarks," he added.

Lien touted the KMT's approach to promoting "peaceful win-win cooperation" in his speech and during his meeting with Wang before the opening ceremony.

In January, William Lai Ching-te from the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party was elected as Taiwan's new leader with 40 per cent of the votes.

In his inauguration speech, Lai said the Republic of China, Taiwan's official name, and the People's Republic of China were "not subordinate to each other". Beijing described the speech as a "confession of Taiwan independence" and has previously described him as a "separatist" and "destroyer of cross-strait peace".

The People's Liberation Army then held massive military drills around Taiwan. Beijing said the exercises were "punishment" for "Taiwan separatists" and a "severe warning" to outside forces intent on interference and provocation.

In a blow to Taiwan's chemical exports, a suspension of tariff cuts took effect on Saturday on 134 items under the Cross-Strait Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement – the only trade agreement between Beijing and Taipei.

The Straits Forum, held annually since 2009, has been a platform for signalling new Taiwan policies. At last year's forum, Wang announced that a cross-strait "integration development" pilot zone would be built in Fujian.

In September, Beijing released a comprehensive guideline for building the zone to promote peaceful reunification.

The plan called on Fujian authorities to remove long-standing restrictions on Taiwanese living on the mainland – such as inconveniences in housing, employment and social security.

Beijing also aims to create interconnected communities between the mainland city of Xiamen and the Taiwan-controlled island of Quemoy, also known as Kinmen, which are less than 5km (three miles) apart. Similar plans are under way for Fujian's provincial capital of Fuzhou and the Taipei-governed archipelago of Matsu, which are about 20km apart.

Fujian party chief Zhou told the forum that 121 major projects for Fujian-Taiwan integration have been planned or implemented since last year, including providing water, gas, electricity and bridges to Kinmen and Matsu.

Wang said in his speech that these policies had been "widely welcomed".

Beijing has so far issued 16 policy documents to promote the plan, including 20 measures issued by the Ministry of Education on Wednesday to make it easier for Taiwanese students and teachers to find courses and jobs in Fujian.

In a meeting attended by senior officials before the forum on Friday, Wang urged related government departments to make the integration of Fujian and Taiwan "deeper" and "more solid".

While this year's forum appeared to emphasise peace, some delegates raised concerns about the cross-strait situation.

During a parallel event on Friday, Cheng Ting-wen, secretary general of the Chinese Youth International,

an organisation that promotes youth exchanges, expressed worries about the PLA's presence in the Taiwan Strait.

### **China's war games near Taiwan threaten international peace and security**

12 June 2024, The Conversation

Taiwan recently saw yet another peaceful transition of power with the inauguration of President Lai Ching-Te, who was elected to office in January.

In his inaugural speech, Lai called on neighbouring China to cease its acts of intimidation and to "choose dialogue over confrontation."

China responded by launching a simulated blockade of Taiwan. The People's Liberation Army released images boasting its ability to rain missiles on one of the most densely populated countries in the world as "strong punishment."

#### **Democracy under threat**

Beijing's standard reaction to the democratic voting rights of 24 million people is to threaten to "break skulls and let blood flow." For China, Taiwan as a renegade province that must "return to the embrace of the motherland" despite the fact China does not have any authority over Taiwan.

In recent years, China has been trying to use its diplomatic clout and influence at the United Nations to rewrite history and legitimize its claim of sovereignty over Taiwan.

While Taiwan ranks highly on the Human Freedom Index (just one spot ahead of Canada), China is a techno-authoritarian state that has regressed even further under the reign of Xi Jinping.

Millions of Uyghur Muslims remain in re-education and forced labour camps, while Tibetans are forced to "Sinicize" and lose their cultural and religious heritage.

#### **Reaching beyond borders**

Political dissidents, journalists and foreign nationals are not immune from intimidation or imprisonment.

In what has been termed transnational oppression, aided through Chinese so-called police stations operating with impunity overseas, the Chinese government targets and threatens Chinese nationals and critics of China wherever they are.

Many governments, including Canada's, caution against travel to China and Hong Kong due to the "risk of arbitrary enforcement" of laws prohibiting activities or speech critical of the Chinese Communist Party.

China's censorship, surveillance and arbitrary arrests are widespread, and such tactics and technologies are alarmingly being exported worldwide.

While the Chinese government condemns the forced divestment of TikTok, the app – together

with Facebook, WhatsApp and Google – are all banned within the great firewall of China.

#### **War games**

When former United States House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan in 2022, China conducted similar war games.

Incursions by Chinese warships and fighters into Taiwan's Air Defence Identification Zone are increasing in frequency. In addition, short of mounting an invasion, China is increasingly testing the waters by deploying its maritime militia to swarm islands under Taiwan's control.

Known as "grey-zone" tactics, they fall short of the use of force, which is prohibited under international law. Also referred to as "salami slicing," grey-zone tactics that are not strictly attacks make it hard for others to respond without potentially escalating a situation to a conflict.

But not responding to threats of force or military intimidation risks normalizing such aggressive behaviour and emboldening China to further destabilize international peace and stability.

Such acts of harassment and threats can happen not just on Earth but in cyberspace and outer space, all of which can have severe repercussions on civilian life and infrastructure.

#### **Pattern of reckless behaviour**

Closely allying with Russia, and actively supplying weapons to sustain its war in Ukraine, China has not concealed its desire to reshape the world order.

Taiwan is not alone suffering China's increasingly brazen naval and aerial military operations. Canadian and Australian aircraft enforcing United Nations sanctions against North Korea have also been repeatedly harassed on international waters, where states supposedly enjoy the freedom of navigation.

Meanwhile, China is continuously engaged in violent border clashes with India, is challenging the sovereignty of islands that belong to Japan and militarizing islands in the disputed waters of the South China Sea.

Deliberate jamming of navigation and emergency distress signals in the Asia-Pacific, which threatens the safety of international aviation, has also been attributed to China.

#### **Why Taiwan matters**

Tech executives around the world were recently in Taiwan to talk about the future of AI and innovative technologies. With Taiwan's prowess in computing technologies and chip production, Jensen Huang – the Taiwanese-born NVIDIA CEO – described his homeland as "the unsung hero, a steadfast pillar of the world."

But Taiwan is also on the front lines of an increasingly aggressive and assertive China. On a daily basis, Taiwan experiences the highest rate of

cyberattacks in the world originating from China, all aimed at disrupting government services and sowing social distrust.

Taiwan has much to share with the world on how to enhance citizen participation in the digital age, counter foreign influence and dispel misinformation and disinformation that undermine trust in democratic institutions and processes.

The latest war games surrounding Taiwan are just another reminder of the various ways China tries to undermine liberal democracies and international peace and security. Today it may be a simulated attack. But the world must stand together and prevent it ever becoming reality.

### **Taiwan tracks 23 Chinese military aircraft around nation**

04 June 2024, DT Next

The median line notably bisects the Taiwan Strait in a way that separates the island from China, which Taiwan claims to be a part of its territory.

TAIPEI: Taiwan tracked 23 Chinese military aircraft around the nation, the country's Ministry of National Defence said on Tuesday. It included fighter jets, transport aircraft, and drones.

Out of these aircraft, 16 crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait. In a post on social media platform X, Taiwan MND wrote, "Overall 23 PLA aircraft (J-16, Y-8, UAVs, etc.) were detected at 0820 hrs today. Out of which, 16 crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait and entered the north, central, and southwest parts of Taiwan's ADIZ in conducting joint combat patrol along with PLAN vessels."

The median line notably bisects the Taiwan Strait in a way that separates the island from China, which Taiwan claims to be a part of its territory.

The Chinese military aircraft were spotted right after China sent in 19 aircraft, eight naval vessels, and four Chinese coast guard ships around the self-governed island within 24 hours ending at 6 a.m. on Tuesday.

"19 PLA aircraft, 8 PLAN vessels, and 4 CCG vessels operating around Taiwan were detected today. 17 of the aircraft crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait and entered Taiwan's northern and SW ADIZ. ROC Armed Forces have monitored the situation and responded accordingly," Taiwan's Ministry of Defence said in a post on X earlier today.

Taiwan monitored the situation and responded accordingly.

Meanwhile, amid tense ties with China and the country's growing aggressiveness, the Defence Minister of Taiwan, Wellington Koo Li-Hsiung, visited

the Army HQ to receive a briefing on the operational concepts for the country's ground forces.

The MND, in a post on X, wrote, "On June 3, Defence Minister Wellington Koo Li-hsiung visited the Army HQ to receive a briefing on the operational concepts for Taiwan's ground forces and key future acquisitions to enhance warfighting capabilities."

"Minister Koo emphasised the importance of integrating active duty and reserve forces, strengthening command and control for joint operations, and adopting realistic training aligned with our asymmetric warfare strategy," the post added.

### **China ready to 'forcefully' stop Taiwan independence: Defence minister**

02 June 2024, Aljazeera

Dong Jun says 'whoever dares to split Taiwan from China will be crushed to pieces and suffer his own destruction'.

Chinese Defence Minister Dong Jun has said the country's military was ready to "forcefully" stop Taiwan's independence, in a fiery speech at a Singapore security forum.

Speaking at the Shangri-La Dialogue conference in Singapore on Sunday, Dong said the self-ruled democracy of Taiwan was the "core of core issues" for China, but claimed Taiwan's governing Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) was incrementally pursuing separatism and bent on erasing Chinese identity.

China views Taiwan as its own territory and has not ruled out the use of force to achieve unification.

Last month it staged two days of war games around the island after the May 20 inauguration of President William Lai Ching-te. Lai and the DPP say it is up to the people of Taiwan to decide their future. Beijing calls him a "separatist".

"Those separatists recently made fanatical statements that show their betrayal of the Chinese nation and their ancestors. They will be nailed to the pillar of shame in history," Dong said.

"The Chinese People's Liberation Army has always been an indestructible and powerful force in defence of the unification of the motherland, and it will act resolutely and forcefully at all times to curb the independence of Taiwan and to ensure that it never succeeds in its attempts," Dong told the forum on Sunday.

"Whoever dares to split Taiwan from China will be crushed to pieces and suffer his own destruction."

Reacting to the Chinese minister's statements, Taiwan's government said it deeply regretted the "provocative and irrational" remarks.

Dong's comments in Singapore followed the first substantive face-to-face talks in 18 months between the defence chiefs of China and the US. Dong and US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin met for more than an hour at the luxury hotel hosting the forum.

"We have always been open to exchanges and cooperation, but this requires both sides to meet each other halfway," Dong said. "We believe that we need more exchanges precisely because there are differences between our two militaries."

After the meeting, Austin said telephone conversations between US and Chinese military commanders would resume "in the coming months", while Beijing hailed the "stabilising" security relations between the two countries.

President Joe Biden's administration and China have been stepping up communication to ease friction between the nuclear-armed rivals, with Secretary of State Antony Blinken visiting Beijing and Shanghai last month.

A key focus has been the resumption of military-to-military dialogue, which is seen as critical to preventing flashpoint disputes from spinning out of control.

China scrapped military communications with the US in 2022 in response to then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan.

On the South China Sea, which China claims almost entirely and where it has been involved in frequent confrontations with Philippine vessels, Dong warned of "limits" to Beijing's restraint.

China has fired water cannon at Philippine vessels in contested waters at Second Thomas Shoal and Scarborough Shoal, which Beijing seized from the Philippines after a months-long stand-off in 2012.

"China has maintained sufficient restraint in the face of rights infringements and provocation, but there are limits to this," Dong said.

China accuses the US of using the Philippines as a "pawn" to stir up trouble in the South China Sea.

After the Scarborough Shoal incident, Manila took its case to international arbitration. The court found in favour of the Philippines, and that China's claims had no legal basis. Beijing has ignored the ruling.

## May

### Exiled Writer Yuan Hongbing Reveals Chinese United Front Strategy Targeting Taiwan's Legislature

28 May 2024, China Scope

In February, exiled Chinese writer Yuan Hongbing revealed that China aims to use the Kuomintang's

(KMT's) influence in Taiwan's legislature to advance its united front strategy, sparking a political storm. Yuan stated in an interview that the information came from a "princeling" (child of a Chinese revolutionary leader) whom Xi Jinping does not dare to challenge. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) wants to turn the KMT into the vanguard force of the People's Liberation Army to achieve unification of Taiwan with mainland China from within.

According to Yuan's analysis, the CCP is not just using military intimidation to destabilize Taiwan; it is also using propaganda, deployment of agents, and expansion of the KMT's legislative power to override the Taiwanese administration. Yuan said that the CCP wants the KMT to pave the way for Xi Jinping to fully occupy Taiwan, and that the recent military drills are aimed at supporting the CCP's agents in Taiwan.

While some members of Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party may have been co-opted by Beijing, Yuan said that the party as a whole rejects CCP influence. This stands in contrast to the political attitude of the pro-China KMT party.

Yuan stated that the CCP's Taiwan policy has shifted from coercion and enticement to psychological warfare, aiming to demoralize Taiwanese. He praised the peaceful protests outside the of Taiwan's Legislature as social forces advocating for self-defense that could resist Beijing's intimidation.

Yuan, a former Beijing University law professor, was exiled from China for supporting the 1989 pro-democracy movement.

### Most countries support one-China principle, oppose Taiwan region's participation in WHA: FM

24 May 2024, Global Times



Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin Photo: fmprc.gov.cn

The support by a majority of countries for China's position on the Taiwan region's participation in the World Health Assembly (WHA) proves again that the one-China principle represents the will of the international community and the trend of the times, and also fully reflects the majority of countries



holding a stance for justice on the Taiwan question related to the WHA, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said on Friday.

There is but one China in the world. The government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legal government representing the whole of China. Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory, the spokesperson reiterated.

China's position on the Taiwan region's participation in the activities of international organizations, including the World Health Organization (WHO), is consistent and clear: it must be handled under the one-China principle, which is also a fundamental principle demonstrated by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 2758 and WHA Resolution 25.1, said Wang.

Most countries have reiterated their commitments to upholding Resolution 2758 of the UNGA and firmly supporting the one-China principle, opposing Taiwan region's participation in WHA, the spokesperson said.

For eight consecutive years from 2009 to 2016, The Chinese central government made special arrangements for the Taiwan region's participation in the WHA on the basis of adherence to the one-China principle. But since the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) authorities came to power, they have obstinately adhered to the separatist position of "Taiwan independence" and refused to admit the 1992 Consensus embodying the one-China principle, which means that the political foundation for the Taiwan region's participation in the WHA no longer exists, said Wang.

The 77th WHA will open on May 27. Upholding the one-China principle, as well as the sanctity and authority of relevant UNGA and WHA resolutions, China has decided not to approve the Taiwan region's participation in this year's WHA, a move that has been widely understood and supported by the international community, said Wang.

Leaders and senior officials of many countries, as well as those of international organizations, such as officials from the UN Geneva Office, have recently restated that their countries or organizations abide by the one-China principle and the UNGA Resolution 2758.

When asked about a question related to China, Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for the UN Secretary-General, said, "it means in terms of our standing on Taiwan as a province of China," according to a UN daily press briefing on Thursday.

Any attempt to violate the one-China principle or play the "Taiwan card" for political manipulation are doomed to fail, Wang said.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin also slammed the US' false narrative on UNGA Resolution 2758. The past few weeks saw repeated

ill-intentioned comments from some US officials challenging the authority of UNGA Resolution 2758. "Those comments distort the facts and history, tread on international law and the basic norms of international relations, and breach the US' own commitment," Wang said at a press briefing on May 15.

### PRC Military Drills near Taiwan

25 May 2024, State.gov, Matthew Miller

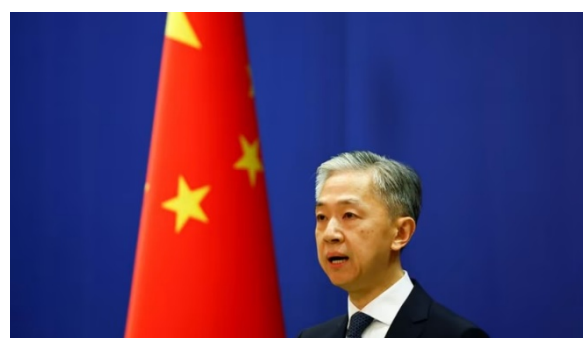
The United States is deeply concerned over the People's Liberation Army joint military drills in the Taiwan Strait and around Taiwan. We are monitoring PRC activities closely and coordinating with allies and partners regarding our shared concerns.

We strongly urge Beijing to act with restraint. Using a normal, routine, and democratic transition as an excuse for military provocations risks escalation and erodes longstanding norms that for decades have maintained peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, which is critical for regional and global security and prosperity and a matter of international concern.

The United States remains committed to its longstanding one China policy, guided by the Taiwan Relations Act, the Three Joint Communiqués, and the Six Assurances.

Beijing says Taiwan politics don't change 'fact' there is 'one China'

20 May 2024, CNA



Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin speaks during a news conference in Beijing, China on Mar 3, 2022. (File Photo: REUTERS/Carlos Garcia Rawlins)

Beijing said on Monday (May 20) that Taiwan's internal politics did not change the "fact" it is part of China, warning that efforts towards the island 'It has described Lai as a "dangerous separatist" for his past comments on Taiwan's independence - rhetoric that he has moderated in recent years. Asked about his inauguration on Monday, foreign ministry spokesman

Wang Wenbin said that Taiwan independence was "a dead end".

"No matter under what guise or banner, the pursuit of Taiwan independence and secession is doomed to fail," he added. "No matter how the internal political situation in Taiwan changes, it will not change the historical and legal fact that both sides of the strait belong to one China," Wang warned.

"The day of China's complete unification will come eventually."

As Lai took office, Chinese state media reported that Beijing had imposed sanctions on three US defence companies over their sales of weapons to Taipei.

Though the United States formally recognises Beijing, it is Taipei's main partner and supplier of arms.

Wang on Monday accused "some politicians in a small number of countries" of engaging in "political manipulation ... on the Taiwan issue, severely interfering in China's internal politics".

Chinese social media network Weibo also blocked hashtags referencing the inauguration, preventing them from trending on the platform used by hundreds of millions in China.

In his inauguration speech, Lai directly addressed the threat of war following years of growing pressure from China to bring Taiwan under mainland rule. Lai said a "glorious era of Taiwan's democracy has arrived" and thanked citizens for "refusing to be swayed by external forces, for resolutely defending democracy". Beijing's Taiwan Affairs Office - which manages relations with the island - slammed Lai's speech as sending a "dangerous signal", state news agency Xinhua reported. Office spokesman Chen Binhua was quoted as saying Lai's remarks "wantonly advocated separatism, incited cross-strait confrontation and sought independence by relying on foreign support and by force". He went on to accuse Lai of ignoring Taiwan's "mainstream public aspiration ... for peace and development".

### **Chinese agents highly active in democratic Taiwan, dissidents say**

19 May 2024, RFA, Hsia Hsiao-Hwa

On Jan. 13, 2023, Guangdong dissident Xiao Yuhui crossed the 10-kilometer (6-mile) stretch of water from China to Kinmen, a small island that is still controlled by Taiwan, paddling across on a surfboard.

But Xiao's bid to escape the influence of the Chinese government didn't end there.

He believes the ruling Chinese Communist Party under Xi Jinping is now focusing closely on "cleaning up" opposition voices overseas, and has spotted people he believes to be Chinese agents a number of times at public events in democratic Taiwan.

According to a former Chinese agent who spoke recently to Australian broadcaster ABC, this is exactly what's going on. Former Chinese spy "Eric" told the station that he has been involved in surveillance, abductions and the silencing of targets around the world since 2008.

The Spanish-based group Safeguard Defenders, which has warned the world about China's secret police stations, its network of "consular volunteers" and its targeting of dissidents and activists overseas, has now launched a "one-stop shop" legal advice center to help fight transnational repression by Beijing.

"The Chinese Communist Party kidnaps and threatens people at home, and they do the same thing overseas," Xiao said, in response to a question about the ABC report.

The sight of unidentified people he suspected were agents of the Chinese state filming and recording at pro-democracy events in Taiwan worried him enough that he now stays away from protests, rallies and other public events that are seen by Beijing as "anti-China."

He's not the only one who's worried, either.

"Both the Taiwanese government officials and the human rights groups who have assisted me have said they hope I won't take part in so many activities or give public interviews, which could lead to my whereabouts being exposed," Xiao told RFA Mandarin in a recent interview.

"They told me this because [China] has so many political collaborators in Taiwan," he said.

Strange behavior

Li Jiabao, a former exchange student from China who applied for political asylum after speaking out against constitutional amendments allowing Xi to abandon term limits for his own job, said he has been continually targeted by authorities in China since then.

One unidentified person approached Li as he took part in a documentary in 2019 about his life story and situation, demanding that the director delete all footage, he said.

"[The director] didn't even know whether he had captured the person following us or whether he was just a very suspicious sort of person," Li said. "The man seemed very nervous and panicky, and behaved unacceptably, threatening us."

On another occasion, Li spotted someone who appeared to be following him in a park near his home. The man would watch him, but then looked at his phone if Li looked in his direction.



Chinese exchange student Li Jiabao shouts 'defend freedom of speech' and 'defend Taiwan's sovereignty,' at a protest in Taiwan's southern port city of Kaohsiung, April 7, 2019. (Hsia Hsiao-hwa/RFA)

Li noticed people exhibiting similarly strange behavior at rallies he attended in Taipei to mark the anniversaries of the June 4, 1989, Tiananmen massacre, he said. Shortly after his denunciation of Xi, someone contacted him claiming to be a journalist, and sent him emails in a bid to have him download an app to his phone.

"He used a disposable account," said Li, who later realized what had likely happened after reading media reports of Chinese agents posing as journalists. "Turns out he was phishing me."

"The main thing they want is to get access to your contacts ... as well as the Telegram, Facebook and other chat records commonly used by dissidents," he said. "They can also be used to track your location at any time, to know who you are meeting, what you did and what activities you took part in."

#### Money for spying

Li has also been approached and offered money to spy on fellow dissidents in Taiwan, he revealed.

"Someone asked me how much you can make a month in Taiwan, said I must be short of money, and told me to go and film the Falun Gong, and the next day to film dissidents, including asking them how they're doing," he said.

"They told me just to live my life, and that they would contact me via a Hong Kong account if I thought it was too sensitive," he said. "The Chinese want to find out if you're willing to do stuff for them for money. I always refuse."

Xiao said the Chinese agents clearly knew of his love of photography, because he remembers being approached in October 2023 to take photos of planes taking off and landing at Taipei's Songshan Airport, home to a Taiwanese Air Force base that runs the flying service for the president and vice president of Taiwan.

"They give you some simple tasks to do and some financial support, to see if you can be bought, then more work would follow," he said.

Xiao smelled a rat at the time, and turned down the offer.

Threats to family members back home are another key part of the Chinese state security police playbook, according to dissidents overseas.

Li said he once received a message from his family asking if he was "being used by overseas or foreign forces."

Xiao said the authorities back home had visited his mother at her home and tried to get her to call him and find out his whereabouts and future plans.

#### Abduction threats

Sometimes, the goal is to get the target to a location where they can be handed over to the Chinese police, the former Chinese agent, who gave only the pseudonym "Eric," told ABC.

During the program, it emerged that RFA political cartoonist Rebel Pepper, whose real name is Wang Liming, was one of the targets, with Eric detailing a plot to lure Wang to Cambodia, using a Chinese-owned conglomerate that has become one of the fastest-growing companies in Cambodia – the Prince Group – to carry out the scam.

RFA has verified that Prince was the company used for the recruitment and has also spoken to "Eric."

Li has already encountered a similar situation, as his Chinese passport is due to expire in October, and he will soon be undocumented.



Guangdong dissident Xiao Yuhui paddled across from China on a surfboard, yet continues to be targeted by Chinese agents in democratic Taiwan. Undated file photo. (Hsia Hsiao-hwa/RFA)

He was recently contacted by someone with China connections offering to renew his passport if he traveled to Hong Kong, Malaysia, Thailand or elsewhere in Southeast Asia.

"[They told me] as long as you're willing to leave, we have the connections to renew your passport here," he said.

"He and some of his staff also tried to get me to try walking the line into the United States, via the Netherlands and Ecuador," Li said. "The reason I didn't go is that at least I'm safe in Taiwan."

"Once I leave, who's to know if someone would report my whereabouts to the Chinese Communist Party," he said. "I could be threatened, kidnapped or killed along the way, despite not needing a visa to go [to Ecuador]."

## Deception

Li said he is very careful about who he is in contact with, as even fellow democracy activists are suspect these days.

"They sometimes pretend to be democrats who care about China, and try to deceive you ... so I'm usually very careful not to meet with strangers unless it's necessary," he said.

"The best way to be sure is to talk to them over time, because no matter how good their cover is, sooner or later they will have to carry out work given them by the Chinese Communist Party, so they will be exposed eventually."

Li said he wasn't surprised by the ABC expose about "Eric", and warned: "Be careful not to accept money or contacts from unknown sources."

Xiao believes that Taiwan still isn't nearly tough enough on Chinese spies operating in its territory, saying that sentences handed down to Chinese spies are typically far too lenient, and not enough to be a deterrent.

Taiwan, despite being a democracy, has plenty of people willing to travel to China and be in contact with authorities there, he said, while certain political parties and civil groups actively campaign for closer ties with Beijing.

## Taiwanese star forced to publicly support 'one China' policy

10 May 2024, RFA, Jenny Tang

Taiwanese TV and movie actor Wu Mu-hsuen was recently forced to sign a pledge to support China's territorial claim on democratic Taiwan, or the show she had just finished filming would be ditched, according to multiple local media reports.

Wu was approached by the film crew after wrapping up filming of the online drama "Hey! Come a bit closer" in China last year, and told to sign the agreement or the show would never be aired, her agent Chen Hsiao-chih told several Taiwanese media outlets in recent days.

According to Wu's agent, the practice is now commonplace when Taiwanese artists work in China, and plenty of other stars have been forced to sign agreements pledging that Taiwan is "a part of China," and that there can be no independence for the island, according to reports in the island's Central News Agency, Liberty Times and TVBS.

Taiwan has never been ruled by the Chinese Communist Party, nor formed part of the 74-year-old People's Republic of China, and most of its 23 million people have no wish to give up their sovereignty or democratic way of life to be ruled by China, according to multiple public opinion polls in recent years.

The news about the agreements has highlighted concerns over China's "soft power" influence over Taiwan, as Beijing vows to achieve "peaceful unification" with the island through propaganda and economic pressures.

## Signing agreements

A former film and television industry worker who gave only the surname Chen for fear of reprisals said such requests are common, and don't typically come from Chinese officials, but from the production team of the show that Taiwanese artists are working on.

"The Chinese producers have put a lot of money into filming these shows, and they're afraid that if the artist gets into trouble after filming is done, the whole drama will be thrown out [by ruling Chinese Communist Party censors]," Chen told RFA Mandarin in an interview on May 9. "So they ask the artists to make a commitment in that regard."

He said all artists, including Chinese nationals, are asked to sign commitments to refrain from drugs or pornography or anything else that could endanger the reputation of the show.

The version of the agreements handed to Taiwanese artists also includes a commitment to support Beijing's claim on China, or to refrain from supporting independence for Taiwan, Chen said, adding that anyone who doesn't comply will likely be added to a Chinese government blacklist, which means the huge and lucrative Chinese market is closed to them.

"Artists need to be very clear about this — it's unreasonable to criticize them and to still want to make money from them," Chen said, adding that most artists "aren't very political," and are willing to comply.

"The Chinese market is so big, that they don't see the need to offend people just to make a fuss about something," Chen said.

He said the deals have become more ubiquitous with the rise in tensions across the Taiwan Strait that followed the landslide victory of ruling Democratic Progressive Party President Tsai Ing-wen in 2016.

## 'Forced to take sides'

While it has refused to rule out invading Taiwan by military force, Beijing vowed in January to step up its efforts to achieve "peaceful unification" with the island after Taiwanese voters in January elected Beijing's least favorite candidate Lai Ching-te — Tsai's right-hand man — as their next president.

"Peaceful unification" refers to the Chinese Communist Party's attempts to bring the island under its control through propaganda, threats and infiltration rather than armed invasion, analysts have told RFA in recent interviews.

"They wouldn't be asking artists to sign such deals if the leaders on both sides of the Taiwan Strait were in a state of harmony," Chen said. "When there are



high-level political tensions, then people further down are unlucky enough to be forced to take sides."

An employee of Taiwan's terrestrial broadcaster TTV who asked to be identified only by the surname Wang said she, too, would steer clear of hiring people with known political views to make entertainment shows.

"We're a purely commercial TV station with no political affiliation, so we would definitely consider when filming TV shows and movies whether someone we hire has a specific political orientation," Wang said. "We would avoid hiring politicians."

"While professional criteria are given priority, we would still be concerned if the political overtones were too strong," she said.

She said some shows that do showcase political themes simply won't sell in the heavily restricted Chinese market.

"There are a lot of people in the film and TV industry who are unable to sell their shows or movies due to political leanings," Wang said.

"But it's a choice — some see the Chinese market as very important, so won't go anywhere near politics, while others give politics top priority," she said.

### **China ramps up pressure on Taiwan ahead of presidential inauguration**

06 May 2024, VOA, William Yang

China has initiated a series of influence campaigns against Taiwan ahead of the island's inauguration of president-elect Lai Ching-te on May 20. Beijing has increased the scale and frequency of military activities near Taiwan while partially relaxing travel and import restrictions.

Some analysts say Beijing is trying to test how the incoming Taiwanese government will respond to the increased pressure from Beijing while further eroding the longstanding status quo across the Taiwan Strait at a time when Taiwan is preparing for a transition of power.

"In the short term, Beijing is trying to see how the new Taiwanese government under Lai may respond to its pressure campaign," said Chen Fang-yu, a political scientist at Soochow University in Taiwan.

"At the same time, the Chinese government is attempting to change the status quo across the Taiwan Strait when Taipei is focusing on the inauguration," he told VOA by phone.

Taiwan's defense ministry detected 26 Chinese military aircraft and five Chinese naval vessels near the island between May 2 and May 3, including 17 Chinese military aircraft crossing the median line of the Taiwan Strait. Some Chinese aircraft got as close as about 76 kilometers from Taiwan's northern port city of Keelung, which hosts an important naval base.

Meanwhile, the director general of Taiwan's National Security Bureau, Tsai Ming-yen, told Taiwanese lawmakers on May 1 that the Chinese military had incorporated new tactics into its joint combat readiness patrol near the island, including staging night-time combat patrols and using landing ships and minesweepers during these exercises.

Additionally, he said Taiwanese authorities are tracking the increased patrols carried out by the Chinese coast guard near Taiwan's outlying island, Kinmen. On April 29, Beijing said the Fujian Coast Guard had organized a fleet of ships to increase the frequency of patrols in waters near Kinmen since April.

Beijing also announced plans to allow residents from its southern province of Fujian to travel to Taiwan's outlying island of Matsu while lifting import restrictions on Taiwanese pomelos and two types of seafood late last month.

The news came after a group of lawmakers from Taiwan's main opposition party, the Kuomintang, which advocates closer ties between Taipei and Beijing, visited China.

Some experts say the measures rolled out by Beijing in recent weeks are all part of its influence operation against Taipei, which involves using disinformation campaigns, economic coercion, and gray zone operations to impose pressure on Taiwan.

"China's overall strategy is still to increase pressure on Taiwan but they are also offering some small favors to Taiwan's opposition parties," said Su Tzu-yun, a military expert at the Taipei-based Institute for National Defense and Security Research.

While recent developments should be viewed as part of China's overall influence operation against Taiwan, Su said part of Beijing's long-term goal is to increase its control over the Taiwan Strait.

"By increasing the frequency of deploying Chinese coast guard vessels to restricted waters near Kinmen and flying Chinese military aircraft closer to Taiwan's main island, Beijing is hoping to eventually turn the Taiwan Strait into its territorial water," he told VOA by phone.

Beijing has repeatedly threatened to achieve reunification with Taiwan through force in recent years, and the Chinese government views Taiwan's president-elect Lai as an advocate of Taiwan independence.

Since the Chinese military usually concentrates military exercises between June and November, Su said the incoming Taiwanese government needs to closely monitor any increase in Chinese military activities around the island after May 20.

In addition to threats posed by a possible buildup of Chinese military activities, some security analysts say Taiwan should also be mindful of Beijing's efforts to create division in Taiwan's domestic politics.



"There is every reason to believe that [the Chinese Communist Party] is ramping up efforts to use Taiwan's democracy against itself," J. Michael Cole, a Taipei-based security analyst, told VOA in a written response.

He said China will rely on China-friendly political forces in Taiwan to "sabotage the Lai administration" and these efforts will have "serious ramifications for Taiwan's ability to counter Chinese infiltration and the Taiwan government's ability to function."

**Prioritizing policy continuity**

In light of the increasing Chinese pressure, Lai has appointed some current cabinet members to key positions in charge of national security, foreign policy, and cross-strait relations in his cabinet.

Taiwan's current foreign minister Joseph Wu will be the secretary general of the National Security Council. The current head of the council, Wellington Koo, will be the new defense minister in the Lai administration.

On the foreign policy front, the current secretary general of Taiwan's presidential office Lin Chia-lung will be the new foreign minister, and Chiu Chui-cheng, a former deputy political minister for Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council, which handles cross-strait relations, will be the new head of the council.

Cole said Lai's personnel picks for national security and foreign policy reflect his intention to continue the policy agenda of the outgoing administration under President Tsai Ing-wen, who has focused on strengthening Taiwan's relations with like-minded democracies including the United States and Japan. The decision "will play a major role in reassuring allies and partners around the world that Taiwan will remain committed to the kind of responsible foreign policy that existed under the Tsai administration," he told VOA.

Chen at Soochow University said the incoming Taiwanese government's cabinet lineup will benefit the U.S.-led efforts to strengthen security-related cooperation among democratic countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

"Since some of his cabinet members are holdovers from the current administration, they have already established relationships with officials in other countries, and some of the existing cooperations can continue," he told VOA.

### **Taiwan reports second Chinese 'combat patrol' in a week**

02 May 2024, Reuters

Taiwan's defence ministry on Thursday said that China had carried out a "joint combat readiness patrol" near the island for the second time in a week.

Over the past four years, China's military has significantly ramped up its activities around democratically-governed Taiwan. Beijing views the island as its own territory, a position the government in Taipei strongly rejects.

The ministry said that starting from 4 p.m. (0800GMT) on Thursday it had detected 15 Chinese military aircraft, including Su-30 fighters, carrying out "joint combat readiness patrols" with Chinese warships around Taiwan.

Ten of the aircraft crossed the Taiwan Strait's median line, or areas nearby, and flew into air space to the island's north, centre and southwest, the ministry said.

The median line used to serve as an unofficial border between Taiwan and China, but Chinese military aircraft now regularly cross it. China says it does not recognise the line's existence.

China's defence ministry did not answer calls seeking comment on Thursday, the country being in the middle of its Labour Day holiday.

Taiwan reported a similar Chinese combat patrol on Saturday.

The island's top security official said on Wednesday that Taiwan is on alert for China to carry out military exercises following the inauguration of President-elect Lai Ching-te later this month.

Taiwan National Security Bureau Director-General Tsai Ming-yen said China had begun using unusual new tactics, including staging night time combat patrols.

China has a strong dislike of Lai, believing him a dangerous separatist. China's government has rejected his repeated offers of talks, including one made last week.

Lai says only Taiwan's people can decide their future.

### **Taiwan on alert for post-inauguration Chinese drills**

01 May 2024, Reuters, Ben Blanchard

Taiwan is on alert for China to carry out military exercises after the inauguration of President-elect Lai Ching-te this month, the island's top security official said on Wednesday, adding China has already begun using unusual new tactics.

China, which views democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory, has a strong dislike of Lai, believing him a dangerous separatist. China's government has rejected his repeated offers of talks, including one made last week.

Lai, like current President Tsai Ing-wen, rejects Beijing's sovereignty claims; both say only the island's people can decide their future. Lai, now vice president, will be inaugurated on May 20.

Speaking to reporters at parliament, Taiwan National Security Bureau Director-General Tsai Ming-yen said maintaining stability in the Taiwan Strait was in the interests of everyone in the international community, including China.

China is currently using a carrot-and-stick approach toward Taiwan, hoping to influence the incoming government's China policy, added Tsai, who shares a common family name with the president but is not related to her.

"What needs special attention is that following May 20, from June to November, is when the Chinese Communists hold their regular military drills," he said. "Whether the Chinese Communists use this hot season as an excuse to carry out some military drills to further pressure Taiwan is a key point the National Security Bureau is focusing on."

China's defence ministry did not answer calls seeking comment outside of office hours on Wednesday, the start of the Labour Day holiday.

China's military has during the past four years massively increased its activities around Taiwan.

#### NIGHTTIME PATROLS

Taking lawmaker questions, Tsai said China had been observed three times so far this year carrying out "joint combat readiness patrols" at night, something he described as a new development.

"In addition, inflight refuelling aircraft are being used during the joint combat readiness patrols" to extend the time combat aircraft can remain in the air, Tsai said.

Landing ships and minesweepers have also been observed joining these patrols, he added.

"These are new patterns for this year."

Taiwan's defence ministry last reported a Chinese combat readiness patrol, where warships and warplanes operate together in the skies and waters near Taiwan, on Saturday.

In 2022, China carried out major war games near Taiwan after a visit to Taipei by then-U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and again last year after President Tsai met then-House Speaker Kevin McCarthy on a stopover in California.

Taiwan-based security sources have repeatedly warned China could show their displeasure with Lai using the military.

Since Lai's January election victory, China has kept up a steady stream of pressure on Taiwan, including coast guard patrols near a group of Taiwanese-controlled islands that sit next to the Chinese coast, and opening new air routes in the Taiwan Strait that Taipei says threaten aviation safety.

But Beijing has also offered to resume, albeit in limited form, Chinese tourism to Taiwan, a proposal the government in Taipei is still considering, as it wants a full resumption of visits by Chinese tourists.

## April

### Ma Ying-jeou urges Taiwan's next president to respond 'pragmatically' to Xi Jinping's 'olive branch'

15 April 2024, Lawrence Chung, SCMP

- Island's former leader also calls on William Lai to 'confirm the one-China framework'
- He made the remarks after a trip to the mainland, which included a meeting with Xi

Former Taiwanese leader Ma Ying-jeou has called on the island's president-elect to respond "pragmatically" to the "olive branch" extended by Xi Jinping and to accept the one-China principle.

Ma, who met mainland Chinese leader Xi in Beijing last week, said Taiwan's next leader, William Lai Ching-te, should take note of Xi's goodwill and refrain from "walking the independence path".

Lai, of the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party, was elected in January and will be inaugurated next month.

Using Taiwan's official name for itself, Ma wrote in a Facebook post on Monday that Lai should "follow the Constitution of the Republic of China, confirm the one-China framework based on the constitution, and ensure that the two sides of the strait are not two separate countries".

The ROC constitution, which includes the one-China concept, was adopted by the Nationalist, or Kuomintang, government in Nanjing in 1947. It has remained in effect in Taiwan since the KMT fled to the island and set up an interim government there after being defeated by the Communists in mainland China during the civil war in 1949.

Since she came to power in 2016, incumbent President Tsai Ing-wen, of the DPP, has refused to accept the one-China principle, saying Beijing has never ruled Taiwan and that the island is already sovereign and independent.

Tsai's second four-year term ends on May 20. Her successor, Lai, has been denounced by Beijing as a "troublemaker" and "obstinate separatist".

Beijing sees Taiwan as part of its territory awaiting reunification, by force if necessary. Most countries, including the United States, do not recognise Taiwan as an independent state but oppose any attempt to take it by force.

In his post on Monday, Ma called on Lai to "guarantee not to pursue Taiwan independence, allow both sides of the strait to return to the common political foundation of the 1992 consensus and engage in various exchanges on an equal and dignified basis".

The consensus is a tacit agreement between Beijing and Taipei that there is only “one China”, but each side has its own interpretation of what that means.

Ma said that at time of unabating conflicts around the world “there is a need to ensure peace and prosperity” across the Taiwan Strait, adding that both the US and Europe would want to see regional security maintained.

“Mr Xi has extended an olive branch to us, and I sincerely hope that for the well-being of the Taiwanese people, [Lai] can respond to him pragmatically,” Ma said.

Ma, who led Taiwan from 2008 to 2016 and remains an influential figure in the Beijing-friendly KMT, returned to the island on Thursday from an 11-day tour of Guangdong, Shaanxi and Beijing with a group of Taiwanese students.

Expressing “special thanks” to Xi for his reception on Wednesday, Ma said he had told Xi that both sides of the strait should cherish each other’s values and way of life, and that if a war broke out it would be “unbearable for the Chinese nation”.

Xi responded that although their systems were different, as long as Taiwan and mainland China shared a common national identity, with the 1992 consensus as the foundation for political ties, then they could sit down to resolve conflicts and build mutual trust, according to Ma.

The former Taiwanese leader also said Xi had a rare face-to-face talk with the students, listening to their thoughts and answering questions.

“I believe this demonstrates the highest sincerity and goodwill towards Taiwan,” Ma said, adding that the students had told him that Xi “seemed like a caring elder, patiently sharing life experiences with them, leaving them with unforgettable memories”.

There was no immediate response to Ma’s remarks from Lai or his office. But the DPP said last week that Ma’s views did not reflect those of the Taiwanese public and that cross-strait dialogue and interaction should be based on “equality and dignity” with “neither side subordinating to the other”.

Taiwan’s Mainland Affairs Council said a survey it conducted this month found that nearly 80 per cent of Taiwanese disagreed with Beijing’s use of the 1992 consensus as the political foundation for cross-strait dialogue.

### **Chinese President Xi meets former Taiwan leader Ma Ying-jeou on pro-unification visit**

10 April 2024, Spectrum News

Chinese President Xi Jinping met with former Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou in Beijing Wednesday in a bid to promote unification between the sides that separated amid civil war in 1949.

Ma left office almost two decades ago and was largely excluded from the opposition Nationalist Party’s failed campaign to retake the presidency in January, a concession to the electorate’s strong opposition to political unification with China and politicians seen as willing to compromise Taiwan’s security.

He follows a long line of politicians from the Nationalists, also known as the KMT, who have been invited to China by its authoritarian one-party government and given VIP treatment on visits around the country.

China claims Taiwan as its own territory, to be annexed by force if necessary. Beijing sends navy ships and warplanes around the island on a daily basis in hopes of wearing down Taiwan’s defenses and intimidating the population.

“The people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait are all Chinese. There is no dispute that cannot be resolved, there is no problem that cannot be discussed, and no force can separate us,” Xi told Ma.

“Differences in systems cannot change the fact that both sides of the Taiwan Straits belong to the same country and nation,” he added.

Ma responded that a new war between the sides would be “an unbearable burden for the Chinese nation.”

“The Chinese people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait will definitely have enough wisdom to handle cross-strait disputes peacefully and avoid conflicts,” Ma said.

Independence leaning president-elect Lai Ching-te of the Democratic Progressive Party won the January election handily and his vice president-elect Bi-khim Hsiao has been visiting nations friendly to Taiwan in Europe and elsewhere ahead of taking office.

Ma’s 11-day trip, ostensibly at the head of a student delegation, underlines continued interactions in education, business and culture despite Beijing’s threat to use military force against the self-governing island democracy to achieve unification.

Toward the end of his second term in 2015, Ma held a historic meeting with Xi in Singapore, which has close contacts with both sides. The meeting – the first between the leaders of China and Taiwan in more than half a century – produced few tangible outcomes, and Ma’s Nationalist Party lost the next presidential election to Tsai Ing-wen of the DPP.

Lai Ching-te, currently vice president, is despised by Beijing for his opposition to unification. The Nationalists recovered a narrow majority in the legislature but their influence on foreign policy and other national issues remains limited.

Taiwan has been boosting military relations with allies such as the U.S. and Japan while maintaining close economic ties with the Chinese mainland.

## **RFI: Taiwan Rejects China's Relief Aid After Earthquake**

05 April 2024, RFI

Following the magnitude 7.4 earthquake that struck Taiwan on the morning of April 3rd, Radio France Internationale (RFI) reported that Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council quickly rejected aid offered by mainland China, saying it was not needed.

Analysts explained that Beijing's aid always comes with conditions attached and is not a true gesture of goodwill. Some suggested that, instead of providing aid, it would be better for the mainland to stop interfering with the Taiwanese government's disaster relief effort.

The report stated that "China has been unwilling to give up the threat of force to expand its control over Taiwan, and the Taiwanese people are naturally highly suspicious of China's intentions." The article mentioned that mainland China blocked the United Nations from providing much-needed assistance to Taiwan 25 years ago when it suffered "The Great 921 Earthquake." In recent years, mainland aircraft and warships frequently disturb the areas surrounding Taiwan. This trend is only intensifying. Because of these ongoing military threats, people in Taiwan are highly suspicious of China's intentions.

Some scholars expressed the belief that China may have anticipated Taiwan's reaction. The argument is as follows: When Beijing made an offer that was very likely to be rejected, they were not actually trying to help; they were setting a trap to embarrass Taiwan for rejecting aid that appears to have been offered in goodwill.

## **Taiwan detects 30 Chinese military aircraft, 9 navy vessels around nation**

03 April 2024, Business Standard

Taiwan Defence Ministry detected 30 Chinese military aircraft and nine navy vessels operating around its nation between Tuesday 6 am and Wednesday 6 am, Taiwan Ministry of National Defence said.

It added that 20 Chinese aircraft entered its northern middle line and Taiwan's southwest air defence identification zone (ADIZ). "30 PLA aircraft and 9 PLAN vessels operating around Taiwan were detected up until 6 a.m. (UTC+8) today. 20 of the aircraft entered Taiwan's northern, middle line, and SW ADIZ. #ROCArmedForces have monitored the situation and employed appropriate force to respond," Taiwan Ministry of National Defence posted on X. Taiwan tracked seven Chinese naval vessels and six military aircraft around the nation amid escalating cross-strait tensions on Tuesday,

Taiwan News reported. In an official post on 'X,' Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence (MND) said, "6 PLA aircraft and 7 PLAN vessels around Taiwan were detected by 6 am (UTC+8) today. 2 of the aircraft crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait. #ROCArmedForces have monitored the situation and employed appropriate forces to respond."

Notably, in March, Taiwan tracked 359 Chinese military aircraft and 204 naval vessels, according to Taiwan News.

Since September 2020, China has increased its use of gray zone tactics by incrementally increasing the number of military aircraft and naval ships operating around Taiwan.

Gray zone tactics are defined as "an effort or series of efforts beyond steady-state deterrence and assurance that attempts to achieve one's security objectives without resorting to direct and sizable use of force."

Meanwhile, the Taiwanese military condemned the filming by drones by Chinese netizens on the outlying island of Erdan near Kinmen on March 31, Taiwan News reported.

Some reports circulated online suggesting that unmanned aerial vehicles had captured footage of military movements on the Taiwanese-held island, within view of the Chinese city of Xiamen.

The Kinmen Defence Command said local officers could take appropriate measures based on the threat level the drones posed.

The military blamed some Chinese netizens for the provocative behaviour, which could easily escalate into a serious incident.

## **Ex-Taiwanese President Ma visits China to help build social and cultural links**

01 April 2024, ABC News

Former Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou is visiting China to help build social and cultural links on a trip that might include a meeting with Chinese leader Xi Jinping despite heightened tensions.

Former Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou is visiting China to help build social and cultural links on a trip that might include a meeting with Chinese leader Xi Jinping despite heightened tensions. Ma left Taipei on Monday with a student group on an 11-day trip that underlines continued interactions in education, business and culture despite Beijing's threat to use military force against the self-governing island democracy to achieve unification. Toward the end of his second term in 2015, Ma held a historic meeting with Xi in Singapore, which has close contacts with both sides. The meeting – the first between the leaders of China and Taiwan in more than half a century – produced few tangible outcomes and Ma's Nationalist Party lost the next presidential election to

Tsai Ing-wen of the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party.

Current Vice President Lai Ching-te, despised by Beijing for his opposition to unification, was elected as Tsai's successor in January, although the Nationalists recovered a narrow majority in the legislature.

Ma's itinerary includes a visit to Beijing, where there is heavy speculation he might meet with Xi, who says he remains open to Taiwanese politicians who proclaim that the island and the mainland, which split during a civil war in 1949, belong to a common Chinese nation.

Taiwan's official Central News Agency quoted Hsiao Hsu-tsen, who directs Ma's foundation, as saying he hopes Ma will have the chance to meet with "an old friend," but gave no details.

Taiwanese are largely opposed to political unification with China, and the island is boosting military relations with allies such as the U.S. and Japan while maintaining close economic ties with the mainland

## March

### Taiwan Calls for Return of Military Officer Rescued by China

23 March 2024, VOA

Taiwan called Saturday for the swift return of one of its military officers who was rescued by Chinese authorities after losing contact during a fishing vacation.

Two men from Taiwan's outlying Kinmen island were found on March 18 by the coast guard of China's Fujian province after the engine of their boat failed. Chinese authorities said one of the anglers, surnamed Hu, was an active member of Taiwan's military, accusing him of intentionally concealing his identity.

Taiwan's defense ministry confirmed Saturday that Hu was part of the Kinmen Garrison Brigade.

"(He) went fishing during his vacation and lost contact due to heavy fog. He contacted his family and service unit that he was rescued by the Chinese coast guard and is safe," said Kinmen's Defense Command in a statement.

It added that they were cooperating with other agencies and hoped "for the safe return of its personnel to Kinmen as soon as possible on humanitarian grounds."

Kinmen Defense Command also said it will tell soldiers "to refrain from participating in various risky activities during their vacation."

The other man in the fishing boat, surnamed Wu, was repatriated to Kinmen by Taiwan's coast guard Saturday.

According to video footage shared by Kinmen lawmaker Chen Yu-jen — who was at the dock — Wu was greeted by his tearful mother with a hug when he stepped off the boat.

Hu's mother told reporters that she hoped China would allow family members to go visit him.

"Our hearts are filled with anxiety when we can't see him in person, although my son has sent a message saying he is safe," she said.

China's Taiwan Affairs Office — a mainland body tasked with handling cross-strait relations — had told Chinese state news agency Xinhua that Hu needed to be held "to further verify and understand the situation."

China claims self-ruled Taiwan as part of its territory and has said it will not rule out force to bring the island under Beijing's control.

This incident comes after an ongoing row between Taipei and Beijing over a fatal boat incident last month.

A Chinese speedboat carrying four people capsized on February 14 near Kinmen while Taiwan's coast guard was pursuing it, leaving two dead.

The coast guard had defended its actions, saying the boat was within "prohibited waters" and was zigzagging before it capsized, but Beijing has accused Taipei of "hiding the truth" about the incident.

Since then, China said it would step up patrols around Kinmen — a territory administered by Taipei but located just 5 kilometers (3 miles) from the mainland city of Xiamen.

### Taiwan Faces Sovereignty Dilemma in South China Sea Amid Chinese Pressure

22 March 2024, VOA

Taiwan has been grappling with debates over the last week about a potential visit to an island in the disputed South China Sea by its outgoing president.

Some lawmakers from the main opposition party Kuomintang, which advocates friendlier ties with China, have urged Tsai Ing-wen, who will leave office in May, to visit Itu Aba, in the contested Spratly Islands, and assert Taiwan's sovereignty over the island.

Taiwan took control of the 46-hectare (114-acre) islet, which Taiwan and China call Taiping Island, in 1956. China, Vietnam and the Philippines all claim sovereignty.



It hosts 200 members of Taiwan's coast guard and contains a hospital, a farm and a runway to facilitate military resupply missions. In January, Taiwan completed a dredging project that would allow larger vessels to dock at the wharf.

In 2016, a Hague tribunal ruled that Itu Aba is not an "island," under the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea, and thus not subject to claims of sovereignty.

"Since the South China Sea arbitration downgraded Taiping Island to a reef in 2016, the Tsai administration hasn't protested against the ruling," Ma Wen-chu, a Kuomintang legislator, wrote on her official Facebook page.

"Instead, her administration urged Kuomintang not to claim sovereignty over the South China Sea. President Tsai should really go to Taiping Island and declare Taiwan's sovereignty over the island," she said, adding that lawmakers from the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee are planning a trip to the island in early May.

However, Taiwan's foreign minister and top security official have advised the president not to take the trip at the moment, saying she should consider current regional tensions and international perception of the potential trip.

"Many countries' aircraft and ships are interfered with by relevant countries when passing through, [so] it is necessary [for the government] to assess whether the president's aircraft's flight safety can be maintained during the 1,600-kilometer flight," Tsai Ming-yan, director-general of Taiwan's National Security Bureau, told journalists Thursday.

Foreign Minister Joseph Wu said Wednesday that while the Taiwanese government remains committed to upholding Taipei's sovereignty over Itu Aba, it needs to consider how other countries might interpret a potential visit to the island by Tsai.

Pointing to the standoff between China and the Philippines in the South China Sea, Wu said Taiwan "must consider how to use peaceful means to resolve the South China Sea issue, and not let others think we are creating difficulties."

While both of Tsai's predecessors visited Itu Aba, Tsai hasn't made similar trips in office. Taiwan has built a runway on Itu Aba to facilitate military resupply missions, but the island is lightly defended compared with nearby islands controlled by China.

The debate comes as Taiwan prepares for the inauguration of President-elect Lai Ching-te on May 20, whom Beijing views as a "separatist." It also follows the increased activities by Chinese coast guard vessels around disputed waters near Taiwan's outlying Kinmen Island in recent weeks.

Some analysts said a potential visit to Itu Aba could "inflare tensions" between Taiwan and other countries with territorial claims in the South China

Sea. A trip to the island by Tsai "could be used by China to further strain [cross-strait] relations," Timothy Rich, an expert on Taiwan politics at Western Kentucky University, told VOA in a written response.

Since Itu Aba lies about 230 miles from the Philippines and is more than 900 miles from Taiwan, Rich said Taiwan's attempt to assert sovereignty over the island through a potential trip by Tsai "could strain relations" with Manila, whose administration "seems particularly open to strengthening relations with" Taipei.

In addition to allowing China to increase pressure on Taiwan, other experts told VOA that a potential trip to Itu Aba by Tsai could also damage the diplomatic progress that Taiwan has achieved since 2016.

"A trip to Taiping Island would be counterproductive to Tsai's New Southbound Policy and the diplomatic progress that Taipei has made with regional partners over the past 8 years," said Ivan Kanapathy, who served on former U.S. President Donald Trump's National Security Council as director for China, Taiwan and Mongolia, in a written response.

As China maintains an aggressive posture in the South China Sea, some Taiwanese analysts think it is in Taiwan's interest to defend its territorial interest in the disputed water through a peaceful approach.

"Since tensions remain high between China and the Philippines and Vietnam in the South China Sea, it'll be favorable for Taiwan if the government uses more peaceful ways to safeguard its territorial integrity," Su Tzu-yun, a military analyst at the Taipei-based Institute for National Defense and Security Research, told VOA by phone.

#### Growing Chinese military activities

Amid ongoing debates about the Taiwanese president's potential trip to Itu Aba, China has increased military activities around Taiwan over the last few days. A total of 68 Chinese military aircraft and 11 Chinese naval vessels were detected in areas near Taiwan between Wednesday and Friday, according to statistics released by Taiwan's Defense Ministry.

Su in Taiwan said the uptick in Chinese military activities around Taiwan is a way for Beijing to express its displeasure toward U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's trip to the Philippines, during which he reiterated Washington's "ironclad" commitment to defend Manila, and Taiwanese Vice President-elect Hsiao Bi-Khim's recent trip to the Czech Republic.

"China is showcasing its displeasure toward Washington's and Taipei's recent diplomatic activities by increasing the scale of its military activities around Taiwan," he told VOA.

With less than two months until Taiwan's President-elect Lai takes office, Rich at Western Kentucky

University said China may try to keep up the pressure on his administration by increasing the frequency of its military activities around Taiwan.

"I assume China's increased naval and air exercises around Taiwan still serve as means to persuade the Lai administration into what they see as a more pro-China policy, [but] the strategy is unlikely to bear fruit," he told VOA.

Amid increased Chinese military activities near Taiwan, the top U.S. military commander in the Indo-Pacific warned that China remains ready to potentially invade Taiwan by 2027.

"All indications point to the PLA [China's People's Liberation Army] meeting President Xi Jinping's directive to be ready to invade Taiwan by 2027," Indo-Pacific Command chief Admiral John Aquilino told the U.S. House Armed Services Committee on Wednesday.

Kanapathy, now the senior vice president of Washington-based consultant Beacon Global Strategies, said that since China's Xi has told his military to be ready for a potential Taiwan invasion in 2027, the world "should take him at his word."

"Beijing is investing heavily to buy down its perceived risks for an invasion operation, including by expanding lift capacity and nuclear capabilities," he told VOA.

### **Taiwan warns of 'enormous' Chinese bases near its S.China Sea holding**

20 March 2024, Reuters

TAIPEI, March 20 (Reuters) - Taiwan's foreign minister said on Wednesday that China has built "enormous" military bases on three islands surrounding Taiwan's main holding in the South China Sea, but Taipei is not looking to further escalate tensions in the strategic waterway.

Both Taiwan and China claim most of the South China Sea as their own territory, but Taiwan only controls one islet in the contested Spratly Islands deep in the southern part of the sea called Itu Aba, which Taiwan refers to as Taiping.

Some lawmakers from both the ruling and main opposition parties have called on President Tsai Ing-wen to visit Itu Aba before she steps down in May to assert Taiwan's sovereignty and view a newly renovated harbour that can take larger ships.

Both her predecessors visited the island but she has yet to do so while in office.

Asked by reporters about calls for Tsai to go to Itu Aba, Taiwan Foreign Minister Joseph Wu said there was no doubt the island belonged to Taiwan and the government would defend their sovereignty over it.

China and the Philippines have been involved in a dangerous stand-off in the South China Sea of late,

but the situation around Itu Aba is also tense, Wu said.

"China has already created very enormous South China Sea military bases on the three islands surrounding Taiping - Subi Reef, Fiery Cross Reef and Mischief Reef - and these are all quite close to our Taiping," Wu said.

"As the dispute continues to intensify, we in Taiwan must consider how to use peaceful means to resolve the South China Sea issue, and not let others think we are creating difficulties."

If there is an opportunity, Taiwan will use the "best way" to demonstrate its sovereignty over Itu Aba, he added without elaborating.

Itu Aba has a runway long enough to take military re-supply flights from Taiwan, but is lightly defended compared to the nearby Chinese-controlled islands. Chinese forces generally leave Itu Aba alone.

China has carried out extensive land reclamation on its South China Sea islands, building major air force and other military facilities, causing major concern in Washington and around the region.

China says it has every right to build on and defend what it considers its territory.

Taiwan also controls the Pratas Islands in the northern part of the South China Sea, and both China's air force and navy regularly operate nearby to assert Beijing's territorial claims over Taiwan, which the government in Taipei rejects.

Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei claim other parts of the South China Sea in dispute with both China and Taiwan.

### **Unification of Taiwan not priority for many Chinese, one-third disapprove of war: Report**

17 March 2024, The Print

Beijing [China], March 17 (ANI): The 'unification' of Taiwan with mainland China is not the main priority for many Chinese people, and around one-third consider launching a full-scale war on the self-ruled island "unacceptable," Al Jazeera reported.

But, even though the people's focus remains underpinned on the economy and other crucial fronts, the Taiwan issue will remain the 'cornerstone' of the Chinese Communist Party's narrative.

The communists won the Chinese Civil War in 1949, and the nationalists of the Kuomintang (KMT) fled Beijing for the island of Taiwan. It was on Kinmen, the main island of the archipelago of the same name, less than 10 km (6.2 miles) from the coast of China, that the nationalists repulsed repeated communist invasion attempts, but not before the fighting had wreaked havoc on both Xiamen and Kinmen, Al Jazeera reported.

Kinmen and its outlying islets – some of which lie even closer to the Chinese coast – have been a part of Taiwan's territory ever since.

Chinese citizens were once able to get tourist visas to visit the islands, but that ended with the pandemic.

"It is difficult to imagine that this used to be a warzone," 23-year-old Shao Hongtian said. "Kinmen, China and Taiwan are all part of the same nation, so it should be possible to visit, and I hope I can visit one day."

Like Shao, Chinese President Xi Jinping and the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) too claim that Taiwan and its territory are part of China.

Xi said in his New Year's address that China's unification with democratic Taiwan was an "historical inevitability," and China has not ruled out the use of force to achieve unification. Last year Xi called on China's armed forces to strengthen their combat readiness.

In recent years, the Chinese military has increased its pressure on Taiwan with almost daily airborne and maritime incursions close to Taiwan's air and seaspace. This further intensified after the visit of former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taipei.

At times, the Chinese manoeuvres have been accompanied by sabre-rattling rhetoric and large-scale military drills.

Lately, tensions have also been rising near Kinmen.

Last month, two Chinese fishermen were killed when their speedboat capsized as they attempted to flee the Taiwanese coastguard when they were discovered fishing "within prohibited waters" about one nautical mile (1.8km) from the Kinmen archipelago, Al Jazeera reported.

Since then, the Chinese coastguard has stepped up its activities around Kinmen.

Zhu Fenglian, a spokesperson for the Chinese government's Taiwan Affairs Office, called the February incident "vicious" and stressed the waters were "traditional" fishing grounds for fishermen in China and Taiwan. There were no off-limits waters around Kinmen, she added.

A second capsizing was reported on Thursday, and on this occasion, China asked for help from the Taiwan coastguard.

But, despite the recent tensions, Chinese citizen Shao says hostilities are not the way to bring China and Taiwan together.

"I want unification to happen peacefully," he said. He said that if that is not possible, it would be better to keep things as they are.

He knows that many of his friends feel the same way. According to Shao, if they go to Kinmen and Taiwan, it should be as visitors, not as fighters.

"The Taiwanese haven't done anything bad to us, so why should we go there to fight them?" he said, convinced that any war between China and Taiwan

would result in significant casualties on both sides. "Unification with Taiwan is not worth a war."

According to Al Jazeera, a study published by the University of California San Diego's 21st Century China Center last year suggests that Shao and his friends are not alone in opposing a war over Taiwan. The study explored Chinese public support for different policy steps regarding unification with Taiwan and it was found that one-third of Chinese respondents termed launching a full-scale war to achieve unification as "unacceptable."

Only one per cent rejected all other options but war, challenging the Chinese government's assertion that the Chinese people were willing to "go to any length and pay any price" to achieve unification, Al Jazeera reported.

Mia Wei, a 26-year-old marketing specialist from Shanghai is not surprised by such results.

"Ordinary Chinese people are not pushing the government to get unification," she said. "It is the government that pushes people to believe that there must be unification."

At the same time, support for a unification war turned out to be close to the same level found in similar studies from earlier years, indicating that despite the growing tension in the Taiwan Strait and renewed talk about taking control of Taiwan, there has not been a corresponding increase in support for more forceful measures.

Wei believes that Chinese like herself are more concerned with developments inside their country, amid issues like property crisis and economic concerns.

"First there was Covid, then the economy got bad and then the housing market got even worse," she said. "I think Chinese people have their minds on more important things than unification with Taiwan."

However, regardless of what Chinese people might think, Eric Chan, a senior fellow at the Global Taiwan Institute in Washington, DC believed that unifying Taiwan with the mainland will remain a 'cornerstone' of the CCP's narrative.

"Unification is not a topic that is up for any sort of debate with the general public," he said.

Although the Chinese leadership often claims that China is a democratic country where the party is guided by the will of the Chinese people, there are no regular national elections or free media, and online discourse is restricted and regularly censored. Speaking out against the CCP can also result in criminal convictions.

Since Xi became president in 2012, crackdowns on civil liberties have intensified, and Xi has centralised power around himself to a degree unprecedented since the rule of Mao Zedong – the man who led the communists to victory against the nationalists and

became communist China's first leader, Al Jazeera reported.

During Mao's rule, reforms and purges of Chinese society led to the deaths of millions of Chinese people, while over 4,00,000 Chinese soldiers died as a result of his decision to enter the 1950-1953 Korean War on North Korea's side.

But according to Chan, the days when a Chinese leader could expend tens of thousands of lives in such a manner are over. Recent government actions that exacted a heavy toll on citizens led to public pushback, and Xi did not appear immune.

During the Covid pandemic, Xi ardently defended the country's zero-COVID policy even though its mass testing and strict lockdowns had dire socioeconomic consequences. The government eventually abandoned the policy as the economy sank, and people took to the streets across China's major cities demanding an end to the lockdowns, even calling for Xi to step down, Al Jazeera reported.

As for war, the circumstances are also different. A battle for Taiwan would be existential for the communist party and Xi, according to Chan.

According to Chan, the public outrage over a long unification war that might even end in a Chinese defeat could 'endanger' the party's rule. So, he expects the CCP instead continuing to engage in low-cost grey zone operations against Taiwan while developing a Chinese military that would be able to score a swift victory.

For citizens like Shao, however, any attempt to settle the issue through conflict would be a disaster.

"I don't think it will end well for anyone – not for those that have to fight it and not for the government that starts it," he said. (ANI)

### **CCP is increasing cross-strait 'gray area': report**

10 March 2024, Taipei Times

The Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) unpredictability is increasing and the "gray area" in its cross-strait policy is being reduced as its National People's Congress (NPC) and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference's (CPPCC) National Committee meetings consolidate Chinese President Xi Jinping's (習近平) authority and the party's control over the state, a report by Taiwan's National Security Bureau (NSB) said.

The report, which has been sent to the Legislative Yuan ahead of NSB Director-General Tsai Ming-yen's (蔡明彥) presentation to the legislature's Foreign Affairs and National Defense Committee tomorrow, said that Chinese Premier Li Qiang's (李強) report at the opening of China's NPC earlier this week showed

that the State Council, which coordinates China's government ministries, is to play the role of enforcing party orders and upholding Xi's authority.

The Organic Law of the State Council was also amended to grant the party a further legal basis for it "to lead the state," the NSB report said, adding that China had also scrapped the premier's press conference this year that is usually held at the end of each NPC.

The report cited critics as saying that these moves would inevitably strengthen Xi's hold over the party and make Chinese politics even more closed off.

Despite facing inflation and the bursting of a housing bubble, China is determined to pump more money into its military spending and is working ever more closely with Russia to increase geopolitical risk in the Indo-Pacific region, the report said.

With the US elections set for November, China is stepping up efforts to reinforce its "one China" principle and change the "status quo" by stepping up military, diplomatic, economic and legal pressure against Taiwan, it added.

China is also trying to invite various Taiwanese groups to visit China with a aim to influence them with "united front" rhetoric, the report said.

On the US presidential election, Tsai said in the report that incumbent Joe Biden and his front-running opponent, Donald Trump, see China as a challenger to the US.

Regardless of who wins the election, the US strategy to continue to support Taiwan and contain China would not significantly change, the report added.

### **"Neither India nor Taiwan is part of the PRC and we're not its puppets" Taiwanese FM**

07 March 2024, Phayul

The Chinese embassy in India has issued a statement condemning an Indian media channel's interview with Taiwan Foreign Minister Joseph Wu. The embassy alleges that the interview provided a platform to advocate "Taiwan independence," on March 2.

The statement from the Chinese embassy read: "On 29th February 2024, certain Indian TV broadcasted an interview with the head of Taiwan's foreign affairs office Joseph Wu, which provided a platform for him to advocate 'Taiwan independence' and disseminate false information. It seriously violated the one-China principle, and is totally unacceptable."

In response to the Chinese embassy's statement, Taiwan's foreign ministry posted on X, "Neither India nor Taiwan is part of the PRC [People's Republic of China] and we're not its puppets. We're both democracies with free and vibrant presses that can't be dictated to." Taipei asked Beijing to worry about its "economic slump, not bully its neighbours".

India was among the first nations in the world to accept the "one China policy" in 1949 and used it in joint statements, but New Delhi stopped doing so around 2010 in response to Beijing's insistence on issuing stapled visas to residents of Jammu and Kashmir and Arunachal Pradesh.

Over the years, India has also deepened its engagement with Taiwan through trade, including negotiations for a free trade agreement, and culture without having diplomatic relations. India has a trade and cultural office in Taipei with a reciprocal set-up in New Delhi, which also provides consular services.

### China drops 'peaceful reunification' reference to Taiwan

05 March 2024, Reuters

China will boost its defence spending by 7.2% this year, fuelling a military budget that has more than doubled under President Xi Jinping's 11 years in office as Beijing hardens its stance on Taiwan, according to official reports on Tuesday.

The increase mirrors the rate presented in last year's budget and again comes in well above the government's economic growth forecast for this year. China also officially adopted tougher language against Taiwan as it released the budget figures, dropping the mention of "peaceful reunification" in a government report delivered by Premier Li Qiang at the opening of the National People's Congress (NPC), China's rubber-stamp parliament, on Tuesday. Tensions have risen sharply in recent years over Taiwan, the democratically ruled island that China claims as its own, and elsewhere across East Asia as regional military deployments rise.

Li Mingjiang, a defence scholar at the Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) in Singapore, said that despite China's struggling economy, Taiwan is a major consideration in Beijing's defence spending.

"China is showing that in the coming decade it wants to grow its military to the point where it is prepared to win a war if it has no choice but to fight one," Li said.

Since Xi became president and commander-in-chief more than a decade ago, the defence budget has ballooned to 1.67 trillion yuan (\$230 billion) this year from 720 billion yuan in 2013.

The percentage rise in military spending has consistently outpaced the annual domestic economic growth target during his time in office. This year the growth target for 2024 is about 5%, similar to last year's goal, according to the government report. The defence budget is closely watched by China's neighbours and the United States, who are wary of Beijing's strategic intentions and the development of its armed forces.

Based on data from the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), this year's budget marks the 30th consecutive year of Chinese defence spending increases.

Japanese government spokesperson Yoshimasa Hayashi on Tuesday urged greater openness from Beijing, warning of serious international concerns.

China's continuous military spending increases without sufficient transparency were "the greatest strategic challenge ever to ensure the peace and stability of Japan and the international community and strengthen international order", Hayashi said in Tokyo.

South Korea's defence ministry declined to comment. Australia's defence ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

James Char, a security scholar at the RSIS, said that despite the defence budget's outpacing GDP growth, it had remained at about 1.3% of overall gross domestic product in the last decade and had put no stress on the national coffers.

"Of course, the country's longer-term economic fortunes will determine whether this can be sustained going forward," Char said.

The purchase of new equipment is likely to take up the largest single chunk of the budget as the military works to meet Xi's goal of full modernisation by 2035, the IISS said in research published last month. That push continues across several fronts, with China producing weapons ranging from warships and submarines to drones and advanced missiles that can be equipped with both nuclear and conventional warheads.

Char said tighter management would also be a priority for military leadership after high-profile personnel purges related to weapons procurement.

The Central Military Commission, China's top military body, last July ordered a "clean up" of the procurement process and invited the public to report irregularities.

The commission has not announced the results of its investigation, but at least nine generals, including four directly in charge of procurement, have been stripped of their title as parliamentarians, a necessary procedure before they can be charged in court.

Two former defence ministers, Li Shangfu and Wei Fenghe, have also gone missing without explanation, which in China often means they are under investigation.

Li had been in charge of military procurement from 2017 to 2022. When asked whether Li would attend the parliament sessions, parliament spokesman Lou Qinjian told Singapore paper Lianhe Zaobao on Monday that Li "cannot attend because he is no longer a delegate".



In the government work report, China reiterated a call for "reunification" with Taiwan, but added emphasis that it wants to "be firm" in doing so and dropped the descriptor "peaceful", which had been used in previous reports.

Although it is not the first time that China had omitted the word "peaceful", the change in language is closely watched as a possible sign of more assertive stance towards Taiwan.

Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council on Tuesday urged China to accept the fact that the two sides are not subordinate to each other, and urged China to create health cross-strait exchanges.

The island's defence minister had said on Tuesday Taiwan's armed forces would increase the number of missile drills they hold this year.

Wen-Ti Sung, a political scientist and fellow at the Atlantic Council, said that the language on Taiwan has "moderately hardened".

"Beijing appears to be balancing between projecting increased toughness on Taiwan with stabilising relations with Taiwan's international friends," he said. After the Democratic Progressive Party's Lai Ching-te won the presidential election in Taiwan, the Chinese Communist Party's fourth-ranked leader, Wang Huning, said at a high-level Taiwan policy meeting last month that China would "resolutely combat" any efforts towards Taiwan independence this year.

Previous statements from the annual meeting only vowed to "resolutely oppose" Taiwan independence. (\$1 = 7.1987 Chinese yuan renminbi)

### **Taiwan faces steady 'drip' of pressure as China tightens pre-inauguration squeeze**

01 March 2024, Reuters

TAIPEI, March 1 (Reuters) - Taiwan is facing a steady "drip, drip" of Chinese pressure ahead of the inauguration of its next president in May, with officials in Taipei fearing Beijing could further squeeze the island's room to manoeuvre without resorting to direct conflict.

Since current Vice President Lai Ching-te won the presidency in January - China views Lai as a separatist - Beijing has snatched away a diplomatic ally, altered an air route in the narrow Taiwan Strait, and begun regular coast guard patrols around the Taiwan-controlled Kinmen islands, which hug the Chinese coast.

China claims democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory, over the island's strong rejections.

Visiting Taipei last week, U.S. Representative Mike Gallagher, chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives select committee on China, said Beijing's patrols around Kinmen, which is a short ferry ride from the Chinese cities of Xiamen and

Quanzhou, were part of a pattern of steady pressure on Taiwan.

It is a salami-slicing effort; they are slowly turning up the rheostat," he said, referring to a resistor used to control an electric current.

One foreign official tracking security matters in the region described what was happening as a "drip, drip" of pressure, keeping up the message that Beijing does not like Lai, but without holding war games - as it has twice around the island in the past year and a half - or forcing direct military confrontation.

"It's part of the pattern of gradually altering the status quo in the Taiwan Strait, seeing what they can get away with and shifting to a new normal, restricting Taiwan's space to move," the source said, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter.

China says the coast guard patrols are to ensure the safety of its fishermen. Two Chinese fishermen died last month trying to flee Taiwan's coast guard after approaching too close to one of Kinmen's heavily fortified islets.

Asked on Wednesday whether the Kinmen tensions were part of China's pre-inauguration pressure on Lai, a spokesperson for China's Taiwan Affairs Office did not answer directly, reiterating China's right to the coast guard patrols.

"Both sides of the Taiwan Strait are part of one China, and Taiwan is a part of China," Zhu Fenglian said.

China says it alone has sovereignty over the Taiwan Strait, and that it also recognises no "off limits" waters for its fisherman around Kinmen. Taiwan strongly rejects China's territorial claims.

Li Zhenguang, a Taiwan expert at Beijing Union University, told China's official Xinhua news agency this week that it was up to China to "firmly grasp the initiative" when it came to dealing with Taiwan, and that asserting jurisdiction around Kinmen was a necessary step on the road to "reunification".

'GREY ZONE'

Taiwan has complained for four years of stepped-up Chinese military action, such as fighters regularly flying over the strait as part of a "grey zone" strategy to wear down Taiwan with activities that stop short of a full-blown conflict.

A senior Taiwan official familiar with the island's security planning said that Beijing is exerting pressure "day in and day out" ahead of Lai's inauguration speech on May 20, and that the Kinmen situation was another "grey zone" tactic.

"We will not go along with their political plots and escalate tensions," said the official, who declined to be named because of the sensitivity of the issue.

Taiwan's Ocean Affairs Council Minister Kuan Bi-ling, whose department runs the coast guard, this week

drew a parallel to what was happening around Kinmen and China's regular sovereignty-asserting patrols around islets in the East China Sea that Beijing, Tokyo and Taipei all claim as theirs.

"It is China trying to take the Diaoyutai method and apply it to the Kinmen-Xiamen waters, which we really, really cannot accept," she said, using Taiwan's name for the islets China calls the Diaoyu and Japan the Senkaku.

Tensions around Kinmen, however, appear unlikely to ease anytime soon, as government representatives from both Taiwan and China this week continued negotiations on how to settle the incident. Families of the dead have asked for compensation and an apology from Taiwan authorities.

A senior Taiwan official dealing with the incident in Kinmen said Taiwan will not apologise, as doing so would make future Taiwan law enforcement there difficult.

Taiwan's armed forces have left the handling of the dispute so far to the coast guard, whose Kinmen fleet of 16 boats patrols there rather than the navy, signalling they don't want an escalation.

Asked on Tuesday what the response would be if China's coast guard "overdid it", Taiwan Defence Minister Chiu Kuo-cheng said they don't want conflict.

"Avoiding war is not to shirk it. We have rules for combat preparation, but we don't want it to happen," he said.

## February

### China Says Its Coast Guard Patrols Around Taiwan Islands 'Beyond Reproach'

27 February 2024, US News

BEIJING (Reuters) -China's government said on Wednesday that its coast guard patrols around a group of Taiwanese islands near the Chinese coast were "beyond reproach", and dismissed complaints the boarding of a Taiwan tourist boat had caused panic.

China's coast guard this month began regular patrols around the Taiwan-controlled Kinmen islands, which face China's Xiamen and Quanzhou cities, where two Chinese nationals died trying to flee Taiwan's coast guard after their boat entered prohibited waters.

Taiwan said last week a Taiwanese tourist boat operating from Kinmen had been boarded briefly by China's coast guard, triggering "panic", and that this week five Chinese ships entered prohibited or controlled waters.

Speaking at a regular news briefing in Beijing, Zhu Fenglian, spokesperson for China's Taiwan Affairs Office, reiterated it does not recognise any off-limits waters around Kinmen for fishermen, and said that

the coast guard did not cause alarm with boarding the tourist boat.

"I don't think there is any issue of panic," Zhu said.

The coast guard carries out its official duties in "their own waters" in accordance with the law to maintain "normal order" and protect the lives and of fishermen and travellers, she added.

"Civilized and transparent law enforcement is beyond reproach," Zhu said.

Taiwan, which China claims as its own territory despite the island's rejection, has been wary of efforts by Beijing to ramp up pressure on Taipei following last month's election of Lai Ching-te as president. Beijing considers Lai, who takes office in May, a separatist.

Taiwan has complained of repeated Chinese military activity near its territory.

On Wednesday, Taiwan's defence ministry said it had detected 15 Chinese military aircraft operating around the island carrying out "joint combat readiness patrols" with Chinese warships.

China recognises no sovereignty claims by Taiwan, and has accused Taiwan of acting "maliciously" by causing the deaths of the two Chinese nationals on the fishing boat, which had gotten too close to one of Kinmen's heavily fortified islets.

Taiwan has defended its action and accused China of failing to properly control its fishing boats and stop them entering Taiwan's waters around Kinmen, the site of frequent fighting during the height of the Cold War.

Zhu said Taiwan was to blame for its dangerous enforcement actions.

"The relevant parties in Taiwan should respect the fact that both sides of the Taiwan Strait have been operating in traditional waters for a long time, and stop seizing and detaining mainland fishing boats in a rough and dangerous manner."

### Over 80% of Taiwanese favour maintaining status quo with China: Survey

24 February 2024, Business Standard

More than 80 per cent of Taiwanese people want to maintain the status quo with China, with those preferring to keep Taiwan's current status indefinitely rising sharply, while those who want independence have been dropping since 2020, according to the results of a survey released on Friday, Central News Agency Taiwan reported.

In the survey titled "Changes in the Unification-Independence Stances of Taiwanese," National Chengchi University's Election Study Center, which has tracked the annual change in Taiwanese residents' stance on the issue from 1994-2023, said it saw increasing support for the continuation of cross-strait status quo.

The three most preferred choices in 2023 were: "maintain the status quo indefinitely" (33.2 per cent), "maintain the status quo, decide at a later date" (27.9 per cent) and "maintain the status quo, move toward independence" (21.5 per cent), according to the Center.

Added together, those three categories of people who either want to maintain the status quo for now or indefinitely accounted for 82.6 per cent of the total, Central News Agency Taiwan reported.

The least preferred option was "unification as soon as possible," which had never exceeded 5 per cent since the survey has been conducted and stood at only 1.2 per cent in 2023, according to the findings. That category of people who want to "maintain the status quo, move toward unification," has dropped from the third highest percentage overall, or 15.6 per cent, in 1994, to 6.2 per cent in 2023.

Also, in 2023, only 3.8 per cent of respondents expressed a desire for Taiwan's immediate independence, making it the second least preferred option overall, with support over the decades never exceeding 7.8 per cent.

Central News Agency Taiwan reported that the percentage of people who want independence now and those who want it later have been steadily dropping since 2020. The two groups added together fell from a high of 32.1 per cent in 2020 to 25.3 per cent last year.

The fastest growing category of people were those who want to maintain the status quo indefinitely; it rose from 9.8 per cent in 1994 to 33.2 per cent last year, rising sharply since 2020.

It surpassed those who favored "maintain status quo, decide at later date" for the first time in 2022.

This survey was released in tandem with another one that tracked the year-on-year changes in how Taiwanese people identify themselves (as Taiwanese or Chinese) between 1992 and 2023.

That second survey showed that 61.7 per cent of Taiwanese in 2023 identified themselves as Taiwanese, falling a little from the record high of 64.3 per cent seen in 2020. That self-identification preference has ballooned from 17.6 per cent in 1992 to more than threefold last year, Central News Agency Taiwan reported.

Last year, around one third of respondents considered themselves both Taiwanese and Chinese, continuing a general downward trend from 46.4 per cent in 1992 to 32 per cent in 2023. But last year those who considered themselves to be Taiwanese and Chinese rose slightly from the record low of 29.9 per cent in 2020.

In contrast, significantly fewer people consider themselves to be simply Chinese, with the number falling from 25.5 per cent to 2.4 per cent over the past 30 years.

Only 3.9 per cent of respondents showed no response in 2023, down from 10.5 per cent in 1992. According to the center, the surveys were conducted via telephone questionnaires with respondents ranging from 1,209 to 34,854 per year.

The center said it used key sample variables to weight the sample's partial characters such as sex, age, and education through an iterated (or raking) process to ensure the sample structure is representative of the population.

It did not provide the confidence level and margin of error.

### **Mainland China's top Taiwan official pledges support for pro-unification forces**

23 February 2024, South China Morning Post  
Beijing's top Taiwan affairs official has called for more efforts to support pro-unification forces and deepen cultural ties a month after the presidential election was won by an independence-leaning candidate.

Wang Huning, who heads the Central Leading Group for Taiwan Affairs, told the Taiwan Affairs Work Conference that this year its task was to "advance the process of reunification" and "maintain peace and stability" across the Taiwan Strait, state news agency Xinhua reported on Friday.

Wang, the No 4 in the Communist Party's hierarchy, told officials they would also need to strike hard against Taiwan independence and interference by external forces.

Last month's Taiwanese presidential election was won by William Lai Ching-te of the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party – whom Beijing has repeatedly described as a dangerous separatist – as its next president. He will take office in May when current leader Tsai Ing-wen steps down.

Beijing has criticised Washington's increased political support and arms sales to Taiwan as "external interference in China's internal affairs", and described them as the biggest obstacles to its reunification plan with Taiwan.

Wang also told the conference that Beijing has "overcome difficulties" in pushing ahead its Taiwan agenda and winning international support for the "one China" principle – an apparent reference to Honduras and Nauru cutting their ties with Taipei in the past 12 months.

"It is necessary to expand cross-Strait exchanges and cooperation in various fields and deepen cross-Strait integration and development. We should push for joint Chinese culture promotions across the Taiwan Strait and promote spiritual bonds among Chinese compatriots," he added.

Beijing sees Taiwan as part of China to be reunited by force if necessary. Most countries, including the

US, do not recognise Taiwan as an independent state, but Washington is opposed to any attempt to take the self-governed island by force and is committed to supplying it with weapons.

As China will celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China this year, Wang said Beijing will need to "further grasp the strategic initiative to achieve complete reunification of the motherland".

In contrast to his speech last year, this time Wang did not refer to "one family across the Taiwan Strait" or of Beijing's efforts to "promote policies benefiting the Taiwanese people".

Instead, he said Beijing would "firmly support patriotic and pro-unification forces on the island and unite Taiwan compatriots".

In December, Beijing suspended tariff cuts on 12 products imported from Taiwan, a decision it blamed on the DPP's stance, and threatened more measures might follow. The decision prompted speculation it might try to weaponise trade to influence the presidential election.

### **China-Taiwan tensions surge as Beijing increases patrolling following fishermen's deaths**

19 February 2024, The Economic Times

Tensions are escalating in the waters near Taiwan as China intensifies patrols around a group of islands controlled by Taiwan. This move comes in the aftermath of the death of two Chinese fishermen who drowned during a pursuit by Taiwan's coast guard, accusing them of trespassing, CNN reported.

China's coast guard, specifically its Fujian division, announced on Sunday that it would enhance maritime law enforcement and conduct regular patrols in the waters around Xiamen, China, and Taiwan's Kinmen islands.

Gan Yu, a spokesperson for China's coast guard, stated that the objective is to "further maintaining the order of operations in the relevant waters and protecting the lives and property of fishermen." The decision to increase patrols raises concerns about heightened proximity between Chinese and Taiwanese coast guard vessels, potentially increasing the risk of miscalculation and conflict, as reported by CNN.

The recent escalation followed an incident where a Chinese speedboat capsized while attempting to evade Taiwan's coast guard, alleging trespassing for fishing in waters approximately 1 nautical mile off Kinmen's coast. Two crew members survived after being rescued by Taiwan's coast guard, while the other two were found unconscious and confirmed dead after being taken to the hospital in Kinmen.

China has strongly condemned the incident, blaming Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)

and accusing them of forcibly seizing mainland fishing boats and mistreating mainland fishermen. The Taiwan Affairs Office in China stated that the incident during the Lunar New Year holiday seriously hurt the feelings of compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

Taiwan authorities expressed regret over the deaths but maintained that their coast guard officers were acting within the bounds of the law. China's Taiwan Affairs Office further escalated the rhetoric, expressing "strong indignation" in mainland China and denying Taiwan's designation of "restricted" waters near Kinmen.

The office asserted that fishermen from both sides have been operating in traditional fishing grounds in the Xiamen-Kinmen waters since ancient times, rejecting the idea of "prohibited or restricted waters." It urged Taiwan authorities to release the surviving fishermen from custody.

In response, Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council reaffirmed its commitment to enforcing the law in the waters it controls, expelling or detaining trespassing vessels. It disputed Beijing's accusations of "rough expulsions," attributing the incident to constant intrusions by unidentified ships that lack certification or port registration. The council stated that the case is under investigation by Taiwanese prosecutors.

Kuan Bi-ling, Taiwan's Minister of Ocean Affairs Council, assured that the surviving fishermen under Taiwan's custody were being cared for and would be repatriated as the case progressed. Kuan highlighted Taiwan's previous rescue efforts for mainland Chinese fishermen and cargo ships, emphasising the humanitarian approach despite rising tensions in the Taiwan Strait.

Over the past three years, Taiwan's coast guard has reportedly rescued 20 individuals from mainland China. China has been applying economic, military, and diplomatic pressure on Taiwan and has severed most communications with Taipei since the Democratic Progressive Party came to power in 2016.

In previous years, during the more Beijing-friendly Kuomintang government's term, joint maritime drills were held for search and rescue operations, CNN reported.

### **'Cycling for a Free Tibet' event launched ahead of Tibetan Uprising Day in Taiwan**

15 February 2024, Phayul

The Human Rights Network for Tibet and Taiwan (HRNTT) organized a "Cycling for a Free Tibet" event in Taipei on Wednesday to raise public awareness on the Tibetan struggle for freedom ahead of the Tibetan Uprising Day. During the event, cyclists took to the streets of the capital to

commemorate 65 years of Tibetan resistance against China's occupation of their homeland and the Lhasa uprising that happened on March 10, 1959.

Tashi Tsering, the founder of The Human Rights Network for Tibet and Taiwan (HRNTT), held a press conference outside the Legislative Yuan. During the conference, he expressed his concerns over the Chinese Communist Party's coercion of Tibet into signing the "Seventeen Point Agreement" in 1951. He highlighted many issues happening in Tibet, including Tibetan children being separated from their parents and subjected to China's indoctrination education in colonial style boarding schools.

He also highlighted that the Chinese Communist Party has imposed laws to dictate the selection of reincarnated Buddhist leaders, in a bid to regulate and suppress Tibetan Buddhism.

During the same event, DPP Legislator Puma Shen warned against China's economic and diplomatic aggression towards Taiwan. Shen cited the "peaceful treaty" signed with Tibet as a warning and emphasized Taiwan's obligation to defend against tyranny, especially in light of the circumstances in the so-called Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and Hong Kong. Shen also pledged to continue advocating for freedom, democracy, and human rights within the parliament.

Sky Fung, the chief secretary of Hong Kong Outlanders, expressed his grief over the persecution of Tibet's religion, culture, and tradition after China's invasion. As a Hong Kong citizen, Fung expressed regret for not realizing China's deception earlier and for not raising support for Tibet. He emphasized the importance of freedom and cautioned against complacency, while warning Taiwan could potentially become China's next target.

More cycling events are scheduled in Taipei on Feb. 21, Feb. 28, and March 6, with another in Kaohsiung on March 2.

### **Taiwan reports more Chinese balloons over Taiwan Strait**

11 February 2024, Reuters

TAIPEI, Feb 11 (Reuters) - Taiwan's defence ministry said on Sunday it had detected eight Chinese balloons crossing the Taiwan Strait in the previous 24 hours, of which five flew across Taiwan, the second day in a row it has reported a large number of balloons.

Taiwan, which China claims as its own territory despite the strong objections of the government in Taipei, has complained since December about the balloons, saying they are a threat to aviation safety and attempt at psychological warfare.

In its daily report on Chinese military activities, Taiwan's defence ministry said it spotted the first

balloon on Saturday morning and the last one mid-afternoon, having spotted the same number of balloons on Friday.

Five crossed the northern and central part of Taiwan, according to a map provided by the ministry.

China's defence ministry did not answer calls seeking comment on Sunday. Both China and Taiwan are currently celebrating the Lunar New Year holiday, the most important festival in the Chinese-speaking world.

Last month, China's government dismissed repeated complaints by Taiwan about the balloons, saying they are for meteorological purposes and should not be hyped up for political reasons.

Chinese warplanes operate daily in the Taiwan Strait and often cross its median line that previously served as an unofficial barrier between the two sides. China says it does not recognise the existence of that line.

Taiwan last month elected Vice President Lai Ching-te as its next president, a man China describes as a dangerous separatist.

Lai, who takes office in May, has offered talks with China, which have been rejected. He says only Taiwan's people can decide their future.

The potential for China to use balloons for spying became a global issue last February when the United States shot down what it said was a Chinese surveillance balloon. China said the balloon was a civilian craft that accidentally drifted astray.

## **January**

### **China is troublemaker by repeatedly using Taiwan Strait issues to hold other countries hostage: Tiaiwan**

28 January 2024, Times of India

TAIPEI: The Taiwan Ministry of Foreign Affairs said today that Taiwan has always been committed to maintaining the status quo, in order to maintain peace and stability in the region and across the Taiwan Strait, but China has repeatedly used the Taiwan Strait issue to hold other countries hostage and sow discord between Taiwan and other countries, fully highlighting that China is the troublemaker that undermines regional and Taiwan Strait peace and stability, and China's so-called "Taiwan independence" fallacy simply cannot be established, the international community should be alert and share concerns and condemnation.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated in the afternoon that when US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met with Wang Yi, Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the CPC Central Committee and Minister of Foreign



Affairs, in Bangkok, Thailand, from the January 26-27, he emphasised the importance of maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. Once again, we firmly and publicly reaffirm our firm stance of supporting the maintenance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and express our sincere welcome and gratitude.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also noticed that the news released by the Chinese foreign ministry falsely stated that "The Taiwan issue is China's internal affairs, and elections in the Taiwan region cannot change the basic fact that Taiwan is a part of China. The biggest risk to peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait is" "Taiwan independence", the biggest challenge to Sino-US relations is also "Taiwan independence."

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterated that Taiwan, the Republic of China, is a sovereign and independent country and is not affiliated with the People's Republic of China. Taiwan's presidential election on January 13 fully demonstrated Taiwan's democratic politics. It has received the heartfelt blessings of more than 100 countries around the world, once again verifying the facts and status quo that have been recognized by the international community for many years. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs solemnly refutes and condemns China's repeated malicious spread of claims that distort Taiwan's sovereign status.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs solemnly stated that Taiwan has always been committed to maintaining the status quo to maintain peace and stability in the region and across the Taiwan Strait. However, China has continued to provoke and threaten neighbouring countries, using pretexts to increase regional tensions, intending to change the status quo and undermine the rules-based international order, and repeatedly used the Taiwan Strait issue to hold other countries hostage and sow discord between Taiwan and other countries, fully highlighting that China is the troublemaker that undermines regional and Taiwan Strait peace and stability. China's so-called "Taiwan independence" fallacy cannot be established at all. The international community should be vigilant and share concerns and condemnations.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasized that the international community is welcome to continue to pay attention to the security of the Taiwan Strait, and Taiwan will continue to work closely with the United States and other countries with similar ideals to jointly safeguard the shared values of democracy and freedom to maintain peace, stability, and prosperity across the Taiwan Strait and the region.

## Beijing Continues Military Operations Near Taiwan After US and China Announce Talks

28 January 2024, NTD

China sent more than 30 warplanes and a group of navy ships toward Taiwan following an announcement that senior American and Chinese representatives were going to discuss Taiwan during a meeting in Thailand's capital, Bangkok, the island's defense ministry said Saturday.

China's army sent 33 aircraft and six navy vessels around Taiwan, between 6 a.m. Friday and 6 a.m. Saturday. Of these, 13 warplanes crossed the midline of the Taiwan Strait—an unofficial boundary that's considered a buffer between the island and mainland. Taiwan has monitored the situation and employed its own forces in response to the activities. Top Chinese and U.S. officials held candid talks in Bangkok aimed at lowering tensions between the superpowers on Taiwan and other subjects, ahead of an expected springtime call between U.S. President Joe Biden and Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan pressed Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi to use his country's diplomatic influence to convince Iran to curtail support for Houthis attacking Red Sea merchant vessels, according to a senior Biden administration official.

The meetings, which spanned more than 12 hours over two days and wrapped up on Saturday, are intended to deliver on President Biden and Xi's agreement at a California summit in November to restore ruptured diplomatic talks on a range of global security and economic issues like defense and counter-narcotics, despite significant disagreements.

China's foreign ministry and the White House said in statements that the two sides had agreed to keep in contact to manage sensitive issues.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is expected to travel to Beijing and more military-to-military talks are planned for the coming months, and counter-narcotics talks start between the countries on Tuesday in Beijing.

China criticized the United States on Thursday for causing "trouble and provocation" after the U.S. Navy sailed its first warship through waters separating China and Taiwan since the election.

The United States switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 1979 and has long said it does not support a formal declaration of independence by Taiwan. It does, however, maintain unofficial relations with the self-governed island and remains its most important backer and arms supplier. President Biden previously upset the Chinese communist regime with comments that appeared to suggest the United States would defend the island if it were attacked. That stance deviates from

Washington's long-held position of "strategic ambiguity."

Open conflict between China and Taiwan in a U.S. presidential election year would strain the U.S. economy and stretch President Biden's national security team, which is already dealing with a grinding Ukraine-Russia war, the Red Sea Houthi attacks, and an Israel-Gaza conflict that has divided Biden's voter base.

China's struggling economy may dampen Beijing's appetite for a more combative relationship with Washington.

Recently six Chinese balloons were flown over Taiwan or through its northern airspace days after the island elected Lai Ching-te as its new president. Mr. Lai's Democratic Progressive Party largely campaigned on self-determination and a rejection of China's threats.

President Biden and Xi met on the sidelines of a summit in November in an effort to patch up frayed relations due to quarrels over a range of economic and geopolitical issues.

U.S. lawmakers, in their first visit to the island since its elections, told Taiwan to "rest assured" that they have firm support from Washington during a meeting last week with President-elect Lai and outgoing President Tsai Ing-wen.

Mr. Lai said he hopes that the United States can continue to firmly support Taiwan.

On the military front, Taiwan has increased the service period for its conscripts from 4 months to one year, with the extension announced in late 2022 by Ms. Tsai as a response to the government's concerns about China's military threat.

In recent years the Chinese regime has ramped up military, diplomatic, and economic pressure on Taiwan.

That has included almost daily Chinese air force missions near the island over the last four years.

The period of military service in Taiwan is still shorter than the 18 months mandated in South Korea, which faces a hostile and nuclear-armed North Korea.

A Taipei-based think tank estimated the extended conscription could add an extra 60,000 to 70,000 soldiers annually to the current 165,000-strong professional force.

### **'Taiwan independence' an obstacle to China-US relations, says Beijing**

27 January 2024, Aljazeera

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan met to discuss competition and cooperation between the two countries.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and United States National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan have held

talks aimed at keeping in contact, both sides said, with Wang stressing that "Taiwan independence" posed the biggest risk to Sino-US ties.

Wang and Sullivan met in Bangkok, Thailand, on Saturday, just more than two months after US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping met on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in San Francisco.

The two "had candid, substantive and fruitful strategic communication on implementing the consensus reach at the San Francisco meeting ... and on properly handling important and sensitive issues in China-US relations," China's foreign ministry said in a statement.

The White House said that the meeting between the officials was "part of the effort to maintain open lines of communication" between the two countries.

It added that "Sullivan stressed that although the United States and China are in competition, both countries need to prevent it from veering into conflict or confrontation".

Beijing and Washington have previously clashed on issues related to technology, trade, human rights, and Taiwan, which China claims as its territory.

Taiwan

The recent Taiwanese election saw the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) secure a third term. The DPP is resistant to China's claim over Taiwan.

This week, two US lawmakers met Taiwan's new leader, Lai Ching-te, to reaffirm Washington's support for the self-governing island.

This was the second group to arrive in Taiwan since the election after Biden sent an unofficial delegation to congratulate Lai two days after the vote.

But, according to China's foreign ministry, Wang stressed in the meeting with Sullivan that Taiwan was "China's internal affair, and the regional election in Taiwan cannot change the basic reality that Taiwan is part of China".

"The biggest risk to peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait is the so-called 'Taiwan independence' movement. The biggest challenge to China-US relations is also the 'Taiwan independence' movement," it added.

Before the meeting, Taiwan's defence ministry said China sent 33 aircraft, including SU-30 fighters and six navy vessels, around Taiwan between 6am Friday to 6am Saturday (22:00 Thursday - 22:00 Friday GMT). Among those sent, 13 warplanes crossed the Taiwan Strait, an unofficial boundary between Taiwan and China.

The White House said Sullivan "underscored the importance of maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait" without elaborating.

High-level diplomacy

Apart from cross-strait issues, the officials also touched on other issues, including Russia's war

against Ukraine, Iran and the Middle East, North Korea, the South China Sea, and Myanmar, the White House said.

Both sides agreed that the two presidents would keep regular contact, provide strategic guidance on bilateral relations and promote exchanges between the US and China in different areas and levels, the Chinese ministry said.

The two sides will set up a call between President Xi and President Biden, the White House said in a statement, as part of “high-level diplomacy” efforts.

They also agreed to launch a joint working group on anti-drug cooperation and set up an intergovernmental dialogue on artificial intelligence.

Sullivan and Wang “recognised recent progress in resuming military-to-military communication and noted the importance of maintaining these channels”, the White House added.

### **Taiwan says it spots six more Chinese balloons, one crossed island**

22 January 2024, Reuters

TAIPEI, Jan 22 (Reuters) - Taiwan's defence ministry said it had detected six more Chinese balloons flying over the Taiwan Strait on Sunday, one of which crossed the island, the latest in a spate of such balloons the ministry says it has seen over the past month-and-a-half.

The ministry earlier this month, in a strongly worded statement, accused China of threatening aviation safety and waging psychological warfare on the island's people with the balloons, days before Taiwan's Jan. 13 elections.

China's defence ministry, which last month declined to comment on the balloons, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. China claims Taiwan as its own territory, despite the strong objections of the government in Taipei.

The potential for China to use balloons for spying became a global issue last February when the United States shot down what it said was a Chinese surveillance balloon. China said the balloon was a civilian craft that accidentally drifted astray.

In the latest incident, revealed by the ministry on Monday in its daily report on Chinese military activities over the past 24 hours, it said six balloons had flown over the strait's sensitive median line on Sunday.

However, only one crossed Taiwan island, at its southern tip, according to a map the ministry provided.

The other five balloons flew to the north of Taiwan but did not fly over land, the ministry said.

The balloons all headed east before vanishing, it added.

The Taiwan Strait's median line previously served as an unofficial barrier between Taiwan and China, but Chinese fighter jets, drones and now balloons regularly fly over it.

China says it does not recognise the existence of the median line.

### **Purges in China's military allow Taiwan some respite – for now**

20 January 2024, Aljazeera

Turmoil in China's senior ranks raises questions about morale and whether the chaos reduces the threat to Taiwan.

Danny Jia was walking down a street outside Taiwan's Taoyuan city in late December when he suddenly heard automatic gunfire.

Not far from Jia's location that morning, the 249th mechanised infantry brigade of the Taiwanese armed forces was conducting military drills at Guanyin beach on the island's northwest coast.

“I was so startled that I almost dropped my phone,” the 46-year-old civil servant told Al Jazeera.

“The exercises are also a scary reminder that a war might actually come to Taiwan in the future,” Jia said.

Guanyin beach is one of Taiwan's so-called “red beaches” – stretches of the coastline that in the event of a Chinese invasion, offer the most favourable conditions for amphibious landing assaults.

For China's military planners, Guanyin beach would be particularly suitable as it lies less than 18 kilometres (11 miles) from Taiwan's primary international airport, and only about 50 kilometres (31 miles) from the outskirts of the Taiwanese capital, Taipei.

Democratic and self-ruled Taiwan has never been part of the People's Republic of China (PRC), but Beijing considers Taiwan to be part of its territory and has not ruled out using force to bring the island under its control.

In his new year speech, Chinese President Xi Jinping called Taiwan's unification with mainland China “inevitable”.

With the ever-present threat of China's troops spilling onto Taiwan's shores one day, Jia believes that the military drills on red beaches serve an important purpose in preparing the Taiwanese military for the worst.

Recently, however, Jia has found himself convinced that such a scenario is far from certain due to events in China's own military ranks.

At the end of December, nine high-ranking military officers were removed from their positions.

Several of those axed were from the Chinese military's elite “rocket force”, which oversees China's tactical and nuclear missiles.

Earlier, in August, two leading figures in the rocket force were likewise removed.

That same month, the then-Chinese defence minister, Li Shuangfu, went missing.

Li has since been dismissed and replaced by Dong Jun.

With so many changes among the top brass, Jia said he failed to see how the Chinese armed forces could be prepared for the complex planning involved in a large-scale assault on Taiwan in the near future.

"I think there is too much chaos in China's military for that," he said.

**A limited Taiwanese respite**

People in Taiwan have reasons to feel more secure, according to Christina Chen, a research fellow at Taiwan's Institute for National Defense and Security Research (INDSR) think tank.

"The removal of senior officers demonstrates that Xi Jinping is clearly not confident in the military, and that reduces the likelihood of a Chinese attack on Taiwan in the near term," Chen told Al Jazeera.

The relatively large number of Chinese officers expelled in such a short time can also affect the armed forces' fighting spirit as uncertainty spreads as to who will be targeted next.

"More removals might follow and that could further weaken the morale of the military and its ability to fight," Chen said.

While the risk of an imminent conflict in the Taiwan Strait may have been reduced, Chen sees Beijing's long-term goal of taking over Taiwan staying firmly in place.

China's new defence minister, Dong Jun, has experience with military matters regarding Taiwan from his previous roles as commander of the Chinese navy, deputy commander of the Southern Theatre Command and deputy commander of China's East Sea Fleet.

Although a defence minister serves mostly a diplomatic and public role in China, the appointment of the highly experienced Dong Jun was not arbitrary, according to Chen.

It reflects Beijing's overall ambition of turning China into a maritime power that can rival the United States and eventually annex Taiwan, she said.

Beijing has in recent years increasingly projected its growing maritime and air power in Taiwan's direction.

Airborne and maritime incursions into Taiwan's air and sea space have become a daily occurrence by the Chinese armed forces.

Sabre-rattling rhetoric and large-scale military drills in the waters close to Taiwan have also accompanied times of particular tension.

This was the case in the aftermath of then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taipei in 2022 and after Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen's stopover in

San Francisco last year where she met with Pelosi's successor, Kevin McCarthy.

Some observers expect a similarly assertive Chinese reaction leading up to President-elect William Lai Ching-te taking office in May following his victory in the Taiwanese presidential election on January 13.

Beijing has branded Lai a separatist and declared that the election result would not change the Chinese government's stance on Taiwan's unification with the mainland.

Chen sees Beijing's pressure campaign directed at Taiwan continuing despite the dismissals in the Chinese military ranks.

"That will not change no matter how many military officers are removed," she said.

**The biggest purge**

According to Associate Professor Alfred Wu, a scholar specialising in corruption and governance in China at the National University of Singapore, the removal of Chinese military officials is more than a simple shake-up.

"In addition to the anticorruption effort, it is a purge," Wu told Al Jazeera.

"Xi Jinping is strengthening his hold over the military and sending a signal to all those that are not completely aligned with him that they might be next and therefore should be afraid," he said.

Wu described the use of fear as a tool employed to try to secure loyalty in China's authoritarian state structure where a lack of oversight and transparency can easily result in corruption and poor governance. Since Xi came to power in 2012, several anticorruption campaigns have resulted in purges throughout the Chinese state apparatus.

The Chinese military has long had a reputation for corruption, but the fact that the army's elite rocket force has been targeted is unprecedented.

The scale of the crackdown has left observers describing it as one of the biggest in Chinese military history.

Under the rule of Xi, who has called for the military's absolute loyalty, purges are, in Wu's words, "a continuous process".

Purges might even grow in frequency and magnitude, according to Wu, as the legitimacy that the Chinese government enjoyed during the country's economic boom years comes under strain at a time when the Chinese economy is showing signs of weakness.

"The economic situation might cause insecurity to grow within the Chinese government leading them to take more hawkish steps to secure loyalty within the state and in the military," he said.

However, continuing purges within the Chinese military may have a lingering impact on its capabilities.

"It's difficult to fight a war if many of your generals are in jail," Wu said.

Back on the outskirts of Taoyuan city near one of Taiwan's "red beaches", Jia, the civil servant who was startled by the military exercises in December, said that he doesn't wish ill on anyone.

But he also hopes the purges continue if they protect peace.

"I hope that more Chinese officers will lose their jobs if it means we won't get a war."

### **Taiwan's top diplomat sets record straight on China: 'We want the status quo. We want the way it is'**

19 January 2024, Fortune

Taiwan's top diplomat in Washington has a message for both the island's Chinese adversaries and its American friends: Don't worry that Taiwan's new president-elect will worsen relations with Beijing and possibly draw the U.S. into a conflict.

President-elect Lai Ching-te plans to keep the status quo in the Taiwan Strait, Alexander Tah-Ray Yui told The Associated Press on Thursday in his first interview with an international news organization since he arrived in the U.S. in December.

The Chinese government has called Lai a troublemaker who will push Taiwan toward independence. But Yui said Lai is willing to engage with Beijing, even as the island seeks to strengthen its unofficial ties with Washington for stability in the region.

"We want the status quo. We want the way it is — neither unification, neither independence. The way it is is the way we want to live right now," said Yui, Taiwan's de-facto ambassador to the U.S., noting the stance is largely supported at home and will guide the new administration.

Yui spoke to the AP five days after Lai won the presidential election with more than 40% of the vote in a three-way race. Lai will succeed Tsai Ing-wen when he is inaugurated in May.

His victory, which gives the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party an unprecedented third presidential term, was not welcomed by Beijing, which claims Taiwan as its own, to be taken by force if necessary.

Military action in the Taiwan Strait could draw in the United States, which is obligated under a 1979 law to provide Taiwan with sufficient military hardware and technology.

Beijing refused to have any dialogue with Tsai because her party rejects China's claim of sovereignty over the island, and before the election had suggested to voters that they could be choosing between war and peace.

It remains unclear if Beijing will be willing to engage with Lai, who in the past described himself as a "pragmatic worker of Taiwan's independence."

Two days after Lai was elected, China wooed away Nauru, a small Pacific island nation, which has left Taiwan with only 12 countries around the world that recognize its statehood. However, China has not launched massive military exercises around the island, as it has in past times of increased tensions.

Yui said Lai intends to follow the same line as his predecessor "but also to offer an olive branch to mainland China by saying that he's also willing to engage with mainland China."

At the same time, Taiwan will work with the U.S. to boost its defense and deepen economic and cultural ties, Yui said, calling relations with Washington "one of the most important aspects in our foreign affairs."

The United States does not have a formal relationship with Taiwan, but it has stepped up its support in the past several years, angering China, which has urged the U.S. to "exercise extreme prudence in handling Taiwan-related issues." President Xi Jinping told President Joe Biden that Taiwan is the most sensitive issue in U.S.-China relations.

Shortly after Taiwan's election, Biden told reporters that his administration does not support Taiwan's independence.

Scott Kennedy, senior adviser and trustee chair in Chinese business and economics at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington-based think tank, said he expected tensions to remain largely the same under Lai.

"Beijing will continue to develop its military capabilities and push the boundaries of military threats and economic coercion," he said. "The U.S. will continue to assist Taiwan with its defensive preparedness and push Taiwan to move more assertively on the various elements needed for effective self-defense."

But Kennedy said Beijing may also open up some channels for the two sides to convey messages and reduce misunderstanding.

Yui said it is incumbent upon both Beijing and Taipei to keep the Taiwan Strait peaceful.

"I have to stress, we're not the aggressors. We're not the ones, you know, making waves in the Taiwan Strait, making things nervous and tense," he said, alluding to Beijing's increased military activities near the island in the past several years.

Yui said Taiwan is determined to safeguard its homeland, noting that the island is increasing its defense budget and has extended the mandatory military service from four months to one year.

He said Beijing's luring away of Nauru was an attempt to punish the Taiwanese people for choosing the leader they wanted and will only backfire.

"They were just trying to find an appropriate time and excuse to slowly pluck all of our allies," Yui said. But, as a technological powerhouse and a



democracy, Taiwan has “become a common word in the international community” and countries around the world have become more willing to engage with it, he said.

Yui, who met with Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson shortly before Taiwan’s election, said he’s been encouraged by the support from both the Republicans and Democrats.

“If you go to the U.S. Congress, your heart warms up because everywhere you go you meet friends,” he said.

Sen. Ben Cardin, the Democratic chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, called Taiwan “a key U.S. partner in the Indo-Pacific and beyond” and said he would be “working closely with the newly elected leadership of Taiwan to deepen our economic, security, and people-to-people ties.”

Yui, who was born to a diplomat’s family, attended high school in Panama and received both his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Texas A&M University. He previously served as Taiwan’s ambassador to Paraguay and as its vice foreign minister.

Before he came to Washington, Yui briefly served as Taiwan’s representative to the European Union and Belgium. Yui succeeded Hsiao Bi-Khim, who left the post in November to be Lai’s running mate. Hsiao, who is credited with deepening Taiwan-U.S. ties when heading the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States between 2020 and 2023, will be the next vice president.

### How China’s public views Taiwan’s elections

18 January 2024, The Economist

Ordinary Chinese express no eagerness for war, but back threats of force

As china’s rulers tell it, the Communist Party must control Taiwan to make the whole country safe and strong. “Unification brings strength while division leads to chaos,” says the State Council, China’s cabinet. “This is a law of history.”

Actually, the party’s obsession with Taiwan is a political choice. After 1991 China signed a series of treaties fixing its borders with the Soviet Union and Russia, in effect ceding over a million square kilometres of Chinese territory grabbed by Russia in the 19th century. No law of history forbade that decision to forget past wrongs.

Taiwan is different because it represents a direct affront to the Communist Party. That dates back to 1949 when the island became the home-in-exile of the Nationalist regime defeated by Mao Zedong and the People’s Liberation Army (pla) in the Chinese civil war. If Xi Jinping could take Taiwan, he would be the final victor of a war that Mao could not end. In contrast, letting the island slip out of China’s grasp

would undermine the party’s legitimacy, or so Chinese scholars claim.

Political self-interest, then, explains decades of investments to build up the pla, with a focus on deterring America from coming to the island’s rescue. It explains, too, threats to use force should Taiwan declare formal independence. Those are political calculations. They make the world more dangerous than it needs to be.

Still, there is another self-serving choice by China’s leaders that arguably keeps the peace in the Taiwan Strait. That choice involves telling the Chinese public—despite much evidence to the contrary—that most Taiwanese long to be part of China, but are thwarted by separatists egged on by America, Japan and other hostile foreign powers. This is a gambit. Mr Xi enjoys more room for manoeuvre as long as lots of ordinary Chinese believe that Taiwan may one day embrace “peaceful reunification”.

The tactic can be seen at work since Taiwan’s presidential election on January 13th was won by the Communist Party’s least-favoured candidate, Lai Ching-te. Mr Lai’s win marks the third presidential term in a row for the Democratic Progressive Party (dpp), which emphasises Taiwan’s separate, democratic identity. Yet since that victory, mainland propaganda outlets have downplayed its significance and played up the dpp’s poor showing in parliamentary elections held the same day. Chen Binhua, a spokesman for China’s Taiwan Affairs Office, assured the Chinese public that the elections show that the dpp “does not represent mainstream public opinion” in Taiwan. Rather than stoke anger, party media dug up soothing past comments by Mr Xi about the need to woo “patriotic”, pro-unification forces on the island.

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It is unclear how angry China's public is even ready to be, after years of being told that most Taiwanese are their blood brothers. When researchers from the South China University of Technology and the National University of Singapore polled Chinese people in nine cities in 2019, they found almost 40% ready to rule out unifying Taiwan with the mainland by force under any circumstances.

A paper for the *Journal of Contemporary China*, published in 2022, records the survey organisers' surprise that support for keeping force on the table as an option was highest among the well-educated and those knowledgeable about Taiwan. Qi Dongtao, a lead author, suggests that well-informed Chinese may not be war hawks as such, but simply more aware than regular folk that Taiwan is not about to submit peacefully to Beijing.

To sample the post-election mood, Chaguan flew south to Xiamen. The Chinese port city enjoys close economic and cultural ties to Taiwan—and would be

on the front line in a war. Serving as a reminder is Hulishan Fortress, whose weathered cannons point at an outlying Taiwanese island, Jinmen, just 27km (17 miles) offshore. In the Mao era, the pla shelled Jinmen. The fort acted as a military radio base. Now a museum, it hosts tourists who tended to flee when asked questions about politics. Those who stuck around offered strikingly diverse views.

A middle-aged woman from Tianjin, strolling on the beach below the fort, expressed confidence that most Taiwanese support unification. She did not know the election results but had recently seen online reports about islanders travelling to an ice festival in the city of Harbin, in China's frozen north. “We should promote this kind of contact,” she enthused. That said, she supported threats of force as an option, venturing that “toughness” by China's leaders should balance “softness” towards Taiwan's people.

Talking of war and peace, in a fort

Up in the fort a retired man from Ningbo, a coastal city, stood taking pictures of Jinmen through the mist. The photographer disclosed that his own father served in China's navy and was killed in the Taiwan Strait in the late 1960s. His family's loss makes him long for peace, he said, adding that China needs to become more appealing, economically, politically and culturally, if Taiwan is to choose unification. Yet his patience co-exists with a belief that force cannot be ruled out. “If we promise to give up the threat of force altogether, and promise that in front of the world, then the island would just declare its independence, right?” he asked.

A university student from Shanghai saw Mr Lai's victory as a sign of trouble ahead, but called the election the will of Taiwan's voters. “Among my generation, I know few who want a war. Whereas some older people may hope that we can recover Taiwan by force one day,” he worried.

The student was not wrong. A former rural official from the province of Jiangsu was encountered briskly climbing the fort's stone steps with his granddaughter, though he turns 85 next month. Every place wants to be ruled by its own king, he declared, and Taiwan has been separate for too long. “We have to reunite with Taiwan by force.” Indeed, if the pla were not powerful, Britain would not have given Hong Kong back, the old man added with a glare. Having laid down that law of history, off he marched.

## 'China most likely to win war against US over Taiwan': Niall Ferguson

17 January 2024, Business Today



China would be more likely to win the war because its manufacturing capacity is now so much greater than the US, said Niall Ferguson

Historian and author Niall Ferguson on Tuesday predicted that China is most likely to win the war against the United States (US) over Taiwan – a self-governing island that Beijing considers as its own territory. He said his advice to policymakers in Washington would be to not go to war with China. Ferguson said China is spending a huge amount of money on defence and that its navy is already the biggest in the world.

"It's (China) building a navy that, in terms of numbers of boats, is already the biggest in the world. It is building a nuclear arsenal, which does not get nearly enough attention. But there is a huge threat to global stability. Right now, if there were a showdown between the US and China over Taiwan, I would not put money on the US winning that showdown," the historian said while speaking with India Today Group's Vice Chairperson & Executive Editor-in-Chief Kalli Purie and Business Today Executive Director Rahul Kanwal at WEF2024 in Davos.

Ferguson, a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, said China would be more likely to win the war because its manufacturing capacity is now so much greater than the US. "If you look at the war games that have been done, one of the striking features is - how quickly the US runs out of precision missiles, in a week. Now, if you're going to run out of precision missiles in a week, you're not in great shape to win a war like that," the historian said.

"China's manufacturing capacity is now so much greater than the US, probably two times greater. If it came to a hot war, China would have some real advantages," he said, adding that his strong advice to the American policymakers would be - "Don't do this. Let's not have a showdown over Taiwan. You're not in the kind of position you were in back in the 1990s, the last time there was a Taiwan Strait crisis." Tensions between the US and China escalated in August 2022 after former US Speaker Nancy Pelosi

visited Taiwan - the first high-profile visit to the territory in recent years that upset Beijing. China has, on multiple occasions, made its intent clear that is prepared to unify Taiwan by force, if required.

When asked whether Taiwan becoming a part of mainland China is inevitable at some point, the scholar said that he hopes not because Taiwan is a free society and a true democracy. "It shows that Chinese people can run a really exemplary democracy. But you have to ask yourself if its autonomy depends on an American military guarantee, how long can that last when the guarantee ceases to be credible?"

Ferguson said China's investment in its military is a serious cause for disquiet. But this, he added, cannot offset the fact that China's economy is slowing down and President Xi Jinping is facing serious issues in the real estate sector and rising youth unemployment. "The demographics are terrible. There's a scenario in which the population halves between now and the end of the century. It's hard for me to see that China's power is there for the long term. Youth unemployment is past 20%."

"These are serious problems for Xi Jinping that they may make him take strategic risks. Sometimes it is when things are going badly that authoritarian regimes do reckless things," the historian said.

Taiwan earlier this month elected its new president, Lai Ching-te – who calls the island "an independent sovereign state". Ferguson said that so far nothing bad has happened from China but it may happen in the future.

"It feels like we have probably avoided a crisis this year. But at some point in the next few years, I am afraid there is bound to be a Taiwan crisis. And when that happens, that will be the real test of the US-India relationship. Where will India be in that scenario? My guess is not picking up the phone kind of busy this weekend."

## FM spokesperson: China firmly opposes US passing of Taiwan-related act

17 January 2024, Xinhua

China strongly deplores and firmly opposes the United States passing the so-called Taiwan-related act, and has made serious representations to the U.S. side, a foreign ministry spokesperson said on Tuesday.

It is reported that the U.S. House of Representatives recently passed the Taiwan Non-Discrimination Act of 2023, requiring the Secretary of the Treasury to use America's influence in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to support Taiwan's membership in this organization.

In response to a related query, spokesperson Mao Ning told a daily news briefing that the United States

passed the so-called act to grossly interfere in China's internal affairs and attempt to manipulate the Taiwan question for political purposes to create "two Chinas" and "one China, one Taiwan." "We strongly deplore and firmly oppose this, and have made serious representations to the U.S. side."

"Taiwan does not have any ground, reason, or right to join the UN, or any other international organization whose membership is confined to sovereign states," Mao stressed.

Mao noted that on Oct. 25, 1971, the 26th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted, with an overwhelming majority, Resolution 2758, which "decides to restore all its rights to the People's Republic of China and to recognize the representatives of its Government as the only legitimate representatives of China to the United Nations", and to expel forthwith the representatives of the Taiwan authorities "from the place which they unlawfully occupy."

Once and for all, UNGA Resolution 2758 resolved, politically, legally and procedurally, the issue of the representation of the whole of China, including Taiwan, at the UN. It also made it clear that there can only be one seat representing China at the UN, and that is the People's Republic of China, Mao said. Over the past half century and more, Resolution 2758 has been observed by the UN, special agencies such as the IMF, and other international and regional organizations, Mao said, adding that any issues regarding the Taiwan region's participation in the activities of international organizations must be handled in accordance with the one-China principle.

The United States should fully understand the highly sensitive nature of the Taiwan question and immediately stop using the Taiwan question to interfere in China's internal affairs, sending wrong signals to the "Taiwan independence" forces and undermining China-U.S. relations and peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, Mao said.

### **China says threats of force over Taiwan not aimed at most Taiwanese**

17 January 2024, Reuters

BEIJING, Jan 17 (Reuters) - China's position that it will not renounce using force to bring Taiwan under its control is aimed at foreign interference and a tiny number of separatists, but Taiwanese need to be disabused of "biases" against China, the government said on Wednesday.

Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which won the presidential election on Saturday, rejects Beijing's sovereignty claims but has repeatedly offered talks that have been rebuffed.

China views president-elect Lai Ching-te as a dangerous separatist.

Chen Binhua, spokesperson for China's Taiwan Affairs Office, told a regular news briefing in Beijing that the result of Taiwan's election does not change the fact that the island is Chinese and will eventually be "reunified".

"Our not promising to renounce the use of force is absolutely not targeted at Taiwan compatriots. We are targeting interference from external forces and the tiny number of Taiwan independence separatists and their separatist activities," Chen said.

Over the past year-and-a-half China has twice staged large-scale war games around Taiwan and regularly sends fighter jets and warships into the Taiwan Strait. Mainstream public opinion in Taiwan wants peace not war, exchanges not distance, and to "take down" the DPP, he said, reiterating the office's comment on Saturday following Lai's victory with less than 50 pct of the vote and the loss of the DPP's parliamentary majority.

"If the DPP does not repent and goes further and further on the wicked path of seeking 'independence' provocations, it will only push Taiwan into a dangerous situation and bring serious harm to Taiwan," he said.

Chen said Taiwanese are "our flesh and blood", but some have been "poisoned" by ideas of independence and have a "biased understanding" of relations across the strait and national identity.

"We are willing to maintain sufficient patience and tolerance, continue to deepen the understanding of the mainland of the motherland by the majority of Taiwanese compatriots, and gradually reduce their misunderstandings and doubts," he added.

"We hope and believe that our compatriots in Taiwan can firmly stand on the right side of history and be upright Chinese people."

As if to underscore those differences in understanding, Chen told off a Taiwanese reporter for using "Beijing" to refer to China, saying the correct wording was "the mainland".

Opinion polls in Taiwan show an overwhelming number of people these days consider themselves Taiwanese not Chinese, and close to no support for China's "one country, two systems" model of autonomy to get the island to accept Beijing's rule.

However, Chen did not mention Lai, who takes office on May 20, by name, unlike before the election when the Taiwan Affairs Office repeatedly and directly called him a separatist and danger to peace. China says talks can only happen under the proviso Taiwan recognises both sides of the Taiwan Strait are part of "one China", which the DPP-led government has refused to do.

## **Lianhe Zaobao: China's Weibo Blocked "Taiwanese Election" Search Results on Election Day**

16 January 2024, ChinaScope

Singapore's primary Chinese language newspaper Lianhe Zaobao recently reported that Taiwan's presidential and legislative elections took place on January 13, and Mainland Chinese netizens were paying close attention to the election results. After voting began at 8 a.m. that day, the relevant term "Taiwan Election" was on the "hot search ranking list" on Weibo, one of the largest social media platforms in Mainland China. The number of views on the topic quickly reached 163.2 million. However, the popular topic was soon blocked on Weibo.

Before the "Taiwan Elections" topic was blocked, many Mainland Chinese netizens posted comments and discussion on this topic. Some netizens called for improving relations between Mainland China and Taiwan after the Taiwanese election, and some netizens expressed their hopes for the DPP's presidential candidate Lai Ching-te to win the election so that the Chinese military would "unify by force" sooner. (Taiwan's DDP party, which won the presidency in the election, is the party that's most opposed to cooperation with Beijing.)

Since Chinese official media, including Xinhua News Agency, CCTV News and People's Daily, had very little coverage of the Taiwan election that day, some netizens asked on Weibo: "Is today the voting day for Taiwan? Why is there no news coverage?" Many related topics were blocked on Weibo as well. The Spokesperson of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a press conference two days earlier that "the United States must not interfere in Taiwan's elections in any form" – this quote remained visible on Weibo.

## **China's Taiwan approach 'has been counterproductive,' Blinken says**

16 January 2024, CNBC

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Tuesday that China's growing aggression toward Taiwan has undermined the country's own interests.

"I think the approach that they've shown in recent years has actually been totally counterproductive to their interests," Blinken said at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland on CNBC's "Squawk on the Street."

Taiwan is an epicenter for the production of semiconductors, which China relies on, and the adjacent Taiwan Strait is a major commercial route

that has implications for economic stability in the region.

Blinken's comments come days after Taiwan voters elected the Democratic Progressive Party's Lai Ching-te to serve as the next president. Of the candidates, Lai was Beijing's least favorite as he would likely maintain the DPP's status quo when it comes to relations with mainland China and the U.S.

In the weeks leading up to the election, Taiwan officials reported several attempts by the Chinese government to sway the election via escalating military pressure and disinformation campaigns.

Despite China's distaste for Lai, the White House has been supportive, issuing several congratulatory statements for the president-elect. That has further angered Beijing.

"The US State Department's statement on the election in China's Taiwan region seriously violates the one-China principle and the three China-US joint communiqués, and goes against the US' own political commitment to maintaining only cultural, commercial, and other unofficial relations with the people of Taiwan," China's Foreign Ministry wrote in a statement Sunday.

"It also sends a gravely wrong signal to the 'Taiwan independence' separatist forces. We strongly deplore and firmly oppose this, and have made serious representations to the US side," the statement said.

At Davos, Blinken reiterated the official U.S. stance on Taiwan and China, which simultaneously supports Taiwan's democratic systems but does not support its independence.

The outcome of Taiwan's election would inevitably have ripple effects on the geopolitical climate and economic landscape. The U.S. has been preparing accordingly.

Days before Taiwan voters took to the polls, the White House said it was preparing various contingency plans for a possible "period of higher tension."

"I don't want to get into specifics on those, but of course, we have to be prepared and thinking through any eventuality ... ranging from no response to the higher end," a senior administration official said Wednesday.

China, which claims sovereignty over Taiwan, has made clear its intentions to reunify the island with the mainland, including during President Joe Biden's one-on-one meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping. China has not ruled out military force to execute that goal.

"What we're focused on is maintaining peace and stability and we've been very clear with China about that and we've been very clear with Taiwan about that," Blinken said.



## Taiwan election: China says US 'gravely wrong' to congratulate new leader

14 January 2024, BBC

China has accused the US of sending "a gravely wrong signal" to those pushing for Taiwan's independence after Saturday's election result.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken sent Taiwanese president-elect William Lai a message of congratulations following the result.

Beijing called the message a violation of Washington's commitment to maintain only unofficial ties with Taiwan.

Mr Lai has vowed to protect Taiwan from an increasingly aggressive China.

But Beijing sees Taiwan as its territory and fiercely challenges any government that says otherwise.

Messages of congratulations for Taiwan's new leader poured in from all over the world after the election, including from Mr Blinken - who emphasised the partnership between Taipei and Washington, which he said was rooted in democratic values.

"We look forward to working with Dr Lai and Taiwan's leaders of all parties to advance our shared interests and values," he said in a statement.

Mr Blinken also stressed that the US, one of Taiwan's biggest allies, is "committed to maintaining cross-strait peace and stability".

The top US diplomat was also quick to say that such collaboration should "further our longstanding unofficial relationship" and be "consistent with the US One China policy".

Under the policy, the US recognises and has formal ties with China rather than the island of Taiwan, which China sees as a breakaway province to be unified with the mainland one day.

Mr Blinken's remarks drew sharp criticism from Beijing, which views any statement of support for Taiwan as lending legitimacy to a candidate and political party it sees as a gang of separatists hoping to turn Taiwan into an independent sovereign nation. In a statement, China's foreign ministry said Mr Blinken's congratulations violated the US's promise to maintain "only cultural, commercial, and other unofficial relations" with Taiwan.

It stressed that the Taiwan question is "the first red line that must not be crossed in China-US relations" and said it had lodged a formal diplomatic complaint.

"China firmly opposes the US having any form of official interaction with Taiwan and interfering in Taiwan affairs in any way or under any pretext."

Beijing's statement will likely serve as a warning to Washington after it sent an unofficial delegation of former US officials to hold talks with leading political figures in Taiwan just hours after the self-ruled island elected Mr Lai.

Deployed by US President Joe Biden, who himself welcomed the election results, the delegation includes a former US national security adviser and a former deputy secretary of state.

Other Western countries, including the UK, France and Germany, congratulated the new leader.

Beijing's Communist government reviles Mr Lai's pro-sovereignty Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which has governed Taiwan for eight years.

That is because China sees any statement of support towards the DPP as lending legitimacy to politicians, which Beijing sees as a gang of separatists hoping to turn Taiwan into an independent sovereign nation.

## New Taiwan Government Faces Challenges in Policy, China Pressures

14 January 2024, VOA

MIAOLI, TAIWAN — Taiwanese voters handed Taiwan's pro-sovereignty ruling Democratic Progressive Party, or DPP, a historic victory in the island's presidential election over the weekend, despite pressure from China.

While several democratic countries around the world congratulated DPP's President-elect Lai Ching-te for his victory Saturday, Beijing claimed the election outcome doesn't reflect the mainstream public opinion in Taiwan and emphasized that Taiwan remains China's internal affair.

The United States, European Union, United Kingdom and Canada all congratulated the DPP for the win, with a U.S. State Department spokesperson praising Taiwan's people for "demonstrating the strength" of the island's robust democratic system.

In response, China's foreign ministry characterized Washington's message as a violation of the One China principle and said the basic fact that Taiwan is part of China will never change.

China considers Taiwan a wayward province and has never ruled out using force to take full control.

"The Taiwan question is at the very core of China's core interests and the first red line that must not be crossed in China-U.S. relations," said an unnamed Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson in a statement, urging Washington not to use the "Taiwan question" to contain China.

Hitting back at Beijing's claim over Taiwan, the island's foreign ministry said China's comments are inconsistent with the international perception and "contrary to the expectation of the global democratic community" as well as "the will of the Taiwanese people."

"This kind of rhetoric is not worth refuting," the ministry said in a statement.

With the DPP winning a third consecutive presidential term, some analysts say Taiwan is likely to continue

to deepen ties with the U.S. and other like-minded democracies while Beijing may further increase pressure on Taipei.

"The messages from Washington show that Taiwan is an important ally to the U.S., and I think both sides will further deepen ties in the next four years," Chen Fang-yu, a political scientist at Soochow University in Taiwan, told VOA by phone.

Taiwan's Foreign Ministry announced Sunday that a U.S. delegation including former U.S. national security adviser Stephen Hadley and former Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg, arrived in Taipei on Sunday for a three-day visit. The delegation is expected to meet Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen, government officials and other political figures during the visit.

While U.S.-Taiwan ties will remain robust, some experts think Beijing will maintain the same amount of pressure on Taiwan, especially at a time when the island is expected to be governed under a divided government over the next four years. Following Saturday's election, no political party secured a majority in the legislature, which some analysts say may weaken the DPP's hold on power for the next four years.

"Beijing will less likely extend the olive branch toward the next DPP government," Wen-Ti Sung, a political scientist at the Australian National University, told VOA by phone.

In his view, since the DPP no longer has a majority in the legislature, the Chinese government may think the next Taiwanese government's hold on power is "delicate enough" that they can maintain a high level of pressure on Taipei. "This means the continued cross-strait tension seems to be in the offing," Sung added.

Ahead of Saturday's election, the Chinese government had repeatedly characterized the election as a choice between "war and peace" and criticized Taiwan's new president-elect as a "troublemaker" who spreads "Taiwan independence" remarks.

To maintain a high level of pressure on Taiwan, Beijing in recent weeks unleashed a series of measures to influence Taiwan's election, conducting military maneuvers in areas near the island and imposing targeted sanctions on certain Taiwanese products.

Some analysts think Beijing will continue to exert pressure on Taiwan but the effect of some of their measures, such as military maneuvers and economic coercion, may be limited. "Regarding the gray zone operations, I think Taiwan's population has more or less normalized it," Ian Chong, a political scientist at the National University of Singapore, told VOA by phone.

When it comes to coercive economic measures, Chong thinks China is only targeting commodities that won't harm its economic interests. "If Beijing really wanted to put pain on Taiwan, they would stop electronic imports and semiconductor imports," he said. "But they are not going to do that since it would hurt their economy."

Despite the limited effect of China's military and economic measures, Chong thinks Beijing is likely going to start forcing Taiwanese politicians, especially those with business interests in China, to toe the line mandated by the Chinese government.

"I'm sure Beijing will try to find new ways to put pressure on Taiwan, and they will try to pressure the Lai administration in the next year to see where they can force him into making mistakes," he said.

Since all three political parties failed to secure a majority in the legislature, Chen at Soochow University said the DPP will likely face obstacles when it comes to policy implementation. "Many important policies and personnel appointments may be blocked by opposition parties in the new legislature," Chen told VOA.

Apart from focusing on negotiating with opposition parties, Chen thinks the incoming administration led by Lai also needs to reestablish a connection with civil society, especially at a time when public opinion isn't supportive of the DPP.

"The DPP needs to create dialogue with civil society and try to use public opinion as a foundation to implement policies," he said.

Among different policy platforms, Chen thinks the two opposition parties, the China-friendly Kuomintang and the Taiwan People's Party, may try to make it tougher for the DPP to push through key policies related to Taiwan's bilateral relations, such as the U.S.-Taiwan Initiative on 21st Century Trade and U.S. arms sales to Taiwan.

"The split government situation will test the Lai administration's wisdom, such as how to negotiate with opposition parties and how to work with civil society groups," he said. "It's important for them to learn how to properly explain policy implementation to the public."

The incoming president takes office in May and will succeed Tsai Ing-wen, who has been in office since 2016.

### **Taiwan expects China to apply pressure on incoming government**

12 January 2024, Reuters

TAIPEI, Jan 12 (Reuters) - Taiwan's government believes China is likely to attempt to put pressure on its incoming president after the island goes to the polls on Saturday, including staging military

manoeuvres near the island this spring, two senior government officials said.

No matter which candidate wins the election, Beijing's military and economic pressure on Taiwan's next leader is likely to increase, said the Taiwanese officials who briefed reporters on condition they not be named.

Taiwan goes to the polls to elect a new president and parliament under the shadow of an increasingly assertive China which has called the vote a choice between "peace and war".

China and Taiwan's largest opposition party, the Kuomintang (KMT), warned on Thursday of the danger Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) presidential candidate Lai Ching-te could pose to peace if he wins election. Lai has pledged to pursue peace and engage with China if elected.

Beijing is likely to apply "great pressure" in a bid to influence the new president's inaugural address on May 20, which is expected to set the tone for the new administration's China policy, said one official, who has knowledge of Taiwan's security planning.

China's top Taiwan policy agency, the Taiwan Affairs Office, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

#### MILITARY PRESSURE

China claims democratically-governed Taiwan as its own territory, against the strident objections of the government in Taipei, and has never renounced the use of force to bring it under China's control.

While large-scale military drills near Taiwan are unlikely immediately after the vote, Beijing is likely to stage manoeuvres near the island after March due to more favourable weather and sea conditions, the official said, citing Taiwan's security assessment.

The potential for further tensions over Taiwan, especially after China staged two rounds of major war games near the island in April of last year and August of 2022, is being closely watched in the region and by Washington and its allies.

Two Western security officials, speaking on condition of anonymity as they were not authorised to speak to the media, said China was likely to respond militarily at some point post election, though they did not believe it would be on the scale of the last two war games.

The Taiwan official said Beijing could also opt to limit any show of military force in the coming months because of considerations including improving U.S.-Chinese relations.

U.S.-China relationship tumbled to historic lows last year, but since President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping met in November and agreed to re-establish military-to-military ties, senior Chinese and US officials have staged meetings.

In the case that the party which wins the presidency fails to gain a parliamentary majority, China is likely

to label the new administration a "minority government," the Taiwanese official said.

In what Taiwan views as a bid to weaken a new administration, China is also likely to invite pro-Beijing Taiwanese politicians to visit China and to continue what Taipei perceives as disinformation campaigns against the Taiwan government, the official said.

"They are likely to try to frustrate the confidence building of the new government," the official said.

China has not publicly named a preferred candidate, but has urged Taiwan voters to make "the right choice" after calling a vote for the DPP dangerous and threatening cross-Straits peace. The KMT traditionally favours close ties with China although it denies being pro-Beijing.

"We are not afraid" of China, said tech worker Charlie Lee, 61. "We already have a very strong democratic identity and will fight to the end."

Taiwan's defence ministry said on Friday it had detected five Chinese balloons flying over the Taiwan Strait over the past 24 hours, one of which crossed the island, the latest in a spate of such balloons the ministry says it has spotted over the past month.

Taiwan has described a range of actions by China, including the balloon flights, reports by China's state-media and threats of further trade sanctions as a form of psychological warfare on the island's people ahead of the vote.

"China's voting interference in Taiwan is a textbook example," the first Taiwanese official said. "Other countries must come and learn quickly."

China says election interference allegations are the DPP "dirty tricks" to win votes.

### China looms large in Taiwan's presidential election

09 January 2024, Axios

Saturday's presidential election in Taiwan will be one of this year's most watched contests, as voters head to the polls to choose a new leader who will chart the future of the island's relations with China — a decision that will be felt far beyond the Indo-Pacific.

Why it matters: Taiwan is a potential U.S.-China flashpoint. Chinese leader Xi Jinping has repeatedly emphasized that China has the right to take Taiwan, by force if Beijing deems necessary.

- The U.S. has strong unofficial ties to Taiwan and President Biden has repeatedly said the U.S. would defend Taiwan if China attacked — though official U.S. policy regarding the defense of Taiwan is known as "strategic ambiguity," meaning the U.S. won't publicly state its actual intention.

The big picture: The election comes at a crucial time as the Chinese government ratchets up pressure on

the self-governing democracy by deploying military, diplomatic and economic coercion in its attempts to convince the island's residents that unification with China is the only possible future.

- A top Chinese government official last week urged Taiwanese people to "stand on the right side of history" and make the "correct choice."
- The Chinese military has increased its incursions into the air and waters near Taiwan over the past month, and has sent high-altitude balloons over the island.
- Taiwan is a key U.S. partner in the region and is home to semiconductor manufacturer TSMC, the only facility in the world that makes certain critical components for smart phones, cars, and satellites.

The key players: This year's election features not just candidates from the two major parties but also a third candidate who seeks to disrupt the two-party system.

- The ruling Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) William Lai is vice president to the current DPP president Tsai Ing-wen, who has advocated forcefully for Taiwan – attracting Beijing's ire. Lai, like Tsai, believes Taiwan should be an independent actor on the world stage and has described himself as a "pragmatic worker for Taiwanese independence." The Chinese foreign ministry has called him a "separatist through and through."
- The Kuomintang's (KMT) Hou You-yi is the popular mayor of New Taipei City and former police chief. He opposes Taiwan independence in favor of the status quo.
- The Taiwan People's Party's (TPP) Ko Wen-je, a former Taipei mayor, founded the TPP in 2019 and seeks to appeal to voters who are tired of the two major parties and want something new. His views on China fall somewhere between the DPP and KMT; he has called for both "deterrence and communication" with China.

Of note: The vice presidential picks for two of the three candidates highlight Taiwan's close relationship and people-to-people ties with the U.S. Lai's running mate, Taiwan's former representative to the U.S. Bih-khim Hsiao, spent parts of her childhood in the U.S. and Japan.

- Ko's running mate, business executive and politician Cynthia Wu, was born in the U.S.

Details: Campaign rhetoric this year has been acrimonious. KMT supporters resent eight continuous years of DPP rule, and Hou has accused the DPP of acting like a "dictatorship."

- Lai, meanwhile, has called the KMT's position on cross-strait relations "deadly" and accused the party's leaders of trying to "befriend the communists."
- Meanwhile, election-related misinformation has proliferated online, and disinformation experts say Beijing-linked actors have promoted stories that cast doubt on the efficacy and legitimacy of Taiwan's democracy and on the reliability of the U.S. as a partner.

What to watch: The DPP's Lai is the frontrunner for the presidential election, but the KMT and TPP are likely to prevail in legislative elections, denying the DPP control of Taiwan's legislature and creating a split government that would make it more difficult for Lai to accomplish his agenda.

- Beijing prefers a KMT-ruled Taiwan and could respond to a potential third DPP term by further increasing pressure on the island – potentially disrupting regional and global trade and transportation.

### **Beijing Postpones China-Japan-South Korea Summit so it can Focus on Taiwan's Presidential Election**

05 January 2024, ChinaScope

According to diplomatic sources cited by South Korean newspaper Chosun Ilbo, China has proposed postponing the upcoming China-Japan-South Korea Summit (previously scheduled for March 2024) as Beijing wants to prioritize monitoring Taiwan's upcoming Presidential election (scheduled for January 13, 2024) and then focus on Taiwan-related issues during the following several months.

The last China-Japan-South Korea trilateral summit was held in Chengdu, China in 2019. Subsequent summits were canceled due to COVID. The three countries had planned to resume their trilateral summits in South Korea in 2023, but later decided to postpone until March 2024.

The meeting was expected to be attended by South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, and Chinese Premier Li Qiang.

### **China calls on Taiwan's people to promote 'peaceful reunification'**

02 January 2024, Reuters

TAIPEI, Jan 2 (Reuters) - The head of China's Taiwan Affairs Office on Tuesday called on Taiwan's people to promote the process of "peaceful reunification", saying it was the common desire of people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

Song Tao's message, which comes less than two weeks before Taiwan holds presidential and parliamentary elections on Jan. 13, follows President Xi Jinping's remarks in his New Year Eve's address that China's "reunification" with Taiwan was inevitable.

"The motherland will eventually be reunified, and it will inevitably be reunified," Song said in his New Year's message on his office's website.

This is the common desire and common mission of people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, Song added.

Taiwan's people should "promote cross-strait relations to return to the right track of peaceful development, and promote the process of peaceful reunification of the motherland", he said.

Taiwan's government rejects China's sovereignty claims. Both the ruling Democratic Progressive Party and largest opposition party, the Kuomintang, say only Taiwan's people can decide their future.

China has offered Taiwan a "one country, two systems" model of autonomy, but no mainstream Taiwanese party supports that idea.

Song reiterated China's support for "one country, two systems" and opposition to Taiwan's formal independence or "interference by external forces".

His message made no mention of the election, which the Taiwan Affairs Office has cast as a choice between war and peace.

China has continued military pressure around the island, ended some tariff cuts for Taiwan and threatened further economic measures as the vote has neared.



# TIBET DIGEST 2024

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## China sanctions 7 companies over US military assistance to Taiwan

27 December 2024, AP News

The Chinese government placed sanctions on seven companies on Friday in response to recent U.S. announcements of military sales and aid to Taiwan, the self-governing island that China claims as part of its territory.

The sanctions also come in response to the recent approval of the U.S. government's annual defense spending bill, which a Chinese Foreign Ministry statement said "includes multiple negative sections on China."

China objects to American military assistance for Taiwan and often imposes sanctions on related companies after a sale or aid package is announced. The sanctions generally have a limited impact, because American defense companies don't sell arms or other military goods to China. The U.S. is the main supplier of weapons to Taiwan for its defense.

The seven companies being sanctioned are Insitu Inc., Hudson Technologies Co., Saronic Technologies, Inc., Raytheon Canada, Raytheon Australia, Aerkomm Inc. and Oceaneering International Inc., the Foreign Ministry statement said. It said that "relevant senior executives" of the companies are also sanctioned, without naming any.

Any assets they have in China will be frozen, and organizations and individuals in China are prohibited from engaging in any activity with them, it said.

U.S. President Joe Biden last week authorized up to \$571 million in Defense Department material and services and military education and training for Taiwan. Separately, the Defense Department announced that \$295 million in military sales had been approved.

The U.S. defense bill boosts military spending to \$895 billion and directs resources toward a more confrontational approach to China. It establishes a fund that could be used to send military resources to Taiwan in much the same way that the U.S. has backed Ukraine. It also expands a ban on U.S. military purchases of Chinese products ranging from drone technology to garlic for military commissaries. Zhang Xiaogang, a Chinese Defense Ministry spokesperson, said earlier this week that the U.S. is hyping up the "so-called" threat from China to justify increased military spending.

"U.S. military spending has topped the world and keeps increasing every year," he said at a press conference. "This fully exposes the belligerent nature of the U.S. and its obsession with hegemony and expansion."

## CHINA-US

The Foreign Ministry statement said the U.S. moves violate agreements between the two countries on Taiwan, interfere in China's domestic affairs and undermine the nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Taiwan's government said earlier this month that China had sent dozens of ships into nearby seas to practice a blockade of the island, a move that Taiwan said undermined peace and stability and disrupted international shipping and trade. China has not confirmed or commented on the reported military activity.

### **China Reacts After Biden Signs Record US National Defense Bill**

24 December 2024, NewsWeek, Micah McCartney

#### **What's New**

Beijing has issued a sharp rebuke after U.S. President Joe Biden on Monday signed the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2025, citing its "negative content on China."

Newsweek reached out to the U.S. Defense Ministry with a request for comment by email.

#### **Why It Matters**

Of the record \$895 billion the bill authorizes in spending—a 1 percent increase over last year and the largest defense budget in U.S. history—\$15.5 billion is allocated to the U.S. Pacific Deterrence Initiative, established in 2021 to strengthen Indo-Pacific defense capabilities to counter China's growing military influence.

Additionally, the act authorizes up to \$300 million in military articles and training for Taiwan, the self-governed island democracy that Beijing's Chinese Communist Party claims as its territory and has vowed to someday unify with.

#### **What To Know**

"The U.S. determined to sign into law the 'National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025,' containing negative content on China, playing up the 'China threat' narrative year after year," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said during Tuesday's regular press briefing.

She accused Washington of "trumpeting for military support to Taiwan," undermining China's sovereignty and development, and limiting exchanges between the two nations. Mao also urged the U.S. to abandon its "Cold War mentality," cease arms sales to Taiwan and stop "weaponizing sci-tech, economic and trade issues."

"The U.S. should also stop finding pretexts for increasing military expenditure and maintaining hegemony," Mao added, warning of "strong and resolute measures" if these actions persist.

The U.S. does not maintain formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan but remains its primary arms supplier.

Last week, Taiwan received the first batch of 38 Abrams tanks from an order of 108 approved by Congress in 2019.

The delivery is part of Taiwan's efforts to bolster its defenses amid increasing Chinese military deployments and exercises aimed at intimidating the Beijing-skeptic government of President Lai Ching-te.

#### **What People Are Saying**

Li Haidong, international relations professor, China Foreign Affairs University told the Global Times: "the U.S. National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025 will bring a negative impact and uncertainties to China-U.S. relations next year, because it is an act aimed at meeting the demands of hawkish and anti-China forces to hype the 'China threat' rhetoric worldwide and provide pretexts for the U.S. military industrial complex to earn more money."

Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs posted on X, formerly Twitter: "We welcome U.S. government approval of arms sales totaling \$295 million to Taiwan, reaffirming its commitment to our defense in line with the Taiwan Relations Act and #SixAssurances. We continue to strengthen our self-defense & bilateral security ties to secure #IndoPacific peace."

#### **What Happens Next**

Given the broad bipartisan support for Taiwan in Congress, defense support for the island, including arms sales, is likely to continue.

Some U.S. officials, including CIA Director Bill Burns and former U.S. Indo-Pacific Command chief John Aquilino, believe Chinese President Xi Jinping has ordered his military to be capable of an offensive against the island by 2027, but this does not mean he plans to give such an order.

### **US government starts another investigation targeting these Chinese technology companies**

24 December 2024, Times of India

The Biden administration opened a trade investigation into China's production of older-style semiconductors, setting the stage for potential tariffs or other trade restrictions when President-elect Donald Trump takes office in January.

The probe, conducted under Section 301 of the Trade Act, targets "legacy chips" that power everyday devices from cars and household appliances to telecommunications equipment and military systems. U.S. officials warn that China's aggressive expansion in semiconductor production, backed by government subsidies, threatens to dominate global supply chains.

"China's policies are enabling its companies to rapidly expand and offer artificially lower-priced chips that threaten to significantly harm their market-

oriented competition," said U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo revealed that two-thirds of U.S. products contain Chinese-made chips, with half of companies unaware of their chips' origin.

The investigation will examine China's practices in producing silicon carbide substrates and other semiconductor components, with officials expressing concern that Chinese suppliers often price chips 30-50% below U.S. competitors. The Commerce Department projects China could control more than 40% of global capacity in foundational chips by 2032. China's Commerce Ministry strongly opposed the investigation, calling it "protectionist" and warning it would "take all necessary measures" to defend its interests. The ministry argued that U.S. companies dominate the global chip market and receive substantial government subsidies.

The probe, which includes public hearings scheduled for March, will be handed to the incoming Trump administration for completion. The investigation could provide Trump a ready pathway to implement his proposed 60% tariffs on Chinese imports, though some industry groups urged caution about potential supply chain disruptions.

### **US nuclear expansion unlikely to deter China, finds CSIS-MIT study**

22 December 2024, Business Standard

Three scenarios culminated in mutual annihilation, with both the US and China engaging in a nuclear exchange that decimated cities and resulted in millions of casualties

A recent unclassified war game conducted by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) has revealed that increasing US nuclear capabilities would not deter China from employing atomic weapons in a conflict over Taiwan, Taipei Times reported.

The findings, published in a report on Friday, challenge current calls among policy experts to expand and modernise the US nuclear arsenal in response to China's growing military strength.

The table top exercise, described as the first large-scale unclassified simulation of a potential nuclear war over Taiwan, explored scenarios where nuclear weapons might be used. According to the report, the US's nuclear capabilities, beyond ongoing modernisation efforts, had minimal impact on Beijing's willingness to deploy nuclear arms. Instead, the exercise highlighted the conditions under which either side might face pressure to resort to nuclear strikes, rather than the likelihood of such weapons being used.

The CSIS study pointed to a recurring pattern where Chinese forces faced the greatest pressure to use nuclear weapons when defeat appeared imminent. "Building on US concerns, this suggests that China could be moving away from its no-first-use policy during critical conflicts," the report noted.

Researchers concluded that while favourable outcomes were possible in some scenarios, "complete victory was unachievable" when nuclear weapons were involved, reported Taipei Times.

In contrast to last year's CSIS-MIT simulation, where nuclear arms were excluded and the US secured a decisive victory, the latest war game revealed more complex and devastating results.

Over 15 iterations of the exercise, Chinese forces retreated from Taiwan five times, with four of these scenarios occurring without nuclear weapons being used.

"The US team was the first to use nuclear weapons in only one iteration of the war games. In another iteration, Taiwan returned to the 'status quo' after the US hit PLA forces in Taiwan with nuclear weapons following a Chinese nuclear strike on Taiwanese forces," Taipei Times reported.

Three scenarios culminated in mutual annihilation, with both the US and China engaging in a nuclear exchange that decimated cities and resulted in millions of casualties. In five iterations, China managed to gain a foothold in Taiwan following the use of nuclear weapons, and one exercise concluded without a decisive outcome, Taipei Times reported.

The study urged Washington to consider diplomatic strategies to prevent nuclear escalation in a Taiwan conflict. Drawing parallels to the Cuban missile crisis, CSIS senior adviser Mark Cancian, who co-authored the report, said, "The US withdrew nuclear missiles from Turkey during the Cuban missile crisis to allow Soviet Russia an off-ramp at relatively little cost."

He emphasised the need for pre-emptive discussions with allies to identify potential concessions for China. "Our concern is that time will not be available when nuclear weapons are used," Cancian added.

Eric Heginbotham, a co-author and MIT researcher, noted that the simulation did not align with recommendations to expand the US tactical nuclear arsenal or develop new delivery systems. "The one US team that employed tactical nuclear weapons used fewer than 12 weapons, in comparison with the more than 600 weapons the US currently has," Heginbotham said.

He also emphasised that participants did not identify a need for delivery capabilities beyond those the US already possesses, while the teams representing China did not perceive any constraints in the US's ability to deploy nuclear weapons.

## China says US 'playing with fire' by giving Taiwan more military aid

22 December 2024, Aljazeera

Beijing calls on the US to stop 'dangerous moves' that 'undermine peace and stability' in the Taiwan Strait.



US President Joe Biden speaks after touring the building site for a new computer chip plant for Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, in Phoenix [File: Patrick Semansky/AP]

China has warned the United States of "playing with fire" after Washington announced more military aid and sales to Taiwan.

A statement from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Sunday urged the US to stop its "dangerous moves that undermine peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait".

China, which has ramped up political and military pressure on Taiwan in recent years, has repeatedly called for the US to cease sending arms and assistance to Taiwan, which Beijing claims as part of its territory.

The US does not officially recognise Taiwan diplomatically, but it is the self-ruled island's strategic ally and largest supplier of weapons.

On Friday, the White House said the outgoing Biden administration had authorised up to \$571.3m in defence assistance to Taiwan. While the White House statement did not provide details of the package, it came less than three months after a \$567m aid was announced.

"This move gravely infringes on China's sovereignty and security interests," the Chinese Foreign Ministry said, adding it "firmly opposes this action". China "has lodged stern representations with the US at the earliest opportunity", it added.

China's Taiwan Affairs Office said such actions by the US "contradict its leaders' serious commitments" to not supporting "Taiwan's independence".

"We demand that the US immediately cease arming Taiwan and handle the Taiwan issue with the utmost caution," said the Chinese office's spokeswoman Zhu Fenglian, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

In October, the US approved \$2bn in arms sales to Taiwan, including the first-time delivery of an advanced surface-to-air missile defence system, drawing China's criticism and war drills by its army around Taiwan.

Taiwan earlier this month demanded that China end its ongoing military activity in nearby waters, which it said undermined peace and stability and disrupted international shipping and trade.

US President-elect Donald Trump has said he would not commit to defending Taiwan if China were to invade during his presidency. Trump has also said Taiwan should pay the US for defending it against China, likening the relationship to insurance.

## Guilty plea exposes Chinese 'secret police station' in New York

21 December 2024, Tibetan Review

In a damning indictment of China's transnational repression of its critics and others, a Chinese resident in New York who operated a "secret police station" in the Chinatown district of Manhattan to aid Beijing's targeting of dissidents has pleaded guilty on Dec 18 to conspiring to act as an unregistered foreign agent, reported Reuters Dec 19.

Chen Jinping, 61, has entered the plea at a hearing in Brooklyn Federal Court before US District Judge Nina Morrison. He is said to face up to five years in prison when sentenced on May 30, 2025.

Chen has also admitted in court to removing an online article about the alleged police station on behalf of China's government in Sep 2022. He has said he was not registered with the Justice Department as a foreign agent at the time, as US law requires of people acting for other countries.

Chen and a New York-based co-defendant, Lu Jianwang, were initially arrested on Apr 17, 2023. Lu has pleaded not guilty to the same charge, as well as to obstruction of justice.

The report noted that the arrests followed a 2022 investigation published by Spain-based advocacy group Safeguard Defenders that reported China had set up overseas "service stations," including in New York, that illegally worked with Chinese police to pressure fugitives to return to China.

China continues to deny having set up any such facility in other countries. "There are no so-called secret police stations," Lin Jian, spokesperson at the Chinese foreign ministry, has said Dec 19, when asked about the Manhattan case at a regular news conference.

"(China) has always strictly abided by international law and respected the judicial sovereignty of all countries," Lin has claimed, adding he had no knowledge of the specifics of the case.



China maintains that there are centres outside China run by local volunteers, not Chinese police officers, that aim to help Chinese citizens renew documents such as driving license and offer other services. It has accused Washington of fabricating the charges to smear China's image.

While the facility may indeed be helping to provide such service, prosecutors have also said that in 2022, Lu was asked by Beijing to locate an individual living in California who was considered a pro-democracy activist.

Before that, in 2018, Lu had sought to persuade an individual considered a fugitive by China to return home, prosecutors have said.

### **China refutes U.S. irresponsible report on military, security developments**

20 December 2024, Beijing Review

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson on December 19 urged the United States to view China's strategic intention and defense development in an objective and rational way, in response to an irresponsible U.S. report on China's military and security developments.

"This report, like the ones we've seen before, lays little emphasis on truth. It is filled with bias and designed to amplify the 'China threat' narrative only to justify the U.S. desire to maintain military supremacy," spokesperson Lin Jian told a daily press briefing.

Lin said China is fully committed to being a force for peace, stability and progress in the world, and is equally determined to defend its sovereignty, security and territorial integrity.

"We call on the United States to abandon the Cold War mentality and hegemonic way of thinking, view China's strategic intention and defense development in an objective and rational way, stop issuing this kind of irresponsible report year after year, and make sure what it does is conducive to a stable relationship between the two countries and the two militaries," Lin said.

### **Trump meets TikTok CEO after saying China, US can 'solve all world's problems' together**

17 December 2024, SCMP, Khusboo Razdan

President-elect said the two countries can work together when pressed about his invitation to the Chinese leader to attend inauguration

US president-elect Donald Trump said on Monday that Beijing and Washington could work together "to solve all of the problems of the world", a sweeping statement issued a little more than a month before he returns to office.

Hours after making the remarks in a press conference at Mar-a-Lago, Trump met TikTok CEO Chew Shou Zi at the Florida resort, according to US media reports.

The meeting coincided with the company's emergency appeal to the US Supreme Court for a temporary halt on the ban, which would take effect if it fails to secure a non-Chinese buyer on January 19, a day before Trump officially takes the White House.

Earlier in the day, Trump signalled during a news conference that he was willing to block the ban on TikTok, which has more than 170 million domestic monthly users on its platform in the US.

"We'll take a look at TikTok. You know, I have a warm spot in my heart for TikTok. TikTok had an impact, so we're taking a look at it," he said, hailing the platform for boosting his connection with young American voters during the campaign.



Both Trump and the social media platform kept the meeting low-key, with neither side confirming the meeting, nor issuing any statement on what was discussed. Media reports from the US said it was not clear what the two men talked about.

Experts have said that Trump has limited options when it comes to saving TikTok from the ban. The meeting followed Trump's hopeful remarks about Chinese President Xi Jinping's response to his invitation to attend the January 20 presidential inauguration. During his press conference at Mar-a-Lago ahead of the TikTok meeting, Trump said Xi "hasn't said one way or the other" about whether he will attend.

The issue was "something we barely discussed", Trump said, adding that he has had "some very good conversations" with the Chinese leader through letters.

"You know, because China and the United States can, together solve all of the problems of the world, if you think about it. So it's very important. And you know, he was a friend of mine," Trump added.

Reflecting on the meeting the two men had at Mar-a-Lago in 2017, Trump said: "He was here for a long time, right in that spot, except sitting in a very comfortable chair. He wasn't standing like you are.

But we spent hours and hours talking, and he's an amazing guy."

Trump's latest Beijing-friendly comments inject more mystery into the approach he will take when he is back in the White House next month, as they send different signals compared with the incoming president's cabinet picks like Florida Senator Marco Rubio – one of Congress' harshest critics of the Chinese government – for secretary of state.

According to Jake Werner, acting East Asia director of the Quincy Institute, a think tank in Washington, Trump's latest comments "signal a real openness to doing some sort of deal" with Xi.

"While many of Trump's national security appointments seemed to promise an immediate, sharp deterioration in US-China relations, Trump's comments, and his decision to extend Xi an invitation to his inauguration, indicates that we have a genuine opportunity to build the relationship on a new foundation," Werner added.

On Sunday, Florida lawmaker Mike Waltz, who will be Trump's national security adviser in the White House, in an interview with CBS downplayed the invitation to Xi, saying the ongoing conversations between Trump and other world leaders were "really nothing beyond congratulatory and niceties".

No Chinese head of state has ever attended a presidential inauguration in the US. Such a move would be a departure from a decades-long tradition whereby the White House includes foreign dignitaries and diplomats at the ceremony, but not world leaders.

Some analysts have expressed doubt that Xi would attend the inauguration, pointing out that the diplomatic groundwork for such a visit would likely require more than the five weeks remaining before the president-elect is sworn in.

Denis Simon of the Institute for China-America Studies, another Washington-based think tank, said it has "more or less been determined that Xi is not coming, and the only question will be, 'Who would come?'"

Describing Trump as a "deal maker", Simon reckoned that by inviting Xi, the US president-elect wants to be "seen as some kind of grand statesman" with a knack for personal diplomacy, and added that Beijing might be inclined to send a high-level delegation.

"I really do think Trump wants a Nobel Peace Prize win. I think that's his aim here. So I think that this grand statesman status, if he can work with Xi, and then Xi can work with Putin and all of a sudden we can find peace in several areas, I think that would be Trump's dream," he said.

Earlier this month, Trump had suggested that China could play a key role in brokering peace between Russia and Ukraine.

"Too many lives are being so needlessly wasted, too many families destroyed, and if it keeps going, it can turn into something much bigger, and far worse. I know Vladimir well. This is his time to act. China can help. The World is waiting," Trump said in a social media post on December 9.

In an interview aired later that day Trump told NBC that he "got along very well" with Xi and that the two leaders had "communication as recently as this week".

At the time, the Chinese embassy in Washington declined to comment on any recent communication between Xi and Trump, saying only that Beijing "welcomes and supports all effort conducive to the peaceful settlement of the crisis".

Werner of the Quincy Institute noted that "China would not be willing to do a one-sided deal".

"Trump would need to begin by offering a stable trade environment and clarity on what realms of exchange are off-limits and enter negotiations on China's core complaints around security and space for economic development," he added.

"Trump would need to begin by offering a stable trade environment and clarity on what realms of exchange are off-limits and enter negotiations on China's core complaints around security and space for economic development," he added.

### **FBI warns some lawmakers that China aims to create fake stories about them to erode support for Taiwan**

17 December 2024, NBC News, Scott Wong and Ken Dilanian

The FBI has held classified briefings warning a handful of U.S. lawmakers that the Chinese Communist Party is working to create fake stories to portray them in a negative light because of their hawkish views of Beijing and support for Taiwan, two U.S. officials familiar with the briefings told NBC News.

The U.S. officials, who asked not to be identified due to the sensitive nature of the briefings, said that one of the false stories being concocted by the CCP, cited by FBI briefers, is that these lawmakers are espousing pro-Taiwan views because they were taking "bribes" from Taiwan.

"The CCP is trying to undermine congressional support for Taiwan's democracy, to paint it as corrupt and not in the American public interest," one of the two U.S. officials told NBC News. "It will not work."

The officials said the briefings occurred in the fall.

A third source, a House lawmaker who specializes in national security matters, said they had been informed about the alleged CCP scheme but had not personally received a briefing.

The FBI had no comment. A spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in Washington, Liu Pengyu, responded to a detailed list of questions for this story with a statement: "The report is entirely fabricated, and the Chinese government has never had any plan to smear these lawmakers. As for whether they have accepted bribes from Taiwan, it should be investigated by the relevant authorities in the United States and has nothing to do with China."

The classified discussions were described as "defensive" briefings, the U.S. officials said, meaning the alleged CCP scheme had not been carried out yet, but the FBI wanted to share critical information with the intended targets as a way to pre-empt the attacks.

The FBI commonly provides defensive briefings to senior officials when the bureau learns they have been targeted by foreign intelligence operations.

Tensions between Beijing and Washington have escalated in recent years, particularly over the future of the island of Taiwan, a self-ruling democracy and a critical U.S. ally in Asia that China claims as its territory.

In 2022, then-Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., an outspoken critic of China's human rights violations, made an unannounced visit to Taiwan and was awarded the highest civilian honor by its president. She was the highest-ranking U.S. official to set foot in Taiwan since former Speaker Newt Gingrich did it in 1997, and the move infuriated officials in Beijing, which launched military exercises around Taiwan including live-fire drills.

Other lawmakers have made similar trips to Taipei. In February, bipartisan members of the special House committee investigating the CCP traveled to Taiwan to congratulate Lai Ching-te, the pro-independence candidate who had been elected president just weeks earlier. And this past May, House Foreign Affairs Chairman Mike McCaul, R-Texas, led a bipartisan group of six lawmakers on an official congressional visit to Taiwan to meet with Lai.

Several members of the House Intelligence Committee and select House committee on the CCP declined to comment when asked if they had received a classified briefing on the matter. Lawmakers are prohibited from speaking publicly about any such classified briefings.

Rep. John Moolenaar, R-Mich., the chairman of the select House committee on the CCP, had no comment about any specific plot by the CCP, but said it was no secret Beijing has been targeting U.S. officials and other Americans.

"The CCP will try to discredit our way of life, our freedoms and will use every means necessary," Moolenaar told NBC News. "So you know, whether

it's hacking high-level officials' communications, we can expect all these things."

Starting with the 2022 midterm elections, China has adopted increasingly sophisticated and aggressive tactics to try to aggravate political divisions in American society and undermine congressional candidates that Beijing deems hostile to the regime's interests, especially over the status of Taiwan, according to U.S. intelligence officials and researchers.

In the 2024 presidential contest, China did not appear to favor either candidate but instead focused on specific downballot races with covert disinformation campaigns, using artificial intelligence tools and fake accounts mimicking Americans. The candidates targeted included McCaul; Rep. Barry Moore, R-Ala.; and Sen. Marsha Blackburn, R-Tenn., according to an analysis from Microsoft. A Chinese Embassy spokesperson said at the time that the claims were "full of malicious speculations" and that China had "no intention" to and would "not interfere in the U.S. election."

U.S. intelligence officials and analysts say China's efforts to stoke polarization and undercut Americans' confidence in the democratic process are part of a long-term effort that includes global information operations designed to tarnish America's image abroad.

China's disinformation efforts have coincided with what U.S. officials say is a concerted effort to steal intellectual property and U.S. military secrets through espionage and cyber hacks.

Earlier this month, the White House said that a Chinese hacking campaign targeting the U.S. and other countries was more sweeping and serious than previously known. The CCP had spied on the texts and calls of U.S. citizens by hacking at least eight American telecommunications companies, according to a White House official.

A spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in Washington responded to that allegation in a statement this month: "China firmly opposes the US's smear attacks against China without any factual basis."

### **Chinese migrants in US illegally uneasy after fourth removal flight**

13 December 2024, VOA, Bo Gu

After more than two years of separation, Chinese migrant Duan Chunxia, 51, recently met face to face with her husband and daughter at Stewart Detention Center, a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility in Georgia.

"My wife has lost a lot of weight, and her hair turned gray," her husband, Ni Jinfang, told VOA Mandarin in an emotional video interview. "Our daughter cried

so much when she saw her mother. Her tears were all over her face and neck."

That tearful reunion on December 1 was the latest in an emotional roller-coaster ride for the family as they've separately come to the United States seeking political asylum.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a surge in Chinese nationals entering the United States illegally and seeking asylum. Over the past year, those numbers have dwindled, and U.S. authorities are stepping up efforts to send a growing number back to China.

There is also increasing concern among undocumented migrants from China about President-elect Donald Trump's pledge to carry out mass deportations.

#### Deportation flights

Just days after Duan met with her family, she was scheduled to be sent back to China on a U.S. government-chartered removal flight.

That flight departed Monday, but Duan was not on it. Following a second asylum interview, authorities agreed to give her more time to appeal the deportation order.

The charter flight marked the fourth time in six months that the United States has deported undocumented migrants back to China. Three previous flights in June, October and November carried a total of at least 350 Chinese citizens back to their homeland.

The last previous large-scale repatriation occurred in 2018.

#### Growing cooperation

In a statement Wednesday, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said the flight "is yet another example of the department's ongoing cooperation with [China] and other international partners to deter irregular migration."

It added that DHS and its counterparts in China "also continue joint work to counter the human smuggling networks that facilitate irregular migration." DHS did not say how many migrants were on the flight.

Chen Chuangchuang, an immigration lawyer in California, told VOA Mandarin that the Chinese and U.S. governments have cooperated more closely on immigration issues this year than previously.

"In the past, China rarely cooperated with the U.S. government in accepting illegal migrants," Chen told VOA in a December phone interview. "China has recently exchanged prisoners with the U.S. many times and also accepted undocumented people. [Chinese leader] Xi Jinping calls it 'law enforcement cooperation' rather than 'border and immigration issues.' "

#### How they arrived

Ni, 53, and the couple's 18-year-old daughter entered the U.S. on tourist visas in 2022. After

Duan's husband and daughter left China, she applied for a tourist visa the following year, but her application was rejected.

More than one year after that, in late September, she illegally entered the U.S., crossing the southern border with Mexico.

Duan made the hazardous journey through Ecuador and then traveled overland through Colombia, Central America and Mexico to the U.S. border.

Both Duan and Ni are from China's central city of Suzhou, just outside Shanghai. The city is relatively wealthy but human rights violations are not unheard of.

In 2012, Ni lost his house and land following a government-led forced demolition. He tried to sue the local government in 2013 but was not given a chance to file his lawsuit. He continued to petition the government without result. In 2016, Ni was assaulted by local police officers and put in jail for 171 days for the crime of "disturbing public order."

Ni continued to speak against the Chinese government after coming to the United States and participated in a protest in San Francisco last November, when Xi visited the city for the APEC summit and met with U.S. President Joe Biden.

#### Panicking

Another Chinese immigrant who entered the United States last year via the same route as Duan and is now living in New York state spoke with VOA on the condition that his name not be used because of his undocumented status.

In a telephone interview, he said that with the recent deportations and Trump's pledges, many in the Chinese immigrant community are a little panicked.

"After he takes office, everyone will be worried about being deported, not just us illegal immigrants," he said. "The ones with green cards, aren't they afraid, too?"

Before entering the United States, this man said he had openly criticized Xi on Chinese social media. He said that if he is deported, he will undoubtedly face a prison sentence in China.

The man, who is in his 30s, has already begun applying for political asylum and is still hopeful.

"Although I don't like this result [Trump's victory], this is the choice of the American people, and there is nothing I can do. We are all entering an uncertain era, and everyone's future is uncertain," he said.

Immigration lawyer Chen said that Chinese immigrants in the U.S. who have not yet obtained legal status do face a "real threat."

"The Republicans have already occupied both houses [of Congress], and conservatives also have a clear advantage in the Supreme Court," he said. "We can say with absolute certainty that the second Trump administration will have way more resources, in terms of manpower, law and finances, to support

the implementation of his deportation plan. This is bound to happen."

However, Chen does not think that all Chinese immigrants who apply for asylum will be unsuccessful.

"For those who have a deportation order, if you have a legal reason to apply to stay in the U.S., there is still a chance for review. It's not easy though. The standard will be raised," Chen said, adding that individuals need to prove that they will be persecuted if they return to their home country.

### **US bans all cotton and tomato products from Xinjiang over slave labor**

13 December 2024, ABC Audio

U.S. Customs and Border Protection said Wednesday it will detain all cotton and tomato products produced in China's Xinjiang province.

The Withhold Release Order (WRO) issued by CBP is based on information that "reasonably indicates" the use of forced labor within China's so-called "re-education" camps. CBP also claims China is oppressing its Muslim population in that region.

"The goal isn't just to interdict shipments ... that's actually the fallback plan," Acting DHS Deputy Secretary Ken Cuccinelli told reporters Wednesday. "The goal of the WRO is that they stop and that the shipments never arrive – the ultimate goal is that China abandons these horrific practices."

This is the fourth WRO that CBP has issued in 2021 and the second on products originating in Xinjiang. China's Xinjiang province accounted for eight of the 13 WROs that CBP issued in 2020 – all stemming from allegations of forced labor.

CBP officials and human rights experts estimate that somewhere between 1 million to 3 million Uighurs, Kazakhs and others are being detained in what U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has dubbed "internment camps" throughout China's Xinjiang province. There are about 1,300 of these facilities scattered throughout the region and they've allegedly forced detainees to work without compensation in nearby factories, according to those same officials.

Evidence from Chinese government documents and media reports indicate that hundreds of thousands of Uighurs in Xinjiang are forced to pick cotton by hand via state-mandated labor, according to a report by the Center for Global Policy published last month. The Chinese government strongly denies all claims of forced labor in Xinjiang.

"I've said this before and I'll say it again: Made in China does not just indicate a country of origin," said Cuccinelli. "It's a warning label."

Cotton is Xinjiang's largest export; cotton exports from China are approximately a \$9 billion industry.

Last month, CBP issued a WRO on Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, which had accounted for 17% of those cotton exports.

CBP has not yet quantified Xinjiang's tomato export output, but China's overall output of tomatoes is a \$10 million industry, according to export data from 2019.

CBP officials emphasized on the call Wednesday that most of the onus falls on importers and consumers – urging them to diligently research their supply chains prior to purchasing items from China in general.

"If you're buying apparel and it's considerably lower than the fair market value everywhere else, there's a reason for that," said CBP Acting Commissioner Mark A. Morgan. "Take a few minutes, understand where it's coming from – is it coming from this region?"

Human rights coalitions have praised the action taken from the U.S. against Beijing's alleged abuses.

"CBP's action is a high-decibel wakeup call to any apparel brand that continues to deny the prevalence and problem of forced-labor produced cotton from the Uyghur region," said Scott Nova, executive director of the Workers Rights Consortium, a member of the coalition to End Uyghur Forced Labour. "The days when any major apparel brand can safely profit from Xinjiang cotton are over."

Scrutiny against China's actions in Xinjiang has mounted in recent months over allegations of forced sterilization of their Uighur population that surfaced last summer.

The scrutiny made its way to social media last week, when Twitter removed a controversial tweet by the Chinese Embassy in the U.S. In the tweet, the embassy shared an unsubstantiated report on population growth in Xinjiang and wrote that Muslim women in the province were "no longer baby-making machines," adding that the decrease in population growth had led to a drop in terrorism.

"After further review we have taken action on this tweet for violating our rules against dehumanization," a Twitter spokesperson said.

### **China Restricts Visas To US Officials Who "Interfered" In Hong Kong Affairs**

12 December 2024, NDTV World, Anushree Jonko

Mao stated that China has decided to impose visa restrictions on US officials who have performed poorly on Hong Kong-related issues. The move is based on China's foreign relations law and a law on countering foreign sanctions.

Beijing has announced that it will impose visa restrictions on US officials who have "interfered" in Hong Kong affairs. This move comes after Washington said it would impose visa restrictions on Hong Kong officials last month.



According to Mao Ning, a spokesperson for China's foreign ministry, the US has "violently interfered in China's internal affairs" by imposing visa restrictions on Chinese officials over Hong Kong issues.

Mao stated that China has decided to impose visa restrictions on US officials who have performed poorly on Hong Kong-related issues. The move is based on China's foreign relations law and a law on countering foreign sanctions.

Mao emphasised that Hong Kong is a part of China and that Hong Kong affairs are China's internal matters.

"I shall emphasise that Hong Kong is China's Hong Kong, and Hong Kong affairs are purely China's internal matters," Mao said. "We urge the US side to genuinely respect China's sovereignty, respect the rule of law in Hong Kong, and stop interfering in Hong Kong affairs in any way."

The US had previously announced that it would impose visa restrictions on Hong Kong officials after 45 pro-democracy advocates were sentenced to prison in November. The sentences ranged from four years and two months to 10 years.

"The 45 defendants sentenced today were aggressively prosecuted, and many now face life-altering imprisonment simply for their peaceful participation in political activities which are protected under the Basic Law of Hong Kong," US Department of State spokesperson Matthew Miller said after the sentencing hearing.

#### Comments

The Hong Kong government condemned the US move, saying that foreign governments and organisations had "turned a blind eye to the facts" and made "exaggerated remarks" about the landmark case.

### Trump invites China's Xi Jinping to inauguration

12 December 2024, CBS News, Jennifer Jacobs

President-elect Donald Trump has invited Chinese President Xi Jinping to attend his inauguration next month, multiple sources told CBS News, and inauguration officials are making plans for additional foreign dignitaries to attend the swearing-in ceremony.

Trump invited Xi in early November, shortly after the election, sources said, but it was not clear whether he has accepted the invitation. A spokesperson for the Chinese embassy in Washington did not immediately comment.

Transition spokesperson Karoline Leavitt told CBS News on Thursday that Trump invited Xi to the inauguration. She told Fox News on Thursday that it is an example of Trump "creating an open dialogue with leaders of countries that are not just our allies but our adversaries and our competitors too."

In addition to Xi, the president-elect's team has raised the possibility of hosting other leaders at the Capitol on Jan. 20. Hungary's far-right leader, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who has a warm relationship with Trump and visited him at Mar-a-Lago this week, is "still considering" whether to attend, according to a source familiar with Orbán's plans.

"World leaders are lining up to meet with President Trump because they know he will soon return to power and restore peace through American strength around the globe," Trump transition spokesperson Karoline Leavitt said.

Ambassadors and other diplomats are typically invited to inaugurations, but State Department records dating back to 1874 show that a foreign leader has never attended a transfer-of-power ceremony.

National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said Thursday that it's "going to be up to President-elect Trump to decide who's going to sit there with him at the inauguration, who's going to be there."

Members of Trump's inner circle remain sharp critics of Xi's government, including Sen. Marco Rubio, his pick to be secretary of state, and incoming national security adviser Mike Waltz.

Trump himself has threatened to increase tariffs on goods from China. The U.S. has imposed a deadline of Jan. 19, the eve of the inauguration, for TikTok's Chinese parent company ByteDance to sell the social media app or face a ban in the U.S. TikTok is fighting the ban in court — it lost a bid last week to block the ban but is appealing the case to the Supreme Court. But Trump has also long believed that close leader-to-leader relationships are key to international deal-making. Since Election Day, world leaders have trekked to Mar-a-Lago to meet with Trump, including Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Argentina's president, Javier Milei, has also been granted private audiences with the president-elect.

Emmanuel Macron, the president of France, was the first world leader to host Trump overseas since he won the 2024 election. Also in attendance at the Paris reopening of the Notre Dame Cathedral were Italian Prime Minister Georgia Meloni, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Prince William. Trump was mostly unknown on the world stage at his first inauguration in 2017. This time, world leaders are treating Trump essentially as an incumbent.

### US House to vote to provide \$3 billion to remove Chinese telecoms equipment

08 December 2024, CNBCTV

06 December 2024, BBC, Bernd Debusmann Jr

The 1,800-page text was released late Saturday and includes other provisions aimed at China, including requiring a report on Chinese efforts to evade U.S. national security regulations and an intelligence assessment of the current status of China's biotechnology capabilities.

The U.S. House of Representatives is set to vote next week on an annual defense bill that includes just over \$3 billion for U.S. telecom companies to remove equipment made by Chinese telecoms firms Huawei and ZTE from American wireless networks to address security risks.

The 1,800-page text was released late Saturday and includes other provisions aimed at China, including requiring a report on Chinese efforts to evade U.S. national security regulations and an intelligence assessment of the current status of China's biotechnology capabilities.

The Federal Communications Commission has said removing the insecure equipment is estimated to cost \$4.98 billion but Congress previously only approved \$1.9 billion for the "rip and replace" program.

Washington has aggressively urged U.S. allies to purge Huawei and other Chinese gear from their wireless networks.

FCC Chair Jessica Rosenworcel last week again called on the U.S. Congress to provide urgent additional funding, saying the program to replace equipment in the networks of 126 carriers faces a \$3.08 billion shortfall "putting both our national security and the connectivity of rural consumers who depend on these networks at risk."

She has warned the lack of funding could result in some rural networks shutting down, which "could eliminate the only provider in some regions" and could threaten 911 service.

Competitive Carriers Association CEO Tim Donovan on Saturday praised the announcement, saying "funding is desperately needed to fulfill the mandate to remove and replace covered equipment and services while maintaining connectivity for tens of millions of Americans."

In 2019, Congress told the FCC to require U.S. telecoms carriers that receive federal subsidies to purge their networks of Chinese telecoms equipment. The White House in 2023 asked for \$3.1 billion for the program.

Senate Commerce Committee chair Maria Cantwell said funding for the program and up to \$500 million for regional tech hubs will be covered by funds generated from a one-time spectrum auction by the FCC for advanced wireless spectrum in the band known as AWS-3 to help meet rising spectrum demands of wireless consumers.

President-elect Donald Trump has named former Georgia Senator David Perdue to become ambassador to China, a key role for how the US deals with one of its biggest global rivals.

Perdue, who was labelled "anti-China" by a Chinese think tank while in Congress, has advocated for a stronger US navy, partly over China's work to increase its military strength.

He is the latest China "hawk" tapped for foreign policy in Trump's next term, as the world wonders if the incoming president will start a trade war with the country.

Earlier this week, Trump said Peter Navarro - who backs high tariffs and taking a hard line on China - would return to the White House as a trade and manufacturing adviser.

Both men tapped by Trump for cabinet roles on foreign policy - Senator Marco Rubio for secretary of state and Fox News weekend host Pete Hegseth for defence secretary - are also China critics, along with Michael Waltz, who is expected to become national security adviser.

In announcing his choice, Trump said Perdue would be "instrumental" in maintaining peace and a "productive working relationship" with China.

The President-elect has vowed to impose stiff tariffs on products entering the US from Canada, Mexico and China during his first days back in office.

A massive trade imbalance between the two countries has persisted for decades. The US imported more than \$420b worth of goods from China in 2023, and exported less than \$150b, federal data shows.

The Chinese embassy in the US recently warned that both countries would suffer consequences if a trade war were to ensue.

"China-US economic and trade cooperation is mutually beneficial in nature," Chinese embassy spokesman Liu Pengyu posted on X earlier this week. "No will win a trade war or a tariff war."

On Thursday night - following Perdue's nomination - Mr Liu said China stands "ready to engage in dialogue, expand cooperation, and manage differences with the incoming US government so as to maintain stability in China-US relations to the benefits of the two countries and the world at large". If confirmed by the Senate, Perdue will take over the ambassadorship in Beijing from Nicholas Burns, a veteran diplomat.

Perdue - who lost his senate seat to Democrat Jon Ossoff in 2020 - ran unsuccessfully to unseat Brian Kemp as the state's governor in 2022.

During his failed gubernatorial bid, Perdue repeated Donald Trump's false claims of electoral fraud in the 2020 election.

Prior to getting involved in politics, he was a high-level executive at Dollar General, Reebok and other firms.

### **China rejects claims of "forced labor" in Xinjiang's tomato industry, criticizing BBC report for relying on subjective claims, unverified assertions**

05 December 2024, Global Times



Farmers are using machinery to harvest tomatoes in Changji Hui Autonomous Prefecture, in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, on August 2, 2024. Photo: VCG

A spokesperson of China's Foreign Ministry on Thursday strongly rejected claims of "forced labor" in Xinjiang, following a BBC report that tomato purees sold in several British supermarkets may contain ingredients sourced from the region, purportedly linked to "forced labor".

We have repeatedly emphasized that there is no forced labor in Xinjiang, and the Chinese government has always firmly opposed and severely cracked down on forced labor. Xinjiang's tomatoes, like its cotton, are high-quality products globally recognized, spokesperson Lin Jian said, noting that with over 90 percent of tomato harvesting and 85 percent of cotton harvesting in the region mechanized, how can "forced labor" be plausible? He criticized the BBC report for relying on subjective and unverified claims, highlighting the lack of factual evidence supporting the allegations of forced labor linked to Xinjiang tomatoes harvesting.

"The life of news lies in its truth. Not believing in rumors, not spreading rumors, and not listening to or believing in biased views are the minimum requirements of journalistic ethics and the basic qualities of a fair and objective media," Lin said.

Much of the so-called "evidence" in the BBC report and video was centered on subjective assumptions such as 'claims' and 'feelings,' which lacked verification, Lin said. He also accused the BBC of

basing on preconceived notions, taking things out of context and making unfounded claims that forced labor exists in tomato harvesting industry in Xinjiang.

Lin further criticized the BBC's investigative approach, noting that while relevant reporters spent months studying various tomato sauces, yet they are unwilling to spend a second to understand the truth about Xinjiang. "This is a typical case of double standards and bias," Lin remarked. "Some individuals with ulterior motives continue to sensationalize forced labor claims to gain attention, with a host of so-called directors and actors as well as a stream of so-called testimonies and reports."

Last week, they hype about Xinjiang cotton, and this week it's about Xinjiang tomatoes. Will next week see the same manipulation targeting Xinjiang's solar energy, carrots, or even its beef and lamb? Lin questioned.

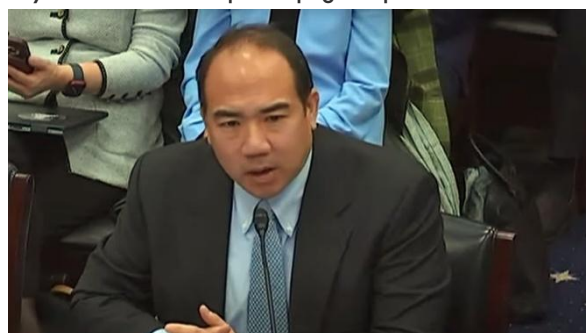
Lin stated that no matter how much these allegations are spread, they cannot change the fact that Xinjiang products are of high-quality, nor can they undermine Xinjiang's economic and social stability and development.

I hope that relevant parties can recognize the sinister intentions behind the lies of "forced labor." I also encourage everyone to visit Xinjiang, take a look around, taste the local tomatoes, experience life in Xinjiang, and feel the real Xinjiang, Lin said.

### **Activists tell US Congress of China's far-reaching cultural erasure**

05 December 2024, RFA, Alex Willemyns

Uyghur, Tibetan, Mongolian and Chinese activists say it's hard to escape Beijing's repressive reach.



Julian Ku, a constitutional law professor at New York's Hofstra University, testifies before the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, Dec. 5, 2024. (Image from Congressional-Executive Commission on China video)

A campaign by China's government to rewrite the cultural identity and history of the country's minority ethnic groups and political dissidents is increasingly being waged on American shores, activists told a U.S. congressional hearing on Thursday.

The Tibetan, Uyghur, Mongolian and Chinese activists said that while the United States once stood as a bastion of free speech and a redoubt of cultural preservation for groups targeted by the Chinese Communist Party, many now feared Beijing's extensive reach.

Rishat Abbas, the president of the U.S.-based Uyghur Academy, told the hearing of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China that his sister Gulshan had been jailed in China on a 20-year sentence due to his and other family member's anti-government activism abroad.

The U.S. government says China's government is carrying out a "genocide" against the mostly Muslim Uyghur minority in the country's far-west. Many Uyghurs abroad actively campaign to end the genocide and to do what they can to preserve their language and culture.

But many look to the treatment of the family members, still trapped in China, of those Uyghurs who choose to speak out, and decide it's safer not to provoke the Chinese Communist Party, even from abroad.

"My sister's imprisonment is a clear action of retaliation," he said. "Her detention exposes the CCP's aggressive policies that target Uyghurs simply for their identity and for the activism of their relatives abroad."

"She has never engaged in any form of advocacy in her life," he said.

Abbas said he was nonetheless not deterred, and hoped to one day bring a Uyghur-language textbook developed in the United States back to China's Xinjiang region, where Uyghurs live under surveillance.

#### Lawfare

It's not only Uyghur immigrants who have been targeted.

In years gone by, American higher education institutions like Stanford University fearlessly curated U.S.-based historical archives about events censored by the Chinese government, said Julian Ku, a constitutional law professor at New York's Hofstra University.

But things have changed.

Ku pointed to a lawsuit brought in the United States by the Beijing-based widow of the late Li Rui – a former secretary to Mao Zedong and later dissident who donated diaries to Stanford.

Stanford says Li Rui donated the diaries through his daughter, fearing that they would be destroyed by Chinese officials if left in China. But Li Rui's widow says they are rightfully hers and wants them returned.

The widow, Ku explained, was inexplicably being represented by "some of the most expensive law firms in the United States," and had likely already

racked up legal fees in the "hundreds of thousands of dollars – and probably more – on a widow's Chinese state pension."

Describing the tactic as "lawfare," he suggested that the widow had powerful backers funding the battle, who may not even care if the litigation is ultimately successful.

The nearly four years of costly legal battles sent a message to other U.S. universities, museums or nonprofits to avoid any contentious documents that might attract the attention of Beijing, Ku said.

"They might think, 'Well, maybe I don't want to acquire that one, because it might subject me to litigation in China and maybe litigation here in the United States,'" he said. "It serves as a deterrence for universities, museums and other institutions in the United States."

#### Living in fear

Like Uyghurs, many ethnically Han Chinese in America also fear speaking out against Beijing even while in the United States, said Rowena He, a historian of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing who was last year banned from entering Hong Kong.

"It's very difficult to not to be emotional being in this room again because I remember 5-10 years ago, when I was first invited to testify to Congress," He recalled. "I was extremely hesitant, because I was so concerned about my family members, and I was so worried."

"I lived with fear ever since the day I started teaching and researching the topic of Tiananmen," she explained, citing the "taboo" around the topic in China, where the massacre is not openly acknowledged.

She said increased funding for curriculums with alternate Chinese histories to the one put forward by Beijing could be one way to counter the "monopoly on historiography" held by China's government.

"If you go to Chinatown, many people are still supporting the CCP, even though they're physically in the United States," He said, noting that figures like herself were denigrated as anti-government.

"Sometimes people call us 'underground historians,' but I do not like the term 'underground,'" she said. "We are the historians."

#### Government funding

Geshe Lobsang Monlam, a Tibetan monk who authored a 223-volume Tibetan dictionary and helps lead efforts to preserve Tibetan language outside of China, said one of the main obstacles for Tibetans outside China outside of pressure from Beijing was finding needed funds.

"Inside Tibet, the young Tibetans have appeared powerless in their ability to preserve and promote their language," the monk said, pointing to concerted efforts to erase use of the Tibetan



language as young Tibetans grow proficient in using Mandarin through smartphones.

"If there can be assistance by the United States to help procure technological equipment that can enable those of us in exile to continue our work on preservation of Tibetan culture and language and way of life ... that would be very useful for us," he explained.

Temulun Togocho, a 17-year-old U.S.-born Southern Mongolian activist, similarly appealed for more funding for cultural preservation.



Temulun Togocho, 17, U.S.-born Southern Mongolian activist testifies before the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, Dec. 5, 2024. (Image from Congressional-Executive Commission on China video)

Togocho said while the decreased global focus on the plight of Mongolians in China had allowed her family in the United States to openly teach her about Mongolian culture and their native language with little fear of reprisal, resources were few and far between.

Mongolians living in China's Inner Mongolia were increasingly facing a similar treatment to Tibetans and Uyghurs, she said, with a "systematic oppression and erasure of Mongolian language" taking place in favor of what is called "patriotic education" lionizing the communist party.

In September 2020, many Southern Mongolians protested the policies through coordinated school boycotts and strikes, but there was little news coverage of the ensuing mass arrests, she explained.

"Approximately 300,000 southern Mongolian students joined the movement," she said. "The Chinese government responded harshly, detaining and placing under house arrest 8-10,000 people."

The young activist called on Congress to fund Mongolian-language programs on Voice of America, which currently do not exist. She said that would help the "minority within a minority" to more actively "preserve their language, culture and identity" from erasure

## US' plan to ban 200 Chinese technology companies; China's responds with this warning

29 November 2024, Times of India

Tensions are rising between the US and China over semiconductor technology, a report has said. China has threatened to retaliate against potential new US export restrictions where the Biden administration is reportedly planning to unveil curbs on chip-related exports to China and blacklist 200 companies.

According to a report by news agency Reuters, the Chinese commerce ministry has responded to these reports. Spokesperson He Yadong expressed strong opposition to the US expanding its definition of national security and its "abuse" of export controls targeting Chinese companies.

He argued that these actions disrupt the global trade order, destabilise industrial security, and harm cooperation within the semiconductor industry.

"These actions severely disrupt the international economic and trade order, destabilise global industrial security, and harm the cooperative efforts between China and the US, as well as the global semiconductor industry," He said.

"If the U.S. insists on escalating control measures, China will take necessary actions to resolutely protect the legitimate rights of Chinese enterprises," he added.

US plans to blacklist 200 Chinese chip companies

The US Chamber of Commerce recently alerted its members that the administration is considering blacklisting up to 200 Chinese chip companies, effectively cutting them off from most US suppliers.

The US has been tightening its grip on semiconductor technology due to concerns that China might use advanced chips to bolster its military capabilities.

Bloomberg reported that the proposed restrictions would include curbs on semiconductor equipment and AI memory chips. However, the latest proposal appears to be less severe than initially anticipated, with fewer Huawei suppliers targeted and ChangXin Memory Technologies, a key player in AI memory chip development, reportedly excluded from the blacklist.

The restrictions would still impact two chip factories owned by Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corp (SMIC), a Huawei partner, and over 100 Chinese companies involved in producing semiconductor manufacturing equipment.

Why China's problems may increase

While the decision on the reported curbs is taken by the Biden Administration, which is due to change in January. There are concerns that President-elect Donald Trump's promise to implement additional tariffs on China could trigger a trade war, Reuters said.

Trump has said that his administration will impose an

## November



additional 10% tariff on all imports from China, above any existing tariffs.

### US and China swap three prisoners each in exchange

29 November 2024, BBC, Holly Honderich

Three Americans detained in China were released in exchange for three Chinese prisoners in the US, after the Biden administration negotiated a prisoner swap. Mark Swidan, Kai Li, and John Leung are on their way back to the US, a spokesperson for the National Security Council (NSC) said in a statement on Wednesday.

"Soon they will return and be reunited with their families for the first time in many years," the statement said.

The exchange was reportedly months in the making, and included the release of three Chinese citizens in US custody, Chinese authorities confirmed on Wednesday.

"Through the unremitting efforts of the Chinese Government, the three Chinese citizens wrongfully detained by the United States have returned to their motherland safely," Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said in a statement Wednesday.

"China has always been firmly opposed to the suppression and persecution of Chinese nationals by the United States for political purposes," she added. President Biden raised the issue of Americans wrongfully detained in China directly with President Xi Jinping earlier this month when the two met during the Apec summit in Peru, according to an American official familiar with the negotiations. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan also urged for their return during his visit to China in August.

"Thanks to this Administration's efforts and diplomacy with the PRC, all of the wrongfully detained Americans in the PRC are home," the NSC spokesperson said.

The swap was first reported by Politico.

Mr Swidan, 48, had been detained since 2012 and was facing the death penalty after a conviction for narcotics trafficking. Swidan denied the charges and the State Department classified him as wrongfully detained, previously raising concerns about his health.

Mark Li, 60, had been held in China since September 2016 on what activists say were trumped-up spying charges.

John Leung, 78, has lead several pro-Beijing groups in the US. He was arrested in 2021 and sentenced to life in prison on espionage charges two years later.

According to the New York Times, multiple US officials said they had discussed releasing Chinese citizen Xu Yanjun, 42, who was convicted in the US

on espionage charges two years ago and sentenced to 20 years in prison. Xu was first Chinese government intelligence officer ever to be extradited to the US to stand trial, the Justice Department said.

As of Wednesday morning, Xu was listed in the Bureau of Prisons system as "not in BOP custody".

The deal marks a diplomatic win for Biden in the final months of his presidency.

It follows the release of another American considered wrongfully detained: David Lin, a pastor who had been jailed in China from 2006 until his release in September.

During his four years in the White House, Biden oversaw the release of more than 70 Americans, including from Russia, Venezuela and Iran.

On Wednesday, the US also lowered its travel advisory level for mainland China to Level 2: Exercise increased caution.

### China criticises Trump tariff threat, says it won't solve America's problems

28 November 2024, Reuters, Joe Cash

China attacked U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's pledge to slap additional tariffs on Chinese goods over fentanyl flows, saying his incoming administration was pushing the blame for America's opioid crisis onto China.

Trump, who takes office on Jan. 20, said on Monday he would impose a 10% tariff on Chinese goods so that Beijing does more to stop the trafficking of Chinese-made chemicals used in the highly addictive narcotic.

He had threatened tariffs in excess of 60% on Chinese goods while on the campaign trail.

"China's position against unilateral tariff increases is consistent," He Yadong, a spokesperson for the commerce ministry, told a regular news briefing on Thursday. "Imposing arbitrary tariffs on trading partners will not solve America's own problems."

He added that the U.S. should abide by World Trade Organization rules and work with China to promote stable economic and trade relations.

Trump's comments fired the starting gun for what analysts expect to be a bruising four-year trade war, potentially much worse than his first term which saw tariffs of 7.5%-25% levied and global supply chains uprooted.

Indeed, Howard Lutnick, Trump's pick to run the Commerce Department and oversee the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, said in a podcast interview in October that "China is attacking America" with fentanyl and suggested Trump might levy tariffs as high as 200% on China.

Editorials in China's state media this week have warned new duties could drag the world's top two economies into a mutually destructive tariff war.

DEJA VU

There was already an eerie sense of déjà vu on Thursday after China's state media praised some U.S. firms for "strong collaboration" - commentary reminiscent of how tensions with the U.S. were covered by the Chinese press during the previous trade war.

Back then, U.S. corporate executives and foreign investors would scour Chinese state media for signals as to which U.S. firms might be in favour and which might be penalised as tensions ratcheted up.

The state-owned Global Times late on Wednesday highlighted Apple (AAPL.O), opens new tab, Tesla (TSLA.O), opens new tab, Starbucks (SBUX.O), opens new tab and HP (HPE.N), opens new tab.

"U.S. politicians need to pay attention to and respect the evident willingness of American businesses for economic and trade cooperation by tailoring suitable policy environments for enterprises," it said.

The China Daily also noted that Morgan Stanley (MS.N), opens new tab received regulatory approval in March to expand its China operations, citing this as evidence of foreign financial firms' enthusiasm for investing in China.

"Neither side was good about communicating policy directly, so business was busy looking at the tea leaves and trying to separate signal and noise in traditional and social media," a Beijing-based American executive said of the first trade war.

The executive was not authorised to speak to media and declined to be identified.

The U.S.-China trade war during Trump's first term saw China threaten to ban U.S. companies from importing, exporting and investing in China with the creation of the "Unreliable Entity List".

At the time, Global Times reported the list would target U.S. companies such as Apple, Cisco Systems (CSCO.O), opens new tab and Qualcomm (QCOM.O), opens new tab. But China never followed through on the threat and to date the list has only included U.S. companies involved in the sale of arms to Taiwan.

Bo Zhengyuan, a Shanghai-based partner at consultancy Plenum, said he expected Beijing would not rush to use tools like the Unreliable Entity List in the immediate wake of any formal tariff announcement once Trump is in power, given the weak state of the Chinese economy.

But Beijing could retaliate later if it felt U.S. policymakers were harming China's commercial interests.

"There was collateral damage last time, and there will be collateral damage this time," he added.

## China's been trying to 'Trump-proof' its economy amid his tariff threats, experts say

27 November 2024, ABC News, Selina Wang

Exports from China to the United States fell 20% last year.

Key U.S. trading partners are better equipped now to deal with President-elect Donald Trump's tariff threats than they were during his first administration, according to experts.

China has spent the last several years trying to "Trump-proof" its economy, reducing its reliance on U.S. trade. Exports from China to the U.S. fell 20% to \$427 billion in 2023.

"China's been trying to Trump-proof its economy for the last few years," said Neil Thomas, a fellow for Chinese politics at the Asia Society Policy Institute's Center for China Analysis. "We know from Trump's first term that tariff threats are often used as an opening salvo for diplomatic negotiations, so I expect there's going to be a lot of behind-the-scenes diplomacy."

Trump on Monday announced he plans to impose a 10% additional tariff on Chinese imports, as well as 25% tariff on products coming from Canada and Mexico.

American markets, so far, are mostly shrugging off Trump's latest tariff threat with stock indexes mixed.

But the Canadian dollar and Mexican peso fell against the U.S. dollar and socks of global carmakers also fell – suggesting investors are waiting to see if Trump makes good on his proposals.

China has shifted and diversified exports to other regions, including Europe and Latin America. It has also increased investments in manufacturing in Southeast Asia, Europe, and Latin America, according to Scott Kennedy, Chinese business and economics specialist at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

The bigger concern for China is Trump's campaign vow to slap 60% tariffs on Chinese imports. That tariff threat could still come.

Trump's latest reason for imposing tariffs on China is the flow of fentanyl into the United States.

Beijing's Ministry of Foreign Affairs pushed back on Trump's claim that China hasn't done enough to stop the flow of illicit drugs.

"China is willing to continue to carry out anti-drug cooperation with the United States on the basis of equality, mutual benefit and mutual respect," it said. "The United States should cherish China's goodwill and maintain the hard-won good situation of Sino-US anti-drug cooperation."

Cooperation on fentanyl is one of the big wins from President Joe Biden's diplomacy with Chinese leader Xi Jinping. According to one senior administration official, China has been "helpful" on curbing the flow

of precursor chemicals and they've been abiding by their commitments.

"Trump wants to take credit for that win [on fentanyl cooperation], and he wants to get even more out of Beijing than Biden to show that his approach to diplomacy is superior," Thomas said.

Thomas said given the fact that China is still struggling to revive its economy post-pandemic, it's possible China could take further steps on fentanyl and impose the death penalty on a few major exporters.

Experts say Beijing will likely try to use Elon Musk and other American businesses with operations in China to try to persuade the Trump administration to moderate his policies on China.

In retaliation to the tariffs, Beijing could also revoke some of the preferential treatment that it gives Tesla.

### **US blacklists 29 more Chinese companies over alleged forced labour in Xinjiang**

23 November 2024, SCMP, Robert Delaney

Products of offending firms range from hi-tech inputs such as polysilicon to food products like tomato paste, according to Homeland Security

The US government put more than two dozen Chinese companies on a blacklist meant to block imports of products made with forced labour, bringing the number of targeted firms to more than 100.

Products made by the 29 companies added to the Department of Homeland Security's Uyghur Forced Labour Prevention Act (UFLPA) entity list range from hi-tech inputs, such as polysilicon, to food products like tomato paste, according to the department's announcement on Friday.

The restrictions will take effect on November 25.

The US Congress passed the UFLPA in 2021 to target imports from Xinjiang Uyghur autonomous region in western China to prevent the entry of goods made under such conditions.

The law has since seen sanctions imposed on Chinese officials accused of being complicit in labour and human-rights abuses there as well as companies. About two-thirds of Xinjiang's nearly 26 million people are members of ethnic minorities, including the mostly Muslim Uyghur and Kazakh groups.

Accusations of human-rights abuses, mass detention and forced labour in Xinjiang, mainly targeting the Uyghur population, have been regularly denied by Beijing.

"Today's enforcement actions make it clear – the United States will not tolerate forced labour in the goods entering our markets," Robert Silvers, US Homeland Security undersecretary for policy, said in Friday's announcement.

"We urge companies to take responsibility, know their supply chains and act ethically."

Asked for comment, the Chinese embassy in Washington called UFLPA a tool for the suppression of China.

"Using falsehoods as a basis, the US has enacted and implemented the UFLPA to impose sanctions on relevant entities and individuals in Xinjiang," said spokesman Liu Pengyu. "This is another act of the US' suppression of China under the pretext of human rights. It is also a blatant violation of international trade rules that further destabilizes global industrial and supply chains."

The companies named in Friday's announcement included those based in Xinjiang, such as Xinjiang Nonferrous Metals Industry Group, and some in other provinces and municipalities, like Tianjin Tianwei Food Company, which source commodities from the region for their final products.

Xinjiang Daqo New Energy Company, another newly targeted firm, produces high-purity polysilicon materials, which are used in semiconductors and solar panels.

The US government "has reasonable cause to believe, based on specific and articulable information, that Xinjiang Daqo ... sources silicon powder from" Xinjiang, the Homeland Security Department said.

Most of the newly targeted companies are in the agricultural sector, while the others mine and process copper, lithium, beryllium, nickel, manganese and other metals.

The UFLPA allows for a "rebuttable presumption" that any materials produced in Xinjiang are at risk of being tainted with forced labour, creating a "guilty-until-proven-innocent" principle for the products of companies on the law's entity list.

Companies can appeal if they provide "clear and convincing" evidence to customs authorities that their supply chains are free of forced labour.

### **China rebuffs meeting with US defense secretary**

19 November 2024, CNN, Haley Britzky and Oren Liebermann

China rejected a meeting with Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin during a conference in southeast Asia this week, marking the latest turn in a tumultuous relationship between the two countries' defense leaders.

Austin sought to meet with his Chinese counterpart, Dong Jun, at the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus in Laos as part of a long-standing effort to maintain military lines of communication between the US and the People's Republic of China. But China did

not accept the offer, pointing to a recent Taiwan arms sale as their rationale, a senior defense official told reporters traveling with Austin in Laos.

Three weeks ago, the US approved a \$2 billion arms sale to Taiwan, including a first-time provision of advanced surface-to-air missiles to the self-governed island. China immediately criticized the sale, promising to take "resolute countermeasures" to defend its sovereignty.

The Chinese rejection of the meeting in Laos comes just days after US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping met in Peru for their final meeting under Biden's administration. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said the meeting was "candid, constructive, [and] wide ranging," but that Biden would not act as a conduit between the Chinese government and the incoming Trump administration. China has often used the cancellation of meetings and lines of communication as a way of registering displeasure with the United States. After then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan in 2022, China cut off a number of lines of communication with the US, including on military issues and climate.

The rejection comes after a seeming improvement in military-to-military communications between the two countries over the last year or so.

### **Taiwan, Democracy, Development Are China's 'Red Lines', Xi Tells Biden**

16 November 2024, U.S. News

China's President Xi Jinping told his U.S. counterpart Joe Biden that the issues of Taiwan, democracy, human rights and rights to development are "red lines" for China and not to be challenged, the official state media Xinhua said on Sunday.

Xi warned the United States not to get involved in bilateral disputes over islands and reefs in the South China Sea or "aid or abet the impulsion to make provocations" in that region, it said.

China and United States would roil or even see relations take a setback in rivalry with each other, but could make considerable progress by treating each other as partners and friends, Xi told Biden on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic forum summit in Peru, according to Xinhua.

### **During meeting with Biden, China's Xi cautions US to 'make the wise choice' to keep relations stable**

16 November 2024, WCVB

China's leader Xi Jinping met for the last time with U.S. President Joe Biden on Saturday but was already looking ahead to President-elect Donald Trump and his "America first" policies, saying Beijing "is ready to work with a new U.S. administration."

During their talks on the sidelines of the annual Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit, Xi cautioned that a stable China-U.S. relationship was critical not only to the two nations, but also the "future and destiny of humanity."

"Make the wise choice," he cautioned. "Keep exploring the right way for two major countries to get along well with each other."

Without mentioning Trump's name, Xi appeared to signal his concern that the incoming president's protectionist rhetoric on the campaign trail could send the U.S.-China relationship into another valley.

"China is ready to work with a new U.S. administration to maintain communication, expand cooperation and manage differences so as to strive for a steady transition of the China-U.S. relationship for the benefit of the two peoples," Xi said through an interpreter.

Xi, who is firmly entrenched atop China's political hierarchy, spoke forcefully in his brief remarks before reporters. Biden, who is winding down more than 50 years of public service, talked in broader brushstrokes about where the relationship between the two countries has gone. He reflected not just on the past four years but on the decades the two have known each other.

"We haven't always agreed, but our conversations have always been candid and always been frank. We've never kidded one another," Biden said. "These conversations prevent miscalculations, and they ensure the competition between our two countries will not veer into conflict."

Biden was expected to urge Xi to dissuade North Korea from further deepening its support for Russia's war on Ukraine. The leaders, with top aides surrounding them, gathered around a long rectangle of tables in an expansive conference room at Lima's Defines Hotel and Conference Center.

China "hosted" the meeting this year, after Xi and Biden met a year ago on the APEC sidelines in Northern California, a gathering hosted by the U.S. They had much to discuss, including China's indirect support for Russia, human rights issues, technology and Taiwan, the self-ruled democracy that Beijing claims as its own.

There's much uncertainty about what lies ahead in the U.S.-China relationship under Trump, who campaigned promising to levy 60% tariffs on Chinese imports.

Already, many American companies, including Nike and eyewear retailer Warby Parker, have been diversifying their sourcing away from China. Shoe brand Steve Madden says it plans to cut imports from China by as much as 45% next year.

In a congratulatory message to Trump after his victory over Vice President Kamala Harris, Xi called for the U.S. and China to manage their differences

and get along in a new era. In front of the cameras Saturday, Xi spoke to Biden — but it was unmistakable that his message was directed at Trump.

"In a major flourishing sci-tech revolution, neither decoupling nor supply chain disruption is a solution," Xi said. "Only mutual, beneficial cooperation can lead to common development. 'Small yard, high fence' is not what a major country should pursue."

After he was greeted by Xi, Biden ignored shouted questions from reporters on his concerns about the incoming Trump administration as well as North Korea. The leaders also did not engage reporters after they made their brief comments at the start of the meeting.

Biden administration officials would advise the Trump team that managing the intense competition with Beijing will likely be the most significant foreign policy challenge they will face, White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said.

Biden has viewed his relationship with Xi as among the most consequential on the international stage and put much effort into cultivating it. The two first got to know each other on travels across the U.S. and China when both were vice presidents, interactions that both have said left a lasting impression.

"For over a decade, you and I have spent many hours together, both here and in China and in between," Biden said. "We've spent a long time dealing with these issues."

But the last four years have presented a steady stream of difficult moments.

The FBI this week offered new details of a federal investigation into Chinese government efforts to hack into U.S. telecommunications networks. The initial findings have revealed a "broad and significant" cyberespionage campaign aimed at stealing information from Americans who work in government and politics.

U.S. intelligence officials also have assessed China has surged sales to Russia of machine tools, microelectronics and other technology that Moscow is using to produce missiles, tanks, aircraft and other weaponry for use in its war against Ukraine.

And tensions flared last year after Biden ordered the shooting down of a Chinese spy balloon that traversed the United States.

Biden is looking for Xi to step up Chinese engagement to prevent an already dangerous moment with North Korea from further escalating.

Biden, South Korean President Yoon Seok Yul and Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba on Friday condemned North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's decision to send thousands of troops to help Moscow repel Ukrainian forces who have seized territory in Russia's Kursk border region.

Biden called it "dangerous and destabilizing cooperation."

White House officials have expressed frustration with Beijing, which accounts for the vast majority of North Korea's trade, for not doing more to rein in Pyongyang.

The North Koreans also have provided Russia with artillery and other munitions, according to U.S. and South Korean intelligence officials. And the U.S., Japan and South Korea have expressed alarm over Pyongyang's stepped-up cadence of ballistic missile tests.

Kim ordered testing exercises in the lead-up to this month's U.S. election and is claiming progress on efforts to build capability to strike the U.S. mainland.

Xi and Biden started their day at the leaders' retreat at the APEC summit, taking part in a photo where they all wore scarves made from vicuña wool, a symbolic animal for Peru. It's common practice that leaders at these gatherings are given a gift — usually traditional clothing of the host country — that they don for the photo.

### **U.S. companies could be caught in the crosshairs if China retaliates to fight Trump**

15 November 2024, CNBC, Eunice Yoon

With President-elect Donald Trump's trade and foreign policy team taking a hawkish stance toward China, U.S. companies are increasingly concerned a hard-line approach could stunt their prospects in the world's second-largest economy — and turn them into targets of Chinese retaliation.

Trump has threatened to hit China with at least 60% tariffs and vowed to end reliance on the country. That alone would be disruptive. It would force companies to scramble to find other sources of supply, American consumers to pay higher prices at the store, and, according to many experts, lead to job losses.

On top of that, the Chinese government could respond with an expanded tool kit to target American businesses.

"The Trump administration's actions may be seen or may be interpreted as economic war," Scott Kennedy, senior advisor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, told reporters in Beijing on Thursday. "If they are interpreted in that way, China might have a much more vigorous response, not limited to tariffs."

Those actions could range from economic changes to matters of diplomacy and security, Kennedy said, adding China may "push back as hard as they can."

More combative relations between the U.S. and China also brings the risk of public backlash amid rising Chinese nationalism. The Chinese government



has strong controls over information flow which has led to consumer boycotts of international brands.

"The worst part is the consumer brands that are not of a strategic nature and themselves are not controversial and would not be subject to export restrictions might be punished by the local consumer because of their nationality," said, Michael Hart, president of the American Chamber of Commerce in China. "Since Covid, companies have been looking to diversify and bolster their supply chains, but there are still no easy and reliable replacements for the supply chains and manufacturing that has developed in China over the past decades."

China's retaliation tool kit

During Trump's first term, the Chinese government retaliated against U.S. tariffs by imposing its own tariffs on U.S. imports.

The U.S.-China Business Council, in conjunction with Oxford Economics, estimates a new tit-for-tat tariff battle could result in a "permanent loss of revenue and pressure businesses to slash jobs and investment plans" with as many as 801,000 net job losses by 2025.

The report projected that Nevada, Florida and Arizona would be among the states hardest hit by such tariffs due to their economic reliance on consumer demand. Manufacturing states such as Indiana, Kansas, Michigan and Ohio would also be vulnerable, the Oxford report found. Swing states Nevada, Arizona and Michigan all flipped to Trump in the 2024 election, helping to deliver him back to the White House.

During the last trade battle, China also stopped buying agricultural products from the U.S. The move targeted key U.S. exports like soybeans, disproportionately hurting rural parts of the U.S. where Trump has strong support.

James McGregor, a business consultant on China for three decades, said he sees Beijing using its leverage on U.S. agricultural purchases if it feels pressed this time, too.

"China is already focused on ridding itself of dependence on U.S. farm products. If alternative supplies are available, China may well shift away from American farmers where they can," McGregor said.

Two years ago, China started importing corn from Brazil. The country is now China's biggest supplier of corn, surpassing the U.S.

Beijing could also broaden its retribution methods to include targeting U.S. companies operating on Chinese soil.

The business climate in China has tightened meaningfully since Trump's first term. Despite the Chinese leadership's stated efforts to welcome international companies, AmCham China's 2024

Business Climate Survey Report found 39% of companies polled felt less welcome in China.

Tougher laws, tightening regulations

There's also the risk of legal and regulatory changes in China that could threaten U.S. companies.

In recent years, China made significant revisions to its export control regulations. Those tighter controls have restricted critical metals for the American clean energy and semiconductor sectors.

Analysts foresee China doing the same during a Trump second term, aiming to deprive U.S. industry of key minerals and components.

Beijing has also enhanced laws like an anti-foreign sanctions law that triggers probes, fines and restrictions on operations in the country.

Even before the U.S. election, Beijing had shown signs of targeting certain American companies. For example, PVH, the owner of Calvin Klein, is under investigation thanks to this law.

China has an upgraded anti-espionage law, which international business groups like AmCham China have criticized for what they say is "ambiguity" in the policy.

The law has led to executive and staff detentions and raids on international firms and has made it easier for officials to impose exit bans, barring the accused from leaving the country.

Many worry that the day-to-day regulatory grind to operate in China could become a bigger slog under a heightened retaliatory environment.

Since Trump's first term, Chinese leader Xi Jinping has consolidated power even further.

If Xi signals that U.S. companies are out of favor, they can expect regulations for permits, safety checks, licensing and other approvals to be interpreted more harshly by lower-level officials, experts say.

"We will likely see retaliation against American companies in China where they could be step-by-step squeezed out of the China market and replaced," McGregor said.

### **Biden and Xi will meet in Peru as US-China relations tested again by Trump's return**

14 November 2024, AP, Aamer Madhani

President Joe Biden will hold talks Saturday with China's Xi Jinping on the sidelines of an international summit in Peru, a face-to-face meeting that comes as Beijing braces for Donald Trump's return to the White House.

White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said the meeting will take place while the two leaders are in Lima for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit. That will come just over two months before Trump's inauguration.

Sullivan was opaque about how Biden and administration officials will answer expected questions from Xi and his aides about the incoming Trump administration.

"Transitions are uniquely consequential moments in geopolitics. They're a time when competitors and adversaries can see possibly opportunity," Sullivan said. "And so part of what President Biden will communicate is that we need to maintain stability, clarity, predictability through this transition between the United States and China."

During his campaign against Vice President Kamala Harris, Trump promised to slap blanket 60% tariffs on all Chinese exports to the U.S., a move that would jolt the already tumultuous relationship between Beijing and Washington.

Washington and Beijing have long had deep differences on the support China has given to Russia during its war in Ukraine, human rights issues, technology and Taiwan, the self-ruled democracy that Beijing claims as its own. A second Trump administration is expected to test U.S.-China relations even more than the Republican's first term, when the U.S. imposed tariffs on more than \$360 billion in Chinese products.

That brought Beijing to the negotiating table, and in 2020, the two sides signed a trade deal in which China committed to improve intellectual property rights and buy an extra \$200 billion of American goods. A couple of years later, a research group showed that China had bought essentially none of the goods it had promised.

The White House has been working for months to arrange a final meeting between Xi and Biden before the Democrat leaves office in January.

Sullivan traveled to Beijing in late August to meet with his Chinese counterpart and also sat down with Xi. After that, Sullivan indicated that there could be a final meeting between Xi and Biden at APEC or at next week's summit of the Group of 20 top economies in Rio de Janeiro, which both leaders are scheduled to attend.

Biden has sought to maintain a steady relationship with Xi even as his administration repeatedly has raised concerns about what it sees as malign actions by Beijing.

U.S. intelligence officials have assessed China has surged sales to Russia of machine tools, microelectronics and other technology that Moscow is using to produce missiles, tanks, aircraft and other weaponry for use in its war against Ukraine. The administration last month imposed sanctions against two Chinese companies accused of directly helping Russia build long-range attack drones used against Ukraine.

Tensions flared last year after Biden ordered the shooting down of a Chinese spy balloon that

traversed the United States. And the Biden administration has criticized Chinese military assertiveness toward Japan, the Philippines and Taiwan.

On the campaign trail, Trump spoke of his personal connection with Xi, which started out well during his first term before becoming strained over disputes about trade and the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a congratulatory message to Trump after his victory over Harris, Xi called for the U.S. and China to manage their differences and get along in a new era, according to Chinese state media.

Biden, for his part, is expected in the meeting with Xi to focus on efforts to stem the flow of Chinese-manufactured chemicals used to make fentanyl, concerns about Beijing's indirect support for Russia's war in Ukraine, cybersecurity concerns and the importance of maintaining military-to-military communications.

Sullivan added that he expected that Biden would also raise an ongoing U.S. investigation into an alleged Chinese hacker operation targeting cellphones used by Trump, Vice President-elect JD Vance, and people associated with the Harris campaign.

Saturday's talks will be the third meeting between Biden and Xi during Biden's presidency. They met in Woodside, California, last November on the sidelines of the 2023 APEC summit, and the leaders last spoke by phone in April.

Sullivan also announced that Biden while at APEC will hold a joint meeting with South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Japan's new prime minister, Shigeru Ishiba.

That meeting is a follow-up on the historic Camp David summit Biden hosted in August 2023 with Yoon and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida.

Biden has nudged the United States' two closest Asian allies to further tighten security and economic cooperation with each other amid their shared concerns about North Korea's nuclear provocations as well as China's military and economic assertiveness in the Pacific.

The historic rivals have been divided by differing views of World War II history and Japan's colonial rule over the Korean Peninsula from 1910 to 1945.

### **Investigation into Chinese hacking reveals 'broad and significant' spying effort, FBI says**

14 November 2024, AP

A federal investigation into Chinese government efforts to hack into U.S. telecommunications networks has revealed a "broad and significant" cyberespionage campaign aimed at

stealing information from Americans who work in government and politics, the FBI said Wednesday. Hackers affiliated with Beijing have compromised the networks of "multiple" telecommunications companies to obtain customer call records and gain access to the private communications of "a limited number of individuals," according to a joint statement issued by the FBI and the federal Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.

The FBI did not identify any of the individuals targeted by the hackers but said most of them "are primarily involved in government or political activity." The hackers also sought to copy "certain information that was subject to U.S. law enforcement requests pursuant to court orders," the FBI said, suggesting the hackers may have been trying to compromise programs like those subject to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, or FISA, which grants American spy agencies sweeping powers to surveil the communications of individuals suspected of being agents of a foreign power."

The warning comes after several high-profile hacking incidents that U.S. authorities have linked to China, part of what they say is an effort to steal technological and government information while also targeting vital infrastructure like the electrical grid.

In September, the FBI announced that it had disrupted a vast Chinese hacking operation known as Flax Typhoon that involved the installation of malicious software on more than 200,000 consumer devices, including cameras, video recorders and home and office routers. The devices were then used to create a massive network of infected computers, or botnet, that could then be used to carry out other cyber crimes.

Last month, officials said hackers linked to China targeted the phones of then-presidential candidate Donald Trump and his running mate, Sen. JD Vance, along with people associated with Democratic candidate Vice President Kamala Harris. Authorities did not disclose how or if the operations announced Wednesday are connected to the earlier campaigns.

In their statement Wednesday, the FBI and CISA said officials are working with the telecommunication industry and hacking victims to shore up defenses against continuing attempts at cyberespionage.

"We expect our understanding of these compromises to grow as the investigation continues," the agencies wrote.

China has rejected accusations from U.S. officials that it engages in cyberespionage directed against Americans. A message left with China's embassy in Washington was not immediately returned Wednesday.

## China Issues Donald Trump a Warning Over Taiwan

11 November 2024, News Week, Billal Rahman

China has warned President-elect Donald Trump to handle issues related to Taiwan "prudently" to avoid "severely damaging" relations between Beijing and Washington.

Beijing, which views Taiwan as a breakaway province, pledged to take "all necessary measures" to uphold its "One China" principle. Under the first Trump administration, Washington and Beijing went toe-to-toe on trade, tariffs and tech.

In response to a question about Trump and Taiwan, Liu Pengyu, spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in the U.S., told Newsweek: "The Taiwan question is the most important and most sensitive issue in China-U.S. relations.

"The U.S. government needs to earnestly abide by the One China principle and the three China-U.S. joint communiqués and prudently handle Taiwan-related issues so as to avoid severe damage to China-U.S. relations and cross-Straits peace and stability."

Newsweek has contacted the Trump campaign for comment via email.

This comes after the U.S. announced it will be providing Taiwan with a surface-to-air missile defense system as part of a \$2 billion arms package in response to escalating tensions with China.

The arms package, which was approved in October, includes three National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems and related equipment valued at up to \$1.16 billion, according to the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. It also features radar systems estimated to be worth \$828 million.

In response, the Chinese Embassy said: "The sales seriously undermine China's sovereignty and security interests, harm China-U.S. relations and peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, and send a gravely wrong message to 'Taiwan independence' separatist forces. China strongly condemns and firmly opposes this and has lodged serious protests with the U.S."

The U.S., Taiwan's closest ally, maintains strong ties with the island, which is crucial to Western foreign policy and influence in the Indo-Pacific region.

U.S. relations with China and Taiwan are complex, and the "One China" policy, established in the 1970s, is central to this relationship. Under this, the U.S. acknowledges Beijing's stance that there is only one China, including Taiwan, while not explicitly endorsing China's sovereignty over Taiwan. This ambiguous stance allows the U.S. to maintain unofficial relations with Taiwan, supporting it in various ways without officially recognizing it as an independent state.

Meanwhile, Beijing cautioned Trump that raising tariffs on Chinese goods could harm the American economy.

During his campaign, Trump pledged to impose 60 percent tariffs on all Chinese exports, a move that would significantly impact China's economy. Tariffs are central to Trump's "America First" economic strategy, designed to protect U.S. industries and stimulate domestic growth.

Dean of the School of Business and Management at Notre Dame de Namur University John M. Veitch told Newsweek, "there will be significant losses to the economy" if a trade war is reignited.

"China is not in a particularly strong economic situation right now. They have seen weakening in important sectors like construction and real estate," he said. "Their central bank has recently implemented new monetary policies and tools to try to stimulate capital markets and the economy broadly.

"Trade wars always have very asymmetric impacts on an economy—overall consumers will lose as they pay higher prices for imported goods and likely higher prices for U.S. goods whose prices were previously held in check by possible imports. This will be a large loss to the economy as a whole and probably a loss that consumers themselves will feel, especially given U.S. consumer sensitivity to past inflation."

In response to Trump's comments suggesting he would impose "massive tariffs" on China if it "went into Taiwan" and that Taiwan might have to pay for U.S. protection, a spokesperson for China's Taiwan Affairs Office said the people of Taiwan had a clear understanding of U.S. policy.

"Whether the United States is trying to protect or harm Taiwan, I believe most of our Taiwan compatriots have already made a rational judgment and know very clearly that what the United States pursues is always America first," Zhu Fenglian told a regular news briefing.

"Taiwan at any time may turn from a pawn to a discarded child," Fenglian said, without referring to Trump by name.

### **Chinese State Media Mocks US Election as 'Battle of Five Presidents' While Analysts Warn of Propaganda Motives**

07 November 2024, China Scope

On the eve of the US presidential election, China's state television CCTV posted a topic on Weibo about "Five US Presidents in a Chaos Battle," which quickly became a trending topic. Chinese netizens reacted to the post with mockery and criticism of the US electoral system by Chinese netizens. The five presidents mentioned in the post were Donald Trump,

Joe Biden, Barak Obama, Bill Clinton, and Jimmy Carter, all of whom were politically active during this last election cycle.

CCTV's post described President Biden as "out," Trump as "nearly physically eliminated due to assassination attempts," and claimed former presidents Obama, Clinton, and Carter were "interfering" (in the election cycle), turning the election into a "battle of five kings." The post garnered 150 million views and sparked extensive discussion.

Chinese social media users criticized the US election process, with some describing it as lacking civility and democratic atmosphere, comparing it to a marketplace quarrel or gang fight. The topic "#USElection" attracted nearly 15.3 billion views on Weibo.

Analysts note that this coverage is part of China's internal propaganda strategy to shape public opinion against the US democratic system. An anonymous source from Chongqing stated that Chinese state media regularly crafts anti-US narratives to control public opinion while avoiding any mention of internal political conflicts within the CCP.

Dr. Du Shengcong, a media expert from Taiwan's Ming Chuan University, describes the Weibo post as "gaseous language" – low-brow statements meant to reach mass audiences. He said that "state media should be more responsible in their reporting" to avoid misinterpretation. He noted, despite pre-election chaos, US democratic institutions continue to function normally after elections."

### **China urges U.S. cooperation as Trump trade threat looms**

07 November 2024, CNBC, Evelyn Cheng

China emphasized the need for greater cooperation with the U.S., a day after it became clear President-elect Donald Trump would become the next leader of the White House.

"The Chinese side is willing, on the basis of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation, to increase communication with the U.S., expand cooperation and resolve differences," He Yongqian, spokesperson at China's Ministry of Commerce, told reporters Thursday in Mandarin, according to a CNBC translation.

She was responding to a question about China's views and planned countermeasures, given the potential for increased U.S. tariffs and restrictions on high-end tech.

"Together [we can] push China-U.S. economic and trade relations toward a stable, healthy and

sustainable direction, for the benefit of both countries and the world," the commerce spokesperson said. Her comments echoed those of Chinese President Xi Jinping, who earlier in the day noted the benefits of bilateral cooperation in a congratulatory message to Trump, according to a Ministry of Foreign Affairs readout.

Washington turned tougher on Beijing under Trump's first four-year term that began in 2017. This year, the president-elect threatened additional tariffs on Chinese goods while campaigning for his second mandate.

Yue Su, principal economist at the Economist Intelligence Unit, said Trump will likely impose such tariffs in the first half of next year. She added that the White House leader could speed up the process by invoking the International Emergency Economic Powers Act or Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974, which allows the president to impose tariffs of up to 15% in response to a serious balance-of-payments deficit.

Other analysts are less concerned about a significant increase in U.S. tariffs targeting China.

"Trump's current tariff proposal is likely the worst-case scenario," David Chao, Global Market Strategist, Asia Pacific (excluding Japan) at Invesco, said in a note Thursday. "I suspect the new administration will hold off imposing these tariffs in order to win concessions, whether that may be more purchases of American soybeans or even geopolitical ones."

He added, "More so, I don't think Trump's proposed 60% tariff policy on China will significantly impact [multinational corporations'] confidence or sentiment."

Chao nevertheless said that a potential 10% tariff on all exports to the U.S. would likely have a bigger impact, weakening global demand and hitting China and the rest of Asia.

## October

### Exclusive: China's Xi pressed Biden to alter language on Taiwan

29 October 2024, Reuters, Trevor Hunnicutt, Laurie Chen and Yimou Lee

Chinese President Xi Jinping asked U.S. President Joe Biden last year to change the language the United States uses when discussing its position on Taiwanese independence, according to two U.S. officials familiar with the private conversation.

During last November's Biden-Xi meeting near San Francisco, Xi and his aides asked Biden and his team to tweak the language in U.S. official statements.

China wanted the U.S. to say "we oppose Taiwan independence," rather than the current version, which is that the United States "does not support" independence for Taiwan, said the people, who requested anonymity to speak about private diplomatic exchanges they participated in or were briefed on.

Xi's aides have repeatedly followed up and made the requests in the months since, according to two U.S. officials and another person familiar with the exchanges.

The U.S. has declined to make the change.

The White House responded to a request for comment with a statement that repeated the line that Washington does not support Taiwan independence. "The Biden-Harris administration has been consistent on our long-standing One China policy," the statement read.

China's foreign ministry said: "You should ask this question to the U.S. government. China's position on the Taiwan issue is clear and consistent."

Taiwan's foreign ministry declined comment.

The defeated Republic of China government fled to Taiwan in 1949 after losing a civil war with Mao Zedong's communists.

The Republic of China remains Taiwan's formal name and the government says it has no plans to change that given they are already a sovereign, independent state and Beijing has no right to claim Taiwan as its own.

### SENSITIVE ISSUE

For several years, Chinese diplomats have pushed the United States to make changes to how it refers to Taiwan's status, which remains the most sensitive area in U.S.-China relations. The unusually direct and renewed push at the leader level has not been reported previously.

The United States severed official relations with the government in Taipei in 1979 but is bound by law to provide democratically governed Taiwan with the means to defend itself. China claims Taiwan as its own territory and has never renounced the use of force to bring the island under its control.

It was not clear why Xi chose to raise the issue with Biden, but he has made opposition to Taiwan independence a focus of his time in office and China's military has significantly ramped up its activities around the island in recent years.

The Biden administration regards the proposed language change as a non-starter.

Taiwan was briefed on the recent overtures at a high level by Washington, said one of the sources.



## Intel invests US\$300 million in China chip packaging and testing plant

28 October 2024, SCMP, Coco Feng

The US chip giant aims to expand an existing chip packaging and testing facility in China, its largest market

US semiconductor giant Intel said it would expand its chip packaging and testing base in Chengdu, in a show of commitment to the mainland market despite a recent call by a Beijing-backed cybersecurity group to review the company's products.

In addition to enlarging packaging and testing capacity for server chips, the facility will also establish a "customer solutions centre to improve the efficiency of the local supply chain, increase support for Chinese customers and improve response time", Intel China said on Monday on its WeChat account.

The Santa Clara, California-based company will inject US\$300 million into its local entity, Intel Products (Chengdu), to support the expansion, according to a WeChat post published by the city's Reform and Development Commission.

Launched in 2003, Intel's Chengdu plant is responsible for the packaging and testing of more than half of the company's laptop processors shipped worldwide. Packaging and testing is the final step in semiconductor manufacturing, ensuring the quality and reliability of a product.

The facility plays a critical role in Intel's global supply chain, while Chengdu provides a "favourable" business environment that paves the way for the company's "stable growth", Intel CEO Patrick Gelsinger said during a visit there last year. Chengdu is the capital of China's southwestern Sichuan province.

The fresh investment comes less than two weeks after the Cyber Security Association of China recommended a cybersecurity review of Intel products sold in the country, citing a series of vulnerabilities previously found in the firm's central processors.

Intel's China unit said at the time that it would "maintain communications with the relevant authorities" and demonstrate its "commitment to product safety and quality".

Despite rising tensions between Beijing and Washington, China remains Intel's largest market, contributing 27 per cent of the firm's total revenue last year, compared with 26 per cent from the US.

Intel, which is struggling to compete against rivals in a chip market that is increasingly focused on artificial intelligence, reported a loss of US\$1.6 billion in the second quarter, swinging from a year-earlier profit of US\$1.5 billion. The firm warned of "weaker spending across consumer and enterprise markets, especially in China".

## Chinese Hackers Are Said to Have Targeted Phones Used by Trump and Vance

25 October 2024, The New York Times, Devlin Barrett, Jonathan Swana and Maggie Haberman

The targeting of the Republican presidential ticket's phones is part of what appears to be a wide-ranging effort to gather information about American leaders. Chinese hackers targeted data from phones used by former President Donald J. Trump and his running mate, Senator JD Vance of Ohio, as part of what appears to be a wide-ranging intelligence-collection effort, people familiar with the matter said on Friday. Investigators are working to determine what communications data, if any, was taken or observed by the sophisticated penetration of telecom systems, according to these people, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe an active and highly sensitive national security case.

The type of information on phones used by a presidential candidate and his running mate could be a gold mine for an intelligence agency: Who they called and texted, how often they communicated with certain people and how long they talked to those people could be highly valuable to an adversary like China. That sort of communications data could be even more useful if hackers could observe it in real time.

The Trump campaign team was made aware this week that Mr. Trump and Mr. Vance were among a number of people inside and outside government whose phone numbers had been targeted through the infiltration of Verizon phone systems, the officials said.

People briefed on the matter said Democrats were among the targets, including staff members of Vice President Kamala Harris's campaign and prominent figures on Capitol Hill, including Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, the majority leader.

The targeting of a presidential ticket's communications underscores the aggressiveness, scope and potential severity of the hacking attack, which Western cybersecurity experts believe was carried out by a group they have called Salt Typhoon.

The investigation is continuing, but the F.B.I. and national security officials have signaled that they are deeply concerned about the potential extent of compromised data and the wide range of possible victims.

Without identifying those who were targeted, the F.B.I. and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency issued a joint statement attributing the hacking to "actors affiliated with the People's Republic of China."

The agencies said they “are collaborating to aggressively mitigate this threat and are coordinating with our industry partners to strengthen cyberdefenses across the commercial communications sector.” They said they had informed potential victims.

It was unclear whether the hackers could have gained access to text messages, especially those sent through unencrypted channels.

Trump campaign officials were told that the hackers might still be inside Verizon’s systems, but that it was unclear whether they were actively trying to take out data. In hacking investigations, observing hackers’ activities within a compromised system can sometimes provide valuable information to investigators.

Data about the communications of a presidential and vice-presidential candidate — even absent the content of the calls and messages — could also help an adversary like China better identify and target people in Mr. Trump’s inner circle for influence operations.

The revelation came in the closing stages of a campaign in which Mr. Trump’s team has also been targeted by Iranian hackers, who have repeatedly sent his inner circle spearphishing emails that were at least partly successful in gaining access to his campaign’s communications and documents.

Security around Mr. Trump has also been tightened as a result of assassination threats from Iran.

A Trump campaign spokesman did not directly address whether the phones used by Mr. Trump and Mr. Vance had been targeted. But in a statement, the spokesman, Steven Cheung, criticized the White House and Ms. Harris and sought to blame them for allowing a foreign adversary to target the campaign. Earlier this year, security officials discovered the presence in American telecommunications systems of a China-affiliated hacking group. But investigators determined only recently that the hackers were targeting specific phone numbers, the officials said.

The infiltration by the hackers extends beyond the 2024 political campaign, with multiple people said to be targeted, people familiar with the investigation said, suggesting it could have far-reaching national security implications.

The investigation into the extent of the hacking and any national security damage is in its early stages. Whether such an attack could monitor or record phone conversations is difficult to know, and whether the hackers could read or intercept texts, for example, would depend in no small part on which messaging apps the targets used and how that data moved over the phone company’s systems.

The Wall Street Journal reported last month that a cyberattack linked to the Chinese government had infiltrated some U.S. broadband providers’ networks and might have been able to get information from

systems used by the federal government in FISA court wiretap efforts.

A spokesman for Verizon, Rich Young, said in a statement that the company was “aware that a highly sophisticated nation-state actor has reportedly targeted several U.S. telecommunications providers to gather intelligence.” He said Verizon is assisting law enforcement agencies in the investigation and working to address any continuing problems.

### **Oversight Committee Releases Report Exposing the CCP’s Destructive Political Warfare and Influence Operations**

24 October 2024, Oversight

Staff report finds that the Biden-Harris Administration lacks a government-wide strategy to counter China’s tactics and provides recommendations to help federal agencies secure America

House Committee on Oversight and Accountability Chairman James Comer (R-Ky.) released a staff report today titled “CCP Political Warfare: Federal Agencies Urgently Need a Government-Wide Strategy.” The report, which includes information obtained during the Committee’s government-wide investigation into 25 federal sectors, details how the Biden-Harris Administration is dangerously behind in implementing measures to combat the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) influence and infiltration campaign. The Oversight Committee conducted multiple hearings, held dozens of briefings, and found that most agencies’ solutions and policies either ignore, placate, or only weakly address the CCP’s efforts to influence and infiltrate the United States. To counter CCP political warfare, the report offers recommendations for federal agencies to use existing resources to defend America and critical U.S. industries.

“The House Oversight Committee has exposed the CCP’s political warfare and is working to ensure the federal government formulates a cohesive strategy to combat CCP threats and protect all Americans. The CCP is successfully infiltrating and influencing communities and critical sectors across this nation and the Biden-Harris Administration is asleep at the wheel. Today’s report details how federal agencies have failed to understand, acknowledge, or develop a plan to combat CCP political warfare and Americans are left to fend for themselves. It is past time for federal agencies to take this threat seriously and fulfill their responsibilities to the American people. Our report offers several solutions federal agencies can implement now with existing resources to address the CCP threat and protect the American people,” said Chairman James Comer (R-Ky.).

Below are some key findings from the report:

- The report exposes the CCP for what it is—a totalitarian force that enslaves its own people, surveils and harasses critics of the Party and people of Chinese descent around the world, poisons tens of thousands of Americans every year with fentanyl, and actively seeks to destroy America. It seeks the downfall of the United States because the CCP views the American way of life as a threat to the authoritarian grip it desperately seeks to maintain.
- The CCP has identified America as its main enemy—against which it has waged infiltration and influence operations for decades. Unlike the first Cold War, the adversary is already within, having entrenched itself within U.S. borders, institutions, businesses, universities, and cultural centers by capturing elites in influential circles.
- The report details what federal agencies, who work for the American people, are doing and failing to do to defend against CCP unrestricted warfare. While CCP infiltration and influence operations target every sector and community in America, much of the federal government under the Biden-Harris Administration has failed to understand, acknowledge, and strategically combat CCP political warfare.
- It is wholly unacceptable that federal agencies have failed to deter CCP unrestricted warfare, let alone to establish a cohesive government-wide strategy to do so, when the CCP has waged this war without weapons for decades.
- To assess how each agency is fulfilling its duties to the American people, the Committee has scored each agency on key metrics—including strategy, knowledge and expertise, transparency and outreach to the American people, and collaboration with relevant partners and stakeholders.

Below are some recommendations from the report:

- Federal agencies should use existing resources to defend America from CCP unrestricted warfare. A successful government-wide strategy must include four components: (1) acknowledgment of and transparent communication about CCP political warfare; (2) rejection of country agnostic and foreign malign influence-focused approaches and embracing of targeted strategies; (3) fostering the depth of knowledge needed to defeat unrestricted warfare; and (4) engaging the American people about the CCP threat and providing resources when appropriate that thwart CCP ambitions.

- Principled leaders who are willing to speak candidly about CCP infiltration of influential circles, communities, and businesses across the United States can turn the tide in America's favor.

Read the report, including all key findings and recommendations, [here](#).

### **China rivalry will continue 'into the next decade,' U.S. ambassador tells NBC News**

24 October 2024, NBC, Janis Mackey Frayer and Jennifer Jett

Ambassador Nicholas Burns said the world's two biggest economies will remain locked in competition even as they try to improve ties.

The U.S. will judge China "on its actions, not just its words," the U.S. ambassador to China, Nicholas Burns, told NBC News, as the two rival powers try to improve ties even as they remain locked in competition that he said would continue "into the next decade."

Both countries have expressed the desire for a stabler relationship, especially after relations plunged to their lowest level in decades early last year when the U.S. military shot down an alleged Chinese spy balloon that had been spotted over the continental U.S. Last month, the U.S. and China's top commanders in the Indo-Pacific resumed formal communications for the first time since 2022, which is vital for avoiding inadvertent military conflict.

"It's very important that we have these channels of communication," Burns said in an exclusive interview in Beijing on Wednesday. "But you know, we're going to judge the People's Republic of China on its actions, not just its words."

The world's two biggest economies are increasingly viewing each other through the lens of national security, including in strategically important sectors such as semiconductors, quantum computing, artificial intelligence and biotechnology.

"We're structural rivals," Burns said. "So I see this competition extending for years into the next decade."

President Joe Biden has maintained and in some cases expanded tariffs imposed by former President Donald Trump that China views as intended to restrict its development in areas such as electric vehicles and solar panels. U.S. officials in turn accuse the Chinese government of "overcapacity" in those areas that results in overseas markets being flooded with lower-priced Chinese goods that undercut domestic competitors.

The two countries are also competing for influence in the Asia-Pacific, where China has been increasing its military activity in the South China Sea and around Taiwan, the Beijing-claimed island democracy whose

most important international backer is Washington. Burns criticized live-fire drills and other military exercises that China, which has not ruled out the use of force to achieve unification, has held near Taiwan in recent days.

In addition to continuing to arm Taiwan, the Biden administration has made a point of strengthening relations with allies in the region, including South Korea, Japan and the Philippines, to counter China's growing power.

Farther afield, the U.S. has accused China of supplying Russia with dual-use technology for use in its war against Ukraine, sanctioning a number of Chinese companies.

"What's troubling for us is the fact that China says that it's neutral in the Russia-Ukraine war, and yet its actions are the opposite," Burns said, "so that is a major problem in this relationship."

China, which has strived to portray itself as neutral in the conflict, says it has never supplied weapons to Russia and that it strictly controls exports of dual-use goods. On Thursday, the Chinese Commerce Ministry reiterated its opposition to U.S. sanctions.

The "most profound difference" in U.S.-China relations, Burns said, "is that we believe in human freedom and human rights, and so we are a critic of what's happening in Xinjiang, in Tibet, in Hong Kong, the lack of religious freedom."

China, which denies rights abuses in its western region of Xinjiang, responded to criticism from the U.S. and others at the United Nations on Tuesday by saying the world's primary concern right now should be the "living hell" in the Gaza Strip, where there are warnings of "catastrophic" levels of hunger as Israel continues its assault on the Palestinian enclave. Though the relationship is primarily competitive, the Biden administration also seeks opportunities for cooperation with China, Burns said, in areas of vital global importance such as illicit drugs, artificial intelligence and climate change. China and the U.S. are the world's two biggest greenhouse gas emitters. "We want to be responsible for our own people but also for the world as we conduct this relationship," Burns said.

Biden administration officials and U.S. lawmakers have made a series of visits to China in recent months, and Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping had a face-to-face meeting in California in November and a phone call in April.

During their summit last year, the two leaders said there should be more people-to-people exchanges between their countries, including in academics, business and tourism.

But change has been slow.

Since the Biden-Xi summit 11 months ago, Burns said, Chinese security services have tried to impede 94 different U.S. Embassy events meant to bring Chinese

and American people together, including by pressuring Chinese citizens not to attend and intimidating those who do.

"They can't have it both ways," Burns said. "You can't say you want to promote people-to-people contacts and then try to actively impede them."

China denied similar allegations by Burns in June, with a Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesperson calling them "factually inaccurate."

The number of direct commercial flights between the two countries is still far below the number before the Covid-19 pandemic, and there are only about 800 Americans studying in China, down from a high of about 15,000 a decade ago.

By contrast, there are about 300,000 Chinese students in the U.S., though some have complained of being subjected to lengthy interrogations or having even been turned away by immigration officials despite having valid visas.

American views of China have hit an all-time low, according to a poll released Thursday. A majority of Americans, 55%, say the U.S. should actively work to limit the growth of China's power, according to the poll, from the Chicago Council on Global Affairs.

Optimism among U.S. businesses in China is also at a record low, according to a survey released last month by the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai, with companies citing geopolitical tensions as their top concern.

Burns, who has been in his role for 2½ years, declined to comment on the U.S. presidential election.

He said U.S. officials did not discuss it with the Chinese government except to warn against election interference, though he declined to comment on whether there was any evidence of Beijing doing so. China has said it has no intention of interfering in the election.

Burns said the Biden administration is "clear-eyed" about the threat China poses to the U.S. but that there are also times when the two countries' interests overlap.

"It's a complicated relationship. It's a very challenging relationship," he said. "But it's without any question the most consequential relationship that we Americans have with any other country."

### **Cold War legislative barrage: House passes 25 anti-China bills in one week**

21 October 2024, People's World, Duncan McFarland And Krista Chan

Reflecting U.S. determination to escalate tensions with China, the House of Representatives passed 25 bills in one week in September aimed at "countering" supposed Chinese influence and addressing alleged national security concerns.

Initiated by the Republican-led Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party, the stated goal of the legislative onslaught was to deal with “the threat posed by the Chinese Communist Party and develop a plan of action to defend the American people, our economy, and our values.”

In reality, the anti-Communist, anti-China policy program is based on racial profiling, xenophobia, and the desire to maintain U.S. global hegemony.

H.R. 1398, entitled “Protect America’s Innovation and Economic Security from the Chinese Communist Party,” is a revival of the Trump-era “China Initiative.” This Department of Justice program targeted primarily Chinese and Chinese American scientists accused of doing research that threatened U.S. national security.

The bill’s declared aim is to “curb spying by the Chinese Communist Party on United States intellectual property and academic institutions.” Under the Trump administration, the DOJ targeted hundreds of Chinese American academics and scientists, many of whom lost their jobs, but not a single supposed Chinese spy was ever prosecuted. Instead, the climate of fear and racism led many Chinese scientists to return to China.

Jane Wu, a prominent neuroscience researcher at the University of Illinois, was persecuted and her lab was shut down; she then took her own life. Rep. Judy Chu, D-Calif., chair of the Asian Pacific American Caucus, denounced the bill as “an egregious outcome of xenophobic and fear-mongering rhetoric.”

Also notable is H.R. 1157, the Countering the PRC Malign Influence Fund Authorization Act of 2023, which allocates \$1.6 billion over five years for the State Department and USAID to fund media and civil society groups around the world to counter China’s “malign influence.”

The real goal of this heavy spending is to smear and undermine China’s Belt and Road Initiative, an international development and cooperation plan that includes 150 participating countries. The bill passed with a bipartisan 351-36 majority.

The House also passed the BIOSECURE Act, aimed at prohibiting contracts with biotechnology companies that have relationships with a “foreign adversary.” While China is not named in the bill, five Chinese companies are explicitly mentioned.

After the release of the bill, one of the companies, WuXi AppTec, said its inclusion in the ban was “a preemptive and unjustified designation without due process that the Company strongly objects to.” Additionally, members of Congress failed to acknowledge the strong reliance of U.S. pharmaceutical supply chains on some of the targeted Chinese companies and the danger their

anti-China legislative crusade could pose to health in the U.S.

H.R. 9456, “Protecting American Agriculture from Foreign Adversaries Act” would prohibit the sale of farmland to Chinese immigrants and nationals if they are deemed a national security threat, such as by purchasing land located near a U.S. military installation.

The Countering CCP Drones Act attempts to block the sale of Chinese-manufactured drones, already widely in use in the U.S. The “Securing Global Telecommunications Act” is aimed at Chinese telecommunications equipment manufacturers, such as Huawei. The various other measures target a long list of products, such as Chinese EVs and batteries—crucial to managing climate change—and even profitable Wall Street investments in Chinese tech companies.

Many Asian and Chinese American advocacy groups have spoken out against the 25 anti-China bills. Having passed the House of Representatives, the bills are now being considered by the Senate.

While their final passage is uncertain, what’s already confirmed is that the latest barrage of anti-China propaganda helps prepare U.S. public opinion for conflict or war with China—an outcome that would be a disaster for the working class in this country and everywhere.

Racist “yellow peril” stereotypes are being whipped up, reminiscent of McCarthy-era repression targeting progressives and Communists. Countering the anti-China hate speech and fear-mongering with factual and balanced narratives and reporting is an urgent necessity. The reality is that China is not an “enemy” but rather a country that continuously seeks to cooperate with the U.S. on urgent global issues such as climate change, health, and peace.

### US to curb AI investment in China soon

21 October 2024, Reuters, Karen Freifeld

U.S. rules that will ban certain U.S. investments in artificial intelligence in China are under final review, according to a government posting, suggesting the restrictions are coming soon.

The rules, which will also require U.S. investors to notify the Treasury Department about some investments in AI and other sensitive technologies, stem from an executive order signed by President Joe Biden in August 2023 that aims to keep American investors’ know-how from aiding China’s military.

The final rules, which target outbound investment to China in AI, semiconductors and microelectronics and quantum computing, are under review at the Office of Management and Budget, the posting showed, which in the past has meant they will likely be released within the next week or so.



"It looks to me like they're trying to publish this before the election," said former Treasury official Laura Black, a lawyer at Akin Gump in Washington, referring to the Nov. 5 U.S. presidential election. Black added that the Treasury office overseeing the regulations generally provides at least a 30-day window before such regulations go into effect.

The Treasury Department published proposed rules, opens new tab with a raft of exceptions in June and gave the public a chance to comment. The draft rules placed the responsibility on U.S. individuals and companies to determine which transactions will be restricted.

A Treasury Department spokesperson declined to comment.

Black expects the final rules to further clarify the scope of coverage over artificial intelligence and the threshold for limited partners.

The proposed rules banned transactions in AI for certain uses, and involving systems trained in using a specified quantity of computing power. They required notification of transactions related to the development of AI systems or semiconductors not otherwise prohibited.

Publicly traded securities such as index funds or mutual funds, certain limited partnership investments, and certain syndicated debt financings were among proposed exceptions.

### **DJI sues US department of defence over military company blacklist designation**

19 October 2024, MyIndMakers

Chinese drone manufacturer DJI has filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of defence (DoD), contesting its inclusion on a blacklist of Chinese military companies. The company announced the legal action on Saturday, challenging the Pentagon's classification, which it claims is incorrect.

"On October 18, DJI filed a lawsuit to challenge the Department of Defence's (DoD) erroneous designation of the company as a 'Chinese military company,'" DJI said in a statement to AFP. The company firmly asserted its independence from the Chinese military, stating, "DJI is not owned or controlled by the Chinese military, and the DoD itself acknowledges that DJI makes consumer and commercial drones, not military drones." DJI added, "DJI is a private company and should not be misclassified as a military company."

DJI has been under increased scrutiny by Washington in recent years, partly due to allegations that its drones have been used to surveil ethnic minorities in China. Additionally, its drones have reportedly been deployed by both sides in the ongoing Ukraine war. In 2022, the Pentagon included DJI on its list of Chinese military-linked companies, claiming that

China uses civilian entities such as DJI to access advanced technologies that contribute to military advancements. The Pentagon's statement highlighted concerns about China's Military-Civil Fusion strategy, which aims to modernise the People's Liberation Army (PLA) by leveraging civilian technology.

DJI, founded in 2006, said it had engaged with the DoD for over 16 months in an effort to address the classification before resorting to legal action. The company reiterated, "DJI is not owned or controlled by the Chinese military, and the DoD itself acknowledges that DJI manufactures consumer and commercial drones, not military drones. DJI is a private company and should not be misclassified as a military company."

The lawsuit is the latest development in a series of actions by the U.S. government targeting Chinese technology companies over national security concerns. Last month, the U.S. Department of Commerce banned the sale of vehicles incorporating Chinese technology due to similar risks. DJI, a global leader in consumer and commercial drone manufacturing, produces drones used in various industries, including aerial photography, filmmaking, agriculture, search and rescue, and public safety.

Controversy has also followed DJI in the context of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The Ukrainian government accused DJI of assisting Russia by providing its AeroScope system, which allegedly helped guide missile strikes. DJI has denied these allegations and suspended business operations in both Russia and Ukraine in April 2022 to reevaluate compliance with international regulations.

In addition to the current lawsuit, DJI was blacklisted by the U.S. Department of the Treasury in 2021 over claims that it supported the surveillance of the Uyghur minority in China's Xinjiang region, further straining its relationship with U.S. authorities.

The outcome of DJI's legal battle against the Department of Defence could have broader implications for Chinese tech companies operating under increasing scrutiny in the U.S.

### **Xi says China willing to be a partner, friend with the US**

16 October 2024, Reuters

Chinese President Xi Jinping said a successful partnership between China and the United States is an opportunity for the two countries to be enablers for each other's development rather than an obstacle, according to state media on Wednesday.

"China is willing to be a partner and friend with the United States. This will benefit not only the two countries, but the world," Xi said in remarks from a

letter to the 2024 annual awards dinner of the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations, according to a CCTV news report.

Xi pointed out that China-U.S. relations are among the most important bilateral relations in the world, which have a bearing on the future and destiny of mankind, according to the letter.

The two countries have been at odds over national security concerns, ongoing trade spats as well as China's actions in the South China Sea and intensified military drills around Taiwan.

Trade relations soured over the past year and have centred around issues including restrictions on electric vehicles and advanced semiconductors.

"China has always handled China-U.S. relations in accordance with the principles of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation, and has always believed that the success of China and the United States is an opportunity for each other," Xi said.

### **China slaps sanctions on 3 US firms, 10 senior execs over weapons sales to Taiwan**

10 October 2024, Reuters

China's foreign ministry on Thursday announced it had imposed sanctions on three U.S. military-linked firms and 10 senior executives over U.S. weapons sales to Taiwan.

The steps taken against the firms, including Edge Autonomy Operations LLC, Huntingdon Ingalls Industries Inc and Skydio Inc, became effective on Thursday and will freeze any property within China, the foreign ministry said in a statement.

### **Chinese hackers access US telecom firms, worrying national security officials**

06 October 2024, CNN, Sean Lyngaas and Evan Perez

A highly skilled group of Chinese government-linked hackers has in the last several months infiltrated multiple US telecommunications firms in a likely search for sensitive information bearing on national security, multiple sources briefed on the matter told CNN.

US investigators believe the hackers potentially accessed wiretap warrant requests, two of the sources said, but officials are still working to determine what information the hackers may have obtained. US broadband and internet providers AT&T, Verizon and Lumen are among the targets, the sources said.

US officials are concerned about the potential national security damage done by the hacking, which they only recently discovered. It's the latest

sophisticated hack targeting US federal agencies that investigators have linked to China, and it comes amid tensions between Washington and Beijing over cyber-espionage and other high-stakes national security issues.

As the backbone of internet and phone communications, US telecom firms hold enormous volumes of caller and user data. US law enforcement agencies request access, through a warrant, to specific portions of that data as part of criminal and national security investigations.

Some of those investigations would be of keen interest to Beijing. The US government has in recent years brought charges against Chinese government agents for allegedly harassing Chinese nationals on US soil and for hacking political dissidents and American companies.

AT&T and Lumen declined to comment. Verizon did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

The Justice Department and the FBI declined to comment.

The Chinese Embassy in Washington, DC, denied that Beijing-backed hackers had breached US telecom firms, calling that information "a distortion of the fact." Embassy spokesperson Liu Pengyu accused the US of "politicizing cybersecurity issues to smear China."

The Wall Street Journal first reported on the hacking activity.

US officials have briefed the House and Senate intelligence committees on the Chinese hacking campaign, two sources said. Cybersecurity experts from Microsoft and Google-owned firm Mandiant have been helping to investigate the hacking activity. People probing the hacks have been struck by the hackers' skill, persistence and ability to burrow into computer networks, the sources briefed on the matter said. The Chinese hacking team in question is known in the cybersecurity industry as Salt Typhoon.

"We track Salt Typhoon and have seen activity consistent with public news reports," a Microsoft spokesperson told CNN. "When we see nation state activity, we provide customers with information to investigate as appropriate."

Yet the Chinese government has an array of other hacking teams at its disposal that can conduct espionage or disrupt computer networks, according to US officials and private experts. FBI Director Christopher Wray has said that Chinese government-backed hackers outnumber FBI cyber personnel 50 to 1.

Another Chinese government-backed hacking group has been lurking in US transportation and communication networks, waiting to use that access to disrupt any US response to a potential Chinese invasion of Taiwan, US officials have alleged.

Yet another Chinese group broke into the unclassified email accounts of senior US diplomats last year on the eve of a high-profile visit by Secretary of State Antony Blinken to China, CNN reported.

Seeking to sway public opinion in the face of detailed US government allegations, China has increasingly accused the US government of conducting cyberattacks against Chinese organizations.

Hacking and information operations are a regular point of contention in bilateral meetings. Chinese leader Xi Jinping told US President Joe Biden that China would not interfere in the 2024 presidential election when the two men met in California last year, CNN previously reported.

### **Transnational repression endangers Americans: US diplomat**

09 October 2024, RFA

China's model of authoritarianism is not limited by sovereign borders, the official said.

Growing efforts by China to silence critics living in the United States are "extremely dangerous" threats to the security of Americans, the top U.S. diplomat for human rights said at a forum Wednesday.

Dafna Rand, who was confirmed in August as the new assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights and labor after being vetted by senators in February, said regular Americans should care about the "great power competition" with China because Beijing's human rights abuses were being exported to their backyards.

At an event hosted by the International Republican Institute, Rand said she viewed the emerging power rivalry with China as one centered on values, with the United States backing open society and democracy.

By contrast, she said, Beijing acts zealously to crush dissent.

"Not only do they go after dissidents and political oppositionists and civil society and journalists and bloggers within the PRC, but now are emboldened to go after dissidents ... who have been exiled, or fled," Rand said, using an acronym for the People's Republic of China.

"This is extremely dangerous to the American taxpayer – this means that the United States is fair game for PRC and others," she said. "This is a world where security is not confined to the nation state."

#### **Transnational repression**

China's government has been repeatedly accused of trying to silence critics living in the United States by making threats, harassing or even outright attacking dissidents who dare to speak out against it.

People protesting against Chinese President Xi Jinping during his visit to San Francisco last year

were attacked by pro-Xi supporters, for instance, and Chinese students studying in American colleges say they fear being monitored by fellow students if they criticize Beijing.

Uyghurs living in the United States have likewise reported fears about speaking publicly against the genocide occurring against their people in China due to threats against family still trapped in the country.

However, Chinese officials have denied any orchestration of attacks on government critics. In some cases, they have turned the blame back on U.S. officials for apparently fabricating the claims due to an anti-China bias, and in others have said regime supporters are the real victims.

Liu Pengyu, a spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in Washington, repeated those denials in an email to Radio Free Asia.

"The Chinese government strictly abides by international law and fully respects other countries' sovereignty in law enforcement. There is no such thing as 'transnational repression' of so-called 'dissidents,'" Liu said. "This is an issue concocted by the U.S. to slander China."

"By attacking China's reasonable and lawful law enforcement operations, the U.S. will encourage more Chinese criminals to seek political asylum in the U.S. and serve as a 'haven for crime,' which will eventually shoot itself in the foot," the spokesperson said.

#### **Double standards**

At the event on Wednesday, Rand also acknowledged that for geopolitical reasons the United States often supports governments that have been found to have committed human rights violations.

She said she viewed her role as the new head of the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor as advocating for changes that chip away at that double standard.

"This is the core of DRL's *raison d'être* and daily work," Rand said, adding that State Department officials were "having really fruitful and productive and constructive debates every day" on the issues.

U.S. foreign policy would always be about "balancing" Washington's "global security concerns" with its human rights agenda, she explained, with her office in charge of gradually convincing rights-abusing U.S. partners that "essentially, this is not good for our partnership."

### **Joe Biden 'sent Xi Jinping congratulatory message' to mark China's 75th National Day**

05 October 2024, SCMP, Kinling Lo

Chinese foreign ministry publicises US leader's message on its website in press briefing format, saying only that it was received 'recently'

Chinese President Xi Jinping received a congratulatory message from US President Joe Biden to mark the 75th anniversary of the People's Republic of China this week, marking the latest top-level exchange as tensions persist in China-US relations.

The news was made public by the Chinese foreign ministry in a statement published on its website on Saturday evening.

The ministry reported the message in a question-and-answer format, noting that it was a response to media questions.

"President Joe Biden recently sent a message of congratulations to President Xi Jinping on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China," the official English-language statement said.

"In the message, President Biden noted that 'on behalf of the people of the United States, I send our congratulations to you and the people of the People's Republic of China as you celebrate the 75th anniversary of its founding. The American people and I convey our best wishes to the people of the People's Republic of China'."

The statement did not specify when the message was sent and in what format.

China celebrates the founding of the People's Republic on October 1, which usually marks the start of a week-long national holiday.

The diplomatic move comes at a delicate time in bilateral ties, with the two countries engaged in a wide-ranging rivalry, from trade and tech to influence in the Asia-Pacific.

China carried out military drills in the contested South China Sea on October 1, following a joint exercise in the region by the navies of the US, Philippines, Japan, Australia and New Zealand at the weekend.

The last exchange between the two presidents was in April, when they held a phone call on topics including cybersecurity and climate change. Their last in-person meeting was nearly a year ago, held on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in California last November.

The presidential message also came as the US Department of State appeared to deviate from its past diplomatic practice of sending a formal congratulatory message ahead of China's National Day.

The department published a congratulatory message from Secretary of State Antony Blinken on its website at 8am Beijing time, on Thursday, October 3. It has traditionally congratulated China before its National

Day, as it does with all countries with which it has diplomatic ties.

It did so on September 29 last year and on September 30 in 2022.

The White House had not released any official statement on Biden's message as of Saturday evening.

On October 1, the official Chinese government website also posted an article published each year by state news agency media Xinhua on congratulatory messages received by China on its National Day.

The article did not note any messages received from the US.

The first few paragraphs mentioned messages from Russia and North Korea, the same as last year.

In 2019, when China celebrated the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic, the article noted Russia's message first, followed by the United States and then North Korea.

### **US bans Chinese steel and food-additives firms over Xinjiang human rights**

03 October 2024, SCMP, Bochen Han

Latest additions to Uygur Forced Labour Prevention Act's entity list show American drive to rid its supply chain of forced labour presses on

The US is banning imports from two more Chinese companies over alleged human-rights abuses involving Uygurs, it was revealed on Wednesday, the latest development in America's drive to eliminate goods made with forced labour from its supply chain. The companies joining the Department of Homeland Security's Uygur Forced Labour Prevention Act (UFLPA) entity list are Baowu Group Xinjiang Bayi Iron and Steel, a subsidiary of the world's largest steelmaker, and Changzhou Guanghui Food Ingredients, a food-additives manufacturer. The restrictions take effect on October 3.

Wednesday's announcement marks the first time that steel and aspartame companies have been added to the list, which also includes entities in the agriculture, apparel, batteries, chemicals, electronics, household appliances, plastics and polysilicon sectors.

Now the total number of sanctioned mainland China-based companies stands at 75, according to the department.

"No sector is off-limits," said Robert Silvers, an undersecretary for policy at Homeland Security.

"We will continue to identify entities across industries and hold accountable those who seek to profit from exploitation and abuse."

The UFLPA, signed into law in 2021, created a "rebuttable presumption" that any materials

produced in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region are at risk of being tainted with forced labour. The "guilty-until-proven-innocent" principle effectively inverted US customs laws related to forced labour. Companies can appeal if they provide "clear and convincing" evidence to customs authorities that their supply chains are free of forced labour.

Homeland Security on Wednesday said state-owned Xinjiang Bayi has "repeatedly participated" in the transfer and receipt of ethnic minorities from Xinjiang, such as Uygurs and Kyrgyz, by way of Xinjiang government labour programmes.

As for Changzhou Guanghui, the department said the Jiangsu-based company sourced aspartame and aspartame inputs from Xinjiang.

The international community in recent years has increasingly voiced concern about the situation in Xinjiang, where the Chinese government has been accused of committing genocide and crimes against humanity targeting Uygurs and other religious and ethnic minority groups.

The alleged crimes include arbitrary detention, destruction of religious sites, forced labour, rape, sterilisation and torture.

Beijing has repeatedly and vehemently denied claims of forced labour, instead portraying its government work schemes as poverty-alleviation programmes.

"The US is again spreading false stories on Xinjiang, putting sanctions illegally on Chinese companies in the name of human rights," said Liu Pengyu, spokesperson for the Chinese embassy in Washington.

In blacklisting the companies, the US was "hurting the right to subsistence, employment and development of people in Xinjiang", Liu added.

Since the UFLPA took effect in 2022, US Customs and Border Protection has inspected 9,791 shipments totalling US\$3.56 billion, denying entry to 3,976 of them.

Still, US House lawmakers last week voiced concern that the act has been insufficiently enforced and called for stronger implementation.

### **China, US to hold talks on economic and trade issues, Xinhua reports**

01 October 2024, Reuters

Chinese Commerce Minister Wang Wentao and his U.S. counterpart will hold a call in the near future on trade and economic ties, China's state-run Xinhua news agency reported on Tuesday, citing people familiar with the matter.

They will exchange views on bilateral economic and trade relations and key issues of mutual concern,

including restrictions on electric vehicles (EVs), Xinhua reported.

During a two-day working group meeting in Beijing last month with a U.S. delegation, Chinese officials expressed "grave" concerns about additional U.S. tariffs, investment restrictions, and Russia-related sanctions.

A new round of U.S. tariffs on \$18 billion of Chinese goods including EVs, EV batteries and solar panels took effect in late September, with lithium-ion batteries bearing the brunt of the levies by value. The U.S. imports nearly zero Chinese EVs.

The tariffs were imposed after a review by the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative of levies that had been previously introduced by former U.S. President Donald Trump in 2018.

The Biden administration said the tariffs were aimed at bolstering protections for strategic domestic industries from China's state-driven excess production capacity. Beijing has vowed retaliation.

China has long accused the United States of containing its economic development and suppressing its technological advancement out of what it says is sheer paranoia. But Beijing has remained open to talks and negotiations, especially given the prospect of Trump returning to the White House.

Trump has said he would consider imposing more tariffs of 60% or more on Chinese goods should he be elected as president again in November.

"In state-to-state relations, the No.1 and overarching question is: are we rivals, or partners?" said Xie Feng, China's ambassador to the United States, at a reception on Monday, the eve of China's National Day.

"China's success does not have to mean a failure of the United States," Xie added.

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"China's success does not have to mean a failure of the United States," Xie added.

China's relations with the European Union have also come under renewed strain as Brussels accuses Beijing of flooding the European market with EVs that it says are backed by unfair Chinese industrial policies and subsidies.

The EU is slated to cast a vote on introducing definitive levies on China-made EVs this month.

## **September**



## China taps into AI to ramp up fake-news campaign amid U.S. election

28 September 2024, Fortune, Didi Tang, David Klepper

When veteran U.S. diplomat Kurt Campbell traveled to the Solomon Islands to counter Beijing's influence in the South Pacific country, he quickly saw just how far China would go to spread its message.

The Biden administration's Asia czar woke up one morning in 2022 to a long article in the local press about the U.S. running chemical and biological labs in Ukraine, a claim that Washington calls an outright lie. Started by Russia, the false and incendiary claim was vigorously amplified by China's vast overseas propaganda apparatus.

It was another example of "clearly effective Russian and Chinese disinformation," Campbell told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in July.

Two years later, the claim still reverberates online, demonstrating China's sprawling effort to reshape global perceptions. The campaign, costing many billions per year, is becoming ever more sophisticated thanks to artificial intelligence. China's operations have caught the attention of intelligence analysts and policymakers in Washington, who vow to combat any actions that could influence the November election or undermine American interests. The key tactic: networks of websites purporting to be legitimate news outlets, delivering pro-China coverage that often parallels official statements and positions from Beijing.

Shannon Van Sant, an adviser to the Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong Foundation, tracked a network of dozens of sites that posed as news organizations. One site mimicked The New York Times, using a similar font and design in what she called an attempt at legitimacy. The site carried strongly pro-Chinese messages.

When Van Sant researched the site's reporters she found no information. Their names didn't belong to any known journalists working in China, and their photos bore telltale signs of being created with AI.

"Manipulation of the media is ultimately a manipulation of readers and the audience, and this is damaging to democracy and society," Van Sant said. Liu Pengyu, spokesman for the Chinese Embassy in the U.S., said allegations that China uses news websites and social media to spread pro-Beijing information and influence public opinion in the U.S. "are full of malicious speculations against China, which China firmly opposes."

In addition to its state media, Beijing has turned to foreign players — real or not — to relay messages and lend credibility to narratives favoring the

Communist Party, said Xiao Qiang, a research scientist at the School of Information at the University of California, Berkeley. Xiao also is editor-in-chief of China Digital Times, a bilingual news website that aggregates information from and about China.

Beijing's methods are wide-ranging and links to the government are often difficult to prove, Xiao said. But whether it's journalists with American-sounding names or an Indian influencer, the consistently pro-Beijing messages give them away.

"The implicit message is the same — that the Chinese Communist Party works for its people," Xiao said.

Analysts at the cybersecurity firm Logically identified 1,200 websites that had carried Russian or Chinese state media stories. The sites often target specific audiences and have names that sound like traditional news organizations or defunct newspapers.

Unlike Russia or Iran, which have displayed clear preferences in the U.S. presidential campaign, Beijing is more cautious and focused on spreading positive content about China.

While the sites aren't owned by China, they run Chinese content. When Logically looked at content specifically about the U.S. election, 20% could be traced back to Chinese or Russian state media.

"There's a decent likelihood that these articles could influence U.S. audiences without them even knowing where it comes from," said Alex Nelson, Logically's senior manager for strategy and analysis.

According to the Gallup World Poll, more countries surveyed view the U.S. positively, but the share of countries where views of both the U.S. and China are negative overall is higher than 15 years ago, signaling the U.S. doesn't appear to be making gains over China.

Some U.S. officials want to increase spending to even the playing field. The House of Representatives this month approved a bill that would authorize \$325 million annually through 2027 to counter China's global influence, including its disinformation campaigns. The measure still needs Senate approval.

"We are in a global competition for influence with China, and if you want to win it, then you cannot do it on a middle-power budget," said Rep. Gregory Meeks, a Democrat from New York.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has demanded a systematic buildup of Chinese narratives that would give his country a global voice "commensurate with" its international stature.

Beijing has invested in state media such as the Xinhua news agency and China Central Television to convey its messages to global audiences in various languages and platforms. Media groups at the local level are creating "international communication centers" to build an overseas presence with websites, news channels and social media accounts.

Beijing also has struck media partnerships worldwide, and the article Campbell read in the Solomon Islands is likely a result of those.

China's outreach is tied to the global race for economic dominance in electric vehicles, computer chips, AI and quantum computing, said Jaret Riddick, a senior fellow at Georgetown University's Center for Security and Emerging Technology.

"The countries that lead on emerging technologies will be the countries that have a great advantage going forward," Riddick said.

To tell its story, Beijing has not shied away from using fake personas. A 2023 State Department report detailed the case of a published writer named Yi Fan, originally described as a Chinese foreign ministry analyst. Yi morphed into a journalist, then became an independent analyst.

Yi's details changed, but the message did not. Through published commentaries and writings, Yi trumpeted close ties between China and Africa, praised Beijing's approach to environmental sustainability and argued that China must counter distorted Western narratives.

Then there was Wilson Edwards, a supposed Swiss virologist quoted in Chinese media as a COVID-19 expert who criticized the U.S. response. But Swiss officials found no evidence he existed.

"If you exist, we would like to meet you!" the Swiss Embassy in Beijing wrote on social media.

### **Legislation to curb US investment in China is top priority, lawmaker says**

26 September 2024, Reuters, Alexandra Alper

The Republican chair of the House of Representatives' select committee on China said on Wednesday that the panel's top priority is legislation restricting U.S. investment in China to stop investors from "funding our own demise."

"We have to have an outbound investment regime that basically says 'No investment in these businesses that are on some kind of a list,' that says 'We shouldn't be helping the Chinese military, we shouldn't be supporting genocide,'" Representative John Moolenaar said, speaking on a panel at the American Enterprise Institute.

"That's probably our number one priority right now," he added. "We are actually funding our demise."

A committee spokesperson confirmed that "genocide" referred to China's alleged treatment of its Uyghur minority in Xinjiang.

The Chinese Embassy in Washington said Beijing firmly opposes "the U.S. overstretching the concept of national security and abusing state power to go after Chinese products and companies." It added that China would "continue to firmly protect the legitimate

and lawful rights and interests of Chinese companies."

Moolenaar's remarks signal Congress could revive long-sought restrictions on U.S. investment in China, which have faced a rocky path in Washington.

A measure restricting outbound investment was stripped out of the Chips Act before it was signed into law in 2022. In August 2023, Democratic President Joe Biden issued an executive order giving the Treasury Department the authority to bar or restrict U.S. investments in Chinese entities in three sectors: semiconductors and microelectronics, quantum information technologies and certain artificial intelligence systems.

But rules implementing that order, proposed in July, have yet to be finalized. The Treasury did not respond to a request for comment on the status of the proposed rules.

Moolenaar said House Speaker Mike Johnson "would like to have something before the end of the year." Johnson's office did not respond to a request for comment.

The United States and other Western countries have imposed sanctions on Chinese officials for human rights abuses in Xinjiang, which the United States has said have amounted to genocide.

China rejects allegations of abuses, including use of forced labor in Xinjiang, and describes the camps it has set up there as vocational training centers for Uyghur Muslims that help combat religious extremism.

Moolenaar also flagged specific Chinese companies that he said pose national security threats including Chinese crane maker Shanghai Zhenhua Heavy Industry Co (ZPMC), which was featured in a recent committee report

U.S.-bound cranes made by ZPMC, which accounts for 80 percent of ship-to-shore cranes in operation at U.S. ports, contain unauthorized cellular modems, creating a "significant backdoor security vulnerability," he said.

"ZPMC could disrupt U.S. maritime equipment and technology at the request of the Chinese government, including during a conflict over Taiwan," he said, referring to the democratically governed island that China claims. The company, he said, is a "loaded gun".

Neither ZPMC nor the Chinese embassy in Washington immediately responded to requests for comment on that issue, but ZPMC has in the past said it does not pose a cyber security threat.

### **Eric Adams Indictment: China Could Lose a Friend in New York**

26 September 2024, News Week

An investigation into the campaign finances of New York's Mayor Eric Adams, which resulted in charges of bribery, fraud and soliciting illegal donations from abroad on Thursday, could strip China of an important friend in the United States. Prosecutors allege that Adams took money from wealthy foreign businesspeople and at least one Turkish government official ahead of his 2021 campaign. Adams has already declared his innocence. City Hall did not immediately return a written request for comment.

Adams has been a successful example of the Communist Party building relationships deep within America and Newsweek reported last year on donations to his campaigns by groups in New York linked to China's ruling party.

"Adams is just one target," said Cheryl Yu, China Studies Fellow at the Jamestown Foundation, a nonpartisan international affairs think tank.

Newsweek's reporting has shown that it has been a mutually beneficial relationship maintained through proxies on both sides. In New York and other major U.S. cities, the Communist Party holds sway over hundreds of pro-Beijing groups, whose members help promote the Chinese government's narrative on core issues including democratic freedoms in Hong Kong and the political status of Taiwan.

Winnie Greco, one of Adams' closest aides, is the mayor's strongest link to these myriad Chinese business and cultural nonprofits. She has represented his office at their events and praised the contributions of their senior figures, who have in turn encouraged their members to back his campaigns with votes.

Adams himself has been a regular at quasi-political events organized by the overseas Chinese groups, which often had members of the Chinese consulate in attendance. Rights groups have accused Adams of inadvertently legitimizing Beijing's overseas influence work by rubbing shoulders with pro-Beijing figures, one of whom was arrested last year for running a secret Chinese police station in Manhattan.

Adams' office previously said his attendance was a demonstration of his support for the Chinese American community and not an endorsement of their political positions. Adams' office previously said his attendance was a demonstration of his support for the Chinese American community and not an endorsement of their political positions. Adams was not the only New York politician with close Chinese connections in his administration. Linda Sun, a former chief aide to New York Gov. Kathy Hochul, was charged this month for seeking to influence New York politics on Beijing's behalf.

In May, Newsweek's review of hundreds of pages of City Hall emails, obtained under a freedom of information request, found that New York's celebrated Asian-American parade was set up in 2022 by the founder of a media company that the

Justice Department had designated a foreign agent of the Chinese government.

The parade was arranged in conjunction with Greco, who has worked with Adams since his time as Brooklyn borough president and who has traveled with him to China in the past.

The investigation into Adams' administration began last November when federal agents raided the home of his top fundraiser Brianna Suggs, who worked on his successful mayoral campaign in 2021.

Last year, a Newsweek investigation revealed dozens of pro-Beijing figureheads—all suspected of involvement in the Communist Party's overseas influence network—had donated at least \$1 million to political campaigns in New York alone since the 1990s. Adams' campaigns received nearly \$40,000 in donations from 2015-2023. About two-thirds went toward his last run for City Hall.

Newsweek was not able to establish whether federal prosecutors suspected his campaign of accepting unlawful donations from Chinese foreign nationals. U.S. law forbids green card holders from making financial contributions if they are considered a "foreign principal" or to be acting on behalf of a foreign government without prior registration.

### **Republicans propose bill that would double tariffs on Chinese imports and end favored trade status**

26 September 2024, Fox News

A group of Republican senators is unveiling a new bill that would cease all permanent normal trade relations with China and double the tariffs on Chinese Communist Party (CCP) goods.

The bill would, over five years, increase tariffs by 100% on imports deemed "strategic" to national security by the Biden administration in an effort to force the growth of the domestic market for national security-related goods.

It would boost tariffs on non-strategic goods by a minimum of 35%.

The bill, led by Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., and cosponsored by Sens. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., and Josh Hawley, R-Mo., would also grant the president the authority to institute further tariffs, quotas and bans on specific Chinese goods. It would end "de minimis treatment" for China, or the value threshold below which imports are not subject to customs duties.

The revenue generated from this, according to the bill, would go towards farmers and manufacturers injured by potential Chinese retaliation, the purchase of key munitions important to a Pacific conflict, and paying down the debt.

This comprehensive repeal of China's PNTR [Permanent normal Trade Relations] status and reform of the U.S.-China trade relationship will

protect American workers, enhance our national security, and end the Chinese Communists' leverage over our economy," Cotton said in a statement.

"Giving Communist China the same trade benefits that we give to our greatest allies was one of the most catastrophic decisions that our country has ever made," said Rubio.

Economists forecast that China's GDP is expected to grow by nearly 5% in 2024. The U.S.'s forecasted GDP growth is half that.

The legislation falls in line with one of Trump's top priorities: during the presidential debate this month, the former president said again that he would impose a 60% tariff on Chinese goods and a 10% baseline tariff on all imported goods. Vice President Kamala Harris scoffed at that plan as a "a sales tax on the American people."

Earlier this month, China instituted new export controls on a batch of minerals that are critical to the U.S. defense industry, including antimony products.

The little-known flame-retardant metal is used in ammunition, infrared missiles, nuclear weapons and night vision goggles, as well as batteries and photovoltaic equipment. China produced nearly half of the world's antimony last year.

#### **BIDEN ROLLS OUT NEW CHINA TARIFFS**

In 2000, the U.S. Congress voted to grant China permanent normal trade relations. The designation fundamentally changed China-U.S. trade relations: American consumers gained access to low-priced Chinese imports and between 2001 and 2021, the value of goods imported from China quadrupled to \$500 billion.

"More than two decades ago, Washington elites granted China most favored nation trading status, enabling Beijing to exploit our working class. Congress must revoke this sweetheart deal to protect American workers from our greatest adversary and to bring back the millions of manufacturing jobs shipped overseas," said Hawley.

The Biden administration earlier this month finalized plans to increase tariffs on certain Chinese-made products: the tariff rate would double for electric vehicles, go up 50% on solar cells and 25% on EV batteries, critical minerals, steel, aluminum, face masks and ship-to-shore cranes beginning September 27, according to the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative.

Tariff hikes on other products, like semiconductor chips, are expected to go up over the next two years. Trump implemented sweeping tariffs on about \$300 billion worth of Chinese-made products. Biden kept those in place and slapped more tariffs on about \$15 billion of Chinese imports.

China is widely expected to respond with tariffs on U.S.-made goods.

#### **Chairman McCaul on House Passage of the STOP CCP Act**

25 September 2024, Committee on Foreign Affairs

Washington, D.C. — House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman McCaul (R-TX) issued the following statement after the House passed Rep. Lisa McClain's (R-MI) H.R. 3334, the Sanction Tyrannical and Oppressive People within the Chinese Communist Party (STOP CCP) Act of 2024, which sanctions top Chinese Communist Party (CCP) officials responsible for threatening Hong Kong and Taiwan, violating human rights in China, and infringing upon the sovereignty of Tibet.

"Weakness invites aggression. The Biden-Harris administration's failure to confront the malign actions of the CCP has emboldened Chairman Xi and the perpetrators of territorial aggression across the Indo-Pacific to commit egregious human rights violations in Xinjiang and Tibet. Earlier this year, I met with the Dalai Lama in Dharamshala, India and learned firsthand about the abuses the CCP has committed against the Tibetan people, as well as CCP efforts to undermine Tibetan culture, language, and religious beliefs. When the U.S. projects strength through action like this, the world listens."

#### **China to Investigate U.S. Retailer, Sending a Message Over Xinjiang**

24 September 2024, The New York Times, Keith Bradsher

PVH, which owns Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger, is targeted for allegedly avoiding purchases from the region where the Chinese government has cracked down on Muslim minorities.

China said on Tuesday that it would investigate whether PVH, the American retailer that owns the Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger brands, has taken "discriminatory measures" against products from Xinjiang in China's far west.

The announcement, by China's Ministry of Commerce, is a new escalation of China's effort to fight bans or consumer boycotts of goods from Xinjiang.

Many Western governments have begun restricting or banning products from Xinjiang following mass arrests and evidence of forced labor among the region's predominantly Muslim ethnic groups, particularly the Uyghurs. Researchers have cited evidence that cotton production in Xinjiang has been tainted by coercion.

Beijing is sending a message to multinational corporations that if they comply with consumer

boycotts or government bans on products from Xinjiang, they may face retaliation in China.

China's action underlines how big companies increasingly find themselves sandwiched between pressures from the Chinese government, which defends its policies in Xinjiang, and Western countries and human rights advocacy groups.

PVH, which is based in New York, said in a statement that it was in communication with the Chinese Ministry of Commerce. "PVH maintains strict compliance with all relevant laws and regulations in all countries and regions in which we operate," the company said.

On Friday, the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China, a group with lawmakers from at least 22 countries and the European Union, issued a statement calling for Volkswagen to withdraw from Xinjiang. Volkswagen, Germany's largest automaker, has a 190-employee joint venture in Xinjiang with a carmaker owned by the Shanghai municipal government. Chinese state-owned enterprises like Volkswagen's partner follow Beijing's lead in opposing any withdrawal from Xinjiang.

The alliance issued its statement after Adrian Zenz, the director in China studies at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, issued a report that cited a leaked audit that Volkswagen had commissioned. His report said the automaker had failed to properly investigate accusations of complicity in Xinjiang's coercive policies toward Uyghurs. Volkswagen has said that the audit shows it behaved appropriately.

Volkswagen said on Monday that it was not building cars in Xinjiang, where workers prepare cars for delivery to dealerships.

China is not only a large consumer market but also the world's largest manufacturer. Many companies, particularly apparel retailers, depend heavily on factories in China and could be vulnerable if Beijing decided to impose sanctions on their subsidiaries or suppliers.

In the United States, the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act bans the import of any goods from Xinjiang unless the importer can prove to American customs officials that the products were made without forced labor. The law took effect in June 2022.

Proving that has become practically impossible, as China has banned independent investigations of labor practices in Xinjiang. Advocacy groups say that forced labor is widely used in Xinjiang's vast cotton fields, which supply textile factories all over China. Xinjiang produces more than 90 percent of all the cotton grown in China.

The European Union is in the process of imposing a ban similar to the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act.

When consumer and human rights groups in the West began organizing boycotts several years ago of brands that used cotton from Xinjiang, big clothing brands initially tried to shun Xinjiang suppliers. PVH said in July 2020 that within the next 12 months, it would cease all business relationships with factories and mills that produced garments or fabric in Xinjiang, or that supplied cotton from the region.

China responded the next year by allowing nationalist groups to use the country's heavily censored internet to organize their own boycotts of Western brands that did not buy from Xinjiang. H&M soon found shoppers were shunning its stores.

Influential personalities who had endorsed Tommy Hilfiger and Calvin Klein, as well as Adidas, Nike and Converse, in China quickly stopped working on behalf of the brands. Burberry had to give up an online video game partnership.

Western companies quickly stopped saying much about their policies in Xinjiang. But the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act has given them a strong incentive to avoid Xinjiang products anyway.

China has quietly passed its own laws that ban compliance with laws, sanctions or boycotts in other countries. The commerce ministry has authority to deem commercial decisions as a threat to China's national security.

The Ministry of Commerce said Tuesday that it would allow PVH 30 days to provide documents regarding whether it had avoided buying from Xinjiang. If PVH is found to have violated China's laws, the ministry said, the penalties could include a halt to the company's imports and exports from China, restrictions or bans on investments in China, restrictions or bans on PVH employees from working or entering China, and possibly fines on the company.

The ministry could impose these penalties if it decides to put PVH on its "unreliable entity" list. The ministry added three U.S. defense companies to that list in May because they had sold weapons to Taiwan, an island democracy over which Beijing claims sovereignty. But that decision made little difference because the United States does not allow the defense contractors to sell arms to mainland China anyway.

China's strong threat to PVH comes as the Chinese government has been trying to woo foreign investors. The ministry tried to send a reassuring message, saying that its actions against PVH were aimed at preserving free trade, not suppressing it.

"The Chinese government is determined to promote high-level opening-up, firmly safeguard the multilateral trading system, and firmly safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of various market operators," the ministry said. "Honest and law-



abiding foreign entities have nothing to worry about," it added.

### **Biden tells Quad leaders that Beijing is testing region at turbulent moment for Chinese economy**

21 September 2024, News Nation, Zeke Miller and Amer Madhani

President Joe Biden told Indo-Pacific allies on Saturday that he believes China's increasing military assertiveness is an effort to test the region at a turbulent moment for Beijing.

Biden's comments were caught by a hot mic after he and fellow leaders of the so-called Quad delivered opening remarks before the press at a summit he's hosting near his hometown of Wilmington, Delaware. He said his administration sees Beijing's actions as a "change in tactic, not a change in strategy."

China is struggling to pull up its economy that was pummeled by the coronavirus pandemic and has seen an extended slowdown in industrial activity and real estate prices as Beijing faces pressure to ramp up spending to stimulate demand.

"China continues to behave aggressively, testing us all across the region, and it's true in the South China Sea, the East China Sea, South China, South Asia and the Taiwan Straits," Biden told Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida. He added, "At least from our perspective, we believe (Chinese President) Xi Jinping is looking to focus on domestic economic challenges and minimize the turbulence in China's diplomatic relationships, and he's also looking to buy himself some diplomatic space, in my view, to aggressively pursue China's interest."

Starting with a trade war that dates back to 2018, China and the United States have grown at odds over a range of issues, from global security, such as China's claims over the South China Sea, to industrial policy on electric vehicle and solar panel manufacturing.

The administration has repeatedly spoken out about concerns about Chinese aggression toward Taiwan and more recently on the frequent clashes between Chinese and Philippine vessels in disputed areas of the South China Sea.

At the summit, the leaders agreed to expand the partnership among the Quad nations' coast guards to improve interoperability and capabilities, with Indian, Japanese and Australian personnel sailing on U.S. ships in the region. But U.S. officials would not say if those transits would include the contested South China Sea.

China also has longtime territorial disputes involving other claimants including Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia

and Brunei. U.S. officials worry about China's long-stated goals of unifying Taiwan with China's mainland and the possibility of war over Taiwan. The self-ruled island democracy is claimed by Beijing as part of its territory.

The leaders in a joint declaration issued following their talks expressed "serious concern about the militarization ... and coercive and intimidating maneuvers in the South China Sea."

Biden last month dispatched his national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, to Beijing for three days of talks with Chinese officials. Sullivan during that visit also met with Xi.

Both governments are eager to keep relations on an even keel ahead of a change in the U.S. presidency in January. And both sides have said they remain committed to managing the relationship, following up on a meeting between Xi and Biden in San Francisco last November.

The concerns about China were raised as Biden showed off a slice of his Delaware hometown to the leaders of Australia, Japan and India as he hosted what is likely the last gathering of the Indo-Pacific partnership that has grown in prominence under his White House tenure.

When Biden began his presidency he looked to elevate the Quad, which until then had only met at the foreign minister level, to a leader-level partnership as he tried to pivot U.S. foreign policy away from conflicts in the Middle East and toward threats and opportunities in the Indo-Pacific. This weekend's summit is the fourth in-person and sixth overall gathering of the leaders since 2021.

"It will survive way beyond November," Biden told the leaders.

The president, who has admitted to an uneven track record as a scholar, also seemed tickled to get to host a gathering with three world leaders at the school he attended more than 60 years ago. He welcomed each of the leaders individually for one-on-one talks at his nearby home before they gathered at the school for talks and a formal dinner. "I don't think the headmaster of this school thought I'd be presiding over a meeting like this," Biden joked to fellow leaders.

Albanese, Modi and Kishida came for the summit before their appearances at the U.N. General Assembly in New York next week.

"This place could not be better suited for my final visit as prime minister," said Kishida, who like Biden, is set to soon leave office.

Earlier, the president warmly greeted Kishida when he arrived at the residence on Saturday morning and gave the prime minister a tour of the property before they settled into talks.

White House officials said holding the talks at the president's house, which sits near a pond in a

wooded area several miles west of downtown, was intended to give the meetings a more relaxed feel.

Sullivan described the vibe of Biden's one-on-one meeting with Albanese, who stopped by the house on Friday, as "two guys — one at the other guy's home — talking in broad strokes about where they see the state of the world." He said Biden and Albanese also swapped stories about their political careers.

The Australian leader remarked that the visit had given him "insight into what in my view makes you such an extraordinary world leader."

Modi also stopped by the house on Saturday to meet with Biden before the leaders gathered for their joint talks.

"There cannot be a better place than President Biden's hometown of Wilmington to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Quad," Modi said.

Biden and Modi discussed Modi's recent visits to Russia and Ukraine as well as economic and security concerns about China. Modi is the most prominent leader from a nation that maintains a neutral position on Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Biden and Kishida, who are both stepping away from office amid sliding public support, count the tightening of security and economic ties among the U.S., Japan and South Korea as one of their most significant accomplishments.

The improved relations between Japan and South Korea, two nations with a deep and complicated history that have struggled to stay on speaking terms, have come amid worrying developments in the Pacific, including strides made by North Korea in its nuclear program and concerns about China.

Biden during their face-to-face meeting commended Kishida for demonstrating "courage and conviction in strengthening ties" with South Korea, according to the White House. They also discussed China, Russia's war against Ukraine and emerging technology issues.

The U.S. and Japan are dealing with a rare moment of tension in the relationship. Biden, as well as presidential candidates Kamala Harris and Donald Trump, have opposed a \$15 billion bid by Japan's Nippon Steel to take over American-owned U.S. Steel.

Biden administration officials indicated this week that a U.S. government committee's formal assessment of the proposed deal has yet to be submitted to the White House and may not come until after the Nov. 5 election.

The summit declaration also condemned North Korea's continued ballistic missile testing and expressed "deep concern about countries that are deepening military cooperation with North Korea." The leaders were expected to discuss the issue in more depth over dinner.

The U.S. has publicized intelligence findings that show North Korea and Iran have provided Russia with ballistic missiles and other weaponry for its war in Ukraine and that Moscow is in turn tightening its relationship with Pyongyang and Tehran.

The leaders announced their four countries are committing \$150 million for HPV vaccines, screening and therapeutics in the Indo-Pacific. Relatively few women in the region get screened for the virus that causes nearly all cervical cancers.

U.S. Navy doctors and nurses will also launch a program to train their Pacific counterparts on conducting cervical cancer screening and HPV vaccinations.

The announcement is related to Biden's Cancer Moonshot Initiative, a long-running passion project of the president and his wife, Jill Biden, aimed at reducing cancer deaths.

The Bidens' son Beau died in 2015 at age 46 of brain cancer.

### **FBI says it has disrupted major Chinese hacking operation that threatened US critical infrastructure**

18 September 2024, CNN, Sean Lyngaas

The FBI has used a court order to seize control of a network of hundreds of thousands of hacked internet routers and other devices that Chinese government-linked hackers were using to threaten critical infrastructure in the US and overseas, FBI Director Christopher Wray said Wednesday.

"It is just one round in a much longer fight," Wray said in a speech at the Aspen Cyber Summit in Washington, DC. "The Chinese government is going to continue to target your organizations and our critical infrastructure."

The massive web of hacked devices — known as a botnet — was a menace that the Chinese hackers could have used to conduct targeted cyberattacks on US companies or government agencies, according to an advisory released by the US and its "Five Eyes" allies (the English-speaking alliance that includes Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom). As of June, the botnet included over 260,000 hacked devices from all over the world, from North and South America to Australia, according to US officials. Those hacked devices ranged from webcams to DVRs to routers, and about half of them were located in the US, according to Wray.

A spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in Washington called the US allegations "groundless" and accused the US government of conducting cyberattacks against China.

It's the latest tit-for-tat in the often-tense relations between US and China in cyberspace. The US government has long warned that another Chinese government-backed hacking group has been lurking in US transportation and communication networks, waiting to use that access to disrupt any US response to a potential Chinese invasion of Taiwan.

That Chinese hacking unit is preparing to "wreak havoc and cause real-world harm" to the US, Wray told Congress in January.

A tool of choice

The botnet targeted by the FBI and its allies on Wednesday was an active menace, Wray said in his speech.

The botnet caused "an all-hands-on deck cybersecurity incident" for one unnamed California-based organization, causing "significant financial loss," the FBI director said.

But Wednesday's takedown was more about what the botnet could have done than what it did. The army of zombie computers has been a quiet and looming threat to US government networks for many months, according to experts. In late December 2023, the botnet's operators "conducted extensive scanning efforts" of US military and other government agencies, according to US tech firm Lumen Technologies, which investigated the activity.

Botnets are a tool of choice for both cybercriminals and state-backed hackers because users around the world are often unaware that their computers have been hijacked for scamming or espionage. The FBI said in February that it had helped disrupt a network of over 1,000 hacked internet routers that Russia's military intelligence agency was allegedly using for cyber espionage operations against the United States and its European allies.

The Chinese botnet targeted on Wednesday had an array of capabilities, including the ability to conduct tailored cyberattacks using the devices it had compromised, according to Lumen researchers. Lumen researchers are watching for signs that the Chinese hackers will resurrect the botnet. But for now, "we assess that the botnet has been taken offline due to a combination of law enforcement efforts and null routing as of September 18," Danny Adamitis, principle information security engineer at Lumen's Black Lotus Labs threat intelligence division, told CNN.

Null routing is a process that internet technology providers can use to stop data from being sent to a specific IP address.

A Chinese company named Integrity Technology Group managed the botnet for the last three years, according to US officials. CNN has requested comment from the company.

The Chinese tech firm is "involved in many of China's most important programs and efforts to improve its

hacking capabilities," Dakota Cary, a consultant at security firm SentinelOne who focuses on China, told CNN. "The naming of the company is significant as it demonstrates allied governments' visibility into China's operations, as well as enabling researchers to further investigate the company."

## China sanctions 9 US firms over military sales to Taiwan

18 September 2024, RFA, Taejun Kang

The U.S. announced on Monday the sale of aircraft spare parts to Taiwan.

China imposed sanctions on Wednesday on nine U.S. military-linked firms for their sale of equipment to Taiwan and it denounced what it called the "dangerous trend" of U.S. military support for the democratic island.

On Monday, the U.S. Defense Security Cooperation Agency announced the sale of aircraft spare parts and related logistics and support worth about US\$228 million to Taiwan, adding that the spare parts would boost the island's "ability to meet current and future threats."

The sale included both classified and unclassified components for the aircraft, as well as related engineering, technical and logistics support services. Washington's arms sales to Taipei "seriously interfered in China's internal affairs, and seriously damaged China's sovereignty and territorial integrity," said China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Wednesday.

China regards Taiwan as a renegade province that should be reunited with the mainland, by force if necessary. The democratic island has been self-governing since it effectively separated from mainland China in 1949 after the Chinese civil war.

Despite their lack of formal diplomatic ties, the U.S. has long been a key supplier of arms to Taiwan. Washington is bound by U.S. legislation, the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act, to provide Taiwan with arms for its defense.

A spokesperson for China's foreign ministry on Wednesday, however, urged the U.S. to immediately stop the "dangerous trend" of arming Taiwan.

"Stop conniving and supporting Taiwan independence, and stop undermining peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait," said Lin Jian at a regular press briefing.

While the U.S. maintains strong informal ties with Taiwan, it has not declared support for the island's independence.

China's steps taken against the firms, including Sierra Nevada Corporation and Stick Rudder Enterprises LLC, come into effect on Wednesday and will freeze

their property within China, the foreign ministry said in a statement.

It described the sanctions as countermeasures and said they also applied to Cubic Corporation, S3 Aerospace, TCOM Ltd Partnership, TextOre, Planate Management Group, ACT1 Federal and Exovera.

Organizations and individuals within China are prohibited from engaging in transactions with the firms, the ministry added.

China previously sanctioned and banned firms, including units of Lockheed Martin, for selling arms to Taiwan.

The latest sales were the 16th military sale to Taiwan authorized by the administration of President Joe Biden.

Taiwan's Foreign Ministry expressed its appreciation for the U.S. support for Taiwan's security while its Ministry of National Defense highlighted the strategic importance of the sale, noting that China's gray zone tactics – a tactic using the threat of force to create fear and intimidation – had affected Taiwan's training and operational readiness.

The aviation-related equipment would enhance the combat readiness and security of Taiwan's air force, the ministry said.

### **China says it tailed a US spy plane through the sensitive Taiwan Strait**

17 September 2024, AP, Simina Mistreanu

Chinese warplanes tailed a U.S. military aircraft through the sensitive Taiwan Strait on Tuesday, China's military said.

The U.S. aircraft was a P-8A Poseidon patrol and reconnaissance plane, capable of conducting long-range anti-submarine warfare, according to a statement by the People's Liberation Army's Eastern Theater Command.

Chinese military forces "organized warplanes to tail and monitor the U.S. aircraft's flight and handled it in accordance with the law," said Li Xi, a senior colonel and spokesperson for the command.

"Theater command troops will remain on constant high alert and resolutely safeguard national sovereignty and security as well as regional peace and stability," he added.

The U.S. Navy didn't immediately comment on the incident.

China claims the self-ruled island of Taiwan as its own territory and bristles at other countries' patrolling the body of water separating it from the island.

On Friday, Germany sailed two warships through the Taiwan Strait in its first transit of the disputed waters in more than two decades, drawing criticism from Beijing.

In 2001, a U.S. surveillance plane and a Chinese navy fighter collided mid-air near the Chinese island province of Hainan, resulting in the Chinese pilot's death. The U.S. said its plane was in international airspace and the accident was the result of reckless flying by the Chinese side.

### **China frees American pastor after 18 years in detention**

16 September 2024, NPR, Emily Feng

An American pastor jailed in China for more than 18 years has been released this week, according to the State Department on Monday.

68-year-old David Lin, a naturalized US citizen, had gone back to the country of his birth in 2006, after applying for permission from the Chinese government to open a Christian church building there.

But he was detained shortly afterwards and was handed a life sentence in 2009 for contract fraud, a charge Lin and his family deny.

According to the Dui Hua Foundation, a U.S.-based human rights advocacy group, Lin's sentence had been reduced several times since 2012. And prior to the most recent reduction, he was set to be released in December 2029.

The State Department considers Lin as "wrongfully detained" in China and said it "welcomed" his release from the Chinese prison.

"He has returned to the United States and now gets to see his family for the first time in nearly 20 years," it says in a statement shared with NPR.

"No words can express the joy we have – we have a lot of time to make up for," his daughter, Alice Lin, told Politico.

Lin was released the week before a U.S. congressional hearing to be held on Washington on other Americans considered "wrongfully detained" in China. The detainees' families say they suffering from serious health issues.

Among them are Kai Li, a businessman detained in 2016 on spying charges, and Mark Swidan, a businessman who was detained in 2012 for alleged narcotics trafficking. The families of both men have denied the charges.

During his last trip to China this April, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said it remains "a top priority to resolve the cases of American citizens who are wrongfully detained or subject to exit bans in China." Since 2012, China has increased the imposition of exit bans on both Chinese and foreign national, according to human rights groups. Beijing rejects these characterizations.

Last summer, the State Department revised its travel advisory for China, urging Americans to

"reconsider" travel to mainland China due to the risk of arbitrary detention and exit bans there. China's foreign ministry said the revision was "totally unwarranted" and called on Washington "to remove this stumbling block in China-U.S. people-to-people exchanges."

### **Top US, Chinese military brass hold first call to stabilise ties**

10 September 2024, Reuters

The United States and China held theatre-level commander talks for the first time on Tuesday, Chinese authorities said, amid efforts to stabilise military ties and avoid misunderstandings, especially in regional hot spots such as the South China Sea.

Washington seeks to open new channels of regular military communication with Beijing since ties sank to a historic low after the United States downed a suspected Chinese surveillance balloon last year.

Admiral Sam Paparo, head of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, held a video telephone call with his counterpart Wu Yanan of the Southern Theater Command of the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's areas of responsibility include the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait, two hot spots for regional tension that are also flashpoints in U.S.-China bilateral ties.

Both sides had an "in depth exchange of views on issues of common concern," the Chinese defence ministry said in a readout.

Paparo urged the PLA "to reconsider its use of dangerous, coercive, and potentially escalatory tactics in the South China Sea and beyond", the Indo-Pacific Command said in a statement that described the exchange as "constructive and respectful".

He also stressed the importance of continued talks to clarify intent and reduce the risk of misperception or miscalculation.

The call followed a meeting in Beijing last month between U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and Chinese leader Xi Jinping's leading military adviser, at which the talks were agreed.

U.S. and Chinese troops were also taking part in large-scale military exercises led by the Brazilian Armed Forces this week in the Brazilian city of Formosa in the state of Goiás.

American and Chinese troops had not trained side by side since 2016, when Beijing participated in the Rim of the Pacific Exercise, or Rimpac, led by the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command.

Most two-way military engagements between the U.S. and China were suspended for almost two years after Nancy Pelosi, then speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, visited Taiwan in August 2022.

"I certainly worry about an unintended conflict between our military forces, an accident, an accidental collision," Nicholas Burns, the U.S. ambassador to China, told the magazine Foreign Policy in an online interview.

Later this week, the United States plans to send a senior Pentagon official to a major security forum in China.

### **China says it is ending foreign adoptions, prompting concern from US**

06 September 2024, The Guardian, Helen Davidson

US diplomats seeking clarity for hundreds of families in the process of international adoption.

The Chinese government is ending its international adoption programme, and the US is seeking clarification on how the decision will affect hundreds of American families with pending applications.

At a daily briefing on Thursday, Mao Ning, a spokesperson for the Chinese foreign ministry, said Beijing was no longer allowing intercountry adoptions of children from China, with the only exception for blood relatives to adopt a child or a stepchild.

Mao did not explain the decision other than to say that it was in line with the spirit of relevant international conventions. "We express our appreciation to those foreign governments and families, who wish to adopt Chinese children, for their good intention and the love and kindness they have shown," she added.

In letters sent to some adoption agencies on Wednesday, and shared on social media, the US state department said it had been told by Chinese authorities that all other pending adoptions were cancelled, except those with already issued travel authorisations.

In a phone call with US diplomats in China, Beijing said it "will not continue to process cases at any stage" other than those cases covered by an exception clause. The embassy is seeking clarification in writing from China's ministry of civil affairs, the US state department said on Thursday.

The state department said: "We understand there are hundreds of families still pending completion of their adoption, and we sympathise with their situation."

Many people have adopted children from China over the decades, visiting the country to pick them up and then bringing them to a new home overseas. Lengthy delays in the process meant many couples who were approved to adopt still waited years, sometimes near a decade, to receive their child.

US families have adopted 82,674 children from China, the most from any foreign country.



Intercountry adoptions had been largely suspended since 2020 because of the Covid pandemic, and changes in China's political, demographic and economic situation had led many in the sector to expect an end or tightening of the adoption policy.

The Chinese government had resumed adoptions for children who had received travel authorisation prior to the suspension, the US state department said in its latest annual report on adoptions, but the numbers appeared small.

A US consulate issued 16 visas for adoptions from China from October 2022 through to September 2023, the first in more than two years, the state department report said. It was not clear if any more visas had been issued since then.

In January, Denmark's only overseas adoption agency said it was winding down operations after concerns were raised about fabricated documents and procedures, and Norway's top regulatory body recommended stopping overseas adoptions for two years pending an investigation into several cases.

The response on social media from prospective and current adoptive parents, and from adoptees themselves, was mixed. Some feared the announcement could also close off avenues for adoptees connecting with their former orphanages and birth families. Some said it was "long overdue" and they hoped children would be taken care of in their country of origin.

The Nanchang Project, a US-based group that works with Chinese adoptees and their adoptive parents to help adoptees find their biological families said the announcement marked "the end of an era" but the programme was "already on its way out".

It added: "It is our profound hope that the remaining children in China receive the attention, medical care, and love they deserve."

The charity said on social media that the number of adoptions had already seriously declined in the years before the pandemic pause, and there were fewer children put up for adoption overall, attributing it to China's improved economy, falling birthrates, and a social preference for male children waning.

The number of newborn babies in China fell to 9.02 million in 2023, and the overall population declined for the second consecutive year. Amid a series of government measures designed to encourage more births, China's decades-long one-child policy – which was a key driver of babies, especially girls, being put up for adoption – was phased out.

### **Former aide to New York governor charged as 'agent' of Chinese government**

03 September 2024, Aljazeera

Linda Sun and husband are accused of having 'laundered millions of dollars' on behalf of China, receiving kickbacks in return.

The United States Justice Department has filed charges against a former top aide to New York Governor Kathy Hochul, accusing the aide of pursuing unlawful "political activities" on behalf of the Chinese government.

The aide in question, 41-year-old Linda Sun, was appointed as Hochul's deputy chief of staff in 2021 and previously worked under Hochul's predecessor, Governor Andrew Cuomo.

But in an indictment unsealed on Tuesday, federal prosecutors accused Sun and her husband Christopher Hu, 40, of using her position to benefit the Chinese government and profit from the exchange.

"Linda Sun, a former New York State government employee, acted as an undisclosed agent of the Chinese government while her husband, Christopher Hu, facilitated the transfer of millions of dollars in kickbacks for personal gain," Christie Curtis, the acting assistant director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), said in a press release.

The indictment is the latest in a series of moves the Justice Department has taken to counter the "national security threats" it perceives from China.

Sun and Hu were both arrested on Tuesday morning. They appeared for their arraignment at a federal court in Brooklyn later that afternoon.

In the indictment, Sun was accused of violating the Foreign Agents Registration Act by failing to register as an agent working on behalf of China and by having "actively concealed" her relationship with its government.

The document also alleged she had committed visa fraud and alien smuggling, as well as entering a money laundering conspiracy.

Hu, meanwhile, was charged with the money laundering conspiracy, as well as conspiracy to commit bank fraud and using a family member's identity to open new bank accounts.

In the indictment, federal prosecutors detailed how they believe the couple "laundered millions of dollars" for China in exchange for kickbacks to buy "luxury vehicles and million-dollar properties" in New York.

That includes a \$4.1m property in Manhasset, New York, and a \$2.1m condominium in Honolulu, Hawaii. Prosecutors also say the benefits afford Sun and Hu the ability to buy a 2024 Ferrari luxury vehicle.

They also accused Sun of offering Chinese officials letters of invitation to travel to the US and arranging meetings with New York State leaders.

She even provided some Chinese government representatives "official New York State proclamations" without receiving the proper authorisation to do so first, according to the indictment.

That contrasts with her treatment of Taiwanese officials, the indictment alleged. It accused her of preventing representatives from Taiwan's government from meeting with New York officials.

The government in Beijing has long denied Taiwan's claims to sovereignty, as part of its "one China" policy. Rather, it maintains that the self-governing island is an integral part of China, under the authority of its government.

US Attorney for the Eastern District of New York Breon Peace explained in a news release that the "illicit scheme enriched the defendant's family to the tune of millions of dollars".

"While appearing to serve the people of New York as Deputy Chief of Staff within the New York State Executive Chamber, the defendant and her husband actually worked to further the interests of the Chinese government," Peace said.

The US Justice Department has been cracking down on alleged interference from the Chinese government in recent months.

Less than two weeks ago, on August 22, it also filed an indictment against a New York resident who reportedly took part in the protests in Tiananmen Square in 1989, a major flashpoint for the pro-democracy movement in China.

The Justice Department accused that person of acting as an agent for China's Ministry of State Security.

And last year, federal prosecutors announced charges against two men accused of running a "secret police station" in New York City. The Chinese government has refuted such claims of foreign espionage.

For her part, Sun left the New York governor office's employ in 2022.

McMaster Washington, The Indian government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is willing to engage in "unprecedented" levels of cooperation with the United States, mainly due to Chinese aggression, but at the same time is "fearful" both of "entrapment and abandonment", former US National Security Adviser Lt Gen H R McMaster has stated in his latest book.

Giving the firsthand account of his tenure during the Donald Trump administration as the National Security Advisor, McMaster in his book "At War With Ourselves", that hit the bookstores this Tuesday, says he met his Indian counterpart Ajit K Doval a day before he was fired by Trump.

"The day before I was fired, I met for dinner with my Indian counterpart, Ajit Doval, at Quarters 13, Fort McNair, a quiet place at the intersection of the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers, just south of the US Capitol. Doval is a character straight out of central casting. Betraying his background as the former director of his country's Intelligence Bureau, he would lean into conversations, cock his head to the side as he spoke, and use hushed tones, even when discussing the most routine subjects," McMaster writes.

"During our walk after dinner, he whispered, 'How much longer will we work together?' It did not take someone with Doval's intelligence background to figure out I was departing the Trump administration. Without answering directly, I told him it had been a privilege and expressed confidence that there would be continuity," he says.

McMaster writes they knew each other well enough for Doval to be direct.

"What happens in Afghanistan after you leave?" Doval asked him, to which McMaster reminded the Indian NSA that Trump had approved the South Asia strategy last August and that it was the first reasoned and sustainable strategy in 17 years of war.

"Doval knew this, but sometimes you cannot be fully candid with even your closest foreign counterparts. In fact, I shared Doval's concern, and I knew that my response was less than convincing. Trump was unconventional and impulsive. Sometimes his impulses were good. Other times, to use one of his turns of phrase, 'not so much'," the American general writes.

McMaster in his book gives a detailed account of his trip to Afghanistan, Pakistan and India from April 14- 17, 2017, during which he met then Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar, Doval and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi.

The conversation was easy, as Doval, Jaishankar, "and I believed we had a tremendous opportunity to work together in pursuit of our mutual objectives", McMaster writes about his meeting at the Janpath residence of Doval. Jaishankar then was the Foreign

## August

**India open to 'unprecedented' cooperation with US because of Chinese aggression, says ex-NSA McMaster**

29 August 2024, Hindustan Times

India open to 'unprecedented' cooperation with US because of Chinese aggression, says ex-NSA

Secretary and late Sushma Swaraj was the External Affairs Minister.

"We spoke about the war in Afghanistan and the threat to India from nuclear-armed Pakistan, but Jaishankar and Doval spoke mainly about an increasingly aggressive China. The two men were open to unprecedented cooperation thanks to Xi Jinping's aggression. The deepening partnership between the world's largest and the world's oldest democracies seemed logical, but India is fearful both of entrapment into competitions from which it would prefer to abstain and abandonment based on the short American attention span and ambivalence over South Asia," McMaster writes.

"Those 'schizophrenic' anxieties and the legacy of India's leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement during the Cold War had led to hedging behaviour, especially with Russia, an important source of arms and oil for India," he states.

On the final day of his trip, he met Modi at his residence.

"Modi gave us a warm welcome. It was clear that deepening and expanding our relationship was a top priority for him. He expressed concern over China's increasingly aggressive efforts to extend its influence at India's expense and over its growing military presence in the region," the former NSA writes.

Modi, McMaster says, suggested that the US, India, Japan, and like-minded partners emphasise the concept of a free and open Indo-Pacific as an inclusive effort to benefit all, in contrast to China's 'One Belt One Road' initiative.

At the end of the meeting, he says, the prime minister gave him a hug, put his hands on his shoulders, and blessed him. "You have an aura around you, and you will do good for humanity," Modi told him.

A few months later Trump hosted Modi for a meeting at the White House on June 25-26, 2017.

"We huddled in the Oval Office for a few moments between the meeting with Modi's delegation in the Cabinet Room and the statements and question-and-answer session in the Rose Garden. I warned Trump that the prime minister was a hugger and, based on how well the visit was going, would probably hug Trump after their statements," McMaster writes. "Although Trump was known to hug the occasional American flag onstage, he was not a big hugger of people. The hug was delivered and reciprocated in a way that was not too awkward. Success. Modi departed on June 27, just two days before Moon's arrival," he says.

Modi was the first head of state the president and First Lady hosted for dinner in the Blue Room, he noted.

## Agenda for US-China talks includes Taiwan, South China Sea, Russia and AI

27 August 2024, SCMP, Igor Patrick

US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi are set for three days of meetings in Beijing this week.

In addition to Taiwan and tariffs, when US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi meet this week, they will discuss counternarcotics, better communication between the nations' militaries and improved artificial intelligence security, a senior White House official said Monday. The meetings, scheduled to run from Tuesday to Thursday in Beijing, are to build on the talks that began at last year's summit in California between US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping. "Mr. Sullivan's trip to China was discussed by the two leaders last November. A lot of planning and scheduling went into it since then, and they're now executing it in Beijing," National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said.

Sullivan's meeting, his fifth with Wang, will be the first trip by a US national security adviser to Beijing since 2016, when Susan Rice of the Barack Obama administration travelled there.

Additionally, Sullivan is expected to raise US concerns regarding security in the Indo-Pacific region, China's support for Russia's defence industrial base as well as other international hotspots, including North Korea, the Middle East and Myanmar, a senior US official said last week.

On Sunday, China's Foreign Ministry said that Beijing regarded Sullivan's trip as "an important step for the two sides to implement the common understandings the two presidents had at their San Francisco meeting," but that Wang would take the opportunity to raise "serious concerns" about Taiwan.

"The US side must abide by the one-China principle and the provisions of the three China-US joint communiques, and honour its commitment of not supporting 'Taiwan independence'," the ministry said in a statement.

According to Kirby, the US intends to tackle the "rising tensions in the South China Sea", where China and the Philippines are embroiled in territorial disputes.

On Monday, Manila criticised Beijing for "repeated aggressive, unprofessional and illegal" actions in the waterway, accusing Chinese aircraft of conducting unsafe manoeuvres against a civilian aircraft patrolling over the Scarborough Shoal and Subi Reef.

Kirby said that Sullivan would also discuss "sea tensions across the Taiwan Strait and a range of other issues, including unfair economic practises".

China's Foreign Ministry said it intended to communicate to Sullivan that "countries outside the region should not do things that provoke confrontation or increase tensions".

"China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests in the region have sufficient historical and legal basis, and ... countries in the region have full confidence, wisdom and capability to properly handle the issue," the statement added.

### **Chinese Communist Party Plots Response to Trump's America First Agenda**

24 August 2024, AMAC, Ben Solis

Earlier this summer, a spokesperson for the Chinese foreign ministry claimed that Beijing was indifferent to who wins the U.S. presidential contest this fall. But experts with whom I spoke said that is far from the truth, with one describing the Biden-Harris administration as "a gift that keeps on giving" to Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Dr. Shoi-Ming Teng, a distinguished economist and philosopher who defected to the West in the 1980s, told me that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) undoubtedly prefers that the "status quo" remains unchanged with a Kamala Harris victory in November. He emphasized that Beijing fears the "constant surprises" that characterized Trump's policy toward the communist nation and would prefer to deal with more predictable Democrat leaders.

"The speed and depth of Trump's policy overwhelmed them," he added, referring to the CCP's senior leadership. "Trump threw them on their knees." Meanwhile, Teng said, the CCP has shown that it does not take Biden as a serious threat, pointing specifically to an altercation early in Biden's presidency where Chinese officials berated and ridiculed Biden Secretary of State Antony Blinken during meetings in Alaska.

Teng also said that while Biden has maintained many of Trump's sanctions and tariffs, he has "failed to make the necessary adjustments after the CCP found a way to avoid them." As a result, China has been able to resume flooding the U.S. with its goods, continuing the hollowing-out of American industry.

Lawyer and economist Jun De Ning, who advised Chinese leader Hu Yaobang and defected to the West shortly after his death, told me that the CCP's "biggest fear" is Trump's return to the White House.

As Ning explained, despite false "official" numbers published by the CCP, China is in a deepening economic crisis caused by Xi's policies and accelerated by Trump's presidency. Prior to Xi's moves to tighten the government's grip over all of Chinese society, many CCP officials assumed China's economic expansion was unstoppable. But now the country has seen a notable rise in unemployment,

increasing debt, and a significant foreign investment and capital outflow, with almost \$15 billion leaving between April and June.

Early indications also suggest that China may already be making preparations to weather the storm of a second Trump term, further indicating that they would much prefer another four years of Democrat rule.

China's increasing military and economic cooperation with Russia may be one prime example of this. Should Trump win a second term, China would need somewhere else to offload the goods that are currently coming into the United States.

One possible answer is Russia, another American adversary. Chinese exports to Russia rose by 4.76 percent in June, more than quadruple the 0.92 percent increase in May.

However, neither Russia's capital nor its consumer market can come close to supplanting the United States. Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine has also hampered Moscow's ability to be an effective trading partner.

But Beijing has also adopted a three-pronged approach to potentially insulate itself from renewed tariffs and sanctions in a second Trump term.

First, Beijing is working to aggressively integrate Chinese firms into the American economy. This includes working to remove Chinese companies from U.S. blacklists, forcing Trump to restart the sanctions process if he is re-elected. Chinese entities, including real estate owners and tech firms listed on major stock exchanges, have been directed to discreetly increase their U.S. capital ownership.

Second, Chinese companies are also rapidly expanding their operations in Mexico and Canada. In addition to allowing them to skirt existing tariffs, Beijing is hoping that joint Chinese-Mexican and Chinese-Canadian ventures can capture a large share of the American consumer market and make it more economically painful for a second Trump administration to impose new tariffs. Notably, Kamala Harris's assertion that Trump's proposed tariffs on Chinese goods are a "tax" and would raise prices for consumers plays right into Beijing's hands on this front.

Finally, the CCP intends to continue heavily subsidizing Chinese industry to flood foreign markets with Chinese goods. While this practice maintains the Yuan's depreciated value, it is also keeping many Western economies on the brink of an economic crisis and decimating their domestic manufacturing capability. Beijing recognizes that if it can maintain its subsidies to keep prices low long enough, manufacturing in the United States and throughout the West will be decimated to the point where the world will have no choice but to rely on imports from China.

Despite what CCP officials may suggest, the outcome of the presidential election this year will have an enormous impact on the future of Chinese economic and foreign policy. With Trump leading in the polls, Beijing is preparing for the worst.

But even if Trump does win a second term, the question remains – will it be soon enough?

### **Jake Sullivan to make first China visit as US national security adviser**

23 August 2024, Financial Times, Demetri Sevastopulo and Joe Leahly

White House expects foreign minister Wang Yi to ask about November election.

Jake Sullivan will make his first visit to China as US national security adviser next week for talks with foreign minister Wang Yi as part of the “strategic channel” created by the two superpowers to stabilise relations. Sullivan will hold talks with Wang on Tuesday and Wednesday, according to a US official. They last met in Bangkok in January, two months after President Joe Biden and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping held a summit in San Francisco.

His visit is part of a broader effort to stabilise the relationship between the two superpowers, which hit a new low last year after a Chinese spy balloon flew over North America. But tensions remain high over issues ranging from the South China Sea and Taiwan to disagreements over the US export controls on technology and China’s support for Russia. Sullivan is the first national security adviser to visit China since Susan Rice, who served in the administration of President Barack Obama and last travelled there in 2016. The White House expects Wang to ask about the US election, which has taken a surprise turn since his last meeting with Sullivan, with vice-president Kamala Harris replacing Biden as the Democratic nominee. The race between Harris and Donald Trump remains tight, with the former president threatening swingeing tariffs against Beijing if he is elected. Over the past 16 months, Sullivan and Wang have held four unannounced meetings – in Vienna, Malta, Washington and Bangkok – in attempts to reduce the odds of the increasingly competitive relationship veering into conflict, particularly over Taiwan. The US official said Sullivan and Wang would discuss issues ranging from Taiwan and technology-related national security policies to US concerns about China’s support for Russia. The US will also raise concerns about aggressive Chinese actions towards the Philippines, a US ally, in the South China Sea. “It’s partly about maintaining stability during a period of high political activity in the United States and . . . general geopolitical uncertainty,” said the official. He said Wang would probably ask, “what does a baton pass from Biden

to Harris look like” if she wins November’s election, and added that Sullivan would say he expected “more continuity than change in China policy” under Harris. The official said Sullivan and Wang would also discuss the possibility of Biden and Xi having a final engagement before the US president left office in January, adding that an in-person meeting was “not off the cards”. “We haven’t proposed anything, but the notion that they would see each other one last time before the president leaves office . . . is not out of the question,” said the official, who noted that both leaders were likely to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum and G20 in November. A second US official said the Sullivan-Wang channel was less about convincing China to change its policies and producing “deliverables” and more about ensuring that the two countries managed their rivalry. “It really is about clearing up misperceptions and avoiding this competition from veering into conflict,” the official added. The official said Sullivan would voice concern about China’s “increased military, diplomatic and economic pressure against Taiwan” and “continue to urge Beijing to engage in meaningful dialogue with Taipei.”

Biden and Xi agreed to set up the channel when they met in Bali, Indonesia, in late 2022. They also agreed to have a series of reciprocal visits by top officials. But the plans were derailed when a Chinese spy balloon flew over North America a few months later. For Beijing, Sullivan’s visit marks the latest step in efforts to return the relationship from the brink of an uneasy equilibrium after disruptions caused by the trade war during the Trump presidency, the pandemic, the Ukraine war and the balloon incident. China needs a more stable international environment as it relies on its export engine to steer its economy through the fallout from a deep property slump.

### **China warns US not to allow Dalai Lama’s ‘separatist activities’ or talks with officials**

22 August 2024, SCMP, William Zheng

Beijing protests to Washington after the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader meets senior American officials in New York.

China warned the US not to allow the Dalai Lama to engage in “separatist activities” while visiting the country and made “solemn protests” to Washington after senior American officials met the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader in New York on Wednesday.

“China firmly opposes any country allowing the Dalai Lama to visit under any pretext, and firmly opposes any government officials of any country meeting with the Dalai Lama in any form,” Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said on Thursday.



"[We] have made solemn protests to the US. The appointment of a so-called special coordinator of Tibetan issues constitutes interference in [China's] internal affairs," she said, adding that Beijing does not recognise the coordinator position.

Mao urged the US to abide by its commitments on Tibet-related issues and respect China's core interests and major concerns.

"Do not allow the Dalai Lama to engage in political separatist activities in the US, and do not have any form of contact with him," she added.

China's protest came a day after senior US officials met the 89-year-old spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism in New York on Wednesday.

White House human rights director Kelly Razzouk and Uzra Zeya, the US undersecretary of state for human rights and special coordinator for Tibetan issues, travelled to New York to meet the Dalai Lama, according to a statement by the US Department of State.

The meeting "reaffirmed the US commitment to advancing the human rights of Tibetans", the statement said.

The Dalai Lama fled to India in 1959 after a failed uprising against Chinese rule in Tibet.

He has been in the United States since June, when he travelled to New York to seek medical treatment for his knees. It is the first time he has visited the US since 2017.

A bipartisan US congressional delegation met him in June at his residence in India's Dharamsala. The delegation included Republican congressman Michael McCaul and former US House speaker Nancy Pelosi, a Democrat. They also met officials from the Tibetan government-in-exile, which is not officially recognised by any state or government.

Last month, Beijing also expressed strong opposition to Washington after US President Joe Biden signed the Resolve Tibet Act, which urges Beijing to resume direct dialogue with the Dalai Lama to resolve differences and calls for a negotiated agreement on Tibet. Beijing considers the Dalai Lama a separatist and opposes contact with him by foreign government officials. It has not held talks with representatives of the Dalai Lama since 2010.

### **China says it is 'seriously concerned' about US nuclear strategic report**

21 August 2024, Reuters

China is seriously concerned about a report that said the United States approved a nuclear strategic plan to focus on China's rapid expansion in its nuclear arsenal, the Chinese foreign ministry said on Wednesday. "The U.S. is peddling the China nuclear threat narrative, finding excuses to seek strategic

advantage," a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said.

According to a report by the New York Times, U.S. President Joe Biden approved in March a highly classified nuclear strategic plan that focused on China's quickly growing arsenal, but also seeks to prepare the U.S. for possible coordinated nuclear challenges from China, Russia and North Korea. "China is seriously concerned about the relevant report, and the facts have fully proved that the United States has constantly stirred up the so-called China nuclear threat theory in recent years," said Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning at a regular press briefing.

The White House said on Tuesday that the classified nuclear strategic plan approved by Biden this year is not a response to a single country or threat.

The U.S. has consistently pointed to China's expansive and growing nuclear weaponry. An annual report by the Pentagon last October said China had more than 500 operational nuclear warheads in its arsenal, and will probably have over 1,000 warheads by 2030.

### **US soldier pleads guilty to selling secrets to China**

14 August 2024, BBC, Gavin Bulter

A US Army analyst has pleaded guilty to charges of conspiring to sell military secrets to China, the Department of Justice (DOJ) has said.

Sgt Korbein Schultz was arrested in March after an investigation by the FBI and US Army counterintelligence alleged that he was paid \$42,000 (£33,000) in exchange for dozens of sensitive security records.

The criminal conspiracy began in June 2022 and continued up until his arrest, officials said.

He is scheduled for sentencing in January.

Sgt Schultz, who held a security clearance to access top secret information, conspired to collect data with someone whom he believed to be living in Hong Kong, according to court documents.

The purported Hong Kong resident asked Sgt Schultz to collect sensitive data related to missile defence and mobile artillery systems, according to court records. Sgt Schultz also collected data on US fighter aircraft, military tactics, and the US military's defence strategy for Taiwan, based on what it learned from Russia's war in Ukraine.

"By conspiring to transmit national defence information to a person living outside the United States, this defendant callously put our national security at risk to cash in on the trust our military placed in him," Assistant Attorney General Matthew Olsen of the DOJ's National Security Division said.

Sgt Schultz on Tuesday pleaded guilty to all charges against him, including conspiracy to obtain and

disclose national defence information and bribery of a public official.

The indictment against Sgt Schultz earlier detailed messages he sent to the supposed Hong Kong resident, who was referred to in court documents as Conspirator A.

In one exchange, Sgt Schultz said he "wished he could be Jason Bourne" in reference to the fictional spy character.

After being promised more money from his handler, he said in another message: "I hope so! I need to get my other BMW back!".

The FBI and US Army Counterintelligence Command are continuing investigations into the case.

### **Biden repeats debunked claim he traveled 17,000 miles with China's Xi Jinping**

13 August 2024, Fox News, Julia Johnson

Biden dropped out of the presidential race last month

President Biden repeated a claim he had been fact-checked for in the past, telling an audience on Tuesday that he traveled 17,000 miles with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

"I spent a lot of time with Xi Jinping," he said during his remarks at an event touting the Biden "Cancer Moonshot" initiative in New Orleans, Louisiana.

"I spent over 80 hours with him alone. Over 17,000 miles in China, anywhere in Tibet, near Tibet."

He described telling the Chinese president that "possibility" is the one word that can define America, tying his analogy to the Cancer Moonshot initiative. Biden's claim that he has traveled more than 17,000 miles with Xi has previously been fact-checked and considered primarily inaccurate, however.

He has made the claim many times over several years and was fact-checked by the Washington Post in 2021. "Try as we could, however, we still could not get the travel to add up to 17,000 miles," wrote the publication.

Biden was given three pinocchios for his claim. According to the Post, this number of pinocchios means there is "significant factual error and/or obvious contradictions." It is comparable to a rating of "mostly false."

The White House did not immediately respond to inquiries from Fox News Digital.

Biden announced \$150 million in ARPA-H awards to develop technologies that will allow surgeons to provide more successful tumor-removal surgeries for people facing cancer at the event in New Orleans.

After having dropped out of the 2024 presidential race last month and endorsing Vice President Kamala Harris to succeed him, Biden is now reportedly focusing on the causes that are most personal for him in his remaining months as president.

Cancer research is of "immense importance" to the president, an aide told CNN.

### **U.S. Officials to Visit China for Economic Talks as Trade Tensions Rise**

12 August 2024, The New York Times, Alan Rappeport

A group of senior Biden administration officials is traveling to Shanghai this week for a round of high-level meetings intended to keep the economic relationship between the United States and China on stable footing amid mounting trade tensions between the two countries.

The talks will take place on Thursday and Friday and are being convened through the U.S.-China Financial Working Group, which was created last year. Officials are expected to discuss ways to maintain economic and financial stability, capital markets and efforts to curb the flow of fentanyl into the United States.

Although communication between the United States and China has improved over the past year, the economic relationship remains fraught because of disagreements over industrial policy and China's dominance over green energy technology. The Biden administration imposed new tariffs in May on an array of Chinese imports, including electric vehicles, solar cells, semiconductors and advanced batteries. The United States is also restricting American investments in Chinese sectors that policymakers believe could threaten national security.

The U.S. delegation, which departed on Monday, is being led by Brent Neiman, the Treasury Department's assistant secretary for international finance. He will be joined by officials from the Federal Reserve and the Securities and Exchange Commission. They are expected to meet with the People's Bank of China's deputy governor, Xuan Changneng, and other senior Chinese officials.

"We intend for this F.W.G. meeting to include conversations on financial stability, issues related to cross-border data, lending and payments, private-sector efforts to advance transition finance, and concrete steps we can take to improve communication in the event of financial stress," Mr. Neiman said ahead of the trip, referring to the abbreviation for the financial working group.

Treasury Secretary Janet L. Yellen pressed Chinese officials during her trip to China in April to stop flooding global markets with cheap clean-energy products. Credit...Pool photo by Tatan Syuflana

American and Chinese financial regulators have been conducting financial shock exercises this year to coordinate their responses in the event of a crisis, like a cyberattack or climate disaster, that might affect the international banking or insurance systems.

The Biden administration has been urging China to take action to prevent chemicals used to produce fentanyl from being exported to other countries and smuggled into the United States. There were signs of progress this month when China announced that it would put new restrictions on three of these chemicals, a move that the United States described as a “valuable step forward.”

Other economic issues between the two countries continue to be contentious. Treasury Secretary Janet L. Yellen pressed Chinese officials during her trip to China in April to stop flooding global markets with cheap clean-energy products, warning that its excess industrial capacity would distort global supply chains. But after a meeting of Communist Party leaders last month, there was little indication that China would retreat from its investments in high-tech manufacturing or take major steps toward rebalancing its economy by bolstering domestic consumption.

The talks this week are the fifth meeting of the financial working group and will be the second time the officials have convened in China.

### **Love the army, defend the motherland: how China is pushing military education on children**

11 August 2024, The Guardian, Helen Davidson and Chi-hui Lin

Growing emphasis on military training for civilians reflects heightened nationalism under Xi Jinping – and a growing risk of war over Taiwan

At Beijing Jiaotong University’s affiliated elementary school, a class of children, maybe six or seven years old, stand in a line in a rainbow painted hallway. A boy holds a replica handgun, and behind him other students grasp unwieldy fake assault rifles. Fake police flak jackets cover their blue and white tracksuits, and their heads swim inside too-big artillery helmets. In other photographs students practise drills, salute visiting soldiers, and arrange themselves on a sporting field to spell out “I [heart] u” next to a Chinese flag.

In the post that includes the photos, published online in April, the school says it has worked hard in recent years to conscientiously “promote the main theme of patriotism, and make it an important part of the school’s ideological and political education and moral education”.

“We will create a strong atmosphere of national defence education, carry out rich and colourful activities, cultivate students’ patriotism, love for the army, and organisational discipline, and cultivate their ambitions to build and defend the motherland from an early age,” it says.

The elementary school is among the thousands designated as “model schools for national defence education”, part of China’s push to increase military awareness and skills among its population – starting at younger and younger ages.

More designations announced in January by the ministry of education and the central military commission almost doubled the number of “model schools”. They are likely to be followed by legal changes extending mandated training including “cadet activities” to students under 15. A bill proposing amendments to the National Defence Education Law was given its first reading in the rubber-stamping National People’s Congress in April. The amendments make more prescriptive what was previously a guide, emphasising the need for basic military training in high schools and tertiary institutions, and allowing it to be extended to younger students for the first time.

“All state organs and armed forces, all political parties and public groups, all enterprises and institutions and grassroots self-government organisations of a mass character shall, in light of their specific conditions, organise national defence education in their respective regions, departments and units,” the draft said.

‘Rebuilding the strength of the Chinese Communist party’

The growing emphasis on military training for civilians reflects a heightened nationalism in today’s China under Xi, who has also made clear his distaste for what he sees as declining masculinity in China, and the worsening risk that he could take the country into war over Taiwan.

“Requiring children to engage in performative military education activities at younger and younger ages normalises China’s increasingly aggressive foreign policy, and could potentially prepare the country psychologically for a contingency in which China engages in armed conflict,” said Bethany Allen, the head of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute’s China programme.

China-based analysts have also told media the ruling Chinese Communist party (CCP) is learning from the Ukraine war and the potential need to have a population that can be quickly mobilised for conflict. Increasing militarism by China under Xi Jinping has raised the risk of conflict or hostilities with other countries, particularly over Taiwan. At the same time its armed forces, despite undergoing a massive overhaul and modernisation process, are reportedly struggling with corruption issues and low recruitment.

The defence ministry said in September 2023 that primary and secondary schools across the country had begun the new school year with defence education lessons, “planting a deep sense of

patriotism, respect for the military, and concern for national defence in the heart of students”.

It's not clear if the lessons are improving recruitment, and China's punitive censorship culture makes it almost impossible to survey their impact on general opinion. Most published comments are similar to that of Feng Shanguo, a former soldier who took part in leading lessons at his child's school, Neijiang No 13 in Sichuan.

“It can help children to build tenacity, courage, and hard-working qualities,” Feng told state media.

But Katja Drinhausen, head of Merics' research programme on Chinese policy, said military education was just one aspect of a broader campaign to boost the CCP's strength at a time when it was facing multiple challenges including economic downturn, sporadic social unrest, multiple regional disputes, and worsening natural disasters driven by climate change.

“It's important to put together the different pieces of the broader ambition,” Drinhausen said.

“There is renewed focus on military training and creating identity and buy-in from the broader population on what the military does, which also serves to build internal cohesion when the party needs to find new sources of social and political legitimacy cohesion because the economy isn't doing it any more,” she said.

“First came a renewed focus on patriotic education and what ‘makes China great’ in schools. Then came a rollout of national security education, not just the mainland but also in Hong Kong ... I do think these are different layers that are part of a broader strategic refocus on rebuilding the strength of the CCP inside China.”

Drinhausen also noted that the military, the People's Liberation Army, is officially the armed forces of the CCP, not the Chinese state or its people, and has been used in the past to violently put down domestic protests.

“It's helpful to see the development when it comes to military and defence focused education [in the context of different possible scenarios] because when you look at it that way, all these measures aren't necessarily solely a precursor for war but serve all sorts of crisis management for the party going forward,” she said

### **U.S. Vies With Allies and Industry to Tighten China Tech Controls**

09 August 2024, The New York Times , Ana Swanson

The Biden administration must navigate the interests of U.S. companies and allied governments as it tries to close off China's access to advanced chips

The Biden administration is fighting to overcome opposition from allied nations and the tech industry as it prepares to expand restrictions aimed at slowing

China's ability to make the most advanced semiconductors, which could be used to bolster Beijing's military capacity.

The administration has drafted new rules that would limit shipments to China of the machinery and software used to make chips from a number of countries if they are made with American parts or technology, as well as some types of semiconductors, according to people who have seen or were briefed on a draft version of the rules.

The rules are aimed at blocking off some of the newer routes that Chinese chipmakers have found to acquire technology, despite international restrictions. The United States has been pushing allies like Japan and the Netherlands to toughen their restrictions on technology shipments to China, during visits to those countries as well as a Japanese state visit to Washington in April. Those nations are home to companies that produce chip-making machinery, like ASML Holding N.V. and Tokyo Electron Limited. But industry in the United States and other countries has argued the rules could hurt them, and it remains unclear when or if foreign governments will issue limitations.

In the meantime, some of the rules that the United States plans to impose would have significant carve-outs, the people said. The rules blocking shipments of equipment to certain semiconductor factories in China would not apply to more than 30 allied countries, including the Netherlands, South Korea and Japan.

That has sparked pushback from U.S. firms, who argue that the playing field will be further tilted against them if the U.S. government stops their sales but not those of their competitors.

U.S. officials say negotiations are ongoing, and that they still hope to persuade Japan and other countries to tighten their restrictions. But some analysts are skeptical.

Emily Kilcrease, a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security, said that while U.S. allies are increasingly wary of a threat from China, they are more comfortable with rules that limit only the most advanced technology.

“The broader the controls get, the more it hurts them commercially,” she said.

Ms. Kilcrease said that U.S. firms were also “not happy” about the U.S. move to restrict the activity of American companies but not their competitors in allied countries.

Gregory Allen, an analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said that countries like South Korea were now making significant updates to their export control rules, after having been urged to do so by the United States.

"I think they've made a lot of progress," he said. "My question is always, are they making progress fast enough to deal with Chinese countermeasures?"

A spokeswoman for the Commerce Department said that it was continually updating export controls to protect U.S. national security and remained committed to working closely with allies.

A representative for the Chinese Ministry of Commerce said the United States had abused export control measures, and China hoped other countries would resist U.S. economic coercion.

Much about the policy remains unclear, and could be subject to change. But the rules – which could come as soon as this month – are clearly an effort to shore up previous restrictions aimed at limiting China's ability to develop the most advanced A.I. chips.

Most advanced chips are used in consumer devices, but some can also be used to develop weaponry, carry out cyberattacks and construct surveillance systems. The U.S. government has blocked American technology exports to China, but a key part of the Biden administration's strategy has been to get other countries to pass similar regulations. If they don't, China could still get much of its technology from elsewhere, while American companies would simply lose out on sales. It could also encourage countries not to use American components so they no longer have to follow U.S. rules.

U.S. officials have been trying to get Japan and the Netherlands to target particular companies in China with tougher restrictions, and change their laws to stop their citizens from servicing equipment in chip factories in China.

The effort to get allies to block chip technology to China started in the Trump administration, when the Netherlands agreed to stop shipping China ASML's most advanced machines.

Then, two years ago, the United States banned shipments globally of advanced chips to China, as well as U.S. exports of chip-making machinery from U.S.-based companies including Applied Materials Inc., Lam Research Corporation and KLA Corporation. Last year, the Netherlands and Japan agreed to issue restrictions barring shipment of some of their most advanced machinery to China, and the United States tighten its own rules, including stopping more shipments from ASML and Tokyo Electron. Still, the Chinese chip industry has continued to progress.

Last year, the Chinese telecom company Huawei rolled out a phone with an advanced chip, a move widely seen as a challenge.

Since then, the Biden administration has been working on tighter rules.

One draft version would place about 120 Chinese companies on a so-called entity list, which requires other companies to obtain a special license to ship

them products from the United States. The listings would focus on companies that make chips, chip-making machinery and products and services to support them.

Certain Chinese chip factories would also be subject to international restrictions limiting shipments of equipment made with American parts or technology from certain countries.

The draft list included several Chinese chip factories alleged to be cooperating with Huawei, including SwaySure, Shenzhen Pensun Technology, Pengxinwei IC and Qingdao Si'En. It did not include major Chinese chipmaker CXMT, which was previously rumored to be targeted.

Other rules would restrict shipments of memory chips, which are crucial for training A.I. models. The administration has considered lower thresholds for A.I. chips made by Nvidia and other companies, but it's not clear if those will be included.

Details of the rules were earlier reported by Reuters and Bloomberg. KLA and Applied Materials declined to comment, while Lam did not respond to a request for comment.

The revised policy would make it harder for U.S. companies to sidestep restrictions by shipping to China from subsidiaries in countries including Israel, Malaysia and Singapore. But surging shipments to China from certain other countries would be unaffected.

ASML said last month that sales to China accounted for nearly half of its revenue in the first quarter. Tokyo Electron has said that the impact of export controls was "smaller than expected," as it increased sales of less sophisticated equipment to China.

Analysts say that networks of distributors and brokers have sprung up to funnel technology to restricted Chinese semiconductor factories.

U.S. companies also suspect that foreign technicians are helping China to maintain American machinery that was previously sold to Chinese factories.

People familiar with the discussions say that foreign partners have been somewhat skeptical of U.S. national security arguments, and are concerned about Chinese retaliation and lost sales.

Japanese officials did not respond to a request for comment. The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs said it was in close contact with partners and it was up to each country to make its own assessment on export controls.

Paul Triolo, a partner at Albright Stonebridge Group, called the rule "an attempt to skirt head-on confrontation."

"Nobody wants to run roughshod over allies," he said. However, the damage from export controls on U.S. industry has been "significant," he said.

"There's been a lot of frustration, which the administration has mostly ignored," he said.



## **Kamala Harris' VP pick has a long history with China. But Beijing may not be happy about it**

09 August 2024, CNN, Nectar Gan, Eric Cheung, Issac Yee and Will Ripley

Presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris' running mate has a decades-long connection with China. But in the eyes of Beijing, that may not necessarily be good news.

Tim Walz moved to China fresh out of college in 1989 to teach high school for a year, and then frequently returned to the country during a decade of taking American students on summer cultural exchanges.

The 60-year-old Minnesota governor has spoken fondly of his time in China and the people he met there, and his familiarity with the country and empathy for its people bring a personal, nuanced perspective on the United States' biggest strategic rival that is rare among his political peers.

Some Republican opponents have seized on that experience to accuse Walz of being "pro-China," but the Democratic vice-presidential nominee has a long history of criticizing authoritarian Chinese leadership. Walz moved to China at a tumultuous and politically charged time, shortly after the Tiananmen Square massacre, when the ruling Communist Party sent tanks in to violently quell peaceful student-led democracy protests in Beijing. Upon returning home to Nebraska in 1990, he told a local newspaper he felt the Chinese people had been mistreated by their government for years.

"If they had the proper leadership, there are no limits on what they could accomplish. They are such kind, generous, capable people," he told the Star-Herald at the time.

During his time in Congress from 2007 to 2019, Walz rallied support for imprisoned Chinese activists. He met with the Dalai Lama, the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader loathed by Beijing, and Joshua Wong, the young Hong Kong democracy activist now jailed for his activism against Beijing's tightening grip.

"The more he understands China, the more he feels pity for the Chinese people, and the more critical he becomes of the rulers who govern them," said Shen Dingli, a foreign policy analyst in Shanghai.

"He has some understanding of Chinese culture and respects it in his heart, but he definitely does not accept China's political (system)," Shen added. "Beijing is probably more fearful and uncomfortable with such a foreigner who understands China."

'It was more about the people'

Walz was among the first groups of young Americans to teach in high schools in China under a Harvard University volunteer program, just a decade

after the two countries established diplomatic relations.

As a fresh graduate, he spent a year teaching English and American history at the Foshan No. 1 High School, in the southern province of Guangdong.

There, he was met with industrious and welcoming students who applauded him each time he used a Chinese word correctly, and friendly strangers who offered to help whenever he stopped in the streets looking bewildered, he told the Star-Herald in 1990. "I was treated exceptionally well," he told the newspaper. "There was no anti-American feeling whatsoever. American is 'It' in the eyes of the Chinese. Many of the students want to come to America to study."

That was a different era in China. The impoverished country was curious about the world after emerging from decades of self-imposed isolation and tumultuous rule under Mao Zedong. Paramount leader Deng Xiaoping unleashed market reforms and, along with an economic opening, calls for political liberalization gathered pace in the 1980s.

Such calls coalesced into a student-led movement in the spring of 1989, which was brutally put down by the Chinese military weeks before Walz's trip.

"I remember waking up and seeing the news on June 4 that the unthinkable had happened," Walz told Voice of America in an interview in 2014.

"Many of my colleagues decided to go home and not to go on [to China]. I thought it was more important than ever to go, to make sure the story was told and to let the Chinese people know we were standing there, we were with them."

From Guangdong, Walz took a 40-hour cross-country train ride to the Chinese capital to see Tiananmen Square, the site of the democracy protests.

He made sure he would always commemorate the crackdown in a personal way – by getting married on June 4, 1994, the fifth anniversary of the massacre. "He wanted to have a date he'll always remember," his wife and fellow high-school teacher, Gwen, told a local newspaper in Minnesota before their wedding.

The newlyweds spent their honeymoon taking students on two-week tours in China for sightseeing and classes on culture, education and history. These trips became a summer tradition for the couple through 2003.

"I would go back in a heartbeat," said Cara Roemhildt, who went on such a trip in 1998. "It was an educational trip with one of our favorite teachers. It was more about the people. It wasn't about the politics."

Roemhildt said she and her classmates still talk about the trip decades later.

"It felt very, very comfortable. And we went all over...Train rides (to) a whole bunch of different places," she told CNN. "Just seeing a different culture and having respect for it while seeing it. Knowing that it's different, but knowing that it's okay, too."

A nuanced critic

After entering politics in 2006, Walz continued to devote time and attention to China in Congress.

He served more than a decade on the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, which monitors human rights and the rule of law in the country – a role Beijing would not be happy about.

"The Chinese government has always viewed that commission as 'anti-China,'" said Liu Dongshu, an assistant professor of public and international affairs at the City University of Hong Kong.

In Congress, Walz co-sponsored a series of resolutions calling on China to release its jailed rights activists, including Nobel Peace laureate Liu Xiaobo, who eventually died in custody of liver cancer.

In 2015, Walz joined a congressional delegation on a trip to China, which included a rare stop in Tibet, which he had also visited decades earlier during his time teaching at the Chinese high school.

The following year, Walz met the Dalai Lama in Washington for what he called a "life-changing lunch." He also welcomed Lobsang Sangay, then leader of Tibet's government in exile, into his congressional office to meet a group of Minnesota high-school students.

At a congressional meeting that year, he called on Beijing to "ensure the preservation of traditional Tibetan culture" and "provide less regulated religious freedom to the Tibetans."

Walz has also been a vocal supporter of Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement.

In 2017, when Wong, the student protest leader, was jailed for his political activism, Walz posted a photo of himself and the young activist standing side by side to show solidarity with "all advocating for democracy in Hong Kong."

Walz also threw his support behind the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act, which sanctions officials responsible for human rights violations in the city, when the legislation appeared to be languishing in Congress.

"We knocked on every door when the #HKHRDA lacked momentum. Only Walz answered his," Jeffrey Ngo, a Hong Kong democracy activist now based in Washington, said on X.

"Walz is perhaps the most solid candidate when it comes to human rights and China on a major-party ticket in recent memory," Ngo said.

On the diplomatic front, Walz has criticized China's unfair trade practices and its growing assertiveness in the South China Sea.

In Chinese nationalist circles, which have an outsized voice on policy debates in China, there are no rosy illusions about Walz.

"On human rights and ideological issues, he has basically crossed all the possible red lines out there," Shen Yi, an international relations scholar known for his fiercely nationalistic views, wrote on social media. But unlike more hawkish politicians, Walz does not believe in decoupling, and instead holds a more nuanced view on the geostrategic rivalry between the US and China.

"I don't fall into the category that China necessarily needs to be an adversarial relationship. I totally disagree," he said in an interview in 2016.

"We're on the same sheet of music, two of the world's great superpowers, there's many collaborative things we can do together."

Stephen Roach, former chief of Morgan Stanley Asia, said the Harris-Walz ticket may provide "an important counterweight to the current venom of American Sinophobia."

Walz's empathy for the Chinese people and appreciation of China's non-political aspects make him a harder case for Beijing to "villainize as an 'anti-China' foil" than politicians that are hawkish on all dimensions, Eric Fish, a former Beijing-based journalist and author of "China's Millennials: The Want Generation," said on X.

'A complex country' Walz's extensive experience with China makes him a rare figure in the race for the White House – at least since George H. W. Bush, who served as America's unofficial ambassador to Beijing in the mid- 1970s before running for vice president and later president.

Bush's stint in Beijing would go on to influence his foreign policy – and help steer US-China relations through the tumultuous fallout of the Tiananmen crackdown.

But US-China relations are at a very different place now from the honeymoon period of engagement. Being tough on China has become a rare point of bipartisan consensus in the US, and Beijing is unlikely to be counting on Walz to improve bilateral ties.

"The direction of US policy towards China is very clear. As an individual, regardless of your attitude towards China, there's not much room for maneuver," said Liu, the expert at the City University of Hong Kong.

"And vice presidents can have a varied level of say in foreign policy, depending on the president they serve," he added.

Walz's experience living and teaching in China could serve as a useful diplomatic ice breaker to warm up the room if that's what the two sides wish to do, Liu said. But even then, he added, the Chinese would need to dance around the awkwardness in the timing

and avoid all mention of the Tiananmen crackdown – which remains a political taboo in China.

On China's tightly controlled social media, Walz's early ties to the country have raised eyebrows and generated considerable interest. The hashtag "Harris' VP pick once taught in China" racked up 15 million views on microblogging site Weibo.

The year of Walz's arrival in China – 1989 – was not lost among those who understand the sensitivity of the date, despite decades of effort by the Chinese government to erase the brutal crackdown from public memory.

But, perhaps reflective of the different era China now finds itself in under leader Xi Jinping, who has fanned nationalist sentiment and suspicion against foreigners over national security, many questioned the "real motive" of Walz's first trip to China.

"Heh, 1989-1990, Americans teaching in China during this period – it's something worth pondering carefully," said a top comment on Weibo.

"Must be a spy," said another.

Liu said that, given how drastically China has changed over the past decades, Walz's understanding of the country from his younger days may offer limited help on American policy toward China today.

Walz himself has conceded that he's by no means a China expert.

"I lived in China, and as I said I've been there about 30 times," he said in the 2016 interview. "But if someone tells you they're an expert on China, they're probably not telling you the truth because it's a complex country."

### **US bans imports from five more Chinese companies over Uyghur forced labor**

09 August 2024, Reuters, Karen Freifeld

The United States on Thursday banned imports from five more Chinese companies over alleged human rights abuses involving the Uyghurs, according to a government posting, as part of its effort to eliminate goods made with forced labor from the U.S. supply chain.

The companies include Hong Kong-based Rare Earth Magnesium Technology Group Holdings (0601.HK), opens new tab and its parent, Century Sunshine Group Holdings (0509.HK), opens new tab, which manufacture magnesium fertilizer and magnesium alloy products. Also included is Zijin Mining Group Co (601899.SS), opens new tab subsidiary Xinjiang Habahe Ashele Copper Co, which mines nonferrous metals.

The list identifies those who work with the government of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region to recruit and transport Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz or members of other persecuted groups out of the region, and those who source material from

the region or from people who work with the government of Xinjiang.

U.S. officials say Chinese authorities have established labor camps for Uyghurs and other Muslim minority groups in Xinjiang. Beijing denies any abuses.

"The so-called 'forced labor in Xinjiang is nothing but an egregious lie propagated by anti-China forces and a tool for US politicians to destabilize Xinjiang and contain China's development," a spokesperson for the Chinese embassy in Washington said on Thursday in a statement. "China will continue to firmly safeguard the legitimate and lawful rights and interests of Chinese companies."

### **China targets U.S. track athletes in response to doping allegations dogging its swimmers**

08 August 2024, CBC

Doping agency cites sprinter Erriyon Knighton as example of U.S. double standard

China is trying to fight fire with fire in the face of persistent doping allegations that have dogged its swimmers at the Paris Olympics.

The China Anti-Doping Agency called Thursday for more intensive testing of American track and field competitors, citing in a news release past doping scandals and questioning how the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency handled them.

Repeated blasts from the Chinese agency have been echoed by reports in the government-controlled state media complaining about double standards applied to Chinese competitors. The reports have highlighted the more than 600 tests undergone by Chinese swimmers at the Paris Games with no violations found.

The World Anti-Doping Agency and World Aquatics have acknowledged that 23 Chinese swimmers tested positive for a banned substance ahead of the Tokyo Olympics. The results were not made public until revealed by media reports earlier this year, with both bodies accepting the Chinese explanation that the positive tests were caused by tainted food.

After the details emerged, the U.S. launched an investigation under a law passed in 2020 giving federal authorities power to investigate sports doping and cover-ups.

In a meeting in Paris this week, the head of the China's Olympic delegation told his American counterpart that China hopes the U.S. will stop its "long-arm jurisdiction" and ensure that athletes from all countries can participate smoothly and safely in the 2028 Summer Games in Los Angeles and the 2034 Winter Games in Salt Lake City, according to an account in an official Chinese sports newspaper.

China's anti-doping agency and its state media have zeroed in on an American sprinter, Erriyon Knighton,

who was competing Thursday in the 200-metre finals. Knighton tested positive for a banned substance in March but the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency said an arbitration panel determined it came from contaminated meat, allowing him to compete.

The Chinese agency issued a release Tuesday accusing the U.S. agency of double standards. It followed up Thursday with the release calling for more testing of

U.S. track and field competitors.

Some competitors from other countries spoke out about the controversy as China won 12 medals in swimming in Paris, including a gold in the men's 4x100 medley relay that ended a decades-long U.S. dominance of that event. Chinese swimmers have denied cheating.

U.S. swimming legend Michael Phelps doubled down on his support for tougher sanctions, including a lifetime ban for anyone who tests positive for a banned substance.

British swimmer Adam Peaty, whose team missed out on a medal by finishing fourth in the relay, blasted a system that allowed the Chinese swimmers who tested positive to compete.

"As an honourable person, I mean, you should be out of the sport," he said, "but we know sport isn't that simple."

### **Chinese businesses hoping to expand in the US and bring jobs face uncertainty and suspicion**

06 August 2024, The Economic Times

WASHINGTON: It was billed as the "biggest ever economic development project" in north Michigan when Gov. Gretchen Whitmer in 2022 welcomed a Chinese lithium-ion battery company's plan to build a \$2.36 billion factory and bring a couple thousand jobs to Big Rapids.

But now the project by Gotion High-Tech is in the crosshairs of some U.S. lawmakers and local residents. Leading the charge is Republican Rep. John Moolenaar of Michigan, chairman of the House Select Committee on China, who accuses the Chinese company of having ties to forced labor and says he fears it could spy for Beijing and work to extend China's influence in the U.S. heartland. Gotion rejects the accusations.

"I want to see this area have more jobs and investments, but we must not welcome companies that are controlled by people who see us as the enemy and we should not allow them to build here," Moolenaar said at a recent roundtable discussion in Michigan.

Lured by the large U.S. market, Chinese businesses are coming to the United States with money, jobs and technology, only to find rising suspicion at a time

of an intensifying U.S.-China rivalry that has spread into the business world.

U.S. wariness of China, coupled with Beijing's desire to protect its technological competitiveness, threatens to rupture ties between the world's two largest economies. That could hurt businesses, workers and consumers, which some warn could undermine the economic foundation that has helped stabilize relations.

"This is a lose-lose scenario for the two countries," Zhiquan Zhu, professor of political science and international relations at Bucknell University, said in an email. "The main reason is U.S.-China rivalry, and the

U.S. government prioritises 'national security' over economic interests in dealing with China." Lizhi Liu, an assistant professor of business at Georgetown University, said the trend, along with the decline of U.S. investments in China, could hurt China-

U.S. relations.

"Strong investment ties between the two nations are crucial not only for economic reasons but also for security, as intertwined economic interests reduce the likelihood of major conflicts or even war," she said. But U.S. lawmakers believe the stakes are high. Sen. Marco Rubio said at a July hearing that China is not only a military and diplomatic adversary for the U.S. but also a "technological, industrial and commercial" opponent.

"The technological and industrial high ground has always been a precursor of global power," said Rubio, a Republican from Florida. He argued that U.S. foreign policy should take into account the country's commercial, trade and technological interests. The bipartisan House Select Committee on China has warned that widespread adoption in the U.S. of technologies developed by China could threaten long-term U.S. technological competitiveness.

U.S. public sentiment against Chinese investments began to build up during President Barack Obama's administration, in a pushback against globalization, and were amplified after President Donald Trump came into office, said Yilang Feng, an assistant professor of business at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, who studies economic nationalism and resistance to foreign direct investments in the U.S.

"The scale has increased, so has the intensity," Feng said.

As President Joe Biden's administration seeks to revive American manufacturing and boost U.S. technological capabilities, many politicians believe Chinese companies should be kept out. "Can you imagine working for an American company working tirelessly to develop battery technology and then you find out that your tax dollars are being used to

subsidize a competitor from China?" Moolenaar said as he campaigned against the Gotion project in his congressional district in a state that is critical in the presidential election.

Whitmer's office has declined to comment on the project. The Michigan Economic Development Corporation told The Associated Press it has received "bipartisan support at all levels" to move forward with the project, which will create up to 2,350 jobs.

Danielle Emerson, spokesperson for MEDC, said the project is "critical to onshore the battery supply chain and create thousands of good-paying local jobs, which reduces our reliance on overseas disruptions and further protects our national security."

Local residents of Green Charter Township, however, revolted against the project over its Chinese connections last year when they removed five officials who supported it in a recall election.

Also in Michigan, a partnership between Ford and CATL, another Chinese battery manufacturer, has been scaled back, following pushback over CATL's potential connections to China's ruling party. In Worcester, Massachusetts, the Chinese biotech company WuXi Biologics paused construction of a large facility a few weeks after lawmakers introduced a bill that would, over data security concerns, ban U.S. entities receiving federal funds from doing business with a number of China-linked companies, WuXi Biologics included.

John Ling, who has helped South Carolina and Georgia attract Chinese businesses for nearly two decades, said geopolitics have been getting in the way in recent years. Chinese companies are less likely to consider South Carolina after the state senate last year approved a bill banning Chinese citizens from buying property, even though the bill has yet to clear the statehouse, Ling said.

Data by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis show the total investments by China in the U.S. fell to just under \$44 billion in 2023, from a high point of \$63 billion in 2017, although first-year expenditures rose to \$621 million in 2023, up from \$531 million in 2022 but drastically down from the high of \$27 billion in 2016. The figures include acquisitions, new business establishments and expansions.

Thilo Hanemann, a partner at the research provider Rhodium Group, said there's been an upswing in new Chinese investments in the U.S. following a major decline, prompted by the end of disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for Chinese companies to go overseas when margins at home are dwindling.

U.S. policymakers are worried that Chinese companies, beholden to the ruling Chinese Communist Party, could pose national security risks, he said, while Beijing is concerned that overseas investments could lead to Chinese technology

leakage. "Chinese companies are in between a rock and a hard place, dealing with both domestic governments in terms of not letting them go abroad and then the U.S. or host governments that have concerns," Hanemann said.

Yet, Chinese investors may still find the U.S. market appealing "due to its high consumption levels and judicial independence," said Liu of Georgetown University.

In 2022, Michigan beat out several other states in luring Gotion, according to the governor's office. Keen to revive its manufacturing base, the state offered a package of incentives, including \$175 million in grants and the approval of a new zone that could save the company \$540 million. Local townships approved tax abatements for Gotion to build a factory to make components for electrical vehicle batteries. In Green Charter Township, the new board dropped support for the project and rescinded an agreement that would extend water to the factory site, only to be rebuked by a U.S. district judge.

The future of the plant remains uncertain, as Moolenaar is rallying support for his bill that would prevent Gotion from receiving federal subsidies. He has accused the company of using forced labor, after congressional staff discovered links between the company and Xinjiang Production Construction Corps., a paramilitary group sanctioned by the U.S. Commerce Department for its involvement in China's forced labor practice.

Chuck Thelen, vice president of manufacturing of Gotion North America, in recent town hall meetings called the forced labor accusations "categorically false and clearly intended to deceive."

By allowing the Chinese company to build a plant in Michigan, it would help "onshore a technology that has been vastly leapfrogged" outside of the U.S., he said. It doesn't amount to "a Chinese invasion," Thelen said. "This is a global approach, an energy solution."

### **US reportedly to escalate AI chip restrictions on China, 'may incur countermeasures'**

02 August 2024, Global Times, Ma Jingjing

Hegemonic move only 'impels Chinese firms to strive for tech self-reliance'

The Biden administration is reportedly working on a set of unilateral restrictions on China's access to artificial intelligence (AI) memory chips and equipment capable of making those products, in the latest hegemonic move to contain China's AI industry in order to maintain its global monopoly. Chinese observers said the US cannot impede China's technological progress and will only impel Chinese



enterprises to strive for technological self-reliance. They said China may take countermeasures, including lodging complaints with the WTO, when it is necessary to fight back as the US continues to expand its "small yard" policies.

Observers said the US' intensifying crackdown on and "decoupling" from China will lead to further deterioration in China-US bilateral relations, bringing monumental losses to US firms that are betting on Chinese opportunities.

#### US' stepped-up restrictions

Bloomberg reported on Thursday that the Biden administration is expected to announce a set of new restrictions as soon as late August to curb China's access to AI memory chips and related equipment. The measure is designed to keep Micron Technology Inc and South Korea's leading memory chipmakers SK Hynix Inc and Samsung Electronics Co from supplying Chinese firms with so-called high-bandwidth memory, or HBM, chips, the report said, citing people familiar with the matter. HBM chips are required to run AI accelerators like those offered by Nvidia Corp, it said. "By putting patches on its chip export restrictions on China, the US' ultimate purpose is to curb China's technological development so as to maintain its global monopoly in cutting-edge technologies," He Weiwen, a senior fellow at the Center for China and Globalization, told the Global Times on Thursday. He said the US' political maneuvers are not sustainable, as they go against economic rules and the interests of US enterprises and residents.

"China may take countermeasures when it is necessary," He said, noting that China could also lodge complaints with the WTO if the US' restriction measures against China reach a certain scale. At a routine press conference on Wednesday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian blasted the US for continuing to politicize trade and tech issues, tie them to national security and use them as a weapon to tighten control over chip exports to China and coerce other countries to go after China's semiconductor industry, which severely undermines international trade rules, destabilizes global industrial and supply chains, and serves no one's interests. The Biden administration is taking an increasingly hardline stance on China issues in the election year. In June, the US Treasury Department issued draft rules for banning or requiring notification of certain investments in AI and other technology sectors in China that could "threaten US national security." Lü Xiang, a research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, warned that the US' intensifying crackdown on China's technological rise may further harm China-US relations and send bilateral relations to a new low.

In addition, the US' attempts to crack down on China will backfire on itself and its allies, Lü told the Global Times on Thursday.

"For example, South Korea and Japan previously exported a large number of semiconductor products to China every year, but the US' export restrictions led to South Korea posting a trade deficit with China. The US' selfish moves will harm its allies' production capacity, and will prompt those countries to resist the US' coercion one day," Lü said.

#### China market indispensable

"For US, tightening chip export controls on China is a double-edged sword," Fu Liang, a Beijing-based tech analyst, told the Global Times on Thursday. Faced with external pressure, Chinese chip producers are accelerating research and development to boost domestic replacements, which means medium- and low-performance US chip products will become increasingly insignificant for the China market, Fu said. Despite the Biden administration's continuous crackdown on China's high-tech field, US firms such as Nvidia are striving to tap the great potential of the huge market of the world's second-largest economy. Nvidia is reportedly working on a special version of its AI chip for the China market. Nvidia will work with Inspur, one of its major distribution partners in China, on the launch and distribution of the chip, which is tentatively named "B20," and the shipments are planned to start in the second quarter of 2025, Reuters reported in July.

### US sounds alarm bell on China's military development

02 August 2024, Think China, Han Yong Hong

With the US reaffirming its view that China is its biggest threat and warning of a widening military gap, Lianhe Zaobao associate editor Han Yong Hong notes that once the US loses its overwhelming hard power, the entire chain of efforts to suppress China will also fall apart.

A 29 July report released by the bipartisan US Congressional Commission on the National Defense Strategy (NDS) does not hide its anxiety about the situation facing the US, including the challenges faced by the US military. While the report has not attracted much attention in China, Chinese citizens may feel that it is a rare positive evaluation of China's strength by the US.

#### US's outdated strategy

At the outset, the 114-page report emphasises in its summary that the threats the US faces are the most serious and most challenging the nation has encountered since 1945 and include the potential for near-term major war, but the US military is "not prepared".

The report boldly proposes that the US should significantly increase military resource investment, prepare for multiple wars and implement a Multiple Theater Force Construct.

To this end, cooperation with allies and partners is necessary to ensure simultaneous defence of the US homeland and response to threats in the Indo-Pacific, Europe and the Middle East.

The commission was tasked to review whether the US Department of Defense's strategy, formulated before the Russia-Ukraine war and the Israel-Hamas conflict, is still applicable. The report assesses that the design and force structure of US defence strategy are outdated, and the defence industrial base is grossly inadequate to provide the equipment, technology and munitions needed today, let alone given the demands of great power conflict.

... while the US "still has the world's strongest military with the farthest reach, within 1,000 miles of China's shore, [the US has] lost military dominance and could lose a war". — Eric Edelman, Vice-Chair, NDS Commission

The report believes that the US should change its longstanding post-Cold War two-war construct, as the alliance between China, Russia, Iran and North Korea has created a real risk of simultaneous protracted conflicts in multiple theatres worldwide.

The report reiterates that China poses the preeminent challenge to US interests and the most formidable military threat. In many ways, China is outpacing the US and has largely negated the US military advantage

in the Western Pacific through two decades of focused military investment. China currently boasts the largest navy in the world with over 370 ships and submarines, and the largest aviation force in its region.

In contrast, the US Navy's "ability to construct, maintain, and repair the maritime forces it requires is fundamentally in doubt" due to insufficient shipbuilding industrial capacity. The report also notes that the US military's combat capability is at an inflection point.

Vice-chair of the NDS Commission, Eric Edelman, also stated that while the US "still has the world's strongest military with the farthest reach, within 1,000 miles of China's shore, [the US has] lost military dominance and could lose a war".

Since July, the People's Liberation Army not only attended numerous military parades and celebrations around the world but also flexed its military muscles on at least three occasions.

US concerns not unfounded

The US Congress typically releases reports like this before the Department of Defense updates its strategy, to feed hawkish elements and US military

industry interests, and to provide reasons and ammunition to increase military budgets.

China usually strongly refutes such reports for "playing up the China threat" and "fearmongering". However, China did not respond strongly this time. One can see that the report's observations on China's military capabilities are not entirely exaggerated. From another perspective, US concerns are not entirely unfounded.

Indeed, the Chinese army is not what it used to be. Since July, the People's Liberation Army not only attended numerous military parades and celebrations around the world but also flexed its military muscles on at least three occasions. It demonstrated the new heights that it has reached in global naval and air power projection capabilities while displaying its military strength against the US and NATO.

This includes the first time Chinese and Russian bombers were seen flying near Alaska on 24 July; and Chinese troops heading to Tanzania in early July to participate in the Peace Unity-2024 joint land and sea military exercise with Tanzania and Mozambique in late July.

The Chinese side also deployed two Type 071 comprehensive landing ships and a Type 052D guided missile destroyer to escort the cross-border transport of heavy weapons and equipment, and then transported troops from the Central Theater Command to Africa on a Y-20 strategic transport aircraft.

... China's drone industry is outstanding and can be said to be at the forefront of the world. At the same time, the military application of drones would also rewrite the traditional mode of combat.

Also, on 29 July, the Type 052D guided-missile destroyer Jiaozuo was deployed to Finland to participate in a joint military operation with Russia. This was interpreted as an exercise on NATO's "doorstep", expressing China's dissatisfaction with NATO's increasing involvement in Asia-Pacific affairs, just as the approach of Chinese bombers to Alaska was seen as a countermeasure against frequent US reconnaissance along China's coast.

In fact, China's drone industry is outstanding and can be said to be at the forefront of the world. At the same time, the military application of drones would also rewrite the traditional mode of combat.

Balancing development with global interests

These are all the inevitable result of China's economic rise and its strong industrial base and manufacturing capabilities. As written in the report, if the US defence industry does not address its shortcomings, the development gap between the US and China will widen.

In future great power competition between the US and China, if the US does not have a decisive military advantage, what kind of situation might that

lead to? Indeed, a series of international issues will follow.

... once the US loses its overwhelming hard power, the entire chain of efforts to suppress China will also fall apart.

Thus, it can be anticipated that China's strategic goal would be to continuously invest in its military, forcing the US to eventually abandon its efforts to suppress China militarily. The Communiqué of the Third Plenary Session of the Chinese Communist Party also listed deepening military reform as one of its goals to serve this strategy.

From a broader perspective, once the US loses its overwhelming hard power, the entire chain of efforts to suppress China will also fall apart.

On the one hand, the rest of the world is somewhat concerned about the uncertainties following China's rise and the expansion of China's military ambitions. On the other hand, it is also very worried that China and the US may engage in conflicts that could lead to a global catastrophe before both sides can achieve peaceful coexistence.

This great power competition will only intensify, and the rest of the world will also adjust their strategies as the situation evolves. The great power that can better balance its own development with global interests will receive broader support and genuine affirmation.

### **Protesters in US were attacked by Beijing-linked figures: report**

02 August 2024, RFA, Alex Willemyns

Anti-Xi protesters at last year's APEC summit were harassed and assaulted to silence them, the report says.

Pro-democracy and human rights activists who protested against Chinese President Xi Jinping during his visit to San Francisco last year were harassed and in some cases violently assaulted by organized supporters of the Chinese Communist Party, a new report says.

The report, *Exporting Repression*, was released Tuesday by the Hong Kong Democracy Council and Students for a Free Tibet. It says that there was an organized "mobilization" of violent counter-protesters arranged by the CCP's "United Front" foreign-influence program.

"Their actions created a pervasive atmosphere of intimidation that not only had a deterrent effect on protests throughout the duration of Xi's stay but also interfered with protesters' exercise of their free speech rights," it says, blaming police for "exhibiting a lack of awareness."

The report details 34 cases of alleged harassment and violent attacks on anti-Xi protesters and calls for

U.S. authorities to look into whether some of the people it alleges carried out the attacks are "unregistered foreign agents" working for Beijing to silence dissent in America.

The attacks, it says, were primarily directed toward Uyghurs, Tibetans and Hongkongers protesting against Xi, who was in San Francisco in November for the Asia-Pacific Economic summit and for high-profile talks with U.S. President Joe Biden just outside the city.

Intimidation of protesters included "threats, attempts to prevent protest, physical attacks and beatings, thefts of cell phones, and incidents of stalking," according to the report. It details multiple cases of protesters being surrounded by counter-protesters before being beaten.

Radio Free Asia reporters in San Francisco also witnessed anti-Xi protesters being attacked with the poles of Chinese flags, with San Francisco Police Department officers at times intervening to stop the violence but at other times taking a hands-off approach.

The report calls efforts by local law enforcement to stop attacks, and later to apprehend those responsible for violence, "inadequate."

The SFPD did not respond to a request for comment.

**Plausible deniability**

The report does not directly attribute the violence to orders from the Chinese Embassy in the United States, but says Beijing's diplomats in America "play a key role in cultivating united front groups overseas, often providing them with guidance and direction at key junctures."

The United Front organizers allegedly behind the campaign to suppress the anti-Xi protests maintain "a facade of autonomy" from Beijing for appearance's sake, it says, but are nonetheless ultimately "guided" by the CCP and act only to preserve its interests.

But this is denied by Beijing.

Chinese Embassy spokesman Liu Pengyu told RFA that the people in San Francisco who the report claims were violent counter-protesters were in fact peaceful supporters who turned out to welcome Xi. He said the people who turned out in San Francisco to welcome Xi's arrival were there "expressing their support for the stabilization and sound development of China-U.S. relations," which he said should be "welcomed by anyone with good will for the bilateral relationship."

Liu said it was in fact the anti-Xi protesters who stoked violence, blaming them for injuring more than 60 people, including the elderly.

"Some of the victims were knocked out, others were beaten to brain and nose bleeding, still others got hurt at sternums and ribs," Liu said. "Some of the violent rioters were arrested on site and indicted with

criminal prosecutions by U.S. law enforcement agencies."

RFA has found no record of the prosecution of any protesters or counter-protesters, with inquiries to the SFPD going unanswered.

But Liu said the Chinese Embassy condemned the violence.

"We have asked the U.S. side to investigate the incidents, bring to justice the perpetrators at an early date and safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of the victims," the spokesperson said.

#### Transnational repression

The report comes as U.S. lawmakers and White House officials express growing concerns about transnational repression committed by foreign governments against rights activists on American soil. In a statement, Rep. John Moolenaar, a Republican from Missouri who chairs the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party, called on the FBI and SFPD to "hold the perpetrators accountable" and said lawmakers needed to come up with solutions themselves.

"Congress must also act to give law enforcement additional tools to prosecute these crimes," he said. "The CCP cannot be allowed to bring its Orwellian model of totalitarian control to American soil."

Chemi Lhamo, the campaign director at Students for Free Tibet, told RFA Tibetan she hoped the report would lead to increased awareness of the ways in which China's government was trying to silence critics abroad, and perhaps even work to discourage the behavior.

"While there is much talk about transnational repression on international platforms, it has typically been difficult to show clear proof of it, which is one of the challenges the report addresses," Lhamo said, adding that it built on a growing body of "tangible proof" of repression.

"The Chinese government's policy of transnational repression is never going to work well when it always tries to silence and intimidate our people and Tibetan freedom fighters," she said. "We will never be discouraged and will fight back even harder."

### US lawmaker calls Chinese sanctions 'badge of honor'

02 August 2024, VOA, Katherine Michaelson

Representative Jim McGovern, the most recent U.S. lawmaker to be put under Chinese sanctions, says he will wear the sanctions "as a badge of honor," calling on the Chinese government to end its oppressive actions in Tibet, Xinjiang and Hong Kong in a statement emailed to VOA from the representative's media office Friday.

"These absurd sanctions against me only serve to highlight how PRC leaders are afraid of free and

open debate. They seek to punish and silence those who disagree with them. But the world is watching what they do, and people who care about human rights will not be silent," he said in the statement.

China placed McGovern under sanctions Wednesday for frequently "interfering in China's internal affairs." In his politics, McGovern has taken on the Tibetan cause, sponsoring a bill advocating for a peaceful resolution of the China-Tibet dispute that President Joe Biden signed into law on July 12.

China views Tibet as an "inseparable part of China since ancient times," despite supporters of the Tibetan Government in Exile and the Dalai Lama saying that Tibet has historically been independent. Chinese state-sponsored media Xinhua said McGovern's Tibet- China Dispute Act "grossly interferes in China's internal affairs," violates international law and distorts historical facts to suppress China and encourage Tibetan separatist movements.

Framed as a response to McGovern's efforts to undermine Chinese territorial sovereignty, the sanctions freeze the representative's Chinese assets, prohibit organizations or individuals in China from engaging with him, and ban him and his family from entering Chinese territory, according to a publication from Xinhua.

McGovern, who represents the state of Massachusetts in the House of Representatives, has no assets or business dealings in China.

McGovern's Tibet-China Dispute Act, gives the State Department increased authority to counter Chinese disinformation about Tibet and promotes the resumption of talks between Chinese leaders and the Dalai Lama. No such talks have occurred since 2010. China stands accused of large-scale human rights abuses in Tibet, which the congressman hoped to alleviate with this legislation.

In a statement released on June 12 when the bill passed the House, McGovern said, "The People's Republic of China has systematically denied Tibetans the right to self-determination and continues to deliberately erase Tibetan religion, culture and language.

"The ongoing oppression of the Tibetan people is a grave tragedy, and our bill provides further tools that empower both America and the international community to stand up for justice and peace," he said. Among the signees of the statement were House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaul, Senator Todd Young, McGovern and Senator Jeff Merkley.

China has sanctioned other U.S. representatives for their involvement in an issue that threatens Chinese territorial homogeneity. Over the last year, China has sanctioned Representative McCaul and former

Representative Mike Gallagher over their support for Taiwan.

### China woos local U.S. officials as tensions with Washington rise

01 August 2024, Nikkei Asia, Pak Yiu

Delegations of American mayors visiting China have grown since last year

More than 140 Chinese provincial government officials and business figures gathered in the small port city of Tacoma, Washington in July for a day of exchanges with their U.S. counterparts from 21 different states. As Washington hardens its stance toward Beijing, China is increasingly focused on strengthening ties with state and local officials.

The sixth U.S.-China sister cities summit, held on July 19, was the first to be held in person since 2019, and included a series of panel discussions on business and trade opportunities, youth and education exchanges, and sustainability.

Tacoma Mayor Victoria Woodards said she was able to reconnect with her counterparts at the event after having visited China in June.

"I was really energized and it just reminded me again of why opportunities like this are so important," she said.

Woodards' visit to China was organized by the government of Fuzhou – a city in the country's southeast – to celebrate the 30th anniversary of a sister-city partnership. She later flew to Ningbo and Beijing to meet with city officials and the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Countries (CPAFC), a key organizer of the U.S.-China sister cities summit and an extension of the Chinese Communist Party's United Front Work Department.

From Tacoma to cities in South Carolina, California and Iowa, China has been courting mayors and state officials to strengthen its local-level diplomacy.

As for tensions between the capitals, "some of that does trickle down to the state," Woodards said. "For me, it is staying focused on the things that unite us as opposed to the things that divide us."

At the July event, China's Ambassador to the U.S., Xie Feng, said more than 30 delegations from Chinese provinces have visited the U.S. since the start of 2023, while 10 delegations from the U.S. have travelled to China. He anticipated more to come before the end of the year in order to address "new challenges facing subnational exchanges."

"The so-called political correctness of being tough on China has been spreading in the United States, casting a chilling effect on sister-city cooperation and subnational interactions," Xie said in video remarks at the US-China sister cities summit.

"But the friendship between our two peoples is deeply rooted in our long history of exchanges," Xie said. "Neither setbacks in bilateral relations nor

headwinds against people-to-people connections will ever change the fundamental wish of our peoples for friendship and cooperation."

The Chinese embassy in the U.S. referred Nikkei Asia to Xie's speeches at other events when asked for comment.

The summit was hosted by international nongovernmental organization Sister Cities International and CPAFC. Neither group responded to requests for comment.

Thomas Huston, a professor at Cincinnati University who has been establishing increased student exchanges with Chinese universities, said it was important to maintain such engagements.

"When you get to the personal level, or school level, the cooperation is here," he said. And while he acknowledged the existence of China-focused policies at the federal level, Huston said, "You don't get hung up on the geopolitical policies at the end of the day." Relations between the

two countries have deteriorated rapidly since 2018 over a wide range of issues, including trade tariffs, reported human rights abuses in Xinjiang and the erosion of Hong Kong's autonomy.

Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in 2022 added fuel to the fire, prompting China to pause climate and military talks. Military talks resumed April this year after the long hiatus.

In 2020, then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo discontinued U.S. participation in a 2011 memorandum of understanding between U.S. and Chinese governments concerning the establishment of a bilateral governors forum to boost subnational ties. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, there were more than

12 local-level engagements annually on average, according to the Truman Center, a think tank focused on national security issues. The number of state, county and city-level engagements reached 27 in 2017. But meetings plummeted to just two in 2020, when tensions between the two superpowers intensified and the pandemic heavily restricted international travel. The number recovered to 14 last year, while this year has also seen 14 engagements with more expected to come.

China's National Development and Reform Commission, a government agency focused on economic planning, said in June that it would establish local liaison mechanisms with the U.S. on climate change, following an event between California and China's Greater Bay Area officials.

The engagement figures are likely underreported, but the Truman Center said they provide a "snapshot" of the vast scope of engagements.

"Part of it is pent up demand, there was a lot of engagement that was just on ice for three years,"



said Kyle Jaros, an associate professor of global affairs in the Keough School of Global Affairs at the University of Notre Dame.

Repairing perceptions of China was one objective, said Jaros, an expert on subnational diplomacy.

While China has been eager to engage with U.S. state officials, Jaros said not all on the U.S. side are enthusiastic about meeting with their Chinese counterparts.

"There's clearly a diplomatic component to it. China concluded that at the state and local level, it might find at least some partners who believe there's an important reason for a constructive U.S.-China relationship, a kind of talking relationship and also [a] close trade and investment relationship."

"In some cases or places, this kind of charm offensive could create backlash against China," said Jaros.

Some U.S. states have taken a more aggressive attitude towards China of late, with a spike in state legislation targeting Chinese investment, trade and education introduced in the past two years.

But not all states have pursued hostile policies towards China as they value Chinese investments and trade with the country, according to analysts.

California is one such state. Six city mayors from California flew to China in May on a trip organized by China Silicon Valley, a nonprofit organization aimed at promoting investment between the two countries.

The mayors met with Hong Kong officials before flying to Chongqing in China's southwest to attend a trade fair and meet with city-level officials. China Silicon Valley did not respond to requests for comment. "Because of California's dependence on Chinese trade and college students, the state government continues to frame its cooperation with China as mutually beneficial in climate change, green technology, and fighting Asian hate, even though there's little tangible results," said William Chou, Japan Chair fellow at the Hudson Institute.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom met Chinese leader Xi Jinping in October last year to discuss climate change, shortly before Xi and Biden met in San Francisco a month later.

Political analysts say there are concerns in Washington that China could exploit local engagement for its own interest and harm U.S. national security.

"For China, these states give it a useful backdoor at a time when there is growing U.S. concern towards China," Chou added.

The Biden administration, aware of the increased Chinese engagement with local officials, has begun to invest in strengthening cooperation between local governments and the federal government. This year it dispatched State Department advisers to Chattanooga in Tennessee, Kansas City in Missouri,

San Antonio in Texas and San Diego in California to work with local community groups, trade associations, and businesses in a bid to strengthen engagement on global issues.

Additional reporting by Ken Moriyasu.

## July

### Chinese envoy calls out US 'political correctness' of taking tough line on China

20 July 2024, SCMP

Sister-city relations offer room for the two countries to advance relations, Xie Feng tells conference in Washington state.

"Grave challenges" confront Sino-US ties, Beijing's envoy to Washington said on Friday as he called out the "political correctness" in the United States of being tough on China.

Addressing a conference in Tacoma, Washington state via video link, Xie Feng called for deeper subnational exchanges, saying it would offer a more solid foundation for ties and "greater room" to move relations forward.

But there are fresh challenges in the way of these more local exchanges. "In recent years, the so-called political correctness of being tough on China has been spreading in the United States, casting a chilling effect on sister-city cooperation and subnational interactions," Xie said.

However, setbacks in US-China ties would not change the "fundamental wish of our peoples for friendship and cooperation", he added.

"The China-US relationship is still facing grave challenges. We need to pool strength from all to get the relationship better," he said in a transcript of the speech posted on the embassy's website.

Xie made the comments at the sixth US-China Sister Cities Summit co-sponsored by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, an agency under China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to promote exchanges with other countries.

According to Xie, the event was the first on China-US subnational exchanges held in the US in five years.

Tacoma, a port city that Chinese President Xi Jinping visited in 2015, became sister cities with the southeastern Chinese city of Fuzhou in 1994.

In his address, the Chinese envoy said sister-city relationships between China and the US had flourished, with 286 pairs already established.

"Serving as bridges for mutual understanding and trust, they have nurtured goodwill between the two peoples, and injected vigour into China-US relations," he said.

Xie noted that since the start of last year, more than 30 delegations from Chinese provinces and cities had visited the US, and these exchanges had helped to "stabilise" US-China ties.

He expected greater exchanges and visits "so that, drop by drop, we can thaw the ice of misunderstanding, and ultimately form a vast ocean of friendship between our two peoples".

China and the US have sought to ease their strained ties, including with the closely watched meeting between Xi and US President Joe Biden in November.

There has been more engagement since then, including on climate change and artificial intelligence.

But in June, US ambassador to China Nicholas Burns said Beijing had made people-to-people exchanges "impossible", including by preventing Chinese nationals from taking part in American government programmes.

Xie, in his speech on Friday, also said that subnational cooperation between Chinese and American cities had brought benefits to both sides, noting that China was the top export market for three US states and in the top three markets for 32.

He urged American firms to seize opportunities brought by China's "openness and development", and called for an expansion in cooperation between sister cities.

"A brighter future for the 1.7 billion people of our two countries cannot be achieved without a healthy and stable China-US relationship," he said.

"It is our sincere hope that our sister-city relationships will continue to be a fountain of strength, giving strong and sustained impetus to the broader bilateral relationship, so as to keep it surging forward."

Tacoma mayor Victoria Woodards said in her speech that sister-city ties between the US and China had allowed the two countries to "build bridges of friendship and cooperation that transcends borders".

"I truly believe that if we can work together to address all the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead, we can and we will create a future that is bright and prosperous for every one of our communities," she said.

### **China halts nuclear arms talks with US over Taiwan support**

18 July 2024, Aljazeera

Beijing said the US's weapons sales to Taiwan has 'compromised the political atmosphere' for continued talks on nuclear non-proliferation.

China has suspended negotiations on nuclear non-proliferation and arms control with the United States in protest against Washington's arms sales to the self-ruled island of Taiwan.

The US called Beijing's decision on Wednesday "unfortunate", while analysts said the move deals a potentially serious setback to global arms-control efforts.

China and the US began nuclear weapons discussions in November as part of a bid to ease mistrust ahead of a summit between Presidents Xi Jinping and Joe Biden.

Further dialogue had not been publicly announced since, with a White House official in January urging Beijing to respond "to some of our more substantive ideas on risk reduction".

A spokesperson for China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Wednesday said the US's arms sales to Taiwan, a territory that it claims, had "seriously compromised the political atmosphere for continuing the arms-control consultations".

"Consequently, the Chinese side has decided to hold off discussion with the US on a new round of consultations on arms control and non-proliferation," Lin Jian, the spokesperson, told a regular news briefing in Beijing.

"The responsibility fully lies with the US," he said.

Lin added that China was willing to maintain communication on international arms control, but said the US "must respect China's core interests and create necessary conditions for dialogue and exchange".

The US switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 1979 but has remained Taiwan's most important partner and biggest arms supplier, sparking repeated condemnations from China.

Taiwan has protested for the past four years about stepped-up Chinese military activity near the island, including almost daily missions by Chinese warplanes and warships.

**Arms-race risks**

US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller slammed China's move, saying Beijing has chosen to follow Russia's lead by asserting that arms-control engagement cannot proceed while there are other challenges in the bilateral relationship.

"We think this approach undermines strategic stability. It increases the risk of arms-race dynamics," Miller told reporters.

**Arms-race risks**

US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller slammed China's move, saying Beijing has chosen to follow Russia's lead by asserting that arms-control engagement cannot proceed while there are other challenges in the bilateral relationship.

"We think this approach undermines strategic stability. It increases the risk of arms-race dynamics," Miller told reporters.

"Unfortunately, by suspending these consultations, China has chosen not to pursue efforts that would manage strategic risks and prevent costly arms races,

but we, the United States, will remain open to developing and implementing concrete risk-reduction measures with China," he said.

The Biden administration advocates a policy of "compartmentalization", in which nuclear arms control talks are segregated from other contentious Sino-US issues.

The Chinese decision comes just over a month after the Biden administration said the US may have to deploy more strategic nuclear weapons to deter growing threats from Chinese and Russian arsenals.

Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association advocacy group, told the Reuters news agency that the US, Russia and China are legally bound as signatories of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty – the cornerstone of global arms control – to "engage in talks to prevent the arms race".

"The only way they can accomplish that is through serious dialogue and Russia's refusal to do so and China's decision to do so are very serious setbacks," he said.

The US has a stockpile of about 3,700 nuclear warheads, of which roughly 1,419 strategic nuclear warheads were deployed. Russia has about 1,550 nuclear weapons deployed and according to the Federation of American Scientists, a stockpile of 4,489 nuclear warheads.

Washington meanwhile estimates that China has 500 operational nuclear warheads and will probably have more than 1,000 by 2030.

US officials have expressed frustration that Beijing has shown little interest in discussing steps to reduce nuclear weapons risks. But Beijing has long argued that the US already has a much larger arsenal.

### **U.S pursuing visa restrictions on Chinese officials involved in human rights abuses in Tibet and East Turkistan**

18 July 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup

The United States State Department is taking action to impose visa restrictions on Chinese officials involved in human rights violations in Tibet and East Turkistan.

In a statement issued on Friday, July 12 by Mathew Miller, the United States State Department spokesperson stated, "The United States continues to promote accountability in the defence of human rights in China. Today, the State Department is taking steps to impose visa restrictions on People's Republic of China (PRC) officials for their involvement

in the repression of marginalized religious and ethnic communities.

The PRC has not lived up to its commitments to respect and protect human rights, as demonstrated by the ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang, the erosion of fundamental freedoms in Hong Kong, persistent human rights abuses in Tibet, and transnational repression around the world. We call on the PRC to abide by the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to accept the many recommendations made this year during the Universal Periodic Review of its human rights record, including unconditionally releasing PRC nationals it has arbitrarily and unjustly detained".

On June 11, 2024, the UN released the Chinese government's response to the recommendations from the latest Universal Periodic Review (UPR) conducted in January 2024 revealing that China would accept 290 out of 428 recommendations, partially accept 8, note 32, and reject 98. However, these accepted recommendations exclude addressing the concerns raised by UN member states regarding severe human rights abuses in Tibet and East Turkistan, such as crimes against humanity, torture, forced disappearances, and the persecution of human rights defenders and journalists.

The Chinese government's approach to the UPR review, consistent with its tactics in previous reviews in 2009, 2013, and 2018, involved submitting misleading information and preventing domestic civil society groups from contributing to the state report or the review process. Additionally, through a vigorous lobbying campaign, China influenced several states to pose benign questions, make vague recommendations, and praise its human rights record. This strategy resulted in many weak recommendations that the Chinese government could easily accept, thus creating a facade of compliance while avoiding substantial reforms.

Despite the heavy pressure, some countries took a principled approach, raising concerns, and making recommendations, based on the growing body of evidence of abuses compiled by NGOs, UN special procedures, treaty bodies and the UN Human Rights Office.

### **US to sanction Chinese officials for alleged ongoing human rights violations**

14 July 2024, Jurist News, Nada Wilson

The US announced Friday that they will be imposing visa restrictions on People's Republic of China officials due to continuing human rights violations against minority groups. The decision is underpinned

by US legislation, namely Section 212 (a)(3)(C) of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

The alleged ongoing human rights violations include "the ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang, the erosion of fundamental freedoms in Hong Kong, persistent human rights abuses in Tibet, and transnational repression around the world." The US has called upon China to amend its human rights policies, stating they must:

abide by the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and accept the many recommendations made this year during the Universal Periodic Review of its human rights record, including unconditionally releasing PRC nationals it has arbitrarily and unjustly detained.

On the same day, the Chinese government also announced sanctions against six US defense companies for selling arms to Taiwan, in addition to five senior management officers from the sanctioned companies. Within this year, the Chinese government announced sanctions against American defense companies repeatedly for engaging in arms trade with Taiwan, allegedly breaching the "One China" principle.

The genocide in Xinjiang against Uyghur Muslims has been reported as an attempt at cultural erasure from China. Uyghur people from 630 villages have been "detained [and] tortured" such that they have been "beat[en] with sticks, [had] fingernails pulled off, some are shackled by heavyweights, immobilized for months on end. Detained women and men have been raped and starved."

China has also reportedly attempted to isolate Tibet from foreign nations by limiting its capacity to interact or communicate with foreign entities. Relatedly, US President Joe Biden signed into law the "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act" which broadens the definition of Tibet to cover not only the Tibet Autonomous Region but also the Tibetan areas of other provinces. In response, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson decried that the law "grossly interferes in China's domestic affairs" by encouraging "Tibet independence." The spokesperson further claimed that the TAR enjoys "social stability and harmony," with prosperous economic development and robust wellbeing protection.

In Hong Kong, the international community is concerned with the development following the enactment of the 2020 national security law and another local national security legislation in 2024, both of which have compromised the autonomy of Hong Kong and undermined the freedoms and rights of Hong Kong people.

Last month, the EU similarly expressed concerns about "very serious human rights situation" in China

Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong in the 39th session of the Joint Human Rights Dialogue.

### **China Threatens To Retaliate Over US Resolve Tibet Bill**

14 July 2024, Bharat Shakti

China strongly opposed U.S. Tibet Dispute Act and vows to defend its interests

China strongly opposed a U.S. law signed by President Joe Biden that urges Beijing to address Tibet's demands for autonomy, vowing to "firmly defend" its interests. On Friday, President Biden signed the Tibet Dispute Act into law. This is a significant step in urging Beijing to hold talks with Tibetan leaders. These talks, which have been stalled since 2010, aim to secure a negotiated agreement on the Himalayan region and address the aspirations of the Tibetan people regarding their historical, cultural, religious, and linguistic identity.

The law, according to China's foreign ministry, 'grossly interferes in China's domestic affairs, undermines China's interests, and sends a severely wrong signal to the 'Tibet independence' forces.' This potential impact is a cause for concern for China.

Although Washington recognises Tibet as a part of China, the law appears to question that position, analysts say. The U.S. has long supported the rights of the Tibetan people to practice their religion and culture, accusing China of human rights violations in the remote region bordering India.

"The U.S. must not implement the Act," the China's ministry said. "If the U.S. continues down the wrong path, China will take resolute measures to firmly defend its sovereignty, security and development interests."

There has been considerable attention on Tibet-China issues, particularly regarding the Dalai Lama's recovery from a medical procedure and his recent 89th birthday. The exiled spiritual leader has stated that he intends to address questions about his succession ar

### **Foreign Ministry Spokesperson's Remarks on the US Signing into Law the "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act"**

13 July 2024, Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America

Q: On July 12 local time, US President Joe Biden signed into law the "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act." The Act gives recognition to the so-called notion of "Greater Tibet" made up by the Dalai group, and asks the US government and the United States Special Coordinator for Tibetan

Issues to counter "disinformation about Tibet" from the Chinese government. President Biden said in a statement that the Act "does not change longstanding bipartisan United States policy to recognize the Tibet Autonomous Region and other Tibetan areas of China as part of the People's Republic of China." What's China's comment?

A: The so-called "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act" violates the US government's long-held position and commitments and the basic norms governing international relations, grossly interferes in China's domestic affairs, undermines China's interests, and sends a severely wrong signal to the "Tibet independence" forces. China firmly opposes it and has protested to the US side.

Xizang has been part of China since ancient times. Xizang affairs are China's internal affairs which brook no interference by any external forces. Xizang today enjoys social stability and harmony, with sound economic performance and people's well-being well protected. Xizang is making fresh progress in effectively running its society, maintaining social stability, and achieving high-quality development. No one and no force should ever attempt to destabilize Xizang to contain and suppress China. Such attempts will never succeed.

We urge the US side to take concrete actions to honor its commitments of recognizing Xizang as part of China and not supporting "Tibet independence." The US must not implement the Act. If the US continues down the wrong path, China will take resolute measures to firmly defend its sovereignty, security and development interests.

### **China blasts US Tibet-China dispute bill, vows to defend its interests**

13 July 2024, Reuters

China expressed strong opposition on Saturday to a U.S. law signed by President Joe Biden that presses Beijing to resolve a dispute over Tibet's demands for greater autonomy, vowing to "firmly defend" its interests.

Biden signed, opens new tab into law on Friday the Tibet dispute act, which seeks to push Beijing to hold talks with Tibetan leaders, stalled since 2010, to secure a negotiated agreement on the Himalayan region and spur China to address the Tibetan people's aspirations on their historical, cultural, religious and linguistic identity.

The law "grossly interferes in China's domestic affairs, undermines China's interests, and sends a severely wrong signal to the 'Tibet independence' forces," China's foreign ministry said.

Although Washington recognises Tibet as a part of China, the law appears to question that position, analysts say. The U.S. has long supported the rights

of the Tibetan people to practice their religion and culture, accusing China of human rights violations in the remote region bordering India.

"The U.S. must not implement the Act," the China's ministry said. "If the U.S. continues down the wrong path, China will take resolute measures to firmly defend its sovereignty, security and development interests."

Attention has focussed on Tibet-China issues as the Dalai Lama, recuperating from a medical procedure, turned 89 last week. The exiled spiritual leader has said he will clarify questions about his succession around his 90th birthday, while China insists it will choose his successor.

### **China's top political advisory body strongly opposes U.S. signing of Xizang-related act**

13 July 2024, Xinhua

The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) National Committee on Saturday expressed strong indignation at and firm opposition to the United States on its signing into law of the so-called "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act."

At a symposium held Saturday, members of the Committee of Ethnic and Religious Affairs of the CPPCC National Committee slammed the act as full of extremely erroneous views and provocative remarks, adding that it was blatant interference in China's internal affairs under the guise of "ethnicity," "religion" and "human rights."

The act fully exposes the United States' sinister intention of interfering in China's internal affairs and containing China's peaceful development, the committee members said, describing the act as a serious betrayal of the U.S. government's commitment to acknowledging that Xizang is part of China and not supporting "Tibet independence."

They said Xizang has been an inseparable part of China since ancient times and the people of the Tibetan ethnic group are members of the Chinese nation. This is a fact recognized by the world and will not change at anytime, they added.

Since ancient times, Xizang has forged unbreakable bonds with the rest of China in geographical, consanguineal, political, economic and cultural terms, they said.

The U.S. side and the Dalai clique audaciously distorts history and brazenly denies the fact of China's sovereignty over Xizang. This is a typical act of U.S.-style bullying, they added.

In the 65 years since the democratic reform in Xizang, great historic changes have taken place, they said, adding that since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012, Xizang has entered a period of best development



and greatest changes, during which the people have benefited the most.

China is a unified multi-ethnic and multi-religious country. China has maintained ethnic unity, religious harmony and social stability for years, which prove that its policies on ethnic and religious affairs are completely correct, they said.

Tibetan Buddhism has a glorious tradition of patriotism and has a complete set of religious rituals and historical norms governing the reincarnation of Living Buddhas that has been respected and upheld by the Tibetan Buddhist community, the committee members said.

The Chinese government implements the policy of freedom of religious belief, respects and protects religious traditions, and manages religious affairs in accordance with the law, rendering U.S. interference completely unwarranted, they said.

The process of building a new, modern socialist Xizang that is united, prosperous, civilized, harmonious, and beautiful is unstoppable by any force, they added.

### **US sanctions more Chinese officials for 'genocide and crimes against humanity' in Xinjiang**

13 July 2024, SCMP, Robert Delaney

State Department announcement caps week of sharp rebukes over Beijing's alleged human-rights abuses and support for Russia against Ukraine.

US President Joe Biden's administration on Friday said it would impose sanctions on more Chinese officials for an "ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity", capping off a week of sharp rebukes over Beijing's alleged human-rights abuses and support for Russia's war against Ukraine.

The US State Department announced it was "taking steps to impose visa restrictions on People's Republic of China (PRC) officials for their involvement in repression of marginalised religious and ethnic communities".

"The PRC has not lived up to its commitments to respect and protect human rights, as demonstrated by the ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang, the erosion of fundamental freedoms in Hong Kong, persistent human-rights abuses in Tibet, and transnational repression around the world," it said.

In March, the State Department criticised Hong Kong for its passage of a new domestic national security law, claiming vague language in its provisions created uncertainty for some of the city's residents.

At the time, the State Department said it was "analysing" the law to understand what risks were involved for American citizens.

Hong Kong lawmakers unanimously passed Hong Kong's domestic national security law just hours earlier, at the end of a marathon session, in which they fast-tracked the constitutionally mandated legislation.

Biden, with North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, included accusations of human-rights abuses in their condemnation of China during the just-concluded annual Nato summit, which the US leader hosted in Washington.

Nato's stern language about China during the summit followed many years of pressure from Washington for the transatlantic security alliance to officially portray Beijing as a threat to the rules-based global order.

Human-rights concerns were highlighted by Nato along with closer economic engagement with Russia, which, it said, keeps Moscow's troops fighting in Ukraine.

China's government reacted quickly, arguing that its policies in all areas cited by the State Department had brought social stability and economic development. Beijing vowed to "respond in kind".

"The so-called 'transnational repression' was invented by the US side through fabricating and piecing together 'evidence' to prosecute public-security officers and other Chinese government officials, engaging in large-scale political manipulation and playing up the threat to China," said Liu Pengyu, a spokesman for Beijing's embassy in Washington.

"China urges the US to stop smears against China under the pretext of issues related to Xinjiang, Tibet, Hong Kong and 'transnational repression' and lift its illegal unilateral sanctions against Chinese officials," he added.

"If the US refuses to change course, China will not flinch and will respond in kind."

In an earlier round of sanctions based on accusations of human-rights abuses in Tibet, in 2022, the Treasury Department froze the US assets of and blocked transactions with Wu Yingjie, the Chinese government's top official in Tibet from 2016 to 2021, and Zhang Hongbo, identified at the time as the Tibetan region's police chief since 2018.

Last year, the State Department announced it was imposing visa sanctions on Chinese officials pursuing "forced assimilation" of children in Tibet.

Friday's announcement, which did not identify which individuals would be denied visas or say how many would be added to the blacklist, adds to the pressure that the White House and the US Congress continue to heap on China on this front.

US lawmakers have made Beijing's treatment of the country's religious minorities including Tibetans and

Uygurs a priority, leading to recent laws like the Uygur Forced Labour Prevention Act.

A report released by the US State Department in April accused Beijing of continuing to "dismantle" Hong Kong's political freedoms and autonomy in violation of the Sino-British Joint Declaration and the Basic Law.

The report highlighted authorities' enforcement of the 2020 national security law, including its retroactive application and the denial of bail to activists in national-security cases.

### **Foreign Ministry Spokesperson's Remarks on the US Signing into Law the "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act"**

13 July 2024, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China

Q: On July 12 local time, US President Joe Biden signed into law the "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act." The Act gives recognition to the so-called notion of "Greater Tibet" made up by the Dalai group, and asks the US government and the United States Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues to counter "disinformation about Tibet" from the Chinese government. President Biden said in a statement that the Act "does not change longstanding bipartisan United States policy to recognize the Tibet Autonomous Region and other Tibetan areas of China as part of the People's Republic of China." What's China's comment?

A: The so-called "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act" violates the US government's long-held position and commitments and the basic norms governing international relations, grossly interferes in China's domestic affairs, undermines China's interests, and sends a severely wrong signal to the "Tibet independence" forces. China firmly opposes it and has protested to the US side.

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We urge the US side to take concrete actions to honor its commitments of recognizing Xizang as part of China and not supporting "Tibet independence." The US must not implement the Act. If the US continues down the wrong path, China will take resolute measures to firmly defend its sovereignty, security and development interests.

### **China slams US for spreading disinformation**

11 July 2024, China Daily

China firmly opposes the continued spread of ungrounded false information by the United States about Russia's so-called "defense industrial base fueled by China," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said on Thursday.

Lin's remarks came after US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's accusation at the 2024 NATO Public Forum.

"We express strong dissatisfaction with and firm opposition to the erroneous remarks made by the US side," Lin told a daily press briefing.

### **China urges U.S. not to support "Tibet independence" forces: spokesperson**

08 July 2024, Xinhua

China urges the United States to stop supporting or endorsing in any way the "Tibet independence" forces and their anti-China and separatist activities, foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said on Monday.

Lin's remarks came after U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a press statement extended best wishes to Dalai Lama on the occasion of his 89th birthday, and reaffirmed U.S. commitment to supporting efforts to preserve Xizang's linguistic, cultural and religious heritage.

Lin told a regular press briefing that the position of the Chinese government on Xizang-related issues is consistent and clear. Xizang affairs are China's internal affairs which brook no interference by any external forces.

"Over the years, Xizang has enjoyed a booming economy, social harmony and stability, and sound preservation of its cultural heritage. The rights and freedoms of all ethnic groups in Xizang, including the freedom of religious belief and the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages, are fully protected," Lin said, adding this is a fact and seen by many in the international community.

As many people know, the 14th Dalai Lama is not a pure religious figure, but a political exile engaged in anti-China separatist activities under the cloak of religion, the spokesperson said.

"We urge the United States to fully understand the gravity and sensitivity of Xizang-related issues, truly respect China's core interests, be fully aware of the Dalai group's anti-China and separatist nature, honor the commitments the United States has made to China on issues related to Xizang, and stop supporting or endorsing in any way the 'Tibet

independence' forces and their anti-China and separatist activities," Lin said.

### **US-China ties may have hit a wall since Xi-Biden summit, noted Chinese commentator warns**

08 July 2024, SCMP, Orange Wang

'Fundamental distrust' must not prevail, or 'another crisis' cannot be ruled out, US-China relations expert Da Wei tells Beijing forum.

Moves to stabilise China-US ties may have reached their "limit" since a summit eight months ago, a leading Chinese political scholar has warned.

Da Wei, director of the Centre for International Security and Strategy (CISS) at Tsinghua University, said both countries needed to make their intentions and goals more clear and convincing to each other.

This was crucial to preventing "fundamental distrust", Da told an international security forum in Beijing on Sunday.

He also warned of "negative development" in bilateral ties, particularly on Taiwan, and technological and economic issues, noting that recent remarks from senior officials on either side had been marked by impatience, frustration, anxiety and disappointment.

"This tendency is not good," the US-China relations specialist told a panel at the World Peace Forum, which was jointly hosted by Tsinghua and the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs, a government-run policy group.

"Another crisis or some kind of confrontation" could not be ruled out if the present trajectory continued, he cautioned.

The summit between Chinese President Xi Jinping and his US counterpart Joe Biden in California last November was followed by several positive signs for the bilateral relationship after months of extreme tensions.

The two countries have resumed high-level dialogue, including military-to-military talks, launched several working groups, held negotiations on trade, finance, and climate and counternarcotics action, and also restarted cooperation on deporting illegal Chinese immigrants from the US.

But tensions continue to build on a number of fronts, most notably over US trade tariffs and moves to hobble China's hi-tech access, its relationship with Russia and what the US and its allies see as Beijing's growing regional assertiveness.

Uncertainty surrounding the outcome of the US presidential election in November has further added to worries about the future of the relationship.

In a phone call with US deputy secretary of state Kurt Campbell on June 27, Chinese executive vice-foreign minister Ma Zhaoxu urged Washington to respect Beijing's concerns.

Washington should take concrete actions on its commitment to not support Taiwanese independence, stop interfering in China's internal affairs relating to Tibet, halt support for Philippine "provocations" in the South China Sea and refrain from "smearing" what was "normal" Sino-Russian trade, Ma said.

Campbell said US commitment to the Philippines under their 1951 mutual defence treaty was "ironclad", while reiterating concerns over China's alleged support for Russia's defence industrial base, an issue US Secretary of State Antony Blinken raised again earlier this month when he said China was helping to sustain Russia's war in Ukraine.

Wu Xinbo, dean of the Institute of International Studies at Fudan University and on the same panel as Da, said that the China-US relationship still "lacked reciprocity" and was "uneven".

"China has tried to accommodate US concerns on artificial intelligence dialogue, military-to-military relations, fentanyl, and so on. But on the US side, the Biden administration has been very reluctant to address China's concerns," he said.

"The Taiwan issue or sanctions or tariffs, [on] all these kinds of things, there has not been much progress."

Others on the panel were Susan Thornton, former US acting assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs; and Douglas Paal, former director of the American Institute in Taiwan, Washington's de facto representative office.

Da said that the process of stabilising bilateral relations was "slowing down", adding: "We have probably picked the low-hanging fruits already."

China and the US had taken a bottoms-up approach to creating trust over the past eight months, which had been "effective", Da noted.

"But there is a limit," he said. "I think we are reaching that limit. Because if you have fundamental distrust [of] the other side, I think these negative sentiments will prevent us from having very meaningful cooperation or even coexistence."

Both sides were still very suspicious of the other's sincerity on stabilising relations and continued to view each other through a "very negative" lens, he added.

"We need to understand the basic motives and the purpose of the other side," he said. "Following that, we need to clean up our house to remove the policies that are inconsistent with [our main goals]."

Da also called on the US to take some actions to convince Beijing that its goal was not containment of China.

For instance, he said, the White House should publicly state that new Taiwanese leader William Lai Ching-te's words and actions did not align with Washington's "one-China" policy.

Beijing sees Taiwan as part of China to be reunited by force if necessary. The US, like most countries, does not recognise Taiwan as an independent state, but is opposed to any attempt to take the self-governed island by force and committed to supplying it with weapons.

Da also called on the US and China to work together on Ukraine and the Middle East, as "we have some shared interest there, rather than veto each other at the United Nations. That's meaningless."

Referring to his conversations with Russian intellectuals about how the US and Russia had missed opportunities to build trust over the past two decades, Da said the same scenario should not play out for Beijing and Washington.

He also dismissed concerns that the wait for the US election results meant ties had entered what in American sporting parlance is called "garbage time" – when the proceedings become perfunctory.

"We need to be on the same page, understanding each other's goal clearly and from the bottom of the heart, then we maybe can ... have real stability in the next four years."

### **US House probes Harvard's handling of students protest during Chinese ambassador speech**

06 July 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon



(L-R) Harvard students Cosette Wu and Tsering Yangchen after the protest on April 20, 2024 (Photo\_Coalition of Students Resisting the CCP (Photo/SFT))

The US House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party initiated an investigation on Monday into Harvard University's response to student protests during Chinese Ambassador Xie Feng's speech at the Harvard Kennedy School on April 20. Members of the Coalition of Students Resisting the CCP and Students for a Free Tibet were forcibly removed by an unidentified individual in a dark suit during the event.

Student activists Cosette Wu and Tsering Yangchen interrupted Xie Feng's address, shouting slogans and

condemning China's human rights record. Following the incident, one of the students was approached by an alleged event organizer who sought the names of those who had challenged the ambassador, according to the House Committee.

"This incident raises serious questions regarding possible transnational repression by the Chinese government and the involvement of international students from China at Harvard in acts of harassment and intimidation condoned by the Chinese government against its critics," wrote Chairman John Moolenaar.

Chairman Moolenaar further noted a troubling trend of Chinese students infringing upon their peers' freedom of expression, citing a recent case in which a former student from the Berkeley College of Music was sentenced for threatening and harassing a fellow Chinese student who had posted pro-democracy fliers on campus.

The speech by Ambassador Xie was organised by the Kennedy School's Greater China Society as part of its two-day Greater China Conference. During Xie's opening remarks, six protesters from Students for a Free Tibet and the Coalition of Students Resisting the CCP disrupted the event, holding Tibetan flags and banners denouncing China's human rights abuses. Harvard University has yet to comment on the incident.

### **China makes mock drill of destroying US F-35 and F-22 fighter jets. Is PLA preparing for war with US? Details here**

05 July 2024, The Economic Times

Can you imagine the People's Liberation Army exploding and destroying US fighter jets worth £78,000 each when the two countries are not at war? Not exactly. There is no US-China war and the Chinese Army has not bombed the US Air Force. What they have done is taking mock drills of exploding jet fighters as a part of their training exercise. According to 'Express', Airbus and Google Earth have captured the images showing destroying US F-35 and F-22 fighter jets in a remote desert area in northwest China. The satellite pictures suggest that the Chinese military destroyed these dummy aircraft with a nearby runway displaying scorch marks and bomb blast craters.

Potential China-US war scenario?

These images also show that China is taking a possible war scenario seriously and is getting ready to target and destroy the US fighters if such a situation emerges in real terms. The seriousness and preparedness of the PLA can be understood by the fact that the landscape in the images is dotted with various types of aircraft models. In the images several hangars and radar towers can be seen,



indicating a comprehensive and realistic training environment for Chinese forces.

Mock drill by the Chinese Army

The mock drill by the Chinese Army has come after North Korea test-fired its two ballistic missiles after Pyongyang vowed "offensive and overwhelming" responses to a new US military drill with South Korea and Japan. It cannot be said that China and North Korea are working in tandem, but they are certainly making preparations to meet any challenge from a common enemy.

North Korea's missile tests

According to 'Express', the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the North Korean Army confirmed that the missiles were launched 10 minutes apart in a northeasterly direction from the town of Jangyon in southeastern North Korea.

If media reports are to be believed, the first missile flew 600 kilometers or 370 miles, and the second missile was 120 kilometers or 75 miles. North Korea generally test-fires its missiles toward its eastern waters.

FAQs:

Have the Chinese Army destroyed US jet fighters?

Not exactly. The People's Liberation Army has carried out a mock drill in which dummy jet fighters were targeted, bombed and destroyed somewhere in Northwest China.

How serious is China over a potential war with the US?

The seriousness and preparedness of the PLA can be understood by the fact that the landscape in the images is dotted with various types of aircraft models. In the images several hangars and radar towers can be seen, indicating a comprehensive and realistic training environment for Chinese forces.

### **US deports 116 Chinese migrants in first 'large' flight in 5 years**

03 July 2024, AP, Rebecca Santana

The Department of Homeland Security said Tuesday that it sent 116 Chinese migrants from the United States back home in the first "large charter flight" in five years.

The flight, which happened over the weekend, comes as Chinese immigration has become the subject of intense political debate in the upcoming U.S. presidential election.

"We will continue to enforce our immigration laws and remove individuals without a legal basis to remain in the United States," Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said in a statement.

The department said it was working with China to "reduce and deter irregular migration and to disrupt illicit human smuggling through expanded law enforcement efforts." It did not respond to questions about how long the migrants had been in the U.S.

In recent years, the United States has had a difficult time returning Chinese nationals who do not have the right to stay in America because China has resisted taking them back. Last year, the United States saw a drastic surge in the number of Chinese immigrants entering the country illegally from Mexico.

U.S. border officials arrested more than 37,000 Chinese nationals on the southern border in 2023, 10 times the number during the previous year.

Chinese migration has increasingly become a rallying cry for Republicans and former President Donald Trump who have raised suspicions about why Chinese migrants are coming to the U.S.

Asian advocacy organizations are concerned that the rhetoric could encourage harassment of Asians, while migrants themselves have said they're coming to escape poverty and repression.

Earlier this year, the U.S. and China resumed cooperation on migration issues.

The Chinese government has said it is firmly opposed to "all forms of illegal immigration." In a statement in May, China's Embassy in the U.S. said the country's law enforcement was cracking down "hard on crimes that harm the tranquility of national border, and maintained a high pressure against all kinds of smuggling organizations and offenders."

Homeland Security said they are working with China on more removal flights in the future but did not give a timeline for when the next one would happen.

Earlier this year, a charter flight carried a small but unknown number of deportees to the northeastern Chinese city of Shenyang, according to Thomas Cartwright of Witness at the Border, an advocacy group that tracks deportation flights.

Homeland Security officials did not say how many people were on that March 30 flight, but the Gulfstream V aircraft typically has a seating capacity of 14. It also made a stop in South Korea before heading back to the U.S., Cartwright said.

The announcement of the large charter flight comes after Ecuador cut off a key route used by Chinese migrants to get to the Western Hemisphere. Ecuador was one of only two mainland countries in the Americas to offer visa-free entry to Chinese nationals and had become a popular starting point for Chinese migrants to then trek north to the U.S.

As of July 1, Ecuador has effectively reinstated visas for Chinese nationals after the South American country said it had seen a worrying increase in irregular migration.



# June

## House passes bill urging China to mend ties with Dalai Lama

24 June 2024, The Hill, Lauren Irwin

The House voted Wednesday to pass a bill that is urging China to mend ties with the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan leaders.

The legislation, named Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act, received broad bipartisan support and encourages China and Tibet to resolve the long-standing dispute over Tibet's governance.

The bill now heads to President Biden's desk after being passed by the Senate last month.

"Tibetans, like all people, have the right to religious freedom — which includes freedom from [Chinese Communist Party] surveillance, censorship, and detention," House Foreign Affairs Committee Chair Michael McCaul (R-Texas) said in a statement. The legislation will allow State Department officials to "actively and directly" counter disinformation about Tibet that's spread by the Chinese government, namely rejecting false claims that Tibet has been part of China since "ancient times," the lawmakers said in their release.

It will also allow the U.S. to push for negotiations between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama or his representatives over the future of Tibet.

The lawmakers noted that no formal dialogue between Tibetan and Chinese authorities has happened since 2010.

As the U.S. seeks to continue its diplomatic conversations with China, the legislation is a reminder that the U.S. recognizes the territory of Tibet as a country occupied by the People's Republic of China and said there are significant human rights issues taking place there. China often pushes back on the Western view, accusing the U.S. of interfering in its sovereign affairs.

Sen. Todd Young (R-Ind.) said in a statement that the bill will refresh the United States's policy toward Tibet and push for negotiations to free the Tibetan people.

"Congressional passage of this legislation further demonstrates America's resolve that the [Chinese Communist Party's] status quo — both in Tibet and elsewhere — is not acceptable," Young's statement said.

"I look forward to this important effort becoming law and working with my colleagues in the Senate and with the Administration to ensure swift and effective implementation."

House Rules Committee Ranking Member Jim McGovern (D-Mass.) said he hopes the bipartisan

support on the bill sends a message to the Tibetan people that America stands with them.

"The ongoing oppression of the Tibetan people is a grave tragedy, and our bill provides further tools that empower both America and the international community to stand up for justice and peace," McGovern's statement said.

## After South China Sea, US, China Set To Wrestle At 'Roof Of The World'; Washington Begins Himalayan Push

24 June 2024, The EurAsian Times, Shubhangi Palve

A geopolitical drama is unfolding in the shadow of the world's highest mountains. The United States, long on the back foot in the Indo-Pacific, is now making a bold move on the Tibetan plateau. But this isn't just about America and China—India finds itself at the center of this high-altitude power play.

The United States, which was for quite some time in a defensive stance in the Indo-Pacific region, is now shifting to an offensive approach against China on the issue of Tibet.

This strategic shift is playing out on Indian soil, adding a new dimension to the already tense U.S.-China-India relationship. With ongoing trade disputes and Taiwan issues, Tibet's emergence as a flashpoint further complicates this global rivalry.

The US Congress recently passed the "Resolve Tibet Act," which advocates dialogue between China and the Dalai Lama. This act is a sharp jab at Beijing's "One China Policy" and a clear sign that Washington is changing its tune.

### History Of US-Tibet Relations

Imagine a century-long story filled with covert operations, spiritual leaders, and mountain warriors. That's the tale of Tibet, and it's heating up once again. The history of U.S.-Tibet relations is complex and often divided.

Aaron Bekemeyer, in his paper for 'History 363' titled 'The Nuances of the US-Tibet Relationship,' argues that 'US-Tibet relations allowed Washington flexibility to avoid total rapprochement with China and maintain Tibet as a potential political tool in Sino-US and other international relations.'

Rewind to the 1950s... After the Communist Chinese takeover of Tibet in 1949 and 1950, the United States covertly supported various forms of Tibetan anti-Chinese resistance as part of its opposition to the Communist regime. However, following the Sino-U.S. rapprochement in 1972, Tibet's utility as an American foreign policy tool quickly diminished.

For the past century or so, Tibet's history has been marked by confusion and conflict over its international political status. In the first half of the twentieth century, Tibet enjoyed de facto independence. Despite Chinese claims to sovereignty,

Tibet secured British recognition of its autonomy in 1914 and maintained a military and diplomatic defense against Chinese encroachments. These factors allowed Tibet to conduct its own affairs until 1949.

According to Bekemeyer, the US, involved in the region only from the 1940s, recognized Tibetan autonomy but stopped short of full diplomatic recognition of Tibet as an independent nation. However, in 1950, after Mao Zedong's Communists took power in China, the People's Liberation Army invaded Tibet, and Tibetan representatives were coerced into signing the Seventeen-Point Agreement, which absorbed Tibet into China.

Beginning in the 1950s, the U.S. provided covert support for a Tibetan 'Guerrilla force' and non-military support for the Dalai Lama. This support continued until the normalization of Sino-American relations in 1972.

By 1974, the U.S. had ceased its support, including cutting off the subsidy to the Dalai Lama and his government. Consequently, Tibet became a lesser issue in U.S. foreign policy, and Washington never again matched the level of commitment it had displayed in the 1950s and 1960s.

#### The US Tibet Policy Bill

This month, the US Congress passed the Resolve Tibet Act, a legislation advocating for a peaceful resolution of the dispute over Tibet's status and governance. The Act calls on Beijing to resume dialogue with the Tibetan spiritual and political leader, the Dalai Lama.

This significant expansion bolsters the Dalai Lama's authority in choosing his successor and mandates decisive US action against Chinese interference, effectively rejecting China's long-held 'One China Policy' and its authoritative grip over Tibet. The legislation marks a notable shift in Washington's approach under President Joe Biden, signaling a more assertive stance against Beijing.

Conversely, China has issued warnings to the US regarding the Tibet policy bill. Officially referring to Tibet as Xizang, China stated in April 2024 that it would only engage in dialogue with representatives of the Dalai Lama, not with officials of the Tibetan government in exile based in India. Additionally, China has ruled out discussions on the Dalai Lama's long-standing demand for autonomy for his remote Himalayan homeland.

Interestingly, Former U.S. Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama all met the Dalai Lama. However, Donald Trump, who had a different stance on Tibet, did not meet him. Current US President Joe Biden has also yet to meet the Dalai Lama.

However, the Dalai Lama has reached the US for medical treatment and has been received very

warmly by his supporters. It is unclear whether the Dalai Lama will meet any U.S. officials during his trip.

Earlier, the Dalai Lama stated that he does not seek independence from China but rather autonomy. While China continues to regard Tibet as its territory, Tibet does not consider itself subject to Chinese rule and continues to advocate for its independence.

#### Role Of India In U.S.-China Dispute Over Tibet

Recently, India's role in the U.S.-China dispute over Tibet gained attention when a group of seven U.S. lawmakers visited Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh, to meet the 88-year-old Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso.

Nancy Pelosi, after the meeting, stated, "The passage of this bill is a message to the Chinese government that we have clarity in our thinking and our understanding of this issue of the freedom of Tibet."

Tibet's significance in U.S. foreign policy extends beyond Sino-U.S. relations. At the very least, Washington's position on Tibet has implications for its relations with India. Understanding India's role requires knowing about the Special Frontier Force (SFF).

#### The Special Frontier Force (SFF)

The Special Frontier Force (SFF), also known as the Vikas Battalion, has played a crucial role in preventing Chinese occupation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh.

The SFF was established on November 14, 1962, in the aftermath of the Sino-India war. Following the war, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and India's Intelligence Bureau (IB) collaborated to train a 5,000-strong Tibetan force for potential missions against China.

According to Tibetologist Claude Arpi, in an interview with 'India Today,' the force was the brainchild of former IB director B.N. Mullick and the CIA.

In the 1950s, the CIA and IB set up Mustang Base in Nepal's Mustang region to train Tibetans in guerrilla warfare. The Mustang rebels facilitated the Dalai Lama's escape to India during the 1959 Tibetan Uprising. The CIA, a civilian foreign intelligence service of the U.S. government, had been involved in a covert program to train Tibetan guerrillas to combat Chinese forces in Tibet since the 1950s.

The SFF is currently based in Chakrata, Uttarakhand, and its insignia features a snow lion. The exact current strength of the force remains unknown.

The SFF gained attention following the Ladakh clash, particularly after the death of Tenzin Nyima, a Tibetan trooper, in a landmine blast at Pangong Tso. Images of his body wrapped in Indian and Tibetan flags brought focus to this secretive security force of trained mountain warriors.

The SFF operates under the operational control of the Indian Army but remains a separate entity due to its inclusion of Tibetan refugees and international implications. Military experts note that the SFF comprises both men and women who receive training equivalent to that of elite commandos.

The SFF has been instrumental in several major military operations, including Operation Eagle (1971 war with Pakistan), Operation Bluestar (1984 clearing of Amritsar's Golden Temple), Operation Meghdoot (1984 securing of the Siachen glacier), and Operation Vijay (1999 Kargil war with Pakistan), as well as numerous counter-insurgency operations. Despite its significant contributions, the SFF has largely operated in the shadows.

Army Alaska's 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, snowshoe across the drop zone during Exercise Spartan Pegasus Feb. 24 at Deadhorse, Alaska. Spartan Pegasus allows USARAK to maximize training resources across multiple units to maintain readiness in a wide array of mission sets across the Arctic and Pacific region. (U.S. Army photo/Staff Sgt. Daniel Love)

### Shifts In India's Tibet Policy

The Tibetan movement is currently facing significant survival challenges.

On June 5, 2024, The Diplomat, an international online news magazine based in Washington, DC, reported that India plans to rename more than two dozen places in China's Tibet Autonomous Region in a tit-for-tat move against China renaming places in Arunachal Pradesh.

According to the report, the Army's Information Warfare Division has finalized the list of renamed places and will soon release it.

Like the US, India's stance on Tibet has not remained consistent historically. Amid escalating tensions with China, there has been a shift in India's Tibet policy.

In 1959, the Dalai Lama fled Tibet and sought refuge in India, arriving on March 31 of that year. Upon reaching India, he established a government-in-exile.

In June 2003, India officially acknowledged Tibet as part of China following a meeting between then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Chinese President Jiang Zemin. However, Indian officials clarified that this recognition was indirect, focusing on the autonomous Tibetan region rather than the entirety of Tibet, which is a significant portion of China.

This policy shift marked increased public engagement by the Indian government with the Dalai Lama. For instance, in 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited Lobsang Sangay, head of the Tibetan government in exile in India, to his swearing-in ceremony. However, Modi did not extend an invitation in 2019 for his second term, prioritizing a smooth summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Currently, India's approach to Tibetans in India is guided by executive policy rather than law. While this policy has improved welfare measures for Tibetans in India, it lacks legal backing on core Tibetan issues. Therefore, there is a growing call for India to adopt a more assertive stance on Tibet in its dealings with China.

As the Dalai Lama ages and questions of succession loom, the stakes are higher than ever. Will India forge its own Tibet policy? Can the US successfully challenge China's grip on the region?

### Chinese embassy threatened House lawmakers, urged them to 'cancel' Dalai Lama visit

21 June 2024, Josh Christenson, New York Post

China's embassy to the US sent a threatening letter to lawmakers who visited the Dalai Lama in Tibet this week urging them to "cancel" the trip, according to a copy of the missive exclusively reviewed by The Post.

"I am writing to express deep concern on the HFAC congressional delegation's visit to Dharamshala," Minister-Counselor Zhou Zheng wrote to aides of House Foreign Affairs Committee chairman Michael McCaul (R-Texas) and ranking member Gregory Meeks (D-NY).

"The visit interferes with China's internal affairs, violates China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. China firmly deplores it," Zheng said, referring to Tibet as "Xizang ... an integral part of Chinese territory since [the] Yuan Dynasty in the 13th century."

"We strongly urge the Congress to cancel related activities, so as to help maintain the current stabilizing momentum of China-US relations, rather than the opposite," he added.

The bipartisan House delegation met Wednesday with the Dalai Lama, the exiled spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, in northern India — despite Beijing's warnings against US association with the leader of "anti-China separatist activities under the guise of religion."

"Just this week our delegation received a letter from the Chinese Communist Party, warning us not to come here," McCaul said during the meeting, "but we did not let the CCP intimidate us, for we are here today."

"Communist China's oppression of the Tibetan people, bullying of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and warnings to those of us who visited Tibetans living in exile in India are inappropriate and all the more reason why the United States and the international community must work together to counter Chinese misinformation about Tibet's history, advocate for the Tibetan people's self-determination and encourage a continuity plan for the Dalai Lama's successor,"

Staten Island GOP Rep. Nicole Malliotakis, who was also on the trip, told The Post Friday.

McCaul, Meeks, Malliotakis, House Speaker emerita Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and other House members greeted officials from the Tibetan government-in-exile, which has had no relations with Beijing since 2010.

The Dalai Lama, 88, fled to Dharamshala after a failed uprising against China in 1959.

He has dismissed allegations of fueling separatism in Tibet and claimed he stands only for the protection of its native Buddhist culture.

"The human rights conditions in Xizang are better than ever, as witnessed by the international community," the letter to the congressional delegation from the Chinese embassy claimed — contradicting reports of hundreds of thousands of Tibetan farmers being forced into labor camps to correct their "backward thinking."

The House lawmakers told a crowd of hundreds gathered outside a monastery in the hillside town, some of whom waved American flags, that the visit underscored the successful passage by Congress of the Resolve Tibet Act, which among other provisions calls on the State Department to "counter disinformation" spread by Beijing — including the idea that the region has been part of China for centuries.

Pelosi called the legislation "a message to the Chinese government that we have clarity in our thinking and our understanding of this issue of the freedom of Tibet."

President Biden has not yet signed the bill into law after it passed Congress last week.

"The President is going to do what he thinks is best on behalf of the American people, that's what I can tell you," White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters in a Tuesday press briefing.

Lin Jian, a spokesperson for the Chinese foreign ministry, said the same day that the White House "must not sign the bill into law," or China will take as yet unrevealed but "resolute measures."

The visit marked the second time Pelosi has disregarded Chinese warnings of US involvement in the Far East, following an August 2022 visit to Taiwan.

The Dalai Lama was expected to fly to the US on Thursday for medical treatment on his knees. It's unclear whether he met with any other officials while on American soil.

### **A Texas congressman was sanctioned by China. He's not backing down.**

21 June 2024, Houston Chronicle, Jeremy Wallace

A lot of members of Congress talk tough about combating Chinese influence around the globe, but

few are getting under the skin of communist leaders there quite like U.S. Rep. Michael McCaul.

The Austin Republican has already been personally sanctioned by the Chinese government and helped trigger an intimidating war games display during a visit last year to Taiwan. He was at it again last week, leading a congressional delegation to meet with the Dalai Lama in India's Dharamshala despite vocal Chinese opposition.

China invaded the independent Himalayan country of Tibet in 1950 and has controlled the territory ever since. The Dalai Lama, the head of Tibetan Buddhism, fled into exile to India amid a failed 1959 uprising against Chinese rule.

McCaul, who chairs the House Foreign Affairs Committee, was a key force in helping pass a resolution in Congress earlier this month calling on China to reengage in peaceful talks over Tibet. But Beijing hasn't held dialogue with the representatives of the Dalai Lama since 2010.

Lin Jian, a spokesperson for the Chinese foreign ministry, urged McCaul and other Washington officials to stop supporting Tibetan independence.

"It's known by all that the 14th Dalai Lama is not a purely religious figure, but a political exile engaged in anti-China separatist activities under the cloak of religion," Lin said.

The latest dustup with McCaul comes just over a year after China imposed sanctions directly against McCaul for leading a delegation to visit Taiwan. Those sanctions included freezing assets and properties he has in China and prohibiting any organization or individual in China from working with him. They also prohibit McCaul from traveling to China. McCaul doesn't have assets in China.

China's foreign ministry said last year that McCaul had frequently interfered in the country's internal affairs with his words and actions and harmed China's interests. They accused him of "seriously harming China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and sending a serious wrong signal to Taiwan independence separatist forces."

The sanctions haven't stopped McCaul, as evidenced by his trip to Taiwan in May in which he gave new President Lai Ching-te a cowboy hat as a gift.

"Being sanctioned by the Chinese Communist Party is a badge of honor," McCaul said. "Nothing will deter the United States from supporting free, democratic nations — including Taiwan."

McCaul, first elected to Congress in 2004, represents the sprawling 10th Congressional District, which includes 13 counties stretching from Austin to Katy.

He has used his role on the Foreign Affairs Committee to also call for moving supply chains away from China and going after U.S. companies that are providing technology that is allowing the

Chinese to expand their military and espionage activities.

In 2022, McCaul and then-incoming House Speaker Kevin McCarthy held a press conference in Houston to blast the Chinese government for using their since-closed consulate in Houston for spying and stealing trade secrets and technology from organizations including the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, NASA and the energy sector.

McCaul says he sees trips like the one to meet with the Dalai Lama as a continuation of his effort to deter Chinese aggression and stand up for allies that need U.S. support.

"I hope our visit served as a symbol of the U.S. government's support for the people of Tibet and the friendship between our two peoples," McCaul said.

### **Won't let China sway Dalai Lama's successor choice: US lawmakers**

20 June 2024, The Tribune

Meet spiritual leader in Dharamsala, reiterate support for free Tibet.

The ongoing war of words between the US and China over the autonomy for Tibet escalated on Wednesday with an American Congressional delegation, on a visit to Dharamsala to meet the Dalai Lama, saying Washington won't let Beijing "insert" itself in choosing a successor to the Tibetan spiritual leader.

"Things have changed, (China should) be ready for that," said the US delegation after meeting the Dalai Lama in the morning. There has been no reaction from India since the US announced on June 15 that its delegation would visit McLeodganj where Tibetan government-in-exile is headquartered.

Michael McCaul, the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the US House, who is leading the delegation, said they discussed with the Dalai Lama "how to move ahead with China on having a free Tibet". Asked whether the Tibet-China negotiations could restart, he said "that was for the US State Department to decide".

After emerging from the meeting, the delegation attended a public reception organised by the Central Tibetan Administration (government-in-exile). Hundreds of Tibetans applauded with shouts of 'Tashi Delek' (greetings in Tibetan) as the delegation members held small US and Tibet flags in their hands.

"The Chinese Communist Party continues to threaten the freedom of Tibetans. They want to insert themselves into the succession plan of the Dalai Lama. We will not let that happen... China has been falsely claiming Tibet as its part since the 13th century. The Tibetans as well as the US know that's not true," said McCaul.

He also mentioned a law titled the Tibet China Dispute Act, also referred to as the Resolve Tibet Act, which has been passed by the US Congress and seeks to strengthen efforts to "resolve the Tibet issue as per international norms under a negotiated settlement". "It allows for self-determination," he said.

Nancy Pelosi, former Speaker of the US House, said the law was a message to the Chinese that "we now have clarity in our thinking and understanding on the issue of freedom of Tibet". "The Chinese are trying to change the culture by reducing the use of the (Tibetan) language... Han (ethnic Chinese) are coming in... Things have changed now, get ready for that," she said.

Taking on Chinese President Xi Jinping, Pelosi said "the Dalai Lama would live long and his legacy would live forever". "But you, the President of China (Xi), nobody will know you and nobody will give you credit for anything," she said.

Jim McGovern, who authored the Bill, said China has an opportunity and it should release all political prisoners, including the Panchen Lama (who disappeared in 1995 as a six-year-old)."

The bipartisan US Congressional delegation, including Meeks, McCaul and Pelosi, met EAM S Jaishankar on Wednesday. Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra was also present. "Pleasure to meet with the bipartisan US Congressional delegation," posted Jaishankar on X.

He also thanked each of the members by name and appreciated their "strong and continued support for the Indo-US strategic partnership".

### **EU raises human rights concerns with China in 39th Dialogue Session**

18 June 2024, ANI

The European Union reiterated its persistent concerns regarding fundamental freedoms, labour rights, judicial independence, and cases of forced labour in China, during the 39th session of the joint Human Rights Dialogue held in Chongqing.

The session, which took place on June 16, followed a side visit to Tibet from June 13-15.

In a press statement, the EU voiced concerns over restrictions on freedoms of expression, assembly, and religion in Tibet. It also highlighted the issues of rights to equality and freedom from discrimination, including the rights of women and LGBT.

The EU also reiterated its unequivocal opposition to the death penalty, urging China to implement a moratorium and provide transparent data on its use. It emphasized that religious leaders should be selected without government interference, respecting religious norms, particularly in the case of the Dalai Lama's succession.



The EU highlighted the vulnerability of religious, ethnic, and linguistic minorities, including Uyghurs and Tibetans, the negative impact of Hong Kong's new national security legislation on rights and freedoms, and the erosion of the region's autonomy. Expressing deep concerns over the human rights situation in Xinjiang, Tibetan areas, and Hong Kong, the EU cited reports of crackdowns on human rights defenders, lawyers, and journalists.

It further urged Beijing to stop human rights violations and investigate the cases of unlawful detention, enforced disappearance, torture, and ill-treatment.

Specific cases raised included EU citizen Gui Minhai, Uyghur academic Ilham Tohti, and Tibetan Activists Go Sherab Gyatso and Tashi Dorje.

The EU also addressed the detention of individuals for exercising freedoms of religion, belief, expression, and peaceful assembly, highlighting the cases of Xu Na, Pastor Wang Yi, Zhang Chunlei, Ding Yuande, Yu Wensheng, Xu Yan, Zhang Zhan, Li Qiaochu, Peng Lifa, and Kamile Wayit.

The European Union also called for a reassessment of China's national security framework to ensure compliance with international human rights law.

It encouraged Beijing to invite UN Special Procedures and monitoring bodies to assess and improve its human rights record.

China, in response, discussed the situation of refugees, migrants, and manifestations of racism in the EU, and focused on economic, social, and cultural rights there.

The EU also updated China on incoming European legislation requiring human rights due diligence for companies and prohibiting products made with forced labour on the EU market.

Both parties affirmed the importance of upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and discussed achieving the full realization of economic, social, and cultural rights alongside civil and political rights. The EU emphasized that all human rights are interconnected, interdependent, and equally necessary for protecting human dignity.

The Dialogue concluded with an agreement to continue exchanges in preparation for the next Human Rights Dialogue in 2025.

It was co-chaired by Paola Pampaloni, Deputy Managing Director for Asia and the Pacific in the European External Action Service, and Shen Bo, Director General for International Organisations and Conferences at China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with EU Member States participating as observers. (ANI)

### **US calls for immediate release of prominent rights activists held in China**

18 June 2024, SCMP

Tibet Digest December - January 2024

The United States on Monday condemned prison sentences given to women's rights activist Sophia Huang Xueqin and labour rights activist Wang Jianbing in China and urged Beijing to release both activists immediately.

The sentences demonstrate China's "continued efforts to intimidate and silence civil society", US State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said in a statement.

Supporters said Huang has been sentenced to five years in prison on charges of incitement to subvert state authority, almost three years after she Wang were detained.

The verdict provided to Associated Press stated that Huang would also face a fine of 100,000 yuan (US\$14,000), underscoring the ruling Communist Party's intolerance of any activism outside its control in a system whose upper echelons are dominated by men.

China's #MeToo movement flourished briefly before being snuffed out by the government. China often silences activists by holding them incommunicado for a long time and then sentencing them to prison.

Huang's release date was listed as September 18, 2026, accounting for her earlier detention. Co-defendant Wang was sentenced to three years and six months on the same charge. Wang is more known for his labour rights activity but also helped women report sexual harassment.

Huang and Wang's cases appear to have become intertwined as part of the most recent wave of a general crackdown on rights advocates, a trend that predates the #MeToo movement and includes previous incidents such as the 2015 detentions of women distributing pamphlets against sexual harassment on public transport.

Working as a freelance journalist, Huang helped spark China's first #MeToo case in 2018 when she publicised allegations of sexual harassment made by a graduate student against her PhD supervisor at one of China's most prestigious universities.

Friends say that Huang and Wang disappeared on September 19, 2021, a day before Huang was scheduled to fly to the United Kingdom to start a master's degree programme on gender violence and conflict at the University of Sussex. They went on trial in September 2023.

The International Women's Media Foundation earlier gave Huang its Wallis Annenberg Justice for Women Journalists Award.

Supporters of Huang and Wang created a GitHub webpage to post case updates and share their thoughts. China is routinely listed by monitoring groups as among the top imprisoning nations of journalists.

Amnesty International's China Director Sarah Brooks issued a statement condemning Huang's conviction as an attack on women's advocacy in the People's Republic of China, which has long promoted the concept that "women hold up half the sky", but whose institutions remain dominated by men.

"These convictions will prolong their deeply unjust detention and have a further chilling effect on human rights and social advocacy in a country where activists face increasing state crackdowns," Brooks said in an emailed statement.

"In reality, they have committed no actual crime. Instead, the Chinese government has fabricated excuses to deem their work a threat, and to target them for educating themselves and others about social justice issues such as women's dignity and workers' rights."

### **U.S. bans imports from 3 more Chinese companies over forced labor**

11 June 2024, UPI, Chris Benson

The Biden administration Tuesday banned imports from three more Chinese companies in a continued crack down on the use of forced labor of Asia's minority populations in America's supply chain.

The Department of Homeland Security "will not tolerate forced labor in U.S. supply chains and will enforce our laws across all industries and sectors," Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said Tuesday in a statement.

The three companies in China named by the Department of Homeland Security produce seafood, aluminum and footwear goods. DHS said those three industries play an important role in Xinjiang's economy.

"We will continue to investigate companies that use or facilitate forced labor and will hold those entities responsible," Mayorkas said while urging stakeholders across industry, civil society and international partners "to work with us to eliminate the scourge of forced labor."

The call was made by the Forced Labor Enforcement Task Force, chaired by DHS, which is comprised of the federal departments of commerce, justice, labor, state and treasury. The office of the U.S. Trade Representative also sits on the task force.

They now join 68 other Chinese companies put on the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act Entity List. U.S. Customs and Border Protection will stop their goods from entering the United States over allegations of using or facilitating forced labor of members of the Uyghur population, including the Kazakh and Kyrgyz people, from the Xinjiang region in northwestern China.

The United States, which has already taken similar actions, has accused China of committing genocide

against its Uyghur Muslim population in the northwestern Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, where Beijing is estimated to have interned about a million of them in concentration camps since 2017.

Shandong Meijia Group Co., Ltd., also known as Rizhao Meijia Group, is based in Shandong Province. They process, sell and export frozen seafood products, vegetables and other quick-frozen convenience food.

Shrimp supply chains have shown "a disturbing pattern of profiting off of the globe's most vulnerable populations," according to John Williams, the Florida-based Southern Shrimp Alliance's executive director.

In a news release, the Southern Shrimp Alliance called Tuesday's move a "groundbreaking announcement."

As an example, Argentinian red shrimp packed by Uyghurs in Chinese seafood processing plants "should not be competing with wholesome products in American grocery stores," Williams said.

The United States claims the seafood company took part in a Chinese government-sponsored labor transfer program to move and deliver Uyghur people, and individuals from other persecuted minority groups, out of the Xinjiang region for labor at its factory in Shandong.

Williams said the task force's effort to counter forced labor in seafood supply chains "sends a strong message" to U.S. seafood importers "that chasing lower costs and higher margins cannot replace ethical and legal obligations."

Dongguan Oasis Shoes Co., Ltd., also doing business as three other "Dongguan" styled companies, is headquartered in Guangdong Province and manufactures shoe and shoe material goods.

It is alleged Dongguan cooperated with the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps to recruit, transfer and receive people of persecuted minority groups, including Uyghurs, out of the Xinjiang region to a Guangdong factory near China's southeastern coast. Xinjiang Shenhua Coal and Electricity Co., Ltd. is a Xinjiang-based company that produces electrolytic aluminum, graphite carbon and prebaked anodes.

It was alleged the company likewise took part in a Chinese government-lead labor transfer program to similarly recruit, move and deliver minority citizens groups out of the region for forced labor.

An independent British tribunal said in 2021 in a 63-page report that Beijing subjected the Uyghur people to "unconscionable cruelty" and crimes against humanity in actions that amounted to genocide, it concluded.

The bipartisan Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act – signed December 2021 by President Joe Biden – bans the import of goods from the region over alleged human rights abuses against the Muslim

Uyghur population, unless the importer proves goods are not made with forced labor. It also imposes sanctions on foreign individuals who make use of forced labor.

Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla, a co-sponsor of the bill, described the law signed by Biden at the time as the "most important and impactful action taken thus far by the United States to hold the Chinese Communist Party accountable for their use of slave labor."

According to the Uyghur Human Rights Project, a Washington-based research and advocacy group, 1 in 26 Uyghurs and non-Han people in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in northwest China were incarcerated in 2022 representing roughly 449,000 people.

While the Uyghur and non-Han population in Xinjiang made up only 1% of China's overall population, the ethnic minority in the Uyghur Region account for 34% of China's estimated prison population, according to the report.

## US report documents China's extreme isolation of Tibet

10 June 2024, International Campaign for Tibet

A new State Department report says that Chinese security forces intimidated, monitored, and harassed Americans in Tibet – and that many diplomats, officials, journalists, and tourists were barred from entering Tibet at all.

A consistent theme is that the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) is uniquely subjected to wide-ranging restrictions on access. These restrictions are not in force in any other provincial-level entity in the People's Republic of China.

"The State Department's report documents China's efforts to lock diplomats, journalists, and American visitors out, and keep the Tibetan people locked in. The goal of this legislation is to open Tibet, and the administration should make greater use of sanctions to bring accountability to the Chinese officials responsible for these restrictions," said Tencho Gyatso, president of International Campaign for Tibet.

Onerous restrictions

This is the sixth annual State Department report on access to Tibet. It notes that while the COVID-era restrictions on travel in other parts of the PRC eased, government regulations and procedures impeding travel to Tibet remain in place.

American officials are largely banned from entering Tibet. The report states that U.S. officials made three requests for official travel to the TAR in 2023, none of which were approved.

Diplomatic and official faced fewer formal restrictions on access to regions of Tibet outside the TAR, but

PRC officials instead used conspicuous surveillance to intimidate, monitor, harass, and restrict travel to these areas.

The report also says that China's decision to close the American consulate in Chengdu severely inhibits American diplomatic and official access to Tibet, with responsibility for these duties now placed some 800 miles away from Tibet in the embassy in Beijing.

Key findings

Other significant findings from the report include:

- During the reporting year, the U.S. mission personnel were unable to conduct any American Citizen Services visits to the TAR in 2023 because requests for visits by consular officers were not approved. No consular officer has visited the TAR since 2019.
- Access to these areas for journalists remained restricted and limited.
- When U.S. journalists gained access to Tibetan areas, the PRC government further suppressed their ability to report about Tibet by intimidating and preventing PRC citizens from interacting with foreign press. By hosting group tours, the government has been able to cite increased numbers and greater access to the region while maintaining strict control over the information conveyed.
- Tibetan Americans undergo a stricter screening process than other U.S. citizens when applying for PRC visas at PRC embassies. Tibetan Americans reported more frequent harassment by security officials in Tibetan areas than in other parts of China, including requirements to report to the local UFWD office where some were reportedly interrogated, threatened, and forced to download tracking software on their phones.
- Some members of the Tibetan American community reported they self-censored their behavior in the United States out of fear of retribution against their family members in Tibet or fear of losing future access to Tibet and threats from PRC officials.

[Read the State Department report here.](#)

## China says US provoking arms race in moves into South China Sea

09 June 2024, Reuters

The U.S. poses the largest security challenge in the South China Sea as its military deployment there is turning it into "the whirlpool of an arms race", Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong said in remarks published on Sunday.

Recent maritime run-ins between China and the Philippines, a U.S. treaty ally, have made the highly

strategic South China Sea a potential flashpoint between Washington and Beijing.

"At present, the biggest security challenge in the South China Sea comes from outside the region," Sun said in comments published by his ministry, after attending a high-level meeting on East Asian cooperation in Laos.

Sun said U.S.-led forces were "promoting military deployment and actions in the South China Sea, inciting and intensifying maritime disputes and contradictions, and damaging the legitimate rights and interests of coastal countries".

A move by the United States to deploy medium-range missile systems in the area "is dragging the region into the whirlpool of an arms race, placing the entire Asia Pacific region under the shadow of geopolitical conflicts", Sun said.

China is committed to properly managing disputes with the parties in the South China Sea through dialogue, he added.

In April, the Philippines said during a meeting with U.S. allies that it was determined to assert its sovereign rights in the South China Sea, accusing China of escalating "its harassment" of the Philippines.

China claims almost the entire South China Sea, a conduit for more than \$3 trillion in annual ship commerce, and has deployed hundreds of coast guard vessels as far as 1,000 km off its mainland to police what it says is its jurisdiction.

The Philippines and China have sparred repeatedly this past year near disputed features that fall within Manila's exclusive economic zone. China routinely accuses the Philippines of encroachment while Manila and its allies have condemned what they call aggression by Beijing.

The United States has said it stands with Manila.

### **Five Eyes nations say China is poaching Western ex-military**

05 June 2024, RFA, Alex Willemyns

The People's Liberation Army is 'aggressively recruiting Western military talent.'

Former U.S. Marines Corp pilot Daniel Duggan, who is facing extradition to the United States for allegedly breaking U.S. arms control law after he trained Chinese pilots, poses for a picture in this undated handout picture.

China's navy and air force have been "aggressively recruiting Western military talent" to train their aviators in complex aerial maneuvers taught by U.S. armed forces, the American-led Five Eyes intelligence sharing network said in a bulletin on Wednesday.



The warning came as former Marine and naturalized Australian citizen Daniel Duggan, 55, fights to avoid extradition to the United States after being accused of training Chinese military pilots at a school in South Africa from 2010 to 2012, when he was a U.S. citizen.

The joint bulletin from the Five Eyes countries – the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand – warns that China's People's Liberation Army "continues to target current and former military personnel" to train pilots in advanced techniques.

Recruitment is "not always obvious, as companies may not initially promote the PLA's role," it says. "Job locations may be in China, South Africa, or elsewhere, with lucrative contracts and the opportunity to fly exotic aircraft, with vague details on the ultimate customers."

Western nations have taken action to counter the threat, the bulletin adds, including putting "commercial restrictions" on private schools like the Test Flying Academy of South Africa, where Duggan worked and said he believed he was only training civilian Chinese pilots.

Duggan, who became an Australian citizen in 2012 and has six school-aged children with his Australian wife, was charged with violating the U.S. Arms Export Control Act for accepting US\$100,000 to train Chinese pilots without permission from the State Department.

According to an indictment, Duggan provided "instruction on the tactics, techniques and procedures associated with launching aircraft from and landing aircraft on a naval aircraft carrier" and acquired a U.S. Navy and Marines training aircraft – a T2-Buckeye – to assist.

He also lived in Beijing between 2014 and 2020, according to reports, and was an acquaintance of convicted Chinese hacker Su Bin, who was arrested in Canada in 2016 and charged with theft of U.S. military aircraft designs by hacking American defense contractors.

Duggan renounced his American citizenship at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing in 2016, and was arrested in Australia in October 2022. He has since been held in a maximum security prison two hours west of Sydney,



from which he has strenuously denied the accusations.

Michael Casey, the director of the U.S. National Counterintelligence and Security Center, said Wednesday's bulletin was meant to warn ex-service members that China's efforts to recruit them "continue to evolve in response" to countermeasures by Five Eyes militaries.

The bulletin should "deter any current or former Western service members from actions that put their military colleagues at risk and erode our national security," he said.

## May

### The Chinese Communist Party is infiltrating the US from the inside

24 May 2024, The Hill, Anouk Wear

At the start of May, three men were arrested and charged in the United Kingdom for allegedly violating the UK's 2023 National Security Act by assisting Hong Kong's intelligence service and engaging in foreign interference on behalf of Hong Kong.

They are Bill Yuen, Peter Wai and Matthew Trickett, British and Hong Kong nationals aged 37-63. They are accused of surveillance, harassment and even attempting to break into a home of Hong Kong people who are settled in the UK under the BN(O) Visa Scheme, which has enabled more than 210,000 Hong Kongers to apply to move to the UK and start the path to British citizenship.

Bill Yuen was a manager at the London Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office (HKETO), which is Hong Kong's representative office in the UK. He is accused of acting on behalf of the London HKETO in hiring Wai and Trickett to target Hong Kong pro-democracy activists in the UK. Bank records show transfers from the London HKETO to Wai's security firm. Trickett was later found dead; the police state "[it] is currently being treated as unexplained. The case is ongoing.

There are 14 HKETOs around the world, representing Hong Kong with an annual budget of HK\$601.5 million (\$76.90 million USD) to engage in commercial relations, public relations and investment promotions. Many of them have diplomatic privileges and immunities, including three such offices in the U.S.

Under its high degree of autonomy, Hong Kong was granted overseas representative offices, which are distinct from Chinese embassies and consulates around the world. In the U.S., there are HKETOs in Washington, D.C., New York City and San Francisco in addition to other Chinese and Hong

Kong government-affiliated cultural and business institutions.

However, Hong Kong is beginning to lose this autonomy. This means that the Chinese Communist Party is increasingly controlling Hong Kong, and that Hong Kong's overseas representative offices, the HKETOs, are increasingly under their direct control as well.

Since 2019, Beijing has aggressively cracked down on Hong Kong by ordering the brutal suppression of pro-democracy protests, imposing a national security law and introducing other new reforms, regulations and policies that assert their direct oversight. In just a few years, Hong Kong has morphed from one of Asia's freest cities to another Chinese Communist Party-controlled territory.

Hong Kong people have relentlessly fought for democracy, fundamental rights and freedoms. We now have political prisoners behind bars, many of whom are awaiting or going through trials today. Newspapers have been shut down, editors are on trial, over 100 civil society organizations have disbanded and the list goes on. Just today, in the Hong Kong 47 case – the biggest national security law case since the law was imposed in 2020 – former and aspiring legislators were found guilty of violating the law for organizing peaceful "unofficial" election primaries. They are punished for attempting to have democracy.

The U.S. has supported the Hong Kong people by introducing the 2019 Human Rights and Democracy Act and the Hong Kong Autonomy Act, and by offering Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) status for Hong Kong people in the U.S. This has not gone unnoticed, but it is simply not enough.

Today, the three HKETOs in the U.S. maintain their status, including diplomatic privileges and immunities. Even after the U.S. has acknowledged Hong Kong's diminishing autonomy, it has not reviewed the HKETOs. In other words, the Chinese Communist Party has two outposts with diplomatic privileges in Washington, D.C., New York City and San Francisco.

We can already see the UK government arresting and charging HKETO staff for national security violations and transnational repression. It is likely just a matter of time before the HKETOs and their staff in the U.S. commit the same violations, if they are not doing so already. The writing is on the wall.

Last week, HKETOs in the U.S. supported Hong Kong Financial Secretary Paul Chan's visit to the United States. Despite his key role in Hong Kong's leadership, he was not sanctioned by the U.S. This week, Secretary of Education Dr. Choi Yuk-lin will be visiting the U.S. as well, on a similar propaganda trip, no doubt with the HKETOs' support and with little criticism.



This is not only a threat to Hong Kong pro-democracy activists in the U.S. — some of whom have received arrest warrants and bounties from the Hong Kong government, and assurances from the U.S. — but also to U.S. national security.

Two of these activists spoke at the House Select Committee on the CCP's hearing last week, where they called for the review and closure of HKETOs in the U.S. They mentioned passing relevant legislation including the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office Certification Act.

It is detrimental to U.S. national security to have so many Chinese Communist Party outposts (HKETOs in addition to the embassy and consulates) in the middle of our cities, with diplomatic privileges and immunities including tax benefits and diplomatic staff. This is a threat to Hong Kongers who seek safety in the U.S., as well as Americans, and a gift to the Chinese Communist Party that we must stop granting as soon as possible.

The U.S. must review the status of the HKETOs and urge the Chinese Communist Party to grant Hong Kong its high degree of autonomy if they are to retain HKETOs under the current status — or strip them of their benefits.

### **China's gray zone social media war comes to America**

18 May 2024, Asia Times, Denny Roy

China employs various "gray zone" tactics — moderately aggressive actions that are not egregious enough to provoke conventional military retaliation — against multiple adversaries. One such tactic is deployed within the United States: undeclared influence operations through social media. Chinese government-linked activity has recently become more worrisome. Previously the principal danger was People's Republic of China (PRC) propaganda lulling the US into uncritical acceptance of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) foreign policy agenda. Now, the Chinese government is adding its weight to the forces tearing at America's national fabric from the inside.

Until recently, the main thrust of PRC-sponsored messaging aimed at Americans through social media was to cultivate a positive image of China and its current government and to promote Beijing's point of view on China-related controversies such as Taiwan's political relationship with China, Chinese treatment of Uighurs and Tibetans, and the restriction of civil liberties in Hong Kong.

The content of social media posts was similar to what Chinese diplomats based in the US were saying when they gave public speeches and TV interviews or wrote editorials for newspapers.

This contrasted with the messaging promoted by the Russian government, which generally disparaged the US government and amplified highly divisive US domestic social and political issues, suggesting the Russian goal was to foment political instability in America. This seemed consistent with the respective Russian and Chinese relationships with the US. Vladimir Putin wanted to hurt the United States. He held deep grudges over

- the loss of Russia's great power status in the 1990s;
- humiliating US treatment of Russia through the expansion of NATO and disregard for Russian sensibilities as America waged conflicts in Iraq, Libya and Syria;
- the publication in 2016 of the so-called Panama Papers, which Putin said was an attempt by the US government to embarrass him; and
- US sanctions against Russia for its annexation of Crimea in 2014.

Putin likely would welcome an American fall into anarchy and economic collapse. China, on the other hand, needed Americans to continue buying Chinese goods, educating Chinese students and transferring cutting-edge technology to China. Hence the goal of Chinese strategic messaging was to defeat any threats to business as usual with the United States.

The attempt to foster positive US attitudes toward China has continued. During the 2022 election campaign in the United States, PRC-linked entities promulgated messaging supportive of China-friendly candidates in a few electoral races. TikTok has promoted short videos to millions of its users that support the PRC propaganda lines about Xinjiang and other controversial political issues.

But now there is an even darker aspect of PRC messaging.

The US director of national intelligence notes "growing [PRC] efforts to actively exploit perceived US societal divisions," through which "the PRC aims to sow doubts about US leadership [and] undermine democracy."

According to Clint Watts, general manager of Microsoft's Threat Analysis Center, "More recently, [PRC government] efforts have shifted to exploiting existing partisan divides in the US," including "the Chinese actually going into US audience spaces, masquerading as Americans and posting inflammatory content around current events or social issues or political issues."

A report by Microsoft published in April 2024 found efforts by the PRC to "spread conspiratorial narratives on multiple social media platforms." Accounts that appear to be CCP-affiliated "post about divisive US domestic issues such as global

warming, US border policies, drug use, immigration and racial tensions.”

As an example, these posts said the deadly August 2023 wildfires in Maui, Hawaii resulted from the US military testing a “weather weapon.” Chinese-linked accounts also published speculation that the US government caused the derailment of a train in Kentucky in November 2023 and was “hiding something” in the aftermath. Microsoft concluded that the apparent objective of such posts is “encouraging mistrust of and disillusionment with the US government.” In another report also published in April 2024, Microsoft’s Threat Analysis Center assessed that Chinese government-sponsored social media activity “aims to destabilize” the US and other democracies.

The change in the content of PRC-promoted messaging in the social media that Americans consume has two important drivers. The first was the coronavirus pandemic. Just before the virus began to severely impact the United States in early 2020, US President Donald Trump was praising the Chinese government for its counter-pandemic response and touting a bilateral agreement that was supposed to end the “trade war” and restore normalcy to US-China trade relations.

As US fatalities mounted, however, Trump blamed China for unleashing a “plague” on the US. The PRC government responded by ratcheting up its criticism of the US government.

Chinese officials and government-controlled media not only decried the botched management of the pandemic in the US but extended the critique to add the argument that America’s political system is broken and that the US does not deserve a role in global leadership. Heavier emphasis on these themes in PRC strategic communication became a new norm. A second boost came from Russia’s expanded invasion of Ukraine that started in February 2022. The war pulled China into stronger diplomatic support for its “no limits” quasi-ally. This has led to closer alignment between Russian and Chinese propaganda messaging. The Chinese government, for example, repeats the Russian position that NATO is responsible for causing the war.

As the conflict in Ukraine has deepened the sense among the democracies of an increasingly dangerous authoritarian bloc, Russia and China are further incentivized to work to delegitimize US influence and the international appeal of the liberal political model that threatens both Xi Jinping and Putin.

Researchers have found large numbers of China-linked social media accounts spreading pro-Trump and anti-Biden messaging, suggesting that China prefers Trump over Biden as the next US president. For the Russian government, there is no

question which of the two major party presidential candidates in the upcoming US election is preferable. Trump has consistently maintained a friendly and respectful stance toward Putin and often criticized US aid for Ukraine as well as the NATO alliance. For Beijing, however, the question is more complicated. Biden has major predictable downsides for the PRC. He would continue to frustrate Chinese desires for freer access to US markets and technology. The Biden administration maintained the Trump-era tariffs against Chinese imports and restricted China’s access to advanced technologies. Biden’s team has also repaired and strengthened US alliances in the Asia-Pacific region, obstructing PRC domination.

But Trump is a wild card for China. The Chinese like that he is transactional and seems to lack either a strategic or ideological vision demanding a US policy of what the Chinese would call “containment.” Trump is respectful toward Xi and has sometimes uncritically absorbed CCP views such as “Korea actually used to be a part of China.”

On the other hand, Trump brought advisors into the White House during his first term who dramatically toughened US policy toward China. Trump himself has at times harshly criticized China, as during the pandemic. He recently said he might increase tariffs on Chinese imports into the US to over 60%. At his worst, Trump might be worse for China than Biden.

Has the top leadership in Beijing now decided that China’s interests are best served if America descended into chaos? That is unlikely given that CCP officials continue to emphasize that their wish is for Washington to stop worrying about national security and allow China maximum opportunity to extract wealth and know-how. But they also want Americans to feel less confident in promoting the liberal democratic model of governance worldwide. Chinese leaders want to fortify their country against demands for political liberalization.

This is part of the reason why the PRC government keeps harping on the importance of the “Bali consensus” in US-China relations. According to Beijing, this “consensus” is a list of five policy renunciations that Biden agreed to during his meeting with Xi in Bali in 2022, one of them his assurance that “the United States does not seek to change China’s system.” (There is no parallel list of policies that China renounces in the Chinese summary of the meeting, and the US official readout does not include a list of five US renunciations.)

That the Chinese government is involved in such a campaign is both ironic and expected.

It is ironic because Beijing so often and so strenuously insists that “China never interferes in the affairs of other countries.” PRC officials specifically deny that China ever has or ever will attempt to

influence the US electoral process, saying the accusation indicates American “paranoia” and a penchant for “slinging mud at China to divert attention” from US governance failures. Yet a surreptitious Chinese attempt to subvert an adversary’s government is not surprising, because the Chinese government is itself obsessed with the danger of subversion. The 2013 internal PRC government memo Document No 9 summarizes the Xi regime’s fear of “Western anti-China forces” overthrowing China’s political system by smuggling in liberal ideas and values.

The document emphasizes that CCP authorities must “ensure that the media leadership is always firmly controlled by someone who maintains an identical ideology with the Party’s Central Committee” and “allow absolutely no opportunity or outlets for incorrect thinking or viewpoints to spread.”

PRC leaders and government-controlled media speak often of the threat posed by “color revolutions” and routinely blame “hostile foreign forces” or “black hands” for causing unrest within China that actually results from discontent with Chinese colonization or CCP repression.

If the Chinese government thinks subversion from the outside is potentially effective, Beijing will not fail to employ the same tactic against its own adversaries.

The many broken promises from PRC officials, including Xi, to behave ethically in international affairs demonstrate bad faith and cynicism. To dissuade Beijing from continuing to meddle in American politics, a US response is justified.

As with other Chinese gray zone operations, however, hitting back is problematic. The PRC does not have real elections or open debate about domestic political issues, and the social media outlets that the PRC exploits to reach American audiences are banned in China.

A possible proportionate US response would be to target a weak spot of the ruling regime: its fear of losing legitimacy in the eyes of the Chinese public.

Xi’s government has already suffered a decrease in prestige because of widespread public pessimism about the government’s ability to successfully manage China’s economy, plus fresh bad memories of the government’s counter-Covid policy, which included draconian lockdowns followed by acquiescence to a mass die-off.

In 2012, a New York Times article documented the immense wealth built up by family members of PRC Premier Wen Jiabao. The expose clearly jabbed a raw nerve in Zhongnanhai; the Chinese government scrambled to censor the story and discussion of it, officially called it false and later expelled a New York Times reporter as retaliation.

Current top-ranking Chinese leaders are similarly vulnerable to damaging revelations about their

personal hypocrisy (such as, for example, sending their children to colleges in the United States) from a credible foreign source.

In normal times, the US could disregard Chinese social media influence operations as insignificant. Unfortunately, this Chinese push occurs at a time when US domestic politics are highly polarized, conspiracy theories are widely believed and procedures and institutions vital to the proper functioning of US democracy are under stress.

PRC interference reinforces harmful trends that already have momentum. Under such circumstances, this malign influencing activity might contribute to outcomes that not only would be bad for America but that even Beijing might regret.

### **US committee targets Georgia Tech's alleged ties to Chinese military linked research**

10 May 2024, Reuters, Michael Martina

A U.S. congressional committee on China has asked leading research university Georgia Institute of Technology to detail its collaboration with a Chinese university facing U.S. government restrictions due to its alleged ties to the country’s military.

Georgia Tech partnered with China’s northeastern Tianjin University on cutting edge technologies despite its documented ties to the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), John Moolenaar, the new Republican chairman of the House of Representatives’ select committee on China, wrote in a letter on Thursday to the U.S. school’s president Angel Cabrera.

ut the Georgia Tech scientist who led the project defended the research, saying all the results were available to the public, that it had passed extensive legal reviews, and that only a small portion of the funding came from the Georgia Tech Research Institute (GTRI), which is heavily sponsored by the Pentagon.

The letter noted that Tianjin University and numerous affiliates had been added in 2020 to the Commerce Department’s export restrictions list for actions contrary to U.S. national security, including trade secret theft and research collaboration to advance China’s military.

“While Georgia Tech is now prohibited from exporting sensitive technologies to Tianjin University due to the Entity List’s prohibitions, it has collaborated with Tianjin University and at least one other PLA-linked entity on developing sensitive technologies,” Moolenaar said.

The Tianjin research center is affiliated with a Chinese company with subsidiaries that supply the PLA, the letter said.

A Georgia Tech press release, opens new tab from January said its researchers based in Atlanta and at the Tianjin International Center for Nanoparticles

and Nanosystems had created the world's first functional semiconductor made from the nanomaterial, graphene, which it said could lead to a "paradigm shift" in electronics and yield faster computing.

The U.S. and China, in the midst of an intense geopolitical and scientific rivalry, both view semiconductors as a strategic industry with civilian and military uses, including quantum computing and advanced weapons systems.

A spokesperson from Georgia Tech said it welcomed the congressional inquiry, but that GTRI "does not have a collaboration, research partnerships, or provide any funding to Tianjin University."

"We are continuously monitoring the evolving relationships between China and the United States and have implemented additional procedures and protocols to ensure security and maintain vigilance," Abigail Tumpey, the spokesperson told Reuters in an email.

In a published article, researchers credited financial support from GTRI, which counted the Defense Department and the U.S. military as customers for more than 90% of its research, opens new tab in fiscal year 2023, according to its latest annual report.

Moolenaar said Georgia Tech's collaboration with Tianjin University raised questions about its entity list compliance, and asked Cabrera to thoroughly disclose all of its joint work.

GTRI, Tianjin International Center for Nanoparticles and Nanosystems, and China's embassy in Washington did not respond immediately to Reuters' requests for comment.

Walter de Heer, the Georgia Tech professor who directed the program, told Reuters that only one Atlanta-based student had derived funding from GTRI for "nonproprietary" research related to the collaboration, which involved reproducing samples made in Tianjin.

He said deteriorating U.S.-China relations had derailed what had been a fruitful scientific endeavor with Chinese researchers. He said the research was still about a decade away from viable implementation, but that he had been unable to obtain U.S. government or private sector funding for follow-on research despite its promise.

"Everything I'm doing is public domain and open source," De Heer said.

The letter marks one of the first actions Moolenaar has taken as head of the bipartisan committee, a post he assumed in April after former Representative Mike Gallagher left Congress. No Democrats on the committee signed the letter.

The U.S. Justice Department under the Biden administration ended a Trump-era program called the China Initiative intended to combat Chinese

espionage and intellectual property theft, but which critics had said spurred racial profiling toward Asian Americans and chilled scientific research.

Still, U.S. agencies and Congress have stepped up scrutiny of China's state-sponsored influence and technology transfers at American colleges and universities, concerned that Beijing uses open and federally funded research environments in the U.S. to circumvent export controls and other national security laws.

Various congressional bodies have recommended stricter China-related measures be added to the Higher Education Act of 1965 that requires U.S. colleges and universities that receive federal funding to disclose foreign ownership, control, gifts and contracts.

### US confronts China over Volt Typhoon cyber espionage

09 May, 2024, Reuters, Zeba Siddiqui

U.S. officials confronted the Chinese government in Beijing last month about a sweeping cyber espionage campaign through which Chinese hackers have broken in to dozens of American critical infrastructure organizations, a senior U.S. cyber official said.

Under the campaign named Volt Typhoon, American officials say China aims to leverage the access it has gained into U.S. organizations in the event of a war or conflict - a nod to escalating U.S.-China tensions over Taiwan. The Chinese have previously dismissed such allegations as groundless.



Brandon Wales, Acting Director Cybersecurity and Information Security Agency at U.S. Department of Homeland Security speaks before a Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee hearing in Washington, D.C., U.S., May 11, 2021. Tasos Katopodis/Pool via REUTERS/ File Photo Purchase Licensing Rights

"We have had direct conversations with the Chinese about it," Nathaniel Fick, U.S. ambassador at large for cyberspace and digital policy, told Reuters in an

interview at the RSA Conference in San Francisco on Tuesday.

"We raised it directly with the Chinese government at very senior levels, and made clear that this kind of behavior is dangerous, escalatory, and it's not acceptable," Fick said. He said he spoke to the Chinese officials with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who was in China from April 24 to 26.

Asked how the Chinese responded, Fick said: "Same way they have to previous attributions ... They have said before that it's a ploy by various U.S. agencies to get more budget dollars."

The Chinese embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Wednesday.

The U.S. and several of its allies sounded the alarm on the campaign a year ago, warning that the Chinese could launch cyberattacks against oil and gas pipelines, rail systems and other critical industries.

It is unclear how many U.S. organizations have been compromised by the hackers, but "any number we give you is likely an underestimate," said Brandon Wales, the executive director of the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, during a separate media briefing at the same conference.

"Chinese targeting of our critical infrastructure is broad-based," he added.

"It is against a broad swath of small and medium-sized companies that are potentially critical in individual supply chains, or just capable of causing societal panic in some place around the country."

### **House Oversight Seeks More Briefings on U.S. Government Response to China's 'Political Warfare'**

06 May, 2024, National Review, Jimmy Quinn

The House Oversight Committee is launching the second phase of its sweeping investigation into the U.S. government's response to the Chinese Communist Party's influence operations and malign behavior, National Review has exclusively learned.

Representative James Comer (R., Ky.), the panel's chairman, sent letters to nine federal agencies today requesting briefings on how each of them is grappling with threats posed by Beijing. Previously, the committee had sent a first tranche of letters to several other agencies in March, and it held a hearing last month focused on Chinese influence campaigns.

"China experts—with decades of experience in U.S. intelligence, national security, and the military—testified before the House Oversight Committee that the CCP's ambitions to influence the United States are destructive, dangerous, and jeopardize the

safety of all Americans," Comer said today, in a statement issued to National Review.

"The Committee has a responsibility to ensure that the federal government is taking every action necessary to protect Americans from the CCP's ongoing political warfare," he said.

The letters today were addressed to the heads of the FBI, the State Department, the Commerce Department, the National Institutes of Health, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, the Department of Education, the Food and Drug Administration, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, and the Department of Energy.

While each letter focused on a set of issues specific to each agency, they all warned that Beijing uses a united-front strategy to influence people who are not members of the party in order to induce them to do the regime's bidding.

The letters all also refer to a 1999 book written by People's Liberation Army officers, titled "Unrestricted Warfare," which set out several tactics that China could use to "defeat America through political warfare," as Comer put it.

"As all Americans are targets of the PRC's warfare, federal agencies have responsibilities to (1) conduct outreach to citizens about the dangers they may encounter, and (2) provide appropriate incentives for Americans to proactively protect themselves—their communities, schools, houses of worship, businesses, finances, food, and more—from the threat," he wrote. Comer attributes his understanding of these threats to three of the witnesses who appeared at the committee's first hearing on China: Robert Spalding, a retired brigadier general who served on the Trump-era National Security Council; Grant Newsham, a retired Marine colonel; and former CIA analyst Peter Mattis.

The letters raised a wide-ranging set of concerns, touching on political-influence operations, medical supply chains, intellectual-property theft, America's reliance on "cheap products made in China," Chinese government-backed activity on U.S. campuses, espionage targeting Department of Energy-run national laboratories, and more. They gave each agency one week to respond and set up a briefing addressing a specific set of questions.

In his letter to Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, Comer expressed particular concern about the party's efforts to cultivate influence among state and local officials. Because they focus on economic development and job growth, they are "soft targets for the CCP's political warfare.

He cited federal government warnings that the united-front system leverages its relationships with lower-level officials to pressure Washington. He also pointed to recent reports about CCP influence campaigns in Utah and to National Review's



reporting about New York City mayor Eric Adams's ties to the Chinese regime.

Comer wrote that he wants to look at how the Commerce Department's Office of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs can play a role in liaising with state and local officials to educate them about the risks of engagement with Chinese government entities.

At various points in some of the letters, Comer criticized the Biden administration's handling of China policy.

In a letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Comer questioned Foggy Bottom's promotion of efforts to expand "people-to-people" ties with China, noting that the email account of U.S. ambassador to China Nicholas Burns was hacked by people based in the country. Comer wrote that the department should not promote tourism to China without acknowledging the risks posed by traveling there.

In a letter to Attorney General Merrick Garland, he said that the Justice Department had "abruptly and mistakenly" ended its China Initiative.

### **US annual int'l religious freedom report red-flags China's move to acculturate Tibetan Buddhism**

03 May 2024, Tibetan Review

Releasing its 2024 report on May 1, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has recommended that China be again listed as a "country of particular concern", along with 16 others, for reasons that include its move to assimilate Tibetan Buddhism to bring it in line with the prevailing values and policy priorities of the atheist Chinese Communist Party (CCP) dictatorship.

Speaking at a virtual launch of the report, the commission's vice-chair, Frederick A Davie, has referred to the report's recommendation that the US State Department designate China with the status of a "country of particular concern" (CPC) in terms of religious freedom violations.

The commission's main findings highlight increased surveillance and security measures on Tibetan Buddhists, leading to restrictions on their peaceful religious activities. These were stated to have led to Tibetan Buddhists being arrested and imprisoned for engaging in such activities or for possessing materials related to the Dalai Lama. Some have been reported placed in "political re-education" camps to prevent self-immolation, with Tibetan Buddhist monks dying in prison.

The report's Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List, an online database, includes 93 Tibetans.

The Commission has identified the Chinese government's multifaceted "Sinicization of religion" policy as the significant factor in the deterioration of

religious freedom under which all major religious groups are forced to obey the CCP and its ideology and policies.

On the Sinicization-of-Tibet drive, which includes the Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism, the report criticizes China for its forced separation of over 1 million Tibetan children from their families by placing them in state-run boarding schools where the curriculum marginalizes the teaching and practice of Tibetan language and culture.

Besides, the report notes, some local authorities had banned parents from teaching religion to Tibetan children; that the government has controlled the ordination of Tibetan monks and reiterated its intent to interfere in the Dalai Lama's reincarnation by appointing his successor.

As regards what entails the implementation of China's Sinicization of religion policy, the report states: "Sinicization requires groups to follow the CCP's Marxist interpretation of religion, including by altering religious scriptures and doctrines to conform to that interpretation."

In Tibet, the commission states, "Sinicization entailed forced assimilation of local populations that threatened their religious and cultural identities."

The USCIRF is a federal government commission created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to monitor religious freedom in other countries and to advise the US president, secretary of state and Congress on how best to promote it.

Commissioner Nury Turkel has spotlighted the fact that the Chinese government's continued targeting of diaspora ethnic and religious communities with ties to China, including Uyghurs, Tibetans, Christians and Falun Gong practitioners in 2023. Also, the commission's report expresses concern over the fact that "the Chinese government used its economic and geopolitical influence to pressure foreign countries, including Turkey, Morocco, Thailand, Nepal, and Pakistan, to repatriate Uyghur Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists, and Protestant Christian refugees to China, where they could face severe human rights abuses."

### **US Commission highlights China's growing 'Sinicization' of Tibetan Buddhism**

02 May 2024, International Campaign for Tibet

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom's 2024 annual report, published May 1, highlights the deterioration of religious freedom in Tibet due to the Chinese government's intensified suppression and "Sinicization" of Tibetan Buddhism. Sinicization is a Chinese policy that aims to bring Tibetan Buddhism under the control of the Chinese Communist Party.

China a country of particular concern

Speaking on behalf of USCIRF during the virtual launch of the 2024 annual report, the commission's vice-chair, Frederick A. Davie, recommended the US State Department designate China as one of the 17 countries with "country of particular concern" (CPC) status in terms of religious freedom violations.

The commission's main findings reveal increased surveillance and security measures on Tibetan Buddhists, leading to restrictions on their peaceful religious activities. Tibetan Buddhists have been arrested and imprisoned for engaging in such activities or for possessing materials related to the Dalai Lama. Some have been placed in "political re-education" camps to prevent self-immolation, with Tibetan Buddhist monks dying in prison.

The commission's Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List, an online database, includes 93 Tibetans.



*The US Commission on International Religious Freedom commissioners released their 2024 annual report on May 1.*

#### Forced assimilation of Tibetan children

Highlighting the forced separation of over 1 million Tibetan children from their families in state-run boarding schools and the government's measures to stop Tibetans from freely practicing their Buddhist faith, the commission spotlighted that:

The government separated one million Tibetan children from parents, putting them in state-run boarding schools to forcibly assimilate them. Some local authorities banned parents from teaching religion to Tibetan children. The government controlled the ordination of Tibetan monks and reiterated its intent to interfere in the Dalai Lama's reincarnation and appoint his successor.

#### Human rights sanctions

Commissioner Susie Gelman emphasized the commission's role and the US government's implementation of targeted human rights sanctions in 2023, including sanctions on Chinese officials and entities. As an example, she cited the Biden administration's sanctioning of Chinese officials "who forcibly separate Tibetan children from their families and seek to eliminate religious freedom in Tibet."

#### Sinicization of religion

The Commission identifies the Chinese government's multifaceted "Sinicization of religion" policy as the significant factor in the deterioration of religious freedom under which all major religious groups are forced to obey the Chinese Communist Party and its ideology and policies.

The commission in its annual report states that "Sinicization requires groups to follow the CCP's Marxist interpretation of religion, including by altering religious scriptures and doctrines to conform to that interpretation." Highlighting the effects of the Chinese government's Sinicization of religion policy in Tibet, the commission states that "Sinicization entailed forced assimilation of local populations that threatened their religious and cultural identities."

#### 25th anniversary of the commission

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) is a federal government commission created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-292) to monitor religious freedom in other countries and advise the US president, secretary of state and Congress on how best to promote it.

The 2024 annual report marks the 25th anniversary of the creation of the commission.

#### Transnational repression

USCIRF Commissioner Nury Turkel spotlighted the Chinese government's continued targeting of diaspora ethnic and religious communities with ties to China, including Uyghurs, Tibetans, Christians and Falun Gong practitioners in 2023.

Highlighting the Chinese government's continued perpetration of transnational repression, the commission's annual report highlighted that "the Chinese government used its economic and geopolitical influence to pressure foreign countries, including Turkey, Morocco, Thailand, Nepal, and Pakistan, to repatriate Uyghur Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists, and Protestant Christian refugees to China, where they could face severe human rights abuses."

#### **'Xenophobia' behind India and China's economic troubles, says US President Joe Biden**

02 May 2024, The Indian Express

"One of the reasons why our economy's growing is because of you and many others. Why? Because we welcome immigrants," Biden said.

Arguing that immigrants have made the United States stronger, President Joe Biden Wednesday said that xenophobia from India, China, Russia and Japan has stalled their economic growth, news agency Reuters reported.

"Why is China stalling so badly economically, why is Japan having trouble, why is Russia, why is India, because they are xenophobic. They don't want

immigrants. Immigrants are what makes us strong," Biden remarked.

The US President was speaking at a Washington fundraising event for his 2024 re-election campaign, which also marked the start of Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. "One of the reasons why our economy is growing is because of you and many others. Why? Because we welcome immigrants," Biden said.

Biden, who is up against Republican candidate and former president Donald Trump in the presidential race, has often criticised his rival for his "anti-immigrant" rhetoric. Trump has promised to curb illegal immigration and restrict legal migration if elected to office. During his campaigning, he has blamed immigrants for the rise of violence in the country.

Biden, meanwhile, has advocated for a more humane stance on the issue of migrants. Since coming to power, Biden has eased the Trump-era crackdown on migrants and introduced new "parole" policies, which allow certain migrants to enter legally for humanitarian reasons.

However, research shows that Biden is facing criticism from voters over unemployment and immigration. A poll from the AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that over half of US adults think that "Biden's presidency has hurt the country on cost of living and immigration".

## April

### Antony Blinken begins key China visit as tensions rise over new U.S. foreign aid bill

25 April 2024, The Hindu

Blinken arrived in Shanghai on April 24 just hours after the Senate vote on the long-stalled legislation

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has begun a critical trip to China armed with a strengthened diplomatic hand following Senate approval of a foreign aid package that will provide billions of dollars in assistance to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan as well as force TikTok's China-based parent company to sell the social media platform -- all areas of contention between Washington and Beijing.

Blinken arrived in Shanghai on Wednesday just hours after the Senate vote on the long-stalled legislation and shortly before President Joe Biden is expected to sign it into law to demonstrate U.S. resolve in defending its allies and partners. Passage of the bill

will add further complications to an already complex relationship that has been strained by disagreements over numerous global and regional disputes.

Still, the fact that Blinken is making the trip -- shortly after a conversation between Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping, a similar visit to China by Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and a call between the U.S. and Chinese defense chiefs -- is a sign the two sides are at least willing to discuss their differences.

Of primary interest to China, the bill sets aside \$8 billion to counter Chinese threats in Taiwan and the broader Indo-Pacific and gives China's ByteDance nine months to sell TikTok with a possible three-month extension if a sale is in progress. China has railed against U.S. assistance to Taiwan, which it regards as a renegade province, and immediately condemned the move as a dangerous provocation. It also strongly opposes efforts to force TikTok's sale.

The bill also allots \$26 billion in wartime assistance to Israel and humanitarian relief to Palestinians in Gaza, and \$61 billion for Ukraine to defend itself from Russia's invasion. The Biden administration has been disappointed in China's response to the war in Gaza and has complained loudly that Chinese support for Russia's military-industrial sector has allowed Moscow to subvert Western sanctions and ramp up attacks on Ukraine.

Even before Blinken landed in Shanghai -- where he will have meetings on Thursday before traveling to Beijing -- China's Taiwan Affairs Office slammed the assistance to Taipei, saying it "seriously violates" U.S. commitments to China, "sends a wrong signal to the Taiwan independence separatist forces" and pushes the self-governing island republic into a "dangerous situation."

China and the United States are the major players in the Indo-Pacific and Washington has become increasingly alarmed by Beijing's growing aggressiveness in recent years toward Taiwan and Southeast Asian countries with which it has significant territorial and maritime disputes in the South China Sea.

The U.S. has strongly condemned Chinese military exercises threatening Taiwan, which Beijing regards as a renegade province and has vowed to reunify with the mainland by force if necessary. Successive U.S. administrations have steadily boosted military support and sales for Taiwan, much to Chinese anger.

A senior State Department official said last week that Blinken would "underscore, both in private and public, America's abiding interest in maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. We think that is vitally important for the region and the world."

In the South China Sea, the U.S. and others have become increasingly concerned by provocative Chinese actions in and around disputed areas.

In particular, the U.S. has voiced objections to what it says are Chinese attempts to thwart legitimate maritime activities by others in the sea, notably the Philippines and Vietnam. That was a major topic of concern this month when Biden held a three-way summit with the prime minister of Japan and the president of the Philippines.

On Ukraine, which U.S. officials say will be a primary topic of conversation during Blinken's visit, the Biden administration said that Chinese support has allowed Russia to largely reconstitute its defense industrial base, affecting not only the war in Ukraine but posing a threat to broader European security.

"If China purports on the one hand to want good relations with Europe and other countries, it can't on the other hand be fueling what is the biggest threat to European security since the end of the Cold War," Blinken said last week.

China says it has the right to trade with Russia and accuses the U.S. of fanning the flames by arming and funding Ukraine. "It is extremely hypocritical and irresponsible for the U.S. to introduce a large-scale aid bill for Ukraine while making groundless accusations against normal economic and trade exchanges between China and Russia," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said Tuesday.

On the Middle East, U.S. officials, from Biden on down, have repeatedly appealed to China to use any leverage it may have with Iran to prevent Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza from spiraling into a wider regional conflict.

While China appears to have been generally receptive to such calls — particularly because it depends heavily on oil imports from Iran and other Mideast nations — tensions have steadily increased since the beginning of the Gaza war in October and more recent direct strikes and counterstrikes between Israel and Iran.

Blinken has pushed for China to take a more active stance in pressing Iran not to escalate tensions in the Middle East. He has spoken to his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, several times urging China to tell Iran to restrain the proxy groups it has supported in the region, including Hamas, Lebanon's Hezbollah, Yemen's Houthis and Iranian-backed militias in Iraq and Syria.

The senior State Department official said Blinken would reiterate the U.S. interest in China using "whatever channels or influence it has to try to convey the need for restraint to all parties, including Iran."

The U.S. and China are also at deep odds over human rights in China's western Xinjiang region,

Tibet and Hong Kong, as well as the fate of several American citizens that the State Department says have been "wrongfully detained" by Chinese authorities, and the supply of precursors to make the synthetic opioid fentanyl that is responsible for the deaths of thousands of Americans.

China has repeatedly rejected the American criticism of its rights record as improper interference in its internal affairs. Yet, Blinken will again raise these issues, according to the State Department official.

Another department official, who also spoke on condition of anonymity to preview Blinken's private talks with Chinese officials, said China had made efforts to rein in the export of materials that traffickers use to make fentanyl but that more needs to be done.

The two sides agreed last year to set up a working group to look into ways to combat the surge of production of fentanyl precursors in China and their export abroad. U.S. officials say they believe they had made some limited progress on cracking down on the illicit industry but many producers had found ways to get around new restrictions.

"We need to see continued and sustained progress," the official said, adding that "more regular law enforcement" against Chinese precursor producers "would send a strong signal of China's commitment to address this issue."

### **US blacklists four Chinese tech apps for helping military in China**

13 April 2024, The Economic Times

Amid escalating tensions between the United States and China, the US Commerce Department has taken action by blacklisting four Chinese companies for their alleged involvement in supplying artificial intelligence (AI) chips to China's military modernization efforts. This move comes as part of the US government's efforts to prevent sensitive American technology from being used for military purposes in China.

The blacklisted companies, including Linkzol (Beijing) Technology Co, Xi'an Like Innovative Information Technology Co, Beijing Anwise Technology Co, and SITONHOLY (Tianjin) Co, were among 11 additions to the Commerce Department Entity List this week. Being placed on this list makes it significantly challenging for these companies to access American goods and technology.

According to Kevin Kurland, an export enforcement official, the banned companies were involved in acquiring US AI chips for Chinese military applications, prompting the US to impose restrictions on exports of advanced semiconductors and chip-making equipment to China.

China, however, vehemently denied the allegations, with Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning dismissing them as attempts to "contain and suppress" Chinese companies. China vowed to take "necessary steps" to safeguard its interests in response to the US actions.

Additionally, the US imposed export restrictions on five other companies accused of aiding drone production for Russia's involvement in Ukraine and Iranian attacks in the Red Sea. Among these companies was Jiangxi Xintuo Enterprise Co, a Chinese firm allegedly supporting Russia's drone program, along with a network of companies supplying drone components to Iran.

China condemned the US measures, arguing that they disrupt normal economic cooperation with Russia. As tensions continue to simmer between the US and China, these latest developments underscore the complexities of economic and geopolitical relations between the two global powers.

### **US-China competition to field military drone swarms could fuel global arms race**

12 April 2024, AP News

As their rivalry intensifies, U.S. and Chinese military planners are gearing up for a new kind of warfare in which squadrons of air and sea drones equipped with artificial intelligence work together like a swarm of bees to overwhelm an enemy.

The planners envision a scenario in which hundreds, even thousands of the machines engage in coordinated battle. A single controller might oversee dozens of drones. Some would scout, others attack. Some would be able to pivot to new objectives in the middle of a mission based on prior programming rather than a direct order.

The world's only AI superpowers are engaged in an arms race for swarming drones that is reminiscent of the Cold War, except drone technology will be far more difficult to contain than nuclear weapons. Because software drives the drones' swarming abilities, it could be relatively easy and cheap for rogue nations and militants to acquire their own fleets of killer robots.

The Pentagon is pushing urgent development of inexpensive, expendable drones as a deterrent against China acting on its territorial claim on Taiwan. Washington says it has no choice but to keep pace with Beijing. Chinese officials say AI-enabled weapons are inevitable so they, too, must have them. The unchecked spread of swarm technology "could lead to more instability and conflict around the world," said Margarita Konaev, an analyst with Georgetown University's Center for Security and Emerging Technology.

As the undisputed leaders in the field, Washington and Beijing are best equipped to set an example by putting limits on military uses of drone swarms. But their intense competition, China's military aggression in the South China Sea and persistent tensions over Taiwan make the prospect of cooperation look dim.

The idea is not new. The United Nations has tried for more than a decade to advance drone non-proliferation efforts that could include limits such as forbidding the targeting of civilians or banning the use of swarms for ethnic cleansing.

### **MILITARY CONTRACTS OFFER CLUES**

Drones have been a priority for both powers for years, and each side has kept its advances secret, so it's unclear which country might have an edge.

A 2023 Georgetown study of AI-related military spending found that more than a third of known contracts issued by both U.S. and Chinese military services over eight months in 2020 were for intelligent uncrewed systems.

The Pentagon sought bids in January for small, unmanned maritime "interceptors." The specifications reflect the military's ambition: The drones must be able to transit hundreds of miles of "contested waterspace," work in groups in waters without GPS, carry 1,000-pound payloads, attack hostile craft at 40 mph and execute "complex autonomous behaviors" to adapt to a target's evasive tactics.

It's not clear how many drones a single person would control. A spokesman for the defense secretary declined to say, but a recently published Pentagon-backed study offers a clue: A single operator supervised a swarm of more than 100 cheap air and land drones in late 2021 in an urban warfare exercise at an Army training site at Fort Campbell, Tennessee.

The CEO of a company developing software to allow multiple drones to collaborate said in an interview that the technology is bounding ahead.

"We're enabling a single operator to direct right now half a dozen," said Lorenz Meier of Auterion, which is working on the technology for the U.S. military and its allies. He said that number is expected to increase to dozens and within a year to hundreds.

Not to be outdone, China's military claimed last year that dozens of aerial drones "self-healed" after jamming cut their communications. An official documentary said they regrouped, switched to self-guidance and completed a search-and-destroy mission unaided, detonating explosive-laden drones on a target.

In justifying the push for drone swarms, China hawks in Washington offer this scenario: Beijing invades Taiwan then stymies U.S. intervention efforts with waves of air and sea drones that deny American and allied planes, ships and troops a foothold.



A year ago, CIA Director William Burns said Chinese Communist Party leader Xi Jinping had instructed his military to “be ready by 2027” to invade. But that doesn’t mean an invasion is likely, or that the U.S.-China arms race over AI will not aggravate global instability.

#### KISSINGER URGED ACTION

Just before he died last year, former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger urged Beijing and Washington to work together to discourage AI arms proliferation. They have “a narrow window of opportunity,” he said.

“Restraints for AI need to occur before AI is built into the security structure of each society,” Kissinger wrote with Harvard’s Graham Allison.

Xi and President Joe Biden made a verbal agreement in November to set up working groups on AI safety, but that effort has so far taken a back seat to the arms race for autonomous drones.

The competition is not apt to build trust or reduce the risk of conflict, said William Hartung, a senior research fellow at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft. If the U.S. is “going full speed ahead, it’s most likely China will accelerate whatever it’s doing,” Hartung said. There’s a risk China could offer swarm technology to U.S. foes or repressive countries, analysts say. Or it could be stolen. Other countries developing the tech, such as Russia, Israel, Iran and Turkey, could also spread the know-how. U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan said in January that U.S.-China talks set to begin sometime this spring will address AI safety. Neither the defense secretary’s office nor the National Security Council would comment on whether the military use of drone swarms might be on the agenda. The Chinese Foreign Ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

#### A FIVE-YEAR WAIT

Military analysts, drone makers and AI researchers don’t expect fully capable, combat-ready swarms to be fielded for five years or so, though big breakthroughs could happen sooner. “The Chinese have an edge in hardware right now. I think we have an edge in software,” said CEO Adam Bry of U.S. drone maker Skydio, which supplies the Army, the Drug Enforcement Agency and the State Department, among other agencies. Chinese military analyst Song Zhongping said the U.S. has “stronger basic scientific and technological capabilities” but added that the American advantage is not “impossible to surpass.” He said Washington also tends to overestimate the effect of its computer chip export restrictions on China’s drone swarm advances. Paul Scharre, an AI expert at the Center for a New American Security think tank, believes the rivals are at rough parity.

“The bigger question for each country is about how do you use a drone swarm effectively?” he said.

That’s one reason all eyes are on the war in Ukraine, where drones work as eyes in the sky to make undetected front-line maneuvers all but impossible. They also deliver explosives and serve as sea-skimming ship killers.

Drones in Ukraine are often lost to jamming. Electronic interference is just one of many challenges for drone swarm development. Researchers are also focused on the difficulty of marshaling hundreds of air and sea drones in semi-autonomous swarms over vast expanses of the western Pacific for a potential war over Taiwan.

A secretive, now-inactive \$78 million program announced early last year by the Pentagon’s Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, or DARPA, seemed tailor-made for the Taiwan invasion scenario. The Autonomous Multi-Domain Adaptive Swarms-of-Swarms is a mouthful to say, but the mission is clear: Develop ways for thousands of autonomous land, sea and air drones to “degrade or defeat” a foe in seizing contested turf.

#### DRONES IMPROVISE — BUT MUST STICK TO ORDERS

A separate DARPA program called Offensive Swarm-Enabled Tactics, had the goal of marshaling upwards of 250 land-based drones to assist Army troops in urban warfare.

Project coordinator Julie Adams, an Oregon State robotics professor, said swarm commanders in the exercise managed to choreograph up to 133 ground and air vehicles at a time. The drones were programmed with a set of tactics they could perform semi-autonomously, including indoor reconnaissance and simulated enemy kills. Under the direction of a swarm commander, the fleet acted something like an infantry squad whose soldiers are permitted some improvisation as long as they stick to orders.

“It’s what I would call supervisory interaction, in that the human could stop the command or stop the tactic,” Adams said. But once a course of action — such as an attack — was set in motion, the drone was on its own.

Adams said she was particularly impressed with a swarm commander in a different exercise last year at Fort Moore, Georgia, who single-handedly managed a 45-drone swarm over 2.5 hours with just 20 minutes of training.

“It was a pleasant surprise,” she said.

A reporter had to ask: Was he a video game player? Yes, she said. “And he had a VR headset at home.”

#### Comer Announces Hearing on the CCP’s Efforts to Infiltrate and Influence the United States

10 April 2024, OverSight

House Committee on Oversight and Accountability Chairman James Comer (R-Ky.) announced a hearing

titled "Defending America from the Chinese Communist Party's Political Warfare, Part I." This first hearing will examine how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is waging war against the U.S. by targeting, infiltrating, and influencing every sector and community in America. At the hearing, members will hear from leading experts familiar with the methods and tactics deployed by the CCP to conduct non-kinetic warfare against the United States. On March 14, 2024, Chairman Comer launched a government-wide investigation into these dangerous CCP tactics and sought information from federal agencies to ensure the federal government is effectively utilizing existing resources to combat the CCP's political warfare.

"The CCP is waging an influence and infiltration campaign that threatens U.S. military readiness, the technology sector, financial markets, agriculture industry, education systems, intellectual property, and even our own federal government agencies. These federal agencies have important responsibilities to safeguard Americans from the CCP's nefarious tactics and the House Oversight Committee is uniquely equipped to ensure the federal government is taking every action necessary to thwart China's political warfare," said Chairman Comer. "This hearing is the first in the Committee's government-wide investigation into CCP political warfare and the witnesses appearing will tell the story of how the CCP targets America. I look forward to exposing the CCP's actions and uncovering ways that federal agencies can work together to safeguard our communities."

### **China accuses US of Deporting Chinese students without proper evidence**

08 April 2024, First Post

In response to inquiries concerning claims that Chinese scholars and students were detained and compelled to leave the country upon crossing the border at Dallas and Washington Dulles airports, Mao stated that the US actions severely damaged the individuals involved and hampered people-to-people contacts between China and the US.

China threatened to take "resolute measures" to protect the interests of its citizens on Monday, accusing the US of forcibly deporting Chinese students without any reasonable justification.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a media briefing here that the US has been overly expanding the definition of national security and has arbitrarily canceled Chinese students' visas, prohibited them from visiting the US, and forcibly deported them without any solid proof.

In response to inquiries concerning claims that Chinese scholars and students were detained and

compelled to leave the country upon crossing the border at Dallas and Washington Dulles airports, Mao stated that the US actions severely damaged the individuals involved and hampered people-to-people contacts between China and the US.

"The recent cases show that the US law enforcement personnel are bent on making excuses for deporting Chinese personnel. These are typical cases of selective, discriminatory and politically motivated law enforcement," Mao said. "China will take resolute measures to safeguard the legitimate and lawful rights and interests of Chinese citizens. The US needs to immediately stop unjustifiably harassing," she said. China's state-run Global Times quoted Chinese Ambassador to the US Xie Feng alleging that dozens of Chinese arriving in the US, including students, were being denied entry every month over the past few months.

He added that they were going back to school after visiting other places or seeing relatives in China, and that they had legal visas and no criminal records.

However, Xie claimed that after they arrived at the airport, they were subjected to an eight-hour interrogation by the authorities, who also forbade them from speaking with their parents, falsely accused them, and even forcibly deported and barred them from entering the country.

Indian students in American schools surpassed Chinese students last year, according to figures from the US Department of Homeland Security.

The number of Chinese students studying in the US increased to 3.20 lakh last year from 2.54 lakh, which Chinese officials ascribed to the country's increasingly unfavorable climate due to worries over the flight of scientific knowledge.

## **March**

**EXCLUSIVE Now Chinese migrants are sneaking onto Guam: Top Republican warns Communist Party wants to 'exploit' every part of the U.S. map and warns critical American base is vulnerable**

30 March 2024, Daily Mail

There are rising concerns that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is infiltrating the United States' sensitive military site in Guam where over 20,000 troops are stationed.

A growing number of Chinese nationals have been sneaking in from the Northern Mariana Islands into Guam, which makes the U.S. territory susceptible to CCP influence.

Guam is the location of the Navy's only submarine base in the western Pacific. It also hosts a 'strategically important' air base with bombers and fighter jets.

The island's homeland security agency has reported 118 'unlawful or attempted unlawful entries by Chinese citizens' since 2022.

The number peaked at 85 in 2022 followed by 27 in 2023 and six so far in 2024, according to Stars and Stripes.

'Count on the Chinese Communist Party to exploit every potential vulnerability on the map. What the CCP is doing in Guam is almost certainly no exception,' House Homeland Security Chairman Mark Green, R-Tenn., told DailyMail.com.

'The United States maintains a significant military presence on the island, a vital outpost for helping America defend our strategic interests in the region.' He added that the 'surging numbers of Chinese nationals coming into Guam' should be a 'major cause for concern, in part because we simply do not know for what purpose these individuals are coming.' Green blames the Biden administration for allowing the CPP to 'sense weakness' and then 'take advantage' of the situation.

'It's not just rising numbers of Chinese nationals illegally crossing our Southwest border that demands attention—what's happening in Guam does, as well.' Chinese migrants using the border to gain entry are the fastest growing group being smuggled in from Mexico.

Last year, Green told DailyMail.com that there had been over 17,800 Chinese nationals released into the U.S. from January through September after they came across the southern border.

In addition to the illegal migrants streaming onto the island, DailyMail.com previously reported on the 'loophole' that allows Chinese nationals to spy on U.S. military installations in Guam.

In 2019, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) enacted a policy to allow Chinese nationals to visit the Northern Mariana Islands for 14 days without a visa.

From there, many have been reported to charter boats to Guam in order to get information on sensitive U.S. military sites.

Guam Customs and Quarantine spokeswoman Alana Chargualaf-Afaisen told Newsweek that the agency stops 'unlawful arrivals' to the territory.

The migrants often 'prevent harm in a variety of areas, including military intelligence and reconnaissance, terrorism, communicable diseases, human trafficking for slave labor, prostitution and illegal gambling, cheap, undocumented labor, the movement of illicit drugs, and other illegal activities that pose a threat to the quality of life in Guam, are of equal concern to our island,' said the statement to Newsweek.

The ongoing visa loophole is of major concern to top leaders in the Senate as well.

Sen. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, previously told DailyMail.com that the visa loophole allows spies to take a 'hard look' at what that U.S. is doing militarily in Guam and then 'use that against us.'

'We're trying to close those loopholes. I just think it's very, very important that we do this,' said Ernst, who sits on the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Ernst and Rep. Rep. Neal Dunn, R-Fla., wrote a letter to Department of Homeland Security Sec. Alejandro Mayorkas slamming the policy, which the administration has said provides a significant economic boost for the small island.

### **China slams the U.S. for interfering in Arunachal Pradesh border dispute with India**

21 March 2024, CNBC

China slammed the United States for interfering in its border dispute with India, after Washington said it recognized the disputed Arunachal Pradesh as a part of Indian territory.

"China strongly deplores and firmly opposes this," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said Thursday at a press conference in Beijing. "The China-India boundary question is a matter between the two countries and has nothing to do with the US side."

The response comes after the U.S. on Wednesday rejected China's "unilateral attempts" to advance its territorial claims, weighing in on a spat between New Delhi and Beijing after Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated a tunnel in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh.

It is the latest in an escalating dispute between neighboring India and China, which share a 3,500 kilometer border.

China, which refers to the territory as Zangnan, claims Arunachal Pradesh is part of southern Tibet. India rejects those claims, stating Arunachal Pradesh has always been a part of India.

On Wednesday, the U.S. State Department weighed in on the matter.

"The United States recognizes Arunachal Pradesh as Indian territory and we strongly oppose any unilateral attempts to advance territorial claims by incursions or encroachments, military or civilian, across the Line of Actual Control," spokesperson Vedant Patel said.

The LAC is a demarcation that separates India-controlled territory from that controlled by China.

China on Thursday reiterated its claims over Arunachal Pradesh, saying: "Zangnan has always been China's territory, a basic fact that is undeniable."

"It is known to all that the US has consistently spared no efforts to provoke and take advantage of other

countries' conflicts to serve its selfish geopolitical interests," Lin added.

U.S. support for India in the border dispute is a "reflection of consistent U.S. efforts to fully align itself with India in its competition with China," Michael Kugelman, director of the South Asia Institute at the Wilson Center told CNBC.

Kugelman pointed out that the U.S. typically refrains from commenting on some Indian border disputes, such as the one with Pakistan over Kashmir.

But in this case, he said, Washington is signaling its solidarity with New Delhi – "in the same way that it has made efforts, including through intelligence-sharing, to help India deter Chinese aggressions on its northern border."

India-China border tensions heat up

Earlier this month, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the "Sela Tunnel" – the world's longest bi-lane tunnel built at an altitude above 13,000 feet, which is located in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, triggering sharp responses from Chinese officials.

Border tensions between India and China have risen in recent years. In a major escalation in 2020, a clash between the two sides killed 20 Indian soldiers and four Chinese troops. Last year, China renamed 11 places in Arunachal Pradesh, a move strongly opposed by India.

Senior Colonel Zhang Xiaogang, deputy director general of the Information Office of China's Ministry of National Defense said in a statement days after the road tunnel inauguration that "China never recognizes and firmly opposes India's illegal establishment of the so-called 'Arunachal Pradesh.'"

Last week, China's defense ministry reiterated its claim over the northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh.

India's foreign ministry this week responded to Zhang's comments, saying Arunachal Pradesh "was, is and will always be an integral and inalienable part of India."

Randhir Jaiswal, India's foreign ministry spokesperson said in an official statement that the Chinese Defense Ministry made "absurd claims" over the Indian State of Arunachal Pradesh and "repeating baseless arguments in this regard does not lend such claims any validity."

On the U.S. standing up for India, Harsh V. Pant, vice president for studies and foreign policy at Observer Research Foundation, a New Delhi-based think tank, said: "It shows how far India-U.S. relations have come."

"Even when it comes to the matter, which has been very sensitive, such as the India China border dispute, the U.S. today is openly standing with India," he told CNBC.

## 'Renewed US-India ties amid China rise', says President Joe Biden in his final State of the Union Address

09 March 2024, Times of India

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden delivered a defiant argument for a second term in his State of the Union speech Thursday night, lacing into GOP front-runner Donald Trump for espousing "resentment, revenge and retribution" and for jeopardising freedom at home and abroad.

Revelling in the political moment, Biden fired multiple broadsides at "my predecessor" without ever mentioning Trump by name - 13 times in all - raising his voice repeatedly as he worked to quell voter concerns about his age and job performance while sharpening the contrast with his all-but-certain Nov rival.

The scrappy tone from Biden was a sharp break from his often humdrum daily appearances and was intended to banish doubts about whether the 81-year-old president, the country's oldest ever, is still up to the job.

For 68 minutes in the House chamber, Biden goaded Republicans over their policies on immigration, taxes and more, invited call-and-response banter with fellow Democrats and seemed to relish the fight. "I know I may not look like it, but I've been around a while," Biden deadpanned. "And when you get to my age certain things become clearer than ever before." Noting he was born during WWII and came of political age during the upheaval of the 1960s, Biden declared: "My lifetime has taught me to embrace freedom and democracy. A future based on the core values that have defined America: honesty, decency, dignity, equality. To respect everyone. To give everyone a fair shot. To give hate no safe harbour. Now some other people my age see a different story: an American story of resentment, revenge, and retribution. That's not me."

The president linked Trump's praise for those who overran the Capitol in an attempt to subvert the 2020 election with antidemocratic threats abroad. "Freedom and democracy are under attack both at home and overseas at the very same time," Biden said as he appealed for Congress to support Ukraine's efforts to defend itself against Russia. "History is watching." Biden directly referenced the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the Capitol, calling out those who have played it down. "My predecessor - and some of you here - seek to bury the truth about Jan 6 - I will not do that," Biden said. "This is a moment to speak the truth and to bury the lies. Here's a simple truth. You can't love your country only when you win."

Taking a victory lap in selling his legislative accomplishments, including funding to bolster

manufacturing of computer chips nationwide, Biden veered from his prepared script to take a dig at Republicans who voted against such policies but nonetheless take credit for them back home. "If any of you don't want that money in your districts," Biden said, "just let me know."

Biden also engaged in a loud call and response with lawmakers as he rhetorically questioned whether the tax code was fair and whether billionaires and corporations need "another \$2 trillion in tax breaks," as he charged Republicans want. Biden also highlighted his efforts to fight "shrinkflation" and so-called "junk fees" on services. Neither is a prime driver of inflation, but the White House hoped to show consumers that Biden is fighting for them.

### **US has a wrong perception of China, says foreign minister**

07 March 2024, Reuters

The U.S. is clinging to wrong perceptions of China and has yet to fulfill its "promises" despite some progress since presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping met last November, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Thursday.

Speaking at a news conference on the sidelines of an annual parliament meeting in Beijing, Wang said exchanges between both countries can only continue if both sides respect and recognize their differences.

"It has to be pointed out that the U.S. side's erroneous perception of China continues, and the promises it has made have not really been fulfilled," Wang said at the National People's Congress.

"The methods of suppressing China are constantly being renewed, and the list of unilateral sanctions is constantly being extended," he said.

The "crimes" the U.S. wanted to add to the list China had supposedly committed "have reached an unbelievable level," Wang said.

Still, Biden had made it clear the U.S. would not seek a new Cold War nor seek to change the Chinese system or back Taiwan's independence, Wang said.

In an annual and wide-ranging discussion, Wang struck a relatively measured tone as he also covered relations with Russia and the Ukraine conflict, Europe, China's stuttering economy and artificial intelligence.

Wang said China would submit a draft resolution on AI to the United Nations General Assembly, reflecting the need for both development and security.

"AI should always be under the control of human beings," he said.

Tensions between the two superpowers have slightly eased since Biden and Xi staged their landmark summit in San Francisco last November, but they remain in an uneasy detente ahead of the U.S.

election this year which could see Republican China hawk Donald Trump return to the White House.

Washington has repeatedly stated its desire to put a floor under the relationship after it spiralled to its worst in decades last year over issues including Taiwan, tech competition, trade and an alleged Chinese spy balloon shot down by the U.S. off its east coast.

China alleges the U.S. is trying to contain and suppress its high-tech development and industrial policy, while both militaries eye each other closely amid increased deployments across East Asia.

"So we urge the U.S. to understand the historical development trend, objectively and rationally look at China's development (and) actively and pragmatically carry out interactions with China."

Beijing also faces ongoing geopolitical confrontations on multiple fronts, including with Europe on trade and the Ukraine war, Japan across a variety of issues, as well as the Philippines over the South China Sea, a regional hotbed of competing territorial claims.

Wang said China is willing to work with Russia to foster new drivers of cooperation and consolidate friendship.

China and Russia had declared a "no limits" partnership in February 2022 when Putin visited Beijing just days before he sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine, triggering the deadliest land war in Europe since World War Two.

Wang also announced an expansion of its visa-free travel scheme, saying that China will offer visa-free travel to nationals from Switzerland, Ireland, Hungary, Austria, Belgium and Luxembourg from March 14.

China currently has a mutual visa waiver agreement with 22 countries, including most recently Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia.

China has also unilaterally allowed visa-free entry for citizens from nations such as Germany, France, Spain, the Netherlands and Italy for 15 days. Those five European nations have yet to reciprocate with a similar arrangement for Chinese citizens.

### **China Hopes For Better Relations Regardless Of US Election Outcome**

04 March 2024, NDTV World

"No matter who becomes the president, we hope that the United States can work in the same direction with China" Lou said.

China said Monday it hopes relations with the United States can improve whoever wins the presidential election in November.

Beijing and Washington have clashed in recent years on flashpoint issues from technology and trade to human rights, as well as over Taiwan and competing claims in the South China Sea.



Americans go to the polls this November in an election that will likely pit former leader Donald Trump against the sitting President Joe Biden for the keys to the White House.

"You mentioned the US presidential election, it is an internal affair of the United States," parliament spokesman Lou Qinjian told a press conference in response to a question about the vote.

"No matter who becomes the president, we hope that the United States can work in the same direction with China and work for a stable, healthy and sustainable China-US relationship," Lou said.

"To stabilise and improve China-US relations is something that everyone follows closely and expects to see, he said, adding: "China's position has been consistent.

## February

### U.S. allegation of 'forced labor' in Xinjiang is huge lie: Foreign Ministry

28 February 2024, ECNS

The allegation of "forced labor" in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region is a huge lie, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said on Tuesday, urging the U.S. to immediately stop smearing China, stop intervening in China's internal affairs, and stop politicizing and weaponizing trade issues.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning made the remarks at a regular press briefing in Beijing, responding to media reports saying that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security is intensifying scrutiny of supply chains of American solar companies as the Biden administration mulls to tighten a ban on products assembled in Xinjiang.

The Chinese side has repeatedly pointed out that the allegation of "forced labor" in Xinjiang is a huge lie. The U.S. uses the so-called "forced labor" issue, which does not exist in Xinjiang, which often results in "forced unemployment" in Xinjiang, Mao said.

U.S.' move has severely undermined the basic human rights of the people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang, violated international trade rules and disrupted international industrial and supply chains, the spokesperson said.

Mao said the U.S. must immediately stop smearing China, stop intervening in China's internal affairs under the pretext of human rights, and stop politicizing and weaponizing trade issues.

### China disappointed over US veto on Israel-Hamas ceasefire vote

21 February 2024, Deccan Herald

China expressed "strong disappointment" over the United States blocking a draft United Nations Security Council resolution on the Israel-Hamas war calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, Xinhua said on Wednesday, citing its UN representative Zhang Jun.

The United States on Tuesday vetoed for the third time a draft United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution, blocking a demand for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire as it instead pushes the 15-member body towards a rival draft that calls for a temporary ceasefire linked to the release of hostages held by Hamas.

The US has said the draft resolution put forward by Algeria could jeopardize "sensitive negotiations" between US, Egypt, Israel and Qatar aimed at brokering a pause in fighting and securing the release of hostages.

"China expresses its strong disappointment at and dissatisfaction with the US veto," Xinhua said, citing Zhang who urged the UNSC to push for a ceasefire calling it a "moral obligation that the council cannot shy away from".

"The US veto sends a wrong message, pushing the situation in Gaza into a more dangerous one," said Zhang, adding that objection to ceasefire in Gaza is "nothing different from giving the green light to the continued slaughter".

Zhang said the spillover of the conflict is destabilising the Middle East region, raising risks of a wider war.

"Only by extinguishing the flames of war in Gaza can the world prevent the fires of hell from engulfing the entire region," Xinhua cited him as saying.

### 'Decoupling from China will only backfire on US itself,' Wang Yi holds 'frank' talk with Antony Blinken

18 February 2024, LiveMint

Washington should lift sanctions on Chinese companies and individuals, and that attempts to decouple from China would only hurt the United States, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi told U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

The United States should lift the sanctions and not harm China's legitimate development rights, Wang told Blinken on Friday on the sidelines of a Munich security conference, according to a statement from China's foreign ministry.

Washington has imposed sanctions on various Chinese companies that it accuses of working with China's military despite denials from the firms. U.S. sanctions have also been imposed on individuals and entities over alleged human rights abuses in the Chinese region of Xinjiang.

Sino-U.S. relations have shown signs of improvement in recent months as both sides took steps to re-establish channels of communication after ties

between the two global superpowers sank to their lowest levels in decades.

But many points of friction remain.

The Biden administration has imposed bans on the sale of certain technologies to Chinese companies, citing national security risks. China has accused Washington of "weaponising" economic and trade issues.

"Making 'de-risking' into 'de-China', and building 'small yards and high walls' and seeking 'decoupling from China'" will only backfire on the U.S. itself, Wang told Blinken.

The exchanges between the two men were "frank, substantial and constructive", the ministry said in the statement released on Saturday.

Both sides exchanged views on regional issues including the Ukraine crisis and the Korean Peninsula, the statement said, without giving further details.

It added the Korean Peninsula envoys of both sides will "stay in touch".

Wang also reiterated that the United States should abide by the one-China principle, if it truly wanted stability in the Taiwan Strait.

"There is only one China in the world, and Taiwan is part of China's territory, and that is the real status quo in the Taiwan issue," Wang said.

China regards Taiwan as part of its territory. But Taiwan strongly objects to China's sovereignty claims and says only the island's people can decide their future.

U.S. President Joe Biden has said the United States does not support the independence of Taiwan. The United States does, however, maintain unofficial relations with the democratically governed island and remains its most important backer and arms supplier.

China and the U.S. have made some progress in bilateral relations since Chinese President Xi Jinping held talks with Biden in November, where they reached agreements covering fentanyl, military communications and artificial intelligence on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit.

China and the U.S. held their first joint meeting of a working group on fentanyl precursor chemicals in Beijing in late January and China's financial officials hosted U.S. Treasury officials earlier this month.

Blinken and Wang discussed exchanges "at all levels" between the two countries in the next stage, and agreed to maintain dialogue in all areas, according to the Chinese foreign ministry statement.

### **Top diplomats from US, China hold 'constructive' talks on issues dividing them**

16 February 2024, Seattle Times

Tibet Digest December - January 2024

Top diplomats from the U.S. and China on Friday held a "candid and constructive" discussion on issues vexing their strained relations over Taiwan, the situation in the South China Sea, Russia's war against Ukraine and synthetic opioids, the State Department said.

The meeting between U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference marked the latest and highest-level meeting between the two sides since U.S. President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping held talks late last year in California.

State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said Blinken emphasized the importance of maintaining peace in the Taiwan Strait as well as expanding on nascent counternarcotics efforts. Blinken also raised concerns about China's support for Russia's defense industrial base that Washington sees as helping Moscow's military operations against Ukraine.

"The two sides had a candid and constructive discussion on a range of bilateral, regional and global issues as part of ongoing efforts to maintain open lines of communication and responsibly manage competition in the relationship," Miller said. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Wang called on the U.S. to remove sanctions against Chinese companies and individuals.

Wang emphasized that Washington's policy of "de-risking" economically from Beijing "has become 'de-Sinicizing,' 'building a tall fence' and 'de-coupling from China'" and "will come back to bite the U.S. itself," according to a Ministry readout Saturday morning.

He also called on the U.S. to stop searches of Chinese nationals. Recently, Chinese state media published reports of Chinese citizens being searched at the U.S. border.

In one prominent case, a group of students led by their professor, Xie Tao from Beijing Foreign Studies University, were interrogated for three hours upon arriving at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport, according to Xinhua. Xie is the dean of the School of International Relations and Diplomacy at the University.

Wang affirmed that cooperation to combat the spread of fentanyl was going "positively" and would continue, as well as the agreement to keep military-to-military communications. Both sides also discussed the ongoing Israel-Hamas war and the war in Ukraine.

Blinken "reiterated that the United States will stand up for our interests and values and those of our allies and partners," Miller said, adding that the current situations in the Middle East and with North Korea had also been topics of conversation.

"Both sides recognized the importance of maintaining open lines of communication between the United States and (China) across a range of strategic issues, including consultations and high-level meetings in key areas in the coming months," he said.

### **Indonesia's presidential election has high stakes for US and China and their rivalry**

14 February 2024, AP News

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — When Indonesians cast their votes on Wednesday for a new president in one of the world's biggest elections, the stakes will also be high for the United States and China and their mounting rivalry in the region.

The Southeast Asian nation is a key battleground economically and politically in a region where the global powers have long been on a collision course over Taiwan, human rights, U.S. military deployments and Beijing's aggressive actions in disputed waters, including the South China Sea.

Outgoing President Joko Widodo's foreign policy has avoided criticizing either Beijing or Washington, but also rejected alignment with either power. The delicate balancing act has paved the way for substantial Chinese trade and investment for Indonesia, including a \$7.3 billion high-speed railway that was largely funded by China, while Jakarta has also boosted defense ties and intensified military exercises with the U.S.

These policies would likely continue if the election is won by the apparent front-runner Prabowo Subianto, the current defense minister whose vice presidential running mate is Widodo's eldest son, according to analysts.

"The problem for great powers, however, is that Jakarta is assiduously non-aligned and almost certainly will remain as such regardless of who wins," said Derek Grossman, a senior defense analyst at Rand Corp., a U.S.-based think tank.

IRFBA Chair's Statement on Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan religious prisoners of conscience the 11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, writer Go Sherab Gyatso, and separation of Tibetan children from their heritage and language

09 February 2024, U.S. Department of State

IRFBA Chair's Statement on Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan religious prisoners of conscience the 11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, writer Go Sherab Gyatso, and separation of Tibetan children from their heritage and language

As the Chair of the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance, I appreciate the contribution of Tibetan Buddhism to a deep understanding of seemingly self-evident concepts such as love,

compassion and meditation. Tibetan Buddhism has played an important role in the history of the region and continues to have a transformative power in Tibetan society, as well as a positive influence on neighbouring countries and many individuals around the globe.

I express my grave concern for the ongoing enforced disappearance of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the 11th Panchen Lama, whose whereabouts and well-being in the People's Republic of China (PRC) have been unknown for nearly 30 years.

PRC authorities abducted Gedhun Choekyi Nyima in 1995 when he was six years old and just days after His Holiness the Dalai Lama recognized him as the 11th Panchen Lama. In response, the PRC installed its own Panchen Lama and continues attempts to compel Tibetan Buddhists to pledge allegiance to the government-selected individual.

I am concerned that PRC authorities have denied Gedhun Choekyi Nyima a lifetime of being able to freely practice his faith in a manner of his choosing. Further, I find the lack of independent access to his whereabouts, the seeming restrictions on his freedom of movement, and the limited information about him spanning nearly three decades highly troubling.

Gedhun Choekyi Nyima is one among many Tibetans whom PRC authorities have silenced or oppressed for expressions of their beliefs, culture, language, and traditions. This includes detaining Tibetans for possessing images of the Dalai Lama, such as Go Sherab Gyatso, a Tibetan Buddhist monk, writer, educator and public intellectual currently sentenced to 10 years in prison for his peaceful advocacy and whom authorities previously detained for reportedly possessing and displaying a portrait of the Dalai Lama.

The PRC's cultural erasure throughout Tibet, including efforts to "Sinicize" Tibetan Buddhism and interfere in the selection process of Tibetan Buddhist lamas, including the Dalai Lama, are alarmingly widespread. These policies prohibit Tibetans from offering prayers to the Dalai Lama in public, as well as images of the Dalai Lama himself. Authorities have also banned the display of highly symbolic Tibetan prayer flags and the celebration of many important Tibetan festivals.

As such, many monasteries and religious events have become subject to regular surveillance. According to monitors, of the roughly 6,000 monasteries that once existed in Tibet, only 13 have been left undamaged. For instance, the 2016 destruction of Larung Gar, the largest Buddhist academy in the world, resulted in the forced eviction of thousands of students, monks, and nuns living around it. Many were reportedly subjected to brutality and "political re-education."

Last year, several UN experts expressed concern about credible reports that PRC authorities have

coerced approximately one million Tibetan children in what they characterized as a “mandatory large-scale program intended to assimilate Tibetans into majority Han culture, contrary to international human rights standards.” Separating a generation of Tibetan children from their heritage and language will do untold damage to their ability to shape and preserve their identity.

I urge the PRC to cease all human rights abuses against Tibetans, including by accounting for the whereabouts and well-being of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima; ending the coercion of Tibetan children into government-run boarding schools; upholding freedom of religion or belief for all; and abandoning policies and practices aimed at erasing Tibet’s rich religious, cultural, and linguistic identity.

### **Chinese hackers have lurked in some US infrastructure systems for ‘at least five years’**

07 February 2024, CNN

The Chinese hackers behind a campaign to infiltrate transportation hubs and other critical American infrastructure have had access to some of their targets’ computer networks for “at least five years,” according to a new report by US and allied security agencies obtained by CNN.

The campaign is part of a long-running effort by the hackers to position themselves for potentially crippling cyberattacks that could disrupt water and electricity, according to US officials.

US intelligence chiefs sounded the alarm about the threat to Congress last week, saying Beijing could use the hackers to disrupt a US response if China invades Taiwan. FBI Director Christopher Wray told lawmakers last week that the hackers could “wreak havoc and cause real-world harm” to the US.

The nearly 50-page report comes as US-China tensions over Taiwan and other key issues remain high and shows how central cyber operations could be to Chinese efforts to hobble US infrastructure in the event of a conflict between the two superpowers, according to US officials. The report would be the most detailed disclosure yet by the US government of the hackers’ stealthy techniques, one aimed at helping private owners of critical infrastructure spot the Chinese hackers in their networks.

The hackers’ presence in critical US networks has sparked a monthslong effort by US national security officials to kick the hackers out.

The report, which US officials are set to release this week, makes clear that the Chinese hackers’ activity began much earlier than previously known, with the hackers scoping and accessing IT systems years ago. From there, they have spent months looking for ways to maneuver onto more sensitive industrial systems that help control power flow and water.

The Beijing-backed hackers have been probing systems that control heating, cooling and water, access that, if exploited, could allow them to manipulate those systems and cause “significant infrastructure failures,” the report says. The hackers have also broken into security cameras at unnamed critical facilities, according to the document.

There are no signs yet that China has decided to use the hackers’ presence to disrupt US infrastructure, according to US officials, but they are concerned that could change quickly in the event of a crisis.

Liu Pengyu, a spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in Washington, denied the US hacking allegations in a statement to CNN on Wednesday and accused Washington of conducting its own cyberattacks.

The new report also sheds new light on the sprawling nature of the hacking operation and on concerns from US allies over the activity.

US officials have confirmed the hackers have broken into computer networks at energy, transportation and water facilities in the “continental and non-continental” US and its overseas territories, including Guam, according to the report. In one case, after breaching the IT systems at an unnamed water facility, the hackers had access to a range of critical information on water treatment plants and water wells, according to the analysis.

The FBI, National Security Agency and Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency are among the US agencies that produced the report, along with cybersecurity agencies from Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. CNN obtained a non-public version of the report, and sources familiar with the report told CNN the agencies are preparing to publish a version of it this week.

Canada’s cybersecurity agency “assesses that the direct threat to Canada’s critical infrastructure” from the Chinese hackers “is likely lower” than that to US infrastructure, but that Canada would still likely still be affected by a disruption to US infrastructure due to “cross-border integration,” the document says. Australia and New Zealand, two key allies in the US quest to counter China in the Pacific, could be vulnerable to similar activity from Chinese government hackers, the report says.

## **January**

### **US hyping up China as “threat in outer space” to expand its forces in outer space: Chinese Foreign Ministry**

27 January 2024, The Economic Times

The US has been hyping China as a “threat in outer space” to target Beijing only to expand its forces in

outer space and maintain military hegemony, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said on Friday.

Wang Wenbin's remarks came after the US Space Force released an assessment report. In the report, the US said that Russia and China are designing and testing counter-space weapons to "deny, disrupt or destroy satellites and space services," China-based Global Times reported.

Speaking at a regular media briefing on Friday, Wang said that the US openly uses outer space as a "battlefield" to develop outer space military capabilities and provoke "major-power rivalry, making itself the biggest factor in militarizing outer space and turning it into a battlefield. He accused the US of abusing space technology and maliciously tracking and approaching spacecraft in a "dangerous" way.

Asked about US Space Force in its report "Competing in Space" mentions that China and Russia are testing and developing anti-satellite weapons to deny, disrupt or destroy satellites and space services, Wang Wenbin said, "The US has long been repeatedly hyping up China as a "threat in outer space" to smear and attack China, which is only an excuse for the US to expand its forces in outer space and maintain military hegemony."

"In fact, the US openly characterised outer space as a battlefield, made great effort to develop outer space military and provoke major-power rivalry, making itself the biggest factor in militarizing outer space and turning it into a battlefield, and the biggest threat to outer space security. The US has long been abusing space technology and maliciously tracking and approaching other countries' spacecraft in a dangerous manner, which increases the collision risk in space and is seriously irresponsible," he added.

Wang Wenbin stated that China sticks to its peaceful use of outer space and opposes the arms race. He said that China urges the US to stop spreading disinformation and expanding the military buildup as well as stepping up war preparation in its outer space.

He further said, "China once again urges the US to stop spreading disinformation, expanding military build-up and stepping up war preparation in outer space, and to genuinely shoulder its due responsibility."

### **U.S. and China are working to make the business environment less volatile, Beijing says**

26 January 2024, CNBC

BEIJING — China and the U.S. are working toward creating a more stable and predictable environment

for businesses, Chinese Commerce Minister Wang Wentao said Friday.

Since U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo's visit to China last summer, the two countries have agreed to hold regular meetings at the ministerial level and below. Wang and Raimondo had a call earlier this month.

That communication "strives to create a good environment for the two countries' economic and trade cooperation, especially in stabilizing business expectations," Wang said in Mandarin at a press conference, translated by CNBC.

He did not mention U.S. tech restrictions, but said sanctions bring business uncertainty and "greatly increase" compliance costs.

In the last two years, the Biden administration has issued export controls that limit the ability of Chinese companies to buy advanced tech such as high-end semiconductors from U.S. businesses. Washington has said it's a way to keep China's military from accessing cutting-edge tech, while maintaining areas of cooperation.

"We always believe that the common interests of China and the U.S. in economy and trade are far greater than their differences," Wang said.

U.S. and other foreign businesses in China have long complained of challenges to doing business in the Asian country, such as unequal treatment of foreign companies compared to local players. More recently, international businesses have said Beijing's vague rules around data transfer out of the country make operations difficult.

In the fall, the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) issued new draft rules that said no government oversight is needed for data exports if regulators haven't stipulated that it qualifies as "important." The move was widely seen as an improvement for foreign businesses, but no official policy has yet followed.

When asked Friday for an update on data rules, Wang only said the "primary ministry is stepping up efforts to release them."

He said China has acted on a 24-point plan released last summer for supporting foreign businesses in the country — with implementation or progress on "more than 60%" of the measures. Wang also said the ministry has set up regular channels for foreign businesses to share feedback.

When Raimondo visited China last year, she called for more action to improve predictability for U.S. businesses in China. Referring to the 24-point plan, she had said: "Any one of those could be addressed as a way to show action."

Growing international challenges

China's economic growth has slowed from the double-digit pace of prior decades to a 5.2%



increase in 2023. Growth is expected to slow further this year.

Wang told reporters Friday that this year, the international trade situation would be "even more complex and severe," pointing to factors such as increased geopolitical tensions.

Foreign direct investment fell by 8% to 1.13 trillion yuan (\$160 billion) in 2023, the lowest level in three years, according to Ministry of Commerce data. It did not specify how much the U.S. invested in China, while noting France and the U.K. saw the largest increases in such investment last year.

China has sought to bolster foreign investment in the country.

At World Economic Forum's annual conference in Davos, Switzerland, earlier this month, Chinese Premier Li Qiang gave a speech that portrayed China as an opportunity instead of a risk.

"Davos is littered with CEOs who have stories of intellectual property ripped off, agreements summarily changed, arbitrary legal judgments in favor of local competitors, and more," Ian Bremmer, founder and president of the Eurasia Group, said in a note Monday.

"But I was also impressed by the breadth of CEOs – across a wide degree of sectors (finance, healthcare, insurance, manufacturing, technology, luxury goods, transition energy and more) who told me stories not just of increased access over the past months, but also new business terms, licenses and partnerships that they were legitimately enthusiastic about," Bremmer said.

He said that "almost every Fortune 500 CEO with a business in China" that he met there was planning to travel more to China this year compared to last year. "Even at 2-3% growth, a change in political impulse from the world's second largest economy with large scale industrial infrastructure and a massive consumer base isn't to be ignored."

### **China's Wang Yi and America's Sullivan to meet in Bangkok**

26 January 2024, Nikkei Asia

White House says national security adviser will also meet Thai PM



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, left, will meet U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan in Thailand's capital. (Source photos by Reuters)

WASHINGTON/BEIJING (Reuters) – U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan will meet with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Bangkok on Friday and Saturday, building on a commitment by the two countries' leaders to deepen dialogue between the world's two largest economies.

The Chinese foreign ministry announced the meeting in a separate statement.

The meeting comes a little more than two months after U.S. President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping met for about four hours on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in San Francisco.

Biden and Xi agreed to open a presidential hotline, resume military-to-military communications, and work to curb fentanyl production, but remained at odds over Taiwan.

"This meeting continues the commitment by both sides at the November 2023 Woodside Summit between President Biden and President Xi to maintain strategic communication and responsibly manage the relationship," Adrienne Watson, spokesperson for the White House National Security Council, said in a statement.

She said Sullivan, who reports directly to Biden, would also meet with Thailand Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin and Deputy Prime Minister Parnpree Bahiddha-nukara.

"In these meetings, Mr. Sullivan will reaffirm the importance of the U.S.-Thailand treaty alliance and partnership and discuss opportunities to strengthen cooperation across a range of bilateral and global issues," Watson said.

### **India, U.S. firm up plan to counter China's aggression in Indo-Pacific**

21 January 2024, The Sunday Guardian

India and the US are working on a "two-fold" strategy to counter China's aggressive agenda in the Indo-Pacific, South China Sea (SCS) and other regions and geographies. One, New Delhi and Washington will fast-track the projects and

other developmental works on which they are already working together in the countries which are in the Indo-Pacific region. Two, the Biden administration and the Narendra Modi government have decided to launch joint development initiatives in the “geopolitically and strategically important” countries such as the Philippines, Cambodia, Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar, Afghanistan and Vietnam.

“The sectors in which joint work has to be done are being identified, and a strategy for the same is being finalized. Talks between the US and India are already underway at different levels of governments. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken have recently briefly reviewed the development so far with the updates on the various such projects,” a source aware of the matter told The Sunday Guardian here in New Delhi. He added, “Jaishankar and Blinken agreed that a comprehensive discussion for finalizing the further strategy needs to be held as soon as possible for which a date to have a higher-level diplomatic meeting will be fixed.”

The US administration says “across much of the Indo-Pacific region, China is using military and economic coercion to bully its neighbours, advance unlawful maritime claims, threaten maritime shipping lanes, and destabilize territory along the periphery of People’s Republic of China (PRC). The US stands with its Southeast Asian allies and partners to champion a free and open Indo-Pacific.” “India also shares US’ views on Chinese bullying and aggressive activities in the Indo-Pacific and both countries want to expand their presence in the countries which are bearing the brunt of an aggressive China,” says a diplomat referring to what transpired so far between Jaishankar and Blinken.

India and the US have, therefore, decided to launch development projects in the Philippines which is facing Chinese aggression. According to sources, diplomatic officials of India and the US are already in talks to plan about how to execute the projects there. Other relevant agencies and establishments have also been taken into confidence, sources said. In fact, the first weeks of 2024 have seen a serious escalation of tension between China and the Philippines in their sovereignty dispute over the Second Thomas Shoal. There have been several run-ins between the two countries’ vessels shooting water cannons at Philippine ships. Naval officials from the countries bordering the Pacific, such as Japan, Russia and the US met in China’s eastern city of Nanjing to discuss the issue of heightened tensions in the South China Sea. But no concrete solutions came out. China continues to lay claim to almost the entire South China Sea which is a conduit for goods worth more than \$3 trillion every year. The nations such as Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan and

Vietnam are also competing claims to the same region. But China continues to expand its military footprints to frighten the small countries. It is in this backdrop that India and the US last year decided to strengthen their strategic alliance by enhancing defence and security collaborations and expanding cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. This collaboration happened during the India-US 2+2 dialogue in New Delhi. The expansion of collaborations and expansion of strategic ties between New Delhi and Washington will now be materialized.

Now, India and the US want to expand existing partnerships with the tiny nations in the Indo-Pacific with the objective to ensure development of the countries and also to address the issues resulting from China’s growing military assertiveness in the region, sources said. The focus will be on the Philippines in whose maritime territorial regions China continues to pose a grave threat. India and the US will be working on expediting the existing joint projects which are already underway in other countries which are facing challenges from China. Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia and DPRK, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, New Zealand, etc. are some of the countries in the Indo-Pacific where the US and India will be fast-tracking their initiatives in what will mark expansion of partnerships with these nations, sources said. The South China Sea, which has long been a focal point of global concern due to China’s belligerent posture in the region, will be on top priority, says an official. India has already exposed how China keeps trying to engage Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) member states in a protracted dialogue on Code of Conduct (CoC in SCS) while at the same time relentlessly pursuing its agenda of island reclamation thereby posing a challenge to regional stability. India and the US have already worked on education, energy, agriculture and health-related development projects in Africa and Southeast Asia in the past. They also have partnered for projects in Cambodia, Afghanistan, Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar and Vietnam. “Now the Biden administration is keen to accelerate the projects in these countries for which it is seeking cooperation from India,” officials told The Sunday Guardian. The Philippines is a key political and security ally of the US. It has recently increased its defence procurement from India as well. The Philippines has received support from the US on several energy projects under the “Energy Secure Philippines” program. India and the US will soon identify the areas where new initiatives could be launched by them, says a diplomat.

## China's strength gap with the US will widen as competition deepens, top political scientist says

17 January 2024, South China Morning Post

The gap in national strength between China and the United States is likely to grow – not shrink – over the next decade, according to one of China's most prominent political scientists.

"Over the next 10 years, the strength gap between China and the US might not tend to narrow but rather widen," said Yan Xuetong, director of the Institute of International Relations at Tsinghua University in Beijing.

Speaking on Saturday at a seminar at Tsinghua on forecasts for international relations, Yan did not elaborate on the reasons for his assessment.

But he did say he expected the world's two largest economies to continue to put distance between themselves and all other economies, even if they posted lower annual growth rates.

"In the future, both China and the US will simultaneously widen their gaps with all other countries. The structure is unlikely to change in the next 10 years," he said.

The growing and wide-reaching tensions between the two sides have been widely characterised as a structural contradiction between a ruling power and a rising power.

A broad range of issues – from the recent presidential election in Taiwan and territorial flare-ups in the South China Sea, to tit-for-tat trade restrictions in the midst of a fierce tech war – have accompanied Beijing's rise from a virtually closed economic backwater more than four decades ago to the world's No 2 economy.

As well as being the world's largest exporter and second-largest importer of goods, China is the second-biggest military spender, and has vaulted ahead in several hi-tech fields while increasing its global footprint through strategies like the Belt and Road Initiative.

The Biden administration has framed China as a "pacing threat", and America's only competitor "with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it".

Several studies have shown that when measured by purchasing power parity, a metric that adjusts for price level differences across countries, China's economy had passed the US economy as early as 2014.

While some observers are reluctant to say that Washington and Beijing have fallen into a "Thucydides Trap", the competitive relationship between the two nations has been evident when seen through an economic lens, said Qu Hongbin, vice-chairman of the China Chief Economist Forum

(CCEF), during an event it sponsored in Shanghai on Saturday.

He was referring to a concept that describes an apparent tendency towards war when an emerging power threatens to displace an existing great power as a regional or international hegemon.

"From a historical perspective, the US, as the current economic hegemon, will naturally feel uneasy and anxious about the rise and development of China and will not stand by and do nothing about it," Qu said.

China could potentially take the top spot as the world's No 1 economy by gross domestic product by 2037, according to a report last month by the London-based Centre for Economics and Business Research.

However, the same consultancy had predicted earlier that China would take first place by 2028.

Debates have emerged about whether China is losing steam in its journey towards dethroning the US economy, as a post-pandemic recovery continues to sputter after the country abandoned strict Covid-19 controls at the beginning of last year.

According to a survey released by the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry in China on Monday, about three-quarters of the 1,713 member companies who responded said they did not expect the Chinese economy to improve in 2024.

China's gross domestic product was 64.5 per cent the size of US GDP in the first half of 2023, down from 77.3 per cent in 2021, due mainly to stalled economic growth and a weaker yuan, according to a note in October from Wang Yongli, general manager at China International Futures.

During the Tsinghua event, Yan said that much of the overestimation of China's economic development was influenced by "wishful thinking".

He also called on Chinese scholars to avoid such mindsets in their analyses of the Sino-American relationship.

"Most of us in the future still hope that China and the US will not compete, but wishes alone do not solve problems. We must suppress our wishes to project where things are going to," he said.

Yan reasoned that bilateral tensions were sharp when Beijing rejected the notion that relations with Washington were competitive, while tensions seemed to ease when Beijing embraced the assumption.

During a speech on January 9, Xie Feng, China's envoy to the US, said "competition is commonplace in the modern world", but added that US-China competition should be "a healthy race to the top, not a zero-sum game".

Yan said that from a realist perspective, the next decade would see "more and more international confrontation and less and less cooperation" due to growing populism around the world.

The role of US-China trade ties in the overall bilateral relationship would diminish despite expected increases in trade volumes, he said.

Yan said that, 10 years ago, when he forecast China's international relations over the coming decade, he did not predict that most countries would opt to distance themselves from Beijing in the US-China competition.

"It's human nature. Amid US-China competition, people tend to choose the stronger side, not the weaker one" he said.

### **Beijing Criticizes US Proclamation Cracking Down On Corruption, Accuses US of Harboring Corrupt Fugitives**

12 January 2024, ChinaScope

On December 11, 2023, U.S. President Biden issued "A Proclamation on Suspension of Entry as Immigrants and Nonimmigrants of Persons Enabling Corruption." On January 7th, Chinese state media outlet China Discipline Inspection and Monitoring News criticized this proclamation as U.S. "hypocrisy" and "double standards" on anti-corruption efforts. Its article reported that 20 of China's most wanted fugitives are currently hiding in the U.S.

The article states that, in recent years, the U.S. has expanded the concept of national security "to justify long-arm jurisdiction and suppress its rivals, while perpetuating its own hegemony." The report argues that U.S. anti-corruption efforts highlight hypocrisy and hegemonic goals, as well as expose the U.S. as "the world's largest safe haven for corruption assets and fugitives."

Specifically, the article claims that the U.S. hosts the highest concentration of persons from developing countries who are suspected of corruption and white-collar crimes. Of the "100-Person Red Notice List" published by the Chinese Interpol office, 20 out of the 38 fugitives who have not yet been brought to justice in China are said to be hiding in the U.S. (The "100-Person Red Notice List" refers to 100 Chinese former state officials who were suspected of corruption and became fugitives targeted for pursuit by Chinese authorities.)

Some Chinese netizens questioned why the CCP's state media is criticizing the new U.S. entry ban, which ostensibly would make life harder for corrupt individuals fleeing from Chinese authorities. Some netizens speculated that corrupt people [within the CCP] and their families are angry that they can no longer travel to or study in the U.S. One netizen remarked that many families of corrupt Chinese officials will now have to return to China.

### **EXCLUSIVE: Second-Largest Foreign Owner Of US Land Is A Chinese Communist Party Member**

11 January 2024, Daily Caller

The second-largest foreign landowner in the U.S. is a Chinese billionaire who it has been determined is a member of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), according to a Daily Caller News Foundation review of Chinese-language news reports.

Chen Tianqiao, the founder, chairman and CEO of global investment firm Shanda Group, owns approximately 200,000 acres of land in Oregon, according to Land Report. Chen also has extensive ties to the Chinese government, ranging from CCP membership to executive roles in CCP-affiliated organizations, according to a DCNF review of Chinese-language media reports.

In 2015, Chen acquired 198,000 acres in Oregon, according to Land Report. The \$85 million purchase made the Chinese national the 82nd-largest property owner in the U.S. and the second-largest foreign U.S. land owner, Bloomberg reported, second only to a Canadian family who owns over 1 million acres of Maine.

Oregon's Bull Springs Skyline Forest accounts for approximately 33,000 of Chen's acreage, according to Land Report. The forest is located west of Bend, Oregon, and is home to springs, creeks, timberland and wildlife, according to the Bull Springs Skyline Forest website.

Oregon Republican Rep. Lori Chavez-DeRemer said she was "deeply concerned that individuals tied to the Chinese Communist Party are buying up timberland, which is one of our most precious and finite resources."

"Foreign ownership of United States lands is a serious problem that has rightfully sparked unease among farmers, ranchers and foresters across the country," Chavez-DeRemer told the DCNF.

Chen also owns several urban properties in the U.S., including the Vanderbilt Mansion in Manhattan, the Seeley Mudd Estate near Los Angeles and a 150,000 square-foot research facility at Caltech called the Tianqiao and Chrissy Chen Institute for Neuroscience — each worth tens of millions of dollars, according to Land Report.

Chinese ownership of U.S. land, in particular agricultural land, has come under increased scrutiny from GOP governors, who see it as a potential national security threat. Several states, including Florida, have taken legislative and executive action to ban Chinese ownership of U.S. farmland, the most recent being Missouri Gov. Mike Parson's January 2024 executive order banning such purchases near military installations.

"One of the Chinese Communist Party's goals is to undermine and weaken America," Florida

Republican Sen. Marco Rubio told the DCFN. "This includes instances where our greatest adversary continues to buy land – whether its farmland or near our installations."

#### 'Despise All Our Enemies'

Born in 1973, Chen served as a student cadre from an early age, state-run media outlet China News Service reported.

"In 1990, Chen enrolled in Fudan University to major in economics, the following year he joined the Chinese Communist Party, and, in 1993, he won the title of 'Shanghai Municipal Outstanding Model Cadre Student,'" according to a DCFN translation of an archived 2005 press release from Chen's alma mater, Fudan University in Shanghai.

Chen was just 18 when he joined the Communist Party, according to a 2007 article from Communist Youth Daily, the official newspaper for the Communist Youth League.

Since joining the Party, Chinese media outlets and business filings have repeatedly identified Chen as a CCP member.

A 2016 Sohu.com article identified Chen and several other Chinese CEOs as CCP members. Likewise, Chen's profile on the Chinese financial portal Sina, which was last updated in November 2023, identifies him as a CCP member.

The state-run Beijing Review describes Chen as an admirer of Mao Zedong, first chairman of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Several Chinese-language outlets have also reported that Chen's corporate office prominently displays Mao's written works.

Chen even has a favorite Mao Zedong quote, according to state-run media outlet China News Service: "Strategically we should despise all our enemies, but tactically we should take them all seriously."

Mao delivered the remarks in a speech denouncing American imperialism during a visit to Moscow in November 1957, according to the University of Dayton Review.

Above and beyond his CCP membership, Chinese government records show that Chen served as a representative to the 11th and 12th councils of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), which ran between 2008 and 2018.

The CPPCC is a Chinese government agency where "all the relevant united front actors inside and outside the party come together: party elders, intelligence officers, diplomats, propagandists, military officers and political commissars, united front workers, academics and businesspeople," former CIA officer Peter Mattis testified to the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence in 2019. "CPPCC delegates attend a high-profile annual meeting to receive direction from the CCP regarding

the ways its policies should be characterized to both domestic and foreign audiences," according to the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission. "Delegates to the CPPCC serve as proxies for CCP interests by virtue of their participation in this forum, and they frequently act as interlocutors with foreign government officials, businesses, and academic institutions."

Chinese media reports include photos of Chen attending CPPCC meetings while wearing the government agency's distinctive red, clip-on delegate's badge.

#### 'Growing Cause For Concern'

Chen has also held executive positions with the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce (ACFIC), including with the group's Shanghai branch, according to the Chinese-language news outlet Sohu.com.

ACFIC describes itself as an organization "led by the Communist Party of China" that "contributes greatly to the Party's united front and economy related work as well as the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics."

John Dotson, deputy director of Global Taiwan Institute, told the DCFN that ACFIC is subordinate to the United Front Work Department (UFW), which is a CCP agency whose operations are a "blend of engagement, influence activities and intelligence operations," according to the House Select Committee on the CCP.

"In regards to the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, it's definitely a subordinate agency of the UFW – that's not even a matter for analysis or interpretation," Dotson told the DCFN. "In public Chinese sources, ACFIC is openly listed as a subordinate branch of the UFW."

ACFIC could not be reached for comment.

"The increase in PRC-affiliated U.S. land purchases in recent years is a growing cause for concern," a House Select Committee on the CCP aide told the DCFN. "We can start with adding a presumption of denial for entities affiliated with the PRC when it comes to land acquisitions near national security sites such as military bases that the CCP could use for intelligence collection or worse."

A Shanda spokesperson contacted the DCFN by email and said that Chen Tianqiao had been a CPPCC member.

"As a nationally recognized entrepreneur in the early 2000s, Mr. Chen was indeed a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, an advisory committee within China," the spokesperson wrote. "He resigned from this position in late 2017."

However, the spokesperson refused to answer whether or not Chen Tianqiao was a CCP member, despite being asked several times.



The spokesperson also shared a 2015 document with the DCNF that was sent from the Department of Treasury to Whitefish Cascades Forest Resource, LLC, which the billionaire used as his investment vehicle to purchase the land in Oregon, according to Land Report.

The 2015 document states that the Treasury Department determined that there were "no unresolved national security concerns" that would prohibit Whitefish Cascades from purchasing the Oregon land.

"Shanda proactively and voluntarily, asked CFIUS to review the potential acquisition of the land before starting the process to ensure there were no concerns," Shanda's spokesperson told the DCNF by email.

The Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) is "an interagency committee authorized to review certain transactions involving foreign investment in the United States and certain real estate transactions by foreign persons, in order to determine the effect of such transactions on the national security of the United States," according to the Treasury Department.

The Shanda spokesperson also told the DCNF that the company engages in several activities supporting the local community in Oregon including offering "public access for outdoor recreation and work with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to provide exclusive hunting opportunities for disabled veterans and young people" and donating "ten acres to the Crescent Rural Fire Department to house a community center and headquarters for the fire department."

### **Taiwan spotlights China crackdown on Hong Kong ahead of key poll**

11 January 2024, Times of India

TAIPEI: As Taiwan prepares to hold a closely watched election on Saturday, the main political parties have highlighted China's crackdown in Hong Kong and rejected Beijing's model of governance there being applied to the self-ruled island.

The former British colony of Hong Kong returned to Chinese rule in 1997 and Beijing has often promoted the "one country, two systems" model of rule there as appropriate for democratic Taiwan which China claims as its own.

"Regarding Hong Kong, I once again urge Beijing to treat Hong Kong well," said the main opposition Kuomintang party's vice presidential candidate, Jaw Shaw-kong, who referred to an ongoing national security trial in Hong Kong involving China critic Jimmy Lai that could see him jailed for life.

"Jimmy Lai should be treated well and given a fair

trial. It is not right that ... the government appoints three judges for him, with a trial lasting 80 days - the outcome of which I can already predict," Jaw told reporters on Thursday.

Lai, a businessman and activist, faces a charge of colluding with foreign forces, including with prominent political figures in the United States, in a trial that has drawn international attention.

"If Beijing treats Hong Kong in this manner, the people of Taiwan are watching. The Taiwanese people will absolutely not accept the 'one country, two systems' framework," Jaw added.

Hong Kong returned to Chinese rule with the promise of a high degree of autonomy under the one country, two systems model that guarantees an independent judiciary and liberties often denied in China, including freedom of expression and of assembly.

Critics, however, say China has reneged on its promises, especially with the enactment of the national security law in 2020 that has led to the jailing of democratic activists, the closure of liberal media outlets and civil society groups and a crackdown on dissent. Beijing says the national security law has restored order after mass pro-democracy protests in 2019.

Earlier in the week, Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) presidential candidate, Lai Ching-te, was critical of Hong Kong's lack of freedoms under Chinese rule, saying the same could happen to Taiwan if Beijing has its way. "If China succeeds in intervening, whoever China designates to support will be elected. Of course, Taiwan's democracy will not exist. Then Taiwan is not electing a president ... it is electing a chief executive, just like Hong Kong," Lai told reporters on Tuesday.

"While we have ideals for peace, we cannot afford to have illusions. Accepting Beijing's 'one China' principle is not true peace.

Without legitimate sovereignty, it's a false peace, just like in Hong Kong."

Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen said last month that people should think of what happened to Hong Kong when they vote. The DPP has been a staunch advocate of rights in Hong Kong and has criticised China's clampdown on the city under the national security law.

At the last election in 2020, Tsai also emphasised Hong Kong's plight, with the

crackdown on pro-democracy protesters there helping her to a resounding re-election victory.

### **China tells U.S. it will 'never compromise' on Taiwan as the island's election draws near**

10 January 2024, NBC News

HONG KONG — China said it would “never compromise” on its claims of sovereignty over Taiwan as the U.S. and China concluded two days of military talks in Washington, part of an effort to restore communication between the two countries’ militaries.

The talks were held days before Taiwan, a self-ruling island democracy, holds a presidential election that will shape its relationship with China, as well as ties between China and the U.S., Taiwan’s most important international backer.

China’s stated ambition to “reunify” with Taiwan, by force if necessary, is among the most sensitive issues between the U.S. and China, whose relationship has in recent years fallen to its lowest point in decades.

China said it would “not make any concession or compromise on the Taiwan question and demanded that the U.S. side abide by the one-China principle, honor relevant commitments, stop arming Taiwan, and not support Taiwan independence,” according to a readout published by the Chinese Defense Ministry on Wednesday.

The 17th round of the U.S.-China Defense Policy Coordination Talks was held Monday and Tuesday for the first time since 2021. They were led by Michael Chase, deputy assistant secretary of defense for China, Taiwan and Mongolia, and Maj. Gen. Song Yanchao, deputy director of China’s Central Military Commission Office for International Military Cooperation.

According to a Pentagon readout, Chase “highlighted the importance of maintaining open lines of military-to-military communication in order to prevent competition from veering into conflict.”

He also reiterated Washington’s commitment to its long-standing “One China” policy, under which the U.S. recognizes Beijing as the sole legitimate government of China but maintains unofficial relations with Taipei.

China said it was willing to develop a “healthy and stable” military relationship “on the basis of equality and respect.” It urged the U.S. to reduce its military presence and “provocation” in the South China Sea, a strategically important waterway that China claims virtually in its entirety, and to “stop supporting provocative actions” by certain countries, without identifying them.

The Pentagon said Chase “underscored the importance of respect for high seas freedom of navigation” in the face of continued Chinese “harassment” of Philippine vessels operating lawfully in the South China Sea.

President Joe Biden and Chinese Xi Jinping agreed to resume military ties at a meeting in San Francisco in November, their first meeting in a year. China had cut off military communications in 2022 after then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., visited Taiwan over its objections.

### **China Foreign Minister: Healthy US-China Ties 'No Longer a Choice'**

05 January 2024, VOA

China’s top diplomat said Friday cooperation between his country and the United States is no longer a choice but an imperative and called for a healthy development of China U.S. relations.

Speaking at an event in Beijing commemorating 45 years of diplomatic ties between the two countries, China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi said under current global circumstances, the U.S. and China have more common interests than ever and the need for cooperation is enhanced.

“It can be said that China-United States cooperation is no longer a dispensable choice for the two countries or even for the world, but a mandatory question that must be seriously addressed,” Wang said.

He called for the two sides to make full use of all mechanisms that have been restored between them to “build bridges of communication between them.” Wang called for cooperation in the areas of diplomacy, economy, finance, commerce and agriculture.

The foreign minister’s conciliatory words come after a year in which tensions between the two superpowers intensified. Early in 2023, the discovery of a Chinese spy balloon floating through U.S. airspace delayed a U.S. diplomatic visit to the country by Secretary of State Antony Blinken. The balloon was eventually shot down.

China’s relationship with Russia, its ongoing threats against Taiwan, territorial disputes in the South China Sea and fair-trade issues have also hampered Beijing’s ties with Washington.

China- U.S. relations thawed somewhat toward the end of 2023, with Chinese President Xi Jinping and U.S. President Joe Biden holding a meeting in San Francisco on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit. Biden administration officials held visits and meetings with their Chinese counterparts soon after.

Xi and Biden exchanged New Year's greetings early this week, with both leaders noting the anniversary of diplomatic ties.

'China, US should strive towards peaceful coexistence,' Xi Jinping says to Joe Biden

01 January 2024, Live MintIn a letter to US President Joe Biden on January 1, Chinese President Xi Jinping emphasized that history has demonstrated the importance of maintaining mutual respect and peaceful coexistence as the correct approach for fostering positive relations between China and the United States, Bloomberg reported.

This comes as both nations work towards repairing their strained diplomatic ties.

Xi said in the letter commemorating 45 years of diplomatic ties between the two countries, according to a report by state-run broadcaster CCTV, "Over the past 45 years, China-US relations have weathered storms and moved forward. It has not only improved the well-being of people from both countries, but also contributed to global peace, stability and prosperity."

The relationship between the United States and China remains delicate, especially concerning Beijing's strong ties with Russia and its position on Taiwan. However, there has been a recent thaw in the relationship, notably after the meeting between Xi Jinping and Joe Biden in November in San Francisco. The meeting resulted in some minor diplomatic achievements, indicating a slight improvement in bilateral ties.

In his congratulatory letter, President Biden recognized that the relationship between the United States and China has contributed to the prosperity and opportunities for both nations, as well as for the global community.

"I look forward to building on the progress made by our predecessors, as well as on our meetings and discussions to continue to advance the relationship between the US and China," Biden said.

# TIBET DIGEST 2024

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## Indian Tibetan community's struggles in exile: Declining numbers, preservation of art & culture

30 December 2024, The Print, Keshav Padmanabhan

## COMMENTARIES

The community, headquartered in Dharamshala, has increasingly faced a number of challenges, especially since 2008. Falling number of Tibetans fleeing China has impacted them severely.

The Tibetan community in Dharamshala is grappling with new problems—drop in enrollment numbers in the schools established by them, preservation of their traditional art and culture, and increased emigration from India to the western world. The challenges faced by the exiled Tibetan community, headquartered in Himachal Pradesh, are largely due to a significant decline in the number of Tibetans fleeing China over the past decade and a half.

From around 3,000 refugees a year, till around 2008, the Tibetan resettlement office in Dharamshala in 2023 had to focus their efforts on resettling just six refugees, said Kunchok Migmar, the Tibetan settlement officer for the district, in an interaction with media persons earlier this month.

The fall in numbers fleeing has been especially acute since 2008—following the unrests witnessed that year in multiple provinces of China, including the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu and Yunnan, primarily in the months from March till May and then sporadically till the end of the year. The unrest also coincided with Beijing hosting the Summer Olympics for the first time.

According to various Tibetans living in exile, both events led to significant restrictions on the routes used to flee China for India.

According to the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) in exile, at least 344 protests of different magnitudes occurred throughout 2008. Nearly 7,000 Tibetans were arrested and around 200 were killed during the protests, according to the CTA, while China maintains that at least 19 people were killed by the protestors, who were predominantly Han Chinese.

"Before 2008, the Tibetan Children's Villages (TCV)—the schooling system set up by the community in exile—had roughly 17,000 students. Now there are only 5,000 students across all the schools, with around 500 students in the senior classes," said Kalsang Phuntsok, the General Secretary of TCV in an interaction with media persons.

Phuntsok added, "The 1980s saw an influx of Tibetans coming to India, leading to the opening of



new schools. The number of students has started diminishing for a number of reasons. The two primary reasons are the falling number of Tibetans coming from China, and dropping fertility rates."

The TCV, established in 1960 by the Dalai Lama for orphaned children who were among the early Tibetan refugees fleeing China, was originally managed by Tsering Dolma, the elder sister of the spiritual leader. However, after she passed away in 1964, its management passed into the hands of Jetsun Pema.

From 51 students in 1960, the TCV has seen over 50,000 students pass through its residence halls in 64 years—a third of the total Tibetan population in exile.

"By 2030, two or three of our schools will be left with no students. We are already thinking about closing down TCV Lower Dharamshala next year as it has only 74 students on its rolls," said Phuntsok. "At our homes (dormitories), there were 80 to 100 children living together from ages of 6 to 14 at one point in time. Today there are about 20 to 30 children per home."

As the number of Tibetans in exile continues to decline, the community has adapted, in a manner, by inviting Trans-Himalayan communities, such as those from Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh, to participate in protecting their culture.

Today, around 30 percent of students in TCVs are Indian citizens from these regions and communities with communal links to the Tibetan community.

Earlier this year, the TCV administration extended an invitation to the Tibetan exile community living outside India to send their children to study in its traditional schooling system. This year, around six children from different countries were sent.

Over the years, many Tibetans living in India have emigrated, spreading the community across 130 countries, with a significant concentration in the Western world. Approximately half of the Tibetan exile population—around 80,000 people—remains in India.

**Impact on Tibetan arts and culture**

For Tibetans in exile, the diminishing number of those fleeing China also has an impact on the preservation of its traditional arts and culture. According to the United Nations, at least a million Tibetan children in China have been slowly assimilated into the larger Han Chinese cultural norms through Beijing's residential schooling system.

This has an impact on their native language and traditions, both of which the community living in exile are doing their best to preserve. One of the earliest institutions that the Dalai Lama setup mere months after arriving in India is the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts (TIPA).

Founded in Kalimpong, before moving to Dharamshala in 1961, the institute has seen around 550 students pass through its residential programmes in studying various Tibetan art forms, including Lhamo (opera), as well as carpentry, music and other traditional performing arts.

"Our focus is not only on preserving Tibetan culture, but also Trans-Himalayan traditions in Ladakh and Tawang. In recent years, students from these regions have also been given training at TIPA," said Dhondup Tsering, the director of the institute, in an interaction with media persons.

Around two decades ago, TIPA had about 50-60 students on their rolls going through the full seven-year training programme. Today, the number of students at TIPA is around 35.

"We are looking to collaborate with institutions in India, like the National School of Drama in New Delhi, and other institutes to help promote our culture across the country," added Dhondup Tsering.

Earlier this year, the institute held an open call in the various schools in the surrounding areas of Dharamshala in order to find more students to train at TIPA. Primarily funded by grants from the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), TIPA has continued to promote art forms including the famed snow-lion performances apart from the annual Shoton Festival held in the months of June and July.

Similar to how Tibetan schools have adapted to bring in students from Ladakh and other regions across the Himalayas, TIPA is looking to expand its collaboration and training with new institutes that have slowly been created in these areas.

### **15th Dalai Lama: Will Tenzin Gyatso name successor on his 90th birthday?**

30 December 2024, Money Control

The Dalai Lama fled to India in early 1959, following a failed uprising against Chinese rule. Since then, he has led the Tibetan government-in-exile and maintained his spiritual leadership for Tibetan Buddhists.

The 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso's, recent reassurance regarding his health has added to the growing speculation regarding his continuity as the spiritual leader and the head of the Tibetan Buddhists or his decision to name a successor. The public talk around the appointment of the 15th Dalai Lama has grown ever since Tenzin Gyatso (the incumbent spiritual head) underwent a knee surgery in New York earlier this year.

"According to my dream, I may live 110 years," the Dalai Lama said when asked about his health and how he was feeling. This reply has become familiar to those who have closely followed the Nobel

laureate, as he has been offering similar assurances for years.

The Dalai Lama fled to India in early 1959, following a failed uprising against Chinese rule. Since then, he has led the Tibetan government-in-exile and maintained his spiritual leadership for Tibetan Buddhists. Beijing, however, insists it will choose his successor. The Dalai Lama, on the other hand, has maintained that his reincarnation could be found in India, and warned that any successor chosen by China would not be respected by his followers.

Tibetan Buddhists believe that learned monastics are reincarnated after death as newborns. Thus, the question of his successor has remained central to the community's future. His prediction of living for another two decades is a comfort to his followers, though many still seek clarity on how the transition will unfold.

Dolma Tsering Teykhang, the deputy speaker of the Tibetan parliament-in-exile, which is also based in Dharamshala, noted that more clarity on the Dalai Lama's succession could come when he turns 90 in July. "We are just lay people, we can't fathom his wisdom, so we are waiting for his clear guidance," Teykhang told Reuters in her office, which is located about 2 km (1.5 miles) from the Dalai Lama's residence.

### Bracing for a Chinese storm in the Indian Ocean

29 December 2024, Deccan Herald, Srikanth Kondapalli

A quiet but steady Tsunami is building in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), qualitatively different from the one that hit 20 years ago but orchestrated by China through its trade, energy dependence, frantic maritime dual-use port construction, unleashing massive surveillance, flooding the region with arms sales, and power projection. In 2012, China's 18th Communist Party Congress passed a resolution for "building a strong maritime nation". Since then, China's maritime footprint is expanding to include trade, energy imports and exploration, fisheries, marine transportation, shipbuilding industry, naval build-up, search for bases abroad, and others. China is currently building its maritime power and making efforts to create an alternative maritime order. At the conceptual level, even though China is not an IOR state, it floated the "China-Indian Ocean Region" initiative for building a "maritime community with a shared future".

China has become a major trading partner for the 38 Indian Ocean states. Since the 2013 launch of the Maritime Silk Road, China has a naval support base at Djibouti, 24 maritime ports under construction of which nine have been completed, and five maritime outposts in the IOR. These include the 99-year lease

of the Kyaukphyu port which connects with the oil and gas pipeline to Yunnan and expansion of dual-use infrastructure in Coco Islands in Myanmar, a 99-year lease of Hambantota and Colombo Port Terminal in Sri Lanka, a 45-year lease of Gwadar in Pakistan, Payra and Chittagong in Bangladesh, Darwin in Australia, and others. These agreements come in handy for China to exert pressure to dock its ships. In 2014, for instance, a Chinese submarine docked at Colombo port and surveillance ships at Hambantota.

China is building at a cost of \$29 billion three railway lines to Thailand, Cambodia and Laos, eventually connecting to Laem Chabang Port in the Gulf of Thailand. Thailand and China are also planning a "land bridge" to connect the Andaman Sea and the Gulf of Thailand.

China conducted surveillance missions and cyber warfare in the IOR, expanded naval arms exports to Myanmar, Bangladesh and Pakistan, besides signing military aid agreement with Maldives, in March 2024. However, in September 2019, India expelled the Chinese research vessel Shi Yan 1 after it was found operating without permission in India's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) around the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (ANI).

China's navy is now the world's largest at 370 vessels, aspiring to grow to 435 by 2030. India, in contrast, aspires to acquire 175 ships by 2035 from the current 132. China has sent 46 naval contingents to the Indian Ocean since 2008, some of which conducted amphibious operations and air defence exercises that are not relevant for counter-piracy operations in the Somali coast, thus violating its UN Security Council commitments.

At any given time, China has eight to ten warships deployed in IOR, apart from research or spy vessels and many illegal fishing vessels. It despatches a submarine every month and in 2020, executed the use of unmanned underwater drones to map the ocean floor around the ANI. With three aircraft carriers, with a plan to have 11 in all, China is poised to send carrier task force patrols to the IOR by 2025.

It is estimated that China gets more than 80 million tonnes of fish in the Indo-Pacific through illegal fishing that violates Article 56 of the international maritime laws under the UNCLOS. Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing has become a major problem. It is in this context that the Quad launched in 2022 Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness to combat IUU fishing and monitor "dark shipping". In July this year, the Quad foreign ministers meeting at Tokyo decided to take concrete measures in this regard.

To protect its maritime interests, India initiated its first joint integrated command, the Andaman & Nicobar

Command (ANC) in 2001. It protects 600,000 sq km of EEZ in the region that is about 30% of India's 2 million sq km. Yet, the security situation is becoming complicated with China's naval forays. China's leader Mao Zedong once observed: "whatever the enemy has, we should have". The ANC should deploy the most modern equipment and skills to safeguard not only India's national interests but also the "preferred partners" in the region.

India needs to adopt a comprehensive strategy and take steps to protect its maritime interests and the Ten Degree Channel, boost its Act East Policy by leapfrogging from the ANI, build world-class infrastructure (including a transshipment facility at Great Nicobar), evolve connectivity between ANI and Sabang Port in Indonesia.

India also needs to enhance unmanned underwater drones and long-endurance submarines for deterrence operations, assist in capacity build-up and conduct surveillance, search and rescue operations with South East Asia and enhance conventional and strategic capabilities at the ANC.

### On a path to embrace Chinese models

29 December 2024, The Kathmandu Post, Ajaya Bhadra Khanal

Nepal's plurality of parties and its ingrained kleptocratic system will undermine Oli's efforts.

As the year 2024 ends, it is the time to question, "What next?" With Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli at the helm, the question has become even more interesting.

In the face of increased geopolitical rivalry at the global and regional levels, what kind of foreign policy is Nepal practising, and where will it take the country? What are the prospects for economic development and democratic evolution?

Given the status of political party dynamics, geopolitical tussle and Nepal's weak diplomatic capacity, Nepal's prospects of economic development and democratic evolution look bleak at best. Oli's efforts to emulate China's growth model and political party discipline will also be undermined by the plurality of political parties and an ingrained kleptocratic system.

#### Geopolitics

In December, Nepal signed a landmark framework agreement with China on the Belt and Road Initiative after intense negotiations between the Nepali Congress and the CPN-UML on the one hand and between Nepal and China on the other. Nepal was able to revise and trim down China's proposed "BRI Implementation Plan" according to Nepal's priorities. However, Nepal's proposal to develop the Nepal-China Friendship Park in Damak and consent to insert security and global initiatives in the joint

communiqué, despite India's concern, may have raised red flags.

Nepal's efforts to exercise strategic autonomy in the face of asymmetric power balance and geopolitical rivalry are undermined by several flaws. First, of course, is the political predilection, which heavily favours China. During several negotiations with China, Nepal's bureaucracy and political leadership appear soft on China but hard on India.

A series of events since 2008 shows that China has always favoured communist governments and that grants and aid disbursements tend to peak when leftist coalitions are in power.

The second factor is Nepal's inability to build trusted relations with China and India and ensure national interests. As China's influence grows in Nepal, India has adopted a two-pronged policy of both engaging Nepal and adopting policy measures to limit the Chinese influence.

There is a real possibility that India will continue to harden the border and create safeguards to limit Chinese access to the Indian market through Nepal. This will likely impact Nepal's connectivity and trade with India in the future, which in turn will affect Nepal's economic trajectory and viability of large infrastructure projects.

The third is Nepali elites' gradual alignment with Chinese interests and distancing from India. It has now become a paradox that while Nepal seeks to enjoy the privileges of the special arrangements ensured by the 1950 treaty with India, it wants to disregard India's traditional interests in Nepal.

One example is Pokhara Regional International Airport (PRIA). Two years after its inauguration, it has seen only 10 international flights, all of them chartered or relief efforts. The officials of CAAN do not have any reasonable near term strategy to make the airport financially viable or to service debts. The situation is so dire that an ordinary Airbus 319 flight from Pokhara to Kathmandu last week was highlighted with much fanfare by the Nepali media.

Regional power dynamics, particularly with India, have affected the airport's viability. When the PRIA was being considered, bilateral relations were invoked—the airport was framed as "critical" to Nepal-China relations. During its inauguration, China positioned the airport as part of BRI and the Trans Himalayan Multidimensional Connectivity Network.

Media reports this week widely discussed the worsening relationship between Oli and India. Indian media reported that although Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba was on a private visit to India, she was disappointed not to meet senior leaders. She was hoping to push forward the agenda of Oli's visit to India. As India appears to ignore him, Oli,

meanwhile, is cozying up to Pakistan and attempting to revive SAARC.

#### Politics

Another significant arena is politics and the direction of Nepal's democracy.

It is now well accepted that Nepal is in a "low-growth, high migration trap". With structural and psychological pressures getting worse, political disruption is possible if the current political regime is unable to deliver economic growth and governance reforms.

However, Nepal's politics shows no signs of reforms or the willingness to address underlying factors that have trapped Nepal in a low-growth, high-migration dynamics.

The three primary sources of power in Nepal's political parties are the relative position of party leaders in the national kleptocracy, their bonds with China and India, and their relationship with political competitors.

Membership in the entrenched national kleptocracy ensures that party leaders can extract resources from the state and obtain rent even if they do not hold any official public position.

Nepal's inability to address corruption and money laundering was reflected in the Mutual Evaluation Review of the Asia-Pacific Group (APG) on Money Laundering. Last week, the Nepal Rastra Bank governor, Maha Prasad Adhikari, gave dire news to the Prime Minister that the APG may be losing patience with Nepal.

According to an expedited follow up report, Nepal has made some progress in addressing technical compliance deficiencies. While Nepal has taken some legislative measures, their effectiveness is questionable and several recommendations remain unsatisfactory.

Internally, Nepal's three major parties have their own problems. While the UML appeared to be on a path to emulate the Communist Party of China, there were signs that the internal power balance of other major parties was transforming, including in the Nepali Congress and the Maoist Centre.

According to a Naya Patrika report, Oli is enamoured by China's development model and the Communist Party of China. He wants to introduce tough disciplinary measures to "unify" the party and align every member around the top leadership.

Only last week, the party took disciplinary action against three popular figures who dared to question Oli's authoritarian streak and his hobnobbing with crony capitalists. The action created ripples in the political sphere although UML members kept quiet, indicating that exercising freedom of expression in the party would come at a great cost.

A large chunk of the Nepali electorate is already ideologically aligned with leftist forces. Now, party

leaders of the UML will have both threat power and agenda-setting power to control dissent and differences in the party—a fertile environment for leaders with authoritarian streaks.

When he came to power in 2018, Oli took several policy initiatives, though unsuccessful, to enforce his vision on the society, curtailing freedom of expression and constricting the space for civil society. He also centralised regulatory and legal authorities and made selective use of power to weaken his political opponents.

Incidents in the last few months indicate he has not changed. His close ties with China have emboldened him to pursue the Chinese models, both in terms of political power and economic development.

However, unlike China, Nepal has multiple parties, and replicating China's political model would be difficult, especially when voters have multiple choices.

#### What will China's new mega dam mean for India ties and fragile Tibetan ecosystem?

28 December 2024, SCMP, Shi Jiangtao

Huge hydro project in Tibet could risk geological disasters and irk New Delhi as neighbours try to ease tensions, observers say



Beijing's approval of a controversial mega dam on a river flowing from Tibet autonomous region into India, has raised concerns about the project's environmental impact and its effect on China-India ties, which had been on the mend.

The dam on the lower reaches of the Yarlung Tsangpo River is expected to be the world's largest hydroelectric project and could generate three times the power of the Three Gorges Dam. Its construction will mark a major step in China's plan to tap the hydropower potential of the Tibetan Plateau.

But it could also intensify a dam-building competition between the Asian neighbours near their disputed Himalayan border, according to diplomatic and environmental experts.

State news agency Xinhua said on Wednesday that the Chinese government had recently approved the

massive project, which was included in Beijing's 14th five-year plan from 2021 to 2025.

The report did not specify the exact location of the project on Tibet's longest river, which becomes the Brahmaputra River when it flows into the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, an area viewed by China as part of southern Tibet. The river also flows into Bangladesh, where it is called the Jamuna.

But what is known is that the project will be built on a section referred to as the Grand Canyon, or the "Great Bend", on the lower reaches of the Yarlung Tsangpo.

According to a 2020 estimate by state-owned Power Construction Corporation of China, the dam, located in one of the most hydropower-rich areas of the world, is expected to produce nearly 300 billion kilowatt-hours (kWh) of electricity annually.

It would dwarf the Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze River, now the world's biggest dam, which was designed to generate 88.2 billion kWh a year.

Xinhua hailed the proposed dam as a "safe project that prioritises ecological protection" and a "green project aimed at promoting low-carbon development" that would help the country meet its carbon peak and neutrality goals.

Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said on Friday that the project had undergone decades of research, including measures to address risks in project security and environmental impact and prevent negative effects downstream.

"China will continue to maintain current exchange channels with downstream nations and step up cooperation on disaster prevention and mitigation," she said.

But most experts were far from convinced, expressing concerns about how the project could affect the fragile ecosystem of the Tibetan Plateau, local communities and downstream countries – in addition to its enormous engineering costs and challenges.

Fan Xiao, a geologist based in Sichuan province, said the dam's location was in a rare "biodiversity hotspot" in a geologically unstable area, which could potentially lead to "irreparable damage" to the environment.

He noted the area is very seismically active, and building a cascade of mega hydropower stations – involving high dams, large reservoirs and giant tunnels – would increase the risk of landslides and other disasters.

"The geological instability and the likelihood of geological disasters in the Yarlung Tsangpo Grand Canyon are much higher than those of other rivers in western China, where we've seen plenty of instances of negative impacts as a result of cascaded hydropower development," he said.

"I'm afraid the construction of the proposed hydropower project would incur unprecedented huge costs and face enormous risks."

He added that a dam-building frenzy in southwest China over the past two decades had resulted in the overdevelopment of hydropower in the region and an oversupply of power due to a lack of market demand, both domestically and internationally.

Fan questioned official claims touting hydropower as "green, renewable and zero-carbon electricity", noting that mega dam projects were mainly driven by economic considerations and vested interest groups, without proper scientific feasibility studies or adequate public involvement.

"It remains unclear if the incalculable cost of possible geological disasters, environmental damage, and the social and cultural impact has been included in the assessment and decision-making process, or if the ecological and environmental impact on the downstream Brahmaputra River and the plains of the South Asian subcontinent has been fully taken into account," he said.

Sayanangshu Modak, a researcher on transboundary rivers and water governance at the University of Arizona, said that for India, a major concern was the risk of dam failure during emergencies caused by unprecedented weather or seismic events.

"This area is highly prone to earthquakes of varying magnitudes due to intense seismic activity from endogenic forces," he said, noting that a massive glacier collapse in March 2021 near the Great Bend area blocked the river and caused water levels to rise by 10 metres (33 feet).

"These cascading effects underscore the fragility of the region and the grave risks associated with large-scale hydropower projects," he said.

The project has long been a source of friction between China and its downstream neighbours, with India and Bangladesh repeatedly raising concerns about China's dam construction plan upstream of the Brahmaputra River, a critical source of fresh water for both countries.

While New Delhi may have limited options to prevent China from building the proposed dam within its territory, Modak said it would cast fresh uncertainty over bilateral ties, which had been on the mend in recent weeks.

Days after a meeting between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in October – their first since a deadly border clash in 2020 – the two sides agreed to de-escalate tensions along their disputed Himalayan frontier.

China's top diplomat, Wang Yi, and Indian national security adviser Ajit Doval also met in Beijing earlier this month for their first high-level border talks in five years.



Modak said India's concerns were "both immense and legitimate", although it was still too early to tell if the colossal dam project would escalate into a new flashpoint between the two countries.

He said that for China, the hydropower project would showcase "China's technical prowess and superiority in hydraulic engineering" while "bolstering China's position as a pre-eminent expert in dam construction – a reputation it has actively sought to export through state-owned enterprises and overseas investments".

Modak said it was "only a matter of time" before Beijing moved to tap the hydropower potential of the Yarlung Tsangpo basin, where only 0.3 per cent of the total energy potential has been harnessed so far. "With the Yarlung Tsangpo River dropping nearly 2,000 metres as it winds around the Namcha Barwa [mountain] and through the Grand Canyon, this area offers one of the world's most favourable hydraulic gradients for hydropower development," he said.

"Its remote location, only connected to the rest of the country by highway in 2013, has delayed such exploitation."

Modak said India increasingly viewed the water issues surrounding the mega dam through the lens of national security, with Delhi accelerating its own dam construction downstream on the same river.

"This move appears to be part of India's strategy to assert its prior appropriation rights, reflecting the competitive and strategic nature of this unfolding scenario," he said.

Reuters reported in July that India planned to spend US\$1 billion to expedite construction of 12 hydropower stations in Arunachal Pradesh in response to China's planned dam project.

A 2022 report published by the United States Institute of Peace said China and India were intensifying their competition over Brahmaputra water and dam projects as "a form of territorial demarcation and control along a contested frontier". It described the so-called Great Bend Dam as the most ambitious and controversial project on the mainstem of the Brahmaputra, where nearly 20 dams have been identified with satellite imagery.

India has planned as many as 150 dams within Arunachal Pradesh since the early 2000s as part of its strategy aimed at "signalling control of not only water but territory", according to the think tank's report.

Modak also expressed concerns about the "profound ecological and cultural consequences" as a result of the escalation of the dam-building spree, including the displacement of people in both Tibet and Arunachal Pradesh.

"Between India and China, one certainty emerges: the region's unique biodiversity and the heritage of its indigenous peoples will inevitably suffer," he said. It is ultimately about trust, and it is no secret that China and India still do not trust each other

Liu Zongyi, foreign policy expert

Ni Lexiong, a Shanghai-based security analyst, said the mega dam project was likely to reignite a war of words between the two countries over whether Beijing was trying to control the flow of the Brahmaputra as strategic leverage over Delhi.

"There has been a lot of talk about 'water wars' in the Indian press. The building of a dam within China may not have been a big deal if the two countries had friendlier ties, but when they treat each other increasingly as a rival, anything could be used as a weapon, including water issues," he said.

While Beijing insisted that tapping the potential of the Yarlung Tsangpo River was a matter of sovereignty, Ni said a mega dam at the Great Bend may effectively put China in a favourable position in its dealings with India.

"Intentionally or not, it would effectively create geopolitical leverage vis-a-vis India diplomatically, and it's not surprising that India sees it as a threat. But it may also deal a blow to bilateral ties, which have just begun to show signs of a thaw," he said.

However, Liu Zongyi, a senior fellow with the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies' South Asia and China Centre, said Beijing had taken into account concerns from its downstream neighbours when rolling out the dam project.

Liu said the impact of China's dam-building activities on the flow of the Brahmaputra was "not as significant as commonly perceived".

He rejected suggestions that Beijing was trying to contain India, as the hydropower project was within China's territory.

Liu said India's plan to expedite dam construction in Arunachal Pradesh laid bare its focus on strengthening its control of the area, which China claims as southern Tibet.

"While India and its Western partners are likely to vent their frustration over the project by smearing China, I don't think the dam project will have a lasting impact on Sino-Indian ties," he said.

Liu added it was possible there would be setbacks in restoring the China-India relationship, especially after the return of US president-elect Donald Trump to the White House in January.

"It is ultimately about trust, and it is no secret that China and India still do not trust each other," he said.

## The Next Dalai Lama: His Reincarnation And Why It Matters For India

27 December 2024, StratNewsGlobal

Former Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale examines various options before India as the Dalai Lama succession issue moves forward given his advancing years and health

On July 6, 2025 when Tibet's exiled spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, turns 90, he is expected to lend more clarity on the issue of his succession. Thus far, his pronouncements on the matter have hinted at various outcomes. Sample this, addressed to a group of journalists in Dharmasala in 2019.

"The reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, the future of the Dalai Lama, is ultimately in my own hands. At the time of my death, I will write some will. So my rebirth I think will somewhere (be in the ) Buddhist community. As early as 1969, I made clear (whether) the institution of Dalai Lama should continue or not (is) up to the Tibetan people. Reincarnation is not important, it's important that Buddha's teachings remain."

China, on the other hand, claims that it alone has the right to decide on the reincarnation and therefore the succession. It already has a Panchen Lama, appointed in 1995 after setting aside the Dalai Lama's anointment of six year old Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as the Panchen Lama. His whereabouts are unknown.

This throws the door open for a number of scenarios that India needs to prepare for, argues Vijay Gokhale, former foreign secretary and ambassador to China. In a paper for the Carnegie India think tank written in November 2024, Gokhale has articulated those scenarios or options.

### Scenarios That Could Play Out

What if the Dalai Lama decides that the reincarnation process could begin in India? By convention and practice the Indian state does not interfere in the selection of any religious leader in the country, Gokhale notes. Practitioners and followers of Tibetan Buddhism are there in some of the north Indian states. All the Government of India can do is to reiterate the constitutional position, that the Tibetan Buddhists are entitled to choose their own leader freely and without interference.

Dialogue: Should India publicly call for a dialogue between the Dalai Lama and China? This is not something the Indian government has ever called for but with the growing international calls for such a dialogue, India could support it given the presence of a large exiled Tibetan community in the country. India can call for such dialogue independently and on the basis of "3 Mutuals – mutual respect, mutual sensitivity and mutual interests."

Self-Determination: Should India support the exiled Tibetan community's demand for self-determination? This has not been the case in the past, writes Gokhale, but points to China calling upon India to resolve Kashmir in accordance with the will of the Kashmiri people. India could use similar or identical language urging China to do the same with Tibet.

"This is different from supporting the demand for self-determination and adequately nuanced to make the point that the principles China claims to espouse in its foreign policy should also be applied to its domestic policy," Gokhale underscores.

Shrine: Should India agree on a site or shrine for the Dalai Lama? This might be inevitable if he passes away in India. It would make him the first Dalai Lama since 1706 to be buried outside the Potala Palace in Lhasa. India could identify such a location well in advance knowing that it would become a shrine for millions of pilgrims. Hence issues like security and accessibility need to be carefully thought through.

India should also develop a response to China's likely demand that the Dalai Lama's remains be sent there since he is a citizen of that country.

Sensitive Interregnum: How will the Indian government handle the interregnum between the passing away of the 14th Dalai Lama and the identification of the 15th? This period could last many months. Since mechanisms already exist, there would be no need for India to formally recognise the Central Tibetan Administration or formalise the interaction through a coordinator, as has been suggested by some.

Should India coordinate with like-minded states on the post Dalai Lama situation? The US Congress is already pushing for a multilateral effort to counter China's narrative and claims. India will need to closely study suggestions for joint initiatives to create a global coalition on the reincarnation question. The aim should be to ensure such initiatives do not exacerbate tensions between Delhi and Beijing.

Free Country: If the successor to the current Dalai Lama is found in a "free country", as he has already said, should India recognise him as legitimate, knowing China would demand Delhi not do so. Even if India does not take an explicit position on the issue, should it allow him to enter the country?

What if the 15th Dalai Lama is discovered in India, is an Indian citizen? Will he be publicly acknowledged, if not what will his status be? Would he be permitted access to the residence and possessions of the ritual objects of the 14th Dalai Lama along with the enthronement ceremony. Since he will be a child and will be guided by a regency council, what should guide the government's relationship and under what guidelines should the council operate?

In India, all religious organisations have the right to determine their own leadership, residence and

practices without state interference. China may pressure India on that score but India should only point to the constitutional practice. The same for allowing the successor to live in India. Access to the symbols of office maybe more sensitive as China will claim ownership.

### **Sanctioned by China, Tibetan activist expresses disappointment over lack of support from Tibetan community, administration**

27 December 2024, The Tibet Express



CTC Executive Director Sherap Tharchin(C) flanked by CTC Chair Samphel Lhalungpa and Community Engagement Manager Youngdoun Tenzin.

Canada Tibet Committee's (CTC) Executive Director Sherap Tharchin expressed disappointment and felt let down by the lack of support he and his colleagues received from the Tibetan community and the administration in exile after they were sanctioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Chinese Communist Government on Sunday, though they received overwhelming support from the Canadian Government and Parliament.

"While we received support and backing from the Canadian Government and Parliament, assuring us that they were behind us, there was a void from the Tibetan community, with not many speaking out or assuring their support," Sherap Tharchin said, visibly let down at Dokham Chushi Gangdruk's public event in Toronto, Canada on Wednesday.

The Canadian government and MPP Bhutla Karpoche (the first person of Tibetan heritage to be elected to public office in North America) contacted us to assure their support," Sherap said and added, "This made us sigh with relief. I also received a call from Canada Chushi Gangdruk President Sonam Wangchen, who said 'Sherap, don't be scared, we are behind you.'"

"But apart from that, nobody from the community stood up or reached out to us," he said and questioned, "As we are working for Tibet's cause, if Tibetans don't support us, then who will?"

The activist summed up the entire episode, noting first and foremost a sense of pride in taking the Chinese sanction as a badge of honour in recognition of his

activism and campaign for Tibet. This, he said, was followed by a climate of fear.

Tharchin said that from Sunday, when they were sanctioned, until he took the stage, they lived in fear of what might happen because of China's might and that Chinese constitute 5 per cent of the Canadian population. He noted the high possibility of China forcing some of the 2 million Chinese Canadians to be state agents, coupled with China's infiltration within the Tibetan Community.

He added that one of his colleagues on the sanction list had to cancel a planned trip to a European country as many European nations have signed extradition treaties with China.

This, the activist added, made him realize the plight of Tibetans and Uyghurs who suffer daily under Chinese occupation.

The Executive Director of the CTC concluded by saying that a sense of disappointment then overtook his fears owing to the lack of support from the Tibetan community and the administration.

He lamented that though he had been engaged in activism campaigning for Tibet and served the Central Tibetan Administration over the last six years, "nobody dared to open their mouth or cared to ask us how we were doing or what we were experiencing."

Asking the crowd to excuse him for soiling the atmosphere as they had gathered for a party, he added, "We should know about this because it's me today, and it could be anyone from the community tomorrow."

The activist concluded by calling for unity among the small numbers of Tibetans spread across the diaspora, warning that going the opposite way would aid China at our own undoing.

Tharchin, along with the CTC Chair Samphel Lhalungpa, Vice Chair Luisa Durante, Board member Eliza von Baeyer, and Community Engagement Manager Youngdoun Tenzin were among the 20 Canadians sanctioned by the PRC—along with the Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project (URAP), led by Mr. Mehmet Tohti (a former WUC Director of the Legal Committee) and 14 of its staff members and experts—were sanctioned by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a "countermeasure."

While the Canadian government condemned China and expressed solidarity with members of the Canada Tibet Committee and the Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project after the Chinese government sanctioned them on Sunday for speaking out about human rights, and MPP Bhutla Karpoche offered her support through a statement declaring, "I join the calls for the government of Canada to ensure that those sanctioned do not come to harm within Canada or other democratic entities," the support from the Tibetan community remained minimal.

Though the Tibetan NGOs, associations, and the administration are usually quick to issue statements of solidarity over China's repressive policies and measure in Tibet as well as condemning anyone who vilified the Dalai Lama without follow-up actions, their enthusiasm fell short when China sanctioned three Tibetan activists from the CTC for their campaign for the Tibetan movement.

While collective support from the Kashag (the executive wing of the CTA) and all Tibetan NGOs could have lifted the morale of the activists, only the Tibetan parliament in exile came forward with a statement on 25th December, declaring that the house "stands in solidarity with the members of the Canada Tibet Committee and the Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project, applauding their courage in speaking out against the atrocities and severe human rights violations committed by China."

Two days after the activist's remarks, only one Tibetan NGO- the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy condemned "China's internationalisation of repression and sanctions imposed on Tibetan human rights group."

### **Buddha's birthplace a geopolitical playing field for China?**

27 December 2024, Tibetan Review

Lumbini, the birthplace in Nepal of the Buddha Shakyamuni, has become a geopolitical playing field for China despite protests from local citizens who remain anxious to preserve its Buddhist and spiritual significance above all else, according to an opinion piece in the indianexpress.com Dec 26.

This year, China not only prevented the fourth Nobel Laureates conference from being held there but also tried to get its imposed 11th Panchen Lama, Gyaincain Norbu, to participate in a Chinese Buddhist conference organized in the holy place in an attempt to boost his global profile. Besides, it moved to virtually takeover the holy place by pledging \$3 billion to the Asia Pacific Exchange and Cooperation Foundation for its all-round development.

The fourth Nobel Laureates conference planned to be held at Lumbini was called off at the last minute because China expressed strong reservations that it would have a pro-Dalai Lama agenda, despite the organisers denying it. China also suspected that the conference on March 11 and 12 was deliberately chosen close to the Tibetan Uprising Day, Mar 10.

Ten months after that, controversy returned to Lumbini when the city, along with Kathmandu, was chosen as the venue for the Nanhai Buddhism Round Table attended by hundreds of monks from Mainland China. Norbu's first international exposure in the land of the Buddha would have been highly

significant. However, there were protests in the area, and the Chinese authorities said the reported news was propaganda, the opinion piece noted.

Lumbini, located around 250 km west of Kathmandu, was envisioned as a global secular pilgrimage by King Mahendra and UN Secretary General U Thant, a Buddhist, in 1967. Japanese architect Kenzo Tange prepared the master plan in 1978. The major part of the plan around an eight-km radius of the Maya Devi Temple – the spot where Buddha was born – was implemented in the first six years with Prince Gyanendra Shah as the founder chairman of the Lumbini Development Authority (LDA).



Lumbini, the birthplace in Nepal of the Buddha Shakyamuni. (Photo courtesy: UNI)

In 2006, the government led by Maoist chief Pushpa Kamal Dahal tried to bring Hindu and Buddhist shrines under political control, but did not succeed due to public protests. However, under him, an Asia Pacific Exchange and Cooperation Foundation, apparently an NGO controlled by the Chinese government, pledged \$3 billion for all-round development that included building an international airport, roads, cultural zones, a Buddhist University, monasteries, bypassing the LDA or the Kenzo Tange plan.

But China's plan did not succeed after widespread protests, the opinion piece said.

However, of late China has shown renewed interest in Lumbini and there has been a flow of Chinese tourists, politicians and government authorities to the city.

While Lumbini's master plan has provision for monasteries from several countries, Nepali authorities were stated to be more interested in mega projects coming from business and private channels, rather than government agencies.

There is anger within Nepal's Buddhist community over what they say attempts to turn their sacred land into a communist and a commercial zone, the opinion piece said. The LDA, which once used to be a bipartisan body, is today packed with politicians affiliated to the ruling party. The decision of the current LDA, chief Lharkyal Lama, a Maoist leader, to give Rambag, a holy site near Buddha's relic, on a long-term commercial lease to a private party fell after an all-party protest three months ago.

Incidentally, it was Lharkyal Lama who was said to have continued to try to bring the Chinese government-appointed Panchen Lama to the Chinese Buddhist conference in Nepal this year despite Kathmandu having already rejected it in absolute terms.

The sentiment of the faithful that the primary responsibility to preserve Lumbini's sanctity lies with the Hindus and Buddhists is being undermined as Lumbini gradually turns into the playground of players who do not understand that Lumbini is respected for peace, compassion and renunciation rather than profit seeking investments and strategic intent, the opinion piece concluded.

### **How China turns members of its diaspora into spies**

26 December 2024, The Economist

America is on the hunt for these non-traditional agents. But its efforts risk backfiring

AMONG EXILED Chinese dissidents, Tang Yuanjun was well known. He had participated in the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 and landed in prison as a result. He later defected to Taiwan, swimming to one of its outlying islands from a fishing boat. America granted him asylum and he settled in New York, becoming the leader of Chinese pro-democracy groups. But in August 2024 he was arrested by the FBI. He admits to having used his position to collect information for the Chinese government and to report on his fellow activists. He did this so that the government would allow him to return to China to see his ailing parents.

China's hacking of American computer networks and its efforts to steal Western military and trade secrets have made headlines in recent years. But it has also been pursuing a more subtle campaign, one that involves bribery, blackmail and secret deals, and which uses people such as Mr Tang and other members of the Chinese diaspora to carry out surveillance, information-gathering and influence operations around the world. Britain recently got a taste of all this when the authorities there accused Yang Tengbo, a Chinese businessman, of cultivating ties with Prince Andrew, the king's brother, as part of an influence operation.

America, though, is China's most important target. These types of activities fall under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), an American law that requires those engaging in political projects on behalf of a foreign actor to register and disclose what they are doing. In recent years the Justice Department has ramped up its enforcement of the act. The department conducted 25 FARA inspections in 2023, the most since 1985. This year there have been several high-profile cases involving China. By

publicising these investigations, the American government is sending a warning to would-be agents, say experts.

One big case involves Linda Sun, a former aide to the governor of New York who was arrested in September for working as an "undisclosed agent" of China and its Communist Party (CCP). Ms Sun allegedly blocked meetings between Taiwanese officials and state leaders, removed references to Taiwan from state communications and stood in the way of efforts to publicise China's persecution of the Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities. In return, she is said to have received millions of dollars in kickbacks and gifts, including several deliveries of Nanjing-style salted ducks to her parents' house.

The accusations against Ms Sun are straightforward. But China's influence operations often occur in a grey area. Take the diaspora groups called tongxianghui, or hometown associations, which bring together immigrants from particular parts of China. They are ubiquitous in American cities—and increasingly under scrutiny by the Justice Department. Association leaders often mobilise voters before elections in America and build relationships with local officials. Some also make trips to China and meet with officials from the United Front Work Department, the Communist Party branch with the job of boosting China's influence abroad. Association leaders organise political activities in America, such as rallies in support of Xi Jinping or protests against visits by Taiwanese officials.

These activities are legal, so long as the organisers are acting independently. But the line between voluntary action and work as an agent is fuzzy. Many overseas Chinese are genuine supporters of the Communist Party or, at least, willing to further its interests because it will help their businesses back home or keep their families in China safe. It is only when they receive covert funding, instructions or supervision from Chinese officials that they cross the line into being foreign agents. In 2022, for example, the FBI arrested the head of a Shandong hometown association—not because of his frequent trips to China and friendliness with Chinese officials, but because they suspected him of working with Chinese police to forcibly repatriate another immigrant. Similarly, in 2023 two Chinese men were indicted for allegedly working with Chinese police to operate a "clandestine police station" inside a Fujian hometown association in New York. One of them pleaded guilty on December 18th.

American authorities have struggled to combat these efforts without alienating the Chinese diaspora. An anti-espionage programme launched in 2018, called the China Initiative, aimed to stop the country from using "non-traditional collectors", such as academics and scientists, to steal America's trade and



technology secrets. Nearly 90% of the defendants charged under the initiative were of Chinese heritage, according to a database compiled by the MIT Technology Review. Many of the cases involved questions of “research integrity”, with academics accused of failing to fully disclose their Chinese affiliations (whether that was deliberate is highly contested). Only a quarter of all the cases brought under the initiative ended in conviction.

America’s counterintelligence efforts are meant to make the Chinese diaspora feel safe, says a former official who worked on the China Initiative. “You’re signalling to them: we’ve got your back,” he says. “What you don’t want to do is over-rotate to a situation where being Chinese equals being a spy.” But the initiative left many academics feeling that the government viewed them with suspicion simply because of their Chinese heritage, says Gang Chen of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 2021 he was charged with failing to disclose connections to Chinese educational programmes when submitting a federal grant application. The indictment was heavily criticised (such disclosures were not actually required). A year later the charges were dropped.

According to a survey in 2022, more than 60% of Chinese-American academics have thought about leaving America. More than 70% said they felt unsafe there. “This is not just shooting ourselves in the foot. It’s shooting ourselves in the brain,” says Mr Chen, who has stopped applying for government grants or working in potentially sensitive areas.

Other members of the Chinese diaspora welcome efforts to stymie Communist Party influence. Zhou Fengsuo of Human Rights in China, an activist group in New York, praises the arrests of people like Ms Sun. But he warns that the heavy-handedness and inconsistency of America’s approach has led to distrust of the government in the diaspora. And he complains that exiled Chinese dissidents receive little protection from the authorities, making them easier targets for Chinese coercion.

In 2022 the Justice Department ended the China Initiative, admitting that it led to a “harmful perception” of racial profiling. But in September the House of Representatives passed a bill to revive it under a new name, the CCP Initiative, with all Republicans voting in favour. Such efforts seem likely to intensify under President-elect Donald Trump, who has given China hawks important jobs. The risk is that in its efforts to counter the Communist Party, America drives more members of the diaspora into its hands.

## Why China’s proposed Tibet mega dam has left India worried

26 December 2024, First Post

China has approved a major hydropower project on Tibet’s Yarlung Zangbo River, which becomes the Brahmaputra River when it enters India. Billed as the world’s largest hydropower dam, it could generate 300 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity annually

China has green-lit a mega hydropower project on Tibet’s longest river. Touted as the world’s largest hydropower dam, it would be built in the lower reaches of the Yarlung Zangbo River, which becomes the Brahmaputra River when it flows into the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh.

India has earlier expressed concerns about the project which could affect millions downstream in the country and its neighbour Bangladesh.

Let’s take a closer look.

China’s mega hydropower project

China’s hydropower dam will come up on the Yarlung Zangbo River, also known as the Yarlung Tsangpo River, in the Tibet autonomous region.

According to China’s state news agency Xinhua, the dam will produce three times more energy than the Three Gorges Dam, which generates 88.2 billion kWh of electricity annually.

The proposed dam could produce 300 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity every year, Reuters reported citing the estimate of Power Construction Corp of China in 2020.

As per a South China Morning Post (SCMP) report, the hydropower project could cost over 1 trillion yuan (US\$137 billion), higher than any single infrastructure project worldwide.

In comparison, the investment in the Three Gorges Dam was 254.2 billion yuan (\$34.83 billion).

It is not yet known when the construction will start and even the exact location of the dam.

Challenges of the project

China’s huge hydropower project comes with its own technical and engineering challenges.

A part of the Yarlung Zangbo falls 2,000 metres (6,561 feet) within a short span of 50 km, giving a major hydropower potential, Reuters reported.

To tap into this potential, nearly six 20 km-long tunnels will have to be carved out from the Namcha Barwa mountain to divert half of the river’s flow at about 2,000 cubic metres per second, as per the SCMP report.

The project site is also located along a tectonic plate boundary which is susceptible to earthquakes.

Authorities have also not revealed how many people will be displaced by the Tibet project.

Why China’s hydropower dam is important

26 December 2024, Beijing Review, Santosh Ghimire

As per Xinhua, the colossal hydropower project in Tibet would protect the local ecology.

"Through extensive geological explorations and technical advancements, a solid foundation has been laid for the science-based, secure and high-quality development of the project," the report said.

The project would also fuel the growth of nearby solar and wind energy resources, according to the news agency. "This represents a major move in China's green and low-carbon energy transition," the report said.

"It is also of great importance to advancing the country's strategy for carbon peaking and carbon neutrality and to coping with global climate change."

India's concerns about the project

China's super hydropower dam has raised alarm bells in India.

New Delhi's concern stems from Beijing's lack of transparency about the project. It fears the Tibet dam could trigger flash floods or lead to water scarcity downstream.

India worries the project could result in the country depending on China for its water supplies, Genevieve Donnellon-May, a geopolitical and global strategy adviser, wrote for AsiaGlobal Online in 2022.

The Yarlung Tsangpo flows across the Tibetan Plateau and then enters India through Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, where it is called the Brahmaputra River.

As she noted in her article, the Brahmaputra is important for India and China's socioeconomic development. "The river accounts for nearly 30 per cent of India's freshwater resources and 40 per cent of its total hydropower potential. For China, the Brahmaputra's role in the country's total freshwater supply is limited, but the river plays a significant role in Tibet's agricultural and energy industries as well as civilisation. Yet, growing populations mean water resources are under increasing stress and demand in both countries," Donnellon-May wrote in her piece.

China being the upper riparian could affect the quantity of water available downstream, increasing New Delhi's worries.

"India has long speculated about China's intention of using hydropower dams to control the Brahmaputra. Many Indian analysts argue that China's water ambitions and the growing competition over water between China and India will inevitably lead to "water wars" between the two nations," Donnellon-May wrote in her piece.

To dent the impact of China's proposed dam on water flows, India is also planning to build 12 hydropower stations in Arunachal Pradesh, as per a Reuters report in July. The move has irked China, which claims the Indian state as the "southern part of Tibet".



The dam of the Upper Marsyangdi-A Hydropower Project in Lamjung, Nepal, on November 8, 2022. Since it began commercial operation in January 2017, the project has contributed 317 million kilowatt-hours of energy to Nepal's national grid each year (XINHUA)

During the visit of Nepal's Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli to China from December 2 to 5, the two countries reaffirmed their commitment to deepening their high-quality cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Oli paid the four-day official visit at the invitation of his counterpart Premier Li Qiang. This is Oli's first bilateral visit to a neighboring country since he returned to the prime ministership in July.

The two expressed their commitment to strengthening connectivity in sectors including ports, roads, railways, aviation, power grids and telecommunications, to help Nepal transform from a land-locked to a land-linked country.

Nepal joined the BRI, the China-proposed initiative to increase connectivity along and beyond the ancient Silk Road routes, on May 12, 2017. Since then, Nepal-China practical cooperation has been further enhanced, both in quality and efficiency. Chinese President Xi Jinping envisioned the BRI as a framework connecting countries around the world through trade, infrastructure development, finance and people-to-people exchanges, among others.

As of now, the BRI has achieved far more than physical connectivity. With the spirit of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, the BRI has evolved into a global platform on which participating countries join hands to improve people's livelihoods and drive human development forward, despite the various challenges facing the world.

Over the past decade, the BRI has delivered more than 3,000 of practical projects around the world, bringing tangible benefits to millions of people. The

number of BRI partnerships has been growing around the world. So far, more than 150 countries and over 30 international organizations have signed BRI cooperation agreements, with the initiative extending from the Eurasian continent to Africa and Latin America.

#### Joint railway project

Some projects under the BRI are already operational, while others are expected to take years to complete. The China-Nepal cross-border railway is one of the long-term projects. During Oli's visit, the two countries reaffirmed their commitment to pushing forward with the project.

"The two sides expressed willingness to steadily advance the feasibility study of the Jilong/Keyrung-Kathmandu Cross-Border Railway and planned to hold the Ninth Working Meeting on China-Nepal Railway Cooperation. The Chinese side will continue to help Nepal train railway professionals," read the joint statement issued during the visit.

Nepal and China announced the launch of a feasibility study for the cross-border railway when President Xi paid a visit to Nepal in October 2019. The cross-border railway is one of the key projects under the BRI. Since 2022, China has been providing grant assistance to support the feasibility study and sending its railway experts to conduct the field survey work.

There are several advantages for Nepal upon the completion of the railway, which will reduce the time and cost of cross-border transport and increase the volume of bilateral trade and investment. The railway will help bring excellent Nepali goods such as cashmere fabrics, wood products, handicrafts and organic alpine agricultural products to China while transferring China's technological development to Nepal. For this reason, the two peoples have great expectations for the railway.

Surya Raj Acharya, a Nepali infrastructure expert, said she believes that the railway will be a game-changer for Nepal's economic development after its completion. "The construction of Nepal-China railway will also be a boon for Nepal. We have seen in many BRI partnering countries that it has improved infrastructure and connectivity, created tens of thousands of jobs, and helped countries realize their shared vision of peaceful development, win-win cooperation and common prosperity," Acharya said.

#### More aviation cooperation

During Oli's visit, the two sides also agreed to increase cooperation in civil aviation under the BRI. "The two sides value the development of civil aviation ties between China and Nepal, and support and encourage air transport enterprises of both sides to open air routes and flights between Chinese cities and Nepali cities such as Pokhara and Lumbini in light of market demand, so as to facilitate bilateral

economic and trade ties and two-way travel," read the joint statement.

The inauguration of the China-aided international airport in Nepal's tourist city Pokhara was one of the greatest moments for many Nepali people. The project, an integral part of the China-Nepal Belt and Road cooperation, was inaugurated in December 2022. Envisaged more than 59 years ago, the international airport is now becoming a boost to the local economy.

The opening of the airport has contributed greatly to Nepal's connectivity and allowed for China-Nepal charter flights, creating new opportunities for cooperation under the BRI. Pokhara International Airport, a 4D-standard facility, was built with loan from the Export-Import Bank of China by China CAMC Engineering Co. Ltd., a company directly affiliated with China National Machinery Industry Corp., a Fortune 500 company. The construction began in July 2017, two months after Nepal became a BRI partner country. The airport demonstrates China's pursuit of quality in project construction and is a source of national pride in Nepal.

#### Cross-border energy cooperation

Apart from railroad and aviation connectivity, Nepal and China have also been working toward collaboration in the field of energy. Nepal is rich in water and willing to sell its surplus electricity to China in the near future. China has expressed readiness to support Nepal in this regard.

During the official visit, the two sides also reiterated commitment toward this end. "The two sides will continue to leverage the platform of the China-Nepal Energy Joint Implementation Mechanism, deepen cooperation in energy and explore exchanges in new energy. The two sides are ready to expedite the feasibility study of the China-aided Jilong-Rasuwadhi-Chilime 220KV Cross-Border Power Transmission Line. The two sides agreed to continue to support the cooperation between telecommunication operators of the two countries and to carry out maintenance and expansion projects related to cross-border land cables," read the joint statement.

#### Endless opportunities

Nepal can learn from the experience of Asian countries that have already successfully completed BRI projects and boosted their economies. The Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway is one such example. The railway is a flagship project that dovetails the BRI with Indonesia's Global Maritime Fulcrum initiative. For the past year since the high-speed train went into operation, the project has seen all-round collaboration by teams from both countries in areas such as high-speed rail operation management, talent development and technology transfer.

The BRI is seen as a great opportunity for Nepal as it aspires to become a "dynamic bridge" between China and India by developing North-South transport corridors. In the words of Kalyan Raj Sharma, Chair of the Nepal-China Friendship Forum, the BRI presents a strategic opportunity for Nepal to advance development projects as there is a lack of vital

infrastructure.

Analysts believe the BRI could be a boon for low-income and middle-income countries like Nepal, which are constrained by limited financial resources and looking for foreign investment to meet their development needs.

"For many low- and middle-income countries constrained by limited financial resources, the BRI offers a potential pathway to realize ambitious development goals, paralleling China's rapid growth trajectory of recent decades," Sharma wrote in an article published in Kathmandu Post on December 1. He opined that Nepal can take advantage of China's expertise in rapid economic growth and infrastructure construction by approaching the BRI as a nuanced, multidimensional initiative.

### **China and India rebuild trust on the path to reconciliation**

25 December 2024, East Asia Forum, Ghulam Ali

On 23 October 2024, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a delegate-level meeting – the first in five years – on the sidelines of the BRICS conference in Kazan, Russia. During the meeting, both leaders endorsed an earlier deal to disengage their militaries along the disputed border, restoring the status quo to its pre-2020 position. Within a week, both sides withdrew troops from border face-off areas.

Given the potential impact of the China-India relationship on regional and global affairs, the Xi-Modi meeting drew international headlines. Analysts characterised it as a boon for both countries, a cautionary note and a tactical pause rather than a strategic shift in relations. Some credited the outcome to BRICS and Russia, while others viewed it as a blow to the US Indo-Pacific strategy.

China and India have the world's longest and oldest disputed border – the Line of Actual Control (LAC) – inherited from colonial times. They fought a border war in 1962 and have had periodic escalations over this issue ever since. Both countries hold differing views on the boundary – India considers the LAC to be 3488 kilometres long, while China claims it is 2000 kilometres, arguing its border with Pakistan is already settled.

In the 21st century, China-India relations have come full circle, moving from deeper understanding to

heightened tension and back to normalcy. In the mid-2010s, the relationship took a hostile turn after decades of stability. While the disputed border sparked conflict, two new factors proved to be key ignitors. Nationalist leaders – President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi – assumed power, setting high goals and pursuing assertive policies. Concurrently, the bifurcation of global politics into a US vs China dynamic fuelled the rivalry. The disputed border, two nationalist leaders and international politics combined in a mutually reinforcing way, escalating the tension.

Nationalistic fervour in China and India extended to soldiers patrolling the disputed border. Troops faced a standoff lasting over 70 days in Doklam in 2017 and a fatal confrontation in Galwan Valley in June 2020, resulting in the deaths of 20 Indians and at least four Chinese soldiers – marking the first fatalities in decades. Following this, the relationship largely remained frozen until the Xi-Modi meeting.

During heightened tensions, both countries viewed each other's policies with concern. New Delhi perceived China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as part of a grand strategy and saw the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) – in which China invested billions of dollars – and China's administrative control of Gwadar Port as a consolidation of a China-Pakistan nexus targeting India.

On the other hand, China regarded India's closeness with the United States, Japan, Australia, Vietnam, Taiwan and other Western countries with suspicion. The Quadrilateral security grouping, which China views as a containment strategy, regained momentum against the backdrop of India's intensifying conflict with China.

India's defence-related agreements with the United States were also concerning for China. These included the agreements to provide reciprocal access to military bases as well as to share geospatial intelligence and enhance the accuracy of military operations. In line with this, the United States rebranded its Asia Pacific strategy to an Indo-Pacific strategy centred on cooperation with India.

It was economic pressures that catalysed China's and India's re-engagement. Following the Galwan fatalities, India's ban on Chinese investment and technology impacted negatively on India's economic growth. This downturn led to unemployment – especially among educated youth, who expressed their frustration in the 2024 general elections – resulting in the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party losing its simple majority. India's annual economic survey for 2024 pinpointed the need to attract investment from China – causing India's business community to push the Modi administration towards rapprochement.

India's obsession with the BRI as a grand strategy also faded over time. Though New Delhi did not join the BRI, it benefited from its subsidiary, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. CPEC did not take off and Gwadar Port remains far from becoming China's naval hub. In 2019, China also stopped blocking the Pakistani military-backed extremist Masood Azhar from being declared a global terrorist by the United Nations, which abated India's concerns about the so-called China-Pakistan nexus.

Parallel to this, India did not receive the expected US and Western support for its 'Made in India' initiative and industrialisation efforts. The US-led 'India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor', meant to counter the BRI, never materialised. Overall, it became clear to New Delhi that achieving great power status requires cooperation with Beijing, prompting an eagerness for reconciliation.

On the Chinese side, Beijing recognised that the success of the Quad and the United States' Indo-Pacific policies primarily hinged on India's role. It was assuaging for China that despite US incentives, India did not sign any formal military alliance and maintained its traditional position of non-alignment. During its own economic slowdown, China could not ignore the large Indian market next door, where trade thrived and reached US\$118 billion in 2023-24 despite geopolitical tensions.

Over the years, Xi and Modi have tempered their ambitious goals with pragmatism. They have gained global exposure and navigated their countries through challenging waters. Through cycles of stability, heightened tension and a return to equilibrium, China and India have learned that conflict undermines their long-term objectives and complicates the boundary issues.

While a breakthrough in their border dispute may remain elusive, the Xi-Modi meeting has put the relationship back on track and this is likely to be sustained.

### **Of Diplomacy and Gaffes: Making Sense of Prabowo and Anwar's China Visits**

25 December 2024, The Diplomat, Rahul Mishra and Harshit Prajapati

Southeast Asian leaders face considerable challenges in balancing nationalistic positions with the complexities of engaging China at the highest levels.

Prabowo Subianto, the newly sworn-in president of Indonesia, is known for his hands-on approach to diplomacy and foreign policy, often departing from the country's established positions and sparking debates.

His recent visit to China, his first official overseas trip since assuming office, ignited fresh controversies. A

joint statement issued during the visit called for "joint development in areas of overlapping claims" in the South China Sea (SCS). The statement also announced an agreement to establish an "Inter-Governmental Joint Steering Committee to explore and advance relevant cooperation." This sharply contrasts with Indonesia's long-standing position of not recognizing any overlapping claims with China in the SCS and rejecting the legality of the Nine-Dash Line.

While Indonesia is not a direct claimant in the South China Sea dispute, it is increasingly entangled in the conflict due to China's claims over parts of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) surrounding Indonesia's Natuna Islands. Indonesia asserts sovereign control over the Natuna Islands and upholds its territorial and maritime rights based on legal and historical grounds.

In an attempt to manage the fallout from Prabowo's diplomatic gaffe, the Indonesian Foreign Ministry clarified that it does not recognize China's claims over the SCS and reaffirmed that Indonesia's position remains unchanged. However, critics argue that Indonesia has unwittingly strengthened China's position by signing the joint statement, which Beijing could reference in future disputes. Such concerns stem from fears that China may leverage the document to legitimize its claims against Indonesia.

While the statement highlights a significant diplomatic error, it does not signify a shift in Indonesia's stance on the South China Sea dispute. Instead, it underscores the challenges Southeast Asian leaders face in balancing nationalistic positions with the complexities of engaging China at the highest levels. Prabowo is not the first Southeast Asian leader to face backlash following a visit to Beijing.

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's March 2023 trip to China also drew criticism after he stated that Malaysia was "open to negotiations" with China over bilateral disputes in the SCS. Like Indonesia, Malaysia has consistently rejected the Nine-Dash Line and maintains there are no overlapping claims with China in the SCS. Following Anwar's remarks, the Malaysian Foreign Ministry clarified that the country's policy on the SCS dispute remained unchanged. Malaysia's position has since remained consistent under Anwar's leadership, suggesting that Indonesia's stance is unlikely to waver despite Prabowo's recent misstep.

Anwar's visit to Beijing secured investment deals worth \$38.6 billion for Malaysia, while Prabowo's trip resulted in agreements valued at \$10 billion. These investments are crucial for Prabowo's administration to fund key welfare programs, including his flagship initiative to provide free meals for schoolchildren and pregnant women.



Prabowo's electoral success was partly built on such welfare promises, and delivering on them is vital for maintaining domestic legitimacy. As Evan Laksmana argues, for most Southeast Asian leaders, political legitimacy is closely tied to public goods, major investments, and welfare schemes, often financed through strengthened trade ties with China. In this context, the joint statement may have been a transactional maneuver to secure economic gains rather than a strategic policy shift.

Moreover, the diplomatic controversy reflects Prabowo's personalistic and hands-on approach to foreign policy rather than a calculated change in Indonesia's SCS strategy. Although he is expected to continue the legacy of his predecessor, Joko "Jokowi" Widodo, Prabowo appears intent on imprinting his personal style on policy decisions. Unlike Jokowi, who delegated much of Indonesia's foreign engagement to career diplomat Retno Marsudi, Prabowo has adopted a more direct role. His appointment of Sugiono, a close aide and ideological protégé, as foreign minister marks a departure from tradition. Sugiono is the first non-career diplomat to hold the position since 2001.

Historically, Indonesia's foreign ministry has acted as a buffer against unilateral presidential influence on foreign policy. However, Prabowo's decision to appoint Sugiono signals his intention to centralize foreign policy decision-making. Reports suggest that the foreign ministry had advised Prabowo's team on Indonesia's position regarding the SCS dispute, but this input was allegedly overlooked.

The joint statement with China emphasizes "head-of-state diplomacy" as a political safeguard and strategic guide for China-Indonesia relations, reflecting Prabowo's preference for a one-man approach to foreign policy. His active engagement on the international stage is evident from the 20 trips he made abroad as defense minister and president-elect between Indonesia's general election in February 2024 and his inauguration in October. This level of activity suggests that Prabowo's tenure will feature more frequent presidential diplomacy compared to Jokowi's two terms.

This is not the first time Prabowo has made a controversial diplomatic move. At the Shangri-La Dialogue in June 2023, he proposed a four-point peace plan to resolve the Ukraine conflict. It was promptly dismissed by Ukraine's defense minister. Jokowi later clarified that the proposal represented Prabowo's personal views, not the Indonesian government's stance. Similarly, Prabowo has previously diverged from official policy by expressing a more sympathetic attitude toward the AUKUS agreement.

While Malaysia's foreign ministry, under a more experienced Anwar Ibrahim, appears more adept at

managing such controversies, Anwar has also made statements that contradicted Malaysia's official positions, such as his remarks on Myanmar.

In conclusion, the clarification from Indonesia's Foreign Ministry suggests that the joint statement is unlikely to have lasting implications and may become a "dead letter." To further address concerns, Foreign Minister Sugiono stated that Indonesia has not yet decided on any joint development areas with China in the SCS. Ultimately, the joint statement seems to reflect Prabowo's personalistic diplomacy aimed at securing economic concessions rather than signaling a shift in Indonesia's established position on the SCS dispute. While it is crucial for Southeast Asian leaders to avoid such gaffes, considering the overwhelming dependence on China for trade and investments, this trend is likely to continue. The point, however, is how adept Southeast Asian foreign policy bureaucracies could be in managing such unexpected twists and turns.

### Guest Opinion: The truth about Xinjiang and its Uygur population

25 December 2024, Xinhua, Meilleur Murindabigwi



This photo taken on November 9, 2024 shows children running in Daliyabuyi Village, Yutian County of northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

Western governments and media, particularly in the United States, have persisted with a years-long smear campaign targeting China over issues related to Xinjiang.

However, their claims often lack proper context and are based on false information intended to undermine China's growing influence on the global stage.

The reality in Xinjiang is a different story with multiple dimensions. It involves efforts to combat extremism, preserve national unity, and promote economic development.

The 6th World Media Summit recently took place in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang. Given the recurring negative coverage of Xinjiang in Western media, it was time for us, media practitioners from around the world, to witness firsthand what life is truly like for the Uygurs, one of 55 ethnic minorities in China. Our

goal was to see for ourselves whether the human rights abuses claimed by Western leaders and media hold any truth.

## DERADICALISATION AND WESTERN INTERVENTIONS

From the early 1990s to mid-2010s, Xinjiang faced a surge in radicalisation, leading to deadly terrorist attacks targeting civilians.

Notable incidents include the Urumqi riots in 2009 and Kunming railway station attack in 2014, resulting in hundreds of fatalities and even more injuries. These were the works of radical separatists who sought destabilisation and secession.

In response, the Chinese government launched comprehensive counterterrorism initiatives, ranging from a law-based campaign against terrorists to a vocational training program to deradicalise individuals influenced by extremism. The latter combined vocational training, legal education, and cultural integration to address the underlying causes of radicalisation.

The separatist movement in Xinjiang has not been a purely internal issue. There is growing evidence that Western countries have had a hand in encouraging separatism in Xinjiang as part of a broader strategy to destabilise China.

The United States has long considered China an economic rival, and any attempt to weaken China internally serves its geopolitical interests.

By fabricating and amplifying accusations of human rights abuses, some Western governments aim to tarnish China's international image, hoping to slow its economic ascent.

These actions align with a broader history of Western interventions designed to disrupt political stability in regions critical to their global dominance.

The persistent campaign of disinformation against China, particularly regarding Xinjiang, is part of a larger strategy by Western countries to contain China's rise.

Western countries have become increasingly alarmed by the prospect of losing nearly two centuries of global dominance.

By painting China as a human rights abuser, Western governments and media outlets seek to rally international opinion against China.

However, this narrative often ignores China's work in lifting more than 800 million people out of poverty over the past decades, improving living standards, and maintaining social harmony throughout the country, including in Xinjiang.

## PROSPERITY TODAY

Despite these challenges, Xinjiang is a flourishing and multicultural region where Uyghurs live peacefully alongside other ethnic groups.

Far from the image painted by some media outlets, Xinjiang has experienced rapid development in

recent years. Its gross domestic product has grown significantly, reaching over 1.9 trillion yuan (approximately 260 billion dollars) in 2023.

Xinjiang is also a crucial part of the Belt and Road Initiative, which has attracted foreign investment and made the region a hub for international trade.

Moreover, the claim that Uyghurs cannot practice their religion is false.

We visited the Xinjiang Islamic Institute in Urumqi, which trains over 1,000 students. Imam Abdurraqib Turmuniyaz greeted us and explained that the school was created to allow Muslim boys in Xinjiang to deepen their knowledge of Islam while preparing them for leadership roles in China's mosques.

Established in the early 1980s, it reflects the Chinese government's efforts to support and regulate Islamic education. Its facilities include a canteen, mosque, library, and gym.

The Xinjiang Islamic Institute also has eight branches across the region, including in Hotan, Aksu, and Kashgar, with about 3,000 students.

Imam Abdurraqib Turmuniyaz emphasized that religious freedom is fully protected in China, especially in Xinjiang. The institute's mission is to educate rather than confine students. This institution is a key part of China's efforts to promote Islamic education in a structured and modern environment.

Xinjiang is a region that once faced serious challenges with extremism and separatism but has overcome these obstacles through development, education, and integration.

The Uyghur people practice religion freely and benefit from the region's rapid economic growth. During our visit to a car manufacturing plant in Xinjiang, we saw Uyghurs working alongside colleagues of other ethnic groups.

Uyghurs are present in all works of life, from restaurants and coffee shops to construction companies, the service sector, and even military service. Some have also gained prominence as models in China's booming fashion industry, showcasing the diverse opportunities available to them across the country.

The broader campaign of disinformation against China, spearheaded by the West, is less about human rights and more about maintaining global hegemony.

As China continues to rise on the world stage, the truth about Xinjiang is clear. It is a region of peace, prosperity, and promise, no matter what the detractors say.

## Self-Determination Of Tibet: A Contentious Issue – Analysis

25 December 2024, Eurasia Review, Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA)

Negotiations on self-determination of Tibet has been a contentious matter between the Tibetan ethnic minority and the PRC government. The PRC government has failed to implement in letter and spirit various laws which stipulate the establishment of autonomous regions for the ethnic minorities in China.

A diplomatic spat between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the United States (US) has ensued, following US President Biden signing the 'Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act' on 12 July 2024 into law.<sup>1</sup> Reacting to the Act, China stated that the US is undermining the "basic norms governing international relations" and should recognise Xizang (Tibet) as part of China. It urged the US not to support "Tibet independence" which if it fails to do, "China will take resolute measures to firmly defend its sovereignty, security and development interests".<sup>2</sup>

Appraising the Act, along with the affirmation of upholding human rights and direct negotiations "without preconditions" with the Dalai Lama in order to resolve the differences, are some of the fundamental aspects at stake for the 'self-determination' of Tibet. This Brief examines how the principle of self-determination has been contested between the Chinese government and the Tibetan ethnic minority. It begins with a review on how the principles of self-determination have been construed in international law.

#### Self-Determination in International Law

The principle of self-determination, which can be traced back to the French revolution in 1789 and the American Declaration of Independence of 1776, refers to the legal right of people to choose their own political destiny. In the contemporary period, it has been closely associated with US President Woodrow Wilson, when after the First World War, several new states were created from the losing powers of Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire.<sup>3</sup>

Previously, self-determination was perceived as a 'political concept' but later on, it emerged as a "principle of positive international law" based on the UN Charter as in Article 1(2), it is requisite that one of the purposes of the United Nations is to "develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determinations of people".<sup>4</sup>

The principle of self-determination has been addressed in several UN resolutions, declarations and conventions. However, it is an 'elusive concept', mainly due to an unclear definition of 'people', i.e., who are actually entitled to self-determination (for example, indigenous groups, religious groups and

other minorities), resulting in various interpretations and significant implications in practice.<sup>5</sup>

One of the foremost legal rights for self-determination is the "Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and People" adopted by UN General Assembly (GA) Resolution 1514 in 1960, where Para 1 declares, "the subjugation of people to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights" and is contrary to the UN Charter.<sup>6</sup> These legal rights were primarily designed or interpreted to foster the decolonisation process and were upheld by the International Court of Justice in the Namibia case.<sup>7</sup>

Additionally, the application of self-determination beyond the anti-colonial dimension was adopted in 1970 by the UNGA, 'Friendly Relations Declarations' which entail the right of self-determination to all people freely "without external interference, their political status and to pursue their economic, social and cultural development".<sup>8</sup> However, this legal document demands that self-determination be exercised cautiously, without disturbing the territorial integrity of the existing state. In other words, these legal rights are in line with 'internal self-determination', i.e., autonomy.<sup>9</sup>

In the case of internal self-determination, Article 1 of the two international Covenants of 1966—International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights—provides people the right to "freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development". Legal expert Antonio Cassese is of the view that all members of an inhabitant state have the right to express self-determination through "internal-decision making processes", without disturbing the territorial integrity of sovereign states.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, such rights have been recognised in the United Nations Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007 where Article 4 declares that indigenous people "have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions".<sup>11</sup>

Although the core substance of self-determination infers secession or the ability to establish sovereign and independent states, in international laws, unilateral secession is not well received due to the fear of creating instability, when or if the right of self-determination is exercised by all who claim it. Former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali thoughtfully said: "if every ethnic, religious or linguistic group claimed statehood, there would be no limits to fragmentation and peace and security and economic well-being for all would become even more difficult to achieve."<sup>12</sup>

Nonetheless, there are jurists that emphasise the applicability of self-determination to a particular group of people to secure their territorial sovereignty. Such kinds of self-determination are known as 'remedial secession' where self-determination is applied as a last resort or secession is justified, if any aggrieved group is severely persecuted by the state.<sup>13</sup> Such legal rights are detailed in the UNGA Resolution 2625, which states that the territorial integrity of the state is protected, if the government is represented by "the whole people belonging to the territory without distinction as to race, creed or color".<sup>14</sup> This clause implies that if any government is unrepresentative or oppressive, it may trigger secession. Meanwhile, some jurists also emphasise, if internal self-determination or say autonomy are flawed in implementation, secession should be seen as a matter of last resort.

#### Negotiations for Tibetan Self-Determination

On 13 February 1913, the 13th Dalai Lama formally declared the independence of Tibet, following the overthrow of Manchu Qing dynasty by the Chinese nationalist revolution in 1911.<sup>15</sup> The historiography on whether Tibet is a part of China, however, is complicated as both sides have competing narratives.<sup>16</sup> But one major historical event in which Tibet formally came under the control of China is when Chinese troops entered Tibet in 1950 and consequently signed the "Agreement on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet" (17 Point Agreement) on 23 May 1951.<sup>17</sup>

Subsequently, at the UNGA, numerous resolutions were passed calling for the right to self-determination for the Tibetan people but it was met with negligible support from the international community.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, the UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities adopted a resolution on 23 August 1991 calling on the Government of the People's Republic of China "fully to respect the fundamental human rights and freedoms of the Tibetan people".<sup>19</sup> After decades of impasse, dialogue between the two sides commenced with a pre-condition that except for "total independence" all other issues were open for discussion.<sup>20</sup> Without substantial outcome, the talks ended in 1985 with the removal of Chinese representative Hu Yao-bang.<sup>21</sup>

Dialogue between the Tibetan and Chinese representatives, however, entered a new chapter following the Dalai Lama's announcement of the "Middle way approach", implying not seeking separation or independence of Tibet, but instead securing 'genuine autonomy' within the scope of the constitution of the People's Republic of China.<sup>22</sup> In order to achieve a genuine autonomy for Tibetan peoples, the Tibetan administration formulated a 'Five point peace plan' in 1987, the Strasbourg

proposal in 1998 and the Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy in 2008. Dialogue between the two sides continued based on these three core documents, but ended abruptly in 2010 without any substantial outcome.

In the negotiations between Tibetan representatives and the Chinese government, securing genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people has been a key issue, and has led to deadlock and pauses in the negotiation process. Hence, it is necessary and worthwhile to look into how the PRC government takes into account autonomy in relation to ethnic minorities.

#### Assessment of 'Autonomy' Implementation in China

Regional ethnic autonomy is supposed to be the core governance mechanism for ethnic minorities in China.<sup>23</sup> Though the 'Common Program' and the 1954 Constitution of the People's Republic of China (PRC) specify the establishment of regional autonomy, Chinese constitutional expert, Gao Quanxi has argued that the 1982 PRC Constitution as amended in 2018 has been infused with a legal attribute, which is aimed at ending incessant revolution, discarding absolute class struggle, substituted by "dictatorship of the proletariat" with a "people's democratic dictatorship".<sup>24</sup>

In the 1982 PRC Constitution, the preamble declares, "China is a unified multi-ethnic state founded by the Chinese people of all ethnic groups" and opposes "major ethnic group (Han) chauvinism". Further, Article 4 stipulates the promotion of ethnic equality and unity, where discrimination and oppression of any ethnic groups is prohibited, and allows for the establishment of autonomous regions for self-governance while obliging that "all ethnic groups shall have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages and to preserve or reform their own traditions and customs".<sup>25</sup> Additionally, based on the 1982 constitution, the National People's Congress in 1984 adopted the "Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy" which was amended in 2001, strengthening and expanding the existing autonomous rights formulated in the 1982 constitution.<sup>26</sup>

Assessing implementation of the ethnic minorities' policy by the PRC government, it is characterised as one of "gradualism and pluralism" where until the late 1950s, a tolerant and benign attitude was practiced towards ethnic minorities by the PRC government.<sup>27</sup> But from the 1960s onwards under the leadership of Mao, especially during the Cultural Revolution (1967-1976), the ethnic minorities experienced the most repressive and assimilative period in the history of PRC.<sup>28</sup> Again from the 1970s, under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, extreme assimilation of minorities ended and they

began to make claims to uphold their rights to national autonomy.

In the case of the Tibetan ethnic minority, though the demand for genuine autonomy by the Tibetan representative emerged more recently, essentially it was already featured way back in 17 Point Agreement in May 1951, as para 3 underlined that, "the Tibetan people have the right of exercising national regional autonomy under the unified leadership of the Central People's Government".<sup>29</sup> The PRC government, however, violated the agreement.<sup>30</sup>

To achieve the aspiration of autonomy for the Tibetan people, its representatives even submitted a "Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People" in 2008 to the PRC government.<sup>31</sup> The demand for autonomy in the memorandum was drafted in consonance with the PRC constitution and the Law on regional ethnic autonomy, which essentially addresses independently managing the internal affairs of Tibetans including language, culture, religion education, environment protection and utilisation of natural resources.

The evaluation of autonomy implementation in the Tibet Autonomous Region, however, reveals policy swings between "more tolerant and more repressive" by the PRC government.<sup>32</sup> Ironically, one of the fundamental reasons why the PRC government rejected the Tibetan proposal of autonomy, and instead adopted a repressive policy towards the Tibetan ethnic minority, is due to "fear of the external forces" of Western countries, especially the United States.<sup>33</sup>

The US policy on Tibet can be traced back to the 1940s, when the US government entered an agreement with Tibet to build a supply route through Tibet to China against Japanese attack. US policy on Tibet has been termed "inconsistencies in commitment, interspersed with occasional bursts of sympathy and activism"<sup>34</sup> mostly due to the impact of Cold War politics. Until 1970, Tibet was included in the US strategy to counter communist expansion in Asia. But it was weakened following the rapprochement of Sino-US relations in the 1970s.<sup>35</sup> And conversely, the Soviet Union, which in the 1950s fully backed the PRC government claim to sovereignty over Tibet, began to condemn Chinese policy in Tibet as a "colonial power".<sup>36</sup> Contrary to the Cold War period, however, Russia's policy on Tibet "seems to view the Tibetan issue in the context of Chechenya, unfortunately".<sup>37</sup>

One major reason for the US leveraging of Tibetan separatism is based on the notion of a growing 'China threat' both in terms of military and economy, which the PRC government considers as a 'containment policy'. Yet, US leveraging of Tibetan secession has consequences, especially for Tibetans

in Tibet and also for the resolution of the Tibetan question. Sinologist Barry Sautman cautions that backing secession by great powers "makes it harder for Tibetans in Tibet to seek self-representation without being suspected of pursuing secession" and also "even makes it harder to resolve the Tibetan question".<sup>38</sup>

#### Way Forward

The President of the Central Tibetan Administration Penpa Tsering in September 2024 acknowledged that 'back-channel' talks between the two sides have been initiated.<sup>39</sup> The PRC government has laid two conditions for resuming negotiations. First, as the Chinese government considers the Central Tibetan Government as an organised political group with an agenda for 'Tibetan independence', negotiations will be held "only with the personal representatives of the 14th Dalai Lama". And second, any contact or talks will only be about the personal future of the 14th Dalai Lama and the handful of people close to him, and not a 'high degree of autonomy'.<sup>40</sup> Meanwhile, external threat perceptions will significantly determine the outcome of negotiations.

To preserve the territorial integrity and maintain amicable relations among the 56 ethnic groups in China, however, one fundamental key is to uphold the PRC constitution and the Law of ethnic regional autonomy in letter and spirit. The fact is Tibetans are not seeking separation from China and this was reiterated recently by the Dalai Lama when he stated "We want to have full autonomy, as part of the People's Republic of China."<sup>41</sup> Thus, much of the discontent among the minorities stems from incomplete or flawed implementation of China's ethnic minority policies.

#### **A dam ignited rare Tibetan protests. They ended in beatings and arrests, BBC finds**

24 December 2024, BBC, Tessa Wong

Hundreds of Tibetans protesting against a Chinese dam were rounded up in a harsh crackdown earlier this year, with some beaten and seriously injured, the BBC has learnt from sources and verified footage.

Such protests are extremely rare in Tibet, which China has tightly controlled since it annexed the region in the 1950s. That they still happened highlights China's controversial push to build dams in what has long been a sensitive area.

Claims of the arrests and beatings began trickling out shortly after the events in February. In the following days authorities further tightened restrictions, making it difficult for anyone to verify the story, especially journalists who cannot freely travel to Tibet.

But the BBC has spent months tracking down Tibetan sources whose family and friends were detained and



beaten. BBC Verify has also examined satellite imagery and verified leaked videos which show mass protests and monks begging the authorities for mercy.

The sources live outside of China and are not associated with activist groups. But they did not wish to be named for safety reasons.

In response to our queries, the Chinese embassy in the UK did not confirm nor deny the protests or the ensuing crackdown.

But it said: "China is a country governed by the rule of law, and strictly safeguards citizens' rights to lawfully express their concerns and provide opinions or suggestions."

The protests, followed by the crackdown, took place in a territory home to Tibetans in Sichuan province. For years, Chinese authorities have been planning to build the massive Gangtuo dam and hydropower plant, also known as Kamtok in Tibetan, in the valley straddling the Dege (Derge) and Jiangda (Jomda) counties.

Once built, the dam's reservoir would submerge an area that is culturally and religiously significant to Tibetans, and home to several villages and ancient monasteries containing sacred relics.

One of them, the 700-year-old Wangdui (Wontoe) Monastery, has particular historical value as its walls feature rare Buddhist murals.

The Gangtuo dam would also displace thousands of Tibetans. The BBC has seen what appears to be a public tender document for the relocation of 4,287 residents to make way for the dam.

The BBC contacted an official listed on the tender document as well as Huadian, the state-owned enterprise reportedly building the dam. Neither have responded.

Plans to build the dam were first approved in 2012, according to a United Nations special rapporteurs letter to the Chinese government. The letter, which is from July 2024, raised concerns about the dam's "irreversible impact" on thousands of people and the environment.

From the start, residents were not "consulted in a meaningful way" about the dam, according to the letter. For instance, they were given information that was inadequate and not in the Tibetan language.

They were also promised by the government that the project would only go ahead if 80% of them agreed to it, but "there is no evidence this consent was ever given," the letter goes on to say, adding that residents tried to raise concerns about the dam several times.

Chinese authorities, however, denied this in their response to the UN. "The relocation of the villages in question was carried out only after full consultation of the opinions of the local residents," the Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the

United Nations office said in a letter from September 2024.

It added: "Local government and project developers funded the construction of new homes and provided subsidies for grazing, herding and farming. As for any cultural relics, they were relocated in their entirety."

But the BBC understands from two Tibetan sources that, in February, officials had told them they would be evicted imminently, while giving them little information about resettlement options and compensation.

This triggered such deep anxiety that villagers and Buddhist monks decided to stage protests, despite knowing the risks of a crackdown.

'They didn't know what was going to happen to them' The largest one saw hundreds gathering outside a government building in Dege. In a video clip obtained and verified by the BBC, protesters can be heard calling on authorities to stop the evictions and let them stay.

Separately, a group of residents approached visiting officials and pleaded with them to cancel plans to build the dam. The BBC has obtained footage which appears to show this incident, and verified it took place in the village of Xiba.

The clip shows red-robed monks and villagers kneeling on a dusty road and showing a thumbs-up, a traditional Tibetan way of begging for mercy.

In the past the Chinese government has been quick to stamp out resistance to authority, especially in Tibetan territory where it is sensitive to anything that could potentially feed separatist sentiment.

It was no different this time. Authorities swiftly launched their crackdown, arresting hundreds of people at protests while also raiding homes across the valley, according to one of our sources.

One unverified but widely shared clip appears to show Chinese policemen shoving a group of monks on a road, in what is thought to be an arrest operation.

Many were detained for weeks and some were beaten badly, according to our Tibetan sources whose family and friends were targeted in the crackdown.

One source shared fresh details of the interrogations. He told the BBC that a childhood friend was detained and interrogated over several days.

"He was asked questions and treated nicely at first. They asked him 'who asked you to participate, who is behind this'.

"Then, when he couldn't give them [the] answers they wanted, he was beaten by six or seven different security personnel over several days."

His friend sustained only minor injuries, and was freed within a few days. But others were not so lucky.

Another source told the BBC that more than 20 of his relatives and friends were detained for participating in the protests, including an elderly person who was more than 70 years old.

"Some of them sustained injuries all over their body, including in their ribs and kidneys, from being kicked and beaten... some of them were sick because of their injuries," he said.

Similar claims of physical abuse and beatings during the arrests have surfaced in overseas Tibetan media reports.

The UN letter also notes reports of detentions and use of force on hundreds of protesters, stating they were "severely beaten by the Chinese police, resulting in injuries that required hospitalisation".

After the crackdown, Tibetans in the area encountered even tighter restrictions, the BBC understands. Communication with the outside world was further limited and there was increased surveillance. Those who are still contactable have been unwilling to talk as they fear another crackdown, according to sources.

The first source said while some released protesters were eventually allowed to travel elsewhere in Tibetan territory, others have been slapped with orders restricting their movement.

This has caused problems for those who need to go to hospital for medical treatment and nomadic tribespeople who need to roam across pastures with their herds, he said.

The second source said he last heard from his relatives and friends at the end of February: "When I got through, they said not to call any more as they would get arrested. They were very scared, they would hang up on me.

"We used to talk over WeChat, but now that is not possible. I'm totally blocked from contacting all of them," he said.

"The last person I spoke to was a younger female cousin. She said, 'It's very dangerous, a lot of us have been arrested, there's a lot of trouble, they have hit a lot of us'... They didn't know what was going to happen to them next."

The BBC has been unable to find any mention of the protests and crackdown in Chinese state media. But shortly after the protests, a Chinese Communist Party official visited the area to "explain the necessity" of building the dam and called for "stability maintenance measures", according to one report.

A few months later, a tender was awarded for the construction of a Dege "public security post", according to documents posted online.

The letter from Chinese authorities to the UN suggests villagers have already been relocated and relics moved, but it is unclear how far the project has progressed.

The BBC has been monitoring the valley via satellite imagery for months. For now, there is no sign of the dam's construction nor demolition of the villages and monasteries.

The Chinese embassy told us authorities were still conducting geological surveys and specialised studies to build the dam. They added the local government is "actively and thoroughly understanding the demands and aspirations" of residents.

Development or exploitation?

China is no stranger to controversy when it comes to dams.

When the government constructed the world's biggest dam in the 90s - the Three Gorges on the Yangtze River - it saw protests and criticism over its handling of relocation and compensation for thousands of villagers.

In more recent years, as China has accelerated its pivot from coal to clean energy sources, such moves have become especially sensitive in Tibetan territories.

Beijing has been eyeing the steep valleys and mighty rivers here, in the rural west, to build mega-dams and hydropower stations that can sustain China's electricity-hungry eastern metropolises. President Xi Jinping has personally pushed for this, a policy called "xidiandongsong", or "sending western electricity eastwards".

Like Gangtuo, many of these dams are on the Jinsha (Dri Chu) river, which runs through Tibetan territories. It forms the upper reaches of the Yangtze river and is part of what China calls the world's largest clean energy corridor.

Gangtuo is in fact the latest in a series of 13 dams planned for this valley, five of which are already in operation or under construction.

The Chinese government and state media have presented these dams as a win-win solution that cuts pollution and generates clean energy, while uplifting rural Tibetans.

In its statement to the BBC, the Chinese embassy said clean energy projects focus on "promoting high-quality economic development" and "enhancing the sense of gain and happiness among people of all ethnic groups".

But the Chinese government has long been accused of violating Tibetans' rights. Activists say the dams are the latest example of Beijing's exploitation of Tibetans and their land.

"What we are seeing is the accelerated destruction of Tibetan religious, cultural and linguistic heritage," said Tenzin Choekyi, a researcher with rights group Tibet Watch. "This is the 'high-quality development' and 'ecological civilisation' that the Chinese government is implementing in Tibet."

One key issue is China's relocation policy that evicts Tibetans from their homes to make way for development - it is what drove the protests by villagers and monks living near the Gangtuo dam. More than 930,000 rural Tibetans are estimated to have been relocated since 2000, according to Human Rights Watch (HRW).

Beijing has always maintained that these relocations happen only with the consent of Tibetans, and that they are given housing, compensation and new job opportunities. State media often portrays it as an improvement in their living conditions.

But rights groups paint a different picture, with reports detailing evidence of coercion, complaints of inadequate compensation, cramped living conditions, and lack of jobs. They also point out that relocation severs the deep, centuries-old connection that rural Tibetans share with their land.

"These people will essentially lose everything they own, their livelihoods and community heritage," said Maya Wang, interim China director at HRW.

There are also environmental concerns over the flooding of Tibetan valleys renowned for their biodiversity, and the possible dangers of building dams in a region rife with earthquake fault lines.

Some Chinese academics have found the pressure from accumulated water in dam reservoirs could potentially increase the risk of quakes, including in the Jinsha river. This could cause catastrophic flooding and destruction, as seen in 2018, when rain-induced landslides occurred at a village situated between two dam construction sites on Jinsha.

The Chinese embassy told us that the implementation of any clean energy project "will go through scientific planning and rigorous demonstration, and will be subject to relevant supervision".

In recent years, China has passed laws safeguarding the environment surrounding the Yangtze River and the Qinghai-Tibetan plateau. President Xi has personally stressed the need to protect the Yangtze's upper reaches.

About 424 million yuan (£45.5m, \$60m) has been spent on environmental conservation along Jinsha, according to state media. Reports have also highlighted efforts to quake-proof dam projects.

Multiple Tibetan rights groups, however, argue that any large-scale development in Tibetan territory, including dams such as Gangtuo, should be halted.

They have staged protests overseas and called for an international moratorium, arguing that companies participating in such projects would be "allowing the Chinese government to profit from the occupation and oppression of Tibetans".

"I really hope that this [dam-building] stops," one of our sources said. "Our ancestors were here, our

temples are here. We have been here for generations. It is very painful to move. What kind of life would we have if we leave?"

### Missing in the Gray Zone? China's Maritime Militia Forces Around Taiwan

24 December 2024, The Diplomat, Ryan D. Martinson

While maritime militia forces are not playing a major role in China's multi-pronged pressure campaign against Taiwan, they are not completely absent from the battlespace.

One of the novel features of Beijing's recent all-domain pressure campaign against Taiwan has been the addition of coast guard forces to its coercive tool kit. In the past, when the People's Republic of China (PRC) rattled its saber across the strait, it relied heavily on the various branches of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), especially its navy, air force, and rocket forces. However, in August 2022 it expanded its repertoire by dispatching a 6,600-ton coast guard cutter to patrol the strait, one of several operational responses to then-U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to the island.

Since then, Beijing has repeatedly deployed coast guard cutters to waters around Taiwan and several of its outer islands, with the clear intent of undermining Taipei's sovereignty and threatening its security.

Many observers, including Taiwan's government, have categorized this new pattern of maritime coercion as "gray zone" (灰帶) actions. The term suggests similarities with PRC behavior in the South China Sea, where the gray zone concept is frequently evoked. But if China is indeed employing a gray zone approach against Taiwan, it appears to be doing so largely without its most infamous gray zone actor — the maritime militia.

To date, there has been little, if any, reporting of militia activities around Taiwan. This does not mean that they are not operating around the strait, just that they are not being incorporated into Beijing's pressure campaign.

In the South China Sea, the maritime militia is a key instrument of Beijing's policy to expand its influence and control over disputed maritime space. Often disguised as civilian fishing vessels, militia forces serve a range of functions, from showing the flag in PRC-claimed waters to physically blocking foreign mariners from using the sea. Due to their ambiguous identity and lack of visible armaments, their actions are less escalatory than those taken by other components of China's armed forces — at least so Chinese leaders believe. The maritime militia often works closely with the China Coast Guard, the PRC's other main gray zone force, two confederates in

coercion, each applying its respective strengths to impose China's will on its neighbors.

If the maritime militia is so central to the PRC's strategy in the South China Sea, how can we explain its apparent absence in waters around Taiwan? Why is Beijing relying entirely on coast guard forces in the cross-strait variant of its gray zone approach? Does it simply lack capable militia forces like those provided by the South China Sea provinces of Guangdong, Guangxi, and Hainan? Or can larger strategic and operational considerations explain the difference?

#### Fujian Province: a Militia Powerhouse

The simplest explanation for the apparent absence of militia forces in waters around Taiwan would be that China lacks capable units with firsthand experience in the Taiwan theater, and therefore has no choice but to rely on its coast guard to achieve its policy aims. However, a review of the available evidence quickly dispels this hypothesis.

For militia operations around Taiwan, the PRC would need to rely on mariners who routinely operate in these waters under their civilian guise. That means fishers from Fujian, the PRC province directly across the strait from Taiwan. Aside from having valuable experience in the theater, Fujian fishers look like they belong there, a necessary condition for operational concealment and ambiguity.

Fujian is home to a large fishing industry, which provides ample raw materials for maritime militia units. The responsibility for molding these fishing fleets into capable militia forces falls on the provincial military district, working through its municipal sub-districts (or garrisons) and their subordinate People's Armed Forces Departments (PAFDs). These PLA entities coordinate their efforts with local government officials, who fund militia-building initiatives, and local fisheries bureaus, which regulate the fleet when not serving militia functions.

The importance of civil-military cooperation in militia work ensures that records about the presence and disposition of maritime militia units are readily found in open sources. Based on the available information, Fujian has organized some significant portion of its very large fishing fleet into militia organizations.

As an example, take just the city of Fuzhou, home to 1,100 medium and large fishing vessels of the type best-suited for militia operations. In 2013, the city and its PLA garrison (福州警备区) began taking steps to bolster its maritime militia forces. In that year, the garrison created "pilot" maritime militia reconnaissance units and investigated ways to strengthen relevant capabilities. Starting in 2014, Fuzhou prioritized the building of maritime militia forces, creating a "maritime force construction leading small group" with an office in the garrison headquarters. The emphasis on augmenting maritime militia continued through subsequent years. By 2017,

the Fuzhou garrison had achieved "real-time command" of maritime militia units, allowing PAFDs to mobilize forces more easily for training and real-world operations.

While the garrison and its subordinate units developed the capabilities of local maritime militia forces, Fuzhou civilian authorities updated the regulations for using them, thereby ensuring their operational readiness. In 2014, for example, Fuzhou city government revised the regulations for mobilizing militia personnel and requisitioning civilian vessels for militia work. In 2018, it issued another document clarifying the standards for compensating civilian mariners whose boats, ships, and personnel are taken away from production to serve state and military requirements, as happens when militia forces are activated for duty. This improved the odds that militia personnel would answer the call for training or real world operations – a perennial challenge for the PAFDs charged with managing them.

Fuzhou's Lianjiang county, located near Taiwan's strategic Matsu island group, has made maritime militia development a particular priority. Its 13th Five Year Plan (2016–20) contains a section on promoting military-civil fusion, which calls for "prioritizing the construction of PLA reserves, maritime militia, and backbone militia forces." Lianjiang is home to two "national center fishing harbors," one each on the northern and southern coast of the Huangqi peninsula. These harbors are home to hundreds of fishing vessels, a significant (but unknown) portion of which belong to maritime militia units.

Lianjiang's maritime militia enterprise resembles militia-building practices in the South China Sea provinces, further suggesting its high degree of sophistication. First, it uses large fishing companies as maritime militia fronts. For example, Shunfan Fisheries Company (顺帆渔业有限公司), located in Huangqi Town, on the southern coast of the Huangqi peninsula, operates dozens of militia boats. The company headquarters contains a number of exhibits celebrating its martial prowess. Second, Lianjiang civilian and military authorities have designated larger civilian vessels to serve as maritime militia command ships (海上民兵指挥船), indicating preparation for extended maritime operations.

#### Different Circumstances

With its hundreds of fishing vessels and robust militia organization, Lianjiang county alone would be able to provide Beijing with the forces needed to operate in sensitive areas around Taiwan – if it made strategic and operational sense for them to do so. Assuming the forces are available, as they apparently are, why is China not using them?

The first, most obvious, explanation is that the two theaters are vastly different. The South China Sea is a large body of water, and Beijing claims jurisdiction over most of it (3.0 million sq km). Although the PRC operates the world's largest coast guard, it cannot be everywhere at once. Militia forces can fill the presence gaps, showing the flag, collecting intelligence, and taking action, when and where needed. The most contested sections of the South China Sea are also very remote from mainland China. As a result, ships and boats must spend large portions of their deployments just getting to and from operating areas — again, increasing the size of the fleet required to meet the mission.

The Taiwan theater is both much smaller and much closer to China. Most gray zone operations occur near Taiwan's outer islands and within the strait itself, with occasional demonstrations east of Taiwan. This places far less strain on China's existing coast guard forces and obviates a key function of the maritime militia, i.e., serving as an auxiliary fleet for the coast guard.

The maritime militia's other major attributes — ambiguous status and lack of armaments — may actually reduce its utility in the Taiwan theater, where Beijing is pursuing different policy aims. In the South China Sea, the maritime militia allows China to achieve local dominance without resorting to classical "gunboat diplomacy," which would damage China's relations with its neighbors and risk an armed conflict, possibly involving the United States.

The calculus is different with Taiwan, where the main goal is to intimidate Taiwanese leaders so they change their policies. The intrusive operations of Chinese maritime law enforcement forces, in the words of retired PLA Navy officer Cao Weidong (曹卫东), "put a squeeze on [Taiwan separatists'] sense of military security." This is a strategic effect that flows from power and authority, which the Chinese coast guard possesses but the maritime militia does not.

#### Different Roles

That the maritime militia is not playing a major role in China's pressure campaign against Taiwan does not mean it is totally absent from the battlespace. Indeed, evidence suggests that militia forces have been mobilized, like in the South China Sea, to operate in sensitive waters, just in a manner more appropriate to the strategic and operational circumstances.

Most notably, Fujian maritime militia units have been tasked with participating in coast guard exercises staged during periods of cross-strait tension, thereby helping to amplify the coercive signal sent to Taipei. One example occurred in May 2024, as part of Beijing's response to President Lai Ching-te's inauguration. In conjunction with the PLA Eastern

Theater Command's large-scale exercise (Joint Sword 2024A), the China Coast Guard sent a four-ship task force to patrol waters east of Taiwan. While there, the ships held a "comprehensive law enforcement drill" (综合执法演练) involving militia vessels.

The drill was clearly aimed at Taipei. It occurred within visual sight of the island, well inside its exclusive economic zone, and practiced "inspection and identification" (查证识别) and "warning and expulsion" (警告驱离), operations that the China Coast Guard had no business doing in these waters. The task force included three of the China Coast Guard's best-armed cutters — hulls 2303, 2304, and 2305 — members of a ship class derived from the PLA Navy's Type 054A frigate. While interviewed by PRC state media, a China Coast Guard officer, Captain Liu Jianfeng (刘剑锋), declared that his service would "continue to strengthen its patrols and law enforcement in China's jurisdictional waters" and "resolutely defend national sovereignty and security" — language clearly intended to alarm its audience in Taipei.

As part of the drill, the China Coast Guard used a real vessel to simulate a law enforcement action. PRC media coverage showed a China Coast Guard cutter dispatching small craft to approach and board a large fishing boat, the Minlianyu 60388. Commercially available ship traffic data suggests that at least one other "Minlianyu" fishing vessel participated in the drill.

For such a sensitive mission, the China Coast Guard would not requisition just any civilian fishing vessels — though in theory it probably could. Rather, it would select boats crewed by personnel best prepared for the task at hand, which unquestionably means members of China's maritime militia.

Minlianyu 60388 is registered in Fuzhou City's Lianjiang County, which, as discussed above, is home to a heavy concentration of maritime militia units. After the mission, the boat returned to the town of Tailu, on the northeast coast of the Huangqi peninsula. Tailu hosts at least two maritime militia units. Minlianyu 60388 might belong to either. The first is based in Xiubang Village (琇邦村). This unit was featured in a December 2015 issue of PLA Pictorial (解放军画报), where it was praised for its adoption of a new command and control application (called 榕兵一号) that could be installed on a smart phone or computer, allowing local military authorities to mobilize militia members more easily for training and real-world operations. The second possibility is the Tailu Village (苔藓村) maritime militia unit, whose unit leader, Sun Yu (孙宇), was



recognized as an outstanding militiaman in 2021 – suggesting that it too is an elite organization.

Fujian maritime militia forces played a similar supporting role during another major coast guard exercise that occurred near Kinmen on May 9, 2024, just before Lai's inauguration. It involved a number of Chinese "public vessels" (公务船), i.e., ships that belong to civilian coast guard agencies. The exercise included two Maritime Safety Administration cutters (Haixun 06 and Haixun 0802), three Fujian Marine and Fisheries Bureau cutters (CMS 8002, CMS 8027, and FLE 35501), and a China Rescue Service ship (Donghaijiu 113). To support the exercise, the organizers requisitioned at least three PRC fishing boats. Taiwanese authorities did not disclose their identities, but publicly available ship tracking data suggests they came from the Longhai District of Zhangzhou, a city west of Xiamen. Longhai is home to at least one maritime militia unit.

#### What Comes Next

In conclusion, while maritime militia forces are not playing a major role in China's multi-pronged pressure campaign against Taiwan, they are not completely absent from the battlespace. They are providing low-key support for China's coast guard forces, specifically, through the conduct of drills designed to threaten Taiwan's sovereignty and security in Taiwan-administered waters. This role makes sense, given the particular circumstances of the theater (small, close to China) and Beijing's policy aims, i.e., to amplify Taiwan's threat perceptions, neither of which calls for heavy maritime militia involvement.

However, just because the maritime militia has not been well-leveraged to date does not mean it will not be in the future. Fujian maritime militia units could be directed to fulfill other roles if Beijing chooses to further escalate cross-strait tensions. For instance, China could decide to enforce at least a partial closure of Taiwanese shipping traffic and raise the threat of blockade. In that case, it could mobilize maritime militia units to ensure adequate forces for such a labor-intensive operation. Beijing might also turn to the Fujian maritime militia if it needed to create a pretext for escalation. It could, for instance, order a maritime militia vessel to operate in a location or in a manner that would demand a forceful response from Taiwan. That response could then give Beijing a *casus belli*, justifying a decision to carry out kinetic strikes against Taiwanese ships, aircraft, and targets ashore, perhaps as a preliminary to a major attack.

In sum, China's decisions about when and how to use the maritime militia against Taiwan will be predicated on strategic and operational requirements, which could evolve over time. What is certain is that unit

availability will not be a limiting factor. In Fujian, the forces exist, and only await orders.

#### Opinion: The China factor in India-Nepal relations

24 December 2024, Telangana Today, Dhananjay Tripathi

While it is reasonable to assume a strong cultural bond between India and Nepal, complacency could be detrimental, especially in the face of tough competition from China

Recently, India-Nepal ties re-emerged in the news headlines due to KP Oli's decision to visit China. Oli, the present Prime Minister of Nepal, took the oath in July 2024. His visit to China drew the attention of Indian analysts as many believed it was a break of traditions. Oli opted for China over India for his first visit to the neighbourhood. However, Nepal experts allege that New Delhi has delayed the invitation.

Whatever the reason, he went to China, signed nine agreements, met President Xi Jinping and discussed the revival of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in what is termed a framework for Belt and Road Cooperation. It is to be noted that Nepal was a signatory of the BRI but due to apprehension of being overloaded by debt, it moved cautiously and the projects envisioned under it have not been operationalised according to the plan.

Failed BRI – A Case of Pokhara International Airport?

Due to the lacklustre progress of the BRI in Nepal, several projects that received support from China have since been classified under the BRI. A prime example of this is the Pokhara International Airport. This airport was constructed at a cost of over \$216 million, with nearly \$215 million provided by the Chinese government in the form of a soft loan. Although the airport is classified as an international facility, it currently has no direct international flights. To demonstrate its success, China arranged a chartered flight from Sichuan to Pokhara International Airport in June 2023. However, in practical terms, the number of international flights to this destination remains very limited.

#### Curious Case of Chinese Debt

There are several direct flights from Kathmandu to Pokhara. Nevertheless, experts believe that given the current revenue generation, it may be difficult to repay the loan within 20 years after the end of the initial grace period. Estimates indicate that Nepal must repay the loan for the construction of the airport with an interest rate of 2%, although some independent sources report the interest rate could be as high as 5%, in addition to other costs.

Interestingly, similar to other projects in South Asia, the contract to build the airport was awarded to a Chinese company. China CAMC Engineering

Company Limited was responsible for constructing Pokhara International Airport, resulting in a significant portion of the loan being recycled, as the construction contracts were granted to the Chinese firm.

The repayment amount, including interest, will be substantial for Nepal, especially considering the current flight operations at this airport. A report indicates that the airport requires approximately 100 daily domestic and 50 international flights per week to cover its expenses. Currently, there are no more than 30 domestic flights each day and no international flights operating from this airport. In summary, the airport will need an extraordinary intervention to repay the Chinese loan. There have been reports that both Prachanda and, more recently, Oli have requested concessions from China, but they have yet to receive a positive response from Beijing. Even for those who disagree with the “debt trap theory” in principle, this case provides grounds for examination.

India remains the largest source of foreign direct investment (FDI) in Nepal; however, China’s overall investment is increasing. In 2023, trade between China and Nepal reached approximately \$1.8 billion, which is an increase of more than 7% compared to the previous years. China is significantly investing in infrastructure projects, particularly in the energy sector, with many of these initiatives funded by Chinese capital. As a result, Chinese debt in Nepal is also rising. According to a World Bank report, this debt grew from \$0.07 billion in 2016 to \$0.26 billion in 2022. While this amount is still much lower than the Chinese debt owed by other South Asian countries, Nepal is concerned about the steady increase in this figure.

#### Strategy of China

Upon close observation, it is evident that China employs a two-pronged strategy to expand its influence in South Asia. The first approach involves straining the economies of these countries by flooding the market with its products, offering loans for unnecessary mega-infrastructure projects, and leveraging its economic power to secure investments for Chinese companies. The second focuses on cultivating a pro-China civil society and promoting political parties and leaders that align with its interests.

China provides generous scholarships to students, grants and funding for projects to think tanks and NGOs. It also offers travel opportunities for scholars, bureaucrats and journalists. Additionally, the country grants PhD fellowships and sends influential elites, academics and members of the Communist Party to various South Asian nations. According to reports, there has been a significant increase in training programmes organised by China for bureaucrats in

Nepal. This strategic initiative creates a favourable intellectual environment for China while sidelining or diminishing the voices of critical and independent thinkers in these countries.

For instance, despite the strengthening ties between China and Nepal, some analysts in Nepal are opposed to requesting debt restructuring from China due to concerns about potential backlash from Beijing. Additionally, many in Nepal employ the logic of balancing relations with India and China in the national political discourse. This approach tends to be more rhetorical than substantive. Nevertheless, the idea that Nepal must balance its relationships with both neighbours has become a widely accepted narrative.

#### What about India?

The discussion about China’s influence in Nepal cannot take place without addressing India’s role. The relationship between India and Nepal is rooted in history and is deeply connected through culture, extending beyond mere political considerations. It involves the people, their traditions and a sense of unity. Notwithstanding, there are contentious issues between the two nations, and China’s growing presence poses a challenge for New Delhi. Beijing has exploited regional tensions and strategically strengthened its foothold wherever India has encountered obstacles due to political factors.

Despite India’s continued investment in the region, it struggles to maintain its strong position, particularly evident in Nepal. At times, India’s foreign policy establishment seems to take certain aspects of this relationship for granted. While it is reasonable to assume a strong cultural bond between India and Nepal, complacency could be detrimental, especially in the face of tough competition from China.

India must work on reinforcing cultural ties with Nepal and engage more with civil society and the younger generation. Given Nepal’s developing status, there is an urgent need for attractive fellowships and enhanced exchange programmes. Additionally, Indian companies should consider investing in Nepal’s social sector to further strengthen these connections.

Many people view China as being more influential than India in Nepal, which is concerning. A more proactive approach from India, aimed at engaging the young and articulate generation, along with a genuine effort to address political differences, could significantly enhance India’s image in the region. Fortunately, some members of Nepal’s political class, regardless of their party affiliations, remain sceptical about China’s involvement, especially in the economic sector. However, this sentiment may not last indefinitely.

## Tibet under siege : The dark side of China's hydropower drive

23 December 2024, News Day



Tibet has been one of the major sufferer of China's Hydropower ambitions. According to a new International Campaign for Tibet, China's rapid Hydropower dam scheme has caused more damage to the Tibet's civilisation and the environment. Describing it as anti Tibet, International Campaign for Tibet report accused the Chinese Communist Party's aggressive pursuit of Hydropower stating that Beijing has no regards for Tibetan voices, environmental sustainability, and the well-being of downstream nations.

The report also accused the CCP of prioritizing political and economic ambitions over human and ecological consequences. According to the report hundreds of dams constructed or planned have covered the entire Tibetan plateau. China's rapid Hydropower dam scheme was causing irreparable damage to the Tibetan civilization, the environment, downstream nations, and the climate.

Tibet is not alone. several countries like Bangladesh, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam have been equal sufferers of China's Hydropower ambitions. At least 11 out of 13 Hydropower dams operated by Beijing have come under accusation of holding back upstream water during drought periods.

As a result, the flow of the Mekong river showed a significant drop in recent years that impacted agriculture, fishery and livelihood of millions of people in these countries.

Experts said that China's Hegemonic Hydropower Projects are a curse for its Asian Neighbours. "The scale and scope of the PRC's Hydropower dam spree is both unbelievable and unconscionable." said Tencho Gyatso, President of the International Campaign for Tibet. He accused Beijing of showing disrespect to the Tibetan people's rights and the climate.

Some of the key findings of the report have made startling revelations. The report stated that the dam

will dislocate 1.2 million people living close to dam projects, depriving them of livelihood.

More than 80 per cent of dams with a capacity of 100 MW or less than 100 MW pose threat to the Tibetan civilization, environmental sustainability, and the climate. Of them, 60 per cent are either in proposal or preparation stage, presenting opportunities to change course.

Experts said that the Chinese government would not take cognisance of the report as it wants to go ahead with its plan to construct dams. In February this year, a protest was organised against the construction of 1.1. million kilowatt Hydropower station on the Drichu River in Derge County (Dege in Mandarin), part of the Garze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province.

Derge is not part of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, whose borders were drawn up by the Chinese Communist Party, but is part of Kham, a historically Tibetan region. Also the protesters sought the withdrawal of the order for thousands of Tibetans to relocate from Upper Wonto and Shipa villages and six important monasteries – including the Wonto monastery, which was built in the 13th century and has priceless murals dating from that period.

The villages and monasteries are expected to be flooded once the dam's reservoir is complete. Multiple protests have taken place after February. The Diplomat had reported that these protests were muzzled by the government's crackdown. The police had arrested more than 1,000 Tibetans, including monks, and imposed a complete lockdown on these monasteries.

It also reported that many of these existing, planned, and under-construction Hydropower dams lack comprehensive Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs). The most astonishing was China's own approach towards dam-building in Tibet because it openly goes against China's own legislative framework such as laws government environmental disclosures, public interest environmental litigation, public feedback on planned Hydropower projects, and proper ESIA procedures. Since 2009, China has formulated and implemented three action plans on human rights and environmental issues.

Based on these regulations, China's government is well aware that certain special projects, like Hydropower plans, cause adverse environmental impact and directly affect the environmental rights of the public.

According to latest article in Made in China Journal, James Leibold reported about Tibet-Aid Project, stating that CCP initiative that pairs Tibet's administrative units with inland government actors is essentially meant to extend Beijing's settler-colonial enterprise and fortify Han dominance in the region.

Among the Tibet-Aid cadres championed in CCP propaganda are Han engineers committed to transforming Tibet's physical landscape through "civilizing" infrastructure projects. Leibold argued, "By unleashing a new legion of Han officials and settlers on to the Tibetan Plateau, Xi seeks to complete the discursive, demographic, and cultural integration of Tibet into a new Han empire." Whatever be the intention but the construction of Hydropower projects will erode local Tibetan sovereignty.

### **In Dharamshala, nonviolent Tibetan leaders grapple with Chinese occupation, Gaza war**

23 December 2024, The Times of Israel, Eliyahu Freedman



An activist pays his respect in front of portraits of Tibetan political prisoners released in 2015 from Chinese jails during an event organized by Students for a Free Tibet in Dharamshala, India, December 26, 2015. (AP Photo/Ashwini Bhatia)

As Israel and regional terror organizations battle it out, pacifist Buddhist scholars and activists see parallels – and crucial differences – between themselves and the Middle East

From the hills of Dharamshala, where exiled Tibetans have made their home for over six decades, the Israel-Hamas war has sparked profound reflection among Buddhist scholars and activists who see parallels – and crucial differences – with their own struggle against Chinese occupation.

"If you solve it through negotiation and dialogue, it is a permanent solution," says Geshe Lhakdor, director of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives and a former translator for the Dalai Lama. "If you solve it through military might – okay, today you are more powerful, you may win. The next day it is my turn. So there will never be a permanent settlement."

The Sino-Tibet conflict has a complex history, and its roots run deep.

"Tibet is the oldest occupied territory... China is the new colonist. The Chinese were the victims of colonization, but one night they shifted positions and became the colonizer," charged Tenzin Lekshay, spokesperson of the Central Tibetan Administration.

In this light, the Dalai Lama's Buddhist position in favor of nonviolence or the "Middle Way" approach has guided the Tibetan movement for decades toward a sustainable peace even as other social movements have adopted violent tactics. Yet the challenges of maintaining this moral stance amid worsening Chinese repression in Tibet are evident in Dharamshala, home of the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration.

"I personally believe that violence can bring nonviolence," said a leader of Students for a Free Tibet (SFT) in India, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"Nonviolence sometimes tempts or limits us to being neutral or passive. It is exhausting because it is like waiting for something big to happen... We use different tactics and approaches, but it still takes so much time," he said.

Even so, the SFT leader believes violence is only justified in particular circumstances: "The violence should only come from me, not from the whole community. If killing one person could bring widespread peace, then I would do it – but only if it does not escalate to more violence, if it does not escalate to the killing of masses."

Dharamshala, India, December 26, 2015. (AP Photo/Ashwini Bhatia)

DHARAMSHALA, India – From the hills of Dharamshala, where exiled Tibetans have made their home for over six decades, the Israel-Hamas war has sparked profound reflection among Buddhist scholars and activists who see parallels – and crucial differences – with their own struggle against Chinese occupation.

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A model head in the likeness of Chinese President Xi Jinping is hung upside down beneath a large banner from a building by activists from Students for a Free Tibet during a protest in Dharamshala, India, July 23, 2020. (AP/Ashwini Bhatia)

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#### Advertisement

This perspective reflects a growing tension within the younger generation of Tibetan activists grappling with decades of stalled progress and what activists see as the systematic erasure of Tibet's identity through China's policy of mass Han Chinese settlement in the region.

This generational shift became more apparent in December 2023, when SFT's New York headquarters issued a statement strongly supporting Palestinians and drawing explicit parallels between Israeli and Chinese tactics of colonization. The statement condemned "Israel's settler colonial violence" and highlighted similarities in how the two countries rename territories and prevent refugees from returning home. The position marked a departure from the more measured approach traditionally taken by Tibetan organizations in India.

In Israel, the 'language of the gun'

The connection between Israelis and Tibetans runs deep, with Israeli travelers having frequented Dharamshala for decades. Lhakdor himself has visited Israel "seven or eight times" to transmit Buddhist teachings. "I remember I gave a public talk on nonviolence in Jerusalem... when I came out, a very tall Israeli gentleman with this white cap on his head... he said, 'Your talk is very good, but here people only understand the language of [the gun].'"

While the stark reality of the Middle East presents a challenging test case for Buddhist principles of nonviolence, Tibetan leaders maintain that military solutions only perpetuate cycles of conflict.



Tibetan poet and activist Tenzin Tsundue in Dharamshala. (Eliyahu Freedman)

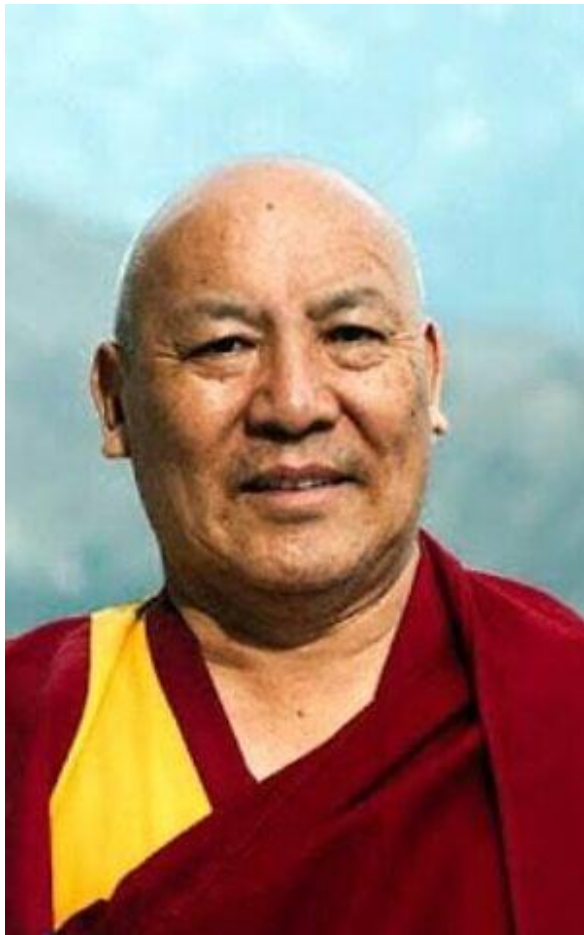
"Instead of killing other people, you kill your anger. Instead of occupying other lands and other wealth, you must conquer your own hatred and greed. The movement for freedom is inside... Because your enemy is not outside. The enemy is inside," said Tenzin Tsundue, a prominent Tibetan poet and activist who has been jailed by China 16 times for his pro-Tibet activities.

For these Tibetan leaders, events in Gaza have reinforced both the difficulty and the necessity of their nonviolent approach.

Lhakdor points to the indiscriminate nature of modern warfare: "With these sophisticated machines, they say that they are not using it on children and women... but the machines, once you use this ballistic missile or atom bomb, they can't discriminate. There will be collateral damage, which we are seeing everywhere."

As opposed to the violent methods utilized by Palestinian so-called "freedom fighters" in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Lhakdor notes with pride that "Tibetans never hijacked a Chinese airplane. Tibetans never threw bombs at Chinese embassies, which are everywhere in the world. Because of this total dedication to nonviolence, I can easily imagine it must have saved the lives of several thousands of people."





*Geshe Lhakdor, director of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives. (Public domain)*

Lhakdor believes the current devastation in Israel and Gaza could have been prevented with earlier intervention.

"People who are responsible, people who are supposed to be leaders, they don't have the vision or the courage to deal with problems right in the beginning, when such problems are about to arise," he said. "It's really like dousing the spark right at the time, so that later on there is no forest fire. When you don't extinguish that little spark, then later on when it becomes a conflagration of fire, it's very difficult to deal with."

"Some of these leaders, they don't care about other people. They let people go to war and die there, and just give orders and sit in a comfortable room."

According to Lhakdor, leaders are needed who understand that "we are living on this one single Earth. We are not living on two different planets... We are breathing the same air from there. We are enjoying the same environment from there."

Yet there's also frustration that this peaceful approach has garnered less international attention than more violent struggles.

Tsundue observes that "there is so much support for violence" — both for the Palestinians or Israelis — while "the Dalai Lama and the Tibetans who have been fighting for freedom with nonviolence don't receive the same kind of attention."

While the Dalai Lama has not commented on the current conflict — his office citing the 89-year-old leader's reduced public engagements in recent years — he answered a question in 2014 on that year's Gaza war, known by Israel as Operation Protective Edge.

"All major religious traditions — Islam, Christianity, Hindu, of course, Jainism and Buddhism — all major religious traditions — teach us the practice of compassion, love, forgiveness, tolerance," the Dalai Lama said at the time. "So then a person who believes in a certain faith, why do you involve in such violence? It is really very, very sad."

Despite the heightened tensions and cycles of violence in Gaza and around the world, these Tibetan leaders maintain their conviction that lasting peace can only emerge through internal transformation, not external force.

"Freedom with ethics will give you freedom now and also in the future," Tsundue said.

### **Can cultural exchanges fix 'ambiguity and uncertainty' in China-India ties?**

23 December 2024, SCMP, Maple Leung

Chinese expert on South Asia says the regional powers, long plagued by border disputes, should work harder to bridge perception gap



China and India should work harder to promote exchanges and bridge the perception gap between two countries, according to a leading Chinese expert on South Asia.

Zhang Jiadong, director of the South Asian Studies Centre at Fudan University, said the level of people-to-people and cultural exchanges between China and India lagged "far behind", considering the strength and international status of the two Asian powers.

This has resulted in "ambiguity and uncertainty" in their understanding of each other, Zhang said in an article published in the Global Times on Monday.

"This problem needs more frequent people-to-people and cultural exchanges to alleviate it," he wrote.

The academic noted that after years of tensions as a result of conflicts along their disputed Himalayan border, a lack of robust exchanges between China

and India had contributed to misunderstandings – exchanges that were vital for fostering mutual trust. Zhang’s commentary came as he and other Chinese scholars, including those from the Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences, wrapped up talks with a delegation from the India Foundation – a think tank affiliated with India’s ruling Bharatiya Janata Party – in China’s Tibet autonomous region.

The discussions in regional capital Lhasa, aimed at easing tensions between the two nations, were the second phase of the Dialogue on China-India Relations. The first phase was held at Fudan University in Shanghai last month. The dialogue is an example of “track 2” diplomacy, which brings together non-state actors from both sides for discussions.

For decades, China-India relations have been troubled by the dispute over their shared border.

In 2020, bilateral ties plunged to their lowest point in decades following a series of stand-offs along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) that separates Indian-controlled Ladakh and Chinese-controlled Aksai Chin. One clash in the Galwan River valley in June of that year left 20 Indian troops and at least four Chinese soldiers dead.

Direct flights between China and India were cut during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the Kailash Mansarovar pilgrimage – a spiritual sojourn undertaken by followers of Hinduism, Buddhism and other religions – to Tibet’s Mount Kailash and Mapham Yumtso Lake has not yet resumed.

However, the two sides have made efforts to bridge the gap in bilateral relations.

Chinese President Xi Jinping met Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the Brics summit in Russia in October, just a day after the countries announced an agreement on troop disengagement at the border, which led to the end of the high-altitude stand-off.

On Wednesday, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Indian national security adviser Ajit Doval held their first special representatives meeting in five years. During the meeting, Wang said it was crucial for both sides to establish a correct understanding of each other and resolve differences through dialogues.

Zhang said that to do so, China and India had some catching up to do when it came to people-to-people exchanges.

He noted that Beijing and New Delhi had been working to resume stalled exchanges, and the countries held their first track 2 dialogue since 2020 in India last November.

But other activities, including student exchanges, have not recovered as quickly.

During the 2019-2020 academic year, there were about 20,000 Indian students studying in China, according to Zhang.

After the Galwan Valley clash in 2020, the number of newly registered Indian students in China dropped to nearly zero. The figure then rose to 8,580 during the 2021-2022 school year before dropping to 6,500 the next year, he said.

The number of Chinese students studying in India is even smaller, with just 166 enrolled for the 2020-2021 academic year, which dropped to 25 for 2023-2024.

### **British Museum faces backlash over use of “Xizang” for Tibet**

23 December 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup



The British museum in London, England (Photo/ Britannica)

The British Museum in London is facing growing criticism over its use of the term “Xizang” in its Silk Roads exhibition, which Tibetan groups accuse of misrepresenting Tibetan heritage and supporting China’s narrative on Tibet.

Tibetan community leaders and human rights groups in England have demanded the removal of the term “Xizang Autonomous Region” from exhibition materials, arguing that it distorts Tibet’s cultural identity.

The controversy emerged from the museum’s use of the phrase “Tibet or Xizang Autonomous Region” in labels and catalogues describing Tibetan artefacts. Critics argue that this language disregards Tibet’s historical and political context, reinforcing the Chinese government’s narrative on Tibet.

Tsering Passang, Founder and Chairman of the Global Alliance for Tibet & Persecuted Minorities (GATPM), expressed concern, stating, “The British Museum’s adoption of ‘Xizang Autonomous Region’ misrepresents Tibet and contributes to efforts to erase Tibetan culture and history.”



Tibetan artefacts labelled as belonging to "Xizang" instead of Tibet (Photo/Facebook)

The museum's Silk Roads exhibition, which opened in September 2024, highlights cultural exchanges between Asia and Europe between 500 and 1000 CE. However, the terminology used to describe Tibetan objects has drawn sharp criticism. In a letter to the museum's director, Dr. Nicholas Cullinan OBE, both GATPM and the Tibetan community in Britain requested that the term be removed, asserting that it legitimises China's claims over Tibet.

"This issue is not just about language," said Phuntsok Norbu, Chairman of the Tibetan Community in Britain. "It is about how history and culture are presented to the public. By using the term 'Xizang,' the museum diminishes Tibetan identity."

Tibetan groups are now demanding immediate action, including the removal of the term "Xizang" from all materials, a public apology to the Tibetan community, and consultations with Tibetan scholars to ensure future exhibitions reflect Tibetan history properly. "The British Museum must ensure it does not become a platform for Chinese propaganda," said Passang. "This is a matter of respect for Tibetan culture and history."

In its response to the initial complaint, the British Museum defended the use of "Tibet or Xizang Autonomous Region," claiming it reflects the current political designation of the region. However, critics argue that this position overlooks the political implications of such terminology. "This is not just about labels; it's about the museum's role in shaping global understanding of a culture under threat," said Norbu. Tibetan groups are calling for the British Museum to uphold ethical standards in its exhibitions. "The museum has a responsibility to present history with integrity and accuracy," Passang stated.

The incident also highlights a broader pattern of controversy regarding the representation of Tibet in international museums and institutions. This controversy is not isolated to the British Museum. Other prominent institutions, such as the Musée du Quai Branly and Musée Guimet in Paris, have similarly adopted terms like "Xizang" and "Himalayan World," which critics argue dilute

Tibetan identity and support Beijing's political agenda.

In September, the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris responded to widespread public outcry by removing the term "Xizang" from its descriptions of Tibetan artefacts. The museum reverted to using "Tibet" in its catalogue and exhibition labels for items related to Tibet following pressure from the Tibetan community and human rights groups. However, the Musée Guimet has resisted similar demands. After 12 protests, the museum's director, Yannick Lintz, refused to rename its exhibit "Himalayan World" to "Tibet," despite calls from Tibetan advocates who contend that the current title undermines Tibet's cultural and historical significance.

### The Environmental Toll of China's Exploitation in Tibet

22 December 2024, Greek City Times, Paul Antonopoulos

On October 15 this year, 29 year old Tibetan environmental activist Tsongon Tsering was sentenced to eight months in prison in Sichuan Province by the People's Republic of China, after he took to the Kuaishou short video platform to share a five-minute message to reveal the illegal sand-mining operations of Anhui Xianhe Construction Engineering Company, in the administrative region of Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture. The company's actions, carried out in the Dangchu River—a vital waterway feeding into Asia's major rivers, including the Yangtze and Yellow Rivers—have severely disrupted the environment and the livelihoods of local Tibetans. Despite his efforts to bring attention to the issue, he was detained and later sentenced. The broader implications of his imprisonment are deeply concerning.

This is the fate of any Tibetan environmentalist who attempts to highlight the illegal and environmentally activities carried out by the Chinese in TAR. Prior to the Chinese occupation, Tibet was ecologically stable, but since 1950 when the People's Liberation Army (PLA) entered the region, rampant destruction of its resources have been carried out on a large scale.

Members of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile (TPiE) recently convened in New Delhi (Dec 17-19, 2024) to discuss a host of issues for boosting the Tibetan campaign against the Chinese occupation rule in their homeland and towards a negotiated peaceful resolution of the issue. Among the issues raised in a 12-point resolution which seeks to "resolve the Tibet-China conflict through the Middle Way Policy and seek genuine autonomy within the PRC's constitution," the exploitation of Tibet's natural resources also features. The TPiE has called on the

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) "to initiate scientific studies on the PRC's exploitation of Tibet's natural resources and its adverse effects on global climate change."

Tibet is known as the "Third Pole" due to its vast ice reserves, serving as the principal watershed for Asia. China calls Tibet its "Number One Water Tower." Climate change and resource exploitation have led to rapid glacial melting, affecting water flow in major Asian rivers. The exploitation of water resources has caused landslides, floods, and pollution, impacting downstream regions that depend on these rivers.

A new report by the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), reveals that China's rapid hydropower dam projects are causing irreversible harm to Tibetan culture, the environment, downstream nations, and the climate. The report, titled "Chinese hydropower - Damning Tibet's culture, community, and environment", combines detailed regional research with advanced Geographic Imaging Software (GIS) analysis, examining 193 hydroelectric dams built or planned in Tibet since 2000.

One stark example is the 2,240-megawatt Khamtok hydroelectric dam in eastern Tibet's Derge County, which will displace thousands of Tibetans, demolish their villages, and destroy invaluable cultural sites, including centuries-old Buddhist monasteries. The report highlights the significant and detrimental impact these projects have on local populations, religious sites, and the surrounding environment.

China's present development policies in Tibet relating to dam building and hydropower generation, land reclamation, settling nomads and fencing of grasslands, afforestation, conversion of farmland to grassland and forest, all sound impressive on paper, but may not be as well thought through or appropriate. Tibetan environmentalists have serious reservations over the wisdom and implementation of China's development policies on the plateau.

One of the greatest threats to Tibetan people, culture, and environment is the massive influx of Chinese civilians and military personnel into Tibet, especially through population transfer programmes. The Tibetan Plateau now sustains a growing human population. Beijing's solution is to pour in more subsidies and enforce extensive urbanisation.

Conversion of grassland to cropland, reclamation of traditional pastures of semi-nomads to allow commercial development, growing rapeseed on low-lying pastures around Lake Kokonor by Chinese settlers and military units, uncontrolled gold mining and illegal harvesting of wild medicinal herbs, infrastructure development such as highways, new townships for settlers and railroad tracks have led to the degradation of Tibet's grasslands and that this is having serious consequences on the livelihood of Tibetan nomads as well as affecting climate patterns.

China does not acknowledge that its policies are the cause for grassland degradation. Undermining the role of Tibet's nomads has resulted in a grassland crisis wherein the combined impacts of erosion, fencing, sedentarisation, debt, poverty, taxation, toxic weed invasions, soil loss, threatens the very survival of the nomadic way of life.

Environmental issues deserve to be considered in their own right, on their merit as part of the heritage of the world. Whether Tibet's political issue is resolved or not, the environmental issue cannot be neglected as it is directly related to the welfare of the people.

China claims that Tibet is experiencing growth and prosperity, but the reality is that, under Chinese rule, Tibetans are impoverished, marginalised, and excluded; the sensitive and globally important ecology of Tibet is deteriorating; and many plant and animal species face extinction.

Mining in Tibet is spreading widely without consulting the local Tibetans and without proper environmental impact assessment. Beijing has increasingly enticed foreign investment and technical expertise into the exploitation of mineral resources in Tibet. Tibet comprises 1/8th of the land area of China, and is rich in mineral ores. Extensive gold mining is conducted in Tibet. Modern gold mining technology that Chinese use in Tibet involves machine, chemical and water intensive processes in which hundreds of tons of rocks are moved and destroyed for every ounce of gold extracted. Since cyanide is used as a processing agent by the gold mining industries, the downstream environmental risks cannot be neglected especially because mines of interest to western companies are all situated near rivers. One tablespoon of two percent cyanide solution is enough to kill a human being. Moreover, the nature of mining activity is such that it provides absolutely nothing to the local Tibetan communities other than few unskilled job opportunities, often in risky and toxic environments

Critics had long questioned China's claim that the development of Tibet was the sole reason behind the building of the 1,956-km Siling-Lhasa Railway. In fact 16 large copper, lead, zinc, iron and, possibly, crude oil deposits exist along the railway line. And this is the real motivation for China to spend a colossal \$ 3.7 billion on Tibet's railway.

Areas of the Tibetan Plateau bordering China are already highly industrialised, with little attention paid to pollution control. In the arid Tsaidam Basin of Tibet's far northeast region of Amdo, oil fields pump two million tons of crude oil annually. Aluminium smelters, asbestos and lead and zinc mining are expanding under the patronage of the Chinese Government. Tibetans are powerless to appeal.



The ecosystem of Tibet is not only important for the inhabitants of Tibet but it has an effect on the environment of the whole of Asia due to Tibet being the source of the larger rivers and also because the Tibetan Plateau controls the monsoon patterns, as clearly established by scientists. The immediate effects of this are felt in India, China, Burma, Bangladesh, Pakistan and other countries downstream.

### **The complexities of India's relations with Tibet and China**

22 December 2024, The Sunday Guardian, Khedroob Thondup

The price India pays for better relations with China is multifaceted.

In the intricate dance of international relations, India finds itself in a delicate position, balancing its historical ties with Tibet and the Dalai Lama against the pragmatic need to foster better relations with China. This balancing act comes with significant costs, both politically and morally.

India has long been a sanctuary for the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) since the Tibetan uprising in 1959. The presence of the Tibetan spiritual leader and the exiled government in Dharamshala has been a point of contention in Sino-Indian relations. China views the Dalai Lama as a separatist threat, and his activities are seen as undermining Chinese sovereignty over Tibet.

In recent years, India has had to navigate this complex relationship with increasing caution. The need to maintain a stable and cooperative relationship with China, especially in the face of economic and geopolitical pressures, has led to a more restrained approach towards the Dalai Lama and the CTA. This includes limiting their public engagements and reducing official interactions, which can be seen as a concession to Chinese sensitivities.

China is one of India's largest trading partners, and the economic interdependence between the two nations cannot be ignored. Improved relations with China could lead to significant economic benefits, including increased trade, investment, and collaboration on global issues such as climate change and regional security. However, these potential gains come at the cost of compromising on India's historical support for Tibetan autonomy and the moral high ground it has traditionally held on human rights issues.

Restricting the activities of the Dalai Lama and the CTA poses a moral dilemma for India. The Dalai Lama is not just a political figure but a global symbol of peace and human rights. Limiting his influence and the operations of the CTA could be seen as a

betrayal of the Tibetan cause and a compromise on India's commitment to human rights and democratic values. This could also affect India's image on the global stage, where it is often seen as a champion of democratic principles and human rights.

The price India pays for better relations with China is multifaceted. While the economic and strategic benefits of a closer relationship with China are clear, the moral and ethical costs are significant. India must carefully weigh these factors as it navigates its foreign policy, ensuring that it does not lose sight of its core values and historical commitments in the pursuit of pragmatic diplomacy.

### **China 'not dreading' Trump 2.0, but reforms will decide who wins big power game**

21 December 2024, SCMP, Orange Wang

US-China ties to 'get rockier', Chinese political scientist Yan Xuetong warns, but also sees Trump term benefiting China 'in several ways'

China is "not dreading" Donald Trump's return to the White House and might actually benefit in several ways despite fears of "rockier" times ahead, a noted Chinese political scientist has said.

How the rivalry turns out will depend on reforms at home and whether China can "do a better job" of it, according to Yan Xuetong, dean of the institute of international relations at Tsinghua University.

This would also determine whether China could narrow the "power gap" with the United States, Yan wrote in an article for Foreign Affairs on Friday.

The relationship was going to "get rockier" over the next four years, Yan warned, with the US president-elect's rhetoric and cabinet choices showing a resolve to double down on the hardline approach towards China seen during his first term in office.

Still, China had "learned a great deal" from his first stint, giving it the confidence to face any tensions during the second Trump administration, Yan argued, while all but ruling out the likelihood of a military clash.

"[Trump] will soon arrive in the White House with the intention of containing China, but Chinese leaders are not dreading his return," he wrote.

With less than a month to go for Trump's inauguration on January 20, China-US relations are widely expected to enter a new period of uncertainty. Much of the rest of the world is also bracing for the return of Trump and his "America first" agenda to the Oval Office.

Yan said that while Trump was likely to push harder for wider trade decoupling with China, including drastic cuts in access to US markets, Beijing was "likely to retaliate".

"The tit-for-tat dynamic may drive the simmering trade war between the two powers to a new peak,



with damaging consequences for the global economy as many other countries scramble to adopt protectionist policies of their own."

Trump said on the campaign trail that he would impose tariff increases of 60 per cent or more on goods imported from China.

Following his victory last month, he pledged that one of his first acts in office would be to impose an extra 10 per cent tariff on goods from China and a 25 per cent tax on all products entering the country from Canada and Mexico.

Chinese President Xi Jinping warned earlier this month that "there will be no winner" in a tariff or tech war between China and the US, and vowed that Beijing would firmly safeguard its interests.

The new US administration was also likely to ramp up military pressure on Beijing, especially when it came to the South China Sea and Taiwan, Yan noted.

It would "hardly be surprising" if Trump or his officials provoked a crisis similar to that which followed then-US House speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in 2022, he warned. Pelosi's visit prompted a furious Beijing to suspend a range of US exchanges, with the ice only breaking after a presidential summit in November last year.

However, Yan also said he expected Trump to seek to avoid overt conflict with China and focus on domestic matters instead.

At the same time, Beijing was not about to draw up a timetable for reunification with Taiwan as it was concerned mainly with economic growth, he added.

Beijing sees Taiwan as part of China to be reunited by force if necessary. The US, like most countries, does not recognise Taiwan as an independent state, but is opposed to any attempt to take the self-governed island by force and is committed to supplying it with weapons.

"In practice, a Trump presidency may benefit China in several ways," Yan wrote.

Trump's relative disinterest in ideological issues might take the edge of the US-China rivalry, he suggested. "Economic and strategic conflicts may increase between Beijing and Washington during Trump's second term, but they will not escalate into ideological conflicts that place the two states on a direct collision course."

Also, Trump's "political isolationism" might lead the US to reduce its stake in protecting traditional allies, Yan forecast.

He said this would drive those states – both in Europe and East Asia – to hedge their bets between the US and China to offset the unpredictability of the Trump White House.

If Trump were to cut military aid to Ukraine, US allies in Europe seeking to shore up their economies to better support Kyiv might become "more forthright

hedgers", giving China "fresh opportunities" to build ties with those countries, Yan said.

However, he added that reforms were key. "Although Trump's isolationism certainly creates opportunities for Beijing to improve its relations with US allies, reforms at home will really determine the course of the competition between the two powers," he wrote. Other Chinese analysts have also warned that the biggest risk to Beijing during Trump 2.0 would be US government overhauls driven by tech billionaire Elon Musk.

Yan said that if Chinese leaders did a better job than Trump of implementing domestic reforms in the next four years, the power gap with the US could be narrowed.

"But if Trump does a better job than China in this aspect – and eschews damaging foreign conflicts and entanglements – the power gap ... will get bigger," he warned.

### **COP29 Failed the 'Third Pole': Wither Tibet in the Climate Agenda?**

21 December 2024, The Diplomat, Varuna Shankar and Jagannath Panda

The U.N. process shows little appetite for addressing the urgent climate crisis on the Tibetan Plateau – in part due to China's apathy.

On November 12, at the 29th Conference of the Parties (COP29) to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Baku, Azerbaijan, the leaders of six Hindu Kush Himalaya countries met to discuss the climate crisis that has reached epic proportions. Out of the eight countries – namely Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan – only Taliban-ruled Afghanistan and Myanmar, now under a military junta, were perhaps justifiably absent.

The broader Himalaya region, called the "Third Pole," which includes the Tibetan Plateau, is a global biodiversity hotspot and has the largest reservoir of freshwater outside the two Arctic and Antarctica polar regions, among other important features. In view of the dangers of a Himalayan meltdown, the meeting – hosted by Bhutan's Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay – vehemently expressed the need for "coordination and support" at global forums to "represent and amplify" regional concerns that have global implications.

However, two factors highlight the complications and even the inadequacy of holding vital meetings in such an almost incidental manner: One is the general declining trust in multilateral climate conferences amid low political will. This year it was particularly apparent because of the lack of attendance of the heads of state of major powers and some of the biggest carbon emitters, including Brazilian President

Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Chinese President Xi Jinping, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, and outgoing U.S. President Joe Biden.

In addition, the election of Donald Trump – a well-known climate change skeptic who withdrew the United States from the Paris Climate Accord during his first term – as the next U.S. president has undone any hope there was left in securing international climate solidarity. And that's not to mention the inherent ethical dilemmas of having two big, influential oil producers hosting back-to-back COP summits (the UAE in 2023 and Azerbaijan in 2024). It highlights that countries with clout – including China, which continues to “elevate its position” at the U.N. bodies – have dominated the global climate forums.

The second problem is the absence of core Himalayan issues in the main UNFCCC agenda, which is governed not just by financial intricacies and inconveniences but unfortunately by “the very worst of political opportunism,” as the Marshall Islands’ climate envoy put it. In particular, the acute marginalization of Tibetan representation in these multilateral climate forums, where China reigns supreme, has only hampered regional concerns from being truly voiced, let alone amplified.

Against such a scenario, what more can the multilateral forums do? How should the global community – including India – respond to China’s apathy for the climate crisis in Tibet?

**The COP29 Upside: 11th Hour Consensus as the Sole Face-Saver?**

COP29 was dubbed the “climate finance COP,” formally known as the New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG). After two weeks of intensive negotiations and several years of preparatory work, the new financial goal is a “course correction” on global climate action. It has tripled the finance to developing countries, from the previous goal of \$100 billion annually announced in 2009 to \$300 billion a year by 2035. COP29 also pledged to continue efforts to harness all actors from public and private sources to scale up finance to developing countries to \$1.3 trillion per year. The climate framework intends to cover all greenhouse gases and all sectors to keep the 1.5 degrees Celsius warming limit within reach.

The new commitment builds on significant strides forward in global climate action at COP27 and COP28. A historic Loss and Damage Fund was agreed upon at COP27, while COP28 delivered a global agreement to transition away from all fossil fuels in energy systems, triple renewable energy, and boost climate resilience.

An agreement on carbon markets is another significant step. The final building blocks that set out

how carbon markets will operate under the Paris Agreement Crediting Mechanism have been agreed upon. This includes the standards for a centralized carbon market under the U.N. (Article 6.4 mechanism) to operationalize country-to-country trading and a carbon crediting mechanism. It entails clarity on how countries will authorize the trade of carbon credits and how registries tracking this will operate.

Furthermore, the transparent process of technical reviews would ensure environmental integrity. This includes mandatory checks for projects against strong environmental and human rights protections. It ensures that a project cannot proceed without explicit, informed agreement from Indigenous peoples. It also allows anyone affected by a project to appeal a decision or file a complaint. This will benefit developing countries receiving new flows of finance and the least developed countries by providing capacity-building support to get a foothold in the market.

In terms of concrete steps aimed at the Himalayan ecosystem, there were a few high-level plenary sessions at COP29 such as the “Resource Mobilization for Climate Adaptation in Asia’s High Mountains,” which stressed the “urgent need for increased investment in climate adaptation” in this region. These seem mostly ineffectual, in-name-only steps. In contrast, the launch of G-ZERO – a forum of carbon-negative and carbon-neutral small countries, which prominently includes Bhutan (also its permanent secretariat) – at COP29 is truly inspirational. Such actions that aim to “enhance carbon sinks and promote nature-positive pathways” will go a long way to build a positive ideology needed to counter climate change in the Himalayas.

As far as Tibet’s participation in COP29 goes, the two Tibetan delegates – Dechen Palmo and Dhondup Wangmo – raised environmental concerns at some events. They even launched a campaign to raise awareness about the risks posed by hydropower projects in China, particularly the Derge Dam – a hugely controversial project that had resulted in mass protests and a brutal crackdown by the Chinese government earlier this year. Yet the token participation of two Tibetans in a few events at the sidelines of the summit is clearly not enough.

The fact of the matter is that despite the adoption of the “Baku Workplan,” which took a decisive step forward to elevate the voices of Indigenous peoples and local communities in climate action, neither the Hindu Kush Himalaya region nor its peoples, including Tibetans, have been included in the mainstream discussion and, more importantly, in policymaking on climate change.

**China’s Tibet Apathy: Accelerating Regional Climate Risks**

That climate change is wreaking havoc in the Tibetan Plateau is old news: For years, it has been established that global warming is not only causing Tibet's glaciers to melt and permafrost to thaw at an alarming rate but also accelerating several extreme weather events such as flash floods. In 2019, a special report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warned that up to two-thirds of the region's glaciers would disappear by the end of the century if carbon emissions were not cut drastically.

On top of the challenges due to global warming, China's so-called "unprecedented" development policies have hastened Tibet's climate crisis. China's relentless pursuit of infrastructure, including helipads, rails, and road networks, as well as dual-use military facilities is causing environmental degradation. That's on top of the human costs that come with the displacement of nomadic and farming communities due to the (over)damming and diversion of Tibet's rivers.

China's Tibet policy is driven by its need to fill the demands of Han-majority regions, including access to Tibet's water or mineral resources (reportedly also including rare earths). It also has a larger securitization angle: building excessive military infrastructure to not only clamp down on all separatist activities but also create conditions for a heavily militarized border, particularly against India. China's increasing militarization in Himalayan territories and influence in countries such as Pakistan and Nepal also have repercussions for the instability of the South Asian region as a whole.

China is also using its control over Tibet's water resources to slowly develop into a water hegemon. Ten major rivers, from the Mekong to the Yarlung Tsampo (Brahmaputra in India) originate in Tibet, and China is planning or has already executed major dams on a number of these rivers. Beyond the impact on Tibet's people and environment, such actions have given rise to concerns about China's intent to block access to water to downstream countries.

This has heated up the already tense geopolitical climate in South and Southeast Asia. China stands accused of using financial incentives as well as economic coercion to clamp down either dissent or disagreement over China's "core national interests," as well as to fulfill its various strategic goals.

**The Imperative for Climate Solidarity: Beyond Multilateral Unity?**

Undoubtedly, the future of Asia's high mountains depends on the decisions of the global climate bodies and the collective efforts taken to build climate-resilient communities and protect these vital ecosystems. A unified effort to combat these challenges would mean moving beyond the business-as-usual approach and focusing on targeted

investments and mobilization of international support. There is a need to quantify economic costs for loss and damage to the specific ecosystem to drive new investments and support stronger policy coordination.

In the Himalayan region, as raised by the Himalayan ministers' council at COP29, tackling transboundary issues with a common approach has to be given the spotlight. Some of these issues include but are not limited to cryosphere risk monitoring, disaster preparedness, increasing air pollution, biodiversity conservation, and innovative financing solutions.

Support at global forums like the U.N. climate conferences to represent and amplify common issues and concerns is critical in attracting global attention to the Himalayan region. This would hopefully also allow access to global funds, such as the Global Environment Facility, which is a partnership of 18 agencies (including United Nations agencies, multilateral development banks, national entities, and international NGOs) and U.N. financial mechanisms such as the Adaptation Fund and Green Climate Fund (GCF), as well as other potential innovative financing solutions. Such an imperative will go a long way to fulfill the funding need that was highlighted by Bhutan's Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources Karma Tshering at COP29.

Moreover, the multilateral partnership must prioritize the Himalayan climate crisis in their common agenda. Four years earlier, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 Ministerial Mountain Summit had declared some common goals, including holding a biennial summit for the eight Hindu Kush Himalaya countries and creating a task force to monitor and assess the calls for action. This needs to be taken forward with renewed momentum at the COP30 to be held in Brazil.

While multilateral cooperation is a must, there is also a need to amplify the voices of the marginalized and suppressed communities in the high mountains. Particularly, the Tibetan Plateau and its people need the international community, including India and the West, to check China's growing inroads into the Tibetan landscape. Be it China's excessive damming of Tibetan rivers, mining, or construction of dual-use military infrastructure (e.g., roads and helipads), China's actions in Tibet belie its claims of adhering to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Then there are also the human rights aspects of the Tibetan occupation, which also lends to the climate change acceleration as the original settlers are "relocated." In this context, India and the West need to collaborate to bring the Himalayan concerns into the emerging Indo-Pacific regional architecture agenda. A common security agenda might help consolidate climate action.

## China's Panchen Lama and Xi's sinister plan to tamper with Dalai Lama's succession

21 December 2024, First Post, Claude Arpi

The Panchen Lama's now-cancelled Nepal visit shows that Beijing was keen to get Kathmandu's seal of approval on its selection of the 11th Panchen Lama to prepare for the 'return' of the 15th Dalai Lama, but things are never simple in Tibetan Buddhism



The Panchen Lama plays an important role in Tibetan Buddhism, especially for the Gelukpa, or Yellow Sect, which considers him as the second in the hierarchy after the Dalai Lama. AFP

A day after Gyaltsen Norbu, the China-selected Panchen Lama's visit to Nepal was cancelled, CGTN, an official channel of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), released an article in English, "Regulating Tibetan Buddhism Reincarnation Under the Rule of Law".

It asserted: "China introduced the Measures on the Management of Tulku Reincarnation of Tibetan Buddhism in 2007, its first regulation on reincarnation affairs. The measures stipulate that the reincarnation process must not be interfered with or controlled by foreign organisations or individuals, and no group or individual is allowed to unilaterally search for or recognise reincarnations."

It shows what the real stakes were for Gyaltsen Norbu's trip to Lumbini, the birthplace of the Buddha Gautama. During the preceding weeks, speculations loomed large over the Lama's visit to the pilgrimage city in Nepal near India's border.

As late as December 12, The South China Morning Post in Hong Kong affirmed: "Panchen Lama to make rare visit to Nepal after Tibet trip ...The trip, which has not been confirmed by Beijing or Kathmandu, comes months before the Dalai Lama is expected to unveil a succession plan."

The article continued: "It follows a visit to China last week by Nepal's Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, when he told Chinese Premier Li Qiang that Kathmandu regards Tibet and Taiwan as inalienable parts of China and that Tibet-related affairs are China's internal affairs."

Nepal was to be Gyaltsen Norbu's second foreign trip abroad after a visit to Thailand in 2019.

Eventually, Nepal shot down the Lama's visit. Kathmandu told the Chinese Embassy that the Lama would not be allowed to visit due to Nepal's neutrality on religious matters.

But the issue is not simple

This issue is part of the struggle to control the next Dalai Lama, as the Panchen Lama plays an important role in Tibetan Buddhism, especially for the Gelukpa, or Yellow Sect, which considers him as the second in the hierarchy after the Dalai Lama. In the past, the Panchen Lamas have often recognised the new Dalai Lamas.

After the death of the 10th Panchen Lama in 1989, in the town of Shigatse, where the Tashilhunpo, the Panchen Lama's monastery, stands, a dispute erupted between the Dalai Lama's office in Dharamsala and the Chinese government about the true incarnation of the Panchen Lama. Of course, the Chinese government (run by the Communist Party) normally had no say in the matter.

As the result of the dispute, since 1995, there have been two Panchen Lamas:

Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, recognised by the 14th Dalai Lama and the majority of Tibetans, has been missing since 1995 after being taken into custody by Chinese authorities. He remains under arrest (if still alive) for the past 29 years.

The second is Gyaltsen Norbu, selected by the Chinese government in 1995 but seen by the Tibetans as a political tool of Beijing, rather than a legitimate spiritual leader.

An activist group, Tibetan Rights Collective (TRC), analysed: "Nepal's refusal to host Gyaltsen Norbu could be interpreted as an implicit acknowledgement of the contentious legitimacy of his claim as the Panchen Lama. By taking this stance, Nepal may be signalling its reluctance to endorse China's religious appointments."

The Tenth Panchen Lama

Chökyi Gyaltsen, the 10th Panchen Lama, was born in Xining, at the border between Tibet and China, in 1938; in the following years he was imposed by Beijing as the true Panchen Lama. A Tibetan candidate sponsored by Lhasa was rejected by the Communist leadership. During the following years, Chökyi was a loudspeaker for Beijing's propaganda. Similar to Gyaltsen Norbu today, Chökyi Gyaltsen was often called 'fake' by the Tibetans, but he eventually grew into a great patriot. In 1962, he had the courage to write a 70,000-character petition (dubbed by Mao as a "poisonous arrow"), in which he listed numerous problems on the plateau. It was addressed to Zhou Enlai, who requested Xi Zhongxun (Xi Jinping's father) to study the letter and prepare an answer.

China's domestic situation was then very unstable; the power struggle within the Party was at its peak (Xi Zhongxun would be purged in July 1962).

The Panchen Lama ended up spending 17 years in confinement; he had gone 'too far' for the communist leadership.

However, it means that even 'fake' lamas or stooges can change into great Tibetan patriots.

How the next Dalai Lama may be selected by China

The selection of the reincarnation of the 11th Panchen Lama is worth having a look at:

Soon after Chökyi Gyaltsen passed away, under mysterious circumstances while on a visit to Tibet in 1989, the Chinese government formed a 'search team' under Gyayak Rinpoche, the Panchen Lama's dharma teacher. Chadrel Rinpoche, abbot of the Panchen Lama's Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, and Arjia Rinpoche, another high lama, were to assist the old Lama. After the death of the former, Chadrel took over the search.

Arjia remembers: "The Chinese government trusted Chadrel Rinpoche to do their bidding... asking only that he report frequently to the central government on his progress."

Chadrel Rinpoche considered that it was Tashi Lhunpo monastery's responsibility to discover the newly born Lama, but as Arjia says: "The Tibetans clearly wanted the 14th Dalai Lama to be the final arbiter of the identity of the true reincarnation of the Panchen Lama."

When Beijing discovered that Chadrel had been communicating with the Dalai Lama, everything changed.

Ying Kesheng, the Party Secretary of Qinghai Province, called a meeting and enumerated three points dictated by Beijing: "eliminating from contention the boy selected by the Dalai Lama (Gedun Choekyi Nyima, who, since then, has been under house arrest); denouncing and removing Chadrel Rinpoche from his official position on the search team; and mandating a Golden Urn Ceremony.

Three names were put in a Golden Urn in the Jokhang Cathedral in Lhasa, and the Governor of Tibet, called Gyaltsen Norbu, selected a candidate called Gyaltsen Norbu: "Gyaltsen Norbu chose Gyaltsen Norbu," a joke later circulated.

But the trick was simple; the capsule in which the chosen boy's name was written was much larger than the two others. The Communist credential of Norbu's family had been checked by the Party before the function; he was the perfect candidate.

There is no doubt that a similar process will be followed for the 15th Dalai Lama if the present leader does not take the initiative and announce the details of his return (in 2011, he said that he would do this when he is 90 years old, i.e., July 2025).

In these circumstances, one understands that Beijing was keen to get Nepal's seal of approval on its selection of the 11th Panchen Lama (to prepare for the 'return' of the 15th Dalai Lama).

Already, the government in Kathmandu has accepted to change the name of 'Tibet' into 'Xizang', the name given to their restive province by Xi Jinping's regime. But it was too big a bite for Oli's government, despite the new honeymoon following the Nepalese Prime Minister's visit to China. Thankfully, permission was refused to Gyaltsen Norbu to proceed to Lumbini.

Not so Docile

But things are never simple in Tibetan Buddhism.

One important factor is that Gyaltsen Norbu has a highly respected teacher, Geshe Jamyang Gyatso, from Labrang Tashikyil monastery in Amdo, who acts as his tutor. This plays a crucial role in his education while moulding his worldviews.

Another serious question is: Will Gyaltsen Norbu remain docile, as Beijing would like him to, or will he follow the footsteps of his predecessor?

On June 10, 2015, Xinhua had announced that President Xi Jinping 'accepted an audience' with Gyaltsen Norbu at Zhongnanhai in Beijing. The term 'accepting an audience' was a euphemism to say the least, because the 'audience' seemed more like a summon-cum-lecture.

The meeting was 'very appropriate', says Xinhua, because it showed that the Party "has consistently given a high level of attention to Tibet". It also indicated "the great importance that the Central Committee attaches to religious work".

Apart from Xi, three other members of the Politburo were in attendance: Yu Zhengsheng of the Standing Committee, Sun Chunlan, the UFW head, and Li Zhanshu, director of the General Office of the Party. Why such a rare lineup? Apparently Gyaltsen Norbu needed to be 'briefed' on how to be a good Communist.

Another telling sign: on February 10, 2024, Gyaltsen Norbu gave a message in English on the occasion of the Tibetan New Year (Losar). It lasted a few minutes, but what was surprising is that during the entire speech he never uttered a word of praise for Xi Jinping.

Of course, during other speeches he often eulogises the policies of the Party and the importance for his countrymen to follow them. But it is far from sure that he is fully a puppet of the regime.

In India, it is worth watching these developments as the Indian Himalayan populations are very much concerned by the future of the Dalai Lama lineage.

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writer. They do not necessarily reflect Firstpost's views.

### **An Identity in Flux? The Case of Tibetan Muslims Residing in Kashmir**

21 December 2024, The Wire, Deepanshu Mohan, Khalid Wasim Hassan, Najam Us Saqib, Ishfaq Wani

The Tibetan Muslims believe that their ancestors were traders who used to take goods from Kashmir to Tibet and later settled there. Thus, when they arrived in Kashmir in the late 1950's, it felt like coming back home for some.

Kashmir has been known for its cultural and ethnic diversity, despite being projected by the radical political right as a state with a homogeneously perceived Muslim population. It is home to many religious and ethnic communities amongst which are different cultural minorities residing in the valley, across different urban and rural areas. A recent manuscript work in progress discusses their profile, livelihood transitions, and more. Amongst one of these lesser-known cultural minority groups is the Tibetan Muslim community.

In 1959, People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China launched an offensive against Tibet and claimed that it was a part of mainland China. The Tibetan defensive was brutally crushed by the PLA forcing the spiritual and temporal head of state, Dalai Lama to seek refuge in India. With him, many Tibetans crossed over to neighbouring countries like India, Nepal and Bhutan.



Tibetan Public School. Photo: Khalid Wasim

In India, Tibetan refugees live in various states, including Karnataka which is home to the largest number of Tibetan refugees in the country followed by Himachal Pradesh, as per government data. A small community of Muslim Tibetans also arrived in the valley of Kashmir. The arrival of Tibetan Muslims in Kashmir marked what they call as the "back to home" process.

The Tibetan Muslims believe that their ancestors were traders who used to take goods from Kashmir to

Tibet and later settled there. Thus, when they arrived in Kashmir in the late 1950's, it felt like coming back home for some.

Muzaffar Ahmad Kaloo, one of the respondents and current spokesperson of the community, says:

"We were called as Khajur in Tibet meaning Kashmiris, our ancestors were traders who migrated to Tibet for trade".

There are different accounts surrounding the arrival of Tibetan Muslims in Kashmir. Muzaffar maintains that they arrived in Kashmir by choice:

"We asked the Chinese government to let us migrate to India, where we were given a choice of settling in any part of India but we chose Kashmir as we originally belonged to this place."

Muzzambil Kaloo\* contests this statement, he said:

"My uncle was jailed, our family was forced to migrate. He (uncle) died in the Chinese Prison," although most of them maintained that it was the elders of the community who asked to be settled in Kashmir.

Farhan Hameed\* added:

"Our elders chose to settle here as Kashmir was a Muslim majority state."

According to the senior members of the community around 50-60 families migrated to Kashmir.

Sense of belonging

When the Tibetan Muslims arrived in Kashmir Valley in the late 1950's, they were given temporary arrangements in the form of tents at Eidgah, Srinagar and in local



Masjid-e-Hijrat. Photo: Khalid Wasim

mosques by the Kashmiri Muslims living in the neighbourhood near Eidgah. Mohammed Farroq\*, who had accompanied his parents as a six-year-old boy, remembers:

"For weeks, it was the locals from nearby areas who brought food and water for us. Although we were different from them in looks but shared the same religious faith and had Kashmiri surnames which worked in our favour."

It was during the tenure of Gulam Mohammed Bakshi-led government that separate buildings were

constructed for the settlement of Tibetan Muslims in front of Eidgah, Srinagar. Mohammed Mustafa\*, who runs a tailoring shop on the ground floor of a Tibetan settlement in Eidgah, says:

"Bakshi saheb was very kind to our community. Not only did he provide shelter for us but allowed some of the Tibetan men to be construction workers for multiple government projects during his time."

Over some time, the Tibetan settlement at Eidgah became one of the important landmarks in Srinagar. It was in the 1980s that the state government allotted land for a new Tibetan colony in the Hawal area of Srinagar. So at present Tibetan Muslims live at Eidgah as well as at Hawal.

As some call themselves ethnic Kashmiris, most of them still like to be identified as Tibetan Kashmiri Muslims, carrying a dual-identity.

"My ancestors were from Kashmir and Tibet, I have blood of both nations in my body as such I identify as a Tibetan and a Kashmiri," Ansar Ahmed\* said, when asked about his identity.

The Tibetan Muslims have a strong sense of belonging which has been shaped through the ages. Even though the community has tried to maintain their distinct cultural practices and heritage, there has been an impact of Kashmiri culture on the members, particularly the younger generation.

"Earlier we used to wear Chuba, that was our cultural dress but now we wear the same clothes that the Kashmiris wear," added Jamil Ahmed\*.

The influence of Kashmir can be seen not only in the dresses but the cuisine.

"Earlier we used to eat the local Tibetan diet but now we eat what Kashmiris eat," said an elderly person.

Similarly, Omar Ahmed\* added:

"On some occasions like Eid we make food like Thupka at home."

Even there is an adaptation of traditional Kashmiri cuisine wazwan during the marriage parties. This loss of culture is worrisome for the elderly generation. They believe that the younger generation of the community is influenced by Western culture at the expense of their culture. Ghulam Mustafa\* added:

"There is no harm in evolving with modern times but it should not come at the expense of our own culture."

Religion is an important part of the community's lifestyle and identity. It is one of the common threads they share with the majority Kashmiri population. They take part in religious festivals as the other Kashmiri communities take part.

"We celebrate all the festivals of Muslims like Eid," added Mohammed Tahir\*.

In the new Tibetan colony of Hawal, the community has a separate masjid, which also serves as a community centre. Interestingly this mosque is named Masjid-i-Hijrat, where the word Hijrat (migration) in

Islamic history is related to migration for a religious cause.

Most of the members of the community are engaged in trade and commerce. They own business establishments ranging from restaurants, embroidery shops and local grocery shops. Mohammed Gul\* pointed out that:

"Around 70% of our community members are in the business of tila-sozi (silver embroidery) of pharens and shawls and a very small number of us run the Tibetan restaurants. But there is stereotyping from Kashmiris that we all run momo shops."

Even though the community has been relatively successful in integrating itself into the broader Kashmiri economy, there are certain areas where they have been neglected, particularly the government sector. Even though they call themselves citizens of India they face a lot of difficulties in obtaining the state-subject (domicile) certificate which was an important document to apply for government jobs in pre-2019 Jammu and Kashmir.

Although these Tibetan Muslims have documents like voter ID and Aadhaar, there are challenges surrounding their issue of identity and recognition.

"Many people in our community have a state subject certificate, but it is difficult to make bureaucrats understand that we are also citizens of India, therefore we prefer getting these certificates, although we have all other identification documents like Aadhaar and voter ID card," added Mohammed Jabbar\*.

On being asked about citizenship, Kamil Haque\*, added:

"Our children have an Indian passport and work in Gulf countries, how can a person who does not have a citizenship have a passport? But it is very difficult to make authorities understand that we are Kashmiris."

Resilience

Despite living in Kashmir all their life and tracing their origins to Kashmir, the community still faces marginalisation both on the ethnic level as well as the social level. The members allege that they have not been fully accepted by the Kashmiri society as their own.

"We are still called Tibetans, even though they (Kashmiris) call us brothers, but they have not accepted us as their own," added Imran Hussain\*.

In a place like Kashmir where the socio-political fabric of the society is intricately woven and complex, the Tibetan Muslims are yet to find their place as natives. As such their struggle for survival and identity continues amid the changing socio-political fabric of Kashmir.



A Tibetan Muslim Community Health Centre sponsored by Central Tibet Administration, Dharamshala. Photo: Khalid Wasim

Despite the issues about questions of 'identity' which revolve around being 'Tibetan', 'Muslim' or 'Kashmiri Tibetan Muslim', the members of the community have shown their resilience in maintaining the proper balance. Living amidst dominant Kashmiri-speaking Kashmiri Muslims, the community maintained the essence of their identity by preserving their traditions, such as language, dress, cuisine and rituals in the celebrations.

For decades, the community members learnt skills such as tailoring Kashmiri dresses, tila-sozi and leather works, which provided them means of livelihood. Due to dependence on the Kashmiri-speaking population from the neighbourhood for day-to-day needs and their businesses, the members of the community have learnt the Kashmiri language. The Tibetan Muslim community members, both at Eidgah settlement and Tibetan colony of Hawal, work for the cleanliness of the lanes and by-lanes. At the time of crisis, Tibetans come together to help the needy within the community. Tibetan women make woolen sweaters, socks, mufflers and gloves and sell these in the local markets during winter time.

Although there is no guarantee of government jobs for the young generation, the community encourages young boys and girls to attend school. The community has established a Tibetan Public School in Srinagar which is attended by both Tibetan as well as local Kashmiri children. The educated youth in the community who are not getting jobs in the government sector have found alternative means of livelihood.

### The Father of Chinese Authoritarianism Has a Message for America

21 December 2024, The New Yorker, Chang Che

Xiao Gongqin thought that, in moments of flux, a strongman could build a bridge to democracy. Now he's not so sure.



A large mural depicting current and former Chinese leaders: clockwise from top, Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Hu Jintao, Xi Jinping, and Jiang Zemin. Photograph by Mark Schiefelbein / AP

When Russian and Chinese élites talk about history, they often mean "History"—the grand Hegelian march toward progress. Since the end of the Cold War, the East has lived with the undignified thesis, popularized by Francis Fukuyama's 1989 essay "The End of History?," that democracy had defeated the authoritarian alternatives of the twentieth century. That idea has not aged well. According to a European survey of more than two hundred countries, 2022 was the first time in two decades that closed autocracies outnumbered liberal democracies in the world. Americans have become unreliable underwriters of the international order. Russia's Vladimir Putin has incited Europe's largest conflict since the Second World War and China's Xi Jinping is remaking global institutions in his own image, bereft of democratic values. When Xi visited the Kremlin in March, 2023, a little over a year after Russia invaded Ukraine, he told Putin that the world was changing in ways "we haven't seen in a hundred years." "Let's drive those changes together," he said. Putin, hands outstretched, nodded. "I agree." Donald Trump's victory this November turned what some dismissed as an electoral fluke, in 2016, into an enduring political reality. "We have won," Aleksandr Dugin, the Russian ideologue known to some as "Putin's philosopher," proclaimed on X. "Globalists have lost their final combat. The future is finally open. I am really happy." Ren Yi, a blogger and grandson of a former Chinese Communist leader, wrote that Trump's win, along with his chumminess with Elon Musk, has created something of a "techno-authoritarian-conservative" alliance that resembled the authoritarian cultures of East Asia. "The 'beacon' of the free world, the United States, will lead various countries into illiberal democracy," Ren predicted.

"There is no end to history, only the end of the Fukuyama-ists."

The morning after the U.S. election, I got a message from a seventy-eight-year-old historian in Shanghai named Xiao Gongqin. "I have predicted on several private occasions that Trump would win," he wrote. Trump, he reasoned, was a necessary corrective against a "woke left" that "had truly gone overboard in recent years." This level of antipathy toward American progressives is not uncommon among Chinese liberals, who, since 2016, have flocked toward Trump, in part to repudiate a Democratic Party whose emphasis on political correctness—real or imagined—reminds them of China's past disasters in socialist governance. But Xiao is not a liberal, and his well-known anti-democratic influence on Chinese politics made him an instructive voice on America's current predicament.

Xiao is the architect of a theory of strongman politics known as "neo-authoritarianism." In the nineteen-eighties, reformers with varying predilections for democracy and capitalism consolidated power in Communist states. Mikhail Gorbachev restructured the Soviet Union's planned economy and loosened censorship. In China, Deng Xiaoping ushered in an era known as "reform and opening up," though the reforms went only so far; he also evinced a limited tolerance for dissent, believing full democracy untenable. In this, he was supported by a group of Chinese thinkers led by Xiao and a prodigious Shanghai academic named Wang Huning. The word "authoritarian" is a rote pejorative in the West, synonymous with tyranny, but in the China of the late twentieth century Xiao and his allies managed to reframe it as a rational, pragmatic, East Asian-specific strategy for modernization. Drawing on a range of sources—Chinese history; Samuel Huntington's theory of "modernizing authoritarianism"; the Asian "dragons" of Singapore and South Korea, which had grown rapidly under authoritarian rulers—these intellectuals pushed, and supplied the moral ballast, for China to postpone the end of history.

Wang entered government in 1995 and shot through its ranks. He is now one of Xi Jinping's closest advisers, the preëminent craftsman of Xi's authoritarian ideology. Xiao, who coined the term "neo-authoritarianism" at a symposium in 1988, continued his advocacy as a professor in Shanghai, until he retired a decade ago. His argument that democracy was a "rootless politics," alien to Chinese culture, remains part of a dominant strain of the country's thought. Whether Xiao had influenced the Party's direction or merely justified it is hard to say. But, in 1988, Deng was briefed on "neo-authoritarianism" by another Chinese leader, who described it as a system where a "political strongman

stabilizes the situation and develops the economy." Deng reportedly responded, "That is exactly what I stand for"; his only qualm was that it could use a rebrand. Later, as China's economy took off, the world would accept more diplomatic names—"state capitalism" or, more vaguely, "the China model."

As a writer covering Chinese culture and politics, I've watched with a sense of foreboding as America has begun to manifest the same authoritarian compulsions that have long dominated Chinese life. There is a cosmic irony in the way that the twenty-first century has played out: the West, hoping its adversaries would become more like it, has inextricably become more like them. Slowly, ideas that Xiao and his allies had propagated decades ago—the stabilizing force of the strongman and a reverence for cultural traditions—seem to have arrived in the control center of the world's most powerful liberal democracy.

After Trump's recent victory, I decided to pay Xiao a visit. I wanted to understand the scholar who had helped salvage the strongman from the dustbin of history, and to know what he made of the figure's present, and likely future, proliferation. What I found, to my surprise, was a man quietly wrestling with the consequences of his ideas. Xiao has deeply conservative instincts—he counts Edmund Burke and Michael Oakeshott among his influences—but he was, and is, an incrementalist who dreams of China becoming a "constitutional democracy." His was a theory of enlightened rule, wherein a dictatorship would vanquish the "radicals," steward an economic miracle, and then, ideally, relinquish power to the people. He had ready-made examples in places such as Taiwan, whose leader Chiang Ching-Kuo dismantled his own autocracy before his death, in 1988. Xiao has not disavowed authoritarianism, and he even seemed to support America's New Right. But as the immediate prospects for democracy have all but vanished from China, his politics have shifted from reaction to reflection. Authoritarianism, Xiao told me, "has its own problems."

When Xi Jinping came to power, in 2012, he used his newfound authority to launch an anti-corruption drive, which Xiao endorsed. Since then, though, Xi has abolished Presidential term limits, decimated civil society, and intensified clampdowns on free expression. As a mainland Chinese scholar, Xiao was careful not to betray his views about the regime. He instead spoke to what he now sees as an unsolvable "dilemma" in his theory. A democrat risks welcoming dangerous ideas into a culture—ideas that, legitimate or not, could hasten a nation's demise. Xiao turned to authoritarianism partly because he believed that China was careening in that direction. And yet "a neo-authoritarian leader must be wise," Xiao told me, with a hint of exasperation. "And he may not

be." Once you pin your hopes on a justice-delivering strongman, in other words, he may take the righteous path, or he may not. The only certainty is that he has control.

On an overcast Monday evening, I arrived at a low-rise apartment tower in Shanghai, where Xiao lives with his wife. He is a sprightly man, with salt-and-pepper hair and wispy bangs that he brushes to one side. Every day, for twenty years, he has kept to an intense exercise routine—a hundred and fifty squats and more than three hundred volleys of a squash or tennis ball outside. During that time, he has been hard at work on a hefty three-volume history of China from antiquity to Deng's "reform and opening up." (He hopes to complete it by 2030.) Xiao has an obsession with classical music. He often leads guests into a spartan living room, where he shows off an oversized speaker system on which he spent tens of thousands of dollars. ("My entire life savings," he told me.) On my visit, we listened to the German violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter's rendition of the "Carmen Fantasy," at a volume suited to the hard of hearing.

In the days after the U.S. election, Xiao wrote an essay on his blog in which he opined about the result's geopolitical ramifications. He feared that Trump's isolationist bluster would lead some Chinese to underestimate U.S. commitments to Taiwan, raising the "probability of direct conflict between the U.S. and China." During our meeting, however, he also expounded on how the countries were similar. China's neo-authoritarianism in the eighties, he told me, shared a common enemy with today's Republican Party: the "romanticism" espoused by the "radical liberals."

Xiao used the term romanticism to describe the belief, inspired by the Enlightenment, that humanity can design ideal societies through reason. He criticized this view for disregarding history and experience—or, to riff on an old adage, for "making the perfect the enemy of the feasible." Xiao, who was born in 1946 and grew up under Maoism, witnessed the worst excesses of this kind of armchair statecraft. When Mao launched the Cultural Revolution, in 1966, Xiao had recently graduated high school and was working in a factory. He hadn't been able to enter university, likely for harboring "bourgeois" sympathies—including his passion for Western philosophy—and he allied himself with the Red Guards as a leader of a "rebel worker faction" at his machinery plant. But, as the revolution wore on, he himself was denounced as a "revisionist," and he spent the next several years consigned to gruelling work at the factory.

Shortly after Mao died, in 1976, the reckoning began. Crowds gathered around a Democracy Wall near Beijing's Tiananmen Square to post demands

for freedom and accountability. Intellectuals called for a "New Enlightenment," and an iconoclastic 1988 documentary, "River Elegy," compared Chinese civilization to a muddied Yellow River that was in need of a "good scrubbing." In the frenzy to repudiate the past, Xiao saw history repeating itself. The Cultural Revolution had cemented his faith in a liberal modernity, but it also, paradoxically, instilled a visceral fear of that modernity's real-life accelerants. In the spirit of William F. Buckley, Jr., the architect of modern American conservatism, Xiao stood "athwart history yelling Stop."

The seeds of "neo-authoritarianism" came to Xiao around 1983, when he was researching republican China, the country's first major attempt at democracy. The experiment followed the overthrow of China's last imperial dynasty, in 1911, and was seen by many of Xiao's coevals as a fount of inspiration. But what Xiao found was complete and utter chaos. "The National Assembly couldn't do anything except mess things up," Xiao told me. "The parties would just go at each other with total disregard for the nation's interests." China, Xiao concluded, lacked the "software system" for democracy: a civil society, a rule of law, a culture of political bargaining and compromise. "I do not mean to say that I am fundamentally opposed to Western democracy," Xiao told me. "I personally feel very envious of the United States and the West." But, he went on, moving the system over is implausible because China "lacks so many of the conditions." What China needed was something like a final emperor, the breaker of the despotic chain who would summon modernity by fiat. Xiao reverse-engineered democracy back to the strongman: "In order to have democracy, there must be civil society," he told me. A civil society requires economic prosperity; economic prosperity requires political stability; and political stability "requires a strongman."

In 1988, Xiao introduced his theory at an academic symposium, and "neo-authoritarianism" officially entered the public discourse. The idea was reviled by liberal intellectuals, who accused Xiao of rationalizing the status quo—or, worse, tilting China back toward the system that it had just escaped. But his theory seemed to mirror the temperament of Deng, who, for all his reformist tendencies, was a ruthless apparatchik. Throughout his reign, the man hailed as a pragmatic liberalizer jailed Democracy Wall activists and denounced unwelcome foreign ideas as "spiritual pollution." In the spring of 1989, students gathered in Tiananmen Square to protest for greater political freedoms. Intellectuals led by the literary critic Liu Xiaobo joined a hunger strike in solidarity. Deng imposed martial law and approved the final order to clear the square.



Xiao told me that Liu and the demonstrators held “considerable responsibility” for the carnage on June 4th that year. The hunger strikers, it seemed, had contracted the same romantic virus that plagued the turn-of-century reformers, the Red Guards, and Gorbachev. “Neo-authoritarianism’s No. 1 enemy,” Xiao told me, “is the radical liberals.” Only once they were “marginalized,” he continued, could Chinese society stabilize and experiment with political freedoms. (Liu Xiaobo died of untreated liver cancer in 2017, after spending nearly a decade in prison.)

If reformers like Liu had, in Xiao’s view, pushed China beyond its immediate capacities, American progressives were now doing the same to the United States. For Xiao, the Democratic Party, elite universities, and Western corporate boards were the new epicenters of romanticism. Open borders ignored the real difficulties of cultural assimilation—it was, as he put it, like “mixing Type B blood with a Type A body.” Transgender identity was just pseudoscience: “The belief that everyone can decide their gender—it disregards human experience,” Xiao told me. (Xiao did not seem to be familiar with “radicalism” on the American right, from white nationalism to QAnon.) The implication was clear: in 1989, the man who repelled the radicals was Deng Xiaoping. In 2024, it was Donald Trump.

Perhaps one reason why authoritarianism has returned to America is that the country’s fundamental political questions are beginning to resemble those of the East. For most of American history, politics revolved around how to limit government. But, in the Communist world, the question was often about how to rebuild it—and save it from bad actors. The stakes felt higher. There are many probable causes of our eastward drift: the failures of globalization, the betrayals of technological progress, cultural anomie, the provocateurs who profit from the sense that the world is about to burn. Whatever the origin, America’s inner conflict now feels comparable to the pivotal decade when Xiao and his liberal adversaries fought over China’s future.

Following what many Americans considered the most consequential election of a lifetime, Elon Musk has vowed to “delete” a bloated government. Trump promises to eradicate an army of deep-state conspirators, whom he calls “the enemy within.” Democratic norms and the rule of law are mere windshield ornaments on the road to American redemption. In its emphasis on results, this approach is familiar to Chinese authoritarians. “The people didn’t want romanticism, they wanted performance,” Xiao told me when I asked him why he thought Trump had won. The Democrats didn’t perform, he added: they didn’t secure the border, and they didn’t improve the economy.

For all of Xiao’s attention to the psyche of “radical liberals,” I was most struck by his own. In the Liu Xiaobos of the eighties, Xiao had glimpsed a romanticism redolent of the Red Guards. In this light, an advocate for peaceful democratic change, who kept vigil in Tiananmen Square to protect students from oncoming tanks, had been similar to violent revolutionaries. Xiao, of course, had been a revolutionary himself—and who better to recognize a radical than a recovering radical? The current generation of Communist Party leaders is not so different in their perspective. “The Politburo is a Red Guard Politburo,” Geremie Barmé, a prominent Australian sinologist, told me. China, he continued, “lives with a completely unresolved, profound historical trauma . . . and is now led by people who are all the product of trauma. All of this is why it is so repressive.”

One is not born but becomes an authoritarian. Carl Schmitt, the twentieth century’s giant of illiberal thought, drew his theories from his personal experience living in the Weimar Republic. Xiao was inspired by Yan Fu, the reformist intellectual and translator of Adam Smith who, after living through China’s own republican experiment, decided that his people were “not capable of self-government.” And, in the U.S., one finds examples like Peter Thiel, the billionaire venture capitalist who declared, in a 2009 essay, that “I no longer believe that freedom and democracy are compatible.” Thiel traced his anti-democratic conversion to earlier defeats: his “trench warfare” against progressive students in college; the post-financial-crisis marginalization of libertarian dogma. Over the years, Thiel’s shift toward the authoritarian right has coincided with the growing acceptance of his ideas in the mainstream. He is now one of the biggest funders of the conservative nationalist movement, a mentor to Vice-President-elect J. D. Vance, and a supporter of “neo-reactionary” figures like Curtis Yarvin, who admires the state-capitalist societies of Singapore and Deng Xiaoping’s China.

Thiel and Xiao are vastly different thinkers, but this only makes their commonalities more striking. In believing that democracy was either premature or past its prime, they turned to the strongman as an antidote. “The problem with Xiao,” Joseph Fewsmith, a professor of Chinese politics at Boston University, told me, “is that he tackles the question of how countries get from autocracy to democracy, but he never explored how not to get stuck. Which is what happened.” When I asked Xiao what a democracy in China might look like, he said that he hadn’t really thought about it. The proponent of a so-called “soft landing” for democracy did not, ultimately, spend much time designing a parachute.

For most of his life, Xiao has claimed that the central danger to Chinese society was not the dictator but his liberal opponents. Whether Xiao was right we will never know. We cannot peer into the universe where Liu and his reformers won, where they are alive and well, rather than silenced or dead. Ours is the world of strongmen, where decisions increasingly turn on the whims of a vanishing few. In China, the risk of Xiao's theory has come to pass—the strongman changed tack. At his trial for "subversion of state power," in 2009, Liu Xiaobo prepared a statement of warning to his political opponents. It remains just as relevant today as it was then. "An enemy mentality will poison the spirit of a nation," Liu wrote. It will "destroy a society's tolerance and humanity, and hinder a country's advance toward freedom and democracy."

### India starts resembling China in unflattering ways

20 December 2024, Reuters, Una Galani

There are some startling similarities developing between India and China. How many and how concerned investors should be will rank among the big questions in 2025.

Western policymakers, CEOs and investors have for years debated the potential of the South Asian country to follow the path of its \$18 trillion neighbour in terms of GDP per capita and global manufacturing might. Such comparisons are now taking on new meaning in Mumbai financial circles and beyond.

For a start, the world's view of China has dramatically deteriorated. Growth in the world's second-largest economy is slowing, and Beijing's relationship with Washington has soured. These two trends have increased India's opportunity to shine as an investment destination on the global stage since the Covid-19 pandemic.

China's current chapter also expands the scope of what it means for a country to emulate the People's Republic. This now includes some less flattering aspects, and it is here where observers may conclude, rightly or wrongly, India is starting to check a few too many boxes.

The first problematic likeness is the trajectory of India's \$4 trillion economy. It is suddenly underperforming expectations: GDP growth fell to 5.4% in the three months to the end of September, the slowest pace in seven quarters, only 80 basis points faster than China's print for the comparable period.

That points to a big potential weakness in the belief within Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government that India will deliver a sustained 6%-8% annual GDP growth over the next decade. As in China, domestic problems underpinning weak private

consumption – including, in India's case, anaemic salary growth – appear deep-seated and hard to fix. What's more, both economies face serious external headwinds. U.S. President-elect Donald Trump is threatening trade tariffs against the South Asian nation as large as he has threatened against the People's Republic. Meanwhile, India's richest man, Gautam Adani, is likely to curb his growth ambitions following his U.S. indictment for securities fraud, which he denies.

The tycoon's problems put a spotlight on India's approach to courting foreign investment. Global companies are entering the country in partnership with local firms helmed by a small number of powerful Indian families. That sets up the potential for at least some of the new alliances to sour, just as several Chinese joint ventures did.

, the company at the centre of the U.S. legal case. Ultimately, while China was more forceful than India in coercing joint ventures, officials in Beijing and New Delhi want the same thing from foreign multinationals: know-how. That desire to acquire intellectual property may ultimately put India in the West's crosshairs.

Finally, there is the issue of perceived interference. The U.S. is trying to contain China's rise, partly because of concerns the Asian behemoth is seeking to influence lawmakers in Washington. Politicians on both sides of the aisle also disapprove of what they view as China's predatory business practices, cyber intrusions and territorial claims.

Unhelpfully, a somewhat similar label of meddling is starting to stick to India. Canada, a member of the Group of Seven rich countries, slapped a "foreign interference" tag on India in June, opens new tab, unseating Russia as the North American country's biggest threat after China per its assessment in 2019. Tensions between Canada and India escalated after Ottawa said Indian diplomats were linked to plots to target Sikh separatists in Canada. India denies the claims, and even if these were true, it would hardly be the first country to seek to assassinate its enemies on foreign soil. The diplomatic brouhaha does not, though, help a capital-hungry country attract investment. Many ordinary Indians view their country as a victim of Canada's domestic politics in this saga. Nearer to home, too, there's a debate about whether India is emerging as a bully to its smaller neighbours including Bangladesh, the Maldives and Nepal; the billions of dollars of aid New Delhi provides these countries in times of crisis does provide leverage, though Modi prefers to describe India as a friend of the world, opens new tab.

Whatever the nuances, global decision-makers are paying attention because disruptions between rich and developing countries can be costly. The deterioration of Sino-American ties has led to

a conscious decoupling, accelerating both a crash in Chinese stocks and re-routing of supply chains by U.S. firms beyond the People's Republic. How India reacts to some of its emerging challenges will set the tone. Burnt by one large emerging market, global investors may prove far less willing to give another the benefit of the doubt.

### Editorial: Nepal in China's strategic embrace

20 December 2024, Telangana Today

Kathmandu's thrust on greater economic cooperation with Beijing – the BRI is part of this endeavour – will whittle down India's influence over Nepal

India has every reason to be alarmed over the developments in Nepal in the light of its steadily tightening embrace of China. Known for his ideological affiliation with China, Nepalese Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli is unabashedly aligning his country to serve Beijing's strategic interests. The latest indicator of China's growing sway over the tiny Himalayan nation came with the signing of a framework for cooperation on the ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Nepal. The agreement was signed during Oli's visit to Beijing early this month, apart from nine other pacts. This is a big setback to India which is strongly opposed to the BRI on grounds of sovereignty as it passes through the parts of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK). This deal will enable China to increase its already considerable inroads into Nepal. Kathmandu's thrust on greater economic cooperation with Beijing – the BRI is part of this endeavour – would also whittle down India's influence over Nepal. The BRI framework agreement, incidentally, also envisages the opening of branches of Chinese banks and financial institutions in Nepal. India has traditionally had deep economic linkages with Nepal, nurtured due to geography – the two neighbours share a porous 1,751-km-long border. This, along with the landlocked nature of Nepal, has helped India become its largest trading partner. During the 2022-23 fiscal, bilateral trade was pegged at \$8.85 billion. This included \$8 billion of exports from India to Nepal. As per the Nepal Rastra Bank, India's share in Nepal's trade accounted for 64.1% in 2022-23.

The latest Beijing-Kathmandu tango has the potential to cause unease not just in India but also in the United States. While America had managed to get Nepal on board its own Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compact to fund Kathmandu's power and transport infrastructure, the BRI seems far broader. With the latest deal with Beijing, Nepal would be hoping that the 10 initial projects, including those meant to boost regional connectivity, will now see the light of day. The Oli government's encouragement of Beijing's concerted moves to

claim Buddhism as a shared heritage is another cause for concern for India, which has been making efforts to build on its shared Buddhist heritage with Nepal. Ever since his dramatic comeback to power in July this year, under the watchful eyes of China which brokered a peace deal among the Communist parties, Oli, Chairman of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), has been warming up to Beijing. In his tenure as Prime Minister in the past, he was known for his pro-China views and this was evident from the foreign policy outlook of his leadership of the CPN-UML too. Oli has served as the Prime Minister of Nepal on two occasions, from 2015-2016 and 2018-2021, before being ousted by the country's Supreme Court in a controversial ruling.

### United Front: China's 'magic weapon' caught in a spy controversy

19 December 2024, BBC, Koh Ewe Laura Bicker

The People's Republic of China has a "magic weapon", according to its founding leader Mao Zedong and its current president Xi Jinping.

It is called the United Front Work Department - and it is raising as much alarm in the West as Beijing's growing military arsenal.

Yang Tengbo, a prominent businessman who has been linked to Prince Andrew, is the latest overseas Chinese citizen to be scrutinised - and sanctioned - for his links to the UFWD.

The existence of the department is far from a secret. A decades-old and well-documented arm of the Chinese Communist Party, it has been mired in controversy before. Investigators from the US to Australia have cited the UFWD in multiple espionage cases, often accusing Beijing of using it for foreign interference.

Beijing has denied all espionage allegations, calling them ludicrous.

So what is the UFWD and what does it do?

'Controlling China's message'

The United Front - originally referring to a broad communist alliance - was once hailed by Mao as the key to the Communist Party's triumph in the decades-long Chinese Civil War.

After the war ended in 1949 and the party began ruling China, United Front activities took a backseat to other priorities. But in the last decade under Xi, the United Front has seen a renaissance of sorts.

Xi's version of the United Front is broadly consistent with earlier incarnations: to "build the broadest possible coalition with all social forces that are relevant", according to Mareike Ohlberg, a senior fellow at the German Marshall Fund.

On the face of it, the UFWD is not shadowy - it even has a website and reports many of its activities on it. But the extent of its work - and its reach - is less clear.

While a large part of that work is domestic, Dr Ohlberg said, "a key target that has been defined for United Front work is overseas Chinese".

Today, the UFWD seeks to influence public discussions about sensitive issues ranging from Taiwan - which China claims as its territory - to the suppression of ethnic minorities in Tibet and Xinjiang. It also tries to shape narratives about China in foreign media, target Chinese government critics abroad and co-opt influential overseas Chinese figures.

"United Front work can include espionage but [it] is broader than espionage," Audrye Wong, assistant professor of politics at the University of Southern California, tells the BBC.

"Beyond the act of acquiring covert information from a foreign government, United Front activities centre on the broader mobilisation of overseas Chinese," she said, adding that China is "unique in the scale and scope" of such influence activities.

China has always had the ambition for such influence, but its rise in recent decades has given Beijing the ability to exercise it.

Since Xi became president in 2012, he has been especially proactive in crafting China's message to the world, encouraging a confrontational "wolf warrior" approach to diplomacy and urging his country's diaspora to "tell China's story well".

The UFWD operates through various overseas Chinese community organisations, which have vigorously defended the Communist Party beyond its shores. They have censored anti-CCP artwork and protested at the activities of Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama. The UFWD has also been linked to threats against members of persecuted minorities abroad, such as Tibetans and Uyghurs.

But much of the UFWD's work overlaps with other party agencies, operating under what observers have described as "plausible deniability".

It is this murkiness that is causing so much suspicion and apprehension about the UFWD.

When Yang appealed against his ban, judges agreed with the then secretary of state's report that Yang "represented a risk to national security" - citing the fact that he downplayed his ties with the UFWD as one of the reasons that led them to that conclusion.

Yang, however, maintains that he has not done anything unlawful and that the spy allegations are "entirely untrue".

Cases like Yang's are becoming increasingly common. In 2022, British Chinese lawyer Christine Lee was accused by the MI5 of acting through the UFWD to cultivate relationships with influential people in the UK. The following year, Liang Litang, a US citizen who ran a Chinese restaurant in Boston, was indicted for providing information about Chinese dissidents in the area to his contacts in the UFWD.

And in September, Linda Sun, a former aide in the New York governor's office, was charged with using her position to serve Chinese government interests - receiving benefits, including travel, in return. According to Chinese state media reports, she had met a top UFWD official in 2017, who told her to "be an ambassador of Sino-American friendship".

It is not uncommon for prominent and successful Chinese people to be associated with the party, whose approval they often need, especially in the business world.

But where is the line between peddling influence and espionage?

"The boundary between influence and espionage is blurry" when it comes to Beijing's operations, said Ho-fung Hung, a politics professor at Johns Hopkins University.

This ambiguity has intensified after China passed a law in 2017 mandating Chinese nationals and companies to co-operate with intelligence probes, including sharing information with the Chinese government - a move that Dr Hung said "effectively turns everyone into potential spies".

The Ministry of State Security has released dramatic propaganda videos warning the public that foreign spies are everywhere and "they are cunning and sneaky".

Some students who were sent on special trips abroad were told by their universities to limit contact with foreigners and were asked for a report of their activities on their return.

And yet Xi is keen to promote China to the world. So he has tasked a trusted arm of the party to project strength abroad.

And that is becoming a challenge for Western powers - how do they balance doing business with the world's second-largest economy alongside serious security concerns?

Wrestling with the long arm of Beijing

Genuine fears over China's overseas influence are playing into more hawkish sentiments in the West, often leaving governments in a dilemma.

Some, like Australia, have tried to protect themselves with fresh foreign interference laws that criminalise individuals deemed to be meddling in domestic affairs. In 2020, the US imposed visa restrictions on people seen as active in UFWD activities.

An irked Beijing has warned that such laws - and the prosecutions they have spurred - hinder bilateral relations.

"The so-called allegations of Chinese espionage are utterly absurd," a foreign ministry spokesperson told reporters on Tuesday in response to a question about Yang. "The development of China-UK relations serves the common interests of both countries."

Some experts say that the long arm of China's United Front is indeed concerning.

"Western governments now need to be less naive about China's United Front work and take it as a serious threat not only to national security but also to the safety and freedom of many ethnic Chinese citizens," Dr Hung says.

But, he adds, "governments also need to be vigilant against anti-Chinese racism and work hard to build trust and co-operation with ethnic Chinese communities in countering the threat together."

Last December, Di Sanh Duong, a Vietnam-born ethnic Chinese community leader in Australia, was convicted of planning foreign interference for trying to cosy up to an Australian minister. Prosecutors argued that he was an "ideal target" for the UFWD because he had run for office in the 1990s and boasted ties with Chinese officials.

Duong's trial had centred around what he meant when he said the inclusion of the minister at a charity event would be beneficial to "us Chinese" - did he mean the Chinese community in Australia, or mainland China?

In the end, Duong's conviction - and a prison sentence - raised serious concerns that such broad anti-espionage laws and prosecutions can easily become weapons for targeting ethnic Chinese people.

"It's important to remember that not everyone who is ethnically Chinese is a supporter of the Chinese Communist Party. And not everyone who is involved in these diaspora organisations is driven by fervent loyalty to China," Dr Wong says.

"Overly aggressive policies based on racial profiling will only legitimise the Chinese government's propaganda that ethnic Chinese are not welcome and end up pushing diaspora communities further into Beijing's arms."

### **2024, the year India defeated China's salami-slicing strategy**

19 December 2024, The Economic Times, Sarahbeth George

For decades, China's strategy of "salami slicing"—incrementally encroaching on territory to solidify its claims — has reshaped borders and silenced resistance across Asia. From the South China Sea to Himalayan frontiers, Beijing's methodical approach has left neighbouring countries scrambling to respond. China shares its border with more than a dozen countries and it has had border disputes with at least six of them over the past few years. On its border disputes with its neighbors, China has mostly gone unchallenged, gradually pushing its salami-slicing strategy forward. But 2024 was a turning point: India was the first country in past few decades to decisively stop China in its tracks and refuse to yield to its tried-and-tested game. India's resistance

proved to be a firm message that China's expansionist ambitions can't always go unchecked.

China's Unchecked March: A History of Dominance  
China's history of border disputes is a study in opportunism. China has locked horns with no fewer than six of its neighbours, from Japan over islands in the East China Sea, down to Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines in the South China Sea. From the construction of artificial islands to weaponizing of trade, leveraging economic dependence, it has often found a way to dominate.

Land borders have been no exception. Bhutan, Nepal and even Russia have experienced China's salami-slicing techniques, where small, seemingly inconsequential incursions are used to cement broader territorial claims. Most nations either lack the resources or political will to counter these moves effectively. But where others hesitated, India chose to fight back.

#### **The Turning Point: India's Bold Stand**

India's watershed moment came in 2024 with a landmark agreement over the Line of Actual Control (LAC). This wasn't just another border negotiation; it marked the culmination of years of tension following the deadly 2020 Galwan clash that left 20 Indian soldiers and an undisclosed number of Chinese troops dead. While China likely expected India to fall in line, as many of its neighbors had, it faced a resolute adversary instead.

India refused to let China dictate terms. The strategic deployment of troops, modernising infrastructure on the LAC, and an unambiguous message through diplomatic channels made it amply clear that China's salami slicing was not going to work this time. This multi-pronged approach forced Beijing to agree to a phased disengagement and a novel patrolling mechanism — a first in decades of border disputes.

The turning point came when Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping sat down for their first face-to-face meeting in years at the BRICS Summit in Kazan. For the first time since 2019, the two leaders had directly engaged each other, and the meeting marked a shift toward breaking the deadlock in their strained relationship. Both leaders agreed that stability in bilateral ties needed to be rebuilt, with a focus on respect for each other's sensitivities and concerns. This rare exchange injected a sense of cautious optimism into an otherwise tense chapter in India-China relations. Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri confirmed that both nations had reached a resolution to address the issues stemming from the 2020 border clashes, a significant step towards stabilising bilateral ties.

Following high-level talks between National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in St Petersburg, both countries agreed to



expedite efforts to resolve the remaining border disputes and improve bilateral relations.

A month before the border breakthrough, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said that 75 per cent of the disengagement issues had been sorted out.

The disengagement agreement in the remaining areas, Depsang and Demchok, in October had paved the way for a bilateral meeting between PM Modi and President Xi on the margins of the BRICS summit in Kazan in which the leaders endorsed the agreement and agreed to resume exchanges between the special representatives on the boundary question and the foreign ministers.

During the talks, both sides highlighted the importance of regular exchanges and contacts at diplomatic and military level through established mechanisms. "They agreed on the need for effective border management and maintenance of peace & tranquillity in accordance with relevant bilateral agreements, protocols and understandings reached between the two governments," said the Indian govt, adding that the Chinese delegation also called on foreign secretary Vikram Misri.

According to the Indian side, the two countries reviewed the situation in border areas, and reflected on the lessons learnt from the events of 2020, which included the deadly Galwan clashes, in order to prevent their recurrence.

Confirming that the disengagement process has been completed in eastern Ladakh, foreign minister S Jaishankar had said in Parliament this week that India will now focus on de-escalation and on effective management of border activities. He had also said that ties with China, which went into a tailspin after the 2020 Galwan military clashes, are now improving. In the latest round of the Working Mechanism for Consultation & Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) talks on Thursday, both sides "positively affirmed the implementation of the most recent disengagement agreement which completed the resolution of the issues that emerged in 2020," said the Indian govt.

"They also prepared for the next meeting of the special representatives, which is to be held in accordance with the decision of the two leaders in their meeting in Kazan on Oct 23, 2024," added the Indian readout.

The agreement includes rights related to patrolling and grazing in traditional areas. He added, Based on this consensus, the disengagement process is nearly complete. We will strive to move beyond just disengagement, but for that, we will need to wait a little longer. This came after both India and China confirmed that an agreement had been reached between the two nations regarding patrolling arrangements along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the India-China border areas.

Speaking at a press briefing, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal confirmed that India and China had finalised the last phase of disengagement in these regions. "On October 21, 2024, the final phase of disengagement was agreed upon between India and China. As a result, verification patrolling has commenced on mutually agreed terms in Demchok and Depsang. We will keep you updated," he said.

Earlier in the day, the spokesperson of the Chinese Embassy in India announced on the social media platform, X that the Chinese and Indian troops are implementing the resolutions that the two sides reached on issues concerning the border area, which is going smoothly at the moment. Chinese Ambassador to India Xu Feihong had also earlier said that he hoped the bilateral ties would move forward smoothly and ties between both countries would not be restricted or interrupted by specific disagreements.

How India Did It

India's success in halting China wasn't accidental. It was the result of deliberate actions on multiple fronts: Strategic Military Presence

India's military strategy underwent a significant transformation to counter the challenges posed by China. Unlike other nations that found themselves blindsided by Beijing's gradual territorial encroachments, New Delhi adopted a proactive stance. Over the years, India invested heavily in upgrading its border infrastructure in remote, high-altitude regions such as Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh, ensuring year-round access for its forces. Advanced weaponry and specialised units were deployed to enhance readiness, leaving little room for complacency. As one senior military official put it, "India's capability to deploy swiftly and respond robustly has completely shifted the dynamics along the LAC."

Economic Counter-measures

Despite bilateral trade with China having reached a record level of \$115.82 billion in 2023, India made deliberate moves to reduce its dependency on Chinese imports. The country's "Atmanirbhar Bharat" or Self-Reliant India initiative gave a significant impetus to local industries, and supply chains diversified with trusted global partners. Indian authorities also banned over 300 Chinese apps, including the popular social media platform TikTok, over concerns of national security following the Galwan Valley clash. A government spokesperson commented, "These measures are not just about economics but a signal that India will not compromise on its sovereignty."

Domestic Pressures: Economic Dependencies and Trade Realities

Domestically, it was Indian businesses, especially those that relied on Chinese imports, that had been

pressuring the government to calm things down. Even with the restrictions that followed after the Galwan incident, the trade between India and China continued to boom. In fact, during 2023-24, China reclaimed its position as India's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade reaching \$118.4 billion. However, this trade boom has been accompanied by a significant downside: a widening trade deficit that continues to concern Indian policymakers.

Sectors which are highly dependent on Chinese raw materials have borne the brunt of strained ties. For example, India imports around 70 percent of its active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) from China – an import dependency that was starkly highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, industries reliant on Chinese technicians have faced operational delays. The Federation of Indian Export Organizations (FIEO) and the All-India Association of Industries (AIAI) have been vociferous, demanding the ease of visa restrictions on Chinese professionals. They argue that in their absence, manufacturing schedules and supply chains have been upset.

Acknowledging these bottlenecks, the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, MeitY, had allowed limited entry for Chinese technicians to alleviate the bottleneck. Chief Economic Adviser V. Anantha Nageswaran, through the Annual Economic Report, also urged the government to invest more in investment-led policies to curtail the growing trade deficit.

India's attitude towards China is cautious with experience. Under the previous tenure of Trump, when the US policies towards China swayed between containment and strategic ambiguity, India had to look after its border tensions unilaterally. Even if the ties between India and the US intensified during the tenure of Joe Biden, New Delhi is vigilant against overdependence on one particular partner, as it wants to maintain strategic autonomy.

#### Stiff Negotiations

Breaking from past approaches that often yielded temporary solutions, India's negotiators took a firmer stance. Talks with China became uncompromising, linking broader diplomatic relations to peace along the LAC. By insisting that de-escalation was a prerequisite for any meaningful engagement, India reset the terms of negotiation. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar emphasized, "There can be no normalization of ties without peace and tranquillity in border areas. That is the baseline."

#### Why India's Stand Matters

This move by India carries great importance beyond its borders. The firm stand against China has made New Delhi a shining example for other countries that have been facing similar pressures while navigating them. It shows how strategic blending of military

preparedness, economic resilience and robust international alliances can counterbalance the dominance of an adversary.

More importantly, India's approach has derailed the narrative of China's unchecked border aggression. It proved that even the most ambitious expansionist plans of China can be restrained through determined resistance.

While India has achieved some notable success, major issues remain. The border dispute is far from fully resolved, and disputed areas like Depsang and Arunachal Pradesh are still unresolved. Restoration of trust will demand persistent dialogue and strict adherence to disengagement agreements – no small feat given Beijing's spotty track record.

2024 wasn't just another year in India-China relations. It was the year India proved that China's salami-slicing strategy has limits. While many others have capitulated, India resisted, setting a precedent for how neighbours can counterbalance Beijing's growing assertiveness.

### Dalai Lama: Succession and beyond

18 December 2024, Deccan Herald, Bhashyam Kasturi

The uncertainty around his successor is significant because Tibet is central to India-China ties.

The 14th Dalai Lama realises that he is not getting any younger and yet when asked about his successor, he says he will live beyond 100 and a decision on the matter will be taken then. While one wishes the Dalai Lama a long life, that his institution and persona go beyond Tibetan Buddhism into the realm of geopolitics and more pertinently to India-China relations merits a relook at what India's plans to safeguard its interests.

The lack of clarity over his succession creates challenges because China has already made plans. The Chinese set the precedent in the case of the Panchen Lama. The Dalai Lama had, in 2011, outlined his plans on how his successor would be chosen. But even today, he holds his cards close to his chest on this strategic issue. Furthermore, the lack of clarity within India on how this issue will be dealt with is disquieting as Tibet is central to India-China relations.

Recently, Sikyong Penpa Tsering, leader of the Central Tibetan Administration, argued in an interview that the Dalai Lama has taken different stances on the issue of succession, as "China cannot handle unpredictability". He notes that the Dalai Lama talks about emanation, which means choosing somebody before one's demise, and also about reincarnation. The Government of India has also been noncommittal about its take on the succession.

There is no doubt, as Sikyong states, “India is concerned” and “India has a stake in this”. This is because the Dalai Lama stays in India and his presence here irks the Chinese. Flowing from China’s increasing efforts to control religious life in Tibet, in 2007, Order No. 5 on “Measures on the Management of the Reincarnation of Living Buddhas of Tibetan Buddhism” was issued. Articles 5 and 9 of Order No. 5 make it clear that living Buddhas of high order will only be approved at the very top of the Communist Party of China.

In the case of the Dalai Lama, China has argued that the Golden Urn will decide his successor. Pertinently, this method was used only in the case of the 11th and 12th Dalai Lama. In Tibetan Buddhism, the process involves either emanation or reincarnation. China also has in place an aggressive global campaign via the World Buddhist Forum to claim its hold over Buddhism. Tagged to this is the strategy to use China’s economic heft to warn nations not to host the 14th Dalai Lama on their soil and follow Beijing’s lead on his successor.

Even if the next Dalai Lama is ‘born’ in China, India will still have a stake in the matter. Locating India’s Tibet policy is thus important. The existing policy is episodic and lacks consistency. Overcoming this lacuna will require high-level contact between the Dalai Lama and the Government of India, as well as with the Sikyong. The best course of action would be to have the External Affairs Minister on the job.

A policy review

Resetting India’s policy on China from the Tibet angle, however, has its challenges. For instance, there is a suggestion to rename India’s border with China, as the India-Tibet Border. This would certainly be in line with the 1914 Shimla Agreement. But post-1951 when China occupied Tibet and after the 1962 border war, a Line of Actual Control divides India and China. Thus, an entire review of India’s policy towards China must occur.

That a political will to move forward on ties with China exists was demonstrated with the October agreement on Demchok and Dopsang. As the EAM noted in his speech in the Lok Sabha on December 3, non-alteration of the status quo unilaterally, respect and adherence of the LAC by both the sides, and the need to respect and adhere to the agreements that were arrived at earlier remain the key principles for India.

The boundary question is, therefore, at the forefront of the bilateral relationship between India and China. Other aspects that demand equal attention include the growing trade deficit and Chinese investments in India. While most of these are covered by different stakeholders in the government, the presence of the Dalai Lama and Tibetans in India has remained mostly the domain of the intelligence

agencies, MHA and MEA. While the China Study Group and the Tibet Study Group regularly discuss policy options, it is time for a thorough political review at the highest level of the government on India’s stand on the Dalai Lama’s succession.

### **A Tibetan writer reflects on the fight for his motherland while living in ‘exile’ in India**

17 December 2024, Scroll, Tsering Namgyal Khortsa

An excerpt from ‘Little Lhasa: Reflections in Exiled Tibet’, by Tsering Namgyal Khortsa.

Winter sunshine warmed the corrugated roofs of the Tibetan houses, as if compensating for the cold of the night before. A horn of an occasional car echoed within the valley. After a long writing streak the previous night, I had woken slightly late and was sitting outside, enjoying the view of the snow-clad mountains and flipping through the newspaper. I heard the sound of people marching and shouting slogans. The noise grew louder as the crowd marched closer, the sound of protests already filling the area. They were, as expected, anti-Chinese slogans. But I could not immediately figure out the purpose of the gathering. Curiosity led me to step out of the house, to see what grievances they were vocalising that morning.

Coming down the steep road from the Dalai Lama’s main temple, often called Tsuglagkhang after its splendid seventh century namesake in Lhasa, were a group of Tibetans. In the first row were mostly nuns, followed by female students both young and old, wearing the Tibetan chuba, the traditional dress. The men folk brought up the rear. They were carrying anti-Chinese placards, some of which had the usual slogans: “China Get Out of Tibet”, “China Release Political Prisoners in Tibet”, as well as pictures of someone who seemed to be a bespectacled monk.

The rally had apparently started at McLeodganj, about three kilometres away, and was headed in the direction of Gangchen Kyishong, where the secretariats of the government-in-exile were located. I soon realised they were protesting China’s announcement that it was going to execute, without trial, Tenzing Delek Rinpoche, a high-ranking Tibetan lama from Eastern Tibet, and Lobsang Dhondup, a layperson. They were accused of allegedly masterminding a bombing incident in the Sichuan Province. The pictures on the placards held aloft by the protesters were those of Tenzing Delek Rinpoche. Looking at the pictures, however, he seemed more like a high school teacher than a terrorist bomber.

Quite unwittingly, I became part of the crowd and walked with them. I did not know the destination nor did I ask: the power of the crowd was bewitching as it forced me – not usually a joiner of crowds – to

suddenly become party to the morning gathering. The rally was huge.

Group leaders first shouted slogans into their microphones, in Hindi and English, followed by the rest of the demonstrators. While many of the Tibetan elders could not speak English, it did not seem to impede their ability to articulate the slogans with amazing fluency in a language they had never formally learned. Some of them were carrying little Tibetan flags: it was a symbol of Tibetan sovereignty. To me they seemed relatively calm and quite at peace, despite the gravity of the issue at stake: the lives of two prisoners of conscience, languishing by now in some Chinese prison. Perhaps this is the reason why the participants were mostly monks and nuns.

The ease with which they were protesting showed that they were used to this ritual of peaceful dissent. As we neared the bazaar in lower Dharamsala, Indian shopkeepers and onlookers watched silently – some quite pensive, some just indifferent – as the crowd gradually moved past the fruit sellers, through the streets, and towards Kacheri, where they stopped and gathered together. As I looked behind me, I could see the number of demonstrators growing larger, filling the narrow, hilly road leading up to Gangchen Kyishong.

Every year, pilgrims and tourists from all over the world travel to this picturesque north Indian hill station to catch a glimpse of the Dalai Lama. For weary travellers, the rock-strewn roads, heavy traffic jams and choking exhaust fumes are far from spiritually uplifting: they are a reminder of the rugged realities of life in the Indian Himalayas. The poor infrastructure is hardly befitting of the international reputé of this hill station where India's colonial rulers escaped the scorching heat of the plains and sought respite in the shadows of the mountains. But the town has come a long way since 1959 when Tibet's exiled leader set up his government-in-exile after fleeing Tibet as the Chinese Army moved into the region.

When the Tibetans first came to live here, they did not know that the location had Buddhist roots dating back 1700 years. The Kangra Valley is rich in unexplored archaeological sites of great importance to Indian Buddhism. In 635 AD, the Chinese monk pilgrim, Hsuan Tsang, recorded fifty monasteries with around 2,000 monks in this fertile region. But a century later, Buddhism and all its sites were eliminated from the valley during an upsurge of Brahminical revivalism. In 1849, the British posted a regiment in Dharamsala, but the place was not to remain a military cantonment for long. By 1855, it was a small but flourishing hill station and the administrative headquarters of Kangra District, which had been annexed by the British in 1848. The two

main areas at the time were McLeodganj, named after the Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab, David McLeod, and Forsyth Ganj, named after a divisional commissioner.

Lord Elgin, Viceroy of British India and a former Governor-General of Canada, reportedly loved the forests of Dharamsala so much that before dying there in 1863, he asked to be buried in the graveyard of St John's Church, located deep in the wilderness. Had he lived longer, Dharamsala might have become the summer capital of British India. And the great Frances Younghusband, leader of British India's fateful incursion to Lhasa in 1904, also had Dharamsala connections. Both his parents, Clara Shaw and John Younghusband, lived there in a pine forest above St John's Church and later bought land in Kangra Valley to pioneer a tea plantation. Clara's brother, Robert Shaw, was a renowned explorer of Central Asia and an early Kangra tea planter.

In 1905, a severe earthquake changed the face of Dharamsala. Many buildings collapsed and the whole settlement, once ravaged, was never re-occupied. The earthquake measured 7.8 on the surface wave magnitude scale and killed more than 20,000 people. McLeodganj then became a sleepy village until the Dalai Lama made it his home in exile and moved the headquarters of his exiled government from Mussoorie, another north Indian hill station now in the state of Uttarakhand, in 1960. Located in the lap of the breathtaking Dhauladhar Range, which stands 5,200 m above sea level, McLeodganj, at nearly 1,800 m, has all the attributes of a great hill station. And over the years, the place, with its pine-clad hillsides, charming villages, snow-clad peaks, and the wide expanse of fertile Kangra Valley below has attracted tourists from all over the world.

Now, Dharamsala has become the beating heart of exiled Tibet. If you stand long enough in McLeodganj, the whole world, it seems, would eventually pass by you. High-profile visitors have included the Duke of Gloucester and the Duchess of York, the first ladies of France and Peru, supermodel Christy Turlington, actors Pierce Brosnan, Richard Gere, Steven Seagal, Goldie Hawn, Jet Lee, Harrison Ford and Sunil Dutt, not to mention the scores of writers and scientists who come to the town. Notwithstanding the glamour of the tourists and celebrity visitors, the place continues to be the capital of Tibetan dislocation. This is where they have seen their imaginary and real homes merge subconsciously to give birth to an entirely unique entity called "Exiled Tibet"; just as writers see their vivid imagination intersect with hard facts to produce works of creative non-fiction.

## A Tibetan Christmas

17 December 2024, JSTOR Daily, Livia Gershon

The story of Cizhong's Catholic holiday festival began when French missionaries arrived in northwest Yunnan with plans to spread their faith across Tibet.



A priest holds a christening for a baby of Tibetan ethnic minority group attends a mass at a church of Cizhong Village on December 25, 2006, in Deqin County of Yunnan Province, China

In 2014, anthropologist Brendan A. Galipeau attended a Christmas celebration in the village of Cizhong, just outside the Tibetan border in China's Yunnan Province. The holiday represents the village's biggest festival of the year, enjoyed by the area's unique Catholic community and the Buddhist minority. The event bears the influences of European missionaries, Chinese government policies, and cultural and economic interplay between villagers and outsiders.

During the two-day celebration, Galipeau writes, villagers decorated their local church with strings of lights, an elaborate nativity scene, and branches of a local evergreen tree with red berries known as "Christmas tree." During the Christmas Eve and Christmas morning masses, the congregation chanted in Tibetan and the priest spoke in Mandarin Chinese. The festival included a procession of children in traditional Tibetan clothing topped with Santa hats and a feast with Tibetan singing and dancing attended by local Buddhists as well as the Catholics. It also drew many Chinese and international tourists and academics fascinated by the unique event.

Galipeau writes that the story of Cizhong's Catholicism began in the mid-nineteenth century when French Catholic missionaries arrived in northwest Yunnan with plans to spread their faith across Tibet. Difficulties, including resistance from Buddhist lamas, limited their geographical reach, but they successfully established churches and converted Tibetans in the local area.

In the 1930s, a group of Swiss priests from the Grand Saint Bernard Hospice in the Alps arrived to supplement the French contingent, deploying their expertise in mountain living.

After a violent campaign in which Buddhists killed a number of priests and destroyed churches, in 1909, locals built the church that Galipeau visited in Cizhong. In the 1930s, a group of Swiss priests from the Grand Saint Bernard Hospice in the Alps arrived to supplement the French contingent, deploying their expertise in mountain living. And then, in 1952, the Chinese government expelled the French and Swiss Catholics. This meant there were no priests to lead mass until 2008, when the Catholic Association of China sent the Han priest who led the masses Galipeau witnessed. However, villagers quietly kept to their religious traditions.

In 2001, as part of a broader change in its approach to local cultures, the Chinese government began promoting tourism in the region focused on the scenic countryside and Tibetan traditions. Among other things, it renamed Zhongdian County—located near Cizhong—as Shangri-La City, a nod to English author James Hilton's 1933 novel *Lost Horizons*, which described a fictional community where Tibetan Buddhists and Catholics live together peacefully.

Galipeau writes that the Catholic Cizhong community recognized an opportunity to capitalize on their unique mixture of cultures. Some opened guesthouses where tourists could drink wine made from grapes first introduced to the area by the French and Swiss.

Local tourism benefited from both international interest and a growing fascination inside China with Tibetan culture as a source of mystical, nature-based inspiration—a phenomenon that some scholars have called "internal orientalism." But, Galipeau writes, the depiction of their traditions as exotic generally doesn't seem to bother local people, who appreciate the interest in their culture and the economic benefits of the tourist industry.

## Uyghur separatist threat could reach beyond China's Xinjiang

17 December 2024, Asia Times, Andrew Korybko

Central Asia, Pakistan and Russia could soon be in terrorists' crosshairs.



Turkistan Islamic Party fighters at an unknown



location said to be in Syria. Photo: Turkistan Islamic Party website

The rapid collapse of the Syrian Arab Army in the face of the advance of Turkish-backed Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, which the UN Security Council has identified as a terrorist group, has drawn attention to the foreign fighters within their ranks.

First and foremost among those foreign fighters are the Uyghurs from China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. They used to fight China as part of the East Turkestan Islamic Movement but rebranded as the Turkistan Islamic Party some years back.

Regardless of whichever name they go by, the group has been involved in Idlib since 2017, when reports began circulating about its colonies in that corner of Syria. The organization has a history of collaborating with terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda in support of the quest to carve out a Uyghur state from China. That's why it was designated as a terrorist group by the UN Security Council. The United States removed its own such designation in late 2020 giving the reason that the group had become inactive, but now it's known that this wasn't true.

Members of the group just released a video from Syria calling for militant jihad against China. Yang Xiaotong contributed a detailed Asia Times piece on this subject under the title "China has cause to be terrified of rebel-run Syria." Two of the most important points are that the Turkistan Islamic Party is recruiting members from Central Asia and that it could reestablish itself in Afghanistan to carry out attacks against the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

The corridor is considered to be the Belt and Road Initiative's flagship project, and for years it's been the target of attacks by the Balochistan Liberation Army, which Pakistan, China and even the US have designated as a terrorist organization. The BLA has ramped up its attacks since the Afghan Taliban reconquered Afghanistan and gave sanctuary to the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan.

The Balochistan Liberation Army and the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan are now considered to be informal allies. Both seek to damage the Pakistani state: BLA wants to carve out an independent Balochistan while the TTP wants to impose a radical Islamic dictatorship.

Some also suspect that the Afghan Taliban would demand the cession of Pakistan's TTP-run, Pashtun-majority Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (formerly known as the Northwest Frontier Province) as compensation for support in bringing the TTP to power, since there is no Afghan Taliban recognition of the Durand Line.

The Afghan Taliban have positive relations with China, so they might not welcome the Turkistan

Islamic Party to Afghanistan. The problem, though, is that the Afghan Taliban don't have full control over their territory – as is proven by the continued existence of ISIS-K cells there. They also previously hosted the Turkistan Islamic Party in accord with the principle of providing sanctuary to all like-minded Muslim groups with the request that the groups don't threaten others.

It's therefore possible that the Turkistan Islamic Party could re-establish itself in Afghanistan with or without the Afghan Taliban. From there, it could attack the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor just as the partially Afghan-based Balochistan Liberation Army has been doing.

Whereas the Balochistan Liberation Army attacks the corridor for ultra-nationalist reasons, claiming that the megaproject exploits the native Baloch by depriving them of the riches derived from their region's natural resource wealth, it can't be ruled out that the Turkistan Islamic Party might opportunistically want to hit China's soft spot, simply in order to raise the organization's profile.

Beyond attacking Pakistani-based Belt and Road projects, such opportunistic motivation could also find relevance in Central Asia. From there, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham also has sourced some of its foreign fighters – namely Uzbeks, who are the region's most populous people.

There are Uyghur communities in Kazakhstan and in perennially unstable Kyrgyzstan from which the Turkistan Islamist Party could find recruits – whether to carry out attacks against Belt and Road projects there or in Pakistan, attacks across the border in Xinjiang or training in Afghanistan or Syria.

These credible possibilities show that the Turkistan Islamist Party threatens more than just China's Xinjiang, and they raise questions about Türkiye's indirect sponsorship of the party via Ankara's tacit acceptance of the Turkistan Islamists' alliance with the Turkish-backed Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (commonly abbreviated HTS), the group that just conquered Syria.

Türkiye considers itself to be the leader of the Organization of Turkish States, which includes Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, yet those countries' nationals – especially Uzbeks – have now received training from HTS and obtained relevant battlefield experience in Syria under HTS supervision. It will be difficult for Türkiye to present itself as a reliable partner for those 'stans when it has allowed some of their citizens to metastasize into potential terrorist threats without lifting a finger to stop them.

Another factor for observers to keep in mind is the role of Ukraine's GUR military intelligence agency. The Washington Post reported that GUR played a role in HTS's blitz across Syria. Kyiv had

earlier supported Tuareg militants against Wagner in Mali and had supported the Sudanese Armed Forces against the allegedly Wagner-backed Rapid Support Forces in Sudan before that, so its backing of HTS isn't surprising. Nevertheless, the contemporary GUR is also a CIA project, as the Washington Post reported in late 2023.

The possibility thus arises of the CIA using GUR as a plausibly deniable proxy for managing or at least encouraging the Turkistan Islamist Party's expansion to the geostrategic Central Asian region between Russia and China. This could occur even if Türkiye is against it. Ankara could preemptively avert that scenario by using its influence over HTS to crack down on the Turkistan Islamist Party inside Syria by demilitarizing and demobilizing its armed formations. Some Uyghurs could also be deported to China.

Of course, that would require tremendous political will, which Türkiye might not have at present. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has presented himself as a champion of the Uyghurs' political cause in times past, but he's toned down such rhetoric in recent years out of pragmatism to improve ties with China. He might thus be accused of betrayal by some of the Islamists from his domestic base, not to mention those abroad who support his Islamist-driven foreign policy – hence his possible reluctance.

If he doesn't take decisive action now, even if only to the extent of containing the Turkistan Islamist Party within Syria and not allowing other Uyghurs, Central Asians or Chechens to travel there via Türkiye for training with that group or HTS, then he might soon find himself with a major problem on his hands that could harm his foreign policy. After all, those people traveled to Syria for training and battlefield experience with the tacit support of his country, so Erdoğan is ultimately to blame in part for whatever future attacks they might carry out.

Pakistan is one of Türkiye's close partners. Thus it will be extremely scandalous if Syrian-based Uyghurs eventually make their way to Afghanistan to wage hybrid war on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which is also envisaged as the foundation for Pakistan's future economic development.

Whether the Turkistan Islamists do so on their own or in collusion with the CIA-sponsored GUR is beside the point since Türkiye will still be partially responsible. Russia, China, the Central Asian republics, and Pakistan are therefore watching very closely to see what Erdoğan will do.

### **Falling enrolment in Tibetan schools a community challenge**

16 December 2024, The Tribune, Lalit Mohan

The Tibetan government-in-exile has been highlighting the challenges posed by the Chinese government,

which has been attempting to erase Tibetan culture in Tibet by prohibiting enrolment in Buddhist monasteries. However, the Tibetan community in India is facing its own set...

The Tibetan government-in-exile has been highlighting the challenges posed by the Chinese government, which has been attempting to erase Tibetan culture in Tibet by prohibiting enrolment in Buddhist monasteries. However, the Tibetan community in India is facing its own set of challenges, including a decline in the number of students enrolling in Tibetan schools, as well as a decrease in the number of Tibetans becoming monks in monasteries across India.

The Tibetan schools and monasteries, set up in India since the Dalai Lama fled into exile from Tibet in 1959, have played a crucial role in preserving the Tibetan language and culture. These institutions have helped spread the Tibetan culture across the world and in maintaining the Tibetan struggle against China.

The issue of declining student enrolment in Tibetan schools in India was highlighted during a symposium organised by the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) on Tibetan education. The Education Minister of the Tibetan government in exile, Tharlam Dolma, expressed concern over the declining student numbers, revealing that the student population in Tibetan schools had dropped from 23,684 in 2012 to 13,035 in 2024 – a decline of more than 10,000 students.

She attributed this decline to three primary factors – the cessation of regular Tibetan arrivals from Tibet since 2008, an increase in Tibetans emigrating to Western countries from Tibetan settlements in India, Nepal and Bhutan, and a declining birth rate within the Tibetan community in exile.

The Tibetan government in exile operates 62 schools across India and Nepal, falling under four different systems – Tibetan Children's Village, Central School for Tibetans (CST), Sambhota Tibetan Schools Society and The Snow Lion Foundation. These schools focus on preserving Tibetan language and culture in exile. Earlier, children from Tibet and north-eastern states of India would attend these schools, with many foreign agencies providing financial support for their education. However, the number of students in these schools is now on the decline.

Additionally, the president of the Tibetan government in exile, Penpa Tsering, recently raised concerns about the decreasing number of monks joining Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in exile. Speaking to Tibetan exiles in Lingsang settlement, Dehradun, Tsering highlighted that, according to records from the Department of Religion and Culture of the Tibetan government in exile, the number of monks

has been steadily decreasing over the past three years. According to him, most of the current monks come from Himalayan communities.

### **Hong Kong redefines its economic DNA for China's new era**

16 December 2024, Dimsum Daily Hong Kong

As Financial Secretary Paul Chan begins public consultations for the 2025/26 Budget, the city faces the challenging task of maintaining its capitalist character under "One Country, Two Systems" while navigating increasingly turbulent international waters.

The imminent return of Donald Trump to the American presidency in January 2025 presents both challenges and opportunities for Hong Kong's strategic positioning. Trump's anticipated confrontational stance toward China – including potential tariffs and technology restrictions – requires Hong Kong to develop more sophisticated responses that leverage its unique status as a bridge between East and West. However, this challenge also presents an opportunity for Hong Kong to redefine its role within China's economic ecosystem. The city's traditional strengths – its common law system, free flow of information, and transparent governance – become even more valuable as China seeks to maintain international economic engagement while developing alternative channels to Western markets. Hong Kong's evolution must be understood within the context of China's broader economic strategy. Beijing's recent Politburo meetings have emphasised the financial sector's crucial role in economic development, particularly in funding technological advancement. This reaffirmation of Hong Kong's position as China's international financial centre represents a strategic cornerstone for the city's future development.

The establishment of an Economic Development Board, as proposed by various stakeholders, could serve as a crucial mechanism for implementing long-term strategic planning. This would mark a significant departure from the current annual budget-focused approach, allowing Hong Kong to develop more comprehensive strategies aligned with China's five-year plans while maintaining its distinctive economic character.

Three key initiatives emerge as priorities for Hong Kong's transformation:

Initially, enhancing English-language broadcasting capacities via RTHK and other English media platforms to address waning global perceptions. This goes beyond mere public relations; it concerns upholding Hong Kong's position as a respected international voice capable of adeptly conveying the perspectives of both Hong Kong and China to the worldwide audience.

Second, the establishment of a Northern Metropolis Future Centre represents a concrete step toward better integration with mainland markets while preserving Hong Kong's unique advantages. This closed-door platform for stakeholder engagement could help resolve complex issues arising from increased economic integration while maintaining Hong Kong's distinct identity.

Third, the proposed Economic Development Board could coordinate these efforts while ensuring Hong Kong's development aligns with both local needs and national objectives. This wouldn't require significant bureaucratic expansion but rather a strategic reorganisation of existing resources.

The challenge lies not in choosing between integration with mainland China and maintaining Hong Kong's unique character – but in achieving both simultaneously. Hong Kong must leverage its distinctive features – common law, human rights protections, press freedom, and transparent governance – while playing a more active role in China's economic development.

This balancing act requires sophisticated policy coordination. The budget must address immediate operational concerns while laying the groundwork for longer-term strategic objectives. It must satisfy three distinct constituencies: mainland authorities, international investors, and local residents. Success requires demonstrating both the will and capability to evolve while maintaining Hong Kong's essential character.

Hong Kong's role as China's international financial centre will likely become even more crucial as global economic power continues shifting eastward. The city's experience in managing international capital flows, combined with its understanding of both Western and Chinese business practices, positions it uniquely to facilitate China's growing economic influence. The upcoming budget represents more than just an annual fiscal exercise – it's an opportunity to articulate a vision for Hong Kong's future that embraces both continuity and change. By maintaining its distinctive advantages while adapting to new realities, Hong Kong can strengthen its position as an indispensable link between China and the global economy.

### **Xi brought down powerful rivals in the military. Now he's going after his own men**

15 December 2024, CNN World, Nectar Gan

In the early years of Xi Jinping's war on corruption, the Chinese leader consolidated control over the world's largest military by taking down powerful generals from rival factions and replacing them with allies and proteges loyal to himself.

A decade on, having given the People's Liberation Army (PLA) a structural overhaul and stacked its top ranks with his own men, the supreme leader is still knee-deep in his seemingly endless struggle against graft and disloyalty.

And, like many strongman leaders in history, he is increasingly turning against his own handpicked loyalists.

Late last month, Xi purged one of his closest proteges in the military – a decades-old associate entrusted with instilling political loyalty in the PLA and vetting senior promotions.

Adm. Miao Hua, who sits on the Central Military Commission (CMC), the top command body chaired by Xi, has been suspended under investigation for "serious violations of discipline," the Defense Ministry announced, using a common euphemism for corruption and disloyalty.

As the head of the CMC's political work department, which oversees political indoctrination and personnel appointments, Miao is the most senior scalp in Xi's latest military purge. Since last summer, more than a dozen high-ranking figures in China's defense establishment have been ousted, including the last two defense ministers promoted to the CMC by Xi.

But none of them boast the kind of long-standing relationship Miao shared with the top leader, dating back decades to Xi's early political career in the coastal province of Fujian.

The probe into Miao opens a new front in a widening purge that has raised questions over Xi's ability to end systematic corruption in the military and enhance its combat readiness at a time of heightened geopolitical tensions.

Over the past decade, Xi has overseen an ambitious transformation of the PLA into a "world class" fighting force that can rival the US military. A key goal of that modernization drive is to ensure China is ready to fight and win a war over Taiwan, the self-governing democratic island Beijing claims as its own.

But Miao's downfall renews questions – raised during last summer's purges – about how much confidence Xi has in his top generals who would be responsible for leading a war, said Joel Wuthnow, a senior research fellow at the Pentagon-funded National Defense University.

"If he fears that he has brought in people who are not unquestionably loyal to him or his agenda, that would be a huge problem."

Experts say Xi's purge of a longtime acolyte points to a familiar dilemma for autocrats, including his predecessor Mao Zedong: after eliminating political rivals, the supreme leader never stops looking for new threats to their absolute hold on power – including from their own close circle.

'Obscene extent of corruption'

Miao's history with Xi goes back three decades. The Fujian native served as a political officer in the former 31st Group Army from the 1980s to the early 2000s, when Xi was rising through the ranks as a local official to become the provincial governor of Fujian.

"According to credible sources, Xi regularly visited the 31st Group Army at the time" and is known to have had personal contacts with Miao, said James Char, a longtime PLA-watcher and assistant professor at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore.

Miao's military career took off soon after Xi came to power. In 2014, he received a major promotion to become the political commissar of the PLA Navy, making an unusual switch from a career in the Ground Force. Three years later, he was promoted again into the CMC, the apex of military power.

"We cannot find a more apodictic acolyte of Xi than Miao," Char said. "If Miao is eventually indicted of graft, clearly Xi himself had not anticipated the obscene extent of corruption that exists among PLA elites."

For the past 18 months, Xi's cleanup had largely targeted officials connected to the procurement of weapons and the Rocket Force, which oversees China's nuclear and conventional missiles. But Miao's downfall signals a broadening of that crackdown into new sectors, such as political work – which Xi has described as the "lifeline" of the military – and the Navy.

"Wherever they look, I'm sure they will find issues and cases. It's just a matter of which sector they pick," Char said.

'Loss of confidence'

The Defense Ministry has offered no details about the allegations against Miao.

As the chief political commissar of the PLA, Miao is tasked with ensuring its loyalty to the ruling Communist Party. He oversees promotions in the military, vetting key candidates for their political loyalty – a role he also held in the Navy.

In the past, such roles have offered fertile ground for graft, especially bribes for promotions. Miao's predecessor, Gen. Zhang Yang, killed himself while under disciplinary investigation for bribery.

As the geopolitical rivalry between the United States and China heats up, the PLA Navy has also seen a drastic increase in the procurement of warships and other weapons, providing ample opportunities for corruption, said Victor Shih, a political science professor at the University of San Diego.

But there could be another potential reason behind Miao's downfall, Shih said, for "being too obvious in his attempt to foster a faction in the military."

Xi has repeatedly warned against the forming of factions in both the party and the military. "Of

course, the only person who is allowed to do that is Xi himself," Shih added.

Miao is seen by some analysts as having recommended multiple associates in the Navy for promotions to key positions, including Rocket Force Commander Wang Houbin and Defense Minister Dong Jun.

The announcement of Miao's investigation came a day after the Financial Times reported that Dong had been placed under investigation for corruption, citing current and former US officials. The Defense Ministry dismissed the report as "sheer fabrication," and days later, Dong made a public appearance at a security forum.

Wuthnow, the expert at the National Defense University, said what led to Miao's downfall was a "loss of confidence," but the reasons for that remain elusive.

In one scenario, Wuthnow said, Xi might have viewed Miao as becoming too powerful and independent, and wanted to uproot what he saw as a bastion of influence that he could not fully control.

"I don't think this is how leaders who are confident in their own power and ability to corral the bureaucracy behaves. It actually strikes me as a sign of weakness, if not paranoia, that he feels he needs to constantly overturn the apple cart," he said.

'This happens over and over again'

Miao's downfall comes less than a year after former defense minister Li Shangfu was removed from the CMC.

The powerful body had six members – all deemed as Xi's loyalists – serving under the top leader when he began his unprecedented third term two years ago. If Miao is also removed, it would leave two vacant seats.

Shih, the expert on Chinese elite politics, said many dictators, from former Soviet leader Joseph Stalin to Mao, have eventually turned against their own proteges.

"Once all of their real competitors are gone, a dictator can never think to themselves: 'Oh well, all the threats are gone. I can just relax.' Because they always think that new threats could emerge, including from people who once were very close to them. This happens over and over again," he said.

As a result, the dictator is always looking for increasingly subtle signs that someone is plotting against them, said Shih, the author of "Coalitions of the Weak," which examines Mao's hold on power in the late stage of his life.

During Mao's last years, he turned against Lin Biao, his longtime protege, former defense minister and heir apparent, accusing him of plotting a coup.

"This kind of dynamic will become increasingly severe as Xi Jinping gets older, as his health is not as robust as previously. His sensitivity to signs of

potential challenge to his power will also become keener over time," Shih said.

For now, the top leader appears determined to carry on his crusade against corruption and disloyalty.

Earlier this month, Xi inspected the PLA's Information Support Force with his four remaining loyalists on the CMC.

"We must ensure the troops remain absolutely loyal, absolutely pure and absolutely reliable," Xi told an audience of note-taking officers.

### **Communist China: Weaponizing Buddhism and Erasing Tibet**

14 December 2024, Tibetan Review, Tenzin Dorjee

Communist China has accelerated the weaponizing of Buddhism and erasing of Tibet. Organizing the 9th Nanhai (South China Sea) Buddhism Roundtable Conference in Lumbini over December 12-17, 2024 – as reported in the Tibetan Review and other news outlets – and persuading Nepal to allow China's Panchen Lama Gyaincain Norbu is an unfolding of China's action plans to fulfill this goal. Historically, China was a major Buddhist country; but since becoming communist, it has had no business organizing and participating in Buddhist conferences. Communist China is an enemy of all religions. The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) and its State Department's Annual reports have rated China as a "Country of Particular Concern" for systematically, egregiously, and continuously violating the freedom of religion or belief. Late Chairman Mao has famously said, "Religion is an opium."

Ample evidences indicate how Communist China has weaponized Buddhism to advance its political and social influence agenda. Two of its main activities today for this purpose are Sinicizing of all religions, especially calling for Buddhism with a socialist outlook, and controlling the reincarnation system of Tibetan Buddhism. China uses state-of-the-art technology to monitor religious freedom, religious ordination, religious administration, religious education, and religious activities in Tibet. Monks are required to undergo political education and Sinicize Buddhism as a means to accomplish Communist ends for both domestic purpose and with geo-political goals. China unashamedly uses Buddhism as a weapon and soft power tool to counteract India's power and expand its social influence on China-dependent, debt-ridden countries and beyond.

Buddhism originated in India and spread all over Asia. Tibetan Buddhism follows the systematic study, contemplation, and practice of the Nalanda Tradition and the sixteen Maha Pandits or preeminent Buddhist professors such as Arya Nagarjuna, Arya Asanga, Acharya Shantarakshita, Acharya Chandrakirti,



Acharya Shantideva, and Great Atisha. Last year, the Government of India collaborated with the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) to hold the first Asian Buddhist Summit in Delhi. But China stayed away because the Summit's goals did not fulfill its geopolitical ends. Prime Minister Modi-Ji and His Holiness the Dalai Lama addressed the summit on different days. Last November, the second Asian Buddhist Summit in Delhi focused on "the Role of Buddha Dharma Strengthening Asia." Again, China had no show.

China has also weaponized the Tibetan reincarnation system. Starting with the first Karmapa, Tibetan Buddhism's reincarnation system is unique. The two most prominent ones are the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama. China formulated in 2007 the State Religious Affairs Bureau's Order No. 5 to regulate the reincarnation system in Tibetan Buddhism. Under it China keeps a registry of so-called "Living Buddhas" that excluded the Dalai Lama and the real Panchen Lama.

When I chaired the USCIRF, I strongly advocated for the release of the Panchen Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, who was recognized as the 11th Panchen Lama by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. China abducted him and his family, and no one has heard about or seen in person the real Panchen Lama, who is now in his 30s. In his place, China's politically appointed Panchen Gyaincain Norbu and parades him across Tibet and abroad to gain legitimacy. China's latest attempt is to showcase him as the leader of Tibetan Buddhism and a symbol of religious freedom at the ongoing roundtable Buddhist conference in Nepal. China hates and despises the Dalai Lama, a global Buddhist icon, as a "wolf in monk's robes," while India hosts him as its honored guest.

China's game plan is to politically appoint a Tibetan boy as the 15th Dalai Lama in future. The Dalai Lama will only feel compassion for Chinese leaders for their ignorance, for only he can decide on his next reincarnation. In recent years, the Dalai Lama assured Tibetans and the world, at many long-life puja ceremonies offered to him, that he is healthy and plans to live over 100 and possibly 113, and there is no rush to discuss his reincarnation. He will leave no room for China or anybody else to play their agenda game with his reincarnation. When the time is right, he will speak unequivocally. The world will believe his words, not China's claim. Tibetans and Tibetan Buddhists firmly believe in him. They must stay united, follow his precise instructions, and do what is necessary.

Relatedly, China has been embarking on erasing Tibet and Tibetan identity. Tibet and Buddhism are metaphorically the two sides of the same coin, symbolizing Tibetans globally. Buddhism is the heartbeat and soul of Tibet as a nation. Tibet is

stored in the memory of the world. Many United Nations experts have objected to China forcibly removing a million Tibetan children from their homes and confining them to boarding schools. China strategically plans to erase its Tibetan identity, language, culture, and faith. Across Tibet, China forbids Tibetan families from teaching their children about faith, worship, and practice.

Domestically, China has systematically, egregiously, and continuously used power, latest technology, and resources in its campaign to erase Tibetan identity. Globally, China wants to erase Tibet from peoples' minds and literature, forcibly introducing the Chinese label 'Xizang.' China officially mandated the use of Xizang for Tibet in their diplomatic relations and communication, both written and oral.

Professor Tsering Shakya wrote an insightful article entitled "Tibet Must Stand" on renaming Tibet as Xizang. According to the December 11 post on the SOAS's China Institute website (University of London), China has launched a two-year social influence campaign to coax "foreign businesses, publishers, and mapmakers to adopt the name "Xizang" in place of "Tibet." In the 1990s, China took to calling Tibet "China's Tibet", which paradoxically suggests Tibet is not China's. Incidentally, why doesn't China call Beijing "China's Beijing"?

Sinicizing Tibetan names does not grant the legitimacy of ownership. Professor Shakya rightly put it, "Internationally, the word "Tibet" has become a symbol of a unique identity with significant cultural "soft power," one which is now seen in China as evoking a sense of separateness that undermines Beijing's claim to the region. The Chinese campaign to enforce "Xizang" on foreign individuals and institutions invokes the moral high ground of decolonization while seeking to make the international community complicit in China's claims to sovereignty and its practices of cultural erasure. But the fact remains that the name "Tibet" is not a Western imposition but a term rooted in indigenous usage, dating from interactions between Tibetans and their neighbors over a millennium ago."

China is weaponizing Buddhism for geopolitical influence and a communist domination endgame. I hope Prime Minister Oli does not kowtow to China and turn Nepal into China's Nepal. China aims to reprogram the minds of people around the globe, erasing Tibet and accepting Xizang instead. China needs to develop and install chips into people's brains to succeed in erasing Tibet and replacing it with Xizang.

## **Tibet Under Pressure: China's Geopolitical Ambitions And Cultural Repression**

14 December 2024, Bharat Shakti, Anukriti K

The human rights situation in Tibet is closely tied to broader political issues. The Chinese government views any expression of Tibetan nationalism or support for the Dalai Lama as threatening national unity and stability.

### **Editor's Note**

China perceived the importance of Tibet and annexed it in the early 1950s. However, the Western world has yet to focus on Tibet and evolve a cohesive strategy to pursue the fruition of Tibetan aspirations. Tibet is critically important for the Chinese BRI project and its offshoot, the CPEC. Tibetans continue to battle Chinese pressures in multiple areas, including their cultural and religious identity and violation of human rights. The article examines multiple facets of Chinese repression and relates these to its belligerence in the region.

The relationship between China and Tibet is marked by deep and multifaceted complexities shaped by a rich interplay of historical, political, and cultural forces. These complexities have not only defined the region's demographic landscape but continue to influence Tibetans' lives and global geopolitics significantly. At the heart of this ongoing conflict are key literal and metaphorical fault lines centred around territorial disputes, forced cultural assimilation, human rights issues, and the quest for Tibetan autonomy.

### **Tibet And China**

Tibet has a long history of autonomy, with a unique culture and Buddhist identity. Before the 20th century, it was a theocracy governed by the Dalai Lama, influenced by Buddhist principles. Tibet's relationship with China is complex, marked by periods of trade, diplomacy, and conflict, but Tibet often maintained independence, especially when China was weak.

During the Yuan (1271–1368) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties, China had some influence, but Tibet largely managed its affairs and preserved its identity. Historians debate the extent of Tibetan autonomy during these periods, with some viewing Tibet as independent and others as under Chinese suzerainty. Following the collapse of the Qing Dynasty in 1911, Tibet declared independence in 1913 under the 13th Dalai Lama. Tibet operated as a de facto independent state for several decades, establishing diplomatic relations, issuing passports, and managing its government. However, China did not recognize Tibet's independence, continuing to assert its claim over the region and setting the stage for future tensions.

The Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) was officially incorporated into the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the 1950s after a military invasion by Chinese forces. Since then, Tibet has been under Chinese rule, but the question of Tibet's autonomy remains a thorn in Sino-Tibetan relations. Tibet's spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, fled into exile in India in 1959 following a failed uprising against Chinese authority. The situation has since been characterized by resistance movements, both peaceful and violent, from Tibetans who seek greater independence or autonomy.

At the heart of the conflict lies the territorial dispute. Tibet, a vast plateau on the northern edge of the Indian subcontinent, is rich in natural resources such as water, minerals, and geo-strategic importance. For China, Tibet's integration is a driver for its national unity and economic and military security. The region's role as the headwaters of several major rivers, including the Yangtze and the Mekong, further complicates the issue as downstream countries like India, Vietnam, and Laos rely heavily on water flow from Tibetan glaciers and rivers.

### **Cultural Assimilation And Identity Struggles**

China has long propounded "ethnic harmony" and integration, but Tibetans argue these policies undermine their distinct cultural and religious identity. The Chinese government's push for cultural and political integration, known as 'Sinicization,' has led to the destruction of Tibetan Buddhist institutions, restrictions on religious practices, and an influx of Han Chinese settlers. Tibetans fear that their traditional way of life, religion, and language are under threat.

Tibetan Buddhism, a core part of Tibetan identity, has been a significant point of tension. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has implemented policies to limit religious influence, resulting in the destruction of monasteries, imprisonment of monks and nuns, and tight control over religious practices.

A key issue is the Chinese government's interference in selecting Tibetan religious leaders. In 1995, when the Dalai Lama recognized Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, China rejected this choice and installed its candidate. Nyima has been missing since then, with his whereabouts unknown, drawing international criticism of China's policies in Tibet.

Self-immolation protests by Tibetans, especially monks and nuns, have become a powerful tool of resistance against cultural and religious repression. These acts have drawn global attention, though China cruelly dismisses them as acts of terrorism and blames "anti-China" forces for escalating tensions.

The imposition of Mandarin in schools and the economic marginalization of Tibetans contribute to growing alienation. Tibetan culture, deeply

connected to Buddhism and its traditions, faces increasing pressure under Chinese policies. Many Tibetans see it as an attempt to erase their identity and integrate them into a Han-dominated society. The Chinese government defends these policies as essential for development, modernization, and national unity.

#### The Question Of Autonomy

The Chinese government claims that Tibet enjoys a high degree of autonomy under the "one country, two systems" model, which is also applied to regions like Hong Kong and Macau. However, in practice, Tibetans argue that their autonomy is severely limited. The Chinese government maintains tight control over political appointments, the economy, and security in Tibet. Policies are dictated by the central government in Beijing, with little input from local Tibetan leaders.

The lack of genuine political autonomy is a major source of frustration for Tibetans, who feel that the Chinese government does not adequately represent their interests. Beijing's emphasis on economic development in Tibet, including large-scale infrastructure projects like the Qinghai-Tibet Railway, is often portrayed as a solution to Tibet's grievances. However, many Tibetans feel that these projects primarily benefit Han Chinese migrants and contribute to the erosion of Tibetan culture and the environment.

#### Human Rights Concerns

Human rights organizations and governments globally have regularly criticized China's policies in Tibet as well as in Xinjiang. Allegations of forced labour, arbitrary detention, torture, and the suppression of free speech are widespread. Tibetans, particularly those in rural areas, face strict surveillance, and the Chinese government monitors their religious practices. The ongoing crackdowns on Tibetan protests, including the 2008 riots in Lhasa, serve as stark reminders of the extent to which China is willing to go to maintain control.

The human rights situation in Tibet is closely tied to broader political issues. The Chinese government views any expression of Tibetan nationalism or support for the Dalai Lama as threatening national unity and stability. As a result, dissent is met with harsh repression, and even peaceful protests are often labelled as acts of separatism. The use of invasive surveillance, including the deployment of advanced technologies like facial recognition, has further restricted Tibetans' ability to express their political and cultural identity.

#### The Dalai Lama Issue

The Dalai Lama remains a powerful symbol of Tibetan resistance and identity despite living in exile since 1959. He has long advocated for the "Middle Way" approach, which seeks genuine autonomy for

Tibet within the framework of the Chinese state rather than outright independence. However, the Chinese government has consistently rejected negotiations with the Dalai Lama, labelling him a separatist.

The Tibetan diaspora, particularly in India, strongly advocates Tibetan autonomy and human rights through organizations like the Tibetan Youth Congress and the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), which calls for Tibet's return to autonomy within China while preserving its cultural and political rights.

Many younger Tibetans, who have grown up in exile and experienced the limitations of their political status, are more inclined to demand full independence rather than compromise on autonomy. This generational divide adds another layer of complexity to the already fraught Tibet-China relationship.

#### International Implications and Global Response

The Tibet issue is not confined to Sino-Tibetan relations; it has significant international dimensions. Tibet's political and environmental stability directly impacts countries like India, Nepal, and Bhutan. India, which shares a long border with Tibet, has a large Tibetan exile community and has been a consistent critic of China's policies in Tibet. The U.S., European Union, and human rights organizations have repeatedly called for improved human rights conditions in Tibet and the resumption of dialogue between the Chinese government and Tibetan representatives.

Another aspect of the tension in Tibet and China is the geopolitical rivalry between China and India. India has hosted the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan exile community since 1959, which has long been a source of tension between the two countries, as Beijing views India's support as interference in its internal affairs. Meanwhile, India sees China's actions in Tibet as part of a broader assertiveness in the region. The border dispute between the two countries, particularly over Arunachal Pradesh, which China claims as part of Tibet, further complicates the relationship, with Tibet serving as a key leverage point in their ongoing geopolitical competition.

China's growing economic and geopolitical power has created a challenging environment for international actors to engage in Tibet-related issues. The Chinese government has been adept at suppressing international support for Tibetan autonomy by exerting economic and political pressure on countries and international institutions.

China's growing presence and expansion in the South China Sea have irked the neighbouring Southeast Asian countries concerned about territorial disputes and maritime security. This stance has further complicated diplomatic ties with European and

American nations, who see China's action as challenging international laws and regional stability. Hence, the situation has heightened geopolitical tensions and triggered a global backlash against China.

While the Chinese government continues to assert its authority over Tibet, calling it a 'core interest' in its territorial integrity, Tibetans continue to seek greater autonomy and recognition of their cultural identity. As these fault lines persist, the international community remains divided on how best to approach the Tibet issue, balancing respect for China's sovereignty with the rights and aspirations of the Tibetan people. Until these underlying tensions are addressed, the China-Tibet fault lines will likely remain a key feature of the region's complex and contested history.

### **Jaishankar: Finding balance with China complex as both nations evolve**

16 December 2024, The Indian Express, Divya A

At magazine launch, External Affairs Minister discusses India's changing relationships with major powers

Accepting that equation is "very complex", External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday said it is in the interest of both India and China to find an equilibrium, and emphasised that India's economic trajectory will put a premium on its ties with countries like Russia and Canada.

During a discussion with C Raja Mohan, Contributing Editor, The Indian Express, at the launch of foreign policy magazine 'India's World', in New Delhi, which was attended by Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, Jaishankar said, "Eventually, it's in the interest of both India and China to reach an equilibrium. Conceptually, it's difficult to do because both are changing in absolute terms and vis-a-vis the world."

"The world is changing, they (India and China) are changing, their relationship with the world is changing and their relationship with each other is also changing. In all these changes, how do you find equilibrium? It's not going to be easy," he said, responding to a question on India's relationship with China and how the two big Asian neighbours can co-exist peacefully.

Referring to the issues along the LAC, he said, "We are still grappling with the short term (issue), which is to focus on de-escalation. While disengagement has been worked out, there are other issues which confront us." In October this year, India and China reached an agreement on patrolling arrangements.

On India's ties with Russia, despite pushback from the West in the wake of the Ukraine war, he said Russia is a very unique aspect of India's foreign policy and a "major power globally, and certainly in

Eurasia, it is something more than that". He stressed that "in International Relations 101, your neighbour's neighbour has an enormous value."

"Today, India is finding new convergences and intersections. A country like India at this stage of its growth, the resource powers of the world have to be our major partners," he said.

"India's economic trajectory will put some premium on (its ties with) countries like Russia, Indonesia, Australia, or even Canada," he said, adding, "It's a new compulsion and new rationalisation of who our partners would be."

Though he didn't mention how India aims to navigate its ties with the US under President-elect Donald Trump, he said, "As part of our relationship with the US, we have very honest conversations on where we agree and where we don't", adding that the India-US ties is "large and important".

Jaishankar underlined that Europe is an important partner in terms of many of the key concerns – supply chains, AI, semiconductors and digital exchanges. "There is a broad intersection which needs to be built upon," he said.

### **How India's soft power led to a border deal with China**

15 December 2024, The Japan Times, Dalbir Ahlawat

The template set by New Delhi balances diplomacy, dialogue and deterrence



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese leader Xi Jinping meet at the BRICS summit in Kazan, Russia, in October. India and China reached a border deal for Chinese forces to retreat from disputed territory and for India to resume border patrols. | China Daily / via REUTERS

Recent events reveal India's success in securing concessions from China.

Ending a four-year hiatus, Chinese leader Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi resumed a structured dialogue at the BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia, in October – after having held only

unscheduled interactions since the 2020 Galwan Valley incident in which the Chinese and Indian armies clashed over the disputed border that divides them.

This seems to have been an opportune moment for the Chinese leadership to disengage its forces from territorial friction points and for India to resume border patrols, with both returning to pre-Galwan Valley incident positions.

Several strategic factors put pressure on China to change its stance. These included the holding of the BRICS summit with the possibility that Xi and Modi would not agree on some of the key points, the prospect that the American election would usher in a new administration with an unpredictable foreign policy and growing challenges in the Indo-Pacific.

In Kazan, Xi even stressed that India and China should work together as partners and not competitors and see the relationship as an opportunity for development, rather than a threat.

This contrasts sharply with Beijing's assertive stance in the South China Sea, where it continues to reiterate its claim over Taiwan and adopt an aggressive posture toward the Philippines and other states. Notably, Xi has repeatedly urged China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) to prepare for war.

On the contrary, India's emphasis on diplomacy and dialogue led to conciliation with Beijing, creating a useful template for other countries embroiled in territorial disputes with China.

For decades, India and China have been locked in a confrontation centered on the 3,488 km-long border they share, known as the Line of Actual Control (LAC). Despite India's repeated efforts to resolve the issue, the dispute remains, creating a volatile situation often marked by displays of military force, face-offs and even casualties.

The genesis of the disagreement can be traced back to postcolonial times. After India gained independence from the British in 1947 and the Communists won control of China in 1949, both nations initially sought cooperation. However, the 1962 war, initiated by Beijing, severely damaged bilateral relations, which remained strained for decades.

In 1989, following the Tiananmen Square crackdown, China faced global isolation. To repair its international image and avoid further estrangement, Beijing engaged with India and signed several confidence-building agreements in the decade starting from 1993 to maintain peace along the LAC and with the ultimate goal of resolving the border dispute.

However, Xi's rise to power marked a decided shift. With the launch of the Belt and Road initiative (BRI) in 2013, Beijing sought to position itself as the leader

of a China-centric order in Asia, encouraging India to align with its vision while sidelining the United States. New Delhi rejected this, particularly due to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a flagship BRI project passing through Pakistan-administered Kashmir, which India regards as its territory. In response, China adopted a more aggressive posture along the LAC, attempting to dissuade India from supporting U.S.-led initiatives such as the construction of the Indo-Pacific as a geostrategic region and the "Quad" security dialogue comprising India, the U.S., Japan and Australia.

A turning point occurred in 2017, when China began constructing a road in Doklam, a disputed territory between China and Bhutan overlooking India's strategic Siliguri Corridor, a stretch of land in West Bengal state.

Indian troops crossed the LAC for the first time to prevent the construction, resulting in a 73-day standoff with the PLA. Under Modi, India demonstrated its resolve to counter Chinese pressure and its unwillingness to compromise on territorial integrity. This display of strength enhanced India's reputation as a credible regional counterbalance to China, encouraging other countries engaged in disputes with Beijing to view New Delhi as a reliable partner.

These dynamics did not augur well for the Chinese leadership, which escalated tensions and skirmishes along different sectors of the LAC, ultimately culminating in the June 2020 Galwan Valley clash.

New Delhi accused Beijing of building bunkers and obstructing the Indian army's movements over the territory it claims. The confrontation resulted in the death of 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers – killings that hardened India's stance, with Modi asserting that the Indian soldiers' sacrifice would not go in vain and that the government would give a befitting reply, if provoked.

The two countries signed an agreement in February 2021 for complete troop disengagement and verification. However, a deep trust deficit persisted as they were unable to resolve all friction points and Chinese forces blocked Indian troops at key strategic nodes, thus limiting India's patrolling abilities and access, for example to its Daulat Beg Oldi air base.

Rather than acquiescing to China's aggressive overtures and reacting to Xi's call for the PLA to prepare for war, India opted for a soft power approach. As well as engaging China through dialogue and diplomacy, New Delhi deepened its ties with Quad members to support a rules-based order leading to free and open Indo-Pacific – one that China intends to alter, even resorting to force. India's joint military exercises with Japan and Australia are a case in point.



In addition, India strengthened its historic partnership with Russia, China's key ally, by continuing its trade with Moscow despite Western sanctions, creating a scenario in which Russia would not be inclined to support China at the cost of compromising its ties to India.

In parallel, New Delhi also deepened relations with Washington, China's key adversary, by signing four foundational security agreements and another for priority delivery of defense items, boosting military interoperability between the two countries. India also reaffirmed its commitment to the central role of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Taken together, all these measures boosted India's strategic heft and reinforced its position as a formidable peer competitor, allowing it to negotiate with China from a position of strength.

Simultaneously, China has faced mounting challenges, including growing tensions over Taiwan, ASEAN's pushback in the South China Sea, the AUKUS security agreement between Australia, the U.S. and the United Kingdom, and Japan's shift to collective defense. Coupled with an economic slowdown, these pressures have left Beijing in a precarious position in recalibrating its approach to India.

Pushing India too hard would risk driving it closer to the U.S. and Quad. Witnessing India's economy grow faster than China's and New Delhi's increasing influence in the region, the Chinese leadership opted for addressing the border dispute and recognizing India as a peer competitor, rather than an adversary. A major achievement for India was to make China withdraw from disputed territory — China's occupation of this land was exposed to the wider world and the retreat suggests that the territory occupied by the PLA does not belong to China.

Securing these concessions without resorting to military action marked a moral victory for New Delhi and implies that other territorial disputes in the Indo-Pacific can be resolved through a soft power approach. India has created a template based on dialogue and diplomacy while carving itself a credible position of regional deterrence.

### **Guest Opinion: The truth about Xinjiang and its Uygur population**

13 December 2024, Big News Network, Meilleur Murindabigwi



This photo taken on Nov. 9, 2024 shows children running in Daliyabuyi Village, Yutian County of northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. (Xinhua/Hu Huhu)

The reality in Xinjiang is a different story with multiple dimensions. It involves efforts to combat extremism, preserve national unity, and promote economic development.

Western governments and media, particularly in the United States, have persisted with a years-long smear campaign targeting China over issues related to Xinjiang.

However, their claims often lack proper context and are based on false information intended to undermine China's growing influence on the global stage.

The reality in Xinjiang is a different story with multiple dimensions. It involves efforts to combat extremism, preserve national unity, and promote economic development.

The 6th World Media Summit recently took place in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang. Given the recurring negative coverage of Xinjiang in Western media, it was time for us, media practitioners from around the world, to witness firsthand what life is truly like for the Uygurs, one of 55 ethnic minorities in China. Our goal was to see for ourselves whether the human rights abuses claimed by Western leaders and media hold any truth.

### **DERADICALIZATION AND WESTERN INTERVENTIONS**

From the early 1990s to mid-2010s, Xinjiang faced a surge in radicalization, leading to deadly terrorist attacks targeting civilians.

Notable incidents include the Urumqi riots in 2009 and Kunming railway station attack in 2014, resulting in hundreds of fatalities and even more injuries. These were the works of radical separatists who sought destabilization and secession.

In response, the Chinese government launched comprehensive counterterrorism initiatives, ranging from a law-based campaign against terrorists to a vocational training program to deradicalize individuals influenced by extremism. The latter combined vocational training, legal education, and

cultural integration to address the underlying causes of radicalization.

The separatist movement in Xinjiang has not been a purely internal issue. There is growing evidence that Western countries have had a hand in encouraging separatism in Xinjiang as part of a broader strategy to destabilize China.

The United States has long considered China an economic rival, and any attempt to weaken China internally serves its geopolitical interests.

By fabricating and amplifying accusations of human rights abuses, some Western governments aim to tarnish China's international image, hoping to slow its economic ascent.

These actions align with a broader history of Western interventions designed to disrupt political stability in regions critical to their global dominance.

The persistent campaign of disinformation against China, particularly regarding Xinjiang, is part of a larger strategy by Western countries to contain China's rise.

Western countries have become increasingly alarmed by the prospect of losing nearly two centuries of global dominance.

By painting China as a human rights abuser, Western governments and media outlets seek to rally international opinion against China.

However, this narrative often ignores China's work in lifting more than 800 million people out of poverty over the past decades, improving living standards, and maintaining social harmony throughout the country, including in Xinjiang.

#### PROSPERITY TODAY

Despite these challenges, Xinjiang is a flourishing and multicultural region where Uygurs live peacefully alongside other ethnic groups.

Far from the image painted by some media outlets, Xinjiang has experienced rapid development in recent years. Its gross domestic product has grown significantly, reaching over 1.9 trillion yuan (approximately 260 billion dollars) in 2023.

Xinjiang is also a crucial part of the Belt and Road Initiative, which has attracted foreign investment and made the region a hub for international trade.

Moreover, the claim that Uygurs cannot practice their religion is false.



© Provided by XinhuaForeign journalists visit the Xinjiang Islamic Institute in Urumqi, northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, June 21, 2024. (Xinhua/Gu Yu)

We visited the Xinjiang Islamic Institute in Urumqi, which trains over 1,000 students. Imam Abdurraqib Turmuniyaz greeted us and explained that the school was created to allow Muslim boys in Xinjiang to deepen their knowledge of Islam while preparing them for leadership roles in China's mosques.

Established in the early 1980s, it reflects the Chinese government's efforts to support and regulate Islamic education. Its facilities include a canteen, mosque, library, and gym.

The Xinjiang Islamic Institute also has eight branches across the region, including in Hotan, Aksu, and Kashgar, with about 3,000 students.

Imam Abdurraqib Turmuniyaz emphasized that religious freedom is fully protected in China, especially in Xinjiang. The institute's mission is to educate rather than confine students. This institution is a key part of China's efforts to promote Islamic education in a structured and modern environment.

Xinjiang is a region that once faced serious challenges with extremism and separatism but has overcome these obstacles through development, education, and integration.

The Uygur people practice religion freely and benefit from the region's rapid economic growth. During our visit to a car manufacturing plant in Xinjiang, we saw Uygurs working alongside colleagues of other ethnic groups.

Uygurs are present in all works of life, from restaurants and coffee shops to construction companies, the service sector, and even military service. Some have also gained prominence as models in China's booming fashion industry, showcasing the diverse opportunities available to them across the country.

The broader campaign of disinformation against China, spearheaded by the West, is less about human rights and more about maintaining global hegemony.

As China continues to rise on the world stage, the truth about Xinjiang is clear. It is a region of peace,

prosperity, and promise, no matter what the detractors say.

### Why Nepal's 'one China' stand matters to PRC

13 December 2024, Taipei Times, Rishi Gupta

Nepalese Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli's first foreign visit to China from Monday to Thursday last week made major headlines in the media. It is seen as a break from tradition, as Oli chose China over India, signaling a significant shift in Nepal's diplomatic outlook. As a landlocked nation, Nepal's geopolitics has always been shaped by the dominant influence of its southern neighbor, India, and the rising power to its north, China, but by choosing Beijing, is Oli charting a new course or walking into a well-laid trap?

The visit carried immense symbolic weight, mainly because Oli was known for his pro-China stance, which largely defined his politics. By signing deals like the Belt and Road Initiative, Oli wants to redefine Nepal's reliance on India and balance it with China. However, Nepal's lack of bargaining with China led to Beijing dominating the outcomes and securing greater security cooperation. At the same time, Nepal sidestepped thornier issues, such as Beijing's alleged encroachments on Nepalese territory.

The joint statement issued after Oli's meetings with Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平), Chinese Premier Li Qiang (李強) and Chinese National People's Congress Standing Committee Chairman Zhao Leji (趙樂際) was a classic case of Chinese insecurities vis-a-vis Nepal. It mainly sought Kathmandu's reaffirmation of the "one China principle."

"Nepal reaffirmed its firm commitment to the one China principle, recognizing that the Government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legal government representing the whole of China and Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory. Nepal firmly supports China's efforts to achieve its national reunification and opposes Taiwan independence," the statement said.

Besides Taiwan, Nepal also reiterated that "Xizang [Tibetan] affairs are internal affairs of China and that it will never allow any separatist activities against China on Nepal's soil."

Beijing's focus on Nepal's assurances regarding Tibet remains central to its Nepal policy, given their shared historical border and Nepal's role as a key transit point for Tibetans seeking refuge with the Tibetan government-in-exile in Dharamsala, India.

For China, Tibetan refugees in Nepal pose a threat to stability in Tibet, particularly as third countries such as the US continue to criticize Beijing's human

rights record. In the 1950s and 1960s, Nepal was at the heart of CIA operations to train Tibetans fighting against the communist regime in Lhasa.

So why is Nepal's commitment to the so-called "one China principle" so critical for Beijing?

Simply put, Nepal's strategic position makes it indispensable. Beijing fears that Tibetan refugees in Nepal, already resisting Chinese oppression, could also align with Taiwan's cause, amplifying dissent against its territorial claims. Beijing also fears that third countries might use Nepal against its interests.

While Oli's visit was a success for China, it was more symbolic for Nepal. Oli signed a Belt and Road Initiative framework agreement in which China agreed to fund projects under "aid assistance financing" – a mutually agreed-upon term.

However, this is not an outcome that Oli's coalition partner in the government, the Nepali Congress, expected. Oli was supposed to press China to be more generous in carrying out development works by offering more aid and assistance than loans, but the devil lies in the details. With the specifics of the framework agreement veiled in secrecy, particularly regarding "aid assistance financing" and other terms, Nepal must tread cautiously. China's stance is clear – no funds leave Beijing without strings attached.

However, what stands out is the contrast with the US' Millennium Challenge Corp, which is offering a US\$500 million grant to Nepal for infrastructure development.

Beijing has called Millennium Challenge Corp a "trojan horse" that is against Chinese interests. However, unlike the Belt and Road Initiative, its financial and contractual details are easily accessible to the public – a transparency that bolsters its credibility.

At the same time, Beijing finds ways to promote a shared vision of sovereignty and strategic independence, aiming to counterbalance India's traditional influence, but this narrative often falls short when reports of Beijing's "salami-slicing" tactics make headlines.

The New York Times in October in a report titled "China's 'New Great Wall' Casts a Shadow on Nepal" revealed how China's infrastructure projects encroach on Nepalese land near the border.

In conclusion, smaller South Asian nations, including Nepal, face the challenge of navigating China's strategic ambitions, often serving Beijing's interests more than their own. Political parties with a pro-China stance must prioritize national interests and remain vigilant about China's broader strategic goals to avoid long-term compromises.

## Dam Construction in Tibet Threatens Local Communities and Environment

13 December 2024, China Digital Times, Arthur Kaufman

Infrastructure projects in Tibet have often drawn controversy for failing to balance development, human rights, and environmental protection. As CDT has covered this year, state-sponsored hydropower projects have forcibly displaced local communities and led to violent reprisals against protesters. A series of recent reports expand on this topic to highlight the social and environmental perils of these projects. Last week, the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) published a report titled, "Chinese Hydropower: Damning Tibet's Culture, Community, and Environment." The report includes an interactive map showing the location of 193 hydropower dams constructed or proposed in Tibet since 2000, along with their areas of impact and proximity to locations of cultural importance, protected areas, and land cover. The report reveals that these dam projects are causing "irreparable damage" to Tibetan communities, downstream countries, and the environment:

If completed, 1.2 million residents living nearby dam projects could be dislocated from their homes, communities, and livelihoods. Religious and sacred sites serving communities will also be destroyed.

Almost 80 per cent of dams studied are large or mega dams (>100MW), which carry the most significant risk to the Tibetan civilization, environmental sustainability, and the climate. However, over half the dams (60%) are either in proposal or preparation stage, presenting opportunities to change course.

A truly sustainable pathway for the energy plan must account for the climate, social, environment, and geopolitical costs of hydropower and change course. No plan is sustainable without the consent, participation and co-management of local communities.

Tibetans, who remain among the most politically marginalized in China, should not bear the highest cost to power China's industrial centers. Any long-term solution must involve a political solution where Tibetan people enjoy the right to freely decide how their natural resources are used. This begins with the PRC entering into a meaningful dialogue with representatives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. [Source]

Speaking to French newspaper *Libération* about the report, ICT researcher and advocacy officer Tenzin Palmo stated, "We wanted to show what was happening in this inaccessible border area in the west of the country, but also to reveal the projects of the Chinese authorities who are trying by all means

to hide information, to harass civil society, all while engaging in a greenwashing operation around these dams." Other groups have provided related evidence. Last month, Turquoise Roof and Tibet Watch published a report titled, "The risks of China's dangerous dam-building in Tibet: the impacts of China's move upstream on the Machu/Yellow River," which highlighted the threat of geological disasters and environmental problems:

For the first time, China's construction of hydropower dams is reaching upstream to the sources of Asia's great wild rivers in Tibet, with at least three major new dams on the upper Machu (Chinese: Huang He) river. Chinese scientists have warned of the risks of heavy infrastructure construction in a seismically unstable region where river systems are increasingly unpredictable due to climate change.

[...] While China can point to its solar and hydro projects in Tibet to signal a green transition, the smart grid is currently orientated to fossil fuels, which may reveal a slower, less substantial shift than these projects imply. Although hydroelectric power is technically renewable, the large-scale hydropower projects underway in Tibet have complex environmental and social impacts, including ecosystem disruption and displacement of communities.

The first major dam to be built upriver on the Machu, the Yangkhil (Yangqu) hydropower station, has devastated an entire community. Accounts and images from eyewitnesses in this report documents how Tibetans have been compelled to dismantle their own homes and an important monastery has been emptied and destroyed. China removed the monastery from a protected heritage list before beginning demolition to make way for a dam that Chinese engineers boast is constructed by AI-driven robots. [Source]

In the *Made in China Journal* last month, James Leibold wrote about the Tibet-Aid Project, which he describes as a CCP initiative that pairs Tibet's administrative units with inland government actors in order to extend Beijing's settler-colonial enterprise and fortify Han dominance in the region. Among the Tibet-Aid cadres championed in CCP propaganda are Han engineers committed to transforming Tibet's physical landscape through "civilizing" infrastructure projects. Leibold argued, "By unleashing a new legion of Han officials and settlers on to the Tibetan Plateau, Xi seeks to complete the discursive, demographic, and cultural integration of Tibet into a new Han empire." In this excerpt, he describes how Han migration and infrastructure-building erode local Tibetan sovereignty:

Most of the Han people living and working in Tibet today are descendants of former Tibet-Aid cadres. In a recent survey of 300-plus Han retirees who had



worked in Tibet, 49 per cent had a parent who had previously worked in Tibet, with one-quarter of those born in Tibet (Zhou and Du 2023: 83). They are called 'second' or 'third-generation Tibetans' (藏二代 or 藏三代) in Chinese and now make up the backbone of the party-state's governing and economic apparatuses in the region. According to officials, they are the 'strongest source of strength' for forging what Xi Jinping has called the 'collective consciousness' (共同体意识) of the Han-centric nation/race (Thondup and Tstring 2023). By claiming Tibetan identity, albeit an altered one, Han migrants are engaging in a common settler-colonial strategy—what Lorenzo Veracini (2010: 46) calls the discursive erasure of 'indigenous specific alterity'.

Han colonists live a highly fluid existence in the TAR and their roots are impermanent. Due to health concerns, they split their time between apartments in lower-elevation cities, chiefly in Sichuan, and their posts on the plateau. China's mega-infrastructure building in the TAR—roads, airports, railways, power and telecommunication lines, etcetera—serves as conduits for Han mobility, allowing colonial subjects to move more comfortably and smoothly through 'harsh' Tibetan spaces while imprinting the landscape with Han norms that ultimately efface Tibetan sovereignty. The 1,629-kilometre Chengdu-to-Lhasa high-speed railway is of 'immense strategic value', a 2018 blog post asserts, as it will not only facilitate military logistics, but also allow the vibrant economy and Han-dominated population of the Sichuan Basin to 'more easily spread and radiate into the Tibet region' when it is completed in 2030 (Sohu 2018). [Source]

Similar dynamics are playing out in other borderland regions, such as Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia. In an article for Atmos, Nithin Coca and Patrick Wack described how state-affiliated energy companies have built massive solar plants in Xinjiang that greenwash rights abuses against local Uyghur communities. Uyghur activists argue that these projects are part of longstanding efforts to Sinicize the region and exploit its resources while further colonizing their homeland through Han migration. This also plays out in the realm of Tibetan language politics, as the Chinese government has imposed Sinicization policies to force Tibetans to use Mandarin instead of their local languages. For more on this topic, see CDT's recent interview with Gerald Roche about the erasure of Tibet's minority languages, which face unique challenges in the face of both Mandarin and Standard Tibetan. Other interviews can be found in CDT's series on Tibet.

## Pakistan Ditches 'Iron Brother' China, Reaches Out to US for Financial Rescue

13 December 2024, Republic World, Yuvraj Tyagi

The phrase "Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me" perfectly encapsulates China's predicament with its so-called "Iron Brother," Pakistan.

The phrase "Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me" perfectly encapsulates China's predicament with its so-called "Iron Brother," Pakistan. Despite Beijing's heavy financial investments exceeding \$67.2 billion since 2000, Pakistan has chosen to pursue its age-old flirtation with the United States, discarding China like a used pawn in the global chessboard of geopolitics.

Pakistan's thankless attitude towards China is no secret. Whether it was the blatant preference for US-made weapons expressed by former COAS General Qamar Javed Bajwa in April 2022 or the unapologetic remarks of current CJCS General Sahir Shamshad Mirza claiming Pak-China ties were borne of "compulsion," Pakistan has made its disdain for Chinese dominance quite clear. Adding insult to injury, the country has been brazenly vocal about its desire to rekindle ties with the US, conveniently forgetting China's lifeline in the form of loans and infrastructural projects.

### The Decline of a Pawn

Pakistan, once a proud US ally during the Cold War, has found itself teetering on the edge of irrelevance. Decades of milking Western military aid to counter India under the guise of crisis diplomacy worked only until China's rise. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), touted as a "game-changer," has left Pakistan with mounting debts and dwindling autonomy. Over 72% of Pakistan's external debt is owed to China, rendering it a vassal state to Beijing's expansionist ambitions.

Unsurprisingly, Pakistan is now desperate to curry favour with the US once again. In a telling display of loyalty, US Assistant Secretary of State Donald Lu remarked in July 2024, "China is the past investment; we (the US) are the future." True to its character, Pakistan offered no clarification, leaving Beijing to stew in its humiliation. This is the same Pakistan that stayed silent during Nancy Pelosi's provocative visit to Taiwan in 2022 and leaked sensitive memos in 2023 advising PM Shehbaz Sharif to avoid appeasing the West.

Pakistan's Lust for the West is rooted in history and economic logic:

1. It was a loyal member of US-led anti-Communist alliances like SEATO and CENTO.
2. It enjoys a trade surplus of \$5.4 billion with the US while suffering a \$15 billion deficit with China.



3. The English-speaking middle class, raised in Western media, identifies more with the US culturally than with China.
4. Pakistan's population is increasingly wary of China's expansionist tendencies and exploitation of its resources.



Pakistan Army personnel with a VT-4 tank in the background. | Credit- OSINT

Pakistan's duplicity reached new heights in August 2023 when it revived a Communications Interoperability and Security Memo of Agreement (CIS-MOA) with the US, effectively opening doors for American military hardware. Pakistan also embarrassed China by reducing orders for Chinese military equipment, including the VT-4 tanks and SH-15 artillery guns, right after the CIS-MOA agreement.

Even more damning, Pakistan hosted US officials at Gwadar Port in September 2023, a move that could result in the strategic port being handed to the US—an act of treachery for a country that owes its survival to Chinese investments.

#### Chinese Frustration and Growing Assertiveness

China, on the other hand, finds itself in a lose-lose situation. Increasing attacks on CPEC projects, like the March 2024 assault on a Chinese convoy at Besham, have pushed Beijing to consider deploying its security forces in Pakistan—a move that would strip the Pakistani Army of its “macho” image. Resentment against the Chinese presence is palpable among Pakistan's elites, with even Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz openly criticizing Chinese security protocols. True to its duplicitous nature, Pakistan has now launched “Operation Azam-e-Istehkam,” a repackaged counter-terrorism operation aimed at placating China. The ulterior motive, however, is clear: keep the internal security situation volatile to extract financial aid from both China and the US, all while hoping to rebuild its military to match India's growing might.

#### The Joke's on China

While Pakistan continues to juggle its loyalties, Beijing is left to wonder why its billions have failed to buy gratitude. The so-called “Iron Brother” has turned into a rusted liability, and as Pakistan places its eggs back in the US basket, it's evident that China's dream of a compliant ally is nothing more than a pipe dream.

In the end, Pakistan's double-dealing may win it temporary rewards, but its long-term trajectory remains that of a parasitic state, surviving by selling out its sovereignty to the highest bidder. If China thought it could tame Pakistan, it was sorely mistaken.

### Nepal blocking China's Panchen Lama visit is rare resistance. It's not enough

13 December 2024, The Print, Rishi Gupta

Beijing has been pushing to introduce a Chinese version of Buddhism in Nepal, the same way it is reshaping Tibetan identity through State-controlled narratives.



Representative Image | Thousands of Buddhists, monks celebrate Gautam Buddha's 2568th birth anniversary in Lumbini | ANI

In a rare display of unified resistance, Nepal's government agencies have reportedly united to block the China-appointed Panchen Lama, Gyaincain Norbu's entry. Widely seen as Beijing's puppet to undermine Tibetan spiritual traditions, this move could mark China's most significant diplomatic setbacks in influencing the Tibetan diaspora. How did Nepal pull off this act, and why is it so crucial for China to send Norbu in the first place?

Reports of the controversial Panchen Lama, handpicked by the Communist Party of China to become the so-called spiritual successor of the 14th Dalai Lama living in exile in India, was expected to visit Nepal to attend the ongoing Nanhai Buddhism Roundtable in Lumbini. It's the birthplace of Lord Buddha—located closer to the Nepal-India border. Because of the sensitivities involved, including that of India, Nepal has reportedly conveyed to the Chinese Embassy that the Panchen Lama would not be welcomed due to “Nepal's neutrality on religious matters”—reported the Kathmandu Post.

Norbu was reportedly expected to travel from China's Chengdu city to Lumbini on a chartered flight, alerting the country's security establishment. Nepalese agencies, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Civil Aviation, and the Lumbini Development Trust, have reportedly disclosed details of the Panchen Lama's

visit to the media. This act highlights China's enduring effort to promote a Sinicised version of Tibetan Buddhism and supplant the 14th Dalai Lama.

#### Crucial timing

Beijing's attempt to send Norbu to Nepal comes in the backdrop of Prime Minister KP Oli's recently concluded four-day visit to China, where he signed a Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Framework Agreement. The latter has been in storage since it was first signed in May 2017 due to its controversial financial modality, which remains a State secret. Although the two sides are reported to have mutually agreed to an "aid financing modality" for BRI projects, the devil lies in the details hidden from the public view. With Nepal wanting 100 per cent aid from China for the BRI projects and China giving no freebies to anyone as high-interest loans enable it to manage greater influence, the future of BRI is uncertain in Nepal.

However, during this trip, Nepal reiterated, "Xizang [Tibetan] affairs are internal affairs of China and that it will never allow any separatist activities against China on Nepal's soil." This was the first time that China referred to Tibet as Xizang, indicating a Communist quest to wipe out Tibet's socio-cultural, traditional and territorial identity. While Nepal has acknowledged "China as the sole authority in Tibet" since the foundation of bilateral ties in 1955, Kathmandu has largely avoided Beijing's attempts to export its version of Tibetan Buddhism.

#### Dalai Lama's Legacy

Why would China seek to introduce its Panchen Lama in Nepal? Simply to gain external validation for its agenda to reshape Tibetan Buddhism under Chinese influence. By presenting the Chinese-appointed Panchen Lama on an international platform, Beijing aims to legitimise his authority, despite rejection by the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan administration-in-exile.

This strategy not only seeks to undermine the standing of the Dalai Lama and the traditional Tibetan Buddhist hierarchy but also to tackle global support for the exiled Tibetan community and leadership. Additionally, it serves to tighten control over the Tibetan diaspora, curbing their cultural and spiritual ties to the Dalai Lama's lineage.

With Tibet at the heart of China's Nepal policy, Beijing has been trying to break the unity and support for the 'Free Tibet' movement among Tibetans in Nepal. Such movements have more than often triggered instability in Tibet, posing a security challenge to the PLA. For example, the seeds of the 2008 Tibetan Uprising in Lhasa found a strong echo in Nepal, where Tibetan refugees stood up against the Chinese brutalities in Tibet. Even the most powerful resistance movements, such as the CIA-backed Khampa Rebellion were planned and executed from the Nepal border with Tibet in the late

1960s. Since then, China has pressured Nepal to curtail the freedom of Tibetan exiles, but international support and human rights organisations have managed to defy this pressure, standing in solidarity with the Tibetan cause.

Since Nepal became a democracy in 2008, Communist China has tried to build ideological and political ties with the country's Left forces, including PM Oli's Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist). The Left-led governments of Nepal have been pushed by China to go after Tibetan refugees. During the tenure of former PM Pushpa Kamal Dahal alias Prachanda, heavy forces were deployed against Tibetans who were protesting against China. Prachanda had drawn global criticism for his actions.

#### Chinese Buddhism in Nepal

Beijing has been pushing to introduce a Chinese version of Buddhism in Nepal, the same way it is reshaping Tibetan identity through State-controlled narratives. In Tibet, this strategy includes so-called "training camps" aimed at instilling "work discipline, Chinese language, and work ethics" among Tibetan youth as part of a broader agenda to undermine their cultural and spiritual heritage. International human rights organisations have raised concerns over these systematic efforts, including the renaming of Tibet as Xizang. By promoting its controversial, State-appointed Panchen Lama in Nepal, Beijing aims to legitimise this version of Buddhism and extend its influence beyond Tibet's borders.

In any case, China misses no opportunity to take a potshot at the Dalai Lama. In 2017, the Dalai Lama's alleged statement that Buddha was born in India caused political havoc in Nepal, and Beijing added fuel to the fire. Many nationalist Buddhists in Nepal were reported to have removed the Dalai Lama's portraits from their houses.

The controversy subsided with the statement, but China is eagerly waiting for such incidents. And not to forget, Beijing hopes that someday Nepal will sign an Extradition Treaty with China, which could not materialise during President Xi Jinping's Nepal visit in 2019. If signed, it will jeopardise the future of several thousand Tibetan refugees living in Nepal, especially the ones who arrived after 1990 and still don't have refugee cards.

While the government of Nepal may have refused entry to the Panchen Lama this time—potentially influenced by coalition partners like the Nepali Congress—this decision is far from a permanent safeguard. Should leaders like Oli return to power with a strong majority, the likelihood of China exerting its influence to advance its agenda in Nepal would dramatically increase, paving the way for deeper cultural and political incursions. The risk of

Nepal becoming a staging ground for Beijing's Sinicisation efforts remains alarmingly real.

### **Interview: Gerald Roche on the Erasure of Tibet's Minority Languages**

12 December 2024, China Digital Times, Sophie Beach

As the Chinese Communist Party has intensified its policy of assimilation for cultural and ethnic minority groups in recent decades, language has been a key part of that effort. Standard Tibetan is recognized as the official language of the Tibetans, who live throughout the Tibet Autonomous Region as well as in Tibetan areas in current Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces. Yet government practice has made it increasingly difficult for Tibetans to live, work, and study in their own language; Mandarin is now the primary language of instruction in many schools, official communications and education have been Sinicized, and hundreds of thousands of Tibetan children are forced to attend boarding schools where they are cut off from their families, cultures, communities, and language. (Read more about the impact of the boarding schools in our interview with activist Lhadon Tethong.) Activist Tashi Wangchuk has been repeatedly detained for his efforts to advocate for the protection of the Tibetan language.

But within the Tibetan population exist smaller communities who speak their own languages, which are not widely understood or acknowledged by the Chinese government, the Han Chinese population, global scholars, or even by many fellow Tibetans. These languages are facing extinction as they are forced to assimilate both to Tibetan and to Chinese. According to researcher Gerald Roche, "The Chinese state policy about those languages is essentially that they don't exist." As a result, speakers of these languages receive neither the respect from society nor the resources needed to continue using and teaching their languages to younger generations.

Roche is an anthropologist and Associate Professor in the Department of Politics, Media, and Philosophy at La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia. His work focuses on issues of power, the state, colonialism, and race in Asia, particularly the transnational Himalayan region. Much of his research explores how these issues manifest in the language politics of this linguistically diverse area, through state-sponsored language oppression and the social movements and community practices which seek to resist it. He lived in Qinghai for several years in the 2010s, working as an anthropologist and studying the communities who speak Manegacha and other minority languages. His new book, *The Politics of Language Oppression in Tibet*, examines

the ways these languages are being erased amid forced assimilation. In the latest installment in our interview series focusing on Tibet, we spoke to Roche about the Tibetan communities that speak minority languages and the threats their languages face. This interview has been lightly edited for clarity and length.

China Digital Times: When most people think about language in Tibet, they generally think about the standard Tibetan language, but as you've researched and written about, there are, I believe, about 30 languages spoken in the Tibetan region. Today, how many people living in Tibet still speak those minority languages?

Gerald Roche: As a disclaimer, a lot of the statistical estimates that I'm giving, they're just estimates, because the Chinese state is committed to denying the existence of these languages and is also committed to denying the people who speak these languages the kind of basic political rights that would enable them to exert their own existence in public forums. So all of the numbers that I'm going to give you are just best guesses, and I think that they're reasonable guesses, but they're not watertight demographic statistics. So the best guess that I have is that around a quarter of a million Tibetans speak these minority languages. That's around four percent of the Tibetan population. As to the number of languages themselves, there are at least two sources of complexity and confusion. One source is that academic research on these languages is still ongoing. A lot of the languages are still being described by linguists, and that's in part because the Chinese state doesn't encourage research on these languages and also because some of the regions where these languages are spoken are closed to outsiders, not just foreigners, but also they are sometimes restricted to Han Chinese people. So, for example, there have been a number of languages described in the last five years that are spoken in some villages around the city of Chamdo in the eastern part of the Tibet Autonomous Region, and it's very difficult for outsiders to access those areas, and it's very difficult for people from those areas to access research institutions. So it's hard for these languages to be put on record for those reasons.

The second footnote on that number of 30 is that counting languages is not like measuring temperature with a thermometer or looking for radiation with a Geiger counter. It's not a scientific endeavor. It's a social and political endeavor, and the answers that you get when you count languages will depend on aspects such as local culture, but also the extent to which those people are politically empowered to engage in public processes around the production of knowledge. Tibetan understandings of what constitutes a language are different from your

understanding or my understanding, and the Chinese state also completely excludes the people who speak those languages from any political processes that would give them a voice in making that decision. The literature is the best thing that we have to go off because of that, and the literature suggests that there's about 30 of these minority languages which are spoken by Tibetans, and if you add up all the numbers that exist in the different literature about how many people speak those languages, a quarter of a million people, four percent of Tibetans. But we don't know for sure.

CDT: Linguistically, how do these languages relate to standard Tibetan?

Roche: They are very different. That's why I separate them off from the Tibetan language. To give a parallel, we can think of the European case. You have a group of languages in Europe, like French, Castilian or Spanish, Catalan, Italian, et cetera, which all have a historical relationship to Latin, and so they form a language family of connected languages called the Romance languages. But we recognize that those are separate and distinct languages. There is a similar situation in Tibet, where you have the Tibetic languages, which all have a historical relationship with the written Tibetan language, and on the level of intelligibility, so whether people can understand each other in conversation or not, those different Tibetic languages are different. They're distinct languages in the same way that French is not Spanish. And that doesn't include the minority languages. There is another distinct group of languages which have absolutely no historical relationship with the written Tibetan language. So if we go back to the case that I introduced before in Europe, those Romance languages and their connection to Latin, you have languages in the region which don't have any connection. Basque is the perfect example. Basque is not just a different language; it exists in a different language family and it's completely distinct from those Romance languages. The minority languages' relationship to Tibetan is more like that. These languages are in a couple of different language families. And as a non-linguist, I'm less interested in that. What is important is that these languages are recognized by Tibetans themselves as being extremely distinct from other Tibetan languages, so that linguistic difference, that historical difference, maps onto local understandings, and it also maps onto the understandings of the Chinese state policy as well. The Chinese state policy about those languages is essentially that they don't exist.

CDT: You focus your research primarily on one of the languages, Manegacha, which you write is spoken by about 8,000 people currently. Where in the Tibetan region do they live primarily?

Roche: Just a point of clarification: Manegacha is spoken by 8,000 Tibetan people. There's actually another group of people who speak the same language, a couple of hundred kilometres away in Gansu province, but they are a different minority group. They are called the Bao'an zu and there's no connection between the two populations. Even though they share the same language, they have completely different identities. The Bao'an zu in Gansu province are Muslims. And the Manegacha speakers in Qinghai province consider themselves Tibetan and are Buddhists. So it's the same language but different populations. The 8,000 [Tibetan] Manegacha speakers live in about four villages on the northeast Tibetan plateau. It traditionally was known as the Tibetan region Amdo, which covers the northern part of the Tibetan plateau, and it's a specific cultural region within Amdo, known as Rebong, which is basically a valley and its hinterland on the northeast Tibetan plateau in today's Qinghai province. So you have this long, wide, beautiful river valley running through the mountains of the Tibetan plateau and villages scattered along the river and up in the hills. The Manegacha-speaking villages are four villages spread along the river from north to south, and the majority of other people in the region are all Tibetans that speak a more standard form of Tibetan.

CDT: How much has the population of Manegacha speakers declined? What was it when it was at its peak?

Roche: This is tricky because we don't have any of these statistics, but I would say that 8,000 is probably the peak, because you have this complicated situation where historically, the population of Manegacha speakers has increased as living conditions have improved. But at the same time, the transmission of the language across generations has decreased. So even though objectively, there's a higher number of speakers, the language is not being passed down at the same rate that it used to be. It used to be that there were only a couple of thousand speakers, but all of them passed the language on. So the population was sustainable. Now you have 8,000 speakers, which is probably more than in the past, but about a third of the families that speak Manegacha are not passing it onto their children. That means that even if the population keeps increasing, the number of speakers is going to decline from now on.

CDT: So you expect a rapid decline in speakers in the coming generations?

Roche: Yeah. I expect the decline will be really rapid because the pressures on the language have been mounting over the last 75 years. Since the area was incorporated into the People's Republic of China, there's been assimilatory pressures. Those pressures

really intensified in the 21st century. When you had the Develop the West program, big infrastructural development, big investment in institution building in Tibet and other parts of what is today western China—those are the things that are really starting to drive people away from the Manegacha language and towards Tibetan. And then you have these collective decision-making processes. Of those four villages, in one of the villages, the entire population has decided to stop using the language at home. So with the collective, communal decision, there's a few families who [say] "No, I'm not going to do that. I'm going to keep teaching [our children] Manegacha." But the majority of families in that village decided collectively to do that. And so if another village does that, and another village does that, that decision only has to happen four times and then there are no Tibetans that speak Manegacha.

CDT: Do you know about efforts that people are making to try to change that, to try to preserve it for the future generations, and how are they doing that?

Roche: I did surveys of Manegacha-speaking households, asking their views on the language and views on Chinese and Tibetan languages, and the different related issues. And the response was always that they want to keep the Manegacha language, that they value it. However, those decisions that they are making are working against those interests to maintain the language. And that's because of how local understanding of language works. People locally think if they don't speak Manegacha to the kids, the kids are still going to learn it because it's their language. They'll just figure it out and pick it up. And this just doesn't happen. We know from those survey responses, people want their children to have the language, and they want the language to survive. We can see that from other actions that they engage in. In the villages where Manegacha is spoken, everyone is bilingual or trilingual. They know Manegacha, Tibetan, and Mandarin. But when two Manegacha speakers meet, they still speak in their language. They don't speak in Tibetan. If Manegacha speakers wanted to, they could just stop speaking the language entirely tomorrow. But they don't do that, and that's an active choice. It's important to recognize that, because there are these huge pressures that are coercing Manegacha speakers into giving up the language and to stop using it. In some sense, just to use the language, even in private, is an act of resistance against those assimilatory pressures. People also do things like push the language into new areas of life when they have the opportunity. When I was there, smartphones and social media started to spread. When I was living in Qinghai, I saw this happen over the course of years, and when it happened, people started making memes in Manegacha recording fun,

little dialogues, doing movies and stuff. That's indicative of people's desire to put the language into these new situations. Normally, for other languages, they would be supported by the state policies to do that, because the languages would be taught in school, there would be money to fund the media, to develop publications, and things like that. But Manegacha speakers just have to do it on their own. Despite the fact that this comes at the cost to them, they do it themselves anyway. So those are some of the things that Manegacha speakers do today.

CDT: In addition to these pressures that you're talking about, you also say that the Manegacha speakers face more explicit discrimination, specifically they face what you call "banal violence." Could you explain what you mean by that and what you saw when you were there?

Roche: Banal in one sense just means everyday, like taken for granted and accepted, and this was very much the nature of the violence against Manegacha speakers. I did interviews with Manegacha speakers about the discrimination that they face, and I also worked with a research assistant who went and spoke to Tibetan speakers about the discrimination that they enact against Manegacha speakers. And I thought those second interviews would be kind of difficult, and people would not want to say very much about it, but local Tibetans were just like, "yeah, this is what we do. We think that they are not really Tibetan. We think that they need to use Tibetan better. We think that they are maybe traitors to the Tibetan cause," and so on. So people were just very unashamed of the way in which they discriminate against Manegacha speakers. So if you're a Manegacha speaker in Rebgong, the main problem that you face in relation to language is that everyday discrimination from other Tibetans. Other Tibetans will dehumanize Manegacha speakers—they will compare them to animals or say that they are not really human in the same way as Tibetan speakers. They will describe Manegacha [language] by comparing it to animal noises, so that they will call it bird talk or compare it to the sound of frying beans—it's not really language. It's just noise.

And then you have another form of discrimination called disparagement humor. You can think of, for example, sexist or racist jokes. We also have these kind of jokes about languages in the context of Rebgong. We know from other studies that these jokes are never harmless, that they do incite people to further violence, to entrench their negative views further and to normalize discrimination against those populations. That happens all the time for Manegacha speakers; people make jokes about them, make jokes about their language. It's just a constant thing that they face. There's also a label in the local language that Tibetans use to refer to



Manegacha speakers. I had to think long and hard about whether to include this term in the book, because it's kind of normalized in local life. People use it every day, including Manegacha speakers, but I think if you sit down and think about it and compare it to other situations, it's correct to refer to that term as a slur, because what that slur does is that it triggers a bunch of negative associations about those people. The word itself doesn't mean anything. It's more about the negative associations that it contains. And so when people use that slur, it triggers all those negative connotations that they're not really human, their language is just noise, that they are funny, that they should assimilate, and things like this. So all of those things I'm talking about, I would consider violence because they aim to subordinate a particular population. But there are also examples of what people will more classically consider violence—of insults, of hate speech, and of physical violence of people getting into fist fights over language issues. So there is that sort of real violence as well. In the lives of Manegacha speakers, their exposure to that violence correlates with their exposure to Tibetan-speaking Tibetans. Whenever they are around other Tibetans, they're subjected to this violence—jokes, slurs, insults, etc—and so this comes back to this label I use of banal violence.

Banal has a second meaning, beyond everyday, which goes back to the Latin etymology and the origin of the term in Roman law, where banality is tied up with words like "abandonment" and "bandits" and so on. And banal was something that existed outside of the law, something that existed outside the protection of the state. To be banished was to be pushed outside the state's protection. And the violence against Manegacha is banal in that second sense in that the Chinese state lets it happen all the time. We know that the Chinese state can be highly punitive when it wants to. For example, it can crack down on Tibetans who have a picture of the Dalai Lama in their home. It can be very invasive, very punitive, very controlling when it wants to. And when the Chinese state chooses not to be punitive and controlling, I think we have to assume that that has some kind of significance. That you have this situation where a specific population is just subject to this constant, everyday discrimination by someone else, and the state just says, "That's fine. We are happy to let that continue." I would make the same argument about a lot of racist violence in Western countries that the state just steps back and is basically like, "well this looks too difficult. We can't really define whether this is technically and legally discrimination or not. So we're just going to let it happen" and maybe express some regret. But they do not legally enforce their own rules relating to particular populations. So the violence against

Manegacha speakers is banal in that second sense. And I think that this is one of the most challenging and confronting aspects of the book, because essentially what I'm arguing is that there is violence between Tibetans that is structured and allowed to continue by the Chinese state. So we have to look at the way that the Chinese state implements its policies against Tibetans through other Tibetans.

CDT: Do Manegacha speakers face this kind of discrimination from the Han population or from other populations? Or are they just viewed as Tibetan by the Han, so they're not differentiated from other Tibetan groups?

Roche: Yeah, they tend to just be viewed as Tibetans. So for Manegacha speakers, their encounters with Han Chinese people are fairly limited. In Rebgong, there is a local Han Chinese population and there are Hui, Muslim Chinese people, in the local area. And Manegachas interact with them and in those contexts, they are just viewed like other Tibetans. There's no specific discrimination that comes to them from that. The main contact that Manegacha speakers have with Han Chinese comes in two situations. One is when people migrate to large Han Chinese cities to go to university, because there are no universities in Tibetan areas, except for Lhasa. So if you're a Tibetan in Qinghai, for example, and you want to go to university, you have to go to Xining, which is a Han-dominated city. It's like that for a lot of Tibetans, that's their first exposure to a Han majority environment when they go to university. I spoke to Manegacha speakers about this, they were just like, "yeah, when I go there, I'm just Tibetan, and they just consider me another Tibetan and they discriminate against me on that basis." But that's it, it's nothing to do specifically with being a Manegacha speaker. The other situation when Manegacha speakers might meet Han Chinese is when they do migrant labor. They go to other places to do work; Manegacha speakers have a preference for doing migrant labor in other Tibetan towns and cities. So it's kind of rarer for them to go to spend long times in Han Chinese cities. But when they do, they face discrimination as a Tibetan, not as a Manegacha speaker.

CDT: Can you explain how standard Tibetan became the language that's acknowledged by the Chinese government and most widely spoken in the Tibetan areas, and the process that that took?

Roche: It's kind of like a covert and ad hoc process. There's never been a real explicit policy to advance this, and there are even some on-the-ground practices that work against standard Tibetan language, so it's pretty messy. But one thing that the Chinese government has done consistently since invading Tibet is to promote the written Tibetan language a bit. Not much, but a bit. So the Chinese state

promotes the written Tibetan language enough that they can show that they're doing something, enough that they can demonstrate to external observers: "Look, we respect minority rights. We put Tibetan on the sign. We let them learn Tibetan in one school. We have a publishing house for Tibetans." The Chinese state has always done this kind of limited support of the written Tibetan language to wow external stakeholders, but also as a way of getting legitimacy amongst Tibetan people. The Chinese state is concerned about perceptions of legitimacy among Tibetan people, and the two main ways that it has tried to get that legitimacy is through economic development—improving people's standards of living and cash incomes. And secondly, by having a shallow, superficial program of cultural preservation, which includes language and performing arts, but essentially not very much else. And so through those two things, it attempts to gain legitimacy for the Party-state rule in Tibet. The language is an important element of that. So that's led to this ad hoc emergence of a standard form of Tibetan across Tibet in the written language. When it comes to the spoken language, on some level, the Chinese state recognizes that Tibetans can't understand each other when they speak to one another. But the Chinese state wants to use spoken Tibetan for propaganda purposes [and] Tibetan is technically only one language for the Chinese government. So what it does is it says that there are dialects, and we use the dialects in broadcast media. So for example, there is an Amdo Tibetan TV, which uses a kind of standardized form of Tibetan that's spoken in the north. There is Kham Tibetan TV, which uses a form of standardized Tibetan, which is spoken in the east and southeast. And then there's another one for Central Tibetan spoken around Lhasa. So there's this tension in the state's own aims and goals.

The root of the standardization practice for Tibetan is the Chinese ethnic classification project. The Chinese state formally recognizes 56 ethnic groups or nationalities in China, including the Han Chinese and 55 minorities. The theory behind that is that each of those ethnic groups only speaks one language. That's the assumption. And I think nowhere is that empirically true. It's not true for the Han, for Tibetans, for the Yi, or for Mongolians. There might be some smaller minzu [ethnic groups] that only have one language, but they would be the exception rather than the rule. The Chinese government set the system up like that deliberately so that there would be a gap between linguistic diversity and ethnic diversity, and that that gap is a policy that's designed to assimilate languages. So you take all of those 300 languages and you give a constitutional freedom for each minority to use one language. And you outsource the assimilation to the minority groups.

And then once you've gotten rid of most of those 300 languages, you have 55 minorities each with one language, and a Han majority with one language, and then you assimilate the minorities into the Han majority. This was the plan that was laid out back when China was a Marxist-Leninist state, which it absolutely no longer is. Because those structures, those categories, and those processes are still in place, we see linguistic minorities assimilating to a dominant language of ethnic minorities. And that's what's happening with Manegacha speakers and other Tibetans that speak minority languages. Not all of them, some of them are assimilating to Chinese, but some of them are assimilating towards Tibetan.

CDT: You described the protests that erupted across Tibetan regions in 2008 as a kind of a turning point for awareness of many Tibetan people's sense of identity and nationality. Can you describe that and how that's impacted the potential survival of languages like Manegacha?

Roche: The 2008 protests were the first Tibetan protests against Chinese rule which transcended locality. There had been lots of isolated protests before, but they were typically in one place and they didn't spread to other locations. But in 2008, the protests started in Lhasa and then they spread all across the Tibetan plateau, so there were also protests in Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, and less so in Yunnan—throughout the Tibet Autonomous Region and including Tibetans living in Beijing. So you had these very widespread ongoing protests among Tibetans explicitly against Chinese rule. It was a very significant event in those terms, and for many Tibetans, it was a kind of profound awakening to their own political situation. Many Tibetans began viewing themselves through the lens of a shared Tibetan identity for the first time. Tibetans have these very strong regional attachments to the valley that they grew up in, the village that they grew up in, the province that they grew up in. And there has always been a sense of Tibetanness, in the background of those things because it's printed on your ID card and you're reminded of your minzu every day. But those 2008 protests, from the evidence we see in Tibetan essays, poetry, pop music, from the evidence I saw in everyday conversations while I was living in Qinghai through this stuff, is suddenly that Tibetan identity becomes the most important identity for people in a way that it hadn't been before.

An important part of that Tibetan identity that emerged from those protests, or that consolidated through those protests, was the role of Tibetan language in Tibetan identity—this idea that to be Tibetan means to speak Tibetan, to know Tibetan, to use Tibetan. And in particular, in the years following the 2008 protests, this idea emerged that Tibetan should be of a particular form and it should be pure

Tibetan. This was the way that it was phrased by Tibetan activists and everyday people. Pure Tibetan in this context means Tibetan that doesn't use any loan words from Chinese. Tibetan, like every language, is full of words from other languages. Tibetan is full of loan words from dozens of languages, but it has been extremely heavily influenced by Mandarin and other local Sinitic languages over the past 50 years. People started expressing this concern that if Tibetan language is the core of Tibetan identity, but Tibetan language is mixed with Chinese, then maybe our identity is also mixed with Chinese. And we need to defend that boundary. We need to defend our Tibetanness by defending the Tibetan language. So at that time, you saw this spread of pure Tibetan language associations in the villages, in schools, in universities, online through social media, where people were encouraging each other to speak pure Tibetan and to stop using Chinese loan words when they spoke Tibetan. So they would do things like print dictionaries to make sure that people knew the correct Tibetan words for it. They would hold spelling competitions. It would enter into people's lives in contexts like restaurants and taxis where you would get a discount if you spoke pure Tibetan, and you would get charged double the price if you spoke in mixed Tibetan. So it became this really pervasive aspect of Tibetan everyday life, I would say from the year 2008, maybe almost for the next decade, but not quite.

Languages like Manegacha got caught up in this dynamic, because in local understandings of language, Manegacha and other Tibetan minority languages were seen as mixed languages. The idea was that they had once been pure Tibetan, but they had now become mixed with Chinese to the extent that they were no longer recognizable as any kind of Tibetan language any more. And this is based partly on the truth and partly on a fallacy. The true part of it is that like Manegacha, for example, has been influenced by Tibetan and it has lots of Tibetan loan words in it. So the name of the language, Manegacha, "Mane" is a Mongolic word from an old Mongolian language. "Gacha" is local Tibetan for language. Manegacha means "our language," but it includes elements of two different languages. People who speak minority languages use a lot of Tibetan loan words, because they're constantly in contact with Tibetan people, speaking Tibetan, and they practice Tibetan culture and follow Buddhism and so on. During this historical moment, Tibetans would hear those loan words and take that as evidence that these languages used to be Tibetan. So they would say, "you need to speak pure Tibetan," and what that essentially means is those people need to assimilate to speaking Tibetan and stop speaking

their languages. Tibetans were putting pressure on these people to speak Tibetan and seeing it as a kind of a defense of Tibetan national unity, rather than a project of assimilation. However, from the perspective of Manegacha speakers and other Tibetans that speak minority languages, it was a project of assimilation. They were essentially being told, "don't speak your language, speak our language, your language is bad, our language is good." There has always been some element of hierarchy between Tibetan speakers and minority language speakers. There's always been some mild pressure to assimilate. But after 2008, that just really intensified because Tibetan identity was coming under this new threat. The Chinese state just reacted with an extremely overwhelming disproportionate response to those 2008 protests—mass arrests, mass incarceration, torture, martial law, checkpoints, the securitization of everyday life, and so on. So Tibetans felt and were under threat, and one of the ways that they responded to this was trying to build national unity by assimilating their linguistic minorities. So it's this really tragic dynamic that emerges from Chinese colonialism in Tibet.

CDT: You describe a similar situation globally when international organizations and advocacy groups that work on Tibet are discussing language in Tibet, they really only focus on the survival of that standard Tibetan language. Are there any groups or individuals, researchers (besides you, of course) who are raising issues related to minority languages?

Roche: I think it's starting to change a little bit, but the recognition of diversity is still not the majority opinion amongst academics who study Tibet or advocates who work for Tibet. Most of the academics that acknowledge this linguistic diversity are linguists who are interested in this specific language and that specific language. They are less interested in putting those languages in their social and cultural context. When it comes to academic studies of Tibetan, [they] tend to overlook the linguistics literature, so they don't acknowledge that diversity. It tends to be based on competence in the written Tibetan language, so people who formally train as Tibetologists, that training essentially is learning to read Tibetan and reading lots of Tibetan texts. You don't have to necessarily interact with Tibetan people to be an academic Tibetologist. And that's why there was this lack of awareness regarding Tibetan linguistic diversity. But beyond that lack of awareness, I would say that there is also a limited acceptance, or a refusal to accept, that linguistic diversity exists, both by Tibetan studies academics and the international Tibet movement. So the international Tibet movement is essentially promoting Tibet nationalism, which is the ideology that the Tibetan people have a territory, they have a

language, they have a national identity, and they were invaded by the Chinese. A lot of Tibetan international organizations that are essentially advocating for Tibetan nationalism, the existence of linguistic minorities counters that narrative, so that acknowledgment threatens their core business, if you like.

Nonetheless, there has been some increasing acknowledgment. For example, I worked with Free Tibet, which is a UK-based organization, and they have updated their website text to acknowledge linguistic diversity in Tibet. I was recently invited by the International Campaign for Tibet to provide a talk about my research and about the unique challenges faced by Tibet's minority languages, so they at least don't view the concept with hostility. They are not totally rejecting the idea. But I think the future survival of these languages depends on something more than acknowledgment that these languages exist. There has to be organized activism and advocacy that explicitly aims to confront the unique forms of oppression that those languages face, because it's different from other Tibetans. It's simply a different form of oppression, and it needs unique strategies and, I would say, distinct funding and things like this. It's great to see broader acknowledgement, but that acknowledgement is not going to mean anything until it's backed up with tactics, strategy, and funding.

CDT: You lived in Qinghai for several years. And then you were not allowed to stay—forced might be too strong, but you had to leave China. When's the last time you were in the Tibetan regions?

Roche: When I say Tibet I'm talking about all Tibetan areas, not just the Tibet Autonomous Region, because that's how Tibetans view Tibet as well. I lived in Qinghai and worked with Tibetans from 2005 to 2013. I couldn't stay there because of new regulations that were brought in placing restrictions on international NGOs and international civil society organizations, essentially. It just became impossible for me to get a visa and a salary. So I couldn't live there anymore. For the next five years, I was able to return there intermittently, but then my really critical publications that critique Chinese state policy in Tibet started coming out around 2014, ten years ago now. The last time I was able to go back to Rebgong was 2017. The last time I was back in China was 2018, so I was in Chengdu, where there's a big Tibetan population where I was hanging out and seeing people. When I tried to go back in 2019, my visa was not denied, but just delayed continuously to the point where it no longer became meaningful to continue applying. I knew from my time in China that this was going to happen eventually if I published on these things. I knew how it was going to happen because I'd seen other examples. It's very rare for

them to explicitly ban anyone. They have done it but it creates bad publicity. So normally they just create friction where it's harder for you to go. And I knew about this because this is exactly the same tactic that they use to prevent Tibetans from leaving China. When Tibetans are trying to apply for a passport, they'll just send people back to the office over and over again, fill out new forms, new regulations, pay new fees, get new documents, over and over again, and people just give up because it's too expensive and it takes too much time.

So I can't go back to China anymore. I'm not surprised by that at all. It's disappointing for me to be cut off from a place that I lived for so long, where I had connections with people that I care about. I would like to be able to go back for personal reasons related to that. I would like to be able to go back for academic reasons as well because the kind of research that I think is valuable can only be done on the ground in specific places by talking to people. The way that the Chinese state gets away with what it does is it's very good at covering up stuff and and you can find lots of evidence in Tibetan language news reports from the Chinese state and so on, but you will never see them writing about Manegacha. You'll never see them talking about these languages in Chinese propaganda in Tibetan. So for that on-the-ground perspective, to be able to see what the Chinese state covers up, you have to be in China. So I just have kind of given up on my research on Tibet, because I just don't think that I can make a meaningful contribution to it anymore. I can access the same documents that everyone outside China can, but I think the real work has to be done from on the ground with people.

CDT: So what are you working on now? How have you shifted your focus?

Roche: I've shifted focus in a couple of different ways. I've shifted to look more regionally and comparatively. I've started doing a couple of comparative studies, looking at the relationship between human rights and language politics. In one study published in a journal called *State Crime Journal*, I worked with some coauthors, and we compared China, India, and Indonesia, looking at how the human rights record in each country impacts the space for language activism within those countries. It's currently the United Nations decade of Indigenous languages, and the United Nations is saying everyone should do indigenous language activism on a human rights basis, and in China, you cannot do that. In India, the human rights situation has been declining very rapidly under Modi. If you just look at the political systems, you have democracy and authoritarianism—it would seem that there would be vast differences. If you look at the human rights records, China and India are rapidly

converging. So I think it's important to be aware of those developments. And China is a good base comparison for understanding what a terrible human rights situation looks like. So I've been working comparatively on that basis a bit. The other thing I've been doing is just looking practically at issues of language rights advocacy and activism. I think that there's a lot of work to be done there academically just to think about what are the theories that we need to support communities in places like China to retain their language? How can we advocate from outside? But practically there's also lots of work to be done. I've been involved with different organizations. I've worked for two years with an organization called the Global Coalition for Language Rights, which I think does great work building a community of language rights activists around the world and bringing them together. More recently, I've been involved with efforts to set up a registered non-profit organization in the United States called the Linguistic Justice Foundation, trying to create a permanent, financially sustainable base from which to organize for language rights. I'm interested in continuing that work to look practically at these issues because I think it's nice to have theories, but I think it's more important to have suggestions for practical things that we can do to make a difference in a world which is very often unjust.

### **Tibetans Coming To India Reduced To A Trickle – OpEd**

12 December 2024, Eurasia Review, Subir Bhaumik

The annual flow of ethnic Tibetans entering India has dropped sharply due to strong border controls by the Chinese and stiff surveillance in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) bolstered by modern technology.

Experts say this may even have an adverse bearing on the future of the Tibetan government-in-exile based in Dharamsala in Himachal Pradesh.

Only 15 Tibetans arrived in Dharamsala in 2023 and exile government officials say the number would be around the same this year.

Central Tibetan Administration

(CTA) officials say the arrival of Tibetans has dropped sharply since 2008. According to CTA officials, in 2021, only four Tibetans arrived in Dharamsala while five had arrived a year ago. The numbers went up slightly with 10 arrivals in 2022 and 15 in 2023.

In the 1980-90s, between 2,500 to 3,500 Tibetans used to cross into India via Nepal. But that changed after 2008, the year Beijing hosted the Olympic Games and Tibet erupted in furious protests as angry citizens sought to draw international attention to 'Chinese repression'.

Chinese authorities suspected that the protests in TAR during the 2008 Beijing Olympics were inspired by some Tibetans who returned from India and were close to the exile government.

The Chinese border guards heavily tightened the Tibet-Nepal borders and started paying Nepalese border guards to stop Tibetans escaping Tibet. Since 2010, the number of Tibetans escaping Tibet drastically fell from 3,500 a year before the uprising to just 20 to 30," says Tibetan writer-activist Tenzin Tsundue, who has been frequently arrested in India for anti-China activism that Delhi seeks to curb. He says since the Maoist government took charge in Nepal, it has become very difficult for Tibetans to cross into that country.

Other CTA officials say the Chinese have intensified checks on all Tibetans, making it mandatory for now for them to report departure and arrival every time they travel anywhere outside their regular place of residence in Tibet or neighbouring Chinese provinces.

"Many passports have been revoked, ID cards, including ration cards, mobile numbers, and bank accounts, are rolled into one number with DNA details. With such a sophisticated mechanism of control, China has turned Tibet into a police state," says writer Tsundue.

The Chinese started intensifying their border controls since 2005. In October 2006, Chinese border guards opened fire on a group of 70 Tibetan refugees climbing the snow-covered Nangpa Pass en route to Nepal. Beijing claimed the border guards were acting in self-defense, but a video filmed by a Romanian mountaineer showed the Tibetans were unarmed and running away when they were fired upon by the Chinese border guards.

A 17-year-old nun, Kelsang Namtso, died in the snow, while 23-year-old Kunsang Namgyal, hit by two bullets, died later,

For those seeking to escape Tibet have found it ever more perilous in the post-2008 era, when Beijing intensified its mass surveillance programs and placed severe restrictions on Tibetans' internal mobility, says Ruby Mukherjee, convenor of the "Save Tibet" campaign in India and an advocate in the Kolkata high court.

China's increased controls over Tibetans' movement within the country and over the Tibet-Nepal border has made it almost impossible for Tibetans to reach India. The number of new arrivals dropped to around 400 per year between 2010-14 but now with tougher restrictions since President Xi Jinping took charge, the Tibetan arrivals into India are at an all-time low, never going past 20 annually.

CTA spokesperson Tenzin Lekshay claims that after the massive Tibetan uprising in 2008, China has successfully imposed a news blockade to prevent



information about Tibet from reaching the outside world. "They use paid Western Youtubers to paint a rosy all-is-well picture about Tibet but reality is severe visa restrictions on foreigners trying to visit Tibet," he said. "China has much to hide."

China denies all charges of repression in Tibet and blames the "separatist and splittist clique of Dalai Lama" for the false global propaganda. Chinese officials say Tibet has developed enormously since the Chinese Communist Party liberated Tibetans from "feudal servitude". Unlike Tibetan hardliners who seek independence, the Dalai Lama has sought negotiations with China to secure extensive provincial autonomy, unsuccessfully so far.

Besides China's tightening of Tibet's southwestern borders since the mid-2000s to stem the flow of Tibetan refugees into Nepal and India, the emigration of Tibetan refugees from the Indian subcontinent to the West beginning in the 1990s, and a general decline in the birth rates of exiled Tibetans has brought down the number of Tibetans in India.

From a peak of 1.5 lakhs in the 1990s, the number has dropped to below 90,000. Experts say this has long-term implications.

A study by Tenzim Dorjee and Tsewang Rinzim in the journal [www.migrationpolicy.org](http://www.migrationpolicy.org) observes:

"The demographic decline of South Asia's Tibetan community poses a threat to the future viability of the government-in-exile—the sole democratic voice representing the Tibetan people both inside and outside Tibet—as well as its institutions and civil-society organizations.

"If this trend continues, it could imperil the Tibetan monastic universities in South India dedicated to safeguarding Indo-Tibetan knowledge systems as well as hundreds of health and education facilities serving tens of thousands of Tibetans and others across India."

With the 14th Dalai Lama already 89 and his succession still caught up in huge uncertainties amidst reports that Beijing may like to put up its own choice, the very distinct Tibetan identity stands imperiled.

### **Nepal "Snubs" Dalai Lama For China-Appointed Panchen Lama; Is Beijing Weaponizing Buddhism?**

11 December 2024, The Eurasian Times, Ritu Sharma

After the brief and bloody war with India ended in 1962, China segregated the Prisoners of War into Indians and Gorkhas. The 700 Gorkha soldiers were given better treatment as Beijing wanted to highlight that Chinese and Nepalis are 'brothers.' China even made a direct offer to Nepal to take back Gorkha POWs, an offer Kathmandu declined.

Cut to 2024, and it seems the message is finding some resonance with the Himalayan Nation. Even as the country, the birthplace of Buddha, remains out of bounds for its most famous disciple—the Dalai Lama—Nepal is preparing to welcome the 11th Panchen Lama, appointed by the Chinese government.

Not only is the Nepal government giving him a red-carpet welcome, but Kathmandu is also hosting the South China Sea Buddhism Roundtable Conference.

Amish Mulmi, the author of "All Roads Lead North: Nepal's Turn to China" wrote: "Didn't know our geography had changed overnight and Nepal was now a South China sea facing nation. Why else would we host a South China Sea Buddhism Roundtable Conference in Lumbini!"

Lumbini, located in southern Nepal, is the birthplace of the Buddha and one of the most venerated sites for Buddhists. The Dalai Lama lives just one hour's flight away from Lumbini, but Nepal has not been keen to host the Tibetan leader for fear of angering China. For some time, Kathmandu tried to maintain its geopolitical neutrality as the two Asian giants jostled for influence in the region.

However, it is changing as Nepal's Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli broke with tradition in his fourth term by heading to Beijing before New Delhi.

During his visit, Prime Minister Oli met Chinese President Xi Jinping. Nepal and China inked the much-awaited framework agreement on the multi-billion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), paving the way for enhanced economic cooperation on the projects.

This will be the first visit of the Chinese-appointed Panchen Lama, and it will help him gain recognition among Buddhist followers worldwide. The South China Buddhism Round Table will be held from December 12 to December 15 and will include government officials and monks from around 20 countries.

The Nepal government has kept the arrival of the Chinese religious leader Panchen Lama a secret. "He is coming for religious harmony," a local Nepali media quoted an official from the Lumbini Development Trust.

The Indian government will closely watch this move as the country hosts the largest population of Tibetan refugees.

According to the latest data from the government in exile, more than 128,000 Tibetans live outside of their homeland. Of those, 94,000 live in India, around three-quarters of the total. Another 10.6% live in Nepal, and the remaining have resettled in more than 30 countries worldwide.

The Panchen Lama is one of the most important figures in Tibetan Buddhism. In 1995, the Dalai Lama recognized Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, a 6-year-old boy in Tibet, as the reincarnated Panchen Lama. But

just three days later, Chinese authorities kidnapped the child and his parents. The Panchen Lama has not been seen in public ever since. His followers all over the world continue to demand his release from Chinese authorities.

The Chinese government instead named Gyaincain Norbu as the 11th Panchen Lama. China has gradually exposed its Panchen Lama in public roles in the hope that it will achieve the respect commanded by the Dalai Lama among Tibetans and globally. He made his first trip outside mainland China in 2012 when he visited Hong Kong.

Chinese-appointed Panchen Lama's upcoming visit to Nepal has created a furor amongst journalists and scholars in Nepal.

Mahesh Kushwaha questioned the Oli government's move on X by asking: "What is the Oli government trying to do by welcoming Panchen Lama for a "South China Sea Buddhism Roundtable Conference" in Lumbini when Nepal cannot even muster the courage to host Dalai Lama?" He works with the Centre for Social Innovation and Foreign Policy.

#### Weaponizing Buddhism

Of all the South Asian countries, China's military ties with Nepal have been among the weakest, owing to decades-old ties between Nepalese and Indian Armies.



The Dalai Lama with a picture of 11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima. Credits Central Tibetan Administration.

Since 1950, both armies have conferred the honorary rank of General of their respective Armies on each other's Chief of Staff. This bond is further reinforced by the substantial presence of approximately 36,000 Gorkha personnel within the Gorkha Regiments of the Indian Army. Also, a sizable population of about 140,000 retired Gorkha personnel from the Indian Army receive pensions totaling around US\$600 million from India.

This has changed since 2022, as the Indian Army enacted a new recruitment scheme, and the Nepalese government forbade its citizens from joining the Indian Army.

This has prompted China to balance its military cooperation with soft diplomacy and Buddhism is an important part of that.

"One shouldn't lose sight of the strategic dimension of Buddhism. China sees a great advantage in

employing Buddhism alongside its hard power pursuits, especially to seek political and economic leverage. Cultural tools also seem embedded into China's latest One Belt One Road initiative in Asia," P. Stobdan, a former ambassador and a scholar of Asian affairs, wrote earlier.

The Dalai Lama has been in the eye of the storm between India and China as the 89-year-old spiritual leader, who leads Tibetan Buddhism, fled Tibet in 1959 following annexation by Beijing. He has been living in exile in India ever since.

Beijing accuses the Dalai Lama of being a separatist. It asserts that the Communist Party China, itself an atheist organization, has the sole right to name the next incarnation of the Dalai Lama and has enshrined it into the country's law.

The Dalai Lama and the Tibetan parliament in exile, with its seat in Dharamshala, have rejected the Chinese claim. Penpa Tsering, the president of the parliament-in-exile, has stated earlier: "A non-believer, atheist government like China interfering in Tibetan spiritual matters is a complete no-no. It cannot be accepted. The world has turned against China. We firmly believe no one will trust their choice."

China hopes to repress the Tibetan separatist movement by controlling the religious leadership of Tibetan Buddhists. The Dalai Lama's increasing age has further heightened tension over his successor. The Dalai Lama has insisted that speculations of his death are premature, as, according to his visions, he will live to 113.

A living god-like figure for millions of Buddhists, India officially calls him "the most esteemed and honored guest of India." China accuses him of being a "wolf in monk's robes," engaged in "anti-China separatist activities under the cloak of religion to break Tibet away from China."

Since 1974, the Dalai Lama has said he does not seek independence from China for Tibet but a "meaningful autonomy" that would allow Tibet to preserve its culture and heritage.

In 2011, in a move to democratize the system of government, the Dalai Lama gave up his political and administrative powers and chose to remain as just a spiritual leader. However, he is still the community's most influential figure.

When the current Dalai Lama dies, Tibetans will be in a state of disarray.

Experts on the tensions between the two countries believe that when the 14th Dalai Lama dies, there will be two successors – one nominated by China and the other left behind by the Tibetan spiritual leader.

Beijing is making its move to fortify the reputation of its Panchen Lama till then to be able to control the Tibetans religiously.

## View: India shouldn't let its data turn Chinese

10 December 2024, The Economic Times

India's institutional strength used to be reflected in the reliability of its national accounts. Unlike in China, few questioned the government's figures for growth in gross domestic product, and investors rarely needed to supplement official numbers with other data sources.

That has, quietly, changed. While few believe Indian statisticians are actively working to make growth numbers look better than they are, less and less data is publicly available, methods are less transparent, and the GDP figures in particular sometimes diverge puzzlingly from independent data.

The minister in charge of statistics recently told Parliament that the government planned to ask a new committee to recommend how it should update its national accounts. Official statisticians should seize this opportunity to overhaul how India's GDP is calculated in order to win back trust.

The government's justification for the update is that India's data is still based on prices dating back to the financial year that ended in March 2012. Such "rebasing" is a chance for wholesale reform — particularly because the last time the GDP series was revised was exactly when questions first began to be asked about its reliability.

Statisticians have a much harder task in India than in the West or even in China. For one, the economy is dominated by services, rather than by manufacturing. It can be easier to value aggregate output in industrial sectors that produce a defined output with a clear price.

A bigger problem is that, unlike in more advanced economies, a large part of activity in India happens in the informal sector. That is, by definition, invisible to the government; official tax records, for example, are not going to tell you much about small businesses that traditionally haven't paid taxes.

The micro-sized enterprises where most Indians work are also very hard to survey. They go out of business quickly; they change their names and locations frequently.

Official numbers get around this problem by looking at a sample of larger companies and extrapolating from that. If the performance of smaller enterprises is linked closely with how bigger ones are doing, such an estimate can work well.

But, if the formal and informal sectors are growing at very different rates, the calculation might lead to biased estimates of GDP. Some think that's exactly what has happened in recent years.

The figures for value-added contributed by the private sector have been particularly worrisome. They are often out of sync with other macroeconomic

indicators — corporate earnings, credit growth, the central bank's estimates for capacity utilization in industry. Many India-watchers now supplement the official GDP numbers with other data points, such as sales of two-wheelers or the revenue reports of consumer-goods companies.

About a decade ago, when the "base year" for GDP calculations was last revised, statisticians also changed the data source they used to estimate private-sector output. That may have introduced unintended problems.

What really angered many economists, however, is that it seemed the "new series" of GDP behaved completely differently from the one they had been using for decades. Comparisons between macroeconomic performance in the 2010s and the 2000s, already politically controversial, became impossible.

The new series also seemed to be overly sensitive to how statisticians calculated price changes between one year and the next. Normally, such questions might be answered by official papers detailing the statisticians' sources and methods. But those have stopped appearing as well.

If authorities are serious about fixing India's problem statistics, they can do two things. First, better mine the enormous amount of available digital data, including the 500 million transactions a day recorded on state-supported payments infrastructure. If they don't do so, some future AI bot will.

Second, they need to be much more open about what they are doing and why. Statistics are useless if they aren't trusted. And only transparency builds trust.

India has wound up with official statistics that are unpredictable, don't match up with other figures, aren't robust to how price shifts are calculated, and provide limited comparability over time. That's sub-optimal, to say the least. To promote growth, the government first needs to know how the economy is really doing.

## Breaking the Circle: Chinese Communist Party Propaganda Infrastructure Rapidly Expands

10 December 2024, Recorded Future, Insikt Group

### Summary

China is rapidly advancing its global propaganda strategies through international communication centers (ICCs), with over 100 centers established since 2018 — most since 2023. These centers aim to amplify the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) voice on the international stage, targeting specific audiences with tailored messaging (a strategy known as "precise communication"). ICCs coordinate local, national, and international resources to build China's

image, share political narratives, and promote economic partnerships.

By leveraging inauthentic social media amplification, foreign influencers, and collaborations with overseas media, ICCs advance China's multi-layered propaganda approach. For instance, Fujian's ICC reportedly manages TikTok accounts targeting Taiwanese audiences, likely including a covert account that is highly critical of the Taiwan government called Two Tea Eggs. On YouTube, the same ICC promotes videos of Taiwanese individuals praising China. These centers are strategically positioned to promote China's interests during geopolitical crises, despite challenges like limited credibility and resource constraints.

**Breaking the Circle: Chinese Communist Party Propaganda Infrastructure Rapidly Expands**

China's efforts to reshape global narratives about its policies, culture, and geopolitical aims have reached new heights with the rapid proliferation of international communication centers (ICCs). Established to amplify the voice of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), these centers are integral to China's global propaganda apparatus and seek to propel the CCP's "precise communication" strategy for targeting distinct audiences. Here's a closer look at their functions, strategies, and implications.

**What Are ICCs?**

ICCs are propaganda hubs designed to bring new resources to the CCP's efforts to "tell China's story" by centralizing and streamlining the capabilities of provinces, cities, and smaller jurisdictions. These centers focus on building China's global image by sharing positive narratives about its culture, economy, and development. Simultaneously, they act as a conduit for political narratives aimed at countering negative perceptions and promoting China's geopolitical agenda.

Over 100 ICCs have been established across China, primarily since 2023, under provincial and sub-provincial propaganda departments and state media organizations. These centers aim to "break the circle" to penetrate foreign audiences and tailoring content for specific regions and demographics.

**Key Objectives of ICCs**

ICCs primarily aim to promote positive narratives about China. They create content that highlights the country's cultural heritage, technological innovations, and economic progress, fostering goodwill among international audiences. Additionally, ICCs counter negative narratives by responding to perceived anti-China sentiments and disseminating content to influence public opinion on geopolitical topics. By tailoring their approaches to specific regions and demographics, ICCs strive to ensure their narratives resonate more effectively. For example, Fujian's ICC specifically targets Taiwanese audiences using TikTok

accounts that blend cultural themes with critical political messaging.

**Tactics and Strategies**

ICCs employ various tactics to achieve their objectives. Social media operations form a core component of their strategy, with thousands of accounts active across platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok. Many of these accounts lack transparency about their state affiliations, enabling covert influence campaigns. Additionally, ICCs leverage foreign influencers and "communication officers" to amplify China's narratives through user-generated content, vlogs, and experiential propaganda.

Collaboration with overseas media organizations further enhances ICCs' reach and legitimacy. Through actions like organizing foreign journalist visits to China, ICCs create an impression of organic coverage and offer an alternative to Western narratives. These partnerships — reportedly established in Australia, Brazil, Cambodia, Egypt, France, Japan, Russia, the United States, and elsewhere — are complemented by localized propaganda activities that align with China's economic and geopolitical interests. S

**Challenges to Success**

Despite ambitious goals, ICCs face significant challenges that hinder their effectiveness. These include a lack of professional and foreign talent, insufficient discourse power, inadequate data for precise communication, and inconsistent funding. ICCs often struggle to translate local developments into effective narratives for foreign audiences and lack focus on target demographics. Many rely heavily on central state media infrastructure, as seen with the Nanning International Communication Center outsourcing key operations to Xinhua News Agency. These limitations echo long-standing issues within China's state media sector.

**Implications**

ICCs represent a sophisticated evolution in China's propaganda efforts. While they are unlikely to become trusted sources of information in the near term, their ability to amplify preferred narratives during geopolitical crises is likely significant. These centers likely have the potential to influence foreign opinion of China by offering regular engagement, providing alternatives to Western sources, and focusing on topics like quality of life in China rather than political values, especially among Global South and Western periphery audiences.

**Outlook**

The expansion of international communication centers (ICCs) reflects China's ongoing efforts to innovate its media strategy, centralize resources, and project global narratives favoring its interests under Xi Jinping's leadership. Despite challenges, ICCs

likely strengthen China's ability to influence global discourse by leveraging thousands of overt and covert social media accounts and fostering collaborations with foreign media. These centers could amplify assertive messaging during crises and suppress negative coverage of China.

China's long-term goal is almost certainly to establish ICC-affiliated platforms as trusted sources of information. While this remains unlikely in the near term due to credibility challenges, ICCs represent a strategic step toward improving China's external propaganda system. Researchers and governments should prioritize tracking ICC activities and advocating for transparent labeling of their state affiliations on social media platforms.

To read the entire analysis, [click here](#) to download the report as a PDF.

### What Lies Ahead for India-China Relations

09 December 2024, The Diplomat, Eizabeth Roche

A high-level meeting between Indian and Chinese officials in Beijing is scheduled for later this month.

Senior officials of India and China are expected to meet in Beijing later this month as the two neighbors look to reset relations that have been in a state of deep freeze since June 2020 when their soldiers engaged in a bloody clash and a prolonged eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation along their disputed border in Ladakh.

The upcoming meeting in Beijing follows the agreement on patrolling arrangements along the disputed border in Eastern Ladakh. India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri told journalists in New Delhi on October 21 that "Agreement has been arrived at on patrolling arrangements along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the India-China border areas, leading to disengagement and a resolution of the issues that had arisen in these areas in 2020."

The Beijing meeting is therefore significant.

The Indian and Chinese national security advisors have to begin the process of repairing bilateral strategic trust. They also have to chart a fresh blueprint for stabilizing their tense border and ensuring equilibrium, badly shattered by the deadly Galwan clash in June 2020 in the Himalayan region of Eastern Ladakh. This will be their first meeting to discuss unsettled boundary issues in five years.

The Sino-Indian face-off at Galwan on the night of June 14-15, 2020, was the deadliest between the two countries in decades. Both sides suffered casualties. Relations frayed thereafter. There was a sharp downside in people-to-people ties with a decline in air links and travel between the two countries. India banned dozens of Chinese companies, including

ByteDance, the firm behind the popular short-video app TikTok, from operating in India.

India and China share a 4,000-kilometer-long undemarcated border that has been a source of friction for decades. It led to a brief but bloody war in 1962 and several face-offs since. However, a series of pacts signed between 1993 and 2013 resulted in largely peaceful ties. This truce was broken when China moved tens of thousands of troops and weaponry to the border in Eastern Ladakh in April-May 2020, catching New Delhi by surprise. While caught off guard, India quickly mobilized forces to match the numbers deployed by China.



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping shake hands at a meeting on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Kazan, Russia, October 23, 2024.

Following the October 2024 announcement, India and China disengaged their troops, i.e. they were withdrawn from their eyeball-to-eyeball positions. A meeting between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping followed on the sidelines of the BRICS summit at Kazan. This was their first bilateral dialogue since 2019.

"The two sides agreed on holding talks between their foreign ministers and officials at various levels to bring the relationship back to sound and steady development at an early date," a Chinese readout of the talks said. The foreign and defense ministers of the two countries also met subsequently.

Briefing reporters in Kazan on October 23, Misri said that Modi and Xi had agreed that by showing "mutual respect for each other's sensitivities, interests, concerns and aspirations, the two countries can have a peaceful, stable and beneficial bilateral relationship."



The first clue that a possible thaw was in the offing came in an interview by Prime Minister Modi with Newsweek in April this year. The posting of a new Chinese Ambassador Xu Feihong in New Delhi in May 2024, 18 months after his predecessor left the Indian capital was also seen as a step toward unfreezing of ties.

Since he assumed official duties, Xu has used his X account, formerly Twitter, to reach out to the Indian public whose opinion had turned sharply against China after the Galwan clash. Xu and the Chinese embassy in New Delhi have also posted information regarding the travel of small groups of Indians to China, sponsored by the embassy.

Another hint of India and China being close to working out a solution came in August when the Indian foreign ministry statement said after talks between diplomats that the dialogue had been “forward looking.” This came amid a toning down of aggressive rhetoric from the Chinese media, largely viewed as government-backed and reflecting official views.

Analysts have described the breakthrough as a “tactical achievement.”

However, the reasons behind the breakthrough are as unclear as the causes for the sudden Chinese mobilization in 2020.

Some speculate that India’s growing proximity to the U.S. in recent years and its development of deeper linkages with like-minded countries like the members of Quad to balance China could have been the trigger.

Another reason for China’s aggression is its ambition to head the global order, which it cannot do unless it dominates Asia. In this context, Indian Foreign Minister S Jaishankar has pointed out that with both India and China harboring ambitions to make their presence felt in the world, and rising together, it has led to a complex situation.

Why did the breakthrough in relations happen now?

One reason is that Indian industry has been quietly pushing for the normalization of ties given that many critical components and products are imported from China. Earlier this year, India’s Economic Survey 2023-24, which is a government document laying out the state of the economy, spoke of the economic imperative for getting Sino-Indian ties back on track.

Another reason being put forth by analysts is that China has understood that it cannot force India to make choices or capitulate under duress. Added to this are the uncertainties prevailing in the world, including the reelection of Donald Trump in the United States and his threats to place punitive tariffs across imports into the U.S. This could be another plausible explanation for why India and China are looking to end their tensions.

Now that the two countries have taken the first step toward normalization of ties, the question is what’s next?

In his statement to the Indian parliament last week, Jaishankar said that with the completion of disengagement, India and China got the space to look at other elements of their relationship keeping “national security interests first and foremost.” This could mean that economic interests will be predicated on security-related matters.

In the immediate future, the two countries will need to carry out two more steps – de-escalation and de-induction of troops. The first refers to moving troops back (perhaps by 3 to 7 kilometers) to minimize the possibility of conflict. De-induction refers to an agreement between the two sides to pull the amassed personnel and heavy weaponry back by some 100 kilometers. This is expected to take several rounds of talks by senior army commanders backed, of course, by political direction.

Once these are accomplished, the two countries will need to work out a fresh set of confidence building measures, given that the ones in place prior to the Galwan clash were summarily disregarded by China in 2020. These measures will have to be strictly implemented, backed by verification methods as India cannot afford to be caught napping again.

These measures could take years to draw up, which means India will have to continue to closely monitor its China border.

The two sides have agreed to coordinated patrols to avoid tensions. China has also sought patrolling rights in Arunachal Pradesh in the east. This is something that India will need to consider cautiously given China’s claim over all of Arunachal Pradesh which it calls “South Tibet.” The particular area in question is Yangste, which has seen consistent attempts of transgression by the Chinese and was also the scene of a scuffle in 2022. Just as China claims all of Arunachal Pradesh that India administers, New Delhi says the Aksai Chin area in Kashmir that China has occupied since 1962 is part of its territory. India doesn’t have any patrolling rights in this area.

On the economic side, India will need to quickly scale up efforts to de-risk its economy from its current levels of exposure to China. That is a tough ask as India’s trade in 2023 touched \$115.82 billion with a trade deficit of almost \$100 billion, in Beijing’s favor. India can be expected to speedily tie up plans to boost trade and supply chain initiatives with Quad partners Australia and Japan. There are some free trade pacts in the offing that need to be concluded quickly. Indian industry should also look to source products and components from within the country and set up and promote domestic supply chains. An economically strong India will be attractive for

investors looking at the China+1 alternative. It will give India resources and the confidence to build up its national capacities vis a vis China.

### K P Oli's China gamble

09 December 2024, The Indian Express, Yubraj Ghimire

The Nepal PM did not wait indefinitely for an invitation from Delhi. Instead, he gave out the message that Beijing is no less important.

Nepal Prime Minister K P Oli's China visit from December 2 to 5 had triggered a loud response even before it began. The Chinese media, including Global Times, called it "tradition breaking" while some in Indian media called it a surrender to the north. Nepal's political spectrum, including the two major constituents in the ruling coalition – Oli-led Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) and the Nepali Congress – were divided on whether Nepal should sign the Belt and Road Initiative framework that may involve having to take loans from China as it goes into implementation phase.

Before he flew back home, Oli said on social media platform X, "Today, we signed the Framework for Belt & Roads Cooperation. As my official visit to China concludes, I am honoured to reflect on the bilateral talks with Premier Li Qiang, discussions with NPC Chairman Zhang Leji, and the highly fruitful meeting with President Xi Jinping."

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Seemingly, Oli defied NC's strict condition that cooperation from China under the BRI should only be grant based. The BRI framework agreement has not offered any special concessions for Nepal. Oli may face the wrath of the Nepali Congress, and even face a crisis of survival, but he found the risk worth it. As with his previous two visits as PM, he has been able to create an impression this time too that Nepal can trust China more and enhance strategic cooperation. In 2016, close on the heels of an economic blockade by India, Oli had signed the treaty of Trade and Transit with China, securing alternative access to the sea.

Oli did not wait indefinitely for an invitation from Delhi this time, generally the first port of call for a Nepali PM, giving a message that Beijing is no less important. In fact, it is more welcoming.

On November 25, the Nepali Congress and its leader Arzu Rana Deuba had rushed to Chengdu and told her counterpart Wang Yi that her government and party would only welcome grants, not loans in any form under the BRI. Yi, understandably, gave her the cold shoulder, and responded by asking her to convey it to Beijing.

That was not without reason. Deuba had played an active role successfully lobbying for parliamentary

endorsement of the Millennium Challenge Corporation's (MCC) Nepal compact worth \$500 million grant in 2022, five years after the two sides had signed an understanding. That delay was largely because of fear and division within the communist parties that the MCC was part of an Indo-Pacific strategy with security components. But a hawkish warning by the US that Nepal's failure to ratify by the February deadline will lead to a review of the entire gamut of US cooperation had its desired impact.

Second, the Nepali Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party have now become "'fraternal parties". Foreign Minister Deuba may not have gone down well with China, but Oli's 20 minutes one-on-one meeting with President Xi on Tuesday seems to have done the magic. President Xi may not have given a deadline on the BRI Framework like the Americans did on the MCC ratification, but China's interest next door being undermined vis-a-vis the US was not acceptable to it. For Oli, overruling Xi's concern was far more difficult, if not impossible.

Xi, who had visited Nepal in October 2019, reiterated his preparedness to do anything to safeguard Nepal's independence and its right to choose its developmental path. Enhancing strategic cooperation, transforming the once India-locked Nepal into a prosperous country by linking the two sides by rivers and mountains, developing Himalayan railway and road connectivity, investing in energy, trade and investment and hospitality, promoting Chinese tourism in Nepal, especially next year when the two countries will be celebrating their 70th anniversary of diplomatic ties, and dispatching volunteers to teach Mandarin across Nepal were the other agendas the two sides agreed upon.

For Oli, consolidating the proximity with China seems crucial with all the risks it may contain. Not trusting the assurances coming from Xi was difficult, if not impossible. In his speech at Peking University on Tuesday, Oli spoke at length about Nepal's domestic politics, the history of movements for democracy in the country, hailing the current alliance between UML and NC, and denouncing both the monarchy and the Maoists. In a way, he was making a case that China has a trustworthy ally only in UML. He gave no credit to any one in the past for developing ties with China, but praised himself for his sacrifice and suffering in Nepal for the struggle for democracy.

He praised BRI as a visionary initiative of President Xi in the spirit of shared prosperity and win-win cooperation, hoping "together, Nepal and China can envision a future of shared prosperity and enduring friendship, inspired by mutual respect and the pursuit of a better world for all."

Despite Oli's totalitarian character, political actors other than the Nepali Congress may not be unhappy over what he achieved on the Beijing trip. But how the two sides would move to execute the BRI projects in near future is something that would require time to assess. What fate awaits Oli politically would largely be decided by the NC response at home over it being overruled in China. But Oli, even if he loses his chair, will try to emerge as a "martyr" for the nation's cause.

### Self-Determination of Tibet: A Contentious Issue

09 December 2024, IDSA

#### Summary

Negotiations on self-determination of Tibet has been a contentious matter between the Tibetan ethnic minority and the PRC government. The PRC government has failed to implement in letter and spirit various laws which stipulate the establishment of autonomous regions for the ethnic minorities in China.

A diplomatic spat between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the United States (US) has ensued, following US President Biden signing the 'Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act' on 12 July 2024 into law.<sup>1</sup> Reacting to the Act, China stated that the US is undermining the "basic norms governing international relations" and should recognise Xizang (Tibet) as part of China. It urged the US not to support "Tibet independence" which if it fails to do, "China will take resolute measures to firmly defend its sovereignty, security and development interests".<sup>2</sup>

Appraising the Act, along with the affirmation of upholding human rights and direct negotiations "without preconditions" with the Dalai Lama in order to resolve the differences, are some of the fundamental aspects at stake for the 'self-determination' of Tibet. This Brief examines how the principle of self-determination has been contested between the Chinese government and the Tibetan ethnic minority. It begins with a review on how the principles of self-determination have been construed in international law.

#### Self-Determination in International Law

The principle of self-determination, which can be traced back to the French revolution in 1789 and the American Declaration of Independence of 1776, refers to the legal right of people to choose their own political destiny. In the contemporary period, it has been closely associated with US President Woodrow Wilson, when after the First World War, several new states were created from the losing powers of Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire.

Previously, self-determination was perceived as a 'political concept' but later on, it emerged as a "principle of positive international law" based on the UN Charter as in Article 1(2), it is requisite that one of the purposes of the United Nations is to "develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determinations of people".<sup>4</sup>

The principle of self-determination has been addressed in several UN resolutions, declarations and conventions. However, it is an 'elusive concept', mainly due to an unclear definition of 'people', i.e., who are actually entitled to self-determination (for example, indigenous groups, religious groups and other minorities), resulting in various interpretations and significant implications in practice.<sup>5</sup>

One of the foremost legal rights for self-determination is the "Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and People" adopted by UN General Assembly (GA) Resolution 1514 in 1960, where Para 1 declares, "the subjugation of people to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights" and is contrary to the UN Charter.<sup>6</sup> These legal rights were primarily designed or interpreted to foster the decolonisation process and were upheld by the International Court of Justice in the Namibia case.<sup>7</sup>

Additionally, the application of self-determination beyond the anti-colonial dimension was adopted in 1970 by the UNGA, 'Friendly Relations Declarations' which entail the right of self-determination to all people freely "without external interference, their political status and to pursue their economic, social and cultural development".<sup>8</sup> However, this legal document demands that self-determination be exercised cautiously, without disturbing the territorial integrity of the existing state. In other words, these legal rights are in line with 'internal self-determination', i.e., autonomy.<sup>9</sup>

In the case of internal self-determination, Article 1 of the two international Covenants of 1966—International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights—provides people the right to "freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development". Legal expert Antonio Cassese is of the view that all members of an inhabitant state have the right to express self-determination through "internal-decision making processes", without disturbing the territorial integrity of sovereign states.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, such rights have been recognised in the United Nations Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007 where Article 4 declares that indigenous people "have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and

local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions".<sup>11</sup>

Although the core substance of self-determination infers secession or the ability to establish sovereign and independent states, in international laws, unilateral secession is not well received due to the fear of creating instability, when or if the right of self-determination is exercised by all who claim it. Former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali thoughtfully said: "if every ethnic, religious or linguistic group claimed statehood, there would be no limits to fragmentation and peace and security and economic well-being for all would become even more difficult to achieve."<sup>12</sup>

Nonetheless, there are jurists that emphasise the applicability of self-determination to a particular group of people to secure their territorial sovereignty. Such kinds of self-determination are known as 'remedial secession' where self-determination is applied as a last resort or secession is justified, if any aggrieved group is severely persecuted by the state.<sup>13</sup> Such legal rights are detailed in the UNGA Resolution 2625, which states that the territorial integrity of the state is protected, if the government is represented by "the whole people belonging to the territory without distinction as to race, creed or color".<sup>14</sup> This clause implies that if any government is unrepresentative or oppressive, it may trigger secession. Meanwhile, some jurists also emphasise, if internal self-determination or say autonomy are flawed in implementation, secession should be seen as a matter of last resort.

#### Negotiations for Tibetan Self-Determination

On 13 February 1913, the 13th Dalai Lama formally declared the independence of Tibet, following the overthrow of Manchu Qing dynasty by the Chinese nationalist revolution in 1911.<sup>15</sup> The historiography on whether Tibet is a part of China, however, is complicated as both sides have competing narratives.<sup>16</sup> But one major historical event in which Tibet formally came under the control of China is when Chinese troops entered Tibet in 1950 and consequently signed the "Agreement on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet" (17 Point Agreement) on 23 May 1951.<sup>17</sup>

Subsequently, at the UNGA, numerous resolutions were passed calling for the right to self-determination for the Tibetan people but it was met with negligible support from the international community.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, the UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities adopted a resolution on 23 August 1991 calling on the Government of the People's Republic of China "fully to respect the fundamental human rights and freedoms of the Tibetan people".<sup>19</sup> After decades of impasse, dialogue between the two sides commenced with a pre-condition that except for

"total independence" all other issues were open for discussion.<sup>20</sup> Without substantial outcome, the talks ended in 1985 with the removal of Chinese representative Hu Yao-bang.<sup>21</sup>

Dialogue between the Tibetan and Chinese representatives, however, entered a new chapter following the Dalai Lama's announcement of the "Middle way approach", implying not seeking separation or independence of Tibet, but instead securing 'genuine autonomy' within the scope of the constitution of the People's Republic of China.<sup>22</sup> In order to achieve a genuine autonomy for Tibetan peoples, the Tibetan administration formulated a 'Five point peace plan' in 1987, the Strasbourg proposal in 1998 and the Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy in 2008. Dialogue between the two sides continued based on these three core documents, but ended abruptly in 2010 without any substantial outcome.

In the negotiations between Tibetan representatives and the Chinese government, securing genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people has been a key issue, and has led to deadlock and pauses in the negotiation process. Hence, it is necessary and worthwhile to look into how the PRC government takes into account autonomy in relation to ethnic minorities.

Assessment of 'Autonomy' Implementation in China  
Regional ethnic autonomy is supposed to be the core governance mechanism for ethnic minorities in China.<sup>23</sup> Though the 'Common Program' and the 1954 Constitution of the People's Republic of China (PRC) specify the establishment of regional autonomy, Chinese constitutional expert, Gao Quanxi has argued that the 1982 PRC Constitution as amended in 2018 has been infused with a legal attribute, which is aimed at ending incessant revolution, discarding absolute class struggle, substituted by "dictatorship of the proletariat" with a "people's democratic dictatorship".<sup>24</sup>

In the 1982 PRC Constitution, the preamble declares, "China is a unified multi-ethnic state founded by the Chinese people of all ethnic groups" and opposes "major ethnic group (Han) chauvinism". Further, Article 4 stipulates the promotion of ethnic equality and unity, where discrimination and oppression of any ethnic groups is prohibited, and allows for the establishment of autonomous regions for self-governance while obliging that "all ethnic groups shall have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages and to preserve or reform their own traditions and customs".<sup>25</sup> Additionally, based on the 1982 constitution, the National People's Congress in 1984 adopted the "Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy" which was amended in 2001, strengthening and

expanding the existing autonomous rights formulated in the 1982 constitution.<sup>26</sup>

Assessing implementation of the ethnic minorities' policy by the PRC government, it is characterised as one of "gradualism and pluralism" where until the late 1950s, a tolerant and benign attitude was practiced towards ethnic minorities by the PRC government.<sup>27</sup> But from the 1960s onwards under the leadership of Mao, especially during the Cultural Revolution (1967–1976), the ethnic minorities experienced the most repressive and assimilative period in the history of PRC.<sup>28</sup> Again from the 1970s, under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, extreme assimilation of minorities ended and they began to make claims to uphold their rights to national autonomy.

In the case of the Tibetan ethnic minority, though the demand for genuine autonomy by the Tibetan representative emerged more recently, essentially it was already featured way back in 17 Point Agreement in May 1951, as para 3 underlined that, "the Tibetan people have the right of exercising national regional autonomy under the unified leadership of the Central People's Government".<sup>29</sup> The PRC government, however, violated the agreement.<sup>30</sup>

To achieve the aspiration of autonomy for the Tibetan people, its representatives even submitted a "Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People" in 2008 to the PRC government.<sup>31</sup> The demand for autonomy in the memorandum was drafted in consonance with the PRC constitution and the Law on regional ethnic autonomy, which essentially addresses independently managing the internal affairs of Tibetans including language, culture, religion education, environment protection and utilisation of natural resources.

The evaluation of autonomy implementation in the Tibet Autonomous Region, however, reveals policy swings between "more tolerant and more repressive" by the PRC government.<sup>32</sup> Ironically, one of the fundamental reasons why the PRC government rejected the Tibetan proposal of autonomy, and instead adopted a repressive policy towards the Tibetan ethnic minority, is due to "fear of the external forces" of Western countries, especially the United States.<sup>33</sup>

The US policy on Tibet can be traced back to the 1940s, when the US government entered an agreement with Tibet to build a supply route through Tibet to China against Japanese attack. US policy on Tibet has been termed "inconsistencies in commitment, interspersed with occasional bursts of sympathy and activism"<sup>34</sup> mostly due to the impact of Cold War politics. Until 1970, Tibet was included in the US strategy to counter communist expansion in Asia. But it was weakened following the

rapprochement of Sino-US relations in the 1970s.<sup>35</sup> And conversely, the Soviet Union, which in the 1950s fully backed the PRC government claim to sovereignty over Tibet, began to condemn Chinese policy in Tibet as a "colonial power".<sup>36</sup> Contrary to the Cold War period, however, Russia's policy on Tibet "seems to view the Tibetan issue in the context of Chechnya, unfortunately".<sup>37</sup>

One major reason for the US leveraging of Tibetan separatism is based on the notion of a growing 'China threat' both in terms of military and economy, which the PRC government considers as a 'containment policy'. Yet, US leveraging of Tibetan secession has consequences, especially for Tibetans in Tibet and also for the resolution of the Tibetan question. Sinologist Barry Sautman cautions that backing secession by great powers "makes it harder for Tibetans in Tibet to seek self-representation without being suspected of pursuing secession" and also "even makes it harder to resolve the Tibetan question".<sup>38</sup>

#### Way Forward

The President of the Central Tibetan Administration Penpa Tsering in September 2024 acknowledged that 'back-channel' talks between the two sides have been initiated.<sup>39</sup> The PRC government has laid two conditions for resuming negotiations. First, as the Chinese government considers the Central Tibetan Government as an organised political group with an agenda for 'Tibetan independence', negotiations will be held "only with the personal representatives of the 14th Dalai Lama". And second, any contact or talks will only be about the personal future of the 14th Dalai Lama and the handful of people close to him, and not a 'high degree of autonomy'.<sup>40</sup> Meanwhile, external threat perceptions will significantly determine the outcome of negotiations.

To preserve the territorial integrity and maintain amicable relations among the 56 ethnic groups in China, however, one fundamental key is to uphold the PRC constitution and the Law of ethnic regional autonomy in letter and spirit. The fact is Tibetans are not seeking separation from China and this was reiterated recently by the Dalai Lama when he stated "We want to have full autonomy, as part of the People's Republic of China."<sup>41</sup> Thus, much of the discontent among the minorities stems from incomplete or flawed implementation of China's ethnic minority policies.



## India must support the Dalai Lama's right to rebirth

08 December 2024, The Sunday Guardian, Khedroob Thondup

Respecting the Dalai Lama's right to choose his place of rebirth is a testament to India's commitment to human rights and spiritual freedom.

The Dalai Lama, a symbol of peace and spiritual leadership, has long been a beacon of hope for millions around the world. His teachings transcend borders, promoting compassion, non-violence, and understanding. As the current Dalai Lama ages, the question of his reincarnation becomes increasingly pertinent. It is crucial for India, a nation that has historically provided refuge to the Dalai Lama and his followers, to respect and support his right to choose his place of rebirth, even if it is outside the confines of communist China.

The Dalai Lama's lineage is deeply rooted in Tibetan Buddhism, where the process of reincarnation is a fundamental belief. The selection of the next Dalai Lama is not merely a political decision but a spiritual one, guided by centuries-old traditions. Historically, the Dalai Lama has been a unifying figure for Tibetans, embodying their cultural and religious identity. The Chinese government's attempts to control the reincarnation process are seen by many as an effort to undermine Tibetan autonomy and spiritual freedom.

India has been a sanctuary for the Dalai Lama since 1959, when he fled Tibet following a failed uprising against Chinese rule. This act of asylum was not just a political gesture but a commitment to uphold human rights and religious freedom. By supporting the Dalai Lama's right to be reborn outside China, India would reaffirm its dedication to these principles. It would also send a powerful message to the international community about the importance of spiritual autonomy and the right to self-determination. Supporting the Dalai Lama's right to choose his place of rebirth could have significant geopolitical implications. It would likely strain India's already complex relationship with China. However, it is essential to weigh these potential diplomatic tensions against the broader ethical and moral considerations. Upholding the Dalai Lama's spiritual rights aligns with India's democratic values and its long-standing tradition of religious tolerance.

India's support for the Dalai Lama's right to be reborn outside communist China is not just about respecting an individual's spiritual journey. It is about standing up for the principles of freedom, human rights, and cultural preservation. As global citizens, we must advocate for a world where spiritual leaders can practise their beliefs without fear of political interference. India's leadership in this matter could

inspire other nations to take a stand, fostering a global environment of respect and understanding.

In conclusion, respecting the Dalai Lama's right to choose his place of rebirth is a testament to India's commitment to human rights and spiritual freedom. It is a call for India to continue its legacy of compassion and support for those who seek refuge from oppression. By doing so, India will not only honour the Dalai Lama's spiritual journey but also uphold the values that define its own identity.

## Xi unlikely to attempt Taiwan invasion during Trump second term, experts say

08 December 2024, Taipei Times

Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平) is unlikely to attempt an invasion of Taiwan during US president-elect Donald Trump's time in office, Taiwanese and foreign academics said on Friday.

Trump is set to begin his second term early next year. Xi's ambition to establish China as a "true world power" has intensified over the years, but he would not initiate an invasion of Taiwan "in the near future," as his top priority is to maintain the regime and his power, not unification, Tokyo Woman's Christian University distinguished visiting professor and contemporary Chinese politics expert Akio Takahara said.



Chinese and US flags are pictured in an arranged photograph taken on Jan. 30 last year.

Photo: Reuters

Takahara made the comment at a symposium in Taipei by National Chengchi University's Institute of International Relations to discuss the potential impact of Trump's return to the White House on Indo-Pacific countries, including Taiwan.

He highlighted Xi's shift from telling former US president Barack Obama that the Pacific Ocean is big enough for the US and China, to telling US President Joe Biden last year that the world can accommodate the two countries.

Viewing the Pacific Ocean from China's perspective, Xi sees unifying Taiwan as essential, not only as a "very nationalistic target," but also as a way to

break through the first island chain and secure an advantage in the strategic competition with the US, Takahara said.

"When Xi Jinping finds that it is better to attack Taiwan to maintain power, then I think he will attack — but that is not tomorrow, that is not next year, that is not 2027," he said, adding that the Chinese president is likely to continue his current strategy of "winning without fighting," which relies on economic and cultural infiltration in Taiwan.

If Trump does not change the US-Taiwan policy "in a big way," then Xi would most likely refrain from using military force against Taiwan during his second term, Takahara said.

"Attacking Taiwan is too risky," as such action would severely damage China's economy and "certainly undermine the source of his [Xi's] legitimacy to rule," he said.

In the event of a "no-reason invasion" by China, the US is likely to intervene with support from Japan, provided its Taiwan policy remains unchanged, he added.

Echoing Takahara, Sam Houston State University Department of Political Science associate professor Dennis Weng (翁履中) said that under the Trump administration, there would be no war or military conflicts between Taiwan and China, as Trump strongly opposes military confrontation.

"He will utilize all kinds of bargaining or all kinds of negotiations" to prevent a Taiwan-China war from happening," Weng said.

Although China is unlikely to initiate an invasion of Taiwan in the next four years, Beijing would utilize "some other tools in their toolbox," such as cutting off trade deals with Taiwan and further isolating it by "taking away" its remaining diplomatic allies, he said.

### **What Do the Latest Purges Mean for China's Military?**

07 December 2024, The Diplomat, Duncan Bartlett

The dismissal of senior commanders creates a sense of "chaos and disarray," says a leading defense expert.

Xi Jinping holds the founding father of the People's Republic of China, Mao Zedong, in high esteem. He sometimes copies Mao's style of dress and displays similar mannerisms. He has even found ways to use Mao's slogans for his own purposes.

In 1938, Mao said: "Every communist must grasp the truth; political power grows out of the barrel of a gun."

In modern China, that militant idea serves as a reminder that the authority of the supreme leader rests upon his control over the military.

In what appears to be a deliberate echo of Mao, Xi told senior ranking officers of the Chinese People's Liberation Army in June 2024: "We must make it clear that the barrels of guns must always be in the hands of those who are loyal and dependable to the [Chinese Communist] Party ... And we must make it clear that there is no place for any corrupt elements in the military."

Since then, a strident campaign to eradicate corruption has continued, leading to the removal of senior officers and political commissars.

Information that has reached the public domain suggests a systematic purge. But much remains hidden, and apparently the obfuscation is deliberate. People accused of corruption tend to disappear; their names redacted from official news sources and social media.

One concrete piece of information was announced by China's Ministry of Defense in November. It said that a senior admiral named Miao Hua has been removed from his post and placed under investigation for a "serious violation of discipline."

A purge reminds everyone in the People's Liberation Army that they must show absolute loyalty to the Communist Party, according to William Matthews, a senior research fellow on the Asia-Pacific Program at Chatham House in London.

Matthews noted in a recent article for Chatham House that Miao was a significant figure within the Central Military Commission (CMC), of which Xi is chair. As director of the CMC's Political Work Department, Miao was responsible for choosing who would fill senior positions. He was also expected to ensure ideological conformity.

"By suspending Miao, Xi has further demonstrated a willingness to remove a perceived loyalist at the highest levels of China's military to ensure compliance with his political agenda, set an example, and ensure the PLA develops in the direction he intends," wrote Matthews.

On November 27, the Financial Times also claimed that China's Defense Minister Dong Jun was being investigated on corruption charges. FT cited "current and former U.S. officials familiar with the situation" in its report. If true, it would mean that three consecutive defense ministers in China have been ensnared in corruption investigations.

At a press briefing in Beijing, however, Defense Ministry spokesman Wu Qian responded by insisting that the FT report was pure fabrication.

"The rumor-mongers are ill-intentioned. China expresses its strong dissatisfaction with such slanderous behavior," Wu said.

On December 5, Dong appeared in public in Shanghai, attending a security forum on the Gulf of Guinea. According to Chinese state media, he met with heads of foreign delegations and conveyed

China's willingness to work with the armed forces of other countries.

Helena Legarda, lead analyst of China's defense and foreign policy at the Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS) in Berlin said that it is unusual for party members who are placed under investigation for corruption to later return to their old posts.

"While the investigation might still be ongoing internally, it looks as if Dong Jun will stay on as defense minister for the time being," she told The Diplomat.

In October 2023, another Central Military Commission member, General Li Shangfu, lost his position as defense minister. In June of this year, Li and his predecessor, Wei Fenghe were dismissed from the CCP and the military on corruption charges.

In Legarda's view, these developments, along with the official confirmation that Miao Hua – who, as a member of the CMC, outranked Dong – has been suspended, indicate that the anti-corruption campaign within the PLA is ongoing and broadening.

"More officers may be removed as this continues," she told The Diplomat.

Legarda believes the military has a long-standing and severe corruption problem.

"It is no secret that the PLA has suffered from corruption for a long time. Officers were notorious for taking bribes in exchange for offering soldiers promotions up the ranks. Also, some officers have been involved in shady activities to support their private commercial activities," she explained. "That is why the initial anti-corruption campaign, which goes all the way back to 2012, initially had a fair amount of support among the public."

Such purges are a characteristic of a one-party state. However, Legarda said it is hard to tell the extent to which the anti-corruption drive is being used as cover to oust members of the PLA who are perceived as potential rivals to Xi Jinping.

Dong and Miao were both appointed to their positions by Xi himself.

Matthews from Chatham House argued that although the move against his protégés may cause Xi to lose face, loyalty and control of the military is more important to him than anything else.

Nevertheless, purges carry risks.

"In addition to the reputational costs to Xi himself as CCP and CMC chairman, whose personal appointments suggest a pattern of misjudgment, there are consequences for how the PLA is seen by potential adversaries," Matthews wrote.

Since last year, Chinese authorities have launched disciplinary proceedings against numerous senior military officials, including a former air force chief, senior commanders at the PLA's strategic missile

force, as well as officers who had worked in procurement.

Several executives at major defense contractors have also been abruptly removed as government advisers, stirring speculation over their fate.

Xi's critics say that the anti-corruption campaign fails to address core issues. By focusing on individual purges, rather than institutional reform, it has created a cycle of high-profile dismissals that have undermined trust between the military and government.

At an international level, questions are being asked about how this struggle will affect the PLA's combat capability.

"These purges signal chaos and disarray," said Legarda.

"That can have an impact on the image of the PLA and the perception of China's willingness to use force. If Xi Jinping keeps having to replace top leaders because they are corrupt, how is he or other party leaders going to trust generals when they say they are ready to run a successful military campaign against Taiwan, or engage in conflict in the South China Sea?"

In Legarda's view, troubles within the military could reduce the appetite for conflict – at least in the short term. Xi's urgent mission now is to fill the top ranks of the PLA with officers whom he trusts to "fight and win wars" upon his command.

## **What China's critical mineral ban means for the US**

06 December 2024, Technology Review, James Temple

The nation has signaled it's prepared to hit back harder still, in ways that could inflict serious economic pain on its biggest economic rival.

This week, China banned exports of several critical minerals to the US, marking the latest move in an escalating series of tit-for-tat trade restrictions between the world's two largest economies.

In explicitly cutting off, rather than merely restricting, materials of strategic importance to the semiconductor, defense, and electric vehicle sectors, China has clearly crossed a new line in the long-simmering trade war.

At the same time, it selected minerals that won't cripple any industries—which leaves China plenty of ammunition to inflict greater economic pain in response to any further trade restrictions that the incoming Trump administration may impose.

The president-elect recently pledged to impose an additional 10% tariff on all Chinese goods, and he floated tariff rates as high as 60% to 100% during his campaign. But China, which dominates the supply chains for numerous critical minerals essential

to high-tech sectors, seems to be telegraphing that it's prepared to hit back hard.

"It's a sign of what China is capable of," says Gracelin Baskaran, director of the Critical Minerals Security Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a bipartisan research nonprofit in Washington, DC. "Shots have been fired."

What drove the decision?

China's announcement directly followed the Biden administration's decision to further restrict exports of chips and other technologies that could help China develop advanced semiconductors used in cutting-edge weapon systems, artificial intelligence, and other applications.

Throughout his presidency, Biden has enacted a series of increasingly aggressive export controls aimed at curbing China's military strength, technological development, and growing economic power. But the latest clampdown crossed a "clear line in the sand for China," by threatening its ability to protect national security or shift toward production of more advanced technologies, says Cory Combs, associate director at Trivium China, a research firm.

"It is very much indicative of where Beijing feels its interests lie," he says.

What exactly did China ban?

In response to the US's new chip export restrictions, China immediately banned exports of gallium, germanium, antimony, and so called "superhard materials" used heavily in manufacturing, arguing that they have both military and civilian applications, according to the New York Times. China had already placed limits on the sale of most of these goods to the US.

The nation said it may also further restrict sales of graphite, which makes up most of the material in the lithium-ion battery anodes used in electric vehicles, grid storage plants, and consumer electronics.

What will the bans do?

Experts say, for the most part, the bans won't have major economic impacts. This is in part because China already restricted exports of these minerals months ago, and also because they are mostly used for niche categories within the semiconductor industry. US imports of these materials from China have already fallen as US companies figured out new sources or substitutes for the materials.

But a recent US Geological Survey study found that outright bans on gallium and germanium by China could cut US gross domestic product by \$3.4 billion. In addition, these are materials that US politicians will certainly take note of, because they "touch on many forms of security: economic, energy, and defense," Baskaran says.

Antimony, for example, is used in "armor-piercing ammunition, night-vision goggles, infrared sensors,

bullets, and precision optics," Baskaran and a colleague noted in a recent essay.

Companies rely on gallium to produce a variety of military and electronics components, including satellite systems, power converters, LEDs, and the high-powered chips used in electric vehicles. Germanium is used in fiber optics, infrared optics, and solar cells.

Before it restricted the flow of these materials, China accounted for more than half of US imports of gallium and germanium, according to the US Geological Survey. Together, China and Russia control 50% of the worldwide reserves of antimony.

How does it affect climate tech?

Any tightened restrictions on graphite could have a pronounced economic impact on US battery and EV makers, in part because there are so few other sources for it. China controls about 80% of graphite output from mines and processes around 70% of the material, according to the International Energy Agency.

"It would be very significant for batteries," says Seaver Wang, co-director of the climate and energy team at the Breakthrough Institute, where his research is focused on minerals and manufacturing supply chains. "By weight, you need way more graphite per terawatt hour than nickel, cobalt, or lithium. And the US has essentially no operating production."

Advertisement

Anything that pushes up the costs of EVs threatens to slow the shift away from gas-guzzlers in the US, as their lofty price tags remain one of the biggest hurdles for many consumers.

How does this impact China's economy?

There are real economic risks in China's decision to cut off the sale of materials it dominates, as it creates incentives for US companies to seek out new sources around the world, switch to substitute materials, and work to develop more domestic supplies where geology allows.

"The challenge China faces is that most of its techniques to increase pain by disrupting supply chains would also impact China, which itself is connected to these supply chains," says Chris Miller, a professor at Tufts University and author of *Chip War: The Fight for the World's Most Critical Technology*.

Notably, the latest announcement could compel US companies to develop their own sources of gallium and germanium, which can be extracted as by-products of zinc and aluminum mining. There are a number of zinc mines in Alaska and Tennessee, and limited extraction of bauxite, which produces aluminum, in Arkansas, Alabama, and Georgia.

Gallium can also be recycled from numerous electronics, providing another potential domestic path for US companies, Combs notes.

The US has already taken steps to counter China's dominance over the raw ingredients of essential industries, including by issuing a \$150 million loan to an Australian company, Syrah Resources, to accelerate the development of graphite mining in Mozambique.

In addition, the mining company Perpetua Resources has proposed reopening a gold mine near Yellow Pine, Idaho, in part to extract antimony trisulfide for use in military applications. The US Department of Defense has provided tens of millions of dollars to help the company conduct environmental studies, though it will still take years for the mine to come online, noted Baskaran and her colleague.

Wang says that China's ban might prove "shortsighted," as any success in diversifying these global supply chains will weaken the nation's grip in the areas it now dominates.

What happens next?

The US is also likely to pay very high economic costs in an escalating trade war with China.

Should the nation decide to enact even stricter trade restrictions, Combs says China could opt to inflict greater economic pain on the US through a variety of means. These could include further restricting or fully banning graphite, as well other crucial battery materials like lithium; cutting off supplies of tungsten, which is used heavily in the aerospace, military, and nuclear power sectors; and halting the sale of copper, which is used in power transmission lines, solar panels, wind turbines, EVs, and many other products.

China may also decide to take further steps to prevent US firms from selling their goods into the massive market of Chinese consumers and industries, Miller adds. Or it might respond to stricter export restrictions by turning to the US's economic rivals for advanced technologies.

In the end, it's not clear either nation wins in a protracted and increasingly combative trade war. But it's also not apparent that mutually assured economic damage will prove to be an effective deterrent. Indeed, China may well feel the need to impose stricter measures in the coming months or years, as there are few signs that President-elect Trump intends to tone down his hawkish stance toward China.

"It's hard to see a Trump 2.0 de-escalating with China," Baskaran says. "We're on a one-way trajectory toward continued escalation; the question is the pace and the form. It's not really an 'if' question."

## China's Rules through Ideologically Indoctrinating the Youth

06 December 2024, RTV

Education is often viewed as the bedrock of critical thinking and intellectual freedom. Yet, in China, schools and universities serve a different purpose: indoctrination into the ideology of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). From the earliest stages of education to the halls of higher learning, the Chinese education system has been understood to systematically mould students to align with state narratives, enabling compliance and discouraging dissent.

In China, the education system is weaponized by the CCP to inculcate unwavering loyalty to its ideology. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Party's narratives about Tibet, Xinjiang, and Taiwan. Through manipulating curriculums and state-controlled pedagogy, Chinese schools and universities have transformed classrooms into arenas of political indoctrination, aiming to distort histories and suppress alternative perspectives.

This systematic indoctrination has not only entrenched authoritarian control but has also perpetuated harmful stereotypes and fuelled divisions that has hindered China's relationship with the international community.

The CCP's Narratives: A Manufactured Reality

From the earliest stages of education, Chinese students are taught that Tibet and Xinjiang are 'inseparable parts' of China and that Taiwan's sovereignty is non-negotiable. School textbooks have known to whitewash histories of these regions, portraying them as historically Chinese territories and erasing the cultural and political autonomy they once held.

The CCP's narrative on Tibet emphasizes its "peaceful liberation" in 1951, a euphemism for military invasion. Students are taught that Tibet continues to be backward, yet a feudal society rescued by Chinese intervention. The realities of Tibetan resistance, the destruction of monasteries, and the suppression of Tibetan Buddhism are unsurprisingly absent from these discourses. By presenting Tibet as a grateful beneficiary of Chinese governance, the CCP's projection has attempted to reinforce its legitimacy while silencing the Tibetan struggle for self-determination.

Similarly, in the case of Xinjiang, elementary school textbooks have emphasized economic development and ethnic harmony, downplaying the harsh realities of mass detentions, cultural erosion, and systemic repression faced by the Uyghur population. These curriculums have projected narratives emphasising how Uyghurs have benefited from Beijing's policies, glossing over their lived experiences of



surveillance and forced assimilation. Students are conditioned to see the CCP's actions in Xinjiang as necessary measures to combat 'extremism', showcasing a nationalistic justification for human rights abuses.

#### The Limits of a Controlled Narrative

The CCP's propaganda on Tibet, Xinjiang, and Taiwan, however also does more than distort history. It has for decades bred prejudice and suppressed critical inquiry, especially when it comes to the human rights abuses the Party has conducted in these regions. By teaching students to view these regions through the lens of state ideology, the education system has entrenched harmful stereotypes and perpetuates systemic inequality.

For instance, Chinese students are been conditioned to see Tibetans and Uyghurs as 'ungrateful' or 'backward' for resisting assimilation, reinforcing societal discrimination against these groups. Similarly, the vilification of Taiwan has bred undeniable hostility that has severely undermined the possibility of peaceful cross-strait dialogue.

However, perhaps the most concerning aspect of the CCP's educational indoctrination is its suppression of dissent. Schools and universities have been equipped with surveillance systems to monitor student behaviour, and classmates are encouraged to report those who express 'unpatriotic' views, similar to practices that were exercised during the fateful 'Cultural Revolution'. This has thus created an atmosphere of fear and conformity, where self-censorship has unfortunately become the norm.

The recent crackdown on students involved in labour movements and human rights advocacy illustrates the lengths to which the Party is prepared to go to silence dissent. These students, who dared to apply the Marxist principles they were taught to contemporary labour struggles, were met with arrests and expulsions, demonstrating the CCP's hypocrisy in promoting ideology only when it serves its own interests.

The indoctrination of Chinese students has far-reaching consequences beyond China's borders. As these individuals enter global academic and professional spaces, they will carry with them a worldview shaped by CCP propaganda and Party indoctrination of views. This complicates international dialogue on human rights, as many are unwilling, or unable, to critically engage with the realities of Tibet, Xinjiang, and Taiwan.

Moreover, the CCP's education model serves as a blueprint for authoritarian regimes worldwide, demonstrating how control over education can be weaponized to sustain power and suppress dissent. The global community must recognize this and push for academic freedom and truthful education as fundamental human rights, for if not, then it must

prepare to decimate the state-propaganda machinery run by the Party and its Supremo, Xi Jinping.

#### India's North East & Indo-Pacific Partnerships

05 December 2024, The Shillong Times

Within a short span of time there have been two engagements on the Indo-Pacific strategic alliance in Meghalaya. The first was initiated by the American Consulate Kolkata in collaboration with Observer Research Foundation. This week the UK High Commissioner to India, Lindy Cameron and her colleague Andrew Fleming, British Deputy High Commissioner, Kolkata. It may be mentioned that the Indo-Pacific strategic alliance is led by the US and includes Australia, Japan, the Philippines, South Korea, and Thailand. While the newly elected US President Donald Trump and outgoing President Joe Biden disagree on most issues, one area of consensus is the Indo-Pacific. During Trump's first term in office, in 2019 he and his team published the Indo-Pacific Strategy, which sought to maintain a "free and open" region primarily through strengthening alliances and partnerships to counter China. When Biden entered office in 2021, he doubled down on his predecessor's approach. President Trump is known to be unpredictable with his international relations and is known to be transactional more than pragmatic and far-sighted. There were times he praised the Indo-Pacific allies and times when he tried strong-arm tactics with them but as far as the Indo-Pacific alliance is concerned he was consistent in his approach of treading with enhanced diplomatic sensitivities. Kamala Harris, the Democrat candidate who lost to Donald Trump in the just concluded US elections during her campaign emphasized continuity with the Biden administration's Indo-Pacific strategy.

It was Late Abe Shinzo the former prime minister of Japan who probably convinced Trump to shift from an Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific focus, which would include India and the Indian Ocean Region as part of a collective strategy to counter China. Japan was also an advocate for reviving the Quad, a diplomatic partnership between Australia, India, Japan and the United States with the commitment to support an open, stable, prosperous, inclusive and resilient Indo-Pacific. Japan made these moves because, during Trump's tenure, it worried about its years-long standoff over the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea (also claimed by China, which calls them the Diaoyu Islands). Japan was also concerned about North Korea, which in 2017 fired ballistic missiles over its territory. Since Biden came to office, Japan has shifted its attention farther south to the Taiwan Strait. Japan believes that a conflict there could impact the security of its southwestern Ryukyu Island

chain. The Indo-Pacific Strategic Alliance much like the Quad is seen as a mechanism for balancing China's influence in the region, although its members have stressed that it is not a military alliance and is open to other countries who share their values and interests. It is interesting why India's North East has become the focal point here. True the North East shares 1395 kilometres with China in the North and the latter has had an abiding interest in Arunachal Pradesh by refusing to issue visas to residents of that state because it claims Arunachal Pradesh is part of South Tibet. In fact China's overarching influence in the Indo-Pacific region and in recent times its attempts to woo countries inimical to India are what makes the Indo-Pacific Strategic Alliance an important diplomatic initiative.

### China's assimilationist tactic towards Tibetan children (IANS Analysis)

04 December 2024, CTA

Tibet has been under Chinese control since 1951, a situation often described by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as "liberation". This annexation has not only involved territorial claims but has also encompassed significant social, economic, and cultural dimensions.

The CCP's approach to Tibet serves as a revealing example of its broader governance strategies towards officially recognised ethnic and religious minorities within China. For over seven decades, the treatment of Tibetans reflects the complexities of China's deep state and its assimilationist policies, which have profoundly affected Tibetan identity and autonomy.

Tibetans, who represent approximately 90.48 per cent of the population in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), are distinguished by their unique cultural and religious practices. Since the annexation, China has consistently asserted that Tibet is an "integral part" of its territory and has implemented various policies aimed at assimilating the Tibetan population. [Click here to read more.](#)

### Xi's "China Dream" Proves a Hard Sell

04 December 2024, Asia Society Policy Institute

Xi's "China Dream" Proves a Hard Sell



Greg Baker/AFP via Getty Images

December 4th, 2024

#### Key Findings

- Over the past two years, growing evidence suggests that increasing numbers of Chinese people are not buying Xi Jinping's "China Dream" and are seeking brighter futures elsewhere.
- The number of people emigrating or seeking asylum overseas has spiked under Xi, as has the amount of private capital leaving China.
- Concerns about a lack of opportunities in a time of economic decline, restrictions on political expression, the party's more aggressive attempts at coercion, erosion of trust in the party, and pessimism about the future have contributed to the exodus of people and capital.
- More Chinese people now feel that the country is moving in the wrong direction and the potential for a course change is slim and are "voting with their feet."

When Xi Jinping first assumed leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) a decade ago, he tried selling the "China Dream" – a vision of the country reclaiming its rightful place in history as the world's greatest power – but today, an increasing number of Chinese people no longer buy it. Since the end of strict zero-COVID policies in late 2022, the number of Chinese people leaving the country has rapidly climbed, as has the amount of private capital exiting through both legal and illegal means. A new social discourse is now in vogue: "runxue" – which is code for "to run away."

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the number of Chinese citizens seeking political asylum overseas climbed to 120,000 in 2023, a more than twelvefold increase since the time of Xi's predecessor, Hu Jintao. In 2023, the U.S. Border Patrol registered 24,314 Chinese citizens illegally entering through southern California and Texas, a number that climbed to 35,399 in the first seven months of 2024. These illegal immigrants took the "walking route": first entering Ecuador visa-free (until the privilege was recently rescinded), then navigating treacherous paths, including the notorious

Darien Gap, through half a dozen Central American countries before entering the United States through Mexico. These numbers represent a substantial increase from the meager 1,500 illegal entries during the Hu era.

Likewise, studies suggest that since the pandemic, the amount of private capital leaving China through legal and illegal means has risen significantly, to a staggering \$738 billion in the third quarter of 2022. Despite strict capital controls, Chinese money has purchased luxury properties in Singapore, Vancouver, and London. Some of these financial outflows are facilitated by Chinese underground bankers and intermediated through criminal syndicates in the United States that control large sums of cash.

What explains the exodus of people and capital from China? What does it mean for Xi Jinping's regime? In general, citizens of autocratic countries, such as Iran and Russia, have little faith in their government's ability to protect their personal safety or private property. China has proven an exception to this rule since the economic reforms of the late 1970s. But things are changing.

Despite growing income inequality, many Chinese citizens have experienced rising prosperity since the early 1980s. The transformative changes in the post-Mao era enabled them to enjoy personal freedoms and economic opportunities unimaginable a generation prior. Growth-minded local officials became complicit in rule evasions that allowed private businesses to flourish in spite of the lack of protection for private property rights. Deng Xiaoping's dictum "to get rich is glorious" removed the stigma associated with private wealth accumulation. CCP cadres were incentivized to prioritize GDP growth above all else. Party officials and government bureaucrats were given a stake in economic growth and benefited professionally – and often personally – from rising prosperity. Corruption was rife, and distribution could be unequal, but everyone, from rural migrants to the urban middle class to privileged elites, got a slice of the growing economic pie.

Prior to Xi's reign, Chinese citizens may not have enjoyed political liberty, but the system allowed them to express their economic grievances, even if they were not always satisfactorily addressed. Protests about livelihood issues – wage arrears, land grabs, housing demolitions, and homeowners' complaints – were commonplace and largely tolerated as long as they were small in scale and geographically isolated. Until Xi tightened online censorship, netizens enjoyed a measure of freedom to roam within the Great Firewall and express their views on a wide range of social issues.

However, much has changed since Xi's ascent to power in 2013, and especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. As I argue in the concluding chapter of my 2022 book, *Outsourcing Repression*, the government regularly engaged, since Mao's era, nonstate actors such as trusted local community members to enforce compliance and mobilize citizens for state objectives. This has now given way to direct coercion under Xi. The past decade has seen widespread crackdowns on civil society organizations, activists apprehended, and tighter security measures introduced not only in Hong Kong and Xinjiang but broadly across Chinese society. Accordingly, the social compliance to everyday repression exercised by trusted nonstate actors has been replaced by various forms of resistance.

These dynamics played out during the two-year zero-COVID lockdown and its aftermath. As I wrote in *Foreign Affairs* in January 2023, though stringent, the lockdown policies executed by trusted community leaders and neighborhood committees yielded widespread compliance and societal acceptance in the first eighteen months. When the virus mutated to the rapidly transmissible Delta variant, the grassroots community could no longer cope with delivering essential items to residents, and food shortages occurred in Shanghai and elsewhere. In summer 2022, some people began to vent their anger online. The resistance spread to retail owners whose incomes were affected by the lockdown. The Urumqi fire that killed scores of people further ignited the "White Paper" protests on elite campuses and in major cities. These protests, together with the erosion of government income from lockdown measures, quickly led to the abrupt abandonment of the zero-COVID policy.

After the pandemic, economic decline and diminishing political space resulted in changes to the social contract. The implicit pact between the party-state and its people has long demanded political acquiescence and tolerance of income inequality in exchange for economic prosperity. As long as family incomes grew, demands for political rights were circumscribed, and tolerance for inequality remained high. However, once income growth stagnated, people began to question the system and, in particular, why certain groups were getting ahead and claiming a disproportionately larger share of the pie. In a system where people cannot effectively voice their grievances without inviting trouble, those who have the means have decided to "vote with their feet." Post-pandemic, those who lack the means to leave have opted to "lie flat" (*tangping*). Urbanites quit stressful jobs to move to the countryside, and increasing numbers of young people seek secure government posts and an "iron rice bowl" – a term indicating a career with guaranteed job security.

Critically, more people in China are pessimistic about the future. The current economic decline does not appear cyclical, and altering the Chinese economy's trajectory will require fundamental changes that better allocate resources and reward effort. The abolition of presidential term limits in 2018 signaled to many Chinese people that the country was moving in the wrong direction. Worse still, the protracted zero-COVID lockdown, as well as the excess and preventable deaths from the policy's abrupt abandonment, convinced many that they could no longer trust the CCP to protect their lives and private property. Consequently, more people have given up on the China Dream, and many of them are heading for the exits.

### **To defend Taiwan tomorrow, we must prepare to sanction China today**

03 December 2024, The Hill, Max Meizlish and Elaine Dezenski

Taiwan is reportedly considering a \$15 billion military package as an overture to President-elect Donald Trump. This comes just as the island nation agreed to spend over \$2 billion in American weapons purchases next year. While such agreements may serve to warm relations with an incoming Trump administration and strengthen Taiwan's military against an increasingly belligerent China, they will do little to address Beijing's biggest vulnerability in a potential conflict with Taiwan — its "soft economic underbelly."

This provides Trump a historic opportunity to not just support Taiwan militarily, but to capitalize on the deepening cracks in China's economy that make it vulnerable to powerful, proactively developed American economic statecraft.

Slow growth, an unraveling real estate market, significant youth unemployment and plummeting foreign direct investment reveal deep vulnerabilities that threaten the Chinese Communist Party. These economic fissures give the United States and its allies a strategic opportunity: by publicly outlining the severe sanctions, export controls and investment restrictions China would face if it invades Taiwan, we can slow the pace of Chinese hostilities toward Taiwan — or even prevent them altogether. However, to ensure this approach succeeds, we must learn from recent history and act before it's too late.

The war in Ukraine serves as a stark reminder of the costs of delayed action. In the aftermath of Russia's invasion more than two-and-a-half years ago, the United States and a coalition of allied governments united to impose significant sanctions on Moscow. Since then, the United States, European Union,

United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, Japan and others have collectively imposed nearly 20,000 sanctions on Russia. Yet, these measures were — and continue to be — too late to deter aggression.

It didn't have to unfold this way.

Following Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, the international community could have publicly committed to impose significantly more drastic economic measures on Russia if it made further incursions into Ukrainian territory. By clearly outlining the severe economic consequences of further aggression, the deterrent effect might have altered the Kremlin's calculus.

Deterrence relies on the credible threat of significant repercussions, and pre-announced sanctions could have increased the perceived costs of invasion beyond acceptable levels for Russia. Nearly a decade later, approximately 1 million people have been killed or injured in the Russia-Ukraine war — and the conflict rages on. We must learn from that grave oversight and proactively plan to sanction key sectors of the Chinese economy if China invades Taiwan.

To the detriment of our national security, targets of economic statecraft are often identified only after a conflict has erupted. This reactive approach places incredible pressure on already under-resourced federal agencies responsible for executing this critical function. Planning for these eventualities must be done as early as possible. Our military forces regularly wargame scenarios for potential conflict and identify targets of attack; our economic security apparatus should do the same.

Some of these targets should be publicly identified to exert pressure on Beijing. Specific industries and major firms central to the Chinese Communist Party's control can be spotlighted now, overtly increasing the potential cost of any action China may take against Taiwan. Third-country firms operating in China will also take note. The threat of possible secondary sanctions may compel them to reconsider doing business as usual if the United States communicates such intentions before a conflict arises. This proactive approach would represent a profound shift in our application of economic statecraft.

Legislation like the Sanctions Targeting Aggressors of Neighboring Democracies (STAND) with Taiwan Act is a significant step in the right direction. By proposing substantial sanctions on China in the event of a military invasion of Taiwan, the STAND Act sends a clear and credible message. It lays the groundwork for a deterrent strategy that could dissuade Beijing from taking aggressive actions by making the consequences unmistakably clear.

Historically, we have lacked a coherent strategy for deploying the disparate set of economic tools at our

disposal. More critically, our government has not fully embraced economic statecraft as an effective deterrent. Many question the effectiveness of sanctions, but few consider how they could be more impactful if target states and market actors understood the conditions under which sanctions would be imposed before a conflict begins. Publicly stating these conditions and, importantly, preparing for the possibility that they are met should at the very least demonstrate a credible threat to our adversaries and prompt considerable market derisking from the private sector.

For an adversary like China, which faces significant economic headwinds, this is precisely the path the United States should pursue. While imposing severe sanctions on China would have substantial repercussions for the United States and its allies given the deep interconnections in global supply chains and trade, these costs may be a necessary price to prevent a catastrophic conflict over Taiwan. Such a conflict could destabilize the entire Indo-Pacific region and disrupt global markets far more severely than any sanctions regime.

We must also anticipate and prepare for potential countermeasures from China, such as restricting access to critical rare earth minerals or disrupting global supply chains. By investing in alternative sources, building strategic reserves, and ally-shoring with international partners to enhance economic resilience, we can reduce our vulnerability and demonstrate our readiness to withstand retaliatory actions.

While it's true that sanctions alone may not always compel an aggressor to change course, they can strain a nation's economy and limit its ability to sustain prolonged conflict. In China's case, where economic stability is paramount for the regime's domestic legitimacy, the threat of substantial sanctions could serve as a powerful deterrent and increase the likelihood that cooler heads will prevail within the Chinese Communist Party leadership.

Alongside economic sanctions, the United States should continue to increase economic support for Taiwan, enhance our military presence in the region, and engage in diplomatic efforts to create a multifaceted deterrent. By taking these proactive steps, we can send an unequivocal message to Beijing: Aggression against Taiwan will come at an unbearable cost.

### **Trump's tariff war 2.0 looms. And China isn't just watching**

01 December 2024, Deccan Herald

President-elect Donald Trump's announcement last week to impose tariffs on Mexico, Canada, and China has rattled the countries concerned as well as

the global markets. Mexico has already spoken about retaliatory tariffs. However, China's response is going to be more concerted: defy and increase costs for the US, divide Trump's camp, diversify trade towards the Global South, build a "united front" with like-minded countries, make tactical concessions to neighbours on core interests, or even tempt a grand bargain with Trump.

On November 25, Trump stated that he will impose 25% taxes on products from Mexico and Canada, and an additional 10% tariffs on goods from China as his first measure after taking over as the President in January. This is in addition to the 60% tariffs on all goods from China that Trump mentioned in his election campaign.

This is a significant development as these three countries are the largest exporters to the US with Mexican exports to the US in 2023 touching \$480 billion, Canadian \$440 billion while that of the Chinese more than \$500 billion. Trump also linked this issue to any progress on curbing the smuggling of fentanyl drug from China, and immigrants. Fentanyl kills over 100,000 Americans every year.

One of the friction points is trade surpluses. The US had trade surpluses against China only in 1979, when a trade agreement was signed between the two countries, till 1981, with a balance of nearly \$4 billion. However, since 1982, when the third communique was signed between the two countries, China had an uninterrupted surplus posted against the US – cumulatively to a whopping figure of nearly \$7 trillion.

China's trade surpluses with the US turned from double figures to triple figures consistently since China joined the World Trade Organisation after the then Clinton Administration extended support. China consistently denied access to many of its domestic segments not only to the US and European Union members but also to Indian pharma and software sectors.

China is no stranger to tariff increases on its exports. Trump, during his first term, imposed tariffs ranging up to 25% since 2018 on Chinese goods worth \$360 billion. The Biden Administration continued tariffs on China, in addition to announcing 100% tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles. China retaliated by imposing tariffs on US goods like soya bean, pork, and other products. However, according to a study conducted by Fudan University researchers at Shanghai, it damaged China's economy more than that of the US. China's manufacturing export profits will be drastically curtailed. Its economic growth forecasts have been lowered to nearly 3%. The country is already facing headwinds due to growing unemployment, sluggish domestic consumption, local debt, real estate bust, and low manufacturing output.



While China's immediate response to the tariff hike has been mild and defensive, it is likely to adopt a multi-pronged approach to address the looming trade war. President Xi Jinping issued "red lines" to President Joe Biden on the sidelines of the 31st Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting at Lima on November 16, emphasising on China's path of development. China's commerce ministry released a slew of measures five days before the new tariff announcement to help the country's export sector including credit insurance coverage, financial support, and enhanced cross-border e-trade.

China is likely to diversify trade towards the Global South. In September, China organised the Forum on China Africa Cooperation by inviting leaders from 51 countries. Today, it is Africa's largest trading partner (\$282 billion). At the meeting, China also signed deals to export EVs and solar panels to Africa. While China is pitching Africa against the US, Beijing is also aware that 22 African countries are in debt to China. Likewise, China's trade with South America increased to \$489 billion.

Expecting a hardline posture from Trump, China is making tactical adjustments with major powers in Asia, notably India, Japan, Indonesia, and Vietnam. Even before the US elections, on October 23, Xi met Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia. Two days earlier, China agreed to disengage troops at Depsang Plains and Demchok. Xi also met Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba on November 15 on the margins of the APEC meeting in Lima. On October 22, China promised to withdraw the drifting buoys at Japanese-administered Senkaku islands.

Apart from these softening approaches, a pragmatic faction in the Communist Party of China may also make a grand bargain with Trump. They suggest that entering into business deals with Trump can help overcome trade frictions, as China did in his first term with \$250 billion in offers. Meanwhile, there are others who believe that Premier Li Qiang's closeness to Elon Musk and Musk's businesses in Shanghai can be leveraged.

### **Will Tibetans be led by a Reincarnated Dalai Lama, or One Picked by China?**

01 December 2024, Economy Next

Chemi Lhamo, Campaign Director of Free Tibet would like to see more international support for preserving the Tibetan way of life and Dharma.

Citing The Resolve Tibet Act, which US President Joe Biden signed into law in June this year, Ms Lhamo added that she was optimistic that European countries that constantly speak on human rights would not hesitate to pass similar legislation in support of Tibet.

Tibet has been under the control of China since 1951, with a government in exile, also known as the Central Tibetan Administration being set up in neighbouring India, by the 14th Dalai Lama following the Lhasa uprising of 1959.

Though he divested himself of all political authority in 2011, the Dalai Lama, who turned 89 this year, continues to be the spiritual head of Tibetans, who consider him the living incarnation of the Buddha. The search for a new Dalai Lama begins when he passes away, by senior disciples who look for visions and signs to identify the successor.

China meanwhile, insists it has the right to pick the next Dalai Lama.

Apart from that, there is the contentious issue of what's referred to as 'residential schools' and described by the UN as a "compulsory education curriculum in the Mandarin Chinese language, or Putonghua, with no access to traditional or culturally-relevant learning." But China disagrees. They claim it is preparing Tibetan children for a future where the language of communication will be Mandarin.

Speaking at a web talk organised by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation South Asia, on November 20, 2024, Ms Lhamo pointed out that reincarnation and religion are personal issues and 'no other external entity, China in this case, has the right or in fact to interfere with the process.' Even as refugees, Tibetans enjoy 'democracy without borders' and she is confident that their culture and Dharma will stand the test of time.

The web talk 'The Future of Tibetan Leadership' was moderated by Dr Anna Sawerthal, Editor of Der Standard, Austria and included the Ven Geshe Lakhdor, Director, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamshala, Professor Anand Kumar, President of the India-Tibet Friendship Society and Tenzin Desal, Senior Research Fellow at the Tibet Policy Institute as panellists.

Reincarnation, says Ven Geshe Lakhdor, is the root of Buddhist teaching, it is not blind faith. The China policy is 'short-sighted,' he adds, alleging that it is an attempt to destroy Tibet's identity.

When the Dalai Lama divested himself of the political aspect of things, it was to prepare Tibetans to function as though he was already gone, explained Ven Geshe Lakhdor, adding it was the Dalai Lama's wish that Tibet should not be led by a religious figure. The Dalai Lama also believes that reposing too much power in one individual is risky. In that context, Ven Geshe Lakhdor hopes for better political awareness among Tibetans.

If they are to unite against Chinese influence, they must also shed their regional and tribal differences, Ven Geshe Lakhdor opines. In a digital world it is not difficult to bring people together, he says, pointing

out that staying united is the key to outlasting dictatorial systems built on oppression.

Indians, says Anand Kumar, are generally supportive of Tibetans, but there are concerns about a post-Dalai Lama scenario. Would India, which has taken a middle path continue in the same vein? Could India successfully facilitate a smooth transition, he asks.

He also points to the possibility of differences of opinions among Tibetans themselves; those living in Tibet may have different aspirations from those in exile, and again, Tibetans residing in India might think differently to those in Europe and the USA. A 'plurality of perspectives and clear lines of communication among Tibetans in exile,' is important, he says.

Meanwhile, Tenzin Desal explains that China is markedly visible in the everyday lives of Tibetans through infrastructure projects and promoting the idea that Tibet is a part of China.

However, the Dalai Lama has created the institutional framework for open discussion both within and outside Tibet on the devolution of power and the future of Tibet. An important feature is that those within and outside Tibet converse with each other, and the integrity of purpose of those in exile has never been questioned by Tibetans living in Tibet.

Addressing the web talk, the current political leader of the executive branch (Kashag) of the CTA, Sikyong Penpa Tsering said reincarnation is unique to Tibetan Buddhism and religious activities are observed as enshrined by the Dalai Lama. While encouraged by the support of the USA, they were hopeful that more countries would endorse their cause. The Dalai Lama, had, in September 2011 been emphatic that no government or individual could interfere in Tibetan affairs.

In a video message, Sandra Weeser, Member of the Bundestag reiterated that while the international community advocates for the rights of Tibetans, it must also be vigilant that the process of transition is free from external forces.

## November

### China leverages buddhist diplomacy to counter negative global perceptions?

29 November 2024, Daily Mirror

China's use of Buddhism in diplomacy is a key element of its foreign policy, particularly under Xi Jinping. The Chinese government leverages Buddhism, a shared cultural heritage in Asia, to enhance its soft power and strengthen ties with neighbouring countries, particularly those with Buddhist populations. This approach is part of

China's broader Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), designed to foster socio-cultural relationships and promote peaceful cooperation.

Although China is often perceived as an atheist regime with limited space for religious freedom—especially given the destruction of monasteries during the Cultural Revolution—it has systematically re-framed Buddhism as both a local and ancient religion of China. This shift in perception serves multiple purposes: it counteracts the spread of Christianity with its Western associations, provides an alternative to growing domestic materialism, and offers a diplomatic link to countries with significant Buddhist populations or Buddhist-leaning philosophies.

Buddhism has proven to be an effective tool in promoting China's peaceful image, particularly with its immediate neighbors, many of which have Buddhist populations or Confucian teachings. At the forefront of this effort, China has sought to reshape its global image, distancing itself from the label of a revisionist power that poses a threat to international peace and security. Cultural exchanges and events like the World Buddhist Forum bring together Buddhist leaders and scholars from around the world to discuss shared values, promote peace, and foster goodwill. In addition, China has invested in renovating and building Buddhist temples and monasteries across various countries, aiming to project itself as a peaceful, culturally rich nation.

China's Buddhist diplomacy is heavily coordinated by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC). Established in 1954, the CPAFFC plays a central role in promoting mutual understanding between China and other nations. The organization arranges cultural and religious exchanges, including those focused on Buddhism, to enhance international cooperation and peace. However, while the CPAFFC operates in a seemingly independent manner, it is deeply connected to China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and answers directly to the State Council. This connection to the Chinese Communist Party makes it an important tool in China's broader foreign policy strategy.

The CPAFFC actively works to influence both governmental and non-governmental organizations through Buddhist diplomacy. By hosting Buddhist conferences, cultural tours, and academic dialogues on Buddhist philosophy, the organization seeks to shape global perceptions of China as a custodian of Buddhist heritage. Yet, its activities have raised concerns about China's broader soft power agenda. Critics argue that the CPAFFC uses Buddhist diplomacy to exert influence over sub-national governments and local political leaders, as

demonstrated by its involvement in the World Buddhist Forum and other international events.

In 2023, Yang Wanming was appointed president of the CPAFFC, signaling Beijing's continued efforts to strengthen ties with regions like Latin America, where China is the second-largest trading partner after the U.S. These efforts have been met with suspicion from the West. In 2020, the U.S. State Department discontinued its participation in the US-China Governors Forum, citing concerns that the CPAFFC was attempting to influence state and local leaders. In 2022, the U.S. National Counterintelligence and Security Center issued a warning about the CPAFFC's activities, describing it as a tool for co-opting subnational governments and pressing China's geopolitical agenda.

The global promotion of Buddhism as a form of soft power by China is unprecedented in the modern world. While Beijing has become increasingly assertive in territorial disputes and has triggered multiple standoffs with its neighbors, it also recognizes the need to address the fears surrounding its rapid rise. In this context, Buddhist diplomacy serves as a counterbalance to the aggressive image China has cultivated through its territorial claims and other actions. Beijing believes that by emphasizing shared cultural and spiritual ties, it can allay the concerns of its neighbors, particularly in Southeast Asia, where the Belt and Road Initiative has sparked skepticism and resistance.

Xi Jinping has been at the forefront of this initiative, directing more resources into Buddhism as part of China's political and economic strategy. His 2014 speech at UNESCO emphasized Buddhism's integration into Chinese culture, referring to it as "Buddhism with Chinese characteristics." Xi's vision reflects China's historical self-image as the "Middle Kingdom," with surrounding countries falling within its cultural orbit. Under his leadership, China has worked to portray Buddhism not only as a local tradition but as a key component of China's global soft power.

However, this outward projection of Buddhist diplomacy is not without contradiction. While China promotes its version of Buddhism globally, it continues to suppress religious freedoms domestically, particularly in Tibet, where protests and self-immolations have been met with harsh repression. The government's promotion of Buddhism as a state tool also seeks to weaken the Tibetan independence movement, which Beijing labels as "spiritist."

In addition to its Buddhist diplomacy, China has implemented strict religious policies domestically. The Patriotic Education Law, enacted in 2024, mandates that religious groups—including Buddhist institutions—promote loyalty to the Communist Party. This law

requires religious leaders and followers to align their practices with socialist values and includes provisions for increasing state control over religious activities. Tibetan Buddhists, Christians, and Muslims face growing restrictions, with reports of raids on churches, restrictions on religious teachings, and forced alignments with state ideology.

Despite the internal repression, China continues to project itself as a leader in Buddhist diplomacy. This strategy is aimed at countering any potential resistance to its global initiatives, particularly the Belt and Road Initiative. Given China's limited global soft power, Buddhist diplomacy serves as a crucial tool for building China's image as a peaceful, culturally-rich, and diplomatic power. By positioning itself as the guardian of Buddhist heritage, China seeks to garner influence in Buddhist-majority countries and reduce the geopolitical risks posed by its growing economic and political influence.

### What's behind Nepal's pivot away from India?

29 November 2024, TRT World, Deepak Adhikari

China's growing regional influence presents opportunities for Kathmandu, but the diplomatic shift comes with challenges.

Nepalese Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's upcoming visit to China signals a strategic shift in Nepal's foreign policy: the Himalayan nation seems to be inching closer to Beijing as frustrations with New Delhi simmer.

While the visit (December 2-6) highlights Nepal's growing engagement with China, it also reflects the complexities of balancing its traditional ties with India.

Oli's decision to prioritise China over India for his inaugural visit marks a break from a long-standing tradition among Nepalese leaders. Traditionally, successive prime ministers have visited New Delhi first, underscoring Nepal's cultural, economic and political ties with India.

However, after months of perceived snubs by the Indian leadership—including silence on Oli's invitation to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the UN General Assembly—the pivot to China appears calculated.

The Nepalese leader enjoys a close relationship with Chinese President Xi Jinping. His tenure has seen significant strides in Nepal-China relations, from signing the historic Transit and Transportation Agreement in 2016 to hosting Xi for a state visit in 2019.

These moves reflect Oli's broader strategy of reducing Nepal's dependence on India, particularly after the 2015 blockade imposed by New Delhi that crippled Nepal's economy.

China's growing regional influence presents opportunities for Kathmandu, but the pivot comes with challenges. Experts caution that Nepal's attempts to counterbalance India could alienate its southern neighbour, whose trade with Nepal stood at \$8.4 billion in 2023 compared to China's \$1.2 billion.

Bishnu Rijal, a central committee member of Oli's Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), says Beijing is poised to exploit the growing rift between Kathmandu and New Delhi.

"China is eager to fill the vacuum in Indo-Nepal ties," he said. "This strategic gap could be an opportunity for China, especially if criticisms of India intensify."

Oli's Beijing agenda is ambitious. It includes negotiating a waiver on the \$216 million loan for the Chinese-built Pokhara International Airport and finalising stalled Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects.

But Nepal's counting on China for infrastructure development raises questions about debt sustainability. Concerns about the Chinese "debt trap" grow, with many citing Sri Lanka's Hambantota Port as an example.

Chinese experts are sceptical about Nepal's prospects of securing a loan waiver. Gao Liang, deputy director of the Nepal Study Centre at the Institute of South Asian Studies at Sichuan University, says: "Personally, I don't think that's very likely. Making such a request in itself would not be conducive to Nepal's image enhancement in the international investment market."

Gao says granting a waiver to Nepal could set an unsustainable precedent. Instead, he suggests that Nepal explore more practical options, such as negotiating an extension of the repayment period (which begins in 2026) or proposing alternative repayment methods agreeable to both countries.

Despite growing Chinese investments, India remains deeply embedded in Nepal's economic framework. From pipelines to transmission lines, India's connectivity projects have accelerated, contrasting with the delays and complications in BRI projects.

India-China rapprochement

Oli's visit coincides with a thaw in India-China border tensions, marked by recent agreements to cooperate on patrols. While this rapprochement could reduce Kathmandu's leverage in playing one neighbour against the other, it also opens doors for trilateral cooperation in trade, energy and infrastructure.

Experts argue that a harmonious India-China relationship could ease regional tensions, benefiting smaller nations like Nepal. However, this balancing act is not always easy.

"Nepal must avoid positioning China as an alternative to India. Instead, we should aim for a balanced approach, maintaining strong ties with both

nations," says Rupak Sapkota, a foreign policy expert.

"Historically, Nepal has leaned towards China when its relations with India deteriorate, but this reactive strategy is no longer viable in today's complex geopolitical landscape."

Nepal's growing engagement with China mirrors broader trends in South Asia, where Beijing's infrastructure diplomacy is reshaping the region. This rivalry creates opportunities for Nepal but also risks, as the country seeks to balance its development ambitions with maintaining independence.

Sapkota, who served as a foreign policy adviser to Oli's predecessor Pushpa Kamal Dahal, says Nepal had developed strategic autonomy by consistently declining to join the US-led Indo-Pacific Strategy or China's Global Security Initiative.

Nepal also rejected India's Agnipath scheme, a military recruitment programme.

However, this neutrality comes with costs. Major powers have scaled back aid, as much of it is tied to alliance memberships, slowing Nepal's access to international economic cooperation. Reduced international aid and slowed access to economic cooperation have hampered development.

China's strict COVID-19 policies had also strained ties, stalling key infrastructure projects and limiting tourism.

Meanwhile, India's influence remains strong, rooted in shared cultural ties and economic interdependence.

As Oli courts Beijing, Nepal must carefully navigate its relationships with both neighbours. Leveraging China's infrastructure diplomacy while maintaining ties with India requires nuanced strategy.

"While India may attempt to pressure Nepal to avoid tilting towards China, the depth of current China-Nepal relations makes such a shift unlikely. The partnership has advanced to a level where it cannot be easily undermined," Sapkota says.

## China's military corruption crackdown explained

28 November 2024, France24

Beijing has removed top military official Miao Hua from office pending a probe into "serious violations of discipline" – a common euphemism for corruption. Miao joins a host of high-ranking figures, including two former defence ministers, to fall foul of a sweeping crackdown in the country's military in just over a year.

Analysts say corruption may have eroded Chinese combat readiness – raising fears in Beijing as it conducts its largest military build-up in decades.

Here's how the crackdown has unfolded so far:

'Chronic distrust'

Chinese President Xi Jinping has waged a sweeping campaign against deep-seated official corruption since coming to power over a decade ago.

Proponents say the policy promotes clean governance, while critics say it helps Xi purge political rivals.

In the past year, that drive has focused on the armed forces, with nearly 20 military and defence industry officials removed since summer 2023.

Some of the biggest fish so far ensnared have been defence ministers.

State media has confirmed that both Wei Fenghe and his successor Li Shangfu have been expelled from the ruling Communist Party and are under corruption investigations.

"Xi appears to be chronically distrustful of his most prominent military officials," Ankit Panda, Stanton Senior Fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, told AFP.

Analysts at the time linked the purge to a wider investigation into the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) Rocket Force, which oversees China's nuclear and conventional missiles and would likely be Beijing's first line of attack in the event of a major conflict.

Both former defence ministers had links to the force – Wei previously headed the unit and Li Shangfu led a department that developed weapons including missiles.

The unit's chief, Li Yuchao, and chief of staff, Sun Jinming, were expelled from the party and investigated for corruption in July.

Three senior officials were also removed from their posts at state-owned missile defence organisations in December 2023.

**Beyond the Rocket Force**

British newspaper the Financial Times this week reported that defence minister Dong Jun was under investigation – reports that Beijing on Thursday dismissed as "pure fabrications".

But Miao and Dong's removal, if confirmed, could suggest the graft purge is widening.

Miao had no clear ties to the rocket force, climbing the ranks in the army and then being promoted to admiral in the navy in 2015.

Similarly, the defence minister – appointed in December – forged his career in the navy and eventually became its commander.

Reports of Dong's fall suggested "the rot in China's military remains even deeper than previously suspected", Neil Thomas, a fellow on Chinese politics at the Asia Society, told AFP.

The crackdown has come as China has increased military pressure on Taiwan and repeatedly pushed up against its neighbours over disputed territory in the South China Sea.

But analysts say graft in the military may be raising worries that the army isn't up to the job.

"Corruption in the Chinese military rightly should raise questions about its ability to achieve military objectives and reach the 'great rejuvenation' envisioned by Xi," Heather Williams, director of the Project on Nuclear Issues at Washington's Center for Strategic and International Studies wrote.

**Compromised**

Bloomberg, citing US intelligence, reported this year that rampant corruption in the Rocket Force had led to malfunctioning equipment and even missile fuel being replaced with water.

"If true, these flaws would compromise missile operations, calling into question China's nuclear force readiness and overall capabilities," the Federation of American Scientists wrote in an open letter in response to the claims.

Xi has vowed that the reunification of the Chinese mainland and Taiwan is inevitable and pledged to take "all measures necessary" to achieve that goal.

The recent crackdown "raises the question of who Xi has left that he can trust and how deep the scandals run that have taken down these key officials," said Joel Wuthnow, senior research fellow at National Defense University in the US.

"It has to be a huge distraction... as he presses the PLA to be ready for a war with Taiwan by 2027."

This month, Xi visited members of the country's air force in central Hubei province, urging them to root out corruption and "unhealthy tendencies".

"(We) must keep firmly in mind our duties and missions, increase our sense of war preparedness and tighten our preparations for military struggles," Xi told soldiers.

But with Miao's removal, analysts expect the corruption crackdown to continue to distract from that goal.

"Competition for top positions is so fierce that there might be some mutual recriminations between officers which would lead to endless cycles of arrests, new appointments and recriminations," Victor Shih, an expert on elite Chinese politics, told AFP.

### **Xi Jinping Doesn't Have an Answer for China's Demographic Crisis**

28 November 2024, Foreign Policy, Lizzi C. Lee

A call for a "high-quality population" ignores the country's real problems.

Chinese President Xi Jinping's recent article in Qiushi, the Communist Party's flagship journal for outlining core ideology and policy, frames China's demographic challenges as a strategic opportunity. It offers Xi's most detailed vision yet for addressing the country's aging population: shifting from a labor-



intensive, population-driven economy to one powered by innovation, education, and productivity. Yet beneath the lofty rhetoric lies a familiar and contentious concept: renkou suzhi, or “population quality.”

The notion of suzhi has long been a cornerstone of Chinese policymaking, shaping debates on everything from education to health care. On the surface, it advocates for cultivating a healthier, better educated, and more skilled population. But its implications run deeper—and are more divisive. Historically, suzhi has been used to draw lines between urban elites and rural or migrant populations, carrying connotations of class bias and, at times, embracing eugenicist thinking. Implicit in calls for a “high-quality population” is the judgment of a “low-quality” counterpart, reinforcing societal divides in a way that is rarely acknowledged outright.

What is striking is the emphatic personal stamp Xi has placed on this familiar rhetoric. He describes “high-quality population development” as a “new concept” first proposed by himself—a policy pivot aimed at addressing demographic shifts by fostering a “high-quality workforce.” Xi’s framing emphasizes a sharper economic focus: moving beyond controlling population size to prioritizing quality, optimizing structures, and enhancing mobility.

Xi’s vision is clear: a population that is educated, innovative, and adaptable, equipped to power China’s ambitions to leapfrog the United States in next-generation advanced manufacturing and technology, while remaining resilient to geopolitical headwinds. Yet the systemic realities of China’s political and economic structures make its realization anything but straightforward. The gap between aspiration and implementation remains vast, with no easy solutions offered by Xi.

It’s true that the challenges of an aging population are not unique to China; much of the developed world, particularly East Asia, is grappling with similar issues. Japan and South Korea, for instance, are contending with the burdens of a rapidly greying society.

But China’s situation stands apart in its complexity. Aging isn’t merely a demographic hurdle—it is amplifying long-standing structural weaknesses. The very obstacles hindering the implementation of Xi’s vision lie in the entrenched flaws of China’s economic and political systems—issues that Xi has either avoided addressing or delayed reforming. Persistent regional disparities continue to leave rural areas under-resourced and underserved, while the rigid hukou system, which ties access to essential public services like health care and education to your residence permit, effectively traps millions in low-opportunity regions, cutting them off from better

health care, education, and jobs. Declining birth rates and shifting family norms reflect a younger generation increasingly unwilling—or unable—to embrace traditional expectations, squeezed by skyrocketing costs and evolving societal values. Further complicating matters, the state’s tight grip on private enterprise has stifled the innovation and risk-taking spirit critical to driving genuine progress.

For all its ambition, the path to achieving Xi’s vision is riddled with contradictions, with labor mobility as a glaring example. While factory and service jobs in urban hubs seldom require a local hukou, access to top-tier schools and hospitals does, perpetuating a tiered system where affluent cities like Shanghai and Hangzhou boast cutting-edge eldercare facilities and world-class health care for the wealthy, while rural areas in backwater provinces like Liaoning and Heilongjiang tell a starkly different story. There, aging farmers with no pensions often work well into their 70s, trapped by inadequate infrastructure and meager local resources.

As the population ages, these inequalities become even more pronounced. Older rural residents remain cut off from advanced medical care, while urban areas grapple with labor shortages in critical sectors like health care and elder services. Reforming the hukou system could ease these pressures by allowing for greater mobility and access to urban services, but such a move would disrupt deeply entrenched administrative structures prioritizing control over equitable mobility. Resistance to such reforms, coupled with the slow pace of implementation, leaves these bottlenecks unresolved.

Without meaningful redistribution, rural elderly populations will continue to be excluded from the health care and social support systems concentrated in urban centers. Yet Beijing’s centralized governance—and its reluctance to devolve power to local governments—makes such redistribution exceedingly difficult to achieve. Instead, the gap widens further, a stark reminder of the uneven distribution of China’s modernization.

Urban governance policies add yet another layer of complexity. Major hubs like Beijing and Shanghai actively limit population growth by restricting hukou transfers, channeling labor toward second- and third-tier cities. This approach creates a dynamic where migrants contribute economically to urban centers but remain excluded from the full benefits of urban life, entrenching disparities and undermining efforts to build a truly mobile and adaptable workforce.

China’s shifting social norms add another layer of complexity. Marriage and birth rates have plummeted, with the country’s marriage rate falling to 4.8 per 1,000 people in 2022, down from double that a decade earlier. Meanwhile, the birth rate declined to 6.77 per 1,000 people in 2022,

marking the lowest rate since records began in 1949. These declines are driven by skyrocketing housing costs, relentless job competition, and changing attitudes among younger generations, for whom traditional family structures are increasingly unaffordable or unappealing. Financial incentives—subsidies for childcare, housing, or education—might help, but they won't work without broader reforms that make family life less burdensome. Reducing costs, increasing gender equality, and improving work-life balance would require systemic change, but if history is any guide, the Chinese leadership's wariness of "welfarism"—the belief that easing life's burdens risks fostering complacency—leaves little room for the flexibility and empathy such solutions demand. Meanwhile, the deeply ingrained cultural preference for men that continues to dominate workplaces will take time—and concerted effort—to shift.

At the same time, the state pension system is lurching toward insolvency. Long plagued by low-yield investments and drained further by pandemic-related spending, China's pension funds are projected to run out by 2035. Raising the retirement age—already a politically sensitive issue—won't be enough to solve the problem. More sustainable reforms, such as diversifying investments and adopting market-driven strategies, would necessitate opening up capital markets and ceding some control over financial systems—a step for which Beijing has shown little appetite.

Even as Xi champions a transition to an innovation-driven economy, his administration's previous approach to private enterprise has significantly eroded trust within the business and investment communities. The regulatory crackdowns initiated in 2021 wiped out more than \$1 trillion from the market value of major companies, severely impacting investor confidence. Breakthroughs in biomedicine, health care innovation, and new models of eldercare delivery require more than state investment; they depend on the freedom of individuals and businesses to take risks, experiment, and occasionally fail. However, the state's growing control over private enterprise, coupled with inconsistent and at times capricious regulations, has fostered an environment where caution stifles creativity, eroding the foundations of innovation essential for meaningful progress.

Comparisons with other aging societies offer valuable, if limited, insights. Japan illustrates the dangers of inertia, where delayed reforms led to stagnation and hindered adaptability, even as the country developed world-class eldercare systems. South Korea's generous pronatalist policies have largely fallen short, unable to overcome deep structural barriers such as high housing costs and

rigid gender norms. Germany's relative success in leveraging immigration to mitigate aging pressures provides a compelling example of labor mobility in action, though such an approach remains politically unthinkable in China. These examples underscore a critical point: Tackling demographic challenges requires genuine flexibility, a willingness to innovate, and the resolve to break through deeply rooted systemic barriers. Whether Beijing can adapt these lessons to its own unique context remains an open question.

Xi's rhetoric about a "high-quality population" acknowledges the need for change but stops short of embracing the systemic reforms necessary to achieve it. Empowering households, redistributing resources to bridge regional divides, and fostering the conditions for innovation would require a profound recalibration of Xi's governance philosophy. His personal reluctance to loosen the reins of power continues to constrain the state's capacity to respond effectively to the pressures of an aging society.

### **India's history of providing refuge – and why Sheikh Hasina poses a unique challenge**

28 November 2024, News Laundry, Nirupama Subramanian

Delhi didn't face demands to extradite the Dalai Lama or Varadaraja Perumal, so this is new terrain with unknown consequences.

On August 5, Sheikh Hasina fled Dhaka and landed at Ghaziabad's Hindon airbase after her ouster as prime minister of Bangladesh. Dramatic as it was, she was not the first high-profile political leader from India's neighbourhood to seek safe haven. In 1959, India suffered consequences with China over the arrival of the Dalai Lama, fraying an already fragile bilateral relationship and contributing to tensions ahead of the 1962 war.

Hasina's presence does not pose such dire challenges, but she's unique in a way that India's other guests in exile are not. Other than the special history that India and Bangladesh share, the former prime minister is the only exile in India who was completely in charge of her domain until the moment she fled. For this reason, she's the only one that the home country wants back, and urgently, opening up potential legal complications to her stay in India.

Even with India's history of providing refuge, extradition is a new angle that Delhi has never faced before with its other guests.

Delhi and Dhaka want different things

Complicating the Hasina matter is the arrest this week of Chinmoy Krishna Das, a Hindu priest in Bangladesh, on charges of sedition. India strongly expressed its concern over his arrest and the denial

of bail to him, an indication that Delhi and Dhaka are now at that stage of talking past each other in the downward spiral of bilateral relations.

Delhi, where the rank communalism of its own leadership does not do India proud, wants to keep the focus on the vulnerability of the Hindu minority in Bangladesh. Dhaka's attention is on Hasina, who is wanted back to stand trial on charges of murder and corruption.

A spokesperson of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party described the former prime minister as "the most wanted person in Bangladesh" for the alleged killings of students in police firings during the uprising against her, for enforced disappearances under her watch as prime minister, and for alleged corruption. According to Bangladesh's health ministry, over 1,000 people were killed during the uprising this year. A students' body has compiled a list of over 1,500 deaths and more than 30,000 injured.

Meanwhile, a special tribunal – set up by Hasina a decade ago to try collaborators with the Pakistan army in the 1971 war on charges of genocide and other war crimes – has now been turned against its creator. The so-called International Crimes Tribunal, which convicted several Jamat-e-Islami leaders, leading to the execution of four of them, has now been repurposed to try Hasina for the deaths of hundreds of protesters shot dead by security forces during the uprising. The tribunal asked the international police organisation Interpol to issue a red notice for her arrest.

The tribunal also filed more than 60 complaints against Hasina, members of her Awami League party, and security officials, accusing them of forced disappearances, murder and even genocide. In September, it issued arrest warrants for Hasina and several others, and asked the Yunus-headed interim dispensation to produce them before the tribunal by mid-November. That date has passed.

Earlier this month, Bangladesh Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus said his government would seek her extradition under the India-Bangladesh extradition treaty. Yunus told *The Hindu* in an interview that if India refuses to extradite Hasina, it would be a violation of the treaty "that will not make a very happy relationship between us". It would not be forgiven by any future government either, he said. The consequences of 'safe haven' to Dalai Lama Extradition is a new worry for India.

In 1959, the Dalai Lama was independent India's first VIP political refugee. When he landed in Chuthangmu, in what was then the North East Frontier Agency, on March 31 that year, India's relationship with China was already fraying.

Peking reacted angrily, screaming and shouting that Delhi had "expansionist" designs. It also railed against "Tibetan rebels" for having their

"faces turned towards India and their backs to their motherland". It was alleged that the Dalai Lama was a prisoner of these "rebels" who, in collusion with India, were coercing him into making statements about "independent" Tibet.

But China, though angered at the high international visibility that India had provided to the Dalai Lama, made no demands that Delhi send him back. Instead, Delhi's problems were of a different order. India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, had already recognised Tibet as part of China through the 1954 Panchsheel Agreement. In a one-on-one with the Dalai Lama, who was then only 24 years old, he conveyed that India's "capacity to help is very limited and the moment we try to extend it, it would stop even that capacity".

Almost like a father speaking to a young son, Nehru put it plainly: "Physically it is not possible to fight on behalf of Tibet. Even such a suggestion will harm them [the Tibetans] and their cause. Sympathy at present for Tibet cannot be converted into help by any country. DL should be under no illusion and, therefore, should fashion his policy with reference to actuality."

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In even starker language, he said: "Let us face facts...The whole world cannot bring freedom to Tibet unless the whole fabric of the Chinese state is destroyed. USA, UK and others or anybody else cannot do this at present. DL should realise that in the present context Tibet's independence would mean the complete break-up of the Chinese state and it is not possible to envisage it as likely to happen. To defeat China is not easy. Only a world war, an atomic war can perhaps be the precursor of such possibility. Can one start a world war? Can India start a world war? Let us talk of the present and not of the future and be more realistic."

Nehru then asked the Dalai Lama how the Tibetans could resist China's overwhelming military superiority. "One should, therefore, not close the doors of settlement; otherwise, it becomes a fight to the death". India would not recognise a Tibetan government in exile, the Dalai Lama was told.

Yet Chairman Mao was convinced India was "doing bad things in Tibet" and decided he would give it "enough rope to hang itself".

For large sections of India's polity, Nehru had blundered by not pushing the Tibet card against China. However, as journalist Ananth Krishnan pointed out in his book *India's China Challenge*,

Chinese suspicions about Indian intentions in Tibet were as important as India's forward policy of 1961 in China's decision to attack India.

The Dalai Lama has lived in India ever since his arrival more than six decades ago, making Mcleodganj in Himachal Pradesh's Dharamshala district his permanent abode in exile. More than one lakh Tibetans now live in settlements across India. By the time India began normalising ties with China in the late 1970s, the Dalai Lama's own views on independence changed. In 2005, he declared that Tibet was part of China and sought autonomy, not independence – a view he has restated several times since then.

As for India-China bilateral relations, India's safe haven to the Dalai Lama has not figured much, except when Beijing objects to some of his activities, which it views as "splittist", such as his visits to Arunachal, all of which China claims as south Tibet.

Fleeing the LTTE and Sri Lanka

India's other high-profile exile, who's lived here since 1990, is Annamalai Varatharaja Perumal.

Perumal was the chief minister of Sri Lanka's North-East Provincial Council, a tragically short-lived experiment at India's behest. Through the 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka Accord and the 13th Amendment, it aimed at devolution of power to the Tamil areas of Sri Lanka. But it was jointly sabotaged by President Ranasinghe Premadasa and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. Premadasa refused to transfer even the smallest power to the northeast government, instead making a deal with the LTTE, arming them to fight the Indian Peace Keeping Force.

Perumal's situation worsened when the new VP Singh government decided to withdraw the IPKF from Sri Lanka. The last Indian troops were scheduled to leave by March 31, 1990. Perumal saw his protective umbrella vanishing. So, on March 1, he made a last-ditch attempt to assert himself. He moved a resolution converting his provincial council into a constituent state assembly that would draft a constitution of the "Eelam Democratic Republic". He said this would take effect from March 1, 1991 if Colombo had not agreed to his demands by then.

It was a de facto "unilateral declaration of independence".

Delhi was horrified, but did not abandon Perumal to his fate. Within hours, Perumal, his wife and three daughters were bundled into an Indian Research & Analysis Wing plane and flown to Mauritius. More than 200 cadres of the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front were evacuated to India in Indian Air Force planes.

In June 1990, Perumal arrived in Mumbai, only to discover that the LTTE had wiped out the top leadership of the EPRLF, gunning them down in their rented apartment in Chennai. Perumal was moved to

Lakshadweep for his safety. In August, he and his family were taken to Madhya Pradesh, to a tightly guarded and barricaded hunting lodge in Chanderi belonging to the Scindia family.

Delhi was horrified, but did not abandon Perumal to his fate. Within hours, Perumal, his wife and three daughters were bundled into an Indian Research & Analysis Wing plane and flown to Mauritius. More than 200 cadres of the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front were evacuated to India in Indian Air Force planes.

In May 1991, after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, Perumal and his family moved to a government bungalow in Ajmer's Civil Lines area. They lived there for a dozen years. There were no demands from Sri Lanka for his return. In the mid-1990s, he spent some months in Kathmandu dodging assassins sent by Prabhakaran. Towards the end of the decade, he went back to Sri Lanka to test the waters when then President Chandrika Kumaratunga seemed determined to bring about a political resolution to the Tamil question. But the 2002 ceasefire, which empowered the LTTE, alarmed him and he withdrew to India once again.

Perumal moved to Tamil Nadu. In 2008, a year before the LTTE was routed militarily, the state police uncovered, just in the nick of time, a plot to kill him and his family. He presently lives in Coimbatore.

What does the post-Hasina era hold?

Sheikh Hasina has been exiled in Delhi before. On August 15, 1975, her father Sheikh Mujibur Rehman and members of her family were assassinated in Dhaka. Hasina, her husband, two children and sister were the only family members to escape as they were abroad. She led a low-profile life, working part-time at All India Radio, with a small circle of friends that notably included Pranab Mukherjee and his family.

In 1981, at the persuasion of her late father's friends, she returned to Dhaka and plunged into politics taking over as the leader of the Awami League, her father's political vehicle.

This time, the 77-year-old, who is reported to have moved into Lutyens Delhi from her transit accommodation at Hindon airbase, is unlikely to go back for another shot at power. And India is unlikely to yield to pressure from Dhaka and abandon her.

Unlike the Dalai Lama, who could hardly take on the Chinese military in Tibet, or Perumal, who stood little chance of surviving the LTTE in north-east Sri Lanka, Hasina is a different category of exile. In full control as prime minister for 15 years, she did for Delhi what no other leader could have done. She secured India's borders from Islamists and north-eastern military groups, and made the Hindu minority feel safe.

And it's her proximity to Delhi, and to the Modi government for two of her three terms, that appears to have been one of the reasons for her downfall. Keeping her here is as important to India as having her back in Bangladesh is for her opponents. In the post-Hasina era, India's relations with Bangladesh will, in the near term, depend on whether Dhaka can move past the demand for the return of Hasina, and if Delhi can look at ties beyond the alleged persecution of Hindus in Bangladesh. Neither of these issues can serve to bring relations back to even keel. Perhaps that is no longer the goal for either country.

### **The Perseverance of an Independent Tibetan School: The 30-Year Journey of Jigme Gyaltsen Ethnic Vocational School**

27 November 2024, CTA

In July 2024, Jigme Gyaltsen Ethnic Vocational High School, which had operated independently for 30 years, announced its closure. Known as the best Tibetan-language educational institution and a private welfare school in the greater Tibetan region, it has now come to an end. The author of this article once served as an IT technician at the school, handling numerous digital archives and witnessing the establishment, struggles, development, and eventual forced closure of this institution on this land. Now living overseas, the author learned of the school's shutdown. However, due to censorship, former colleagues and Tibetan friends could not convey their sorrow. The author took up the pen to write this detailed recollection.

-by gingerduan.substack.com, 26 November 2024

The original manuscript was published in Chinese on Mangmang: 一所独立藏语民族学校的坚守与落幕——吉美坚赞民族职业学校的30年

On July 14, 2024, in Golog Prefecture, Qinghai Province, the esteemed monk of Ragya Monastery and renowned educator Jigme Gyaltsen announced via a bilingual Tibetan-Chinese post on WeChat that the independently operated Jigme Gyaltsen Ethnic Vocational High School, which he founded, would be closing down after 30 years. The school had long offered free admission to students from farming and herding communities across the Tibetan regions of five provinces. It was regarded as one of the finest Tibetan-language educational institutions in the Greater Tibetan Area. This legendary private welfare school on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau has thus come to an end. The announcement emphasized that the closure was not due to the will of any individual or organization. Still, it was based on the national standards for vocational schools and relevant directives from the Qinghai Provincial Committee.

Some have commented that "black snow" has fallen over the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, extinguishing a beacon for the Tibetan people.

Ragya Town, a small settlement along the Yellow River in Golog Prefecture, Qinghai Province, is home to this iconic institution. Here, when locals say "the school," everyone knows it refers to this one—it feels like there is only one school in Ragya. Between Ragya Town and the school lies the mountain "Ani Qungong," meaning "Great Roc Spreading Its Wings," at the foot of the mountain stands Ragya Monastery, the first monastery on the Yellow River. I will use "Ragya School" in the following text to refer to Jigme Gyaltsen Ethnic Vocational High School.

From 2018 to 2019, I briefly worked as a network technician at this school. While there, I became deeply immersed in its environment and worked closely with many digital archives. I witnessed Ragya School's founding, struggles, development, and eventual forced closure on this land through this. I witnessed its rise and fall, its joys and sorrows.

This school was called the "Harvard of the Tibetan people," its forced closure carries profound significance for the entire Tibetan region. Now, living overseas, I learned of the school's shutdown. I saw my Tibetan friends on social media drowning in tears, yet unable to express their grief in their native language due to censorship on social media like WeChat.

I deeply feel a connection between myself and this distant school, and the sorrowful cries from afar resonate with me. Since I am overseas, I decided to write it all down.

#### **01 A Fusion of Tradition and Modernity: An Educational Experiment**

Jigme Gyaltsen (hereafter referred to as "the Principal") was a monk from Golog who founded Ragya School in 1994. It was the first private welfare school in Qinghai Province and a pioneering educational reform in Tibetan regions at the time.

Traditional Tibetan society primarily relied on monastic education. For both men and women, becoming a monk or nun and going to a monastery was often the only way to receive an education. Monasteries had a comprehensive education system comparable to modern primary and secondary schools, with various degrees and certifications. For example, the Geshe degree is akin to a doctorate in Tibetan Buddhism. Families would willingly support their children's monastic studies by providing food, clothing, and pocket money. In Tibet, monasteries functioned as more than just schools; they also served as welfare organizations, banks, hospitals, and academic institutions.

The Principal, who had received higher education, graduated from the Advanced Buddhist Institute founded by the Panchen Lama in Beijing before



deciding to return to his hometown. At that time, Amdo Tibet was underdeveloped and lacked educational resources. Traditional monks were unfamiliar with modern knowledge and skills such as law, Mandarin, or computer science and had no place to learn them. Meanwhile, Tibetan children from nomadic families, due to their traditional pastoral lifestyle, had limited access to education. For example, in 2020, a Tibetan herdsman named Tenzing Tsondu(DingZhen) became an internet sensation in China because of his handsome appearance. After achieving fame as a livestreamer with millions of fans, he was revealed to be illiterate in Chinese. This wasn't unusual in traditional Tibetan society, as herding on the grasslands didn't require literacy.

To promote modern education in Tibet, the Principal combined the traditional monastic education system with the modern school system to create a unique integrated model that admitted both monks and lay students of all ages. Since pastoral families in Tibetan areas don't face the same academic or employment pressures as in mainland China, it was common to see young teenagers studying alongside older herdsman with beards who had spent the past decade tending sheep in the same classroom. Ragya School placed no restrictions on age, religious status, or sect. Even students who were completely illiterate at the time of admission were treated equally. They lined up to register and were placed in classes according to their level of Tibetan literacy.

As a welfare school, Ragya School adhered to the principle of "education for all without discrimination." Each year, the school enrolls about 200 students; sometimes, even the principal's relatives have to wait in line for three years before being admitted. Priority was given to orphans, dropouts, overage youth, and young monks from poor rural and nomadic families. The school even accepted Mongolian, Han, and other ethnic students and tulkus from various regions.

Once admitted, students were provided with free tuition, meals, and accommodation. The school's curriculum was rooted in the traditional Tibetan "Ten Sciences" while incorporating modern scientific knowledge. The school includes a junior high school and a senior high school. The junior high school offered foundational courses such as basic Tibetan, Mandarin, and mathematics, while the senior high school evolved into a vocational high school with seven specialized programs tailored to Tibetan culture: Tibetan medicine, advanced Tibetan studies, computer applications, tourism, English, arts and crafts (Thangka painting), film production, and alpine guiding. Most of these programs were developed as school-based curricula with published textbooks.

The school accommodated more than 1,000 students, ranging in age from 6 to 42, with about one-third being monks. Students came from farming and herding regions across Qinghai, Tibet, Sichuan, Gansu, Inner Mongolia, and beyond.

#### 02 Difficult Start-up, Unique Operational Methods

The establishment of the school was initially very difficult, lacking resources in many ways: funding, policies, teachers, and construction were all challenges. The principal was neither a Rinpoche nor a distinguished eminent monk. When the school was founded, he only had 3,000 yuan in deposit. He had to travel extensively, seeking loans and resources, hoping to persuade people to support his endeavor. Eventually, he gained the support of Rinpoche from various monasteries and the then-governor of Golog Prefecture. After many twists and turns, he secured land and obtained the government's approval to open the school.

When the school was first established, the campus was built with the help of the nine students who initially enrolled. At that time, the students and teachers had no accommodation and had to live at the Ragya Monastery. During winter weekends, they would go to nearby mountains to gather branches and yak dung to keep the stoves burning for warmth. Local villagers, monks from Ragya monastery, and the school's students worked together, using bags to carry soil and level the ground to create the sports field. They also felled trees to construct the first school buildings.

In a documentary about the school's history, I saw how the wood for the early buildings was sourced. The students were allocated into three groups: the first group felled trees upstream of the Yellow River; the second group floated the logs down the river to Ragya; and the third group retrieved the wood from the shallow banks of the Yellow River near the school. This was how many of the school's early buildings were constructed.

Principal Jigme Gyaltzen was an educator and an entrepreneur. The school initially maintained its independence through funding provided by the "Snowland Treasures" dairy company (hereafter referred to as the Dairy Factory), which he established. The factory's early techniques were learned from two Europeans, and its dairy products were initially exported overseas. The dairy business provided income for herders and all its profits were used to cover the school's expenses, allowing it to offer free education and boarding for students and pay staff salaries.

By the time I had just graduated from university and began to engage with the operations of social organizations, I was amazed at how the principal, who had spent years on the plateau, learned and established such a progressive concept of "social

enterprise.” By using this advanced model, he promoted sustainable development in pastoral regions.

Later, however, the export channels for the dairy factory’s products faced issues, and the products could no longer be sold overseas, leaving the domestic market as the only option. Over time, the factory’s efficiency declined, and the principal had to seek funding from other sources. Given the influence of Ragya School and the principal’s reputation, fundraising was not initially difficult. At that time, various social sectors and local governments were eager to provide resources to the school: The Hong Kong Jockey Club funded the construction of modern school buildings. The Trace Foundation supported several school expenses. Beijing Blue Charity Foundation donated many books to the school library. Government subsidies were provided to impoverished students for living expenses.

However, transferring donations to the school’s accounts became more difficult due to increasingly restrictive government regulations and policies. Overseas funds were no longer accepted, and even domestic funds could not be accessed. Gradually, the school began to experience financial difficulties. Before it closed, it was said that the school had gone three years without paying regular salaries.

The teachers’ salaries had never been high to begin with, and when the financial issues arose, the school stopped paying the salaries of monastic teachers. Since the monks don’t have families to support, the school provided their meals and accommodations, and their families could provide tiny allowances for personal expenses. However, lay teachers, who had families to support, found it much harder to cope. Many had no choice but to leave the school.

One teacher, who had studied at a university on the mainland, told me that working at Ragya school was a social service but not a service without an end. After serving for some time, one had to leave—continuing serving was not sustainable.

In October 2018, the Trace Foundation issued an open letter announcing its gradual cessation of most activities in Tibetan areas of China, citing fundamental changes in conditions on the Tibetan Plateau for an overseas foundation. The Trace Foundation, headquartered in New York, funds and supports community and educational initiatives in Tibet. Many private Tibetan-language schools, including Ragya School, have received their support. At the time, I was in China and completely unaware of this significant change. I had only heard sporadically that introducing China’s Foreign NGO Law had made it difficult for foreign donors to fund initiatives like ours. Back in the day, my knowledge of Tibet was very limited, and I didn’t know where to find reliable research materials to learn. Our projects

run by our organization in Tibetan areas also faced challenges: we struggled to find full-time teachers willing to work on the Tibetan Plateau and secure funding partners interested in supporting this project. As a recent college graduate on a short-term network technician assignment, I was just beginning my journey on this plateau. My responsibilities were to consolidate and transform the outcomes of earlier projects and wind down some of the initiatives. [Click here to read more.](#)

### **China: Human rights defenders criminalised as well as face harassment, surveillance and transnational repression**

27 November 2024, Monitor Civicus, Zhang Zhan

Civic space in China is rated as ‘closed’ by the CIVICUS Monitor. China’s authoritarian state ruled by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has systemically repressed fundamental freedoms. Human rights defenders and activists report harassment and intimidation; unfair trials; arbitrary, incommunicado and lengthy detentions; and torture and other ill-treatment for exercising their fundamental rights. Protests do occur but are quickly repressed, and critical civil society groups have been shut down.

August 2024 marked two years since the UN released a report determining the possible commission of ‘crimes against humanity’ against Uyghurs and other Muslim peoples by Chinese authorities. The Office of the High Commission on Human Rights (OHCHR) said that “many problematic laws and policies remain in place” and that allegations of human rights violations, including torture, must be “fully investigated”. The Office also called for a “full review” with a human rights emphasis of the legal frameworks governing Chinese policies related to national security, counter-terrorism and minority rights.

Civil society groups called on the High Commissioner to “hold regular and substantive briefings with victims, survivors, and their representatives, and establish a mechanism to locate and free missing and wrongfully detained family members.”

In October 2024, the European Parliament passed an emergency resolution condemning the Chinese government’s persecution of Uyghurs and urging China to immediately and unconditionally release detainees, including Uyghur economist Ilham Tohti and Gulshan Abbas. The resolution, which was adopted by a vote of 540 in favour, 23 against and 47 abstentions, strongly condemned China’s “repression and targeting of Uyghurs with abusive policies, including intense surveillance, forced labor, sterilisation, birth prevention measures and the

destruction of Uyghur identity, which amount to crimes against humanity and a serious risk of genocide.”

In recent months, the authorities have detained human rights defenders including Zhang Zhan, Tibetan activist Tashi Wangchuk and artist Gao Zhen, and convicted Yu Wensheng and Xu Yan for their activism. There has also been surveillance and harassment of bloggers and activists and transnational repression of critics in Japan. A protest in Shanghai by factory workers was also documented.

Association

Re-detention of woman human rights defender Zhang Zhan

Citizen journalist and activist Zhang Zhan was re-detained in September 2024, less than four months after being freed from prison. On 26th November 2024, it was reported that she had been formally arrested on charges of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble", an overly broad provision which is weaponized to target, intimidate and harass human rights defenders, activists, journalists and dissidents.

According to Amnesty International, Zhang Zhan, who is being held at the Pudong New District Detention Center in Shanghai, appears to have been targeted because she has continued to advocate for human rights since her release from jail in May 2024.

Following her release, Zhang Zhan expressed concern that her online speech was being monitored by authorities. She was regularly and repeatedly taken in for police questioning in August 2024, with some interrogations lasting over 10 hours.

As previously documented, Zhang Zhan has been vocal against human rights violations and suppression of dissent in China. She has used her legal training and knowledge to help other human rights defenders to claim their rights through legal channels. In February 2020, Zhang Zhan visited Wuhan city in Hubei province of China to report on the COVID-19 outbreak from the ground. She went missing in Wuhan in May 2020. It later emerged that she had been taken by the Chinese authorities and detained in Shanghai. In December 2020, a court convicted her of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" after a sham trial and sentenced her to four years in prison.

Human rights defenders Yu Wensheng and Xu Yan convicted

On 29th October 2024, the Suzhou Intermediate Court in Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, convicted human rights lawyer Yu Wensheng and woman human rights defender Xu Yan for "inciting subversion of State power". Yu Wensheng was sentenced to three years in prison while Xu Yan was sentenced to one year

and nine months in prison. Yu and Xu were detained by police in April 2023 while on their way to meet with high-level European officials visiting China.

Yu Wensheng is a human rights lawyer based in Beijing. He has represented cases of victims of China's crackdowns on petitioners, civil rights activists, and his fellow human rights lawyers. Yu Wensheng has also used his legal skills to advocate for reform in multiple sectors of Chinese society. He previously served a four-year sentence from 2018 to 2022 after being convicted for "inciting subversion of state power".

Xu Yan is a woman human rights defender who campaigned for the release of Yu Wensheng, to whom she is married, as well as for other human rights defenders and their family members who face harassment, surveillance, and arbitrary detention.

Transnational repression of critics in Japan

Chinese authorities have been trying to intimidate people from China living in Japan who take part in activities critical of the Chinese government.

According to Human Rights Watch, the Chinese government's harassment of people from China, including those from Xinjiang, Tibet and Inner Mongolia, and their family members back home, appears aimed at deterring members of the diaspora from protesting against the government or engaging in events deemed politically sensitive. The Chinese authorities have also sought out diaspora members to provide information on others in Japan.

Between June and August 2024, Human Rights Watch interviewed 25 people from Hong Kong and mainland China, including from Xinjiang, Tibet and Inner Mongolia, who were living in Japan. All had been involved in peaceful activities that the Chinese Communist Party deems unfavourable or threatening to one-party rule, such as holding public events to raise awareness about crimes against humanity in Xinjiang, promoting Tibetan culture, or having a reading club discuss a book by an activist from Inner Mongolia.

China conducts the most sophisticated, global, and comprehensive campaign of transnational repression in the world. Freedom House's conservative catalogue of direct, physical attacks since 2014 covers 214 cases originating from China, far more than any other country.

Tibetan language rights activists under surveillance after release from detention

Prominent Tibetan language rights advocate Tashi Wangchuk was detained for 15 days on charges of 'disrupting social order' and allegedly spreading false information on social media, and has been under strict surveillance.

According to Radio Free Asia (RFA), Wangchuk, 39, was arrested by the Internet Police Unit in China's Qinghai province on 20th October 2024. After an

investigation, he was detained for 15 days in the Yulshul Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture until his release on 4th November 2024.

He was accused of posting "false information" on social media platforms since June 2024, for "repeatedly insulting and ridiculing government departments" and "negatively impacting the online environment and public order in society" by allegedly distorting and rejecting government policies.

Wangchuk's detention comes as China intensifies its policies to suppress — or even eradicate — Tibetan and other ethnic languages and cultures and replace them with Mandarin and Han Chinese customs.

Surveillance and harassment of bloggers and activists The authorities have continued to monitor and harass activists and other individuals, both off and online, especially ahead of politically sensitive dates or major events.

In September 2024, The Guardian reported that China's internet police went from targeting bloggers to their followers. In recent months, followers of influential liberal bloggers have been interviewed by police as China widens its net of online surveillance.

In the same month, authorities in Beijing stepped up security measures ahead of celebrations of the 75th anniversary of the People's Republic of China on 1st October 2024, issuing restrictions on who may enter the city. Police have been following rights activists and lawyers, detaining their family members, or preventing them from entering Beijing. The moves form part of China's "stability maintenance" operations. One of the first to be targeted was Li Wenzu, the activist wife of prominent rights attorney Wang Quanzhang, who was detained on entering Beijing.

In October 2024, RFA reported that authorities across China targeted dissidents and petitioners ahead of a key meeting of the ruling Communist Party, placing them under house arrest or escorting them out of town on enforced "vacations." Among those targeted include political journalist Gao Yu, rights lawyer Pu Zhiqiang and political commentator Zha Jianguo.

Expression

Artist detained for 'insulting' Mao sculptures



Dissident Chinese artist Gao Zhen was detained in August 2024 on suspicion of "insulting revolutionary heroes and martyrs."

The Gao Brothers are known for their provocative sculptures, which critique the founder of the People's Republic of China, Mao Zedong, and his regime. The Gao Brothers' dissident artwork has been shown at many venues overseas, but not publicly displayed in China since they signed an open letter from dissident physicist Fang Lizhi to then supreme leader Deng Xiaoping during the pro-democracy movement of 1989.

Gao Zhen left China in 2022 to live permanently in the United States but had been visiting family when he was taken by authorities in Hebei province. According to his brother, Chinese authorities stormed the brothers' art studio in Sanhe City on 26th August 2024 and confiscated several artworks.

Spoofing or insulting China's revolutionary "heroes and martyrs" was made a crime in 2021, as part of a newly amended criminal code, under a campaign by China's leader, Xi Jinping. It carries a penalty of up to three years' imprisonment.

Peaceful Assembly

Shanghai factory workers block major highway



11月21日，上海七宝。因长期拖欠工资，逼迫工人辞职。国利公司的工人们走上沪松公路堵路维权。之后警察开始对部分堵路工人进行驱散和抓捕。



Last edited 8:55 AM · Nov 21, 2024

3.7K Reply Copy link

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Hundreds of workers at an automotive trim company in Shanghai blocked a major highway in the city in November 2024 amid a protest over plans for mass layoffs.

The workers from the state-owned Shanghai Guoli Automotive Leather Decoration Co. scuffled with police as traffic backed up on the Husong Highway. Police detained at least one worker, prompting others to shout and join in the scuffle.

Employees have been protesting since receiving a notice on 9th October 2024 offering a payout of three months' minimum wage to anyone who volunteered to resign, amounting to a total of payment 8,070 yuan (USD 1,113).

Social media posts from people identifying themselves as workers from the company said the “voluntary resignations” weren’t actually voluntary. They said they are entitled to three months’ compensation based on their average wage over the previous 12 months.

Freedom House that monitors dissent in China noted that it has “documented a rise in protests over recent months by consumers and investors amidst a sluggish economy.” The majority of these protests are led by workers (41 percent).

### Nepal’s China dilemma

27 November 2024, The Kathmandu Post,  
Siddharta Thapa

China celebrated the 10th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Republic of China in 1959. A Nepali delegation also visited the country to participate in the celebrations conducted by the Chinese Communist Party. Surya Bahadur Thapa, a minister in the interim government formed by King Mahendra, led the Nepali delegation.

At the end of Thapa’s sojourn to China, his Chinese interlocutors informed him that Chairman Mao would grant him a meeting. Thapa was advised to carry three messages to King Mahendra. First, Mao informed Thapa that the Chinese were not in a race with India to provide developmental assistance to Nepal. Second, he assured that China would not let anyone compromise issues related to Nepal’s sovereignty. Finally, Mao said that Thapa must advise the King to maintain good relations with India to ensure political stability in Nepal.

Leading a semi-retired life half a decade later, the octogenarian Thapa was curiously observing the evolving politics of the peace process, which marked a gargantuan shift in Nepali society. Pushpa Kamal Dahal had just resigned as prime minister over his failed attempt to depose the army chief in 2010. At this point, he seemed hellbent on soliciting China’s support to return to power. After losing power, Dahal visited the northern neighbour with a plan to counter India. This was Dahal playing the China card in Nepali politics in the early phase of the peace process.

After returning to Nepal from his China visit in 2011, Dahal’s trusted China hand Agni Sapkota declared China’s prophetic advice to the visiting Maoist delegation: To mend ties with India for stability in Nepal. Thapa observed that great powers seldom change track at provocations insinuated by political frictions of Nepali leaders. He also witnessed that China had upheld its tested Nepal policy for over 50 years since different regimes in Nepal continued with their commitment to the One China Policy.

Interestingly, China’s ambitious global outreach in recent times has compelled analysts to examine whether its policy is evolving towards deeper engagement in Nepal. For instance, many analysts have characterised the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as a geopolitical initiative that aims to provide strategic leverage over other countries. BRI is a signature foreign policy of President Xi Jinping, which was announced in 2013 to connect China closer to the world through infrastructure and investment projects. Unsurprisingly, Beijing would want Nepal to be a part of President Xi’s ambitious foreign policy gambit. While Nepal signed the BRI Framework Agreement in 2017, Beijing is now pressing Kathmandu to move forward with the BRI implementation plan.

Given the heightened geopolitical rivalry, including in the SAARC region, the BRI implementation plan was bound to face scrutiny in Nepal. The fact that the document has not been made public and the details of the plan remain elusive gives way to rising speculations on the negative aspects of the proposed plan.

In a democracy, process and content fundamentally determine the course of bilateral or multilateral treaties. As in Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), the proposed implementation plan should have been made public to allow for debates, enhancing the understanding of the agreement. Also, the government, in the Parliament’s absence, could have called an all-party meeting or referred the plan to the international committee of the Lower House of Parliament. MCC received bipartisan support since Nepal’s parliament endorsed it after many rounds of deliberations and amendments. Therefore, as Nepal builds on its relationship with its neighbours, the political leadership in Kathmandu should provide space to open debates on the policy choices it intends to initiate. More importantly, Nepal must strive to achieve bipartisan support on critical issues impacting its external relations, especially with its neighbours.

As Nepal’s economy struggles due to political instability, bilateral and multilateral funding will continue to play a pivotal role in fueling growth. However, there are genuine concerns regarding BRI that should be clarified. It is widely reported that BRI has led to unsustainable debt in several countries, and the bad debt incurred through its funded projects has seriously impacted their economies. Sri Lanka and Pakistan are perfect examples in the region, illustrating that large infrastructure projects with high interest rates plunge the economy into a crisis with high debt-to-GDP ratios. This situation leads to unsustainable levels, eventually producing a balance-of-payment deficit and a large-scale financial crisis that triggered protests in Sri Lanka.



Nepal must prudently select projects that it can repay, and the borrowing rates must be on par with what the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank Group offer for financing infrastructure projects in the country. In simple words, we must bite what we can chew in terms of envisioning big-ticket infrastructure projects that require enormous amounts of capital.

Another aspect of the implementation plan that was criticised was how the plan covers an entire range of areas of cooperation, including law enforcement and other areas unrelated to infrastructure development. Any imbalance in Nepal's foreign policy will be watched closely by Nepal's friends on the global stage. Coincidentally, Donald Trump's NSC designate recently visited Kathmandu, which reinforces Nepal's geopolitical importance.

The BRI implementation plan, in its current speculated form, has broader strategic and geopolitical implications. There seems to be no clarity on the requirement of the plan for BRI projects, as countries worldwide haven't signed it. Therefore, the rationale for Nepal signing the agreement is largely questionable at this stage. At all costs, Nepal must avoid sending a signal that it has chosen a particular geopolitical camp.

Advocates of the implementation plan mention that this is only an in-principal document. If so, the political leadership of Nepal must evaluate that by conceding Nepal's principled position on seeking grants or concessional loans at the World Bank and the ADB rates. Observers will question the neutrality of the in-principal stand taken to endorse the document. Those opposing the plan in its present form will continue to argue that once a country loses on principle, what else is there to lose?

Nepali politicians and policymakers at the strategic level should realise Beijing has moved ahead from the traditional way of looking at Nepal. Nepal should assess whether China has shifted the goalpost and its commitments by introducing a non-essential implementation plan as one of its priorities—from a geopolitical perspective—and what it means for the country. Moreover, Kathmandu's position should be to seek the implementation of past announcements and promises. Lastly, Sino-Nepal relations are of historical importance, and therefore, they cannot be reduced to dividing political forces in Nepal. Nepali politicians need to improvise their foreign policy positioning by understanding that state-to-state relations are becoming more transactional and that each nation will aim to expand its leverage over the other. It is time an aspiring Nepali woke up to the reality of cutthroat competition for influence in international relations.

## Why India needs to take its ties with China 'sincerely' & the inconvenience of US indictment of Adani

27 November 2024, The Print, Vandana Menon

Global media, however, acknowledges that India does indeed face a Chinese threat. It also notes that controversy surrounding Adani Group creates problems for India's own domestic growth.

When it comes to the Indian growth story, there are two things, according to global media, that are shaping it—Adani and China.

Let's take China first. Rather predictably, Global Times in an opinion says New Delhi needs to be taking India-China ties more sincerely. Doubts have arisen in China, the piece says, about Indian sincerity towards improving its relationship because of India's tenuous current position in the West over issues like "democracy" and "human rights."

"Given India's previous inconsistencies in its policy toward China, these doubts are not without merit," the piece says. India needs to eliminate "erroneous concepts" like the need to counter China, or the inevitability of war.

It goes on to list three areas of improvement in India's policy towards China: domestic public opinion, an overemphasis on security and not on economic development, and barriers in people-to-people exchanges.

The writer of the op-ed is of the opinion that domestic public opinion is too skewed away from China, and the Indian establishment needs to be doing more to "properly guide rather than manipulate public sentiment when issues arise in bilateral relations". Think tanks and media outlets have "poisoned" public perception against China by creating a "China threat"—and that needs to change, apparently, because trade and economic cooperation should take precedence over issues of security. Never mind that there are actual border encroachments taking place—India needs to stop practicing "discriminatory economic and trade policies against China" as a way to get back at China.

"Actions speak louder than words," the op-ed generously concludes. "We hope that India will quickly take concrete and positive actions on various issues related to bilateral cooperation, truly working to thaw the relationship between China and India."

The Wall Street Journal offers another viewpoint—one in which India absolutely does have a Chinese threat to counter. If incoming American president Donald Trump makes good on his promise to levy high import tariffs on Chinese goods, then India stands to gain a lot: but first, it must "get out of the way of its factory owners."

In a report on how India has done very little to clear hurdles for labour-intensive manufacturing,

the WSJ takes the example of the garment industry, in which India should have an edge. However, annual apparel exports have declined more than 11 percent compared to a decade ago. In the same time period, Bangladesh saw a growth of over 50 percent.

Bangladesh and Vietnam are the two top choices for the China+1 strategy as the Chinese share in global manufacturing exports declines. India doesn't even figure in the top 5, the WSJ reports.

The WSJ lands on stringent regulations as the cause for holding India back: it's keeping companies from expanding, apparently. The question of labour rights—and what the government is doing to protect them—is painted as a headache and the reason why India isn't surging ahead of countries that seem to allow exploitative practices.

The piece does talk about how the Modi government planned to overhaul the labour code and loosen laws—including allowing firms employing upto 300 workers to fire workers without government permission—but says pushback from labour unions have stalled the process.

"Manufacturing firms in India said they are wary of operating large factories because of the power of organised labour," the piece says. Plus, "India's failure to sign free-trade agreements with other countries that would slash tariffs on its exports has also made Indian garments increasingly too expensive for global retail companies."

This has meant that Indian retailers and manufacturers have shifted production and sourcing to Bangladesh, leading to a jump in apparel imports. But manufacturers expect "Trump's election—and political unrest in Bangladesh which ousted its prime minister in August—to provide opportunities to larger apparel makers". India can still get ahead of China, if only it figures out its labour problems.

The spectre of Trump still lingers over India and China relationships. Academic Walter Russell Mead writes in the WSJ that "a strong U.S.-India relationship is both necessary and problematic. Only America can help India keep China on its own side of the border, but America is a difficult friend."

Mead visited Tawang as part of a delegation organised by the Hudson Institution on an invitation from the India Foundation, which is close to the BJP. It might be far-flung and remote, but Tawang is where "the promise and complexity of the U.S.-India relationship are easy to see", writes Mead.

The threat of Chinese incursion into the region has drawn India closer to the US. But religious tensions—like the major proselytising that Christian missionaries do in the region—and the difficulty of defending the northeast without access to Bangladeshi airspace complicates things for India. An American hand is seen behind both: American ideas about religious

freedom and accusations of America meddling in Bangladesh are both irritants in India.

"In New Delhi and Tawang, Indians mostly cheered Donald Trump's election. They hope he will give India the support against China it seeks without making a lot of noise about human rights," Mead writes. "We shall see."

Which brings us to Adani and the billionaire boys club, and the inconvenient timing of the American justice system investigating the Adani Group.

To start, the Financial Times has a story on Kenya's jubilation over cancelling the proposal for the Adani Group to expand its international airport and invest in its power sector.

"Kenya's decision underlined the global ramifications for Adani's companies after he was indicted for allegedly overseeing kickbacks to win business in India," the FT reports.

The Adani Group's expansion into Africa is seen as part and parcel of India's geopolitical ambitions, but investing in Kenya was like kicking the hornet's nest after massive protests against Adani's involvement took over the country in July.

"Modi urged Indian corporates to become 'multinational' soon after taking office in 2014, although Adani has always denied receiving preferential treatment from the government. India sees opportunities for its companies from Africa's natural resources and growing population," the report says, listing Adani's investments in other countries.

But the scandal also creates problems for India's own domestic growth.

"The allegations validate foreign investor perceptions of the difficulty of doing business in India and how a few politically connected players can allegedly game the system," Bloomberg says in its latest India Edition newsletter.

Foreign investors are warier than ever about fresh projects in India. It's undeniable that India's massive growth in the past 10 years has been supported by a "fivefold increase in infrastructure investments by the Modi government." One of the best successes of this expansion program has been the solar energy sector, and Bloomberg believes that this sector will be impacted the most by the Adani bribery scandal.

"First, the solar sector's bidding processes and economics will come under additional scrutiny now that US agencies have alleged that officials of Adani and Azure Power offered bribes to various state governments to purchase expensive power after having overbid to bag 12 GW projects from Solar Energy Corporation of India," the piece says.

Second, the involvement of Canadian pension fund Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec (CDPQ)—a major investor in Azure Power—shows that even Western institutions are caught in the mess. Funds are

likely to side-step India, even as markets in the US look exciting.

But keeping foreign investors back will also be hard: the government “will have to fix the reputational damage while protecting one of its so-called national champions.”

Reuters worries that Indian businesses will learn the wrong lessons from Adani. “Corruption’s long history in India explains the country’s failure to live up to its growth potential,” the editorial opens. “The danger, however, is that businesses learn the wrong lesson from the affair and grow warier of international capital markets rather than cleaning house.”

The problem, as Reuters sees it, is that corruption tends to “evolve” rather than disappear in fast-growing economies. “The scandal shines a light on a reality that many global companies would rather ignore. India’s \$3.9 trillion economy, with its low \$2,700 GDP per capita, is full of promise but also a difficult place to do business, like many other developing markets,” the piece says.

And routing out corruption should attract more FDI, but instead, “authorities know that going after big targets in any crackdown could have a shorter-term economic hit.”

“Ultimately, Adani’s use of U.S. debt capital markets exposed him to the long arm of the Justice Department, which doesn’t mind ruffling feathers of Washington’s diplomatic friends and foes alike,” the piece concludes. “The message Indian tycoons are hearing loud and clear is clean up fast or curtail your international ambitions.”

### Is This Civilisation Finished?

27 November 2024, Daily Sun, A K Ziauddin Ahmed

The Himalaya-Hindu Kush Mountains, along with the Tibetan Plateau, are often called the Third Pole after the Arctic and Antarctic, because of their huge ice reserves. Rivers originating in the Third Pole are a source of water for 40% of the world’s population, including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, India and Pakistan, according to Eos Scientific News published by the American Geophysical Union.

The importance of the region in global climate prompted China to launch the “Third Pole Climate Forum” in June 2024. Over the past several years, global warming has been melting the ice in the Third Pole at an alarming rate, causing flash floods, landslides and glacial lake outbursts in the region. Losses in terms of human lives, crops, livestock, homes, roads and other infrastructure are catastrophic.

It is now widely known that global warming and resultant climate change are a consequence of over 250 years of carbon emissions, largely from industrialised nations, since the mid-18th century.

However, the losses and damages due to climate change are suffered most by the developing countries since they lack the resources and technologies to mitigate them. The developing nations have long been asking for reparations from the developed nations but to no avail.

Finally, at the United Nations Climate Change Conference COP27 held in 2022, an agreement to provide funding for loss and damage to vulnerable nations was reached. As of January 2024, the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD), as they named it, received ‘commitments’ for contributions amounting to \$661 million, UNDP reports. We may recall here that the losses incurred by Pakistan in 2022 for floods triggered by unusual rains and melting glaciers were estimated at over \$10 billion.

At COP15 in Copenhagen, Denmark in 2009, developed nations pledged climate finance of \$100 billion yearly by 2020 to aid developing countries combat climate change. Climate finance is different from the above-mentioned FRLD. It is intended to mitigate carbon emissions and make necessary preparations for adapting to climate change. This year COP29 was held in Baku, Azerbaijan, from November 11 to 22. A UN press release declares that a breakthrough agreement was reached in the conference that developing countries will now be provided with USD 300 billion annually as climate finance raising it from USD 100 billion. A great rise indeed.

Are these funds really coming in? Let’s count from 2016, the year after the landmark Paris Agreement on climate change was adopted in COP21. The following table shows the amounts provided in climate finance funds by developed countries as published by OECD:

#### Is This Civilisation Finished?

Although the contributions have consistently fallen below the commitments over the years, it is encouraging to see that they finally reached and even exceeded the \$100 billion target in 2022.

However, Oxfam International, the renowned NGO with a mission to end global poverty and injustice, disagrees. In its press release issued on 9 July 2024, the organisation asserts that the “true value” of climate finance is only around \$35 billion. This is because nearly 70% of the funds have actually been provided as loans, not grants, meaning poor countries will have to repay them with interest.

Nevertheless, the rich countries have at least agreed to establish a system for compensating poor countries for losses suffered due to climate change and helping them adapt by making financial contributions. The underlying moral is that these nations are taking responsibility for causing climate change by emitting billions of tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

At every COP, countries pledge to reduce carbon emissions to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels—the limit agreed upon in the Paris Agreement. Unfortunately, global carbon emissions rather increased in 2023 by more than 497 million tons compared to 2022. In fact, the rising trend of carbon emissions has persisted except during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Is This Civilisation Finished?

Every year, COPs are organised with grandeur, drawing thousands of attendees, including heads of state and government, journalists and representatives from civil society, philanthropy and international organisations. Traditionally, countries engage in tough negotiations, and world leaders make pledges and commitments. Meanwhile, carbon emissions continue to surge unabated.

In the USA, the second-largest carbon emitter in the world (having lost its first position to China in 2006), Donald Trump is back in the presidency. During his first term, Trump withdrew the US from the 2015 Paris Agreement. He has repeatedly called climate change a “hoax”. So, the future outlook is even worse. Global carbon emissions will continue to rise, and at some point, global warming will cross the critical redline of no return. Therefore, as Rupert Read and Samuel Alexander contend in their book, “This civilisation is finished.”

### Pakistan and China’s diplomatic relations reach a low ebb

27 November 2024, The Interpreter, Adnam Aamir



As if Pakistan’s government wasn’t under pressure enough – with thousands of protesters on the streets and the capital Islamabad in lockdown amid calls to release former prime minister Imran Khan – relations with neighbouring China are also going from bad to worse.

Beijing’s growing anger over the safety of its citizens in Pakistan has been illustrated by a surprising diplomatic spat. “It is unacceptable for us to be attacked twice in only six months,” declared China’s ambassador in Islamabad Jiang Zaidong in an unusually direct response to comments made by a

senior Pakistan politician seen to be downplaying the risk. “President Xi [Jinping] cares about Chinese people’s security and puts people’s lives first,” Jiang went on to say. “He especially cares about the security of the Chinese people in Pakistan.”

Tension has been growing after a string of attacks seen to be targeting Chinese nationals, particularly in Balochistan, the restive southwestern province, and elsewhere, too. Pakistani officials described the ambassador’s comments as perplexing, given the positive diplomatic relations between both countries. Yet it was also the first time Pakistan and China have publicly exchanged blame, a significant departure from their usual polite diplomatic exchanges, at least those in public.

The prospect of Chinese “boots on the ground” is politically sensitive.

An attack in the north of Pakistan left five Chinese engineers dead in March. Another attack killed two Chinese nationals working for a power company in the port town of Karachi in October, with a further two Chinese workers injured in a shooting in November. Yet China has been asking for stronger security measures for its nationals in Pakistan since at least 2022 as attacks continued to mount. The public outburst by China’s ambassador is illustrative of frustration at Pakistan’s failure to protect Chinese nationals.

But Pakistan’s reaction was baffling. As the junior partner, and in need of support from China for its economy, military and diplomacy, Pakistan still chose to react to the ambassador. This might be a sign of annoyance after China aggressively pushed to allow Chinese security personnel to guard Chinese nationals in Pakistan. When this demand was rejected by Pakistan, China sought to form joint security companies, where Chinese along with Pakistani personnel would protect Chinese nationals working in Pakistan. But the prospect of Chinese “boots on the ground” is politically sensitive.

The standoff has economic consequences. China is stalling funding for the first phase of the ML-1 railway project, a \$6.8 billion project to upgrade railway tracks in Pakistan. Pakistan can expect more delays until making a major concession to China on security. The mood could also sour Pakistan’s request to China to reprofile power debt worth \$15 billion in July, where it is still waiting on an answer. This delay will hurt the balance of payment situation in Pakistan, which must repay \$100 billion in external debt in the next four years.

Ultimately, there is a limit to which China will tolerate losing its nationals in Pakistan, and it’s clear that a threshold is being reached. If Pakistan doesn’t improve the security situation it seems likely Beijing will move to disengage with Islamabad, which would carry significant consequences for CPEC, the China-

Pakistan Economic Corridor, a \$50 billion component of the Belt and Road Initiative.

**China's atrocity crimes in Xinjiang are entering an even darker phase. The UN must act.**

26 November 2024, Atlantic Council, Rayhan Asat

While the world's attention has turned to the devastating conflict in the Middle East, Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, and other global crises, the suffering of the Uyghur people in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region is accelerating. In late October, a Chinese state-run news outlet released what it called a documentary but was in fact an atrocious propaganda video. In this video, two Uyghurs, Gulmira Imin and Zulpiqar Rozi, were forced to confess to a crime they almost certainly did not commit. Forced confessions are a routine tactic employed by the Chinese government against Uyghur political prisoners. Imin and Rozi had been detained in the aftermath of the July 5, 2009, Uyghur uprising, and for almost fifteen years it was not known what had happened to these political prisoners. As a more well-known political prisoner, Gulmira is listed as a prisoner of conscience by the US Congress's Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission. Then suddenly, they appeared on camera, ostensibly blaming outside forces for the Chinese government-manufactured human rights violations that resulted in the student-led uprising. The years of torture they had endured since they were detained were visible on their faces, hair, and teeth due to the horrific conditions in the camps.

This video is just the latest example of the Chinese government's brutal treatment of Uyghurs. My colleague Alyssa Johnson and I have prepared a forthcoming report to the United Nations (UN) documenting an array of horrors, including deaths, torture, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, and the newly imposed illegal financial penalties on prisoners' families as a form of extortion. Our report also details forced labor, transnational repression, continuous violations of reproductive rights, and assaults against human rights defenders, among other offenses. Our work bears witness to the dark history unfolding in our time.

When atrocities persist, they risk becoming tragedies that the world feels powerless to change.

In the face of genocide and grave human rights violations, the Uyghur people have demonstrated extraordinary courage, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to peace. From the brave survivors to families of those who fell victim to the camps, the Uyghur community stands as a testament to grace and unity in the most trying of times. Yet,

despite their strength, the global community and the UN system have failed to protect them.

For nearly a decade, Uyghur advocates, myself included, have pushed the UN and governments across the world to address China's crimes against humanity and genocide against the Uyghur people. After two years of engaging with China on its terms, on August 27 of this year, Volker Türk, the UN high commissioner for human rights, issued an update on the ongoing human rights crisis in Xinjiang. The update merely confirmed what was already known—that despite requests from the UN, the Chinese government has refused to allow authorities any meaningful access to the region. This statement builds on the 2022 landmark report by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), which alleged that Chinese government policies targeting the Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples in Xinjiang may amount to crimes against humanity. The recommendations made in this report urged China to engage with and facilitate further visits by the OHCHR. However, in subsequent engagements with the UN and member states, the Chinese government has presented a deceitful image of its policies in Xinjiang, deliberately concealing the atrocity-torn region where Uyghurs and other ethnic groups remain in mass incarceration.

Today, after nearly nine years since China initiated its policy of mass detention of Uyghurs in Xinjiang, Beijing's atrocities against the Uyghur people have entered an even darker phase. China is further escalating the use of its authoritarian penal system to imprison people, with at least half a million Uyghurs imprisoned as of 2022, according to the Chinese government's own data (with 2022, 2023, and 2024 data missing due to public scrutiny indicating that the real numbers are much higher). In an August report that I co-authored with Min Kim for the Yale Genocide Studies Program, we conducted a statistical analysis of Uyghur imprisonment rates based on the Chinese government's own data. Despite Uyghurs comprising less than 1 percent of China's population, they account for 34 percent of the country's incarcerations, marking the world's highest rate of ethnic imprisonment. Our analysis estimates that, if left unchecked, China's atrocities will strip 4.4 million years of life from my proud community.

An investigation by researcher Nyrola Elimä and journalist Ben Mauk, published in the New York Times in November, uncovered the alarming extent of China's international reach, as it targets Uyghurs who have fled its oppressive regime. In cooperation with Thai authorities, the Chinese government has forcibly repatriated—in overt violation of international law—hundreds of Uyghurs who sought asylum in Thailand. The UN Refugee Commission failed them



after their brave escape. Dozens died. Today, more than sixty Uyghurs remain detained in Thailand under dire conditions, awaiting an uncertain fate. This situation calls for urgent international attention and action, as reports coming out of camps in Xinjiang are increasingly alarming. One such example is the Netherlands-based Uyghur activist Abdurehim Gheni, whose brothers, niece, and dozens of other relatives are in the camps. The Chinese government temporarily released Abdurehim's father, Abdugheni Hudaberdi, to pressure him into refraining from testifying at an international tribunal hearing examining China's human rights violations. When Abdurehim refused to comply with their request, his father was taken back to the camp, where he tragically passed away two months later in government custody. There is a saying in Uyghur that when someone passes away before they can see someone who they longed for, the person leaves this world with their eyes wide open. Abdurehim's father left this world with his eyes open.



Abdurehim Gheni holds a poster of his father, Abdugheni Hudaberdi, on July 29, 2024, in Amsterdam during a protest against the Chinese government's brutal policies in the Uyghur homeland. (Photo courtesy of Abdurehim Gheni.)

When thinking about such cases, my brother, Ekpar Asat—an award-winning entrepreneur and alumnus of the US State Department's exchange program—comes to mind. He has been unjustly imprisoned for eight years and eight months. I can hardly fathom what he endures each second in that prison. But Ekpar is not alone; there are countless others like him languishing in those cells. This reality leaves me, and others who care about the Uyghurs, no room to dwell in pain—we must channel it into action.

When atrocities persist, they risk becoming tragedies that the world feels powerless to change. But the Chinese government's crimes against the Uyghurs are not just tragic facts—they are deliberate acts of ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity, and genocide. The world cannot remain passive. Above all, the UN has a responsibility to act on the recommendations it has put forward and to demand accountability.

The United States, too, will have a major role to play in ensuring accountability for China's crimes against the Uyghur people. As the incoming US administration assembles its team of experts on China, I hope that the plight of Uyghurs will be placed at the center of US diplomacy with Beijing. At the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting in Lima, Peru, last week, Chinese leader Xi Jinping outlined four red lines for the United States, one of which was democracy and human rights—a pointed message to the incoming Trump administration not to press Beijing on these issues. The United States must respond decisively: These red lines for Xi are the foundations of the United States' core values that define its global leadership. Along with more decisive action from the UN, US leadership and initiative on China's human rights violations against the Uyghur people will be essential to hold Beijing accountable for its crimes.

### Google blocked 1,000-plus pro-China fake news websites from its search results

25 November 2024, The Register, Laura Dobberstein

Beijing's propaganda buddies aren't just using social media.

Google's Threat Intelligence Group has blocked a network China-related firms from its search results for operating fake news services and websites.

"Collectively these firms bulk-create and operate hundreds of domains that pose as independent news websites from dozens of countries, but are in fact publishing thematically similar, inauthentic content that emphasizes narratives aligned to the political interests of the People's Republic of China (PRC)," declared Google.

It's named the network "Glassbridge" and asserted it's comprised of entities operating in concert while pretending to be independent.

While Google could not confirm the leadership of Glassbridge, it assessed that the four entities – Shanghai Haixun Technology, Times Newswire, Durinbridge, and Shenzhen Bowen Media – were taking direction from a shared customer outsourcing the creation and distribution of pro-PRC content.

That content included regurgitated state sponsored media, press releases and other material. When it appeared online, it often did so mixed alongside more innocuous content, as well as conspiracy theories or ad hominem attacks on specific individuals.

The actors behind the campaign used digital PR firms, a ploy Google feels gave the operation plausible deniability, and could obscure the true source's role in the "dissemination of coordinated inauthentic content."

The most prolific of the four entities was Shanghai Haixun Technology. It had 600 domains that Google removed from its news search feature, and a number of YouTube channels that were also terminated. The group has been operating for a while – in 2022, 59 domains and 14 subdomains hosted by Shanghai Haixun were identified by Mandiant as slinging bogus pro-Beijing content.

Overall, Google revealed it has blocked over 1,000 sites from Google News and Google Discover since 2022. The takedowns were a response to what the search giant deemed deceptive behavior, and out of editorial transparency.

The Chocolate Factory reckons that Glassbridge's use of newswires indicates that information operations actors have moved beyond social media to spread their narratives. Similar tactics have been observed at Russian and Iranian operators.

But that doesn't mean Beijing is abandoning its foreign influencers. Plenty of government-linked trolls have been spotted this year – including from a separate influencing operations group tracked as Dragonbridge.

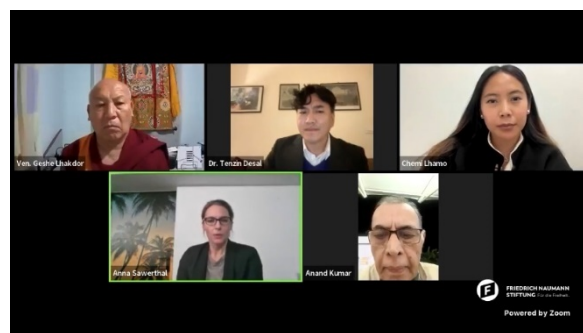
Dragonbridge content is also regularly found on websites related to Durinbridge and Shenzhen Bowen, Google's researchers wrote.

### Experts discuss future of Tibetan leadership and Dalai Lama's succession

25 November 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Nyidon

The discussion around the future of Tibetan leadership especially over the succession of His Holiness the Dalai Lama was reinvigorated by a panel of well-known and competent personalities from both the Tibetan and international circuits. The webinar titled "The Future of Tibetan Leadership: Insights on His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Succession" was organised by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF), a German foundation promoting liberal values hosted an international webinar on Wednesday

The panel featured prominent experts including Geshe Ven. Lhakdor, Director of the Dharmshala-based Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (LTWA); Prof. Anand Kumar, President of the India-Tibet Friendship Group; Dr. Tenzin Desal, Senior Researcher at the Tibet Policy Institute (TPI) and board member of the International Seminar of Young Tibetologists; and Chemi Lhamo, a Tibetan-Canadian activist and Canadian representative for the International Tibet Network's Steering Committee. The discussion was moderated by Dr. Anna Sawerthal, editor at the Austrian daily Der Standard.



Screengrab of distinguished speakers at the FNF's webinar held on Nov. 20, 2024

The webinar commenced with an introduction by Nupur Hasija, Senior Program Manager at the South Asia Regional Office of the FNF. She presented a short video highlighting FNF's long-standing collaboration with the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) since 1991. A pre-recorded keynote address by Sandra Wesser, a member of the German parliament, underscored the significance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's upcoming 90th birthday. She described the occasion as a "milestone" in global leadership, offering a moment for the international community to reflect on the future of Tibetan leadership and its associated challenges.

CTA President Penpa Tsering, in his pre-recorded remarks, expressed gratitude to FNF for organising the event and emphasised the importance of international awareness regarding His Holiness' reincarnation. "The Chinese government is not bothered by the living 14th Dalai Lama but they are more concerned about the yet to come, the 15th Dalai Lama," he noted. The Tibetan political leader also referenced the 16th Cabinet's official Position on the Issue of Reincarnation of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, published on September 29, 2022, reaffirming the Tibetan stance on the matter.

Ven. Geshe Lhakdor, who served as a religious assistant and translator to His Holiness the Dalai Lama for 16 years, emphasised the profound importance of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation in today's world. He highlighted Tibet's unique legacy in understanding the human mind and nurturing inner resources over millennia. "Tibet is the only country that has spent thousands of years studying the human mind and understanding its deeper potential to preserve and protect it," he stated. "We understand the concept of reincarnation better than anyone, and we recognise the immense importance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's reincarnation. In contrast, China, a country that restricts freedom, has minimal understanding of the human mind, and does not believe in religion, is now claiming the authority to recognise the Dalai Lama's reincarnation—just as they have with the Panchen Lama."

Geshe Lhakdor pointed out that China's interference in Tibetan religious practices is not new, dating back

to the Manchu era when they sought to control Tibetans by influencing the recognition of high lamas. He noted that under the current authoritarian regime, this control has become even more aggressive. He criticised Beijing's approach, stating, "They think they are very clever, but to people with basic common sense—at least to someone like me—they are absolutely stupid. They are making a mockery of human intelligence. They have no right to recognise His Holiness' reincarnation. Even if they try to, no one will follow it. Some might be out of fear of the regime, as we've seen with the Panchen Lama."

Prof. Anand Kumar provided a comprehensive analysis of India's perspective on the challenges surrounding the succession of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He highlighted the Dalai Lama's strategic transfer of political authority to the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), noting that secular matters now rest under the jurisdiction of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile. This transition, he explained, has been recognised by the Indian government and supported by most global powers. As an observer, he said he noticed when Indian authorities receive courtesy from the Tibetan government in exile, they are no longer cross-checking with the Dalai Lama. "That is a very important development in the last 15 years— a scientific, rational, and secular solution to a problem that will emerge with the physical passing of the 14th Dalai Lama."

Prof. Anand, who has actively engaged with the Tibetan cause since 1992, also reflected on the emotional connection between the Indian people and the Dalai Lama. "The Indians have been accustomed to identifying the Dalai Lama with Tibetans, and Tibet with the Dalai Lama. And we are always giving the highest importance to the position taken by the Dalai Lama in anything. Whenever reports emerge from Beijing, they are juxtaposed with those from Dharamshala, and it is Dharamshala's perspective that holds greater legitimacy," he noted. He also emphasised that India's support for the Tibetan cause transcends political affiliations, stating that the issue of Tibet in India has become a matter of national consensus regardless of which party is in power.

Activist Chemi Lhamo shared her perspective on how the international community can play a crucial role in addressing the succession of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, particularly from the standpoint of Tibetans in far-flung diaspora countries. She emphasised the need for preemptive international support through legislation, citing the U.S. Tibet Policy and Support Act of 2020 as a model. "The Chinese Communist Party seeks control and legitimacy, both internally and externally. When denied this, they resort to asserting their narrative and creating confusion. This is precisely where the international community must step in—with clarity and recognition of how

outrageous it is for the Chinese government to even participate in the conversation about reincarnation, let alone make decisions on it," she said.

Drawing a comparison, Chemi remarked that the idea of the Venezuelan government deciding the next Pope is "ridiculous," highlighting that even the Pope's selection involves a structured electoral process by the College of Cardinals. "In the case of reincarnation, it is not only a religious process but also a personal one. There is absolutely no room for political or colonial entities, such as the Chinese government, to interfere in this process. They are entirely unfit to do so." She further underscored the Chinese government's systematic destruction of Tibetan identity over the past seven decades. "This is the same regime actively erasing every aspect of Tibetan culture and identity. How can such a regime, the destroyer of Tibetan heritage, even attempt to speak about or decide the future of our spiritual leader?" she questioned. Chemi's remarks captured the strong sentiments of the Tibetan diaspora, rejecting any Chinese involvement in the reincarnation process. "The Chinese government has no right to be part of this conversation, and their actions only underscore their illegitimacy in this matter," she said.

Dr. Tenzin Desal, a fellow at TPI shared his insights on the signals emanating from the Tibetan exile capital and the broader dynamics of the Tibetan community, which he described as consisting of two distinct yet interconnected strands— Tibetans living in exile and those living in Tibet under colonial occupation. He explained that to understand the People's Republic of China (PRC) and its engagement with Tibet, we must consider two parallel activities— state-making and nation-building. "State-making is about incredible infrastructure building such as railways, and the omnipresent influence of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the everyday lives and politics of Tibetans inside Tibet. Nation-building, on the other hand, has proven to be a far greater challenge for the PRC as they attempt to impose the narrative that 'Tibet is part of the PRC.' This narrative faced a major reckoning in 2008, when widespread protests erupted across Tibet, with calls for the Dalai Lama's return and demands for a free Tibet—clearly signalling the PRC's failure."

Dr. Desal highlighted the resilience of Tibetans inside Tibet, who, despite limited freedom to voice their opinions, continue to engage in creative forms of resistance. At the same time, the Tibetan exile movement, forged since 1959, has successfully created a cohesive dialogue between these two strands. "This cohesion between Tibetans inside Tibet and the diaspora movement, amplifying each other's voices, is the biggest success story. And the singular

figure uniting and navigating these strands is His Holiness the Dalai Lama," he said.

Addressing the message from Dharamshala, he referenced a statement made by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 2011, affirming that discussions about his reincarnation would take place once he reaches the age of 90. "For now, we must wait a little longer for a clearer picture," he said.

The overall importance of the issue, although acknowledged by the stakeholders around the world, have seldom been actualised through an event like this, which was viewed by watch parties around the world including Tibetans, followers of the Dalai Lama as well as geo-politicians and observers who realise the political implications of the coming years.

### **Protecting Chinese workers in Pakistan: Should the PLA intervene?**

25 November 2024, Think China, Ghulam Ali

As violence continues to break out in Pakistan, Chinese workers are among those targeted, despite the clashing forces having no quarrel with China. Academic Ghulam Ali notes that China sending troops to Pakistan would not guarantee the safety of its citizens, and might expose them to danger instead.

Unabated terrorist attacks on Chinese workers in Pakistan have prompted policy circles to discuss the prospects of China's direct involvement in ensuring the safety of its workers in the country. While both governments have remained tight-lipped, the media has uncovered information about ongoing discussions between the two nations.

If these reports prove valid, it would represent a major shift in China's traditional policy of avoiding security roles in other countries. Furthermore, initiating such a role in a terror-hit Pakistan would serve as a litmus test for Beijing's capabilities.

#### **Decreasing Chinese investment**

Under its "flagship" China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), China has committed nearly US\$62 billion for projects in Pakistan, of which US\$25 billion has already been spent. In developing this project, China has faced severe security challenges due to relentless terrorist attacks on its workers engaged in various projects in Pakistan.

In 2024 alone, seven Chinese nationals lost their lives in two separate attacks. The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), a terrorist outfit fighting against the Pakistani military for the independence of Balochistan, and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), a religious extremist group demanding the implementation of strict Islamic laws and operating along the porous Pakistan-Afghanistan border, carried out these attacks.

Such challenges have led China to reduce its investment in Pakistan by 74% in 2023, despite an increase in its post-pandemic investments worldwide. Chinese Premier Li Qiang made no commitments to new projects or to initiating the second phase of the CPEC during his maiden visit to Pakistan in October 2024.

#### **China a soft target**

Notably, both BLA and TTP, fighting against the Pakistani military, harbour no direct grudges against China. Moreover, these terrorist groups are a result of the flawed policies of the Pakistani state.

China's significance to Pakistan, due to its historically strong strategic relationship, makes it a soft target. Any attack on the Chinese in Pakistan would bring these groups into the international limelight, which they seek for attention.

The pernicious seeds of religious extremism in Pakistan were sown by military dictator General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq (1977-88), who imposed strict Islamic laws in the country and joined the Afghan jihad against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan during the 1980s. Subsequent military leadership also used religious proxies expeditiously. The TTP is an offshoot of those policies. Most of its demands – implementation of Islamic laws, withdrawal of the military from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, provincial autonomy and the release of prisoners – are directed at the military. None of these demands is related to China.

Similarly, the insurgency in Balochistan is largely a reaction to oppressive military policies, marginalisation, denial of a share in the province's abundant natural resources, the establishment of military cantonments and the enforced disappearances of thousands of local Balochis. The roots of this insurgency, now in its fifth wave, trace back to the independence of Pakistan.

China's role in Balochistan began in 2002 with the construction of Gwadar port. Even after the completion of the first phase of the port, China withdrew, and the port was handed over to the Port of Singapore Authority (PSA). The differences between the Pakistani government and PSA were resolved by transferring administrative control to China in 2015.

Both terrorist groups are fighting against the Pakistani state, specifically the military. China is merely caught in the crossfire. China's significance to Pakistan, due to its historically strong strategic relationship, makes it a soft target. Any attack on the Chinese in Pakistan would bring these groups into the international limelight, which they seek for attention.

... the fundamental question is whether China's security role, through PSCs, the PLA, or other security operatives with a direct presence in Pakistan, will help ensure the safety of its citizens.

China's security role in Pakistan: PSCs or the PLA?

To counter these attacks, proposals for China's direct role in Pakistan's security have emerged. These include the deployment of China's private security companies (PSCs) or the People's Liberation Army (PLA), strengthening the capabilities of Pakistani security agencies, and establishing a joint security management system with Chinese security officials participating in security meetings.

China's PSCs, although having grown to thousands with millions of employees, have limited experience in international operations. According to reports, at most 40 of them have overseas operations. Furthermore, PSCs do not carry firearms, lack high-risk operational capabilities and operate under limited authority. Their role primarily consists of intelligence gathering, escort services, security training, risk assessment, site protection and emergency evacuation.

The deployment of PSCs or the PLA would require amendments to the existing laws of both countries, as they prohibit security roles in other countries. While amendments may not be difficult, as both states are involved, the fundamental question is whether China's security role, through PSCs, the PLA, or other security operatives with a direct presence in Pakistan, will help ensure the safety of its citizens.

Chinese deployments would hardly enhance security, given that they are unfamiliar with Pakistani culture and geographic conditions.

China should think twice

If PSCs or the PLA are deployed in the outer security circles around Chinese compounds or alongside vehicles carrying Chinese engineers, it would directly expose them to terrorist targets. As terrorists employ suicide attacks, which are the ultimate form of ambush, this reduces the chances of survival. Chinese deployments would hardly enhance security, given that they are unfamiliar with Pakistani culture and geographic conditions.

At the same time, deploying China's regular or paramilitary forces would contribute to the Baloch militants' narrative that China is assisting the Pakistani military in the exploitation of the province's resources, representing a new form of colonisation. On the global stage, it would reinforce the perception of China's expansionist agenda driven by its military power.

Considering that the Pakistani military and intelligence agencies, with all the resources at their disposal (equipment, access to information, and control over state machinery), have failed to ensure the safety of Chinese workers, how could small contingents of Chinese troops succeed in doing so?

The failure of Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts is not merely due to a lack of financing, equipment or intelligence sources. Following its entry into the US-

led "war on terror" in 2002, the Pakistani military received substantial aid, equipment, and intelligence support from the US. Yet terrorist incidents in the country continued unabated.

China should think twice before entering into Pakistan's security quagmire, which is a product of the Pakistani military itself. Sending any form of troops to Pakistan offers no guarantee of safety for its citizens and would likely expose them further to terrorists. China can strengthen Pakistan's counterterrorism measures while simultaneously questioning the will of the Pakistani military in this fight.

### China-India ties to be more resilient in the Trump 2.0 era

25 November 2024, The Interpreter, Daniel Balazs

India and China have sought to defuse their military standoff and that will limit the prospect for US interference in their relations.

Donald Trump's upcoming engagement with China and India will be one of the key determinants of Asian affairs. While Beijing and New Delhi are emerging great powers, their bilateral ties are not immune to Washington's geopolitical calculations. US strategic support to India and the enhancement of defence cooperation exacerbated a major downturn of Sino-Indian ties after the 2020 Galwan conflict. Nevertheless, a recent breakthrough on border affairs and shared economic imperatives suggest that China-India relations will be more robust against US strategic interference in the years to come.

China and India share a disputed border in the Himalayas that has served as a source of tension since the 1960s. China went to war over the border with India in 1962, and the two countries fought again in 1967. After an intense military standoff on the boundary in 1986-87, guns and boots gave way to decades of precarious stability. Frictions surfaced again in the 2010s, with bloodless military standoffs occurring in 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2017. In June 2020, a deadly fight in the Galwan valley claimed the lives of at least 20 Chinese and four Indian soldiers.

In the wake of the Galwan conflict, relations went into a nosedive. Not only did China and India deploy thousands of soldiers to the border, but tensions also spilled over into other areas. India restricted the inflow of Chinese investments, banning more than 250 applications developed by companies such as Tencent and Baidu, and conducted tax raids on telecommunications companies including Huawei and ZTE. India also expelled Chinese journalists, and China responded in kind.



The previous Trump administration branded China as a “strategic competitor” and it reacted to the Sino-Indian rift accordingly. Washington aided India during the Galwan conflict by providing it with intelligence and defence equipment. After the clashes, the United States and India signed the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement on Geospatial Cooperation, a pact that improves interoperability between the US and Indian militaries. The Biden administration followed a similar approach. The 2022 National Defence Strategy and Indo-Pacific Strategy reiterated US support to India vis-à-vis China on the border and in the broader Indian Ocean region. A report also stated that the US shared intelligence with India that prevented another fatal clash in 2022. The Biden administration spearheaded cooperation with India in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or “Quad”, and Biden referred to China as an aggressor at the meeting of the group earlier this year.

China watched these developments with unease. Chinese media blasted the US for destabilising Asia and cajoling New Delhi into a coalition against Beijing. Reports lambasted India for siding with the United States after the Galwan clashes, and exploiting a strategic collaboration with Washington against China.

Last month, the Indian government announced that it had reached a border patrol agreement with China. The pact defused the Sino-Indian military standoff that had persisted since 2020.

While US strategic interference worsened tensions between Beijing and New Delhi, recent developments portend greater Sino-Indian resilience to Washington’s geopolitical designs for the region.

Last month, the Indian government announced that it had reached a border patrol agreement with China. The pact defused the Sino-Indian military standoff that had persisted since 2020. The agreement does not resolve the border dispute, but it lays down the foundation for the normalisation of Sino-Indian ties and has implications for the two Asian states’ relationship.

Stable ties with China allow India to reduce its reliance on US strategic support and offset one of the key drivers of India’s commitment to the Quad. Furthermore, the border agreement allows India to re-engage with China in the economic domain, as trade and investment relations with Beijing serve New Delhi’s goal of becoming a manufacturing hub. Investment proposals by China were already being approved on a case-by-case basis before the agreement, and such clearances could increase going forward.

A steady relationship with India also benefits China, as it counteracts New Delhi’s “strategic drift” towards the United States. As tensions subside,

China’s outreach to India is likely to have an economic element. Accessing the vast Indian market would benefit China as it capitalises on exports for growth amid a real estate slowdown and a decline in consumer spending.

Trump’s upcoming trade policy could also drive rapprochement between India and China. Trump pledged to impose 60-100 per cent import tariffs on goods brought in from China and 10-20 per cent tariffs on imports from any other country. Recent analysis suggests that India could also be a target of additional punitive tariffs, and Trump has a track record of trade frictions with New Delhi. The first Trump administration’s steel and aluminium tariffs affected US-India trade and the United States also revoked India’s preferential trade treatment in 2019. Against this backdrop, China and India could benefit from each other’s markets to mitigate the impact of potential import tariffs imposed by the United States.

The Galwan conflict and the Sino-Indian rift allowed the United States to boost defence ties with India and shape the Asian strategic landscape to its advantage. With China and India on the road to rapprochement, Trump 2.0 will need to take a fresh look at Asian affairs and design a strategy that is less reliant on New Delhi’s animosity towards Beijing.

### **Why loan from China under BRI may bring down KP Oli govt in Nepal**

25 November 2024, FirstPost

Ahead of Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli’s visit to China in December, the country’s ruling parties are at odds over Beijing’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). While Oli’s Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist wants to go ahead with a loan from Beijing under the BRI, the Nepali Congress led by Sher Bahadur Deuba is staunchly against it. Let’s take a closer look

Is the KP Sharma Oli-led government in Nepal in trouble?

Ahead of Oli’s visit to China, Nepal’s ruling parties are going at it over Beijing’s Belt and Road Initiative. While Oli’s Communist Party of Nepal- Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) party wants to go ahead with the loan from China, the Nepali Congress led by Sher Bahadur Deuba seems adamantly against it.

Oli, ahead of the China visit, struck an upbeat note.

“I am embarking on a visit to China on December 2 and it will not just be a tour to a foreign country,” Oli said. “You will know by yourself how the visit became successful after I return home.”

But what do we know about the row?

Let’s take a closer look:

Oli’s CPN-UML pushes BRI

First, let’s briefly examine Oli’s upcoming trip.

As per The Print, this will be Oli's first foreign visit since taking office.

Nepal's foreign minister Arzu Deuba is heading to China today ahead of the trip, as per Indian Express. Deuba, the wife of Nepali Congress leader Sher Singh Deuba, will join Oli on the trip.

Oli's visit is a departure from history as Nepal's leaders usually visit India first after taking office – which is a nod to the close ties between Kathmandu and New Delhi.

However, Oli is thought to be a pro-China leader.

Oli previously visited China in March 2016 after taking power in 2015.

Oli and the CPN-UML have been pushing for more loans under China's Belt and Road Initiative from its Exim Bank, as per Indian Express.

The newspaper reported that Oli, at a meeting of top Nepal's officials last week which included Nepali Congress chief Sher Bahadur Deuba, his wife and Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba and NC general secretary Gagan Thapa, said he had made assurances to China that it would be difficult for him to back out of.

Oli, attending a grand rally organised by his party in Kathmandu last week, claimed that the government is firmly progressing towards its commitment to development, prosperity, and good governance.

Oli during the rally hinted that he intends to sign a few projects with China.

"As much as possible we don't want to take loans from anywhere; we are not in the condition that we can add on more loans but we have to increase our production. How can we increase our production? It's not something that we need to be depressed about. Rather we should be hopeful and raise awareness within our circle, other smaller countries aren't in the place where they're now," Oli said.

"Increasing productivity will be my priority," he added.

Nepali Congress opposes loan

But the Nepali Congress has been insistent on its stance against any new loans.

Oli during the meeting last week with the top officials was unable to convince his coalition partners the Nepali Congress to put pen to paper over the BRI framework, as per Indian Express.

The agreement, signed in 2017, is yet to be finalised.

"How much loan do we take? If grant, take it now. Let's not add further burden," Deuba told Oli during the meeting, as per Rising Nepal Daily.

According to The Times of India, China and Nepal are yet to negotiate a loan under the BRI despite intense efforts from Beijing.

Kathmandu has been historically reluctant to take loans – preferring instead to rely on grants – given the state of its economy.

It is also wary of falling into a debt trap like some other countries.

The Nepali Congress leaders insisted that Oli sign the BRI framework treaty only if the projects have 100 per cent grants.

Beijing has made it clear it has no interest in doing so.

People in the know told The Times of India that the Nepali Congress may have a rethink about supporting the government if Oli proceeds with taking loans under the BRI over its objections.

The Nepali Congress, during a meeting at the Federal Parliament building to discuss Nepal's current economic situation and reform measures, had yet again reiterated that it would not accept any new loans under the BRI.

Prakash Sharan Mahat, the Nepali Congress spokesperson and ex-finance minister, said that China must honour its prior commitments before any talk of new loans.

"The Nepali Congress is not opposed to the BRI, we are simply saying that we cannot take on new loans at this time," he explained.

"In terms of the support we need for connectivity, we initially required grant assistance for road construction. Many of the commitments made by the Chinese government in grants have yet to be fulfilled, and those need to be addressed first."

Mahat further added, "If the grant implementation itself is lagging, what is the point of discussing loans? The debt burden is already increasing. Therefore, we should avoid taking loans from any government, including the Chinese government."

While the Chinese government is expected to implement grant commitments under the BRI, Mahat reiterated that new loans should not be pursued immediately.

"Regarding the BRI framework, are we attempting to combine other strategic security aspects into this? We believe these matters require careful consideration," he stated.

"For now, the focus should be on implementing the grants, especially those under the BRI, and avoiding new loans," he added.

Experts say Oli is in a tough spot.

"PM Oli is now treading a tightrope. He has to take the NC, the main ally of the coalition, into confidence so that he will make some significant gain from the China visit," a piece in Rising Nepal Daily stated.

"Nepal's political leaders should demonstrate their ability to navigate the geopolitical complexities. But their real leadership test lies in taking bold steps in the interest of the nation while avoiding the potential geopolitical pitfalls."

Oli remains upbeat

Oli though, has remained upbeat

At last week's rally he dismissed any rift between the coalition partners.

He said the cooperation between the CPN-UML and the Nepali Congress is aimed at lifting the country from its decline.

He also rubbished allegations made by his opponents, justified the alliance between the Nepali Congress and CPN-UML to form the incumbent coalition government, and vowed to take action against corruption, anarchy and those violating the law.

Any form of fraud, smuggling, corruption, character assassination, and obscenity is unacceptable, the prime minister said.

Addressing what is claimed to be the awareness campaign of the party, Oli urged the investors to invest with confidence as the government is on a mission to create a 'Prosperous Nepal and Happy Nepali' by maintaining peace and security.

"You should invest, the government will arrange security and good governance," he told industrialists. Addressing the rally seen as Oli's first show of strength of his party CPN-UML after assuming power a year and a half ago, the premier claimed the economy is improving due to the policies and plans adopted by the CPN-UML-Congress coalition.

Rejecting rumours spread by the opposition parties regarding the fall of the government, Oli assured it would run for a full five-year term till the next election.

He vowed to hand over power to Nepali Congress chief Sher Bahadur Deuba in a one-and-a-half-year term as per the power-sharing deal between the two largest parties.

He also sought to reassure India earlier this month.

"That I am visiting China first does not mean our relation with India is not good," he told the Kathmandu Post.

"We took a position while India imposed a blockade [in 2015-16], so they were not happy. There is no reason for them to be unhappy with us [now] as we will maintain friendly, balanced and good relations with both our neighbors."

### **China's People Deserve the Truth—Not Censorship | Opinion**

25 November 2024, Newsweek, Ben Cardin

On Nov. 11, in Zhuhai, China, a 62-year-old man drove his car into a crowd at a sports complex, killing 35 people and injuring 43 others. It was China's deadliest mass killing in more than a decade. While the tragedy barely made headlines in the West, many Chinese citizens may not have heard about it inside China, where it was swiftly and thoroughly swept under the rug by the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) vast censorship apparatus.

Even foreign news agencies faced intimidation, and in the case of a BBC reporter, physical assault, when he attempted to cover the developments in Zhuhai.

Before family members, friends, and acquaintances of the victims could even begin to grieve, CCP authorities quickly dismantled makeshift memorials and removed flower arrangements placed in remembrance. Social media platforms in China were instructed to delete posts expressing outrage and sorrow. Once again, the CCP quickly escalated its censorship efforts to suppress public discussions of the tragedy and its impact, leaving Chinese citizens to grapple with this incident—and what it says about their country—in the midst of an information blackout. In Washington, we tend to focus on China's global ambitions, its economic competition with the United States, and its aggressive behavior on the international stage which challenge the global norms that we and our allies have upheld since World War II. We analyze China's conduct through diplomatic, economic, and security lenses, but we continually overlook a critical element of U.S.-China policy—the Chinese people.

Some of this is out of our control. Under President Xi Jinping, the CCP has repeatedly restricted access to U.S. diplomats and cancelled dozens of public events organized by the United States mission in China. He is also responsible for expanding the CCP's powerful media and online censorship regime that blocks news outside, independent, or "sensitive" information—like news about the Zhuhai mass casualty incident—silencing free expression among people in China.

What we can control is how we respond to these challenges. So far, despite the excellent work of outlets like Radio Free Asia and Voice of America, our efforts to engage with the Chinese people and empower them with access to uncensored information have fallen short. In the near term, this weakens our ability to counter the anti-U.S. propaganda aimed at China's 1.4 billion citizens. Over time, it risks creating a lasting divide in mutual understanding and goodwill between our nations, potentially leading to broader support for—or an implied acceptance of—some of Xi's extreme policies. Despite ongoing censorship, Chinese citizens are increasingly questioning their government's policies and conduct. More are seeking alternative sources of information and calling for greater economic and political freedoms. The 2022 White Paper Movement protests against the Chinese government's draconian "zero-COVID" policy clearly demonstrated that desire. And perceptions of the United States have recently shown improvement despite a constant barrage of targeted anti-U.S. propaganda. The stakes are higher than ever, yet all the evidence suggests we have an unprecedented opportunity to engage.

This pivotal moment calls for bold steps to deepen understanding, bridge divides, and build genuine connections with the people of China. That's why, when I introduced the bipartisan Informing a Nation with Free, Open, and Reliable Media (or INFORM Act)—a bill directing the executive branch to share clear, independent information to Chinese citizens—I hoped to spark a much-needed conversation in Congress about how U.S. policy can better support the rights and freedoms of those who have long endured intense repression and censorship. That conversation should also remind us that the Chinese people are not our adversaries; they are members of the global community, entitled to the same liberties that all people deserve from a government that respects their dignity.

As the new administration takes office and the next chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee steps into their role, it's critical that they make this issue a priority and join in this important conversation. It is vital that we continue to emphasize that our differences are with China's authoritarian government, not its people. By recognizing the Chinese people as partners in the international community rather than enemies, the United States can reframe its approach to U.S.-China policy—grounding it in shared human values between our two citizenries.

While we continue to prioritize economic, military, and technological competition with China's government, it's also time to dedicate our efforts and resources to meaningful engagement with the people of China. From the Tiananmen Square protests to the resilience seen in the White Paper Movement, Chinese citizens have repeatedly shown remarkable resolve in the face of repression. This latest tragedy in Zhuhai underscores what's at stake—not only the rights of those to grieve and seek justice but also the very soul of China's future. Each silenced story, each deleted post, and each dismantled memorial is a stark reminder that, without the means to connect, learn, and question, the Chinese people are left isolated from the truth and the outside world.

If we are as serious about the China challenge as we profess, we must continue to stand up for the Chinese people who are courageously leading the way.

### **How Xi Jinping is going back to Confucius to define China's future**

24 November 2024, SCMP, Xinlu Liang

Xi's plan to glorify China's deep cultural roots is embodied in Ruzang, a compilation of the philosopher's writings and related works

For most of the 103-year history of the Communist Party of China, the teachings of the philosopher Confucius were deemed relics of a backwards past, with its leaders looking to Marxism and socialism to modernise China.

But under President Xi Jinping's leadership, Confucianism has made a dramatic comeback as the bedrock of imperial Chinese ethics and governance, and other Chinese classics have become the pillars of Beijing's efforts to shore up its intellectual foundation and governance philosophy amid an intensifying ideological competition with the US-led West.

One of the latest ventures is the Ruzang, or "Confucian Canon", project to create the largest ever compilation of Confucian classics. The project, which has had the input of nearly 500 scholars since it was started in 2003, was significantly elevated in 2014 when Xi became the first Chinese president to throw his personal weight behind it.

Within China, the project is reminiscent of similar immense canon projects undertaken only a few times in the past 2,000 years, and is set to become a major source of inspiration for better governance.

Among those contributing to Ruzang are international scholars, with Beijing apparently aiming to appeal to overseas Chinese. But experts point to geopolitical tensions and a public opinion of Confucianism as a Han-centric idea as obstacles.

The Ruzang project was first approved in 2003 by the Education Ministry under then president Hu Jintao and spearheaded by Chinese philosopher Tang Yijie, who pledged to compile all known Confucian classics while explaining the survival and development of the nation.

Xi backed the project when he visited then 87-year-old Tang at Peking University in 2014, hailing it as "a very meaningful endeavour that carries forward Chinese civilisation".

Peking University vice-president Wang Bo took over the project from Tang after he died in 2014.

Wang was chosen to make policy recommendations at October's study session of the 24-man Politburo chaired by Xi, who spoke on the goal of turning China into a "cultural powerhouse" by 2035, drawing strength from Marxism and Chinese traditional heritage.

So far, nearly 500 scholars from around 100 institutions in China, South Korea, Japan and Vietnam have collaborated on the project, with estimated costs around 150 million yuan (US\$21 million).

By April last year the first phase had compiled 510 influential Confucian writings into 282 volumes. The ongoing second phase aims to include an additional

160 works, resulting in a massive collection of about a billion characters – the largest of its kind in China’s history.

The Confucian Canon is among China’s efforts to tap into its cultural and philosophical roots to strengthen national pride at home, dubbed by Xi as “Compilation of Classics in the Flourishing Age”.

To many Chinese, Xi’s description brings to mind Chinese writing projects such as the “Five Classics” of Confucian works in the Han dynasty (206BC-AD220), the vast Yongle Dadian, an encyclopaedia commissioned under the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), and the Siku Quanshu, which was written in the 18th century during the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) and was the largest collection of books in imperial China.

The Confucian Canon follows the basic structure of Siku Quanshu, categorising works from the pre-Qin dynasty to the end of the Qing dynasty, including original Confucian classics, works reflecting Confucian thought and literature related to governance, and personal conduct that reflects Confucianism, according to the Peking University Editorial and Research Centre of Confucian Canon.

Some literature previously deemed non-Confucian – such as that of Tao Yuanming, traditionally a Taoist poet and politician; and Qi Jiguang, a Ming dynasty general who fought Japanese pirates – have been included because they reflect Confucian ideals.

This scope presents a holistic view of Confucian thought over time, complete with editorial footnotes explaining each text’s significance.

Meanwhile, the texts were also digitised, which could play a crucial role in making these ancient texts accessible to scholars and the public around the world, according to the centre’s interviews with multiple project editors.

Confucianism’s changing role

In various media interviews, Tang Yijie emphasised Confucianism’s influence on ancient Chinese politics, economics, and culture. He said that while historically Buddhist and Daoist canons had been compiled, there was no overarching Confucian Canon because resources had been limited.

While the Ruzang project has academic benefits, analysts say it also encapsulates a broader narrative connected to China’s cultural renaissance and national security concerns amid the prevailing narrative war with the West.

Stephen C. Angle, a professor of philosophy and East Asian Studies at Wesleyan University in the United States, notes that the project reflects both political motives and “a genuine desire ... to re-energise” Confucianism as a source of theory and practice in Chinese society.

“Confucianism must be seen as ‘progressive’, which means developing in response to modern social, economic and political changes,” he said.

For centuries, Confucianism has served as the foundation of Chinese ethics and governance and influenced various dynasties.

Confucius, born in 551BC, proposed a system based on hierarchy mixed with benevolence, a reflection of the importance of social harmony and moral integrity in governance.

However, these principles faced being rejected during the revolutionary upheavals of the 20th century.

“Chinese dynasties have typically relied on the Confucian canon for legitimacy. Only radical regimes, like the Communist Party in the 20th century, opposed this notion, particularly during the May Fourth Movement and Cultural Revolution,” said Rana Mitter, ST Lee Chair in US-Asia Relations at Harvard Kennedy School.

While the official hostility towards Confucianism ended after the Cultural Revolution Chinese leaders in the subsequent decades mainly leaned towards the liberal democracy and capitalist model, said Daniel A. Bell, a chair professor at the University of Hong Kong.

Bell is the author of *The Dean of Shandong*, an account of Chinese academia based on his experience at Shandong University from 2017 to 2022, when he was involved in promoting Confucianism through teaching and research.

He said that since the 1990s, “Confucianism and communism mounted huge and unexpected comebacks” in a multipolar world, as China claimed it would not copy the West.

According to Bell, who was last month elected vice-president of the International Confucian Association, politically Confucianism provides a “source of values-based legitimacy” that complements Marxism and psychologically, it addresses the “atomisation and moral vacuum” created by capitalist-style modernisation.

The revival gained further traction in the 2000s under then president Hu’s “Harmonious Society” strategy alongside the establishment of Confucius Institutes worldwide.

Since Xi assumed leadership in 2012, cultural initiatives have been emphasised as part of China’s national security, encompassing various dimensions.

The resurgence of Confucianism culminated when Xi visited Qufu, Confucius’s birthplace, in eastern Shandong province in 2013 and made a speech on the 2,565th birthday of Confucius in September 2014 – the first time a Chinese president had taken part in celebrations marking Confucius’s birth.

He personally endorsed the role of the sage and suggested Confucianism could offer solutions for global peace and development. “Confucianism is key to understanding the national characteristics of the



Chinese as well as the historical roots of the spiritual world of the present-day Chinese," he said during the 2014 celebration.

He added that Confucianism had evolved and responded to the demands of the times.

In that year, the Communist Party mandated that officials nationwide attend lectures on Confucius and other classical philosophers.

Legalism – the school less discussed

Xi has referred to classical texts so frequently that in 2015 and 2018, Communist Party mouthpiece People's Daily compiled two volumes of quotes he used from important articles and speeches. Among the selected nearly 300 quotes, Confucianism is his most cited philosophy, followed by Legalism.

While Beijing has not promoted the school of thought known as Legalism as prominently, some academics, such as Delia Lin from the University of Melbourne, argue that Xi combines both philosophies.

Legalism is a pragmatic governance approach characterised by strict laws, centralised authority and the belief that human nature is inherently self-interested and could lead to chaos without proper control.

Confucianism promotes moral leadership and social harmony, justifying the Communist Party's authority through the idea of the virtuous ruler, or "sage-king", aligned with Xi's "rule by virtue".

In 2017, Lin wrote in a book chapter that "Confucianised Legalism" was the dual emphasis on moral education and firm legal structures that underpinned Xi's governing framework.

It enabled the Communist Party to claim both legitimacy and effectiveness in governance, and was highlighted in the 2014 fourth plenary session, which reinforced the commitment to "governing the country according to law".

In multiple speeches about governing by the law and anti-corruption, Xi has cited Legalism classics in defence of the hardline crackdown.

"Today's China under Xi Jinping is leaning into the idea of China as a source of traditional wisdom. This has tapped into a greater nationalist pride in China's intellectual traditions more broadly in China," said Harvard historian Mitter.

Intellectual legitimacy

Besides the canon project, in recent years there has been a slew of "Chinese culture projects" that all reinforce Beijing's narrative of a continuous history with China a global power with ancient status.

They include the "China Paintings through the Ages" series exhibited since 2022, a project that aims to document and preserve Chinese paintings from ancient times to the Qing dynasty. Additionally, the evacuation of archaeological sites such as Liangzhu serve as physical proof of China's 5,000-year civilisation.

These changes manifest that "modern China looks back to its civilisational heritage to extract wisdom that can inform its future," according to Peter T.C. Chang, a visiting senior fellow with the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore.

The ideological foundation of China was rooted in Leninist-Marxist thought, but the current leadership recognised the importance of the country's indigenous traditions, especially Confucianism, he said.

"This process marks a return to cultural roots, using the teachings of Confucianism and other traditional philosophies as guiding principles for China's continued development and governance."

The key approach, in Xi's own words, is to "Sinicise Marxism" through Chinese traditional culture, a process outlined in the "two combines" strategy introduced in 2021 during the party's centenary. It was later added to Xi Jinping Thought on Culture, which was raised in October last year as the sixth pillar of the paramount leader's political doctrine that has been enshrined in the constitution since 2018.

The "first combine" adapts Marxism to China's unique realities, exemplified by Deng Xiaoping's reforms. The "second combine" coined by Xi integrates Marxism with traditional Chinese culture.

At the symposium in June last year, Xi asserted: "This fusion has resulted in a distinctly Chinese style and character, with Sinicised Marxism becoming the essence of Chinese culture and spirit in contemporary times".

He also hailed China's unique development path in its uninterrupted cultural continuity, creativity, unity, inclusiveness and peaceful nature.

Limited influence abroad

China's ongoing revival of Confucianism also comes amid its struggle against Western narratives that frame China as "authoritarian" and resistant to modern democratic values.

The canon project involves collaboration with scholars from South Korea, Japan and Vietnam, emphasising their shared cultural heritage. However, experts warn the project must be handled sensitively and with limited effects because of ongoing political disputes.

The project aims to strengthen Chinese identity and pride in the achievements of Chinese civilisation while also emphasising common cultural ties with neighbouring countries, according to China observer Andrew Nathan, a Columbia University professor of political science.

He said it might be difficult for the objectives of the project, while valid, to resonate beyond China's borders.

"When Chinese classics travelled to other neighbouring countries, they were reinterpreted and

adapted in those countries, just as Chinese thinkers adapted Buddhism from India or Mao Zedong carried out the 'Sinification of Marxism'," he said, adding that the project should consider this variation in national traditions within the broader framework of Confucian thought.

Germaine A. Hoston, a political-science professor at the University of California, San Diego, also underscored the need for sensitivity in recognising Confucian contributions across different countries in Asia to avoid undermining the legitimacy of the project.

"It is important that such contributions are not disregarded or diminished in an effort to reassert Chinese military, political and cultural hegemony in the region," she said.

The influence of Confucianism beyond China – or not – is a subject of discussion among observers and academics.

For Chang, Confucianism today remains largely a Han-centric sphere, despite its influence in Japan and South Korea.

"To promote Confucianism globally without being perceived as a form of cultural hegemony, the tradition must undergo a process of 'de-Sinicisation'," ensuring that teachings were accessible through translations that facilitate engagement without cultural barriers, he said.

Larger differences related to geopolitical and other disagreements may overshadow common heritage.

According to Mitter, there has been "relatively little spillover effect, even in Asia," as "China's contemporary political disputes over war memory, territory and economics mean that neighbouring states prioritise those issues over ideas of shared common cultural heritage".

Outside Asia, Confucianism was increasingly being positioned as a "counterpoint" to Western narratives, particularly Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilisations" theory, Chang pointed out.

"Xi Jinping's vision of a 'community of shared future for humanity' draws upon Confucian values of harmony and coexistence. This philosophy provides an alternative Eastern world view that emphasises peaceful collaboration and mutual respect, contrasting with the more conflict-oriented outlook of some Western theories.

"The Confucian principle of harmonious coexistence is thus being employed as a framework for advocating global unity over division," he said.

Another criticism of China's attempts to promote traditional Chinese culture – especially Confucianism – is that it promotes state propaganda or "cultural hegemony".

For Angle, some of the criticism is justified "because too often, official representatives of Chinese culture

have not acted in a confident way, but in a rigid way that refuses all questions or genuine dialogue".

Bell suggested there needed to be "Confucian-style 'soft power' – rule by virtue, moral example, 'diversity in harmony', personal freedom and political participation at the local level – to counter and soften centralising and totalising tendencies of China's legalist tradition that advocates strong state power above all else".

### **New Delhi needs to warm up China-India relations with sincerity**

24 November 2024, Global Times, Lou Chunhao

With the successful implementation of the resolutions that China and India recently reached on issues concerning the border area, the China-India relationship, which has been lingering at a low level for over four years, is entering a window of opportunity for improvement. The Indian side has expressed its willingness to strengthen strategic communication with China, enhance strategic mutual trust, and expand mutually beneficial cooperation. It has also proposed relevant ideas and suggestions for improving and developing bilateral relations, leading to positive expectations for the future of the relationship between the two countries. However, some argue that the current shift in India's attitude is partly due to its widening differences with the US, Canada, and others over issues of "democracy" and "human rights," as well as considerations to reduce the resource consumption of winter troop deployments along the border. This has raised doubts about New Delhi's sincerity in improving relations with China.

Given India's previous inconsistencies in its policy toward China, these doubts are not without merit. Therefore, in addition to strategically eliminating erroneous concepts such as "relying on the US to counter China" and "war is inevitable between China and India," India also needs to work with China to promote the stable and healthy development of bilateral relations. Currently, India needs to make efforts in at least the following three areas.

First, it's necessary for India to rationally guide domestic public opinion to foster a positive understanding of China. The development of China-India relations requires a solid foundation of public opinion. It is particularly necessary for the government and mainstream media to properly guide rather than manipulate public sentiment when issues arise in bilateral relations. However, in recent years, some Indian military and political officials have excessively exaggerated the contradictions and differences between China and India. Certain think tank scholars and media outlets have been eager to fabricate the "China military threat" narrative,

frequently amplifying the "China threat" to attract attention and generate traffic. This has significantly poisoned the Indian public's perception of China.

A key issue in this situation is the role the Indian government should play and the signals it should send. In light of the recent positive momentum in China-India relations, it is crucial for the Indian side to clearly explain to its citizens the necessity and inevitability of improving and developing these relations.

Second, it is crucial to decisively abandon the practices of overstretching the concept of security and genuinely deepen economic and trade cooperation. Over the past 30 years, China-India economic and trade cooperation has made significant progress, with continuous improvements in cooperation mechanisms and steady growth in investment and trade. Economic and trade cooperation was once regarded as the "ballast stone" of bilateral relations. Both sides not only regard the development of a partnership as a core component of their strategic and cooperative relationship but have also established a high-level economic and trade dialogue mechanism to strengthen the alignment of economic development strategies, and promote balanced and sustainable growth in bilateral trade.

However, in recent years, India has increasingly tended to view its economic and trade relationship with China from a competitive, and even substitutive or hedging perspective. This shift has led to discriminatory economic and trade policies against China, such as banning Chinese applications, restricting Chinese investments in India, and suppressing Chinese enterprises operating in India, which have severely harmed the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese companies. Clearly, India has not benefited, and cannot benefit, from its discriminatory policies against China. The Indian government is also attempting to create a favorable business environment to attract more foreign direct investment. Restoring and strengthening economic and trade cooperation with China would be beneficial in achieving these goals.

Third, it is essential to eliminate artificial barriers as soon as possible and actively promote people-to-people exchanges. Amity between the people holds the key to sound state-to-state relations. As two ancient civilizations, China and India have historically benefited from cultural exchanges that provide positive energy to their bilateral relations. However, in recent years, the Indian side has imposed artificial obstacles, such as suspending direct flights to China, limiting visas, halting activities, and expelling journalists. These actions have led to a dramatic decline in bilateral people-to-people exchanges. China has consistently maintained an

open attitude toward people-to-people exchanges between the two countries, while the Indian side's self-imposed barriers have left many rational individuals who hope for stable development in China-India relations feeling surprised and perplexed. The recent state of academic exchanges between China and India illustrates this point. Many Indian scholars have been invited to participate in academic activities in China, while it has become increasingly difficult for Chinese scholars to engage in face-to-face exchanges in India. The Indian government needs to promptly lift restrictions on people-to-people exchanges with China, allowing for more frequent interactions; otherwise, hopes for improved bilateral relations will be extinguished once again.

The current disengagement efforts at relevant border points are merely the first step toward easing border tensions and promoting the improvement of bilateral relations. China-India relations have not yet returned to the state they were in before the Galwan Valley conflict in 2020. Actions speak louder than words; we hope that India will quickly take concrete and positive actions on various issues related to bilateral cooperation, truly working to thaw the relationship between China and India.

### Decoding PM Modi's message to China

23 November 2024, The Indian Express, Ram Madhav

The Modi government's China policy is pragmatic and realist. It understands that the bilateral relationship cannot be placed in any specific category of friends or foes. It will remain volatile. Three important meetings between the leaders of India and China have generated a sense among observers that the two countries are cosying up to each other once again. Prime Minister Narendra Modi met President Xi Jinping at Kazan in Russia in October on the sidelines of the BRICS summit. This was followed by a meeting between the Indian Foreign Minister S Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, at Rio de Janeiro in Brazil on the sidelines of the G20 summit. Around the same time, Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh was in Vientiane in Laos, shaking hands with his Chinese counterpart, Admiral Dong Jun. Prime Minister Modi's meeting with Xi Jinping comes five years after the second India-China informal bilateral summit at Mahabalipuram in Tamil Nadu in 2019. China's violation of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in early 2020, leading to the deaths of 20 Indian soldiers and an unknown number of Chinese soldiers, stalled the bilateral engagement process.

Sporadic engagements on a few occasions notwithstanding, bilateral relations remained tense through the last four years. The coldness was conspicuous at the G20 summit in Bali, Indonesia, in 2022, when Modi and Xi limited their interaction to a mere handshake. The two leaders bumped into each other once again at the BRICS summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2023. Not much enthusiasm was witnessed after a brief meeting between the two, which the Chinese readout described as held "at the latter's request".

Bilateral engagements in the last one month, however, have generated a different kind of enthusiasm. The Chinese readout on the Modi-Xi meeting described the two countries as "important members of the Global South", and said that they "must also shoulder their international responsibility, set an example in boosting the strength and unity of developing countries, and contribute to promoting a multipolar world." On its part, the external affairs ministry of India, too, sounded positive, suggesting that "stable, predictable, and amicable bilateral relations" between the "two largest nations on earth", will have a positive impact on regional and global peace and prosperity. In a post on 'X', Rajnath Singh described his talks with Dong as "extremely productive". At Rio, Jaishankar underscored that the countries worked "constructively" in the BRICS and SCO framework, and "our cooperation in the G20 has also been evident".

Predictably, a lot of commentary is happening over the trajectory of India-China relations. Global Times declared that "there are encouraging signs that China-India relations are moving forward". Some suggested that India's economic compulsions propelled it to restore normalcy with its neighbour while others have argued that China wants to exploit India's tensions with the West.

There are two types of strategic analysts among China watchers – hawks and doves. The hawks believe that a thaw between the two countries is impossible. They cite examples to buttress the point that the northern neighbour cannot be trusted. Then there are doves, who believe that despite the challenges the two countries must and will work together. Jawahar Lal Nehru was known for his dovish views on India-China relations. "Indeed, I may say that we shall always leave the door open for an honourable settlement with China", he argued in 1963, even in the face of a humiliating defeat inflicted by it on India.

However, the breed of doves is shrinking as there is reduced appetite for a romantic approach to the bilateral relationship, especially after the Galwan incident. On a lighter note, doves are big suspects now. Last year, Indian agencies captured a pigeon

"suspiciously" roaming near a port in Mumbai. It had rings attached to its feet that carried Chinese letters. It was detained for eight months only to be let off in April this year after thorough investigation of possible espionage attempts by the Chinese. Even the Congress party, accused for long of being dove-ish on China, is seeking to refurbish its image by hawkishly attacking the Modi Government for "gullibility and naïveté" regarding China.

The Modi government's China policy is pragmatic and realist. It understands that the bilateral relationship cannot be placed in any specific category of friends or foes. It will remain volatile, with the two countries having "both differences and convergences" on bilateral and international issues, as Jaishankar told his counterpart. India also remembers that despite dozens of agreements between the two countries since the "Peace and Tranquility Agreement" of 1993, the LAC violations by China continued unabated. In 2013, AK Antony, the then defence minister, told the Indian Parliament that just as his government was signing border agreements with China in 2012 and 2013, there were more than 400 transgressions by the Chinese army between 2010 and 2013.

That is the reason why the Modi government has demonstrated cautious optimism about the future of bilateral relations. While welcoming the thaw, Modi underscored the importance of "properly handling differences and disputes", and advised that ties should be "stable, predictable, and amicable". Jaishankar reiterated that "mutual sensitivity, mutual respect and mutual interest" must be the touchstone for improving ties. While China continues to take potshots, stating that "improvement in bilateral relations in the future will largely depend on the sincerity of the Indian side", and "India's policy that aims at decoupling from China has failed" and "India can't profit from being hostile to or decoupling from China, and it is even making it difficult for India to realise its own development", the Indian leadership has gently but firmly told its Chinese counterparts that its foreign policy has been "principled and consistent, marked by independent thought and action". Jaishankar told Wang Yi that "we are against unilateral approaches to establish dominance" and India "does not view its relationships through the prism of other nations".

PM Modi has conveyed the crucial message that India is not only strongly committed to a multipolar world, but also "a multipolar Asia". Some argue that a "new beginning" is being made in bilateral relations. But what India wants is a "new understanding" on China's part to deal with old challenges and new opportunities.

## India-China border agreement: A case for military buildup

23 November 2024, ORF, Kartik Bommakanti

In light of India's new patrolling agreement with China, the country needs to increase its military spending and bolster its armed forces against future threats

With India and China reaching a limited agreement on the disengagement from and patrolling of the Depsang Bulge and Demchok areas in eastern Ladakh, there is widespread jubilation in some quarters. The celebration of this breakthrough announced on 21 October 2024, should be tempered by the reality that there is still a significant amount of disengagement, de-escalation, and de-induction of forces to be completed by New Delhi and Beijing. Pending further negotiations, under the latest agreement, the following friction points were left out—Galwan Valley (PP 14), Pangong Tso (North and South Banks), Gogra (PP 17A) and Hotsprings (PP 15). These four areas are currently under buffer zones that prohibit patrolling, meaning the status quo ante, has not been restored completely. Meanwhile, with Depsang and Demchok, India and China have agreed to “coordinated patrolling,” which one analyst described as an “innovation.” This is misleading and deceptive because it is not an innovation, but a restriction on patrolling. There are three patrolling restrictions under the latest agreement.

Firstly, each patrol team cannot exceed 14 troops. Secondly, the other side must be notified before embarking on a patrol. Thirdly, the number of patrols that Indian and Chinese forces can conduct cannot exceed two or three every month, to all the points they deem part of their territory in Depsang and Demchok. Indeed, though India can patrol areas in Demchok, it is not permitted to patrol Charding La—a key pass. In addition, there is a quid pro quo. Just as India has gained patrolling access to Demchok and Depsang up to Patrolling Points (PP) 10, 11, 11A, 12, and 13, which it last secured access to in January 2020, China has gained a reciprocal concession by way of an “escorted patrol” in the Yangste area of Arunachal Pradesh, as well as another location. These patrolling restrictions did not apply under the terms of the 1993 and 1996 agreements. Further, these “innovations” are ultimately a concession to the Chinese because most of the territory that the Chinese occupied in April-May 2020 was primarily India-dominated, if not India-controlled, territory.

Beijing has numerous opportunities to rake up trouble along the entire stretch of the 3,500 kilometres of contested boundary between India and China.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) maintains that “...verification patrolling has commenced on

mutually agreed terms in Demchok and Depsang.” Nevertheless, restrictive conditions have been built into this agreement, in a quest to avoid clashes between Chinese and Indian forces. Only time will tell whether this arrangement will deliver the stabilising impact that the Modi government claims it is intended to achieve. Theoretically, clashes could still occur even under the new patrolling arrangement. Beijing has numerous opportunities to rake up trouble along the entire stretch of the 3,500 kilometres of contested boundary between India and China. India has had to accept these restrictive conditions as the price for resuming a limited patrolling agreement at Demchok and the Depsang Plains. The Chinese have compelled India to accept a shift in the terms of prior patrolling arrangements, and India's consent implies a tacit acceptance of China's case that earlier patrolling arrangements—as a result of agreements in 1993, 1996, 2005, and 2012—were unworkable or ineffective. Where does that leave India's quest to restore the status ante of April 2020? Despite the Modi government's impressive infrastructure build-up along the Sino-Indian boundary, which was one of the key reasons for the Chinese precipitating the ongoing boundary crisis, has New Delhi conceded to Beijing's demands that it will limit further infrastructure development, especially the Darbuk-Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO) road? The government will have to come clean and clarify these matters. To its credit, the Modi government has invested heavily in border infrastructure and introduced vital changes in the military command structure. Under the interim budget in February 2024, the government has allocated more capital to the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) to beef up infrastructure in critical parts along the Sino-Indian border, such as the Nyoma Airfield in Ladakh, Shinku La Tunnel in Himachal Pradesh, the Nechiphu Tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh and several others. Supplementing this infrastructure build-up, visible change is underway in the Indian Army's conversion of its Headquarters Uttar Bharat (HQ-UB) into a new comprehensively operational Corp. This change is geared toward shifting the focus from the peacetime duties of the HQ-UB, which is now a Corps, to a Line of Actual Control (LaC) in the Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand sectors. These are very indispensable and laudable measures. Although the government is performing commendably on these two metrics, it is insufficient.

Engagement with Beijing without militarily equipping the Indian armed forces with additional capabilities conveys weakness.

Although the Modi government's work on India's border infrastructure paved the way for India's military mobilisation against China's annexation of



Indian territory in April-May 2020, it has to do more to accumulate military strength through additional capital expenditure. Since 2017, well before the eruption of the current boundary crisis between India and China, there has not been significant growth in the defence budget, especially in capital acquisitions. Growth has been primarily in revenue expenditure which covers pensions, allowances, salaries and so on. This high growth of revenue spending is also driven by "One Rank, One Pension" (OROP). Even with the introduction of the Agnipath recruitment scheme, cost savings that are intended to help pay for capital acquisitions in the armed services, will not reap benefits until many years later. Engagement with Beijing without militarily equipping the Indian armed forces with additional capabilities conveys weakness. It will run the risk of inviting more crises and possibly a serious military conflagration with the People's Republic of China (PRC).

### **What draws China's anti-corruption watchdogs to Guangdong and its 'sin city' Dongguan?**

23 November 2024, SCMP, William Zheng

As dozens of high-ranking officials fall in corruption scandals, a political analyst reveals a common thread

China's southern Guangdong province, with its sprawling textile and electronics manufacturing hubs, has long been known as a global economic powerhouse. But in recent years, it has gained a reputation of a very different kind.

In cities such as Dongguan and Huizhou, corruption investigations are widening against local cadres – often former officials accused of having used their position to take money from companies in return for special favours.

Xu Jianhua, who served as the Dongguan party secretary from 2011 to 2016, became the latest official to be placed under investigation, with the provincial disciplinary commission announcing on Wednesday that he had been detained.

Xu, 66, is suspected of committing "serious violations of discipline and law" – a euphemism for corruption. Xu was well-known for leading a government crackdown in February 2014 after state broadcaster CCTV exposed an extensive underground sex trade and thriving red light districts in Dongguan, a sprawling manufacturing base known also as "sin city".

Xu's detention comes just two months after Zhong Ganquan, the former deputy head of Dongguan's political advisory body, was placed under investigation.

Zhong, a Dongguan local who for decades was chief of the city's Humen district famed for its textile and

electronics exporters, earned fame as "the man who knows all".

In August, former Dongguan mayor Li Yuquan, who served from 2006 to 2011, was also detained on corruption charges.

All three have long retired from official duties.

A tally based on announcements from Guangdong's provincial and municipal level anti-corruption bodies shows that 42 sitting and former party and government heads in Dongguan have faced corruption investigations so far this year.

A common factor in the investigations appeared to involve land sales.

According to a political analyst from Guangdong's Sun Yat-sen University, township governments control land sales in many cities in the province, particularly in Dongguan.

"The real decisions on land sales are at the grass roots level, as these lands, which are later developed into industrial estates, were owned by the villagers. So the township government heads are very influential in land deals," said the analyst, who asked not to be named due to the sensitivity of the matter.

"Oddly, in Dongguan and some other cities, few officials want to be promoted to higher government positions. No one wants to be thrown out of the decision-making circle for million-dollar land deals. Now, the property sector is under scrutiny, and past collusion between officials and developers is being revealed."

While almost every city in Guangdong has seen multiple anti-corruption investigations unfold this year, one in particular has riveted public attention.

In Huizhou, a second-tier city some 100km (62 miles) from Dongguan, at least seven out of 10 members of a former municipal leadership committee have been detained in recent years.

The most prominent downfalls involve Chen Yiwei, Huizhou mayor and party boss from 2011 to 2018, who was placed under investigation in July, and Mai Jiaomeng, who served as mayor when Chen was party chief. He was detained in April 2022.

When Chen's team was in charge, Huizhou's economic growth stalled. Between 2016-2020, the city's GDP grew at an average annual rate of 5.5 per cent, compared to as much as 14.1 per cent from 2008 to 2013.

"Despite the many excuses Chen and his team had for the drastic slowdown, Beijing and Guangdong leaders were not happy with their work, especially given infighting between Chen and his subordinate Mai, which became public knowledge in Guangdong," the analyst at Sun Yat-sen University said "They did not talk to each other even after they were transferred to provincial jobs."

According to reports from the Guangdong Provincial Discipline Inspection Commission, 109 department-

level and 1,321 division-level officials were brought to book in the three quarters to September 30, almost 50 per cent more than the number punished the same period last year.

### **What Trump's proposed tariffs against China mean for India**

22 November 2024, Hindustan Times, Sriparna Pathak

As the dust begins settling on the United States (US) elections and Donald Trump is now President elect, the world considers the foreign policy challenges and opportunities that arrive with his leadership. For the second largest economy, China, a big source of concern is tariffs against Chinese products. During the campaign trail, Trump had stated that he would impose at least 60% tariffs on Chinese imports and 20% tariffs on imports from all other countries. In 2018 and 2019, the Trump administration had imposed tariffs on approximately \$380 billion worth of Chinese goods, resulting in a tax increase of nearly \$80 billion. The tariffs were implemented under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, which allows the President to impose tariffs in response to unfair trade practices.

Even though China is a major economic partner of the US, it engages in unfair trade practices, which include trade in illicit goods, currency manipulation, theft of sensitive technologies among a long list of others. While the trade war between the US and China is attributed to Donald Trump, fact remains that outgoing President Joe Biden had also taken several measures to protect the American economy from China's unfair trade practices. In May this year, Biden directed his trade representative to increase tariffs under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 on \$18 billion of imports from China to protect American workers and businesses. Biden slapped major new tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles (EVs), advanced batteries, solar cells, steel, aluminum and medical equipment. He had stated that Chinese government subsidies ensure that the country's companies do not have to turn a profit, giving them an unfair advantage in global trade; 100% tariffs were slapped on Chinese EVs.

The Biden administration continued from the previous Trump administration and the Trump administration this time will take off from where the Biden administration leaves. Fears of further escalation of trade wars are rife in most countries of the world. With regards to India, while there will be an increase in tariffs against Indian goods, they will not be as steep as those against China's. In this context it becomes pertinent to find out the extent to which India will be able to leverage opportunities out of economic calamities. While the Biden administration

slapped tariffs on Chinese products, several agreements to bolster trade and economic ties were signed, ranging from semiconductor fabrication to clean energy transition to defence industrial cooperation, including collaborations on jet engines, munitions, and ground mobility systems, to the "Innovation Handshake" agenda, which promotes cooperation between startups, private equity and venture capital firms, corporate investment departments, and government officials; to the minerals security partnership to diversify the supply chain for critical minerals; to the green transition fund to hydrogen safety. The two also have a renewable energy technology action platform to enhance collaboration on clean energy manufacturing and global supply chains to the international energy programme.

Even under the Biden administration, the US was cautious towards China and embracing with regards to India. In all probability the trend will continue under the Trump administration. In the 20 years, supply chains across Asia became deeply integrated, and as an example, if a product is manufactured in Taiwan, it would be shipped in China and some component could be made in Thailand or Vietnam. If tariffs are slapped on China, a disruption in trade flows is seen, followed by a reduction in growth. However, India is not so integrated with the Chinese production supply chain. Thus, out of all the major economies in Asia, India would be the least impacted by tariffs against China.

Given constant supply chain disruptions, the China Plus One strategy has emerged in which companies and countries are increasingly pulling out of the Chinese economy to invest elsewhere. In the context of China Plus One, the most commonly mentioned examples are those of India and Vietnam. China is facing the biggest downtrend in its property market. About 737 million square kilometres of real estate is available, and to counter that the Chinese government announced a stimulus over three years, the contours of which are not yet clear. If one invests in China, one will have to bet on specific companies and take tactical bets on those individual names and companies for those with higher risk appetite. As compared to that, under the current Modi administration in India, infrastructure is being built on massive scales and for investing companies, the earnings will be structurally higher and there will be less problems with valuations. Further tariffs on the Chinese economy brings in gloom for the world. However, for India, if strategically manoeuvred then the losses will be low and manageable.

### **Biography of a Thought'**

22 November 2024, Tricycle, Haley Barker

The contemporary Tibetan painter Tenzing Rigdol on Buddhism versus secularism and his new installation at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Born in Kathmandu, Nepal, to Tibetan refugees, Tenzing Rigdol attended the University of Colorado Denver School of Arts & Media and was awarded a BFA in Painting and Drawing and a BA in Art History. Since graduating, Rigdol has built a career as a contemporary visual artist working across a range of mediums, including sculpture, painting, collage, performance art, and more. His pieces, infused with sociopolitical undercurrents, often address the pressing issues of today through Himalayan Buddhist imagery. Said pieces have been exhibited internationally at the Rubin Museum of Himalayan Art, Asia Society, Tibet House Gallery, Rossi & Rossi Gallery, Nobel Museum, and Glenbarra Art Museum, to name a few. *Biography of a Thought*, Rigdol's most recent installation, is the centerpiece of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's current exhibit "Mandalas: Mapping the Buddhist Art of Tibet," on view through January 12. Detail shot of *Biography of a Thought* by Tenzing Rigdol.

Situated in the Robert Lehman Wing, "Mandalas" allows visitors to explore Tibetan devotional art from the 12th to 15th centuries through a series of corridors lined with paintings, sculptures, textiles, instruments, and an array of ritual objects. These early masterworks are juxtaposed with Rigdol's expansive modern installation in the collection's sunlit central gallery. Over five years in the making, *Biography of a Thought* features four thirty-foot-long paintings, a pillar with braille and American Sign Language, as well as handwoven carpets.

Tricycle's Haley Barker recently talked with Rigdol about his oceanic inspirations, the demands of scale, and the universality of different spiritual traditions. For more on "Mandalas: Mapping the Buddhist Art of Tibet," read Dominique Townsend's recent exhibition review, "Mandalas at the Met."

This interview has been edited for length and clarity. *Biography of A Thought* is huge, and filled with Buddhist iconography and sociopolitical imagery. How did you approach this commission conceptually? Basically, Kurt [Behrendt] showed me the space [the Robert Lehman Wing]. He wanted to do a big "Mandala" show. This was before the pandemic. When I saw the space, I thought, "Yeah, I have some ideas." So [the whole process] started over five years ago; it took me about two and a half years to do the study of the composition, then about three years to paint it and to produce the carpet.

At that time, I lived in Astoria, so there's the Atlantic Ocean. For months, I would always go there and look at the ocean. I would look at small parts of the ocean, and then try to study how it breathes. Then the main composition was going to be waves and the clouds. Clouds are like the thoughts, and waves are like the emotions. You weave the two stories and ideas together, and that was the idea.

OK, so you took inspiration from the ocean. I see it, because your piece is very blue, and the clouds are rich and colorful. Like the thoughts! You know, our thoughts are sometimes vibrant, sometimes dull—sometimes thoughts are all gathering [together], almost like [they are] talking to each other. I thought it would be interesting to represent thoughts as clouds, and there are many Buddhist references there too. I played with that iconography.

Are there specific details of the composition that stick out to you, or that are your favorites? Not really, because interestingly, there are three ways to install it. One way to install it is to put all the paintings together into one painting, and it's 120 feet long. Another way of composing it is having a central piece, and all the surrounding pieces become a circle. And then the third way of presenting it is where it's opened up on four walls, like you're entering my mind—basically like the Buddhist idea of tantra. In Buddhism, too, you have three ways of experiencing the teachings: through Theravada, Mahayana, or Vajrayana. I play with that. And since it's one complete composition, the idea is to really pay attention to every corner of each percentage of the painting. So there's no picking [a favorite]. If something works, it's because other things are supporting it. We look at the totality of it.

I see! Going off that, can you speak a bit about how the size of this work changed or challenged your creation process? In a way, it did. Initially, we were thinking of starting with one painting, then two paintings, maybe four paintings. Then the size really was dictated by how strong the light was coming into the space. The walls are very intimidating, in a way. They are very big walls. If I had small pieces, like four small paintings, it wouldn't work. So it grew in that way. Within a few months, we realized it had to be big in order to fit the space. Many things were dictated by the space. And the idea needed a fixed space so that I could explore it properly, with what you call "complete satisfaction."

I read in your interview with Behrendt that you had to get a whole new studio space to work on this, because it had to be big enough to accommodate the size of everything. I wanted to have a studio that had almost the same light. That's sunlight, so I built a studio in Nepal on the fifth floor, and I had all the surrounding walls be only windows. I had all the

sunlight coming in. In that way, I built a whole studio that fits the thirty-foot paintings.

And you were working in that studio, specifically, for three years? Yeah, three years—my retreat. I call it an art retreat. I think tantra is all about one's ability to pay attention, and what attention means, and how one can harness it. That kind of subject matter would naturally demand a quiet place to explore and execute. It's almost like you're painting while there's an egg on your head. You really slowly calm yourself.

What did you learn about yourself through making this piece? I learned how to slow down. That was very difficult. And to release effort. But I think it's not that you're learning but you're actually discovering. Maybe you're learning how to be calm, but that leads you to discover things about yourself that are already there. I think what I learned or discovered is that it's amazing to just paint and spend time on something that big.

There are so many details to the composition, so many little Easter eggs in every single corner. Can you take us through some of it? You can enter the room from any space. After a while, you start seeing simple repetition. Then you notice somewhere that the waves are fluctuating, the clouds are more vibrant. Slowly the clouds and waves settle. So the initial experience is immersive. It's something that somebody who doesn't really know anything about Buddhism can experience—energy.

The first panel talks about natural phenomena. It talks about the environment on a surface level; air pollution, water pollution, deforestation. But at the same time, at a deeper level, it talks about our awareness, being thrown into this world, being here. And all the symbols are very hidden, like how tantric texts are. The second panel talks about what happens when the mind gets wild. Suffering—not who created it or how it is in this country or anything like that—but just suffering and how people respond to it. In one of the paintings [on this panel], I used this old picture of His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. He was giving an exam and debating right in front of Potala. I removed the monk he was debating, and I put a Chinese hat there. It is talking about how many people are so violent right now, but there are also some people who believe in dialogue and nonviolence as a solution. So this second panel really is about *vrutti*. We call it modulation. Vibration.

All my artworks are like a stage for the mind to dance.

And on the third panel, you start seeing how to stabilize the mind, how to look at identity. I used Picasso's five women [Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)]. People say, "Oh, they're from the brothel," and this and that. So I re-created it and added the five primordial Buddha's colors. And I added the five

mental faculties that he was offering. When you properly tune the five mental faculties, you see they're all buddhas. In a way, I'm saying your soul doesn't have a gender; [the same is true of] your atman or rigpa or whatever you call it. You're much more than your thoughts and body. That was one of the tantric teachings. And then the fourth panel is calmness.

My friend is an Indian scholar. He wanted to know about the painting. In a very simple way, I explained it like this: In the Patanjali Yoga Sutra, the second yoga, Chitta, is the first panel. Vritti is the second, nirodha is the third, and the fourth is the yoga. [laughs] You can look at it in so many ways, but I'm just giving you the general melody. If you go into detail, it's crazy. I remember once I went with Kurt and Mike [Hearn], I think we talked about it for three and a half hours.

How do you see people engaging with the piece? I think most of the people that come have no memory of Buddha, so it's very interesting. They respond to just the melody of it. It's almost like you go to a country where you don't speak any language and you don't know the content of it, but you know the melody. And sometimes, many people come, especially elders and kids, and they don't ask much. They just walk around, and they hug, and some elders cry and they just say, 'thank you.' I don't know what they understood. I don't know what I told them. Sometimes I say all my artworks are like a stage for the mind to dance. I create a stage, and I create that stage as smooth and as effortlessly as possible. And hopefully each individual brings their own mind, and then they dance around, and then they explore the plot. And in the end, what they're exploring is themselves. So whatever one sees, it is seen through their own history, experiences, and interests.

I've read that you consider much of your work to be secular, even though a lot of your work uses some pretty overt Buddhist motifs. So how does Buddhism inform your work, or the creation of it, and how do you square that with your intention to be more inclusive? I have always visited places or institutions to really learn something. You don't go there to feel like you belong. Let's say you're a thangka painter, and if you think about yourself as a thangka painter, then you'll start seeing everything like a thangka. That's not freedom, because you're looking at it from a specific angle. Sometimes, even being a Buddhist, I also might not have the most perfect vantage point, because you can think, 'I am a Buddhist, they are non-Buddhist.' You can go even more fundamental. To whom did Buddha prostrate? I think his teaching was for us to become like him. And he bowed down to basic principles. In that way, Buddhism helped me look at all the other religions together.

I see. Buddhism is the vessel that allows you to see things differently and make different connections. Yes. You know, it's like if the 7 train goes out to Jackson Heights, Queens, it also goes back to Manhattan too. So it's not 'Buddhism is very special.' It's just that all religions are like different subway stations. When you combine all the stations, it's like one circle—like prayer beads!

I was brought up with Tibetan culture, and I naturally have more information about it. But, of course, I see suffering in Kashmir. I see suffering in Hong Kong. I see suffering in different places, and I see Mount Tibet in those places. I'm talking about a kind of universality. It's happening everywhere. Tibet is everywhere. The injustice, suffering, discomfort, disease is everywhere. And every country has its own homework to do. I think it's time to look within oneself, one's own country.

### **Has Trump-fear driven China to be conciliatory towards India?**

22 November 2024, Tibetan Review

As China-hawk Donald Trump ascends the US presidency, come Jan 20, good relationship with India is becoming particularly important for Beijing. As geographical neighbours and the two most populous countries in the world, China and India not only face similar challenges, but also share extensive common interests, said the official globaltimes.cn Nov 21 in an editorial.

This may explain why from being reportedly stubbornly unyielding on withdrawing its troops from Depsang and Demchok incursions in eastern Ladakh over numerous rounds of border talks at various levels, despite a series of strong moves from India that adversely affected its interests in the country, China agreed to a seemingly sudden border patrolling agreement on these areas on Oct 21, to be preceded by disengagement and followed by de-escalation and restoration of trust leading to normalization of bilateral ties.

For China-India relations to become more stable, it is essential for both governments to maintain dialogue, strengthen economic ties, and promote cultural and personnel exchanges, the editorial said.

Still, the editorial maintained that the strength of the momentum for improvement in bilateral relations in the future will largely depend on the sincerity of the Indian side. It expressed hope that India can allow consensus, rather than differences, to shape China-India relations. This obviously referred to New Delhi's conditioning of restoration of normal bilateral ties to China's withdrawal, first of all, from the Depsang and Demchok incursions.

China's response to Trump's "America first" approach that envisages huge tariffs on imports from it will demand not only a strong domestic market but

also engagement with all possible international stakeholders, the scmp.com Nov 22 cited Zhu Xian, a former World Bank vice-president and a former deputy head of the Shanghai-headquartered New Development Bank (NDB), as saying. This obviously also means healing its seriously frayed ties with India, the world's fifth largest economy with a consumer base of over 1.4 billion.

Zhu has also maintained, however, that the looming threats posed by Trump's tariff and climate policies could also open a window of opportunity for Beijing to elevate its global profile and move the needle on issues such as increasing the international role of China's currency, the yuan.

Still, that "depends on whether Beijing can bring forward an agenda ... that can be supported by other developing countries, new emerging economies or even some developed nations," the development finance veteran has said in an interview with the Post. The report noted that on the campaign trail, Trump had raised eyebrows around the world with his threats to impose tariffs of 60 to 100% on imports from China and of 10 to 20% on products from other countries. While it is argued that US consumers will end up paying for those high tariffs, their effect on Chinese exports due to reduced demands also cannot be underestimated.

### **Nepal PM K P Oli's Beijing visit may not win him points at home**

22 November 2024, The Indian Express, Yubaraj Ghimire

Oli was a hero back home when he signed the Trade and Treaty agreement with Beijing during the 2015 economic blockade. But this time, India's "sin" was insignificant. It simply chose not to welcome him in Delhi and for that he enjoys no sympathy in the country.

There are several hopes and fears about the likely outcomes of Nepal PM K P Oli's five-day visit to China beginning December 2. This will be the fourth time that Oli, as PM, has made the first bilateral visit after assuming office to Beijing rather than Delhi, in contrast to the generally followed practice of going to Delhi first. The latter was seen as an endorsement of the view that the relationship with India is more "special".

Oli's and Narendra Modi's governments have clashed twice in the past nine years — first over Nepal's constitution and then on territory. At this point, Delhi still seems keen to work closely with the Nepali actors — it's just not that comfortable with Oli. The fact that India chose not to invite Oli but entertain Foreign Affairs Minister Arzu Rana Deuba — who belongs to the Nepali Congress — during her



visit to Delhi in August at the highest level has made the current PM and the Communist Party suspicious of Delhi's intent.

Advertisement



Oli's first tenure which began in October 2015 witnessed an unofficial economic blockade on Nepal for over four months. (File Photo)

Oli's first tenure which began in October 2015 witnessed an unofficial economic blockade on Nepal for over four months. Then came the bitter territorial disputes over the as-yet unresolved areas in Lipulek, Limpiyadhura and Kalapani. Delhi's reluctance to invite him this time is perceived as a hangover of this past bitterness and a sign that it has not forgiven Oli for signing the trade and transit framework agreements with China, ending Nepal's exclusive dependence on the south for maritime access.

The larger question is: Has there been an erosion of the "special relationship" between India and Nepal? The unique open border is now seen as a law and order threat, with terrorist actors also being reported to exploit it at times. Traditionally, Nepal has been a Hindu-majority society with deep ties to the Puri Shankaracharya Mutt. In reciprocity, Nepal's kings – until the abolition of the monarchy 16 years ago – were given the special privilege of having access to India's important Hindu shrines including Rameshwaram, Badrinath, Kedarnath, Ayodhya and Jagannath Puri. Nepal's royal palace used to send the first ingredients for preparing "khichri" as the mahaprasad for the annual Gorakhanath mela that takes place in Gorakhpur each year in the month of Magh (mid-January to mid-Feb). Nepal's transition to a secular republic brought an end to these practices, which also served as leverage and openings during diplomatic crises.

Nepal has suffered political instability, with 36 Prime Ministers in the past 35 years. Three leaders – Oli of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist), Sher Bahadur Deuba (Nepali Congress) and Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' (Maoist Centre) – have alternated in the post in the last nine years since the constitution's promulgation. Instability and frequently changing political equations, solely driven by power, have also resulted in policy

inconsistencies, and loss of confidence from both domestic and multinational investors.

Oli and the current establishment are facing public wrath, especially on corruption issues.

This background, and India not sending him the invitation first, makes his China visit more interesting. Both the US and India have warned Nepal not to go for BRI projects to avoid a debt trap. Nepali Congress, the dominant partner in the coalition, seems to have taken this prescription as a mantra and has warned Oli not to sign the BRI execution framework treaty during his visit except under the condition that all these projects will be fully grant-based.

Oli's failure to sign such an agreement with China, something he seems to have already assured, will lead to a loss of credibility. On the other hand, bypassing the Nepali Congress's suggestion and upsetting two external stakeholders may cost him his chair back home.

China may not be willing to make an exception for Nepal under the BRI, but there are indications that it may defer by a few years the date (2026) for Nepal to pay instalments on a \$220 million dollar loan to build the Pokhara international Airport – which is lying idle ever since it was inaugurated two years ago. China has time and again turned down Nepal's plea to convert this loan into a grant but it has indicated flexibility on readjusting terms and dates.

Oli is known for taking risks – some even politically suicidal at times. His visit to Beijing may just backfire. He was a hero back home when he had signed the Trade and Treaty agreement with Beijing during the 2015 economic blockade. But this time, India's "sin" was insignificant. It simply chose not to welcome him in Delhi and for that he enjoys no sympathy in the country.

### **'Trashing' Scientific Warnings, China Is Constructing Three Upstream Dams In Tibet; A Disaster In The Making?**

22 November 2024, Eurasian Times, Shubhangi Palve

China is proceeding with the construction of massive hydropower dams on the upper reaches of the Machu (Yellow River) in Tibet despite mounting scientific concerns about potential geological disasters and severe environmental consequences.

A recent report by Turquoise Roof, a collaborative research network focused on Tibet, has raised alarms over these large-scale infrastructure projects.

For the first time, China is building hydropower dams upstream in Tibet, targeting the sources of Asia's major rivers. The report highlights the construction of at least three significant dams on the upper Machu River.

The Machu River, known as the Huang He in Chinese, is also known as the “Sorrow of China” because of the devastating floods it has caused.

This region, already seismically unstable and heavily impacted by climate change, poses substantial risks, yet China continues its dam-building efforts in this delicate environment.

#### The Yellow River’s Significance

The Yellow River, or Machu River in Tibet, is a vital waterway that spans northern China. Known as the “Mother River” in China, it is the second-longest river in China and the sixth-longest river system globally.

The Yellow River, often referred to as the “world’s muddiest river,” is notorious for its high sediment content. This heavy sediment buildup has earned it another nickname, the “hanging river,” as the accumulated silt raises riverbed sections above the surrounding landscape. Over time, this accumulation has caused the river to change its course, resulting in frequent and devastating floods.

Over a third of the river’s course lies in Tibet, where it flows nearly 2,000 kilometers across the Amdo region in northern Tibet. Originating on ‘the Bayan Har Mountains’ – the Tibet-Qinghai Plateau (15,000 feet), the Yellow River runs eastward through seven Chinese provinces: Qinghai, Gansu, Ningxia, Inner Mongolia, Shaanxi, Shanxi, Henan, and Shandong, before emptying into the Bo Hai Gulf in the Yellow Sea.

The Yellow River comprises three distinct sections: the upper course through mountainous terrain, the middle course across a plateau, and the lower course flowing through a low plain.

The combination of its massive sediment load and unpredictable course makes the Yellow River both a crucial waterway and an environmental hazard.

#### Why Are Hydropower Dams In The Upstream Of Rivers Dangerous?

**Climate Change:** Chinese scientists warn that the combined effects of intense human activity and adverse climate change have led to significant ecological and environmental problems in the upper reaches of the Yellow River. These issues have jeopardized the region’s ecological security and power supply.

Building a series of dams, or a cascade, requires raising captive water levels high enough to reach the bottom of the next dam upriver. This transforms a once fast-moving mountain river into a series of man-made lakes, each tightly positioned against its upstream neighbor.

To achieve this, dams must be among the world’s tallest, standing 300 to 400 meters high. If one dam fails, a catastrophic chain reaction could potentially trigger the collapse of successive dams, much like a tsunami of water.

**Danger To The Permafrost Zone:** Building dams at high altitudes in Tibet presents another risk: thawing permafrost. Tibet’s permafrost zone is the largest outside the Arctic, and construction on this unstable ground presents a significant challenge. As the permafrost thaws each summer and freezes again in winter, the shifting subsoil may threaten the dam’s stability.

Additionally, as permafrost melts across 1.6 million square kilometers of the Tibetan plateau, methane—much more potent than carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas—is released into the atmosphere. China has no clear policies or measures in place to address these methane emissions, exacerbating climate change.

**Coal-Fired Power Plants:** While China positions itself as a leader in clean energy, it is still the world’s largest emitter of greenhouse gases. In the first half of 2024, China led the globe in constructing new coal-fired power plants.

Despite the presence of renewable energy sources, the report shows that coal-fired power plants dominate the region’s power grid, highlighting China’s continued reliance on fossil fuels. This reliance contradicts its claims of aggressive decarbonization.

While hydropower is considered renewable, large-scale hydropower projects have significant environmental and social consequences, including disruption of ecosystems and displacement of communities. China’s strategy of combining hydropower with coal power may be a way to present a cleaner energy profile without addressing the deeper ecological impacts.

**Devastation Of Local Communities:** The impact on local Tibetan communities has been severe. According to the report, The Yangkhil (Yangqu) hydropower station, the first major dam built upriver on the Machu, has destroyed an entire Tibetan community. Eyewitness accounts detail the forced dismantling of homes and the destruction of a monastery, which was removed from the protected heritage list before demolition.

While Chinese engineers boast about using AI-driven robots in construction, these technological advancements come at a high human cost.

The report also highlights that in February, Tibetans risked their lives to protest the Kamtok (Chinese: Gangtuo) dam being built on the upper Drichu (Yangtze) River. The dam directly threatens their homes and six historic monasteries, which house priceless 14th-century frescoes that Chinese scholars have long sought to preserve.

#### Tibet’s Rivers Under Siege

Before this, In January 2023, satellite images confirmed that China was constructing a new dam on

the Mabja Zangbo River in Tibet, a tributary of the Indian Ganga River.

This river lies near the tri-junction of India, Nepal, and Tibet. Construction of the dam, which began in May 2021, is located approximately 16 km north of this tri-junction, opposite Uttarakhand's Kalapani territory.

This development has raised significant concerns for downriver nations, India and Nepal, especially as China has been increasing its military and dual-use infrastructure along both the eastern and western sectors of the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

As highlighted by the Turquoise Roof report, China's hydropower projects upstream of the Yellow River also have significant downstream impacts, affecting farmers and fisherfolk in countries like Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar.

The far-reaching consequences of these projects underscore the risks of unchecked infrastructure development in ecologically sensitive regions.

This aggressive dam construction in Tibet's fragile ecosystem represents a significant shift in China's infrastructure development strategy, raising serious concerns about long-term environmental sustainability and regional stability.

### **Words Used for Cultural Genocide: How "Northern Frontier" Is Replacing "Inner Mongolia"**

21 November 2024, Bitter Winter, Zeng Liqin

They are starting with adjectives. "Mongolian culture" becomes mandatorily "Northern Frontier culture."

The Uyghurs told us so. Many Southern Mongolians perhaps did not understand why Uyghurs insist that the word "Xinjiang" should not be used and should be replaced by "East Turkestan." "Xinjiang" means "New Frontier," a term denying Uyghur history and identity. It looks like the only defining feature of the Uyghur land was to serve as the new frontier of China, once it was occupied by the Chinese.

Now the Mongolian inhabitants of what is officially called the "autonomous region of Inner Mongolia"—they prefer to use "Southern Mongolia"—are being treated with the same medicine. If East Turkestan is the "New Frontier" (Xinjiang) Southern Mongolia is now being called "Northern Frontier" (Beijiāng, 北疆).

The strategy used is to attack the substantive through the adjective. So far, the name of the pseudo-autonomous region is still "Inner Mongolia." However, the adjective "Inner Mongolian" is increasingly replaced by "of the Northern Frontier." And this is virtually mandatory when the noun for

which the adjective is used is "culture," in this context the most important noun of them all.

The Chinese Communist Party since 2023 regards as official the use of "Beijiāng wenhua" (北疆文化), "Northern Frontier Culture," instead of "Inner Mongolian Culture," or even "Mongolian Culture," referred to what after all is one of China's officially recognized ethnic minorities.

The CCP regional propaganda office has established an academic journal dedicated to "Northern Frontier Culture," and Inner Mongolia's main state-run academic institute has opened a "Northern Frontier Research Centre."



An image of the Sixth Plenary Session of the 11th Committee of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region CCP (2023). Screenshot.

The campaign, now in full swing, was inaugurated last year at the Sixth Plenary Session of the 11th Committee of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region CCP, held in Hohhot from July 3 to 5, 2023. The CCP wanted to "launch the brand 'Northern Frontier Culture,'" with the purpose of emphasizing that the culture of the autonomous region is "Chinese" rather than "Mongolian." It is argued that it is the product of the fusion of the different ethnic cultures of the region under the unifying principle of "being grateful to the Party, listening to the Party, and following the Party."

Following campaigns to replace Mongolian language with Chinese in the region's education and administration, the semantic shift is clearly part of a project aimed at "Sinicizing" Mongolians and eliminating their distinctive cultural, religious, and ethnic heritage.

### **Why Is China's Atheist Regime Trying To Pick The Next Dalai Lama?**

19 November 2024, Tippi Insights, Bryan Burack and Jack Erickson

The Chinese Communist Party is preparing to hijack an ancient faith. Freedom-loving people can't let it succeed.

In early September, dozens of high-ranking Tibetan Buddhist monks and religious scholars gathered in the Chinese city of Lanzhou to discuss reincarnation, a major tenet of their faith. Observers would be understandably perplexed by how the participants “emphasized the importance” of the approval of China’s communist regime “in the recognition of reincarnated Tibetan religious leaders.”

The mystery has a simple, sinister answer: The meeting was organized by the Chinese Communist Party itself, through the Buddhist Association of China, a part of its United Front Work Department, which controls all religious expression in China.

Shamefully, the atheist CCP is attempting to reach into the afterlife to seize control of religious leaders that have escaped its grasp on earth.

The CCP’s paranoia and brutality falls heavily on people of faith in China, and Tibetan Buddhists are among the most abused. The CCP’s efforts to wipe out Tibetans’ identity and establish complete control over their lives are thought to constitute crimes against humanity, and Tibet was a proving ground for techniques of repression used in the CCP’s genocide against the Uyghurs.

The CCP is intensely hostile toward the 14th Dalai Lama, Tibetan Buddhism’s highest spiritual leader, who escaped to India following the CCP’s annexation of Tibet in the 1950s. Since then, the Dalai Lama has been an active proponent of greater autonomy for Tibetans, founding the Central Tibetan Administration, Tibet’s government-in-exile based in northern India.

For the CCP, Tibetans’ veneration of the Dalai Lama constitutes a threat to its control over Tibet, which has seen periods of unrest incited by CCP repression. The future of the dalai lama as an institution is therefore linked to the future of Tibet itself.

Next year, the Dalai Lama turns 90 and is expected to announce plans for his reincarnation and succession. He has remarked that he may reincarnate outside of China, leaving the next dalai lama outside Chinese government control. He has also considered the possibility of choosing a successor while still alive. That would represent a break with the more common Buddhist tradition, whereby after the death of the dalai lama, a council of senior religious figures identifies a young boy as his successor and reincarnation.

The Dalai Lama has also suggested he may reincarnate as a woman, or even forgo reincarnation altogether.

For the CCP, the Dalai Lama’s succession is an opportunity to seize even tighter control of the Tibetan Buddhist faith and ensure its practitioners no longer have a spiritual leader to look to beyond China’s borders and outside the CCP’s reach. The

CCP has been preparing to hijack the Dalai Lama’s succession for decades.

In 1995, the Dalai Lama identified a young boy in Tibet as the 11th Panchen Lama, the second-ranking religious figure in Tibetan Buddhism. Almost immediately thereafter, the CCP forcibly disappeared the then-6-year-old child, who has not been seen since. The CCP then appointed its own Panchen Lama.

In 2007, the Chinese government released regulations stipulating that “[n]o group or individual may without authorization carry out any activities related to searching for or recognizing reincarnating living Buddha soul children.” In recent years, China has emphasized that the reincarnation of the dalai lama “must comply with Chinese laws and regulations.”

The United States recently enacted the Resolve Tibet Act, bipartisan legislation disputing the PRC’s misleading historical claims over Tibet and urging Beijing to agree to talks with the Dalai Lama’s representatives. In June, a bipartisan congressional delegation met with the Dalai Lama in northern India, warning that China is “trying to erase [Tibetans’] culture ... . They are trying something that we cannot let them get away with.”

India also has a stake in preventing CCP subversion of the Dalai Lama’s succession. Aside from hosting Tibet’s government-in-exile, India’s Tawang district sits within what was once part of the historical Tibetan nation and was the birthplace of the sixth Dalai Lama. It’s also the site of one of the largest Buddhist monasteries in the world. Beijing has opposed the Dalai Lama’s visits to Tawang, as China claims the district as part of a broader “South Tibet.”

Although India’s deliberations surrounding the Dalai Lama’s succession have largely remained muted, a former Indian ambassador to China stated that India wouldn’t be “comfortable with China trying to control that process.”

With the Dalai Lama’s 90th birthday next July, discussion over his succession will come to a head soon. The CCP has been preparing for decades to turn the next dalai lama into a tool to advance Beijing’s interests. The U.S. government is well aware of this plan. In its statement marking the Dalai Lama’s 89th birthday, the State Department reiterated its support for Tibetans’ “ability to freely choose and venerate religious leaders without interference.”

But more than platitudes will be required, and the U.S. should be engaging now with representatives from the Dalai Lama’s office, the Tibetan government in exile, and the Indian government to better prepare for the succession.

The Chinese Communist Party cannot be allowed to quash the religious freedom of the Tibetan people and Buddhists worldwide.

**Debotri Dhar | With India's lead, Brics can be a voice for Global South Columnists**

18 November 2024, The Asian Age, Debotri Dhar

The 16th Brics summit, held in Kazan, Russia, on October 22-24, is the talk of the town. Brics (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) is an inter-governmental body for the promotion of multilateralism, peace, security and economic development. Its first summit in 2009 included founding members Brazil, Russia, India and China, with South Africa joining a year later. Brics expanded this year to include four new members, and 30 more nations have applied for membership. Talks were held this year for an alternative financial model to challenge the West-led Bretton Woods global monetary system, comprising the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, as well as a push for a united front to advocate for United Nations Security Council reforms.

So, is Brics poised to become the cool new Global South club – or is it a harbinger of a stridently anti-Western world order? For Russian President Vladimir Putin, the Brics summit was an obvious opportunity to push back against Western sanctions over Russia's invasion of Ukraine, including Washington's efforts to choke off financial supplies to Moscow, and to lobby for support from the Global South. Pertinently, the "Global South" is not just a geographical but a geopolitical and socio-economic grouping. Many Global South nations are in the Southern Hemisphere, in Asia, Africa and Latin America, often sharing colonised histories that led to economic exploitation for centuries. That many of these emerging economies did not blacklist Russia has been misinterpreted by some Western analysts as the Global South's backing for Moscow's Ukraine policy. Instead, it more accurately reflects a growing disenchantment with the West, a tacit critique of what many erstwhile colonised nations see as Western double standards on wars and imperialism, and the selective (mis)use of human rights for other agendas, therefore pursuing their own politico-economic interests as non-aligned nations.

Or multi-aligned, when it comes to India's international relations. Fellow Indians of varying political beliefs hold diverse opinions on Nato, but I have not met anyone who approves of Russia's invasion. Rather, there is a sense of a historical friendship with Russia among many, that Moscow has not harmed India's interests, and a refusal to bear the costs of a war created by others. From a geo-strategic viewpoint, given the strengthening Russia-

China partnership, a continued relationship with Moscow is useful for India to counter-balance Chinese expansionism in the Indo-Pacific. Following the recent breakthrough border agreement between India and China ahead of the Brics summit, there is speculation in some quarters that Moscow may have lent a helping hand to defuse hostilities between the two Asian giants. Under this Sino-Indian agreement, outstanding issues simmering since the 2020 Galwan Valley clashes are being resolved, with both sides agreeing to a patrolling arrangement allowing for the return of Indian troops to what became friction points on the Line of Actual Control (LAC). In what is a major diplomatic win for India, tensions in Demchok and Depsang in eastern Ladakh have been addressed with military de-escalation in these areas. With this well-timed beginning to the summit, followed by a meeting of prominent leaders from the Global South, the worldwide interest generated by Brics is unsurprising. Some critiques have also been directed at how Brics is a very loose formation of nations with vastly diverging interests. While Beijing and Moscow see Brics as a platform to challenge the Western-led world order in general, and the dominance of the American dollar in particular, this is not the case with India, which is not anti-West and sees Brics as an alternative outfit to better support and negotiate for the concerns of the Global South, as compared to elite clubs such as the G-7 which were not designed to advocate for emerging economy perspectives.

While Brics membership is less homogenous than the G-7, whose members all meet common developmental criteria, even the G-7 is not unmarked by internal disagreements. Examples are some of France's foreign policy positions independent of the United States, as on the Israel-Palestine war, or Italy's policy disagreements with France, as on not sending domestic troops to fight in the Russia-Ukraine war. Yet the G-7 has, despite such internal dissent, been able to focus on a larger vision, consolidating the group's economic and geopolitical power over time. This is the bigger challenge ahead for Brics. That there is a tremendous need to advocate for emerging economy perspectives so that powerful blocs do not unilaterally dictate terms to the Global South is apparent from the sheer number of countries applying for Brics membership. Now the group will need a clearer vision. Will there be any economic requirements (such as GDP levels) for entry into Brics? Will smaller member-nations that are attacked be diplomatically supported in peace efforts and provided humanitarian aid? Countries in the Global South have historically been criticised for having weak democratic institutions, but the truth is that democracy in the West also needs strengthening. Brics as a non-Western body can shape a more



representative global order, with the caveat that a just, democratic world is challenging to build with authoritarian states or those which promote terrorism. Peace and security are objectives of Brics, yet some members have long been under strife, with vulnerable populations being greatly impacted. My public commentaries and lectures have, for years, analysed gender violence in war, such as the decades-long US-Russia war over Afghanistan, with the Soviet invasion of 1979 followed by American Cold War era foreign policies on arming religious extremists, resulting in the rise of the Taliban, with disastrous consequences for socio-economic development and women's rights in Afghanistan. Another example is how the real threat of wartime rape in some Global South nations like Syria results in families marrying off girls aged ten or twelve, compounding high regional maternal and infant mortality rates. As Brics is being celebrated by the developing world, the Women, Peace and Security Agenda to mainstream gender into peace and security multilateral architecture has also recently celebrated its 24th anniversary. The point is that the economic and social indicators of development often work better together. India-US collaboration to counter Chinese military aggression in the Indo-Pacific will continue under Donald Trump, whose recent victory in the US presidential election will have other far-reaching policy consequences, including US involvement in the two global wars. A democratic India that can unite Brics to reflect non-Western development aspirations and draw upon strategic relationships with the Western and Russia-China blocs to provide diplomatic, humanitarian support to end wars justly will be very well-positioned to play a leading role for Brics, the Global South, and the world.

### **Nepal's New PM Oli Is Going To China, Why Is He Not Coming To India?**

18 November 2024, StratNews Global, Surya Gangadharan

Is too much being made of the China visit of Nepal's Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli from Dec 2-6? This is important for every time Nepal gets a new prime minister, the first trip he makes is to Delhi.

But for some reason, Oli has not merited an invitation even though his Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba, was in Delhi in August and invited Prime Minister Modi to Kathmandu.

Was it a protocol lapse that Modi did not extend an invitation to Oli at that meeting? Or was it deliberate? Was Delhi conveying some subtle displeasure? It's hard to say and the MEA (Ministry of External Affairs) has maintained silence.

Veteran Nepali journalist Yubraj Ghimire told Stratnewsglobal over the phone from Kathmandu, that in his understanding, Modi and Oli had met for about half an hour at the UN General Assembly in New York.

"It was not a one-on-one meeting," Ghimire says, "and Modi had told Oli he planned to come to Kathmandu but there was nothing about inviting him to Delhi."

He says India is committed to the Nepali Congress (NC), which is in coalition with Oli's CPN (UML). By meeting Arzu Rana Deuba, wife of NC leader and former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, India was underscoring its support for that party.

Ghimire believes India would prefer that the NC and Maoist leader Prachanda come together rather than the current arrangement.

Former Indian diplomats who have served in Nepal, were wary about commenting on the possible reasons for not inviting Oli. But one warned that if Oli chose to interpret this as a snub, "there would be no shortage of people and groups in Kathmandu who could turn the heat on the bilateral relationship."

India's familiarity born of culture and access, has traditionally made it an easy target. This was the case even during the days of the monarchy and those habits did not die with it. But there is a view in Kathmandu which is at variance with this argument.

Nepal's former ambassador to Denmark, Vijay Kant Karna, wondered why every newly anointed Nepali prime minister has to travel overseas, whether to Delhi, Beijing or elsewhere and even more so in the present case.

"Leaving aside Arzu Rana Deuba's visit in August, India's External Affairs Minister Jaishankar was in Kathmandu earlier this year in January and there were important outcomes including on the export of 10,000MW of electricity to India, cross-border power linkages and so on. When so much has already been decided upon, what is an Oli visit expected to deliver," he asked.

There is the border dispute over Kalapani, Lipulekh and Limpiyadhura which peaked in 2019, when Oli was prime minister, and has simmered since then. No resolution is in sight.

With regard to China, Karna also questioned the rationale for that visit.

"China has not been forthcoming on budgetary support for Nepal, amounting to around \$200 million," he said, "and this despite regular reminders. Nor is there any movement on the BRI projects first announced in 2017 and reiterated during every VIP visit since then."

The latter is because the NC insists that the projects be funded through grants and concessional loans

while China is only offering commercial loans. Result the BRI Implementation Plan has not moved forward. Is there a hidden Indian hand here, one can only speculate. A corner stone of India's policy in Nepal is not to have two communist or left-wing parties together in Kathmandu. That would add infinitely to China's leverage.

The current NC-CPN(UML) arrangement is better than the above option, but Oli may not enjoy high levels of trust in Delhi given how he brought the Kalapani border issue to the fore in the bilateral relationship.

His proximity to China is another irritant although he's been low profile on that relationship since taking over as prime minister. But with Beijing on his radar in December, that maybe about to change.

### How attacks on Chinese working for CPEC projects dent China-Pakistan ties

17 November 2024, First Post, Tara Kartha

That the Chinese have felt the need to hire private security is perplexing when the Pakistan army has granted itself a huge rise in the budget ostensibly to take care of their security

There appears to be some rusting in a certain 'iron brother' relationship. A spat of no common order had erupted recently when the Chinese ambassador to Pakistan warned the authorities that their patience was at an end with regard to attacks on Chinese workers in the country.

The Foreign Office spokesperson, equally unusually, took umbrage instead of quietly accepting the (justified) criticism, all of which raised eyebrows across the circles that matter in both countries. Now it seems matters may have been smoothed out. Just a day ago, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian, while reiterating the 'all-weather friendship' motif, also stated, "We (China) are firm in our commitment to protecting the safety and security of Chinese nationals.." rather mysteriously also stating, "Attempts to undermine the mutual trust and cooperation between the two countries will not succeed". There was also a distinct threat, that terrorists would 'pay the price'. The poor Baloch better look out.

The Chinese are unusually annoyed

All of this needs some explanation. There is no doubt at all that Beijing has every right to get completely annoyed. Ambassador Jiang Zaidong observes that "Top priority should be the security of Chinese personnel because they come to Pakistan to participate in the country's development," adding that the Chinese "don't deserve this kind of sacrifice...." There have been two serious attacks in a month's time, with not just the attack on the bus at the Jinnah airport just before the meeting of the SCO

(Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) but also an unusual attack by a security guard in Karachi. That was apparently the result of an altercation between a group of Chinese nationals and the security.

Anyway, some 16 rounds were fired, which indicates quite a mess. The Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif, has assured the ambassador that he was 'personally' managing the situation. It may be noted that relations on the ground between the two sides have had problems, given the huge cultural differences. Pakistanis often complain of marked racism among the Chinese and a contempt for locals.

A letter from the Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG), Syed Asad Raza, to the chairman of the All Pakistan Security Agencies Association (APSA) is revealing. It shows the Chinese have taken to hiring their own security people rather than relying on the Pakistanis. These are locals, and as the DIG says, their training is not of the highest order, and their knowledge of 'foreigners' is minimal. But that the Chinese even feel the need to hire private security is perplexing. In a largely unnoticed move, the Pakistan army has granted itself a huge rise in the budget ostensibly to take care of their security.

#### Spike in Attacks

There is no doubt that the numbers of attacks have risen recently. From about an attack a year earlier, 3 in 2021, and then a jump to 4 attacks in March 2024, is enough to cause serious concern. But here's the curious part. In early October this year, the Economic Coordination Committee of the Cabinet sanctioned Rs 35 of Rs 45 billion to the army in a supplementary grant. That's rather a lot. This is the second such grant, after another Rs 60 billion for Operation Azm-e-Istehkam, all of which is above the Rs 2.127 trillion defence budget. As yet unclear is another Rs 45 billion for 'approved projects' for the army. The body also approved Rs 16 billion for the Special Security Division South and another Rs 8 billion for a similar division in the south, both of which are responsible for protecting the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in southern regions. All this means a near doubling of the defence budget, at a time when the International Monetary Fund is rapping Islamabad on the knuckles for a current account deficit and still reviewing its performance.

#### Pakistan Army gets a financial boost

There is one possible clue to both the sudden bounty in Pakistan army coffers and the relatively softer position of China towards Pakistani issues. Beijing has been insisting for some time that it bring its own security agencies into the country, including supporting intelligence. Towards this, it seems it has proposed a joint company for CPEC Phase 2 and a security agreement to firm this up.

Pakistan has so far resisted this, given that this would mean a definite erosion of its sovereignty. No country likes other people's intelligence roaming freely around the country. Now it is possible that this has been done, which may align with the sudden affluence apparent in the budget. True, the Pakistan army has multiple sources of income, some from its business empire inside the country and outside it.

Ayesha Jehangir estimates its empire at about \$38 billion, not counting the extensive private empires of its senior officers, like former chief Gen. Bajwa, whose family became billionaires in just six years. Reports like this also link the military generals to CPEC ventures, which means they are committed to them lock, stock, and barrel. A little loss of sovereignty may not bother them. Or else they are so compromised they have little choice.

End result

Either way, Delhi needs to look out. First, there are going to be more Chinese security officials within Pakistan, who know well how to use the tech that they have given to the Pakistanis. That includes "Smart City" projects that include hundreds of cameras placed in major cities. Karachi has yet to take off, which is probably why the attacks are occurring there in the first place. Second, they would dig into the Pakistan army's own databases as well as the National Identity data. That is quite something. Second is a more serious issue.

The huge spike in the defence budget is clearly not just for the defence of Chinese nationals or for guarding the border. This needs more clarity, an impossible task given the opaque nature of Pakistan's finances. Meanwhile, the International Monetary Fund needs to ask some pointed questions. Beijing has every right to demand more security, but it doesn't really know the kind of army it is dealing with. Meanwhile, for those who think that the attacks have dented CPEC, think again. Coming on line are more projects like the Karachi Coastal Comprehensive Zone, a huge development comprising some 930 hectares, of which 630 are reclaimed. That's just next to our borders. This is a mega project that may, in the end, be larger than even Gwadar. Besides, no one less than President Xi Jinping broke protocol to congratulate Shahbaz Sharif in March when he became Prime Minister. Officials have since been trooping into the country, indicating that Beijing still has its hand on the tiller. The bilateral boat may be tilting a good deal, but the captain is still very much on the job.

### **Why India and China Are Finally Starting to Patch Things Up**

17 November 2024, TIME, Michael Kugelman

In June 2020, a bloody border clash broke out between India and China in the Ladakh region—the deadliest since a 1962 war. Relations between the nuclear-armed neighbors plunged to their lowest level in decades. But, after four years of icy ties, the relationship is finally beginning to thaw.

India and China struck a border deal last month that calls for resuming patrols in Ladakh, and for disengaging troops that restore positions to pre-crisis locations. The accord likely paved the way for an Oct. 23 meeting between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping—a first since the 2020 Ladakh clash—on the sidelines of a BRICS summit in Russia. They pledged to strengthen communication and cooperation.

These developments provide a chance to inch ties forward. New Delhi has long insisted the relationship can't improve until border tensions are eased; that precondition has now been met. The two sides can also leverage the thaw to tap more fully into existing areas of cooperation. Trade ties have remained robust despite deep tensions, and goodwill triggered by the border deal could unlock more Chinese investment in India. New Delhi and Beijing work together in many global forums, from BRICS to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. They share many common interests, from countering terrorism and promoting multilateralism to embracing non-Western economic models—and rejecting what they view as U.S. moral crusading around the world.

A lasting détente between the two Asian giants would have far-reaching consequences, including for Washington's strategic partnership with New Delhi—which is fueled by the shared goal of countering Chinese power. But it could also serve as a hedge against the unpredictability of President-elect Donald Trump, should he decide to jettison his hardline approach to Beijing and seek his own rapprochement with Xi—a leader Trump has often praised, including as recently as last month.

Yet the significance of the thaw shouldn't be overstated. That's because India-China relations are still deeply fraught, and will likely remain so for the foreseeable future.

The Ladakh deal, for instance, does little to resolve a broader India-China border dispute. The countries share a 2,100-mi. frontier, of which 50,000 square miles are disputed—an area equal to the size of Greece. Additionally, mistrust between border troops remains high; traumatic memories of the Ladakh clash—which entailed Indian soldiers getting beaten to death with iron rods, and getting flung to their deaths into icy rivers—still strikes a nerve.

Tensions are high elsewhere, too. The mammoth Chinese Belt and Road Initiative infrastructure project, which New Delhi categorically rejects because it winds through Indian-claimed

territory, remains a flashpoint. India also worries about Beijing's naval power projection in the Indian Ocean, stretching eastward over a massive expanse from a Chinese naval base in Djibouti to what New Delhi believes are Chinese spy ships operating near the Andaman Sea, where India has island territories. Closer to home, New Delhi is concerned about the surveillance risks posed by Chinese technologies in India.

Furthermore, India and China have strong security ties with the other's main rival. Thanks to a series of foundational defense accords, the Indian and U.S. militaries are cooperating on unprecedented levels, and ramping up arms sales and technology transfers. India has now evolved into a net security provider for the U.S., providing Washington with military equipment and helping its allies counter Chinese provocations. The U.S. has even supplied intelligence to New Delhi at critical moments. For its part, Beijing continues to pursue its longstanding security alliance with Islamabad. It provides significant military aid to Pakistan, including equipment for ballistic missiles (which has produced a flurry of recent U.S. sanctions).

Meanwhile, India and China also have profound differences on core issues. Beijing rejects many Indian policies in Kashmir, the disputed region that's provoked multiple India-Pakistan wars. India is strengthening ties with Taiwan, which Beijing views as a renegade province of China. The Dalai Lama—the exiled leader of Tibet, who Beijing regards as a dangerous separatist—has long been based in India. India and China are also each part of rival global forums: India participates in the Indo-Pacific Quad, while China leads BRI.

Yet bilateral ties should continue to improve. Continued talks on the border—which have happened regularly since the Ladakh crisis—to discuss other flashpoints, and to reassert mutual commitments to longstanding protocols that forbid the discharge of firearms, could help avert future escalations. The next opportunity for high-level dialogue could come this month, if Modi and Xi attend the G20 leaders summit in Brazil.

The best hope for deeper ties lies with their robust economic partnership (China was India's top trade partner last year). India's chief economic advisor is making the case for more Chinese FDI that could accelerate Beijing's long-term plans to invest in top Indian industries. And China, with its recent economic setbacks, stands to benefit from increasing engagement with the world's fastest-growing major economy.

The incoming return of Trump could also spur more India-China business bonhomie, if their collective fear of U.S. tariffs prompts them to carve out more commercial space for themselves.

Ultimately, relations will sometimes be cooperative, particularly on the economy, but they'll remain competitive—and possibly at times even confrontational. Still, even a modest India-China thaw is a good thing. The world is on fire, and it can't afford yet another crisis—much less a conflict.

### Why go to China?

17 November 2024, The Kathmandu Post

Prime Minister and CPN-UML Chair KP Sharma Oli is not someone who minces his words. So when Oli was asked at the recent Kantipur Conclave whether he was worried about visiting China before going to India, it was interesting to see him struggle for the right words. He eventually said something along the lines that it is hard to discern which of the two neighbours is more important and should be his first port of call. Just so that the Indians are not spooked, he added "our relations with India are deep, historical, based on culture and tradition, and predate the formation of modern states." Ever since he became prime minister around four months ago, PM Oli has been desperately trying to get an invite from New Delhi. This was why he had sat on an earlier offer to visit China. But when he saw that New Delhi was in no mood to invite him, Oli decided to visit Beijing first. Perhaps it was also a not-so-subtle signal to India that if it is not ready to engage with him, he will not be afraid to sidle closer to China.

Balancing India and China would have been tricky for Prime Minister Oli irrespective of the kind of coalition he led. But as the head of a government where he is the prime minister but not the leader of the biggest party presents him with unique challenges. During his 2016 China trip following the Indian blockade, both the electorate and most political parties were strongly in favour of greater engagement with the northern neighbour. But this time, even his main coalition partner does not want him to sign any consequential agreements with China. The Nepali Congress says Nepal should not accept any loan under the Belt and Road Initiative. Rather than sign new agreements, it is in favour of asking the Chinese to follow through on their previous pledges. In other words, short of getting the Chinese to waive off the loan for the Pokhara International Airport—which, though a very long shot, could be a huge coup for the prime minister—Oli will struggle to portray his China visit as a success. If there can be no domestic political mileage for Oli, why go to China and risk losing face at home, even some UML leaders are asking?

Whether a Nepali prime minister visits New Delhi or Beijing first, it should be up to Nepal to decide. That is not a big issue. What is more of a concern is that even when our prime minister embarks on a state visit

to China, domestic political calculus rather than national interest will guide his decisions. So far, neither is the Congress ready to give him more of a leeway in negotiating with the Chinese nor is the UML in a place to say that it will do no important business with China. In the latter event, the Beijing visit will be reduced to a formality even before Oli embarks on it. This is not how coalitions work. How can people trust the government with anything if its constituent parties cannot even agree on how to deal with Nepal's two most important international partners? And what does it say about the executive authority of the prime minister? The ruling coalition needs to immediately sort out its foreign policy mess before the country suffers an irreparable loss of trust abroad.

**COMMENT: The Dalai Lama's death and reincarnation will be a defining moment for Indian politics**

17 November 2024, bne IntelliNews , Ben Aris

The death of the 14th Dalai Lama will be a defining moment for Indian politics as his influence stretches to cover China's internal struggle to control Tibet and could end in a clash with India, which has offered the Buddhist leader sanctuary for six decades. / Ben Aris

At the heart of the Tibetan plateau lies a profound challenge for India's foreign policy: the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama. Already 89 years old, Tenzin Gyatso, the fourteenth Dali Lama and head of the Buddhist Yellow Hat sect, says himself that he is not long for this world and has suggested that he may be the last of his line.

The problem is that when he dies, the race will be on to find a reincarnation to replace him and that China has already said that the fifteenth Dali Lama will be born in China, meaning he will fall under the control of the Chinese government.

There is already a precedent. When the tenth Panchen Lama, Lobsang Trinley Lhündrub Chökyi Gyaltsen, the number two in the Yellow Hat Sect hierarchy, passed away on 28 January 1989 at Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in Tibet, his reincarnation, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, was found a few months later in Lhari County, Nagchu Prefecture in Tibet and recognised by the Dalai Lama as the true Panchen Lama that May. But he and his family were immediately taken into custody by the Chinese authorities and have not been seen in public since. The Chinese government has said that he is living "a normal life" and "does not wish to be disturbed," but these claims have not been independently verified. As of now, his exact whereabouts and well-being remain unknown, and he has not taken up his role of leading the Yellow Hat sect in Tibet.

The question of succession for the fourteenth Dalai Lama remains vexed. The Dalai Lama, who currently lives in exile in northern India, has said that he may be reincarnated outside Tibet or may not be reincarnated at all. For the Chinese authorities that annexed Tibet in 1959, the current Dalai Lama is a thorn in the side of Beijing as it strives to incorporate Tibet and bring the region, which accounts for a third of all the People's Republic's land, under its full control. Bringing the fifteenth Dalai Lama under China's direct control is a top priority for Beijing. Who will be the new Dali Lama and where he lives is no longer a purely spiritual issue but a pivotal geopolitical matter involving India, China and the wider global order.

**Life in exile**

The Chinese invaded Tibet in 1959, which was still a closed country at the time and fiercely independent, and quickly took over. The Dalai Lama fled, walking across the Tibetan mountains into India, and set up a government in exile based in Dharamshala, a town in the northern Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, where it remains to this day. The Dalai Lama remains one of the most revered religious leaders in the world and has constantly lobbied for a return of Tibet's independence. Amongst his many accolades is a Nobel Peace prize for his non-violent struggle for the liberation of Tibet and his advocacy of a peaceful resolution to the Tibetan issue through dialogue.

China insists that the next Dalai Lama must be born within its borders and approved by Beijing, a move Tibetans see as interference in their religious traditions. Observers worry that this scenario could end with two rival and competing Dalai Lamas – one endorsed by Beijing and another by the Tibetan exile community – thereby complicating international diplomacy.

"The reincarnation debate is central to China's internal stability and its global image," Vijay Gokhale of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace said in a recent paper. "It is not merely about Tibet but reflects Beijing's concerns over ethno-religious unrest and external interference in its borderlands."

India has been a strong supporter of the Tibetan government in exile, providing a home for refugees that still walk over the mountains to escape a repressive regime in Tibet. During a trip through Tibet in 1989, this correspondent was told of forced sterilisation of Tibetan women by the Chinese government in interviews with locals in Lhasa and also witnessed first-hand the summary execution of a Tibetan man who attacked a Chinese official with a knife in Shigatse, the second largest city in Tibet and the traditional seat of the Panchen Lama, earlier the same day.



The reincarnation of Tibet's spiritual leader is not just a theological matter but will be a defining issue for India's relations with China and its role in the global order. Relations between the two countries have been poor due to a long-standing border dispute. Tensions between the two flared up most recently in 2023 when China issued a new "standard map" that included part of India's northern territory that was marked as part of China. In a hilarious retort, India's official cartographers issued their own new map that included all of China, but labelled "India 3.0."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi remains worried about Chinese aggression and on the agenda during his trip to Moscow this summer to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin was securing the delivery of Russia's advanced S-400 missile system that he wants to use to secure his borders with both China and Pakistan, which is also in dispute with New Delhi.

However, more recently the two long-standing rivals have tried to bury the hatchet as part of the attempts to build up the BRICS+ group in the face of US aggression and the growing geopolitical tensions. India's Ministry of External Affairs confirmed an agreement with China on disengagement and border patrols along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in October ahead of the latest BRICS summit, hosted by Russia in Kazan.

Gokhale argues that the question of the Dalai Lama's successor is also intricately tied to India's domestic politics, its foreign policy and the evolving geopolitical landscape shaped by the escalating Sino-US rivalry.

"The Dalai Lama remains a potent symbol of Tibetan identity and resilience. His death could trigger a geopolitical clash between India and China over the recognition of his successor," said Gokhale.

If Beijing selects and endorses its own new Dalai Lama within its borders, and dismisses a Tibetan or Indian-born rival that is recognised by the Tibetan government in exile, New Delhi's knee-jerk reaction will be to back the government in exile's candidate that will put it in direct conflict with Beijing and result in the start of a long-term legitimacy battle.

"The reincarnation issue is central to China's internal stability and international ambitions," Gokhale explains. "For Beijing, controlling the narrative is as important as controlling the territory. This is about demonstrating to the world –and to its own people – that Tibet is firmly integrated into the Chinese state." India's geopolitical conundrum

India is heavily invested in the Tibetan question. For over six decades India has been the spiritual and political haven for the Dalai Lama and his government-in-exile, a policy that has defined New Delhi's moral stance on the Tibet issue but strained its relations with China.

"India faces a tough choice," Gokhale observes. "Should it continue to serve as a sanctuary for Tibetan religious and cultural life, or should it tread cautiously to avoid provoking China further?" The presence of a large Tibetan exile community in India – numbering approximately 100,000 – and its historical commitment to supporting Tibetan autonomy have made India a key stakeholder in the reincarnation debate. The international respect the Dalai Lama commands makes it even harder for New Delhi to compromise on the Tibetan issues, as that would also hurt Modi's growing international stature and India's reputation as it starts to play a larger role on the international stage. In particular, Modi positioned India as an alternative leader of the Global South during the G20 summit last year with great success and hopes to moderate Beijing and Moscow's more aggressive stance in their clash with the West – a message that is well received by many in the aspiring Global South countries that don't want to get drawn into a Russian-led East-West head-on clash.

Complicating matters is the fact that Tibetan Buddhism has deep roots in India, particularly in the Himalayan belt, where Tibetan spiritual traditions are interwoven with local culture. Buddha was born in Lumbini as a prince of the local royal family, which is located in modern-day Nepal and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. However, he travelled widely and attained enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree in Bodhi Gaya, which is in the present-day northern Indian state of Bihar. The site is marked by the Mahabodhi Temple, another UNESCO World Heritage Site, and is considered one of the most sacred places in Buddhism.

According to the 2011 Census of India, Buddhism is practised by approximately 8.4mn individuals, constituting about 0.7% of the nation's total population. The majority (77%) of Indian Buddhists are concentrated in the state of Maharashtra. Estimates of the proportion of Buddhists within China's population vary significantly due to differing methodologies and definitions of religious affiliation. According to a 2018 survey by the Chinese General Social Survey, approximately 4% of Chinese adults, equating to about 42mn people, formally identify as Buddhist. However, another survey in 2023 study suggests that a third (33.4%) of China's 1.4bn residents, or approximately 470mn individuals, can be identified as Buddhists.

Any perceived concessions to China on this issue could have political repercussions within India, alienating communities that revere the Dalai Lama as a spiritual guide. Due to the high number of Chinese that at least loosely associate themselves with Buddhism, it is a key domestic issue for Beijing as well.

## The Sino-US angle

India's challenges are compounded by the broader geopolitical backdrop of escalating Sino-US tensions. The US has been increasingly vocal in its support for Tibetan autonomy, enacting legislation that directly challenges China's claims over the reincarnation process. The 2020 Tibetan Policy and Support Act, for instance, explicitly upholds the Tibetan community's right to select its religious leaders without interference and is another plank in the US campaign to challenge China's rise. The 2024 Resolve Tibet Act further sharpens this stance by rejecting China's historical claims over Tibet and urging direct dialogue between Beijing and the Dalai Lama – a law that has only increased Beijing's desire to take control of the Dalai Lama's successor.

"Beijing sees the reincarnation debate not just as a domestic issue but as a proxy battleground for its competition with the United States," Gokhale notes. Beijing not only wants to secure control over the Dalai Lama's reincarnation for reasons of control over Tibet, but also as it fears the issue will become a proxy for its escalating rivalries with Washington. Gokhale warns that India cannot afford to approach the reincarnation question with indifference or delay. A clear and balanced policy is crucial to navigating the complex dynamics at play. "India has managed the Dalai Lama's presence with relative success over the past six decades," he says. "But the post-Dalai Lama era will demand a new level of strategic foresight and diplomatic agility."

Among the key policy questions India must address are:

**Recognition and Legitimacy:** If an alternative Dalai Lama is identified in exile or within Indian territory, how should India respond? Should it extend recognition and allow the successor to reside in India, or maintain ambiguity to avoid antagonising China?

**Advocacy for Dialogue:** Should India publicly support calls for negotiations between Beijing and Tibetan representatives? Such a stance could align India with international expectations while signalling its principled stand on the Tibetan issue.

**Engagement with the Exile Community:** How should India manage the Tibetan government-in-exile and the broader exile community during the transition? Gokhale suggests continuing to permit their cultural and educational activities while firmly deterring any violent or provocative actions.

**Managing a Domestic Backlash:** Tibetan Buddhism has a significant following in India, particularly in the northern states. Controversy over the next Dalai Lama could spark unrest among these communities, necessitating proactive measures to address their concerns.

**Handling the Interregnum:** The period between the death of the fourteenth Dalai Lama and the identification of his successor could be fraught with uncertainty. India must prepare for potential disputes within the Tibetan exile community and respond to Chinese demands regarding the Dalai Lama's symbols, such as ritual objects that are used to determine the authenticity of a new Dalai Lama.

## Walking the tightrope

While Gokhale acknowledges that India's actions may not fundamentally alter China's policy on the Dalai Lama, he argues that inaction is not an option. Beijing's approach to Tibet has always been driven by its domestic imperatives of maintaining political control and stability in the region. However, India's role as the host of the Dalai Lama and the epicentre of Tibetan religious activity makes it an indispensable actor in the reincarnation debate.

"India should not entertain any illusions that appeasing China on this issue will lead to better bilateral relations," Gokhale cautions. "If anything, it may embolden Beijing to escalate its demands, including shutting down Tibetan institutions in India." Instead, India must strike a balance between its strategic interests and its long-standing commitments to Tibetan autonomy. Gokhale suggests that India consider coordinating with like-minded nations, such as the US and European countries, to counter China's attempts to monopolise the reincarnation process.

The succession of the Dalai Lama is not just a matter of religious tradition, but it will be a defining moment for the Indo-China relationship. For China, it is a test of its ability to assert control over Tibet in the face of international scrutiny. For India, it is an opportunity to reaffirm its democratic values and strategic independence while managing the risks of confrontation with its most powerful neighbour.

Gokhale concludes: "The reincarnation question embodies the intersection of spirituality, geopolitics and power. How India navigates this challenge will shape its future role as a regional leader and a global influencer."

## Analysis: Under Trump, Pakistan to be viewed through 'China, India lens': experts

16 November 2024, DAWN, Anwar Iqbal

Experts say many picks are decidedly anti-China, while nominees such as Rubio, Waltz have demonstrated their pro-India leanings in past.

As President-elect Donald Trump picks people to staff his second administration, Washington-based scholars of US-South Asia relations are weighing the potential impact of these appointments on ties with Pakistan.

These observers predict that the Trump administration's foreign policy focus will likely prioritise countering China's influence in South Asia, a shift that could present challenges for Pakistan as the geopolitical landscape evolves.

Historically, Islamabad has sought to be treated independently by Washington, rather than viewed through the lens of India or Afghanistan.

However, with the incoming administration, the focus will shift once again – this time to China. This shift does not guarantee that Pakistan will be treated independently; instead, the US may continue to approach it through the lens of its competition with Beijing.

In interviews with Dawn, several scholars noted that the new team includes individuals who advocate for a stronger alliance with India, which could pose potential challenges for Pakistan.

They suggest that Trump's choices, which includes figures like Senator Marco Rubio and Congressman Mike Waltz, signal a clear shift toward strengthening the US-India alliance, likely at the expense of Pakistan.

Joshua White, a former senior advisor to the White House on South Asian Affairs, warns that the nominees' past experiences and concerns about China will likely influence their stance on Pakistan too.

"Trump's senior appointees will likely be quite skeptical – if not hostile – toward deepening US-Pakistan ties, given their experiences in Afghanistan, their valuation of the US-India relationship, and their concerns over Pakistan's relationship with China," he said.

Rubio, a strong advocate for countering China, recently introduced legislation aimed at elevating India's status to that of a key US ally, reflecting the growing strategic defence and technology cooperation between the two nations. Rubio's long-standing stance on South Asia, including efforts to limit US assistance to Pakistan over its support for Kashmiris' struggle for freedom, further emphasises the policy direction.

Shuja Nawaz, a distinguished fellow at the Atlantic Council's South Asia Centre, stresses that Pakistan's role in US strategy remains largely confined to counter-terrorism, particularly in Afghanistan. "Pakistan's utility to the US is primarily in counter-terrorism. It's unlikely to rank high in terms of positive engagement," Nawaz said.

The anticipated nomination of Mike Waltz as national security adviser is expected to further tilt the balance toward US-India defence cooperation. Waltz, a strong proponent of military collaboration with India, is also the co-chair of the Indian Caucus in Congress. He is expected to push for deepening the US-India

partnership, especially as both countries desire to counter growing security challenges from China.

Hassan Abbas of the National Defence University in Washington, notes that while it is still early to fully assess the direction of Trump's foreign policy, America's national interests will ultimately drive decisions.

He acknowledges the growing influence of Pakistani diaspora activists in the US, but advises Islamabad to broaden its engagement with Washington beyond security issues as US-India relations continue to deepen.

Uzair Younus of The Asia Group agrees that Trump's appointees, particularly Rubio and Waltz, are likely to maintain a hardline stance toward Pakistan. Younus also points to Rubio's history of criticizing leaders who leverage anti-American sentiment for domestic political gain, a stance that could hurt PTI's efforts to solicit Trump's support to get Imran Khan released.

Furthermore, Trump's domestic reforms, such as those led by the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), are expected to facilitate economic cooperation between the US and India, easing the path for Indian businesses. The inclusion of Kash Patel, an Indian-American attorney, in Trump's administration is being seen as an indication.

"There may be factions in the Trump administration that would like to see the US pressure Pakistan on various domestic and foreign policy issues—from the status of Imran Khan to Kashmir. But that would require sustained attention from Washington, and I think it is more likely that the administration is preoccupied with Iran, China, border challenges with Mexico, and a host of other priorities," Joshua White said.

Meanwhile, Shuja Nawaz warned that Pakistan may not be high on the list of positive priorities of the Trump administration.

Waltz served in Afghanistan and will likely carry the memories of having lost comrades in the eastern region where the Haqqani Network operated, he said.

"He also might further subscribe to the Biden administration view that Pakistan is now in the Chinese lap," Nawaz said, adding: "Pakistan will need to show that it can improve its economy to garner US support via the International Financial Institutions like the IMF, World Bank, and ADB."

### **Lhasa: Black and White'**

15 November 2024, Ekantipur, K. Raj

After the monsoon of 1996, there was a chance to go to Lhasa with 20/22 tourists from Poland. Through a tour company in the city of Poznan, Poland, I was responsible for taking tourists to

Kathmandu, Chitwan National Park in Nepal, rafting on Trishuli River and Lhasa in Tibet.

The Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu used to facilitate the issuance of permits for visiting Tibet. After the official tour company submitted the details of the tourists to the embassy, they had to get 'clearance' from the center and only then the permit was issued from Kathmandu.

About seven years after the government of reformist Chinese Communist leader Deng Xiaoping brutally crushed student protesters in Beijing's Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989, I was on my way to Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, which China had occupied in the 1950s.

Before the Chinese army captured Lhasa, on the night of March 17, 1959, the religious and political leader of Tibet, the Dalai Lama Khampa, reached Arunachal Pradesh, India, and took refuge with the Tibetans. Before leaving Lhasa, the Dalai Lama and his aides, informed of the complicated situation, appealed to the influential countries of the West for help, but no one would listen. The Dalai Lama, who is referred to as 'His Holiness', is still living in Dharamsala, India.

Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai promoted tourism as an important part of international relations and diplomacy during his tenure. Visits to China at that time were either official or production and industry study tours. China International Travel Services (CITS) was established at the government level in 1954 to organize such tours. After the , the company became one of the largest travel companies in China. Deng Xiaoping, who emerged after the death of Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao Tse Tung, made tourism a means of earning foreign exchange and economic development after 1978. At a time when Chinese citizens rarely had contact with the outside world, Tibet became a subject of mystery and curiosity to everyone.

Even now Nepal has only foreign mission in Lhasa, no other country has. Also, Lhasa's international air connectivity is only with Kathmandu.

I was going to Lhasa at a young age with tourists from Poland, a country in Eastern Europe that had just woken up from the bad dream of communism, to Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, the autonomous region of China, which is achieving rapid economic growth through the path of democracy. Serving a group of tourists would earn good money.

Although a tour operator named Orwis started tourism in Poland in 1923, tourism business was nationalized like other economic sectors after the Second World War. After the countries of Eastern Europe were freed from the dark shadow of communism in 1989, Poles also began to travel abroad as tourists.

A small plane of China Southwest Airlines took off from Kathmandu to Lhasa around 10 am. It was my first experience flying internationally on a large ship. Aang would shriek as the ship's wheels left the ground and flew into the sky as the ship descended toward the house. Due to the start of rain, the sky was cloudy. I was desperately trying to look down from the window at twenty thousand feet.

After some time, the ship reached the top of Everest and after the pilot announced that 'the black pyramid-like takura on the lower left is Mount Everest', all the passengers got up from their seats and started taking pictures. Looking down, we saw clouds floating here and there, countless snow-covered peaks, glaciers and even Mount Everest.

I didn't have a camera, so I took a picture of Everest with my eye lens and kept it in mind. That exciting flight over the highest point on earth located in the majestic Mahalangur Himal was unforgettable not only for me but for almost all the passengers.

For a while, nothing was visible from the ship except the seemingly endless expanse of snow. The ship was flying over a high plateau known as the roof of the world, munching on snow-covered land, lakes of Kanchan blue water. Flying over the greenery of Nepal and Ankantar and Chisa Pahara, the ship has entered Tibet, an autonomous region of China. My eyes were fixed on the window and without even breathing I was measuring the land of vast Tibet stretching beyond the horizon.

I had no leading role in Lhasa nor did I have contact with anyone. Those Polish tourists probably knew more about Tibet than I did. They had come to visit after having studied a little about Tibet.

Maybe because the citizens of a country that has recently been freed from the clutches of dictatorship have a different mindset, they thought that it was right that I visited Lhasa with their money, it was beyond imagination that I would spend my own money to visit Tibet. Because almost 480 USD was spent on air tickets alone. I felt that there was a difference in their thinking and behavior from tourists from Western countries.

After about an hour of flight, we landed at Gangor Airport in Tibet. Since the time in Lhasa is 2 hours and 15 minutes later than that of Nepal, it was around 1:30 when we reached there. The airport is normal. Although there are domestic flights from Chinese cities including Chengdu to Lhasa, international air connections are only from Kathmandu.

At the airport at an altitude of 3600 meters, flights will not be allowed after 2 pm because of wind. The Polish tourists and I lined up for the immigration check. A Tibetan tour guide came with a small minibus to pick us up. He also spoke Hindi, and had spent some time in Dharamsala, India. After we

boarded the bus, the guide said in English Started the 'briefing'. Lhasa city is 90 kilometers away from the airport and it takes about one and a half hours. There were only scattered houses around the road. Around five o'clock we reached the hotel in Lhasa city. It was late evening. After 'checking in' at the hotel and sending all the tourists to their rooms, I also went to my room. Lek Lagech Kare, felt nauseous and a bit heavy headed. So I went to bed without eating dinner. There was a noise coming from other rooms too.

It must have been 4 o'clock in the morning in Nepal, Beira from the hotel came with tea. After getting the information that breakfast is ready and the guide has also arrived, I got ready and left. Another guide has come today, called Chiring. He also speaks Hindi and English well and spent five years as a disciple of the Dalai Lama in Dharamshala, India. A little bit of Nepali is also spoken. Telling that he came back to India from Nepal as a Tibetan refugee, he said, 'It is difficult for us to cross the border of Nepal.' At that time, all Toyotas in Pokhara were only 1975 model Korala Deluxe and Hydellux. Only a few wealthy people in Kathmandu owned Volkswagen Beetle models.

Since I was hungry, I entered a small roadside restaurant and ordered noodles. The noodles came with chunks of beef patty and chopsticks. I said not to eat beef. And the restaurateur brought vegetarian noodles. But they started teaching me because I didn't know how to use chopsticks. He brought a banana seed and taught me in Hindi, ``Aisei Pagte Hain".

After dusk, the shutters of a small building opened, and Tibetan girls in miniskirts began to appear. Colored lights started to flash. A man came in the car and started talking to the girl. Maybe a dance bar or something, I found the scene interesting. Since I was single, I wanted to go, but I didn't dare because I was sick.

After resting the next day, I went to see Jokhang Temple and Sera Monastery in Lhasa along with the tourists. The history of Nepal is also connected with the Jokhang Temple built in the seventh century. Inside the temple, the 2500-year-old Buddha statue that Bhrikuti took from Nepal after her marriage to the Tibetan emperor Srongchen Gampo is kept facing Nepal. It is said that Newari Kaligarrhs were taken from Nepal to build the said temple.

When we reached there in the morning, the pilgrims were crawling on the ground and praying towards the temple. During the Chinese Cultural Revolution of 1966, the Chinese Red Guards destroyed many structures including important statues and artefacts in this temple. Repairs started after 1972 and it was restored in 1980. Near the Jokhang temple there is

also a house with a small hoarding belonging to a large business group of Nepal. I wanted to take a closer look but the guide didn't have time.

Infrastructure construction work is going on in Lhasa city. Everywhere there were bulldozers and excavators and Chinese workers in yellow helmets. Braving the dust and traffic jams, we reached Sera Gumba, 5 km away. Founded in the early 15th century, this monastery is located at the foot of a hill. Before the 1959 incident, there was a huge monastery here that could accommodate up to 6,000 Buddhist monks. Inside the monastery, the large halls contained large thangka paintings relating to the life of the Buddha.

After visiting the monastery, the guide explained to the tourists about Lord Buddha and the paintings containing his biography. After calming the curiosity of the tourists, he asked everyone, 'What is religion?' The tourists took turns answering. Some say religion is 'good work', some say 'religion is faith', some say 'helping the poor is religion'.

Although the tourists were from former communist countries, they all believed in Christianity. I said 'Accepting the existence of God is religion'. The guide began to say seriously, 'You are right, but in the language that common people understand, religion is the only thing that goes with a person even after death. After we die, everything should be left here, but even after death, people can take religion with them. All the tourists were impressed by the guide's words and the huge hall resounded with applause. On the way back to

, one Marek (the police call Marek in English) said to me, 'Raj, you know, when some people here die, they cut up the dead bodies over there and feed them to the vultures.' Didn't know. I said 'myth'. But as Marek said, that is reality. Later I heard that cremation is done in the same way in Upper Mustang of Nepal. It is called 'Sky Burial' in English.

The next day we went to see the palaces of the Dalai Lama, Potala and Norbuling. The Potala Palace was heavily guarded by the Chinese military and photography was strictly prohibited. Foreign tourists, Tibetans and Chinese tourists flocked to see the huge palace covered with white limestone on the red hill.

According to our guide, the Buddha and other lama statues and small stupas inside the palace are made of gold. In that way, there should be tons of gold inside the Potala. Perhaps that's why the proverb "Lhasa has a ear is my daughter's ears" has come into vogue. Not only in Nepal but also the Greek philosopher Herodotus, who is known as the father of history, has described the gold found in Tibet in an interesting manner. legend According to

, Padmasambhava, the pioneer of Tantric Buddhism, scattered gold from his siddhi in the land of Tibet. But Tibetans do not think it is good to dig the ground to



extract gold because Padmasambhava gets angry when they dig the ground to extract gold, the fertility of the soil is destroyed, storms come and the crops are damaged.

Potala Palace is the Dalai Lama's winter palace and Norbuling's summer palace. Norbuling's palace was built a little further away, and all over the courtyard were beautiful flowers, including dahlias. In the palace, a golden throne about 4 meters high, donated by a merchant from Lhasa in honor of the Dalai Lama, and a box-like and box-like radio, gifted by the then Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, are also interesting items.

There is a consulate general of Nepal. That delegation of Nepal has stood as a witness with the history of political and commercial relations between Nepal and Tibet (voted at that time). The agency opened in Lhasa in 1856 as the "Lawyer's Office" and was transformed into the Consulate General in 1956.

Initially, food and other materials were exported from Nepal to Tibet, while sheep wool, wool, gold, salt, and herbs were imported from Tibet. It is said that travel and trade to the north of Nepal was safer than to the south.

After traveling to Tibet for five days and four nights, we returned to Kathmandu by Air China plane. Perhaps there was a psychological effect, in Lhasa my lungs always felt like they were starved of oxygen. After Tribhuvan International Airport Burn, Phylis tourists moved to New Delhit in transit. I was more than I got out of the airport long after leaving a long time.

### **A Modest Call for China to Elevate Kailash's Status**

15 November 2024, Republica, Dr Ganesh Regmi

China is Nepal's inseparable and close ally. Nepal should maintain a special relationship with such a large and prosperous neighboring country. Just as the Nepali people along the southern border share a people-to-people connection with India, the residents along the northern border share a bond with China. Nepal has ancient and historical ties with China. There are various religious, social, and spiritual connections, including the revered Manasarovar and Kailash. Manasarovar and Kailash are unique and unparalleled in their importance. Kailash is the home of Mahadev, the supreme deity in Hinduism. For Buddhists, Jains, Shaivites, and yogis, Kailash is what Mecca and Medina are for Muslims. However, it appears that the Chinese government has not paid much attention to maintaining the dignity of Kailash, which is circled by Tibetan locals who prostrate themselves on the ground, taking three steps forward, bowing, and continuing like this for nearly a month.

I am writing this article based on my firsthand experiences during a pilgrimage to Manasarovar and Kailash, which is quite expensive for the average Nepali. I am not an influential person, nor am I in a position to advise the Chinese government; however, as a responsible pilgrim, I humbly request the Chinese government to consider the following points to elevate the status of Manasarovar and Kailash.

First, do not be stingy in providing necessary information. As a communist country, and due to the presence of the Dalai Lama, China has its internal policies to control information in Tibet. However, it is essential to provide necessary information to pilgrims visiting the sacred land of Manasarovar and Kailash.

The region is vast and extremely remote. Information such as the route to take, the locations of places, distances, altitudes, accommodations, dining facilities, emergency rescue arrangements, safety measures, and reporting of crimes like theft or fraud should be made available, preferably in English. Without sufficient information, the journey feels like traveling in the dark.

Second, manage the entry gate to Manasarovar and control the unfair 'vehicle syndicate'. The journey to Manasarovar is long and challenging. While the routes look attractive and well-maintained, the main entry gate to Manasarovar has issues with vehicles getting stuck in mud and sand. There is no shelter in case of rain, nor places to have tea, snacks, or rest.

A bigger issue is that vehicles are not allowed entry into Manasarovar for the pilgrimage. Whether a pilgrim can take their vehicle inside depends on the whims of the gatekeepers, and bribes are reportedly needed. Such a 'local syndicate' was common in Nepal's Mustang area two decades ago, and now it is seen at Manasarovar.

Third, improve the condition of the Manasarovar circumambulation route. While Kailash is circled on foot, the tradition for Manasarovar involves circumambulation by vehicles, which takes around three hours. Unfortunately, the route is a dusty, rough, and uncomfortable dirt road, resembling Nepal's remote and undeveloped areas. It is disappointing to see the world's second-most prosperous nation leaving such an important pilgrimage route in poor condition. One wonders why China, a symbol of prosperity, has not upgraded this road to the standards of America, Europe, or Singapore.

Fourth, construct holy bathing ghats at Manasarovar. There are no designated holy bathing areas around Manasarovar. Due to the absence of proper facilities, pilgrims have to bathe in muddy spots near the shore, such as in the west-north area near the guest house. The mud is so thick that shoes get stuck, and bathing in the freezing water leaves one's legs

covered in mud. Facilities for warm and cold water would make bathing more accessible, and creating proper bathing ghats would be a minor challenge for prosperous China.

Fifth, address the lack of proper toilet facilities. The public toilets in Manasarovar are in an appalling state. They are communal, foul-smelling, have no proper doors or locks, and lack water. The sight is disheartening, and it would be unfortunate for even an enemy to experience such conditions. Unable to use the toilets, I, like many others, had to resort to open areas at night.

Sixth, build a temple or Shiva Lingam at Manasarovar. There are no temples or Shiva Lingams at Manasarovar and Kailash. This means that offerings and prayers brought from Nepal or other countries have no place to be dedicated and are instead scattered on the ground. Despite a long and spiritually significant journey, there is no designated place to express religious sentiments or bow before the divine.

Seventh, pay attention to pilgrims' health and safety. Manasarovar and the Kailash pilgrimage require traversing harsh terrain at high altitudes, with strong winds and extreme cold. Although tens of thousands of pilgrims visit Manasarovar and Kailash every year, there are no health camps or emergency medical facilities, not even private clinics or pharmacies. It seems that pilgrims' lives have been left to the care of Lord Shiva himself, as two of my fellow travelers lost their lives during the journey.

Eighth, ensure the pilgrims' welfare, safety, and rescue. There is no proper infrastructure for the well-being and safety of pilgrims. There are no safe shelters along the way, no facilities to warm up or drink hot water, no oxygen camps in case of altitude sickness, and no government medical staff or equipment in sight. This suggests that China has not prioritized the dignity of Kailash.

Ninth, remove the restriction on helicopter access. Helicopters are the most efficient means of rescue in high-altitude areas, yet they are not allowed in the Kailash region. This restriction deserves reconsideration, as the Chinese helicopters used for security should not be considered a threat.

Tenth, security should be further strengthened along the route. CCTV cameras could be installed in necessary areas. The pilgrimage is often exploited by brokers, with pilgrims overcharged for services like horses, where the local owners receive only a fraction of the payment. Fixed rates in English would prevent such issues. Local police and immigration officers are often harsh towards pilgrims, and better facilities are needed.

Lastly, a nation itself may not follow a particular religion, and China may consider religion as "the opium." However, for the people, religion is

important. It is the responsibility of a great and prosperous country like China to maintain the dignity of Kailash, a place revered by many Tibetans and others alike, who circle it with utmost reverence.

While the revenue from pilgrim royalties might be very little to a wealthy nation like China, the respect for Kailash, a sacred center for Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Shaivites worldwide, should not be compromised. Addressing the concerns outlined above by building infrastructure and arranging necessary management would demonstrate that China is not diminishing the sanctity of Manasarovar and Kailash, but rather upholding it. Otherwise, it might appear that the current state is left unchanged to portray the deprived status of the Tibetan people.

### **Tibet-Aid Program at 30: Driving Tibet's Development in Xi's 'New Era'**

15 November 2024, The Jamestown Foundation,  
Devendra Kumar



A medical team as part of the TAP at work in Tibet.  
(Source: Tibet.cn)

#### **Executive Summary:**

- The Tibet-Aid Program (TAP), a principal driver of development in Tibet, has ramped up significantly under Xi Jinping's rule.
- The TAP has, throughout its 30-year history, sought to use material development to placate local tensions that have periodically arisen from the Party's governance failings in the region. Most recently, the emphasis has been on improving the quality of healthcare and education.
- The TAP is a focus for the Party's priorities, and the increasing flow of resources to "moderately prosperous" villages on the Indian border could be a cause for concern for neighboring India.
- Tibet remains an unattractive destination for cadres despite copious propaganda suggesting otherwise, which has helped perpetuate a relatively poor standard of governance in the region.

On November 11, 2024, the Tibet Daily reported on a book launch event held in Lhasa to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Tibet-Aid Program, sometimes also called pairing-up assistance for Tibet (TAP; 对口援藏) (Tibet Autonomous Region [TAR] Government, November 11). The book, written by a cadre sent to Tibet from Zhejiang Province, eulogizes the work of his comrades and the region's beauty across 110 poems. This is the latest of a string of propaganda efforts this year that have praised the work of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) over the last three decades in bringing the region further under the control of Beijing. Beyond the book launch, websites for positive news stories around the anniversary has been set up by state media outlet Xinhua as well as the TAR government, both of which features as its top article a picture of a smiling Xi Jinping, waving in front of the Potala Palace in Lhasa (Xinhua/TAP 30th Anniversary, accessed November 12; TAR Government, accessed November 12).

The Party has also sought to promote its achievements in Tibet overseas. This week, state-sanctioned Tibetan Studies experts are visiting Latvia and Estonia. In the former, they discussed "the development achievements of China's Tibet in the new era (中国西藏发展成就)," among other topics. According to the People's Daily, the parliamentarians were grateful for the visit, as Latvian people "mostly learn about China's Tibet from American movies and western media, and have accepted too many wrong views about it (多从美国电影和西方媒体中了解中国西藏, 接受了太多有关西藏的错误观点)" (People's Daily, November 11). The overall propaganda efforts have been accompanied by key meetings in Beijing and Lhasa involving senior CCP officials, which have emphasized the TAP's centrality and the need to further ramping up the program.

#### Wang Huning Outlines Way Forward in Lhasa

The most important event of 2024 for the Party's approach to Tibet was the Fourth Tibet-Aid Work Conference (第四次对口支援西藏工作会议), held in Lhasa from August 27–29. [1] The conference marked the TAP's 30th anniversary, and for the first time the meeting took place in the regional capital of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). Wang Huning (王沪宁), the fifth-ranked member of the 20th Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC) and Chairperson of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) attended and delivered a speech, in which he signaled TAP's increased centrality to the governance of Tibet under Xi Jinping's leadership (TAR Government, August 29). The fact that serving and retired senior officials travelled to Lhasa for the conference and the

messages conveyed underscore the growing significance of the TAP in the PRC's approach to the region.

Wang's visit sought to underline the CCP's focus on people's basic needs. He visited Lhoka People's Hospital (山南市人民医院) in Nedog district, which receives support from Anhui province, as well as the administrative seat of Southwestern prefecture-level city Lhoka (山南市) along the Indian border (Xinhua, August 29). Projects announced since the Sixth Tibet Work Forum in 2015 have focused on healthcare and education, emphasizing the Party's aim of ameliorating people's standard of living in the sparsely populated yet strategically important region.

In his speech, Wang emphasized the "spirit of driving in nails (钉钉子精神)." Translated more euphemistically in official sources as the "spirit of perseverance," the phrase was first used by CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping at the second plenary session of the 18th CCP Central Committee in February 2013 (State Council Information Office, July 11, 2019). It refers to the necessity of repeating actions multiple times before achieving the required result. As Xi noted at the time, "When we use a hammer to drive in a nail, a single knock often may not be enough; we must keep hammering until it is well in place before proceeding to hammer the next one. If you keep on driving in nails, then you will achieve great results (钉钉子往往不是一锤子就能钉好的, 而是要一锤一锤接着敲, 直到把钉子钉实钉牢, 钉牢一颗再钉下一颗, 不断钉下去, 必然大有成效)" (Party Member Net, February 28, 2013). In the context of Tibet, the phrase has been used to convey the priority of central government directives in key policy areas such as the "two centenary goals," stability maintenance, and border area development. Wang's speech also echoed much of the official discourse around the 30th anniversary by referring to the "Spirit of Old Tibet (老西藏精神)." Invoked by senior CCP figures, including Xi, since the late 1990s, the phrase is intended to exhort Tibet-Aid cadres take inspiration from the Party's seizing control of Tibet in the early 1950s to ensure long-term stability, development, and prosperity (TAR CCP, June 26, 2014; Xi Theory, July 2021; People's Forum, December 21, 2021). [2]

The invocation of this spirit is a nationalist call for mobilizing cadres to serve in the frontier region, which is not a popular destination. Beyond ethnic divisions, the negative attitudes of many Tibetans toward Han officials, low economic development, and—for Tibet-Aid cadres in particular—the harsh climate make it an unappealing place to be sent. Several cadres are known to have died while serving in the TAR due to the hostile conditions. Where

appeals to nationalist sentiment have not sufficed, the CCP has resorted to offering cadres better wages, subsidies, and career advancement opportunities. These are attractive, especially for young cadres from poorer central and western provinces that neighbor Tibetan areas.

#### Early TAP Led to Uneven Development, Local Tensions

Beijing launched the TAP in 1994 on the recommendations of the third Tibet Work Forum in July that year. This followed widespread ethnic tensions from the late 1980s onward borne out of increasing inequality along regional and ethnic lines. The original blueprint for the program drew from earlier mobilization of cadres and resources from inland (内地) provinces during the heyday of Maoist socialism and an array of programs launched after a 1980 visit to Tibet by PBSC member Hu Yaobang (胡耀邦) and that year's inaugural Tibet Work Forum (China Economy Online, April 8, 2008). Later, TAP also came to supplement the "Great Western Development (西部大开发)" strategy, which was launched in 1999 to channel resources from more prosperous and developed coastal provinces to poorer western provinces (Gov.cn, October 10, 2009).

The TAP has a three-pronged assistance mechanism. These are the direct transfer of funds to the TAR government from partner provinces, centrally administered cities, central ministries, and institutions; the transfer of cadres to the TAR; and investments in specific projects in counties and prefectures in the region. Cadres from partnering provinces typically serve for one or three years in counties and prefectures where the partner province funds projects. According to the latest official statistics, nearly 12,000 cadres across 10 batches have served from 18 provinces, 89 central organs and ministries, and 4 centrally administered cities (People's Daily Online, August 16, 2022).

Functionally, the assistance projects range from "group style (组团式)" medical and educational assistance to poverty alleviation, urbanization, and infrastructure development in so-called "xiaokang villages (小康村; moderately prosperous villages)" in counties along the border with India. "Group-style" assistance in these villages began in 2015. It is characterized as a "people-centered" policy but is also intended to change the way projects are undertaken. Under this model, dozens of doctors, nurses, and teachers come to select hospitals to train local doctors and teachers and to change how hospitals and schools function at the holistic level (Xinhua, August 23, 2022). The TAR provincial government has undertaken a massive project of developing more than 628 xiaokang villages in

border counties along its border with India since 2017; and TAP has played a significant role in funding infrastructure, tourism, educational and health facilities there (Toutiao, July 7, 2023; Tibet.cn, August 26).

In the late 2010s, it became clear that the benefits of the TAP were not being distributed optimally. The structure of subsidies led to a form of "boomerang aid" that helped only a fraction of Tibetan elites and non-Tibetan migrants in urban areas. [3] Tensions flared in 2008, with massive protests in Tibetan areas. This provided the impetus for change. The Fifth Tibet Work Forum in 2010 called for intensifying the TAP as part of developing a "long-term strategy (长久之策)." It was decided that developed provinces, centrally administered cities, and central organs must set aside 1 percent of their fiscal revenue annually to the Tibet-Aid program, as well as emphasizing coordinated development (TAR CCP, 26 June 2014; Qiushi, August 27). This shift has become more pronounced under Xi Jinping, though it is unclear whether the sources of tension from 2008 will be resolved under this new path.

#### 'New Era' TAP Focuses on Education, Healthcare, and Unity

Wang Huning's August conference speech underscored the need to persist in policies across four domains: maintaining stability, increasing development, promoting ecological civilization, and strengthening border areas (People's Daily Online, August 28). In Xi Jinping's "new era," the TAP is the primary vehicle through which these four objectives are to be achieved in the TAR. One of the earliest formulations of Xi's Tibet policy came at the Sixth Tibet Work Forum in 2015. Xi articulated his priorities for governing the region as "six musts (六个必须)," which align with the approach taken by the TAP. Other priorities included strengthening the CCP's organizational and ideological hegemony, expanding and strengthening local party organizations, and "rallying the peoples' hearts (凝聚人心)" to promote ethnic unity (Xinhua, August 26, 2015).

Wang's also made repeated references to Xi Jinping's earlier emphasis on creating a "new situation for Tibet Aid work (援藏工作新局面)," something that was picked up by official media commentaries (People's Daily, August 29, 2020; CPC News, August 30). In practice, "new situation" refers to the focus on rural revitalization, health, and education work, as well as the TAP as the key vehicle for achieving the party-state's political goals of fostering ethnic unity and ensuring Tibetans' support. It also reflects changes to the structure of the program itself. For example, group-style education and health projects aim to bring

about sustainable improvements to health and educational institutions in the TAR, as opposed to sending talents to temporarily make up for the region's shortage of skilled doctors and teachers (Xinhua, August 6, 2022). Xi's personal interest in ramping up the TAP is often conveyed through media reports on his involvement in the TAP projects from the days when he worked in Fujian province in the late 1990s (CCTV, September 8, 2015; October 6, 2017; People's Daily, July 28, 2022).

Media commentaries also referred to the capacity of TAP projects to "transform people's lives and win their hearts (改善民生凝聚人心)." Xi first articulated this phrase at the Sixth Tibet Work Forum, and refers to ensuring regime stability and loyalty through improving people's general quality of life (China Daily, September 8, 2015; Xinhua, August 28).

The increase in cadres serving under the TAP has been dramatic during Xi's tenure. Around 7,000 out of the total 12,000 have served since 2012, and the size of each batch has also risen substantially, from 622 in 1993 to 2,117 in the batch that has been serving since 2021 (Xinhua, August 22). A notable driver of TAP's expansion came in 2015, when the Central Organization Department—which oversees all personnel matters for the TAP—mobilized the ministries of education and health, as well as the partnering provinces, for "group-style Tibet Aid work (组团式 援藏工作)" focusing on education and health. Since then, the number of projects launched and cadres dispatched under these two sectors have contributed significantly to the visibility and centrality of the program in the CCP's Tibet policy (Xinhua, August 23).

The expansion of the program to include cultural and educational domains also follows the Party's gradual shift to "Second-Generation Ethnic Policies (第二代民族政策)" in the last two decades. These refer to efforts by the central government to dilute the ethnic autonomy provisions and rights guaranteed to ethnic groups including Tibetans under the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law (中华人民共和国民族区域自治法) (Gov.cn, July 29, 2005; CECC, February 2006; Made in China Journal, September 7, 2020). For example, the Party has introduced a range of policies from increasing mandarin Chinese-language instruction in schools to appointing more Han cadres in contravention to the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law (Center of Excellence for Himalayan Studies, September 13, 2023). Educational and legal campaigns also seek to instill trust in PRC laws and regulations over Tibetan Buddhist religious norms and beliefs (TAR Government, February 5). A common thread to the second-generation ethnic policies is "forging a sense of Chinese nation through national, legal, and civil consciousness (铸牢中华民族

共同体意识和国家意识公民意识法治意识)," which has become "the key line of ethnic work of the CCP (新时代党的民族工作的主线)" aimed at creating a "unified (统一)" national identity (Qiushi, August 8).

#### Conclusion

Wang Huning's presence at this year's Tibet-Aid Work Conference is the latest of several senior officials' visits to the TAR in recent times. This could indicate that the Party senses a degree of fragility in its hold over the hearts and minds of ethnic communities. In July, one month prior to the Conference, Wang also visited Tibetan areas in Sichuan in addition to spending time in the TAR (Xinhua, July 7; July 28).

The TAP's focus on education and healthcare reflects a conscious effort to redress failings in earlier policies by seeking to improve the material benefits that accrue to local Tibetans who have so far been excluded from economic benefits. However, the Party-state's belief that economic development will create a supplicant and peaceful Tibet could be misguided. By ignoring Tibetans' cultural and spiritual desires, insisting that they conform to a unified ethno-national identity, and diluting laws and regulations that enshrine their autonomy, Beijing risks following a self-defeating strategy.

#### At Tiananmen Square, tight security with metal detectors reflects a changing China

15 November 2024, NPR, John Ruwitch

It was my second attempt in as many days to visit Tiananmen Square, and it wasn't looking good.

When I tried the day before, a guard said I required an online appointment – and, no, I couldn't make a same-day booking. So, I scanned a QR code, entered my name and passport number, and returned the following day.

Now, I was at the front of a line of dozens of people trying to get onto the world's biggest public square.

Just making it here was a process: There was a police ID check to exit the nearby subway station. Another to get in line on the sidewalk. A third while standing in line. And now, there was a fourth – by a towering police officer standing before a bank of metal detectors and X-ray machines – the final inspection.

My journalist visa caught his eye. He told me to step aside, and radioed his boss.





People's Liberation Army soldiers stand guard in Tiananmen Square at the end of the flag-raising ceremony marking the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, in Beijing, on Oct. 1. Andrea Verdelli/Bloomberg via Getty Images

Another cop arrived. Foreign reporters, he said apologetically, need special permission. And I did not have it.

Seventy-five years ago last month, Chinese revolutionary leader Mao Zedong declared the founding of the People's Republic from atop Tiananmen, the Gate of Heavenly Peace. Situated on the southern edge of the imperial Forbidden City, few symbols of power in China rival it.

The vast square that unfolds at its feet is another symbol of power, which over the decades has vacillated between people — and the state.

A protest tradition took root in Tiananmen Square more than 100 years ago when students marched through the square in 1919 — the May Fourth Movement. They were protesting the terms of the Treaty of Versailles at the end of World War I.

After the Communist Party took power in 1949, it expanded the square. The party installed two huge buildings on its east and west flanks — and placed a monument to heroes of the revolution in the middle.

"That all happened in the 1950s, basically to prepare for 1959, which was the 10th anniversary," says Yu Shuishan, an expert on Beijing's urban architecture at Northeastern University.

And the party had a model in mind. "Basically, copying Moscow," Yu says.

The square was to be a grand public venue, like the Soviet Union's Red Square, for parades and mass gatherings.

State power

In the 1960s and '70s, Mao brought thousands of young Red Guards to Tiananmen Square to sing his praises during the Cultural Revolution.

There have been military parades for milestone anniversaries of the founding of the country, and celebrations for other major events, including the 2021 centenary of the establishment of the Communist Party of China.

Those big shows of state power jostled against other things happening in the square. In 1976, thousands gathered in Tiananmen Square spontaneously to mourn the death of Premier Zhou Enlai.

There were protests there in the 1980s — and in 1989, students took over the square for months — until the army crushed the movement.

Those protests, and the crackdown, broadcast across the world, brought the square more attention — and enhanced its significance and sensitivity.

Security in Tiananmen Square increased. But it was still possible to hang out there. People flew kites in the square. You could bike or skateboard there.

Sporadic demonstrations still occurred in the 1990s and 2000s. Most were small, and ended quickly in a swarm of plainclothes and uniformed police patrolling the square.

I've seen petitioners toss leaflets into the air at Tiananmen, and unfurl banners. Rep. Nancy Pelosi even did so in 1991 to memorialize demonstrators killed in 1989.

People have lit themselves on fire in Tiananmen Square in apparent protest.

And in 2013, extremists who the government said were linked to a separatist movement drove an SUV through a crowd, leaving several people dead, in front of Tiananmen Gate.

Security was again ratcheted up. Metal detectors and X-ray machines went in. During the coronavirus pandemic, the authorities added a digital booking system to enter — demanding IDs or passports, and controlling the number of people who go onto the square, ostensibly in the name of public health.

The booking system has remained in place.

"In the past, you could do anything there," says a 69-year-old man surnamed Liu, who has lived around the corner his whole life. He declined to tell NPR his full name out of concern about speaking frankly to a foreign reporter.

"Now, you absolutely can't do anything."

Elizabeth Perry, an expert on Chinese politics and protests at Harvard University, says the intensified security reflects the insecurities of the current leadership.

Chinese President Xi Jinping "is very insecure," she says.

"Not that the party ever welcomed popular protest, but could certainly live with it. But I think that that sense has now disappeared and that any kind of protest, even if it's very limited demographically and geographically, is seen as potentially dangerous by the party," she adds.

Perry says that may relate to the way Xi has ruled — culling rivals with an anti-corruption campaign, consolidating power, abolishing term limits and putting the Communist Party back in the center of everyday life. Security has tightened across the

board. At the same time, the economy has been floundering.

"There seems to be a kind of collective doom that the current leadership could be in place for a very long time, and there is no longer any institutionalized mechanism for leadership succession," she says.

Tourists don't seem bothered by the extra security at Tiananmen Square, which travelers consider a "must visit" in Beijing.

Xie Bin came from the city of Hangzhou to see the square with her kids, who were decked out in red stickers and little Chinese flags. She says it was a good experience.

"[The authorities] have their own considerations for making these restrictions, and as visitors we just need to respect the decision," she says on a street nearby.

In September, I tried to visit Tiananmen Square again, hoping the third time's a charm.

NPR requested permission through the Foreign Ministry, which contacted a government office that manages the square and the area around it. After waiting nearly a week, on a glorious early fall day, the request was granted.

I had been on the square countless times, as a tourist and as a student. In more recent years, I had visited as a journalist when foreign leaders were welcomed to China, or when the square was converted into a giant parking lot for party conclaves or sessions of parliament.

Years ago, it felt like an open, organic part of Beijing. Now, it feels like consecrated ground.

A group of tourists from China's northeast invited me to join them for a photo, with the famous portrait of Mao in the background.

I obliged, but we didn't talk. A government official and a police officer accompanied me on my visit to the square. And I had been told that interviews were off limits.

### **Why Is China's Atheist Regime Trying to Pick the Next Dalai Lama?**

15 November 2024, Daily Signal, Bryan burack and Jack Erickson

The Chinese Communist Party is preparing to hijack an ancient faith. Freedom-loving people can't let it succeed.

In early September, dozens of high-ranking Tibetan Buddhist monks and religious scholars gathered in the Chinese city of Lanzhou to discuss reincarnation, a major tenet of their faith. Observers would be understandably perplexed by how the participants "emphasized the importance" of the approval of China's communist regime "in the recognition of reincarnated Tibetan religious leaders."

The mystery has a simple, sinister answer: The meeting was organized by the Chinese Communist Party itself, through the Buddhist Association of China, a part of its United Front Work Department, which controls all religious expression in China.

Shamefully, the atheist CCP is attempting to reach into the afterlife to seize control of religious leaders that have escaped its grasp on earth.

The CCP's paranoia and brutality falls heavily on people of faith in China, and Tibetan Buddhists are among the most abused. The CCP's efforts to wipe out Tibetans' identity and establish complete control over their lives are thought to constitute crimes against humanity, and Tibet was a proving ground for techniques of repression used in the CCP's genocide against the Uyghurs.

The CCP is intensely hostile toward the 14th Dalai Lama, Tibetan Buddhism's highest spiritual leader, who escaped to India following the CCP's annexation of Tibet in the 1950s. Since then, the Dalai Lama has been an active proponent of greater autonomy for Tibetans, founding the Central Tibetan Administration, Tibet's government-in-exile based in northern India.

For the CCP, Tibetans' veneration of the Dalai Lama constitutes a threat to its control over Tibet, which has seen periods of unrest incited by CCP repression. The future of the dalai lama as an institution is therefore linked to the future of Tibet itself.

Next year, the Dalai Lama turns 90 and is expected to announce plans for his reincarnation and succession. He has remarked that he may reincarnate outside of China, leaving the next dalai lama outside Chinese government control. He has also considered the possibility of choosing a successor while still alive. That would represent a break with the more common Buddhist tradition, whereby after the death of the dalai lama, a council of senior religious figures identifies a young boy as his successor and reincarnation.

The Dalai Lama has also suggested he may reincarnate as a woman, or even forgo reincarnation altogether.

For the CCP, the Dalai Lama's succession is an opportunity to seize even tighter control of the Tibetan Buddhist faith and ensure its practitioners no longer have a spiritual leader to look to beyond China's borders and outside the CCP's reach. The CCP has been preparing to hijack the Dalai Lama's succession for decades.

In 1995, the Dalai Lama identified a young boy in Tibet as the 11th Panchen Lama, the second-ranking religious figure in Tibetan Buddhism. Almost immediately thereafter, the CCP forcibly disappeared the then-6-year-old child, who has not been seen since. The CCP then appointed its own Panchen Lama.

In 2007, the Chinese government released regulations stipulating that “[n]o group or individual may without authorization carry out any activities related to searching for or recognizing reincarnating living Buddha soul children.” In recent years, China has emphasized that the reincarnation of the dalai lama “must comply with Chinese laws and regulations.”

The United States recently enacted the Resolve Tibet Act, bipartisan legislation disputing the PRC’s misleading historical claims over Tibet and urging Beijing to agree to talks with the Dalai Lama’s representatives. In June, a bipartisan congressional delegation met with the Dalai Lama in northern India, warning that China is “trying to erase [Tibetans’] culture ... . They are trying something that we cannot let them get away with.”

India also has a stake in preventing CCP subversion of the Dalai Lama’s succession. Aside from hosting Tibet’s government-in-exile, India’s Tawang district sits within what was once part of the historical Tibetan nation and was the birthplace of the sixth Dalai Lama. It’s also the site of one of the largest Buddhist monasteries in the world. Beijing has opposed the Dalai Lama’s visits to Tawang, as China claims the district as part of a broader “South Tibet.”

Although India’s deliberations surrounding the Dalai Lama’s succession have largely remained muted, a former Indian ambassador to China stated that India wouldn’t be “comfortable with China trying to control that process.”

With the Dalai Lama’s 90th birthday next July, discussion over his succession will come to a head soon. The CCP has been preparing for decades to turn the next dalai lama into a tool to advance Beijing’s interests. The U.S. government is well aware of this plan. In its statement marking the Dalai Lama’s 89th birthday, the State Department reiterated its support for Tibetans’ “ability to freely choose and venerate religious leaders without interference.”

But more than platitudes will be required, and the U.S. should be engaging now with representatives from the Dalai Lama’s office, the Tibetan government in exile, and the Indian government to better prepare for the succession.

The Chinese Communist Party cannot be allowed to quash the religious freedom of the Tibetan people and Buddhists worldwide.

## China’s Commodification of Minorities

14 November 2024, The Diplomat, Natasha L. Mikles

Beijing’s preferred form of ethnic minority culture is a sanitized simulacrum featuring plays, theme parks, and other government attractions aimed at Han tourists.

This summer, I returned to China after nearly a decade to conduct fieldwork among Tibetan communities in Sichuan Province. As a scholar of Chinese and Tibetan culture who has spent significant time in China over the past two decades, I have had the opportunity to observe the transformations as Chinese Communist Party (CCP) General Secretary Xi Jinping has centralized power and revitalized Chinese nationalism.

New, tightened restrictions became especially apparent on this most recent research trip, during which the government unexpectedly re-routed me from my Tibetan fieldwork sites. Instead of my planned research itinerary, I was led on a three-week tour of Yunnan Province by a CCP tour guide, who encouraged me to take the opportunity to “learn about the full richness of China’s many other minority groups.”

Throughout this spontaneous new itinerary, I was blocked from any meaningful encounter with Tibetans and instead shown a sanitized simulacrum of minority culture in the form of plays, theme parks, and other government attractions aimed at tourists from the Han majority ethnic group. In the new China of Xi Jinping, the cultures of China’s 55 ethnic minorities have been turned into a simulated commodity for domestic tourists under the guise of economic development and cultural preservation. Meanwhile, actual expressions of ethnic identity are suppressed.

While this process has been underway for some time, the transformation was accelerated during the pandemic by the deployment of facial recognition software and greater police-state observation. The realities of domestic Han tourism in the new context of the 21st-century Chinese police state have produced an invisible wall that sequesters minority culture and ultimately silences or otherwise obscures minority voices.

### An Unexpected Change

Shortly after arriving in China – and the day before my husband and I were supposed to begin driving from Chengdu toward the city of Derge – the company we had worked with to arrange our travel called an emergency meeting. The owner explained that the CCP tourism bureau had barred our travel to the Tibetan regions of western Sichuan due to “floods.”

After a tense conversation in which I suggested a myriad of other routes or itineraries, it became

apparent that anywhere ethnic Tibetans lived in Sichuan or Qinghai province had “floods.” Past experience had taught me that rhetorical games like this were a common tactic used by the Chinese government to deny access to people and places without explicitly saying “no.” Proving this point, I later confirmed that many foreign tourists had visited these regions during the summer. There were no “floods.” Either I had specifically been “graylisted” – allowed to enter China, but unable to go to any sensitive areas – or all foreign researchers like myself were barred from entry to Tibetan regions.

After scrubbing my research trip, the company offered a three-week trip through Yunnan, designed in consultation with both the national and provincial tourism bureaus. The next morning, our primary tour guide introduced herself as a CCP member who did not work for the company, but had been specifically asked to help culturally interpret for us on the trip. We traveled on a classic Yunnan tour that began in Kunming, and traveled through Lijiang, Dali, and Shangri-la, before eventually returning to Chengdu via Xichang.

While I was unable to do my planned research, the trip proved an eye-opening experience on how Han Chinese perceive and interact with minority culture.

#### Commodifying Minorities

The itinerary led us to a variety of sites created, primarily, for domestic Han tourists to experience China’s ethnic minorities. Among these was the Yunnan Minorities Village in Yunnan’s capital city of Kunming – a modern version of a “human zoo.” In this sprawling park, each of Yunnan’s 26 ethnic minorities has a pavilion showcasing their traditional homes, temples, and village life. Han guests are invited to interact with local representatives of the ethnic minority, each dressed in the most exaggerated representation of their traditional garb. Especially popular with Han tourists are the performances, where a minority ensemble stages exuberant demonstrations of their traditional dances and songs. The emcee of each performance referred, in Mandarin, to the Han guests as “friends” (朋友) and invited everyone to dance along with his performers, often while making jokes to the audience about the simplicity of life in the minority villages outside the big city.

These dance experiences were echoed by other performances in Kunming, including the sold-out “Dynamic Yunnan.” Created by celebrated Bai minority dancer Yang Liping, the show claims to preserve dying forms of minority dance in an extravagant two-hour performance featuring hundreds of dancers, drummers, moving set pieces, and high-end lighting. The performance depicted minorities as alternately highly sexualized or deeply childlike, reflecting the “noble savage” trope

ubiquitous in early Western anthropological literature. A shirtless drummer wearing only a loin cloth and drumming a song representing the sexual union of men and women was followed by a gaggle of minority women dressed as young girls making flirtatious gestures with their hands.

Despite its lauded claims to support indigenous dancers, I noted that only a few select minority groups were represented among the dancers. Such a distinction is not entirely surprising. Scholars like Colin Mackerras have noted that certain minority groups receive significantly greater government support and funding in the preservation of their performance traditions; these resources often are inversely related with the perceived threat of separatism the minority culture may represent.

Sometimes this leads to minority communities being written out of their performance tradition entirely. When the Beijing Dance Academy celebrated its 70th anniversary this fall, clips circulated on social media of the predominantly-Han faculty and staff performing traditional Tibetan folk dances as part of China’s dance heritage. I noted that Dynamic Yunnan’s dance representing the Tibetan people featured no ethnic Tibetan dancers and ultimately portrayed a community obsessed with Buddhist devotion and religious practice to the detriment of all else, including financial livelihood and personal health.

The mostly Han audience, seemingly unreflective or unconcerned by the stereotyped performance of Dynamic Yunnan, gave several standing ovations. After the performance, our driver told us that “before minority people can walk, they are dancing; before they can talk, they are singing.” While seemingly an innocent expression of appreciation for the vitality of minority culture, aphorisms like this reinforce a narrative of childlike innocence preserved only through the power and benevolence of the (Han) Chinese government.

I asked our tour guide if a member of an ethnic minority might one day rise to the level of CCP general secretary. At first, the question itself confused her, and I had to keep repeating it in differing formats. Eventually, however, she just shook her head and told us “no.”

As we drove further into Yunnan province from the capital city of Kunming, the widespread effects of China’s domestic tourism agenda became more apparent. Each small village we stopped at boasted an “ancient town” – a pedestrian pavilion designed to appear as a charming relic from an antiquated time – filled with stores owned by Han transplants selling identical factory-made knickknacks. These ancient towns are the product of “folklorization,” wherein the particularities of a (minority) culture as it has historically been lived in a

certain place are simplified into little more than a stylized picturesque photo opportunity. And, indeed, photo opportunities did abound. Ancient towns bustled with young Han women who had rented minority costumes to walk around the picturesque setting. Many had hired photographers – usually local, minority men – to take dramatic photos of them as “tribal princesses” for sharing on social media. In Shangri-la, a historically Tibetan town that was renamed by the provincial government in 2001 to match the fictional paradise depicted in James Hilton’s 1933 novel *“Lost Horizon,”* I watched one such “tribal princess” unsure what to do with the Tibetan prayer wheel she had been handed as part of her costume. Continually tossing it in the air and trying to catch it again, she seemed uninterested in engaging with the Tibetan culture around her any more than necessary for the photo.

Smithsonian Institute folklorist Peter Seitel identifies this disinterest as a crucial feature of “folklorization.” When folklorized products and cultures are understood to be “other” to a dominant culture they are rendered “not as complex or meaningful as the products of high, elite, or official cultural processes.” Such items, therefore, are viewed as little more than a prop for photos.

#### The Policing of Minorities

The replacement of minority culture with a government simulacrum is aided by the startlingly effective use of facial recognition and virtual monitoring software to further isolate individuals from authentic relationships with minority peoples. After the government changed our itinerary, I immediately messaged my research contacts and friends on WeChat, the ubiquitous social media app popular in China. Explaining our experience honestly in writing over a virtual network, however, could raise the attention of an observation bot or a Public Security Bureau (PSB) officer and put my contacts in danger.

As a result, we had very coded conversations, where any significant communication had to be hidden between the lines of pleasantries. After explaining that it was “unsafe” to travel to western Sichuan due to weather and that I was disappointed that I could not see my friends, they assured me that “Yunnan is beautiful this time of year.” I understood with this message that there was nothing that could be done to get me to my fieldwork site.

While I’ve always had some concerns about observation while traveling in China, my fears were more pronounced on this most recent trip. On July 1, 2024, China introduced a law that PSB officers and border agents can look through laptops and cellular phones without a warrant. Knowing that I had potentially already been graylisted and could be under special scrutiny, all texts, social media posts,

and emails had to be circumspect and speak in shadow language lest a PSB agent pick up any concerning words or phrases at a casual glance.

In practice, this took the unlikely form as encoding my research notes during travel in the form of a “Dungeons & Dragons” adventure, where an adventuring party (my husband and I) traveled through a potentially hostile place (the Vagosi Empire) to learn about a small minority culture (the Erinvale tribe). I hoped the language of swords and spells might confuse a PSB agent looking for a specific list of banned topics.

Similarly, China’s lauded facial recognition software became a constant source of anxiety whenever I spoke with Tibetans and other minorities. Because my husband and I were Americans, some individuals I met on our tour felt comfortable sharing candid thoughts about the CCP government, the political situation for minorities, or the limits on religious freedom that have become normalized in China. In previous times, such conversations would become important parts of my research highlighting the lived practice of minority religious life in China.

While writing my research notes, however, I realized how the new facial recognition software meant that it was impossible to fully anonymize my conversation partners. As a result, I could never discuss their experiences or share their voices in my research. In these ways, just the threat of the Chinese police state’s powers creates a form of self-imposed isolation that not only achieves their goal of silencing criticism, but also bars those outside of China from hearing authentic experiences and opinions from minority cultures.

#### Conclusions

After three weeks of travel through Yunnan, I was denied access to actual minority culture and instead shown a state-approved rendering of minority cultures. These simulacra are built for an audience of Han tourists and promote the distorted image of a unified, multiethnic China. Previously China’s ethnic minorities had enjoyed some agency in how they presented themselves and the freedom to express authentically their own culture, but as we toured staged “ancient towns” and sat through stylized minority dance performances, it was apparent this was the minority culture China wanted us to see.

In her work on state-led economic development among ethnic minorities in China, Charlene Makley has described the “silent pact” between Tibetans and Han Chinese in the People’s Republic of China. By remaining silent on the complex histories between the two communities and the implications inherent to competing structures of religious and political authority, both communities have been able to maintain an uneasy peace that provides the ground for mutual economic prosperity, at least in



theory. Such a pact exists between many ethnic minorities and the CCP government. My trip demonstrated, however, that this unspoken arrangement has also laid the groundwork for a more insidious transformation of culture. No longer is it only political and religious histories that are not being discussed, but authentic cultural self-expression as well. Where the silent pact had existed previously, there now was a silent wall.

In a cruel twist of timing, my travel coincided with the closure of one of the last remaining private Tibetan schools – a bastion of Tibetan culture and one of the very last places in China where classes could be taught, at least in part, in the Tibetan language. Some social media commentators called it the start of a “second cultural revolution.” Among my colleagues who study Tibetan culture, there have been quiet discussions of looking for new research sites outside of China that are less politically volatile. We have the privilege to make that decision, but it only leaves Tibetan friends and colleagues within China further isolated.

The night I discovered I would be unable to pursue my fieldwork, I lay awake obsessively digging through my past to try and understand what might have made me problematic in the eyes of the Chinese government. Was it that article I published using social theory to highlight how the CCP was secularizing Tibetan culture to serve the needs of a multiethnic state? Was it the conference I attended in Dharamshala at which the Dalai Lama had unexpectedly been a guest? Was it the blog article I shared on my social media about the protests in Derge aimed at protecting several important Buddhist monasteries from a planned hydroelectric dam?

Above all, my mind kept returning to my friends and Tibetan colleagues trapped behind the new silent wall of the Chinese police state. As an international student at Tibet University early in my academic career, I had watched Tibetan friends gathering every Friday night to dance together the traditional circle dances from their home villages. Those memories remain for me a powerful expression of a people working to maintain their traditional culture in a hostile environment. Now, 15 years later and staring at the ceiling of a Chengdu hotel room, I wondered to myself if they were still dancing on that night – not for Han tourists or white friends stumbling through conversations in broken Tibetan, but for themselves – desperately fighting to preserve their culture as a government sought to box it ever more into a neatly packaged commodity.

## China Is Recalculating Its Middle East Policy

14 November 2024, The Diplomat, Tommy Steiner

Iran experiences diplomatic distancing with Chinese characteristics.

Since the October 7th massacre in southern Israel and the outbreak of the war in Gaza, China’s leadership has conveyed outright support in word and deed for the Iran-led “Axis of Resistance.” The display of strategic vulnerability by Iran and its proxies since mid-August appears to have prompted Beijing to pause and reassess. Upon return from the National Day holiday in early October, China’s official messaging on Iran noticeably shifted. This adjustment has been further underscored by commentary from Chinese policy advisers specializing in the Middle East.

As events on the ground led to a review of its Middle East policies, China is refraining from outright public support of Iran and the Axis of Resistance it leads, at least for the time being. This is borne out by the striking difference between China’s response to Iran’s missile and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) attack on Israel in mid-April and its reaction to the latest ballistic missile attack on Israel by Iran on October 1. Similarly, the Chinese response to Israel’s retaliatory strike on Iran on October 28 reflected this revised approach. While the Foreign Ministry refrained from condemning Israel per se for its most recent attack, one of China’s most respected Middle East policy advisers all but justified it in an op-ed published in the China Daily.

### A Tale of Two Telephone Calls

The day after the first Iranian drone and missile attack on Israel, on April 15, China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi held a phone call with his then-Iranian counterpart, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, and showcased China’s steadfast support to Iran. The Chinese Foreign Ministry’s official readout quoted Wang as all but endorsing Iran’s barrage of drones and missiles on Israel:

China has noted that Iran stated that the actions taken by Iran were limited and that it was exercising its right to self-defense ... China appreciates Iran’s emphasis on not targeting regional countries and neighboring countries, and reaffirming its continued pursuit of a policy of good-neighborliness and friendship. China believes that Iran can handle the situation well and avoid further destabilization while safeguarding Iran’s sovereignty and dignity.

Less than six months later, Beijing changed its stance. In the midst of the Chinese national holiday, on October 2, in response to Iran’s mass missile attack on Israel, the Foreign Ministry’s spokesperson in response simply stated that “China is deeply concerned about the turbulence in the Middle East.”

Following mounting international reports regarding potential Israeli retaliatory operations against Iran, on October 9, the Chinese ministry's spokesperson reiterated the "deep concerns" over the instability in the Middle East and the need to prevent escalation. At the daily briefing, a reporter's pointed question, which included extreme scenarios of Israeli attacks on Iran's strategic sites and anticipated harsh criticism of Israel, resulted only in a measured expression of concern. The spokesperson merely called on all parties to "manage the current situation in a calm, rational and responsible manner from the perspective of preserving regional peace and stability." This response amounts to China diplomatically distancing itself from Iran.

Five days later, on October 14, Wang called up his new Iranian counterpart, Abbas Araghchi. This time around, the official Chinese readout of the call conspicuously avoided any possible hint or suggestion that China approves of Iran's missile attacks. While the readout commended Tehran's diplomatic outreach to Arab countries, it implied subtle criticism noting that China "opposed taking adventurous military actions and called on all parties to do more to maintain regional peace and stability." Beijing's readout even seemed to present Iran as apologetic, stating that the Iranian minister promised to strengthen communication and coordination with China to "cool down" the regional situation. Rather than demonstrating close China-Iran relations, the call reinforced Beijing's new "even-handed" approach toward Iran.

#### China's Tempered Stance Toward Israel

The distancing of Iran was reinforced by the parallel toning down of Chinese animosity toward Israel, which had become rife since the October 7 massacre. The linkage between the diplomatic distancing of Iran and toning down criticism toward Israel was demonstrated on the day China's foreign minister spoke with his Iranian counterpart – a conversation that came after a call between Wang and Israel's foreign minister, Israel Katz.

The most striking example of this rhetorical adjustment is the formal statement by Lin Jian, the Chinese Foreign Ministry's spokesperson, following Israel's retaliatory strike on Iran on October 26. In the daily briefing of October 28, Lin sidestepped a leading question asked by a reporter from Russia's TASS that anticipated condemning Israel. The reporter alleged the Israeli attack led to "exacerbating the escalation of the conflict and endangering civilians." Instead, Lin noted that China "opposes infringing upon the sovereignty and security of other countries and opposes resorting to the use of force," and called on "all parties concerned" to "avoid further raising the overall security risks." Despite official condemnations of

Israel from Saudi Arabia and the UAE, the spokesperson refrained from even the slightest condemnation.

The Chinese envoy to the United Nations, however, was critical of Israel even though he refrained from specifically and straightforwardly expressing condemnation. Rather, he stated that "China condemns acts that violate Iran's sovereignty and territorial integrity..." Despite his harsh criticism of Israel during the U.N. Security Council hearing convened on October 28, his careful wording spoke volumes.

#### Chinese Policy Advisers Rethink Iran

This shift in China's official public messaging regarding Iran aligns with public commentary by Chinese policy advisers specializing in the Middle East. Professor Liu Zhongmin, head of the well-respected Middle East Studies Institute at Shanghai International Studies University, asserted that "the Axis of Resistance led by Iran has suffered significant losses and even a complete failure. The export of the revolution by Iran and ideological diplomacy has reached an unsustainable dead end." In a subsequent piece, Liu argued that Iran and its proxies have harmed the Palestinian cause.

Similarly, a researcher from the think tank affiliated with China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the China Institute of International Studies, commented on Iran's nuclear policy. Responding to a statement from an Iranian lawmaker that Iran is considering withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Li Zixin warned that such a move would constitute crossing a red line that goes against Iran's own interests.

Notably, any change in China's public stance on Iran is likely to be limited, at least in the near term. This is not the first time that China has distanced itself from Iran, as it repeatedly sided with the UAE over a bilateral border dispute. Furthermore, a recent study by a Chinese policy adviser contended that the Chinese-Iranian bilateral relationship is held back by "little political mutual trust" and that Beijing is less keen on deepening the relationship than Tehran. Notwithstanding, China has other strategic considerations involving Iran, particularly in Afghanistan, a neighbor of both countries and where Iran holds influence, and in the broader context of China's partnership with Russia, to which Iran contributes militarily.

#### Is China Recalibrating Its Middle East Ambitions?

The current dynamics – marked by Iranian setbacks and strategic vulnerability – have challenged China's Middle East strategy since October 7. Beijing's steadfast support to Tehran was based on the assessment that Iran and its proxies could advance China's interests and influence in the region by thwarting the Saudi-Israeli normalization.

Furthermore, Chinese policy advisers were confident that Beijing was on the way to assuming a key role in "Middle East Security Governance," as extensively outlined in a paper published by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Following Beijing's role in the 2023 Saudi-Iran agreement, Chinese leaders and diplomats considered the Middle East as a key arena for validating one of their key initiatives – the Global Security Initiative (GSI).

Understanding it cannot rely on Iran to advance its strategic interests in the Middle East has had a broader impact on China's approach to the Middle East, even beyond adjusting its rhetoric on Israel. Considering recent Chinese expert commentary that noted the limits on China's influence in the Middle East, this experience may have somewhat curbed Beijing's strategic ambitions in the region, including applying the GSI in the Middle East. Thus, Beijing's shifting position toward Tehran and its Axis of Resistance might well evolve into a strategic turning point in China's Middle East policy.

### **Analysis: Xi Jinping to keep chasing Chinese dream despite Donald Trump's return**

14 November 2024, Nikkei Asia, Katsuji Nakazawa

It was Xi, not Trump, who triggered the accelerating U.S.-China decoupling

It was a prelude to the second round of the Xi Jinping vs. Donald Trump matchup.

Xi, the president and Chinese Communist Party general secretary, sent a congratulatory message to U.S. President-elect Trump shortly after the Republican was voted back into the White House on Nov. 5.

Trump will be formally sworn into office in January for a second four-year term and appears ready to amp up the U.S.'s rivalry with China, which began during Trump's first term.

In his message to Trump, the Chinese leader pointed out that "history tells us that both China and the U.S. stand to gain from cooperation and lose from confrontation," according to a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson.

But the spokesperson denied a U.S. media report that Xi called Trump to congratulate him on his U.S. presidential election victory.

Xi took the party's helm in November 2012. When the first round of the Xi-Trump matchup began about eight years ago, Xi was rapidly consolidating power while serving his first five-year term as China's supreme leader.

He was also seeking to further boost his political standing at home. At the time, everything seemed to be going smoothly for him.

In fact, he acquired a special status that put him on par with Mao Zedong, the founding father of "a new

China," or the People's Republic of China, and Deng Xiaoping, who initiated and promoted "reform and opening-up."

The sixth plenary session, or plenum, of the party's 18th Central Committee, ended on Oct. 27, 2016, after positioning Xi as the "core" of the party. Less than two weeks later, Trump won his first presidential election.

At the time, China perceived Trump, a business tycoon, as "a merchant," and thought he would be easier to deal with than Hillary Clinton, his Democratic opponent in the election. Clinton had taken a tough stance toward Beijing regarding human rights and democracy.

With Trump's defeat of Clinton, however, China and Xi personally were expecting favorable relations with the U.S.

In the eight years since, Xi has lost some of his momentum. The cult of personality built around him within the party now shows signs of weakening, and the Chinese economy is weakening.

Popular opinion might be that Trump's China policy, which delivered a serious economic blow to China, was to blame for the U.S.-China decoupling. Even in China, many people believe the root cause of the decoupling lies in Trump's China policy.

But the truth is that the decoupling was triggered by China long before Trump's first presidency. Trump's high-profile China policy just made it apparent and accelerated matters.

Xi made an important remark leading to the decoupling 12 years ago. It came during the party's 18th national congress in November 2012, immediately before he was elected as party general secretary.

Then-Vice President Xi warned during the congress that the Chinese economy was being "hijacked" by the U.S. and pledged to correct the situation.

Xi sounded his warning in secret and off the record. But it was in the era of his predecessor, Hu Jintao, when unfettered discussions were still possible as long as they were held only within the party. Xi's "hijacked" remark was leaked and became widely known.

As he pledged in November 2012, Xi began maneuvering to gradually weaken strong U.S. influence over China's economy and to eventually realize the "Chinese dream" of becoming the world's most powerful country.

After becoming China's leader, Xi started to pursue the country's economic self-reliance and technological hegemony more clearly than expected. These ambitions received fresh attention amid the trade war between China and the U.S. under the first Trump administration.

At the party's 19th national congress in 2017, Xi also declared China "will basically realize socialist

modernization by 2035," bringing forward China's modernization target by about 15 years.

Previously, China had targeted 2049 – the 100th anniversary of the People's Republic of China's founding – to catch up with and overtake the U.S. militarily and economically.

Alarmed by China's ambitious 2035 target, the Trump administration began to launch counterattacks, as symbolized by its trade war with China.

Setting the target of realizing the Chinese dream by 2035 also had a significant political meaning: Xi would remain at the helm until the 2030s.

After the 2035 target was set in 2017, Xi's extended reign, not only beyond the party's 20th national congress in 2022 but also beyond its 21st national congress in 2027, began to be perceived as a fait accompli.

Only several months after the 2035 goal was set at the party's 19th national congress, Xi also pushed through a constitutional revision to allow presidents to serve more than two five-year terms. The surprise revision has paved the way for Xi to be crowned president for life.

There was another important development related to decoupling at the party's 19th national congress in 2017.

The "comprehensive national security concept" was enshrined in the party's constitution. This made clear national security came before the economy. As such, national security-related legislation was considerably strengthened.

In China, the term "security" covers a range of concerns, including regime security. China remains vigilant against a color revolution, which refers to the democratization protests that began sweeping through the former Soviet Union and other countries at the turn of the century, toppling some long-time dictatorships. Many of these mass movements were named after colors or flowers.

When Xi talks about national security, he is saying he intends to stamp out any such movement early on.

Xi's security state has heaped enormous pressure on private companies in China. Four years ago, the initial public offering of Ant Group – the financial subsidiary of Alibaba Group Holding – was suddenly shelved. Market players speculate it was because Alibaba founder Jack Ma had made a critical remark about China's financial authorities.

Xi, 71, is strong-willed and stubborn. He tends to barrel ahead with some policies regardless of how they impact the Chinese economy.

As a result, the situation in which Xi saw the Chinese economy being "hijacked" by the U.S. has drastically changed since the president first expressed a sense of crisis 12 years ago.

The U.S.-China decoupling has progressed at a far faster pace than expected. Amid the ongoing process, the flow of foreign direct investment into China from the free world, led by the U.S., has been on a downward trend.

Trump returns to the White House in January. During his election campaign, he vowed to impose import tariffs of as high as 60% on Chinese goods. He also slapped high tariffs on imports from China during his first presidency, sparking a tit-for-tat tariff war between the countries.

When he takes the presidency again in two months, Trump will find a Chinese economy that is in dire straits, quite different than the juggernaut it was in 2017, when Trump's first four-year term began. However, despite Trump's tariff threat, abandoning China's self-reliance is not an option for Xi.

Furthermore, as the decoupling has accelerated far faster than expected, the probability of China overtaking the U.S. economically by 2035 has considerably declined.

Xi still has no choice but to go full throttle toward the 2035 goal. If he fails to realize his Chinese dream, questions will be raised about whether he will be able to extend his rule beyond 2027, when the party's 21st national congress convenes.

Trump's second administration, which goes to January 2029, presents a big external hurdle to Xi and his 2035 timeline. The Chinese president is thus bracing for the return of the unpredictable and freewheeling "merchant."

### **Future global economy to be shaped by India, China: Experts**

14 November 2024, Deccan Herald

Experts shared their views and opinions on the two countries at the inaugural workshop pointing out that China and India, the world's first and third-largest economies by purchasing power parity, wield immense global influence.

Singapore: Singapore and the Southeast Asian region should continue to closely engage with both India and China, given the two countries' vital roles in regional growth and development, the city state's Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sim Ann said on Thursday.

She underlined the significance of China and India as economic powerhouses and pivotal players on the global stage at an inaugural event for a series by two think tanks that are to examine key issues related to China and India and their roles in the global economy.

The senior Singaporean minister was speaking at the launch of the series 'China and India: Two Giants Shaping the Global Economy' to be held jointly by the East Asian Institute (EAI) and the Institute of

South Asian Studies (ISAS) at the National University of Singapore (NUS).

Experts shared their views and opinions on the two countries at the inaugural workshop pointing out that China and India, the world's first and third-largest economies by purchasing power parity, wield immense global influence.

The two countries together account for 35 per cent of the global population and are projected to contribute 50 per cent of global economic growth in 2024.

The launch event was also addressed by leading experts, scholars and researchers, including Dr Li Li, Deputy Director of the Institute of International Relations (IIR) at Tsinghua University, and Professor C Raja Mohan, Visiting Research Professor at ISAS.

EAI Director Alfred Schipke said, "China and India stand as pivotal pillars in the global economic landscape, their combined potential driving half of the world's economic growth in the coming years. As key players in trade and innovation, their influence extends beyond borders, shaping policies and addressing global challenges." The two NUS research institutes will jointly organise workshops and public events to examine China and India's growth strategies and their broader impact on the global economy from a policy perspective by bringing together academics, policymakers, practitioners and business leaders.

ISAS director Iqbal Singh Sevea noted that both India and China are pivotal to the future of digitalisation and the transition to the green economy.

"Overall, the global order is evolving, and the future of the global economy will be shaped by India and China. Thus, we must understand the impact these two countries will have on global trends," he said.

### India's Troubled Truce with China

13 November 2024, Project Syndicate, Shashi Tharoor

The recent agreement between India and China ending their years-long military standoff along their shared Himalayan border was motivated, from India's side, largely by economic considerations. But whatever benefits India reaps from increased Chinese investment will probably disappoint – especially given the likely costs.

NEW DELHI – In June 2020, incursions by Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops into the fraught borderlands of India's Ladakh region triggered bloody clashes that killed 20 Indian soldiers, plunged bilateral relations to their lowest point in decades, and led to a prolonged military standoff. Now, China and India have reached a truce, though many in India would prefer to hold their applause until they see how it is implemented.

Since the 2020 violence, India has made it clear that bilateral relations would remain frozen until China took steps to restore the status quo ante at the border. After all, China's unprovoked encroachments across the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh are to blame for disturbing the peace in the first place.

To show it meant business, India slowed down approvals of Chinese investments; tightened visa approvals for Chinese nationals; and canceled direct flights between the two countries. Moreover, India toughened its stance on Chinese territorial claims in the Pacific, and made pointed political gestures that were bound to displease China, like responding warmly to the Taiwanese president's congratulatory message after Modi's re-election (China opposes all official interactions between Taiwanese authorities and countries with which it maintains diplomatic relations).

While the recent truce suggests that China has finally gotten the message, it is difficult to shake the impression that India was the more anxious of the two parties to reach an agreement. In fact, India's economic establishment appears largely convinced that, far from pursuing a strategy of decoupling – or at least "de-risking" – vis-à-vis China, India should be using Chinese capital to fill its own investment gaps.

Given that bilateral trade has reached its highest-ever levels, despite the political tensions, it comes as no surprise that India's business community has reportedly been pressing the government to conclude an agreement that would facilitate economic engagement. In July, the government's chief economic adviser openly advocated a strategy that would increase Chinese investments in India and deepen Indian integration into Chinese supply chains.

Over the last few months, a number of straws in the wind indicated that an agreement to end the Ladakh standoff was forthcoming. On September 12, Indian Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar remarked that about 75% of the "disengagement" problems with China along the LAC in eastern Ladakh had been sorted out. Later that day, Ajit Doval, India's national security adviser, met with Wang Yi, the influential director of the Communist Party of China's foreign affairs commission, in St. Petersburg, with indications of an agreement to "work with urgency" to "realize complete disengagement in the remaining areas."

Conciliatory commentaries and statements by China's new ambassador to India in the Indian media reinforced the impression that both sides were attempting to lay the groundwork for reconciliation. And a deal did soon emerge, allowing both China and India to resume patrols along the frontier.



But significant areas of concern remain. For starters, as the political commentator Brahma Chellaney observed, when Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping met on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Kazan, just days after the deal was announced, their respective ministries produced very different statements. Whereas India described the accord as a step toward a “multipolar Asia and a multipolar world,” China referred only to a “multipolar world.” The implication was subtle but clear: Asia belongs to China.

More broadly, China’s actions along the LAC have signaled a clear desire to keep India off balance by taking steps to shift the border in ways more favorable to its own interests. This mirrors China’s assertive approach to advancing its territorial ambitions elsewhere along its shared border with India, and in the South China Sea.

It is worth remembering how the last standoff between India and China, focused on the Doklam plateau in Bhutan, ended. India does not claim Doklam, but it does support Bhutan’s claim, which China disputes. Moreover, a major Indian highway runs below the plateau, connecting India’s northeastern states to the rest of the country. So, when China deployed troops to build a Chinese highway in Doklam, India sent troops to stop the project.

In that case, the two sides took just a few months to reach an agreement, which looked much like the recent Ladakh deal. Since then, however, the Chinese outflanked India by building a road elsewhere on the Doklam plateau to achieve the same result. The PLA now overlooks a vital Indian highway.

China’s conduct follows a clear pattern: create new facts on the ground, deploy forces to positions from which they can intimidate (and, potentially, attack) India, and wear India down with protracted diplomacy. In the meantime, encourage India to increase its dependence on Chinese imports and dangle the investment carrot before Indian business leaders.

Yet the promised economic benefits of the two sides’ recent rapprochement are unlikely to materialize. The Chinese have not lifted a finger to address India’s huge bilateral trade deficit – which soared to \$101 billion in 2022, from \$70 billion in 2021 – or to lower the barriers Indian companies face when trying to access the Chinese market.

Moreover, all indications point to Chinese investment in low-value-added industries, rather than sectors involving technology transfer, even as Chinese companies pursue acquisitions in sensitive sectors in India. There are also massive opportunity costs: greater economic integration with China would surely make India less attractive to global companies

seeking to reduce their exposure to the People’s Republic.

Add to that China’s long track record of exporting its way out of economic trouble and weaponizing other countries’ economic vulnerabilities, and it seems clear that India should proceed with caution. Until China credibly demonstrates its good intentions, the truce in Ladakh warrants little celebration.

### To China, Trump is ‘poison’

13 November 2024, The Hill, Gordon G. Chang

“Trump and Kamala Harris are two bowls of poison for Beijing,” said Zhao Minghao of Shanghai’s Fudan University, to the Financial Times. “Both see China as a competitor or even an adversary.”

The poison analogy has, unfortunately, caught on in elite Chinese circles.

Renmin University’s Shi Yinhong, one of China’s most widely quoted academics, said China’s hope was that the “lesser of the two evils” would be elected. To the dismay of Chinese leaders who already had to deal with Trump for four years, they have not gotten the preferred outcome and are not looking forward to another term.

During the campaign, Americans perceived Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump’s China policies as widely divergent. Chinese observers, on the other hand, viewed them as largely the same.

To China’s Communist Party and its tightly controlled academic community, America has taken on a menacing view. As a result, the gap in perceptions between Americans and Chinese is wide. In the last half-decade, it has appeared to have widened even more so.

Officially, Beijing wants to get along with America. President Xi Jinping, in a congratulatory message to Trump, talked about finding “the right way for China and the United States to get along with each era in the new era.”

Xi’s foreign ministry said China has maintained an unchanging stance toward the U.S.

“China’s policy on the U.S. is consistent,” Mao Ning, foreign ministry spokesperson, said after the election. “We will continue to view and handle our bilateral relations under the principles of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation.”

Other official comments have not been so benign. In May 2019, People’s Daily, the party’s self-described “mouthpiece” and most authoritative publication in China, carried a landmark editorial declaring a “people’s war” on America.

Americans may think they can ignore hostile propaganda, but this phrase has had special meaning for the Communist Party.

"A people's war is a total war, and its strategy and tactics require the overall mobilization of political, economic, cultural, diplomatic, military and other power resources, the integrated use of multiple forms of struggle and combat methods," declared a column carried in March 2023 by PLA Daily, an official news website of the People's Liberation Army. The army reports to the Party.

Why does China's ruling organization display such hostility? The Communist Party of China views the U.S. as an existential threat not because of anything Americans have ever said or done but because of who they are and what they stand for.

An insecure ruling organization in Beijing is afraid of the inspirational impact on the Chinese people of America's ideals and form of governance. This means even in the best of times, America's mere existence is considered a direct threat to communist rule.

The perceived threat to the party was heightened when Trump was in the Oval Office. In his first term, he was widely popular among ordinary Chinese in China. There are many explanations for this phenomenon, but the most fundamental, I think, is that he was then – as he is now – abhorred by the privileged.

The Chinese people, therefore, identify with Trump, who led a revolt against America's coastal business, cultural and academic classes.

"I deeply resent the hypocritical smug elites and heartily welcome the return of Trump's salt-of-the-earth approach," said Charles Burton of the Synopsis think tank to me last week. "I think the Chinese people see it the same way as tens of millions of Americans who cast their ballots for the billionaire outsider."

"Trump gives the Chinese people the inspiration that they too can sweep away their elites," Burton added. Moreover, Trump provided ordinary Chinese with a contrast with their leaders. Xi Jinping almost never appears in public except on formal occasions. On the extremely rare occasions when he goes out among the people – as he did in December 2013 when visiting a Beijing steamed bun shop, for instance – the event is staged by propaganda officials.

Xi is always scripted and humorless, speaking in a stilted Communist Party lingo heavily laced with ideological phrasing. His predecessor, Hu Jintao, was even less lifelike. Trump, of course, is the opposite, unfiltered and always ready to break convention. He is the breath (gale-force wind?) of fresh air.

Di Dongsheng of Beijing's Renmin University, in a widely publicized November 2020 live-streamed event in China, spoke about how Chinese leaders had in the past used Wall Street – "the core power

of the United States" as he put it – and "old friends" to tell American presidents what to do. Di also said that these links to the White House had been broken during the Trump years. Trump, in short, was not inclined to take advice from East Coast elitists.

So it's no mystery why Chinese leaders think Trump is poisonous. They fear they can't talk to him through their upper-class friends in America – and they want him nowhere near the lower rungs of China.

### India needs to leverage Trump's China antipathy

13 November 2024, ORF, Harsh V. Pant, Kalpit A Mankikar

Trump's return raises questions about his China policy, offering India a chance to attract investment amid U.S.-China tensions.

The electoral victory of Donald Trump, and his comeback as the United States (US) president, has led to speculation as to the contours of his administration's policies with respect to the Indo-Pacific region.

US presidents are said to get more ambitious in their second term, and if the past is prologue, Trump 2.0 may have a profound impact on the US's China policy. This is because, in his first term, Trump changed Washington's fundamental engagement with Beijing. Since the normalisation of relations between the two nations in the late 1970s, cooperation in economic, scientific and cultural spheres flourished. Trump mooted de-coupling, meaning the gradual severing of the intertwining between the two.

Under the terms of the trade deal that China signed, it agreed to increase purchases of American products, address issues related to intellectual property, and give American financial institutions greater market access.

He also sought to address challenges in trade, geopolitics and security. The Sino-U.S. trade war escalated on the back of the Trump administration levying tariffs on Chinese imports to reduce the trade deficit. Under the terms of the trade deal that China signed, it agreed to increase purchases of American products, address issues related to intellectual property, and give American financial institutions greater market access. The Trump administration labelled Xi Jinping's China as a strategic rival. Thus, national security concerns became paramount and led to curbs on Chinese investment in sensitive sectors, restrictions on Chinese majors like Huawei and ZTE, and a thrust on countering Chinese influence in telecom networks, cellphone app ecosystems, and cloud computing.

The Biden administration has built on this foundation, constricting flows of sensitive technology, investment and human capital to China. It is also seeking to

have its allies on board with the curbs on semiconductors. As Xi's China set much store by technology like electric vehicles, the US hit back with tariffs on the same. Thus, the political agenda across Republican and Democrat administrations has been to escalate measures that China perceives as seeking to contain it.

On the campaign trail, Trump sought to restore American primacy in manufacturing and zeroed in on Xi's China Manufacturing initiative that seeks to build dominance in important sectors like advanced information technology, high-end numerical control machinery, robotics, aviation equipment, maritime engineering technology, sophisticated rail equipment, energy-saving vehicles, electrical equipment, agricultural machinery, biopharmaceuticals and high-performance medical devices. He has called for higher tariffs on Chinese goods. Trump's China perception is also coloured by his notion that Xi's mishandling of Covid-19 led to his rout in the 2020 election. This antipathy may translate into a tumultuous relationship.

The economic slump and deteriorating relations between the US and China have taken the lustre off Beijing as an attractive investment destination for American firms.

For China, Trump's return has stoked worries over its political and economic trajectories. Xi has expressed fears that there may be attempts to dislodge the Communist Party through regime change; this has found resonance even among the general public. Economists speculate that it may not achieve its intended gross domestic product (GDP) growth target of about 5%. The economic slump and deteriorating relations between the US and China have taken the lustre off Beijing as an attractive investment destination for American firms. European businesses operating in China have voiced concerns that diminishing returns for capital invested did not justify the risks of operating in the Chinese market. They believe the problems in the Chinese market will linger unresolved, and they will have to rethink staying invested in China on account of regulatory issues, priority to state-owned businesses in government procurement, market-access hurdles, and overcapacity. This is also compounded by US tech companies exiting China amid geopolitical tensions.

India should try to leverage the churn to its advantage. Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi has been one of the first leaders to connect with Trump after his win. Modi has sought to build on the relations developed during the first Trump presidency. The question is can India use the disenchantment of the West with China to attract more investment? Under the first Trump presidency, military cooperation flourished as evidenced by the signing of the foundational agreements. While India

and China have taken steps to address the military standoff along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), Delhi must improve its defence-industrial complex to bolster its deterrent potential. A defining feature of Trump's first term was the emergence of minilaterals in the Indo-Pacific. Under Trump, Quad was resurrected in 2017. As Pakistan goes under, and terrorism re-emerges in Kashmir, India must engage with Trump who was receptive to Indian concerns in his first innings. There can be much closer cooperation between Washington and New Delhi on India's neighbourhood where divergences have been slowly emerging in the last few years.

### **Trump's return to White House spells uncertainty for U.S.-China relationship**

12 November 2024, CBC, Lisa Xing

Policies could jeopardize trade relations, allow Beijing to assert itself on global stage

Donald Trump's return to the White House is sure to be felt globally, including in China — one of the United States' biggest trading partners and an emerging superpower on the world stage.

The uncertainty of the next few years could be seen in the response from Beijing.

As Chinese President Xi Jinping congratulated Trump on his Nov. 5 election win, he also issued a warning, saying the two countries "gain from co-operation and lose from confrontation," according to a post on X, formerly Twitter, from Xie Feng, China's ambassador to Washington.

"There's no formula," said Lynette Ong, a distinguished professor in Chinese politics at the University of Toronto's Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy. "[Trump's] brand is ... a lack of predictability."

During Trump's first term as president after his election in 2016, the relationship between him and Xi began jovially but crumbled during the COVID-19 pandemic and an ensuing trade war. It wasn't until November 2023 that relations began to normalize after Xi and U.S. President Joe Biden met in San Francisco on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation summit.

The incoming president, though, who won a sweeping victory over Kamala Harris a week ago, has repeatedly vowed to impose punishing tariffs of up to 60 per cent on imports from China, which would further disrupt the already weakened Chinese economy.

Geopolitical implications also loom for Trump's second term, especially if he continues to withdraw from the international stage, putting Taiwan's future in question.

"There's definitely a lot of anxiety among businesses in China and also in Beijing among the leaders," said

Jia Wang, senior fellow and senior adviser at the China Institute at the University of Alberta in Edmonton.

#### Trade implications

The foremost, and likely most immediate concern, is the issue of trade, as Trump indicated in February in an interview with Fox News that he plans to slap 60 per cent tariffs on all Chinese imports (along with a blanket 10 per cent tariff on all imports into the U.S.) – a blow to the world's second-largest economy.

Not only are the rates higher than the tariff of up to 25 per cent levied during his first term, but China's economy isn't as resilient as it was during that period. Since the pandemic, there has been a downturn in the country's real estate market with slumping home prices and sales, along with rising government debt and unemployment.

The Biden administration stayed the course, imposing a 100 per cent surtax on Chinese-made electric vehicles, 50 per cent on computer chips and 25 per cent on EV batteries, aluminum and steel. Canada matched the 100 per cent tariff this fall, to mixed reviews from analysts, and a 25 per cent surtax on steel and aluminum imports from China began on Oct. 15.

"There's going to have to be more focus on the [Chinese] domestic economy," said Han Shen Lin, who works in Shanghai as the China country director for Washington-based consultancy firm The Asia Group.

Indeed, China has been trying to do just that. As recently as this past summer, officials like Premier Li Qiang said the country would focus on diversifying its markets and boosting domestic demand instead of relying on exports as trade tensions escalate globally. It has rolled out various stimulus measures in recent months.

Considering China exported in excess of \$400 billion US worth of goods to the United States in 2023, according to the United States Census Bureau, focusing on consumption domestically won't happen overnight.

"They will require a tremendous amount of consumer confidence," the University of Alberta's Wang said.

#### U.S. could turn inward

While China is attempting to transition its economy, the geopolitical landscape could also shift if Trump's first term is any indication, potentially benefiting Beijing.

Under Trump, the U.S. withdrew from multiple international agreements, including the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the United Nations Human Rights Council.

If he continues to turn inward, there would be a shift in global governance, leaving a power vacuum that

China could step up to fill with less resistance from a Western ally system led by the U.S.

"China could take this opportunity to make more friends or at least reduce rivals and enemies," Wang said.

This is an undertaking that's already underway, the latest example being a meeting in October between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Xi Jinping – the first in five years due to various border disputes. (India may have had its own reasons for the rapprochement.)

"We believe that the India-China relationship is very important, not only for our people but also for global peace, stability and progress," Modi said in October.

#### The Taiwan question

According to Lin of The Asia Group, there could be an "atrophy of the alliance system."

With that, China may also have an opportunity to assert its presence in its own sphere of influence, including in the Pacific, putting the future of Taiwan into question.

Under the "One China" policy, Beijing views Taiwan as part of the country, not an independent state, frequently touting "reunification."

Although it has no formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan, the U.S. has unofficially maintained ties and commits to its defence.

In 2016, Trump famously drew ire from China after taking a phone call from then-Taiwanese president Tsai Ing-wen after winning the White House, becoming the first U.S. president (and president-elect) to speak to a Taiwanese leader since the 1970s.

In October, he told the Wall Street Journal that China would not dare provoke the Republican leader because President Xi Jinping knows he is "f-king crazy."

However, on a recent episode of the Joe Rogan Experience podcast, Trump mused that Taiwan should pay Washington for its defence and routinely accused it on the campaign trail of stealing the U.S.'s semiconductor industry, threatening soaring tariffs.

Currently, analysts estimate that about 90 per cent of the world's advanced chips are manufactured by Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company.

Considering the lack of consistency and the president-elect's previous non-interventionist stance, some say he could lose sight of the island as he focuses on the relationship with Beijing.

"He might forget [about defending Taiwan] completely," the University of Toronto's Ong said. "That will send a very kind of strong signal to China that Taiwan is up for grabs."

This time around, Taiwan was quick to deny that its current president, Lai Ching-te, was going to make a

similar phone call, a likely indicator of the fragility of the relationship this time around.

"I don't think Taiwan has a lot of allies around the world aside from the United States, so it's actually fairly weak," Ong said.

At a routine press briefing following Trump's election, officials with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterated that "China firmly opposes any form of official interaction between the United States and Taiwan."

"The U.S. government should abide by the One China principle," warned spokesperson Mao Ning.

What the Trump administration's approach will be will also depend on the people he appoints. On Tuesday, Trump said he picked retired Army Green Beret Mike Waltz as national security adviser, a China hawk and prominent critic.

"We still hope that people at the top have some degree of sensibility," said Ong.

How does Canada factor in?

With Trump in office, Beijing's relationship with Ottawa may be put on the back burner as leaders manage their ties with the U.S.

However, there's another outcome, according to Wang, who said the possibility of a weakened Canada-U.S. relationship and a more uncertain future could lead to China strengthening its ties outside of the Pacific region.

"Canada may also have an increased incentive to look elsewhere in the world," she said.

### **The Next Dalai Lama: Preparing for Reincarnation and Why It Matters to India**

11 November 2024, Carnegie India, Vijay Gokhale

The aim of this paper is to look beyond the India-China dynamic on the Dalai Lama and Tibet, to how the PRC shapes its approach to the reincarnation question based on its broader domestic and foreign policy. This paper identifies the key questions that might assist policy makers in India to generate appropriate policy to handle the same.

#### **Introduction**

His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama is eighty-nine years of age. He has been living in exile since 1959. He assures his followers that he will live for several more years, possibly until he is 113.<sup>1</sup> Since the early 1980s, there have been attempts by the Dalai Lama to reconcile with the People's Republic of China (PRC). Thus far, these efforts have not borne fruit. Although a reconciliation in the future that might permit him to return to Tibet cannot be ruled out, the likelihood of this happening appears to be remote. He could likely pass away in exile. In 2022, he said that he would prefer to die in a free and democratic country like India rather than be surrounded by Chinese officials at the time of his death.<sup>2</sup>

As a Living Buddha, he is expected to reincarnate, but the question of his succession remains shrouded in uncertainty since the current Dalai Lama has forewarned of the possibility that the line might end with him. He has also indicated at various times that he might reincarnate outside Tibet. The PRC, which has ruled Tibet since 1950, says there will be a successor to the 14th Dalai Lama and that the next incarnation will be born inside China and approved by the Chinese government.

The question of who selects the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama is debatable. Tibetans reject the idea that China has the authority to exercise legal jurisdiction over the process of selecting the Dalai Lama (and other Living Buddhas of Tibet). The PRC claims that the imperial ordinance of 1793 (known as the Imperially Approved Ordinance for Better Governance of Tibet or the 29-article Ordinance) stipulates the procedure for the reincarnation of the Living Buddhas (including the Dalai Lama) and subjects the selected candidate to approval by Beijing.<sup>3</sup> However, it is a fact that the Golden Urn method of selecting the Dalai Lamas, stipulated by the 1793 imperial ordinance, was only selectively applied in the cases of the 11th and 12th Dalai Lamas but was dispensed with for the 9th, 13th, and 14th Dalai Lamas.<sup>4</sup>

If the current Dalai Lama chooses to reincarnate, possibly outside the territory of the PRC, and another reincarnation is selected by the PRC, more than one reincarnation of the 15th Dalai Lama could co-exist.<sup>5</sup> This situation will be monitored with great interest in India, where the Dalai Lama has been residing since 1959. His presence has been a continuing sore point in India's relations with the PRC. After his passing, a sizeable Tibetan community-in-exile will continue on Indian soil. Should the reincarnation either be found in or relocated to India, it might complicate relations in light of China's declaration that the reincarnation must be found with its prior approval within sovereign Chinese territory. One study supposes that the PRC would probably demand the closure of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) as well as Tibetan educational and cultural institutions located in India. The possibility that the PRC will try to split the exile community by infiltrating and influencing Buddhist monasteries and communities in India's Himalayan region will have security implications for India.<sup>6</sup>

The reincarnation question has salience for India. Tibetan Buddhism has a significant Indian following in the Himalayan states, and controversy over the selection of the next Dalai Lama could have domestic reverberations. There is also a significant Tibetan population that has been residing in India—which is the result of the poor handling of Tibetan issues by the PRC—and India has an interest in an orderly



transition taking place for Tibet's highest-ranking spiritual leader. Hence, the policy question of how India might handle such a situation, should it arise, is of crucial importance domestically as well as for the future relationship between India and the PRC.

In India, the issue of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation is usually viewed from a bilateral perspective—as either giving India leverage vis-à-vis China or imposing a burden upon it in the context of India–China relations. It presumes that India's posture on the sensitive matter of the reincarnation could be central to the crafting of the PRC's policy in a post-14th Dalai Lama scenario. This approach attributes a passive or reactive role to the PRC. The aim of this paper is to look beyond the India–China dynamics on the Dalai Lama and Tibet and at how the PRC shapes its approach to the reincarnation question based on its broader domestic and foreign policy needs so that India might generate appropriate policy to handle the same.

The paper is divided into four sections. The first part examines how the evolution of Chinese policy toward religion in general, and Tibetan Buddhism in particular, since 1949 is shaping Chinese thinking on the question of the next Dalai Lama. The second part looks at how external factors, in particular the approach of the United States toward Tibetan Buddhism and the Dalai Lama, has impacted the Chinese policy on Tibet, and how the current state of U.S.–China relations might shape the PRC's approach on the reincarnation issue. The two sections identify domestic and external drivers of Chinese policy on the issue at hand. The third part looks at the history of India–China relations with respect to the Dalai Lama and how both countries have handled the matter. It seeks to draw some broad learnings from the past sixty-five years of interaction between the two countries after the Dalai Lama came to India. The last part of the paper identifies some of the policy questions that India might need to handle in order to shape a coherent and stable policy in a post-14th Dalai Lama scenario. The paper concludes that the PRC's policy on the Dalai Lama and the reincarnation question is not primarily driven by India's actions or policy. The primary drivers are the overriding domestic requirement of politico-social stability in an ethnically distinct borderland region and the external dynamics of the U.S.–China competition. The PRC has tolerated the Dalai Lama's presence in India so long as it does not impinge on the two critical concerns of social stability and Sino–U.S. competition. A unilateral gesture of goodwill that India might show after the passing of the 14th Dalai Lama, (for example, possibly disallowing the Dalai Lama's chosen successor from living in India or officially acknowledging the PRC's candidate as the successor

to the 14th Dalai Lama) is unlikely to change the PRC's policy toward India. The passing of the 14th Dalai Lama will also bring a material change in the India–China–Tibet equation because they might not agree on the next incarnation. This is likely to raise important questions for which India needs to develop policy responses in advance of the event. Given his age and health, critically thinking through these questions ought not to be postponed.

#### Part I: Religion in China and the Chinese Communist Party

Prior to 1949, religion did not prominently figure in Mao Zedong's conversations and speeches. His priority was to establish communist rule in China, including over the minority regions like Tibet.<sup>7</sup> As Mao put it, the minority regions comprised over half the territory of China; they were resource-rich, and located in the borderlands.<sup>8</sup> Hence, the establishment of Chinese control over Tibet was the priority and not the religious question.

So far as general religious policy was concerned, apart from the fact that religion was antithetical to communism, the newly established PRC took a relatively benign approach. They needed support from all segments of the population and accepted the influence of religion in Chinese society as a reality. In April 1945, Mao Zedong told the 7th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) that, "all religions are permitted in China's liberated areas in accordance with the principle of freedom of religious belief. All believers in Protestantism, Catholicism, Islamism, Buddhism, and other faiths enjoy the protection of the people's government so long as they are abiding by its laws."<sup>9</sup> The CCP's policy toward religious groups in China was conditioned by two priorities—social stability and national security. In the former case, the party felt that the nexus between entrenched feudal interests and religious groups might be an obstacle to the CCP's efforts to establish complete control over society. In the latter case, their concern was that foreign domination of religious organizations inside China could become conduits for opposition. In such cases, the party applied restrictions and took action against religious groups.

Since the CCP's priority in Tibet was to gain political control, plans were made to attack Tibet immediately after the establishment of the PRC in 1949.<sup>10</sup> Mao personally approved these plans.<sup>11</sup> Following the People's Liberation Army's invasion in October 1950, the Tibetan government was compelled to negotiate the Agreement of the Central People's Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet (known as the Seventeen-Point Agreement). It brought the Tibetan people into the "big family of the motherland—The People's Republic of China," and accorded

autonomous status to Tibet but only as a “local government” under the leadership of the central authority in Beijing.<sup>12</sup>

The CCP did not trust the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Buddhist clergy but was conscious that their hold over Tibet was tenuous and that they lacked the material means to administer complete control over Tibet. They needed to consolidate before tackling the Dalai Lama. In April 1952, an inner-party directive was sent by the party’s central committee to the southwest bureau (in charge of Tibet), which acknowledged that, “while they [the Dalai Lama’s government] are inferior to us in military strength, they have an advantage over us in social influence. We should . . . put off the full implementation of the agreement.” The priority was to “take proper steps to win over the Dalai and the majority of his top echelon . . . in order to achieve a gradual, bloodless transformation of the Tibetan economic and political system over a number of years.”<sup>13</sup> There was no direct move to interfere with Tibetan Buddhism, although they began to undermine the Dalai Lama’s influence in other ways.<sup>14</sup> The soft approach taken by the PRC in the early 1950s is reflected in the Dalai Lama’s statement that Mao was a fatherly figure with whom he had good relations.<sup>15</sup> By the late 1950s, the PRC had grown more confident about its position inside Tibet and had begun tightening its control over Tibetan society. After the Dalai Lama left Tibet in 1959, the PRC introduced repressive policies. In the wake of the Dalai Lama’s flight, Mao’s government confiscated estates belonging to the religious elites and closed down many monasteries. The destruction of monasteries, imprisonment of monks, and banning of worship during the Cultural Revolution (1966–76) is well-documented. It was similar to their approach toward other organized religions inside China (Catholicism, Protestantism, Islam, and Taoism). Thus, religious policy in general during Mao Zedong’s period, as well as more specifically in Tibet, was guided by priorities of domestic political stability and national security rather than Marxist dogma. These remain the fundamental pillars of the PRC’s subsequent religion policy.

After Mao’s passing, the PRC’s religious policy entered its second phase. In March 1982, the party’s central committee formally acknowledged the harsh religious repression and enormous destruction of places of worship in China during the Cultural Revolution. It passed a landmark resolution titled “The Basic Viewpoint and Policy on the Religious Question during Our Country’s Socialist Period.”<sup>16</sup> Commonly known as Document 19, this became the new guideline for all religious policy, including that toward Tibetan Buddhism, under Deng Xiaoping. Document 19 acknowledged the existence of religion inside the PRC, its mass nature, and its entanglement

with the ethnic question in the borderlands.<sup>17</sup> It posited a basic question that became the determinant of the PRC’s revised religious policy, namely “can we handle this religious question properly as we work towards national stability and ethnic unity, as we develop our international relations while resisting the infiltration of hostile forces from abroad?”<sup>18</sup> While acknowledging both the domestic (social stability) and international (national security) dimensions, as Mao had done, Deng reoriented religious policy to meet the requirements of the new policy of reform and opening up to the outside world.

The PRC permitted the revival of religious activity by recognized religious groups but set clear limits within which such a revival could proceed. Freedom of religious belief was given constitutional protection in 1982 (Chapter II, Article 36 of the PRC Constitution).<sup>19</sup> But religious establishments were not permitted to repossess their feudal privileges and use religious pretexts to oppose the Communist Party’s leadership, nor to destroy national or ethnic unity. Within the rubric of this broad religious policy, the PRC also began its reengagement with the Dalai Lama. In 1979, with Deng’s approval, the PRC reestablished contact through his brother Gyalo Thondup.<sup>20</sup> Beijing believed that the Dalai Lama’s return to Tibet would confirm China’s sovereign claim to the region. Thondup led the team of the Dalai Lama’s representatives for two exploratory talks (in 1982 and 1984). It did not lead to a wider dialogue between the PRC and the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama subsequently built pressure by internationalizing the Tibet question in his speech to the European Parliament in Strasbourg in June 1988 and, in turn, the PRC labeled the Dalai Lama as a “splittist.” But the PRC’s policy toward Tibetan Buddhism broadly remained in line with the overall religious policy.<sup>21</sup> In fact, from the 1980s onward, Chinese strategy gave priority to economically integrating Tibet with the rest of China so that it might reduce the role of religion and the Dalai Lama in the minds of the Tibetan people over time.

Through the 1990s, as a substantial religious revival began in China, regulations were introduced to manage religious affairs, beginning with the party’s central committee’s Document No. 6 in 1991, increasing regulatory control over religious activity. In 1994, under the Regulations on Managing Religious Activities of the State Council (known as Document No. 144), it was made mandatory for religious organizations to register with local governments and to certify that they were free from foreign controls. In 1995, fifteen religious groups (including the Fa Lun Gong) were labelled as “evil cults” and banned.<sup>22</sup> In 1997, the State Council issued a white paper on freedom of religious belief in China, which said that religions must conduct

activities within the sphere of the law. Despite tighter regulations, a tolerant perspective was adopted toward the organized religions so long as they operated under the leadership of the State Religious Affairs Bureau and the patriotic religious organizations approved by Beijing. At the National Conference on Religious Affairs in December 2001, general secretary Jiang Zemin called for greater “guidance” to religion but also reminded officials to adhere to the party’s basic line on religious policy and not to use administrative measures to eliminate religion in China.<sup>23</sup> This relatively benign approach to religion was reflected in the party’s handling of Tibetan Buddhism. During Jiang Zemin’s term as president, informal contact was resumed with the Dalai Lama’s representative, which would lead to the establishment of a formal dialogue from September 2002 onward between the party’s United Front Work Department (UFWD) and the Dalai Lama’s chief representative, Lodi Gyari.<sup>24</sup>

China’s overall religious policy entered a transition phase under Jiang’s successor, Hu Jintao. The first signs of the tightening of religious freedoms appeared in 2004 when the State Council passed Decree No. 426 (known as Document No. 6) titled “The Regulations on Religious Affairs.”<sup>25</sup> These regulations decreed that religion in China shall not be used to undermine the country’s social order (Article 3), stipulated enhanced measures for the establishment of new religious institutions, and more strictly regulated the conduct of religious activities (Articles 8 and 12), and made it mandatory for religious clergy to have prior recognition from the state authorities (Article 29). The new regulations did not prohibit external contact but said that these should be nonconditional.<sup>26</sup> For Tibetan Buddhism, the 2004 regulations were also significant because, for the first time, it introduced stipulations on the selection of high-ranking Tibetan lamas. Article 27 of Document No. 6 stated: “The inheritance and succession of the Living Buddhas of Tibetan Buddhism shall be handled in accordance with religious rituals and historical customs under the guidance of Buddhist groups and reported to the religious affairs department of the people’s government.”<sup>27</sup> This was the first sign that the central leadership was focusing on the reincarnation of ranking lamas of Tibetan Buddhism. While the 2004 regulations did not stipulate any specific procedures for the state to control the process of the selection of Living Buddhas, Article 27 laid the basis for a subsequent set of specific rules on their selection.

In 2007, the State Religious Affairs Bureau issued Order No. 5 titled “Measures on the Management of the Reincarnation of Living Buddhas of Tibetan Buddhism,” which made it clear that the central government intended to control the entire process of

selection and appointment of Living Buddhas.<sup>28</sup> The regulations specified that only registered monasteries in Tibet could apply for Living Buddha reincarnations (Article 3). No group or individual could carry out any activity related to the search or recognition of a reincarnation without authorization from state authorities (Article 7). Any person or group that initiated a search for Living Buddha candidates without prior authorization would be deemed as committing a criminal offense that warranted harsh punishment (Article 11). Furthermore, it was explicitly stated that Living Buddhas with a “particularly great impact” (you tebie zhongda yingxiangde)—such as the Dalai Lama—could only be approved by the highest state organ of the PRC (Articles 5 and 9).<sup>29</sup> From September 1, 2007, the process of reincarnation of all Living Buddhas has been under the complete control of the Chinese central government.

The lack of progress in reconciliation between the Dalai Lama and the PRC is one factor that would explain the party’s decision to enact specific regulations on Living Buddha reincarnations. According to Lodi Gyari, the Dalai Lama’s main negotiator for nine rounds of talks from 2002 until 2010, both sides appeared satisfied until the fourth round of talks in July 2005, after which the Dalai Lama’s representatives saw a hardening of the Chinese position along with a sustained propaganda campaign against him. This hardening coincided with a period of tense rioting that erupted in Tibet in 2008.<sup>30</sup> All this made it less likely that the Dalai Lama would agree to Chinese terms. The tapering off of Chinese hopes about securing a favorable resolution to the Tibetan question through talks, coupled with the Dalai Lama’s advancing age, appears to have triggered the change in policy. Perhaps Chinese leaders kept in mind the controversy that had erupted in the early 1990s over the selection of the 11th Panchen Lama and wished to preempt it when it was time to find the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama.<sup>31</sup>

Since 2013, China’s current leader, President Xi Jinping, has overseen the further tightening of controls over all religious activity in China. This is part of his broader plan to restore the party’s authority and to prevent inimical forces from injecting ideas that are detrimental to the party’s dominance. The Communiqué on the Current State of the Ideological Sphere (also known as Document No. 9), issued in early 2013, has specifically identified “the use of ethnic and religious issues to divide and breakup” China as a challenge to the party’s long-term dominance.<sup>32</sup> Xi has taken steps to deal with it. In May 2015, he convened a United Front Work Conference where he publicly called for the “Sinicization” of religions in China, a call that was

repeated at the National Religious Work Conference in April 2016.<sup>33</sup> Xi announced that this process would be managed through laws.<sup>34</sup> Wang Zuo'an, director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs, said that religions in China needed to be guided towards this process of "localization."<sup>35</sup> A slew of legislative and regulatory provisions followed.

In February 2018, the State Council made it mandatory for all religious organizations, instructors, and colleges to register with the state authority and to seek prior permission before establishing religious colleges and conducting teachings and other religious activities at public venues.<sup>36</sup> In February 2020, further regulations titled Measures for the Administration of Religious Groups stipulated that all religious organizations "must follow the leadership of the CCP" (Article 5) rather than simply supporting the CCP leadership as stipulated in the 2018 regulations. It became mandatory for all religious groups to accept the supervision, oversight, and administration of local and central governments (Article 6); to publicize the party's directives and policies and to educate and guide believers toward supporting the party's leadership (Article 17); and to establish study systems for this purpose (Article 25). Each subsequent regulation since 2020 has progressively tightened the scope of religious activity inside China and built pressure on religions to sinicize. These regulations include a prohibition on the distribution of unauthorized domestically generated online religious content without the state's approval (Measures for the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services, March 2021), empowering the state to exercise closer financial supervision over religious institutions (Measures on Financial Management of Venues for Religious Activities, June 2021), and making it mandatory for all religious venues to study Xi Jinping thought (Measures for the Management of Religious Activity Venues, September 2023).<sup>37</sup> The steady advancement of state and party control over all religious activity inside China is also evident in the language of the legislation, which has evolved from "guiding" religious groups in order to support CCP leadership in the 2018 regulations, to the more authoritative "must follow" the CCP leadership in the 2020 regulations, and the definitive "must uphold" (not simply follow) the CCP leadership and sinicize religion in the latest (2023) regulations. They reflect growing concerns within the party leadership that religious activity inside China might prove to be a politically destabilizing force that requires to be reined in since maintaining political and social stability at all costs is the overriding consideration for the Communist Party of China.

In the case of Tibet, concerns over the potentially destabilizing role of Tibetan Buddhism are magnified by the separate ethnic identity of the Tibetans and their geographical location in the borderland. At the Seventh Tibet Work Forum in 2020, Xi made it clear that Chinese policy in Tibet will continue to be based primarily on maintaining security and political stability.<sup>38</sup> This means tighter supervision over Tibetan Buddhism.<sup>39</sup> Since 2011, permanent teams of party cadres have been assigned to all Tibetan monasteries. After 2018, a systematic program to make monks and nuns "politically reliable" is underway.<sup>40</sup> Thus, the overriding concern of ensuring domestic stability that has guided the PRC's overall religious policy is reflected in its treatment of Tibetan Buddhism. In Tibet, ethnic and geographical factors have accentuated the Chinese concerns. The fear that Tibetan irredentism or separatism might be used by external enemies has shaped Chinese policy since the beginning and, as we shall see in the next part, from early on, the PRC has worked its policy to eliminate such a possibility.

The PRC's perception of Tibetan Buddhism from the prism of its domestic stability concerns is a critical (but not the sole) determinant in shaping policy on the selection of the next Dalai Lama.

## Part II: The United States, China, and Tibetan Buddhism

Aside from domestic concerns over the undermining of social stability by the established religions in China, the influence of external forces on religions inside the region is also a general concern for the Communist Party. It maintains that Western religions like Catholicism and Protestantism in particular "had long been controlled and utilized by colonialists and imperialists."<sup>41</sup> In 1949, the PRC deported Western missionaries and created "patriotic" religious associations to manage the religious question under direct state supervision.<sup>42</sup>

So far as Tibet was concerned, the ethnic identity gave an edge to the PRC's concerns about the manipulation of Tibetan Buddhism by external forces in order to separate Tibet from China. In the CCP's opinion, the British had encouraged a distinct and separate Tibetan identity after 1911, by acknowledging Chinese "suzerainty" but not "sovereignty" over Tibet and dealing directly with the Dalai Lama's government.<sup>43</sup> The PRC felt that even after Britain's withdrawal from India, the United States continued to pursue efforts to separate Tibet from China by championing the cause of "Tibet independence."<sup>44</sup> Hence, an examination of U.S. policy and its impact in shaping the PRC's attitude toward the Dalai Lama is important.

The United States has had a checkered policy with respect to Tibet. During World War II, the U.S. government disagreed with the British on Tibet's

status. In its memorandum to the British government in July 1942, the United States opined that “for the most part the government of the United States has borne in mind the fact that the Chinese government has long claimed suzerainty over Tibet and that the Chinese constitution lists Tibet among areas constituting the territory of the Republic of China. This government has at no time raised a question regarding either of these claims.”<sup>45</sup> The United States did not agree with the Dalai Lama’s request in 1949 for support to the idea of an independent Tibet either.<sup>46</sup> By the early 1950s, American policy had changed because of the Korean War. The United States wanted the Dalai Lama to disavow the Seventeen-Point Agreement (1951) and flee into exile, and said that it would recognize him as the “head of an autonomous Tibet.”<sup>47</sup> The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency financed the Khampa rebellion in eastern Tibet during the mid-fifties. The rebellion failed, but the United States took an important step towards recognizing Tibet’s special status when, after 1959, letters delivered to the Dalai Lama explicitly stated the willingness of the U.S. government “to make a public declaration of its support for the principle of self-determination for the Tibetan people.”<sup>48</sup>

Tibet became marginal to American interests after the U.S.-China rapprochement. When the Dalai Lama wished to visit the United States in 1970, Henry Kissinger, the national security adviser to president Richard Nixon, said that “too close an identification with Tibetan separatist aspirations would rank with our Taiwan policy as key roadblocks to any improvement of relations with communist China.”

<sup>49</sup> The Nixon administration adopted a hands-off approach that was to continue through subsequent administrations until the early 1990s.

The United States Congress became involved in the Tibetan Buddhist cause from the late 1980s. After the end of the Cold War, Bill Clinton became the first U.S. president to officially receive the Dalai Lama in the White House.<sup>50</sup> Clinton raised the issue of religious freedoms in China, including for Tibetan Buddhism, with China’s president Jiang Zemin. In October 1997, president Jiang Zemin told a press conference in Washington that all Chinese citizens had freedom of religious belief.<sup>51</sup> In June 1998, in his second press appearance with Clinton in Beijing, Jiang explicitly said that Chinese constitutional provisions on freedom of religious belief also extended to Tibet. “As long as the Dalai Lama can publicly make a statement and a commitment that Tibet is an inalienable part of China,” said Jiang, “the door to dialogue and negotiation is open. Actually, we are having several channels of communication with the Dalai Lama.”<sup>52</sup> He also publicly confirmed that confidential contacts had

resumed between the Dalai Lama’s representatives and the party’s United Front Work Department (UFW).<sup>53</sup> During the second Clinton administration, a new position of special coordinator for Tibetan affairs was created within the State Department. In 2000, the newly established Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) was mandated to maintain regular scrutiny of China’s human rights record and to cooperate with the special coordinator for Tibet in these matters.<sup>54</sup> It signaled the return of a proactive American phase on the Tibet question.

In 2002, the U.S. Congress passed the Tibetan Policy Act (TPA). This was, as Lodi Gyari put it, “not simply a resolution expressing the sense of Congress but rather a binding law requiring action on behalf of the U.S. government.”<sup>55</sup> It was the core legislative measure guiding the U.S. policy on Tibet. It institutionalized the Office of Special Coordinator for Tibetan Affairs, officially encouraged the Chinese government to hold a dialogue with the Dalai Lama, and provided financial support for the preservation of the Tibetan identity.

Since the passage of the TPA in 2002, Tibet has been on the political agenda. Congress enacted the second piece of Tibet legislation, known as the Tibetan Policy and Support Act (TPSA), that president Donald Trump signed into law in December 2020. The TPSA specifically endorsed the right of the Tibetans to select, educate, and venerate their own religious leaders in accordance with their established religious practices and system. It called on the PRC to respect the reincarnation system of Tibetan Buddhism. The act also stated that the PRC’s interference in the process of reincarnation was a “clear violation of the fundamental religious freedoms of Tibetan Buddhists and the Tibetan people,” and asked the U.S. government to take “all appropriate measures to hold accountable senior officials of the government of the PRC or the Chinese Communist Party who directly interfere with the identification and installation of the 15th Dalai Lama.”<sup>56</sup> The special coordinator was mandated to pursue the building of international coalitions to oppose the PRC’s efforts to select Tibetan Living Buddhas and to ensure that the future Dalai Lama is determined solely within the Tibetan Buddhist community. In short, the TPSA 2020 directly took a stand that is contrary to the PRC’s on the question of the Dalai Lama’s reincarnation.

In July 2024, the third and most recent piece of legislation was signed into law by President Joe Biden. The Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act (known as the Resolve Tibet Act) authorizes funds for countering Chinese disinformation about the Dalai Lama and urges the PRC to engage in meaningful and direct dialogue



with him without preconditions. It reiterates the mandate given to the special coordinator in the TPSA 2020 to “coordinate with other governments in multilateral efforts toward this goal.”<sup>57</sup> The act is also significant because it states that “the U.S. government has never taken the position that Tibet was a part of China since ancient times,” and challenges the statutory definition of Tibet by the PRC as limited to the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR). The Resolve Tibet Act, defines Tibet as the TAR, as well as other Tibetan areas in Chinese provinces (Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan).<sup>58</sup>

These three pieces of American legislation on Tibet since 2002 raise doubts about the historical Chinese claims to Tibet, challenge the PRC’s claim to having locus standi on the future Dalai Lama’s selection and enthronement, and internationalize the Tibet issue by mandating the special coordinator to counter Chinese propaganda and coordinate with foreign governments on pressing the Chinese to have an unconditional dialogue with the Dalai Lama. China has categorically rejected all three pieces of legislation and refused to recognize the special coordinator.<sup>59</sup> China’s foreign ministry said that the TPSA 2020 severely violates the norms governing international relations and is an attempt to interfere in China’s domestic affairs.<sup>60</sup> In response to the Resolve Tibet Act of 2024, the PRC has said that China’s internal affairs “brook no interference by any external forces” and that “no one and no force should ever attempt to destabilize Xizang [Tibet] to contain and suppress China.”<sup>61</sup>

Although the passage of the TPA in 2002 took place when Sino-U.S. relations were in a better shape than they currently are, its significance was not lost on China. It revived concerns about the United States’ intentions with respect to Tibet. In the subsequent raft of domestic legislation on religious policy enacted by the PRC from 2004 onward (detailed in the first part of this paper), the theme of foreign interference and the PRC’s determination to restrict it are palpable.

Article 4 of the 2004 Chinese legislation explicitly states that religious affairs shall not be dominated by foreign forces.<sup>62</sup> Article 2 of the 2007 regulations reiterates this point specifically on the question of the selection of Living Buddhas of Tibet. It states that “reincarnating Buddhas shall not be interfered with or be under the domination of any foreign organization or individual.”<sup>63</sup> The PRC’s efforts to insulate the process from foreign interference have accelerated since President Xi Jinping assumed office in 2013.

Xi called for the “sinocization” of all religions in China at the National Conference on Religious Work (the first to be held after 2001) in April 2016. In this context, he explicitly stated that “we must resolutely guard against overseas infiltration via religious

means.”<sup>64</sup> Wang Zuo’an, director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs, has since elaborated on this theme by claiming that the West is using religion to infiltrate the PRC with the objective of changing its political system.<sup>65</sup> Under Xi, the fresh regulations are aimed at eliminating any possibility for foreign involvement in China’s religious affairs. Since 2018, foreigners have been prohibited from establishing religious organizations, setting up religious institutions or sites, recruiting Chinese followers, and engaging in missionary activities inside the PRC.<sup>66</sup> Since 2021, there has been a ban on overseas organizations or individuals from operating online religious services without prior Chinese approval.<sup>67</sup> The Law on Administration of Activities of Overseas NGOs within China also prohibits overseas NGOs from engaging in or sponsoring any religious activities inside China.

These new regulations are stringently applied in Tibet where, aside from limiting the role of foreigners, the state has severely curtailed foreign travel by Tibetans to attend the Dalai Lama’s teachings abroad and pressured the government of Nepal to close its borders to devotees and refugees from Tibet. Strict laws have criminalized self-immolations and those abetting such practices because of the adverse international attention that such acts have attracted in the recent past. Officials have been placed in monasteries for supervision and the “patriotic re-education” of monks and nuns.<sup>68</sup> Meanwhile, the PRC has tightened its grip on the identification and selection process for Living Buddhas. According to a Chinese source, by the end of 2022, ninety-three newly incarnated Living Buddhas have been found inside and approved and recognized by the PRC.<sup>69</sup> Lastly, despite international appeals and the American legislation, President Xi Jinping has not renewed talks with the Dalai Lama.

Thus, the actions of both the PRC and the United States on the Dalai Lama reincarnation question since the beginning of the twenty-first century have made it a significant friction point in their relationship. China’s concerns over American objectives in Tibet and the public support in the United States and the West for the Tibetan cause are strong drivers of the PRC’s policy on the reincarnation question. It is leading to the securitization of the reincarnation, becoming a part of the larger Sino–U.S. competition. It is thus clear that Beijing’s worries over the effectiveness of its control on Tibet and their concerns over American objectives are shaping a hard-line policy on Tibet and the Dalai Lama. This will have important implications for India too.

Part III: A Short Account of Indian and Chinese Approaches to the Dalai Lama

Although India and Tibet had several centuries of spiritual and cultural contact, modern political relations began with the British rule over India. The British interest in Tibet grew from the concern that at the end of the nineteenth century, the Russian Empire was seeking to expand into Southern Asia. The determination of the frontier was crucial to halt the Russian advance north of the great Himalayan range. The matter was complicated by the dynamics between China and Tibet—the Chinese claimed sovereignty over Tibet, and the Tibetans claimed that Tibet had never been a part of China. The British sidestepped the question of Tibet's status by acknowledging Chinese "suzerainty" but not "sovereignty" over Tibet and finalized the Indo-Tibetan frontier as per the traditional and customary line that lay along the highest Himalayan watershed, with the 13th Dalai Lama's government in 1914.<sup>70</sup>

After independence in 1947, the government of India maintained its ties to the Dalai Lama's government. In 1949, India's dilemma, contained in a note from the prime minister, was one of how to "maintain and continue our friendly relations with the Tibetan government" without "taking any measure which might be considered a challenge to the Chinese communist government."<sup>71</sup> India's primary interest was to ensure that the boundary remained unchanged, less so with regard to the survivability of the Dalai Lama's government.<sup>72</sup> This remained the primary Indian objective in Tibet after the Chinese takeover in 1950. The Dalai Lama became a factor in India's policy only much later when he fled into exile.

In contrast, China's primary objective was to seize control over Tibet. They were concerned about Western interference. India, by virtue of its close relationship with the UK, was viewed with suspicion—because not only did the Chinese think that India might interfere, but they also felt that India might be pressured to allow its territory to be used by the West to frustrate the PRC's objective of fully controlling Tibet. At critical times in the 1950s, when their concerns grew over Western interference in Tibetan affairs, Chinese officials and media accused the government of India "as having been affected by foreign influences hostile to China in Tibet," or alleging that India was providing behind-the-scenes support to the West in fomenting the trouble in 1959.<sup>73</sup>

It is worth noting that although the PRC brooked no interference from any foreign power in Tibet, it would ask India from time to time to intervene with the Dalai Lama when this aligned with the PRC's own priorities. In March 1951, former Chinese premier Zhou Enlai personally sought Indian assistance in dissuading the Dalai Lama from leaving Tibet during the negotiations on the Seventeen-Point

Agreement.<sup>74</sup> In 1956, when the Dalai Lama was reluctant to return to Tibet (he had come to India to attend the 2500th anniversary celebrations of the birth of the Lord Buddha), premier Zhou directly requested India's prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru to persuade him to return, adding that, "as long as the Dalai Lama is away [from Tibet] something might happen. . . . This is chiefly instigated by the United States and Taiwan."<sup>75</sup>

Three broad conclusions might be drawn from this recounting of the early history of India-China exchanges on Tibet and the Dalai Lama.

First, from the very beginning, India and China had different objectives in Tibet. Complete control over the Dalai Lama's government and Tibetan society, which were Chinese priorities, was not India's primary concern. For India, its relationship with the Dalai Lama was about ensuring the finality and inviolability of its boundary.

Second, the PRC acknowledged Indian influence on the Dalai Lama. Hence, they sought India's help or involvement when required. At such times, the PRC expected India to assist unconditionally, but it would not reciprocally permit India any relationship with the Dalai Lama on matters of interest to India. In other words, China used the doctrine of "non-interference in internal affairs" selectively.

Third, since the PRC was primarily concerned about American efforts to frustrate their objectives in Tibet, their policy was to neutralize India so that Indian territory was not available to the West to subvert China in Tibet. They soft-pedaled the border issue until they had marginalized India's influence by ending extraterritorial privileges in 1954. In the late 1950s, after the CIA commenced operations inside Tibet, the PRC brought pressure on India to dissociate from such efforts but without directly accusing India of interference (until the Dalai Lama arrived in India), although the Chinese leadership distrusted the government of India's motives in Tibet.

The PRC has continued to follow this pattern in dealing with India on matters relating to the Dalai Lama in certain ways. First, it focuses on securing reaffirmations from India about Chinese sovereignty over Tibet, thus reducing the scope for ambiguity.<sup>76</sup> Second, it accepts the Dalai Lama's presence in India and tolerates the so-called Tibetan government-in-exile (Central Tibetan Administration or the CTA) in return for regular Indian assurances that it does not recognize the CTA or permit the Dalai Lama to engage in anti-China political activity from Indian soil.<sup>77</sup> Third, it seeks to deny the use of Indian soil to the United States for the purpose of subverting the PRC's sovereignty in Tibet. China is also careful not to "provoke" India by accusing it of being a part of the Western "plot" to promote Tibetan "independence." The white paper on Tibet

issued by China's State Council in May 2021, for example, does not allege Indian involvement with the United States in efforts to support the Khampa rebellion in the 1950s, nor about India's alleged involvement in the 1959 uprising in Tibet.<sup>78</sup> The official PRC statements are cautious, confining themselves to expressing the hope that India will abide by its assurances of not letting the Dalai Lama engage in political activity or denying the use of its territory to China's adversaries. They also remain mostly silent or make pro forma protests when Indian leaders meet the Dalai Lama.

The PRC does not want to trigger active Indian support to the activities of the Tibetan exile community living in India or create scope for "anti-Chinese western forces" to subvert the PRC's territorial integrity from Indian soil. The Chinese leadership has designed its policy toward India with these objectives in mind.

For its part, India is publicly circumspect in its dealings with the Dalai Lama, but it has not allowed the PRC to stop its support toward preserving the Tibetan way of life or circumscribing the spiritual and religious activities of the Dalai Lama. India's policy is that he is a revered religious leader and is accorded freedom to carry out his religious activities in India.<sup>79</sup> From time to time, India's leadership also receives the Dalai Lama as a spiritual leader and exchanges greetings on special occasions. It permits foreign disciples to attend his teachings and to seek his blessings. It does not prevent visits by foreign government or legislative representatives, but it also does not associate with or endorse them.

India has not taken a public stand so far on the question of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation. It has, however, demonstrated that it is not willing to unconditionally accept the PRC's-anointed Living Buddhas (as in the case of Ugyen Thinley Dorje, the so-called 17th Karmapa Lama). It permits alternative Living Buddha candidates to stay and pursue their claim from India. It also continues to permit the entry of Tibetan refugees, supports Tibetan educational and cultural institutions, and allows the exile community to practice Tibetan Buddhism in whatever manner they choose. The Tibetan community has been able to live, practice, and nurture their culture and civilization unhindered in India for more than sixty years.

India does not formally acknowledge the CTA or the Tibetan parliament-in-exile, but it does not interfere with their lawful activity. It has not taken a position on their demands for self-determination. Nor has India called upon either party to hold dialogue to resolve the matter. Overall, India has sufficiently managed the difficult situation of providing asylum to the Dalai Lama and sustenance to the Tibetan exile

community. India's policy has been tolerated by the PRC because it aligns with their own objectives.

As the 14th Dalai Lama ages, the question of what happens after he passes is becoming more pressing. Although China has labeled him a "splittist," he is recognized by both parties as the legitimate Dalai Lama and, thus, India and China are in agreement on this basic point. If more than one incarnation of the 15th Dalai Lama emerges and there is a disagreement between India and China on the next incarnation, the question of whether the PRC will see the presence of an alternative to the Chinese candidate living on Indian soil as a subversive action on India's part could have a bearing on their policy toward India. This would depend on what sort of threat the 15th Dalai Lama candidate poses to the PRC's control of Tibet as well as the state of Sino-U.S. ties. Although India's approach and behavior is not the primary driver of Chinese policy on Tibet and the Dalai Lama, its stance on the selection of the next Dalai Lama will also be a factor in China's handling of the reincarnation question. The activities of the Tibetan community in exile, including the CTA and Tibetan parliament in the post-14th Dalai Lama scenario, are also likely to have policy implications for India. The international response may also influence the policies of both countries. Hence, an exploration of options that India might need to ponder is relevant.

#### Part IV: The Available Options

In India, the Dalai Lama question is garnering public interest. In June 2024, the Times of India, a mainstream newspaper, published an op-ed asking India to prepare for a post-Dalai Lama scenario. The piece advocated for a robust Tibet policy as leverage against China at a sensitive time of transition in the highest echelon of Tibetan Buddhism.<sup>80</sup> Such views are also reflected in the works of scholars who think that the PRC's arrangements to control the succession process once the 14th Dalai Lama passes and its acceptability to the people in Tibet appear dubious.<sup>81</sup> There have been suggestions that India ought to take a clear position on the succession question. This is also the demand of the Tibetan exile community. Stagnating relations between India and China after 2020 because of the latter's military activity in eastern Ladakh have impacted the public discourse on India's Tibet policy. The passage of the Resolve Tibet Act 2024 as well as, more generally, greater criticism of China's human rights record are amplifying international concerns over the succession question.

Given the domestic stability and national security sensibilities of the Chinese Communist Party and the PRC on the matter of the Dalai Lama's succession, any unilateral gesture or goodwill that India makes toward the PRC with regard to the Dalai Lama on the

assumption that China might view it positively is not likely to resonate in Beijing and should therefore be avoided. The PRC distrusts India's motives but tolerates its current policy in pursuit of larger stability and security goals. Their approach with India on the Tibet issue is unidirectional—India must be sensitive to Chinese concerns, but China need not show reciprocal sensitivity to India's concerns relating to Tibet. Hence, any unilateral step that seeks to please China should not be pursued as it will not result in any benefit for India.

Neither should India take an entirely hands-off approach to the reincarnation question, which has salience for India. Tibetan Buddhism has a significant Indian following, and controversy over the selection of the next Dalai Lama could have domestic reverberations. There is also a significant resident Tibetan population since 1959, which is the result of the poor handling of Tibetan issues by the PRC, and India has an interest in an orderly transition in Tibet's highest-ranking spiritual leader.

There are some topics on which the government of India might think through policy options during the lifetime of the 14th Dalai Lama.

First, should India opine on the issue of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation and, more generally, on the right of the Tibetan Buddhist community to select its spiritual leaders without state interference? Thus far, India has avoided this topic. However, if the 14th Dalai Lama decides he will reincarnate, this process could begin in India.<sup>82</sup> The PRC is bound to protest, and the international community is likely to welcome it. By both convention and practice, the Indian state does not interfere in the selection of leaders of any faith in India. Tibetan Buddhism is also a faith that is practiced by communities in some of the northern Indian states. A statement from the government of India, at the appropriate time, about permitting the Tibetan Buddhist community to select its own religious leaders freely and without interference is sustainable as per both the constitution and practice. Going into the details of the selection processes as called for by the Tibetan community by, for example, endorsing the 14th Dalai Lama's statement of September 24, 2011, on reincarnation processes is neither necessary nor desirable.<sup>83</sup>

Second, should India lend its public support to the demand for dialogue between the PRC and the Dalai Lama? The Indian government has not publicly articulated support for the Dalai Lama's call for dialogue with the PRC. However, the PRC, from time to time, publicly calls upon India to have a dialogue to resolve the Jammu and Kashmir issue, even when India makes it clear that this is an internal matter on which China has no *locus standi*. Given the growing demand from the international community for dialogue between China and the Dalai Lama, India

ought to consider articulating its support for these demands. It could be argued that the presence of a large Tibetan exile community in India for more than six decades (as a result of the current Chinese policy in Tibet) gives India *locus standi* in the future of Tibet. It is not necessary that this should be done jointly with others. Although it is extremely unlikely that the PRC will heed India's appeal for dialogue, such articulation will be in line with the current policy of the three mutuals articulated by India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar in 2022—mutual respect, mutual sensitivity, and mutual interest.<sup>84</sup>

Third, should India support the demand of the Tibetan community-in-exile for the right to self-determination? India has not supported these demands in the past. China does not show the same sensitivity toward India's concerns in Jammu & Kashmir. It regularly urges India to resolve the matter in accordance with the will of the people of Kashmir. India might consider using identical or similar language in the future when the occasion arises. This is both different from supporting the demand for self-determination and adequately nuanced to make the point that principles that China claims to espouse in its foreign policy should also be applied to its domestic policy.

Fourth, should India agree to a site or a shrine in India for the final resting place of the mortal remains of the 14th Dalai Lama? Should the 14th Dalai Lama pass away on Indian soil, this might become inevitable. If that happens, the 14th Dalai Lama will be the first Dalai Lama since circa 1706 to be buried outside the Potala Palace in Lhasa.<sup>85</sup> Should the Dalai Lama pass away in India, the government may have no choice in the matter of where his mortal remains should rest. Working on this presumption, the government of India might wish to identify potential resting sites for his mortal remains well in advance, bearing in mind that the place of interment of the 14th Dalai Lama's mortal remains will automatically become a holy shrine for millions of pilgrims. Hence, potential locations, accessibility for pilgrims, and the social and security considerations need to be carefully thought out. Since the PRC still claims that the Dalai Lama is a citizen of the PRC, albeit a renegade, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that it might demand his mortal remains for interment in Lhasa. The government of India would need to develop an appropriate policy response, including potential recourse to legal means, to deal with such demands from the PRC.

Fifth, in what manner will the government of India handle the interregnum between the passing away of the 14th Dalai Lama and the identification of the 15th one? This period could last several months. The government of India needs to frame appropriate policy responses as to the terms of its engagement

with the CTA and the Tibetan parliament located in India during this time as the expulsion of the Tibetan community is not an option available to India. Such contacts are important because the presence and activities of the exile community have domestic, social, and law and order implications. Since mechanisms are already in place for this purpose, there is no need to either formally recognize the CTA or formalize the interaction through the appointment of a coordinator, as suggested in one study.<sup>86</sup> India should continue to support the cultural, educational, and spiritual activities of the Tibetan community in the future.

The related question of how India deals with elements in the Tibetan exile community that wish to change the strategy and tactics of "resistance," without the guiding hand of the 14th Dalai Lama (who has called for a peaceful resolution of the Tibet-China issue), is also worth pondering. This situation might come to pass if, as one study has suggested, the PRC selects a Living Buddha incarnation from the Shugden sect (with which the 14th Dalai Lama has serious differences) as the 15th Dalai Lama.<sup>87</sup> In the eventuality of such an occurrence, there might be potential for acts of violence within the Tibetan exile community, with consequent law and order problems for India. In both constitutional and legal terms, so long as the exile community does not engage in acts that are contrary to India's national security (including domestic law and order), there should be no hesitation in permitting the community and its institutions to continue operating from Indian soil. Any sort of violent behavior within the Tibetan community or the threat to use violence against the PRC from Indian soil cannot be tolerated. Equally, neither should India brook any interference by the PRC or its agents like the United Front Work Department in the affairs of the Tibetan community in India. Efforts by Chinese agencies to interfere in any manner should be firmly dealt with under domestic laws, and relevant legal clauses that may be applied should be identified in advance for such purposes.

Sixth, the idea that India should coordinate with like-minded states on the post-14th Dalai Lama situation requires a careful cost-benefit analysis.<sup>88</sup> The U.S. Congress has already mandated the administration to build multilateral momentum on countering the PRC's narrative and claims. Suggestions for joint initiatives to create a global coalition on the reincarnation question may need to be studied carefully from an Indian perspective, keeping in consideration the implications for the country. International opinion will undoubtedly have domestic reverberations and should be respected, but it is also important that third parties should not be permitted to take undue advantage of the tentativeness of the

situation to engage in activities that might exacerbate the tension between India and the PRC.

Seventh, the 14th Dalai Lama has already said that if he reincarnates, it will be in a "free" country. In 2011, the Dalai Lama explicitly said that "no recognition or acceptance should be given to a candidate chosen for political ends by anyone, including those in the PRC." This raises the following questions for which appropriate policy would need to be identified.

(a) If the 15th Dalai Lama candidate is found in a third country, how would India respond to an explicit demand from the PRC that the former does not, officially or unofficially, recognize him as the legitimate Dalai Lama?

(b) Even if the government of India does not take an explicit position on the candidate who is found abroad, would it permit him to enter the country? How will India deal with the Chinese objections?

(c) If the 15th Dalai Lama candidate is discovered in Indian territory, will India publicly acknowledge this fact? If not, what will be the status of the Living Buddha candidate?

(d) Since a number of the exile community holds Indian citizenship, how would the country deal with the situation if the selected Dalai Lama candidate were an Indian national?

(e) In the aforementioned second or third scenario, would India permit the 15th Dalai Lama unfettered access to the 14th Dalai Lama's residence and possession of the ritual objects and symbols of the Dalai Lama, along with the enthronement ceremony?

(f) How would India deal with the PRC's demands that the ritual objects and symbols of the Dalai Lamas belong to China and must be returned to them? Along with the political implications, this might also have legal implications.

(g) The Living Buddha child, who is identified as the 15th Dalai Lama, will be under the guidance of a regency council until maturity. What relationship, if any, will India have with this regency council, and under what guidelines might they be permitted to operate in India?

Since this set of questions has both foreign policy and domestic implications, they should be dealt with on the principle of separating the question of recognition from that of location or residence. In constitutional terms, religious organizations have the right to determine their own leadership, residence, and practices without state interference. The PRC will seek to pressure India to reject the alternative candidate, but the government of India need not express any view either in favor of or against such a candidate on the grounds that the selection of religious leaders by the concerned communities is permitted within the scope of the constitution and laws of the land. Allowing the candidate to reside in



India is also in keeping with India's ethos and past practice. The demand of the Tibetan community to permit access to their 15th Dalai Lama candidate to the current Dalai Lama's ritual objects and symbols of office is a more sensitive issue. The PRC will claim ownership over the ritual objects and symbols, alleging that they were illegally smuggled out of India and should be returned.

#### Conclusion

India is not central to the framing of Chinese policy on the Dalai Lama and the reincarnation issue. The Chinese policy is primarily driven by concerns regarding maintaining stability and political control over Tibet and what the United States might do during the transition to destabilize Tibet and discredit China internationally. India has a stake in the reincarnation question due to the domestic following and the presence of the exile community on Indian soil. It is not a passive spectator.

Even six decades after he left Tibet, the Dalai Lama still holds significant influence over the hearts and minds of Tibetans; this worries Beijing, as does Washington's escalating support for the Tibetan cause and the Dalai Lama personally. Therefore, there has been a hardening of the PRC's position on the 14th Dalai Lama and the reincarnation question in the past fifteen years. This hardening is likely to create fresh challenges for India's policy, particularly on the key questions of the reincarnation and recognition of the 15th Dalai Lama, as well as the interregnum between the passing of the 14th Dalai Lama and the selection of his successor.

For the past sixty-five years, an uneasy *modus vivendi* between India and China has prevailed because both acknowledge the same individual as the 14th Dalai Lama. This might not be the case after his passing since a Dalai Lama reincarnation found outside the PRC will not be accepted by China. Since the primary residence, temporary religious seat, and symbols of the Dalai Lama are located in India, its approach to the reincarnation question and handling of the candidate found outside China will become of great interest to the PRC. Indian policy is likely to be tested on the touchstone of how it helps or hinders the PRC in its twin objectives of maintaining stability in Tibet and deterring American efforts to destabilize Tibet. This future quagmire should necessitate India to craft policy on this subject, bearing in mind not only its relations with the PRC and the Tibetan community in India and abroad but also the context of Sino-U.S. and Indo-U.S. relations.

Lastly, inaction would not be sustainable in the face of international and domestic public pressure to allow the Dalai Lama candidate to take up his duties in Dharamsala. Taking unilateral steps to please the PRC in the hope that the passing of the 14th Dalai Lama is an opportunity to reset the bilateral

relationship is unlikely to be viewed in a similar vein by the PRC. Pondering the questions posed in the final part of this paper may lead to clarity of objectives, help to handle the difficulties, and create opportunities for India to pursue its basic goals.

#### **Military Digest | A Tibetan spy who was a Gorkha soldier: Dramatic rise and sudden fall of Lha Tsering**

11 November 2024, The Indian Express, Man Aman Singh Chhina

Lha Tsering was a soldier of Gorkha Rifles, an officer of the Intelligence Corps, and then an Assistant Director in the Intelligence Bureau.

Lieutenant Tsering served in the 1/10 Gurkha Rifles (now Gorkha Rifles) as a Non Commissioner Officer (NCO) in the First World War (1914-18) and was commissioned in October 1942 during the Second World War. ( Photo courtesy: Facebook/ Devendra Basnet)

As early as 1949, the Intelligence Bureau (IB) was concerned about the developing political situation in China and its impact on Tibet. The agency started ramping up its coverage of the Sino-Tibet border, and during these preparations, the IB hired a unique person whose rise was as dramatic as his eventual fall.

But before touching on the story of Lha Tsering, a soldier of Gorkha Rifles, an officer of the Intelligence Corps, and then an Assistant Director in IB, let us take a look at the intelligence agency's appreciation of the situation in Tibet just a year and a half after Indian Independence.

Archived documents reveal that in April 1949, the Director IB (DIB) wrote a top-secret note on the situation in China and its possible effects on Tibet. With this situational appreciation in mind, the DIB recommended the urgent need for re-organising and expanding the intelligence system so as to gather intelligence from Tibet and the Indo-Tibetan Border. Judging from the progress of the civil war in China, he concluded that it would not be long before the Communist elements in China would have the dominant voice in Chinese national and international affairs and would begin meddling with the affairs of Tibet.

A Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) note states, "In his opinion such activities in Tibet might have far reaching consequences on the Indo-Tibetan border and Sikkim and Bhutan who have many ties with Tibet. The DIB accordingly proposed an increase in his intelligence staff on the Indo-Tibetan Border."

Another memorandum prepared by the Deputy Director of IB in May 1949 stated that judging from reports coming in, Tibet had not taken kindly to the

idea of a Communist-dominated China and would seek again to emphasise her independent status.

"In fact many of her recent actions, which have been against the wishes of the Chinese Government, have been with a view to establish her claim that she is an independent state. It is difficult to say what line the future Government of China is likely to take, but there seems to be no reason to doubt that they will make efforts to extend their influence and to propagate their ideology in an area which according to the Chinese Government is part of their territory," the memorandum says.

The entry of Lha Tsering

Against this backdrop, the DIB moved a proposal that Lieutenant Lha Tsering, who had been working since August 1, 1946, at Kalimpong as Deputy Central Intelligence Officer (DCIO) in charge of Sino-Tibetan affairs, be appointed as an Assistant Director. Lieutenant Tsering served in the 1/10 Gurkha Rifles (now Gorkha Rifles) as a Non Commissioner Officer (NCO) in the First World War (1914-18) and was commissioned in October 1942 during the Second World War.

He served in the Intelligence Corps in Calcutta, Dacca, New Delhi and Ranchi till his services were placed at the disposal of the Government of India under the Intelligence Bureau as DCIO.

The DIB added that Tsering was conversant with the Nepali, Tibetan, and Hindi languages and had a very good Tibetan background. A character roll of Lieutenant Lha Tsering prepared by the IB states that he was born in January 1903, though the exact date of his birth is not known. He studied up to matriculation.

"We propose to retain Mr. Tsering as Assistant Director, for an indefinite period. The post of Assistant Director held by him is at present sanctioned upto 28.2.1951 only but there is every likelihood of its continuance beyond this date for indefinite period on year to year basis. We have not made any efforts to obtain the services of a serving State Police officer for this post, because Mr. Tsering is considered to be specially suited for the job," the character roll states.

The chief part of his duties were concerned with notables of Tibet, Bhutan and Sikkim, and being a Tibetan himself, he had an easy access to these circles without the fear of raising suspicions. "There are no Tibetan-knowing officers in any State Police cadres and any other officer would not be of any use for this job," the IB note said.

However, the evaluation of Lha Tsering's capabilities suddenly took a downturn in April 1952, when the IB wrote to the MHA seeking his reversion to the DCIO post.

"Lha Tsering was promoted to the rank of Assistant Director, W.E.F. 1.4.50. We have watched his work

since then but find that he is not upto the mark. The Director has therefore decided to revert him to the temporary post of D.C.I.O. which he was holding before his promotion to the rank of Assistant Director," the note states.

The matter did not end there, and there was a move to terminate his services. There was considerable movement of files between various departments on this move, with objections being raised and answered. In the meantime, rather than be demoted in rank, Lha Tsering chose to quit the IB and resigned. Thus ended the remarkable career of a Tibetan spy.

### **As Trump Threatens a Wider Trade War, the U.S. Confronts a Changed China**

11 November 2024, The New York Times, Peter S. Goodman

The Chinese economy is more dependent on exports, making tariffs more potent, yet it's less reliant on American markets and increasingly bent on self-sufficiency.

Chinese leaders, seeking to accelerate industrial advances, are directing investment into robotics and aviation.

Eight years ago, when a newly elected Donald J. Trump promised to apply the powers of the Oval Office to start a trade war with China, the target of his ire was widely viewed as a juggernaut. China was the indispensable factory floor to the world and a swiftly developing market for goods and services.

As Mr. Trump now prepares for his second stint in the White House, he is vowing to intensify trade hostilities with China by imposing additional tariffs of 60 percent or more on all Chinese imports. He is pressuring a country that has been chastened by a powerful combination of overlapping forces: the calamitous end of a real estate investment binge, incalculable losses in the banking system, a local government debt crisis, flagging economic growth and chronically low prices — a potential harbinger of long-term stagnation.

The decline of fortunes at home has made Chinese companies especially focused on sales abroad. And that makes the country vulnerable to any threat to its export growth, a weakness that would enhance the expected pressure from the Trump administration as it plans to seek a deal that would increase Chinese purchases of American goods.

"The balance of power has certainly shifted in favor of the United States," said Eswar Prasad, a professor of trade policy at Cornell University who was previously the head of the China division at the International Monetary Fund. "The Chinese economy is not quite on the ropes, but it has been struggling for a while."

Yet complicating factors beneath that widely shared assessment may strengthen China's ability to endure whatever measures the incoming Trump administration may have in store.

Most immediately, the Chinese government possesses formidable resources to stoke the domestic economy. After long declining to loosen credit for fear of reviving investment in real estate, China's central bank this year lowered borrowing costs for homeowners and businesses. On Friday, the government approved a \$1.4 trillion rescue plan that would allow local governments to refinance existing debts at lower rates of interest.

At the same time, a government-led strategy to advance the nation's industrial prowess has turned China into the dominant supplier of electric vehicles and other clean energy technologies. That gives Chinese companies a hold on rapidly growing markets for critical wares regardless of American tariffs. In an era of rising alarm over climate change, the world can either use Chinese-made gear to limit carbon emissions or shun Chinese industry. At least for now, it is struggling to do both.

China is less dependent on access to American markets than it was the last time Mr. Trump ratcheted up tariffs. The wave of American import duties imposed by the Trump administration, beginning in 2018 and continuing under the Biden administration, eventually covered some \$400 billion in Chinese goods. Chinese factories in turn looked to Southeast Asia and Latin America for customers.

Over the last six years, China's share of American imports has dropped to 13 percent from 20 percent, according to TS Lombard, an investment research firm in London, though some of that shift reflects goods that end up in the United States after being routed through countries like Mexico and Vietnam in order to avoid American tariffs.

As Europe has more recently added its own tariffs to Chinese-made electric vehicles, China has accelerated its push to expand sales in other regions. "Beijing is using the Global South to offset the loss of market share to the West," said Jie Yu, a senior research fellow at Chatham House in London.

China's leaders have taken a similar approach to goods like agricultural commodities, shifting some purchases of soybeans from American farmers to suppliers in Brazil and Argentina.

That experience may give Beijing confidence that it can hold firm against escalating tariffs and retaliate with reductions in American imports, especially of agricultural products. China could also further restrict its exports of critical minerals.

"China has more leverage than the first time around," said Scott Kennedy, a China expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. "It has a range of tools it can mobilize

to push back and put some hurt on the U.S. economy if it believes Trump is pursuing outright economic war."

Mr. Trump may opt to moderate his threats of tariffs, concluding that the American economy would be imperiled by them. Economists warn that widespread taxes on imports would increase consumer prices and stymie domestic manufacturers that rely on imported components.

Still, if Mr. Trump does follow through, Chinese industry would suffer.

Exports would plunge by 8 percent over the following year while shaving 2 percent off China's annual economic growth, estimates Larry Hu, chief China economist at Macquarie Group, an Australian financial services firm. And if Mr. Trump seeks to close off imports of goods made by Chinese companies in other countries like Mexico, the damage would be greater still.

China's increased susceptibility to trade disruption is underscored by the fact that the country now produces 17 percent of global exports, up from 12 percent during Mr. Trump's first term, according to TS Lombard.

Chinese industry is often described as being dominated by large, state-owned companies that are governed through crippling bureaucracy and the imperatives of the ruling Communist Party, making them ill-suited to adjust to changing market conditions — another ostensible source of American leverage.

But this conception misses the emergence of a vast and far more nimble private sector, which now accounts for roughly half of Chinese exports, compared with 9 percent for state-owned companies, according to Nicholas R. Lardy, a China expert at the Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington.

"This has been a tremendous structural change," Mr. Lardy said. "It gives them more adaptability."

The Chinese government has the capacity to compensate for diminished exports by turning on spending, experts say. It can deploy its state-owned banks and corporate giants toward national goals like economic growth.

So far, the stimulus plans emerging from Beijing have been more gradual and modest than some anticipated. Still, they have resonated as a signal that China's leaders are concerned about public dissatisfaction with stagnating living standards and have resolved to promote economic growth.

"Traders I speak to in China, they describe it as going from your deathbed straight to a nightclub," Rory Green, chief China economist at TS Lombard, said. "It's a huge change in an array of policies."

The pivot toward stimulus by Beijing underscores a central feature of the Chinese system in adapting to shocks. Ruled by the all-powerful Chinese Communist

Party, the country operates with draconian controls on individual expression and absent free elections. Yet once the Party settles on the need for an emergency course, it has the power to quickly establish policies free of the impediments found in democratic societies.

"In terms of moving quickly and resolving a crisis, the C.C.P. is highly effective," Mr. Green said. "They have a lot of levers to pull."

China's president, Xi Jinping, has spent the last decade consolidating power and securing an unlimited claim on his office.

When Mr. Trump first took office in 2017, Mr. Xi was only four years into his tenure and still legally restricted to two five-year terms. He had only recently embarked on an initiative known as Made in China 2025: The government directed cheap land, voluminous state credit and highly trained experts toward increasing the country's capacity in 10 advanced technology industries.

In crucial areas, that plan has achieved extraordinary returns. China now controls at least 60 percent of the global capacity to make solar cells, wind turbines, batteries and other components for energy systems that reduce carbon emissions, according to the International Energy Agency. Chinese investment amounts to an even higher share of announced expansions.

Chinese companies are increasingly dominant in the realm of mobile telephones, with eight of the 10 largest brands by volume headquartered in China, according to a study by the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada.

In one regard, the Chinese plan has pointedly failed to achieve a critical objective – closing the gap in capability that separates domestic computer chips from the most advanced varieties made in Taiwan, using technology from the United States, Europe and Japan.

The Biden administration has employed export controls on American companies while pressuring allies to withhold technology that could allow Chinese industry to catch up.

But that campaign may have indirectly increased China's ability to withstand whatever trade restrictions are on the way, some experts assert.

"These export restrictions are accelerating China's drive for self-sufficiency," Mr. Lardy, the Peterson Institute economist, said. "This idea that we can slow them down across the board strikes me as uninformed."

Mr. Trump's next wave of proposed tariffs would present a challenge. Yet it would also reinforce a notion that has gained currency in Beijing: that China can no longer rely on foreign markets to supply needed components and technologies.

"Chinese leadership will learn a hard lesson that they cannot really depend on anyone but themselves," said Lynette Ong, professor of Chinese politics at the University of Toronto. "Trump's second term may be a gift for China's economic self-reliance."

### **Beijing's Transnational Repression of Dissidents: From Bad to Worse**

09 November 2024, Bitter Winter, Marco Respinti

The chilling story of a Uyghur reporter exiled in the US is the sad tip of a shivering iceberg.

That the repression exerted by the Beijing's communist regime on Uyghurs has extended beyond the borders of the People's Republic of China (PRC), employing a strategy of transnational repression to target the diaspora communities worldwide, is today a known fact.

This involves a variety of tactics aimed at silencing, intimidating, or surveilling abroad individuals who are critical of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) policies or who advocate for Uyghur rights.

Recently, Paris-based international human rights organization Reporters Without Borders (RSF) shared the testimony of a Uyghur journalist exiled in the United States whose friends who are still in the PRC were detained in retaliation for his work.

The exiled journalist's story illustrated the transnational repression carried out by the CCP to extend censorship beyond its borders. International news reporter Kasim Abdurehim Kashgar, who left China for the US in 2017 due to the Chinese regime's intense repression in the XUAR, said Uyghur journalists like him find no escape from the CCP, even in exile. According to the report by RSF, following Kashgar's emigration, those in his entourage in the PRC were interrogated and, in some cases, imprisoned.

"The Chinese authorities wanted me to stop my investigations and work for the regime's propaganda. In the months following my refusal, at least twelve people with whom I had worked in a language school were arrested and questioned about me. Some were even sentenced to up to seven years in prison," the exiled journalist, who investigates crimes committed against Uyghurs for the American public media Voice of America (VOA), explained. The journalist said one of his friends was sentenced to nine years in prison, while four of his former colleagues were sentenced to seven years' imprisonment on obscure charges, and only one was released, while the fate of the others remains unknown.

Working under a pseudonym for many years, the journalist revealed his identity in the documentary "From Fear to Freedom: A Uyghur's Journey" broadcast by VOA in June last year. As per

the RSF report, that reporter's mental health suffered as his close circle was targeted by the Chinese authorities. "After learning about their detention, I developed anxiety and depression," Kashgar said. "I am asking the authorities to release them because they have nothing to do with my work," he added. Kashgar remains determined to continue his investigations, despite the pressure. Through extensive research, he discovered his former colleagues were being detained. "It took me three years to reveal their arrests. I only decided to go public recently, when I had gathered solid evidence from five different and unrelated sources," Kashgar told RSF.

Commenting on the matter, RSF Asia-Pacific Bureau Director Cédric Alviani said the journalist's chilling testimony "illustrates the full extent of the transnational repression carried out by the Chinese regime to prevent exiled journalists from revealing the atrocities it is committing in Xinjiang." He added: "The international community must mobilise to protect journalists making the difficult decision to go into exile, as well as their families who remain in China." Also, in 2024 the police of the PRC arrested two journalists from the Kazakh minority working for the local public channel Xinjiang Television, as well as several other journalists whose identities have not yet been confirmed, reports RSF. The organization counts at least 79 detained individuals among journalists and press freedom activists, including renown Sakharov prize winner Ilham Tohti.

In fact, the PRC is ranked 172nd out of 180 countries in RSF's 2024 World Press Freedom Index. And according to a report by the Washington-based human rights group Freedom House, the parts of the Chinese communist party-state apparatus involved in transnational repression are as diverse as the targets and tactics of the campaign.

The importance of extending the party's grip on overseas Chinese and ethnic minority exiles originates with the highest echelons of the CCP, Freedom House said. "Besides CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping's own advancement of sweeping anti-corruption campaigns, leaked speeches from other members of the Politburo high up in the security apparatus are explicit about the priority that should be given to the 'overseas struggle' against perceived party enemies," the report added.

VOA recently reported that many exiled Uyghurs in the United States claimed the Chinese regime has ramped up transnational repression against them, using their relatives who still live in China to threaten them into silence abroad. VOA reported that the United States' domestic intelligence and security service Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is aware

of such activity targeting Uyghurs and other ethnic minority groups in the US.

"Tactics and patterns morph with advancements in technology," the FBI said in a statement to VOA. These acts, "often identified as transnational repression," represent "severe violations of international norms, US law, and individual rights and freedoms. TNR conducted by any government, against any person including Uyghur Americans, is unacceptable," the federal police agency was quoted as saying by VOA.

Earlier in May this year, UK-based human rights group Amnesty International reported some Chinese and Hong Kong students studying in Europe and North America claimed they were being photographed and followed at protests in their host cities, while many said their families in China had been targeted and threatened by police in connection with the students' activism overseas.

But this transnational repression, a grave violation of human rights, extending the reach of its authoritarian control beyond its borders, not only affects Uyghurs but also poses broader challenges to global human rights and international diplomacy.

Addressing these issues requires coordinated international action, robust support for Uyghur advocacy, and continued scrutiny of Beijing practices, as all experts on the PRC say. As the situation evolves, the global community's response will play a critical role in shaping the future of Uyghur rights and freedoms.

### **Sitting in India, We Have Become Internal Exiles**

09 November 2024, The Wire, Himraj Dang

If the choices are between the 'long hope' and the 'long defeat', I think internal exile is a natural waystation till we start to heal ourselves and the planet we are burning.

I recently attended a set of programmes entitled, 'The Spirit of Tibet: Celebrating Culture and Compassion.' The programmes included a panel on 'Exile Stories: Crafting Resilience.' Various panellists, working in the arts, described a life of resistance and what it meant. The panellists described their efforts at contributing to the exile community, the importance of memory, and, finally, how survival is itself a contribution, even success.

Sitting on my home turf, surrounded by familiar sights and sounds, people who look like me (ahem!), I would not be expected to identify with exile. And, yet, listening to this panel triggered a close identification with the state of exile.

An exile from reason in public life, from an ingrained respect for nature, a sense of all-pervasive gratitude, from the memories and the loving care of a fortunate childhood, from family supports that have inevitably



drifted apart, from friends who live very far away, from elders taken before time, from unconstrained times in the wilds, from imbibing so much of the idealism of earlier days...mature sensitivity accepts these have all passed from this life. Leaving behind a pervasive sense of loss only leavened by philosophy. Contrast this with the braggadocio of the growing numbers who have lapped up the formulaic responses to Huntington's questions of identity, those looking for simple solutions to layered challenges in public policy, for binaries to understand complex problems, for heroic leaders to wave magic wands and solve all our problems, for news that comes pre-digested in social media fit for short attention spans, from the repeated highs of unending professional success, from the pleasures of an ever-expanding array of material possessions, trophies, and marks of despoliation left upon this world.

There is no minimising the despair that comes from losing one's connection to one's land and culture. The way Tibetans have worked to keep their culture alive in the diaspora with positivity and compassion is impressive. But aren't the rest of us in some kind of exile? For constitutionalists, for highly sensitive people, for environmentalists, for those suffering from ecological grief, or even solastalgia, for those from whom history and its lessons matter (based on facts, not caricatures), and for the rare few who have reconciled rationality with love.

We live, as the Tibetan artists spoke, 'in a life of imagination, where we can imagine the lost nation (or the lost idealism).'

To do so, I would state, is to be in internal exile. The Russians capture it best as "vnutrennaya emigratsia," or internal emigration. An escape inward from a malevolent world; an embrace of one's alienation.

The environment

When I think of the 6,500 ancient deodar trees to be cut for the doubling of the tourist road from Uttarkashi to beloved Harsil, bypassing the mandatory environmental impact assessment and community hearings, and ignoring simpler alternatives like expanding embankments for overtaking, my biggest concern is the loss of agency for the community. The arms of the state simply do not see the need for dialogue.

We can seek refuge in the memory of the ancientness and beauty of the Taknaur valley, and imagine a more enlightened life of consultation, mediated by an economics which internalises externalities, and even prayer at the ancient Mukhba shrine. Refuge in memory, imagination, and prayer, how different is this from the story of Tibetan exile? Has the much-touted Chinese Communist Party regime at last come to India to deliver ease of doing business?

From west to east, the Himalayas are being bombed for development, completely rejecting community

consultation, alternative approaches, or ancient wisdom. Highway doubling to the Char Dham in Uttarakhand fronted by imperatives of national security, dams too close to glaciers in Sikkim, the prospects of limitless solar parks for Ladakh, and 'cutting' everywhere, the cutting of mountains for roads without embankments or water channels, and tunnels without escape adits.

Scanning the landscape south from the Gangotri Valley to the Nicobar Islands where we plan to cut almost a million tropical trees, attempting to compensate for this with a Dubai-inspired safari park in arid Haryana, is an unfolding story of unexamined destruction.

The heart of this dystopian journey is in central India: the Ken-Betwa river inter-linking project, which would construct a dam in the heart of Panna National Park to pump an imagined water surplus, uphill, to another drying river basin, at the cost of Rs 45,000 crore. For 20 years, ever since I heard about this fantastic scheme, I have persevered to question it. Still at it: there is no movement, compromise, or exploration of alternatives.

I just read the elephant population of India has been reduced by 20%, or nearly, 4,000 souls, in just a decade, and the shocking report on this has been withdrawn even as it is getting dated. We privilege cows and revere elephants but save neither cows nor elephants.

In the face of such enormous one-sided destruction, it seems even the divinities have abandoned us, there are no checks left. Exiled from the public arena, where multi-dimensional planning, consultation, and inquiry are impossible, how does one live in such times? The response varies from collaboration with the regnant evil to an internal exile of resistance.

Collaboration

Anne Applebaum wrote an intriguing essay in *The Atlantic*, 'History will judge the complicit.' In this essay, she explored what it took for two people from similar backgrounds to part ways: one to become a collaborator and the other to reject the cruel, unfair, and unequal communist regime they both grew up with.

In a series of personality sketches, Czeslaw Milosz explores the diverse rationales for collaboration by intellectuals. The leading tropes set out were: 'We can use this moment to achieve great things'; 'We can protect the country from the (lunatic) President'; 'I, personally, benefit'; 'I must remain close to power'; 'Nothing matters'; 'My side may be flawed, but the political opposition is much worse'; and, 'I am afraid to speak out.'

None of these follows the prescription of the Polish foreign minister, Wladyslaw Bartoszewski, who had spent a lifetime in dissent: 'Just try to be decent,' he exhorted. In Applebaum's view, history will only

remember the effort at decency, none of the self-serving excuses.

Or resistance

At the Tibet forum, the artists reminded us how important sheer survival is for resistance. To give shape to resistance by imagining the lost community. To plan the return. Using the time gained to tell stories, to keep memory alive. In the evocative turn of phrase by Milan Kundera, 'the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory over forgetting.'

When I speak with peers, I am always shocked at how shallow the roots of liberal democracy are in this country, and how few people care about joining the dots between the ever-expanding talons of the state and condition of liberty, or remembering why this country was created, impossibly (and imperfectly) dredging from its hoary civilization the very best for the young Republic.

Sitting in India, we have become internal exiles. We live in the interstices ignored by the state: remote places in the mountains and forests, now getting rapidly 'developed'; the dying, private institutions and academic refuges, all being yoked to the national project. Seeking solace in books, and, still, the power of connecting with the external world.

A Tibetan activist, Tenzin Tsundue, rightly describes home as 'not a house but the purpose that takes its places, and sometimes away from our own home. Reasons to live can make strangers a family and no country foreign.' Global citizenship provides exiles, both the internal and external versions, greater understanding and wider access to remote interstices to help preserve culture and memory. Alas, even this notional global home, and engagement with global confreres, only reveals the retreat of liberty and reason elsewhere.

In conclusion...

Pamela Swanigan wrote an interesting essay in NOEMA, cautioning against the hope that human behaviour will change and return to values that sacralise nature. Asking us instead to appreciate J.R.R. Tolkien's view in accepting reality and looking for acts of heroism against the 'earth-and-sky destroyers,' and to achieve small victories that postpone the inevitable defeat of the natural world that sustains us.

Frankly, if the choices are between the 'long hope' and the 'long defeat', I think internal exile is a natural waystation till faith is realised or humanity itself changes course, and we start to heal ourselves and the planet we are burning.

## The Secret Sauce of the China-India Rivalry Is Education

08 November 2024, Mint

For 100 years, the two countries have followed different paths to accumulating human capital, with striking results.

The world's two most-populous nations began to open up to the world around the same time, in the early 1990s. But while both grew rapidly and pulled hundreds of millions of people out of poverty, China's per capita income is now more than double India's, when their currencies are adjusted for their true purchasing power. What's behind the divergence?

Beijing and New Delhi pursued quite separate paths to globalization. One set its sights on becoming the world's factory, starting with toys and electronics, and moving on to electric cars and semiconductors. The other emphasized services like computer software. Their population structures were dissimilar, too. A one-child policy gave rise to a pronounced youth bulge and brought China to the brink of rich-country status before it started turning old. India's demographic destiny is playing out now, though minus the jobs to absorb surplus farm labor. And then there are differences in political institutions. China's is a single-party state, while India is a messy, multiparty, electoral democracy.

This is the conventional narrative. But what if there was a more fundamental force operating beneath the surface, a sharp departure in the long history of how the two nations embraced modern education? That's the thesis of *The Making of China and India in 21st Century*, a new paper by Nitin Kumar Bharti and Li Yang. The scholars at the Paris School of Economics' World Inequality Lab have pored over official reports and yearbooks going back to 1900 to make a database of who studied what in the two countries, for how long, and what was taught to them. The different courses charted by China and India for the last 100 years may have led to striking outcomes for human capital and productivity.

Here's what Bharti and Yang found. Thanks to a 50-year head-start in exposure to Western learning, India had a student population that was eight times bigger than China's at the turn of the 20th century. China began to catch up only after the abolition of the imperial examination system in 1905 bid farewell to Confucianism. By the 1930s, it had achieved parity with India's overall enrolment.

In the 1950s, the newly formed People's Republic kept up a steady pace of expansion, not even allowing the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) to come in the way of secondary schooling. Where the chaotic decade extracted a heavy price was in undergraduate education. In the early 1980s, India's

college enrollment ratio was five times higher than China's. By 2020, however, the story had changed: China was sending a far bigger share of its university-age cohort to tertiary institutions than India.

The different trajectories have their roots in history. China's late-19th-century Qing dynasty rulers wanted manpower with vocational skills to handle military-related production.

By contrast, India's British colonial masters had little interest in creating a manufacturing base. So they seeded the education system with a bias for producing clerks and junior administrators. Only the more affluent sections of the society had access to government jobs, and to the education required to land them. After independence in 1947, India doubled down on tertiary institutions, investing in elite colleges at the expense of basic reading and math skills.

The decision to emphasize tertiary education was a top-down choice for India, where half the individuals born in the 1960s were likely to remain illiterate, compared with 10% in China, according to the Bharti-Yang study. Most school-age Indian kids dropped out quickly (if they even started), either because nobody came to their villages to teach, or because more hands were needed to augment the family labor pool. A bottom-up strategy involves giving a large number of young pupils five years of learning, then enabling an increasingly bigger subset of them to attend high schools for a total of 12 years of instruction — before opening pathways to 16 years of education. This is what China chose.

An even more stark finding of the study is about college majors. Historically, India has had a preponderance of social-science graduates at the bachelor's degree level. In China, however, the overrepresentation of humanities, law and business began to ebb as early as the 1930s as more undergraduates got trained as teachers, scientists, engineers, doctors and farming experts.

This might have had a bearing on growth. As a 1991 paper by Kevin Murphy, Andrei Shleifer, and Robert Vishny has shown, a country that wants to expand faster needs more engineers than lawyers. (Law and economics have seen a revival in China after economic reforms created new demand for human capital in these areas.)

The common view, particularly in the US, is that India is the "land of engineers." It's true that many tech-industry founders and chief executives, including the CEOs of Microsoft Corp. and Alphabet Inc., were born and educated in India. But the huge expansion of its high-speed train network — or the sophistication of its EVs — shows that Bharti and Yang may have zeroed in on an often-overlooked source of

China's competitiveness. "China's higher share of engineering and vocational graduates, combined with a higher share of primary and secondary graduates, lends itself more readily to a focus on manufacturing," the authors say.

Deng Xiaoping's 1992 tour of southern China signaled Beijing's willingness to engage with capital from the West, while retaining the primacy of the Communist Party. Just a few months earlier, Manmohan Singh, then the new Indian finance minister, too, had made a decisive break from decades of Soviet-inspired socialism and isolationism. India, he said, was going to be a major economic actor. "No power on earth can stop an idea whose time has come," Singh said, invoking Victor Hugo.

The residues of history, however, are often hard to brush off. The top-down, elitist bias that the British put into India's education has carried over. One final finding in the Bharti-Yang paper proves the point: In 1976, China had 160 million people who had missed out on regular schooling in adult education programs, compared with just 1 million in India. The progeny of those 159 million extra minds to whom China gave literacy and numeracy may have played more than a small role in beating India at growth.

### Eyes north, ears south

07 November 2024, The Kathmandu Post, Sanjeev Satgainya

It's now all but certain: Oli will visit China in early December. This trip would mark a break from the tradition of Nepali prime ministers making their first "official" visit to India. There is nothing to quibble about, as flying to New Delhi first is merely an unwritten custom, not a formal requirement. So, Oli's planned visit to Beijing isn't a breach of any protocol; rather, it could set a precedent.

Yet questions have lingered over why Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi hasn't extended an invitation to Oli, sparking speculation that Oli began planning a trip to China after waiting in vain for an invite from New Delhi. In some circles, there is a belief that Oli's ascension to power is not to India's liking. Some within Oli's orbit have remarked that certain foreign powers have been trying to unseat the government without providing evidence to support this claim.

Oli and India amid global shifts

Even Oli can't deny that his past actions and rhetoric have frequently irked New Delhi. While his assertive stance may have earned him a "nationalist" image among sections of Nepali society, it has also placed him in India's bad books. Attempts at rapprochement have been met with a cold shoulder, leaving him to orchestrate his return to power. Since the 2022 elections, he's worn many hats: Coalition partner,

opposition leader, and now, once again, prime minister.

Yet India appears unconvinced. While Modi's government rolled out the red carpet for Arzu Rana Deuba of the Nepali Congress, who serves as foreign minister in Oli's Cabinet, it has yet to extend an invitation to Oli, despite him being in office for over 100 days and even meeting Modi in New York in September. Meanwhile, Oli's government has repeatedly signalled its keenness to host Modi in Nepal, failing to elicit any concrete response.

Then, has India abandoned its long-standing tradition of hosting the Nepali prime minister soon after a new government is formed? If so, this raises broader questions about India's much-touted "Neighborhood First" policy. Extending an invitation to Oli could have shown goodwill and reinforced New Delhi's proclamation that "Nepal is a special priority partner."

Amid rapid geopolitical shifts, India may have set its sights on bigger platforms and larger roles in the world order, but it would do well not to ignore its neighbours or treat them based on the government of the day.

On Nepal's part, its foreign policy is becoming increasingly complex, extending beyond bilateral ties with India and China, as Sino-Indian and Sino-American tensions and interests intersect more with a growing US influence in Asia amid shifting global dynamics. Oli, as the incumbent, needs to tread carefully. His role demands deft management of relations with India and China while also recalibrating Nepal's strategic posture in a complex and evolving geopolitical landscape.

**The northern nexus**

Nepal's communist leaders often lean towards, or appear to align with, China when they want to "send a message" to India. Oli is no exception. Even before an official invitation was extended, extensive media reports outlined Oli's potential agenda for the trip, including efforts to secure a loan waiver for the Pokhara International Airport and agreements on some Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects. The Chinese, who often practise quiet diplomacy, have yet to comment on Oli's planned visit. Meanwhile, the BRI remains a contentious issue in Nepal, with Beijing eager to reframe all China-funded projects under its banner.

Oli currently leads a strong government with support from the Nepali Congress, the largest party in Parliament. Congress's position on the BRI and other forms of assistance is clear—grants are acceptable but loans are not. If Oli avoids pushing too aggressively with China, potentially unsettling his coalition partner, his position remains secure. Deeper engagement with China could bring valuable infrastructure projects, but it also raises concerns

about long-term dependency and potential political leverage. It's up to Nepali leaders—especially Oli—to negotiate beneficial terms.

The Nepali public is divided on Chinese aid: Some see it as a counterbalance to dependence on India, while others fear it might lead to undue influence from the north. Both views have merit and flaws, making it crucial for the current leadership to steer Nepal's foreign policy in a direction that serves and safeguards the country's interests.

While Nepal could benefit from its northern neighbour's economic and technological might, it is not in a position to ignore its southern neighbour, with whom it not only shares historical, cultural and people-to-people ties but also carries out a majority of its trade.

**The catch**

Diplomacy often works best when conducted quietly. Oli's "preparations" to visit Beijing could have been kept under wraps until concrete plans were in place. The premature leak of his intentions by his circle allows room for speculation that this may have been a tactic to pressure India.

While China seeks to expand its influence in Nepal, it remains cautious about provoking India to the point of confrontation. And India, too, appears hesitant to employ its usual political manoeuvres in Nepal, particularly after recent setbacks in its immediate neighbourhood. As the Sino-Indian relations show signs of thawing, Nepal stands to benefit from reduced regional tension. Oli would be wise to avoid antagonising either neighbour.

Nonetheless, Oli has an uncanny inclination to critique India. While he uses backchannels to re-engage with New Delhi, his public jabs at India reveal his characteristic defiance. If his plan to visit China is driven more by spite than by a balanced foreign policy strategy, he risks making a strategic misstep.

Even after over 100 days in office, Oli's performance has been dismal on various domestic fronts. Neither Oli nor his coalition partner, the Nepali Congress, has been able to justify the formation of this "stable" government.

With his political legacy on the line, Oli has an opportunity to "achieve something meaningful" as prime minister, and he should approach foreign policy with a view toward lasting impact.

Foreign policy is certainly a tough balancing act for a country like Nepal, sandwiched between the world's two large economies. In an era of fluid geopolitics, future Nepali leaders will likely face further challenges in balancing relations with both neighbours. Nepali politicians' failure to pursue a cohesive and balanced foreign policy has already tarnished Nepal's international image.

In the intricate world of foreign policy, there's little room for grandstanding. And, adventurism can backfire. Oli has a unique chance to set a precedent for independent, balanced diplomacy that could serve as a model for the country and his successors. His China sojourn could go beyond simply breaking the so-called custom of prioritising one neighbour over the other; it might even pave the way for a new approach. But this must be done in the best interest of Nepal, not to satisfy personal pride or vanity.

### **Mountains of Resistance: The Past and Present of Tibet's Quest for Independence**

06 November 2024, Harvard International Review

A leader in exile. Children forced into cultural assimilation. A barrage of failed protests. For more than 50 years, China, a global superpower with a population over 400 times that of Tibet, has occupied this small region. Since 1950, Tibet and China have lived in an uneasy balance. However, recent reports have shown exacerbated tensions between the two regions, as Tibetans have accused the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) of severely restricting the practice of Tibetan traditions, including Buddhism.

#### **The Tumultuous Ties Between Tibet and China**

For centuries, Tibet and China co-existed in Central Asia—each as a distinct nation with individual culture and history. China's historical records and treaties demonstrate that China forged equal partnerships with its strong neighbor, Tibet, as early as 2,000 years ago. In 1913, the 13th Dalai Lama, who served as Tibet's political and spiritual leader, officially proclaimed the nation's independence, stating, "We are a small, religious, and independent nation." The nation had a theocratic government of which the Dalai Lama was the supreme religious and temporal head. With social security systems such as the provision of medical assistance to expecting mothers or care for the elderly, Tibet was a place of rich culture, art, and education.

However, in 1950, the newly established CCP launched an invasion of Tibet to incorporate it into the People's Republic of China. By seizing Tibet, China gained access to a multitude of rich natural resources and easier access to the strategically significant Indian border. Facing almost 40,000 Chinese troops, the young Dalai Lama was forced to recognize China's rule in return for loose promises that the CCP would protect Tibet's religious and political system. The CCP never kept these promises, and on March 10, 1959, hundreds of thousands of Tibetans surrounded the Potala Palace in Lhasa to protest Chinese government occupation, marking the beginning of an ongoing Tibetan resistance. The CCP

swiftly suppressed the uprising, and the then-14th Dalai Lama was forced to flee in disguise, dressing himself in a Chinese uniform and escaping on foot with his family members and ministers.

**Persistent Protests: The Struggle for Tibetan Freedom**  
Tibetans have been protesting China's presence in the country since 1959. However, in recent years, protests have gained momentum and prominence as the international community becomes increasingly aware of the CCP's actions. In March 2008, on the 49th anniversary of the National Uprising Day, hundreds of Tibetan monks gathered in Lhasa to protest Beijing's rule and advocate for the release of fellow Drepung monks, who protestors claimed were previously detained. The protests and violence escalated throughout the week, and by the end, human rights groups claimed that more than 140 people had died, although Chinese authorities put the figure closer to 22 deaths. April 2008, during the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics, was another milestone in protests, as thousands gathered on the streets of San Francisco, California. Protests in Tibet mirrored those in San Francisco: thirty Tibetan protesters were convicted of arson, robbery, and attacking government offices related to the March violence. They received prison sentences ranging from three years to life. Hundreds of Tibetans have been imprisoned or outright killed by the CCP, while further deaths have resulted from self-immolation as a form of protest. Since 2009, 159 Tibetans have self-immolated, including 127 deaths and 26 minors under the age of 18.

Some changes in Chinese leadership led to periods of greater leniency. In 1978, Deng Xiaoping succeeded Mao Zedong after his death, and the government appeared to acknowledge past errors. Throughout the next decade, many Tibetan religious and traditional customs were allowed again. Tibetans were allowed to assume positions of social status, obtain a university education, study the newly acknowledged Tibetan culture, travel abroad, and even travel to India to meet the Dalai Lama. Deng Xiaoping even invited Gyalo Thondup, elder brother of the Dalai Lama, to the capital to discuss greater partnership between the two regions—although full independence was still not discussed. Letters between leaders also indicate relatively amicable discussions. Crucially, during this time period, tourism flourished, with over 43,500 foreigners visiting Tibet in 1987 and spending more than US\$15 million within the nation.

However, these small advances did not alter China's overall power in Tibet, and in 1987, protests reemerged. The demonstrations continued until 1989 and led to troops from the Chinese People's Liberation Army imposing checkpoints every few meters throughout



Lhasa. The Chinese government declared martial law for 13 months, and CCTV footage leaked internationally displayed Chinese brutality.

#### Global Outcry and Growing Support

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom's 2024 annual report, published on May 1, 2024, revealed a lack of religious freedom in Tibet due to the CCP's growing suppression of Tibetan Buddhism. These restrictions are part of broader Sinicization efforts by the CCP government. In the past, "Sinicization" has referred to the concept of making something more Chinese in character. However, over the past few years, Sinicization has developed a secondary meaning referring to Chinese efforts to impose increased surveillance and security measures on Tibetan Buddhists. These measures restrict peaceful religious activities, including rituals and spiritual practices such as mantras and yogic techniques. Authorities have arrested and imprisoned Tibetan Buddhists for engaging in behaviors related to the Dalai Lama, with some Tibetan Buddhist monks dying in prison.

The CCP has also forced the separation of over one million Tibetan children from their families to attend state-run boarding schools. Tibetans have called these institutions "colonial boarding schools," designed to cultivate loyalty to the CCP and deny the children the opportunity to continue practicing their cultural traditions. The US commission recommended the US State Department designate China as one of the current 17 countries with "country of particular concern" (CPC) status regarding religious freedom violations. It also identified the Chinese government's "Sinicization of Religion" policy as a significant factor in the deterioration of religious freedom. The report stated that "Sinicization requires groups to follow the CCP's Marxist interpretation of religion, including by altering religious scriptures and doctrines to conform to that interpretation."

The US Congress has also stepped into the conflict; a month after Senate approval, the House voted on June 12, 2024 to pass a bill, the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act, urging China to mend ties with the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan leaders. The legislation allows State Department officials to "actively and directly" counter disinformation about Tibet spread by the Chinese government, particularly claims that China has encompassed Tibet since "ancient times." President Biden signed this Act into law on July 12, 2024.

#### Tibetan Voices: Calls for Identity and Freedom

Calls from Tibetans have remained the same for decades: the protection of Tibetan identity, freedom, and human rights and the return of the Dalai Lama to Tibet. Though in exile in India, the 14th Dalai Lama has established a democratic government, or

the Central Tibetan Administration, which advocates for greater freedom and rights for Tibet, termed the "Middle Way Approach." For 63 years, the democratic government-in-exile has endured in the foothills of the Himalayas. Alongside the Dalai Lama, the parliament is ruled by Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang, their elected leader. Although exiled, the government still aims to rule with democratic transparency and fairness, posting announcements and news on its website and keeping interested parties globally up-to-date on parliamentary sessions. The parliament-in-exile even meets with global leaders, such as former US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other US legislators and European Parliament members.

However, within the community of Tibetan exiles, there are two factions: those who simply ask for Tibet to remain a part of the People's Republic of China but with greater control over its own affairs (the "Middle Way Approach") and those who push for complete independence from China ("Rangzen"). From July 13th to 15th, 2024, the 7th International Rangzen Conference dedicated to Tibet's complete independence from China was held in Toronto, Canada. With over 250 delegates from around the world, the conference expressed a lack of trust for the Chinese government and condemned recent educational suppression techniques employed by the CCP. The rhetoric of the speakers was fairly assertive, with Rangzen claimed as a "birth right" and discussions on "[countering] China not just by vocalising...demands or organising protests, but by understanding the political landscape within China and its relations with other countries." Ultimately, internal turmoil persists in determining the best solution.

Differing from more violent secessionist movements in other countries, the Tibetan independence movement primarily takes a spiritual approach. This movement looks to the Dalai Lama as an influential freedom advocate who still spends his day "meditating on the roots of compassion and what he can do for his people." Although the man himself retired as a political leader in 2011, his values—introspection, meditation, spirituality, and peace—are still at the core of the movement. Indeed, despite initial violent uprisings met with suppression by Chinese authorities, the resistance movement in Tibet has been relatively peaceful. It remains to be seen whether this movement will achieve Tibetan sovereignty, finally reuniting the parliament and Dalai Lama with the Tibetan people.

## **The CCP Insists that Chinese Islam Should Be “Confucianized”**

04 November 2024, Bitter Winter, Ma Wenyan

References to the Jinling School hide a call to “Sinicization” intended as unquestioning alignment with the Communist Party.

From October 17 to 18, 2024, the Jiangsu Islamic Association and the Research Center for Strengthening the Consciousness of the Chinese Nation’s Community hosted in Nanjing a conference on the “Research on Integrating Islam and Confucianism and Strengthening the Consciousness of the Chinese Nation’s Community.” The conference was part of a campaign promoting the Jinling School as a model of “Confucianized” Islam.

The Jinling School, formed in late Ming China, established Chinese-language educational institutions for Muslims. Ma Zhenwu, Zhang Shaoshan, and Ma Junshi, all Muslim teachers involved in both Sufism and Confucian studies, taught in Nanjing. They promoted the idea that Confucianism and Sufism were similar, advocating a connection between Islam and Confucianism. This movement faced opposition for introducing non-Islamic elements into Islam and eventually declined.

The CCP bureaucrats’ interest in the Jinling School is noteworthy, but it’s doubtful they fully understand the nuances of 17th and 18th-century Muslim Chinese theologians. For them, “Confucianizing” Islam means supporting the movement to eliminate “Arabic” architectural elements and replacing them with Chinese ones. Ultimately, the CCP is interested in a “Confucian” approach to Islam as a call for unquestioning alignment with the government in power. While this perspective may not accurately reflect the intentions of the Jinling School theologians, it is applicable to the current China Islamic Association.

Over 50 experts, scholars, and Islamic community representatives attended the seminar. Yang Faming, President of China Islamic Association, opened the meeting and delivered a keynote speech. Officials from the Second Division of the United Front Work Department, in charge of supervising religious communities, also attended the conference.

President Yang Faming praised the Jiangsu Islamic Association for promoting the sinicization of Islam in Jiangsu. He emphasized the importance of understanding the spirit of the Third Plenary Session of the 20th CCP Central Committee and Xi Jinping’s thoughts on ethnic and religious work to integrate Islam and Confucianism. Yang urged carrying out basic research, editing Muslim classics to publish them in “Sinicized” versions, and highlighting the contemporary value of the Jinling School. He also called for “innovative approaches that reflect

modern times and are easily accepted by believers to advance the integration of Islam and Confucianism.” In his speech, Qin Hua, member of the Party Leadership Group and Deputy Director of the Jiangsu Provincial Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission, in turn emphasized that the Islamic community should follow political guidance, study and implement the spirit of the Third Plenary Session of the 20th CCP Central Committee, and increase publicity and education efforts to promote the Sinicization of Islam. He also stressed the importance of strengthening Confucian thought among Muslims as part of the efforts to Sinicize Islam.

## **Why Has China Halted Centuries-old Sino-Nepal Borderland Marriages?**

04 November 2024, The Diplomat, Birat Anupam

China has offered no explanation why it halted cross-border marriages between Nepali and Tibetan people living in border villages like Olangchung Gola.

A man from Biratnagar in southeastern Nepal can marry a woman from Beijing in China, just as a man from China’s Kunming city can wed a woman from Kathmandu in Nepal. Beijing does not seem to have a problem with long-distance cross-border marriages. However, it has forbidden cross-border marriages between people who live in the Sino-Nepali borderlands, within walking distance of each other, and with strong linguistic and cultural ties. Beijing has provided no explanation for this policy.

During my recent trek in Olangchung Gola village of Nepal’s far eastern Taplejung district, which borders both of Nepal’s neighbors, China and India, I found that cross-border marriages, once the norm in Olangchung Gola, are now a rarity.

At Olangchung Gola, a Himalayan village of 55 households, I met Chumbe Sherpa, an elderly Nepali man with four wives. His first wife, with whom he eloped in 1962, was from Tibet.

Chumbe Sherpa’s first wife was from Tibet. Photo by Birat Anupam.

However, nowadays, a Nepali in the borderlands cannot marry a Tibetan. Nepali men can no longer be sons-in-law of China’s Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR).

“Cross-border marriage was not an issue until 2008,” a Nepali local in Olangchung Gola told The Diplomat. It was “halted from the Chinese side after 2012.”

According to Chumbe Sherpa, who is a former deputy chair of the erstwhile Olangchung Gola Village Development Committee (local government),

previously Tibetan women were drawn to Nepal as Nepal was comparatively well-developed and the source of their food and other supplies. A marriage with a Nepali man was therefore an attractive option.

However, in more recent decades, China has developed the Tibetan region, and the Tibetan border regions are more developed than the Nepali ones. The situation has reversed and commodities now flow into Nepal from Riu in Dinggye County of the TAR. Almost all daily essentials being used by residents of Olangchung Gola are from TAR and sport Mandarin characters. Olangchung Gola is closer to Riu bazaar than Taplejung's district headquarters of Phungling bazaar.

Even meeting relatives on the Chinese side of the Sino-Nepali border has become tougher post-pandemic. "We can't go to our relatives' homes on the other side," Chhilamo Lama, whose maternal house is on the Chinese side said, pointing out that she has "to stay at a quarantine-like home," where her "relatives come to meet and greet" her. "This was not the case in the past," she said.

At Olangchung Gola, I saw people engaging in cross-border trade with China, which is just around 25 kilometers away.

Local residents as well as security personnel view the Chinese positively. Madhab Khatri, the recently deployed Border Outpost chief of Nepal's Armed Police Force said, "Chinese counterparts often ask if we need anything from them."

"We mostly go to Riu to sell our products and buy theirs. If we can't sell all our products in the Riu bazaar, Chinese policemen purchase our unsold items," Chhilamo Lama told The Diplomat.

Chheten Sherpa, a local leader of the Nepali Congress and a former local government member, said that the Chinese are helpful and are eager to have better road connectivity with Nepal. Chinese-sent bulldozers and oil tankers with Chinese number plates are visible at Olangchung Gola bazaar.

People from both sides of the Sino-Nepali border share a Buddhist cultural heritage and linguistic ties. Still, cross-border marriage doesn't exist anymore. The centuries-old borderlands marriage has been halted thanks to the Chinese side.

Yet Chinese leaders have waxed eloquent on the strong bonds, including matrimonial ties, between the people of the two countries. In a signed article written ahead of his Nepal visit in 2019, Chinese President Xi Jinping noted, "In China's Tang Dynasty (618-907), Nepali Princess Bhrikuti was married to Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo, while the Chinese monk Huen Tsang visited Lumbini, the birthplace of the Buddha, and left many precious written accounts of his pilgrimage."

"The Himalayas soaring between our two countries have not blocked the friendly contacts between our two peoples," Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai said at the Kathmandu Civic Reception during his visit to Nepal in April 1960.

Cross-border movement of people and goods, which was halted during the COVID-19 pandemic, was resumed recently. On May 25, Nepal and China reopened 14 traditional border crossings, including Olangchung Gola, in the presence of top leaders including Nepal's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Narayan Kaji Shrestha and Vice Chairman of China's Tibet Autonomous Region Silang Nima.

When border trade and crossings have resumed, why are traditional borderland marriages being blocked? Why are marriages between people who have to fly long distances across the Himalayas permitted when those who live just walking distance of each other are forbidden?

Beijing has not explained its strange policy.

### Is Sino-Pak 'Sweeter Than Honey' Friendship Turning Sour? – OpEd

04 November 2024, Eurasian Review, Nilesh Kunwar

Organised by the Pakistan-China Institute [PCI], one had expected that the recent international conference on "China at 75: A Journey of Progress, Transformation and Leadership" would be yet another exchange of poetic phrases and adulations coined by Beijing and Islamabad to describe their relations being "a friendship higher than Himalayas, deeper than ocean, sweeter than honey and stronger than steel." However, what Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong stated during this conference clearly indicates that relations between these two "iron brothers" may not be as hunky dory as they claim.

Saying that "China wants to see steps against perpetrators of terrorist attacks and all those involved in such attacks could be penalised," Ambassador Zaidong made it clear that such incidents were "unacceptable for China and we do hope that the Pakistani side will ensure the safety and security of its nationals working in Pakistan." He also noted with concern that Chinese nationals had been "attacked twice in only six months and these attacks have also caused casualties." [Emphasis added]. His terse message sans sweetness of honey undoubtedly came as a bolt from the blue for Islamabad.

Visibly rattled by the Chinese ambassador's undisguised admonition, Pakistani Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar responded with the assurance that Islamabad would leave no stone unturned in ensuring security of Chinese nationals. Dar disclosed

that he along with President Asif Ali Zardari would visit Beijing in early November to brief the Chinese authorities on the actions taken by Islamabad to bring perpetrators to book but refused to make any public disclosures on progress of investigations regarding terrorist attack on Chinese nationals. This raises strong suspicions that Islamabad may not have anything substantial to reveal.

That the Chinese ambassador exceeded his brief in this case is unlikely as China chooses its diplomats with due care and ensures that they implicitly toe Beijing's line and steer clear of any controversy.

So, when the Chinese ambassador broke protocol and took to the rostrum once again and issued a rejoinder to Dar's feeble assurances by highlighting the deteriorating security environment in Pakistan, it became absolutely clear that he was emphatically reiterating Beijing's concerns. Had Sino-Pak friendship truly been sweeter than honey as both Beijing and Islamabad claim, then would the Chinese ambassador use a public platform to launch a scathing attack on the Pakistan army's inability to check terrorist activities?

Beijing has all the reasons to be annoyed. For one, it has invested heavily in the ambitious USD 62 billion China Pakistan Economic Corridor [CPEC] project but Islamabad has not yet been able to fulfil its repayment obligations and is continuously seeking debt restructuring and bailouts. Pakistan's circular debt arising out of its inability to pay for subsidies has resulted in irregular reimbursement to Chinese Independent Power Producers [IPPs]. Lastly, despite repeated assurances, the Pakistan army has not been able to get the better of Baloch rebel groups targeting Chinese nationals working on CPEC projects.

Pakistan too has several genuine reasons to be angry. In trying to keep Beijing happy, Islamabad has made several compromises ranging from overlooking the humongous adverse environmental impact of CPEC projects to extending extraordinary concessions to Chinese working on CPEC projects and even disregarding the genuine concerns of locals. This has accentuated political and social upheaval as well as contributed to the country's burgeoning financial crisis and Islamabad is miffed that Beijing has not adequately appreciated Pakistan's actions. This is evident from Pakistan Foreign Office [FO] spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch's remark that "The statement from the Chinese ambassador is perplexing, especially considering the positive diplomatic traditions between Pakistan and China." [Emphasis added].

In an attempt to appease Beijing, Islamabad has indeed yielded a lot. For example, on China's bidding, the Pakistan army took the highhanded decision of not only converting the entire port city of

Gwadar into a virtual fortress but also treating locals as potential terrorists and subjecting them and their houses to repeated searches. It has also institutionalised forcible abductions and enforced disappearances in the garb of security necessity and thereby further alienated the beleaguered Baloch people.

The irony is that while Chinese trawlers are allowed to fish in Gwadar's waters, the Pakistan navy restricts local fishermen from accessing their traditional fishing areas for security reasons. While Rawalpindi may deny it, but the fact that all major mass movements against human rights excesses, enforced disappearances, extra judicial killings and denial of basic rights in Balochistan like the Baloch Yakjethi Committee [Balochistan Unity Committee] or BYC and Haq Do Tehreek Gwadar [give Gwadar its rights] started after CPEC activities commenced in Balochistan surely can't be a mere coincidence.

Both the Haq Do Tehreek leader Maulana Hidayat ur Rehman Baloch and BYC chief Dr [Ms] Mahrang Baloch squarely blame Beijing for aggravating the already sorry state of affairs prevailing in Balochistan. The former has reportedly issued a warning to Chinese nationals in Gwadar that if Islamabad "ignores" their peaceful protests, the Baloch people would be well within their rights "to pick up and use weapons to protect our rights."

Similarly the BYC leader is sanguine that "China or any other country investing in Balochistan is directly involved in the Baloch genocide. The enforced disappearances and forced displacements in the Makran coastal belt are huge. They are looting our resources with no gain to local Baloch." Her observation is based on the harsh reality and a true reflection of Baloch sentiments that is fuelling armed resistance by nationalist groups.

With Beijing becoming publicly more assertive this "iron brother" of Pakistan is fast turning into a "big brother" and Pakistan is probably realising that in today's world, there are no free lunches. As the metaphoric Sino-Pakistan friendship extravaganza shows signs of crumbling, Islamabad does deserve sympathy for having walked into Beijing's 'friendship trap'.

However, Islamabad cannot absolve itself for taking China's friendship for granted-it surely couldn't be unaware of Greek philosopher Plato's [427-348 BC] warning to mankind given many-many centuries ago that "True friendship can exist only between equals."

## **Depsang to Kazan: Emerging détente between China and India**

04 November 2024, ORF, Atul Kumar and Antara Ghosal Singh

Although India and China have reached a preliminary agreement to disengage, the future development path of China-India relations is still full of potholes and slippery slopes

The fact that an agreement between China and India to move forward on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) was in the works has been anticipated in both capitals. Since late 2022, both governments have pursued a modus vivendi for disengagement at Depsang and Demchok, with the issue discussed threadbare in the Corps Commanders' meetings. The 17th Corps Commanders' meeting on 20 December 2022 marked a critical point. Following the establishment of five buffer zones in Eastern Ladakh and the Yangtse clash on 9 December 2022, the meeting provided an in-depth dialogue on the disengagement frameworks and probable solutions. In the next two years, these frameworks were substantially refined by both militaries which received the political endorsement this year.

This agreement has initiated the disengagement process at both remaining locations. As discussed below, a review of the lead-up to the Kazan agreement, its specifics on the ground and perspectives on this agreement from China, indicates that within strategic and political constraints, the agreement is a constructive restart for both states, though tempered with cautious optimism.

**The buffer zones and their complexities**

By September 2022, China and India had established five buffer zones at Pangong Tso Lake from Fingers 4-8, Gogra, Hot Springs, Kugrang Nullah and the Galwan Valley. This belt of buffer zones was aimed to separate both forces from their face-to-face deployments and was located mostly on the Indian side of the LAC, creating a distance of 3–10 kilometres between both sides and establishing restrictions on human patrolling or grazing temporarily. Only electronic surveillance was allowed. The denial of grazing received substantial criticism in India as these areas were traditional grazing grounds for the local population. However, the Indian government argued that if they could not patrol or graze in these buffer zones, neither could the Chinese and that ensured stability and peace in these areas.

This belt of buffer zones was aimed to separate both forces from their face-to-face deployments and was located mostly on the Indian side of the LAC, creating a distance of 3–10 kilometres between both sides and establishing restrictions on human patrolling or grazing temporarily.

The negotiation for achieving a similar modus vivendi in Depsang and Demchok proved difficult. The standoff in these two places was a legacy issue, starting in 2008-09 and eventually becoming a part of the 2020 Galwan Clash discourse. After surveying this area in September 2013, the Shyam Saran Committee reported that the Chinese were not allowing the Indian Army patrol units to access patrolling points 10 to 13 in the Depsang bulge area and creating difficulties for patrols in the Sirijap and Demchok area. Therefore, these two locations proved to be the toughest to negotiate.

Nevertheless, the Indian establishment displayed adept negotiation skills, finally securing the Kazan Agreement. This accord avoids creating buffer zones in the area, allowing staggered patrolling by small patrol units from both sides. Indian troops can finally access patrolling points 10 to 13 in this region again.

**Economic foundation for the political agreement**

Since the 2020 clashes, China-India relations have stagnated, marked by minimal engagement across trade, economics and regional political fronts. India, stepping away from its oft-professed neutral politics, has actively engaged in the Malabar Exercises and the QUAD, aligned closely with the United States (US), while restricting Chinese investments, apps, and airlines. India has often adopted positions countering China. Beijing believes India has become detrimental to its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Southern Asia and withheld support from multiple Chinese economic initiatives namely, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, and the China-Nepal India Corridor.

Beijing believes India has become detrimental to its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Southern Asia and withheld support from multiple Chinese economic initiatives namely, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, and the China-Nepal India Corridor.

China-India trade, however, has remained strong. Consequently, India's trade deficit has grown over the last three years, often crossing US\$ 100 billion a year. In addition, foreign direct investment (FDI) in India has dropped substantially, to less than US\$30 billion in the last financial year. The Indian Finance Ministry has, therefore, expressed concerns, prompting the Indian Chief Economic Advisor, Anantha Nageswaran, to advocate for renewed engagement with China in the 2024 Economic Survey. China, meanwhile, is in difficult terrain as its industrial overcapacity, high unemployment rate and collapsing real estate sector, along with severe societal repression by a paranoid Chinese state, has created a volatile economic environment. The Kazan Agreement is, thus, viewed as a mutually beneficial pact to reduce hostilities and reestablish a working



arrangement to minimise the potential for bilateral conflict.

#### Opinions in China on the agreement

The border agreement with India has received intense attention within China's strategic community. The big question everyone tends to ask "Now that India's Modi has given a thumbs up, will China and India turn the page in terms of bilateral ties." In the Chinese assessment, this is a substantial achievement, a hard-won success. It is being argued that this ice-breaker will revitalize China-India relations and can potentially open up new space for cooperation between the two countries on the global stage. For example, some Chinese scholars believe the Kazan meeting will pave the way for greater cooperation between China and India on the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) platform. There are talks about PM Modi personally attending the summit in China next year and opening up a new chapter in bilateral cooperation.

As per Lin Minwang, a researcher at the Centre for South Asian Studies, Fudan University, the current positive turn in China-India relations shows that India's diplomatic strategy is gradually returning to its "multi-alliance" core position under the Modi government. Similarly, Zhang Jiadong, another India watcher associated with Fudan University argued that "both sides realize that their primary focus is still economic development and responding to changes in the international landscape. In that case, a costly border dispute is not in the interests of both countries."

The warming of Sino-Indian relations will make the US and the West uneasy and may impact their strategic layout and global and regional policies.

The Chinese side further notes how the handshake across the Himalayas can be an important turning point in global geopolitics and have a far-reaching international political significance. The warming of Sino-Indian relations will make the US and the West uneasy and may impact their strategic layout and global and regional policies. It is, therefore, no coincidence, they argue, that the US has been building pressure upon India on the Khalistan issue and has threatened to adopt severe measures if India does not cooperate. Simultaneously, other Western powers continue to court India and lure it into the "trap of replacing China". For example, Chinese scholars note with concern how German Chancellor Scholz recently led a delegation to India, promising the strengthening of German-Indian economic cooperation while publicly promoting a "de-risking from China" strategy and projecting India as an alternative to China.

However, while appreciating the development, Chinese scholars advise caution given the structural differences in China-India ties. There seems to be

a consensus within the Chinese strategic community that "the border agreement signed by China and India does not mean that all issues have been resolved. The agreement's implementation, the progress of subsequent negotiations, and whether the two sides can trust each other are all important factors in the future of China-India relations." The signing of the agreement is only "a starting point".

Chinese scholars argue that true reconciliation with India will require greater patience and sincerity, as the border issue is complex, involves sovereignty issues, and is subject to interference from third parties or external forces. Liu Zongyi, director of the South Asia Research Center at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (SIIS), argued that although there have been some positive developments in bilateral ties, it will still take some time for the relationship to recover. Since India's great power ambitions and its overall strategic goals of outcompeting China have not changed much, China needs to exercise caution, particularly Chinese companies still need to adopt a cautious attitude when investing in India."

#### Final evaluation

The general feeling in China is that although both states have reached a preliminary agreement to disengage, the future development path of China-India relations is still full of potholes and slippery slopes. The two sides still face the possibility of a sudden escalation in conflicts and differences because the borderline has not yet been fully determined.

China will keep a keen eye on how India can maintain good relations with China while maintaining cooperation with the United States in the future.

In addition, the future direction of the China-US-India trilateral relationship is full of uncertainty. The US elections, scheduled for November 2024, will also impact China-India relations. China will keep a keen eye on how India can maintain good relations with China while maintaining cooperation with the United States in the future.

Similarly in India, the disengagement at Depsang and Demchok is ongoing, and the patrolling may begin around Diwali. However, hereafter both sides must negotiate de-escalation and de-induction and future access and patrolling in existing buffer zones. The completion of this process will bring back a modicum of sensitivity towards each other's red lines and may generate mutual respect. The Kazan Agreement, in sum, has reduced the animosity and mistrust and opened the scope for bilateral cooperation. The trust between both Indian and Chinese militaries, however, is a long way ahead.

## EXPLAINED: How do Asia's authoritarian states pick leaders?

04 November 2024, RFA, Paul Eckert

Communist-style staged elections and hereditary strongmen dominate.

Clockwise from top left, China's President Xi Jinping, North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un, Laos Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone and Vietnam's Communist Party General Secretary To Lam. (AFP photos)

In a world bracing for a close U.S. presidential election result this week, a large swathe of Asia picks its leaders without suspense – and mostly with little popular participation.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping was confirmed by the National People's Congress in March 2013 with 2,952 votes for, one against, and three abstentions. Last year the rubber stamp parliament voted unanimously to give him a third term, putting him on track to stay in power for life.

North Korea's leaders have inherited their power from father to son for three generations. They are technically "elected" – but there is no choice. In 2014, Kim Jong Un was elected to the Supreme People's Assembly without a dissenting vote with 100% turnout.

A leadership succession that played out in Vietnam this year saw a serial purge of political rivals and the death of an ailing top leader propel To Lam, a wily career security policeman to the top of the Communist Party, where he is maneuvering for a key intra-party vote in early 2026.

In U.S. elections, the president and vice president are not elected directly in a popular vote by citizens. Instead, they are chosen through the Electoral College process, in which electors equal to the total number of representatives and senators a state has in Congress cast that state's votes. These electors vote according to the majority of residents in that state.

Members of Congress – 100 in the Senate and 435 in the House of the Representatives – are elected directly by residents of each of the 50 states.

How do the Communist-ruled countries in Asia choose their leaders?

Of the six countries covered by Radio Free Asia, whose mission is to provide independent media to territories that lack it, four – China, North Korea, Laos and Vietnam – were founded and organized on the Marxist-Leninist party-state model copied from the Soviet Union.

Some countries call themselves "democratic," but in practice the people have little or no say in choosing their leaders or governments.

**NORTH KOREA**

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea was founded in 1948 by Kim Il Sung, who had been cultivated by Moscow as a Cold War ally in the northern half of Korea.

North Korea describes itself as an "independent socialist state" with universal and compulsory suffrage at 17, and holds elections for the Supreme People's Assembly, the national legislature every four-to-five years, and for local People's Assemblies every four years.

In practice, each candidate is pre-selected by the North Korean government and voters are allowed to vote either "yes" or "no" in ballots that are not private. Nearly all elections report 100% support for the government.

**CHINA**

The People's Republic of China, founded in 1949 by Mao Zedong, describes itself as a "socialist democracy and a people's democratic dictatorship." Xi-era slogans describe it as "socialist consultative democracy" and "whole-process people's democracy."

China has universal suffrage from age 18, with voting at five levels of People's Congresses, from local townships to cities and provinces, to the parliamentary National People's Congress. Higher-level Congresses are indirectly elected by delegates of lower-level Congresses.

Technically not a one-party state, China has eight non-communist parties, including the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang, the China Democratic League, the China National Democratic Construction Association and the China Association for Promoting Democracy.

However, as the U.S.-based Freedom House notes, "the CCP effectively monopolizes all political activity and does not permit meaningful political competition." The noncommunist parties serve in an advisory role, "but their activities are tightly circumscribed, and they must accept the CCP's leadership as a condition for their existence."

**VIETNAM**

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam, founded in 1975 after Ho Chi Minh's Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) overthrew the U.S.-backed Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam), likewise followed the Soviet template of one-party politics.

Suffrage is universal at age 18, and direct elections are held for local People's Councils and the National Assembly – but all candidates are pre-approved by the ruling party.

"Vietnam is a one-party state, dominated for decades by the ruling Communist Party of Vietnam," says Freedom House. "Although some independent candidates are technically allowed to run in legislative elections, most are banned in practice."

In the May 2021 elections for 500 National Assembly seats, the Communist Party of Vietnam took 97.2% of the vote, while non-party candidates got 2.8%. The next election is in early 2026.

#### LAOS

In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, a Communist protégé of Vietnam also founded in 1975, "is a one-party state in which the ruling Lao People's Revolutionary Party dominates all aspects of politics and harshly restricts civil liberties," says Freedom House.

Laos has universal suffrage, and its president, vice president, and prime minister are elected by the National Assembly. These elections, however, have been deemed not free or fair, and in the most recent 2021 poll, the ruling party took 158 of the body's 164 seats, with the rest going to pre-approved independents.

"The electoral laws and framework are designed to ensure that the LPRP, the only legal party, dominates every election and controls the political system," says Freedom House.

#### CAMBODIA

Radio Free Asia's other target countries are Cambodia and Myanmar, more pluralistic states that have held competitive, if flawed elections.

Cambodia has been holding elections since 1993, as mandated by the 1991 Paris Agreements, which ended the country's civil war and mandated democratic elections under a parliamentary constitutional monarchy.

Cambodia's former Prime Minister Hun Sen shows his inked finger after voting at a polling station during the Senate election in Takhmao city, Kandal province on Feb. 25, 2024. (Tang Chhin Sothy/AFP)

In practice, however, Cambodia's political system has been dominated by the Cambodian People's Party and its leader Hun Sen. A strongman who violently refused to share power with coalition partners in the 1990s, Hun Sen ruled the country for more than three decades until handing power last year to his son, Hun Manet, but still wields great influence.

"While the country conducted semi-competitive elections in the past, polls are now held in a severely repressive environment," says Freedom House, noting Hun Sen's penchant for banning popular opposition parties.

The July 2023 National Assembly elections, held just a month before Hun Manet took over from his father, were condemned by the United States, the European Union and the United Nations as neither free nor fair.

#### MYANMAR

In November 2020, the country formerly known as Burma emerged from only its third semi-competitive election since its independence in 1948, a vote that

delivered a strong majority to the National League for Democracy, or NLD, of de facto national leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

An official with the Myanmar Union Election Commission counts ballots at a polling station in Naypyidaw on Nov. 8, 2020. (Aung Shine Oo/AP) The multi-party election, which observers widely deemed credible despite flaws with conflict zone voting cancellations and registration, delivered 86 percent of the seats in the Assembly of the Union to Suu Kyi's NLD, routing the army-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party.

On Feb. 1, 2021, Myanmar's military, citing baseless claims of election fraud, deposed State Counsellor Suu Kyi and President Win Myint in a coup d'état, later jailing them.

The junta annulled the results of the 2020 vote, and pledged to hold elections in 2023 – but has repeatedly delayed this and extended its emergency rule as the nation became more deeply embroiled in a civil war that has killed thousands and destroyed wide swathes of the country.

The military regime has committed to holding a general election late next year, with voting to be staggered because of security concerns, but has continued to extend a state of emergency across the country and brought in tough new registration laws that disqualify many parties from standing.

#### TIBET

Chinese-run "autonomous" regions such as Hong Kong, Tibet and Xinjiang largely follow mainland practices. But Tibetans who followed the Dalai Lama when the spiritual leader fled into exile in India and other countries around the world in 1959, and their descendants, have been choosing their leaders.

In 2021, Tibetans living outside of their China-ruled homeland held their third election since 2011, to seat a new political leader, or sikyong, for their India-based government-in-exile called the Central Tibetan Administration.

Penpa Tsering won the CTA's leadership in a vote among the Tibetan diaspora, a community of about 150,000 people living in 40 countries, mainly India, Nepal, Europe and North America.

### **EXPLAINED: What is China's United Front and how does it operate?**

03 November 2024, RFA, Paul Eckert

Praising it as a 'magic weapon,' Xi Jinping has expanded the murky influence operations.

Evidence is mounting of clandestine Chinese influence operations in the heart of America.

Just in the last few months, a former aide to the governor of New York state and her husband were arrested for alleged illicit activities promoting the interests of China; a Chinese democracy activist was

arrested and accused of spying for China; and a historian was convicted of being an agent for Beijing. The three separate cases of former Albany functionary Linda Sun, dissident Yuanjun Tang and author Wang Shujun took place in New York alone. And they were not the first cases of alleged Chinese influence operations targeting immigrants from China in the Big Apple.

Those cases came to light as a detailed investigation by the Washington Post revealed that China's diplomats and pro-Beijing diaspora were behind demonstrations in San Francisco that attacked opponents during President Xi Jinping's visit to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, or APEC, summit last November.

All bear the hallmarks of China's "united front" influence operations conducted by government ministries, party operatives and local proxies – but in a veiled manner.

"United front work is a unique blend of influence and interference activities, as well as intelligence operations that the CCP uses to shape its political environment," said the House of Representatives Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party in a report published last November.

What is the United Front Work Department?

Coordinating this overseas influence and interference work is Beijing's shadowy United Front Work Department, or UFWD, set up in 1942, even before the Communists took over control of China.

Headed by Shi Taifeng, a Politburo member, it seeks to promote China's political interests through an extensive network of organizations and individuals around the world, experts say.

It spares no effort trying to push Beijing's view – and crush dissenting opinions – among people in Taiwan and Hong Kong, ethnic minorities such as Mongolians, Tibetans and Uyghurs as well as among religious groups.

How does the UFWD operate?

The United Front Work Department is engaged in a mixture of activities, from interfering in the Chinese diaspora and suppressing dissidents to gathering intelligence, encouraging investment in China and facilitating the transfer of technology, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, or ASPI, said in a report.

It uses quasi-official organizations and civil society groups based overseas to blur the line between official and private, giving China plausible deniability in many cases, witnesses told the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, which advises Congress on China.

It funds Confucius Institutes – Chinese-language study centers on university campuses around the world – many of which have been shut down in the United States. It also funds diplomats' engagement with foreign elites and its police force's perpetration of

"transnational repression" – clamping down on dissidents or opponents outside China's borders, the review commission said in a 2023 report based on expert testimony.

United front groups often have innocuous sounding names, like the Council for the Promotion of Peaceful National Reunification or the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries. Many appear to be ordinary overseas Chinese community organizations, and are found in business and even in multinational corporations.

Lurking behind or within them, though, are government or party agencies – very often China's powerful intelligence, security and secret police agency.

"United front groups are used – very specifically – to hide the Ministry of State Security," said Peter Mattis, head of the non-profit Jamestown Foundation. "This is why I like to think of the United Front Work Department as the tall grass that is sort of deliberately cultivated to hide snakes," he told RFA.

What is the history of China's 'united front' work?

Under the Moscow-led Comintern in the 1920s, the Chinese Communist Party adapted Soviet revolutionary Vladimir Lenin's concept of forming a "united front" – forging temporary alliances with friends and lesser enemies in order to defeat greater enemies.

After Mao Zedong's Communists took power in 1949, united front work focused internally on co-opting Chinese capitalists and intellectuals, who were brought to heel and persecuted in the 1950s under Mao's vicious ideological campaigns.

Xi Zhongxun, the father of current President Xi Jinping, played a key united front work role with top Tibetan Buddhist figures, trying to influence the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama.

What role has Xi played?

While China denies meddling in the affairs of foreign nations, experts say that under President Xi, China's overseas influence activities have become more aggressive and technologically sophisticated.

In 2017, Xi famously repeated Mao's description of united front work as a "magic weapon" for the party's success. But two years before that, he established a "leading small group" to coordinate top-level united front work and carried out a major expansion and reorganization of the UFWD.

"We will build a broad united front to forge great unity and solidarity, and we will encourage all the sons and daughters of the Chinese nation to dedicate themselves to realizing the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation," Xi told the 20th Party Congress in 2022.

That congress saw Xi's top ideological theorist, Wang Huning, who ranks fourth in the Politburo,

appointed to lead the national-level united front system, the House Select Committee report said.

Xi has built up the power and capacity of the UFWD, which controls 11 subordinate government agencies, including the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office, the State Ethnic Affairs Commission and the State Administration for Religious Affairs, according to Australia's ASPI.

What are some examples of the UFWD's efforts in the U.S.?

In New York, prosecutors say that Linda Sun and her husband, Christopher Hu, received millions of dollars in cash, event tickets and gourmet salted duck from the UFWD. In exchange, Sun tried to remove references to Taiwan in state communications, and obtained unauthorized letters from the governor's office to help Chinese officials travel, prosecutors say.

In California during Xi's visit in November, the Washington Post reported, the Chinese Consulate in Los Angeles paid for supporters' hotels and meals and directly interacted with aggressive actors who punched and kicked anti-Xi protesters and attacked them with flagpoles and chemical spray. U.S. stopovers by Taiwan leaders have drawn similar protests.

Who are the targets of united front work?

Sun and Hu represent a key demographic in the UFWD's crosshairs: the Chinese diaspora. The activist Tang had access to the overseas Chinese dissident and pro-democracy community and its network of supporters.

United front pressure and harassment tactics – including threats against family in China – are deployed against diaspora members of China's persecuted ethnic and religious minorities: Tibetans, Uyghurs, Mongolians, and members of the banned Falun Gong movement.

Citizens of Taiwan have for decades been pressured by united front efforts to support unification with the Communist-controlled mainland.

The recent imposition of draconian national security legislation in Hong Kong has made citizens and exiles who oppose those authoritarian steps in formerly free Chinese territory targets of united front pressure.

These targets are not alone and the list is growing, with Australia, Britain, Canada and New Zealand also grappling with Chinese influence campaigns that smack of united front work.

"There's no clear distinction between domestic and overseas united front work: all bureaus of the UFWD and all areas of united front work involve overseas activities," the report from Australia's ASPI said.

"This is because the key distinction underlying the United Front is not between domestic and overseas

groups, but between the CCP and everyone else," it said.

The Chinese Embassy in Washington told Radio Free Asia that the United Front's domestic role is to "promote cooperation between the (Communist Party) and people who are not members of it." Outreach to the diaspora "helps give full play to their role as a bridge linking China with the rest of the world," the embassy spokesperson's office said in an e-mailed statement.

"Its work is transparent, above-board and beyond reproach," it said. "By making an issue out of China's United Front work, some people are trying to discredit China's political system and disrupt normal exchange and cooperation between China and the United States."

Why Xi Jinping dreads the Dalai Lama

03 November 2024, The Sunday Guardian, Vijay Kranti

Xi and the CCP are obsessed with the Dalai Lama, which is outrageous because of their declared contempt for religion and their denigration of the Dalai Lama.

On 21 October 2024, Penpa Tsering, the elected "President" of Tibet made experts from a leading New Delhi think-tank laugh aloud when he advised Chinese President Xi Jinping to order his Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to find out reincarnations of the great dead Chinese leaders like Chairman Mao and Deng Xiaoping. He made this tongue in cheek remark as he was underlining President Xi's feverish obsession with exclusive ownership of the process of discovering the next child reincarnation of the present Dalai Lama.

This obsession of Comrade Xi and his Communist Party looks funny, or is rather outrageous because of its declared contempt for religion and also that all Chinese leaders, right from Mao to Xi himself, have been using the choicest abusive terms in the Communist lexicon for the Dalai Lama. The six-century-old institution of the Dalai Lama of Tibet is unique because it occupies the supreme position in both spiritual as well as temporal matters of Tibet, and this inheritance transfers only through reincarnation. It is believed that enlightened souls like the Dalai Lamas and other learned monks have the virtue of guiding their own rebirth process. After the death of a Dalai Lama, the Tibetans search for, identify and install the next Dalai Lama baby boy through a typical process, which involves testing of all boy children born after the death of a Dalai Lama. A major factor which directs this search process are the personal indications and desires left behind by a Dalai Lama about the place, family and other elements of his own choice of his next birth.



In Tibet, China has been facing strong resistance from the Tibetan population right from the day when the Chinese PLA marched into Lhasa in 1951. In the initial four decades of Tibetan occupation, the communist masters of Tibet tried every tool under their command to suppress religion with the hope that absence of religion will make people understand and accept communism more faithfully. But it only provoked the Tibetan masses further to express their anger through small but frequent uprisings across Tibet. Massive uprising of Lhasa in 1987 and 1989 forced the Beijing leadership to realize the influence of religion and of Dalai Lama despite his three-decade long absence. It was decided to use religion as a tool rather than resisting it.

The first public signal of this change in Chinese strategy came in 1992 when Beijing decided to undertake and install the reincarnation of 16th Karma Pa. Same process was repeated in 1995 for identification of the incarnation of 10th Panchen Lama whom Beijing had used against the Dalai Lama till he died in Tibet at Shigatse in 1989. A committee of senior monks of late Panchen Lama's monastery was formed under the leadership of a communist officer to look out for the new incarnation of late Panchen Lama. The monk members of the committee identified a five-year-old boy, Gedhun Choeky Nyima and secretly took approval of the exiled Dalai Lama on the authenticity of the new incarnate boy. This angered Beijing so much that Gedhun and his parents were taken away by Chinese security personnel and another boy of the same age, named Gyaltsen Norbu, was formally installed as the new Panchen Lama. The whereabouts of Gedhun and his family are yet to be made public by the Chinese authorities despite repeated international outcries.

The Panchen Lama's role is important because the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama play an important role in certifying the incarnation of each other and also work alternately as the teacher of the other's incarnation. Beijing has placed high stakes on Gyaltsen with the hope that he will be a useful tool when it comes to installing the next Dalai Lama. But the Tibetans have refused to accept. So much so that the Chinese administration uses police force and money to bring Tibetan crowds to his congregations. In 2007, the Chinese government adopted a special law called "Order-5" which governs the search process and certification of the reincarnation of the future "Living Buddhas" (or "Tulku" in Tibetan terminology). This law gives all powers for the selection of any future "Living Buddhas" to the respective Buddhist association of the respective region and is fully controlled by senior communist cadres.

Beijing has come to realize that it will be easy to tame the Tibetan people once the Dalai Lama is

under its control. But as a permanent solution to its Tibetan headache the Xi government is now fully focused at establishing its exclusive claim over the next incarnation of the Dalai Lama. To pre-empt such Chinese efforts, the Dalai Lama issued a detailed official statement on 24 Sep 2011 which reads, "... the person who reincarnates has sole legitimate authority over where and how he or she takes rebirth and how that reincarnation is to be recognized. It is a reality that no one else can force the person concerned, or manipulate him or her..." adding further that, "it is particularly inappropriate for Chinese communists, who explicitly reject even the idea of past and future lives, let alone the concept of reincarnate Tulkus, to meddle in the system of reincarnation and especially the reincarnations of the Dalai Lamas and Panchen Lamas."

Being aware of Chinese plans about his reincarnation, the Dalai Lama had already played his master stroke by bifurcating the role and power of Dalai Lama by passing on all political powers, so far vested in the Dalai Lama, to the elected representatives of Tibet who comprise of the elected "Sikyong", the exile Parliament and the Tibetan judiciary. In practical terms it means that even if China manages to install a puppet Dalai Lama of its choice in Tibet, the real political powers will remain outside the control of Beijing or the CCP. This master stroke of the Dalai Lama has extended the shelf life of the political role of the Dalai Lama institution beyond his own life time and insulated the Tibetan system from Chinese manipulations.

Ladakh disengagement is good, but what about Eastern Himalayas?

02 November 2024, The Sentinel Assam, Amitava Mukherjee

There is now an atmosphere of excitement in the corridors of power in New Delhi. Military disengagement with China in eastern Ladakh has taken place.

There is now an atmosphere of excitement in the corridors of power in New Delhi. Military disengagement with China in eastern Ladakh has taken place. Armies of China and India have reportedly pulled back in Depsung and Demchok. This is good. But there is still a veil of silence over the 'Finger' points in the Pangong Tso lake area. Previously, India used to patrol till Finger 8. After the Chinese incursion, this came down up to Finger 4. What will happen here? Would India have to cede the area between the two abovementioned fingers? Till now, no clear cut official standpoint is available.

So, causes of worry remain. At the same time, there are glimmers of hope also. Xu Feihong, Chinese envoy to New Delhi, has expressed that relations

between China and India are now standing at a new starting point with new development opportunities. Is it really so? In 1962 also Chou en Lai, the then Chinese Premiere, had said many such pious words before his army swooped down on North Eastern India and reached up to Bomdilla, situated deep in Arunachal Pradesh and right up to the borders of Assam.

New Delhi must always keep in mind that in Chinese geopolitical interests, Arunachal Pradesh is much more important to them than the Ladakh sector, where, in many stretches, "not even a blade of grass grows." By a blitzkrieg in this sector, they can overrun Daulat Beg Oldi, India's last military post, on the foot of the Karakoram pass and cut off the Siachin glacier. But how much can China gain by doing this? The DBO outpost can hardly threaten the China controlled Aksai Chin, which is five miles to the east. On the other hand, China is already in Pakistan through the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) coming through Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir.

So, strategically, the importance of the western Himalayas is much less to China than it is in regard to the eastern Himalayas. Why is it so? The principal reason is China's burgeoning water shortage and, at the same time, increasing demands for electricity. To overcome it, Beijing is building up hydroelectric dams on the Brahmaputra in Tibet, thereby blocking the free flow of river water to India.

Now, the river valleys of Arunachal Pradesh have immense hydropower potential, currently estimated at 50,328 megawatts, or approximately 22 percent of India's power generating capacity. Control over this state would give China immense strategic security.

Interestingly, we have not heard anything from China in recent times for settling border problems in the eastern Himalayas, particularly in the McMahon Line sector that involves Arunachal Pradesh. On the contrary, it's renamed 30 places in this Indian state this year. On several occasions, China has included Arunachal Pradesh in its map.

With a certain motive, China is increasing its military capacity in the deep areas across Arunachal Pradesh. It is now well known that four sectors of the state, namely Asaphila, Tuting Axis, Chang Tze, and Fishtail 2, are under some kinds of Chinese threat.

There is no scope for oversatisfaction on the part of New Delhi over Beijing's future moves vis-à-vis Arunachal Pradesh. It is because the Tawang monastery of the state is invaluable to China for control over Tibetan Buddhism, which in turn means complete control over Tibet, an area now occupying the central position in China's foreign policy.

What would be New Delhi's approach now? Confabulations over the proper alignment of the

McMahon Line are welcome. But at the same time, New Delhi should always be prepared for some surprises.

Opinion: Don't get 'river-crabbed!' How China is cracking down on punny dissent

02 November 2024, NPR, Scott Simon

An online blogger in China recently asked: how do you clean a flask? But the Mandarin word for flask is xi-jing-ping, which sounds like the name of China's leader, Xi Jin Ping. Government censors suspected the writer was really asking, "How do you get rid the president of China?" They took down the query.

If someone online in China refers to President Xi as a "paratrooper," they may not be hailing him as rugged and resourceful. Paratrooper in Mandarin is san bing, which sounds much like the word for "idiot."

China's Cyberspace Administration and Ministry of Education has begun what they call the Clear and Bright Campaign to prune the web in China of what they consider "irregular and uncivilized language."

Sponsor Message

The language bureaucrats aren't just watching for criticism of President Xi, mentions of the Tiananmen Square massacre, or demonstrations in Hong Kong. They want to extinguish the seemingly innocuous phrases many Chinese have ingenuously appropriated to express dissent.

Wen'guang Huang, the Chinese writer, translator, and author of the honored memoir, *The Little Red Guard*, who now lives in Chicago, gave us several examples.

Xiang jiao pi, which is banana peel in Mandarin, has the same acronym as the name of President Xi. The word for shrimp moss is xia tai, similar to the Mandarin phrase for "step down." When someone on the Chinese web dares to declare, "Banana peel shrimp moss!" it is heard as a call for President Xi to step down.

When a Chinese censor finds an "irregular" phrase, they eliminate it, but call it "harmonizing". He-xie, the Mandarin word for harmony, sounds like the word for river crab, and so people who have been censored report they have been "river-crabbed."

Then there's Cao Ni Ma, the Mandarin name for the mythical grass mud horse. It sounds similar to a phrase that is so profane, I can't even hint at it. The Mandarin phrase for "cover your middle parts", dang zhong yang, sounds close to the name of the Chinese Party Central Committee. And so the artist Ai Weiwei created a music video in which voices sing out, "Grass mud horse and cover your middle part!" in "Gangnam Style," and, "Grass mud horse and river crab!"

Wen'guang Huang says the video can't be seen in China, of course. But people there have heard about it, and might hum it in hushed tones. The tune is catchy and appealing – like free speech.

## October

### REVEALED: Inside the CIA's (largely) secret role in the Tibetan resistance

30 October 2024, RFA, Tenzin Pema, Dorjee Damdul, Passang Dhonden and Lobsang Gelek

The last surviving CIA officer, who trained Tibetan resistance fighters in Camp Hale, Colorado in 1958-64, speaks to Radio Free Asia in an exclusive interview.



Tibetan resistance fighters are seen here adorned in Tibetan traditional dress during Tibetan New Year or Losar celebrations, between 1961 and 1964. (STCIRCUS Archive of Tibetan Resistance via Hoover Institution Library & Archives)

High up in the Southern Rocky Mountains of Colorado, at 2,800 meters (9,200 feet), lies Camp Hale – widely known as the birthplace of backcountry skiing and the training grounds of the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division soldiers who fought the Nazis in World War II.

Lesser known, however, is the camp's storied past as the CIA-operated secret training facility for Tibetan resistance fighters in the early 1960's.

The Tibetan fighters who trained there – from 1958 to 1964 – were a part of a nationwide armed resistance movement in Tibet against Communist China.

Sixty years after the end of the operation, Camp Hale has yielded a new secret. Called "The Ranch" by the CIA and fondly referred to as "Dumra," or garden, by the Tibetans, it was the training ground for at least 259 Tibetan fighters who were then parachuted back into Tibet and what is today Nepal to aid the Tibetan resistance against China.

Yet, until recently the exact location of the CIA's training facility for Tibetans was lost to history. Quite like the story of Tibet's armed resistance against China and the CIA's role in it, it had remained shrouded in secrecy for many decades.

Decades after the CIA dismantled Camp Hale, leaving no trace of the site— save for a few ruins of bunkers— the original footprint of the Tibetan training camp was finally identified in 2024 within the 53,804-acre expanse of alpine valley, thanks to the work of a dogged academic, a local hiker, and a former CIA trainer.

In June, the families of former fighters, their supporters, and the Central Tibetan Administration's Cabinet Minister for Security, Gyari Dolma, gathered to honor the resistance movement.

Bruce Walker, now 91, is the last surviving CIA case officer out of about 30 officers who trained the Tibetan fighters at Camp Hale.

"I'm the last speaking CIA officer who can tell the story," Walker told Radio Free Asia in an exclusive interview on the sidelines of the June commemoration ceremony.

His tale of the time spent there reveals the spirit of a people deeply committed to their cause who drew on a wellspring of grit, ingenuity and ability to learn the skills Camp Hale had to offer.

#### Finding Dumra

Following the People's Liberation Army's invasion of Tibet in 1949, thousands of ordinary Tibetans rose up in a series of independent uprisings in the 1950s to defend their country and religion against Chinese troops. In 1958, the Chushi Gangdruk army, a unified resistance force, was formally established.

Led by Gompo Tashi Andrugtsang, a charismatic trader living in Lhasa, it later became known as the Chushi Gangdruk Tensung Danglang Magar or Tibetan National Volunteer Defence Army, a name it was given by a tutor to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In 1960, they set up a base in Mustang, then a small kingdom in Nepal, where they were exiled, until they were eventually forced to lay down their arms in 1974.

For a large part of this period, the movement received covert financial support and training from the CIA, with four contingents of Tibetan troops flown in to train at Camp Hale from 1958 to 1964.

Yet it was a secret even to those who lived nearby the Colorado training grounds.

"The local community here in Colorado still don't know the Tibetan history of Camp Hale – much in the same way that the Tibetan community still don't know much of the history of Chushi Gangdruk or CIA in Camp Hale," said Carole McGranahan, an anthropologist and scholar of Tibet who spent years working to locate the site.

Indeed, a false story was circulated at the time to maintain the secrecy of the training site and keep the locals at bay. "Atom Unit Making Tests Near Leadville," read a headline from the Denver Post in July 1959, after the press was informed that the Defense Atomic Support Agency would soon be conducting atomic testing programs at Camp Hale.

"I like to think of it now as that it was hidden in plain sight," said McGranahan, noting how the CIA maintained the secrecy of the camp for over four decades.

Word of the camp and the CIA's role in training Tibetan fighters there only began to trickle out in the early 2000s following the declassification of a 1964-dated CIA memorandum.

A documentary released just before, titled *Shadow Circus: The CIA in Tibet*, by filmmakers Tenzing Sonam and Ritu Sarin, also drew attention to the Tibetan resistance movement, even as additional details began to emerge from books, such as McGranahan's *Arrested Histories*, and interviews of former CIA trainers.

Still, the site itself continued to remain hidden. In 2010, a plaque was installed to mark the U.S. government's first public acknowledgment of the CIA-Tibet training camp. But even then, the exact location of the training site was unknown.

Following a ceremony to mark its installation, retired CIA officers and former Tibetan fighters went looking for the original Camp Hale training grounds. The group included Roger McCarthy and Ken Knauss, the two CIA officers who had worked on the original campaign. But they came back frustrated and dismayed that they couldn't locate the site where they had lived and worked for several years, McGranahan said. She promised to make it her mission to locate the original site.

It would take years, but true to her word, McGranahan, with the help of Vail Valley local resident and hiker Tracy Walters, took on the mission. The duo took with them old photographs of Camp Hale and, while snowshoeing, matched the 1963-1964 photos to the current landscape by carefully aligning specific ridgelines to locate Dumra. In February 2024, they found the first location – rather easily, McGranahan says. "The second one was more difficult," she added, explaining that it required matching up the visual angles of old photographs to the physical topography of the land until they hit on the right spot.

"But we found it," she said.

She then turned to Walker and to filmmakers Sonam and Sarin for final confirmation on whether the site they had located was indeed Dumra.

Walker, who was the only Tibetan-speaking CIA trainer from 1960 until the CIA shut the site in 1964, responded the very next day. "You nailed it," he

wrote. "You found the site. And I'm the one who took those photographs."

An operation misunderstood?

Along with his wife and few friends, Walker came to Camp Hale from California in June to honor the Tibetan soldiers who he trained in the covert operation which the CIA code-named ST Circus.

Now an elegant white-haired nonagenarian, Walker lit up as he recalled his time working on ST Circus, his voice filled with energy as he explained the backstory of the secret mission and smiling fondly as he recalled the commitment of the Tibetan fighters whom he had trained.

"The covert operation was misunderstood in some respects... [there's] the impression that the Americans in the CIA were taking advantage of the Tibetans. We were not," Walker told RFA Tibetan.

"Tibetans in the 1950s and 60s had very few international friends... in the late 1950s, the American government and the CIA were the few from the international community that were willing to come to the aid of the Tibetans," he said.

Indeed, the CIA would support the movement with training, aid, and arms until the early 1970s.

"We did what we could to get them their aid. We were not going to send an army and we were not going to send tanks, but we tried to send help to Chushi Gangdruk to fight and to make progress in the rest of the country," said Walker.

At Camp Hale, over a dozen CIA case officers trained Tibetan fighters on a full range of combat and operations skills.

"This site was specifically used for the purpose of training radio teams who would be parachuted back to Tibet to join the resistance forces and to send back messages about the situation – the resistance inside Tibet – on a real-time basis," Walker told RFA Tibetan. Over the years, the soldiers who trained there were air dropped into Tibet and in Mustang, Nepal, where they aided and trained the thousands of resistance fighters stationed at those locations.

It was actually not the first site for ST Circus. Earlier, the CIA had piloted the project with a group of fighters who were trained at Saipan, Northern Mariana Island. The first radio team to be dropped back into Tibet by Operations St Circus took place in September, 1957 – but the training grounds were moved to Camp Hale when it became apparent that the Tibetans were not used to the hot weather conditions of the island, and Colorado was selected because its terrain and weather conditions resembled that of Tibet.

Life at Camp Hale

Walker's first assignment with the Tibetan project had been as a caretaker and cook for six weeks for the small contingent of Tibetans who trained at Saipan.

He first arrived in Camp Hale as a case officer in April 1960, but he would not be at the camp on a permanent basis until two years later, after the CIA sent him for periods of more language training. Sporting a red beard and looking like an “adventurous American”, Walker returned to Camp Hale in September 1962, where he found the site had been renovated with new quarters added and ready to open its doors to the fourth and final batch of trainees who arrived in October that year.



Facilities available at Camp Hale are seen in this archival image. (STCIRCUS Archive of Tibetan Resistance via Hoover Institution Library & Archives)

The camp had four classrooms, one recreation room, one staff barracks, one administration office, a gym, a mess hall, and a storage room.

The Tibetan fighters had a rigorous training program there. “It was a very busy campus,” Walker recalled, with the trainees always “practicing one thing or another, or they were in the classrooms.”

It was a huge time of learning for Walker too. “I started out as a case officer who was not speaking Tibetan, giving instruction and compass reading to find locations on a very special map made by the CIA,” he said.

He eventually gained enough proficiency to communicate directly with the trainees. “It was a very different career change in speaking a different language to an entirely different people who I had never met before,” he reflected.

The Tibetans were trained in radio operation; surveillance and combat maneuvers; parachuting at Fort Carson, another military base in Colorado; intelligence collecting; clandestine exchange of written material and film; world history and geography; and small armament training with bazookas, grenades and rifles.

“All were given training with the M1-Garand rifle, and the old 10th mountain division rifle range. Two marine sharpshooters were seconded to this project and they also gave the Tibetans instructions in self defense and jiu jitsu,” Walker said.

Walker and the other CIA officers admired the Tibetan fighters, who had volunteered for the movement and had been recruited as exiles in India.

They represented Tibetans from all over Tibet and came with varying backgrounds; they even included monks who had temporarily given up their vows to fight for the Tibet cause.

“They were not paid. They were simply willing and able... And boy, were they able,” said Walker.

They were also quick learners, he recalled. “They were enthusiastic, they listened, and they took to the training immediately. Above all, they were happy to be here... And it was a real pleasure to work with them in that respect because they made it easier for us to get to know them and to try to accomplish through the training,” he added.

Tibetan curiosity, resilience

The CIA officers were amazed by the Tibetan curiosity and ability to invent solutions to problems with the materials at hand, said Walker.

There was one instance, where the fighters had reportedly made a portable rocket, apparently out of a wooden trough, using gunpowder, homemade napalm, and a small warhead, he said, citing a local Vail Daily report.

The Tibetans also had a natural gift for volleyball and engaged in highly competitive tournaments. On weekends, movies would be projected in the recreation room and headquarters would send new movies on a rotation basis. The Tibetans, without any surprise, liked western movies. But their favorite was *The King and I*.

“Their response was a pure delight to watch,” Walker said.

A 1963 brochure created by Ken Knaus and Tibetan trainees portrays Chinese leader Mao Zedong leading the destruction to Tibetan way of life. (STCIRCUS Archive of Tibetan Resistance via Hoover Institution Library & Archives)

They also had a “remarkable talent” for drawing, Walker said. Crayons and colored pens were made available for drawing and few of their drawings became collectibles, including an illustration that a Tibetan fighter had made representing Chinese desecration of Tibetan culture and religion which was used in CIA material.

On Saturday nights, the Tibetans took over the kitchen from the CIA cooks Joe and Bill, and would make Tibetan dishes like momo and shabaley.

But they didn’t (strictly) stick to this routine. One day, a shepherd from the area – who had a longstanding agreement with the government for him to traverse Camp Hale with his sheep as he led them to summer pastureland – found one sheep missing when he returned with the sheep after a month of their grazing. “His route happened to go directly past the Tibetan compound. Not wanting to cause suspicion by denying the shepherd his annual drive, we arranged for the compound to close up tightly,



presumably with everyone inside the compound and out of sight," said Walker.

Upon his return, having led his herd through the compound and out of Camp Hale, the herder soon counted his sheep and found he was missing one. "He reported his loss to army authorities and the situation was brought to our attention. We had no recourse but to suggest the sheep must have drifted from the herd, gone astray and could not be found," Walker said.

"Somehow we found out that two Tibetans had waylaid the sheep and later roasted it and brought it into the compound for the fellow Tibetans to eat. The herder was angry and unsatisfied but as far as we were concerned, it was out of sight, out of mind."

Carole McGranahan and the CIA training site for Tibetan resistance fighters at Camp Hale (RFA Tibetan)

Best and bravest

In 1960, part of the training was to practice parachute landing in advance of being airdropped in Tibet. However, after a U.S. civilian pilot was shot down over Russia in May 1960, President Eisenhower banned further overflights into Tibet.

Thereafter, the radio teams and the support teams were flown back to Thailand, and over land to border posts in India and Nepal, including Mustang. Walker acknowledged the grim reality that awaited these men upon their return to Tibet. "They knew what would be the consequences if they were parachuted to Tibet," Walker said somberly.

"A lot of the Tibetans who were trained on the radio teams that were parachuted in gave their lives. They were captured. Some of them went to jail, and a few of them were released, in time," he said. "But there were a lot of heroes — as this will attest — who sacrificed their lives as Tibetans."

An important legacy

The training program at Camp Hale was closed in 1964 as the U.S. began to take a more conciliatory approach to China. CIA support for the Tibetan resistance movement ended altogether in the early 1970s as the Nixon administration took an approach of engagement with Mao's Communist regime. Along with increased pressure from the Nepali government, which also began to cultivate warmer ties with China and internal fissures that emerged within the movement itself, the Chushi Gangdruk was forced to lay down its arms by 1974.

Though the program wound down, a legacy, including crucial successes, came from the Operation ST Circus trainings that has significance today, even if the resistance movement ultimately did not achieve independence.

For example, the first radio team ever trained as part of the CIA operation at Saipan — two fighters, Athar Norbu and Gatsetsang Lotse (codenamed Tom and

Luke, respectively) — were airdropped in September 1957.

The team, known as Team A, were able to contact local Chushi Gangdruk members in Kham, eastern Tibet, and reach Lhasa, making contact with Tibetan leaders such as the Lord Chamberlain, Thupten Phalha. As explained by Gyolo Thondup in his book *The Noodle Maker of Kalimpong*, the Dalai Lama was not directly involved in the CIA operations, as it was impossible for him to condone any use of violence when his entire life was committed to nonviolent Buddhist practice.

But some high-ranking officials such as Lord Chamberlain Phalha knew about the resistance from the beginning and were sympathetic to its cause.

"It was Phalha who organized the Dalai Lama's escape... Team A accompanied the Dalai Lama on his journey to the Indian border from where they radioed CIA Langley that the Dalai Lama had arrived safely," said Walker.

In the Dalai Lama's personal autobiography titled *My Land, My People*, the spiritual leader acknowledged the bravery of the Tibetan freedom fighters who accompanied him undercover into exile in 1959. "In spite of my beliefs, I very much admired their courage and their determination to carry on the grim battle they had started for our freedom, culture, and religion," he wrote.

"I thanked them for their strength and bravery, and also, more personally, for the protection they had given me."

The Dalai Lama's escape into exile and the role the Chushi Gangdruk played in his safe escort from Lhasa to India is still today regarded as the movement's most significant achievement.

Today, plans are afoot to build a memorial on the now-rediscovered exact training ground. The plaque that was installed in 2010 stands not too far away, its inscription attesting to the bravery of those involved: From 1958 to 1964, Camp Hale played an important role as a training site for Tibetan Freedom Fighters. Trained by the CIA, many of these brave men lost their lives in the struggle for freedom. 'They were the best and bravest of their generation, and we wept together when they were killed fighting alongside their countrymen.' (*Orphans of the Cold War*, by John Kenneth Knaus). This plaque is dedicated to their memory.

Standing by the plaque, at the site he'd played a part in re-discovering and which brought back so many memories, Walker mused over the friendships gained and lost to history.

"It was an emotional parting because we became very good friends with the Tibetans and they with us. We bonded, and we were sorry that we had to break it up the way we did," he said.

## Has India made friends with China after the Modi-Xi agreement?

29 October 2024, Brookings

“Modi and Xi make friends” announced the Economist following Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping’s meeting in Kazan. The newspaper subsequently declared that, following an agreement on disengagement and patrolling, the Sino-Indian border stand-off had been “resolved.”

These developments are noteworthy, but they must not be over-read. It is significant that, if implemented, the agreement could ease tensions between China and India stemming from their border crisis in 2020. But current and former Indian officials are striking notes of caution, including about getting “lulled into a false sense of security.”

Modi and Xi’s meeting—their first in five years—signals a tactical thaw rather than a strategic shift away from Sino-Indian rivalry. Steps remain to resolve the 2020 border row, and the two countries have several serious differences beyond their broader border dispute. So, think of this as akin to Washington’s effort to stabilize or set a floor to the U.S.-China relationship, rather than the beginning of a beautiful friendship between New Delhi and Beijing. For India, China will remain the pacing challenge.

### The context

It has been evident for a few months that China and India were working toward an agreement. Military and diplomatic officials have met for the last four years to discuss the border stand-off. But New Delhi seemed to detect a window of opportunity recently, as Beijing faces strategic and economic pressure, and is uncertain about the U.S. election (or tries to take advantage of it).

India, too, has reasons to try to ease the situation. These include preventing another border escalation; recognition that India needs time to build its capabilities and partnerships; the need to grapple with the adverse impact of global crises; uncertainty about the next American president’s approach to China; concern that its partners’ outreach to Beijing could leave India vulnerable; perhaps a desire to create some leverage vis-à-vis with those partners; and calls for selective Indian economic re-engagement with China (including from some American companies).

### What we know about the agreement

Specifics are still emerging, but we do know that the agreement heralds a return to dialogue. Beyond the Modi-Xi meeting, the countries announced the revival of suspended consultations, including the special representatives’ talks, and regular foreign ministerial and other exchanges.

Indian officials announced that the first part of resolving the 2020 border stand-off, i.e. disengagement, has been completed, with new patrolling arrangements at some points of friction (around Depsang and Demchok in the western sector, and Yangtse—site of a 2022 skirmish—in the eastern sector).

However, this is not a return to the status quo ante. Questions remain about how the new patrolling and grazing terms compare with what existed before, and whether new buffer zones created at other friction points would persist. Moreover, two further steps—de-escalation and de-induction of troops that have been forward deployed—have not been taken.

The agreement also doesn’t signify a normalization of Sino-Indian ties, as some observers contend. The Indian foreign secretary said that it opens the pathway to more normal ties, but stressed that is contingent on both sides actually walking that path.

Given the Indian sense that China violated previous bilateral agreements in changing the status quo at the border in 2020, there is little, if any, trust that Beijing will walk that path. So, India will closely watch Beijing’s implementation of the agreement and seek to verify that China is following through on its commitments. Further Indian steps vis-à-vis border negotiations or other issues may be linked to Beijing doing so.

If there is progress, there are several areas where India could review the limitations it has imposed on cooperation with China. A few possibilities: restarting various dialogues (diplomatic, military, and economic) that have been suspended, restoring direct flights, more civil society interactions, granting more visas (including for journalists), specific cooperation on multilateral issues (e.g. global economic governance reform), and selective economic re-engagement.

There is no consensus—even among Indian businesses—on the desirability or extent of economic ties with China. But if there is progress at the border or in negotiations, India could ease restrictions in areas that are less sensitive or where there is hope that, on balance, cooperation will be beneficial in the short term for Indian labor, manufacturing, and exports. A blanket lifting of restrictions is unlikely; streamlining the scrutiny or case-by-case approval process is possible.

There have already been some approvals of visas and imports when the Indian government saw those as necessary to enable companies—from India or friendly foreign countries—to make India part of global supply chains and generate jobs. In certain areas, India could make the condition of any Chinese investment a joint venture with a local company. Eventually, Delhi wants to do to Beijing what Beijing

did to the world: take its expertise and components and then eventually take its markets.

Different readouts, different vibes

Most Indian officials don't seem to be under any illusions that the path ahead will be easy. The persistent gap between China and India has already been evident in how they have messaged these agreements.

Both the Indian and Chinese readouts stated that they reached an understanding on the border and agreed to enhance strategic communication.

But that's where the similarities ended. India emphasized its "border before broader" prioritization, reinforcing border peace and tranquility as a prerequisite for broader ties. China, on the other hand, maintained its "broader before border" focus, stressing that "specific disagreements" should not derail the broader relationship.

In addition, China suggested that India had agreed to return to economic cooperation to enable development, while India was more non-committal, saying it was open to exploring it. More broadly, the Chinese readout also suggested that Modi who was the one interested in proposing ways to deepen ties, with Xi then agreeing "in principle" to consider it.

The countries' diverging visions of their global and regional roles were also striking. India noted that both leaders affirmed that stable and amicable ties would "contribute to a multipolar Asia and a multipolar world" but the Chinese statement only mentioned the desire for a multipolar world. This will only reinforce Indian concerns that Beijing seeks a unipolar Asia. India, in turn, did not echo or endorse Xi's declaration that China was "a member of the Global South."

The gap between India's worldview and that of China (and Russia) was also clear in Modi's remarks at the BRICS summit. He cautioned against the group being seen as divisive (i.e., anti-Western) and out to upturn the international order. His words also conveyed concern that BRICS expansion, encouraged by Beijing and Moscow, would dilute India's role and influence.

Important step, but not a strategic reset

These divergences, among others, reveal that New Delhi and Beijing aren't on the same page. Moreover, absent a significant change in China's intentions and actions, the recent agreement will not herald a strategic shift away from India's rivalry with China.

For one, the border has changed for good. De-escalation and de-induction will be difficult, if not impossible, given the troop, equipment, and infrastructure buildup on both sides of the Sino-Indian border since 2020. India also distrusts China and will want to remain prepared if the People's Liberation Army takes action again. One former Indian

ambassador to China has already cautioned that it would be tougher for India (than China) to re-induct troops into that sector of the border if Beijing reneges from its commitments.

Even beyond the ongoing border dispute, there are several other bilateral, regional, and global differences between India and China—and there has been no let-up in Chinese assertiveness on any of those fronts yet.

Moreover, the mistrust seems mutual. China sees India as a regional, and possibly global, competitor—in its own right and due to its close partnership with Beijing's other rivals (especially the United States).

Thus, even as New Delhi reengages Beijing in dialogue, it will keep trying to strengthen its resilience and deterrence. It will maintain its de-risking approach and likely limit exposure to China in critical infrastructure, technology, and telecom sectors. It will enhance Indian capabilities and capacities across the board, though it will have to guard against calls from certain quarters that there's less urgency to do so. And it will likely continue to deepen its balancing partnerships, including with Washington.

Some partners might wonder if India will become more reticent to cooperate with them, so as not to derail its reengagement with China. But even as it has been negotiating with Beijing, New Delhi has not held back—as it might have pre-2020—on taking several steps. These include Modi's reply to Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te; India's welcoming of a U.S. Congressional delegation that met with the Dalai Lama and criticized China; the Quad summit, which included tougher language on China's assertiveness in the South China Sea and security cooperation initiatives; hosting maritime exercise Malabar and multilateral air force exercise Tarang Shakti; participating in a maritime reconnaissance exercise with its Quad partners on the sidelines of Australia's exercise Kakadu; and the opening of a third Taiwanese representative office in India.

This might be due to a change from the sentiment that deepening ties with the United States and Western partners would provoke China, to believing—since 2020—that deeper ties with balancing partners would deter Beijing.

Nonetheless, it won't be surprising if partners continue to monitor the possibility of Indian hesitation to cooperate with them vis-à-vis China in the future. It would be helpful if New Delhi is as transparent as possible with its partners about its discussions with China and their implications—something its partners should reciprocate regarding their own outreach to Beijing.

## EXPLAINED: What's Hong Kong's role in China's hi-tech military plans?

29 October 2024, RFA, Ha Syut

The city is named in a U.S. ban on AI, semiconductors and quantum computing investments in 'countries of concern.'

The U.S. Treasury Department finalized an investment ban aimed at curbing China's military-linked high-tech ambitions in artificial intelligence, advanced computer chips and quantum computing this week, prompting angry reactions in Beijing and Hong Kong on Tuesday.

New rules issued Monday bar U.S. businesses and citizens from investing in a slew of advanced technologies in "countries of concern," and specifically list mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau among them.

"U.S. investments ... must not be used to help countries of concern develop their military, intelligence and cyber capabilities," Paul Rosen, assistant Treasury secretary for investment security, told the Associated Press, warning that such investments also bring with them other benefits including managerial help and assistance finding top talent and tapping other sources of financing.

Violators can be hit with a fine could be as high as twice the value of the prohibited transaction or US\$368,136, whichever is greater. The rules will be enforced by a newly created Office of Global Transactions, the agency reported.

China "strongly deplores and firmly opposes" the ban, foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian told a news briefing in Beijing, while Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee said it would damage global supply chains, warning that "American politicians will suffer the consequences" of pursuing what he called their "political interests."

Why has Hong Kong been named in the latest investment restrictions?

There is growing evidence that the ruling Chinese Communist Party is leveraging Hong Kong universities and private companies for research funding, expertise and links to global supply chains.

A low-orbit AI surveillance satellite jointly designed and developed by the Chinese University of Hong Kong that was successfully launched on Sept. 24, 2024, ostensibly for use in "disaster prevention."

But experts say the technology used in such hardware, which can monitor the movements of people and vehicles to distances of less than one meter, can very easily be modified for military use.

The university's Chinese partner in the project, state-owned Nationstar Aerospace, was named by national security expert Elsa Kania at a U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission hearing last year as an example of "military-civil fusion," a

key goal of Chinese President Xi Jinping's military modernization program, which seeks to blur the line between military operations and the civilian economy in an all-out bid to modernize the People's Liberation Army.

Are other Hong Kong universities involved in these plans?

At least four universities, including the Chinese University of Hong Kong named in the above example, are known to have worked on the development of remote-sensing satellite technology, which is also used in military reconnaissance.

Hong Kong's Polytechnic University has boasted of having "more than 30 years' experience" in aerospace research, and has participated in Chinese space missions on many occasions, and was involved in the joint development of a "surface sampling execution device" for China's Chang'e-6 lunar probe and in the 2021 Tianwen-1 Mars rover mission.

In September, it signed a cooperation agreement with Nationstar Aerospace, sanctioned by the United States in 2022 for allegedly trying to steal sensitive technology, to set up a remote sensing lab to "jointly conduct scientific research that contributes to national development."

In August 2023, the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology collaborated with China's Changguang Satellite Technology, another key player in Xi Jinping's military-civil fusion strategy, in the successful launch of the first earth observation satellite, the Xiongbing-1.

Changguang Satellite Technology was sanctioned in June by the European Union for "supporting the Russian military-industrial complex" in the Ukraine war.

The University of Hong Kong's space lab researchers also worked on the Lobster Eye dark matter detection satellite, launched in July 2020, alongside companies in the China Aerospace family of state-owned companies, which includes missile-maker China Aerospace Science and Industry Corp.

In 2021, lunar exploration third phase designer Hu Hao predicted "more collaboration between the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong in the country's aerospace projects in the future," state media reported, adding that the University of Hong Kong had a "competitive edge" in remote sensing technology.

"We certainly hope to work with competitive and strong institutions to research and design aerospace facilities and equipment," Hu said.

What role do Hong Kong companies play in this process?

According to Shu Hsiao-huang, associate researcher of the Chinese military at Taiwan's Institute for National Defense and Security Research, some Chinese state-owned conglomerates and universities

have well-documented ties to the People's Liberation Army, and are obvious targets for international sanctions, while private sector companies in Hong Kong are far more likely to be able to evade scrutiny.

"They're taking the opportunity now to find some loopholes via universities and private companies, especially in the field of AI, which absolutely needs private innovation, investment and development," Shu told RFA Cantonese in a recent interview. "State-owned enterprises are too easily targeted because they're so big, so private enterprises are used to inject innovative power into state-owned companies." Hong Kong is also a great place to source supplies by setting up companies not perceived to have military links, with a straightforward company registration process that has seen a proliferation of shell companies in recent years.

"[China is] using Hong Kong's advantages to set up companies just to help with sourcing, or that could then collaborate with universities in Hong Kong, for example, or with other private companies, as a way around this," Shu said.

How much is Hong Kong spending on such projects? Investment in national innovation and high-tech schemes became a policy priority after the government rewrote election rules to exclude opposition candidates from public office.

But precise breakdowns are hard to come by.

In 2020, the city's government pumped HK\$2 billion (US\$257 million) into its Innovation and Technology Fund to fuel innovative start-ups in the Greater Bay Area that includes neighboring cities in mainland China, but has never published a detailed account of where the money goes.

In his October 2024 policy address, John Lee announced a HK\$10 billion Innovation & Technology Industry-Oriented Fund "to guide more market capital to invest in specified emerging and future industries of strategic importance, including life and health technology and artificial intelligence."

Officials at the city's Innovation and Technology Bureau said they had funded 76,000 projects since the fund began on June 30, 1999 to the tune of around HK\$45 billion (US\$5.8 billion), but declined to provide a breakdown requested by RFA Cantonese.

The universities mentioned in this article declined to respond when asked for details of funding for their collaborations with military-linked Chinese enterprises.

Yet it seems there's plenty of money around in the sector.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, China invested more than 3.3 trillion yuan (US\$462 billion) in research and development last year, a rise of 8.4% on the previous year. China's nationwide R&D

expenditure is currently second only to that of the United States.

China also saw the creation of more than 110,000 new aerospace companies last year, a rise of nearly 30% from the previous year, with the country launching hundreds of satellites in the past three years. That is likely to rise to more than 10,000 over the next decade.

## Confronting the Growing Threat of the Chinese Communist Party

29 October 2024, Congressman Dan New House

Over the past two years, as a member of the House Select Committee on Strategic Competition between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party, we have uncovered the malign influence the CCP has in American institutions. With these revelations, we have committed to finding real, actionable solutions to prevent the CCP from tightening their grip on our nation's security and way of life.

The Select Committee has exposed numerous CCP schemes aimed at undermining our national security. From increased land purchases near sensitive sites to directly incentivizing the illicit fentanyl trade, the CCP is one of the greatest threats to our nation. Standing strong against them is imperative, which is why the House of Representatives has passed over twenty-five pieces of necessary legislation to safeguard our military, economic, ideological, and technological interests, including legislation I wrote to protect American agricultural land. We also passed several bills which originated directly from the Select Committee, reflecting the policy recommendations we have been developing since last year.

Securing our supply chains—from electric vehicle batteries to healthcare and critical infrastructure—is essential. As the CCP works to ensure the United States is dependent on Chinese companies for the products we use daily, I proudly supported legislation like the BIOSECURE Act, which would prohibit United States companies from using biotechnology from companies associated with foreign adversaries like the CCP. We also passed the End Chinese Dominance of Electric Vehicles in America Act and the Decoupling from Foreign Adversarial Battery Dependence Act, both of which take steps to protect taxpayer dollars from being used by the CCP to advance its leverage over our supply chains.

As we know, the CCP has also increased their investment in U.S. agricultural land tenfold, which raises serious concerns about their growing influence over our food security. To address this, the House of Representatives passed my bill, the Protecting American Agriculture from Foreign Adversaries Act, which adds the Secretary of Agriculture to the



Committee on Foreign Investment in the U.S. for transactions and requires them to report any updates that could be a threat to national security. This issue is part of a broader pattern of economic influence that the CCP exerts on vital American industries, and the federal government must stay aware.

Where we see the CCP's strongest grip on global resources and our supply chains is through critical mineral production—an industry essential to electric vehicles and lithium batteries. With China controlling the vast majority of mineral resources needed for battery manufacturing, I introduced legislation to promote U.S. production of these critical minerals. The Securing America's Midstream Critical Materials Processing Act establishes a framework to bring critical material processing back to American soil, away from foreign adversaries like the CCP, and reduces the unworkable permitting barriers to help secure supply chains. The United States produces energy cleaner and more cost-effective than anywhere else, and this bill would allow us to end our dependence on an adversary that could bring this industry to a halt at any time.

The CCP's campaign of malign influence poses a direct threat to American industry, jobs, and national security, and it is past time we take decisive action. By relying heavily on a nation intent on weakening the United States, we expose ourselves to unprecedented threats. I will continue advancing policies that will decouple our supply chains from our greatest adversary and ensure our nation is not beholden to those who oppose our values and way of life.

### **Data shows the Chinese government is less popular than state media makes it seem**

29 October 2024, East Asia Forum

The White Paper protests, which spread across China in November 2022, were triggered by the death of ten people during a fire in a quarantined apartment building in Urumqi. The protests reflected widespread dissatisfaction with the Chinese government's COVID-19 policies, which forced observers of Chinese politics to question whether the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) really enjoys widespread popular support.

In contrast with the majority of protests in China driven by discontent with local governments, the White Paper demonstrations offered critiques of the central government and the CCP's rule more generally. The CCP's legitimacy—resting on the party's achievements in developing China's economy and reducing poverty, maintaining social stability through censorship and repression, and, increasingly, promoting a nationalist vision of China's

future—depends to a great extent on public perceptions of the regime.

Popular political attitudes in China have shaped the regime's domestic stability, the reception of its policies, and constrained its foreign policy decisions. These pillars of CCP legitimacy appear to be shifting beneath the regime's monolithic facade, as demonstrated by the White Paper protests. Whether due to China's slowing economy, the concentration of power under Xi Jinping or the heavy-handedness of the country's COVID-19 response, researchers and policymakers must carefully analyse these changes in popular attitudes or risk greatly misunderstanding state-society dynamics.

For scholars of Chinese politics, the most common tool applied to gauge public opinion is a direct survey, in which respondents are asked about their attitudes towards the Chinese government via in-person enumerators or online forms.

One prominent study, published by the Ash Center for Democratic Governance at Harvard University, has traced popular attitudes toward the Chinese government since 2003. Their surveys place regime support above 90 per cent, suggesting that favourable views of the Chinese government are as ubiquitous as party propaganda might suggest. These results have been covered by China Central Television, Xinhua, China Global Television Network, China Daily and other CCP propaganda outlets, becoming part of the state's efforts to substantiate its legitimacy—both at home and abroad.

But does the CCP really enjoy such widespread support? Or do survey respondents conceal their opposition to the regime due to the threat of repression? And if so, what share of Chinese citizens really support the CCP? To answer these questions, we employed a survey technique known as a list experiment. In a list experiment, respondents are provided with a short list of nonsensitive statements, such as 'I consider myself a sports fan', and are asked to tally up the number of statements they agree with.

Respondents were randomly assigned to either a control group or a treatment group, with treated individuals receiving an additional sensitive statement, like 'I support comrade Xi Jinping' or 'the CCP government works for the people'.

The results, which were published in the *China Quarterly*, reveal widespread preference falsification. With direct questions, individuals reported their support for Xi, the CCP and the Chinese government at rates similar to those found in prior direct survey research, reaching upwards of 90 per cent support for the regime. With list experiments, support for the regime dropped to between 50 per cent to 70 per cent.

Since list experiments may not fully obviate respondents' concerns about online surveillance, this is more likely an upper bound on regime support. Respondents were more willing to express opposition to 'the system of government' than to Xi or the CCP directly.

Across questions and survey waves, support for the regime varied consistently across three characteristics. Ethnic Han respondents supported Xi about 20 percentage points more than minority respondents. College-educated respondents were between 10–20 percentage points more supportive of the CCP than respondents who completed early middle school. This may be because the CCP's efforts to shape educational curricula have succeeded, or because college-educated Han perform considerably better in the labour market. CCP members are about 10 percentage points more supportive of the regime. This makes sense, since they elected to join the Party and benefit from its rents.

The difference between regime support under direct questioning and regime support under list experiments is known as the preference falsification rate. The survey experiments reveal a preference falsification rate in Xi's China of around 25 percentage points. A recent meta-analysis examined all known list experiments in autocratic contexts and found an average preference falsification rate of around 14 percentage points. This makes Xi's China a clear outlier and demonstrates its citizens are far more fearful of expressing opposition to the regime.

These results suggest observers should be sceptical about public opinion surveys in China that rely on direct questioning. The CCP's sprawling internal security apparatus compels citizens to engage in widespread self-censorship, at a rate nearly three times higher than in Vladimir Putin's Russia. The pervasiveness of self-censorship has caused observers to overstate the amount of legitimacy that the CCP enjoys. This legitimacy, the conventional wisdom goes, is born of its record of economic growth and a propaganda and censorship apparatus that persuades citizens of the regime's merits.

The results, most broadly, suggest the CCP confronts widespread frustration. Its recent policies, including the increase in repression and sabre-rattling over Taiwan, should be seen as an effort to contain this frustration.

### Is Tibet forgotten?

29 October 2024, The Statesman, Raju Mansukhani

There seems to be euphoria in diplomatic and media circles after the meetings of Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Xi Jinping, President of the People's

Republic of China, on the sidelines of 16th Brics Summit at Kazan on 23 October 2024.

There seems to be euphoria in diplomatic and media circles after the meetings of Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China, on the sidelines of 16th Brics Summit at Kazan on 23 October 2024. The agreement for complete disengagement and resolution of issues that arose in 2020 in the India-China border areas is being widely welcomed as India underscored the importance of properly handling differences and disputes, not allowing them to disturb peace and tranquility.

Reading between the lines of diplomatic statements emphasizing 'the management of peace and tranquility in border areas and to explore a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable solution to the boundary question', what has gone completely missing is Tibet. The focus now is on stability, rebuilding bilateral relations, and as the Indian Foreign Secretary briefed the media, "to boost communication and cooperation between their countries and resolve conflicts to help improve ties that were damaged by a deadly military clash in 2020." At the United Nations, around the same time as the Brics Summit, on 22 October 2024, James Larsen, Australia's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations, delivered a joint statement on behalf of a coalition of 15 countries, expressing serious concern over grave human rights violations in East Turkistan and Tibet, and calling for urgent action from China. The statement was presented during the general discussion on human rights at the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly's Third Committee. Representing Australia, alongside 14 other countries including Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Japan, Lithuania, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States, Ambassador Larsen highlighted grave concerns based on evidence gathered by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and other UN bodies. The assessment, released two years ago, described these violations as potentially amounting to crimes against humanity. It is significant to note that India was not part of the 15-nation coalition stating its concerns over human rights abuses in Tibet. The Tibetan Government in Exile website has detailed the erosion of cultural, educational and religious rights and freedom in Tibet; arbitrary detentions for the peaceful expression of political views, restrictions on travel, forced labour, and the forced separation of children from families in boarding schools. Ambassador Larsen noted that despite repeated international calls for transparency, China has dismissed these concerns and labeled the

OHCHR's assessment as "illegal and void" during its Universal Periodic Review adoption in July 2024. China has yet to undertake a comprehensive human rights review of its policies in Xinjiang, with its problematic legal framework on national security and counterterrorism remaining unchanged, according to an OHCHR statement from August 2024. The 15 nations called on China to uphold its international human rights obligations and fully implement the recommendations from the OHCHR and other UN mechanisms.

The Tibetan Government in Exile, also referred to as the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) has been proactively conducting its public diplomacy across the world. Sikyong Penpa Tsering, in a vision document of the CTA released on 10 April 2023, said, "Our work as representatives of the Tibetan people and in securing the future of Tibet is more timely and crucial than ever (before). The PRC (People's Republic of China) has increased its efforts to destroy Tibetan culture and identity through the imposition of draconian measures. The PRC government has coerced our children into colonial boarding schools and imposed a ban on teaching all subjects in the Tibetan language. Our monasteries are increasingly controlled by Beijing, and even our tradition of reincarnation is politicised. In the name of maintaining national security and stability, with the existing control by the permanent work teams stationed down to the village level, Tibetans are subjected to intrusive state security through constant surveillance by the PRC using artificial intelligence and grid management system."

Given the paradigm shift in geopolitics and the international system post-Covid, Ukraine crisis and particularly with the escalation of sporadic tension between different nations, Sikyong Penpa Tsering emphasized "Tibet's strategic importance increasingly matters because of its geographical position and historical role as a buffer zone between China and India. Moreover, rivers originating from Tibet's mountains feed the rivers of ten nations downstream that provide water to a population of about 2 billion people. Due to the number of glaciers and permafrost on the Tibetan plateau, Tibet is also called 'Asia's Water Tower' and the 'World's Third Pole'.

Spiritually and culturally, the Tibetan people's steadfast belief in the Buddhist principles of non-violence and compassion under the leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, even in the face of brutal attacks serves as an inspiration for the violence-ridden world." The vision document highlights the two fundamental missions of the CTA which are inextricably linked: "Mobilising Tibetans and our allies to reopen the Sino-Tibetan dialogue to seek genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people and to

develop a sustainable Tibetan community in exile. Both missions ensure the survival of our identity and contribute to the furtherance of our cause." While 2024 marks the 70th anniversary of the famous Panchsheel Agreement of 1954, it was in 2004 to commemorate its 50th golden anniversary that the Indian Ministry of External Affairs published a document simply titled 'Panchsheel'.

It declared that Panchsheel, or the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence, were first formally enunciated in the Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between the Tibet region of China and India signed on 29 April 1954, which stated, in its preamble, that the two Governments "have resolved to enter into the present Agreement based on the following principles: Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, Mutual non-aggression, Mutual non-interference, Equality and mutual benefit, and Peaceful co-existence." Two months later, during the visit of Premier Zhou Enlai to India, he and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru issued a joint statement on 28 June 1954 that elaborated their vision of Panchsheel as the framework not only for relations between the two countries but also for their relations with all other countries, so that a solid foundation could be laid for peace and security in the world.

Panchsheel, as envisioned by its creators, gave substance to the voice of newly established countries who were seeking the space to consolidate their hard-won independence, as it provided an alternative ideology dedicated to peace and development of all as the basis for international interaction, whether bilateral or multilateral. At that time, the two Prime Ministers also expressed the hope in the Joint Statement that the adoption of Panchsheel "will also help in creating an area of peace which as circumstances permit can be enlarged thus lessening the chances of war and strengthening the cause of peace all over the world." The treaty of 1954 provided for withdrawal of all Indian influence from Tibet. Wrote S Gopal in Volume II of Pt Nehru's biography: "Nehru had no regret about this, for it embarrassed him to lay claim to the succession of an imperial power which had pushed its way into Tibet.

Anxious to make the agreement purely non-political, the Chinese at first resisted mention of the Five Principles which they themselves had elaborated, but ultimately agreed to it as a concession. India was keen on the inclusion of these principles as explicit reference to mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, and mutual non-aggression suggested, at least by implication, that China had no frontier claims; but this was clutching at straws after the main opportunity had been deliberately discarded. The only real gain India could show was a listing of six border passes in the

middle sector, thereby defining, even if indirectly, this stretch of the boundary.

On the other hand, the Chinese had secured all they wanted and given away little; and that they regarded even this sanction of some Indian trade agencies and markets in Tibet as an interim concession was made clear by their objection to automatic renewal of the treaty after its first term of eight years." The historian in Gopal commented, "the chance of securing a clear and explicit recognition of India's frontier at a time when India had something to offer in return had been lost. This was not because of Nehru's unrealistic assessment of China's intent and strength or of his failure to attach importance to this issue but because he allowed his own views, and those of his senior advisers, to be set aside..."

The argument that the best defence of the frontier was a friendly neighbour was sound, provided the frontier was a settled one. This was India's case: But that case could have been immeasurably strengthened by directly making it a part of the negotiations leading to the 1954 treaty."

This diplomatic lapse, call it an omission, made India give priority to setting up borders and check posts strung out along its entire length, priority to building communications, strengthening the intelligence system. To Nehru's biographer, "the impact of government would have to make up for remiss diplomacy.

### **A silent resistance is growing in Tibet**

27 October 2024, The Sunday Guardian, Khedroob Thondup

The Beijing-recognized Panchen Lama, Gyaltsen Norbu, is seen by many Tibetans as a political puppet.

In the heart of Tibet, a silent yet powerful form of resistance is taking place. Across monasteries, homes, and public spaces, the image of the 10th Panchen Lama, Choekyi Gyaltsen, is prominently displayed. This act is not just a tribute to a revered spiritual leader but a profound statement against the Chinese government's attempts to control Tibetan Buddhism.

The 10th Panchen Lama, Choekyi Gyaltsen, is deeply respected among Tibetans for his unwavering dedication to preserving Tibetan culture and religion under Chinese rule. Born in 1938, he became a vocal advocate for Tibetan rights and criticized the Chinese government's policies in Tibet. His 70,000-character petition in 1962, which detailed the suffering of Tibetans under Chinese rule, remains a seminal document of resistance.

In stark contrast, the Beijing-recognized Panchen Lama, Gyaltsen Norbu, is seen by many Tibetans as a political puppet. In 1995, the Chinese government

rejected the Dalai Lama's choice of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as the 11th Panchen Lama and instead installed Gyaltsen Norbu. Gedhun Choekyi Nyima was subsequently taken into custody and has not been seen since. This move was widely perceived as an attempt by Beijing to control the spiritual lineage and diminish the influence of the Dalai Lama.

Displaying the photo of the 10th Panchen Lama is a way for Tibetans to honour his legacy and assert their cultural identity. It is a reminder of his courage and his commitment to the Tibetan cause. For many, the 10th Panchen Lama symbolizes the true spirit of Tibetan Buddhism, untainted by political interference. Moreover, this act of defiance is a form of non-violent resistance. By rejecting the Beijing-recognized Panchen Lama, Tibetans are making a clear statement about their refusal to accept Chinese control over their religious practices. It is a way to keep the memory of the 10th Panchen Lama alive and to inspire future generations to continue the struggle for religious and cultural freedom.

The Chinese government's attempt to control the reincarnation process of Tibetan lamas is part of a broader strategy to assimilate Tibetan culture into the dominant Han Chinese narrative. By installing a state-approved Panchen Lama, Beijing aims to weaken the influence of the Dalai Lama and ensure that Tibetan Buddhism aligns with state ideologies.

However, the widespread display of the 10th Panchen Lama's photo shows that these efforts have not succeeded. It highlights the resilience of the Tibetan people and their determination to preserve their cultural and religious heritage. This act of resistance is a powerful reminder that despite decades of repression, the spirit of Tibetan Buddhism remains strong.

The choice to display the photo of the 10th Panchen Lama is a deeply symbolic act for Tibetans. It honors a leader who stood up for their rights and serves as a form of peaceful resistance against Chinese control. As the world watches, it is crucial to support the Tibetan people's right to religious freedom and cultural preservation. The legacy of the 10th Panchen Lama continues to inspire and empower Tibetans in their ongoing struggle for autonomy and dignity.

### **The changing dynamics of India-China relations amidst India-U.S. tensions**

27 October 2024, The Sunday Guardian, Savio Rodrigues

The decline in India-US relations played a pivotal role in changing the dynamics of the Sino-Indian border negotiations.

The recent agreement between India and China to restore patrolling arrangements along their disputed border to pre-June 2020 status has marked a

significant step toward reducing tensions between the two countries. The deal, finalised on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Kazan, came after China finally complied with India's longstanding demand for disengagement along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). While the agreement is a notable diplomatic achievement, the context in which it was reached reveals deeper geopolitical shifts influenced by deteriorating Indo-US relations.

Since the June 2020 Galwan Valley clashes, which resulted in casualties on both sides, India and China have held multiple rounds of diplomatic and military talks to resolve their border dispute. However, little progress was made until the recent agreement. The breakthrough coincided with a downturn in Indo-US relations, which began to sour following a scandal in the summer of 2023 involving allegations of an Indian assassination attempt on a US citizen with ties to separatist movements.

This incident, coupled with subsequent US actions—including support for Canada in escalating a diplomatic spat with India—fuelled distrust between New Delhi and Washington. As a result, China reassessed its strategic calculus regarding its border dispute with India, no longer perceiving India as a potential partner in the US' containment policy aimed at countering China's influence. This shift in perception allowed China to consider a pragmatic approach to the border issue, leading to the recent agreement.

The decline in Indo-US relations played a pivotal role in changing the dynamics of the Sino-Indian border negotiations. Historically, China viewed any concession on the border issue as a sign of weakness, potentially emboldening other regional claimants, such as those involved in the South China Sea disputes. However, the realisation that Indo-US trust had been severely compromised encouraged China to see the border resolution as a strategic move to prevent India from aligning too closely with the US.

The US has long pursued a divide-and-rule strategy in Asia, attempting to exploit historical tensions between India and China to maintain its influence in the region. The pressure on India to adopt Western sanctions against Russia and comply with US foreign policy objectives has only served to underscore the limits of the partnership between New Delhi and Washington. This realisation has allowed India to manoeuvre diplomatically, using its rapprochement with China to signal its unwillingness to be coerced into a subordinate role.

The agreement with China signifies more than just a resolution of a longstanding border issue; it reflects a shift in India's strategic orientation amidst growing friction with the US. The 2023 scandal, US meddling in South Asian politics, and the imposition of foreign

policy demands have all contributed to India's re-evaluation of its partnership with Washington. The latest border breakthrough, therefore, can be seen as a signal to the US that India will not be compelled into playing a role in an anti-China coalition.

While military and trade relations between India and the US remain stable for now, the political rift between the two countries raises questions about the future trajectory of their ties. As India and China move toward improving bilateral relations, the US risks losing a key partner in its Indo-Pacific strategy. If India and China can continue to find common ground, it could significantly alter the power dynamics in the region and weaken the effectiveness of the US's containment strategy.

The possibility of closer India-China ties, with the border issue no longer serving as a primary irritant, could unleash significant economic and strategic potential. The world's two most populous nations have natural economic complementarities that could drive regional development and accelerate the transition towards a multipolar world order. This would mark a departure from the US-centric global system that has dominated since the end of the Cold War.

Should Sino-Indian relations continue to improve, it would signal a shift in global strategic dynamics, with Asia emerging as a central axis in world affairs. A partnership between India and China would not only strengthen regional stability but also challenge the current balance of power by reducing US influence in the region. This potential realignment could reshape the global order, paving the way for a new era of international relations driven by Asian powers. In retrospect, the US pressure campaign against India—spanning diplomatic, economic, and political dimensions—might inadvertently prove to be a turning point in global geopolitics. By pushing India to its limits, the US may have accelerated the very outcome it sought to prevent: a Sino-Indian rapprochement that undermines its efforts to maintain unipolar dominance. While it remains to be seen whether the current momentum in Sino-Indian relations will be sustained, the recent agreement offers a glimpse into a world where traditional rivalries are redefined in response to shifting global power structures. The restoration of pre-Galwan Valley patrolling arrangements along the India-China border marks a significant diplomatic achievement for both nations and a potential game-changer in the strategic dynamics of the region. The deal's timing, amid growing Indo-US tensions, underscores the complex interplay between regional disputes and global power politics. As India and China navigate this new phase in their relationship, their ability to resolve longstanding issues and enhance cooperation



will be pivotal in shaping the future of the international order.

Whether the US adjusts its approach in response to these developments remains uncertain, but one thing is clear: the old strategic assumptions no longer hold. The world is witnessing a recalibration of alliances, driven not by coercion or containment but by a recognition of shared interests and the desire for a more balanced global order. The implications of this evolving landscape will be felt far beyond the borders of Asia, heralding a new era of international relations where traditional rivalries give way to strategic pragmatism.

### **LAC patrolling agreement with China doesn't mean everything is resolved: Jaishankar**

27 October 2024, The New Indian Express

The External Affairs Minister credited the military, which worked in 'very very unimaginable' conditions, and deft diplomacy for the breakthrough agreement with China.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Saturday said the breakthrough agreement with China on patrolling along the LAC does not mean that issues between the two countries have been resolved, however, the disengagement allows us to look at the next step.

He credited the military, which worked in "very very unimaginable" conditions, and deft diplomacy for the breakthrough agreement with China.

"The latest step (of disengagement) was the October 21 understanding that patrolling will take place in Depsang and Demchok.

This will allow us now to look at the next step.

It is not like everything has been resolved but the disengagement which is the first phase we have managed to reach that level," Jaishankar said at an event in Pune.

Responding to a question during a separate interaction with students, Jaishankar said it is still a bit early for normalisation of relations which will naturally take time to rebuild a degree of trust and willingness to work together.

He said that when Prime Minister Narendra Modi met President Xi Jinping at Kazan in Russia for the BRICS summit, it was decided that the foreign ministers and National Security Advisors of the two countries would meet and see how to move forward.

"If today we have reached where we have. One is because of the very determined effort on our part to stand our ground and make our point.

The military was there (at LAC) in very very unimaginable conditions to defend the country, and the military did its part and diplomacy did its part," Jaishankar said.

Over the decade, India improved its infrastructure.

Part of the problem is that in the earlier years, the border infrastructure was really neglected, he added. "Today we have put in five times more resources annually than there used to be a decade ago which is showing results and enabling the military to actually be effectively deployed. The combination of these (factors) has led to where it is," he said.

Earlier this week, India announced it had reached an agreement with China on patrolling along the LAC in eastern Ladakh, in a major breakthrough in ending the over four-year-long military standoff.

Since 2020, the situation on the border has been very disturbed which understandably negatively impacted the overall relationship.

Since September 2020, India had been negotiating with the Chinese on how to find a solution, he said.

The EAM said there were different aspects of this solution.

The pressing one is disengagement because troops are very very close to each other and the possibility of something happening existed. Then there is de-escalation because of troop buildup on both sides, he added.

"Then there is a larger issue of how you manage the border and negotiate the boundary settlement.

Right now everything that's going is concerning the first part which is disengagement," he said.

He said India and China came to an understanding at some places after 2020 on how troops return to their bases but a significant segment was related to patrolling, the external affairs minister pointed out.

"There was blocking of patrolling and that is what we had been trying to negotiate for the last two years. So what happened on October 21 was that in those particular areas Depsang and Demchok we reached an understanding that patrolling would resume how it used to be before," Jaishankar added.

Following the agreement, the two countries have begun troop disengagement at the two friction points at Demchok and Depsang Plains in eastern Ladakh and this process is likely to be completed by October 28-29.

On "string of pearls", a chain of civilian/naval ports perceived as a strategy for encircling India, Jaishankar said the development has to be viewed seriously, and India needs to be ready to compete.

The term refers to the network of Chinese military and commercial facilities and relationships along its sea lines of communication.

"Unfortunately when it was happening, people (did not see it seriously). Frankly, we are paying the price for it. We did not respond the way we had to. It was done for ideological reasons. The view of China was very different in the political circles of the government," the EAM added.

## **The Man Who Shaped China's Strongman Rule Has a New Job: Winning Taiwan**

26 October 2024, The New York Times, Chris Buckley

Xi Jinping's top adviser, Wang Huning, is credited with shaping the authoritarianism that steered China's rise. But can he influence Taiwan?

When Xi Jinping held the first-ever talks in Beijing with a former president of Taiwan, seeking to press the island closer to unification, a bookish-looking official stood out for his ease around China's leader. While others treated Mr. Xi with stiff formality, the official, Wang Huning, spoke confidently in his presence and sat next to him during the meeting, said Chiu Kun-hsuan, a member of the delegation that accompanied Ma Ying-jeou, the former Taiwanese president.

The scene gave a glimpse of one of the most important, yet little understood, relationships in China: between Mr. Xi, the country's most powerful leader in decades, and Mr. Wang, the ruling Communist Party's most influential ideological adviser in decades.

"He has the top leader's full trust," Professor Chiu, an emeritus scholar at National Chengchi University in Taipei, Taiwan's capital, said of Mr. Wang. "Wang Huning's influence has been in ideology, but now in China under Xi Jinping, ideology connects everything."

Given the opaque nature of Chinese politics, the world often fixates on Mr. Xi, who since taking power in 2012 has centralized control and surrounded himself with loyalists, making it hard to know whose views he most values. In his circle, Mr. Wang stands out for rising to the top despite never having led a province or city, and for advising three successive Chinese leaders across three decades — a rare feat of adaptability and survival.

The New York Times spoke to more than a dozen people who have known Mr. Wang or met him, including during a visit to the United States in the late 1980s, and read dozens of his papers and books. The interviews and writings illuminate how he rose to the apex of power by developing ideas that he put to the service of China's leaders, with a lasting influence on how the country is ruled.

Mr. Wang is credited with honing the Communist Party doctrines that have guided China's rise, founded on the conviction that only the unyielding dominance of the party can secure the country's success in the face of rapid economic change and intensifying competition with Western powers.

More recently, Mr. Xi has entrusted Mr. Wang with handling the fraught political relations with Taiwan, the island democracy that Beijing wants to absorb. Taiwanese officials say Mr. Wang has been

overseeing efforts to deepen Chinese influence over the island, through selective displays of good will and covert influence activities.

Yet Mr. Wang, 69, is little known to outsiders. A professor turned party theorist, he stopped giving interviews after he began working at the Communist Party headquarters in 1995, cutting off contact with most former colleagues and staying aloof from foreign visitors.

Since 2012, he has been central to distilling Mr. Xi's vision for China into an ideological program for a superpower that is technologically advanced, unabashedly authoritarian and increasingly fortified against American-led containment.

Mr. Wang "provided the ideological spirit for authoritarianism over the last 30 years," said Rush Doshi, a former deputy senior director for China on President Biden's National Security Council who is now at the Council on Foreign Relations and Georgetown University. "He has helped craft the national narrative."

### **Winning Over Taiwan**

Now Mr. Wang is turning his ideas, political acumen and influence with Mr. Xi to Taiwan. He appears to be sharpening strategies for reaching deeper into Taiwanese society and rolling back its people's deepening rejection of China, including Taiwan's cultural links with the mainland.

"He's also someone who knows how to use both a soft touch and a hard fist," said Chao Chun-shan, a professor emeritus at Tamkang University in Taiwan, who has been in meetings with Mr. Wang in the early 1990s and twice since last year.

Mr. Wang has assiduously wooed dozens of members of Taiwan's opposition Nationalist Party, which favors stronger ties with China, treating them almost as a Taiwanese government in waiting — one that Beijing would rather deal with. He has politely quizzed Nationalist lawmakers: Who has old roots in Taiwan? Who came from families that fled mainland China in 1949? He asked them to describe their concerns, making a point that he was paying close attention, said several members of the delegations. His overtures to the opposition fit with Beijing's strategy of isolating Taiwan's president, Lai Ching-te, and his governing Democratic Progressive Party, which rejects China's claim of sovereignty over the island.

Behind the scenes, Mr. Wang has overseen Chinese efforts to influence Taiwanese public opinion with online campaigns, which amplify messages that are skeptical of American power, scathing about Mr. Lai and admiring of China, according to two Taiwanese security officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter.

At the same time, China has hardened its military approach to Taiwan; it recently held exercises

encircling the island. It is also using legal measures to intimidate Taiwanese people, like the recently issued rules calling for execution, in extreme cases, for supporters of independence.

Such efforts may appear crude and likely to alienate many Taiwanese, but over time, their chilling effect could make a difference politically, said John Dotson, the deputy director of the Global Taiwan Institute in Washington. "Even if it only moves public opinion by a few points, that can be decisive," he said.

Mr. Wang may also have considerable influence over China's plan for unification. Mr. Xi has said Taiwan must accept the "one country, two systems" formula that Beijing used for Hong Kong, but that arrangement is widely rejected in Taiwan. Instead, Chinese officials like Mr. Wang now speak of a "comprehensive plan" for Taiwan, a phrase that allows for adjustments to the formula.

"If his past roles are any guide," Mr. Doshi said, referring to Mr. Wang, "he's likely been tasked with figuring out an approach to Taiwan that involves crafting long-term strategy, as well as the ideological framework for unification."

From Democratic Hopes to 'Neo-Authoritarianism'

Mr. Wang, like Mr. Xi, is the son of Communist officials and was one of the few Chinese youths chosen to go to university during the 1966-76 Cultural Revolution, a decade of violence and zealotry when students were drilled in Marx, Lenin and Mao.

But as Mr. Wang started graduate school at Fudan University in Shanghai in 1978, many in China were starting to look to Western countries for inspiration. Talk of democracy, suppressed under Mao, crept into classrooms, and Mr. Wang, who specialized in political science, became an avid student of Western political traditions.

"He was quite open and lively," Chen Kuide, who shared a dormitory room with Mr. Wang at Fudan, said in an interview. "He also wrote contemporary poetry."

Mr. Wang became fascinated with the "political culture" of democracies: the shared public faith in government that kept countries stable as leaders came and went. A strong web of public values was a key pillar of solid political order, he wrote, often citing American scholars like Samuel P. Huntington and Sidney Verba.

Mr. Wang stayed on at Fudan as a lecturer and joined the Communist Party in 1984. He was never a rebel, but he shared in the hopes, widespread in China in the 1980s, that the party could absorb some democracy.

"In today's world, democracy has become the goal of political development," Mr. Wang wrote in a Shanghai newspaper in 1986. "Without a highly democratic political system, there can be no talk of

standing tall as a modernized, powerful country among the world's advanced nations."

But as the decade progressed, China confronted growing public anger over inflation and corruption. Student protests for democracy broke out in 1986. Even as Mr. Wang continued to praise democracy as a long-term aspiration, he cautioned against rapid political liberalization.

Abrupt political opening could bring upheaval and derail China's economic takeoff, Mr. Wang wrote, arguing that its leaders could learn from South Korea, Taiwan and other Asian "dragons" that had grown rapidly under authoritarian rulers.

"He became more of a realist," said Mr. Chen, the former roommate, who later worked alongside Mr. Wang. "He had the ways of a politician or political operator."

Mr. Wang wrote a report saying that China needed a "centralized" model of modernization, not a democratic one, to loosen the state's hold on the economy — which would cause a painful surge in prices for food and other necessities — while keeping a lid on instability.

The report circulated among policymakers in Beijing, according to a memoir by Wei Chengsi, an official in Shanghai who had commissioned it, and it became a seed for "neo-authoritarianism," a school of thought arguing that China needed a strongman leader.

"His support for a strong central government and central leader was obvious," said Ming Xia, a former student and colleague of Mr. Wang at Fudan University.

American Lessons

In 1988, Mr. Wang began a six-month visit to the United States, his first immersion in the superpower that China was coming to both admire and fear.

"He was deeply struck by how developed the United States was," Hsu Chang-mao, a journalist from Taiwan who got to know Mr. Wang at that time, said in an interview. "After he returned, he dressed more attractively and stylishly; you could see that he'd been influenced by the American sense of fashion."

But Mr. Wang's travels across America, as a visiting scholar at the University of Iowa and other campuses, also seemed to deepen his view that Western-style democracy had flaws and could not be easily copied in China.

The United States lacked the social discipline and cohesion of Japan, Mr. Wang wrote in "America Against America," a 1991 book about his visit. He was repulsed by a camp for homeless people in Berkeley, which he described as dirty. He followed the 1988 presidential race and concluded that voters ultimately had limited say in government.

His American sojourn appeared to reinforce his belief that a country had to instill the correct attitudes in its citizens, including respect for authority and

tradition, or disorder would weaken it from within. Mr. Wang approvingly cited Allan Bloom, a political theorist whose book denouncing liberal cultural trends, "The Closing of the American Mind," was a best seller at that time.

After Mr. Wang returned to China in 1989, his skepticism of democratization deepened. That spring, student-led pro-democracy demonstrators occupied Tiananmen Square in Beijing. The Chinese military crushed the movement on June 4 with tanks and troops, killing hundreds, if not thousands, in the capital and across the country.

In the aftermath, Mr. Wang warned that the party still faced deeper threats. China's leaders, he wrote, needed a "comprehensive overhaul of the entire system of social control" to tame the effects of economic growth, especially corruption, as well as an influx of Western investment and cultural influence.

Mr. Wang urged leaders in Beijing to reassert their control over revenues and state-owned companies. Their grip on economic resources had weakened in the previous decade, and revenue-rich local officials sometimes chafed at orders from Beijing, he warned. He argued that as China opened to the outside world and the party retreated from directing people's lives, leaders needed new ways to retain their loyalty. The new challenges, he wrote in 1992, "demand that China's system of social control respond more firmly, flexibly and vigorously." He advised Beijing to develop new ways to monitor and shape people's values.

"He was really writing about what they were trying to figure out: how do you maintain political order through very fundamental social and economic change?" said Timothy Cheek, a historian of the Chinese Communist Party at the University of British Columbia.

In 1995, Mr. Wang was plucked from academia by Jiang Zemin, the former Shanghai party secretary who had become China's leader in 1989. He joined the party's Central Policy Research Office and was later credited with helping shape Mr. Jiang's "Three Represents" concept, a policy for bringing private entrepreneurs into the party's embrace.

After Mr. Jiang stepped down, Mr. Wang remained a top adviser to the next Chinese leader, Hu Jintao. When Mr. Xi came to power in 2012, he retained Mr. Wang.

The Man Behind 'Xi Jinping Thought'

Mr. Wang's continuing close access to Mr. Xi suggests that he remained an influential source of advice as the Chinese leader grappled with a pandemic, economic troubles and growing antagonism with Western governments.

Experts credit Mr. Wang with a big role in shaping Mr. Xi's ideas into an official credo — Xi Jinping

Thought — focused on China's resurgence as a great power. To combat the dangers he sees to party rule, Mr. Xi has demanded ideological conformity, restricted Western cultural influences, expanded censorship and sought to silence even mild dissent.

Mr. Wang became office director for a commission on policy reform, which has pushed Mr. Xi's ideas of state-steered growth, and he continues to shape major policy documents. He defended China's tight control over the internet before an audience of multinational executives. He accompanied Mr. Xi on trips abroad, including summits with American presidents.

Mr. Wang gained "a real policy-shaping role, not just as an ideologue," said Matthew D. Johnson, a research director at Garnaut Global, a consultancy, who has studied Mr. Wang. "I don't think he's a one-trick pony."

In 2017, Mr. Xi rewarded Mr. Wang by promoting him to the Politburo Standing Committee — the top tier of party power. And Mr. Xi kept him on the committee for a second term in 2022, as others stepped aside.

During a party congress in 2022, Mr. Wang's standing with Mr. Xi played out in front of television cameras. The tightly choreographed proceedings were briefly interrupted when Mr. Hu, the retired leader, apparently agitated and confused, seemed to resist being led out by an usher.

When Li Zhanshu, a senior official, tried to help Mr. Hu, Mr. Wang tugged at Mr. Li's suit and whispered to him, apparently urging him to sit down. In theory, Mr. Li had a higher rank, but that didn't deter Mr. Wang.

### **Explainer: India and China troops disengage at disputed Ladakh border, easing decades-long tensions**

26 October 2024, The Tribune, Vijay Mohan

Explainer: India and China troops disengage at disputed Ladakh border, easing decades-long tensions

The current phase of bilateral ties has been particularly strained since the violent standoff at Galwan in 2020, which resulted in the deaths of 20 Indian soldiers and an estimated 40 Chinese troops, marking the worst tensions since the 1962 war

The ongoing disengagement between Indian and Chinese troops at two friction points along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh – Demchok and Depsang – marks another watershed in the tumultuous relations between the two Asian giants since the late 1950s. File photo

The ongoing disengagement between Indian and Chinese troops at two friction points along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh – Demchok

and Depsang – marks another watershed in the tumultuous relations between the two Asian giants since the late 1950s. The current phase of bilateral ties has been particularly strained since the violent standoff at Galwan in 2020, which resulted in the deaths of 20 Indian soldiers and an estimated 40 Chinese troops, marking the worst tensions since the 1962 war.

The Sino-Indian War (October 20 – November 21, 1962) marked a turning point in India-China relations, which had previously shared a strong cultural and historical bond, significantly impacting India's security establishment. Reports of occasional run-ins with China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) began surfacing as early as 1951, gradually increasing toward the decade's end.

Following India's grant of asylum to the Dalai Lama in 1959, PLA intensified its activities in Tibet and adopted a more aggressive stance. PLA resumed regular border patrols in previously dormant regions, leading to an escalation in skirmishes along the border.

On October 20, PLA launched simultaneous offensives along the 3,225-km disputed border in Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh, capturing Indian positions and seizing significant territory. However, on November 21, China declared a ceasefire and pulled back to its pre-October 20 positions. Since then, tensions have persisted along the LAC as both nations maintain conflicting territorial claims.

India became independent in 1947, while the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established in 1949, which then annexed Tibet in 1950. Chinese maps showed about 120,000 sq km of Indian territory in Aksai Chin and Arunachal as part of China. The then-Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, raised the subject with Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai, but despite promises, there was no resolution.

In 1954, China and India negotiated the 'Panchsheel' or Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, by which both sides would settle their disputes. However, China did not acknowledge Indian claims. The construction of roads and military. The construction of roads and military posts by China in the Aksai Chin region in the 1950s was perceived as aggression by India, prompting India to establish its own posts. China's 1,200-km road connecting Xinjiang and western Tibet, 180 km of which passed through Aksai Chin, made the region easily accessible from China, while India lacked communication links.

In July 1958, China intruded into Ladakh near Khurnak Fort. Similar incidents occurred in 1959 at Migyitui and Pangong Tso. In October 1959, an Indian patrol was ambushed near Kongka Pass, killing nine Indian policemen.

In 1960, Zhou Enlai proposed that India drop its claims over Aksai Chin in exchange for China withdrawing claims over the North-Eastern Frontier Agency (now Arunachal Pradesh) but India refused. In 1961, India adopted a "forward policy" to counter Chinese activity.

The India-China border disputes have led to numerous incidents and confrontations since 1962. That summer, India directed its air force to avoid direct conflict, despite the potential benefits of close air support for ground troops. In June, a skirmish resulted in significant Chinese casualties, prompting India to advance troops and probe Chinese resolve. The period from June to October saw multiple incidents in the east, including the Thagla Ridge confrontation in Arunachal Pradesh.

Subsequent clashes occurred in 1967 at Nathu La and Cho La, where Indian forces successfully repelled Chinese attacks. In 1975, four Indian soldiers were ambushed and killed by Chinese troops in Indian territory. Another major standoff took place in 1986 in the Sumdorong Chu Valley, Arunachal Pradesh, but was resolved after India's external affairs minister visited Beijing in 1987.

Despite the absence of armed clashes since, China's PLA has regularly incursed into Ladakh and Arunachal, sometimes advancing several kilometres into the Indian territory, as seen in the 2013 Depsang Plains incident. Frequent confrontations and face-offs along the LAC have led to scuffles and physical altercations. Approximately two dozen sensitive areas have been identified along the LAC, with 13 experiencing frequent incursions. Seven friction points in eastern Ladakh, including Galwan, Hot Springs, Gogra, Pangong Tso, Depsang Plains, and Demchok, remain contentious since 2020, with ongoing disengagement efforts at Depsang and Demchok.

### **Opinion | China-India border detente paves way for a more balanced world order**

26 October 2024, SCMP, Sagina Walyat

While Beijing and New Delhi have their own interests in settling tensions, greater cooperation is a net positive for the Global South

Just before the 2024 Brics summit, India and China reached a significant agreement on de-escalating border tensions. In an interview on NDTV, Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said the deal would allow border patrols to be conducted the way they used to be in 2020, ostensibly before the deadly Galwan Valley clash.

On Tuesday, this position was echoed by Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian, who confirmed the progress, saying that China "will work with India to properly implement [the] resolution".



In a larger geopolitical context, the deal reflects the shaping of a new world order with a non-Western bloc that does not necessarily oppose the West but seeks to challenge its long-held hegemony.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping held their first formal bilateral dialogue in five years on Wednesday, on the sidelines of the Brics summit in Kazan, Russia. Xi acknowledged the responsibilities of both nations – key members of the Global South – to boost the strength and unity of developing countries. After the meeting, Modi underscored the significance of peace, not just for bilateral ties but for global stability.

The groundwork for the border deal has been laid over the past two months through high-level engagement, including two meetings between Jaishankar and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in July. Wang also met Indian National Security Adviser Ajit Doval last month in St Petersburg.

India has consistently made it clear that settling the border issue was a necessity for advancing relations with China. Both nations stand to benefit from this development. India seeks to further grow its economy while China needs India to secure vital partnerships amid its economic slump.

China and India have engaged in dialogue for a long time but bilateral tensions have only seemed to increase, especially since the Galwan Valley clash. India has challenged China on multiple fronts, recently flagging concerns at the World Trade Organization about “non-transparent” Chinese trade practices.

Despite these challenges, the Brics grouping has emerged as a platform for bridging divides, especially with Russia likely to favour more cooperation between China and India.

As Brics expands its membership, Sino-Indian cooperation is crucial for the grouping’s future, particularly for achieving its strategic goals. These goals are not necessarily anti-Western in nature but part of a broader attempt to build a popular alternative to the West in the world system. Russia also stands to benefit, as having India and China on cordial terms is essential for challenging Western dominance.

India’s recent diplomatic spat with Canada over the Khalistan separatist movement, in which Ottawa was supported by other members of the Five Eyes intelligence alliance, seems to have pushed New Delhi further towards working with its non-Western partners.

The US has increased its involvement in South Asia, including in domestic Indian politics. Last month, high-level American officials met activists who reportedly have pro-Khalistan independence sympathies. And, just before Modi’s visit to the US, an American court

reportedly issued a summons against Indian officials in a civil suit filed by Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, whom New Delhi designated a terrorist in 2020. Given these developments, India has a strong rationale to explore improved ties with China.

However, India is likely to keep pursuing its non-alignment policy, maintaining a balanced engagement with the West, particularly Europe. Beijing, meanwhile, has concerns of its own, given New Delhi’s growing relations with Taiwan and its increasing interest in the Tibet autonomous region.

Since 2010, India has stopped mentioning the One-China policy, reportedly in response to Chinese authorities issuing stapled visas to residents of disputed areas such as Arunachal Pradesh and the territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Under Modi’s leadership, India has significantly advanced its technological, economic and diplomatic relations with leaders in Taiwan.

Taiwan recently opened its third representative office in India, which sparked a strong rebuke from Beijing. However, like most countries, India still does not recognise Taiwan as an independent state. With Beijing seeking a peaceful reunification with Taiwan, its interest in resolving the border dispute with India has grown.

While India and China have their own strategic reasons for settling the dispute, Russia also stands to gain from this new-found cooperation. For Brics to become a credible global counterweight to the West, Moscow needs New Delhi and Beijing to work as cordial partners, if not allies.

As the Brics grouping expands and pursues transformative initiatives such as de-dollarisation and creating multilateral alternatives to Western institutions, alignment between India and China can help to ensure the success of these projects.

The de-escalation at the Sino-Indian border plus the high-level meeting between Xi and Modi could pave the way for further cooperation, the relaxation of investment restrictions and the improvement of people-to-people ties through direct flights and exchanges.

While these developments signal an improvement, it is still too soon to tell if India and China will function as fully fledged partners. Their trust deficit and trade imbalance still loom large. Nevertheless, this week’s bilateral breakthroughs have certainly melted the ice and opened the door to further dialogue.

Improved Sino-Indian relations could benefit the entire region, especially countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Global South, which stand to gain from reduced tensions between two of Asia’s largest powerhouses.

The 2024 Brics summit marks the beginning of a new geopolitical reality – one in which India and China constructively manage their differences and

contribute to the emergence of a more balanced world order that challenges Western hegemony.

### **Brahmaputra's challenges: A call for strategic cooperation and sustainable solutions**

25 October 2024, The Sentinel

The recent drop in the Brahmaputra's water level, resulting in the suspension of the vital ferry service between Jorhat and Majuli

The recent drop in the Brahmaputra's water level, resulting in the suspension of the vital ferry service between Jorhat and Majuli, raises serious concerns about the future of Assam's most critical waterway. As the river that sustains the region's ecosystem and economy, any fluctuations in the Brahmaputra's water system, particularly during the lean winter months, deserve the immediate attention of both policymakers and the scientific community. This isn't merely an isolated occurrence—there's growing evidence to suggest a combination of environmental and geopolitical factors may be at play, contributing to the potential crisis facing the Brahmaputra and the broader riverine landscape of Assam.

Seasonal variability or anomaly? The Case for Serious Scrutiny

It is well established that the Brahmaputra's flow decreases during winter. However, the unprecedented scale of reduction in recent years has raised legitimate concerns among local communities, experts, and government officials. A particularly troubling pattern of dwindling water levels during the lean season has been observed, sparking debates about the underlying causes. While a certain degree of reduction is expected due to natural seasonality, the abnormal scale of receding water volumes suggests that other factors might be altering the Brahmaputra's hydrology.

One key suspect behind these changes lies beyond India's borders: In the upper reaches of the river, China has been engaged in large-scale dam construction on the Yarlung Tsangpo (as the Brahmaputra is known in Tibet). The massive damming efforts undertaken by China could potentially have far-reaching implications for the river's natural flow, especially in Assam and the lower riparian regions. These developments, coupled with the accelerating impacts of climate change, make the Brahmaputra's future uncertain.

China's Damming and Diversion: A Brewing Geopolitical Tension

China's dam-building activities on the Yarlung Tsangpo have long been a matter of contention between Beijing and New Delhi. There are well-documented instances of China's efforts to harness the power of the Brahmaputra's upper stretches for hydroelectricity and irrigation. These initiatives, while economically beneficial for China, could spell disaster for downstream countries like India and Bangladesh, which rely heavily on the river's uninterrupted flow. The Chinese government's lack of transparency concerning the scale and nature of these projects only adds to the concerns, as does its history of ignoring international water-sharing norms. International treaties and protocols mandate cooperation between countries that share transboundary rivers. Yet China has a track record of resisting adherence to such conventions. The Centre, as the representative of India's geopolitical interests, has so far been hesitant to take a firm stance against China's unilateral river management practices. With mounting evidence of the impacts on water flow, New Delhi faces increasing pressure to engage diplomatically, urging China to honour established water-sharing agreements and protocols. This is essential not only for India's water security but also for the preservation of the Brahmaputra Valley's socio-economic fabric.

The Climate Dimension: Glacier Melt and Rainfall Volatility

The climate crisis is an undeniable force contributing to the Brahmaputra's altered hydrology. Glacial retreat in the Himalayas has accelerated in recent years, driven by rising global temperatures. Since the Siang (Yarlung Tsangpo) accounts for a significant share of the Brahmaputra's total water volume, especially during winter, any reduction in glacier-fed contributions could have a cascading effect on the river's flow downstream.

Moreover, the changing climate is affecting rainfall patterns across the region. Unpredictable monsoons, extreme weather events, and extended droughts have become more frequent, impacting not just the Brahmaputra but the entire ecosystem it supports. If the Brahmaputra transitions from a perennial to a predominantly rain-fed river, the consequences for agriculture, fisheries, and hydropower in Assam could be devastating.

According to a study by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), the Himalayas, which supply a significant portion of water to the Brahmaputra, are warming at a rate faster than the global average. A report by NASA's Earth Science Division corroborates that the Himalayan glaciers have lost nearly a third of their ice mass in recent decades. This loss directly influences river systems like the Brahmaputra, making it increasingly vulnerable to seasonal variability.

## Hydrological Impact: Dredging and Waterway Management

Addressing the water flow irregularities of the Brahmaputra requires a multifaceted approach, beginning with better management of the river itself. Experts suggest dredging the Brahmaputra to deepen its channel, which would reduce flooding during the monsoon season and improve navigability year-round. Transforming the Brahmaputra into a fully functional national waterway holds promise for bolstering Assam's economic potential, but such interventions should be grounded in a thorough understanding of the river's unique ecosystem and hydrodynamics.

Effective dredging could reduce sedimentation, a major problem in the Brahmaputra, which is one of the most sediment-heavy rivers in the world. This would not only ease the chronic flood situation in Assam but also facilitate smoother inland navigation—a critical aspect of economic integration in India's Northeast. However, implementing such measures requires extensive research and collaboration between governmental agencies, scientists, and local communities to avoid unintended ecological consequences.

## The Role of International Cooperation and Governance

The Brahmaputra's challenges underscore the need for robust international cooperation. It is crucial that India engages with China through diplomatic channels to establish a reliable information-sharing mechanism concerning the river's water flows. In the absence of formal treaties, informal dialogues and back-channel negotiations could pave the way for more structured cooperation. Additionally, multilateral platforms like the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal (BBIN) Initiative offer opportunities to address shared water concerns collectively.

The World Bank has previously advocated for regional river basin management initiatives, which could serve as a template for the Brahmaputra. If all stakeholders—including China—commit to a shared vision of sustainable river management, it would mitigate the risks associated with unilateral actions. This approach could also bring additional benefits, such as improved flood management, enhanced agriculture, and greater regional stability.

## Preserving the Brahmaputra Valley Civilisation: A Call for Action

The Brahmaputra is more than just a river; it is the lifeblood of Assam's cultural, social, and economic identity. The rising threats to its stability—from the unpredictable impacts of climate change to the geopolitical maneuvers by neighboring countries—demand a comprehensive and well-coordinated

response. This includes stricter enforcement of environmental regulations, enhanced data collection on river flow dynamics, and increased investment in adaptive infrastructure to cope with future uncertainties.

The state government, in coordination with the Centre, must take proactive measures to mitigate these challenges. A dedicated Brahmaputra River Commission could serve as a centralised body to oversee the implementation of sustainable river management practices, coordinate with international partners, and ensure the ecological health of the river system. Additionally, the scientific community must be empowered with greater resources to study the Brahmaputra's changing hydrology, focusing on predictive models that account for both climatic and geopolitical variables.

## Navigating a Complex Future

The crisis surrounding the Brahmaputra's receding waters is a stark reminder of the complex interplay between nature and politics in South Asia. Addressing this issue requires a blend of science, diplomacy, and regional cooperation. For Assam, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the Brahmaputra is not just an environmental necessity but an existential imperative. The challenge is daunting, but with a clear-eyed, unified strategy, the region can safeguard its future, ensuring that the Brahmaputra continues to flow as a perennial source of life and prosperity for generations to come.

## What's next for China and India as Modi, Xi start over?

24 October 2024, DW, Murali Krishnan

At the BRICS summit in Russia, Narendra Modi and Xi Jinping triggered a diplomatic thaw after years of icy relations between India and China. But is it enough for the two Asian rivals to overcome their mutual distrust?

A diplomatic reset between India and China seems to be underway after the leaders of the two countries met at a BRICS summit in Kazan, Russia, this week.

Both India's Narendra Modi and China's Xi Jinping made public pledges to improve ties, and praised the recent progress towards solving territorial disputes in the Himalayas.

Chinese President Xi said both China and India were ancient civilizations in a phase of intense development and modernization, and should adhere to the principle of being "partners rather than competitors."

Modi called for "[m]utual trust, mutual respect, and mutual sensitivity" between the two most populous nations in the world.

Border conflicts as a stumbling block

The talks between Xi and Modi come at the heels of a recent deal on patrolling the remote and highly disputed border area between India and China. While the rivalry between the two Asian powers is deep and wide-reaching, their troops clashing in the Himalayas could be seen as a trigger point for the latest diplomatic freeze.

In June 2020, a border clash reportedly caused the deaths of 20 Indian soldiers and an unknown number of Chinese troops. In the years between that event and the Kazan BRICS summit, Modi and Xi have not held any formal face-to-face talks, although they have briefly met each other on the sidelines of other international conferences.

The reported border deal will enable Indian troops to resume patrols up to the two major friction areas, Depsang and Demchok. Details remain scarce, however, it is worth noting that China did not use the word "agreement" in its readout of the Modi-Xi meeting, instead labelling it "important progress in resolving relevant issues."

According to a Xinhua report: "Modi put forward ideas and suggestions on improving and developing bilateral relations, to which Xi Jinping agreed in principle."

De-escalation still to come

India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said Beijing and New Delhi would initially focus on disengagement before taking up de-escalation and de-induction of forces at the "appropriate time."

"We will have to make continuous efforts that the mechanics of the agreement will be such that such clashes can be stopped," he said.

While experts have welcomed the intent on both sides to improve their relations, they warned that the talks would not lead to a renewal of business as usual.

"We do not expect any miracles. There will be the need to continue the dialogue and work towards improving the relationship," Alka Acharya, honorary director of the Institute of Chinese Studies in India, told DW.

The grouping of five major emerging economies comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa represent over 40% of the world's population and almost a third of the global economy. The club decided to expand last year, with six new countries – Egypt, Ethiopia, Argentina, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Iran – joining it.

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Russia wants India and China to close ranks

While China and Russia push a narrative of using BRICS as a counterweight to the US and G7, other members have been more subdued. Their political systems differ, with India, Brazil and South Africa being democracies, while China and Russia are autocratic. This and other differences tend to hold BRICS back from acting as a cohesive political or economic unit.

"It would appear that the efforts this time have resulted in a breakthrough," Acharya said. "The multilateral groupings are also an important platform for India – which they cannot cede entirely to China. And Russia is a very critical partnership," she added. Srikanth Kondapalli, a professor of China studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University pointed that China was facing problems such as "economic headwinds, decoupling and derisking from the West, uncertainty about the course of the next US president, and territorial disputes in the neighborhood."

"In forums like BRICS, Russia would also like to see India and China come together so that it can expand the multipolar camp, neutralize sanctions, and reduce reliance on the US dollar as a reserve currency," Kondapalli told DW.

Why is China-India thaw important?

The Modi-Xi meeting in Kazan could "pave the way for normalization" in many areas, former diplomat Sujan Chinoy told DW.

"Resuming direct flights, addressing the trade deficit, and reinstating visa services between India and China could significantly contribute to normalizing relations and enhancing bilateral ties," added Chinoy, who now serves as the head of the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses. He also pointed out that BRICS allows India and China to be on the same platform, including in terms of developmental priorities for the Global South, which looks to both Asian giants to play a leadership role.

"In recent years, the multilateral space for cooperation between India and China has shrunk and the BRICS and SCO can help retrieve some ground on key issues, including combating terrorism, climate change, green transitions, and reforms of global institutions," said Chinoy.

### **The curious case of China renaming locations in India's Arunachal Pradesh**

24 October 2024, The Border Lens, Tejaswini S S and Rajesh A M

China's claim of Arunachal Pradesh as per China's Standard Map 2023 (Photo: Global Times)

Explore the recent Chinese renaming of Indian territory in Arunachal Pradesh. Understand their motivations & the geopolitical implications of this move.

Deciphering territorial claims and reasons behind exclusion of few districts

If William Shakespeare were alive today, China would have questioned his "What is in a name?" line from 'Romeo and Juliet' and defended its renaming efforts (of locations) countering that 'naming of things is relevant'.

The renaming spree in Arunachal Pradesh (names in standardised Chinese, Tibetan and Pinyin characters with latitude and longitude and a high resolution map) was started in 2017 and has spatial and temporal history including in Tibet, Xinjiang, South China Sea (SCS) and East China Sea (ECS). For example, People's Republic of China (PRC) has Chinese names for all the islands of Spratly Islands Group (the Nansha Islands) and Paracel Islands (Xisha islands).

The renaming covered a total of 62 locations including villages and towns (25), mountain peaks and passes (25), land segment (3), and rivers, streams, and lakes (9) with six locations in first batch (April, 2017), fifteen in 2nd batch (December, 2021), followed by eleven in April, 2023 and thirty in March, 2024.

Wu Qian, spokesman of Defence Ministry of China had rejected (March, 2024) India's right to Arunachal Pradesh by saying : "It is an undeniable fact that Zangnan has been Chinese territory since ancient times, where does the so-called 'Arunachal Pradesh' come from?".

This statement justifies the fact that it took China almost seven years for renaming and official publication of 62 Indian locations. This long, staggered duration adopted by China is possibly due to efforts by Chinese scholars (at the directions of People's Republic of China) to bake data to attach historical and cultural ties of renamed locations with Tibet and other parts of China, which can then be used to satisfy and justify, if need arises, the audience both domestic and global.

China does not claim whole of the state of Arunachal Pradesh, at least if one goes by the 2023 edition of China's Standard Map of Standard Map Service of the Ministry of Natural Resources, PRC.

Arunachal Pradesh currently has 26 districts and however districts like East Kameng, Kamle, Leparada, Lohit, Siang, Changlang, Tirap, Longding, and Namsai did not feature any of the renamed locations. East Kameng, Kamle, Leparada, Lohit, and Siang districts fall within the boundary of China's claimed territory formed by 62 renamed locations. If one carefully looks at the China's Standard Map of 2023 and Chinese version of Google Earth map, China's claims on Arunachal Pradesh exclude the whole of the districts of Changlang, Tirap, Longding, Namsai and most of Lohit district and parts of Anjaw district.

As per the 2011 Census Data of India, there were 5587 villages in Arunachal Pradesh. If we remove 845 villages (115 of Lohit district, 178 of Namsai district and 362 of Changlang and 190 villages of Tirap district & Longding district), theoretically China claims over 4735 villages.

But there is a notable discrepancy in China's claims over Arunachal Pradesh. According to sources including the Chinese, the so called South Tibet (Zangnan) encompasses an area of approximately 90,000 to 93,000 square kilometre and is said to have a population of approximately one million. When Arunachal Pradesh is only 83,743 square kilometre as per Government of India, where is the additional 6000-9000 square kilometre of territory in the so called Zangnan.

Also, 2023 edition of China's Standard Map excludes 13,816 square kilometre area comprising Changlang, Tirap, Longding, Namsai and most of Lohit district and parts of Anjaw district. Therefore, China needs to tell the world where is this additional claim of 19,816-22,816 square kilometre area of the so called Zangnan (13,816 square kilometre combined with 6000-9000 square kilometre).

It could be possible that Zangnan has parts of it in Bhutan and or Myanmar and China does not want to admit this in public to avoid diplomatic collision or there is something seriously wrong with Survey of India's measurement of the Arunachal Pradesh or PRC is confusing the stakeholders as its claims are baseless and unsubstantiated. Looking at the China's history of territorial claims, the latter is the most plausible explanation. It appears that China is following Sun Tzu's quote "the whole secret lies in confusing the enemy, so that he cannot fathom our real intent" in letter and spirit.

China kept these districts of Arunachal Pradesh out of the Standard Map 2023 due to following reasons: districts of Changlang, Tirap, Longding have strong presence of National Socialist Council of Nagalim-Yung Aung (NSCN-YA), United National Liberation Front of Asom- Independent (ULFA-I), and National Socialist Council of Nagalim-Isaac/Muivah (NSCN-IM) who reportedly received China's support (financial, training, weapons) and are three of the many North East India origin Insurgent Groups with various demands including a separate nation state and more autonomy. These IIGs do operate under the China's umbrella of influence and act as its eyes and ears. So by not including these districts, China has kept them on its side. Another reason is China would be avoiding administrative and strategic inconvenience of not getting surrounded by India and Myanmar in districts of Changlang, Tirap, Longding, Namsai, Lohit and parts of Anjaw in which case it will be China's chicken's neck.



By renaming locations in Arunachal Pradesh what China (from its strategic perspective) has done is delimitation of Arunachal Pradesh which (delimitation) is usually the first step in any sacred bilateral relations for establishment of boundary and or resolution of any boundary issue. The other two steps being delineation and demarcation (usually in that order). Through delimitation one intends to identify the dots (may be residential areas, mountains and passes, rivers etc) in a particular area in order to conceptualise the boundaries or limits which in turn gives a sense of where the boundary of the area in question begins and ends.

Plotting latitudes and longitudes of all the 62 Indian locations renamed by China since 2017, gives a sense of geographical area covered (where the boundary begins and ends) which can later be delineated and demarcated by drawing lines on a map and construction of boundary pillars respectively. It covers almost all the districts except for the whole of the districts of Changlang, Tirap, Longding, Namsai and most of Lohit district and parts of Anjaw district which do not form part of Chinese claimed Indian territory of Arunachal Pradesh as can be seen in China's Standard Map, 2023.

A critical analysis events surrounding Cha's actions in Arunachal Pradesh reveals that some of the 62 renamed locations have earlier been transgressed by Chinese PLA wherein they had set up their tent and stayed for a few hours including hiring of Indian porters as happened in October, 2018 during which Chinese troops had entered approximately 14 kilometre inside near the banks of Mathu and Emra Rivers in Dibang valley. Emra River is a right-bank tributary of the Dibang River located in Dibang Valley district which eventually flows into the Brahmaputra River. Emra River (with the Chinese Pinyin name Niangmuri He) was in the fourth list of renamed locations released by China in March, 2024. The recent example of PLA spray painting rocks in Kapapu, near Chaglagam of Anjaw District is a testimony.

China needs reason/s to sustain its aggression especially in disputed territories. In case of Taiwan, it is that (China's claim) it is one of the last remaining symbols of China's reported history of centuries of humiliation and for SCS, it is the imaginary nine dash line. The renaming attempts in hitherto undisputed Arunachal Pradesh are because China needs to convince its domestic audience, allies and if necessitated the international jury with reasons for its claims before making any strategic decisions to carry on with its aggression tactics along the McMahon line and attempts to (if) occupy.

According to American Mandarin Society, China's PLA has India specific military doctrine called "Border Self-Defense Counterattack Operations"

detailed in Science of Military Strategy, 2013 Edition of Academy of Military Science's Military Strategy Research Department, Beijing. From China's point of view, this is a euphemism for "joint" PLA operations to fight along the China-India border with the objective to capture disputed territory (allegedly currently controlled by India) in order to improve China's "defensive" position; thereby resolutely "protecting territorial sovereignty and restoring border area peace and stability."

By renaming locations and giving baked history of their association with China, the latter is building a narrative to its domestic and global audience (as it is answerable to them, at least in theory!) that India is the aggressor here allegedly occupying its territory and China is only legitimately trying to reclaim them (in case it launches such operations). Therefore renaming locations and associating them with China is the first step before it can pursue its India specific military doctrine called "Border Self-Defense Counterattack Operations" .

Should China make attempts to occupy Arunachal Pradesh is best left to the wisdom of leaders of CCP and PRC as most countries including China and global institutions understand the reality that India, as a rising power, of 21st century is different and has moved on from 1962. China also understands that any such cross border attempts will be nothing but a mutually assured destruction of both nuclear powers. However, it is a totally different subject matter which will be explored in an another article another day.

Map aggression is one of the tactics of China that are intentionally ambiguous to create confusion among the stakeholders as it does in SCS without any concrete progress in 'Declaration on the Conduct of the Parties' and 'Framework for a Code of Conduct in the SCS'. It is much easier for any aggressor like China to continue with its geopolitical game of keeping the claimants guessing particularly in boundary disputes as it gives much larger space to manoeuvre the stakeholders.

Similarly in Arunachal Pradesh, China is keeping policy makers in India guessing and confused. India should tread this China's design with utmost planning and counter China's efforts by augmenting its current policy of enhancing border civilian and military infrastructure along the McMahon line. In addition, coordinated efforts be made along with other stakeholders in SCS and ECS to expose China's falsified claims and records in order to send a united message to China's domestic and global audience that China cannot succeed in its ill designs to capture territories of other sovereign nations.

**Thaw in Sino-Indian relations: Trust, but keep verifying**

24 October 2024, FirstPost, Chintamani Mahapatra

China has a well-known record of springing surprises and India needs to remain alert all the time

The Narendra Modi-Xi Jinping meeting on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in the Russian city of Kazan symbolises a thaw in the relationship between the two most powerful Asian countries that had turned bitter about four years ago in the wake of Chinese Army's unexpected attacks on Indian soldiers in the Galwan Valley.

India's commercial and political ties with China was moving in an upwardly positive trajectory when the Galwan incident occurred and Sino-Indian ties nosedived. In a way, a restrained Cold War type rivalry emerged with China more fiercely expanding its influence in countries around India and at the same time feeling jittery about deepening India-US security relations. India's proactive engagements in the Indo-Pacific, strengthening of the Quad, and Delhi's ability to navigate the turbulent geopolitics emerging from the Ukraine War with continuation of stronger ties with Moscow and Washington appeared to be Beijing's envy.

Moreover, Beijing also witnessed India's robust economic growth amidst downturn in global political economy, including in China.

China clearly sees the benefits of normalising ties with India, which has the tenacity to face Chinese muscle flexing along the LAC and the wisdom to maintain trade ties with China at the same time.

In addition, persistently taking unfriendly steps against India in the backdrop of US alliance politics in the Indo-Pacific, such as the Camp David Defence Pact with Japan and South Korea, AUKUS pact with Australia and Britain are now seen in Beijing as counterproductive. China is undoubtedly suspicious of Quad as well, but respects India as a country that maintains its strategic autonomy.

The way India has been able to keep Pakistan at bay also sends a clear signal to China that Islamabad may be proud of its all weather friendship with China, but an unstable Pakistan cannot be a durable strategic asset and may actually become a liability.

Chinese think in the long term and take steps with a strategic vision. The high level dialogues between the two sides at multiple levels to restore peace and stability along the border and its positive outcome is the byproduct of current Chinese strategic thinking.

India too is a responsible international actor with deep strategic calculations. The Modi government has successfully deterred further Chinese advances along the LAC, reinforced the military presence in the border regions, built critical infrastructure in the difficult Himalayan terrain, and simultaneously refused to normalise ties with China unless peace along the border is maintained and status quo of April 2020 is restored.

The latest agreement by both the parties is a welcome development and the very first step to restore normalcy is mirrored in the Modi-Xi meeting in Kazan. Both China and India support a multipolar world order, both oppose unilateralism in principle, both seek to champion the cause of the Global South, and both are members of multiple multilateral mechanisms, including BRICS, East Asia Summit, ASEAN Regional Forum, and many others.

Prime Minister Modi has aptly said that Sino-Indian cooperation can bring dividends for regional and global security. External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar has often stated that the 21st century cannot become an Asian Century without deeper and expansive Sino-Indian cooperation.

However, the Modi-Xi meeting in Russia is only a first necessary step. It perhaps gives satisfaction to the strategic community and the peace lovers in the Indo-Pacific region. After all, many Indo-Pacific countries face their own dilemmas in navigating the Sino-Indian differences and disputes. Thaw in Sino-Indian ties is certainly good news for them. But it is not a positive sign for countries that played China against India or saw strategic gains in emerging Sino-Indian competition in certain areas. Thus, complications will arise on the way to normalising India's relations with China. Some hardliners from both sides may also hold on to their conventional views that normalisation of relations is not possible until the entire boundary disputes are resolved. Besides, India needs to be cautious, careful and diligent to progress through myriad dialogue mechanisms that have remained stalled since 2020.

China has a well-known record of springing surprises and India needs to remain alert all the time. Trust is an imperative to conduct international relations, but history teaches us that it is important to keep verifying the moves of other countries, so that words, written and spoken, match actions on the ground.

### Decoding Chinese Military Diplomacy in South Asia

24 October 2024, ORF, Col (DR) DCS Mayal

#### Introduction

"To win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill."

~ Sun Tzu

Nations are increasingly using military power as a form of diplomacy,[1] with a notable surge in military diplomacy[a] stemming from overt displays of hard power. This escalation is largely attributed to the engagement of armed forces in civilian affairs through what is referred to as Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW)[b] both domestic and

overseas, with minimal risk, cost, and time. A revolution in communication technologies has led to increased interactions and interdependencies in the global community, resulting in the influence of soft power extending beyond government domains. Non-traditional threats such as terrorism and climate change have further underscored the significance of military diplomacy in addressing new challenges that transcend geographical and political boundaries.

In this context, the role of the military has transformed from traditional defence, deterrence, compulsion, and intervention to non-traditional peace-time activities such as crisis prevention, early warning, and post-conflict rebuilding. The aim is to establish stability and security through a “disarmament of the mind”, i.e., a change in the attitudes and perceptions of participants and stakeholders. Countries are forming alliances, coordinating operations, working towards interoperability, and sharing technology to achieve a pragmatic strategic outlook towards lasting peace.[2] Chinese military diplomacy has played a crucial role in advancing the overall political and diplomatic objectives of Beijing and safeguarding the country’s strategic interests. Since the beginning of the 21st century, China has departed from Deng Xiaoping’s policy of “Hide your strength, bide your time”[c] and replaced it with a more aggressive policy that emphasises defence and security and seeks to address the historical grievances the nation endured during the period referred to as the ‘Century of Humiliation’.[d] The United States’ (US) heightened focus on Afghanistan, Iraq, terrorism, and the 2008 financial crisis created space for China to strengthen its international presence, enabling it to expand its global influence and enhance regional security.[3] The People’s Liberation Army (PLA) has become more active in military diplomacy, as emphasised by Chinese military writings over the past decade. The stated objectives of military diplomacy, derived from broader PLA missions, include supporting national foreign policy, protecting sovereignty, advancing the national interest, and shaping the international security environment.[4]

#### China’s Military Diplomacy

Despite possessing the second most powerful army in the world, China is a late entrant in military diplomacy. Eventually, military diplomacy emerged as an important tool for China to leverage its global influence, assisting in the development of a comprehensive approach to evolving multidimensional security threats. China’s approach since the beginning of the 21st century has been marked by a paradigm shift from inward to outward, with the expansion and modernisation of the PLA aimed at protecting China’s expanding overseas interests. Historically, the PLA has played a minor

role in Chinese foreign policy. However, following the establishment of a more nationalist and assertive Chinese foreign policy, the PLA began serving strategic and operational goals to aid the national diplomacy and security strategy.[5] Thus, tracking the PLA’s diplomatic activities[e] could help in better understanding the trends in China’s diplomatic goals and interests.

China’s expanding international interests necessitate enabling a favourable security environment that can facilitate overseas investments and safeguard its citizens and assets globally. Chinese leadership has also indicated that it expects the PLA to play a larger role in expanding Chinese national and security interests abroad through military diplomacy. At an All-Military Diplomatic Work Conference and the 16th Military Attaché Working Conference in 2015, President Xi Jinping highlighted the role of military diplomacy by stating that the PLA’s external activities must serve China’s larger foreign policy strategy, uphold national security and sovereignty, and promote the military’s development. One of the key elements of this goal is building and maintaining the ability to control the narrative and shape favourable global perceptions.[6]

Indeed, military diplomatic activities have increased under Xi. From 2003 to 2012, China averaged 151 military diplomatic activities[f] per year. The average from 2013 to 2018 was 20 percent higher, at nearly 179 activities per year.[7] The April 2024 edition of the China Maritime Report highlights a notable but partial recovery in China’s military diplomacy activities in 2023, following a decline in engagements with foreign militaries during the COVID-19 pandemic.[8] This international exposure has also provided valuable insights into foreign military strategies, training methods, management techniques, technologies, equipment, and tactics.[9]

A 2019 defence white paper stated that China’s security cooperation around the world supports Xi’s vision to create a “community with a shared future for mankind” and “building a new model security partnership”.[10] Articles published in January 2023 reiterated the importance of military diplomacy in achieving China’s national rejuvenation, serving the country’s diplomatic interests, and protecting or defending national interests abroad. A number of authoritative books from PLA institutes on military diplomacy were also published around 2015, highlighting the emphasis placed on military diplomacy by the Chinese leadership.[g]

To counter Western domination and highlight its role as global security provider, Chinese military diplomacy aims to cultivate relationships with developing and underdeveloped countries. The year 2023 was the first year for fully implementing the guiding principles laid down at the 20th CCP

National Congress. In the area of military diplomacy, the PLA relied on the “Xi Jinping Thought on Strengthening the Military”[h] and “Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy”,[i] followed the lead of the head of state, and undertook high-level exchanges focused on practical cooperation, with an emphasis on multilateral platforms.[11] China’s military diplomacy activities in 2023 included senior-level visits and meetings, joint exercises, naval port calls, humanitarian activities, and academic exchanges. [12] According to Ministry of National Defense (MND) spokesperson Wu Qian, China’s military diplomacy in 2023 “served the overall political and diplomatic objectives of China”; “resolutely safeguarded national sovereignty, security and development interests”; “expanded foreign-related military operations”; “made innovative efforts in multilateral diplomacy”; and “contributed to building a community with a shared future for mankind.”[13] Beijing also promotes various global and regional initiatives, the largest of which are the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and three other global initiatives—i.e., the Global Development Initiative (GDI),[j] the Global Security Initiative (GSI),[k] and the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI).[l],[14] These three have been introduced as part of the country’s foreign policy under Xi, with the aim of establishing China as a leader in global governance and offering alternatives to the Western-led global order. The complementary and amorphous GDI, GSI, and GCI concepts in China’s “Community of Common Destiny”[m] can be viewed as components of a larger push to establish China as a leader in global governance.[15] The GDI and GSI can support military diplomacy by fostering strategic partnerships and military economic activities through dual-use infrastructure and development projects, enhancing security cooperation through joint exercises, intelligence- and infrastructure-sharing agreements, defence industrial cooperation, technology transfer, humanitarian aid, military training, educational exchanges, and peacekeeping efforts. These actions would boost China’s global influence and reinforce military relations. Following purges of the foreign ministry and military in 2023,[16] Xi is likely to install new field commanders to marshal the civilian and military envoys he has called on to forge a “diplomatic iron army”.[n] In December 2023, former Navy chief Dong Jun was appointed defense minister—a rank-and-file Central Military Commission role whose primary responsibility is liaising with foreign militaries.[17] Every Chinese leader since Mao Zedong has implemented a programme to compel the commercial and civil sectors to support the PLA. These

programmes are known by various terms, including the Civil-Military Integration (CMI) and the Military-Civil Fusion (MCF). Under Xi, the role of the military and the MCF have been increasingly promoted. [18] The MCF replaced the CMI and has been frequently discussed in China’s Five-Year Plans (FYP) and academic literature.

The MCF strategy is more complex than the CMI; the CMI refers to the cooperation between government and commercial facilities in Research & Development, manufacturing, and maintenance operations, whereas MCF is a state-led, state-directed programme that leverages state and commercial power to strengthen the PLA. The strategy is aimed at promoting the sharing of resources and collaboration in research and applications to ensure mutually beneficial economic cooperation and national defence construction.[19] MCF aims to enable China to become an economic, technological, and military superpower by fusing the country’s military and civilian industrial and Science & Technology resources.[20] The PLA also uses military diplomacy through the MCF to gather intelligence, learn new skills, benchmark PLA capabilities against those of other nations, and build interoperability with foreign partners.[21]

The exposure to innovative Western scientific technologies has enabled China to redirect its intelligence collection towards acquiring advanced dual-use technologies and equipment and leveraging the capabilities of research institutes, universities, and companies. Additionally, collaborative operations with foreign armed forces have not only contributed to the enhancement of Chinese military capabilities but also stimulated the Chinese economy and exports by showcasing cheap Chinese military technologies on the global stage. The military use of Chinese-operated foreign infrastructure is also set to increase as key projects and security relationships mature. Chinese integration into global transport networks allows China to monitor, delay, and potentially obstruct the activities of US and other competitors. [22] For the purposes of analysis, Chinese military diplomacy objectives can be divided into strategic and operational goals (see Table 1).

In its Annual China Military Power Report 2023, the US Department of Defense highlighted that, besides the existing overseas military base in Djibouti, China has likely considered adding military logistics facilities in 19 countries.[o],[24] PLA Navy (PLAN) vessels make extensive use of Chinese firms’ network of commercial transport infrastructure around the globe to safeguard China’s overseas interests and carry out far-seas protection across the long, vulnerable sea lanes stretching to coastal China. The most significant observations of this existing dual-use capability emerge from the network of nearly 100

ocean ports owned and/or operated by Chinese firms in foreign jurisdictions.[25] PLAN warships have now made port calls at over one-third of these facilities, utilising China's trade-centric infrastructure network.[26]

A number of Chinese multinationals, including the China Ocean Shipping Corp (COSCO) and China Merchants Group (CMG), operate global port terminals. Their assets form a vertically integrated transport network that supports China's international trade. These facilities are preferred by the PLAN and also enable PLA peacetime operations far from China. Domestic laws require Chinese firms to give PLA vessels preferential access, share information, and support defence mobilisation. Additionally, these ports collect extensive data on vessels, routes, cargos, and personnel, providing valuable intelligence, especially since military vessels often use commercial ports.[27] Notably, the PLAN has surpassed the PLA in exercise involvement, underscoring China's commitment to building a blue-water navy.[28]

China has integrated the trillion-dollar BRI connectivity project with military diplomacy to leverage its leadership role on security issues. Following the launch of the BRI in 2013, China has made infrastructure developments in the vicinity of South Asia, including in Djibouti, the Melaka Gateway port in Malaysia, and an industrial park near Duqm port in Oman.[29] In South Asia, Chinese military diplomacy footprints are being created in Gwadar (Pakistan), Hambantota (Sri Lanka), Coco Island (Myanmar), and Uthuru Thila Falhu Island (Maldives).[30] In the Indian Ocean and the West Philippine Sea, a covert conflict is underway, driven by China's maritime militia, known as the Third Sea Force which, disguised as civilian research vessels, pursue Beijing's geopolitical ambitions.[31] Despite international rulings against its South China Sea claims,[32] China is militarising the region by building artificial islands and releasing a "new standard" map to assert territorial claims and position itself at key maritime routes to challenge its rivals.[33]

Besides supporting foreign policy objectives and securing the lines of communication for energy resources and raw materials, military diplomacy has provided China with the opportunity to expand the range and geographic reach of PLA operations globally without raising red flags. Between March 2020 and April 2021, the PLA provided military medical assistance and donations to 56 countries around the world and participated in a UN peacekeeping mission. With the exception of two countries, all of the PLA's medical diplomatic activities targeted BRI countries.[34] Beijing is the 10th largest troop and police contributor (2,274

personnel) of any country and the second largest financial supporter, providing nearly 19 percent of UN peacekeeping programme funding.[35] Four out of six major BRI continental/maritime projects are located in South Asia and are in close proximity to India, including the Chinese China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) flagship project.

The integration of the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB), the Maritime Silk Route (MSR), the Digital Silk Route (DSR), the Space Information Corridor (SIC), and the Health Silk Road (HSR) with the BRI has further placed China in an unassailable position to monitor, scan, and govern global dynamics at critical choke points through military diplomacy.

Most South Asian countries, with the exception of Bhutan, have joined the BRI. Since 2018, China has committed or invested over US\$150 billion in the economies of Bangladesh, the Maldives, Myanmar, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan; China is now the largest overseas investor in the Maldives, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.[36]

South Asia has long been the hotbed of Sino-Indian strategic competition. A strategically located South Asia in the Western periphery of China, which has almost a quarter of the global population concentrated in only 3.5 percent of the total landmass, provides an ideal opportunity for Chinese westward expansion to the Middle East, Africa, and Europe through both continental and maritime routes and would be instrumental in relieving China from its 'Malacca Dilemma'[p] and helping fulfill its 'Middle Kingdom Dream'.[q] An underdeveloped but fertile South Asian region also provides China with ample opportunities to ensure uninterrupted connectivity for its energy, raw materials, and finished products to fuel its economy, ensure food security for its largest population, and absorb surplus capital, production, and construction capabilities particularly to fill the vacuum created after the withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan. China could also use the BRI to win the favour of the large youth population in South Asia to overcome challenges such as unemployment, rampant corruption, illiteracy, and ageing populations.

Chinese military diplomacy in South Asia, with the exception of Pakistan, was limited till the end of the 20th century. Chinese approach in the region shifted in the beginning of the 21st century. The approach aims to encircle India through continental and maritime routes for effectively pursuing its String of Pearls strategy.[r] India contributes 68 percent of the total landmass, 75 percent of the population, and 79 percent of the economic output in South Asia.

The PLA's military diplomacy has grown in the last three decades.[37] China has prioritised military interactions over civilian engagements, viewing military diplomacy as more enduring and conducive



to advancing security objectives. Almost half of all official visits or exchanges with other nations have been spearheaded by military officers. PLA military diplomacy places emphasis on Asia, which accounted for 41 percent of all interactions in 2003 to 2016. [38] Since 2013, the PLA has increased its military diplomacy activities, especially joint military exercises. Nearly a third of these exercises between 2003 to 2016 were with Pakistan, and India was among the top five PLA partners globally for such drills. Sri Lanka and Pakistan were among the top five global destinations for port calls.[39] Since 2020, however, joint military exercises with South Asia have declined compared to pre-COVID years, due to geopolitical tensions between China and India, leaving Pakistan as the only partner.[40]

To augment its expeditionary capabilities and protect its overseas strategic interests, China is increasing the strength of its marine corps from 20,000 in 2017 to 100,000 according to latest data.[41] There are speculations about China's plans to deploy these personnel overseas at the Gwadar Port and Djibouti. China has also enlisted Pakistan to deploy 30,000 Pakistan military personnel to protect Chinese citizens in the CPEC and is also in talks with the Taliban about the safety of Chinese citizens.[42] After the March 2024 suicide attack on Chinese engineers at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan, China is also considering deploying PLA personnel for the protection of its CPEC assets.[43]

China has enacted laws and regulations to strengthen the legal framework for implementing military strategies both domestically and internationally. The extraterritorial application of these laws aims to secure cooperation from Chinese citizens, diaspora, and foreign entities, posing distinct challenges to global freedom of expression. Key laws that bolster the legal basis for security and military activities abroad include the National Security Law (2015), the National Intelligence Law (2017), the new maritime law (2021), and the new land border law (2022). Additionally, in June 2022, China signed an order to implement the "Action Guidelines on Military Operations Other Than War" on an experimental basis, allowing the Chinese military to conduct "special military operations" abroad.[s],[44]

While China tailors its public diplomacy approach for each South Asian country, the following tools are common:

- Direct communication and visits between leaders of the Central Military Commission (CMC) and the defence and military leadership of the country.[45]
- Hosting peace and security fora to introduce BRI and other Chinese initiatives. [46] Similarly, military signalling of Chinese

leadership displeasure through the cancellation of high-level engagements, dialogues, and exercises.

- Military economic activities through the construction and overseeing of dual-use port/ infrastructure/Special Economic Zone (SEZ) facilities, infrastructure-sharing agreements, foreign military bases, defence industrial cooperation, technology transfer, and military production at pivotal chokepoints and use of Chinese space technology for navigation.
- Showcasing, export, maintenance, and training/handling of Chinese military equipment/technologies, including vaccine diplomacy with foreign militaries.[47]
- Shaping/signalling of military expeditionary capabilities through joint operations, training, exercises, games, and cultural activities in international security operations.[48]
- Intelligence-sharing agreements.
- Military research/funding/academic collaboration for pursuing higher studies, dual technology identification/transfer, and talent hunting.
- CMF incorporating civilians abroad to reinforce China's security.
- Salami-slicing tactics or carefully calibrated non-war military activities to pursue territorial/ maritime claims, including the construction of border defence villages in Tibet.
- Illegal, Unlawful, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing activities in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)
- New laws to strengthen the legal basis for security and military activities abroad

#### China's Footprints in South Asian Military Diplomacy Pakistan

Pakistan is a lynchpin for China to leverage its military diplomacy footprints in South Asia. Chinese military diplomacy in Pakistan can be identified from China's clandestine assistance in the nuclearisation of Pakistan,[49] the manufacture of military hardware including ballistic missiles at National Defense Complex, Rawalpindi[50] and JF-17 fighter jet at Pakistan Aeronautical Complex (PAC) Kamra, [51] leasing land to China in Gilgit-Baltistan, [52] Pakistan gifting two Sindh islands to China, [53] and the repatriation of Uighurs to China.[54]

After the March 2024 suicide attack on Chinese nationals in Pakistan, there are speculations that Beijing may push Islamabad to accept Chinese security agencies to guard CPEC projects.[55] China and Pakistan are also reportedly about to sign a deal that would involve setting up joint security companies and deploying Chinese security personnel for the protection of Chinese projects and workers.[56]

Nepal

Chinese military diplomacy in Nepal can be identified from professional military and language training, capacity-building for UN Peacekeeping forces, the establishment of a defence university, [57] the installation of a 5G tower on Mount Everest, [58] restrictions on Nepalese citizens joining the Indian Army Agniveer Scheme, the possible employment of Gurkhas in the PLA, [59] the construction of the Lumbini airport, [60] and the elimination of Tibetan activism in Nepal. [61]

#### Bangladesh

Bangladesh is China's second-largest arms importer (17 percent of total export between 2016-20), after Pakistan. [62] Chinese military diplomacy footprints in Bangladesh can be identified from the delivery/training of military equipment, [63] regular military exchanges, the construction of a submarine base in Cox Bazar in 2023, [64] and the modernisation of Chittagong Port. Bangladesh has also allocated two SEZs to China—in Chittagong Port and Dhaka. [65]

#### Maldives

Since Muizzu became president in November 2023, there has been an increase in Chinese military diplomacy in the Maldives. The Feydhoo Finolhu island is leased to China, [66] artificial islands are being developed, [67] Indian troops have withdrawn from the country, [68] and the China-Maldives military agreement was signed in March 2024. [69]

#### Bhutan

Chinese military diplomacy footprint in Bhutan remains insignificant despite sharing a land border. Through their salami-slicing strategy, the Chinese have built roads and erected new villages and administrative centres for their military in Bhutan. [70]

#### Afghanistan

Following US withdrawal, Chinese military diplomacy in Afghanistan can be identified from the setting up of a mountain brigade by China, the reported PLA deployment in Wakhan corridor, [71] and the creation of the Quadrilateral Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism. [72] In May 2023, the Taliban agreed to allow China to extend BRI infrastructure into Afghanistan from Pakistan. [73]

#### Sri Lanka

In addition to the lease of Hambantota port, Chinese military diplomacy in Sri Lanka is seen in the provision of Mandarin language classes for the police, [74] the construction of an artificial island off Colombo, [75] the docking of a surveillance ship at a Sri Lankan port, [76] and the supply of arms and ammunition to Sri Lanka. There are also rumours that Beijing plans to build a radar facility at Dondra Bay, to monitor maritime activities in the IOR. [77]

#### Conclusion

Since the beginning of the 21st century, China has increased its military diplomacy footprint in South Asia. With financial and military support, China is

increasing its influence in South Asia, which could pose a security threat and isolate India in its IOR backyard. [78]

China's military diplomacy leverages the MCF to extend its global reach through economic initiatives like the BRI for dual-use infrastructure projects, defence industrial cooperation, arms export, Chinese space technology, salami-slicing tactics, IUU fishing, and strategic bases at key global chokepoints, including South Asia. In contrast, India's military diplomacy is focused on counterbalancing China in South Asia and the Indian Ocean.

India appears to be ambivalent about using military diplomacy to further its national interests. Instead, it emphasises humanitarian aid, joint exercises, defence cooperation, and regional engagement to build strategic partnerships and regional stability. Overall, India's military diplomacy is yet to reach the desired levels. However, there have been a few qualitative developments in the last decade. [79]

To offset the military diplomacy by the Chinese as an extra-regional power in South Asia, there is a need to take cognisance of growing Chinese footprints in the region and initiate appropriate timely steps. India's armed forces have versatile capabilities across terrains and climates for conventional and non-traditional operations. Adopting military diplomacy similar to those of China could boost India's global standing and serve as a vital tool for achieving national objectives.

### We need to talk about China

24 October 2024, The Article, Stephen Rand

All good things come to an end. For China, that saying might finally be catching up. Since 1978, the country has defied economic gravity, becoming the world's growth engine. As Gordon Brown found out, if you think you've solved the riddle of boom and bust you're just storing up trouble. So brace yourself: the wheels seem to be coming off the Chinese economy, and the consequences will ripple far beyond Beijing's borders.

In 2023, China's GDP grew by 5.2%—a figure that would be the envy of any developed nation, but for China, it's sluggish, well below its pre-pandemic trajectory. Worse still, the World Bank forecasts an even slower 4.8% for 2024, signalling that deeper, structural problems are at play, and they're set to get worse before they improve.

China faces the same headwinds as the wider global economy — sluggish growth, weak international trade, tight monetary policies, and geopolitical flashpoints from the Middle East to Europe. But Beijing has an additional set of self-inflicted wounds: weak domestic demand, a limping property sector,

and limited capacity for traditional stimulus measures. It's a toxic brew.

What's more troubling is that China's official numbers, always massaged by state-controlled reporting, may not even tell the full story. Beneath the surface lies a ticking real estate time bomb, a mountain of debt, and creeping social controls—all of which cast long shadows over China's economic future.

At the core of China's dilemma is the absence of a meaningful firewall between the state and the economy. The government wields the business world as just another lever of political control. This has worked fairly well in the past. The Chinese Communist Party forced the population to trade personal freedoms for economic prosperity, but the opening of the markets delivered one of the biggest reductions in poverty in history. That deal was predicated on uninterrupted growth. If the engine stalls, Xi Jinping could face an angry and restless populace.

In an attempt to stave off economic collapse, Beijing has been throwing the kitchen sink at the problem. In the wake of the pandemic, the Chinese government launched a series of fiscal stimuli, starting with \$450 billion in 2020. By 2023, an additional \$110 billion was added, followed by the largest-ever intervention—\$1.07 trillion in 2024. These measures aim to prop up infrastructure, keep the stock market afloat, and shore up the struggling property sector. But none of it seems to be working.

China's debt-to-GDP ratio now exceeds 280%, a figure comparable to Western economies like the UK and US. Yet it's the structure of this debt that's particularly worrying. The central government's debt-to-GDP ratio is a relatively modest 83.6%—low by international standards (the UK sits at 100%, and the US at 120%). But this statistic masks the real danger—soaring local government debt.

By 2023, local government debt in China had ballooned to over \$9 trillion, accounting for 45-50% of the country's GDP. In contrast, local government debt in the US and UK sits at just 15% and 4% of GDP respectively. The difference is stark, but it's not just the scale that's troubling. Chinese local governments rely heavily on off-balance-sheet entities, such as Local Government Financing Vehicles (LGFVs), to finance infrastructure projects and service debt. These LGFVs are hard to track, prone to corruption, and largely funded by selling land to housing developers — fuel for China's overinflated property market.

What this means is that central government has effectively offloaded its fiscal problems onto local government, making the latter dependent on land sales to keep afloat. If (or rather, when) the housing bubble bursts, this vital revenue stream will vanish,

pushing heavily indebted local authorities into a fiscal crisis. With limited ways to raise funds, many will be forced to default on the mountains of debt they have accumulated. This isn't just a local issue—it's a ticking time bomb for the entire Chinese economy.

Every fiscal stimulus Beijing unveils feels like plugging a leaking dyke. Sooner or later, the dam will burst, and the long-term consequences will be devastating. Even if the Communist Party bureaucrats were to undertake serious structural reforms, which they won't, it's probably too late.

The property market is the canary in the coal mine for any economy. For decades, China's real estate sector was the pillar of its economic boom, accounting for almost 30% of its GDP—a staggering figure when compared to the US, where real estate peaked at 18% before the 2008 crash. And now that Chinese pillar of growth is crumbling.

Take Evergrande, one of China's largest developers, which went bust this year with liabilities exceeding \$300 billion. To put that in perspective, Boeing—currently a topic of international business scrutiny—has liabilities and shareholders' equity of around \$130 billion. When Lehman Brothers collapsed in 2008, triggering the biggest financial crisis since 1929, its liabilities stood at \$613 billion. But Lehman was a bank. Evergrande is a property developer and a liability of \$300 billion is enough to bring down numerous Lehmans. Evergrande was a housing behemoth.

Yet, despite Evergrande's failure, the full-scale crisis many expected hasn't materialised—yet. The Chinese government stepped in, restructuring the company's debts and managing the collapse. In a free market, such an implosion would have reverberated through the banking sector, potentially triggering a Lehman-style crisis. But in China's state-controlled system, the damage has been contained. However, other over-leveraged developers are teetering on the edge, and the broader property market remains on the brink of collapse. There just isn't enough money in the world for the Chinese Communist Party to keep papering over the cracks.

The Evergrande saga has been unfolding since 2021, when it first missed a bond interest payment. Had China allowed the market to take the hit then, it might have been a manageable crisis, a storm in a teacup. But Beijing's instinct to avoid even small disruptions has simply stored up trouble. Now, China finds itself chucking good money after bad, delaying the inevitable. A full-scale meltdown in the Chinese property market could dwarf the 2008 financial crisis, and the fallout would engulf not just financial institutions but wipe out local governments and millions of homeowners.

A deep recession in China wouldn't stay within its borders. Countries in Asia and Africa, whose economies rely on China's insatiable demand for raw materials, would be hit hard. A sharp drop in Chinese demand could push these nations into recession. Western markets, too, would be shaken, particularly in sectors exposed to China's real estate and infrastructure spending. Western financial institutions have eagerly ridden the wave of China's growth—part of your pension is likely invested in it.

But the biggest wildcard is China's vast reserves of US dollars. Officially, China holds over \$3 trillion in reserves, with estimates suggesting another \$3 trillion in "shadow reserves". If China released these dollars to prop up its domestic economy, the result could be global financial chaos. It would devalue the dollar and trigger a deflationary spiral—an economic nightmare. As any student of German history knows, it was deflation, not inflation, that brought down the Weimar Republic.

I'm not saying such a deflation is inevitable, but the risks are real. China's future is increasingly uncertain. Its addiction to debt, a crumbling property market, and growing geopolitical isolation are creating a perfect storm. Without serious reforms, China could face an economic collapse that would send shockwaves across the globe, reshaping the financial landscape for decades to come.

The West, meanwhile, cannot afford to be complacent. We need to prepare for a potential Chinese collapse. The storm might still be gathering, but when it hits, it will be a storm of historic proportions.

### **From Orchards to Auctions: The Chinese Robbery of Uyghur Wealth. Part II**

24 October 2024, Bitter Winter, Abdulhakim Idris

Properties of Uyghur "dissidents" are auctioned on Taobao and end up in the hands of Han Chinese.

The judicial auction process of Uyghur properties is also one of the bitter consequences of the Uyghur Genocide. It begins with the arrest and imprisonment of Uyghur businesspeople, often on so-called "terrorism" or "extremism" charges. These arrests are typically carried out with little due process or transparency. Following arrest, Chinese authorities confiscate the assets of imprisoned Uyghurs. These assets include real estate, businesses, company shares, and personal property. Chinese courts then issue orders for the confiscated assets to be auctioned off. These court orders are often the only official documentation of arrests and asset seizures.

The seized property is then listed on the judicial auction section of Taobao, an e-commerce platform owned by Alibaba Group. Taobao has been used by the Chinese judicial system since 2012 to auction

properties seized in criminal cases and properties that serve as collateral for overdue loans. When a property is auctioned on Taobao, potential buyers can bid on assets ranging from household appliances to multi-million-dollar real estate. Once the auction is complete, the property is transferred to the highest bidder. The proceeds from these sales often go to the Chinese Communist Party rather than to the families of imprisoned Uyghurs.

One example cited in a report on this issue is that of Abduljelil Helil, a prominent Uyghur real estate developer in Kashgar. He was arrested in 2017 for allegedly "aiding terrorist activities." Following his arrest, several properties owned by his company were auctioned on Taobao. One of these properties is a 17-story building in Kashgar, which was sold in 2021 for 750 million yuan (about \$116 million). Another case is that of Akbar Imin, a wealthy businessman from Khotan who was arrested in 2018 for allegedly making unauthorized Hajj pilgrimages. Following his arrest, his assets were seized and auctioned, including a valuable property in Urumqi sold on Taobao for 23 million yuan (about \$3.6 million).

Similarly, another Uyghur businessman, Rozi Haji Hemdul, was wrongfully arrested in 2017. Following his arrest, his assets were seized and auctioned on Taobao; a large commercial building in Urumqi was sold for over 100 million yuan (approximately \$15.5 million). The UHRP report also revealed a previously unreported case of a Uyghur individual whose property was auctioned in Hotan. The auction listing on Taobao included a court order stating that the individual had been imprisoned for "aiding terrorist activities." The property being auctioned is a residential building worth several million yuan. In another case, the report found evidence of property auctions linked to multiple members of the same family. Three people, all over the age of 75, were accused of allegedly "aiding terrorist activities." Shared family properties, including farmland and residences, were auctioned on Taobao.

Since 2019, courts in the Uyghur region have auctioned at least 150 assets on e-commerce sites, ranging from household appliances to real estate and company shares, belonging to at least 21 individuals and worth \$84.8 million. Amid a large-scale government campaign to assimilate Uyghur and other Turkic Muslim communities, tens of millions of dollars in assets belonging to imprisoned Uyghur business owners have been seized and auctioned off.

The role of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC), or Bingtuan as it is known, in confiscating Uyghur assets is also worth highlighting. Bingtuan has been involved in expropriating Uyghurs' land for agricultural and

industrial projects. These projects often prioritize Han Chinese settlers and workers, marginalizing Uyghur farmers and communities. The XPCC is not only involved in expropriating Uyghurs' land but also manages critical natural resources in the region, including water and minerals. Profits from these resources primarily benefit state-owned enterprises and Han Chinese interests rather than local Uyghur communities.

Bingtuan has been involved in surveillance operations, contributing to the broader control system over the Uyghur population. Its dual role as an economic entity and a paramilitary force enables it to implement government policies effectively. This unique structure allows the XPCC to serve as both an instrument of economic dominance and social control, playing an essential role in the systematic marginalization of Uyghurs. The XPCC's activities align with broader government strategies aimed at assimilating ethnic minorities and consolidating control over the region. The XPCC ensures that Uyghur communities remain economically dependent and politically repressed through its control over land, resources, and economic activities.

The destruction of Uyghur wealth through genocidal criminalization by the Chinese Communist Party in violation of human rights, international law and universal values is a calculated effort deeply intertwined with policies of control, assimilation, and economic domination. From the early land reforms that confiscated orchards and farms to the current auctions of Uyghur businesses and properties, this process has methodically eroded the financial and cultural foundations of the Uyghur people.

The introduction of organizations such as the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC) further increases the scale and intensity of this economic repression, ensuring that the benefits of the region's wealth flow to Han Chinese settlers and state-owned enterprises. At the same time, Uyghurs are left marginalized and economically powerless. What is happening to Uyghurs is not just a series of isolated incidents but part of a broader strategy to weaken Uyghur identity by removing the material and cultural wealth that sustains it. As the world watches, the brutal confiscation of Uyghurs' assets continues to reshape the region, leaving behind a legacy of loss, displacement, and economic devastation.

## From Orchards to Auctions: The Chinese Robbery of Uyghur Wealth. Part I

23 October 2024, Bitter Winter, Abdulhakim Idris



Sunday market in Khotan. Credits.

How confiscation of Uyghur wealth by China is pushing Uyghurs to poverty.

The genocide policy implemented by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in Xinjiang/East Turkestan is still continuing with all its violence. This genocide policy is felt in every aspect of life, from the placement of Uyghurs in concentration camps to forced sterilization, from the rape of women to the separation of children from their families.

An essential dimension of the Uyghur genocide is the confiscation of the assets of the Uyghur people and their impoverishment. The systematic confiscation of Uyghur wealth in the Uyghur region is not just a modern strategy but a long-standing method of control and repression with deep roots in Chinese policies dating back to the mid-20th century. What once began with land reform in Uyghurs' orchards and farms has evolved into a comprehensive campaign of economic displacement, with Uyghur businesses and property regularly confiscated and auctioned under the guise of counterterrorism or modernization.

Underlying this ongoing expropriation is a broader plan to undermine Uyghur existence, erode their economic base, and reshape the region for Han Chinese settlers' domination. This series explores the historical origins, methods, and effects of China's relentless campaign to deprive the Uyghur people of their wealth, from ancestral orchards to today's auction blocks.

Following the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the CCP initiated land reform policies that were particularly harsh in regions such as Xinjiang (East Turkestan). The government classified many Uyghur farmland owners as "landlords" and confiscated their land, homes, and property. These so-called land reforms were highly politicized and resulted in the indiscriminate confiscation of property from Uyghur families, especially in agricultural areas such as Kashgar.

The atrocities perpetrated by the CCP during the so-called land reforms have reached incredible



proportions. It is reported that the number of victims killed during land reform across China, including Uyghur lands, has exceeded one million. According to one study, families who owned even a pot of sugar or a water buffalo to plow the fields were reported so that their property could be confiscated. Thus, in some parts of China, the so-called land reform has become entirely arbitrary and out of control, with completely innocent peasants falling victim to an indiscriminate mob mentality.

Over the following decades, the Chinese Communist Party's repressive policies continued to erode Uyghurs' economic well-being. The Cultural Revolution, which began in 1966 and lasted for a decade, saw further attacks on Uyghur property owners and intellectuals, while the 1980s and 1990s brought waves of Han Chinese migration that began to change the demographic and economic landscape of the region.

After Xi Jinping took the helm of China in 2012, repression in the Uyghurs' homeland has intensified. In recent years, notably in 2014, he launched the "Strike Hard Campaign." Since its introduction, the confiscation of Uyghurs' assets has accelerated dramatically. On the other hand, Xi Jinping announced the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013. While projects stretching from China to Europe and Africa were on the agenda, the Chinese Communist Party claimed that it aimed for the world's equal economic growth. Xi gives the message that China will eradicate poverty worldwide at every opportunity.

However, when it comes to Uyghurs, this so-called equal development disappears. Instead, the Chinese government has implemented repressive policies under the guise of fighting so-called extremism. The Beijing government uses a variety of methods to confiscate Uyghurs' assets under the guise of counterterrorism, economic development or modernization initiatives. One of the most common strategies is land expropriation, where large tracts of agricultural land are taken from Uyghur farmers for industrial development, resource extraction projects, or redistribution to Han Chinese settlers. The compensation given to Uyghurs whose property is confiscated is often far below market value and insufficient for Uyghurs to maintain their previous standard of living. The loss of fertile land that once belonged to Uyghurs represents a significant financial blow and severs Uyghurs' ties to their ancestral lands.

When looking at the Chinese Communist Party's methods of confiscation, the expropriation of businesses, especially in sectors such as agriculture, textiles, and tourism, is also a common occurrence. Uyghur-owned businesses are forcibly transferred to state ownership or Han Chinese management. These

seizures are often carried out under the pretext of so-called anti-terrorism investigations or allegations of financial irregularities based on no evidence. Many Uyghur business owners have been detained in internment camps, and their assets have been frozen or confiscated in their absence.

Another way in which Uyghurs' assets are being removed is through so-called urban renewal programs. For example, urban renewal projects have resulted in the demolition of traditional Uyghur neighborhoods in cities such as Kashgar, Khotan, and Urumqi. Residents are often relocated to modern apartment blocks located far from their communities and previous livelihoods. These displacements disrupt the social networks and economic patterns that have sustained Uyghur communities for generations.

Another tool often used by the authorities is asset freezes. Bank accounts and property of Uyghurs accused of so-called "extremism" or "separatism" are usually frozen, leaving families destitute. Even Uyghurs not directly accused of crimes see their assets frozen if they have suspected family members. In addition to financial assets, items of cultural and historical significance, including artwork, manuscripts, and religious artifacts, have been confiscated from Uyghur families and institutions. This is not only a financial loss, but also the erasure of Uyghur cultural heritage.

The confiscation of Uyghur wealth serves multiple purposes for the genocidal Chinese Communist Party. First, the government is weakening the economic base of Uyghur society, making the population more dependent on state support and employment, and increasing pressure on individuals and communities. The confiscation of Uyghur assets also facilitates the transfer of resources to Han Chinese settlers and state-owned companies, supporting the government's efforts to change the demographic and economic balance of the region.

Moreover, the relocation of Uyghurs from traditional neighborhoods to modern, easily monitored housing complexes provides for increased surveillance and control over Uyghur communities in violation of human rights. By separating Uyghurs from their traditional economic activities and living spaces, the government aims to remove the material basis of Uyghur culture and identity. Asset confiscation also serves as a powerful tool to punish those who do not demonstrate their loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party and to deter others from resisting government policies.

The systematic confiscation of Uyghurs' assets has led to widespread economic displacement and marginalization. Many Uyghurs have been forced from self-sufficient agricultural or small business lifestyles into low-wage labor or unemployment. This economic repression serves as a powerful tool of

control and assimilation, making it increasingly difficult for Uyghurs to maintain their traditional way of life or achieve economic independence.

The loss of agricultural livelihoods has been one of the most devastating impacts. As farmland has been converted for industrial use or confiscated for state-run agricultural projects, many Uyghur farmers have lost their primary source of income. Economic development has been concentrated in cities, leaving rural Uyghur communities behind. Urban renewal projects have often pushed Uyghurs to the peripheries of cities, away from economic opportunities. Discrimination in favor of Han Chinese in hiring is also widespread in the Uyghur region. Uyghurs face widespread discrimination in hiring, especially for high-paying jobs in the growing industrial and service sectors. Many job postings explicitly state preferences for Han Chinese applicants or require fluency in Mandarin, effectively excluding many Uyghurs.

### China's Agents of Chaos

22 October 2024, Foreign Affairs, Oriana Skylar Mastro

**The Military Logic of Beijing's Growing Partnerships**  
At a joint press conference in June 2024, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg fretted over the strengthening ties between China, Iran, North Korea, and Russia. They are hardly the only politicians to have done so. The informal pact between these four autocracies has become a major focus in Washington, described by both Democratic and Republican officials as a new "axis of evil." These countries, analysts point out, coordinate military and diplomatic activity. They have similar rhetoric and common interests. And they seem to share one aim above all: weakening the United States.

Each of these countries, by itself, has formidable capabilities. But China is the bloc's central player. It has the biggest population and economy, and it doles out the most aid. Beijing is North Korea's primary trade ally and benefactor. It has helped Iran contend with international sanctions, signing a "comprehensive strategic partnership" agreement with Tehran in 2021. And China has provided Russia with over \$9 billion in dual-use items—goods with both commercial and military applications—since the latter's invasion of Ukraine. This support has kept Russia's economy from collapsing, despite Western sanctions aimed at crippling the country's war effort. (Chinese goods now make up 38 percent of all imports into Russia.)

But China doesn't want to be seen as the leader of this group. It doesn't even want to be viewed as a member. In April 2023, Chinese Premier Li Qiang

claimed that "China-Russia relations adhere to the principles of nonalignment, nonconfrontation, and nontargeting of third parties." In 2016, Chinese Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Fu Ying said that Beijing had "no interest" in forming "an anti-U.S. or anti-Western bloc of any kind." The government has, accordingly, refrained from signing defense treaties with Iran and Russia. It sometimes works against Iranian, North Korean, and Russian positions in international conflicts.

There is a reason for this ambiguity. China wants to supplant the United States as the world's dominant power, and although partnering with Iran, North Korea, and Russia helps Beijing in that effort, the trio can also undermine its aims. The three states weaken Washington by attracting its resources and distracting it from Beijing. But they have also greatly antagonized powerful neighbors—such as Germany, Japan, and Saudi Arabia—that China doesn't want to alienate. As a result, Chinese officials must walk a fine line. Their relationship with the axis must be close enough that they can wield it, but not so close that they are blamed for its misbehavior.

Unfortunately, the United States is letting China have the best of both worlds. Washington has been too focused on figuring out whether these countries will form a traditional defense alliance to understand Beijing's existing entrepreneurial approach to partnerships—or to see that it is very successful. Under the present arrangement, Iran, North Korea, and Russia all cause trouble for the West. Yet because those countries are not formal Chinese allies, Washington's partners have not penalized China for their transgressions. In fact, if anything, the axis is splitting the U.S. alliance system. Many of the United States' friends, preoccupied with their own regional troublemakers, have refused to join with Washington in its competition against Beijing.

China's approach could be especially effective in the event of a war. If Beijing and Washington had to battle, the axis is now powerful enough and coordinated enough on military matters that it could fight together and defeat the United States. But because axis states are not a tightly coordinated bloc, they could just as easily launch separate conflicts that divide American resources, distract U.S. allies, and thus help Beijing prevail.

Washington must therefore change course. Rather than trying to guess how close these countries are to each other or working to pull them apart, the U.S. government must start treating them as the autocratic bloc they are. It must encourage its allies around the globe to do the same. And it needs to treat China as the master of the axis—whether or not that is the reality of the situation.

HALF IN, HALF OUT

In 1950, at the onset of the Cold War, the Chinese Communist Party and the Soviet Communist Party formalized a 30-year Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance. The agreement, forged in the aftermath of the Communists' victory over the Nationalists in the Chinese Civil War, was framed by both sides as the natural coming together of two revolutionary socialist states. As such, it called on Beijing and Moscow to defend and consult each other "regarding all important international questions affecting the common interests of the Soviet Union and China."

In practice, however, the Chinese-Soviet relationship quickly became complicated. The countries did often collaborate, most notably by supporting North Korean founder Kim Il Sung in his war against South Korea. But they also clashed over who would lead the communist bloc. Beijing and Moscow, for example, vied to arm the North Vietnamese. China resisted Soviet efforts to forge a *détente* with the United States.

Today, China's relationship with U.S. antagonists is again half in, half out. There is, on the one hand, plenty of cooperation. In 2021, Beijing renewed the Chinese-North Korean mutual defense treaty, and as of 2023, China purchases 90 percent of Iran's oil. China, Iran, and Russia conduct regular joint naval exercises in the Gulf of Oman. And in 2018, China agreed to join Russia in a national military exercise in which the two countries practiced, among other things, how they might handle war on the Korean Peninsula. But Beijing has not endorsed the invasion of Ukraine, nor has it provided direct military aid. When Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un met in June and signed a treaty in which they pledged to support each other militarily if either was attacked, the Chinese Foreign Ministry called it a bilateral matter between Moscow and Pyongyang. When the United Arab Emirates had a maritime dispute with Iran, Beijing released a joint statement with the UAE declaring its support for a "peaceful solution." And in January 2024, Chinese officials told their Iranian counterparts to curb Houthi attacks on Red Sea shipping, signaling that continued hostilities might jeopardize their economic relationship.

During the Cold War, China paid a price for sending mixed messages to its Soviet ally. Over time, Moscow moved away from Beijing, eventually leading to what analysts call the Sino-Soviet split. But this time, China's authoritarian partners appear not to mind Russia's behavior. Despite Beijing's detachment, China is getting natural gas from Russia at a 44 percent discount compared with what Europe pays. Iran did not sign a letter condemning China for its violence against the Uyghurs in Xinjiang, and Tehran

has offered Beijing political support for its takeover of Hong Kong and its claims to Taiwan.

All the while, Beijing has managed to stay on good terms with most U.S. allies. South Korea, and to a degree Japan, does not fully support U.S. deterrence efforts against China. Beijing remains both Japan's and South Korea's largest trading partner, even though it aids North Korea. Beijing has put enough distance between itself and Moscow that the EU felt comfortable trading over \$800 billion in goods with China in 2023, or 15 percent of the EU's total trade. During his 2023 visit to China, French President Emmanuel Macron said that his country would not blindly follow the United States in crises that are not its concern, specifically in reference to Taiwan. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has on multiple occasions claimed that Germany is not a part of a geopolitical bloc and will not join one. Similarly, China's partnership with Iran has not jeopardized its ties with the Gulf States or Israel.

#### ORDER OF DISORDER

At first, it may seem as if China's mixed approach to Iran, North Korea, and Russia should be tolerable for the United States. Under the status quo, after all, China is not giving Russia outright military aid with which to attack Ukraine. Beijing continues to support diplomacy to halt Iran's nuclear program. The EU-Chinese relationship, meanwhile, could moderate Iran's behavior.

The status quo is better than a situation in which Beijing provides full-throated support for these countries. But U.S. officials should take no comfort in the current situation. Neither the distance between China and its partners nor Beijing's outreach to the West has truly acted as a constraint. China may occasionally wag its finger at Iran or quietly criticize Russia, but when push comes to shove, it is giving an enormous amount of help to these states. Beijing, for example, bolstered a disinformation campaign in 2022 claiming that U.S.-funded Ukrainian biolabs were making biological weapons—helping provide the justification for the invasion of Ukraine. The states work together to challenge the traditional human rights language used by international institutions, arguing that concepts such as civil liberties and the rule of law are exclusively Western constructs. Iran, North Korea, and Russia all use Chinese technology to repress their populations.

Beijing's support for these states is most pronounced on matters of security and defense. It has provided them with sophisticated military technology and assistance. It has shared intelligence with Russia, including from its extensive satellite network, helping Moscow's war efforts. Moscow, in turn, supplies Beijing with billions of dollars in weapons annually. These shipments have dramatically improved China's ability to target U.S. jets, bases, and ships. Moscow

has also given Beijing technology it can use to develop or enhance its domestic weapons production.

Russia's partnership with China adds a terrifying new dynamic to U.S. nuclear calculations.

Partly as a result of this cooperation, the United States may be at a military disadvantage for the first time in decades. China alone has more active soldiers than does the United States. Beijing and Moscow together have more warships and tanks than Washington. Given how readily the former two governments cooperate, there is a good chance they might overpower U.S. forces if they fought together in a single military theater—for example, if China and Russia aid North Korea in a war against its southern neighbor or if Russia helps China with an attack on Taiwan.

The autocratic quad could also wreak havoc by fighting separately but simultaneously. The United States would struggle to win a two-front war. Instead, the American armed forces are structured to fight one major war while deterring smaller regional conflicts. That means if wars were raging in Europe, in the Middle East, on the Korean Peninsula, and over Taiwan, the United States would have to leave all but one of those theaters to largely fend for itself, at least initially.

Many U.S. allies have capable militaries that could battle axis members. But because they face their own regional demons, they are reluctant to help other states with their conflicts. In the event of a multifront war, they will want to keep their forces at home for self-defense. That means Washington cannot count on its allies to help U.S. troops even where it needs them most. If, for instance, the United States focused on defending Taiwan while North Korea was trying to seize South Korea, then Seoul and Tokyo would be either entirely or largely unwilling to give the United States support. In fact, concerns about North Korea have already made South Korea reluctant to let U.S. forces stationed within its borders take any actions beyond the Korean Peninsula. Europe, trying to protect its commercial ties, would almost certainly stay out of such a conflict.

To be sure, China would struggle to help its partners with their own fights if it had to take on the United States. During the Chinese Civil War, the Communists lost Taiwan partly because they chose to aid North Korea, giving U.S. President Harry Truman time to dispatch the Seventh Fleet to the Taiwan Strait and prevent an invasion. Chinese leader Xi Jinping will not want to repeat that mistake.

But any of these axis members can create crises that divert U.S. and allied resources without launching risky, full-blown conflicts. They can also give China an edge without joining its war. Russia, for example, could help China withstand an energy blockade by

sending it oil and gas overland. The Eastern Siberia–Pacific Ocean pipeline, which sends Russian oil to Asian markets, can export about 35 million metric tons annually to China. The Power of Siberia pipeline, which transports natural gas to China, is expected to send 38 billion cubic meters per year by 2025—nearly equal to the amount of natural gas consumed annually by Australia. Moscow could also contribute its capital and labor to help China with manufacturing. The two states already have joint manufacturing systems in place, including those related to making weapons.

If Moscow chose to become just slightly more involved in a U.S.-Chinese war, it would create even bigger headaches. Russian fighter jets, for instance, could conduct defensive joint air patrols with Chinese forces, as they have done in the past. The United States might then refrain from hitting Chinese targets, if only to stop Russia from becoming a direct combatant.

Whatever Russia's degree of involvement, its partnership with China adds a terrifying new dynamic to U.S. calculations. In the past, the United States has never had to contend with more than one nuclear peer. Now, with Beijing and Moscow, it has two. Unfortunately for Washington (and the world), attempts to prevent conflict with one of these governments could undermine deterrence against the other. For example, the United States signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty with the Soviet Union in 1987 to eliminate their ground-launched intermediate-range missiles. It broadly succeeded and lowered tensions between the two countries. But the deal also left Beijing unconstrained, helping it gain a significant regional advantage in intermediate-range ballistic missiles. Future negotiations between any two of the three countries could again give the third an incentive for nuclear proliferation.

#### UNITE AND CONQUER

Some American strategists have suggested that to handle this axis, Washington should try dividing it. U.S. officials appear to be listening. In March 2023, for example, Blinken sought to drive a wedge between Beijing and Moscow by preying on the latter's insecurities: "Russia is very much the junior partner in this relationship," he said. Such efforts could hark back to the Cold War, when Washington worked to divide the fraught Chinese-Soviet axis. As Beijing and Moscow grew more distant, U.S. diplomats established channels of communication with their Chinese counterparts, leading to U.S. President Richard Nixon's visit to China in 1972. Seven years later, China and the United States established formal relations. Eventually, they even worked together to spy on the Soviets.

But today, such efforts would be for naught. The autocratic axis provides Beijing with political support, energy supplies, and technology that it just cannot get from the West. Attempts to convince any of these countries that their autocratic colleagues present a greater threat than the United States are as ineffective as they are foolish.

Instead of trying to split the bloc, the United States must do the opposite: treat its members as entirely interlinked. That means ensuring poor behavior on the part of one leads to penalties for the others. Instead of exclusively sanctioning Chinese companies that support Russia's war effort, the United States could treat the Chinese state as a supporting entity and implement economic restrictions against the whole country. It could tell Beijing those restrictions will remain in place until Russia comes to the negotiating table. Beijing will cry foul, claiming it has no influence over Moscow. This might, indeed, be the case. But with skin in the game, China will work harder to acquire the influence it needs to successfully pressure Russia.

If Washington wants to be the leader of the whole world, it will need to gain support from autocracies. Grouping China and its partners could also help Washington unify its own coalition. Europe may not fully grasp the threat Beijing poses to the international order, but it surely understands the dangers emanating from Moscow. Yet the United States has not done nearly enough to explain to European countries why China and Russia are broadly connected, instead emphasizing the narrow links Beijing has to Moscow's invasion. If Washington can explain the bigger relationship, Europeans will be more likely to take Beijing's security challenge seriously and be more proactive in attempting to shape its behavior.

Yet the United States should still avoid an ideological approach. Although it should treat these autocratic countries as a bloc, it should avoid framing the global competition as one of democracies against autocracies. Autocratic partners (such as Saudi Arabia) will not want to help Washington prevail against China if the contest is about systems of government. Neither will many potential democratic partners in the developing world, such as Brazil, Indonesia, and South Africa. In fact, China has built a wide network of friends by being regime agnostic and focusing on development. In his speeches to foreign audiences, for example, Xi loves to play up Beijing's respect for "state sovereignty," its commitment to "noninterference," and its desire to see poor countries grow rich. The developing world has listened. In the summer of 2024, when Xi met with José Ramos-Horta, the president of East Timor—a small, impoverished, and highly democratic state—Ramos-Horta declared that he did not care about

great-power rivalries or the character of his country's allies. If China can alleviate East Timor's poverty and malnutrition, Ramos-Horta said, "then China is my hero."

Washington should take a page from Beijing's book. If it wants to be the leader of the whole world, not just the free world, it will need to gain support from developing democracies and autocracies alike. (According to Freedom House, 80 percent of people on earth live in countries that are either not free or only partly free.) It needs to be more agile, tailoring its offerings and messaging to address what each country cares about. This process involves not only offering more aid but also contributing to the right types of projects, such as ones related to health care, higher education, and cybersecurity. It means greater diplomatic engagement, military cooperation, and people-to-people ties.

It is true that, by applying more pressure, Washington and its allies may push Beijing to forge stronger connections with Iran, North Korea, and Russia. But China already substantially benefits from these relationships, so the United States has no choice but to take a tougher stance. The reality is that anything the United States does to impose costs on China will upset Beijing. The only way to avoid that is to give it what it wants, which is territorial control over Taiwan, maritime control of the South China Sea, and economic, military, and political dominance in Asia. Washington cannot be afraid to make China pay for helping bad actors, especially when holding back lets Beijing pretend to be above the fray.

### **Guest Opinion: False narratives about Xinjiang won't halt its development**

20 October 2024, Xinhua, Mohammad Abu Shaikha

Xinjiang has come a long way, from a region hit by extremism to a thriving hub of development. The government's focus on unity and opportunity has dramatically changed the region.

When China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region was subjected to rampant acts of sabotage, violence and extremism for decades till about eight years ago, some Western countries saw an opportunity to spread disinformation and destabilize the Chinese economy.

The extremists planned and carried out thousands of bombings, assassinations, poisonings, arson attacks and other violent crimes.

Western countries have misrepresented the treatment of Uygurs in the region. On a visit to Xinjiang in 2023, I attended an anti-extremism exhibition. No nation would shy away from addressing extremist forces.



Xinjiang is home to over 10 million Muslims belonging to the Uygur ethnic group. While there, we prayed in an ancient mosque. I observed Muslims leading joyful lives and experiencing the same freedoms as other Chinese citizens across the nation. The roads are clean and wide, there are no traffic jams, and the road signs are written in three languages: Uygur, Chinese, and English. The Uygurs and various other ethnic minorities can engage in their cultural practices, traditions, and customs.



An aerial drone photo taken on April 25, 2024 shows a wind farm in Dabancheng District of Urumqi, northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. (Xinhua/Chen Shuo)

After 2016, the region began to recover from the disease that afflicted it and became safer day by day. It focused on development, with the government offering opportunities to anyone inclined to work and improve their living conditions. The government also established schools and education centers for Islamic studies throughout Xinjiang. These centers and religious institutions strive to provide clerics with accurate understandings of Islam, enabling them to teach Muslims more effectively.

Xinjiang has witnessed rapid transformation due to China's push for mega-development projects. It has become a vital hub on the Silk Road Economic Belt, connecting China with Southeast, South, and Central Asia and extending to Russia and Europe.

The Chinese government works around the clock to enhance the well-being of Xinjiang's residents and foster unity among all ethnic groups. Residents work in agriculture, industry, trade, and advanced technology, among other fields.

Xinjiang has become an investment hub for many foreign companies in various sectors, such as manufacturing, mining, leasing, business services, software, information technology, finance, agriculture, retail and wholesale industry.

Security and safety, in addition to the region's natural resources, such as oil, gas, and coal, plays a significant role in attracting investment.

China's relations with the Arab world are another shining point. The People's Republic of China seeks not to interfere in the affairs of any Arab country but instead provides humanitarian and logistical assistance and promotes joint cooperation. All Arab countries have signed cooperation documents with China on the Belt and Road Initiative.

Arab countries want good relations with all countries based on win-win outcomes and desire relations free of hegemonic intent.

Xinjiang has come a long way, from a region hit by extremism to a thriving hub of development. The government's focus on unity and opportunity has dramatically changed the region. Xinjiang's progress also strengthens China's ties with the Arab world, promoting collaboration and mutual benefit.

### Value Vacuum: China's command versus India's concessions

19 October 2024, The Economic Times

Let's start with a comparison of two countries:

Country A: Once highly protectionist, with tariffs over 30%, it still imposes significant trade restrictions. Capital flows are tightly controlled, the banking sector is state-regulated, and foreign asset ownership is limited. Corruption, lack of elections, and weak intellectual property laws persist, making it a piracy hub. Many state-owned enterprises survive on government subsidies despite losses.

Country B has long maintained a highly protectionist trade policy, with industrial tariffs averaging 40-55%. Most of the population lacks voting rights, and electoral fraud is common. Corruption is rampant, with government positions sold to political backers, and civil servants are not hired through competitive processes. Public finances are unstable, marked by frequent defaults, and foreign investors face significant discrimination. In banking, foreign shareholders are barred from leadership or voting roles unless they reside locally. The absence of competition law enables unchecked monopolies, while intellectual property protection, especially for foreign copyrights, remains weak.

Many may recognize Country A as China around 2010, but fewer may realize that Country B is the United States circa 1880, a time when it was poorer than China in 2010. As Ha Joon Chang notes in 23 Things They Don't Tell You About Capitalism, nearly all wealthy nations, including Britain and the US, rose to prosperity through protectionism, subsidies, and policies they now discourage developing countries from adopting.

The Financial Times recently reported that Xiaohongshu, China's Instagram-like platform, achieved \$1 billion in sales and \$200 million in profits in the first quarter of the year. With over 300 million users and a valuation exceeding \$17 billion, its success is remarkable.

Xiaohongshu is part of a growing list of companies that have created significant wealth by adapting successful Western business models, including Tencent Holdings (WeChat, similar to WhatsApp, and QQ, akin to Facebook Messenger), Weibo and

Toutiao (modelled after Twitter), Baidu (Google), Youku (YouTube), Zhihu (Quora), Dianping (Yelp), and Didi Chuxing (Uber). Collectively, these companies have a combined market valuation exceeding \$1 trillion, based on the market capitalization of listed entities and estimates for those that remain private.

Richard McGregor writes in *The Party* that China's ability to maintain tight control over its population is rooted in the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP's) pervasive governance, which extends across all levels of society.

The CCP's mechanisms of control include the use of surveillance, centralisation of authority, and management of personnel, ensuring loyalty and compliance through appointments controlled by the Central Organization Department. This tight governance over the population allows the Party to implement policies that prioritize strategic national goals over individual liberties.

When combined with the CCP's ability to regulate which companies can operate within its borders, this control fosters an environment where domestic enterprises are heavily favoured. By ensuring that economic activities align with national interests and maintaining political loyalty within businesses, the party creates an ecosystem in which domestic companies can thrive, especially in sectors critical to China's global ambitions. The synergy between population control and business regulation has allowed China to build large, valuable domestic companies that are integral to its economy.

In India, individual liberties, including economic freedom, are highly valued, which allows for minimal restrictions on which companies can operate within the country. Unlike countries that impose tight controls on the market and limit foreign or private enterprises, India fosters an open environment where companies of all kinds can compete, leading to significant opportunities for individuals, such as influencers, to earn substantial income.

According to a study by Koflucose, social media influencers in India earn anywhere between Rs 20,000 to Rs 2,00,000 per month, depending on their following and engagement rate. For instance, fashion influencers earn between 40 to 60 paisa per view, while financial content creators can command Rs 3-4 per view.

However, despite the high potential earnings for individual influencers, this openness and lack of stringent regulation on companies mean that overall, businesses do not generate the same level of concentrated value as those in more controlled markets, like China. This results in a more fragmented ecosystem where individual successes are prominent, but domestic companies struggle to reach a large scale of influence and profitability.

For perspective, India's largest listed company has a market cap of around \$250 billion. And, only 83 Indian companies generate over \$1 billion in quarterly revenue, and just 54 report quarterly profits exceeding \$200 million, highlighting the scale of China's Instagram-like startup in comparison.

The contrast between China and India highlights the trade-offs inherent in different development models. China has leveraged state control to build dominant corporations aligned with national interests, while India has focused on creating opportunities for individuals in a free-market environment. As a result, India's vast demographic potential is increasingly being harnessed by global tech giants, rather than fuelling the growth of Indian corporate giants.

The key challenge will be finding the right balance between individual opportunity and corporate power—between openness and strategic control—so that India's demographic potential benefits not only individuals but the nation as a whole.

### Getting Hongkongers to retire in mainland China isn't the answer to poverty: experts

19 October 2024, SCMP, Fiona Sun and Emily Hung

Measures unveiled in policy address do not tackle widening wealth gap and suggest government is shirking responsibilities, they say

Encouraging Hongkongers to retire across the border offers an alternative for some but cannot be the city's solution to poverty, welfare experts and groups have said while calling for a blueprint with long-term strategies.

They also urged the government to spend money more effectively on poverty alleviation and supporting those in need amid the city's surging expenditure on welfare.

The calls were made after Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu delivered his third policy address on Wednesday where he laid out plans to improve people's livelihood, which experts said were lacking. "The expenditure on welfare has been on the rise while the poverty issue has not been solved. That is because the money was not spent effectively," Professor Paul Yip Siu-fai of the University of Hong Kong (HKU) said.

Lee highlighted in his policy address that more than HK\$300 million (US\$38.6 million) was spent on social welfare daily, topping the public expenditure of all policy portfolios.

Official statistics showed that the city set aside about HK\$127 billion for social welfare in the 2024-25 financial year, which translates to about HK\$350 million a day.

Such expenses have more than doubled over the past decade from about HK\$58 billion in 2015-16, according to the data.

"We should not be proud of the increasing welfare expenses," Yip, an associate dean of the faculty of social sciences, said.

He said that despite the rising expenditures, the circumstances of low-income families had worsened because of the impact of the economic slowdown on sectors such as the service industry that hit poor workers hard.

The academic urged authorities to review the effectiveness of the expenses on welfare policies and make better use of the funds.

Welfare policies encouraging elderly residents to settle in mainland China were laid out in this year's policy address, including a three-year pilot scheme to subsidise those living in designated care homes in neighbouring Guangdong province.

The scheme, to be launched next year, will offer HK\$5,000 a month to each of those receiving the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) allowance, with a quota of 1,000 in total.

Seven more care homes will be added to the Residential Care Services Scheme in Guangdong, taking the total for elderly Hongkongers to 11.

Under the scheme, the government will also pay the part of medical bills not covered by the urban-rural resident basic medical insurance, and also subject to a cap.

Another pilot scheme that allows elderly residents to use healthcare vouchers over the border will be extended to all the mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area, a policy push to link nine Guangdong cities, Hong Kong and Macau.

Nelson Chow Wing-sun, an emeritus professor at HKU's department of social work and social administration, said the incentives signalled a trend of authorities encouraging retirees to live in the bay area's mainland cities.

But he said such measures, with their quotas, would more benefit those who had already settled across the border and were not attractive enough to persuade others to uproot themselves.

"The Greater Bay Area is no longer just a concept but has already become a real choice for those who have retired," he said. "But still, people have to give up a lot of things, such as public housing, to move and settle across the border."

Chow urged the government to also look into supporting those who were willing to live in communities across the border rather than in care facilities and address their top concerns by subsidising them to buy local health insurance to cover medical expenses.

Social welfare lawmaker Tik Chi-yuen said that despite the alternative retirement option, sending

older residents across the border was not going to solve the city's poverty and elderly support issues.

"Most people still intend to remain in Hong Kong after they retire," he said. "The government cannot shirk its responsibility of offering care for them."

The legislator noted that most of the welfare measures in this year's policy address simply involved the addition of quotas to existing schemes.

Among such measures is a 20 per cent increase in the number of vouchers for elderly people to pay for residential care to a total of 6,000.

Other policies include the expansion of the Strive and Rise Programme – a mentorship scheme targeting students from poor families – and the addition of three more community living rooms used by substandard housing households.

Sze Lai-shan, deputy director of NGO the Society for Community Organisation, said that even the scale of such expansion was limited, with many of those in need left without support.

Aside from rolling out or maintaining individual schemes, both Sze and Tik called on the government to formulate a blueprint with holistic, long-term strategies.

Tik said the blueprint should establish a clear definition of poverty, collect data on the poor population and set out targets on what should be achieved and when.

"A daily expenditure of more than HK\$300 million does not mean the job has been done, as Hong Kong is facing a widening wealth gap and a rapidly ageing population," Tik said.

## **PRC at 75: In China under Xi Jinping, people run or 'lie flat'**

19 October 2024, RFA, Hsia Hsiao-hwa

Xi's policies run counter to the economic reforms of Deng Xiaoping, sparking fears of a return to the Mao era.

When Xi Jinping took his place as leader of the ruling Chinese Communist Party in 2012, some commentators expected he would be a weak president beset by factional strife in the wake of the jailing of former Chongqing party chief Bo Xilai and cryptic official references to rumors of a coup in Beijing.

Yet Xi has evoked more comparisons with late supreme leader Mao Zedong than any other leader since Mao's death in 1976, with his cult of personality, his abolition of presidential term limits and his intolerance of any kind of public criticism or protest, including in Hong Kong.

Blamed by many outside China for his government's handling of the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic in Wuhan, Xi seriously damaged his reputation among the Chinese people with three

years of grueling lockdowns that saw some people welded into their own apartments and others carted off to mass quarantine camps in the middle of the night.

While the zero-COVID years eventually ended in late 2022 amid nationwide protests known as the "white paper" movement, a mass exodus of people dubbed the "run" movement was already under way. Refugees and dissidents, private sector executives and middle-class families with children have been willing to trek through the Central American rainforest to get away from life in China, in the hope of gaining political asylum in the United States.

"I left China for Ecuador and Colombia, then walked north through the rain forest," one migrant – an author whose writings were banned under Xi – told RFA Mandarin in a recent interview. "I left on Aug. 8 and entered the United States on Oct. 21."

"I was limping from my second day in the rainforest, and I was robbed by bandits," the person said. "I could have died."



A migrant from China, exhausted from the heat, rests on the shoulder of a fellow migrant from Nicaragua after walking into the U.S. at Jacumba Hot Springs, California, on June 5, 2024. (Frederic J. Brown/AFP)

Another recent migrant – a writer – said they left because everything they wrote had been banned.

"My articles were banned from newspapers and magazines, my name was not allowed to be mentioned, and I couldn't take part in public events," they said. "I realized if I stayed in China, my life would just be a huge disaster, so I fled in a hurry."

Xu Maoan, a former financial manager in a private company, said he used to make a good professional salary of 10,000 yuan (US\$1,400) a month, but lost his job due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

He never succeeded in finding another, despite sending out hundreds of resumes, and recently joined many others making the trek through the rainforest to the U.S. border.

"I didn't find out about the white paper movement until I got to the United States," Xu told RFA Mandarin. "All news of it was blocked in China."

Reversing course?

But it wasn't just the pandemic; Xu and many like him were growing increasingly concerned that Xi

was reversing the investor-friendly policies of late supreme leader Deng Xiaoping, with his confrontational attitude to Western trading partners and hair-trigger sensitivity to "national security," an elastic term used to describe any activity that could threaten or undermine the ruling Chinese Communist Party's official narrative.

"I have personally experienced how the government drove away foreign investors and cracked down on the private sector, in the name of national security," Xu said. "The government is in financial difficulty, so if they don't like you, they raid you."

"[Xi] quarreled with Europe and the United States, frightening foreign investors, who withdrew to Vietnam and India," he said. "His values are the opposite [of Deng Xiaoping's]."

"The domestic economy has collapsed, but they just won't admit it," he said. "I was afraid we would be going back to the days of famine and forced labor of the Mao era, so I left in a hurry."

Xi's abolition of presidential term limits in 2018 and the creation of what some fear is a Mao-style cult of personality around him is also driving concerns.

"Xi has deified himself as the 'core' leader with his own personality cult, but he lacks Mao's charisma," Ma Chun-wei, assistant politics professor at Taiwan's Tamkang University, told RFA Mandarin in a recent interview. "He requires everyone to study Xi Jinping Thought throughout the party and the whole education system."

Oppression of Uyghurs, Tibetans

Xi has also presided over the mass incarceration of Uyghurs in Xinjiang's "re-education" camps, the surveillance and suppression of Tibetans and their culture, as well as the upgrading the Great Firewall of internet censorship and the installation of surveillance cameras in schools to monitor students and teachers alike.

Under his tenure, private companies have been forced to set up Communist Party branches, and censorship is tighter than it has ever been, Ma said.

Yet Xi is one of the most ridiculed leaders in recent Chinese history, according to exiled author Murong Xuecun. "He has had the most nicknames of any general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party in the past 70 years," Murong told RFA in a recent interview. "Some people calculate that he has more than 200 nicknames."

Many of Xi's nicknames are now banned from China's internet, including Xi Baozi, Winnie the Pooh and Xitler, and their use has led to imprisonment in some cases.





Pro-democracy activists tear a placard of Winnie the Pooh that represents President Xi Jinping during a protest in Hong Kong on May 24, 2020. (Isaac Lawrence/AFP)

"The key to all of this is the political system," Murong said. "Xi rose to lead the Communist Party and have power over appointments, the military, the party, the police and national security agencies through a series of opaque and intergenerational processes."

"He commands everything, yet his power isn't subject to any kind of supervision or restriction," he said. "He can purge or replace anyone he doesn't like."

Lying flat

Murong likened China under Xi's rule to "a runaway train rushing towards a cliff with him as the driver."

"China has now entered the garbage times, when everything it does is doomed to failure," he said.

"The shadow of Xi will always haunt China."

He said the damage done by Xi is evident in the numbers of young people choosing to "lie flat" in the face of life's challenges. Even high-flying university graduates are moving back in with Mom and Dad and refusing to live up to social expectations like finding a job, marrying, mortgages and children.

"Those who can leave will leave, and those who can't will lie flat," Murong said.

Internationally, Xi has encouraged a far more expansionist and aggressive foreign policy than his predecessors, with island-building and military operations in the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait, and a barrage of nationalist rhetoric around Beijing's claim on democratic Taiwan, which has never been ruled by the Chinese Communist Party.

A Hong Kong-born researcher at the London-based think tank China Strategic Risk Institute who gave only the nickname Athena for fear of reprisals said Xi has strongly rejected international values like freedom, democracy and the rule of law, and cares little about international criticism of China's human rights record.

Instead, China has taken the fight to international organizations, and was recently accused of "gaming" its human rights review at the United Nations.

Secret police stations

Xi is also pouring trillions of dollars into his Belt and Road infrastructure and supply chain network, and engaging in colonial expansion across Africa, Murong Xuecun said.

China has become known under Xi for its aggressive "wolf-warrior" diplomats, some of whom have resorted to physical violence to get their point across, as well as its transnational network of secret police stations and its pursuit of its critics on foreign soil, as well as its army of "little pinks," who snarl at any criticism of the motherland.

Xi's administration was also instrumental in turning Hong Kong from a thriving financial hub and politically engaged city with freedoms of speech, association and publication intact to a city where the majority of people are being forced to toe the government line or risk imprisonment.

In recent years, international concerns are growing that Xi may be preparing for a military invasion of Taiwan, which he has vowed to "unify" with the rest of China.

Yet he may have more of an internal battle on his hands than he bargained for, according to former Lt. Col. Yao Cheng of the Naval Aviation Force.

"He has been messing with the military for more than 10 years, ever since he came to power," Yao told RFA Mandarin. "Between 2012 and 2015, he arrested hundreds of generals, yet his attempts to reform the military between 2015 and 2017 were a failure."

Part of the problem is that Xi has never been a soldier, despite wearing the uniform of a Commander in Chief, he said.

"Now Xi is commander-in-chief of the Joint Operations Command at the Central Military Commission, managing an army of several million people," Yao said. "Yet he procured military equipment in a haphazard manner, spending money recklessly and winding up with a pile of scrap copper and iron."

Meanwhile Xi has backed up Beijing's claims of sovereignty in the South China Sea with newly built islands and military bases, as Chinese Coast Guard vessels regularly harass China's neighbors, as well as ordering repeated rounds of military drills around Taiwan.

The People's Liberation Army Rocket Force recently launched an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of carrying nuclear warheads into the Pacific Ocean. Yet Yao believes that Xi ultimately lacks the support of most of China's generals.

"He took down the leaders of the Rocket Force, and wants to attack Taiwan now, but the military won't do this; they will wait and see," he said. "They may be engaging in busywork for now, but they won't do what Xi Jinping wants."



## China's economy is set to have its slowest year of growth in decades

19 October 2024, NPR, John Ruwitch and Scott Simon

SCOTT SIMON, HOST:

The world's second-biggest economy is struggling. New economic data shows that China is on track for a year of growth that's among the slowest since 1990, the year after the crackdown on protesters in Tiananmen Square. NPR's China correspondent John Ruwitch joins us. John, thanks so much for being with us.

JOHN RUWITCH, BYLINE: Happy to be here.

SIMON: What do the latest numbers show?

RUWITCH: Well, they show that the gross domestic product growth between July and September was 4.6% year on year. That is a slight slowing from the second quarter, but it's a little better than expected. On the plus side, industrial output was up, and retail sales exceeded expectations. That's an important one because weak consumption has been a really huge part of the problem with this economy. And the government knows it, and they're worried about it. Part of what drove retail sales this last quarter were subsidies for trade-ins on appliances, like air conditioners, fridges, those things.

SIMON: What seems to be behind the slowdown?

RUWITCH: The big thing is real estate, as it's been for the past year or two. Activity has been depressed pretty consistently since the government adopted measures to pop the bubble a couple of years ago. So property investment in the recent quarter fell. In the year-to-date, it was down more than 10%. New home starts also fell in the double digits. Property prices continued to slide. The overall situation still feels quite grim in China. I was in Beijing recently and spoke with a tailor named Li Jianjun. His customer base has shrunk, he says, since before the pandemic. And he says his income has dropped 40%.

LI JIANJUN: (Speaking Chinese).

RUWITCH: He says before the pandemic, a lot of people came in to get new clothing. Now they're coming in for alterations if their size has changed or whatnot because their income has shrunk. And when they do give him orders for new suits or shirts, he says customers are really opting for Chinese-made cloth rather than more expensive imports.

SIMON: And, John, what's the government trying to do in response?

RUWITCH: Well, there have been bits and pieces over the past few months to try to prop up the economy. Starting late in September, they really ramped that up with a string of new measures. They've got a more aggressive monetary policy in place now. They've lowered interest rates, for

example. They've tried to prop up the stock market. They're taking steps to reflate the real estate market to a certain extent and to capitalize developers. They're also poised to issue a bunch of new central government debt to recapitalize state-owned banks to help local governments out of their major debt problems. Alicia Garcia-Herrero is chief economist with the French investment bank Natixis in Hong Kong.

ALICIA GARCIA-HERRERO: Is that a stimulus? Not really, but they need to do it first. It's like a precondition because if not, it will be throwing good money on bad money, because there's too much bad debt in the system. There's systemic risk. There's deflation.

SIMON: So, John, do experts think it's going to work?

RUWITCH: Well, I think what this economist just now is saying is that these measures are focused on sort of addressing acute crises going on in the economy right now. Like, take local government debt, for instance - there are reports that some localities aren't able to pay government employees their wages. These are people in the middle class, right? How can China ramp up consumption if these people aren't even getting paychecks? Some economists say that the - you know, the measures they're taking are good. They're a good first step. They're not enough really to boost domestic demand and consumption or to change the structure of the economy.

The government is aiming for around 5% growth this year. After factoring in the latest data, though, some now think it'll fall short of that. What's interesting is the contrast. You know, China's economy is continuing to weaken, and it's happening at a time when the country is really amped up its sort of muscularity on the global stage. It just had military drills around Taiwan, for instance.

SIMON: NPR's John Ruwitch. Thanks so much for being with us.

RUWITCH: You're welcome.

## Who really benefits from China's winter tourism promotion in Tibet?

19 October 2024, Tibetan Review

For the seventh year in a row, China-ruled Tibet has launched a winter tourism promotion drive in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), with ostensible aim to bring more income to local residents, offering discounts, freebies, and what not.

China claims that the drive will attract more tourists and bring more incomes to local residents. Many of these local residents will no doubt be Tibetans. But Tibetans are overwhelmingly farmers and herders, having little concern with tourism.

So, one of the main aims of this policy may be to ensure the sustenance and prosperity of the Chinese immigrant population which dominate the businesses in Tibet, including in the tourism sector. They may otherwise go back to China during winter season, like their counterparts in other sectors of Tibet's economy. This population is expected to eventually redefine the region's demographic and cultural identity in keeping with President Xi Jinping's signature call for the Sinicization of Tibet.

The TAR has launched its 2024 winter tourism campaign, offering discounted air tickets, hotel vouchers, and free admission to tourist attractions to draw more visitors during the off-peak season, reported China's state news agency Xinhua Oct 19.

As part of the "winter tour of Xizang" campaign, Xizang is offering 10,000 "buy-one-get-one-free" domestic flight tickets, 10,000 free domestic train tickets, and complimentary hotel vouchers at premium accommodations for tourists traveling to the region, the report said, using the Sinicized name for Tibet.

Special travel vouchers tailored for family tours and senior travellers have also been introduced, the report added.

Also provided again are free entry to A-rated tourist sites, including the iconic Potala Palace.

China's tourist attraction rating system classifies sites from 1A to 5A based on overall tourism quality, with 5A being the highest grade.

The initiative, launched on Oct 18 in capital Lhasa, was stated to be aimed at maintaining steady tourism growth year-round, with the current round of promotions running from Oct 15 to Mar 15, 2025.

The event was stated to have seen the regional culture and tourism department signing cooperation agreements with Chinese provinces and cities. Local travel operators were also stated to have formed partnerships with international tour operators from countries including Australia, Thailand and Germany. In 2023, TAR welcomed 55.17 million tourists, a year-on-year increase of 83.7%, generating total tourism revenue of 65.15 billion yuan (about 9.2 billion US dollars), up 60% from the previous year, the report said.

There has so far been little or no known study of tourism's impact on the territory's people, environment, society, and culture.

This bears relevance as the number of tourists visiting the region, who are overwhelmingly from China, exceeded 15 times the local population of 3.66 million as of last year.

## Xi Jinping Has Further Boosted the Military-Industrial Group of China

18 October 2024, The JamesTown Foundation, Arthur Ding, K. Tristan Tang

On June 28, Huang Qiang (黄强) was appointed as the party secretary of Jilin Province. Formerly secretary-general of the National Defense Science and Technology Commission (国防科工委) and deputy director general of the National Defense Science and Technology Bureau (国防科工局), Huang's promotion marks a further development for the People's Republic of China's (PRC) group of military-industrial leaders (Xinhua, June 28). Alongside Hao Peng (郝鹏) in Liaoning and Xu Qin (许勤) in Heilongjiang, all three provincial Party secretaries for the major industrial bases in Northeast China now have backgrounds in the defense industry.

Supreme leader Xi Jinping has provided consistent support to the defense industry in recent years, and has increased his reliance on officials from defense industry backgrounds—as seen in the curricula vitae of Central Committee members unveiled at the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) 20th Party Congress in October 2022 (The Diplomat, September 12). These developments represented a culmination of personnel decisions that date back to at least the 19th Party Congress in 2017, when Xi's emphasis on the importance of military-industrial officials began to become observable. Research to date has tended to analyze this rising group of military-industrial personnel from a technocratic perspective (see China Leadership Monitor, December 1, 2022; February 29). Owing to the significant differences between military-industrial officials and technocrats in general, however, the PRC's military-industrial group merits attention as a growing force within both the defense industry and the CCP Central Committee, and has the potential to one day emerge as a key faction within the PRC's political system.

Structural Dynamics Suggest Emerging Military-Industrial 'Faction'

For the purposes of this article, the "military-industrial group" refers narrowly to those individuals who developed their careers in defense industry corporations or the "Seven Sons of National Defense (国防七子)" universities before being promoted to the vice-ministerial level. [1] It excludes those who merely studied at Seven Sons universities without either teaching at those same institutions or subsequently joining defense industry corporations, and those who joined the defense industry only after being promoted to the vice-ministerial level. The

decision to set the rank at the vice-ministerial level is based on the understanding that officials at this level are “central management cadres (中管干部)” whose transfers and promotions are regulated by the Central Organization Department (People’s Daily, September 16, 2014). The transfer of personnel to the defense industry later in their careers is primarily done for résumé-building purposes or for oversight. As such, these personnel differ significantly from those who gained early experience in the defense industry during their tenure as grassroots or mid-level officials.

The military-industrial group has the potential to develop into a faction. This is because the educational background and industrial operational models of the PRC’s defense industry are likely to foster a shared identity, mutual trust, and a high degree of homogeneity within their interpersonal networks. There are two dynamics that underpin this emerging group.

First, most of these officials graduated from the Seven Sons universities. These institutions, established in the 1950s and 1960s, are oriented toward the defense industry. As such, their historical and institutional connections provide students with greater career opportunities in the industry than those from other universities. Often, key state-owned defense companies have agreements with—or are major contributors to—Seven Sons universities (Harbin Engineering University, June 11; Beijing Institute of Technology, August 25, 2022). The higher prevalence of graduates from these schools over other universities who join the industry is borne out in the statistics (CSET, December, 2020). This has resulted in a higher level of connectivity among these officials compared to graduates in other industries or fields (Takungpao, October 16, 2023). These institutions also foster a strong sense of belonging and honor among their students. This is achieved in part through the celebration of the technical defense achievements of earlier Chinese scientists, notably those involved in Mao’s “Two Bombs, One Satellite (两弹一星)” project that was focused on building the country’s first nuclear weapons, ICBMs, and satellites (Northwestern Polytechnical University, June 7, 2023).

Second, the PRC’s defense industry is fairly closed off. The “block logic” that characterizes the PRC’s broader bureaucratic system is also present in the defense industry, resulting in research and development being largely confined to specific defense companies or research units. An article published in 2017 by the Center for Advancing Military-Civil Fusion Programs (军民融合项目促进中心) lamented the industry’s “confining nature of closed concepts, the constraints of the planning

system, the limitations of monopolistic structures, the restrictions of policy standards, the impediments of [few] access points, and the siloing of information channels (封闭观念的禁锢、计划体制的束缚、垄断格局的限制、政策标准的制约、准入门槛的阻碍和信息渠道的隔离)” (Development and Reform Commission of Gansu Province, December 26, 2017). This makes it difficult for other companies or universities to participate in core research, meaning that while interactions and collaborations between research institutes and factories within the defense industry are relatively frequent, they are less so with entities outside this ecosystem. Therefore, such a closed industrial environment tends to foster a rich understanding and strong level of interaction among insiders, more so than for those in other sectors.

**Military-Industrial Officials From the 19th and 20th CCP Central Committees**

Among the two most recent Central Committees’ 409 members, a total of 21 have had a background in the defense industry (see Table 1). Out of 17 members elected to the 19th Central Committee, 11—roughly two-thirds—were re-elected to the 20th Central Committee, along with the election of an additional four new members.

In terms of rank, the highest position held by military-industrial officials in the 19th Central Committee was that of Central Committee member. However, in the 20th Central Committee, four members were promoted to the Politburo: Vice Premiers Liu Guozhong and Zhang Guoqing, Xinjiang Party Secretary Ma Xingrui, and Chongqing Party Secretary Yuan Jiajun.

Regarding positions held within the Central Committee, three individuals have previously worked in the Office of the Central Commission for Military-Civil Fusion Development (中央军委融合发展委员会办公室) [2] or the Communist Youth League. These include Lei Fanpei, though his position as deputy director of the former is based on external media reports only (Epoch Times, February 2, 2023). There has been no formal announcement from state media, though he continues to be present in state media reports as part of the rank of ministerial-level officials (CASC, June 14, 2023).

In terms of positions held within the State Council, many ministries have installed military-industrial officials in key roles. Notably, in the 20th Central Committee, individuals who effectively control military-industrial resources and related industrial sectors within the State Council include Vice Premiers Zhang Guoqing (in charge of industry) and Liu Guozhong, State Councillor Wu Zhenglong, Minister for Industry and Information Technology Jin Zhuanglong, and Minister of Education Huai Jinpeng (see Table 3).

At the local level, a total of 21 military-industrial officials have held the positions of Party secretary or governor in 14 provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions across the two most recent Central Committees. This represents a trend of negative growth, however, as military-industrial officials held top or deputy positions in 13 localities during the 19th Party Congress, but only in six following the 20th Party Congress. For example, in Hunan, Jiangsu, and Hebei, military-industrial officials held positions during the 19th Central Committee but not in the 20th Central Committee. In contrast, provinces such as Liaoning, Heilongjiang, and Shaanxi continue to have military-industrial officials in office (see Table 5). The fact that military-industrial officials are in top positions in these three provinces is important, however, as they are home to research companies and institutes that are vital to the country's defense industry. For example, Heilongjiang has the Harbin Aircraft Industry Group (HAIG; 哈尔滨飞机工业集团), Liaoning Province has the Dalian Shipbuilding Industry Group (DSIC; 大连船舶重工集团), and Shaanxi Province has the Fourth and Sixth Research Institutes of the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC; 中国航天科技集团). However, given that a number of military-industrial personnel who previously held positions in local governments are either being promoted or retiring—such as Wu Zhenglong, who was promoted from Jiangsu Province to secretary-general of the State Council, and Lin Duo, who retired from his post in Gansu Province—Xi Jinping may need to ensure that military-industrial personnel remain in regions most closely tied to the defense industry.

Military-industrial officials have been elected to positions within the China Association for Science and Technology (CAST; 中国科学技术协会), the National People's Congress (NPC; 全国人民代表大会), and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC; 中国人民政治协商会议). In the 20th Central Committee, military-industrial officials serve as vice chairpersons and vice presidents in both the NPC and CPPCC, while CAST has been predominantly led by military-industrial officials during both the 19th and 20th Central Committees (see Table 4).

**Authentic Military-industrial Faction Yet to Appear**  
Analysis of the interpersonal networks of military-industrial officials in the Central Committee after the 20th Party Congress indicates that many share educational or professional backgrounds. Looking at the group more closely, NPC Vice Chairman Zhang Qingwei could be a central node in this network. Due to his nearly three-decade career in the

aerospace sector, most officials from the aerospace or aviation sectors have connections to him. For instance, Chongqing Party Secretary Yuan Jiajun, Xinjiang Party Secretary Ma Xingrui, Deputy Director of the Central Military-Civil Fusion Office Lei Fanpei, and Minister of Industry and Information Technology Jin Zhuanglong have all served as his deputies at various times. Another central figure may be Vice Premier Zhang Guoqing. Current State Councillor Wu Zhenglong and Shaanxi Governor Zhao Gang have previously worked alongside him (*Economic Daily*, December 31, 2017). Zhang and Wu worked together at the Chongqing Municipal Committee of the CCP between 2013 and 2014, while Zhang and Zhao worked together at China North Industries Group from 1993 to 1995, and again at China North Industries Corporation from 2011 to 2013 (*Economic Daily*, July 29, 2017; *CPC News*, October 24).

The military-industrial group has also formed a Chinese-style military-industrial complex within the 20th Central Committee. Currently, military-industrial officials occupy significant administrative and industrial roles, oversee major provinces that are home to crucial parts of the military-industrial sector, or participate in the operations of the top-level bodies (the NPC and the CPPCC). These officials have the capacity to promote the development of the military-industrial sector, through such methods as resource allocation (State Council Vice Premier), policy planning (Minister for Industry and Information Technology), regulation formulation (National People's Congress), policy execution (local government), and opinion transmission (CPPCC). Although the PRC operates under the one-party rule of the CCP, a large and complex bureaucracy means that the regime is far from unitary, and various interest groups still wield substantial power. As such, the ability to shape and wield regulations and public opinion is still important. This is particularly relevant for military-industrial officials, as they participate in the operations of the NPC and CPPCC as Central Committee members rather than merely as nominally retired individuals. This implies that they have a special status compared to other vice chairs.

Some obstacles currently preclude the assignment of a "faction" to this group, however. No military-industrial officials have been promoted to the Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC)—the very highest CCP body. They, therefore, do not meet the necessary criterion for a faction under the standard academic definition. This could change in 2027 following the 21st Party Congress. Apart from the relative cohesion of the group noted above, the logic of the CCP's norms surrounding the age of officials suggests that this is a distinct possibility. Three military-industrial officials in the current Politburo will

still be under 67 years old in 2027, which theoretically qualifies them for promotion; and out of the 23 current Politburo members (excluding Xi Jinping), ten meet the conventional age eligibility criterion to become members of the PBSC in 2027, resulting in a competitive situation of ten officials vying for six positions. Notably, Chongqing Party Secretary Yuan Jiajun, Vice Premier Zhang Guoqing, and Liu Guozhong hold significant political positions and control substantial resources, making them well-positioned for such a promotion.

#### Conclusion

The personnel arrangements of the 20th Central Committee reveal that the development of the PRC's military-industrial group has become even more robust compared to the 19th Party Congress. This strengthens the military-industrial sector's advantage in the overall allocation of resources and policy focus and suggests that the country's military technology and equipment production capabilities may be further enhanced than ever before. Whether this group of officials will grow to wield more significant power will depend on a number of factors, but future personnel movements will be a key indicator, with the makeup of the 21st Central Committee in 2027 likely to reveal the group's relative power within the Party-state system.

### China's Political Mobilization Challenge

18 October 2024, The Diplomat, Josh Freedman

In the face of cadre overwork and citizen apathy, China's leaders face a mobilizational challenge that raises the costs of achieving their domestic goals.

China's aggressive pandemic lockdowns are firmly in the rearview mirror, but observers agree that public sentiment has undergone a tangible change. Amid continuing political tightening and an economy struggling to rebound, writers argue that China has entered an age of "malaise" or "stagnation" that lacks the optimism and excitement that defined the heady days of the reform era. New words and phrases now pepper daily conversation: some people are choosing to "run" for the exits, while others are opting to "lie flat" and give up on their ambitions.

In my own extended discussions with individuals across China on multiple trips over the past year, the most common descriptor is always *juan*, short for *neijuan* (内卷 or involution) – a term similar to "endless hustle" and repurposed from an anthropological concept to describe more and more work for less and less output. The "less" in today's China is partially about money, as salaries are dropping; it also refers to less meaning, as

people are working more but feeling alienated from why they are doing it.

In many ways, rising anomie and pessimism about the future are common sentiments across all modern societies, especially among youth. Yet the ubiquity of this sentiment from the top to bottom of Chinese society suggests that something significant has shifted among the Chinese public. Observers have identified the changing *zeitgeist* but struggled to make sense of what its political implications might be. While many commentators argue that rising disenchantment signals a threat to regime stability, there is no evidence to support the claim that the regime faces a fundamental legitimacy crisis. Even scholars who are keen to speculate about regime fragility acknowledge that the recent changes are unlikely to spur near-term collapse of either the economy or the political system, as leading market analysts have pointed out.

An alternate way of framing China's new social normal is to think in terms of the costs of political mobilization. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has laid out an ambitious agenda to overcome the mounting challenges it faces: a sluggish economy, high levels of unemployment, technology and trade pressure, and a demographic cliff, to name just a few. These are challenges confronting numerous regimes, but they matter more for contemporary China. Not only has the CCP historically relied on mobilization to realize its political agenda, but the consolidation of political control and suppression of alternate forms of organization has left party-led mobilization as the only means for achieving these governance goals.

From tackling social issues such as reviving the dismally low birthrate to achieving "comprehensive security" in areas ranging from food to ideology, the CCP wants and needs an all-out effort from both bureaucrats and regular citizens. Yet the current mood in China suggests instead that mobilizing either of these groups is increasingly costly.

Throughout its modern history, the party has used mobilization as a key element of its political rule. It seeks not only to operate through standard bureaucratic channels, but also to encourage and motivate the participation of various groups to go above and beyond the normal limitations of institutional governance. At the apex of high socialism under Mao Zedong, politics revolved around mass mobilization: individuals had to attend public meetings, conduct collective criticisms and study sessions, and even read through the front pages of *People's Daily* (a task so dry and difficult that author and Sinologist Simon Leys described "reading Communist literature" as "akin to munching rhinoceros sausage"). Even after reform and opening up, the CCP continued to rely on



campaigns and other mobilizational tactics, rather than formal institutions, to achieve major governance goals.

Mobilization in the reform era inherited key features of its Maoist forebears, but it also took on new elements in a more liberalized society. The targets of this mobilization have often been cadres and bureaucrats, rather than regular citizens. "Maoist campaigns mobilized the masses into politics," explained Zeng Qingjie in a study of poverty alleviation. "Reform-era campaigns, by contrast, entail a much lower degree of mass involvement. Instead, it is the bureaucrats who became the main targets of intense mobilization."

Elizabeth Perry described these mobilization efforts as "managed campaigns," which incorporate the framework of mass revolutionary campaigns but are more highly directed from the top and overlaid with technocratic terminology. These efforts include work teams, local councils, linking cadres or localities to other targeted areas, and more – all of which focus mobilization on groups of elites, rather than the masses.

In the face of massive economic and social challenges, the new era under Xi Jinping is not just marked by a shift toward enforcing party unity and cracking down on political dissension – it is also about the CCP running into the limits of the existing mobilization strategy.

The reliance on mobilizing bureaucrats and cadres to carry out the agenda has overextended them to the point where they cannot possibly keep up with the demands. With the party and state responsible for more governance tasks than ever before, and with strict and inflexible targets for completing these tasks, bureaucrats are overworked (and, with local government budgets in some areas collapsing, underpaid). As a result, bureaucrats frequently describe disillusionment and feelings of involution.

At the same time, realizing many of the goals for development and social order also requires buy-in from a broader swath of the population. In an environment of growing political apathy, however, these calls to mass action are more likely to be met with indifference or contempt. The more the public ignores these entreaties, the more that bureaucrats are being mobilized to try to overcome these limits. They are tasked with carrying out more responsibility with less support from the people on the receiving end of the policies, and with less room for flexibility than in the past.

As one example, the CCP has implemented a policy campaign to improve food security and reduce reliance on foreign imports by establishing a quota for arable land that can grow staple crops like grain. Local officials are mandated to achieve targets of land reclaimed from other uses, which often

requires getting elderly farmers to use their land to grow unprofitable and labor-intensive grains rather than more profitable cash crops like tea or fruit. Already struggling under the weight of overwork, local officials spend fruitless months trying to convince citizens to get on board, often to no avail. The only plausible way to convince locals to agree to the program is to offer massive subsidies, and even then many citizens are still reluctant to change their farming strategy.

Nowhere is the challenge of dealing with disenchantment more obvious than in the case of the falling birthrate. No matter how many pro-natal policies the party and state put in place, the number of new children in China continues to decline year after year, and the overall population is now shrinking. After years of resisting calls to change the family planning system, leaders not only scrapped the one-child policy but are now scrambling to encourage young women to have two or even three children.

Population declines and lower fertility rates are now the norm across the modern world, especially in East Asia. A focus on careers, pressure to balance between individual goals and traditional family obligations, and the prohibitive costs of starting a family have all made marriage and child-rearing much less attractive to many young people. (As one of my friends in central China quipped, "Housing prices are the greatest contraceptive.") Few, if any, policy solutions anywhere have made even a blip in birthrates. Facing a lack of policy solutions, Xi Jinping has called for party officials to actively promote a child-bearing culture and reshape young people's views on marriage and family. Campaigns to encourage more births are underway. Thus far, these attempts look like a fool's errand. The response from women to these entreaties, as reporters have found, has been a resounding "no." The stories in the media corroborate conversations I have had with young Chinese: the state's attempts to mobilize, encourage, or cajole women and families to have more kids are met with a collective shrug. As these campaigns become more important, bureaucrats will have to spend more time trying to convince a reluctant population, and citizens will only become more reluctant in turn.

This is not to say that society-wide mobilization is impossible or that top-down mobilization is irrelevant. Instead, it is to point out that the costs of such mobilization are increasing in ways that limit the options available to a mobilization-oriented regime. China never officially made COVID-19 vaccination mandatory, but local officials – given strict instructions from their superiors – tried every possible way to pressure people to get vaccinated short of physically forcing them. Even then there was a

significant percentage of the population, especially the elderly, who still refused. Studies show that more than a quarter of the oldest citizens (age 80-plus) and more than 10 percent of elderly (60-plus) had not been fully vaccinated when China abandoned its pandemic control policies – and local bureaucrats had to spend time and money trying to reach their targets.

Without effective mobilization over the long term, and with local officials facing impossible targets, the CCP is left only with the option for coercion – a last resort that is both extremely costly and threatens to inflict irreparable damage on both individuals and society at large. Reports of coercion in the face of intransigence have become so common in the case of arable land quotas that the national government had to reprimand local officials for going too far.

The rising costs of mobilization present an enormous challenge to China's governance project. For China to be able to achieve its goals and fulfill what Xi and the leadership envision, they will have to overcome this mobilization challenge; so far, many citizens are responding to mobilization efforts by further retreating from politics, while bureaucrats are floundering under the limits of what they can do. Rather than focus on legitimacy crises or regime stability, observers would be well-served to focus their attention on the mobilization challenge. Whether China's leaders can address this challenge will define where China is headed and whether it will be able to achieve its ambitious agenda.

### Nicholas Roerich, Shambhala, and Agartha. 1. Tibet and Paris

18 October 2024, Bitter Winter, Massimo Introvigne

The notions of mythical and mystical kingdoms Shambhala and Agartha, as we know them today, are largely influenced by the views of the Russian painter.



Nicholas Roerich, "Tangla: Song of Shambhala" (1943)

We are down-to-earth Westerners, aren't we? We leave to Asia, or to a past we believe the Enlightenment liberated us from, ideas of mysterious inaccessible lands where milk and honey flow, peace

reigns, and all inhabitants have extraordinary abilities. Yet, many Western new religious movements also have teachings about earthly paradises, and not all derive from the Bible.

I would argue that this is largely due to the multiple (if neglected) influences of Western esotericism, and that a key figure in this respect is Russian painter Nicholas Roerich (1874–1947). To illustrate this thesis, we will travel to different parts of the world in the three parts of this series of articles.

#### Scene 1 – Tibet



Shambhala in a Tibetan thangka of the 19th century. From X.

Two notions often confused should be disentangled, Shambhala (the common spelling derived from Tibetan of the Sanskrit "Sambhala") and Agartha. Shambhala is mentioned in the "Kalachakra Tantra" (early 11th century) as a mythical kingdom whose existence is physical, yet at the border with the metaphysical.

The "Kalachakra Tantra" includes a millennial prophecy: the king of Shambhala will come again, and fight a final battle for the triumph of righteousness and Buddhism, ushering in an earthly paradise.

The future manifestation of Shambhala is connected with two distinct sets of prophecies: about a latter-day kingdom of the Maitreya Buddha and about the return of the mythical King Gesar of Ling, which according to Tibetan, Mongolian, and other traditions was a legendary hero and ruler of the early Middle Ages.

#### Scene 2: The Hollow Earth—or Paris

Unlike Shambhala, the concept of Agartha is not traditional. We find it in Paris, used first by French occult novelist Louis Jacolliot (1837–1890) in 1873, more or less as a synonym of Shambhala. It became popular in Western esotericism in 1910, when the book "Mission de l'Inde," by Alexandre Saint-Yves d'Alveydre (1842–1909), originally written around 1886, was published, one year after the death of his author.

Saint-Yves claimed that Agartha was actually a physical place, only it existed underground, under the mountains of Asia. It was the residence of the Master of the Universe and of the most advanced civilization of our world.

Saint-Yves combined two different narratives. That Masters hidden somewhere between India and Tibet wielded great power had been taught by Madame Helena Blavatsky (1831–1891) and her Theosophical Society. That a hollow Earth harbored an underground high-level spiritual center had been suggested in Britain, before Saint-Yves, by novelist and politician Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803–1873) in “The Coming Race” (1871) and by medium and Theosophist Emma Hardinge Britten (1823–1899) in “Ghost Land” (1876).

But was all this symbol, metaphor, or reality? Among the first to claim that it was absolutely real was Chicago lawyer and businessman Willis George Emerson (1856–1918). In 1908, he published “The Smoky God,” allegedly an account written by a Norwegian sailor, Olaf Jansen, who had found near the North Pole the entrance to a subterranean kingdom, whose capital was the original Garden of Eden. Occultists quickly claimed Jansen had found Agartha.

Much more seriously was taken Polish (although born in present-day Latvia) explorer Ferdynand Ossendowski (1876–1945). He had traveled to Central and Eastern Asia and had played an ambiguous role in the political game between Russia, China, and the West to control the three strategically crucial areas of Tibet, Mongolia, and present-day Xinjiang.

In 1922, Ossendowski published “Beasts, Men and Gods”. He claimed to have collected evidence about the underground kingdom of Agartha, where the King of the World reigned. He also mentioned a prophecy that, as human corruption will increase, “the peoples of Agartha will come up from their subterranean caverns to the surface of the earth” to establish a righteous kingdom.

We are still in Paris, though. There, on July 26, 1924, the editor of the prestigious “Nouvelles Littéraires”, Frédéric Lefèvre (1889–1949), invited Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain (1882–1973), historian of Asia René Grousset (1885–1952), and esoteric author René Guénon (1886–1951) to debate Ossendowski, who was visiting France. Grousset and Maritain remained skeptical, but Guénon found in Ossendowski, together with “unbelievable” tales and passages simply derived from Saint-Yves and others, original and valuable information. The debate influenced Guénon’s decision to publish in 1927 “Le Roi du monde” (whose first part appeared in December 1924 in the Italian esoteric journal “Atanòr”), where he discussed the theory of a “King of the World” and of hidden spiritual centers located in Asia.

A plethora of secret societies mentioned Agartha and Shambhala. Their leaders were not necessarily experts of Asian religion and legends, and often

confused the two notions. For a certain Western practical mentality, the main question was whether Shambhala or Agartha would come out from wherever secret place they were and really establish an earthly paradise, which would also imply dealing with the current political circumstances. This question will generate a special interest in Russia and the United States, as we will see in the next articles of this series.

### **Decision of The Court of the Citizens of World on the Proposed Indictment of Xi Jinping – The Opinion of Judge Bhavani Fonseka**

17 October 2024, OpinioJuris

‘The Court of the Citizens of the World’ – a people’s tribunal – was organized by the Cinema for Peace Foundation, relating to alleged crimes committed by Xi Jinping, President of the People’s Republic of China. The tribunal considered confirmation of an indictment for the crime of aggression, the crime of genocide, and crimes against humanity as proposed by a Prosecution team, and challenged by a Defence team, and heard witnesses and received documentary evidence during 8 – 12 July 2024 in public hearings in The Hague. The three judges at this tribunal – Z. M. Yacoob, Stephen Rapp and Bhavani Fonseka – came to a decision regarding confirmation of the charges, and these posts are their individual opinions, in which all concurred, pronounced at the last hearing of the tribunal on 12 July 2024.

12 July 2024

Thank you, Judge Rapp.

At this stage of the confirmation of the charges I will be examining whether there are substantial grounds to indict the accused of the charge of-

Count 2: the Crime against Humanity of Forcible Transfer of children, between at least 14 March 2013 and 24 May 2024, contrary to Article 7(1)(d) of the Rome Statute

Count 3: the Crime against Humanity of Imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty, between at least 14 March 2013 and 24 May 2024, contrary to Article 7(1)(e) of the Rome Statute

Count 4: the Crime against Humanity of Persecution, between at least 14 March 2013 and 24 May 2024, contrary to Article 7(1)(h) of the Rome Statute

Article 7 of the Rome Statute sets out the acts that falls within Crimes against Humanity when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack.

Thus, there are two elements to the crime-

A contextual element that entails “when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population” and

A mental element that requires “with knowledge of the attack”

It must also be noted that acts should not be random, accidental or isolated but evidence must demonstrate that the acts are committed in furtherance of a State or organizational policy to commit an attack

In addition to the Rome Statute, attention is also on whether violations fall under Customary International Law.

#### Evidence Presented

As the evidence provided to the court indicates, the accused is the general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and is the president of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). The court heard of how the accused has had effective authority over the PRC since 2013. It has also been submitted that the system of governance in the PRC is centralized and the accused is intrinsically involved in the planning and preparation of policies in the PRC.

As the court heard this week, the civilian people of Tibet have experienced widespread and systematic attacks including attempts to erase their cultural, linguistic and religious practices and identity, restrictions on the free expression of opinion and belief, on their movement, of torture and a large number of Tibetan children being forcibly moved to Chinese run boarding schools. The testimony and evidence presented to court highlighted the systematic and organised nature of these practices. The court also heard of evidence that shows the involvement of the accused in the planning of these policies.

The court heard of specific instances that require attention-

Firstly,

We heard from victims and expert testimony on the implementation of the colonial boarding schools and its impact on Tibetan children and their families, the psychological and emotional trauma and the long term impact on Tibetan identity. Previously, subjects taught in the Tibetan language saw a change of policy under the leadership of the accused with education presently being solely in the Chinese language.

The court heard evidence indicating to at least a million Tibetan children affected by this policy that further estrange young Tibetans from their heritage and is aimed at assimilating Tibetan people culturally, religiously and linguistically. Children of the Tibetan minority are forced to complete what can be considered ‘compulsory education’ curriculum in Mandarin Chinese.

This has resulted in Tibetan children losing their ability to communicate with their parents and

grandparents in the Tibetan language, further contributing to the assimilation of the Tibetan identity.

Secondly,

We heard evidence that speaks to the targeting of Tibetan monasteries including-

- the destruction of several monasteries and violence targeting Tibetan monks and nuns
- restrictions placed on Tibetans access to religious sites and religious gatherings
- changing the practice of Tibetan Buddhism to Chinese Buddhism
- persecution of Tibetans for religious activities honoring the Dalai Lama or possessing his image.

Such practices can be viewed as a deliberate policy aimed at dismantling Tibetan religious and cultural identity.

Thirdly,

We heard evidence that speaks to multiple forms of restrictions on free expression of opinion and belief, on movement, assembly and association.

Further, evidence indicated to other serious violations including the use of torture that includes the denial of basic services to prisoners and reports of enforced disappearances with families unaware of the whereabouts of political prisoners.

The court also heard of state policies with questions raised as to whether ‘unity’ is to create uniformity and with it eradicate other cultures, religions and languages. In addition, the court heard of narratives such as ‘lasting stability’ ‘national security’ that seek to provide legitimacy to the policies of the PRC and the accused.

The court heard that the tenure of the accused has marked a period of increased institutionalization of repressive measures against Tibetans, with a clear focus on eroding Tibetan cultural identity. Despite the official narratives that include economic development, unity in the motherland, the renovation of cultural sites, the preservation of language and culture, and the eradication of extreme poverty, evidence before the court indicates to a concerted attempt to eradicating the Tibetan identity and culture and to integrate Tibetan identity into the dominant Chinese identity.

Moreover, the dire conditions in the Tibetan areas have witnessed several reported instances of self-immolation and as indicated to the court is indicative of the desperation and oppression faced by Tibetans.

Considering the vast evidence before the court, we believe there are substantial grounds to infer a widespread and systematic attack directed against the civilian population, with knowledge of such attack.

Thus, the court confirms Count 2, 3 and 4 of the proposed indictment, which following the non-confirmation of proposed Court 1, will be renumbered Counts 1, 2, and 3.

Finally, the testimony of victims reflects the lived experiences of violence and immense suffering, with several speaking to ongoing forms of violence. The courage of those who shared their experiences despite the multiple challenges speaks to the resilience of victims who want to see an end to the violence and seek accountability. We commend them for their courage, resilience and determination.

We thank all those who shared their experiences, submitted evidence and supported the court in this confirmation hearing.

South Asia In Transition: Geopolitical Impacts Of China's Expanding Role – OpEd

17 October 2024, Eurasian Review, Mirza Abdul Aleem Baig

China's expanding techno-economic and geopolitical influence is a well-established reality. Even Western nations, which typically have the advantage of stronger state and civil society institutions, are finding it difficult to counter China's rising influence efforts. In more vulnerable regions, particularly South Asia, where China positions itself as a dominant power, countries are facing challenges due to Beijing's increasing activism and influence operations. China's economic investments and military involvement are steadily growing across South Asia, particularly in countries like Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and most recently, the Maldives.

Over the past decade, China's growing influence in South Asia has not only been driven by its funding and execution of large-scale infrastructure projects, particularly under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), but also reflects its broader geopolitical strategy in the region, which increasingly challenges the influence of the United States and other Western powers. While much focus has been placed on the debt burdens these projects have generated and the economic crises that have followed, less attention has been given to how China engages with political leaders in these countries to advance its strategic interests, including its competition with the U.S. for regional dominance.

China's ability to swiftly implement infrastructure projects has helped it build strong ties with South Asian governments, often aligning itself with ruling elites and top-tier military generals to gain political leverage. However, these projects do not always align with the actual needs of these countries, leading to wasteful spending and unsustainable debt. For instance, in Sri Lanka, the Hambantota Port project, financed by Chinese loans, failed to

generate adequate business, forcing Sri Lanka to lease the port to China on a 99-year agreement, which critics argue has geopolitical implications, potentially giving China a strategic foothold in the Indian Ocean – a region of significant interest to both India and the U.S. Similarly, the Maldives, once a nation firmly within India's sphere of influence, has also seen an increase in Chinese investments and political outreach, illustrating China's growing clout in a region traditionally seen as within India's strategic backyard. Under President Abdulla Yameen, pursued several Chinese-funded infrastructure projects that have left the country heavily indebted, raising concerns about China's ability to exert influence over key Indian Ocean nations.

Nepal, a landlocked nation sandwiched between China and India, has seen Beijing's influence increase in recent years. China's investment in Nepal's infrastructure, including roadways, hydropower, and telecommunications, comes with political implications, as Beijing seeks to counterbalance Indian influence in the region. Bangladesh, too, has been courted by China, which has made significant investments in the country's transportation and energy infrastructure, further entrenching its role as a regional economic powerhouse.

In Pakistan, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was supposed to bring economic transformation, but the energy crisis persists due to deeper political and economic inefficiencies, which Chinese investments have not addressed. CPEC promises to modernize Pakistan's infrastructure and energy sectors, critics argue that the financial dependency created by Chinese loans could undermine Pakistan's long-term sovereignty. While China's investments have helped it gain influence, they often overlook long-term sustainability, leaving successor governments to manage the consequences of increased debt and underperforming projects, which also fuels public criticism.

Similarly, China's growing technological influence in South Asia through investments in telecommunications, digital infrastructure, and smart cities reflects a broader strategy to extend its reach into critical sectors like 5G, e-commerce, and cybersecurity, posing a direct challenge to U.S. technological and economic leadership. Chinese firms like Huawei and ZTE play pivotal roles in 5G expansion, while companies such as Alibaba and Tencent are making significant inroads into the region's e-commerce and fintech sectors.

In developing digital infrastructure, including fiber optic cables and data centers, China is laying the foundation for long-term influence in South Asia, while also exporting surveillance technologies,



raising concerns about digital authoritarianism and increased state control. This expansion complicates U.S. efforts to promote democratic governance and open markets in the region, particularly as countries become increasingly dependent on Chinese technology and expertise. India's response to this growing influence has been one of caution, particularly in telecommunications, as it seeks to curb China's reach in sectors it views as critical to national security.

However, despite India's efforts and U.S. concerns, China's economic power and infrastructure investments in South Asia give it a significant strategic advantage. As a result, China's deepening presence in the region not only raises questions about the sustainability of its development model but also has broader geopolitical implications, as it enhances China's soft power and undermines U.S. influence in a region that is increasingly becoming a key theater for global competition between the two superpowers. Beijing's growing activism across South Asia is not without challenges. Critics argue that China's approach can foster local resentment, especially when it comes to concerns about debt-trap diplomacy, environmental degradation from infrastructure projects, or loss of sovereignty. Nevertheless, the increasing interdependence created by China's investments in South Asia leaves many nations in a precarious position, often caught between the economic benefits of Chinese partnership and the political costs of aligning too closely with Beijing.

China's rising influence across South Asia is emblematic of its broader global ambitions. The region's strategic location, combined with its developmental needs, makes it a key target for Beijing's broader geopolitical aspirations, positioning China as a major power player not only in South Asia but on the global stage. As the dynamics of the region continue to shift, the challenge for South Asian nations remains how to engage with China while safeguarding their autonomy and balancing their relationships with other global powers, particularly India and the West. How has China's policies, including "Wolf Warrior Diplomacy", weigh heavily on countries to take sides against the U.S. or India, and how might this affect South Asia in the future? This remains to be seen.

### **India's Arunachal Dam a defence against China's 'Mother of all Dams' plan in Tibet?**

16 October 2024, Tibetan Review

China's plan to build the world's largest hydropower project—the 60,000 MW Motuo mega-dam—on the Yarlung Tsangpo River in Tibet, is prompting downstream India to take measures against its

potential use as a hydrological weapon, given China's well-known record for doing so, said an opinion piece posted on the [eurasiantimes.com](https://www.eurasiantimes.com) Oct 15.

New Delhi is stated to be worried that the dam will give Beijing the power to control the river flow, which provides drinking water to an estimated 1.8 billion people in countries including China, India, Bhutan, and Bangladesh.

The mega dam will add to the series of other dams China has built to tame the Yarlung Tsangpo, which is known as the Brahmaputra river in India. This "Mother of all Dams" will curtail the river's flow during the lean season and trigger artificial floods during the rainy season.

India's response includes a plan to build an 11,000 MW hydropower project on the Siang River in Arunachal's Upper Siang district. Its design includes a "buffer storage" of over 9 billion cubic metres of water during peak monsoons. This would act as a reserve when water flow is reduced. It will also act as a buffer for downstream areas of Arunachal and Assam if China releases sudden water.

China has a history of using its dams to carry out transnational aggression. The piece noted that in 2021, China cut the water flow of the Mekong River by 50% for three weeks without any prior warning. The flow was cut ostensibly for power-line maintenance, but this affected the millions of people living along the waterways in the Southeast Asian countries of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Also, in 2019, China's dams in the upper Mekong River basin retained a record amount of water, despite experiencing above-average rainfall in the region during the wet season. Consequently, countries downstream faced an unprecedented drought during this typically wet season.

Since that year, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam have experienced the most severe and prolonged drought on record. The region's economy and food security have been adversely impacted. Farmers have lost crops, fish populations have dwindled, and reservoir levels have dangerously decreased, the piece noted.

The Yarlung Tsangpo is one of the world's largest transnational river systems. It originates in eastern Tibet's Ngari region, home to the holy Mt Kailash and Lake Mansarovar, flows 2,900 kilometres across southern Tibet along the Himalayas, and enters India through the states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. In 2017, the water of Siang, a tributary of the Brahmaputra, turned black and became unsuitable for drinking, damaging the ecology and disrupting local agricultural production. Indian officials publicly blamed China. China dismissed the accusations as highly exaggerated, the piece noted.

Building dams in upstream Tibet “enables China to use water as a geopolitical tool, potentially manipulating water levels for irrigation, power generation, or flood control, which has impacted India and Bangladesh,” Neeraj Singh Manhas, Special Advisor for South Parley Policy Initiative, Republic of Korea, has said.

“India’s geographic location, with much of its water originating from rivers flowing from China (Tibet), places it at a disadvantage. India, as a lower riparian state, is dependent on these upstream flows for its agriculture and water security, which makes it vulnerable to any upstream activities by China,” Manhas has added.

He sees India’s recent proposal to build its dam on the Siang as a shift in strategy “aiming to assert its water rights and reduce dependence on China’s actions.” This includes India’s National Hydroelectric Power Corporation building the Upper Siang hydropower project, which would be the country’s biggest hydropower project, with a capacity of 10,000 megawatts.

While China has been taming the river to generate hydro-power over the past several years, the super dam proposed at the remote stretch of the river known as the Great Bend is the biggest of them all.

The dam’s site is at the eastern reaches of the Himalayas near the disputed border with the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. It is at a place where the river makes a dramatic U-turn. Here, the river elevation drops fiercely over 2,700 meters within a 50 km stretch before it changes course towards India.

China is said to claim that the project is being constructed to increase life quality in Tibet and manage water scarcity while meeting China’s goal of reaching a carbon emission peak before 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2060.

While that may be so, the dam construction is also seen as being driven by geo-political considerations. In 2016, China obstructed the flow of the Xiabuqu River, a Brahmaputra tributary located in Tibet near the Indian border. On the face of it, the obstruction was done to facilitate the operation of the Lalho hydropower project.

China’s “mother of all dams” is being planned at a time when India is contemplating a review of the Indus Waters Treaty with Pakistan following the cross-border Uri terrorist attack. “This trend signifies the potential ‘weaponization’ of transboundary water resources, posing a significant threat to regional stability in South Asia,” Manhas and Dr Rahul M Lad were stated to have contended in a recent research paper.

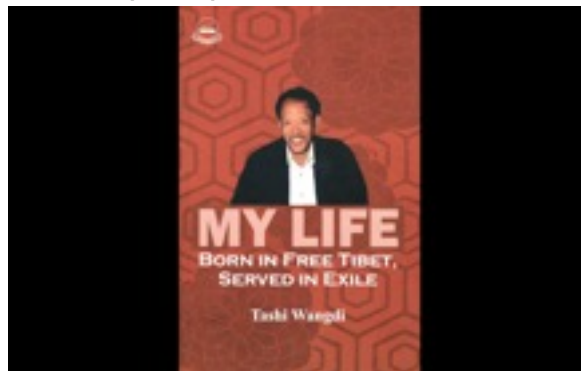
The opinion piece also notes that after the 73-day Doklam border standoff with India in 2017, China “abruptly” ceased to share hydrological data for the

Brahmaputra River despite previous agreements. In contrast, Bangladesh continued to receive uninterrupted data from China. This behaviour by China reflects its intent to utilize water resources as a political tool against India within the South Asian context, the piece noted.

### Book review: A document for the posterity

16 October 2024, Phayul, Vijay Kranti

“My Life-Born in the free Tibet, Served in exile”, The autobiography of Tashi Wangdi, a seasoned Tibetan diplomat is an interesting ring side view of exiled Tibet’s early history.



The latest autobiographic book “My Life – Born in Free Tibet, Served in Exile” by a senior (retired) Tibetan diplomat Tashi Wangdi is yet another monumental addition to an ongoing series of Tibetan autobiographies. A common driving force behind this series is the advice of HH the Dalai Lama to all Tibetans, especially those with long public exposure as servants of the Tibetan government-in-exile or as leaders who have been active in various fields, to write down their experience, views and observations to document Tibet’s history in exile. This book by Tashi Wangdi becomes more important from the point of historic documentation of the Tibetan struggle because of his unique position as a translator of the letters and telegrams received by the Dalai Lama administration in exile during early days when none of his ‘Kalons’ (ministers) could understand English.

This book is an authentic documentation of many events and developments because of Tashi Wangdi’s four decade long experience in the exile government. Starting from an Upper Division Clerk and gradually rising to the topmost ranks he served as a minister in the Dalai Lama’s administration. In the latter part of his career as a minister for seventeen years in almost every department of the government-in-exile he also served as the Representative of Dalai Lama in New Delhi and Brussels. His closeness to the Dalai Lama also provided him the unique opportunity of accompanying him and being privy to many historic

events during his foreign visits between 1985 and 2011.

This book shows that as a diplomat to the core of his personality Tashi Wangdi has the ability to look at situations and developments with deep commitment and necessary detachment too. For example, in his concluding remarks he enumerates three main factors which will have a determining impact of the ultimate success of the Tibetan movement. Among these factors he also underlines the importance of the "Goodwill and support of the Chinese people" along with two other factors namely Tibetan people's unwavering determination and commitment and the international support for Tibetan cause.

Tashi Wangdi has specifically mentioned the two reasons behind writing this monumental and massive autobiography which is spread over 699 pages. One is the Dalai Lama's advice to all senior retired civil servants as well as all other Tibetans to write down a full and honest account of their life story as exiles. His other reason is to share his life story with his own children because he could not spend enough quality time with them during their growing up years because of his own official engagements and frequent travels. But the third reason which he has not mentioned in the introduction chapter of this book is to let his own friends, like me, to understand how important role he and his peers played, with full commitment and devotion, in Tibet's struggle for its legitimate rights as an occupied nation. This book has done good justice to all of these three reasons.

As a first-hand witness to many one-to-one interactions of Dalai Lama with many world leaders he writes, "He (Dalai Lama) is consistent, principled and transparent in the views and ideas he himself holds as important and shares with others. He is never one who will say something publicly and do the opposite himself, as one often witnesses in many public figures."

The author gives an interesting but painful account of how the women in Tibetan society were treated less than equal, especially in activities related to some religious practices. He writes, "I could not understand why women were not allowed to touch certain religious objects meant for protection, why they were not allowed to enter some shrine rooms..... I remember my mother praying that she may be born as a man in her next life..... There were instances where my mother would stand outside a shrine or deity room when men folks went in to pray."

This book is divided into 17 chapters, arranged in the chronological order as this autobiographic story moves ahead from Tashi Wangdi's 'Happy Childhood in Tibet' to his retirement from his official work in 2001. Some other chapters like his 'Journey into Exile', 'Delhi Bureau' (as Dalai Lama's

Representative in India), 'Brussels' (as Dalai Lama's Representative in the European Union), 'Part of Entourage' (travels with Dalai Lama) and 'Dharamsala-Beijing' (as a senior member of Dalai Lama's team for negotiations with China) give lucid details of his personal life as a Tibetan refugee and his role in the 'Central Tibetan Administration' which functions as de-facto Tibet's 'Government-in-Exile'.

In chapter 'My Education' Tashi Wangdi has given interesting details of how the modern education process of Tibetan refugee children started with institutions like the 'Tibetan-Homes-Foundation' (THF) to finally emerge as the greatest strength of the Tibetan diaspora.

In chapter 'Higher Education' Tashi tells the story of how his college education at Durham in UK became possible, like most other Tibetan youths, due to liberal grants and scholarships provided by donors and institutions who were kind to the Tibetan refugees. His experience of participation in demonstrations on issues like Northern Ireland, war in Vietnam, White apartheid rule in South Africa etc. give a good glimpse of how such international exposure of Tibetan students helped them in developing and refining their political skills for their own national struggle.

As expected, a major part of this book carries a detailed narration of Tashi Wangdi's years in the Tibetan establishment. Besides details of many major developments depicting the evolution of Tibetan issue on the international scene this book also gives a good glimpse of the nature and intensity of internal politics among the Tibetan exile community. On the one hand many anecdotes reflect on not only the fault lines of traditional regional groupings and newly emerging power groups within this microscopic community, but also successfully underline the extraordinary unity among the Tibetan diaspora which has emerged during the exile years as a result of people's deep faith in Dalai Lama and his visionary leadership. For example, the evolution of Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) as the biggest and the most dynamic organization of the exile community has proved itself as a unifying force of the diaspora by going beyond the regional identities, sub-religious followings and socio-economic differences. His access to day to day developments in the higher circles of the Tibetan establishment and important documents as a Kalon for 17 years has also helped Tashi Wangdi to make this book rich from history point of view. Many of the photo copies of such documents are going to prove useful for future researchers and coming generations of Tibetans.

One of interesting and important subjects which emerged as an important development during Tashi's tenure as the Kalon of Religion and Culture Department is related to the ordination of Nuns

which was initiated by Dalai Lama himself. Similarly, the controversy related to the incarnation of 17th Karma Pa has been dealt with in details in this book. Photo copies of some important letters related to this issue should be quite useful for those who intend to study this issue in details.

Besides many more important developments Tashi has also described the formation of a Tibetan lobbying group at Washington DC in 1988 which has emerged as one of the most effective lobby groups of Tibet in the form of 'International Campaign for Tibet' (ICT). He has described how a clear distinction between this public action group was kept insulated from the Representative Office of Tibet in New York. It is interesting to note that present day Tibet's three most reputed diplomats namely Gyari Lodi Gyaltshe, Tenzin Namgyal Tethong and Tashi Wangdi served the Tibetan cause in tandem and in continuity in the same era in the USA which proved to be the most successful watershed era in the history of Tibet's national struggle. Tashi's detailed descriptions of HH Dalai Lama's visits to various countries and within India when he accompanied him are interesting and will prove useful to those who have interest in understanding present Dalai Lama's quality of bonding with new people and communities.

Another major attraction of this book is its chapter 'Dharamsala-Beijing' which deals with the history of contacts and the long dialogue process between Dharamsala and Beijing that started in 1979 with the contact between some Beijing functionaries and Gyalo Thondup, the elder brother of Dalai Lama, who operated from Hong Kong at that time. In addition to giving some details about this contact Tashi has also shared his experience and views about this process as a senior member of Dharamsala's 'Task Force for Negotiations' in its different Avatars.

In this chapter Tashi has quoted some interesting internal statements by two prominent Tibetan leaders, His Holiness Panchen Lama and Comrade Bapa Phuntsog Wangyal, who both stayed back in Tibet and collaborated with the occupying Chinese masters in their own respective ways. One interesting quote is from Panchen Lama's speech given to the members of the TAR Standing Committee who were attending the National People's Congress in Beijing on March 28th, 1987. He said, "In the State Planning Commission's report, there were many proposals for poverty alleviation in many areas. But the proposals did not say a word on the minority regions. Raising this point in the Standing Committee meetings I said, "There is nothing wrong in you becoming prosperous first. We (Tibetans) will wear threadbare garments and beg for food. But does that make you proud?" (p-607)

Tracing the history of dialogue between Dharamsala and Beijing Tashi has underlined the Chinese game

of deception by pointing out how the Chinese government went against the assurance given by its own paramount leader Deng Xiaoping who had offered Dalai Lama to resolve the Tibetan issue through discussion on all issues except independence of Tibet. Listing all five points of the new policy document of Beijing government in November 1984 about Tibet he writes, "...the latest policy document had reduced the whole issue to His Holiness' return to Tibet and his future status." (p-601)

It is interesting to note that since then Beijing has formally restricted the entire dialogue process only to the return of Dalai Lama. In addition to this China also offered an attractive bait of good jobs and living conditions to Dalai Lama's associates with specific mention that these conditions "will be better than before". It is notable that while the Tibetan Parliament in Exile rejected this Chinese offer in its statement on February 5, 1985, the Chinese also outrightly rejected the Tibetan memorandum and closed its doors for any further discussions in 2010.

Before concluding his book on the chapter titled 'Retirement,' Tashi Wangdi has given an interesting description of how Dalai Lama decided to give away his own political powers in chapter 'Kalon Tripa Election'. It was in 2011 that Dalai Lama finally concluded the process of converting the Tibetan system from its traditional theocratic one to a democratic one which he had started in 1960 soon after escaping from Tibet and taking asylum in India. It was under the new constitution, announced by Dalai Lama in 2011, that he transferred his temporal authority to the elected representatives and the statutory bodies of Tibet in 2011 while keeping his own role limited only to spiritual matters. The more interesting part of the first ever election for the new Kalon Tripa (Prime Minister) as a result of this constitutional change was that the winner would eventually take over the political and other temporal powers from Dalai Lama as the first ever 'Sikyong' (President) of Tibet.

Tashi Wangdi has given elaborate details of the election process starting with the results of the first phase of polling in which all ordinary voters nominate candidates of their choice. It is on the basis of this voting that the election commission announces the list of top three contestants for final voting. This exercise left Dr. Lobsang Sangay, Tenzin Namgyal Tethong and Tashi Wangdi in the final fray. Giving a detailed description of his own election strategy Tashi also politely exposes the well-planned and organized practice of character assassination of rival candidates in Tibetan elections. He has painfully described how some bad words and baseless allegations were used against him to tarnish his image and his poll prospects during the election campaign. Sadly one finds today that this tendency

has gained further momentum and dimensions with increasing use of social media in Tibetan elections. The final result of the elections was on the obvious and expected lines in the form of victory of Dr. Lobsang Sangay who introduced the US Presidential election type publicity blitz campaigns and defeated the other two candidates with an impressive margin of votes.

As H.H. Dalai Lama has said in his foreword to this book, "This book shines a light on contemporary Tibetan history through the eyes of an individual who actively participated in its development."

### **Opinion: What China's leaders grasp about another Trump term**

15 October 2024, The Salt Lake Tribune, Rush Doshi

Trump remains well outside a bipartisan consensus on competing with China.

At the beginning of the Biden presidency, many of us serving in the National Security Council gathered to read the intelligence and reached a key conclusion: The 2020s would be what we called the "decisive decade" in U.S. competition with China.

Beijing seeks to displace the United States from its global leadership position and is a formidable challenger. It is America's first geopolitical rival to surpass 70 percent of U.S. G.D.P., exceed American industrial capacity and pull ahead in multiple technology sectors, such as electric vehicles, hypersonic weapons and nuclear energy technology. Absent corrective action, the United States risks falling behind China technologically, growing dependent on it economically and perhaps even suffering defeat by China's military in the Taiwan Strait or the South China Sea. How the next U.S. president navigates the remaining years of this decisive decade will have far-reaching consequences for America and the rest of the world.

The good news is that despite deep divisions in American politics, Democrats and Republicans now broadly agree on the need to outcompete China. They have enacted legislation intended to boost American technological leadership, revive domestic manufacturing, promote human rights around the world, strengthen American deterrence in the Taiwan Strait and bolster Asia-Pacific alliances.

That united front will be undermined if Donald Trump is elected again. Ironically, although he helped catalyze the current bipartisan approach as president by upending the long-term U.S. policy toward China that emphasized engagement over competition, he has never fully embraced the new consensus and now stands outside it. On China, he is often at odds with his former staff members, current advisers, the nationalist wing of

his party and even his own vice-presidential pick — all of whom see the challenge posed by Beijing more clearly than he does. Left to his own unpredictable impulses, Mr. Trump could very well lose this decisive decade for America.

Nobody grasps this better than China's leaders. They saw his term as an accelerant of what they believe to be American decline, and not without reason. Mr. Trump focused on U.S. commodity exports instead of long-term manufacturing strength. He alienated allies and partners, mishandled the pandemic response and repeatedly showed disregard for democratic norms. On China policy, he routinely put personal gain over America's interests and undermined important steps his staff members took to compete with Beijing. As a result, Mr. Trump was widely mocked by Chinese citizens, who nicknamed him "Chuan Jianguo" ("Build-the-Nation Trump" — the "nation" being China). His administration led President Xi Jinping of China to declare that the world was undergoing "great changes unseen in a century" as America fell from pre-eminence.

There is no reason to believe that in a second term Mr. Trump would deviate from the approach that weakened America's position during his presidency.

Take technology policy. When Mr. Trump was in office, his administration rightly levied export controls on Huawei and ZTE, Chinese telecommunications companies that the intelligence community had warned could be vectors for espionage and cyberattacks. But he put self-interest first. He reportedly promised Mr. Xi he would lift the controls (and eventually did so for ZTE, despite bipartisan opposition) in exchange for purchases of U.S. agriculture and energy commodities that he felt would help his re-election prospects.

Today Mr. Trump opposes overwhelmingly bipartisan legislation that would ban TikTok unless the app's China-based owners sell it. The goal is to prevent Beijing from being able to shape U.S. public opinion by manipulating the news feeds of TikTok's 170 million American users or from having access to sensitive user data. He previously supported this approach but appears to have reversed himself after meeting with a top donor who has a roughly \$30 billion stake in the app.

President Biden has taken important steps to deny China the advanced semiconductors it needs to take the lead in artificial intelligence and improve its military weapons, and he has moved to shore up America's defenses against Beijing's publicly documented campaign to compromise critical U.S. infrastructure, such as water, gas, telecommunications and transportation, in the run-up to a possible conflict. If, in a second term, Mr. Trump again elevates his personal interests above the



country's approach to technology competition, it would put these vital efforts at risk.

The story is similar in manufacturing. As a recent report by Senator Marco Rubio made clear, China already "leads in many of the industries that will determine geopolitical supremacy." Members of both parties recognize that urgent action is needed to reindustrialize America as a new flood of Chinese exports threatens key U.S. industries.

Mr. Trump does not seem to share this view. As president, he squandered any leverage he gained from raising tariffs on China by accepting a bad trade deal that he hoped would help his re-election prospects. The deal allowed Beijing to keep its unfair practices and sell Americans manufactured goods if China promised to buy American commodities. More bad deals like that in a second term could cost millions of U.S. jobs, displace America in high-tech industry and accelerate decline by turning the United States into a commodity supplier dependent on Chinese manufactured goods.

With democracy and human rights under pressure around the world, American leadership in defending those values is imperative. Yet Mr. Trump retains an affinity for authoritarian leaders like Mr. Xi and President Vladimir Putin of Russia that is far outside the bipartisan consensus. Mr. Trump once praised China's response to the Tiananmen Square massacre and threatened to veto nearly unanimous legislation condemning China's crackdown on Hong Kong by declaring, "We have to stand with Hong Kong, but I'm also standing with President Xi." According to Mr. Trump's former national security adviser John Bolton, Mr. Trump privately encouraged Mr. Xi to build the re-education prisons in which China interned an estimated one million ethnic Uyghurs. A second Trump term could further greenlight China's repression and its drive to weaken democratic values and American leadership around the world.

Mr. Trump's ideas on Taiwan are a blueprint for calamity. For decades, Washington has deterred China from invading Taiwan with a bipartisan policy of strategic ambiguity about whether the United States would defend the island. Mr. Trump threatens to weaken that deterrence. He said recently that Taiwan should pay the United States to defend the island, which is democratically ruled, while cavalierly casting doubt on America's ability to do just that.

This is extremely dangerous. Telegraphing a lack of U.S. resolve could one day embolden China to seize the island, which could spark a conflict that devastates the global economy. And Beijing has already taken notice: It is increasingly well known in Western diplomatic and scholarly circles that Chinese officials and think tank experts are quietly asking

whether Mr. Trump might acquiesce to Chinese military action against Taiwan if he is re-elected.

Democrats and Republicans alike believe that strengthening America's global alliances is one of the best ways to counter China. But Mr. Trump has shown that he still does not value America's international friendships. He is threatening once again to raise tariffs on allies, make them pay more for collective defense and renege on U.S. defense commitments. Without its allies, America would stand alone against Beijing.

China is America's most formidable geopolitical rival in a century, and thanks to Mr. Trump's term in office, leaders in Beijing are acutely aware of what he is about and how to manipulate him. They believe China is rising and America is declining. Electing Mr. Trump next month risks proving them right.

### **China's government is about to spend big on stimulus – can it turn around the country's sluggish economy?**

15 October 2024, The Conversation

China's relentless economic growth used to be the marvel of the world. Oh, what a memory.

The past couple of years have seen China contend with an economic slowdown amid colliding crises, many of which make it internationally unique. Consumer prices have been approaching deflationary territory, there's an oversupply of housing, and youth unemployment has soared.

Mounting pressure has forced the Chinese government to step in. Over the past month, Beijing has put forward a set of significant economic stimulus measures aimed at reviving China's faltering economy.

According to a research note by Deutsche Bank, this stimulus could potentially become "the largest in history" in nominal terms. But there's still a lot we don't know. So what kinds of measures that are in this package so far, and has China been here before?

What's in the package?

On September 24, Pan Gongsheng, governor of China's central bank, unveiled the country's boldest intervention to boost its economy since the pandemic. The initiatives included reducing mortgage rates for existing homes and reducing the amount of cash commercial banks are required to hold in reserves. The latter is expected to inject about 1 trillion yuan (A\$210 billion) into the financial market by letting the banks lend out more.

On top of this, 800 billion yuan (A\$168 billion) was announced to strengthen China's capital market.

This comprised a new 500 billion yuan (A\$105 billion) monetary policy facility to help institutions

more easily access funds to buy stocks, and a 300 billion yuan (A\$63 billion) re-lending facility to help speed up sales of unsold housing.

Further signs of economic revitalisation became evident at a Politburo meeting of China's top government officials, two days after this announcement.

Chinese President Xi Jinping stressed the urgency of economic revival. Xi even encouraged officials to "go bold in helping the economy" without having to fear the consequences.

That same day, seven government departments released a joint policy package to stabilise China's 500 billion yuan (A\$105 billion) dairy industry, which has been severely impacted by declining milk and beef prices since 2023.

A market rollercoaster

Initially, the market's response was overwhelmingly positive. Perhaps too positive. In the last week of September, stock markets in Shanghai, Shenzhen, and Hong Kong saw their biggest weekly rise in 16 years.

On October 8, following China's National Day holiday, turnover on the Shanghai and Shenzhen stock exchanges hit an unprecedented 3.43 trillion yuan (A\$718 billion). However, expectations for further stimulus measures were met with disappointment.

China's National Development and Reform Commission brought forward 100 billion yuan (A\$21 billion) in spending from the 2025 budget. That wasn't enough to sustain market optimism. On October 9, Chinese stocks saw their most severe drop in 27 years.

This downturn only worsened a few days later, when China's Ministry of Finance hinted there was "ample room" to raise debts but did not specify any new stimulus measures.

Still thin on the details

The market remains deeply uncertain about the future direction of China's economic policies and what they might mean for the world. Hopes that more details might be released over the weekend were largely dashed.

Back in July, Chinese authorities asserted in their Third Plenary Session communique that China "must remain firmly committed" to achieving this year's economic growth target of 5%. Compared to the country's reform-era economic performance, that's a modest goal.

But facing a persistently sluggish economic outlook, Xi later seemed to subtly shift the tone, changing the language from "remain firmly committed" to "strive to fulfill" in September.

Over the past decades, China has frequently employed massive-scale stimulus measures to revive its economy during downturns. These policies have

been able to significantly rejuvenate the economy, though occasionally with some worrying side effects. In response to the 2008 global financial crisis, China's State Council released a 4 trillion yuan (A\$837 billion) stimulus package. This successfully helped China stand firm through the crisis and was credited as a key stabiliser of the global economy.

But it also accumulated trillions of yuan in debt through local government financing and accelerated the rise of "shadow banking" – unregulated financial activities.

China also spent big on stimulating its economy in 2015, following stock market turbulence, and then again in the wake of the pandemic.

What should we expect?

What should we expect this time? How balanced or sustainable will any ensuing growth be?

We are still waiting on many of the details about the size and scope of the package, but any big increase in Chinese economic demand will likely have "spillover" effects.

As we've discussed, many of the measures announced to date will have their most immediate effect on borrowing, lending and liquidity in China's stock markets.

That suggests we should watch for what's called the "wealth effect" in economics. This is the theory that rising asset prices – such as for housing or shares – make people feel wealthier and therefore spend more.

If China's big stimulus spend causes sustained increases in asset values, it could give rise to economic optimism. Chinese consumers – and investors – may become less anxious about the future. From Australia's point of view, that could see increases in demand in areas where our economies are interlinked – iron ore, tourism, education and manufactured food exports.

More broadly, Chinese demand could contribute to growth in other global economies, with a self-reinforcing effect on the world as a whole.

Beware financialisation

On the other hand, China's shift to depending more on volatile asset price rises in its capital markets to sustain growth could have destabilising effects. Where asset price increases benefit those at the "top end of town," they can breed inequities and imbalances of their own.

China's "Black Monday" stock market crash in 2015 raised alarm in Beijing. Partly reflecting a wariness of excess financialisation, Xi cautioned at the time that "housing is for living in, not for speculation".

So far, China is still navigating its path towards a more sustainable development model, striving to strike a balance between sustaining economic growth and stabilising its domestic markets and political

landscape. As for the outcome, it remains a profound uncertainty for us all - perhaps China itself included.

### The Politics of China's Land Appropriation in Bhutan

15 October 2024, The Diplomat, Robert Barnett

China has built 22 villages and settlements within Bhutan's customary borders. And there is no sign that Bhutan can do anything about it - or that Beijing will face any costs.

In dealing with its neighbors, China "always strives to find fair and reasonable solutions through peaceful and friendly consultations," a spokesman for the Chinese Embassy in the United States told the New York Times in August. Why, then, has China appropriated part of a neighbor's territory?

That neighbor is Bhutan, a country with which China has said for decades it is keen to have formal diplomatic relations, hoping to balance or reduce Bhutan's close relations with its southern neighbor, India. Bhutan, for its part, has what it calls "friendly and cooperative relations with the People's Republic of China" and has supported China consistently at the United Nations and elsewhere.

As China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi has put it, in more poetic terms, "China and Bhutan are linked by mountains and rivers and enjoy profound traditional friendship." And China signed a treaty with Bhutan in 1998 in which both parties proclaimed "mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity" and agreed "not to resort to unilateral action to alter the status quo of the border."

What has since happened is the opposite. Eight years ago, China began building villages within territory that has for decades if not centuries been within Bhutan. Now, as documented in a report out today, there are 22 such villages and settlements built by China within Bhutan's customary borders. And there is no sign that Bhutan can do anything about it - or that China will face any costs for doing so.

As far as one can tell from satellite images, the Chinese villages and settlements in total contain some 2,200 homes for approximately 7,000 people. To construct these villages, China has annexed 2 percent of Bhutan's territory.

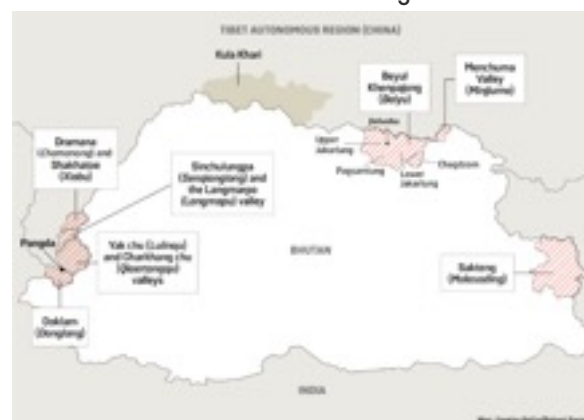
The villages are being built in two areas of Bhutan. Eight of the Chinese villages are in a western area of Bhutan that the historian Tsering Shakya said was ceded to Bhutan by the then ruler of Tibet, the 13th Dalai Lama in the early 20th century. China has built those eight villages for military reasons: it wants that western area of Bhutan because it includes an 89-square-kilometer area called Doklam, possession of which would give China major strategic advantage in its ongoing confrontations with India.

The 14 other Chinese villages and settlements are in areas of northeastern Bhutan known as the Beyul Khenpajong and Menchuma. These areas have always been understood to be in Bhutan. China produced a claim for these areas only in the 1980s and until at least the early 1990s they were shown on official Chinese maps as parts of Bhutan.

These northeastern areas of Bhutan have no compelling military or strategic value to China. Its reason for annexing them was more or less explicitly to place diplomatic pressure on Bhutan. In 1990, in what has become known as the "package deal," Beijing offered to drop its claims in the northeast of Bhutan if Thimphu would yield a number of claimed territories in its west, including Doklam, to China. In other words, the Chinese villages in the northeast were built within Bhutan's customary borders as a threat: if Bhutan didn't agree to the package deal and yield the western areas, the threat implied, it would lose the northeastern areas too.

That threat appears to have been largely realized. Without any public comment, and unnoticed even within the country, let alone abroad, Bhutan has already changed its maps so that Menchuma, one of the northeastern areas occupied by China since the 2000s, is no longer shown as part of Bhutan, though it clearly was some 30 years ago - even on China's maps.

And in March last year, two years after reports emerged of Chinese villages within Bhutan, Bhutan's then-prime minister finally said that those reports were false. The statement does not, however, mean that those reports were false when they were published. Instead, it suggests that now Bhutan does not expect to be able to recover the areas where China has built its cross-border villages.



Map showing the principal areas of Bhutan currently claimed by China. China is building villages in the western sector of Bhutan (in Bji Gewog in Haa dzongkhag) and in the northeastern sector (in Beyul and Menchuma in Lhuentse dzongkhag). Bhutan ceded Kula Khari (Gasa dzongkhag) to China in the 1980s, and in 2020 China made a public claim to Sakteng in the eastern sector. Source: Foreign Policy/Robert Barnett 2021.

From Leverage to Punishment

China's eight villages in Bhutan's west are part of what China calls a "consolidation" or "fixing" tactic: they are a way of acquiring territory by creating "facts on the ground" that another party can hardly change without triggering a war. In this sense, they are like China's actions in the South China Seas.

But the 14 villages and settlements in the northeast of Bhutan represent a completely different rationale: not the seizing of a strategic asset but what seemed to be a temporary occupation, a signal to Bhutan that it should yield to pressure. This was indicated by the fact that, in 2018, when China finished building its first cross-border village, which was in the northeast of Bhutan, it had only 16 residents.

By early 2023, when Bhutan announced that it was close to reaching a deal with China and that there were no Chinese villages on its soil, that pressure appeared to have paid off for China. Yet China's building spree in Bhutan's northeast continued. At the end of 2022, there were 14 villages and settlements, built over six years. But in the 18 months since early 2023 seven more have been built, and three existing villages have been majorly expanded and are currently being upgraded from villages to towns. This surge of construction has added another 790 units of Chinese housing in the northeast of Bhutan, tripling the housing stock in that area, which until recently China had not apparently seen as of strategic significance.

These new villages and settlements are not required to increase China's pressure on Bhutan – Thimphu seems close to yielding to most of China's demands, since it has no other option. Rather, they seem to represent punishment of Bhutan because it cannot yield Doklam to China. Legally speaking, Bhutan cannot do so unless India agrees, because of a 2007 treaty between Bhutan and India obliging either side not to "allow the use of its territory for activities harmful to the national security and interest of the other." So China's continuing occupation of parts of Bhutan and the expansion of its cross-border villages is penalizing Bhutan for having failed to accept an element of the package deal that it has no power to enact.

If, as seems likely, Bhutan yields the non-Doklam western areas demanded by the Chinese government, it will get some rewards from China, in that Beijing will most likely drop its claims to those areas of Bhutan that it has claimed but not occupied. These areas are the Upper Langmarpo, Charithang, and Yak chu areas in the west and the Chagdzom area in the northeast, totaling about 430 sq km. China's claims to those areas are viewed by some observers as "trade space" – token demands made only to be dropped later so as to give the impression of good will.

It is also likely that China will give back the Pagsamlung valley, an area of religious and historic significance for Bhutan which China has annexed by building roads and outposts and by stationing troops, but where it has not constructed villages. Returning the Pagsamlung valley to Bhutan would not, however, be a genuine concession either, because China does not include the Pagsamlung as part of China on its national-level maps (some local-level Chinese maps do include it as part of China), and has not done so for at least 25 years. So in the case of the Pagsamlung valley, China has occupied a piece of a neighbor's territory that it does not even claim.

#### Conflict Without An Enemy

China's land-grabs in Bhutan thus differ from Beijing's actions in the South China Seas. Firstly, unlike the Spratly Islands and other maritime features in the critical waterway, most of China's villages in Bhutan are not in areas of major strategic value, apart from Doklam. Their value was primarily as a form of pressure on the Bhutan government to yield the Doklam plateau.

Second, China's actions in the South China Sea – claiming territory on dubious grounds and then building unilaterally on that territory – were hostile acts directed at competitors or antagonists. But China supposedly views Bhutan as a friend, and Bhutan cannot, because of its size, resources, and geography, resort to any form of antagonistic response. China could have used multiple other options to place diplomatic pressure on Bhutan without seizing its territory and openly breaching an international agreement.

Bhutan has in any case, since at least the early 1990s, indicated its interest in opening formal relations with Beijing and settling the border disputes, apart from the Doklam issue, which depended on getting agreement from India. Bhutan's willingness was never the problem, and even the use by China of territorial annexation as an extreme form of pressure on Bhutan was always unlikely to get India to agree to Doklam being yielded to China.

A realist might see China's actions as what the political theorist Thomas Schelling called "coercive diplomacy," or, more particularly "compellence" – a muscular form of dominance-assertion. But Schelling's theory always assumes an adversary, leaving the coercing power with relatively few options. That is the opposite of the case here: Bhutan has not claimed anything that China held before its recent annexations, and could not compete with China even if it did.

In addition, coercive diplomacy involves a threat that is not fulfilled unless there is non-compliance (think Kennedy and the Cuban Missile Crisis). But in the case of Bhutan, the threat was carried out in advance, making it closer to Schelling's "forcible

action" (which he also called "brute force"), with the unlikely promise of withdrawal if Bhutan were to concede to the demand – which China's strategists must have known that in all likelihood it could never do in full.

Beijing's actions are of course ultimately directed against India, with which China is locked into a long-running border conflict. But the only damage being done here is to Bhutan, not India. For its part, India has shown interest only in the Doklam issue – or more precisely in the southern ridge of Doklam, which gives oversight of India's bottleneck at Siliguri.

In June 2017 India sent 270 troops into Doklam to prevent Chinese soldiers taking that ridge, leading to a 73-day standoff between Indian and Chinese army units. But India has not commented publicly or responded to China's incursions or appropriation at other points along the Bhutan-China border, and not even to China's seizure of the majority of the Doklam plateau just to the north of the ridge, where China has built multiple roads, barracks and military facilities in what is clearly disputed territory.

So why would China risk its stated goal of establishing formal relations with a friendly neighbor, and its much-proclaimed commitment to a "peaceful rise," in order to punish India, a third party that, as far as is known, is involved only in one small sector of that border? And why would China continue building villages in the northeastern area of Bhutan – at mind-numbing expense, given their remoteness, altitude, and climate, as a result of which every settler in those villages has to be paid large sums by the Chinese government to agree to live there – long after the utility of those villages as leverage has passed, literally, the point of no return?

Domestic factors can play a role in these situations – local Chinese power-holders in Tibet stand to gain significant funding from Beijing for their administrations by claiming that they face security threats from northern Bhutan. However, the only threat that Chinese media have cited as coming from Bhutan – since the Indian military has little presence in Bhutan other than at Doklam – is the possibility that exiled Tibetan supporters of the Dalai Lama might somehow try to cross into Tibet via Bhutan to foment an independence movement. But there have been almost no reports of illegal border crossings in the last ten years on any part of Tibet's 4,000 km-border (91 percent of which is with India or Nepal, not Bhutan), and even before then there were no reports of any trying to cross via Bhutan.

The use of annexation as a diplomatic tool matches with a recent shift by China from soft-power approaches to hard-power moves in its foreign relations, in particular with regard to Taiwan, the Philippines, and India. Some have presented realist

explanations for these developments, arguing that China sees those states as posing threats of some kind to its security. Others have seen China's combination of a declared commitment to a soft-power approach with the reality of its hard-power politics as designed, intentionally or not, to create confusion for observers and reduce predictability. But such arguments have little purchase in the case of Bhutan, since it does not pose a threat to China. Instead, the Bhutan case demonstrates the widest instance so far of a gulf between China's rhetoric and practice in its policy towards its neighbors, especially the smaller ones.

#### A New Cost-free Norm?

But there is another factor that may be more significant than normative assumptions of rationality or threat-response: the lack of cost. The exercise by states of their coercive powers is presumably constrained by the costs of excessive actions. In the Bhutan case, there have been no costs, not even of the mildest kind.

The mainstream media, other than those in India, have mostly ignored the issue, apart from news pieces by the New York Times in 2020, Reuters in 2021, and the Wall Street Journal in 2024, three years after the first major reports of cross-border village-construction (besides a Washington Post op-ed I wrote in 2020). Criticisms of China are routine in Western media – the BBC and the Guardian, for example, recently covered extremely doubtful allegations of Chinese abuses in Tibet based on such slender evidence as photographs of students wearing military-type fatigues or insignificant shifts in nighttime light emissions. But neither outlet has carried anything about China's annexation of territory within another country, seemingly a challenge to a founding principle of the United Nations.

As for governments, Bhutan and India have been largely silent on the issue, surely the wisest option for them in this situation. But it remains unclear why other governments or politicians have been quiet about China's annexation of parts of Bhutan. All the reports of village construction in disputed territory have long since been confirmed by satellite imagery, and the U.S. military has issued two reports judging China's village-building program in Bhutan to be potentially a case of occupation (one in October 2023, and another in much greater detail in March this year). Rabid anti-China rhetoric is never helpful, but near-total silence risks signaling acquiescence by the wider community to the use of territorial annexation as a tactic of choice with small neighbors.

The reason why China chose this hard-fisted tactic against Bhutan may thus be because it rightly calculated that the costs would all be Bhutan's. Given



its commitment to long-term considerations, Bhutan has no effective option but to continue as if its powerful northern neighbor is a friend, to accept the Chinese deal as far as India will allow, and to open formal relations with Beijing. As then-Prime Minister Lotay Tshering said last year, "How can Bhutan not have any bilateral relations with China? The question is when, and in what manner."

China may not end up with control of the southern ridge at Doklam, but its cross-border actions elsewhere in Bhutan have already demonstrated the effectiveness of land appropriation as a cost-free means for a major power to extract concessions from a smaller neighbor.

### **China's 'Mother Of All Dams' Threatens More Tensions With India; Delhi Responds By Building Another Dam On Its Side**

15 October 2024, The Eurasian Times, Ritu Sharma

China is all set to weaponize water against India by building the world's largest hydropower project—the 60,000 MW Motuo mega-dam—on the Yarlung Tsangpo River, which is known in India as the mighty Brahmaputra River.

In the post-Galwan world, New Delhi is worried that the dam will give Beijing the power to control the river flow, which provides drinking water to an estimated 1.8 billion people in countries including China, India, Bhutan, and Bangladesh.

The mega dam is in addition to the series of dams that China has built to tame Tsangpo. China's 'Mother of all Dams' can curtail the river flow during the lean season and trigger artificial floods during the rainy season. A concerned India has proposed an 11,000 MW hydropower project on the Siang River in Arunachal's Upper Siang district.

The dam design includes a "buffer storage" of over 9 billion cubic meters of water during peak monsoons. This would act as a reserve when water flow is reduced or act as a buffer for downstream areas of Arunachal and Assam if China releases sudden water.

The proposed dam aims to strengthen India's water-sharing rights as a riparian state.

India's fears are not unfounded. In 2021, China cut the water flow of the Mekong River by 50 percent for three weeks without a prior warning. The flow was cut ostensibly for power-line maintenance, but this affected the millions of people living along the waterways in the Southeast Asian countries of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam.

In 2019, China's dams in the upper Mekong River basin retained a record amount of water, setting a new record despite experiencing above-average rainfall in the region during the wet season. Consequently, countries downstream faced an

unprecedented drought during this typically wet season.

Since 2019, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam have experienced the most severe and prolonged drought on record. The region's economy and food security have been adversely impacted. Farmers have lost crops, fish populations have dwindled, and reservoir levels have dangerously decreased.

Now, the Yarlung Tsangpo is one of the world's largest transnational river systems. It originates in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau in southwest China, flows 2,900 kilometers across southern Tibet via the Himalayas, and enters India, where it is called the Brahmaputra, through the Indian states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh (which China claims as South Tibet).

Siang is a tributary of Brahmaputra. In 2017, the water of Siang turned black and became unsuitable for drinking, damaging the ecology and disrupting local agricultural production. Indian officials publicly blamed China. Nonetheless, China dismissed the accusations as highly exaggerated.

Experts believe that constructing dams on rivers such as the Brahmaputra will allow China to control the flow of water downstream.

"This enables China to use water as a geopolitical tool, potentially manipulating water levels for irrigation, power generation, or flood control, which has impacted India and Bangladesh," Neeraj Singh Manhas, Special Advisor for South Parley Policy Initiative, Republic of Korea told the EurAsian Times.

He opined: "For China, controlling the headwaters of major rivers provides an upper hand in negotiating with downstream nations. India's geographic location, with much of its water originating from rivers flowing from China, places it at a disadvantage. India, as a lower riparian state, is dependent on these upstream flows for its agriculture and water security, which makes it vulnerable to any upstream activities by China."

Manhas sees India's recent proposal to build its dam on the Siang as a shift in strategy "aiming to assert its water rights and reduce dependence on China's actions." The National Hydroelectric Power Corporation will build the Upper Siang hydropower project.

The dam was first proposed in 2017 by the central government think tank Niti Ayog. It said it would be the country's biggest hydropower project, with a capacity of 10,000 megawatts.

The NHPC has selected three sites along the Siang River, Uggeng, Ditte Dimme, and Parong, to assess whether the dam is feasible in this area.

The pre-feasibility report assesses the probable cost of the dam and whether it can be constructed in that area. The survey also involves drilling a 200-meter-deep hole to test the strength of the rock surface. The

dam is facing considerable opposition from the local population.

#### Water Wars In The Himalayas

The Yarlung Tsangpo runs almost 3,000 kilometers through the Tibetan Autonomous Region to the Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam and then out into the Bay of Bengal via Bangladesh. It is the highest major river on Earth, running at an average elevation of 4,000 meters.

In the last few years, China has been taming the river to generate hydro-power. But the super dam proposed at the remote stretch of the river known as the Great Bend is the biggest of them all.

The dam site is at the eastern reaches of the Himalayas near the disputed border with the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. It is at a place where the river makes a dramatic U-turn. Here, the river elevation drops fiercely over 2,700 meters within a 50 km stretch before it changes course towards India.

China claims that the project is being constructed to increase life quality in Tibet and manage water scarcity while meeting China's goal of reaching a carbon emission peak before 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2060.

But the dam construction is also driven by geopolitical considerations. In 2016, China obstructed the flow of the Xiabuqu River, a Brahmaputra tributary located in Tibet near the Sino-Indian border. On the face of it, the obstruction was done to facilitate the operation of the Lallo hydropower project.

However, it coincided with the time when India was contemplating a review of the Indus Waters Treaty with Pakistan following the Uri attack. In a research paper, Manhas and Dr. Rahul M. Lad contend that "this trend signifies the potential "weaponization" of transboundary water resources, posing a significant threat to regional stability in South Asia."

Bangladesh, where millions of people reside in the Brahmaputra basin, will also be adversely affected by the change in the river's course.

After the Doklam standoff with India, China "abruptly" ceased to share hydrological data for the Brahmaputra River despite previous agreements. In contrast, Bangladesh continued to receive uninterrupted data from China. This behavior by China reflects its intent to utilize water resources as a political tool against India within the South Asian context.

#### India has a China problem, not just a border problem

15 October 2024, The Strategist, Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan

It's not just the border. India has a deeper problem with China, and it looks like it's part of the same problem that other countries have with China: the country has become much more aggressive.

Indian policymakers and commentators routinely assume that if New Delhi could only resolve the dispute over the line of the Himalayan border, other issues would fall into place. In fact, there's not much reason to believe that. Just look further afield to the Western Pacific or Ukraine.

For the past several years, New Delhi has said there can be no progress in other aspects of the relationship as long as China refuses to concede on the border problem. This was initially an effort at pushing the border problem to the centre, presumably in the hope that China would not want to risk the entire relationship over it. But China has not budged and does indeed seem willing to risk the relationship instead.

There has been some recent speculation that India and China are on their way to resolving their standoff at the border, where military confrontations have sometimes become violent. India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said last month that 75 percent of the disengagement problems had been resolved. The holding of a round of Sino-Indian border talks in August and a meeting between Indian National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Affairs Minister Wang Yi also added to hope. But Jaishankar has since clarified that his reference was only to disengagement, not to issues of militarisation of the border or the larger state of relations.

Anyway, there may be a larger problem with India's strategy. The assumption behind it appears to be that the border dispute is the key issue in the relationship. But confrontations at the border may be consequences of deeper problems rather than a cause of them.

India-China relations have become increasingly challenging over the past two decades, even before a severe border clash that raised tensions in 2020. China objected vociferously to the US-India nuclear deal. It gave way, but a few years later refused to allow India to join the Nuclear Suppliers Group, which governs transfers of civilian nuclear technology and material. Around the same time, China repeatedly stymied Indian efforts to designate Pakistan-based terrorists under the UN terror list. Similarly, China has refused to back India's efforts to promote UN Security Council reforms as well as India's quest for a seat on the Security Council.

A meeting of foreign ministers of the BRICS group failed to issue a joint statement (for the first time since its founding) because of the Security Council issue. It is not difficult to assume, given China's long-standing efforts to undermine UN Security Council reforms, that it had a hand in the latest failure.

India's assumption appears to have been that each of these was a discrete policy disagreement rather than an indicator of a more fundamental issue—and that may be its big mistake.

China's behaviour with many of its neighbours has similarly changed. These changes have included increasingly aggressive behaviour in the South China Sea and East China Sea, particularly against Taiwan. It is also attempting to fish in troubled waters in both the Middle East and in the Ukraine war by extending diplomatic support to Iran to undermine American influence and appearing to provide material support to Russia.

Each of these instances of China's behaviour may seem explicable when viewed in isolation. China and its supporters would argue that its behaviour in the South China Sea is a response to aggressive actions by Vietnam and the Philippines, for example.

But we are seeing too many instances. There's a pattern, and India should recognise it.

If China's behaviour has fundamentally changed, and its behaviour towards India is only one aspect of that change, then what New Delhi faces is a much more serious problem than just the border. Indeed, it's clearly not even a Sino-Indian problem, but a China problem.

Part of this might reflect some historical patterns about the way rising powers behave, but one aspect of it may be more narrowly cultural: a reflection of China's sense of itself and its place in history. Either way, such a shift in China's position and worldview is not likely to be dealt with through negotiations narrowly focused on an apparently simple border dispute.

This is not to suggest that the border dispute is trivial. In 2020, for the first time in decades, blood was spilled in a clash between Indian and Chinese troops. Tens of thousands of Indian and Chinese soldiers are eyeball to eyeball, with all the attendant risks of inadvertent escalation.

This is a matter of concern even without all the other layers of complications between the two countries. Nevertheless, those layers of complications do matter and suggest that more fundamental issues are at stake than just the border dispute. If China is now fundamentally difficult to deal with, resolving that problem will be harder than Indian policy seems to assume. And even if it were resolved, other disputes may not be.

## **EXPLAINED: Xinjiang's largest cotton producer turned 70; not everyone is celebrating**

14 October 2024, RFA, Gülchéhre

The XPCC is involved in everything from governance to commerce. Evidence points to its oppression of Uyghurs.

This month the Chinese Communist Party celebrated the 70th anniversary of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, or XPCC, a massive CCP-backed paramilitary group that functions as an armed force, corporate conglomerate and government administrative unit.

China's vice premier, He Lifeng, traveled to Urumqi, the capital of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, to join the festivities, which included a performance by dancers holding replicas of giant vegetables to symbolize the bounty XPCC has brought to the region through land reclamation projects. He and other CCP officials praised the corps for protecting China's western border and promoting social stability and called for the group to take an even more expansive role in Xinjiang's development.

That won't come as welcome news to XPCC's critics who assert that gains ascribed to the corps have come at the expense of Uyghurs and other ethnic Turkic communities indigenous to Xinjiang. They allege the XPCC's economic development has relied on land expropriation, forced labor and extrajudicial detentions that have drawn international condemnation.

"In the last five years in particular, the XPCC has played a critical role in suppressing Uyghur life, culture and identity," a highly critical 2022 report from researchers at Sheffield Hallam University in the United Kingdom said.

The conglomerate is under sanctions by the U.S. Treasury. Cotton imports from Xinjiang are banned in the United States in part because of allegations that Uyghurs detained under the mass internment campaign were forced to work in textile factories upon release.

What is the XPCC?

The XPCC, which is referred to as Bingtuan in China, dates to the early days of the People's Republic of China. It was founded in 1954 with decommissioned troops from the People's Liberation Army and initially focused on security in a relatively sparsely populated border area and on agriculture and construction projects.

In the decades since, the XPCC's footprint has grown considerably. It now has stakes in industries including media, mining, logistics, clothing, insurance, tourism and others. In 2023, the XPCC's output in goods and services were valued in excess of \$50 billion, more than 20% of Xinjiang's total GDP.

XPCC is among the world's largest producers of cotton, the importation of which has been banned in the United States. News reports have said entities tied to the corps account for about 30% of China's cotton production.

The U.S. and human rights groups have said the production is in part driven by forced labor. China denies the accusations and has said the work of the corps has led to a more prosperous region. News reports have noted a few relative benefits of working for the XPCC. This account in Foreign Policy magazine published on the occasion of XPCC's 60th birthday noted that laborers for the corps are paid more than other workers.

What is unique about the XPCC?

While the XPCC has grown into a major conglomerate, it is structured in a way similar to a military unit in that it is divided into 14 divisions that are subdivided into dozens of regiments.

Its leaders take military titles who exercise administrative control over areas in which they operate. That includes authority over its court and educational systems in Bingtuan territories.

Nearly 3.5 million people in Xinjiang live under XPCC's direct authority, making it a parallel government to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, or XUAR. In 2021, the corps managed more than one-sixth of the region and a quarter of its arable land.

Why has the U.S. sanctioned the XPCC?

In July 2020, the U.S. Treasury Department sanctioned XPCC for its involvement in a mass internment campaign against Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in response to a supposed threat of terrorism.

The U.S. has labeled Chinese persecution of Uyghurs a genocide because it seeks to diminish native culture and traditions in the name of assimilation. More than 1 million people are thought to have been held in reeducation camps designed to promote assimilation with the dominant Chinese Han culture, which critics allege the XPCC has helped to promote in Xinjiang by facilitating migration.

Chen Quanguo, who as Communist Party secretary of the XUAR implemented that campaign, was also the first political commissar of the XPCC, which gave him authority over the growing conglomerate.

"The XPCC has been used to detain Uyghurs in camps and prisons, to surveil Uyghurs ... they have contributed massive police forces," German researcher Adrian Zenz, who has documented the persecution of Muslims in Xinjiang, told RFA Uyghur. "And the XPCC is used to a large extent for forced labor as Uyghurs are being transferred to XPCC factories."

The Sheffield Hallam study reported that 70% of the land in one village was transferred from Uyghur farmers.

The celebrants who gathered for the 70th anniversary offered another take. Ma Xingrui, party secretary for the XUAR, credited the XPCC for playing a central role in ensuring a harmonious Xinjiang.

"We must adhere to the idea of one chessboard and one family between the corps and the locals from beginning to end," he said.

### **The Great Han Chauvinism: Why China doesn't have any place for minorities**

14 October 2024, FirstPostv, Claude Arpi

The late Chinese leader, Wu Bangguo, may have believed that the Chinese system is superior, but minorities have no place in China today, except in the Party's propaganda

On October 8, Wu Bangguo, the former third in the Communist hierarchy and head of China's top legislature, died in Beijing at the age of 83.

An official obituary by Xinhua described Wu as an 'outstanding leader'.

The South China Morning Post observed: "Wu was best remembered for his strong opposition to the Western political system. At an NPC [National People's Congress] seminar in 2011, Wu identified five political arrangements that China cannot implement: a multiparty system, pluralistic ideologies, federalism, privatisation, and the separation of powers and bicameralism." "We will absolutely not copy models in the Western political system," he argued.

This raises the question of what the Chinese system is. Is it really superior, and perhaps more importantly, is it fully implemented?

We shall see that it is not.

Recently, 81.com, the website of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), gave Xi Jinping's views on 'time'.

At a time the People's Republic of China (PRC) celebrates its 75th anniversary, the article noted: "These 75 years are destined to be a magnificent historical time in the vast 'time history' of Chinese civilisation."

The PLA website further tells us: "General Secretary Xi Jinping has profound thoughts and profound consciousness about time: thinking about the past, present, and future from a big time perspective, planning the governance of the country on a long time axis, grasping and using time with dialectics, and dedicating precious time to the motherland and the people."

The author of the article adds, "I remind myself all the time to have such a sense of history... The central axis of Beijing is like a historical spine running through ancient and modern times. In the centre of Tiananmen Square, the Monument to the People's Heroes stands tall, [since] September 30, 1949."

Of course the events of June 1989 on the Square have been erased from the collective memory, and Beijing has also forgotten that it has not always been the 'axis' of the world. Further, facts show that the political system in the Middle Kingdom is far from perfect, especially in relation to China's so-called minorities.

#### Unrest in Minorities' Areas

According to Chen Wenqing, head of the Communist Party's Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission (CPLAC), the Party's top security body, who recently visited Tibet, "Maintaining stability and guarding against independence activities are the top priorities for security personnel in Tibetan areas... Security forces must resolutely crack down on separatist and destructive activities."

He added that the Party must "resolutely manage religious affairs while resolutely protecting normal religious activities, so as to prevent risks, crack down on crimes, and maintain stability."

During his tour, while visiting security units in Lhasa and Chamdo, Chen 'ordered security personnel to carry out more propaganda and education campaigns to increase awareness of national identity among the people of all ethnic groups'.

It means that the Tibetans are first Chinese and eventually Tibetans.

That is not all. Around the same time, Zhang Jun, president of the Supreme People's Court, while inspecting some courts in Tibet, stated that it was necessary to hand down "tough punishment to keep up the pressure on violent terrorism, ethnic separatism, and other serious criminal crimes".

A month earlier, Ying Yong, head of the Supreme People's Procuratorate, while in Lhasa, stressed the need for prosecutors to "harshly crack down on all kinds of separatist infiltration, sabotage activities, and crimes endangering national security in accordance with the law".

What is so superior in this political system where the Tibetans need to be so harshly treated? Of course the Chinese propaganda claims otherwise.

Where is the genuine autonomy asked for by the Dalai Lama?

From September 22 to 28, Wang Junzheng, Party Secretary of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, visited Mongolia and South Korea to 'comprehensively' publicise: "Xi Jinping's diplomatic thought, enhance and deepen cultural and economic exchanges, and jointly create a new situation of win-win cooperation."

Wang praised the People's Republic of China's great achievements during the past 75 years. Later, he went to Korea, where he said that Comrade Xi Jinping "attaches great importance to Tibet work and deeply cares about the people of all ethnic groups in Tibet".

#### Will China Change?

Some observers believe that time should be given to China to change and progressively evolve into a decent democratic system. They refuse to see that the 'time' is also ticking against the minorities, and in any case, China does not want to change.

Some 40 years ago, I had asked the Dalai Lama how Tibet would regain its independence (or autonomy); at that time, he answered, "It does not depend on us Tibetans; changes will come from within China". He repeatedly said that the people of China will bring about changes in their own country, which will give a chance to the people of Tibet to fulfil their aspirations.

It still seems so far away.

In this context, three letters addressed twenty years ago to then president Hu Jintao by the veteran Tibetan communist leader Phuntsok Wangyal, who had led the Chinese troops into Lhasa in September 1951, should have triggered a larger debate in China. It did not.

Wangyal (known as Phunwang by the Tibetans) told Hu several interesting things: the Dalai Lama's demise would only radicalise young Tibetan hardliners frustrated with his 'middle way' approach; he reminded the then Chinese President about his own objective to establish a harmonious society; and if Hu would strive for the return of hundreds of thousands of exiled Tibetans, he could turn 'confrontation into harmony'.

#### The Tibetan Flag

Another historical incident involving Wangyal gives an indication of the direction in which the issue could have gone.

In the 1990s, during an interview with Phuntso Tashi Takla, the Dalai Lama's brother-in-law who was in charge of the Tibetan leader's security when the latter visited China in 1954-55, Takla said: "At that time [in 1954] because the Chinese occupation of Tibet was not complete, the Chinese extended full courtesy and cooperation to the Dalai Lama. On some occasions, Mao Zedong came himself to the Dalai Lama's residence [in Beijing]. During one of the several discussions that the Dalai Lama and Mao Zedong had, they were talking on some subject when Mao [suddenly] said, "Don't you have a flag of your own? If you have one, you can hoist it here [on the guest house]".

Takla was surprised to hear Mao Zedong saying this.



When I later read Phunwang's biography, I understood better the incalculable implications of the chairman's statement.

It is worth quoting Phunwang: "One day, Mao unexpectedly came to visit the Dalai Lama at his residence [guest house]... During their conversation, Mao suddenly said, "I heard that you have a national flag, do you? They do not want you to carry it, isn't that right?"

Phunwang further recalled: "Since Mao asked this with no warning that the topic was to be discussed, the Dalai Lama just replied, "We have an army flag". I thought that was a shrewd answer because it didn't say whether Tibet had a national flag. Mao perceived that the Dalai Lama was concerned by his question and immediately told him, "That is no problem. You may keep your national flag". Mao definitely said 'national' flag.

The chairman added that in the future the Communist Party could also let Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia have their own flags. He then asked the Dalai Lama if it would be fine for him to host the national flag of the People's Republic of China in addition to the Tibetan flag. Phunwang says that the young Lama nodded his head and said 'yes': "This was the most important thing that Mao told the Dalai Lama, and I was amazed to hear it," Phunwang later wrote.

**The Great Han Chauvinism**

Phunwang was not sure if Mao had discussed this with other leaders in the Politburo or if it was his own idea: "As I had always paid great attention to the Soviet Union's nationality model, I was excited because I took Mao's comment that Tibet could use its own flag to mean that China was contemplating adopting the Soviet Union's 'Republic' model, at least for these three large minority nationalities."

Phunwang realised that the innocuous remark of the Great Helmsman had far-reaching consequences for the future of China and particularly for the Tibetans. Unfortunately, Phunwang was arrested in April 1958; he spent the following 18 years in solitary confinement, during which his studies of Marxism led him to believe that the relationship between nationalities in a multiethnic state should be one of complete equality.

Till date, Tibet has only had Han Party secretaries; the Chinese leadership still does not trust the Tibetans and other minorities. Most of the problems faced by China today are due to the Great Han Chauvinism.

Wu Bangguo may have believed that the Chinese system is superior, but minorities have no place in China today, except in the Party's propaganda.

When will we see a Tibetan flag on the Potala in Lhasa?

## **A Japanese boy was killed in China. Was cyber-nationalism to blame?**

14 October 2024, BBC, Tessa Wong and Fan Wang

On a Tuesday morning in September, a 10-year-old boy was approaching the gates of a Japanese school in Shenzhen in southern China, when a stranger walked up and stabbed him.

He died of his injuries. The killing shocked Japan and China, and sparked a diplomatic furore.

The Japanese government said it believed what happened was motivated by xenophobia, with the country's foreign minister blaming the attack on "malicious and anti-Japanese" social media posts.

Online commentators have noted the killing happened on a politically sensitive date – 18 September, which is the anniversary of an incident that led to the Japanese occupation of Manchuria in China in the early 1930s.

For some, what happened is a sign of online nationalism – manifesting in recent years as rising anti-foreigner rhetoric – spilling over into the real world.

For years, posts related to events during World War Two have proliferated on the Chinese internet, with the Japanese invasion during the war remaining a sensitive topic for nationalists on both sides. In China, Japan's wartime atrocities have long been a sore point as Beijing maintains that Tokyo has never fully apologised.

The online posts are part of a wider phenomenon, which encompasses both xenophobia and attacks on Chinese nationals for being unpatriotic. One argument by analysts is that this digital nationalism has gone mostly unchecked by the Chinese government, with online patriotism fanning flames of anti-foreigner sentiment as well as accusations against Chinese figures.

Some are asking if this has gone too far. They have dubbed the online attacks calling Chinese figures unpatriotic a "Cultural Revolution 2.0", the latest in a series of drives ensuring ideological purity. They see echoes of the violent, state-sponsored campaign against so-called enemies of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) that traumatised the country in the 1960 and 1970s. Hundreds of thousands died in purges often led by youth militias known as the Red Guards. Families and neighbours turned on each other.

In a recent essay, author and university professor Zhang Sheng noted that "in the past people summoned the Red Guards, now people summon the 'little pinks'" – a popular nickname for the virtual army of online nationalists.

**Anti-foreigner posts**

While many on Chinese social media mourned the killing of the Japanese schoolboy, a few cyber-nationalists struck a very different tone.

"I have no opinion on how Japanese die if they don't apologise for history," read one popular comment on Weibo, while another pointed out that the Japanese had killed many Chinese during World War Two "and haven't apologised till this day. How could they be even close to being described as civilised?"

A Chinese official reportedly wrote messages in a private group chat saying it is "not a big deal to kill a Japanese child" and "it's in our regulations to kill Japanese". He has since been placed under investigation, according to local media outlet Phoenix News.

As Japanese officials demanded answers for the "despicable" crime, Beijing sought to play it down, heavily censoring discussion of the incident online and calling it an "accidental, individual case" and an "isolated incident".

But this is the third high-profile attack on foreigners in recent months, all of which China has described as "isolated incidents".

In June, a Japanese mother and her son were attacked at a bus stop outside a Japanese school, and a Chinese woman died while trying to shield them. This happened just weeks after four US university tutors were stabbed in a park in Jilin. While the motives for both attacks were also unclear, they spurred anxious discussion that they were linked to xenophobic rhetoric online.

Online campaigns

It is not just foreigners facing the ire of cyber-nationalists. In recent months, Chinese public figures and companies have also been castigated for being insufficiently patriotic.

Beverage giant Nongfu Spring is considered a Chinese business success story, with its mineral water bottles a ubiquitous sight across the country's convenience stores and restaurant tables. But in March, nationalists accused the company of using Japanese elements in its product design. One of its logos was said to resemble a Shinto temple, while the iconic mineral water bottle's red cap was deemed to be a reference to the Japanese flag.

It resulted in a brief but intense online campaign: some called for a boycott, while videos of people angrily stamping on Nongfu Spring bottles and chucking their drinks down the toilet were all over social media.

Similarly, the author and Nobel Literature Prize laureate Mo Yan was accused of "beautifying" Japanese soldiers and being unpatriotic in his works by a nationalist blogger, who controversially sued the writer for insulting China.

These moves have sparked deep concern. Hu Xijin, the former editor of state-run newspaper Global Times, warned that nationalistic attacks on creatives like Mo Yan could have a chilling effect.

And the outspoken liberal intellectual Yu Jianrong said the recent stabbings of foreigners were fuelled by "dangerous populist tendencies, which deserve our utmost vigilance".

Even state media has accused online nationalists of "making patriotism a business". One commentary by CCP mouthpiece People's Daily said those who "stir up public opinion and add fuel to the flames in order to... gain traffic and make personal gains, should be severely punished".

But the ruling party has had a hand in stoking the fire, some say.

What feeds the fire?

"State-endorsed patriotism" and Beijing's constant warnings about foreign influence has contributed to the "intense nationalism" we see today, says Rose Luqiu, an associate professor at Hong Kong Baptist University's communication school. What has aggravated it, she says, is the legal risk of being deemed unpatriotic.

The Chinese government has now criminalised the "distortion and smearing [of] heroes and martyrs" – this was used in the lawsuit against the author Mo Yan. It has also passed a sweeping anti-espionage law and launched a campaign encouraging the public to report suspicious activity by foreigners.

To legitimise its rule, it has stepped up efforts to strengthen patriotism in schools, where from a young age Chinese children are taught to love not just their country but also the CCP.

Meanwhile, a global surge in Sinophobic sentiment during the Covid pandemic and growing suspicion of China in the West due to trade tensions has fed a sense among some Chinese that their country is being unfairly discriminated against by foreigners.

China's slowing economy and a spreading social malaise have also played a role. "Many people in China are confronted with severe social and economic worries. Inflation, housing crises, youth unemployment, and evaporating pensions are all causing anxieties. Nationalism is a readily available and highly potent framework for venting those frustrations," says Florian Schneider, an expert in online Chinese nationalism at Leiden University.

All these factors have resulted in nationalist bloggers becoming a prominent fixture of the Chinese internet in the last few years. Well-known influencers can amass millions of followers – and potentially earn income from the traffic – by pumping out patriotic content extolling the virtues of China and the CCP while denouncing their enemies.

While they often act in the name of revolutionary leftist fervour, their behaviour is actually more similar to the far right found in other countries who lead xenophobic and reactionary movements, Professor Schneider tells the BBC.

As “populists who are trying to make China great again”, they “harbour hopes of returning society to some imagined former glory, and see all manner of elites and foreign powers as roadblocks to this goal”.

A risky balance

Sometimes authorities appear to listen to concerns.

In July, they quietly dropped a controversial amendment to a national security law after a public outcry. They acknowledged that a proposed ban on “hurting Chinese people’s feelings” could “infringe upon the legitimate rights and normal life of the public”.

Chinese social media platforms have tried to rein in online nationalists by periodically suspending their accounts.

Well-known nationalist influencers Sima Nan and Guyanmuchan have been censored without warning. So was the blogger who tried to sue Mo Yan, whose lawsuit was also rejected by the courts.

One vlogger, who shot to notoriety this year after he posted a video accusing a shopping mall of putting up decorations that resembled the Japanese flag, was similarly shut down. A scathing state media commentary denounced his video as “a malicious report that rides on the online traffic of patriotism”.

Still, authorities appear to have a loose grip on online nationalists.

While dissenters are swiftly shut down or in some cases arrested in the name of social stability, nationalist bloggers are allowed a freer rein, despite their sometimes inflammatory rhetoric. State media has even boosted these voices by republishing their content.

The BBC has asked the Chinese government for a response on why nationalist content does not appear to be censored on social media as much as other content deemed sensitive.

That could be down to the fact the state views online nationalism as a useful safety valve to “dissipate dissent in a way that does not undermine its authority”, particularly during its current economic troubles, where “society really needs an outlet to express frustration”, says Dr Luqiu.

By encouraging nationalists and then occasionally reining them in, the government “harnesses nationalism to its advantage, only intervening when it risks spilling over” into an uncontrollable situation.

It may seem risky, but Beijing has successfully crushed serious challenges to its authority in recent years, such as the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong in 2019 and the White Paper protests in 2022 against harsh zero-Covid policies.

The government is thus confident it can manage the dangers, and it means nationalism is likely to stay despite the backlash, analysts say.

“Nationalism is a mixed blessing for China’s leaders, and at the moment we are witnessing the costs of that,” says Professor Schneider.

“But will the leadership rethink or even abandon its nationalism in favour of something less toxic? I wouldn’t hold my breath.”

### **Don’t play Big Brother, be nuanced with a long view Columnists**

14 October 2024, Deccan Chronicle, Pavan Varma

The Narendra Modi government has declared that it will pursue a “Neighborhood First” policy. How has it fared, is there any undisputed yardstick to judge its efficacy, and what are the constraints on even well-intentioned measures to make it succeed? To my mind, we need to avoid knee-jerk evaluations because South Asia must rank as one of the most troubled regions in the world. Any evaluation must be holistic, not piece-meal, nor restricted to any specific time phase or incident. In this broader perspective, there are certain unalterable coordinates which are constant, and have to be factored in.

India has a land border with seven countries – Bangladesh (4,096 km), China (3,485 km), Pakistan (3,310 km), Nepal (1,752 km), Myanmar (1,643 km), Bhutan (578 km), and Afghanistan – through Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (106 km). With Pakistan and China, the border is disputed and a source of perennial military friction. Resolution is not easy, because the demands from them are beyond acceptance. Pakistan claims all of Jammu and Kashmir, and China, apart from illegally occupying Aksai Chin, claims the whole of Arunachal Pradesh, which it calls “South Tibet”. China’s consistent policy with India is engagement with containment. In pursuit of this, it periodically flexes its military muscle on the border, most recently in Ladakh, where it appears to have forcibly occupied territory ahead of the recognised Line of Actual Control, even as trade with it balloons (with India facing a huge trade deficit), and high-level visits continue. Pakistan exports organised terror into J&K, and elsewhere. There are problems with other countries, too. From Bangladesh there is illegal immigration, with Myanmar smuggling of drugs and arms – clearly visible in the ongoing crisis in Manipur, and with Nepal counter-claims on border demarcation. Also Read - Dilip Cherian | EC’s mixed signals: Two poll-bound states, but contrasting decisions It does not help that many of our territorial neighbours are politically unstable. In Pakistan, where the military and the ISI are de facto rulers, the country is currently in the grip of violent civil unrest as, following an obviously rigged election that brought in the Shehbaz Sharif government, supporters of jailed Imran Khan are on the streets

seeking his release. Bangladesh is in turmoil after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government, with Islamic fundamentalism on the rise. In Nepal, Communist Party-led coalition governments are constantly wobbly. And insurgency grappling Myanmar, ruled by a repressive military junta, has left us with the Rohingya refugees.

India also has a very long coastline of over 7,000 km. We share maritime borders with Sri Lanka and Maldives, and from Andaman-Nicobar, with Thailand, Indonesia, and Myanmar. In Sri Lanka, a new government led by the left leaning Anura Dissanayake has recently won the election. In Maldives, the openly pro-China President, Mohamed Muizzu, is in the saddle. As a general stratagem, India must further strengthen its coastline defences. We should never forget that the Pakistani terrorists who wreaked havoc in Mumbai on November 26, 2008, literally walked into the financial capital unopposed.

China's consistent meddling in the region creates additional problems. Pakistan is its staunch ally, and the possibility of India facing a two-front simultaneous war against both these implacably hostile countries can never be ruled out. In Nepal, Chinese influence has grown exponentially through the Communist parties, and economic incentives. China has emerged, too, as Sri Lanka's largest creditor, financing several large infrastructure projects, including the strategic Hambantota port. India, as the largest and most powerful country in the region, is indispensable to its neighbours. But often the old saying kicks in: "Why do you hate me? I have not helped you." Many neighbours are suspicious that India uses its overlapping historical, cultural and ethnic ties to interfere in their internal affairs. Sometimes our intervention is asked for, such as in the creation of Bangladesh (1971), the involvement of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in Sri Lanka (1987-90) to resolve the Tamil conflict, and the quelling of the coup against President Gayoom of Maldives (1988). But even so, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal are sensitive to any Indian internal interference, and often anti-India sentiments are fuel for their internal politics. Often, our foreign policy also lacks nuance and finesse. An illustrative example of this is the blockade of the border with Nepal, during Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's government (1989), and again under PM Modi in 2015. In fact, I initiated a short duration discussion in the Rajya Sabha in 2015 on the adverse political and humanitarian consequences of this insensitive step, which gave a fillip to pro-China and anti-India sentiments. The priority must always be to build trust, and even while providing economic assistance, which we do, never perceive to be acting like a "big brother". Secondly, we have to be exceptionally

vigilant to the unceasing machinations of China, upgrade our counter-intelligence, and reinforce our age-old ties with new and innovative ways of cooperation. A good example of this is our assistance in building Bhutan's 10,000 MW hydro-electric power capacity. We buy the power; Bhutan gets the revenue; it is a long-term and institutionalised win-win situation for both countries, and a break to China's long-term interest in acquiring a strategic toe-hold in the kingdom. Thirdly, we must discreetly maintain avenues of communication with all sides of the political spectrum in these countries. In Bangladesh, we put all our eggs in Sheikh Hasina's pro-India but authoritarian rule, and must now face the consequences. Fourthly, we must continue to strengthen our military prowess to counter Pakistan and China. We have been woefully negligent in this regard for decades, but progress is being made now and the momentum needs to be accelerated. A militarily strong India is essential for its leadership in its backyard. Our neighbours cannot ignore us. Maldivian President Muizzu may have visited China first, but in his recent visit to India, he accepted an Indian bail-out, including a currency swap agreement, substantial financial assistance and the inauguration of a runway. The role of religion, too, is part of our neighbourhood cauldron. If India is seen to be insensitive to its Muslim minority, it provides grist to anti-India politics in the region. Similarly, the treatment of the Hindu minority in Pakistan and Bangladesh is a source of friction. India's diplomacy must show patience, maturity and a long-term vision. There are no short-cut solutions, and, therefore, no pat evaluations.

### **PRC Positive Messaging Frames Successful Colonization in Xinjiang**

13 October 2024, The Jamestown Foundation, Niva Yua

I have lost count of how many times foreign experts have asked me if Central Asians care about the abuses happening in Xinjiang. The Turkic territory, now part of the People's Republic of China (PRC), is known locally as East Turkestan. Once part of Central Asia, the language of its people shares the same heritage as those of the wider region, and its food, culture, and religion are similarly inseparable. What divides Xinjiang from Central Asia is not just the mountainous border but a colonization project that has continued, and in some cases accelerated, even as the rest of the region has begun to move in the opposite direction, decolonizing 30 years after independence from the Soviet Union. This background makes a huge difference. Transitional Central Asian states have not popularized, or even formed, a consensus over the many tragedies from

the period of Soviet colonization. Despite an awareness of the PRC's abuses on the other side of the border, these states have not made sense of them as colonial policies. Instead, they have been susceptible to the PRC's positive messaging programs and shaping of the region's information environment (Jamestown Perspectives, September 4).

'Jongugu Sapar' Blends Soviet Nostalgia to Tout Ethnic Harmony

Jongugu Sapar (Джунгого сапар/"Travel to China"), a successful daily PRC propaganda show in the Kyrgyz Republic, is a good example of the PRC's positive messaging. The show has broadcast the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) economic and social activities in Xinjiang since the early 2000s. A nationally representative opinion survey completed by the Central Asia Barometer in the summer of 2022 found that 576 out of 1000 respondents reported knowledge of the show. Of those, nearly all had previously watched the show, and 70 percent found the content "favorable (нравится)." [1] In my informal conversations with Chinese-speaking Kyrgyz students, I was surprised to find that many had first learned about the PRC from the show and not from school textbooks.

We installed a small TV in our Bishkek office and watched the show each day for several months as part of a team activity. The presenter, an ethnic Kyrgyz woman from Xinjiang, speaks a Kyrgyz dialect mixed with a smattering of Mandarin Chinese words. My local colleagues sometimes found her diction incomprehensible. Still, they found her monotone delivery, stiff movements, and narrow range of facial expressions, as well as the overall presentation of the show, very nostalgic and reminiscent of Soviet-era broadcasts.

The show centers on themes of ethnic harmony, yet it depicts a clear divide between the Turkic population and the Han Chinese. Stories focused on Zhang Qian (張騫) and Ban Chao (班超), two Han Chinese diplomats celebrated for their significant contribution to Xinjiang, is the narrative the CCP uses to assert legitimate Han Chinese rule over the region. Not once were Turkic peoples' cultural and historical heroes mentioned. Similarly, we never saw Turkic people speaking their native language to one another. All conversations began in Mandarin, only to be dubbed into Kyrgyz seconds later. Sinicized names of villages and towns were used repeatedly. No Islamic names were depicted at any point. Instead, the show highlighted archaeological findings suggesting a Buddhist presence and framed excavated artifacts as representations of Han Chinese life.

The Turkic population interviewed in the show were consistently portrayed in low-skilled roles such as farmers and seamstresses. Han Chinese, meanwhile,

appeared as business owners, managers, lead engineers, or industrial specialists. Every archaeologist interviewed was Han Chinese. Only in select fields, like wildlife and forest conservation, traditional medicine, artisanal crafts, and ethnic cuisine, were members of the Turkic population shown in senior positions. This stark lack of elite Turkic representation reinforced an impression of Han superiority over the Turkic population.

Viewers See 'Resettlement Labor Programs' as Positive Economic Development

A striking departure from this subtle messaging were the stories about resettlement labor programs. The show featured unemployed women and those in rural areas who had enrolled in short-term vocational schools to learn skills such as sewing and gardening, eventually "graduating into employment" at factories and greenhouses in newly established settlements. In these settlements, an acute power dynamic was on display between the Han Chinese and the Turkic population. Senior roles such as teachers, library managers, metro administrators, hospital directors, and heads of elderly homes were all occupied by Han Chinese. One scene in particular left us uneasy: a group of Turkic women in striped pajamas, seated in a small room of bunkbeds, expressed gratitude to Han Chinese doctors for taking good care of them.

The resettlement labor programs described on the show bore an uncomfortable resemblance to the findings of Tomoya Obokata, the United Nation's Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, who concluded in a July 2022 report that forced labor among ethnic populations in Xinjiang has been occurring in sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing (UNHRC, July 19, 2022; see China Brief, February 14).

Viewers in the Kyrgyz Republic did not interpret what they saw this way. In follow-up in-depth interviews conducted between August 2022 and February 2023, we asked selected survey respondents who had seen the program for their thoughts on the show. Many framed what they saw positively, connecting it to their memories of the Soviet Union—a collectivist society they believed had been successful. A 66-year-old male government worker told us that the "hardworking people" depicted reminded him of those who "worked tirelessly" during the Soviet era. "We used to work like that," he continued. "We were brought up to be hardworking. China encourages people to work hard ... that's why China is economically developing."

The inability to perceive the CCP's actions in Xinjiang as colonialism is closely tied to a similar lack of recognition of the Soviet Union as a colonial power. This shared historical perspective is a key factor behind the success of the PRC's positive messaging about Xinjiang in the Kyrgyz Republic and across the



region. The show not only reinforces an appealing image of Xinjiang but also strengthens local consensus around the success of China's economy. This sentiment echoed even among those who did not grow up under the Soviet Union, however. Some of these people believed that the collectivist regime had been a success. A 23-year-old female government worker told us, "Through this program, I learned that people in China are very hardworking." She added that it seemed to her that the program was showing "the life of Kyrgyz people in the old days, perhaps under the USSR," particularly in the people's style of speech and the program's overall content.

#### Conclusion

As long as the region remains in a transitional phase and is unable to decolonize fully, these sentiments are likely to be passed on to the next generation, who will continue to consume the PRC's positive messaging. The irony is that the rhetoric of decolonization has long been part and parcel of the PRC's overseas messaging. In Africa, for example, the PRC has deployed anti-colonial rhetoric for decades. In Central Asia, however, it remains silent on the issue. This suggests a normative hollowness and deep pragmatism to the PRC's political communications. In each country, it aligns its positive messaging with specific foreign policy objectives, tailoring its content to resonate with the local population and regional context.

### Building a Historical Narrative of Tibet

13 October 2024, Tricycle, Mike Sheffield

Two of the minds behind *The Animated History of Tibet* talk with Tricycle about the show's creation, pivotal figures, and what it means to tell the story from a distinctively Tibetan perspective.

For more than two hundred years, the Tibetan Empire was one of the greatest military, political, and cultural forces in all of Central Asia, maybe even the entire world, ruling over a vast territory that included parts of modern-day Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, China, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan and making seemingly countless contributions to the spheres of philosophy and religion. "The things that they translated from Sanskrit to Tibetan and the lands they occupied are immense," says Tenzin Choephel. Choephel is the lead cultural consultant on *The Animated History of Tibet*, an nine-part animated documentary miniseries that covers over thirteen hundred years of history, starting with the rise of the Tibetan Empire, its subsequent fragmentation, and the first spread of Buddhism to Tibet in the 7th century CE. Currently available to watch as part of Tricycle's Film Club, the series is engaging, entertaining, and gorgeously animated in fastidious

anime-inspired detail, created with the intention of being accessible to the average viewer as well as potentially serving as a resource for those studying Tibet, Tibetan Buddhism, and world history.

Produced by the independent educational video production company and YouTube wormhole favorites Armchair Academics, the series—led by showrunner and host Alexander K. Smith—aims to show a different side of the Tibetan Empire story, one told from a distinctively Tibetan perspective. I recently talked with Choephel and Smith about what went into the creation of the project, the tricky business of crafting accessible narratives around real-world history, and the goals and aspirations behind their grassroots-funded endeavor.

—Mike Sheffield, web editor

This interview was adapted for clarity and concision.

Mike Sheffield (MS): Can you tell me a little bit about the origins of this project?

Alexander K. Smith (AS): *The Animated History of Tibet* has been a brainchild of mine for ages. I remember pitching it to a friend as hypothetical, when I was a master's student at Oxford fifteen years ago, but started taking it seriously in 2022. I lost my job at the height of Covid (I had been working as an assistant professor in Germany). So I then started working in educational documentary filmmaking, and I realized at some point that I actually had the resources to make it happen. We put together a crowdfunding campaign with no real expectations that it would work, and it took off. Then Tibet House US came in, in New York; they are our coproducers on the project. We're in a second period of crowdfunding right now to finance the second half of the series.

MS: How did the team come to be?

AS: At Armchair Academics, I worked with a gaggle of freelance animators. Our core team is actually Mongolian, based in Ulaanbaatar. Saraa Amber is the lead animator on the project; she has been a hugely positive influence on the whole thing. In the early stages, for matte paintings, we worked with a very talented Tibetan studio artist named Tenzin Gyurmey, who is based in New Delhi. Over time, Amber brought in some of her colleagues from Mongolia. And then there is Tenzin Choephel. He is the cultural and linguistic consultant. If this were a \$150 million Disney project, you would call him the head of our brain trust and he would be leading a team of fifty people making sure that every single detail works. But for our project, our brain trust is just him and me.

Tenzin Choephel (TC): Alex and I met for the first time in 2015. We both attended the International Seminar of Young Tibetologists conference in Leipzig, Germany. Then I think I ran into him a couple times in Oxford.

MS: Tenzin, I see you run your own online Tibetan language school called LopLao. How did you get involved in education?

TC: I've taught Tibetan in many different places. I left home when I was very young and eventually came to India when I was 13. There, I enrolled in a Buddhist monastery called Drepung Monastery, where I was mostly studying English, Buddhism, debate, and philosophy. Later, I came to Dharamsala, in the north of India, where I enrolled in Sera Jey Monastic University, which is maybe the best Tibetan Studies university in India. I was there for four years, and then they asked me to teach there for a year, and I started teaching Tibetan—Tibetan history as well as Tibetan language—when I was 22. After that, I taught Tibetan at a nunnery called the International Buddhist Women's Association. Then I came to Oxford in 2017, where I studied and taught, and later, in 2019, I taught at SOAS University before starting LopLao. I've also taught at various Buddhist centers, including the first and largest Tibetan Centre and Buddhist Monastery in the West called Kagyu Samye Ling.

MS: What does your Buddhist practice look like?

TC: I still do daily practices, my set of prayers. I study at the University of Edinburgh, and we have a Buddhist society where we do meditations twice a week, and I'm the president of that small society. I do practice Buddhism quite a lot, but I approach it in a way that is more philosophical than devoutly religious. I'm more interested in philosophy than just believing in something, but I also don't disregard the whole belief system. In general, I would say I'm a Buddhist.

MS: What does it mean to be the linguistic or cultural consultant on a project like *The Animated History of Tibet*?

TC: My job is to correct the style of animation, making corrections in the style of dress or addressing cultural or historical points from a Tibetan perspective, as when the script doesn't have the narratives that we generally agree upon in Tibetan history. It is mostly to push a more Tibetan-centered narrative of Tibetan history.

AS: He's worked quite a bit with our Western animators to make sure that the details were on point, but there have been a few mistakes. One notable example, and this is my fault, is at one point, there's a prayer wheel that's spinning in the wrong direction. But that was because I actually did all of my doctoral fieldwork, and lived for a very long time, in Bonpo communities, where things tend to be done in the opposite direction. And it just felt right to me, but it's something that doesn't read right to Buddhists.

MS: That was one point I wanted to bring up, actually. This series is incredibly detailed, but

because it is such a large undertaking, it covers a lot of ground in a short period of time and there are some aspects of the history that are missing, like the influence of Bon or indigenous religion on Tibetan Buddhism. How did you decide what to include over what to omit?

AS: There are two parts to my answer. I trained and worked as a historian, not a generalist—it was very laser-focused on a particular period in Tibetan history, on Bonpo issues, specifically. With that training, it's very difficult to reframe the sort of academic scholarly history that we read, that we write, that we're taught, and reformat that for something that is public-facing and serialized and aimed at a general audience. Episodes have to stand on their own as well as be integrated into a larger narrative that spans centuries at a time. So we begin each episode always by laying out the major players, the major factions, what's at stake, and then you have to build some type of denouement to build a satisfying narrative to keep people watching. History doesn't work that way. Very often, there are not satisfying conclusions.

What you have to do is take that scholarly history and then run it through a narrative lens that is algorithmically friendly for something like YouTube. And that's hard. It's particularly hard for Tibet. In Roman history, this has been done a thousand times by a thousand different people, and there are many different road maps to follow. But we don't really have that for Tibet, certainly not in television and film. We're kind of reinventing the wheel. It's easier for certain periods, and much more difficult for others.

I bulldoze some of the complexity, particularly with issues like Yungdrung Bon and the indigenous elements that conflicted with Buddhist culture. Leaving those out is something I did to my chagrin, but it was done for entirely economic purposes—just budgeting our time.

It's really a shame to gloss over the indigenous elements in Tibetan Buddhism, because they're one of the things that accounts for the fact that it's so baroque and rich and so tangibly different from the traditions that surrounded it, and the way that they blended or sometimes didn't blend and conflicted with forms of Indian Buddhism. But it's something I would love to come back to.

Tibetan history is a living, open-ended history; it continues.

The easiest thing for us to do was to latch on to later Tibetan histories, focus on the great chos rgyal, or dharma kings, of Tibet and structure the history in that way. Now, we deal with a materialistic, economic, and political style of analysis. You lose a lot of things with that structure, and one of the major things you lose particularly with someone like

Songtsen Gampo is the complexity of his early reign, the interclan alliances and conflicts, the early stirrings of religious conflict and anti-Buddhist sentiment. I tried to compensate for that in the third episode, where you have on figures like Langdarma, who sort of leads an anti-Buddhist faction in the aristocracy, and, according to Tibetan religious narratives, orchestrates this massive purge of Tibetan Buddhism or a withdrawal of patronage that led to a systemic collapse of monastic institutions.

MS: What kind of sources are you drawing from?

AS: As a historian, I draw from primary sources in my work, so we do draw quite a bit from primary sources. Our general lens tends to be materialist, to deemphasize the religious history and dig more deeply into the political, economic, and cultural history of Tibet. It's a slightly different lens from what you see in some of the Western and more religiously oriented histories of Tibet. As for secondary sources, there's a lack of very comprehensive general histories of Tibet. There are some really good ones, like Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa's *Tibet: A Political History*, Sam van Schaik's *Tibet: A History*, and Matthew T. Kapstein's *The Tibetans*, which has just a couple of chapters that concisely provide a balanced overview of Tibetan history. But to actually do our work, we have to draw from a patchwork of era-specific histories, because there are lacunae and gaps when you're dealing with Tibetan sources. For the imperial period, Christopher Beckwith has this fantastic, almost unreadable, multilingual history of the Tibetan Empire called *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia*. We also use Ronald M. Davidson's *Tibetan Renaissance* for later periods. And that continues all the way up to the 19th and 20th centuries, when it becomes more difficult to find a single source to hang your narrative on because there are so many sectarian and political interests that overlap with the production of histories and texts, so you have to be more heterogeneous and more holistic in your approach to the literature. I'm not so interested in building Chinese state narratives, for example, into our history. So we take a roundup of perspectives on the events of 1949–1959 that come from Tibetan authors and Tibetan sources.

MS: As you mentioned, your series stops in 1959, but Tibetan history doesn't stop there.

AS: The history we have on offer technically ends in 1963, with the drafting of *The Charter of the Tibetans in Exile*. But the history of Tibet, the history of Tibetan Buddhism, didn't stop in '49 and it didn't stop in '59. We have an extended bit at the end that focuses on the major diaspora camps and how they grew and evolved over time, where they are, and the character of each of them—because they're all quite different—as well as the emergence of two Tibets. There is the Tibet that still persists, right inside the

TAR [Tibet Autonomous Region]. That's where most Tibetans live, and they still carry their culture, their language, their religion. But that language, culture, and religion has also continued and also evolved in an almost parallel way in India.

Tibetan history is a living, open-ended history; it continues.

MS: Who is a pivotal figure from Tibetan history that you would like to shine a light on?

TC: People should read Tsongkhapa. I normally say Tsongkhapa is the Immanuel Kant of Tibet. He's so sharp, and his disposition on emptiness is extremely deep. It would be great if people could study Tsongkhapa just as people study Plato or Immanuel Kant or John Locke. He also wrote poems, which are beautiful.

Thupten Jinpa is the main translator of the Dalai Lama, and he's written a biography of Tsongkhapa that's quite interesting. The way he presents Tsongkhapa is a very modern style of presenting Tsongkhapa. In the past, Tibetan monasteries presented Tsongkhapa as a celestial being, but Jinpa writes about him as very much a human being. And he is human; he lived from 1357 to 1419, perished at 62.

MS: What do you consider to be the main goal of the series?

AS: For me, let's say that there are two. In general, many Tibetan issues—whether it's Buddhism or Tibetan cultural and political issues—are not visible in online discourse on platforms like YouTube. I saw this as a way to simultaneously help increase the visibility of Tibet-related content on platforms like YouTube while also building a historically accurate resource that my former colleagues in Tibetan studies and other educators and students can use to learn about Tibet.

My second goal as a documentary filmmaker is to tell stories of indigenous and marginalized peoples. So I would love to make more stories about Tibetan groups, also the history of Buddhism itself, right? There are very few sort of public-facing cultural histories of Buddhism. Why does Buddhism look so different across so many cultures? How has it evolved over time? How are the major branches of Buddhism different from one another, and why? The idea of tying these threads and discourses together to give you a historical and activist angle could become a great service to the Buddhist community. To bridge those two goals would be really personally valuable to me as a creator.

TC: Most people have this image of Tibet that is always very humble, very nice. They are not 100 percent wrong, obviously, but they are not 100 percent right. There are Tibetans who are warriors, Tibetans who are thieves, Tibetans who are bandits. There are Tibetans who dedicate their lives to

Buddhist practices, and we can probably call them bodhisattvas. It all depends who they are.

When I first came to Oxford, I remember that some of my friends were surprised when I told them that the Tibetan Empire once invaded China for fifteen days. They wondered how that could be possible because China is now so big. But when you look at the history of the Tibetan empire, for, let's say, two hundred years, it was so glorious. Younger Tibetans should understand how big it was and how influential it was. You can still see the remnants of the Tibetan Empire today, in Ladakh, in Kashag, in Manali, in northern India, in southeast China. You can even find Tibetan descendants in Afghanistan, you can find Tibetan descendants in Pakistan; they even speak an altered form of Tibetan.

The second thing that I wanted to do is to provide some of the truths, or the understanding of Tibet to people who are interested or maybe haven't even heard of Tibet, or just heard about Tibet and know nothing about it. Obviously, the Chinese narrative of Tibet is much stronger on the international platform because they have much bigger funding to promote and advance it. So this project is structured to go against that narrative. Truth is a relative thing, but we have bigger authority over Tibetan history than the Chinese.

Every country projects a sanitized version of history. This may also have some sanitization because, as you say, history is a lie, or we write history to talk about ourselves and it will be revised. We write history to understand ourselves.

### **Human rights take a new hit in Xi Jinping's Tibet**

13 October 2024, The Sunday Guardian ,Vijay Kranti

200 students have been taken away from a Tibetan school and force-enrolled in a state-controlled residential school for their education and 'proper' upbringing.

Earlier this month, the parents of about 200 Tibetan children in the age group 15 to 18 years were in for a shock when they were forced by the Chinese authorities of Sichuan province to enroll and send their wards to the state-controlled residential school for their education and "proper" upbringing. These children belonged to the local Lhamo Kirti Monastery School, which was founded as a community initiative by the monastery in 1993 to part education in Tibetan language and Tibetan culture but was forcibly closed by the Chinese authorities in July this year. Soon after the closure, a batch of about 300 Tibetan children belonging to the 6-14 age group was taken away and admitted in a newly opened residential school despite strong resistance from their families.

The new school, run by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is among hundreds of similar residential schools that have been established across Tibet by the Chinese government to implement President Xi's diktat to ensure a "united" and "homogenous" society with "Chinese socialist characters". These schools are dreaded by Tibetan parents because Tibetan children are not only weaned away from their Tibetan environment but are made to grow up in a typical Han Chinese environment in which they can communicate only in the Chinese language and are brainwashed with the Communist ideology.

On February 6, 2023, a study by a group of UN experts had warned that around a million Tibetan children were being affected by Chinese government policies aimed at assimilating Tibetan people culturally, religiously, linguistically and ideologically through the residential school system. This Chinese move has already attracted strong opposition and condemnation in the parliaments of Germany, Canada and the European Parliament whereas the US government has placed restrictions of all such Chinese officials and CCP leaders who are engaged in these Tibetan residential schools.

President Xi's campaign of brainwashing and "homogenizing" the entire Tibetan generation through CCP-run residential schools has grown out of his frustration that despite CCP's seven-decade long colonial rule over Tibet and total absence of exiled Dalai Lama's influence, the Tibetan resistance against Chinese rule has refused to die. The worst shock for Xi has been that since his taking over the reins of China as its "Paramount Leader", more than 157 Tibetan monks, nuns and ordinary youths have committed self-immolation demanding freedom for Tibet and return of Dalai Lama.

In early 2023, the Xi government's campaign of collecting blood samples of each Tibetan citizen and their DNA profiling raised a huge controversy and protests at international levels. The main concern of human rights organizations and experts was that China was building a scientific medical data bank of Tibetans to support its ongoing illegal trade in human organs. It was also feared that the Chinese army can use this data for forcible blood donations in the event of a war. America's Thermo Fisher Scientific Company had to face a massive opposition from international organizations for supplying its biomedical products and instruments to the Chinese government in this unethical campaign.

President Xi's frustration against his Tibetan colonial subjects has frequently found expression in many other aggressive acts like implementing stricter ban on keeping the present Dalai Lama's photos; disciplinary proceedings against all such Tibetan officials and CCP cadres who are found participating in community religious celebrations or family prayers;

demolition of all such Buddhist statues in every town or village where the statue dominates the skyline or is visible from a distance; closing and demolishing all community run Tibetan schools; and wiping out all such Buddhist community establishments which have evolved without official plans.

For example, following the typical Taliban style of demolishing historic Buddhist statues at Bamian in Afghanistan, Xi's government demolished two massive statues of Buddha, one being 99 feet high, in the Kham region of original Tibet, now a part of the Sichuan province of China. Similarly, a massive Buddhist community, which was slowly developed by thousands of Tibetan and Han Chinese practitioners in Larung Gar in the Larung Valley of Sertar County in Sichuan, was completely pulled down and wiped out under the personal supervision of Wong Dongshen, a prominent CCP leader on the pretext of "environment protection". Interestingly Wong was also responsible for demolishing above mentioned Buddha statues.

### **Caught in India-China clashes, Ladakh's nomadic herders fear for future**

12 October 2024, Aljazeera, Priyanka Shankar

Constant military patrols near the Indo-China border in Ladakh have shrunk pastures and are extinguishing an ancient way of life.

The bubbling sound of water boiling on the stove and the aroma of spinach dal fill the air in Tashi Angmo's kitchen as she rolls dough to make a type of Tibetan bread.

"This is a dish which we call timok in Ladakh and tingmo across the border in Tibet," she says as she prepares the apparatus to steam the dough she has rolled into balls resembling dumplings. "It's a delicious meal after a hard day's work."

Angmo, 51, lives in Chushul, a village which sits at an altitude of 4,350 metres (14,270 feet) in India's Ladakh, one of the highest regions in the world, known for its pristine rivers and lakes, high valleys and mountains and clear skies. Chushul also lies about 8 kilometres (5 miles) from India's Line of Actual Control with China, the disputed, de facto border between the two countries.

"I was around 11 years old when I realised that my family and I lived very close to the Chinese border. Back then, we used to be a family of shepherds, and I often went near the border with my father, to take our sheep herding," Angmo says.

She now works as a labourer doing a variety of tasks from cleaning roads to helping with construction and cooking meals for other workers, for the Border Roads Organisation – the Indian Defence Ministry's initiative to maintain roads in the subcontinent's border areas.

"We even used to trade apricots and barley which grew in our village with the Chinese shepherds. In return, we brought back chicken, some Chinese cookies and also teapots!" she exclaims and points to the teapots which she still keeps in her kitchen cabinet.

Even the Sino-India war in 1962 over border and territorial disputes between the neighbours, after New Delhi had given shelter to the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan refugees, did not undo that delicate balance.

What did was a deadly clash in the summer of 2020. As the world was absorbed in its battle against the COVID-19 pandemic, Indian and Chinese soldiers fought with sticks, stones and their bare hands along the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh's Galwan valley. Each side claimed that the other's troops had crossed into their territory. The close combat fighting led to the death of 20 Indian soldiers and at least four Chinese soldiers. These were the first deaths along the border in decades.

Since then, both sides have stepped up border patrols and moved troops to the region, and their troops have occasionally engaged in standoffs.

In many Ladakhi villages bordering China, grazing and farming close to the frontier has now been restricted by the Indian military. Boating in the pristine Pangong Tso lake, parts of which are claimed by both New Delhi and Beijing, has also been restricted to only military boats.

"We can't go near the border any more or trade with Chinese people. Shepherds – most of whom are nomads – have also lost land close to the border since the Indian military oversees the area," she says.

The land has largely been swallowed by military buffer zones on both sides of the border, with rich pasture land for 2km in either direction now a no-go zone for the herders.

Young nomads and farmers moving away

Donning a pink scarf and a grey sweater, Kunjan Dolma, who is in her late 30s, belongs to the Changpa community – seminomadic Tibetan people who live in the Changtang plateau in eastern Ladakh. She lives in Chushul during the winter months and is nomadic throughout the rest of the year.

Dolma tells Al Jazeera that the land near the Chinese border is an important winter pasture for their animals. "But if we take our sheep and goats near the Chinese border, the military stops us and advises us to find grazing lands elsewhere. We have lost important pastures in recent years, but we have begun adjusting to the restrictions," she says as she milks her sheep in an open-air shed built with stones and surrounded by the low-lying mountains.



"In a way, the military restrictions also make sense. They protect us from the Chinese soldiers who I fear might take away our sheep in case we go very close to the border."

Dolma lives with her husband and teenage daughter and the family has about 200 sheep whose wool they sell to make pashmina shawls. It is an important source of income, she explains.

She spends days in the mountains to ensure their yaks and sheep have access to the best grazing lands during the warmer months of the year. The Changpa community retreats to the villages in the lower-lying hills of Ladakh during winter. She earns her living selling pashmina wool, and yak meat and milk.

But Dolma's daughter, like many young people from the nomadic families of the Changtang plateau, has begun turning to other professions to earn a living. Dolma added that military restrictions on grazing land have also increased the momentum of young nomads turning away from this traditional way of life.

Sipping on a cup of warm water before she heads to the mountains to make her cattle graze, Dolma reminisces about her younger days when border tensions did not exist in their lands.

"I've spent many joyful days in these mountains with my sheep and when there were no border restrictions, it was very easy for us to take our cattle across pastures. We would also interact with nomads from China who were very friendly," she says, adding that she wishes her daughter could experience that same nomadic lifestyle.

At the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC), an administrative body in the union territory's capital of Leh, Konchok Stanzin, 37, is a councillor working with the village leaders in Chushul to ensure local governance runs smoothly.

Speaking to Al Jazeera at the LAHDC headquarters, Stanzin acknowledges the issues nomads in Ladakh have been enduring due to border tensions.

"Grazing land comes under the buffer zone which is currently no-man's land. So, nomads face a challenging situation, trying to figure out where to take their yaks and sheep. Besides land, we also face difficulties in Pangong Tso where military border controls continue," Stanzin explains. Tso is the Tibetan word for lake.

"[Young people] migrating out of their villages in search of work is a serious concern," he noted. "This is also leading to the disappearance of nomadic traditions like herding which enable the production of pashmina. So we are trying to educate the youth to continue their traditions while also working on improving the economic situation in border villages."

'I still remember the Chinese cookies'

As he enjoys a cup of Ladakhi staple butter tea in his mother Tashi Angmo's kitchen, Tsering Stopgais, 25, notes that generating jobs is the biggest challenge for the region.

"There once was an open trading route between India and China along this border. If that opens again, it will be a huge economic opportunity for many of us," he says.

"My grandfather has crossed the border to trade with China and earned well. My mother used to also go near the border and trade with the Chinese. I still remember the Chinese cookies she would bring home."

Angmo chimes in, saying the border clashes are all political.

"Social media also plays a role in spreading rumours about border tensions. In reality, it is not an active war zone and it is peaceful right now. It is a standoff between politicians and not people on either side of the border," Angmo says.

On the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly meeting in New York in September, India's Minister of External Affairs S Jaishankar addressed the situation in eastern Ladakh and said: "Right now, both sides have troops who are deployed forward."

At an event organised by the Asia Society Policy Institute, a think tank in New York, he continued: "Some of the (border) patrolling issues need to be resolved," highlighting that this aspect would solve the dispute.

Retired Senior Colonel Zhou Bo, who was in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China and is now a senior fellow of the Centre for International Security and Strategy at Tsinghua University and a China Forum expert, told Al Jazeera that border patrols continue because "each side has its own perception about where the border lies".

"So sometimes, for example, the Chinese patrolling troops patrol in areas which are considered by Indians as Indian territory. And likewise," he says.

According to local media reports, China has denied Indian troops access to key patrolling points in eastern Ladakh, claiming these regions belong to Beijing. New Delhi says this has made it harder for the Indian army to carry out its regular border security activities in the region.

Senior Colonel Bo says that while the border issue is difficult to solve, both militaries have signed agreements in the past to maintain peace and talks are continuing to find a solution to solve the military and political discord.

'Education can bring peace'

Counting the beads on her Buddhist mala and chanting a prayer, 71-year old Kunze Dolma, who lived through the 1962 Sino-India war in Chushul when she was about nine years old, says she thinks education is what can bring about peace.

"I just remember how scared I was during that war as a little girl. I thought the Chinese army would enter our school," she tells Al Jazeera.

"I now work as a cook in the village school and hope the children are educated about maintaining peace along the border and how people on both sides of the border need to understand each other better," she tells Al Jazeera.

Tstringandhu, 26, teaches at the government middle school in Chushul. "I teach children aged three to 10 years at this school. I teach them the Ladakhi Bhoti language which is an offshoot of the Tibetan language. I teach the students about the border in our village by telling them the history of this language and explain to them that Tibet is now a part of China and is across the border," he told Al Jazeera.

"When we educate children, we just tell them that the land across the border is China and not an enemy country. I look at education as a way to bring peace. If a teacher educates children about places and cultures in the right manner, hostilities will not exist and peace will prevail," he says.

### China's 'New Great Wall' Casts a Shadow on Nepal

12 October 2024, The New York Times, Hannah Beech and Bhadra Sharma

The Chinese fence traces a furrow in the Himalayas, its barbed wire and concrete ramparts separating Tibet from Nepal. Here, in one of the more isolated places on earth, China's security cameras keep watch alongside armed sentries in guard towers.

High on the Tibetan Plateau, the Chinese have carved a 600-foot-long message on a hillside: "Long live the Chinese Communist Party," inscribed in characters that can be read from orbit.

Just across the border, in Nepal's Humla District, residents contend that along several points of this distant frontier, China is encroaching on Nepali territory.

The Nepalis have other complaints, too. Chinese security forces are pressuring ethnic Tibetan Nepalis not to display images of the Dalai Lama, the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader, in Nepali villages near the border, they say. And with the recent proliferation of Chinese barriers and other defenses, a people have also been divided. The stream of thousands of Tibetans who once escaped Chinese government repression by fleeing to Nepal has almost entirely vanished.

Yet Nepal's leaders have refused to acknowledge China's imprints on their country. Ideologically and economically tied to China, successive Nepali governments have ignored a 2021 fact-finding report that detailed various border abuses in Humla.

"This is the new Great Wall of China," said Jeevan Bahadur Shahi, the former provincial chief minister of the area. "But they don't want us to see it."

China's fencing along the edge of Nepal's Humla District is just one segment of a fortification network thousands of miles long that Xi Jinping's government has built to reinforce remote reaches, control rebellious populations and, in some cases, push into territory that other nations consider their own.

The fortification building spree, accelerated during Covid and backed by dozens of new border settlements, is imposing Beijing's Panopticon security state on far-flung areas. It is also placing intense pressure on China's poorer, weaker neighbors.

China borders 14 other countries by land. Its vast frontier, on land and at sea, remained largely peaceful as China's economy grew to become the world's second-largest. But amid Mr. Xi's tenure, Beijing is redefining its territorial limits, leading to small skirmishes and outright conflict.

"Under Xi Jinping, China has doubled down on efforts to assert its territorial claims in disputed areas along its periphery," said Brian Hart, a fellow at the China Power Project of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

Viewed individually, each action along China's borders — fortifying boundaries, contesting territory and pushing into disputed zones — might seem only incremental. But the aggregated result is startling.

Near its eastern maritime reaches, in what are internationally recognized as Philippine waters, China has turned a coral reef into a military base. On its far western land border, China's People's Liberation Army has pushed into disputed mountain territory shared with South Asian neighbors.

Two dozen soldiers from India and China, both nuclear powers, died in high-altitude, hand-to-hand combat in 2020. Another border clash two years later injured more soldiers.

China's border buildup is a major reason that the U.S. Department of Defense, in its 2023 China Military Power Report, declared that China has "adopted more dangerous, coercive, and provocative actions in the Indo-Pacific region."

The shifting security landscape is drawing the attention of global powers and leading to new alliances. Small nations with ties to China, like Nepal, are vulnerable, even as they downplay or deny border disputes for fear of losing Beijing's economic favor.

"Weaker states like Nepal," Mr. Hart said, "face immense pressures because of the overwhelming power differential with China."

"If China does not face costs for encroaching on its weakest neighbors, Beijing will be further emboldened to threaten countries in the region," he added.

Nepal's foreign minister, Arzu Rana Deuba, said in an interview with The New York Times that she had not received complaints about problems on the border with Tibet and that the government's focus was more on the southern boundary with India, where more Nepalis live.

"We have not really thought much of looking at the northern border, at least I haven't," she said.

#### A Top Secret Report

The distance from Simikot, the capital of Humla District, to the frontier village of Hilsa is 30 miles. But the drive to the border with Tibet takes more than 10 bone-jarring hours through rough, rocky terrain. Humla is unconnected to Nepal's national road network. Cars and heavy machinery must be flown in.

Himalayan passes in Humla reach nearly 16,400 feet. Deadly altitude sickness can set in fast. It was to this district, Nepal's poorest and least developed, that members of a fact-finding mission – composed of Nepali Home Ministry officials, government surveyors and police personnel – traveled three years ago.

Armed with a 1960s map from when Nepal and China formally agreed upon their boundary, they set out to discover whether the official cartography diverged from the reality on the ground. The mission members trekked to remote border pillars. They chatted with yak herders and Tibetan Buddhist monks.

Eventually, they produced their report to Nepal's cabinet. And then the report disappeared. The public was not allowed to see it. Even high-ranking officials and politicians were refused access, several people involved said.

The veil of secrecy extended to the historical map that the mission brought with it. Survey department employees said they have been cautioned that sharing it could be a security breach – a strange warning for a map accessible in American archives.

A copy of the report obtained by The Times shows that the government mission documented a series of small border infringements by China. Also coursing through the report are worries about China's grander geopolitical intentions and fears about upsetting Nepal's powerful neighbor.

A nation of 30 million people, Nepal is small, landlocked and underdeveloped. Its government is headed by a Communist, who this year replaced a former Maoist rebel as prime minister. In ideology and in economics, Nepal leans heavily toward China, even as it remains in the orbit of nearby India. The report says that in several places in and around Hilsa, China constructed fortifications and other infrastructure, including closed-circuit TV cameras, that are either in Nepal or in a buffer zone between the two countries where building is prohibited by

bilateral agreement. Chinese border personnel took over a Nepali irrigation canal fed by the Karnali River, the report said, although the Chinese retreated when the Nepali mission visited.

Chinese forces have illegally prevented ethnic Tibetans living in Nepali areas near the border from grazing their livestock and participating in religious activities, the report said. Such constraints bring extraterritorial menace to Mr. Xi's campaign of repression in Tibet.

The report advised that Nepal and China urgently needed to address various border disputes, but a bilateral mechanism for resolving border problems, which includes joint inspections, has been stalled since 2006.

N.P. Saud, Nepal's foreign minister until March, said in an interview with The Times that bilateral "border meetings are held frequently."

But one of Mr. Saud's deputies told The Times that no border inspections had occurred in more than 17 years. Asked about this, Mr. Saud amended his statement.

"I can share with you that the joint inspection team will work soon," he said. "I can't tell you the exact time until it is finalized."

Mr. Saud said that he did not know why the Humla report had not been made public.

"The border of a country," he said, "is not a matter of secrecy."

Mr. Saud said Nepal could not make any determination on the report's validity until the joint inspections restart.

"Until and unless we confirm the report," he said, "how we can raise the issue internationally with another country?"

Ms. Deuba, who replaced Mr. Saud as foreign minister, said she was not aware of the report or of Chinese fencing on the border.

The Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu declined to comment.

The Chinese government says that it is a force for peace in the region. In an article in the party-run People's Daily, Pan Yue, the head of the National Ethnic Affairs Commission, wrote last year that China "never sought to conquer or expand territorially, never colonized neighboring countries."

History collides with such national mythmaking. In 1979, Chinese forces briefly invaded Vietnam, which China had once controlled for a millennium. Since the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, China and India have fought two border wars.

Mr. Shahi, the former provincial chief minister from Humla, said that his efforts to publicize Chinese border intrusions have been actively discouraged.

"The Chinese, they say to our government, and then the government says to me, 'If you talk about this border issue, then they will stop trade, they will stop

everything," he said. "Who the hell can say this to me about our land?"

#### A Holy Land, Divided

The border fence separating Hilsa from Chinese-controlled Tibet cleaves not only nations but centuries. On the Chinese side, modern buildings feature glass atriums, armored vehicles glide along paved roads and floodlights blaze in the night sky. Nepal, by contrast, seems stuck in a bygone era. Ramshackle shelters hunch in the cold. There is not an inch of asphalt or any reliable electricity.

The Chinese side used to be nearly as remote, the seclusion broken only by a flow of pilgrims to Mount Kailash, which is holy to four faiths. But as part of a push into lands populated by ethnic minorities, the Chinese government has seeded Tibet and the neighboring Xinjiang region with new infrastructure. Migrants from China's Han ethnic majority have poured in, including to the Tibetan town of Purang near the border with Hilsa. A new high-altitude airport in Purang, a feat of engineering, serves both civilian and military purposes, part of a transportation network that gives the People's Liberation Army easy access to border areas. Just 20 miles away is the junction of China, Nepal and India. Beijing considers a large swath of Indian-controlled territory along the Tibet-India boundary to be its own, calling it "South Tibet." On the border with tiny Bhutan, China claims more disputed land and has built settlements there.

The Chinese focus on Tibet reflects more than geopolitical ambitions. Mr. Xi's government has overseen a brutal effort to pacify ethnic minorities. High-tech surveillance of Tibetans, and the fortification of the border, has all but severed their escape route into Nepal, where ethnic Tibetans also live.

Chinese police and border guards, Hilsa residents say, regularly cross over to Nepal without going through normal immigration procedures. They intimidate ethnic Tibetan Nepalis and have captured some of the few Tibetans who succeeded in fleeing to Nepal, said Lhamu Lama, a Humla District village administrator.

An officer with the Nepali paramilitary police in Hilsa said that last year his commander asked the Chinese to retreat from an area that the 1960s official map indicated was not Chinese land. The Chinese never responded, said the officer, who did not want his name used because he was not authorized to speak to the news media.

"China is big and powerful so it can do what it wants," said Pema Wangmu Lama, who was born in Tibet but now lives in Nepal. "Even if Hilsa is swallowed up one day, who would know or care what's happening here?"

## From G2 to Cold War 2.0: The Changing US Attitude Toward China

12 October 2024, The Diplomat, Hongda Fan

A decade ago, Washington saw China as a potential co-leader in global governance. Now, the U.S. consensus is that China is a rival, not a partner.

On September 18, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell bluntly stated at a House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing that "the Cold War pales in comparison to the multifaceted challenges that China presents." In fact, the view that the U.S. and China are already in a new Cold War has been widely discussed in the United States. The two countries are undoubtedly in a state of intense confrontation, which is a marked change from the late 2000s and early 2010s.

In 2007, Niall Ferguson and Moritz Schularick co-authored an article titled "'Chimerica' and the Global Asset Market Boom" in *International Finance*. They argued that China and the United States shared a symbiotic relationship: one saved while the other consumed, one exported while the other imported, one provided products while the other provided services, one accumulated foreign exchange reserves while the other printed dollars.

In 2008, Fred Bergsten published "A Partnership of Equals: How Washington Should Respond to China's Economic Challenge" in *Foreign Affairs*. He argued that the United States should encourage China to become a responsible pillar in the global economic system and seek to establish a genuine partnership with Beijing to jointly lead the global economic order.

From then on, the idea of a Group of Two (G-2) began to spread.

The 2007-2008 financial crisis, which originated in the United States, swept across the globe. However, due to the relative independence of China's market, coupled with its sustained high economic growth and substantial foreign exchange reserves, China appeared more stable in the face of the crisis. China's highly successful hosting of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, which impressed the world, also marked a peak in the international prestige of the People's Republic of China. This was the global context in which the concepts of Chimerica, the G-2, and China-U.S. co-governance emerged. At that time, the world was in need of rescue, and China was seen as one of the most capable rescuers.

Whether it was called Chimerica or the G-2, both concepts centered on the United States collaborating with China in addressing global challenges. At that time, even within the world's leading power, the U.S., many recognized China's significant international standing and believed that close cooperation with China was essential. President

2004

Barack Obama (in office from 2009 to 2017) and his secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, repeatedly emphasized the importance of maintaining strong cooperation between the United States and China.

Although China also sought greater and better cooperation with the U.S., Beijing did not endorse terms like Chimerica or the G-2 and was even critical of them. China believed these concepts promoted the idea of China-U.S. co-governance of the world, which could easily fuel the “China threat” narrative.

When receiving visiting President Obama in November 2009, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao made it clear that he did not agree with the G-2. The Chinese premier stated that the idea of China-U.S. co-governance was flawed and did not align with China’s peaceful diplomatic principles.

In 2010, China’s GDP surpassed Japan’s, making it the world’s second-largest economy after the United States. Since Xi Jinping became China’s top leader in 2012, Beijing has become increasingly confident in diplomacy, which is often seen by some countries such as the United States as reflecting China’s growing ambitions. Additionally, more attention has been paid to the significant differences in ideology and political systems, along with some actions by China that were seen as not in line with WTO rules. All these factors together have led to China being increasingly viewed as a threat by the United States. Actually, while the Obama administration expressed a desire to cooperate with China, it was also strengthening efforts to contain China, especially in Obama’s second term. The “U.S. Rebalance to Asia” strategy illustrated this point. This trend would intensify over time.

The National Security Strategy released by the Trump administration in 2017 clearly defined China and Russia as the United States’ main rivals and strategic adversaries. This administration “awakened” Washington officials to the urgency of addressing the threat posed by China. During the Trump administration, the United States engaged in a fierce trade war with China, leading to a strained China-U.S. relationship.

The Biden administration largely inherited its predecessor’s hardline policies toward China, further clarifying its perception of a “China threat.” Over time, the U.S. government has come to view the fundamental nature of China-U.S. relations as competitive.

The U.S. government’s attitude toward China naturally influences U.S. public opinion. The Pew Research Center surveyed American adults in 2007, 2014, and 2019, asking which country is the greatest threat to the United States. China ranked third (2007), second (2014), and tied for first with Russia (2019), showing Americans’ threat perception of

China increased over time. The same survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2023 found that as many as 50 percent of respondents considered China to be the top threat to the United States, while only 17 percent viewed Russia as the top threat.

At the same time, the U.S. legislative branch continues to propose bills targeting China. For example, in mid-September 2024, the U.S. House of Representatives voted on more than 20 bills related to China, showcasing an effort by Congress to curb China’s influence. China is being regarded as the leader of an anti-US axis formed together with Russia, Iran, North Korea, Venezuela, and even Cuba.

The United States has developed not only a bipartisan but also a public consensus of negative perceptions towards China. Washington firmly views China as an undisputed rival.

The evolution from G-2 to the current rivalry was not quite as simple as described above, of course. Almost immediately after the idea of Chimerica/the G-2 emerged, it faced significant criticism and opposition, both in the United States and in China. Even Ferguson and Schularick, the creators of the term “Chimerica,” collaborated again in 2009 to publish an article titled “The End of Chimerica.”

On the other hand, there has been an undeniable change in recent years. Although Beijing has repeatedly stated that China and the United States are partners rather than rivals, this claim – which was not controversial even 10 years ago – has been explicitly rejected by the U.S. government. Meanwhile, U.S. academia has a growing lack of understanding of China and an increasingly negative attitude toward China.

Today, when cooperation is advocated, it faces strong pushback in the United States. The impact is clear in mounting tensions with China.

### **Dashain: Nepal turns to India for meat, China for toothpicks**

11 October 2024, Khabarhub

As the country prepares for Dashain, the biggest festival in Nepal, locals are immersed in celebration and culinary traditions, which prominently feature fish and meat.

Despite advancements in agriculture and animal husbandry, Nepal continues to import significant quantities of fish and meat from abroad.

Over the past five years, Nepal has imported meat worth over 13 billion rupees.

In the financial year 2019/20 alone, fish and meat imports amounted to approximately 2.77 billion rupees.



The following year, 2020/21, saw an increase with imports reaching 3.34 billion rupees.

In the fiscal year 2021/22, the figure was slightly lower at 3.13 billion rupees.

The most recent data for 2022/23 indicates a decrease, with imports totaling around 1.08 billion rupees.

However, during the previous fiscal year (2023/24), fish and meat worth approximately 2.23 billion rupees were imported, reflecting the seasonal demand during the festival.

In terms of livestock, Nepal imported goats valued at around one crore rupees during this period, with nearly 996,300 goats sourced entirely from India.

Toothpicks worth two crores imported annually

In addition to meat, Nepal also imports various small items, including toothpicks.

Despite local production capabilities, bamboo in Nepal has deteriorated due to weather conditions.

In July and August of this year alone, 6.63 million toothpicks were imported, totaling 18,912 kg.

Over the past five years, imports of toothpicks have reached a cumulative value of 94,441 rupees.

Last fiscal year, dental floss worth 27.93 million rupees was also imported. In 2079/80, a total of 1.13 crore toothpicks were brought in.

While Nepal has rich agricultural and culinary traditions, the reliance on imports for meat and small items like toothpicks highlights ongoing challenges in local production and supply.

### CCP Insists on Falsifying the History of “Humanistic Buddhism”

11 October 2024, Bitter Winter, Zhu Yaozu

A forum was held in Shanghai, a city that was really the cradle of the Buddhist current—which was, however, never Marxist, and later developed mostly in Taiwan.



Group photograph of the participants in the Shanghai forum. From Weibo.

On September 21 and 22, 2024, the Jade Buddha Temple in Shanghai hosted a national forum on “the theory and practice of humanistic Buddhism.” Bureaucrats from the United Front Work

Department and the government-controlled China Buddhist Association spoke at the event.

Venerable Changzang, speaking also on behalf of the absent Master Yanjue, the President of the government-controlled China Buddhist Association of which Changzang is Vice President, hailed Shanghai as “the birthplace of humanistic Buddhism.” He also explained that “humanistic Buddhism” and “Sinicized Buddhism” are one and the same.

“Humanistic Buddhism,” he said, always meant a Buddhism adapted to the most progressive ideologies of the time. Today the most advanced ideology is the CCP’s Marxism with Chinese characteristics as presented by Xi Jinping. It is to Xi Jinping Thought that a Buddhism that is both Sinicized and humanist should adapt, Changzang said.

That Shanghai is the birthplace of humanistic Buddhism is not false as it is there that Master Taixu, one and perhaps “the” key figure in the development of the current, taught in the last period of his life. Taixu died at the Jade Buddha Temple in 1947.

As one participant to the forum told “Bitter Winter,” mentioning the important role of Taixu was the only true statement in Changzang’s speech and indeed in the whole forum. All the rest was false.

Taixu did not want to adapt Buddhism to modern anti-religious ideologies. What he proposed was a Buddhism that was less focused on ritual and more on helping suffering human beings, including through active social and charitable work. This was the real humanistic Buddhism, and it was impossible to practice it under the iron-clad dictatorship of the Chinese Communist Party.

In fact, those loyal to Taixu’s teachings largely went to Taiwan, where worthy “humanistic” institutions such as Tzu Chi, Fo Guang Shan, and the Dharma Drum Mountain were developed. Some of these institutions may maintain certain “political” relationships with present-day China for their own purposes but certainly their ideas and actions are not inspired by Marxism or Xi Jinping socialism. As “Bitter Winter” has already denounced, the CCP is simply trying to hijack the prestigious label “humanistic Buddhism,” make it a synonym of “Sinicized Buddhism,” empty the name of its original content, and replace it with Xi Jinping’s brand of Marxism. It is, basically, a fraud, perpetrated with the complicity of the China Buddhist Association.

### From Deng to Xi, China’s Foreign Policy Identity Has Been Consistent

10 October 2024, SFS, Niall Duggan

Despite claims that Xi Jinping’s leadership has adopted a more aggressive foreign policy driven by nationalism, the effect of national identity on Chinese foreign policy has been consistent in the post-Mao

era. Instead, China's perception of its capacity to act internationally is driving a more proactive foreign policy. Therefore, Western states' China policy should focus on forcing China to question its capacity to act in international affairs by maintaining leadership in areas such as climate change and the war in Ukraine.

Is Nationalism in Chinese Foreign Policy New?

Many US policymakers consider the People's Republic of China to be the United States' key strategic rival. As the United States has refocused its attention on China in the past decade, it has found that China has become more aggressive and nationalistic under Xi Jinping's leadership. To US leadership, China's coercive "wolf warrior diplomacy" of the late 2010s exemplifies this new attitude. These US policymakers view recent assertive Chinese foreign policy as a departure from earlier post-Mao administrations, which they perceived as pragmatic. Prior Chinese administrations focused on economic engagement rather than ideological objectives and were therefore less threatening. However, contrary to popular belief, the effect of national identity on Chinese foreign policy is consistent and has changed little since the Mao era.

Background

Modern Chinese nationalism is rooted in Han intellectual and popular movements that emerged during the demise of the Qing dynasty in 1911. These movements created a Chinese state identity rather than the flexible identity that subjects of the Chinese empire held. After the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) created socialist patriotism, a form of Chinese nationalism interconnected with a socialist, anti-imperialist nationalism and rooted in China's experience under Western imperialism during the Century of Humiliation (1839–1949). Then, during the reform era of the 1980s, the CCP adopted positive nationalism, which reduced the anti-Western, anti-imperialist nature of socialist patriotism. For instance, China rejoined the Summer Olympics in 1984 and promoted its success in the games as a Chinese success rather than a victory over Western capitalism. During this era, China sought to rejoin the family of nations.

However, the country soon reverted to socialist patriotism due to international isolation resulting from the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre and the CCP's resultant fears of regime change. This fear led the CCP to introduce patriotic education campaigns in 1994. These campaigns focused on three periods of Chinese history – "five thousand years of splendid Chinese history", "the humiliation of more than a century," and "the People's Republic opens up for progress" – and became the collective narrative of Chinese history and current affairs. Despite

possessing a vast, diverse population and a widely contested national identity, these campaigns promoted the national narrative that China is an ancient civilization that has continually resisted Western imperialism and is reclaiming its great power status. China is still far from a totalitarian state – the anti-lockdown street protest of 2022 is a clear example of the fact that the Chinese people are willing and able to push back against their government – but China's campaigns of the 1990s effectively created one official Chinese historical narrative that reinforces loyalty to the CCP.

Nationalism in Foreign Policy

China articulates its nationalist identity through its foreign policy behavior in areas such as international law and global climate governance. Chinese white papers on Africa policy in 2006 and 2015 framed a narrative of shared victimhood at the hands of Western imperialism, colonization, and unequal treaties. China's identity as a developing state motivates its foreign policy focus on the Global South and has driven real policy action outside China's normal policy of non-interference in sovereign states' internal affairs. For instance, China supported international military intervention during the 2011 Libya crisis, backing a UN resolution that referred Libya to the International Criminal Court on counts of violations of human rights and potential crimes against humanity. China justified its decision by supporting the views of fellow developing states in Africa and the Arab world. Li Baodong, China's Permanent Representative to the United Nations from 2010 to 2013, stated that China considered "the concerns and views of the Arab and African countries when voting in favor of resolution 1970," framing China as a sympathizer of countries in the Global South.

China also presents itself as a leader in climate change governance among developing nations. In COP climate summits, for instance, China portrays itself as a significant, responsible stakeholder. It champions the interests of the Global South by supporting positions such as the Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC), a principle that acknowledges the unequal distribution of climate action responsibility among countries due to their differing emissions profiles and economic capacities. This underscores China's commitment to shaping its identity as a leading power on the international stage, where China sets rules that support the position of the Global South rather than accepting those created by the West.

China's socialist patriotic identity also drives more aggressive foreign policy in territorial disputes and the international economy. China has been assertive in defending its territorial claims, including its "Nine-

Dash Line," which encompasses a significant portion of the South China Sea. Tensions have been rising between China and several states, including Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and Taiwan, over areas such as the Spratly Islands, Paracel Islands, and Scarborough Shoal. Since China has played a historically dominant role in the South China Sea, it is attempting to achieve a hegemonic role in the region that aligns with its nationalist identity of returning to great power status.

China's geopolitical nationalistic stance extends beyond its regional neighbors. Epitomized by the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China's ambitions manifest in creating Chinese-centric forums for economic cooperation and hubs for financing and logistics across the Global South, including Central Asia, Latin America, and Sub-Saharan Africa. Rooted in the historical narrative of China's "five thousand years of splendid history," the BRI serves as a contemporary testament to China's enduring position as a critical economic and civilizational center.

From Deng to Xi, China's Foreign Policy Identity Has Been Consistent: The West Must Change Its Perspective

Many policymakers and media commenters have linked China's assertive foreign policy to Xi Jinping's policy of rejuvenating the Chinese nation. However, Chinese foreign policy has been consistent since the early 1990s. During this period, China sought to expand its power in the South China Sea steadily. In the late 1990s, China strived to establish amicable relations with Global South countries and moved toward leadership in global governance. Even the concept of a multipolar world order, evident in deepening Sino-Russian relations and highlighted as a policy change under Xi's leadership, is rooted in the Chinese foreign policy discourse of the mid-1990s, which debated the extent of China's development as a great power.

Instead, the key change since the 1990s has been China's rapid economic growth. While growth has not fundamentally changed China's identity and institutions, it has strengthened Xi's ability to achieve the foreign policy objectives of Chinese nationalism. The West expected China's identity to shift toward liberal, market-led democracy as it integrated with the global economy. This expectation was based on two factors. First, observers reasoned that China's need for a fully market-led economy to sustain rapid development would require political reforms, including creating an independent judiciary and developing a multiparty political system. Moreover, China's growing dependence on the international market would force it to support the Western economic order.

However, Western policymakers' anticipated shift in China's identity in the 1990s and 2000s did not

occur. As the Chinese economy grew, the one-party system expanded to co-opt the newly wealthy and educated elites instead of transitioning to liberal democracy. And while China's economy improved, China's foreign policy, identity, and geopolitical ambitions did not change. Thus, China's increased economic and military capacity supports its emergence as a global power that challenges the model of a unipolar world order dominated by the West.

Despite the development of Xi Jinping thought, the Xi administration has remained consistent with its predecessors in crucial areas of foreign and security policy, including China's attitude toward Taiwan, which is the last remaining wound from the Century of Humiliation for many Chinese policymakers. This suggests that US policymakers should not expect changes in Chinese leadership to generate seismic shifts in Chinese foreign policy. China's identity as both a victim of Western imperialism and a reemerging great power will remain the foundation for decision-making, even with positive or negative pressure from the West.

Given the relative stasis of Chinese foreign policy goals, China's newfound capability to advance its critical interests under Xi's leadership is the key difference from previous administrations. If China's identity remains consistent, understanding China's perspective on its capacity to achieve foreign policy goals is vital for Western states, as is the ability to shape China's perception of its own capabilities.

Therefore, Western states' China policy should focus on forcing China to question its capacity to act in international affairs. If Russia, for instance, were to lose the war in Ukraine, China might then question its capacity to defeat Taiwan in armed conflict. Moreover, if the United States were to lead on critical global issues such as climate change, China may question its capacity to lead in these areas. Chinese policymakers would view the cost of counteracting a fully engaged United States as beyond China's current ability. While US leadership could use direct economic and military competition with China to change Beijing's policies, this would feed into the Chinese identity as a victim of Western aggression. Compared to policies aimed at "countering China," engaged US leadership on global issues is a far more effective strategy that would force China to exercise restraint without reinforcing China's identity as a victim of the West.

## Critical Translation Readings On Monyul In The History Of India's Tawang Monastery – Book Review

10 October 2024, Eurasia Review, Dr. Adfer Shah



The Tawang Monastery in Arunachal Pradesh, India.  
Photo Credit: Vikramjit Kakati, Wikipedia Commons

The *Clear Mirror: Reflection of Monyul in the History of Tawang Monastery* takes a look at the history, culture and social geography of the Monyul, thereby giving readers an ethnographic account and lived reality of Tawang monastery and the People of Mon. The book was originally written in Tibetan by Gyalsey Trulku, who served as the Abbott of Tawang Monastery for almost two decades from 1978 to 1997. This dense work is the result of his long experience in Monyul and his thorough analysis of various scattered documentary sources and the local oral narratives. The original book's title in Tibetan is 'Rtawangdongpa'i lo rgyus, mon yulgsalpa'i me long' and it was first published by the author's disciple Chaak Jampa Gyatso of Tawang in 1991.

Thereafter it was revised and enlarged, and the second edition was published by the Amye Machen Institute, Dharamsala in 2009. This work comprises of thirty-two (32) small chapters and has been translated in an engaging and lucid style by Yeshe Dhondup, who is currently the managing editor of the Tibet Journal and has translated many other works both in Tibetan and English so far. His other translation works include *Biography of Gendun Chopel*; *Tale of Golden Corpse*, which is a Tibetan version of Vikram Vetal, *Sino-Tibetan Negotiation: the Negotiation that Never Was*; and *Political and Military History of Tibet*. Yeshe Dhondup's contribution as a translator of this work is huge because the Tibetan version can only be read by a limited section of readers and to make it available to a larger readership, its English translation was much needed and has come out finally if not timely.

However, the task was arduous because the main problem with translating from Tibetan to English was the vast cultural and linguistic differences between the two languages. Also many Buddhist concepts and teachings have no direct equivalent in English that makes it challenging to convey their full meaning and

significance. Overall, translating important Buddhist literature into Indian languages requires a careful and nuanced approach that takes into account the unique linguistic and cultural differences between Tibetan and the target language. Though with proper care and attention, it is possible to create translations that accurately convey the profound wisdom and teachings of Buddhism to a wider audience and for that it is essential to have a deeper understanding of Buddhist philosophy and culture to ensure that the translation accurately conveys the intended meaning. Also to translate important Buddhist literature into Indian languages, it is essential to work with skilled translators who are fluent in both Tibetan and the target language, the criteria that Yeshe Dhondup fulfils adequately though he acknowledges that the death of the author of this work Gyalsey Trulku in 2009 and unavailability of any Tibetan who is good in Mon and Tawang history and culture made his translation work difficult. Still, he has been able to carve out such a dense work of translation and has come up with an easily readable and coherent version in English.

While reading the English version one gets to understand the very essence of Tawang Monastery and its social, political and historical importance along with its strategic location due to which it has long been the focus of tensions between India and China. It is argued that the conflict began in 1950 when China and India signed an agreement demarcating the border between the two countries. However, the agreement was never ratified by China and the two countries have been in dispute over the border since then. In 1962, the conflict escalated into a full scale war between the two countries, with China launching a massive offensive against India the then. Instead of improving the worsening Sino-Indian relations and foresee diplomatic implications, China still is very interested in Tawang and is trying all its evil designs to have its hegemony over Tawang region and the monastery, given its strategic location that is rich in mineral and natural resources besides historical claims that Tawang is part of the south Tibet.

In addition to this the religious consciousness also serves as a motivation that Tawang is home to the 17th-century Tawang Monastery one of the largest Buddhist monasteries in India and considered a holy site for Tibetan Buddhism. Since China sees the monastery as an important tool to increase its influence in the region and to promote its own brand of Tibetan Buddhism. China also has not been able to provoke or influence India against the Tibetans residing in India for decades now. Today India has become the home to the largest Tibetan population outside Tibet, with an estimated 100 thousand Tibetans living in India.

While India does not recognize Tibetan refugees as refugees under its legal framework it has however provided them with temporary residence permits and freedom of movement within the country. The Indian government has also established a settlement program for Tibetan refugees, which provides them with basic amenities and services such as healthcare and education. Even the Tibetan Government-in-Exile runs from Dharamsala, India where H.H. the Dalai Lama resides since his arrival to India decades ago.

By going through the book one gets to know that the Buddhist monasteries in India are centers of spiritual and cultural learning, where monks and nuns live a life of simplicity and devotion to the teachings of Buddha. They are often located in remote areas, away from the distractions of modern life, and provide a space for meditation, study, and contemplation. It must also be noted that Buddhist monasteries in India continue to play a vital role in preserving the rich heritage of Buddhism and promoting its values in contemporary society.

Gyalsey has employed a cultural lens to study the Monyul and the Tawang Monastery. This Monastery is one of the largest and most famous Buddhist monasteries in India, located in the state of Arunachal Pradesh. It is known for its unique architecture, as well as its rich history and cultural significance. The monastery is also home to a large collection of ancient scriptures, valuable artifacts, and religious relics. Tawang Monastery is considered a sacred site by Buddhists and attracts thousands of pilgrims every year. According to history, the origin of people of Mon were Tibetans who migrated to the place in the 9th century in different waves of migrations. Back then Tawang was known as Monyul –the land of Mon which means lower land in the Tibetan lexicon as Tibet they then referred to the entire southern landmass as Monyul or Lho Mon.

Also, the Monpas are a tribe that migrated from southern and central Tibet and settled in Monyul. Historically it is believed that Tawang was a part of Tibet. It saw the seeding of Buddhism when it was brought to Tibet during the 8th century by the Buddhist scholar Padmasambhava. It is also believed that the Tawang monastery was built by a 5th Dalai Lama's disciple named Marak Lama Gyatso earlier known as Geluk Monastery. 'Ta' means horse and 'Wang' means green pasture in Monpa Language and it became the centre for the spiritual and powerhouse of the Mon people and was directly governed by Lhasa. Also since the establishment of the Tawang monastery, Monyul was completely incorporated into Tibetan administration in terms of politics, culture, language, taxation and law.

It was the Simla convention in 1914 that changed the map of Monyul this convention changed the boundary between Tibet and the eastern Himalayan

region of British India. In 1951 India took full control of Tawang and the Tawang region was incorporated into the Northeast Frontier Agency (NEFA). After communist China forcibly annexed Tibet in 1950, China started claiming Tawang as a part of south Tibet. Monpa is the most progressive tribe of Arunachal Pradesh today and is the only nomadic tribe of northeast India which migrated from south-east Tibet.

Given the socio-historical and political backdrop, the roots of this ethnography on the Tawang area and Tawang monastery and the community lie somewhere in anthropology. The author traces the lineage and historical accounts of the Mon people in today's Arunachal Pradesh. The account becomes sociological when he gives a picture of the social and cultural aspects of the monastery and the landscape. Though the earlier works on Tawang discuss the issues at length like some recent quality research on Tawang and Tawang Monastery besides Yeshe Dhondup's translation work that has been published are: Sharma, Renuka. Tawang: The Birthplace of the 6th Dalai Lama was published by Indus Publishing Company in 2017.

Some others like Khamtse, Samten G. Tawang: The Sacred City by Indus Publishing Company in 2015. Another work is Dawa, Tashi's 'The Tawang Tiger: Tale of a Lost Land' by Indus Publishing Company in 2015. Another prominent work is Pema Dhondup's 'The Monastery, the Fort and the Land of the Dawn Lit Mountains: A History of Tawang by Indus Publishing Company in 2016. An important work by Bhutia, Tsetan Namgyal's, 'Tawang: A Journey to a Hidden Land by Indus Publishing Company in 2014.

Also books have been written recently on Tawang, Monpas and Tibetan Buddhism which cover a range of socio-historical and political issues. Besides the author's and translator's preface, the subsequent chapters written in a very coherent style describe the sociology of the Monpa people and the arrival of people from Tibet and their descendants in Mon, description of Prince Tsangma and his lineage and arrival in Mon, about his sons, spread of Buddhism in India and Tibet and spread of Buddhism in Mon.

In Chapter 9, there is a fine description of the Kagyue (Kagyu) tradition. It is one of the four main lineages of Tibetan Buddhism founded by an Indian Buddhist in the 11th century and is based on the teachings of the Indian Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna. This tradition emphasizes the importance of meditation and the transmission of the Buddha's teachings from teacher to student through an oral lineage.

Chapter 10 discusses the spread of the Geluk tradition in Mon. It is a branch of Theravada Buddhism that originated in Burma (Myanmar) and is practiced mainly in Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and



Sri Lanka. It emphasizes the attainment of inner peace, happiness, and enlightenment through meditation, good deeds, and mindful living. The term "geluk" means "happiness" or "bliss" in Pali, the language of the Buddha. Similarly, chapter 11 narrates the founding of Namgyal Lhatse monastery and its administrative and religious traditions are discussed in chapter 13.

Other chapters include discussions about the Tawang monastery and its renovation, visits of Indian Prime Ministers and H.H. Dalai Lama to Tawang, the history of Ogyanling and other monasteries, etc. Mon people have played an important role in the history of Tawang, as they were one of the first groups to settle in the region. Monyul, which translates to "Land of Mon," is a term used to describe the Tawang district. They have their own language, which is a Tibeto-Burman language, and their own customs and traditions. The importance of Monyul in the history of Tawang can be seen through the various historical sites and monuments that are found in the region.

For example, the Tawang Monastery, which is one of the largest monasteries in India, was founded by a Monpa monk named Mera Lama Lodre Gyatso in the 17th century. Monpas are an ethnic groups found in the Himalayan regions of Nepal and India. They are also known as the Lopas and are a sub-group of the Sherpa people. They are mostly located in the Khumbu region of Nepal, which includes the famous Mount Everest. The Monpa people, on the other hand, are primarily located in the region of Mon, which is in the northeastern part of India's state of Sikkim. They speak the Monpa language, which belongs to the Tibeto-Burman language family. The Mon people are an ethnic group that inhabits the region of Tawang in India's state of Arunachal Pradesh, India.

Tawang Monastery, also known as the Galden Sumdo Monastery, is a Buddhist monastery in Tawang. It is considered one of the largest monasteries in India and is known for its architecture and historical significance. The Monastery was founded by Mera Lama in the 17th century. It is famous for being the birthplace of the sixth Dalai Lama, who was born here in 1683. The monastery is also known for its rich collection of ancient Buddhist scriptures and artwork. Academically, Tawang Monastery has been studied by scholars of Buddhist studies, art history, and anthropology. Several academic papers and books have been written on the monastery and its significance in the history and culture of India.

The Mon people, who are the native inhabitants of the region, have a unique history and culture that has been influenced by their interactions with the neighboring Tibetan and Bhutanese cultures.

However, there is still a significant research gap in understanding the history and culture of the Mon people and their relationship with the Tawang Monastery. Since the work is based on the author's use of sources like rare documentary resources and oral narratives that makes it ethnography. The author's interest in the Tibetan culture and religious tradition, cultural understanding and most of all meaning-making given his effort of looking at the Monyul from an insider's perspective makes things more lucid for Tibetan readers and scholars. However, the ethnographer, in this case, is not a researcher but a Buddhist monk and had been living among the inhabitants and not with the purpose of understanding the culture that these people shared but as the head of the monastery thereby understanding the community and portraying a larger picture of the monastery as a socio-religious organization.

This work is important because writing on monasteries or exploring the lived realities, understanding administration, politics, social interventions, educational and other contributions is equally important as it helps to preserve and promote the cultural and historical significance of these religious institutions. This work reflects that Monasteries are not only important religious centers but also serve as repositories of knowledge and art. Therefore such works help researchers in documenting and studying these monasteries to gain insights into the cultural practices and beliefs of the people who built them, as well as their contributions to the broader society. Additionally, writing about monasteries can help to raise awareness about their importance and attract more visitors, which can have economic benefits for the surrounding communities that exactly is happening in Tawang now since it is witnessing a huge tourist footprint now.

One of the key research points that need to be addressed is the historical and cultural links between the Mon people and the Tawang Monastery. While there has been some research on the history of the monastery, there is limited information on the role of the Mon people in its foundation and development. Additionally, there is a need to understand the impact of the Mon people's culture and religion on the development of the monastery's architecture and art.

Another important research point is the study of the Mon people's traditional religion and beliefs. There is still a lack of understanding of their traditional religion and how it has evolved over time. This research gap can only be filled by conducting fieldwork and ethnographic research with the Mon people to understand their traditional religion and beliefs. Furthermore, the Mon people have also played a crucial role in the defense of Tawang

during various conflicts throughout history. During the Sino-Indian War in 1962, the Mon people were instrumental in helping Indian forces defend Tawang from Chinese troops. The central argument of the book is that the Mon people and their cultural traditions have played a vital role in shaping the history and identity of Tawang.

Their contributions to the region's religious, cultural, and military history make them an essential part of the social fabric of Tawang and its surrounding communities. The book is an important addition to the present body of Tibetan literature because it brings to focus some crucial aspects of Tawang Monastery and the life world of Monyul. There is a need to study the impact of globalization and modernization on the Mon people and their culture. The Mon people have been isolated from the rest of the world for a long time, and their culture is now facing the challenges of globalization and modernization. There is a need to understand how these changes are affecting the Mon people's culture and way of life and what measures can be taken to preserve their unique culture and identity.

There is a significant research gap in understanding the history and culture of the Mon people and their relationship with the Tawang Monastery. To bridge this gap, researchers need to conduct fieldwork and ethnographic research with the Mon people, study the impact of globalization and modernization on the Mon people's culture, and investigate the historical and cultural links between the Mon people and the Tawang Monastery. Last Word Yeshe Dondup's English translation of Gasley Trulku's book on Tawang Monastery is a detailed account of the history, architecture, and religious practices of the monastery.

The book provides a comprehensive overview of the monastery's origins, its evolution over the centuries, and its significance in the Tibetan Buddhist world. The book provides a detailed account of the history of Tawang Monastery, including its founding by Merak Lama Lodre Gyatso in the 17th century. The book describes the architectural features of the monastery, including its various temples, chapels, and other structures. The book provides insight into the religious practices of the monastery, including its daily rituals, festivals, and other ceremonies.

The book is written in a clear and accessible style, making it accessible to readers of all backgrounds. However, it is equally important to understand what the book misses despite covering a range of perspectives. The book does not provide a thorough examination of the political and social context of Tawang Monastery. While it provides some background on the region's history and its relationship with Tibet, it does not delve deeply into the political and social factors that have shaped the

monastery over the centuries. The book does not provide a comprehensive account of the monastery's religious teachings and practices. It does provide some insight into the daily rituals and festivals of the monastery, but it does not delve deeply into the philosophical and spiritual teachings of Tibetan Buddhism. The book does not provide a detailed account of the lives of the monks and nuns who live in the monastery. Some information on their daily routines and activities is given, but their personal experiences and perspectives are not explored deeply.

The book doesn't reflect a comprehensive account of the impact of modernization and globalization on Tawang Monastery. It lists some changes that have occurred over the centuries, it struggles to explore the ways in which these changes have affected the monastery and its inhabitants. At last, this book isn't able to give a comprehensive account of the relationship between Tawang Monastery and other Tibetan Buddhist institutions. It sheds some information on the monastery's connections to other institutions; however, it does not explore the ways in which these relationships have shaped the monastery's history and culture.

### **Opinion: The Erasure of Tibet- A Dangerous Change at the Guimet Museum**

10 October 2024, Phayul, Tenam



A Tibetan girl at a protest rally in Paris, France  
(Photo/Threads/dremong)

I still remember my first visit to the Guimet Museum, a moment of profound importance for me as a Tibetan in exile. Upon entering the museum, I felt a deep connection with the sacred objects on display, artifacts that represented my culture and heritage – our civilization. I saw thangkas commissioned by the Great Fifth Dalai Lama. I saw statues carved by Nepalese artists for Tibetan monasteries in the 17th and 18th centuries. I wanted to remove my shoes in this sacred space before continuing my visit.

For me, the Guimet Museum represented a sacred space for Tibetans living in exile – a place where we could connect to our culture in the face of a relentless 70-year campaign aimed at destroying it in Tibet by

the Chinese government. The museum offered a sanctuary where Tibetan identity could be preserved and celebrated, free from the repressive narratives imposed by the PRC.

So recently, when the Guimet Museum in Paris made the decision to replace the term "Tibet" with "Himalayan World" and to designate "Art of Tibet" with the vague terminology "Tibetan Art," it was a shock for Tibetans in France and worldwide. This change is not only scientifically and historically inaccurate, but it also risks supporting the Chinese colonial narrative about Tibet. As a museum with the largest collection of Asian arts outside Asia, its actions carry significant weight, leading to the erasure of Tibetan culture and identity for future generations.

#### Historical Context and Cultural Importance

Tibet is not simply a place on a map; it is a civilization that flourished for centuries, rich with a unique heritage that predates the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Tibetan arts, traditions, and religious practices have flourished for centuries, rooted in a unique cultural context that deserves to be recognized and preserved. By diluting this identity and opting for "Himalayan World," the Guimet Museum obscures the rich tapestry of Tibetan history and contributes to a Chinese narrative that has long sought to erase it.

The act of renaming places is not a trivial matter; it is deeply tied to power dynamics and colonial histories. European colonialism sought to inscribe order and meaning on non-European landscapes through the process of naming places. Naming or renaming was fundamental to extending imperial control over physical and human environments. The use of the colonial power's language, alphabet, and cultural idiom was important to express and cement the imperial authority of the former colonial power, and China perpetuates this in its colonies like Tibet and East Turkestan.

The act of renaming is an assertion of authority, stripping away the indigenous connection to land and culture. This is particularly relevant in the context of Tibet, where such renaming efforts are part of a broader strategy to erase Tibetan identity and history. This erasure of Tibet is also an erasure and dilution of our world's rich heritage that goes beyond Tibet.

Moreover, the term "Tibet" also evokes powerful associations with the "Free Tibet" movement, which has galvanized international attention on the Tibetan struggle for freedom. The recognition of Tibet as a distinct entity serves as a reminder of the ongoing colonial domination, human rights violations, and cultural destruction perpetrated by the PRC. In attempting to erase the term "Tibet," the Chinese government seeks to suppress this narrative, diverting

attention from the broader Tibetan experience beyond what it designates as the "Tibet Autonomous Region," which encompasses only central Tibet but not the two other traditional provinces of Amdo and Kham.

This invisibilization of Tibet in an important cultural institution like the Guimet Museum is deeply alarming. As future generations engage with these arts, they risk absorbing a distorted understanding of Tibetan culture – one that does not recognize its uniqueness and historical significance. This affects not only Tibetans but also deprives global audiences of a more complete appreciation of the diverse cultures that make up our world.

By adopting terminology that diminishes Tibet's identity, the Guimet Museum perpetuates the erasure of Tibetan culture, facilitating an environment in which colonial narratives thrive. This decision could influence other institutions and researchers, leading to a broader normalization of a distorted view of Tibetan identity that ignores its complexities and historical roots.

I believe that the ability to name one's own culture and heritage is integral to self-determination. The Tibetan people have the right to define their identity, history, and culture, free from external manipulation or erasure. The Guimet Museum's decision to strip Tibet of its name is not simply an institutional choice; it is a denial of this fundamental right.

To defend this incomprehensible change, the Guimet Museum justifies its decision by claiming to want to make the collections "more readable and understandable to non-specialists." However, simplifying our history does not do justice to its richness. Public education and awareness must come through authentic presentation, respecting the complexity of our cultures rather than diluting them. The beauty of human history and Humanity lies in its complexity and diversity. The museum must present History as it is and not rewrite it!

In light of these concerns, it is imperative for the Tibetan world, the field of Tibetan studies, and anti-colonial movements to unite and pressure the Guimet Museum to restore "Tibet" to its rightful place in its exhibitions and communications. We must advocate for the recognition of Tibet as a distinct cultural and historical entity, ensuring that future generations do not inherit a diluted understanding of its rich heritage.

This is not simply a matter of terminology; it is a matter of justice for a culture that has endured more than seven decades of oppression. The Guimet Museum has the opportunity to stand against colonial narratives and affirm its commitment to authentic representation. By restoring "Tibet" in its exhibitions, it can honor the resilience of the Tibetan

people and safeguard their identity for generations to come.

The decision to replace “Tibet” with “Himalayan World” is a dangerous and insidious move that perpetuates historical injustices. It is our collective responsibility to challenge this narrative and ensure that the voices of the Tibetan people are heard, recognized, and celebrated. Together, we can help preserve Tibet’s rich heritage and stand in solidarity against cultural erasure.

The struggle to restore the name “Tibet” goes beyond a simple matter of terminology. It is a question of justice, honor, and respect for a people, their history, civilization, and right to self-determination. As a global community, we have the responsibility to oppose cultural erasure and celebrate the richness of diversity that enriches our humanity.

### **China still challenges India in the Himalayas as BRICS summit approaches**

10 October 2024, The Hill, Brahma Chellaney



Indian army vehicles move in a convoy in the cold desert region of Ladakh, India, Sept. 18, 2022.

With the Oct. 22 BRICS summit meeting approaching, China and India have stepped up discussions about defusing their tense military standoff along the long Himalayan frontier. But although the 10-nation summit in the Russian city of Kazan is catalyzing efforts to resolve the confrontation — which has sparked rival force buildups and intermittent clashes — it is far from certain that any deal will be reached.

The standoff between the two Asian giants is not grabbing international headlines, thanks in part to the wars raging in Ukraine and the Middle East. But the threat of the confrontation escalating to a border war of the kind fought in 1962 cannot be discounted. Both sides have significantly ramped up border deployments of troops and weapons, with India acknowledging the situation is “very tense and dangerous.”

The Sino-Indian faceoff, as well as the Russian invasion of Ukraine, are detracting from the international appeal of BRICS, the world’s first major

non-Western initiative. Founded 15 years ago by Brazil, Russia, India and China as BRIC, the group, with the addition of South Africa in 2011, became BRICS. And with this year’s entry of five additional countries, it has become BRICS-plus, accounting for nearly half the world’s population and 40 percent of global trade.

As many as 40 more countries have lined up to join BRICS, which seeks to shape a multipolar global order in place of the fading era of Western dominance. An easing of military tensions between nuclear-armed titans China and India could help build consensus to further enlarge BRICS.

The Sino-Indian border faceoff was triggered by China’s stealth encroachments on some Indian borderlands in April 2020. India failed to foresee the Chinese aggression largely because Prime Minister Narendra Modi had focused on appeasing Beijing in a bid to chip away at the China-Pakistan strategic axis. Between 2014 and 2019, Modi met with Chinese President Xi Jinping 18 times, building a close personal rapport. The Xi-ordered encroachments were thus widely seen in India as a stab in the back.

Xi seriously miscalculated that China would be able to present the land grabs to India as a fait accompli, like the Chinese “salami-slicing” expansionism elsewhere in Asia. In contrast to Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, China prefers incremental expansionism, enabled by stealth and deception.

India’s robust military response to China’s encroachments, including more than matching Chinese force deployments, took Beijing by surprise, helping to spotlight not just the Sino-Indian territorial disputes but also India’s challenge to Chinese power and capability. No other nation, not even the U.S., has locked horns with the Chinese military in this century the way India has since 2020.

Xi, by transforming the Sino-Indian frontier into a “hot” border patrolled by tens of thousands of rival troops, has crimped the further pursuit of his own “salami-slicing” strategy on the Himalayan massif. China will find it more challenging from now on to nibble away at Indian territories.

With the U.S.-China rivalry deepening, the last thing Xi should be doing is turning India into an enduring enemy. Yet as the world’s fastest-growing major economy, India is moving closer to America, with Modi’s foreign policy showing a distinct pro-Western tilt.

With an eye on China, India has ramped up its military buildup and modernization. A stronger India aligned with Western powers and Japan is likely to stymie China’s plan to gain strategic preeminence in Asia.

A war with India could expose China’s weaknesses. Whereas the Chinese military relies largely on

conscripts, India, with an all-volunteer force, has the world's most-experienced troops in mountain warfare. The Chinese military, though, has a technological edge over Indian forces.

Against this backdrop, China's recent charm offensive in India, including initiating renewed efforts to defuse the military standoff, suggests that Xi wants to salvage Beijing's relationship with New Delhi – but without losing face at home.

For four-and-a-half years, tens of thousands of Chinese troops have remained deployed along the inhospitable Himalayan frontier, which has some of the harshest terrain on Earth. Oxygen levels are so low that soldiers take weeks to acclimatize before being deployed on the front lines. If Xi were to reach a deal with India centered on a pullback of rival forces, it would raise questions in China about why he ever launched this provocation in the first place.

This may well explain why, in the bilateral negotiations up to now, the Chinese side has sought a deal largely on its own terms, dimming the prospect of reaching an agreement by the time Xi and Modi could meet on the sidelines of the BRICS summit.

But even if Xi climbed down to some extent, leading to a deal to implement a sequential process of disengagement, de-escalation and removal of rival forces, the new warfare-related infrastructure China has built along the India frontier will remain in place. India thus would not be able to lower its guard.

China has bored tunnels and shafts into mountainsides to set up an elaborate underground military infrastructure, as if preparing for war. In addition, it has planted settlers in new militarized border villages, the equivalent of the artificial islands it created in the South China Sea to serve as forward military bases.

China and India, which represent more than one-third of the global population, became neighbors only after the Chinese Communist Party annexed Tibet in 1951. Today, China and India need to find ways to peacefully coexist. Yet, despite the latest efforts to mend fences, their strategic rivalry seems likely to endure.

### China's Dark Shadow Over Nepal's Tibetan Refugee Community

09 October 2024, Bitter Winter, Tsering Passang

Beijing's economic and political ties with Nepal make life increasingly hard for the 10,000 Tibetans who escaped there.

China's increasing influence in Nepal is no longer just a geopolitical concern—it is a pressing human rights issue that is affecting the lives of the Tibetan refugee community there. This past summer, I spent a month in Nepal and visited Tibetan refugee camps,

where I witnessed firsthand the deepening challenges these exiled Tibetans face as Beijing's grip on the country tightens. What I saw was not just a tale of economic progress, but one of growing repression—disturbingly reminiscent of the conditions Tibetans fled from their homeland over 65 years ago.

One of the most glaring signs of foreign aid in Nepal is the transformation of its infrastructure. Chinese-funded projects, from the arrival of electric buses to the construction of regional airports in Lumbini and Pokhara, are reshaping the country's landscape and its people's attitudes to China. While these projects may bring short-term economic benefits, they come at a heavy price: the erosion of Nepal's sovereignty.

For decades, Nepal has balanced its delicate relationships between India and China. But as Chinese-backed initiatives increase, there is rising concern about Nepal's long-term independence. Despite the construction of new regional international airports, foreign airlines remain hesitant to use these facilities, largely due to India's reservations about China's growing role in Nepal's internal affairs. With Nepal becoming increasingly reliant on Chinese investments, the country's foreign policy risks shifting in favour of Beijing—a shift that could have far-reaching consequences for Nepal's autonomy.

This geopolitical shift has even more serious implications for the dwindling 10,000 Tibetan refugees living in exile in Nepal. Having escaped their homeland after China's occupation of Tibet, where cultural suppression and persecution still prevail, many now find themselves facing similar restrictions in what was supposed to be a safe haven. Expressions of Tibetan identity—whether through wearing a "Free Tibet" t-shirt, raising the Tibetan flag, or participating in traditional cultural practices—are being met with growing hostility. During my visit, I learned that local authorities, likely acting under pressure from Chinese interests, have begun restricting Tibetan cultural practices. Events like Gorshey (Tibetan circle dances), once public celebrations of Tibetan heritage, are now forced underground in the Kathmandu Valley. The chilling effect on these cultural activities is a painful echo of the repression that many Tibetans thought they had left behind.



A Tibetan refugee selling traditional handicraft in Nepal. Credits.



Even the deeply symbolic tradition of Lhakar (White Wednesday) is now under threat. A movement that grew out of the 2008 protests in Tibet, Lhakar is a weekly expression of Tibetan pride and identity. Every Wednesday, Tibetans speak their language, wear traditional clothing, and support Tibetan-owned businesses as an act of peaceful cultural resistance. But even these small acts of pride are being curtailed. As China's influence in Nepal grows, Tibetans are finding it increasingly difficult to gather, celebrate, and maintain their traditions.

What is particularly troubling is the erosion of the very freedoms Tibetan refugees believed they would find in exile. The rights they sought—freedom of expression, freedom from fear, and the ability to preserve their identity—are being undermined. The parallels between the repression they fled in Tibet and the mounting pressure they face in Nepal are becoming too striking to ignore.

This growing threat to the rights of Tibetan refugees must be a matter of global concern. The international community cannot afford to stay silent. China's expanding influence in Nepal has implications that go beyond mere infrastructure deals—it strikes at the heart of human rights and cultural survival. Tibetan refugees in Nepal have a fundamental right to express their cultural identity, free from persecution or interference.

The time for action is now. Media outlets, human rights organisations, and governments around the world must shine a light on this pressing issue. As China continues to reshape Nepal's political and social landscape, the global community has a responsibility to ensure that Tibetans in exile can live free from oppression and preserve their rich cultural heritage. Their struggle is not just about one displaced community—it is about defending the universal values of freedom, dignity, and the right to exist as a people.

The fight for Tibetan freedom is far from over. As the founder and chair of the Global Alliance for Tibet & Persecuted Minorities, I call on the international community to stand up for the Tibetan refugees in Nepal and recognise the growing threat posed by China's influence. Tibetans' cultural identity and their right to live free from oppression are worth defending—because their fight is a fight for the fundamental human rights we all cherish.

### **Book Review: The Phallus by Bhuchung D. Sonam**

07 October 2024, Phayul, Tsering Namgyal Khortsa

Bhuchung D. Sonam is one of the most prolific poets, writers, and translators in the Tibetan diaspora. He has published nearly half a dozen books and edited two acclaimed anthologies of Tibetan writing: *Muses*

*in Exile: The Anthology of Tibetan Poetry*, which appeared twenty years ago, and more recently, *Under the Blue Skies: A Tibetan Reader*.

He is also the publisher of the Dharamshala-based Blackneck Books, an imprint of TibetWrites, which has become an important platform for Tibetan writers, both young and old.

His nearly two-decade-long effort in promoting Tibetan writing was featured in *The New York Times* and earned him the prestigious Ostana Prize youth award for his translation work.

Sonam has now released his first collection of short stories, *The Phallus*, which consists of six short stories about Tibet and Tibetan life in both India and Tibet. The book can be read in just one sitting.

Like much of Tibetan fiction, or most fiction in general, the book is grounded in real stories and facts, particularly the history of China's occupation of Tibet and the Tibetan exile in India. Bhuchung-la's book, narrated in both first and third person, is largely autobiographical and based on true events.

In the title story, *The Phallus*, Sonam provides an account of his grandfather's time in a Chinese labor camp in 1960, where, due to hunger, they were forced to eat worms out of their feces and later the carcass of a donkey when they found one.

"For a few days, fifty prisoners enjoyed the donkey, which not only kept them warm but also rejuvenated their emaciated bodies. However, they could not bite off its penis. They boiled it several times, but it remained rubbery and tough."

The grandfather, a lama in a monastery, would later denounce the teachings of Buddha and praise the Party during his confession in order to be released.

The second story, *Way of a Woman*, recounts how a husband in Tibet decides to go on a journey against all advice and meets with an accident, drowning in a river along with his horse. The horse returns home without its rider. The widow shows no visible remorse, leading to various rumors in the village, but eventually sells all her horses and belongings and decides to become a nun. The husband, however, continues to appear in her dreams asking for his horses. In response, she says: "The dead have no rights."

The third story, *The Connection*, is a remarkable piece of detective fiction. The author, while applying for his Indian Identity Certificate (IC)—a long and laborious process for Tibetans—is summoned by the police. He is questioned in connection with an old Indian Muslim friend from his college days, and based on his answers, they attempt to track the friend down. Later, the author reads in a newspaper that his friend was likely among those arrested as one of the masterminds behind the hijacking of an Indian Airlines plane from Nepal. "Five months later, my IC arrived. They had printed my name wrong."

In *Under the Shadow*, Sonam takes readers on a journey to a Tibetan school in Manali where the principal, who has a penchant for religion, begins to chop down an old tree in the school courtyard to make way for a new Buddhist stupa. The author realizes that the tree was, in fact, planted by his grandfather, who may have once worked at the school. The author reflects on the life of trees and whether trees have souls. The story also touches on an aspect of Tibetan history in India that has rarely been discussed: the construction of roads by Tibetan refugees in the Himalayas during the 1960s and 1970s.

In *News from Afar*, the final story, a Tibetan refugee schoolboy recalls his life behind the Himalayas in Tibet as he retreats into the wilderness to read yet another letter informing him of a death in the family. "News of one death and then others, over the years, had hardened him somewhat," Sonam writes. The story is filled with heartbreaking nostalgia. "Of all the things he missed about home, his grandmother's stories and her homemade dried cheese topped the list. Elderly women he encountered often reminded him of his grandma, stirring memories of long evenings spent listening to her tales."

When he hears of his father's death from his uncle, tears roll down his cheek. "It was neither the intensity of sadness, nor the sharpness of his uncle's narration, that prompted his eyes to flood. The tears were for his father's youthfulness – a forty-two-year-old man, the head of a family, a good farmer."

The book is full of anguish, dislocation, heartbreak, sadness, sacrifice, and above all, nostalgia for a time gone by. Most importantly, it expresses the lack of a home to call one's own and the urge to use art and writing as a form of redemption.

Despite the somber themes, there is a lot of humor, especially dark humor, in the book, particularly in the title story. There is also a certain ingenuity and practicality in Bhuchung-la's art that is refreshing. I especially liked the book's format, which is perfectly suited for the Instagram age and can be savored in one or two sittings. Even after reading the book twice, I came away satisfied with the different facets of life in exile and Tibet that Bhuchung-la conjures in this slim but powerful volume.

What sets him apart as an author is his lack of authorial anxiety—he simply ends the story where it naturally ends and doesn't feel the need to keep going if the narrative has concluded. His detailed and careful prose—his background as a poet shows—beautifully describes both nature and human expression. The book, which masterfully blends historical realities with personal narratives, evoking the hardships, nostalgia, and resilience of Tibetans, is a delight to read and is yet another important

addition to the growing corpus of Tibetan writing in English.

## China's Sentinel State

07 October 2024, China India Project, Dalia Parete

Hype around China's "digital panopticon" is huge. But according to Minxin Pei, an expert in Chinese governance and mass surveillance, cutting-edge tech is just one part of the Party-state's toolkit, which also leans heavily on manpower and pervasive self-censorship – what he calls China's "sentinel state."

China Media Project researcher Dalia Parete spoke with Pei about the titular idea behind his latest book, *The Sentinel State: Surveillance and the Survival of Dictatorship in China*. Pei tells us about what makes the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) brand of mass surveillance unique, considering how it anticipates rather than simply reacts to dissent and how it combines the latest technology with grassroots mobilization and internalized censorship, involving citizens in the very machinery controlling them. It's a system as old as the PRC itself, but one that has changed dramatically in the past few years and which will only continue to evolve.

Dalia Parete: What is the "sentinel state," and how does it differ from the more familiar concept of the surveillance state?

Minxin Pei: In my book, I introduce the concept of distributed surveillance, highlighting how China conducts its surveillance distinctly. While all dictatorships employ repression, the most sophisticated ones, like China, lean heavily on preventive rather than reactive measures – essentially ex-ante repression versus ex-post repression. The real challenge lies in designing an effective system for this preventive repression. Should all surveillance responsibilities be concentrated within a single agency or distributed across multiple entities? Each approach has its trade-offs. For instance, if you go the route of a centralized agency like the Stasi [East German secret police], you invest heavily in a large bureaucracy that could ultimately threaten the ruling party itself.

On the other hand, China's strategy involves decentralizing tasks horizontally across various security agencies, and vertically by incorporating civilian involvement. These civilians, while formally part of the security apparatus, take on key surveillance functions. This creates a unique system where surveillance is distributed and multifaceted, allowing the government to maintain control without the vulnerabilities that come with a single, centralized authority.

While all dictatorships employ repression, the most sophisticated ones, like China, lean heavily on preventive rather than reactive measures.

DP: Which is more important for this sentinel state – the technologies of repression or the human resources of state control?

MP: There's often too much focus on technology itself. While it can be a useful tool, it is used by people. And let's not forget that technology has lots of blind spots. It can accomplish many tasks, but if people implement countermeasures, technology becomes ineffective. For example, if someone wears a mask or a hood, facial recognition systems struggle to identify them. Similarly, if you hide your phone in a Faraday bag, the government loses track of your movements. There are lots of limitations to technology. This is why I believe the most effective approach combines human intelligence and technological resources. China has both advanced technology and a highly organized structure.

DP: What did the Covid-19 pandemic reveal about China's surveillance capabilities?

MP: During the pandemic, China's approach to enforcing lockdowns was truly remarkable, particularly in how it used cell phone monitoring. The most crucial part was the actual collaboration projects with private companies like Alibaba and Tencent, as they developed health tracking systems. Another significant aspect was the use of so-called "grid management" (网格化管理), which is much more labor-intensive and human-focused than technology-driven. This approach proved to be quite effective during the pandemic. China implemented a system where communities are divided into several grids, typically comprising around 1,000 people or 300 families. Each grid is closely watched by an individual who not only monitors these families but also provides various community services.

To effectively lock down a community, you need active participants. So, those two elements – phone monitoring and grid management – played vital roles. Interestingly, traditional tools like facial recognition and video surveillance were not very useful during the lockdown since people were confined indoors.

DP: Would you say the pandemic was a trial run for China's technological capabilities?

MP: Because of the uniqueness of the pandemic, it was a limited test. There was a lot of self-enforcement because people also did not want to get sick. So, during the pandemic, the government didn't need to resort to heavy-handed coercion. About half of the population probably complied with regulations simply out of self-interest and a desire to stay safe.

DP: What role does the Chinese media, including state-run outlets, play? Are they part of the sentinel state?

MP: In this case, official Chinese media don't play a significant role. Their primary function is to disseminate government-sanctioned messaging. I think that social media is the main target for surveillance because the government has a very sophisticated and effective way of monitoring what's happening on social media. If a particular topic starts trending, they swiftly intervene to suppress it. There is a very good system in place in that sense.

In my book, I don't focus on the output side of this – essentially, how the government employs censorship. One lesser-known aspect of China's internet surveillance is how they monitor who is accessing the internet. They've created effective technology to ensure that anyone using the internet has their identity recorded by the authorities. This way, they maintain tight control over online activity.

DP: What lies behind the Chinese state's paranoia and need for control?

MP: This system was developed in the aftermath of Tiananmen Square. This taught the Chinese Communist Party a very important lesson: they needed to be aware of what was happening in society. Like other dictatorships, the Chinese Communist Party is very fearful of dissenting voices, especially activists, because they need to deter the population from engaging in protests, in anti-regime activities. Most of the time, these activities can be led by a small number of activists. Because they set an example, they show the rest of the population that they are not afraid. To make sure this does not happen, the government relies heavily on surveillance. If somebody dares to challenge the Party's authority openly, that person will be discovered and punished.

In my book, I discuss what I call "key individuals." These are people who are subject to close monitoring by human assets and technological means. There are even "internet key individuals" whose online activities are closely tracked. Some of these individuals are restricted from accessing certain websites or services to further limit their influence.

DP: What do you make of China's plans to introduce a national cyberspace ID scheme?

MP: From the Party's perspective, the more control they can exert, the better. That's their mindset. However, we also have to consider the law of diminishing returns. In this context, the additional benefits the Communist Party might gain from implementing a cyber ID are likely quite limited. Given how effectively they control the internet, I'd estimate they oversee about 95 to 97 percent of online activity. To capture that remaining two to three percent would require a substantial investment of resources, leading to high marginal costs that probably don't yield significant benefits. You have to hire people to monitor. You have to actually harass

people if you catch them. Then what if they keep posting? It will probably cost them a lot of manpower.

This feels excessive, especially considering that the party can quickly identify who is online. When you use home internet from state-owned providers, your IP address is already known. The same applies to your phone. Even in public places like cafes they have surveillance systems to track IP addresses. So why introduce a cyber ID? It seems largely unnecessary. Additionally, many people in China are already quite cautious about their online behavior, leading to considerable self-censorship.

DP: So why do you think these plans are being rolled out right now?

MP: Xi Jinping has been emphasizing a comprehensive approach to security. National security is not just about defense against external enemies but also maintaining social stability and cybersecurity. So, under that guideline, Chinese censorship agencies and domestic security agencies will ask, "How can we carry out the top leadership's instruction?" So, they propose all kinds of measures, such as cyber IDs. From a bureaucratic perspective, this is a clear response to new directions from the central authority, prompting the bureaucracy to take action. When we look at the current circumstances, like the slowing economy, there's probably more social unrest. There will be a lot more public dissatisfaction. The government aims to suppress expressions of this dissatisfaction and potential social unrest.

By introducing something like a cyber ID, the Party hopes to enhance self-censorship, as people will be afraid to express their dissatisfaction online. However, this approach might backfire. If individuals feel they can't voice their frustrations online without repercussions, they may resort to more destructive means of expression. That's why I believe this strategy may not be beneficial. Over time, this will also depend largely on the economy, as the Chinese security apparatus is primarily funded by local governments. If these local governments do not have the resources, both the human and technological components could suffer. They won't be able to recruit more informants or maintain and upgrade their technology, which, as we know, can be quite costly.

By introducing something like a cyber ID, the Party hopes to enhance self-censorship, as people will be afraid to express their dissatisfaction online.

DP: Finally, what are the scenarios in which the sentinel state might break down?

MP: If the economy breaks down, it will be the first sign of trouble. You'll likely see a degradation of the security system and a rise in public discontent. Another concern is the potential for corruption within

the system itself. Those in charge of security wield significant power and have access to resources. Instead of using funds for informants or upgrading the system, they might enrich themselves, leading to better facilities and higher salaries rather than enhancing security.

Additionally, there's the issue of overreach. The demand for security can seem insatiable, like a beast that can never be fully satisfied. This could result in unnecessary spending on resources — like an excessive number of surveillance cameras using the latest technology — when it may not even be needed.

## China's Tryst With Religion

07 October 2024, StratNews Global, Resham and Anukriti

### Religion In China

China's religious landscape is a complicated collage peppered with distrust, deceit, dubious intents and discouraging party politics. With the government officially recognising five religions—Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism and Catholicism—and regulating them with an iron hand, much remains to be seen on how Chinese society grapples with faith or manages spiritual vacuums. Authorities tightly monitor registered and unregistered religious groups. In 2021, the U.S. Government estimated that Buddhists comprise 18.2% of the country's population, Christians 5.1%, Muslims 1.8%, followers of folk religion 21.9% and atheists 52.2% with Hindus, Jews and Taoists comprising less than 1%. In a more accurate estimate, based on publications of the Council on Foreign Relations (May 15, 2024). The percentage of the population having religious affiliations in China is given below.

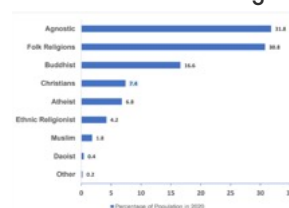


Figure 1. Sourced from World Religion Database

Members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) are officially banned from practising religion. While there is some leniency to folk practices; Christianity and Islam are considered foreign religions. The diktat to all religious institutions that they must uphold the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, promote Xi Jinping thought and Sinicisation of religion, only affirms the acute political control desired by CCP over religion. There is a large and consolidated State effort to ensure religious groups are more aligned to Chinese culture, morality and diktats of the CCP.

Notwithstanding the clampdown measures, practising religion in China has been on the rise. China started with banning religious activities during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), acknowledging people's

demand for religion (1980s), to revival of religious institutions and groups (1990s). While the Constitution does permit following of five accepted religions of Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism and Catholicism; these are under strict State control. Apart from registration of religious organisations with State sanctioned patriotic religious associations, supervision by the United Front Work (a branch of the Communist Party) ensures due monitoring and regulation.

#### The Hammering Of Buddhism

Tibet has been long apportioned the unfortunate fate of being a strategic state in a dangerous neighbourhood at a momentous time in Asian history. The invasion of Tibet (termed "liberation of Tibet" by the Chinese) has profoundly and consistently impacted India-China relations, especially their boundary dispute, which is intrinsically linked to the Sino-Tibetan conflict. Moreover, the institution of the Dalai Lama continues to be the centrepiece of such India-Tibet-China geopolitical complexity. His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, Yeshe Tenzin Gyatso, is one of the most revered spiritual leaders of modern times. His Holiness is the present reincarnation of the previous 13 Dalai lamas of Tibet, who are in turn are considered to be manifestations of Avalokiteshvara, or Chenrezig, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, holder of the White Lotus. He is believed to be the 74th in a lineage that is traced back to a Brahmin boy who lived in the time of Buddha Shakyamuni. Born on 05 July 1935, in a small village of Taktser, located in the province of Amdo, he was named Lhamo Thondup, which literally meant 'Wish Fulfilling Goddess', his journey as the 14th Dalai Lama, started in 1939-40 where he forfeited his name and assumed the name of Yeshe Tenzin Gyatso. His education comprised teachings from the Nalanda traditions, with five major and five minor subjects including logic, fine arts, Sanskrit, Medicine and Buddhist philosophy which encompassed Prajnaparamita (the perfection of wisdom), Madhyamika (the philosophy of middle way), Vinaya (the canon of monastic discipline), Abidharma (metaphysics) and Pramana (logic and epistemology).

1950 saw raids and cross-border incursions by the Chinese into Tibet, threatening the region and robbing the Tibetans of the peace they practiced. In October 1950, reports of PLA crossing the Dri Chu River East of Chamdo with 80,000 soldiers deeply disturbed and threatened Tibet. In a bid to assign political authority over Tibet, His Holiness was officially enthroned the temporal leader of Tibet over six million people at the Norbulingka Palace on November 17, 1950 at the age of 15. With no assistance coming from the U.S. and the UK, the process of dialogue was initiated through the Governor of Kham to prevent the invasion of Tibet.

Eventually through coercion, the Chinese unilaterally announced that a 17 Point 'Agreement on Peaceful Liberation of Tibet' had been accepted on May 23, 1951, between Government of PRC and Local Government of Tibet, even to the extent of forging the Tibetan seal. From July 1954 to March 1957, His Holiness visited China and met Mao Zedong and Chou Enlai, Zhu Teh and Deng Xiaoping. Due to growing threats, increasing brutality against the Tibetans, repression of religion, and in a bid to have sustained existence of faith, on March 17, 1959, with the consultations of the Nechung Oracle, His Holiness travelled to India and crossed the Indian borders on March 31, 1959, and reached Bomdilla in Arunachal Pradesh.

At almost 90, His Holiness is the highest spiritual leader and head of Tibetan Buddhism. His succession has been fiercely debated as CPC has put enormous efforts to have complete influence over Buddhism through control over the legacy of Dalai Lama and institution of a CPC-nominated head. The question over the Dalai Lama's reincarnation reflects the larger ideological and political debates about the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) versus the Communist Party of China (CPC), religious freedom versus materialism, the sovereignty of Tibet versus China's occupation of it, and history itself. New Delhi has over the prolonged political refuge of the Dalai Lama, maintained an ambiguous Tibet policy, primarily with an intent to not infuriate China. There is a case to merit, to refute Chinese claims of legitimacy over the succession of His Holiness and bringing to fore the impact of such a miscalculation which can further Buddhism into an unending abyss of misrepresentation.

Xi Jinping has legislated three core demands to the Dalai Lama: accepting Tibet as an inseparable part of China; abandoning Tibet Independence; stopping activities to split the Motherland; and has advised the Dalai Lama to 'discard any illusion, face reality squarely, correct mistakes, and choose an objective rational path'. China fears that since the 6th Dalai Lama was born in Tawang in 1683, the 14th Dalai Lama, may plan to recognise a successor in Tawang, which makes His Holiness visits to the area highly sensitive and anxious for China. The situation has now often been referred to as the diplomatic grey zone. With limited signs of positive moderation by China over Tibet, rapid Sinicisation of religion, changing demographic overtones, China is set to nominate the successor of the 14th Dalai Lama, while India should prepare for the eventuality of actual successor of 14th Dalai Lama being nominated from India.

Compounded with this is also the striking case of the missing Panchen Lama. Being one of the most important leaders of Tibetan Buddhism, his detention



since 1995 is one more significant religiously oppressive step adopted by the CPC. Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the 11th Panchen Lama, was born in Chinese occupied Tibet on April 25, 1989. At the age of 6, he was recognised by the Dalai Lama as the reincarnation of the previous Panchen Lama. But three days after this recognition, Chinese authorities kidnapped the child and his parents. The Panchen Lama has not been seen since.

#### The Persecution Of Muslims

The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, located in China's northwest is the only region in China with a majority Muslim population. The Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and other communities in this region are ethnically Turkic. As per the 2010 census, Uyghurs made up 46% and Kazakhs 7% of the Xinjiang population. The stories appearing on millions being detained in detention camps, subjected to indoctrination in political education camps, pre-trial detention centres and prisons have all received due coverage in the media. Mass surveillance, arbitrary arrests, forced sterilisations, enforced disappearances and religious erasure are common practices instituted by the State that continue unabated. The Chinese Government calls these detention centres as 'vocational education and training centres'. International media organisations and researchers call these re-education camps, internment camps and detention camps. The detainees are targeted for various reasons, including contact with other Islamic nations, visiting mosques, having more than three children, sending texts and Quranic verses or being extremists.

The entire process of persecuting the Muslims is multi-faceted and systemic. The overarching reasons show that Chinese believe that ethnic minority population threatens social stability and national identity, with violations of birth limits. Xinjiang has been claimed by China since the CCP took power in 1949. Chinese Party officials view the Islamic community as extremist and separatist with threat to China's territorial integrity, government and population. The CCP has since instituted measures to shape all religions to adhere to the Han-Chinese customs, which relate to the atheist party beliefs including passage of an anti-extremism law that prohibits growing long beards and wearing veils in public. The parents are also prohibited from naming their children Mohammed and Medina. The reasons for such absurdities in managing religion stem also from the need to ensure the safety of the ambitious BRI that passes through this region.

Xinjiang is also the region with the largest coal and natural gas reserves in China. Hence, resource extractions without separatist overtones are desirable to ensure there is no unrest. Since 2017, it has also been assessed that Xinjiang's birth rate has declined

by 84%. China, however, denies any religious, humanitarian or human rights violations.

#### The Last Word

There is a much larger need for the world to see religious colonisation being orchestrated by the Chinese in a bid to safeguard the interests of the Party. This legacy of Xi Jinping, will leave a distorted interpretation of religion, selfishly directed by the CPC, whose members are prohibited to practise any form of religion. There is a need for a united call for adherence norms as far as religion is governed, with the international community pitching in ensuring social rights. India's policy on Tibet and the fateful succession of 14th Dalai Lama needs serious review to contextualize the fate of India-China relations.

#### **IAF downs Chinese spy balloon: What is China up to and what is India doing?**

07 October 2024, Business Standard, Bhaswar Kumar

An IAF Rafale jet recently shot down a Chinese balloon using a missile at an altitude of nearly 55,000 feet on the eastern front near China

The Indian Air Force (IAF) has reportedly alerted the government about the presence of Chinese spy balloons in Indian skies.

One such balloon, hovering at an altitude of nearly 55,000 feet, was recently shot down by an IAF combat aircraft on the eastern front near China, The Tribune reported on Monday.

An IAF Rafale aircraft, based out of Hasimara in northern West Bengal, was reportedly deployed to destroy the spy balloon, which was carrying a payload. The Rafale jet used one of its missiles to accomplish the task.

What is India doing to deal with Chinese spy balloons?

According to the report, a standard operating procedure is now being formulated to address similar threats in the future.

While another Chinese balloon was also spotted over the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal, it was not shot down by Indian forces.

The Tribune report added that the IAF has also held discussions with its counterparts in the United States (US) regarding the issue.

What are these Chinese spy balloons doing?

In 2023, the US also encountered similar spy balloons launched by China. The US military even shot one down in February that year.

A report from the US Department of Defense (DOD), titled 'Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2023', had also highlighted this threat. "Military and commercial entities in China have been researching and developing high-altitude systems, including high-

altitude balloons, since at least the mid-2000s," the report said.

The US authorities also believe that these balloons are steerable.

Meanwhile, Chinese military publications have also discussed the use of high-altitude systems for tracking and targeting.

The US DOD report had also said, "The high-altitude balloon shot down on February 4, 2023 (in the US), was developed as part of this broader military-linked aerial surveillance programme."

In February of 2023, a US military fighter jet shot down a suspected Chinese spy balloon off the coast of South Carolina, a week after it entered US airspace.

The balloon's takedown was reportedly ordered by US President Joe Biden himself.

While several US fighter and refuelling aircraft were involved in the operation, the balloon was taken down by a F-22 fighter jet using a single missile, much like in the case of the IAF Rafale that took down a similar threat recently.

China had condemned the shooting down of the balloon, asserting that the airship was for meteorological and scientific purposes and had "unintentionally" entered US airspace. However, these claims by Beijing were rejected by US officials. The incident led to escalating tensions between the US and China, including a sharp exchange just days later involving US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and China's top diplomat, Wang Yi, at a security conference in Munich.

Blinken reportedly stated that the US would not "stand for any violation of our sovereignty" and warned that "this irresponsible act must never again occur". Meanwhile, Wang dismissed the episode as a "political farce manufactured by the US".

While China continued to deny launching a spy balloon to snoop on the US, the latter claimed that Chinese military balloons had crossed the airspace of more than 40 countries across five continents.

Shortly after the US takedown, Japan also announced that after re-analysing past cases of unidentified flying objects, it "strongly" suspected that China had flown at least three spy balloons over its territory since 2019.

According to a Financial Times article from that period, unnamed Taiwanese officials also said that the island, which is claimed by China, had been surveilled by dozens of Chinese military balloons.

## **'Monks, Business and Rebellion: Nepal's Bhot-China Relationship and India' book review: Nepal's geographic location is both strength and a weakness**

06 October 2024, The Annapurna Express, Randhir Chaudhary

Kitab Publication published two books written by Sudheer Sharma on Sept 15. First, "Monks, Business and Rebellion: Nepal's Bhot-China Relationship and India". Second, "The Storm across the Himalayas: The Changing Nepal-China Relationship after the Republic." After reading both the books here I have attempted to provide a review of the first one. Sharma, a well-known figure in Nepali media, appears to have done deep research for this 376-page book. This book is organized in seven sections including an epilogue.

**Nepal-Tibet relations and Chinese domination**

The book begins by chronicling Nepal-Tibet trade relations dating back to the 7th century, noting Nepal's diplomatic presence in Tibet for over 374 years. Despite ups and downs, the relationship took a pivotal turn in 1856 with the signing of the 10-point 'Thapathali Treaty' after Nepal's invasion of Tibet. This treaty made Tibet a protectorate of Nepal, which raised concerns for China. A tripartite agreement followed, recognizing both Nepal and Tibet as under the Chinese emperor's authority.

As China increased its military presence in Tibet by 1968, tensions escalated for Nepal. Historical records in the book reveal that China viewed Nepal as a potential part of its sphere of influence, even offering Nepal a place in its union of five ethnic groups (Han, Manchu, Mongol, Tibetan, and Muslim). Sun Yat-sen, the father of the Republic of China, even listed Nepal among China's 'lost territories.' These accounts challenge the popular belief that Nepal was spared from Chinese domination, a sentiment that has lingered in Nepal's historical narrative.

To counter the Chinese threat, Nepal sought British recognition as an independent nation, formalized in a 1923 treaty. Until the 1950s, Tibet was Nepal's immediate northern neighbor, with whom it shared deep cultural, economic, and strategic ties. It wasn't until China annexed Tibet that Nepal found itself facing a new geopolitical reality. While many fear the 'Sikkimization' of Nepal following India's annexation of Sikkim, Sharma's book argues that China's annexation of Tibet and its desire to dominate Nepal receive less attention. Through historical evidence, the book sheds light on China's expansionist approach toward Nepal.

Sharma also explores the influence of Chinese leader Mao Zedong in Nepal during the 1950s. Maoist ideology started spreading in Nepal, and by 2004,

Gangalal founded the 'Lal Communist Party,' influenced by Mao's ideas. Though short-lived, this marked the beginning of communist interest in China within Nepal. By the late 1950s, China became a political shrine for Nepali communist leaders, who were drawn to its propaganda and the spread of the Chinese language, which carried political undertones. The book's fifth chapter, 'Circus,' examines how China used language education as a tool to indoctrinate Nepalis, with the first lessons being "Long live Chairman Mao" and "Down with American imperialism."

**Mahendra's elusive nationalism**

The chapter 'Mao and Mahendra' focuses on Nepal-India relations, particularly the controversial 1950 Friendship Treaty. Sharma portrays King Mahendra as having two distinct personas: one as the architect of modern Nepali diplomacy and the other as a ruler who curtailed democracy to consolidate power. His nationalist stance is scrutinized, particularly in relation to India. While Mahendra is credited with removing most of the Indian military camps in Nepal, Sharma questions his motives, suggesting that Mahendra used nationalism to preserve the monarchy rather than genuinely serve Nepal's interests.

Contrasting Mahendra's nationalism with the actions of Prime Minister BP Koirala, the book highlights Koirala's balanced foreign policy approach. For example, when Nehru tried to engage Koirala in a united front against China, Koirala resisted, choosing instead to maintain equilibrium between India and China. The book also revisits Mahendra's controversial decision to cede part of Mount Everest to China, undermining his nationalist image.

**Preserving the monarchy**

Sharma argues that Mahendra strengthened ties with China not out of ideological alignment but as a strategy to counterbalance India's influence. The book also shows how Mahendra cultivated relations with the United States to further his geopolitical goals. During his 1960 visit to the US, just months before imposing the Panchayat system, Mahendra received a warm welcome at the White House and secured substantial financial support. Shortly after, he overthrew the democratically elected government, signaling a shift towards authoritarianism.

The sixth chapter, 'Rajtantra ko Samyawadi Saino,' discusses how successive Nepali monarchs, including Mahendra, Birendra, and Gyanendra, maintained strong ties with China. Sharma's analysis suggests that the monarchy strategically used these relationships to preserve its power. Interestingly, despite its title focusing on Nepal's relations with Tibet, China, and India, the book's chapter on US involvement, particularly during the Mustang

rebellion, leads the reader to feel that "America" should have also been featured in the title.

### Why US-Taiwan aid package is a signal to China ahead of election

06 October 2024, The New Indian Express, Deutsche Welle

The US recently earmarked one of its largest-ever defense packages for Taiwan. Although helping defend Taiwan enjoys bipartisan support, there are concerns over unexpected changes under a potential Trump administration

US President Joe Biden recently approved one of Washington's largest-ever military aid packages for Taiwan, comprising \$567 million (£517 million) worth of defense aid.

The aid will be provided via the "Presidential Drawdown Authority" (PDA), which allows for the "speedy delivery of defense articles" from US Department of Defense (DoD) stocks "to respond to foreign crises." The US is already using this process to send military aid to Ukraine.

China considers Taiwan to be its territory, which President Xi Jinping has vowed will one day be "reunited" with the mainland, by using force if necessary. Beijing has been increasing pressure on the self-ruled island, for example, by demonstrating force with regular military exercises in the Taiwan Strait.

Although it doesn't maintain official diplomatic relations with Taipei, the US is Taiwan's largest security benefactor. China considers any military support of Taiwan to be a provocation.

The White House has said its goal in supporting Taiwan's self-defense is to "continue to maintain peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait."

**Taiwan and the new US president**

With the US presidential election coming up in November, Chinese pressure on Taiwan is set to be a challenge for the incoming president, whether it be Democrat Kamala Harris, or Republican Donald Trump.

Joseph Bosco, a former Pentagon official on China policy, told DW that "we don't know exactly how [a new] administration will treat Taiwan."

He added the Biden administration was therefore "trying to accelerate the transfer of resources as much as possible during this period."

Bosco, who served as country desk officer for China in the office of the US Secretary of Defense from 2005 to 2006, said the current administration is confident of continuity on China policy from Harris, but "it is not at all clear" what a second Trump administration would do.

Which way would Trump go on Taiwan?

Trump's first administration was hawkish on China, launching a trade war in an attempt to isolate China's economy. Trump also bolstered US security assistance to Taiwan, with \$18 billion worth of arms sales notified to Congress during his administration. However, Trump's "transactional" approach to foreign policy is an ongoing concern for US allies in Asia and elsewhere.

Bosco said that the Republican presidential candidate has been "very unsympathetic" in his statements about Taiwan and has become unpredictable about his future Taiwan policy.

"There's no telling which way he could go," he said, adding that he thinks Biden is "hedging his bets" in approving the defense aid drawdown ahead of the election.

During his 2024 campaign, Trump claimed that Taiwan had taken America's chip business, and told Bloomberg in July that Taiwan should "pay the US for defense."

Harris could diverge from Biden on Taiwan

If Harris wins the November election, her administration could adopt a different tone on Taiwan than Biden, who told a TV interview in 2022 that US forces would defend Taiwan if there was an "unprecedented attack." The White House later walked back the remarks.

Bonnie Glaser, managing director of the German Marshall Fund's Indo-Pacific program, wrote in a recent analysis that "Harris might not echo Biden's persistent stance that he will send US forces to defend Taiwan if China invades the island."

"She may opt instead to return to a more traditional policy of strategic ambiguity," Glaser wrote.

Bosco said that Harris would "pretty much follow the Biden policies" in the beginning. However, he added that if China starts "ramping up the pressure on Taiwan and makes some overt moves toward Taiwan ... then we'll see how committed she is to Taiwan's security."

Delays in US defense aid deliveries

Under the US' "one-China" policy in place since 1979, the US "reserves the right" to provide Taiwan with defensive weapons.

Under the policy, the US "acknowledges" but does not officially recognize Beijing's position that Taiwan is part of China, while recognizing the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the sole legal government of China.

China bristles at any support of Taiwan. China's Foreign Ministry responded to the latest US aid package by accusing the US of "emboldening" Taipei to provoke Beijing and threaten the status quo. In July 2023, Biden approved a PDA to Taiwan for the first time, signing off on a \$345 million package.

However, delivery problems from the 2023 drawdown were outlined in a September 2024 report by the DoD's inspector general.

The report found a large percentage of equipment sustained water damage while waiting months at a military base for shipment.

It said the DoD "did not effectively or efficiently implement accountability and quality controls" and "provided unserviceable and poorly packaged equipment and munitions to Taiwan."

Taiwan has also reported delays in the delivery of equipment ordered years ago, including Stinger portable anti-aircraft missiles and new F-16V fighter jets.

According to the CATO institute, a US think tank, the topline figure for the backlog of US arms sales to Taiwan remains at \$20.5 billion.

Taiwan a challenge for any administration

Besides technical issues, former Pentagon official Bosco said political shifts can also affect US support for Taiwan.

"At some point, other factors enter into the picture: the economy, inflation," Bosco said. "The American public will decide that it's had enough of spending US resources in these various international conflicts."

"A lot of it will depend on the leadership that is shown by the new president in terms of convincing the American public that we need to be involved in these crises ... It'll be a tough challenge for any new administration," he added.

Glaser from the German Marshall Fund told DW that the latest PDA approval "sent a strong signal to Beijing" that the US is resolved to help Taiwan bolster its defense capabilities.

However, she downplayed the importance of its approval ahead of the election.

"There is strong bipartisan support in the US for Taiwan and regardless of the outcome of the US election, arms transfers to Taiwan will continue," Glaser said. "I don't see any special significance in the timing of this."

### **Why China is investigating US companies Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger**

06 October 2024, The Indian Express, Ritika Singh

The move marks the first investigation from China into foreign companies boycotting cotton from Xinjiang. Here's what to know.

China launched an investigation last week into the US company PVH, the parent company of apparel brands Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger, over its boycott of cotton from China's Xinjiang region.

Several Western brands have stopped sourcing raw materials from Xinjiang in recent years, over the alleged use of forced labour in cotton cultivation. Reports have claimed that members of the minority

Muslim Uighur community are made to work there as part of the larger discriminatory policies targeted at them by the Chinese state.

The move marks the first investigation into the matter by China, who has now gone beyond simply denying allegations of human rights abuses, and acted against companies for not using Xinjiang's cotton. The decision also comes amid the US and China increasingly targeting sectors of the other's economy over trade, security and strategic concerns. Here's what to know.

What is the investigation about?

In late September, the head of the Bureau of Safety and Control of China's Ministry of Commerce said relevant agencies had reported PVH to the Unreliable Entity List (UEL) working mechanism.

China's Commerce Ministry established the UEL four years ago, allowing it to respond to unfavourable actions taken by enterprises or individuals from a foreign country. Under its provisions, if a foreign entity endangers China's "national sovereignty, security or development interests", suspends normal transactions with a Chinese enterprise or individual, or applies "discriminatory measures" against them and causes "serious damage to their legitimate rights and interests", they can come under the UEL list.

Being on the list allows the Chinese government to restrict or prohibit the foreign entity from engaging in China-related import or export activities, investing in China, entering China, restricting their work permit, or imposing a fine.

So far, a few American defence companies are on the list, although they were already barred from dealing with China by the US government.

What are China's complaints against PVH?

The head of the Bureau of Safety and Control said PVH was "suspected of violating normal market transaction principles and boycotting Xinjiang cotton and other products for no reason without any factual basis, seriously damaging the legitimate rights and interests of relevant Chinese companies, endangering China's sovereignty, security and development interests."

PVH has banned the sourcing of raw materials from Xinjiang. It said in an earlier statement that the company follows the US government's policy regarding Xinjiang.

Under the Biden administration, the US banned the import of cotton and tomatoes from Xinjiang in 2021 under the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, citing forced labour and human rights abuses. A report from The New York Times noted then, "The area is a major source of cotton, coal, chemicals, sugar, tomatoes and polysilicon, a component in solar panels, that are then fed into factories around China and the world."

Western brands such as H&M, Adidas, Nike and others made statements condemning the possible usage of forced labour at the time and faced an immediate backlash on Chinese social media websites. Pro-government accounts further demanded boycotts and evoked nationalist sentiments, leading to temporary removals of the brands' products from Chinese e-commerce sites.

What could have prompted the investigation now?

Why China has specifically acted against PVH, and why now, is unclear.

On being asked if China's attitude towards foreign investment has changed, the head of the Bureau said, "The Chinese government will unswervingly promote high-level opening up to the outside world", adding, "China has always dealt with the unreliable entity list issue prudently, targeting only a very small number of foreign entities that disrupt market rules and violate Chinese laws. Foreign entities that are honest and law-abiding have nothing to worry about."

But foreign companies have been wary of the business climate in China for a few months now. In 2023, China's amended security law was flagged by US authorities for making foreign entities' business operations difficult, with vague grounds for companies being inspected over espionage suspicions.

Citing security concerns, the US also said in 2023 that it planned to "de-risk" its economy from China or reduce its dependence on it for specific materials like semiconductors, which are critical to manufacture almost all electronic devices.

The two global economic giants' rivalry has given way to major disagreements in multiple areas. Under Xi Jinping as president, China has further taken assertive stances on issues such as the treatment of Uighurs, making global cooperation difficult. Even as the Chinese economy sees a period of slump, a doubling down against US companies is being witnessed.

Former US President Donald Trump also frequently criticised China over trade practices during his term, and later imposed tariffs on its products, which added to the lack of trust in their bilateral ties. Biden has largely continued the stance of being tough on China.

Critical resources and products have been restricted since, such as China curbing the exports of germanium and gallium, metals used in manufacturing critical semiconductors. This year, the US imposed tariffs on importing semiconductors from China.



## Are China's lauded anti-poverty triumphs at risk of vanishing?

05 October 2024, SCMP, Yuanyue Dang

In the country's vast rural regions, officials armed with poverty relapse dossiers are struggling to track and help the vulnerable avoid destitution

In Zhongwei, a city in northwest China's Ningxia Hui autonomous region, fighting poverty seems to be a never-ending battle.

While the country as a whole has made tremendous gains in living standards, in July, the city's Shapotou district announced that 28 more individuals had been added to a poverty relapse watch list.

The officials who update the list maintain dossiers on families that are in dire financial straits and aim to stop them falling below the poverty line, while also ensuring that they do not become too reliant on government handouts.

The district did not say how many people in total are on the list but its updates are part of the administration's attempts to avoid a return to widespread poverty as the economy struggles to regain momentum.

The goal is a national priority.

According to state news agency Xinhua, China has spent nearly 1.6 trillion yuan (US\$306 billion) to alleviate poverty since Chinese President Xi Jinping took power in 2012.

In 2021, Xi declared that absolute poverty had been eradicated in the country. The next milestone, he said, was to attain common prosperity and a decent standard of living for all by 2050.

Those ambitions rest on preventing a large-scale re-emergence of poverty.

Analysts say that achieving the goals would be crucial not just for building a more equitable society, but also in maintaining social stability and hence strengthening China's hand in its economic competition with the United States.

"The anti-poverty movement has been defined as one of Xi's great achievements, so it will be a big issue if absolute poverty comes back," said Alfred Wu, an associate professor at the National University of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy.

"As a developing country, poverty is an inevitable problem for China." However, China's model of fighting poverty through massive investment "is not sustainable", Wu said.

Maintaining people's livelihoods has been an ongoing concern for Chinese leaders. The issue was underscored in the "No 1 Central Document" – the leadership's first policy directive issued at the beginning of each year since 2021.

Alarms were raised in 2022 during the Covid-19 pandemic when large numbers of rural residents who

were migrant workers had lost their jobs – and their only source of income – during the lockdowns.

They were raised again in January, when the Central Rural Work Leading Group, the top decision-making body for China's agricultural and rural affairs, said that preventing a massive return to poverty was "both an economic and political task".

So much so that when Chinese Premier Li Qiang inspected the southern province of Guizhou in April, he warned cadres that they would be held responsible if people slipped back into poverty.

"We must firmly adhere to the bottom line of not allowing large-scale relapses into poverty by enforcing and consolidating the responsibilities of all parties, maintaining the intensity of support efforts, and ensuring that all policies are well coordinated and implemented," Li said.

The vigilance against poverty relapses featured prominently in July when the Communist Party's Central Committee met to map out the country's economic and national development plans for the next decade.

In a communique issued after the meeting, the leadership called for regular surveillance of low-income individuals and nationwide monitoring of rural populations, where the problem of poverty was more prevalent.

It is not clear exactly how many people in rural China are struggling since the government has not released statistics.

However, last October, the Ministry of Civil Affairs said that the construction of a "low-income population dynamic monitoring platform" had been "basically completed", covering more than 66 million low-income people, more than 3 million of whom were considered at risk of falling back into poverty.

According to a 2021 national census, nearly 510 million people lived in China's rural regions, accounting for 36 per cent of the country's population.

Beijing has previously asserted that preventing large-scale poverty relapses and ensuring food security were "two bottom lines" in its rural and agricultural work.

Those "two bottom lines" had become more urgent since "the spread of Covid-19 and uncertainty facing the world economy and trade", Min Shi, a professor of rural economics at Huazhong Agricultural University in Wuhan, and Wang Xiaobing, a researcher at Peking University's Institute of Modern Agriculture, jointly wrote in an article published in the official Guangming Daily in March 2022.

Poverty lines in China vary from one province to another. In Ningxia, one of China's less affluent regions, individuals who earn less than 9,000 yuan a year are considered to be living below the poverty line and are eligible for government help. This

compares with 8,050 yuan in southwestern Yunnan province, and 7,800 yuan in the eastern province of Jiangxi.

According to poverty alleviation manuals issued by local governments, individuals are monitored if they have risen above the poverty line but have unstable incomes, or if they hover above the poverty line but have experienced unexpected events such as natural disasters or sudden illness.

Last summer, the northeastern provinces of Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning – one of China's major grain-producing regions – were hit by floods, which dealt a blow to rice production. In July 2021, in the central province of Henan, almost 15 million people, most of them rural residents, were affected by flooding that destroyed 35,000 houses.

According to the manuals, once a family has been placed under monitoring, local officials must help them through "appropriate means". In Zhongwei, for example, able individuals should be hired for public work such as street sweeping.

Lower-level cadres are under immense pressure to keep poverty under control. People whose names are added to the dossiers are considered risks to the anti-poverty drive and are therefore subject to monitoring.

A town official from a province in central China, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that documenting all vulnerable individuals had been a priority task for the second half of the year, and he expected the provincial government would soon send inspectors to the town to check on their performance. It's really exhausting, and our superiors don't even treat us like human beings

Village cadre

Inspections are already under way in some places. Many grass-roots cadres have vented their frustrations and worries on social media platform Xiaohongshu, describing the pressures they have faced to complete headcounts by the end of the month.

"Has your poverty relapse prevention app crashed too?" read one widely shared post, which described the anxiety felt by a cadre who must use the mobile app to collect information about the families surveyed.

"It's really exhausting, and our superiors don't even treat us like human beings," complained another, who said they must go door-to-door to check on the villagers' incomes.

While China has been praised for lifting tens of millions out of absolute poverty over recent decades, it has also faced criticism that its achievements may have been overstated by some local cadres who exaggerated their results.

Other criticisms have included fabricating the poverty relapse dossiers, and an over-reliance on government

subsidies that could leave recipients more vulnerable once the handouts have ended.

Wang Sangui, dean of the China Anti-Poverty Research Institute at Renmin University in Beijing, warned in an interview with China News Service in December 2022 that some of the groups declared by the government to have been lifted out of poverty "relied on wages as their main sources of income" but the Covid-19 pandemic had "seriously affected their employment".

Wang also highlighted the impacts of natural disasters on the rural population, and the fact that many farmers struggled to make ends meet by selling their crops.

He Xuefeng, who researches China's rural governance as dean of the school of sociology at Wuhan University, cautioned in an article published on WeChat earlier this year that some of the government's efforts may be misguided.

He, who conducted field research in seven villages late last year, said some poverty-stricken households had become reliant on government subsidies as family members were unable to work due to illness or disabilities, but the aid had not helped them to make necessary fundamental changes to improve their livelihoods.

Zheng Linyi, a researcher with the China Academy for Rural Development at Zhejiang University, said Beijing should prevent relapses by first "preventing the economy from sliding and providing job opportunities for farmers".

"In recent years, natural disasters such as droughts, floods and earthquakes have happened frequently. The government should help farmers affected by disasters to resume production and livelihoods," Zheng said.

"The growth of farmers' agricultural income is slow, and it is necessary to improve the agricultural subsidy system," Zheng added, referring to subsidies provided by the government through grain sales and farm machinery purchases.

## Jaishankar's Hard Sell In Colombo

05 October 2024, MenaFN

The Indian External Affairs Minister S.Jaishankar's parleys with Sri Lanka's new left-nationalist leaders on October 4 were cordial. But India-Lanka relations will still be troubled by the looming Sino-Indian conflict.

Jaishankar had a single-point agenda in Colombo – to convince a sceptical Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Disسانayake about India's capabilities and what it can do for Sri Lanka's economic growth and prosperity without asking it to compromise its sovereignty. It was a difficult task given the latent and long standing distrust in the relationship.

The visit took place in the immediate aftermath of the September 21 Sri Lankan Presidential election in which the radical leftist and pro-China underdog, Anura Kumara Dissanayake of the National Peoples' Power (NPP), beat stalwarts like incumbent President Ranil Wickremesinghe and Sajith Premadasa, leader of the large Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) party.

Unlike Wickremesinghe and Premadasa, who had no ideological angularities either in their domestic or foreign policy, Dissanayake's has been dyed in the wool ideological politics. He has been a longstanding campaigner against "Indian domination".



The NPP, a 21-party alliance, is avowedly moderate. But its core is the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) which has had a strong and anti-Indian strand since its founding in 1965. Dissanayake is the current JVP Supremo.

Articulating the NPP's policies ahead of the Presidential election, its spokesman (and the present Foreign Minister) Vijitha Herath told Ceylon Today that a JVP delegation had told Jaishankar early this year that under an NPP government, foreign-funded or foreign executed projects would have to go through a transparent and public tendering process.

Herath was decrying past projects that were farmed out to foreign parties with nothing more than a cabinet decision under the category of "Strategic Projects". Herath said such handing out of projects was a source of huge corruption.

In the case of India, the West Container Terminal project at the Colombo port was given to Adani Ports and two wind power projects in North Sri Lanka were given to the Adanis and another Indian company, under pressure from New Delhi.

Herath assured that the existing projects would be allowed to proceed as they were a done deal, but future projects would have to go through a transparent tendering process. Indications are that the same stringent conditions will apply to all foreign-funded projects including China-funded ones. Deviation from his much trumpeted rectitude will be difficult for Dissanayake.

Seeing the writing on the wall, Jaishankar went beyond hard selling India's economic capabilities but also displayed humility in doing so. This was evident in his message on the social media platform X from Colombo. He said that he took "guidance" from President Dissanayake on India-Lanka relations. "Appreciate his warm sentiments and guidance for the   relations," Jaishankar messaged after talks with the President.

Jaishankar assuaged Sri Lankans' anxieties about Indian domination in security matters. The official Indian readout said that Jaishankar and Dissanayake "recognised the importance of a

continuous dialogue on security and defence to promote trust, transparency and mutual sensitivity."

Sino-Indian Conflict

India-Sri Lanka relations are not confined to the two countries. There is an elephant in the room and that is China's presence, whether real or imaginary. India objects to Chinese projects and visits of Chinese oceanographic research vessels on grounds of security.

India sees the Chinese-built and operated Hambantota port and the setting up of a power plant in North Sri Lanka by Chinese companies as a security threat. It saw the setting up a radar station in Ruhunu University on the southern coast also as a threat.

With the economic giant China in mind, Jaishankar gave a tutorial to Dissanayake on India's capabilities and what India can do for Sri Lanka's development in the field of energy production and transmission, fuel and LNG supply, connectivity, digital public infrastructure, health and dairy development.

On Sri Lanka's debt restructuring efforts, Jaishankar recalled that India had been supportive of Sri Lanka's economic stability and recovery from the very start. India was the first country to give financing assurances, which enabled the IMF to finalize the Extended Fund Facility.

Jaishankar confirmed India's support in the Official Creditors' Committee for Sri Lanka's agreement with International Sovereign Bond holders. India is also willing to expedite the conclusion of its bilateral MoU with Sri Lanka, Jaishankar added.

In his discussions with Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath, Jaishankar said that India has offered to modernize the Kankesanthurai port in north Sri Lanka through a grant of USD 61.5 million. Payments for seven completed Line of Credit projects to the tune of USD 20 million could be converted into a grant, Jaishankar added. Further, India had decided to gift 22 diesel locomotives to the Sri Lankan Railways.

In response, Dissanayake said that India's economic support is critical for Sri Lanka to realize its vision of a prosperous country meeting the aspirations of its people. He referred to the potential for exporting renewable energy to India as it would help reduce production costs in Sri Lanka. The President also noted the contribution of Indian tourists to the Sri Lanka's economy and said that this has the potential to grow further.

Dissanayake took care to assure Jaishankar that Sri Lankan territory will never be allowed to be used in a manner inimical to India's security interests.

While both India and Sri Lanka appear keen on building a smooth relationship, India's quest for

security against China could clash with Sri Lanka's aspiration to assert its sovereignty and independence. The clash between these two agendas had soured India-Sri Lanka ties every now and then.

India is very keen on re-starting discussions on the Economic and Technology Co-operation Agreement (ETCA). But as in the case of land connectivity, ETCA has been scary for Sri Lankans who fear Indian domination. In the Sri Lankan mind, land connectivity or very close economic cooperation, would be a recipe for Sri Lanka's subjugation.

In fact, the projects mentioned by Jaishankar in his discussion with AKD have been on the anvil for a long time but have not seen the light of day. Sri Lankans tend to agree to Indian proposals and even ink agreements, but drag their feet in implementing them.

In the months and years to come, a resurgent India will try to stem the encroachment of China in its neighbourhood. And China will try to test India's strength in the region. Sri Lanka like other South Asian neighbours will draft China to help it resist New Delhi.

#### Indian and Chinese Presence

Both India and China are deeply involved in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan armed forces have been operating a range of Indian defence equipment like L-70 guns, Indra Radar, Offshore Patrol Vessels and Army training simulators.

India had given offshore petrol vessels, and more recently, a Floating Dock. A Maritime Rescue Coordinating Centre, backed by a US\$ 6 million grant from India, has been set up in Colombo. It includes seven remote stations along the island's eastern seaboard, including one close to the Chinese-run Hambantota port.

India is a major trainer of Sri Lankan armed forces personnel. India-trained officers are the single largest group in the Sri Lankan armed forces.

India regularly holds military exercises with Sri Lanka, like Mitra Shakti with the army, and SLINEX with the navy. Indian naval vessels keep visiting Colombo and other ports very regularly (even to celebrate Yoga Day!). There have been visits by aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya and submarines as part of New Delhi's power projection.

#### China's Presence in Sri Lanka

China's economic activity has been on the back foot in Sri Lanka since COVID- 9 and the Sri Lankan economic crisis in 2020. But China had already invested in major infrastructural projects in Sri Lanka earlier, like the Hambantota Port, Katunayake-Colombo Expressway, Norochcholai Coal Power Project, among many others since 2010.

During last year's financial crisis in Sri Lanka, China's response was tepid compared to India's because Sri Lanka owed it US\$ 7.4 billion. But later, China

agreed to restructure Sri Lanka's debt. It said that Sri Lanka will not have to immediately repay the principal and interest due for the years 2022 and 2023.

During Sri Lanka's war against Tamil separatists, China had sold a lot of arms to Sri Lanka. According to the Stockholm Peace Research Institute, China traded military equipment worth US\$ 749 million since 1959. China's arms trade with Sri Lanka between 2000 and 2008 was US\$ 271 million.

After the war, some submarines and a few naval research vessels visited Sri Lanka, raising a storm in India. All in all, China's military's influence in Sri Lanka is nothing in comparison to India's.

### Why do so many Chinese officials fall for fake promises of political charlatans?

04 October 2024, SCMP, Sylvie Zhuang

Party insiders who should know better are being targeted by tricksters claiming connections and influence, despite crackdowns

All Su Hongbo had to do was brag about his Beijing connections and package himself as someone who could make things happen. The charade ended in 2020, when he was revealed as a conman and later convicted on corruption charges.

To the party's corruption fighters, Su was as a typical "political charlatan" – an impostor who fakes ties with high-level officials for gain – and was accused of "seriously polluting and damaging the political ecology".

Since then, the term "political charlatan" has turned up in numerous transcripts of investigations into officials who, despite their knowledge of the internal workings of the party system, were fooled by businesspeople who took advantage of their ambitions.

The scale of the problem meant that when the party's all-important third plenary session vowed in July to continue President Xi Jinping's signature anti-corruption campaign, political charlatans were named as a target.

It echoed Xi's message at the past two annual plenary meetings of the Central Commission of Discipline Inspection (CCDI), the party's anti-corruption watchdog, when he called on cadres to "persistently purify the political environment".

At this year's meeting in January, Xi said there was a need "to crack down on various political charlatans and strictly prevent the principles of commercial exchange from infiltrating the party".

Meanwhile, last year's amendments to the party's regulations also specified that befriending political charlatans or being exploited by them could lead to expulsion in the most severe cases.

But why are people inside China's party state system fooled so frequently by outsiders bragging about their political influence, and how do political charlatans manage to persuade officials that their claims are genuine?

According to an enforcement and disciplinary official who spoke under condition of anonymity, some corrupt officials turn to the fraudsters in the hope they will help to cover up their behaviour.

"They naively believe these individuals can use their connections to intervene, plead, or cover up their case," the official said, adding that these mindsets were exploited by the charlatans to carry out fraud.

"Also, because these officials know they are guilty of corruption, they are too afraid to report the charlatans, even after they realise they have been deceived."

Some disgraced officials that have been accused of trying to advance their careers by courting political charlatans have been at the ministerial level, such as former justice minister Fu Zhenghua who was jailed for life in 2022 for corruption.

Despite being the second most powerful man in China's police force, Fu was manipulated for 20 years by a political charlatan, according to a 2021 report by state broadcaster CCTV.

"Anyone with a normal thought process and logical reasoning" would not have believed that a man with only a technical school education could be an expert and high-level adviser to the leadership as he claimed, CCTV reported.

"However, Fu Zhenghua fell for it."

According to the report, Fu received nothing from the relationship while the charlatan gained land development projects contracts and jobs for his relatives.

In the past two months, the CCDI has made a number of announcements about allegedly corrupt officials accused of associating with political charlatans.

They include Wang Yilin, former party secretary at China National Petroleum Corporation, and Wang Yong, who was a member of the party's leadership group in the Tibet autonomous region.

Both were placed under investigation and accused in July of having "long associated with political fraudsters".

With most officials drawn from society's well-educated elites, the phenomenon seems "counterintuitive", according to a Beijing-based political scientist, who asked not to be named because of the issue's sensitivity.

But, he said, "it isn't that surprising" that they could still be deceived, because the party's centralised decision-making systems allowed little personal control over career progression.

"The party has a saying, that cadres cannot design their own career development. This means that the

career path of a cadre, such as promotions or transfers, is not something they can control – it is determined by higher-ups."

The idea that officials should have no say over their careers is not new. In 2018, Xi reinforced the message to personnel chiefs from around the country at the national organisational work conference.

"Personal effort isn't about self-design or aiming for a certain position, but rather about enhancing political experience and practical skills to become someone loyal to the party and useful to the country," Xi told them.

Deng Yuwen, former deputy editor of Study Times, the Central Party School's official newspaper, said people turned to fraudsters because the system itself was designed to be accountable upwards rather than downwards.

"The legitimacy of officials' powers does not come from recognition by the public, or their achievements. It comes from the higher-ups, from the recognition of these higher-level officials. So officials would be seeking connections with the higher-ups."

A CCDI report published in May last year said the deceivers usually described themselves as people who could be trusted to intervene in governmental personnel arrangements.

The CCDI also found that the activities of the political charlatans reached their peak during leadership transitions and personnel changes.

According to the political scientist, as individuals ascend to higher levels, there are fewer people to confide in and the rules on how things work become less clear. Career progression is also unpredictable and becomes increasingly complex and uncertain.

"One has no control over his own career development or even personal safety, which he cannot grasp at all, and the lack of any information, [as well as] the absence of people around to discuss or verify content," he said.

Higher-level political operations had become "increasingly mysterious", he said. "As it is highly opaque and [with] no other channels to communicate or verify information, these fraudulent individuals have more room to manoeuvre."

There is also the risk of falling out of favour and standing too close to the wrong camp before transitions of power, which may cost an official their personal safety and freedom, according to the political scientist.

The past two years have seen several dramatic incidents, including the dismissals of two senior ministers, Qin Gang and Li Shangfu, both the shortest serving officials in their respective positions.

Former foreign minister Qin was last seen in June 2023, before he was abruptly removed from his post and all other positions. Beijing has never officially



explained his removal, saying only that he had resigned.

Li, who was defence minister, was also abruptly removed from his post last October without explanation, a year before the party finally announced he had been placed under investigation. Claus Soong, an analyst at Berlin-based think tank the Mercator Institute for China Studies, said the opaque nature of the party system was inside out. "Within the system, everything is opaque, so the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing. "And people inside the system often lack the information and ability to discern fraudulent activities, which are typically disguised with prospects for career promotion to hook up comrades."

A Beijing-based official, speaking on condition of anonymity, also said the information imbalance went both ways, with those in higher positions not always knowing the full picture needed to make informed decisions or gain clarity.

Selections and promotions were mostly decided by superiors but "they often cannot fully understand the abilities and performances of all their subordinates", leading to an information asymmetry.

This provided an opportunity for fraudsters claiming to have strong connections with high-ranking leaders and the ability to influence their decisions, which "can be very tempting for officials who are eager to advance in their careers", the official said.

Another official based in southern China, who also requested anonymity, said some high-ranking officials were particularly vulnerable. They had little contact with the grass roots, which meant they were easily tricked.

According to the southern official, there are people who specialise in targeting these individuals by pretending to have connections in Beijing and then asking for money to pay bribes.

### **How India-China border tensions affect Ladakh nomads**

04 October 2024, DW, Priyanka Shankar

Nomads in Ladakh are facing restricted access to grazing lands. As their traditional way of life hangs in the balance, what solutions exist to safeguard their rights?

One evening in mid-September, as the sun began to set, the grunts of Kunzes Dolma's yaks filled the sandy streets of Chushul, a Himalayan village in Ladakh, India, near the border with China.

The 68-year-old whistled to guide the animals toward her brick hut. Dolma is a herder from the Changpa community, a seminomadic group that lives in eastern Ladakh's Changthang Valley. Her family owns over 300 sheep and 50 yaks.

"The nomadic lifestyle is harsh, but I enjoy taking my cattle to graze in the mountains," said Dolma, who sells sheep wool and yak milk at the local market.

Dolma told DW that life has become difficult for her family because the Indian military has restricted grazing near the India-China border due to a territorial dispute.

"The pasture in that region is very good. Now, we cannot use the land to graze our cattle," Dolma said, with her 37-year-old daughter, Tsering Lamo, echoing her concerns.

"These days with restrictions triggered due to military tensions, it is no longer pleasurable to be a nomad," Lamo said, adding it is a harsh lifestyle, suggesting that, "it is better for younger people to take up other jobs."

What is the border dispute all about?

Chushul is about 8 kilometers (5 miles) from the de facto border between India and China, known as the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

The high-altitude village was impacted by the 1962 Sino-Indian war, triggered by differences over the ownership of the regions of Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh.

The conflict lasted for over a month and ended with Beijing declaring a cease-fire and claiming sovereignty over Aksai Chin.

While India and China have fought only one major war since the 1960s, there are occasional clashes along the LAC — which India claims is 3,488 kilometers (2,167 miles) long and China says is shorter.

In May 2020, a skirmish in the Galwan River valley resulted in the deaths of at least 20 Indian soldiers, with China later confirming four of its troops had been killed.

Since then, both nations have ramped up patrols along the LAC and on Pangong Tso lake, a pristine but disputed area claimed by both sides.

Rigzhin Dorjay, a farmer who has lived in Chushul all his life, said the 2020 clashes reminded his family of the 1962 war.

"I was not born when the war in the 1960s took place but my parents often told me about how afraid they were," the 55-year-old told DW.

"They said the Indian military had helped them feel secure. So when the 2020 clashes took place, I trekked up to the mountains to give the Indian military officers securing our border food and rations."

Zhou Bo, a retired senior colonel in China's military, explained that tensions persist because the India-China border has never been "clearly demarcated."

"The military tensions have spilled over into political tensions since nobody actually knows who is controlling what," he told DW.

"India says that unless this border issue is solved, relations won't improve. So China is just waiting," Bo said, adding that there are other issues at play like market forces, which also influence relations.

"Bilateral trade is on the rise between both the countries. India is aware [of] this, making solving tensions with Beijing important," said Bo.

Solutions to secure land rights

Farmer Dorjay acknowledged the complexity of border tensions, but emphasized the need to find solutions for farmers and nomads who are losing their land.

"I mainly cultivate crops like barley and peas and this year the harvest was good," he said, adding that he can no longer use land near the border.

"Also, due to climate change and global warming we have water scarcity in the region which has made it challenging."

Chetan Doye, who also works as a farmer in Chushul, said that due to military tensions there has been no development in their border village.

"The government has constantly promised us that we would be given funds to develop facilities in the village like installing electricity and funds to cultivate our lands," the 76-year-old told DW. "But the money does not seem to be reaching us."

Ladakh's nomads push for rights and recognition

Ashish Kothari, co-founder of the Indian environmental group Kalpavriksh, told DW that recognizing the land and resource rights of nomads and farmers in the Changthang region under the Indian Forest Rights Act could offer support. The legislation protects the livelihoods of traditional forest dwellers and tribal communities across the country.

Ladakh is a union territory, which means it is directly governed by the Indian central government. Including Ladakh in the Sixth Schedule of India's constitution, which allows Indigenous tribal people to make their own laws and policies, would ensure that the interests of nomads and farmers are protected.

Demands for "Sixth Schedule" status have gained momentum in Ladakh recently, with local environmentalist Sonam Wangchuk holding rallies in favor of the move.

But Konchok Stanzin, the councillor of Chushul at the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council in Leh, said that autonomy for Ladakh would not necessarily solve issues of land and development.

He admitted that nomads and farmers in the villages bordering China have lost land in the buffer zone between India and China. But he highlighted that due to the ongoing military tensions, security of the country and people is of primary importance.

"We are aware that loss of land as pastures and for cultivation is important. So we have submitted border village development scheme proposals to the central government to ensure they sanction packages that

will assist people in eastern Ladakh, especially during the winter months," Stanzin told DW.

Watching her sheep and yak amid the cold desert hues of her village, Dolma said there are times when she listens to the news about Indo-China relations and worries about the future of their land.

"I am getting older and we do face many difficulties as we traverse across the land as nomads. While there is peace between India and China right now, it is possible that a war could also take place since it is a complex issue at the border," she said.

"But when I'm in the mountains with my cattle and high valleys and mountains and pristine rivers surround me, I am at peace. Nature heals."

## Sino-Indian relations coming full circle

04 October 2024, New Age. Ruksana Kibria

BEGINNING in 1950, Sino-Indian camaraderie reached its buoyant apogee with the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's inaugural visit to Beijing in October 1954, the leitmotif of which was the spirit of Hindi-Chini bhai bhai (India and China are brothers). Since then, it has been marked by a gradual trajectory of decline, due to a host of controversial reasons. The course of Sino-Indian relations has been convoluted, contentious and indecipherable, hence making it difficult to tell where facts end and myths begin.

Subsequent to the 1962 Himalayan debacle, the epistemic predicament has been further compounded by the media-generated refrain of rivalry between China and India, rendering it almost axiomatic that the two Asian neighbours are to always remain at odds with each other. This discursive construction of unmitigated tension has been buttressed by statements of policymakers, strategic experts and scholars, Indian rather than Chinese, though – while India is deemed to have a 'China problem,' China doesn't have a corresponding 'India problem.' According to the security analyst, Harsh V Pant, 'It is the structure of global politics that by definition makes Sino-Indian competition inevitable.' Also taking a structuralist approach, Ashley J Tellis, senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, contends that as emerging Asian powers, China and India will continue to vie for power and influence in South Asia and elsewhere. In the view of Shashi Tharoor, the prolific Indian scholar-diplomat-politician, Beijing is 'a formidable adversary' of New Delhi. Some Indian analysts are even apprehensive that China poses 'an existential threat' to New Delhi's strategic interests in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal, as well as inside India. The eminent American Sinologist, John Garver, argues that 'India and China share a fundamentally antagonistic and competitive relationship in which conflict is inherent.'

That being said, it should now be interesting to delve into the matter and determine the validity of these above-mentioned observations and to what extent China is actually an 'existential threat' for India. An attempt will be made to broadly assess the state of Sino-Indian relations through the connectivity, economic, governance and strategic prism, the four themes underpinning them.

#### Connectivity

ACCORDING to Smruti Pattanaik, Research Fellow at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, 'India and particularly the West view BRI [Belt and Road Initiative] as a geo-economic manoeuvre by China to assert control over the world's economic arteries from a geopolitical standpoint.' As far as infrastructure and connectivity are concerned, the Chinese-sponsored BRI, Indo-Japanese Asia-Africa Growth Corridor, and the US-led Indo-Pacific Strategy, (including its private sector, market-based derivative, the Blue Dot Network infrastructure project, launched in response to the Chinese variant), are essentially complementary, not conflicting: if BRI is seeking to influence the global economic highways, so is IPS, but unlike the Cold War, the goals of the two projects are not zero-sum. Rather, they are manifestations of what one scholar has characterised as 'messy alternative pluralisms' and, as such, deserve to be treated not in black-and-white but in a nuanced manner. Likewise, the International North South Transportation Corridor (INSTC), a 7,200-km-long multi-modal connectivity initiative launched by India, Iran and Russia in 2000, seeks to connect Eurasia along a north-south axis; BRI, too, aims to do the above-mentioned, but in the east-west direction. Mutually reinforcing each other, according to one Indian diplomat, 'North-South Corridor and BRI are not incompatible.' It may be mentioned that both China and India are involved in infrastructure development in Iran, often in the same project, like the Chabahar Port, a prospective trans-regional economic hub. Analogously, they are also to invest, without any 'collision,' in the Mongla port improvement project in Bangladesh for the trans-shipment of (Chinese?) goods to India's landlocked northeast.

Given the benefits that BRI would potentially bring and the prospects of China and India ultimately achieving a community of common destiny, it is not inconceivable that, in order to boost economic productivity, in the not-so-distant future, even India itself may participate in the Chinese initiative. Connectivity and globalisation being intertwined, greater linkage will enable both China and India to further explore Asian markets through trade and investment. Their active collaboration in Central Asia and the Persian Gulf to extract resources through the market mechanism, foregoing competition for

exclusive access, is telling. Besides, an integrated transport network to connect the four countries under the Bangladesh, China, India, Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor sub-regional initiative can only be achieved with the two Asian powers working together. Infrastructure development, like highways, railroads and energy pipelines, by both along the Sino-Indian Line of Actual Control (LAC), ostensibly for military purposes, can also, under amicable circumstances, foster regional connectivity, thus joint development and trade relations between them. Similarly, the planned BRI trans-Himalayan 75-kilometre railway route across the China-Nepal border may also invigorate Sino-Indian trade in the future.

#### Economic

CHINA and India are being extolled for presumably redeeming their glorious pre-19th century/pre-colonial heritage through their re-emergence on the world stage. Reality, however, is far more complex than this simple narrative suggests. The template of Western state and multinational corporation-led achievement of China's historical 'modernisation' project is being applied in 21st century India, too. After all, BRICS, the acronym of the four emerging countries who are to play a key role in reshaping the global economy – Brazil, Russia, India and China (South Africa having been added subsequently), was coined by the investment bank Goldman Sachs as a marketing tool. Globalisation, having undermined the concept of a truly national and independent economy, valorises the optimisation of primarily production and, secondarily, consumption. As its beneficiaries, the multinational corporations are exploring the market opportunity the two Asian votaries of globalisation (with one-third of the world population, vast cheap labour, and one-fourth global consumer spending, whose combined GDP by the turn of the next century is expected to be about 43 per cent of the global), embody. Concomitantly, the corporate quest for diversification and a relatively secure but lucrative location for their operations, the 'China+1 strategy,' is coming to fruition. With more than 1.4 billion potential consumers and \$3.5 trillion GDP, India is poised to be the prospective '+1' option, as well as the next development powerhouse. China's huge consumption market too has not escaped Indian policymakers' attention, especially when it has replaced the US as India's largest trading partner. When asked by an interviewer about the possibility of 'very soon' Bollywood producing films more responsive to Chinese rather than local sensibilities, the Indian minister of external affairs, Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, responded unequivocally, 'If [we] can make money on it, why not?' Emerging separately but parallelly, they are practically 'two peas in a pod,' with India being a

new China in the making: manufacturing is being outsourced to China and services to India, in which it has an advantage (though in the recent years, manufacturing is increasingly occurring there, too). The remarkable complementarity between their developmental evolution having hardly left any room for competitiveness and the economic relations between them operating synergistically, the two countries are considered to be the most yin and yang in the world, with China regarding India as a partner (albeit junior) rather than an adversary. Jairam Ramesh, a Congress leader, has even employed the portmanteau word 'Chindia' to denote the virtual symbiosis of China and India, having 'separate beds but same dream.' It should be noted that, flying under the radar and without any official acknowledgement, it's difficult to gauge the magnitude of their bilateral trade volume and other economic transactions, which are far more robust than is reported.

#### Governance

DESPITE enduring belief in binary ideologies, treading the same path, Chinese and Indian political systems are beginning to appear comparable, what with New Delhi's authoritarian but pro-business 'billionaire raj' government, a la Chine, which may be an incipient reflection of what is quipped to be India's 'dictator envy for China.' Since the 2014 election of prime minister Narendra Modi, the Chinese president Xi Jinping has been optimistic about rekindling the dormant Hindi-Chini bhai bhai ethos. Furthermore, renegotiating the post-1947 Nehruvian consensus under the current political dispensation, the tenor of Indian democracy is attuning itself to the Chinese concept of democratic system. One can thus be forgiven for wondering whether the likelihood of Chinese values, norms and preferences subtly permeating the Indian body politic is farfetched. As an 'autocratising' country, the V-Democracy Institute regards 'India [to be] on the verge of losing its status as a democracy,' while a 2020 Freedom House report states that 'the Indian government's alarming departures from democratic norms under [...] Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party could blur the values-based distinction between Beijing and New Delhi.' In that case, India's claim to be a democratic alternative to China becomes debatable. Globally too, China and India are working in tandem, both enjoying a shared vision for the 21st century, and are integral to a multipolar and multi-aligned global system, having compatible approaches to Myanmar, the Rohingya issue, trade negotiations at the World Trade Organisation, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, and climate change. Besides, both of them are benefiting from the Ukraine War alike. Their armies have also held joint military exercises, while the Indian Navy and

the PLA Navy have been coordinating their counter-piracy missions in the Gulf of Aden since 2008. Mutual interests in jointly monitoring the maritime global commons, charting their future cooperation in the ocean economy, and underwriting regional stability for sustained economic growth, as well as facilitating regional integration through finding an institutional expression in the Indian Ocean Region, could further elevate their partnership.

Not opposed to China's interest in expanding BRICS membership, India's active role in the group's Development Fund and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank is also advancing its collaboration with China, with both sharing a common approach towards international trade in agricultural goods and intellectual property rights. Given New Delhi's aspiration to play a leadership role in global governance, there's also a high probability of it participating in the Beijing-led Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative and Global Cultural Initiative, which would have profound implications for the deeply troubled liberal international order.

#### Strategic

ASTONISHINGLY, despite the long-term perceived threat to India and the emergence of a panoply of research centres, think tanks and academic programmes dedicated to studying the People's Republic, New Delhi has not produced a coherent China policy. Bombastic Chinese rhetoric aside, Beijing too has failed to demonstrate its naval prowess and launch its much-heralded Indian Ocean fleet, which is not commensurate with its presumed image as a great power. Curiously enough, despite both China and India resolutely professing to have divergent strategic cultures, research indicates there to be hardly any distinction between the two. In the realm of maritime security, regardless of bellicose posturing, neither of them is actually pursuing a containment policy. The Indo-Pacific expanse being vast enough to accommodate both, rather than forming an anti-Chinese coalition, these factors may prompt New Delhi to come to a tacit agreement with Beijing to share the pivotal maritime space between them, with India having an unchallenged pre-eminence in South Asia/Indian Ocean Region, and China in East Asia and Western Pacific. In fact, such a scenario is already looming on the horizon.

Portraying China as the 'greatest shared strategic challenge,' New Delhi has succeeded in cementing its security links with the Indian Ocean Region littoral countries through the Colombo Security Conclave (CSC), the minilateral arrangement, composed of India, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Mauritius, Bangladesh being the most recent member. The CSC is expected to play a crucial role in consolidating India's regional primacy, which is further leveraged

through the US call for a 'new maritime statecraft' and endorsement of India's centrality as the regional security provider in South Asia. By bringing the IOR countries within its orbit, the threat perception of the member-states cannot but resonate with that of New Delhi, nor can they circumvent strategic dependence on it. 'China is balancing against India's regional hegemony by increasing its influence through [the] small states' – such media trope, stoking anti-China animus and exaggerating the China threat perception is untenable, since India stands to gain from such dire projections. Considering that India is evidently having its metaphorical strategic cake and eating it too, the key question, whether Chinese engagement in these smaller South Asian countries is necessarily antithetical to India's interests, can only be answered in the negative. The perception of China's naval aggrandisement in this strategic hub validating New Delhi's role in maritime governance, its leadership of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), the potential regional Indian strategic framework, has been instrumental in institutionalising security-related matters, including bringing the IOR/Bay littoral largely under the Indian coastal radar surveillance network. Similarly, the anodyne Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR), the operational articulation of India's Act East Policy (2014), foregrounds the strategic dimension, thus enabling India to project power in the IOR maritime domain.

In view of China's modest global military footprint, it has been dubbed a 'minnow' in comparison to other big powers. However, in Indian narratives, Chinese capabilities have been magnified, hence perpetuating the perception of tension and the optics of conflict in the high Himalayas, which serve to further accentuate the putatively intractable nature of the dispute. According to the late Indian journalist Kuldip Nayar, there have been 'manufactured tales of trouble on the disputed border' to create mischief. It's indeed perplexing why the remote but otherwise negotiable 'intangible value' Sino-Indian border issues have been allowed to remain ambiguous and left unresolved despite prolonged efforts.

By the same token, the reported skirmishes on the undemarcated LAC, as well as perceived Chinese assertiveness in the Indian Ocean Region (where Beijing does not have any vital strategic interest), have provided the impetus for India's strategic engagement with the West. The conclusion, within a two-decade span, of four long-pending foundational defence agreements with the United States has ushered in unprecedented bilateral security collaboration, thereby allowing Indian policy entrepreneurs to radically transform New Delhi's diplomatic orientation. By steering it away from its

more than a half-century foreign policy moorings, India's much-vaunted tradition of non-alignment has been all but jettisoned in favour of a decidedly pro-Western tilt, though under the fig-leaf of a vague concept called strategic autonomy. How China could be blindsided by the consequences of its confrontational but counterproductive stance detrimental to its interests is incomprehensible. That Beijing, a would-be superpower, 'lacks a consistent and coordinated foreign policy' is acknowledged by the Chinese leadership, though.

Despite Garver's misgivings about the notion of an US-China-India 'ever-shifting, flexible, three-cornered minuet,' such an outcome is not implausible, with the three countries constantly moving through the revolving strategic door. Neither is it beyond the realm of the possible to see American, Chinese and Indian interests coinciding (if they haven't already), thus adding another layer of complexity to animate the regional geopolitical landscape. Notwithstanding their current power imbalance, cooperation between China and India is likely to shape the future world order, and with the probable inclusion of the US, even result in a trilateral security partnership to approach regional and global contingencies in a concerted manner. On the face of it seemingly counterintuitive, but how the smaller regional states can pull their supposedly astute balancing act without the interests of the three big powers being aligned remains an intriguing question.

#### Concluding thoughts

THE key takeaway from this brief survey is that, by and large, their common interests far outweigh whatever peripheral bilateral issues they may have. The Sino-Indian relationship is imbued with a promising spirit of cooperation. Significantly, the scaffolding of the claims of the structural basis of their 'conflict,' China to be an 'existential threat' for India as 'a formidable adversary,' the inevitability of competition between them, or their antagonism to be organically embedded, proved to be too fragile to weather the intellectual scrutiny they were subjected to.

Despite inordinate focus on the military-strategic dimension, the fact remains that the global paradigm shift from geopolitics to geoeconomics has to be factored in, along with what that entails for Sino-Indian relations. With economic imperatives emerging as paramount in the globalised setting and walking in the same direction as partners, China and India are on the threshold of graduating from bhai bhai status to 'twin titans,' where their border dispute strikes a discordant note (to the untrained ear, that is). Veiled behind the recital of rivalry, the cornerstone of their amity is being reinforced to provide leadership to a new politically transformational, digitally driven, Sino-centric, but



business-friendly global order. With power dynamics moving in favour of the Big Tech, advanced technologies are the vectors through which the very concept of security could be redefined in the calculus of their bilateral relations. In sum, paraphrasing the late English philosopher-economist, John Maynard Keynes, in the long run, despite occasional hiccups, instead of being dead, Sino-Indian relations are expected to thrive famously.

### PRC at 75: Deng Xiaoping never delivered on young people's desire for freedom

03 October 2024, RFA

Many in China feel nostalgia for the 1980s, but political authoritarianism was still the default setting. Many in China under Communist Party leader Xi Jinping look back to the economic boom-time under late supreme leader Deng Xiaoping with nostalgia, as a freewheeling era in which it was easier to get rich, and when the government had less control over people's lives. But the reality of life under Deng was much grittier, political activists and commentators told RFA Mandarin in recent interviews.

In June 1983, postgraduate philosophy student Chen Kuide was singled out for political criticism after taking part in an academic conference in the southwestern city of Guilin, as part of a political campaign against "spiritual pollution."

It was just a few years after then supreme leader Deng had kicked off a slew of economic reforms and "opening up" to the rest of the world in the wake of the death of Mao Zedong and the trial of the Gang of Four that marked the end of the Cultural Revolution.

But despite the rosy glow that often suffuses people's memories of China in the 1980s, the political campaigns didn't stop when the universities reopened and the government started the massive task of rehabilitating people who had been persecuted under Mao and his wife, Jiang Qing.



Then Chinese Vice President Deng Xiaoping meets U.S. President Jimmy Carter at the White House in Washington, Jan. 29, 1979. (AP)

Instead, Deng launched the "spiritual pollution" campaign targeting anyone with any liberal tendencies, who advocated humanitarianism, market economics or appreciation of the arts for their aesthetic, rather than social, value.

By the time Chen got back to his dorm at Shanghai's Fudan University, there was a red circle around his name on a list in the municipal government, and Chen and a fellow student were suspended from their studies for three months. Luckily for Chen, the campaign was later called off and he was reinstated. His friend with government connections told him at the time: "There was a red circle round your name, as if you were going to be exiled to Qinghai or something."

Leaving aside the upbeat official narrative of "reform and opening up," the 1980s was not an easy time to be Chinese, according to veteran U.S.-based democracy activist Wang Juntao.

"I don't think there was any golden age during the 1980s," Wang said. "Intellectuals back then were pretty unhappy with Deng Xiaoping and Zhao Ziyang."

#### Fall of Hu Yaobang

A 1980 amendment to the country's constitution deleted a clause protecting people's right to "speak out, air their views freely, hold debates and make big-character posters," while a 1978 amendment made two years after Mao's death deleted their right to "reproductive freedom," amid growing concerns about the burgeoning population.

A system of film censorship was set up in 1980, while the right to private ownership of land disappeared with a constitutional amendment in 1982.

Nationwide student protests in 1986 were sparked by local officials' insistence on interfering in local elections to the People's Congresses, and spread from eastern Anhui province to Shanghai and Beijing, in protests that lasted 28 days.

Former 1989 student leader Chen Pokong also took part in the 1986 student protests in Shanghai.

"We didn't do anything much; just walked along the street and sometimes sat in front of the city government," he said. "We weren't trying to overthrow the government, just asked them to move a little faster and meet some of people's demands for democracy and equality."

"It all fizzled out peacefully in the end, because the weather was cold, and the winter vacation was about to begin, and a lot of students wanted to go back home for the Lunar New Year," he said.



Deng Xiaoping and French President Francois Mitterrand share a toast at a state banquet in Beijing, May 5, 1983. (Gabriel Duval/AFP)

Soon afterwards, news emerged that premier Hu Yaobang would resign to take the fall for those protests, blamed for his "ineffective leadership."

Then the party expelled a number of prominent dissidents from its ranks, including journalist Liu Binyan, physicist Fang Lizhi and author Wang Ruowang.

"Before that, I didn't have much of an impression of Deng Xiaoping – he just seemed like a short little guy among the old guys in charge of the Chinese Communist Party," Chen said. "But he had suddenly made such a big move, and I started to think about why that would be. I felt he didn't really understand young people or our ideas."

"Once young people get started with economic reform, they'll immediately start to want political reform too, and as soon as they start to interact with the West, they'll want freedom and democracy," he said.

"But this old man just wanted to take a leisurely walk – he was behind the times, and not suited to ruling the country. He should have let younger people take charge," Chen said.

#### 1980s political purges

Following the 1986 protests, the right to demonstrate was stripped from students in Beijing, with the passage of new regulations warning that anyone who took part in "unauthorized parades" would be prosecuted. Those rules were enshrined in national law after the 1989 Tiananmen Square mass protests.

"For me, there was nothing good about the 1980s. Anyone who tried to fight for freedom and democracy was still suppressed," said Wang, citing the heavy jail terms handed down to 1979 Democracy Wall dissidents Wei Jingsheng and Wang Xizhe.

"The political purges continued throughout the 1980s, and large numbers of people were affected each time," he said. "I think people who remember the 1980s as a good time probably didn't care much about politics."

"I don't think there has ever been a good time under the Chinese Communist Party, and that hasn't changed."

U.S.-based former Party School professor Cai Xia agreed that life was still pretty tough for ordinary Chinese.

"The door had been left open just a crack for people to push open if they tried hard enough ... and people just wanted to survive," Cai said. "They had been poor for more than a decade."

Cai said most of the "reform" and "opening up" under Deng was largely the work of the people themselves, spurred on by new "household responsibility" contracts for farmers, by the return of exiled intellectuals to the cities in the wake of the Cultural Revolution, and by new rules allowing people to set up in business for themselves and sell their wares in "free markets."

"Even Deng Xiaoping admitted this when he said, 'we didn't do anything; it was the people who were creative, and we just affirmed their creativity'," Cai told RFA Mandarin in a recent interview.

Part of the perception of the Deng era as a golden age stems from his lionization in Western media, including his nomination by Time Magazine as "Man of the Year" twice, an honor it has bestowed on just four non-U.S. citizens.

"Historical evaluations of Deng Xiaoping were really too complimentary," veteran journalist and political commentator Hu Ping told Radio Free Asia, adding that Deng had little to do with the crushing of the Gang of Four, nor with the rehabilitation of millions of people persecuted unjustly during the Mao era.

Cai said that before he ordered the People's Liberation Army to clear Beijing of unarmed civilians, causing hundreds, perhaps thousands, of deaths, Deng was a master at going with the flow, and allowing things to happen, rather than initiating change.

"He basically put his legal stamp on some new economic phenomena that were emerging among, and driven by, ordinary people," she said. "In terms of his vision and ideology, he was still pretty conservative, and was looking to maintain the status quo in China over the long term."

#### Only 'partially de-Maoified'

Former high-ranking Chinese Communist Party aide Yan Jiaqi, who once worked for late ousted premier Zhao Ziyang, said that China did enjoy some good years before the 1989 bloodshed, citing new rules limiting presidents and premiers to just two terms in office.

But in written comments to Radio Free Asia, he said Deng had only "partially de-Maoified" China, paving the way for current General Secretary Xi Jinping to take the country further to the left, and step up

authoritarian controls over people's lives in recent years.

Morally, Hu likened Deng to a doctor who has cured a large number of patients but murdered some along the way.

"Because of the Tiananmen massacre, Deng is guilty for a thousand years, regardless of what he did before or after," he said. "It makes no difference."

And the crackdown pretty much shut down any hopes of political reform, he said.

"A country that achieves rapid development along such a pathway will be more confident, more arrogant, and more powerfully authoritarian," Hu said. "And it is bound to be far more contemptuous, hostile and fearful of universal values like justice, human rights and democracy, and to pose a greater threat to peace and freedom around the world."

While Wang put the sense of hope in pre-Tiananmen China down to youthful dreams, Chen Pokong can still remember being overwhelmed with a dizzying sense of new possibilities, simply because people now had regular access to something outside of their daily lives.

"I remember that there were really new things every day, new clothes, new books, new music, new dances," he said. "I had the feeling that the country would move forward into the future, no matter what happened."

That belief was soon to be shattered, with the news that People's Liberation Army soldiers had opened fire on civilians in Beijing on the night of June 3, 1989, on the orders of Deng Xiaoping.

Chen Pokong was lying in his dorm room in Guangzhou when a classmate shouted the news. He tuned into Hong Kong radio to find out more, and wrote big-character posters on the Sun Yat-sen University campus in protest at the bloodshed.

Chen Kuide, meanwhile, had accepted an invitation to study at Boston University. He flew out of Beijing on June 5, a day after seeing smuggled Hong Kong TV footage of the massacre.

The sense of fear as his university shuttle bus threaded its way through army roadblocks on the way to the airport, with people cycling there after public transportation was suspended, was to be his last, lingering memory of China.

### Why China's soft power fails to soften its image

03 October 2024, FirstPost, Tenzin Tsultrim

Without changing its attitudes toward its people and neighboring countries and its treatment of the people of the occupied nations, Beijing may continue to suffer from the soft power deficit

Joseph Nye, the father of "soft power," reveals in his latest book, *A Life in the American Century*, how in December 2013, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi invited him to a private meal to quiz him about how China could increase its soft power. Nye replied, "Raising hundreds of millions of people out of poverty and celebrating a gorgeous traditional culture are important sources of attraction for China. At the same time, as long as it had territorial disputes with its neighbours and as long as its insistence on tight party control over civil society and human rights continued, China would face serious limits on its soft power in Asia and the West."

Before the concept of "soft power" was introduced by Nye, China had already lost a major part of its share of soft power points. After the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) took over China, strategically, it began to invade its neighbouring countries, including East Turkestan, Tibet, and southern Mongolia. Communist China also decided to intervene in the Korean War, just a week after it invaded Tibet. Worse, after entrenching its rule in Tibet, the CCP also decided to encroach on the borders of India, eventually leading to the China-India War of 1962. All these military invasions and interventions had permanently dented the international image of 'New China'. Within China too, in the name of the Great Leap Forward, the CCP pushed China to three years of famine and later euphemistically called it the three years of natural disasters. The outbreak of the infamous Cultural Revolution further made the CCP unlovable by its people.

What happens in Tibet never stays in Tibet

For decades, the CCP was convinced that Tibetan people might have been enchanted by the development shoved on them; however, the peaceful protests of 1987-89 and the 2008 uprising in Tibet pushed them out of their beds. To counter the internationalisation of the Tibet issue, from the 1990s onwards, the CCP began to churn out its first of many white papers on Tibet. This is still being dished out mechanically. Yearly reports from various well-established rights groups such as Freedom House, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch (HRW) continue to highlight growing human rights violations in Tibet.

Like the systematic detention of millions of Uyghur Muslims in the internment camps by the CCP in the western region of East Turkestan, which received a tremendous amount of international attention. Similarly, the exposition by the Tibet Action Institute report that around one million Tibetan children aged six to eighteen were forced to live in Chinese government-run colonial boarding schools and preschools had also drawn international attention. In the recent report by HRW, Educate the

Masses to Change Their Minds: China's Forced Relocation of Rural Tibetans, it is reported that over 707,000 people have relocated. Most of the Tibetan people were forcibly relocated. All these reports have severely tarnished the nosedive image of communist China and its long-held aspiration for a lovable image and the so-called responsible superpower.

Like Charity, Soft Power too begins at Home

Unlike democratic nations, the CCP needs to charm both domestically and internationally. Within China, the CCP is trying to charm its people without losing control. In other words, the CCP is implementing the carrot and stick policy. Communist China's handling of the Tiananmen Square movement earned the ire of international communities as well as the Chinese people. Many Western countries decided to freeze high-level contacts with China for around two years. There have been dramatic declines in revenues from tourism (down 20 per cent in 1989), direct foreign investment (down 22 per cent in the first half of 1990), and foreign lending (down 40 per cent in 1989). Because of this, the CCP decided to reorient its domestic and foreign policies.

However, the CCP is still wary of its own people, and it is no wonder that China's domestic security spending is higher than its defence-related expenses. Covid-19 further proved the mismanagement and brutalities of the CCP, and common Chinese people realized the importance of freedom and the free flow of information. The death of Dr. Li Wenliang became the most talked-about topic on WeChat and Weibo (China's two biggest social media platforms), attracting millions of posts and searches and garnering an estimated 1.5 billion views. Following the Covid-19 pandemic, negative views of China increased by double digits in more than half of the countries surveyed in the international poll by the Pew Research Center. If the CCP is not able to win the hearts and minds of its own people, it will be very difficult to charm the international community. In other words, if you are not soft towards your family members and always create problems inside your home, you cannot expect your neighbours to smile back.

Good Fences Make Good Neighbours

China has one of the highest numbers of territorial disputes with its neighbouring countries on land and sea. For instance, with India, China has one of the oldest territorial disputes in the world, which is still unresolved, and China is not in the good books of many countries. According to a 2023 Pew Research Center survey, a median of 67 per cent of adults across 24 countries express unfavourable views of China. A median of 71 per cent thinks China does not contribute to global peace and stability. Not only that, a median of 76 per cent think China does not

take into account the interests of other countries in its foreign policy, and a median of 57 per cent say China interferes in the affairs of other nations a great deal.

According to Nirupama Rao, former Ambassador of India to the United States, "The mistrust of China only deepened after Xi Jinping came to power. He is viewed as being at the helm of a nation that is much more muscular, confrontational, and aggressive in the pursuit of territorial claims across the Indo-Pacific region, both on land and sea." Out of 133 countries surveyed by Gallup in 2023, the US enjoyed a soft power advantage in 81 of them, and China in 52. Hence, the global approval of US leadership is higher than that of China. In short, every neighboring country is on its toes when it comes to dealing with China.

Conclusion

Despite spending billions of dollars on infrastructure development and security apparatuses, the CCP fails to win the hearts and minds of the Tibetan people. Because of the CCP's continued crackdown on Tibetan Buddhism, Tibetan language, and Tibetan culture every year, the situation in Tibet is worsening. Hence, without improving the situation inside Tibet, the CCP will be solely responsible for waning China's soft power. Similarly, because of what the CCP has unleashed on the Chinese people, the ghosts of the Tiananmen Square movement will continue to haunt the CCP.

The mismanagement of Covid-19 by the CCP in China further widens the gaps between the CCP and the Chinese people. After the Covid-19 pandemic, the negative views of China increased by double digits in more than half of the countries surveyed by the Pew Research Center. The territorial disputes with neighbouring countries are another important factor that hinders China's soft power. Because of its frequent incursions and unlawful maritime claims in the South China Sea, Beijing is viewed as an aggressor and troublemaker in Asia. Hence, according to a 2023 Pew Research Centre survey, a median of 71 per cent of adults across 24 countries think China does not contribute to global peace and stability.

In a speech at the National Propaganda and Ideology Work Conference on August 19, 2013, Xi Jinping voiced the importance of "telling China's story well". In 2021, he told senior Communist Party officials that it was important to present the image of China as "credible, loveable, and respectable." Since the party-state propaganda machinery works from the top down, the CCP is not telling a story; rather, it is pushing China's story. According to David Shambaugh, "Soft power is like a country that is a magnet that attracts others to you; others want to emulate you; they respect you; they value your

political system. In other words, they want to be like you. That is soft power. It comes from society. It does not come from the government."

Similarly, one can act loveable, but one cannot force someone to like you. Therefore, without changing its attitudes toward its people and neighboring countries and its treatment of the people of the occupied nations, Beijing may continue to suffer from the soft power deficit, and the Chinese people will continue to receive backlash because of the CCP's actions.

### **After 19 years, a docent at the Rubin Museum says goodbye to his 'home away from home'**

03 October 2024, Gothamist, Ryan Kailath

After 20 years in Chelsea, the Rubin Museum, which houses art from Tibet, Nepal and the Himalayan regions of India and China, will close its doors permanently on Sunday and transition to a touring exhibition model that will loan its collection to other institutions.

It's a loss for New York City, which has experienced a spate of small museum closures this year, including Fotografiska and the Center for Italian Modern Art.

It's also a loss for Nitin Ron, a docent who has led tours of the museum for 19 of its 20 years.

"This museum was home away from home for me," Ron said last Wednesday on what would be one of his final tours. "I've done 19 hikes in the Himalayas and climbed Mount Everest. So when I walked in here, this space made my heart beat faster."

A neonatal doctor at South Brooklyn Health in Coney Island, Ron arrived in New York in 2001, after a fellowship in neonatal-perinatal medicine at Brown University. A friend brought him to the museum a few days after it opened in 2004, and he hit it off with founders Donald and Shelley Rubin.

Ron soon signed up for the volunteer docent program, which at the time consisted of a year of weekly classes on topics like the tenets of Buddhism and the cultures represented at the museum, he said. (That program has since been shortened to 10 weeks.) He graduated with the inaugural class in 2005, and estimates he's given at least two tours a month since then.

"We had actors come in to teach us how to emote in public," said Ron. "A person from the FBI came to teach us how to read body language in a crowd."

Since his day job at the hospital also included teaching, Ron soon made field trips to the Rubin a part of the curriculum for medical students, tying art appreciation and meditation into the practice of medicine.

The Rubin has faced the same challenges of declining attendance and deficits that have plagued many small art museums, and plans to sell its building on 17th Street near Seventh Avenue, according to

Executive Director Jorrit Britschgi. The space was originally purchased for \$22 million before it was converted into the museum.

A spokesperson for the museum highlighted its endowment of more than \$150 million and overall financial strength despite operational deficits.

Although the collection will be kept in storage in New York, Britschgi said there are plans to tour as many of the works on the road as possible, or loan them out to other organizations.

"Our docents may be the most important people here, because they're the intersection between what we do in the galleries and what visitors experience," Britschgi said via Zoom.

Ron's personal favorite work is one of the museum's most popular: the quiet and meditative Tibetan shrine room, which will move to the Brooklyn Museum for a six-year loan starting in June 2025.

"My dad and mom also love to meditate, and when they visit from India they say, 'Take us to the shrine room,'" Ron said. "They close their eyes and feel the energy of the place."

Now that the museum's doors are closing, Ron, who lives on Staten Island, is considering volunteering at the small Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art there, or perhaps giving tours of the United Nations.

"I'm going to miss the museum and my Friday evenings here connecting to people, connecting to musicians, connecting to actors, connecting to my medical students," said Ron. "But I feel the effect has been long lasting and the museum is going to evolve into something very beautiful and even more universal."

Museum admission is free all day Thursday through Sunday. Ron's final tour at the Rubin will be on Friday evening, Oct. 4. The last day to visit the museum is this Sunday, Oct. 6.

### **Geopolitics and the fate of Manipur**

03 October 2024, The Sangai Express, Haorokcham Anil

India has a long-standing unresolved border dispute with China in the Himalayan region, particularly over Aksai Chin, which India considers part of Jammu and Kashmir. This claim is based on the Johnson Line (1865), drawn by surveyor William Johnson and later endorsed by John Charles Ardagh as the official boundary of India. However, China rejected this boundary, instead claiming Aksai Chin as a part of its Xinjiang province, according to the McDonald Line proposed by the British Empire in 1893. China currently controls much of the region under what is called the "Line of Actual Control" (LAC). The violent clashes in the strategically important Galwan Valley on June 15, 2020, resulting in casualties on both



sides, were a consequence of this ongoing territorial dispute. To this day, the boundary between the two Nations remains a point of contention.

The border dispute extends beyond the western Himalayas to the eastern sector, where China claims the Indian State of Arunachal Pradesh as a part of South Tibet. This claim challenges the McMahon Line, which India recognizes as the official boundary. The region has also become a significant flashpoint in India-China relations.

The Chinese incursions of 1962 at Arunachal Pradesh and Aksai Chin underscore the volatility of these disputed areas. This threat was further highlighted by the 2017 Doklam standoff near the Siliguri Corridor, a strategically vital region for India. Known as the "Chicken Neck", this narrow strip of land is only about 20 km wide and 60 km long, connecting the North Eastern States to the rest of India. Its geo-strategic importance is amplified by its proximity to Nepal in the northwest, Bangladesh to the south, and Bhutan to the northeast. The presence of Chinese military forces just 130 km away in Tibet's Chumbi Valley, within the range of Chinese artillery, heightens the vulnerabilities of the area.

Given China's unpredictable behavior in disputed territories, exemplified by the 1962 incursion, India has recognized the need for an alternative route to ensure continued connectivity with its North Eastern States in case of conflict at the Chicken Neck preventing North East India from being cut off from the mainland that will create two blocks like the erstwhile West and East Pakistan. This concern has driven the development of the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project apart from facilitating NER region access to the Indian Ocean for economic boost.

Some believe, the Kaladan project is one the reasons for the ethnic violence that erupted on May 3, 2023, between the Meitei and Kuki communities in Manipur although it may not account as the direct cause. The Government's appeasement of certain groups or communities to safeguard the project's interests has been questioned. Factors such as large-scale deforestation by the Kuki community, the influx of illegal immigrants from Myanmar's Chin province, the destruction of poppy cultivation by the Manipur State Government, and narco-terrorism have all contributed to tensions and the ensuing violence. Moreover, opposition from tribal communities, particularly the Kuki, against the directive of the Hon'ble Manipur High Court to the Government of Manipur to send the sought socio-economic report for inclusion of the Meitei/Meetei community in the Scheduled Tribe (ST) list further fuelled the conflict.

The Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, part of India's Act East Policy, passes through the strife torn regions of Rakhine (Arakan) and Chin

State in western Myanmar. These areas are home to Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) that oppose Myanmar's military junta, seeking greater autonomy and democratic reforms. The 110 km roadway section of the project, from Paletwa to Zorinpui on the India-Myanmar border in Mizoram, traverses the Chin State, where the Kuki-Chin and Chin EAOs are the influential groups.

India's geopolitical interests in the region include safeguarding the Kaladan project and countering Chinese influence. China has invested heavily in the Kyaukpyu Deep Sea Port, part of the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) under its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Located about 75 km south of India's Sittwe Port (developed as part of the Kaladan project), Kyaukpyu offers China an alternative route to the Malacca Straits and the South China Sea, bypassing several strategic choke points.

The competition between India and China in this region is now evident, with both Nations seeking to strengthen ties with the local populace for strategic advantages. For India, maintaining good relations with the Kuki-Chin people is vital for the success of the project if the threat looming at the Chicken Neck is pertinent. The strategic relationship with the locals is also required for projects like the India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) Trilateral Highway, which spans 1,360 km and originates from Mae Sot (Thailand) passing through Myawaddy, Bago, Mandalay, Tamu (Myanmar) and entering India through Moreh is an important component of India's Act East policy to connect with ASEAN through road connectivity. It is also important to note that this important IMT Trilateral Highway passes through Chin State of Myanmar.

In Manipur, the Kuki community, originally brought by the British in the early 19th century, has been seeking geographic, demographic and political dominance, through illegal immigration mainly from Myanmar's Chin State. This, combined with the State's Scheduled Tribe (ST) status for "Any Kuki tribe" and the influx of funds from poppy cultivation and narco-terrorism, has led to challenges against the "Idea of Manipur" which have more than 2000 plus years of history and well-defined territorial boundary when merged to the Union of India on 15th October, 1949.

The strong demand for a "Separate Administration" for the Kuki-Chin people in the State of Manipur following the incitement of violence on the Meitei community on 3rd May 2023 with an ulterior motive is seen as a part of a long-standing agenda.

Given these dynamics, a critical question remains: "Are we willing to risk the destruction of Manipur to secure the broader interests of North East India

through the appeasement of a particular community?"

### China is using an "anaconda strategy" to squeeze Taiwan

03 October 2024, The Economist

Taiwan's navy commander warns that his forces are increasingly strained

China's dislike of Taiwan's president Lai Ching-te is no secret. Chinese authorities call him a stubborn, confrontational "separatist" who may provoke war in the Taiwan Strait. But since Mr Lai's election in May, it is China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) that has been raising the chances of conflict by deploying more air and naval craft around Taiwan. "The PLA is using an 'anaconda strategy' to squeeze the island," says Admiral Tang Hua, Taiwan's navy commander.

In an interview with The Economist, Admiral Tang (pictured) warns that Chinese forces are "slowly, but surely" increasing their presence around his country. "They are ready to blockade Taiwan at any time they want," he says. His concerns are backed up by the data. The number of PLA air incursions across the median line, the de facto border in the middle of the Taiwan Strait, has jumped more than five-fold, from 36 in January to 193 in August. The number of PLA ships operating around Taiwan has steadily risen, too, doubling from 142 in January to 282 in August. These vessels are also coming closer to Taiwan—right along its contiguous zone, or 24 nautical miles from its coast. And they are patrolling for a few days at a time, up from a few hours previously, according to Taiwan's naval commander. These are relatively new developments. Until August 2022 the PLA had operated mostly in Taiwan's south and west, around the Bashi Channel between the island and the Philippines. Taiwan's rugged east coast, home to aircraft hangars built underneath its mountains, was seen as safer and harder to reach from China. But that changed after a visit to the island that year by Nancy Pelosi, then a high-ranking American official. The trip enraged China and, soon after, the PLA conducted a mock blockade near Taiwan's east. That sent a signal that the region was no longer safe. Now the PLA has normalised patrols there and regularly encircles the island by sea and air. It has also increased the number of navy transits through the Yonaguni channel between Taiwan and Japan.

Few people in Taiwan are aware of how close and regular the PLA patrols are. Since 2020 Taiwan's defence ministry has published daily updates on air activity around the island, including maps of Chinese warplanes' locations. In 2022 it added updates on the number of PLA naval vessels operating "around Taiwan". But it does not specify what types of ships,

where they go, or for how long. The government may be worried that too much disclosure would damage Taiwan's public morale or economy, says Admiral Tang.

The PLA's increased patrols are straining Taiwan's navy. China has twice as many frigates and ten times as many destroyers. Taiwan often has to deploy 25-50% of its combat vessels just to match China's patrols, according to Cheng-kun Ma and Tristan Tan, a pair of Taiwanese defence researchers. "They give you extreme pressure, pressure, pressure. They're trying to exhaust you," says Admiral Tang. A government audit found that more than half of Taiwan's main warships had fallen behind on regular maintenance.

As the PLA Navy presses closer to the island, Taiwan is focused on avoiding confrontation. "The PLA is trying to force Taiwan to make mistakes," says Admiral Tang, and looking for "excuses" to trigger a blockade. That is why Taiwan's military leaders issued new rules of engagement this year that define ethical and legal use of force in self-defence: "We restrain our guys, not to provoke or escalate."

Even as Taiwan's armed forces practise restraint its leaders are working with allies on how to keep sea lines of communication open in case of a blockade. Taiwan is also seeking international help to resist Chinese pressure. Japan's navy conducted a transit exercise through the Taiwan Strait for the first time in September, as did naval ships from Australia, New Zealand and Germany. America's navy sails through it several times a year. The exercises send a signal to China that the strait is international territory. The Chinese authorities protest. But they show no sign of loosening the anaconda's squeeze.

### Did Jaishankar's long story of China mean Mao's 5 fingers...this secret of the dragon will force you to think

03 October 2024, Press Wire

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar recently said in America that our relations with China have a long story. However, in short, we had agreements to maintain peace and stability on the border, China has violated those agreements. Let us understand what Jaishankar's long story is about China. We also know what agreements were made, which China has always been violating. Defense and Strategic Affairs Analyst tries to understand every move of China through Lieutenant Colonel (Retd) JS Sodhi and his/her book China's War Clouds: The Great Chinese Checkmate.

When Mao said, take the palm and 5 fingers According to Defense Analyst Lt. Col. (R) JS Sodhi, relations between India and China had been good for centuries. In 1949, when the civil war in China

ended and China emerged as a new nation, a part of it, Taiwan, separated from it. After this, India-China relations started turning sour. This sourness came because in 1949, the founding leader of the Republic of China, Mao Zedong i.e. Mao Zedong said that the palm and 5 fingers should be captured by China. The palm meant Tibet and the 5 fingers meant Ladakh, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Nepal and Bhutan. From here, China's policy towards its neighbors kept changing.

China ready for war after Dalai Lama takes refuge

JS Sodhi explains that after Mao's nefarious intentions became apparent, China illegally occupied Tibet in 1950. Relations between India and China deteriorated further when the Dalai Lama fled Tibet in 1959 and took refuge in India. These relations deteriorated so much that in 1962, China treacherously attacked India and there was a war between the two countries.

Do you know about India-China war of 1967?

The Nathula and Chola conflict took place in 1967, also known as the Sino-Indian War of 1967 or the Sino-Indian War of 1967. This conflict was a series of border clashes between China and India along the border of Sikkim in the Himalayan region. The Nathula conflict began on 11 September 1967, when China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) attacked Indian posts in Nathula and the conflict continued till 15 September 1967. Another military duel took place at Chola in October 1967, which ended the same day.

India had driven out Chinese soldiers

It is believed that at that time India gained a decisive strategic advantage and managed to hold its ground against the Chinese forces and push them back. Several PLA fortifications were destroyed in Nathula. There the Indian soldiers drove back the attacking Chinese army. 340 Chinese soldiers were killed in Nathula. At the same time, 88 Indian soldiers lost their lives in Chola. When the Chinese army attacked with machine guns, the Indian soldiers responded with cannons.

What was that agreement, which Jaishankar hinted at?

According to JS Sodhi's book China's War Clouds: The Great Chinese Checkmate, in 1993, Border Peace & Tranquility Agreement, 1993 was signed between India and China, in which it was decided that the soldiers of both the countries would patrol the border and before patrolling a- Will inform others about this. Peace prevailed on both sides till 2017. But, everything changed in 2017. At that time China increased its military activities in Doklam area. With this aggressive action, China made a huge movement of its troops. This action was directed from China's theater command.

Being directed by China's Army Theater Command

China created several new theater commands in 2015. Chinese forces started taking aggressive action on the borders as per the theater command. he/she created areas of controversy in many new places. In 2020, he/she sent his/her army to Galwan Valley, in which there was a lot of clash with Indian soldiers. From then till today relations between India and China have never been normal.

Are India and China moving towards another war?

According to JS Sodhi, on February 5, 2024, America's government agency Directorate of National Intelligence of America has told that the way the tension between India and China is increasing, they are gradually moving towards war.

China's strategy to attack India in 2035

According to the book China's War Clouds: The Great Chinese Checkmate, China's official newspaper Wen Wei Po published from Hong Kong says that there will be three wars in the next 11 years i.e. by 2035. The first war among these is to be with Taiwan in 2027. At that time China will attack Taiwan. The second attack will take place in 2029 on the Spratly Islands located in the South China Sea, which is surrounded by Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia. This island is considered very strategically important. Apart from this, China and Pakistan together will attack India in 2035. This is going to be a two front war, under which China will wage war on the Arunachal Pradesh border and Pakistan will fight in Jammu and Kashmir.

China has its eyes on Shaksgam valley also, has already claimed

Defense and Strategic Affairs Analyst Lt. Col. (Retd) JS Sodhi says that Dragon is now adopting a dual strategy through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Firstly, it is strengthening itself economically and secondly, it is preparing to tighten the noose on countries like India. In a way, he/she is preparing himself for the future war. From Shaksgam Valley, China wants to reach Pakistan's Gwadar port and reach Central Asia through Afghanistan. he/she has also claimed this valley.

Aksai Chin was not on the map of China till 100 years ago

Sujan R Chinoy, author of 'The Forgotten Fact of China Occupied Kashmir', writes that China had started establishing its presence in the Karakoram area since the 1750s. At that time, Qian Long was the fourth king of the Qing Empire in China. China had then claimed that the eastern part of the Karakoram Pass passing through the Kunlun Range adjacent to the Pamir Plateau had been incorporated by the Manchou Empire in 1759 itself. In the historical map of China of that time, only the lower part of Yarkand and the rivers originating from Shaksgam were shown. Before 1890, China made no

claims to the Shaksgam Valley, nor was Aksai Chin shown as part of Xinjiang province.

Chinese PM claimed the area by writing a letter to Nehru

With the Karakoram Tract Agreement signed with Pakistan on March 02, 1963, China captured Raskam and also started claiming the Shaksgam area. On January 23, 1959, Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai, in a letter to the then Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, talked about his/her claim in the Frontiers area of Jammu and Kashmir. In 1953, Chinese forces started infiltrating from the eastern Hunza area.

Jinping's CPEC project is a big dream

One reason behind the continuous attacks by Pakistan-backed terrorists in Jammu instead of the valley is China's economic corridor which is passing through PoJK. China has already invested US\$65 billion in the CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) project. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is an ambitious plan of Chinese President Xi Jinping, which was launched in 2013. India has been opposing this project because PoJK is an integral part of India.

### **India's geopolitical manoeuvring disrupts Mongolia's religious harmony**

02 October 2024, Pakistan Today, Imran Khalid

Interference in matters beyond its ken.

India has long pursued an assertive stance, intruding into the domestic affairs of its neighbouring countries. Whether it's Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Bangladesh, Nepal, or Bhutan, India's hand in meddling is unmistakable, driven by a desire to cement its sway in the region.

Yet, this tendency to interfere doesn't stop at its immediate vicinity. Far from the Indian subcontinent, we see Mongolia— an isolated, landlocked country squeezed between Russia and China— emerge as the latest theatre for India's ambitions. Here, India seems bent on chipping away at the strong ties Mongolia shares with Russia and China, countries with which it has historically enjoyed warm relations.

Recent actions by India regarding Mongolia's religious affairs have caused significant concern, particularly in the context of the 10th Bogd Jebtsundamba Khutuktu, the spiritual leader of the Gelug lineage of Tibetan Buddhism in Mongolia. The Bogd— an emblem of Mongolia's very soul— traces roots back nearly four centuries, intertwined with the legacy of the Mongol emperor, Kublai Khan. A lineage that embraced Tibetan Buddhism, spreading its influence far beyond Mongolia, even into the vast stretches of China and the conquered lands.

In the early 1900s, a Tibetan-born Bogd (pronounced bogged) ruled Mongolia as a theocratic leader, revered not just as a ruler but as a god-king. However, when the last Bogd passed away in 2012, murmurs of concern rippled through Mongolia. The fear? That India, wielding the influence of the Dalai Lama— who's been in exile in India since 1959— might attempt to steer or even dictate the selection of the next Bogd. The ninth Jebtsundamba Khutuktu spent much of his life in exile — first in Tibet, then in India. It wasn't until 1990, long after his identity had been kept under wraps by the Dalai Lama, that it was finally disclosed. It wasn't until 2011— just a year before his death— that he was finally able to take up residence in Mongolia and be enthroned as the leader of Mongolian Buddhists. After the death of the ninth Bogd, the Dalai Lama asserted that the reincarnation of the Jebtsundamba Khutuktu had been found. Yet, he remained tight-lipped, revealing nothing until 8 March 2023, during a ceremony in Dharamsala. The Dalai Lama introduced the world to the new Jebtsundamba Khutuktu— a young boy named "A. Altannar."

But here's where the tale takes a twist. The full first name? Not disclosed. And the plot thickens, for there aren't just one but two "A. Altannar." Identical twins. Both their names begin with an "A" — Achildai Altannar and Agudai Altannar. So, which one is the true Jebtsundamba Khutuktu? The answer lies shrouded in secrecy, known only to five people: the two 8-year-old boys, their mother (a college professor of mathematics), their father (a scion of a mining fortune), and, of course, the Dalai Lama himself.

Apparently, at the behest of India, the Dalai Lama's has embraced an American passport holder boy as the 10th Jebtsundamba Khutuktu, marking an upsetting moment in the spiritual and political landscape of Tibetan Buddhism. For believers, reincarnation is a divine mystery, guided by higher powers. Yet, it's hard to ignore the political undercurrents that often shape the lives of these spiritual figures, particularly in how they are educated and positioned within the broader geopolitical context.

Policymakers in New Delhi seem to believe that by steering the selection of the 10th Bogd in their favour, India could subtly expand its influence in Mongolia — a move that might serve to unsettle both China and Russia over the long haul. This strategic calculation reflects India's broader geopolitical ambitions, where cultural and religious diplomacy intertwine with the pursuit of regional power dynamics.

India's involvement in this sacred process, especially in the identification and education of the 10th

Jebtsundamba Khutuktu, represents a concerning overreach into Mongolia's internal affairs. The Dalai Lama's acknowledgment of the 10th reincarnation further denotes India's growing interference in Mongolia's religious sphere. This move suggests a strategic attempt by India to exert influence over Mongolia's cultural and religious landscape. The Dalai Lama's handling of matters pertaining to the selection and education of the 10th Jebtsundamba Khutuktu reflects this complex interplay of spirituality and politics.

It is still shrouded in mystery why he has selected an American-born boy from a rich family— despite intense resistance by the boy's parents, who initially refused to accept his verdict about their son. This manoeuvre, however, hasn't been met with universal approval. In Mongolia, reactions have been mixed, with many taking to social media to express scepticism and confusion. It's clear that not everyone is comfortable with the 14th Dalai Lama's actions

The Dalai Lamas have long claimed that the Jebtsundamba Khutuktu is an incarnation of Taranatha, a 16th-century Tibetan master of the Jonang tradition. However, the Jonang School itself has not publicly endorsed this recognition, raising further questions about the legitimacy of the Dalai Lama's decision. Historically, the Gelug tradition, to which the Dalai Lama belongs, has had a contentious relationship with the Jonang School, adding another layer of complexity to this situation.

This development is being viewed as a potential threat to the stability and independence of Mongolia, raising alarms about the broader implications for regional sovereignty. When external powers, like India, intervene in such a delicate process, it not only undermines the sovereignty of the affected nation but also disrupts the sanctity of its religious practices. Concerns extend beyond the immediate political ramifications; they encompass the preservation of religious integrity.

The recent involvement of India in the selection process of the 10th Bogd Jebtsundamba Khutuktu raises serious questions about the intentions behind such actions. This move is not merely a matter of religious significance; it carries the potential to destabilize regional harmony.

The selection of the 10th Bogd Jebtsundamba Khutuktu should remain an internal matter, free from external interference, to ensure that the process aligns with Mongolian customs and religious practices. In the interest of regional stability, it is imperative that all nations honour the internal affairs of their neighbours, safeguarding the delicate balance that underpins peace and cooperation in the region.

Policymakers in New Delhi seem to believe that by steering the selection of the 10th Bogd in their

favour, India could subtly expand its influence in Mongolia – a move that might serve to unsettle both China and Russia over the long haul. This strategic calculation reflects India's broader geopolitical ambitions, where cultural and religious diplomacy intertwine with the pursuit of regional power dynamics.

### **Chinese are seeing India as going soft. Talk of 'consensus' over disengagement rings hollow**

02 October 2024, The Print, Sana Hashmi

A review of Chinese media and social platforms reveals a widespread perception that India has adopted a more conciliatory approach towards China.

The India-China border dispute remains a critical flashpoint in bilateral relations, where the nuances of diplomacy are often overshadowed by competing narratives.

A statement last week from the Chinese Defence Ministry asserted that both countries have been able to "reduce differences" and build "some consensus" on disengaging troops in eastern Ladakh, indicating a possible thaw in relations that could facilitate long-awaited normalisation. However, beneath this surface optimism lies a complex web of distrust and grievances.

As winter approaches and troop deployments along the LAC escalate, the stark reality persists: despite the hopeful rhetoric, a profound trust deficit continues to impede meaningful progress in India-China relations.

Chinese hints at India's conciliatory approach

A review of Chinese media and social platforms reveals a widespread perception that India has adopted a more conciliatory approach towards China.

Commentators suggest that the Indian government recognises that a confrontational stance may jeopardise its own interests, particularly in the manufacturing sector, which has faced significant repercussions due to hardline policies against China.

Amid US pressure to reduce reliance on China, a reporter from Guancha noted that American companies are increasingly viewing India as a potential manufacturing hub to mitigate supply chain risks. However, this strategy is complicated by India's growing dependence on trade with China. Commentators have highlighted a perceived contradiction: while hopes persist that Chinese investment could strengthen India's economy, concerns about China are on the rise. This dynamic reflects India's emphasis on the threat posed by China, even as it actively seeks Chinese investments— which is viewed as a stronger inclination for normalisation from India than from China.



Discussions within Chinese media often exhibit an air of arrogance regarding India's potential as a manufacturing alternative to China. Analysts remain sceptical about India's ability to serve as a viable substitute in the economic sphere. Many argue that India will struggle to surpass China or replicate its achievements over the past three decades within a similar timeframe, citing significant challenges in advancing its manufacturing capabilities.

Notably, Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's recent statement that India can "chew gum while walking" has been interpreted as an indication of India's willingness to pursue normalisation with China while maintaining its alignment with the Quad, BRICS, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). However, some warn that this so-called "fence-sitting diplomacy" could result in greater losses for India.

In a media comment, Qiu Yonghui, a professor at the Centre for South Asian Studies at Sichuan University, cautioned against hasty assertions regarding India's potential to significantly recalibrate its relations with China. She noted that while some adjustments may be likely, the ongoing stalemate over border issues necessitates improvements in infrastructure and engineering technology—areas where India remains heavily dependent on China. And Long Xingchun, a professor from the School of International Relations at Sichuan International Studies University, characterised India as a regional hegemon grappling with concerns over its declining influence in South Asia.

But overall, there is a growing perception among Chinese commentators that India's stance has softened in recent years. Enhanced communication with China is seen as an indication of India's genuine interest in swiftly resolving territorial disputes. Moreover, Chinese analysts observe that Indian media increasingly reflects optimism about Sino-Indian negotiations, likely influenced by India's current economic situation. The discourse is stuck between the idea that India will never be able to catch up with China and the belief that China should not help its adversary's rise.

On platforms like Weibo, users frequently disparage India's infrastructure, with some advocating for China to assist in its development by highlighting its high-efficiency, low-cost construction capabilities as a potential solution. However, one commentator argued against Chinese companies investing in India and aiding its industrial capacity, warning that a stronger India would pose a greater threat to China than the US. Furthermore, a Weibo user pointed out that Chinese state-owned enterprises have helped India build its largest steelmaking blast furnace — which has angered many in China who

believe this contributes to India's industrial advancement and could pose a future threat.

**China's deception**

China's attempts to emphasise aspects of bilateral relations beyond border disputes may be misleading. This strategy does not change the realities on the ground or alter China's actual position. Last Friday, Chinese spokesperson Lin Jian reiterated: "The area of Zangnan is Chinese territory, and it's illegal, and null and void for India to set up the so-called Arunachal Pradesh in Chinese territory. China's position on this issue is consistent and clear."

China's actions simply do not align with its words regarding India. While Beijing has long urged New Delhi to focus on issues beyond the border dispute, the current narrative suggesting consistent disengagement by China—while portraying India as eager to adjust its stance for commercial interests—appears disingenuous. This effort seems designed to distract from underlying issues and points of contention, while also fostering a false narrative that India is going soft on China.

### **The Tibet International Communication Center and China's Latest Manipulation Exercise**

02 October 2024, Japan Forward, Professor Pema Gyalpo

China has launched the Tibet International Communication Center to control the narrative on Tibet, suppress Tibetan voices, and spread disinformation globally.

In a brazen move that underscores its relentless campaign to control the global narrative on Tibet, China has launched its latest propaganda tool, the Tibet International Communication Center in Lhasa. This development, unveiled on September 2, 2024, marks a significant escalation in Beijing's efforts to manipulate international public opinion. In addition, it seeks to further suppress the voices of Tibetans.

Far from an isolated incident, the establishment of this center is a well-calculated strategy that has been years in the making. It follows the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) longstanding playbook of information control and narrative manipulation. Now, however, it is supercharged with modern technology and global reach. As the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) rightly warns, this move signals an imminent intensification of China's propaganda machine. It aims to dominate the global conversation on Tibet with its distorted storytelling.

**Constructing a False Reality**

At the heart of this propaganda offensive lies a sinister attempt to rewrite history and erase Tibetan identity. For example, the CCP's push to replace the internationally recognized name "Tibet" with the

Sinicized term "Xizang" in global discourse. Beijing discreetly initiated this linguistic sleight of hand in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. It aligns perfectly with CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping's vision to "tell a good Chinese story" on the world stage. But make no mistake - this "good story" is nothing more than a fabrication designed to obscure the harsh realities of China's occupation and oppressive rule in Tibet.

The launch of the center came with a flurry of official statements that revealed the true nature of China's intentions. Wang Junzheng, the CCP's top leader in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), didn't mince words when he stressed the importance of "ideological guidance" in external propaganda.

His call to "build a foreign discourse system and narrative system related to Tibet" is a thinly veiled admission of the CCP's intent to construct an alternative reality. In this CCP-constructed reality, a narrative of Chinese benevolence and progress replaces Tibet's rich cultural heritage and struggle for autonomy. They believe if they chant their lies a hundred times, it becomes a reality.

#### Disseminating False Narratives

This new propaganda center is set to leverage a multi-pronged approach to spread its false narrative. State-controlled media outlets like China Daily and the China Global Television Network (CGTN) will undoubtedly play pivotal roles in disseminating China's perspective on Tibetan issues to a global audience.

A recent agreement between China Daily and the China Tibetology Research Center to establish the Tibetology International Communication Center shows this strategy in action. Shifting away from "monotonous data" towards "storytelling" represents a more insidious form of manipulation. Through this, the CCP seeks to "win attention and hearts worldwide" through emotional appeal rather than factual representation. This constitutes a significant threat to authentic information about Tibet's situation. The implications of this propaganda offensive are far-reaching and deeply troubling. As the CCP intensifies its efforts to control the narrative, the voices of Tibetans are at risk of being further marginalized and silenced. Their true stories of cultural suppression, human rights abuses, and the ongoing struggle for genuine autonomy are in danger of being drowned out by a flood of state-sanctioned misinformation. Moreover, the international community faces increased pressure to adopt China's narrative on Tibet.

Diplomatic efforts to influence policy decisions and public statements regarding Tibet's status are likely to intensify. This could potentially compromise the integrity of international bodies and governments. Expanding Chinese "cultural and educational"

initiatives presenting a China-centric view of Tibetan history and culture threaten to distort the global understanding of Tibet's rich heritage and complex political situation.

#### A Broader Agenda

Recognizing that this propaganda center is not an isolated entity but part of a broader, more insidious strategy is crucial. The CCP's claim of facing "restrictions" in conveying its message about Tibet to the West is laughably hypocritical, considering its systematic suppression of dissent within Tibet. This false narrative of victimhood is a classic tactic authoritarian regimes employ to justify their propaganda efforts and deflect criticism.

In the face of this propaganda onslaught, the international community must remain both vigilant and critical. China's narrative of "high-equality development" in Tibet often serves as a smokescreen for human rights violations and cultural suppression. It is imperative that global leaders, media, and civil society organizations scrutinize China's claims. They must seek out authentic Tibetan voices to counter this state-sponsored disinformation campaign.

Recent actions by United Nations human rights experts are demanding answers regarding China's repression of dam protests in Tibet. These actions serve as a model for the international scrutiny needed in such situations. Such initiatives are vital in challenging China's narrative and bringing attention to the realities on the ground in Tibet. As China ramps up its propaganda efforts, the need for Independent, fact-based reporting on Tibet becomes even more critical. The international community must support and amplify the voices of Tibetans, both inside and in exile, to ensure their stories and struggles are not erased by China's propaganda machine.

#### Standing Firm for Tibet

Establishing this center in Lhasa is not just about controlling information- it is about controlling minds and shaping global perceptions. It represents a direct assault on truth, freedom of expression, and the right of Tibetans to tell their own story. China seeks to "seize the power in the international discourse about Tibet."

The world must stand firm in its commitment to truth, human rights, and the preservation of Tibetan culture and identity. Against this propaganda offensive, silence is not an option. Ensuring that the authentic voices of Tibetans are heard and challenging China's false narratives demand a renewed commitment from the international community to support Tibet. Sustained vigilance, critical analysis, and unwavering support for human rights are essential to counter China's propaganda machine. Only then can we preserve the truth about Tibet for future generations.

# September

**Communist China is celebrating its 75th birthday and its stock market is soaring. But not everyone is in the party spirit**

30 September 2024, CNN

For much of the past year since China reopened to the world following the Covid-19 pandemic, a pall has hung over large swathes of the country as its economy struggles to regain momentum.

The country's bright young minds are having a hard time landing a job; its white-collar professionals are hit by pay cuts and layoffs; its entrepreneurs struggle to finance their businesses and pay off debts; its middle-class families are seeing their wealth slashed by crumbling housing prices; and its rich race to move money out of the country.

In the months leading up to the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic on Tuesday, the mood was encapsulated by a new buzz phrase: "the garbage time of history." Like the final minutes of a basketball game with one team trailing so far behind that all efforts to win seem futile, some Chinese believe their country is trapped in a similarly bleak period with little hope for a turnaround.

The pessimism was a far cry from the buoyant outlook just five years ago, during the last major National Day celebrations in 2019. Back then, economists were rushing to predict when China might overtake the United States to become the world's largest economy. Those conversations aren't happening much anymore. These days, the talk centers on how Beijing can avoid a repeat of Japan's "lost decade" of economic stagnation following bursting of its housing bubble in the 1990s.

Last week, after months of increasingly grim economic data, Chinese leader Xi Jinping finally gave the nod to a much-needed stimulus package in a bid to shore up faith in the world's second largest economy.

On Tuesday, the country's central bank unveiled a raft of measures to counter falling prices, including freeing commercial banks to lend more money and making it cheaper for households and companies to borrow.

Officials kept up the positive drumbeat the next day by announcing rare cash handouts to disadvantaged citizens and pledging subsidies for recent graduates struggling to find a job.

And on Thursday, the ruling Communist Party's 24-member Politburo continued the bullish messaging. In a break with tradition, Xi dedicated the group's September meeting to economic affairs.

The top officials acknowledged that "new situations and problems" have arisen in the economy and demanded urgent action, vowing to boost fiscal spending, arrest the decline of the property market and improve employment for fresh graduates and migrant workers.

According to Xu Tianchen, senior economist at the Economist Intelligence Unit, the "rare, simultaneous rollout of so many measures underscored the urgency for policymakers to prop up the economy."

The policy blitz gave an adrenaline shot to the country's dismal stock market days before the week-long national holiday, which starts on Tuesday. China's blue-chips stocks soared more than 15% last week in its biggest single-week gain in nearly 16 years. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index surged 13%, notching its best week since 1998, according to Reuters.

The frenzy continued on Monday, when the combined turnover on the Shanghai and Shenzhen bourses exceeded 1.8 trillion yuan (\$228 billion), logging a record high, according to the Securities Times, a state-run financial newspaper. That's despite a key measure of factory activity, the official purchasing managers' index (PMI), shrinking for another month in September.

Remarkable turnaround

Even some big-name investors are excited by the rally. David Tepper, the billionaire founder of American hedge fund Appaloosa Management, told CNBC in an interview Thursday that he was buying more of "everything" related to China.

The stock market may be in the midst of one of its most remarkable turnarounds, but economists say reversing China's economic downturn will require much more work.

"Stimulating the stock market doesn't really do much for the real economy in China. Very few people invest in the stock market compared to other major markets," said Logan Wright, director of China markets research at Rhodium Group.

Chinese households have suffered a massive loss of wealth from a slump in the housing market, amounting to an estimated \$18 trillion, Barclays economists said in a research note earlier this month. It's as if each three-person household in China has lost around \$60,000, an amount that is almost five times China's per capita gross domestic product.

Wright said the stimulus package "makes the leadership look more reactive, more responsive to the downturn in the economy. And that is what's generated some of the more positive sentiment (last) week. But nothing really changes in terms of the structural outlook."

China's decades-long investment-led growth has reached "a dead end," and fundamental overhauls of its fiscal system — including a redistribution of

income and greater transfers to households — are needed to rebalance the economy toward a more sustainable consumption-led growth model, Wright said.

There has been little in the barrage of measures announced last week to address the underlying structural problems weighing down economic growth. China has long had one of the highest saving rates in the world. While one-off cash handouts and subsidies may boost short-term consumption, robust social welfare and healthcare are needed to make Chinese households feel comfortable to spend more in the long run, especially following the collapse of the property sector, where most Chinese invest their savings.

#### Property woes

The outlook for the real estate industry, which makes up about a quarter of the Chinese economy and 70% of household wealth, remains dim.

“There’s not much Beijing can do,” Wright said. “In many ways, the adjustment in the property sector is almost complete, and policy hasn’t been very effective in stabilizing it.”

After decades of boom, China’s real estate sector is now in its fourth year of contraction since falling into a deep crisis in 2020, when the government cracked down on excessive borrowing by developers to rein in their high debt. Beijing’s efforts to rescue the market have struggled to revive demand, with prices of new homes continuing their freefall.

In a concerted push to prop up the embattled property market, the southern metropolis of Guangzhou became China’s first tier-one city to lift all restrictions on home purchases on Sunday, while Shanghai and Shenzhen also eased rules for home buyers.

The country now has so many empty apartments that not even all of its 1.4 billion people are enough to fill them. To make matters worse, the population has been shrinking for two years, a demographic shift that could further hobble future growth.

The Chinese government’s efforts to encourage births has also failed. More and more young people are delaying marriage and childbirth, if not foregoing them all together. Many feel jaded or burnt out from “involution” – a catchphrase describing the intense competition that has dominated their lives, from striving for academic excellence to building a successful career. Some are resorting to “lying flat” or “letting it rot,” a form of passive resistance against society’s pressure by doing just enough to get by.

These buzzwords sum up a growing sense of despair among China’s disenchanted youth. Some are finding the arc of their lives increasingly out of sync with the expected upward trajectory described in Xi’s “China dream,” a grand vision of “unstoppable” national rejuvenation.

Having grown up in an era of breakneck economic growth and ever-improving living standards, China’s Gen-Zs are now reckoning with the possibility that they might not do better than their parents, whose generation accepted limited freedoms in exchange for promised prosperity.

Over the past years, China’s youth have watched their personal freedoms shrink under Xi’s authoritarian rule and their job prospects dim in a flagging economy.

Xi’s crackdown on the private sector, from big tech to private tutoring, has eliminated many jobs once available to China’s fresh graduates. The youth unemployment rate soared to 18.8% in August, the highest since authorities changed the methodology last year to exclude students.

That poses a potential problem for the Communist Party, which has for decades staked its legitimacy on the country’s unprecedented growth. As the economy slows, Xi has bolstered another pillar of the regime’s legitimacy: nationalism, which he is expected to invoke to mark the country’s 75th anniversary on Tuesday.

But Alfred Wu, an associate professor at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore, said Chinese leaders are not “planning on giving up the economic performance argument yet.”

“They want to restore confidence in the economy, but the most troublesome headache for the Communist Party is they don’t have effective solutions to the economic slowdown.”

### **The 57th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council and Chinese Stance**

28 September 2024, Modern Diplomacy, Prof. Engr. Zamir Ahmed Awan

The ongoing 57th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) continues its critical work of promoting and protecting human rights globally.

The ongoing 57th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) continues its critical work of promoting and protecting human rights globally. Established in 2006 by the UN General Assembly, the UNHRC replaced the Commission on Human Rights, aiming to address human rights violations and ensure accountability. Based in Geneva, the Council comprises 47 member states, elected by the General Assembly, and meets regularly to discuss pressing human rights issues.

#### Historical Background and Importance

The creation of the UNHRC marked a significant shift in the global human rights landscape. It was founded to address concerns over the politicization and inefficacy of the earlier Commission, emphasizing a

more objective and credible approach to human rights. Since its inception, the Council has served as an essential platform for addressing a wide range of human rights violations, conducting investigations, and holding governments accountable for their actions.

#### Functions and Aims

The UNHRC's primary function is to promote universal respect for the protection of all human rights—civil, political, economic, social, and cultural. The Council reviews human rights situations in UN member states through mechanisms like the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), where every nation's human rights record is assessed periodically. It also responds to urgent crises, commissions fact-finding missions, and offers recommendations to governments.

#### The Significance of the 57th Session

The 57th session comes at a critical time when global human rights issues such as conflict-related abuses, migration crises, and environmental challenges are at the forefront of international debate. This session is particularly important as it continues the Council's work in addressing new and emerging threats to human rights, while promoting dialogue, cooperation, and international standards.

The UNHRC serves as a vital institution in the global effort to ensure human dignity, freedom, and justice. Its ongoing work in the 57th session reaffirms the international community's commitment to uphold human rights for all, in line with the principles of the United Nations.

#### Politicization of Human Rights

It has been observed that some countries are increasingly politicizing human rights issues, using them as tools to advance their geopolitical agendas. A clear example of this is seen in the selective nature of the United States' annual human rights reports, which tend to target nations like Russia, China, and a few others that are perceived as political adversaries. While these countries face scrutiny, glaring human rights abuses by other nations, particularly those aligned with U.S. interests, are conspicuously overlooked.

For instance, Israel, widely regarded as one of the most significant violators of human rights throughout modern history, is rarely, if ever, mentioned in U.S. reports. The ongoing oppression of Palestinians, destruction of civilian infrastructure, and repeated violations of international law have been largely ignored. Similarly, India, which has consistently faced accusations of gross human rights violations, particularly in Kashmir and against religious and ethnic minorities, escapes substantial criticism from the U.S. government. Despite India surpassing many nations in terms of human rights abuses, the U.S.

remains largely silent, prioritizing strategic alliances over human rights advocacy.

Even within its own borders, the U.S. faces serious human rights concerns. Issues like systemic racial discrimination, police brutality, and the treatment of migrants have reached alarming levels, yet these problems are rarely acknowledged in the same critical manner the U.S. reserves for other nations. This selective focus undermines the credibility of human rights advocacy, revealing a double standard where violations are condemned based on political convenience rather than universal principles.

In light of this, the international community must strive to ensure that human rights are defended impartially and consistently, free from political bias. Selective enforcement and politicization only weaken global efforts to uphold human dignity and justice.

#### Chinese Stance and global support

Over 100 countries expressed their support in various ways, both jointly and individually, for China's position on issues related to China's Xinjiang, Xizang, and Hong Kong regions and opposed the politicization of issues on human rights following statements made by the US and handful of countries which smear China's human rights situation during the ongoing 57th session of the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council.

The representative from Cuba made a joint statement on behalf of nearly 80 countries during the council, emphasizing sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, in addition to non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign countries, are the basic norms of international relations, according to a release from the Permanent Mission of China to the UN Office in Geneva and other international organizations in Switzerland on Wednesday.

The joint statement noted that issues related to Xinjiang, Xizang, and Hong Kong Special Administrative Region are internal affairs of China. They oppose the politicization of human rights issues and the application of double standards, as well as using human rights as an excuse to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries.

All parties should adhere to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, follow principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity, and non-selectivity, and respect the right of the people of each state to choose independently the path under their national conditions.

Ambassador Chen Xu, permanent representative of China to the UN Office in Geneva and other international organizations in Switzerland, said the current atmosphere of politicization and polarization in the Human Rights Council is intensifying.

The Human Rights Council should not be a venue for confrontation and pressure, but it should play its role in helping countries build trust and promote



cooperation through dialogue and communication, Chen said.

Other representatives also emphasized that all parties should view the human rights conditions in other countries objectively and engage in dialogue and cooperation on human rights issues based on equality and mutual respect. They called for avoiding selective and double standards and jointly resisting the erroneous practices of politicizing, instrumentalizing, and weaponizing human rights issues.

The Chinese delegation also described the real situation of human rights protection in China, exposing the serious human rights violations existing in countries like the US, and urging these countries to effectively protect human rights and contribute more to the international human rights cause.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian stated on Wednesday that the support expressed by more than 100 countries at the UN for China once again demonstrates that the politicization of human rights issues by the US and a few other countries is unpopular and destined to fail within the international community.

China urged the US to seriously reflect on and address its own grave human rights issues, including racism, gun violence, social injustice, and violations of immigrants' rights. Lin further called on the US to safeguard the rights of its citizens, stop interfering in other countries' internal affairs, and engage constructively in international human rights cooperation.

### **What is China doing at such heights in Tibet? The research report revealing the truth about PLA is surprising.**

28 September 2024, Press Wire

China is laying a network of helicopter bases in Tibet. This is a big challenge to India's security. Research by the Takshashila Institution has revealed that about 90% of China's helipads in Tibet are at an altitude of 3,300 to 5,300 meters (10,000 to 17,400 ft) above sea level. 80% of these helipads are at an altitude of more than 3,600 meters. This disclosure is an alarm bell for India because China can use these helipads to rapidly transport troops and weapons to the border.

China's conspiracy on India-Bhutan border

Research has also shown that China is building these helipads near the border with India and Bhutan. These helipads are an important part of China's military strategy and have increased the threat to India. 109 helipads have been studied in the research. Of these, only two helipads are at an altitude of 780 to 2600 meters. 32 helipads are located at an altitude of 2700 to 3600 meters, 44

helipads are located at 3700 to 4300 meters and 25 helipads are located at an altitude of 4400 to 4700 meters. Six helipads are at an altitude of 4800 to 5400 meters.

Shocking revelations in the research report

Professor Y Nithyanandam, head of the geospatial research program at the Takshashila Institution in Bengaluru, has written an article for The New Indian Express. In this he/she said that China can use these helipads for military operations. he/she can use them for movement of troops and weapons, to increase surveillance and to provide help in emergency situations.

The research report led by Dr. Nithyanandam states that China is rapidly increasing its military capability in the highlands. Earlier, flying helicopters in high altitude areas was considered a weakness of China, but now it is rapidly overcoming this shortcoming. As part of its military strategy, China is also expanding helipads as well as airstrips. It plans to use airstrips less than 1,000 meters long for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).

China is continuously increasing its military capability. Over the past decade, China has invested heavily in helicopter infrastructure, increasing its military capability. This investment is not just a response to incidents like the 2017 Doklam standoff or the 2020 Galwan Valley conflict. Rather, it is a deliberate strategy aimed at ensuring long-term gains in an area where geographical conditions and altitude pose serious challenges to PLA (People's Liberation Army) troops. For example, the Z-20 and Z-8L helicopters are specifically designed to operate in the difficult conditions of the Tibetan Plateau, demonstrating China's will to overcome obstacles posed by adverse conditions.

The report said, 'The speed with which China is building heliports reflects its aggressive military expansion.' Some heliports included in the study are being modernized and some new heliports are being built. China is laying a network of helicopter bases near LAC. Helipads and airports have been built at a distance of 5 kilometers, 10 kilometers, 25 kilometers, 50 kilometers, 100 kilometers and 200 kilometers from the LAC.

Are there any preparations for war?

These helipads will help in military operations and deployment of troops on the border. By combining these helipads with other military facilities such as radar stations and surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites, China is creating a strong military network that it can quickly deploy in the event of any border dispute. The report says that India needs to be cautious of this move by China. India will have to strengthen its military capability and keep a close watch on China's actions.

## Securing the Legacy: The Future of the Dalai Lama and Tibet. A Tibetan Point of View

27 September 2024, Bitter Winter , Ugyen Gyalpo

To avoid Chinese maneuvers, the 14th Dalai Lama may consider self-emanating when he is still alive, i.e., appointing a successor and recognizing him as his "emanation."

Just few weeks ago, the Tibetan community of New York and New Jersey offered Tenshug, long life prayer ceremony for His Holiness the Dalai Lama at the UBS Arena in New York. Seventeen thousand Tibetans and other devotees of His Holiness showed up who were lucky enough to get the tickets for this small venue arranged by the able organizers at a short notice.

A poignant moment of the whole ceremony was the time when four hundred Tibetan children facing His Holiness sitting on the traditional Buddhist throne sang the song "Tashi Sho." The arena's massive screen alternated between images of children singing and the crescendo of their emphatic voices echoing through and the visibly smiling image of the Dalai Lama which looked noticeably frailer as he was recovering from a knee surgery. The cropped-out video of the children singing went viral on Chinese social media within Tibet, although it omitted the stage where His Holiness was seated.

I was deeply moved by this powerful moment, and many others were similarly reduced to tears. Witnessing somebody who embodies Avalokiteshvara and has served as a fatherly figure for the Tibetan people was profoundly emotional.

His Holiness has guided the Tibetan movement through tumultuous times and has been instrumental in preserving Tibetan language, culture, and the future of Tibetans born in the diaspora, who are now thriving globally. The thought of Him slowly succumbing to aging and the forces of nature was a sinking feeling. Despite His Holiness's assurances through prophetic dreams that he would live up to the age of 113, the reality of the Tibetans people's vulnerability without him is undeniable. The Chinese government, with its "long wait game," seeks to exploit this vulnerability.

China is known for employing the stratagem of "long wait game" and the issue of Dalai Lama's reincarnation process is no exception. For almost three decades now dating back to 1995, China already hatched the plan to hijack the reincarnation process of the Dalai Lama and set the foundation of its sinister campaign by conspiring and executing the abduction of the 11th Panchen Lama, a six-year old boy recognized by the Dalai Lama, next in line on the Tibetan Buddhist hierarchy. After the abduction of the six-year-old child and the arbitrary arrest of the entire family, China soon after installed

their own fake Panchen Lama approved by an atheist Chinese Communist Party. Today this fake Panchen Lama groomed by the CCP tours Tibet, conducts Kalachakras amidst a captive audience who are forced to worship him under the barrel of the gun and advocates allegiance, adherence, and total submission to the ideology of the Party and thought of Xi Jinping.

China always has a thirty-year plan, forty-year plan, and fifty-year plan in all its policy agendas and the plan to totally hijack the Dalai Lama institution is already on the thirty-year mark when His Holiness is precariously treading on the age of ninety.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama is the soul of Tibet. Tibetans have been led politically and spiritually by fourteen reincarnations of the Dalai Lamas, and he is synonymous to Tibet itself. Imagining Tibetan existence without Him is like envisioning a lost herd of sheep without its shepherd. The hopes and aspiration of Tibetans rest on one person, and the CCP is hellbent on exploiting this. To win over the Tibetan spirit, controlling the fate of the Dalai Lama to tame the Tibetan resistance against Chinese rule has become the paramount objective of the Party. To impose their version of a manufactured Dalai Lama "made in China" to subvert, influence, manipulate, defeat, and win over the hitherto indomitable spiritual world of Tibetan Buddhism is their foremost priority.

We may lack the leverage to engage in international diplomacy and politics with China. However, in order to fight against China in its own dirty game, Tibetans, along with the Tenshug offering for the long life of His Holiness, must also request His Holiness and pray that he considers self-emanating within this lifetime. If His Holiness wishes his reincarnation to be sought outside of Tibet, then request to self-emanate into a soul of a child born in the United States of America should be included in our prayers. An American-born Tibetan child should be a "game changer." Being an American is a strong currency of its own and it comes with political clout and direct representation of the people of Tibet, in a land where many legislative measures for Tibet have been passed, and bipartisan support remains steadfast and rock-solid to this day across the aisle of the Congress.

Whether Tibet has been used for geopolitical self interest by the Americans is the debate for another day! Whether or not we acknowledge this, a vacuum without a reincarnation and looming threat of the CCP hyenas hovering around to alter the course of our history is a real concern. Therefore, ensuring a continuous presence of His Holiness without a gap between reincarnations is crucial. Imagining the 15th Dalai Lama while the 14th is still present, particularly if the child is a Tibetan American groomed by the greatest Ocean of Wisdom could thwart China's

effort to hijack the Dalai lama institution and take over Tibet entirely.

### **Xi Jinping Is Prioritizing Political Survival Over Economic Prosperity**

26 September 2024, Foreign Policy, Raja Krishnamoorthi

China is missing out on growth because the Communist Party comes first.

If the citizens of the People's Republic of China (PRC) were asked, "Are you more hopeful for the future now than you were before Chairman Xi came to power?" the answer for most, if they were able to answer freely, would likely be a resounding "no."

China's economy is facing its gravest challenges since the Maoist era amid a collapse in public confidence. Growth has slowed, the unemployment rate is high, and the housing market is tumbling. But at the recent Third Plenum, a meeting of top Chinese Communist Party (CCP) officials held roughly every five years and centered on economic policy, President Xi Jinping made clear that he has decided to stay the course and is doubling down on state control of the economy. At the same time, Xi has been baselessly claiming that the economic reform goals set at 2013's Third Plenum were met.

Xi believes in the central role of the CCP in everything—including the economy. The CCP has taken an increasingly direct hand even in private businesses, and using this leverage, his government has pursued a policy of prioritizing the expansion of manufacturing capacity through massive subsidies, embracing an export-driven economy rather than one linked to expanding domestic consumption in China. With this excess capacity, Xi hopes to gain market share by driving foreign competitors out of business through dumping the subsidized goods below cost.

Xi's plan has alarmed foreign political and business leaders while leaving the Chinese public and even local officials resigned to the fact that they have no ability to impact central policymaking. By doubling down on this policy, the Third Plenum crushed any lingering hope that the PRC would be able to break out of sputtering growth or address long-standing economic imbalances that leave it increasingly at odds with the rest of the world.

Since the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989, the CCP has maintained its power not only through force, but also through an implicit compact with its citizens that the party would deliver economic growth as long as its primacy remained unquestioned. With the current slowdown, the CCP is failing to uphold its end of that political bargain. Protests in China over labor issues and housing have become more frequent

as the unemployment rate ticks up; meanwhile, the PRC has seen the largest exodus of high-net-worth individuals from the country in its history.

The path to strengthening the PRC's economy and restoring confidence in increasingly skeptical Chinese consumers is clear: loosen the CCP's political stranglehold over the economy, acknowledge the severe problems that China is facing, and offer a realistic plan for addressing the needs of the Chinese people. Instead, Xi has chosen to tighten his grip, consolidating powerful state-owned enterprises, elevating CCP ideology, ignoring the drivers of demand and consumption, and prioritizing his political control over China's prosperity.

The Third Plenum painfully confirmed what we already know: The PRC under Xi lacks the ability to self-correct because Xi does not allow it. Xi's centralization of power has minimized opportunities for expert dissent and public discourse, sharply curtailing considerations of alternative economic policies. The results of the Third Plenum made clear that Xi believes China's economic policies are already on the right track and that better results will come when officials better implement his directives.

According to one recent analysis, party cadres and economists were demonstrably less willing to speak up and provide comments during this Third Plenum drafting process for the conference's central "decision" policy document than they were at the Third Plenum held in 2013. Xi was also less willing to listen. According to the Asia Society Policy Institute, there were 25 percent fewer written suggestions submitted for the text by cadres during this year's session than in 2013, and of those suggestions, only a meager 12 percent were accepted in the final document as 88 percent were rejected.

One of China's most loyal "wolf warriors" and CCP propaganda insiders, former Global Times editor Hu Xijin, was recently banned from Chinese social media for incorrectly interpreting the Third Plenum decision as signaling more support for the private sector. In this environment, why would any official stick their neck out to propose significant reform, no matter how necessary they believed it to be?

Xi believes that China must dominate the advanced technologies of the future, and he remains committed to that priority, even as it comes at the expense of the public good. In Xi's economic vision, social welfare programs, which would decrease the current trend of Chinese people saving more than a third of their income, would divert resources away from the PRC's pursuit of technological dominance that would support its military capacity.

In Xi's worldview, national security is based on political security, which means the security of the party. As an unfortunate result, we should expect the CCP's grip to tighten. Xi will continue to view the

economy through the lens of national security even at the expense of the PRC's sagging economy and the wealth of its people. It also means that Xi will double down on nationalism, censorship of discontent, and international bellicosity to distract from domestic challenges.

China's economic struggles have continued through Xi's crackdowns at home and increasingly aggressive stance toward Taiwan and the Philippines. Xi will continue to face trade-offs between his nation's prosperity and his total control. Based on the recent signals, we should not expect changes in the PRC's government, economic priorities, or foreign policy any time soon.

### **Restoring Tibetan Supreme Justices: An Ode to the Supreme Strength of Public Mobilization**

26 September 2024, Tibetan Review

While not claiming a direct causal link to the recent and widely welcomed amendment of the Charter of Tibetans in Exile by the Tibetan Parliament in Exile—which allows for the appointment of Justices to the Tibetan Supreme Justice Commission, Prof. Nawang Phuntsog\* highlights that the “People’s Movement for Securing the Central Tibetan Administration,” which campaigned for this change, exemplified the power of unity and collective strength when people rally around a shared cause.

In the past four years, the Tibetan Parliament in Exile has, by its own doing, subjected the Tibetan public to a tumultuous ordeal, with clear signs foreshadowing the weakening of the Tibetan establishment in exile. However, during its final session, the recently concluded 17th Tibetan Parliament in Exile marked a significant turning point—much to the relief of many, particularly those involved in the well-organized “People’s Movement for Securing the Central Tibetan Administration.” The participants of this movement were visibly emotional, with many moved to tears as they heard the TPiE’s charter amendment announcement. Although no direct causal link is suggested here, the timing of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile’s (TPiE) decision to amend the Charter of Tibetans in Exile at the last moment of its session and the mounting wave of public advocacy were on full public display. The advocacy participants watched the Tibetan Parliament session proceedings in real-time on a big screen, with the anxious eagerness of high school students waiting for the announcement of the final school examination result.

It is puzzling why the Tibetan Parliament in Exile members, supposedly the sacred representatives of the public, had the audacity and inclination to prolong an ordeal that was both unnecessary and entirely avoidable. Yet, it lasted for over three years. The deadlock originated from the infamous

Resolution 39, which sought to remove the justices in what seemed like a bitter act of retaliation. This occurred after the supreme justice commissioners, fulfilling their judicial responsibilities, imposed a nominal penalty on the TPiE’s Standing Committee for failing to convene a meeting during the COVID pandemic. The Parliament’s Standing Committee could have quickly resolved the issue through an online meeting or handled it internally, given that the pandemic forced everyone to adapt without exception.

After years of stalemate in the Tibetan Parliament in Exile, many Tibetans have questioned the relevance of Parliament members representing various Tibetan Buddhist schools. These clergy representatives, skilled in parliamentary debate and rhetoric, have been seen as obstructing resolutions that could have broken the deadlock. As a result, the Parliament’s focus has been diverted from critical issues, such as the ongoing suppression of religious and linguistic rights in Tibet. While religion itself is not to blame, the clergy’s frequent attempts to inject unnecessary polemics into parliamentary sessions have disillusioned the general public, leaving many to painfully reflect on how religion, in the political context of Tibetan exile, can be both a blessing and a curse. While the participation of clergy in the parliamentary process is a unique feature of the Tibetan exile establishment, recent questionable events have left an obnoxious and repulsive taste in the general public’s mouth.

The gravity of the situation became unmistakable when several individuals questioned the wisdom of Resolution 39 from the outset, yet the TPiE remained as immovable as a stubborn mule. This resolution had far-reaching consequences, the chief among them being that the judiciary—one of the three pillars of Tibetan democracy in exile—was left in limbo for more than three years. The issue became so severe that the public could no longer sit idly by. This gave rise to the “Advocacy of the General Public for the Sustainability of the Central Tibetan Administration,” a grassroots movement aimed at restoring the judicial branch. The movement was built on voluntary participation and led by three remarkable leaders: Mr. Tseten Phuntsok La, Ms. Tenyang La, and Mr. Tsering Siten La, who conducted numerous online meetings as part of their mobilization efforts. These leaders deserve recognition for their commendable public service, cooperative spirit, and ability to present a clear, powerful, and rational case. With humility and grace, the three leaders spoke in public and in online meetings with dignity, integrity, and courage, leaving a lasting impression on all who heard them. Many wish them to be members of the Tibetan Parliament and elevate it to greater success for the common good. Ms. Tenyang La appeared as



anyone's loving sister, but when she spoke, she delivered her message with force and a clear sense of purpose. She always folded her hands and paid sincere homage to His Holiness before beginning her speech, leaving all with deep admiration for her courageous humility.

The dynamism of this leadership trio became evident when they successfully mobilized nearly 1,000 Tibetans, young and old, monks, and nuns from multiple countries, who assembled in Dharamshala just as the 17th Tibetan Parliament in Exile was set to convene on September 11, 2024. This massive gathering included members from 25 regional chapters from India, Nepal, Europe, Australia, and North America. Thanks to the active engagement of members from these Chapters, the advocacy was a mobilization force to reckon with. It is difficult to recall a public mobilization as effective and impactful as this one, which brought heightened attention and pressure on the need to restore the judiciary within Tibetan democracy. Funded by voluntary contributions from Tibetans across the globe, united by a common purpose, to ensure the sustainability of the Central Tibetan Administration as a viable institution capable of resolving the Sino-Tibetan conflict for the welfare of six million Tibetans, this movement showcased the power of unity and strength when people rally around a shared cause. More than just a source of inspiration, the public advocacy movement proved the transformative potential of collective action when common interests are threatened, undermined, or hijacked by partisan or sectarian forces. Like many public interest groups around the world, this advocacy movement was conceived with the sole aim of serving the collective good. The organization must continue to raise public awareness and mobilize people to act whenever needed. Its success should serve as a clarion call: this movement will be there when duty calls.

### How China Soured on Nepal

26 September 2024, ORF

On July 29, China's Ambassador to Nepal Chen Song publicly mocked Nepal's efforts to locate two missing buses and their passengers following a landslide at Simaltal on the Narayanghat-Mugling road. His comments specifically targeted the Indian assistance to local rescue and search teams, ridiculing Nepal's tendency to seek support from its southern neighbor.

The ambassador's remarks drew widespread criticism in Nepal, both in the media and among parliamentarians, who condemned his insensitivity toward the grieving families and his unnecessary intrusion into a domestic matter.

This incident is part of a broader pattern of Ambassador Chen's interference in Nepal's internal affairs, often resulting in diplomatic blunders. In the previous year, he had similarly mocked Nepal's electricity trade and other economic relations with India, attracting similar condemnation. In May 2024, he engaged in a contentious exchange on social media with a local journalist over a report on China's loan to Nepal for Pokhara International Airport.

Ambassadors generally adhere to established diplomatic norms, refraining from involvement in local political matters except in situations of significant national or international concern. However, China's ambassador to Nepal has recently diverged from this tradition. Chen's actions suggest a continuation of the "wolf warrior" diplomacy that Chinese envoys have employed in recent years, especially in smaller states. This behavior reflects Beijing's growing exasperation with its setbacks in Nepal and signifies a shift toward a more assertive Chinese stance with Nepal over recent years.

#### The Equidistance Policy's Ramifications

China's frustration stems from its lack of progress in Nepal across multiple areas: political alignment, foreign policy, major economic projects, and military affairs. China experienced a loss of face when it failed to block the ratification of the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Nepal Compact. In addition, China could not counter India's renewed proximity in Nepal's political and military circles, or achieve substantial gains in Nepal's polity, economy, and military.

China has encountered challenges with Nepal's equidistance policy, a strategy that Beijing itself once promoted to recalibrate Kathmandu's approach, particularly concerning India. This policy advocates for Nepal to maintain balanced relations with India and China across political, economic, and military domains. However, if taken to its logical conclusion, the equidistance policy does not preclude Nepal from enhancing its bilateral relations with Western nations, including the United States. Consequently, the emphasis on equidistance has transformed Nepal into a zone of competition in South Asia, exacerbated by worsening China-U.S. and China-India relations.

Beijing's efforts to pivot Kathmandu's foreign policy predominantly toward China and away from Western countries suffered a significant setback during the controversy over the MCC Compact, which would see the United States issue a \$500 million grant to Nepal for improvements to electricity and road infrastructure.

In an unsuccessful attempt to block ratification of the agreement, Beijing employed scaremongering tactics, encouraging China-funded groups to propagate a



narrative that the MCC would allow the U.S. to deploy troops in Nepal. Pro-China MPs and leaders prolonged the issue for nearly five years, but the momentum eventually waned. Following this, China openly opposed the compact. Despite China's covert and overt opposition, the MCC Compact was ratified in 2022, a development that dealt a considerable blow to Beijing's ambitions in Nepal.

A major concern for China in Nepal has always been the security of its southern Tibetan border. Beijing is particularly sensitive to Tibetan refugees in Nepal and their history of anti-China activities. China believes recent U.S. actions regarding Tibet, including the passage of the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Conflict Act and a U.S. congressional delegation's meeting with the Dalai Lama in India, have emboldened these refugees. A porous Tibetan border further troubles China and therefore, it has sought greater cooperation with Nepal's army and border security forces while looking askance at the partnership between Nepal and the United States.

#### Political Complexities

Nepal's political situation reveals China's next failure. Beijing has struggled to make significant progress due to frequent government changes, leaving China uncertain about its next steps. Although former communist allies of China have periodically returned to power, they have grown increasingly pragmatic over time, seeking a balanced diplomatic approach.

Pushpa Kumar Dahal, also known as Prachanda, of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist Center, fostered deep ties with China during his first term as prime minister from 2008 to 2009. However, during his most recent term from 2022 to 2024, he maintained a balanced approach, adopting India-friendly policies. Similarly, Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli of the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist-Leninist (CPN-UML) has lately shifted toward more equidistant policies.

As expected, Oli is grappling with internal party factionalism, indirectly fueled by China, with leaders such as Narayan Kaji Shrestha, Bishnu Rizal, and former President Vidya Devi Bhandari challenging his authority. Bhandari has rejoined the CPN-UML, and China plans to support her candidacy in the 2027 general elections to unify all communist factions, a goal that Oli and Dahal have been unable to achieve. In the past, China has successfully unified the communist parties, notably through its former flamboyant Ambassador Hou Yanqi, who brokered a working arrangement between Oli and Dahal in 2020. However, this mediation proved short-lived, as Oli and Dahal frequently undermined each other.

As the widow of the late Madan Bhandari, a founding member of Nepal's Communist Party, Vidya

Devi Bhandari commands decent respect across all communist factions. China aims to cash in on her status in the upcoming elections. However, both Dahal and Oli remain roadblocks, resisting China's interference in their politics. Notably, Oli has declined to allow Bhandari to visit China on a Chinese invitation.

Unable to forge a strong relationship with the Nepali Congress Party due to its perceived pro-India stance and facing fragmented and indecisive Madhesi parties, Beijing finds itself with limited options in Kathmandu, primarily restricted to engaging with communist factions.

Consequently, the ongoing rivalry between Oli and Dahal significantly impedes China's political objectives in Nepal. China's failure to resolve this complex issue, partly due to its inexperience with democratic compromise, has left it feeling increasingly nervous and defensive.

#### Economic Doldrums

China has substantially invested in Nepal, focusing on expanding economic links across numerous sectors. Beijing has encouraged Chinese infrastructure companies to engage in projects such as road construction, tunnel development, hydropower, and communication facilities in Nepal. However, this approach faces challenges. Nepal, with its relatively small economy, can only absorb a limited amount of Chinese investment.

China initially anticipated that its economic initiatives in Nepal would facilitate trade routes to India's northern regions, capitalizing on the potential for lucrative trade. However, these expectations have not materialized. The deterioration in China-India relations has led India to discourage Chinese trade through Kathmandu and prevent Chinese hydropower companies from exporting electricity to India. This policy has dampened the enthusiasm of Chinese energy developers in Nepal.

In another example, Pokhara International Airport, developed with substantial Chinese investment, has failed to receive Indian clearance for overflights, leading to its isolation and diminished returns on investment. The significant Chinese financial involvement and high interest rates have led Nepal to formally request that China convert the airport loan into a grant. This lobbying, however, has run into criticism in China, which perceives it as a hostile attempt by Nepali leaders to undermine Chinese investments. (The high interest rate on the airport loan was the subject of the previously referenced dispute between Chinese Ambassador Chen Song and a Nepali journalist.)

China's ambitions to advance its infrastructure projects under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) have also faltered. None of the BRI projects in Nepal has

progressed, as Kathmandu prefers grants over Chinese loans and remains cautious about entering into any China-sponsored infrastructure project with sovereign-guaranteed loans. Consequently, the lack of progress in the economic sphere has heightened China's frustration.

#### Military Proximity

China has always sought close cooperation with the Nepali armed forces, hoping to moderate its pro-India leanings. Beijing found an opportunity in 2005 when the former king suspended Nepali democracy. Consequently, when its traditional suppliers – namely, India, the U.S., and the U.K. – refused to provide arms, Nepal began sourcing arms from China. This trend escalated after the communists came to power in Kathmandu in 2008. Bilateral visits, military grants, and aid increased annually, reaching nearly \$32 million by 2019.

China's military diplomacy extended to capacity-building efforts for the Nepali Army in disaster management, military medical facilities, and infrastructure development, in addition to arms supplies. However, as Chinese weaponry came under global scrutiny for quality, performance, and support services, Nepal could not ignore persistent issues with Chinese arms. For instance, China-supplied armored vehicles for Nepal's peacekeeping troops have encountered significant problems, and imported Chinese transport aircraft became costly white elephants. As a result, despite China's existing arms supply relationships, an Indian company SSS Defence secured the contract to supply ammunition to the Nepal Army in an open competition in 2022.

For better military-to-military links, China encouraged a wide range of Nepali military officials, from junior to senior ranks, to opt for professional military education programs at People's Liberation Army (PLA)-run institutions. To date, about 44 senior Nepali military officials have opted to study in the Defense and Strategic Studies Course at the PLA's National Defense University (NDU)'s College of Defense Studies. Many of these China-trained officers have risen to high ranks within Nepal's Armed Forces, including the current army chief, Gen. Ashok Raj Sigdel. In May of this year, the Chinese Embassy in Nepal hosted a reception for these PLA NDU alumni to strengthen international connections and promote deeper China-Nepal relations. However, the effectiveness of these efforts has been mixed.

The China-Nepal military relationship briefly gained momentum following the unofficial blockade in 2015 of the India-Nepal border; however, it faltered during China's own COVID-related undeclared blockade of the Nepali border from 2020 to 2023. During this period, China blocked all border trading routes, and Nepali traders and communities near the Tibetan border suffered significantly. Since mid-2023,

China has attempted to rekindle its ties and restart the Sagarmatha joint military exercises.

China has moreover, failed to weaken India's proximity and strong military ties with Nepal, rooted in longstanding institutional and veteran relationships. India has gradually worked to reduce suspicions with Nepal, leading to significant agreements in power purchase, petroleum pipelines, and infrastructure projects. This has fostered greater understanding between political and military institutions in both countries. Consequently, China's original objective of disrupting the close bilateral relationship between India and Nepal appears to be unraveling.

#### Beijing's Exasperation

China's ongoing struggle to deepen its connections with Nepali institutions across political, economic, and military sectors has led to noticeable exasperation among Chinese officials. This frustration began to build in 2019 when China's President Xi Jinping failed to secure an extradition treaty with Nepal, leading to the final two years of Ambassador Hou Yanqi's tenure ending in disappointment. The current ambassador's controversial statements, along with his defensive, quarrelsome, and undiplomatic behavior, starkly reflect China's overall disillusionment in Nepal.

Despite Beijing's efforts to quietly maneuver and improve its position and undercut the United States' and India's prospects in Nepal, the existing regional dynamics, security architecture, and tough competition from New Delhi and Washington offer Nepal multiple options, complicating China's ambitions. As a result, Beijing faces a challenging situation in Nepal, resulting in China's growing exasperation.

### **India-China relationship 'significantly disturbed' but it's key for the world: Jaishankar**

25 September 2024, The Economic Times

The India-China relationship is key to the future of Asia and it will influence not just the continent but the entire world, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said, noting that the "parallel rises" of the two countries present a "very unique problem" in today's global politics.

"I think the India-China relationship is key to the future of Asia. In a way, you can say that if the world is to be multi-polar, Asia has to be multi-polar. And therefore this relationship will influence not just the future of Asia, but in that way, perhaps the future of the world as well," Jaishankar said in his address at an event titled 'India, Asia and the World' hosted by Asia Society and the Asia Society Policy Institute here on Tuesday.

Jaishankar said currently the relationship between the two countries is "significantly disturbed".

Jaishankar, who will address the General Debate of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly on Saturday, held a series of bilateral meetings with his global counterparts during the day in the UN Headquarters and the city.

Responding to a question on China during an interaction at the Asia Society event, Jaishankar noted that India has a "difficult history" with China, including a conflict in 1962.

"You have two countries who are neighbours, unique in the sense that they are the only two countries with over a billion people, both rising in the global order and who often have overlapping peripheries, including the fact that they have a common border. So it's really a very complicated issue. I think, if you look today in global politics, the parallel rises of India and China, present a very, very unique problem," he said.

Jaishankar had recently said that roughly 75 per cent of the disengagement problems with China have been sorted out, a remark that was alluded to during the Asia Society interaction.

Referring to those remarks, the minister said: "When I said 75 per cent of it has been sorted out - I was asked in a way to quantify - it's only of the disengagement. So that's one part of the problem. The main issue right now is the patrolling. You know, how do we, both of us, patrol up to the Line of Actual Control."

Jaishankar said the patrolling arrangements after 2020 have been disturbed. "So we've been able to sort out much of the disengagement, the friction points, but some of the patrolling issues need to be resolved."

He said once we deal with the disengagement, "there is the larger issue as both of us have brought a very large number of troops up to the border. So there is what we call the de-escalation issue, and then there is the larger, the next step is really, how do you deal with the rest of the relationship?"

Jaishankar gave a historical perspective of the relationship and of the border dispute, saying the "entire 3500 kilometre-border between India and China is disputed".

"And so you make sure the border is peaceful so that other parts of the relationship can move," he said.

He added there were a series of agreements between the two countries that went into greater and greater detail on how to make sure the border remained peaceful and stable.

"Now the problem was in 2020, despite these very explicit agreements, we saw that the Chinese - we were all in the middle of Covid at that time - moved a large number of forces in violation of these

agreements to the Line of Actual Control. And we responded in kind," he said.

"Once troops were deployed very close up, which is "very dangerous", it was likely a mishap could happen, and it did happen," Jaishankar added.

Referring to the 2020 Galwan clash, the minister said: "So there was a clash, and a number of troops died on either side, and that has since, in a sense, overshadowed the relationship. So until we can restore peace and tranquillity on the border and ensure the agreements signed up to are adhered to, it's obviously difficult to carry on with the rest of the relationship."

Jaishankar said the focus for the last four years had been to, in the first instance, at least disengage the troops, meaning that they go back to the camp, the military bases from which they traditionally operate.

"Because right now, both sides have troops deployed forward," he said.

### Reimagining human rights and China?

23 September 2024, Bangkok Post, Vitit Muntarbhorn

Should human rights be reimagined, especially in the context of China? From one angle, the answer is obvious. Plenty of norms are already agreed upon globally without the need for reimagination, and China is part of that universality. Yet given the situation on the ground level and the evolving nature of human rights, there might be room for some innovative reimagination, and this deserves balanced reflection.

Formally, the country is part and parcel of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. High-powered statements from the top of the administration cite this UN declaration as a guiding light for the country. The term "human rights" appears in the country's constitution, and various national human rights action plans exist. The country is a party to six key human rights treaties, namely the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Cedaw); and the conventions on racial discrimination, child rights, rights of persons with disabilities and action against torture.

It has signed but not ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It has not yet become a party to the conventions on the rights of migrant workers and on action against enforced disappearances. The country participates in the peer-review process, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), under the UN Human Rights Council, and it has had its fourth review this past year. It also engages with the UN Special Procedures, such as UN Special Rapporteurs (varying between mandates).

On the constructive side, the country's achievements in the economic and social fields are well appreciated. It has overturned the serfdom of the past and the World Bank notes this achievement: "Over the past 40 years, the number of people in China with incomes below US\$1.90 (62 baht) per day has fallen by close to 800 million, accounting for close to three-quarters of global poverty reduction since 1980". In vetting the country's record on women's rights, in 2023, a Cedaw committee commended some developments, including the amendment to the Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women, a new law against sexual harassment, and an anti-domestic violence law.

Yet, the main quandary is in relation to the fulfilment of civil and political rights, and the treatment of minorities. This is especially evident from the various recommendations which other states, as peers, conveyed to the country during the UPR as areas needing improvement. The country rejected or noted without commitment a notable number of those recommendations during the fourth review mentioned in 2024. Out of about 400 such recommendations, it rejected nearly 100. The latter were mostly in regard to suggestions to improve the situation in Xinjiang, Tibet, and Hong Kong. A number of UN reports raise key protection gaps needing attention, especially concerning torture, arbitrary detention, excessive securitisation, and the mistreatment of various groups seen as adverse to the authorities.

A statement in August 2024 from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) remarks on the continuing dialogue between that office and the country's administration on "a range of critical issues, such as counter-terrorism laws and policies, criminal justice, other policies of concern that impact on the human rights of ethnic and religious minorities, including in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and the Tibet Autonomous Region, equality and non-discrimination, as well as national security and human rights concerns in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region."

A team from the OHCHR recently visited the country to discuss the issue of counter-terrorism policies and the criminal justice system. A subsequent OHCHR statement called for a full review of the legal framework governing national security and counter-terrorism and to strengthen the protection of minorities against discrimination. This is thus an invitation for progressive action, reimagining more effective human rights implementation in their totality. Interestingly, the country has now become a party to the International Labour Organization's conventions (numbers 29 and 105), which target eliminating forced labour, and an ILO team has also visited the country to stock-take. These conventions are monitored by an ILO committee of experts, who

adopt a low-profile approach since the proceedings are behind closed doors. This is complementary to the more public positions of the other UN mechanisms on human rights noted above. These synergies help to advocate the preferred path progressively.

On other fronts, there are varying degrees of convergence with other countries. For instance, the country advocates the right to development, especially to help raise the profile of developing countries in the economic field. For substantive democratisation, this needs to be contoured by respect for civil and political rights, in tandem with economic, social and cultural rights.

The country is also agreeable to the right to peace. Visibly, it is one of the top contributors to UN peacekeeping, both in terms of funding and the provision of peacekeepers in a myriad of peace operations worldwide.

On the newly formulated universal right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, while it is true that the country abstained on the vote in favour of this right in the UN, this was possibly due to the omission in the text of the flexible principle of common and differentiated responsibilities under international environmental law which the country advocates. This right is displayed in practice in the country by the many litigation cases against state enterprises, questioning lapses concerning environmental protection and climate change, such as the need to shift to renewable energy. The call for green transition, with access to justice as part of accountability, is thus a bridge between this country and other countries.

The advent of digitalisation and artificial intelligence (AI) has propelled reimagination on the more futuristic front regarding national and international responses. Despite superpower rivalry, there is emerging global convergence on the call for laws on personal data protection, paralleled by the need to ensure human supervision and control over AI.

Why not then – recognise universally, as a novelty, the right of humanity to AI transparency and safety for all?!

Vitit Muntarbhorn is a Professor Emeritus at Chulalongkorn University. This is the third part of his series on 'Deciphering China in a Multiplex World'. The second part was published by the 'Bangkok Post' on Sept 12 under the title 'China and Fulcrum of Peace, Security'.

## Open questions | Why minority languages are disappearing from some classrooms in Xinjiang but not Tibet

23 September 2024, SCMP, Xinlu Liang

What drew you to ethnic minority issues in China?

I'd been to Xinjiang perhaps three or four times many years ago. I was concentrating on a particular subject, which was preferential policies. At that time I was studying them broadly, going to different minority areas including Tibet, Xinjiang, Guizhou, Sichuan, Inner Mongolia. That was in the late 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s.

From that I got interested in ethnic minority policies more generally because there was a debate in China about them.

Some said preferential policies and ethnic policies were not broad enough and they weren't directed sufficiently to closing the socioeconomic gaps that existed between Han people and minority people.

The other side was people who said that basically ethnic regional autonomy had created a vested interest on the part of minority officials particularly.

The debate intensified after 2008, 2009 because in 2008 there were the demonstrations in Tibet, and then in 2009 there were the [riots] in Urumqi.

The people who are in favour of reform of the system of ethnic regional autonomy and the diminution of preferential policies then started to have the upper hand in the debate.

So as a result of that, there have been some significant changes and preferential policies in some places have diminished.

For example, the system of "additional points" [given to ethnic minorities in college entrance exams] has diminished in some provinces but in places like Xinjiang it's still pretty strong.

This is absolutely necessary in my view because the whole goal is to create more ethnic minority students, particularly from Xinjiang and Tibet, but also from other areas where the ethnic minority population is still quite rural, still has a substantial number of people who are relatively poor and has lower levels of education. So these places need to have lots of people from their community go to university, get training, come back to their areas and help them in terms of economic and social development.

Have you seen any big policy shifts in the past five to 10 years under the banner of building "a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation"?

There has been a shift but it's quite variegated – it all depends upon what part of China you're talking about.

In some places, there's been quite a significant shift in terms of no longer putting so much emphasis on ensuring either that there be a significant core of ethnic minority officials or that ethnic minority

languages be central to the educational process in ethnic minority areas. It was also the subject of controversy in Inner Mongolia [where] there is no longer any requirement that ethnic minority languages be taught in schools.

It's still the case that in some places there are continuations of the programmes of teaching people their own indigenous language, their mother tongue. At a lot of boarding schools, for example, in Tibet or in Xinjiang, the Tibetan students or Uygur students are going to have maybe three, four, five hours a week of Tibetan or Uygur.

But in other places, it just depends. Such programmes have been discontinued. For example, a primary school [in Kashgar], one of the things they told us was starting last year, they no longer had any special classes in Uygur language for the primary school students. And this is because the parents overwhelmingly rejected the idea. They want their children to concentrate on learning biology and mathematics and Mandarin. They didn't want them to spend their time [learning Uygur]. Of course, all these students were Uygur and they're in a city where 84 per cent of the population is Uygur, so they're not going to forget how to speak Uygur. They speak Uygur every day at home and to their classmates. But in terms of learning how to read and write Uygur, nobody's teaching them now.

Their parents are less interested. They are urban people and they want their children to be competitive in terms of going to a good middle school and then going to a good high school and then going to university, et cetera.

But this remains a concern among some minority intellectuals. They think it's really necessary to preserve not only speaking ability in their languages, but also reading and writing so they can have access to the literature of their ethnic groups.

Let's talk about Tibet. The Dalai Lama turned 89 in July and he's hinted that he will address the issue of his reincarnation when he turns 90. How should Beijing prepare for this, and what are the biggest challenges for Beijing, the Dalai Lama and his exiled government?

China has been preparing for this for decades. The central government will not just allow the Dalai Lama to name his successor without reacting to that by doing something significant.

The odds are [the Dalai Lama's preferred candidate] will be somebody outside because [if it's] somebody inside Tibet, he's going to be under the surveillance of the local authorities, and he may not have any opportunity to take up his office. But nobody knows whether the Dalai Lama will name a man or a woman, a Tibetan or a non-Tibetan, a child or an adult.



All we can conceive with some assurance is that the central government will definitely try to counter whatever the Dalai Lama does.

There's some rumours that the Dalai Lama will name an adult as a successor, despite the past practice of naming a child of four or five. Naming an adult has some advantages for the Tibetan émigrés of course, because the child will have to be studying Buddhism for many years. So there's at least going to be a 10-year hiatus where the successor named by the Dalai Lama really can't be taken seriously as a leader because he's a kid.

So if that happens, first of all, the Chinese government will denounce the Dalai Lama for diverging from the practice of naming a new Dalai Lama. The normal practice is a lottery: you wrap the names of candidates in a ball of tsampa [flour made from roasted barley], you put it in an urn, you have somebody pick out the winner. If it names its own Dalai Lama, the central government will probably name a kid and go through that ceremony.

There are lots of rinpoches, or reincarnated Buddha, now in Tibet who are quite loyal to the government, and they don't care much about the Dalai Lama any more, at least not openly.

For one thing, the Dalai Lama hasn't been in Tibet since 1959. The Dalai Lama is no longer a commanding presence among Tibetans generally. I think most Tibetans have heard of him, but they don't know much about him. And unless they're very devout, they probably don't care that much about him either any more.

Plus, Tibet has also been transformed economically and the level of education has gone up tremendously. A lot of Tibetans actually do think of themselves as being Tibetan and Chinese, or Chinese Tibetans anyway. They think of themselves now as part of China, and they don't hate Han people.

There was a period when there was a significant part of the Tibetan population, at least in Lhasa, who had a hostile attitude towards Han people. But that seems to have significantly subsided.

That's because now Tibetans are much more closely connected to the rest of China, not just in the literal sense of trains and planes, but mostly through language. Now a large part of the urban Tibetan population can speak Mandarin. And they have gone much further in the school system than they would have in the past, and there are a lot more Tibetan professionals. So all of this makes things radically different from even, say, in 2008 at the time of the demonstrations in Lhasa and in several other cities in Tibet.

Boarding schools in Tibet – pretty much all of them I think – have maybe five hours a week of Tibetan language instruction. So those people are taught to read and write Tibetan. They must learn Mandarin as

well ... the children are completely bilingual. So it's not the same situation as the primary school in Kashgar I described earlier.

Do you see global attention on Tibet waning as the issue of Xinjiang has come up? Will it wane further with the passing of the current Dalai Lama?

I think if the Xinjiang issue didn't exist at all, the Tibet issue would still fade.

Most people in the West know nothing about Tibet. But a lot of people have heard the name Dalai Lama, and they are mistaken about the Dalai Lama in the sense that most people think the Dalai Lama is the world leader of Buddhism, which of course he isn't.

He might be called the head of Tibetan Buddhism but at most he's really just the head of its Gelug [yellow hat] school. But there are 12 million Tibetan Buddhists in the world and there are 250 million or more Buddhists in total.

When the Dalai Lama is no longer around, the Tibet issue will almost recede into oblivion.

The Tibet issue was very much around the Dalai Lama's personality, and of course he was framed in a certain way ... as being this sort of childlike adult, very friendly and effusive and laughing and telling stories and being kind and all that.

I interviewed him once before ... in the 1990s. He was a nice guy, but maybe now his image is no longer the same. He's seen as somebody who can't get around any more, and also there was the incident about him kissing this young boy. I think given the current perspective that people have about such matters that, at least in some quarters, he's going to be a bit discredited as a result of that.

You've recently been to Xinjiang. In the current climate, how did it compare to earlier trips in terms of carrying out research and people's lives?

One thing is it's more difficult to talk to people. Foreigners can go to Xinjiang without any special permission, in contrast to Tibet. But to actually interview people is another matter – especially to get access to officials.

The first time I went to Xinjiang – in the late 1990s, early 2000s – I went to Kashgar. I wanted to interview an official from the education department, and I had a reference letter from the State Ethnic Affairs Commission. But I went to the office of this official and he just picked up a newspaper and started reading it. He wouldn't talk to me at all.

I also interviewed the head of the Religious Affairs Bureau in Kashgar. He had just got back from the Hajj – he's Uyghur of course – and I showed my reference letter. He said, "I'll answer any question you want." I was really surprised. No official ever says that. He said, "I'm close to retirement." He's a member of the Communist Party, but he was saying that.

But nowadays, I think it's more difficult because lots of people, particularly officials, are cautious about how they interact with outsiders. I'm the ultimate outsider since I'm a foreigner. But I think they're cautious even with regard to people from the mainland who come to Xinjiang. And they're even cautious with people who are Xinjiang locals at Xinjiang institutions because everything is so sensitive there now. Researchers just really have no confidence any more that they can do their research and be assured that they'll be allowed to get the data they need. And this is even more true with regard to statistical data. It's really a big problem now.

What do you think of international criticism of China's minority policies?

All these claims made about Uyghur genocide, or forced labour, arbitrary detentions – basically they have no cases to present with regard to any of those claims. There's absolutely no evidence of any person being forced to labour.

As for arbitrary detention, well, there certainly were a lot of people detained and many people imprisoned, and some of them given quite long prison sentences. But this was an anti-terrorism campaign. This was also an anti-separatist and anti-religious extremism campaign.

And the terrorism in Xinjiang was very real. Although the government has really only talked about hundreds of people being killed by terrorists, every scholar I've talked to says that this is a gross underestimate – that actually thousands of people were killed by terrorists.

Different governments of course act in different ways in anti-terrorist campaigns. Terrorists of Isis, al-Qaeda are still very much around, still carrying out terrorist attacks in many places in the world. China basically defeated the terrorists in Xinjiang, and it defeated them by some degrees of repression. That's true. They mobilised the army, they mobilised armed police, the Public Security Bureau.

The main method was to try to do something to alleviate the conditions which create terrorism, religious extremism and separatism. So they constructed these vocational educational training centres, which people in the West love to call concentration camps, internment camps, detention centres. But actually, none of this is accurate in terms of describing what was done in those places.

And they only existed from April of 2017 to October of 2019, after which they were closed down.

The centres had three missions. One was to teach people Mandarin – they learn some rudimentary standard Chinese. They were also taught about laws that they're supposed to obey – stay away from religious extremism, terrorism, separatism. And then

there were vocational skills – there were eight primary vocational skills that were available.

The people who went through that system – and they may or may not have been happy about going through it – some of them were sent there because they had violated laws. Other people were sent there just because they were suspected of being religious extremists.

How do you think China's handling of the Xinjiang issue will impact its relationship with Central Asian and Middle Eastern countries and its Belt and Road Initiative?

For Xinjiang, what's most important in terms of the Belt and Road Initiative are the neighbouring Central Asian countries.

What's interesting in that regard is that the governments of Central Asia have a harder line than even China does against terrorism, against Islamic fundamentalism.

Now these are all Muslim countries, but their governments are dead set against religious extremism because they realise that there's a direct relationship between adopting Salafist religious views – Salafism being the Islamic fundamentalist school of thought – and becoming a member of Isis or al-Qaeda or some other terrorist organisation.

So take for example this question of suppressing women wearing burkas in Saudi Arabia. China since 2014 has suppressed that. They've also suppressed men having long beards. Where did China get this idea? Directly from the Central Asian countries which passed laws earlier than China's law about this. In Tajikistan, in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, people have been arrested for having long beards. People in China have also been arrested, but they've been treated much more leniently in Xinjiang than people are treated in Central Asia. Most people are just given a warning and then they obey it. They cut their beard shorter and women will no longer wear burkas.

These governments have a much more repressive outlook with regard to terrorism than even the authorities do in China. Authorities in China are dead set on ensuring that there are no longer terrorist incidents and they've been quite successful – there hasn't been any recorded terrorist incident for seven years in Xinjiang.

Do you think Han chauvinism still exists today, and if so how does it impact minority relations?

Definitely. The main way I think it still exists today is online. And unfortunately I think the government doesn't do enough to suppress Han chauvinism. It should be taking down posts and it should even be arresting people if they advocate discrimination against ethnic minority people. After all, there's a law in China against that. So Han chauvinism definitely still exists, and it still very much revolves

around the idea that ethnic minority people are backward.

The proportion of people in the Han population who are Han chauvinists has actually diminished. In part, that is because the government does at least promote the idea that there's a Zhonghua minzu [Chinese nation]. So that includes Han people and minority people.

Looking ahead, are there any areas of minority policy where Beijing might make concessions or reforms?

It's difficult to predict but I don't think there will be any major changes, because I think major changes have already been made.

The main thing that will probably be done in terms of the minority areas is that there will be even bigger inputs to socioeconomic development. The Chinese government – while it's certainly not an egalitarian operation – nevertheless does have the idea that they want to reduce the very significant differences that still exist between the west and the east, between minority areas and Han areas, and I think they'll continue to do that.

Certainly there should be a major change in the leadership of the party and state in terms of minority people. It is not good that the Politburo – 25 people – is, first of all, male, and second of all, Han. This is a major embarrassment. There's very considerable scope for changing the nature of the top leadership to incorporate more women and more minority people. So maybe that will happen, but unfortunately it probably won't any time soon.

### **Understanding China's policy of forced labour towards Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang (IANS Analysis)**

23 September 2024, Social News XYZ

Over the last ten years, the global community and media have persistently highlighted the extensive atrocities inflicted by China upon its minority groups, particularly the Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang province. The Uyghurs represent approximately 45 per cent of the region's demographic and have endured various forms of oppression, including mass detention and indoctrination through what are termed 'vocational education and training centres'.

This has been accompanied by pervasive surveillance technologies, enforced sterilization, and systematic sexual abuse. In August 2022, Michelle Bachelet, the then UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, released a significant report indicating that China's treatment of the Uyghurs might amount to "crimes against humanity".

The report detailed large-scale arbitrary detentions, torture methods such as forced starvation and

coerced medical procedures, alongside evidence of forced labour.

The so-called 're-education camps,' which have also been referred to as 'internment camps' or 'concentration camps' by various observers, first emerged in 2014 and saw substantial expansion in 2017. According to the Chinese government's narrative, these actions are framed as necessary measures to combat terrorism, extremism, and separatism.

In 2019, claims made by the governor of Xinjiang suggested that many individuals had 'graduated' from these centres, leading to perceptions that numerous facilities had been shut down.

However, in 2020, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute revealed that this closure was merely a façade for a shift towards utilising the formal prison system for detaining those deemed a 'threat' to state security, evidenced by a marked increase in prosecutions and convictions of Uyghurs.

Furthermore, to evade international scrutiny, China has been employing deceptive strategies to suppress its Uyghur Muslim minority in Xinjiang. One such tactic involves presenting forced labour as a labour transfer initiative aimed at employment generation, industrial development, and poverty alleviation.

Adrian Zenz, a prominent researcher on China's policies in Xinjiang, examined the work practices of Uyghur Muslims in 2023 and uncovered that the labour-transfer programme involved the forced relocation of Uyghur Muslims to state-assigned jobs far from their home regions.

Unsurprisingly, these workers are threatened with prosecution or imprisonment should they attempt to leave their employment. Zenz asserted that this labour-transfer initiative is utilised in the production of various goods, including cotton, tomatoes and tomato products, peppers and seasonal agricultural items, seafood, polysilicon for solar panels, lithium for electric vehicle batteries, and aluminium for batteries, vehicle bodies, and wheels.

Another method through which China compels Uyghur Muslims into involuntary labour is via the prison system. As previously noted, recent years have seen alarming rates of Uyghur prosecutions. For example, Human Rights Watch reported that approximately half a million individuals in Xinjiang were prosecuted between 2017 and 2022.

Similarly, a leading media outlet disclosed that one county in Xinjiang recorded that one in every 25 residents was convicted on terrorism-related charges, all of whom were Uyghurs.

The accusations brought against Uyghurs by the People's Republic of China (PRC) can range from serious charges like terrorism to trivial ones such as 'picking quarrels and provoking trouble.' Given that labour is a standard practice for inmates, Uyghur

Muslim prisoners are exploited to support China's industrial growth by working in agriculture, mining, and the manufacturing of goods.

The troubling reports of forced labour in Xinjiang have prompted Western governments to implement legal restrictions on imports from the region.

In 2021, US President Joe Biden enacted the Uyghur Forced Labour Prevention Act, requiring companies to prove that their imports are not produced through forced labour involving Uyghurs. Similarly, in April 2024, the European Parliament approved legislation set to take effect in 2027 that will screen imports linked to forced labour.

Notably, by the end of the first four months of this year, the EU had already imported goods valued at \$641 million from Xinjiang. According to a 2022 study, polysilicon produced in Xinjiang, essential for solar panels, accounted for approximately 95 per cent of photovoltaic energy in the world's top 30 solar power-producing nations.

The same research indicated that Xinjiang was responsible for about 18 per cent of globally traded processed tomato products and that one in five garments worldwide contained cotton sourced from the province.

Companies face significant challenges in identifying products made with Uyghur forced labour due to China's strategic obfuscation of these practices under various pretenses, including the so-called labour transfer scheme.

Earlier this year, Human Rights Watch published a report condemning major global automotive manufacturers, including General Motors, Toyota, Volkswagen, and Tesla, for failing to adhere to responsible sourcing standards regarding aluminium linked to Uyghur forced labour in Xinjiang.

Recently, China has established itself as a leading producer and exporter of automobiles, with Xinjiang emerging as an industrial centre that experienced a dramatic increase in aluminium production, rising from one million tonnes in 2010 to six million tonnes in 2022.

Approximately 9 per cent of the global aluminium supply is sourced from Xinjiang, and since much of this aluminium is blended with other metals to create finished products, it becomes exceedingly difficult to ascertain the extent to which forced labour contributes to these goods.

While the international community is increasingly recognising the severe abuses perpetrated by China against the vulnerable Uyghur population, existing legal frameworks are inadequate due to the intricate nature of manufacturing processes and the lack of transparency surrounding them. Consequently, persistent pressure must be exerted on China to urge a change in its practices and to halt the

dehumanisation, persecution, and exploitation of Uyghur Muslims.

### There's More to China's Politics than Xi Jinping

22 September 2024, National Interest, Michael Mazza

Even though Xi has seized the helm of political decision-making, the intense focus on the general secretary himself—while necessary—has inadvertently exposed gaps in our understanding of the broader Chinese political system.

Over the course of three Chinese Communist Party Congresses—the eighteenth in 2012, the nineteenth in 2017, and the twentieth in 2022—Xi Jinping has cemented his position atop the CCP pyramid, eschewing old norms and rules governing elite politics in favor of his preferences. Pundits and politicians alike have been left to grapple with myriad new questions regarding the future trajectory of the regime's power dynamics, policy priorities, and its role on the global stage. The ripples of these changes extend far beyond the Great Wall, threatening to reshape the contours of great power competition in the years to come.

A clear lesson from the nineteenth and twentieth Party Congresses is that personal loyalty to Xi is now a key factor—perhaps the weightiest factor—in the Party's leadership ascension playbook, but even as personal allegiance has grown increasingly important, it has not completely supplanted the influence of legacy factors in leadership selection. Age, experience, and regional origins still play roles—to varying degrees—in determining who rises to the Party's senior ranks. These long-standing criteria remain significant at more junior levels, even as loyalty takes center stage at the pinnacle of the CCP power structure. Aspiring leaders must navigate a complex terrain where demonstrating loyalty is crucial, but not at the expense of neglecting other, traditionally required qualifications.

Xi's defiance of unwritten rules in personnel selection has become a hallmark of his leadership style. However, contrary to common belief, the CCP is still in a period of flux. Given Xi's advanced age (seventy-one years old), mounting domestic and international challenges, ambitious up-and-comers, and a continuing evolution of elite politics from the Eighteenth to the Nineteenth to the Twentieth Congress, there is as yet no new normal. Allegiance to Xi is an ephemeral qualification for elite advancement—in part because it's unmeasurable. Moreover, Xi is mortal. The potential for a return to more familiar patterns of leadership succession and governance cannot be discounted. Another radical shift in the way power is shared, amassed, and wielded is possible.

The upcoming Twenty-First Party Congress in 2027 will be a critical juncture, with Xi's performance and the prevailing power dynamics determining the extent to which he can shape the next generation of leaders. Over the next three years, observers should keep a particularly close eye on the evolution of factional politics within China.

Factional rivalry has long characterized Chinese politics. The two factions that had dominated the period between Deng's passing and Xi's ascendance—the Chinese Communist Youth League faction and the “Shanghai Gang”—are no longer major players. In their place, a handful of new factions have risen. However, unlike their predecessors, each of these new factions is loyal to the same senior leader: Xi Jinping. This may bind inter-factional competition in novel ways. Even though Xi has seized the helm of political decision-making, the intense focus on the general secretary himself—while necessary—has inadvertently exposed gaps in our understanding of the broader Chinese political system. What resources and prerogatives do these factions compete over? How do they compete? What role does Xi play in directing, managing, or channeling that competition? These are all open questions.

Behind the facade of Xi's all-powerful rule, contemporary Chinese politics is as complex as it has ever been. Going forward, intelligence agencies and scholarly analysts alike should explore the functioning and interaction of these new factions, seeking to uncover how they define their interests, the nature of their competition, and why they may sometimes cooperate. Such efforts will illuminate how Xi shapes and navigates this political ecosystem and how that ecosystem may evolve without him.

Indeed, this new network of Xi-centered factions may have within it the seeds of future disorder. Eventually, Xi will depart the scene. With no one atop the superstructure to manage rivalries and with the old rules of elite politics long since jettisoned, vicious competition for control of the Party—and of China—may result. Before Xi, there was inherent stability in a two-faction system. But now, there is the possibility that a unipolar party may transform into a multipolar party virtually overnight.

In Communist China, the revolution has always eaten its own. In a post-Xi China, the revolution may find a feast fit for an emperor.

### The India 'hiding in plain sight'

22 September 2024, Deccan Herald, Sanjay Sipahimalani

Seventy years ago, historian A L Basham published *The Wonder That Was India*, a sweeping ode to India's ancient history, religion, the arts, language and literature. The book was a riposte to negative

assessments of the country's heritage that had persisted from the time of James Mill and Macaulay to the imperial perspective of Vincent Smith.

“India's contribution to the world's cultural stock has already been very large,” Basham wrote in the book's epilogue, urging us to take account of its legacy, “for it is no longer the heritage of India alone, but of all mankind”. Similar views by others provide fodder to those who claim the subcontinent was the source of all that is good and great on the planet, an attitude caricatured by Sanjeev Bhaskar's character in the British comedy series *Goodness Gracious Me*: “Christianity? Indian! Leonardo da Vinci? Indian! Royal family? Indian!”

Wild claims aside, William Dalrymple writes in *The Golden Road* that “the entire spectrum of early Indian influence has always been there, hiding in plain sight”. He finds it in the Buddhism of Sri Lanka, Tibet, China, Korea and Japan, in the place names of Burma and Thailand, in the murals and sculptures of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata in Laos and Cambodia, and in the Hindu gods, rituals and temples of Bali.

From about 250 BCE till the founding of the Delhi Sultanate, India was a confident exporter of its civilisation, creating “an empire of ideas” that encompassed religion, the arts, technology, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, mythology, language and literature. Dalrymple's capacious and absorbing portrayal of this period of soft power blends recent archaeological discoveries with short accounts of his own travels, along with an abundance of archival sources.

#### Sinocentric framing

The title of the book is an attempt to rebalance the concept of the Silk Roads, the ancient overland trade routes between China and Europe that facilitated the exchange of goods and ideas. For Dalrymple, this is a “Sinocentric reframing and rebranding of history”. He sets out to show how India was at the centre of a web of influence stretching between the Red Sea and the Pacific.

To make its case, the book journeys through various staging posts and destinations over time. For a start, there are accounts of boatloads of Indian goods driven by monsoon winds making their way to and from the Roman Empire.

The process intensified after Emperor Augustus's takeover of Egypt following his victory over Mark Antony and Cleopatra in 31 BCE. Fleets of merchant ships passed between the two worlds, making India the largest trading partner of the Roman Empire.

From diamonds to rubies, from teak to sandalwood, and of course, from pepper to other spices, they couldn't get enough. Such commerce caused the puritanical naval commander Pliny the Elder to grumble that India was “the sink of the world's most



precious metals...There is no year which does not drain our empire of at least fifty-five million sesterces”.

The might of the Persians, the ravages of the Goths, and the eventual decline of the Romans in the West ultimately made Indian merchants shift focus to the East. Here, they found a Suvarnabhumi, a land of gold. Dalrymple recounts in immersive detail how the Pallavas dominated lucrative Southeast Asian trade routes, with Mamallapuram emerging as arguably the greatest entrepôt of the region.

Culture travelled hand in hand with trade, as always. Indian thought, epics, plays and dance were widely disseminated all over the newly-extended Indosphere, to use the coinage of Simon Sebag Montefiore. The process would reach a magnificent flowering with the great temple complexes of Indonesia's Borobudur and Cambodia's Angkor Wat.

As The Golden Road fluently shows, the Indosphere's ripples carried even further. Buddhism brought about a metamorphosis in China's arts, history, society and culture; with time, it was also profoundly changed and moulded by the host country.

And no such account would be complete without mention of how Indian thought in astronomy and mathematics — such as the concept and treatment of the zero — passed to the Arabs, and from them to the wider world. For this, we have the Barmakid family to thank: Abbasid viziers descended from the line of Sanskrit-literate Buddhist abbots in Afghanistan.

These broad historical currents are leavened with engrossing portraits of influential individuals over the ages. Among them are Xuanzheng, the intrepid traveller to Nalanda and tireless disseminator of Buddhist doctrine; Wu Zetian, the only woman who became emperor in her own right in 3,000 years of Chinese history; the Pallava monarch Mahendravarman under whose rule Shaiva and Vaishnava bhakti movements bloomed; and Dandin, the polymathic Sanskrit luminary of his time.

Earlier works like *White Mughals* and *The Anarchy* have amply demonstrated Dalrymple's skill in portraying times of confluence, collaboration and conjunction: eras during which one way of life collides with and blends into another. The Golden Road is another fascinating addition to the list.

### Is China losing the plot against the Dalai Lama?

20 September 2024, Greek City Times, Paul Antonopoulos

China is taking a calculated move to pre-empt the 14th Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso from announcing his succession plan in 2025. It could be seen in the recent direction of the Communist Party of China's leadership to the state-backed Buddhist monks and

religious experts to expedite the search for “reincarnated living Buddha.”

With this, it has also emphasized that policies and regulations for search of the “reincarnated living Buddha” must confirm the approval by the current Panchen Lama, who is a member of the Standing Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the country's top political advisory body.

A decision to this effect was taken at a seminar which was held in Lanzhou, Gansu province on September 3, said Tibet.cn, an official Beijing-based website.

The seminar, organised by the Beijing-based Tibetan Buddhism College of China, was attended by more than 50 Tibetan Buddhist monks and religious experts belonging to the Buddhist Association of China. The college trains officially recognised Tibetan Buddhist monks.

The top leadership of the Communist Party of China seems to be in a hurry over the selection of Beijing-endorsed Dalai Lama much before the present Dalai Lama who has turned 89 in July 2024 announces his successor next year. The Tibetan spiritual leader has indicated that he will address the issue related with his reincarnation when he turns 90.

A large number of Tibetans spread across the world and powerful international community members like the US, Europe and other countries support the 14th Dalai Lama's decision on the reincarnation issue.

The US's Tibetan Policy and Support Act, which was unveiled in 2020, maintains that the “wishes of the 14th Dalai Lama, including any written instructions, should play a determinative role in the selection, education, and veneration of a future 15th Dalai Lama.” The Tibetan Policy and Support Act calls for sanctions on Chinese officials who interfere with Tibetan Buddhists' succession practices.

This has unnerved China. Yet the CPC leadership feels that pre-empting the Tibetan spiritual leader's decision on reincarnation would allow it to have an upper hand in giving the world a Dalai Lama of its own choice.

However, the Dalai Lama has already made it clear that China should keep itself away from the incarnation issue as it is his prerogative to declare his successor, a tradition which has been followed since 1391, when the first of his incarnations was born. The Dalai Lama has been reincarnated 13 times since 14th century.

Experts feel that even if China moves to pick a new Dalai Lama of its choice, Tibetan Buddhists will not accept it as the Dalai Lama holds a great significance to them. He is seen as a symbol of their nationalism and identity, say experts. They further maintain that the centuries old Tibetan reincarnation system is built on Tibetan Buddhists' faith in rebirth.

As per the Tibetan Buddhism tradition, a search for the incarnated Dalai Lama follows a certain process which is based on signs that the existing Dalai Lama conveys to top Buddhist monks before his death. These senior Buddhist monks conduct an elaborate search for a child who is the Dalai Lama's next incarnation.

As per the Sydney Morning Herald, the search involves consulting oracles, interpreting visions, and reading spiritual signs. Besides, these monks try to find clues from the deceased body of the Dalai Lama. When the body is cremated then smoke emitting out of the pyre is monitored. The direction of the smoke provides clues about the direction of rebirth of the next Dalai Lama.

This apart, dreams are considered to be an important guide in the search for the incarnated Dalai Lama. For example, monks tasked to search for the Dalai Lama often meditate at the central Tibet-based Lhamo La-Tso, which has been revered for centuries by Tibetan Buddhists as an oracle lake. On the bank of this lake, monks meditate till they get a vision or insight into the whereabouts of the Dalai Lama's rebirth, the Sydney Morning Herald said.

After a child is found following these visions and signs, a series of tests are carried out to verify the rebirth. The child is presented with items, some of which belonged to the earlier Dalai Lama. If the child identifies which objects belonged to the previous Dalai Lama, it is taken as a sign.

The 14th Dalai Lama was found at the age of two when a senior monk saw his village and house in a vision during meditation at the Lhamo La-Tso, the oracle lake. The boy then named as Lhamo Thondup was able to identify items that belonged to the 13th Dalai Lama, including a drum used for rituals, rosaries, and a walking stick.

In his autobiography, "My Land and My People," the 14th Dalai Lama said that as a child, he recognised a senior Buddhist monk who had disguised himself to observe the local children, and successfully identified a number of articles that belonged to the previous Dalai Lama.

Based on belief in rebirth, not all incarnated Dalai Lamas have been found in Tibet. The fourth Dalai Lama was found in Mongolia, South China Morning Post said.

However, just opposed to Tibetan Buddhists' traditions and customs for the search of the reincarnated Dalai Lama, the Communist Party of China follows a tradition which was tried during a Qing dynasty (1644-1911) emperor.

The said Qing dynasty emperor used to carry out a ritual known as the Golden Urn ceremony to identify the reincarnated Dalai Lama. This ritual was launched in the 18th century, but it was disrupted by political upheavals and wars in China in the early

20th century. It was again revived by the CPC and incorporated into official regulations in 2007, the Hong Kong-based English language newspaper said. China and its appointed Buddhists want to follow this ritual in the identification of the reincarnated Dalai Lama. After the death of the Panchen Lama, the second most important spiritual leader in Tibetan Buddhism after the Dalai Lama, in 1989, the CPC-backed search team had identified a child as his reincarnation through the Golden Urn ritual in 1995. The 14th Dalai Lama and his followers refused to recognise him.

China watchers say if China insists on carrying out the Golden Urn ritual to find out the Dalai Lama of its choice, he may face the same rejection by Tibetan monks and their backers across the world.

Despite this, China appears ready to give the world the Dalai Lama of its choice. It means there will be two Dalai Lamas, one backed by China and other recognised by the followers of the 14th Dalai Lama. However, in the process to win the plot against the 14th Dalai Lama, China has failed to learn lessons from the past.

China appointed Panchen Lama is not recognised by Tibetan Buddhists and the world. The same is true with the Karmapa, third most important Tibetan spiritual leader. Tibetan Buddhists and the international community do not recognise the China-appointed Karmapa as the legitimate head of the Karma Kagyu sect.

In the matter of faith and spiritualism, China's interference will backfire, experts say. They argue that Beijing may have conquered Tibet by force, but it has failed to suppress Tibetan Buddhists physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. They continue to take bold steps while asserting their national identity; they protest against China's occupation of Tibet, while at the same time defending their tradition, practices and culture.

### **EXPLAINED: Why choosing the Dalai Lama is not just a spiritual matter**

20 September 2024, RFA, Lobsang Gelek

The continuity of Tibetan Buddhist leadership and culture is at stake. Little wonder there are politics.

The Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, has said he will discuss the details of his reincarnation when he turns 90, next July. The China Tibetan Buddhist Academy – a Chinese government-supported institution – isn't waiting. This month, in Lanzhou, China, the group held a seminar to promote its views on the matter. The bottom line: whatever spiritual force guides this sacred process must adhere to the strictures of the Chinese Communist Party, or CCP.

If that sounds unholy, that may be the point. China has very practical reasons why it wants a say in who is the next Dalai Lama, given the enormous popularity of the current one and his ability to maintain cohesion among Tibetans across the globe in their fight for greater autonomy for Tibet.

The current Dalai Lama has become an enormously popular figure. Winner of the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize, his international renown has helped maintain a unity among Tibetans in and outside Tibet, despite efforts to negate his influence by the CCP.

The September seminar in Lanzhou re-emphasized the CCP's policies on reincarnation that must align the system with Xi Jinping thought and party policies. According to Beijing's official media, the seminar attendees were Tibetan Buddhism representatives and experts from Tibetan populated areas, including the Tibet Autonomous Region and the provinces of Qinghai, Sichuan and Gansu.

But that quickly triggered a rebuttal from the Tibetan government-in-exile, the institution the current Dalai Lama helped set up in 1959.

"While China recognizes only the Tibet Autonomous Region as the only 'Tibet,' they still recruited attendees from other Tibetan populated areas for important issues," Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the president of the current government, said in response to the seminar.

"No government nor any individual has the right to interfere in the reincarnation of the 14th Dalai Lama," he added.

Who is the Dalai Lama?

"Lama" means teacher or master, and a lama is essentially a monk who has achieved some renown and taken on a leadership role within a community. There are thought to be hundreds of lamas within Tibetan Buddhism, which incorporates tenets of both traditional Buddhism and shamanistic practices that preceded its creation.

Worshippers consider the Dalai Lama to be the manifestation of Avalokiteshvara (Phakchok Chenri Se-པཌ་ཅོ་ཁ་ཆོས་ལུ་འཕགས་པ་ཞེས་པ་ in Tibetan), the Buddhist source of compassion.

The current Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, is the 14th in a line that began in 1391. Tibetans believe that when he dies he will be reborn to continue his role as spiritual leader.

Beyond the Dalai Lama's spiritual significance, thousands of Tibetans who have fled their homeland and were forced to leave behind families view him as a father figure who has provided for their temporal needs as well — security, education, health care — through an exile government he helped create in Dharamsala.

How is a new Dalai Lama selected?

Tibetan Buddhists believe that when the Dalai Lama dies his spirit will reincarnate in a new body. A

search committee traditionally composed of high-ranking monks and lamas is formed to find a child born within a year of the Dalai Lama's death who exhibits exceptional qualities and behaviors akin to his predecessor. The present Dalai Lama was two years old when he was identified.

The method of discovery includes visions, consultations with oracles and interpretations of omens. The child must recognize belongings of the previous Dalai Lama, demonstrating a connection to his past life.

Why is choosing the Dalai Lama controversial?

The process of succession affirms the continuity of Tibetan Buddhist leadership and culture, which is why China seeks to have control over the selection. Choosing the 15th Dalai Lama could help solidify authority over Tibet and provinces where ethnic Tibetans live in large numbers. There are thought to be more than 6 million Tibetans in China, compared to 150,000 in exile.

The China Tibetan Buddhist Academy's meeting this month attempted to promulgate the Chinese government-preferred process, known as the "Golden Urn Selection." The method is considered a historical custom popularized during the Qing dynasty, but is disputed by the Tibetan way of recognizing the reincarnated lamas.



Activists and members of the Tibetan Women's Association (Central) living in exile protest the disappearance of 11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, in New Delhi on May 17, 2023. (Sajjad Hussain/AFP)

A previous effort to control the selection of Tibetan leaders has met only minimal success. In 1995, Chinese authorities kidnapped a 6-year-old Panchen Lama, the second most important figure in Tibetan Buddhism, shortly after he was chosen by the Dalai Lama. The Panchen Lama and the Dalai Lama traditionally participate in each other's reincarnation recognition process, so many experts believe that Beijing will use its own Panchen to choose the next Dalai Lama.

The person they installed as a replacement continues to be viewed with suspicion by many Tibetans inside and outside China.

What has the Dalai Lama said about his reincarnation?

The Dalai Lama himself has suggested several possibilities for his reincarnation, declaring once that "If I die in exile, my reincarnation will be born in exile not in Tibet." The statement was viewed as a way to emphasize the importance of spiritual freedom.

He has also raised the possibility that the line dies with him; that a woman for the first time will be chosen; and that he may identify his successor before his death.

But despite himself engaging in speculation about the subject, questions about who will succeed him are premature, he says. He foresees living another 20 years.

### **The India-China standoff: One border, two systems Columnists**

20 September 2024, Deccan Chronicle, Claude Arpi

On September 12, 2024, India's national security adviser Ajit Doval met Wang Yi, a member of the politburo of the CPC central committee and de facto Chinese foreign minister. The encounter took place in St. Petersburg, on the sidelines of a Brics meeting, and a Chinese communiqué says: "The two sides discussed the progress made in the recent consultations on border affairs and believed that the stability of China-India relations is in the fundamental and long-term interests of the two peoples."

Wang Yi noted that in the face of a world in turmoil, as two ancient Eastern civilizations and emerging developing countries, "China and India should adhere to independence, choose unity and cooperation, and insist on mutual achievement and avoid mutual consumption." On the disputed Line of Actual Control (LAC), it said: "Both sides agreed to work with urgency and redouble their efforts to realise complete disengagement in the remaining areas."

This is much easier said than done, for the simple reason that in the first place, China has never admitted to having changed the status quo by advancing into India's territory in six places in eastern Ladakh in 2020. Another issue is that the LAC has been moving over the years. The line, which was agreed by Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai in 1956 (and reconfirmed in December 1959) is far from the present Chinese claims.

Recently, India's external affairs minister S. Jaishankar said that 75 per cent of the disengagement has already been achieved in eastern Ladakh, but the remaining 25 per cent is certainly the most complex, to put it mildly. As in previous encounters with Indian leaders, Wang Yi tried to argue that India and China are in the same boat and

if they work together, the two nations can change the whole world.

However, one should not forget that the systems of governance of India and China are vastly different; in fact, they stand at opposite ends. While India is a democracy with all its good and less good aspects, China is a totalitarian regime with a leader appointed for life. Some examples show the difference between the two Asian nations. Today's "disputed" border is with an occupied country, namely Tibet; before 1950, India had no border dispute with its northern neighbour. Beijing tries to change this basic fact with intense propaganda. On September 11, the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), a think tank based in Washington DC, released a report: "China launches new propaganda centre in Lhasa". It explains that "in the latest escalation of China's efforts to control the narrative on Tibet, a new propaganda centre called the Tibet International Communication Centre was launched in Lhasa on September 2, 2024." The Chinese propaganda would like us to believe that all is well in Tibet, which is not the case. If it was true, why should China stop visitors from coming to Tibet or Tibetans to visit their leader, the Dalai Lama, in India? In fact, the border discussed by Wang Yi and Ajit Doval is hermetically closed, even the centuries-old trade exchanges between the Indian Himalayas and Tibet have stopped; ditto for the Kailash-Manasarovar Yatra which is not accessible for Indian devotees. The first stage of the new propaganda campaign is to replace the name "Tibet" with a Sinicized version "Xizang", and begin to manifest Chinese President Xi Jinping's old slogan "tell a good Chinese story on the global stage". Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) party secretary Wang Junzheng argued that "external propaganda is an important part of the cause of the Party and the country. We must thoroughly implement General Secretary Xi Jinping's important expositions on external propaganda [and] fully and accurately implement Xi Jinping's important instructions on Tibet work". The instructions are that all is fine in Tibet. One of the tools used by the Chinese propaganda is the Beijing-selected Panchen Lama, the second highest figure in Tibetan Buddhism. The Tibet Daily recently remarked that the lama, whom the Tibetans name as the "fake" Panchen Lama, "carried out a series of Buddhist and social activities in Lhasa, the capital city of southwest China's Xizang Autonomous Region". The "Panchen" gave a talk during which he stressed "the need to firmly uphold the Communist Party of China central committee's final say on the reincarnation of Living Buddhas of Tibetan Buddhism and voiced strong opposition to secession, while calling for national unity, ethnic unity, and religious and social harmony". China is already preparing for the Dalai

Lama's succession. You could ask how this is connected with the border issue between India and China? But forceful propaganda is always linked to a weakness. Remember the Great Leap Forward, during which 30 or 40 million people died of starvation following Mao's flawed agricultural policies? The years 1958-1961 witnessed more propaganda posters on the bumper harvests in the Middle Kingdom and the happiness of the masses than at any other time. Propaganda always tries to cover a flaw or a shortcoming. As Tibetans are today prisoners in their own country, they are shown enjoying Xi's policies; this is the crucial difference between populations on the Indian and Tibetan sides of the Himalayas. This should be noted by New Delhi. On September 10, the TAR announced the beginning of the celebrations for the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China; since the ministry of public security had already designated Year 2024 as "the year of special action to combat and rectify online rumours", it was decided "to deploy public security organs across the country to carry out a one-year special action". The public security organs "have responded quickly and taken the initiative to crack down on Internet-related crimes... making every effort to maintain the order of cyberspace and social security and stability," observed the Chinese media; quite ominous for an already over-monitored region. An article mentioned the launch of a "special action": "...the public security organs of the whole region have cleared more than 13,000 online rumour information, investigated 69 online rumour cases, and shut down 65 illegal and irregular accounts according to law. ...More than 650 offline publicity activities have been carried out, and 200,000 people have benefited and participated." It concluded that "the public security organs treated both the symptoms and the root causes, supported by special operations, and helped to maintain the security of cyberspace effectively". Let us remember that there is one border, but two opposite systems. It is certainly something that India should use to its full advantage to counter China's propaganda.

### **Keeping an Eye on the Watchdog: proposed revisions to the Supervision Law**

19 September 2024, China Law Translate, Jeremy Daum

The adoption of China's Supervision Law was a major blow to the nation's ongoing criminal justice reforms. When it took effect in 2018, accompanied by a Constitutional Amendment necessary to accommodate it, it created a new branch of government empowered to investigate corruption and other abuses of public power outside the courts.

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This demonstrated a lack of confidence in the justice system to handle these sensitive cases and allowed investigators to sidestep established defense protections.

Since the law's release, additional legislation has refined the Supervision System, but draft revisions to the Law are now available for the first time since its passage and open for public comment through October 12, 2024. The major changes are noted below, followed by a comparative chart.

Expanded powers to detain suspects:

Among the most controversial provisions of the Supervision law is the 'liuzhi' or Retention in Custody (RC) system, which effectively codified the secretive Intra-Party Disciplinary (extra-legal) system of investigative detention known as Shuanggui. Those ultimately found to have committed crimes are transferred to the normal criminal justice system for trial, but this can follow months of retention in custody during the investigation, sidestepping many protections for the accused, such as the right to an attorney. Further, because the Supervision Law is concerned not only with crimes, but also with non-criminal 'serious violations' by state actors (defined as those which could result in a sanction of removal from their position under the P.R.C. Law on Governmental Sanctions for Public Employees) the law authorizes this type of investigative detention even where the offense's ultimate penalty might not include imprisonment.

The draft revisions propose expanding supervision powers to include a spectrum of measures that limit suspects' freedom to different degrees, including compelled appearances, release pending investigation, Confinement, Protective Care, and Retention in Custody. These new measures closely track corresponding language and powers in the Criminal Procedure Law, but apply to the broader range of misconduct in the jurisdiction of the supervision commissions.

### **Sinking McLeodganj: Dalai Lama's Monastery and Army Cantonment Under Threat**

18 September 2024, The News Himachal, Rahul Bhandari

The popular tourist destination of McLeodganj is facing a severe environmental crisis, as large-scale land subsidence continues to affect the area, threatening vital infrastructure, including the Dalai Lama's monastery and the Indian Army cantonment in nearby regions. The sinking land and roads, along with the emergence of deep cracks, have raised alarm among local authorities and residents.

The subsidence has been reported in several areas, including McLeodganj, Farsetganj, Jogibara Road, Tihra Line, Kalapul, and other surrounding regions.



Roads are sinking at multiple points, and the main road connecting Dharamshala to McLeodganj has subsided by 1.5 to 2 feet in several sections, making it unsafe for heavy vehicles. As a result, the movement of Volvo buses on this route has been banned. The damage has been further compounded by fallen poles and widening cracks on the roads.

#### Religious and Military Areas at Risk

One of the most significant concerns is the threat posed to the Dalai Lama's monastery, which draws both tourists and religious followers from around the world. The headquarters of the Tibetan spiritual leader and the Tibetan government-in-exile are also located in McLeodganj, making the situation even more critical. Additionally, the subsidence is impacting the Farsetganj and Tihra Line cantonment areas, where Indian Army soldiers and officers reside, further escalating the seriousness of the issue. The area is also home to a Kendriya Vidyalaya, adding to the concerns over the safety of residents and students.

#### Geological Survey Report Awaited

Deputy Commissioner of Kangra, Hemraj Bairwa, has confirmed that a detailed survey report has been requested from the Geological Survey of India (GSI) to assess the full extent of the damage and determine potential solutions. "We have instructed the Municipal Corporation and the TCP to strictly monitor all construction activities in the region to ensure compliance with building regulations. This will help in mitigating further damage caused by unplanned construction," said Bairwa.

While the GSI has already conducted preliminary surveys in the area, the final report is still pending. The delay in receiving the survey findings has prompted calls for immediate action to prevent further deterioration, as McLeodganj falls under seismic zones 4 and 5, making it highly vulnerable to earthquakes and related natural disasters.

#### Unregulated Construction Raises Concerns

Despite its seismic sensitivity, McLeodganj has witnessed unregulated construction activities in recent years, contributing to the land subsidence problem. The presence of around 400 hotels, restaurants, shopping malls, and other commercial establishments in areas like Dharamkot, Naddi, Satowri, Farsetganj, and Jogibara Road adds to the risk. The town attracts lakhs of tourists each year, further straining the infrastructure.

Local officials are worried that if timely action is not taken, McLeodganj could face a disaster similar to Joshimath in Uttarakhand, where unchecked construction and environmental degradation led to massive land subsidence and displacement of residents.

#### Need for Immediate Action

With its religious, military, and tourism significance, McLeodganj's future hangs in the balance as the administration awaits the GSI report. The focus now is on curbing further illegal construction and ensuring that the town's infrastructure can withstand the ongoing crisis. The rising cracks, sinking roads, and fragile conditions have made it clear that McLeodganj is in urgent need of comprehensive intervention to prevent a larger catastrophe.

### "Buddhist Diplomacy" and China's Support of Russian Aggression Against Ukraine

19 September 2024, Bitter Winter



The Russian delegation visits Master Yanjue and China Buddhist Association in Beijing, September 14. From Weibo.

Last week, a delegation from the Russian Traditional Buddhist Sangha visited the government-controlled China Buddhist Association at Guangji Temple in Beijing and traveled to other temples and monasteries in preparation of their participation in the World Buddhist Forum in Ningbo in October.

While the Forum will be another opportunity for Chinese "soft diplomacy" through Buddhism, the visit of the Russian Traditional Buddhist Sangha, led by its First Vice President Abbot Ochilov, who met with China Buddhist Association's President Master Yanjue and other leaders of Chinese state-controlled Buddhism, was an opportunity to advertise the Buryat Buddhist apology for the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine.

Master Yanjue expressed his support for the Buddhist establishment of Buryatia, from where Abbot Ochilov came, and emphasized Chinese (government-controlled) Buddhists' role in strengthening the cooperation between Moscow and Beijing.

The Russian Traditional Buddhist Sangha is the heir of institutions that existed in Czarist and Soviet times and allowed the government to control Buddhists in Buryatia. During the Stalin era, the Sangha was one of two Buddhist organizations allowed to exist in the Soviet Union, together with one also catering to ethnic Buryats in the Aginsky Buryat National District in Zabaykalsky Krai. Buddhist organizations in Kalmykia and Tuva were liquidated, and only in 1988 under Mikhail Gorbachev an Association of Buddhists of Kalmykia was again authorized.

The Sangha remains largely controlled by Buryats and is led by the XXIV Pandito Khambo Lama, Damba Ayusheev. The Khambo Lama's role became strategically important with the war in Ukraine, as Buddhist Buryats are over-represented in the Russian Army there. The Khambo Lama has repeatedly supported Putin's war and blessed the Buryats fighting in Ukraine.



The Khambo Lama with Putin. Credits. As opposed to this, Telo Tulku Rinpoche (Erdne Ombadykow), the Supreme Lama of Kalmykia, condemned the war in Ukraine and went into exile, with the government replacing him with a pro-war Supreme Lama.

The Khambo Lama and the Russian Traditional Buddhist Sangha have also been active since the war in Ukraine started in intensifying the exchanges with the larger China Buddhist Association, hoping to make inroads through their Chinese friends into international Buddhist organizations and present there their apology for Putin's war against Ukraine.

### **What lies ahead for a complete normalisation of India-China ties?**

18 September 2024, Modern Diplomacy, Bejoy Sebastian

This long-form article looks at how India-China relations have reached this critical juncture, the multiple dimensions underlying it, and how a restoration of ties can be worked out.

A section of Indian media has been unwarrantedly citing a statement by a spokesperson of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, Mao Ning, during a media briefing on 13 September 2024, who said, "in recent years, front-line armies of the two countries have realised disengagement in four areas in the Western sector of the China-India border, including the Galwan Valley. The China-India border situation is generally stable and under control". This statement is being used to create a sense of 'breakthrough' in ties, while the reality is, this is a mere reiteration of facts already known and the last disengagement along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh happened only two years ago, in September 2022, at Patrolling Point (PP) 15 in the Gogra-Hot Springs area.

Sometimes, obscured reality and half-truths are far more vicious than a complete cover-up of facts. The military situation along the LAC remains unchanged for the last two years, and thousands of troops are still on both sides of the undemarcated line. The military-to-military talks are in a stalemate since February 2024 when the last Corps Commander-level meeting took place. India seeks complete disengagement in the remaining two areas as a prerequisite for normalising ties. Before disengagement at Hot Springs, three other points – at PP-14 (Galwan Valley), PP-17A (Gogra Post), and both banks of the Pangong lake – had witnessed disengagement since July 2020.

There have been minor skirmishes along the LAC since June 2020, amid border infrastructure development and a heavy build-up of troops on both sides, like the one that occurred in the Yangtse area of Tawang in the Eastern sector in October 2021 and December 2022. Satellite imagery shows that China has been building habitable structures on India-claimed territories in recent years, while giving Chinese names to Indian villages in Arunachal Pradesh. The armies of both countries have engaged in sporadic standoffs even before the Galwan incident, such as in Nathu La and Cho La in 1967, Tulung La in 1975, Sumdorong Chu in 1987, Depsang in 2013, Demchok in 2014 and Doklam in 2017. But the most fatal of all incidents since 1975 occurred in the Galwan Valley, which resulted in the death of 20 Indian soldiers and an unknown number of Chinese soldiers.

#### **Recent bilateral engagements**

There have been both positive and negative developments in the diplomatic and economic fronts lately. Earlier this month, on 12 September 2024, the Special Representatives for the India-China border talks mechanism, Ajit Doval and Wang Yi met in St. Petersburg, Russia, on the sidelines of a meeting of National Security Advisors of the BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa) grouping. In July 2020, the month following that of the Galwan incident, a conversation between the two veteran negotiators led to the first breakthrough at the LAC in the current standoff – the disengagement of troops from the clash site of Galwan Valley.

Fast forward four years to July 2024. The foreign ministers of India and China – Dr. S. Jaishankar and Wang Yi – met twice, first in Astana, Kazakhstan, on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit and later in Vientiane, Laos, on the sidelines of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) meeting. In February last year, senior diplomatic officials from India travelled to Beijing for the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) talks in their first face-to-face

WMCC meeting since the current LAC standoff began in 2020. It was the 26th such dialogue since this mechanism came into existence in 2012.

During all these aforementioned interactions, both sides committed themselves to resolve the remaining issues, while normalisation is yet to be achieved. India wants to return to a status quo ante as of April 2020 and also the resolution of legacy disputes at Depsang and Demchok, while China conveniently views the dispute or differences in perception of the LAC as a 'leftover problem' from the British rule. The Indian side has repeatedly made it clear that there can be no back to normal without resolving the border question. China's current Ambassador to India, Xu Feihong, took charge in May 2024, after an 18-month delay in appointment, the longest for the post since 1976, when bilateral ties were restored following the 1962 war. The senior Chinese diplomat has been on a charm offensive since then, meeting key figures in Delhi's power circles.

Meanwhile, the legacy disputes at Depsang and Demchok, which China considers as not part of the current standoff, are yet to be resolved. Of the six friction points along the LAC in Ladakh, troops were withdrawn from the June 2020 clash site of the Galwan Valley in the weeks following the incident, the north and south banks of Pangong Lake in February 2021, Patrolling Point-17A of the Gogra-Hot Springs area in August 2021 and Patrolling Point-15 in September 2022. There are sixty-five such patrolling points along the LAC in Ladakh, of which India reportedly has lost access to twenty-six points to China and differences in perception of the line persists at multiple areas.

#### Underlying geopolitical games

India has been increasingly confident to play the Tibet and Taiwan cards lately and has stopped reiterating the 'One China' principle for many years now. In June, this year, New Delhi allowed the former U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and a bipartisan Congressional delegation accompanying her to meet the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader, the 14th Dalai Lama, in Dharamshala, and later they met the Prime Minister himself in New Delhi. Earlier in the same month, PM Modi responded to a congratulatory post on X from Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te on his election victory stating that he looks forward to closer ties between India and Taiwan, to "work towards mutually beneficial economic and technological partnership".

Chinese Foreign Ministry had protested both these moves. President Xi Jinping, however, did not congratulate PM Modi on his re-election. Beijing's suspicious engagement in New Delhi's neighbourhood in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region, its disapproval of India's bid for permanent

membership at the UN Security Council (the remaining four UNSC permanent members support New Delhi), the resistance to India's entry to the elite Nuclear Suppliers' Group (NSG), and the vetoing of UN sanctions on Pakistan-based terrorists further adds to the strategic mistrust and insecurity between the two Himalayan neighbours.

However, Indian restrictions on visas for Chinese professionals in selected industries were relaxed in November, last year, and again in July this year after several businesses in India were hit with a shortage of skilled workers. Subsequently, PM Modi toned down his rhetoric on China. In an interview given to Newsweek magazine, published in April 2024, the Prime Minister described relations with China as "important and significant" and expressed hope that stability along the LAC could be restored. In the same month, the Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh opined that border talks were "progressive and satisfactory" and "no fresh tension has come up".

During an interaction at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy in Switzerland earlier this month, India's foreign minister Dr. S. Jaishankar stated that "roughly 75% of the disengagement problems are sorted out". However, the Chinese media's open dislike for the veteran diplomat was clearly evident from a recent controversial article published in the state-run Global Times that was pulled back hours later. The op-ed piece, titled 'India's diplomacy has a 'S. Jaishankar problem'', took aim at Dr. Jaishankar's remarks on 31 August at a media forum in New Delhi where he said the world has a "general China problem" and India was not the only country debating how to deal with Beijing.

In spite of such self-goals, Dr. Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi met twice in July this year – first on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Heads of State summit in Kazakhstan and then at an ASEAN meeting in Vientiane. Moreover, India has also doubled down on its military partnerships and joint exercises with countries in Southeast Asia. PM Modi's visit to Singapore and Brunei earlier this month is a testament to India's renewed focus on its "Act East" policy. Despite being partners in non-Western groupings such as the BRICS and the SCO, India chose to participate in the U.S.-led minilateral groupings, such as the Quad and the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA). The *raison d'être* of such flexible groupings can be explained by both 'balance of power' and 'balance of threat' theorisations in international relations.

#### 'Paradoxical' economic ties

In July 2024, a mothership called at India's first deep-water container transshipment port at the under-

construction Vizhinjam port for the first time, ushering in a new era in India's maritime history. Interestingly, the ship embarked on its journey from China's Xiamen port, and twenty-four hi-tech cranes from China were delivered to the port since October last year. The state-owned Chinese company ZPMC, or the Shanghai Zhenhua Heavy Industries Ltd., has provided more than two hundred such cranes for Indian ports, and port operators in India continue to install them.

Today, New Delhi's biggest challenge is to balance its age-old security imperatives with that of its rapidly expanding industrial base, for which it can't stop doing business with China, and most of the alternatives to Chinese goods and Chinese technology appear to be comparatively costly. This 'paradoxical' phenomenon is not unique to the two countries alone, as countries elsewhere in the world too engage in trade with adversaries for several reasons. Chinese technology is key to India's infrastructure development as well.

India's imports from China increased to \$102 billion recently, which is 56% more than what was four years ago, out of a total \$118 billion in bilateral trade. Thus, India's trade deficit with China has risen by around 75% during this period. Recent data from the Global Trade Research Initiative reveals that Chinese imports to India crossed \$100 billion in the financial year 2024, cementing China's status as India's largest trading partner, displacing the U.S. after a gap of two years. So, the overall nature of bilateral ties between India and China, considering this economic dimension, is adversarial and co-operative at the same time, and their economies are interlinked like never before.

However, the public sentiment in India towards China has largely turned negative owing to the border issue. Consequently, India's economic, trade and investment policies are increasingly subjected to 'securitisation', as evident from its move to block 320 Chinese apps, including TikTok and WeChat, the suspension of direct flights, restrictions on Chinese investment and diversification of supply chains away from China through its participation in Western-led groupings such as the Quad, Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI) and India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). Today, China's defence budget is almost three times as India's, but the latter is fast catching up with rapid defence indigenisation and attempts to diversify arms supplies away from Russia. Past standoffs and negotiations

It was quite an irony that in April 2020 – year of the Galwan incident – India and China marked the 70th anniversary of establishment of formal diplomatic relations, and in June 2024, China observed an event marking the 70th anniversary of

the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, a foreign policy concept first put forward in the Sino-Indian agreement of 1954, following which India officially recognised Tibet as part of the People's Republic of China. However, the Panchsheel, as it was referred to by New Delhi, remained as a cornerstone of Indian foreign policy under Jawaharlal Nehru, until its essence and purpose were lost in the ashes of the 1962 war.

Bilateral ties remained in a state of coma for almost one-and-a-half decade after the war. Subsequently, diplomatic ties were restored in 1976. However, China has condemned India's merger of Sikkim state in 1975 and the bestowment of full statehood to Arunachal Pradesh in 1987. Back in 1979, then Indian foreign minister, and later Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee made a landmark visit to China, and two years later, in 1981, then Chinese foreign minister Huang Hua reciprocated the move by visiting India, paving way for both countries to begin an annual dialogue.

Seven years later, in 1988, then Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi visited China and both countries agreed to set up a joint working group (JWG) on boundary disputes. Three years later, in 1991, Chinese Premier Li Peng visited India, followed by Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's visit to China in 1993. The remaining part of the decade saw India and China signing two key agreements, in 1993 and 1996, thereby initiating steps to bring back peace and tranquillity along the border areas, in addition to an agreement to pull back troops from the Eastern sector in 1995.

The following year, 1996, witnessed the landmark visit of China's Paramount Leader Jiang Zemin to India. Both nations agreed to reduce troops on the disputed border and avoid the use of force. The decade that followed also saw a series of confidence-building measures, including the 2005 Protocol and the 2012-initiated working mechanism for consultation and coordination on India-China border affairs that replaced the old JWG process between the foreign ministries. But it fell short of preventing the Depsang standoff in March 2013.

Later, in October 2013, a Border Defence Cooperation Agreement (BDCA) was signed between the defence officials of both countries, unlike civilian officials in the previous pacts. Since then, the new Paramount Leader who rose to power in China that year – Xi Jinping – upped the ante on border disputes with not only India, but also with other countries in China's neighbourhood, including several ASEAN member-states. Experts are now of the view that China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) has a much larger say in shaping the Chinese foreign policy than ever before, with President Xi Jinping

heading the Chinese Communist Party and the Central Military Commission.

#### Way ahead for rapprochement

It is worthwhile to recall that in the previous century, leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union continued to have dialogues even during the peak time of the Cold War. In the case of India and China, between 2014, when Modi first became the Prime Minister of India, and June 2020, when the Galwan incident occurred, the Indian leader met his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping eighteen times, including in informal summits, visits to each other's countries and meetings on the sidelines of multilateral summits. Despite this, the Galwan incident couldn't be prevented, and the prospect of a repeat of similar incidents or far more fatal ones still looks imminent.

After Galwan, both leaders met twice – first in Bali, on the sidelines of the G20 summit of 2022 and then in Johannesburg on the sidelines of the BRICS summit of 2023. The Chinese leader chose not to attend the G20 summit of 2023 in New Delhi and sent Premier Li Qiang instead, the first time a Chinese Paramount Leader not attending the G20 summit since 2008, excluding the virtual summits of 2020 and 2021 during the pandemic. In July 2024, PM Modi skipped the SCO summit in Astana, Kazakhstan, while President Xi attended it. Now, there are two possibilities later this year for PM Modi and President Xi to meet face to face – the first in Kazan, Russia, for the BRICS Summit in October and the second in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, for the G20 summit in November.

China's \$17.9 trillion economy is the second largest in the world, only behind the United States, while India's \$3.7 trillion economy is ranked the fifth. While the latter continues to be a lower middle-income country, the former has already progressed into an upper middle-income country in the last 40 years, powered by its fast modernisation and the upliftment of nearly 800 million people from absolute poverty. Both countries started off as independent countries in the 1940s and faced similar socioeconomic problems until four decades ago. Today, there is a tremendous scope for both countries to cooperate with each other, including in trade, climate change, energy security, Global South issues, and regional connectivity. But all of it depends squarely on how diplomacy progresses forward.

The circumstances are quite different today than it was four decades ago, considering the serious power gap between the two Asian neighbours, which India must fill in the coming years. More importantly, New Delhi must not be oblivious of the fact that China today is an economic and technological superpower in competition with the world's pre-eminent superpower – the United States – and is fast catching-up on the military front as well. Dealing with

such a power calls for meticulously crafted state policies – both foreign and domestic. India has been building up border infrastructure and deterrence capabilities at a pace faster than ever before. Continuing dialogue at the highest political levels makes it complete.

The two nuclear-armed neighbours must manage their competition responsibly and minimise the prospect of an unintended or accidental conflict to the best extent possible. There is also a strong need for standalone meetings to discuss and resolve the border question and not just along the sidelines of when regional or multilateral groupings meet. Without political dialogue going hand in hand with military dialogue, a new mechanism for peaceful coexistence and normalisation of ties can never be reached. Rather than working on old and ineffective frameworks of engagement, both sides must give a fresh start to building a broad consensus and a comprehensive framework for bilateral engagement, and it ought to be in tune with the current realities, respecting each other's concerns and sensitivities.

#### China's Legal Warfare Closes a Beloved Tibetan School

18 September 2024, The Diplomat

Despite taking part in a momentous rite of passage, tears streaked the faces of the 110 students who graduated from Gangjong Sherig Norbu Lobling School, located on the Tibetan Plateau in Golog prefecture, Qinghai province, this July. For months, authorities had prodded any and all excuses to find violations, pursuing various legal avenues to shutter the school. Until this summer, they were unsuccessful.

Eventually, despite legal battles that ended in the school's acquittal, regional administration ordered the school's closure. In a speech before his students, Gen Jigme Gyaltsen indicated the school was closing because it was not in compliance with the Qinghai Provincial Party Committee's vague standards of vocational schools. Additional details were not disclosed. The 110 students that graduated in July will be the last the institution ever accredits.

The internationally acclaimed Tibetan school was first founded in 1994 inside the Golog Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Since then, its rich curriculum in Tibetan cultural and linguistic studies has drawn youth from across Tibet, Mongolia, and Inner Mongolia. The school's emphasis on the preservation of specialized Tibetan language studies, medicine, and Buddhist philosophy has garnered both private and public extraterritorial support, such as from Finland and the Netherlands. The school's rigorous curriculum was supplemented with computer



science, engineering, medicine, filmmaking, and physical education.

During his testimony at the Tibet Policy Institute's July roundtable on the closure, Shede Dawa of Tibet Watch, a research network based in the United Kingdom, gestured to a projected image of Gangjong Sherig Norbu Lobling, tucked into shaded mountain foothills and rich with pine saplings. He noted the lengths these trees had grown since his years as a student there, where he was encouraged by his instructors to celebrate the arduous process of reconnecting with his own heritage in a region some scholars refer to as an "open air prison."

The room of roundtable participants felt the reverberations this upbringing has had in the careful sincerity of Dawa, a steady advocate for peers facing systematic academic repression. He gazed out over the scholars in front of him, locking eyes with the camera lens before insisting, in the words of the school's founder, that the preservation of the Tibetan language and script is a crucial means for the survival of the Tibetan people. People survive through stories, which are in turn cradled by linguistic exchange.

Dr. Lobsang Yangtso, program and Environment Desk coordinator for the International Tibet Network, expressed her admiration for the courage of alumni like Shede Dawa, who might now face retaliation for speaking up against the school's closure. "There are many others like him," she said.

In recent years, human rights monitoring networks have observed the gradual swapping out of Tibetan textbooks for those in the Chinese language. A cultural assimilation policy, which was formulated in 2010, deems that all schools in Tibet must legally use Chinese as the primary language, beginning at the kindergarten level.

Dawa Tsering, director of the Tibet Policy Institute and longtime policymaker with the Tibetan government-in-exile, contextualized the school community's ordeals: "Presently, the Chinese government is closing monasteries and Tibetan schools... These measures are part of a broader strategy to eradicate the Tibetan language and culture."

### **First line of defence: The role of border villages as custodians of India's frontiers**

17 September 2024, Broadsword, Ajai Shukla

Echoing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's stated commitment to holistic development of villages located close to the Sino-Indian border, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has described these villages as not just remote habitations but also the country's first line of defence.

Addressing a Border Area Development Conclave in New Delhi on September 11, Singh said the best way of dealing with the multiple challenges posed by India's geo-strategic location was to ensure border area development.

In underlining the role of border villages as custodians of India's frontiers, New Delhi is following the example of China in Tibet, where President Xi Jinping has personally directed a new border village policy since 2017.

China in Tibet

China's new border village policy, which is aimed at setting up Tibetan villages in disputed border areas, was announced with great fanfare at the 19th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 2017. In May 2021, noted Tibetologist Robert Barnett described the working of Xi Jinping's resettlement policy in an article in Foreign Policy magazine.

Barnett's article details the experience of four Tibetan nomads from the remote Beyul Khenpajong region, which remains disputed between Bhutan and China. Until 1995, like other yak graziers living along the border, the four spent their summer grazing their herds in the Beyul, before returning to their village in Tibet ahead of the winter snows.

In 1995, however, the local CCP officials told them Beyul was Chinese territory and it was their duty to guard it for China by physically remaining there through winter. For the decades that followed, the four graziers spent the bitter winters alone in the Beyul, in harsh and primitive conditions, with no contact with the outside world.

Once the Chinese completed a road to their tiny settlement, over the Himalayan crest line, a larger village was rapidly built up. In April 2020, the Communist Party Secretary of Tibet, Wu Yingjie, trekked all the way to the new grazer village, now named "Gyalphug", to hail the graziers as heroes of China.

Each summer, CCP officials organise the herders to carry out small tasks to reassert China's claims. Barnett writes: "These included driving yak herds over land grazed by Bhutanese herders in the Beyul, demanding tax payments from the Bhutanese herders, planting Chinese flags on peaks and painting the word 'China' on rocks throughout the area."

An estimated 250,000 Tibetans have been resettled thus along the border. In effect, this has transformed local Tibetan histories of border grazing and monastic claims into state-level territorial claims by China.

In July 2021, Xi Jinping visited Tibet for three days, with his focus squarely on the Tibetan town of Nyingtri (Nyingchi in Chinese). Beijing regards Arunachal Pradesh as a southward extension of Nyingtri Prefecture.

## Development work

India's defence minister, speaking at the Border Area Development Conclave, pointed to the development work carried out in India's border areas during the last decade. He cited the construction of 8,500 kms of roads, 400 permanent bridges, and three major tunnels: Atal Tunnel, Sela Tunnel, and Shikun-La Tunnel, with the third currently the world's highest road tunnel.

The defence minister also cited the connection of border areas in Ladakh with the National Electricity Grid, and the provision of high-speed internet to over 1,500 villages, mainly in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh, through the Bharat-Net broadband project. Singh said the government's special emphasis on border area tourism was catalysing the development of the region. "Tourism has immense potential in border areas, but it could not reach the desired heights due to lack of infrastructure. Things have changed since this government came to power... From 2020 to 2023, the footfall of tourists in Ladakh, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh increased by 30 per cent... We are taking consistent steps to make J&K a tourist hotspot," he said.

Economic development of the border areas, he said, was triggering "reverse migration", such as in Huri village in Arunachal Pradesh, where villagers who had migrated to the hinterland were returning to their original homes.

Speaking at the same conclave, army chief General Upendra Dwivedi described border area development as "a core component of national security."

## New flashpoint

Like New Delhi, Beijing supports its graziers with incentives, including financial ones, to equip them for spending long periods in high-altitude pastures along the McMahon Line border. Unlike New Delhi, however, Beijing has not shrunk from using armed force in the form of border guards and frontline soldiers to intimidate and bully Indian graziers.

Indian military commanders believe Beijing covets Beyul Khenpajong as a bargaining chip to offer Bhutan in exchange for Doklam, a disputed pocket of land at the tri-junction of Bhutan, China and India.

India regards Doklam as militarily vital, being located less than 100 kilometres from the strategic Siliguri corridor, a narrow, 25-kilometre-wide strip of land that connects India's seven north-eastern states to the Indo-Gangetic heartland. Bhutan has always been careful of India's concerns vis-à-vis Doklam.

"China doesn't need the land it is settling in Bhutan: Its aim is to force the Bhutanese government to cede territory that China wants elsewhere in Bhutan to give Beijing a military advantage in its struggle with New Delhi," wrote Barnett, in Foreign Policy.

Since 1990, Beijing has been offering to give up its claim to 495 square kilometres in the north of Bhutan, provided Thimphu yields 269 square kilometres in the west. The territory in north Bhutan that China is offering to give up includes the Beyul Khenpajong.

The creation of border infrastructure is the new flashpoint between China and India. Among the causes cited for intrusions by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) into Eastern Ladakh in the summer of 2020, the construction of the 255 kilometre-long Darbuk-Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldi (DSDBO) road by India's Border Roads Organisation is possibly the most convincing. Following clashes between the PLA and Indian troops in the Galwan River Valley in June 2020, China's foreign ministry identified the creation of the DSDBO road as a trigger for the clash.

Clearly, New Delhi will have to walk a fine line between developing India's border infrastructure on the one hand and assuaging Beijing's border sensibilities on the other.

## For Tibetans, There Is Now a "Xi Jinping Thought on Reincarnation"

16 September 2024, Bitter Winter, Lopsang Gurung

Beijing insists it will not abandon its claim that, although officially atheistic, the Communist Party is entitled to control reincarnation of Tibetan Living Buddhas.

There is a "Xi Jinping Thought" for everything, including toilets. And Tibetans know that, while being atheistic, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 2007, through the State Administration of Religious Affairs, issued a regulation claiming its right to control reincarnation.

According to the infamous "Order no. 5" of 2007, the CCP decides which Buddhist lamas are authorized to reincarnate, and they receive a card confirming the authorization. The next incarnation of a deceased lama is identified by the CCP, which has created a historical myth about the so-called "Golden Urn" to justify its theory that reincarnation of Tibetan Buddhist lamas should be controlled by Chinese state authorities. Obviously, since 2007, the CCP is preparing to assert the right to pick up the next Dalai Lama when His Holiness will leave this world.

There were rumors that the farcical system where an officially atheistic state and party, which obviously do not believe in reincarnation, decide who is the reincarnation of whom, would be abandoned at least to avoid international ridicule. The rumors, however, were denied by the CCP in 2023, as "Bitter Winter" reported.

What was missing was to freeze the doctrine of CCP control of reincarnation by making it part of

the omnipresent and unquestionable Xi Jinping Thought. Logically, but more quietly than usual, this step was taken this month.

A seminar on “History, Customs, Policies, and Regulations of the Reincarnation of Living Buddhas in Tibetan Buddhism” was held in Lanzhou, Gansu Province, by the government-controlled China Buddhist Association..

Master Chang Zang, Vice President of the China Buddhist Association, delivered the keynote speech. CCP-approved reincarnated Tibetan Living Buddhas also spoke.

The seminar explained that Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism for the New Era also includes a “Xi Jinping Thought on Reincarnation.” It teaches, Chang Zang said, the “basic principles on religious work and the CCP’s strategy for governing Tibet in the new era, and guide monks, nuns and believers to have a more objective understanding of the historical customs, religious rituals and policies and regulations of the living Buddha reincarnation system. They should fully recognize that historical customs such as domestic searches, drawing lots from the Golden Urn and government approval are important principles that must be adhered to in the reincarnation of living Buddhas. This will play a positive role in managing the affairs of the reincarnation of living Buddhas in accordance with the law, promoting the healthy inheritance of Tibetan Buddhism, and actively guiding Tibetan Buddhism to adapt to socialist society.”

With the high stamp of Xi Jinping, the CCP’s control of reincarnation will be asserted even more vigorously. All eyes continue to be on who and how will select the next Dalai Lama.

### Remember Tibet?

15 September 2024, The Wire, Nithin Coca

China’s digital surveillance and censorship efforts have reached their full potential in Tibet.

There are no photos of Tibet’s top tourist attraction from the afternoon of February 25, 2022. Typically, the Potala Palace, the 1,000-room, traditional winter residence of the Dalai Lama that was built in the 1600s, is teeming with tourists – the UNESCO World Heritage Site is the majestic backdrop of countless photos on Chinese social media networks like Weibo and WeChat . Every year, some 37 million tourists visit Lhasa, Tibet’s capital, where the palace is built into the side of a mountain, and the vast majority of visitors come from China, which has governed the Tibet Autonomous Region since 1950. But despite its popularity, not a single image of the front of the palace exists from the afternoon of February 25, 2022. On that day, Tsewang Norbu, a 25-year-old male Tibetan singer and frequent guest on Chinese

music shows, went up to the Barpokaling stupa, at the corner of the palace grounds, shouted “Free Tibet,” and set himself on fire.

At least, that is what experts think happened. The event has disappeared from Tibet’s digital history as well as China’s. According to *The Economist*, the Chinese government acknowledged an incident took place, but denied it was Norbu, saying instead that it was a man who had long struggled with mental illness and “attempted suicide many times.”

It took Tibetan journalists and researchers in India more than a week to verify what happened that day after piecing together bits of information from sources inside Tibet, Chinese social and state media, and by monitoring what was being censored or removed. Radio Free Asia broke the news on March 4, 2022.

“Tsewang Norbu was a really popular Tibetan singer. He did this in front of the most famous monument in Tibet, where there were likely tons of tourists and Tibetans around,” says Tsela Zoksang , a Tibetan American with the non-profit Students for a Free Tibet. “The sheer speed that the authorities, with their various tools, were able to scrub the internet of every mention of Norbu is astonishing and frightening.”

China is famous for its digital censorship and control, but experts say the situation in Tibet is on another level. Consider what happened just a few months later, when another lone protester took action in Beijing. In October, Peng Lifa unfurled banners from the Sitong bridge calling for “freedom,” an end to Covid lockdowns and the removal of Xi Jinping. His protest went viral, both on Chinese social media and internationally. Although Peng is still in detention , his name and cause is well known. Perhaps more importantly, his actions had impact: The bridge signs are considered a precursor to the white paper protests that forced the Chinese Communist Party to dramatically change its Covid policies in December.

The contrast between Norbu and Peng illuminates a dark and underappreciated truth: that China’s digital surveillance and censorship efforts have reached their full potential in Tibet. Indeed, several experts say the autonomous region has emerged as a kind of success story, with the policies there serving as a model for other areas that Beijing wants control over, such as the Uyghur regions in Xinjiang.

Tenzin Norgay , a research analyst at the non-profit International Campaign for Tibet, says officials in Tibet and Xinjiang routinely share best practices and lessons learned with one another. In June of 2023, for instance, a delegation from Xinjiang attended a symposium in Tibet on “long-term peace and stability.” Wang Junzheng, party secretary of Tibet, reportedly stressed collaboration between the

regions in “promoting social stability and rule by law.”

“At the moment, the party-state thinks that Tibet is under control, so now Xinjiang officials want to learn from authorities in Tibet about how to manage and suppress society without attracting global attention,” Norgay says.

Xinjiang has been the focus of intense media attention in recent years. Reports about internment camps and the destruction of Uyghur cultural heritage have become global issues and even U.S. policy priorities. Meanwhile, the situation in Tibet — once a hot topic of Hollywood celebrities and politicians — has faded from view.

Tibetans inside Tibet are, nowadays, so scared to talk to us. There is a sense that the government is always watching them and monitoring them, and for us, that means we can’t get first-hand information from Tibet. Self-censorship has become a huge problem.

Tenzin Dawa, an India-based Tibetan refugee and executive secretary at the Tibet Center for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD)

To appreciate the shift, experts point to the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, when

images of monks, nuns and students protesting Chinese rule spread around the world. Those sympathetic to Tibet’s cause held “solidarity” protests at Olympic torch rallies in San Francisco, London, and Paris, as well as several Chinese embassies and consulates. The

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, even released a statement saying she was disturbed by “continuing allegations of violence against Tibetans” and called on China to “permit Tibetans to express their feelings without fear of retribution.”

Similarly, in 2011 and 2012, activists in Tibet began a wave of self-immolations to protest what has become a multi-year lockdown of the entire region. One dramatic video shows the self-immolation of a 35-year-old Tibetan nun named Palden Choetso. In the background, you can see Tibetans offering prayers to the Dalai Lama and a woman hanging a Tibetan scarf, a symbol of respect, on Choetso’s neck.

“It’s one of the most powerful videos from Tibet,” says Lobsang Gyato Sither, a Tibetan living in exile in India who works with the non-profit Tibet Action Institute. “It’s hard to see, but images like that really hit and stick with people.”

Indeed, that video took just one day to spread around the world. In its aftermath, members of Congress pushed for a fact-finding mission to Tibet, and the European parliament passed a resolution calling on China to respect human rights and have a dialogue with the Dalai Lama.

In recent years, however, acts like Norbu’s don’t escape the censors. There haven’t been any visible, large-scale demonstrations for Tibetan independence — either inside the country or abroad — which is, experts note, exactly what Beijing wants.

“Images, videos and personal voices are so important for human rights stories,” says Yaqui Wang, a research director at the Washington-based Freedom House. “But given the government’s sophisticated censorship and surveillance apparatus, we don’t have the images, and that limits the ability of their plight to attract global attention.”

“Fifteen years ago, there was so much more information coming out of Tibet,” adds Gabriel Lafitte, an Australia-based author and expert on Tibet. “But, even more than Xinjiang, China has succeeded in closing down Tibet.”

#### THE PLAYBOOK

By many measures, Tsewang Norbu was the model member of an ethnic minority in B China. His parents worked for organizations affiliated with the Communist Party and

sang in state-approved musical groups, he had over half a million followers on Weibo, and his songs — in Tibetan, Mandarin and English — could be found on Chinese and global video streaming platforms.

But ever since Tibet was occupied by the People’s Liberation Army in 1950, and especially since the Dalai Lama fled to India in 1959, Tibet has seen regular periodic protests and calls for greater autonomy or independence from Chinese rule. There were signs that Norbu may have had sympathies himself, as he avoided singing songs that overly propagandized China, and his uncle is a political prisoner.

According to Namloyak Dhungser, and author of a book on self-immolations, Norbu’s act could have a long-term impact on the Free Tibet movement because it “stands out as a significant case among the new generation of Tibetans, particularly those raised under the ‘red flag.’”

It’s exceedingly difficult to know if this generational shift is happening or even why Norbu chose to do what he did. The Tibet Autonomous Region has been closed off entirely to independent media since protests against Chinese rule broke out in 2008. While journalists can travel around the rest of China, including Xinjiang, they can only visit Tibet on state-approved trips.

The lack of reporters, however, is only the first hurdle to corroborating information about Tibet. Repression in places like Tibet and in Xinjiang is multifaceted, experts say, creating a climate of intense fear and self-censorship among sources.

There is, of course, digital censorship and high-tech surveillance, including biometric data. Dense networks of cameras and numerous police stations

keep a watchful eye, and at checkpoints, Tibetans and

Uyghurs are often forced to hand over their phones and install Chinese government apps that have been identified as spyware. Over the past several years, Tibetans have been arrested and punished for merely having certain data, like a picture of the Dalai Lama or an unauthorized app like WhatsApp, on their phones. And to make matters worse, entire families can be punished for the actions of an individual.

Tenzin Dawa, an India-based Tibetan refugee and executive secretary at the Tibet Center for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD), says the pervasive sense of fear limits the work she and others can do.

"Tibetans inside Tibet are, nowadays, so scared to talk to us," she says. "There is a sense that the government is always watching them and monitoring them, and for us, that means we can't get first-hand information from Tibet. Self-censorship has become a huge problem."

Han Chinese certainly face repercussions for exercising their right to free speech," adds Wang, at Freedom House. "But regular Tibetans and Uyghurs have been given lengthy sentences for just speaking with foreign media. It's just not of the same order of magnitude."

What we need is the context of what led a person [like Norbu] to take action... Many times we get fragments of information, and we can't fully confirm it, so we just keep that information, then sometimes, months or years afterwards, we have another fragment of information coming through.

Tenzin Choeyki, a senior researcher at Tibet Watch Liza Lin, a journalist with the Wall Street Journal, notes that reporting on the rest of China has its challenges but also its workarounds. After being based in Shanghai for 8 years, she was forced to leave China when her visa renewal was refused. Now based in Singapore, she says she notices a difference in Chinese sources when they travel to the island-nation for business trips. "They're a bit more willing to talk here than when they are in China," she says.

Tibet, however, is missing this release valve. For many years, Tibetans crossing into Nepal and India were a key source of information for people like Kate Saunders, a longtime Tibet activist and co-founder of Turquoise Roof, a Tibet-focused, collaborative research network.

"In the 2000s and up to around 2009, there were thousands of new arrivals from Tibet," she says, noting that many were coming to attend teachings of the Dalai Lama or were refugees seeking to make a new life abroad. "Talking to nomads, children, the elderly — it was the bread and butter for Tibetan organizations and media to gain an understanding of what life was like in Tibet."

Now, however, Tibetans are increasingly unable to get passports to travel abroad, and an enhanced border control system has closed the pathways through the Himalayas that used to connect Tibet refugees with exile communities in South Asia. In 2023, only 15 Tibetan refugees arrived in India and Nepal, compared to 3,000 in 2010.

"We did not expect that China would seek to close the entire gateway to India and Nepal," says Saunders.

Without human sources, says Maya Wang, associate director in the Asia division at Human Rights Watch, getting reliable information is exceedingly difficult. "If it was a video game, China is already, like, level 156 — really, really hard," she says. "But Tibet and Xinjiang are double that."

#### ONLY OSINT

Like many second and third generation Tibetans-in-exile, Tenzing Dhamdul grew up in India with few links to his family across the border. But the 28-year-old is part of a new generation of Tibetans who are using Open Source Intelligence, or OSINT, to uncover

information about human rights or policies in Tibet.

"OSINT is a way to try to understand what Tibetans inside Tibet are experiencing and feeling," says Dhamdul, who works as a research associate at the New Delhi-based Foundation for Non-violent Alternatives. "It is gradually becoming more prominent among the Tibetan community."

Working with two other Tibetan refugees, Dhamdul's first project analyzed Chinese documents, online maps and social media to identify how the government had changed the names of villages in parts of India claimed as "South Tibet" by China. While not a particularly complex task, the project provided insight into Beijing's attempts to strengthen its claim over disputed Indian territory and led to a flurry of reactions from the Indian government.

For Dhamdul, the OSINT process is especially valuable since its strategies can be easily replicated elsewhere. "We can work together with people who are like us Tibetans — oppressed by the current communist regime of the PRC — be it the Uyghurs, the Taiwanese or Hong Kongers," he says.

Indeed, a recent RAND Europe report on detention centers in Tibet followed in the footsteps of a Xinjiang report. Using light data, RAND estimated the size and scale of the detention

centers as well as how they've evolved over time. The analysis uncovered patterns of growth in night-time lighting, suggesting a shift towards longer detentions and imprisonments.

"Our organization had previously analyzed the evolution of detention centers in Xinjiang using geospatial data and night-time lighting measurements, so we decided to see if this method



would also make sense in the Tibetan context, and it did," a RAND Europe researcher said by email. (The researcher asked to remain anonymous due to the report's sensitivity.)

Turquoise Roof, Saunders's initiative, also uses OSINT research. So far, they've released reports on lithium mining, hydropower dam development, and spyware, all without interviewing or relying on anyone in Tibet. For example, for lithium, they used satellite data to locate mines and processing centers and analyze how they'd expanded over time. They then scoured Chinese government files, business documents, scientific research and trade data to estimate the scale of production, identify the Chinese companies involved and the links to major automakers like Tesla and BYD.

"We decided we have to work to lessen dependence on dangerous means of talking to Tibetans inside Tibet," says Saunders.

This approach has its limitations, however. In some of OSINT's most successful use cases, groups like Bellingcat and the HALO Trust have combined open source data with data gathered by anonymous sources on the ground, often sent via secure communication platforms like Signal. In Russia, for example, this approach allowed for the tracking of illegal ghost ships exporting grain from occupied Ukraine. It's a tactic that isn't possible in Tibet or Xinjiang.

This erasure underscores the links between political and technological dictatorships. When these forces converge, the consequences for human society are dire.

Namloyak Dhungser, a Tibetan researcher at Curtin University in Australia

"It's difficult to triangulate information," says Saunders. "Everybody thinks you can learn everything through technological means, but that's one of the findings of Turquoise Roof. We still need Tibetans inside Tibet, with deep knowledge on the ground."

Moreover, while these OSINT reports do get media coverage, it hardly compares to the human interest stories, images and videos that used to come out of Tibet.

OSINT "has to be combined with a human being," notes Tenzin Choeyki, a senior researcher at Tibet Watch. "What we need is the context of what led a person [like Norbu] to take action — that can't be filled in by OSINT."

Norbu's youth, celebrity status and choice of location made his act stand out among the 160 known self-immolations in Tibet. It may have also played a role in his story coming to light in just a week. But Choeyki says it's a reminder of how little we still know about what is happening in Tibet.

"Many times we get fragments of information, and we can't fully confirm it, so we just keep that information, then sometimes, months or years afterwards, we have another fragment of information coming through," says Choeyki.

In September of 2015, for instance, another young Tibetan man, Shurmo, self-immolated in a remote village. It took an astounding five years before Tibet Watch could verify and share what happened, and even then, there's a lot that remains unknown about Shurmo, including what happened to his body and his family. There are no photos of Shurmo or of his act.

"It's deeply unsettling that, in our digital age, these events can be swiftly erased from public memory, leaving no trace of their sacrifice in images or videos," says Dhungser, at Curtin University.

It also brings up other questions: Are there others like Shurmo or Norbu? Just how far behind are we in terms of understanding what is happening in Tibet? When, if ever, will the CCP feel its job is done?

"This erasure underscores the links between political and technological dictatorships," says Dhungser. "When these forces converge, the consequences for human society are dire."

### **Western stories about Xinjiang nothing more than mythical dramas**

14 September 2024, Global Times, Yasir Habib Khan

Before setting foot in China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, most of the members of the media delegation from Pakistan were under the influence of Western deceptive narratives that ethnic minorities are subject to injustices.

Frankly speaking, the delegation and I, as president of a think tank "Institute of International Relations and Media Research," entered China as skeptics. However, as we started visiting places, interacting with people and talking to the local minorities, it became clear that Western stories were nothing more than mythical and fictional dramas that had nothing to do with reality.

Seeing is believing. Hence, myths pertaining to discrimination against ethnic minorities in China were proven to be complete fabrications. Media delegates witnessed the rise and development of Xinjiang.

Delegates visited minority groups living in the modern village of Chabuchar county in Yining, Xinjiang. Seeing the living standards, bustling life, school education, civic amenities, surrounding ambience, well-furnished homes and livelihood, all their questions and doubts were answered.

"It is high time the international community pay a visit to Xinjiang. This will help distinguish fact from fiction," Asghar Ali, one delegate, said. Meanwhile, head of modern village (Uzonbrak resettlement) Ms Yang

Yang welcomed the delegation, and was very informative, telling them all about the village and the lives of the villagers.

Delegates learned that impoverished local minorities living in mountains with their animal herds were resettled here under the China poverty alleviation program by providing them with plenty of resources to improve their quality of life.

I witnessed how the local government made it possible for them to set up new businesses to improve their income. Each shop in the village makes between 10,000 yuan (\$1,405) to 15,000 yuan. Besides ancestral occupation of animal husbandry, minority youth have been securing jobs in nearby factories in economic zones. Some have also joined the agriculture profession, carrying on the family line of business.

China's ethnic policy is rooted in the country's unique history and culture, and has four features: equality, autonomy, development and unity.

The lawful rights and interests of the people of all ethnicities in Xinjiang have been effectively protected. All ethnic groups, regardless of their population size, have equal legal status and enjoy freedom of religious belief and various rights in accordance with the law. These rights include participation in state affairs, access to education, use of their own languages and preservation of their traditional culture. Additionally, the Xinjiang government has made great efforts to improve the prosperity of Uyghur Muslims. Remarkable achievements have been made in eliminating extreme poverty.

China has been a unified multi-ethnic country as a result of multiple rounds of great ethnic integration in history. This has contributed enormously to the uninterrupted development of the Chinese civilization spanning thousands of years. Together, ethnic groups in China have long become a community with common interests and a shared future.

### **China's increasing influence in the UN: The role of Africa and Asia**

13 September 2024, IANS

In August 2022, following the release of a report by then-UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, which asserted that China's treatment of Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang "may constitute... crimes against humanity," many countries in the Global South, particularly in Africa and Asia, reacted in a perplexing manner.

Rather than maintaining a neutral stance on the reported atrocities, Pakistan spearheaded a coalition of 70 nations opposing the UN Human Rights Council's perceived 'interference' in China's domestic

affairs about a month after the report's publication. Notably, this coalition included fourteen Arab nations, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco.

In October of the same year, a UNHRC vote to discuss the report was unsuccessful, as several Muslim-majority countries, including Pakistan, Indonesia, Qatar, the UAE, and Somalia, voted against it.

These nations were joined by nearly all but three African countries in the Council.

In contrast, when former Gambian Justice Minister Abubacarr Tambadou presented a case to the international rights body in 2019 against Aung San Suu Kyi for her treatment of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, he received strong backing from the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation (OIC), which comprises 57 Muslim countries, including 27 from Africa.

China's deliberate strategy to revise the global order is rooted in its advocacy of a strict interpretation of Westphalian sovereignty, which prioritises non-interference in domestic affairs over universal human rights.

This principle, adopted at the June 2018 Central Foreign Affairs Work Conference, has been a driving force in China's foreign policy. To achieve its goal of reforming international institutions and norms, Beijing has focused its efforts on the Global South, particularly Africa and Asia, which together constitute 55 per cent of the votes in the United Nations General Assembly.

China's tactic has been to construct an alternative force of numbers rather than relying on the individual influence of a single country. This trend has resulted in a large number of Global South countries backing China and echoing its stance on sovereignty, even if it means disregarding universal human rights.

In recent years, China has steadily increased its financial and personnel contributions to global and multilateral development institutions. A report from 2020 indicated that China ranks second, behind the United States, in assessed contributions to both the UN's regular and peacekeeping budgets.

Additionally, China has strategically focused on leveraging the representational power of the Global South within the UN.

It positions itself as the leader of the developing world, ready to challenge the West's frameworks regarding human rights, the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), and imposed liberalism. By emphasising principles such as non-interference, development, South-South cooperation, and the use of multilateral institutions, China claims to advocate for the interests of the Global South.

However, the emerging solidarity between Beijing and various African and Asian nations is not solely based on ideological alignment.

Beijing's dependence on African nations in international forums dates back to the 1971 UN General Assembly debate concerning the People's Republic of China's (PRC) admission to the UN and the expulsion of Taiwan, a development significantly influenced by African votes.

For over three decades, China's foreign minister has prioritised visits to Africa at the start of each year, underscoring its gratitude and deep interest in the continent.

Currently, only one African nation, Eswatini, recognises Taiwan, while the remainder adhere to the 'one China principle'. Furthermore, bilateral and collective agreements between African countries and China emphasise mutual cooperation in global governance matters.

With the backing of the African Union, China successfully passed its first resolution in the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), titled "The Contribution of Development to the Enjoyment of Human Rights".

Three years later, another resolution proposed by China was adopted, supported by all but one African member.

These resolutions reflect China's attempt to legitimise an alternative vision of human rights, centred on state-led economic development and the principle of non-interference.

In fact, several African nations even supported China's unsuccessful attempts to defund human rights monitors and NGO observers during the 2018-19 UN budget discussions. Unsurprisingly, in recent years, very few African countries have endorsed draft resolutions at the UN that criticise China's policies regarding Xinjiang, Hong Kong, and Tibet.

One significant factor contributing to the solidarity among authoritarian regimes is their collaboration on human rights issues, which serves to bolster their political stability and international legitimacy.

In West Asia, the challenges related to women, political dissidents, and religious and ethnic minorities present complex dilemmas that these governments often address through the principle of non-interference. Consequently, they endorse Beijing's narrative regarding Xinjiang, framing it as a matter of terrorism, extremism, and separatism.

This was exemplified in 2023 when the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) visited Xinjiang and publicly commended the activities of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the region.

Moreover, economic considerations also drive this emerging 'South-South cooperation'.

For many West Asian countries, following decades of Western intervention, China is viewed as a more

dependable partner, having recently become the primary foreign investor in the region.

Chinese economic and strategic influence has surged, particularly after the Arab Spring and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and is expected to grow further following the US withdrawal from the region.

For Africa, the situation is somewhat more complex. Under President Xi Jinping's vision of the 'Great Rejuvenation' and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the continent has become a central focus of China's economic and infrastructural efforts.

As the largest bilateral trade partner and creditor for Africa, China's extensive 'no-strings-attached' lending practices towards vulnerable African nations have resulted in many becoming economically entrapped or reliant on Beijing.

Consequently, Beijing's economic initiatives towards these nations and its promotion of South-South development cooperation represent a strategic effort to establish itself as a hegemonic power within the evolving global order. This dual strategy of fostering economic dependence among susceptible countries while simultaneously empowering authoritarian regimes has proven advantageous for China as it gradually ascends the ranks of global influence.

**In memoriam: Chungdak Koren, former  
Representative of the Dalai Lama and ICT Board  
member**

13 September 2024, ICT

The former representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Geneva, Chungdak Koren, passed away on September 10th, 2024 in a hospital in Oslo, Norway. The International Campaign for Tibet was deeply saddened by the news and conveyed its condolences to her husband Michael.

Chungdak Koren was born in Phari, southern Tibet, in 1950. After escaping to India, she studied at different schools before getting engaged in the Transit School in Dharamsala. In 1969 she was selected for a nursing education in Norway that was to become her new home. She devoted her energies both to the Tibetan refugees in Norway and to lobbying work, e.g. through the Norwegian Tibet Committee. She was deeply involved in organizing the festivities around the Nobel Peace Prize Award to H.H. the Dalai Lama in 1989.

In the years 1995-2001 she served as Representative of H.H. the Dalai Lama in Geneva. After retiring from public service, her immense energy went into advocating the Tibetan cause on many levels. She was instrumental in establishing the radio station Voice of Tibet, she served as Executive Director of the Norwegian Tibet Committee and starting in 2001 was a board member of the International Campaign

for Tibet Europe. In 2011 she was elected as member of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile.

Following a severe stroke, she had to concentrate on regaining her health. She did this with the same admirable zeal and determination as she showed in all tasks she took on. She made remarkable progress and was able to continue her work for her people.

The International Campaign for Tibet is deeply grateful to Chungdak Koren for her contributions to ICT's mission and for her energetic commitment to the cause of her people.

"Chungdak la was truly fearless, and unstoppable, and her singular dedication to Tibet and His Holiness the Dalai Lama will remain always an inspiration to me," said ICT President Tencho Gyatso.

Tsering Jampa, former ICT Europe Executive Director, with whom she worked as the Board member, said, "I am deeply saddened by the passing of my former dear colleague and friend, Chungdak Koren la whose unwavering commitment and dedication to advocating for the rights of Tibetans were truly inspiring. Working closely with Chungdak la advocating on the human rights situation in Tibet at the United Nations Human Rights Commission was a privilege, and Chungdak la's passion and hard work will always be remembered. Her passing away is a great loss, not just for those who knew Chungdak la, but for our cause she championed so tirelessly. My thoughts and prayers are with her and family during this difficult time. Chungdak la will be greatly missed."

### **Musical "Patriotic Education" in Hong Kong**

12 September 2024, Bitter Winter, Gladys Kwok

If regular CCP propaganda does not work with Hongkongers, the Party believes that perhaps karaoke would for adults—and cartoons for children.

"Patriotic Education" is the name of the most massive campaign of domestic propaganda in the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) recent history. Hong Kong is regarded as being particularly in need of this medicine, which is at the same time reluctant to take. A "Working Group on Patriotic Education" has been established, with pro-CCP legislator Lee Wa-king (Starry) as its leader. The Working Group has both "official members" and "non-official members." However, the "non-official members" are officially listed in its official web page as well.

One of the "non-official members" is veteran singer Kwong Mei-wan (Cally), another well-known CCP loyalist.

It seems that the CCP believes in music as a tool of "Patriotic Education" in Hong Kong. With great fanfare, a song by Cally Kwong has been launched both in a regular and a karaoke version. The song, called "Our Home," was introduced at a press

conference of the Working Group on Patriotic Education on September 3, to coincide with the the 79th anniversary of the Victory Day of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. The lyrics hail the unity of all Chinese around the Beijing government and its leaders.

Last month, the Working Group on Patriotic Education inaugurated a new thematic gallery at the Hong Kong Museum of History, presenting the necessity and alleged benefits of the repressive National Security Law.

The National Security Gallery also teaches children through cartoons to become "young guardians of National Security." For example, a video shows a beetle who violates the National Security rules and ventures away from the Butterfly Garden (China), ending up in a hostile land (the West, or a mental locus where Western ideas prevail). There, the beetle is about to be eaten by a huge spider (Western imperialism). Happily, armed with the National Security Law, the young Guardians of National Security from the Butterfly Garden come and save it. The beetle cries profusely and promises that it will always respect National Security Law in the future. A good lesson for young Hongkongers...

### **Fallen From the Front Page: Plight of Tibetans**

10 September 2024, Wilson Center, Ambassador mark A. Green



The pilgrims praying outside Jokhang Temple, the most sacred temple of Tibetan Buddhism in Lhasa, Tibet, China. Shutterstock/vigules.

If things continue at their current pace, Chinese authorities will have forcibly uprooted and relocated approximately 500 Tibetan villages (including more than 550,000 individuals) by the end of 2025.

The United Nations Refugee Agency has estimated that by the end of this year, there could be as many as 130 million people displaced across the world. That includes a third of Ukrainians who have been forcibly displaced from their homes since Vladimir Putin's full-scale invasion in early 2022, more than a fourth of Sudanese who have been forcibly displaced since war broke out again earlier this year, and over



a fourth of Venezuelans who have been forced from their homes since 2015. And then there are the ongoing displacement crises in places like Syria and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In other words, there are numerous forced displacement crises going on right now around the world. That inevitably means that some simply aren't getting the attention—or support—they deserve.

Many Americans have heard about China's systematic oppression of Uyghur Muslims from the northwest Xinjiang province. Between 2017 and 2019, somewhere between 800,000 to 2 million Uyghurs and other Muslims were arbitrarily detained in "reeducation" camps. Uyghurs in the region were also subjected to forced labor, sterilization, and surveillance (all considered to be crimes against humanity), and even genocide, according to the US, UN, and others in the international community. Although China closed many of these camps in 2019, hundreds of suspected camps remain in use. Others have been repurposed into formal prisons that continue to disproportionately detain Uyghurs.

While Western news services still carry the occasional story about the plight of the Uyghurs, another Beijing-led campaign against an ethnic minority group persists without much attention: the Chinese government's decades-old effort to destroy the independence and distinctiveness of Tibetans.

China has long held that Tibet is legally (and practically) an integral part of the People's Republic of China and, therefore, under the control of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), despite active Tibetan resistance. While China's constitution recognizes citizens' "freedom of religious belief," the CCP continues to heavily restrict religious practice, forcing the Dalai Lama—the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhists, who compose over 90% of Tibet's population—into exile since China's military occupation of Tibet in 1959.

What is less well known to many Westerners is Beijing's practice of "whole-village relocations" and its broader efforts to "Sinicize" Tibetans and their religion by uprooting and replacing local culture. The CCP has advanced efforts to dilute the Tibetan ethnic majority with an influx of state-sponsored Han Chinese migrants and forcibly placing Tibetan children into Chinese schools. According to a recent report by Human Rights Watch (HRW), Beijing began the process of forcibly relocating 930,000 rural Tibetans in 2020, while pressuring another 3.36 million to change their way of life. Just as Beijing has framed its detention of Uyghurs as voluntary participation in "vocational education and training centers," the CCP has argued that the relocation of Tibetans is both economically beneficial and undertaken willingly by Tibetans. However, the HRW report documented systematic efforts to

intimidate individuals into relocation through coercive home visits by CCP authorities and threats to cut off services. In fact, HRW said it was unable to find a single example of an individual Tibetan being permitted to voluntarily stay put.

According to HRW analysis of previous Tibetan relocation programs, once people have left their home villages, Chinese law essentially guarantees that they won't be able to return. And upon their move, Chinese authorities demolish the relocated Tibetans' original homes.

The relocation of Tibetan families is part of a larger effort by the CCP to fully assert regional control. Given the extensive cultural influence which the Dalai Lama holds over this population and his advanced age, Beijing is preparing to select its own Chinese successor once he passes—against Tibetan Buddhist custom and the current Dalai Lama's wishes. The United States has made its support for the aspirations of the Tibetan people clear. For example, the Resolve Tibet Act explicitly recognizes and reaffirms the distinctness of Tibet's culture and history and insists that the next Dalai Lama is to be chosen solely by the Tibetan people.

Given the many crises that seem to be raging these days, it's hardly surprising that that of the Tibetans, which is shielded from public view by an authoritarian regime, has fallen off the front pages. That doesn't make it or others that fade from view any less important, or tragic. Just ask those who once lived peacefully in the villages of Tibet.

### **Bipartisan support for Tibet as US election draws near**

10 September 2024, ICT

With the primaries concluded and Kamala Harris and Donald Trump confirmed as presidential candidates, the stage is set for the 2024 election. In addition to the White House, control of the House and Senate will be decided. For Tibet supporters, one question looms large: What will this election bring for Tibet?

The People's Republic of China's occupation of Tibet has long struck a chord with the American public. Beijing's repressive tactics have led to the hyper-securitization of the Tibetan plateau, recurring and egregious violations of the economic, social, and cultural rights of the Tibetan people and institutionalized an extremely oppressive environment to stifle their dissent, increase interference with Tibetan Buddhism, and inflict systematic and widespread use of arbitrary detention and torture.

Meanwhile, fourteen years have passed since the last of the contacts between the Dalai Lama and the Chinese government, which aimed to resolve the



Tibet conflict. Beijing's plan seems to be to eschew dialogue while cementing its control.

#### American interest

The situation in Tibet is contrary to the fundamental values of human rights and democracy espoused by the United States. More than 60 years after the PRC's invasion and occupation of Tibet, its rule remains completely illegitimate in the eyes of the Tibetan people, whose political, ethnic, social, cultural and religious identity is historically distinct from the Chinese.

Meanwhile, Tibetan resistance to Beijing's decades-long campaign to erode the Tibetan people's civilization remains overwhelmingly nonviolent. This is largely due to the leadership provided by the Dalai Lama. This peaceful approach is one of the key elements in the widespread public support that the Tibetan people enjoy among the American public.



The Dalai Lama speaks at a Congressional Human Rights Caucus event on September 21, 1987, where he presented his Five Point Peace Plan

Tibet also lies within the parameters of US security interests; more than human rights are at stake. Tibet occupies a geostrategic location, representing an Asian fault zone of clashing interests and big power politics. Russia, China and British India vied with each other in the past for control of Tibet. To this day tensions rise between China and India due to the PRC's occupation of Tibet. This holds implications for the Indo-Pacific region as well as potential global consequences. A stable Tibet would contribute greatly to peace in this sensitive region.

The importance of Tibet in US-China relations argues for a vigorous approach from the new Administration. In a change from the days when the United States had no coherent formalized policy toward Tibet and the Dalai Lama, today there is an institutionalized position that provides for both programmatic and policy support. American presidential administrations are mandated to implement American law which supports the Tibetan people.

Today, multiple reinforcing laws should define the next administration's approach to the Tibet conflict. In accordance with the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-228; 22 U.S.C. 6901) the United States of America must continue efforts to preserve and promote the "unique religious, linguistic, and

cultural heritage" of the Tibetan people, ask China "to respect fully their human rights and civil liberties," and encourage a peaceful resolution to the Tibetan dispute.

Additionally, these laws reflect the US position on Tibet and the Dalai Lama: the Congressional Gold Medal to H.H. the Dalai Lama 2007 (PL 109-287; 31 U.S.C. 5111), the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act of 2018 (PL 115-330), the Tibetan Policy & Support Act of 2020 (PL 116-260), and the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act of 2024 (PL 118-70).

Specifically, the following aspects of the Tibetan conflict (or situation) require the new administration's policy formulation and implementation:

US Policy: Supporting unconditional dialogue to resolve Tibet dispute

Since 1979, when His Holiness the Dalai Lama first visited the United States, there has been a consistent move towards overt American support for the Tibetan people. Many of the initiatives in recent decades have been led by Congress. Reflecting the broad support for Tibet among the American public, Congress continues to display a consistent bipartisan support when it came to Tibet-related matters.

As reiterated in the most recent Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act, which became law on July 12, 2024, the "long-standing policy of the United States (is) to encourage meaningful and direct dialogue between representatives of the People's Republic of China and the Dalai Lama, his or her representatives, or democratically elected leaders of the Tibetan community, without preconditions, to seek a settlement that resolves differences."

The United States actively supported the Tibetan-Chinese dialogue process, including the nine rounds of talks held between 2002 and 2010. Since then, the Chinese authorities have not resumed the process. Every year, the administration must report to Congress on the state of the Tibetan-Chinese negotiations. In the past, these annual reports highlighted the problems in Tibet and rightly outlined that "the lack of resolution of these problems leads to greater tensions inside China and will be a stumbling block to fuller political and economic engagement with the United States and other nations."

On Aug. 21, 2024, Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights and Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues Uzra Zeya during her meeting with the Dalai Lama in New York City, "reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to advancing the human rights of Tibetans and supporting efforts to preserve their distinct historical, linguistic, cultural, and religious heritage."

The United States must encourage China to create conditions for a sustainable settlement, which is

essential to the long-term stability of the region. Lodi Gyari, who led the Dalai Lama's delegation in the talks with China between 2002 and 2010 wrote in 2014, "... American Presidents, Cabinet members and Members of Congress have continuously encouraged the Chinese government to engage in a dialogue with His Holiness the Dalai Lama's representatives. President Bill Clinton and President George W. Bush gave the Tibet issue high priority, and I worked very closely with their senior aides. Their involvement was of immense value and helped sustain our dialogue with the Chinese government."

Clarity in US policy assertions on Tibet

The most recently codified law, the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act, now provides clarity on how the administration should define United States policies on different aspects of Tibet, particularly on the dialogue process and history. The bill, popularly called Resolve Tibet Act, asserts that "the dispute between Tibet and the People's Republic of China must be resolved in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Charter, by peaceful means, through dialogue without preconditions."

It also calls on China to "cease its propagation of disinformation about the history of Tibet, the Tibetan people, and Tibetan institutions, including that of the Dalai Lama."

Recent administrations have maintained that they consider Tibet to be a part of the People's Republic of China. However, this does not accord with history and the State Department has never been able to provide a sound historical basis for the assertion. It has also sparked opposition from Congress, which has included a prohibition against funds appropriated to the State Department to be used to produce any map or document that depicts Tibet as a part of China.

The Resolve Tibet Act clarifies that at no time has the US recognized Tibet to be part of China "since ancient times," a key component to the PRC's stated claim over Tibet.

Policy on reincarnation of the Dalai Lama

The Dalai Lama will be 90 years old in July 2025 when a new President takes office. He remains in good health. However, his level of active involvement in the Tibet issue will be reduced as he ages.

The strong bond between the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people is deeply grounded in centuries of history and has not been broken despite China's propaganda machine. The Dalai Lama continues to enjoy enormous respect and loyalty inside Tibet. Internationally, he remains one of the most respected religious leaders on the world stage.

Beijing's continued disregard for religious freedom and its systematic effort to claim authority over Tibetan Buddhist traditions, including the

reincarnation system, particularly that of the Dalai Lama, is a matter of paramount significance to followers, many of whom are American citizens. The Dalai Lama's succession is essential to the Tibetan people, represents a key test for the respect of religious freedom worldwide and is therefore vital to US national interests.

The Tibetan Policy & Support Act of 2020 provides clear direction for the new Administration on Tibetan religious freedom, particularly on the issue of the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama:

(1) decisions regarding the selection, education, and veneration of Tibetan Buddhist religious leaders are exclusively spiritual matters that should be made by the appropriate religious authorities within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition and in the context of the will of practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism;

(2) the wishes of the 14th Dalai Lama, including any written instructions, should play a key role in the selection, education, and veneration of a future 15th Dalai Lama; and

(3) interference by the Government of the People's Republic of China or any other government in the process of recognizing a successor or reincarnation of the 14th Dalai Lama and any future Dalai Lamas would represent a clear abuse of the right to religious freedom of Tibetan Buddhists and the Tibetan people.

(c) Holding Chinese Officials Responsible for Religious Freedom Abuses Targeting Tibetan Buddhists.—It is the policy of the United States to take all appropriate measures to hold accountable senior officials of the Government of the People's Republic of China or the Chinese Communist Party who directly interfere with the identification and installation of the future 15th Dalai Lama of Tibetan Buddhism, successor to the 14th Dalai Lama, including by—

(1) imposing sanctions pursuant to the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act (22 U.S.C. 2656 note); and

(2) prohibiting admission to the United States under section 212(a)(2)(G) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1182(a)(2)(G)).

Implement the principle of reciprocity on Tibet

The Chinese government promotes Tibet as being open to the world. This flies in the face of reality. Tibet remains closed to outsiders. The Chinese government's current strategy is to encourage Chinese tourists to visit Tibet and allow only a select few international visitors, quite a few of which are social media content creators. These people are used to drive the Chinese narrative on Tibet.

In contrast, multiple requests for visits of American diplomatic personnel and intergovernmental organizations have been refused. Scholars are routinely denied visas because of their writing, and

international journalists thrown out of the PRC because they were critical of its policies in Tibet. These delegations are an integral part of China's sophisticated strategic disinformation operations, designed to manipulate and influence perceptions of target audiences in Western countries on Tibet and the Dalai Lama.

The Tibetan overseas community is frequently subjected to harassment, monitoring, and cyberattacks carried out by the Chinese government. It is incumbent upon the United States government and the international community to insist upon the principle of reciprocity in its dealings with the PRC, to address the asymmetry of authoritarian influence in Tibet. The concept of reciprocity is increasingly being cited by governments as an instrument for countering China's one-way influence operations and in order to seek compliance with international standards and long-term mutual obligations.

The United States and some European governments have referred to reciprocity as a key principle in terms of their bilateral relations with the PRC. Acknowledging that reciprocity is an important tenet of international relations, members of Congress introduced and passed bipartisan legislation, the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, to promote freedom of movement and an open and accessible Tibet for American citizens and for Tibetans themselves, including the Dalai Lama.

#### Tibetan water and international security

Tibet, which is coterminous with the Tibetan plateau, is the third largest repository of fresh water after the South and North Pole. Eight of the major rivers that serve 1.8 billion people across Asia originate in Tibet. The PRC's plan to construct dozens of hydroelectric dams and other infrastructure over the next decades presents a direct threat to many downstream countries and is a cause of increasing regional volatility.

Underlying the importance of water on the Tibetan plateau, the TPSA mandates the Administration "to encourage a regional framework on water security through mechanisms such as the Lower Mekong Initiative, to facilitate cooperative agreements among all riparian nations that would promote transparency, sharing of information, pollution regulation, and arrangements on impounding and diversion of waters that originate on the Tibetan Plateau."

Highlighting the importance of the strategic location of Tibet to the global environmental conditions, TPSA further says that the Administration should "monitor the environment on the Tibetan Plateau, including glacial retreat, temperature rise, and carbon levels, in order to promote a greater understanding of the effects on permafrost, river flows, grasslands and desertification, and the monsoon cycle".

Where do the candidates and parties stand on Tibet?

On foreign policy, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the Israeli assault on Gaza have been dominant in the campaign so far. China has remained peripheral, mainly coming into focus in regard to trade issues and its policies toward Taiwan.

During every presidential election cycle, both the Democratic and the Republican parties release their platforms. These are considered as reflecting their respective policy priorities and positions on domestic and foreign affairs. Even though these documents are considered non-binding to the presidential candidates, the fact that efforts are made to form platform committees, amend wording, and formally adopt them, do indicate that they carry weight.

This year's platforms by both parties do not contain any specific reference to Tibet, in contrast to some previous platforms. The Democratic Party Platform, which was adopted by the Platform Committee before Kamala Harris became the nominee, states that China is "America's most consequential strategic competitor." The Republican platform says "countering China" will be one of the ways the party will "return peace."

Both the platforms focus on trade relations with China. The Republican platform says, "Republicans will revoke China's Most Favored Nation status." The Democratic platform says, "we seek to "de-risk" and diversify the economic relationship between our countries, not decouple. We will protect a targeted number of sensitive technologies with focused restrictions, creating a "small yard and a high fence" that preserves our national security."

In their acceptance speeches at their respective party conventions, Trump and Harris made only tangential reference to China. In the case of Harris she refers to China while talking about AI and space saying, "I will make sure that we lead the world into the future on space and artificial intelligence; that America, not China, wins the competition for the 21st century; and that we strengthen, not abdicate, our global leadership."

Trump's reference to China is on trade saying, "I will bring auto jobs back to our country, through the proper use of taxes, tariffs, and incentives, and will not allow massive auto manufacturing plants to be built in Mexico, China, or other countries..." Neither of the candidates talk about freedom and human rights in Tibet and China.

The new administration is congressionally mandated to articulate a China policy that frames the lack of a solution on Tibet as an impediment to more harmonious relations between the United States and the People's Republic of China.

The State Department has responsibility to coordinate with other governments in multilateral efforts toward a negotiated settlement of the Tibetan issue. It should appoint a Special Coordinator for

Tibetan Issues at the earliest and work with like-minded countries, including the EU, in undertaking coordinated initiatives to help alleviate the plight of the Tibetan people and to find a lasting solution to the issue. In the U.S.-EU Summit Joint Statement in October, 2023, the two committed to “keep voicing our concerns” about Tibet.

### **Sinification of Buddhism: China’s manipulative quest for control**

09 September 2024, The Border Lens, Bidhayak Das

China’s efforts to claim Buddhism’s origins clash with millions of Buddhists’ enduring connection to India. As China pushes forward with its efforts to establish a Chinese variant of Buddhism, it attempts to stake a claim on the very origins of the religion. However, for millions of Buddhists across the world, the history of Buddhism’s birth in India remains untouchable. “India will always be the centre of Buddhism for us—the place where the Buddha attained enlightenment,” says Tswewang Dorzi, a Tibetan Buddhist scholar from Dharamshala. Dorzi’s conviction underscores the deep spiritual and historical connection that Buddhists have with India, where the roots of their faith lie.

But does this mean that China’s attempts to Sinify Buddhism are doomed to fail? “Perhaps,” says Dorzi, though he acknowledges that the Chinese campaign to reshape the religion’s narrative is relentless. He highlights how India’s legacy in the growth of Buddhism, particularly through figures like Padmasambhava, or Guru Rinpoche, is inseparable from the religion itself. Known in Tibetan as Slob-dpon (Teacher) or Padma ‘Byung-gnas (Lotus Born), Padmasambhava’s influence stretches across the high Himalayas. His teachings have deeply resonated with communities in the region known as Monyul, which extends from the Tibetan plateau into India. These communities, largely followers of Tibetan Buddhism, have preserved the spiritual traditions connected to the great guru.

Dorzi points out that the Eastern Himalayas, spanning regions under the jurisdiction of Nepal, India, Bhutan, and China (Tibet), are home to a rich diversity of communities, each with their own religious practices, including Tibetan Buddhism. Scholars have long explored how Padmasambhava spread Vajrayana, or Tantric Buddhism, across these regions, cementing India’s connection to this spiritual path. Professor Jigme Yeshe Lama of the Kolkata University, for instance, writes about how Padmasambhava, an Indian tantric adept born in the Swat Valley—modern-day Pakistan—brought Vajrayana Buddhism to Tibet and founded the Nyingmapa school. “This history is unchangeable,” Dorzi affirms, calling out the Chinese government for

its hypocrisy in attempting to stake a claim on Padmasambhava’s legacy.

China’s efforts to control the narrative of Buddhism, particularly Tibetan Buddhism, have included acts of destruction aimed at erasing the tangible symbols of this heritage. According to reports in Free Tibet in January 2022, Chinese authorities in Drago County demolished a 45-foot bronze statue of Padmasambhava, which stood outside Chanang Monastery in Nyimo Township. The report further adds that this act followed an earlier incident where a 99-foot Buddha statue in Sengdeng Village was similarly destroyed under the watch of paramilitary troops.

These acts of aggression are not isolated. As per reports coming out of Tibet in 2007, statues of Padmasambhava were targeted in Ngari Darchen, Burang County, and Kardze County, among other areas within Tibet. These demolitions, orchestrated by the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) under the command of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), reflect a broader strategy to erase the teachings and influence of Padmasambhava, whose spiritual legacy challenges China’s narrative.

Despite these aggressive efforts, scholars like Dorzi and others insist that China’s actions cannot erase the rich history of Buddhism’s spread from India. Yet, China’s ambitions to become the global centre for Buddhism, through initiatives like Buddhist diplomacy, are seen as a potential disruptor. Dorzi notes that China has made significant inroads in countries such as Sri Lanka and throughout Southeast Asia, where they have formed alliances with Buddhist groups that are economically dependent on Beijing. “These relationships could shift the balance in China’s favour,” he warns.

**The World Buddhist Forum: A political tool disguised as religious dialogue**

One of China’s most prominent platforms for this strategy is the World Buddhist Forum (WBF), which is set to convene its sixth session in Ningbo this October. Although ostensibly a platform for spiritual exchange, the WBF is increasingly viewed as a vehicle for China’s political agenda. A Tibetan youth describes it as “an instrument of state control,” pointing out how the forum, under the guise of promoting world peace, is being used to advance the Sinification of Buddhism. Launched in 2006, the WBF has grown into the largest multilateral platform for Buddhist dialogue, yet its noble goals of peace and well-being are overshadowed by China’s deeper political motives.

The Chinese government’s narrative posits that Buddhism, particularly Tibetan Buddhism, is fundamentally Chinese. This attempt to rewrite history erases the contributions of other cultures, particularly India, which remains central to the

origins of the religion. At a 2021 National Conference on religious affairs, Chinese President Xi Jinping emphasised the necessity for religions in China to embrace a distinctly Chinese character. This initiative is part of China's broader agenda to mould Buddhism in line with the CCP's political goals. Buddhism's reputation as a doctrine of peace and non-violence makes it an appealing instrument for China's diplomatic influence, particularly as it seeks to counter perceptions of secularism within the CCP. China efforts at Sinification of Tibetan Buddhism which has gone beyond its borders has been excellently portrayed by a report in the *Morung Express* which highlights how Beijing has also been promoting sacred Buddhist sites and figures such as Avalokitesvara, Amitabha, and Manjushri to attract pilgrims and tourists. The report further adds that this effort includes replicating Buddhist holy sites in India, such as the Brahma Palace in Wuxi, which is designed to resemble Rajgir. Moreover, China has been backing the Shugden faction of the Gelug School, providing financial support such as in Bangladesh through initiatives like the annual Dipankar Atisha Peace Award. These actions are not limited to China's borders; Nepal, Pakistan, and Bangladesh are all key targets of China's Buddhist diplomacy.

In Pakistan, China has focused on promoting the Gandhara trail, which connects Buddhist sites in Pakistan to South Korea and Japan. According to reports China is actively positioning Pakistan as a key destination for Buddhist pilgrimage and a historical centre for international Buddhists.

The Sinification of Tibetan Buddhism: A threat to religious freedom

China's manipulation of Buddhism is not merely an attempt to claim historical legitimacy; it is central to the CCP's broader policy of Sinification. This policy seeks to reshape all aspects of religious life in China to align with the ideologies of the CCP. Tibetan Buddhism, with its deep cultural ties to Tibet, poses a direct challenge to this agenda. The CCP views Tibetan Buddhism's influence as a threat to its control over the region and, by extension, to its authority. Consequently, efforts to co-opt and Sinify Tibetan Buddhism have intensified in recent years.

In March 2024, during China's Two Sessions, Wang Huning, head of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), reaffirmed the importance Beijing's attaches to promoting the Sinification of Tibetan Buddhism. This campaign, which has been ongoing since Xi Jinping's announcement in 2012, is about stripping the religion of its unique characteristics and repurposing it as a tool of state control. The Buddhist Association of China (BAC), once a non-political organization, has now become a key instrument of this agenda,

explicitly supporting the CCP's directives to align religious practices with socialist principles and Xi Jinping Thought.

As the international Buddhist community gathers in Ningbo for the upcoming World Buddhist Forum, it is crucial to confront the reality of China's attempts to rewrite Buddhism's history. What should be a forum for spiritual growth and dialogue has become a tool for state propaganda. Failing to recognise this could result in the further erosion of religious freedom and the distortion of one of the world's oldest and most profound religions.

China's ambitions to reshape Buddhism for its own political gains may seem insidious, but the global Buddhist community remains steadfast in its reverence for the true origins of the faith. For all the CCP's efforts to promote China as the seat of Buddhism, the world's Buddhists continue to look to India as the birthplace of their religion. Sites such as Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, and Nalanda hold spiritual significance that no state-sponsored narrative can erase. In the end, China's efforts to rewrite the history of Buddhism may disrupt the present, but they cannot erase the indelible link between Buddhism and its true origins—the forgotten story of India's enduring role in the religion's past, present, and future.

### Attempts to keep up exchanges between Taiwanese, Chinese face obstacles

09 September 2024, VOA, William Yang

Efforts to maintain exchanges between Taiwanese and Chinese citizens face new challenges after Beijing last month sentenced a Taiwanese activist to nine years in jail, a move that analysts say will create a chilling effect within Taiwan's civil society.

On September 6, China's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) confirmed that a court in the eastern city of Wenzhou earlier had sentenced Taiwanese political activist Yang Chih-yuan to nine years in jail under secession charges.

TAO said Yang, who was arrested in 2022 while teaching and participating in competitions for the board game Go, has long been involved in secessionist activities, playing a key role in organizations that advocate Taiwan's independence. "His acts are egregious and the court reached the decision according to law," the office said in a statement.

Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council, which oversees cross-strait exchanges, condemned the Chinese court's ruling and asked Beijing to make public the verdict and the evidence that supports the charges.

"Beijing is trying to use Yang's case to intimidate Taiwanese people and use the pretext of penalizing Taiwan independence as a way to exercise long-arm



jurisdiction," the MAC wrote in a statement released last week.

Yang's case marks the first time that China used secession charges against Taiwanese people. It comes after Beijing in June introduced 22 new guidelines to punish what they called "die-hard Taiwan independence activists." The maximum sentence could be the death penalty.

Analysts say the sentencing of Yang represents Beijing's attempt to take a "more hardline stance" against Taiwanese who promote the island's sovereignty. His case "shows that Beijing means business when it comes to using legal instruments to crack down on what it regards as 'separatism,'" said J. Michael Cole, a Taipei-based senior fellow at the Global Taiwan Institute.

"This will inevitably affect people-to-people and civil society exchanges [between Taiwan and China,]" Cole told VOA in a written statement.

Indefinite delay of cross-strait academic exchanges, city-to-city forum

Meanwhile, the scheduled visits by two academic delegations from China's Xiamen University have reportedly been postponed as Taiwanese authorities review their paperwork.

While some local media outlets said the postponement may be caused by "obstacles" imposed by Taiwanese authorities, Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council said the review of the Chinese delegations' applications is based on existing procedures, adding that Taipei has no intention to prevent certain groups from visiting Taiwan.

Despite clarification from Taiwanese officials, China's state-run tabloid Global Times characterized the postponement as the Taiwanese government's attempt to "block" the Chinese delegations from visiting Taiwan.

"The Xiamen University delegations have completed the preparations in terms of formalities and materials, but related 'security authorities' in Taiwan have put 'a technical hold' in place while they carry out a review," Zhang Wensheng, deputy dean of the Taiwan Research Institute at Xiamen University, told the Global Times in an interview.

Some experts say the delay in the Chinese delegation's trips to Taiwan shows the Taiwanese government may be reviewing how to facilitate cross-strait exchanges amid growing military and political pressure from Beijing.

"In light of Beijing's heightened pressure against Taiwan, the Taiwanese government may be reviewing what might be a more reciprocal approach to manage cross-strait academic exchanges," Wen-ti Sung, a Taipei-based political scientist for the Australian National University, told VOA by phone.

In addition to the delay of cross-strait academic exchanges, the annual Shanghai-Taipei City Forum, which remains one of the few occasions for municipal officials from Taiwan and China to meet, has yet to announce a date for a potential 2024 gathering.

When asked in August about the forum, Taipei Mayor Chiang Wan-an told Taiwanese media outlets that at a time when cross-strait tensions are high, it is more necessary for Taiwan and China to maintain communication.

"Such delays serve as a clear reminder that even lower-level engagement is difficult to sustain when one side rejects core aspects of the other's existence," Timothy Rich, a political scientist at Western Kentucky University, told VOA in a written response.

Since Taiwan President Lai Ching-te took office in May, Beijing has increased military pressure against Taiwan.

Against this backdrop, Cole in Taipei said the lack of engagement between Taipei and Beijing may increase the risks of miscalculation, which could lead to accidents and escalation.

In his view, Beijing will likely maintain a two-pronged approach against Taiwan in the near future. They will uphold "a suspension of official dialogue with the Taiwanese government led by the Democratic Progressive Party while keeping the door open to sub-state interaction with other elements of Taiwan's society, with the aim of dividing both," he told VOA.

### EU-China-India: Three to tango?

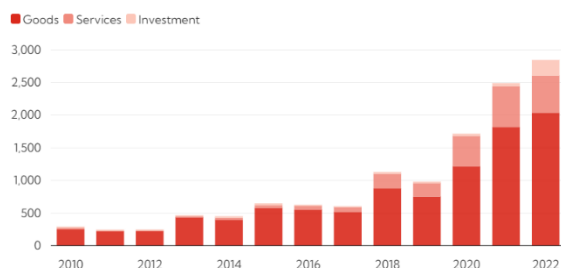
09 September 2024, ORF, Swati Prabhu

With perceptible reliance in terms of trade in goods and services, the EU, India and China are dependent on each other, even as the EU attempts to reconfigure its relationship with China.

#### Disrupted global context

Globally, surging economic fragmentation in the form of trade barriers, restrictions, and sanctions not only increases the gap in financing for sustainable development, but also makes developing countries more fragile, vulnerable and prone to frequent meltdowns. The ongoing polycrisis has resulted in an increase in trade protectionism. Despite repeated reiterations by nation-states underscoring the need for building greater cooperation and robust partnerships, economic fragmentation is on the rise. As per the International Monetary Fund (IMF) new trade barriers, that were introduced on an annual basis, has almost tripled since 2019 to about 3,000 in 2023 (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Number of trade restrictions imposed annually worldwide



Source: Global Trade Alert & IMF

Alongside, talks of decoupling, interrupted capital flows, increasing threat posed to the digital space, and uneven distribution of income are adding to the mounting challenges of global economic integration. As societies become more digitally-enabled and technology-driven, there are also heightened concerns about cyber-security, trade wars, surveillance, and sabotage of infrastructural capacities. This gains further traction in light of increasing Chinese footprints in artificial intelligence (AI), procuring critical raw minerals, securing energy sources, strengthening its maritime presence in the South China Sea and, subsequently, aiming to acquire global supremacy. Further, conflicts breaking out across the globe, be it Ukraine or the Gaza Strip, has resulted in stringent economic sanctions by several powers including the United States (US) and the European Union (EU) on Russia and also China. Being one of the largest development providers in the world, the EU is known for its top-notch standards, good regulatory mechanisms, and administrative practices.

Moreover, official development assistance (ODA) equally forms a critical component in supporting the development trajectories of several low-income and other developing economies. Yet, actual on-ground implications of development cooperation continue to be fuzzy. Against this backdrop, geopolitical contestations, such as the intensifying Sino-US rivalry, are now reaching the brink of extreme polarisation in the international landscape. Naturally, the EU is unnerved and finds itself in a sticky spot. Being one of the largest development providers in the world, the EU is known for its top-notch standards, good regulatory mechanisms, and administrative practices. But even after two decades of inking its strategic partnership with India, the true potential of this partnerships remains untapped. On the other hand, the EU's relationship with China has weathered several phases from a 'competitor' and a 'systemic rival', to 'decoupling' and finally 'derisking'. Ambiguous as it seems, it lacks a comprehensive and long-term strategy of tackling China's growing power in multiple domains.

**India & China: Two different tales of development**

As the international development architecture witnesses an evolution of sorts, the rise of the global South like India and China is pertinent. Attempting to

ably shoulder the responsibility of providing technical and humanitarian support towards establishing cooperative frameworks is their way of constructing their own development narrative. However, clubbing New Delhi and Beijing together as like-minded drivers of South-South cooperation (SSC) may not be correct. With different perspectives and praxis, China's development cooperation model is based on a market imperialist strategy aiming to expand its geographic outreach and establish its economic linkages by creating debts and dependencies. Although, post the COVID-19 pandemic, Beijing is attempting to refurbish its global image by stepping into softer sectors like humanitarian development cooperation, sustainable development, climate change, poverty reduction, and creating resilient food supply chains. But its foundational development modality remains the same. In this sense, the recently concluded 24th EU-China Summit in December 2023 yet again failed to bear any constructive results between the two.

With different perspectives and praxis, China's development cooperation model is based on a market imperialist strategy aiming to expand its geographic outreach and establish its economic linkages by creating debts and dependencies.

India's stance to put forth the concerns and voices of the Global South has been acknowledged as a welcome step by the advanced economies, including the EU. By raising issues of food, fuel and fertiliser, India has not only spoken for itself but also on behalf of the diverse set of developing economies who do not find the platform or space to voice their concerns. Also, in the recently concluded 3rd Voice of the Global South Summit, India's shared vision of establishing a four-fold 'global development compact' for realising the SDGs is a significant step. Further, New Delhi's development partnerships have come to occupy a pivotal portion of its development diplomacy in recent years. With an explicit recognition for diversifying sources, avenues and alternatives models of development, India is trying to put its best foot forward towards pushing the sustainability narrative. However, relations between India and China have remained unsteady and tumultuous over the years. Also, India's trade dependence on both China and the EU has increased significantly. According to UNCTAD, India's trade reliance on China and EU has increased by 1.2 per cent each in 2023 and it is expected to rise further i.e., by 2 per cent in the first quarter of 2024.

**A baffled Brussels**

With such perceptible reliance in terms of trade in goods and services, the EU, India and China are obviously quite dependent on each other. However, for EU to overlook either one of them is difficult and not recommended. Representing two primary engines

of the Southern economies and enjoying high levels of demography, India and China are, in fact, the pivotal cogs in the development wheel. The EU certainly cannot afford to ignore either India or China if it has to sustain its presence and relevance in today's geostrategic and geoeconomics world. At the same time, it needs to choose its partners wisely. Given India's philosophy of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" or One Earth, One Family, One Future, and its attempts to create a shared vision for charting the development journey of the Global South, Brussels must be receptive of such positive engagements. At the same time, there is an alarming need for the EU to reassess and reconfigure its China position, which can potentially balance its security ambitions with its economic aspirations. With tensions breaking out at the drop of the hat in contemporary times, formulating a robust, comprehensive, clear and long-term China strategy should be high on the EU's to-do list. It is not to say that a strategy will always safeguard Brussels from any further mistrust or hostilities, but it will certainly provide a sense of direction to its global leadership.

### China and India in the multipolar global order

09 September 2024, The Express Tribune, Shahih Javed Burki

There is a growing fear of China among the administrations that have come to power in Washington since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. It was in 1991 that the USSR broke into several geographic pieces. While the states in Eastern Europe and Central Asia parted company with Moscow, China began to grow its economy and increase its military strength. In the early 1980s while working in the World Bank I had coined the term "a multipolar world". I was mocked by several commentators for using the term. I was reminded that in English language there were only two poles, north and south. Multipolar world did not make any grammatical sense.

While that may have been the case, there is no denying the fact that there are now several centres of economic activity around the globe. Most of these have their spheres of influence. Often these overlap, which gives rise to conflict. This is the case in Eastern Europe, East Asia and the Middle East. These involve in some way or the other the United States. Washington is helping Ukraine in Eastern Europe to push back Russia which invaded its neighbouring country to recreate what was once Greater Russia. In the Middle East, Washington is aiding Israel to put down the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. In East Asia, Washington is partnering with several states to check the rise of China. It is also working with India to develop a counter power to

China. Today I will discuss whether India is able to counter the growing influence of China.

If global presence is measured in terms of the size of the population, India has overtaken China and is now the world's most populous country. It also has a higher rate of population growth than China. Beijing now must deal with the problem that has resulted in rapidly aging people and decline in the rate of increase in population. These demographic challenges have severe economic consequences. Countries need, if not growing than at least steady population size, to maintain reasonable rates of economic growth. With aging comes pressure on public funds. It means diverting public resources from investment in economic development and social improvement to take care of the old.

As India grows and diversifies its economy, it has become more dependent on China rather than develop independently and compete with the Asian economic giant. The subject of growing Indian dependence on China was covered in an in-depth analysis by Karishma Mehrotra in an article written for The Washington Post. The analysis was published under the title 'India's growing reliance on China poses challenge for U.S. trade strategy'. He wrote: "American businesses looking to reduce their reliance on China have been eyeing India in the past few years as a new manufacturing hub - and as a hedge against potential disruptions in Chinese supply chains by rising geopolitical tensions or another pandemic. But as India has amped its production of goods like smartphones, solar panels and medicine, the Indian economy itself has become dependent on Chinese imports, in particular for the components that go into these products. This dynamic serves as a reality check for U.S. policymakers who have been urgently promoting efforts to diversify supply chains away from Chinese factories and 'de-risk' the commercial relationship with China."

Will the Western companies - especially those based in the United States - be successful in linking with the enterprises in India, bypassing China. The answer is no, since India is heavily dependent on China for parts and components it needs for its finished products. "Unless China stops being the third party from where components come in and we just assemble, that de-risking is not going to happen for any country producing in India," said Sriparna Pathak, an associate professor at Jindal University focusing on India-China relations. According to Global Traded Research Institute, GTRI, an Indian think tank, imports from China include finished products as well as intermediate goods. Imports from China have been growing twice as fast as those overall and now make up a third of Indian imports. India's domestic industry is deeply dependent on the parts and components that are imported from China

and go into final products. Nearly two-thirds of the Indian imports of electronic components such as circuit boards and batteries now come from China, says the Confederation of Indian Industry. According to the data released by GTRI, the volume of such Chinese imports has tripled during the past five years.

India has a well-developed pharmaceutical industry. The world's reliance on Indian medicines and vaccines became clear during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, even in this industry, India relies on ingredients from China. According to GTRI, imports from China of intermediate drug products increased by more than one-half during the buildup related to the pandemic.

American reliance on solar power to meet what it saw as its obligation to reduce the emission of greenhouse houses to reduce the impact on global warming was fed by imports of solar panels from China. However, when reducing the reliance on imports from China became a priority, the United States sought inputs from India. As the switch occurred, it was revealed that India sourced between half of its solar components - such as modules, cells, wafers solar glass - from China between 2021 and 2023.

According to senior America officials who spoke to Mehrotra, "We have taken a more practical view that in order to effectively diversify, the first step is to get a foothold in the parts of this supply chain where you can diversify today. And then from there you can go upstream." That is where India enters the American strategy to delink as much as possible from China. But as already discussed, India's reliance on China is increasing even in the industries in which it has had traditional advantage. To support the manufacture of Indian textiles and garments, manufacturers in the country have been ramping up imports of yarn and fabric from China. Even in the fast-growing automobile industry, India has been increasing its imports from vehicle parts and accessories from China. This is the case in particular in the electric vehicles sector. For instance, India has been successful in switching the important passenger-carrying rickshaws from using diesel to being powered by electricity.

### **Third plenum inspires renewed vitality into China's modernization drive**

08 September 2024, Global Times, Wang Changlin

The resolution adopted by the third plenary session of the 20th CPC Central Committee underscores a strong commitment to comprehensively deepening reforms to further advance Chinese modernization. The global community is closely watching China's ongoing efforts to promote high-quality economic

development and high-standard opening-up, and the potential impacts on the world economy. The Global Times invited Wang Changlin, vice president of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, to share his insights.

The 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) adopted a resolution on further deepening reform comprehensively to advance Chinese modernization at its third plenary session held from July 15 to 18 in Beijing. The resolution emphasized the need to further deepen reform comprehensively with a view to advancing Chinese modernization.

Modernization is a comprehensive and profound transformation of economic and social development, as well as a profound transformation of the system and mechanism.

Modernization refers to the profound transformation of social production methods and human lifestyles, triggered by the rapid rise in productivity since the industrial revolution. It is a historical process of rapid increase in social material wealth, promoting the profound transformation of traditional society into modern society.

Its main features include highly developed productivity, leading technological innovation capabilities, effective national governance, urban-rural integrated society structure, high-level public services, safe and beautiful ecological environment, and high levels of civic literacy.

The practice of global modernization fully proves that science and industrial revolution are the fundamental driving forces for modernization. For a country or region to achieve modernization, it must seize the opportunities of technological revolution and vigorously develop advanced productive forces. Meanwhile, institutional and cultural innovation is the guarantee for the development of modernization. The modernization of national governance system and governance capacity is not only an important part of comprehensive and complete modernization, but also a key factor and necessary condition for a country to walk a smooth path toward modernization.

**Advancing Chinese modernization**

Chinese modernization is continuously advancing and will open broad prospects in the process of reform and opening-up.

Reform and opening-up is the crucial policies for China to move with the times in great strides. Over the past 40 years, reform and opening-up have emerged as the defining symbol, the most widely accepted consensus, and the most remarkable spirit of contemporary China.

Since the 18th National Congress of the CPC, historic achievements and progress have been made in the

cause of the Party and the country, relying on reform and opening-up.

China has promoted high-quality economic development with supply-side structural reform at its center, resolutely expanded high-level opening-up, decisively eliminated a range of systemic and institutional drawbacks, and achieved the transformation from partial exploration and breakthrough to systemic integration and comprehensive deepening in reform.

The basic institutional framework in various fields has been basically established, many areas have undergone historic progresses, systemic reshaping, and overall reconstruction.

The level of modernization of the national governance system and governance capacity has been further improved, providing a strong institutional guarantee for the comprehensive construction of a moderately prosperous society, promoting China's economy to embark on the path of high-quality development, and continuously enhancing the sense of gain, happiness, and security of the people. China has embarked on a new journey to comprehensively build a socialist modernized country.

On this new journey, China must continue to create new opportunities in building Chinese modernization, with a strong reliance on reform and opening-up. Currently, China faces a crucial period of promoting the construction of a strong country and national rejuvenation through the comprehensive advancement of Chinese modernization.

China needs to start from its own national conditions, follow the general laws of modernization, strive to explore an institutional system suitable for the development of Chinese modernization, continuously promote better adaptation between production relations and productive forces, national governance, and social development, and stimulate vitality and add momentum to Chinese modernization.

Opening broader prospects

To further deepen reform comprehensively, it is essential to focus closely on advancing the theme of Chinese modernization. It is essential to closely focus on the overall goal of upholding and improving the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics and modernizing China's system and capacity for governance and further promote comprehensive deepening of reform.

China needs to focus on building a high-level socialist market economy system. A high-level socialist market economy system is an important guarantee for Chinese modernization.

Since the reform and opening-up, a key factor in the great success of China's economic development has been the establishment of a socialist market economy system. In the new journey of promoting Chinese

modernization, China needs to prioritize the construction of a high-level socialist market economy system, further stimulate the internal driving force and innovation vitality across the whole of society.

Only by working unswervingly both to consolidate and develop the public sector and to encourage, support and guide development of the non-public sector, building a unified national market, improving basic market economy institutions such as property rights protection, market access, fair competition, and social credit, can China better play the role of market mechanisms, optimize resource allocation efficiency and maximize benefits, accelerate the construction of a new development pattern, and promote high-quality development.

Prioritizing the improvement of people's quality of life is essential. A higher quality of life encompasses stable employment, greater satisfaction with income, reliable social security, and improved basic public services. These elements serve as both the foundation and the driving force behind economic development, playing a crucial role in fostering a high-quality economic cycle.

To advance Chinese modernization, it is crucial for China to align reforms in both the economic and social sectors.

This includes improving the income distribution system, strengthening the social security framework, and ensuring that basic public services are balanced and accessible to all. By doing so, China can achieve meaningful progress in the comprehensive development of individuals and promote the common prosperity of its citizens.

### India's commitment to Tibetan cause continues

08 September 2024, The Sunday Guardian, Khedroob Thondup

India's support has been instrumental in preserving Tibetan culture and identity.

The Government of India's decision to grant asylum to the Dalai Lama and thousands of Tibetan exiles in 1959 stands as a monumental act of compassion and political foresight. This gesture not only provided a safe haven for those fleeing persecution but also laid the foundation for a unique cultural and spiritual bond between India and the Tibetan community.

A SANCTUARY FOR THE DALAI LAMA AND TIBETAN EXILES

When the Dalai Lama fled Tibet following the Chinese invasion, India welcomed him with open arms. This act of amnesty was not merely a political manoeuvre but a profound humanitarian gesture. It underscored India's commitment to upholding human rights and protecting those in dire need. The Dalai Lama's presence in India has since become



a symbol of resilience and hope for Tibetans worldwide.

#### PRESERVATION OF TIBETAN CULTURE AND IDENTITY

India's support has been instrumental in preserving Tibetan culture and identity. The establishment of Tibetan settlements across India, particularly in Dharamshala, has allowed the Tibetan community to thrive. These settlements have become centres of cultural preservation, where traditional Tibetan arts, crafts, and religious practices continue to flourish. The Central Tibetan Administration, based in Dharamshala, operates as a government-in-exile, working tirelessly to keep the Tibetan cause alive on the global stage.

EDUCATIONAL AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT  
India has also played a crucial role in the educational and economic empowerment of Tibetan exiles. Numerous schools and institutions have been established to provide quality education to Tibetan children, ensuring that they grow up with a strong sense of their heritage while being well-equipped to navigate the modern world.

Additionally, vocational training programs and economic initiatives have helped many Tibetans achieve self-sufficiency and contribute positively to Indian society.

#### A BEACON OF HOPE

India's unwavering support for the Tibetan cause has not gone unnoticed. It has inspired other nations to recognize the plight of the Tibetan people and advocate for their rights. The Dalai Lama's teachings of peace, compassion, and non-violence have resonated globally, further highlighting the significance of India's role in his journey.

#### CONCLUSION

The Government of India's decision to grant asylum to the Dalai Lama and Tibetan exiles was a defining moment in modern history. It showcased India's commitment to humanitarian values and its willingness to stand up for justice and freedom. As the Tibetan community continues to thrive in India, this enduring partnership serves as a testament to the power of compassion and the enduring spirit of the Tibetan people.

#### **How Chinese J-20 fighters in Xinjiang and Tibet are a concern for India**

08 September 2024, Firstpost, Air Marshal Anil Chopra

Through the deployment of fifth-generation stealth J-20 fighter aircraft, China wants to increase its airpower along the Line of Actual Control. India, though well off to handle the threat, must be prepared.

India-China relations have been at lows since the Galwan skirmish four years ago. There is an uneasy calm at present and an attempt to re-engage, but a range of divergences persist between the two Asian giants. China is aggressively building infrastructure in Tibet and Xinjiang along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). The Chinese want to add air power to the conflict.

China's People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) recently deployed fifth-generation stealth fighters J-20 at Shigatse Air Base around 300 kilometres north of the Indian Air Force's (IAF) Rafale air base at Hasimara and just 150 km from the LAC in Sikkim. J-20s have operated at Hotan Airbase in Xinjiang, 350 km north of Pangong Tso Lake. And just 120 km from India's claim line in Aksai Chin. It is important to understand the PLAAF resources and capabilities at these two operationally important airbases.

#### Shigatse (Xigaze) Air Base

Shigatse (Xigaze) is the second largest city in Tibet Autonomous Region. Shigatse Airbase, also called the Shigatse Peace Airport, is a dual-use airfield in Tibet, around 180 kilometres west of Lhasa. Construction began in 1968 and was completed in 1973. PLAAF started operating there in 1973, and civil operations began in 2010. The airport is at an elevation of 3,782 m / 12,408 ft above mean sea level (AMSL) and is one of the highest airports in the world. It has two concrete runways, 09/27 with 5,000 m (16,404 ft) length, and the second, 07/25 with 3,000 m (9,843 ft) length. It has the longest public runway in the world; the only other with the same length is Ulyanovsk Vostochny Airport in south-west Russia.

The airport sees over 2,000 movements a year and around 200,000 passengers. Significant cargo is also transported by air. The second (shorter) runway was constructed in 2017, and Guizhou WZ-7 "Soaring Dragon" UAVs were seen operating from here.

In May 2024, six J-20 stealth fighters were seen operating from the airbase. Also, at least eight J-10 aircraft and one KJ-500 Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) aircraft were seen parked at the airbase. The runway at Shigatse is very large, and therefore it will be able to partially neutralise the disadvantage of weight carriage during high-altitude airfield operations.

#### The Chengdu J-20 'Mighty Dragon'

The Chengdu J-20 is the Chinese twinjet stealth fifth-generation fighter aircraft. The aircraft has three variants: the initial production model J-20A, the thrust-vectoring J-20B, and the twin-seat aircraft teaming capable J-20S. The aircraft made its first flight in January 2011, and the first J-20 combat unit was formed in February 2018, making China the second country in the world and the first in Asia to

field an operational stealth aircraft. Nearly 250 have been built as of date. J-20 squadrons have been allotted to all the theatre commands.

The aircraft has the Type 1475 (KLJ-5) active electronically scanned array (AESA) radar. Six electro-optic sensors provide omnidirectional IR coverage, which is fused with the radar picture for better situational awareness.

The aircraft is powered by a Chinese WS-10Cs engine with thrust of 142-147 kN and has serrated afterburner nozzles for enhanced rear-aspect stealth. The finally intended powerplant is the Shenyang WS-15 with a thrust of 180 kN.

The main weapon bay is capable of housing both long-range air-to-air missiles (PL-12, PL-15, PL-21) and precision-guided munitions. The two smaller lateral weapon bays can carry short-range AAMs (PL-10).

The estimated production rate was 40 to 50 airframes per year in 2022 and 100 to 120 airframes per year in 2023. PLA Air Force (PLAAF) currently has around 240 aircraft. The J-20 fleet could reach 1,000 aircraft by the early 2030s.

J-20S will be a twin-seat variant. The second operator to coordinate attack and reconnaissance missions and manage unmanned combat aerial vehicles (UCAVs) as "loyal wingmen" such as the AVIC Dark Sword and stealth Hongdu GJ-11 UCAV.

Significance of Deployment at Shigatse

Shigatse is rather close to LAC near Sikkim (150 km) and IAF's Hasimara air base (300 km). Hasimara air base is in the Siliguri corridor, known as the Chicken's Neck. It is a stretch of land, 20-22 kilometres at the narrowest section. This geopolitical and geoeconomic corridor connects the seven northeastern states to the rest of India. The airbase is very significant as it houses one of the only two squadrons of the top-end IAF aircraft, the Rafale. If this base was to be neutralised even for short periods, it would have implications for India.

If an unfriendly regime takes charge in Bangladesh, the complexity of the narrow Siliguri corridor increases. But then India has lived with much more hostile East Pakistan. Today, India is a much more powerful country, but so is China.

J-20 vs Rafale

The Indian Rafale is a 4.5-generation aircraft with front-hemisphere stealth. It is much better than J-20 in terms of weapons, electronic warfare, and aero-engine reliability. The J-20 has yet to leave its shores, even for an airshow. It has no combat experience. It has yet to exercise with any foreign air force. Rafale has been combat-proven for 20 years in Iraq, Afghanistan, Mali, Libya, and Syria. IAF regularly exercises them with the top air forces of the world, most recently in "Red Flag" (USA) and the ongoing exercise "Tarang Shakti" in India.

IAF Options Against Shigatse

Even though Hashimara is the home base for Rafale, the aircraft will be in hardened shelters. Also, all the aircraft don't remain at home bases and move to operational detachments at other bases. Like China may attempt to neutralise IAF bases, India would do the same against Shigatse using fighter and missile strikes. India has much more air base options for aircraft dispersal and deployment, whereas Shigatse is a sole base in the region. Indian air bases are at much lower altitude and will allow a higher weapon and fuel load and therefore reach targets without refuelling.

The IAF has a significant number of Su-30 MKI squadrons in the eastern air bases (Tezpur and Chabua) with very significant air strike capabilities, including the deadly BrahMos missiles, among others. Clearly, IAF can launch many more missions than PLAAF. IAF will also deploy significant air defence systems, including the S-400.

Hotan Air Base

The Hotan airfield in the Xinjiang autonomous region was built in 1957, around the time China began building the contested Aksai Chin Highway (G219) through Indian Ladakh. The airfield elevation is 4,672 feet (1,424 m) AMSL. It has two parallel concrete runways (11/29) with a wide parallel taxiway 3,200 m (10,499 ft) long. The civil airport has a capacity of around 1.5 million passengers annually.

Hotan is just 130 km north of India's claim line and 270 km north-east of Karakoram Pass. It is 380 km north-east of Leh. These distances are not large for airborne platforms.

The Hotan airbase plays a critical role in Chinese military operations in the Ladakh area. Both runways at Hotan are now active. The second runway is longer than the original and is about 3,700 meters long. A number of military buildings and aprons have also come up along with the new runway. The new runway would enable more sortie rates.

China is constantly upgrading its military preparedness since the standoff with India began in eastern Ladakh in 2020. Hotan is one of the seven strategic dual-use airports that have been upgraded since 2017. The Chinese air force has built an underground command and control centre at Hotan Airbase. There are hardened shelters and secure ammunition and fuel storage areas. There are PLA Rocket Forces (PLARF) dugout positions. Besides Hotan, Chinese have also carried out extensive upgrades at their airports in Ngari Gunsa.

Kashgar is another airbase a little further north in Xinjiang province. Nearly 300 km north of the Indian claim line and 600 kilometres from Leh. Elevation is 4,529 ft (1,380 m) AMSL, and it has a 10,499 ft long runway. There is significant PLAAF presence

here with sunshelters and hardened blast pens. Fighter aircraft can be seen in satellite pictures.

J-20s at Hotan

Hotan had seen between 70 and 100 aircraft during the Galwan crisis. These included cruise-missile carrying and nuclear-capable H-6K bombers, J-11, J-10, UAVs, AEW&C, and EW platforms. The then still operationally greenhorn J-20s were also briefly seen at Hotan in 2020, during Galwan perhaps making show of flag missions, in the hope of intimidating. In June 2022, PLAAF once again stationed around two dozen frontline fighters, including the J-20, J-11, and J-10 at Hotan.

The Y-20 strategic transport aircraft has also been observed at the airbase. These would facilitate faster and larger entry of troops and equipment. AEW&C KJ-500 deployments have also been seen. One can see the UAV apron and hangars, and CH-5 UAV have been observed. There are SatCom antennas and vehicles.

IAF Response to J-20s in Hotan

The Rafale base is at Ambala. Most IAF fighters can operate from Leh. The MiG-29s were deployed in Thoise. A sizable number of Su-30 MKI can cover the Ladakh region. Immediately after the Galwan skirmish, IAF fighters began making significant day and night flights in the region. IAF Mirage-2000 and MiG-29s have been upgraded. A few more are being acquired. Meanwhile, India is building a full-fledged airbase in Nyoma, just 35 kilometres from the LAC.

Summary

India has been significantly upgrading the IAF airfields facing China. Also, the road-rail network, bridges, and tunnels are coming up at high speed. India has a significant inventory of surface and aerial strike weapons with significant range.

India has nearly 28 airfields overlooking the LAC, and most are at much lower altitudes vis-à-vis China, which are much fewer in numbers and at altitudes above 10,000 feet. Nearly 118 ongoing projects of India's Border Roads Organisation (BRO) involve construction of airfields, bridges, and roads near the LAC.

IAF has seen much more combat, and its aircrew are exposed and trained for better employment tactics and concepts of operation, and most importantly, skill sets, experience, and combat readiness status. IAF has fought a war at Himalayan heights in Kargil. IAF is engaged in logistic support operations at the highest battleground in Siachen and elsewhere in Ladakh and north-east throughout the year.

Many Indian analysts behave like sceptics, painting doomsday scenarios relative to China. Actually, India is fairly well off, and IAF will be able to launch many more missions. Of course India must quickly build its fighter squadron numbers, more so because Pakistan

could take an advantage and create a two-front threat situation.

India's own fifth-generation fighter, the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA), is still under initial development and will take another 10-15 years to be operationally deployed with the IAF. While India must accelerate the Light Combat Aircraft and AMCA programs, which are currently facing delays, there is an urgent need to acquire the 114 Multi-Role Fighter Aircraft (MRFA) gap to bolster the 4.5-generation inventory.

India must increase its satellite- and aircraft-based intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capability. It must increase the number of AEW&C and FRA quickly. Atmanirbharta in aerospace has to be accelerated. Time to act is now, lest we get left too far behind.

### 17th Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje to return to India After Exile?

08 September 2024, Tibet Rights Collective

Ogyen Trinley Dorje, the 17th Karmapa and one of Tibet's most prominent religious figures, may soon return to India after living in exile since December 1999. The Tibetan spiritual leader's recent meeting with His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Zurich, Switzerland, on August 25, has renewed hopes among his followers that he may be allowed to re-enter India soon. This meeting, the first in seven years, took place against a backdrop of growing anticipation regarding the Karmapa's return.

A Historical Background of Exile

The Karmapa is the head of the Karma Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism, one of the oldest lineages of reincarnations in Tibet. He fled Tibet at the age of 14 in December 1999, citing a lack of religious freedom under Chinese rule. Seeking refuge in India, the Karmapa primarily resided at the Gyuto Monastery in Sidhbari, near Dharamsala, where he was treated as an "honoured guest" by the Indian government. For many years, the Karmapa became an important religious figure for Tibetan exiles and for Indian followers, particularly in the northeastern state of Sikkim.

In May 2017, the Karmapa left India on a three-month visa for Europe. During his extended stay overseas, he acquired Dominican citizenship, which complicated his return to India.

Efforts to Bring the Karmapa Back

Sikkim, a state with a significant Buddhist population, has long been lobbying for the Karmapa's return. The Rumtek Monastery, located in the capital Gangtok, is his seat-in-exile. Recently, Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang reached out to the Indian government to discuss the possibility of bringing the 17th Karmapa back to India and,

specifically, to Sikkim. Tamang met with Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and Minority Affairs, Kiren Rijiju, in Delhi to push forward the matter.

While the meeting between the Karmapa and the Dalai Lama raised hopes, the exact details of their discussions remain undisclosed.

#### Visa Complications and the Road Ahead

The Karmapa's acquisition of Dominican citizenship means that he no longer qualifies for the Residential Certificate (RC) that India issues to Tibetan refugees. This legal complication prevents him from returning to India without obtaining a visa, which he must apply for at an Indian consulate or mission abroad.

The path to his return is further complicated by the fact that his case involves both religious and political sensitivities. Nevertheless, the efforts by Sikkim's leadership, as well as his meeting with the Dalai Lama, offer hope to the Karmapa's many followers in India.

As discussions continue, the possibility of the 17th Karmapa's return to India remains a topic of interest, particularly for the Tibetan Buddhist community in Sikkim and beyond. His return would not only be a significant religious event but also a step towards resolving the complex political and legal issues surrounding his exile.

#### Conclusion

The 17th Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje, remains an influential figure both in Tibet and among the Tibetan diaspora in India. His return to India after years of exile has yet to be confirmed, but recent developments have given his followers new hope. The situation is being closely monitored by both religious and political leaders, with the prospect of the Karmapa's return continuing to resonate across India's spiritual landscape.

#### 17th Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje: Hopes of Returning to India After Exile

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## Why Planes Avoid Flying Over the Tibetan Plateau

07 September 2024, Pune Pulse

Extreme altitude, unpredictable weather, and rugged terrain make the “Roof of the World” hazardous for commercial aviation.

The Tibetan Plateau, often called the “Roof of the World,” poses formidable challenges for aircraft, leading airlines to avoid flying over this area whenever possible. Despite modern advancements in aviation, the unique conditions of this elevated region, combined with geopolitical complexities, make it one of the most dangerous zones for flying.

The Tibetan Plateau is renowned for its high elevation, averaging over 4,500 meters (14,800 feet). This altitude reduces air density, which is crucial for the proper functioning of jet engines. Thinner air affects engine performance, requiring aircraft to work harder and potentially reducing efficiency. In emergencies, planes need to descend quickly to lower altitudes where oxygen levels are higher. However, over the plateau, there is little space to drop to a safe altitude due to the surrounding mountain peaks.

### Harsh Weather Conditions

The weather over the plateau is notoriously harsh and unpredictable. Severe winds, thunderstorms, and turbulence are common, making navigation risky. Sudden changes in weather can lead to dangerous flying conditions, while storms pose further threats, particularly in areas with limited emergency landing options.

### Rugged Terrain

The mountainous terrain adds another layer of danger. The plateau is home to peaks that exceed 7,000 meters (22,965 feet), including Mount Everest, the tallest mountain in the world. If a plane encounters mechanical trouble, the rugged landscape offers few places for safe emergency landings. The region’s geography leaves little room for error.

### Limited Infrastructure

The Tibetan Plateau’s sparse population means there is limited aviation infrastructure. Fewer airports, air traffic control facilities, and navigational aids make it difficult for pilots to receive timely information or assistance during emergencies. Navigating the region without sufficient ground support increases the risk for aircraft.

### Geopolitical Tensions

Geopolitics further complicate flight routes over the plateau. The area lies at the heart of territorial disputes involving China, India and neighboring countries. Airspace restrictions and regulatory issues make it challenging for airlines to plan routes, often requiring them to detour around the region.

Several incidents underscore the risks of flying over the Tibetan Plateau. For example, in 1992, China Airlines Flight 358 experienced severe turbulence over the region, injuring passengers and crew. In 2002, a helicopter crash in the area claimed 19 lives. While aviation technology has improved, and planes are now better equipped to handle high altitudes and weather challenges, the risks of flying over the plateau remain high.

The combination of extreme altitude, unpredictable weather, treacherous terrain and limited infrastructure makes the Tibetan Plateau a particularly dangerous region for commercial aviation. Airlines prioritize the safety of passengers and crew and avoiding this hazardous area is often the safest and most practical option.

## Diplomacy Beyond the Elections: How China Is Preparing for a Post-Biden America

07 September 2024, The Diplomat, Seong-Hyon Lee

China is not just managing tensions but setting the stage to influence the next U.S. administration and push its long-term ambitions forward.

U.S. President Joe Biden’s national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, recently made a high-profile visit to China, which he described as aimed at the “responsible management” of China-U.S. relations. Sullivan’s meeting with Chinese leader Xi Jinping was the first by a U.S. national security adviser in eight years, highlighting its diplomatic significance. While it is tempting to label the visit a success, especially given its timing during the height of the U.S. presidential election race, its practical purpose went beyond managing tensions. It also served as a warning to China not to interfere with the U.S. election.

However, a pressing question remains: Why did China treat Sullivan with surprising cordiality, especially given that Biden himself will soon step down, granting Sullivan a face-to-face meeting with Chinese leader Xi Jinping?

Just before the national security adviser’s visit, the United States imposed a massive new tranche of sanctions on 42 Chinese firms for supporting Russia’s war efforts in Ukraine. Yet, this didn’t deter Xi from meeting Sullivan.

Some interpret it as a “goodwill gesture” toward the outgoing Biden administration. However, Beijing’s sudden softer tone, evidenced by Xi’s amicable photo-op with Sullivan, warrants deeper analysis. Xi is well-versed in the art of photo-op diplomacy, using such moments to convey his emotions. For example, during his meeting with the late Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo in 2014, Xi adopted a famously solemn expression, avoiding eye



contact. When Abe attempted to speak, Xi pointedly turned away, facing the cameras instead.

According to official Chinese Foreign Ministry reports about the visit, Sullivan appeared to have offered a list of assurances that aligned with China's interests. Sullivan told Xi that "the United States does not seek a new Cold War, does not aim to change China's system, and does not support Taiwan independence."

In his meeting with Wang Yi, China's top diplomat, Sullivan provided a more comprehensive reiteration on Taiwan that raised eyebrows. He stated that the United States does not support "Taiwan independence," "two Chinas," or "one China, one Taiwan." This is known as the "Three Nos" policy regarding Taiwan.

While elements of this policy had been expressed separately or partially by various U.S. administrations, the last time all three elements were explicitly stated together in an official setting in China was, over 20 years ago, by President Bill Clinton in 1998. In response to Clinton's "Three Nos," concerned lawmakers in both the Senate and the House nearly unanimously passed resolutions reaffirming the U.S. commitment to Taiwan.

After Clinton's statement, subsequent administrations generally refrained from repeating the full "Three Nos" formulation, often focusing mainly on the non-support for Taiwan independence, until Sullivan did so on this occasion.

Moreover, Sullivan requested and was granted a meeting with General Zhang Youxia, marking the first time a U.S. national security adviser has met with a vice chairman of China's Central Military Commission (CMC) since 2016. Sullivan described this opportunity as "rare." Zhang, the second-highest military decision-maker in China, used the occasion to emphasize that Taiwan is "the core of China's core interests" and the "first unbreachable red line in China-U.S. relations."

Based on these official statements, it is evident that China successfully secured key reiterations from the United States that align with its interests, while also clearly articulating its own demands.

Notably, the Chinese account of the meeting was more detailed and explicit than the U.S. version. For example, in the English readout Wang outlined five key points in over 950 words, emphasizing that China's sovereignty, territorial integrity, political system, development path, and the legitimate rights of its people must be respected. Wang further urged the United States to adopt a "correct perception" of China and to cease its economic, trade, and technological suppression.

In the broader context, the meeting appears to be a follow-up to the Biden-Xi summit held in San

Francisco last November, during which both leaders committed to reducing tensions, albeit for different reasons. Washington aims to focus on the upcoming presidential election without disruption from China, while China seeks to buy time in the Sino-U.S. competition in order to revitalize its struggling economy.

Xi's emphasis on seeking "peaceful coexistence" and maintaining "stability in China-U.S. relations" reflects a desire for a stable external environment to address these internal issues. This approach aligns with China's current focus on economic recovery and its need to navigate domestic challenges without external pressures exacerbating the situation.

From the U.S. perspective, the goal is to prevent China from provoking geopolitical tensions in sensitive regions such as the South China Sea, Taiwan, and the Philippines. The United States also seeks to dissuade China from supporting Russia's war against Ukraine or forming a trilateral alliance with North Korea and Russia. In contrast, China is keen to avoid further economic and technological pressure as it focuses on economic recovery in a stable external environment.

The fact that Xi agreed to meet with Sullivan supports the interpretation that Sullivan's talks with senior officials, including Wang and Zhang, were productive. China often leaves the possibility of a meeting with Xi uncertain until the last moment, keeping visiting delegations in suspense. Xi's decision to meet with Sullivan suggests that he was pleased with the progress made during their discussions.

China's broader strategy seems to be the creation of a relational blueprint that secures its interests, particularly as the U.S. political landscape shifts. By positioning itself now, Beijing can potentially influence the next U.S. administration, using these agreements as a foundation for future China-U.S. relations that align with its long-term goals.

This reaffirmation of bilateral principles favorable to China could serve as leverage for Beijing in dealing with the next U.S. administration, particularly if Vice President Kamala Harris, who has limited foreign policy experience, succeeds Biden. Given Harris' likely adherence to Biden's foreign policy approach, Beijing may strategically use Sullivan's visit to ensure that, if she assumes office, the agreements forged between Biden and Xi are maintained.

With less than six months remaining in Biden's term, both nations are preparing for the transition. Washington appears focused on maintaining stability during the election season, while Beijing is balancing its immediate need for economic stability with its long-term strategic ambitions. The disparity between China's comprehensive readouts and the relatively brief summaries from the United States underscores the differences in their respective approaches.

Ultimately, China's long-term strategy is clear: It is looking beyond the current administration to shape U.S. perceptions of China, convincing Washington that its rise does not pose a threat and creating a more favorable environment for advancing its ambitions.

### **Taiwan must tighten the lid on China's misinformation campaigns**

07 September 2024, East Asia Forum, Mark Manantan

In response to Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te's inauguration, the Chinese People's Liberation Army conducted a joint military drill and simulation of an invasion of Taiwan, demonstrating Beijing's firepower and displeasure at perceived threats to the One China principle. China also expanded its influence operations and AI-generated disinformation campaigns during Taiwan's 2024 election. The overwhelming torrent of disinformation has overwhelmed traditional fact-checking methods in Taiwan, causing distrust in Taiwan's electoral systems and amplifying narratives underscoring the binary choice of peace or war in the Taiwan Strait.

In the days leading up to Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te's inauguration on 20 May 2024, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) was relatively quiet. But the silence did not last long. On 23 May, the PLA's Eastern Theatre Command embarked on Joint Sword-2024A – a joint-military drill involving the Army, Navy, Airforce and rocket force that surrounded Taiwan and showcased Beijing's firepower.

The main purpose of the military exercise is retribution. It represents Beijing's displeasure towards President Lai's inauguration ceremony, which undermined China's long-held 'One China' principle. Compared to his predecessor President Tsai Ing-wen, who adopted more ambiguous terms like 'mainland' or the 'other side of the Strait', Lai is far more assertive and has explicitly referred to China as China. In response, China's Taiwan Affairs Office called President Lai a dangerous separatist, condemning his hardline tendencies that will only bring 'war and destruction to the island'.

But Beijing's wrath did not end there. Completing its repertoire of grey zone tactics, the PLA has released a dramatic video that simulates an all-out-invasion of Taiwan. Complete with special effects, the video not only amplifies the intended coercive effects of its joint military exercises, but also highlights the vital role of influence operations in Beijing's efforts to achieve reunification.

If the developments surrounding Lai's inauguration are an indicator of the trajectory of cross-strait relations, it only points to the

continued normalisation of Beijing's escalatory and coercive actions against the self-governed island. Influence operations will also become even more central to China's mission to legitimise its jurisdiction over Taiwan. By co-opting and penetrating the psyche of its domestic population, Beijing aims to ultimately undermine public trust in Taiwan towards its political institutions.

Fortunately, Taiwan has strong stamina when it comes to countering China-sponsored influence operations. After years of experiencing China's disinformation and misinformation campaigns, the island is home to a vibrant network of traditional media and civil society groups.

But the aftermath of Taiwan's January 2024 election offers fresh lessons that underscore the enormity and sophistication of China's evolving influence operations.

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) took centre stage during Taiwan's election season. A smear campaign that used generative AI videos to target former president Tsai-Ing Wen circulated on TikTok and Instagram. According to Taiwan AI Labs, 3.5 per cent of the top 200 videos reshared on Facebook in 2023 were found to be automatically generated using text-to-speech and AI.

Conventional fact-checking techniques employed by Taiwanese media organisations and civil society groups could hardly keep up with all the AI-fabricated audio and video content. The mass production and proliferation of AI-generated audio, video and text have overwhelmed fact-checkers, while new malicious content propagates instantaneously.

Troll groups were also highly active and coordinated. Before the election, more than 14,000 troll accounts were actively propelling narratives like the binary choice of peace and war in the Taiwan Strait and the unreliability of US support for Taiwan. TikTok, and its Chinese version Douyin, were suspected of manipulating their algorithms to promote video and audio content that targeted specific candidates or political parties or highlighted controversial topics such as asymmetry in the Taiwan-US relationship.

Several high-profile influencers were also posting false information that sought to tamper with the integrity of the election process. Such malicious content has led to a high degree of distrust in Taiwan's electoral systems and procedures.

Given the prevalence of China's coercive tactics against Taiwan and the rapid explosion of generative AI and algorithmic bias, combined with the unpredictable headwinds in today's geopolitics, Taiwan needs to reboot its counter-influence operations toolkit.

Taiwan should encourage its leading tech companies to increase participation in global technical

standards setting through formal and informal channels. It should also mobilise civil society groups to proactively participate in multi-stakeholder consultations on emerging technologies like generative AI. For instance, the International Telecommunications Union is currently exploring the development of standards and frameworks to detect deepfakes and other forms of malicious AI-generated media. Taiwanese start-ups and civil society groups can share best practices and lessons learned in fighting state-sponsored influence operations.

Because most of the Chinese-linked influence operations propagate faster on social media platforms before being amplified in mainstream media, Taiwan must explore more stringent options to regulate digital platforms to enhance transparency, especially during elections.

It would be strategic for Taiwan to reframe the prevailing narratives that it is a mere pawn of the US-China rivalry or that there is only a binary choice of having peace or war in the Taiwan Strait. In highlighting its role as a major economic and semiconductor powerhouse, Taiwan can strengthen its democratic identity and its right to engage and participate in international debates on pertinent issues like regulating AI, reducing carbon emissions and even fighting election-related influence operations.

By rebooting its narrative beyond the binaries, Taiwan may help reduce tensions across the Strait and sustain or even open new avenues for regional cooperation.

### **EXPLAINED: The (worrying) popularity of caterpillar fungus**

07 September 2024, RFA, Lobsang Gelek

The parasite is an important income source for rural Tibetans, but imposters are crowding the market.



Local residents search for caterpillar fungus, a traditional Tibetan medicine, on the Laji mountains of Guide county, west China's Qinghai province May 12, 2007

By now the army of scavengers has retreated from the high hillsides of the eastern Tibetan plateau, their bounty in hand. Harvest season for yartsa gunbu (དྭངས་རྩ་དུག་ལྗང་), or caterpillar fungus, typically runs from May to July, when winter snows have receded and thousands of rural, ethnic Tibetans can prospect for what's also known as "soft gold."

It's hard to overstate the importance these few weeks hold for the people who climb the steep slopes. Collecting caterpillar fungus — which is used to treat a variety of ailments — can account for as much as 90% of a rural family's annual income.

But high demand has spurred overharvesting, making it harder to find the fungus in its natural environment. Climate change poses another challenge. Warmer temperatures on the high plateau are reducing the length of winter, a critical time for yartsa gunbu.

Now a new threat is emerging, sources inside China say: artificial varieties designed to fill the gaps between supply and demand, in the form of either cultivated fungi or fake products altogether. Although Chinese authorities have tried to regulate the sale of cultivated fungus, interviews with Tibetans and online videos that attract tens of thousands of viewers say imposters have infiltrated the market.

"It will definitely jeopardize the lives of thousands of Tibetan herders and farmers whose income depend on the wild yartsa," said Lobsang Yeshe, who has practiced traditional Tibetan medicine at Men-Tsee-Khang in Dharamshala, India, for the past 20 years. What is caterpillar fungus and where does it come from?

Yartsa gunbu translates to "summer grass, winter bug." The *Ophiocordyceps sinensis* — its scientific name — releases spores that sink underground and infect the larvae of ghost moths, so called for the white color of males. The yartsa gunbu takes over, commandeering the caterpillar's nervous system, consuming its organs and finally, in spring, emerging from its head as a brown stoma at altitudes of greater than 13,000 feet (4,000 meters). Its methods have drawn comparisons to the fungus that stars in the HBO hit zombie series, "The Last of Us." Harvested intact, it's about the length of a little finger and shaped like a caterpillar with a stem attached.

Yartsa gunbu is found primarily in the Himalaya mountains and the Tibetan plateau. The Yushu Tibetan Autonomous prefecture in Qinghai province, east of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, is a particularly good place to look. Thousands of its residents set up makeshift camps from which they hike into the thin air.

The annual harvest is reportedly around 300 million fungi that can cost \$7 a pop or more, leaving a multi-billion dollar market.

What is caterpillar fungus used for?

Yartsa gunbu has been used in Tibetan and Chinese traditional medicine to treat heart, liver and lung ailments. More recently, it acquired a reputation for improving sexual stamina in men and women. ("Himalayan Viagra" is another moniker.) Studies have shown possible benefits, though scientists say more clinical research is needed.

Users consume yartsa gunbu by brewing it with hot water similar to how tea or herbal infusions are prepared, or chewing it as it comes. Some put it in soups and other recipes. Lesser specimens are ground into powders.

Why are people growing a fungus ?

Pluckers like to pick the fungus before it releases spores, limiting its ability to reproduce and leading to its population decline. China has encouraged the development of cultivated yartsa gunbu, and one company has reportedly solved the puzzle, synthetically growing the *O. sinensis* fungus found in the wild.

But some individuals are trying to cultivate fungus varieties on their own. That, fungus traders say, has undercut prices and, because the buyers remain suspicious of its medicinal properties, consumer confidence, several sources told RFA.

In Guangzhou, a major market, "there is a hesitancy of customers in buying because of too much artificial fungus in the market," one trader said. A Tibetan living in Qinghai province said prices have dropped nearly 20% this year.

In New York, a retailer said he can still sell a single piece of wild fungus for \$14, but "there are a lot of fake and cultivated yartsa" undercutting the business, he said. "Nowadays, people are selling thousands of artificial yartsa online per day, as well as in shops, jeopardizing the original yartsa business," he said.

Studies have shown that cultivated fungus can replicate the chemical compounds of natural varieties, though there are differences.

What is China doing to protect the market?

Chinese authorities seem to be aware of the financial risks to some of their poorest populations.

In April, the Chinese government in Qinghai, tried to control the artificial plantation of yartsa gunbu. But a trader in Nagchu, Tibet Autonomous Region, an area that historically has been among the best for finding wild yartsa gunbu, said enforcement has been lax.

"Chinese authorities have come out with a lot of rules saying that the artificial fungus is banned," the trader said. "But the on-ground reality is that the Chinese authorities are not strictly monitoring or stopping the sale of artificial fungus. And this is making it tough for us to sell the real fungus."

## Tibetan Villages Driven to Poverty by China's Forced Relocation Program

07 September 2024, Japan Forward, Professor Pema Gyalpo

Beijing has been uprooting entire Tibetan villages, stripping them of economic self-sufficiency and eroding their culture under the guise of modernization.

China's government has been systematically uprooting hundreds of Tibetan villages and nomads from their ancestral lands. It has been forcibly relocating them to centralized settlements under the guise of "poverty alleviation" and environmental protection.

This mass relocation campaign has accelerated dramatically since 2016. It is eroding Tibetan culture, disrupting traditional livelihoods, and leaving many relocated families impoverished and dependent on government subsidies.

### Mass Systematic Relocation

According to a recent report by Human Rights Watch, over 930,000 rural Tibetans have been relocated since 2000. A staggering 76% of these relocations occurred just since 2016. The Chinese government frames these relocations as voluntary poverty reduction efforts. However, evidence suggests they are often coercive and driven by Beijing's political agenda to assimilate Tibetans and tighten control over the region.

Many of these relocations involve moving entire villages hundreds of kilometers from their original homes. Authorities refer to the relocated Tibetans as "border guardians," essentially turning them into civilian sentries along China's contested frontiers with India, Nepal, and Bhutan.

Satellite imagery shows that China has strategically placed new settlements near virtually every accessible Himalayan pass along these borders. While officially civilian in nature, these border villages provide infrastructure that could support rapid military deployments if needed.

More insidiously, they serve as a form of "demographic engineering," permanently altering the population of contested areas to strengthen China's territorial claims.

### Loss of Economic Self-Sufficiency

But for the Tibetans themselves, these relocations often lead to economic hardships and cultural dislocation. Traditional nomadic herders are forced to sell their livestock and abandon their grasslands. Farmers are moved from their ancestral fields. In their new homes, many struggle to find work or make ends meet.

A local government document reviewed by The New York Times indicated some villagers may receive around 20,000 yuan (less than \$3,000 USD)

per year for relocation. A few earn extra income from border patrol work. But for many, the relocations mean a complete loss of economic self-sufficiency.

China's relocation policies appear not just to control Tibetan populations, but to fundamentally reshape Tibetan society and culture. Religious life is noticeably absent from the new settlements. There are no Buddhist monasteries or temples to be found. Instead, the villages are dominated by symbols of the Chinese state — national flags and portraits of President Xi Jinping adorn walls and light poles throughout.

This cultural erasure is no accident. The relocation program serves as propaganda, a display of Chinese strength and superiority in the region. It is social engineering aimed at assimilating Tibetans into mainstream Chinese society.

#### Erasing Tibetan Culture

The mass relocations are just one component of China's broader efforts to reshape Tibet. Increased surveillance, restrictions on religious practices, and Mandarin-language education policies all serve to undermine Tibetan identity and autonomy.

The forced relocations, however, are particularly devastating in their scope and impact on traditional ways of life. A Human Rights Watch report highlights how Chinese authorities use coercive tactics to overcome Tibetans' reluctance to relocate. Officials make repeated home visits, threaten with punishments, and warn that essential services will be cut off for those who refuse to move. Higher-level authorities pressure local officials to meet relocation quotas, framing the program as a non-negotiable policy for Beijing.

Even when relocations are framed as "voluntary," Tibetan families are often misled about the economic prospects of their new homes. Surveys by Chinese scholars found that many relocated Tibetans "cannot find suitable jobs to support their families" and report low satisfaction with their new circumstances.

#### Entire Villages Relocated

The scale of these relocations is staggering. Beyond the 140,000 rural Tibetans moved through "whole-village relocation," another 567,000 may have been relocated through "individual household" programs since 2016. In total, Human Rights Watch estimates that various relocation and "sedentarization" programs have affected most of Tibet's 4.55 million rural inhabitants.

China's approach to ethnic minorities, particularly in Tibet, reveals a deeply manipulative strategy aimed at erasing distinct cultural identities. Under the guise of poverty alleviation and modernization, the Chinese government systematically undermines minority cultures. This is achieved through forced

relocations, language policies favoring Mandarin, and strict controls on religious practices.

#### Destroying Diversity

These tactics are not merely about economic development or national security. They reflect a concerted effort to homogenize diverse populations into a singular state-approved Chinese identity. By uprooting communities from their ancestral lands, severing ties to traditional livelihoods, and flooding minority areas with Han Chinese settlers, Beijing seeks to dilute and eventually erase unique ethnic identities.

The government's heavy-handed approach demonstrates a fundamental disregard for the value of cultural diversity. It undermines the rights of minority populations to maintain distinct ways of life. This cultural erasure, masked as progress, is a form of soft ethnic cleansing that threatens to permanently alter the rich tapestry of ethnicities within China's borders.

International law prohibits forced evictions, making China's coercive relocation program a clear violation of human rights. The mass displacement of Tibetan communities threatens to irreparably damage Tibetan culture and identity. That way, Tibetan identity is in the hands of the Chinese party-state and is eradicated under different policy directives.

#### Beijing's Expansionist Nightmare Continues

The evidence paints a clear picture of a systematic campaign to reshape Tibet's demographics, consolidate state control, and erode Tibetan cultural identity.

Far from alleviating poverty, these forced relocations are creating a class of displaced impoverished Tibetans. They have been made dependent on state subsidies and cut off from their traditional livelihoods and cultural roots.

As China continues to tighten its grip on Tibet, the international community must speak out against these forced relocations and other policies that threaten Tibetan culture and autonomy. Without intervention, China's campaign of demographic engineering and cultural erasure in Tibet will only accelerate. It will potentially destroy one of the world's most unique and vibrant cultures.

"The unique Chinese style of imperialism and colonialism" as Beijing might like to call it if it succeeds, sees Tibet as its first prey and victim. However, the big, ambitious Chinese dream of expansion doesn't stop there. You can see what is happening in Southern Mongolia and Eastern Turkistan (aka the Uyghur Autonomous Region). Every neighboring people and nation of Communist China could face the same destiny unless the world is consciously watchful.



## World merrily forgets Uyghur cause as China mobilises mega-propaganda machine

06 September 2024, Firstpost, Mahesh Ranjan Debata

While China has become largely successful in influencing international opinion to favour its narrative on Xinjiang, the world community has failed miserably to set Beijing right for its follies

A report titled “The Assessment of Human Rights Concerns in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, People’s Republic of China”, which was published under the auspices of the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR), completed two years on August 31, 2024. The OHCHR had spent a lot of time (almost five years since late 2017), money, and energy on fact-finding investigations and rigorous deliberations over the reports, documents, and pieces of evidence provided by various governments, civil society organisations, individual researchers, think tanks, media, etc, to publish this report.

The organisation analysed thoroughly the testimonies of some Uyghurs who were released or had escaped from the detention centres in Xinjiang after having harrowing experiences for years. While highlighting “serious human rights violations” in Xinjiang in the garb of the Chinese Central government’s so-called “counter-terrorism and counter-extremism” strategies, the 48-page report rapped China left and right in addition to prescribing a long list of recommendations for China to adhere to.

The horrors of hundreds of detention camps inside Xinjiang, which Chinese authorities romanticise as re-education camps, came to light in 2016. China has reportedly incarcerated over a million Uyghurs in these camps. Several governments, human rights organisations, Uyghur diaspora organisations, academics, think tanks, freelancers, and activists have prepared and published many online and offline reports on this issue.

One of the eye-opening reports on the situation in Xinjiang is by the Human Rights Watch, which describes the Chinese excesses against Uyghurs as “crimes against humanity”. Similarly, the US government passed the “Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act” in 2020, which “imposes sanctions on foreign individuals and entities” responsible for human rights violations in Xinjiang.

However, Beijing has categorically denied and outrightly rejected the reports described above. It does not pay any heed to the global community’s concern for Uyghurs imprisoned in Xinjiang. It has yet to follow nor implement the OHCHR recommendations. Instead, China has reactivated its propaganda machine to disseminate the message

worldwide that the situation in Xinjiang is stable and peaceful, and the Uyghurs are leading a prosperous life. Accordingly, it has strategised methodically and honed its diplomatic efficacy to counter the international community’s concerns about the Uyghurs.

The Chinese government has circulated several counter reports, White Papers, etc, to mobilise international opinions against the Uyghurs and those who extended them continuous moral and material support. As part of its propaganda drive, the State Council Information Office of China has published (between 2019 and 2021) six White Papers on overall human rights developments in the country and eight White Papers on the situation in Xinjiang. As the latest countermeasure, the Standing Committee of the 14th Xinjiang Regional People’s Congress passed a resolution last month (August 2024) opposing a series of American sanctions related to Xinjiang since 2022 under the ambit of the Uyghur Force Labour Prevention Act.

Besides, China has exhibited its sheer power of money and diplomacy to silence critics all across the globe. The Chinese government has built a strong rapport with the leadership in Islamic nations so that they do not show solidarity with their brethren in Xinjiang. Chinese government strategy includes visits by foreign dignitaries (politicians, diplomats, media people, scholars, activists, etc) from like-minded friendly countries for state-sponsored guided tours in Xinjiang.

The Chinese authorities also facilitate visits by YouTubers from different parts of the globe to showcase the marvels China has done in Xinjiang without showing anything about the Uyghurs’ woes. China ensures that these dignitaries give positive feedback about Xinjiang and share their experiences in all news media while parroting the Chinese lines.

Early this year, several political leaders from Arab countries and journalists from Pakistan visited various cities in Xinjiang and enjoyed seven-star Chinese hospitality. In lieu of this Chinese largesse, the visiting dignitaries eulogised Chinese policies towards the Uyghurs. Earlier, this author had highlighted in a couple of publications how the Uzbek Premier and Turkish Foreign Minister had yielded to Chinese pressure during their visits to Xinjiang and subsequently subscribed to the Chinese narrative on Uyghurs. Last year (2023), as many as 30 Islamic scholars from over a dozen countries in Asia, Europe, and Africa not only visited Xinjiang but also heaped full praise on the Chinese policies towards Muslims in the country in general and Uyghurs in particular.

At present, the condition of Uyghurs in Xinjiang beggars description. Nobody has any clue about what is happening inside the detention camps and

with the Uyghurs. The Chinese government has made all-out efforts to muzzle international media, including social media, and to thwart academics and activists who oppose the Chinese move against Uyghurs and support the human rights and freedom of the Uyghurs. Because of the surveillance in the region, it is difficult for anyone to pass on news from Xinjiang to the outside world.

It is a worldwide fact that everything in Xinjiang is on the Chinese government's radar. The state security apparatus persecutes anyone who holds an anti-government or anti-China stand. In recent years, the Chinese strategy has been to disclose only information about Xinjiang, which does not harm its position in the region. It means China has effectively made the world believe what it says about Xinjiang and the Uyghurs.

Keeping in view the endeavours made by the international community to persuade or pressurise China for the grave mistake it has committed in Xinjiang, it is imperative to deduce that while China has become largely successful in influencing international opinion to favour its narrative on Xinjiang, the world community has failed miserably to set China right for its follies.

Beijing has been daring enough to ignore the OHCHR findings and the sanctions by the Western countries, especially the US, and thereby keep on continuing its campaign against Uyghurs. The US Department of State has expressed disappointment over the Chinese not complying with the global body's report. It is high time the world understood the gravity of the problem and clamped down stricter measures to cut the arrogant and aggressive China to size. All conscientious nations and their leaders should make a combined endeavour to compel the Chinese government to stop excesses against the minorities in the country, especially Uyghurs, and to provide them with fundamental freedom.

### **Why a China-US thaw may not be in India's economic interests**

05 September 2024, Deccan Herald, Anushka Saxena

India now finds itself in a unique position, with the ability to leverage its relationship with the US to seek concessions.

For anyone observing the simmering tensions in United States-China relations, the recent meeting between US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi would have gone exactly as expected.

The readouts published by both sides suggest that the meeting was merely a reiteration of the red lines each side must not cross. To an international

audience closely following the development, these readouts confirm that US-China competition is here to stay, with little chance of a thaw. But, as the White House readout suggests, the two sides can still attempt to "manage the relationship responsibly."

An emerging feature of this competition has been the steady elevation of India's position in the US strategy to counter China. In fact, just before his visit to Beijing, Sullivan also hosted Indian defence minister Rajnath Singh in the US for a series of discussions on strengthening India-US ties, especially in the fields of defence and critical technologies.

Their mutual competition with China has hence opened doors for collaboration in economic, military, and technological domains. In this regard, a thaw in US-China relations may not be in India's economic interests.

As the two largest economic powers of the world, the US and China are expected to manage differences in a manner that does not destabilise the security of global value chains.

However, as evident from the discussions at the Wang-Sullivan meeting, the two sides continue to compete in the trade and critical technologies domains. As Sullivan reiterated, the US has adopted a firm stance on limiting the export of American critical technological talent, investments, and materials to China, while China has responded by calling such restrictions unfair.

China is also making grand investments in indigenous technological capabilities and has no intention to give up its export dominance in vital domains such as solar photovoltaic cells, strategic electronic components, and New Electric Vehicles (NEVs), all of which are facing heavy import tariffs in Western markets due to the Chinese State's market- and price-distorting subsidies.

Countries around the world are hence attempting to build cadence with the US' secondary sanction and tariff regimes, balancing such attempts with the low cost advantages imports from China offer. And even US allies are not exempt—the Netherlands-based firm ASML, for example, had to agree not to renew licences to service equipment or provide spare parts to China for semiconductor production, despite the fact that China accounted for nearly half of the firm's revenues in Q2 of 2024.

The growing sentiment in the West to de-risk certain value chains from China has created opportunities for countries like India, which has the potential to compete with China in production costs, standards, and backward supply chain linkages. In this strategy, commonly referred to as 'China+1', India has frequently emerged as an alternative destination and has sought to position itself as the US' new hub for production and investment.

But this effort has its challenges. Strict regulatory restrictions, a lack of openness to business, and robust tariff and non-tariff barriers have led India to lose out in certain sectors to Vietnam, Thailand, and Mexico. Nonetheless, there is optimism about India's potential to emerge as a viable 'China+1' alternative, especially as a recent report by Rhodium Group ranks India fifth among the top 10 countries with the highest diversification attractiveness.

#### India's Choices

India now finds itself in a unique position, with the ability to leverage its relationship with the US to seek concessions. Recently, the US, Canada, and the EU imposed import tariffs of 30-100 per cent on imports of electric vehicles made in China. This includes EVs manufactured by the Texas-headquartered Tesla, shipped from its factory in Shanghai (the EU, however, has granted a 9 per cent concession on tariffs to Tesla in August).

This highlights the discontent surrounding the supply glut created by Chinese overcapacity, which has even led Western firms to face the wrath of their governments for producing in or supplying to China, significantly undercutting their cost and revenue advantages.

In this regard, India has a significant opportunity to take a nuanced and clear-eyed approach to four crucial factors: inviting private sector investment from US firms, opening up to imports of critical components, implementing regulatory changes to create an uncomplicated business environment, and conducting economic diplomacy with the US.

The goal of these efforts should be for India to emerge as a whitelisted destination of imports for US and other Western markets, even if Chinese components are involved in its production processes. To achieve this, India must not only clear restrictions on imports from China to develop robust supply linkages in the assembly process but also negotiate with the US to ease potential rules of origin-related restrictions on imports from India based on mutual interests and friendly relations.

Though not exactly similar in nature, there exists some precedent to the extension of such goodwill. In June 2023, for example, following continued bilateral exchanges to strengthen the India-US trade relationship, India agreed to roll back its retaliatory import tariffs against the US and terminate six WTO disputes with it.

If India can successfully make the case that Tesla can similarly produce in and export from India without facing import tariffs from the US, not only will India witness some progress in its China+1 ambitions, but also create room for Western economies to seek the right alternative without hampering business sentiment.

Till such a time as India can find its own alternatives for imports of strategic components, however, it must rely on cost effective methods of procurement, even if they involve China.

#### Tourist boom threatens to swamp Indian mountain town where Dalai Lama took refuge

05 September 2024, The Guardian, Prasannata Patwa

McLeod Ganj is a magnet for domestic holidaymakers fleeing scorching temperatures. But their cars choke the streets and new hotels stretch scarce water supplies

UVs and saloon cars pass slowly along McLeod Ganj's narrow one-way Jogiwara Road, blaring horns at pedestrians and scooter riders and playing loud music. The powerful vehicles soon get stuck in the traffic near Kalachakra temple, the place of worship of the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso.

"You can be stuck in this traffic easily for two hours," says a frustrated local taxi driver, not keen to share his name.

McLeod Ganj, a Himalayan town famed for its temples, meditation courses and ashrams, is witnessing an influx of domestic tourists seeking refuge from rising temperatures in dry and tropical states across India. Many come to enjoy cricket matches with the view of the mighty Dhauladhar mountain range overlooking the stadium, which has become a magnet for India's sports fans.

Once monks in burgundy red robes dominated the colour palette of McLeod Ganj's main market. The town was where thousands of Tibetans fled after the 1959 uprising against the Chinese in Tibet sent the Dalai Lama into exile here.

It became a refuge not just for Tibetans but for foreign hippy travellers and others seeking a quiet and contemplative environment. But now vehicles and clusters of Indian tourists crowd these lanes, filming videos and clicking selfies. More than 150 new hotels have been built or opened in the past four years.

McLeod Ganj's Tibetan community has been migrating out of the hill station in search of better work opportunities for several years. But now the impact of the climate crisis and overtourism is pushing others to contemplate leaving. The population has dramatically shrunk, say local people.

"This is not the quiet and peaceful McLeod Ganj any more. The only reason we are staying here is because we want to stay close to our spiritual leader Dalai Lama," says Kunsang, owner of Cafe Hope.

The tourist season of May to July has disappeared, with visitors now coming all year round, he says.

"Now people come here to party for some days and leave, rather than staying here for some length of time."

The Dalai Lama, who turned 89 last month, has been crucial in building a new home for Tibetans in India and is a symbol of hope for the scattered diaspora, says Dr Latika Gupta at the faculty of education in the University of Delhi.

Surrounded by snow-capped mountains and cedarwood forests, the city of Dharamshala is 1,457 metres above sea level, keeping the temperature cool. The weather conditions being similar to Tibet made Dharamshala a perfect new home for the Dalai Lama, and the Tibetan refugees who followed him into exile.

But this year's heatwaves across India have pushed up temperatures in Dharamshala, and its suburbs of McLeod Ganj and Dharamkot, regularly hitting 40C, previously a rare occurrence for the region.

"You should keep onion skin in your pocket to defend against this heat," says Dorjee, a Tibetan man in his late 80s, playing chess in the square.

India's capital, New Delhi, touched 49.1C on 29 May. Temperatures in states near Dharamshala such as Rajasthan, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab also reached close to 50C in the May heatwave, according to India Meteorological Department.

It sent middle-class and better-off Indian families to the hills and many to McLeod Ganj, a worldwide attraction since the Dalai Lama and his followers arrived in the 60s, attracting visitors including the Beatles.

"This place used to be filled with foreigners. Their visiting purpose was to study about Tibet and its culture, Buddhism, or participate in yoga or meditation retreats. This would make them stay here for many months," says Jempa, a Tibetan man in his early 80s, who as a boy followed the Dalai Lama to India with his parents.

"I used to have international travellers who would stay for six months, a year or two years. Now that time is gone," says Neeraj Rajput, manager of Misty Woods, a hotel in McLeod Ganj.

Local bed and breakfasts, hotels and eateries are also facing competition from the rapid increase in luxury hotel chains and homestays, according to more than half a dozen local business owners.

"Since the cricket stadium has opened up, a lot more three- and five-star properties have been built in areas that we didn't even know existed. The entire Dharamshala is probably covered now," adds Rajput, who has been managing Misty Woods for close to a decade.

The former visitors here, those from abroad, would not bring cars but use local taxis to get about. But domestic tourists bring their air-conditioned cars,

leading to traffic jams, and less income for taxi drivers.

"There is not much difference in my earnings during tourist season or off season. In peak season, I am usually able to complete only a couple of rides and also get stuck in traffic for hours," says another taxi driver, also requesting anonymity. "In off season, even though there are less people, I am able to make more trips, most likely with less traffic."

As the debate around Tibet's freedom has faded from the global stage, many new visitors, especially from younger generations, are unaware of the links to the Dalai Lama and Tibet's history, seeing instead an exotic place with monasteries, prayer flags and waterfalls.

The climate crisis is having its impact here. Triund, which is one of McLeod Ganj's main water sources, dried up during summer this year, according to those who frequent the popular trekking route.

"It was completely dry up there. We didn't even have water to wash our hands," says Amandeep Kaur, a college professor, who took a dozen of her students on a trekking trip in June.

The monsoon season is proving more extreme too, with landslides and cloudbursts common in Himachal Pradesh state. A red alert was issued for Dharamshala's Kangra valley on 1 August, after cloudbursts across the state, including in the capital city, Simla, left 50 people missing and five dead.

Dorjee is among those local people who blame construction work associated with tourism for exacerbating the situation. "If you keep drilling holes in the mountains, what do you think is going to happen?" he says. "I am not an engineer or an architect but my mother used to earn wages by building roads in these mountains. I have helped in building [the Dalai Lama's] temple here. Things should be built on the mountain instead of breaking it," he says.

## **Chinese Premier Visit To Pakistan: A Milestone For Strengthening Bilateral Ties – OpEd**

05 September 2024, Eurasia Review, Asad Ali

Chinese Premier Li Qiang is scheduled to visit Pakistan next, marking a significant moment in the history of Sino-Pak relations, as this will be the first visit by a Chinese Premier to Pakistan in 11 years. This visit, planned ahead of SCO summit on October 15-16, offers both countries an opportunity to enhance their longstanding partnership, explore new avenues for cooperation, and navigate the evolving geopolitical landscape.

Premier Li Qiang's visit, coming at a time when both nations are facing economic challenges and shifting global dynamics, is expected to be more than just a routine diplomatic engagement. It symbolizes the

renewal of commitment to deepening cooperation in a wide range of areas, including trade, investment, infrastructure, and regional security.

One of the most anticipated outcomes of this visit will be a renewed focus on economic cooperation, particularly within the framework of CPEC. Since its inception, CPEC has been the cornerstone of Pakistan's economic ties with China, leading to billions of dollars in Chinese investment in energy, infrastructure, and industrial projects. However, CPEC has faced challenges, including delays in project implementation, security concerns, and economic difficulties in Pakistan.

Pakistan and China share common concerns about regional security, particularly in the context of Afghanistan and the broader South Asian region. Premier Li Qiang's visit is likely to see discussions on enhancing security cooperation to address challenges such as terrorism, cross-border insurgencies, and the evolving situation in Afghanistan.

China has played an active role in promoting regional stability, especially after US withdrawal from Afghanistan. Both China and Pakistan have a shared interest in preventing Afghanistan from becoming a hub of terrorism and instability. Their cooperation in security matters, particularly in intelligence sharing and counterterrorism efforts, is expected to be high on the agenda during Li Qiang's visit.

Moreover, as both nations are members of SCO, this visit presents an opportunity for Pakistan and China to coordinate their positions ahead of the SCO summit. The SCO, which focuses on regional security, economic cooperation, and counterterrorism, is an important platform for both countries to align their strategies on issues of mutual concern, particularly in the context of Central Asia and Afghanistan.

While CPEC remains a focal point of China-Pakistan relations, there is a growing recognition on both sides that the relationship must expand beyond this corridor. Premier Li Qiang's visit offers a chance to explore new avenues of collaboration in emerging sectors such as digital economy, science and technology, and green energy.

China has made significant strides in technology and innovation, and Pakistan is eager to benefit from Chinese expertise in areas such as artificial intelligence, telecommunications, and e-commerce. Li Qiang's visit could lead to agreements that promote greater collaboration in these sectors, thus opening new opportunities for Pakistani entrepreneurs and tech professionals.

In addition, Pakistan, like many other countries, is facing the pressing challenge of climate change. China's leadership in renewable energy, particularly in solar and wind power, offers a valuable

opportunity for Pakistan to enhance its green energy capacity. Cooperation in this area would not only contribute to Pakistan's energy security but also align with global efforts to combat climate change.

Premier Li Qiang's visit also comes at a time of significant geopolitical shifts in the region. The growing strategic competition between China and the United States, as well as India's increasing alignment with the West, adds complexity to China-Pakistan relations. While both countries have historically maintained a strong partnership, they now face new challenges and opportunities in a rapidly changing world order.

For Pakistan, deepening ties with China remains crucial, particularly as it seeks to navigate its relationship with other major powers. China's support has been vital for Pakistan in forums such as the United Nations, where it has backed Pakistan on key issues such as Kashmir. At the same time, Pakistan must balance its relations with China, the United States, and other regional powers, particularly India.

Li Qiang's visit will reaffirm China's continued support for Pakistan on the international stage, particularly in multilateral organizations like the United Nations and SCO. It also underscores the importance of the Pakistan-China partnership in maintaining regional peace and stability, especially as the two countries seek to counterbalance the influence of other major powers in South Asia.

Premier Li Qiang's visit to Pakistan in October 2024 marks a critical juncture in the history of Sino-Pak relations. This visit offers a unique opportunity for both countries to reinvigorate their strategic partnership, strengthen economic ties, and enhance cooperation in emerging sectors such as technology and green energy. Moreover, it provides a platform for Pakistan and China to align their positions on regional security ahead of the SCO summit.

As the two countries look towards the future, the visit highlights the enduring strength of the China-Pakistan relationship, which has weathered challenges and continues to evolve in response to changing global dynamics. By expanding cooperation beyond traditional sectors and addressing shared challenges, Premier Li Qiang's visit will further cement the bond between the two nations, ensuring that this "iron brotherhood" remains a cornerstone of regional peace, stability, and prosperity.

### **How China's Boarding Schools in Xinjiang (East Turkistan) Are Erasing a People's Identity: A Uyghur View**

05 September 2024, Bitter Winter, Abdulhakim Idris



The Chinese regime is perpetrating the cultural genocide of a generation by weaponizing education. The state of the matter after ten years of persecution. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the active Uyghur genocide, consisting of President Xi Jinping's "People's War on Terror," and there is no sign of it stopping in the near future. The Chinese government has detained over one million Uyghurs (a quite conservative evaluation) in re-education camps, but the horrors extend beyond the camps, to the children left behind. These children are being forcibly assimilated into Han Chinese culture through a vast network of state-run boarding schools. This essay delves into how these institutions serve as tools of cultural genocide, stripping Uyghur children of their language, religion, and identity.

The plight of the Uyghur and Kazakh people is not a sudden eruption but a consequence of a long history of oppression and marginalization. Uyghurs, predominantly Muslim Turkic people, have historically faced systematic assimilation and genocide in their homeland, East Turkistan, which the Chinese regime calls Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). Their struggle for cultural and religious autonomy has been met with relentless suppression by the racist, nationalistic Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

In 2014, this simmering tension took a drastic turn. Under the guise of combating "religious extremism," the People's Republic of China (PRC) initiated an intensified crackdown in East Turkistan. The region, rich in cultural diversity, was subjected to an increasingly pervasive and intrusive surveillance system. This campaign, ostensibly targeting terrorism, was in reality a thinly veiled attempt to control and assimilate the Uyghur population.

The Uyghur region is not only a cultural and religious battleground but also a territory of significant economic interest. It is rich in natural resources, including oil, gas, and minerals, making it a strategic asset for the PRC's "Belt and Road Initiative." Beijing has heavily invested in infrastructure projects in the region, but these developments have disproportionately benefited the Han Chinese population while further marginalizing the Uyghurs.

A policy of assimilation

The economic exploitation extends to forced labor. Many Uyghurs who are not detained in camps are subjected to forced labor in factories across the PRC. These factories are often linked to global supply chains, implicating international corporations in the human rights abuses occurring in East Turkistan. The Chinese government justifies this as part of its "poverty alleviation" program, but in reality, it is a form of modern-day slavery designed to further control and assimilate the Uyghur population.

In this calculated strategy of cultural genocide, the Chinese state has weaponized education. The Chinese government's assimilation process starts with detaining parents under arbitrary claims, placing them in detainment camps and leaving children defenseless and vulnerable. Children whose parents are detained, in prison, or undergoing re-education or "training," are classified into a special needs category, making them eligible for state care, which typically means placement in orphanages or boarding schools.

At the epicenter of the PRC's brutal repression of Uyghurs lies a particularly insidious tactic: the systematic separation of Uyghur children from their families. This abhorrent practice serves as a cornerstone of China's campaign to erase Uyghur cultural identity and enforce a homogeneous Han Chinese ideology.

Since 2017, the CCP has intensified its crackdown on the Uyghurs. Under the guise of combating extremism, the Chinese government has implemented a series of draconian measures aimed at eradicating Uyghur culture. These measures include mass detentions, forced labor, and sterilizations. The United States and several other countries have labeled these actions as genocide, while the United Nations has indicated they can amount to crimes against humanity.

As the Chinese government detains Uyghur adults, their children are sent to state-run boarding schools. These institutions are designed to sever the children from their cultural roots and indoctrinate them into Han Chinese culture. According to reports, more than half a million Uyghur children have been placed in these schools, where they are taught to speak Mandarin exclusively and are subjected to a curriculum that glorifies the Chinese state while denigrating their native culture.

The Kuchar brothers

Aysu and Lütfullah Kuchar, two Uyghur children, were forced to spend nearly twenty months in a state boarding school. They were forcibly separated from their family and subjected to physical and emotional abuse. Their heads were shaved, and they were frequently beaten and locked in dark rooms as punishment. By the time they returned home, they had forgotten how to speak Uyghur, their mother tongue. "That was the heaviest moment in my life. Standing in front of my two Chinese-speaking children, I felt as if they had killed me," their father lamented. By the time they were able to return to their parents to Türkiye in December 2019, they had become malnourished and traumatized.

Another victim, Mihrigul Tursun, a Uyghur woman who survived the concentration camps, tearfully recounted the torture she endured. Her children were taken from her and placed in a boarding school.

When she was finally allowed to reconnect with them, she found that one of her children had died due to an operation performed without her consent.

NPR, or National Public Radio in the US, published the Kuchars' story and was able to identify the school Lütfullah was sent to. It had been previously called the Urumqi Folk Art School and is located in the densely populated, predominantly Uyghur neighborhood of Sandunbei in the region's capital, Urumqi. The school is among at least 1,300 boarding schools set up across the Uyghur region, according to the Ministry for Education documents. XUAR local governments have been scrubbing their websites of all references to the boarding schools, but an official education report from 2017—the year before the Kuchar children were sent to the school—says nearly half a million children had already been enrolled by the start of that year.

In these boarding schools, the use of the Uyghur language is strictly prohibited. Classroom instruction is conducted almost exclusively in Mandarin, and teachers can be punished for using Uyghur outside specific language classes. This policy aims to erode the children's fluency in their native language, thereby severing their connection to their cultural and religious identities.

Reports have documented numerous instances of physical and emotional abuse in these schools. Children are often beaten, locked in dark rooms, and forced to hold stress positions for extended periods. These punitive measures are designed to break the children's spirit and make them more pliable to assimilation efforts.

The systematic separation of Uyghur children from their families and their forced assimilation into Han Chinese culture constitutes a form of cultural genocide. By eradicating the Uyghur language, religion, and customs, the CCP aims to eliminate any sense of Uyghur identity. This policy not only affects the current generation but also ensures that future generations will grow up devoid of their cultural heritage.

The psychological toll on these children is immense. Separated from their families and subjected to constant abuse and indoctrination, many of these children suffer from severe trauma. They grow up feeling alienated from their cultural roots and are often unable to communicate with their parents and grandparents, who remain fluent in Uyghur.

The boarding schools in East Turkistan are not merely educational institutions; they are tools of cultural genocide. By forcibly assimilating Uyghur children into Han Chinese culture, the Chinese government aims to erase the Uyghur identity from the face of the earth. The stories of Aysu, Lütfullah, and Mihrigul are harrowing reminders of the human cost of this

genocidal campaign. As the world watches, it is imperative to continue documenting these atrocities and advocating for the rights of the Uyghur people.

A systematic campaign

According to expert Adrian Zenz and BBC, children of detained parents in boarding schools were penalized for failing to speak Mandarin Chinese and prevented from practicing their religion. In a paper published in the "Journal of Political Risk," Zenz calls the effort a "systematic campaign of social re-engineering and cultural genocide." Human Rights Watch said that the children detained at child welfare facilities and boarding schools were held without parental consent or access. "The New York Times" reported that approximately 497,800 elementary and junior high school students were enrolled in these boarding schools. These sources also reported that students are only allowed to see family members once every two weeks and that they are forbidden from speaking the Uyghur language.

Furthermore, UN experts expressed grave concern over allegations of a significant expansion of the state-run boarding school system, which fails to provide education in the children's mother tongue and forcibly separates Uyghur and other minority Muslim children from their families and communities, leading to their forced assimilation. "We are deeply concerned that boarding schools in Xinjiang are teaching almost exclusively in the official language with little or no use of Uyghur as medium of instruction and that the separation of mainly Uyghur and other minority children from their families could lead to their forced assimilation into the majority Mandarin language and the adoption of Han cultural practices," the UN experts said. They stressed the discriminatory nature of the policy and the violation of minorities' right to an education without discrimination, to family life, and to cultural rights.

The experts received information about large-scale removal of children, mainly Uyghur, from their families, including very young children whose parents are in exile or "interned"/detained. These children are treated as "orphans" by State authorities and placed in full-time boarding schools, pre-schools, or orphanages where the language used is almost exclusively Mandarin, the standard official Chinese language, or "Putonghua."

"Uyghur and other minority children in highly regulated and controlled boarding institutions may have little interaction with their parents, extended family or communities for much of their youth," the experts said. "This will inevitably lead to a loss of connection with their families and communities and undermine their ties to their cultural, religious and linguistic identities," they added.

Molding minors

The UN experts were also informed of the exponential increase in the number of boarding schools for Uyghur, Kazakh, and other Turkic Muslim children in recent years, and the closure of local schools where education through the medium of Uyghur and other ethnic groups languages could be provided. "The massive scale of the allegations raises extremely serious concerns of violations of basic human rights," they said. Experts note this is part of Chinese authorities' efforts to mold minority children into speaking and acting like the country's dominant Han ethnic group.

"This ideological impulse of trying to assimilate non-Han people corresponded with this punitive approach of putting adults in camps, and therefore lots of young children ended up in boarding kindergartens and boarding schools or orphanages," says James Millward, a professor at Georgetown University who studies Chinese and Central Asian history. "It really is an effort to try to make everyone Chinese and see themselves as Chinese and have a single cultural background."

China rejects the widespread accusations of wrongful discrimination against Uyghurs and other minorities in the region—but Uyghurs, rights advocates, and reporters have documented numerous accounts of systematic abuse.

China claims it is expanding the number of boarding schools allegedly to improve educational access, especially in remote rural communities. But Uyghur families say such schools are also institutions where children with both parents detained or imprisoned are sent, against family wishes. "My relatives would rather take care of the children themselves, but they are forced to send the kids to boarding schools," says Mukerrem Mahmud, a Uyghur student in Türkiye.

### **Nepal between India and China**

05 September 2024, Modern Diplomacy, Sounak Ghosh and Dr. Karamala Areesh Kumar

Nepal is a miniature state nestled in a strategic position between China and India, two of the emerging powers of the contemporary world.

Nepal is a miniature state nestled in a strategic position between China and India, two of the emerging powers of the contemporary world. Due to its geographical location, Nepal is an important buffer state and gives China and India equal opportunity to influence the region. In terms of national strength, Nepal's relations with China and India are asymmetrical. The primary interest of China's intervention is to prevent Tibetans from using Nepal's territory as a base for its movement for autonomy. The Chinese government has made

significant attempts to build its economic presence in Nepal since 1950, and simultaneously bilateral relations strengthened between both countries.

Along with its geographical location, vast river systems, sustained by glaciers and monsoon rains, make Nepal an ideal location for hydroelectric power generation. The country is among the richest in the world in terms of water resources per square kilometre, with an estimated 83,000 MW of hydro potential. As an aspiring power, China considers Nepal's water resources as an alternative to meet its energy demand and needs in the southwest region. Under the bilateral cooperation, China expressed its interest in initiating a joint hydropower project, which can help both states.

Given the current circumstances, Nepal has chosen to maintain a non-alignment approach while hedging with both India and China. To address geopolitical obstacles, Nepal hopes to use Beijing's economic and infrastructure development initiatives, such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). India, on the other hand, sees China's increasing influence in Nepal as posing a serious threat to its interests. The gap and lack of trust between India and Nepal increased China's presence in Nepal. From 1975 onwards, Sino-Nepalese relations have been tight and have grown significantly. China's investments in Nepal have increased dramatically over the decades. In terms of total investments made in Nepal, China surpassed India for the first time. Between 2014 and 2021, Nepal's exports to China amounted to \$196 million, while its purchases from China reached \$12.4 billion. In comparison, Nepal brought in \$49.9 billion from India and exported \$5.37 billion to that country (OEC 2021). China overtook India for the first time in 2015–16, accounting for 42% of all foreign direct investment (FDI). With China securing project contracts worth \$10.74 billion in Nepal during the following five years, till 2022, Chinese companies emerged as the main players in Nepali projects.

2016 saw the signing of the Trade and Transit Agreement (TTA) and Nepal's inclusion as one of the original members of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), among other major accords during Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli's visit to Beijing. Positive changes in infrastructure, economy, and military cooperation were evident during this time in Nepal-China relations (Mainali 2022). From 2017 forward, Nepal has made an effort to improve ties with China by welcoming more Chinese business and investment. This move away from India's long-standing dominance in Nepali foreign policy was welcomed by the leftist parties, especially the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist Centre and the Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML).

China accounted for 14.5% of foreign direct investment in Nepal in 2021, while India accounted for 33.3% (Nepal Central Bank Report 2022). Over the previous 27 years, Chinese exports to Nepal have increased at an annual rate of 13.9%, from \$53.4 million in 1995 to \$1.78 billion in 2022. China became a significant player in Nepali infrastructure projects in 2022, and Nepal's imports from China reached \$1.78 billion. China's growing sway aside, India continued to be the primary recipient of foreign direct investment and kept a careful eye on the shifting dynamics. During fiscal year 2022-2023, India purchased items worth USD 839.62 million from Nepal, while its total exports to Nepal came to USD 8015.99 million. To traverse challenging geopolitical environments and take advantage of chances for economic and infrastructural growth, Nepal has balanced its relations with both China and India.

If Nepal changes its allegiance and accrues debt to China, it could affect India's dominance in the region. If Nepal's financial problems lead it to ask for more aid, that might affect India's commercial relations. If tensions along the border rise due to Nepalese instability, India might have security worries. Additionally, it could lead to a wave of refugees into India, straining its already limited resources. Concerns have been raised about China's financial support to Nepal. It's called "debt-trap" diplomacy by critics. Beijing disputes this, but the concern endures. Nepal needs to exercise caution and look for grants and soft loans rather than commercial loans that can trap the country in debt. The major concern lies in the attempted Chinese debt trap, following a similar pattern seen in Sri Lanka. India advises Nepal to be cautious and prioritise sustainable financing options.

Nepal drifting from India could have strategic consequences. India's immediate neighbours hold immense importance for regional stability. A weakened alliance with Nepal may impact India's security interests, trade routes, and influence in the Himalayan region.

Despite India's worries about Nepal's growing commitment to China, it is important to recognize that Nepal's relationship with China presents a unique combination of opportunities and problems. Although India may view Nepal's stronger connections with China as a challenge to its hegemony in the region, Nepal's efforts to build its infrastructure and economy with China could benefit both parties and promote stability in the area. Concern still lies in how Nepal will tackle the wrath of China which they can't foresee, and how it affects India's relation with Nepal.

## Rural bookstore shares story of Tibetan culture

04 September 2024, Asia News Network

Architect Zhao Yang, who designed the renovation plan, believes the bookstore should be an outgrowth of the vast land on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, helping people connect with the soil and experience its authenticity.

About seven years ago, 33-year-old Tsering Dondrub, a business owner in Shangri-La county, Diqing Tibetan autonomous prefecture in Southwest China's Yunnan province, purchased three traditional Tibetan houses in Wugong village, Xiaozhongdian town of the county, a half-hour drive from downtown area.

The three freestanding houses built nearly half a century ago had been unused for five years and would maintain this status for another three years until a bookstore brand moved in for its new branch.

Shangri-La was a key staging post in the Yunnan-Xizang branch of the Ancient Tea-Horse Caravan Route, a trade route that started in the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and prospered in the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911) connecting Pu'er in Yunnan with Lhasa in today's Xizang autonomous region.

It continues to be an important point along the north-south National Highway 214, which starts from Qinghai province, runs through Xizang and Yunnan's Shangri-La, Lijiang and Dali, and ends in Pu'er. There are 26 ethnic groups in Shangri-La and about 33 percent of the population are of the Tibetan ethnic group.

Wugong sits just beside the highway. Villagers used to live by growing highland barley and raising yaks and sheep. About 20 years ago, there were 67 people and 10 households, which has expanded to 139 people and 31 households.

Born into a family of blacksmiths, Tsering Dondrub and his father kept refining their skills in making machetes and tableware in their spare time.

With the national highway, a high-speed railway and an airport, Shangri-La, the mysterious region described in the novel *Lost Horizon* by James Hilton published in 1933, has become easier to access in recent years.

Tourism has boomed, bringing visitors from home and abroad to the outlying village, who have showed a strong interest in traditional Tibetan culture.

Having been often invited to craft Tibetan knives and containers by tourists, Tsering Dondrub and his father opened a workshop beside the highway, which soon became lucrative.

Since 2009, under the trademark Kasa Dao (Kasa Knife), Tsering Dondrub has been running the business of making and selling traditional Tibetan products both online and in shops. By 2021, with

integrated businesses, including rural tourism, iron products and ethnic cultural products, he has seen revenues exceed 7 million yuan (\$985,125).

He bought the three old houses seven years ago, not far from a reservoir, with plans to renovate them into hostels. However, by 2020, Tsering Dondrub had still not found a partner who was willing to renovate the three houses, which otherwise would be torn down.

In May 2020, Chinese bookstore brand Librairie Avant-Garde, headquartered in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, opened its new branch in a village in Shaxi ancient town of Dali Bai autonomous prefecture, Yunnan. Its founder Qian Xiaohua and rotating chairman Zhang Ruifeng soon started looking for other opportunities in the province.

They came to Shangri-La at the invitation of the local government because, since 2014, their bookstores renovated from derelict old houses in rural areas have successfully brought vitality back to those hollowed-out villages, setting good examples for rural vitalization in China.

They were taken to the commercial areas in Dukezong ancient town and other places, but Qian always prefers a venue with a good view that has not yet been touched by commerce.

"We always want to create a place to realize our idealism about bookstores, rather than simply for business," Zhang says.

When Tsering Dondrub first showed them the three ramshackle Tibetan houses, they were quite impressed, but there were dozens of such houses nearby. A year later, when they viewed the houses again, Qian decided to rent them. Otherwise, they were very likely to be torn down like other deserted houses.

They invited architect Zhao Yang to design the renovation plan.

Zhao, a graduate of Tsinghua University and Harvard University, is now based in Dali. For years, he has been trying to put his architectural idealism into practice – to talk to nature with an open mind.

"A good house is like a tree. If a tree grows well, it's because it grows in the right place – it can adapt to the local water, soil and sunlight conditions," he was quoted in a previous interview. "What I have learned from building houses in rural areas is that there are no definite rules about design, which changes according to local conditions."

Before the bookstore, Zhao already completed two works in the places lived in by Tibetans. One is the Nyangchu River tourist center, which was completed in 2009 and is located in Nyingchi county in Xizang along National Highway 318.

Another is the Sunyata Hotel in Yunnan's Dechen county, which opened at the end of 2018 and sits across the holy Tibetan Meili Snow Mountain. Its predecessor was the renowned Migratory Bird Inn.

In 2022, when Zhao first saw the three rundown Tibetan houses standing in the field, he says he felt this place fits the bookstore's brand ethos.

Typical of traditional Tibetan houses in Shangri-La, the three houses represented the architectural system established by people who had lived there for hundreds of years.

"Their architectural form, the slope of the roof, the way it handles rainfall, and the choice of materials all blend harmoniously with the surrounding environment," Zhao says. "So, we need first to understand and appreciate them before considering whether we can add something new."

Zhao and his team carefully entered the houses, closely observed them and found people like Tsering Dondrub to tell stories about the village.

Zhao was surprised to find that the wooden structure of the three houses is different from those of the houses of the Han people in their building logic.

In the wooden structure of a Han house, the pillars on the first and second floors are often a single piece of wood. However, the pillars on the first floor of a Tibetan house were shorter, more slender and simpler than those on the second floor. The first floor was inhabited by livestock and the second floor by people.

"That is fascinating for an architect like me, who grew up with a modern architectural education. I see it as a precious anthropological legacy that we should carefully preserve," he says.

What also fascinates Zhao is the textured surface of the pillars on the first floor that reveals how they were made – possibly with just an axe – and a painting featuring the eight auspicious symbols every Tibetan household has, along with other anthropological information, which he managed to keep.

With an altitude of more than 3,400 meters, Shangri-La sees its temperature drop to about – 20 C in winter and people would open small windows on the thick rammed-earth walls for insulation and security, making the rooms so dark that during the days, people needed artificial lighting indoors.

In summer, Shangri-La enjoys abundant sunshine, but rich rainfall causes problems for people living under roofs made of wooden tiles, which they regularly need to replace.

Zhao found that the wooden structures were well-preserved, but the roofs had fallen into disrepair.

Considering that a modern bookstore needs proper lighting, Zhao supplanted them with roofs made of translucent polycarbonate panels and galvanized steel roof trusses, inspired by the sunrooms widely used in Shangri-La.

The three houses were renovated for different purposes – books, coffee and creative cultural products.



"We tried our best to preserve all the wooden structures in the original space," Zhao says.

"We made the smallest changes to the inner structure, so the second floor of the cafe is like a museum of the traditional residences in Shangri-La. We lifted the roof to let light in and brighten the residence."

Another fascinating point is that each house had a granary. Builders left a square opening on the rammed-earth facade and covered it with wooden slats for ventilation.

"Since we don't need granaries in a bookstore, we removed them. We transformed the openings into doors and built concrete walkways that connect the three houses and with the land, which is an important part of my design," Zhao says.

Zhao believes that the bookstore should be an outgrowth of the vast land on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, helping people connect with the soil and experience its authenticity. He created the walkways to encourage people to go out and stroll through the fields, mountains, rivers and clouds.

The building process was by no means easy.

The construction team coming from outside knew that they needed to delegate part of the work to the villagers according to local customs. After the harvest in September, villagers were free so the team hired them to tear down broken walls to increase their incomes while building good relations with them.

However, the villagers lacked the required skills, so the construction team had to carefully instruct them.

Another problem was rebuilding the rammed-earth walls to enclose the yards. Having no idea what to do, the team members turned to the villagers. To their surprise, though this type of wall had almost been abandoned in Shangri-La, elderly villagers still retained memories of building houses with their fathers.

"I was so frustrated that I thought we should abandon the plan of building rammed-earth walls. However, with the help of the local people, we continued. Nothing is more 'site-specified' than this. Looking back, it is such a gift from the land to our project," writes the on-site architect Liao Fuhong in his construction notes.

Offering a view of the Haba Snow Mountain across the Jinsha River, the upper stream of the Yangtze River, the bookstore houses 15,000 books on humanities and social sciences and 100 types of creative cultural products with local elements. Readers can also find books about local cultures, geography, languages and history.

"It's great that there are so many books about Tibetans and Shangri-La at the bookstore. These books can connect different cultures," Tsering Dondrub says.

In the house for creative cultural products, people can find refrigerator magnets inspired by natural and cultural landmarks, such as the Ganden Sumtseling Monastery, an important Tibetan Buddhism site in Yunnan, the Haba Snow Mountain, prayer wheels, bookmarks inspired by Tibetan scripts and brooches inspired by Tibetan Opera masks.

At the cafe, visitors can have a highland barley-flavored latte or yak butter latte.

"The bookstore showcases how distinctive the old houses in Shangri-La are innovatively revitalized and imbued with new content and new appearances with more possibilities for the future," Zhang says.

The Shangri-La branch is the sixth rural bookstore of Librairie Avant-Garde since its first one in Bishan, Anhui province, in 2014.

"We have rural bookstores in the Bai, She and Yi ethnic areas – and now the Tibetan ethnic area," he says.

In *Lost Horizon*, Hilton describes a library in Shangri-La that has a large collection of books, ancient and modern, domestic and foreign.

"Zhongdian was renamed Shangri-La (based on the introductions in Hilton's work) in 2001, so it must have an idealistic bookstore," Zhang says.

However, building a bookstore in such a remote place is not only symbolic. In the short term, the bookstore, like its many precursors, can boost tourism, the economy and culture.

"Every place has its unique history. What we can do is feature the local forte through our platform so that tourists can see traditional local architecture or learn about the local culture, history and geography through the books we present," Zhang says.

Since its opening, the revenue reached 270,000 yuan in the first month, which "is better than expected", Zhang says, adding that "maybe it's because summer is the peak season for Shangri-La tourism".

In other seasons, especially winter, "business might be sluggish because the altitude naturally prevents many people from visiting, but we will keep going", he says.

In the long run, the bookstore will exert a seminal influence on the residents with books and various cultural events, he says.

"We cannot turn people into book lovers within six months. But over five years, or one or two decades, the residents will see so many people reading and caring about their history and culture, which will not only help increase their incomes but also encourage them to cherish, protect and pass on their culture and be proud of it," Zhang says.

In September, Librairie Avant-Garde will open a Lisu ethnic bookstore in the Grand Canyon of the Nujiang River, on the Gaoligong Mountain bordering Myanmar, duplicating its previous experiences.

Chinese poet Yu Jian, 70, a guest attending the bookstore's opening ceremony, said that he was surprised to see a bookstore in such a "remote" place.

"The bookstore is great but I am wondering how they will survive because there aren't many readers of Mandarin books since most Tibetan people don't understand Mandarin," Yu says.

"However, the bookstore transcends traditional models. It's not about making money. It's more like a 'temple' inspiring people's respect for books and bookstores."

### **Celebrating Tibet, Challenging China's Narrative, Understanding India's Concerns**

04 September 2024, StratNews Global, Resham

A three-day event titled "Spirit of Tibet: Celebrating Culture and Compassion" at the India International Centre in Delhi, was an opportunity to mix Tibet's rich cultural heritage and historical significance with some issues of strategic salience.

There were Tibetan cultural performances and discussions on politics and spirituality. These were showcased in the context of Tibet's historical journey, with exhibits and artefacts, followed by screening of documentaries and films. Those of a different bent can sample Tibetan medicines or explore Tibetan astrology.

Inaugural Session: "Relevance of Tibet to India"

But a discussion featuring Penpa Tsering, head of the Central Tibetan Administration, former diplomat Dilip Sinha whose recent book *Imperial Games in Tibet* is garnering appreciation and acclaim, also celebrated Tibetologist Claude Arpi and Lt Gen Viinod Bhatia, ex-DG Military Operations, drew a packed house.

With the focus on the Relevance of Tibet to India, Penpa Tsering confirmed an ongoing collaboration with the US to challenge China's spurious claims to Tibet. "We intend to convince more countries to challenge Beijing's narrative," said Tsering.

Ambassador Sinha highlighted the strategic shift along the India-Tibet border, saying, "There was a time when the India-Tibet border was considered the most secure, but now that it is the India-China border, it has become a security nightmare for us."

The "Six Wars" China May Fight

Gen Bhatia underscored an important point: while younger generations may have forgotten the 1962 India-China border war, the Galwan clash has revived memories of that tragic conflict, shaping a view of China which is watchful and wary

He referenced a theory predicting that China could engage in six major conflicts over the next several decades to restore what it perceives as its historical glory. These potential conflicts reflect China's aggressive approach to territorial expansion:

- Unification of Taiwan (2020–2025): China considers Taiwan's unification non-negotiable and reserves the right to use war to realise its aims
- Recovery of South China Sea Islands (2025–2030): After a possible victory in Taiwan, China may shift focus to asserting control over the disputed South China Sea islands, even though those claims are not tenable under the UN Laws of the Seas.
- Reconquest of Southern Tibet (2035–2040): Arunachal Pradesh, which China calls Southern Tibet, remains a contested area. The long-standing McMahon Line border dispute between India and China makes this region a focal point for China's aggression.
- Conquering Diaoyu and Ryukyu Islands (2040–2045): China aims to reclaim these Japanese-controlled islands, citing historical ties. The islands are currently under Japanese control.
- Invasion of Mongolia (2045–2050): China views "Outer Mongolia" as part of its historical territory and may seek to assert control over it, following similar patterns seen in its territorial disputes elsewhere.
- Reclaiming Land from Russia (2055–2060): China may eventually focus on regaining land lost to Russia, seeking to Siberia it believes was historically part of China.

#### **China's Long-Term Strategic Approach**

Bhatia summarised China's expansionist strategy with the formula: "claim, occupy, legitimise, impose, exploit, and integrate." He stressed that China operates with a long-term vision, aiming to solidify and legitimise its territorial claims over time. In contrast, he suggested, India sometimes overlooks the deeper historical context.

He also explored the evolution of terminology around the India-China border, noting how the Indo-Tibet border was gradually rebranded into what is now called the Line of Actual Control (LAC). He emphasised that this rebranding, particularly the shift from the 1970s onwards, reflects China's strategic influence on regional perceptions.

The "Line of Perceptions" and the Complexity of the LAC

Bhatia offered an interpretation of the LAC, describing it as more than just a physical border. He described it as a "Line of Perceptions," comprising four distinct lines:

- India's Perception of the LAC: How India defines the boundary.
- China's Perception of the LAC: How China views the boundary.

- India's Perception Based on China's View: India's understanding of the boundary, influenced by China's positioning and claims.
- Combined Perception: A mix of both Indian and Chinese interpretations of the LAC.

"The LAC, if I may put it as Line of Perceptions. It is not one line, it is not two lines, it is not three lines but four lines," he explained, underscoring the complex nature of this dispute.

### **How Deng Xiaoping's 'one country, two systems' dates back to 1957 in Tibet**

04 September 2024, SCMP, Chow Chung-yan

With hindsight, the one country, two systems framework bears a certain resemblance to a Qianlong policy Deng and others studied in 1957

Some 25 years before Deng Xiaoping first proposed "one country, two systems" as a creative political solution to facilitate Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau's return to China, Mao Zedong tasked him with finding an answer to the Tibet issue.

It was 1957, six years after Beijing and Lhasa signed the Seventeen-Point Agreement that confirmed Tibet as part of the People's Republic of China and its autonomous status.

Tensions started to flare between the two sides shortly afterwards. The central leadership blamed this partly on some Communist officials' radical move to change Tibet's social and political systems.

Mao sent Deng, one of his most capable lieutenants, to take charge of the situation and find a long-term solution. Between February and March 1957, Deng held rounds of meetings with other senior officials. Xi Zhongxun, father of the future president, Xi Jinping, was among the attendees.

Deng and his colleagues studied ancient documents for inspiration. The most important one was the Twenty-Nine Article Ordinance for the More Effective Governance of Tibet, an imperial decree issued by the Qianlong emperor of the Qing dynasty in 1793. For centuries, Tibet was China's Gordian knot. Its extreme climate, high altitude and unique sociopolitical conditions made administration arduous. Yet, it is critical to China's stability and security.

Various emperors tried to adopt the so-called patron-priest approach, providing material and military support to Lhasa in exchange for its loyalty and religious influence. However, at the turn of the 18th century, continuous internal strife in the region and the threat of Nepalese invasions forced Beijing's hand.

The Qianlong emperor ordered a reorganisation of the Tibetan administration and codified it into the imperial decree. It formalised the selection of top

lamas like the Dalai and the Panchen through a lottery in a golden urn under the supervision of Qing officials. This was a symbolic gesture to position Beijing as the final arbiter of power succession in Tibet.

The ordinance also elevated ambans – equivalent to the central government's liaison office directors today – to the same level of political authority as the Dalai Lama. Beijing would control Tibet's foreign and military affairs but otherwise allow the region to maintain its unique social, religious and political systems. It required Tibet to reform its systems gradually without stipulating deadlines. Tibet was not absorbed into China as another province, but it was also not a simple tributary state like Vietnam.

The Seventeen-Point Agreement Mao offered the 14th Dalai Lama is essentially a modern version of the Twenty-Nine Article Ordinance. Even at the height of the Communist Party's triumph, Mao and Deng were mindful of the vast differences between Tibet and inner China. While they were adamant that Tibet must be part of China, they were also willing to be flexible and patient with its peculiar systems.

On September 4, 1956, Beijing decided to pause socialist reforms in Tibet for "six years". However, similar programmes continued in other Tibetan-populated regions in Sichuan, Yunnan and Qinghai. Deng argued that conditions on the ground were not ripe for introducing radical changes. Even though the priest-god political system and the social reality of serfdom in Tibet were an affront to the Communists' atheist doctrines, Mao and Deng were willing to wait.

The meeting minutes of the secretariat of the Chinese Communist Party at the time showed that the leaders had even discussed letting Tibet keep its systems unchanged for "50 years".

At the Politburo meeting on May 14, 1957, vice-chairman Liu Shaoqi signalled that Beijing was ready to take a "long-term" view of Tibet's reforms but also warned that it would not be afraid to resort to force if war was forced on China. Considering that China was then at the zenith of its revolutionary fever – the Great Leap Forward would be launched a year later – the restraint shown by the leadership over Tibet was remarkable.

Yet, the Tibetan elite rejected the olive branch and decided that time was not on their side. Tensions escalated and culminated in an armed revolt in Lhasa in 1959. Suspecting involvement from the United States, Chinese leaders quickly set aside their waiting strategy and responded with swift military action, resulting in the exile of the 14th Dalai Lama till this day.

No documents show how that experience might have influenced Deng when he entered negotiations with the British 25 years later for the peaceful return of

Hong Kong. But with hindsight, the one country, two systems framework bears a certain resemblance to the Twenty-Nine Article Ordinance.

Both underscore a political tradition running from imperial to modern China. Chinese rulers place great importance on national unity and security, from which they derive their governing mandate and legitimacy. The ambition to acquire more territory or wealth is rare and often frowned upon. A good sovereign power is the ultimate guarantor of law and order, upholding national unity and promoting Chinese culture.

As long as the bottom line is not challenged, the Chinese leadership can be extremely pragmatic and flexible. Throughout China's long history, major wars triggered by religious or ideological differences have been rare – unlike in the West.

China never launched any crusade or witnessed anything like the brutal religious struggles in Europe during the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation in the 16th and 17th centuries.

A rare exception was the 10 years of anarchy during the Cultural Revolution that marred Mao's legacy and almost wrecked Deng's career. When Deng returned to politics at the end of the turmoil, he was more determined than ever to stick to pragmatism, setting aside ideological debates in favour of achieving results.

It was against such a background that the idea of "one country, two systems" was hatched. Today, China is trying to reconnect with its historical past more than ever. In Xi's speeches, he cites ancient political philosophers like Xunzi, Guan Zhong or Han Fei extensively.

For people from the English-speaking world, it is tempting to view other countries purely from a Western-centric perspective. We tend to forget that many modern concepts, such as narrowly defined territorial sovereignty, statehood or self-determination, came into existence only after the Treaty of Westphalia at the end of the Thirty Years' War in 1648.

There is a tendency to force everything into the Procrustean bed of the Western narrative, while ignoring the political traditions, priorities and philosophies of other civilisations. This Western-centric perspective, combined with crusading zeal, is often the root cause of conflict in today's increasingly multipolar world.

### **The Significance of China's Reforms for Pakistan**

04 September 2024, Modern Diplomacy, Sahibzada M. Usman

The 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China recently convened its third plenary session,

marking a pivotal moment in China's journey toward comprehensive reform and modernization.

The 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) recently convened its third plenary session in Beijing, marking a pivotal moment in China's journey toward comprehensive reform and modernization. This meeting outlined a clear path for China to establish a high-quality socialist market economy by 2025 and laid the groundwork for becoming a great socialist country by mid-century. The ambitious goals set during this session underscore China's commitment to deepening reforms and enhancing governance capacity, all while maintaining its distinctive Chinese style of socialism.

During the session, more than 360 reform measures were introduced, which will be implemented in a phased manner until 2029. These measures are designed to advance comprehensive economic reforms, establish democratic governance, promote a vibrant socialist culture, and improve the economic conditions of the Chinese people. The scope of these reforms is global, emphasizing the need to create a seamless connection between the real and digital economies. The meeting highlighted the importance of the service sector, infrastructure development, and the security and sustainability of industrial and supply chains. These initiatives are seen as vital for China to refine its socialist system and achieve general modernization.

One of the key areas of focus during the session was green growth. The CPC emphasized the need for carbon reduction, pollution control, and improved environmental management systems to achieve a zero-carbon footprint by 2060. This commitment to environmental sustainability is part of a broader effort to ensure that China's modernization is both inclusive and environmentally responsible. By reducing carbon emissions and promoting green growth, China aims to position itself as a global leader in the transition to a green economy.

On the foreign policy front, the session reiterated China's commitment to peaceful development and its dedication to promoting international cooperation through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The declaration from the meeting emphasized China's role in advancing global development, security, and civilization. It called for an equitable and orderly multipolar world and a form of economic globalization that benefits all nations. China's modernization, as outlined in this session, is not just about national development but also about contributing to global stability and prosperity.

Chinese modernization is crucial for nation-building and development. With a population of over 1.4 billion—larger than the total population of developed

countries—China’s approach to modernization is designed to promote common prosperity. This means meeting the rising expectations of the Chinese people for a better life, while also ensuring equity, justice, and social development. The goal is to balance material and cultural development with harmony between humanity and nature, responding to climate change, and ensuring sustainable development.

China’s commitment to peaceful, high-quality economic and cultural development, coupled with its focus on creating a secure environment and improving governance, offers valuable lessons for other developing nations. China’s approach to modernization provides an alternative model for countries in the Global South, offering insights into achieving sustainable development, shared security, and shared prosperity. The strong political leadership, governance experience, and social cohesion that underpin China’s success can be leveraged by other nations in their own modernization efforts.

The outcomes of the CPC’s third plenary session have significant implications for Pakistan-China relations. As China’s all-weather strategic cooperative partner and a key player in South Asia, Pakistan stands to benefit immensely from China’s modernization initiatives. The Belt and Road Initiative, particularly the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), has already transformed Pakistan’s energy and infrastructure sectors. As the second phase of CPEC begins, bilateral cooperation is expected to expand into areas like agricultural modernization, industrial development, mining, and information technology. This cooperation will further accelerate Pakistan’s socio-economic development.

Moreover, the Global Development Initiative, highlighted during the CPC session, promises to enhance Chinese cooperation in Pakistan’s poverty alleviation efforts, capacity building, and green economy. Both China and Pakistan share a commitment to achieving the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The Global Security Initiative, another focus of the meeting, underscores the need for common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security. This initiative is particularly relevant to Pakistan, as it seeks to maintain political stability and combat terrorism. China’s continued support in these areas will be crucial for Pakistan’s long-term stability and security.

The meeting also highlighted the importance of advancing cooperation in technology and space research, extending the scope of Pakistan-China relations from land, sea, and air to the frontier of space. The Global Civilization Initiative, which promotes cultural exchange and mutual respect, will also strengthen ties between the two countries. More Pakistani students are expected to study in China,

gaining advanced knowledge in agriculture, IT, and AI, further enriching the bilateral relationship.

Conclusively, the third session of the CPC’s 20th Central Committee has laid the foundation for a new era of reform and modernization in China. The comprehensive reforms and initiatives introduced during this meeting will not only shape China’s future but also have far-reaching implications for its partners, particularly Pakistan. The deep historical ties, strategic partnership, and unbreakable brotherhood between China and Pakistan will grow even stronger, yielding more fruitful results in the years to come. The task now is to translate these ambitious plans into action and ensure that the benefits of modernization are realized for both nations.

### US Supports Strengthening India-Tibet Relations

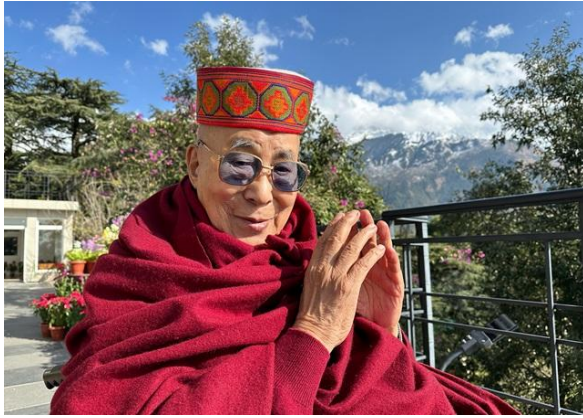
04 September 2024, Sri Lanka Guardian, Ashok K Mehta

The recent visit of a bipartisan delegation of U.S. lawmakers to New Delhi and Dharamshala marks a significant moment in U.S. diplomacy in the region.

A Tibet festival began on 3 September at the India International Centre, New Delhi, to celebrate its rich Buddhist heritage, culture, and identity. The Sikyong (head) of the Central Tibetan Administration, Penpa Tshering, will preside over various activities to highlight Tibet’s geo-strategic, spiritual, and cultural importance for India.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama, at 89, is receiving medical treatment in a New York hospital but is reported to be in good health. U.S. Special Coordinator on Tibet, Uzra Jeya, met him, which elicited an “immediate (solemn) protest from China.” Foreign Affairs spokesperson Mao Ning stated, “We don’t allow the Dalai Lama to engage in political activities in the U.S.” Backchannel talks between the Dalai Lama’s envoy and China have been ongoing for an undisclosed period, though Beijing does not confirm them. These talks are driven by the U.S. House Resolution Resolve Tibet Act of July 2024, which calls for the restoration of Tibet’s full autonomy. India needs to add its voice for Tibet’s autonomy, both internally and externally, as part of a broader coalition. India’s recognition of full Chinese sovereignty over Tibet was based on Beijing granting and implementing Tibet’s autonomy. Instead, China has quashed Tibet’s autonomy and trade treaties, opening the door for India to adopt a more nuanced position.





Dalai Lama, wearing a traditional hat from Himachal Pradesh, watching the Indian Republic Day Celebrations on TV at his residence in Dharamasala, HP, India on January 26, 2023. [Photo: Tenzin Jamphel]

Two issues require the Government of India's prompt attention: the Dalai Lama's succession and the border issue, including the restoration of peace and tranquillity and full disengagement in East Ladakh. The visit of a bipartisan U.S. delegation of lawmakers to Dharamasala and Delhi, received by both the Dalai Lama and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was significant. China critic Nancy Pelosi made comments about President Xi Jinping that drew Chinese ire. On the ground, the sinicization process of Xijiang (Tibet) began in the mid-1960s. The method of injecting 7.5 million Han Chinese into Tibet, along with neutralizing Tibetan Buddhism by deploying Chinese monks in Tibetan monasteries, was designed to change the heart and soul of Tibet. Militarization and infrastructure construction soon followed, adversely impacting the environment. USD 5.8 billion was spent on the Sichuan-Tibet railway system, which is being extended to borders with India, Nepal, and Bhutan.

A new border law has led to the construction of 628 well-off border villages close to or encroaching into neighboring countries. In 1965, convenience police stations were established as a key security measure: Big Brother is Watching. By 2011, Tibet Autonomous Region advertised for 2,500 police stations, with 458 designated for Lhasa alone. By 2016, this grid-style social management of Tibet had recruited thousands of Han Chinese and some Tibetan policemen.

A Chinese Communist Party (CCP) political secretary has always maintained close surveillance over Tibet, which is governed by the CCP from Beijing. Internal policing has fostered a sense of 'otherness' through the surveillance drive. Reports indicate attempts to recruit Tibetans into the PLA, including some forcible intake.

The day may come when some Nepalese might choose to join the PLA outside of the South West Theatre Command in Tibet. This could result from the

ill-conceived Agniveer policy. The Chinese Renaming Campaign has led to what the Forum for Non-Violent Alternatives (FNVA) calls 'Thread of Beads: an analysis of renaming 62 locations in India's Arunachal Pradesh since 2017.' China claims that 90 percent of Zangnan (Arunachal Pradesh) is illegally occupied by India. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has suggested renaming 62 locations in Tibet. This is unlikely to provoke a strong reaction from the Chinese. The Chinese renaming drive occurred in four phases: 2017, 2021, 2023, and 2024.

This campaign has been supplemented by encroachments into Nepal and Bhutan, with the construction of Xiakong villages (well-off) in contested areas to bolster their claims. While Nepal and Bhutan are pretending this is not happening, India is building approximately 600 vibrant villages, with funds already released. Numerous encroachments have also occurred in India. The strategic importance of Tibet for India cannot be overstated.

The root of the border problem and the Tibet issue lies in India's failure to understand its significance in time and act. In the Eastern Command, Lt Gen Sir Francis Tucker foresaw in 1946 that India must prevent China from occupying Tibet and be prepared to occupy it. This did not happen, for which we are now paying the price. The priority now is to coordinate with the Dalai Lama to address his succession. The Dalai Lama has been silent on this issue recently but has spoken and written about it in the past.

The Chinese are likely to appoint their own Dalai Lama, as they did with the Panchen Lama (second to Dalai Lama), Gyaltzen Norbu. This must be preempted. The CTA is preparing a new map of Tibet with the help of cartographic experts from Princeton University in the U.S.

The issue of the map and India announcing the contours of its Tibet policy, including the border and full disengagement of the PLA from its intrusions in East Ladakh, must be coordinated with the CTA. A succession policy should also be outlined. With Tibetans migrating to the U.S. and soon becoming the majority of Tibetans residing there, the Tibet issue may diminish, leaving Delhi with reduced leverage against Beijing.

### **Top French museums have succumbed to China's soft power on Tibet etc?**

04 September 2024, Tibetan Review

Some top museums in France have succumbed to China by going along with the latter's propaganda distortion of history and silencing of the cultures of minority groups, including those concerning Tibet,

reported [decoditien.com](https://www.decoditien.com), citing a collective of experts. The development has sparked a heated debate about the implications of such actions on historical accuracy and cultural preservation, the report said.

In particular, the Musée du quai Branly and the Musée Guimet, two renowned institutions in France, have come under scrutiny for having complied with Chinese demands to rewrite history and erase the identities of non-Han peoples who have been assimilated or annexed by the PRC. This disturbing trend has raised concerns about the preservation of diverse cultural narratives and the autonomy of historical representation in museum settings, the report said.

Citing one “glaring example”, the report said that “this erasure” of culture can be seen in the Musée du quai Branly, where the term “Tibet” has been replaced with the Chinese designation “autonomous region of Xizang” in the catalogue of Tibetan artifacts.

This alteration reflects the enforcement of a law passed in 2023 by the PRC, which aims to eliminate any mention of Tibet as a distinct entity with its own history and heritage. By succumbing to Chinese pressure, the museum has effectively whitewashed the Tibetan identity and obscured the painful realities of occupation and colonization that have defined its past, the report said.

Likewise, the report continued, the Musée Guimet has opted to use the term “Himalayan world” instead of “Tibet” in its exhibition spaces dedicated to the region.

“This subtle yet significant change echoes the broader narrative dictated by Beijing, which seeks to downplay the unique cultural heritage of Tibetans and subsume it within a homogeneous Chinese identity,” the report said.

The report sees these as a general trend in France in which certain French institutions, including universities hosting Confucius Institutes, have become unwitting conduits for Chinese propaganda and censorship. These institutes, funded by the Chinese government, promote a sanitized version of Chinese history and culture that aligns with the narrative endorsed by Beijing. By collaborating with these entities, museums risk perpetuating a distorted view of history that prioritizes the interests of the PRC over academic integrity and cultural diversity, the report said.

Museums are forced to navigate between appeasing Chinese authorities and preserving the integrity of their collections in a situation where China exerts increasing influence on the global stage, leading to institutions prioritizing the maintaining of diplomatic relations and securing access to Chinese resources over upholding ethical standards and historical accuracy.

The report calls on museums to uphold their role as custodians of knowledge and champions of cultural heritage by resisting external pressures to distort historical narratives and erase marginalized voices. This is imperative for French museums to reaffirm their commitment to intellectual freedom and cultural diversity.

The report also called on stakeholders in the cultural sector to engage in meaningful dialogue and advocacy to ensure that museums remain spaces of education, reflection, and empowerment for all communities.

The report said the recent controversies, to which a collective of researchers had brought attention concerning French museums’ compliance with Chinese demands, highlight the urgent need to safeguard the integrity of historical representation and cultural preservation.

By confronting external pressures and asserting their autonomy, museums can reaffirm their dedication to truth, diversity, and inclusivity in the face of mounting challenges. It is crucial for all stakeholders to stand united in defence of intellectual freedom and cultural integrity, ensuring that museums continue to serve as beacons of knowledge and understanding in an increasingly complex world, the report said.

### **‘China distorting Tibetan history, destroying architectural buildings’**

03 September 2024, Hindustan Times, Dar Ovais

“As part of this policy to eradicate anything Tibetan, the Chinese authorities are distorting Tibetan history, erasing national identity, and forcibly changing the way of life, and destroying architectural buildings, designs and artwork with Tibetan characteristics,” said Penpa Tsering.

Sikyong (president) of Tibetan government-in-exile Penpa Tsering on Monday alleged that the government of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) is implementing hardline policies aimed at eradicating the distinct Tibetan identity in Tibet.

As the exiled Tibetans and Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) in Dharamshala celebrated the sixty-fourth anniversary of the Tibetan Democracy Day on Monday, Tsering while reading the statement of Kashag (cabinet) said that the PRC government is forcefully implementing an assimilationist policy called “forging a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation” through a three-pronged process termed as “to facilitate ethnic exchanges, communication and integration”, aimed at eradicating the Tibetan people’s identity through indoctrination programmes and Sinicisation campaigns in the religious, political and social programmes.

An Estonian parliamentary delegation led by MP Juku-Kalle Raid, the Chair of Tibet Support Group in Estonian Parliament, attended the commemoration ceremony at Tsuglagkhang temple in McLeodGanj.

"As part of this policy to eradicate anything Tibetan, the Chinese authorities are distorting Tibetan history, erasing national identity, and forcibly changing the way of life, and destroying architectural buildings, designs and artwork with Tibetan characteristics," said Penpa Tsering

Sikyong said, "Over a million Tibetan children are forced into state-run colonial boarding schools to learn Chinese language and ideology without access to their families. Books related to Tibetan nationality, religion, and histories are being forcibly removed from the libraries of these schools. And pictures and statues of historical figures such as Thonmi Sambhota, who created the Tibetan script and other ancient and modern scholars in the school campuses, are being wiped out. Such alarming reports continue to emerge from Tibet."

The Tibetan parliament-in-exile, in its statement, said, "Regarding our fellow Tibetans living under Chinese occupation, it is evident that they are completely deprived of any democratic political system. Instead, the brutality of the Communist Party of China's hardline policies, under which they continue to suffer as if in a living hell, becomes increasingly evident with each passing day. With the goal of eradicating the Tibetan race and language, the Chinese government has forcibly relocated over one million young Tibetan children to separate boarding schools, where they are subjected to policies designed to Sinicize them."

"Additionally, for many years, China has pursued a policy of Sinicizing Tibetan religion and culture by destroying existing centers dedicated to their practice and preservation. On July 12, 2024, the Chinese government issued a coercive order to immediately shut down the Golog Ragya Gangjong Sherig Norbu Lobling, an academy established in 1994 with all necessary permissions from various Chinese authorities," the Tibetan parliament-in-exile said, adding that this abrupt shutdown has deeply saddened the Tibetan people both in Tibet and in exile, as well as those worldwide who value Tibetan culture.

### **Bursts of Sympathy, Teetering Commitment: U.S. Policy on Tibet**

03 September 2024, ORF, Sujana R. Chinoy

#### **Introduction**

Two recent events involving the United States (US) have refocused the spotlight on the issue of Tibetan sovereignty. Even as China urged US President Joe Biden not to sign the 'Promoting a Resolution to the

Tibet-China Dispute Act',[1] a bipartisan US Congressional delegation led by former Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Dharamsala in June 2024 to meet the Dalai Lama and express solidarity with the Tibetan people.[a],[2] In July, President Biden signed the Act into law.[3]

It would be instructive to examine how this Act differs from earlier legislation in the US on Tibet and its impact on the future of the Tibetan people.

#### **Previous US Legislation**

The US first appointed a Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues in 1997.[4] The Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 laid the foundation for renewed activism through further legislative measures to preserve the heritage of the Tibetan people.[5] The Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act of 2018[6] and the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020[7] put further pressure on China, with the latter categorically rejecting any interference by China in the selection of the Dalai Lama.

The Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 focused on the protection of Tibet's distinct historical, religious, cultural, and linguistic identity and sought accountability for human rights violations. Unsurprisingly, the task assigned to the Secretary of State to establish a branch office in Lhasa of the US Consulate General in Chengdu to monitor political, economic, and cultural developments in Tibet remained unrealised, even as the emphasis on Voice of America and Radio Free Asia Tibetan language broadcasts continued.[8] The US also failed to establish contact with the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedun Choekyi Nyima, who was taken from his home in 1995 and has since been replaced by a China-appointed lama, Gyaltzen Norbu.[9] The 2002 Act also upheld the UN General Assembly resolutions of 1959, 1961, and 1965, calling on the People's Republic of China to cease practices that deny the Tibetan people their right to self-determination.

Many of the earlier positions of 2002 were incorporated into the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020 which, under then President Donald Trump, emphasised the need to protect Tibet's unique identity and human rights and called for the establishment of a consulate in Lhasa. The 2020 Act, perhaps reflecting a certain *modus vivendi*, did not refer to the right to self-determination for the Tibetan people. However, the Act opposed any effort by China to interfere in the matter of reincarnation and succession, including the manifestation of the Dalai Lama in the future.[b] The applicability of the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act to Chinese officials who violate human rights in Tibet and the protection of the environment and water resources of the Tibetan Plateau were other notable features of the law.

## New Elements in the New Law: Tibet and Self-Determination

The Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act directly refers to a “dispute” between Tibet and China, implying that they are two distinct geographical and political entities. This is different from the relatively restrained language used in the 2002, 2018, and 2020 Acts. Additionally, the latest legislation focuses on exerting pressure on China to have a meaningful dialogue with the representatives of the Dalai Lama without the usual preconditions imposed by China, such as acceptance by the Dalai Lama that Tibet has always been a part of China. Meanwhile, the Dalai Lama has been ready to reconcile to the fact that Tibet is (today) part of China. He has also declared that he is not seeking independence for Tibet and that he is committed to arriving at a negotiated settlement.[10] The Dalai Lama has not accepted the additional Chinese demand that he declare Tibet as always having been a part of China.[11]

Clause 5 of Section 2 [Findings of US Congress] of the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act states that the “US government has never taken the position that Tibet was a part of China since ancient times.”[12] However, this reaffirmation does nothing to question the US position, shared by the global community, that Tibet is today part of China. The protection of human rights in Tibet and its right to self-determination have been revived in the new Act. It also introduces policy measures to counter efforts by the Chinese government and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to spread disinformation about Tibet. The Act, like its predecessors, covers not just the Tibet Autonomous Region but also the areas of Greater Tibet, which have long since been carved and merged with neighbouring Chinese provinces such as Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan, and Yunnan.

### The Evolution of US Policy

The US displayed scant interest in Tibet’s independence or autonomy in the years leading to the formation of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 and its military takeover of Tibet in 1950. [13] Indeed, in 1908, William Woodville Rockhill, a US diplomat who served in the US embassy in China, described the Dalai Lama as a “vassal prince”. [14] With its Tibet policy outsourced to Great Britain, the US was inclined to reflect British positions in the early 1940s. However, the US, unlike Britain, could not distinguish between the implications of the term “sovereignty” as against “suzerainty”.

Chinese suzerainty over Tibet was crafted by the British in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to ascribe conditional legitimacy to its nebulous claims over the Outer Tibet provinces of western Kham and Ü-Tsang and to encourage China to not limit itself to the Inner Tibet provinces of Amdo and

eastern Kham. This was part of the Great Game, which aimed to prevent Imperial Russia from making inroads into High Tartary.[15] The British were loath to stretch themselves and contented themselves with the fig leaf of Chinese claims. At the same time, in the context of the Simla Convention of 1914 between Great Britain, China, and Tibet, the British, while recognising Chinese suzerainty over Tibet, recognised the autonomy of Outer Tibet. Article 2 of the Convention also committed Great Britain and China to abstain from interference in the administration of Outer Tibet (including the selection and installation of the Dalai Lama), which was to remain with the Tibetan government at Lhasa.[16]

For a brief period during the Second World War, US President Franklin Roosevelt also directly reached out to the Dalai Lama’s administration in Lhasa to gain access to Tibet’s territory to aid the war effort, [17] although this was episodic. In the 1940s, the Communists gained ground in the civil war and became increasingly determined to consolidate territory across Tibet. Chinese officials and soldiers had left Tibet after the collapse of the Qing dynasty; between 1912 and 1950, China had no presence in Outer Tibet, though the Kuomintang government had attempted to re-establish presence following the death of the 13th Dalai Lama by dispatching a “condolence mission” to Lhasa, headed by General Huang Musong.

As China’s ally during the Second World War, the US supported Chiang Kai-shek’s position.[c],[d] This support led to cautious US policy towards Tibet leading up to 1949. The Chinese Nationalist government had claimed “suzerainty” over Tibet, whereas the Chinese constitution identified Tibet as an integral part of the Republic of China.[18]

It is no surprise then that the US was circumspect in dealing with the Tibetan government in Lhasa.[e] This was when the Dalai Lama, the Regent, and the Kashag had written to the president of the US expressing a desire to establish good relations between the two governments. There was a proposal to send a Tibetan Trade Mission to India, China, the United Kingdom (UK), and the US later in 1947; [19] the mission, led by the Tsepon Shakabpa, a Tibetan nobleman, eventually travelled in 1948, [20] on passports issued by the Tibetan government in Lhasa.[21] Tsepon Shakabpa’s Tibetan passport bears the immigration stamps of India, US, UK, France, Italy, Switzerland, Iraq, Pakistan, and Hong Kong but not China, though the trade mission did visit Shanghai, Nanjing, and Hangzhou as part of its itinerary.[22] This may indicate the Republic of China’s unwillingness to countenance any suggestion of independence although Tibet enjoyed independent status at the time.

The policy circumspection of the US is also evident in a 1 August 1947 letter to the Secretary of State, in which the US envoy in Delhi took the position that "in view of the Department [of State]'s desire to avoid any action which may reflect on the Chinese claim to sovereignty over Tibet, the Embassy has addressed its reply to the letter from the "Foreign Office" [of the Tibetan Government] to the "Foreign Bureau". [23] The distinction made by the US was perhaps that "Foreign Office" was the equivalent of the foreign ministry of a sovereign state, whereas the "Foreign Bureau" in China denoted the provincial foreign affairs bureau of the central government. The wording indicated the US's unwillingness to dilute its recognition of China's claimed sovereignty over Tibet; additionally, the US did not hesitate to reject any suggestion by the Tibetan government's "Foreign Office" that it represented the equivalent of an independent state's foreign ministry.

As outlined by then Assistant Secretary of State James Graham Parsons to the Secretary of State in a memo dated 14 October 1959, US policy towards Tibet began to evolve in the 1950s, following the takeover by the Communists.[24] Amid growing tensions, including in the Taiwan Strait, the US adopted the approach that the Tibetans had the same "inherent right" to self-determination as any other people. It further acknowledged that, if developments warranted, the recognition of Tibet as an independent state should be considered. However, the US did not move to formulate a definitive legal position on Tibet at the time. According to Parsons, the US considered it adequate "for present purposes" to state that it recognised "the de facto autonomy that Tibet has exercised since the fall of the Manchu Dynasty, and particularly since the Simla Conference (of 1914)."[25]

Reflecting on US policy since 1950, Parsons stated that the US acknowledged that "arguments against recognition of Tibetan independence under the conditions prevailing in 1959 were stronger than those in favour." [26] Evidently, Chiang Kai-shek, by then restricted to running the Republic of China from Taiwan, continued to influence and moderate the US's position.

Then Acting Secretary of State C. Douglas Dillon's Memorandum No. 381 of 16 June 1959 to President Eisenhower mentioned the Dalai Lama's letter of appeal to the US President and the Secretary of State, in which he insisted that Tibet "be granted full independence as a prerequisite for Communist China's entry into the United Nations." [27] This came immediately after the Dalai Lama had fled to India in March 1959 and when he was seeking full independence for Tibet on the plea that earlier efforts to secure genuine autonomy within the People's Republic of China had failed. On crossing

into India, he had repudiated the 17-Point Agreement.[28] The US had assessed that then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was "strongly opposed to any independence for Tibet, favouring rather the Dalai Lama's publicly committing himself to working for the reestablishment of Tibetan autonomy." [29] Today, it is a matter of conjecture how much of the lack of enthusiasm for Tibet's independence, including in the US, had its roots in India's policy at the time.[f]

Memorandum No. 383 dated 5 August 1959 from the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Parsons) and the Acting Assistant Secretary for International Organization Affairs (Walter Walmsley) to Secretary of State Christian Herter on Developments with Respect to United Nations Action on Tibetan Issue highlights interesting details. [30] After his flight to India in March 1959, the Dalai Lama had reached out to the US government to seek support for his intention to take the Tibet issue to the UN General Assembly and possibly make a public appeal for UN action. The Dalai Lama "had also asked the US government whether [it] would be willing to propose to some other government, preferably in Asia, that it extend recognition to his government-in-exile." [31]

The US embassy in Delhi was clear in its assessment that, "while the GOI would consider that raising the Tibetan issue in the United Nations would serve no useful purpose, it would concede that the Dalai Lama has the right to appeal and to be heard if the United Nations wishes." [32] The Embassy's assessment was that "an appeal by the Dalai Lama and his appearance at the United Nations would probably not jeopardize his return to India so long as he avoided insisting on the concept of Tibetan independence." [33] Additionally, the US was keen on his return to India.

Chiang Kai-shek's Government of the Republic of China (GRC) was at that time not only a UN Member State but also a permanent member of the UN Security Council. In the US embassy's assessment, the Republic of China "would not itself raise the Tibetan issue at the General Assembly but would strongly support any other country which might bring up the problem...The GRC delegation would participate in any UN debate that might take place, castigating Chinese Communist actions in Tibet and reiterating President Chiang's statement of March 26, 1959 promising the Tibetan people the right of self-determination following the overthrow" of the communist regime in Beijing.[34]

On 20 February 1960, then Secretary of State Herter stated, "It is the belief of the U.S. Government that this principle [of self-determination] should apply to the people of Tibet and that they should have their voice in their own political destiny." [35] According



to Guangqiu Xu, "on January 17, 1962, in a letter to the Dalai Lama, Secretary of State Dean Rusk repeated the U.S. position that the principle of self-determination should apply to the people of Tibet." [36] Guangqiu Xu further stated that "successive U.S. administrations of that period strongly condemned Chinese human rights practices and supported all three U.N. General Assembly resolutions [of 1959, 1961, and 1965] that urged China to withdraw from Tibet." [37]

It is clear that the US played safe and paid no heed to Tibet's pleas to the United Nations for assistance. Both the US and the UK wanted India to take the lead, which did not materialise. It was El Salvador that moved a resolution in the UN General Assembly when the Chinese PLA rolled into Tibet in 1950, [38] but the debate proved inconclusive and was postponed due to the uncertainty among the big powers. The question of Tibet was raised again in a resolution in the UN General Assembly in 1959, when the unrest in Tibet led to the Dalai Lama's flight to India. Yet again, smaller powers—Ireland and Malaya—pushed for a resolution on the "Question of Tibet". [39]

Between 1959 and 1964, three reports of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) gave a boost to the Tibet issue, with *prima facie* evidence of violation of human rights and attempts by China to destroy the Tibetan nation and the Buddhist religion.

The history of US support [g] to the Khampa guerrilla outfit Chushi Gangdruk (four rivers, six ranges that define the Kham region) that was fighting the Chinese PLA is well-documented. [40] The low-intensity covert operations carried out by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in the 1950s involved training the Tibetan resistance units in Colorado as well as the "Mustang Army" of rebels operating from Nepal's border region with Tibet. US assistance had begun to ebb around the time that the PRC established the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) in 1965 and conclusively ended in the aftermath of the Sino-US rapprochement in 1971. After that, Tibet was relegated in US foreign policy, with all remaining support for the Tibetan guerrillas coming to a halt. [41] Even the latest Tibet-China Dispute Act acknowledges that it "does not change longstanding bipartisan United States policy to recognize the Tibet Autonomous Region and other Tibetan areas of China as part of the People's Republic of China." [42] In the wake of the Sino-US rapprochement, then President Richard Nixon and his successors eased up on the issue of Tibet; it is well known that President Jimmy Carter was reluctant to meet the Dalai Lama. [43] The finality of this expedient position was clear from Secretary of State James Baker's statement of 5 February 1992, during a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing, that "U.S. policy accepts the

Chinese position that Tibet is part of China." [44] That position has endured till the present day.

US policy remains key to the future of Tibet. However, the history of US policy on Tibet suggests inconsistencies in commitment, interspersed with occasional bursts of sympathy and activism. Cautious references to self-determination in the 1950s and a focus on human rights violations in the 1960s segued into the appeasement of Beijing for larger trade, economic, and strategic interests against common concerns vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.

#### Post-Tiananmen

The unrest in Tibet during 1987-1989 coincided with the Tiananmen protests and the military crackdown of June 1989. When Bill Clinton assumed office as US president in 1992, his country's focus was on human rights violations, trade friction, proliferation concerns, and tensions across the Taiwan Strait. Clinton received the Dalai Lama four times, in 1993, 1997, 1998, [45] and 2000. [h], [46] Then Vice President Al Gore and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright were present at the 1997 and 1998 meetings; similarly, at the 1993 meeting, Gore and Secretary of State Warren Christopher were present, along with Speaker Thomas Foley. This also set the stage for future meetings of the Dalai Lama with US Presidents George W. Bush in 2001 and 2003, [47] and Barack Obama in 2010. [48]

The unipolar decade presided over by Clinton gave the US a chance to push harder for a fair deal for Tibet, but this period also coincided with the Clinton administration gradually de-linking human rights issues from the question of granting China Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status. This clearly suggested that human rights violations in Tibet were being relegated to the back-burner.

Before creating the Office of the Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues in 1997, a Bill to establish the position of United States Special Envoy for Tibet had been introduced in the 103rd Congress. A provision to create the position was also introduced as part of the foreign relations authorisations bills in the 104th and 105th Congress sessions. [49] The proposed legislation had called for the Special Envoy to be accorded the rank of ambassador to ensure that an important issue in bilateral relations with China maintained centrality in senior-level policy discourse. [50] The Clinton administration finally settled for a compromise when Secretary of State Albright designated the Director of Policy Planning in the Department of State, Gregory Craig, as the Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues. [51]

#### China-Dalai Lama Talks and the US

US support for direct talks between the Dalai Lama's representatives and the Chinese government has long been a key feature of US policy. Direct talks had shown some promise under Deng Xiaoping.

[i] Thereafter, fact-finding missions were mounted by the Dalai Lama's representatives, without any outcome. The Dalai Lama's address to the European Parliament in 1988 brought his "Strasbourg Proposal" for a negotiated settlement into salience but the Chinese backed off soon thereafter. Between 2002 and 2010, nine rounds of talks were held between the Tibetans and the Chinese, all in China except for one round in Berne in Switzerland in 2005.[52] The talks were inconclusive. In his statement at the 50th anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising Day, the Dalai Lama stated, "The Chinese insistence that we accept Tibet as having been a part of China since ancient times is not only inaccurate, but also unreasonable. We cannot change the past no matter whether it was good or bad. Distorting history for political purposes is incorrect." He added, "We Tibetans are looking for a legitimate and meaningful autonomy, an arrangement that would enable Tibetans to live within the framework of the People's Republic of China." [53] There has been no direct dialogue since 2010, although the Dalai Lama's representatives have acknowledged the existence of informal channels of communication.[54]

President Clinton had pressed Chinese President Jiang Zemin in 1997-1998 to open a dialogue with the Dalai Lama. President Bush also urged the Chinese government to engage in substantive dialogue with the Dalai Lama or his representatives, stating that the Dalai Lama's call for "genuine autonomy was sincere", [55] and to respect the unique cultural, linguistic, and religious heritage of the Tibetan people. Bush expressed his support in his meeting with the Dalai Lama in 2003 and also raised the Tibet issue with Chinese President Jiang Zemin during his two visits to China in 2001, besides raising it with visiting Vice President Hu Jintao in 2002 and Premier Wen Jiabao in 2003.[56]

In 2011, Obama met the Dalai Lama in the White House. According to the White House statement issued on the occasion, "The President commended the Dalai Lama's commitment to nonviolence and dialogue with China and his pursuit of the 'Middle Way' approach." The statement also mentioned that President Obama "stressed that he encourages direct dialogue to resolve long-standing differences and that a dialogue that produces results would be positive for China and Tibetans." [57]

#### Conclusion

The renewed reference in the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act to the right of the Tibetan people to self-determination in the current context could prove to be more sensitive than it first appears. Notably, no country in the world has recognised Tibet as an independent state.

The US has not taken concrete steps to promote self-determination for Tibet in multilateral forums. While being a permanent member of the UN Security Council accords the US a position to trigger discussions on the issues covered by the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act, it has refrained from doing so. Moreover, even as the US has held consultations with its allies on the situation in the Taiwan Strait, it does not appear to have given the same priority to the Tibet issue. A key mandate of the US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues is to engage Tibetans. Naturally, such a remit involves the sizeable number of Tibetan refugees in India, which could create friction between India and China. Additionally, India has long rejected UN resolutions that call for self-determination; [i] its position on self-determination for the Tibetan people is unlikely to be different.

Today, China treats US legislation and sanctions with growing disdain.[58] China has absorbed Tibet and consolidated its integration through demographic changes as well as cultural and educational resets, backed by indoctrination, surveillance, and punitive measures. Enhanced rail, road, and air connectivity has further consolidated Beijing's hold on Tibet. The Dalai Lama has stated that he does not seek independence for Tibet, only genuine autonomy. [59] Though there is sympathy for the Tibetan people, few concrete steps have been taken that can result in meaningful change. There is scant international appetite or scope for Tibet realising self-determination, the US legislation notwithstanding.

With the forthcoming US elections, it would be instructive to recall that, after Sarah Sewall's term as Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights and concurrent term as the Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues ended on 20 January 2017,[60] the Trump administration had kept the post vacant for three years and seven months, until Assistant Secretary Robert A. Destro of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor was appointed in October 2020.[61] Given the flux in the US political landscape, there is little guarantee that the current US line will be maintained, especially if Trump returns to office.

#### China's Preference as the next US President: Kamala Harris?

03 September 2024, ORF, Atul Kumar

At a time when China urgently needs a stable economic environment, Trump's return to power would be akin to a bull in a china shop

In her 41-minute acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention on 22 August 2024, Vice President Kamala Harris mentioned

China only once, in a passing comment, and entirely avoided topics like Taiwan, Tibet, the South China Sea, and the Uyghurs. This omission was deliberate. Harris's future political agenda focuses primarily on the economy, a theme she emphasised three times during her speech. Her predominant focus on domestic issues aligns with China's preference for the next United States (US) President.

Chinese President Xi Jinping and his associates in Beijing prefer Harris over the temperamental and unpredictable Republican nominee, former President Donald Trump. Harris's inward focus and tendency to prioritise social values may present China with a rare post-COVID-19 opportunity to recalibrate its US policies and revive cooperative engagement with the US, which is crucial for China's continued economic growth. This article examines Chinese concerns regarding Trump and explores their reasons for favouring Harris in the current political landscape.

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China's apprehension of Trump

The Trump administration from 2017 to 2021 likely marked one of the most challenging periods in US-China relations since their rapprochement in 1971. Characterised by uncertainty, unpredictability, and hostility towards China, Trump rapidly strove to dismantle the foundations of the US-China economic relationship. Even before assuming office, he sparked tensions by directly interacting with Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen and rejecting adherence to the 'One China Policy'. His subsequent decisions led bilateral relations into uncharted territory.

Trump halted negotiations for a Bilateral Investment Treaty, forcefully condemned Chinese actions in the South China Sea and against Japan, imposed substantial tariffs on Chinese steel and aluminium imports, and resolutely pursued policies against China's large trade imbalance with the US. He also targeted China's non-tariff barriers against American exports, and the pressure on US companies to transfer technologies to their Chinese partners in joint ventures.

Moreover, Trump renamed the US Pacific Command to the Indo-Pacific Command, heightening China's apprehension and refocusing American strategic priorities on China. Additionally, he condemned China's economic espionage, repeatedly emphasised its central role in the spread of COVID-19, at times referring to it as the 'China Virus' and frequently sanctioned Chinese companies, particularly by restricting Huawei's access to semiconductor chips and promoting technological decoupling. The Trump

administration and its officials viewed China as an adversary, dismissing any illusions of cooperative engagement.

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This approach nearly derailed China's economic and diplomatic trajectory. Therefore, even after Trump left office, China imposed sanctions on former senior officials, including Mike Pompeo, Alex Azar, Kelly Craft, and 25 others, for their roles in severely damaging China-US relations. China continues to feel the impact of the Trump administration's actions.

China and the Democratic Party since 2021

Since 2021, the Biden administration has maintained a firm stance on China, continuing several of Trump's policy measures. It has kept pressure on Chinese officials regarding trade imbalances, economic espionage, technological decoupling, and regional security. Additionally, the Biden administration has elevated the importance of issues like Tibet, Taiwan, and other contentious matters, while providing stronger support and attention to US allies in their stance against China. However, the current US economic policy is less hostile, offering a significant respite for President Xi. This has allowed him to focus more on consolidating his domestic political power and shifting the blame for economic challenges, such as rising unemployment and slowing manufacturing, onto his junior politicians and finance officials. This reprieve is further reinforced by Biden's recent efforts to engage with China through high-level visits and backchannel diplomacy. Herein lies China's opportunity and inclination.

Kamala Harris's emphasis on issues such as the cost of living, housing, reproductive rights, border control, and a focus on the economy is more favourable for China. China anticipates that officials currently causing friction, like Anthony Blinken and Jake Sullivan, might not continue in a Harris administration, hoping instead for milder representatives who prioritise US-China economic relations. Harris's running mate's positive history with China further enhances Xi's hope for renewed cooperative engagement.

China cannot predict the trajectory of US policies under Trump and is concerned that his future team could include notably anti-China policymakers like Matt Galagher and Robert Lighthizer.

In contrast, Trump, in any capacity, poses a significant threat to China's regional and international political and economic ambitions. China cannot predict the trajectory of US policies under Trump and is concerned that his future team could include notably anti-China policymakers like Matt

Galagher and Robert Lighthizer. These officials would increase China's difficulty at a time of economic crisis. Already, Trump has threatened to impose a 60 per cent tariff on Chinese goods if he comes to power.

The Democratic Party's utility

In the upcoming US elections, a Democratic victory would keep the administration's focus on the crises in Ukraine and the Gaza Strip. Democratic politicians are deeply involved in the Russia-Ukraine war and are grappling with the unpredictable and opportunistic Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. Netanyahu's strategy of perpetuating conflict with Hamas to maintain his hold on power puts Democrats in a difficult position, particularly with their domestic left-liberal base, which remains hostile to any perceived American support for Israel. Even during Harris's acceptance speech, a significant pro-Palestinian group protested against her balanced approach.

With the majority of Democrats preoccupied with these two critical crises, they would have little capacity to concentrate on China and East Asia. The current US-China quiet diplomacy is influenced by these complexities, as the US shows little willingness to confront a crisis in East Asia. However, Trump has already announced his intention to withdraw from the Russia-Ukraine war and avoid entanglement in the Israel-Palestine conflict, which makes China apprehensive.

The current US-China quiet diplomacy is influenced by these complexities, as the US shows little willingness to confront a crisis in East Asia.

The second issue concerns China's approach to international organisations and multilateral institutions. Over the past few decades, China has invested significant effort in engaging with various UN agencies, seeking to gain influence and leadership positions. China views these agencies as vital to becoming an international superpower. As a result, it has increased its influence wherever possible and, where it has faced resistance, established alternative multilateral organisations, such as new financial institutions to compete with the Bretton Woods system.

A potential Trump presidency threatens to undermine much of China's progress in these multilateral efforts. Trump's disdain for the UN-led political structure, the World Trade Organization (WTO), and its various agreements and financial frameworks jeopardises China's efforts over the past decades. At a time when China urgently needs a stable economic environment, Trump's return to power would be akin to a bull in a china shop.

For China's national rejuvenation and financial dominance, Beijing prefers a controlled and gradual decline of the US. A disorderly decline, potentially

caused by Trump's isolationist policies, would harm the Chinese economy. Additionally, US isolation could destabilise the international security environment, which China has leveraged for trade and economic gains. A chaotic world poses risks to China's business interests, and its struggling economy cannot afford such instability.

An isolationist US military stance could drive East Asian countries, such as Japan and South Korea, to develop nuclear capabilities, which would pose long-term security threats to China.

Additionally, there are potential risks for China regarding regional security. Trump is harsh on adversaries but brutal with allies, particularly those who underspend on defence and intend to free ride on US military presence. An isolationist US military stance could drive East Asian countries, such as Japan and South Korea, to develop nuclear capabilities, which would pose long-term security threats to China. A potential coalition among these nations to deter China would be far more challenging to manage.

Therefore, Harris's victory is necessary for China to recalibrate its policies with the US administration and re-embark on economic growth and dominance. As expected, China prefers the Democrats in the coming elections and remains apprehensive of Trump's return.

### India's special China problem

03 September 2024, The Pioneer

S Jaishankar has highlighted India's 'Special China problem,' one that is deeply rooted in the unresolved border disputes

India-China relations have long been fraught with challenges, but recent remarks by India's External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar have brought the depth of these issues into sharper focus. Jaishankar has said that India has a "special China problem," which he emphasized is distinct from the more general concerns that the rest of the world, including Europe and the United States, has with China. Jaishankar's comments come at a time when countries globally are grappling with what he termed the "general China problem." This problem, characterised by economic and national security debates, is not unique to India. Across Europe and the United States, policymakers are increasingly preoccupied with China's growing influence and the challenges it poses. From trade imbalances to concerns about Chinese technology in critical infrastructure, these issues have sparked widespread scrutiny of China's global role. However, India's situation is further complicated by its unique geopolitical and economic circumstances. India shares a long and contested border with China,

which has been the site of several military standoffs over the years, the most recent and severe of which began in May 2020 in eastern Ladakh.

India's "special China problem" goes beyond the broader concerns of the international community. It is rooted in the unresolved border dispute between the two nations, which has led to a prolonged military standoff along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh. The ongoing border tensions have necessitated the deployment of approximately 50,000-60,000 troops by both sides, creating a volatile situation that has yet to see a lasting resolution. Diplomatic efforts to resolve these issues continue, with the 31st meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation & Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) taking place on August 29 in Beijing. However what is interesting is that despite tensions and border skirmishes India China trade has flourished and many importer in India make regular rounds to source stuff from China to sell in the Indian market. But Jaishankar's remark could mean a shift in the official policy vis a vis China. If Govt changes its policy, Chinese goods and investments may have to face more barriers dissuading the Chinese investors. Jaishankar also highlighted the economic dimensions of India's relationship with China, pointing out that the trade deficit and the nature of Chinese investments are areas of significant concern. Indeed security is non negotiable and must be implemented in letter and spirit. But at the same time the commerce should not be thought of as an impediment. If one thing that can improve the relations between two countries, it is trade. However, India could restrict Chinese investment in security-sensitive areas such as telecommunications and digital cyber space.

### **Tibet, the Dalai Lama and the Power Struggle with China**

02 September 2024, Daily Watch

The 14th Dalai Lama is 89 years old. The question of who will succeed him has sparked a power struggle between India and China.

Beijing wants to be solely in charge of choosing the next Tibetan spiritual leader. In its eyes, Tibet belongs to China.

The Dalai Lama has been living in exile in India since 1959. The older he gets, the more important the question of his succession becomes – not only for the future of Tibet, but also for global geopolitics. India, the United States and the European Union support Tibet, which has demanded autonomy since its annexation by China in 1950. China, meanwhile, does not recognize the Dalai Lama's government in exile.

Beijing is now determined to take sole responsibility for appointing the next Dalai Lama, raising fears that the debate could have serious political consequences. Tensions between China and India have been exacerbated by a conflict over a disputed border, which has been smoldering since 1962.

When Mao Tse-tung's People's Liberation Army invaded Tibet, India lost the Buddhist neighbor that lay between it and Communist China. With the Tibetan people forced to assimilate, India granted asylum to the 14th Dalai Lama and numerous other refugees, much to Mao Tse-tung's displeasure. Since then, conflict has simmered, especially in the disputed Himalayan border region.

By taking power in Tibet, China was also able to secure valuable mineral resources such as chromium, copper, borax, uranium and lithium. It also gained control over the sources of Asia's largest rivers – something India sees as a threat to its supplies of fresh water.

Tibetans themselves are caught in a standoff between the two most populous nations in the world, which are also major economic powers. It is not easy for them to make their voices heard, despite the best efforts of their spiritual leader.

### **China's Crackdown on Tibetan Voices of Freedom: The Silencing of a Culture on Social Media**

02 September 2024, The Earth News

The situation in Tibet is complicated and has been a source of concern for many years. The People's Republic of China has been accused of suppressing Tibetan voices calling for more autonomy and human rights in the region. The Chinese government's actions in Tibet have been criticized for infringing fundamental human rights such as freedom of expression, assembly, and religion. Many Tibetans have been detained, imprisoned, or forced to flee their homes in search of safety.

China has increased its crackdown on the use of the Tibetan language, particularly on social media platforms such as Douyin, China's version of TikTok, in a concerted effort to undermine Tibetan cultural identity and pro-freedom voices. This move is part of a broader strategy to assimilate Tibetans into the dominant Han Chinese culture, eroding their unique linguistic and cultural heritage.

The Tibetan language prohibition on platforms such as Douyin is more than just censorship; it is a purposeful attempt to reduce Tibetan culture's visibility and influence in the digital age. By prohibiting the use of Tibetan in internet areas, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) attempts to muzzle criticism and squelch any expression of Tibetan identity that threatens its narrative. For many Tibetans, social media had become an essential



instrument for keeping cultural links, sharing traditions, and expressing their desire for freedom. The crackdown has made these practices more dangerous.

China's crackdown on Tibetan voices advocating for freedom has escalated, with authorities employing extensive repressive tactics to suppress dissent. Tibetan activists, religious leaders, and ordinary citizens are under constant monitoring, with advanced technologies used to track and control their movements, communications, and activities.

The Chinese government's intensified crackdown aims to erase Tibetan cultural identity and suppress any aspirations for independence. Harsh penalties are imposed on those expressing pro-Tibetan sentiments, reflecting a broader effort to control and assimilate the region. This suppression showcasing the ongoing struggle for Tibetans to preserve their cultural and national identity.

This tyranny goes beyond mere linguistic limits. Tibetan activists, writers, and even regular residents who utilize their own language online or espouse Tibetan liberation face harsh consequences such as surveillance, harassment, and jail. The CCP's measures are part of a larger attempt to silence Tibetan voices and remove Tibet's unique cultural identity from public consciousness.

The world community cannot turn a blind eye to this digital persecution. Global human rights organizations, governments, and technology businesses must put pressure on China to respect Tibetans' linguistic and cultural rights. The censoring of Tibetan voices on social media is a grave injustice that highlights Tibet's ongoing struggle for cultural survival and freedom—a struggle that requires immediate international attention and support.

### **How China's internet police went from targeting bloggers to their followers**

02 September 2024, The Guardian, Amy Hawkins

In recent months, followers of influential liberal bloggers have been interviewed by police as China widens its net of online surveillance.

Late last year, Duan\*, a university student in China, used a virtual private network to jump over China's great firewall of internet censorship and download social media platform Discord.

Overnight he entered a community in which thousands of members with diverse views debated political ideas and staged mock elections. People could join the chat to discuss ideas such as democracy, anarchism and communism. "After all, it's hard for us to do politics in reality, so we have to do it in a group chat," Yang Minghao, a popular vlogger, said in a video on YouTube.

Duan's interest in the community was piqued while watching one of Yang's videos online. Yang, who vlogs under the nickname MHYYYY, was talking about the chat on Discord, which like YouTube is blocked in China, and said that he "would like to see where this group will go, as far as possible without intervention".

The answer to Yang's question came after less than a year. In July, Duan and several other members of the Discord group, in cities thousands of miles apart, were called in for questioning by the police.

Duan says that he was detained for 24 hours and interrogated about his relationship to Yang, his use of a VPN and comments that he'd made on Discord. He was released without charge after 24 hours, but he – and other followers of Yang – remain concerned about the welfare of the vlogger, who hasn't posted online since late July.

The incident is just one sign of the growing severity of China's censorship regime, under which even private followers of unfavourable accounts can get into trouble.

"I don't think I've seen followers of influencers being questioned to this extent in the past," said Maya Wang, the associate China director at Human Rights Watch.

China's ministry of public security and the local public security bureau handling Duan's case could not be reached for comment, but both he and his fellow online idealists fell foul of one of the foundational principles of China's internet: don't form a community, especially not one related to politics, even in private.

Being punished for comments made online is common in China, where the internet is tightly regulated. As well as a digital firewall that blocks the majority of internet users from accessing foreign websites like Google, Facebook and WhatsApp, people who publish content on topics deemed sensitive or critical of the government often find themselves banned from websites, or worse.

Last year, a man called Ning Bin was sentenced to more than two years in prison for posting "inappropriate remarks" and "false information" on X and Pincong, a Chinese-language forum.

Even ardent nationalists are not immune. In recent weeks, the influential, pro-government commentator, Hu Xijin, appears to have been banned from social media after making comments about China's political trajectory that didn't align with Beijing's view.

Duan said that the call from the police was not entirely unexpected. Still, he says, the intensity of the interrogation caught him by surprise. "Just complaining in a group chat on overseas software is not allowed".

The net of online surveillance widens

In February, Li Ying, who runs a popular Chinese-language X account, posted an “urgent notice” saying that his followers in China were being called in to “drink tea” with the police, a euphemism for interrogations. He urged people to unfollow him and take care to make sure that their X accounts didn’t reveal their personal information.

Li, who is based in Italy, runs an account called “Teacher Li is not your teacher”, which posts a stream of unfiltered news about protests and repression in China, the likes of which would never be published in China’s domestic media.

“The police began to call all users who had registered with Chinese mobile phone numbers and asked them to unfollow me,” Li said. People living overseas had their relatives in China contacted by the police, Li said. They were put pressure on to persuade the person overseas to unfollow Li’s account.

Two other popular Chinese bloggers, including Wang Zhi’an, a Chinese journalist based in Japan, also said that their followers were questioned by police this year.

“Part of this has to do with deepening repression – police have gone from harassing activists and people ‘out there’ active in physical spaces to harassing those online because much of activism and dissent is now more deeply hidden,” says Wang.

In December, Li Tong, an official at the ministry of public security’s cybersecurity bureau said that the government had designated 2024 as “the year of a special campaign to combat and rectify online rumours”. Local authorities have taken on this mantle with gusto: in July, Guangdong province said that it had dealt with more than 1,000 cases of “online rumours” and “online trolls” this year.

William Farris, a lawyer who studies state prosecutions of speech in China, said that internet cleaning campaigns are “an annual, or semi-annual, tradition”. Similar campaigns have been announced every year dating back to at least 2013. He noted that in several judgements against people who had been punished for their online activity, the authorities also paid attention to who the people followed. In 2019, a man called Jiang Kun was sentenced to eight months in jail for posts on X, with the court noting that “he followed certain anti-Chinese forces” on the platform.

Still, Wang said that the ongoing cat and mouse game between the authorities and those who think differently from them indicated “an emerging set of shared values that cut across China’s borders. Despite the fact that the authorities have always sought to stamp out these ‘universal values’, they have nonetheless persisted among significant portions of people in and from China.”

The Discord crackdown has been widely discussed online, in forums blocked by China’s firewall. On Reddit, one user wrote: “I sincerely hope that all those who have lost contact can return to life safely. We will meet again, in a place where there is no darkness!”

\* Names have been changed.

## High time the Chinese leadership resolved the longstanding Sino-Tibet conflict: Tenzin Lekshay

01 September 2024, The Telegraph

‘Under the benevolent leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Tibetans at large, particularly the Central Tibetan Administration, are consistently pursuing the Middle Way Policy to resolve the longstanding Sino-Tibet conflict through meaningful dialogue, whereby both Tibetans and the Chinese will be mutually benefitted’

Q What is the idea of home for the exiled Tibetan community?

Tibetans in exile are living in different homes away from home. Though many Tibetans in exile have not seen or lived in Tibet, we still believe that Tibet is our home where our heart belongs.

Q Usually, a duality complicates the emigrant experience of home. There is the original home and the home – in this case, India – that the new generation is born into. How do young Tibetans confront this dichotomy?

Like any other refugee community, we faced many challenges. Due to the visionary leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the older generations, and with the continued support of and assistance from the Indian government and the people, we have been able to build a home away from home where we remain as the voice for the voiceless Tibetans in Tibet.

Q Do Tibet’s spiritual/textual traditions assist in easing the anxiety of rootlessness?

Certainly. Tibetan Buddhist culture helps us cope with statelessness as it teaches the nature of interdependency and impermanence. It also instills hope not just within yourself but in your counterpart as well through compassion and positive changes.

Q Being homeless can also be a liberating experience since it widens horizons and dissolves borders. His Holiness, for instance, is a truly global citizen. How does the exiled Tibetan community view the tension and the ties between the Home and the World?

We can call it a blessing in disguise as it allows us to explore and understand the world and contribute to world peace. However, Tibetans inside Tibet are living a life in hell under the Chinese communist regime. Tibetan culture has been assimilated and Tibet economically marginalised and ecologically

destroyed. Yet, the Sino-Tibet conflict remains unresolved. It is high time the Chinese leadership resolves this longstanding conflict through dialogue.

Q His Holiness has often spoken of changing the way of seeing or of looking at a problem from multiple dimensions to resolve conflict. Is multiplicity then the key to world peace?

Under the benevolent leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Tibetans at large, particularly the Central Tibetan Administration, are consistently pursuing the Middle Way Policy to resolve the longstanding Sino-Tibet conflict through meaningful dialogue, whereby both Tibetans and the Chinese will be mutually benefitted. The whole concept of the Middle Way Policy is based on trust, friendship and reconciliation for the sake of the entire humanity.

Q Not just politics, religion too seems to be narrowing given its insistence on homogeneity – Hindutva in India, militant Islam in Africa and Asia or aggressive Buddhism in Sri Lanka are examples. Why is this happening?

It is crucial to recognise that diversity is a reality and consider the different histories, cultures, geographies, livelihoods and faiths, among other factors. Therefore, insisting on homogeneity contradicts the essence of being human. China's efforts to homogenise all nationalities in China are destined to fail.

Q Another major crisis for all our homes is climate change. Why is the global leadership not doing enough? How can Buddhism help?

Climate change is the real thing that everybody is facing. It is a universal challenge. Global leadership may amplify the need for sustainable development and ecology, but very little is being done on the ground. Look at China, the frontrunner for the global environmental leadership. Every year, about two million people die of air pollution. Eighty one per cent of China's coastal regions are heavily polluted with plastic debris. The craze for natural resources (minerals and water) drives China to heavily exploit Tibet. In 1987, in his Five Point Peace Plan for Tibet, His Holiness the Dalai Lama had proposed "restoration of and protection of Tibet's natural environment and abandonment of China's use of Tibet for the production of nuclear weapons and dumping of nuclear waste".

Q Pico Iyer, the author who has worked with His Holiness, wrote in *The Open Road* that the Dalai Lama believes in incremental, invisible change. So should change, whether at home or elsewhere, be incremental or revolutionary?

Change is a permanent thing. For a good change to happen, it is important to have the conviction that problems and changes are bound to happen. But what determines change is action. As Shantideva said, "If there is a remedy, then what is the use of

frustration? If there is no remedy, then what is the use of frustration?" As for the Tibetan people, we hope that the Sino-Tibet conflict will be resolved. We remain resilient in our freedom movement with that conviction.

## August

### Ethnic unity in China or cultural genocide in Tibet?

31 August 2024, Actual News Magazine

On August 14, amid almost general indifference, 100 Tibetan academics sent a petition to the United Nations High Commissioner to denounce the policies of cultural assimilation still taking place in Tibet, an autonomous territory controlled by China.

According to them, the Chinese government continues its policies of suppression of the Tibetan language and culture, including through the closure of schools or through indoctrination and propaganda in school curricula.

The private Tibetan-oriented school Gangiong Sherig Norbu Lobling was reportedly closed last July. According to the Tibet Action Institute, this is a continuation of Chinese President Xi Jinping's policy of "ethnic unity", which promotes the culture of the Han majority in the country's minority territories.

China claims that Tibet has been an inseparable part of its territory for centuries, while control of the Himalayan region (of which Tibet is a part) was only completed after the Communist Party came to power in 1949.

Cultural genocide can occur without violence or loss of life. It is the intentional destruction of a people's culture through the elimination of cultural practices, cultural objects or artifacts, language (written and oral), and ancestral traditions. The concept was developed by Polish jurist Raphael Lemkin in his 1944 book, which also defined the term "genocide." According to a June report by the NGO Human Rights Watch, China continues to coercively relocate Tibetans from rural areas to cities in the name of "poverty reduction."

#### Assimilation

This forced urbanization would be a way to assimilate the population more quickly and to eliminate cultural practices that are more alive in the countryside than in the city. The aim would also be to eliminate the nomadic lifestyle of about 3 million Tibetans who live from yak herding and agriculture.

According to the New York-based human rights group, such forced displacements cause permanent damage to Tibetan culture and way of life, particularly when farmers and herders are no longer

able to ply their trades and are forced to work as wage laborers in non-agricultural industries.

Of course, Chinese authorities call the relocations "voluntary," but Human Rights Watch has reviewed more than 1,000 reports from state media and government publications that contradict these claims. Visits by government officials or threats to cut off all services to homes are reportedly frequently used to force Tibetans to leave their villages.

According to official figures, by the end of 2025, more than 930,000 Tibetans will have been displaced, sometimes in entire villages. Although these policies date back to the early 2000s, 76% of these interventions are said to have been carried out after 2016. While the repression in Tibet is no longer in the headlines, there is apparently an acceleration of assimilation policies.

India is not doing much better. According to an independent report, in June it planned to rename 30 Tibetan sites with Indian names. This is likely retaliation by New Delhi, as in March China unilaterally assigned Chinese toponyms to 30 already named places in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh in order to strengthen its territorial claims over the region.

India has historically accepted China's hold over Tibet, in the face of Beijing's de facto control over the region. However, India's recent actions suggest a change in policy by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Answers

Anti-government protests in the region in 2008 led to a massive military crackdown by China, and foreigners wishing to visit Tibet now need a special visa. Journalists have great difficulty getting there, except for those from Chinese state media.

The repression suffered by the Tibetan people is nevertheless recognized by the international community. At least three motions on this subject were adopted at the UN, in 1959, 1961 and 1965, but they did not bring about any major change in Chinese policy.

A recent U.S. State Department report notes that Chinese authorities have intimidated, surveilled, and harassed Americans in Tibet and have barred many diplomats and journalists from entering. Americans of Tibetan descent also reportedly face additional scrutiny when applying for Chinese visas.

The Canadian House of Commons unanimously adopted a motion last June affirming its willingness to defend Tibet's right to self-determination and its right to exist as a distinct nation.

The motion, brought forward by Bloc Québécois MP Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe, recognizes that the Chinese government is pursuing a generalized policy of cultural assimilation of Tibetans and specifies that China should not interfere in the selection of the next Dalai Lama.

The historic Tibet region, about 2,500,000 km<sup>2</sup> was an autonomous country from 1912 to 1951, before officially becoming a Chinese province after its annexation by the communist government, then an "autonomous region" of China in 1965.

Its official name is Xizang Autonomous Region. The official religion is Tibetan Buddhism, and the spiritual leader is the Dalai Lama. According to 2022 figures, at least 160 monks, religious figures, and ordinary Tibetans have self-immolated in protest against Chinese policies.

This text is part of a series on oppressed peoples around the world.

### Analysis: Elders stay faithful to Deng over 'reformer Xi Jinping'

29 August 2024, Nikkei Asia

Katsuji Nakazawa is a Tokyo-based senior staff and editorial writer at Nikkei. He spent seven years in China as a correspondent and later as China bureau chief. He was the 2014 recipient of the Vaughn-Ueda International Journalist prize.

What can be called a "revolt against reformer Xi Jinping" took place behind closed doors this summer, dealing a setback to the supreme leader and his allies. The highly unusual political drama played out during the third plenary session of the Chinese Communist Party's current 20th Central Committee. The plenum was held in Beijing from July 15-18.

Around that time, international attention was focusing on what medium- and long-term economic policies party chief Xi and his team would unveil during the key meeting.

The political focus in China, however, was zeroing in on something else entirely, how "reform and opening-up"

– the policy that led to China building the world's second-largest economy – came to be adopted. More specifically, the focus was on what role Xi and his late father, Xi Zhongxun, who once served as vice premier, played in forming the policy widely credited to Deng Xiaoping.

The state-run Xinhua News Agency on July 15 published a lengthy commentary, "Xi Jinping the reformer," to coincide with the plenum's opening. The piece praised Xi as an outstanding reformer and appeared designed to reinforce Xi's authority at the big meeting.

But behind the scenes the essay came under an immediate barrage of attacks from political forces not close to Xi. Some within the party called the article strange and factually incorrect, while others said it was not in line with official party history and asked who greenlighted its publication.

Observers said the backlash hit like an unexpected tsunami. It fed off particularly vociferous criticism from retired party elders and "second-generation reds," or children of revolutionary-era party leaders, and proved impossible to contain. Many others within the party used the reverberations as an opportunity to vent their pent-up frustrations with China's dire economic situation.

The controversial article focused on the history of "reform" under Xi, thereby daring to trivialize the

history and results of Deng's "reform and opening-up." The piece also partially used the terms "reform" and "reform and opening-up" interchangeably, deliberately sowing confusion among readers.

Descriptions of the 1970s, including an assertion that reform was a "family tradition" for Xi, came in for particularly intense criticism.

In 1978, when Deng put his policy into motion, Xi's father was sent to southern China. According to the commentary, Xi Zhongxun led politics in Guangdong province and established special economic zones in Shenzhen and other places.

The article also said that in 1978, the elder Xi commissioned the younger Xi, who was studying at Tsinghua University in Beijing, to go to Anhui province in eastern China to conduct a field study on the household responsibility system. The younger Xi took copious notes while in Anhui and has kept the notebook for over 40 years, the article said.

The household responsibility system, also known as the contract

responsibility system, was introduced as an agricultural reform measure to incentivize farmers. It allows farming households that meet their production quotas to freely sell any surpluses.

The Xinhua commentary gave the impression that father and son Xi, not Deng, led China's reform drive by virtue of the father's work in the south and the son's notetaking in Anhui.

As for Xi's role in Anhui, it was actually Wan Li who at the time promoted the household responsibility system in that province. Wan, a staunch supporter of Deng's reform and opening-up policy, later served as vice premier and then as chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's parliament.

Furthermore, Xi's current economic policy seems to significantly differ from Deng's reform and opening-up.

Party elders critical of the Xinhua commentary might have felt that Xi was taking credit for Deng's great achievement.

The article's description of Xi as an outstanding "reformer" also became the specific target of behind-the-scenes criticism. While Deng has been dubbed "the general architect of reform and opening-up," the

commentary emphasized that Xi, not Deng, is now the highest authority on reform in the party's history. When the backlash reared, Xi should have realized the seriousness of the situation. He had no choice but to effectively order relevant departments to completely withdraw the article. It did not go on to run in a print edition of the People's Daily, a party mouthpiece, and was completely scrubbed from China's internet before the last day of the third plenum.

This is how "reformer Xi Jinping" was toppled.

It is not hard to imagine the atmosphere at the third plenum after the downfall of "reformer Xi Jinping." The harsh political climate that the commentary triggered could have made it difficult for any meaningful decisions or personnel changes to be made.

Xinhua is under the direct control of the State Council, which belongs to China's central government, and is under the supervision of the Publicity Department of the Communist Party, a propaganda unit. In addition, any important articles like the commentary cannot be published without approval from the General Office of the Communist Party, which manages clerical work in Beijing's Zhongnanhai area, where Xi and other leaders have their offices. At any rate, the commentary's sudden erasure was highly unusual. Blame the debacle on an error in judgment by Xi's close aides.

Those aides miscalculated, partly because they failed to fully consider what this year means in terms of party history: It is the 120th anniversary of Deng's birth.

Deng's birthday, Aug. 22, this year came at a politically sensitive time, shortly after the party's Beidaihe meeting, which is held annually at the seaside resort of the same name in Hebei province, where party leaders and retired elders informally discuss important issues.

It was a decade ago when Xi, shortly after that year's tense Beidaihe meeting, presided over an event to commemorate the 110th anniversary of Deng's birth. Back in 2014, the elders focused their Beidaihe discussions on Xi's fierce anti-corruption campaign.

Their discontent was strong, even that of former President Jiang Zemin, as the elders' former subordinates and the military officers who were close to them were being targeted by Xi's anticorruption team.

But Xi simply shrugged off their discontent as he went about steadily consolidating his power under the banner of fighting corruption. The elders eventually had no choice but to pledge solidarity with Xi.

So what was the mood like at this year's Beidaihe meeting? The discussions remain shrouded in secrecy,



even as August is nearing its end. It isn't even known whether Xi traveled to the seaside resort to join the conclave. The lid on information is being held down tighter than ever.

In place of accurate information from the meeting – and touched off by Xi's disappearance from public view – various rumors concerning Xi swirled from the end of July to the middle of August.

Amid the confusion one certainty has emerged, and it stems from another disappearance, that of the Xinhua commentary. Chinese politics has been altered to some extent, and the situation is developing. What is less certain is whether this turn of events will give rise to another behind-the-scenes battle in the months to come.

## **CPEC 2.0: Transforming Pakistan-China Relations – OpEd**

29 August 2024, Eurasia Review, Manahil Jaffer

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project under China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), has been a cornerstone of the Pakistan-China relationship since its inception in 2013. With the introduction of CPEC 2.0, this partnership has entered a new phase, bringing both opportunities and challenges that could reshape Pakistan's economic landscape and its strategic ties with China.

### **CPEC 1.0: A Brief Overview**

CPEC 1.0 focused on infrastructure development, energy projects, and establishing Special Economic Zones (SEZs). The \$62 billion initiative addressed Pakistan's energy deficit, modernized its transportation network, and stimulated industrial growth. By 2021, several projects were completed, including the Gwadar Port, various power plants, and road networks that enhanced connectivity between China and Pakistan.

These projects have brought tangible benefits, such as alleviating Pakistan's energy crisis and improving transportation infrastructure. However, they also generated concerns about debt sustainability, environmental impact, and the uneven distribution of benefits across different regions of Pakistan. Despite these challenges, CPEC has remained a symbol of the strong bilateral relationship between Pakistan and China.

### **The Evolution to CPEC 2.0**

CPEC 2.0 represents a strategic shift from infrastructure development to industrialization, agriculture, socio-economic development, and digital connectivity. The focus is now on enhancing Pakistan's industrial capacity, improving its agricultural output, and integrating its economy more deeply with China's. This phase is particularly important for Pakistan, as it seeks to address its

economic challenges, including a balance of payments crisis, low industrial productivity, and a stagnant agricultural sector. By leveraging Chinese expertise and investment, Pakistan hopes to transform its economy, increase exports, and reduce its dependence on external borrowing.

One of the key components of CPEC 2.0 is the development of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) aimed at attracting foreign investment and promoting industrialization. The Rashakai SEZ in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Allama Iqbal SEZ in Punjab, and Dhabeji SEZ in Sindh are among the priority projects. These zones are expected to create thousands of jobs,

enhance technology transfer, and boost Pakistan's manufacturing sector.

Another significant aspect of CPEC 2.0 is agricultural cooperation. Pakistan's agriculture sector, which employs nearly 40% of the workforce, has struggled with low productivity and outdated practices. Under CPEC 2.0, China has committed to sharing its expertise in modern farming techniques, water management, and agricultural technology. This collaboration could significantly improve Pakistan's food security and export potential.

### **Economic Implications for Pakistan**

CPEC 2.0 offers Pakistan a pathway to economic revitalization, but it also comes with challenges that need to be carefully managed. The success of this phase will largely depend on Pakistan's ability to implement reforms, enhance governance, and ensure that the benefits of CPEC are equitably distributed.

One of the main concerns is the growing debt burden associated with CPEC projects. While Chinese loans have been instrumental in financing key infrastructure projects, they have also added to Pakistan's external debt, raising concerns about debt sustainability. To address this issue, Pakistan will need to ensure that CPEC investments generate sufficient economic returns to service the debt.

Another challenge is the need for improved governance and transparency in the implementation of CPEC projects. Corruption, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and political instability have previously hindered the progress of several initiatives. To fully realize the potential of CPEC 2.0, Pakistan must strengthen its institutions, streamline project approval processes, and enhance coordination between federal and provincial governments.

Moreover, the environmental impact of CPEC projects remains a critical concern. The expansion of infrastructure, industrial zones, and agricultural activities under CPEC 2.0 could exacerbate environmental degradation if not properly managed. Pakistan needs to adopt sustainable practices and

implement strict environmental regulations to mitigate these risks.

#### Strategic Implications for the Pakistan-China Relationship

The evolution of CPEC into its second phase underscores the deepening strategic partnership between Pakistan and China. This relationship, often described as “all-weather,” has become increasingly important for both countries in the context of regional and global dynamics.

For Pakistan, China remains a crucial ally in its quest for economic development and security. The CPEC initiative has solidified China’s role as Pakistan’s largest trading partner and investor. Furthermore, China’s support in international forums, particularly on issues like Kashmir, has further strengthened the bilateral relationship.

For China, Pakistan is a key partner in its broader Belt and Road Initiative. CPEC not only provides China with access to the Arabian Sea through the Gwadar Port but also serves as a counterbalance to India’s influence in South Asia. The strategic location of Pakistan makes it a vital component of China’s efforts to secure its energy supply routes and expand its geopolitical influence.

However, the deepening Pakistan-China relationship has also raised concerns among other regional and global powers, particularly India and the United States. India perceives CPEC as a threat to its sovereignty, especially since the corridor passes through the disputed territory of Gilgit-Baltistan. The United States, under its Indo-Pacific strategy, has also expressed reservations about CPEC, viewing it as part of China’s broader ambitions to expand its influence in South Asia and beyond.

#### The Way Forward

As Pakistan and China move forward with CPEC 2.0, the focus should be on maximizing the economic benefits while addressing the associated challenges. This will require a collaborative approach, with both countries working together to ensure the successful implementation of projects, adherence to environmental standards, and equitable distribution of benefits.

For Pakistan, CPEC 2.0 represents an opportunity to achieve long-term economic growth and stability. However, this will only be possible if the government remains committed to reforms, improves governance, and ensures that the interests of all stakeholders are taken into account. For China, the success of CPEC 2.0 will reinforce its strategic partnership with Pakistan and demonstrate the viability of its Belt and Road Initiative in other regions. By continuing to invest in Pakistan’s development, China can further solidify its position as a key player in the global economy and a major influence in South Asia.

CPEC 2.0 marks a significant evolution in the Pakistan- China relationship, with the potential to reshape the economic and strategic landscape of the region. Both countries stand to benefit from this partnership, but success will depend on careful planning, effective implementation, and a shared commitment to sustainable development.

#### Opinion: Dr. Doom’s origin in Tibet- Disney should not whitewash and kowtow to Communist China

29 August 2024, Phayul, Tenzin Younten and Tenzing Dhamdul



Robert Downey Jr. appears at the Marvel Studios panel at San Diego Comic-Con as Dr. Doom on July 28, 2024 (Jesse Grant/Getty Images)

The Marvel Cinematic Universe and its parent company Disney have the stage set and have the opportunity to bring a big change in the film industry and that is by tackling the issue of ‘whitewashing’ in its upcoming Dr. Doom movies and cast Tibetans to play the roles of Monks of Dooms and even Mahatma Doom if he is to be part of the upcoming Marvel projects.

On 28th July at this year’s San Diego Comic-Con, Marvel Studios announced that the Russo brothers will return to direct the 2 upcoming Avengers movies: Avengers: Domsday and Avengers: Secret Wars. But what took everyone back was when it was announced on stage that Robert Downey Jr. (who revealed himself) would return to play as Dr. Victor Van Doom popularly known as Dr. Doom. This character is the next biggest villain in Marvel’s upcoming phase but one thing that caught many fans and Tibetans in particular is how the origin of this very popular Marvel character like Dr. Strange is tied to Tibet, where the art of mysticism is closely associated with popularly.

The Marvel Universe is a goliath in the Hollywood and movie industry largely due to the fandom and the content they have been bringing out to the public. However, one has repeatedly seen how business and economics take the front stage even if it means straying away from the original story.

When the Marvel movie Dr. Strange was released, it was called out for its practice of Whitewashing, in particular the character of the Ancient One. Whitewashing in films is described as the casting of white Caucasian actors and actresses in roles originally meant to be characters of color, whereby it does not only dismiss the original characters but also their story and place of origin.

Marvel Comics has a long-standing practice of attaching the lore of its characters to Tibet especially

when it comes to two prominent Doctor-themed characters Dr. Strange and Dr. Doom. In the Marvel comics, the mentors or Lama (as we call it in Tibetan) of both these Marvel characters are Tibetans and of Tibet origin with popular Marvel Fandom making it clear for us all as well. Dr. Strange's mentor, the Ancient One, and Dr. Doom's attendant, the Monks of Dooms were from Tibet and Tibetan in origin. The original writers described them clearly as from Tibet and Tibetans rather than Chinese.

Based on the original comic from which the storyline and the movie of Dr. Doom will blossom, it is visibly clear that the Monks of Dooms (a group of Tibetans monks residing in the Himalayans Mountains in Tibet) forged Dr. Doom's iconic Armour in the Great Furnace of the Tibetan monastery and was also here he learned his mystic arts and skills from. This is a critical component of Dr. Doom's origin story and is sure to receive much screen time similar to how the creation of Stormbreaker (Thor's weapon to substitute Mjolnir) in the movie Avengers: The Infinity War was portrayed. But the question lies in whether Marvel will be bold enough to confront its inner demons here and stay true to its source materials.

In the past, against all the backlashes of Marvel Universe's whitewashing practices, they still decided to Whitewash the Ancient One in Dr. Strange's movies with Caucasian Actress Tilda Swinton. The practices of whitewashing Tibetans and Asians off the big screen have far greater repercussions than simply denial of representation. The decision to remove and ignore Tibetans off the big screen is undoubtedly for profit over principle and further aid and abet CCP's efforts to erode Tibetans and its unique identity. It's an act of appeasement towards the CCP and being able to access their market, at what cost though? Rather than casting Tibetans and keeping the distinct originality of the films intact they till now have viewed it as a risky move that would affront or antagonize the People's Republic of China. Marvel Studio to date has decided to remove Tibetans and its ties to Tibet entirely.

Doctor Strange's writer when speaking on why Tibetans were cast off from the movies, admitted to placating PRC stating that the Ancient one "originates from Tibet, so if you acknowledge that

Tibet is a place and that he's Tibetan, you risk alienating one billion people who think that that's bullsh\*t and risk the Chinese government going, 'Hey, you know one of the biggest film-watching countries in the world? We're not going to show your movie because you decided to get political.'

It is unfortunate to witness such a big body kowtowing to Chinese demands and aiding them in spreading disinformation about Tibet. An agenda that was mentioned in the recently passed US law now titled 'Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act' popularly known as the 'Resolve Tibet Act.' With

Marvel Studios being based in the USA, they would directly be violating this law if they were to act with Beijing's consciousness. The Chinese Communist party-led government has used Hollywood and other big business entities including the NBA to spread their narrative with notable incidents being Tibet Supporter Richard Gere permanently being banned from China, the 'Seven Years in Tibet' and 'Kundun' movies, the career of NBA player Enes Kanter and more recently removing chunks of the famous cult movie 'The Fight Club' and US Congressmen Jim McGovern being sanctioned for supporting Tibet. Tibet an illegally occupied country by China continues to face severe repression, it has been named the least country according to Freedom House Report, 2024.

We the Tibetans, ethnic minorities, Asian communities, and Marvel comic book fans around the world demand Marvel Universe and Disney not whitewash Tibetan characters off from the upcoming Dr. Doom movies and cast Tibetans for the role of monks of Doom and Mahatma Doom. Moreover, erasing the representation of Tibetans within the Marvel Universe just to appease China is not art and directly contradicts what Walt Disney stood for.

### **Why China must recall history before replacing Tibet with 'Xizang'**

29 August 2024, First Post, Claude Arpi

Chinese officials should read their own reports and history on how Tibet, which was clearly not theirs, was first 'liberated' and then brutally 'pacified' One can argue that the Chinese are history lovers; they have a recorded history for several millennia (which is not the case of India, where history was usually transmitted in the guru-shishya parampara form); however, since the advent of the Communist Dynasty in 1949, the Mandarins in Beijing seem to have lost this sense of history. There is a simple reason for this: the Communist ideology has to prevail over history.

The Middle Kingdom's relation with Tibet is an example of the Chinese amnesia about the recent past.

From immemorial times (to use Chinese terminology), the Tibetans have turned to India for their religion, culture, trade, and civilisation in general; Tibetan Buddhism is still today synonymous with the Nalanda tradition. Similarly, Tibetan script has evolved from the Brahmi script, which can't be included in the Chinese knowledge system.

One could multiply such examples; even politically, Tibet was an independent nation till it was invaded by Mao's Army in 1950-51.

The fact that Tibet, India, and China sat on an equal footing for six months at the conference table in Simla in 1913-14 is the best proof that the Nationalist regime could not deny Lhasa the right to negotiate a treaty (even if, at the end, it was not ratified by China for unrelated reasons).

#### Official Erroneous Interpretation

On the first day of her arrival in the Chinese embassy in Delhi, a Chinese official tweeted a threatening message, attacking the Indian media, which did not follow, according to her, the line of the Communist Party: "Recently, we noticed some comments on Xizang-related affairs in some Indian media. Xizang has been part of China since ancient times. Xizang-related affairs are purely China's internal affairs that brook no foreign interference," she wrote.

What is this 'Xizang'?

It is the name given by Beijing to Tibet. As any colonial power has done in the past, the names of places (and persons) are changed. For Beijing, the name 'Tibet' needed to be erased and replaced by a Chinese one. Advertisement

Then the official tried to make us believe that Communist China has great expertise about the return on earth of the spirit of advanced masters: "Reincarnation of Living Buddhas comes with a set range of rituals and conventions, which has been in existence for several hundred years. The Chinese government pursues policies of freedom of religious belief, including respecting and protecting the reincarnation of Living Buddhas, an institution of succession in Tibetan Buddhism. For the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, the Panchen Erdeni, and other grand Living Buddhas, a complete set of methods and procedures have been established over the centuries, and the religious rituals and historical conventions as well as the Chinese laws need to be complied with in this process."

'Living Buddhas' is again a Communist invention; reincarnated lamas are generally known as tulkus or Rinpoches (an honorific title meaning 'precious') or yantsi, a term literally meaning 'being born again' or 'repeat of existence'; a master takes birth again in

the cycle of existence, purportedly to continue his spiritual work started in his previous life.

The Chinese official concluded that "reincarnation of Living Buddhas including the Dalai Lama, must comply with Chinese laws and regulations and follow religious rituals and historical conventions. It is hoped that the media respect China's core interests and do not provide any platforms for anti-China separatist activities."

In Tibet, the system of reincarnation was not rigidly codified; it was left to each monastery, college, or school of Tibetan Buddhism to discover their own masters, then enthrone and groom them.

The Panchen Lama is also mentioned in a renamed form, 'Panchen Erdeni' by the official. The Panchen Lama is considered the second most important spiritual leader in the Yellow (Gelug) School of Tibetan Buddhism.

The case of the Panchen Lama is interesting as it shows how far Beijing is ready to go to control the 'reincarnation' system.

Following the death of the 10th Panchen Lama in 1989, in 1995, the 14th Dalai Lama recognised a young boy, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, as the true incarnation of the 10th incarnation. Three days later, Beijing abducted Gedhun and his family. A few months later, after setting up its own search committee, Beijing selected Gyaltsen Norbu as the 'real' Panchen Lama. For the purpose, they used a lottery system known as the Golden Urn, which was extremely rarely used in Tibet...because it is easier to manipulate.

Since 1995, the whereabouts of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his family are unknown. Is he still alive? Who knows?

The message of the official of the embassy, however, indicates that China is preparing to select its own 15th Dalai Lama, even against the will of the present one. For this, the Communist leadership will send Gyaltsen Norbu to Lhamo Latso, the holy Lake of Vision; Norbu will have a vision of a boy born in Tibet, and Xinhua will announce the good news.

How the Chinese Communist 15th Dalai Lama will be accepted by the Tibetans and the world is another story.

Just look at the 14th Dalai Lama; he was recently in New York, where 17,000 people gathered in a stadium to offer long-life prayers. Following a knee replacement surgery in June, it was his first major public appearance.

People gathered in the sports arena to fervently pray for the long life of the 89-year-old Buddhist leader, who told them, "I have done my best to benefit others and the Tibetan people."

Two days later, he had a stopover in Switzerland. In Zurich, he went on the stage at the Hallenstadion, where he sat on a throne before large Thangka

paintings. The stadium was booked to full its capacity of 15,000.

Thinley Chökyi, Representative of the Office of Tibet, Geneva, said in her opening remarks: "May you yet be able to return to Tibet, take your seat on the Lion Throne in the Potala Palace, and offer teachings from there once more." Watching the videos, the fervour of the Tibetans offering long-life prayers was truly moving.

Around the same time, Gyaltsen Norbu, the Chinese selected Panchen Lama, was travelling in Nagchu City (prefecture) 'in China's Xizang Autonomous Region' (note, 'China's Xizang' in case one forgets where Tibet is).

Before returning to Lhasa, Norbu visited several Tibetan Buddhist monasteries: "he participated in religious services and performed head-touching rituals for monks and believers."

Xinhua asserted that "he also attended a series of Buddhist and social activities in various localities, including a horse racing festival and a symposium of representatives of the religious circle."

The point is that everywhere the crowds were minimal, like it has been when he visited some areas of Central Tibet and border areas during the past years, never more than 50 people.

It so happens that during this time, I was working on the role of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Air Force in Tibet; what is striking is that ever since the invasion (called 'liberation' by China) of the Roof of the World, the Tibetans have never felt part of the Middle Kingdom, quite on the contrary.

When they started rebelling against the Communist rule, which wanted to impose 'reforms' on them (a few years later the Red Guards introduced similar reforms in the Mainland), they had to be 'pacified'; at that time, many Tibetans were trying to take refuge in the northern districts.

In August 1958, the Central Military Commission ordered the PLA to systematically attack the fleeing Tibetans from the air. By then, the pilots had a very simple way of identifying 'rebel bandits': after spotting hundreds of white sheep, "we neared the sheep herds; we'd discover yaks alongside them, as well as scattered tents, and then we could basically conclude that they were rebel bandits," said a Chinese record quoted by Jianglin Li, a Chinese author based in the United States. Jianglin quoted an Air Force 25th Division pilot who took part in the bombing: "One time, a buildup of thousands of rebel bandits [read the Tibetans] was surrounded by our troops on the top of Maqin [Amnye Machen] Mountain. At first the army launched a powerful attack on the mountain from four directions, but because the enemy occupied a commanding position and the mountain slopes were precipitous, the attack was not successful, and our troops suffered

substantial casualties. The Rebellion Pacification Command Post ordered an immediate deployment of bomber planes to bomb the rebel bandits on Maqin Mountain."

The Tibetan rebel 'bandits' tried to fire on the aircraft with guns, but they experienced "the iron fist of the People's Air Force. ... In one stroke, we annihilated this band of stubbornly resisting rebel bandits." The PLA Air Force unit is said to have dropped nine 100-kilo bombs on Amnye Machen Mountain, and all of them hit their target."

Jianglin and some other authors give a number of examples.

One can only suggest that all Chinese officials should read their own reports and history on how Tibet, which was clearly not theirs, was first 'liberated' and then brutally 'pacified'.

### Beijing's Sovereign Claims for Tibet

28 August 2024, AIER

Even a cursory knowledge about modern China reveals the contradictory conditions of increased economic freedoms with continued repression of civil and political liberty. For example, forming political parties is viewed as an unacceptable challenge to the inviolable "dictatorship of the proletariat" overseen by China's Communist Party.

However, Beijing uses heavy-handed methods to suppress non-political groups, including an "iron fist" approach to Falun Gong, a sect known for breathing exercises. It has also halted prayer meetings and closed Christian churches, while administering some "rough handling" of the Uighur minority.

As it is, China's communist leaders have proven themselves to be adept masters of diplomatic maneuvering. They deflect external criticisms against internal repression of dissent or religious freedom by asserting sovereign rights to conduct domestic affairs and that foreigners have no right to comment or pass judgments.

Meanwhile, Beijing raises warning flags or sends diplomatic missiles to countries even if there are only rumors of a visit or interactions with politicians from Taiwan. Despite its persistent and harsh interference with religious and cultural freedoms against Tibetan Buddhists, after Taiwan, complaints or comments about this will invite very prickly responses from the Communist leadership.

As the 14th Dalai Lama celebrates the ninth decade of his mortal life, he and other Tibetan Buddhists worry about the identification of his reincarnate and that of the Panchen Lama, the top figures in Tibetan Buddhism. For its part, China's State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) declared that all reincarnations of living Buddhas of Tibetan Buddhism



will be considered “illegal or invalid” unless they have government approval.

Dalai Lamas, acting as spiritual and administrative leaders of Tibet since 1391, are considered manifestations of Avalokiteshvara, the patron saint of Tibet. When Lhamo Dhondup was two years old, (born as Tenzin Gyatso in 1935), he was recognized as the reincarnation of the preceding Lama.

A Living Buddha, known as tülku, is a reincarnated Tibetan Buddhist lama that consciously decides to be reborn many times to continue his religious pursuits. Among the most powerful tülku lineages are the Dalai Lamas and Panchen Lamas.

Regardless of Beijing’s preferences, the Dalai Lama is the undisputed spiritual leader of millions of Tibetans, including those forced into exile or living under the shadow of the People’s Liberation Army. In considering whether to accede to China’s demands, it might be useful to consider the basis of its claims over Tibet.

Considering history and communist ideology, one of the persistent demands and great triumphs of the twentieth century was ending imperial dominance of unwilling populations. It has become fatuous and disingenuous to make territorial claims and insist upon adherence to treaties imposed by defunct imperialists. It is remarkable for an atheistic regime with ideological disdain of imperialism to pass judgment on religious affairs in a territory that it claims to rule based on an imperial past. As it is, Chinese law and political claims for “unity” are being allowed to trump Tibetan autonomy in pursuing a unique religious culture and heritage.

China’s insistence on sovereignty over Tibet or other areas of previous control is dubious on numerous grounds since this logic renders moot all its territorial disputes with India that was unified long before China in 321 BCE. While India’s centrally-controlled State included Afghanistan and controlled the entire Indian Subcontinent, it refrains from asserting claims on this line of historical reasoning.

China’s claims over Tibet are based upon imperial treaties or conquests, including the marriage of Tang Princess Wencheng to Tibetan king Songtsen Gambo in the seventh century. Chinese scholars ignore the fact that the Chinese emperor initially rebuffed Songtsen Gambo who then used military prowess to force his will in the matter.

While no indigenous Chinese force was able to subdue Tibet in ancient times, the great Mongol chieftains did conquer Tibet. A claim to Tibet based upon treaties with Genghis Khan and his great-grandson Kublai Khan, founder of the Yuan dynasty, involved agreements that included anyone of Han-Chinese origin.

In all events, political allegiance and religious blessings were exchanged for protection by the

Mongols. Later, it was an administrative region under the Yuan Empire (1279 -1368), and then the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) recognized the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama.

Eventually, Lhasa broke away from the Yuan emperor and regained independence from the Mongols. While the Han-Chinese Ming dynasty ruled China from 1368 to 1644, it had few ties to and no authority over Tibet, and then Tibet was largely free from foreign influences until the eighteenth century.

Interaction with the Manchus and the Qing dynasty began in the seventeenth century with its tight embrace of Tibetan Buddhism. But imperial troops sent to Tibet were for the protection of the Dalai Lama from foreign invasion or internal unrest rather than making it part of the Manchu empire or incorporating it into the territory of China.

Several pacts during the twentieth century relating to Tibet and European imperial powers were overseen by the Chinese imperial court. While Great Britain acknowledged Chinese suzerainty in Tibet with the 1904 Lhasa Treaty (Anglo-Tibetan Convention), it exacted financial indemnity and trade concessions in Tibet and Sikkim, but such a treaty has no moral authority.

In 1906, an Anglo-Chinese Convention signed in Beijing reversed the right of Britain and Tibet to conduct direct negotiations as conducted earlier in Lhasa. But again, it was a matter between two outside imperial powers that decided that the Chinese government was the administrative master of Tibet. Later, the imperial powers of Britain and Russia signed the Anglo-Russian Convention (1907) agreeing that future negotiations over Tibet would be conducted through the Chinese government. During the times of imperial domination, Tibetans were not consulted about the resulting conventions as most such treaties ignored local interests.

Apologists for Beijing’s dominance often suggest that the Chinese have helped preserve Tibetan ways. While it is claimed that China has more practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism, most are in a former Tibetan province (Amdo) that was incorporated into the Middle Kingdom and renamed Qinghai province in the 18th century.

It is also pointed out that the YongHe Gong Lamasery in Beijing has been the site of worship for nearly almost three centuries. Even so, Chinese forces have razed many of Tibet’s monasteries and temples, either as retaliation against resistance to Beijing’s rule or to dilute their influence.

In all events, Chinese physical presence or cultural influences in modern Tibet were negligible until after the Cultural Revolution. Indeed, it was only in the past 25 years or so that significant numbers of Han Chinese were resettled in Tibet.

Beijing has applied several new tactics to secure its control over Tibet. One of these was its "Go West" campaign that involved enlisting the support of businesses to develop the western region of China, including the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region and Qinghai province.

There was also an attempt to bring in the World Bank to extend a loan for \$160 million to resettle about 60,000 farmers in traditional Tibetan lands as part of the China Western Poverty Reduction Project. This resettlement of farmers would involve several ethnic groups, notably the majority Han Chinese. Groups supporting preservation of Tibetan culture have denounced the moves by China to be tantamount to "cultural genocide".

If according to legal custom, possession is nine-tenths of the law, China can use such logic to rationalize its continued occupation of Tibet. Whatever merit this dictum might reflect, judicial procedure and reasoning are normally applied to determine whether the basis for possession was reasonable or just. A dispassionate view of the matter indicates that China's assertions for suzerainty over Tibet teeter on a weak and unconvincing foundation.

Considerable evidence indicates many Tibetans feel they would be better off without Beijing's choking embrace, as there have been periodic uprisings during the five decades under Communist Party rule. Their expressions of discord were met with harsh retaliation by Chinese soldiers and police, leading to the death of thousands of Tibetans.

After the Dalai Lama fled Tibet for India in 1959 after a failed uprising against the Chinese invasion, authorities in Beijing have persistently demonized him. Even so, Tibetan Buddhists remain strongly loyal to him as their spiritual leader.

Of course, such meddling in religious affairs is not confined to Tibetan Buddhists. Uighur Muslims, Daoists, Falun Gong, "unregistered" Protestants and Vatican-loyal Catholics must bend their faith to fit the Procrustean demands of China's secular law.

In 1982, the CCP Central Committee issued, "Concerning Our Country's Basic Standpoint and Policy on Religious Questions During the Socialist Period" imposed "proper control" over religious affairs. As such, "patriotic" religious associations were to sacrifice the interests of their religious communities to promote the objectives of the Communist state.

Only a Beijing bureaucrat could see no humor in the requirements that reincarnation applications must be submitted in quadruplicate forms to secular authorities. Among the bodies tasked to "institutionalize management on reincarnation of living Buddhas" are the religious affairs department of the provincial-level government, the provincial-level government, SARA, and the State Council with

approval granted according to the fame and influence of the living Buddhas.

SARA officials insist that selection of reincarnates must preserve national unity and solidarity of all ethnic groups. And they insist that this precludes the influence in the selection process by any group or individual from outside the country.

As it is, administrating religious affairs based on interests of the Chinese state or "public interest" interferes with Tibet's internal religious affairs. While regulations guarantee "normal religious activities" of Tibetan Buddhism and protect the religious belief of Tibetan Buddhism, temples that recognized reincarnation of a living Buddha must be legally registered.

It is easy to see why Beijing considers it necessary to keep them under tight control. Reincarnated lamas have considerable influence over life of native Tibetans since they lead religious communities and oversee training of monks.

And so it was that the eleventh incarnation of the Panchen Lama, identified as a six-year-old Tibetan Buddhist Gedhun Choekyi Nyima in 1995, was spirited away to Beijing. In turn, he was replaced with Gyaltzen Norbu by religious affairs officials in Beijing.

As it is, most Tibetans never felt the need to be "liberated" by an alien, outside power. For their part, they wish to preserve the dignity of indigenous people that wish to be free to choose their own destiny within their own culture.

But Chinese policy ignores the reality that Tibetans care more about their own distinctive culture, history, and identity than they care about expressing loyalty to Beijing. Perhaps this is what is most galling to China's leaders.

Beijing's insistence upon its beneficence in dealing with the local people is no more convincing than Japan's rationale for "liberating" the rest of Asia from European domination during the 1930s and 1940s under the guise of a "Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere." Although the scale may be less, the degree of brutality used has not been much different than the Japanese during the Rape of Nanking.

In all events, the issue for Tibetans is more about preserving cultural and religious identity rather than geography or borders. While geographic territory is an important element of sovereignty for modern nation-states, it should not be used as an unconditional reason to overwhelm the aspiration of humans that engage in conflict with their governments.

For their part, political systems that aspire to peace should provide methods to resolve tensions relating to rights of self-determination so individual citizens or groups can undertake continuous expressions of their

will. As the motivating force behind anti-colonial movements, collective self-determination allows diverse groups and individuals within political borders to act to shape their cultural and value systems.

But Chinese law and Beijing's political claims for geographic "unity" are seen to override Tibetan's desire for self-determination and to maintain their unique religious culture and heritage. While control of Tibet's religious heritage has been usurped by an atheistic regime with ideological contempt for imperialism, it insists on controlling religious affairs based on territorial claims based on imperial treaties. One cannot ignore the irony and hypocrisy behind Beijing's insistence for recovering Hong Kong was the rejection of the legality of titles based on force and unequal treaties. Since neither military invasion nor continuing occupation change the legal basis of Tibetan sovereignty, it must be viewed to be an independent state under illegal occupation.

### **Dalai Lama — thorn in China's side**

28 August 2024, Taipei Times

The Chinese government's sensitivity toward the Dalai Lama is a complex issue rooted in historical, political and cultural factors. Understanding this sensitivity requires delving into the intricate relationship between China and Tibet, as well as the broader implications of the Dalai Lama's influence.

The Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, fled Tibet in 1959 following a failed uprising against Chinese rule. Since then, he has lived in exile in India, continuing to advocate for the rights and autonomy of the Tibetan people.

Despite his public stance of seeking genuine autonomy rather than full independence for Tibet, the Chinese government views him as a significant political threat. His influence and the support he garners for Tibetan autonomy challenge China's sovereignty over Tibet, a region it considers an integral part of its territory.

One of the most unique aspects of the Dalai Lama's role is the process of reincarnation. The Chinese government has expressed a strong desire to control the selection of the next Dalai Lama, ensuring that the successor aligns with their political interests.

This move is part of a broader strategy to maintain control over Tibetan Buddhism and prevent any separatist movements. By controlling the reincarnation process, China aims to diminish the Dalai Lama's influence and integrate Tibetan Buddhism more closely with the state.

The Dalai Lama's global recognition as a symbol of peace and human rights often leads to diplomatic tensions between China and other countries. His meetings with foreign leaders and his international

advocacy for Tibetan rights are perceived by China as attempts to undermine its sovereignty and territorial integrity. These interactions can strain China's diplomatic relations, leading to strong reactions from the Chinese government whenever the Dalai Lama is given a platform on the global stage.

The Dalai Lama holds immense cultural and religious significance for Tibetans and Buddhists worldwide. His teachings and leadership are deeply revered, making him a powerful figure beyond the political realm.

The Chinese government's efforts to control religious practices and institutions in Tibet are part of a broader campaign to assimilate Tibetan culture into the dominant Han Chinese culture. The Dalai Lama's influence represents a challenge to these efforts, as he embodies the preservation of Tibetan identity and religious freedom.

The Chinese government's sensitivity toward the Dalai Lama is driven by a combination of historical grievances, political calculations and cultural considerations. The Dalai Lama's enduring influence and his advocacy for Tibetan rights continue to pose a challenge to China's authority over Tibet.

As long as the Dalai Lama remains a prominent figure on the global stage, the Chinese government's sensitivity toward his activities is likely to persist.

Understanding these dynamics is crucial to comprehending the broader geopolitical landscape and the ongoing struggle for Tibetan autonomy and cultural preservation.

Khedroob Thondup is a former member of the Tibetan parliament in exile.

### **Don't Ever Invade China: Xi Jinping Prioritizes Border, Coastal, and Air Defense**

27 August 2024, War On The Rocks, Shanshan Mei and Dennis J. Blasko

Major or minor

You don't want yourself An incident

Don't ever invade China

Mark Knopfler, Don't Crash the Ambulance (2004)

Just as the U.S. National Defense Strategy lists homeland defense as the first priority of the Department of Defense, China's national defense policy states that the top mission of China's armed forces is to "safeguard national territorial sovereignty (领土主权) and maritime rights and interests (海洋权益)." Other "major security domains" have been added to China's National Defense Law — specifically space, the electromagnetic spectrum, and cyberspace in 2020 — but protecting the borders of the homeland has always been the prime directive.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping underscored mainland defense on July 30 with a speech to the Chinese Communist Party's politburo standing committee group study session on China's border, coastal, and air defense (边海空防). This meeting addressed the duties of a significant portion of the active-duty People's Liberation Army, the People's Armed Police, and the reserves and militia, which operate on the frontlines with neighboring militaries and civilian entities. Xi praised their efforts as central to China's national security and strategic interests since he took power in 2012. The study session became the banner front page article of the Aug. 1 edition of the Chinese-language Liberation Army Daily newspaper. Xi's speech gained symbolic heft by coming on the date celebrated for the 97th anniversary of the founding of People's Liberation Army.

What does Beijing's carefully crafted, high-profile political signaling tell us? First, the timing of this session suggests the Chinese leadership seeks to deter the United States, its allies, and partners (including Taiwan) by highlighting its commitment to defending China's sovereignty and territorial claims. Though no foreign military might actually be contemplating action against the Chinese mainland in the near term, Mark Knopfler's musical warning resonates with the paranoia of Chinese leaders. Fear of invasion goes back long before the founding of the People's Republic of China to the foreign occupation extending through the war with Japan in the 1930s. In the 1950s, China was threatened with nuclear weapons during the Korean War and the Taiwan Straits crisis. Beginning in 1964, a tremendously expensive program known as the Third Line (三线 or Third Front) moved strategic industries deep into the interior for protection from attack. A decade later, the military and militia practiced the "three attacks, three defenses" (三打三防, "attack tanks, aircraft, and airborne troops, defend against air, chemical, and nuclear attack"). In the 1990s, a "new" was added before the three attacks, three defenses and to keep up with technology, the targets were changed to "attacking enemy stealth, cruise missiles, and helicopters and defending against precision strikes, electronic warfare, and reconnaissance."

The threat to China's sovereignty was further highlighted by the mistaken bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999. Despite U.S. explanations and apologies, many Chinese leaders and people still consider the action a deliberate strike. We may never know for certain, but it is plausible that the Chinese Communist Party worries about another "October surprise" during the fall 2024 election season or early in a new U.S. administration. This is amplified by increasing friction in the South China Sea and across the Taiwan Strait.

As of summer 2024, Chinese government continues to assess that a "certain major power [the U.S.] has resorted to power politics and bullying, and willful containment and suppression of emerging forces." And Xi's "explainer" for the recently concluded Third Plenum continued to warn against the dangers of "black swans" and "gray rhinos" – both are Chinese codewords for unforeseen risks and uncertainties, foreign and domestic.

Second, prioritizing China's border, coastal, and air defense reflects Xi's continuing belief in "People's War," China's "magic weapon" (法宝), in its strategic deterrence posture and "integrated national strategic systems and capabilities" (一体化国家战略体系和能力). He is determined to mobilize manpower, resources, and technical know-how embedded in Chinese society and civilian sectors to advance the Chinese Communist Party's security interests first at home and gradually beyond China's borders.

Third, Xi's statement raises the possibility of more "major" Chinese activities along the country's land borders (e.g., India, Burma) and coastal regions (e.g., Taiwan Strait, South and East China seas), potentially employing new and innovative measures. The fact that the Central Military Commission Joint Staff Department provided the briefer for the study session may portend a significant change in the responsibilities of the Chinese military chain of command regarding border operations. Expect the unexpected.

Who's Leading the State Border and Coastal Defense Commission? Unclear.

China's border, coastal, and air defense system is roughly equivalent to the U.S. homeland defense functions. It coordinates the enforcement of the country's claimed territorial boundaries and integrates the party, government, military, law enforcement, and civilian assets (党政军警民) under a unified central authority. Its leaders will play a central role in any potential crisis along China's land or sea borders. Chinese homeland defense is led by the Party Central Committee and Central Military Commission, with responsibilities shared among the armed forces, civilian law enforcement, and local governments. But who exactly is in charge seems to be in flux.

The 2006 defense white paper reported that the State Border and Coastal Defense Commission (国家边海防委员会), created in 1994, was composed of "the relevant departments of the State Council and the [People's Liberation Army]." Many of its responsibilities include infrastructure development projects to improve the transportation and communications in border regions and to upgrade the standard of living for military personnel. However, the 2020 National Defense Law removed

the State Council from that commission, implying changes to come.

Today, it is unclear who leads the State Border and Coastal Defense Commission. Previously, the minister of national defense held the position. The deputy director of the Party Central Foreign Affairs Leading Small Group (changed into a commission in 2018) has served as one of the deputy directors of the commission. Current Defense Minister Admiral Dong Jun, however, has not been associated with the commission, nor has he become a member of the Central Military Commission or a state councilor. We don't know who oversees the commission's foreign affairs portfolio, either.

The director of the Central Military Commission National Defense Mobilization Department (军委国防动员部) has served as deputy director of the State Border and Coastal Defense Commission since the military reform started in 2016. Within that department is a Border Defense Bureau (边防局), which coordinates with smaller border and coastal defense bureaus/divisions in the five theater armies' joint staff departments (战区陆军参谋部边海防处) and in the army staff department (陆军参谋部边海防局). So far, we have found no similar staff organizations in the navy or air force, although those services contribute units to conduct missions along China's borders. Chinese Armed Forces Units Responsible for Border, Coastal, and Air Defense

The People's Liberation Army's Army, Navy, and Air Force all provide units and personnel to conduct daily border, coastal, and air defense operations (but not Rocket Force units except in their general nuclear and conventional deterrence role). These units are supported by elements of the People's Armed Police, particularly the China Coast Guard, and reserve and militia units. The newly formed Military Aerospace Force, Cyberspace Force, and Information Support Force provide capabilities with global reach to China's strategic deterrence posture in support of the four services and five theaters.

The army contributes the largest force dedicated to this mission. Though the army may participate in a few exercises outside of China with foreign militaries each year and provides about 2,000 personnel annually to United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, the vast majority of its troops have never left the country.

Army units, in general, are categorized into three groups. "Maneuver operation (机动作战部队)" units are organized mostly into 13 group armies and a handful of divisions that may move from one part of the country to another as required. "Garrison forces (警卫警备部队)" comprise the system of provincial military districts, military subdistricts, and people's armed forces departments that provide mobilization

support, perform conscription functions, and command militia units.

The army's "border and coastal defense (边海防部队)" units were mostly reorganized after 2015 into brigades (except for the western theater, where the former structure of regiments was retained). The International Institute for Strategic Studies Military Balance counts about 50 border and coastal defense brigades and regiments, which we estimate could number well over 100,000 personnel. The forces are widely dispersed in small units across the country. They primarily are responsible for patrolling and monitoring the borders for military activity. These units have been equipped with some new weapons and equipment, but remain in a defensive posture. In hot spots, the border defense units are reinforced by "maneuver operation" combat units. For instance,

the line of actual control with India has been reinforced as part of the 506 Special Mission for nearly a decade. This mission has been amplified in the years since the 2020 skirmishes in the Galwan Valley. Along the east coast, in August 2022, new army modular long-range multiple rocket launcher systems were employed in the large joint exercise in response to U.S. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan.

The navy is in a period of transition, moving from "defense on the near seas (近海防御) to protection missions on the far seas (远海防卫)." The Military Balance counts more than 100 patrol craft and corvettes that are optimized for operations along China's coast, along with many of its conventionally powered submarines. Meanwhile, roughly the same number of carriers, cruisers, destroyers, frigates, and nuclear subs can perform operations within the first island chain as well as in distant waters. The navy's land-based coastal defense force (岸防部队) maintains multiple anti-ship cruise missile regiments and air defense, electronic countermeasures, and radar brigades, plus a significant land-based aviation force.

The air force, meantime, is "accelerating the transition of its tasks from territorial air defense (国土防空) to both offensive and defensive operations (攻防兼备)." It has "one of the largest forces of advanced long-range [surface-to-air] missile systems in the world" augmented by a large fleet of fighter aircraft to provide integrated air defense of the mainland and adjacent seas.

The "air defense" Xi referred to in his speech actually applies to civil or people's air defense (人民防空, or 人防) and not active-duty air defenses (防空). China Civil Air Defense offices are found in local civilian governments to manage construction of



facilities, such as bomb shelters and command posts, and cooperate with other government agencies in emergency management.

The China Coast Guard has “over 150 regional and oceangoing patrol vessels,” including over 20 former navy corvettes modified for coast guard operations. In May 2024, several coast guard vessels participated in the Joint Sword-2024A exercise after Taiwan’s presidential election. In addition, hundreds of maritime militia vessels operate daily in the South China Sea alone and will complicate foreign operations in time of crisis or war.

Finally, People’s Liberation Army reserve units, currently being restructured, also contribute to border and coastal defense operations, particularly in air defense and support tasks. Militia units also have been assigned air defense, rescue and recovery, and other technical and logistics tasks including operating multiple types of unmanned vehicles.

#### Conclusion

Prioritizing border, coastal, and air defense aligns with the party’s resolution to “strengthen traditional combat forces” in Xi’s speech to the recent party Third Plenum (see section XIV). In Chinese military parlance, “traditional combat forces” refer to conscript-heavy units that make up the border and coastal defense forces and other ground combat units. Xi’s emphasis on homeland defense will almost certainly help elevate the stature of such (mainly) army elements. To give them higher profile in society, border troops have a webpage dedicated to their stories for internal consumption on the Chinese-language China military website.

Inside China, local officials and bureaucrats may read something else into Xi’s speech: that central funding is available for dual-use infrastructure construction in border regions for projects that contribute to defense readiness. This may encourage local leaders to volunteer to participate in this development as part of nationwide “military-civilian integration/fusion” (军民融合) activities. A likely example of this thinking is demonstrated in the construction of over 50 new villages and expansion of 100 others in remote regions along China’s periphery since 2016.

Xi’s speech noted that it is “important to foster neighborly relations and pragmatic cooperation with neighboring countries to create a favorable surrounding environment.” Military relations with several adjacent southeast Asian countries seem relatively stable. However, given the friction caused by China’s actions over disputed ocean territories, any call to foster neighborly relations with its offshore neighbors appears mostly empty. But maybe Xi’s emphasis of “pragmatic cooperation” signals

Beijing’s willingness to adopt a more flexible approach in the coming years.

Finally, Xi stressed the need to “optimize the leadership management system.” Xi may be considering placing border operations under the Central Military Commission’s Joint Staff Department. Such a move would take it away from the National Defense Mobilization Department Border Defense Bureau and might ripple down to the theater commands’ Joint Staff Departments. Perhaps the navy and air force may create border operations staff offices. Such changes could lead to greater integration of operations along China’s periphery. In the long run, more unified control of front-line units could also reduce miscommunications and accidental encounters with foreign military and civilian entities operating in proximity to Chinese borders.

### The dark side of China’s Tibet strategy

27 August 2024, Daily Mirror

China’s Tibet policy has been one of the most controversial aspects of the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) seventy-five-year rule. While the CCP has claimed to develop Tibet as a global center, the reality is much grimmer than Beijing projects.

Tibet, rich in cultural heritage and historical significance, remains one of the most underdeveloped regions in China. Despite its vast natural resources and strategic importance, Tibet lags behind in nearly all development metrics, including literacy rates, healthcare access, and infrastructure. This raises the question: Why does the CCP, which has promoted rapid development elsewhere in China, allow such disparities in Tibet?

The answer is straightforward: Tibet is punished for its adherence to a faith the CCP views as revolutionary and anti-CCP. The Party aims not only to eradicate Tibetan Buddhism but also to transform the region into a Han-majority area, ultimately erasing Tibetan culture.

China’s policies in Tibet have focused on limiting foreign contact and stifling economic development. The state has also sought to alter the local demography, disrupting the ethnic and cultural balance to assert its dominance. China’s Tibetan policy is notoriously brutal, as evidenced by its violation of the Seventeen Point Agreement, the dismantling of Tibetan traditions, and the forced exile of the Dalai Lama.

Under-development as a Strategy of stifling the culture of Tibet

The literacy rate in Tibet is among the lowest in China, contrasting sharply with the rapid educational advancements in other regions. Tibetan schools are

often underfunded, and the curriculum prioritizes Mandarin over the Tibetan language, reinforcing cultural erosion. This suppression of education is not an oversight but a calculated strategy by the CCP to control the Tibetan population by keeping them undereducated and less informed about their rights and the outside world.

Furthermore, the CCP's policies in Tibet suppress not only economic development but also the social and cultural identity of the Tibetan people. By limiting development, the CCP ensures that Tibet remains economically dependent on Beijing, curbing any potential for resistance. A well-developed, educated population with strong cultural ties threatens the CCP's narrative of a unified China under its rule. Thus, by maintaining low development parameters, the CCP can more easily impose its will on the Tibetan people, minimizing dissent and preserving its control over the region.

This systematic suppression of development is a deliberate attempt to weaken Tibet's ability to assert its identity and autonomy. The world must recognize this as part of the broader strategy of the CCP, which uses underdevelopment as a tool of oppression. It is crucial to bring international attention to this issue and advocate for the Tibetan people's rights to education, economic opportunities, and the preservation of their unique cultural heritage.

For decades, the Tibetan population has been subjected to severe and violent Chinese policies designed to instill fear and suppress resistance. Discriminatory practices prevent the use of local culture and language, with communities banned from mentioning the Dalai Lama's name or writings. The authorities' fear of the Dalai Lama's influence is so intense that they worry his teachings could spark a mass revolt among Tibetans. To prevent this, the state suppresses both communities and news outlets.

Over the past thirty years, hundreds of young Tibetans have self-immolated to draw attention to the oppressive nature of the Chinese regime. This has led the CCP to extend its policies beyond overt repression; the party now directs local governments to report all political activities, monitor personal communications, and profile the DNA of individuals deemed suspicious, all without accountability. These strategies raise serious questions about human rights violations undertaken by the CCP in Tibet.

The failing logic of the CCP's official response to Tibet The justification for such cruel measures often comes in the form of claims about stability, economic development, and overall progress in a volatile region. The Party's repeated human rights violations have not only attracted global scrutiny but have also hindered Chinese plans in Tibet.

The CCP's sole objective in Tibet is to reshape Tibetan history. The Party describes these tactics as

part of its "strategy to achieve long-term social stability." While the official narrative is cloaked in the motive of achieving lasting peace, it is clear that Tibet is part of a larger CCP plan to dominate disputed regions.

The well-being of millions of Tibetans rests on disrupting Chinese strategies. The world should be concerned about Chinese intentions in disputed regions, as the Party will not stop at Tibet if it successfully achieves its strategic objectives there.

### Modi 3.0 Faces the Dragon

27 August 2024, ORF

Is greater economic engagement with China feasible at a time when New Delhi is moving closer to Beijing's red lines on Taiwan, Tibet and South China Sea?



Source Image: Getty

In the jumble of statistics contained in the government's Economic Survey 2023-24, there was a tantalising proposition of greater economic engagement with China. The document suggested that inviting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from Chinese companies could help India improve its participation in international supply chains through exports. It held out two propositions: one in which we continue trading with China that results in an ever-widening trade deficit. The other is getting the optimal ratio between commerce with Beijing and Chinese investment, with the hope that India could address the trade deficit, leveraging the geopolitical trend of the West shifting away from its erstwhile partner. The Survey cited the case study of East Asian economies like South Korea and Vietnam that have received a double bonanza of the US redirecting manufacturing from China, and these nations also getting large FDI flows from Beijing. However, the government was quick to reject speculation that there was an intent to loosen Chinese capital inflows, with Union Commerce and Industries Minister Piyush Goyal stating that there was no review of India's stance on Chinese investments into the country. It has been four years that Indian and Chinese armies have been locked in a tense standoff, which has had a bearing on their

larger relationship. The Indian government assesses that China's bid to repeatedly change the status quo along the border through the use of force has "violated the basis" of relations between the two nations. Foreign Minister S Jaishankar termed the India-China relationship as "abnormal". Thus, the government has pointed to the centrality of resolving the border impasse over economic and cultural engagement.

In the run-up to the 2024 Indian General Election, there seemed to be a sliver of a thaw. Amidst the electioneering, China named Xu Feihong as its new ambassador in Delhi after a long hiatus, which gave rise to speculation that there could be a resolution to the standoff. In an interview to Newsweek, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated that there was a need to resolve the pro-longed situation along the borders.

China's foreign ministry's reaction to the prime minister's statement was that India would work with China to keep building trust. However, words have not been matched by deeds, and China has used military coercion to send a signal to India ahead of the election. Reports have surfaced that China has deployed its state-of-the-art Chengdu J-20 stealth aircraft in Tibet, and reportedly conducted military exercises near eastern Ladakh in March 2024, less than a month before the first phase of voting. When the election results showed that Modi would form a government in a coalition, strategists began to debate the contours of Modi 3.0's foreign policy, especially with respect to China. The concern was that domestic issues would consume Modi 3.0's bandwidth, leaving less space for the robust foreign policy dealings witnessed in his previous two terms. But proving naysayers wrong, S Jaishankar is back in the saddle at the foreign office, and India's resolve to combat China does not seem to have flagged. India is striding close to China's red lines on Taiwan, Tibet, and the South China Sea.

In fact, early on, Modi responded to Taiwan President Lai Ching Te's congratulatory message upon his election win and even pledged to deepen economic and technology cooperation. China, which sees Taiwan as a break-away province, saw red and urged India to adhere to its commitment towards One China. This development comes at a time when China is seeking to isolate Taiwan; soon after Lai won the election, Nauru switched diplomatic recognition to the People's Republic, cutting off ties with Taiwan. But undaunted, India-Taiwan dynamics are seeing an uptick. Under an agreement for labour mobility, the first set of Indian labourers will join the workforce in Taiwan by next year. The Tata Group and Taiwan's Power-chip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corporation's plan to set up a plant will commence production of chips by 2026. India

bestowing the third-highest civilian award this year to Taiwan tech major Foxconn's Young Liu is testimony to the growing Indian-Taiwan technology cooperation.



Chinese President Xi Jinping visits a Tibetan Buddhist temple in Xining, Qinghai province, June 20, 2024

India is backing efforts by the US to put the world's focus back on Tibet by greenlighting the trip of a bipartisan US Congressional delegation to meet the Dalai Lama. The venue of the interaction was Dharamshala, which is considered to be the seat of the Tibetan government-in-exile. Dispelling doubts that this was merely an outreach by US lawmakers, the Indian foreign ministry reaffirmed support for the Tibetan religious leader, stating that he was free to conduct his spiritual activities. The Biden administration's stance on Tibet follows the US passing new legislation that directed Beijing to re-engage with the Dalai Lama and elected Tibet-an nominees to resolve the standoff over Tibet's future. The new law mandates that the US government coordinate multilateral efforts to effect a settlement on Tibet. The legislation also stipulates that the US should allocate funds for countering disinformation spread by the Communist Party of China regarding Tibetan culture, and religious institutions like the Dalai Lama.

The Indian position on Tibet has also undergone a change in the last decade. During Modi's first inauguration in 2014, the political head of the Tibetan government-in-exile was in-vided along with heads of state from South Asian nations. The Dalai Lama was hosted at the Rashtrapati Bhavan by then-President Pranab Mukherjee in 2016. India has also deployed the Special Frontier Force, a unit comprising predominantly of Tibetans, in military operations against the People's Liberation Army in 2020. For some time, there was a perception that China was waging a psychological war to get the upper hand as evidenced by its renaming places in Arunachal Pradesh, and releasing a map depicting Indian territory within its territorial limits. Now, as a response to China's map-fare strategy, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has advocated that Modi 3.0, too, rename places in Tibet. Modi 3.0 has

also sought to make common cause with nations that have been at the receiving end of Chinese belligerence. India has backed the Philippines following the recent confrontation between Chinese and Filipino maritime security personnel in the South China Sea. Here, words are being fortified by deeds. India's delivery of the BrahMos missiles to the Philippines sends a signal to China that its bid to change the status quo—along the Line of Actual Control or the South China Sea—will not go unchallenged.



Delhi's strategic community has cautioned that India is ceding ground to the US on Tibet. Some commentators have advocated dialogue at the executive level with China, considering its large economy and superior military capabilities. On the contrary, India-US cooperation on Tibet can serve to keep Beijing on tenterhooks as it has been unable to completely erase the Dalai Lama's standing in the region. It stokes the Communist Party of China's anxieties of a forgotten conflict in the late 1950s waged on the roof of the world when US intelligence trained Tibetans to operate behind enemy lines. This is also being reinforced by India deploying the Special Frontier Force against the People's Liberation Army during the standoff that started in 2020. As for restarting political dialogue, interactions at the executive level froze post-Galwan in 2020. Any opening to China will be viewed by it as a sign of weakness post the electoral verdict of 2024. Between 2014 and 2019, Modi has had 18 interactions with Chinese President Xi Jinping. In 2019, Modi hosted Xi in Tamil Nadu and desired to augment economic cooperation, but even before the ink dried, India's peace moves were met with China trying to change the status quo unilaterally in Galwan, which resulted in the deaths of Indian soldiers. The question is whether Modi 3.0's treading closer to what Beijing defines as its core interests—Tibet, Taiwan, and the South China Sea—is bearing fruit. While it is too early to tell, there may be some visible strains. First, China's anxiety regarding Tibet springs from its inability to completely obliterate the Dalai Lama's influence on the region. There have been efforts by

China to exert greater control on organised religion across China, particularly in Tibet. The Communist Party of China has sought to create a "politically reliable" religious class who bears affection for their nation and religion. Curiously around the Congressional delegation's tour of Dharamshala, Xi Jinping visited a Tibetan Buddhist shrine in Xining, Qinghai's provincial capital, where he reiterated his point about "creating a sense of community for the Chinese nation", and "promotion of national unity". Second, the Indian and Chinese governments are discussing ways to resolve the border standoff.

Jaishankar has met his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi twice in July—most recently, at the sidelines of the East Asia Summit, and previously, at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit—in which the border issue was discussed. On July 31, the 30th sitting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) on India-China Border Affairs took place with a delegation from Beijing visiting Delhi. The remit of top diplomats from both sides was to arrive at a solution to the pending friction points along the border and restore peace and tranquility. Lastly, when dealing with the Chinese, we must factor in their mindset. When asked about the impact of the French Revolution, then Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai retorted that it was too early to tell. In this way, India must avoid the affliction of short-term gains, and think long term in its ambition to take on the China challenge.

### China's urban-rural gap is a threat to growth. Is the divide too wide to fix?

27 August 2024, SCMP, Yuanyue Dang

Researchers report waning optimism about social mobility among rural Chinese as education disparities create obstacles for economy

Zheng Yajun, a mainland-born PhD graduate of the University of Hong Kong, knows from personal experience how difficult it is to break through China's urban-rural divide.

Raised and educated in a remote small town in the northwestern province of Gansu, Zheng sat for the national college entrance examination twice before she was admitted to Shanghai's prestigious Fudan University in 2009.

Zheng did not find life easy at Fudan, where she struggled to understand her instructors and fellow classmates from big cities. Many of her classmates from less developed regions had a similar experience, she said.

"In my first year of university, I couldn't understand why – although I had worked hard since childhood and never wasted a day – I still looked so bad



compared to other students [from big cities]," she said in a widely circulated interview last year. She managed to survive the fierce competition. After her graduation from Fudan, she expanded her master's thesis on the gap between urban and rural students at top universities in China, and her findings were published early last year. Zheng's book, which discusses class differences from a sociological perspective, is one of the most prominent of several works on similar topics published in recent years in China, sparking widespread media coverage and public debate.

These discussions all point to the same question: are class divisions and the rural-urban divide irreparable in today's China?

The Communist Party leadership is aware that if the urban-rural divide continues to widen, China's sustainable growth could be jeopardised.

At a key plenary session in 2013, party leaders pointed out that "the dual structure of urban and rural areas is the main obstacle to the integration of urban and rural development".

Six years later, at another plenum, party leadership proposed to "continue to promote the integrated development of compulsory education in urban and rural areas".

The problem was again discussed among top leaders of the Communist Party last month, when they called for actions to narrow the gap during the third plenary session of the decision-making Central Committee.

Observers said while Beijing was aware of its gravity, resolving the problem was no easy task, especially in education.

In China, all children are required to complete nine years of compulsory education, including primary and junior high school.

But scholars have pointed out that the deficiencies in China's rural education start when students are very young, and if the rural-urban divide persists, the world's second-biggest economy, which is already slumping, will face a serious human capital crisis.

Scott Rozelle, faculty co-director of the Stanford Centre on China's Economy and Institutions, said that low- and middle-income labour in rural areas "could be a major long-term obstacle to China's sustainable economic growth".

This is because a lack of skills has made it difficult for rural workers to compete in the urban labour market. "Children attending rural schools have difficulty acquiring the academic skills needed for highly skilled jobs," Rozelle said.

According to research by Rozelle, 40 to 50 per cent of rural children have delays in cognitive development, which can lead to difficulties in learning maths, science and languages.

"The average level of education of the entire workforce in China (aged 18 to 65) is slightly lower by international standards, almost entirely due to the lower level of education of the rural population. A significant proportion of rural workers do not have a high school diploma," Rozelle said.

He added that if Chinese workers find it difficult to move from low-skilled to high-skilled jobs, "it could hinder China's transition to a high-income, high-skilled economy".

Beijing announced in 2021 that it had achieved success in eliminating extreme poverty, and President Xi Jinping hailed the lifting of 850 million people out of

poverty as an "unprecedented achievement" unmatched by any country in modern history.

But Rozelle said China's "policy focus needs to shift to addressing the challenges faced by hundreds of millions of low-income rural Chinese".

According to the 2021 national census, the population living in rural areas stood at 509.79 million, accounting for 36.11 per cent of China's total population.

Following the conclusion of the third plenum last month, party leaders announced an action plan for the next five years to support rural development in agriculture, housing and for migrant workers.

The plenum's decisions hinted that some policies seen as contributing to the rural-urban divide might ease, including the much-criticised household registration system, or hukou, which restricts the movement of people from rural to urban areas where a residency often means better social welfare, medical care and education for children.

Zheng Linyi, a researcher with the China Academy for Rural Development at Zhejiang University, said some measures included in the action plan would create conditions for residents to move more freely between rural and urban areas and promote the "integrated development" of cities and the countryside.

He said the income gap between urban and rural areas in China had narrowed in the past decade, but it would be more difficult to achieve the reform goal "if there are still huge gaps in public services and infrastructure because of the imbalance of urban and rural development".

Zheng said the education gap was a key manifestation of the urban-rural divide.

He added that if China's population declines in the coming decades, as most demographers have predicted, mergers of some rural schools would become inevitable, and this means more rural students would have to travel longer distances for school, creating "an increased burden on farmers".



Yuan Changgeng, an anthropologist at Yunnan University, warned that public awareness was still lacking in the discussion of the rural-urban divide.

Public discussions in recent years about the disadvantages of rural students have been dominated by “middle-class and intellectual circles”, Yuan said. “This kind of social discussion is still small-scale,” Yuan said, adding that people from small towns or rural areas do not have enough of a voice.

Settling in the city, becoming a member of the middle class and enjoying a better life are long-held aspirations of many people from less-developed regions, especially rural areas. These aspirations have been strongly supported by nearly four decades of rapid economic growth in China.

For many decades, and especially after the reform and opening process kicked off by Deng Xiaoping, Chinese society has encouraged individual endeavours, and

many people believe that hard work can lead to social mobility. The highly competitive university entrance exam system, known as the gaokao, is at the heart of this belief.

But HKU’s Zheng said things have changed. For many students from less developed regions, especially rural areas, it has become increasingly difficult to enter the middle class despite individual efforts.

She interviewed 62 students from Beijing’s Tsinghua University and Shanghai’s Fudan University and found that the differences in their life choices at university and after graduation were greatly affected by their background.

Students from big cities have a better understanding of how to survive at elite universities and are able to plan their careers in advance, and it is easier for them to find an “elite” job after graduation. Students from rural areas, however, are at a disadvantage in this game.

The elite university students interviewed by Zheng are already at the top of the rural student pyramid, while the situation seems even more acute for the vast number of students at the bottom, who are largely invisible.

According to her research, rural graduates from top universities still achieved social mobility compared to their parents, but they fell behind their urban counterparts after graduation.

Yuan, who has long studied social issues in China, said the belief that success in the gaokao could lead to social mobility might have been shaken.

Yuan grew up in a county in the eastern province of Shandong. He said that when he was in high school more than 20 years ago, most of his classmates were hard-working rural students and “their efforts were

rewarded compared to the living conditions of their parents’ generation”.

But Yuan said that now some of his students are convinced they will have limited achievements, reflecting social attitudes that are different from those of their parents who came of age in the 1980s, after the gaokao had been restored following the end of the Cultural Revolution and at a time when people were generally optimistic about the future.

According to Yuan, another problem was that many people “refused to question the fairness of the gaokao”.

“As long as you have a basic understanding of China’s education system, you know that it is not the final examination that determines the results, but the years of preparations,” he said, adding that the huge rural-urban divide had made these preparations “not a fair game”.

Big Data China, a collaboration between the Washington-based think tank Centre for Strategic and International Studies and Stanford University, published an analysis last month showing how Chinese people’s beliefs about personal effort and inequality had changed based on surveys conducted over the past 20 years.

Drawing on work by Rozelle and Martin Whyte, a professor emeritus of sociology at Harvard, the report found that between 2004 and 2014, respondents believed that “lack of ability”, “low education” and “lack of effort” were the three most important factors explaining poverty in China.

But by 2023, “unequal opportunity” had become the top reason respondents cited for why people were poor, while “an unfair economic system” ranked third, with only “low education” remaining in the top three. Similarly, when asked why people became rich in China, the top three factors chosen in 2009 were “ability and talent”, “hard work” and “good education”. But as of last year, the top three factors were “having good connections”, “grew up in a rich family” and “better opportunities”.

In addition, the share of people who agreed with the statement “in our country, effort is always rewarded” fell from 62 to 28 per cent over the past two decades. The researchers said while these changes were “shaped by the excessively strict policies implemented to control the spread of the Covid-19 virus over the course of 2022”, they actually echoed sentiments that had already been trending in Chinese society in previous years.

The idea of “lying flat” or *tangping* – doing the bare minimum to get through hard times, and doing nothing except what is absolutely necessary to survive – has become popular among young people. This means that some people have become reluctant to study hard, join the brutal competition for jobs, buy a house or start a family.

In 2021, the official censors removed much of the online discussion around lying flat after realising that the idea, if it became widespread, could affect economic development.

The Big Data China authors said the trends “point to an overall challenge for the Chinese government in the coming years, as it works to rebuild confidence in the economy’s ability to provide opportunities for all and develop a revised social contract acceptable to the populace”.

They added that if the government introduced “the right kind of policies” to promote economic growth, “it could generate a reduction in perceptions of inequity and unfairness and greater popular optimism about the future”.

### **India-Tibet Ties Higher Than Himalayas: Need Stronger Bond Amid Chinese Sinicization**

27 August 2024, Bharat Shakti

It has often been the approach of more powerful nations to overwhelm the cultural past and historical linkages of weaker nations. The Chinese efforts to Sinicize Tibet and curtail the religious freedom of its people is an example of this. However, these efforts are bound to fail. Renaming certain places to establish Tibet’s Chinese linkages is bound to fail, as the civilizational relationship between India and Tibet disproves any false Chinese connections that Beijing would like to promote. The resilience of Tibetan culture is a testament to this. Tibet which China now calls “Xizang”, also known as the “Water Tower” of Asia and the “Roof Top of the World,” has once again become the centre of geopolitical manoeuvring between two leading powers of the world. On July 12, 2024, US President Joe Biden signed the “Resolve Tibet Act,” which means that China must peacefully resolve the Tibet-China Issue in accordance with international laws and not through subjugation. China’s claim that “Tibet has always been a part of China” has no basis whatsoever. Both spoken and written Tibetan languages have no relation with the Chinese language and are derived from the Indo-Aryan tradition. The traditional boundary between Tibet and China was demarcated by the “Peace Treaty of 1821,” which stated that the two countries should never interfere in each other’s affairs. However, everything changed when the Communist Party took over the reins of China in 1949 and annexed the “Sovereign Land of Tibet” in 1951.

Tibet’s origin is shrouded in mystery, but archaeological and historical evidence suggests it was inhabited as early as the Neolithic period, around 8000 BCE. The first recorded kingdom of Tibet was the Yarlung Dynasty, which ruled from the 5th to the 9th century CE. From the pre-modern

period until the annexation of Tibet by Communist China in 1951, Tibet had a unique history and distinct culture and tradition. India significantly influenced Tibetan traditions and culture due to the deep bond Tibet shared with India as the birthplace of Buddhism. Over the past several hundred years, Tibetan monks travelled to India to study Buddhism, and Indian scholars and teachers travelled to Tibet to spread their teachings.

This exchange of knowledge and ideas helped shape Tibetan culture and played a key role in the growth of Tibetan Buddhism.

During a series of exchanges, the Northern Indian States signed several treaties with the Tibetan Rulers to facilitate trade and the movement of scholars across the Himalayan ranges. The first treaty of friendship, known as the “Tibet – Bushahr Treaty”, was signed in 1674 between Raja Kehri Singh of Bushahr (Himachal Pradesh) and the Gaden Phodrang government of Tibet. This treaty ensured no taxes were imposed on Tibetan and Bushahri merchants and established trade in Tibetan towns such as Purang, Ruthog, Dawa, Tsaparang, and Gartok. Subsequently, another treaty was signed in 1684 called the “Treaty of Tingmosgang” between Ladakh and the Tibetan government under the regency of Desi Sangye Gyatso.

Another treaty of friendship that Tibet made with Ladakh was the “Treaty of Chushul” after the Dogra-Tibetan War of 1841-42. Raja Gulab Singh of the Sikh Empire sent his general Zorawar Singh to conquer Tibet’s western Ngari region in order to control the trade routes into Ladakh. Zorawar Singh reached Minsar but was later killed in action. His tomb remains at Minsar.

Subsequently, an agreement known as the “Agreement of 1852 between Ladakh and Tibet” was signed by the Garpons (provisional governors) of the Gaden Phodrang Government of Tibet, with Thanadar Sahib Bastiram representing the Maharaja of Kashmir. It’s important to note that all agreements were signed by representatives of India and Tibet, with China not being involved. The borders that India and Tibet shared remained peaceful for centuries until China occupied Tibet.

India and Tibet have deep cultural, religious, and historical connections. For Hindus, Tibet is a sacred land where they can cultivate higher spiritual consciousness. The regions of Burang and Minsar are considered the territory of Kuber (God of wealth) and the treasurer of Devtas (Gods).

Many important Vedic cultural sites, such as Mansarovar Lake and Kailash Parvat (Mount Kailash), as well as many other religious sites, are located there. Mount Kailash is one of the most sacred mountains and has become an important

pilgrim site for four faiths: Buddhists, Jains, Hindus, and the Tibetan religion of Bon.



Burang County is in Tibet and shares a border with Uttarakhand state in India. This border is significant as it serves as a key entry point for Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain pilgrims travelling to the sacred sites of Lake Manasarovar and Mount Kailash.

These religious sites hold great importance for their respective followers. The region surrounding Burang originates from major rivers such as the Indus, Ganges, Yarlung Tsangpo/Brahmaputra, and Karnali/Ghaghra. In historical context, General Zorawar Singh captured Burang and Zanda County to establish a land border with the Kingdom of Nepal during the Dogra-Tibetan War.

On the journey from Burang to Mount Kailash, there is a holy Jain shrine named Ashtapad ("eight steps"). It is located in Darchen village, just opposite Mount Kailash, and serves as the starting point for any pilgrimage in the region. Ashtapad holds great religious significance for Hindus as it is believed to be the abode of Lord Shiva.

Jains also hold this mountain in reverence as it is considered to be the place where Rishabhadev, the Tirthankara of Jainism, attained nirvana.

The final destination of this pilgrimage is the sacred Kailash Parvat, also referenced in the Tibetan-English dictionary. The mountain is known as Gang Rinpoche in Tibetan, meaning 'precious one', and in Chinese, it is called Gang ren bo qi feng (冈仁波齐峰).

Mount Kailash is near Manasarovar and Rakshastal lakes and is revered in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Bon religions. People from India, Nepal, Tibet, China, and other countries embark on pilgrimages to the mountain.

The village of Minsar, also known as Moincer, is in Gar County, just south of Kailash and west of Manasarovar. Minsar was under the governance of Ladakh for 160 years and later under the Sikh Empire. Even after India gained control, Minsar continued to send revenue.

In 1947, when India gained independence, the village of Minsar was considered part of India. Despite being surrounded by Tibetan territories, the inhabitants of Minsar had historically paid taxes to the Kingdom of Ladakh and later to the State of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) for centuries.

The last official to visit the region was Rigzen Ghagil Kalon, a special officer of the Government of J&K, who visited the village in 1950. His report was then forwarded to the Government of India in New Delhi. During the India-China Boundary talks, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) report in 1960 also demanded India's claim over Minsar.

Despite Chinese efforts to "Sinicize Tibet" and restrict religious freedom in the region, Buddhism continues to grow in China. The historical ties between India and Tibet are deep and intertwined, particularly through the Nalanda-Lhasa connection of past centuries.

Despite 74 years of harsh occupation by the Han Chinese and the Communist Party of China, Buddhism is flourishing in Tibet, with Sanskrit-based sutras being chanted across the India-Tibetan plateau.

India does not need to rename places in Tibet to emphasize its historical relationship, which is often described as 'Higher than the Himalayas.' This connection is echoed in daily mantras in the highlands and temples. It's imperative for India to assert and strengthen its historical ties and ancient traditions with Tibet to solidify its bonds with the region.

### **China's quest to replace 'Tibet' with 'Xizang' is destined to fail**

26 August 2024, Tribune India

THE term 'South Tibet' frequently pops up in Indian media, uncritically disseminating misinformation from Chinese news outlets. A recent report claimed that China has renamed 30 more places in Arunachal Pradesh, which Beijing asserts are part of 'South Tibet'. In common parlance, Tibetans may refer to the eastern, western, central or northeastern regions of Tibet, but there is no term 'South Tibet' as a geographic proper noun in the Tibetan lexicon – a fact easily verified by consulting any Tibetan dictionary or encyclopaedia. This term is an entirely new Chinese construct.

Beijing truly deserves recognition for its exceptional mastery in the politics of names. Their prowess in manipulating names – whether of people, places or concepts – as strategic political tools to assert power, control narratives, shape identities and influence public perception is a masterclass in propaganda.

A classic example of China's dominance in shaping the narrative on the Sino-Tibetan conflict is evident from their definition of 'Tibet' itself. The 'Tibet' referred to by China is geographically distinct from the Tibet that exists in the hearts and minds of the Tibetan people. The People's Republic of China, established in 1949, considers only the 'Tibet Autonomous Region' (TAR), created in 1965, as Tibet

— an ancient nation with a rich history spanning thousands of years! Traditionally, Tibet consisted of three regions: U-tsang, Kham and Amdo. When Tibetans speak of 'Tibet', they mean all three regions, encompassing approximately 2.5 million square km.

In line with the classic colonial divide-and-rule policy, the so-called TAR includes only U-tsang and parts of Kham, with the remaining areas fragmented as autonomous prefectures and counties, and incorporated into the neighbouring Chinese provinces of Qinghai, Sichuan, Yunnan and Gansu. Qinghai, for example, is composed entirely of the traditional Amdo and parts of Kham.

The composition of the current democratically elected leadership of the exile Tibetan polity highlights the stark incongruity of China's definition of Tibet. For example, both the current and former Sikyong (President) of the Central Tibetan Administration belong to areas outside the so-called TAR. The current Sikyong, Penpa Tsering, belongs to Amdo Chentsa, now part of Qinghai province, while former Sikyong Lobsang Sangay belongs to Kham Lithang, which is currently within Sichuan province.

In previous Sino-Tibetan talks, a key demand from the Tibetan side was the establishment of a single autonomous Tibetan administration encompassing all Tibetan autonomous areas. This is crucial for the genuine implementation of China's constitutional provisions regarding national regional autonomy.

Between 2002 and 2010, nine rounds of formal talks took place between representatives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Chinese Government.

Beijing, however, rejected our entire proposal, including our request for a single Tibetan administrative unit. They claimed that the proposed autonomous region would be too large and that Tibetans have historically never been governed under a single administration. This claim is a clear distortion of historical facts. I quote an excerpt from a speech by former Kalon Tripa, Prof Samdhong Rinpoche: "Tibetans were under one administration until the mid-ninth century. Later, Tibetans were again re-integrated into one administration in 1260 under Drogon Choegyal Phakpa. This was offered to him by emperor Kublai Khan and this offering explicitly refers to the three Cholkas with a clear demarcation of its borders. Such unified administration remained until the 1730s." China further distorted the definition of 'Tibet' by introducing the notion of 'Greater Tibet'. While Tibetans, like people from any other nation, proudly refer to their homeland as great, Beijing has very deftly rephrased this as 'Greater Tibet'. This is a vicious distortion of Tibetan territorial identity. For Tibetans, there is no concept of 'Greater' and

'Smaller' Tibet; there is simply Tibet, as understood in our collective consciousness.

Beijing has now gone a step too far by attempting to supplant the term 'Tibet' with 'Xizang'. It is important to note that Beijing's definition of even 'Xizang' differed both before and after the invasion of Tibet in 1949-50.

In ancient times, such as in the Sino-Tibetan treaty of 821-822, the terms 'Great Tibet' and 'Great China' were used. Before 1949, the Republic of China employed the terms 'Inner Tibet' and 'Outer Tibet' to differentiate regions within Tibet, similar to the use of 'Inner Mongolia' and 'Outer Mongolia' for Mongolia. 'Inner Tibet' referred to the areas under Chinese control at that time, while 'Outer Tibet' denoted independent Tibet. These terms also appeared in the Simla Convention (1913-14), which involved Great Britain, China and Tibet. China's gradual military conquest of eastern territories of Tibet was swiftly followed by the renaming of the newly annexed places. For example, Ziling was renamed Xining, Dhartsedo became Kanding, Bathang (my homeland) was changed to Ba an, and Chamdo was renamed Changdu. China then developed and promoted its own narrative, claiming that only the territories under the effective control of the Government of Tibet at that time constituted Xizang. They believe that by renaming places annexed through military conquests and forging new identities and historical narratives, they can gradually root out and erase the deep, centuries-old bond between the people of these areas and historic Tibet. The current reality, however, is quite the opposite. Since the disintegration of the mighty Tibetan Empire in the ninth century and the eventual inception of the Dalai Lama's Gaden Phodrang Government in Tibet in 1642, what is ubiquitous across the Tibetan plateau today is a strong, deep sense of common territorial and national identity.

Beijing's quest to replace 'Tibet' with 'Xizang' is, therefore, destined to fail. If history is any guide, the imposition of Chinese identity through the distortion of historical and cultural narratives will only further alienate the Tibetan people and strengthen their sense of distinct national identity.

Views are personal

### How to secure the China front

25 August 2024, The Sunday Guardian, Lt Gen  
Harinder Singh (Retd)

A view of the mountains in the eastern part of Ladakh, 3 km from the Line of actual Control between India and China, on 1 August 2024. ANI India will have to make it clear to China that it opposes any unilateral military action. Any Chinese attempt to alter the status quo will be met with stiff resistance, and if necessary, with counter action.

China's growing military might and its assertive posture along the Himalayas pose a tough challenge to India. It is incumbent upon India to craft a border guarding strategy that not only safeguards its rightful territorial claims, but deters China from undertaking any unilateral military action. Until a mutually acceptable boundary solution is found, India has no option but to build its capacity to deter China from altering the status quo.

Building India's capacity would imply acquiring and deploying assets for strategic intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), augmenting border infrastructure and troop habitat, fielding the right mix of weapon-platforms, creating an asymmetric edge, stockpiling strategic reserves of war material and restructuring the current force to provide high levels of military readiness and response action. But deterring the Chinese military is not simply a matter of restructuring, equipping and reorienting the border guarding force; it is also about signalling a strong military intent and willingness to use force.

The more powerful an adversary, the more important and difficult it is to deter the adversary. India will have to make it clear to China that it opposes any unilateral military action. Any Chinese attempt to alter the status quo will be met with stiff resistance, and if necessary, with counter action. India will also have to assure China that it does not seek any territorial aggrandisement. Improvements in border infrastructure are India's legitimate needs, and should not be construed as inimical to Chinese interests. So, how does India demonstrate its military resolve to deter China, without exacerbating an unintended escalation, are among the issues that befuddle policymakers and practitioners.

#### TERRITORIALITY AND CONFLICT

Two scholars, Paul D. Senese and John A. Vasquez, in their book, *The Steps to War*, explain how wars arise from a series of steps that states take to deal with real or imagined grievances that bedevil their relationship. One such factor is territory and disputes arising out of it. When states are unable to draw a compromise in a territorial dispute and disagreements persist, they tend to resort to the use of force. If such disputes recur and militarise over time, they lead to a deep sense of rivalry that becomes very hard-line and prone to war. Understandably, India's festering territorial disputes with China have acquired such a military character.

As the likelihood to give up respective territorial claims diminishes over time, the probability of using force will only increase. This could lead to inadvertent military escalation. In this context, two aspects are important: First, the role and salience of territorial contiguity in increasing the probability of war. Second, whether the presence of a border dispute is real or imagined, how do the two states handle their disputes is significant in bringing about or averting war. Hence, it is not territory per se, but territorial contiguity and lack of geographical clarity that explain the occurrence of border disputes and the probability of war.

Our border disagreements and disputes with China are borne out of this territorial contiguity. Complicated and intricate colonial treaties, unclear boundary lines, imprecise border tri-junctions, illegality of ceded territory and manning difficulties in unreachable sectors of super high-altitude—all add up to a contentious border. This lack of clear border demarcation has bred intense mutual suspicion, and in turn grievances over control of territory. The recurring nature of these disputes indicates the acuity of prevailing mistrust. Once an escalatory threshold is crossed, the probability to miscalculate increases and it can trigger a wider military escalation. The question then is, how China and India will manage such risks of territorial contiguity, in absence of its geographical clarity, so that recurring disputes do not escalate into war.

Broadly speaking, the presence of norms and mechanisms to manage disputes can give a set of actors' ways and means for handling disputes, without an inadvertent escalation. While four such agreements and protocols (1993, 1996, 2005 and 2013) exist, and they lay out a set of norms and protocols, these are not adequate to address the current nature of border disagreements. These protocols have worked well until the late 2010s, but post that, with frequent stone-walling from the other side, there has been a marked decline in their effectiveness to mutually defuse border tensions. A reset in the norms and protocols is therefore necessary in the Sino-Indian context.

#### RITUALISING BORDER-CONTACT

During the Cold War, the US and Soviet Union demonstrated that ritualisation of the mutual relationship could help dampen prospects for war. The probability of war tends to increase if territorial disputes militarise and recur, but one can expect the likelihood of war to reduce if the handling of disputes is ritualised. When there are no mutually accepted norms or mechanisms to handle border disputes, military escalation becomes strident. Even if norms and protocols do exist, but these are not very precise, the parties to the dispute tend to exploit the loopholes. Therefore, how disputes are handled



holds the key to ushering in peace and tranquillity, not merely the presence of norms or protocols.

There can be only two ways of handling disputes. Either by use of force, or by demonstrating restraint. The tendency to over-compensate for perceived threats, by way of military build-up and arms-racing can increase the risk of war. Furthermore, militarised border disputes tend to generate domestic narratives that pre-disposes governments to pursue hard-line policies. However, if states were to resolve their disputes through restraint and dialogue, they can expect long periods of peace and prosperity. In other words, the policy practices of a state act as a dampener or cause of war.

The ritualisation of border-contact can help avert inadvertent escalation. The ongoing military-level talks in Eastern Ladakh must be seen in this light. Besides managing the disputes at hand, these talks assist in resolving other minor infractions arising out of routine border-contact. It would make eminent sense if these high-level talks are extended to other sectors. The need to ritualise contact also highlights the necessity to increase existing channels of military communication, in terms of additional border hotlines, alternate media connectivity for fail-safe communications and border meeting points. These act as useful tools and mechanisms to avoid or manage inadvertent escalation.

#### POLICY CHOICES

While much political and military capital is being expended on managing the current border disputes, there is little effort spent on addressing the long-term risks of territorial contiguity. A political settlement alone can help build durable peace. Once the borders are settled, other disagreements arising out of an absent boundary would cease to exist. However, China might not have any incentives to seek an early resolution to the boundary question. In that case, as an interim measure, stabilisation of the borders, by re- visiting the existing border agreements and protocols, could be pursued.

A few aspects are important. First, a new agreement, which comprehensively addresses the current infirmities in existing border agreements and protocols, is the need of the hour. A comprehensive one-piece peace and tranquillity agreement would avert the need to connect the dots over four different agreements (1993, 1996, 2005 and 2013) to interpret the field-level responses in a crisis situation. At the tactical level, this is a critical requirement for better understanding and response action.

Second, an all-inclusive border agreement can help draw clarity on a few extant clauses that are misleading and contentious. For instance, Article-II under BPTA 1993, which lays out the principle of mutual and equal security, is woefully vague and

prone to conflicting interpretations. A few other clauses pertaining to use of certain category of armaments and weapon platforms, or permissible force levels in a sector, or modalities that guide mutual reduction of forces remain obscure and unclear.

And third, a revised agreement could help address the current gaps and new nuances in border management. For instance, heightened risk-taking behaviour of troops, skirmish-prone stand-offs, use of intrusive or disruptive technologies such as drones, sonic booms, dazzlers and tazers, provocative deployment of large- calibre area weapons in the forward zone, or coordinated separation of entangled forces, all of which impact border management at the tactical level. In the wider context, it might also be prudent to consider the principles that might guide a future border settlement. And how we can draw clarity and consensus on it. The answers to these questions would require resumption of a political dialogue with China, to re-build trust and confidence. China with its political structure has an edge. India would have to work hard to build domestic consensus, lest our internal contradictions limit own options to negotiate. Many experts might argue that making peace would signal weakness and invite renewed Chinese aggression. On the contrary, this approach might afford us the time and opportunity to bridge the power gap and, in turn, the material resources to strengthen our efforts to build a credible military deterrent.

#### **China-Xizang Himalayan Forum: The cynical 'sinicisation' of Tibet**

25 August 2024, Deccan Herald, Srikanth Kondapalli

The delegates invited, the agenda unveiled, and the larger context, indicate China's efforts to convert Tibet (renamed recently as Xizang) into the fulcrum of sub- regional initiatives as well as to expand China's influence in the neighbourhood.

With a forum for the trans-Himalayan region – the 'China-Xizang Himalayan Forum' – Beijing is firstly sending a signal of consolidating and dominating the "roof of the world" in a post-Dalai Lama scenario, secondly encircling India in a multi-dimensional way by following one of its 36 ancient stratagems of "hexiao kongda" (cooperate with the small to counter the big) by providing incentives to South Asian countries to cumulatively exert pressure on New Delhi, and thirdly, obfuscating the impending environmental disaster through its modernisation efforts.

Pointedly, the China-Xizang Himalayan Forum was initiated at Nyingchi prefecture in Tibet, opposite Arunachal Pradesh, in 2018. Its fourth meeting was

held in early July this year. The delegates invited, the agenda unveiled, and the larger context, indicate China's efforts to convert Tibet (renamed recently as Xizang) into the fulcrum of sub-regional initiatives as well as to expand China's influence in the neighbourhood.

The first forum meeting in September 2018 was attended by representatives from Nepal, Pakistan and other countries, with the agenda focused on economy and tourism. The next three meetings had a focus on environmental issues, one of the weakest issues for China in view of its exploitation of Tibet's resources. At the third meeting last October, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi made five points, some of them repetitive, some even contradictory to the current Chinese practice in Tibet. Wang called for upholding mutual respect and mutual trust and building a "trans-Himalaya region into a family of solidarity". He also called for building an "ecological civilisation" and a "trans-Himalaya region of green development and cooperation", as well as for regional integration through connectivity and enhancing people-to-people exchange.

The fourth meeting, also held at Lulang town of Nyingchi prefecture on July 5 this year, was attended by nearly 20 countries, including representatives from Nepal, Myanmar, Mongolia, Bhutan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan but also countries like Sri Lanka, Chile, Bolivia, and South Korea. The inclusion of countries not connected in any way to the Himalayas suggests that China is trying to drum up support for its policies in Tibet.

While China entered Tibet in 1951 through military intervention, in recent times, it has intensified not only its control but also its "modernisation" efforts. In August 2020, a few months after the Galwan border incident with India, the decisive Tibet Forum Meeting, attended by the Communist Party's politburo members, including President Xi Jinping, declared the goal of ushering in "sinicisation of Tibet" – meaning, to intensify the long ongoing effort to strip Tibet of its own characteristics and identity and infuse Han Chinese body and soul into it.

Subsequently, Xi visited Nyingchi prefecture in July 2021 to oversee the progress in infrastructure projects, such as the \$5.8 billion Sichuan-Tibet railway line. His visit to Tibet was also to convey a message of resolve to fully integrate the region into China.

As a result, over a period of time, 7.5 million Han Chinese have come into Tibet, drastically altering the demographics of the region and making Tibetans a minority in their own land. China introduced "strike hard" policies of repression and banned the Dalai Lama's photos or any activity seen as "splittism". Beijing has sought to take control of the Dalai Lama's succession by insisting on a "golden urn" process to

select the next Dalai Lama. It has also passed the Land Border Law and built 628 "well-off society" villages across Tibet's borders with the rest of South Asia. These "well-off society" military/paramilitary "watch posts" are expected to consolidate China's control over the peripheral areas of Tibet and adjoining regions in South Asia. In the event of any political uncertainty in the region, these are expected to trigger military consolidation efforts by China.

China's modernisation drive saw a flurry of infrastructure projects in Tibet, with the current 14th Five-Year Plan allocating \$22 billion in funding for railways, roads, energy pipelines, fibre optics, telecommunications, hydro-electricity dams, and reconstituting Tibetan nomads into ghettos for effective surveillance and control.

While the infrastructure projects attracted an estimated 55 million domestic and foreign tourists to Tibet last year, the world's "third pole" is under stress due to China's economic policies. China began exploiting 100 minerals in Tibet, as well as diverting water and electricity from it to the rest of China. As a result, Tibetan glaciers have melted over 15% in the past decades, threatening the fragile environment. However, China wants to convince the participants in the China-Xizang Trans-Himalayan Forum that all is well with the Tibetan ecology.

By including countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar in such meetings, China is trying to counter India. To counter China's intrusions, India needs to comprehensively review its policies, build an international Buddhist circuit in Arunachal Pradesh, promote eco-tourism in the region, and prepare for Trans-Himalayan turbulence in the coming years.

### **Diaries of Mao's secretary at the center of a legal battle over the history of modern China**

25 August 2024, NBC News

The diaries of a top Chinese official and prominent critic of Beijing are at the center of a U.S. legal battle, raising questions about who will write the history of modern China.

Li Rui, who died in 2019 at the age of 101, held a number of important positions within the ruling Chinese Communist Party, including personal secretary to longtime leader Mao Zedong. In detailed handwritten diaries he kept from 1946 to 2018, Li recorded his experiences and observations during seven tumultuous decades of Communist Party rule – a version of events that might conflict with the official party line.

As a high-ranking official, Li was an authoritative witness to parts of history that the party would rather not highlight – from internal disputes and policy missteps to the deadly Tiananmen Square crackdown

— because they challenge its narrative of uninterrupted prosperity and political unity as China rose from a poor and isolated nation to become the world's second-largest economy.

A trial that began in California on Monday will decide whether Li's diaries should remain at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, where his daughter donated them, or be returned to his elderly widow, who has been accused of acting as a front for Chinese authorities who would most likely censor them.

"We've never had something like this before," said Joseph Torigian, a research fellow at the Hoover Institution.

"These are diaries and personal papers that run to dozens and dozens of boxes that talk about everything from the early years of the revolution to Li Rui's work as a secretary to very powerful individuals, including Chairman Mao."

Few top Chinese Communist Party officials have kept such detailed diaries, especially after the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, when they were used as evidence for political persecution.

"It is very hard to study the People's Republic of China because it is an authoritarian regime that believes that different narratives about its past are very dangerous for regime security, which means that they run a tight ship," said Torigian, who is also an assistant professor at the School of International Service at American University.

In his diary, Chinese official Li Rui referred to the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown as "Black Weekend." Hoover Institution Stanford says Li had directed his daughter, Li Nanyang, to donate the materials to the Hoover Institution, which is known for its large archive of historical materials on modern China, for fear they might otherwise be destroyed by Chinese authorities as part of a crackdown on dissent he saw growing worse under President Xi Jinping.

Li Nanyang, a vocal critic of the Chinese Communist Party who lives in the United States, carried most of the diaries out of China in 2017. She made the donation to the Hoover Institution official days before her father's death in 2019, once she felt he was safe from possible reprisal.

Shortly after that, Li's second wife, Zhang Yuzhen, sued for the return of the original diaries, which she says are rightfully hers. Her lawyers argue that they contain deeply personal information about her relationship with Li, and that the violation of her privacy has caused her emotional distress.

A Beijing court found in favor of Zhang, a ruling Stanford says cannot be enforced because it was denied the opportunity to appear in court and defend itself. The university has sued Zhang in California in return.

Lawyers for both sides say their claims are buttressed by comments Li made in his diaries and in interviews about what he wanted to happen to his writings and who should represent him.

But given that Zhang is now in her 90s, questions have been raised about whether the lawsuit was her idea. "She will not be capable of making money or contributing money for a lawsuit or to pursue the return of the diary," said Feng Chongyi, an associate professor of China studies at the University of Technology Sydney, who met regularly with Li.

Only the Chinese Communist Party, he said, has "the resources, the money and the political will to do that." Zhang's lawyers have said that she is acting alone. The Chinese Foreign Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Friday.

Feng and others worry that Chinese authorities would severely restrict access to any diaries by Li, a longtime critic of the party's leaders and policies, whose writings were banned in China in 2006.

Li joined the Chinese Communist Party in 1937 at the age of 20, rising through the ranks as it defeated the existing government in a civil war to gain power in 1949. By 1958, Li had become Mao's personal secretary.

But he was expelled from the party the following year over his criticism of the Great Leap Forward, an industrialization program championed by Mao that led an estimated 30 million to 40 million people to die of starvation in three years. During his 20 years in exile, Li was imprisoned in a labor camp and spent eight years in solitary confinement.

He was reinstated to the senior party ranks in 1979, three years after Mao died. In the 1980s, Li worked in the party's powerful Organization Department, which is responsible for the appointment and promotion of high-ranking officials.

Li was also highly critical of the Chinese government's deadly crackdown on pro-democracy protests in 1989. From the balcony of his apartment in Beijing, he could see soldiers firing on protesters in and around Tiananmen Square in what he described in English as "Black Weekend."

His diaries, Torigian said, reveal "his thinking as well as a lot of other very senior revolutionary elders during that crisis," public discussion of which is suppressed in China.

In his later years, Li was a leader of a group of pro-reform elder intellectuals in Beijing, "and there are details about his interactions with that circle as well," Torigian said.

"So the breadth and the detail are really something that are quite unprecedented for the study of politics and the Chinese Communist Party," he said.

Though the Hoover Institution has scanned copies of the diaries, archivists and historians say it's important

to retain the original materials as well, both for research purposes and to reinforce the authenticity of the scans.

"The Communist Party of China has a history of altering materials in order to fit what it wants the version of history to be," said Perry Link, a Sinologist and emeritus professor of East Asian studies at Princeton who testified at the trial last week.

If scholars publish research based on the Hoover copies but the originals are in Beijing, "the government in China can say, 'No, your conclusions are wrong, you worked from the wrong materials. We have the originals, and that's not what they say,'" said Link, who is also a professor at the University of California, Riverside.

With the originals in their possession, party elites could release them selectively to support their preferred narratives "and might even change what's in the diaries," he said. "They've done this before."

### **The Dalai Lama Divides China And The US**

24 August 2024, Patheos, Alice H. Murray

China and the US don't only disagree on trade, Taiwan, and use of the South China Sea. There's also the issue of the successor to Tibet's Dalai Lama. The elderly religious leader's recent presence in the US for medical treatment has provided reason for more tension between the two superpowers. One thing everything can agree on is that the Dalai Lama divides China and the US.

Who Is The Dalai Lama?

The current Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, is the 89-year-old spiritual leader of Tibet, an area which embraces Tibetan Buddhism. He is the 14th Dalai Lama in a line stretching back to the late 1300s. Tibetan Buddhists believe the Dalai Lama is the manifestation of the Bodhisattva (one who works to lead all beings to the state of enlightenment) of Compassion and the patron saint of Tibet.

Prior to 1951, Tibet had a theocratic form of government of which the Dalai Lama was the head. He also served as supreme religious leader. Communist forces began occupying the country in 1950, and in 1959 China annexed Tibet. After an unsuccessful revolt by Tibetans against Chinese rule, the Dalai Lama fled to India in 1959. He has remained there in exile for many years.

Work During Exile

After arriving in India, the Dalai Lama set up a government-in-exile in the Himalayan Mountains there. He stepped down as the head of the Tibetan government-in-exile in 2011.

While in India, the Dalai Lama has pursued a nonviolent campaign to end Chinese domination of Tibet. He is seeking real autonomy for Tibet with

protections provided for its religion, language and culture. The Dalai Lama's work led to his being awarded the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize. This religious leader has become one of the most recognizable and highly respected individuals in the world. Nevertheless, China views the Dalai Lama as a dangerous separatist seeking independence for Tibet, a claim the Dalai Lama has denied.

About Tibet

Tibet, known as the "rooftop of the world," sits on a vast area of mountains and plateaus in Central Asia. This area includes the world's highest mountain, Mount Everest. Historically an autonomous region of China, as of 2020 Tibet provided a home to more than 3.5 million people over 471,700 square miles.

Because Tibet sits on a high plateau surrounded by enormous mountain masses, the country was relatively isolated prior to 1950. It had its own language and religion, Tibetan Buddhism.

Interference By China

In 1950 China began to incorporate Tibet into the People's Republic of China. This action was highly controversial in both Tibet and worldwide, and the issue remains highly charged even today. Tibetans deemed China's move as an invasion of their sovereign country which continues as occupation by a foreign power. Although it is officially an autonomous region of China, in reality, China's Communist Party strictly controls Tibet.

In particular, Communist party leaders in Beijing want to control the selection of the successor Dalai Lama. They insist the succession process must comply with Chinese law. The current Dalai Lama had suggested he could name his successor rather than relying on the traditional means of selecting the individual deemed his reincarnation. The Chinese government rejected his suggestion. This impasse raises the fear rival Dalai Lamas could result—one approved by Beijing and another supported by the current Dalai Lama and his Tibetan followers.

US Support For The Dalai Lama

In June US officials met with the Dalai Lama in India. They conveyed the message that the US did not intend to allow the choice of his successor to be influenced by China. Going even further, the Americans indicated their country would pressure China to begin talks again with Tibetan leaders, a process that has been stalled since 2010.

The Dalai Lama's time in the US this summer has increased tensions between China and the US. The spiritual leader came to New York for knee replacement surgery conducted on June 28th. Following that surgery, he spent time recuperating in upstate New York for six weeks. This past Wednesday, senior US officials met with the Dalai

Lama in a show of support for him and to bring greetings from Pres. Biden. Additionally, they expressed staunch support for the Tibetan community. Dalai Lama Divides China And The US China, anxious about the religious leader's successor, reacted angrily to news of this meeting. It lodged serious protests with the American government, noting the Dalai Lama was "a political exile engaged in anti-China separatist activities under the cloak of religion." US officials face attempting to strike a balance between managing already tense relations with China and showing support for a religious leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner respected worldwide. Clearly, the Dalai Lama divides China and the US, but it is only one facet of the two countries strained relationship.

Whether the divide between China and the US over the Dalai Lama can be bridged is questionable. China wants one process and the US-backed current Dalai Lama desires another to determine his successor. But with an 89-year-old religious leader, the issue will have to be addressed sooner rather than later. Given the Dalai Lama's Nobel Peace Prize, hopefully he will adhere to his track record of advocating for nonviolent change and find a way to keep the peace between all involved.

### **Taiwan and China must negotiate a new political agreement to avoid war**

24 August 2024, East Asia Forum, Philip Hou

Efforts to fortify Taiwan against decapitation assaults and amphibious invasions can only do so much to prevent conflict with China in the long run.

Taipei and Beijing have pushed political boundaries closer to their respective red lines. To prevent conflict, Taiwan and China need to negotiate a new mutually acceptable political framework that clarifies, strengthens and respects each other's red lines and political concerns.

Taiwan can reassure China's concerns about 'independence' by formally recognising relations as region-to-region, government-to-government, non-state-to-state or a combination thereof. Unlike the 1992 Consensus, such frameworks shift the emphasis from sovereignty disagreements toward defining cross-strait relations while preserving the assumptions of 'One Country' included in the 1992 Consensus.

In return, China should recognise domestic pressure in Taiwan against such political agreements by acknowledging cross-strait relations as a non-hierarchical relationship between two equal political entities. China could also recognise and reassure the autonomy of Taiwan's democratically elected

government to govern the 'Taiwan region' and participate in international organisations.

Under such a political framework, Taiwan can still assert that it is an independent, sovereign country. China would also maintain space to express its commitment to peaceful reunification.

Taiwan's Lai administration has faced criticism from the opposition party, Kuomintang (KMT), over its ambiguous position on cross-strait relations. Facing domestic pressure, Lai's administration could be more open to new cross-strait political frameworks. While Beijing demands the 1992 Consensus as a prerequisite, it could be receptive to renegotiating an agreement that implicitly recognises the consensus. Current US policy responding to rising cross-strait tensions and China's military build-up has centred around the 'porcupine strategy' of arming Taiwan to deter invasion. While stronger US-Taiwan defence capabilities may affect China's calculus, relying solely on military means for a political problem would be misguided.

It is a long-standing US policy to support 'cross-strait dialogue' and the status quo. Obligations to ensure Taiwan has sufficient defence capabilities do not relieve the United States of its responsibility to support the peaceful settlement of conflict between Taiwan and China. The United States should actively encourage cross-strait dialogue and oppose unilateral changes to the status quo.

Defence-oriented policies place Taiwan under a state of chronic pressure. A war over Taiwan would upend global security through the militarisation of the Asia Pacific, regardless of whether China succeeds or is defeated.

If China successfully 'unifies' Taiwan, neighbouring countries and the United States may engage in a rapid military build-up, form a treaty alliance system similar

to NATO, pursue total economic decoupling and allow for regional nuclear arms proliferation. China could also face armed insurgency and an uncooperative population.

If Taiwan and the United States repel a Chinese invasion, China could resort to launching long-term, around-the-clock airstrikes against Taiwan and US military assets. A war in the Taiwan Strait is unequivocally a no-win situation.

The military dimension of conflict between Taiwan and China is only peripheral to the underpinning political drivers and is a tool for achieving political objectives. From China's perspective, Taiwan's 'reunification' is an essential milestone for party legitimacy and continued rule. China's enduring view that Taiwan is an inseparable part of its territory compels the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to



maintain recognition of the 'One China Principle' and prevent official Taiwan independence.

Taiwan, governed by the Republic of China (ROC) government, views the People's Republic of China (PRC) as a threat to its autonomy. Taiwan, under the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), has asserted the ROC as a sovereign independent country, non-subordinate to the PRC.

China cut off contact with Taiwan under former president Tsai Ing-wen's administration due to the DPP's rejection of the 1992 Consensus. Under the 1992 Consensus, the KMT and CCP agreed that both Taiwan and mainland China belong to 'China' while refraining from delineating China's sovereignty as belonging to either the PRC or ROC. Both Taipei and Beijing considered the status of their relations as region-to-region rather than country-to-country.

This agreement addressed China's top concern of preventing official Taiwan independence. Yet, the consensus neglected Taiwan's core interest of maintaining its autonomy.

Under the DPP, Taiwan has blurred its position on the nature of relations with the PRC. Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te has refused to accept the 1992 Consensus under the premise that recognising the consensus equates to accepting China's 'One Country Two Systems' model for unification.

Taiwan, under the DPP, has also pushed for greater recognition of its autonomy. Taiwan has asserted that the PRC has never ruled Taiwan and that the ROC and PRC are not subordinate to each other. China perceives these assertions as Taiwan salami-slicing towards independence because these stances avoid specifying Taiwan's relationship with 'China'.

Peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait are in the strategic interest of Taiwan, China and the United States. Yet, with the collapse of trust, an arms race seems like the safest bet to secure national security and achieve political agendas.

Taiwan and China are trapped in an illusion that military power alone will prevent encroachment on their red lines and secure their political goals. The United States also mistakenly believes that defeating an invasion of Taiwan guarantees a foreign policy triumph. Before marching toward catastrophe, Taipei and Beijing should attempt strategic negotiations.

### **The Rise, Decline, and Possible Resurrection of China's Confucius Institutes**

24 August 2024, The Diplomat

CIs grew rapidly in the early years, thanks to a favorable geopolitical environment toward China. Can they rebrand and rise again under very different circumstances? This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Confucius Institute – established by the Chinese government to promote the Chinese

language, culture, and a positive image of China globally. Confucius Institutes rapidly expanded to more than

500 centers across 160 countries in little over a decade, becoming a central component of China's international language and culture promotion (ILCP) strategy.

Yet their development has not been unchallenged. Over the past decade, Confucius Institutes have faced setbacks, most notably in the United States, where at least 100 have closed. These closures led to a major overhaul of the management structure of Confucius Institutes in June 2020, when the Chinese International Education Foundation (CIEF) was established as the effective brand holder, while the former headquarters was dissolved and replaced by the Centre for Language Education and Cooperation (CLEC). These changes marked a shift toward decentralization.

The initial rapid growth of Confucius Institutes was attributable to the favorable geopolitical environment toward China during the early years of the initiative. Under President Hu Jintao, China adopted a diplomatic philosophy of "tao guang yang hui" (hiding capabilities and keeping a low profile), emphasizing soft power as a means for its peaceful rise.

Confucius Institutes were intended as a bridge to reinforce friendship and cooperation between China and the world, with the project benefiting from substantial financial and human resources provided by the Chinese government. Its joint venture model – which involved partnerships between Chinese universities and host universities – allowed Confucius Institutes to be integrated within local academic institutions, utilizing their existing facilities and resources while attracting substantial funding from China. This model facilitated the rapid establishment of Confucius Institutes, particularly in Western countries, where China sought to improve relations and foster cooperation despite differing political ideologies.

Internationally, the rise of China and its growing influence created a demand for knowledge about China and the Chinese language. This was particularly evident in the United States in the early 2000s, when the two countries enjoyed relatively good relations. The rapid expansion of Confucius Institutes was widely seen as a reflection of China's growing soft power during this period, with the initiative providing an avenue for promoting Chinese culture and language and offering institutions a chance to partner with Chinese universities.

Partly because of this dramatic expansion, however, Confucius Institutes faced increasing scrutiny and criticism, particularly in the U.S. Some critics argued that the project served as a tool for Chinese

propaganda, raising concerns over academic freedom and the potential for political influence. This occurred as China's rise had begun to shift the power balance between China and the West, resulting in an increasingly hardline approach toward China in Washington.

Under the Obama administration (2009-2017), the

U.S. strategic "pivot" to Asia aimed at balancing against or containing China, and marked the beginning of a more critical stance toward Confucius Institutes. In 2012, for example, a U.S. Department of State directive led to the temporary expulsion of Chinese teachers in Confucius Institutes over visa issues, signaling growing unease within the administration about Confucius Institutes in U.S. universities.

Under the Trump administration (2017-2021), this scrutiny dramatically intensified, resulting in a wave of Confucius Institute closures across the United States. The mechanism that the Trump administration used to shut down Confucius Institutes was principally the threat of withdrawal of federal funding from universities. For example, a Confucius Institute's former oversight committee member at one U.S. university explained to the authors how the passing of an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) in 2019 forced U.S. universities to make a choice between substantial federal funding and China's smaller Confucius Institute funding.

The committee member explained that in order to receive U.S. federal funding, "the University would need a waiver to prove that no federal funding would support Chinese language instruction, but this was challenging because funding is often fungible." The committee member added, "Government grants typically cover the overhead of entire university. Separating the funding to ensure that none of it benefited the CI [Confucius Institute] posed difficulties."

The committee member further explained how "there was no established process for waivers, which could take years to resolve. Consequently, [funding agencies] decided to stop accepting grant applications from any institutions with a CI until new procedures were established."

The outcome was often the closure of the Confucius Institute. The committee member stated, "... Considering the University's significant stake in such grants, compared with the much smaller Chinese funding for the CI, this price was deemed too high. Therefore, the committee agreed to close down the CI. Even though the focus seemed limited to the language itself, the objective was to ultimately shut down the CIs."

Under the Biden administration, similar policies on Confucius Institutes have continued to be enforced,

including under the NDAA (2021), the Innovation and Competition Act (2021), and the Confucius Act (2021). Clearly, for higher education institutions in the United States that hosted a Confucius Institute, closing the institute was often an easier solution than lengthy rule-checking or applying for waivers. Following on from the U.S. lead, countries such as Australia, Germany, India, Japan, and the U.K. have all launched reviews or imposed pressure on Confucius Institutes. Meanwhile, Confucius Institutes in the developing world, India aside, have continued to develop robustly during the period of China's rise. In response to the growing challenge to Confucius Institutes, particularly in the United States, China has undertaken a major overhaul of its ILCP strategy since mid-2020, signaling a shift toward decentralization in three aspects.

Administratively, the CIEF, the CLEC, and other similar initiatives such as ChinesePlus and the China Center for International People-to-People Exchange (CCPIPE), have been established to share the former responsibilities of the Confucius Institute headquarters.

Politically, there has been an effort to disassociate the new management system of the Confucius Institute from the Chinese central government, resulting in the diminished official political status of the new ILCP initiatives. Financially, compared to the centralized fiscal role assigned to the former Confucius Institute headquarters in China's previous ILCP strategy, at least five decentralized sources of funding for revamped Confucius Institutes can be identified: the CIEF, a Chinese partner, a local partner, the CLEC, and income from individual Confucius Institutes.

The outcome of this new strategy, however, remains uncertain. It has, so far, not significantly altered critics' perception of Confucius Institutes. It has also caused confusion and resistance within the Confucius Institute administrative system, while additionally complicating funding arrangements and casting doubts on the funding capability of the CIEF.

While decentralization may have reduced the scrutiny and criticism previously directed at Confucius Institutes, it has not fully resolved the broader issues of trust and suspicion that have emerged between China and the West, particularly in the United States. The evolving story of Confucius Institutes from a positive global symbol of China's soft power to a contested initiative highlights the challenges of promoting cultural diplomacy in a complex, ever-changing, and sometimes hostile international environment. The future success of the Confucius Institute and China's revised ILCP strategy will depend on broader geopolitical dynamics and

the ability of China to rebuild trust and cooperation with the United States.

In this sense, the decades-long involvement with China by Democratic vice-presidential candidate Tim Walz – since he taught in China in the late 1980s – raises the possibility that the outlook could still alter somewhat. A victory for the Harris-Walz campaign in the U.S. election in November might begin to change the China narrative in ways that could help in the rebuilding of the United States' more than 100 lost Confucius Institutes.

### **The Future of Leadership: What Lies Ahead for the Senior Military Leadership in the Chinese Army?**

23 August 2024, Politics DZ

Over the past twenty years, only a handful of studies have examined the leadership of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA). These studies typically covered only specific sectors of leadership, and most were completed before the structural reform of the PLA that began at the end of 2015. In this context, the Institute for National Strategic Studies published a report in September 2022 by Joel Wuthnow, a senior fellow at the U.S. National Defense University, titled "The Gray Dragon: Assessing Senior Military Leadership in China." The report provides a comprehensive assessment of the senior leadership of the PLA in 2021, analyzing more than 300 biographies of senior Chinese military officers from 2015 to 2021 to evaluate the structure, demographic composition, career patterns of PLA leadership, as well as their political qualifications and promotion determinants. Ultimately, the report assesses China's military effectiveness and the future of leadership within the army.

#### **Army Structure**

The report focuses on the structure of senior leadership within the PLA and analyzes the major changes that have occurred under the structural reforms implemented by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2015, as follows:

##### **Presence of Elite Officers in Senior Leadership:**

According to the report, the senior leadership of the PLA consists of the top 100 to 200 officers in the army, who sit at the peak of an officer corps made up of hundreds of thousands. The number of senior leaders in 2021 was approximately 155 officers.

They are similar in importance to the three- and four-star officers in the United States, according to the report. **Clear Division of Specialties in Senior Leadership:** The report notes that before reaching senior leadership, these officers systematically progress through lower ranks. Upon commissioning, they are categorized into five specialties: military

affairs, political affairs, logistics, equipment, and technical specialists.

##### **Periodic Structural Reforms in the Army:**

According to the report, the senior leadership was not immune to the structural reforms undertaken by President Xi within the army. In 2015, the number of senior leaders was 182 officers, but by 2021, the number had decreased to 155. This 13% decrease aligns with the overall reduction in army personnel during the same period from 2.3 million to 2 million individuals. The reductions in leadership also included the Central Military Commission itself; when Xi became chairman of the commission in 2012, it included 10 officers, but after the 19th Party Congress in October 2017, this number dropped to six officers. According to the report, the cornerstone of the PLA reforms under Xi was the development of a joint command structure in which theater commanders have peacetime authority over land, naval, and air forces. This model was better aligned with the army's focus on preparing for high-intensity joint operations compared to the pre-reform system, where military region commanders lacked peacetime operational control over non-military units. The Chinese military has also expanded joint training in recent years, allowing officers to hone their planning and command skills in a "realistic combat" environment.

##### **Dominance of Air and Naval Forces in Positions:**

The report highlights that the share of ground force officers in senior positions has decreased by more than 20% under recent structural reforms, after having dominated most key positions in general departments and military regions. This shift favors the development of the Chinese military's future operations in the maritime and aerial domains. The biggest winner from these reforms, according to the report, was the "Rocket Force," which saw its share double (from 4% to 8%). Additionally, naval and air force officers became military theater commanders for the first time in 2017.

##### **Increase in Leadership at Military Service Headquarters:**

According to the report, the share of officers appointed to service headquarters doubled from 16% to 32%. This reflects the creation of new military headquarters, such as the Strategic Support Force (SSF) and the Joint Logistics Support Force (JLSF). Under the new system, officers appointed to army, navy, and air force headquarters are primarily responsible for building forces in terms of training and equipping them. The report suggests that having a larger share of senior officers in service headquarters may have implications for competition among upper echelons in the future.

##### **Leadership Characteristics**

According to the report, the group of senior military leaders in 2021 has formative and professional experiences different from their predecessors, but they are demographically similar, as follows:

**Possession of Similar Professional Experiences:** The report indicates that the current leadership was the first to join the PLA during the “Reform and Opening-Up” era (1979 to the present). Their careers were shaped by the changing military strategy of China before and after the end of the Cold War. Most began their careers preparing for a large-scale conflict against the Soviet Union, which was China’s main adversary in the late Cold War. These officers were also in service during the 1980s, when the Chinese military engaged in significant military cooperation with the United States. However, they also witnessed the deterioration in Sino-U.S. relations after the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989.

**Similar Ages Among Senior Leaders:** Only 18 out of 155 senior officers in 2021 joined the military during the era of President Mao (1949–1976); they are now in their mid-sixties to early seventies and will soon retire. Most senior officers joined in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with the youngest joining in the mid-1980s. According to the report, Chinese military officers rotate every two to three years and are exposed, to some extent, to different responsibilities, but less so than in the U.S. system, where four-star officers typically change positions every 18 months or so.

**Similar Gender and Ethnic Composition:** The report states that male Han Chinese dominate the senior leadership of the PLA. There were no women among the senior military officers in 2015 or 2021. The military also follows preferential policies against ethnic minorities, though it has sometimes appointed Uyghur and Tibetan officers to senior levels in the Xinjiang and Tibet military regions, according to the report.

**Limited International Experience:** According to the report, senior Chinese military leaders often move across the country but have limited international experience, aside from what they may have gained through military diplomacy on short tours earlier in their careers. The report also suggests that there may be limited awareness of other functional skills; for example, operational commanders tend not to have backgrounds in logistics or acquisition.

#### Promotion Determinants

All PLA officers must be in good standing with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), but candidates for promotion to the highest ranks are subject to further scrutiny due to the sensitivity of their positions. Below are the key qualifications and determinants for promotion in the Chinese military:

**Loyalty to the Chinese President:** Senior leaders need to possess political acumen; they must have not only

social capital but also successfully navigate elite internal struggles. Some have already been purged in anti-corruption campaigns that Xi used to remove political opponents after taking power. The report emphasizes that those who survived the purges were those who avoided association with Xi’s rivals and were also careful to show loyalty to him by supporting his agenda for military reform.

**Competence and Diverse Experiences:** There is a misconception that senior PLA officers are disproportionately selected from the Nanjing Military Region, where Xi Jinping served from 1985 to 2007. It is also known as the “cradle of generals” due to its importance in preparing for the anticipated Taiwan conflict. However, only about a third of the senior leaders in 2015 had served in the Nanjing Military Region in the past decade. Instead of favoring officers with a specific geographical background, Xi focuses on high performers and ensuring that leadership includes a diverse range of experiences.

In conclusion, the report suggests that the stringent duties within the PLA and the extreme centralization of decision-making may reduce China’s effectiveness in future conflicts, especially those requiring a high level of cooperation and adaptability, such as the war Russia waged against Ukraine in 2022. This is particularly true if Chinese military leaders lack the ability to think in new ways beyond their service and specialty.

Therefore, there are signs of change in the senior leadership, most notably by providing emerging leaders with greater experiences and giving the new generations the opportunity to participate in senior leadership. This could create a future generation that is quick to grasp modern operations and technology. The report also suggests that producing a completely different type of senior PLA officer would require changes in service traditions and organizational culture, which has proven to be difficult even for the United States after more than three decades of the Defense Reorganization Act passed on October 4, 1986.

### Claude Arpi | China’s ‘salami’ warfare big danger to Himalayas Columnists

23 August 2024, Deccan Chronicle, Claude Arpi

The planet is being churned; and wherever one looks, one sees natural and unnatural (mostly man-made) disasters. It is not only the multiple landslides that occurred in six villages of Wayanad district of Kerala on July 30, but the entire Himalayan belt is disturbed. In Wayanad, heavy rains triggered the collapse of hillsides, resulting in torrents of mud, water and boulders cascading down into the valley. Similarly in the Himalayas, particularly in Himachal

Pradesh and Uttarakhand or Arunachal Pradesh, tragic incidents such as these are taking place.

In most of the cases, wild development activities have resulted in these mishaps. For example, in Himachal Pradesh, some environmental activists told the Down To Earth magazine that "most incidents of natural disasters that occurred in Himachal Pradesh during the last one year happened around some power (dams) or national highway project". In Uttarakhand, wild construction, not taking into account the capacity of the mountains to sustain new roads, new hotels and millions of tourists, has been one of the factors triggering one tragedy after another.

One basic fact has been forgotten: that mountains are fragile. Flying over the Himalayan range, one has the impression that the snow-covered ranges and high peaks are massive and seemingly-impenetrable mountains; however, on the ground, the Himalayas are in grave danger. For millennia the Himalayan passes have been criss-crossed by adventurers, pilgrims, traders, monks or holy men looking for a mythic paradise upon earth, or simply good business; however, through all that time the environment was not disturbed.

Another factor has to be taken into consideration is the militarisation of the Himalayan range, and for this India cannot be held responsible. The finger must be pointed clearly at our northern neighbour. For centuries, life went on as usual, but in 1950 the troops of China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) marched into Tibet. The military balance of the peaceful plateau as well as the ecological equilibrium quickly started to change.

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During the following years, thousands of Tibetans managed to escape their colonised land and take

refuge to India; it included the Dalai Lama, Tibet's religious and temporal leader, who arrived in India in 1959. Then came October 1962, when Chinese troops attacked India on the Himalayan slopes; from the arid Ladakh region in the west to the dense forests in the north-west, the PLA marched into Indian territory. The conflict was short, just one month, but violent. More than 60 years after the event, it is still deeply engraved in the Indian psyche. It had incalculable consequences for the mountains and though the passes were closed, trade and pilgrimage routes stopped and communications were cut

between northern India and the Tibetan plateau. India now had a bully instead of a friend as a neighbour. At the beginning, very few worried about the environment and even less about climate change. But the Chinese occupation slowly started to have disastrous consequences for the Himalayan ecology. Today, it is not only India who is under threat of the Chinese "salami tactics" (taking over a few kilometres of territory at a time). On August 23, 2023, China released a new "standard map". The map included Taiwan and parts of the maritime zones of the Philippines, Vietnam, Brunei, Indonesia, and Malaysia. It added the tenth dash to its existing nine-dash line claim in the South China Sea... and of course Arunachal Pradesh and the Aksai Chin area. Interestingly, the map included the small Bolshoy Ussuriysky island, though in 2005, Russia and China had agreed that the island would be split in half and the border would run in its centre. On May 17, 2024, the South China Morning Post in an opinion piece said that "China must act fast to reclaim 'lost territories' from Russia". A hundred years ago, a treaty between the then USSR and China had abolished the so-called Czarist unequal treaties, it noted, and said: "Now, with Russian President Vladimir Putin bogged down in the Ukraine war, it may be the best time for Beijing." Another recent example of Chinese aggressiveness, from August 2 to 4, some Japanese fighter planes had to scramble to cope with an intrusion into Japanese airspace over the Sea of Okhotsk, the Sea of Japan, the East China Sea and the Pacific Ocean. Examples could be multiplied. India, like several other countries, has no alternative but to defend itself. As a result, the Himalayas have become one of the most militarised regions in the world. Despite several bilateral agreements between India and China, in May 2020, China started practicing "salami" slicing in five different areas of Ladakh, the high plateau in north-western India. Why open new fronts in that arid mountain desert? Many believe that one general, in search of promotion, had suggested some "small" operation to President Xi Jinping. These few kilometres here and there would give strategic depth to the PLA. India reacted swiftly, at the cost of spending four winters at 15,000 feet, often with temperatures at minus 40 degrees Celsius. Each army

has today between 60,000 and 70,000 troops posted at the Line of Actual Control (LAC). China and India then began to frenetically develop the infrastructure on their respective sides. The immediate collateral damage was to the environment; this is compounded by climate change and wild tourism development. On July 25, India's external affairs minister S. Jaishankar met China's foreign minister



Wang Yi. Mr Jaishankar underlined the need for “full respect” of the LAC; ultimately, both sides agreed on giving “strong guidance for disengagement”. It is, however, doubtful that it will translate in troops reduction on the ground. The degradation of the Himalayan environment is obviously due to several other factors too, but the militarisation triggered by China’s hegemonic tendencies has brought incalculable harm to the fragile eco-system. A solution had been proposed by the Dalai Lama in 1989 in his Five-Point Peace Plan: the whole of Tibet, including the eastern provinces of Kham and Amdo, should be transformed into a zone of “Ahimsa”, meaning a state of peace and non-violence. Unfortunately, this dream seems much more distant today than 35 years ago; when the Dalai Lama had explained: “The establishment of a peace zone in Tibet would require the withdrawal of Chinese troops and military installations from the country, which would enable India also to withdraw troops and military installations from the Himalayan regions bordering Tibet.” A “Zone of Ahimsa” would be a great boon for the Himalayan environment, but for the time being, it may remain a dream.

### **The Climate Crisis in Tibet: The Dalai Lama’s Warning**

22 August 2024, National Interest

Earlier this year, at the ninth International Conference of Tibet Support Groups (TSGs) held in Brussels, the Dalai Lama addressed 140 representatives from 40 countries. His speech highlighted Tibet’s environmental concerns as a global problem. This is not the first time the revered Tibetan leader has tackled the issues of climate change and the effects of ecological degradation due to wanton human activities.

Over the years, be it his speech at the “Endangered Tibet” conference in 1996 or his remarks at the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), to name a few, the Dalai Lama has not only cautioned about the global ramifications of “ecological neglect” in the “Third Pole” of the Himalayas and Tibetan Plateau but also emphasized the importance of the “spirit of solidarity and cooperation” to counter transnational challenges. But if the world at large has thus far remained relatively unmindful of the Buddhist leader’s words, what is the relevance of the Dalai Lama’s climate advocacy today? First, there is a direct correlation between his teachings on the interdependence of species on each other and nature and the impact of human-driven environmental changes, including severe water shortages.

Second, the significance of the Dalai Lama’s advocacy for climate action is related to China’s

repression of the Tibetan people and culture. This repression, in part, takes the form of accelerating Tibet’s climate crisis through myriad infrastructure developments (from mega-dams to over-mining). In this context, the Dalai Lama has not shied away from calling out China for not only neglecting the ecological devastation in the Tibetan Plateau but actively participating in the overexploitation of natural resources “without proper environmental safeguards.”

The third reason is the current highly divided political landscape where the democratic states, and not just in the West, are increasingly recognizing the imperative of countering China’s militaristic aims, including in Tibet. China’s financial and diplomatic support of several authoritarian regimes like Russia, North Korea, and Iran have also created greater concerns about the dangers to the liberal order. Thus, today, there is potential for greater receptivity of Tibetan concerns than ever.

What is the extent of Chinese activities on the Tibetan and Himalayan ecology? What specific measures must the West and partners like India take to address the ecological balance in the Himalayas?

The Climate Crisis in the Third Pole

The Tibetan Plateau and its surrounding mountainous areas are commonly considered the “Third Pole” because they are home to the largest reservoir of glaciers and ice sheets on earth after the Arctic and Antarctica polar regions. In effect, several major rivers such as the Mekong, Salween, Yellow, Yangtze, Yarlung Tsampo (Brahmaputra in India), Indus, Irrawaddy, Ganges, Sutlej, and Karnali fountain from the Plateau. Thus, it serves as the “Water Tower of Asia,” providing fresh water and vital sources of livelihood to billions of people not just in Tibet but across South and Southeast Asia.

Moreover, the Plateau is not only one of the most biodiverse regions in the world but also rich in minerals, including rare earth reserves. Additionally, it is surrounded by four biodiversity hotspots—biologically diverse but threatened areas—namely the Himalayas, Mountains of Southwest China, Mountains of Central Asia, and Indo Burma. These hotspots are not immune to the repercussions of climate change, including glacial melting and extreme weather events like flash floods. This is exacerbated by increased human activities—from unbridled infrastructure development to increased hostilities in the Himalayas. In such a scenario, it is time that the world and its leaders champion an ethical approach to climate-

change solutions, including proper and widespread dissemination of information among the general populace, something the Dalai Lama has always underscored. However, the challenges are far from

over. The rise in decibel levels from the U.S.-China great power competition and Russia's Ukraine invasion means that the Chinese will stake a claim over Tibetan resources more aggressively than ever. China's Infrastructure Spree: Unlikely to Slow Down? China has been systematically undertaking infrastructure development in Tibet and Xinjiang over the last twenty years. This has had devastating results for the fragile Himalayan ecology, and lowland areas have witnessed increased flooding. The intensive infrastructure buildup has led to habitat fragmentation and increased air and noise pollution. In 2006, after the Golmud-Lhasa railway line became operational, there was a massive boom in mining operations on the Tibetan plateau. Mining exploration revealed that there were deposits of over 110 types of minerals across 3,000 sites, with a value of more than \$125 billion. This included large deposits of copper, chromium, gold, and lithium, as well as oil and gas reserves. The heightened mining activity led to protests by Tibetan nomads, citing poisoned drinking water and the deaths of herd animals. Moreover, there are reports of the forced resettlement of Tibetan nomads to make way for mining and hydropower projects. Between 2021 and 2025, China has planned to spend approximately \$30 billion on infrastructure projects in Tibet under the Fourteenth Five-Year Plan: "By 2025, the total mileage of highways in Tibet will exceed 120,000 km, and that of expressways will exceed 1,300 km." This development plan includes roads, railways, airfields, border villages, telecommunication facilities, and hydroelectric projects. Moreover, China's construction of hydroelectric projects on the river Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra) in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), such as the sixty-gigawatt mega-dam, is concerning for downstream states like India and Bangladesh. It will impinge on the availability of water in downstream nations and create opportunities for coercion and conflict. It is important to note that in Chinese president Xi Jinping's security-obsessed worldview, water is not a global common but a source of leverage to solidify regional domination. As a result, the vision of a Sino-centric order as a "community with a shared future for mankind" is hogwash intended to mislead the international community from investigating China's repressive policies in Tibet (and elsewhere) that have accelerated climate change via increased mining of valuable minerals, building "dual-use" infrastructure, and "whole-village" relocation of Tibetan nomads,

who are essential to maintaining the ecosystem of the plateau.

The consequence of all this activity is the rapid degradation of delicate environs and habitats, such as wetlands, alpine meadows, and forests. Several endangered species, including the snow leopard and Tibetan antelope, which reside here, are thus further vulnerable. Not only is wildlife threatened, but a recent study indicated that if the prevailing temperature trends continued, the Himalayan glaciers might disappear entirely, "having a significant impact on regional water supplies, hydrological processes, ecosystem services, and transboundary water sharing." Studies show the Tibetan Plateau is warming three times faster than other parts of the world, leading to retreating glaciers. Thus, the international community needs to act fast not only to counter China's policies but also to spur climate action.

#### India & the West Must Join Forces

Clearly, Europe and the West must include the Himalayan region in their environmental strategies since the climate crisis in the Third Pole will soon escalate into a global emergency. Concurrently, China's recent militarization efforts in the Tibetan Plateau that have transformed villages into resettlement zones, including dual-use infrastructure such as helipads, highways, oil pipelines, road and rail networks, and dams, must be countered together. India faces even more onerous direct challenges due to its Himalayan territory coming under threat from climate change. In addition, India's decades-long border dispute with China and the risks associated with China's growing eco-hegemony, including unrestricted access to Tibet's critical water resources, are also no less a threat.

Against this scenario, the fast-changing conditions at the Third Pole have not received much attention compared to the northern and southern polar ice caps. Often, the mainstream media, in particular, has focused excessively on the disputed borders rather than the region's environment, which is relevant to global well-being. This needs to change, and a concerted approach to increase public awareness should be one of the main targets.

More importantly, reliable, informed, up-to-date scientific knowledge is essential to tackle this crisis. That being said, Europe and the West must collaborate with India and other "like-minded" nations to develop scientific programs for environmental and climate change monitoring, including both ground-based and satellite-based monitoring.

Moreover, as the partnerships within the still-emerging U.S.-led Indo-Pacific economic and security architecture continue to take shape, it is important to include the Himalayan climate and geopolitical

concerns into the mix. Naturally, bilateral, minilateral, and multilateral cooperation that earnestly works at climate change solutions is all equally vital.

In this regard, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)'s Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Package (Q-CHAMP) is a welcome initiative. While it recognizes the need for "integrating resilience" into policies from investments to governance, the Quad must look into including the Third Pole specifically in this ambit. Similarly, the G7's push to address the tripartite crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution is admirable.

As the group of 198 countries that have ratified the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change get ready to meet for the COP29 held in Baku later this year, new frameworks and partnerships will be needed to scale up climate cooperation, particularly for the three polar regions. This is all the more pertinent as the COP29 Presidency's plan is based on two mutually reinforcing parallel pillars. The first is to get all parties to commit via national action plans, and the second is to ensure the availability of finance to enable action, thereby reducing emissions, adjusting societies to the effects of climate change, and addressing damages. COP29 must integrate the mountain region's challenges into the negotiation tracks.

Hopefully, the debates this year will focus beyond energy transition and into the ways to control extensive damage caused by human actions and greed for more resources and power, particularly in politically and ecologically sensitive regions like the Tibetan Plateau. The international community, including decision-makers and the private and public sectors, needs to be involved in regional cooperation ventures in the Himalayas to ensure accountability, maintain transparency, and take responsibility.

Last but not least, the world's leaders will do well to remember what the Dalai Lama cautioned nearly thirty years ago about developing a "greater sense of universal responsibility" for global well-being and solving environmental problems—words to live by.

### **The Climate Crisis in Tibet: The Dalai Lama's Warning**

22 August 2024, National Interest, Jagannath Panda  
The international community needs to hold China to account for its environmental degradation of the critical Tibetan Plateau.

Earlier this year, at the ninth International Conference of Tibet Support Groups (TSGs) held in Brussels, the Dalai Lama addressed 140 representatives from 40 countries. His

speech highlighted Tibet's environmental concerns as a global problem. This is not the first time the revered Tibetan leader has tackled the issues of

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Second, the significance of the Dalai Lama's advocacy for climate action is related to China's repression of the Tibetan people and culture. This repression, in part, takes the form of accelerating Tibet's climate crisis through myriad infrastructure developments (from mega-dams to over-mining). In this context, the Dalai Lama has not shied away from calling out China for not only neglecting the ecological devastation in the Tibetan Plateau but actively participating in the overexploitation of natural resources "without proper environmental safeguards."

The third reason is the current highly divided political landscape where the democratic states, and not just in the West, are increasingly recognizing the imperative of countering China's militaristic aims, including in Tibet. China's financial and diplomatic support of several authoritarian regimes like Russia, North Korea, and Iran have also created greater concerns about the dangers to the liberal order. Thus, today, there is potential for greater receptivity of Tibetan concerns than ever.

What is the extent of Chinese activities on the Tibetan and Himalayan ecology? What specific measures must the West and partners like India take to address the ecological balance in the Himalayas?

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vital sources of livelihood to billions of people not just in Tibet but across South and Southeast Asia.

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China's Infrastructure Spree: Unlikely to Slow Down?

China has been systematically undertaking infrastructure development in Tibet and Xinjiang over the last twenty years. This has had devastating results for the fragile Himalayan ecology, and lowland areas have witnessed increased flooding. The intensive infrastructure buildup has led to habitat fragmentation and increased air and noise pollution. In 2006, after the Golmud-Lhasa railway line became operational, there was a massive boom in mining operations on the Tibetan plateau. Mining exploration revealed that there were deposits of over 110 types of minerals across 3,000 sites, with a value of more than \$125 billion. This included large deposits of copper, chromium, gold, and lithium, as well as oil and gas reserves. The heightened mining activity led to protests by Tibetan nomads, citing poisoned drinking water and the deaths of herd animals. Moreover, there are reports of the forced resettlement of Tibetan nomads to make way for mining and hydropower projects.

Between 2021 and 2025, China has planned to spend approximately \$30 billion on infrastructure projects in Tibet under the Fourteenth Five-Year Plan: "By 2025, the total mileage of highways in Tibet will exceed 120,000 km, and that of expressways will exceed 1,300 km." This development plan includes roads, railways, airfields, border villages, telecommunication facilities, and hydroelectric projects.

Moreover, China's construction of hydroelectric projects on the river Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra) in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), such as the sixty-gigawatt mega-dam, is concerning for downstream states like India and Bangladesh. It will impinge on the availability of water in downstream nations and create opportunities for coercion and conflict. It is important to note that in Chinese president Xi Jinping's security-obsessed worldview, water is not a global common but a source of leverage to solidify regional domination.

As a result, the vision of a Sino-centric order as a "community with a shared future for mankind" is hogwash intended to mislead the international community from investigating China's repressive policies in Tibet (and elsewhere) that have accelerated climate change via increased mining of valuable minerals, building "dual-use" infrastructure, and "whole-village" relocation of Tibetan nomads, who are essential to maintaining the ecosystem of the plateau. The consequence of all this activity is the rapid degradation of delicate environs and habitats, such as wetlands, alpine meadows, and forests. Several endangered species, including the snow leopard and Tibetan antelope, which reside here, are thus further vulnerable. Not only is wildlife threatened, but a recent study indicated that if the prevailing temperature trends continued, the Himalayan glaciers might disappear entirely, "having a significant impact on regional water supplies, hydrological processes, ecosystem services, and transboundary water sharing." Studies show the Tibetan Plateau is warming three times faster than other parts of the world, leading to retreating glaciers. Thus, the international community needs to act fast not only to counter China's policies but also to spur climate action. India & the West Must Join Forces

Clearly, Europe and the West must include the Himalayan region in their environmental strategies since the climate crisis in the Third Pole will soon escalate into a global emergency. Concurrently, China's recent militarization efforts in the Tibetan Plateau that have transformed villages into resettlement zones, including dual-use infrastructure such as helipads, highways, oil pipelines, road and rail networks, and dams, must be countered together. India faces even more onerous direct challenges due to its Himalayan territory coming under threat from climate change. In addition, India's decades-long border dispute with China and the risks associated with China's growing eco-hegemony, including unrestricted access to Tibet's critical water resources, are also no less a threat.

Against this scenario, the fast-changing conditions at the Third Pole have not received much attention compared to the northern and southern polar ice

caps. Often, the mainstream media, in particular, has focused excessively on the disputed borders rather than the region's environment, which is relevant to global well-being. This needs to change, and a concerted approach to increase public awareness should be one of the main targets.

More importantly, reliable, informed, up-to-date scientific knowledge is essential to tackle this crisis. That being said, Europe and the West must collaborate with India and other "like-minded" nations to develop scientific programs for environmental and climate change monitoring, including both ground-based and satellite-based monitoring.

Moreover, as the partnerships within the still-emerging U.S.-led Indo-Pacific economic and security architecture continue to take shape, it is important to include the Himalayan climate and geopolitical concerns into the mix. Naturally, bilateral, minilateral, and multilateral cooperation that earnestly works at climate change solutions is all equally vital.

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### **Realism, strategic interests should dictate India-China ties**

21 August 2024, Tribune India

A realistic assessment of the current state of India-China relations is necessary amid the apparent orchestrated pleas urging India to ease travel and import restrictions on Chinese personnel and goods. Since its military adventure in Ladakh in April 2020, Beijing has consistently sought normalisation of

relations, especially economic, setting aside the situation on the border. Over the past couple of months, various business sectors, reinforced by arguments advanced by some economists and media reports, have echoed China's demands.

There is a negligible prospect of an improvement in India-China relations in the near future. The absence of communication for over four years at the highest level and China's recent protest against economic assistance to projects in Arunachal Pradesh and other border regions – on the specious pretext that they are disputed – are brazen examples. On the contrary, they point to China expanding the areas of pressure on India.

The bilateral relationship has been subjected to considerable strain ever since Beijing decided that it will attempt to forcibly take the territories it claims and compel India to acquiesce to China being the leading power in the region. China has simultaneously redoubled efforts to establish dominance over Asia. These developments have coincided with the view in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leadership that India has drawn uncomfortably close to the US. Additionally, Beijing sees India as adopting a tougher, unyielding stance, which includes building defences along the border as well as initiating steps to close off the burgeoning Indian market to China. Beijing views these as unwelcome steps, but considers that India does not yet pose a serious challenge. The situation on the border has also not changed; 60,000-70,000 troops remain deployed on the front lines. The Chinese have built additional accommodation to billet reinforcements and new advanced weaponry and military units continue to be inducted. Border defence infrastructure is being built at a frenetic pace with plans to build 35 military or dual-use airports and major arterial railways and roads along the border in Tibet. Chinese President Xi Jinping's attitude towards India, signalled on the opening day of the 20th Party Congress in October 2022, with the screening of a video of the fateful Galwan clash of June 2020, has not altered.

In a cosmetic attempt to show that China wants to improve ties but it's India that is playing spoilsport, Beijing claimed that it had sent Ambassador Xu Feihong, who arrived in India almost 20 months after his predecessor Sun Weidong departed, to enhance communication and improve bilateral ties. This has been echoed by many Indian journalists, academics and others. Since his arrival, Xu Feihong has virtually been holding court, meeting Indian politicians, former diplomats, businessmen and others. China is keen on maintaining commercial and economic access to India's market but has no intention of taking substantive steps to ease tensions on the border. At the same time, it is determined to keep



India under protracted and sustained pressure. There are other signs of China's attitude and intentions. Xi has not initiated direct contact or meeting with Prime Minister Modi since April 2020, or even observed basic diplomatic niceties and congratulated him on his re-election. Chinese Premier Li Qiang did send a routine message of congratulations, but only after Modi's swearing-in. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs explained that it would have been 'premature' to convey greetings prior to the swearing-in. There was, however, no such hesitation in inviting Indonesia's President-elect on an official visit prior to his swearing-in! Whether this presages an effort to restrict China-India interaction at the level of the Chinese Premier is to be seen.

Xi also skipped the G-20 Summit and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meetings. A senior CCP cadre had divulged a couple of months prior to the G20 Summit that Xi would not attend the event and it would, therefore, be a failure. However, Xi's absence ensured there would be no distractions, the G20 communique was unanimously approved, and, importantly, India brought the Global South within the G20 fold.

Another instance was China's prickly objection to Taiwan President Lai Ching-te's congratulations to Prime Minister Modi.

China's real attitude towards India is now more clear. The Chinese foreign ministry's remark on July 10 that "South Tibet is China's territory," and India's development activities in the area are "illegal and invalid" underscore its approach on border issues. The same day, Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who is also China's Special Representative for border talks, congratulated Ajit Doval on his reappointment as National Security Adviser and Special Representative observing he is ready to "properly handle" issues related to the situation on the ground in border areas. The use of the phrase "properly handle" indicates that discussions would be in accordance with China's stated position on the border since April 2020.

Beijing's attitude towards India will undoubtedly colour its position on border and other negotiations. It will explore additional avenues for applying pressure on India, including through international financial organisations. India needs to take cognisance of this while examining proposals by Beijing and also consider whether to give China a free pass on issues like human rights, Tibet, Xinjiang, etc. Beijing will, meanwhile, continue to activate Indian businessmen and others to exert pressure on the government to facilitate the inflow of Chinese personnel and goods. Any travel and trade concessions would be at the cost of the public exchequer, further increasing the galloping trade

deficit and with long-term deleterious effects severely undermining the 'Make in India' initiative.

### **China isn't mocking India as usual. It's praising Modi's Russia-West balancing act instead**

21 August 2024, The Print, Sana Hashmi

One Chinese commentator suggested Modi's visit coincides with a period of Ukrainian passivity, potentially allowing India to make the most of the situation.

When Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Russia in July 2024, it sparked extensive discussion in China regarding India's strategic positioning between the United States and Russia. Chinese commentators were divided; some expressed frustration over what they saw as the West's perceived leniency towards India, while others admired Modi's adept balancing act. As Modi prepares for a landmark visit to Ukraine later this week, these debates are resurfacing with renewed intensity.

Modi's visits to Poland and Ukraine mark significant milestones. The trip to Poland is the first by an Indian Prime Minister in 45 years, underscoring India's growing engagement with Europe and its intent to bolster bilateral relations and extend its influence in the region. More notably, Modi's visit to Ukraine will be the first by an Indian Prime Minister since the establishment of diplomatic ties between New Delhi and Kyiv in 1993. It's another sign of India's careful strategy of balancing its ties with both Russia and Ukraine amid the ongoing conflict.

It reinforces India's commitment to a diplomatic solution to the conflict and positions the country as a potential mediator. Modi was the only world leader to condemn Russia's attack on a civilian hospital—by stating that "loss of life leads to despair, especially when children are killed"—in front of Russian President Vladimir Putin. Now, he's set to visit Ukraine. Modi's actions are aligned with his prior assertion that 'this is not an era of war', a perspective also echoed in the G20 communique. It reflects India's broader objective of fostering peace and stability. At the same time, China, which brokered a peace deal between Iran and Saudi Arabia, positions itself as a global peace broker. It's why China is closely observing India's visit and its potential role as a mediator in the conflict.

Will Modi bring lasting peace?

Chinese reactions to Modi's visit to Ukraine reflect a range of perspectives. Many commentators agree that lasting peace in the region will ultimately depend on direct negotiations between Russia and

Ukraine, and view Modi's visit as part of India's broader effort to facilitate this process.

One analysis provided three key reasons for Modi's Ukraine visit. First, it suggests that Modi's visit aligns with a utilitarian approach to diplomacy: while Russia offers valuable resources and technology to India, the West provides markets and investment opportunities. Thus, Modi's trip can be seen as part of a strategic effort to balance these interests.

Second, by engaging directly with Ukraine and trying to mediate the conflict, Modi aims to bolster his image as a prominent global leader, enhancing India's stature on the world stage.

Third, the visit is viewed through the lens of competition with China. The commentary highlighted that India's desire to match China's diplomatic moves is evident, especially following Beijing's recent invitation to Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba. Modi's visit, announced shortly after Kuleba's departure from China on 26 July, seems strategically timed to capitalise on this competitive dynamic.

Another perspective highlights the significance of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's meeting with Modi in the broader context of regional peace efforts. Ukraine has been actively seeking support from countries in the so-called Global South, including India. Despite these efforts, India, along with several other nations, did not sign a joint statement at the Ukraine peace summit in Switzerland in June, reflecting differing strategic interests.

But as one commentator pointed out Ukraine views India through a commercial lens as well: state-owned enterprise Zorya-Mashproekt has been negotiating with Indian enterprises for joint production of gas turbines. Additionally, discussions are ongoing regarding the production of aircraft and aircraft engines in India.

Yet another commentator suggested Modi's visit coincides with a period of Ukrainian passivity, potentially allowing India to make the most of the situation. They note that recent Ukrainian losses in Kursk have weakened Kyiv's military capacity, making Modi's visit strategically timed. With the possibility of a Donald Trump re-election in the US limiting Kyiv's conflict sustainability, New Delhi might find new opportunities to augment its influence.

Less mockery, more appreciation

On Chinese social media, particularly Weibo, there is a range of narratives. One user suggested that Modi's visit to Ukraine is damage control, following his controversial trip to Russia. Another user noted Modi's seemingly favourable reputation, observing that his visit to Ukraine follows closely after his visit to Russia. Some commentators have supported Modi's policy on Russia, arguing that purchasing Russian oil does not necessarily equate

supporting Russia's actions. A commentator argued that if global energy production had not increased and Russian oil and gas had been removed from the market, energy prices would have surged, leading to higher transportation costs, global price increases, and potential shortages in poorer nations. The commentator contended that the best approach is to keep Russian energy resources in the market, while preventing it from directly funding the war. Europe and the US have imposed a price cap on Russian crude oil rather than excluding it, allowing oil once sold to India to be redirected to Europe and maintaining stability in the international energy market.

Overall, discussions in Chinese media and social media about Modi's visit to Ukraine and India's potential role in mediating the conflict reflect a shift from the usual mockery India faces. There is considerable appreciation for Modi's adept handling of India's relations with the West and Russia—an area where China has faced challenges. Modi's recent visits to Russia, and now Poland and Ukraine highlight India's strategic agility in an ever-complex geopolitical landscape.

### **Bhutan: A Frontier Against China's Expansion in the Himalayan Region**

20 August 2024, Japan Forward, Dr. Monika Chansoria

Beijing's policy toward Bhutan is limited for now, but history shows why the latter remains wary of China's ultimate strategic aims in the Himalayan region.

China's geostrategic bid to exert influence in South Asia finds Bhutan as its last standing border barrier apart from India. Clashed between India and China, this landlocked mountain kingdom was long isolated by frosty Himalayan peaks. It is known for its geographical, cultural, and religious proximity to Tibet.

China has held no relations with Bhutan since 1947. Historians and analysts attributing this to the 1910 treaty between British India and Bhutan and the 1949 treaty between India and Bhutan.

'Five Fingers of Tibet'

Two successive political developments, namely the communist revolution in China in 1949 and its annexation of Tibet in 1950, further underlined Bhutan's political and strategic vitality.

Following its victory in the 1949 communist revolution, China, led by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), described Bhutan as one of the "five fingers" of its "Tibetan palm." The treaty that the Republic of India signed with Bhutan in 1949 is largely said to be a continuation of the treaty of 1910.

Following the 1949 treaty, China tacitly recognized the special treaty relationship between India and

Bhutan. However, it held grave reservations, particularly regarding Article 2, which empowered the government of India to guide Bhutan's external affairs upon the latter's request.

Bhutan's border with India remains clearly identified and demarcated. While signing the 1949 treaty, India returned about 32 square miles (about 83 sq km) of land territory in the area known as Dewangiri to Bhutan to accommodate its claims.

Particularly after 1959, China began reasserting its supposed claims over Bhutan. Maps were published in Beijing in which Bhutan was shown inside the domain of China.

There have been instances where the Bhutanese elite softened their attitude towards China. Nevertheless, the latter's policy in Tibet continues to arouse hostility in traditional Bhutanese society, which remains culturally woven to Tibet. Meanwhile, Bhutan's policy towards China is circumscribed by numerous political and economic considerations. Moreover, Bhutan's apprehensions over the ultimate politico-strategic objectives of Chinese policy in the Himalayan region have not disappeared.

**Bhutan and Tibet at the Borders**

When activity in Tibet gained momentum in 1958-1959, Chinese maps began showing almost the entire eastern district of Tashigong and pockets of northeastern and northwestern Bhutan as parts of China. All normal travel and trade between Bhutan and Tibet came to an end in 1959 when China suppressed the Tibetan uprising. At that time, the 14th Dalai Lama and his followers fled Lhasa and sought refuge in India.

The following year, 1960, Bhutan sealed its borders with Tibet. This closed the traditional trade routes northward to Shigatse and Lhasa from Paro, Punakha, and Tashigong as well as the brisk trade route via Yatung in the Chumbi Valley to the west. The Royal Government of Bhutan adopted a cautious policy towards Tibet and offered asylum to hundreds of Tibetan refugees in 1959-1960. However, it later asked them to accept Bhutanese citizenship or leave the country.

Historically, Bhutan maintained checkpoints all along its boundary with Tibet and exercised effective administrative jurisdiction up to this boundary. The Bhutanese officials conducted official tours and collected taxes from the land areas extending up to it. Moreover, Bhutanese citizens regularly utilized the lands up to their border. And local Tibetan officials in areas adjacent to the border respected this boundary. The discrepancy existing in this area was confirmed when the Chinese side handed over the coordinates of the most strategic southeast corner of Bhutan to India. The latter viewed that the coordinates were being incorrectly shown in Chinese unofficial and official maps.

**China's Strategic Objectives**

Surveying the political history and geographic location of Bhutan provides a strong rationale for studying the consequences of its relationship with Beijing. The forward element of China's foreign and defense policy has remained visible in its policy of extending its sway and influence over the peoples and territories of peripheral regions. These include Mongolia, Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, parts of India's northern and northeast frontiers, and to an extent, even Burma.

Beijing's strategy of prolonging border-related negotiations to extract maximum strategic concessions is a well-demonstrated tactic across Asia. As for Bhutan, its China policy has limited objectives, at least in the short term. Securing a comprehensive agreement on the boundary question will remain Bhutan's priority. However, its bilateral and regional initiatives have been driven by fear and apprehension regarding its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence.

Since the Sino-Indian border war of 1962, the Bhutanese have nursed anxieties of a Chinese military intervention in the region. The long-feared communist threat still looms large in Himalayan Asia.

### **Is China winning the Global South?**

19 August 2024, The Week, Joel Mathis

China is "forging ties in the Global South," said The Washington Post, making inroads with countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America whose leaders increasingly seek an "alternative to Western hegemony" led by America and Europe. Beijing has increased its joint military drills with countries like Tanzania and Mozambique, and has sought to expand the U.N. Security Council to include the developing world. It's all part of China's attempt to achieve "greater legitimacy on the global stage." Those efforts are boosting China's standing. "In a lot of the capitals around the world," Stanford University's Oriana Skylar Mastro told the Post, "they're now thinking first of Beijing, and then of Washington." "This isn't about authoritarianism versus democracy," David P. Goldman said at The Asia Times. It's about commerce and influence. Beijing has "doubled exports to the Global South" since the beginning of the COVID pandemic, and those exports are going to democracies like India. The goal? "To make the world dependent on Chinese technology and supply chains." What did the commentators say?

Chinese firms are expanding to the Global South "with startling speed," said The Economist. Those businesses are "building factories in countries from Malaysia to Morocco," and they're also pursuing the

"5 billion consumers who live in the rest of the developing world." That growth offers "uncomfortable lessons" for the West, which has increasingly raised trade barriers to Chinese goods. China is now "reaping the rewards" of sticking with globalization. "As the West has turned inward, China and the rest of the emerging world have drawn closer."

"The Chinese charm offensive is working," Gabriele Manca said at *The Diplomat*, helped along by a combination of "economic influence, soft power, political pressure, and diplomatic initiatives." That work is also forward-thinking: By 2100, "eight out of 10 people will live in Asia or Africa." That shift in population will inevitably "reshape the global economic and political order." New York is the "quintessential city of the current era of globalization" that has been shaped by Western countries. Now China is offering a way forward to those "left out of today's globalization benefits."

What next?

There is a class element to all of this. A survey of 35 countries found that most residents of "middle-income countries" — like those found in the Global South — see China favorably, said Pew Research Center. (The favorable views were highest in Thailand, Kenya and Bangladesh.) In high-income countries, however, the vast majority of respondents see China unfavorably. Those views are more divided, though, in the Asia-Pacific where China has simmering territorial disputes with its neighbors.

American leaders acknowledge that China has "outpaced" the U.S. in the Global South, said *The Washington Post*. "We need to do more," Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The goal for U.S. officials is to make sure the planetary playing field doesn't go uncontested. "We want to help ensure that [countries in the Global South] have a choice," another State Department official said to *The Atlantic Council* in February, "and that they can make their decisions free from coercion."

### **Dharamshala's Tibetan tide ebbs, arrivals fall steeply amid China's strict border vigil**

19 August 2024, *Hindustan Times*

Only around 10 to 15 Tibetans trickle into Dharamshala annually now, down massively from nearly 3,000 a decade ago

Once abuzz with Tibetans arriving in India from their native land after crossing the Himalayas, the Tibetan Reception Center at Khanyara, Dharamshala, has seen a sharp decline in arrivals in recent years. Only a handful Tibetans trickle in now, a shift that most Tibetan government-in-exile officials attribute to

stricter border control imposed by the Chinese government.

Originally built as a transit point for over 2,500 Tibetans who annually made the clandestine journey from Tibet into Nepal and then to Dharamshala — home to the Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, since his escape from Tibet — the facility has seen significantly reduced activity now.

The officials at Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), based in Dharamshala, say surveillance around the border and mountain passes was amped up by the Chinese in 2008 following a major demonstration in Tibet.

According to CTA officials, in 2021, only four Tibetans arrived in Dharamshala while five had arrived a year ago. The numbers did not improve much, with 10 arrivals in 2022 and 15 in 2023.

The same figure stood around 2,500 to 3,000 around the 1990s or the early 2000s. CTA officials said the number of arrivals has gone up in the last couple of years, but is nowhere close to what it was a decade or two ago.

CTA spokesperson Tenzin Lekshay says, "The situation has changed dramatically after the massive Tibetan uprising in 2008. In response, China took measures to prevent information about the situation in Tibet from reaching the outside world. They tightened border controls to restrict movement and stop people from leaving Tibet. China aimed to obscure the reality of conditions in Tibet, promoting a positive image that contradicts the actual situation."

He adds that China has also been restricting access to Tibet for outsiders, "Visiting Tibet is not like travelling to China; foreigners need special permits to enter. This tight control suggests that there are aspects of Tibet that China wants to keep hidden."

The CTA operates three Reception Centers in Nepal, Delhi, and Dharamshala. New arrivals first enter Nepal, then transit through Delhi, before ultimately arriving in Dharamshala.

Namkyi, a former political prisoner who recently arrived from Tibet, had testified her experiences before she decided to leave Tibet for Dharamshala. She and her sister, who had participated in a march calling for "Free Tibet" in October 2015 were detained by police. "In November 2016, after our detention period had lasted for 13 month, the court of Trochu County called us to the courtroom and we were put on trial. We were sentenced to three years each on trumped-up charges of undertaking 'separatist acts against the nation' and supporting 'the Dalai clique,'" Namkyi, who speaks in Tibetan, said in her testimony published by CTA.

After their release in October 2018, the family was put on a blacklist. "Our expressions and movement were severely restricted, putting anyone we were in contact with at risk," Namkyi, who began her

journey to India with her aunt Tsering Kyi in May 2023, says.

Tenzin Tsundue, Tibetan writer and activist based in Dharamshala, said the Tibetan uprising during the 2008 Beijing Olympics that rocked Chinese control was found to be inspired by Tibetans who returned from India.

"So, the Chinese border guards tightened the Tibet-Nepal borders and started to pay Nepalese border guards to stop Tibetans escaping Tibet. Since 2010, the number of Tibetans escaping Tibet drastically fell from 3,500 a year before the uprising to just 20 to 30," he said, adding that Tibetans now have to report departure and arrival every time they travel from one district to another.

"Many passports have been revoked, ID cards, including ration cards, mobile numbers, and bank accounts, are rolled into one number with DNA personal details. With such a sophisticated mechanism of control, China has turned Tibet into a police state," he added.

Tsundue says China now also uses paid western YouTubers to create a false image of Tibet as a tourist destination, but in reality is very strict in giving visas to foreigners. He adds that visas are not being given to Indians since the 2020 Galwan valley clash.

### **Opinion: More Painful Than the Agony of Death**

19 August 2024, Phayul, Palden Sonam

On July 12, a video clip from Tibet was going viral on the Tibetan cyber world, which, at first glance, appeared like a funeral ceremony. Everyone in the video looked visibly distraught with their heads down and many crying.

However, it turned out to be a scene from the final day of Ragya Sherig Norbu Lobling –a prominent private-run Tibetan school in Amdo region of Tibet as teachers and students paid their last respect to their beloved school after the Chinese government forced it to close.

In a normal situation, a school would be shut down if it failed to serve the primary goal of giving education to its students. In today's occupied Tibet, however, a school can be forced to close simply because it is able to give great education to its students.

Ragya School was established in 1994 by Jigme Gyaltsen, a Tibetan monk educator in Golok, (Ch: Guoluo Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai). Golok is largely a remote nomadic area and this school has played a pivotal role in providing quality education to hundreds of Tibetan students. As its popularity spreads, students from different parts of Tibet have sought admission into it. Many of its students are orphans.

This school, in addition to providing both traditional and modern education –including Tibetan traditional medicine and handicrafts, computer and international languages like Chinese and English –has adopted the centuries-old techniques of Nalanda's analytical debate to teach contemporary subjects. This teaching method proved to be a great success in the learning experience of the students. Some Chinese scholars have been so much impressed by the academic brilliance of the school's students that they visited the school to observe it.

In fact, Ragya school and its founder won many official recognitions from Chinese government including Excellent Service Award (2003), China Charity Worker award (2005), National People's Education award (2010) and Innovative School Award (2012) for its contribution to education and society.

Nevertheless, the aggressive assimilationist campaign, Chinese president Xi Jinping launched as the key feature of his repressive policy toward Tibetans and other colonized people like the Uyghurs, has drastically reduced their already limited space to teach and study and practice their language, culture and religion.

This policy is implemented on an aggressive scale – shutting down village-level schools, banning private Tibetan classes, displacing Tibetan as medium of instruction and putting thousands of children in colonial boarding schools. In May this year, China closed another Tibetan-run school, Taksang Lhamo Tibetan Culture School in Amdo Ngaba (Sichuan). This school founded in 1986 played a key role in providing education to the local Tibetan children.

For Tibetans, this entho-nationalist war, on their language and culture, is not only an issue of language and cultural rights and repression, but also human rights violation and a crime against humanity. The most cruel and heinous aspect of this cultural war is that it targets children by putting them in colonial boarding schools –even children as young as 4 years old, too little and too vulnerable to be in a boarding school. Today these boarding schools house roughly one million children between ages 6 to 18. China kept another 100,000 children aged between four to six years old in boarding pre-schools. They have not only been subject to cultural assimilation but also ideological indoctrination as a strategy to manufacture a generation of model colonial subjects –rootless in their culture and toothless in their language.

This systematic policy of separating children from their families and subjecting them to cultural assimilation and ideological indoctrination is nothing but Cultural Genocide. Under this policy, Beijing is not only tearing families apart but also forcing vulnerable children to become strangers to their own



culture by severing their spiritual, linguistic, and cultural ties to their home and community.

This has to be understood, not merely as an issue of taking away defenceless children from their families and brainwashing them, but in a more psychological and physiological sense of brutalizing children's mind and body for political ends. And the traumatic experiences, they have to suffer, and the social and emotional tolls they will have on the people of Tibet in the future is not an uneasy thing to guess.

An absurdity, stretched beyond its limit, is Beijing's justification for running the colonial boarding school system on the grounds that there are not enough schools in rural and remote Tibetan areas. However, the reality is that it is the same regime in Beijing that closed existing village-level as well as the few private schools in Tibet –leaving no alternatives for Tibetan students except the boarding schools.

Therefore, the real problem with Ragya School, in China's eyes, is not that it does not have fancy buildings or expensive grounds. Instead, it stood in Beijing's way of cultural and linguistic elimination in Tibet. This school has produced many modern educated students with strong roots in their culture and skilled in their mother tongue –making a positive impact in their respective field as educators, artists, intellectuals, writers, civil servants and entrepreneurs. In the ultimate analysis, this forced closure of Tibetan medium schools is to terminate, not just an alternative school for the Tibetans but the very idea that it is not only possible, but also pedagogically more conducive for Tibetan students to excel academically if the medium of instruction is their own language.

Colonial system, whether yesterday or today, is intrinsically disempowering when it comes to the true interests and aspirations of the occupied people. In the case of Tibet, this has never been clearer than now. It is manifested in the form of political repression, economic marginalization and cultural suppression. The forced closure of Tibetan medium schools is another bomb China dropped on the soul of Tibetan people and civilization.

Tibetans, especially in Tibet, felt the crushing blow of this repression against their culture and language. The mournful scene from the last day of the school is, indeed a funeral rite –for an acclaimed school and the idea of such an alternative. Despite the enormous personal risks including the arrest and torture, many in Tibet expressed their sense of loss, sadness and helplessness after the school was shut down.

A line from the social media post of a Tibetan encapsulates the general mood in Tibet during that time --“Even the agony of death may not be as excruciating as today's event.”

## India-China relations: The ball is in the Chinese court

19 August 2024, ORF, Manoj Joshi

India is open to re-configuring relations with China but a resolution of the border issue in eastern Ladakh is essential for progress.

For some time now, there have been signs that India wants a reset of its relations with China, however, no concrete steps are visible as of now. The formal Indian position, articulated repeatedly by the External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar, is that there can be no forward movement till there is a final resolution of the border issue in eastern Ladakh.

Last month, the Ministry of Finance in its annual Economic Survey, called for increased Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows from China to increase India's participation in the global supply chain and its exports. This was a surprise because in 2020, as a fallout of the eastern Ladakh tensions, India had placed stringent restraints on FDI from China.

The Survey noted that if India were to take advantage of the prevailing “China plus one” strategy, it needed to either integrate into Chinese supply chains or use FDI from China “for boosting India's exports to the US,” in the same way other East Asian economies had done in the past. It added that “It is more effective to have Chinese companies invest in India and then export the products to these markets rather than importing from China, adding minimal value”.

Both sides continue to hold fast to their respective positions—India insisting that the status quo ante be restored in eastern Ladakh to normalise relations, while China insists that there is no real problem there and India should set aside issues relating to the border and forge good relations with China.

Whether these views of the Ministry of Finance have an impact on current policy remains to be seen, on the surface, however, there is little change. Both sides continue to hold fast to their respective positions— India insisting that the status quo ante be restored in eastern Ladakh to normalise relations, while China insists that there is no real problem there and India should set aside issues relating to the border and forge good relations with China.

In early July, S Jaishankar met his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi at the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). Jaishankar noted on X that he and his counterpart “discussed early resolution of remaining issues in border areas.” And that they had agreed to “redouble efforts through diplomatic and military channels to that end”, adding that “respecting the LAC and ensuring peace and tranquility in the border areas is essential.” The key to good relations, he said, was the “three mutuals”—

“mutual respect, mutual sensitivity, and mutual interest”.

A press release by the Ministry of External Affairs noted that the two ministers agreed “that the prolongation of the current situation on the border is not in the interest of either side.” It noted that Jaishankar emphasised “the importance of fully abiding by relevant bilateral agreements, protocols and understandings reached between the two Governments in the past.”

Three weeks later, the two met again in Vientiane, Laos; the official MEA press release noted that their discussions focused on the need to find “an early resolution of the remaining issues along the Line of Actual Control to stabilise and rebuild bilateral relations.” It reiterated the importance of the “three mutuals.”

Just how much of a gap there remained between the Indian and Chinese positions was evident from the Chinese press release of the meeting which ignored the border issue and noted that “the two sides should take a rational approach to rise above differences and frictions to promote the improvement as well as stable and sustainable development of China-India relations.”

The release cited Jaishankar as saying that the two sides had “broad converging interests” and had to “face the shadow brought by the situation in the border areas”. But the Indian side was ready “to take a historic, strategic, and open perspective to find solutions to the differences.”

At the apex level, Prime Minister Modi in April 2024 had given an interview to Newsweek magazine where he mentioned that in his view the relationship with China was “important and significant.” He went on to add that it was his “belief that we need to urgently address the prolonged situation on our borders so that the abnormality in our bilateral interactions can be put behind us.” He said that he hoped and believed that “through positive and constructive bilateral engagement at the diplomatic and military levels, we will be able to restore and sustain peace and tranquillity in our borders.”

In eastern Ladakh, through their military and diplomatic talks, the two sides have been able to create “no patrol zones” in three of the six areas which the Chinese had blockaded in 2020 and prevented Indian forces from patrolling—the Kugrang river valley, Gogra, and Pangong Tso. As part of the settlement, Indian troops vacated the Kailash heights overlooking Spanggur Tso.

As of now both sides also continue to maintain substantial additional forces on either side of the LAC. But Chinese blockades in two important areas remain—the Depsang bulge in the north and the Charding-Ninglung Nala area in the south. As of

now both sides also continue to maintain substantial additional forces on either side of the LAC. Only with

complete disengagement will the two sides de-escalate in eastern Ladakh.

The 21st round of Corps Commanders level meetings to discuss the issue took place at the Chushul-Moldo border meeting point in 2024. And parallel to this, the 29th meeting of officials under the rubric of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) took place on 27 March in Beijing. There have been no further institutional meetings aimed at resolving the border issue, though Wang and Jaishankar expressed hope in Astana that a meeting of the WMCC would take place soon.

Even today, the goal of the surprise Chinese action in 2020 remains a mystery. In 2019, Xi Jinping met Prime Minister Modi for their second informal summit in Chennai, an event that presaged good relations in the coming period. 2019 was also the year in which Chinese investments into India peaked in terms of the number of transactions (527). The peak year for investments, US\$859 million was 2015.

But then, they conducted a sudden mobilisation, violative of the 1996 Military Confidence Building Agreement, and established blockades at several points in eastern Ladakh to prevent Indian troops from patrolling parts of the LAC. They did not attack any Indian post as such and the Galwan events that led to the loss of 20 Indian soldiers were more by way of a situation gone out of control than any planned action. The Indian reaction was quick and tough. Besides banning hundreds of Chinese apps, the India issued Press Note 3 which placed restrictions on investments from countries sharing a land border with India. Though ostensibly aimed at preventing “opportunistic takeovers/acquisitions of Indian companies due to the COVID 19 pandemic”, its real effect was palpable on FDI flows from China which had coincidentally undertaken the eastern Ladakh incursions at that time. A parliamentary question in March 2022 revealed that 347 applications had been received in the previous two years and of these 66 were approved and 193 rejected.

Besides banning hundreds of Chinese apps, the India issued Press Note 3 which placed restrictions on investments from countries sharing a land border with India.

Despite all this, India-China trade continued to grow, and in 2023-24, it has reached US\$ 118.4, making China India’s largest trading partner ahead of the United States. There was a huge imbalance in this with India exporting just US\$16.67 billion worth of goods and importing US\$101.7 billion. India remain heavily reliant on China for critical products like

telecom parts, pharmaceutical ingredients, and advanced technology components.

The Economic Survey's call for seeking enhanced FDI from China was also an admission by the government that the Production Linked Investment (PLI)

scheme that it had launched in 2020 to strengthen India's manufacturing industries and make them more globally competitive was not performing as well as expected.

As of now in terms of relations with India, the ball is in the Chinese court. India has made it clear that it is not willing to normalise ties till issues are settled in eastern Ladakh. China continues to ignore that demand while calling for better ties. Meanwhile, both sides continue to maintain additional forces along the LAC as well as their build-up on either side of the border.

### Opinion: More Painful Than the Agony of Death

19 August 2024, Phayul, Palden Sonam

Hundreds of students march on October 19, 2010, to protest Qinghai provincial policy threatening Tibetan linguistic and culture heritage (Photo/Free Tibet)

On July 12, a video clip from Tibet was going viral on the Tibetan cyber world, which, at first glance, appeared like a funeral ceremony. Everyone in the video looked visibly distraught with their heads down and many crying.

However, it turned out to be a scene from the final day of Ragya Sherig Norbu Lobling –a prominent private-run Tibetan school in Amdo region of Tibet as teachers and students paid their last respect to their beloved school after the Chinese government forced it to close.

In a normal situation, a school would be shut down if it failed to serve the primary goal of giving education to its students. In today's occupied Tibet, however, a school can be forced to close simply because it is able to give great education to its students.

Ragya School was established in 1994 by Jigme Gyaltsen, a Tibetan monk educator in Golok, (Ch: Guoluo Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai). Golok is largely a remote nomadic area and this school has played a pivotal role in providing quality education to hundreds of Tibetan students. As its popularity spreads, students from different parts of Tibet have sought admission into it. Many of its students are orphans.

This school, in addition to providing both traditional and modern education –including Tibetan traditional medicine and handcrafts, computer and international languages like Chinese and English –has adopted the

centuries-old techniques of Nalanda's analytical debate to teach contemporary subjects. This teaching method proved to be a great success in the learning experience of the students. Some Chinese scholars have been so much impressed by the academic brilliance of the school's students that they visited the school to observe it.

In fact, Ragya school and its founder won many official recognitions from Chinese government including Excellent Service Award (2003), China Charity Worker award (2005), National People's Education award (2010) and Innovative School Award (2012) for its contribution to education and society.

Nevertheless, the aggressive assimilationist campaign, Chinese president Xi Jinping launched as the key feature of his repressive policy toward Tibetans and other colonized people like the Uyghurs, has drastically reduced their already limited space to teach and study and practice their language, culture and religion.

This policy is implemented on an aggressive scale – shutting down village-level schools, banning private Tibetan classes, displacing Tibetan as medium of instruction and putting thousands of children in colonial boarding schools. In May this year, China closed another Tibetan-run school, Taksang Lhamo Tibetan Culture School in Amdo Ngaba (Sichuan). This school founded in 1986 played a key role in providing education to the local Tibetan children.

For Tibetans, this ethno-nationalist war, on their language and culture, is not only an issue of language and cultural rights and repression, but also human rights violation and a crime against humanity. The most cruel and heinous aspect of this cultural war is that it targets children by putting them in colonial boarding schools –even children as young as 4 years old, too little and too vulnerable to be in a boarding school. Today these boarding schools house roughly one million children between ages 6 to 18. China kept another 100,000 children aged between four to six years old in boarding pre-schools. They have not only been subject to cultural assimilation but also ideological indoctrination as a strategy to manufacture a generation of model colonial subjects –rootless in their culture and toothless in their language.

This systematic policy of separating children from their families and subjecting them to cultural assimilation and ideological indoctrination is nothing but Cultural Genocide. Under this policy, Beijing is not only tearing families apart but also forcing vulnerable children to become strangers to their own culture by severing their spiritual, linguistic, and cultural ties to their home and community.

This has to be understood, not merely as an issue of taking away defenceless children from their families

and brainwashing them, but in a more psychological and physiological sense of brutalizing children's mind and body for political ends. And the traumatic experiences, they have to suffer, and the social and emotional tolls they will have on the people of Tibet in the future is not an uneasy thing to guess.

An absurdity, stretched beyond its limit, is Beijing's justification for running the colonial boarding school system on the grounds that there are not enough schools in rural and remote Tibetan areas. However, the reality is that it is the same regime in Beijing that closed existing village-level as well as the few private schools in Tibet –leaving no alternatives for Tibetan students except the boarding schools.

Therefore, the real problem with Ragya School, in China's eyes, is not that it does not have fancy buildings or expensive grounds. Instead, it stood in Beijing's way of cultural and linguistic elimination in Tibet. This school has produced many modern educated students with strong roots in their culture and skilled in their mother tongue –making a positive impact in their respective field as educators, artists, intellectuals, writers, civil servants and entrepreneurs. In the ultimate analysis, this forced closure of Tibetan medium schools is to terminate, not just an alternative school for the Tibetans but the very idea that it is not only possible, but also pedagogically more conducive for Tibetan students to excel academically if the medium of instruction is their own language.

Colonial system, whether yesterday or today, is intrinsically disempowering when it comes to the true interests and aspirations of the occupied people. In the case of Tibet, this has never been clearer than now. It is manifested in the form of political repression, economic marginalization and cultural suppression. The forced closure of Tibetan medium schools is another bomb China dropped on the soul of Tibetan people and civilization.

Tibetans, especially in Tibet, felt the crushing blow of this repression against their culture and language. The mournful scene from the last day of the school is, indeed a funeral rite –for an acclaimed school and the idea of such an alternative. Despite the enormous personal risks including the arrest and torture, many in Tibet expressed their sense of loss, sadness and helplessness after the school was shut down.

A line from the social media post of a Tibetan encapsulates the general mood in Tibet during that time --“Even the agony of death may not be as excruciating as today's event.”

## **‘Monument to history’ battle between US and China over future of Mao’s secretary’s diary**

18 August 2024, The Guardian, Amy Hawkins

Beijing is believed to be behind court bid to secure account of life inside Communist HQ.

In the early hours of 4 June 1989, Li Rui, a veteran of the Chinese Communist party (CCP), was standing on the balcony of his apartment on Chang'an Boulevard in central Beijing. He could see tanks rolling towards Tiananmen Square.

For weeks, up to a million protesters had been gathering peacefully in Beijing's plaza, demanding political reform. But they failed. Instead, as Li observed from his unique vantage point, troops opened fire, killing an estimated several thousands of civilians. It was the worst massacre in recent Chinese history. “Soldiers firing randomly with their machine guns, sometimes shooting the ground and sometimes shooting toward the sky,” Li wrote in his diary. A “black weekend”.

The first-hand account of an event that the Chinese government has systematically tried to distort and erase from the historical record is one of thousands of observations noted in Li's diaries, which he kept meticulously between 1946 and 2018. Few people, especially not of Li's stature, have kept such detailed records of this tumultuous era in Chinese history. Now those diaries are the subject of a hotly disputed lawsuit, the trial of which begins on Monday.

Born in 1917, Li joined the Communist party as a young idealist. After the communists seized power in 1949, he rose through the ranks to become Mao's personal secretary in 1958. But it wasn't to last. In 1959, Li publicly criticised Mao and was sent to a penal camp as punishment. His persecution continued through the Cultural Revolution, including more than eight years in solitary confinement. It wasn't until after Mao died in 1976 that Li returned to the senior party ranks. He went on to become one of the most outspoken members of the liberal, reformist faction, observing from the inside the silencing of dissent that has intensified under the rule of his personal acquaintance Xi Jinping.

Li's papers are, therefore, thus a crucial archive. “It's hard to overstate their significance,” says Joseph Torigian, a research fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution. But on Monday, a court in California, not China, will begin hearing a trial about the fate of those diaries, the culmination of five years of legal wrangling that have complicated Li's legacy since he died in February 2019, at the age of 101.

For several years before his death, Li's daughter Li Nanyang, who lives in the US, had been scanning, transcribing and cataloguing her father's papers, and ultimately transferred them to the Hoover Institution, the leading archive for CCP history in the

US. Li Nanyang and Stanford claim that this was in line with Li's wishes. On 30 January 2017, for example, he recorded a meeting with his wife, Zhang Yuzhen, to talk about "the issue of my diaries". Zhang "agreed with my decision ... having Hoover retain the diaries", he wrote.

But on 21 March 2019, a lawyer for Li's widow wrote to Stanford, asserting her ownership of the diaries and seeking their return. The 89-year-old soon filed a lawsuit in Beijing, arguing that she was the rightful heir to Li's estate. In May that year, Stanford filed a countersuit in California to eliminate Zhang's claims to the materials. And so began a legal battle between one of the world's top universities and an ageing widow – who, Stanford argues, is a front for the Chinese government.

Why would Zhang, who is now well into her 90s, spend several years and millions of dollars fighting over a collection of diaries?

Lawyers for Zhang, who did not respond to interview requests, say it is about privacy. The materials reflect "deeply personal" affairs, including "intimate correspondence", her lawyers argue. The "ongoing violations" of her privacy have caused "severe emotional distress".

But others are sceptical. "By all indications ... the PRC [People's Republic of China] is running this litigation behind the scenes," lawyers for Stanford have argued. "To put it simply, Ms Zhang lacks the financial ability to pay the attorneys' fees being incurred on her behalf." Zhang's lawyers deny there has been any interference from the Chinese government.

"It's simply about control," says Ian Johnson, author of a book about China's unofficial historians, such as Li. Under Xi Jinping, China's leader, the party has made it clear that it "can't allow competing narratives of what happened in the past".

In many countries, the diaries of a political leader would be housed in an archive, available to researchers or the public. In China, the opposite is true. In 2013, Xi warned against "historical nihilism". For historians, that has meant that, after a period of relative openness, archive after archive has been shuttered. In 2012, the archives of the foreign ministry abruptly closed, reopening the following year with 90% of the materials redacted.

That makes Li's diaries particularly valuable to researchers. "The detail is mind-boggling," says Frank Dikötter, a historian. Insights into elite politics are buried among notes about how many laps he swam in the pool, and how many times he got up to use the bathroom at night. Domestic details notwithstanding, Dikötter says it's unimaginable that his diaries could be displayed in today's China. "When you have a monopoly over power, you develop an obsession with secrecy."

Li was keenly aware of this trend. In 2013, he said in an interview: "There are classified materials of the party about the Cultural Revolution ... I heard it was all burned." Such tidbits have been marshalled by Stanford to argue that Li wanted his papers preserved at Hoover. But Zhang's lawyers have found their own bits of evidence in Li's voluminous writings and interviews. In 2014, he said, "Li Nanyang is Li Nanyang, and I am myself. My thoughts and opinions are well known and expressed in my books and articles. Li Nanyang is my daughter, but she can't represent me, and I don't allow her to represent me."

Li Nanyang, a fierce CCP critic herself, doesn't dispute the fact that she and her father didn't always see eye to eye. "He wanted to save the party. That's not my idea ... This is not something that demonstrates that my father won't work with me [to donate] his historical materials."

Zhang denies that there is a plot to hide the Li Rui diaries from the public. Her legal filings note that she is only seeking the return of his original handwritten diaries, not the full collection of papers at Hoover, and that Hoover is free to make copies for researchers.

But historians say that original manuscripts are vital, especially when history is contested. It's "crucial that you have the handwritten ones," says Dikötter. "Because, ultimately, that's what the whole thing relies on. The credibility relies on that."

Li "would have known how difficult it would have been for [the diaries] to see the light of day [in China]," says Johnson. "I think very much that he wanted to donate them to Hoover."

Li died without a will. His daughter says that this is because if he had made his intention public, including getting a will formally notarised, he would have faced trouble from the government. Zhang's lawyers have quoted from a draft will, in which Li stated that his children "must not participate in the publication of my diaries". Stanford says it has never seen evidence of this draft.

A court in Beijing long ago ruled in Zhang's favour. A second lawsuit filed in Beijing by Li Nanyang's sister, seeking the return of the papers relating to their mother, Li Rui's first wife, also resulted in a judgment that the materials should be returned. But the 40 boxes full of pages and pages of Li's dense scrawl, documenting the dramatic and often darkening developments of China in the 20th century, for now remain at Stanford. Some legal experts have pointed out that this week's trial could simply be a question of whether a US court should respect a ruling made in a foreign jurisdiction. But for scholars, the stakes are higher. The diaries are "a monument to history", says Dikötter.



This article was amended on 22 August 2024. An earlier version referred to Li Rui having kept diaries between 1938 and 2018; in fact the dates are 1946 to 2018. It has also been clarified that Li was sent to a penal camp in 1959, before the Cultural Revolution started in 1966.

### **Tibetan Travails: China's Stranglehold on Movement**

18 August 2024, Devdiscourse

China's stringent travel restrictions are severely impacting ethnic Tibetans' freedom of movement. Increased surveillance, checkpoints, and passport hindrances create significant barriers, affecting their ability to seek exile or practice their cultural identity. The Tibetan community in Dharamshala sees dwindling arrivals amidst heightened security since 2008.

China's stringent travel restrictions are disproportionately affecting ethnic Tibetans, creating significant barriers to their freedom of movement. The obstacles include troop deployments, checkpoints, roadblocks, required bureaucratic approvals, and passport restrictions, which impede travel both within Tibetan areas and externally.

Restrictions have intensified, particularly near international borders in the south, making it harder for Tibetans to seek exile in India and other countries. The Tibetan Reception Center in Dharamshala remains largely vacant, with dwindling student numbers at the Lower Tibetan Children's Village (TCV) school. Experts attribute this decline to increased strictness on movement following the 2008 protests in Tibet.

According to Central Tibetan Administration sources, only five Tibetans arrived in Dharamshala in 2020, four in 2021, ten in 2022, and 15 in 2023. This contrasts starkly with over 2000 annual arrivals during the 1990s and early 2000s. Tenzin Passang, executive director of Students for a Free Tibet-India, remarked, "Fleeing Tibet has always been perilous, but Tibetans pursue it to preserve their cultural identity and religious freedom."

Passport acquisition for foreign travel remains nearly impossible for Tibetans, with over 2,000 inspectors manning 700 discipline committees across rural Tibet. These measures have severely curtailed the number of Tibetans escaping post-2008 due to Beijing's heightened security to prevent protests and international scrutiny. Passang noted, "China aims to prevent escapes as Tibetans can provide firsthand accounts of human rights abuses."

Previous incidents involve Chinese authorities confiscating passports and imposing travel restrictions to Lhasa. Tibetan-origin foreign nationals

also face major hurdles in obtaining visas to visit Tibet, often resulting in denials after prolonged waits. Highlighting these issues, Passang added, "Our culture and way of life face aggressive suppression by the CCP."

### **China's extreme restrictions on freedom of movement affecting ethnic Tibetans**

18 August 2024, ANI

China's extreme restrictions on freedom of movement are disproportionately affecting ethnic Tibetans. Obstacles including troop deployments, checkpoints, roadblocks, required bureaucratic approvals and passport restrictions impede freedom of movement both within Tibetan areas and between those areas and the outside world. China has tightened travel restrictions, with Tibetans needing permits to enter certain areas, particularly near international borders in the south. These constraints on freedom of movement also hinder Tibetans from seeking exile in India and other countries.

The Tibetan Reception Center in Dharamshala is lying vacant. Moreover, the number of students in the Lower Tibetan Children's Village (TCV) school in Dharamshala is also decreasing.

Experts say that after the protests in Tibet in 2008, China has increased strictness on the movement of Tibetans.

According to Central Tibetan Administration sources only five Tibetans had arrived in Dharamshala in 2020, four in 2021, ten in 2022 and 15 arrivals have been reported in 2023. However, in the 1990s or the early 2000s, the annual arrivals were over 2000. Speaking to ANI, the executive director of Students for a Free Tibet- India, Tenzin Passang said, "Fleeing Tibet has always been a dangerous journey but Tibetans still believe that it works because they cannot practice their religion freely or speak their language and express their cultural identity so they realise that they have a better chance for maintaining this unique Tibetan identity in-exile so they choose to flee." Tibetans face nearly insurmountable hurdles in obtaining a passport for foreign travel. Also, more than 2,000 "inspectors" that staff around 700 "discipline committees" set up in rural Tibetan communities have tightened travel restrictions in recent years. "After 2008 the number of people escaping from Tibet decreased drastically because China specifically raised their security and surveillance across Tibet to ensure that there is no repeat of the mass demonstrations that happened in 2008 which also received global media attention and China faced international criticism so they have a strong interest in preventing Tibetans from

escaping because the Tibetans can provide the first-hand information about the human rights abuses in Tibet," Passang added.

Further, she also highlighted the previous cases in which the Chinese authorities have confiscated the passports of Tibetans and restricted travel to Lhasa. Foreign nationals of Tibetan origin face enormous challenges when seeking a visa to visit Tibet, often waiting for years only for their request to be denied. "There were also cases where they confiscated the passports of Tibetans living at the borders and they imposed strict restrictions to travel across Lhasa. Even in our own country, the CCP has raised a war against our culture and our way of life," she said.

### **Dalai Lama, the US and diplomacy**

18 August 2024, Taipei Times, Khedroob Thondup

During his 2020 presidential campaign, US President Joe Biden made a promise that resonated deeply with advocates of human rights and religious freedom: He pledged to meet the Dalai Lama and invite him to the White House if elected.

This commitment was seen as a significant gesture toward supporting the Tibetan cause and standing up to China's oppressive policies in Tibet.

However, as Biden's four-year tenure draws to a close, this promise remains unfulfilled, raising questions about the administration's diplomatic priorities and its stance on human rights.

Despite his campaign pledge, Biden has not met with the Dalai Lama during his presidency. This absence is notable, especially considering that some former US presidents, including George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama, have met with the Tibetan spiritual leader.

The Dalai Lama, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, symbolizes the struggle for Tibetan autonomy and the broader fight for human rights and religious freedom. One of the primary reasons for this unfulfilled promise appears to be the Biden administration's concern over offending China. The US-China relationship is complex and fraught with tension over issues ranging from trade to human rights to military presence in the South China Sea. Meeting with the Dalai Lama, who Beijing views as a separatist, could exacerbate these tensions and potentially derail diplomatic efforts on other fronts.

By not meeting with the Dalai Lama, Biden has missed an opportunity to reaffirm the US' commitment to human rights and religious freedom. Such a meeting would have sent a powerful message to the world about Washington's stance on these critical issues. It would have also provided a platform to highlight the ongoing human rights abuses in Tibet and to support the Tibetan people's struggle for autonomy.

While the Biden administration has taken steps to address the Tibet issue, such as signing the Resolve Tibet Act, which pressures China to resume negotiations with Tibetan leaders, the symbolic power of a presidential meeting with the Dalai Lama cannot be overstated. Symbolic gestures in diplomacy often carry significant weight, influencing public perception and international relations.

Biden's decision not to meet with the Dalai Lama during his tenure reflects the delicate balance of international diplomacy.

However, it also underscores a missed opportunity to stand firmly for human rights and religious freedom. As the world watches, it is crucial for leaders to not only make promises but also to follow through on them, especially when they pertain to fundamental values and principles.

### **Nancy Pelosi has consistently called out China's oppressive policies**

18 August 2024, The Week, Khedroob Thondup

Pelosi has advocated the rights of the Tibetan people.

NANCY PELOSI, a name synonymous with resilience and unwavering commitment to human rights, has long been a formidable figure in American politics. Her relationship with His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people is a testament to her dedication to justice and freedom. As someone who has consistently stood up to China, Pelosi has an admirable legacy of courage and tenacity.

Pelosi's history of challenging China dates back to 1991, when she unfurled a pro-democracy banner in Tiananmen Square, commemorating the victims of the 1989 massacre. This act of defiance was a clear message to Beijing that the US would not turn a blind eye to human rights abuses. Over the years, Pelosi has consistently criticised China's record on human rights, from the treatment of Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang to the suppression of freedoms in Hong Kong and Tibet. Pelosi's connection with the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan cause dates back to the early years of her political career. In 1989, she was one of the first American politicians to meet with the Dalai Lama after he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. This meeting marked the beginning of a long-standing friendship and a shared commitment to the Tibetan struggle for autonomy and human rights. One of the most poignant moments in Pelosi's advocacy for Tibet came in 2008, during the Beijing Olympics. Despite the potential diplomatic fallout, she led a congressional delegation to Dharamsala, the seat of the Tibetan government-in-exile. There, she met with the Dalai Lama and expressed her solidarity with the Tibetan people. Her visit was a bold statement

against China's human rights abuses and a clear message that the world was watching.

She has consistently used her platform to call out China's oppressive policies and to advocate the rights of the Tibetan people. In 2007, she played a crucial role in the passage of the Tibetan Policy Act, which aimed to support the preservation of Tibet's unique religious, cultural and linguistic heritage. During a visit to Tibet in 2015, she and her delegation were closely monitored by Chinese authorities. Despite the restrictions, Pelosi managed to meet with local Tibetans and hear their stories of resilience.

Pelosi's role in world affairs extends beyond her advocacy for Tibet. As the first woman to serve as Speaker of the US House of Representatives, she has been a trailblazer for women in politics. Her leadership during critical moments, such as the passage of the Affordable Care Act and the impeachment proceedings against President Donald Trump, has cemented her reputation as a formidable and principled leader.

Her stance on China has been particularly noteworthy. Pelosi has been a vocal critic of China's human rights record, its aggressive territorial claims and its influence on global affairs. She has consistently called for a tougher stance on China, advocating policies that promote human rights and democratic values.

Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in August 2022 was a significant moment in her career and in US-China relations. Despite warnings from Beijing and even caution from the Biden administration, Pelosi proceeded with her trip, emphasising the US's unwavering support for Taiwan's democracy. Her visit was met with strong condemnation from China, which conducted large-scale military exercises in response. This move was seen by many as a bold statement against China's increasing assertiveness in the region.

Pelosi's achievements in a male-dominated field are even more remarkable as she has consistently stood up to powerful adversaries. She has shattered glass ceilings and paved the way for future generations of women leaders. Her ability to navigate the complexities of international politics while maintaining her commitment to human rights and justice has made her a significant figure in world affairs.

The author is the son of Gyalo Thondup, the Dalai Lama's elder brother and his former personal representative to China. He lives in Taiwan.

## **President Biden's Missed Opportunity: He should have met the Dalai Lama**

18 August 2024, The Sunday Guardian, Khedroob Thondup

During his 2020 presidential campaign, Joe Biden made a promise that resonated deeply with advocates of human rights and religious freedom: he pledged to meet the Dalai Lama and invite him to the White House if elected.

This commitment was seen as a significant gesture towards supporting the Tibetan cause and standing up to China's oppressive policies

in Tibet. However, as President Biden's four-year tenure draws to a close, this promise remains unfulfilled, raising questions about the administration's diplomatic priorities and its stance on human rights.

Despite his campaign pledge, President Biden has not met with the Dalai Lama during his presidency. This absence is notable, especially considering that previous U.S. presidents, including George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama, have all met with the Tibetan spiritual leader.

The Dalai Lama, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, symbolizes the struggle for Tibetan autonomy and the broader fight for human rights and religious freedom. One of the primary reasons for this unfulfilled promise appears to be the administration's concern over offending China. The U.S.-China relationship is complex and fraught with tension over issues ranging from trade to human rights to military presence in the South China Sea. Meeting with the Dalai Lama, whom Beijing views as a separatist, could exacerbate these tensions and potentially derail diplomatic efforts on other fronts.

### **Impact on Human Rights Advocacy**

By not meeting with the Dalai Lama, President Biden has missed an opportunity to reaffirm the United States' commitment to human rights and religious freedom. Such a meeting would have sent a powerful message to the world about the U.S.'s stance on these critical issues. It would have also provided a platform to highlight the ongoing human rights abuses in Tibet and to support the Tibetan people's struggle for autonomy.

While the Biden administration has taken steps to address the Tibet issue, such as signing the Resolve Tibet Act, which pressures China to resume negotiations with Tibetan leaders, the symbolic power of a presidential meeting with the Dalai Lama cannot be overstated. Symbolic gestures in diplomacy often carry significant weight, influencing public perception and international relations.

President Biden's decision not to meet with the Dalai Lama during his tenure reflects the delicate balance

of international diplomacy. However, it also underscores a missed opportunity to stand firmly for human rights and religious freedom. As the world watches, it is crucial for leaders to not only make promises but also to follow through on them, especially when they pertain to fundamental values and principles.

Dalai Lama's nephew, Khedroob Thondup is a geopolitical analyst.

### **Tibetan people deserve their dignity — and their rights**

17 August 2024, Boston Globe, Jim McGovern

Our visit was to India — not Tibet — because the Dalai Lama has lived in exile there for the past 65 years, forced to flee after his native homeland was brutally taken over and occupied by China.

Earlier this summer, I was part of a bipartisan congressional delegation that traveled to Dharamshala, India, to meet with the Dalai Lama.

Our visit was to India — not Tibet — because the Dalai Lama has lived in exile there for the past 65 years, forced to flee after his native homeland was brutally taken over and occupied by the People's Republic of China.

For decades, the United States has played a complicated role in the resulting dispute — pledging support for the people of Tibet while also accepting China's sovereignty over the region. In recent years, and rightfully so, the Chinese government has come under increasing scrutiny for violating the rights of the Tibetan people and attempting to erase their language, culture, religion, and way of life. For America to help right these wrongs, we must demand that China start treating the people of Tibet with dignity and respect. We have more tools in the toolbox — now is the time to use them.

Visiting with His Holiness was an incredibly powerful and moving experience. As the world's best-known Tibetan leader, he has inspired millions with his belief in the oneness of all humanity and the importance of human dignity. I have been guided by his commitment to nonviolence and his dedication to preserving the one planet we all share. In a world consumed by turmoil, his leadership is as relevant and as necessary today as ever.

Our visit to Dharamshala was a vivid reminder of these two realities. The Tibetans we met in India are there because of Chinese repression. The thriving community and solid institutions they have built — including the democratically self-governing Central Tibetan Administration — are evidence of their strength and resilience as a people. But the underlying dispute over the Tibetan right to self-determination is unresolved.

The week before our bipartisan delegation departed for India, the House voted overwhelmingly to pass the Promoting a Peaceful Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act, a bill I authored. This legislation affirms America's support for Tibetan self-determination and requires the State Department to counter false information about Tibet — such as the PRC claim that Tibet has been part of China since ancient times. Correcting the historical record is one step the United States can take to support the Tibetan people.

China has criticized this new legislation with the tired accusation that it constitutes interference in China's internal affairs. In fact, the PRC sanctioned me for my role in calling out their horrific human rights record — an action that only serves to highlight how afraid their leadership is of free and open debate, and how they seek to punish and silence those who disagree with them.

I will wear their sanctions as a badge of honor, and I will continue to call on the Chinese government to honor its existing obligations under international human rights law. As a state party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, China has accepted that “all peoples have the right to self-determination.” Self-determination can take many forms; the Dalai Lama's Middle Way Approach, which seeks genuine autonomy for Tibetans in China, is one example.

The United States must continue to pressure Chinese officials to stop their efforts to erase Tibetan culture. Tibetans must be able to speak their language, practice their religion, educate their children, and preserve their history as they see fit. Tibetan political prisoners should be released. And the Dalai Lama's successor, the Panchen Lama — forcibly disappeared by the Chinese government in 1995 — should be allowed to live his life in freedom. The Dalai Lama should be allowed to return to Tibet if he wants and meet with his people.

The United States must also urge the Chinese government to negotiate in good faith with the Dalai Lama, the Central Tibetan Administration, or whoever Tibetans decide, to ensure a future in which Tibetans preserve their dignity and all of their rights. There is no obstacle to negotiation on the Tibetan side. It is past time for the PRC to return to the table. If they were to take these steps, the international community would respond positively.

Finally, America must uplift the voices of Tibetans in the diaspora and support their initiatives to preserve their culture and memory. At the end of the day, this comes back to the Tibetan children who greeted us upon our arrival in Dharamshala. We seek a better future for their sake.

Despite our differences, China and the United States must learn to peacefully coexist. But peaceful coexistence doesn't mean staying silent when we disagree – we have different principles and values, and those values compel the United States to stand up until the human rights of the Tibetan people are respected.

America must stand in solidarity with the people of Tibet for as long as that takes.

### India lagging behind the West on Tibet stance?

17 August 2024, Tibetan Review

Given the recent US adoption of the 'Resolve Tibet Act' and the passing of significant resolutions on Tibet by the parliaments of the EU, Canada, and Australia in recent times, Tenzin Sherab\* quotes US House Speaker Emeritus Nancy Pelosi that "Now things have changed" to argue that India too should adopt a more robust policy on Tibet in keeping with its historical ties with the Chinese occupied Himalayan territory and its current geopolitical concerns.

Two recent Tibet related events have made Tibetans jubilant and Xi worried. Seventy-year-old conflict between Tibet and China has now surfaced prominently through media and on various social platforms.

In his recent speech at upper Indian Parliament (Rajya Sabha), a member from Sikkim State, Shri Dorjee Tshering Lepcha made a pragmatic demand to the Government of India to refer the border of 1,400 km stretching from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh as "Tibet border" rather than China border. Since 1962, India and China have held 30 border meetings, the latest one in July 2024 in New Delhi, which yielded no tangible result for both sides. Historically, there never existed borders between India and China. MP Mr. Lepcha urged the Indian Government to issue a directive to its agencies to officially rename the border as "Tibet border" as it affected India's national identity and territorial integrity.

And another significant event was the recent passage of the 'Resolve Tibet Act' by the US Congress, which is a legislative milestone and unprecedented bipartisan support for the Tibetan cause. This important bill is to end an impasse in negotiation with Beijing which has stalled since 2010. The US delegation who met with His Holiness the Dalai Lama and their subsequent statement refuting the Chinese claim of "Tibet being a part of China", rattled the communist regime.

A delegation of seven influential US lawmakers led by Republican Congressman Michael McCaul, former Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi, and long-time

Tibet supporter and human rights champion and Democrat Congressman Jim McGovern, made headlines across the globe on June 19, 2024. They brought the issue of Tibet to the forefront. The law not only underscores renewed US support for Tibet but also challenges the core issue of the "One China Policy" which many countries have adhered to over the years.

However, the immediate counter-reactions from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to the "Resolve Tibet Act" included shutting down the renowned private Tibetan School in Golog Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai Province and surveil and suppress every movement of Tibetans. Unless the Joe Biden administration steps up to implement the Act in letter and spirit, Tibetans inside Tibet will continually be put in inconceivable harm's way and their lives and identity would be seriously jeopardized.

### Catastrophic Miscalculation

A look back at the international playbook of politics and diplomacy reminds us Tibetans, who have been perennial and hapless victims of oppression and misinformation, how the CCP had twisted the credibility of even acclaimed leaders such as Britain's Tony Blair, David Miliband and the Clintons, to name a few stalwarts. China misguided them to the extent that they gave in to the CCP's narrative of the "One China Policy". In doing so, they looked the other way to decades of China's iron-grip control of Tibet. Even former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton during her visit to Beijing in 2009 hushed up severe rights violations in Tibet that occurred in the aftermath of widespread protests in Tibet against Chinese rule and in the run-up to the 2008 Olympics in Beijing. Her widely reported press statement in Beijing, saying human rights violations in China can't interfere with or take precedence over other economic issues, was unnerving and totally distressing. Her stoic silence on human rights issues caused extensive damage and distress to the Tibetan struggle and to other minorities who were suffering under the regime. The catastrophic miscalculations of such Western leaders that China will become liberal after it is brought into the WTO fell flat in the face of a more belligerent and assertive China. Instead, the Chinese regime – not its citizens who are hardworking and freedom loving – became a more aggressive and existential threat to peace-loving peoples and rule-based international democratic systems.

And so, the radical change in the legislative US policy towards Tibet gives Tibetans a huge sigh of relief and hope. It also aligns well with what India might have perceived lately to counter the Chinese cartographic warfare concerning the Indian State of Arunachal Pradesh and China's growing influence in the region. The Significant Bond



Pundits in Delhi, I believe, are aware of how profound cultural and spiritual affinity between India and Tibet evolved over the centuries. It is not just Buddhism that binds the two nations together. The Tibetan language, with its letters originally based on Brahmi Gupta scripts, is the foundational basis of mastering the Tibetan language, and the Buddhist sutras and tantras. More than two hundred volumes of the Buddha's teachings, a few hundred years ago, were translated into Tibetan by Indian and Tibetan scholars.

The 38th Tibetan Emperor Trisong Detsen (8th century AD) invited Indian masters such as Padmasambhava, Acharya Shanta Rakshita, etc, to Tibet. Buddhism, therefore, took a firm root and flourished. Worship of deities such as Tara Devi, Saraswati, Vajrapani, Bhairava, Hayagriva, etc, have been an integral part of Tibetan practices and way of life. Mount Kailash and Lake Mansarovar are not only considered sacred, they are a significant bond between the Indian and Tibetan civilizations. However, peace, calm, and tranquillity that historically prevailed between the two sides on the border were rudely disrupted by the forceful Chinese annexation of Tibet in 1951. There were hardly any soldiers patrolling the India-Tibet border until then. In fact, it was Tibet's independence which ensured India's security. More than 1.2 million Tibetans died as a result of Chinese occupation, and many are still languishing in prison for as simple a reason as displaying a picture of H. H the Dalai Lama.

It is time for India to initiate a more significant and robust Tibet policy, to strike while the iron is hot, as old saying goes. As a great admirer of the visionary trio (Prime Minister Modi-ji, Mr. Doval & Dr. Jaishankar), I, for one, appeal to them to meet with His Holiness the Dalai Lama at least in his capacity as religious and spiritual leader of the Tibetans and millions of his followers worldwide.

USA aside, Canada, the EU, and Australia have also pledged their support for Tibet in a manner no one has ever imagined a decade ago. As per Asian News Network, Japan will hold its first ever International Conference next year in support of Tibetans. In short, it is fair to say that what matters to the leaders depends entirely on the self-serving interest of their concerned nation when it comes to chalking a policy direction. It only needs to be understood that the Tibet issue is not only for Tibetans, rather, it involves long-term geopolitical interest of the global community as well.

As Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi rightly said, "Now things have changed." So does the law of impermanence, as per Buddhist belief, is inevitable, and only time will tell what fate lies ahead for Tibet.

## What 'Tibet' means for China's water security

16 August 2024, Tibetan Review

Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), the western half of Tibet proper which China calls Xizang (or Xizang Autonomous Region), is home to 41% of China's total glaciers, 16.5% of its water resources, 30% of its grasslands, 18.3% of its wetlands and 40% of its lake area, reported China's official Xinhua news agency Aug 16.

These percentages will rise enormously if the other historically Tibetan areas that are under Chinese rule are also taken into consideration, especially Qinghai, made up of the bulk of Tibet's historical Amdo (or Domey) province and a section of Kham (or Dotoe) province.

The report gave these details in the context of the coming into force on Oct 1, 2024, of a regulation on the protection of the glaciers in the region, citing a press release issued by the Standing Committee of the People's Congress of TAR on Aug 15.

The report noted that the regulation came after China's law on ecological conservation on the Tibetan Plateau was enacted in Sep 2023, the first state-level legislation specialized in regulating ecological conservation on the plateau.

The regulation is stated to provide specific guidelines for governments and relevant departments in glacier areas, introduce a responsibility system and performance evaluation mechanism for glacier protection goals, and establish punitive measures for violations.

The regulation will effectively protect glacier resources, ensure the ecological safety of the Tibetan Plateau, and contribute to the preservation of the plateau's flora, fauna and landscapes, Zhao Guiying, deputy director of the Legislative Affairs Commission of the Standing Committee of the People's Congress of the TAR has said.

## Surrounded by the flames

16 August 2024, ORF, Harsh V. Pant

With multiple fires burning around India, what is astounding is not India's seeming inability to manage those fires but its remarkable success in insulating itself from those flames

Events in Bangladesh continue to reverberate across the region. But their consequences would take a long time to reveal themselves. Even before the collapse of the Sheikh Hasina Wazed government, the region was reeling under a host of challenges. It appears that the political and the economic turmoil in most of the region's nations, except India, are taking a toll.

Pakistan has been in a state of flux for quite some time now. Afghanistan under the Taliban has had no success in getting rid of its pariah status despite a lot

of effort. The seemingly never-ending political transition in Nepal has resulted in a sense of fatigue. Myanmar continues to drift towards being a failed State as the military junta has ceded space to a plethora of non-State actors that have found it difficult to coordinate their actions on the ground. And the effects of Sri Lanka's economic crisis continue to shape its political trajectory with no clear sense of purpose.

Bangladesh under Wazed was giving everyone a false sense of stability even as the ground beneath her had begun to shift. As the people of Bangladesh and the entire region come to terms with a post-Wazed political and social landscape, there has been a sense of despondency about the future in popular and intellectual discourses. This specifically relates to India's supposed failure in the region at a time when Indian policymakers have talked about their nation as a leading global player with a rising profile on the international stage.

Bangladesh under Wazed was giving everyone a false sense of stability even as the ground beneath her had begun to shift.

There are three aspects to this debate that need highlighting. First, changes in global balance of power have ensured that there is no such thing as 'South Asia' anymore. South Asia might have been a mental map for geopolitical articulations at some point in time but today that kind of strategic mapping no longer makes sense. India and its surroundings are now part of a wider Indo-Pacific, a geography that is as much a function of China's spectacular rise as it is of India's rise and New Delhi's need to develop critical linkages with East and Southeast Asia as well as the wider Pacific. The shift from an India-Pakistan binary to a Sino-Indian one is a reality that New Delhi will have to contend with along with all its attendant costs and opportunities. China's partnerships with India's neighbours and its growing presence in the Indian Ocean region are manifestations of this dynamic. There is no going back to South Asia anymore. Consequently, as geopolitical contestations among major powers get sharpened, they will impact India's periphery. Some of that was evident in the downfall of Wazed as well. Second, New Delhi's centrality in its backyard is declining. But there was never a golden age of Indian hegemony in its backyard. Right from Independence, India's perceived hegemony was challenged by its neighbours, with Pakistan taking it to extremes. While Islamabad's morbid fascination with ensuring equality with India ensured its downfall, India's other neighbours also did their best to balance Indian preponderance in the region. There were times New Delhi used military or economic coercion to get its way but it almost always turned out to India's disadvantage. It is easy to

forget how dire India's ties with Bangladesh were before Wazed assumed power 15 years back. Even under her, China was Bangladesh's most important defence partner. The agency of Indian neighbours should never be underestimated and New Delhi's ability to manage the region should never be overestimated.

The final aspect pertains to India's own regional profile. With multiple fires burning around India, what is astounding is not India's seeming inability to manage those fires but its remarkable success in insulating itself from those flames. New Delhi has shown that despite the challenges in its neighbourhood, Indian foreign policy and its corresponding global profile have only grown. That's a tribute to Indian resilience and a cause for celebration on India's 78th Independence Day.

### **Xi balances between professionalism and political control of the PLA**

15 August 2024, East Asia Forum, Yoram Evron

Chinese President Xi Jinping's relationship with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is marked by frequent purges, recurring organisational reforms and deep-seated distrust, despite continued military modernisation efforts. Xi's strategy of assertive rhetoric and limited military use aims to cultivate China's (and his own) powerful image and placate the PLA, without engaging in full-scale warfare, but ongoing political interferences, purges, and reforms raise questions about the PLA's actual strength and ability to control escalation dynamics.

The tumultuous relationship between Chinese President Xi Jinping and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is marked by frequent purges, recurring reforms and persistent expressions of distrust. Simultaneously, Xi advances military modernisation and assigns the military a role in foreign policy not seen for decades. This dual approach intensifies the tension between military professionalism and political loyalty, reaching levels not seen since the Mao era.

But Xi's lack of trust in the PLA raises concerns about its effectiveness in crisis. Launching a war would also give PLA leaders greater political influence, a situation Xi might be reluctant to accept. What does this indicate about China's military modernisation and recent assertiveness?

A possible explanation is that China's recent incendiary rhetoric and frequent yet limited use of the PLA does not necessarily signal a reckless use of force. Rather, it may reflect a strategy to deter adversaries without engaging in full-scale warfare, while concurrently placating the PLA.

Xi's complex relationship with the military has been especially chaotic throughout 2023–24. In March

2023, former defence minister Wei Fenghe, who previously commanded the Rocket Force, vanished from public view. A few months later, the defence minister at the time, Li Shangfu, who had headed the Central Military Commission's Equipment Development Department, also disappeared, only to be officially removed in October. Both were expelled from the Chinese Communist Party in June 2024.

In December 2023, nine generals were ousted from the top legislature, including General Ju Qiansheng, commander of the PLA's Strategic Support Force, and three aerospace executives from China's military-industrial complex who were purged. They are not alone – more senior cadres, many linked to the PLA's pivotal Rocket Force and the military-industrial complex, had also been purged during this period.

In addition, organisational reforms initiated by Xi just eight years earlier have been partially revised.

The replacement of established bodies has altered the PLA's command structure and its lines of subordination to the Central Military Commission and Xi himself. Notably, the Strategic Support Force, formed in December 2015 to oversee aerospace and cyber units, was dissolved in early 2024.

Any belief that these moves stabilised the Party's relationship with the military was disproven by the June 2024 Military Political Work Conference that was held for the first time in a decade. Symbolically, it was held in Yan'an, the historic revolutionary base. Expressing deep dissatisfaction with the PLA's conduct, Xi emphasised the need for a strong, loyal, corruption-free and capable military under Party guidelines and supervision. He stressed ideological transformation, strict anti-corruption measures and the revitalisation of the PLA's commissar system. Xi also underscored the importance of learning from historical roots, urging PLA commanders to visit the PLA's Civil War-era headquarters.

These measures collectively reflect Xi's distrust of the PLA, both politically and operationally, despite its impressive progress over the last two decades. Since the 1980s, and especially in the past 25 years, the PLA's budget has skyrocketed. This has enabled extensive modernisation in nearly every area, including weaponry, command and control, doctrine and training. Recent purges may further advance the PLA's modernisation by removing unprofessional and corrupt officers.

But the PLA is likely not as formidable as China would like others to believe. Xi's rule of fear, extensive political activities within PLA units, and pervasive corruption across the armed forces and the defence industry offset much of the positive impact of modernisation measures. The revival of dual

leadership with political commissars further diminishes any benefits.

These factors create widespread paralysis, inefficiency, the promotion of unqualified commanders, insufficient training and other maladies reminiscent of the Mao era, which reforms since the late 1970s have attempted to address. The Ukraine War provides a pertinent context for understanding these sources of weakness. Observing the conflict, Xi might recognise the risks and costs associated with large-scale military operations.

Unwilling to compromise on China's – and his own – image of strength, Xi aims to cultivate such a reputation without engaging in significant military conflicts that could expose weaknesses and result in substantial losses. Instead of outright military action, he emphasises deterrence, particularly regarding Taiwan. By sounding the drumbeats of war and emphasising military readiness, Xi seeks to deter any adversary from challenging China's red lines.

This approach not only strengthens China's assertive posture but also mitigates the risks associated with full-scale warfare. Simultaneously, it provides the PLA with a sense of purpose and mission, ideally minimising the risk of political interference. The crucial question remains whether Xi's China can maintain control over these escalation dynamics.

#### **COMMENT: Sino-Indian relations warm, but Delhi sticking to a neutral middle path**

15 August 2024, Intellinews, Ben Aris

Recent signs of improved relations between India and China, such as progress in border dispute talks and a more open stance toward Chinese investment, suggest a tactical shift rather than a fundamental realignment in India's geopolitical strategy, Capital Economics said in a note.

The changing relations between the world's two most populous countries underscores a broader trend among emerging markets (EMs) that are increasingly courting Chinese investment to strengthen their positions in the evolving global economy, even as they continue to lean towards the West.

Unlike the Cold War era, where the world was divided into two ideological camps of socialism and capitalism, since the start of the 1990s everyone is a capitalist. However, as the leading emerging markets have developed over the last three decades they have started to flex their geopolitical muscles, which has led to tensions. Capital Economics earlier described this as a fractured world where countries have coalesced into two groups centred on the US and the Sino-Russia alliance.

In this new world India has historically sought "strategic autonomy" and strives to keep a neutral non-aligned position, but in the current geopolitical

landscape, it is increasingly aligning with the West, driven by both security concerns and economic opportunities, Shilan Shah argues, the deputy chief emerging markets economist at Capital Economics.

The long-standing border dispute in the Himalayas with China, particularly the tensions that escalated in 2020, has reinforced India's wariness of its northern neighbour. Additionally, the US offers significant friendshoring opportunities as global supply chains shift, particularly in sectors like mobile phone and semiconductor manufacturing, where India has seen a surge in its global market share.

But more recently India has warmed to both Russia and China in defiance of international pressure to make Moscow a pariah. Modi was in Moscow in July, where he was warmly greeted by Russian President Vladimir Putin and negotiated for long-term oil and fertiliser supply deals. Modi shrugged off the muted criticism from the West for his Moscow visit, highlighting that he would act in what he saw as India's best interests, irrespective of how that is perceived in the West.

Likewise, Indian policymakers appear to be warming to the idea of more Chinese investment to fuel the rapid development of India's economy, which is also leading to better relations with Beijing.

Another consequence of Russia's war in Ukraine and the resulting extreme sanctions regime has been to push the Global South countries closer together as they seek safety in numbers in the face of increasing aggression by the world's leading powers. This change was manifest in both of last year's G20 summit and the expanding BRICS+ group, but not limited to these two. Both China and India have indicated a willingness to resolve their border issues, with the creation of five "buffer zones" where troops have been withdrawn and patrols ceased, marking a rare moment of cooperation.

And Delhi has reversed its hesitance to host major Chinese industrial investments. A year ago, it blocked BYD's attempt to establish an electric vehicle factory in India. India's flagship Annual Economic Survey noted that "developing countries will have to figure out a way of... boosting domestic manufacturing capabilities, sometimes with the collaboration of Chinese investment and technology" – a sentiment that was recently repeated by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

"Some have suggested that these developments indicate a shift in India's geopolitical alignment. This isn't unheard of: over the past couple of years, a number of EMs including Saudi Arabia and South Africa have moved towards China's sphere of influence with their own strategic interests in mind," says Shah. While some observers suggest these moves could indicate a shift in India's geopolitical alignment, this interpretation seems premature, says

Shah. The border negotiations remain fragile, and any miscalculation could reignite tensions. India remains deeply concerned about China's military presence in the Indian Ocean and its alliance with Pakistan. At the same time, India is equally annoyed with the US, which also maintains cordial relations with Pakistan, and incensed Delhi by agreeing to a deal to supply Islamabad with advanced F-16 jet fighter planes last year, which has only reinforced its strategic autonomy policy.

And India is hedging its bets with China too. Part of the talks between Modi and Putin covered an order for Russia's advanced S-400 missile system that India has already paid for, but yet to receive, which it intends to install all along its border with China. Likewise, China has been building dozens of "border guardian" settlements in the Himalayas at the end of any traversable valley and paying people to go and live there, partly as a regional development programme, but also as a passive early warning network to protect against invading forces. The settlements have also been built on the borders with Bhutan and Nepal, according to a recent The New York Times (NYT) investigation.

Moreover, India's membership of the Quad – a security dialogue that includes the US, Japan and Australia – along with its stringent policies against Chinese smartphone apps, reaffirms India's ongoing mistrust of Beijing.

The slight warming in Sino-Indian ties does not negate the advantages of aligning with the US, particularly in capturing the benefits of friendshoring. For example, India's global share of mobile phone and semiconductor exports continues to grow, underscoring the economic benefits of this alignment. However, India's engagement with China reflects a broader strategy seen in several EMs, which are balancing relations with both China and the West to maximise economic benefits. This approach, exemplified by India's potential acceptance of Chinese investment in infrastructure, aims to enhance its appeal as a manufacturing hub while carefully managing geopolitical risks, says Shah.

Elsewhere, countries like Morocco and Hungary are also benefiting from Chinese investment, particularly in green technology and electric vehicles, while maintaining strong economic ties with Europe and the US. Hungary, for instance, has seen a surge in Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI), making it one of the top recipients globally, despite its alignment with the US bloc.

In Central Asia, the five 'Stans, squeezed between Russia and China, have been a lot more cautious to keep China at arms-length and will search for other investors and creditors first to diversify their exposure, only accepting Chinese investment if no other viable alternative can be found.

As China's domestic growth slows, its firms are likely to continue investing overseas, driven by the need for higher returns and the desire to bypass Western protectionist measures. For some EMs, this presents an opportunity not just for capital inflows but also for the transfer of technological and managerial expertise. However, the balancing act could become more challenging if the US, China rivalry intensifies. "Courting both sides could become harder for EMs if the US and China become more aggressive in pushing to exclude each other's inputs from their supply chains. For example, if the US were to prevent goods containing certain Chinese components from being sold domestically, then firms anywhere hoping to sell to the US would have to exclude them too," says Shah. There are some signs that this is already happening. For example, Indonesia is attempting to reduce Chinese investment in new nickel mining projects in order to qualify for tax breaks in the US. The US has also introduced smart sanctions on Russia in December, where Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) is increasingly targeting third countries supplying Russia with "priority goods" and threatening their companies with secondary sanctions. "Only time will tell if this is the direction that fracturing will take. But for some EMs, greater Chinese investment now could prove fruitful, not only in terms of higher capital spending but through the transfer of technological and managerial know-how," concludes Shah.

**Coercive annexation of Taiwan by the People's Republic of China would unleash globally destructive consequences, Rice Baker Institute report says**

15 August 2024, Rice University

A new paper from Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy argues that an annexation of Taiwan by the People's Republic of China (PRC) would trigger economic shocks and diminish the quality of life for populations across Asia and beyond, as well as have devastating impacts on American interests and Americans' well-being.

Gabe Collins, Baker Botts Fellow in Energy and Environmental Regulatory Affairs at the Baker Institute, and his coauthor Andrew Erickson, professor of strategy at the U.S. Naval War College, say an annexation of Taiwan would be one of the most dangerous, consequential flashpoints on the planet. The paper aims to address the economic, military and geopolitical impacts of coercive annexation, with particular focus on semiconductors, weapons systems, allies and partners.

"At stake are crucial interests such as the semiconductors that power today's big data world

and the national security of U.S. allies and partners," the paper reads. "Neighboring states' responses to PRC expansion could also result in the erosion of American military advantages as well as the destabilization of democracy and the international order."



As a global commodity, microchips are as important as oil, Collins and Erickson argue. There are currently only two places in the world that produce the latest generation of silicon chips – in Taiwan by Taiwan

Semiconductor Manufacturing Company Limited and in South Korea by Samsung.

"If China could capture Taiwan with minimal direct use of military force, it could potentially obtain a near-monopoly over one of the 21st century's most critical economic inputs," the authors wrote. "That could help to catapult Beijing into a position of global preeminence and, in turn, might allow China to dominate the world economy even in the face of sanctions."

Semiconductors are essential to the modern economy with approximately \$600 billion worth produced globally each year, according to the report. The semiconductors are added into physical items collectively worth multiple trillions of dollars, and the services delivered by these devices – such as smartphones, data centers or cars – amount to tens of trillions of dollars annually.

Collins and Erickson argue that coercive annexation brings the possibility of major disruption of Taiwan-origin semiconductor supplies that could temporarily halt technological progress and could slow global economic growth for years thereafter.

The authors argue that American policymakers must act urgently to deter PRC aggression and maximize U.S. capabilities to prevent China from coercively annexing Taiwan and creating long-term economic strife.

View the executive summary and the entire report titled "Annexation of Taiwan: A Defeat From Which the US and Its Allies Could Not Retreat" here.



## Imposing on questions of faith will get China nowhere

15 August 2024, Hindustan Times, Dhundup Gyalpo

It is high time for other countries to step up and clarify their stance on whether the Tibetan people have the right to religious belief and the freedom to choose their own religious leaders, thereby helping prevent China from creating an embarrassing situation for itself.

These days, one often hears that China may choose the next Dalai Lama. Alarming as it may sound to many around the globe, my answer is invariably and emphatically: It does not matter. For the Tibetan people, it does not matter if China chooses its own Dalai Lama. Just as with the Chinese-appointed Panchen Lama, a Chinese-appointed Dalai Lama will only cause embarrassment for China. Despite Beijing's all-out efforts to promote their Panchen Lama as an authentic spiritual leader, the Tibetan people have firmly and wholeheartedly refused to offer him even a modicum of obeisance.

Unlike the Panchen Lama's case, where the real Panchen Lama along with his entire family have "disappeared", when that critical time eventually dawns upon us, the world will have another Dalai Lama, born in a free country, recognised in accordance with Tibetan religious traditions and customs, and chosen as per the clear instructions left behind by the current Dalai Lama.

Despite China's complete occupation of Tibet since the Dalai Lama's escape into exile in 1959, it still lacks legitimacy for its rule over Tibet. It, therefore, continuously insists that other countries recognise Tibet as a part of China. Since the Dalai Lama has been historically the supreme temporal and spiritual head of Tibet, if China can somehow arrogate to itself the right to recognise and choose the next Dalai Lama, selecting a docile one, it would help legitimise its rule over Tibet. This is inherently flawed.

Tibetans revere the Dalai Lama as the emanation of Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva of compassion and the patron saint of Tibet. He is the ultimate symbol of Tibet as a nation and its people. The process of search and recognition of a reincarnation may seem complex and intricate to outsiders, it's important to note that since 1391, the Dalai Lama has been reincarnated 13 times. The institution of the Dalai Lama, in stark contrast to the People's Republic of China established only in 1949, is ancient and experienced enough to manage all potential future scenarios.

Let me briefly set the basics straight on the issue of reincarnation. The following excerpt from the present Dalai Lama's interview to TIME in 2004 should offer some insight: "The institution of the Dalai Lama, and

whether it should continue or not, is up to the Tibetan people. If they feel it is not relevant, then it will cease and there will be no 15th Dalai Lama. But if I die today, I think they will want another Dalai Lama. The purpose of reincarnation is to fulfill the previous [incarnation's] life task. My life is outside Tibet, therefore, my reincarnation will logically be found outside. But then, the next question: Will the Chinese accept this or not? China will not accept. The Chinese government most probably will appoint another Dalai Lama, as it did with the Panchen Lama. Then there will be two Dalai Lamas: one, the Dalai Lama of the Tibetan heart, and one that is officially appointed."

The mind-boggling conundrum such a situation presents for Beijing was highlighted back in 2013 by a professor at the Party School of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in Beijing. In an interview with Asia Weekly, professor Jin Wei noted that treating the Dalai Lama as an "enemy" alienated all six million Tibetans who revere him as "the living Buddha." She said, "The Dalai Lama is the key to the issue of Tibet," and recommended that China should resume its stalled dialogue with him. According to Jin Wei, China's ultimate goal should be to avoid an embarrassing situation that throws up two Dalai Lamas. She believed that if China could control the selection of the next Dalai Lama's reincarnation, the party would gain the goodwill of all Tibetans and weaken the Tibetan independence forces working outside the country. Unfortunately, both then and now, good sense has yet to prevail in China.

The system of reincarnation, unique to Tibetan Buddhism, is a purely religious matter rooted entirely in people's faith. No force can impose faith upon people. And in matters of faith, there is no room for compromise, flexibility, or doubt: Either people believe someone is the reincarnation, or they don't; there are no maybes.

The United States, through various legislative acts concerning Tibet, has sent a clear and strong message to China that it stands firmly in solidarity with the Tibetan people. It is high time for other countries to step up and clarify their stance on whether the Tibetan people have the right to religious belief and the freedom to choose their own religious leaders, thereby helping prevent China from creating an embarrassing situation for itself.

## Beijing intensifies gray tactics against Taiwan

14 August 2024, GIS, Junhua Zhang

Newly elected Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te is struggling to counter the creative use of pressure coming from China.

Three months after President Lai Ching-te took office in Taiwan, Beijing continues to seek ways to make life

difficult for the new leader. At the beginning, despite Mr. Lai's measured rhetoric (from his perspective) at his May 20 inauguration, the reaction in China was extreme displeasure. The Chinese State Council's Taiwan Affairs Office slammed Mr. Lai for "stubbornly adhering to the 'Taiwan independence' position," while Foreign Minister Wang Yi accused him of "betraying the nation and his ancestors in a disgraceful way."

Beijing's response was largely triggered by President Lai's refusal to deliver his inaugural speech in accordance with Chinese expectations. Officials described the address as even more pro-independence than those of previous Taiwanese leaders, and as a point of no return. Since then, Beijing has given clear signals as to the implications of this perception, with consequences for cross-strait relations over the next four years.

The approach of Lai Ching-te

Mr. Lai did not mention a single word about Taiwanese "independence" in his speech. But unlike his scholarly predecessor, Tsai Ing-wen (2016-2024), the current leader's governance style is seen as more "manly" and unafraid of conflict, while lacking a degree of sophistication. Compared to his predecessors, he comes closer to what Beijing considers the red line around the issue of Taiwanese independence.

For example, the "two-state theory" drafted by former President Lee Teng-hui (1988-2000) has gone through a 25-year-long evolution from ambiguity to clarity. In his first address, Lai Ching-te was more forceful in elaborating on the cross-strait issue, avoiding mention of the Cross-Strait Act, which implies that the two sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to the same China. He also used the term "China" throughout the speech, instead of "the other side of the Taiwan Strait" or "Beijing," terms purposely used in Ms. Tsai's inaugural speeches of 2016 and 2020 to avoid anger from mainland China.

While Ms. Tsai's "one-China" hopes seemed to persist, however obscured, in the eyes of Beijing, Mr. Lai's positioning on cross-strait relations has transformed strategic ambiguity into strategic clarity. In a June interview, President Lai emphasized "dignity and reciprocity" in his dealings with China, and invited Chinese President Xi Jinping to share with Taiwan the responsibility for peace and stability in the region and to create prosperity. It has become clear that this line of messaging has had no effect on the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) attitude.

China's response

Facing President Lai's "iron fist in a velvet glove," Beijing quickly adopted various measures – both soft and hard, internal and external – with the clear intention of trying to hinder Mr. Lai's government.

Beijing's intimidation began with military power. Just three days after the inauguration, China began a two-day, large-scale military drill. It is worth comparing this to a previous episode. When former United States Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi led a delegation to Taiwan in August 2022, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) also conducted a military drill and organized live-fire exercises in six sea and air areas surrounding the island.

This time, despite the lack of live-fire operations, the "pockets" were tightened – in other words, the scope and degree of deterrence were significantly greater than following Ms. Pelosi's visit. At the same time, Beijing continued to use various military aircraft to fly over the center line of the Taiwan Strait. Soon, it even appeared that civilian aircraft were being used to fly over Taiwan-controlled Kinmen.

Along with military signals, Beijing has stepped up its information war against Taiwan, spreading a great deal of disinformation in Taiwanese media. It has also taken economic measures, such as suspending tariff concessions for some products under the Cross-Strait Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement and erecting trade barriers to more Taiwanese products on antidumping grounds. Diplomatically, Beijing has increased efforts to isolate Taiwan and intimidate its allies.

Tactical adjustments

At the same time, the Chinese government under President Xi has changed its approach this year. This is reflected in two ways. On the one hand, prior to President Lai's inauguration, the Kuomintang (KMT) party in Taiwan had positive interactions with the government in Beijing. The culmination was an April 10 meeting between former KMT Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou (2008-2016) and Mr. Xi. By meeting with an outgoing president who is no longer in the political arena, and scheduling the meeting one month before Taiwan's new president was sworn in, Mr. Xi aimed to convey the message that, given the choice, Beijing would still prefer "peaceful reunification" with Taiwan over a costly reincorporation by force. According to sources familiar with the matter, Mr. Ma even submitted a report to the Chinese side on specific issues such as the country's proposed name after a future cross-strait reunification.

Although China has not reported these developments, Beijing has a high opinion of these positive interactions with the KMT. It gave Beijing good reason to believe that there is still enough room to further exploit the position of KMT, as well as the Taiwan People's Party (TPP), to the point of discrediting and paralyzing Mr. Lai's government. This led to a chain of events in which the KMT and the TPP, which have a majority in the Executive Yuan,

turned on Mr. Lai's Democratic Progressive Party after his inauguration, with the outcome still uncertain.

Beijing will generally not use force until it has exhausted its gray tactics and other means of creating divisions in Taiwan.

The other area of China's change in strategy was diplomacy. Beijing has decided to take every measure to reduce U.S. pressure in East Asia. The military cooperation between Japan, South Korea and the U.S. established by the administration of President Joe Biden is a major threat to China's incorporation of Taiwan by force. To this end, in May, Beijing restarted a meeting of the leaders of China, Japan and South Korea after over four years of hiatus. Chinese Premier Li Qiang called for greater contributions to regional prosperity and stability, seeking to use the bait of new cooperation to pick apart the U.S.-Japan-South Korea alliance.

It is important to realize that China is Japan's largest trading partner, export destination and import source, with bilateral trade totaling \$317 billion in 2023. China is also South Korea's largest trading partner, largest export market and largest import source, with their trade amounting to \$310 billion last year. This economic dependence is a card in Beijing's hand.

#### Xi's Taiwan timeline

Although the CCP has never disclosed (and will never disclose) a timeline for the "liberation" of Taiwan, President Xi's unwillingness to leave the issue unresolved during his third or fourth five-year term in office is obvious to all. While Mr. Xi made a point of recently telling European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen, in an effort to win European sympathy, that Washington was trying to "goad Beijing into attacking Taiwan" (as if China itself had no intention of doing so), there are increasingly hints that the timetable is changing.

Zhang Weiwei, a professor at Fudan University and a favorite of the Chinese propaganda ministry, claimed publicly that Taiwan's recent election might be its last. He Lei, a former PLA official, also recently said that the complete reunification of the motherland was growing nearer. What Beijing fears is that if President Lai Ching-te stays in his position for eight years, the mindset of "Taiwan independence" will be even more deeply embedded in the minds of the island's younger generation, and it will be difficult to eradicate it even with a change of political parties. The time pressure is thus increasing.

#### The Lai tenure so far

Fully matching the new president's character, Taiwan under Mr. Lai appears set to be more determined to pursue high-end military hardware, such as submarines and fighter jets, and focus on military training to defend against a Chinese invasion. But all

of this will do little to stop China's gradual imposition of coercive control through law enforcement and other nonlethal, "gray" tactics. Taiwan is trying to take steps to counter the mainland's salami slicing.

Taiwan's previous administration clearly disappointed and confused many young people during its eight-year tenure on social issues, especially housing and employment. And that legacy is now being borne by President Lai Ching-te. He leads a minority government without a majority in the Legislative Yuan, which would already have made it difficult for him to govern, not to mention that the opposition party in the legislature is trying to reduce the scope of the president's power.

In polls after Mr. Lai's inaugural speech, 53 percent of those who watched were satisfied with his May 20 inaugural address, 28 percent were dissatisfied, and 19 percent had no opinion. Some 47 percent of respondents said they trusted Mr. Lai, compared to 34 percent who did not trust him and 20 percent with no opinion.

Nearly a month later, a poll by the Taiwan Public Opinion Foundation found that the number of people approving of President Lai's handling of the country's affairs has decreased by 9.8 percent, suggesting that he has lost support from nearly 2 million people since taking office. Arguably, China's combination of soft and hard means – and the use of Taiwan's internal contradictions to stoke polarization – has so far achieved certain results for Beijing.

#### The role of the U.S.

Washington has long pursued a policy of strategic ambiguity toward Taiwan, meaning it does not indicate exactly how it would respond if Beijing were to attack Taiwan. Facing the upcoming November election, both the Democrats and former President Donald Trump are competing to sound tough on Taiwan.

President Biden has made it clear that the U.S. will not stand idly by should Beijing attack Taiwan. Admiral Samuel Paparo, the new commander of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, outlined during the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore a "hellscape" response scenario by the U.S. military in the event of an invasion of Taiwan by the PLA. Although there have sometimes been harsh voices, the Biden administration has generally preferred to stick to strategic ambiguity, with a continued arming of Taiwan becoming the White House's preferred option. The Pentagon recently established the Taiwan Advanced Integration Team to help Taipei get the weapons and military assistance it needs more quickly. So far, President Biden has implemented 15 arms sales to Taiwan since 2021 to strengthen its defenses.

At the same time, the U.S. government is also clearly putting pressure on Mr. Lai to avoid excessive expressions of "Taiwanese independence." As U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaul has warned, Beijing's one-China policy has "certain red lines" that should not be crossed, even if U.S. policy does not recognize Chinese sovereignty over Taiwan.

#### Scenarios

Beijing will generally not use force until it has exhausted its gray tactics and other means of creating divisions in Taiwan. Of course, these methods are backed by military power. Neither Taiwan nor the U.S. seem to have effective countermeasures to China's approach. The biggest challenge for President Lai is to adjust his relationship with Taiwanese opposition parties to deal with the mainland's tactics. Assuming that Beijing will persist in using such gray methods against the Lai government over the next several years, three scenarios are relevant.

#### More likely: KMT triumph

One is that President Lai allows the pro-China factions among the KMT and the TPP to grow in power in the Legislative Yuan to the point where the function of the Executive Yuan is objectively paralyzed. In this scenario, the KMT wins the next round of elections and will secure governing power.

#### More likely: Domestic compromise

In a second scenario, Mr. Lai quickly learns to deal with the opposition parties and manages to compromise. At the same time, he effectively solves domestic problems (such as in housing and energy) and, in doing so, eases the relationship with China, allowing Taiwan to buy time.

#### Less likely: Tensions exacerbate within the next four years

A third outcome would see China start to impose sanctions on the so-called "Taiwan Independents" and use the pro-China fraction of the KMT to further polarize Taiwanese society, which also suffers from the KMT's own incompetence. As a result, cross-strait relations become extremely tense, leading to military action.

### **Pakistan's Role In Protecting Chinese Interests In CPEC – OpEd**

14 August 2024, Eurasia Review, Dr. Sahibzada Muhammad Usman

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is hailed as a milestone in the strategic partnership between China and Pakistan. This ambitious project, a key component of China's "Belt and Road Initiative," aims to enhance connectivity and cooperation through an extensive network of roads, railways, and pipelines. The CPEC project, with an

investment of \$62 billion, is poised to transform Pakistan's economy by creating employment opportunities, improving infrastructure, and promoting regional integration. However, despite these promising prospects, the security of Chinese workers and engineers involved in CPEC projects has emerged as a significant concern, threatening the very foundation of this crucial partnership.

The safety and security of Chinese nationals working on CPEC projects in Pakistan have become a serious issue due to the persistent threat of terrorist attacks by Baloch separatists and their affiliated militant groups, particularly the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). These groups, driven by various motives, have targeted Chinese citizens, viewing them as symbols of the CPEC initiative that they oppose. The most high-profile attacks have occurred from Karachi to Gwadar, exposing the vulnerabilities in the security arrangements promised by Pakistani authorities to their Chinese counterparts.

The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), a separatist group, has been at the forefront of these attacks, demanding that China cease its involvement in CPEC and withdraw from Baluchistan. The BLA has repeatedly warned Beijing against signing new CPEC deals with Islamabad, condemning China's role in the Gwadar port project. These threats have not only endangered Chinese lives but also shaken the confidence of Chinese investors, who now demand foolproof security measures from Pakistan.

Security analysts have noted that the increasing frequency of attacks on Chinese interests in Pakistan has damaged the perception of invulnerability that Pakistani authorities had sought to project. Beijing, as the largest foreign investor in Pakistan, now faces significant security concerns that could potentially

affect its future investments in the country. While Pakistan has blamed "foreign elements" for these attacks, arguing that their primary goal is to sabotage Pakistan-China relations and the CPEC project, the damage to the confidence of Chinese stakeholders is undeniable.

These terrorist attacks have claimed precious lives and strained the relations between the two nations. The hesitancy of China to pursue new CPEC projects, as indicated by reports of limited progress during recent high-level visits, reflects the growing apprehensions within Chinese leadership. Although official statements from both countries have maintained a positive tone, the underlying concerns are palpable. During a meeting with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Chinese President Xi Jinping expressed hope that Pakistan would create a "safe and stable business environment" to guarantee the safety of Chinese personnel and projects.

The Pakistani government has assured the Chinese leadership that it is taking all necessary measures to address the security challenges posed by these terrorist groups. According to Pakistani security officials, stringent measures are being implemented under a comprehensive policy aimed at eliminating the terrorists involved in attacks against Chinese citizens. Intelligence sharing between Pakistani and Chinese authorities is ongoing, reflecting the seriousness with which both nations are addressing these threats.

The complex nature of the security challenges faced by Chinese workers in Pakistan is further complicated by the involvement of various militant groups. Beyond the Baloch militants and the TTP, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), a group seeking to establish a separate state in China's Muslim-majority Xinjiang province, has also been implicated in these attacks. Many ETIM militants had settled in North Waziristan in the late 1990s, where they developed close ties with Taliban elements. These relationships have persisted, enabling coordinated attacks on Chinese residents working on CPEC projects.

Pakistan's efforts to counter these threats have included the arrest and extradition of numerous ETIM militants to China. However, despite these efforts, the attacks on Chinese citizens in Pakistan have not ceased, underscoring the need for more vigorous and comprehensive measures to dismantle the networks of terrorists involved. The persistent nature of these threats demands a sustained and multi-faceted approach that goes beyond immediate security responses.

The success of the CPEC project and, by extension, the stability of Pakistan-China relations hinges on the ability of Pakistan to address these security concerns effectively. The continuation of terrorist attacks not only jeopardizes the lives of Chinese citizens but also

threatens to derail the broader objectives of CPEC. A failure to provide a secure environment for Chinese investments could lead to a decline in Chinese enthusiasm for future projects, which would have far-reaching consequences for Pakistan's economic development and regional integration goals.

### **The race to choose the next Dalai Lama China and India disagree over reincarnation**

14 August 2024, UnHerd, Christopher Harding

This time next year, the world may find the arcana of Tibetan Buddhist reincarnation taking centre stage in global politics. For the 14th Dalai Lama, who celebrated his 89th birthday a few weeks ago, has long promised to reveal his succession plans when he turns

90. In the past, he has suggested that his reincarnation might take place in India or somewhere in the West. This will be a moment fraught with danger for Tibet and Tibetans in exile, but also for relations between two of the most powerful countries on earth: China and India.

Tibet and China go back a long way together, and theirs has rarely been a happy history. At the height of its power in the eighth century, the Tibetan kingdom's armies fought their way into the great capital of Tang China, Chang'an, and occupied it. The Tibetan Empire would later fragment after the last king of Tibet was murdered in 842, and Buddhist teachers known as lamas would eventually come to rule in his place. They helped the Mongols to govern Tibet in the 13th century. Then, in 1279, Kublai Khan established the Yuan Dynasty, the Mongol-led dynasty of China, and Tibet became nominally part of his empire.

The degree of authority over Tibetan affairs exercised by Chinese emperors of the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties fluctuated a great deal over time, but in general they preferred indirect influence to outright control. Crucial to these arrangements was the maintaining of good relations with Tibet's Buddhist leaders and in particular its tulkus. These were lineages of men and sometimes women who were regarded as manifestations of a particular bodhisattva: an enlightened being who puts off their entry into paradise in order to help others. By controlling the intermediate realm between death and rebirth, they were able to choose specific human incarnations, again and again, in order to continue their lineage and fulfil their salvific purpose in the world. Among the best-known Tibetan lineages are the Karmapas and the Panchen and Dalai Lamas.

The lineage of the Dalai Lama goes back to the turn of the 15th century, peaking with the "Great 5th" Dalai Lama who united Tibet under his rule in 1642. Subsequent Dalai Lamas enjoyed both spiritual and political authority but found themselves embroiled in struggles for power between neighbouring Mongols and Chinese. In 1720, the Kangxi Emperor of the Qing Dynasty won a decisive victory over a Mongol rival and managed to install his favoured candidate as the 7th Dalai Lama. From then on, China's Qing dynasty regarded Tibet as a protectorate of sorts and the question of a Dalai Lama's reincarnation as very much their business.

Yet the mysteries of reincarnation were often hard to control. Traditionally, an elderly Dalai Lama might leave written information about where he intended to be reincarnated or drop hints during the last weeks of his life. The direction in which the smoke drifted at his cremation might be watched for clues. Senior lamas would weigh these things alongside dreams or



intuitions of their own before paying a visit to the homes of children who appeared to be likely candidates. There they might lay in front of the child some of the predecessor's possessions, alongside unrelated objects, to see whether the child recognised the correct items as his own.

Concerned about the political quarrels and corruption that sometimes accompanied this process, and worried more broadly about Tibetans dabbling in divination when this was supposed to be the prerogative of the imperial court, the Qianlong Emperor sought to exert some control over Tibetan reincarnations. In a move that may well have important repercussions next year, the Emperor decided in 1792 to intervene in the process of identifying reincarnations within tulku lineages. Personally doubting the Buddhist doctrine of reincarnation but resigned to managing the people of Tibet on their own terms, the Emperor had a golden urn made and sent to Lhasa. When it came time to identify a reincarnation, candidates identified in the usual way would have their names placed inside the urn. After prayers were said, a single name would be drawn by a Qing official.

This wasn't about luck or having China's preferred candidate fortuitously selected, though it did rather usefully allow for the latter. The Golden Urn method was based on a form of divination already used in branches of China's imperial administration and was intended as a means of avoiding human corruption and allowing fate to take its course. Qing efforts to make the method acceptable to Tibet's elites were helped by the fact that the chosen children frequently came from wealthy and influential families. The Golden Urn method ended up being used, over the decades that followed, to finalise a number of reincarnations. Precisely how many is debated, but they may have included the 10th, 11th and 12th Dalai Lamas.

After the Qing dynasty fell and a Republic of China was proclaimed in 1912, the 13th Dalai Lama sought independence for Tibet. But both the Republic and then, after 1949, the People's Republic continued to regard Tibet as belonging to China. After the 14th Dalai Lama fled Tibet for India in 1959, China moved steadily to consolidate its control over Tibetan affairs. This included the use in 1995 of the Golden Urn to identify the 11th Panchen Lama. It was an important moment: the Dalai Lama's favoured candidate was rejected and both the candidate and his family were disappeared into "protective" custody. The People's Republic has since gone further still, creating a register of all those who are permitted to reincarnate after death. The state can revoke that permission at any time. It also claims authority over when the search for a new reincarnation may begin.

Much of this appears to be designed to ensure that the 15th Dalai Lama will be a person with whom the Chinese Communist Party can do business. The current Dalai Lama, alongside Tibet's government-in-exile in Dharamsala, India, rejects the idea of using the Golden Urn to identify the next Dalai Lama and insists that no candidate who is effectively chosen by the People's Republic will be acceptable. It is highly likely as a result that within a few years we will have two people both claiming to be the 15th Dalai Lama: one in China selected using the Golden Urn, and another elsewhere chosen in the traditional way. Assuming that both are children – likely, but not inevitable – they will probably have regents speaking and acting on their behalf.

Why would the CCP go to all this trouble? More than a decade ago, the current Dalai Lama relinquished his political authority in favour of a prime minister, or *sikyong*, elected by Tibetans in exile. But although the Dalai Lama no longer holds political power, over the course of a long life he has become synonymous with Tibet's spirit and its hopes of independence – the question of who succeeds him is therefore enormously important. The United States made clear its position in 2015: Chinese government interference in the Tibetan reincarnation process would go against the internationally recognised right to religious freedom. The Tibetan government has been working hard, of late, to persuade European countries to follow suit, but much will depend on how willing those countries are to risk antagonising China. Standing up to China over Tibet in the Sixties was a relatively cost-free exercise for Westerners. That is no longer true in 2024.

"Standing up to China over Tibet in the Sixties was a relatively cost-free exercise for Westerners. That is no longer true in 2024."

India, meanwhile, will face a particularly difficult decision. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has recently warmed to the Dalai Lama, sending him birthday greetings and attending a Global Buddhist Summit alongside him in 2023. It is all part of an effort to deploy Buddhism as part of India's soft power, especially with countries such as Japan, Vietnam, Sri Lanka and South Korea, in whose cultures Buddhism runs deep. Modi has spoken of India's "Buddhist cousin nations" around the world and of his desire to develop Bodhi Gaya – the place where the Buddha is said to have attained enlightenment – as the "spiritual capital" of Buddhism. In April 2023, India's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting produced "Lessons from Lord Buddha": a compendium of speeches by Modi that emphasise his spiritual debt to Buddhism. India's Prime Minister is, the introduction assures readers, "a huge admirer and follower of Lord Buddha".

India cannot, however, afford to ignore its relationship with China. India recognises China's sovereignty in Tibet and has to tread carefully when it comes to disputed border areas in the Himalayas – many of which are home to significant Buddhist populations. China's leadership has already shown its displeasure, on a number of occasions, with Modi's wooing of the "anti-China" Dalai Lama. It also hopes that a "Buddhism with Chinese characteristics" will be capable of enhancing relations with its neighbours. Both Modi and Xi Jinping, it seems, regard Buddhism as key to their attempts to win friends and influence people in Asia. Modi may also need to worry about how the search for the next Dalai Lama could cause divisions within Tibet's exile community in India. Without the current Dalai Lama there to act as a unifying figure, older rivalries may once again come to the fore. Meanwhile, it is no longer sensible to assume that Beijing's candidate for the 15th Dalai Lama will be uniformly rejected or ignored by Tibetan Buddhist leaders living in Tibet and China. Some of these have made converts among Han Chinese who find the drama of Tibet's landscape and esoteric religious traditions a refreshing – perhaps even a countercultural – alternative to urban Chinese life. For Tibetan monks and lamas ministering to these Han Chinese Buddhists, the backing – or at least the tacit permission – of the Chinese state is essential in going about their work. The countdown, then, is on. A Hindu leader in India, an atheist one in China and their Christian and secular counterparts around the world must soon decide how to respond to what a nonagenarian Tibetan Buddhist will say about his forthcoming reincarnation. Perhaps this strange moment will be the last of its kind. The next Dalai Lama may well lack their predecessor's charisma, gift for communication and international status. The lineage may fall into semi-obscurity as geopolitics moves on. China's leaders may well be hoping for just such a turn of events. For Tibetans in exile, it would be a disaster: their greatest spiritual and diplomatic asset gone, with no-one to take his place. Lacking a homeland and having lost a powerfully symbolic leader, the challenge will be daunting of retaining – perhaps remaking – Tibetan identity.

### **America's gambit: Putting Tibet in the legal spotlight**

13 August 2024, ORF, Udayvir Ahuja

The recently enacted Resolve Tibet Act marks another chapter in America's engagement with the Tibet issue, potentially reinvigorating international attention on the region

Tibet captured global attention following World War II when the People's Republic of China annexed it in 1950. However, in the past two decades, Tibet's struggle for autonomy has largely faded from the forefront of international consciousness, becoming a footnote among the freedom movements of the 21st century.

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Aside from Nepal and India, which are home to the majority of the Buddhist Tibetan refugees, it is the United States (US), which has arguably played a more significant role in keeping the Tibetan movement alive in the international arena. Most recently, on 12 July 2024, US President Joe Biden signed the 'Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act', also dubbed as the Resolve Tibet Act.

#### **Background**

Since the invasion of Tibet by China in October 1950, the region of Tibet has been under Chinese control. For a brief period, a settlement was reached between the Tibetan and Chinese governments, through the Seventeen-Point Agreement, which was signed in 1951. However, due to significant violations of multiple undertakings of the agreement as well as forced reforms in addition to propaganda campaigns against Tibetan culture and history, the Tibetan government legally repudiated the agreement in March 1959. During the same period, there was a short-lived armed revolt by the Tibetan population, in the aftermath of which the 14th and current Dalai Lama fled from Lhasa and took shelter in Dharamshala, India.

Since the invasion of Tibet by China in October 1950, the region of Tibet has been under Chinese control.

Today, Tibet is governed as an autonomous region of China through the administration of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and 12 Tibetan autonomous prefectures or counties in the nearby provinces of Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu, and Yunnan.

#### **US and Tibet**

Historically, the US's policy towards Tibet has fluctuated drastically depending on its relations with China and its geopolitical outlook. In the 1950s and 60s, it provided military and financial aid to Tibetan guerrilla forces. In the 70s and 80s, however, we witnessed a switch where the US had almost zero contact with the Tibetan government in exile as it was trying to strengthen its relations with China. However, from 2000 onwards, it began to refocus its attention on Tibet with the Tibet Policy Act (TPA) of 2002, a core legislation which still acts as a guiding US policy towards Tibet, which states 'It is the policy of the United States to support economic development, cultural preservation, health care, and education and

environmental sustainability for Tibetans inside Tibet'. The enactment further went on to establish the position of Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues in the US State Department, talk about the establishment of a US Branch Office in Lhasa and encourage dialogue between China and the Dalai Lama, among other things. Fast-forward to 2018, the US came out with the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act 2018, which directed the Department of State to report to Congress regarding the level of access Chinese authorities granted U.S. tourists, journalists and diplomats to Tibetan areas in China. The 2020 Tibetan Policy and Support Act (TSPA) stipulated that the question of the succession of Tibetan Buddhist leaders, including the Dalai Lama, be decided within the Tibetan Buddhist community, without any interference from the Chinese government. The 2020 Tibetan Policy and Support Act (TSPA) stipulated that the question of the succession of Tibetan Buddhist leaders, including the Dalai Lama, be decided within the Tibetan Buddhist community, without any interference from the Chinese government. The TSPA also imposes sanctions against Chinese officials who engage in said interferences. Resolve Tibet ActThe Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act was introduced as a bipartisan bill by US Senators Jeff Merkley and Todd Young. The Act promotes an unconditional dialogue between the Dalai Lama and the People's Republic of China (PRC) to seek a settlement and further enhance the US's overall support for Tibet.

Key enactments:

1. The definition of Tibet: While the Act does not necessarily change Washington's policy of viewing Tibet as a part of China, it lays down a statutory definition of Tibet that encompasses not only the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) but also Tibetan areas within the Chinese provinces of Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu, and Yunnan. Unlike the Chinese government's typical reference to Tibet, which is limited to the TAR, this broader definition aligns with the regions traditionally recognised as Tibet.

2. Self-determination: Section 2 of the Act underlines the 'Right of Self-Determination' of the Tibetan people as laid down in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The right to self-determination is a core principle of international law which provides that every person has the right to self-determination. By the said right, people can freely determine their own political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development. This has been reinforced by the International Court of Justice in the Wall case (2004), in which it states 'the principle of self-determination of peoples has been enshrined in

the United Nations Charter and reaffirmed by the General Assembly in resolution 2625 (XXV), under which "Every State has the duty to refrain from any forcible action which deprives peoples referred to [in that resolution] ... of their right to self-determination". The Act may serve as a catalyst which brings Tibet back into the attention and purview of international law.

3. Tackling Chinese disinformation: The Act amends the TPA by expanding the duties of the Office of the US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues to tackle Chinese disinformation about Tibet's history, culture, people, and institutions, including that of the Dalai Lama. This comes amidst a global narrative push by the Chinese government Tibet has "always" been a part of China. A possible reason behind this is to construct a narrative that gives them a right to be in Tibet and that justifies China's record since its takeover in the 1950s. Thus, delegitimise Tibetan nationalism and any question of independence within the international framework. Impact

The Resolve Tibet Act, enacted following a high-level US delegation's meeting with the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala in June 2024, marks another chapter in America's engagement with the Tibet issue, potentially reinvigorating international attention on the region. By emphasising the right to self-determination and challenging China's narrative, the Act raises intriguing questions about Tibet's status in international law. This legislation could serve as a catalyst for bringing Tibet's case before international legal forums, opening new avenues for discourse. However, the practical impact remains uncertain, given China's firm stance and global influence. The Act's effectiveness in opening doors for Tibet in

international law will depend on diplomatic manoeuvring, support from other nations, and the complex dynamics of US-China relations. As Tibet remains caught between shifting geopolitical priorities of nations, as with any geopolitical dispute, it is crucial to remember the ongoing toll on the Tibetan Buddhist population since the 1950s.

### **China's third plenum shows its reform era has entered a new phase**

13 August 2024, SCMP, Yang Yao

The Communist Party's long-awaited third plenum seems to not have grabbed the expected amount of attention, both inside and outside China. One of the explanations is that the plenum failed to meet expectations for significant reforms. In particular, there were no announcements of any concrete measures to boost China's low

domestic consumption levels – widely acknowledged as a major problem for the country's economy.

However, the third plenum is not oriented towards solving short-term problems. The third plenums of past party congresses put forward long-term strategies. This most recent third plenum was no exception. One of its significant achievements is that it lays out a plan for China in 2035 regarding its economic system. The key is the new goal of implementing a "high-level socialist market economy". Several aspects of this goal are particularly significant for China's policy agenda.

First of all, it implies that the primary stage of socialism, a concept formally proposed in 1987 to describe China's early stage of development, is reaching its endpoint. As that stage comes to a close, so are the institutional arrangements that characterised the first part of China's reform era.

China's economic system is founded on the reforms carried out in the 1990s. With the unification of dual exchange rates in 1994, markets became the main tool to set prices. Many state-owned enterprises were either privatised or went bankrupt. Since then, privately managed businesses have consistently gained ground.

The conventional formula to describe the role of private businesses now is the so-called 56789: the private sector contributes 50 per cent of tax revenue, 60 per cent of gross domestic product, 70 per cent of innovations, 80 per cent of urban employment, and 90 per cent of registered businesses. The Chinese economy is no longer one that is dominated by state-owned enterprises but one that features a mixture of private and public ownership.

Other reforms were no less important, such as policies that replenished China's financial system by successfully removing its non-performing loans. The tax reform of 1994 created a fiscal federal system that is believed to be one of the secrets for China's economic success as it gave local officials strong incentives to grow local economies.

The government reform got rid of a third of the ministries in the central government and downsized civil servants across the board. Finally, accession to the World Trade Organization lifted China's economic opening to new heights, paving the way for its phenomenal growth in exports.

However, the Communist Party's theoretical foundation has not fully reflected these reforms, despite their level of success. Thus, one of the main tasks of the third plenum was to theoretically cement those reforms, with the purpose of creating a high-level socialist market economy. As a mixed economy of both public and private businesses, China will continue to open to the rest of the world and will rely on the market to determine the allocation and pricing of resources.

However, the Communist Party's theoretical foundation has not fully reflected these reforms, despite their level of success. Thus, one of the main tasks of the third plenum was to theoretically cement those reforms, with the purpose of creating a high-level socialist market economy. As a mixed economy of both public and private businesses, China will continue to open to the rest of the world and will rely on the market to determine the allocation and pricing of resources.

About 20 per cent of the Chinese population live in places where they do not have local hukou and thus have no access to local benefits. For more than a decade now, the central government and various provinces have initiated hukou reforms, though results have substantially varied. This time, the central government will take an even larger role and authorities are determined to overhaul the hukou system within five years.

Another significant reform that came out of the third plenum addresses local government budgets. The plenum pledges to hand over collection of consumption taxes to local governments to strengthen local budgets. In the meantime, it also proposes that all income (as well as debt) raised by government resources be included in the government budget. One implication of this is local governments' commercial debt will be included in local governments' budgets. This move will hopefully make local debts transparent and thus easier for the public as well as the central government to monitor. Just like the overhaul of the hukou system, the tax reforms are expected to be finished in five years. It will become the ultimate tool to control local debts.

In conclusion, the Communist Party's third plenum laid out a grand plan for China. The proposal to build a high-level socialist market economy system is an affirmation of the reforms carried out in past decades, cementing their results into the party's theoretical framework. With this goal and the other policy initiatives, it will surely be remembered as one of the most important meetings in the Communist Party's history.

### **Opinion: India's policy on Tibet remains steadfast**

13 August 2024, The Week, Dhundup Gyalpo

India may fine-tune its rhetoric on Tibet but will never adopt an anti-Tibet position

In today's tumultuous global geopolitical landscape, there is growing curiosity on whether the Government of India should revisit its Tibet policy. As a Tibetan, I believe it is essential to contextualise this question accurately.

Changing dynamics in the region have often contributed to heightened media speculation on New

Delhi resetting ties with Beijing. I vividly recall a brief period of reports of exaggerated bonhomie between India and China, especially following the Wuhan Summit in April 2018 and leading up to the Mamallapuram Summit in October 2019.

During this period, numerous bilateral meetings between Prime Minister Modi and President Xi Jinping suggested a potential reset in Sino-Indian relations. The media also fervently highlighted their personal rapport, showcasing their informal interactions such as tea ceremonies and walks.

At that time, some of our well-wishers expressed concern about whether the Government of India might alter its Tibet policy due to the improving ties with China. I was frequently asked whether there had been any noticeable change in India's policy towards Tibet.

However, following the Galwan Valley clash, relations between the two countries taking a hit dominated media reports.

There is keen interest in deepening India's strategic partnership with the United States, particularly in the military and defence spheres. The U.S. now views India as a key ally in countering China's influence in the Indo-Pacific region. Moreover, the recent passage of the Resolve Tibet Act, signed into law by U.S. President Joe Biden, which refutes Beijing's claim that Tibet has been part of China since ancient times, has again intensified calls for a reassessment of India's Tibet policy.

Given that the current policy was framed in an entirely different geopolitical era, and considering China's growing belligerence on all fronts, it is quite understandable why the so-called Tibet card is being invoked in discussion every now and then.

Thus, the question arises again: Will the Government of India change its Tibet policy? My answer—then and

now—has invariably remained the same. When it comes to core issues, India's stance on Tibet has always been steadfast.

Reflecting the prevailing global geopolitical climate and ongoing border tensions, the Government of India may fine-tune its rhetoric on Tibet, sometimes being vocal and at other times subdued. But I firmly believe that the Indian government will never adopt a position that is anti-Tibet or anti-Tibetan people.

I am confident that my response will remain the same in the future.

## What China's Strategists Think About China-US Relations

13 August 2024, The Diplomat, Shannon Tiezzi

Yu Jie, a senior research fellow on China in the Asia-Pacific Program at Chatham House, analyzes Chinese elites' perceptions of the bilateral relationship.

Over the past decade, tensions in the China-U.S. relationship have mounted to the point that many now speak of a "new cold war" between Beijing and Washington. U.S. policymakers have leaned into this dynamic, explicitly framing China as a "strategic competitor" and "America's pacing threat."

How do Chinese elites view the relationship?

That's the question Dr. Yu Jie set out to answer in her new report, "China 'under siege': How the US's hardening China policy is seen in Beijing." Yu Jie, a senior research fellow on China in the Asia-Pacific Program at Chatham House, analyzed publications, officials remarks, and private conversations with top Chinese strategists to understand how elites in China are thinking about the China-U.S. relationship.

In this email interview with The Diplomat, Yu Jie explains common trends in China's thinking about the United States as well as hotspot issues like Taiwan and the war in Ukraine. Overall, she says, "Beijing's strategic community does not expect any significant improvement in the Sino-U.S. relationship before and after the U.S. elections in November 2024."

In 2015, veteran China scholar David Lampton famously warned of a "tipping point" in China-U.S. relations, as American perceptions of China changed dramatically. Your paper traces a similar shift in Chinese perceptions of the U.S. – and hardening of official rhetoric – in the early 2020s. What explains the delay between U.S. and Chinese re-evaluations of the basic state of their relationship?

There are three main reasons of this delay in adjusting their bilateral ties: Firstly, the Chinese political elites didn't consider the erratic Trump administration would last beyond 2020. They hoped that the election of U.S. President Joe Biden in 2020 might herald a softening of the confrontational China policy of his predecessor. However, these hopes have been dashed

as President Biden has pursued a similarly tough China policy, executed in a more sophisticated, coordinated, and substantive manner. Beijing sees clear evidence of a containment strategy in Washington.

Secondly, Chinese leaders have deprioritized the typical buffers and stabilizers of the China-U.S. relationship such as trade and investment. The tangible benefits of the China-U.S. relationship in the



past, namely trade and investment, have rapidly diminished due to increased commercial competitiveness and Beijing's decisive pivot from low-end, export-led growth to a high-end manufacturing growth model.

And lastly, the thorniest and most risk-laden issues in China-U.S. relations, such as Taiwan and South China Sea, continue to add mistrust and upset the current status quo. Beijing considers stronger deterrence actions should be absolutely necessary to send warnings to Washington and its Indo-Pacific allies.

If most Chinese strategists believe that the deterioration of China-U.S. relations is now more or less permanent, then what is Beijing's goal regarding China-U.S. interactions? The Biden administration has repeatedly stressed the need for "guardrails" and conflict management. Is that China's hope as well? China's ultimate goal is to ensure that the further erosion of China-U.S. relations does not hinder domestic economic growth, which is key to giving the ruling regime legitimacy. The overall strategy for Beijing to deal with the U.S. is to minimize damage from Washington by maximizing China's economic and political influence in the rest of the world, most notably with large parts of the Global South. Such a move might well buy time for China to speed up its own economic resilience and technology development.

As for the phrase "guardrails," it was hugely dismissed by the Chinese political elites. The guardrails implies someone set the rules and others to follow. However, Beijing does not only want to become the follower of rules set by the U.S. in this bilateral relationship. It asks for a significant equity in deciding the rules.

You note a strong pessimism among Chinese experts about the potential of "peaceful reunification," with many experts arguing that Taiwan's government would not agree to unification with the mainland absent strong coercion. Is there any introspection about why the DPP has adopted a hardline stance on China – and been re-elected to the presidency three times in a row by Taiwan's people?

A noticeable feature from Beijing is the growing sense of urgency to deter pro-independence supporters and the sharp criticism of "separatists" inside Taiwan, as President Xi and his lieutenants have made several official comments on various occasions – particularly after Nancy Pelosi, at the time speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, visited Taipei. Both changes

reflect Xi's own belief that there has been a serious deterioration of the Sino-U.S. relationship. Related to this shift, Chinese leaders and official media use coded vocabulary, such as "external forces," to

criticize U.S. interference in matters related to Taiwan under both the Trump and Biden administrations.

Despite no formal changes of wording in Beijing's political blueprints on Taiwan, on balance Chinese political elites and influential scholars consider the current situation to be precarious with the pro-independence DPP government in Taiwan, which is likely to result in more active Chinese deterrents to confront the Taiwanese government as well as the incoming U.S. president, irrespective of who that is. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, there's a strong sense among European analysts that China has "lost" Europe due to its support for Russia. Do Chinese strategists agree? And if so, how important is this factor for China's national interests?

The Chinese strategic community has intensely debated the three challenges related to the war in Ukraine. The subject has raised many questions that have proven difficult to answer, including: to what extent can China support Russia and maintain stable ties with both the U.S. and Europe, while not facing secondary sanctions from the collective West? When and how will the war end? Should China play a more active mediation role between Russia and Ukraine given the current stalemate on the battlefield?

In fact, Chinese experts opinions are divided on the fundamental questions of whether China should align with Russia and what the likely repercussions would be for China's ties with the U.S. and Europe. However, there is also a strong view among many Chinese international affairs specialists that even if Beijing sided with Europe, Europeans would not have responded in kind; and the transatlantic alliance countering China would not be weakened by China's stances to this war. One can confirm that Beijing's damage limitation efforts have not been well received in some European capitals.

China's strong inclination to sustain its ties with Russia goes well beyond the Kremlin's military adventure. Its return on investments is still framed by its response to the United States' pursuit of a China containment strategy. Beijing believes its relations with Moscow might well bring a necessary (if imperfect) solution in dealing with U.S. policy in both economic and diplomatic terms.

How does China view the upcoming U.S. election? Is there a clear preference for either Donald Trump or Kamala Harris?

With the U.S. presidential candidates likely to compete with one another to sound tough on China, Beijing's strategic community does not expect any significant improvement in the Sino-U.S. relationship before or after the U.S. elections in November 2024.

With the possible return of Donald Trump, Chinese leaders will likely reinforce the narrative that the U.S.

is the single and most disruptive source of global instability, while portraying China as a responsible and confident world power able to stand up to the U.S. hegemony. For Beijing, the return of Donald Trump might well be a rare opportunity to recalibrate its bilateral relationship with the U.S., as he is often willing to make deals outside traditional political parameters. However, his leadership style will cause further anxiety for Chinese leaders as Trump tends to focus on his own interests regardless of the consequences, as was illustrated by the Trump administration ignoring the well-established approach of generations of U.S. and Chinese leaders to Taiwan. On Harris, Beijing naturally considers she will continue to carry forward the Biden administration's China policy and strengthen the United States' influence in the Indo-Pacific. As a result, there is not a clear preference for Harris or Trump.

### **America's gambit: Putting Tibet in the legal spotlight**

13 August 2024, ORF, Udayvir Ahuja

The recently enacted Resolve Tibet Act marks another chapter in America's engagement with the Tibet issue, potentially reinvigorating international attention on the region

Tibet captured global attention following World War II when the People's Republic of China annexed it in 1950. However, in the past two decades, Tibet's struggle for autonomy has largely faded from the forefront of international consciousness, becoming a footnote among the freedom movements of the 21st century.

Tibet captured global attention following World War II when the People's Republic of China annexed it in 1950.

Aside from Nepal and India, which are home to the majority of the Buddhist Tibetan refugees, it is the United States (US), which has arguably played a more significant role in keeping the Tibetan movement alive in the international arena. Most recently, on 12 July 2024, US President Joe Biden signed the 'Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act', also dubbed as the Resolve Tibet Act.

#### **Background**

Since the invasion of Tibet by China in October 1950, the region of Tibet has been under Chinese control. For a brief period, a settlement was reached between the Tibetan and Chinese governments, through the Seventeen-Point Agreement, which was signed in 1951. However, due to significant violations of multiple undertakings of the agreement as well as forced reforms in addition to propaganda

campaigns against Tibetan culture and history, the Tibetan government legally repudiated the agreement in March 1959. During the same period, there was a short-lived armed revolt by the Tibetan population, in the aftermath of which the 14th and current Dalai Lama fled from Lhasa and took shelter in Dharamshala, India.

Since the invasion of Tibet by China in October 1950, the region of Tibet has been under Chinese control.

Today, Tibet is governed as an autonomous region of China through the administration of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and 12 Tibetan autonomous prefectures or counties in the nearby provinces of Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu, and Yunnan.

#### **US and Tibet**

Historically, the US's policy towards Tibet has fluctuated drastically depending on its relations with China and its geopolitical outlook. In the 1950s and 60s, it provided military and financial aid to Tibetan guerrilla forces. In the 70s and 80s, however, we witnessed a switch where the US had almost zero contact with the Tibetan government in exile as it was trying to strengthen its relations with China. However, from 2000 onwards, it began to refocus its attention on Tibet with the Tibet Policy Act (TPA) of 2002, a core legislation which still acts as a guiding US policy towards Tibet, which states 'It is the policy of the United States to support economic development, cultural preservation, health care, and education and environmental sustainability for Tibetans inside Tibet'. The enactment further went on to establish the position of Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues in the US State Department, talk about the establishment of a US Branch Office in Lhasa and encourage dialogue between China and the Dalai Lama, among other things.

Fast-forward to 2018, the US came out with the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act 2018, which directed the Department of State to report to Congress regarding the level of access Chinese authorities granted U.S. tourists, journalists and diplomats to Tibetan areas in China.

The 2020 Tibetan Policy and Support Act (TSPA) stipulated that the question of the succession of Tibetan Buddhist leaders, including the Dalai Lama, be decided within the Tibetan Buddhist community, without any interference from the Chinese government.

The 2020 Tibetan Policy and Support Act (TSPA) stipulated that the question of the succession of Tibetan Buddhist leaders, including the Dalai Lama, be decided within the Tibetan Buddhist community, without any interference from the Chinese government. The TSPA also imposes sanctions against Chinese officials who engage in said interferences.

#### **Resolve Tibet Act**

The Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act was introduced as a bipartisan bill by US Senators Jeff Merkley and Todd Young. The Act promotes an unconditional dialogue between the Dalai Lama and the People's Republic of China (PRC) to seek a settlement and further enhance the US's overall support for Tibet.

Key enactments:

1. The definition of Tibet: While the Act does not necessarily change Washington's policy of viewing Tibet as a part of China, it lays down a statutory definition of Tibet that encompasses not only the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) but also Tibetan areas within the Chinese provinces of Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu, and Yunnan. Unlike the Chinese government's typical reference to Tibet, which is limited to the TAR, this broader definition aligns with the regions traditionally recognised as Tibet.

2. Self-determination: Section 2 of the Act underlines the 'Right of Self-Determination' of the Tibetan people as laid down in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The right to self-determination is a core principle of international law which provides that every person has the right to self-determination. By the said right, people can freely determine their own political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development. This has been reinforced by the International Court of Justice in the Wall case (2004), in which it states 'the principle of self-determination of peoples has been enshrined in the United Nations Charter and reaffirmed by the General Assembly in resolution 2625 (XXV), under which "Every State has the duty to refrain from any forcible action which deprives peoples referred to [in that resolution] ... of their right to self-determination". The Act may serve as a catalyst which brings Tibet back into the attention and purview of international law.

3. Tackling Chinese disinformation: The Act amends the TPA by expanding the duties of the Office of the US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues to tackle Chinese disinformation about Tibet's history, culture, people, and institutions, including that of the Dalai Lama. This comes amidst a global narrative push by the Chinese government Tibet has "always" been a part of China. A possible reason behind this is to construct a narrative that gives them a Impact right to be in Tibet and that justifies China's record since its takeover in the 1950s. Thus, delegitimise Tibetan nationalism and any question of independence within the international framework.

Impact

The Resolve Tibet Act, enacted following a high-level US delegation's meeting with the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala in June 2024, marks another chapter in

America's engagement with the Tibet issue, potentially reinvigorating international attention on the region. By emphasising the right to self-determination and challenging China's narrative, the Act raises intriguing questions about Tibet's status in international law. This legislation could serve as a catalyst for bringing Tibet's case before international legal forums, opening new avenues for discourse. However, the practical impact remains uncertain, given China's firm stance and global influence. The Act's effectiveness in opening doors for Tibet in international law will depend on diplomatic manoeuvring, support from other nations, and the complex dynamics of US-China relations. As Tibet remains caught between shifting geopolitical priorities of nations, as with any geopolitical dispute, it is crucial to remember the ongoing toll on the Tibetan Buddhist population since the 1950s.

### **India Needs To Reset Its Ties with China Instead Of Relying On America**

13 August 2024, Almayadeen, Rabi Sankar Bosu

It is hoped that India and China should work to normalize their derailed ties by increasing economic, political, and strategic cooperation as well as people-to-people exchange.

The official diplomatic journey of India and China, the two big neighbouring countries and ancient civilizations in Asia started on April 1, 1950, when India being the first non-socialist country recognized the newly-born People's Republic of China as a sovereign country. During their remarkable journey spanning over seven decades, these two countries have maintained a cordial and close friendship through state-level visits while a burgeoning trade and economic partnership as well as people-to-people and cultural ties have contributed to further blossoming their bilateral bonding.

But no one can dispute that the unfortunate bloodshed in the 2020 Galwan Valley clash between the Indian and Chinese border troops at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Ladakh region decimated the India-China relationship. Since then, India has reiterated that the border situation will determine the status of its relations with its northern neighbour until normalcy is restored along the LAC. Address the longstanding issue of cross-border terrorism." Jaishankar's comments clearly indicate that India will take a seemingly hard line against China to resolve the border dispute with China. There is no disputing that the Doklam (Donglang) standoff in 2017 and the Galwan Valley standoff in 2020 led to a sharp decline in India-China relations and significantly affected the socio-economic conditions of over 2.7 billion people residing on either side of the Himalayas. Aftermath of the Galwan Valley Clash:

It's really unfortunate that despite a plethora of bilateral agreements on border-related issues, the two countries have not yet reached a complete agreement on the disengagement of troops from all friction points at the disputed LAC in Ladakh. After rounds of talks between military commanders and diplomatic meetings between India and China failed to produce any dramatic breakthroughs, questions continue to haunt Indian and Chinese people alike: How can the two countries manage to improve their ties? Will the sour political and diplomatic relations become the normal state between the two countries? More importantly, what does the Galwan Valley clash signify for the future of Sino-Indian relations?

Right after the Galwan Valley clash, Indian policy towards China entered a dangerous phase when the Narendra Modi-led Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government adopted punitive measures such as imposing a range of economic measures against Chinese firms and banning a set of mobile apps linked to China. The Indian political leadership has accelerated its strategic tilt toward the United States and echoing the words of US President Joe Biden, painted China as an "expansionist." On June 21, 2020, India introduced new "Rules of Engagement" for the border areas that give its commanders "complete freedom of action" along the LAC. India's sedulous courtship of the United States, resuscitation of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), and cancellation of public contracts with Chinese firms do not promote healthy and stable development of its relations with China. Rather, such a trend could derail India's dream of becoming a "US\$5 trillion economy".

**The Quad Keeps Eye on China:**

It should be mentioned here that the dialogue of the four Quad foreign ministers from Australia, India, Japan, and the United States and the joint statement of the Quad meeting in Tokyo, Japan on July 29, 2024, have clearly shown that it is directed against China to contain the country's rise in the Indo-Pacific region, currently the most active region in the global geopolitical landscape under the leadership of President Biden. The Quad foreign ministers expressed serious concerns over China's intimidating actions in the South China Sea and pledged to enhance maritime security and stability in the region. Since becoming Indian Prime Minister in 2014, Modi has been working closely with the United States under former U.S. President Donald Trump and current President Biden to check Chinese adventurism and militarization in the frame of Indo-Pacific strategy, including the South China Sea. In terms of security issues, India is more concerned about China's presence in the Indian Ocean and the defense cooperation between China and Pakistan. The Narendra Modi-led government believes that an alliance with America is in its best interests.

However, on July 29, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lin Jian condemned the joint statement of the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting for chanting "a free & open Indo-Pacific" by stating that "Some countries outside the region have frequently sent advanced military aircraft and vessels to the South China Sea to flex their muscles and create tension, and have formed various groupings and incited division and confrontation in the region, all of which make them the biggest threat and challenge to regional peace and stability." He also condemned the Quad as an exclusive group that incites antagonism and confrontation and hinders the development of other countries.

It is indeed surprising that India, despite being a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS, is irritating China by joining a part of the U.S.-led security alliance against China. Notably, India is going to host the Quad Leaders' Summit later this year. India should not be overly fascinated by the U.S.'s strategic approach to China. India's foreign policy cannot be dictated by the U.S.

**Returning India-China Relations to Normal:**

Amid continuing border standoff between the two countries, Indian Foreign Minister S Jaishankar met his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on July 25, on the sidelines of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Vientiane, the capital of Laos, and discussed various aspects of bilateral collaboration, including resolving the border disputes as soon as possible. After the meeting with Wang, the Indian foreign minister said in a post on X: "The state of the border will necessarily be reflected in the state of our ties."

On the other hand, emphasizing the daunting global challenges, the Chinese foreign minister stressed that the two countries should increase understanding and mutual trust for mutually beneficial cooperation. It is to be noted that the two foreign ministers earlier met on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) meeting in Astana, Kazakhstan on July 4 and agreed to work to defuse the border tensions. On both occasions, Wang emphasized that China values its friendship with India and will work to manage its differences with its neighbour.

Obviously, the two ministers exhibited both hope and confidence in relations between Asia's two biggest countries. More importantly, Jaishankar insisted that India was "not looking to other countries to sort out" the ongoing border dispute with China during the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting on July 25 in Japan. Indian foreign minister is right. India is an independent major country. Its normal relations with China should not be a target for external interference from a third party.

**India needs China, China needs India:**

The Economic Survey 2024, authored by India's Chief Economic Adviser V Anantha Nageswaran,

outlined that it is inevitable for India to plug itself into the global supply chain without increasing imports from China and also said that allowing foreign direct investment (FDI) from China could help boost India's exports to the western nations, according to a report published by The Hindu Businessline on July 23, 2024. The Survey said, "India's economy is still a fraction of China's".

India cannot punish China economically or politically because of its fragile economy. Despite the political frostiness and prolonged border faceoffs, the good news is that India's trade with China is grown fast in recent years. China has emerged as the largest trading partner of India with \$118.4 billion two-way commerce in 2023-24, overtaking the U.S., according to various news reports in India. India's exports to China rose by 8.7 percent to \$16.67 billion in the last fiscal.

On the other hand, China needs to invest more in improving its relationship with India even if the returns aren't immediate. China can take advantage of India's emerging and buoyant consumer market, in particular, the electronics, pharmaceutical, and telecom markets. Judging India's trade figures with China, it can be said that India needs China more than China needs India. Pushing Forward Bilateral Relations:

Mahatma Gandhi, "Father of the Indian nation", once said, "I must not serve a distant neighbour at the expense of the nearest." India and China are two close neighbours and represent the world's biggest emerging economies. The importance of India-China relations has been increasing to the two countries themselves, to Asia, and to the world. Considering the strength and development of India-China bilateral ties as well as the two countries' respective roles in international issues, Sino-Indian relations cannot be a "zero-sum game" in the era of globalization. It is hoped that India and China should work to normalize their derailed ties by increasing economic, political, and strategic cooperation as well as people-to-people exchange, which are all equally important for the region and for global peace, stability, and prosperity.

### **US attempt to cause a rift between China and India over border issue deserves vigilance**

13 August 2024, Global Times, Su Lun

Amid signs signaling a thaw in China-India relations, the Voice of America (VOA) reported on Tuesday about India's recently released Project Zorawar light tank. The report claimed that the weapon is a direct response to "China's expanding military influence," highlighting the tank as new evidence of the extensive competition between China and India. It

portrayed the tank as a clear signal of India's intention to prevent China gaining from advantages in the border crisis. This coverage attempts to use media influence to cause a rift in China-India relations, particularly to heighten border tensions between China and India and give the US a pretext to strengthen its strategy in the Asia-Pacific region.

Despite Indian media reporting in July that the Zorawar tank is "expected to be ready for induction into the army by 2027," VOA presented the Zorawar as a "game-changer for high-altitude warfare" without objectively assessing its potential deployment timeline or feasibility.

"The Zorawar tank will not significantly alter the balance of power on the China-India border," Long Xingchun, a professor from the School of International Relations at Sichuan International Studies University, told the Global Times, noting that the real factor affecting the border situation is the two countries' respective national strength. "The report by US media aims to sow discord in China-India relations, making it easier for the US to pull India into an anti-China circle," Long added.

Media manipulation, in which the significance of India's Zorawar light tank was magnified, has been used to stir up misunderstandings and tensions between China and India. This strategy aims to deepen divisions and conflicts, thereby sustaining US influence on India and in the Asia-Pacific region.

Over the past three years, China and India have maintained communication and coordination through military and diplomatic channels over the border issue. The foreign ministers of China and India held two meetings in July 2024, where they emphasized the need to step up talks to resolve disputes along their borders. This positive development has not only de-escalated tensions in the border region, improved bilateral relations, but also contributed to greater stability in the region.

However, the momentum has clearly rendered the US on tenterhooks.

The improvement in China-India relations is clearly detrimental to the implantation of the US global strategy. Washington is concerned that the easing of tensions between China and India could weaken US influence and strategic advantage in the Asia-Pacific.

Additionally, India's recent statements dismissing the need for third-party interference in the China-India border issue may also give the US a sense of urgency about losing control in the region.

The US has never been a true friend to India. Its relationship with India has always been based on utilitarian exploitation, with the hope of turning India into a pawn to contain China. However, cooperation and improved relations align more closely with the



mutual interests of China and India as representative powers of the Global South.

The recent emergence of positive momentum for the improvement of bilateral ties between China and India should be preserved and strengthened. And both sides must be vigilant against interference from other forces with ulterior motives.

The improvement in China-India relations could serve as a crucial driver of regional peace, and the US attempts at provocation and manipulation of public opinion reveal its hypocritical strategy. In the face of such interference, China and India should resolve differences through dialogue and cooperation and promote the stable development of bilateral relations. Only based on cooperation, can the two countries jointly meet future challenges and achieve a win-win outcome.

### **The Resolve Tibet Act, a Timely Impetus for Foreign Policy Review**

13 August 2024, Japan Forward, Tsewang Gyalo Arya

The "Resolve Tibet Act" defines US policy on Tibet, challenges Chinese claims, and promotes global action for Tibet's rights and international resolution.

President Joe Biden Signs Resolve Tibet Act, Strengthens America's Tibet Policy on July 12, 2024 (Photo: Tibet.net)

July 2024 marks an important milestone in defining the United States' policy on the Tibet issue and its resolutions. US President Joe Biden signed the "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act," and the Act became law on July 12. This legislation delineates and will govern the US policy toward Tibet and the Tibetan struggle for freedom and justice.

The Act has six sections:

1. Short title
2. Findings
3. Statement of policy
4. Sense of Congress
5. Modifications to the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002
6. Availability of amounts to counter disinformation about Tibet

The Act is popularly known in its abridged form as the "Resolve Tibet Act." Both its long and abridged forms

succinctly convey the purpose and necessity of the legislation. It aims to settle the ongoing dispute between Tibet and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime. This is crucial due to China's ongoing aggressive efforts to distort and erase the true nature of the issue through disinformation.

### **Historical Truth vs Diplomatic Deadlock**

Section 2 of the Act has 12 clauses explaining how negotiations between 2002 and 2010 failed and why they were impossible. This was due to China's insistence on the illogical precondition that the Dalai Lama recognize Tibet as having been a part of China since ancient times. Clause 5 of the section states, "The United States Government has never taken a position that Tibet was a part of China since ancient times."

Tibet has been an independent country with a long cultural, religious, and political history. Since the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1950, China has consistently tried every means to justify its presence in Tibet, including distortion of Tibetan history. Washington reiterated that Tibet has never been a part of China since ancient times. Free and democratic nations around the world should uphold and recognize this historical truth.

This will awaken China from its condescending big bully stupor and arm-twisting maneuver. It will force China to accept the reality that its military occupation of Tibet was brutal, illegal, and against the United Nations Charter.

Recognition, Rights, and Countering Disinformation  
Section 3 of the Act, which includes five clauses, states the policy of the US government. It recognizes the Tibetan people as having distinct religious, cultural, linguistic, and historical identities. Moreover, it emphasizes that the Tibet issue must be resolved by international law, including the UN Charter, through peaceful means and dialogue without preconditions. Clauses in Section 2 further refer to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. These covenants establish the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right, Tibetans can "freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development."

### **Distorting Tibetan History**

Section 4 of the Act rejects the Chinese claim that Tibet has been part of China since ancient times as "historically inaccurate." It also states that US public diplomacy efforts will "counter disinformation about Tibet from the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party." This includes addressing disinformation about the history of Tibet, the Tibetan people, Tibetan institutions, and the Dalai Lama.

This is a clear message from the US government to China to stop distorting Tibetan history and religious culture. Additionally, it calls on China to refrain from interfering in the selection of Tibetan spiritual

leaders, including the reincarnation of the 14th Dalai Lama.

#### Challenging China's Claims

The Act also defines Tibet's geographical area and composition. It has pointed out all the Tibetan regions under the traditional three provinces of U-Tsang, Amdo, and Kham as Tibet. This is a considerable blow to the CCP's policy of limiting Tibet to China's so-called "Tibet Autonomous Region." Furthermore, it also challenges Beijing's efforts to erase the nomenclature "Tibet" and replace it with "Xizang." Washington's Resolve Tibet Act is about the US policy to resolve the Tibet-China dispute according to International law and the UN Charter through peaceful dialogue. It states that the Chinese occupation of Tibet is illegal, and the Tibet issue is still an unresolved international issue. Significantly, it also states that UN members have an obligation to resolve it.

#### Disinformation and Militarization

Elsewhere, the Act refers to the UN resolution on Tibet, which China has neglected. The Act also warns China to stop spreading disinformation about Tibet and Tibetans. China uses such disinformation to justify its illegal occupation of Tibet and interference in Tibetan religious matters.

Beijing's militarization of the Tibetan plateau and the volatile situation that we see at the borders of India, Nepal, and Bhutan are concerning. China's heavy military presence in the Indo-Pacific regions and Southeast China Sea raises further alarms. There is also the constant Chinese threat to Taiwan and the Senkaku Islands. None of this bodes well for peace and stability in Asia and the world.

#### A Call for Global Action

If the international community seeks a world free of violence, injustice, and repression, it must take action. Allowing a destructive authoritative regime like China to continue its arm-twisting hegemonic maneuvering in neighboring regions is unacceptable. It is high time to tame and control the authoritative regimes posing obstacles to world peace and stability. Free and democratic nations must take this US initiative to revise their national policy toward China.

"An evil man will burn his own nation to the ground to rule over the ashes." If what Sun Tzu, the legendary Chinese military philosopher, said is true, it's an alarm bell for all of us. India, Japan, and the European Union should take the lead in Europe and Asia to change their respective policies on Tibet and harness the fiery dragon bent on burning itself and the world.

## Did climate change kill the ancient Tibetan empire?

12 August 2024, Tibetan Review

The general narrative on the demise of the Tibetan empire, which pervaded across Central Asia and beyond during the period of 7th to 9th centuries AD, even sacking China's Tang dynasty capital Chang'an — modern day Xian—in 763, is pretty straightforward: It followed the assassination of its Yarlung dynasty King Langdarma and the disintegration of the empire due to the absence of a central authority. However, scientists are said to see the explanation for the collapse of the Tibetan empire lying elsewhere, namely climate change.

The period of its heyday fell on 618-877 AD. However, then it began to fade, and then completely disappeared. For a long time, scientists could not understand what exactly led to the death of the state, noted newsyou.info Aug 12.

In order to finally solve the mystery of the collapse of an ancient civilization, scientists from the Tibetan Highlands Research Institute turned to the geological data of lake sediments. As a result, they came to the conclusion that the fading occurred due to changed natural conditions, the report said, citing a vsviti.com.ua report.

Warm and humid weather trends were strong during the heyday of the Tibetan empire. This contributed to the development of agriculture and cattle breeding. But later, despite everything, there was a severe drought that coincided with the collapse of the state, the authors of the work were stated to have noted.

The researchers have based their opinion on the remains of microscopic unicellular algae found in one of the lakes of Tibet. They drew attention to clear signs of the transition from planktonic species (drifting inside the lake, closer to the surface) to benthic forms (living near the bottom of the reservoir). This means that its level was once much higher. That is, later the lake partially dried up.

During the analysis of other reservoirs in the region, the authors of the work were stated to have come to the conclusion that climatic changes affected the entire highlands, and were not limited to the place under study.

The drought probably lasted for 60-70 years. This would have caused crop failures, and food shortages in those days often led to social unrest, as well as religious and political problems, the researchers were stated to have concluded.

## China's Anti-Religious-Freedom Policy: A Threat to World Peace and Stability

12 August 2024, Bitter Winter, Tsewang Gyalpo Arya

An analysis of the brutal repression of religion in Tibet and beyond, based on the author's panel speech at the July 22 Tokyo's International Religious Freedom Summit Asia.

Why is religion important and why do we need it?

H.H. the Dalai Lama, a Tibetan spiritual leader and 1989 Nobel Peace Laureate, has said that all religious teachings carry important messages of love, compassion, forgiveness, and non-violence. All the major religions in this world have a great potential to generate and contribute peace and harmony at all levels: of the individual, the family, societal, national, and international. To have a peaceful world, we first need peace within ourselves at a personal level. This will have a ripple effect. For this, we need religion and moral ethics to guide us properly to find this peace within and outside ourselves. It is this important sacred potential of religions that we must uphold and promote for a better and peaceful world. In a free and democratic nation, this religious freedom is respected and it complements social and national harmony. But a dictatorial and authoritarian regime, which wants to have complete control over people's minds and bodies, sees religion as a threat to its authority, hence the religious repression. The very fact that they are against the religious teachings that are based on love, compassion, forgiveness, and non-violence, shows the evil and dangerous nature of such a regime.

Tibet's experience past and present

It's more than 70 years since China occupied Tibet militarily. Despite their propaganda and claims of emancipation, prosperity, development, and socialist paradise, Tibetans are still suffering under the repressive brutal communist regime. The violation of human rights, religious freedom, repression, and destruction of Tibetan identity, which has been going on since the early occupation in the 1950s, has now reached the climax. Today, the situation in Tibet is described by sentences such as "total information blackout," "Tibet has become a police state," "Tibetan plateau militarized," and so on. The US Freedom House survey has described Tibet as the most repressed and inaccessible country in several consecutive annual reports.

When China failed to gain legitimacy to rule Tibet even after 70 years of occupation and indoctrination, the communist regime decided to eliminate the root of the Tibetan identity, i.e., Tibetan language, culture, and religion.

More than 6,000 monasteries and nunneries were destroyed and thousands of monks and nuns were forced to disrobe in the early years of occupation. But

the situation has become worse since the coming of Xi Jinping in 2012. Today, monasteries, religious statues and artifacts, and schools are destroyed in broad daylight before the eyes of the public, and information on these atrocities comes out only after the destruction and despite of cover-up measures.



Tsewang Gyalpo Arya at the Tokyo Summit with Ambassador Sam Brownback, former U.S. Ambassador-at-large for International Religious Freedom.

CCP's propaganda and misinformation on "separatism"

China insists that the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Administration in Exile are separatists and anti-China. But the truth is different. It is the Chinese communist leadership that is separatist and anti-China. Many Tibetans and Chinese lived and studied peacefully and harmoniously together in two large monastic complexes of Larung-gar and Yachen-gar in the Kham region in Eastern Tibet. There were students from South Korea, Taiwan, and other countries too. However, Chinese authorities saw this good relationship between Tibetans and Chinese along with others studying Buddhism together as dangerous.

They started destroying the two monasteries in 2001 and sent the Chinese and the Tibetan students to their respective places. Tibetan monks were not allowed to teach Buddhism to Chinese, and Chinese people were banned from receiving teachings from Tibetan masters. So, who is the real separatist? It is the CCP regime with its "divide and rule" policy that is the real separatist.

Many protested peacefully. Three nuns, Rinzin Dolma, Tsering Dolma, and Semgha committed suicide to protest the destructions and evictions. It was reported that monks and nuns were arrested and forced into indoctrination classes where they were coerced to wear Chinese military outfits, dance, and sing songs praising the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

Emboldened China and broad daylight repression  
The silence of the international community has emboldened China to commit these religious atrocities in broad daylight.

In December 2021, China dismantled a 99-foot Buddha statue and a 30-foot Maitreya statue and destroyed 45 large prayer wheels and a monastic school in the Drago region in the Kham province of Tibet. They dismantled a 45-foot statue of Guru Padmasambhava, an Indian saint who introduced Buddhism and was revered as the second Buddha in Tibet, in Nyimo Township.

But very little news or information comes out because of the communication restrictions, strict surveillance, and threat of torture. The world thinks Tibet is safe and at peace because there is no news on Tibet. But the truth is the opposite.

Making laws to justify religious repression

The CCP, although it does not believe in and respect religions, knows the power of religion. To have total control over the people in China and the occupied territories, the CCP is trying to make religion its handy tool. When repressions, indoctrination, and destruction of monasteries, churches, and mosques failed to destroy people's faith in religions, the CCP leadership came up with laws, rules, and regulations to control religions and the religious understanding of the people.

Last year, China came up with Religious Order No.19, the Administrative Measures for Religious Activity Venues, to administer the places of worship in China and in its occupied regions. Through this regulation, China is trying to justify the CCP's interference in religious matters with the people and to stop the international community's criticism by saying that they are acting within the law.

Article 3 of the Order states, "Places of religious activity shall uphold the leadership of the CCP and the socialist system, and thoroughly implement Xi Jinping's ideology of Socialism with Chinese characteristics for the New Era."

Here China has openly made it clear that under this regulation all religious bodies must adopt "Xi Jinping's ideology of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics" in their religious teachings and practices. This is ridiculous and unacceptable! Communist ideology and Xi Jinping do not respect and believe in religion. So it is preposterous and sacrilegious on the part of the CCP leadership to dilute and profane the religious teachings for their political agenda.

China also announced a law on patriotic education last year. Articles 3 and 6 of the law say, "Patriotic education shall hold the great banner of socialism with Chinese characteristics, persist in using Marxism, Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, the important thought of the 'Three

Represents', the Scientific Outlook on Development, and Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for the New Era as guidance..."

From this, it is very clear that the CCP's patriotic education is nothing more than indoctrinating and forcing the obsolete communist ideology on the masses and making it a mandatory part of education and social life. By idolizing Mao and Deng, the law also tries to erase the dark memories and records of all the deaths and sufferings that Mao's Cultural Revolution, the Great Leap Forward, and Deng's Tiananmen Square massacre brought to China.

Forced and repeated use of "Xi Jinping Thought" here and there is aimed at imposing the worship and deification of the Chinese President. This is evident from the fact that Tibetans are forced to make offerings and do prostrations before pictures of Xi Jinping.

Control of religious leaders

As religious leaders are respected and revered, the CCP tries to exert its authority over the selection and appointment of religious leaders and teachers. China Buddhist Association (CBA), the highest religious body theoretically looking after the teachings of Buddha in the country, is strictly controlled by the CCP. Through this body, the CCP is trying to control the Buddhists not only in China but around the world. Arjia Rinpoche, a prominent Tibetan-Mongolian reincarnate lama, when he came to know that he was going to be appointed the head of the CBA, as he writes in his book "Surviving the Dragon", "could no longer ignore the conflict between government interests and my own religious vows. Rather than betray my faith, I chose to leave my hometown, my friends, and my beloved monks at Kumbum Monastery. I chose the path of exile." He fled Tibet in 1998. His book has now become a testament to the atrocities the CCP has perpetrated and is perpetrating in Tibet since its occupation in 1950.

Buddhism is very popular in China and around the world and Tibetan reincarnated lamas and teachers are highly revered in the Buddhist world. The CCP through their Religious Order No.5 in 2007 has asserted its power to select and control the reincarnation of Tibetan Buddhist masters. China is now aggressively spreading disinformation that it has historical and political rights to select the next Dalai Lama. This is wrong and completely false. The policy behind this is to produce religious leaders under the guise of reincarnation who will parrot the CCP's dictates. The Chinese-selected 11th Panchen Lama is a typical example of this policy.

Of course, the same is happening with Christian, Muslim, and Taoist communities. The churches, mosques, and temples are all controlled by CCP cadres and the official heads of these religions are all selected and groomed to stick to the CCP version

of religion and Xi Jinping's ideology of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics. This is very dangerous, and we must not let it continue.

**With US keen on military base and China eyeing deep sea port, India must engage with Bangladesh smartly**

11 August 2024, First Post, Air Marshal Anil Chopra

If Bangladesh remains unfriendly to India, Pakistan could also take advantage, including in connivance with China

As Bangladesh comes to grips with the violent protests after the resignation and exit of former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, international power play is unfolding. Hasina has been ruling the strategically located South Asian nation since 2009 and secured a fifth overall term in the one-sided election in January, which was boycotted by the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

China is heavily invested in infrastructure and military hardware in Bangladesh. The US is trying to secure a military base in Bangladesh. India has its longest land border with Bangladesh (4,096 kilometres) that covers its three sides, the fourth being the Bay of Bengal (BoB).

US Favoured a Regime Change

For a long time, the US administration has expressed support for regime change in Bangladesh. They were not very happy with Hasina being pro-India or taking support from China. Various strategies have been tried to get her out of power. Opposition activists had been supported to create a revolt. The US ambassador has been meeting the opposition party, BNP. During the elections, Hasina faced constant criticism from the US over what they called unfair polls.

The US 2023 NDAA Burma Act

Sheikh Hasina recently indicated about a plot by a third country (purportedly the US) that could lead to the division of Bangladesh on religious lines and the creation of a non-Muslim majority country like East Timor. Kuki-Chin rebels are fighting with the Myanmar army to help and promote Christian rebels. The incorporation of the Burma Act into the US 2023 NDAA had raised strong public opinion in Myanmar that substantial US support would come for the resistance movement in Myanmar. Kuki Chin Province of Myanmar, Chattogram hill tracts of Bangladesh, and Mizoram of India may be the demarcation.

More than one million Chin live in Myanmar, one million Mizo live in Mizoram, half a million Kuki live in Manipur, and tens of thousands of Kuki live in Bangladesh. In addition, due to the ongoing fighting between the Myanmar army and the Chin people,

hundreds of thousands of Chin have fled overseas, including 80,000 in the United States". Hasina felt that it was a wakeup call for the sub-region.

Naval and Airbase at Saint Martin's Island

The 3 sq km St Martin Island is in the north-eastern part of the BoB, about 9 km south of the tip of Cox's Bazar-Teknaf peninsula, and is the southernmost part of the country.



The US had reportedly suggested that Bangladesh join the Quad alliance, and there were reports suggesting that they proposed leasing Saint Martin Island for building an air and naval base. The US does maintain military ties with Bangladesh, with both forces engaging in regular visits and joint exercises. Since China is also trying to get closer to Bangladesh, such a US base meant to contain China was not acceptable to them. Some others have suggested that the US actually wants to make Bangladesh a playground to 'dominate' India.

However, during a press conference, Matthew Miller, spokesperson for the US Department of State, asserted that the United States has never engaged in any discussions regarding taking control of St Martin's Island or has any intention to do so.

China-Bangladesh Defence Cooperation

Bangladesh has emerged as an important player in China's political expansion strategy. Military cooperation between the two in the form of arms supply and construction of military infrastructure has increased in the past few years. During the 1971 liberation of Bangladesh, China had supported Pakistan. But today, Bangladesh considers China a trusted ally.

In 2002, China and Bangladesh signed a "Defence Cooperation Agreement", which covers military training and defence production. By 2006, Dhaka had emerged as a major buyer of Chinese-made weapons. China praised Bangladesh Hasina for her decision to deny permission for a foreign military base, commending it as a reflection of the Bangladeshi people's strong national spirit and commitment to independence. Any strategic partnership with Dhaka gives Beijing added leverage to reduce Indian influence and checkmate its forces.



China has emerged as Bangladesh's highest trading partner, with over \$25 billion invested in various projects. After Pakistan, Bangladesh is the second-highest Chinese investment recipient in the South Asian region. China has played a significant role in building bridges, roads, railway tracks, airports, and power plants in Bangladesh. The Padma Bridge Rail Link Project is one of the flagship projects undertaken by China, which connects Dhaka with Jessore through the Padma Bridge. Importantly, a broad array of products from Bangladesh enjoys zero tariffs in China. China has also continuously enhanced defence ties with Bangladesh and supplies military equipment, which includes fighter jets, battle tanks, and naval frigates, submarines, and missile boats. Bangladesh sources nearly 86 per cent of military hardware from China.

China sold 65 large-calibre artillery systems in 2006. In 2008, Bangladesh set up an anti-missile launch pad near Chittagong Port with Chinese support. In 2014, the two sides signed four military agreements related to setting up military training facilities. In 2016, two Chinese-built 1,350 ton Type 056 corvettes joined the Bangladesh Navy. In the 2018 deal, China agreed to deliver 23 Hongdu K-8 intermediate jet trainers for the Bangladesh Air Force (BAF). Bangladesh imported 36 F-7BGI aircraft from China in 2021. China has played a pivotal role in the development of Bangladesh's military, naval, and airbases. China is also the main supplier of portable air defence systems (MANPADS) and small arms and ammunition.

A deal was signed in 2017 for two submarines that included training and help to let Bangladesh construct its first submarine base. In 2023, PM Hasina inaugurated a \$1.21 billion, six-slot submarine base, built by China at Cox's Bazar off the Bay of Bengal coast, which will provide safe jetty facilities to submarines and warships.

Bangladesh and China conduct their first-ever joint military exercise codenamed 'China-Bangladesh Golden Friendship 2024' in early May 2024. It was to test out United Nations peacekeeping anti-terrorism operations such as the rescue of hostages on buses and the clean-up of terrorist camps. It will deepen bilateral defence cooperation. Although Bangladesh and India have held 11 military drills between 2009 and 2023, China's entry has future implications. Could Bangladesh be drawn into some kind of cold war between India and China?

#### Substandard Chinese Defence Supplies

In 2022, the Bangladesh Army expressed dissatisfaction with military supplies from Beijing. There have been rejections of tank ammunition supply. Also, there have been issues about spare parts for tank repair and maintenance. The HQ-7 short-range SAMs supplied by China were found to

have defects. The two Ming-type submarines procured at a discounted rate also failed to meet operational expectations.

#### Sonadia Island – Deep Sea Port

Sonadia Island is a small 9 square kilometres size, offshore of Cox's Bazar coast in Chittagong Division, Bangladesh. It is 15 km north-west of Cox's Bazar District Headquarters. China had been eyeing a naval base in BoB and had offered to initially develop the Sonadia Islands as a deep sea port for Bangladesh, which could have later turned out to be another Gwadar-type headache for Indian defence establishments. The island could have provided a new bead for the 'string of pearls' and could have affected India's clear strategic advantage in the BoB. Luckily, in 2020, Bangladesh finally buried the project. It is hoped that the new government does not reopen the subject.

The Chinese government still wants to extend funds for the design, construction, and operation of the deep-sea port in Bangladesh on a build-own-operate-transfer basis. Chittagong or Sonadia could give China direct access to the BoB and, in extension, to the Indian Ocean.

#### Payra Port

Bangladesh's third largest seaport, Payra port, now the deepest port in the country, was originally planned as China's bid for another deep seaport in its String of Pearls strategy. The construction of the port, which was being financed on a public-private partnership (PPP) platform, was initially granted to a Chinese company. India, Japan, and the United States opposed the plan. The Payra Port Authority (PPA) then signed a deal with Belgium-based dredging company Jan De Nul (JDN) for capital and maintenance dredging of the 75-kilometre-long main channel of the under-construction Payra seaport. In March 2023, JDN completed capital dredging.

#### Adani Group Interest in Bangladesh Ports

Adani Group intends to venture into the port sector in Bangladesh through a private partnership. The company is deliberating to invest in Chittagong Port's planned Bay Terminal, a deep terminal proposed to come up near the port. China and India are both vying to invest in the development and modernisation of Bangladesh's Mongla port. Since 2017, Adani Power has supplied 1,496 MW of net capacity under a 25-year contract via a 400 kV dedicated transmission line connected to the Bangladesh grid from its Jharkhand plant.

#### China-Myanmar Dynamics

Generally, China has maintained positive relationships with both military and elected governments in Myanmar. Bilateral relations between China and Myanmar have faced difficulties due to alleged Chinese backing of rebels in Myanmar's

territories. Also due to ongoing clashes between ethnic Chinese rebels and the Myanmar military near the China- Myanmar border. Beijing's recent warm-up with the Army Junta was driven by self-interest and reactionary hedging to America's Burma Act.

China assisted in constructing a naval base in Sittwe, a strategically important sea port close to India's Kolkata port. Beijing also funded road construction to Yangon and Sittwe, providing the shortest route to the Indian Ocean from southern China. Earlier, Myanmar allowed China to establish monitoring and surveillance facilities at the Coco Islands, just 45 kilometres north of the Andaman Islands. It allows tracking India's missile launches off the Balasore test range in Odisha as well as strategic assets stationed off the eastern seaboard at Visakhapatnam.

Bangladesh-China Closeness: Implications for India India remains an important factor in the China-Bangladesh relationship. China acts as a counterbalance against large neighbour India. India is conscious that Bangladesh is strategically important for India's connection with its northeast and for its look and act east policy. India had to increase its ties with Myanmar, which is a competitor of Bangladesh, in the wake of growing Sino-Bangladesh ties. But during Hasina's years in power, Bangladesh had carefully balanced the two relationships.

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) have seen uninformed negative reactions in Bangladesh. This became a potential for friction. The other points of contention include long-standing bilateral river water disputes, significant trade imbalance in favour of India, and illegal entry of Bangladeshi citizens into Assam and West Bengal.

Complexity will increase if the military or BNP remain in power. Also, the Teesta water management project that involves building a reservoir in Bangladesh, if funded by China, will move Dhaka further closer to Beijing.

Bangladesh remains crucial to the emerging BoB geopolitics. Although the military assets provided by China to Bangladesh don't present any military threat to India, increasing defence ties will put pressure on India's Indo-Pacific strategy. If Bangladesh remains unfriendly to India, Pakistan could also take advantage, including in connivance with China.

#### Way Ahead India

China's South Asian policy has strategic designs that may harm India's interests in the region. By positioning itself as a protector of Bangladeshi sovereignty, China aims to mitigate American influence, thereby creating indispensability. As China inches closer to Bangladesh and its military, it becomes a reason for India's concerns.

The timing of China's support, amidst Bangladesh's election cycle and tiffs with the US, is a deliberate strategy with its own dynamics. It is best for India to let post-Hasina chaos settle down. Continue its generous approach. Find better consultative ways for development assistance and infrastructure building. Also, the continued presence of Hasina in India could remain an irritant. Her early move to an acceptable country must be hastened.

Bangladesh was born with India's support but gradually leaned towards aggressive and expansionist China. A hostile Bangladesh is bad for India in view of the narrow Siliguri corridor between China and Bangladesh that connects India's North East. Yet, Bangladesh and India have signalled concerns over Chinese plans to dam and divert water from the Brahmaputra River in Tibet.

The huge trade deficit with China is also a concern for Bangladesh, as it can possibly push Bangladesh into a debt trap. At one stage, China was also keen to build Bangladesh's nuclear plants. Finally, the contract for the Rooppur nuclear power plant was given to the Russian Rosatom State Atomic Energy Corporation.

China's long-term plan is to cultivate South Asian countries through arms deals and deceptive trade models, which will entangle them in debt traps and misunderstandings. India must keep cautioning Bangladesh. India must continue military engagement by offering more training courses. India's \$500 million credit line to Bangladesh has been operational since 2022. India can offer maintenance contracts for Russian-origin equipment such as Mi-17-1V helicopters, Antonov An-32 aircraft, and MiG 29 jets, which India uses. India is also now in a position to offer defence equipment, including all-terrain special-purpose vehicles, helicopters, BrahMos missiles, radars, arms, and ammunition, at competitive rates. Efforts must be continued to improve regional connectivity projects and the integration of Bangladesh's economy and its military strategy into India's Bharat Mala and Sagar Mala projects. The two must work on the Look East Act East projects more vigorously under the broad contours of IORA (Indian Ocean Rim Association) and BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation). India must exploit the shift in Myanmar's foreign policy to avoid excessive dependence on China. India must also keep good relations with Thailand, the other player in the BoB. Hasina's Bangladesh had been engaging with China, keeping Indian sensibilities in mind. The same may not happen in the immediate future. India has a Maldives-like situation to handle with maturity. India must remember that Bangladesh needs India no less than the other way around. Strategically, BoB is

important for India's second strike capability. India has to keep it secured and dominate it.

By wanting to set up a military base in Bangladesh, the US is perhaps trying to reduce/neutralise Chinese influence. But it is not in India's interest that the US comes in here. They already have bases in Diego Garcia and have access to Australia's Cocos Keeling Island base. The US' global interests keep changing. As a Quad member, it is best if it trusts India to dominate the BoB.

It is time for Indian security analysts to stop painting "doomsday scenarios" in their writings and on TV debates. There are geostrategic ups and downs, but the world carries on and adjusts to changes. Bangladesh would also have to be part of global realpolitik.

### **Book Review | When India let Tibet down Books and Art**

10 August 2024, Deccan Chronicle, Indranil Banerjee  
Time and again history has shown that great powers tend to shape the world according to their interests and rarely on the basis of moral precepts. This, as former diplomat and author Dilip Sinha proves in his book, is precisely what is responsible for the tragedy of Tibet, a nation invaded by a powerful neighbour and abandoned by the world community. Even Tibet's traditional friend, India, badly let down the Tibetans when they most needed assistance and a voice to tell the wider world of their calamity.

Mr Sinha describes how each of the great powers involved in Asia through history treated Tibet, China and India as well as the other related kingdoms of East Turkestan and Mongolia. Put very simply, Britain found itself incapable of fully assimilating or controlling Tibet the way it did India. China too was a distant and vast kingdom that required more power to rule than Britain could expend. Britain which constantly worried about Russian ingress into every part of Asia, including India and China, felt it was best to prop up Beijing's authority over these two regions and thereby pre-empt any Russian creep into India's neighbourhood. The court at Beijing which traditionally had only limited authority over Tibet and enjoyed a special priest-monarchical relationship was thus thrust into the role of protector and suzerain of Tibet and Xinjiang. The Communists led by Chairman Mao who took control of China after the Second World War believed that any region in the past, no matter how distant, that had once paid tribute to China's imperial court was now an integral part of their country. Tibet had no hope of remaining independent.

India was the first country Tibet turned to for help, before and after the Chinese invasion. But India's Prime Minister Nehru in his wisdom would have nothing to do with it. He even refused to raise the

matter in the UN General Assembly after the invasion. "There was internal disagreement over India's policy", writes Sinha. Nehru's foreign secretary Girija Shankar Bajpai "was unhappy with Nehru's decision believing it was not in accordance with India's earlier decision to support Tibet...and even contemplated resigning." Ultimately, it was tiny El Salvador that came to the rescue of the Tibetans in the United Nations, pointing out "the peaceful nation of Tibet had been invaded without provocation" and "called for the formation of a General Assembly committee to recommend measures".

India came to the support of Tibet only in 1965. This time in the UN, "India voted in favour, with its representative accusing China of genocide and violating the seventeen-article agreement of 1951. This change became possible because China had invaded India three years earlier, and there was a new leadership in India: Jawaharlal Nehru had died the previous year and Lal Bahadur Shastri had succeeded him." By then of course it was too late.

### **India's foreign policy misalignment**

10 August 2024, The Kathmandu Post, Ajaya Bhadra Khanal

The dramatic turn of events in Bangladesh has shocked many people. But the story, for the Nepalis, is all too familiar. Nepali political leaders, including former monarchs, have not differed from the deposed Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. All of them have blurred the thin line between democracy and autocracy and between good governance and misrule. What is even more striking is the role of India and questions about its foreign policy.

India's "pragmatic" foreign policy was, to a large extent, responsible for emboldening Hasina's autocratic tendencies, making her impervious to the demands of democracy and the growing aspirations of the new generation.

Given Bangladesh's location and strategic importance, India had multiple overriding concerns and security imperatives.

Hasina became India's trusted ally. Given her historical and personal relations with India, it was easier for her to sympathise with them. India's support for Hasina and the Awami League (AL) appears logical, given the fact that her party has served India's strategic and economic interests.

However, in the last round of elections, Bangladeshi people perceived that India had openly sided with the AL. India tried to convince the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party to take part in the elections but without success. India then supported AL's attempt to hold the elections against the wishes of the larger civil society in Bangladesh. As a result,

the voter turnout was very low and widespread irregularities were reported.

Despite Western countries like the US expressing concerns about the legitimacy of the elections, India was instrumental in facilitating legitimacy to the sham election results. Growing disenchantment with Hasina gave a fillip to anti-India sentiments among the people.

India's foreign policy, in the last decade, has tried to recast itself in terms of pragmatism and flexibility, focused solely on India's strategic interests. In his book, *The India Way*, India's Minister of External Affairs, S Jaishankar, explains the idea of "Krishna's Choice" as being undeterred by the collateral consequences. This means focusing on the self-defined "righteous" goals rather than on the righteousness of the means.

Adopting such a foreign policy disregards the pervasiveness of anti-India sentiments in South Asia. As per Jaishankar's philosophy, India does not need to be popular, it just needs to secure its interests.

Such thinking is reasonable. Despite a significant level of anti-India sentiment in South Asia, India's power and presence remain substantial. It has learnt to secure its interests, in spite of hostile governments. However, if India wants to claim leadership as a regional power in South Asia and beyond, stand up to global norms, and maintain stability in the region, it must adopt democracy as a pillar of its foreign policy. India's foreign policy goals must align with the neighbourhood's broader interests, particularly democracy and economic development.

Without aligning with democracy, "pragmatism" in its foreign policy can only deliver short-term tactical gains that may quickly be overturned. On the other hand, prioritising democratic values and putting the interests of the people rather than the governments can become a long-term evolutionarily stable strategy.

Perspectives from Nepal may offer some insights into India's growing role in the region and how people from Nepal view India's foreign policy.

From a Nepali perspective, India's foreign policy, in its current state, is problematic. For example, in recent years, India has not hesitated to empower Nepali politics and politicians that have hampered democratic values, promoted inequality and harmed people's interests.

India has been conducting its foreign policy in Nepal in three prominent ways. The first is by engaging with the government, whatever the propensity of the ruling regime and using all available leverages and powers to ensure that the party in power remains "friendly." This strategy has often hampered the efforts of the Nepali people to democratise the parties and the country. India's emphasis on this

method has given rise to anti-Indianism as a political platform and as a feature of public psychology.

There is also a more sinister Cold War era style of engagement. In engaging with Nepal's political parties and ruling regimes, India has frequently resorted to its intelligence wings, whose brash and open interventions have amplified anti-India sentiments and spread them to the grassroots level.

Every new government in Nepal seeks India's support to ensure its longevity. In a recent closed-door conversation, senior party leaders told us that during state visits, Nepali prime ministers are under tremendous pressure to demonstrate that India supports them and that their visit is a success. They fear that without India's support no government can expect to be durable.

Another way India has cashed in is by supporting political movements. This has also had mixed results. When India sided with Nepal's democratic forces against the King in 1989-90 as well as in 2005, it enraged the monarchist and nationalist forces. Similarly, in 2015, when it sided with the Madhesh movement, it angered the hill people and hill-centric parties, propelling them closer to China.

The third way India has conducted its bilateral relations is through connectivity and development diplomacy. India has gradually achieved "irreversible" bilateral relations with Nepal through the strategy of improved connectivity, trade and economic integration.

For example, in recent years, India and Nepal have worked on Integrated Check Posts (ICPs), hydro-power projects, petroleum pipelines, payment gateways and transmission lines. These forms of connectivity are gradually making it more difficult for Nepal to swing between India and China as in the past.

In order to sustain its gains, India must demonstrate that its values align with the interests of democracy and the aspirations of the younger generation in the neighbourhood. Such values extend to economic equality, human rights, justice, identity politics and secularism. Unfortunately, the impact of the Indian government's association with the Hindutva movement has spilled over borders; it has alienated Muslim populations in the neighbourhood, including in Nepal and Bangladesh.

The case of Bangladesh also shows that if Hasina had strengthened democratic values and institutions, the social order in Bangladesh would not have come under strain even now.

Another major factor why India must emphasise democracy and align itself to people's interests in South Asia is the presence of China.

China is waiting on the sidelines, biding its time, ready to pounce on the opportunities missed by India.

Experts and policymakers in India do not believe China can gain access to the Indian market, given the current state of Sino-India relations and border disputes. But China is not fazed. It is confident that it has secured its interest in Tibet vis-à-vis Nepal. Now, it has its eyes on the Indian market. China's persistence in investing in border infrastructure in Tibet, as well as in the Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network, shows its long-term strategy and confidence in its ability to gain access to South Asia.

### China's Great Wall of Villages

10 August 2024, The New York Times, Muye Xiao and Agnes Chang

China has moved thousands of people to new settlements on its frontiers. It calls them "border guardians."

Qionglin New Village sits deep in the Himalayas, just three miles from a region where a heavy military buildup and confrontations between Chinese and Indian troops have brought fears of a border war.

The land was once an empty valley, more than 10,000 feet above the sea, traversed only by local hunters. Then Chinese officials built Qionglin, a village of cookie-cutter homes and finely paved roads, and paid people to move there from other settlements.

China's leader, Xi Jinping, calls such people "border guardians." Qionglin's villagers are essentially sentries on the front line of China's claim to Arunachal Pradesh, India's easternmost state, which Beijing insists is part of Chinese-ruled Tibet.

Many villages like Qionglin have sprung up. In China's west, they give its sovereignty a new, undeniable permanence along boundaries contested by India, Bhutan and Nepal. In its north, the settlements bolster security and promote trade with Central Asia. In the south, they guard against the flow of drugs and crime from Southeast Asia.

The buildup is the clearest sign that Mr. Xi is using civilian settlements to quietly solidify China's control in far-flung frontiers, just as he has with fishing militias and islands in the disputed South China Sea.

The New York Times mapped and analyzed settlements along China's border to create the first detailed visual representation of how the country has reshaped its frontiers with strategic civilian outposts, in just eight years.

Working with the artificial intelligence company RAIC Labs, which scanned satellite images of China's entire land border captured by Planet Labs, The Times identified the locations of new villages and checked them against historical images, state media, social media posts and public records.

The mapping reveals that China has put at least one village near every accessible Himalayan pass that borders India, as well as on most of the passes bordering Bhutan and Nepal, according to Matthew Akester, an independent researcher on Tibet, and Robert Barnett, a professor from SOAS University of London. Mr. Akester and Mr. Barnett, who have studied Tibet's border villages for years, reviewed The Times's findings.

The outposts are civilian in nature, but they also provide China's military with roads, access to the internet and power, should it want to move troops quickly to the border. Villagers serve as eyes and ears in remote areas, discouraging intruders or runaways.

"China does not want outsiders to be able to walk across the border for any distance without being challenged by its security personnel or citizens," Mr. Akester said.

The buildup of settlements fuels anxiety in the region about Beijing's ambitions. The threat of conflict is ever present: Deadly clashes have broken out along the border between troops from India and China since 2020, and tens of thousands of soldiers from both sides remain on a war footing.

#### China's Eyes and Ears

The first signs of Mr. Xi's ambitions emerged in 2017, when state media told the story of a letter he wrote to two Tibetan sisters in the remote village of Yume, in a region near Arunachal Pradesh that is blanketed by deep snow for more than half the year.

He praised their family for having protected the area for China for decades, despite the inhospitable terrain: "I hope you continue your spirit as a patriot and border guardian."

Over the next few years, workers built dozens of new homes in Yume, and officials moved over 200 people there.

Yume, also known as Yumai in Chinese, is among at least 90 new villages and expanded settlements that have sprung up in Tibet since 2016, when China began outlining its border village plan in the region, The Times found. In neighboring Xinjiang and Yunnan, The Times identified six new and 59 expanded border villages. (China says there are hundreds of villages like them, but few details are available and many appear to be mere upgrades of existing villages.)

Of the new villages The Times identified in Tibet, one is on land claimed by India, though within China's de facto border; 11 other settlements are in areas contested by Bhutan. Some of those 11 villages are near the Doklam region, the site of a standoff between troops from India and China in 2017 over Chinese attempts to extend a road.





China makes clear that the villages are there for security. In 2020, a leader of a Tibetan border county told state media that he was relocating more than 3,000 people to frontier areas that were “weakly controlled, disputed or empty.”

Brahma Chellaney, a strategic affairs analyst based in New Delhi, said that in quietly building militarized villages in disputed borderlands, China is replicating on land an expansionist approach that it has used successfully in the South China Sea.

“What stands out is the speed and stealth with which China is redrawing facts on the ground, with little regard for the geopolitical fallout,” Mr. Chellaney said. “China has been planting settlers in whole new stretches of the Himalayan frontier with India and making them its first line of defense.”

In a written response to The Times, Liu Pengyu, a spokesman for the Chinese Embassy in Washington, said that in dealing with border issues with its neighbors, “China always strives to find fair and reasonable solutions through peaceful and friendly consultations.”

India and Bhutan did not respond to requests for comment about the buildup. Indian officials have previously noted “infrastructure construction activity” by China along the border. Local leaders in Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh have complained to The Times that China was slowly cutting away small pieces of Indian territory.

India has responded with what it calls “Vibrant Villages,” a campaign that aims to revive hundreds of villages along the border.

But China is outbuilding India, says Brian Hart, an analyst for the China Power Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, or C.S.I.S., who recently co-authored a report on border villages in Tibet.

Among other findings, the C.S.I.S. report identified what appeared to be a militarized facility in one such village, known as Migyitun, or Zhari in Chinese, an indication of the settlements’ dual-use nature. The Times studied satellite images of the same village and identified military trucks and tents, as well as what appeared to be a shooting range nearby.

The villages also serve as propaganda: a display of Chinese strength and superiority in the region, said

Jing Qian, co-founder of the Center for China Analysis at the Asia Society.

“They want the Indians, Central Asians and others to see and think that Chinese villages are so good, that the China model is working very well.”

Uncertain Future, Unforgiving Terrain

The slice of the Himalayas where many Chinese villages have sprung up has been largely uninhabited for good reason. Its rocky, icy terrain is particularly forbidding in winter, with roads buried many months of the year by deep snow. The air is thin and cold. The land is barren, making farming difficult.

To persuade residents to move there, Chinese Communist Party officials promised them their new homes would be cheap. They would receive annual subsidies and get paid extra if they took part in border patrols. Chinese propaganda outlets said the government would provide jobs and help promote local businesses and tourism. The villages would come with paved roads, internet connections, schools and clinics.

A local government document reviewed by The Times indicated that some villagers may be receiving around 20,000 Chinese yuan a year for relocation, less than

\$3,000. One resident reached by phone said he earned an extra \$250 a month by patrolling the border.

But it is unclear whether the villages make economic sense.

The residents become dependent on the subsidies because there are few other ways to make a living, according to Mr. Akester, the independent expert.

China’s relocation policy is also a form of social engineering, designed to assimilate minority groups like the Tibetans into the mainstream. Tibetans, who are largely Buddhist, have historically resisted the Communist Party’s intrusive controls on their religion and way of life.

Images from the villages suggest that religious life is largely absent. Buddhist monasteries and temples are seemingly nowhere to be found. Instead, national flags and portraits of Mr. Xi are everywhere, on light poles, living room walls and balcony railings.

“They want to transform the landscape and the population,” Mr. Akester said.

Over the years, the government has pushed many nomadic Tibetans to sell their yaks and sheep, leave the grasslands and move into houses, but often without clear ways for them to survive. Instead of herding, residents have to work for wages.

Interviews suggest that many nomads who have moved to the new villages are reluctant to adapt. Some herd yaks for half the year in the mountains; others return to their old homes to live for months at a time.

Residents are often not told about the challenges that moving can entail, Mr. Barnett said, including having to spend more to travel to towns and on electricity, water, food and other essentials.

"The major problem is they are moving them from one lifestyle to another," he said. "They end up with no capital, no usable skills, no sellable skills and no cultural familiarity."

When money isn't enough, Chinese officials have applied pressure on residents to relocate, an approach that was evident even in state propaganda reports.

A documentary aired by the state broadcaster, CCTV, showed how a Chinese official went to Dokha, a village in Tibet, to persuade residents to move to a new village called Duolonggang, 10 miles from Arunachal Pradesh.

He encountered some resistance. Tenzin, a lay Buddhist practitioner, insisted that Dokha's land was fertile, producing oranges and other fruit. "We can feed ourselves without government subsidies," he said.

The official criticized Tenzin for "using his age and religious status to obstruct relocation," according to a state media article cited by Human Rights Watch in a report.

In the end, all 143 residents of Dokha moved to the new settlement.

How we identified the villages

The Times first compiled a list of the locations of 10 border villages in China that had been in earlier news reports and shared their coordinates with RAIC Labs. RAIC Labs used artificial intelligence to scan satellite images of China's land borders, provided by Planet Labs, to look for settlements that had similar features. The area that was scanned extended roughly three miles beyond China's border and 25 miles within the border.

We manually checked the results from RAIC Labs' scan to determine whether each site it had detected was a village. Features in satellite images that pointed to civilian settlements included yards, roofs of homes, cars and sports grounds like running tracks and basketball courts. Where possible, using coordinates identified by RAIC Labs, we looked up village names and searched for social media posts and Chinese media reports about the sites. We categorized the sites based on how much had been built around 2016, when China began planning its border village program. We categorized a village as new if no more than 10 structures had existed before 2016. A village was categorized as having expanded if it had more than 10 structures before 2016 but had grown in the years since. We also treated a settlement as a new village if the Chinese government designated it as such, regardless of how many structures it had before 2016. We found a

small number of villages that the algorithm had missed. Our findings still might not be comprehensive. Matthew Akester and Robert Barnett reviewed our analysis and contributed three additional village sites that had not previously been reported.

## Stories of Tibet

11 August 2024, Tricycle, Tenzin D. Tsaogang

A collection of fiction from the innovative Tibetan filmmaker Pema Tsenden (1969–2023)

In "The Doctor," the final and perhaps most experimental short story of the late Pema Tsenden's collection, *Enticement: Stories of Tibet*, Man A and Woman A face an apocalyptic contagion. Discussing the absurdity of life, Woman A says: "When one thinks about it, human life is totally absurd." Man A responds with a heavy sigh: "It is completely absurd." Woman A also sighs: "The world and samsara are utterly meaningless."

Like a chorus, they echo each other's words, as though by mere repetition, truth itself emerges.

The narrator doesn't disclose their names or their relationship. Are they husband and wife? Brother and sister? Two strangers who just met? Descriptions of the setting, like stage directions of a play, are bare. There is a riverbank. It is spring. The leaves of a recently planted tree are beginning to grow.

The man and woman are in a double bind: To escape the contagion, they can either traverse the dangerous river or wait for a doctor to arrive with a cure. Both options threaten death; they choose to wait. As time passes, events occur and recur in an endless loop. The seasons change. They age and wrinkle. Others trying to escape appear and disappear. Some die crossing the river. Prospects of the doctor's arrival appear increasingly bleak. To buffer themselves against the absurdity of their new reality and the inevitability of their suffering, the man and woman repeatedly invoke and insist on their faith in the three jewels.

Characters in the rest of Tsenden's sprawling and experimental anthology—his first in English—also confront and cycle through a samsara of suffering. They brush against the alienating forces of the state or the whims of nature, faith, and their bare human desires. Few emerge with their innocence and morality intact, their sense of the world irreparably ruptured.

If stories by exiled Tibetan writers begin with the separation from and fixation on the homeland they knew, writings from inside Tibet are about witnessing and chronicling its changing landscape.

Born during the turbulent years of the Cultural Revolution in a nomadic region in Trika County in Qinghai Province, Tsenden grew up in a family of

herders and farmers. At an early age, he cultivated an appreciation for Tibetan language and culture from his grandfather, who would make the school-aged Tseden copy Buddhist scriptures by hand.

Before earning a reputation as a pioneer and auteur of Tibetan New Wave cinema, Tseden was first a writer and a translator. In the 1980s, as Tibetan and Chinese literature emerged from the twilight of the Cultural Revolution, Tseden attended Northwest University for Nationalities in Lanzhou, where he wrote and translated stories.

If exiled writers read like caricatures as they “shout, trying to underscore our exile,” as the writer-translator-editor Tenzin Dickie writes in her introduction to *The Penguin Book of Modern Tibetan Essays*, writings from Tibet are like code that must be deciphered. “There is so much they can’t say,” writes Dickie, “so little that can be said.”

In the more realist and contemporary stories of *Enticement*, Tseden’s critique of the Chinese colonial state can be decoded in his focus on the quiet absurdity and alienation of modern Tibetan life. In

“Tharlo,” the titular protagonist, a shepherd-orphan affectionately known by local villagers as “Little Braid,” travels to the city to obtain a new government-issued identity card. On his journey, Tharlo meets several people: the district police chief behind the local campaign to register villagers for IDs; a photographer who tells him his hair is too messy; and a young, attractive hairdresser. They gently mock Tharlo’s small braid, and when he recites the number of sheep he owns or a speech from Mao, they express surprise at his excellent memory. Mostly, they find his pastoral innocence and guilelessness amusing, as though he has just emerged from a cave.

As he spends more time in the city, Tharlo starts drinking. He falls for the hairdresser who persuades him to sell his sheep, the main source of his livelihood. In one heartbreaking scene, he cuts off his braid, lopping off a part of his old self.

In an ironic and absurd twist, when Tharlo visits the police station to collect his identity card, the chief tells him he now looks different from his photograph, and orders him to make a new one. So Tharlo ends up right where we encounter him at the beginning of the story, off to the city to take a new photo. But this time, his innocence is irrevocably lost. The temptations of city life, his carnal desires, and the interests of the state prove to be forces too powerful for Tharlo to overcome.

Despite the decades-long trend of Han Chinese migration into the Tibetan plateau, Chinese characters are noticeably absent from Tseden’s depiction of contemporary Tibetan life. If they appear, it is only in marginal roles, like the Chinese tourist in “Tharlo,” who, upon seeing the wild-haired

Tharlo smoking a cigarette, exoticizes him and tells him he looks like an artist. By erasing or minimizing Chinese presence from the worlds he has built, Tseden’s stories are radical exercises in fantasy, underscoring that his concerns as an artist are foremost of Tibetans.

The lives of his characters are of those undeniably touched by the colonial state.

Nonetheless, the lives of his characters are of those undeniably touched by the colonial state. In “Eight Sheep,” a young shepherd grieves the loss of his mother and grassland that has been in “disarray” since the government decided to enclose it with a fence. Or in “Gang,” a magical-realist tale about two siblings named Gang with translucent bodies that shimmer in the light. After snowstorms and failed crops beset their village, the male Gang decides to exhibit his body to the public to help generate economic prosperity.

But to the dismay of the foreign researchers who want to study their glowing bodies, the journalists who flock to the town for a good story, and the desperate villagers who hope to profit from the tourism, the siblings refuse to be photographed together.

By removing Chinese perspectives, Tseden also avoids making his stories about the pure, innocent Tibetan pitted against the bad-faith Chinese actor. Instead, his work shows how Tibetans—the women who try to civilize Tharlo or the desperate villagers in “Gang”—are also complicit in feeding systems of exploitation and profit. Each is caught in complex calculations of what it means to be a modern Tibetan subject.

It is nearly impossible for the characters in Tseden’s stories to retain moral purity. Only the siblings in “Gang” manage to. But they can do so only by abandoning society and its totalizing and cannibalistic urges.

To confine Tseden’s literary concerns to a primarily political project, however, would be a disservice to his range as a writer. Tseden’s satirical and humorous treatment of Tibetan life also extends to Buddhism and the seemingly irrational nature of faith.

The delightful and charming “Orgyan’s Teeth” begins with the death of the narrator’s childhood friend Orgyan, a reincarnate lama, who many believe has “passed into nirvana.” But the narrator is skeptical. The story occurs mostly in flashbacks, as the narrator, like a detective, exhumes old memories of Orgyan, searching for any evidence that he was or wasn’t a holy being.

He remembers how Orgyan, who wasn’t an especially bright student, struggled with math and often copied his homework. But there’s an equal impulse in the narrator to believe that his friend is

special. He recalls one memory of Orgyan resuscitating a fish back to life, or the times when Orgyan, despite his special religious status, treated him as an equal. The story, told through memories in which the narrator seesaws between belief and disbelief, reads like a catalog of faith. The narrator never arrives at a clear answer. But it's his attempt that matters.

While "Orgyan's Teeth" is about one man's ambivalence toward faith, "Enticement," the collection's centerpiece, is about the extreme, even violent, measures one can take in the name of devotion. In this dreamlike story, a young man is transfixed by a silkbound book of scriptures that sends him into violent, uncontrollable fits that he can't remember.

In the meta-narrative "A Golden Corpse Tale: Gun," Tseden's twist on a Tibetan folktale, a man named Dega, to repent for his sins of killing, must bring a golden, talking corpse out of the grave to his master. He cannot speak to the corpse, or else he'll lose possession of it. But the corpse is cunning. To trick Dega into speaking, he tells him a tragic story about two generations of a family stuck in a loop of suffering. Like the people in the story, Dega keeps repeating his error. He remains stuck in transit with the corpse, never reaching his goal—and never atoning for his sins.

In one of the first scenes of "Tharlo," when asked by the police chief why he never bothered to make a government-issued card, Tharlo poignantly responds, "Isn't it enough that I know myself?" Of the stories in Tseden's anthology, this statement feels like his most pointed rebuke of the Chinese state, its insistence that only by being absorbed into its bureaucratic machine and control do people like Tharlo and Tibetans across the plateau matter. Tseden's stories can thus be interpreted as an intervention against the fate that befalls people like Tharlo, who, in the face of sweeping political and economic changes, become unrecognizable.

Yet to earmark modernity as specifically Chinese and tradition as Tibetan is too facile. It's a tragedy that Tseden, who passed away just a year ago at the age of 53, is no longer here to contend with this conundrum imposed by colonialism. His work—the ten stories in this collection and his extensive and celebrated filmography—also does not provide an easy fix. But it does give Tibetans a template to interrogate and better know themselves, so they don't, as Tharlo does, completely self-obliterate in the face of larger structural changes.

In *Enticement*, just as Chinese characters are notably missing from Tseden's stories, so are contextualizing landmarks. There is a village, a town, a river, but they remain unnamed. There are no mentions of Tibet's traditional regions—like Amdo (where Tseden

was from), Kham, and U-Tsang. There is no mention of dialects. But there are vivid descriptions of the grasslands, the mountains, the snow—topographies synonymous with Tibet.

In the introduction to her anthology of Tibetan essays, Dickie writes, "To speak as Tibetans, and to write as Tibetans, is to continually recreate the nation." By creating specific but unspecified landscapes, Tseden extends to his Tibetan readers a wide and generous terrain where they can map their own stories; he offers a Tibet they can recognize and claim as their own.

## Journey to Tibet

11 August 2024, Tricycle, Judith Hertog

Retracing the footsteps of the French adventurer Alexandra David-Néel

"Our passage in Londres was as inconspicuous as we could have wished. Not one of the villagers whom we met appeared to take any particular notice of us." This is how Alexandra David-Néel, a French Tibetologist and explorer, described the beginning of her journey in Tibet in the fall of 1923. She recounts how she and her adopted son, a young Tibetan named Yongden, made their way through the village under the cover of night, trying to find the trail toward a mountain pass that would allow them to slip across the border into Tibet and reach the city of Lhasa.

The village at the foot of the Himalayas—on English maps of the time transliterated as "Londres"—is now called Yongzhi, a Tibetan farming community at the northern tip of the Chinese province of Yunnan, part of the Tibetan Kham region. The village lies right outside the border of what is officially designated as the "Tibet Autonomous Region." It is perched on the slopes of a fertile, green valley rich with pomegranates, walnuts, and grapes, its vineyards laden with fruit waiting to be picked for the fall harvest. Many of the villagers also work on the side as trekking guides and drivers for tourists visiting the region.

Yongzhi lies in the special Shangri-La tourism zone, which in recent years has become a busy travel destination. The village of Yongzhi is just outside the tourist circuit, but the nearby town of Degen hosts countless Chinese tour groups who like to spend a night in one of its luxury hotels to photograph the sunrise over the Kawa Karpo, a holy Buddhist mountain on an ancient Tibetan pilgrimage route.

It was this route that Alexandra David-Néel used to slip unnoticed into Tibet, dressed as a pilgrim, her hair and face darkened to hide her European complexion. At the time, the Tibetan government did not allow foreigners to enter the country and stationed troops along the border to arrest

unauthorized travelers. I visited the village exactly a hundred years later wanting to see the place Alexandra David-Néel describes in the opening of her book *My Journey to Lhasa*, which inspired my own obsession with Tibet when I first read it as a teenager.

Together with Yongden, Alexandra set out to be the first Western woman to reach Lhasa. She was 55 years old and had been drawn to Tibet and Buddhism since the time she was a teenager, when she encountered Theosophy, a spiritual movement that purported to come from Tibetan sources.

For Alexandra, Buddhism was an alternative to the suffocating restrictions of the 19th-century bourgeois society in which she was raised. Born in 1868 as the only child of wealthy French-Belgian parents, Alexandra had a deep disdain for ordinariness and the submissiveness expected of women. She longed for freedom and adventure. In her 20s and early 30s she associated with anarchists in Paris and studied Eastern philosophy while earning a living as an opera singer. She stubbornly resisted marriage, which at the time spelled the end of a woman's freedom. But eventually she wedded a lover, Philippe Néel, a well-to-do railroad engineer based in Tunisia with whom she lived on and off for only the first seven years of their almost forty years of marriage. In 1911, at the age of 42, Alexandra set off for Asia to deepen her study of Buddhism. She spent most of the next thirty-five years there, supported by her husband, who, from afar, sent her money orders and letters.

Alexandra must have infected me with her dreams of adventure. I too wanted to become an explorer venturing into the unknown, free from the humdrum of regular life.

After Alexandra and Yongden set out from Yongzhi, they walked for more than three months in the middle of winter across the mountains of eastern Tibet, a journey of over a thousand miles. They reached Lhasa in February 1924.

This was not Alexandra's first attempt to penetrate the "forbidden" land. Alexandra had already spent more than twelve years in Asia, approaching Tibet from all directions. From 1914 to 1916, she lived in Sikkim, where she studied with a hermit lama in the Himalayan mountains near the Tibetan border. But she was expelled from Sikkim after making an illegal trip into Tibet to meet the Panchen Lama, one of Tibet's highest-ranking incarnate Lamas, who lived just across the border in the town of Shigatse.

After her expulsion from Sikkim, she eventually moved to China in 1917, where she spent the next six years traveling in Tibetan border regions. For two years, she studied at the famous Kumbum Monastery in the northeastern Tibetan Amdo region. Twice she joined caravans to Lhasa but was turned back at the

border. If there was anything that provoked Alexandra's anarchism, it was to be told something was forbidden. "[A]ny honest traveler has the right to walk as he chooses, all over that globe which is his," she asserted in the preface to *My Journey to Lhasa*.

As the first Western woman to reach the capital of Tibet, where she lived incognito for more than two months, Alexandra instantly became a celebrity in Europe and America. She spent a few years publishing and touring before returning to Asia for another decade of travel.

In 1946, at the age of 77, she finally returned permanently to Europe to settle down in southern France, where she continued writing books that explained the mysteries of Tibetan Buddhism. Alexandra was a master at presenting herself as a no-nonsense narrator who had seemingly rational explanations for the most fantastical supernatural phenomena. Her many books on Tibetan Buddhism allowed readers to believe that there is a place in the world where magic exists, where sorcerers can revive dead bodies, and where meditating monks have to weigh themselves down with chains so they won't float away in levitation. In the 1960s, when Alexandra was in her 90s, she became an idol to hippies who flocked to her house to meet the aged adventurer and Buddhist authority.

That must be how I encountered her, growing up in bohemian Amsterdam in the 1970s. I remember first reading one of Alexandra's books, left at our house by one of my mother's friends, when I was 12. Like so many other readers, I was immediately drawn to the descriptions of the wild landscapes of Tibet and the accounts of magical and spiritual attainment. Alexandra must have infected me with her dreams of adventure. I too wanted to become an explorer venturing into the unknown, free from the humdrum of regular life.

The first time I traveled in Tibet I was right out of college. My boyfriend and I had impulsively gotten married in Hong Kong, and for our "honeymoon" we snuck without a travel permit into Tibet, took a bus to Lhasa, and then hitchhiked from Shigatse to Mount Kailash and into Xinjiang. We could have died when, hungry and sick, we got stuck without transportation in the sparsely populated Tibetan highlands. I felt exhilarated nonetheless.

"I have homesickness for a country that isn't mine," Alexandra wrote in a letter to her husband. "The steppes, the solitudes, the eternal snows and the big skies up there [in the Himalayas] haunt me." Like her, once I had experienced the landscape of Tibet, I kept wanting to return.

Shortly after that first trip, I did the math and discovered that I was born a little over nine months after Alexandra died, just before her 101st birthday.



I like to muse that the coincidence of my birth gives me some kind of cosmic connection with Alexandra, and that in my life I have been retracing her travels. I returned several times to Tibet. In the fall and winter of 1999–2000, I lived for five months in Lhasa as an English teacher. I visited Lhasa again in 2019. But after getting to know the city that had been Alexandra’s destination, this time I wanted to see the place from where she had begun her adventure. When I arrived in Shangri-La, I happened to meet a farmer from Yongzhi who in his spare time freelanced as a guide and driver. He offered to let me stay with his family for a few days. It felt like a magical feat to arrive in the place I had read about so breathlessly as a teenager in Amsterdam. Only, everything was different now.



A woman gazes out from the entrance of a new Kentucky Fried Chicken in Lhasa, Tibet. | Photo by Judith Hertog

The village seemed to be doing well. Instead of the dirt roads on which Alexandra traveled, the area is now connected by highways, with tunnels drilled through the mountains. Next to the stupa that adorned the highest ridge above the village stood a large cell tower that provided 5G coverage. My hosts had furnished one of the rooms in their farm with extra beds, hoping to earn some cash by lodging tourists. Although foreign tourism has almost dried up, Tibet is now a popular destination for Chinese urbanites, and the government has invested billions of dollars to promote tourism in this northern tip of Yunnan. To boost exotic appeal, the county was officially renamed Shangri-La, after a fictional Tibetan paradise in the 1933 best-selling novel *Lost Horizon* by the English writer James Hilton. I could imagine Alexandra’s fury at this turn of events. She resented the success of *Lost Horizon*, and would have been piqued that this region, which she knew so well, would be named after an invention by an author who had never been to Tibet and who very likely had read her books for inspiration.

For several days, I became part of village life, in one of those houses Alexandra had been so carefully trying to avoid. I sat with the father of my host when he milked the cows, helped shuck corn, practiced

English with my host’s son, and hiked in the mountains. On the second day, we visited the village chapel, where a lama from the nearby monastery gave a teaching. The chapel was filled with villagers, all sitting cross-legged on the wooden floor beneath the lama’s throne, like a scene in one of Alexandra’s stories. Except that some of the attendees held smartphones in their lap to record the sermon.

What we think of as our “self” is shaped by our time, our culture, and our circumstances.

I was lucky to have arrived just in time for the annual cham dance at the local monastery where my host’s brother was a monk. Alexandra called this performance of monks dressed up as spirits and deities “the ceremony of the demons.” I may have channeled Alexandra when the crowd parted and ushered me to sit on the temple steps so that I could have a front-row view of the ceremony. This was the kind of treatment Alexandra always seemed to receive. She had supreme self-confidence and considered it normal that everyone would grant her special favors. She never doubted that even the most influential Buddhist masters would regard her with the greatest deference.

When Alexandra met the Thirteenth Dalai Lama in India in 1912, shortly after she had arrived there, she was convinced she impressed him with her superior knowledge of Buddhism. She recounts that the Dalai Lama inquired which Buddhist master had initiated her, assuming she had studied with a Tibetan lama. “It was not easy to convince him that the Tibetan text of one of the most esteemed Buddhist books had been translated into French before I was born,” she writes, and describes how she eventually persuaded the Dalai Lama to personally compose written answers to her questions about Tibetan Buddhist philosophy.

It felt strange to be staying in the village of Yongzhi. Looking out of the window, all dimensions seemed jumbled up, as if I could spy on Alexandra and Yongden across time. I imagined them hiding in the vineyard on the slope below the house. They had arrived in the village pretending to be on a botanical expedition, but at night they changed into their pilgrim disguises and sneaked off into the mountains toward the pilgrim’s path.

In preparation for my trip, I had spent hours reading Alexandra’s account for clues and had zoomed in on Google Earth trying to determine the exact location of that path. I examined every mountain around the village, trying to discern details in the forested slopes, snowy mountain summits and in the shadows of rocky crevices captured in satellite images.

But, of course, a digital map on a computer screen is nothing like actually walking through a landscape. A loudspeaker on the roof of the village’s town hall filled the valley with the sound of prerecorded

government announcements that were played several times a day, stones dislodged by my footsteps bounced off the mountainside toward the Mekong River in the valley far below, and I was sweating in my long-sleeved shirt that trapped the October heat. I had pictured myself hiking up the nearby Dokar Pass, which Alexandra describes in her account. But once we reached the turn to the main trail, high up in the mountains above the village, my host didn't want to go any farther. "It's impossible," he said. The other side of the pass was officially the Tibet Autonomous Region, where the Chinese government restricts foreign travel because of the tensions between Tibetans who resist Beijing's control and the Chinese military stationed in Tibet to suppress dissent. I would need to arrange for a government-approved tour guide and apply for special travel and hiking permits.

When Alexandra stood at the head of this trail in the fall of 1923, the situation had been reversed: Back then, it was the independent Tibetan government that jealously guarded its borders. At the behest of conservative Buddhist clerics who feared foreign influences, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama had banned foreign travelers from entering Tibet.

During my earliest visits to Tibet, it hadn't been so difficult to sneak in without a permit, but in recent years the surveillance has increased. The last time I was in Lhasa, in 2019, I found police checkpoints throughout the city, monitoring everyone's comings and goings. New high-rise suburbs had been constructed to entice more Han Chinese to move to the city, and flashy shopping malls heralded wealth and modernity. The old city center around the ancient Jokhang temple still throbbed with activity, but now the Tibetan pilgrims were outnumbered by Chinese tourists posing for photographs.

On the map, the places along Alexandra's route had looked immutable and permanent: names with set coordinates. But even the names of the villages that she passed through have been lost. The Chinese government has Sinicized all the Tibetan place names, and the 19th-century English transliterations of old Tibetan names that Alexandra used are often no longer traceable. The landscape of a hundred years ago has changed as well: Creeks and rivers have been dammed, temples have been destroyed and rebuilt, forests have been harvested for timber, and new roads and tunnels are reshaping the mountain slopes. Nothing is permanent. Kawa Karpo's white peak still rises over the landscape, but even the glacier at its bottom is melting due to climate change.

Culture too has changed. When I look back at Alexandra, a revolutionary in her time, she now seems elitist and orientalist. She presumed herself to understand Buddhism better than most Tibetan monks

and haughtily educated Tibetan masters about "true" Buddhism while dismissing their traditional customs as "superstitions."

Of course, what we think of as our "self" is shaped by our time, our culture, and our circumstances. Alexandra David-Néel was a 19th-century upper-class European woman, steeped in European prejudices.

Just as I have been shaped by my own background, and by Alexandra's tales, which have inspired my own romantic vision of Tibet.

Standing there at the head of the pilgrim's trail, I considered giving my host the slip and just walking into the mountains. But in these few days he had treated me like a family member. He was hosting me without a permit, and I didn't want to get him in trouble. Besides, there are no longer any anonymous crowds of pilgrims to hide amongst. The cell towers on the mountain ridges would ping my phone and record my location, like everyone else's, all of us little dots on a digital surveillance map.

In the evening, as we drank homemade wine with our dinner, I told my host and his wife about Alexandra and her connection to their village. It almost felt like a betrayal, as if I were exposing her secret plan. I had discovered that *My Journey to Lhasa* had just been translated into Chinese, and I had found a Chinese website with a short documentary about Alexandra. My host's wife pulled up the video on her phone. "That's here!" she exclaimed when the pilgrimage route around the Kawa Karpo was mentioned. I could see an idea forming in her mind: Each village in the area was looking for ways to cash in on the tourist industry. Perhaps she thought this could be a business opportunity.

A few weeks later, she posted on her social media feed pictures of a group of villagers she had organized to fix a bridge on the old pilgrimage route. They were replacing wooden beams that had rotted away after maybe a hundred years of neglect. I expect Alexandra would be pleased if the villagers enshrined her name in local lore. In *My Journey to Lhasa*, she recounts, with her characteristic lack of modesty, the extraordinary impression she must have made on the people she encountered and concludes: [My acts] will probably live long in the memory of those who witnessed them. Maybe a legend will arise out of it all; and who knows if, in the future, a learned student of folklore will not offer some interesting commentary on the story, being far from suspecting the truth of it.

Alexandra was as imperfect a human being as any of us: She could be arrogant, stubborn, and prejudiced. But she definitely became a legend.

## China has turned inward to sell Xinjiang cotton after a trade ban. Will it be enough?

11 August 2024, SCMP, Kingling Lo

The US' ban on cotton from China's Xinjiang has forced a shift to the domestic market for the textile industry – and created a gaping shortfall.

After Hong Yongcheng's American customers began to shy away from renewing their orders – a change the towel factory owner attributed to heightened restrictions on Chinese imports – he responded in unexpected fashion.

Rather than try to win back those skittish buyers from overseas, he started a new production line in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region – an area of China where exports to the US are all but forbidden.

"I don't see much hope in getting American orders back, so producing from Xinjiang does not matter any more, as most customers are domestic," Hong said. "At least we can cut costs."

Hong's new line in Xinjiang made him a perfect fit for the China-Eurasia Expo in the regional capital Urumqi last June, where authorities invited him to display his home-grown wares and help promote the local economy.

In the two years since a sweeping ban on US exports hit the region, however, most of China's textile and apparel makers are struggling to fill the resultant vacuum in demand.

Global retailers have been under pressure to sever their supply chains from Xinjiang – China's largest cotton-growing region – after allegations over the use of forced labour began to surface in the US and European Union as early as 2019.

International clothing brands – most notably Nike and H&M – responded to those concerns in 2020 with statements disavowing any links to the region. The next year, when legislation began to work its way through Western legislatures, those statements resurfaced and sent Chinese internet users into a furore.

Outraged netizens called for a boycott, using the hashtag "I support Xinjiang cotton" to push consumers to avoid products from foreign firms in question and buy local as a form of patriotism.

But even with its considerable size, Hong said, the domestic market does not fill the void created by the departure of foreign customers.

"It is true that we are seeing our costs halved in Xinjiang, but our overall profits are nothing like before," he said. "The orders just don't make up."

'We needed a way out'

Xinjiang, a region in China's far west with a surface area about three times the size of France, supplies one-fifth of the global cotton supply and 90 per cent of China's own stocks. It has made international headlines as governments and media outlets – mostly

in the US and Europe – alleged regional authorities have detained an estimated one million members of Muslim ethnic minority groups and subjected many to forced labour.

While Beijing has denied these allegations, the Uygur Forced Labour Prevention Act – a ban of all imports from Xinjiang unless a "rebuttable presumption" of forced labour can be successfully disputed – passed the US Congress in late 2021 and was enacted in June 2022.

We were losing one-third of our business just from Americans cutting orders

- Hong Yongcheng, towel factory owner

Beijing responded forcefully, saying in a Foreign Ministry briefing companies that stopped using the "best cotton in the world" would only be harming themselves. But for authorities and businesses in Xinjiang, the ban – set to last eight years according to the legislation's sunset clause, though the likelihood of indefinite renewal is high – has put immense strain on the local economy, which had one of the country's lowest nominal GDPs even before the ban.

While there is little public data available to gauge the full impact the act had on Xinjiang's economy, the region has seen a 54.6 per cent drop in foreign direct investment, with only US\$50.14 million invested throughout 2021 according to the local government. In terms of trade, Xinjiang's total exports to the US in 2023 were valued at around US\$373 million – a 92 per cent drop from 2020, according to Urumqi customs figures.

Xinjiang has historically relied on help from other regions and the central government to support its economic development. Since 2015, the local authorities have rolled out a multitude of investment incentives, attempting to grow the textile and apparel industry through tax rebates and subsidies for electricity and transport.

Hong and his partners – who have been running their towel business from export-heavy Jiangsu province for over a decade – only considered a move to the faraway arid region last year, when conditions were particularly bleak.

"We needed to find a way out," Hong said. "We were losing one-third of our business just from Americans cutting orders. We were not even using Xinjiang cotton in our production, we imported it from Pakistan." Hong said the drop-off began in 2020 among his customer base, mostly buyers for international hotel brands. "They faced pressure to drop Chinese suppliers."

Revenues went down 60 per cent. In response, the company has moved the lion's share of its exports to a mix of closer markets, including South Korea, Japan and several countries in Southeast Asia.

"Before the sanctions, 70 per cent of our business was exporting overseas, half to the US," Hong said. "Now it's the complete opposite. Seventy per cent are local orders."

Hong said his company decided to open a production line in Xinjiang after being offered a rent-free factory by the local government, 10 times the size of their 2,000-square-metre (21,528-square-foot) facility in Jiangsu.

"Electricity and labour costs are half of what we pay in Jiangsu. We just needed to buy our own equipment and use cotton from Xinjiang in production," Hong said.

Thanks to heavy government subsidies like these, Xinjiang's textile and apparel industry has grown considerably. By October 2023, there were 3,725 companies registered for the fabrics business in Xinjiang, almost six times the count from 2014. More than one-third came about via investments from elsewhere in the country, official figures revealed.

The region has also ramped up trade with its five Central Asian neighbours – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – which were the recipients of 66.9 per cent of Xinjiang's exports during the first six months of 2024.

Customs data showed the value of these shipments totalled 147.6 billion yuan (US\$20.7 billion), a 23.9 per cent increase compared to the same period last year. Apparel and footwear now represent 60.7 per cent of China's total export value to the five countries, with electronics coming in at 30 per cent, according to 2023 customs figures.

Interwoven with exports

But the surge in trade with Central Asia has only made up for some of the shortfall in China's textile exports, a problem exacerbated by lethargy in the broader economy.

Manufacturers in the field exported US\$67.2 billion of goods in the first quarter, a year-on-year slump of 6.9 per cent according to Chinese customs data. Shipments to the US, EU and Japan shrunk by 18.4 per cent, 24.7 per cent and 8.7 per cent respectively during the period.

The trend is unlikely to be reversed any time soon, as the US has continued to strictly scrutinise the region's textile trade and update the scope of its legislation accordingly. The state-owned Xinjiang Tianshan Wool Tex Stock, one of Xinjiang's largest garment companies, was added to the act's list of proscribed firms in September 2023 along with two other enterprises. Five metals and chemical companies were added to the list on Thursday, according to Reuters.

A person with direct knowledge of the company's operations said it exported 20,000 fewer pieces of clothing in 2023 compared to 2022. There is no

public information on how many pieces of clothing the company produces each year.

"Orders from the US are now virtually zero. The US and France used to be our biggest customers, but during the Covid period, France started cutting orders, too. Fortunately, Germany's orders have remained stable," the person said, adding other export destinations are unlikely to account for the loss of business.

China's textile sector reported an export value of US\$293.6 billion last year, an 8.1 per cent drop in export value compared to 2022. Fabrics and clothing contributed 8.6 per cent to the total value of China's 2023 exports – a figure that also fell on a year-on-year basis, but only by 4.6 per cent. Sheng Lu, a professor of fashion and apparel studies at the University of Delaware, said while China's sector will "undoubtedly remain one of the world's most competitive" given its manufacturing capabilities, geopolitics will continue to be a drag on exports. "Due to deteriorating relations, sourcing from China is regarded as high-risk for US fashion companies," Lu said. "This pushes [these] companies to reduce their 'China exposure' and move orders elsewhere. For Chinese manufacturers that heavily rely on exports, the worst may be yet to come."

China reported weaker than expected economic growth in the second quarter of 2024, with a 4.7 per cent expansion year on year falling short of the government's annual target of "around 5 per cent". A slackening of demand appears correlative, as retail sales rose 2 per cent in June, year on year – a noteworthy slide compared with the 3.7 per cent growth seen in May, and the slowest rate of increase since China lifted its coronavirus restrictions at the end of 2022.

Clothing sales were hit particularly hard during that month, with a drop of 1.9 per cent reported despite growth of 1.3 per cent in the first half of the year. Of the discretionary items that Chinese consumers said they would cut back on when "uncertain about their financial prospects", clothing ranked near the top. These results were published on July 9 in the 2024 McKinsey China Consumer Report, after a survey of nearly 12,000 respondents was conducted last year. All these are worrying signs for Chinese policymakers, who have repeatedly stressed the importance of shifting the primary source of economic growth from manufacturing to consumption.

Hong, meanwhile, has been dealing with numerous challenges. On top of receiving smaller orders from hotels and restaurants for his towels this year, fierce competition from domestic players – bordering on "price-slashing", he said – has led him to expect another 30 per cent drop in sales by December. Chen Li, an analyst from Chinese think tank Anbound, said weak foreign and domestic demand, along with

geopolitics-induced shifts in supply chains, would mean more undercutting among clothing manufacturers.

"Low prices lead to a decline in companies' profit margins. In the long run, it will hinder corporate growth because companies are unable to invest more resources in brand-building, product innovation, and marketing," Chen said. "Small and medium-sized enterprises will become extremely fragile, and likely to be eliminated in the market, thus having a major impact on the economy in the long run."

A way out, a way forward

With manufacturers duking it out over a shrinking pool of domestic demand, Zhang Zhiwei, president and chief economist at Pinpoint Asset Management, said many will look to move production out of the country. Now most of our buyers are Chinese ... This has pushed our prices down further - Li Qingrong, Sichuan Firstlady Textile "Those with access to the international market [will] seek to expand overseas," Zhang said. "It is a trend I expect to continue for the coming years." Sun Ruizhe, president of the China National Textile and Apparel Council, named "Arabic, Southeast Asian, Central Asian and African countries" as top destinations for Chinese businesses in a July speech to members. With the broader economic picture still hazy, however, some companies are content to stay put.

Li Qingrong, general manager of Sichuan Firstlady Textile - another company promoting its wares at the China-Eurasia Expo in Urumqi - said business went down by one-third since Japanese clothing brand Uniqlo cancelled its orders over cotton sourced from Xinjiang.

"Now most of our buyers are Chinese," she said. "They know how things work and exactly how much production costs, unlike foreign buyers who usually buy at a higher price. This has pushed our prices down further." She expects another 20 per cent drop in sales by the end of the year.

"We don't have particular plans, the economy is not looking great for everyone," she said, adding that her family-owned business has nearly 300 employees.

Hong, still adjusting to running a factory in Xinjiang, said he has started to plan for the future despite this year's gloomy outlook.

"We have to change our business model, from customising for other brands to creating our own brand for domestic customers," Hong said.

"These things take time. We need to produce our products to a higher quality so even if we sell fewer, we can sell it at a higher price," he said. "I think labelling products as 'made with Xinjiang cotton' would still do well in China."

## Can democracy in South Asia withstand US-China rivalry?

10 August 2024, SCMP, Sagina Walyat

From rising authoritarianism to political instability, unrest throughout the region has intensified alongside shifting alliances.

Recent developments in South Asia, particularly the uprising in Bangladesh, are transforming regional dynamics with potentially global impacts. Home to 1.94 billion people, South Asia is grappling with rising extremism, democratic backsliding and political instability. As a key player in the Indo-Pacific, the region's turmoil - particularly given Bangladesh's strategic position in the Bay of Bengal - holds profound significance.

The chaotic US withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Taliban's 2021 resurgence, regarded by many as a US foreign policy failure, sparked a refugee crisis and additional security issues involving Pakistan. US sanctions and international isolation worsened the suffering of the Afghan people, especially women and children. The 2021 military coup in Myanmar has added to regional migration pressures.

In 2022, Sri Lanka faced its worst economic crisis since it gained independence, marked by 55 per cent inflation and a debilitating debt crisis, leading to crowds eventually storming the president's official residence. By 2023, Pakistan had sunk further into political and economic turmoil, with foreign reserves falling to US\$3.1 billion and civil unrest erupting after former prime minister Imran Khan was arrested. In April this year, massive protests gripped Nepal, with demands for the restoration of the monarchy. Amid the unrest, political parties were able to form a coalition government as the country balanced ties between India and China. And now Bangladesh, South Asia's second-largest economy, has experienced bloody regime change sparked by student protests over job quotas that escalated with extremist involvement.

Overall, the outlook for democracy in South Asia appears grim, with ongoing shifts towards authoritarianism and mobocracy showing little sign of reversal. The impact on stability in the region as well as global geopolitics will continue to unfold, as major powers navigate this complex and volatile landscape. South Asia has become entangled in US-China geopolitical rivalry, with significant implications for India. Projected to be the world's third-largest economy by 2028, India has attracted US interest when it comes to countering China. However, New Delhi remains committed to strategic autonomy. Meanwhile, China's growing regional influence poses challenges for India's foreign policy interests.

Recently, Bangladesh has become a victim of great power struggles. Under Sheikh Hasina's



administration, Bangladesh's independent foreign policy and tilt toward Beijing have upset Washington. Bangladesh has been reluctant to join the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue – a platform comprising Australia, India, Japan and the US – and is a part of China's Belt and Road Initiative.

Bangladeshi politicians have alleged that the US wants to lease Saint Martin's, an island in the Bay of Bengal – the US has denied this. Hasina has said she rejected an offer from "a white man" for a foreign country to establish an airbase in Bangladesh. In June, Hasina said she wouldn't agree to leasing Saint Martin's although doing so would make it easier for her to stay in power. She has also said that there are conspiracies afoot to carve a Christian state out of Bangladesh and Myanmar.

Meanwhile, over the past decade, China's influence in South Asia has grown through the Belt and Road Initiative, which South Asian nations such as Sri Lanka and the Maldives have joined. Infrastructure projects and cultural exchanges have shifted public perception, advancing China's interests. This growing influence troubles New Delhi, as it affects India's soft power and relationships with neighbouring countries. Interestingly, China, mirroring the US, has started to play a role in shaping the future direction of these countries. A rumoured diplomatic snub during Hasina's recent visit to China could be one indicator of shifting regional dynamics. As prime minister, she allowed India access to the strategically crucial Mongla and Chittagong ports and favoured India over China for the Teesta River project.

The US, a seasoned player in South Asia, has established a robust strategic nexus with Pakistan, exerted significant influence in Nepalese politics and maintained warm informal relations with Bhutan. The US has aligned with India through the Quad, defence cooperation and joint military exercises in the Indian Ocean. Its reported attempts to gain influence in Bangladesh, freezing of Afghanistan's assets and strategic positioning in Sri Lanka and near the Strait of Malacca serve to maintain its hegemony in the region. The US is engaged in a strategic chess game, with its foreign policy increasingly focused on countering China's growing influence in the region. The India- Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor is also one such move to counter China's Belt and Road Initiative in South Asia.

Advertisement

On the other hand, China has effectively utilised its economic power and diplomacy. It has strengthened its all-weather friendships with Pakistan and Nepal. The Maldives, a partner in the Indian Ocean, supports Beijing's ambition for its Maritime Silk Route.

Beijing's diplomatic act in the region has served its interests in Myanmar, while balancing relations with

Nepal and managing ties with Sri Lanka in spite of earlier setbacks. The recent developments in Bangladesh could present an opportunity for China to expand its influence, given its good relations with the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. Notably, China has become South Asia's primary trade partner, with trade reaching US\$197.4 billion in 2022 and growing at an average rate of 8.3 per cent.

Furthermore, the evolving regional landscape may lead India to become more conciliatory towards Beijing over time, though it will maintain its position on the border dispute with China. The onus is on China to act maturely and seize the opportunity to amicably settle the border dispute in a way that benefits both sides.

The competing interests of major powers are reshaping South Asia's dynamics, presenting both challenges and opportunities that will have significant global repercussions.

### **Fighting for Tibet must be a Team Effort**

10 August 2024, Tibetan Review, Robert Vanwey

Back in June, Professor Tenzin Dorjee made an impassioned argument for why Tibet matters. [<https://www.tibetanreview.net/why-tibet-matters/>] He identified several factors that illustrate that the "Tibetan problem" is in fact a global one. As the "Roof of the World," "the Water Tower of Asia," and the "Third Pole," Tibet sits within one of the most environmentally critical places on earth. Saving it means saving the world, as Professor Dorjee eloquently articulated. The human rights situation in Tibet is a repugnant stain on the international community. Religious practice is restricted. The Tibetan language is oppressed, and eroding through forced attrition. The combined assaults on Tibetans' religious practice and use of their own language are the means of eradicating the entire Tibetan culture that has spanned at least a millennium. Relatedly, these forces threaten Tibetan Buddhism, the most potent expression of Buddhism globally.

Given the profundity of each of these matters highlighted by Professor Dorjee, their resolution cannot belong to Tibetans alone. No people should be left to fade away in the dustbin of history as a result of the apathy of those who perceive themselves as not directly affected. For humanity to prosper, it is incumbent upon everyone to contribute to its diversity, robustness, and valor. Team efforts reign supreme over individualized endeavors by virtue of the assortment of expertise. Tibetans most assuredly would benefit from compounded energy applied to the preservation of their culture.

One thing I've learned from my experience working in the Himalayas is this: a sustained response to environmental catastrophes profits most from

stakeholder participation. It is the people who live upon a land, those who derive their livelihood from it over generations, that are the people who tend to know best how to sustain it. Swiftly evolving conditions invite new challenges, even for those with generations-long local knowledge. Such local knowledge nevertheless provides an important supplement to scientists seeking practical ways to mitigate the devastating global effects from climate change. But this is only part of the picture.

Public advocacy for suppression of human rights in Tibet depends upon education. We need experts who can operate effectively within the halls of power – skilled diplomats, politicians, and attorneys—who are educated in the historical details that have produced the current Tibetan situation. Without question, accurate knowledge of current, localized conditions is critical. On the larger scale, false arguments put forth to ‘justify’ the atrocious policies destroying Tibetan culture are couched within ahistorical narratives that few non-Tibetan public figures have the background to refute. To oppose this many-leveled attack on Tibetan culture, public advocacy needs to be empowered by education in fair renditions of history, not history derived only from Chinese sources, but also from Tibetan, Mongolian, Hindi, Nepali, and even Russian ones. Resisting the degradation of Tibetan Buddhism seems, in some ways, easier than these other challenges because the Western world has vigorously embraced it. The Tibetan literary tradition grounded in the canon translated from Sanskrit is enormous. Yet only a small portion of Tibetan texts on Buddhism have been translated into western languages. Just as Tibetans worked with Sanskrit scholars for hundreds of years, western translators require guidance by Tibetans fully educated in their tradition. Without fully-educated Tibetans our western translations will be incomplete and Buddhism will suffer for it.

All of this boils down to a simple point. Preservation of one of the world’s most exquisite jewels demands a multidisciplinary approach. It is for this reason that I am working to expand an organization comprised of experts of several fields, one that may seem rather eclectic to some. We are led by two of the most accomplished translators of Tibetan Buddhist works. Two of our members are technology experts, a critical skill in this 21st century, particularly for reaching a wider audience. I, myself, have extensive experience in the world of environmental studies in the Himalayas, and am a trained historian of Tibet. I am also educated as a lawyer, and another of our specialists was a practicing lawyer before shedding that day job to commit more time to the highest levels of translation. We bring this wide array of experience into our curriculum of Tibetan studies.

What any of us can do, regardless of our expertise, is to spread the word about organizations like mine and plenty of others. To capitalize on the contributions of skillful advocates, we need to help provide them the resources to do their work. In a world where the news cycle lives by the minute, the Tibetan issue barely treads water. This is not because it is any less relevant or important; it is simply an artifact of the current way the world functions. People who worry for the future of Tibet, Tibetan culture, and Tibetan Buddhism have an obligation to come together and support the entire community. Perhaps we cannot change the tides of history, but we can diminish their most insidious effects.

### **Experts discuss China's infrastructural ambitions in Himalayan region during recent webinar**

09 August 2024, ANI

The Stockholm Centre for South Asian and Indo-Pacific Affairs (SCSA-IPA) brought together scholars and experts from Europe, the US, and South Asia to examine China's strategic investments and influence in the Himalayan region.

The webinar titled "China's Himalayan Hustle Part I: Can China Achieve Infrastructural Hegemony?" was moderated by Dr Jagannath Panda, Head of SCSA-IPA. It explored China's multifaceted approach to the Himalayas, focusing on its economic investments, military involvement, and diplomatic strategies. Panda emphasised the need for more in-depth discussions about China's Himalayan strategy, noting a gap in Western and European discourse on the issue. The webinar addressed key questions concerning China's current infrastructural development plans in the Himalayan region, the implications of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and the country's long-term goals in this geopolitically sensitive area.

Panda highlighted the strategic importance of understanding China's actions in the Himalayas, particularly in the context of unresolved territorial disputes with neighbouring countries like India and Bhutan.

Matej Simalcik, Executive Director of the Central European Institute of Asian Studies, discussed China's infrastructure projects in the Himalayan region, linking them to the broader context of the Tibet issue and China's border strategy. He pointed out the significance of these projects in influencing regional stability and governance, particularly in countries like Nepal, which has received substantial Chinese investment.

"China's approach to the region is not based merely on territorial disputes, but also on military and economic matters. This is especially evident in Nepal, a country that since 2019 has received investment for

many infrastructure projects, including, for example, the trans Himalayan railway network," said Simalcik. Jeffrey Payne, a professor at the Near East South Asia (NESA) Centre for Strategic Studies, elaborated on China's Himalayan policy as an extension of its broader domestic and foreign policy objectives. He drew parallels between China's approach in the Himalayas and its actions in the South and East China Seas, suggesting that China's tactics are aimed at asserting control over disputed territories. "A parallel can be made with China's approach in the South and East China Seas and the Himalayan region— in both disputed areas, the Chinese action is to make the world notice that they can control these regions, and as a result, these territories are by default theirs," said Payne.

Thomas Eder, a senior researcher on China, highlighted China's neighbourhood policy, emphasising the importance of security partnerships with countries like Pakistan. He noted that China's investments in Pakistan, particularly through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, are a crucial part of its competition with the U.S. and efforts to secure its periphery.

Antonina Luszczkiewicz-Mendis, a former Fulbright senior scholar at Indiana University-Bloomington in the United States, discussed India's concerns regarding China's infrastructure projects, especially those related to water sharing and transboundary rivers like the Brahmaputra. She pointed out that China's activities in these areas could exacerbate tensions, given the existing border disputes and water rights issues.

Dr. Saroj Kumar Aryal, a researcher at the Faculty of Political Science and International Studies at the University of Warsaw, provided insights from Nepal's perspective, highlighting the growing influence of China in Nepal's internal politics and the challenges posed by China's infrastructure projects near the India-Nepal border. He also noted Nepal's limited capacity to monitor Chinese activities in the northern Himalayas.

The webinar concluded with a call for greater cooperation between the West, India, and other regional players to counter China's infrastructural ambitions in the Himalayas. (ANI)

### **The geopolitics in 'Tibet border' reference**

09 August 2024, Deccan Herald, Jabin T Jacob

Dorjee Tshering Lepcha's speech underlines that India's development policies for its border areas and its policy towards China are connected, and that both are equally important.

Rajya Sabha member Dorjee Tshering Lepcha from Sikkim hit the headlines last week for his call to the Union government to instruct the Indian Army and

other agencies working in border areas to start referring to the 'China border' as the 'Tibet border'. However, all of Lepcha's speech — his response to the Union Budget for 2024-2025 — deserves attention.

The parliamentarian from Sikkim made other direct and indirect references to Tibet. For instance, Lepcha called for restarting border trade through Nathu La and the Kailash Mansarovar pilgrimage. He pointed out that the route through Nathu La to Kailash Mansarovar was the best of the three overland routes currently available — the other two are through Nepal and Uttarakhand.

Lepcha also briefly made a reference to Ogyen Trinley Dorje as the 17th Karmapa and called for bringing him to Sikkim. Dorje is only one of the claimants to the title of the 17th Karmapa and leadership of the Karma Kagyu sect of Buddhists, albeit one who has been accepted by both the Dalai Lama and the Chinese government. The young Buddhist religious figure later escaped from Tibet to Nepal in 1999, moving to India the following year. However, he left India in 2017, and has not been back since. The Rumtek monastery in Sikkim is a major seat of the Karma Kagyu school, and hence, Lepcha's call.

The Member of Parliament surely realises that any official Indian government action either switching to 'Tibet border' or on the Karmapa would only draw protests from Beijing, and make restoration of border trade and the Kailash Mansarovar pilgrimage that much harder.

The speech by Sikkim's lone member in the upper house of Parliament — the state will mark 50 years of its accession to the Indian Union in 2025 — must, therefore, be understood in a larger context. The reference to the 'Tibet border' was possibly an attempt to draw attention to arguably more important issues that the speech raises. It highlights the linkages between the Union government's China policy and questions of politics and development in India's border states.

Lepcha started his roughly 10-minute-long intervention with a reference to the problem of unemployment among the educated youth in his state. While he sought to portray this as part of a global phenomenon, it was clear that this was an issue that was uppermost in the minds of ordinary Sikkimese, and one whose solution he made clear needed a non-partisan approach. He framed his request for the Union government's intervention to promote skill development and improve the employability of the state's job-seekers with a reference to *atmanirbharta*. It is also in this context of lack of jobs and need for government support that his call to promote organic farming and his demand

for the inclusion of 12 more communities in the Scheduled Tribe (ST) list must be seen.

The Sikkimese Member of Parliament then identified problems with the state's infrastructure including the poor state of the section between Sevoke and Rangpo on National Highway No 10 – which he called the “lifeline” of the state – and problems with operations at Sikkim's only airport at Pakyong. Both are issues that Lepcha has raised repeatedly in Parliament but received only somewhat unsatisfactory answers for. One direct question, for example, on a demand from the Government of Sikkim to transfer the Sevoke- Rangpo stretch from the West Bengal Public Works Department to the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd. elicited a non-committal response from Minister of Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari.

Economic logic also dominates the Tibet references in the parliamentarian's speech as should be clear from his highlighting of trade and pilgrimage through Nathu La. He further pointed out that while the Chinese were constructing villages all along the Line of Actual Control, India by contrast had kept people from accessing border areas through the notification of these areas as reserved forests and wildlife sanctuaries. This is not an anti-environment complaint but a reference to the fact that the Union government's environment policies are often neither sensitive to local conditions nor acknowledge local knowledge and contributions to conservation and sustainability. Policies that cut off local populations from border areas, forest lands, and traditional grazing pastures whether for national security considerations or environmental ones have implications for local culture, development, and livelihood, as well as for national security, itself.

Lepcha's speech underlines the fact that India's development policies for its border areas and its policy towards China are connected and that both are equally important – one cannot take priority over the other.

To return to the headline of calling India's northern border the ‘Tibet border’, this could be seen as a response to China's renaming of various places in Arunachal Pradesh, the third instance of which took place in March. However, the question then arises why a government response has been lacking since 2017 when China first renamed places in the northeast Indian state. In fact, it was widely reported in June that the government was planning to rename 30 locations in Tibet according to their names in Indian languages. Nothing has been heard of this idea since.

Renaming the border is probably easy to do and it might even be argued is a necessary reminder of historical facts. But neither the existence of the Indo-

Tibetan Border Police nor India's hosting the Dalai Lama for decades has led to any great expertise on Tibet outside of select pockets in India's government and society. Or to sustained political and economic attention to India's border areas or, indeed, to formulating cogent policy towards China. The problem then lies elsewhere.

Dealing with the challenges China poses to Indian interests must not be an episodic affair led by headlines or limited to rhetoric. It demands urgent, sustained action in India's border states in terms of investments in human resources, improving Centre-State policy co-ordination, and ensuring accountability.

### **Taiwan should step up transparency amid Chinese 'gray zone' tactics: Expert**

08 August 2024, Focus Taiwan

Taiwan should step up efforts to boost transparency about China's "gray zone" activities to drum up international support and pressure Beijing into not escalating tensions, a maritime transparency project director at Stanford University said Thursday.

To engage the public at home and the international community, the Taiwanese government should release footage and images of China's "gray zone" maneuvers around Taiwan, including standoffs between Taiwanese and Chinese coast guard ships around the Kinmen Islands, Ray Powell, director of Seelight at Stanford's Gordian Knot Center, told a press event held by Forward Alliance in Taipei.

Gray zone activities refer to actions that fall between traditional notions of war and peace. These activities typically involve ambiguous or nontraditional methods that aim to achieve strategic objectives without overtly crossing the threshold into open conflict.

Taiwan's Defense Ministry currently relies mostly on flight maps and press releases of Chinese warplane incursions into its air defense identification zone, however, to get the public and lawmakers on board with projects and items the country is funding with defense spending, Taiwan needs to "show the public what these things look like," he said.

Using China's gray zone maneuvers against the Philippines in the South China Sea as an example, he said that after the Philippine government around February 2023 started to task its coast guard vessels with capturing videos and pictures of blocking and swarming maneuvers employed by the Chinese coast guard against Philippine vessels.

Back then, China had tried to harass Philippine vessels on resupply missions to the Second Thomas Shoal, Powell said.

Manila's response to the Chinese gray zone activities, which garnered international support for the Philippines, influenced the United State's decision

in late July to provide the Philippines with US\$500 million to shore up its defense amid ongoing friction with China in the South China Sea, Powell argued.

Over the past 18 months, the international media reported extensively on tensions in the contested waters, garnering wide attention of the international community, which was helped by a keynote speech by Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. at the Shangri-la Dialogue in May, he said. Manila's tactic was accompanied by a robust embedded reporters' program, which spotlighted the issue locally after six years of opacity surrounding such incidents under former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte and also in the international community, Powell said.

Although Beijing initially responded by stepping up its "patrols" near the Second Thomas Shoal, Manila's strategy prompted the two countries to each read out its version of an "agreement" on how each side would approach resupply missions undertaken by the Philippines, which went uncontested by China, he said. "People need to see how Chinese ships and Chinese aircraft are maneuvering in an unsafe manner. Words are important, but images are much more effective,"

Forward Alliance Director Enoch Wu (吳怡農) said.

"People need to see how Chinese coast guards are forcibly boarding sovereign countries' civilian vessels. Our public needs to see that and the world needs to see that," he said.

### India-China: A frozen relationship

07 August 2024, Modern Diplomacy, Pritam Sarbabidya

The India-China border disputes date lower back to the early twentieth century whilst the British colonial rulers drew the McMahon Line as the boundary among India and Tibet.

The India-China border disputes date lower back to the early twentieth century whilst the British colonial rulers drew the McMahon Line as the boundary among India and Tibet. However, China never accepted this boundary and claims vast swathes of territory in the eastern sector of the border, including Arunachal Pradesh. On the western front, there may be the Aksai Chin vicinity, which is claimed through India but occupied by means of China. Despite a couple of rounds of negotiations and agreements, including the 1996 Agreement at the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity alongside the LAC, the border disputes stay unresolved and continue to be a source of hysteria among the two giants.

The latest escalation in tensions started out in the Covid year of 2020 when Indian and Chinese troops clashed within the Galwan Valley in Ladakh. The violent clashes led to casualties on each facet and

brought about a major escalation when the whole world was busy with the first wave of the deadly virus. Since then, both sides have deployed hundreds of troops along the LAC, leading to an anxious and volatile scenario inside the vicinity.

The implications of the border disputes and the current trends on India's foreign coverage are a ways-reaching. India has historically pursued a policy of "non-alignment" and "strategic autonomy", with all most important powers at the same time as safeguarding its country wide pastimes.

The India-China border disputes have additionally highlighted the strategic importance of the Himalayan location and the need for India to strengthen its army abilities and infrastructure along the border. In reaction to China's developing assertiveness in the place, India has stepped up its border infrastructure improvement and army deployments in Ladakh and other touchy regions alongside the LAC. For instance in terms of building roads, India's Border Road Organisation (BRO) has completed 330 projects at a cost of ₹8,737 crore in the last three years.

Maintaining the channel of communication, both side hold numerous rounds of commander level meetings, the latest one was 21st round taken place on 19th February 2024 at Chushul-Moldo border meeting point, concluded with a hope and statement "committed to maintain peace and tranquillity on the ground" and wanted "mutually accepted resolutions of remaining issue". But one major question appears at this point – "Is "mutual" solution really possible, when China "unilaterally" violated all the norms?" We have also seen China's move of unilaterally changing the names of places that belongs to India, objecting Indian PM Narendra Modi's visit to Indian State of Arunachal Pradesh.

Although the two countries trying to balance out their strategies and counter strategies, its for India to look situations from different perspective. In May, 2024 we came across a report which highlighted the Chinese strategy of building a road in "Shaksgam Valley". This Chinese physical occupation could potentially threaten Indian defences in Siachen Glaciers. If China has the access there then twin threats on "Siachen" in South "state in mess" Pakistan and in the North "the dragon". Recently, another media report informed that "China has completed the construction of a 400-metre bridge, connecting the northern and southern banks of the Pangong Tso." Which can be seen as a concern for the India side as these actions enhance communication channels.

The recent standoff has also underscored the significance of enhancing security cooperation with nations like Japan, Australia, and Vietnam, which percentage India's concerns about China's rising



strength and assertiveness in the vicinity. At the same time India's focus in strengthening the idea of "free, open and prosperous Indo-Pacific" with the groupings like QUAD.

Despite the border disputes and periodic tensions, India and China have additionally sought to deepen their financial and change ties through the years. China is now India's biggest trading companion, with \$118.4 billion in two-way trade. But there are areas of concerns in economics as well, the trade imbalance the two countries. For the record, in 2024 India has the highest trade deficit with China. India's export to China in 2023-24 stood at \$16.65 billion, while import stood at \$101.75 billion. As a result, the trade deficit is over \$85 billion.

However, the monetary courting has been marred with the aid of change imbalances, market get entry to issues, and worries about Chinese investments in crucial sectors of the Indian economy. To counter that in recent years, India has sought to diversify its financial and strategic partnerships to reduce its dependence on China and enhance its strategic autonomy. The authorities' 'Make in India' initiative or its new updated version of "Atma-Nirbhar Bharat" to draw overseas investments in key sectors like defence, infrastructure, and era are aimed at decreasing reliance on Chinese imports and promoting self-reliance in important sectors of the economic system. India has additionally bolstered its partnerships with nations like Japan, Australia, and the USA, via tasks like the Quad and the Indo-Pacific strategy, to mitigate China's developing impact within the region.

The manner forward in resolving the India-China border disputes lies in a complete and sustained speak system that addresses the middle issues of contention and builds mutual consider and self-assurance among the two countries. Both aspects need to stick to current agreements and protocols, which include the 1996 Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the LAC and the 2005 Agreement on Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question, to save you similarly escalation of tensions and preserve peace and balance along the border, at the same time safeguarding India's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

As India continues to rise a major global player resolving the border dispute with China will be pivotal in defining its trajectory in the 21st century.

## Explainer: Tim Walz's long track record in China

07 August 2024, VOA, William Yang

From teaching at a high school in China to his experience serving on a key congressional committee that focuses on relations between Beijing and Washington, Democratic vice-presidential nominee Tim Walz has a decades-long connection with China dating back to the pro-democracy protests in Tiananmen Square in 1989.

As an educator, Walz taught American History, culture, and English to Chinese students at the Foshan No.1 High School in the southern Chinese province of Guangdong in 1989, the year that saw hundreds of thousands of Chinese students protesting against the ruling Chinese Communist Party in Tiananmen Square. "China was coming, and that's the reason that I went," Walz said in a 2007 interview with The Hill, a Washington D.C.-based news website. During his one-year teaching stint in China, Walz was nicknamed "Fields of China" by his students due to his kindness. His time in China had an impact on his perspectives of Chinese people's lives under the ruling Communist Party.

"If they had the proper leadership, there are no limits on what they could accomplish," he said in an interview with the Star Herald in 1990, describing teaching in China as "one of the best things" he has ever done.

His interest in China didn't stop there. Upon returning to the United States, Walz and his wife set up a company named "Educational Travel Adventures" to coordinate summer trips to China for American high school students.

Five years after the Tiananmen Square protests and the Chinese government's violent crackdown, Walz returned to China with his wife for their honeymoon and they brought along two American high school tour groups. Walz continued running the summer exchange program to China for American students with his wife until 2003.

Advocating human rights in China

After becoming a member of Congress in 2007, Walz continued to focus on issues related to China. During his time in Congress, Walz served on the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, which focuses exclusively on human rights issues in the country.

Walz quickly established himself as a vocal critic of the Chinese government, holding regular meetings with high-profile activists from China and Hong Kong, including prominent Hong Kong activist Joshua Wong and Tibet's spiritual leader Dalai Lama.

In an interview with VOA in 2014, Walz recounted his impression of witnessing the student-led protest in Tiananmen Square unfold. "I remembered waking up

and seeing the news on June Fourth that the unthinkable had happened,” he said.

While most Americans at the time decided to leave China due to security concerns following the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989, Walz said he felt it was “more important than ever to go” to China because he wanted to ensure that “the story was told” and let the Chinese people know that the outside world was with them.

In addition to engaging with activists from China and Hong Kong, Walz also co-sponsored several resolutions on key human rights issues in China, including demanding the release of Chinese Nobel laureate Liu Xiaobo and Chinese activist Huang Qi, as well as co-signing the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act in 2017.

In one of his congressional remarks in 2016, Walz highlighted the importance of having “constructive dialogues” with Beijing to ensure “the preservation of traditional Tibetan culture and Tibet’s fragile ecology.” “The U.S. was founded on the ideas of universal freedom, and I believe that we must continue to urge the Chinese government to provide less regulated religious freedom to the Tibetans,” he said at the time. Foreign policy boost

In addition to being a vocal critique of China’s human rights record, Walz also expressed concerns about

China’s attempt to expand its presence in the South China Sea in 2016, citing Beijing’s efforts to build artificial islands in the disputed water as the reason to oppose Washington’s attempt to reduce military spending.

Despite his strong stance on China’s human rights record and military posture, Walz continued to stress the importance of maintaining cooperation with China. “I don’t fall into the category that China necessarily needs to be an adversarial relationship,” he said in a video interview with Agri-Pulse Communications.

“I think we need to stand firm on what they are doing in the South China Sea, but there [are] many areas of cooperation that we can work on,” Walz added.

Some analysts say Walz’s deep connections to China and track record in U.S.-China diplomacy could potentially help the Democratic presidential pair make more informed decisions on foreign policy, especially on issues related to China.

“I think [his emergence as Democratic vice-presidential nominee] is going to put a lot of people who care a lot about American foreign policy in this part of the world at ease, knowing that there is someone on the ticket who is informed, has spent time in the region, and is not starting from square one when it comes to learning about American

foreign policy in East Asia,” said Lev Nachman, a political scientist at National Taiwan University.

He said since Walz has expressed many humanistic views of the Chinese people, Tibetan people, and Hong Kongers, the Minnesota governor could add more nuance to the policy debate related to China in the United States.

“He may be able to articulate the need to push back against China’s authoritarianism and human rights violations in different parts of the world in a way that doesn’t vilify Chinese citizens or doesn’t lean antagonistically in this overtly scare tactic rhetoric that I think a lot of U.S.-China discourse has turned into in the U.S.,” Nachman told VOA by phone.

### **The Annexation Of Taiwan In Xi Jinping’s Timeline – OpEd**

06 August 2024, Eurasia Review, Sarah Neumann

The conflict between China and Taiwan regarding independence or annexation has persisted since the end of World War II. However, since the mid-2000s, this issue has escalated significantly, largely due to the intensifying global competition in economic, political, and geopolitical spheres between the United States and China, which has become a defining element of the new world order. Additionally, Taiwan’s transformation into a major hub for semiconductor production—crucial to modern industrial, technological, financial, and logistical advancements—has heightened tensions among Beijing, Taipei, and Washington.

Taiwan’s strategic geographical location further underscores its importance. China is encircled by archipelagos hosting U.S. military bases and allied nations. For the United States, Taiwan serves as a critical pressure point on China’s access routes, whereas for China, it represents the “first island chain.” By integrating Taiwan and artificial islands under construction, China aims to complete its Anti-access/Area denial (A2/AD) strategy in the Western Pacific, thereby disrupting the U.S. containment efforts.

In 1972, Mao Zedong told Richard Nixon that Beijing could wait a century to reclaim Taiwan. However, Xi Jinping appears far less patient. According to U.S. intelligence, Xi has instructed the People’s Liberation Army to be ready for an operation to annex Taiwan by 2027. Various factors, however, could accelerate this timeline, potentially prompting a forcible annexation sooner.

Taiwan seeks independence and requires the support of a major power to counter China, making the United States its best ally. Taiwan leverages its semiconductor production capabilities to gain this support. It manufactures over 60% of the world’s advanced digital, analog, and mixed-signal chips,

serving as a primary supplier to U.S. tech companies and defense contractors. Moreover, Taiwan fully cooperates with U.S. sanctions against China, especially regarding the use of integrated circuits made by Taiwanese companies like TSMC, thereby intensifying China's determination to pursue Taiwan's annexation more seriously.

China urgently needs specialized microelectronics, currently produced in Taiwan, to develop its military technologies and AI-related industries. To achieve this, China faces two options: either integrate its domestic production with the latest global technology—a challenging task due to Western sanctions preventing companies like ASML from selling chip-making machines to China—or annex Taiwan to utilize its top-tier manufacturing capabilities.

The potential transformation of Taiwan into a strategic military base for U.S. and NATO forces could prompt China to act preemptively. Under the pretext of aiding Taipei against an imminent Chinese attack, the U.S. aims to bolster its military presence on the island, solidifying its foothold near China's borders. Presently, China is surrounded by U.S. and allied forces: to the northeast by Japan, South Korea, and Okinawa; to the south by Australia and New Zealand; and to the east by the Marshall Islands, Mariana Islands, and Guam, home to active U.S. military personnel. Given this encirclement and the placement of nuclear submarines and unmanned underwater vehicles (UUA), ballistic missiles (IRBM, ICBM, SLBM), B2 bombers in the Andersen Guam base, as well as the deployment of the navy's 7th in the region, China views Taiwan as crucial to connecting with other recently constructed artificial islands to effectively implement its A2/AD strategy.

Considering the geographical positioning of U.S. forces in the Western Pacific, the capabilities of A2/AD systems will be crucial upon the first shot being fired. Advanced weaponry like hypersonic missiles, unless integrated with reliable A2/AD monitoring systems, will be ineffective in detecting, locating, and tracking enemy ships and aircraft. In such a scenario, Taiwan would serve as both the first and last line of defense for both sides. Should Beijing perceive Taiwan as becoming such a strategic position for the Western alliance, it would promptly initiate an early operation against Taiwan.

Another factor potentially accelerating China's 2027 timeline is the U.S. presidential election. If Kamala Harris wins the election, NATO's Indo-Pacific policy and the vision of NATO 2030 will likely continue, intensifying the military presence of the Atlantic alliance in East Asia and the Pacific. Taiwan's geographical significance in this context will be more pronounced than ever. Conversely, if Donald Trump wins, the situation could differ. Trump's non-

interventionist rhetoric, aimed at reducing financial and human costs for American soldiers, could create an environment more conducive to China's ambitions. Beijing would exploit the isolationist policies of a new administration to further its goal of reclaiming Taiwan. Currently, China is disinclined to engage in a conflict over Taiwan, which could lead to a direct confrontation with the U.S. and its regional allies, as the economic and financial repercussions would be severe. Instead, China continues to make implicit threats and conduct military drills around Taiwan, such as the "Joint Sword A-2024" exercise, to maintain a constant threat over Taiwan and potential Western actions. However, if conditions change and certain factors emerge, China might act against Taiwan sooner than the end of this decade or 2027. If Western sanctions on Chinese technology intensify and the U.S. significantly widens its technological and military lead, Beijing will take decisive action to annex Taiwan, a key to 21st-century advancements. Should Washington expand the Indo-Pacific NATO idea and integrate Taiwan as a critical military outpost, it would be akin to chaining the wings of the Chinese dragon. In such a scenario, the People's Liberation Army would launch a swift, decisive, and surprise operation to seize Taiwan.

If Trump enters the White House, his anti-NATO, non-interventionist, and anti-coalition policies would offer a glimmer of hope for Beijing. This would embolden Chinese leaders to pursue the annexation of Taiwan. If Beijing realizes that the U.S. is unwilling to bear the substantial costs of protecting Taipei's political aspirations, it will seize the opportunity to annex the island.

### **China's Iron Grip on Tibet: A Scathing Indictment of Religious Repression**

05 August 2024, Khabarhub, Manoj Ghimire

The United States State Department's 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom, released on June 26, 2024, offers a damning assessment of China's ongoing suppression of religious freedom in Tibet.

This comprehensive review serves as a stark reminder of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) relentless efforts to control and manipulate every aspect of Tibetan Buddhism, effectively strangling the spiritual and cultural life of the Tibetan people.

At the heart of China's oppressive policy lies an insidious campaign of "Sinicization" – a euphemism for the systematic erasure of Tibetan identity and the forced assimilation of Tibetan Buddhism into a CCP-approved version of Chinese culture.

This is not merely cultural imperialism; it is a calculated strategy to neutralize what Beijing perceives as a threat to its authority and to remake Tibetan Buddhism in its own image.

The State Department report highlights the CCP's 2019-2023 five-year plan to Sinicize Buddhism in China, with a particular focus on Tibetan Buddhism. The requirement for monasteries to obtain official permission for large-scale religious events or gatherings further restricts the free practice of religion.

This plan, far from being a benign cultural initiative, is a blueprint for ideological control.

It demands loyalty to the CCP and the state above all else, effectively attempting to replace spiritual devotion with political allegiance.

The involvement of the state-run Buddhist Association of China (BAC) in this process only underscores the extent to which the Chinese government is willing to co-opt religious institutions to serve its political agenda.

Perhaps most alarming is the CCP's brazen interference in the most sacred aspects of Tibetan Buddhist tradition.

The report details how the United Front Work Department (UFWD), an arm of the CCP, has arrogated to itself the power to control the selection of Tibetan religious leaders, including the recognition of reincarnated lamas.

This is not merely administrative overreach; it is a fundamental violation of religious freedom and an attempt to control the very spiritual lineage of Tibetan Buddhism.

The regulations stipulating that reincarnate lamas must be born within China and that no foreign organization or individual may interfere in their selection are particularly egregious.

These rules are transparently designed to prevent the current Dalai Lama, who lives in exile, from having any say in the recognition of his successor.

It is a calculated move to sever the spiritual connection between Tibetans inside Tibet and their exiled religious leader, and to ensure that future religious leaders are compliant with CCP dictates.

The ongoing disappearance of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, recognized as the 11th Panchen Lama by the Dalai Lama and most Tibetan Buddhists, stands as a chilling testament to the lengths the Chinese government will go to control Tibetan Buddhism.

Abducted at the age of six in 1995, his whereabouts remain unknown nearly three decades later.

This act of state-sponsored kidnapping not only violates basic human rights but also represents a direct assault on the religious traditions of Tibetan Buddhism.

The report also sheds light on the Chinese government's efforts to erase the Tibetan language and culture.

Monasteries are being forced to translate texts from Tibetan to Mandarin, a move that observers rightly

identify as an attempt to undermine the Tibetan language.

The forced replacement of images of the Dalai Lama and other revered lamas with portraits of CCP leaders in both monasteries and private homes is a particularly cruel form of cultural violence, striking at the heart of Tibetan spiritual practice.

The ban on images of the Dalai Lama, with harsh repercussions for those who dare to own or display them, is a clear violation of religious freedom and personal expression.

It speaks volumes about the CCP's fear of the Dalai Lama's influence and its determination to eradicate any trace of loyalty to him among the Tibetan people. The report also highlights the intensification of repression around politically sensitive events, religious anniversaries, and cultural events with religious components.

The cancellation or curtailment of lay attendance at religious events, even those that had received official approval, demonstrates the capricious nature of CCP control and the constant state of uncertainty under which Tibetan Buddhists must practice their faith.

The role of the United Front Work Department in managing religious affairs through the State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA) reveals the extent to which religion in Tibet is viewed as a political matter rather than a spiritual one.

The systematic attempt to control, manipulate, and ultimately reshape Tibetan Buddhism to serve the political interests of the CCP is nothing short of cultural genocide.

The UFWD's claim to have the right to deny recognition of reincarnations of high lamas of "especially great influence" is a clear indication of the CCP's fear of charismatic religious leaders who might challenge its authority.

The regulations that allow citizens to take part only in officially approved religious practices are a direct assault on religious freedom. By asserting CCP control over all aspects of religious activity, including the management of religious venues, groups, personnel, and schools, the Chinese government is effectively trying to remake Tibetan Buddhism into a state-controlled entity devoid of its spiritual essence.

This comprehensive control extends to the minutiae of daily religious life. The CCP maintains a registry of officially recognized reincarnate lamas, effectively bureaucratizing a deeply spiritual process. Local governments in Tibetan areas are given control over the registration of monasteries, nunneries, and other Buddhist religious centers, subjecting these sacred spaces to constant scrutiny and potential interference. The requirement for monasteries to obtain official permission for large-scale religious events or gatherings further restricts the free practice of religion.

This micromanagement of religious activities not only stifles spontaneous expressions of faith but also allows the CCP to monitor and control the gathering of Tibetan Buddhists, likely out of fear that such assemblies could foster dissent or opposition to Chinese rule.

The International Campaign for Tibet's president, Tencho Gyatso, rightly points out that the suppression of religious freedom in Tibet, including the efforts to control the succession of the Dalai Lama, are core issues for the survival of Tibetan civilization and its future.

The spotlight put on Tibet in this year's State Department religious freedom report is indeed needed more than ever.

As the world watches, China's policies in Tibet continue to flagrantly violate international norms of religious freedom and human rights.

Only through sustained pressure and advocacy can there be hope for preserving the unique religious and cultural heritage of the Tibetan people in the face of such systematic repression.

The systematic attempt to control, manipulate, and ultimately reshape Tibetan Buddhism to serve the political interests of the CCP is nothing short of cultural genocide.

It is a campaign that strikes at the very heart of Tibetan identity and spirituality. China's policies in Tibet are not just a matter of domestic concern; they represent a challenge to the universal principles of religious freedom and human rights.

The CCP's actions in Tibet reveal a government deeply insecure about its legitimacy, resorting to heavy-handed tactics to suppress a peaceful religious tradition that it views as a threat to its power.

The Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism is not merely a policy of cultural assimilation; it is an attempt to fundamentally alter the nature of Tibetan spiritual practice to serve the state's interests.

By insisting that Tibetan Buddhism "follow the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics" and "correctly handle the relationship between national law and canon," the CCP is effectively demanding that religious doctrine be subordinated to party ideology. This approach not only violates the basic tenets of religious freedom but also demonstrates a profound misunderstanding of the nature of spiritual belief.

Religion, particularly one as deeply rooted in tradition and philosophy as Tibetan Buddhism, cannot simply be rewritten to suit political objectives without losing its essential character and meaning.

As long as Tibet remains under the iron grip of CCP control, with every aspect of religious life subject to state scrutiny and manipulation, the rich spiritual traditions of Tibetan Buddhism – and indeed, the

very survival of Tibetan culture – remain in grave peril.

The international community must continue to shine a light on these abuses and hold China accountable for its actions in Tibet.

Only through sustained pressure and advocacy can there be hope for preserving the unique religious and cultural heritage of the Tibetan people in the face of such systematic repression.

### **China's War on the Dalai Lama Stokes Tension with India and Russia**

05 August 2024, Providence, Antonio Graceffo

On July 6th, the 89th birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama was celebrated in Dharamshala, India and observed by the Tibetan diaspora and supporters worldwide. Beyond marking a milestone for the leader of the Tibetan Buddhist faith, this event carries significant political implications for China amid great power competition. Ironically, the one place his birthday was not celebrated was in his native Tibet, where the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) forbids citizens from having any contact with their spiritual leader, who has lived in exile since 1959. Each year, as his birthday approaches, the repression in Tibet intensifies. This year, under the revised espionage law, police have been conducting random cellphone checks to ensure Tibetans have not downloaded his photo to pray for him.

The celebration underscores India's support for Tibetan Buddhism over the wishes of the CCP. Despite India's membership in BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Dalai Lama remains a major point of tension. The Indian ambassador even attended the first large-scale public celebration of the Dalai Lama's birthday in Mongolia, where Tibetan Buddhism is the national religion. Since Mongolia won its independence from the Qing dynasty in 1921, China has tried to control the fiercely independent nation, and the Dalai Lama has been a sticking point. When the Dalai Lama visited Mongolia in November 2016, China responded with economic sanctions. Although Mongolia has avoided inviting His Holiness back to prevent reprisals, this celebration clearly demonstrates Mongolia's refusal to submit to Chinese suzerainty.

In another blow to the CCP, representatives from China's closest ally, Russia, also attended the celebration in Ulaanbaatar. This is because the Mongolic republics within the Russian Federation, including Buryatia, Kalmykia, and Tuva, follow Tibetan Buddhism. While the CCP can exert significant influence over economically dependent states, religion remains a point of resistance.



As the Dalai Lama ages, succession issues become critical, with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) aiming to select the reincarnated monks who will replace key figures in Tibetan Buddhism, particularly the Dalai Lama. The CCP seeks to control not only earthly religious practices but also extends its reach into the next life through harsh laws, ironically referred to by critics as “rebirth control.”

Through the state-controlled Buddhist Association of China (BAC), the CCP has long sought to control the reincarnation of prominent Tibetan Buddhist monks in order to suppress Tibetan cultural identity. Violating CCP regulations on recognizing reincarnations carries stiff penalties. In 2022, when 86-year-old lama (lama being a generic term like “guru”) Tulku Dawa died in Lhasa, the CCP attempted to keep it secret. He had been arrested in 2010 for seeking guidance from the exiled Dalai Lama in selecting the reincarnation of the Rongpo Chöje, the chief lama of the Shag Rongbo monastery. He was sentenced to seven years in prison, while the monastery underwent a stringent reeducation program, resulting in one suicide and the expulsion of numerous monks. The Chinese government mouthpiece, Global Times, justified the CCP’s control over reincarnations, stating, “Living Buddhas can be a peaceful power, but also a ‘weapon of mass destruction’ if used by evil or splittist forces.” A living Buddha is someone recognized as the reincarnation of a great monk such as the Dalai Lama. By “splittist forces,” Beijing refers to His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, whom the CCP views as a separatist and has even labeled a terrorist, despite his

consistent advocacy for non-violence and genuine autonomy rather than independence. The Dalai Lama has maintained that while the CCP could handle Tibet’s external affairs, he seeks true autonomy, including freedom of religion, culture, and language, within China’s framework.

The Global Times article stated, “Some Living Buddhas affirmed by the 14th Dalai Lama, the highest lama of Tibetan Buddhism, have been behind riots or self-immolations that aim to further the cause of Tibetan independence.” This quote was from Zhou Quan, a columnist at m4.cn, a Beijing-based political commentary website dedicated to “helping young Chinese build healthy, constructive, and progressive minds.” In the CCP’s estimation, building a healthy mind includes rejecting religion. Under Chinese law, children under 18 are barred from any religious affiliation. The CCP also believes that for young people to have healthy, progressive minds, they must reject traditional cultures that are not Han Chinese. This particularly applies to Uyghur culture in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), as well as Mongolian culture in Inner Mongolia Autonomous

Region (IMAR), and Tibetan culture in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR).

In 1995, the Dalai Lama recognized six-year-old Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as the 11th Panchen Lama, a Buddhist leader whose role includes identifying the next Dalai Lama. In response, the CCP detained the boy and appointed their own candidate, Gyaincain Norbu. To this day, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima has not been seen. The CCP claims he is alive, well, and uninterested in religion or interviews.

In 2016, a similar conflict arose in Mongolia when senior Tibetan Buddhist leaders, endorsed by the Dalai Lama, recognized a U.S.-born boy of Mongolian descent as the 10th Jebtsundamba Khutuktu, the spiritual head of Mongolian Buddhism. The CCP protested, claiming the right to identify reincarnated lamas not only within China but in other countries as well. Despite China’s protests, Mongolian authorities recognized the boy chosen by His Holiness. However, they did not invite the Dalai Lama to return to Mongolia. Instead, in 2023, the boy was formally introduced by the Dalai Lama in a ceremony in Dharamsala, India.

Beijing even attempts to prevent Western governments from meeting with the Dalai Lama in India. The CCP recently lodged complaints when a delegation of U.S. lawmakers, including former Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, went to India and met with His Holiness, the Dalai Lama. This move followed President Biden signing the “Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act” into law, aimed at “advancing the human rights of Tibetans and supporting efforts to preserve their distinct linguistic, cultural, and religious heritage.” He reiterated that the

United States had not changed its stance on Tibet being part of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) but urged Beijing to open negotiations with the Dalai Lama to find a fair resolution to the dispute.

China warned the US over Pelosi’s visit and rebuked the signing of the Tibet Act, viewing it as a violation of China’s sovereignty. It appears that China’s repression of Tibetan Buddhism, both inside and outside its borders, will continue and likely intensify unless the CCP falls, which currently does not seem imminent.

### **India cannot afford to lose plot while chasing Chinese investment**

04 August 2024, SCMP, Natasha Agarwal

Chinese investment in India’s economy would be helpful, but the economic logic behind India’s pursuit must be refined and made more coherent.

Of the many strategies to deepen India’s integration into the global value chain, the Indian Economic Survey 2023-24 says “it is inevitable that India plugs

itself into China's supply chain". To do so, it argues that India must make a choice between relying solely on imported goods from China or attracting Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI).

The report, produced annually by India's Ministry of Finance, favours the latter. Chinese FDI would help India kill two birds with one stone. It would help India address the growing bilateral trade deficit with China while at the same time enabling India to capitalise on the "China plus one" strategy, a strategy being effectively used by other developing economies.

However, the reasons India is seeking Chinese FDI are haphazard and show a lack of coherent economic reasoning. The Economic Survey suggests they stem from being economically submerged in the bilateral relationship with China while missing out on the benefits of "China plus one". Indian policymakers seem to think they have no choice but to pursue Chinese FDI while leaving development of domestic technological capabilities as an afterthought.

India needs to redefine its objectives. Improving the country's technological capabilities should be the focus of India's FDI policies. Accordingly, its strategy towards China should rest on technological transfers and diffusion from Chinese FDI.

A paucity of data means there is little to no evidence to indicate whether wholly owned Chinese subsidiaries are better than joint ventures with Indian firms. Drawing from global studies on the impact of firm ownership on technological transfers in host countries, policies could be directed to encourage joint ventures between Indian and Chinese firms with technological transfers as the fulcrum of such partnerships.

Transfers can be direct through means such as technological handovers, with know-how shared with little restrictions in study groups or corporate joint ventures. Alternatively, transfers can also be indirect wherein the very presence of Chinese firms within India's borders could initiate the process of technological transfers.

The idea is that the technological capabilities and management techniques of Chinese multinationals gradually leak out of Chinese firms and become common knowledge in the domestic Indian market. In other words, Indian firms could enjoy technological spillover benefits from incorporating foreign knowledge into their production processes without having to acquire it via a transaction.

Such technological spillovers can play a critical role. However, the magnitude of the spillover largely depends on a country's ability to absorb and assimilate available knowledge, which in turn relates to the skills of its workforce, the state of its infrastructure, its institutional framework and openness to structural reforms.

For example, the presence and activities of Chinese firms in India could facilitate technological spillovers through imitation, whereby domestic Indian firms could reverse engineer technologies embodied in Chinese FDI. This could close the technological gap, putting domestic laggards onto an innovation trajectory. However, reverse engineering is only possible if the Indian workforce has the necessary skill set to make it happen.

Thus, India must invest time, money and effort in structural and institutional reforms. These reforms need to start delivering high-quality development rather than just ticking government boxes. For example, given India's aspirational growth trajectory, it comes as no surprise that the country is witnessing an infrastructure boom.

In its budget for the coming year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government maintains that infrastructure will continue to receive "strong fiscal support". However, upgrading the country's infrastructure needs to go beyond improving India's position in assessments such as the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index or delving into aspirational projects such as building the country's largest sea bridge or biggest port.

Instead, the focus in infrastructure development should be to deliver seamless, effective and efficient connectivity across the length and breadth of India. This connectivity must go beyond national highways and include local roads that connect the country's interior, leaving no Indian behind. Replacing crumbling infrastructure and ensuring pothole-free roads, especially during wet seasons, could be one ambition at the start of this journey.

India also needs to tap into the role that governments at the state and local levels can play in bringing along the development of the country's infrastructure. While financial transfers and budgetary autonomy are indispensable factors, decentralisation that endorses adaptive governance is also important to promoting good development outcomes.

Much like other multinational firms, Chinese multinationals would do a cost-benefit analysis before entering India. The presumption that Chinese firms are waiting with anticipation for India to open up needs a reality check, especially given India's stringent attitude towards Chinese businesses to suit the government's rhetoric over the border dispute with China.

India's short-sighted approach to Chinese FDI needs to go beyond extending a cautionary welcome. It needs to actively bargain for a higher share in Chinese multinationals' portfolios. The bargaining chip here is a robust and resilient domestic ecosystem, which also helps multinationals in managing their international risk exposure.

A country's absorptive capacity can not only facilitate FDI spillovers within a country but also act as a determining factor for FDI inflows in the country. Essential reforms such as on visas can help ease labour shortages in the domestic economy as well as encourage FDI spillovers. Whichever path India chooses going forward, it will need a holistic approach to FDI policies with policy intervention on all fronts of economic development, domestically and internationally.

### Why time is ripe to shun 'One-China policy'

04 August 2024, FirstPost, Maj Gen Ashok Kumar

The passage of the 'Resolve Tibet Act' by the US and the initiation of a large number of other measures from the American side favouring Tibetan struggle are naturally aligned with Indian interests

The recent signing of the 'Resolve Tibet Act' by the US has renewed the focus on Tibet and Tibetan issues concerning China. While the US has extended its support for 'One China Policy' earlier, which literally means recognising all erstwhile countries captured by China that Beijing annexed as part of its expansionist agenda, new contours of this policy are emerging lately.

On one hand, the US is supporting Taiwan being claimed by China as part of one China policy, and at the same time, the US is also supporting Tibet by multiple means. As of now, the public stance taken by the US on Taiwan relates to 'non use of force' by China to occupy Taiwan, but it is OK if the Taiwanese people wish to unify with mainland China of their own free will. In a similar manner, it is advocating the negotiated settlement to resolve the Tibet issue. Though the US has not clearly denounced its 'One China Policy', its actions on Taiwan and Tibet clearly indicate the weaning support for 'One China Policy'. This is therefore prudent to have a look at the evolution of Tibet as a sovereign state. A sovereign state as per international norms needs to have a permanent population, defined territory, a government of its own that is not under another government authority, and the capacity to interact with other states on its own free will. Tibet had all these four ingredients of a sovereign state—population, territory, government, and sovereignty—from as early as the seventh century AD, when the Emperor Songtsen Gampo created the unified state of Tibet.

In fact, China and Nepal married their princess to him due to his powerful stature. Tibet captured part of China, which was followed by the boundary settlement of 783 AD and then later in 821 AD, clearly establishing Tibet as a sovereign state since then.

Even thereafter, while Tibet has been able to maintain cordial relations with almost all neighbours, including Mongol Emperors (1240–1350), Ming Emperors (368–1644), and the Quing Dynasty (639–1911), with a primary focus on the priest-patron relationship wherein Tibetans have been ruling their land independently.

A historic connection to Tibet exists not only in the form of the British India-Tibet relationship but both prior to this and after this as well. It is essential to understand this, as this India-Tibet relationship of equilibrium was comprehensively disrupted by the current Chinese regime, which forcibly occupied Tibetan land in 1950-51 and continues to occupy the same till date. In the process, the tranquil borders between India and Tibet have been converted into a Line of Actual Control (LAC) between India and China. The Quing Dynasty has been one of the most powerful dynasties occupying China. Even though they entered Tibet three times in their regime, but only after being asked for help in 1728 AD, 1752 AD, and 1792 AD in response to the priest-patron relationship. It was for the first time in 1908 AD that Manchus (Quing Dynasty) attacked Tibet to checkmate the increasing British influence. This resulted in the 13th Dalai Lama fleeing from Tibet and taking refuge in India, wherein he stayed in Darjeeling and Kalimpong. He also terminated the priest-patron relationship with the Quing Dynasty, as the patron itself had attacked the state of priest. With the Quing Dynasty collapsing in 1912, the 13th Dalai Lama proclaimed independence on 14 February 1913, which continued till 1950-51 when Tibet was forcibly occupied by the current regime of China.

Therefore, it clearly emerges that Tibet has never been part of China, and the current status indicates the forced occupation of a sovereign state by China. Not only has China occupied Tibet, it is expanding the areas under its occupation on a regular basis, while India has gone all out to support China since it came into being on October 1, 1949. India's signing of the Panchsheel agreement, responding to the slogan to Hindi-Chini bhai-bhai, and many other actions are testimony to this support.

As against this, China not only betrayed India in 1962, capturing large tracts in Indian areas of Aksai Chin and smaller tracts in other border areas. Indians' effort to establish peaceful relations through bilateral agreements and confidence-building measures failed comprehensively when China transgressed at a number of locations on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh in 2020.

The current situation requires a new approach, as it affects India for its own security concerns. In case there is further delay to checkmate the expansionist agenda of China, it will become a serious security challenge in the future.

With the US and West understanding the Chinese design and its agenda, they have already initiated a host of measures to check the unhindered rise of China, which appears to be attempting to dislodge the US from its pole position. The passage of the 'Resolve Tibet Act' by the US and the initiation of a large number of other measures are naturally aligned with Indian interests. India needs to take some or all of the following actions:

- Sign a boundary agreement with the Tibetan Government in Exile aligned to its own claim line.
- Mount diplomatic offensive to get 'Free Tibet Act' passed by the US as a UN resolution.
- Support all governments in exile, like East Turkestan, etc., that have been captured by China going beyond its real extent. Engage with the US and West to take the lead.
- Establish diplomatic relations with Taiwan.
- Raise voices for a unified geographical entity of Tibet to include Tibet Autonomous Region, Amdo, and Kham.
- All communications should mention and use the term India-Tibet border as against India- China Border/LAC.
- Do away with 'One China Policy' unless our claim lines are restored and Pakistan- occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Shaksgam Valley are vacated by Chinese from all kinds of its presence.
- Rename all places with Indian names in claimed areas and with Tibetan names beyond that.
- Publish maps as per the claim lines of India and ensure that all countries having

diplomatic relations adhere to this. It needs to be done deliberately in a targeted manner.

- Don't allow visitors of those regions, which have been captured by China, to travel to India on a Chinese visa.
- Focus on infrastructure growth in border areas.
- Reinforce forces and resources in the border areas.
- Enhance support for vibrant villages in the border areas.

The above are some of the measures, and there could be many more. These have to be pragmatically adopted in the national interest. It has to be realised that by supporting Tibet, in a real sense, India will be ensuring its own national security.

### **Does a deal over 2 fishermen mean Taiwan and mainland China are ready to restart talks?**

04 August 2024, SCMP, Lawrence Chung

A five-month crisis over the deaths of two men near Quemoy has ended but one critical obstacle remains, observers say.

It took five months and more than a dozen rounds of talks but officials from Taiwan and mainland China finally hatched a deal for the return of the remains of two mainland fishermen this week.

The fishermen died in waters near the Taiwan-controlled island of Quemoy – also known as Kinmen – on February 14 after their boat capsized during a pursuit by Taiwanese coastguard boats.

The incident set off a barrage of accusations from both sides of the Taiwan Strait but ended in an agreement that raised hopes for the reopening of a dialogue channel between the two.

But analysts remain cautious, saying neither is willing to compromise on the most critical issue.

Under the agreement reached on Tuesday, Taiwan agreed to compensate the victims' families, apologise, and repatriate the bodies of the two men. Chen Yu-jen, a legislator from the Quemoy constituency and a member of the main opposition party the Kuomintang (KMT), said the settlement marked a good start for mending fences between both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

"This will allow our two sides to accumulate more goodwill, which is advantageous for improving relations," said Chen, who has promoted better communication between the island and the mainland. Her KMT legislative colleague Hsu Yu-chen agreed, saying the incident could pave the way for further dialogue.

"Though the incident created a crisis, its resolution can serve as a stepping stone for re-establishing a cross-strait dialogue channel based on this format," she said, adding: "This would help ease cross-strait tension." Communication was suspended in 2016 when Tsai Ing-wen of the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) was elected the island's leader and declined to recognise the 1992 consensus, an understanding that Beijing sees as the foundation for any talks.

The consensus is a verbal understanding reached by Beijing and the KMT in Hong Kong in 1992, allowing the two sides to continue talks under the premise that there is only one China, but each side can have its own interpretation of what that China stands for.

Tsai's successor, William Lai Ching-te, has also avoided the consensus, much to Beijing's ire. Lai, who was elected in January, was inaugurated on May 20 and declared that Taiwan and the mainland "are not subordinate to each other", a declaration that Beijing branded as proof of his "obstinate separatist" intentions.

In a statement on Wednesday, the DPP welcomed the agreement on the Quemoy incident, saying it "indicates that even with differing cross-strait positions, and regardless of political preconditions or

labels, communication and problem-solving can occur based on equality and mutual respect”.

It said the government “is open to dialogue with the Chinese government without preconditions” and “will manage cross-strait affairs with a rational and pragmatic attitude”.

Analysts noted that both sides had softened their position on the February 14 incident, which would help enable cross-strait communication.

“The incident finally came to an end after both sides stopped stubbornly holding onto their positions and were willing to make concessions,” said Chang Wu-ueh, a professor of mainland China studies at Tamkang University in New Taipei.

“Cross-strait ties have remained tense and confrontational since May 20. The satisfactory resolution of this issue is a good sign as it could pave the way for normal personnel exchanges between the two sides.”

Chang said he thought there could also be a positive outcome in the case of a Taiwanese soldier held by the mainland since March, as well as that of the five crew members of a Taiwanese fishing boat that violated the mainland’s fishing ban by operating in waters near Quanzhou last month.

The soldier was detained after his boat drifted near Quanzhou in foggy weather during a fishing trip with a civilian friend. While the friend was released, the soldier from Quemoy remains in custody, accused of “intentionally” concealing his occupation.

Chen Yu-jen, who also helped communicate with the mainland for the soldier’s release, expressed confidence that Beijing would return the man on August 7.

But analysts said it was highly unlikely that the mainland would accept the latest settlement as a new basis for resuming cross-strait talks and improving relations more broadly.

“It would be too optimistic to assume that the resolution could lead to reopening the long-suspended official talks between the two sides, given their thorny political differences,” said Max Lo, executive director of the Taiwan International Strategic Study Society, a think tank in Taipei.

Like Tsai, Lai “is unlikely to accept the ‘1992 consensus’ and will adhere to his hardline counter-China-and- protect-Taiwan stance”, Lo said, adding that the hardcore pro-independence camp also would not allow him to appear to give ground to Beijing.

Bao Chengke, deputy director of the Institute for East Asian Studies in Shanghai, said the February 14 incident was treated as a humanitarian concern and handled as “a special case, a singular, isolated event”. “I do not believe this is a routine way to solve cross- strait issues. The routine solution should still be based on the 1992 consensus, with the

recognition that both sides belong to one China,” he said.

Bao said the incident had dragged on and a settlement was necessary to address public concerns and help the bereaved families.

Chen Binhua, a spokesman for the mainland’s Taiwan Affairs Office, echoed that position on Wednesday, saying the talks in Quemoy “had nothing to do with cross-strait negotiations.”

“The reason for the suspension of institutionalised cross-strait negotiation mechanisms is well known, and only by returning to the political foundation of the ‘1992 consensus’ can cross-strait negotiations be resumed,” he said.

Taiwan’s Mainland Affairs Council, which charts cross- strait policy, also said the incident was a “singular and isolated accidental event”, whose settlement was achieved through “persistent communication and efforts” by “various sectors of society”.

### China’s, US’ Indo-Pacific strategies

04 August 2024, Taipei Times, Antonio Graceffo

In January, Beijing re-established formal diplomatic relations with Nauru, following the Pacific island nation’s shift in diplomatic recognition from Taiwan. Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平) hosted Nauru’s president in Beijing, welcoming the nation into the Belt and Road Initiative and promising to expand bilateral trade and investment.

Such moves are part of China’s broader strategy to diplomatically isolate Taiwan while expanding its presence and influence across the Indo-Pacific region.

The US and China are locked in a strategic contest of diplomacy, economics and military buildup in this vital area.

The Indo-Pacific region includes South Asia, Southeast Asia, East Asia – which includes China, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan – Oceania and Pacific island nations, as well as the Pacific Rim, which includes the western coastlines of North and South America.

It is home to more than half of the world’s population, including 58 percent of the world’s young people, and accounts for 60 percent of global GDP and two-thirds of global economic growth.

Geographically, it encompasses 65 percent of the world’s oceans and 25 percent of its land.

It is also home to several of the world’s largest and most powerful militaries.

China’s Blue Dragon Strategy seeks to expand its influence across key bodies of water and land in the region, threatening regional security and freedom of navigation.



China has built and militarized artificial islands in the South China Sea, reinforcing territorial claims covering 90 percent of the area.

Taiwan and Sri Lanka are strategic anchors. Controlling Taiwan would give China dominion over the Taiwan Strait, a crucial route for 80 percent of the world's largest container ships. Sri Lanka, which is in the Bay of Bengal, is ideal for naval bases, enhancing China's influence in the Indian Ocean.

The Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy conducts drills off Taiwan and near Sri Lanka, maintaining a dedicated fleet that can include two aircraft carriers. The Blue Dragon Strategy targets Japan's Senkaku Islands — known in Taiwan as the Diaoyutais (釣魚台) — and control of inland areas of rivers such as the Brahmaputra and the Mekong, giving China geopolitical leverage over downstream countries. This strategy heightens territorial disputes with India, particularly in Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh. Projects such as the Belt and Road Initiative and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor dovetail with the Blue Dragon Strategy, leveraging China's strengths to expand its influence.

More US military personnel are stationed in the Indo-Pacific region than anywhere else outside the US. China's aggression, including economic pressure on Australia, border conflicts with India, threats toward Taiwan and intimidation in the East and South China seas, has put the US and China on a collision course. In 2022, the US launched its Indo-Pacific Strategy to counter China. The same year, the Solomon Islands signed a security agreement with China, allowing Chinese naval vessels to dock and replenish at its ports, potentially leading to a Chinese military base in the region. This could extend China's military reach in the South Pacific.

In response, the US increased its engagement with the Solomons and reopened its embassy in Honiara, which had been closed since 1993.

China also tried to convince the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau and the Marshall Islands to break their compacts of free association with the US. However, the US successfully negotiated to keep them aligned. The compacts provide the US with strategic military positioning in the Pacific, while offering financial assistance and other benefits to the other nations.

Two years into its Indo-Pacific policy, the US released an assessment. During this time, the US Department of State increased regional investment, and humanitarian and military aid. The US Navy upholds international maritime law as outlined in the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and the US government publishes detailed studies on maritime claims in the "Limits in the Seas" series. The US and its allies condemned China's repeated harassment of vessels exercising high-seas freedom of navigation

and its refusal to comply with a 2016 arbitral award, which rejected China's expansive claims to the South China Sea under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. The US supports the ruling, recognizing it as final and binding.

Last year, the US cohosted the Indo-Pacific Business Forum with Japan, launched the US-Taiwan Initiative on 21st-Century Trade to boost economic ties and reaffirmed its commitment to helping Taiwan defend itself against a Chinese invasion. Additionally, the US signed defense cooperation agreements with Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, held US-Pacific Islands Summits in 2022 and last year, upgraded its relationship with ASEAN to a comprehensive strategic partnership and recognized the Cook Islands and Niue as sovereign nations, establishing diplomatic relations.

Last month, the US opened an embassy in Port Vila, Vanuatu, and plans to open one in Kiribati this year, where China recently signed an expanded fishing agreement.

The US also opened a new embassy in Nuku'alofa, Tonga, to strengthen diplomatic ties. Other achievements of the Indo-Pacific strategy include successfully hosting last year's APEC Ministerial Meeting in San Francisco and advancing the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework.

The US has also strengthened ties and defense agreements with regional allies. In June 2022, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the UK and the US established the Partners in the Blue Pacific to support Pacific priorities. Through this initiative, the US has facilitated cooperation between Europe and the Pacific, including NATO and the G7. Canada, Germany, and South Korea have joined as partners, and the EU has joined as an observer.

The US and the Philippines established bilateral defense guidelines, reaffirming and strengthening the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty. The US also established trilateral cooperation with Japan and the Philippines in defense and security to maintain a free and open maritime order.

Trilateral military talks were held between the US, Japan and South Korea. Already bound by a mutual defense agreement, the US and Japan are now establishing a military command in Japan to oversee stationed forces and coordinate more closely with regional allies to better counter China.

Cooperation with Quad partners Australia, India and Japan continues, focusing on investment and maritime security. Bilateral relationships with Vietnam and Indonesia have been upgraded to comprehensive strategic partnerships. Additionally, there have been high-level visits and increased cooperation with India, along with greater participation in the Indian Ocean Rim Association.

Overall, the competing Indo-Pacific strategies of China and the US are reshaping the region's geopolitical landscape. China aims to increase its control, while the US focuses on maintaining a free and open region, striving to avoid triggering a conflict with China.

### **Xi's Hong Kong letter a gesture to shore up confidence in the private sector**

03 August 2024, SCMP

The president's reply to a letter from Hong Kong business leaders with Ningbo ancestry also sends a message that the city has always been a top source of investment for the mainland over the past 40 years and remains an important bridge between the nation and the world.

There was more than gratitude expressed when Hong Kong's business leaders with Ningbo ancestry received a rare letter from President Xi Jinping in recognition of their contribution to the country's development. It was also seen as yet another politically symbolic gesture by the Chinese leader to shore up confidence in the private sector amid daunting challenges ahead. The timing and choice of the receiver are arguably more significant than what is in the letter. Xi rarely shows this kind of close personal relations with private businesses.

Xinhua news agency reported that a group of businesspeople with familial ties in the mainland port city of Ningbo had earlier written to the president renewing their commitment to serving the country. Responding in a letter, Xi, who was party secretary of Zhejiang province from 2002 to 2007, acknowledged and thanked the group's support in innovation, entrepreneurship, philanthropy and education.

He added that the building of a strong country and rejuvenating it through modernisation required all Chinese to unite and work together.

This is the second time in a decade that Xi has written to the business sector. Such a move is by no means random.

Beijing has been working hard to rebuild confidence in the private sector, which is critical to China's growth and development. The previous crackdowns were targeting individual players that were damaging the market or breaching rules, not the industry per se or the private sector as a whole.

The letter also sent a message to businesses on the mainland and overseas. Hong Kong has always been a top source of investment for the mainland over the past 40 years and remains an important bridge between the nation and the world.

Foreign investors, who admire Hongkongers' business acumen, also take trends and movements in the city as the cue to follow. Restoring confidence among local businesses is therefore also an

important step to shore up overseas confidence in China.

The first generation of Hong Kong patriotic tycoons was keen to contribute to China's development rather than seeking profits. Such selflessness and love for the nation was deeply appreciated and has continued, with many standing ready to do their duty should the need arise.

Unlike the early years when foreign capital was in need, the emphasis today is more on the fact that China remains open to the outside world. Xi's reply coincides with the 40th anniversary of late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping's 1984 call to mobilise the "Ningbo group" to build the home city.

The letter shows Xi's appreciation of Deng's legacy and clear determination to continue the reforms.

### **As China, India ramp up naval rivalry, is the Indian Ocean at a maritime crossroads?**

03 August 2024, SCMP, Biman Mukerji and Amy Sood

China's ports and ship deployments in India's backyard raise concerns of control and influence in Indian Ocean as next possible flashpoint.

Dangerous squabbles in remote Himalayan borderlands between China and India may, at least for now, have been soothed by a recent meeting between the two nations' top diplomats.

But the Indian Ocean looms as the next potential flashpoint, security analysts say, as New Delhi flashes increasingly anxious eyes at Beijing's ports and ship deployments across a vast expanse of water in India's backyard – but crucial to China's supply of oil.

In July, on the sidelines of an Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) meeting in Laos, S.

Jaishankar and Wang Yi, the respective foreign ministers of India and China, agreed to thrash out differences that have resulted in mobilisation of troops along their shared Himalayan border.

The diplomats agreed "to work with purpose and urgency to achieve complete disengagement at the earliest", according to a statement by India's Ministry of External Affairs.

The meeting – which followed a visit by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Russia – left hints that their common friend Moscow may have played a role in nudging the two Asian giants towards calming tensions along a border, which flared into war in 1962 and have since seen sometimes deadly skirmishes between rival militaries, the worst in 2020 leaving 20 Indian and four Chinese troops dead.

Russia probably "urged both countries to put aside [their] differences", said Christopher Blackburn, a British political and security analyst. "It looks like they have listened."

With the mountain border spat simmering down, analysts say control and influence in the Indian Ocean presents a new and formidable challenge.

China, which relies on free passage of the ocean for 80 per cent of its crude oil imports, has steadily accumulated strategic ports and related infrastructure in a zone which stretches from the Arabian Sea to the Strait of Malacca, sharply aware of its vulnerability to blockades in vast, open waters in the event of a major conflict.

Yet its investment has raised alarm bells in Delhi which views the Indian Ocean as its home turf yet is playing catch up with its own investments.

"The sea route from the Middle East to the coastal cities of China is running through the Malacca Strait, which is a location that the US and India can blockade," said Satoru Nagao, a non-resident fellow at the Hudson Institute focusing on US-Japan-India security cooperation.

The scenario is dubbed by analysts as the "Malacca Dilemma", in which naval forces of rival powers such as the United States or India could disrupt Beijing's vital supply route.

The Indian Ocean region has thus far been relatively unscathed by the disruptions roiling global shipping routes thanks to the Israel-Gaza and Russia-Ukraine wars.

Indian policymakers are looking to China's frequent run-ins with Southeast Asian neighbours in the South China Sea as a guide to how China's strategic imprints can over time become painful pinch points between nations.

From port projects in Sri Lanka and Sudan, Kenya and Pakistan, China has built a network of assets referred to as a "string of pearls" that is perceived by Delhi and others to have encircled India.

Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative – which has enrolled Bangladesh, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka – has further fuelled concerns in India, which lags behind in economic might, diplomatic currency with fractious neighbours, as well as in the capacity to deliver its own state-backed mega-projects, including ports in the remote Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Sittwe in Myanmar.

Wider competition is setting the tone of relations between the world's two most populous nations.

While the Indian economy is largely pegged to the service sector, Modi's government has been vying for a slice of China's global manufacturing pie by doling out incentives and slashing India's notorious red tape to access a large, cheap labour pool.

Meanwhile, Modi and China's leader Xi Jinping have rarely met face to face since the Himalayan stand-off. "Relations with China are not doing very well," said Jaishankar, referring to the still unresolved border issues between the two countries, at a news

conference in Tokyo on the sidelines of a Quad meeting this week.

"For India the primary question in the Indian Ocean region is security," said Aditya Gowdara Shivamurthy, associate fellow with the Delhi-based Observer Research Foundation. "For China, it is crucial to win in the Indian Ocean because it cements its position as the Asian power."

'Suspect behaviour'

At the same time as financing and building ports, China's naval presence is growing. The presence of its ships in the Indian Ocean has stirred suspicion from Delhi that so-called "research vessels" deployed by Beijing are in fact spy ships.

Earlier this year, two Chinese research vessels were spotted near India's coast. In March, one was spotted near the Bay of Bengal region, which followed the docking of another vessel at a Maldivian Port.

Beijing says its vessels are simply carrying out ocean-bed surveys for scientific reasons. But Indian officials allege such vessels have a habit of "going dark" or turning off the vessels' automatic identification system transponders.

Shivamurthy says these ships are believed to be manned by the People's Liberation Army "and we don't know much about their use".

A January report by the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies alleged that 80 per cent of Chinese civilian research vessels had "demonstrated suspect behaviour or possess organisational links", suggesting that their work was connected to military objectives.

Suspensions intensified last October when Beijing docked a vessel – Shi Yan 6 – at Sri Lanka's main port of Colombo.

It was virtually a replay of another Chinese research vessel, Yuan Wang 5, which docked at Hambantota Port in August 2022. The port is under a 99-year lease to the Chinese-state owned company that built it after Colombo failed to service a US\$1.4 billion loan to pay for the project.

"India protested but could not succeed in getting the Yuan Wang 5 out of Hambantota," said Srikanth Kondapalli, the dean of the School of International Studies and a professor of China studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in India.

"This incident indicated that China has more rights and say on Hambantota than the Sri Lankans themselves," he added, noting that there was an opportunity for Beijing to move "military-related assets" to such ports in the future.

In January, Sri Lanka declared a moratorium on foreign research ships entering its waters for a year, in a move observers say was linked to pressure from Delhi.

But last month Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Ali Sabry told Japanese state media NHK that it would resume permitting calls from foreign research vessels at its ports from next year as the government "cannot only block China".

Japan – along with India and France – is a co-chair of Sri Lanka's Official Creditors' Committee that in June firmed up a debt treatment deal with Sri Lanka. China's expanding activities in the Indian Ocean region are viewed as a "big threat" by India, according to Nagao from the Hudson Institute.

No base for conflict

Despite China's accumulation of infrastructure assets in the Indian Ocean region, analysts say most are for commercial and not military purposes. Moreover, without a naval base, Chinese vessels will be dangerously exposed in the event of a violent flashpoint.

"The Chinese navy and the Indian navy can never be in a situation of confrontation unless China has a base in the Indian Ocean," Shivamurthy said. "China might have economic and military leverage but India has geopolitical leverage."

The Pentagon's 2023 China Military Power Report published in October says China's navy has about 370 warships, which is expected to grow to 435 ships by 2030.

The US fleet is smaller, with about 280 vessels and expected to reach only 300 in the early 2030s. In comparison, India possesses around 130 warships that is expected to grow to 160 by 2030.

"India has the advantage of geography because China is a far-off country," said Manoj Joshi, a security expert at the Observer Research Foundation, adding without naval bases in the Indian Ocean any ambitions by China will be limited.

"But China sees itself as competing with the US rather than India."

India could easily defend itself even with a smaller naval fleet size, he said, adding that the chances of a conflict was likely to arise only if Delhi decided to take a strong stance against Beijing in the event of a future conflict, such as siding with Taiwan.

Beijing sees the island as part of China and has never ruled out the use of force to take it back. Most countries, including the US, do not see Taiwan as an independent state, but are opposed to a change of status quo by force.

In the event of a full-scale war over Taiwan, Chinese oil tankers traversing the Indian Ocean could be sunk or captured, draining their capacity to engage in a sustained conflict, analysts say.

The Pentagon report listed 11 potential Chinese bases in the Indian Ocean, including in Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Tanzania. These locations align with Beijing's diplomatic and commercial initiatives under

its belt and road programme but have not materialised into military assets.

The report noted that China has "little power projection capability" in the Indian Ocean.

Experts also note that China does not have "tactical air support" for any naval deployments into the Indian Ocean.

"The Chinese may bring the aircraft carriers into the Indian Ocean, but they are sitting ducks," shyam said. Meanwhile, Nagao argues that the Indian navy alone will not be able to deal with China.

"However, China is alone, and India is not ... the number of political partners has been a decisive factor in geopolitical struggles," he added.

Delhi and friends

As Delhi is spooked by China's growing footprint, India may need to tug harder on its partnerships with other countries including co-members of the "Quad" group – the US, Japan and Australia.

"The challenge is bound to get more pronounced," said Harsh Pant, a professor of international relations at King's College London, noting the risk of further Chinese expansion especially if the US-China rivalry again comes to boiling point in coming months.

Donald Trump, the front runner in the US presidential election, adopted a hardline stance towards China in his previous term, lumping blanket tariffs on Chinese goods and talking tough on their rivalry. President Joe Biden has extended the trade war, determined to tuck back in the rise of Chinese tech.

"If US-China rivalry escalates, China is going to push for these [port] projects across the world. India will also have to recalibrate its responses accordingly," Pant said.

Delhi's option to stave off any metastasising presence in its neighbourhood will be to leverage its partnerships with the European Union, Japan and the US and build more strategic assets across nations craving investment but lacking in cash.

"China has more money but we [India] bring different capabilities. We bring partners like the EU, US and

Japan," Pant said, adding that it was vital for India to build outposts.

In October, India will hold naval exercises in the Bay of Bengal region with its Quad group members, manoeuvres which cannot fail to catch Beijing's attention.

At the same time, to avoid onerous state spending and the risk of bungled delivery, the South Asian country may also support private enterprises to build new infrastructure in countries with major needs from Sri Lanka and Bangladesh to the Maldives.

Last December, India's Adani group, controlled by one of Asia's richest people Gautam Adani, launched a project to develop the Colombo West International Terminal project in Sri Lanka's capital,

backed by more than US\$500 million in funding from a US government agency.

From energy generation to telecommunications, a slew of other private firms are eyeing projects across the region, industry officials say, a potential to outbox Chinese investment in a crucial region.

Last year, Adani's companies faced a major stock rout following accusations from short-seller Hindenburg Research, which alleged widespread fraud and stock market manipulation by the conglomerate. But the group has bounced back on infrastructure bets, with shares of Adani ports jumping to record highs in June. There have also been reports the billionaire shares close ties to Modi, implying his business plans align with Modi's economic growth strategy for India.

China too has marked its presence with projects such as the China-Maldives Friendship Bridge in the Maldives, the first cross-sea bridge built on the Indian Ocean.

Ties between India and the Maldives came under strain after President Mohamed Muizzu was elected on an anti-India campaign late last year. But since then the island country has sought to mend fences with rounds of diplomatic visits and invites by Indian policymakers.

"China's economic footprint will continue to expand in the global South and Central Asia as the US and perhaps Europe become increasingly hostile," said Einar Tangen, a senior fellow at the Taihe Institute think tank in Beijing.

Now there are guide ropes for de-escalation in the Himalayas, experts say China, the world's second-ranked economy, may next have to take the lead in defusing tensions or suspicions over its plans in the Indian Ocean region.

"If China can show a willingness to engage with its neighbours and lower its aggression and expansive policies, then ... I don't see a potential conflict in the Indian Ocean. But the onus is on China to stop being so aggressive," Blackburn said.

"Can it deliver on its promises to India? We shall see."

### **What Does China's Plenum Mean For The West?**

03 August 2024, Forbes, Mike O'Sullivan

If I uttered the word plenum, you might think I was a surgeon or arcane barrister, and not a casual observer of Chinese politics. The 'Plenum' is held seven times during the five yearly policy making cycle that aims to set the long-term direction of the development of China by the Communist Party.

Amidst the generalised chaos of Western politics in recent weeks, China held its most recent plenum (July 15-19), and this was the third plenum of this policy

cycle, which typically focuses on economic policy.

Though the outcome appeared to have been something of a damp squib, it is worth reflecting on. To many international observers (note that China is becoming much less transparent in its policy process and in the availability of detailed macro data), there are three recurring threads.

The first is to 'make China more like Denmark' (my words not the CCP's), in other words to deepen its social welfare net and to limit inequalities. This has long been a goal of the CCP. In 2018, in the last chapter of the Levelling we wrote that 'Another approach is to develop social infrastructure that encompasses many of the elements of intangible infrastructure, such as health-care spending, education, pension plans, and broader financial services. ....Motivation for building social infrastructure in China may come from stress points uncovered during China's next recession. As such, it would be a logical chapter in China's path to development, and not at all unlike Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. The New Deal was a watershed in the United States in many respects, one of which was that it marked the full evolution of the United States from an emerging to a developed nation.

The building out of a social infrastructure in China remains a significant project, as does the flattening out of Chinese society. Granted that I wrote the above paragraph in 2017/18, it is striking that a number of basic reforms are still missing – there is very little reform of the hukou system (household registration system that allows internal migrants to work in cities) and children of migrant workers to cities do not receive the same social benefits and education as children of city parents do. In addition, little accommodation has been made for the fact that the ageing of the population will strain the social safety network. In that regard China looks a little like France! So, like the US under Roosevelt, the creation of a formal 'new deal' type social infrastructure, if it happens, could be a (positive) turning point for China. The second challenge is to make China more like Silicon Valley. The plenum underlined the importance of maintaining a laser-like focus on 'high quality development', which translates as the need to make China the leader in new, strategic technologies. In this respect it is conceptually like the EU's idea of strategic autonomy, but far far more serious in implementation. In addition, the wording of the plenum drafts references 'fierce international competition', which ultimately points to intense competition with European car manufacturers, and in the telecoms and AI sectors. In recent years the number of directives from the CCP on topics that fall under the 'Strategic Innovation' umbrella, has multiplied and state aid for sectors like AI and



semiconductors is now burgeoning into the trillions of dollars.

The third element that bears flagging is the ongoing focus on 'reform', and to my limited experience there is a 'lost in translation' element where quite harsh Chinese policies end up being translated as positive, innocuous Western ones. As an example, I recall in the 2010's a very senior Chinese trade diplomat explaining that 'rule of law' did not equate to a Western sense of adherence to established laws, but rather the imposition of the rule of the CCP on business, politics and society. In that context, the idea of 'reform' means the fitting of Chinese society to the will of CCP, and specifically Xi Jinping 'thought'.

My interpretation of all of this is that Xi is shaping China in the form of a more closed state (which again to the tone of my recent note on globalization, makes for a less open world), that curbs the will of those inside, adopts a singularly selfish approach to those outside, and relies on several great strides in technological industrialisation for the prolongation of the 'China Dream'.

The contradiction here, and specifically between the three strands to emerge from the plenum, is that in its policy making (social infrastructure) and economy (high quality development) China needs innovation but is creating a socio-political system that smothers it. This is the fallacy of authoritarian systems.

In this respect, the third plenum missed a trick in not outlining a Keynesian style stimulus for the economy (or even longer-run structural one). The property market is slowing, entrepreneurs are very cautious and the risks associated with local government debt are rising.

I am beginning to wonder if, in the carefully choreography world of Chinese policy making, they need to plan for an 'emergency plenum'.

### **Taiwan is readying citizens for a Chinese invasion. It's not going well.**

03 August 2024, The Washington Post, Christian Shephard and Vic Chiang

The government extended mandatory military service and revamped reservist training in an effort to make Beijing think twice. But it's already falling short.

In the imagined blockade of "Zero Day," a Taiwanese television drama that will be released next year but is already causing a stir, the Chinese military has encircled Taiwan, cutting it off from the world and plunging the island democracy of 23 million into crisis. In a 17-minute trailer released last week, the public responds to China's blockade with a mixture of terror and resignation. Young couples ride bikes past tank convoys on empty streets. Criminal gangs stir up chaos on behalf of Beijing and its territorial claims over Taiwan.

Taiwanese shouldn't fight and couldn't win anyway, an influencer tells her followers in the series. "Those who want us to enter the battlefield — they really don't care about our suffering," she says.

It may be fiction, but the show's bleak assessment of Taiwanese readiness to fight touches upon a very real problem facing President Lai Ching-te, who took office in May and whom Beijing considers a dangerous separatist.

The threat from Beijing has intensified as Chinese leader Xi Jinping has declared China's "reunification" with Taiwan inevitable. He has underscored his willingness to use force to achieve that goal by sending rising numbers of warplanes and navy ships to probe the island's defenses.

Taiwan's government has been trying to improve its defenses by extending mandatory military service and revamping ongoing training for reservists as part of a broader shift in defense strategy designed to make Xi think twice before taking a gamble on using force.

But young Taiwanese are not answering the call, and Defense Minister Wellington Koo recently acknowledged that a lack of equipment and instructors has slowed attempts to professionalize reservist training. "I must honestly say that we need to quickly strengthen [training] as there is still a lot of room for improvement," he told the legislature in June.

Such admissions may concern Donald Trump, who has signaled a more transactional approach to American support for Taiwanese defense if he wins a second term as president in November.

Taipei wants to create a professional backup force to support 155,000 active-duty soldiers. All Taiwanese men born in or after 2005 are required to enlist for a year of service, while about 2 million former soldiers are supposed to complete refresher training every two years.

But officials have acknowledged being behind schedule with plans to teach reservists and draftees how to supplement front-line troops in the event of a war. Only 6 percent of eligible conscripts — 6,936 people — took part in the newly implemented 12-month program this year. Most deferred military service to first attend university, meaning the 2005-born intake cohort won't be fully trained until 2027. Those doing military service this year are not undergoing the anticipated training. A select group of one-year conscripts were supposed to be learning to use drones, Kestrel antitank rockets and surface-to-air Stinger missiles, but there were not enough of them this year to begin the training, according to a Defense Ministry officer.

Taiwan's slow progress on boosting training concerns military experts in Washington and Taipei, who are

urging authorities to move faster to deter Xi and prevent a war.

"The last thing that Taiwan wants is for Xi Jinping, as the key decision-maker in China, and for the United States, as the key ally of Taiwan, to doubt Taiwan's commitments to its own defense," said Matt Pottinger, who was U.S. deputy national security adviser in the Trump administration and is now a visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution.

Pottinger said Taiwan needs the political will and foresight to dedicate some of its best military officers to recruitment and instruction. "I'm really hoping that Taiwan makes these sacrifices," he said.

China's military, the largest standing army in the world, has 2 million active personnel and recruits about 400,000 conscripts every year. Its defense budget of

\$230 billion was 13 times as large as Taiwan's in 2023, and its military regularly trains to take the island in a sudden overwhelming assault.

The United States is required by law to help Taiwan strengthen its own defenses, including through arms sales, but it isn't formally committed to intervening against a Chinese attack, a policy known as "strategic ambiguity."

While President Biden has repeatedly said he would send the U.S. military to defend Taiwan, Trump has made no such promises. Asked what he would do in an interview last month, Trump said that Taiwan was "9,500 miles away" and should pay for American defense.

Taiwan must be "mentally prepared" for a Trump victory in November — and the scrutiny that will come

with that, said Mei Fu-hsing, director of the Taiwan Security Analysis Center, a New York-based research center.

Trump would "certainly demand Taiwan to significantly increase its own defense spending and be more proactive in preparing for war," Mei said.

Improved training is a key way for Taiwan to show it is taking military readiness seriously, analysts say. But new programs have continued to face shortages of funding, instructors and equipment, leading to regular complaints from attendees about the quality of instruction, according to reservists as well as official statements acknowledging setbacks.

"It was a complete waste of time," said Vincent Tsao, a 30-year-old scuba diving instructor who spent most of his five days of reservist training last week sitting idly inside, being taught by retired soldiers who openly acknowledged they weren't prepared to lead the program.

Taiwanese men who completed mandatory service within the past 12 years are theoretically called back for refresher training every second year, although in practice many attend far less frequently. Only a fifth

of the reservists who went through refresher training last year completed the newly extended two-week course, with the majority doing only five or seven days.

Preparing 2 million reservists for "immediate combat readiness" as a second line of defense is "very important for defending Taiwan," said Han Gang-ming, former director of Taiwan's All-out Defense Mobilization Office, which oversees reservists.

"Since the reserve force is not the primary combat unit, we are always placed last whenever budgets are allocated," Han said.

Fighting a 'defeatist' attitude

Since taking office in May, Lai has vowed to press ahead with his predecessor's reforms that will improve readiness and has warned the military to guard against a "defeatist" attitude, telling troops they cannot presume "the first battle will be the last battle" if China attacks.

But the new administration has not announced major changes to training beyond scrapping ceremonial bayonet and goose-stepping drills.

Lai also faces fierce pushback from the Beijing-friendly Kuomintang, which controls the legislature and has accused the ruling Democratic Progressive Party of trying to turn Taiwan into a "powder keg."

China, which wants to undermine Lai, has claimed that he wants to turn ordinary people into "cannon fodder." But analysts say Taiwan must prepare for the new realities of an increasingly aggressive China. Taiwan's military strategy has long focused on stopping China before its troops cross the 110-mile strait that separates them, but a growing number of defense analysts in Taipei and Washington say Taiwan must prepare for the worst possible scenario: a protracted battle on the island itself.

"Taiwan's reservists are going to be mobilizing where the fight is happening, when the fight is happening," said Michael Hunzeker, a retired Marine who studies military reform at George Mason University.

The island is patently not ready for that, according to people who have completed military training recently. Cony Hsieh, 31, who previously enlisted and served as a soldier for six years, signed up for reservist training as soon as women were allowed to join last year. She returned for a second round in May.

While there were minor improvements, the military was moving too slowly to gain public trust and make training more than a formality, she said. "I don't even know what I'm supposed to do in my position if a war breaks out," Hsieh, who is now working on a master's degree, said in an interview.

Rising public concern about a conflict has left many in Taiwan asking themselves what they would do in a

“Zero Day” scenario and how far they should allow China’s invasion threat to infringe on daily life.

Surveys show a majority of Taiwanese support the decision to lengthen mandatory service, but that doesn’t mean they think training is a good use of time or public funds.

“Everyone has their own lives and families. My wife would have to work and take care of the child by herself when I was away,” said Hsieh Yu-hsiang, a 30-year-old salesman at an insurance company who attended 14 days of training in early July.

Even so, he supports government plans to strengthen reservist training. “As the threat increases,” Hsieh said, “it’s inevitable that we need measures in place to respond.”

### **China needs to pick a side, and it just might pick the west**

02 August 2024, The Conversation

For the Kremlin, its “partner of no limits”, China, isn’t doing enough to aid Russia’s war against Ukraine. So, Russia has signed a peace treaty with North Korea, hoping to pressure China into backing Moscow’s war effort further.

Meanwhile, the west sees China as far too helpful to Russia. The sentiment in the west was best captured on July 10, 2024, during a summit in Washington DC. Heads of state and government of Nato countries jointly proclaimed that China is a “decisive enabler” of Russia’s war against Ukraine, and also called on China “to cease all material and political support to Russia’s war effort”.

To the west, China’s aid, though short of actual weapons supply, is more than enough to fuel Russia’s war machine. This in turn poses a security threat to Europe.

But Nato’s message and Russia’s implicit code to China seem to indicate one thing: Beijing’s fence sitting days are numbered, and it needs to choose a side. Unfortunately for Russia, China may be forced to pick the west.

Signs that China is already pivoting to the west have started to appear. Speculation was rife in late 2023 that China’s panda diplomacy (where it gifts the lease of the bears to foreign zoos) was on the way out amid worsening ties with the west.

But in mid-2024, Beijing sent more pandas to Spain and Vienna, as well as the US tech centre of California. President Xi Jinping also went on state visits to the US, Europe, Australia and New Zealand to mend ties with the west.

Beijing’s Russian headache

China knows that the war has had catastrophic consequences for both Russia and Ukraine. Estimates indicate that Putin’s conflict in Ukraine could cost Russia US\$1.3 trillion (£1.0 trillion) and at least

315,000 in troop casualties. So, win or lose, the post-war damage to Russia would be immense.

This is bad news for China. Not only will it have a weakened ally, but the west could then have a free hand to consolidate its resources in dealing with the “Chinese threat”. This concern isn’t unfounded. After all, a substantial portion of Americans view China as the greatest enemy of the US, and China is sometimes characterised as a member of an “axis of evil” alongside Russia, Iran and North Korea.

So, the Chinese government needs to hedge itself against becoming the “target of all arrows” (众矢之的), as the famous Chinese saying goes, resulting from

Russia losing the war in Ukraine. Reviving panda diplomacy and sending China’s leaders on state visits then become tools to mend ties with the west, and serve as insurance policies.

But Nato’s criticism of China in July 2024, which echoes a similar statement by US secretary of state Anthony Blinken in late April 2024, suggest that these soft power initiatives are insufficient to appease the west.

China needs to press Russia to sue for peace with Ukraine. With this, Russia gets to preserve its national strength, while China could concentrate efforts on being the world leader in AI, and healing its ailing economy.

Economic performance

For months, China has been reeling from a real estate crisis, a volatile stock market, a massive 288% debt-to-GDP ratio, as well as high youth unemployment. And recently, Chinese government bond prices soared from increasing demand, suggesting that investors are seeking safer investment alternatives as confidence in the Chinese economy remains low.

But a battered economy isn’t the only problem the Chinese government faces. It has traditionally employed economic performance to legitimise its rule. So given the poor economic climate, Beijing needs to jump-start its ailing economy to maintain power.

However, there is one major flaw with Beijing’s economic growth strategy: it centres around exports, which relies heavily on western demand. While China has increased its exports to various regions across the world, almost 30% of its exports in 2023 were meant for the US and the EU.

As it stands, cracks are surfacing in Beijing’s export plans. In May 2024, the US raised tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles (EV) to 100%. The European Union followed suit by raising its own Chinese electric vehicle tariff from 17.4% to 37.6%, which comes on top of an existing 10% duty imposed on all Chinese electric vehicles coming into Europe.

But things may get worse for China's economy depending on what it does with Russia. A day after Nato's proclamation, US president Joe Biden announced that China's continuous support of Russia will bear dire economic consequences for the Asian superpower. He added that "some of our European friends are going to be curtailing their investment in China", alluding to what China might face if its support for Russia continues.

For its own sake, China is hoping that the war ends with a peace settlement that favours Russia. Failing this, China's sense of self-preservation will put its partnership of no limits with the Kremlin to the test. After all, as the quote widely attributed to the 19th century British prime minister Lord Palmerston goes, "There are no permanent enemies, and no permanent friends, only permanent interests."

### **In Xi's China, Politics Eventually Catches Up With Everyone**

02 August 2024, The New York Times, Li Yuan

In 1996, when Peter Hessler taught at a small college in Sichuan Province, 90 percent of his students came from villages. Mr. Hessler, 5 feet 9 inches, towered over them by about half a head. They often had just one outfit to wear: a blue suit jacket, or maybe a knockoff Chicago Bulls jersey. One student told him decades later that he could afford only one meal a day. Mr. Hessler returned to China in 2019 to teach at Sichuan University-Pittsburgh Institute. This time, all his nonfiction writing students came from cities, and some of the women in his class were even taller than him. A couple of students wore retro Air Jordans that cost hundreds of dollars.

The changes he observed reflected how, in a generation, China had transformed. The country's population flipped from 70 percent villagers to two-thirds city dwellers. Economic output per person rose twentyfold, according to the World Bank. A 2020 study in *The Lancet*, a medical journal, reported that, out of 200 countries, boys in China had the largest increase in height from 1985 to 2019, while Chinese girls had the third largest.

But the political system that defined society had not changed one bit, Mr. Hessler writes in his new book, "Other Rivers: A Chinese Education."

"I still taught next door to the College of Marxism, and the university still hosted old-school Communist rallies," he writes. "How could a country experience so much social, economic and educational change, while the politics remained stagnant or even regressive?" That question also puzzles many Chinese people, foreign policymakers, academics and journalists, including me.

In "Other Rivers," Mr. Hessler calls his students from the mid-1990s the "reform generation." They

believed in competition and were largely rewarded for their hard work. He calls his students from the 2020s the "Xi generation," after Xi Jinping, the leader who has tightened the leash on all areas of Chinese society. They are willing to work hard, just like the students before them, but have few illusions about the system or their own future.

The Xi generation is risk-averse. Its members are more unhappy about their government, but are unwilling to resist. Mr. Hessler assigned "Animal Farm," by George Orwell, to his students. The two characters they most identified with were the donkey, who is skeptical of the new farm but keeps his thoughts to himself, and the horse, who is hardworking but blindly loyal.

In "Other Rivers," Mr. Hessler doesn't provide a resounding answer to his question. But he believes that now, more than any other time in his nearly three decades writing about China, something fundamental about the country's political system must change. Young people are increasingly dissatisfied, he said, but they are not ready to try to initiate a change. They know the price people pay for defying the system, and the payoff for going along — even as the payoffs are becoming harder to come by.

In addition to two teaching stints in Sichuan, in southwest China, Mr. Hessler worked as the Beijing correspondent for *The New Yorker* in the 2000s. He has written five books about China, three of which have been translated into Chinese. "Other Rivers" has little prospect of being published in China because of its criticism of the government, and Mr. Hessler said his previous books would not be published in China now.

Nevertheless, "Other Rivers" is one of the most anticipated new books in the country.

Mr. Hessler, practically a celebrity in China, is known for his perceptive observations and empathetic portrayal of ordinary people, whom he describes as diligent, tough, pragmatic and, for the most part, apolitical. "Compassion" is a word Chinese readers use to talk about his work. His writing "transcends the binary of yes or no, like or dislike," a well-known Chinese writer commented on his debut book, "River Town." That book, published in 2001, recounted his experience teaching English in small-town China as a Peace Corps volunteer.

But in an increasingly polarized world, Mr. Hessler and his writing face more criticism inside and outside China. He is labeled both pro-China and anti-China, for being too political and for dancing around politics.

Some nationalistic Chinese, known as "little pinks," said he was reflexively critical in an article he wrote for *The New Yorker* about the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020. When he published another report five months later, about China's effective control of the outbreak, some fellow Western journalists and China

specialists branded him an apologist for the Chinese government.

Mr. Hessler and his family moved back to the United States in 2021 after his teaching contract was not renewed. He didn't experience the brutal "zero Covid" restrictions that the Chinese government imposed in 2022: frequent testing, lockdowns, quarantines, food shortages and denial of medical treatment.

In an article on the website ChinaFile late last month, he responded to criticism, writing that he was unfairly judged, especially by other China experts who had left the country. After many American journalists were expelled in March 2020, he became part of a smaller press corps. He felt that he was still in the game, he told me in an interview on my podcast last month, "while the rest of the former players became sports commentators, nit-picking."

Some of Mr. Hessler's Chinese critics said his meticulous descriptions of average citizens in "River Town" and other early works faithfully reflected the pulse of that time, when China was more open and people were trying to adapt to fast-paced changes. But in the Xi era, they said, they wished he would address politics more directly. In China today, politics has caught up with nearly everyone.

That's not how Mr. Hessler sees his role. Trained as a fiction writer, he told me, he was more interested in the people and places than in the issues. "The politics is part of it," he said. "But I almost never start with an issue."

I wondered if his approach in "Other Rivers" might have been different if he had stayed in China until the winter of 2022. Protesters came out in Chinese cities, including in Chengdu, where he had lived, to demand that the government stop its "zero Covid" policy. Some angry demonstrators called for Mr. Xi to step down.

In "Other Rivers," Mr. Hessler writes that his young students, whom he kept up with through email and surveys, were angry about the lockdowns, which they often described as having fundamentally altered their perspectives.

A young man wrote to him from Europe: "Most significantly, it has changed my opinions about 'revolt' and 'demonstration.' I think Chinese should more often seek their rights through demonstrations, even though demonstrations in China have been equated with 'revolt.'"

Most of his younger former students were focused on personal concerns like job opportunities, not politics or climate change, Mr. Hessler reports in "Other Rivers."

"You often hear that a lot of people say: 'We don't need to have democracy. We just need to have a little more space and not so much pressure.' But maybe it doesn't work like that," he told me. "Once

you break that and you don't know what's coming next, or when it's going to come, then you're going to create instability."

### The Jaishankar-Wang Meeting and the Future of China-India Ties

01 August 2024, The Diplomat, Ali Yawar M.

Even if New Delhi and Beijing decide to collaborate on the economic front, it might not be enough to shift the needle on their relationship.

On July 25, in Vientiane, Laos, Indian External Affairs Minister Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar met his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on the sidelines of ASEAN-related meetings. This was the second such meeting in the last month; they met earlier in Astana on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Heads of State summit. The meetings have brought the spotlight back onto the strained relationship between India and China.

In a post on the social media platform X after the Vientiane meeting, Jaishankar said:

The state of the border will necessarily be reflected on the state of our ties. Agreed on the need to give strong guidance to complete the disengagement process. Must ensure full respect for the LAC and past agreements. It is in our mutual interest to stabilize our ties. We should approach the immediate issues with a sense of purpose and urgency.

Meanwhile, Wang Yi reiterated that it is in "the interests of both sides to get China-India relations back on track."

Although many see this as little more than a routine interaction, which can only lead to marginal progress, if any, this meeting comes at a time when both nations are dealing with complex domestic and international pressures that necessitate a re-evaluation of their bilateral ties.

Although such diplomatic interactions between the two countries have become more frequent, the India-China relationship in the recent past has been characterized by a fragile balance between cooperation and competition. The border disputes between the two Asian giants, particularly in the Ladakh region, have been a persistent thorn in the side of bilateral relations. Despite multiple rounds of talks and agreements aimed at maintaining peace and tranquility along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), skirmishes and standoffs have continued to occur, the most significant flashpoint being the Galwan Valley clash in June 2020.

In this climate of mutual distrust, it is difficult to be optimistic about the China-India relationship. However, despite the geopolitical tensions, economic realities present a compelling case for cooperation. Both countries are slowly coming to terms with the fact that cooperation is the only way forward.



India is finding that it has little choice but to allow Chinese investment in its manufacturing sector. India's "Make in India" effort, which aims to transform India into a global manufacturing hub, has failed to pick up the desired steam despite multiple high-profile projects. While India doesn't lack the potential to realize such an ambition, aggregate performance indicators have not been very encouraging. Early reports indicate that "Make in India" has been off to a slow start. The share of manufacturing in the gross value added (GVA) by the economy, for example, showed no improvement after the launch of the Make in India initiative. FDI figures tell a similar tale. A goal this ambitious requires significant capital, technology, and expertise, areas where China excels. Moreover, Chinese investments in sectors such as telecommunications, infrastructure, and consumer goods have played an important role in India's economic growth over the years. Despite restrictions on Chinese businesses, India's imports from China exceeded \$100 billion last year.

All is not well in Beijing either. China is finding it increasingly difficult to operate in Western markets. The China-U.S. trade war, coupled with growing protectionist policies in Europe, has limited China's access to its traditional export markets. Additionally, China's own economic transition toward higher-value manufacturing and the rise in labor costs have made cheap manufacturing increasingly unviable. China seeks new markets and investment opportunities, and India can be an attractive partner.

Thus, the economic alignment between India and China suggests a pragmatic basis for engagement. The statements by both the ministers reveal an understanding of these mutual interests. Both sides have held multiple rounds of talks to de-escalate tensions and establish protocols to prevent future conflicts. There has been little progress, but the recent disengagement in certain friction points along the LAC is a positive development. However, this process has been slow and punctuated by setbacks. Trust remains a significant issue, exacerbated by the Galwan Valley clash.

China's incremental territorial advances, often referred to as "salami slicing," are a source of constant concern for India. These tactics involve small, non-confrontational moves to incrementally change the status quo along the border. For India, these moves are not just about territorial encroachment but also about the strategic signaling of China's intentions. In response, India has been enhancing its border infrastructure, increasing its military presence, and forging strategic partnerships with other nations to counterbalance China's influence.

While Jaishankar's emphasis on the importance of three mutuals – "mutual respect, mutual interests,

and mutual sensitivity" – during this meeting indicates India's expectations from China, it's clear that India's strategic positioning extends far beyond its immediate neighborhood. The presence of Indian National Security Advisor Ajit Doval at Nguyen Phu Trong's funeral in Vietnam alongside representatives from China, South Korea, and Japan, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's planned visit to Ukraine, underscore India's intent to engage with a broad spectrum of global players. By fostering such diverse relationships, India aims to enhance its geopolitical leverage, including with China.

Thus, India's approach to China can be seen as an indicator of a broader strategy to assert its influence in global affairs. A prolonged border dispute with China can exhaust India's resources and focus. Moreover, a strained relationship with China might hurt India's economy. To rally, the Indian economy needs all the resources it can marshal. However, the responsiveness of China and the willingness of Chinese companies to invest in India remain uncertain. Concerns about future restrictions and geopolitical tensions may deter Chinese businesses from fully committing to the Indian market.

Despite the geopolitical tensions, it's clear that economic cooperation remains a potential area of mutual benefit. Sectors such as technology, infrastructure, and renewable energy present significant opportunities for collaboration. China's expertise in large-scale infrastructure projects can complement India's developmental needs. Similarly, India's burgeoning technology sector can offer innovative solutions and market opportunities for Chinese firms.

However, economic cooperation is not without challenges. The Indian government has imposed stricter regulations on Chinese investments following the Galwan clash, citing national security concerns. Chinese companies face increased scrutiny and regulatory hurdles, impacting their willingness to invest. Moreover, the broader geopolitical context, including China's assertive policies in the Indo-Pacific region, influences the economic relationship. Both nations need to navigate these complexities to realize the full potential of economic collaboration.

However, even if New Delhi and Beijing decide to collaborate on the economic front, it might still result in a "close but no cigar" situation. The fact remains that in international politics, economic interests aren't everything. The rehabilitation of China-India ties is a complex and multifaceted process. Economic necessities, historical grievances, and geopolitical strategies will all play a role.

While there is a pragmatic basis for cooperation, significant hurdles remain. An uneasy peace, characterized by cautious engagement and selective collaboration, is likely to define the relationship in

the near future. Both nations will need to navigate this intricate landscape with a long-term perspective, balancing immediate economic benefits against broader strategic interests.

Ultimately, the future of China-India relations will depend on the ability of both nations to manage their differences while capitalizing on areas of mutual benefit. It will require a delicate balance of competition and cooperation, guided by a realistic and levelheaded understanding of each other's strategic imperatives. For now, an uneasy peace seems the most realistic outcome, but with sustained efforts and mutual trust-building, a more stable and cooperative relationship may emerge over time.

Put simply, will mutual collaboration benefit both New Delhi and Beijing? Yes. Will shared interests lead to a thaw in relations? That remains to be seen.

### **Tibetans hail new US legislation**

01 August 2024, Taipei Times, Tenzing Dhamdul

US President Joe Biden signed the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act, also known as the Resolve Tibet Act, into law on July 12.

However, he made sure to note in his signed statement that the US recognizes Tibet (as referenced in the act) as part of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Tibetans throughout the world welcomed the act and celebrated it. On Thursday last week, Penpa Tsering, sikyong of the Central Tibetan Administration, also known as the Tibetan government in exile, attended a reception in Washington to thank members of the US Congress for making the act law.

The act includes major modifications to the US' Tibetan Policy Act of 2002, all of which strengthens Tibet's hand and position against the PRC, which was only established in 1949.

With the passage of the law, the US government officially recognizes that Tibet is not only comprised of the so-called Tibetan Autonomous Region, which was only established in 1965 by the PRC, but now includes areas that Beijing designated as part of the Tibetan Autonomous Region in 2018. This more or less states what Tibetans have been saying when it comes to Tibet territorially, which is that Tibet is a country that includes the three provinces of Amdo, Kham and U-Tsang.

They view the claims made by the PRC that Tibet has been part of China since ancient times as historically inaccurate, with the people of Tibet having the right to self-determination as they have a distinct culture and identity.

The law says that the Tibet-China dispute is unresolved and promotes substantive dialogue between the PRC, the Dalai Lama and their representative, which would also include the

democratically elected leaders of the Tibetan community, which in many ways recognizes the Tibetan government in exile based in Dharamshala, India.

The law also requires the US government to combat the propagation of disinformation by the PRC about Tibet, its history, its people, its institutions and the Dalai Lama, and says that the designated US special coordinator to Tibet must work with US Department of State bureaus to implement this.

The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs denounced the US for its backing of Tibet even before the Resolve Tibet Act was signed into law.

Specifically, during the mid-June visit of US representatives Michael McCaul and Nancy Pelosi to India, the US congressional delegation met with Tibetan and Indian leaders at Dharamshala, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. India displayed and demonstrated its critical role in resolving the Tibet-China dispute.

In all of its criticisms of this law, Beijing maintains that Tibet is a domestic matter. In actuality, the Tibet-China conflict is a global problem with implications for the world's sanctity, as well as the entirety of Asia. It remains Asia's water tower and is the third pole.

The US law on Tibet comes at a time when there are growing ties between the Tibetans and Taiwan. Major developments appear to be visible on the horizon when it comes to the Tibet-China conflict. With this chess piece being moved forward, it is now up to Beijing to respond.

### **Is the growth rate of Uyghurs in Xinjiang higher than that of the Han?**

01 August 2024, RFA, Shen Ke Verdict: False

Chinese officials claimed that the Uyghur population in China's autonomous territory Xinjiang increased at a "significantly higher rate" than the Han population since the first national census in 1953.

But the claim is false. Multiple official sources reviewed by AFCL show that the Han Chinese population growth rate in Xinjiang outstripped Uyghurs both over the decades since 1953 and most recently between 2010 and 2020.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said on July 1 that China's census data showed that the Uyghur population in Xinjiang had grown from "3.6076 million to 11.6243 million" between 1953 to 2020, adding that the growth rate for the Uyghur population was "significantly higher" than the increase of the Han population in the region.

Mao made the remarks in response to a question from a journalist from Japan's public broadcaster NHK regarding the International Religious Freedom

Report released in June by the U.S. State Department that criticized the Chinese government for continuing “genocidal practices” in Xinjiang.

Xinjiang, officially the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, is an autonomous region in northwest China at the crossroads of Central Asia and East Asia.

The Uyghurs are an ethnic Turkic people originating from, and culturally affiliated with, the general region of Central Asia and the broader Muslim world. They are recognized as the titular nationality of Xinjiang.

The Han Chinese, or the Han people, are an East Asian ethnic group native to Greater China. They represent more than 90% of the population of mainland China. There have been disputes in Xinjiang between Uyghurs and Han Chinese over cultural, religious, and political issues.

Many Uyghurs claim that the Chinese government has engaged in systematic discrimination and ethnic repression in Xinjiang, while Beijing claims that the region needs strict oversight following several attacks carried out by Uyghurs who it terms terrorists and extremists.

In 2009, for instance, rioting in Xinjiang’s capital, Ürümqi, broke out as mostly Uyghur demonstrators protested against state-incentivized Han Chinese migration to the region and widespread economic and cultural discrimination.

But Mao’s claim about the Uyghur population growth is false.

#### Chinese official census

A review of China’s official census figures cited by Mao shows that the rate of growth of the Han Chinese community in Xinjiang exceeded that of the Uyghurs. Chinese census data is based on the number of “permanent residents” of an area, defined as both people born there and long-term migrants settled in a given province or region for more than six months who may or may not decide to settle there permanently. Although China conducted seven national censuses from 1953 to 2020, AFCL could only find detailed data on the Uyghur and Han populations in Xinjiang from the third census in 1982 to the seventh in 2020.

Over the 38 years between the third and seventh censuses, Xinjiang’s Uyghur population increased from 5,955,900 to 11,624,300 with a net growth rate of 95.17%. During the same period, the Han population in the region grew from 5,286,500 to 10,920,100, resulting in a net growth rate of 106.57%.

A closer look at the population changes between individual census years reveals that Uyghur growth rates significantly exceeded those of the Han Chinese in the 1980s and slightly in the 2000s. However, during the 1990s, the Han population increased at

more than double the rate of the Uyghurs and also significantly outpaced them in the 2010s.

When asked to clarify Mao’s remarks, a representative from China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs declined to answer directly, referring the AFCL to the Chinese Embassy in the United States.

The embassy has not responded to AFCL’s inquiries as of this writing.

#### Trends in official statistics

In order to obtain data on demographic changes within Xinjiang in the years before 1982, AFCL consulted the book 1949-2009: A Report on the Development of Ethnic Minorities in Xinjiang, a monograph published by the Xinjiang People’s Publishing House in 2009.

Written by Wu Fuhuan, the former president of the Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences and a leading expert on Xinjiang history, the book has been recommended by official publications such as Studies on the History of the Chinese Communist Party.

The report contains year-by-year statistics on the population growth for ethnic groups within Xinjiang from 1949 to 2007, citing the Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook as its source of demographic data.

The report’s findings summarized in the below chart show a Han growth rate significantly higher than that of the Uyghurs between 1949 and 2009.

The report shows that between 1949 and 2007, the Uyghur population in Xinjiang nearly tripled, growing from 3,291,100 to 9,650,600. In contrast, the Han population increased over 28-fold during the same period, rising from 291,000 to 8,239,300.

#### Academic study

The shift in Xinjiang’s ethnic demographics has also been a focus of academic study, such as a 2013 paper by Agnieszka Joniak-Lüthi, a professor at the University of Freiburg in Germany.

Joniak-Lüth explained how several waves of Han migrants were brought to Xinjiang following various historical events in the decades following the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949.

She noted that in 1949, Han Chinese made up just over 6% of Xinjiang’s total population, while Uyghurs comprised nearly 75%.

But in the 1950s, China established the state-owned Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, recruiting large numbers of Han migrant workers, especially from the People’s Liberation Army.

This internal migration was further fueled by nationwide famine in the early 1960s, which brought another influx of Han refugees from eastern China to Xinjiang.

Additionally, during the Cultural Revolution from the mid-1960s to mid-1970s, hundreds of thousands of young Han intellectuals were sent to live and work in Xinjiang.

Han growth rates in Xinjiang saw a noticeable decline in the decade following major Chinese economic reforms in the late 1970s and early 1980s. However, they once again significantly outpaced Uyghur growth rates in the 1990s.

Joniak-Lüthi described post-1980s Han migration to Xinjiang as being “driven by the search for economic profit,” largely organized by individuals and mostly voluntary.

She also noted that due to these waves of Han migrants, Uyghurs likely became a minority in Xinjiang by the mid-2000s.

While China’s official statistics currently show the Uyghur population in Xinjiang as larger than the Han population, some scholars suggest that the actual number of official Han residents is considerably higher, as many Han attempt to delay registering their households in the region for a considerable time after migrating there.

Meanwhile, China’s state-run outlets such as The Global Times, China News and Tianshan Network reported that the Han population in Xinjiang grew by 24.86% over the previous decade, while the Uyghur population increased by only 16.2%, following the release of data for China’s seventh national census in 2021.

Census data used in this fact check was taken from the following sources:

1. Date for 1953 and 1964: 1949-2009: A Report of the Development of Ethnic Minorities in Xinjiang
2. Data on the Uyghurs from 1982 to 2020  
- Xinjiang Population Dynamics and Data
3. Data on Han Chinese for 1982 - Third National Population Census, Volume IV: Population of Various Ethnic Groups
4. Data on Han Chinese for 1990 and 2000  
- Bulletin on the Fifth Population Census in Xinjiang
5. Data on Han Chinese for 2010 and 2020  
- Bulletin on the Seventh National Population Census in Xinjiang

### **Unmasking the Truth: China's Campaign of Disinformation on Tibet**

01 August 2024, Chennai Centre For China Studies, Tenzing Dhamdul

Through the advancement of technology, the dissemination of information has reached unprecedented levels. The popular phrase “at the tip of one’s fingertips” aptly describes the easy availability of unfiltered information. Many countries, especially hegemony, have used this to spread their own narratives, including the British Empire, Hitler’s Third Reich, the USA, and, more recently, the People’s Republic of China (PRC).

The PRC was established in 1949 after the Communist Party of China (CPC), led by Mao Zedong, won the civil war against the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) led by Chiang Kai-shek. Mao Zedong announced the PRC’s territorial claims, which included Tibet, East Turkestan, and Southern Mongolia, during his famous “The Chinese People Have Stood Up” address on September 21 at the 1st Plenary Session of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference. This showcased a meticulous plan for occupying these independent nations and territories through the tactful usage of information warfare.

In 1950, Beijing among other things used the 10th Panchen Lama’s scripted cry for help to invade Tibet, which includes the three traditional provinces of Amdo, Kham, and U-Tsang. And finally, in 1951, Tibetans signed the 17th Point Agreement with the PRC under duress, leading to its occupation. The day of the signing of this agreement has been declared by the PRC as the day it officially “liberated” Tibet, when in fact it symbolizes the day Tibet was occupied by the PRC. These early actions of the PRC under the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime, which had established the United Front Work Department to spread its influence and narrative beyond Chinese soil, demonstrates its modus operandi to promote its agenda. When it comes to Tibet, the situation is no different. In this context, I present certain themes and subjects regarding Tibet that the PRC has misrepresented through false narratives.

1. Tibet: A Rich History Misrepresented as Just a Part of China

The PRC, led by the United Front Work Department (UFW), various state-run media outlets, recent YouTube influencers, and even leaders of nations (including the Taliban leaders promoting and praising Chinese state-run colonial boarding schools), have utilized a plethora of disinformation to build the narrative that Tibet is part of its territory and has not been an independent nation throughout history.

This claim is false, as Tibet was historically an independent nation and even conquered large swathes of territory, of what is now Chinese territory during the period of the Tibetan Empire, which flourished under King Songtsen Gampo from the 7th century onward. This clearly dispels the PRC’s notion that Tibet was not a nation but part of China throughout history.

Furthermore, to adapt to and embrace the modern concept of Westphalian nation-states, Tibet reaffirmed its independence in 1913 under the leadership of the 13th Dalai Lama, Thupten Gyatso. This illustrates that Tibet not only constituted a Westphalian nation-state, meeting the essential criteria of 1. a shared national identity, 2. physical borders, and 3. a single government, but

was also a nation-state even before the PRC was established in 1949.

The recent US 'Resolve Tibet Act' further debunks the PRC's claims, with extensive research from Chinese sources by Prof. Hon-Shiang Lau showing that Tibet was never part of the PRC or previous Chinese entities.

## 2. Is Tibet Truly Liberated from Serfdom, or Is It a Myth?

Another major campaign that the PRC promotes for its political legitimacy over Tibet is the notion of Tibet's liberation, emphasizing the eradication of serfdom following its arrival in the region. This campaign is so entrenched that the now-repudiated 17 Point Agreement, signed under duress by Tibetan officials on May 23, 1951, is still celebrated as the so-called "Peaceful Liberation of Tibet." This agreement marked the first time in history that Tibet officially recognized itself as a province of China.

Each year, this day is celebrated with much pomp by the CCP leadership in occupied Tibet, showcasing how they have "liberated" Tibet from serfdom. This concept is deeply entrenched in communism and Marxism, first articulated by Karl Marx when he researched the political economy of the Western world of his time. However, one misses how Beijing presents only one narrative, using synecdoche to vilify the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government by claiming they had "slaves," when in fact these so-called slaves were workers compensated for their services. If there was any form of serfdom in Tibet's history, it is the current system—where Tibetans are heavily oppressed by the very communist leaders who control them—that resembles serfdom, with Tibetans entirely under Beijing's control.

This notion of serfdom and liberation has become a tool used by the "50 Cent Army" (internet commentators paid by the PRC to spread their narrative) to disseminate information on public platforms. This influence is now more visible than ever. Whole white papers on Tibet repeatedly mention the so-called liberation of Tibet from serfdom while failing to address the atrocities of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution in Tibet. If Tibetans were truly liberated, why do they continue to engage in the ultimate form of non-violent protest: self-immolation?

## 3. Divided Lands: The Fragmentation of Tibetan Territories

This action has been one of the most successful policies by the PRC in diminishing Tibet's status as an independent nation-state in the minds of the broader public and governmental policymakers.

In 1965, the PRC officially established the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), which is only a portion of Tibet that the Tibetans claim and where they lived and flourished prior to the PRC's illegal occupation

by the People's Liberation Army (PLA). For Beijing, this region is considered Tibet, and it continues to remain so officially, despite contradicting the legitimate claims of Tibetans living in the traditional provinces of Amdo and Kham. The TAR largely encompasses the entire U-Tsang province, with some parts of Kham included as well. The current 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, was born in Taktser, Amdo, which is not part of the TAR. Additionally, Andrug Gompo Tashi, the leader of the Tibetan resistance force Chushi Gangdruk and the National Volunteer Defense Army (NVDA), was born in Lithang, Kham, which is also outside the TAR.

Hence, the intended plan to remove and erase Tibetan territories from official maps by labelling them as Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures—despite lying within the official borders of Tibet and China—is a tactical masterclass that many nations have unfortunately accepted. The 2003 India-China joint communiqué stated that "the Indian side recognizes that the Tibet Autonomous Region is part of the territory of the People's Republic of China," reflecting a similar stance taken by other nations, including the USA, which viewed Tibet primarily in terms of the TAR then.

However, there is pushback from the international community, including the USA, which explicitly mentioned in the recent "Resolve Tibet Act" that Tibet as a territory is not limited to the TAR but includes areas designated as Tibetan Autonomous by the PRC as of 2018. And also from India with its Prime Minister Narendra Modi openly wishing the Dalai Lama on his birthday, with many even speculating a possible public official meeting between the two leaders. This marks the first time that a government officially refers to Tibet as encompassing the three traditional provinces, using Beijing's own narrative against them regarding Tibetan territory.

## 4. From Borders to Schools: The Hidden Costs of Colonial Aggression

If the PRC had legitimacy over Tibet as a sovereign entity, why does it treat the region differently? More importantly, why does it suppress the Tibetan people through severe surveillance, transnational aggressions, and colonial boarding schools? All of these factors contribute to a dystopian world reminiscent of the one George Orwell envisioned in his famous book, 1984.

Firstly, internal suppression is well-documented, and several protests continue to take place in Tibet despite the heavy restrictions imposed since the PRC's illegal occupation. Notable examples include the 1956 Eastern Tibetan Rebellion, the 1959 Tibetan Mass Uprising, the 1987 Tibet Protest, and the 2008 Tibet Protest. Recent testimony from Tibetan political prisoner Namkyi illustrates the situation in Tibet,



where individuals cannot hold a picture of the Dalai Lama without facing imprisonment—often unjustly and for no reason at all.

Secondly, we see a rise in transnational aggression as Beijing uses Tibetan family members in Tibet as a tool to pressure and threaten Tibetans living abroad—whether as exiles, refugees, part of the larger Tibetan diaspora, or even citizens of free countries. In February 2024, the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) released a report titled "Chinese Transnational Repression of Tibetan Diaspora Communities," highlighting this very tactic that Beijing continues to employ. This approach has been used not only against Tibetans but also against those under their governance, including Han Chinese.

Thirdly, the issue of colonial boarding schools has been exposed by the Tibet Action Institute. One of the main whistleblowers, Dr. Gyal Lo, emphasizes how Beijing, after implementing various tactics to gain legitimacy in Tibet, is now targeting Tibetan children. In these schools, Tibetan parents are forced to send their children, who are not being taught Tibetan; when Tibetan is taught, the syllabus is structured in such a way that little essence of Tibet remains. One example given by Dr. Gyal Lo is that textbooks in these schools teach Tibetan children that the Japanese are their enemies, despite the fact that Tibet and Japan never had any major conflicts in the past. In fact, a Japanese general, under the guidance and vision of the 13th Dalai Lama, established the first modern Tibetan army in the early 20th century.

Hence, through these actions, we can understand how Beijing, knowing that it does not have clear legitimacy among the Tibetan people, is pursuing such repressive policies to control and gain legitimacy by force, even if it means harming Tibetans.

#### 5. Spiritual Suppression: The Fight Over the Dalai Lama's Lineage:

The PRC was established in 1949 and it continues to be led by the CCP. The CCP does not believe in religion, with Mao Zedong famously stating that "Religion is Poison," to the Dalai Lama, echoing the Marxist adage that "Religion is the opium of the masses." He and his party followed this up by destroying religion, including the Tibetan tradition of Buddhism on a grand scale during the Cultural Revolution, an event unparalleled in history.

Tsering Woeser's book "Forbidden Memory: Tibet during the Cultural Revolution" employs powerful images, detailed interviews, and critical analysis to illuminate what actually occurred during that period and how thousands of monasteries and religious sites in Tibet were ravaged to the ground.

In 2007, Beijing issued Order Number 5 and subsequent orders to control the Tibetan reincarnated lamas, whom they call "living Buddhas." This policy has forced reincarnated lamas - who hold significant respect and reverence among Tibetans - to seek permission from CCP leaders, who officially do not believe in religion or Buddhism, for their status. The centuries-old tradition of reincarnation has now been reduced to a bureaucratic process, with many using this system to bribe Chinese officials and declare their own reincarnated lamas. Consequently, the number of recognized reincarnated lamas has drastically increased since the inception of this order. Amidst such conditions, they seek to recognize and claim sole authority over the succession of the Dalai Lama. This irony would make Shakespeare himself proud, provoking laughter from the audience. However, it is widely known that Beijing plans to install their own Dalai Lama, with the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama already setting a precedent for this. It is crucial to recognize and support the traditional process of reincarnation, as the Dalai Lama himself frequently states that if he were to reincarnate, he would be born in a free country - implicitly marking/cancelling occupied Tibet (under current system unless it becomes free), which continues to hold the unfortunate title of being one of the least free countries in the world.

#### Conclusion:

The signing of the 'Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act' into law by US President Joe Biden on July 12th is a significant step for towards Tibetans right of Self-Determination, with the USA once again taking a stand on Tibet's status while competing with China. A particular section of this law mentions how the US will work towards combating disinformation campaigns by the PRC on Tibet.

The recent visit of a US Congressional delegation to Dharamshala, where they met the Dalai Lama and leaders of the Tibetan Government in Exile, followed by a meeting with the Indian Prime Minister, suggests visible progress is being made in the Tibetan freedom movement. With former Indian Ambassador Dilip Sinha stating "India should continue to support the Tibetan cause and bury China's narrative on Tibet."

It has been more than six decades since Tibetans, including their leader the Dalai Lama, were forced to flee their own country. The majority of Tibetans continue to live under Chinese occupation, but as the world gradually awakens to this issue, the experiences of Tibetans become invaluable for understanding Beijing and navigating the challenges ahead, including the tactics and information warfare strategies it has employed and continues to use against Tibet. As the saying goes, to understand the People's Republic of China, one must understand Tibet.

## After a population exodus, Hong Kong looks to mainland China for new residents

01 August 2024, ABC News, Kathleen Calderwood and Marty Smiley

Real estate agent Jeffrey Wai is showing me what \$3 million buys in the notoriously expensive Hong Kong real estate market. We're touring a two-bedroom, two-bathroom apartment with stunning views over Kowloon Bay, one of 1,200 new homes in a high-rise development called Miami Quay.

"This is a good price in this moment," he assures me, noting that similar-sized apartments can fetch well over \$5 million.

The towering residential complex we're touring sits on a thin, 3km strip of reclaimed land that was once the site of Kai Tak airport, for decades Hong Kong's gateway to the world. It was a famously treacherous landing. Passengers steeled themselves for a white-knuckle ride skirting mountains and high-rise buildings, before touching down in the heart of the city.

These days the redeveloped Kai Tak district is welcoming a very specific kind of new arrival – buyers from mainland China snapping up real estate. "Three out of four buyers in Kai Tak district were buyers from the mainland," says Mr Wai.

In the past couple of years, more than 100,000 people have moved to Hong Kong, and the majority have come from mainland China. It's not by accident. Hong Kong's Beijing-controlled government is offering a raft of incentives to lure people to the city, after an exodus of skilled workers in the wake of the COVID pandemic and China's ruthless crackdown on political dissent following the 2019 pro-democracy protests.

Mostly, it's mainland Chinese responding to the call. Mr Wai has seen the influx of buyers from across the border in his burgeoning real estate sales figures. Earlier this year, after the government lifted stamp duty on property purchases for non-Hongkongers to boost the struggling real estate market, sales in the Kai Tak district skyrocketed.

"There were around 10,500 for the whole year in 2023, but there were 4,200 transactions in March 2024 alone," he says. "I believe that the past few months were the best months in my life, [in terms of] my performance and achievements."

Mainlanders "like Hong Kong very much," he adds, "because Hong Kong is a very international city."

The new face of Hong Kong

On a ferry heading for Cheung Chau island, about an hour from Hong Kong's CBD, Eliana Cheung is admiring the city she now calls home. The 29-year-old is from Guangdong, in southern China, but has been living in Hong Kong for just over two years

now. In that time, she's fallen "deeply in love with the place."

"Hong Kong culture has influenced me ever since I was a kid," she says. Growing up in China, she remembers watching *Chungking Express*, a 1994 film set in the city. The Hong Kong she met on screen captured her imagination even then. "It's portrayed as a very glorious yet retro and nostalgic place," she says, "and that people here are friendly and loyal." Eliana first came to Hong Kong to complete a Master's degree but was able to stay on after finishing her studies thanks to a scheme called "Immigration Arrangements for Non-Local Graduates".

Government data shows migrants from mainland China dominate the list of approved applicants. In 2023, the number of permits issued under the scheme more than doubled to 26,089. Of those, 24,650 were for applicants from the mainland.

Eliana is now working in human resources and eyeing a future for herself long-term in Hong Kong.

"Mainland buyers like Hong Kong very much, because Hong Kong is a very international city."

Other programs are having a similar effect.

In late 2022, Hong Kong's government launched the "Top Talent Scheme" to entice candidates who had either graduated from one of the world's top 100 universities, or earned more than \$HK2.5 million (\$489,000), to move to the city.

Nearly 70,000 applications have been approved since it began, more than 90 per cent of which were for candidates from mainland China.

Eliana's friend Xing Xing, who comes from Guizhou in China's south-west, can understand why people from the mainland want to migrate here. "I think there are more opportunities in Hong Kong, not much pressure and I think everyone accepts me," Xing Xing says. "As long as I want to work, I will be able to get a job." Fleeing China's crackdown

The government's eagerness to attract new residents to Hong Kong has its roots in the aftermath of the 2019 anti-government protests, when millions poured into the streets to oppose a bill that would allow Hongkongers to be extradited to mainland China.

For months the city was engulfed in chaos, as clashes between protesters and police grew increasingly violent. Beijing eventually cracked down hard to quell the unrest, bypassing the city's legislature to introduce a draconian "National Security Law" criminalising secession, subversion, terrorism and collusion with external forces, in some cases with a maximum sentence of life in prison.

Earlier this year, Hong Kong's Legislative Council passed its own local security law, known as Article 23. Both laws have been criticised by international governments and human rights groups concerned

about the chilling effect on the city's freedom of speech, assembly and press.

"The freedoms that we enjoy are sort of evaporating fast," says Emily Lau, a veteran of the city's pro-democracy movement and one of the few activists left in Hong Kong still brave enough to speak out.

I ask her whether she thinks protests like in 2019 could happen again today. "Oh, of course not," she scoffs. "Any protests? Not possible. No protests allowed. It's very sad."

Instead, she senses a climate of fear has gripped the city.

Around 300 arrests have been made under the security laws and a pre-existing colonial-era sedition law that was revived after the protests. But the Hong Kong Democracy Council estimates there are around 1,000 political prisoners in total in the city on a variety of charges. Many have been languishing for years awaiting trials or sentencing.

Regina Ip, a senior member of the Hong Kong legislature, argues that Hong Kong has had to make sacrifices to restore the city's security. "(The police) can't take any chances for the sparks of protest to rekindle the mass upheaval that we saw in 2019," she says. The restrictions are "proportional" and ensure "the overall stability and national security of our city will be maintained," she says. "That's all."

In recent years, mounting concerns over the uncertain security environment, combined with the pandemic, have seen an exodus of residents from the city. How many have left is hard to say, but at least 135,000 people have taken advantage of a scheme offered by the UK government in the wake of the National Security Law giving them a route to citizenship.

In 2022, the city's leader, chief executive John Lee, acknowledged that the city had lost 140,000 workers over the previous two years.

A refuge for the exiles

Some who fled found refuge in nearby Taiwan.

In the capital Taipei's trendy Xinyi district, former Hong Kong journalist Shirley Leung meets me in an underground bar called Revolution Now. She says it's become her "secret haven" because it always reminds her of home. The owners are a warm, welcoming couple from Hong Kong, who often sit late into the night playing Cantonese songs and talking about music and politics with the regulars.

"Whenever you miss your home, you come to the bar," says Shirley. "With people speaking your own language, share the same culture, share the same history or memories. I think it's very important emotionally."

Shirley once worked at Apple Daily, a boldly pro-democracy newspaper that drew the ire of

authorities for its criticism of Beijing. Its owner, media mogul Jimmy Lai, and several senior staff were arrested under the National Security Law. Eventually, the paper shut down.

Shirley decided she needed to leave Hong Kong if she wanted to keep working as a journalist. "The whole society is so afraid to talk about anything," she says of Hong Kong today. "And for me, it's so suffocating." She now reports on Hong Kong from Taipei, running her own news outlet Photon Media. Even here, she has to take special precautions to ensure her staff's safety. All her reporters work anonymously, and the location of their newsroom is kept secret.

Shirley doesn't believe it's safe for her to return home but refuses to give up hope that the city could still change and its freedoms might be restored. "I'm so hopeful, because if I'm pessimistic, it's so difficult to continue working like this."

Her former boss's son, Sebastien Lai, has also found sanctuary in Taiwan. He happened to be in Taipei on the day of his father's arrest and hasn't been able to go home to Hong Kong since. His 76-year-old father Jimmy Lai has been in jail for more than three-and-a-half years and his national security trial has been underway since late last year.

The trial was recently adjourned until November. If convicted, his father could face life in prison.

"It's a show trial," says Sebastien. "It's three government-appointed judges, there's no jury. From my understanding, he's held in the maximum-security prison and at 76 he's the oldest political prisoner. You fear the worst."

Hong Kong's economy takes a hit

The loss of skilled workers delivered a body blow to Hong Kong's economy, which has long built its success on its reputation as an international financial hub. At one point, the stock market plunged more than 40 per cent lower than in 2019.

Vera Yuen, an economist at Hong Kong University, says concerns over transparency are driving foreign investors away. "For investors, you would need transparency of what the company is actually doing in order to evaluate the assets," she says. "But if now we are into more Chinese business, you don't know which one is connected to the government, which one is not."

"The whole society is so afraid to talk about anything ... it's so suffocating."

And there are other problems too.

On a busy street in Kowloon's Mong Kok district, she points to shuttered shops and vacant commercial premises as visible signs that the city is mired in the economic doldrums. "I see more brick-and-mortar shops closing and there have been fewer people on the streets," she says. "Tourists from foreign countries, they are not very interested in coming to

Hong Kong." Dr Yuen believes Hong Kong is still one of the most capitalist cities in the world, but it's facing challenges returning to pre-2019 levels of economic growth. "It will gradually," she says. "I think Hong Kong's economic growth slows down but we still have some growth every year."

Hong Kong authorities' efforts to entice new residents, from the Top Talent Scheme to tax cuts, to holding major events, are all designed to plug the gaps in the economy. Regina Ip, a senior member of the Hong Kong legislature, admits the city has been in a downward cycle, but is confident it will bounce back as it has "many times" before.

"You cannot judge the performance of Hong Kong as a financial centre purely on the basis of the stock market, because we do a lot of other things," she says. "The National Security Law actually affects very few people, so we just have to keep explaining to the business community that life hasn't changed for them at all."

'I feel very free'

Five years on from the protests, Hong Kong is a city being remade.

Back at Miami Quay, the change is visible. The gleaming apartments seem a world away from the heaving, humid old neighbourhoods of Kowloon, just to the west. "Mainland buyers prefer brand new units," says real estate agent Jeffrey Wai.

Already the complex is decked out with pools, elaborate gardens and even a communal mahjong room. Soon it will include more facilities to entice buyers, including "a sports centre next door, a cruise terminal and lots of different shopping malls," he says. "To me, the reason why I want to live in Hong Kong is because it's such a diverse place," says human resources worker Eliana Cheung.

Like generations before her, she came here seeking opportunity and a connection to the world beyond the mainland. But whereas last century's migrants were escaping the People's Republic of China and its communist government, many today are coming under the direct encouragement of Beijing.

These days a high-speed rail line connects the city with Shenzhen, just 20 minutes away over the border. Most weekends, Eliana makes the trip with her friend Xing Xing to visit family and friends, and shop where the prices are far cheaper.

Eliana's plan now is to live in Hong Kong long enough to get a local passport, so that she can travel more freely and have more opportunities for her family in the future. "I want my child to be born in Hong Kong and have a Hong Kong ID like I do, so they will have more options in their education," she says.

For her friend Xing Xing, Hong Kong has provided an escape from the pressure she felt in her hometown. "People [in Hong Kong] wouldn't

question you about your age, they wouldn't ask you to start planning for marriage and having children," she says. "After working in Hong Kong for half a year, I feel very free."

## July

### A Shift in the China-Tibetan Dispute

July 2024, Robert Barnett

Since the late 1970s, the Dalai Lama of Tibet and his supporters have been trying to persuade China to agree to give his former country some degree of meaningful autonomy. Their method has generally been based on strident criticisms of China's human rights record in Tibet. This has not worked. The Chinese have not agreed to formal talks for 14 years, have said that they will never discuss the question of autonomy, and have embarked on policies in Tibet and other ethnic areas that are all but indistinguishable from assimilation. Given the rise of China as a global power, and the increasing failure of Western governments regarding their own claimed values, the prospects of success for a values-based approach to diplomacy with Beijing are vanishingly small.

In recent months, however, there have been signs of a new approach within the exile Tibetan leadership that replaces moral critique with a more considered calculus – one that exploits emerging contradictions in China's Tibet policies. In particular, Beijing's stated aims regarding the Dalai Lama's succession and China's historical claims to Tibet are starting to look hard to realise absent the imprimatur of the Dalai Lama. Seen from this perspective, China has boxed itself into a strategic cul-de-sac from which it cannot easily extricate itself without reaching a deal with the Tibetans.

Signs of this new approach underlay the visit by Nancy Pelosi and six other US congressional representatives to India to meet the Dalai Lama in mid-June. The speeches of the US visitors were filled with the usual claims of ideological combat and moral superiority, but the delegation carried with them the text of a bill just passed by Congress that pointed to the basic parameters of the exiles' new approach. Currently awaiting presidential assent, the "Resolve Tibet Act" repeats the exiles' demand that China hold unconditional negotiations with the Dalai Lama about his call for cultural autonomy in Tibet. But the real purpose of the bill is not to do with culture, human rights, or abuses in Tibet. As the Chinese media immediately realised, it is to remind China that its claim to sovereignty in Tibet is weak. If China continues to impose preconditions on talks with the Dalai Lama, the bill implies, the US Congress will

push the US government to recognise that the legal status of Tibet "remains to be determined."

#### Sovereignty and Succession

Unlike human rights criticism, that threat addresses a core sensitivity for China. Its primary objective on the Tibet issue in the last 40 years had nothing to do with rebutting criticisms of its record on human rights. Those were never more than background noise for Beijing. Instead, China's primary objective has always been to get all governments to state that Tibet is part of China. It took China just short of a century to achieve that goal – it was only in October 2008 that the British government renounced its 1914 treaty-based recognition of Tibet as a distinct political entity, making it the final nation in the world to recognise Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. The Resolve Tibet Act suggests that the US Congress could put that achievement in doubt if China fails to hold unconditional talks with the Dalai Lama.

On one level, this is just another instance of US interference in China's affairs and a threat to its security. But it reflects a conceptual shift on the part of the Tibetan exile leadership. That shift, associated with the current Tibetan prime minister, Penpa Tsering, no longer sees Tibetans as desperate to get China to hold talks with the Dalai Lama, now 89 years old and in declining health. Instead, the new approach assumes that it is the Chinese, not the exiles, who urgently need talks to start. If so, it is China that is running out of time to get that deal.

On the succession issue, for example, China has said that its major target regarding Tibet is to have sole control over the selection of the next Dalai Lama. It did not need to claim that power – there are myriad other ways to defang a so far unknown person who might or might not emerge as the leader of the minute community in exile in the distant future. But for China to appoint its own candidate as the 15th Dalai Lama is an extraordinarily difficult goal for it to achieve (in the past, even Tibetans have found it hard to do without major internal disputes and controversy). The opposition of the US government on this issue will surely not deter China on this issue, but support by the majority of Tibetans in Tibet will be crucial. And China has never succeeded with appointing proxy figureheads as religious leaders in Tibet in the past.

It set up the former 10th Panchen Lama as the leader of Tibet in 1959, but he ended up under house arrest or in prison for much of the next two decades after criticizing China's policies in 1962; before his death in 1989, he again made major criticisms of China's role in Tibet. In 1992, China tried to establish another leading lama, the Karmapa, as its proxy in Tibet, only for him to flee abroad seven years later. Beijing has been trying since 1995 to get Tibetans to accept a Beijing appointee as the 11th Panchen

Lama, but there are no signs that Tibetans freely revere him – video footage of him visiting Tibet this week show a noticeably tepid response from the public. That suggests that the only way for China to install a credible successor would be to get endorsement from the current Dalai Lama for its right to appoint one. Reports circulating within the exile community in India say that China is already trying to wrest such a concession from the Dalai Lama today.

This is why the surprise announcement by the exiles in April this year that China has been involved in back-channel talks with them for over a year differs from such reports in the past. Under the new exile leader, Penpa Tsering, the talks process is seen as necessary, but without any presumption of a productive outcome. As he put it, "we have no immediate expectations". This change in Tibetan views is a consequence of Beijing's own strategy over the last four decades of never giving Tibetans any gain from previous talks, despite major concessions given by the Tibetan side. Beijing continues that approach, saying recently that it will only talk about terms on which the current Dalai Lama and his circle could return. That can be seen as another own goal by Beijing, repeatedly reducing incentives for Tibetans to give yet more concessions. But more significant was Penpa Tsering's comment about which side initiated the new contacts: "They [the Chinese] are reaching out to us, it's not us reaching out to them." This claim presents China as under pressure to cut a deal with the Dalai Lama, rather than the other way around.

#### Shifting Dates

The second emerging vulnerability in China's Tibet policies concerns China's legitimacy for its presence in Tibet. China never obtained a referendum or mandate from the Tibetan people for its absorption of their country into China. It therefore rests its claim to sovereignty solely on a historical claim according to which Tibet became part of China in the past. This claim is problematic – Tibet was certainly part of empires in the past that were centered in China, but it was never part of a country called China, was not directly ruled by Beijing until the 1950s, and never became a Chinese province. But the critical weakness in China's historical claim – and this is the main point of the "Resolve Tibet Act" delivered by the US delegation to India last month – is much more serious: China keeps changing the date when its sovereignty over Tibet is said to have begun.

Before the 1950s, many Chinese scholars said Tibet came under Chinese (they meant the Manchu Qing) rule in the 18th century. Since the late 1950s, however, Beijing has said that Tibet was formally incorporated into China in the 13th century. But in 2011, Beijing declared that what had happened to



Tibet in the 13th century was only the "formal incorporation" of Tibet within China. Tibet, China now said, had already been part of China "since ancient times". This referred, it said, to cultural and genetic ties, not to any form of Chinese administration in Tibet. In April 2015, it changed that view again: a government White Paper announced that "since ancient times" meant that Tibet had become "a local government of ancient China" in the 7th century. This was an unprecedented claim for which Beijing has produced little argument or evidence.

This revisionism is central to the negotiation issue. China's primary pre-condition for talks with the Dalai Lama was always that he must declare that Tibet is part of China. The Dalai Lama assented to that demand shortly after it was made in 1979 and gave up calls for independence. Behind the scenes, Beijing then quietly changed the terms of this precondition. It began requiring that the Dalai Lama must also say that Tibet was part of China in the past. He has declined to change his views on Tibetan history, saying that historical questions should be left aside and not be part of any talks (ironically, Beijing insisted on the same position in talks with the Tibetans in the 1980s). Now, even if he had agreed in the past to say that Tibet became part of China in the 13th century, he would have to revise that date to at least six centuries earlier.

The Tibetans' new stance towards negotiations appears to see this goalpost-shifting by Beijing as a political opportunity. The Resolve Tibet Act thus accepts China's sovereignty in Tibet (as does the Dalai Lama), but only as a consequence of its "effective control" there since the 1950s, not because of a pre-existing historical claim. Instead, the Act notes that the US has never recognised China's claim that Tibet has been part of China "since ancient times" – it could hardly have done so, since that claim has only just been made. Hence, the Act implies, it would not be hard to get Western governments to confirm that they have not endorsed China's claim to ownership of Tibet "since ancient times".

#### Unforced Errors

There are two other factors implied by the new Tibetan strategy. These too are unforced errors by Beijing, and unlike the other issues, in these cases we know there were voices in Beijing that long ago warned China's leaders to avoid them. The first of these errors is the most obvious, and for the same reason, has almost never been noticed abroad: the Chinese government never needed to switch to a policy of personally insulting the Dalai Lama. Beijing made this decision at a policy meeting in July 1994, against the advice of many of its own Chinese experts on Tibet. Popular resentment among Tibetans

against that decision already led to major protests across the Tibet plateau in 2008. It is likely to lead to greater resentment when the Dalai Lama dies, unless China has brokered a reasonable agreement with him before that time. China appears concerned about a risk of serious unrest at that time, judging from the fact that it has sent 20,000 cadres in teams of four or more to live in every village in Tibet, apparently to prepare for such an outcome. A last-minute deal with the Dalai Lama would remove that risk.

China's second unforced error is brinksmanship. Between 2002 and 2010, China's leaders delegated the talks process to an agency called the United Front, whose officials basically stalled the talks process by impugning the intentions of the Tibetan side (they are still doing so), irrespective of concessions by the Tibetans. It became hard not to conclude that China's strategy was to wait for the Dalai Lama to be at his weakest and oldest in order to maximise the concessions that it could get from him. But now, as the Tibetan leadership sees it, the window of opportunity for China is closing, and it is China, as much as the exile leadership, that is under pressure to start talks.

#### Prompting Reassessment

This display of political jujitsu by the Tibetan exiles is a major conceptual adjustment, but it is not a shift in political realities or power. China still holds all the cards, and even if the US government became openly involved, it could not force China to yield on this issue and would probably have the reverse effect (more significant will be India's role, which in turn will depend on whether it resolves its current disputes with China). The significance of this shift in approach is not that it might lead to visible change in China's negotiating stance, but that behind the scenes, it might strengthen those advisers within Beijing who warned their leaders 30 years ago that a policy of insulting the Dalai Lama, and of delaying talks until just before he dies, would damage China's own interests.

Already, China's former Party Secretary in Tibet is under investigation, allegedly for corruption, an unprecedented development in the Tibetan context. The likely cause for the investigation is not corruption but some form of factional debate or struggle, rumored to relate to China's Tibet policy. If such debates could be stimulated by the Tibetan exiles' shift in approach. That may not in itself lead to change in China's policies, let alone concessions. But, by focusing on China's objectives and their contradictions rather than on values or ideology, the new approach to the dispute could prompt reassessment by both sides of their strategic options before the final opportunity for a negotiated resolution is lost.

## Empowered Together: Our Journey at ITYF 2024

31 July 2024, FNVA, Tenzin Lhatso and Rinzin Namgyal

Within a year of its launch in 2023, the International Tibet Youth Forum has become a “must-go” event for advocates of the Tibetan movement for freedom. We consider the forum as a carnival of Tibetan advocacy and a marketplace of ideas where we can delve deeper into, deliberate and discuss the Tibet movement for freedom. The widespread and in-depth advocacy of the Tibetan movement among the global community is the major vision and hallmark of the 16th Kashag, led by Hon. Sikyong Penpa Tsering, who has prioritised the inclusiveness of all sections of our community in the Tibetan freedom struggle.

We were honoured to receive an invitation to the second International Tibet Youth Forum 2024, held in Dharamsala from 3rd to 5th July, followed by the celebration of His Holiness’s birthday. The conference brought together over 100 Tibetan youth from more than 13 countries, representing diverse educational and professional backgrounds. This prestigious forum aimed to provide a platform for Tibetan youth to exchange ideas, express their concerns, and collaboratively discuss the way forward. It also aims to nurture the already widespread and fragmented Tibetan advocacy efforts throughout the world into a well-coordinated movement. It seeks to connect advocates from different places, cultures, languages, and geographies, and unify them with the vision of Tibet advocacy.

Attending the ITYF 2024 was a transformative experience for us. The forum, which began with an enlightening CTA Tour, offered us an invaluable perspective on the governance and administrative efforts of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. This tour was particularly captivating as it provided a unique insight into the workings of a government we had long heard about but never had the opportunity to explore deeply. We are extremely grateful to the Department of Information and International Relations (DIIR) of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile for organising this conference and providing us with a platform.

[Click here to read more.](#)

## America’s Resolve Tibet Act and India as Third Polarity in Sino-Tibetan Negotiations

29 July 2024, CTA

If negotiations take place, Tibetans should add India as a third polarity as in every case, India will remain Tibet’s neighbour

-by Claude Arpi for Firstpost

It was an interesting coincidence that the book—Imperial Games in Tibet—of former ambassador, Dilip Sinha, appeared on the market at the time the bipartisan Resolve Tibet Bill, titled Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act, was signed into an Act by the US President.

Dilip Sinha served earlier as the head of the United Nations delegation at a time when India had a seat in the Security Council; he was also posted as Ambassador to the UN in Geneva, where he was elected Vice President of the Human Rights Council and Vice Chairman of the South Centre.

Though never posted in China, his diplomatic experience gave him the background to study the ‘Great Game’ over Tibet, as he soon realised the deep injustice inflicted on the Dalai Lama and his people, especially after the Lhasa government took Tibet’s plight to the UN in November 1950.

After going deeper into the old records, Sinha concluded: “Tibet’s current plight is the result of a combination of miscalculation and misfortune. Its misfortune was that Britain and Russia left it in the Chinese empire, refusing to support its bid for independence even after the collapse of the Manchu dynasty. Had either of them annexed it at that time or earlier, Tibet would be a free country today. Instead, neither supported Tibet’s appeal to the UN, leaving it to India and the US. The absence of international support left Tibet at China’s mercy.”

The Resolve Tibet Bill

On February 15, 2024, the US House of Representatives overwhelmingly voted for the bipartisan Resolve Tibet Bill. The House’s approval of the bill seemed a major achievement for Tibetans, as it demonstrated strong bipartisan support for Tibet and the Tibetan cause. Among other things, the bill reaffirmed the US policy of supporting direct dialogue between the People’s Republic of China and representatives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama without any preconditions.

Under the present repressive regime in Beijing, it is a doubtful proposal, though it is a reminder to Beijing that the world has not forgotten the Land of Snows.

And as noted in an earlier column, the Act mentioned that the “claims made by officials of the People’s Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party that Tibet has been a part of China since ancient times are historically inaccurate”. The Act rightly asserts that officials of the People’s Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party “are historically inaccurate in claiming that Tibet has been part of China since ancient times”. This is exactly what Ambassador Sinha has demonstrated in his well-researched book.

Dilip Sinha’s argument is important because it analyses, in scholarly language, the ‘Great Game(s)’ which cost Tibet its independence in the 1950s; it has

serious implications for the today-disputed Indo-Tibet border. [Click here to read more.](#)

### Xi's economic, political headaches

28 July 2024, Deccan Herald, Srikanth Kondapalli

Yet, Xi's hold over the party will become increasingly tenuous if he does not address China's mounting economic problems. It is not without reason that Xi has had the names of his predecessors Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao erased from the party document. This has been recent practice, one intended to ensure that Xi, and Xi alone, is glorified. The just-concluded Third Plenum of the Communist Party of China was viewed as a "landmark event" by the party, with China's media depicting it as "pivotal" and "epoch-making". But others depicted it as a damp squib as the pressing problems of the Chinese people were not addressed.

The Third Plenum, held July 15-18 at Beijing, was attended by 364 Communist Party Central Committee and alternate members. The meeting deliberated on the report of party General Secretary Xi Jinping and an "Outline" and a "Resolution" were released at the end of the session that identified 300 reform measures to be undertaken. A new ambitious target of completing these reforms has been set for 2029, the 80th anniversary of the People's Republic and two years after the next party congress in 2027.

The main task of the Plenum was "further deepening reform comprehensively to advance Chinese modernisation". This has become urgent due to sagging economic growth, the real estate crisis, the stock exchange meltdown that wiped out \$6 trillion, mounting local debt, ageing of the society, stagnant domestic consumption, widespread domestic political protests, geopolitical pressures through US and European Union sanctions and ongoing technological disruptions.

China's economic growth rate has been falling, especially after the debilitating lockdowns during the Covid pandemic and restrictive policies on the private sector. While China maintained impressive growth rates averaging about 9% after the reform programme began in 1978, in recent years, the country has been losing steam with 3-5% growth rates mentioned officially. However, the Rhodium Group estimates that China is actually growing at about 1.5%.

If China does not lift its sagging economic outlook, the first consequence is that it will be stuck in the "middle income trap", besides popular discontent and ensuing instability. Last year, China stated that its per capita income reached more than \$12,000, approaching the World Bank figure of \$13,845 to become a "developed" country. It could get stuck

below the latter figure, a fate that has befallen many other economies.

China intends to make the steep climb it confronts by "promoting high-quality development", by increasing total factor productivity, stressing efficiency and utilising "new quality productive forces" like automation, AI, IoT, new energy, aerospace, new materials, quantum computing and others. The current total factor productivity of China is just above 1% and it needs to scale this up for higher growth rates by bringing in "revolutionary breakthroughs in technology" and "innovation in key generic technologies, cutting-edge technologies, modern engineering technologies, and disruptive technologies", revamping the market mechanism and enhancing educational standards. China wants to complete this arduous task by 2029.

The 2029 deadline is interesting as the 21st party congress is due in 2027, which is likely to be politically stormy for Xi Jinping not only because of the economic problems but also because of political headwinds. At the 20th party congress in 2022, Xi decimated rival political factions, including the formidable Communist Youth League, whose leader Hu Jintao was shown the door. Other factions like the military have been contained through Xi's anti-corruption drive.

Yet, Xi's hold over the party will become increasingly tenuous if he does not address China's mounting economic problems. It is not without reason that Xi has had the names of his predecessors Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao erased from the party document. This has been recent practice, one intended to ensure that Xi, and Xi alone, is glorified.

While the Third Plenum meetings since the 11th party congress (1978) stressed on economic issues, the current plenum on the other hand mentioned prominently external balancing, with a focus on national security and foreign policy as well. In the light of the speculations about China's plans to increase the nuclear stockpile, nuclear warheads and ballistic missiles, the following direction that "we will speed up the development of strategic deterrence forces and strive to develop new-domain forces with new combat capabilities" is alarming.

The most amusing passage in the Plenum's resolution, though, is the one invoking a Lincolnian phrase, saying that China's Communist Party intends to "make our reform measures highly responsive to the call of the people, so as to ensure that reform is for the people and by the people". With hundreds of thousands of Chinese people participating in "mass incidents" every year and popular discontent spreading, one wonders how the 98 million-strong Communist Party could control 1.4 billion people without effective democratisation. On the other hand, the Plenum's resolution that it wants to pursue

“progress while ensuring stability” indicates that more draconian measures are due.

### **REPORT: Pro-Han bias, tension at India-borders hamper China’s new economic development policy in Tibet**

28 July 2024, Tibetan Review

The focus of China’s new development plans in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), which includes the establishment of New Economic and Technology Development Zones (ETDZs), are on pockets of the Han populated areas. Already, the Tibetan economy is largely under Han control (except for in the agriculture and livestock sectors), and Han people constitute the majority group in many of Tibet’s urban centres, noted a jamestown.org report Jul 26. Besides, the potential for exports, a major thrust of the development plans, cannot be realised due to the continuing border tension with India, the report added.

The zones have been set up by the TAR government to import practices from elsewhere in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and shift the region’s economy away from traditional sectors and toward export-oriented industries, construction, and even high-tech manufacturing.

In June, TAR’s Party Secretary Wang Junzheng, made an inspection tour of the Lhasa ETDZ in the regional capital’s Doilungdêqên (Tibetan: Toelung Dechen) District. While there, he instructed officials to improve various aspects of the zone to help boost businesses such as cross-border e-commerce and support Tibetan products to “go out,” creating a new source of growth for the region’s foreign trade, the report said, citing Lhasa Daily, Jun 13. The readout of Wang’s visit reflects a concerted focus on ETDZs and expanding overseas trade as local growth drivers.

The report noted that although the region has registered growth rates above the national average since the 1990s, this has largely been fuelled by massive subsidies and transfer payments by the central government.

Since 2008, the government has focused on developing the tourism, mining, and construction industries, but their potential to help shift to indigenous growth remains limited. Provincial policymakers therefore have launched an array of initiatives that broadly replicate the growth model of inland provinces, hence the establishment of the ETDZs to attract investments, promote exports, and incubate industries as a key feature of the emerging strategy.

The policy of setting up ETDZs has been articulated and endorsed politically at higher levels, underscoring their significance in overall economic

planning, the report noted. The provincial-level ETDZs have been established in Chamdo City in 2013, Lhokha in 2018, and Shigatse near the border with Nepal, and Nyingchi (Tibetan: Nyingtri) near the border with India in 2019. Before these, China’s State Council established an ETDZ in Lhasa in 2001.

The new ETDZs seek to promote industrialization, help reduce the urban-rural gap, and pursue other policy objectives through encouraging urbanization, export-oriented industries, commercialization of agro-pastoral products, and tourism.

ETDZs are designed to create functional linkages with local industrial parks and rural commercial enterprises like farmers and herders’ cooperatives. Both industrial parks and ETDZs aim at incubating more “non-public economic organizations” to increase local tax revenue.

In the long run, the flourishing of such enterprises is also intended to incentivize Han private entrepreneurs to invest in the region, the report noted.

Industrial parks are a portion of the city that are specifically reserved for industrial use. These zones are not for the use of commercial or residential needs. They generally include ports, oil refineries, distribution centres, warehouses, and factories.

The TAR has 74 industrial parks, three-quarters of which are based in Lhasa city, followed by Nyingchi, Shigatse, and Lhokha. Besides, Nagqu (Nagchu), Chamdo, and Ngari each have one industrial park. This geographic distribution reflects the economic focus of the government on the “central economic zone”, a term used in previous regional planning documents.

TAR has also launched a related set of initiatives under the umbrella of “Five Cities and Three Hours Economic Belt”, centering on Lhasa and Lhokha prefecture-cities and creating linkages with Shigatse in the west and Chamdo in the east. This regional integration plan, begun in 2018 and set to complete its second phase of implementation in 2025, will improve railway connectivity by completing the Lhasa-Nyingchi line of the Qinghai-Tibet railway, as well as road and air transport infrastructure.

At the regional planning level, these interrelated projects and initiatives are crucial for creating local sources of revenue and growth. Lhasa and Lhokha, whose combined populations equate to 41% of the TAR’s total, contribute 48% of the region’s GDP and 58.8% of total revenue. This population has grown significantly since 2016 due to the massive relocation of farmers and herders from Nagqu to Lhasa, Nyingchi, and Lhokha, the report said, citing Human Rights Watch, May 21.

The report cites the development of strategic border towns facing Nepal, India and Bhutan as another important policy, as referenced in the Thirteenth Five-

Year Plan for the TAR. These include Shiquanhe (Sengge Khabab) and Burang (Purang) town in Ngari Prefecture, Yadong (Yatung or Dromo) in Shigatse city-prefecture, Longzi (Lhuntse) Town in Lhokha city-prefecture and Mainling in Nyingtri city-prefecture, among others. As part of this urbanization push, the government has upgraded several county-level administrative units to city (urban) status since 2013 to facilitate further devolution of resources and administrative power to local governments.

Currently, the PRC has five land border ports in this Tibetan region, namely Zhangmu (Dram) in Nyalam County, Gyirong (Kyirong) in Gyirong County, Riwu (Ra'og) in Dinggye (Tingkye) County in Shigatse on the Nepal border, Burang in Ngari on the Indian border, and Yadong in Shigatse on the India-Bhutan border.

Being an extension to the TAR of key pillars of the PRC's economic strategy that began in coastal regions in 1978, the provincial leadership has pursued central directives in attempting to develop the region's foreign trade profile over the last decade.

However, the report cites the heavy subsidization, Han control of the Tibetan economy (except for in the agriculture and livestock sectors), and the marginalization of ethnic Tibetans as potential causes of problems for both the local economy's prospects. And the government's more recent initiatives could simply exacerbate the problems, particularly as the new parks and zones are focused on pockets of the rising Han population.

Ma Rong, a sociologist of population in Tibet, has noted that the TAR's Han population has increased overall but especially in certain pockets. Gar County in Ngari had a Han population ranging from 10% to 30%, Nyalam and Yadong in Shigatse had between 5 and 10% of total population from the 1990s up to the early 2000s.

However, these estimates, at best, underestimate the Han population by excluding or undercounting the "floating population" of Han temporary migrants and small businesses. The latest official socio-economic survey statistics suggest that Han people now constitute a majority or close to a majority of the population in specific urban centres like Bayi District in Nyingchi (around 39%) and Gar County in Ngari (around 57%), the report said.

ETDZs are designed in part to support exports, but the TAR's external trade is currently limited to Nepal, due to ongoing border tensions with India. Meanwhile, infrastructural challenges hampering the development of the Sichuan-Tibet railway or national highways connecting the TAR with other provinces suggest that further integration with the rest of the PRC remains some way off, the report concluded.

## Amitabh Mathur on the Tibetan Struggle, Post-Dalai Lama Scenario, and the 'Tibet Card'

27 July 2024, The Diplomat, Sudha Ramachandran

"There is nothing like the Tibet card. And it would be deeply offensive to the Tibetans to think they are mere pawns on the diplomatic chessboard."

When a delegation of U.S. Congressmen met the 14th Dalai Lama at Dharamshala in India in June 2024, it triggered speculation over whether the Indian government was signaling a new tough position on the Tibetan question vis-à-vis China. The meeting comes at a time when Sino-Indian and Sino-U.S. relations have frayed significantly. Days later, the Dalai Lama underwent knee surgery and on July 6, he turned 89, underscoring the Tibetan spiritual leader's declining health and advancing age, and that the Tibetan movement is nearing enormous changes and challenges when he passes on.

In an interview with The Diplomat's South Asia Editor Sudha Ramachandran, Amitabh Mathur, co-founder of DeepStrat, a think tank in New Delhi, shares his insights into the complex processes involved in finding the successor to the 14th Dalai Lama. Following his retirement in October 2014 as special secretary of the Research & Analysis Wing (India's external intelligence agency), Mathur was appointed adviser on Tibetan Affairs in the federal Ministry of Home Affairs (September 2015-September 2018). In this role, he forged a close relationship with the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan government-in-exile and Tibetan religious and political leaders.

The democratic leadership of the Tibetans in exile should be supported, he said, and not for any geopolitical aims: "India's support to the Tibetans... is in the nature of its policy to help sustain and nurture the unique Tibetan culture and practice of Tibetan Buddhism, which China is trying to obliterate."

A delegation of U.S. Congressmen met the Dalai Lama at Dharamshala recently. Why did the Indian government allow them, especially when India's relations with China are tense?

The short answer to the question would be, as stated by the spokesman of India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), that His Holiness the Dalai Lama (HHDL) is a revered religious leader, an honored guest who has the complete liberty to meet anyone he wishes to. Visits by U.S. State Department officials, senators, congressmen and other notables from various countries have been taking place unimpeded for many years, often facilitated by the government of India. Different U.S. State Department Coordinators for Tibetan issues over the years have met the Dalai Lama at least six times in Dharamshala – the last being in May 2022, when Uzra Zeya called on him.



It does seem, however, that the visit of the bipartisan delegation of U.S. members of the Congress to meet His Holiness and elected leaders of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) in Dharamshala is a departure from routine visits of the past. The visit took place at a time when both U.S.-China relations and India-China relations are at a low point. Not only was the delegation officially hosted, but subsequent meetings with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval suggested a nod to the message the delegation came to convey. Some interpreted it as going beyond India's positions on matters pertaining to the Tibet issue.

The purpose of the delegation was to apprise the Dalai Lama of the "Promoting a Resolution of the Tibet-China Dispute Act," which had been passed with bipartisan support both in the Senate and House. Commonly referred to as the "Resolve Tibet Act," it was subsequently signed into law by [U.S.] President Biden on July 12.

Features of the act question Beijing's claim that Tibet was always a part of China and enjoin U.S. government public diplomacy to counter China's misinformation to this effect. It calls upon China to initiate a dialogue, unconditionally, with the Dalai Lama or his representatives or the democratically elected leaders of the Tibetan community for a negotiated agreement on Tibet. The Act further endeavors to collaborate with other nations to achieve the negotiated settlement.

The visit seems to have been carefully choreographed. The composition of the bipartisan delegation was interesting. Led by Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee Mike McCaul, it included among others, co-author of the act Congressman Jim McGovern and Nancy Pelosi, former speaker and a longstanding Tibet supporter and China biter.

The delegation could easily have saved itself the bother of flying across to Dharamshala to meet the Dalai Lama and instead met him in the U.S. as he was in any case scheduled to reach New York in a few days for knee surgery. The impact perhaps then would have been much less than made by its highly publicized meetings and statements made in Dharamshala, the exile capital of Tibet.

Though a public platform was provided to the U.S. delegation, official statements on the meetings with Indian leaders merely referred to "discussions on bilateral strategic partnership." Nevertheless, India is seen to have signaled its loss of patience with China's intransigence in efforts to end the standoff along the Line of Actual Control as the disputed Sino-Indian border is known, following its unprovoked military incursion in 2020 into the Ladakh sector, and

other pinpricks in Arunachal. The signal to Beijing seems to be that we will not respect your sensibilities if you do not respect ours.

Considering the stand taken of late by the Indian government on relations with Taiwan and the South China Sea dispute, it does seem to point to a more aggressive posture towards China and a more proactive stance on Tibet. The Tibetans seem to have interpreted it like that. Whether this indicates Indo-U.S. convergence on moves regarding Tibet remains to be seen.



Tibetan poet and refugee activist Tenzin Tsundue protests across from Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's hotel room in Bangalore, India, 2005.

Credit: Wikipedia/ Nick Gulotta

Is India using the Tibet card? Has it worked?

To my mind, there is nothing like the Tibet card. And it would be deeply offensive to the Tibetans to think they are mere pawns on the diplomatic chessboard.

India's support to the Tibetans or the occasional public expression of it is in the nature of its policy to help sustain and nurture the unique Tibetan culture and practice of Tibetan Buddhism, which China is trying to obliterate. Right from the beginning, in the early 1960s, India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru recognized that the Tibetan struggle was a civilizational one and made available all facilities and assistance to the Dalai Lama in preserving it.

India does not believe in any such card and thus the question of using it does not arise.

Why has PM Modi not met the Dalai Lama?

It is not entirely correct to say there has been no meeting between Modi and the Dalai Lama. In an interview in July 2019 with the Indian magazine *The Week*, the Dalai Lama disclosed he had met the PM in 2014 itself. He went on to say he had written to congratulate Modi on his victory in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls and received a “very good reply.”

Campaigning during the recent general elections, Modi revealed he frequently engages in discussions with His Holiness, who he describes as a “stalwart of our rich heritage.” Given his public greetings to the Dalai Lama on his birthdays and most recently to wish him a speedy recovery from his knee surgery, one can say the Indian Prime Minister has not shied away from his contacts with the Dalai Lama.

It also needs to be known that there is constant communication between the government of India at the highest official levels with not only the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) but also with His Holiness and his key aides.

Central ministers and chief ministers especially of the northeastern states, who are also practicing Buddhists, meet the Dalai Lama and frequently engage with the CTA. In the Indian Parliament, there is an inter-party parliamentary group that engages with CTA and members of the Tibetan parliament in exile.

However, I do agree that there could be more public meetings between the Dalai Lama and top Indian political leaders. Honoring and respecting religious leaders is part of our cultural tradition. It would also send the right signal to those Tibetans, very few to my mind, who from time to time need reassurance that there has been no dilution of India’s support to their cause.

Who will succeed the 14th Dalai Lama is a very important matter that will determine the future of the Tibetan movement. Yet there is no clarity on the selection process. Why? What process is the Dalai Lama and the CTA considering?

The single most important question in every Tibetan’s mind is what will happen after the 14th Dalai Lama is no more. The Dalai Lama was historically both the spiritual and the political head of Tibet. Although he gave up his temporal responsibilities in 2011 to a democratically elected government, he is still perceived by the rest of the world to be its leader, and indeed the embodiment of the Tibetan government. As such, he continues to be the driving force for the Tibetan government, both in India and in the wider world.

All hopes and aspirations of the Tibetans in Tibet and in exile are centered around the exceptional personality of the Dalai Lama. Devotion and loyalty to him is because of the Tibetans’ deep faith in the institution of reincarnation, unique to Tibetan Buddhism, and the religious preeminence of the Dalai

Lama. Naturally, there is anxiety as to what will happen to the institution, the future of the Tibetan community in India and the Tibetan struggle. The anxiety is further compounded by China’s declaration that it will select the reincarnation of the 14th Dalai Lama.

The Dalai Lama is yet to clear the air on the subject of his succession or reincarnation. He has spoken of various possibilities, from discontinuing the “feudal anachronism,” to reincarnating in a free country, to being reborn as a woman, or opting for emanation (manifesting in another body) in his lifetime, rather than reincarnation.

Dalai Lama’s most authoritative statement remains the one made in 2011 when he warned China against meddling in the subject of his reincarnation. He declared that at the age of 90 (he has just completed 89) he would consult with High Lamas of Tibetan Buddhism, the Tibetan public, and other concerned people who follow Tibetan Buddhism. More importantly, the Dalai Lama said that if it is decided that the institution must continue and there should be reincarnation, it would be the responsibility of the Gaden Phodrang Trust to follow his written instructions and carry out the search and recognition, which should be as per tradition.

It is not in the public domain whether the Dalai Lama has given such instructions on the search process and related matters. Given the fact that China will anoint its own protege in the Potala Palace, it is important that the processes are formalized in a manner to withstand manipulation and interference by the Chinese government and others with vested interests. In 2019, Ogyen Trinley Dorje, the 17th Karmapa and head of the Karma Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism, wrote an open letter saying the Chinese policy on the Dalai Lama’s reincarnation and its repercussions must be investigated. He expressed worry about attempts being made from within and outside Tibet to arbitrarily recognize the reincarnation of Lamas without any regard for traditional Tibetan systems and adopting dubious means.

Interestingly, however, the process of consultation that the Dalai Lama has spoken about seems to have been done in 2019. There were separate meetings of (a) past and present CTA officials, (b) representatives of Tibet’s support groups and (c) religious leaders of all four schools of Tibetan Buddhism, important lineages including the Bön. All unanimously resolved the Dalai Lama must reincarnate.

What do you foresee happening after the passing of the current Dalai Lama?

China is waiting for the Dalai Lama to die. It seems to have a strategy in place to deal with his death, both inside and outside Tibet. It will use the occasion to assert its right to choose the next Dalai Lama through

a lottery using the Golden Urn as prescribed by Chinese emperors, thereby affirming its claim that Tibet has always been under China. The method was introduced after Nepal invaded Tibet in 1791, and Tibetans sought help from the Chinese emperor to drive them out.

The Chinese claim is dubious, as barring the case of the 11th Dalai Lama, in all other cases, the choice was made through traditional religious methods. In any case, it is solely the decision of a person to decide when and where he will be reborn. This cannot be decided by atheist communists who do not even believe in the unique concept of reincarnation. Having selected its candidate, China can be expected to have him recognized by its own Panchen Lama, and ensconce him in an elaborate ceremony on the throne in the Potala Palace. To sow division amongst Tibetans, the choice will in all likelihood be endorsed by some Gelugpas, the Dalai Lama's school of Tibetan Buddhism, who worship the Dorje Shugden deity, a practice that the Dalai Lama has disallowed. Of the many important monks in this group is the reincarnation of Trijang Rinpoche, the junior tutor of the Dalai Lama, who actively supports the activities of the Shugden Group.

China also expects, in the absence of the towering personality of the Dalai Lama, the head of the CTA will not be able to draw the same international support or even unite the Tibetans in exile. It anticipates, in the changed circumstances with drying up moral, political, and financial support, the CTA will become ineffective, and should it become so, it will turn into a liability for the Government of India.

Thus, it is important to have a strategy for strengthening the democratically elected political leadership.

Despite some shortcomings, the CTA has established itself as the political representative of the Tibetans the world over. It has also successfully coordinated with Tibet advocacy groups in recent years to engage with the world. Credit for the enactment of the Resolve Tibet Act can rightly be given to the synergy between the International Campaign for Tibet and the CTA. The more difficult challenge before it would be to keep the Tibetans united and pursue an agreed political line. At the moment, however, it looks unlikely the Chinese government will agree to engage with it.

Via its Tibet Support and Policy Act 2019, the U.S. has declared that the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama is his business and that of the Tibetan religious leadership. Anyone interfering in the process would be sanctioned. All eyes are now expectantly looking to New Delhi to make a similar statement.

The other important aspect to be remembered is that there is likely to be a substantial gap between the death of the current Dalai Lama and the installation

of the next, who will even then only be a child. And the gap will become longer by the time he comes of age. He will need the support of all heads of the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism and high-ranking lineage holders. In the vacuum that will follow it is imperative that the heads of such lineages are united and on board. In this, crucial will be the role of the 41st Sakya Trizin, a revered religious leader, and Ogyen Trinley Dorje, the 17th Karmapa.

The young Karmapa, who fled to India from Tibet in January 2000, left India in 2017, unhappy at the way he was treated. Unlike prominent young tulkus born in exile, he was born in Tibet, recognized by the Chinese and the Dalai Lama, and enthroned in his traditional seat in Tsurphu, Tibet. Unlike others, he has also lived in Tibet. The 17th Karmapa is loyal to the Dalai Lama, is charismatic, and his popularity cuts across sectarian lines. His presence in India would be of great advantage to all concerned and all efforts should be made to convince him to return to India.

### **Tibet and Xinjiang: The US increases pressure on China**

26 July 2024, The Times of Israel

While this week will be known for China gathering 14 Palestinian groups in Beijing to unite terrorists under a "Beijing declaration" and trying to get Palestinian groups such as the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas into the PLO, the last weeks were about the US administration trying to increase pressure on China on Tibet and Xinjiang.

US President Joe Biden's administration said it would impose sanctions on more Chinese officials for an "ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity", capping off a week of sharp rebukes over Beijing's alleged human-rights abuses and support for Russia's war against Ukraine. This came around the time that President Biden signed into law the Tibet Resolve Act. Less noticed but equally important was the judgement by Argentina's Federal Court reviving a complaint that alleged that China had committed genocide and crimes against humanity and the Uyghur people.

Meanwhile, one finds that the US State Department has also announced that it intended to impose visa restrictions on Chinese officials for their repression of religious and ethnic minorities, meaning thereby the Uyghur and Tibetans. The US has long stood by the Tibetans through bipartisan legislations, it is time for Washington to stand up for the Uyghur peoples also.

Turning to the Tibet Bill which US President Joe Biden signed into law (12 July) it must be said that it was had been anticipated and in reality, not a new bill, but

improves upon the Tibet Policy Act of 2002. Titled rather ambitiously, "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act" this Act gives a fillip to America's Tibet policy through further amendments to the Act of 2002 and seeks to facilitate the resolution of the longstanding conflict between Tibet and China. Coincidentally, a few days earlier, Tibet and China held secret back-channel talks. Sikyong Penpa

Tshering while announcing the holding of talks said the Tibetan people did not expect anything from President Xi Jinping adding that the long-term view being taken was for the day after Xi! These talks are part of the ongoing episodic conversation that takes place between Tibet and China, but without any concrete results. It remains to be seen if the US Bill will bring any pressure on China to actually 'talk' to the Dalai Lama. The act rightly asserts that People's Republic of China (PRC) government and the Communist Party of China (CPC) wrongly claim historically Tibet as a part of China. It is for this reason that the act specifies that public diplomacy initiatives should actively combat disinformation propagated by China concerning Tibet, including disinformation and propaganda about the history of Tibet, its people, and the Dalai Lama. This point is significant as the Chinese narrative about Tibet (called Xizang by China today) is completely skewed. Declaring the US administration's stand, President Joe Biden said, "...I share the Congress's bipartisan commitment to advancing the human rights of Tibetans and supporting efforts to preserve their distinct linguistic, cultural, and religious heritage. My administration will continue to call on the People's Republic of China to resume direct dialogue, without preconditions, with the Dalai Lama, or his representatives, to seek a settlement that resolves differences and leads to a negotiated agreement on Tibet." Notably, the Act looks at both sides doing things to improve the prospects for dialogue that could lead to a negotiated agreement on Tibet.

It is in this context that one should see the US State Department's announcement it was "taking steps to impose visa restrictions on PRC officials for their involvement in repression of marginalized religious and ethnic communities". Basically, America has said that China has not lived up to its commitments to respect and protect human rights, as demonstrated by the ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang and the persistence of human rights violations in Tibet.

However, the State Department does not restrict itself to Tibet and Xinjiang, it speaks of the erosion of fundamental freedoms in Hong Kong and raises the bar by talking of Chinese "transnational repression around the world". Interesting turn of phrase for it

echoes the Chinese repression of ethnic minority and Chinese citizens living overseas.

A step back shows that in 2022, the US Treasury Department had frozen the US

assets of and blocked transactions of two top Tibetan officials. The first was Wu Yingjie, TAR Communist Party Secretary from 2016 to 2021, while the other is Zhang Hongbo, the Tibetan region's police chief since 2018. In 2023, the State Department imposed visa sanctions on Chinese officials pursuing "forced assimilation" of children in Tibet. The latest announcement adds to the pressure that the US continues to put on China through legislation and other legal measures. Tibet and its people is the only region where US lawmakers have made an issue of.

They have also passed laws like the Uyghur Forced Labour Prevention Act. The State Department had earlier criticized Hong Kong for passage of its new national security law, claiming that the vague language in its provisions created uncertainty in the minds of the residents. A State Department report of April 2024 accused China of continuing to "dismantle" Hong Kong's political freedoms and autonomy. The enforcement of the national security law along with its retrospective application as well as the denial of bail to activists was cited by the US State Department as being central to China's disinterest in keeping Hong Kong's democratic system in place.

At the end of this analysis, it is necessary to understand the importance of the recent judgement of the Argentinian Court of Cassation. It recently ruled that the Court of Appeal of Buenos Aires' decision to shelve the original complaint filed by several international organizations supporting the Uyghur cause, lacked sufficient justification. It noted that the appealed ruling did not provide legal and political reasons for restricting the victims' rights and refusing to exercise universal jurisdiction. Notably, the judgement stated that Argentina's judicial system possessed the necessary resources to ensure victims of international crimes could access jurisdiction for their cause. Consequently, the court ordered the prosecutor to open an investigation, mandating that the judge to commence investigatory stage of proceedings. On 16 August 2022, a criminal complaint had been filed in Buenos Aires under Section 118 of the Constitution of Argentina, which permits the

prosecution of international crimes regardless of where they occur. The legal campaign in Argentina was launched by the World Uyghur Congress and the Uyghur Human Rights Project in the courts of Argentina in relation to the international crimes of genocide being committed against the Uyghur.

The foregoing narrative shows the wide net cast by the US against China. This includes legislative action

and imposition of sanctions. Thus, different wings of the

US government act to send out a strong signal on the need to protect the rights and identity of ethnic minorities in China. The pivotal Tibet Act 2024 strengthens America's policy following other such significant acts, like the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2019 and the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act of 2018. On the 65th Tibetan Uprising Day in March 2024, a resolution was introduced in the US Congress

reaffirming support for the Tibetan people. Other countries can take a leaf from the US handling of Tibet and Xinjiang which serves to put pressure on the PRC. It could be argued that some of these Acts do not go far enough, but the fact that they are in place and in force serve to send a signal, which by itself carries a lot of weight.

### **As China's economy spirals, the Communist Party tightens its grip**

26 July 2024, The Hill

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has just concluded the Third Plenary Session of its 20th Central Committee, emphasizing continued reform and opening up.

Phrases like "reform will not pause, and opening up will not stop," and "the market plays a decisive role in resource allocation," suggest a commitment to these principles. However, Xi Jinping's definition of reform diverges significantly from the Western interpretation rooted in Deng Xiaoping's era, which leaned towards a market economy and some political liberalization.

Under Xi, the term "reform" has been redefined. Xi has clarified that moving towards Western "universal values" and political systems is a misinterpretation. The Third Plenary Session reaffirmed that reforms must maintain the CCP's leadership, adherence to Marxism, socialism with Chinese characteristics and the people's democratic dictatorship.

This version of reform, according to Xi, "will neither take the old closed and rigid path nor the erroneous path of changing flags and altering banners."

Under this premise, the party must constantly "reform," or in other words, adapt to the times, adjusting policies for governing the country and managing the economy to best serve the ultimate goal of maintaining and strengthening party rule.

Reform is not an adjustment made for special circumstances or in a specific direction but a routine action for governing the country. In fact, the "reform" that the CCP discusses in the economic sphere today is another way of saying "planned economy" at the highest level.

That said, Xi Jinping's planned economy is different from Mao Zedong's. Mao's planned economy had no "opening up" and no market mechanism. In Xi Jinping's planned economy, opening up and a partial market economy are allowed, provided that they need to be under the supervision and control of the party.

In "An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations," Adam Smith coined the term "invisible hand" to describe the unseen forces that move the free market economy. That hand in China's controlled market economy is the Communist Party, and it is visible, although it has started showing signs of dysfunction recently.

Developments in China's economic landscape suggest that the Chinese economy may be slipping out of Xi Jinping's control. After unsuccessful attempts to revive the economy, the signs are that Xi is pivoting towards a deeper planned economy to solve these problems.

On June 3, the State Council prohibited central government-owned enterprises in non-financial sectors from holding shares in financial institutions to mitigate financial risks. This "withdrawal from financial sector order" signals anticipated financial turmoil.

In July, the Chinese central bank, the People's Bank of China (PBOC), began borrowing national bonds and planned on selling them in the secondary market. While this action can increase bond yields and stabilize the RMB exchange rate, it can also have severe consequences.

The Ministry of Finance, which issues bonds, and the central bank, which prints money, are controlled by the CCP. This allows the Ministry of Finance to issue unlimited bonds. If it can't repay them upon maturity, the central bank will print more money. The central bank's borrowing of national bonds will also lead to unanchored money printing, causing significant inflation.

Two weeks later, the PBOC unexpectedly lowered interest rates again to further increase liquidity, despite inflation risks. These moves reflect China's dire financial situation: a severe lack of liquidity and nobody has money. Similar issues are evident in other economic areas under Xi's administration, as significant stimulus efforts in electric vehicles (EVs), real estate, and the stock market in the first half of the year have all been ineffective.

China's EV sector, a key focus for Xi, faces setbacks with high U.S. and European Union tariffs, limiting market access. The Chinese stock market remains unstable. The government has used measures such as reducing the stamp duty and investing significant funds to prop up the stock market.



While the index briefly rose above 3,000 points, it primarily benefited state-owned enterprises. Private small and medium-sized enterprises continued to decline. The real estate market is in a slump, with developers and consumers refusing to invest due to China's gloomy economic future, financial difficulties and population decline.

Overall, Xi Jinping's economic rescue attempts have failed. In response, he appears to be shifting towards a deeper planned economy to address these issues and mitigate the CCP's authority crisis.

This is exemplified by the new Law of the People's Republic of China on Rural Collective Economic Organizations. This law reaffirms that all rural land belongs to the country and that the use and management rights of land and other rural resources are centralized under party organizations at various levels. This reverses the rural reforms in the late 1970s, which rendered the farmers great autonomy in managing lands and receiving profits accordingly. This Third Plenary Session also pledged to strengthen, optimize and expand state-owned capital and enterprises – another indication of a shift towards deeper planning in economic matters. Transitioning to a deeper planned economy aims to consolidate CCP rule and will impact foreign policy, especially regarding Taiwan. The dire economic situation may limit China's ability to take Taiwan.

However, if Xi is determined to take Taiwan, a deeper planned economy could be advantageous. By focusing on internal circulation, such an economy would reduce the impact of sanctions on China.

### **Why Chinese TikTok is being accused of deleting Tibetan content**

26 July 2024, The Observers, Thais Chaigne

It's not new for the Chinese Communist Party to censor any social media content about Tibet that has a political bent. However, in recent weeks, Tibetan users of Douyin, China's TikTok equivalent, have said that any and all content in the Tibetan language is being censored, whether it is political or not. We spoke to a Tibetan woman in exile who also works for an NGO fighting to defend the human rights of Tibetans.

"Aren't all ethnic groups supposed to be equal? Why, then, is the use of our language, Tibetan, being restricted?" asks a TikTok user who goes by Youga Ga in a video in Mandarin published on the Douyin video platform. The video quickly disappeared from the platform before being republished on other social media sites not censored by the Chinese Communist Party and accessible from abroad.

The Chinese Communist Party has a long history of censoring any political content about Tibetans and other ethnic and religious minorities. At the same

time, the Party encourages what might be called cultural content about tourist-friendly things like music, dance and cuisine.

"They were using Douyin for non-political purposes"

However, in recent weeks, Youga Ga is far from the only person to complain about Douyin's so-called "ban" on content in the Tibetan language. But like Youga Ga's video, these posts were quickly removed by the platform.

Douyin hasn't made a public declaration about banning the Tibetan language, but many posts in Tibetan have been deleted – as have posts about Tibetan culture, according to the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD), an NGO based in Dharamsala, India, the seat of the Tibetan government in exile. Tenzin Dawa, the executive president of the TCHRD, spoke to the Observers about what is happening online:

A huge number of Tibetans active on Douyin have expressed their frustration that they suddenly cannot use Douyin the way they used to. Some of them make a living from the platform, and are now facing sudden restrictions.

Many of them spoke about things that were strictly non-political. It's just that they were using the Tibetan language. Doctors, entrepreneurs, monks, or content creators, they were using Douyin for non-political purposes - for example, to teach Tibetan to non-Tibetans. Or in the case of doctors, to communicate with people in areas such as remote villages where they only speak Tibetan.

It's a huge platform. In most cases, the posts are not removed immediately, but a few days after they are published. But any live-streamers speaking in Tibetan get banned and removed within minutes.

Douyin isn't the first platform to ban Tibetan. Talkmate, a language-learning application, deleted its content in Tibetan, as did the video streaming platform Bilibili. In 2022, a video sharing app called Kuaishou, which is very similar to Douyin, started deleting videos in Tibetan.

A "folkloric" image of Tibet

The links between ByteDance, the company that owns the video platform Douyin, and the Chinese Communist Party are widely documented (such as in this report by an investigative committee of the French Senate). And like all social media platforms in China, Douyin is supervised by Party censors. In the past few years, for example, Douyin has been censoring content linked to the Uighur Muslim minority. The only content about the Uighurs that remains online is cultural in nature and paints a picturesque portrait to bring in tourists.

Videos in Mandarin that promote Tibetan culture have also met certain success in China, like those made by Tenzin Tsondu. The young shepherd reached

near-celebrity status after a video of him wearing traditional garments went viral on Douyin in 2020. Historically, the Chinese Communist Party tends to like this kind of cultural content, and the Tourism Board of Litang recruited Tsondu as an “ambassador”.

“The Communist Party sees the culture of ethnic minorities as a threat”

What looks like a concerted effort to remove the Tibetan language from social media would be aligned with the political drive for cultural assimilation. Since Xi Jinping came to power in 2013, his government has pushed for minorities to assimilate to the Han ethnic majority. Historically, these assimilation measures have targeted the most autonomous ethnic groups like the Uighurs, the Mongols and the Tibetans. Even just speaking Tibetan can be seen as an act of defiance, says our Observer:

The Communist Party often talks about “ethnic harmony” and “ethnic unity”. In China, there are 56 ethnic minorities. “Ethnic unity” is used as a euphemism to assimilate other groups that are not ethnically Chinese to one Chinese nation, by which they mean one language, one nation. The Party sees the culture of ethnic minorities as a threat, as a form of subversion.

The aim is to eradicate other languages, cultures and religions. One of the reasons is because in Tibet we had widespread peaceful protests in 2008, which got a lot of international attention. In order to avoid a repeat of that, the Party is trying to erase our language and culture, and assimilate the younger generation of Tibetans so there is no criticism from inside.

A number of dissidents reported that the government goes after people who try to protect Tibetan culture and that some young Tibetans are pushed to go to boarding schools to learn Mandarin.

### **Opinion: Hopes and Dangers of new Tibet-China dialogue- A friendly warning**

26 July 2024, Phayul, Vijay Kranti

Beijing’s record of conducting dialogue and establishing contacts with others throughout its history has never been happy for the other side. Skeptics point out that whenever Beijing showed interest in a ‘dialogue’ with Dharamshala, the Chinese leaders used it only to buy time for further fortifying their grip on Tibet or to cool down the growing international pressure on matters related to Tibet – or both. Now sudden interest shown by President Xi Jinping’s China in starting a fresh dialogue with Dharamshala calls for a deep clinical scrutiny of what prompted President Xi Jinping to restart these negotiations?

Repeated claims by the senior most Tibetan exile leadership about ‘back channel’ talks being in progress with Beijing are an indication of a new round of Dharamshala-Beijing dialogue taking shape to settle the seven decade old conflict between the two sides. In his recent media statements Penpa Tsering, the ‘Sikyong’ (Tibetan title for the elected ‘President’ of the exiled Tibetan diaspora) has revealed that some behind the scene talks are being held with the Chinese leaders with the help of a third country. It’s understandable that the Sikyong refused to divulge either the name of the ‘third country’ or the identity of officials involved from either side. But his claim that these talks started with the initiative of the Chinese side deserves serious attention and calls for a deep clinical scrutiny of what prompted President Xi Jinping to restart these negotiations after having rejected every single point on which the Dalai Lama side has been resting its case for settlement of the Tibetan issue with Beijing.

Since the last official contact between Dharamshala and Beijing ended abruptly in 2010, Dalai Lama’s establishment in Dharamshala has been calling upon world governments to push Beijing to restart the dialogue – a demand which the Chinese side has been brushing aside with full contempt all these 14 years. Although the ruling elite among the ‘Central Tibetan Administration’ (CTA), also known as the ‘Tibetan Government-in-Exile’, looks enthusiastic over this new development about a fresh dialogue, many independent thinkers among the diaspora and the skeptical section among Tibet supporters are smelling a rat in this sudden change of mind on the part of Chinese leadership. The latter point out that China has never been sincere in its dealings and contacts with the Dalai Lama since Mao assimilated Tibet into China in 1951 through a forcibly signed ‘17-Point Agreement.’ China had signed this controversial ‘Agreement’ in Beijing with a visiting Tibetan delegation who, according to the erstwhile Dalai Lama establishment in Lhasa, was never authorized to sign any treaty or agreement on his behalf with Beijing. To the annoyance of the 16 year old Dalai Lama the signing of this ‘Agreement’ led to assimilation of Tibet into China without the knowledge or approval of his Lhasa government. Citing history of all subsequent contacts between Dharamshala and Beijing the skeptics claim that whenever Beijing showed interest in a ‘dialogue’ with Dharamshala, the Chinese leaders used it only to buy time for further fortifying their grip on Tibet or to cool down the growing international pressure on matters related to Tibet – or both.

‘Dialogue’- a tool of deception.

Another historic example of this Chinese art of deception in the name of holding ‘dialogue’, though unrelated to Tibet, was late Chairman Mao’s

invitation to a wide set of Uyghur leaders of East Turkistan who were violently resisting China's takeover of their country in 1949. After most of these leaders agreed to go to Beijing in an airplane, specially arranged by Mao, the plane mysteriously exploded in the midair and the entire Uyghur resistance leadership was wiped out to pave way for converting a free 'Republic of East Turkistan' into China's new colony 'Xinjiang'.

The last 2002-2010 dialogue too, which Beijing started with a big bang, unfortunately proved to be just a Chinese façade and ended up into a whimper. The Chinese leaders dragged it on for eight long years without moving an inch in any direction in spite of Dharamshala's high hopes on it. It is worth noting that before this dialogue started in 2002 the Chinese side had consistently remained indifferent for decades to Dalai Lama's appeals and offers for a dialogue. It was only because of the rising international pressure that Beijing finally agreed to talk to Dharamshala. In its resolution on Tibet on 6th July 2000 (text-0326) the European Parliament had put a three-year embargo on the Chinese government and had asked the EU governments to "give serious consideration to the possibility of recognizing the Tibetan Government in exile as the legitimate representative of the Tibetan people if, within three years, the Beijing authorities and the Tibetan government in exile have not, through negotiations organised under the aegis of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, signed an agreement on a new Statute for Tibet....".

Similarly the US Congress' decision to add the famous 'Tibet Policy Act of 2002' (TPA-2002) to its agenda too had shaken the Beijing leaders. As the EU Parliament embargo date started approaching and the US Congress started discussing TPA-2002, Beijing started its so called 'Dialogue' in 2002 and an over enthusiastic Dalai Lama's side joined it without involving the UN Secretary General or any other independent international agency. True to the Chinese nature, the dialogue remained a non-starter till its last day in 2010.

Behind the walls of 'Dialogue'

It took Dharamshala eight years to realize that while it was confident about some big breakthrough and was busy in bragging about the dialogue as its great achievement, the Chinese side was busy using these crucial years to fill up all such major gaps which stood in their way of foisting its final colonial grip over Tibet. To name a few: by agreeing to sit with the Tibetans for a 'dialogue' the Beijing leaders successfully deflated the growing European, American and most of other international anger over the non-resolution of Tibetan issue and the ever worsening human rights situation inside Tibet. On the material side, some major critical successes of Beijing

during these years included completing the strategic target of spreading the Chinese infrastructure like roads and military network to the farthest corners of Tibet; developing a vast chain of new and modern cities and towns across Tibet to facilitate migration of millions of new Han settlers with the aim of reducing the Tibetans into a nearly meaningless minority in their own homeland. And, more than everything else, the Chinese government used this period to achieve the most unthinkable and technologically difficult target of connecting Tibetan capital Lhasa and the other major city Shigatse to China through its bullet train. This train has proved to be the final tool for making Tibet hospitable for the new Han settlers and a fast and reliable transportation mode for the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to transport hundreds of its tanks, armored vehicles and any number of military personnel to Tibet on any day of the year.

How China manipulated the Dalai Lama

Besides these achievements inside Tibet, the Beijing leaders also proved smarter than Dharamshala outside Tibet where Dalai Lama had laboriously developed a massive international network of Tibet supporters and Tibet Support Groups (TSG) across almost all continents over his five decades of his exile. It goes to the credit of Beijing leaders that they could successfully use the dialogue bonhomie to manipulate Dalai Lama and his CTA establishment to defuse the Tibet support movement across the world. The Chinese side also succeeded in creating deep friction and divisions among the Tibetan diaspora which already stood fragmented following Dalai Lama's decision to scale down his demand for 'Independence' of Tibet from the Chinese colonial rule to just 'genuine autonomy' for Tibet.

As the massive network of Tibet support groups across the world started making international news headlines by stopping or disrupting the Olympic-Torch's journey towards Beijing for the forthcoming Beijing-Olympics-2008, the Chinese leadership proved smart enough to convince the Dalai Lama to use his influence and charm to stop his supporters from their anti-China demonstrations in order to let the Beijing Olympics happen successfully. The anti-China sentiments among the Tibetan people living inside Chinese controlled Tibet too were so high at that time that anti-China demonstrations and riots erupted inside Tibet, months before the Beijing Olympics-2008 started. World was surprised to note that these Tibetan demonstrations spread to more than 54 cities and towns of Tibet. Interestingly, 52 of these 54 places belonged to those areas of original Kham and Amdo provinces of Tibet which China does not recognize as 'Tibet'. After occupying Tibet in 1951 Beijing had scooped out these areas out of original Tibet and had assimilated them into adjoining Chinese provinces of Yunnan, Sichuan,

Gansu and Qinghai through a reorganization of Tibet in 1965.

#### A great Tibetan blunder

What came as a shock to many Tibetans and Tibet supporters was that in his enthusiasm to win the Chinese leaders' smiles and success for his ongoing dialogue with China, the Dalai Lama personally appealed to the Tibetan people inside Tibet as well as Tibet supporters across the world and persuaded them to stop their anti-China demonstrations. It was during this anti Beijing Olympics-2008 movement that the international Tibet support movement had recorded its highest popularity and efficacy by forcing the International Olympic Committee to abandon its traditional practice of carrying the Olympic Torch from Greece to the host country in an open international marathon. But in the checkered history of Tibet support movement the Tibetan leadership's over enthusiasm to please their Chinese dialogue partners also proved to be the watershed point when the movement started losing its steam and went on a path of demoralization and decline following the 2008 Beijing Olympics .

#### China's U-turn

And here comes the anti-climax. As soon as the Beijing Olympics ended successfully, the Beijing leaders were back in their original colours. They suddenly put a full stop at the ongoing Tibet-China dialogue and asked the delegation of Dalai Lama's representative to come back with a written statement of their expectations from Beijing in this dialogue. The community of Tibet watchers and sympathizers was shocked to realize that over first six years of the 'dialogue' the Chinese had not let the Tibetan side to even tell them what were their expectations from this 'dialogue'.

The 'dialogue' finally crashed with a loud thud two years later in 2010 when the Tibetan delegation was invited to Beijing to present its memorandum. The Chinese delegation took only a few minutes to reject the memorandum out rightly and closed the dialogue saying that the Tibetan memorandum was unacceptable because it is nothing but asking for separation of Tibet from China. Since the sudden death of this dialogue Dharamshala has been desperately trying to restart the dialogue despite Chinese rejections.

However, it is not also true that the Dalai Lama and Dharamshala have been always on the losing side in their direct dealings with Beijing. In late 1970s and early 1980s when late Deng Xiaoping was busy opening China to the outer world and gave impression that he was serious about settling the Tibetan issue with Dalai Lama but without the idea of 'Tibetan independence'. It was at that time that Dalai Lama succeeded in convincing the Chinese leaders to allow his representatives to freely visit Tibet to have a

first-hand assessment of the situation. But the process was abruptly stopped by China and sent back Dharamshala's fifth delegation in the middle of its visit. The Beijing masters of Tibet were shocked to see Tibetan peoples' overwhelming welcome and support for Dalai Lama's representatives. While this experience gave a big impetus to the Dalai Lama's hopes about Tibet, it gave a good reason to the Chinese side to revise their strategy for taming its Tibetan subjects. Massive international propaganda generated by Dharamshala on the basis of these visits also further infuriated Beijing and made it highly skeptical about further links with Dalai Lama.

Is it a 'change of heart' in Beijing?

If Sikyong Penpa Tsering's claims about a 'back channel' contact and Beijing's own initiative for this new edition of dialogue are correct, then it is worth analyzing why Xi Jinping and his communist establishment are suddenly getting so keen about fresh negotiations with the Dalai Lama? There is no shortage of people among functionaries of CTA and those from the personal establishment of Dalai Lama who must be looking at this 'change of heart' on President Xi's part as his vulnerability to the American and European pressure on Tibet just like what happened in 2002. But knowing the present state of power balance between China and its Western foes, this euphoria has hardly any base to sustain itself. Today's ground reality is that power equations between China and the entire western block put together are just opposite of the conditions prevailing in 2002. In 2002 Beijing was still a rising power; was vulnerable to international opinion and pressures on issues like Tibet and; its grip over Tibet was still less than complete . In sharp contrast to the 2002 situation Dharamshala will now have to deal with an aggressive, arrogant and an all mighty Xi who is at the helm of a new China which is armed with an unprecedented financial, military and international clout. The vice like control of China on today's Tibet through its PLA; the Gestapo like Public Security Bureau (PSB) and; a massive network of digital and electronic surveillance system which controls every moving sentient thing, including poor Tibetan people inside today's Tibet, would leave hardly any meaningful elbow room for the Dalai Lama side in its negotiations on the dialogue table.

#### Hopes of the Dalai Lama

In my personal meetings with the two supreme Tibetan leaders during initial days of the 2002 dialogue His Holiness the Dalai Lama himself and Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche, who happened to be the most popular elected 'Kalon Tripa' (Prime Minister) of present day Tibet, both looked confident of positive results from the Dharamshala-Beijing dialogue. In my separate meetings, both of them told me more than once that their minimum expectation

from this fresh contact with Chinese leadership was that the Chinese leadership will stop the ongoing process of destruction of Tibetan identity and that this new bonhomie between the two sides, aided by the international support for the Tibetan people, will force the Chinese leaders to ease the suffocating human rights situation being faced by the Tibetan people inside Tibet. But unfortunately, the ground situation on both counts went in just opposite direction and life of ordinary Tibetans inside Tibet went from bad to worse throughout the fateful eight years of the dialogue. Things look far worse today when President Xi has declared an open war against the Tibetan identity of Tibet and the people of Tibet living under his colonial control.

Dharamshala's appeals to Tibetan people inside Tibet and Tibet supporters on the international forums to stop their 'anti-China' demonstrations, especially against the visiting Chinese Presidents and other senior leaders have finally proved to be a serious diplomatic mistake. In my personal discussions with some very senior functionaries of the CTA I was told that a common complaint of the Chinese side during the dialogue process was that Dharamshala was playing double game by talking to the Chinese on one side and supporting the anti-China demonstrations by Tibetan people inside Tibet and the Tibet supporters outside Tibet on the other. The Chinese side refused the Tibetan argument that as people's democratic rights in India and other countries the Tibet support movement was self-initiated and was out of Dharamshala's command area. I was told that in response to this logic of Dharamshala the Chinese side told the delegation that it simply meant that the CTA was not the sole representative of the Tibetans and hence there was no point in talking to Dharamshala about whole of Tibet. As one of these senior leaders told me, Dharamshala's stand against such anti-China movement, especially its appeals to the TSGs to stop such demonstrations, was aimed at meeting this Chinese demand in order to keep the dialogue going.

Ever since President Xi took over control of China and Tibet the Dalai Lama and the 'Sikyong' (elected President) of CTA have been publicly expressing fears about imminent total destruction of Tibetan identity inside Tibet. Xi's open call to the communist cadres in Tibet for establishing 'Tibetan Buddhism with socialist character' has started a replay of Mao's same dreaded 'Cultural Revolution' which had led to destruction of every single Buddhist symbol from the public and private life of Tibetan citizens. Destruction of Buddhist statues across Tibet by the communist administrators today has revived the memories of the notorious 'Bamyan Act' of the Taliban in Afghanistan. China's new law which

makes it mandatory to have written and paper-stamped approval of the local Chinese Communist Party office for every new incarnate Lama; Xi's draconian decision to snatch every Tibetan child, above age of 4, from their families and lodging them into jail like secluded Communist Party schools for communist brainwashing and pure Han upbringing and; rules like seven-year jail for possessing a photo of Dalai Lama in today's Tibet will hardly encourage any Tibetan or Tibet supporter to share hopes and enthusiasm of the pro-dialogue lobby of Dharamshala.

Dharamshala's shrinking elbow room

Even outside Tibet too, China's ever spreading tentacles over the Tibetan diaspora and his influence over international institutions is successively reducing the scope for the Tibetans and their supporters to force Xi to settle for an agreement which meets at least minimum expectations of Dalai Lama and the people of Tibet. For example, Tibetans, escaping from China controlled Tibet and joining the Dalai Lama establishment in exile as new refugees used to be the biggest source of a committed, dedicated and united human source to keep the Tibetan movement going. Since Dalai Lama escaped from the Chinese grip in Tibet in 1959 over 120 thousand Tibetans managed to escape from Tibet. In past decades somewhat around 2000 to 3000 Tibetans used to escape each year from Tibet via Nepal to reach India. A gentleman's agreement between the Nepal government, Indian government and the United Nation's High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) worked smoothly for decades to help the Tibetan escapees reaching India after scrutiny and debriefing by the Indian embassy in Kathmandu. But China's ever increasing influence over the Nepal government, especially during past few decades, has encouraged the Nepalese army, police and bureaucracy in the border areas to oblige their China friends by catching the escaping Tibetans and handing them back to the Chinese army.

As a result of change in Nepal's approach on this issue the annual outflow of Tibetans has now drastically reduced from a few thousands to just single digits for over a decade now. This has almost completely dried the lifeline of Dalai Lama's exile establishment. Akin to bleeding a human body to near white, this refugee drought has severely affected the Tibetan diaspora, especially the CTA in Dharamshala. This change is now more than visible in the functioning of the vast network of Tibetan schools and monasteries across India. The situation is so serious that even national ranking Tibetan monasteries like Drepung, Sera and Ganden at Karnataka in southern India are now forced to cater mainly to monks and students from Indian Himalayan states of Ladakh, Himachal and Arunachal Pradesh



and Buddhist countries like Mongolia, Sri Lanka and Vietnam. The craze among the younger Tibetan refugees to migrate to greener pastures like USA, Canada and Europe has further added to the problems of CTA which is now feeling new challenge of attracting new youths among the diaspora and difficulty in holding on to its talented staff.

To make things worse for the Tibetan diaspora, Xi's communist establishment has found a good strategic use for the database the previous Beijing governments have been building up on the exile Tibetans. In past decades when the Dharamshala-Beijing contacts made things easier for the Tibetan refugees to visit their families back home, the Chinese authorities have been diligently building up a database of the refugee's family links inside Today's Tibet. There have been hundreds of instances when activist Tibetan exiles have complained about the Chinese authorities threatening and using their family members to force them return to Tibet or to stop their anti-China activities in exile. During my three yearlong series of international webinars on Tibet and China I personally had to deal with situations when some brilliant Tibetan activist or a scholar would express his or her inability to join the public discussion in the webinar for fears of safety of their family members inside Tibet.

Keeping in mind all these advantages in the hands of Xi's China it is imperative to see why Xi has suddenly become interested in talking to Dalai Lama? Also, what makes the CTA leaders so enthusiastic about the back door contacts and what results they are hopeful about the new edition of the Dharamshala-Beijing dialogue? As far as Dharamshala is concerned the Dalai Lama side has good reasons to be elated by the recent unanimous (almost) passage of Tibet related Acts in the US Congress in 2020 and 2024 which were also promptly signed into new laws respectively by President Trump and President Biden. While both of these laws call upon Beijing to settle the disputes with Dalai Lama through a dialogue they also categorically support and underline all those vital assertions of the Dalai Lama side which China has been rejecting outright and even broke the dialogue citing its objection to these points. For ordinary Tibetans too these new American laws have come as a great moral booster. To name some of these major points:

- Tibet is an 'occupied country' and Tibet is an 'unsettled' issue;
- China should settle the Tibetan dispute through negotiations with Dalai Lama, his representatives and the elected Tibetan leaders;
- Tibet was never a part of China in history;
- 'Tibet' means TAR plus all those areas of Tibet which have been assimilated in adjoining Chinese provinces

of Yunnan, Sichuan, Gansu and Qinghai— and not just 'TAR' as claimed by China;

- The selection and appointment of Dalai Lama's reincarnation is exclusively the right of Dalai Lama himself and the people of Tibet and that China has no role to play in this. If any Chinese officials is found to indulge into this process then the new US laws oblige the President of USA and other concerned agencies to take action against them;

- China must respect religious values of Tibet and human rights of Tibetan people inside Tibet;

- All US governments must ensure that the projects funded by US agencies inside Tibet must not damage Tibetan environment and must not work against Tibetan people's human rights; and

- Unless the Chinese government agrees to the establishment of the USA Consulate in Lhasa no new Chinese Consulate offices in USA can be permitted.

No wonder these new US laws have come as a fresh shot in the arm of Dharamshala, especially after having seen China rejecting each of these points over past many decades. But one also wonders how susceptible or vulnerable Xi's China is actually going to prove against these assertions or claims of America and other friends of Dharamshala? After all, it is one thing for the US Congress or other pro-Tibet forums like the EU Parliament to pass any resolution on Tibet and China within their own four walls and an altogether different game to make China dance on these musical notes.

Dialogue "doomed to fail"- Jimmy Carter's prediction In real terms, the Chinese vulnerabilities look much farther from what is visible to the eye today because Dharamshala today holds practically no new card in its hands to play on the dialogue table. In his 'Five-Point Peace Plan' of 1988 the Dalai Lama has already made the offer to accept Tibet as a part of China under the Chinese constitution in return for 'genuine autonomy' for Tibet. Since then this has remained the 'bottom-line' of his approach on dialogue with China. True to his great diplomatic skills (Late) Lodi Gyaltzen Gyari, one of my best and lifelong friends among Tibetans, who was Dalai Lama's Special Envoy and the head of his negotiator team during the 2002-2010 Tibet-China dialogue, has described this vulnerability of Dharamshala through an interesting anecdote in his monumental book "THE DALAI LAMA'S SPECIAL ENVOY — Memoirs of a Lifetime in Pursuit of a Reunited Tibet" (Columbia University Press).

Lodi Gyari has given details of his meetings with former US President Jimmy Carter to seek his advice on the draft of Dalai Lama's 'Strasbourg Proposal' (more famous as Dalai Lama's 'five-Point Peace Plan'). In his typically diplomatic and respectable style President Carter pronounced Dalai Lama's approach as impractical and prone to failure unless it

was suitably revised. Giving details of this meeting Lodi writes:

".....Finally he (Carter) put the document down and asked what the Dalai Lama's "bottom line" was. I responded: "Mr. President, this is His Holiness's bottom line." President Carter then replied that if that were true, we should begin by asking for something more. I explained to him that many of us felt the same way, but His Holiness remained adamant, declaring that he wasn't a politician but a Buddhist monk, and bargaining is not in his nature. His Holiness wanted to be straight forward and clear about what he was asking for. After listening carefully to my explanation, President Carter admiringly observed that if His Holiness's approach succeeded, it could revolutionize the field of negotiations....."

Time to be alert

Knowing China's history of handling negotiations with its foes and, more than that, keeping in view the aggressive and bullying style of President Xi's functioning, friends of Tibet like me would feel compelled to advise Dharamshala leaders to seriously look for and probe the reasons which make Xi interested in starting fresh dialogue after rejecting it so many times in the past. More so, because, unfortunately, most of things concerning today's Tibet don't appear to be stacked in favour of Dharamshala and its ageing leader, the Dalai Lama. Frankly speaking there are not enough signs on the Tibetan horizon which can assure one that Dharamshala has enough of skills, tools and advantages to squeeze out any meaningful favours or concessions from Xi's China?

Xi's design on the Dalai Lama

Dharamshala leaders today cannot afford to ignore the fact that unlike Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao in whose time the previous dialogue was initiated in 2002, President Xi today heads a China that is too powerful and influential to care for even an iota of international niceties or rule of law. After having succeeded in putting entire occupied Tibet under his iron vice the last goal of President Xi now is to mollify the ageing Dalai Lama and lure him to the Chinese umbrella. Once the Dalai Lama side accepts Chinese assurances it would remove the last hurdles in his way of imposing the next incarnation of Dalai Lama of CCP's choice on Tibet. In such a situation the chapter of Tibet for the international community is bound to be closed for ever.

And to achieve this goal on the dialogue table we can expect Xi to promise and offer anything to the Tibetan side – even the moon and the sun. The living generation of the world community, including the Tibetans in Dharamshala and Lhasa, has already witnessed the levels of sincerity of China and its communist leaders about their own promises and

assurances on Hong Kong. Unfortunately the world has already experienced the levels of courage and guts (or lack of both?) on the part of world powers and the rest of world when none could dare ask Beijing leaders to deliver on their promises they had made to the people of Hong Kong while taking over the colony from the British. After firsthand experience of how China has manipulated and mutilated its own promises on 'n' number of occasions since the Tibetan delegation signed on the '17-Point Agreement' with China in 1951, the latest example of Hong Kong should have been enough to make Dharamshala and its pro-dialogue advisors to understand the level of sincerity of Chinese leaders.

Friends or Enemies?

One word of caution which every friend and well-wisher of Tibet would like to share with policy makers in Dharamshala is that they must remain cautious about such individuals, governments and groups who might be hunting for big personal gains by offering the present Dalai Lama to Xi's China on a platter. Such an unfortunate situation will, no doubt, solve China's Tibet problem for ever, but it will also push Tibet into an irretrievable situation for all times in its future history. Unfortunately, this warning is not without a base because Tibet has witnessed many such cases in its recent history when a Tibetan minister like (late) Nagapo Ngawang Jigme, rather than helping Tibet, preferred to trade off Tibet's interests in return for personal comforts and worldly gains.

There is also no shortage of governments, individuals and institutions which appeared to be strong supporters and friends of Tibet on their face, but took no time in shifting their priorities to winning favours from Beijing. The most glaring example has been of a prominent German foundation which spent tons of money on organizing series of international Tibet support conferences across the world. Once it established its credentials as a well-wisher of Tibetan diaspora, it took on itself a gigantic campaign of training Tibetan youth leaders on issues like 'autonomy' and 'democracy' through a long series of five-star residential seminars and conferences. It was already too late for the Tibetan community before they realized that the entire campaign was aimed at brainwashing an entire generation of Tibetan youth leaders and weaning them away from their national agenda of 'independence' from China. But before the Tibetan diaspora could understand the real game of this organization it publicly shifted its loyalties to the government of China leaving Tibet and the Tibetans high and dry. The worst impact of this brainwashing campaign was that hitherto a highly united Tibetan diaspora got deeply fractured and divided between the 'Autonomy' (Umay Lam) and the 'Independence' (Rangzen) camps who could

have otherwise coexisted without such a friction. It is also not a coincidence that this brainwashing campaign on Tibetan youth leaders severely damaged the Tibetan society's resolve to fight together for their country.

No hope from the international community

Tibetans cannot forget that the world community in general and the world powers in particular have remained so fearful of China's anger that ever since Mao sent his PLA first time in 1949 to invade Tibet they hardly went ahead beyond offering some verbal generosity to the suffering people of Tibet. Tibetans must also be wary of the fact that today when most countries, including the super powers, feel threatened by a far more powerful China and the danger of a world war is looming large over the world then it is all the more in the interest of international community to see a closure of the Tibetan issue on whatever terms – suitable to Tibetans or not. A publicly advertised settlement between Xi and Dalai Lama with a glaring photo-op ceremony might get front page coverage across the world media next day. But it will also seal the fate of Tibet and Tibetan people permanently. Once the photo-op is over and front page news headlines shift to other world issues then any complaints of Tibetans after that day are bound to be brushed off by the world community as a 'petty internal matter' of China.

### **The Tibetan Struggle at 70: Challenges and Opportunities**

26 July 2024, Australian Outlook, Dr. Sonika Gupta

On 6 July, the 14th Dalai Lama turned 89, having lived for the last 65 years in exile in India. The Dalai Lama is the physical embodiment of the Tibetan nation and his advancing age brings forth urgent questions for the future of the Tibetan struggle.

In 1959, His Holiness had to flee Lhasa under Chinese persecution and has never returned to Tibet. Since 1959, thousands of Tibetans have followed His Holiness into exile. This exiled population is estimated to be around 130,000, a fraction of Tibet's current population, and has a crucial role in amplifying and keeping the Tibetan struggle alive.

With the help of the Indian government and other international donors, there exists an extensive infrastructure of 40 Tibetan settlements in India that comprise monasteries, Tibetan schools, Tibetan medicine hospitals and dispensaries, cultural institutions for performing arts, handicrafts, and literary production. These settlements are sustained by agriculture, handicrafts, small businesses, and overseas remuneration of Tibetans resettled in western nations such as Australia, US, Canada,

Switzerland, France, Japan, and others. In the settlements, Tibetans in exile have consistently strived to keep alive Tibetan Buddhism, language, and its cultural traditions under very challenging conditions. These settlements are governed by the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) in Dharamshala, a democratically elected Tibetan-Parliament-in-Exile, representing all Tibetans. The trajectory of Tibetan democratisation in exile, though faced with many challenges, speaks to Tibetan people's democratic aspirations and provides a stark contrast to Chinese authoritarianism.

However, the Tibetan cause has suffered from a lack of international political support in addressing the issue of the Chinese occupation of Tibet. A 2023 Freedom House report identified Tibet as the "least free country in the world." Chinese religious and political repression and ethnic discrimination in Tibet is well documented, though has yet to produce a commensurate global political response. Since the 1990s, Tibet's political fate has been held hostage to China's increasing economic and political accommodation in the international system. Consequently, since the 1990s, Tibet has largely been framed as a human rights issue or more recently as one of cultural genocide. While this brings attention to the increasing religious repression in Tibet, it skirts the question of Tibetan self-determination. As voiced by the Dalai Lama, as well as CTA, there is a persistent quest for "genuine autonomy" for all Tibetan people in all Tibetan areas under Chinese rule. At the same time, there are Tibetans all over the world who aspire to total independence of Tibet from China. A decision on either of these choices has to be made solely by the Tibetan people. The Chinese state at the moment offers no avenues of discussion on any possibility for resolution of the Tibet issue, claiming Tibet as an integral part of China and denying any repression. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, a window has opened with the US incrementally stepping up its support for Tibet. There have been a number of significant developments on the issue in the US with the potential to lay the groundwork for more robust international support for Tibet. One such development is the issue of the reincarnation of the 14th Dalai Lama. It is certain that the 14th Dalai Lama's eventual succession will become a battle between China and the Tibetans for political and religious legitimacy, with long term implications for the future of the Tibetan struggle. Recognising this, in 2020, the US passed the Tibet Policy Support Act, unequivocally declaring that the reincarnation of the 14th Dalai Lama is a religious issue, solely to be decided by the Tibetan people, brooking no involvement of the Chinese government. This Act goes beyond the US position of recognising human

rights abuses in Tibet and acknowledges the religious agency of the Tibetans to decide their own affairs.

Historically, the lineages of Tibetan lamas have played an integral role in shaping the geo-politics of Tibet, Mongolia, and China. This is likely to be repeated on a much larger stage when the 14th Dalai Lama passes away. The 15th reincarnation will have an unprecedented political context far beyond the borders of China and Tibet, and will have foreign policy implications for US, India, Japan, Mongolia, Taiwan, Russia, Bhutan, Nepal.

The Dalai Lama has declared that he will not “reincarnate” in occupied Tibet. This leaves open the possibility of the 15th reincarnation in other areas where significant populations of Tibetan Buddhists reside. This includes Mongolia, Bhutan, Nepal, and the entire Indian Himalayan belt from Ladakh to Sikkim to Arunachal Pradesh. It is certain that the China will declare their own candidate for the Dalai Lama, as they did for the 11th Panchen Lama. In 1995, the Dalai Lama recognised six year old Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as the 11th reincarnation of the Panchen Lama. Within 72 hours of being identified, the Chinese authorities had kidnapped the boy and his family. China then introduced Gyaltsen Norbu as their choice for the Panchen Lama who continues to occupy the lineage.

Norbu is a member of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference that advises China’s United Front Work Department tasked with intelligence gathering, influence operations, and co-opting elites in Tibet, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Xinjiang to neutralise political opposition to the Communist Party of China. The Chinese Panchen Lama enjoys little legitimacy among Tibetans. However, over the last three decades, China has worked systematically to tighten its grip on the system by passing multiple decrees stipulating that any “reincarnation” must be approved by the state. In this context, the 2020 Tibet Policy Support Act and the subsequent 2024 Tibet Resolve Act have become significant in shaping the US and possibly a global response to the next reincarnation.

The Resolve Tibet Act, signed into law by President Joe Biden on 12 July 2024 with overwhelming bipartisan support, promises enhanced US support for the Tibetan cause. The Resolve Act has three significant provisions worth noting. Firstly, it provides a statutory definition of Tibet to include Tibetan areas outside of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) of China and in Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu, and Yunnan provinces. This aligns with the CTA’s long-standing demand of recognising these areas as part of Tibet in any solution to the Tibetan issue. TAR was formed in 1965 by separating Central Tibet from Tibetan areas of present Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu, and Yunnan provinces. The Dalai Lama and the CTA have

consistently rejected this fragmentation of Tibet by China. The Resolve Act territorially maps contemporary Tibet to its cultural and historic space in a substantive recognition of the Dalai Lama’s position.

Secondly, the Resolve Act also acknowledges China’s active disinformation campaign concerning Tibetan history, presenting Tibet as a part of China since ancient times. Recognising this, the Act tasks the US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues to counter this narrative. Finally, the Resolve Act intends to build international opinion on Tibet towards a negotiated settlement and demands that China resume dialogue with the Dalai Lama that was suspended in 2010.

While it would be too ambitious to imagine that the Tibet issue may become a core issue in any future US-China diplomatic effort, the political support for Tibet in Congress can definitely be leveraged to create more institutional checks on China’s repressive policies in Tibet, and greater international concert on support for the Tibetan community, both inside Tibet and globally can leverage this support for the crucial upcoming issue of reincarnation of the 14th Dalai Lama.

In the next few years, the Tibetan movement is poised for a transformative change as it negotiates the traditionally destabilising process of reincarnation. Global support recognising sole Tibetan agency in recognising the next Dalai Lama would be crucial to the future of the Tibetan movement and the Tibetan nation.

### **Inaction, or complicity? Chinese authorities turn a blind eye towards restrictions on Tibetan language**

24 July 2024, International Campaign For Tibet

Tibetans inside Tibet are circulating videos objecting to the fact that Douyin, one of the most important streaming and social media platforms in China, is blocking Tibetan-language broadcasts. Chinese authorities have not responded to these objections, revealing a new aspect of the PRC’s efforts to undermine the use of Tibetan and replace it with Mandarin.

Livestreaming has become the most popular online retail sales avenue in the People’s Republic of China, but Tibetans are facing discrimination from platforms which, like Douyin, restrict the usage of Tibetan. The list of these platforms includes major Chinese sites such as Kuaishou, Bilibili, and Talkmate.

Restrictions on spoken Tibetan

Tibetans use Chinese platforms that provide facilities for messaging, reels posting, playing music, ecommerce and livestreaming for discussion on topics that are seen not “sensitive” to the authorities; many of the major social media and streaming sites used in

other countries are blocked in China. Younger Tibetan entrepreneurs have embraced livestreaming retail sales to capture the Tibetan market, selling items such as Tibetan garments, Dzi beads, and religious artifacts. Visitors who have traveled to Tibet recently reported that online business has been very lucrative for some of these Tibetan businesspeople.

Recently, however, videos have emerged on Tibetan-language social media in which Tibetans complain about Douyin preventing them from livestreaming in Tibetan. One such livestreamer is heard saying in an undated video, which has been subsequently posted on Youtube:

"Today, I have to mention that I am forced to speak out. Today, I want to ask whether our Douyin company holds more power or is it the nation, or whether Douyin company is more powerful than the legal system? Or does Douyin company have more power or does the government? What is it? For example, my question is, to give an example, our country's very good policies give protection for a nationality's cultural preservation and promotion of a nationality's language. The state really supports these, as does the legal system, and the government, too, supports them. Therefore, why is Douyin company blocking (the livestreaming) in our language when we speak in Tibetan? I want to ask this here. It will not do [for me] not to ask this. Now, the state is saying we must promote a nationality's language, so how can our nationality's language be promoted? Where should we go, residing in our villages and speaking our language?"

The Dharamsala-based Tibetan Centre for Human Rights & Democracy also mentions the plight of Tibetan medical practitioners who are unable to use Tibetan in their online consultations. A doctor who was forced to shut down online consultation is quoted as saying:

"I may be a small-time Tibetan doctor, but my medical expertise has never been in question. I encounter numerous patients who self-medicate for headaches and other illnesses with painkillers without seeking medical advice. Many seriously ill individuals and those with health issues seek my guidance. With the prohibition on using the Tibetan language, I am forced to use Chinese, and since my patients are Tibetan, especially the elderly and illiterate youth, including farmers and nomads, they struggle to understand me when I speak in Chinese. What purpose does speaking Chinese serve if they cannot comprehend it? As a result, I have stopped my online broadcasts."

In 2022, RFA Tibetan reported that multilingual learning app Talkmate and video streaming app Bilibili removed postings in Tibetan from their platforms. TCHRD also reported that Kuaishou imposed restrictions in Tibetan.

Sources inside Tibet were not able to confirm whether these videos circulating on social media outside of Tibet are recent or whether they are old postings, as the restrictions on the usage of Tibetan on online Chinese platforms have been in place for years.

#### Restrictions on written Tibetan

Beyond the restrictions on Tibetan-language streaming, Tibetan netizens have noticed restrictions on comments written in Tibetan as well.

In a comment in Chinese posted on the popular platform "WeChat public accounts" (公众号; "gongzhong hao"), one netizen (PiaoBoDZ) had written, "Although many comments are written in the mother tongue [meaning Tibetan], it is like throwing stone into the ocean."



A message by "PiaoBoDZ" on a WeChat post complaining about not being able to post in Tibetan.

In March 2021, one Tibetan netizen posted a message on the Chinese platform Douban stating that Douyin had rejected an image as being "not suitable for the public". The image was a picture of a Tibetan-language inscription of a popular poem by the sixth Dalai Lama, Tsangyang Gyatso (b. 1683).



Screenshot of the image rejected by Douyin.

Tibetans have noted that even nicknames in Tibetan are not being approved by Douyin. In what seems to be a clarification from the platform in May 2024, in response to a question about why the platform rejects usernames with Tibetan characters Douyin says, "Our technical team worked day and night, and after a lot of research and practice, we finally found the central solution for processing Tibetan. The new review strategy no longer regards Tibetan as sensitive information."

Official inaction over abuse of Tibetan language rights



Tibetan netizens, even while objecting to the online platforms, are differentiating between the action of Douyin and other online platforms and the policies of the Chinese government, expressing hope that the authorities will intercede on their behalf because of their "good policies." This rhetorical position may be necessary to protect them from being seen as critical of the Chinese government.

The regulation governing livestreaming is the one issued by the Chinese State Administration of Radio and Television on June 8, 2022, in which Article 12 of this Code of Conduct for Online Presenters says, "Online presenters shall use the nation's common spoken and written language in accordance with standardized writing methods and meanings."

However, Chinese officials have said that online presenters can use any language they want. At a press conference in Beijing on achievements and measures on ethnic unity and progress in the new era on August 29, 2022, Zhao Yong, then deputy director of the National Ethnic Affairs Commission, defended the Chinese policy of promoting Mandarin maintaining that it does not impact the promotion of non-Chinese languages. In response to a question on China "promoting the use of Mandarin in ethnic minority areas such as Xinjiang and Tibet" might be "detrimental to the development of ethnic minority languages and cultures," Zhao said, "while popularizing Mandarin in accordance with the law, the Chinese government fully respects and protects the freedom of ethnic minorities to use their own languages, creating conditions for them to learn and use their own languages."

He further said, "And as for how to protect the languages and cultures of ethnic minorities, I think supporting their use is the best method of protection" adding, "In short, there is absolutely no obstacle for ethnic minorities in learning and using their own languages in their work and lives."

If this indeed is the official policy, then there is no implementation when it comes to the Tibetans. The authorities have been turning a deaf ear to the appeals being made by the Tibetan online presenters.

Livestreaming platforms fulfilling CCP's political agenda

One reason for the Chinese government not protecting the rights of the Tibetans to use their own language on such online platforms is because these restrictions fulfill the Chinese government's political agenda of undermining the study of Tibetan while making Mandarin the dominating language even among Tibetans.

Indicating the anguish that Tibetans feel about the erosion of the Tibetan language and the mainstreaming of Chinese, several self-immolators have, in their last words or statements, referred to

the importance of protecting their language. As he lay dying following his self-immolation in 2012, monk Ngawang Norphel said: "Every nationality needs freedom, language and tradition. Without language, what would be our nationality? [Should we then] call ourselves Chinese or Tibetan?"

The case of Tibetan language rights advocate Tashi Wangchuk having to undergo five years of imprisonment and even now continuing to face denial of his freedom, even after formal release is another example of denial of language rights. He is among a younger generation in Tibet who have prioritized protection of the Tibetan language.

Wangchuk was arrested in early 2016, two months after he was featured in a New York Times video and article in 2015 criticizing Chinese cultural and educational policies on Tibetans. He stood trial in January 2018, and was subsequently given a five-year sentence. In the New York Times video posted in November 2015, Wangchuk complained that Chinese "government authorities actively block the teaching and studying of the Tibetan language." He stressed the importance of Tibetans having access to education in the Tibetan language and his intention to file a lawsuit against the authorities for not enabling this. He further amplifies the thinking of the Tibetan self-immolators telling the New York Times, "They didn't just set themselves on fire because of some family issues or something. I believe they also saw culture disappearing and other cultural problems. But we don't have ways to solve these problems. I want to try to use the People's Republic of China's laws to solve the problem."

In its 2024 report, Freedom in the World, Freedom House reported, "The online censorship and monitoring systems in place across China are applied more stringently in Tibet, while censorship of Tibet-related keywords on apps like WeChat has become more sophisticated. The use of Tibetan language is banned on a range of social media apps, particularly ones that use streaming and live communication services."

Douyin is China's domestic version of the controversial TikTok, and both are owned by the Bytedance. In April 2024 Congress passed a legislation banning TikTok in the United States if Bytedance doesn't sell its stake by January of 2025. Earlier, in 2022, Senate had passed a bill that prohibits certain individuals from downloading or using TikTok on any device issued by the United States or a government corporation. TikTok is suspected of being a tool in the Chinese Communist Party's long arm of authoritarianism. TikTok reportedly "instructs its moderators to censor videos that mention Tiananmen Square, Tibetan independence," according to a 2019 report in The Guardian quoting leaked documents detailing the

site's moderation guidelines. In one instance of TikTok being used to harass Tibetans in diaspora, a young Tibetan American student received a series of derogatory comments within hours of posting a video of herself in Tibetan clothes on TikTok. The posts ranged from standardized CCP propaganda to slurs, and more.

### **Echoes from the Tibetan Youth Convention: A growing experience**

24 July 2024, FNVA, Tenzing Dhamdul

I recall checking my inbox and receiving an email from the National Democratic Institute (NDI) to attend the Tibetan Youth Convention in Dharamshala, as I had previously attended several of their events, including the Tibet Youth Day event last year. I was originally hesitant to join because I had already cancelled my participation at the International Tibet Youth Forum 2024 a few weeks ago because I had previously attended the forum in 2023, and on top of that, I had several commitments at Foundations for Non-violent Alternatives (FNVA) to fulfil. However, when I discussed this invitation with my trustees at the Foundation for Nonviolent Alternatives (FNVA). They insisted on my participation because two of our research interns, both V-TAGgers, were also scheduled to attend the International Tibet Youth Forum in Dharamshala and saw this as an opportunity where I would learn and grow. I was curious to learn more about the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), also known as the Tibetan Government in Exile, which was one of the main topics of the youth conference.

For the entire text, [click here](#).

### **Can the US 'Resolve Tibet Act' Make a Difference?**

24 July 2024, The Diplomat, Marie Miller and Tenzin Lhadon

The act takes a landmark step in challenging the CCP's historical revisionism. But the U.S. should be prepared to offer concrete support to the Tibetan community, which is already beginning to feel the CCP's retaliation.

It's a narrative that's all too familiar: Nationalist world leaders claiming historical sovereignty over territory, weaponizing revised history to justify invasion.

In 1950, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) acted upon its self-declared inheritance over Tibet, imposing a treaty that officially annexed the region. Following the 1959 Tibetan uprising against the CCP, and the escape of the Dalai Lama to Dharamshala, India, the iron fist only tightened. The Tibetan government-in-exile estimates that in the 20

years following the uprising, 1.2 million Tibetans died as a result of China's policies, while still many more languished in prison.

Historic revisionism is the basis for the same predatory rhetoric Xi Jinping's government uses today as it builds entire villages in Bhutan, claims ownership over northern India's Arunachal Pradesh as "South Tibet," and threatens Taiwan with militaristic drills and mock missile strikes. Revisionist history is laden with propagandistic undertones – and it's a threat to self-determination, culture, and human life.

Today, with the ink of President Joe Biden's signature drying on the Resolve Tibet Act of 2024, the United States has an opportunity to explicitly – and officially – set the narrative straight. His signature marks a testy politicization of the Tibetan cause by the executive branch. As this law is implemented, however, the U.S. should be prepared to offer concrete support to the Tibetan community, which is already beginning to feel the CCP's retaliatory crackdown.

The CCP portrays an image of China as diverse-yet-"blended," contained by borders it claims are inherited from "ancient times." By 1950, however, the Tibetan government had enjoyed 37 years of declared independence from Qing rule. Floundering for territorial security and fearing the same fissured fate of the Soviet Union, the CCP implemented assimilationist policies in claimed territories. This included the shuttering of local Tibetan schools and the rise of monolingualistic state-run residential education for Tibetan children as young as four, the destruction of monasteries, and mass arrests of those – including monks – who protested environmentally damaging policies. Authorities took aim not only at ideological dissidents but at the very ethnic and religious identities of the Tibetan community.

Undoing the methodical rewriting of history is no easy feat, especially as U.S. policy on Tibet has been historically arrhythmic: Since the 1960s, when Tibetan lamas first won the hearts of the American public as counselors to counterculture protesters, the executive branch frequently criticized congressional support for the Tibetan cause.

In spite of then-President George W. Bush's assertion that his administration had the right not to implement multiple provisions of the law, the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 was eventually included in appropriations law. Amid the COVID-ridden tension of China-U.S. relations, the Tibet Policy Act of 2020 promised to slap Magnitsky sanctions on all officials of the Chinese government meddling in the selection of the next Dalai Lama. Both landmark policies called for dialogue between the CCP and the Dalai Lama, yet the meat of the legislation lay in specific funding programs for the Tibetan communities-in-exile,

including support for uncensored news outlets and scholarships for cultural preservation.

Until now, China's territorial claims have officially been left unchallenged by the United States, for fear of risking increased tension between Washington and Beijing. Marking a quiet transition from the previous precedent of unspoken acquiescence to CCP-defined borders, however, the State Department's 2023 human rights report has dropped previous affirmations that Tibet is part of China.

Congress now seeks a definitive political re-write. Bolder than its predecessors, the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act – also known as the “Resolve Tibet Act” – makes it official U.S. policy that the CCP's claim to Tibetan territory as “part of China since ancient times” is “historically inaccurate.”

One scholar noted the political weight of U.S. leadership in affirming self-determination – it could encourage India to speak up against the CCP's territorial claims to Tibet. In the wake of the bill's passage, former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Representative Michael McCaul traveled to India to meet with the 14th Dalai Lama, followed by engagements with a newly re-elected Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

This visit was met with strong condemnation by the Chinese Foreign Ministry, which declared that China will take “resolute measures” to protect its sovereignty. In response to the passing of a truly “strong policy supporting Tibet,” first promised during Biden's 2020 campaign, Chinese authorities have intensified their crackdown: As Biden signed the Resolve Tibet Act into law, CCP authorities responded by ordering the closure of Jigme Gyaltsen Vocational High School, for “undisclosed reasons.” This school, reputed for its specialized Tibetan language studies, maintained a rich repository of Tibetan literature.

When the U.S. politicizes human rights, it will not always feel the repercussions. However, the imprisoned community will. The Resolve Tibet Act must take their fate into consideration as well. For example, concerned voices of the Tibet Policy Institute pointed to the bill's lack of substantive policy response to urgent issues such as the dramatic increase of forced relocation of rural Tibetans.

The CCP relies on the distortion of history to infringe upon Tibetan self-determination and justify its ethnonationalist project. An act of political affirmation is necessary to challenge a historical narrative that justifies a predatory status quo. Yet challenging is only the first step – as China begins to enact its “resolute measures,” the U.S. must be prepared to take responsibility for the reactions it is stirring, offering substantive support to the Tibetan community it is inadvertently putting in harm's way.

## China's Leaders Just Held a Third Plenum. So What?

23 July 2024, Foreign Policy

On July 18, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) concluded the Third Plenum of its 20th Party Congress. Held in a secured military conference hotel on the western outskirts of Beijing, proceedings closed with a ritual appearance by top leader Xi Jinping. Third Plenums, so called because they're the third meeting of the party's five-year cycles, cover economic policy; outcomes are scrutinized by cadres and global businesses alike.

This Third Plenum duly addressed the economy but also broke from precedent: When the conclave wasn't scheduled during the accustomed time last fall, speculation swirled around delays due to party purges and economic headwinds. With the session finally finished, we can now parse speeches and documents for insights into Beijing's economic thinking—and gauge how CCP institutions have fared under Xi's norm-bending rule.

One recurring catchphrase this session has been “reform and opening up”—a term with a rich history but invoked today in circumstances starkly different from the time of its original coinage. In 1978, paramount leader Deng Xiaoping was picking up the pieces after Mao Zedong's chaotic rule. Deng sought to create stable conditions for economic growth. He sidelined Maoist cadres advocating “class struggle” and promoted reformers keen on economic experimentation. The 1978 Third Plenum keynote speech was Deng's victory lap. In his clipped Sichuanese accent, speaking at the same military hotel, Deng called for China to open itself to foreign capitalists and overseas manufacturing firms. This new “reform and opening up” policy drove decades of growth, lifting the masses from poverty and integrating the People's Republic with the global economy.

While official meetings were erratic under Mao, Deng sought a steadier rhythm. The terrors of the Cultural Revolution were subsiding; cadres found a certain solace in bureaucratic rituals. The headline event of the party calendar is the National Congress; in the pattern set after Mao's death, it is held usually in October of years ending with 2 and 7. (Xi, for instance, ascended as CCP general secretary in 2012, gained a second term in 2017, and an unprecedented third in 2022.) At a full Congress, thousands of delegates convene in Beijing to ratify decisions about leadership and ideology, while 99 million party members look on.

After the Congress concludes, subsidiary plenums are called over the ensuing five-year span until the next full session. These intermediate meetings typically convene a few hundred CCP bigwigs and

selected experts and have historically been held five to nine times (most commonly seven) before the following Congress half a decade later. Plenums typically cover party appointments (First Plenum), government personnel (Second), economic reform (Third), party-building activities (Fourth), fixing a new Five-Year Plan (Fifth), management of culture and history (Sixth), and a closing summation (Seventh) before the next Congress. Each meeting also disposes of sensitive party business arising in the interim. Since the Second Plenum in early 2023, several members of Xi's top team—including ministers of defense and foreign affairs—have vanished into the CCP's disciplinary apparatus, snared in graft and other indiscretions. At this plenum, their fates were finalized. Some offenders, stripped of party membership, now face criminal trial. Others got off more leniently: Last week, former Foreign Minister Qin Gang, who was disappeared for a year, formally lost membership of the elite Central Committee. But in an official document, he kept the appellation "comrade"—demotion without total disgrace. Such individual intrigues ultimately matter less than the overall tone: the "party line" and "main melody" of propaganda. In earlier eras, plenum themes reflected a more collective leadership. Today, that agenda closely follows the will of Xi himself.

Ever since Deng's 1978 breakthrough set the template, observers have eagerly watched Third Plenums for portents of change. Results have always varied. Over the 1980s, one Third Plenum widened economic reforms from the countryside to the cities, but, with inflation rising, the next Third Plenum tightened statist wage controls and commodity price caps. After the Tiananmen Square crackdown in June 1989 froze political reforms, the 1993 Third Plenum signaled that economic reforms would continue: The communiqué made rhetorical room for capitalism by advocating a "socialist market economy." This turn of phrase translated into epochal change: the dismantling of many state-owned enterprises and the end of "iron rice bowl" welfare security for more than 20 million people. The Third Plenums in 2003 and 2008 were, in hindsight, milquetoast: missed opportunities to update China's growth model and rectify an unruly (and sometimes greedy) party apparatus.

When Xi took over in 2012, he had a mandate from his colleagues to secure the CCP's future by taming corruption and enacting structural reforms. Xi's first Third Plenum as leader—in November 2013—was met with high expectations. The conclave announced big changes: a plan to end the one-child policy and a determination to let market forces take a "decisive" role in the economy. Outside observers, squinting to see China's economic modernization tracking toward convergence with the

West, hailed the plenum as a masterstroke and Xi as a bold "reformer."

The one-child policy was duly scrapped after several years. But the CCP soured on market mechanisms after Chinese stocks swooned in 2015, threatening the stability of the broader economy. The state responded with heavy-handed measures: strong-arming equity sales and detaining financial reporters. Meanwhile, party institutions grew more visible in everyday life and acted more assertively toward private businesses. Crackdowns snared rights lawyers and journalists; government regulators humbled China's booming tech sector. Politics took priority—and command—over economics. By 2018, Xi had decided to abolish term limits for the presidency of the People's Republic, a post held concurrently with the more important role of CCP general secretary. Though the position is a state title—technically outside the party bureaucracy and calendar—this move seemingly disturbed the regular rhythms of party politics. The Third Plenum in 2018 fell early, landing in February rather than the fall. Unusually, that meeting focused on personnel rather than economic issues.

Today, a look back on Xi's inaugural Third Plenum in 2013 shows the limitations of prognosticating based on that or any other party meeting. Some plans were implemented. In other cases, unexpected events may have overtaken the best intentions. But whatever the rhetoric, more than a decade later, the reality is trending toward more government intervention in the economy rather than less. A reformer Xi has been—but rarely in the direction Western observers might have hoped. Since Xi took power and held his inaugural Third Plenum at the expected time, two subsequent Third Plenums have fallen outside their usual season. Xi is now in power indefinitely, having amassed more formal titles and personal influence than any leader since Mao.

At the recently concluded Third Plenum, Xi and his comrades affirmed the expected themes with range of slogans, with some—such as "reform and opening up" and "Chinese-style modernization"—reflecting Deng's legacy. Documents highlighted security and control while also calling for "high-quality development" in key sectors, such as green tech and semiconductors, believed to be crucial to future growth. Some perennial problems have resurfaced again after being mentioned in past Third Plenums but never faced.

In 2003 and 2013, communiqués suggested a property tax to raise local government revenue for health and welfare spending, but no comprehensive policy resulted. Now, a crumbling real estate sector threatens to tip into crises in local government debt and the economy at large. In 2024, the CCP sounds more tepid today toward market

forces than in 2013, reprising the 1993 slogan of a “socialist market economy” while calling for “market order” and making scant mention of the private sector.

Even in 1978, the important politicking actually happened behind the scenes before Deng’s inaugural Third Plenum. In Deng’s keynote speech ending the session, even as he exhorted his comrades to “liberate [their] thinking” and “look forward,” he made no mention of the phrase “reform and opening up,” instead quoting from Lenin and praising Mao. Deng framed his new initiatives through Mao’s language, saying that to pursue true Marxism, cadres must “seek truth from facts.” Deng’s call for a foreign investment law came last in a list of draft legislation covering routine topics such as forestry, factories, and labor. The radical impact of Deng’s reforms only became apparent over time, through actions rather than words.

So it may have been with the Third Plenum in 2013, when Xi framed his ambitions in the language of his immediate predecessors. Whatever is said at the dais, Chinese policymaking ultimately depends as much—or more—on personalities, and the pressure of events, as on showpiece meetings of party or state.

This year’s arrhythmic Third Plenum has, so far, yielded a 5,000-word communiqué and a “decision” document, along with a profusion of records, commentary, and clarifications to elucidate the CCP’s will. These hail Xi’s “comprehensively deepening reforms” but have offered few specifics so far. Whatever the future of China’s politics and economy, Xi’s continuing central role in guiding both appears ensured.

### **When Tibet Sought China’s Help Against “Napoleon of India” – The Incredible “Twist In Tale” From Today’s Scenario**

22 July 2024, The EurAsian Times, Shubhangi Palve

India recently showcased the ‘Zorawar’ light battle tank, designed for high-altitude warfare. Jointly developed by the DRDO and Larsen & Toubro (L&T) Limited, Zorawar is tailored to meet the Indian Army’s needs in the eastern Ladakh sector, addressing Chinese deployments across the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

This is India’s first indigenously designed and developed light tank, intended to counter China at high altitudes. In both mobility and firepower accuracy, it is expected to surpass the Chinese Type 15 tanks deployed along the Ladakh border.

The name ‘Zorawar’ translates to ‘strong and powerful,’ embodying the essence of formidable strength and resilience.

The Threat Of China & Project Zorawar

The clashes between India and China on the Line of Actual Control in Galwan in June 2020, which resulted in the deaths of 20 Indian soldiers and at least four Chinese soldiers, significantly strained relations between the two nations.

During this period, the Indian Army encountered challenges with the rapid deployment of tanks. The existing tanks were too heavy, complicating their airlift to the frontline.

Additionally, these tanks were not suited for the high-altitude terrain of Ladakh. Compounding the problem, the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) had deployed numerous advanced lightweight tanks in the region, putting Indian forces at a disadvantage.

To address these issues, the Indian Army required a tank weighing no more than 25 tonnes, capable of being easily airlifted to forward positions in Ladakh, and well-suited for the challenging conditions. Consequently, the Indian government approved ‘Project Zorawar’ in March 2022.

Drawing from the lessons of the Indo-China standoff in Galwan, the tank was named “Zorawar” to honor the 19th-century Dogra warrior and military strategist General Zorawar Singh Kahluria.

Revered as the “Napoleon of India” and the “Conqueror of Ladakh,” General Zorawar led numerous successful campaigns in Ladakh and Balistan.

General Zorawar Singh Kahluria

General Zorawar Singh Kahluria, often revered as a valiant warrior and military leader, played a significant role in the history of the Dogra region, particularly in the early 19th century.

Born in 1784 (though some sources claim 1786) in the Kahlur region, present-day Bilaspur district in Himachal Pradesh, India, Zorawar Singh belonged to the Kahluria clan of Rajputs.

Zorawar Singh began his military career in the service of Raja Sansar Chand II of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. His bravery, strategic acumen, and leadership skills quickly propelled him through the ranks. One of his most notable achievements was his extensive military campaigns to expand the borders of the Sikh Empire under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the founder of the Sikh Empire.

Conquest Of Ladakh & Western Tibet

Zorawar Singh is renowned for his bold expeditions into Ladakh, then part of the Tibetan Empire. In 1834, he led a campaign to conquer Ladakh on behalf of Maharaja Gulab Singh of Jammu and Kashmir. Over the following years, he carried out multiple campaigns in the region, successfully capturing crucial towns and fortresses.

In 1834, the Raja of Timbus sought Raja Gulab Singh’s help against the Ladakhi King. Seizing the



opportunity, Raja Gulab Singh ordered his capable commander, Zorawar Singh, to march into Ladakh.

As the General of Jammu, Zorawar Singh launched Trans-Himalayan campaigns starting in April 1834 with an army of 5,000 men. Within eight years, he conquered Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Western Tibet.

Zorawar's campaigns faced numerous challenges due to the harsh terrain, extreme weather conditions, and resistance from local rulers. Despite these obstacles, he displayed exceptional leadership and determination.

In the spring of 1835, he defeated an army of 22,000 troops led by General Kahlon and marched his victorious forces to Leh. The panic-stricken King sued for peace.

According to the agreement, he was retained as King, with Ladakh becoming a vassal state of the Dogra Kingdom. Shortly after the peace agreement, the Chief of Sod rose in arms against the Dogras. General Zorawar Singh swiftly suppressed the revolt and triumphantly returned to Jammu at the end of 1835. This is considered one of General Zorawar Singh's greatest victories.

**Tibet Sought China's Help**

Having consolidated his reign in Gilgit-Baltistan, Raja Gulab Singh revived an ancient Ladakhi claim over Western Tibet. In May 1841, he dispatched General Zorawar Singh to enter the highlands of Tibet with 5,000 men. Leading a diverse army of Dogras, Ladakhis, and Baltis, Zorawar swept across the roof of the world.

Sweeping aside all resistance along the way, Zorawar Singh passed Mansarovar Lake and converged at Gartok. The Tibetan commander fled to Taklakot, and Zorawar Singh stormed Taklakot Fort in September 1841, capturing the strategic city.

Envoys from Tibet and Nepal met the General at Taklakot to negotiate peace. Unexpectedly, in November, a composite army of 10,000 Chinese and Tibetans marched to Taklakot to drive the Dogras from Tibet.

This turned out to be Zorawar Singh's final expedition into Tibet in 1841. Unfortunately, during this campaign, Zorawar, who was 57 years old at the time, encountered severe hardships, including shortages of supplies and extreme weather conditions. He was unable to receive reinforcements from Leh or elsewhere due to heavy snow blocking all the passes.

Temperatures had fallen to minus 50 degrees Celsius due to sweeping blizzards. Despite these conditions, the Dogras put up a tough fight. However, in December 1841, Zorawar Singh was fatally wounded in the Battle of Toyo by the combined forces of Tibetans and Chinese.

The death of their commander decided the outcome of the battle. Living up to their bravery, the Dogras executed the enemy General to avenge their commander's martyrdom.

Although this great conqueror fell during the campaign, his efforts were not in vain. In September 1842, a treaty was signed between representatives of the Chinese and Lhasa governments on one side and the Khalsa Darbar and Gulab Singh on the other. This treaty extended the Sikh, and subsequently Indian, frontiers to their current international boundary, thereby incorporating all of Ladakh into Indian territory.

**A Legend That Endures**

Today, Zorawar Singh's memory lives on in ways both grand and unexpected. In Tibet, a memorial stands where pregnant women pray for sons as brave as the Indian general.

In his book *Kailash – Jewel of the Snows*, Rajinder Arora describes the Kailash Yatra and highlights that Zorawar Singh's Samadhi remains at the site of his death. Remarkably, even today, Chinese soldiers are acquainted with his name.

And now, a tank bears his name, ready to defend the very lands he once conquered. The "Zorawar" light tank, nimble yet powerful, stands as a modern incarnation of the warrior's spirit – a testament to India's resolve to protect its Himalayan frontier.

From the 19th-century battlefields to the 21st-century arms race, the legacy of 'Zorawar' continues to shape the destiny of nations atop the world's highest battlefield.

### **Golog, Qinghai: After 30 Years, a Prestigious Tibetan School Is Liquidated**

22 July 2024, Bitter Winter, Lobsang Gurung

The Jigme Gyaltsen Nationalities Vocational High School was praised even by Communist authorities. But that it preserved Tibetan culture could not be tolerated.

The Jigme Gyaltsen Nationalities Vocational High School in Golog (also spelled Golok) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai province, has been liquidated by the Chinese authorities on July 12. More than 90% of the inhabitants of Golog Prefecture are Tibetans and the area is part of historical Tibet, even if China assigned it to Qinghai province.

Jigme Gyaltsen was not any school. It was established in 1994 by a famous Tibetan teacher, Ragya Jigme Gyaltsen, and went on to win awards from the Chinese administration itself. It grew from the original 86 of 1994 to more than 1,000 students. Of the 2,559 students who graduated there in thirty years, 742 went on to college and 13 became tenured university professors. Alumni of Jigme

Gyaltsen published more than 300 books and hundreds of articles in peer-reviewed journals. The school was featured as a model educational institution in several Chinese TV shows.

However, in the eye of the Chinese authorities Jigme Gyaltsen had an original sin. While proud of its courses in computer science, engineering, and medicine, the school taught pupils in both Tibetan and Chinese language, offered courses in Tibetan culture, had monks as teachers, and counted among its alumni distinguished monastic administrators. It thus became a victim of the Chinese effort to eradicate Tibetan culture from Qinghai.

It all started with the legal prosecution of the founder and principal, Ragya Jigme Gyaltsen, on trumped up charges of taking bribes, and of some students accused to use the symbols of Tibet's national flag, which are banned in China. Earlier this year, the principal was found not guilty, yet he was excluded from the Tibetan Nationalities Council, of which he was a member. An investigation was launched to determine whether among pupils there were monks and nuns who had taken their monastic vows before turning 18, which is illegal under Chinese law.

Although investigations were inconclusive, on July 12 the authorities announced that the school had been liquidated, just days after what turned out to have been the last graduation ceremony, held on July 8.

In a social media post dated July 14, Ragya Jigme Gyaltsen captured the general mood of sadness, and what the institution was all about: "To Jigme Gyaltsen Nationalities Vocational School of Golok: even if you are only thirty, you are still young and healthy, so what a pity. But what is impermanent is never permanent. It is the inevitable law of impermanence that things change from moment to moment. We believe in rebirth and that education through a series of lives is the most important thing. Why not pray for education in future lives? If death cannot be revived, what is the use of wailing? Therefore, it is best to pray for a perfect body in future lives. Please do not be sad but take responsibility for your future."

### **China's controversial boarding school policy for Tibetans explained**

21 July 2024, RFA, Lobsang Gelek

Officials say the system is the best way to educate a scattered population. Critics call it forced assimilation.

The Gangjong Sherig Norbu School has long been a source of pride for ethnic Tibetans in China's Qinghai province. Known for its rigorous curriculum, the school counted leading Tibetan scholars as members of its faculty; its graduates have gone on to

excel in fields like engineering, education, medicine and religion.

"It was there that I truly understood the significance of Tibetan language and identity," Tenzin Woesser, a Tibetan songwriter who attended the school in the 1990s, told RFA.

So it was with tears in their eyes that students marked the last graduation Gangjong Sherig would ever hold after Chinese authorities closed the school in July, making it one of a growing list of Tibetan educational institutions that have shut. Subsequently, RFA learned two more Tibetan Buddhist institutions – the Ngaba Kirti and the Lhamo Kirti monasteries in Sichuan province – were also closed this summer.

Chances are that most of the students at these schools will now be sent to a Chinese-run boarding school that minimizes instruction in Tibetan in favor of a Mandarin-heavy curriculum that promotes party loyalty. The story of how Tibetans are educated has attracted international concern and reflects a tension between cultural preservation and national integration.

What is China's education policy?

Tibetan students in the first half of the century were typically educated at home or in the hundreds of monasteries that dominated Tibetan culture and traditions. Some Tibetan children still attend schools where the medium of instruction is Tibetan.

But the vast majority are thought to now go to schools where the lessons are in Mandarin, with Tibetan courses limited to a single language class.

The Gangjong Sherig Norbu School and the two Sichuan monastery schools are among dozens of Tibetan institutions that have closed in recent years. Others include the Sengdruk Taktse School in Amdo Golog, Qinghai province, and the Drago Monastery in Kham Karze, Sichuan province. According to a Human Rights Watch report, the number of non-Tibetan-speaking teachers jumped in areas with ethnic Tibetan students. One goal, according to the report, appears to be to quiet restive regions through assimilation with the majority Han culture.

Visitors say young children who attend Chinese boarding schools are unable to easily communicate with older relatives who grew up studying Tibetan, creating a generational rift and worries about the loss of a unique Tibetan identity.

What do other governments think about China's boarding schools?

China has come under increasing international criticism for its educational policies both in the Tibetan Autonomous Region and in Tibetan areas in the Chinese provinces of Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu and Yunnan.

A panel of experts advising the United Nations human rights office said as many as 1 million Tibetan

students now attend boarding schools and risk an “erosion of their identity.”

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in August 2023 that China’s “coercive policies seek to eliminate Tibet’s distinct linguistic, cultural and religious traditions among younger generations of Tibetans.”

What’s China’s response to the criticism?

China bristles at the complaints. Officials note that much of the Tibetan population remains scattered, leaving boarding schools as the only effective way of ensuring students have access to quality teachers and educational resources.

Beijing says Tibetans aren’t forced to attend and many also include instruction in Tibetan language and history.

Officials also point to figures that show the number of Tibetans who can read and write (in Mandarin or another language) has increased dramatically, although official statistics are hard to verify and other surveys show varying literacy rates.

What are the concerns about Chinese-run boarding schools for Tibetans?

Gyal Lo, a Tibetan activist and sociologist who studied the boarding school system in China before fleeing into exile in Canada, told RFA that the schools serve to sinicize Tibetans, including children as young as 4-years-old.

At that age, it’s easy to overwhelm the Tibetan language the students use at home with the Mandarin instruction they are bombarded with every day in school. Attendance is compulsory in everything but name, as families that don’t send their children to the schools may be cut off from government benefits or job opportunities, he has said.

“The Chinese government has repeatedly tried to convert Tibetans into Chinese by eliminating the Tibetan way of life and identity. Now they are educating the youngest members of society to eradicate Tibetan identity,” Gyal Lo said. “This is the most dangerous policy.”

### **The Vibrant Villages Programme: A Response to PLA’s Salami Slicing through Xiaokang (小康) villages**

19 July 2024, ORF, Atul Kumar

The VVP’s effective implementation will help these Indian villages connect to the national mainstream, participate in India’s growing economy and, in return, enhance security for the state

On 12 July 2024, the Rural Development and Migration Prevention Commission of India’s Uttarakhand State reported that 11 villages along

the India-Tibet border in the Chamoli, Pithoragarh, and Uttarkashi districts had been abandoned. The Commission’s survey of 137 villages in the previous year revealed that three villages in Chamoli, six in Pithoragarh, and two in Uttarkashi were deserted. This finding underscores the significance of the Indian government’s Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP), launched in July 2023, aimed at preventing such occurrences. The VVP seeks to provide essential services, including social goods, livelihood opportunities, healthcare, infrastructure, and communication facilities to encourage the repopulation of these border villages.

This initiative is particularly crucial in light of China’s establishment of Xiaokang villages near the Indian border. The settlement of entirely new villages close to the border, often within contested territory, surpasses the People’s Liberation Army’s (PLA’s) previous forward patrolling and road-building activities. This action violates multiple treaties that China has signed with its neighbours, disregards decades of border negotiations, and mirrors the tactics China used in the South China Sea to seize smaller islands and construct new ones.

Importance of Xiaokang

Xiaokang (小康) is an ancient Chinese social concept first mentioned in the “Shi Jing” (Book of Poems) nearly 2,000 years ago. It signifies China’s national aspiration to develop into a society characterised by “modest happiness and comfort” for the common people. Over the years, the term evolved, and China’s paramount leader, Deng Xiaoping, described Xiaokang as a stage of economic development marked by a per capita income of US\$ 800. China achieved this target in 1997, and by 2024, its per capita income has risen to approximately US\$ 13,136.

In 2017, Chinese President Xi Jinping invoked the Xiaokang concept to address poverty and measure the quality of life in villages, ensuring that no one would be left behind in the pursuit of development. He emphasised the importance of health, infrastructure, and cultural and environmental progress, alongside income equality, to signify the attainment of a modestly prosperous village. This policy shift led to increased efforts to develop border villages, aiming to enhance the living standards of border populations and improve border management and security.

In 2017, Chinese President Xi Jinping invoked the Xiaokang concept to address poverty and measure the quality of life in villages, ensuring that no one would be left behind in the pursuit of development. Therefore, as part of the Xiaokang village construction programme in 2017, China began developing 628 villages, primarily near its borders, with some even in disputed territories. Gyalaphug,

deep within Bhutan's Beyul region, is an example. In May 2023, news reports further highlighted China's construction of Xiaokang villages near Uttarakhand State's Barahoti region, just 11 kilometres from the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Middle Sector. These villages have been established to support strategic road networks and sustain China's military outposts in rugged, mountainous areas. Chinese authorities encourage their residents in these villages to see themselves as "soldiers without uniforms," turning each village into a fortress and each household into a watch post, primarily to guard China's borders.

#### Situation Inside Xiaokangs

The actual population of these villages is often higher than reported in official figures. This includes mostly temporary residents, primarily Chinese and occasionally Tibetan, such as construction workers, technical advisors, and security agents, who reside there for a year or more. A special unit of the border police is also stationed in or around the village, with the primary task of intercepting Tibetans attempting to flee to India or Nepal. Village residents are required to form a joint defence team with the border security police to patrol the neighbouring mountains. Consequently, PLA border patrols, which previously occurred once every three months or seasonally, now arrive approximately every fifteen days due to the presence and development of these villages.

Additionally, a village-based cadre work team resides here, with its members rotated every year or more. This team guides the village committee and the local Communist Party branch, providing political education to villagers and assisting with practical needs such as greenhouse building and management, and mushroom growing techniques. These various regulatory agencies ensure that the residents of these villages remain under strict surveillance and control.

This team guides the village committee and the local Communist Party branch, providing political education to villagers and assisting with practical needs such as greenhouse building and management, and mushroom growing techniques.

The Xiaokang villages represent a sophisticated strategy for extending *de facto* and *de jure* control over borders. The PLA enhances its security infrastructure and support system, following its often-professed philosophy of civil-military collaboration in logistical supply. Furthermore, these villages have become popular tourist destinations, contributing to the region's financial development and strengthening Chinese control over the frontier.

Additionally, the establishment of village political units, along with the introduction of postal networks, broadband connections, and permanent

administrative apparatus, helps China bolster its legal claims to these areas in the international arena. Since bilateral territorial negotiations typically avoid disturbing settled populations in disputed territories, these Xiaokang villages have become a quasi-legal instrument for the Chinese state. India and Bhutan, in particular, have been adversely affected by these incremental Chinese advances.

#### The Indian context: Vibrant Villages Programme

India must devise countermeasures to address China's salami-slicing (Can Shi 蚕食) tactics in territorial acquisition. One countermeasure is to define and announce red lines, then defend them with a serious commitment to deter the adversary. Another is to cultivate a reputation for unpredictability or occasional overreaction; irregular aggressive responses can shape adversary behaviour and maintain deterrence. The third countermeasure is the "swallowing as a whale" (Jing Tun 鲸吞) strategy, where small territorial nibbles by the adversary are countered with significant territorial gains, negating their efforts and creating space for negotiation.

India must devise countermeasures to address China's salami-slicing (Can Shi 蚕食) tactics in territorial acquisition. One countermeasure is to define and announce red lines, then defend them with a serious commitment to deter the adversary.

The most robust response to these Chinese villages is an equally effective, focused, and determined border development strategy that India's Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP) intends to achieve. This development initiative aims to repopulate frontier regions, expand state presence, and attract tourists, thereby bolstering India's territorial claims.

The Indian government must maintain its commitment to the VVP, ensuring it does not succumb to bureaucratic inefficiencies. Often, ineffective monitoring and lack of accountability lead to fund diversion and consequent slow or lack of progress in development schemes in far-flung regions. Even in 2024, some villages along the India-Tibet border still require days of travel on foot or by pony to reach. Therefore, the VVP's effective implementation will help these Indian villages connect to the national mainstream, participate in India's growing economy and, in return, enhance security for the state. Repopulated villages along the border can become the most important sustainment factor for Indian troops deployed along harsh mountainous terrain.

Finally, there are crucial differences between Indian border villages and Chinese Xiaokang villages. In India, border populations abandon their villages due to a lack of facilities and livelihood opportunities, therefore, providing basic amenities would likely encourage them to return and reinhabit their homes. In contrast, Xiaokang villages are forcibly

established, with the local border population compelled to remain and support the Chinese state and its agencies. This distinction can be a significant advantage for India. Proper planning, adequate support, and effective monitoring are crucial to leverage this advantage.

### **Tibetan Buddhist Nuns: An Overlooked Pillar of the Four-fold Sangha**

19 July 2024, BDG, Ani Wangmo Tenzin

Scriptures state that the Buddhadharma will exist as long as the fourfold sangha exists, meaning bhikshus, bhikshunis, upasakas and upasikas (ordained monks, ordained nuns, laymen, and laywomen). The Buddha ordained the sangha at the beginning of his teaching journey and didn't pass into parinirvana until the fourfold sangha was firmly established and flourishing.

For the Dharma to flourish, we need the balance of the four parts of the sangha. The Buddha taught monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen alike how to study and practice, yet, after passing to parinirvana, Buddhist teachers focused mostly on monks; their approach wasn't balanced. This resulted in a weakening of the female monastic community. Consequently, when an extremist Muslim invasion destroyed the monastic community in northern India, laypeople did not know how to study and practice and so became Hindus or Muslims.

Fortunately, the Buddhadharma was preserved in other Asian countries, such as China, Thailand, and Tibet.

Today, we face an imbalance in the fourfold sangha once again. If we focus on Vajrayana Buddhism, we can see that in Western countries and non-Himalayan regions in general, the Dharma is focused mostly on lay practitioners: Dharma centers are led by laypeople to serve the needs of mostly lay practitioners. This is good and benefits many people—except that in this framework, monasticism is often deemed unnecessary. For the first time in the history of Buddhism, much of the ordained sangha is not supported by laypeople, who are encouraged to send money abroad, to support the various projects, monasteries, and activities of the famous, often very well-off head lama. This results in a large majority of lay support being sent overseas—either to Bhutan, Nepal, India, or Tibet, while many practitioners' own sanghas remain overlooked.

Donors often think that Tibetans are in dire need of support, and in some cases this may be true. But generally speaking, they are one of the best-situated refugees, while at the same time, many the non-Himalayan nuns are alarmingly unsupported. According to several estimations, about 80 per cent of non-Himalayan monastics disrobe in a few years

due to lack of different forms of support, from financial to social, spiritual, educational, psychological, medical, and so on.

Of the fourfold sangha required for the survival of the Dharma, nuns are the least supported, in particular non-Himalayan nuns. They are often left with no choice but to disrobe and join the workforce to support their lives, despite their strong desire to live as monastics. Within the fourfold sangha, they are the endangered species that most needs your attention.



Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo and Tsunma Gakyi in Jamyang Choeling nunnery. Photo by Tsunma ND Dolma. Image courtesy of the author

Decades ago, when Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo came from the cave and began to advocate for Himalayan nuns, people were surprised: "Oh, nuns! We never hear about the nuns. We know the male teachers and their monasteries, but where are the nuns?"

It took some time and several people to raise awareness, but by the power of her clear vision and the dedicated, diligent work of many people, today Tibetan Buddhist nunneries are thriving and nuns are excelling in education and meditation alike.

What looks impossible becomes possible when we engage in skillful action.

Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo, together with Geshema Kelsang Wangmo and Tsunma Tenzin Sangmo who founded Thosamling nunnery, established the Alliance of Non-Himalayan Nuns (ANHN) to support nuns from non-Himalayan regions. Recognized as a US-based non-profit organization earlier in 2024, the Alliance of Non-Himalayan Nuns, Inc. is governed by its board of directors, which includes representatives from all four major traditions: Kagyu, Gelug, Nyingma, and Sakya. Its supporters include also other luminaries, such as Bhikshuni Karma Lekshe Tsomo, Bhikshuni Thubten Chodron, and Venerable Robina Courtin, to name a few.

In March 2024, 38 nuns from 17 countries and five continents congregated in Thosamling Nunnery in Dharamsala, India, at the first ANHN Gathering to meet, to learn from renowned teachers and each



other, to practice together, and to simply enjoy each other's company, seeing that they are not alone.

Tibetan Buddhist nuns from non-traditional Tibetan Buddhist cultures have a unique set of skills and encounter a unique set of challenges in upholding their vows and robes. These skills are a great advantage if they are noticed. While Himalayan monastics enter monasteries at a young age and have almost no experience of the world outside the monastery, non-Himalayan nuns are often highly educated, accomplished in different careers, such as healthcare, education, finance, the arts, and mental health. They have led companies, acquired soft skills, worked in demanding environments, and have been mothers raising children.

Small children entering a monastery cannot renounce much; often they are just sent there. Meanwhile, these non-Himalayan nuns have often seen worldly success, yet renounced it all to pursue the Dharma and benefit others in a deeper, more far-reaching way. Nonetheless, they remain without the support that the Himalayan monastics receive.

This is shortsighted, since they can significantly benefit Buddhist communities, not only through the sincerity of their practice, but also through the various skillsets they bring from their lives before ordination. This is so often overlooked. They know the world outside the temples and their skills can be utilized for the Dharma to flourish. Many nuns show great resilience and a deep dedication to the Dharma, and continue to serve despite the difficulties they are facing. Without greater support, this is not sustainable.

ANHNN was established to support non-Himalayan nuns and at the first gathering discussed above, the nuns have started to organize themselves in mutual support. Even so, we will need a collaborative effort on the part of all four parts of the sangha to tackle the challenges that non-Himalayan nuns face: not being a part of a monastic sangha, staying alone and isolated, and not receiving enough support from the lay community and, sometimes, also from teachers. There needs to be a conscious effort to reframe this situation as a unique opportunity for the Dharma to manifest in non-traditional cultures. It is essential that laypeople are informed about how they can provide greater support.

At the same time, several teachers have expressed their support, among them: His Holiness the Dalai Lama; Mingyur Rinpoche; Khamtrul Rinpoche; Serkong Rinpoche; Geshe Dorji Damdul from Tibet House; and Geshe Ngawang Tenzin, the abbot of Dolma Ling nunnery; together with its leading geshemas. At the recent gathering, there were also heartwarming meetings with fellow nuns from Dolma Ling and Dongyu Gatsal Ling nunneries,

and a genuine sisterhood has started to form among the NHNs, inviting more and more nuns to join.

### Pema Tseden's Other Legacy

18 July 2024, Sixth Tone, Cai Xin



The Tibetan filmmaker was also a prolific writer of short stories.

Last May, the author, translator, and filmmaker Pema Tseden died of a sudden heart attack in Lhasa. While the news came as a shock to all who knew him, myself included, the events of the past year prove that he has not been forgotten. His last film, "Snow Leopard," released posthumously, won the Grand Prix at the 36th Tokyo International Film Festival last November before premiering in cinemas on the Chinese mainland in April.

But Pema Tseden's films are only one part of his legacy — he was also a prolific writer who produced 46 short stories in both Tibetan and Chinese.

The last two of these — the fiction collection "Fresh Scent of Pine Wood" and a compendium of translated folklore "Tales of the Golden Corpse: Tibetan Folk Tales" — finally hit stores this May, on the one-year anniversary of his death. Their publication was something of a pet project of mine: my way of paying tribute to a great, if sometimes overlooked, literary talent.

Pema Tseden's career defies easy categorization. An auteur who wrote and directed his own scripts, he was equally at home writing screenplays and novels. And he did so in two languages — Tibetan and Chinese — often translating his own work from one to the other.

Although Pema Tseden grew up in a Chinese-speaking environment and was in third grade by the time his region revived education in minority languages and scripts, Tibetan was his mother tongue. His grandfather, a monk in the Nyingma sect of Tibetan Buddhism, raised and educated him, taught him Tibetan, and helped him recite the scriptures. Their loving relationship would prove the foundation of Pema Tseden's creative life.

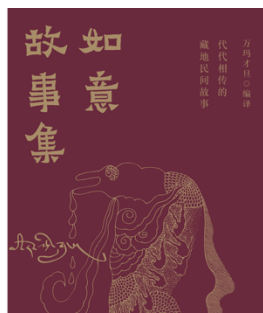


松木清香，琥珀留痕

万玛才旦 小说集  
其子久美成列亲自编选

描写先帝转世灵童与无家可归流浪者的关系与爱恋

中国文联出版社



藏地版《一千零一夜》

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描写千年前的爱情故事  
讲述宝尸的转世轮回

中国文联出版社



The cover of “Fresh Scent of Pine Wood” and “Tales of the Golden Corpse.” CITIC Publishing Group

After graduating from junior high, Pema Tseden was admitted into a high school in the northwestern province of Qinghai. It was there that he met the famous Tibetan poet and writer Dondrub Gyal, and under his guidance began his literary journey. Highly influential to the generation of Tibetans who came of age in the 1980s, Dondrub Gyal was the quintessential bad boy poet: Eschewing custom, he wore his hair long, donned sunglasses and a long trench coat, and smoked in class. He could recite epics like the “Ramayana” and spoke endlessly about poetry.

But Pema Tseden didn’t just draw influence from Tibetan literature: In addition to Tibetan classics like “The Life of Milarepa,” he immersed himself in work like the 17th-century classic “Dream of the Red Chamber,” Russian literature, and popular romances. He also read many of the realist noels and avant-garde writers who emerged in China in the late 1980s, including Yu Hua, Yan Lianke, Ge Fei, Su Tong, and Can Xue.

Their influence can be seen in his first published story, “Men and Dog,” which came out in the Tibet Literature magazine in 1992, when he was just a freshman in college. The narrative is simple: A dog lives on a mountain inhabited by three households of shepherds. One night, one of the households witnesses a marriage, another has a member who falls ill, and in the third, a child is born. A wolf arrives, and the dog vigilantly guards the herds of sheep, barking and shrieking. The people, feeling ill at ease about the sound, beat the dog to death with a staff. The next morning, they realize that the strange sounds they heard the night before were from a fight between the dog and a wolf.

“It was my debut piece, and it basically set the tone for all my other work,” Pema Tseden later told his biographer. “What remains is really only one emotion, a slight pessimism.”

In 1991, after four years spent as a primary school teacher, Pema Tseden was admitted into the Tibetan Language and Literature major at Northwest Minzu

University in Gansu province; he would eventually receive a master’s degree in Tibetan-Chinese Literary Translation from the school. As part of his degree, he needed to translate a text from Tibetan to Chinese; he picked the “Tales of the Golden Corpse,” a compendium of classic folktales from the region.

“I needed to get some practice translating, so I translated the ‘Tales of the Golden Corpse,’ which greatly influenced me when I was young,” he recalled. “The narratives and dialogues in those stories were very simple, but they inspired me.”

Indeed, both his short stories and scripts were greatly influenced by folk literature and Tibetan literary traditions. Pema Tseden listened to many folktales growing up, and later on he would retell these stories to others, giving him an ear for concise language and structure. In 2009, he published a full Chinese translation of the “Tales of the Golden Corpse,” affixing “Tibetan Folk Tales” to the title. That same year, he completed work on his first feature film, “Soul Searching,” part of his graduate thesis at the Beijing Film Academy. It would go on to win the Jury Grand Prix at the 12th Shanghai International Film Festival.

But Pema Tseden believed that writing fiction allowed for more self-expression than filmmaking, and the pleasure and satisfaction he derived from writing was greater than that for the films he made. When he wrote short stories, he tried to work quickly, going from inspiration into text in a single bound. He would liken writing to dreaming. A common trope in Tibetan literature is for the storyteller to abruptly enter different states: When reciting “The Epic of King Gesar,” for example, the storyteller must channel completely different voices. They themselves might be illiterate, but through the story, their language can become beautiful and sophisticated. If uninterrupted, these recitations could last for several hours. Pema Tseden always hoped that his own works could mimic such a state — dreamlike, trancelike.

“Searching, but ultimately not finding — the theme of loss runs through all my writing,” Pema Tseden said. He used stories to reconstruct his own understanding of the Tibetan world he grew up in, even as that world changed and grew more distant.

His posthumously released short story collection, which I had the privilege of working on, was compiled by his son, himself a filmmaker, Jigme Trinley. The pieces are presented in backward chronological order, from his last novel to his debut. In addition to “Fresh Scent of Pine Wood,” the last story he completed before his death and the one that gives the book its name, it includes some of his other most representative works, such as “Men and Dog,” the novel from which “Soul Searching” is based off. One standout is “A Red Cloth,” which tells the story of two people’s experiences across a single day.

One is blindfolded and ends the day unchanged; the other goes through an entire lifetime, aging, falling ill, and eventually dying.

It's a curious fable — the orphaned legacy of an artist gone far too soon.

Translator: Matt Turner; portrait artist: Wang Zhenhao.

(Header image: A portrait of Pema Tseden (right) taken in 2016, and a collection of his fiction. Courtesy of Liu Dayan and CITIC Publishing Group)

### Tibetan exiles are on the move again

18 July 2024, Prospect, Pippa Crawford

They first fled their homeland in the fifties. Now a new generation of Tibetans is emigrating thousands of miles away

Above the lakeside city of Pokhara, Nepal, there stands a small settlement of houses, brightly painted in pastel yellow, brick red and blue. This is Tashiling, one of the oldest camps for Tibetan refugees in the country. Behind Tashiling rises the double summit of Machapuchare, or "Fishtail", a Himalayan peak that has never been climbed. Beyond Fishtail is the border with China, over which thousands of Tibetans have fled since their homeland was occupied by Chinese forces in 1959.

The first refugees who settled here in 1962 hoped Tashiling would be a temporary shelter. Just over 60 years later, there are shops, a school, a carpet workshop, a Buddhist monastery and a population of 476. Nepal took in more Tibetans than any other country except India; the country was home to 20,000 at the peak of Tibetan immigration.

Yet times are changing for this fragile community. Local industries that employ Tibetans are struggling. Nepal has stopped issuing new refugee cards to Tibetans, blocking anyone born after 1990 from getting a passport, or opening a bank account in the country. Beijing is tightening its grip on Kathmandu, with recent aid packages from China to much poorer Nepal coming with the understanding that the government will increase its surveillance of Tibetans.

In April, I took a taxi from Pokhara to Tashiling camp, and asked residents about their lives there. Most were cautious about talking, but on the condition that I change her name, one woman pulled me up a stool beside her shop.

Lhamo\* is part of the generation who has never seen Tibet. "I was born here, in the camp, in 1975," she told me. "My parents came in 1965." Lhamo has brought up her two daughters in Tashiling, and earns a living making and selling traditional souvenirs: jewellery, statues, and silver cymbals used in prayer.

The designs are Tibetan, passed down between generations, but Lhamo explained that it is no longer possible to bring the raw materials into Nepal from Chinese-occupied Tibet. "We had to find new routes," she said. "Peddlers bring us silver and turquoise from Burma and Afghanistan."

I asked if the changes were connected to the recent crackdown by the Chinese government. Lhamo pressed a finger to her lips. "I can't say openly. But yes, things have been difficult... with China, and with the rules and regulations of Nepal. Last year we wanted to celebrate Uprising Day [the anniversary of the Tibet rebellion]—we were going to march in Pokhara town and shout: Free Tibet! But we weren't allowed. We marked the day at the camp instead, with praying and singing."

"We are in touch with people back home," she whispered, "But it's getting harder. They listen to phones."

Tibetans who can speak more freely have similar stories. As Lobsang Lungtok, a Tibetan community leader now based in Australia, has written: "the Chinese government taps the phone conversations of Tibetans who have family members in exile; the only way for us to stay in contact is by avoiding topics on politics and the Dalai Lama. Phone and internet connections are cut when a protest breaks out."

Lhamo explained that Tibetan children are taught separately at the camp. Though their parents encourage them to play with Nepali children, the community is guarded and protective. "We want them to be like brothers and sisters...but we hope that they will choose Tibetan husbands and wives. We have to stick together."

Politics aside, Tibetans and Nepalis coexist peacefully. Tibetan Buddhists are free to practise their religion in Hindu-majority Nepal, where it's not uncommon to see temples with elements of both Buddhism and Hinduism.

A 10-hour bus ride from Pokhara, in Nepal's capital, Kathmandu, is Utse, the district's oldest Tibetan restaurant and hotel. A chalkboard gives the day's specials: peanut masala; egg-drop soup, tea with yak butter. There are framed portraits of the Dalai Lama, Tibet's 89-year old religious leader, who is exiled in India. A successor has yet to be chosen; some in the diaspora fear they will lose protection after the Dalai Lama's death.

Utse is run by three generations of the same family. When I arrived, Rinchen\*, the matriarch, was standing in the lobby in slippers and an embroidered dress, checking in a large party of Belgian mountaineers. "Yes, this is my place," she told me, "I opened it after we lost our country. It was 1971. I was a young woman then, I'm 77 now! I wanted it to be for everyone, not just Tibetans."

Is it still for everyone? Rinchen glances over her shoulder. "Yes. People come from all countries." I ask about China, and Rinchen makes the same gesture as Lhamo, a single finger pressed to the lips.

"Yes, yes, we have many visitors from China. Business is business. But we feel all the time that they are watching us."

China denies that repression is taking place against Tibetans, at home or abroad. "Since Tibet's peaceful liberation and democratic reform in the 1950s, the southwestern autonomous region has made great strides in preserving and developing Tibetan culture, with the government investing heavily in education and cultural preservation," reads a recent article on the state-run news site Tibet.cn.

Available data indicates a second wave of emigration of young Tibetans to Australia—overwhelmingly from the generation born after 1990 and no longer eligible for refugee cards in Nepal—though data is scarce. Most Tibetans do not have passports, and others have falsified their ages in order to enter another country. It's also difficult to pinpoint the diaspora population; the Australian census, for example, asks "which country were you born in?" rather than "with which nationality do you identify" meaning that second and third-generation immigrants can slip through the net.

In 1990, the US began accepting 1,000 Tibetan refugees a year following the introduction of a Diversity Immigrant Visa that prioritised educated migrants from countries that didn't already have large immigrant communities in America. Language data from the US census shows a steady rise in the Tibetan languages, from 188,000 residents speaking these languages at home in 2000, to over 300,000 in 2020. Australia and Canada also launched their Tibetan quotas in the nineties.

Diana Hewitt, a researcher at Williams College, argues that the decline of the carpet industry—which employed 1.2m Tibetans and Nepalīs in Nepal at its peak—drove the descendants of the first settlers overseas. "It used to be [Nepal's] largest earner of foreign currency, but there just isn't the demand for these kinds of carpets anymore. The younger generation can't rely on the income anymore," she said in a phone call.

The balancing act of Nepali government policy is another factor, with the partial rights granted to Tibetan settlers affecting some generations more than others. "Tibetan children can go to school in Nepal, and be educated to degree level. But any job in Nepal that requires a university education also requires citizenship, which most Tibetans still don't have. So they have to go abroad, and send money home to their families," Hewitt added.

While it is also common for young Nepalīs to emigrate to find better jobs abroad, Tibetans cannot

always follow the same routes. Hundreds of thousands of Nepalīs head to Saudi Arabia or the UAE for work every year, but this requires documents which Tibetans don't have. Thus, they are travelling further, to Australia, the US and Canada, to countries that will accept them. Geopolitical factors are at play here too; as China courts Nepal and India, with visa-free travel and joint military drills, the west is opening doors for those who ran from China—and are still running.

Dee Why near Sydney is home to a community of at least 800 Tibetans. Last year, the demand for Tibetan books was so high that Dee Why library opened a Tibetan section, the first of its kind in Australia. A spokesperson for the mayor of the Northern Beaches council told me the library has loaned out 780 books since launching, and has just started a bi-weekly Tibetan storytime session for children.

Australia's Gold Coast is as distinct from Himalayas as can be imagined—and the new landscape brings new challenges. Many Tibetans born and raised in landlocked Nepal have never learned to swim, or even seen the ocean. There is now a swimming club especially for the Dee Why Tibetans.

Western help for the Tibetan émigrés may be part of a wider political strategy, but the communities that have sprung from it are growing year on year. In the foothills of Machapuchare, Lhamo is looking to the future. "Life here in the camp is neither good, nor bad," she said. "All I hope for is a happier life for my children and grandchildren."

\*Names have been changed

### India sees US 'Resolve Tibet Act' as driven by great power rivalry?

18 July 2024, Tibetan Review

As focus grows on it to take a political stand on the issue of Tibet in consonance with Sino-Tibetan ties before the 1950's, India's former national security adviser (NSA) Shivshankar Menon has claimed that the primary driver for the recent US adoption of 'Resolve Tibet Act' was its "rivalry with China", not any concern for Tibet, reported the [economictimes.com](https://economictimes.com) Jul 17.

On the other hand, US House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaul, who played a leading role in the Act's passage, said in a statement Jul 17 that the legislation was meant to help the Tibetan people against China's undermining and erasing of their culture and the stripping of their right to self-determination. The Act also dismisses as false China's claim that Tibet has been part of it since ancient times.

Speaking at the launch of former diplomat Dilip Sinha's book 'Imperial Games in Tibet: The Struggle for Statehood and Sovereignty' on Jul 16, Menon



has argued that there were “clear limits” to America’s commitment to Tibet and they were waving the flag of Tibet today in its own interest.

Justifying the lack of any move in India’s policy on the political issue of Tibet, Menon has said: “I would be very careful to say ‘Oh! the world is changed, they (the US) have passed an act’. I think you need to look at the basic correlation of forces and the balance of forces, and the actual strength of the people and what is the interest of the great powers and how they see it at this time.”

Menon, who has served as India’s foreign secretary from 2006-09, has also noted: “Today, the Americans see it as in their interest to at least wave the flag of Tibet but this doesn’t extend to recognising Tibet... It is driven not by the concern for Tibet, the primary driver here is the rivalry with China.”

Though clear that Tibet cannot rely on great power rivalry to solve their problems, Menon, 75, has lauded India’s effort in ensuring that the Tibetan culture, civilization and identity “stays strong”. He has said Tibetans, too, like Armenians, could have been another “lost people” otherwise.

“They are not lost. Part of it because of His Holiness, his personality and what he has done. But also because I think of what India provided, and that we shouldn’t forget and should never give up on,” he has added.

Menon has praised Sinha’s book as an “honest account” of what happened – be it the great power rivalry, how it affected Tibet or how it affected India. The book claims to offer a thorough exploration of Tibet’s historical and contemporary geopolitical significance. It critically examines the ongoing impact of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet – whatever that may mean – amidst persistent citizen protests and global calls for freedom.

The discussion at the launch event has covered various topics from the book, including a brief history of Tibet, its complex geopolitical entanglements, the rise of Tibetan Buddhism, and its annexation by China in 1950. Apart from Menon and Sinha, well-known Tibet-China expert Claude Arpi has also taken part.

Significantly, at the book’s launch event, Sinha, a former Indian ambassador, said China has not been able to assimilate or absorb Tibet and it has not been able to win the hearts and minds of the Tibetan people, noted the ANI news service Jul 17.

### **Biden’s Tibet Stance Draws Criticism Despite Signing Landmark Act**

18 July 2024, The Tibet Express, Tsering Choephel

The New York and New Jersey Chapter of the Tibetan National Congress has written to US

Tibet Digest December - January 2024

President Joe Biden in protest of his reiterating the US policy that recognises Tibet as part of China while announcing the passage of the “Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act” on 12 July. Expressing disappointment, the letter reads: “We appreciate your signing of S. 138, the Promoting a Resolution Act. However, we were disheartened by your subsequent statement. Although you expressed support for freedom, democracy, and human rights for Tibetans, your recognition of Tibet as part of China contradicts these values. Tibet has never been a part of China, and we continue to struggle for our freedom from communist China.”

The Resolve Tibet Act, now a law, is a milestone victory for years of advocacy efforts led by the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), the International Campaign for Tibet, and other organisations. While Tibetans celebrate Biden’s signature, which embeds the bill into US law, his subsequent statements stating that “The Act does not change longstanding bipartisan United States policy to recognise the Tibet Autonomous Region and other Tibetan areas of China as part of the People’s Republic of China” have aroused disappointment and discussions among Tibetans.

CTA held a ceremony on Wednesday in the Sikyong Hall at Gangchen Kyishong to celebrate the US government’s adoption of the bill into law. As multiple online posts and reports on Tibet.net show, Tibetan communities in various parts of India, including Shimla, Gangtok, and Varanasi, among others, also held celebratory functions at their locations.

A Tibetan netizen said in an Instagram post, “I don’t know how to greet or celebrate this development,” in an apparent disappointment as the bill was lauded as a game-changer before it went to the President’s desk to be signed into law.

Another Tibetan netizen declared it a great achievement and, in a post on Facebook, thanked all the individuals and organisations for working tirelessly, as well as the bipartisan support from the US Congress. However, he called out President Biden for “his unnecessary comments in the press statement, seemingly to appease China,” saying it “unfortunately discredited the new law.”

### **Tibetan Exile President Ups Ante In Nomenclature War – OpEd**

18 July 2024, Eurasia Review

The Tibetan exile government says it will “strongly counter” Beijing, which has been renaming Tibetan places with Chinese names.

Penpa Tsering, Sikyong or President of the Central Tibetan Administration (Tibetan Parliament in Exile)



or CTA, told Indian media that the “Sinification of Tibet must stop.”

“We will create a map of Tibet that will carry names of all places in Tibet in Tibet language. Chinese official position on Tibet underplays Tibet’s own rich and distinct history as it projects Tibet as part of China since the ancient era. We have to put an end to it,” Tsering said.

“Chinese renaming of Tibetan places will not erase Tibet’s unique culture and identity, because we have been an independent entity for much of our history. China forcibly occupied Tibet by sending its army and that historical fact is acknowledged by the world,” Tsering said.

He said China calls Tibet as Xizang.

“But now we are researching every name in Tibet and we will have a map of Tibet that will show all the original Tibetan names of all the places in Tibet,” he said.

Recently, the information warfare division of Indian Army released a list of 30 places in Tibet with traditional names. Tibet experts in the Calcutta-based Asiatic Society helped prepare the list. Experts say this might be a tit-for-tat move to counter China’s naming many places in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh with Chinese names. China challenges Indian control over Arunachal Pradesh and says it is South Tibet, an extension of the Chinese province of Tibet.

Penpa Tsering asserted that the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama will be determined by the Dalai Lama and the Tibetans, saying, “It is the reincarnation of His Holiness Dalai Lama and not reincarnation of Xi Jinping.” That will surely irk Beijing.

Tsering arrived in Delhi from the hill town of Dharamsala on his way to USA, almost immediately after the enactment of the Resolve Tibet Act in the US Congress.

Tsering arrived in Delhi from the hill town of Dharamsala on his way to USA, almost immediately after the enactment of the Resolve Tibet Act in the US Congress.

The Resolve Tibet Act has also raised the issue of self-determination for Tibetans declaring, “All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right, they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.” Sikyong Tsering interpreted the “self-determination” as the right to hold plebiscite in Tibet and added, “Self-determination means plebiscite. The question is whether China will allow plebiscite in Tibet.” Mr. Tsering expressed gratitude to all stakeholders in the U.S. for ensuring the passage of the Resolve Tibet Act and said he will likely meet all sides, including the Republican party’s leading members as the election season is heating up in the U.S.

Tsering also that CTA was “having back-channel negotiations with the Chinese side.” He insisted that the talks were started with initiative from Chinese side.

“We do not have any expectation from these talks but we have to keep the engagements going as these are part of our long term plans. We met in the first week of this month and the talks are being held with the help of a third country,” said Penpa Tsering.

But he did not name the “third country” that got the talks going or the level of Chinese officials involved in the talks.

China has been silent on the “back channel talks” with the Tibetan exile government. India, where the CTA is based, is also tight lipped on the issue.

Tsering came to Delhi from Dharamshala before leaving for Washington DC where he will meet with U.S. politicians of different parties as the Resolve Tibet Act received bipartisan support.

President Biden signed the text of the Resolve Tibet Act on July 12 that is aimed at initiating “meaningful dialogue” between the People’s Republic of China and the Dalai Lama or “his representatives,” which prompted the Central Tibetan Administration to welcome the move.

Sikyong Tsering described the Tibetan issue as a “conflict” saying that terms like “Tibetan issue” or “dispute” do not convey the substance of the problem.

“Tibet continues to be an unresolved conflict and its resolution has to be based on international law,” said Mr. Tsering. The Resolve Tibet Act has used “dispute” to describe the Tibetan issue, but Mr. Tsering said, “Tibetan conflict is the term to give it a proper status as the real issue is the Chinese occupation of Tibet.” He pointed out that while countries of Europe and the West often talk about violation of human rights and religious rights in Tibet these fails to convey the real problem.

He further pointed out the new act promulgated by the U.S. Congress will help in countering Chinese official position on Tibet that he characterised as a “misinformation campaign”. Chinese official position on Tibet, said Mr. Tsering, often underplays Tibet’s own rich history as it projects Tibet as part of China since the ancient era. He also took a strong stand on the renaming of various places of Tibet saying that renaming will not erase Tibet’s unique culture and identity.

“Nowadays Beijing has started calling Tibet as Xizang but now we are researching every name in Tibet and we will have a map of Tibet that will show all the original Tibetan names of all the places in Tibet,” said Mr. Tsering.

He also said that the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama will be determined by the Dalai Lama and the Tibetans, saying, “It is the reincarnation of His

Holiness Dalai Lama and not reincarnation of Xi Jinping."

The Resolve Tibet Act has raised the issue of self-determination for Tibetans declaring, "All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right, they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development."

Penpa Tsering said, "self-determination" for Tibetans would mean the right to hold plebiscite in Tibet but doubted whether China will ever allow that to happen.

Tsering expressed gratitude to all stakeholders in the U.S. for ensuring the passage of the Resolve Tibet Act and said he will likely meet all sides, including top Republicans in the US election season.

### **US' rivalry with China primary driver for 'Resolve Tibet Act': Former NSA Shivshankar Menon**

17 July 2024, The Economic Times, Shivshankar Menon

The primary driver for the US recently passing the 'Resolve Tibet Act' is its "rivalry with China", not any concern for Tibet, claimed former national security adviser (NSA) Shivshankar Menon. Speaking at the launch of former diplomat Dilip Sinha's book "Imperial Games in Tibet: The Struggle for Statehood and Sovereignty" on Tuesday, Menon argued that there are "clear limits" to America's commitment to Tibet and they are waving the flag of Tibet today in its own interest.

"I would be very careful to say 'Oh! the world is changed, they (the US) have passed an act'. I think you need to look at the basic correlation of forces and the balance of forces, and the actual strength of the people and what is the interest of the great powers and how they see it at this time.

"Today, the Americans see it as in their interest to at least wave the flag of Tibet but this doesn't extend to recognising Tibet... It is driven not by the concern for Tibet, the primary driver here is the rivalry with China," said Menon, who has also served as the foreign secretary from 2006-09.

US President Joe Biden has recently signed into law a bill that enhances American support for Tibet and promotes dialogue between China and the Dalai Lama towards a peaceful resolution of the dispute over the status and governance of the remote Himalayan region.

China, on the other hand, had opposed the 'Resolve Tibet Act', describing it as a "destabilising" Act. The Act enhances US support for Tibet - empowering State Department officials to actively and directly counter disinformation about Tibet from the Chinese government.

Though clear that Tibet cannot rely on great power rivalry to solve their problems, Menon, 75, lauded India's effort in ensuring that the Tibetan culture, civilization and identity "stays strong".

He said the Tibetans, too, like Armenians, could have been another "lost people".

"They are not lost. Part of it because of His Holiness, his personality and what he has done. But also because I think of what India provided, and that we shouldn't forget and should never give up on," he added.

After a failed anti-Chinese uprising in 1959, the 14th Dalai Lama fled Tibet and came to India where he set up the government-in-exile at Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh.

From 2002 to 2010, the Dalai Lama's representatives and the Chinese government held nine rounds of dialogue that did not produce any concrete outcome. Praising the book, Menon said it is an "honest account" of what happened – be it the great power rivalry, how it affected Tibet or how it affected India. "The nice thing in the book is that this is not a partisan historical account. It is a straightforward account based on what actually happened," he added.

"Imperial Games in Tibet" claims to offer a thorough exploration of Tibet's historical and contemporary geopolitical significance.

It also sheds light on the 14th Dalai Lama's escape to India and the resultant Sino-Indian tensions, critically examining the ongoing impact of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet amidst persistent citizen protests and global calls for freedom.

The book, published by Pan Macmillan India and priced at Rs 599, is currently available for purchase across online and offline stores.

### **China Calls the US Resolve Tibet Act a "Sinister Farce"**

17 July 2024, Bitter Winter, Lopsang Gurung

It took only 24 hours to mobilize China's pro-CCP establishment, including its Three-Self and Catholic branches, to repeat the usual anti-Tibetan lies.

On July 12, President Joe Biden signed into law the "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act," known as the Resolve Tibet Act. The historical law explicitly states that CCP's claims that Tibet has been part of China since ancient times are false and calls for the US diplomacy to counter Chinese disinformation and propaganda. It also states that the problem of Tibet should be solved through international dialogue from which China cannot exclude the Dalai Lama and his representatives.

It took only twenty-four hours for the CCP to answer and quickly assemble a symposium condemning the Resolve Tibet Act.

On July 13, the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) held a symposium "strongly condemning" the Act. It was chaired by Zhang Yijiong, the Director of the Nationalities and Religious Affairs Committee of the CPPCC National Committee, and attended by Deputy Directors Jiang Jianguo, Bian Bazaxi, Li Shan, Li Guangfu, Yang Faming, Xu Xiaohong, Yan Jue and more than twenty CPPCC National Committee members, sixteen members of the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee, representatives of the ethnic minority communities. The leaders of the government-controlled Buddhist, Taoist, Islamic, Catholic, and Protestant groups also spoke.

In short, the CCP mobilized against the Resolve Tibet Act the whole pro-Party religious establishment. Those in the West who maintain a "dialogue" with the Three-Self Church, the Patriotic Catholic Church, and the other pro-CCP religious bodies should reflect on the fact that these organizations are willing to endorse immediately even the most obnoxious CCP claims.

The speakers called the Act "sinister," "a farce," and an interference in China's internal affairs. The final press release insisted that "Tibet has been an inseparable part of China since ancient times, and the Tibetan people are members of the Chinese nation. This has long been determined by history, supported by the people, and recognized by the world. This will never change and cannot change at any time... The US and the Dalai Lama group have willfully distorted history and openly denied the objective fact that Tibet's sovereignty belongs to China, which has greatly hurt the feelings of all Chinese people, including the Tibetan people. This is a typical American bullying behavior."

No doubt, "useful idiots" and "fellow travelers" will start being mobilized abroad too against the Act, parroting the same Chinese propaganda lies against the Tibetans and the Dalai Lama. The reaction, on the other hand, shows that this time the CCP has been hit where it hurts.

### **China's Grip on Tibet: Struggles and Sovereignty Explored**

17 July 2024, Devdiscourse

Dilip Sinha's book 'Imperial Games in Tibet: The Struggle for Statehood and Sovereignty' discusses China's inability to assimilate Tibet, underscoring the region's geopolitical significance. The book's launch saw discussions with prominent figures, highlighting Tibet's history, China's tactics, and India's stance.

China has not successfully assimilated or absorbed Tibet, nor has it won over the hearts and minds of the Tibetan people, former Indian ambassador Dilip Sinha remarked at the launch of his book 'Imperial

Games in Tibet: The Struggle for Statehood and Sovereignty'. The book was unveiled at the India International Centre in New Delhi on Tuesday.

Sinha's work underscores Tibet's role as a battleground for global geopolitical ambitions and speculates on the future of the region's pursuit of statehood. He highlighted China's reliance on force to control Tibet, a method he argues is rejected by the Tibetan populace, leading to ongoing resistance against Chinese rule.

The event featured a panel discussion including former Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon and Tibetologist Claude Arpi. They explored Tibet's complex history, its geopolitical conflicts, the influence of Tibetan Buddhism, and China's annexation in 1950. Menon praised the book for its honest recounting of Tibet's past and its impact on India, while Arpi criticized China's involvement in the Dalai Lama's reincarnation process, contrasting it with India's non-interventionist stance.

### **Hope of Returning Home Springs Eternal in the Breasts of Tibetan Exiles in Dharmshala**

17 July 2024, Politics Today, Karen Dabrowska

China is like a tiger in a zoo. When it comes out of its territory, it does not know how to hunt.

he atrocity of silence is worse than the atrocity itself". This statement by the makers of the BBC documentary *Murder in the Snow*, which shows the shooting of Tibetan refugees as they attempted to flee across the Himalayas into Nepal, captures the feelings of Tibetans in the north Indian state of Himachal Pradesh about the plight of their country, which has been occupied by China since 1950.

The 2006 documentary, the first recorded footage of Tibetan refugees trying to cross the border, was screened at the Hope and Stories Café in McLeodganj, home to the Dalai Lama, Tibet's spiritual leader, and the Tibetan government-in-exile. The town of 11,000 – many of them saffron-robed monks and refugees – is a mini Tibet with the large Tsuglagkhang complex. At its heart lies Namgyal Monastery, the personal retreat of the Dalai Lama. It is a magnificent structure that houses a community of dedicated monks. The melodious chants and rhythmic sounds of ceremonial instruments that echo through its walls offer a glimpse of the deep spiritual practices that have flourished here for centuries.

Kundang Tenzin, a Tibetan photographer who founded the Hope Café in 2017, is a man with a mission: to preserve and promote Tibetan culture and to record, document and expose the oppression of the Tibetan people by the Chinese government. He calls his café Hope because he came to India with the hope of returning to Tibet.



Kundang Tenzin founder of the Hope Café Photo by Karen Dabrowska

"I still have that hope," the soft-spoken, gentle man with an engaging smile told Politics Today. "We always talk about harmony, humility, peace, love and compassion. Our cause [freedom from Chinese oppression and respect for the human rights of the Tibetan people] is based on these ideals".

The Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 for promoting peaceful solutions based on tolerance and mutual respect to preserve the historical and cultural heritage of the Tibetan people. "The nonviolent movement works," said Tenzin with confidence and pride. It is not just a fairy tale. Most of the news is about war, terrorist attacks, robbery and rape. The younger generation may think that violence works, but the awarding of the Peace Prize to the Dalai Lama shows that non-violence works.

Following China's communist revolution in 1948, it invaded Tibet in 1950. Overwhelmed, Tibet was forced to surrender its independence. After a failed uprising against Chinese rule in 1959, the 14th Dalai Lama – Tibet's political and spiritual leader – fled into exile in Dharamshala, India, followed by tens of thousands of Tibetans. Since 1959, the Chinese government has exercised total political control over Tibet, using all means of repression, including forced abortion and sterilization, to deter and punish Tibetan resistance.

When asked, "Just because you don't eat a tiger doesn't mean the tiger won't eat you," Tenzin replied: "Non-carnivores can live with the tiger. Tibetans are all over the world. China is like a tiger in a zoo. When it comes out of its territory, it does not know how to hunt.

The Hope Café, which started life as an office, is located on the long, narrow, winding main street of Mcleodganj, where pedestrians, bicycles, motorcycles, rickshaws, cars and four-wheel-drives compete for space. The walls are tastefully decorated with Tenzin's paintings, which speak a thousand words about the suffering of his countrymen, books, Tibetan handicrafts, including

the famous and most widely used peace mantra, om mani padme hum.

In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, it is revered as a powerful tool for spiritual transformation. The mantra is sung, written and engraved on prayer wheels, prayer flags and even mountainsides, symbolizing the desire to spread compassion and peace throughout the world. There are also prayer flags. Tibetans believe that the wind will carry the prayers and mantras around the world to benefit all beings.

Tenzin's dog, the café's mascot, enjoys pride of place on a bean bag. The café has donation boxes for charities, including the street dogs that roam the streets of Mcleodganj uncared for and hungry.

In this haven of peace, a tireless, dedicated team of five run a weekly program. Monday is the day for sharing stories. Niyma Samdup described his hometown of Meto Junga, near Lhasa in Tibet. "It was where the mountains touched the sky. I lived there with my two sisters and my parents. My father had a small bicycle and he went to Lhasa to look for work to feed the family. He did some cleaning, but there was no steady work, so we decided to flee with a kettle, a blanket and some clothes. I was five years old. It took us six months to walk to Nepal.

On Wednesdays, visitors to the café can spend a day living as a Tibetan. Each morning, Nyima Samdup leads a fascinating walk through Tibetan culture, starting with donning a traditional costume and visiting the Dalai Lama's monastery, where the 89-year-old leader gives public lectures. Near the monastery is a chilling photo exhibition of Tibetans who have set themselves on fire in protest at the Chinese occupation. According to the Free Tibet Campaign, more than 150 people have set themselves on fire inside Tibet since March 2009. The number dropped in 2012 when the Dalai Lama said he did not condone the practice but praised the courage of those who had made the ultimate sacrifice for Tibet.

Friday is the day of documentaries and discussion. Tenzin and his colleagues are handing out leaflets about the event in Mcleodganj and have a personal message for those who come to the café in support of Tibet. Murder in the Snow tells the story of more than 70 young people who travelled for three nights in the back of a lorry as it climbed into the mountains. The refugees then walked for another 10 nights, with inadequate clothing and limited food and water, to the foot of the infamous 6000m Nangpa Pass, an ancient trade route to Nepal. As they made their way up the snow-covered pass, a group of mountaineers from a nearby camp watched in horror as Chinese border police opened fire on the refugees. The story went global when American mountain guide Luis Benitez emailed his account of the shooting to a popular climbing website. In 2006,

about 100 Tibetans a month were fleeing their country. Today, only about ten a year are able to make the treacherous journey, as the Chinese have stepped up surveillance following demonstrations against their rule in Tibet in 2008.

Like the flight over the mountains, preserving Tibetan culture is an uphill struggle against seemingly insurmountable odds, but Tenzin is undeterred. "Good things are difficult to achieve," he says philosophically, stressing that preserving the Tibetan language is essential to keeping the culture alive.

In August last year, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, citing a recent UN report on the 'forced assimilation' of one million Tibetan children forced into Mandarin-speaking state boarding schools far from their homes and families, called on China to stop trying to erase Tibet's distinct identity. In December, the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling on China to immediately abolish the boarding schools.

According to reports in various Tibetan-language news media monitored by ChinaAid, an international human rights organization working to promote religious freedom in China, students in Tibetan regions will be required to take full Mandarin Chinese classes from March 2023.

In his first address to the US Congress, Penpa Tsering, the head of Tibet's government-in-exile based in India, known as the Sikyong of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), said his country was dying a 'slow death' under Chinese rule. "We are often asked why we don't hear about Tibet anymore," Tsering said.

He blamed this silence on China's "Orwellian gridlock system, using all means of artificial intelligence to monitor people, control the flow of information and close Tibet to the outside world".

The Chinese government continues to spread disinformation about Tibet through official statements and propaganda, paid online commentators and even fake social media accounts.

The United Nations has repeatedly challenged China over human rights abuses in Tibet, including finding that Tibet is the worst area in China for child malnutrition. In 2023, the watchdog group Freedom House again ranked Tibet as the least free country in the world, tied with South Sudan and Syria. It was the third year in a row that Tibet was at the bottom of Freedom House's rankings, with an overall global freedom score of 1 out of 100.

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom's 2024 Annual Report, released on May 1, highlights the deterioration of religious freedom in Tibet due to the Chinese government's intensified repression and "Sinicization" of Tibetan Buddhism – a policy aimed at bringing Tibetan

Buddhism under the control of the Chinese Communist Party.

The Chinese government has consistently objected to the Dalai Lama's visits to other countries, particularly his trips to Arunachal Pradesh, a north-eastern Indian state over which China claims territorial sovereignty. Countries that host the Dalai Lama often face repercussions from China. When he visited Mongolia in 2016, Beijing responded by imposing an economic blockade on the landlocked country. It also unsuccessfully pressured Sri Lanka not to invite the Dalai Lama in April this year.

Although King Charles held an informal meeting with the Dalai Lama during his European tour in June 2012, the Dalai Lama did not attend the coronation. In light of this, senior Conservative MPs have described the presence of China's Vice President as 'outrageous'.

From chanting 'Tibet needs freedom' in the streets to participating in protests and political lobbying, Tibetans around the world are resisting China's policies despite 70 years of occupation. The voice of the Tibetan people is carried to the outside world by a number of vocal pressure groups such as the Free Tibet Campaign.

Every morning at Hope Café, Nyima Samdup writes a thought for the day on the blackboard. On day 23 of the year 2024, he wrote "If there is no enemy inside, the enemies outside cannot hurt you."

Tenzin sees independence for Tibet or genuine autonomy as two lines of thought. "If we can live our lives in freedom and our human rights are respected, both are acceptable." But he admits that his dream of returning to Tibet has little chance of coming true unless there is a regime change in China.

"We want the Chinese government to see what we are doing [in Dhamarshala]," says Tenzin. "The Tibetan government in exile provides education and health care. Parents make sure their children speak Tibetan. We will always stand up for Tibet."

Hope has an address. The Hope Café on Joigwara Road in Mcleodganj.

### **Can Modi 3.0 end tensions with China? What Experts say**

17 July 2024, India Today, Shashank Mattoo

India's biggest threat has advocated for a fresh start between the two countries. As the Modi government rings in a new term, will the Modi government finally put an end to clashes or will it stand on ground? India's relationship with China has been both stagnant and pivotal in the past decade.

The General elections 2024 confirmed a comeback for prime minister Narendra Modi's government, infamously known as Modi 3.0. The new



government, despite winning for a third consecutive term, has not had it easy.

With growing tensions at the border and across the country, the centre of attention is the government's foreign policy, amid a new closeness between Russia and China.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's policy on China has swung between talking and fighting for a decade. During his first term in 2014, Modi tried making peace with China but the relationship now stands tattered, as territorial and diplomatic clashes between the two countries, combined with the deadly Galwan Valley clashes that killed 20 soldiers, have only increased in the past decade.

#### A decade of tensions

In 2020, Chinese troops began the most brazen border violation by China in decades as they coordinated a campaign to move into disputed territories across the Line of Control that divides India and China. The troops began to occupy territories across the northern sector of the LAC that India had claimed and were soon in a standoff with the Indian Army. This lasted for two months, concluding with the deadly Galwan clashes that claimed the lives of 20 Indian jawans. The Galwan clashes effectively broke India's relationship with China.

It did not take long for the territorial tensions to take an economic turn.

India took several measures to cut its economic exposure to China. It aimed at creating everything China provided, locally. A series of bans happened, including Chinese companies and apps, most notably social media platform TikTok. The movement also barred Chinese companies from investing in some Indian firms, stopped them from bidding for road projects, and blocked a \$3 billion import of power equipment.

#### The Present

In 2024, not much has changed. While the border crisis has eased in several hotspots, tens of thousands of troops remain deployed there. India has embarked on a major campaign to improve its infrastructure on the border with China. The country has been making serious decisions regarding tensions with China and the country has remained unpopular within the nation. Political dialogue has also been stalled since India has made it clear that China has to solve the border crisis before things can improve on our end.

#### A steady future?

Interestingly, there are signals that India may be considering a change in its approach to China. In an interview in April, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India's relations with China were "important and significant." Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh also called for good relations with neighbours

and stated that border talks with China were going well.

There have been diplomatic developments on China's end too, as China finally appointed an ambassador to India.

A number of experts also argue that reducing tensions and engaging with China might actually be a good idea as China has also repeatedly called for improvement in ties with India. However, China's proposal to fix relations isn't all in good taste, as China wants India to focus on other issues like economic and climate change instead of persisting over the border issue.

On the economic front, despite several attempts to reduce dependence on China, trade with China has bloomed. In 2022, India-China trade crossed USD 136 billion, which made Beijing India's second-largest trade partner. Trade in electronics, pharmaceutical ingredients, textiles and chemicals has continued to bloom as India's economy still isn't full self-reliant on China. China is also the top supplier of goods to India's most important industrial sectors. The Modi government's efforts to block some of these imports have been met by protests from Indian businesses that need Chinese products.

Meanwhile, India's electronics sector has pushed the government to allow more Chinese investment and joint ventures with Chinese firms. The industry has even asked for easier visa norms to allow Chinese technicians to help Indian electronics companies. They argue that if India is to become a developed country by 2047, its major industries will need investment and know-how from China.

And from a diplomatic perspective, India is not alone in having tensions with China. The countries, however, have not isolated China. Clearly, India is not gaining much from being the only power that has isolated China. Both President Joe Biden of America and PM Albanese of Australia have met China's Xi Jinping.

#### Experts Say

On resolving issues with China, many of India's best experts have a nuanced answer. While they say that India has done well in holding its ground against China, it has also made clear again and again that China cannot break the rules and get away without consequences. Thus, these experts believe India's policy of holding back a full normalisation of relations until China behaves itself on the border is a sound strategy.

China has a policy of undermining India in South Asia and has good relations with Indian rivals like Pakistan. Considering this, the experts also believe that India-China rivalry isn't going anywhere, despite more engagement or cooperation.

## 'China fails to win hearts and minds of Tibetan people': Former envoy

17 July 2024, ANI

China has not been able to assimilate or absorb Tibet and it has not been able to win the hearts and minds of the Tibetan people, former Indian ambassador Dilip Sinha said during the launch of his book titled 'Imperial Games in Tibet: The Struggle for Statehood and Sovereignty'.

The book 'Imperial Games in Tibet: The Struggle for Statehood and Sovereignty' authored by Sinha was unveiled at the India International Centre in the national capital on Tuesday.

Sinha, in his book titled 'Imperial Games in Tibet: The Struggle for Statehood and Sovereignty', highlighted how Tibet became the playground for global geopolitical ambitions and what the future may hold for this region fighting for statehood.

Dilip Sinha, the author of the book, stressed that China is doing what they do best, which is to try and control them by force.

"China has not been able to assimilate or absorb Tibet and the Tibetan people; it has not been able to win the hearts and minds of the Tibetan people. So China is doing what it does best, which is to try and control them by force, and that is not acceptable to the Tibetan people, which is why we have a movement. But the very fact that China has to impose all kinds of restrictions shows that there is a lot of resentment against Chinese rule," Sinha told ANI.

The book is a deep dive into Tibet's past and future, based on several documented events, international records, archives, and documents.

It provides the reader with an analysis of how Tibet became the playground for global geopolitical ambitions and what the future may hold for this region fighting for statehood.

The event also featured a brief panel discussion between Dilip Sinha, India's former Foreign Secretary, Shivshankar Menon, and Claude Arpi, a renowned author and Tibetologist.

The discussion covered various topics from the book, including the brief history of Tibet, its complex geopolitical entanglements, the rise of Tibetan Buddhism, and its annexation by China in 1950.

Shivshankar Menon, calling the book 'an honest account' of Tibet's history, said, "The strength of the book is that it is an honest account of what happened—the Great Power Rivalry, how it affected Tibet and how it affected us (India). And it is not only about the great powers, as the Tibetans also had a say, they had agency in their future."

He further said that it is a straightforward account based on the accounts of what happened in the region.

"It is not partisan historiography; it is a

straightforward account based on the accounts of what had happened. It shows you how these things work and how they have worked in the past and it triggers fresh thinking about how you approach the question (Tibet)," Menon said.

While speaking to ANI, Claude Arpi shed light on China's tactics for Tibet's cultural assimilation.

Referring to China's intervention in the Dalai Lama's reincarnation, Arpi said, "It is very strange, as they are a communist nation and what do they know about the reincarnation! And China as a state should not intervene in such matters. Moreover, it's a private decision of His Holiness Dalai Lama to reincarnate or emanate, whatever he decides," Arpi said.

Praising India as it has never intervened in the matter, he said, "And in this matter, India is much wiser, as Delhi has always said that it will not intervene, and if the 15th Dalai Lama comes to India, he will be welcomed, just like the 14th Dalai Lama had been welcomed."

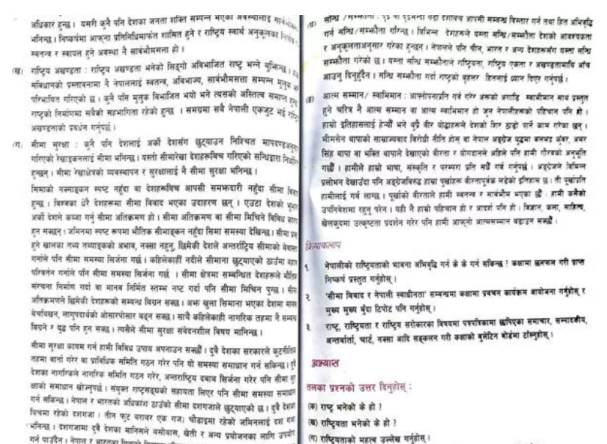
During the discussion, when Claude Arpi was asked about how Tibet has its own identity, the Tibetologist said that Tibet was indeed independent as it had its own currency, passport, flag and representatives.

"Tibet had its currency, its passport, its representatives, and their flag. So Tibet was indeed independent. But I see something else also in the tragedy of the Tibetan people, His Holiness, but it is also a tragedy for the Indian border," he said. (ANI)

## Textbook case of bad textbooks

17 July 2024, Nepali Times, Chandra Kishore

Grade 9 Social Studies textbooks present a toxic interpretation of the open Nepal-India border



A chapter on 'Nation and Nationalism' in Grade 9 Social Studies has the following lines: "An open border opens up the possibility of increased human trafficking and drug smuggling. In fact, an open border can poison relations between people and even lead to war."

As the well-known adage goes: you can choose your friends but not your neighbours. There is no alternative to learning to live together.

Relations between neighbours in a housing estate or nation states is (or should be) dependent on long term bilateral interest, not instantaneous calculations. Nowhere is relations between nations become more of an everyday issue than in the borderlands. And how multidimensional relations between countries are managed and nurtured should be the message in school textbooks.

Afterall, the foundations of knowledge and values are laid in school and in the books used to teach them. In most countries the content of textbooks is determined by the state, in fact it is an official document reflecting a country's position on various facets of citizenship. Textbooks determine a person's views on a cross border state.

I have recently been leafing through the Social Studies textbooks for Grades 9 (pictured, below) and 10 published by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology's Curriculum Development Board at Sano Thimi.

Imagine my astonishment when in the Grade 9 chapter on 'Nation and Nationalism' was this sentence in the section titled Border Security (translated from Nepali): 'An open border opens up the possibility of increased human trafficking and drug smuggling. In fact, an open border can poison relations between people and even lead to war.'

Similarly, a section titled 'Nepal's Friends and Agencies' talks about Nepal being a landlocked country situated between India and China, without indicating that these two neighbours of Nepal are global economic heavyweights.

Whatever the text book may say about the dangers of an open border, all national frontiers should be as open as the one between India and Nepal. Nepal has had a similar open border with Tibet for centuries.

Officially, a country's relation with its neighbour is marked by when diplomatic relations were established. But there is no such date with which we can pinpoint how long Nepal's relations with India and Tibet (now an autonomous region of China) has existed.

Nepal's school textbooks fail to impart on students the importance of the country's relations with these two vast and powerful neighbours. Instead of establishing a narrative that an open border is the ultimate symbol of strong and close ties between countries, Nepali textbooks give it an unhelpful negative connotation.

By contract, Nepal's trans-Himalayan border with China is limited and controlled. Citizens of both countries need passports and visas to enter the other.

From time to time, some Tibetans do enter Nepal bypassing official checkpoints.

The Nepal-India border on the other hand is open because of mutual agreement, friendship, good neighbourliness, religious and cultural diversity, social cohesion, family relations, and common geographical features on both sides.

These economic, cultural, political and historical aspects of the open border should have been incorporated into Nepal's text books. On the other hand, the books should also have explained the reason why the Nepal-China border has not been open since the annexation of Tibet 65 years ago.

The content of the Social Studies text book reflects state neglect. A border is not the result of the wishes of a country on one side, it is the common meeting point of nations.

Because the examination system requires students to memorise and regurgitate content of textbooks, a teacher cannot deviate from what it says even if it is incorrect. A secondary school teacher regards the textbook as the curriculum.

A text book's content therefore does not just impact the point of view of students, but also teachers. More than disinformation on social media, it is the half-truths and false notions in text books that are more dangerous.

In fact, textbooks read like the declaration of the political party in power. This is a result of the curriculum drafters not being inclusive and representative of Nepal's diversity.

This can bring about a tectonic shift in the thought process of young Nepalis, evoke a sense of animosity towards neighbours and 'others'. In a country where political polarisation, ideological divide is already wide, such assertiveness by the dominant community can be sensitive.

Textbooks cannot be propaganda, they cannot be a vehicle to establish a political narrative. They should heal and unite.

Students need to learn and understand Nepal's fragile geopolitical circumstance, and not be exhorted to rock the boat. There is a common socio-cultural milieu that is transboundary because of our shared history and politics.

Nepal's youth need to have a moderate and balanced view of the history, geography and cultural links of the borderlands so they can contribute to cooperation and coexistence.

**Global Watch | China's Weaponisation of Water Resources is a Grave Threat to South Asia**

17 July 2024, News18, Arun Anand

As a non-signatory of transboundary water treaties, Beijing operates without accountability, leveraging its upstream position to control rivers vital to downstream nations. This disregard for international norms risks catastrophic environmental and humanitarian consequences.

Since the annexation of Tibet in 1950, China has been exploiting Tibet's rich natural resources, especially water, along with violating the human rights of the Tibetan population. Known as Asia's Water Tower, Tibet is the world's largest freshwater reserve outside the polar regions. Tibetan plateau and the Himalayas are also the primary sources of some of the major river basins in South and Southeast Asia such as the Ganges, Brahmaputra, Meghna, Indus and Mekong. Most of these rivers are transboundary in nature and flow through many South and Southeast Asian nations. This inevitably makes these low-riparian nations dependent on transboundary rivers.

To give a clearer picture, Bangladesh has over 57 transboundary rivers, while it shares 54 of them with India. These river basins, thus, are vital not only for meeting the economic needs, but also for the preservation of the ecosystem and biodiversity of the lower riparian nations.

With Tibet under Chinese control, water resources have emerged as China's new weapon to achieve hydro-hegemony. Pertinently, China has undertaken substantial hydroelectricity projects as hydroelectricity is Tibet's second largest energy source for China, after coal. China's hydro-hegemonic ambitions, however, are coming in the way of lower riparian countries' reliance on transboundary rivers flowing through these countries and their increasing demand for water in the face of rapid climate change. China's hydro hegemonic ambitions are reflected in its big dam construction projects, aimed at water diversion and the use of artificial rain projects to regulate rainfall in barren areas of the Tibetan plateau.

China's mega dam construction projects are rooted in its motive of meeting the country's large energy demands, accounting for about 31 per cent of global hydropower as per 2022 data. The development of hydropower based on the Yarlung Tsangpo River finds mention as a 'priority' in China's current 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25). Because of its dominant position as an upper riparian nation and in order to cater to its increasing hydro-energy demands, the development of China's infrastructure on upper riparian rivers has had a significant impact on water flow, adversely affecting the Mekong and Yarlung Tsangpo rivers.

Meeting energy demands, however, is not China's only interest here. Beijing's control of water flow and river diversion through the operationalisation of

mega dams aims to have influence and exert dominance over its neighbouring lower riparian nations. In order to understand this game, it is important to see the flow of upper riparian rivers in China; the Yarlung Tsangpo and Mekong, are both known to be major transboundary rivers. Yarlung Tsangpo River, the world's highest river, originates in the Manasarovar Lake in Tibet that eventually flows through the Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh (as Siang River) and Assam (as Brahmaputra) and bordering country Bangladesh before draining into the Bay of Bengal. The Mekong River, which also originates in the Tibetan plateau of the upper Mekong Basin, flows through six nations in Southeast Asia before flowing out to the South China Sea. This makes Mekong Southeast Asia's largest river basin.

The announcement of China's plan to build the world's biggest hydropower dam (50-metre high with a capacity of 60 GW power production) on the lowest reaches of the Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra) river, in Medong country bordering India's Arunachal Pradesh, is a case in point. Believed to be three times the size of China's Three Gorges Dam, the world's largest dam presently, the "Super Dam" on the Brahmaputra River is claimed to strengthen China's water security and meet its clean energy goals. However, the location of this new mega-dam construction has raised suspicion for its neighbouring countries.

Accounting for 30 per cent of India's freshwater resource, Brahmaputra River is significant not only for India, but is equally important for Bangladesh. Around 70 per cent of the Bangladeshi population reside in the Brahmaputra River basin. China's opaque approach in its river diversion plan, through this new mega-dam construction, thus risks affecting both countries.

With India, China is already engaged in disputes along the borders and on infrastructure projects. The relationship, in this context, has witnessed further deterioration since 2020. Once constructed, the "Super Dam" is likely to trigger floods in India's Northeast regions during monsoons and cause severe water shortages during the winter season. Moreover, the construction of dams on the Brahmaputra River would also lead to the consolidation of China's baseless territorial claims over the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh.

The satellite images revealed last year that China has been implementing a dam construction project since 2021 that is close to the Line of Actual Control (LAC). China had also withheld hydrological data during the Doklam Standoff in 2017, violating legally binding accords. This also added to New Delhi's difficulties in managing annual floods affecting its Northeastern states. It is a reflection of how China has been weaponising water resources. Another

similar case was witnessed in 2019 when China regulated the water flow of the Mekong River through its 11 large hydropower dams operational along the river basin. The Chinese actions had led to the worst drought witnessed in decades by lower Mekong countries; Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam the following year. It had adversely affected millions of people in these countries whose source of livelihood and food were dependent on the Mekong River.

Last year, Bangladesh's Daily Asian Age had reported that China's approach toward water resources, reflected in its rampant dam construction projects, had adversely impacted environmental conditions, and caused large displacement of people and huge debt to low riparian countries in South and Southeast Asia.

China is not only exploiting its neighbours by leveraging its upper riparian status but also using it as an excuse to consolidate its claim over Tibet. The weather modification programme to induce artificial rain over barren plateau is one such example, causing disastrous effects on the climatic conditions of the Tibetan plateau. China's major artificial rain experiment, the Sky High or Tianhe Project plan (2018), aims to boost extra rainfall over the plateau region through the process of fuel-burning chambers that will induce artificial rain. More than 500 of these fuel-burning chambers were reported to be installed across Tibetan mountains in 2018 itself.

The \$19 million project witnessed further expansion in 2020, covering an area of over 5.5 million square kilometres (to be developed by 2025). In 2022, drones and rockets launched for the purpose of cloud seeding were seen over China's Sichuan province. This was done to induce rainfall over more than 600 square kilometres of land witnessing extreme heatwaves and drought. Interestingly, now these areas have been witnessing their worst flood conditions for the past two years after the experiment.

The artificial alteration of weather through use of cloud seeding technology is controversial for many reasons, as it directly affects the ecosystem. The Tianhe Project, covering such an expansive area, not only endangers Tibet's environment, but also China's neighbouring countries, especially India. China, through its dam construction projects and weather modification programmes, seem to be weaponising water for its geostrategic interest.

China's recent unilateral decision to donate 3,000 tonnes (1,500 tonnes donated in March and 1,500 tonnes in May) of potable glacial water from Tibet to Maldives, at the latter's request, is the latest example of China's exploitation of Tibet's water resources for geopolitical gains. However, this act of Chinese benevolence had also raised concerns among the

Tibetans in Tibet. Apparently, China's water conservation regulations that set the limit on water usage in the Tibetan region were unveiled barely a week prior to the first consignment of water being dispatched to Maldives in March 2024.

Reportedly, Tibetans themselves are facing water shortage in Tibet due to decades of water management and conservation campaigns run by China for the exploitation of Tibetan water resources throughout the plateau. This, along with the dam construction projects, has paved the way for frequent displacement, including, the forced displacement of Tibetans from their ancestral land. Not to mention, Chinese water exploitation has been endangering the climate, flora and fauna of the Tibetan plateau as well.

Being a non-signatory of any transboundary water treaty, China seems to be exploiting Tibetan transboundary water sources as its own sovereign resources, demonstrated by its unilateral and belligerent actions. By leveraging its upper riparian status, China is using water as a weapon, raising environmental and livelihood concerns not only for its neighbouring countries, but also for the Tibetan plateau itself, the source of this "water weapon".

### China's border dispute with India

17 July 2024, Taipei Times, Khedroob Thondup

The Sino-Indian border dispute remains one of the most complex and enduring border issues in the world. Unlike China's borders with Russia and Vietnam, which have seen conflicts, but eventually led to settled agreements, the border with India, particularly the region of Arunachal Pradesh, remains a point of contention. This op-ed explores the historical and geopolitical nuances that contribute to this unresolved border dispute.

The crux of the Sino-Indian border dispute lies in the differing interpretations of historical boundaries. The McMahon Line, established by the 1914 Simla Convention, was accepted by British India and Tibet, but never recognized by China, which argues that Tibet was not a sovereign state capable of entering into international agreements. This line demarcates what India considers the boundary of Arunachal Pradesh, a region China refers to as South Tibet.

China has historically shown a willingness to engage in warfare to resolve border disputes, as evidenced by the Sino-Soviet border conflict of 1969 and the Sino-Vietnamese War of 1979.

These conflicts, although violent, eventually led to negotiations and settled borders. The resolution with Russia was finalized in 2003, and with Vietnam, despite ongoing tensions, there has been a formal demarcation of the border.



In contrast, the Sino-Indian border remains unsettled. Several factors contribute to this impasse:

The region holds significant strategic importance for both nations. It serves as a buffer zone and is crucial for the security of India's northeastern states and China's sensitive Tibetan region.

Both countries view the control of the disputed area as a matter of national pride and territorial integrity. China's claim over Arunachal Pradesh as South Tibet is rooted in its assertion of sovereignty over the historical region of Tibet. Both nations have been competing to build infrastructure along the border, which exacerbates tensions and leads to frequent standoffs.

The stalemate persists due to a combination of historical grievances, nationalistic sentiments and geopolitical strategies. Unlike its settled borders with Russia and Vietnam, where pragmatic diplomacy eventually prevailed, the Sino-Indian border is mired in a complex interplay of history and politics. The lack of a mutually recognized legal framework, such as the McMahon Line for India, and China's insistence on historical claims complicate the dispute. For a resolution to be reached, it will require sustained diplomatic engagement, mutual respect for each other's concerns and a willingness to compromise. The resolution of the Tibet issue, as suggested by the Tibetan government-in-exile, could potentially pave the way for a broader settlement of the border dispute. However, this would necessitate a significant shift in China's stance on Tibet, which seems unlikely in the near future.

The Sino-Indian border dispute over Arunachal Pradesh stands out as an unresolved issue in China's border history due to its unique historical, cultural and geopolitical complexities. While China has settled its border disputes with other nations through war and subsequent diplomacy, the path to resolution with India remains fraught with challenges that go beyond the mere demarcation of a boundary line.

### **Researcher explains how Uighurs are exploited in Xinjiang forced labor regime**

16 July 2024, Eurasianet, Erkin Damolla

Western companies benefit from opaque system.

Uighur activists and human rights defenders often contend that major Western electronics and apparel manufacturers profit from the use of slave-like and coerced labor in China, including work done by Uighurs confined in camps in western Xinjiang Province. Mediazona Central Asia discussed the various forms of involuntary labor in Xinjiang with Rune Steenberg, an anthropologist and researcher at the University of Olomouc in the Czech Republic who has long studied the Uighur population in Xinjiang.

He and his colleagues rely on an approach they call "remote ethnography" to form a picture of what is transpiring in Xinjiang. This method relies on anecdotal evidence from those who have direct experience in Xinjiang, as well as close analysis of written accounts and economic data, to compensate for the lack of access for foreign experts to the region.

MZ: How did you collect information about forced labor in Xinjiang?

Steenberg: I worked with German journalists on issues of forced labor, cotton picking, and clothing production in Xinjiang, and also interviewed people who were in a "re-education" camp and forced to work there. So, I have an insider idea of how the system works. I also know a little about labor transfer programs in Xinjiang.

MZ: Please tell us more about the involuntary/coerced labor regime in Xinjiang.

Steenberg: There are three different types of forced or involuntary labor in Xinjiang, each having different degrees of coercion. The most forced and difficult labor occurs in prisons. In Xinjiang prisons, prisoners can be forced to work for decades. Often it is very hard work, physically difficult work in terrible conditions, and no pay, nothing.

Then we have a situation where people are forced to work in the camps, or are transferred from a camp to closed factories, which also operate according to the principles of the camps, where they sew clothes, produce food and various other things. They aren't paid for this either, but the conditions are not as harsh as in prison.

There are also those who have been interned in a camp but are given an opportunity to move from the camp to a factory. This can be described as "liberation." All this camp forced labor, as well as prison "slave" labor, takes place in Xinjiang itself, next to the camps and prisons. People who have had a chance to be released from the camp to work in factories are sometimes transferred to inland China. There, they are given a contract, they sign an agreement, and they are paid some kind of salary, albeit a very low one. Moreover, they work in conditions that are not as bad as those in camps or prisons. I don't know exactly how many people have gone through all this.

A fourth category is the so-called labor transfer programs. This involves people who have not been arrested or detained. They are directly "recruited" to work in various factories, fields, etc. Some people are sort of forced into it because in their village – or wherever they are – they are told that they need to bring so many people to a certain place, for example, to pick cotton.

This practice is not new. It is, in fact, a form of forced labor as well. If someone refuses, there are

consequences. But many also sign up for these labor transfer programs voluntarily, to receive a salary, although not very high, and with certain conditions that they can also leave if they want. The reason why many of them sign up for these programs is because they have no alternative, otherwise they will not be able to find a job. Getting a job in Xinjiang is now very difficult, especially for Uighurs who lack education. Many Chinese companies simply do not hire Uighurs, considering that officials say they are terrorists, suspicious, problematic.

Also, as I found out, when many men are detained in “re-education” camps, their wives, sisters and daughters can be sent to factories in so-called new special economic zones in Kashgar and Ghulja. I’ve heard stories of people who were directly involved, who worked in these newly opened factories. For their work they received a modest salary, but the government, at its own expense, arranged for transport to and from villages. It wasn’t entirely voluntary either – if you didn’t show up or didn’t agree to participate, you could get in trouble.

MZ: An important part of the modern Uyghur discourse in the West is to talk about how the forced labor of Uighurs not only benefits Chinese companies, but also some Western firms. How do we know about this?

Steenberg: Of course, it [forced labor] is not used directly by these companies, but by someone in their supply chains. Because of the way the capitalist system is structured, supply chains, as you can imagine, are very long and opaque. So, it’s very difficult to understand where the raw products actually come from. Many of these companies hide behind the fact that they don’t know anything, they just get ready-made products. But the reason why they do this, the benefit they get from it, is that they simply, through forced labor, get very, I repeat, very cheap products. Many of these companies operate factories and supply chains where there is no certainty that they are “clean” and where there is a high probability that forced labor is used. Besides cotton there is also polysilicon for solar cells, which is used by many large companies.

China is not just a market economy, but a state-controlled market economy. Therefore, many of these [Western] companies may have been involved in these labor transfer programs. Some of them may even have directly benefited from forced labor in prisons or camps, or have connections to factories where people were brought either after being in a camp, or which has workers who are wives of prisoners. Until companies and factories open up to transparent inspections, we will be forced to suspect that similar forms of forced labor exist throughout the region.

MZ: You have conducted research on cotton from Xinjiang? Can you discuss your research methods?

Steenberg: It was about a year and a half ago. We interviewed people who worked in the Xinjiang cotton industry, and they told us about the use of forced labor during harvesting and early processing. That is, to extract the seeds from cotton, as well as to clean it, extracting the oil from it, before it can be turned into threads, from which they will then sew fabric, and from it – clothes. So, we researched companies that could source cotton from Xinjiang, bought clothes from them, and tested them in a laboratory. As a result, based on the isotopic analysis of the clothing, we were able to say with a very high degree of confidence that these clothes contained cotton from Xinjiang. Where exactly this cotton was harvested, what kind of cotton, in what field, and so on, of course, is difficult to determine in this way, but this is at least something that we can say for sure.

We also analyzed satellite images of cotton fields, which show the speed of harvest. The Chinese government says that most of the cotton is picked by machines, but if you pick it by machines, they pick it all at once. If you collect it manually, it takes longer. Therefore, satellite images show how quickly a photograph of a field turns from white to dark. This is an indicator of how much of the crop is harvested by machine and how much by hand. Moreover, harvesting is not the only place where forced labor is used. At cotton gins, raw cotton is treated with chemicals, and this is quite hard and in many ways dangerous work, the voluntariness of which we also cannot measure.

Our understanding of forced labor needs clarification. Our ideas about it do not quite correspond to the situation in Xinjiang. As I already said, many people there have contracts, they sign up for work, they are paid a salary, but they are under political pressure to go and do the work, and they have no alternative. Therefore, I believe that this could still qualify as forced labor, and maybe even coercion. So, we need to think more deeply about the terms we use and how we define them, as well as the legal framework that surrounds them. The Xinjiang case can help us take a closer look at this and, I hope, create better tools for analyzing these types of labor.

### Chinese soldiers gear up for winter warfare

16 July 2024, The Strategist, Anushka Saxena

China is putting great effort into developing its soldiers’ ability to operate in high-altitude and cold environments, increasing its military capacity relative to India. Skills as simple as shovelling snow have become part of combat training exercises.

Equipment, facilities and procedures are being improved in what appears to be a highly systematic approach to mitigating the challenges of moving and fighting in the Himalayas and adjacent areas.

Since 2015–16, under the leadership of Chinese President Xi Jinping, the People's Liberation Army has undergone significant reforms. Those reforms have concentrated on enhancing combat readiness in the information age, transforming the PLA into a joint, network-centric fighting force by integrating its services, arms and systems. The PLA Western Theatre Command (WTC) has been particularly active in adapting to what the PLA calls 'informatisation' and 'intelligentisation', focusing on securing China's southern and southwestern borders, preparing for both conventional and unconventional warfare and training its soldiers to operate in the challenging terrains and high altitudes of Xinjiang and Tibet.

Terrain and altitude training is a central pillar of the WTC's jointness capabilities, as the ability to achieve interconnected goals in complex environments would shape the results of conflict. Moreover, given that it is the largest theatre command by area and covers both the arid northwestern deserts of Xinjiang and the high-altitude areas of Tibet, along the border with India, adaptation to terrain and altitudes determines the ability of soldiers to fight protracted conflict and conceal postures without disrupting the sustainable flow of everyday resources to combat bases.

Further, because the Indian border is one of the principal operational directions assigned to the WTC, the outcome of any contest between the Chinese and Indian militaries will be determined not just by the quality of weapons systems and combat doctrines, but also by the logistical superiority and adaptation tactics of the soldiers on both sides. In this regard, the WTC's focus on terrain and altitude training is an attempt to gain advantage over the Indian soldier's adaption to fighting in the Himalayas.

WTC's terrain training work includes combat and non-combat tasks. Radar stations in the WTC, for example, are experimenting with ways to ensure a continued supply of tap water, since the detachments of trucks that supply water to base units are often irregular or snowed in. The new measures require investment of intensive resources. Soldiers in the WTC are laying water pipelines and ensuring replenishment of water tanks. A successful case study is that of a radar station under a WTC air force brigade based on a snow-covered plateau in Tibet, which, in February last year connected soldiers' dormitories with running-water supply.

Similarly, shovelling snow in the Tibetan mountains or in the high-altitude desert areas of Xinjiang is a core non-combat task required of WTC personnel. While it is a non-combat task, it has significant applications in combat work. For example, a CCTV report from

January 2023 highlighted the significance of practising snow-shovelling for a Xinjiang border detachment. The detachment, based at the foot of the Barluk Mountains, faced 200 days of gale-force winds in the new year period that led to snow accumulation, estimated to be as high as 2–2.5 metres and extending as far as 60 metres from the detachment's base. So, when members of the detachment undertook a border observation patrol and encountered severe snow accumulation, they demonstrated snow-shovelling skills. Then they had to reach the final patrol point on foot.

Combat tasks are also designed to account for challenging terrain and high-altitude conditions. For instance, earlier this year, an army brigade from the WTC engaged in snowfield training to improve combat readiness in cold, high-altitude and low-oxygen environments. This approach aligns with the PLA's standard of effective training, in which combat scenarios are accurately simulated and tasks are assigned to test various components of joint and integrated operations.

Further, WTC soldiers posted along the Kunlun Mountains (extending into Xinjiang and Tibet) have begun building army command posts concealed near snowlines at altitudes of over 4000 metres. The goal has been to continuously lead troops to conduct effective on-site research, planning and training in high-altitude zones. Officers in the command posts formulate measures for high-altitude training and preparedness and conduct concealment tests for soldiers, vehicles and tents, sometimes changing locations every few months. Then, soldiers are required to pursue other combat-preparedness tasks, such as testing of marching speed over several hundred kilometres, as well as practising live-fire shooting to determine ballistic performance of artillery at various altitudes. From the Indian perspective, this is significant because, over time, some of those concealed positions and tactical arrangements have come to restrict Indian forces' access to key patrolling points along the de facto border, the Line of Actual Control.

Finally, since August 2022, border defence companies in Xinjiang have been testing a new 'integrated individual system', which includes a new-type helmet, multifunction night-vision goggles, a portable computer, an individual load carrier and an assault rucksack. The challenge will be to integrate adaptation to hypoxic conditions with the ability to carry heavy loads that come with this new integrated system. (The material load seems to be about 30kg). This indicates that the next step in combat altitude training in the WTC is for individual soldiers to become more independent and resilient.

Overall, as Indian and Chinese soldiers gear up for long winters along the border, India has much to

look out for in relation to the WTC's efforts in terrain and altitude training. At the same time, the challenges that personnel of the WTC encounter while operating in hypoxic conditions are intense and may require intensive investment in training and resource management to overcome.

### **Anti-Cult Propaganda in Ulugqat County, Xinjiang —Where There Are No “Cults”**

15 July 2024, Bitter Winter, Zeng Liqin

For thirteen years a “horseback anti-cult police squad” has visited herders who have never met a “cult.” Why?

Ulugqat County, Xinjiang, is one of the two westernmost counties in China. It is also one of the most impervious, with inhabitable mountains and deserts accounting for more than 99% of its surface. 88% of the scarce population (around 60,000) is made out of ethnic Kyrgyz, many of them herders living at altitudes of 3,000 or 4,000 meters who have never left their pastoral area in their lives.

It looks like an unlikely region to be targeted by the xie jiao, a Chinese word translated in English by the CCP itself as “cults” but in fact indicating since Imperial times organizations spreading “heterodox” teachings. It is thus with some surprise that “Bitter Winter” has learned that one Jiakupuwali Baikeyaoli, deputy director of the Bostanterak Police Station of the Wuqia County Public Security Bureau, is being promoted in Chinese media as one of the best anti-xie-jiao fighters in the country. The police officer reported that he and his “horseback anti-xie-jiao police squad” have visited remote villages bringing there anti-xie-jiao propaganda for thirteen years.

What makes the story as told by Chinese TV networks and media unique is that, admittedly, in all these years the Bostanterak police officers have found in their area no xie jiao at all. This is confirmed by the herders who appear in the propaganda videos and articles to thank Jiakupuwali for his good work. “Although I have never come into direct contact with a xie jiao, I have always heard of cases of harm caused by xie jiao,” one herder said. The herder lives in a grazing site at an altitude of 4,000 meters and at 200 kilometers from the nearest township. He has never visited a large city and has rarely met people from outside his pastoral area in his life, except the police officers and other government bureaucrats who periodically visit the site.

The question the propaganda does not discuss, thus, is why exactly thirteen years of anti-xie-jiao propaganda were needed in a remote area where there are no xie jiao. By examining the propaganda carefully, one can find some answers. While

ostensibly the propaganda targeted the religious groups banned as xie jiao, in fact the brochures distributed and the talks given by the police officers warned more broadly against “illegal” religion, “superstition,” and “anti-scientific and anti-government ideas.”

The fight against the xie jiao is a pretext to promote materialism, atheism—and loyalty to the Communist Party. Prominent in the propaganda about the “horseback anti-xie-jiao police squad” is a herder introduced as “Uncle Mamtsulaiman Jiakifu, a 30-year-old party member of the Kyrgyz ethnic group.” He reported on the effect on him of the indoctrination against the xie jiao: “I want to play the vanguard and exemplary role of a Communist Party member and tell my family, relatives and fellow villagers that for resisting the xie jiao you should always follow the Party and listen to the Party,” he said. The old herder has never seen a xie jiao—but he perfectly understands what the propaganda is all about.

### **Bhuchung D Sonam - “Human experience is as deep as it is vast”**

15 July 2024, Hindustan Times, Chintan Girish Modi

Dharamsala-based Tibetan poet, translator and publisher Bhuchung D Sonam talks about the role of literature in the Tibetan freedom struggle and about editing *Under the Blue Skies: A Tibetan Reader*, an anthology of fiction, poetry and non-fiction. How do you view the role of literature in the Tibetan freedom struggle?

Acts of storytelling are crucial for a small exiled community such as ours because we are fighting against Chinese colonial power that has a humongous state propaganda machinery continuously churning out untruths. Literature also deepens our sense of identity and connection since Tibetan refugees are scattered around the world.

Your book *Under the Blue Skies: A Tibetan Reader* aims to offer “a fresh and an alternative window to the individual and collective Tibetan psyche”. What kind of stereotypical or jaded representations are you looking to challenge? Whom do you hold responsible for the way in which Tibetans have been represented in literature?

For many centuries Tibet and the Tibetan people have been written about by outsiders. Although Tibet has a very rich repository of Buddhist literature, we did not invest much in producing secular literature based on human experience. There are a lot of misperceptions about us which are a consequence of writings done by others, primarily Western travellers, missionaries, diplomats and fantasy-seekers.

Since we were forced into exile in the aftermath of China's occupation of Tibet, Tibetans have started to

write in English and other languages. Today, there is a new generation of Tibetans who have linguistic skills to articulate their deepest thoughts and opinions. As a result, non-Tibetans have access to Tibetan writing, which is based on lived experience and hence free of stereotypes.

Tell us about the fresh and alternative voices and perspectives that you have chosen to highlight. What sets them apart from earlier writing? How did you find them?

My own writing, and in fact writings of most contemporary Tibetan writers, are based on our first-hand experience as people who are forced into the space of others. We write about loss, anger, frustration, loneliness as well as hope that things will change for the better. A new generation of Tibetan writers like Lekey S Leidecker, Kaysang, Tenphun and others have unique voices reflecting their realities. There is a generation of Tibetans attuned to the tenet that, as Kaysang writes, "Living does not mean not dying" and, as Tenphun writes, "Tibetans who have a small store of Hindi vocabulary siphoned off from barmaids, taxi drivers and barbers". Their lives are, as Kalsang Yangzom writes, "an intersection of many selves, pilgrimage to an ancestral home, India or Tibet?"

The Own Voices movement in literature draws attention to the importance of authentic representation and marginalised people taking control of their narratives but also gets criticised for limiting the scope of literature by telling writers that they should stick to writing about their lived experience and not appropriate other people's stories. What do you think?

I think human experience is as deep as it is vast. With any writer from any community, particularly those who are/have been historically marginalised, exploring his/her own innermost thoughts, wisdom and silence, the story is bound to be unique to his/her own self/community. When a person honestly articulates his or her deepest emotions, they will echo universal human sentiments.

The question of appropriation arises when people I call "story-hunting tricksters" travel to remote places spawning exotic tales spiced up with mysticism and their own preconceived ideas, and then sell these tales as original stories or accounts of a people and a culture they didn't even try to understand. This has happened to many marginalised communities, including Tibetans.

The book has three sections: fiction, poetry and non-fiction. What made you decide on this structure instead of grouping writers based on the subjects they write about?

Although we have been writing and producing works of literature for several decades in exile, there hasn't been an anthology containing all three categories in

one title. I thought it would be both useful and interesting for outsiders to have Tibetan fiction, poetry and non-fiction in a single edition – a kind of an entryway to the world of Tibetan literature. The other, and perhaps more important, reason was that *Under the Blue Skies* was to be a supplementary textbook in Tibetan refugee schools, where the students have always been taught Indian and foreign literature in English. How wonderful it would be if Tibetan children are introduced to and taught Tibetan writing in English!

Given the stature and the popularity of the Dalai Lama, several non-Tibetans assume that most Tibetans are Buddhist and the diversity is often overlooked. In the process of putting together *Under the Blue Skies*, did you seek out Muslim, Christian, atheist and agnostic voices from the Tibetan community? What were the challenges that you faced?

It was the Fifth Dalai Lama in the seventeenth century who granted a site in Tibet's capital city for the Muslims, who were mostly a merchant community, to build the first mosque. There is also a small number of Tibetan Christians in eastern Tibet. As far as I know, there has never been interreligious disharmony in Tibet although we had witnessed disputes within the various schools of Tibetan Buddhism. In exile, the Dalai Lama has played a crucial role in the survival of the Tibetan struggle as well as continuation of its culture and spiritual traditions. His charisma and visionary leadership are recognised throughout the world, and consequently Tibet is viewed through this lens.

I am not aware of Tibetan Muslim or Christian writers who produce secular literature, which was what I was looking for in *Under the Blue Skies*. Tibet and its people have been typecast, by and large, through a Buddhist perspective, which is not an entirely accurate representation of Tibet. The country has many different shades, some of them are subtle and yet important. Therefore, I wanted the anthology to be free from religious didactics and prevalent stereotypes.

The book is published by Blackneck Books, an imprint of TibetWrites. How does your publishing model work? Is it based on grant funding or does it depend entirely on book sales?

We have an advisory group of prominent Tibetan writers, who read sample chapters of our proposed titles. Based on their advice and feedback, we make our publication decisions. TibetWrites operates entirely on a voluntary basis. None of us get paid for what we do. Our primary goal is to promote secular creative Tibetan writing. We do get some funding for our publication projects from The Tibet Fund.

What similarities and differences do you notice between creative writing among the Tibetan diaspora



living in India, Bhutan, Nepal, USA, Canada, and other countries?

I am neither a scholar nor have I done any research or studied literature for that matter, and therefore I am not in a firm position to comment on this. But some common themes displayed in their writings are exile, loss, hope and an uncertain sense of identity as they are forced to negotiate two or sometimes even more social, political and cultural realities in their daily lives.

Tenphun, who was born in Tibet and grew up in exile, writes: "I forgot my roots / I wish, I only wish to go back to my childhood sailing paper boat". Lekey Leidecker, born and raised in the West, writes: "in a long history of using / brown people at convenience / I recite Tibetan phrases / foreign to my English-immersed tongue as theirs, / At a local Quaker meeting". Tenzing Rigdol, born in Nepal, grew up in India and living in USA, writes: "When I wake up, / May I find all my past to be / Just a dream - / A poetic error, A bad handwriting / A terrible comedy". Their writings are as different as their backgrounds, and yet a deep sense of dislocation and out-of-placeness bind them.

Being an editor of an anthology is an entirely different experience from being a poet. What do you love most about both these roles?

I like to read and write. Editing is working with words, and writing is playing with words. Editing maybe a little more logical and writing more emotional, but both are fundamentally the same vocation.

Tell us about the other projects that you are working on.

Blackneck Books published four titles last year, a novel in Tibetan called *Murder of Tenzin*, a non-fiction book called *The Tragedy of the Modom House* and two volumes of poetry – *Carrying Memories* and *Learning Tibetan*. We have two titles to be published in 2024 – a memoir and a book of poems. We have offers for a Hindi anthology of Tibetan poetry and a Spanish one too. We will have to see how they go. Otherwise, we receive proposals for individual poems that people want to translate into other languages. These are mainly for online publications and sometimes for magazines as well.

### Interview with Rinzin Namgyal on Life, Tibet and the Dalai Lama

14 July 2024, Ij- Reportika

Can you share your/family's journey of moving to India and how it has influenced your professional and personal life?

I am Rinzin Namgyal, born and raised in the Phuntsokling Tibetan refugee settlement in Odisha. Our settlement comprises five camps, and both our

professional and private lives are significantly influenced by societal factors rather than merely family factors, as we live in a Tibetan-concentrated refugee settlement. However, in my case, my family has played a crucial role.

My grandparents fled Tibet and entered Indian territory through Bomdila (Arunachal Pradesh border), working as road construction workers in the Kullu-Manali region. Like many early Tibetan refugees, they toiled in such jobs for their livelihood. This instilled in me a profound understanding of the hardships they endured, as the Tibetan community started from the ashes. Their resilience remains a source of pride and inspiration for me. Additionally, my father served in the Indian Army's Special Frontier Force, a Tibetan guerrilla force established to counter the Chinese in the high Himalayan mountains. His dedication to Tibet, despite residing in India and dreaming of returning one day, has been a tremendous catalyst for me. It inspired me to pursue studies related to China, driven by a desire to contribute to my own identity and honour His Holiness the Great 14th Dalai Lama, who is the sole leader responsible of what we are today.



How has your experience living in India shaped your views on Tibet and its geopolitical significance?

For many Tibetans entering Indian universities, identity issues often arise due to the differences from native Indian students. My perspective on Tibet has recently evolved, prompting questions such as: What if His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama were not with us

tomorrow? What if the Indian government revoked our refugee status? Where would we go? Is the current Central Tibetan Administration truly self-reliant? These questions instill a sense of urgency for having our own land.

For many Tibetan students, the geopolitical significance of Tibet has recently shifted. Chinese aggression at the Indian border, environmental crises, and the consequences of irresponsible Chinese development across the Tibetan plateau—known as the world's third pole—highlight Tibet's strategic importance. This has helped forge an understanding of Tibet's geopolitical significance, positioned at the centre of South and Central Asia, serving as a vital bridge.

## EDUCATION

What motivated you to pursue an MA in East Asian Studies at Delhi University?

Since childhood, I have felt a strong sense of duty to repay what His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama has given us. Privately, I have always had a keen interest in History, Politics, and International Relations. Consequently, I pursued a Bachelor's degree in History, delving into Chinese history. As I progressed to my Master's, I realised that this course (M.A EAST ASIAN STUDIES) would most appropriately serve my identity, interests, and aspirations. I also plan to pursue a PhD in China Studies in the near future.

How has your education helped you in your current roles at All India Radio and the Foundation for Non-violent Alternatives?

As a research intern at the Foundation of Non-Violent Alternatives, a public policy organisation focused on the objective study of Tibet, Tibetan affairs, and their security implications for India, I find my work both convenient and motivating. I cover topics related to Tibet, China, and Xinjiang, including recent developments in these areas since this area is also my Master's level study. FNVA provides an excellent environment for learning and growth, with colleagues who have extensive experience and insight into these fields. Moreover, I work as a Tibetan translator and announcer for All India Radio, which kept me informed about daily developments in Tibet. Overall, my work and education align perfectly, allowing me to broaden my understanding, deepen my knowledge, and continually improve.

## Tibet

What are your thoughts on the current situation in Tibet, especially in light of recent developments vis a vis China-Philippines tussle in South China Sea, Taiwan issue and India-China standoffs?

The question itself implies an answer. The issues mentioned are recent developments that have come into the spotlight, yet the situation in Tibet stands in stark contrast. Since the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1959, Tibet has faced a serious existential threat

and is on the brink of a complete genocide of Tibetan identity through Beijing's programmes, such as colonial boarding schools, aimed at assimilating Tibetan younger generations into mainstream Han culture. However, the China-Philippines tussle, the Taiwan issue, and the India-China standoffs provide a perfect example of what Tibetans have been warning about for the past seven decades: do not feed the dragon (China) through trade. China's plan is one of expansionism and establishing a Beijing rule-based international order. The situation in Tibet is fundamentally a civilisational, sovereignty, and human dignity issue, rather than merely a human rights issue. Given these standoffs with major Asian economies, it seems unlikely that the situation in Tibet will improve in the foreseeable future, as it clearly indicates Beijing's prioritisation of national security and expansionism.



Second International Tibet Youth Forum 3-5 July, Dharamshala

How do you see the role of international advocacy groups and policies, such as the US Resolve Tibet Act, in shaping the future of Tibet?

This is an intriguing question, as the current 16th Kashag Sikyong (President) Penpa Tsering of the Central Tibetan Administration places significant emphasis on raising awareness and forming advocacy groups. As a member of Delhi V-TAG (Volunteer Tibet Advocacy Group), we strive to raise awareness about the challenging situation in Tibet. Recently, we hosted our second International Tibet Youth Forum, aimed at educating V-TAG members worldwide on effective campaigning, lobbying, and global awareness strategies. I view such advocacy groups as the genesis of the Tibetan freedom movement, given that they consist largely of educated young people exposed to diverse cultures. Historically, such advocacy groups have played a tremendous role in enacting legislation like the Tibet Policy and Support Act 2020 and the US Resolve Tibet Act 2024 in the United States through relentless lobbying with Congressmen. However, in Europe and India, while we continue our efforts, the level of response is lower than in the United States. These advocacy groups not only advocate but also educate on the Tibet issue, which is crucial for Tibet's future. I

consider the US Resolve Tibet Act a milestone in our struggle. Firstly, it explicitly states that Tibet and China are distinct entities, reaffirms that the Tibet issue remains unresolved, and recognizes Tibet's historical regions like Gansu, Yunnan, Qinghai, and Sichuan as integral parts of Tibet. This stands as a direct challenge to the One China Policy. Such legislation has placed the Tibetan issue on a completely different platform, allowing us to advocate for both complete independence and genuine autonomy, which is our official stance. The Act has been immensely helpful in advancing our movement.

#### Geopolitics

What are your thoughts on the broader geopolitical dynamics involving China, Tibet, and other ethnic regions like East Turkestan?

The Chinese occupation of Tibet and East Turkestan holds significant geopolitical implications. As early as the 1950s, Indian intellectuals and statesmen like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and V.D. Savarkar warned about the profound geopolitical shifts and consequences for India. Firstly, Tibet is rich in natural resources, including critical minerals like lithium and freshwater. The Sanjiangyuan National Park in the Amdo region of Tibet (Qinghai Province) is known as the "water tower of China."

Secondly, in terms of trade, East Turkestan serves as a gateway to Central Asian countries and thereby to Europe. Beijing's strategic maneuvers through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative underscore the geopolitical significance of this region.

Thirdly, within China, there is a belief that safeguarding the peripheries (Tibet and East Turkestan) ensures the security of the core (Mainland China). Losing control over these regions would be a substantial setback for China.

How do you foresee the future of Tibet-Sino and Indo-China relations evolving in the coming years?

I firmly believe that Beijing's approach and the root of unrest in Tibet hinge solely on two factors: INTENTION AND METHOD. Their aim is to assimilate us and turn us into robots of the CCP, which is utterly incompatible with our centuries-old culture. Their intention is to impose uniformity rather than celebrate diversity, and their method involves harsh assimilation through the sinicisation of Tibetan population, neglecting the rights guaranteed by both the Chinese Constitution and laws on ethnic autonomy.

Our future security depends on aligning intentions and methods to reflect mutual aspirations for diversity and genuine respect. In my view, the future of Tibet-China relations rests on the CCP's intentions and methods. Correcting these can lead to the Great Unity described in Chinese classics.

The ongoing Indo-China issue is largely rooted in Tibet, as China has employed salami-slicing tactics and border aggression towards India. This situation underscores two key points: Firstly, the current border standoff reveals that historically, Tibet was an independent country, and thus, India and China did not traditionally share a border. Consequently, Chinese claims over territories stem from a lack of historical territorial understanding.

Secondly, this issue is alarming for India, prompting a reevaluation towards supporting Tibet's independence based on historical truths. Without a permanent resolution to the Tibet issue, there can be no lasting solution to India's and Bhutan's border concerns with China.

#### The Dalai Lama

What are your thoughts on the future of the Dalai Lama's institution, particularly concerning the selection of the next Dalai Lama?

Firstly, there is currently a span of more than 15 years since His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama himself stated, "I will live for 113 years." Additionally, many great Tibetan scholars and yogis prophesied that the 14th Dalai Lama would have the longest lifespan among all Dalai Lamas.

The continuity of the Dalai Lama institution in the future hinges entirely on the Tibetan people's desire for a 15th Dalai Lama, a sentiment frequently expressed by His Holiness himself, who is regarded as the manifestation of Tibet's patron saint, Avalokiteshvara.

Regarding the selection of the 15th Dalai Lama, it presents both a challenging and straightforward situation. Firstly, China's State Religious Affairs Bureau Order No. 5 (July 2007) stipulates that the CCP holds the responsibility for selecting the next Dalai Lama, despite the Communist Party's atheist stance. This issue is of significant concern as it threatens the sanctity of the Dalai Lama lineage.

However, it is also straightforward because His Holiness himself stated, "If I pass away in exile (India), I will definitely be reborn in the free world (outside of Chinese-controlled territory)," emphasizing that the sole authority rests with the Dalai Lama's wishes and the Tibetan people. Next year, as His Holiness, the supreme holder of the Shakya lineage, turns 90, it has long been anticipated that he will convene a conference involving high-level Tibetan Buddhist masters and bureaucrats. During this event, there will be a declaration on the next 15th Dalai Lama, accompanied by clear instructions and protocols signed by the current 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso.

Regarding the reincarnation process, there are two systems: one where the successor is born before the current Dalai Lama's passing (Med-Dey Tulku), and

another where they are born afterward. Given the current situation in Tibet, I believe the 15th Dalai Lama will follow the Med-Dey Tulku system to ensure continuity during the regency period.

However, US legislative acts, including those concerning the 15th Dalai Lama, are a positive step in preserving the sanctity of the Dalai Lama lineage and other democratic countries should follow.

### **Bilateral diplomacy is a never-ending tightrope walk for India and China**

14 July 2024, The Week, Satarupa Bhattacharjya

Observers say Beijing and New Delhi barely talk these days.

#### **DIPLOMACY**

Sino-Indian diplomacy has seen good and bad days over the past seven decades. The bilateral relationship had experienced an intense freeze for 15 years, following the 1962 war. It plunged to a new low after Indian and Chinese soldiers were killed in a clash in the Galwan river valley in June 2020. More skirmishes, though nonfatal, have taken place since then, amid a troops build-up, in their thousands, and partial pullback. Despite a series of military meetings, the standoff in certain parts of the border continues, with major implications for foreign policy.

Diplomacy is struggling. The lack of direct flights, suspended four years ago, is an indication. Indian observers of Sino-Indian relations said Beijing and New Delhi barely talked these days. Chinese analysts said back channels of communication should be opened.

In his message to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on June 11 to congratulate him on his election victory, Chinese Premier Li Qiang said, "China is willing to work with India to push forward bilateral relations in the right direction." India wants to talk about "border issues" with China, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar told the media after the new government was formed.

Diplomacy is struggling. The lack of direct flights, suspended four years ago, is an indication. Indian observers said Beijing and New Delhi barely talked these days.

China views the decades-long dispute as a "leftover problem" of British colonialism and wants to go about business as usual in other areas such as trade, where it exports a lot more than it imports (India's trade deficit was nearly \$85 billion in 2023-24). India wants a return to status quo—as things were before mid-2020—along the Line of Actual Control. China's new ambassador to India, Xu Feihong, arrived in April. The 18-month delay in his

appointment was the longest for the post since relations were normalised after the war.

"The boundary question won't be settled overnight. We need to talk, but China needs to undo its attempt to change facts on the ground," said Ashok Kantha, who was India's ambassador to China from 2014 to 2016. Ma Jiali, director of the Centre for Strategic Studies at China Reform Forum, a Beijing think tank, said boundary was not the only issue, and that China and India could discuss economic cooperation, cultural exchanges, and finding common ground on international issues, such as energy security, climate change and regional peace. "Disengagement or deployment depends on the ground situation, but also on political relations."

India's concerns include the very uneven economic relationship. Trade deficit aside, a reliance on Chinese imports and the limited market access for Indian companies in China are other concerns. Post-pandemic, the global supply chain issues have shown that "you can't be too dependent on one country", said Kantha. Added to that are current concerns about the Chinese economy and geopolitics.

India has been working on the securitisation of its economic interests. The government changed India's foreign direct investment policy in April 2020. Now, prior approval for foreign investments from countries sharing a land border with India is mandatory. While India shares land borders with several countries, the measure impacts China the most. Chinese investment in India has declined in recent years alongside the government crackdown on businesses. Chinese smartphone companies were sponsoring cricket in India not so long ago.

Andy Mok, senior research fellow at the Beijing-based Centre for China and Globalisation, said trade was a bright spot, despite the challenges. "Tackling market access barriers and ensuring fair regulations can cultivate a better trade relationship."

A 'Leading Small Group' is a body of the Communist Party of China that directs foreign policy. Such groups tasked with policy recommendations have become prominent during President Xi Jinping's tenure. The ministry of foreign affairs follows the guidelines in managing policy. In India, the parliamentary standing committee on foreign affairs, with MPs from different political parties, has a substantial say in foreign policy, while the ministry of external affairs runs the show in coordination with the prime minister's office.

"Unlike India, the Chinese system is opaque in terms of the implementation of foreign policy," said Srikanth Kondapalli, professor of China studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi. Revelations seldom come even years later if Chinese leaders publish their memoirs. They rarely share personal



anecdotes from their time on the job or opinion on policy.

China's foreign policy at the moment is defined by expansive territorial claims that it is pushing hard to secure, said Ian Chong, who teaches Chinese politics at the National University of Singapore. China and India are major geopolitical actors. "To the extent that their interests diverge, there will be friction, as indeed we have seen over disputed parts of their border," said Chong.

The foreign policy objectives for both, as with many other countries, are dealing with the effects of de-globalisation, tensions in US-China relations and the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza. "India and China are trying to keep their moorings intact, while putting their national interests in the forefront," said Alka Acharya, professor of East Asian studies at JNU. China has criticised the Quad, or the quadrilateral security grouping of the US, Japan, Australia and India, as a bloc aimed to contain its rise. For India, China's power assertions in South Asia and its closeness with Pakistan have been hard to ignore.

Beijing and New Delhi want the relationship to stabilise, but they must talk and negotiate, said Qian Feng, director of research at the National Strategy Institute, Tsinghua University, Beijing. "Chinese decision-makers definitely see India as a power." The growth of the Indian economy is not the only reason. Singapore, for instance, has been economically strong for long, but it is a city state and enjoys good relations with China, said Qian. India is a country of 1.4 billion people and its foreign policy is perceived to be autonomous.

Kantha said Quad was not an Asian version of NATO. Besides, India is a major player in groupings with China, such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. "China is not supportive of India's rise," he said. A permanent member of the UN Security Council, China has been scuttling India's bid for a seat at the table. The other four—the US, France, Britain and Russia—have offered India their support.

Both a common and a complex factor in India-China relations is Russia. China and Russia share what they call a "limitless partnership", more pronounced since the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and cemented further following western sanctions against Russia for invading Ukraine in 2022. "This is the new international model," Qian said of Sino-Russian relations.

India-Russia relations go back in history. India has diversified its defence imports over the years, yet trade with Russia has continued in other sectors. China and India have emerged as the biggest importers of Russian oil. India, which has a smaller trade deficit with Russia, is wary of at least one aspect of the China-Russia relationship. "India is

against the transfer of strategic technology from Russia to China. It could be passed on to Pakistan," Kondapalli said. These include the S-400 air defence system, which is among the world's most advanced technologies.

Russia supplies weapons to India, China and some other countries. China is Pakistan's main supplier. At its peak in 2005, China accounted for 60 per cent of all Russian deliveries of major weapons. But that share has fallen to 10 per cent since 2010. After difficult negotiations, Russia and China moved to a new level of arms trade in 2015, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute that tracks defence export and import around the world. "We have concerns about Russia-China relations and the sale of arms to Pakistan. China is aware of our concerns," Kantha said.

Sino-Russian relations have come a long way since the Sino-Soviet split, but are not without questions. China has given an old Chinese name to the Russian far eastern city of Vladivostok, and other Chinese names to seven Russian locations near its border, in its official documents. "President Vladimir Putin doesn't protest because he needs Xi's blessings," Kondapalli said. Chinese presence has also increased in the vast resource-rich Russian region of Siberia.

In the early 1990s, China and Russia began to demilitarise their shared border and resolved the disputes within the next decade. "Emulating the China-Russia model of overcoming historical tensions could be similarly advantageous for India," said Mok. "But it requires pragmatism."

### **It's time for India to revise its voice on Tibet**

14 July 2024, Tibetan Review

This is a quick rebut of the article 'It's time for India to reclaim its voice on Tibet' by Suhasini Haidar published in The Hindu on June 27, 2024. For the unenlightened, the article was a polemic on the US delegation that arrived at Dharamsala on Jun 18. Given that it was written after a lapse of some days of the event, the piece sure is a well-meditated one. However, one could not, try as hard as one may, fail to go away with the feeling that the structuring of the arguments and articulation of the narrative is dilettantish. The following scrutiny of selected arguments put forward in the article would prove it so.

The US taking centre stage in India on the issue of Tibet is not a reflection of weakness on India's part. If at all, it shows the strength of India in allowing the US to do it. And as for the US, coming to Dharamsala is the only path to take. They cannot go to Tibet for obvious reasons and Dharamsala is



where the instrumentalities of the exiled Tibetan political system are located. As for the 'carefully calibrated foreign policy narrative on Tibet', the author is missing the wood for the tree. It is easy to see that the whole exercise is laid out to spin the narrative out of control while still retaining control. What is more surprising is that a seemingly seasoned political commentator is choosing to equate humanitarian aid with political aid. Indeed, there is no other country in this world more gracious and grandfatherly to the Tibetan people than India. However, India has been tone-deaf when it comes to countless pleas for political support as is known to all and sundry.

As for the claim by the author that India has formulated its stand on the Tibet issue informed by its sensitivities on sovereignty and territorial integrity, India never had any compulsion to condone the Chinese invasion of Tibet in the first place. On the contrary, it had all the strategic reasons to not allow a Chinese advance on Tibet. It is one of the greatest mysteries of modern geo-politics as to why India looked the other way while its small neighbour was ravaged. Even worse, after recognising Tibet as a part of China subsequently, India unwittingly ceded or at least created grounds for ceding the erstwhile sphere of influence of political Tibet to China. The claims on parts of Arunachal Pradesh and some areas in Ladakh by China are on behalf of Tibet. China never had any border with India throughout history until the Faustian bargain was made.

And the fear that India is being relegated to the backseat in the Tibet issue is unfounded. When you are either not in a condition or inclined to drive the car, having a good driver take over is not such a bad idea. The obtained geo-political stands and standings necessitate such a manoeuvring. As a political commentator, the author should have known this unless she has chosen not to. As for the charge of superfluosity of the event, the delegates have come to interface with the elected leaders of the exile government, meeting His Holiness is a courtesy call in an official capacity and spiritual quest in the personal capacity of the members of the delegates.

Lastly, the argument that India is getting 'bigfooted' by the US because the US is being readily accommodative and obliging to Tibetan people is disingenuous at so many levels. The 17th Karmapa was left with no option but to move to the US in the aftermath of the currency notes episode. As for the succession issue, this is an issue that His Holiness and the Tibetan people would tackle when they get to that bridge. The best that the rest of the world can do is cheerlead the process. Moreover, the larger US-China contestation would be at the forefront of global geopolitics for the foreseeable future. There is hardly anything to be gained by being envious of it.

## Last-gasp bid to use Dalai Lama to destabilize China

14 July 2024, China Daily, Yan Yongshan

On Friday local time, US President Joe Biden signed a controversial bill related to Xizang, continuing the United States' practice of using domestic legislation to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries. This new legislation, however, goes further than previous efforts by introducing the claim that Xizang's sovereignty is unresolved, denying the historical fact that Xizang has been part of China since ancient times. This move raises serious questions about the US' commitment to the rules-based international order it claims to uphold. Why has the US, disregarding historical facts and international consensus, decided to flagrantly violate its own longstanding position on Xizang?

First, the US aims to use this unresolved sovereignty narrative as a strategic tool to revitalize its failing strategy of using Xizang to pressure China. Historically, Western powers like the United Kingdom and the US have manipulated issues like Xizang to serve their colonial interests. The so-called Xizang issue emerged from this colonial context. Even today, the West clings to the illusion of separating Xizang from China, using it as a tactic to tarnish, accuse and destabilize China. As China's peaceful development continues, the traditional US strategy of using Xizang against China is proving increasingly ineffective. Hence, in a desperate move, the US has unveiled this new narrative, directing its administrative bodies to promote it, revealing its ambition to intensify pressure on China and coerce other nations to join its stance.

Second, the US is seeking to extract the last remnants of value from the Dalai Lama and his followers. As the Dalai Lama ages and his clique's influence wanes due to internal divisions and the increasing fragmentation of the "Tibetan independence activists", the push for "Tibet independence" is weakening. Both the West and the Dalai Lama's clique see this as a last-ditch effort. Biden's timing of signing the bill during the Dalai Lama's visit to the US for medical treatment underscores this is the final pitch to use the Dalai Lama to serve US interests.

Third, the US is hoping to use this narrative to undermine China's unity and stability. The malign nature of the unresolved sovereignty claim lies in its intention to deconstruct the historical reality of China. The West avoids acknowledging its own history of coveting, instigating division, and even militarily invading Tibet, instead fabricating various falsehoods about its historical status as part of China. These falsehoods are intended to sow confusion and division. This strategy of inciting regional secession was previously used to destabilize the Soviet Union and is now being attempted against China.

The facts are clear: the West talks about the “Tibet issue”, but they have never genuinely cared about the Tibetan people.

Xizang has been a part of China since ancient times, a fact that is supported by the historical evidence. The US disregards these facts to serve its own agenda. But history cannot be rewritten, and the truth is more powerful than repeated lies. Xizang’s historical status as part of China is undeniable and cannot be negated by any country’s legislation.

The integrated development of the Chinese nation demonstrates that Xizang’s historical status as part of China is irrefutable. China’s historical records clearly delineate its territorial integrity. The close genetic, archaeological and linguistic ties between the Tibetan and Han peoples further affirm this. Historical documents, such as the inscriptions at Jokhang Temple, vividly capture the longstanding unity between Xizang and other provinces in China. These historical facts are unassailable.

The historical relationship between successive central governments and Tibet’s local authorities underscores its unquestionable legal status as part of China. From the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) onwards, various central governments have exerted effective administration over Tibet in different ways. Historical documents, in both Tibetan and Chinese records, provide unequivocal evidence of this relationship.

The continuous interactions and integrations among the various ethnic groups within China have formed an inseparable national community. Throughout history, the Tibetan people have stood alongside other Chinese ethnic groups, showcasing unity and resilience against foreign invasions and contributing to the nation’s collective strength. This unity cannot be invalidated by any foreign legislation.

In conclusion, the recent US legislation related with Xizang is not only a blatant interference in China’s internal affairs but also a misguided attempt to rewrite history and destabilize China. But the historical and factual reality of Xizang as an integral part of China stands firm, beyond the reach of any external political maneuvering.

### **The Resolve Tibet Act and Its Implications for Tibet-China Relation**

13 July 2024, Tibet Rights Collective

In a significant development enhancing U.S. support for Tibet, President Joe Biden signed into law the “Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act” (S. 138), commonly known as the “Resolve Tibet Act,” shortly after Nancy Pelosi’s visit to Dharamsala. This legislative move underscores the United States’ commitment to advocating for human rights and preserving the distinct linguistic, cultural,

and religious heritage of Tibetans, amidst longstanding geopolitical tensions with China.

#### **Background and Legislative Journey**

The Resolve Tibet Act represents a bipartisan effort to address the Tibet-China dispute. Passed by the House of Representatives in February and clearing the Senate in May, the Act signals a robust legislative response to the Tibetan plight. Despite China’s vehement opposition and its characterization of the Act as destabilizing, the U.S. has proceeded with this significant policy shift.

#### **Key Provisions and Strategic Implications**

The Act does not alter the established U.S. policy recognizing the Tibet Autonomous Region and other Tibetan areas as part of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). However, it substantially enhances U.S. support for Tibet by empowering State Department officials to actively counter Chinese disinformation about Tibet. The legislation unequivocally rejects the Chinese narrative that Tibet has been an integral part of China since ancient times. Instead, it advocates for direct, unconditional negotiations between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama or his representatives, emphasizing the need for a peaceful resolution.

#### **Historical Context and Diplomatic Efforts**

The Dalai Lama, who fled Tibet in 1959 and established a government-in-exile in Dharamshala, India, has long been at the center of the Tibet-China dialogue. Between 2002 and 2010, his representatives engaged in nine rounds of dialogue with the Chinese government, which failed to yield any concrete outcomes. The Act’s provision for renewed dialogue aims to rekindle these efforts and foster a negotiated settlement.

#### **China’s Stance and International Response**

China’s reaction to the Act has been predictably hostile. Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian warned against destabilizing actions and reaffirmed China’s resolve to defend its sovereignty. Concurrently, the U.S. State Department imposed visa restrictions on several Chinese officials implicated in the repression of marginalized religious and ethnic communities, citing ongoing human rights abuses in Xinjiang, Hong Kong, and Tibet.

State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller emphasized that the PRC has not upheld its commitments to respect human rights, as evidenced by documented abuses in these regions. The U.S. continues to call for China to adhere to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to unconditionally release arbitrarily detained individuals.

#### **Conclusion**

The Resolve Tibet Act represents a pivotal moment in U.S. foreign policy towards Tibet. By reinforcing support for Tibetan rights and calling for renewed

dialogue, the Act seeks to address a long-standing geopolitical conflict through peaceful means. This legislative measure not only enhances the U.S.'s strategic posture but also aligns with broader international human rights advocacy, positioning the United States as a key player in the quest for a just and negotiated resolution to the Tibet-China dispute.

### Will Tibet Be Independent One Day?

11 July 2024, The Citizen, K.P. Fabian

China moved its troops into Tibet in October 1950

The author conceived 'Imperial Games In Tibet: The Struggle for Statehood and Sovereignty' eight years ago and delivered it over a period of five years, as I learnt from him during a morning walk. He is blessed with lucidity of style and brevity, a rather rare combination these days.

I read the book practically non-stop despite the names of places and persons in China, rather difficult for many non-Chinese readers to recall easily.

The central thesis is that Tibet deserved independence as a state and lost it because of the imperial games played by China, Britain, and Russia-Czarist Russia and the Soviet Union. The role played by independent India also comes under scrutiny. The introduction is followed by 12 chapters, with the last termed appropriately an epilogue. The historical overview in the introduction recounts briefly the genesis of "The Great Game" between Russia and Britain played out in Iran, Afghanistan, and Tibet.

As far as Tibet was concerned London wanted to prevent Russia from gaining any undue influence there. Therefore, London invented 'suzerainty' of China over Tibet and later asserted that China had sovereignty over Tibet. Lord Curzon as Viceroy had a different approach, but London practically overruled him.

The author narrates the rather complex history of Tibet in chapter 1 titled "Tibet: Monastic Heights". In Tibet they call their country "Bod". The word 'Tibet' comes from 'Tubbat', a term used "by Tibet's neighbors -the Turks, Iranians, and Arabs", possibly derived from 'To Bo' which can be translated as Upper Tibet.

The Chinese call it 'Tufan' and Indians call it 'Tibbat'. The reader would appreciate the meticulous approach of the author. The Tibetan calendar starts from 127 BCE, the date of accession of the first king- Nyatri Tsem-po. Buddhism was introduced by King Songtsen Gampo who attacked northern India and defeated King Arjuna of Kannauj. Arjuna had succeeded Harshavardhana, a famous patron of Buddhism. During Harshavardhana's reign the famous Chinese Buddhist scholar Xuanzang, known in India as Hiuen Tsang, had come as a pilgrim to India.

Arjuna was antipathetic to Buddhism and during his reign Wang Hiuen-Tse, a Buddhist scholar sent by the Chinese Emperor and a 31-member team were killed. That was the provocation for King Songtsen Gampo's attack. We conclude that Buddhism reached Tibet in the 7th Century CE. Tibet's contact with China also occurred in the 7th Century CE by way of a matrimonial alliance. While Tibetans acknowledge that Buddhism came from India, we should note that the Chinese claim that it was a princess from China married into the Tibetan royal family who brought it to Tibet. China claims to have had contacts with Tibet from time immemorial, even though proper evidence is lacking. Chapter 7 "Britain and Tibet: Forcing Trade" starts with the skirmishes between British India and Bhutan, after the 1757 Battle of Plassey. Tibet claimed that Bhutan was its tributary state. Thus started the interface between British India and Tibet.

Governor General Warren Hastings sent his Scottish private secretary George Bogle to Tibet primarily to explore trade possibilities. He met the Panchen Lama who promised to transmit the proposal for trade to the emperor in Beijing as China had forbidden Tibet from dealing directly with foreign powers. Panchen Lama went to meet the emperor, caught smallpox, and died in China. We do not know whether he got permission to do trade with British India. Chapter 9 "An Independent Tibet" gives an in depth account of the 1913-1914 Simla Conference that begat the McMahon line, named after Lt. Col Henry McMahon who as foreign secretary led the delegation of British India. The reader would note that despite Tibet's determined efforts neither Britain nor China took seriously Tibet's claim to Independence. If recognition by peers is an essential ingredient of Independence, Tibet was not independent even though the Chinese had been expelled in 1912 following the fall of the Manchu dynasty.

The most interesting part of the book is how independent India addressed the crisis in Tibet following the attack by the People's Republic of China. There is a general impression that Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru could have done more to help Tibet retain its independence. The author does not fully support that impression. China moved its troops into Tibet in October 1950. The author draws attention to the internal discussions in Delhi and the famous letter dated 7th November 1950 from Deputy Prime Minister Patel to Nehru. Patel described China's action as "little short of perfidy" and pointed out that India had let down Tibet. Nehru wanted to sit down and discuss the matter with Patel. Unfortunately, Patel breathed his last on 15th December 1950 before they could meet. Much has been made of this letter in the literature on India's foreign policy in the Nehru years. The gist of the

criticism of Nehru's policy has been that he was a starry-eyed idealist whereas Patel was a sturdy realist with a firm grip on the ground realities. Let us listen to Foreign Secretary Maharajakrishna Rasgotra who joined the Indian Foreign Service in 1949. He was present at the creation of the service. In his book, *A Life in Diplomacy*, he says that a good deal of what Nehru did about Tibet had to be kept secret, not even put on file, and if Patel had known all that Nehru was doing, "perhaps the latter's famous letter" would not have been written. Rasgotra believes that the letter was drafted by Sir Girija Shanker Bajpai, Secretary General of the Ministry of External Affairs. This reviewer was personally told by Sir Girija's son, Ambassador Katyayani Shanker Bajpai, that his father drafted the letter. It is well known that India did not support Tibet's application to join the United Nations as a member-state. What is not generally known is that, as Rasgotra points out, Nehru had sent two special envoys to Tibet, the first immediately after India became independent, to persuade the members of the Kashag- the ruling council- to apply for United Nations membership. The envoys spent weeks in Lhasa, to no avail. Nehru did not take into confidence India's representative in Lhasa, an Englishman. The key question is: What could India have done to save Tibet from China's aggression? Ambassador Vinod C. Khanna says in commenting on this book, "Debates will continue about the manner in which Nehru handled the problem but the question remains: Would any other decision by him have prevented the takeover of Tibet by the very determined and powerful China?" We all know that the Indian army defending Jammu & Kashmir was in no position to take on the People's Liberation Army. There is a record somewhere, I cannot recall right now, that when asked by Jawaharlal Nehru, General Cariappa, the Army chief, made it clear that he could not spare more than two battalions. Ambassador Sinha has made an irrefutably strong case for Tibet's right to Independence. Let us hope that this book will be read in China and that at least in the republic of letters there will be a consensus for Tibet to regain full autonomy, if not Independence. The imperial games at the cost of human rights and the right to self-determination of a people must be curbed. Who knows, one day Tibet might be independent.

### **Tibet And Its Position In The India-China-US Geopolitical Triangle**

11 July 2024, OWP, Sapna Suresh

On June 19, 2024, a bipartisan Congressional delegation went to India and met the Dalai Lama. The members of Congress included republican Michael McChaul and democrat speaker of the

House Nancy Pelosi. When addressing a crowd at the monastery the members insisted that their visit was part of the Resolve Tibet Act. Passed by Congress the week before, this act aims to promote dialogue between Tibet and Beijing for a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

In response, the Chinese government criticized this visit and Lin Jian, the spokesperson for the Chinese foreign ministry, said that the President must not sign the bill into law. He instead insisted that "it's known by all that the 14th Dalai Lama is not a purely religious figure, but a political exile engaged in anti-China separatist activities under the cloak of religion."

Tibet is a Buddhist-majority region, known as the "roof of the world" due to the region's high mountain peaks. China argues that Tibet has been an "inalienable" part of China since the 13th century when the Yuan Dynasty was in power. Crucially, the KMT (Chiang Kai Shek's party) shares the CCP's position on Tibet. Hence, it is worth asking that in the event the CCP is ousted from power and replaced with the non-communists (as many in Washington desire,) Xinjiang and many issues related to territorial integrity and sovereignty would change.

However, by contrast, the Tibetans insist that during that time, China was under a Mongol dynasty (Yuan) or a Manchu dynasty (Qing), rather than a (Han) Chinese Empire, and that Tibet was merely a protectorate in which it was allowed considerable autonomy. In 1913, after the Qing state ended, Tibet declared independence and became a de facto independent state.

In 1949, Mao Zedong established the People's Republic of China (PRC) and in 1950, the PRC asserted its claims on Tibet. A year later, the Tibetans signed the Seventeen Point Agreement with Beijing, in which it said that the Chinese government would respect local Tibetan religion and customs, but in exchange, China would have a military base in Lhasa – the capital of Tibet.

Nevertheless, despite the treaty, tensions have persisted between Tibet and Beijing and many Tibetans report experiencing severe cultural repression, with some deeming it a genocide akin to the Uyghurs. Consequently, the "Free Tibet Movement," a non-state civil society organization, has played a role internationally by criticizing China's human rights abuses, demanding more autonomy, and pressuring China by boycotting Chinese goods. This was the group that organized protests when Xi Jinping visited France in May 2024. Perhaps most importantly, Tibet has played a critical role in shaping China's relations with India and the US.

In 1952, the Indians recognized Tibet as a part of China. In 1954, India and China signed an

agreement which restricted India's relations with Tibet which ceased trading and travelling without a visa. Since, Indian maps illustrate Tibet as a Chinese territory, reflective of a time when India sought to have cordial relations with Beijing during the early 1950s. However, in 1959, a rebellion arose in Tibet known as the Lhasa Rebellion. New Delhi gave asylum to the Dalai Lamas along with other Tibetan refugees. This move created a suspicion in Beijing that India had a role in the uprising and wanted to destabilize China.

Also during this time, the C.I.A. funnelled money into the Dalai Lama to support activities against Beijing. The logic behind aiding Tibet was to gain access to developments inside China, reminiscent of how the U.S. spied on the Soviet Union by entering through Central Asia. Consequently, the Chinese accused the Indians of aiding the Americans in funding anti-Chinese activities in Tibet, and the Dalai Lama's fleeing to India only added to China's paranoia. Hence, many scholars and historians argue that Tibet was one of the many factors that led to the 1962 Sino-Indian War.

While most scholars agree that India was aware of this program, they differ on whether India actively aided the US. However, according to Bruce Riedel's (a nonresident senior fellow at The Brookings Institution) book, *JFK's Forgotten Crisis: Tibet, the CIA, and the Sino-Indian War*, it was Pakistan that provided support to the Americans. While aware that such a program existed, India did not provide any support to the Americans itself.

Nevertheless, despite the covert or overt support Washington and New Delhi gave to Lhasa, the priority for India and the U.S. has been to advance their interests, not the interests of Tibet.

In 1972, after the U.S. and China pursued normalization, the U.S. ended its support to the Tibetans and gradually, the U.S. reframed the Tibet issue as an issue of human rights abuses, rather than a demand for Tibetan independence. Additionally, in 2009, to maintain cordial relations with Beijing, Valerie Jarrett, a senior advisor for President Obama, went to China and emphasized that they wouldn't invite the Dalai Lama to the White House in Obama's first year. When he ultimately visited, he was given a downgraded treatment.

Later, during the Trump administration, an American official visited Tibet. However, this visit was less about the concern for the Tibetans (considering Trump's aversion to advancing "human rights") but rather, a politicization of the Tibetan issue at a time when US-China relations were fraught due to disagreement on trade issues. Likewise, despite the recent bill and the Congressional visit, the Tibet issue will eventually be sidelined when US-China relations stabilize.

This approach to Tibet is reminiscent of Washington's position towards the Iraqi Kurds. During the 1960s, the Americans (along with the Israelis and Iranians) gave secret support to the Iraqi Kurds to fight against Saddam Hussein's government. However, by 1975, as the Iranians eased tensions with the Iraqis, support ceased. Hence, as with the Tibetans, the U.S. has used the Kurdish issue to advance its geopolitical interests in the Middle East.

Likewise, Tibet has also been sidelined when New Delhi wants to reduce tensions with Beijing. In 2018, the Modi government issued a warning against any participation. This was to commemorate 60 years of the Dalai Lama's exile, a "sensitive time" in India-China relations. Two months later, Modi met Xi Jinping in Wuhan at a time when the BJP government sought to reduce tensions with China.

Recently, the Indian government publicly announced plans to rename approximately 30 sites in Tibet in retaliation to China renaming 62 locations in Arunachal Pradesh (or as China calls it "South Tibet.") According to an unnamed Indian analyst, this move had more to do with placating the public to look "tough" on China, rather than a substantive policy change.

Importantly, even with the recent Congressional visit, the Indian government reaffirmed its position that the Dalai Lama isn't a political figure but a "revered religious figure." Interestingly, while the Chinese criticized the Americans, there wasn't any criticism of New Delhi, perhaps fearing further Indian cooperation with the Americans.

Going forward, the way to aid Tibetans is not to rely on the governments of Washington, New Delhi, or any other state official of another country. Rather, the best way to aid Tibetans is to increase people-to-people contact and to treat them as a human issue, rather than a (geo)political problem.

### **The Dalai Lama's revenge: the high fertility of Tibetans in China**

11 July 2024, Mercator, William Huang

The Tibetan struggle is one of the best-known resistance movements in the West, largely thanks to the fame of the Dalai Lama, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

Ever since the Dalai Lama fled from Lhasa to India after the 1959 uprising, China has faced worldwide criticism of its myriad human rights abuses and colonising practices in Tibet. One of the most serious is allegations of ethnic cleansing, as ethnic Han migrants enter Tibetan majority regions and the demographic makeup changes.

However, one of the most important factors in demographic change, fertility, is seldom highlighted by outside observers of the Tibetan question.



In this article, using data obtained from the 2020 Chinese census and reported nowhere else, we look at how Tibetans are faring in the age of ultra-low fertility across China and East Asia, and why their relatively higher fertility levels may offer a rare light of hope in the region.

#### The TAR

Tibetans live in a large, sparsely populated area spanning millions of square kilometres in five provincial-level administrations of China. The core area, namely the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), or Xizang in Mandarin, only contains around half of the ethnic Tibetan population in China.

The other half of the seven million Tibetans currently residing in China are scattered in four other provinces: Yunnan, Gansu, Sichuan, and Qinghai.

When we look at fertility levels in this article, we will only examine the TAR as the writer has managed to obtain detailed statistics of the region's 2020 census results, and also because in the modern Chinese political sense, "Tibet" only refers to the autonomous region itself, not the other Tibetan majority areas.

Let us examine the Tibet Autonomous Region's data. According to the National Bureau of Statistics of China's 2020 census data, Tibetans make up 86 percent of the autonomous region's total population of 3.648 million. Han Chinese only make up around 12.2 percent and are heavily concentrated in a few major urban centres of the TAR, especially the capital, Lhasa, where half of all Han Chinese in Tibet reside.

This means that the rural fertility rate in Tibet would directly correlate with the rural ethnic Tibetan fertility rate, and the urban fertility rate of Tibetans would only be higher than the urban TFR of the region, since Han Chinese migrants are known to have lower TFR than the Tibetans.

#### Stark contrast

So, what is the fertility rate of the Tibetans? In 2020, the Tibet Autonomous Region had a total fertility rate of 1.926, which is the third highest in the nation after two other provinces with large ethnic minority populations, Guangxi and Guizhou. This is quite close to the replacement level of 2.1 and, by Chinese standards, is extremely high.

If we further break this down to rural Tibet, the 2020 census statistics indicate that rural Tibetans have a total fertility rate of 2.363. This should be regarded as a largely accurate reflection of ethnic Tibetan fertility, as they make up more than 95 percent of the rural TAR population. This high TFR level is in stark contrast to the TFR rate in urban areas of the TAR (largely dominated by Lhasa) of only 0.87 and the TFR in peri-urban/suburban town areas, which is 1.63.

In the TAR, 64 percent of the population still live in rural areas, therefore the rural fertility rate remains

the key factor in deciding the TFR of the whole region. However, urbanisation is continuing in the TAR at a rapid pace, with the rural population percentage plummeting from 77 percent in 2010 to less than two-thirds in 2020. This urbanisation trend is largely encouraged by the Chinese government, and also spells trouble for the ethnic Tibetan fertility rate as rural Tibetans become urbanised and more assimilated, leading to further fertility declines.

We can further break down the Tibetan fertility statistics by the seven main prefectures of Tibet. As the capital, Lhasa is only 70 percent Tibetan and 27 percent Han Chinese, with more and more Han Chinese migrants arriving and diluting the ever-decreasing Tibetan majority. Since these Han Chinese migrants generally have much lower fertility, this means that Lhasa's fertility, at 1.06, is also the lowest in the whole of the TAR. Chengguan district, the Han Chinese-dominated central urban area of Lhasa, only registered a TFR of 0.772, which is on par with South Korea.

However, most of the other prefectures in Tibet have large ethnic Tibetan supermajorities, with Nagqu being 96.9 percent Tibetan, Shigatse 95 percent Tibetan and Changdu 93 percent Tibetan. These prefectures have double, if not triple, the TFR of Lhasa.

In Shigatse, which by population is the second largest prefecture in the TAR, the TFR is 2.42, with several counties within Shigatse bordering Nepal, such as Bainang and Tingri, having TFRs above 3. Nagqu's TFR is 2.59, with Lhari County, the birthplace of both candidates to the current Panchen Lama throne, registering an ultra-high TFR of 3.5. Lhari County also has an extraordinary feat – the rural parts of this county have a TFR of 4.15, which is undoubtedly a record in present-day East Asia (and even South Asia).

This is unheard of in China and is presumably the highest TFR in the entire country. Changdu has a TFR of 2.3 and also has counties with TFRs above 3 or approaching 3.

#### Final bastion

What about the other Tibetan prefectures with smaller Tibetan majorities? Again, it is very noticeable how the Han Chinese migration and urbanisation affect and lower fertility.

Nyingchi, in Tibet's east and bordering India's Arunachal Pradesh, an area also claimed by China, has become heavily settled with Han Chinese migrants, as the Han Chinese percentage jumped from 17.3 percent ten years ago to 24.7 percent in 2020. Nyingchi had a TFR of 1.89, still very high by Chinese standards, but lower than the TAR average and also much lower than the Tibetan supermajority areas.

Based on these above statistics, it is clear that ethnic Tibetans, especially rural Tibetans, have some of the highest fertility and natural growth rates in the entire country. These rural people still form the majority of both the ethnic Tibetan and TAR populations and will become vital lifeblood to the demographic health and future of the Tibetans.

Moreover, as ethnic Tibetan refugee populations in India and Nepal continue to dwindle due to much lower fertility rates and high emigration rates to Western countries, ethnic Tibetans living in the motherland will form the last bastion of hope for the continuity of the Tibetan population. Currently they still maintain a fertility advantage double to triple that of the Han settlers, and this will continue for the foreseeable future. This is vital to ensuring that the TAR will continue to retain a Tibetan majority.

Ethnic Tibetans in the TAR are also performing much better than their cultural and religious brethren in neighbouring Bhutan, Sikkim and Ladakh. Bhutan, a country known for its happiness and mysteriousness, shares a cultural and religious heritage with Tibet. Its TFR has dropped to around 1.86 in 2023 and is now a major source of concern to its royal family.

Sikkim and Ladakh are faring far worse – in Ladakh for 2019-2021, the TFR is only 1.3, whilst Sikkim had a pathetic 1.1, and the government there is desperately trying to boost birth rates.

Despite all odds, ethnic Tibetans, especially the 2.5 million rural Tibetans in the TAR, continue to have above replacement rate TFRs and, in some cases, ultra-high fertility rates. This is a very fortunate fact, and hopefully, the Tibetan people can continue to maintain this demographic advantage, which will help them greatly in their decades-long fight for freedom.

### **How a US act revived Sino-Indian confrontation over Tibet**

10 July 2024, The Daily Star, M Sakhawat Hussain

On June 12, 2024, both houses of US Congress passed a bipartisan bill called "Promoting a Resolution to Tibet-China Dispute Act," better known as "Resolve Tibet Act." The act calls on China to find a "peaceful settlement" to the 65-year-old Tibet issue through dialogue with the Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, who is in exile in Dharamshala, India. The Dalai Lama was rescued from Lhasa to India in March 1959, when Chinese troops were about to take over the Tibetan capital. He still heads a "Tibetan Government in Exile," based in the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, despite strong Chinese disapproval.

Almost six decades after the Sino-Indian war over the Tibetan border issue and the Dalai Lama's ambivalent stand on Tibet's sovereignty, the US'

Resolve Tibet Act would certainly bring the issue out of historical obscurity. The issue was thought to have been frozen after the China-US rapprochement and the US' acceptance of the One-China policy in 1972, while India is also said to have reconciled with the claim that Tibet is an integral part of China.

The issue was settled to an extent when China reconciled with India's takeover of Sikkim, considered one of the five fingers of Tibet, during the visit of India's late Foreign Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 1979. But China never gave up its claim over outer Tibet including Aksai Chin, Tawang and Arunachal Pradesh—declared as one of the five fingers of Tibet by Mao Zedong—in the northeast.

Since its creation in 1949, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has denied the outcome of the Shimla Convention of 1914, which was attended by representatives of autonomous Tibet and the Republic of China (ROC). Though the ROC attended the meeting, it refused to endorse the border agreement, claiming that the entire Tibet had historically belonged to China and would always remain an integral part of it.

The India-China dispute particularly centred on the western border in Eastern Ladakh, involving Aksai Chin—with there being controversy over the acceptance of the Macartney-MacDonald Line versus the Johnson Line. PRC claimed the Karakoram watershed line to be the correct dividing line, rejecting India's claim based on the Johnson Line further to the east. During his official visit to India in 1960, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai refused to adjust the border along the Karakoram Range in exchange for recognition of the McMahon Line in Arunachal Pradesh. This refusal, despite efforts by then Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, regarding the Tibet and Dalai Lama issue, dashed hopes for a peaceful settlement between the two governments.

The complex relationship soured not only over the border dispute but was compounded by the involvement of CIA, India and Pakistan in the Tibet uprising and the extrication of the Dalai Lama, primarily facilitated by India, which provided him refuge. As a result, what began as an exemplary third-world relationship between China and India soon turned bitter.

These issues were central to the 1962 Sino-Indian war, in which India suffered defeat in both Aksai Chin in the west and Arunachal Pradesh in the east. The events of the war remain ingrained in the Indian psyche and continue to influence its military strategy and geopolitics. China unilaterally withdrew from Arunachal Pradesh but retained control over Aksai Chin. And the Chinese claim over outer Tibet in Arunachal Pradesh remains a contentious issue.

During that war, India faced significant supply and troop deployment issues on the northeast through the

Siliguri Corridor, also known as the Chicken's Neck. East Pakistan at that time stood in the way of any alternative supply route to the Chicken's Neck. And it's worth noting that China was increasing its presence at Nathula Pass in Sikkim and the Namka Chu Pass in Tawang region, posing a threat to the Siliguri Corridor between Tetulia, Bangladesh, and Nepal.

India learned an important lesson about its strategic handicap, vis-à-vis Arunachal Pradesh, which could be a flashpoint in any Sino-Indian conflict. But things have changed drastically since 1962, and both countries are now nuclear powers. And yet, reports indicate that both have heavily militarised along the McMahon Line, especially after the Sino-Indian Doklam standoff on the Sikkim-Bhutan border.

Chinese presence in Doklam makes it easier to threaten the corridor in the event of a wider conflict. Therefore, India's strategic pursuit of alternatives, such as the Kaladan route, is insufficient due to its longer and more perilous journey. And so, the other obvious alternative being talked about in many leading Indian newspapers is through Bangladesh.

While the US was in the process of enacting the Resolve Tibet Act, China issued a new official map showing the entire Arunachal Pradesh as being a part of Tibet, changing its name to Xizang. What is interesting is that, within a week of the Act passing on June 18, a bipartisan seven member US Congressional delegation visited Dharamshala and met with the Dalai Lama.

Moreover, the act says that, "claims made by officials of the People's Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party that Tibet has been a part of China since ancient times are historically inaccurate." And that, "United States public diplomacy efforts should counter disinformation about Tibet from the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party, including disinformation about the history of Tibet, the Tibetan people, and Tibetan institutions, including that of the Dalai Lama." It further calls on China to negotiate with the Dalai Lama's government in exile.

After meeting the Dalai Lama, the US delegation also visited India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The fact that the Indian PM decided to meet with the US delegation sends a clear message to China as regards to India's position. Predictably, the delegation's visit drew angry responses from the Chinese authorities, who view the act as interfering with China's internal matters.

Given these circumstances, it's important to ask where Bangladesh stands in regards to the geostrategic tensions between China and India. Bangladesh also needs to seriously think about the implications of allowing Indian logistical routes to bypass the critical Chicken's Neck for potential

military-logistical buildup, perhaps against China in the future. Thus, it is essential to clarify whether India is seeking transshipment, transit, or a corridor through Bangladesh—which India has been trying to get since the time of Bangabandhu's government.

### **As Violence Surges, Can Pakistan Protect Its Chinese Projects?**

10 July 2024, The New York Times, Zia ur-Rehman and Christina Goldbaum

In a busy port city along Pakistan's southwestern coast, a newly built security barrier and hundreds of new checkpoints safeguard Chinese workers.

Farther down the Arabian Sea coast, in Pakistan's largest city, Karachi, officials added hundreds of police officers to a special unit charged with protecting Chinese-funded development projects. And in the capital, Islamabad, officials created a new police force specifically to protect Chinese nationals. Across Pakistan, authorities are hurrying to bolster security for Chinese workers after a surge in militant violence targeting Chinese-funded megaprojects. The attacks have threatened infrastructure, energy and trade projects that have kept Pakistan's economy afloat through a dire economic crisis.

That investment in Pakistan, which began in 2015 as part of China's Belt and Road Initiative, involves around \$60 billion of planned projects. Tens of thousands of Chinese workers are thought to be in Pakistan, though estimates vary widely. Chinese investment has proved critical since support from the United States tapered off after the war in neighboring Afghanistan ended in 2021.

The Chinese-funded projects struggled with security challenges from the start. But over the past three years, as militant groups have resurged across Pakistan and the number of terrorist attacks has soared, Chinese investments — or even just projects perceived to have some connection to China — have become increasingly vulnerable.

A series of attacks this spring highlighted that threat. In late March, armed fighters targeted the Chinese-built and operated port in Gwadar along the southwestern coast of the Arabian Sea, killing two Pakistani security officers. Days later, militants attacked the country's second-largest air base, citing opposition to Chinese investment to extract the region's resources.

The day after the air base attack, five Chinese workers died after a suicide bomber rammed an explosive-laden truck into their vehicle. The next month, five Japanese workers were the object of a suicide attack in Karachi after being mistaken for Chinese workers, according to the police. (The Japanese escaped unharmed, but a bystander, who was not a foreigner, was killed.)

"The bottom line is that one of Pakistan's closest allies and most important donors is now the foreign entity that is the most vulnerable to terrorism in Pakistan," said Michael Kugelman, the director of the Wilson Center's South Asia Institute.

"Pakistan's economy is in a very precarious state," he added. "Islamabad can't afford to have one of its most critical donors feel that level of vulnerability. The stakes are very high."

Already, the security situation appears to have dampened Beijing's confidence in investing in Pakistan. Last month, Pakistan's prime minister, Shehbaz Sharif, visited Beijing and met with China's leader, Xi Jinping, in an effort to secure an additional \$17 billion in funding for energy and infrastructure projects. But the visit ended with no firm pledge for future investments from Beijing.

There was a "vague promise to enhance economic cooperation, but these outcomes fell short of the substantial agreements Pakistan had hoped for," said Filippo Boni, an academic specializing in China-Pakistan relations at the Open University in Britain.

Since the start in 2013 of China's Belt and Road Initiative — \$1 trillion of infrastructure development programs in roughly 70 countries — Pakistan has been the program's flagship site. Beijing has planned billions of dollars in megaprojects in the so-called China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, and it has started on several, including the deepwater port in Gwadar.

Along the way, China has also lent more and more to Pakistan as the country has faced a major economic downturn, with inflation hitting double digits and joblessness soaring.

For years, the megaprojects have faced security threats from militant groups operating in Pakistan, including the Islamic State affiliate in the region; armed separatists; and the Pakistani Taliban, an ideological twin and ally of the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Many harbor grievances against China, experts say. The Islamic State and Pakistani Taliban seek revenge for Beijing's repression of Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang. In recent years, both groups have begun collaborating with the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, a Uyghur organization that China has long accused of inciting unrest in Xinjiang, according to a United Nations Security Council report released in January.

Others, like the Baluch Liberation Army, an armed separatist group in Baluchistan Province, oppose outsiders — including Pakistan's central government and China — benefiting from the province's natural resources.

"They view Chinese development efforts as reinforcing Pakistan's central government, which they perceive as oppressive," said Iftikhar Firdous, an

expert on armed groups with The Khorasan Diary, an Islamabad-based research platform.

Over the past three years, violence from those groups has surged, an increase that many experts attribute to the Taliban seizing power in Afghanistan. Pakistani officials have accused the Taliban government of offering safe haven to some groups, like the Pakistani Taliban, which they say has allowed violence to flourish.

The Afghan government has denied those claims, and it has cracked down on other terrorist groups within the country, including the Islamic State. But one result of that was to push militant fighters into Pakistan, experts say.

As violence has rebounded across Pakistan, so, too, have attacks on Chinese workers and projects.

Seeking to rebuild Beijing's confidence, in recent months Pakistani authorities have bolstered the ranks of a dedicated security division within the police and military established in 2015 to safeguard Chinese Belt and Road Initiative projects. They have discussed additional fencing around the port in Gwadar, the centerpiece of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. But the country's law enforcement is already overstretched, officials say. Police and army officers are ill-equipped to confront militants, many of whom are armed with American-made weapons procured from Afghanistan after U.S. troops withdrew. More focus on protecting Chinese nationals could come at the expense of protecting Pakistanis, they warn.

Chinese officials have urged Pakistan to let private Chinese security contractors protect its projects in the country, an idea Pakistani authorities have rejected.

The countries have also been at odds about other approaches to coping with the threat from the Pakistani Taliban, also known as Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, or T.T.P., said Asfandiyar Mir, a senior expert at the United States Institute of Peace.

Pakistani officials have sought to pressure the Afghan government to act against T.T.P. fighters. At times Pakistan has directly attacked them, officials say, firing airstrikes into Afghanistan and expelling Afghan refugees.

China has taken a more collaborative approach, Mr. Mir said, effectively offering to normalize relations with Afghanistan in the hopes of persuading Taliban officials to negotiate with the T.T.P. on Beijing's behalf.

Pakistani officials have faced resistance from their own citizens over the recent increase in security measures for Chinese workers.

In Gwadar, hundreds of residents have poured into the streets in recent months to protest the government's digging a trench to separate the compound where the Chinese live from the rest of the city.

The trench was the latest security measure. Checkpoints line major roads, where every few miles police and army personnel scan identification cards and search vehicles. Hundreds of police and army officers roam the streets. There has been talk of walling off the Chinese-built portion of the city entirely with a new fence.

"Living in Gwadar already feels like living in a security zone," said Mumtaz Hout, 29, a university student. "Now these new trenches, and the talk of future fencing, are further restricting our movement and violating our basic rights."

### **Tibetan Dilemma: Uncertain Future Without The Dalai Lama**

10 July 2024, The Times of India

The Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, turned 89 this year, a milestone celebrated by hundreds of exiled Tibetans in Dharamshala, India. Since fleeing Tibet in 1959 following a failed uprising against Chinese rule, the Dalai Lama has resided in this hillside town, making it the center of the Tibetan government-in-exile. The celebrations were marked by traditional dances, songs, and the cutting of a three-tiered cake, but the Dalai Lama himself was absent, recovering from knee surgery in the United States.

The Dalai Lama's advanced age and ongoing health issues have intensified concerns among Tibetan exiles about the future of their movement and leadership. China has stated its intent to control the selection of his successor, further complicating matters. This scenario has raised significant questions about the political and cultural fate of Tibetans in exile and in their homeland.

Why are Tibetans concerned about their future without the Dalai Lama?

The Dalai Lama has been a unifying figure for Tibetans, advocating for substantial autonomy and the preservation of Tibetan culture. His absence raises fears about the continuity of these efforts. As Penpa Tsering, president of the Tibetan government-in-exile, stated, "Post-fourteenth Dalai Lama we don't know what will happen."

What is the significance of the Dalai Lama's birthday celebrations?

The birthday celebrations in Dharamshala are not only a tribute to the Dalai Lama's leadership but also an expression of cultural and spiritual solidarity among exiled Tibetans. They serve as a reminder of their ongoing struggle for autonomy and the preservation of their heritage.

What are the concerns regarding the succession of the Dalai Lama?

Beijing's claim that it will appoint the next Dalai Lama has caused significant concern among Tibetans.

Historically, the Dalai Lama is believed to reincarnate, and the current Dalai Lama has hinted he will clarify succession matters around his 90th birthday. The fear is that China will install a rival leader to assert control over Tibet, undermining the legitimacy of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition.

How has the international community responded to the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan issue?

Recently, a group of US lawmakers, including former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, met with the Dalai Lama, reiterating support for Tibetan autonomy. This meeting, along with a bill passed by the US Congress urging China to resume talks with Tibetan leaders, has been viewed as a significant step. Pelosi emphasized, "This bill says to the Chinese government: things have changed now, get ready for that."

What is the "Middle Way" approach advocated by the Dalai Lama?

The "Middle Way" approach seeks genuine autonomy for Tibet within the framework of the Chinese constitution. It aims to preserve Tibetan culture, religion, and identity while acknowledging China's sovereignty. This approach has been a cornerstone of the Dalai Lama's advocacy, but its future is uncertain without his guiding presence.

How does India factor into the Tibetan dilemma?

India has been a host to the Dalai Lama and Tibetan exiles since 1959. While it recognizes Tibet as part of China, India remains a critical support base for the Tibetan cause. Observers suggest that India's role could become more prominent post-Dalai Lama, especially in balancing its diplomatic relations with China.

What are the potential scenarios for Tibetans after the Dalai Lama?

There is a concern that the movement could lose momentum or become more radical. The Tibetan Youth Congress, for example, has voiced aspirations for full independence, contrasting with the Dalai Lama's Middle Way. Penpa Tsering mentioned, "If every country keeps saying that Tibet is part of the People's Republic of China, then where is the reason for China to come and talk to us?"

The future without the Dalai Lama is fraught with uncertainty for Tibetans. The spiritual leader's advanced age and China's assertive stance on his succession have amplified fears of a leadership vacuum. Nonetheless, the global Tibetan community remains steadfast in their cultural and political aspirations, drawing strength from the Dalai Lama's enduring legacy.



## Could Taiwan's 'separatists' face death penalty in China?

09 July 2024, Deutsche Welle, Yuchen Li

Beijing has unveiled new guidelines against what it says is "a very small number" of "diehard" advocates for Taiwanese independence — but others say these laws could apply to nearly everyone in Taiwan.

Some of the legal changes, however, are not easily dismissed. Beijing courts can now pass sentences, including life imprisonment or the death penalty, to "Taiwan independence" supporters who are convicted of conducting or inciting secession.

China says its new guidelines are targeting a "very small number of diehard 'Taiwan independence' separatists."

What are the guidelines?

This might include politicians like Chen, or other outspoken independence leaders such as Taiwan's current Vice President Hsiao Bi-khim and former Foreign Minister Joseph Wu.

But the 22 guidelines seem to intentionally employ vague language, with analysts describing them as legally ambiguous.

They list five "accurate identification of crimes," which include "attempting to alter Taiwan's legal status as part of China" and "advocating for Taiwan's participation in international organizations limited to sovereign states," but the last item on the list simply described the offense as "other acts aimed at separating Taiwan from China."

Penalties for "splitting the state" may include capital punishment if the crime causes "particularly grave harm" to the state and the people or "if the circumstances are particularly serious."

The guidelines also allow Chinese courts to hold trials in absentia for suspects not available in the country.

People who are already listed as Taiwanese separatists might not face immediate risk of arrest, Taiwanese legal scholar and consultant to the Taipei-based Straits Exchange Foundation, Wu Se-chih, told DW. However, they could be tried in absentia and have bounties imposed against them.

Most Taiwanese could be at risk

Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te, whom Beijing has publicly disliked and called "a dangerous separatist," reacted by saying that "China has no right to pursue cross-border prosecution of Taiwanese people."

Wu told DW that, given the broad definition of the crimes, around 90% of Taiwan's population could potentially be criminalized — a figure Lai also reportedly shared with his party's central committee during a meeting.

"Before the 22 measures, the target for [people advocating] Taiwan independence was broad. Now it's even broader," Wu said.

Wu warned that retired members of the Taiwanese military, its government personnel, employees of sensitive high-tech companies as well as educators are all among the high-risk groups, based on new laws and previous cases.

Such cases include Beijing charging Taiwanese activist and vice chairman of the Taiwanese National Party with "secession" last year after the official was detained in China for nearly eight months.

China dismisses travel concerns

Taiwanese authorities responded to the new laws by raising the alert level for travel to China. At the same time, foreign companies in China are considering relocating Taiwanese employees, according to the Reuters news agency.

In response to the travel alert, Beijing accused Taiwan's Lai administration of "maliciously smearing judicial documents" and issued a statement reassuring that most Taiwanese had no reason for concern and could visit China "in high spirits."

Will Beijing go after Taiwanese 'separatists'?

Beijing was already capable of punishing "Taiwan independence" advocates with the existing laws, according to Chao Chien-min, director of the Graduate Institute for National Development and Mainland China Studies at the Chinese Culture University in Taiwan.

However, Beijing chose to unveil new measures one month after Lai took office — which indicated its intention of targeting "more radical pro-independence individuals in the new government" rather than ordinary citizens, Chao said.

In addition, according to Article 17 in the guidelines, defendants or suspects abroad are to be handled by national and public security units instead of China's Foreign Ministry. Chao said this showed that Beijing was unwilling to "escalate the matter to an international level."

"Forcibly extraditing [suspects] to mainland China for trial would cause a huge international shock," Chao added. "I think given China's current international situation and diplomatic status, they probably haven't considered going that far."

Lessons from Hong Kong

In recent years, the Chinese government has passed or amended a series of national security-related laws, including an anti-espionage law and a law on guarding state secrets. The 22 guidelines are considered part of Beijing's efforts to expand its "legal toolbox."

Wu Se-chih believes that the latest move is a clear attempt to "make Taiwanese people feel a certain degree of self-restraint in their speech and political expressions," hoping to replicate the suppression methods used in Hong Kong.

Beijing imposed a national security law on the former British colony in 2020. A large number of pro-

democracy figures, dissidents and journalists have been arrested since then.

"Hong Kong is almost completely in a state of self-censorship over the past four years," Wu said.

Chen, the Taiwanese politician sanctioned by Beijing, said that what China did to Hong Kong was "a very tyrannical approach."

"I think Taiwanese people will feel more aversion [towards Beijing]," if the same methods are applied to Taiwan, she said.

### Why the Panchen Lama Matters

09 July 2024, The Diplomat, Antonio Terrone

The Panchen Lamas and Dalai Lamas consider themselves "spiritual friends," but the relationship between the two figures and their communities has hardly been smooth.

The 11th Panchen Lama of Tibet, Chokyi Gyalpo, has been called many names in and outside China, including "fake," a "Chinese puppet," "Jiang Zemin's Panchen" and a "Chinese Panchen."

Many claim that his influence in Tibetan affairs is negligible. The reasons for these negative conceptions go back to the controversial way in which the People's Republic of China (PRC) selected him after disqualifying another boy that the 14th Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso had already recognized as the 11th Panchen Lama, Gendun Chokyi Nyima, because the process lacked the authority of the Chinese government.

The whereabouts of Gendun Chokyi Nyima have remained unknown since 1992.

Even so, dismissing the PRC-appointed 11th Panchen Lama Chokyi Gyalpo can be detrimental to the future of Tibetans in China and to the safeguarding of Tibetan cultural heritage. The wellbeing and interests of the Tibetan people in China depend not on forces and powers outside their land, but on those inside.

The two highest-ranking Tibetan lamas affiliated with the Geluk School of Tibetan Buddhism, which ruled Tibet prior to the invasion of the PRC, were the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama. For at least the past three generations, there have been tensions between them over jurisdiction, territory, and taxation. At the same time, these two lamas have maintained a tradition of recognizing each other's reincarnation. It is not hard to see, then, why the current Panchen Lama, Chokyi Gyalpo, is so important right now — Chokyi Gyalpo is 34 years old and the Dalai Lama will turn 90 on July 6, 2025.

If the 14th Dalai Lama officially recognizes the PRC-appointed 11th Panchen Lama Chokyi Gyalpo, this could break the nearly 75-year-old Sino-Tibetan standoff and could even pave the way for his return to Tibet. A rapprochement between the current

Panchen Lama and Dalai Lama could soften the Chinese government's hand in Tibetan areas, pacify restive movements among the Tibetan population in China, and offer some closure to long-standing traumatic events of the past decades. The Dalai Lama could follow the model set by Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh and return to his Communist-controlled homeland to live out his final days.

A Tibetan Buddhist Leader in China

Jetsun Lobsang Jamba Lhundup Chokyi Gyalpo Pelsangpo, or simply Chokyi Gyalpo (Ch. Queji Jiebu), was born Gyaltsen Norbu in Lhari County in the northern areas of the now Tibetan Autonomous Region in 1990 to parents from the pastoral region of Nakchu. His parents are members of the Chinese Communist Party and first met at a local test-prep school in 1986.

After the Chinese government decision to disqualify the Dalai Lama's recognition of Gendun Chokyi Nyima as the 11th Panchen Lama, a government-approved Tibetan delegation led by a senior Gelugpa monk, Sengchen Chokyi Gyaltsen (1936-1998) searched for potential candidates. In 1990, in the presence of the Tibetan Autonomous Region Government Chairman Gyaltsen Norbu, State Councilor Luo Gan, and Ye Xiaowen, head of the State Council National Religion Affairs Bureau, Sengchen Chokyi Gyaltsen extracted the name of Chokyi Gyalpo from a short list of finalist candidates contained in a Golden Urn officially proclaiming him the 11th Panchen Lama of Tibet. The Chinese government bestowed upon Chokyi Gyalpo the responsibility of representing his fellow Tibetans and the Chinese government's interests in the betterment of Sino-Tibetan relations.

Since his early years, Chokyi Gyalpo has lived in Beijing, where he received a religious education in accordance with the Gelugpa tradition as well as a secular education, which included Mandarin Chinese, Chinese history, and Marxist-Leninism theory. Most of his studies were carried out at the Tibetan Advanced Buddhist Academy of China, which his predecessor the 10th Panchen Lama Chokyi Gyaltsen established in Beijing in 1987.

Presently, Chokyi Gyalpo enjoys the highest Tibetan Buddhist clergy leadership rank in the People's Republic of China. He has direct access to Xi Jinping, the president of the People's Republic of China, and benefits from warm relationships with the Chinese Government and the large Chinese Buddhist community.

Just like his immediate predecessor, the current Panchen Lama is fluent in Mandarin Chinese, knowledgeable about Chinese politics and world affairs, and highly erudite in Buddhist doctrine and philosophy. Additionally, his cooperation with Chinese authorities is in line with his predecessor's

regarding policies to prioritize education among Tibetans, Sinicize Tibetan Buddhism, protect Chinese territorial integrity, support the Chinese Communist Party, and deter separatist activities that disrupt interethnic harmony.

Nowadays, in his capacity to represent the interests of Tibetans and following the footsteps of his two predecessors, the young Panchen Lama is allowed to join high profile meetings and participate in national political conferences, thus gaining familiarity with state affairs and diplomacy firsthand. In 2010, he personally welcomed Singapore Foreign Minister George Yeo to the PRC. On June 10, 2015, Xi held a formal audience with the 11th Panchen Lama of Tibet in Zhongnanhai, the palace that serves as the headquarters of both the Chinese Communist Party and central government of China. Chokyi Gyalpo travels domestically and internationally (he visited Bangkok, Thailand, in 2019) to give speeches and offer spiritual teachings to Buddhist devotees. According to Tibetan Buddhist customs, he bestows blessings to devotees, grants audiences, offers teachings, and performs various rituals for both monastic and lay communities. He frequently gives political talks, addressing the necessity for Tibetans to accept a Sinicized form of Buddhism in Tibet in line with Socialist values, the Chinese legal system, and the core principles of a modern society.

#### A History of Rivalry

Although criticized by many in the world, the close relationship that exists between the Panchen Lama and the Chinese government should not be a surprise. Both previous Panchen Lamas, the 9th and 10th, were close allies of China under the Nationalist government (1911-1949) as well as the Communist government after 1949. They also had a controversial relationship with their respective Dalai Lamas, they lived and operated from China, had Chinese followings, and worked for the Chinese government. Just like his predecessor, the 10th Panchen Lama, Chokyi Gyalpo is a member of the Standing Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and vice president of the Buddhist Association of China, which is the top governmental organization in charge of handling Buddhist affairs in accordance with the Chinese law.

The two previous Panchen Lamas had interests incompatible with those of the previous Dalai Lamas, especially regarding the Panchen Lamas' control and management of their vast lands, taxation, and monastic administration in Central Tibet. They had a progressive agenda to modernize Tibet and welcomed political assistance and protection from China. They also lived out the end of their lives in Chinese cities, where they supported various

religious and political initiatives and commanded Chinese followings.

The Panchen Lamas and Dalai Lamas consider themselves "spiritual friends," but the relationship between the two figures and their communities of followers and supporters have hardly been smooth. Their rapport has been characterized by turbulence and rivalry for much of the past century. Just like the 11th Panchen Lama, the 10th Panchen Lama was not recognized by the 14th Dalai Lama right away. The nomination of Gampo Tseten, the boy who later became the 10th Panchen Lama, was supported by the 9th Panchen Lama's monastery search committee and the Chinese Nationalist government of the Republic of China, but not by the Dalai Lama, who had another candidate in mind. Although the young Gampo Tseten was officially enthroned as the 10th Panchen Lama at Kumbum monastery in the summer of 1949, the Dalai Lama reluctantly conceded his recognition only several years later.

#### Reconciliation and Cooperation

As the Dalai Lama ages, journalists and analysts around the world speculate about the future of the institution of the Dalai Lama and the fate of Tibetans. In 2010, the Tibetan delegation paused its work with the Chinese government and talks have not reopened since.

For his part, the 11th Panchen Lama continues to build confidence among the Tibetan population in China to increase their welfare and prosperity. His influence could be substantially improved with the Dalai Lama's official support on his side, and his recognition as the legitimate Panchen Lama. If the Dalai Lama succeeded in opening a dialogue with the Panchen Lama to understand his vision and acknowledge his leadership in China, the Dalai Lama may have the chance to improve Sino-Tibetan relations, Tibetans' quality of life, and the safeguarding of the Tibetan language and culture. This could also help curtail the possibility of violent reactions to the future news of the passing of the Dalai Lama.

The traditional role of the Panchen Lama as a key figure in recognizing the incarnation of the Dalai Lama is well known among Tibetans and the Chinese officials alike. The 14th Dalai Lama and the administration in exile could opt to continue the tradition of finding the next incarnation. However, it is extremely improbable that the Chinese government will allow the next incarnation of the Dalai Lama to be found within Tibetan areas of the PRC without the authority of the Chinese government. It is also very likely that the Chinese government and the Tibetan leadership within China will decide to select and recognize the Dalai Lama's successor in accordance with their own standards and laws, and with the participation of the current 11th Panchen Lama.

## A Path Ahead?

The Dalai Lama has tried for decades to cultivate dialogues with Beijing, with limited success. However, there are a few final options he could pursue. The Dalai Lama could offer to formally accept and confirm Chokyi Gyalpo as the legitimate reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama. He could offer to cooperate with Beijing in the selection of his successor as the 15th Dalai Lama, if such a path is agreed upon. If these actions were to succeed, they would have considerable power to bring benefit to both parties. The Dalai Lama would be appreciated for acting responsibly and peacefully, while Beijing would have to seriously consider accommodating some of the Dalai Lama's wishes to improve the wellbeing and safeguard the cultural heritage of Tibetans in China. The Dalai Lama could even garner some leverage with Beijing to disclose information about and negotiate the release of Gendun Chokyi Nyima and his family. By recognizing the 11th Panchen Lama, the Dalai Lama would send a message to all Tibetans that it is time to move on, accept the situation, and welcome the 11th Panchen Lama as a legitimate leader acting in the interests of Tibetans.

Finally, the Dalai Lama could consider negotiating with Beijing for a possible return to Tibet to live his last years there, as Thich Nhat Hanh did in Vietnam. Considering the profound influence Hanh's Buddhist-inspired peace activism has had on him, the 14th Dalai Lama could model his final act on that of the Vietnamese Buddhist teacher, who passed away at Tu Hieu Temple in Vietnam at the age of 95 in 2022. The socially and politically active Hanh campaigned extensively in the 60s both in his country and abroad for a peaceful solution of the war in Vietnam. He reluctantly opted to live a life in exile in 1966, the year he publicly announced his "Five Point Proposal to End the War," fearing reprisals and incarceration or even worse murder upon his return to his country. Despite that fear, however, toward the very end of his life he returned to Vietnam in 2019, ending his exile and fulfilling his wish to be in his homeland. If the Dalai Lama followed Hanh's lead and returned to live out his final days in Tibet, he too would be able to rest in the land of his people and bring closure to his long exile. Tibet is now part of the PRC, but it is still Tibetans' ancestral land, and it could be spiritually supervised by a Panchen Lama under the blessing of his "spiritual friend" the Dalai Lama.

## Tibet embodies larger issues of religious freedom in Asia

09 July 2024, UCA News, Ben Joseph

The silence of world religious leaders on Tibetan Buddhism needs to end

Xi Jinping was a toddler when the 14th Dalai Lama was received by Chinese Chairman Mao Zedong in Beijing in 1954. The Dalai Lama had a special love for Jinping's father Xi Zhongxun, a politburo member of the Chinese Communist Party, and gifted him a Rolex watch.

The Tibetan spiritual head, now 89, gives sleepless nights to the 71-year-old Communist Party supremo, holding on to the theory of incarnation followed by ritualistic Tibetan Buddhism, a branch of the world's first proselytizing religion.

Tibetan Buddhists believe the Dalai Lama, at the moment of his death, will pass his spirit on to another human body, and that person will be reincarnated as the next Dalai Lama.

The Chinese Communist Party is looking to control the next Dalai Lama, the highest spiritual head under Tibetan Buddhism, to legitimize its 1950 occupation of Tibet, a remote land in the world's largest and highest plateau far removed from the banes and boons of tech-powered modernity then.

The Chinese Communist Party hijacked the whole process of finding a successor to the Dalai Lama by handpicking the Panchhen Lama, the second highest authority in Tibetan Buddhism after the Dalai Lama. The Panchhen Lama plays a significant role in naming the next Dalai Lama.

The current Dalai Lama recognized Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as Panchen Lama in May 1995. But three days later the Chinese government kidnapped the six-year-old boy and took his family into custody. The Chinese government also named Gyaincain Norbu as the Panchen Lama.

Most Tibetan Buddhists have rejected Norbu, but Nyima has never been seen publicly after he went missing in 1995.

The previous Panchen Lama (Lobsang Trinley Lhundrup Choekyi Gyaltsen) spoke out against Chinese rule in the 1960s. He died in suspicious circumstances in 1989 after spending more than eight years in jail.

China has already claimed the right to handpick the successor to the current Dalai Lama, whose birthday falls on July 6, and even enshrined this right into Chinese law.

To win over pastoral Tibetans, the Communist Party has pushed modern development activities. Reports show that tremendous changes have occurred in infrastructure due to the introduction of modern communications and information technology.

Under the ongoing 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25), China will invest US\$30 billion to expand big-ticket infrastructure on the ecologically sensitive Tibetan Plateau.

For over a decade, the Dalai Lama, currently based in Dharamshala in India, kept a low profile and an impossible peace with the Communist Party. This ensured that nations worldwide developed a more negative attitude toward the Dalai Lama and his government-in-exile.

By 2010, Western nations had almost abandoned the Tibetan cause after China began to make great strides in the global economy. Hollywood celebrities who once made a beeline to meet the Dalai Lama deserted one by one, citing a lucrative Chinese market.

China has reiterated that the next Dalai Lama must be reborn in Tibet and his successor must be approved by the Communist Party, which has raised many eyebrows in the US, which has passed three pieces of legislation on Tibet to seek a resolution to the China-Tibet dispute.

Though the US put the Tibetan issue on the backburner, the Biden administration revived it with the Resolve Tibet Act passed by Congress on June 12.

It authorizes the use of funds to counter Chinese disinformation about the Dalai Lama and urges China to engage in talks with him or his representatives.

The Resolve Tibet Act succeeds two acts that preceded it. After the Act was passed, the Dalai Lama underwent knee surgery in the US.

On June 18, a high-level bipartisan US congressional delegation, led by Foreign Affairs Committee chairman Michael McCaul, visited the Tibetan government-in-exile. The delegation included Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi, known for her controversial visit to Taiwan.

Will the international communities, their systems and world religions come to the rescue of Buddhism, the mother of all religions in the world?

Whoever becomes the next Dalai Lama is crucial for the existence of Tibetan Buddhism because that would decide the measure of people's freedom to practice their traditional religion in Tibet.

After the Dalai Lama dies, a search will begin based on signs such as the direction he was looking in when he died, the flow of the smoke when he is cremated, and visions seen on Lhamo Latso, the oracle lake in Tibet. While most Dalai Lamas trace their roots to Tibet, one was born in Mongolia and another in India.

Will the Dalai Lama name a successor, abolishing the centuries-old incarnation theory, to hoodwink China? That is likely to lead to a situation of two Dalai Lamas vying for legitimacy — one nominated by the Dalai

Lama and the one anointed by the Chinese Communist Party.

Even if the current Dalai Lama dies without nominating a successor, the situation is unlikely to change — there could be two Dalai Lamas — one selected based on the systems of the ancient religion (sans Panchen Lama) and one chosen by the communists.

The silence of world religious leaders on Tibetan Buddhism needs to end. The Communists Party's attack on Tibetan Buddhism is only a precursor to the future of other religions in China and other nations that could come under Chinese influence, particularly in Asia.

### **Jaishankar-Wang Meeting: Why normalcy in India-China ties is likely to stay elusive**

08 July 2024, The Indian Express, Manoj Kewalramani and Vanshika Saraf

Complete disengagement and de-escalation in Eastern Ladakh can provide a starting point for steps to be taken in other domains. Achieving this requires sustained and often frustrating dialogue at multiple levels to devise a roadmap of action

On July 4, India's External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar met with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meeting in Astana, Kazakhstan. The post-meeting readouts from both sides demonstrate the distance between their respective positions and why normalcy in bilateral ties is likely to remain elusive.

The MEA's readout is a restatement of India's established position that "complete disengagement from the remaining areas in Eastern Ladakh" and restoration of border peace and tranquillity are prerequisites to the restoration of normalcy in ties. In addition, the statement talks about respecting the LAC, abiding by relevant bilateral agreements, protocols, and understandings, and maintaining peace and tranquillity in the border areas. What it does not mention as a goal is the restoration of the pre-May 2020 status quo.

In contrast, the Chinese readout stresses on "properly handling and controlling the situation in the border areas" while simultaneously "actively restoring and expanding normal exchanges." On the surface, this doesn't appear to be particularly different from earlier messages from Beijing. However, it is worth noting that Wang did not stress that the border issue should be put in an "appropriate position" in bilateral relations and not define overall ties. What was also different was Wang's comment that China was willing to "explore the correct way for two major neighbouring countries to coexist," entailing the need to "respect,



understand, trust, and accommodate each other, and help each other succeed.” This is a different formulation from the earlier, oft-repeated one around the two sides not being threats to each other but opportunities for each other’s development.

Words are important. But actions are what truly matter. One must, thus, wait and watch whether Wang’s rhetoric materialises into tangible changes in Chinese policy, particularly around disengagement and de-escalation in Eastern Ladakh. That will be key to developing stability and predictability in the relationship, which is critical for both countries’ strategic ambitions. Unfortunately, without changes in Chinese policy, it would be strategically imprudent and politically difficult for the Indian administration to return to the normal track in ties.

India’s frustration with China is encapsulated in the framework of the three mutuals – mutual respect, mutual sensitivity and mutual interests – which Delhi wants Beijing to adhere to. The primary expression of this has been in the context of Chinese military posture along the LAC. But there are also concerns around China’s deepening engagement in the Indian subcontinent and lack of appreciation for India’s expanding interests and stake across East Asia and the Global South and within multilateral institutions. Xi Jinping’s decision to skip the G20 summit in New Delhi in 2023 was an example of this.

Meanwhile, from Beijing’s perspective, there is growing annoyance with a spectrum of Indian policies. For instance, India continues to resist the resumption of direct flights between the two nations despite Chinese calls for normalcy. The visa approval process for Chinese scholars, travellers and talents continues to be rather challenging, despite it, on occasion, adversely impacting Indian industry. Delhi has also taken a series of steps cracking down on Chinese imports and alleged illegal activities by Chinese companies. Late last month, India’s Directorate General of Trade Remedies initiated an anti-dumping probe on glass fibre imports from China, Bahrain and Thailand after complaints from domestic manufacturers. Delhi has also been cautious and selective when it comes to approving Chinese investments.

On the foreign policy front, China remains particularly wary of India’s growing proximity with the US. In fact, the Chinese readout of the Jaishankar-Wang meeting reflects this persistent anxiety, with the Chinese minister calling on his Indian counterpart to work together to “oppose unilateral bullying, resist camp confrontation, safeguard the common interests of developing countries, and make due contributions to regional and world peace, stability, and development.”

Beijing would have certainly noted, with some consternation, the recent comments by prominent RSS

leader Ram Madhav stressing that the rise of China calls for “greater understanding and coordinated action between the US and India,” the MEA’s remarks criticising the PLA’s actions in the South China Sea and the US Congressional delegation’s visit to Dharamshala.

Chinese officials, however, have chosen not to hype up any of these developments and lash out at India. Instead, the new Chinese ambassador, Xu Feihong, has been engaged in quiet diplomacy, meeting with key stakeholders, including Foreign Minister Jaishankar and former ambassadors. His statement condoling the deaths in the recent stampede in Hathras is also an example of softer public diplomacy from the Chinese side.

In sum, while the relationship between India and China will likely remain strained for the foreseeable future, there appears to be a faint crack in the door for some sort of a tactical adjustment. This will require meaningful actions by Beijing, and will not be easy given the political changes following the elections in India. Moreover, the underlying, structural issues are not likely to be easily addressed. Nevertheless, complete disengagement and de-escalation in Eastern Ladakh can provide a starting point for steps to be taken in other domains. Achieving this requires sustained and often frustrating dialogue at multiple levels to devise a roadmap of action. While continuing to prioritise its concerns on the border, India must not eschew such engagement.

### **Tibet back under the spotlight**

08 July 2024, ORF, Harsh V. Pant and Kalpit A Mankikar

The issue of Tibet is back onto the international centre-stage with the visit of a seven-member US Congressional delegation to Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh, this month to meet the Dalai Lama and members of the Tibetan government-in-exile. During the visit, former US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi lashed out at Chinese President Xi Jinping saying that the Dalai Lama’s contribution will live on in perpetuity while Xi Jinping will fade into obscurity. Pelosi had earlier made a trip to Taiwan, which China claims is a breakaway province, following which Beijing launched military drills around the island.

The American activism on Tibet comes close on the heels of the US clearing new legislation that pushes Beijing to re-engage with the Dalai Lama and elected representatives to resolve the standoff over Tibet’s future. The new law directs the US government to coordinate multilateral initiatives to bring about a negotiated settlement on Tibet. Importantly, it also stipulates funding by the US for the purpose of

countering disinformation spread by the Communist Party of China on Tibetan history and traditional institutions like the Dalai Lama.

The new law directs the US government to coordinate multilateral initiatives to bring about a negotiated settlement on Tibet.

India has also begun to recalibrate its policy on Tibet, albeit slowly, over the past decade. For his swearing-in ceremony in 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited the political head of the Tibetan government-in-exile, Lobsang Sangay, along with heads of state from neighbouring countries in South Asia.

The June 2020 clashes in Galwan were an important inflection point in relations between India and China, following which a tense standoff continues between the two armies along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) to this date. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) sent a senior representative to attend the funeral of a soldier from the Special Frontier Force (a clandestine unit comprising mostly Tibetans) who was martyred during military operations against the People's Liberation Army along Pangong Tso in August 2020. This was followed by Modi tweeting birthday greetings to the Dalai Lama in 2021.

In the current instance, the fact that the US delegation met Prime Minister Modi and foreign minister S. Jaishankar after the interaction with the Tibetan spiritual leader demonstrates that this was not a personal outreach by US lawmakers. The Indian foreign ministry also stated that the Dalai Lama was a religious figure and was at liberty to conduct his spiritual activities, while countering China's outburst over the Dharamshala interaction. This foray shows that there is close coordination between New Delhi and Washington on the issue of Tibet, thanks largely to convergent interests.

The 1951 Chinese annexation of Tibet led to the Dalai Lama seeking refuge in India. Over the years, China consolidated its hold over Tibet, resulting in the suppression of religious freedom there, and several Tibetans came to India as refugees, drawn by cultural affinity. The Indian government's Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy (2014) document puts the number of Tibetan refugees living in 45 settlements across the country at over 100,000 (as on 2009). Moreover, the government acknowledges that many Tibetans live outside these official settlements too. The Dalai Lama is revered by Tibetans and has acquired international stature. Given that the Dalai Lama is an octogenarian, the issue of succession looms large in the strategic calculus. As a large Tibetan population resides in India, there are apprehensions over how the community would be influenced in the future. Chinese propaganda has tried to smear the institution of the Dalai Lama, dubbing the current spiritual head a separatist. China

will seek to assert itself on the question of succession. There is significant global awareness of China's designs. The US Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020, cleared by the Donald Trump administration, stipulates that only those adhering to the Tibetan Buddhist faith must decide on the Dalai Lama's successor. Media reports suggest that the Indian government discussed the succession issue at the highest levels in 2021.

Chinese propaganda has tried to smear the institution of the Dalai Lama, dubbing the current spiritual head a separatist. China will seek to assert itself on the question of succession.

To conclude, Xi's rise and consolidation within China has led to the nation stoking territorial disputes with neighbours like India, Japan and Taiwan. However, China may not be left unscathed by its project to redraw borders. India okaying the US delegation's meeting with the Dalai Lama also bursts the notion that a reduced majority in the Lok Sabha may lead to greater caution in Modi's foreign-policy dealings. On the contrary, by replying to the greetings of Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te with respect to Modi 3.0, and reaffirming support to the Tibetan cause, India is pushing the envelope on China's red lines. Modi's decision not to attend the SCO summit this year in Astana was also aimed at avoiding a direct meeting with the Chinese leader.

The message from New Delhi seems to be categorical: If China does not respect India's sensitivities with respect to its core interests, India too should not be expected to be mindful of Beijing's red lines. And unless Beijing addresses India's core concerns on border clarity and national security, New Delhi is in no hurry to mend fences.

### **Tibet, not LAC, is the real issue**

07 July 2024, Deccan Herald, Seshadri Chari

America's Tibet policy under several presidents has been ridden with flip-flops. Trade and commerce with Beijing dominated the decision-making process, which was at the cost of security perils for countries in China's proximity, especially India.

The official US State Department X/Twitter account of the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs put out a tweet wishing His Holiness The Dalai Lama, "Happy 85th birthday to His Holiness @DalaiLama, who has inspired the world through his peace & kindness, and as a symbol of the struggle for Tibetans and their heritage. We thank India for hosting His Holiness and Tibetans in freedom since 1959 & wish His Holiness happiness", it read. In Beijing, officials were crowding over the tweet and discussing ways of damage control. The Xi Jinping dispensation has every reason to be worried.

America's Tibet policy under several presidents has been ridden with flip-flops. Trade and commerce with Beijing dominated the decision-making process, which was at the cost of security perils for countries in China's proximity, especially India. The human rights violations, mass killings of Tibetan Buddhist monks, self-immolations by senior monks and wanton destruction of holy relics and other historical records did not seem to draw the attention of the White House resident at crucial times. But in recent times, pro-Tibet voices and organisations have succeeded in highlighting the plight of Tibetans living in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and other areas annexed by China using brute force since the late 1940s.

Former US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi met with Dalai Lama in Dharamshala and strongly reaffirmed congressional support for the people of Tibet and spoke out against the China's oppressive human rights record. Her comment aimed at Xi Jinping – "Dalai Lama's legacy will live, you'll be gone" – has drawn sharp criticism from Beijing.

China's occupation of Tibet has not only made it our immediate neighbour but has seriously impacted our security on the western border, too, with Pakistan having gifted a big chunk of occupied land to China, thus severing our link with Central Asia. It is strategically imperative for New Delhi to not only regain Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir but also to re-establish our ancient trade route through Central Asia.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has outlined his government's priorities in the region and emphasised resolving the vexed India-China 'border issue' through dialogue and diplomacy. But seven decades of dialogue and diplomatic engagements have not made any difference to the hegemonic objectives and actions of Beijing. It is time to face this reality and amplify efforts to add ourselves as a force multiplier in the dynamics of regional geopolitics. That Prime Minister Narendra Modi skipped the SCO summit in Astana not only signals a downgrading of the forum in India's calculus, but also his proposed visit to Moscow adds a new dimension to India's policies and strategy for regional stability.

External Affairs Ministry officials would be well aware of a new Tibet-related bill introduced by prominent Republican and Democratic lawmakers and passed recently by the US House of Representatives. The 'Resolve Tibet Act', awaiting presidential assent, calls for enhancing US support for Tibet and "pushing for negotiations without preconditions between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama or his representatives or the democratically elected leaders of the Tibetan community." Besides empowering State Department officials to counter Beijing's disinformation on Tibet,

the US will work with likeminded governments and multilateral efforts to reject false claims of Tibet being a part of China since "ancient times".

The real issue between India and China is not the so-called Line of Actual Control and the settlement of the border dispute as much as it is about Tibet's freedom and its sovereignty. A large section of people in India would like to have a friendly relationship with China and conduct trade under normal conditions. But this can be best done with an independent Tibet as a buffer between the two countries. Beijing is not serious about resolving any of the several issues with India, perhaps because resolving them would then bring the Tibet issue between them front and centre. New Delhi should impress upon the international community that a free and independent Tibet is the only solution to many of the global and regional China-induced flashpoints that could emerge as major conflict zones.

### **World Tibet Day Special | Tibetan struggle is on an upward swing despite its ups and downs: Amb Dilip Sinha**

06 July 2024, First Post, Vimal Harsh

The struggle has received a shot in the arm with the visit of the bipartisan US Congressional delegation to Dharamshala, their meeting with PM Modi, and the Dalai Lama's US visit, says the author of 'Imperial Games in Tibet: The Struggle for Statehood and Sovereignty'

The issue of Tibet has been undeniable in the matrix of India-China relations and remains a textbook example of Red imperialism. Ever since communist China invaded the country of monks – beginning with the invasion of Chamdo, when the Chinese People Liberation Army crossed the Jinsha River on October 6-7, 1950, to the El Salvador-sponsored draft resolution requesting global support against Tibet's invasion in November 1950, to the 17-point agreement on May 23, 1951 – Lhasa appeared abandoned by all the major powers.

Historically, Tibet had a 'patron-priest' relationship with China and strong intellectual linkages with India. But nowhere in its history has Tibet lost its autonomous identity. And after the Xinhai Revolution and the fall of Qing, a Manchu-led imperial dynasty, Lhasa was a de facto sovereign polity.

With the rise of China, as an economic as well as geostrategic power, the West, which once accepted the 'one-China' policy merrily to meet its Cold War demands, has now started raising the issue of Taiwan and Tibet. As any objective analysis of history would second, Tibet has been the focus of 'Great Games', whether it might be the rivalry of British and Russian empires in the 19th century, the Cold War in the 20th century, or emerging US-China bipolarity.

Exploring these issues, a new book on Tibet has just come. *Imperial Games in Tibet: The Struggle for Statehood and Sovereignty* by former ambassador Dilip Sinha is an 'authoritative', 'lucid', 'rich', and 'impressive' analysis of the global geopolitical ambitions that have practically left the spiritual bastion to the mercy of the Chinese Red aristocracy. As we observe World Tibet Day on June 6, Amb Sinha answers some of the questions his book deals with.

Excerpts:

Q. Many people wonder if the Tibetan struggle for statehood and sovereignty is dying a slow death. Is this the case?

The Tibetan struggle has had its ups and downs, but far from dying, it is on an upward swing. It has received a shot in the arm with the visit of the bipartisan US Congressional delegation to Dharamsala, the meeting of the delegation with the Indian prime minister and the Dalai Lama's visit to the US.

Within Tibet, the struggle continues to be brutally repressed by China, but this itself is an indication of China's inability to win the hearts and minds of the Tibetan people. Currently, a million Tibetan children have been taken away from their homes and are being groomed in residential schools as Han Chinese, shorn of their own language, culture and religion. But the Tibetan people continue to resist their occupiers peacefully and stoically.

Q. The detailed analysis provided by the book helps readers gain a lot of information about China and Tibet. Don't you think the world, particularly Indians, should know more about them and their history, when these Asian giants have a disturbed frontier stretching for about 3,500 kilometres?

Yes. Indians need to know more about their largest and friendliest neighbour, Tibet, with whom they have very close historical ties. Tibet had long been an independent country. It was conquered by China in the eighteenth century, around the time Britain started its conquest of India. Early in the twentieth century, when Britain and Russia divided Central Asia between them, they agreed to keep Tibet as a part of the Chinese Empire, because neither wanted the other to seize it. Even when China's Qing dynasty collapsed in 1912, Britain and Russia refused to recognise Tibet's declaration of independence. When China invaded Tibet in 1950, Russia supported China and Britain stayed aloof, advising the US to do the same. This put the onus on newly independent India which was still struggling with the aftermath of the partition. India should have taken up Tibet's cause, at least diplomatically, and refused to recognise the annexation. But it didn't, and is now faced with a security nightmare on its northern border.

Q. Where do you think Tibet's case was lost, if it has been lost yet?

The cause is certainly not lost and will not be as long as the Tibetan people continue to resist Chinese rule. The refusal of the big powers to condemn China's invasion in 1950 was a serious setback for Tibet. But countries all over the world, led by India, have given shelter to Tibetans fleeing Chinese repression. Their support and the resistance of the Tibetan people will keep the cause alive.

Q. The book deals well with the kind of political ties Tibet historically had with China, but despite that, the passages show the strong ideational relationship that India and Tibet have shared in the past. Any comments from your side?

Tibet's ties with India have always been much closer than with any other country. It goes back even before Buddhism travelled to Tibet from India. Tibetans regard Nyatri Tsenpo as their first king. They believe that he belonged to a royal family related to the Buddha. Buddhism arrived in Tibet a few centuries later from India and its religious texts were translated from Sanskrit and Pali. India's ties became weak during the long period of Muslim rule in northern India. When the Nalanda university library was burnt by the invaders, its teachers and students rescued several books and took them to Tibet. There is thus a strong relationship of trust between the people of the two countries to come to each other's help.

Q. The book depicts Tibet as a victim of major powers; does that include India as well?

That is unfortunately true. Britain and Russia accepted Tibet as a part of China because they did not want the other to occupy it. The US helped Tibetans in the 1950s as part of its war against communism, but after the Sino-Soviet split it befriended China and ignored Tibet. Now that US-China relations are once again sour, the US is promoting the Tibetan struggle to weaken China.

India too attached greater importance to its relations with China than Tibet. In 1950, it wanted to lead, jointly with China, Asia's resurgence against European imperialism. It also felt that good relations with China would help in moderating Mao's aggressiveness and avert another world war.

Q. You have quoted BN Rau, India's then permanent representative to the United Nations, as saying that had Communist China been made a UN member, it would not have invaded Tibet. Now that the PRC is a member of the UN, do you think that this will act as an inhibitor to the Chinese designs in Ladakh, Arunachal Pradesh, or even Taiwan, for that matter? India was naïve in believing that if Communist China was allowed to take the China seat in the UN (held by the Kuomintang party, which had lost in the civil war and withdrawn to Taiwan) it would start

behaving responsibly and abandon its plans of attacking Tibet, Taiwan, Korea and other countries it claimed. Communist China did eventually become a member of the UN and a permanent member of the Security Council in 1971. Its first act was to veto Bangladesh's membership application to please Pakistan. Its aggressive policies abroad and repression at home continue unabated. Far from becoming more responsible, it has used its power to threaten its neighbours, repress its own people and support other dictatorial regimes.

### **Why the Himalayan Region Is Integral to a Rules-Based Order in the Indo-Pacific**

06 July 2024, The Diplomat, Jagannath Panda, Ryohei Kasai and Eerishika Pankaj

Chinese militarization and expansionism in the Himalayas remains a perennial concern not just for India, but for the United States – and its Indo-Pacific allies and partners.

In June 2024, former U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi minced no words in criticizing the Chinese government and President Xi Jinping for the persecution of Tibetans, including attempts to erase their culture. Pelosi was part of a U.S. delegation that met with the 14th Dalai Lama in Dharamshala, India, where he has been living in exile since he was forced to flee Tibet in 1959 after an uprising against China's repressive rule was brutally suppressed. China considers the Dalai Lama a dangerous separatist, and seeks to prevent all diplomatic contact with him.

Pelosi's acrimony went beyond empty rhetoric. Building on the U.S. Congress' "Resolve Tibet Act," passed only days before her visit to Dharamshala, she heralded stronger U.S. support for the Himalayan region, which China is trying to rebrand as "Xizang," the Mandarin term for Tibet. Her remarks have yet again brought to the forefront the fact that Chinese militarization in Tibet remains a perennial concern not just for India, but for the United States – and its Indo-Pacific allies and partners.

For China, Tibet is perhaps the most critical, but not the only, aspect of its growing Himalayan troubles. Most notably, China has a long-standing border dispute with India, which has kept getting more hostile since Xi Jinping came into power – recall the 2017 Doklam stand-off, the defining 2020 Galwan Clash, and the 2022 Tawang skirmish, to name but a few prominent contentions along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Concurrently, China has been pursuing its "salami tactics" strategy with the neighboring states, including the small land-locked nation of Bhutan. Then there is the question of China's increasingly

unsustainable, "debt-trap"-inducing Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which has already cast a dark shadow over economically weaker Himalayan states like Nepal and Pakistan. Most importantly, China's massive hydro-infrastructure constructions and upper-riparian-derived unilateral control of South Asian rivers that begin in Tibet have raised serious questions about the impact on Himalayan ecology and control of resources.

Against such an overall bleak scenario, will the latest Pelosi visit engender greater geopolitical awareness and considered responses, beyond the human rights questions, in the West about China's tactics? Importantly, can the Himalayas as a whole be featured as a primary focus of the Indo-Pacific strategies, not just as a byline to specific conflicts be it vis-à-vis India or Tibet?

Time to Talk About a Himalayan Liberal Rules-Based Order

Pelosi's remarks and meeting with the Tibetan Government in Exile evoke memories of her controversial 2022 visit to Taiwan, which intensified China's military maneuvers against the democratic island and precipitated the so-called Fourth Taiwan Crisis. Not just Taiwan, but most countries in the Indo-Pacific, including South Korea – where President Yoon Suk-yeol opted not to meet the then-U.S. House speaker – worried about the repercussions on the region's already fractious relations.

Yet that trip brought unprecedented global attention to Taiwan, whose democratic credentials weighed heavy against China's autocratic, disruptive rule, and the surrounding region, too. Such a tactic, in turn, has proved consequential for globally publicizing the Indo-Pacific's maritime concerns, including the South China Sea disputes. Greater awareness in the international media about the repercussions of Chinese interference in the Taiwan Strait or the South China Sea has further popularized the Indo-Pacific construct.

Yet much of the narrative has automatically assumed that a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific is primarily (and perhaps only) maritime in nature. This assertion is aided by the reality that the maritime trade routes would be directly affected by China's actions, in turn impacting European/Western security and prosperity.

Yet, were China to become the "Himalayan hegemon," the consequences would be dire. The interdependent nature of the security dilemmas means that a rules-based order in the Himalayan region is imperative for the stability, security, and prosperity of the Indian Ocean, South China Sea, East China Sea, and the Taiwan Strait.

A key reason why this connection has not yet been made as clearly is that the focus by the West on Tibet



has remained limited to the human rights aspect, highlighting it as the central cause of concern in the Himalayas. Without taking away from the criticality of the human rights question, it is important to also connect the human rights violations to China's broader geopolitical agendas in the Tibetan plateau, which need to be closely examined.

Such a lens is critical for trans-Himalayan and Tibetan studies, wherein geopolitics has often come second to human rights and environmental debates, often missing the connection between these issues as grander security narratives. For instance, with respect to the succession of the 14th Dalai Lama, few studies have looked at the geopolitics associated with succession politics, which will directly impact the bilateral relationship of countries across the world with China. This has meant that nations remain unprepared to deal with the strategic realities of such a question – a fact China relies on to work in its favor. More widely, issues of militarization and securitization in Tibet and adjoining areas, as well as weaponization of natural resources, need to be discussed in tandem with climate/ecological degradation and human security aspects in the Himalayas to preserve the Indo-Pacific's rules-based order.

Due to the interconnected nature of regional stability and security, the Himalayas are a critical strategic region influencing major geopolitical dynamics. Tensions here can spill over, impacting maritime and territorial disputes in the Indo-Pacific. A liberal rules-based order in the Himalayas ensures consistent principles of international law, mutual respect for sovereignty, and conflict resolution mechanisms. Without this, the broader rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific remains fragile and susceptible to power imbalances and regional conflicts. Therefore, integrating Himalayan security within the Indo-Pacific framework fosters comprehensive regional stability, enhancing the credibility and effectiveness of a rules-based international order.

#### Securitization of the Restive Himalayas

In the 2000s, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) launched its Western Development Strategy to offset the lack of economic growth in the western provinces, including the Buddhist-dominated Tibet and the Muslim-dominated Xinjiang, compared to the stupendous high-quality development in the eastern zones and the southern coast. Under this "Go West" policy, the Chinese government aimed its own funds, as well as foreign investment and development assistance in implementing the development of both coastal and inland areas, to replace perceived backwardness with modernization, including new infrastructure. Under Xi Jinping, large-scale development went on to incorporate eco-environmental protection ideals to further these aims

"to achieve common prosperity for all the ethnic groups of the western region" – but more specifically the goal was to consolidate the frontier regions, often at the expense of the ecological needs of the region despite environment protection promises. For instance, China's extensive modern-day mega-dam building that began with the construction of the Three Gorges Dam has already disrupted biodiversity, as well as caused droughts, floods, earthquakes, and massive displacement of people.

In the more than two decades since the launch of the "Go West" campaign, the Chinese government has doubled down its pursuit of these aims, which remain laced with empty rhetoric. The main intent is to exploit the region's abundant natural resources while building hard infrastructure to make civil-military logistics easier.

To securitize and militarize the areas, China has implemented unsavory measures such as resettlements, intrusive laws, internment camps, forceful induction into the People's Liberation Army (PLA), increased surveillance, and accelerated assimilation. Such tactics will not only help China's government repress separatist tendencies among minority groups and neutralize their own respective languages and cultures but also help fortify the regions around the Himalayas with infrastructure that can be utilized to expand territory.

Similarly, the unabated infrastructure development, including airports/helipads, highways, oil pipelines, rail networks, and reservoirs, aimed at improving land-sea linkages is mainly a tool to expand "dual-use" of infrastructure – that is, national security interests – in the garb of socioeconomic growth. For example, China's increase in railway construction in Tibet and "leapfrog development in general aviation" look to facilitate better access not just to neighboring provinces but also to land ports along the border areas for military purposes.

Already, the increase in stationed PLA troops and even nuclear weapons have raised concerns about the impact of hyper-militarization on the fragile Himalayan region. China has in the past been accused of "conducting nuclear-weapons research on the Tibetan plateau and dumping radioactive waste" and also of building an "immense military bastion with tactical missiles and intercontinental ballistic missiles."

Another vital geopolitical aim is to enable this region's active participation in the BRI, via initiatives such as the "Western Region Land-Sea Corridor" development announced in 2019. This would improve connectivity and integration between China's poorer, restive regions with both the well-to-do eastern and southern provinces and countries in Eurasia, Central Asia, and South Asia, as connected by the expansive BRI. Through avenues like the

“Himalayan Quad” China has sought to establish with South Asian countries Nepal, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, where Beijing has immense economic clout, it has sought to further the geopolitically motivated aspects of BRI into greater intent.

Similarly, China’s use of its position as the “upstream water hegemon” – with six major Asian rivers originating in the Tibetan Plateau flowing into nearly 18 downstream countries – has aimed at controlling access and prioritizing its own “water sovereignty.” China has a history of weaponizing water to achieve its national interests as seen, during Doklam clash of 2017 with India.

Furthermore, China has been indulging in rewriting Himalayan territorial borders, e.g., by issuing “standard maps” (e.g., showing India’s Arunachal Pradesh and the disputed Aksai Chin plateau as Chinese territory) and by expanding into Bhutanese territories. These moves call into question Xi’s stated aim of building a “community of shared future among neighboring countries.”

**Aiming Beyond Rhetoric**

Optimistically, one can hope that the latest round of support for Tibet in the U.S. Congress and the U.S. delegation’s visit to the Tibetan Government in Exile would usher in a new wave of international action and attention, including more foreign delegations, as happened with Taiwan in 2022. But more importantly, it should initiate a multiplicity of debates questioning not just China’s long-standing repressive actions – from unfettered territorial expansion and instability to overexploitation and access to natural resources – but also the international community’s tacit silence regarding Himalayan issues. For instance, the EU, which despite its focus on human rights in Tibet is only starting to recognize Chinese coercion globally, may also facilitate discussions in the European Parliament around the aforementioned Himalayan concerns with broader implications.

It is important to note that none of the major concerns regarding China in the Himalayas are new. For example, China has used Tibet and Xinjiang for nuclear bases since before 1964; the Tibetans have hence long worried about the militarization of the region. Old reports dating back to the 1980s highlighted how it is not just the Indian cities and industrial centers that are possibly within the range of China’s nuclear strikes, but also “all the major cities of Central Asia,” highlighting the interconnectedness of security debates.

Undoubtedly, in era of Chinese military modernization under Xi, the threat has only accelerated. For instance, satellite imagery in Bhutanese territory has confirmed China’s aggressive push to change the status quo in the Himalayas.

If the United States and democracies in Asia and Europe such as the EU states, India, and Japan, are

serious about the intent to preserve a rules-based order, then they must acknowledge that the threat from China is not limited to its so-called autonomous regions in the Himalayas or the neighboring states, but covers China’s multidirectional expansionism, which has been going on for years. Given the current sliding geopolitical landscape and Xi’s focus on achieving his “China Dream” goals, including national rejuvenation and integration, the Indo-Pacific democracies have no choice but to put impetus into examining and upending China’s attempts at sinicizing the Himalayan (dis)order.

### **India mum on environmental losses due to China’s Tibet policies: Academic**

05 July 2024, Deccan Herald

Anand Kumar pointed to China’s efforts to alter the courses of rivers originating in Tibet, seven of which flow through countries in South and Southeast Asia, under the guise of development. These actions pose significant environmental challenges for countries sharing natural resources with Tibet, he said.

Bengaluru: India, despite being the world’s largest democracy and a champion of anti-colonial struggles, has not responded strongly to Tibet’s environmental losses caused by Chinese encroachments, Anand Kumar, a sociologist and former professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, said here on Thursday.

Kumar made these remarks while delivering a talk on Indo-Tibet Relations, Tibetan Plateau, and India’s Climate Security at an event organised by Mount Carmel College in collaboration with the Central Tibetan Administration, South Zone, Bengaluru.

He pointed to China’s efforts to alter the courses of rivers originating in Tibet, seven of which flow through countries in South and Southeast Asia, under the guise of development. These actions pose significant environmental challenges for countries sharing natural resources with Tibet, he added.

Environmental activist Soumyadeep Datta also addressed the lack of substantial regional language resources on Tibet’s history of struggles, contrasting it with the vast resources in English. He called for including the histories of neighbouring countries in Indian curricula to underscore the impact of global warming, particularly on regions like Tibet.

Datta further said vast stretches of India’s northeastern states are grappling with environmental degradation.

The discussions were part of the celebrations marking the 89th birthday of the Dalai Lama and included traditional prayers by Buddhist monks from Mundgod and a cultural dance performance by Gangjong Doegar, a troupe from Kalimpong, West Bengal.

## **Sino-Indian Conflict Is The Centerpiece Of India's Foreign Policy – Analysis**

04 July 2024, Eurasia Review, P.K. Balachandran

Jaishankar-Wang Yi agree to resume dialogue over border peace on the side lines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit in Astana, Kazakhstan on July 4

The relationship between India and China has been fraught from the time of India's independence in 1947 and the birth of the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. But it was not the centre piece of India's foreign policy until much later.

Today, it is the main concern in policy making circles in New Delhi. Besides it is impacting countries in India's neighbourhood and causing resentment there. The conflict also shapes India's relations with world powers.

Recent moves in India's foreign relations stem from the antagonistic Sino-Indian relationship: Within days of assuming office as Prime Minister for a third time, Narendra Modi flew off to Italy to fraternize with the leaders of the anti-Chinese Western bloc at the G7 summit.

On June 19, to China's chagrin, India facilitated a meeting between a US Congressional delegation and the dissident Tibetan leader, the Dalai Lama, in Dharamshala.

Modi chose to be absent himself from the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in Kazakhstan on July 4. China happens to be one of the founders of the SCO. In all likelihood, Modi will stay out of the BRICS summit in Kazan (Russia) on October 22 also. China is a founder-member of BRICS and a leading player there.

India has made a number of anti-Chinese moves both in the Indian economy and India's neighbourhood. In the domestic sphere, it banned Chinese apps accusing them of snooping on Indians. It imposed high tariffs on imports from China. Chinese companies were banned from participating in highways, micro, small and medium industrial sector projects.

Applications for investments in the e-commerce and financial services sectors were viewed with suspicion. Steps were taken against money laundering and tax evasion. All this led to US\$ 6 billion in potential Chinese FDI being held up in 2022.

In India's neighbourhood, steps were taken to dissuade governments from giving projects to the Chinese, in some cases successfully. Neighbouring countries felt uncomfortable about being a venue for Sino-Indian tussles. International forums also saw India and China battling it out on one issue or the other.

China's Provocations

On February 4, 2022, government told parliament that China was in illegal occupation of about 38,000 sq.km of in Ladakh for the last six decades. Chinese troops killed 20 unarmed Indian soldiers at Galwan in Ladakh in June 2020.

China claims sovereignty over the entire Indian State of Arunachal Pradesh and gave new names to places in that State irritating India.

Chinese President Xi Jinping did not attend the G20 summit in India in September 2023, although it was Indian Prime Minister Modi's prestige project.

In 2008, China blocked India's entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). It also blocked its entry into the UN Security Council as a permanent member. China has blocked India's bid to sanction terrorists at the UN. In short, China is loath to give India quarter in the multilateral sphere.

Relevance of Sino-US Relations

Writing for the Carnegie Endowment website, Former Indian Foreign Secretary and Ambassador to China, Vijay Gokhale, says that China judges India's actions from the stand point of its relations with the US.

From the 1940s, the Chinese have never seen India as an independent country with a foreign policy independent of the West. India has no independent status in China's policy landscape. India matters to China only to the extent that it has a role in the Sino-US conflict.

According to the Chinese, the signing of foundational agreements between the Indian and US armed forces in 2023 meant that India and the US were moving towards an alliance, disturbing the balance of power between China and the US.

Gokhale quotes Ye Hailin of the National Institute of International Strategy in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences to say that China is convinced that India would lean to the US to derive benefits and that China would inevitably be the target of a joint Indo-US "China containment plan."

Line of Actual Control Issues

According to Gokhale, the escalating tension on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) on the Sino-Indian border since 2013 has to be seen from the Chinese perspective to understand why China is troubling India so frequently.

According to a recent study by Ms Ketian Zhang, Assistant Professor at George Mason University, China uses mild coercion on the LAC to warn India not to go for an all-out war with China.

Ms. Zhang submits that India's cooperation with the US has not yet reached a level that can compel the US to support India in case of a war with China, and that China's current strength and level of coercive actions along the LAC are adequate to unsettle India without provoking a serious backlash or full scale war.

In Gokhale's understanding, China regards India as being "unequal" to it, and therefore "unworthy" of being looked at as a stand-alone or independent power.

India becomes relevant to China primarily in the context of great power relationships, especially US-China relationship.

China expects India to treat China's concerns as "global" and therefore requiring immediate attention. It wants India to regard its own concerns vis-a-vis China as "localized problems" that should be managed bilaterally. In other words, India should be satisfied that China is not making these problems worse!

According to Gokhale, China's leaders believe that the nature of India's polity as well as the asymmetry of power between the two countries do not require China to reshape its policy in a way that meaningfully accommodates Indian interests.

However, paradoxically, the Chinese think that India will never formally become a US ally. They also think that the US will not get directly involved militarily in a India-China war because this will be an intolerable burden.

There is also the view in China that India is hesitant to play the role of a junior ally of the US because it has a long tradition of pursuing a non-aligned foreign policy.

According to Ms. Zhang, even QUAD has not changed China's view that the US and India will not form a military alliance. She therefore says that the probability of a geopolitical backlash to the continuance of the current level of coercion on the LAC, or even some increase in it, will be low.

**China Underestimates India**

In Gokhale's view, China is under-estimating India's potential. India is also building up its economy and its military power and is sticking to its stand on the border issue and normalization of relations.

China wants the border issue to be put on the backburner and the two countries to work on trade, economic cooperation at the bilateral and multilateral levels. But India insists that there can be normal bilateral relations until the situation on the border returns to normal, which means going back to the positions and the agreed conditions of engagement as of 1993. But China does not want to go back to the 1993 agreements.

**War Unlikely**

However, both sides seem to rule out an all-out war of the 1962 kind. In a TV interview, Indian Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar ruled out war saying it would be difficult to take on a country whose economy is five times that of the Indian economy.

War or even a big increase in Sino-Indian tension will result in China losing the big Indian market for its telecom, machinery and electronic goods sectors.

China's share here in this is 30%, according to the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI). Bilateral trade is now US\$ 118 billion

**Jaishankar-Wang Yi meeting in SCO Summit**

The Foreign Ministers of India and China, S. Jaishankar and Wang Yi, met on the side lines of the SCO summit at Astana in Kazakhstan on July 4 and agreed that "the prolongation of the current situation in the border areas is not in the interest of either side."

Jaishankar highlighted the need to redouble efforts to achieve complete disengagement from the remaining areas in Eastern Ladakh and restore border peace and tranquillity in order to remove obstacles towards return of normalcy in bilateral relations.

He reaffirmed the importance of fully abiding by relevant bilateral agreements, protocols, and understandings reached between the two Governments in the past.

The Line of Actual Control must be respected and peace and tranquillity in the border areas always enforced, Jaishankar told Wang Yi.

Wang Yi's response is not mentioned in the Indian read out.

However, both ministers agreed to continue and step up meetings of the diplomatic and military officials of the two sides to take forward their discussions to resolve the remaining issues at the earliest.

To that end, they agreed that the Working Mechanism on Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) should hold an early meeting.

### **Is integration of Tibetan schools in exile the way forward?**

03 July 2024, Phayul, Tsering Dhundup

Since the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1959 and the subsequent flight of Tibetan refugees to India, Nepal, and Bhutan, the provision of shelter and education for Tibetan children has been a pressing concern for the Tibetan government in exile. In these circumstances, schools emerge as pivotal institutions, serving as the bedrock for the preservation of Tibetan culture and language, the cultivation of knowledge, and more importantly, nurturing resilience within the community.

Over the next six decades, the Tibetan education setup saw four school institutions rise. The Central Tibetan Schools Administration (CTSA) established in 1961, which is now dissolved and part of the Sambhota Tibetan School Societies, Tibetan Children's Village (TCV) established in 1960, Sambhota Tibetan Schools Administrations (STSS) established in 1999, and Tibetan Homes Foundations (THF) established in 1963. These autonomous bodies

took up the mantle of educating Tibetan youth, collaborating closely with the Department of Education of the Tibetan government in exile, known officially as the Central Tibetan Administration.

However, present challenges cast a shadow over the future. It's an open secret that Tibetan schools are grappling with a dwindling Tibetan student population. Once vibrant hubs of learning, these institutions now find themselves at a crossroad, contending with declining enrollment and the resultant strain on resources.

#### Decline of Tibetan students in exile schools

The primary hurdle facing Tibetan schools today is the dwindling number of Tibetan students. The President of the CTA Penpa Tsering reiterated in multiple speeches the challenge of diminishing demography of Tibetan students faced by all the Tibetan schools, citing factors such as the declining influx of Tibetans from Tibet, the low annual birth rate in exile, and increasing migration to the West.

As of April 2024, enrollment figures in various Tibetan schools paint a concerning picture. In North India, STS Shimla, once boasting hundreds of Tibetan refugee students, has a total enrollment of 290 students, with only 32 Tibetans, 42 Himalayan students and 216 Indian students. For the year 2024 admission, only two Tibetan students were enrolled in the school. Sambhota Tibetan School in Mussoorie accommodates 382 students, among whom only 42 are Tibetan, 62 are of Himalayan descent and the rest are Indian students. STS Herbertpur has only 116 Tibetan students and the rest are Indian students out of 310 students in total. In East India, STS Kalimpong has 133 Tibetan students out of 365 students. STS Darjeeling has 119 Tibetan students out of 232 students.

Tibetan Homes School Gohrimafi in Rishikesh has seen a decrease in enrollment, with only 66 students compared to its previous count of 150. Gopalpur School in the Tibetan Children's Village has also experienced a significant decline in student numbers, dropping from 902 in 2020 to 629 in 2023. STS Dalhousie which used to be a senior secondary school has to close down because of fewer students. Currently, STS Dalhousie operates as a kindergarten and houses only 6 children.

The decline in the number of Tibetan students in North India is also concerning, with an average attendance hovering around a mere 10 per cent of the total strength. This downward trend is pronounced in north-Eastern Tibetan schools also, where the presence of Tibetan students dwindles to only 40 to 50 per cent of the total school students on average.

However, there is a stark difference in South and Central India, where Tibetan schools are experiencing a robust presence due to the cluster

Tibetan communities there. STS Mundgod has 80 Tibetan students out of 82. All of STS Mainpat's total strength of 46 students are Tibetans. STS Bylakuppe has 96 Tibetan students out of 112 students.

The diminishing number of students poses challenges to the functioning of these educational institutions. Several schools have already closed, including STS Poanta Sahib in 2021, STS Dalhousie and recently Lower TCV school in Dharamshala. Some are on the verge of closing like THF Gohrimafi in Rishikesh.

The number of Tibetan students enrolled in CTA-affiliated schools in India and Nepal has declined significantly, especially since 2008. From 2000 to 2023, enrollment fell by 39 per cent, from approximately 25,700 to 15,700. Additionally, from 2016 to 2023, the number of schools directly or indirectly affiliated with the CTA contracted from 71 to 66. To stabilise the student population, Tibetan educational institutions have admitted thousands of non-Tibetans from Himalayan communities that share the Tibetan Buddhist cultural heritage.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering while speaking to Tibetan Youth convention participants on July , 2024 in Dharamshala stated that "The Himalayan regions are developing rapidly, and soon they will establish quality schools within their communities. Once these schools are in place, families are likely to send their children there rather than to Tibetan schools".

Tsewang Rigzin, former Deputy Director of the Tibet Fund and co-author of the recently published article titled "South Asia's Tibetan Refugee Community Is Shrinking, Imperiling Its Long-Term Future," told Phayul that "In my opinion, the most pressing issue facing the Tibetan exile community today is the dwindling enrollment of Tibetan children in Tibetan schools, whether they fall under the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) or operate independently. This is a significant cause for concern, as the prosperity of the Tibetan exile community hinges on the strength and vitality of its institutions, such as the CTA and various other bodies. The primary workforce that sustains these institutions comprises the children who emerge from these schools".

Kashag's vision to streamline the exile educational institutions

The 16th Kashag's decision to streamline educational institutions reflects a multifaceted approach aimed at enhancing efficiency, coordination, and service delivery within the Tibetan education system. At the core of this vision is the decision to appoint Education Kalon as the Chairman for prominent institutions like Tibetan Children's Village (TCV), Tibetan Homes Foundation (THF), and Sambhota Tibetan Schools Society (STSS). This decision has sparked both commendation and controversy,



highlighting the complexities and challenges involved in restructuring educational governance.

Proponents of the decision argue that establishing uniformity in governance structures across these institutions will increase efficiency and coordination. By standardizing the appointment of the Chairman, the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) aims to create a more cohesive educational system. Additionally, the emphasis on aligning departmental roles and leadership underscores a commitment to addressing systemic inefficiencies within the education system.

However, critics raise concerns that centralizing the appointment of the Chairman under the Education Kalon may compromise the autonomy and independence historically enjoyed by these educational institutions. These institutions have operated with a degree of autonomy, allowing them to cater to the unique needs of their student populations. Consolidating power in the hands of the Education Kalon raises the risk of stifling innovation and local decision-making processes that have contributed to the success of these institutions in the past.

Speaking to Phayul, Sikyong Penpa Tsering justified the decision to centralize the chairmanship of prominent educational institutions, framing it as a necessary structural change aimed at improving service delivery within the Tibetan education system. "This is not necessarily a consolidation, it's more of structural change that we are trying to make to the institution....., when the structure is not right then the system becomes faulty. Traditionally the role of the education minister is to take care of all the autonomous institutions".

Tsering highlights the disparate arrangements within the governance of institutions such as Tibetan Children's Village (TCV), Tibetan Homes Foundation (THF), and Sambhota Tibetan Schools Society (STSS) as evidence of the need for reform. He points out that while the Education Kalon chaired the board of TCV, the chairmanship of THF was held by the Sikyong.

Meanwhile, STSS exhibited further complexity with two distinct boards; one chaired by the Education Kalon for schools directly managed by Sambhota and another chaired by the bureau representative in Delhi for schools formerly under the Central Tibetan Schools Administration.

This diversity in governance structures, according to Tsering, led to inefficiencies and inconsistencies in decision-making processes, hindering the effective delivery of educational services. By consolidating the chairmanship under the Education Kalon for all these institutions, Tsering claims to have established homogeneity in the governance structure, thereby simplifying decision-making processes and promoting

greater coordination and coherence across the educational system. However, it's crucial to critically assess whether centralization under the Education Kalon truly addresses the underlying challenges faced by these institutions.

While uniformity in governance structure may streamline administrative processes, it also raises concerns over the concentration of power and potential loss of institutional autonomy and issues arising due to consolidation of authority. Moreover, the extent to which this structural change translates into tangible improvements in service delivery remains uncertain and necessitates evaluation based on concrete grassroots assessment.

The idea of integration of schools

During an interview with phayul, Sikyong Penpa Tsering emphasized the need to integrate Tibetan schools to ensure their long-term sustainability aiming to streamline administration, enhance facilities, and optimize resources for students. Tsering acknowledged the complexity of school integration, highlighting concerns such as the dismantling of staff structures or the necessity of providing alternative employment if schools are closed down. He stated "In terms of integration of schools, there are lots of questions on how we have to do it, one of the ideas that I floated was can we do it zone-wise, starting from northeast because northeast doesn't have Homes schools and TCV school, it's all Sambhota sets of schools. We have to see how do we integrate the schools for sustenance of these institutions over the long run and then in Central North including District Sirmour with Tibetan Homes Foundations. In Himachal Pradesh, most of the schools are TCV schools and Ladakh is also TCV. So we have to resolve the issue by talking with each other about how to integrate the schools because integration is not an easy job, there is lots of detachment and if we close down one school the whole staff structure has to be dismantled or provide alternative employment of a golden handshake, the idea is to reduce the administrative cost and increase the facilities to the students."

Tsering further emphasized the importance of considering statistical data, particularly regarding the declining birth rates and subsequent implications for school enrollment. He stressed the need for strategic planning to address the evolving educational landscape, including the provision of adequate facilities for both students and teachers. "We have to keep the statistics in mind, there are only about 500 new births in a year, in the years to come we are looking at only about 6000 tibetan children from grade 1 to 12 if we look at the average. Considering these numbers, in the next 5 years who do we manage? How do we organise ourselves? How many higher secondary schools do

we need to be able to provide the right education with the right facilities even increasing the facilities for teachers if possible”.

He pointed out that schools like TCV face challenges such as administrative costs rising while student numbers decline. He urged proactive measures, warning of the increasing financial burden associated with delayed integration efforts. Sikyong Tsering advocated for the development of a comprehensive blueprint to guide the integration process over the next five to ten years. “TCV is seeing a huge challenge with so many schools, the administrative cost is going up and numbers of students are going down, they will have to strategize on how they want to do it or follow a complete structure that the education department and Kashag guides them to do it. The longer it takes to consolidate the schools, it’s going to be more miserable, it’ll cost a lot more drain on the finances. So before that happens, if we can develop a blueprint as to how things might change and what steps we need to take in the next 5 to 10 years for the complete integration of schools.”

Having the same concern as the Sikyong, Tsewang Rigzin, told Phayul “The consolidation of Tibetan schools is a necessary step due to the declining number of Tibetan students. Maintaining a larger number of schools is costly and inefficient if the student population is decreasing. This consolidation is more of a compulsion rather than a choice. In the early days, these schools had to look after and educate a large number of students, which was a challenging task. Nowadays, with fewer students, the focus should shift to improving the quality of education.

“Recent CBSE exam results have shown that Tibetan schools are performing well, but it’s important to remember that passing an exam requires only 33 per cent. If a student aspires to attend a good college, they need to achieve high marks. Therefore, focusing on the quality of education rather than the quantity of students is crucial”.

However, Tsering’s proposal to integrate schools zone-wise encountered technical hurdles, as highlighted by Tsering Dhondup, Director of the Sambhota Tibetan Schools Administration. Dhondup, told Phayul, citing concerns regarding the potential impact on funding: “If schools that are transferred from the Central Tibetan Schools Administration (CTSA) to Sambhota Tibetan Schools Societies, like STS Mussoorie and STS Herbertpur, were transferred to autonomous institutions like the Tibetan Homes Foundation (THF). Such transfers might jeopardize funding from the Indian government, which currently supports these schools. If schools in Himachal were to be looked after by TCV, there would be ramifications for schools like STS Shimla, which

currently receives funding from the Indian government”.

Dhondup also shared concerns about whether autonomous institutions would be willing to assume the responsibility of administering these schools. These technical and logistical hurdles underscore the complexity of implementing Tsering’s proposal. He further stated that “there have been two meetings between Sikyong and key stakeholders, including TCV, THF, and STSS, and no substantial decisions have been reached regarding school integration”. The meetings have brought to light the complexity of the issue and the need for careful consideration of technical, administrative, and financial implications.

What lies ahead

In light of the myriad challenges and transformations facing the Tibetan schools in exile, it stands at a pivotal crossroads, demanding thoughtful strategies and decisive actions for its continued existence and sustenance. The journey from the aftermath of the Chinese occupation to the present scenario, characterized by declining enrollment numbers and institutional restructuring, underscores the resilience and adaptability of the Tibetan community in exile.

The dwindling enrollment figures in Tibetan schools, particularly in the northern regions of India, raise urgent concerns about the sustainability of these institutions. Factors such as demographic shifts, migration patterns, and changing birth rates contribute to this complex issue, necessitating comprehensive interventions to reverse the downward trend. The closure of some schools and the impending risk faced by others underscore the gravity of the situation and the imperative for immediate action.

Amidst these challenges, Kashag’s vision to streamline educational institutions represents a bold step towards enhancing efficiency and coordination within the system. The decision to centralize the appointment of Chairpersons under the Education Kalon reflects an ambitious effort to standardize governance structures and promote coherence across educational institutions. While this move holds promise for administrative efficiency, it also sparks debates regarding the potential erosion of institutional autonomy and responsiveness to local needs.

Furthermore, the proposal to integrate schools zone-wise highlights the complexities inherent in such endeavours, ranging from logistical hurdles to financial implications. Despite the recognition of the need for strategic planning and proactive measures, the path forward remains fraught with uncertainties and technical challenges.

In navigating these complexities, it is imperative to adopt a holistic approach that balances the imperatives of standardization with the imperative of

preserving the unique identities and needs of individual institutions. Any structural changes must be accompanied by rigorous evaluation and consultation with stakeholders to ensure that they align with the overarching goal of providing quality education to Tibetan children in the exile set up.

### India playing Tibet card to prick China

03 July 2024, O Heraldo

In a rare visit, a delegation of American lawmakers visited Himachal Pradesh's Dharamshala this week to meet the Tibetan leader the Dalai Lama.

In a well-orchestrated convergence of mutual interests, the United States, the Tibetans in exile, and Indians with their nod to the visit came together to send a message to China. The message found its mark.

Shortly after the US delegation, comprising House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaul and Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi, began their engagements with Tibet's Government-in-Exile, the Embassy of China in India warned the United States to not "send the wrong signal".

Beijing's reaction highlights the sensitive nature of the Tibet issue in China-US relations.

The American lawmakers' visit to India was part of a broader effort to support Tibetan rights. They met the Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, in Dharamshala. The visit aligns with Washington's long-standing support for Tibetans and their cultural and religious practices, which have faced repression in China.

The US House of Representatives recently passed the Resolve Tibet Act, which aims to pressure China into resuming dialogue with Tibetan leaders. This dialogue has been stalled since 2010. The bill seeks a negotiated agreement on Tibet's future, addressing aspirations related to its historical, cultural, religious and linguistic identity.

China considers the Dalai Lama a separatist. The Dalai Lama, however, seeks genuine autonomy for Tibet rather than independence. Beijing insists on approving the Dalai Lama's successor to strengthen its control over Tibet.

The question that comes to one's mind is about what makes US diplomats for this sudden visit to India, meeting Dalai Lama at this point of time? At the same time, India must carefully analyse the repercussions of such sudden move.

The present meeting directly involves three countries: US, Tibet and India. While physically US is very far from the epicenter, Tibet is a part of China's main contenders; therefore, any physical clash will be between China and India. Sino-Indian border dispute is an ongoing territorial dispute over the sovereignty of two relatively large, and several smaller, separated pieces of territory between China

and India which are being claimed and counter claimed. Besides India being vulnerable in the India-China Northern border, threat from the eastern border through Myanmar and the Indian Ocean cannot be ignored. At the same time, India has to broadly see the issues of Tibet, Taiwan, Xinjiang, Hong Kong - from their perspectives - that combine the kind of broader view that India has to take.

Besides, direct dispute between China and India on the Tibet issue will call for direct conflict, whereas US has no physical stake but only a political one.

While it is also difficult to fathom at what level the US-China relationship will get ignited in case of Tibet issue, conflict with Taiwan is going to be a major issue in worsening the US-China relationship. In case of US getting directly involved in the China-Tibet issue, it is likely to compound Sino-China issues too.

India has also initiated a strategic response to China's renaming of places in Arunachal Pradesh by planning to rename over two dozen places in Tibet. This move comes as part of a broader effort to counteract China's territorial claims and assert India's own historical and geographical narratives. India aims to assert its own narratives and strengthen its position on the global stage.

It is a warning shot for China and its president Xi Jinping. India is essentially signaling to China that play-time is over. The scare of falling out of line vis-à-vis the 'One China Policy' is over. One-sided bullying will no longer be allowed being the norm. China can no longer rename Indian villages and expect New Delhi to sit by idly. The rules of engagement have changed.

It was about time India let China know that it too can press some of Beijing's raw nerves. While caution is advisable, it is refreshing to see India demonstrate the ability to play the game as an equal power. Bullying tolerated beyond a point is as good as submission. As a side note, it is surprising to watch the US takes up the issue of Tibet's autonomy so aggressively.

By allowing the US delegation to not just visit Dharamshala but also meet the Dalai Lama, the Indian government has made it clear it can also play the Tibet and Taiwan cards at a time and place of its choosing.

However, to achieve such a balancing act, India must strengthen its economy and the defence sector very powerfully. After immense provocation, if China responds with aggression, India should be able to ward off the threat.

03 July 2024, Lt General M K Das

"His Holiness Dalai Lama, with his message of knowledge, tradition, compassion, purity of soul and love, will live a long time and his legacy will live forever. But you, the President of China, you'll be gone and nobody will give you credit for anything."  
–Nancy Pelosi, former US House Speaker

A 7-member US Congressional delegation, led by House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaul, which also included Nancy Pelosi, former US House of Representatives Speaker visited Dharamshala (HP) and New Delhi from June 16 to 20, 2024. The visit of the delegation to Dharamshala, the home of His Holiness Dalai Lama on June 18-19 assumes significance from the foreign policy perspective on Tibet. The powerful delegation from the US called on HH Dalai Lama on June 19. The visit comes after the US Congress recently passed the Resolve Tibet Act. It would become a law once the US President Joe Biden formally signs and approves it. The visit was a clear message for China after China strongly objected to the visit of the US delegation by urging the US to "fully recognise the anti-China and separatist nature of Dalai clique and refrain from any contact with it." We need to understand the background of this important issue which also has serious implications on Indo-China relations. Tibet is often called the "roof of the world" and it is a high-altitude plateau and mountain region with an average height of 14,000 feet.

Located to the south-west of China, this massive area of 25,00,000 square km is bordered by Nepal, India and Bhutan to its south. Before 1950, it was a remote area and it was an autonomous region. China gained Independence on October 1, 1949 and immediately staked its claim over Tibet citing ancient linkage with the region. China forcefully annexed Tibet in 1951 and since then it has been under the administration of People's Republic of China (PRC). After the Tibetan uprising in 1959, the spiritual leader of Tibetans had to flee to India and HH Dalai Lama established a Tibetan government in exile in Mussoorie on April 29, 1959 and thereafter it shifted to Dharamshala in 1960. Though India recognised Tibet to be part of China in 1954 itself, the existence of Government in exile in India has not been taken kindly by it. The One China Principle of China maintains that PRC and the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has sole legitimacy over Tibet, Hongkong and Taiwan. On the other hand, One China Policy of US accepts Tibet and Hongkong to be under the PRC and the US officially has no diplomatic relations with Taiwan. But the US has supported the call for genuine autonomy for the

Tibetans from the autocratic China. In pursuance of this stated policy, the US Congress passed the Resolve Tibet Act in June 2024 to enhance US support for Tibet and promote dialogue between China and Dalai Lama.

As expected, China has reacted very strongly and has asked the US to shelve the bill. US and China share a tumultuous relationship when it comes to democratic and just rights of the Tibetans. But the timing of the act is interesting. Modi 3.0 Government has assumed power on June 9, 2024. The elections for the US presidency are due in November this year and championing the cause of democracy in Tibet does benefit President Biden in his reelection bid. Another way of looking it may be US reshape the One China Policy and leverage more from China in the next term. The US can afford to annoy China below the threshold of diplomatic tolerance at least till the formation of the new Government. The US delegation also met Prime Minister Modi and officially the meet was to congratulate Mr. Modi on winning the third term in office as also further strengthening Indo-US relations. India also reaffirmed its support to HH Dalai Lama in his position as the spiritual leader of the Tibetans to conduct "his religious and spiritual activities." Though this has been the public position of India, the timing of the visit of the US delegation would have China thinking. Compared to the US, these developments pose much serious Tibetan dilemma to Indian foreign policy mandarins. With the situation in and opposite Eastern Ladakh not having changed much after the Galwan crisis of June 2020 in the last four years, any further aggravation of the situation elsewhere is something we can ill afford as of now.

Therefore, our response has to be carefully calibrated in tune with the ground realities. Given the advanced age of HH Dalai Lama (89 years) and his failing health, the key issue would be his 15th successor to the Tibetan heritage. China certainly would like to have a successor attuned to their thought process. The US has said that it would not accept a Beijing-appointed Dalai Lama. India would have to tread carefully here. One thing is sure. China is going to react very strongly if they fail to appoint the successor and may be President Xi Jinping would try to prove Nancy Pelosi wrong. The critical decision from the foreign policy perspective would be India's stance on continuing with the Tibetan government in exile functioning from India. While we may continue to support the just rights of the around 70,000 Tibetans living in India, the US should be offering the Tibetans a government in exile on their soil. That would give some seriousness to the much touted Reshape Tibet Bill/Act. Based on how the 15th Dalai Lama is enshrined, India's foreign policy must have the options ready. One obvious option is to settle

border dispute with China and their claim over Arunachal Pradesh. Militarily, while we improve our strategic relations with the USA, in a conflict with China in the immediate or mid-term, the Americans won't be of much help. With a majorly Russian origin military hardware with Indian Armed Forces, it would take decades and a huge dollar bill to have compatible arsenal. The only option is to quickly become 'Aatmnirbhar' and our defence industry has to match up to this challenge. The defence infrastructure projects have also to be pushed further. Modi 3.0 Government may have to confront the Tibetan dilemma in its third term. While we should continue to support the Tibetan cause as inherited, the future beckons a more pragmatic response, not necessarily bound with the existing moral dilemma.

### **Boycotting Xinjiang cotton: What does it mean for environmental and labor justice in Central Asia?**

03 July 2024, Global Voices, Shahida Yakub

In recent years, the international community has boycotted cotton sourced from Xinjiang, a vast region in northwestern China, due to concerns over human rights violations. Under the leadership of Chinese President Xi Jinping, Beijing has subjected Xinjiang's Muslim minorities to arbitrary detention and forced labor. Some global cotton buyers, in response, have turned to other regions to fulfill cotton demands.

The boycotting of Xinjiang cotton has created something of a ripple effect in other parts of the world, where cotton harvesting is associated with environmental challenges and human rights abuses. One of the most glaring examples of this is Uzbekistan, where cotton production contributed to one of the biggest environmental catastrophes in the world, the drying out of the Aral Sea, as well as decades of forced labor practices.

The Xinjiang cotton industry under scrutiny

Situated in northwestern China and bordering Central Asia, Xinjiang is home to approximately 12 million Uyghurs, a Turkic-speaking ethnic group that is predominantly Muslim. The region began to see large-scale cotton production in the 1950s when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) placed its economy under the control of a paramilitary institution known as the Production and Construction Corps (or bingtuan 兵).

Researchers and human rights organizations have found that the Bingtuan forced members of local communities and prisoners – potentially more than half a million people – to work in mining, construction, manufacturing, and cotton harvesting under harsh conditions. Today, Xinjiang is pivotal in China's cotton production, accounting for over 85

percent of the country's output and 20 percent of the global supply. The Bingtuan is still responsible for around one-third of Xinjiang's cotton production.

The cotton industry in Xinjiang has historically relied on manual picking. Despite the Chinese government's claims of significant progress in machine harvesting, 60 percent of cotton harvesting in southern Xinjiang, remains a manual effort, according to Chinese state media and government statistics. In recent years, human rights organizations and international news media have uncovered evidence of systematic forced labor programs that coerced Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities to work in cotton fields and factories.

According to Chinese state media, the cotton textile industry in Xinjiang employs close to a million workers, although Beijing denies allegations of forced labor. These labor programs are part of Beijing's broader strategy to maintain political stability in Xinjiang, international organizations say. The US government first banned Xinjiang cotton imports before subsequently passing a law to ban nearly all imports from the region in 2021. Brands like Nike, H&M, and Burberry have also publicly severed ties with Xinjiang cotton suppliers – moves that drew condemnation and boycotts from Chinese consumers.

This widespread international backlash has not only affected Xinjiang but also led to scrutiny of the cotton supply chain worldwide, as nations and companies reevaluated their dependencies on China.

Shifting tides of cotton sourcing

In recent years, many industries including textile and clothing have shifted operations from China to countries like Vietnam, Bangladesh, and Turkey, in order to avoid increased labor costs in China and the West's heightened regulatory scrutiny for Chinese products. However, paradoxically, in some cases, this increased demand for a more just cotton supply chain is exacerbating local environmental issues and worsening labor rights conditions.

Cotton is one of the most resource and labor-intensive agricultural commodities in land, water, and labor. In developing countries and regions, the cotton industry has long grappled with labor abuses and environmental issues, such as the depletion of water, soil contamination, and overuse of pesticides.

In Uzbekistan, Central Asia's top cotton producer, an estimated 60 percent of agricultural water is wasted yearly due to mismanagement and obsolete technologies. The country is also known for labor exploitation in cotton production. Since 2011 Uzbekistan's cotton products faced global boycotts because of the use of child and forced labor. Over 330 international brands and retailers supported this boycott. International pressure forced the Uzbek government to commit to



agricultural reforms and eradicating forced child labor during the cotton harvest, which resulted in the lifting of the boycott in 2022.

However, experts believe that the labor risks are still very high. In an interview with Global Voices, Umida Niyazova, director of Uzbek Forum for Human Rights, a non-governmental organization based in Germany said:

Uzbekistan is still not willing to change its anti-market rules of regulation of its cotton industry. The central government and local authorities are still operating on a quota basis, whereas every region of the country has to produce a certain amount of cotton and assigns land to farmers specifically to grow only cotton.

The persistence of this quota system and the associated administrative pressures became evident during a video conference wherein the Deputy Advisor to the President of Uzbekistan Shukhrat Ganiev directly threatened farmers: "I don't care what you do but you must deliver 11 thousand tons of cotton. Don't play with it, don't play – otherwise, it will end very badly for you and for the regional governor."

The lifting of the boycott on Uzbek cotton in 2022 coincided with sanctions being imposed on cotton from Xinjiang. Uzbek officials looked to take advantage of this situation, even as many textile brands were wary of partnering with Uzbekistan in light of its unresolved environmental and human rights violations. Brands' hesitation to move their production chain from Xinjiang to Uzbekistan didn't stop the Uzbek president from announcing his ambitious plans to turn his country into a textile hub and increase the production of yarn up to 100 percent by 2027. In order to stimulate this strategy, the Uzbek government intends to create textile production zones and release them from taxation until 2027.

Due to a combination of political, geographic, and social factors, Uzbekistan is especially vulnerable to the climate crisis, with environmental watchdogs ranking it 96th out of 181 countries in 2020 for climate risk. To mitigate this, Uzbekistan signed the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement in 2015, as well as the United Nation's Europe Protocol on Water and Health, which aims to protect human health and well-being through better water management. However, despite the pledges made by the Uzbek government, the lack of progress in agricultural reforms and tight control over farmers makes experts skeptical about the progress.

China was and still remains one of the key foreign investors in Uzbekistan. Since 2017, the scale of China's investments in the country increased fivefold and amounts to USD 11.1 billion, according to Uzbek

Minister for Trade and Investments, Laziz Kudratov. One of the key areas of China's investment is textiles and agriculture. Though partnership with China is hailed by the Uzbek government, human rights defenders are concerned about transparency in observing labor rights and care for the environment. In an interview with Global Voices, Umida Niyazova, director of the Uzbek Forum for Human Rights said.

When we talk about Chinese-owned textile factories or cotton clusters, we need to forget about any sort of advocacy. When we carried out our campaign to boycott Uzbek cotton, Western companies were signing up for this, but Chinese companies didn't care. They continued to buy Uzbek cotton and they didn't care about human rights violations or environmental justice. It would be much better if Western companies came to Uzbekistan, because they follow very strict regulations when it comes to labor or environment. We don't see this happening with Chinese companies.

### **Relocation Of Chinese Industries To Pakistan: Strategic Move For Economic Growth – OpEd**

03 July 2024, Eurasia Review, Sehr Rushmeen

In a significant development reflecting the strengthening ties between Pakistan and China, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has approved the relocation of Chinese industries to Pakistan as part of joint ventures between companies from both nations. This decision marks a strategic effort to bolster Pakistan's economy through enhanced foreign investment and industrial collaboration. The move is set to pave the way for increased economic activity, job creation, and technological transfer, positioning Pakistan as an attractive destination for global investors.

Chairing a meeting to discuss matters related to the Board of Investment (BoI), Prime Minister Sharif emphasized that promoting both local and foreign investment is a top priority for his government. He underscored the importance of creating a business-friendly environment to attract traders and investors. This initiative is seen as a step towards realizing the government's commitment to fostering economic growth and stability.

The prime minister directed relevant authorities to submit a comprehensive report on the follow-up of memorandums of understanding (MoUs) signed between Pakistani and Chinese companies in Shenzhen during his recent visit to China. This directive highlights the government's proactive approach in ensuring that agreements translate into tangible economic benefits.

In light of developments from his visit to China, Prime Minister Sharif called for a review of the draft law for the Special Economic Zones One-Stop Shop. The aim is to streamline processes and make it easier for

businesses to operate within these zones. Special Economic Zones (SEZs) are critical in attracting foreign investment, and the government's focus on improving the regulatory framework reflects its commitment to providing a conducive environment for industrial growth.

The relocation of Chinese industries to Pakistan is expected to cover sectors such as textile, leather, and footwear, among others. The prime minister highlighted the potential benefits of this relocation, noting ongoing efforts to facilitate the process. By attracting these industries, Pakistan aims to boost its manufacturing capabilities, create employment opportunities, and increase exports.

Plans were also revealed to enlist Chinese experts to establish a Business Facilitation Centre in Islamabad. This center will play a pivotal role in assisting foreign investors, ensuring smooth operations, and addressing any challenges they might face. The draft of the 'Easy Business Act' will be forwarded to the Cabinet Committee for Legislative Cases, further emphasizing the government's resolve to simplify business regulations.

In a separate meeting focused on petroleum and Thar coal, Prime Minister Sharif stressed the importance of promoting alternative energy sources, particularly solar energy. Pakistan, despite having a minimal carbon footprint, ranks among the top five countries vulnerable to climate change. Therefore, the government is taking measures to mitigate the impact of climate change by promoting products based on alternative energy.

During the briefing, it was highlighted that a strategy for Thar coal gasification is being developed. This initiative aims to leverage the country's coal reserves for cleaner energy production, thereby reducing reliance on imported fuels and enhancing energy security.

A comprehensive strategy to enhance the production of tight gas and the installation of smart meters to curb gas and oil theft was also discussed. These measures are part of a broader effort to improve efficiency and reduce losses in the energy sector. Additionally, a policy is being formulated to promote electric bikes, vehicles, and domestic electric appliances. These steps are in line with global trends towards sustainable energy solutions and reducing carbon emissions.

Proposals for deregulating the petroleum sector and digitizing petrol and gas exploration are underway. The Petroleum Division is taking steps to enhance competitiveness in the sector, promote bio-fuels, and increase local production of oil and gas. These initiatives are expected to attract investment, foster innovation, and improve the overall efficiency of the energy sector.

The meetings chaired by Prime Minister Sharif reflect a multi-faceted approach to economic revival. By fostering industrial relocation, promoting alternative energy, and enhancing competitiveness in the energy sector, the government aims to create a robust economic framework that supports sustainable growth.

The relocation of Chinese industries to Pakistan is particularly significant. It not only strengthens the bilateral relationship between Pakistan and China but also positions Pakistan as a key player in the regional industrial landscape. The anticipated influx of Chinese investment and expertise is expected to boost the local economy, create jobs, and facilitate technology transfer.

Moreover, the government's focus on creating a business-friendly environment and simplifying regulatory processes underscores its commitment to making Pakistan an attractive destination for global investors. The establishment of the Business Facilitation Centre and the introduction of the Easy Business Act are steps in the right direction, aimed at providing seamless support to businesses operating in Pakistan.

The emphasis on alternative energy sources and climate change mitigation highlights the government's forward-thinking approach. By promoting solar energy and developing strategies for coal gasification, Pakistan is taking significant steps towards energy security and environmental sustainability. These efforts are crucial in addressing the long-term challenges posed by climate change and reducing the country's carbon footprint.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent initiatives, including the relocation of Chinese industries and the promotion of alternative energy sources, reflect a strategic vision for Pakistan's economic future. By fostering industrial collaboration, simplifying business regulations, and addressing energy challenges, the government aims to create a robust and sustainable economic framework. These efforts are expected to position Pakistan as a key player in the regional and global economic landscape, paving the way for long-term growth and prosperity.

As Pakistan continues to navigate its economic challenges, the proactive steps taken by the government provide a promising outlook. The collaboration with China, in particular, offers significant opportunities for industrial and economic development, marking a new chapter in Pakistan's journey towards economic revitalization.

## Is there going to be an India-China deal?

02 July 2024, Brookings, Tanvi Madan

Four years ago, a fatal military crisis at the India-China border took their relationship to a new low where it has largely remained. In recent months, however, there has been a debate in India about the desirability of a Sino-Indian reset, i.e., whether New Delhi should make a concerted effort to resume political dialogue or resolve differences with Beijing. Given the potential impact on India's willingness to cooperate with countries to balance China, the possibility of such a change has been a subject of interest for India's partners.

There are reasons why the Modi government might seek to stabilize ties with China, or at least set a floor for the India-China relationship. These include conflict prevention, geopolitical uncertainty, partners' parleys with Beijing, and economic drivers. However, a tactical thaw is more likely than any structural shift away from Sino-Indian rivalry.

This is because there has already been a reset in Sino-Indian ties—to a more competitive level. And, even if there is some reengagement, the relationship will remain there due to the range of divergences that persist between India and China.

The potential for a tactical thaw

Speculation about a shift in India's approach got a fillip from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's comments in April that relations with China were "important and significant." Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh subsequently stated that India wanted "good relations with all our neighbors." He also remarked that border talks with Beijing were "progressive and satisfactory," and "no fresh tension" had arisen. Moreover, fiery rhetoric against China was largely absent on the campaign trail.

The new Chinese ambassador's arrival in India after 18 months only further fueled speculation, as did the relatively mild Chinese condemnation of Modi's post-election tweet acknowledging Taiwanese leader William Lai's congratulations. Beijing also did not publicly criticize India for hosting a U.S. congressional delegation that lambasted Beijing while visiting the Dalai Lama in India. There has also been an uptick in think tank exchanges, with Beijing touting its facilitation of Indians' travel to China.

Both Singh and Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar have denied that India's approach has changed. But there are several reasons why it won't be surprising if a third-term Modi government seeks to put relations with China on a more stable footing. For one, New Delhi does not want another escalation at the border, where the four-year-old military standoff continues. Conflict could disrupt India's economic growth and other objectives and

would have an uncertain outcome given the Sino-Indian capabilities gap.

Second, geopolitical uncertainty. Indian policymakers have already been grappling with the fallout of several global and regional crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the border clash with China, the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the Israel-Gaza conflict. Then there are the tensions in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait.

These crises will shape New Delhi's thinking about a potential escalation with China. They have absorbed India's and its partners' bandwidth and resources which are needed to balance Beijing. These partners include the United States, which provided India with fast-tracked or leased military supplies, intelligence, and diplomatic support during the 2020 Sino-Indian crisis.

Meanwhile, the Russia-Ukraine war has disrupted India's defense imports and led to greater Russian dependence on China—not ideal for an India that still deploys considerable Soviet/Russian-origin equipment on its frontline with China. On the maritime front, piracy and Houthi attacks have absorbed the Indian Navy's attention.

The U.S. elections add another element of uncertainty—specifically, the prospect of another Trump administration. One way it might shape Indian calculations is the impact on India's own options. New Delhi appreciated the Trump administration's competitive approach to China. But there was some uncertainty around President Donald Trump's praise of Xi Jinping. Candidate Trump's shift on a TikTok ban will have raised similar questions about the consistency of his view of China. India might also assess that Beijing's own concern about a second Trump term could result in a Chinese tactical rethink on India (as it seemed to in fall 2017 when China sought to stabilize ties with India and Japan).

A third reason New Delhi might consider selective engagement is concern that its partners' recent China dialogues and deals leave India vulnerable to Chinese pressure. Given historical concerns about a "G2"—a Washington-Beijing condominium—U.S.-China interactions have received particular attention. A former foreign secretary even linked the postponement of the Quad summit earlier this year to Washington's desire for stability with Beijing. Indians would have also warily watched high-level Australia-China visits, European leaders' engagements with Xi, and the revival of China-Japan-South Korea talks.

While these interactions would concern India, they could simultaneously suggest to New Delhi that Beijing might be ready for a rethink too—since the United States rather than India is China's primary rival. The Modi government might want to test whether Beijing, under pressure from Washington

and facing economic headwinds, could seek to ease tensions on its India front and stall the deepening of India's ties with China's rivals.

A fourth reason might be the desire in some quarters in India for economic reengagement with China. The debate within government on this between the security-firsters and the economy-firsters is not new. Yet a new element in it is the assessment that India will need certain imports from China as it seeks to become a manufacturing hub—and part of global supply chains or China-plus-one/diversification strategies. Some constituencies outside government have also advocated for easing imports and investment restrictions. And some Indian corporations are keen to strike deals with Chinese companies in the telecommunications, retail, and electric vehicle spaces.

Finally, some officials and analysts might press for a China rethink due to their skepticism of the United States and concern about New Delhi getting too close to Washington. They might believe that a better equation with China would alleviate the need for alignment with the United States and other Western partners. A milder version of this motive would be outreach to China serving to remind India's Western friends that the Modi government has options and should not be taken for granted.

The improbability of a strategic shift

The extent and outcome of such an Indian exploration with China is uncertain. There was similar speculation in spring-summer 2023 about a breakthrough, but it did not materialize.

Even a tactical thaw wouldn't be easy, as one or both sides would need to budge from their existing, conflicting positions. India's stance has been "border before broader," i.e., broader ties could not return to normal if the border remained "abnormal." China's stance has been "broader before border"—as reflected in the new Chinese ambassador's insistence that "the boundary question is not the entirety of the relationship."

A thaw could also be perilous for New Delhi. Any asks from Beijing that curb India's balancing efforts—building its domestic capacities and foreign partnerships—would be strategically risky. They could advantage China, which has greater capabilities, with no guarantee that Beijing will respect any commitments it makes.

There is also some political risk. The Modi government has dismissed opposition accusations that it has accepted Chinese gains and a new normal at the border. But domestic critics will continue to scrutinize any claims of a "return to peace and tranquility" (the government's stated metric) and whether concessions are made in the search for stability. There might also be some backlash from labor and/or sections of Indian business from any

easing of economic restrictions on China, given concerns about Chinese overcapacity among other issues.

If there is movement despite these obstacles, possible outcomes could involve increased engagement between more senior officials or ministers, including perhaps at the forthcoming Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit. They could involve tactical adjustments at the border, discussions about updating the border agreements, reviving the idea of border delimitation, or selective economic reengagement and renewed civil society interactions.

What they are unlikely to involve, however, is a grand bargain or, at least for now, a leader-level summit. Modi probably feels twice bitten because his previous summits with Xi in September 2014 and April 2018–October 2019 did not preclude border crises.

Even if new agreements are negotiated, New Delhi is likely to take a "don't trust, verify" attitude given the lack of faith in China respecting them. There might be further disengagement at the border, but de-escalation of the much-more-militarized border areas or dismantling of dual-purpose infrastructure will be harder to pull off. If anything, reports indicate that China and India are continuing to take steps to bolster their territorial claims and military capabilities.

Moreover, even beyond the border, India has a range of differences with China. These include asymmetry in economic ties and technological exposure, giving rise to a sense of vulnerability; China's deep ties with India's other rival, Pakistan; its expanding strategic footprint in almost all of India's neighbors and in the Indian Ocean; its desire to set the terms in Asia as the dominant power; and its efforts to hinder India's role and interests in the global order. And these have only been intensifying.

Thus, India is unlikely to ease its efforts to compete with and deter China, especially by strengthening its capabilities and partnerships. Moreover, Modi will not want Beijing to believe that he is weaker after the Indian election.

So, could there be an Indian effort to see whether a more stable dynamic with China is possible? Yes. Modi could try—as he did in 2014, 2018 and 2019. But his government is bound to embark on any such outreach while keeping in mind the limits of those previous initiatives, and with the understanding that there has been little let up in Sino-Indian competition across several domains.

## Forced Relocation in Tibet: The Downside of China's Poverty Reduction Strategy

02 July 2024, IARI, Ilaria Manganiello

As a result of China's relocation programs, Tibetans' cultural identity is at risk, but according to the Chinese government, these programs are imperative to eradicating poverty. PCC's strategy, however, should be cautious if Xi wants to prevent a "quarrel" with his neighbors.

Over the past 40 years, the Chinese government has carried out several programs to reduce and eliminate extreme poverty in the Country. On 25 February 2021, the National media announced that extreme poverty had been almost eliminated in China. There were, however, many issues that came up along the way.

The road so far

From 1949 to 1976, under Mao's leadership, the Chinese government defined poverty as an ideological, more than an economic problem. The poverty issue was addressed by eliminating private ownership of the means of production and redistributing land from landlords to peasants. Redistribution policies were supported by agricultural and educational reforms, together with policies of involuntary mass relocation, mainly for urban construction. By the end of the 1970s, China's government launched the Reform and Opening Up policy. In the first years, the agricultural sector was the main driver of economic growth and, consequently, of poverty reduction in rural areas.

At the beginning of the 1980s, the government began to develop a second mode of relocation as a strategy for poverty alleviation in areas where geographical conditions were considered unable to sustain farming or other forms of livelihood. This mode of relocation was called "ecological migration". The Chinese government moved over three million villagers to areas where the geographical conditions were more suitable for agriculture. Based on increases in rural income among the relocatees and other factors, the government declared this program a success.

Since then, the Chinese government has constantly renewed its poverty alleviation programs focusing more and more on the poorest areas of the country. In 2001 the "ecological migration" strategy was expanded to other areas, which included Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and Tibet. In 2013, the Party launched a new strategy specifically for these areas, called the "Targeted poverty alleviation" program.

Targeted poverty alleviation program

The Targeted Poverty Alleviation (TPA) program was officially implemented in 2015, it was structured to follow the whole process: from poverty identification to poverty exit. Within the TPA, China has introduced

the use of five indicators to identify who needs to be lifted out of poverty, referred to by the slogan "one income, two assurances, and three guarantees". So, the first indicator is income; the two assurances are food and clothing, and the three guarantees are basic medical services, safe housing with drinking water and electricity, and free and compulsory education.

After the first identification phase, TPA developed five core methods to lift the poor out of poverty: industry, relocation, ecological compensation, education, and social assistance. Despite its innovative approach to eradicating extreme poverty, TPA methods have some harsh side effects, especially for ethnic minorities.

Relocation and human rights

As said previously, the relocation strategy is not new to the Chinese government. However, after launching the TPA, it was mainly directed toward regions where most people belong to China's ethnic minorities. Tibet is one of the regions where the mass relocation programs are more controversial, mainly because of the numerous human rights violations perpetrated by China's government against Tibetans since the creation of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) in 1951.

Indeed, mass relocations in Tibet should be set in the region's political and historical context. The presence of PCC's cadres in Tibet is overwhelming and Tibetans are placed under intense pressure to demonstrate their "loyalty" to the Party, which sees Tibet, along with Xinjiang, as politically suspect and a security threat.

To respond to this security need, the PRC is carrying out a "Sinicization" campaign whose objective is to eradicate any trace of Tibetans' autonomy's desire. Mass relocation programs are part of this strategy, even if the government maintains that it is the most effective strategy to reduce poverty and, at the same time, to stop environmental degradation. In the case of Tibetans, however, there is no clear and detailed evidence that these areas cannot support human life, and many of the Tibetan households relocated as part of the relocation programs are not even registered as poor.

The last report of Human Rights Watch focuses on the relocation of Tibetans and its consequences. One of the aspects that the report highlights is that Tibetans are moved to locations where they cannot continue their former livelihoods or lifestyles. Often, for example, herders are moved to farming areas and farmers are moved to urban areas where they will be entering the labor market without the experience to do so. Part of the TPA indeed is to provide relocated people with initial subsidies and social assistance to facilitate their adjustment to new lifestyles, but for



what concerns Tibetan herders, this kind of assistance is not enough.

Secondly, the report maintains that if villagers do not agree to relocate, PCC's cadres are allowed to exert different forms of pressure that range from intrusive home visits to implicit threats. After the relocation, the Chinese government takes extreme measures to prevent people from returning to their homes: it requires them to demolish their former homes once they have been relocated. Depriving relocatees of the possibility of returning to their homes if relocation proves unsatisfactory is allowed by the National Regulations but contravenes international standards. Indeed, the UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-based Evictions and Displacement provides that states should, when circumstances allow, prioritize the rights of restitution and return.

Of course, this is not China's first time being accused of human rights violations and it is simple to imagine what kind of reaction China could have: it could either invoke the principle of non-interference or justify its actions as a countermeasure against terrorists, secessionists, or any other political threats. The Chinese government has plenty of data showing how effective its forced relocation programs have been in reducing extreme poverty in Tibet, so other countries or NGOs have little chance of stopping them.

In the future, however, the downsides of the relocation programs will be heavier since Vietnam, Thailand, and other countries are replacing China in the GVCs and China's economic system is not prepared to welcome new waves of rural migration. Thus, the labor market is becoming stricter and more competitive, and relocated Tibetans will have more difficulties finding a job or resolving work-related problems.

Relocation as a means to control the borders with China's neighbors

In recent years, the relocation of Tibetans has been accurately directed towards villages along the contested territories between China and its neighbors. In July 2017, the TAR issued the "Plan for the Construction of Well-off Villages in the Border Area of the Tibet Autonomous Region". It involved building 628 border villages called "well-off border defense villages" which were selected for their remote location, very sparse population, and poor conditions. For China's government, these villages have multiple objectives: reduce the poverty rate in the country, and keep an eye on the movements of populations and activities across the border. Moreover, the location of these villages, and the development of bridges and railway lines in the same regions, should be viewed as a way to gain leverage in its border disputes with its neighbors.

China is particularly concerned about one of its neighbors: India. Although trade between the two nuclear powers surpassed \$136 billion in 2023, relations between Beijing and New Delhi remain tense. China reclaims large parts of Indian territory, including the entire state of Arunachal Pradesh which was recently renamed "Southern Tibet" by China's government. The response of the newly elected National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was the renaming of 30 places in Tibet, signaling its willingness to confront China, at least theoretically. Indian and Chinese troops stationed along the border regularly engage in conflict, sometimes resulting in casualties.

As China focuses more on border defense and security in Tibet, the situation between India and China at the borders is likely to escalate and possibly result in more clashes. China is investing heavily and strategically in border-related infrastructure and in relocating and re-educating residents. The Indian Government may follow suit and bolster its borders by investing more, securing them, and ensuring their safety.

For India, the Himalayan problem is a bilateral affair, but recently Modi seems more willing to let China know that he is looking for new allies. Modi thanked Lai Ching-te, the newly elected President of Taiwan, for his message of congratulations after being re-elected. Nevertheless, the Taiwan-India relationship remains unofficial, and their political connections seem to be directed at deepening economic cooperation.

It is possible that Modi's third term could widen the rift between the two members of BRICS, signaling the beginning of India's shift toward an even more anti-China sentiment. However, the Chinese and Indian governments are keen to avoid any other conflagration that could cause casualties like the episode that happened in 2020 in the Galwan Valley. In light of these scenarios, India's relationship with China will likely become increasingly complex and sensitive.

### **A new dawn in Tibetan diplomacy**

02 July 2024, The Pioneer, Prafull Goradia

A seven-member American delegation led by US House Representatives met with the Dalai Lama, indicating a shift in the US stance on Tibet



A seven-member American delegation led by Michael McCaul, and Nancy Pelosi, both leading lights of the US House of Representatives, recently met the Dalai Lama at Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh; this is a particularly significant event. They delivered a clear message that the USA no longer accepts Tibet as a part of China; and the US Congress will be soon passing an Act to be made into a law, called the "Resolve Tibet-China Act". The delegation told the Tibetan spiritual leader that "things have changed now". This American message has unmistakably resisted in Chinese ears. This US delegation first called on His Holiness at Dharmashala, indicating they were calling on the Tibetan government-in-exile, calling on Prime Minister Narendra Modi only thereafter. The Government of India has not hesitated to welcome the delegation. Xi Jinping may have forgotten that Mao Zedong's regime had first claimed 'suzerainty' over Tibet. Before long, it asserted that Tibet was a Chinese province, before attempting to erase Tibet's culture, heritage and language. These events have their roots in what happened towards the end of World War II. By allowing Stalin's Red Army to enter Berlin first and occupy it, the US made the Russians believe that they were the prime victors of WWII. In 1949, the Soviet Communist regime, by hook or crook, acquired the atom bomb. This made them believe even more they were now a superpower. Economically though, the Soviet Union was no 'super' but only a Eurasian power, as it had historically been. Similarly, the US overestimated the Communist Chinese as well. Compared to Chiang Kai Shek and his Kuomintang (KMT) on the mainland, the Maoists were much more committed. That, however, was no reason to dump the KMT as well as Formosa, now Taiwan from the UN as an official member. In fact, India should have been the correct replacement, but the Nehru government was insistent on giving the right of way to Red China, believe it or not. The USA, or at least its State Department continued to believe for years that the Soviets and the Chinese were a single communist bloc. The extent of the

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animosity between the two was fully realized only after the Sino-Soviet clash along the Ussuri River in 1969.

It was only thereafter that President Nixon decided to call on Chinese Premier Mao Zedong in 1972, which brought a great deal of prestige to Dr. Henry Kissinger. The ultimate beneficiary of this resumption of relations was China, when Deng Xiao Ping introduced economic reforms, emphasizing manufacturing and exports. The surplus of trillions of dollars accumulated by China came largely through exports to America. The course of these events explains why the State Department of the USA until now ignored the treatment of the hapless Tibetans by successive Chinese regimes over the last seven decades, beginning in 1959. The question is: is this because of repeated provocations over Taiwan, or could there be some larger reason unknown to us? The intentions should become clearer with the unfolding of time. India's stand has also been important. Unfortunately, the Leftists and communists in the country had clamoured for the (then) newly formed Red Chinese regime, which had requested its recognition within a few days of its winning the civil war. Deputy Prime Minister Sardar Patel, on the other hand, was of the clear view that there was no hurry to recognize the new Chinese regime. In November 1949, Patel invited the American charge d'affaires Donovan to verify if there was an urgency in the recognition of Red China.

Knowing the Sardar through his long correspondence with Jawaharlal Nehru on the subject of China, uppermost in his mind must have been the concern that the Sino-Indian border should be mutually recognized. But Jawaharlal Nehru was in a hurry and without consulting the Sardar, informed the Chinese of India's decision to recognize their regime in the December of that year itself.

While expressing its delight at Nehru's message, China also laid down a few preconditions. India would pass on to the new regime all properties and assets of China. Secondly, India would not recognize any members of the KMT. Thirdly, India should support the expulsion of Nationalist China from the UNO, as well as its replacement by the communist regime. China's perfidious intentions can be gauged from the fact that its communist regime announced the 'liberation' of Tibet as the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) task just one day before the founding of the People's Republic of China. The Tibetans had expelled the Chinese Amban, although he had been a Kuomintang government appointee.

The Chinese blamed India for it, abusing Nehru as "a lackey of British imperialism" and complicit in the British humiliation of China, which Mao sought to reverse. The People's Daily of China in an editorial denounced the concept of suzerainty as feudal and

oppressive—the very thing China demanded over Tibet. It even called on the UNO to examine India's relationship with Bhutan. The reality, which the Nehru government chose to ignore despite even Ambassador K.M. Pannikar's warnings was that China was eyeing Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan too. But India's first prime minister, a votary of international peace and brotherhood was oblivious to this. The sufferers were from Tibet and India.

### **Tibet In The Spotlight – OpEd**

02 July 2024, Eurasia Review, Ahmad Ali Haral

A bipartisan delegation of seven US lawmakers, led by Rep. Michael McCaul and former House Speaker Rep. Nancy Pelosi, travelled to India to meet with the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan leader in exile. This meeting took place just weeks after the US Senate unanimously passed a bill urging the Chinese government to engage in dialogue with the Tibetan leaders to resolve the longstanding China-Tibet dispute.

The Tibet-China Dispute Act, while lacking concrete measures, holds significant symbolic value. Its passage underscores the US support for Tibet and signals China that the issue remains a priority for American policymakers. This move is symbolic of the multifaceted approach the US is taking in its rivalry with China. In addition to trade tensions and support for Taiwan, American initiatives concerning Tibet add another layer to the complex geopolitical chessboard. Washington's support for Taiwan and initiatives regarding Tibet can be viewed as part of a strategy to counterbalance China's growing assertiveness in the region.

These developments raise questions about the consistency of the US' adherence to the One-China policy, which has been a cornerstone of Sino-American relations. The One-China policy recognizes Beijing's claim over Taiwan and Tibet, yet recent actions by the US suggest a more nuanced and, at times, contradictory stance.

In response to the recent developments, Chinese government vowed to take "resolute measures" if Washington fails to honour its commitment to recognize Tibet as part of China. This rhetoric is consistent with Beijing's longstanding position that any foreign involvement in Tibet is a violation of China's sovereignty. The Chinese government views the Dalai Lama not just as a religious leader but as a separatist figure who threatens national integrity.

This incident highlights the managing act that the US must perform in its foreign policy. On one hand, it seeks to uphold human rights and democratic values by supporting figures like the Dalai Lama and endorsing Taiwan's self-governance, on the other hand, it needs to navigate the diplomatic tightrope of

maintaining stable relations with China, an economic powerhouse and crucial player in global affairs. The symbolic gestures of support for Tibet and Taiwan are thus dilemma: they reaffirm US commitment to certain principles while simultaneously risking further escalation of tensions with China.

Furthermore, this development should be analysed within the context of the broader US strategy in the Asia-Pacific. The US has been strengthening alliances and partnerships across the region, from the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) to increased military presence and defence cooperation agreements. These moves are aimed at countering China's expanding footprint in the region. The Tibet issue, though historically contentious, is being re-contextualized as part of this larger strategic framework.

In conclusion, the recent meeting between US lawmakers and the Dalai Lama is more than a mere diplomatic formality; it is a calculated manoeuvre within the intricate and high-stakes game of international relations. As the US continues to assert its influence in the face of China's rise, the interplay between symbolic gestures and concrete policy actions are critical in shaping the future dynamics of US-China relations. The implications of such meetings extend beyond the immediate diplomatic fallout, potentially influencing the strategic landscape of the Asia-Pacific.

### **Pinching the dragon's tail on future of Tibet**

02 July 2024, Hindustan Times, Dilip Sinha

The recent visit of a bipartisan US Congressional delegation to Dharamshala raises the question – how far will India go with the US?

The recent visit of the United States (US) Congressional delegation to Dharamshala and the Dalai Lama's visit to New York have catapulted Tibet to newspaper headlines. The seven-member US Congressional delegation led by representative Michael McCaul was remarkable in several respects. A bipartisan delegation at a time of sharp polarisation in American politics, it included Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi and chose to visit Dharamshala even though the Dalai Lama was due to leave for the US in a few days. The visit coincided with the US Congress passing a bill, "Promoting a Resolution of the Tibet-China Conflict Act", or the Resolve Tibet Act, which has since gone to the president for his assent. On its return to New Delhi, the delegation was received by Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi, signalling that the Indian government is not uncomfortable with the US choosing Indian soil to pinch the dragon's tail.

In the past, the US generally followed the old British line of recognising Chinese suzerainty over Tibet. It provided training and assistance to the Khampa rebels in the 1950s, but in the years of the grand camaraderie of President Nixon and Henry Kissinger with Mao Zedong, Tibet was largely forgotten. The downswing in their relations started in the Trump presidency. Trade disputes, technology theft, China's aggressive build-up in the South China Sea, threats to Taiwan and now the military assistance to Russia in the Ukraine War have soured relations and ushered in a new cold war. Tibet was an issue waiting to be reopened by the US.

The first US Tibet Policy Act of 2002 had been a mild articulation of the need to protect Tibet's water security and its environment, promised assistance to Tibetan refugees and urged China to engage with the Dalai Lama. The next act, in 2020, defined the US government's stand on the Dalai Lama's succession, calling it a purely religious matter to be decided by his followers and threatening any Chinese official interfering in the process with sanctions. It also declared that China would not be permitted to open another consulate in the US unless it allowed one in Lhasa.

The new US Tibet bill is a quantum jump from the two earlier acts. It defines the territory and international status of Tibet, marking a qualitative change in US policy. It states that the territory of Tibet extends beyond the Tibetan Autonomous Region and includes Tibetan areas in Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces; that the conflict between China and Tibet is unresolved and Tibet's legal status is to be determined according to international law. It calls upon the US government to counter Chinese disinformation about Tibet's history and institutions, such as China's outlandish claim that Tibet has been a part of it since ancient times. McCaul told the media that the bill reaffirms America's support for Tibet's right of self-determination.

Little wonder that China is rattled by the visit and has launched a vitriolic tirade against the "separatist Dalai Lama clique" as it calls it, accusing him of indulging in anti-China separatist activities under the cloak of religion and warning the US not to play the Tibet card in violation of the one-China policy. A foreign office spokesperson urged the US not to sign the bill into law or support Tibet's independence and warned that China would take resolute measures.

How does all this affect India? China's repression in Tibet and escalating claims on Indian territory have belied the expectations on which India had framed its stand in the 1950s. China has never missed an opportunity to counsel India on Kashmir. Despite such provocations, hostile actions and broken promises, India has clung to its policy of recognising Tibet as a part of China.

India has paid a heavy price for giving asylum to the Dalai Lama and the thousands of Tibetan refugees who run the Central Tibetan Administration, the putative government-in-exile. Tibet is a sensitive issue for China since it claims it as its imperial legacy and now exploits its water and other natural resources. India contends that the presence of the Tibetan government-in-exile should not annoy China and that Tibet is not an issue in India-China relations. But with the US raising matters of concern to the Tibetan people, India faces a dilemma. Should it let the international discourse on important questions concerning Tibet slip into America's hands? One of these is the ageing Dalai Lama's succession, on which the US has taken a very strong stand. It is time for India to give some sage counsel to China and recover the initiative on Tibet.

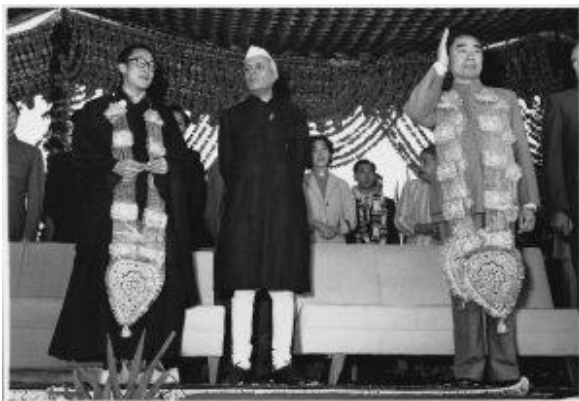
There will be no dearth of Indians questioning the advisability of India taking the cue from the US to change its Tibet policy. America's unreliability is well known, as are the risks of provoking China. But Tibet accounts for a considerable length of India's border with China and who rules it will always remain critical to India's well-being and security. The current US-China confrontation is an opportunity for India to assert its interests and develop its Tibet policy in its logical progression.

India's relations with China have been cold since Galwan and there is little chance of a thaw in the immediate future. By not going to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit and receiving the US delegation in New Delhi, PM Modi has made his leanings explicit. The external affairs ministry rejected China's protest, reiterating India's stand on the Dalai Lama being an honoured guest who is free to conduct his religious activities in India. It remains to be seen if India will now take the next logical step of telling China not to interfere in the process of the Dalai Lama's succession. This would be a good beginning towards a more assertive Tibet policy.

### **The Past (and Future) of the Territorial Swap Offer in the China-India Border Dispute**

01 July 2024, The Diplomat, Ameya Pratap Singh

Twice, China and India had chances to settle their disputed border through a "package deal," but domestic politics got in the way. Is such a solution still possible?



From left: the Dalai Lama, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai in 1956 in India, at the UNESCO Buddhist Conference in Ashok Hotel, New Delhi.

Disputes over territory are perhaps the largest contributors to interstate conflict, as the recent examples of the Israel-Palestine and Russia-Ukraine conflicts have evidenced. The most insurmountable entry in this category, at least in terms of the length of the disputed boundary, is the 2,100-mile long disputed Sino-Indian border.

But boundary disputes of such magnitude are not set in stone, either. Just as the ebbs and flows of the China-India rivalry over the years have proffered moments of tension and war, they have also created opportunities for political entrepreneurs to craft *détentes* – and occasionally, even consider the possibility of a settlement.

The use of territorial swaps to settle boundary disputes is assumed to be taboo, owing to the immutable properties of a state's territorial holdings. Domestic publics generally view any compromise of a state's territory as a surrender of national prestige, ideology, and even the nation's *raison d'être*. However, in certain moments, such concessions are proposed and seriously deliberated upon. Two such moments took place in Sino-Indian relations in the Nehru-Zhou and Rajiv-Deng periods.

This is unsurprising if one considers the larger historical register. Despite a significant number of outstanding territorial claims, China has also resolved boundary disputes with neighboring countries such as Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan. India too has resolved its share of boundary disputes, most notably through the exchange of enclaves with Bangladesh in 2015.

The two Himalayan rivals came close to a "package deal" on the Sino-Indian border too (twice!), but the proposals did not materialize. Do these failed attempts offer hope for an eventual resolution or portend the inevitably ruinous future of diplomatic attempts to solve the issue?

In 1960, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, accompanied by Foreign Minister Chen Yi and a 31-member

Chinese delegation, arrived in Delhi to negotiate a final settlement of the disputed Sino-Indian boundary with his Indian counterpart, Jawaharlal Nehru. The boundary was a vestige of British colonial rule, and had been in dispute for longer than the existence of the Republic of India as well as the People's Republic of China.

The British Empire had purposefully maintained Tibet as a "buffer state." This allowed them to claim territorial largesse when the need arose, while continuing to deny Britain's great power competitors a foothold in the region. The British Empire could countenance such an expedient arrangement with the Chiang Kai-shek-led Nationalist China. But this would only hold aspirational value for an independent India faced with Communist China on its northeastern border. The Indians were mere spectators as the Chinese annexed Tibet in 1949, making the two postcolonial states neighbors on a historically contested and undemarcated border.

Both the Indians and the Chinese knew of the disputed nature of the border but neither side wanted to raise alarm until they had militarily secured their status and legitimacy in border areas. When the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" were chronicled through a bilateral trade treaty on India's commercial rights in Tibet in 1954, Indian and Chinese interlocutors deliberately and carefully avoided mentioning any disputed parts as trade posts.

Isolated stand-offs in feeding pastures along the Himalayan border had also begun to creep up as early as 1954 in areas in the Central Sector such as Bara Hoti. Historically, these boundaries were highly fluid and had been used by agrarians on both sides. However, the imposition of nation-statehood now demanded territorial exclusivity. Despite this, both India and China did not choose to directly address the boundary issue, opting instead to build a stronger negotiating position before showing their hand.

However, their position was forced when the Tibetan Revolution broke out in 1957. People's Liberation Army (PLA) forces from China, chasing Tibetan rebels, entered disputed border areas, often provoking confrontations with Indian border patrols. Since there was no formal demarcation of the boundary, the armed forces of both sides found themselves in a highly unenviable situation.

In 1959, in the Western Sector (Aksai Chin Region), a clash at Kongka Pass led to the death of nine Indian soldiers – the first casualties of the Sino-Indian boundary dispute. This forced Nehru and Zhou's hand. Leaving the boundary ambiguous was no longer tenable.

Meanwhile, Chinese conduct was being heavily criticized by Soviet Union. In a meeting on October



2, 1959, Nikita Khrushchev unequivocally asked Mao Zedong and Zhou to settle the dispute in order not to alienate India from the Communist bloc. Begrudgingly, the latter committed that they would respect the "McMahon Line" in the Eastern sector and soon bring the issue to an end.

In a nutshell, this was the "package deal" – a status quo solution. The Chinese would accept India's claims in the Eastern Sector, which was more critical for the security of India's Northeast, in exchange for Indian acceptance of Chinese sovereignty in the Western Sector of Aksai Chin, which was the region that housed the arterial road that connected Chinese forces to the Tibetan plateau via Xinjiang.

For his part, Nehru too had been preparing the grounds for this "package deal." In Parliament, he repeatedly mentioned Aksai Chin as inhospitable terrain. This provided some defense for India's inability to prevent Chinese encroachments. The Indian side had long been willing to trade Chinese presence in the Aksai Chin region for China's formal recognition of the McMahon Line in the Eastern Sector.

However, public opinion in India would not countenance such a deal in 1960. The Chinese could navigate the pitfalls of public diplomacy over a complex border issue much better than the Indians. Once the death of Indian soldiers on the border, and the scale of Chinese territorial claims, became public knowledge, Nehru's room for maneuver had diminished significantly. Accepting the status quo meant the vindication of Chinese aggression on India's borders, and was thus considered intolerable.

Despite the Chinese being the militarily stronger power, they proposed the "package deal." And despite this arrangement being acceptable to India's political leadership earlier, it was declined as this simply could not be justified to the Indian people or Parliament. This is why the talks between Nehru and Zhou failed in 1960.

The "package deal" was revived in 1979, when Deng Xiaoping proposed it to then-Indian Minister of External Affairs Atal Bihari Vajpayee during his China tour. Once again, the proposal was rejected by the Indian side, as they continued to insist on a detailed historical study to resolve the border in each sector.

In 1986-87, the intractability of border talks eventually led to a military stand-off in the Sumdorong Chu Valley in the Eastern Sector. A weak coalition government led by Morarji Desai, which only lasted in office for two years, did not have the ability to push through such a settlement. The deal was offered to Desai's successor and Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi, in 1984. But her assassination curtailed any serious consideration.

The deal was offered once again by Deng to Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1988. Deng wanted India to make minor territorial concessions to the Chinese on the Eastern Sector for Beijing's acceptance of the McMahon Line (which was to be renamed). Similarly, minor Chinese territorial concessions to India in the Western Sector would be offered for India's acceptance of Chinese sovereignty in the Aksai Chin region.

Chinese Diplomat Yang Wenchang recounts the exchange as follows:

As a diplomat in late 1980s, I witnessed a chance to solve the problem with Prime Minister Rajiv and Deng, who was also a strong man. We do some compromise on west wing, you do some on the east wing, then we can have a new border. We offered, but Prime Minister Gandhi didn't have a response. After that I felt very sad we lost the chance.

Rajiv Gandhi had the parliamentary mandate required to formalize a "package deal." But he too chose not to jeopardize his political future, settling instead for confidence building measures on the border to ensure "peace and tranquility."

Twice, political compulsions and domestic weaknesses have compelled Chinese leaders to offer a "package deal" to their Indian counterparts to settle the border once and for all. But in both cases, the pulls and pushes of parliamentary democracy in India have made "managing the dispute" more palatable than its resolution.

Now, the scales have changed significantly. At least since 2017, in light of China's sustained economic growth and newfound military strength, especially relative to the Indian side, the Chinese no longer want a "package deal" solution based on the status quo. Instead, they have proposed a new "package deal" that disproportionately demands concessions from India in the Eastern Sector, particularly in the populated region of Tawang. While Deng's proposal in the 1980s too required a concession in the Eastern Sector, this was relatively minor and was to be reciprocated by Chinese concessions in the Western Sector. If a much more favorable "package deal" couldn't pass muster in the past, Xi Jinping's new proposal is highly unlikely to do so.

But ultimately, it is in the interest of both states to achieve a final settlement of the border and some variation of the "package deal" is most likely to prove fruitful in this respect. Unlike Taiwan for China or Kashmir for India, the Sino-Indian boundary dispute does not concern key pillars of national identity. Neither do the concerned border territories offer any particular advantage in terms of natural resources or larger strategic advantages beyond the rivalry. Therefore, the revival of a package deal would be favorable to India's growth prospects as well China's global ambitions.

Until the conditions for such a solution are arrived at, China and India should find ways and means of enhancing other important aspects of their relationship and managing conflagrations at the border. More so than the South China Sea, it is the resolution of the Sino-Indian boundary dispute that will determine if “Asia” will be a term that geopolitical experts will use as a reference of power, or to signify an arena of unending conflict and violence in the emerging world order.

### **Modi 3.0: How India is setting the course for relations with China**

01 July 2024, Organiser, Ameya Kulkarni

As India embarks on a new governmental term under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, the complex and evolving relationship with China remains a paramount concern.

A strange paradox plagues the status of India-China ties. For such a consequential relationship that may make or mar India's rise, the debates around it are largely myopic, set across the political and ideological faultlines. India certainly cannot afford not to constantly evaluate and debate threadbare the terms of the relationship, more so as a new government in New Delhi begins another innings with a fresh mandate.

Since 2020, dealing with China has been the most debated topic of Indian foreign policy. That the old bilateral framework has irretrievably fractured because China violated a basic principle – non-use of force in resolving disputes – is not in doubt. The debate is about the way forward in building a new relationship based on the current realities.

The new framework will be built in circumstances that are very different from 1990. Then, the economies of India and China were comparable, and their respective military capacities were fairly balanced. Now, China's GDP is more than four times ours, and the two militaries are not evenly matched on paper. Nor is it likely, even by optimistic growth projections, for India to significantly reduce this gap in the next 10 years. And the common challenges are outweighed by geopolitical differences that are unlikely to subside as China expands its global footprint.

Will the third iteration of Narendra Modi government prefer continuity, or a new approach? Given that bilateral ties have hit a deadlock in the backdrop of an ominous military buildup across the ill-defined Himalayan borders, creating a dangerous flashpoint between two of the world's most powerful armies, the urgent question is the current state of the bilateral framework.

It is clear that the terms of the framework that were drawn up in the 1990s have collapsed. Owing

chiefly to the power imbalance, an inordinately more powerful China now wants to redraw the provisos of the relationship in its own terms, and that involves creating new realities along the 3,440km-long LAC. So far, all of India's efforts at persuading China not to use force to unilaterally change the status quo at the LAC have failed, and New Delhi has also been unsuccessful in coaxing China to revert to pre-2020 status quo, even at the cost of considerable bloodshed.

Even more worryingly, both militaries – armed to the teeth – are locked in a confrontationist posture at the LAC. Failure to achieve a détente could lead to an eventual catastrophic conflict, led by miscalculation even, if not intent. The question of a new bilateral framework that may prevent such an eventuality gains added significance but with China adopting a maximalist position, leaving India with an onerous choice between acceptance or aggression, the roadmap to a new framework isn't clear.

To get a shot at a new framework, therefore, the deadlock needs to be broken. There must be sufficient incentives for both sides to engage with an earnest intention of breaking the deadlock. So far, 21 rounds of military-level talks have achieved some progress. But it has not been enough. The onus lies on India, unlike China that wants the “boundary issue” to be boxed in “an appropriate place” for resumption of normalcy because “China-India ties should not be defined by any single issue or area”. In other words, China is not interested in resolving the crisis.

New Delhi, in response, is creating deterrence to discourage China from further deployment of grey-zone tactics. The Modi government is furiously building and upgrading critical infrastructure at the border to improve its logistics capabilities. It is also exploring the option of external balancing by gravitating closer to the US and its regional allies.

None of it, however, has given India the requisite leverage to force China to climb down from the cliff, ‘manage’ the crisis and reduce the risk of violent escalation. Some voices are urging a resumption of political-level dialogue.

It is important to posit the question as to whether the ‘break’ in the political dialogue since 2020 has addressed Indian concerns over the steady militarisation of LAC by the Chinese. By various accounts, this may not be the case. China appears to have augmented its military capacity, including air-power, along the entire front. It remains obdurate on reeling back its forward posture in two areas in eastern Ladakh. Despite more than 20 rounds of talks between the two militaries, the status quo still prevails.

Commendable work is being done in building deterrence against adventurism. Aside from

the augmentation in men and materiel, the idea of strategic risk is being re-defined. Deployment patterns are being altered to send the clear signal that there is no tolerance for grey-zone warfare tactics by PLA. The breach of trust triggered by the Chinese behaviour in Galwan requires clear and tangible counter-displays of goodwill, and remedial action by China along LAC, before trust can be rebuilt.

But is deterrence in itself an adequate policy response? At the height of the Cold War, the two superpowers never halted political dialogue. Mechanisms were built to prevent nuclear war, and mutual understandings were reached on managing competition and limiting the prospect of accidental conflict. An important lesson from the Cold War was that dialogue and deterrence were not mutually exclusive.

In the past four years, there has been no direct bilateral engagement between the executive heads of Indian and Chinese govts (aside from fleeting conversations in Bali and Johannesburg), and a single bilateral meeting between the foreign ministers when Wang Yi visited India in March 2022. Nor have the defence ministers or national security advisers of both sides visited each other.

A few 'pull-asides' or 'meetings in the margins' at multilateral conferences may not allow for the sort of discussion that is required when a new framework for the relationship needs to be built.

Writing in *The Times of India*, author and former Indian foreign secretary Vijay Gokhale observes, "What objectives might a resumption of the political dialogue serve? To begin with, it might allow for an in-depth understanding at a political level of each other's positions. Such dialogue might, hopefully, permit both sides to find some common ground to start building a new framework. It might benefit risk management, not simply in terms of minimising unintended conflict, but also in terms of modernising the 1993 and 1996 agreements in order to make them relevant to contemporary needs."

While the restarting of dialogue process at the highest political level may help in breaking the deadlock, it is worth noting that Chinese incursions have occurred even when two leaders have met. Xi Jinping's visit to India from 17-10 September, 2014, was marked by a standoff between Indian soldiers and the PLA in the Chumar and Demchok region of Ladakh.

While political dialogue has its usefulness, it isn't clear how dialogue will help when China is using power disparity between two nations to redraw the *modus vivendi*. In March 2023, when India's external affairs minister S Jaishankar had met then Chinese foreign minister Qin Gang on the sidelines of the G20 FMs' summit, the Chinese interpretation of

the meeting indicated the widening gulf between the two sides.

S. Jaishankar, India's external affairs minister, has emphasized the potential to strengthen India's relationship with Taiwan in the technology sector, specifically in the important semiconductor sector, which is a growing focus of global competition. Taiwan is a major power in this domain, accounting for over 90 % of advanced chip production. Meetings between Indian and Taiwan government officials, as well as industry leaders such as Foxconn Technology Co. and others, exemplify the potential for and developing the technology partnership that both India and Taiwan have openly discussed, much to China's censure.

Amid strained and deteriorating cross-strait relations, Taiwan has continued apace with its economic and technological engagement with India, and vice versa. While their interactions and lucrative pursuits have already had a negative impact on China-India relations, expansion in this direction will present both opportunities and challenges. Still, Modi has moved beyond mere gestures, explicitly saying that India will pursue the opportunities further.

Nevertheless, the Taiwan-India relationship remains unofficial, and their political connections continue to play a major role in deepening economic cooperation, despite numerous advancements. Taiwan's Indo-Pacific strategy is an important area in which both have prioritised mutual interests, even when clashing with China's.

The India-China-Taiwan relationship triangle also converges with India and China's space ambitions, their geostrategic rivalry, and the crucial semiconductor and technology sector, in which Taiwan plays a key role and is arguably a survival guarantor. Semiconductor technologies play a crucial role in the exploration of space, enabling spacecraft, satellites, and space instruments to operate.

While both India and China are Global South leaders and powers, they have a shared identity as rising space powers. Space power is an essential part of geopolitical competition, but being a space power requires satellites and communication to support military, security, and economic goals, as well as to dominate the battlefield. For example, Beijing's advancing space activities and capabilities enable it to maintain regular surveillance of India's military positions and operations along LAC without violating Indian territory. India, reportedly, has had to receive intelligence assistance from the United States to keep apprised of China's movements

Scholar Antara Ghosal Singh of ORF, who pores over Chinese media commentary and analyses for reaction, writes of the Chinese perspective that "the mainstream Chinese discourse post the meeting was

that 'China needs to prepare for the worst at the LAC'. From a Chinese perspective, India did not show a positive attitude during the meeting and did not reciprocate China's so-called 'goodwill gestures' such as it seeking to explore common grounds between the two countries beyond the border dispute or participating in defence exchanges and cooperation with India under the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, etc. It was argued that the meeting only lasted for 45 minutes, in which Jaishankar made 'a big fuss' about the border issue."

While India holds that ties may improve only if there's disengagement at the border and that overall relations cannot be separated from the military standoff, China insists that India cannot bring any conditionality to the table during talks. In this game of one-upmanship, Chinese and Indian leverages for peaceful resolution have cancelled each other out for an enduring stalemate, leaving China, the superior military and economic power, in a state of advantage.

China has used the situation deftly, indulging in a series of cartographic and nomenclature aggression to buttress its overarching territorial aggrandizement, and is doing everything from building dual-use facilities and villages along the LAC, expanding infrastructure and is even beefing up offensive air force capabilities by deploying advanced stealth fighters along the border.

What could be India's response? Modi 3.0 has given a few indications. Some notable developments show an attempt by New Delhi to create more leverage.

The Diplomat reported that India plans to 'rename' 30-plus places in Tibet, "reclaiming from historical records their ancient names in Indian languages."

The magazine claims to have witnessed a list of the places to be "renamed", and quotes Indian army officers involved in the exercise, as saying that media trips are being organized to disputed border areas "to speak to locals who fiercely oppose Chinese claims and say they were always part of India" with an aim to "push through the Indian counter-narrative on the disputed border through regional and global media."

If renaming of places, a move that is yet to materialize, is 'playing the Tibet card', the message got louder with India hosting a bipartisan US Congressional delegation that had just passed a bill, Resolve Tibet Act, that empowers the US "to actively and directly counter disinformation about Tibet from the Chinese government, rejecting false claims that Tibet has been part of China since 'ancient times,' pushing for negotiations without preconditions between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama or his representatives or the democratically elected leaders of the Tibetan community, and

affirming the State Department's responsibility to coordinate with other governments in multilateral efforts toward the goal of a negotiated agreement on Tibet."

The American lawmakers (both Republicans and Democrats) who passed the bill that pushes for 'free Tibet', landed in New Delhi, met the Dalai Lama, and issued a scathing attack on Xi. Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who was part of the delegation, stated that while "His Holiness Dalai Lama, with his message of knowledge, tradition, compassion, purity of soul and love, will live a long time and his legacy will live forever. But you, the President of China, you'll be gone and nobody will give you credit for anything."

And then the delegation met Prime Minister Modi the next day, having been hosted by Jaishankar the previous night. Interestingly, the Tibetan spiritual leader has left for the US for medical treatment, so the meeting could well have been held on American soil. The fact that India played host to the American lawmakers who had an explicit agenda on Tibet, and the prime minister granted them an audience the next day says all that is to be said about India's messaging.

Modi's move came right after the newly elected prime minister, in his third consecutive stint, had responded warmly to a congratulatory message from Taiwanese leader William Lai Ching-te and vowed to build "closer ties as we work towards mutually beneficial economic and technological partnership". The deliberate nature of the public response that triggered an acerbic reaction from China, left little space for doubt that this is part of a calibrated pushback, aimed at leveraging the partnerships. That Modi is using the US and its allies in sending across messages won't be lost on Beijing.

New Delhi is also refusing to resume direct civilian flight service between India and China, that has remained suspended for the last four years since the outbreak of the pandemic, despite several requests from Beijing – tying it with restoration of normalcy at the border.

Modi has also decided not to visit the upcoming SCO summit at Astana, Kazakhstan. The official excuse is ongoing Parliament session that ends on July 3, but it is hard to ignore the impression that avoiding running into Xi has been an equally strong motivation. Any Russian displeasure at Modi's absence will be taken care of by the prime minister's quick dash to Moscow for a standalone visit for the India-Russia summit on July 8.

Faced with a fait accompli at the border, Modi's attempts are focused on creating leverage by expanding the horizons. The overarching goal remains stability in relationship while breaking the deadlock and forcing Xi into a meaningful

engagement. India has been forced into this balancing act because China is unwilling to reverse the new 'facts on the ground' or make any more concessions.

To China, India has no real clout or ability to alter the new reality and no option but to accept it. From this vantage point, China calls India's earnest efforts to tie normalisation of relations with the resolution of border crisis "arrogance" and "sky-high price".

Chinese scholar and strategist Hu Shisheng – the director of Institute for South Asian Studies at CICIR, an influential Chinese think tank on foreign policy and security affairs that comes under the direct supervision of CCP's Ministry of State Security (MSS) and whose research influences and represents the mainstream voice of the Chinese party-state system, in a recent piece on Indian foreign policy, calls the diplomacy of Modi government "dynamic" and "tension-filled".

Hu's essay, reproduced in Sinification (machine translation), observes that though Indian diplomacy has "flourished" under Modi due to "indulgence from the West", and even though India-US ties despite "latent mistrust" are "set to deepen", "in recent years, the Biden administration has focused much of its efforts on the Western Pacific region, promoting minilateral security cooperation mechanisms with its allies. This indicates that the US has lowered its expectations of India in its strategy to contain and blockade China."

Hu also observes that "considering the significant disparity in power between China and India, New Delhi will neither want to break relations with China completely nor will it be willing to serve as 'cannon fodder' for the West's containment of China. In future, Sino-Indian relations may continue to be characterised by "cold hostility" [冷暴力] or "non-violent, non-cooperative" coexistence."

To the extent that Hu's views represent the prevalent Chinese thinking, it appears that Beijing has come to a conclusion that India's options in getting China to do its bid are becoming increasingly more constricted. China remains aware of the significant power discrepancy between the two nations, and this awareness is making China more adventurous, imbuing it with a greater appetite for risk-taking including implementation of force to achieve its objectives – secure in the belief that India, as a lesser power, will ultimately be forced to back down.

This is not to suggest that Beijing is spoiling for a violent escalation, but it seeks to use force, or threat of force as a leverage to demand obeisance from India, and it wants New Delhi to accept Beijing's primacy and admit its secondary status in Asia.

From our perspective, it might provide political platforms to express our concerns, as well as to find solutions, over unfair Chinese trade practices.

Dialogue is also a logical step in building multi-alignment diplomacy.

Only government can ultimately decide what is the right policy. But a healthy debate on the question is now needed more than ever because public participation in foreign policy is an important requisite for citizens who aspire to make India into a global powerhouse.

In this context, PM Modi's recent moves assume greater significance. A battle of nerves lies ahead. External balancing and a fast-growing economy are India's best options, but in the short term, a lot may depend on the outcome of US presidential polls.

### **Building Bridges: Impact Of PM Shehbaz Sharif's Historic Visit To China – OpEd**

01 July 2024, Eurasia Review, Hammad Baloch

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent five-day visit to China stands out as a landmark event, underscoring the robust and dynamic nature of Pakistan-China relations. This visit has not only cemented existing ties but also opened new avenues for cooperation across various sectors. The outcomes, including the signing of 23 Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), signify a comprehensive and forward-looking partnership that promises to deliver significant benefits to both nations.

The visit featured high-level interactions, most notably an extensive three and a quarter hour meeting between Prime Minister Sharif and President Xi Jinping. This lengthy discussion emphasized upgrading the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), highlighting the strategic importance both countries place on this initiative. The Prime Minister made it a point to advocate for the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) in all his meetings, receiving encouraging responses from Chinese officials. Furthermore, a dedicated committee has been set up to advance the Main Line One project, alongside the signing of 32 business-to-business agreements, marking a significant step forward in bilateral cooperation.

#### **Economic Milestones and Future Opportunities**

One of the most notable achievements of this visit was the signing of 23 MoUs spanning multiple sectors, including transport infrastructure, industry, energy, agriculture, media, health, water, and socioeconomic development. These agreements are poised to enhance Pakistan's economic landscape, creating new trade and investment opportunities. The Pakistan-China Business Conference, attended by 500 business personalities, underscored the economic potential of this partnership. China's commitment to training 200,000 Pakistani youth in IT is particularly noteworthy, as it is expected to significantly boost Pakistan's IT exports. Federal



Information Minister Attaullah Tarar highlighted the positive economic indicators emerging from this visit, such as increased IT exports, a reduced current account deficit, rising foreign exchange reserves, and a stable currency. These developments suggest a promising trajectory for Pakistan's economy, driven by strategic partnerships and international cooperation.

#### Addressing Security Challenges

Security concerns have been a critical aspect of the Pakistan-China relationship, especially following recent attacks on Chinese nationals in Pakistan. Prime Minister Sharif's visit, accompanied by the army chief, Gen. Asim Munir, underscored Pakistan's serious commitment to addressing these security issues. The Prime Minister assured the Chinese leadership of enhanced security measures to protect Chinese nationals working in Pakistan. Both sides agreed on the importance of combating terrorism, particularly preventing militants from using Afghan territory for attacks against Chinese interests.

#### Overcoming Criticisms and Challenges

Despite the positive outcomes, the visit has faced some criticisms and highlighted challenges. Observers note that improving the economic partnership with China is hampered by Pakistan's economic policies. The country owes over \$7.5 billion in project debt to power plants established under CPEC and nearly \$2 billion in circular debt to Chinese power producers. Managing this debt burden requires careful financial planning and strategic economic management. Economist Ali Hasanain criticized Pakistan's approach to CPEC projects, arguing that the obligations in foreign currencies conflict with the country's domestic-oriented exchange rate and industrial policies. This misalignment has gradually narrowed Pakistan's fiscal space, leading to a debt crisis where new loans are sought to pay off previous debts. The much-delayed Mainline-1 (ML-1) project, costing approximately \$6.8 billion, exemplifies these financial strains, struggling to attract Chinese investment due to anticipated financial stress.

#### Strategic Vision and Future Prospects

Despite these criticisms, a strategic vision for the future of Pakistan-China relations is emerging. The renewed focus on CPEC 2.0 aims to optimize existing infrastructure and attract Chinese energy-intensive industries to Pakistan, utilizing surplus power and enhancing economic productivity. This phase emphasizes industrial cooperation, mining and exploration, and leveraging Pakistan's strategic location for economic growth. The joint statement issued at the end of the visit highlighted China's encouragement for companies to invest in Pakistan based on market and commercial principles. This cautious yet optimistic approach signals a pathway

for sustainable and mutually beneficial investments in the future.

#### Conclusion

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to China has indeed been a historic and successful endeavor, reinforcing the enduring and exemplary friendship between Pakistan and China. The economic, strategic, and security agreements forged during this visit lay a solid foundation for future cooperation. While challenges remain, particularly in managing debt and aligning economic policies, the visit has demonstrated a strong commitment from both sides to overcome these hurdles and work towards a prosperous and secure future. The benefits of this visit are expected to reach the Pakistani public, enhancing economic opportunities, job creation, and overall socioeconomic development. The positive trajectory of Pakistan-China relations, as evidenced by this visit, reaffirms the enduring partnership between the two nations and sets a promising course for the future. The strategic vision and collaborative efforts displayed during this visit highlight the potential for continued growth and cooperation, ensuring that the Pakistan-China partnership remains robust and resilient.

## June

### **"India Should Revise Tibet Policy On China Occupation, Make Stance Clear On Dalai Lama's Succession"**

30 June 2024, StratNews Global, Amitabh P. Revi

A conversation on China occupied Tibet: past, present and future with Ambassador Dilip Sinha. His latest book is 'Imperial Games In Tibet: The Struggle for Statehood And Sovereignty'

#### China Occupied Tibet

"India's position at that time (China's invasion of Tibet in 1950) was that the invasion was wrong. The matter should be settled peacefully. And Tibet has internal autonomy. Now, all this has been violated by China. So China has violated the basis on which India and others formulated their policies. It is time to revisit the issue." On 'The Gist', Ambassador Dilip Sinha speaks to StratNews Global Associate Editor Amitabh P. Revi. Ambassador Sinha is the author of the book 'Imperial Games In Tibet: The Struggle for Statehood And Sovereignty'. You can find it in bookstores and online. Above all, it will officially launch in July. Ambassador Sinha has served as India's Envoy to the UN in Geneva, was the Former Head of the UN Division and Ex-Head of the PAI(Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran) Division in the Ministry of External Affairs.

## "China Claims Everything

"In his book, Ambassador Sinha demolishes the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) attempt to rewrite history by claiming Tibet was always part of China. "China now claims that even Chinggis Khan was Chinese. So they claim everything. But, the Mongols were the first to rule over Tibet. Thereafter Tibet became independent. The Manchus conquered China in 1721. When the Manchu dynasty collapsed in 1912, Tibet declared independence. Tibet was independent until 1950 when Communist China invaded." Infact in history there were times when Tibetan rulers invaded China and captured the then capital.

Ambassador Dilip Sinha discusses:

- The recent U.S. bipartisan lawmakers' visit to the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi, NSA Ajit Doval and EAM Dr S. Jaishankar meeting the delegation subsequently.
- The latest Tibet Act passed by both Houses in the U.S.
- Whether the U.S. is firing off India's shoulders India's Tibet and China policy post-independence to the present.
- The Great Game over Tibet. China's renaming of locations in Tibet, Xinjiang and Arunachal Pradesh.
- Debunking Chinese imperialism which is now presented as a CCP narrative of the so-called century of humiliation.
- The criticality of the Dalai Lama's succession.
- China crushing religion on one hand and usurping religious authority on the other.
- Whether Xi Jinping fears religion.
- What it will take for Tibet to be independent again.
- And how India and Tibet helped preserve each others customs, traditions and manuscripts during invasions.

## The shift in US policy toward Tibet

29 June 2024, Taipei Times, Sumit Kumar

Delegation-level visits between the two countries have become an integral part of transformed relations between India and the US. Therefore, the visit by a bipartisan group of seven US lawmakers, led by US House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs Chairman Michael McCaul to India from June 16 to Thursday last week would have largely gone unnoticed in India and abroad. However, the US delegation's four-day visit to India assumed huge importance this time, because of the meeting between the US lawmakers and the Dalai Lama.

- This in turn brings us to the focal question: How and to what extent has the meeting

between the US lawmakers and the Dalai Lama underlined a change in the US policy toward Tibet, and how would the shift in US policy impact China's claim over Tibet?

Historically, US policy toward Tibet has been inconsistent and unpredictable.

For example, while the US has consistently accepted that Tibet is part of China, Washington provided financial and military assistance to Tibetan guerrillas in the 1950s and 1960s. Subsequently, Washington's policy toward Tibet witnessed a dramatic change in the backdrop of a rapprochement between China and the US in the 1970s. More to the point, Tibet became almost a non-issue for the US.

However, Tibetans succeeded in drawing the attention of the US administration to the issues of human rights violations, suppression of freedom of expression and others through their pro-Tibet international campaign.

Then-US president Ronald Reagan signed into law the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1988 and 1989, which specifically asked the US to urge China to actively reciprocate the Dalai Lama's efforts to establish a constructive dialogue on the future of Tibet. It also asked China to respect internationally recognized human rights and end violations of Tibetans' human rights.

The emergence of the US as the sole superpower in the post-Cold War era positively impacted Washington's approach toward Tibet.

More importantly, then US-president George H. W. Bush declared the Dalai Lama and the government-in-exile as "Tibet's true representative."

The rise of China among other developments in the 21st century has further forced Washington to double down on its policies supporting the cause of Tibetans. More to the point, China has aggressively pursued the policy of dismantling the historically important legacies of Tibet by destroying several monasteries and imposing Chinese culture, rules and regulations on Tibetans. Moreover, Chinese atrocities against Tibetans have also increased over the years.

Consequently, it has become obligatory for the US to take strong measures in support of Tibet as a part of its foreign policy objective to promote freedom, human rights and democracy across the world.

The US administration has been agitated by Chinese President Xi Jinping's (习近平) efforts to challenge US dominance by challenging the existing liberal international order.

Beijing has adopted an assertive posture against its neighbors in east, southeast and south Asia. More importantly, the rise in China's military activities against Taiwan has alarmed the US. Thus, there is an increasing realization among the strategic community in Washington that the US should boost global

support for Tibet to challenge China's dominance over Tibet.

Another aspect of the US' renewed Tibet policy is to ensure that the identification and installation of Tibetan Buddhist religious leaders, including any future Dalai Lama, is determined solely by those within the Tibetan Buddhist faith community, in accordance with internationally recognized rights to religious freedom.

In this context, a new US bill – Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute – that awaits US President Joe Biden's assent is seen as a paradigm shift in US policy toward Tibet and China. For example, the bill says: "The United States Government has never taken the position that Tibet was a part of China since ancient times."

It also states that claims made by officials of the People's Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party that Tibet has been a part of China since ancient times are historically inaccurate.

In other words, departing from its previous position, the US now considers Tibet a sovereign state, rather than a part of China. Consequently, the bill talks about Tibetans' right to self-determination.

The bill also asks China to cease its propagation of disinformation about the history of Tibet, the Tibetan people and Tibetan institutions, including that of the Dalai Lama. At the same time, it expects the US to take public diplomacy efforts to counter disinformation about Tibet from China and the Chinese Communist Party.

Of course, transformed ties between New Delhi and Washington, and turbulent relations between Beijing and New Delhi, are another factor for the US to utilize the Tibet issue to prove its utility for India.

After all, the shift in the US' Tibet policy would greatly help India to allow more freedom to the Tibetan government-in-exile on its soil.

The new US bill on Tibet extends legitimacy to India's decision to provide asylum to Tibetans and allow the operation of the government of Tibet to function.

On the other hand, the credibility of the US would also be enhanced among its allies, partners and friends in the Indo-Pacific region. Moreover, the Biden administration's policy toward Tibet strongly reciprocates Modi's approach to Tibet.

Thus, while it is not unusual for the Indian government to allow a meeting between the bipartisan group of seven US lawmakers and the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, the shift in US foreign policy has certainly squeezed China's political space on the Tibet issue.

## **Resolve Tibet Act: An Opportune Time To Revisit India's Tibet Policy**

29 June 2024, Kashmir Observer, Anuraag Khaund

Tibet once again came to the fore-front of news headlines past few days because of two momentous actions by US and India. On 12 June, the US House of Representatives passed the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet- China Act (also known as the Resolve Tibet Act) which for the first time clearly stated the Washington's position on Tibet not constituting 'a part of China since ancient times'. The Act also called for the dispute between Tibet and the People's Republic of China (PRC) to be 'resolved in accordance with international law, including the UN Charter, by peaceful means, through dialogue, without pre-conditions' while enhancing bipartisan US support to the Tibetan issue. The above Act can be termed historic in the sense that the wording clearly posits Tibet and PRC as two separate entities locked in a long-standing dispute of international dispute (reference to international law) instead of the former being a part of the latter's territory and hence the dispute being 'internal.' Also noteworthy is the fact that the Act stipulates the US government to counter Beijing's disinformation of Chinese historical claims over the Tibetan plateau including not just the current Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) but also the provinces of Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu and Yunnan.

In India, the new Modi 3.0 government has given the green signal to rename 30 places in Tibet in a tit-for-tat move aimed at Chinese action of renaming places in Arunachal Pradesh, which Beijing refers to as 'Zagnan' or Southern Tibet on March 2024. This, and other events such as Taiwan President Lai Ching-te's congratulatory message to PM Modi and the latter's reciprocation of the same with wishes of closer New Delhi- Taipei ties have led to the speculation that Sino- Indian ties are bound to remain rocky like in the previous years since 2020. Moreover, Xi Jinping's act of not personally congratulating the new Indian PM on his assumption of office and the blatant Chinese pessimism on social media regarding the new government can be seen as an indication of the continuation of the current situation described as 'armed coexistence'.

Both the above instances involving India and US, two prominent democracies and global players have resulted in the re-emergence of the question of Tibet which have often remained on the backburner in an attempt not to stir up trouble with China. For India, the passage of the Resolve Tibet Act and the US clarity of position on Tibet is an opportune time to revisit and re-examine its own Tibet policy which is still weighed down by history.

Criticism of India's policy towards Tibet can be traced back to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's prescient letter in 1950 about nefarious Chinese designs on Tibet and its negative implications upon the security of then newly independent India. His premonitions were proved true by the 1962 war despite Nehru's acknowledgment of Chinese control over Tibet under the Panchsheel or the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence in 1954. Since then, over the years, corresponding to ebb and flow in Sino- Indian ties, there have been calls to revisit the over-cautious Indian approach to respecting Chinese sensibilities with no substantive reciprocation from the other side. This was reflected in the comments made by the Indian Parliamentary Committee on External Affairs in 2017 which stated that while New Delhi 'is overly cautious with China about China's sensitivities while dealing with Taiwan and Tibet, China does not exhibit the same deference while dealing with India's sovereignty concerns, be it Arunachal Pradesh or that of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir'. Hence, the Committee called for adopting a 'flexible approach' in dealing with Beijing which include Taiwan. And should include Tibet as well.

Calls for revision of India's Tibet strategy have become stronger in the backdrop of the continuing military standoff in Ladakh since 2020. This was reflected in action such as the PM's conveying birthday wishes to the 14th Dalai Lama and the attendance of then Sikyong (President) of the Tibetan Government in Exile (TGIE) Dr Lobsang Sangay during Modi's first swearing ceremony in 2014. The re-naming of places in Tibet mentioned above has led to the opinion that the latter action is 'tantamount to India re-opening the Tibetan question'. And it was about time that the Tibetan question be brought up for discussion and recalibrated in tune with India's changing geopolitical and strategic equation with China. While the above tit-for-tat renaming is a good start, yet as scholar Claude Arpi opines New Delhi will have to be more proactive in formulating a new comprehensive strategy vis-à-vis Tibet.

A first step, as mentioned earlier, is the re-discovery and highlighting of the age old historical links between Tibet and India especially the Indian imprint in Tibetan culture, religion, medicine and language. Like in the renaming initiative, meticulous research must be directed towards the links between Tibetan and Sanskrit languages, Buddhist Gurus and monks from Indian subcontinent who preached in Tibet, and the cross-cultural exchange between Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism and Hindu Tantric tradition visible in deities such as Palden Lhamo (similar features with Hindu Goddess Kali). To this end, the Government of India should provide

active support and funds to institutions such as the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Norbulingka Institute, Men-Tsee-Khang (Tibetan traditional medicine) and the Tibet Museum in Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh. The highlighting of the above linkages would put a strong dent to Chinese claims of control over Tibet since time immemorial. In this regard, New Delhi could also cooperate with the US as countering Chinese disinformation constitutes one of the objects of the Resolve Tibet Act.

The Sino- Indian rivalry over Buddhism constitutes another crucial area tied to New Delhi's Tibet policy. China has made significant inroads into the world of Buddhism by increasing its influence in platforms such as World Fellowship of Buddhists, the International Council of Day of Vesak (ICDV) as well as promoting the development of Buddhist sites such as Lumbini in Nepal- the birthplace of Gautama Buddha. Such increasing influence over the Buddhist world is utilised by Beijing to push the narrative of China, rather than India, being the historical centre of Buddhism while discrediting the Dalai Lama using rival sects as proxies. In the near future, the above influence could also be used to prop up support and legitimacy for the Chinese appointed 15th Dalai Lama after the passing away of the current one. Hence, India needs to urgently step up its game in the battle for influence by actively supporting bodies such as the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) under the Union Ministry of Culture and organising the Global Buddhist Summit (GBS) annually. The recent inauguration of the Nalanda University in Rajgir, Bihar on 19 June near the site of the historic ancient seat of Buddhism 34 years after the idea was first deliberated in Parliament in 2010, is a welcome move which arrived late but nonetheless would bolster New Delhi's soft power capabilities given it is utilised properly.

The most important pillar buttressing the Indian link with Buddhism and Tibet is the 14th Dalai Lama himself who on many occasions have underlined the umbilical connection between India (Guru/ Mentor) and Tibet (Chela/ Disciple). Moreover, the proclamations of the Dalai Lama himself regarding his re-incarnation such as stressing his exclusive right to choose his own way of re-birth/ re-incarnation and his (legitimate) successor hailing from a free country (possibly India) puts New Delhi in an advantageous position vis-a-vis China. Hence, India should strongly back the appointed successor or any reincarnation born on Indian soil while also actively supporting and coordinating with the Gaden Phodrang Foundation- the body deputed by His Holiness with the responsibility to recognize the latter's reincarnation. In this regard, Washington's support

could also be sought within the Tibetan Policy and Support Act (TPSA) 2020 which among other things, clearly stipulates the Tibetan Buddhist communities' sole right to appoint the 15th Dalai Lama without external (Chinese) influence. At the same time, Buddhist countries such as Japan and Vietnam to extend support to any future India born reincarnation- countries having strained ties with China currently. The 15th Dalai Lama born and raised in India and receiving the support of Buddhist population worldwide would be an asset to New Delhi in maintaining and consolidating its position among the Tibetan communities in exile all over the world and in the leadership of Buddhism over China. As a response to the mention of Kashmir in joint China- Pakistan statements, India should release an official statement supporting the Resolve Tibet Act and especially its emphasis on the resolution of the dispute between the two parties through dialogue. At the same time, both New Delhi and Washington should include Tibet and the Dalai Lama during summit level and high-level bilateral talks and release joint statements on the same thereby highlighting the disputed nature of Chinese occupation of the Tibetan plateau. Similar statements could also be generated bilaterally as well as multilaterally with countries like Japan and Vietnam since the Act also stipulates the US 'to coordinate with other countries.... towards the goal of a negotiated agreement on Tibet.'

The recent visit of a US high level delegation to India whose itinerary includes a meeting with the Dalai Lama in Dharamshala is a step which should be made frequent and actively emulated by high ranking Indian ministers having audiences with the Tibetan leader. Important commemorations of Tibetan history such as Tibetan Independence Day (13 February) and Uprising Day (March 10) should include high level Indo- US participation as well as promotion of the events brushed under the carpet by Chinese narrative. Moreover, both New Delhi and Washington should bring up the gross human rights violations happening in Tibet on UN and other related forums. The UN's focus should be brought upon the Tibetan self immolations and escaped political activists seeking asylum in India and elsewhere including allowing the latter to present testimonies in international fora. These would dent Chinese claims of peace and development in Tibet while also countering Beijing's unnecessary meddling with Kashmir at the UN.

Finally, New Delhi should synergise its increasing ties with Taiwan with its Tibet policy. Despite the historical uneasiness between the both, India could devote efforts at bringing them closer and even support TGIE's efforts to re-establish the Taiwanese parliamentary group for Tibet in the Legislative Yuan (Taiwanese parliament). In addition, Taiwan's

Buddhist connection could lead Taipei to support the Dalai Lama's chosen re-incarnation candidate. In this, the US could be roped in given the latter's status as the most important ally of Taiwan.

Mao Tse Dong in 1950 had justified Tibet's annexation in terms of the latter being the 'palm' to 'five fingers' (Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh). It is time India weakened the iron grip over the palm for the sake of the fingers crucial to our security and integrity.

### PLA reorganisation has implications for China's neighbours

27 June 2024, The Tribune, Jayadeva Ranade

As the conflicts in Ukraine and West Asia have shown, the battle of perception has become very important in present-day warfare to win popular support.

APPARENTLY undeterred by the turbulence in the People's Liberation Army (PLA), sparked by the disappearance of China's then Defence Minister Gen Li Shangfu and the 'removal' soon thereafter of the Commander and Political Commissar of the PLA Rocket Force and at least 11 other Generals, Chinese President Xi Jinping has effected the largest reorganisation of the PLA since 2016. It demonstrated his grip on the PLA. It showed that the PLA officers have imbibed lessons from their close study of the wars in Ukraine and Gaza. One major lesson has been the importance of propaganda and the ability to craft and shape popular perceptions. In Gaza, for example, Israel found that it lost global popular support, which had suddenly and overwhelmingly shifted in favour of Palestine. This was one backdrop that possibly precipitated the dissolution of the PLA Strategic Support Force (SSF) and the establishment of the PLA Information Support Force (ISF).

On April 19, Xi announced the formation of the PLA ISF. He simultaneously announced the establishment of the PLA Aerospace Support Force and the PLA Cyberspace Support Force and the dissolution of the PLA SSF. The order of precedence for the new services, important for the hierarchy-conscious PLA, was indicated as thus: the PLA Aerospace Support Force, PLA Cyberspace Support Force, PLA ISF and the Joint Logistics Support Force. Each of these is now an independent entity at the Deputy Theatre Commander-level, reporting directly to the Central Military Commission (CMC). They have single missions and are focused on one aspect of warfare, which would be intended to make command and control, as well as their performance, more effective. Among the reasons for the reorganisation would be that the capital-intensive PLA SSF encompassed a range of varied aspects of modern hi-technology



warfare capabilities, probably making it difficult for the PLA SSF Commander to pay adequate attention to the individual specialised forces under his command. At a time of rapid advances in technology and battlefield tactics evolving on the battlegrounds in Ukraine and West Asia, which the PLA leadership has been studying and analysing very carefully, this would be an impediment to the PLA becoming a world-class military capable of fighting and winning wars.

As the conflicts in Ukraine and West Asia have also shown, the battle of perception has become very important in present-day warfare to win popular support and influence outcomes. Information warfare and shaping scenarios has been noticeably prominent and successful in both these conflict zones. Reorganisation of the SSF will ensure focused attention and better utilisation of funds for each force. Since all forces are specialised, they will establish separate training establishments so that professionally competent personnel are available.

The main functions of the PLA ISF, as presently discernible, includes communications, including satellite communications, analysis of battlefield environment and target data, and maintenance, disruption and monitoring of cyber and communications channels. Many of the entities integrated into the ISF are from the SSF.

Available information shows that the agencies integrated into the PLA ISF include the headquarters of the now-disbanded SSF, the Information and Communication Base, and the Information and Communication Brigades of the Xinjiang and Tibet Military Districts. Additionally, it encompasses the Target Data Battalion, Battlefield Environment Battalion, Communications Support Battalion, Spectrum Control Battalion, and the Intelligence Analysis Centre of the Joint Staff Department of the CMC. Certain functions and capabilities from the Battlefield Situation and Strategic Early Warning Sub-Centres of the Joint Operations Command Centre of the CMC, as well as the Battlefield Situation Battalion, Information Service Battalion, and Command Operations and Maintenance Battalion of the Theatre Command Joint Operations Centres, have also been integrated. Furthermore, some forces from the 35th Base and the Satellite Communications Centre of the former SSF, along with the Battlefield Environment Research Institute and the Network Information Research Institute of the Systems Engineering Research Academy of the Academy of Military Sciences, are now part of the ISF.

Most personnel of these formations and units would have been retained and moved to the ISF with their original units. The leadership elements would largely have been left undisturbed. The Commander and Political Commissar of the Aerospace Force and

Cyberspace Force could similarly have been left in place.

Earlier, speaking at the National People's Congress on March 7, Xi had focussed on the building of strategic capabilities in emerging fields, the need to understand developments in emerging fields, and efficient integration of new productive forces and new combat forces.

Xi also underscored the importance of innovation and deepening reform of the national defence science and technology industry system. He stressed the importance of "integrating preparation for maritime military warfare, safeguarding of maritime rights and development of the maritime economy". He simultaneously highlighted the importance of a network space defence system and enhanced safeguards for national network security.

The reorganisation has implications for China's neighbours. Creation of the ISF implies increased attention to signals and electronic monitoring, interception and disruption capabilities. It will probably be responsible for disinformation campaigns and will enhance its cyber warfare capabilities. The ISF will be under pressure to show results, and cyberattacks and disinformation campaigns against targets – Indian, South Asian, South East Asian, etc. – can be expected to increase. The Dalai Lama's establishment would equally be a target. An important area of focus for the new force will be the maritime domain and particularly the Taiwan Strait and South China Sea.

### **Why Do India and China Keep Fighting Over This Desolate Terrain?**

27 June 2024, New York Times, Yudhijit Bhattacharjee

The 2,100-mile border separating India and China passes through some of the world's most inhospitable terrain. In the west, it runs along India's Ladakh region, at an altitude of 13,000 to 20,000 feet. During the months when the area isn't covered in snow, the ground resembles a moonscape. The earth is sandy, strewn with rocks and pebbles; not a blade of grass grows anywhere; there are no visible signs of animal life. In winter, temperatures can drop to – 40 degrees. The bleak conditions and barren vistas can induce despair in those who set foot on the land. "I've been to those places," a former Indian diplomat who now works for an international Buddhist organization in Delhi told me. "When you visit, you tend to think, Who the hell even wants this area?"

But that's not how nation-states view territory, no matter how desolate it is. That is why India and China have their armies deployed on these heights along an unmarked and, in many places, contested

boundary between the two countries. In the absence of any fencing or barbed wire to demarcate territory, soldiers from each nation contend with considerable ambiguity when conducting patrols along what's known as the Line of Actual Control. Vinod Bhatia, who served as director general of military operations for the Indian Army and is now retired, describes it as a line of perceptions.

"It's four lines, actually," he told me when I visited Delhi last year. "One is the Indian perception of the Line of Actual Control. Another is the Chinese perception of the Line of Actual Control. Third is the Indian perception of the Chinese perception of the Line of Actual Control — because we have a perception based on their line of patrolling. And the fourth is, of course, the Chinese perception of the Indian perception of the Line of Actual Control."

This lack of clarity means that there are several places along the border that are effectively a no-man's land, where both Indian and Chinese troops carry out patrols. Soldiers from each side routinely leave empty cigarette packets and beer cans behind as marks of territorial claim. At the same time, soldiers on each side are legally bound to exercise restraint during patrols, according to a 1996 agreement between the two countries that prohibits the use of firearms and munitions at the border.

When units from the two sides run into one another, they follow a mutually agreed upon protocol to avoid confrontation. "We pull out a banner that says in English and in Chinese: 'You are in our territory. Please go back,'" Bhatia told me. "And they hold up a banner of their own that says in Hindi and in English: 'You are in our territory. You go back.'"

Historically, such face-offs have been resolved peacefully. In recent years, however, confrontations have sometimes spiraled into skirmishes. One night in early December 2022, for instance, hundreds of Chinese troops attempted to breach, in four spots, a stone wall along a border ridgeline in the Yangtze plateau, located on an eastern stretch of the border in India's easternmost state, Arunachal Pradesh, which China claims is a part of Tibet. According to Indian press reports — the Indian Army has not provided a public account — the Chinese troops were armed with nail-studded clubs, monkey fists (knotted-up portions of rope used as a weapon) and stun guns. The Indian soldiers, using crude weapons of their own, eventually forced the Chinese troops to retreat.

Though there were no fatalities, the engagement was violent, making it the most severe skirmish since a June 2020 clash in the Galwan Valley, which proved fatal for 20 Indian soldiers and at least four Chinese soldiers.

Episodes like those in Galwan and Yangtze reflect an era of increased hostility between the two countries,

which have generally maintained a peaceable, if strained, relationship in the decades since they fought a war in 1962. Today, India and China have each stationed an estimated 60,000 soldiers along the Line of Actual Control.

Jayadeva Ranade worked for many years with India's Research and Analysis Wing, the country's main foreign intelligence agency; he now serves on India's National Security Advisory Board. In his view, skirmishes along the border are likely to be regular occurrences for the foreseeable future. "This conflict isn't going to go away in a hurry," he told me. And in large part, the matter is about more than just gaining territory; it's also about a broader geopolitical rivalry. "The bigger issue is they don't want India to rise," Ranade says, referring to China. "Because they see themselves as the only power in the Indo-Pacific region."

The two countries are increasingly jockeying for global influence as well. A strong nationalist leader rules each country: President Xi Jinping in China and, in India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who just won a third term in office, despite his party's electoral setbacks that will make him dependent on allies in Parliament. Xi, in his address to the 19th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in 2017, declared that China "has stood up, grown rich and is becoming strong" and could offer "Chinese wisdom and a Chinese approach to solving the problems facing mankind."

More recently, Modi has been emboldened by India's growth. The country's population surpassed China's last year, and its economy, while still much smaller than China's, is expected to grow faster in the coming years. Like Xi, Modi has spoken of India's ambition to reclaim its ancient glory and return to its status as Vishwaguru, a Sanskrit phrase that means "teacher to the world." India now acts with an assertiveness it lacked even a decade ago.

Harsh V. Pant, a professor of international relations at King's College London, characterizes Modi's government, compared with previous governments, as "much more robust in articulating India's national-security priorities and making the case that New Delhi will stand up for those interests." In 2019, that stance was demonstrated when India conducted airstrikes against what it claimed were terrorist training camps in Balakot, Pakistan. "Balakot was a signal that we are willing to use the instrumentality of the military to achieve certain outcomes and test how far we can go," Pant told me. Last year, India rebuffed criticism from the European Union over its continuing imports of Russian oil, which was seen as helping Russia in its war against Ukraine.

New Delhi's assertiveness was again on display in a diplomatic crisis last year, when Canada announced

that it suspected Indian intelligence of having been involved in the killing of a Sikh separatist leader on Canadian soil. The Indian government denied the charge and demanded to see evidence of that claim. It also accused Canada of sheltering Sikh terrorists. Canada had to withdraw 41 of its 62 diplomats from India in October, after the Indian government said it would revoke their diplomatic immunity. As further retribution, visas for Canadians were suspended for more than a month.

In May, after Canadian police arrested and charged three Indian citizens based in Edmonton for last year's murder, India's foreign minister suggested that the killing was related to gang violence and chided Canadian authorities for having allowed "organized crime from India, specifically from Punjab, to operate in Canada."

It isn't uncommon to detect a degree of belligerence in how Indian officials talk about these matters. When I visited Delhi last fall, the mood in the capital over Canada's allegations was one of defiance. Pankaj Saran, who served as India's deputy national-security adviser from 2018 to 2021 and now runs NatStrat, which researches security issues, contrasts India's self-assuredness on the international stage today with its diffident foreign policy of the 1980s. "Back then, we were literally riding the coattails of the Soviet Union," he told me. But as the world's fifth-largest economy, India no longer has any reason to be timid. "Today," he says, "we have a government that believes we've been taking the hit for far too long."

The Indo-China war of 1962 was precipitated by a series of border clashes not too different from those of recent years. The earlier ones were about more than territorial disagreements, though. China was smarting from India's embrace of the Dalai Lama, who had fled Tibet in 1959 and established a government in exile in Dharamshala, India. At this point, the two countries were still young in their modern incarnations; neither had an impressive military. But the People's Liberation Army of China was stronger, and Indian troops suffered a humiliating defeat, which impelled India to increase military spending. A month after the war began, around the same time that India requested that the United States intervene with air support, China declared a unilateral cease-fire, effectively ending the conflict. India had to accept that Aksai Chin, an area of 15,000 square miles that it claimed as its own, would remain under Chinese control.

An uneasy truce held for the next several decades, except for a confrontation in 1986-87 on the eastern stretch of the border, in a valley bordering the hilly and verdant Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. Indian officials say that the status quo began to change in 2013, right after Xi Jinping became

China's president. In April of that year, weeks before the newly anointed Chinese premier Li Keqiang was scheduled to visit Delhi, Chinese troops entered the Depsang Plains in Aksai Chin and set up an encampment just 20 miles south of an Indian military base. Alarmed by the incursion, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police pitched its own tents about 300 yards away. The standoff continued for about three weeks before it was resolved through talks, and both sides removed their encampments.

Less than a year and a half later, days before Xi's state visit to India in 2014, Chinese troops entered Chumar, in eastern Ladakh. "This time it was deeper into our territory and on a broader swath," Ranade told me when we met for coffee in Delhi last summer. Modi reportedly raised the matter with Xi during a dinner in Ahmedabad, and weeks later the troops withdrew from the area.

Some Indian officials back then were of the view that Depsang and Chumar were one-off incidents, attributable solely to People's Liberation Army commanders on the ground locally, but Ranade was certain that Beijing had to be involved. In those days, he prepared a regular report on China for a think tank, based on his analysis of Chinese materials. He learned a few things that were troubling: The P.L.A. was conducting more exercises in Tibet (and using more weapons in them) than ever. "Then they began having paratrooper exercises there, and they had some kind of aircraft coming in there, which was again unusual," Ranade told me. The increased military preparedness signaled an aggressive posture. "I said: 'Look, there's something brewing. I can't tell you what it is, but it doesn't look good to me.'"

The next notable confrontation unfolded in Doklam, a plateau roughly 800 miles to Ladakh's east, close to where the borders of Bhutan, China and India meet. China claims Doklam as its territory, while India and Bhutan maintain that the area is a part of Bhutan. Bhutan has historically relied on India's help to defend its borders, so when China started to build a road into Doklam in June 2017, Indian troops entered the area to stop that construction, and the two sides formed human walls that faced off against each other.

Srikant Kondapalli, a professor of China studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, recounted to me what he had learned from an Indian brigadier about how Indian forces attempted to gain a psychological advantage in the conflict. "They put together some 40 to 50 especially tall Indian soldiers, all above six-and-a-half feet, and pitched them against the Chinese, who were a lot shorter," Kondapalli says. He believes the intimidation tactic helped India as the troops went eyeball to eyeball. Scuffles broke out intermittently. The face-off lasted 73 days. India was

able to shut down the road project, which would have put the Chinese military within striking range of the Siliguri corridor – a strategically vital sliver of land that connects India’s northeastern states to the rest of the country.

‘If this was not premeditated, how come the Chinese had iron clubs with spikes and barbed wire?’

Then came the clash in the Galwan Valley, during a June night in 2020. The valley is along the Galwan River, just southwest of Aksai Chin. Tensions had been simmering there since April, when Chinese troops pitched tents in the valley. The Indian military saw this as yet another incursion across the Line of Actual Control by the P.L.A. According to Indian officials, China agreed to withdraw from these areas, including from the valley.

The violence in mid-June began when Col. Bikkumalla Santosh Babu, who commanded an Indian Army unit tasked with monitoring the Chinese withdrawal from Galwan, reportedly got into a heated exchange with Chinese soldiers who were supposed to have left by then. Although the Indian Army hasn’t released details, I gathered the broad outlines of the incident from Indian security and intelligence sources, including Jayadeva Ranade, whose own understanding of the incident comes from a careful reading of media reports. He told me that Babu, who was accompanied by two men when he walked over to the Chinese camp, was attacked. “One of the men came back and told the others in his unit,” Ranade said, “and they went over and there was a showdown.”

The Chinese soldiers were apparently armed with metal clubs studded with spikes and wrapped in barbed wire. The fighting, which continued late into the night and involved dozens of men on each side, might have been less bloody if the soldiers had used their firearms. In all, 20 Indian soldiers, including Babu, were killed. State media in China later reported four deaths on the Chinese side, although Indian officials claim the number was significantly higher.

The brutal fighting in Galwan didn’t strike Ranade as entirely unexpected. He saw it not as a fracas that spiraled out of control but rather an attack planned by the Chinese – the kind of thing he had been warning his colleagues about. As he put it to me, “If this was not premeditated, how come the Chinese had iron clubs with spikes and barbed wire?” Ranade said he had come across calls put out by P.L.A. units inviting bids to supply similar weapons as recently as March 2023, which indicated continued hostile intent. “So obviously, they are preparing.”

In 2017, Xi Jinping wrote a letter to two sisters from a yak-herding family in Lhunze County, in southern Tibet, adjacent to Arunachal Pradesh, thanking them for their efforts in safeguarding the border.

According to Chinese state media, the two Tibetan women and their father had been the sole inhabitants of their town Yumai for a period of years until the mid-1990s; its population has since risen to more than 200. In his letter, which was widely publicized in China, Xi expressed hope that the family would inspire other herders to put down roots in the area like “galsang flowers” and become guardians of Chinese territory.

Since taking over as president, Xi has repeatedly talked about being uncompromising in protecting the country’s “core interests” – a term that is understood to include China’s territorial and sovereignty claims. Under Xi, the country has converted coral reefs and sand piles dredged up from the seabed in the South China Sea, which it maintains belongs almost entirely to China, into artificial islands that are now heavily militarized with missiles and air strips. Xi has also emphasized China’s commitment to realizing its long-held dream of “reunification” with Taiwan, which split from mainland China in 1949. A similar priority is the consolidation of Chinese control over Tibet by squashing a decades-long Tibetan independence movement. China’s aggressive stance along the border with India, Kondapalli told me, is being driven by the same overarching goal of asserting sovereignty over disputed areas.

A senior Indian intelligence official I met with in Delhi last year explained that China’s hostility along the Line of Actual Control had two strategic objectives: diminishing India’s impact in its own backyard and tying down India’s military in order to weaken India’s broader geopolitical influence. “We are the big brother in our region: Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka – everyone looks to India when they have a problem,” he said. “China wants to dent us by saying, ‘How is India going to be your net security provider when they can’t handle their own risk?’” He attributed Chinese cyberattacks directed at India to the same motive: a desire to reduce India’s standing. China’s hostility, he said, was aimed at diluting India’s participation in strategic alliances that have emerged to counter Chinese threats.

One such example is the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or Quad, a group made up of India, the United States, Australia and Japan, which share the goal of preventing China from dominating the Indo-Pacific. The Chinese, according to the intelligence official, “don’t want India to be the long arm of the United States in this region or to be an active part of things like the Quad, which brings you back to the border issue. They want to keep us pinned down on the land borders because the future of geopolitics is maritime. They don’t want us to lift our heads.”

China’s economic muscle has helped expand its influence in the region in ways that India hasn’t been able to match, the official told me. As part of its Belt

and Road Initiative, which Xi began in 2013, China has invested in infrastructure projects in every one of India's neighbors. "We call them strategic projects because they are going into them with no consideration of what they'll get back in business terms," he said. What China was gaining from these investments was "massive leverage." Not only was India unable to compete in terms of resources, he added, India was also not allowed to operate as he claimed the Chinese do. "They literally come with bags of cash," he said. "We have to have parliamentary approval, this approval, that approval."

At the Tibetan border, this approach has taken a more physical form, as China has built more than 620 new "xiaokang" — or "moderately well-off" — villages all along the Tibetan border. Billions of yuan have been spent on roads, power stations, schools and health care facilities to support these villages. Each settlement consists of about 100 homes equipped with modern amenities like heating and internet connectivity. A mix of Tibetans and Han Chinese — many of whom are ex-military men — have moved into the villages, Kondapalli says, effectively changing the demographics of the area and enhancing Beijing's ability to crush Tibetan resistance.

"These settlements are de facto intelligence outposts," Kondapalli says. In contrast to the xiaokang villages, which are right next to the Line of Actual Control, the settlements on India's side are 20 to 30 miles inside Indian territory. That gives the settlers in these villages an opening to encroach upon land that belongs to India, Kondapalli says.

Indian authorities see the establishment of these border villages as buttressing a strategy of gradual encroachment — or "salami slicing," as it's known among security strategists — that China has practiced over the years in the South China Sea and is now attempting to replicate along the Line of Actual Control. The high-ranking Indian intelligence official I spoke with in Delhi explained to me how the Chinese military had been operating on the border. "It's very simple, but very clear," he told me over breakfast on the patio of a Delhi hotel. "It starts with their yaks coming into pastures that are common grazing grounds at the border. After a few weeks of the yaks hanging around, the herdsman will come. Then, they start making trails for the herders. And then, because there are herders and yaks there, the P.L.A. will come, saying, 'These are our nationals — we're just checking on them.'"

The official went on: "Once the troops start coming in for patrols, then they'll pitch tents, saying, 'Our troops need to rest.' The next thing they'll do is, 'The trails are not good enough, let's start making roads.' Then they'll prevent our patrols from coming into that

area. Once the roads are properly made, the tents will become cemented structures. So, in about eight to nine steps, they will create new facts on the ground and say, 'This is ours.'" Effectively, winning a war without firing a shot.

That's what the P.L.A. appears to have been aiming for, not just in the Galwan Valley but also in several areas along the border in eastern Ladakh that Chinese troops moved into in the spring of 2020. The clash at Galwan was followed by a withdrawal from that site by both sides, but Chinese soldiers continued to occupy other areas, including those on the banks of Pangong Lake, whose westernmost edge lies 50 miles to the south of the Galwan Valley.

India fought back. On the evening of Aug. 29, 2020, troops from a secretive Indian guerrilla force, together with soldiers from the Indian Army, began ascending the slopes of a mountain in eastern Ladakh. The mountains are part of the Kailash Range, a chain of rugged peaks, the tallest of which reach 22,000 feet, beginning near Pangong's southern bank and extending southeast for some 500 miles. Because of the difficult terrain, the heights along the range were left unoccupied by both India and China after the 1962 war. But now, nearly six decades later, Indian Army commanders hoped to take control of several of these hilltops.

As Lt. Gen. Y.K. Joshi, the top commander in charge of the operation, later disclosed in media interviews, the operation, called Snow Leopard, had been planned as a response to the P.L.A.'s incursions. By the night of Aug. 29, Indian troops were in possession of a strategic peak. The following morning, Indian tanks rolled up a mountainside several miles southeast on the range, enabling the Indian Army to occupy a high mountain pass known as Rezang La, a strategic location overlooking a Chinese garrison stationed at Moldo on the other side of the range. By the time the P.L.A. could bring its equipment and troops up the slopes on their side, Indian troops already had the advantage.

The action was "well planned, well thought out and executed, achieving total surprise," Joshi said in a video interview with Nitin Gokhale, a veteran Indian military journalist who runs a foreign-affairs website called Stratnews Global. (The Indian Army has not officially released any information about the operation, but I got a summary description of it from Gokhale.) The Indians suffered one casualty: 53-year-old Nyima Tenzing of the guerrilla Special Frontier Force, which was established 60 years ago to conduct covert operations against China. Tenzing, like other troops who make up the S.F.F., was of Tibetan origin and died from a land mine left behind after the 1962 war.

As Joshi explained to Stratnews, India's goal in taking the Kailash heights was to compel China to



withdraw from the areas occupied by the P.L.A. after their incursions earlier that month. The strategy gave India leverage in negotiating with China, and ultimately led to success: In February 2021, the P.L.A. dismantled its structures and pulled its soldiers back from those sites in exchange for Indian troops vacating the hilltops.

That doesn't mean, however, that the Chinese have given up. In fact, the P.L.A.'s military presence in the broader area north of Pangong Lake has increased significantly since 2021. According to an analysis by the Center for Strategic and International Studies of satellite images taken on Oct. 4, 2022, the Chinese have built a new P.L.A. divisional headquarters just north of Pangong, just three and a half miles from the Line of Actual Control. Its support buildings are, the C.S.I.S. reports, "flanked by a bevy of trenches and revetments for storing and securing equipment."

At the end of last August, China's Ministry of Natural Resources released a new map that rendered Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh as Chinese territory. China has published such maps before. But the timing of the new release — less than two weeks before India was to host the G20 summit in Delhi — suggested that it was a calculated jab intended to undermine India precisely when the country hoped to showcase its rising influence. A government spokesman said such actions by China served only to "complicate the resolution of the boundary question."

India sees China employing similar tactics to try to pressure India on Arunachal Pradesh, which the Chinese government calls Zangnan. In April, China's Ministry of Civil Affairs announced that it was renaming 30 places in the region — the fourth such move since 2017. In March of last year, China chose not to send its delegate to a G20 event hosted by India in Itanagar, the capital of Arunachal Pradesh, as a reminder that it considers India's rule there illegitimate. "When there's a delegation of Indian bureaucrats traveling to China, the Chinese embassy here in Delhi will not issue a stamped visa to the delegate who belongs to Arunachal Pradesh," says the former diplomat now at the nonprofit Buddhist organization. Instead, embassy officials permit entry by stapling an unstamped piece of paper to the passport. "They say the individual is welcome because his land is a part of China." The result, the former diplomat told me, is that the Indian government then can't send that delegate because doing so would register approval of China's position. India has its own anxieties about Indians living near the border: It worries that they might shift their allegiance to China.

One reason for China's interest in Arunachal Pradesh, especially its district of Tawang, is the existence of Buddhist holy sites in the state, including

the Tawang monastery. Founded in the late 17th century, it is the world's second largest Buddhist monastery, after the Drepung monastery in Lhasa, Tibet. The Tawang monastery was the Dalai Lama's first refuge in India when he fled Tibet in 1959, crossing over into Arunachal Pradesh after an arduous trek through the mountains. Derek Grossman, of the RAND Corporation, explains that China wants Tawang because it believes that control over what is currently the most important center of Tibetan Buddhism outside Tibet will help consolidate its hold over the Tibetan population. "They have some fears that because India continues to give safe refuge to the Dalai Lama, at some point the Dalai Lama could return to Tawang and use it as leverage to galvanize the Tibetan people to try and declare independence from China," Grossman says.

India's government has its own anxieties about Indians living close to the border: It worries that they might shift their allegiance to China. Arunachal Pradesh, like much of India's northeast, is less developed than other parts of the country; many rural communities in remote areas live in relative isolation. Yeshe Phuntsok, a retired government employee who lives in Tawang, told me that even 20 years ago, many people in the village where he grew up were not fully aware that they were Indians. "They didn't know there was a country called India or that there was a country called China," he says. Over the years, outreach efforts by Indian authorities have helped change that, he says: "Now, they understand that India is their country."

This fledgling, still-forming sense of Indian identity in parts of the border population is another reason the xiaokang villages built by China are a source of concern for the Indian government. "Their thinking is that when they publicize the development of their villages, people on our side of the border will look at that and say, 'Oh, we are so badly off,'" the Indian intelligence official I had breakfast with told me. "And the Tibetans will see that Arunachal is so poor by comparison."

Better cellular connectivity in China's border villages is a source of envy across the Line of Actual Control, where citizens in some areas are able to receive signals from Chinese cellphone towers. Phones can automatically switch to the Chinese network near the border, Phuntsok told me. Earlier on the day we spoke, he had visited an area close to the Line of Actual Control. "Right after I got there, I noticed that my phone was showing 3:30 p.m.," he said. For a little while, Phuntsok puzzled over how the time could have passed so quickly. He then realized the phone was showing Chinese time, which is two hours and 30 minutes ahead of Indian time there.

Ngawang Tashi, a Buddhist monk from Arunachal Pradesh, told me that China's attempts to woo India's

predominantly Buddhist border population is part of a larger effort to “sinify” Buddhism – that is, dilute its Tibetan identity and make it more Chinese. He said he had heard about the Chinese government offering houses and financial benefits to Indian yak herders to get them to settle in some of the newly built villages. “Most people here are loyal to India and followers of His Holiness the Dalai Lama,” he told me. But after the current Dalai Lama is gone, that could change, he added. “They can be swayed when there is money being offered.”

Belatedly, the Indian government has responded to China’s xiaokang villages with a “vibrant villages” program, announced in April last year. Over the next decade, the government says, it plans to invest \$600 million in the development of about 3,000 villages that are already settled along the Line of Actual Control, from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh. By building roads, dams, schools and hospitals, and by improving telecom services throughout this stretch, authorities hope to give people in border communities a reason to stay where they are and stay loyal to India.

The skirmishes of the past few years have had a silver lining, says Claude Arpi, a longtime scholar of Tibet and Indo-China relations who is currently a distinguished fellow at the Center of Excellence for Himalayan Studies at Shiv Nadar University. It has forced the two sides to come to formal agreements about the border at certain places in Ladakh. “In fact, this is the first time that a map for the L.A.C. exists for this area,” Arpi told me.

Disagreements about the boundary persist elsewhere, however, including Demchok and Depsang. It’s unclear if those will be resolved anytime soon, even though Modi and Xi Jinping agreed at a summit in South Africa last August to expedite “disengagement and de-escalation” on the border, according to an Indian government spokesman. Despite his party’s loss of its majority in the recent election, Modi’s decision-making power on nationalistic issues like border disputes with China is unlikely to diminish in his third term, which in turn means India’s assertiveness along the Line of Actual Control is likely to continue. “Today, after what happened in Galwan, there is no question that China can come more than a few hundred meters inside India’s territory,” Arpi says. “India has responded very strongly for once.”

## **Straight Talk | India’s Himalayan Powerplay: China Caught Off Guard As India, US Play the Tibet Card**

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For now, India has made it abundantly clear to China that unless it course-corrects, New Delhi’s activism for both Taiwan and Tibet will only rise

The new Indian government was sworn in on June 4. Within days, a bipartisan American delegation led by the US House Committee on Foreign Affairs chair Michael McCaul was in town. The town in question was Dharamshala – the seat of the Tibetan government in exile and where the Dalai Lama has been living ever since he fled Tibet. Despite China’s warnings to Washington against the said visit, the American delegation met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Delhi after their talks with the Tibetan government and the Dalai Lama. That Nancy Pelosi is a personality deeply embedded in the American establishment is a well-known fact. As such, her visit had to have the sanction of the top echelons of both the Biden administration and the Modi government. Her visit to Dharamshala was, for all practical purposes, as significant as her trip to Taiwan in 2022, if not more.

Naturally, this has made many in India and around the world sit up and take notice. After all, Washington and New Delhi’s Tibet push has come out of the blue. On expected lines, the intention of the visit has come under scrutiny. China is flummoxed, while many in India appear to be apprehensive of the Americans using New Delhi as a shoulder to fire from. However, this is certainly not a haphazard decision by India, much less one taken under pressure. It is a warning shot for China and its president, Xi Jinping. India is essentially signalling to China that play-time is over. The scare of falling out of line vis-à-vis the “One China Policy” is over. One-sided bullying will no longer allowed to be the norm. China can no longer rename Indian villages and expect New Delhi to sit by idly. The rules of engagement have changed.

It was about time India let China know that it too can press some of Beijing’s raw nerves. While caution is advisable, it is refreshing to see India demonstrate the ability to play the game as an equal power. Bullying tolerated beyond a point is as good as submission. As a side note, it is surprising to watch the US take up the issue of Tibet’s autonomy so aggressively. The US appears to be trying to gain leverage over Beijing in the run-up to it making a move on Taiwan. The invasion of Taiwan looks inevitable, and is only a question of “when” and not “if”. Joe Biden also has good reason to push the Tibet card now, at the fag end of his Presidency, given how American foreign policy since 2020 has been an unmitigated disaster. If this indeed turns out

to be the first and last Biden presidency, he would like to end it on a high note and be seen as a President who brought Tibet back on the table.

For India, China's growing appetite for expansionism is quite concerning. Beijing has been upping the rhetoric on "South Tibet", renaming Indian villages and refusing to disengage from crucial areas in Ladakh. It is also expanding its outreach in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and attempting to lure traditional India-friendly countries under its umbrella. For India, the worry in a post Taiwan-invasion scenario will be where China turns its eyes next. Chances are, Beijing's focus will turn to Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh even as it steps up activities in the IOR.

India does not want to be taken by surprise and left devising a strategy when the crisis strikes. By allowing the US delegation to not just visit Dharmshala but also meet the Dalai Lama, the Indian government has made it clear it can also play the Tibet and Taiwan cards at a time and place of its choosing.

That the same has happened at the very outset of Modi's third term in power is quite telling as well. It is a sign from the Indian government that China will be taken head on over the next five years.

The US has orchestrated a big show of strength alongside India in order to publicise the bipartisan Tibet policy bill. After all, the visit came in the backdrop of Biden preparing to sign the Tibet policy bill adopted by both the US Senate and the House of Representatives. The bill seeks to counter China's narrative about its control over Tibet and promote dialogue between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama.

The Tibet Policy Bill refutes China's claim that Tibet has been part of China since ancient times. That, in Beijing's mind, is a direct affront to the "One China Policy" – something which India is now party of.

**WHAT PROMPTED THE CHANGE IN INDIA'S STRATEGY?**

There are a couple of factors playing on India's mind. First, China and India are both engaged in an active standoff in Eastern Ladakh. Beijing wants India to accept the new status quo in Ladakh and allow the bilateral relationship to remain unaffected. However, New Delhi is willing to have none of it and insists that absent a resolution in Ladakh, the bilateral relationship will remain in the cold storage.

For far too long, India has had a headless and incoherent policy of dealing with China. Finally, one can witness signs of New Delhi getting its act together and a much more strong-headed and mature China policy taking shape – one which will become even more apparent and concrete in the months to come. Moves relating to Taiwan and Tibet

appear to be part of the same strategy, which India is now using to gain leverage over China.

China's recent gesture of gifting water to the Maldives from Tibetan glaciers, while hypocritically promoting water conservation campaigns, has not gone unnoticed. In response, New Delhi is preparing to rename 30 villages in Tibet, as a form of diplomatic retaliation. The message for China could not be any clearer.

China claims Arunachal as its territory by referring to it as 'Zangnan' or southern Tibet. It has renamed 30 locations in Arunachal Pradesh with Chinese and Tibetan names. This appears to have been the last straw for India. Not only is China refusing to expeditiously resolve the standoff in Eastern Ladakh, but is also consistently pushing its own narrative on Arunachal Pradesh by calling it "South Tibet".

Besides, only months prior to India hosting the G20 leader's summit in New Delhi last September, Beijing had released a new map that asserted territorial claim over Arunachal and Aksai Chin in Ladakh. In the 2023 edition of China's 'standard map', uploaded by its ministry of natural resources on the website of its standard map service website, Aksai Chin and Arunachal are among the south and south-east Asian territories marked within the Chinese borders. Add to it China's growing eye in the Indian Ocean Region, and India believes the time to take concrete action is now.

India has finally realised that China is not a country that can be ignored. Beijing's expansionist tendencies know no bound. There will not suddenly come a day when China forgets all about its fictitious claims on Ladakh, Arunachal Pradesh and other sovereign Indian areas. For now, India has made it abundantly clear to China that unless it course-corrects, New Delhi's activism for both Taiwan and Tibet will only rise. In the times to come, one can expect more facets of this Himalayan powerplay to unfold.

### **Centring 'Tibetan' in Tibetan and Himalayan Studies in India**

25 June 2024, SNU, Swati Chawla

Although prompted by tensions with China, the recently renewed administrative and scholarly interest in the Himalayan regions of India bordering Bhutan, Nepal, and Tibet is nevertheless an opportunity to correct broader historical amnesia about the long histories of interconnectedness in the area. It is vital here to acknowledge the contribution of the six-decade-long exile of the Dalai Lama— both the institution and the person—and of the Tibetan community in exile in preserving Himalayan traditions and histories and in shepherding the institutions that enabled their revival in postcolonial

India. This article makes a case for centring Tibet and Tibetan exiles in Tibetan and Himalayan studies in India.

Keywords: Tibetology, Tibetan exile, Himalayan studies

It had been a huge discovery for me— the Himalayas are not part of Indian history.

— Aniket Alam, 2020i

My pet peeve is that you can't have a China policy without a Tibet policy, and you can't have a Tibet policy ... without a Himalayan policy — a 'Himalayan policy' that encompasses both 'domestic Himalaya' and 'inter-state Himalaya.'

— Siddiq Wahid, 2020ii

#### Introduction

In June 2023, following a chintan shivir (brainstorming session) chaired by Home Minister Amit Shah, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) asked personnel of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) to collect histories of the border villages manned by them “extending up to the past 2,000 years” (Manral 2023). Some understood the move was connected to the government's plans to improve infrastructure in the border region. The 'Vibrant Villages Programme,' for example, aims to develop and create employment opportunities and promote local products in the border areas, which, the Home Minister stressed, could “eventually stop migration” out of these villages. He added that “contact and communication with every border village and its residents is very important for the security of the borders” (Manral 2023).

The Vibrant Villages Programme, a scheme sponsored by the Union Government for the financial years 2022-23 to 2025-26, has earmarked 2,967 villages along India's northern and eastern borders with Tibet/China, situated across 19 districts in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Ladakh (Union Territory). The Programme has also authorised the establishment of several units of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), enhancing their infrastructure and inducting over 9,000 troops (The Indian Express 2023).iii

This recognition of the need to better document and understand the histories of India's vast border regions, stem depopulation, and bridge the disconnect between the locals and the officers of the Indian state is a reminder of the cartographic anxiety that continues to plague the Indian republic three-quarters of a century after decolonisation.iv The 2,000-year village histories

collected by CAPF personnel—which would subsequently be added to their training module (Manral 2023) would undoubtedly reveal the older provenance for this anxiety and its relation to processes of border-making and nation-building. Most importantly for this article, these histories also

remind us of the region's embeddedness within the Tibetan Buddhist cultural world— age- old relations of trade, intermarriage, seasonal migration, and monastic patronage among Tibet and parts of Himalayan India— and the impact of the six-decade-long Tibetan exile on Himalayan peoples.

Regrettably, though, amidst laudable suggestions such as the promotion of traditional knowledge practices, showcasing local culture and heritage, and promoting social entrepreneurship—all of which, it is hoped, would encourage locals to stay in their native villages and perform a more significant role in safeguarding the borders (Manral 2023; The Indian Express 2023)—there is scant acknowledgement of this wider context and shared history, or of the debt of gratitude India owes to organisations and initiatives established by Tibetans in exile, which have been long performing some of the very tasks outlined by the MHA (Chawla 2023).



Figure 1. “Tibet Border NOT China Border,” Graffiti at Tibetan settlement at Majnu ka Tila, Delhi (August 2021). Photo (panorama) by the author.

Two years before the chintan shivir mentioned above, on 28 January 2021, as Indian and Chinese troops faced off in Ladakh in the western Himalaya, The Times of India reported about the Indian Army's proposal for its officers to study Tibetology in order to “counter the propaganda and spread of influence by China.” As scholars of Tibet and the Himalaya, many of us welcome the so-called “Tibetology proposal” to understand “Tibetan history, culture, and language on both sides of the Line of Actual Control” (Pandit 2021). The government is right to emphasise the importance of building expertise on Tibet to understand the history and contemporary challenges in India's relationship with China.

India-China relations cannot be approached through a strictly bilateral prism that excludes Tibet and the Himalaya. Equally, however, Tibetology cannot be confined within the bounds of state

interests and territorial conflicts on either side of the Tibetan plateau. And it cannot disregard the Tibetan community in exile (Chawla and Balasubramaniam 2021).

Forgotten friends?



The Indian Army's instrumental and strategic employment of Tibetology is not very different from how Tibet and the Himalaya have been approached in most scholarship. The production and codification of knowledge about Tibet had served European imperial interests from the earliest missionary writings to the travelogues and the histories written by diplomats.<sup>v</sup> Linguistic competency was part of colonial officers' training; they learned the Central Tibetan dialect and were often tutored by monks from Sikkim, Ladakh, and Darjeeling who had spent time in Tibet (McKay 1997). This interest and expertise in Tibet declined in the postcolonial period. Officers were not posted in the frontier regions long enough to produce a cadre that knew the region and the language or could conduct original research. According to historian Tsering Shakya, Indian diplomatic scholarship about Tibet after Independence mostly regurgitated colonial writing.<sup>vi</sup> When I began scouring the archival record for my doctoral work, I realised that the exiled nuns and monks I had met in Dharamsala, who (or whose parents) had migrated after 1959, were far from blazing a trail. In fact, they had followed in the footsteps of their kinsmen and traders, monks and laypeople, who had, for generations, been crisscrossing what later became firm national borders. Furthermore, while looking for "Tibet" in archival catalogues and indices, I kept running into correspondence routed through Sikkim and Bhutan. My knowledge of Tibetan exile and of South Asian history thus far had not alerted me to these longer histories and interconnections.

I realised, too, that my own ignorance was not unique. As Indrani Chatterjee pointed out in her aptly titled monograph *Forgotten Friends*, postcolonial historians of modern India have "mastered a particular kind of forgetfulness about their trans-regional, trans-sectarian, and trans-national precolonial histories" (Chatterjee 2013, 20). A series of personal interviews on the state of the field of Tibetan studies with scholars of Tibet and the Himalaya from South Asia in late 2020 revealed that, like me, many of them had first discovered these interconnections in the archives that had been omitted from our history books (see the first epigraph by historian Aniket Alam).<sup>vii</sup> Their research and teaching, like mine, have since sought to transcend regional and disciplinary boundaries in contemporary South Asia. In Chatterjee's words, an "insistent mapping of a relational universe" is "the starting point of the journey out of a fragmented landscape," through which postcolonial historians are attempting to revive "a modicum of the friendships that have been valued in and among Buddhist communities" (Chatterjee 2013, 20, added emphases).



Figure 2. "Jai Bharat, Jai Tibet" ("Long live India, Long live Tibet"). Graffiti at Tibetan settlement at Majnu ka Tila, Delhi (February 2022). The rest of the slogan, "Boycott Made in China", is partially visible. The PRC flag forms the background. Photo by the author.

#### A reciprocal debt

Thus, 60 years into the Dalai Lama's exile, his unifying role is widely recognised among the Buddhist communities in the region, as is the grassroots work of lay and monastic educational organisations under the Central Tibetan Administration (Wahid 2014; Chawla 2022a; Palsang 2009). The recent courses in Tibetology are a nod to this storied history of institution building.

Let us take the institutes identified by the Indian Army Training Command (ARTRAC) for their officers could enrol for training in Tibetology. Two of these— the School of Buddhist Philosophy in Leh, Ladakh (now known as the Central Institute of Buddhist Studies) and the Central Institute for Higher Tibetan Studies (CIHTS) in Sarnath<sup>viii</sup>— were established in the early years after Independence, and focused on the study of Buddhism. Nehru had suggested to Foreign Secretary Subimal Dutt (1955-61) that CIHTS at Sarnath be run almost entirely by the Tibetan monks who had followed the Fourteenth Dalai Lama into exile.<sup>ix</sup> The Tibetan exile community has since shepherded this institution. A third, the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology in Sikkim, was inaugurated by India's first Prime Minister in 1958; the Dalai Lama had laid its foundation the previous year on his way back from India for the 2,500th Buddha Jayanti celebrations. Also on the list is the Dalai Lama Institute for Higher Education in Bengaluru, which was established for Tibetans in exile as part of the Tibetan Children's Village (TCV) under the exile administration.

Indeed, monastic scholars from Tibet have long performed the yeoman's service of shepherding the discipline of Tibetan and Himalayan studies in India. Its foundation in the modern period was arguably laid by Rabindranath Tagore when he envisioned Santiniketan—which features on the ARTRAC list— as a meeting place for the languages and cultures of India. Tagore's invitation to the French Indologist



Sylvian Levi (1863-1935) to Santiniketan in 1921 “may be

termed as the starting of scientific studies on Indo-Tibetan Studies at Visva-Bharati” (Loseries 2010, 58–59). In 1954, the Department of Indo-Tibetan Studies was established to “promote research on age-long cultural relations between India and Tibet.” From its establishment through the 1980s, the Department invited Tibetan Buddhist monks, many of whom had come into exile in the 1950s, to collaborate with Indian scholars (Dash, Narendra [2000] 2017b; [2000] 2017a; Loseries 2010).

Among the Tibetan lamas who served at the Department was Chimed Rigzin Rinpoche (1922-2002), popularly known as C.R. Lama, a non-celibate Tantric master in the Nyingma tradition, who served as the first head of the Department (1954-1987) and helped build its manuscript and xylograph collection, with manuscripts he had brought out of Tibet forming its foundation (Yachin and Fischman 2022; Dash, Narendra [2000] 2017b). Lama was the first Tibetan to hold such a position in an Indian university and was part of the delegation that met Zhou Enlai at Visva-Bharati during the latter’s visit to India in 1956, where Nehru himself accompanied him.

Another illustrious Tibetan scholar who served at Santiniketan was Lama Chimpa (1923-2011), who was born in Inner Mongolia and received his basic education there before moving for further monastic studies to Beijing and subsequently to two important Geluk monasteries in Tibet— Kumbum and Drepung. (Sera, Drepung, and Ganden are the “great three” Geluk monastic universities of Central Tibet.) Lama Chimpa came to India in 1951. He worked at the International Academy of Indian Culture in Nagpur and Delhi (1952-61) and taught at the Department of Buddhist Studies—also on the ARTRAC list— at the University of Delhi.<sup>x</sup> He subsequently taught Tibetan language and literature at Visva Bharati from 1962 till his retirement in 1993 (Gerke, Barbara 2000; Das, Ritiman 2022; Kravchenko and Zaitsev 2003; Tan 1999).

Another Tibetan lama, Tulku Thondup Rinpoche, was born and studied in Golok in Amdo. Following the political upheaval in Tibet, he came to Sikkim in 1957 and moved to India in 1958. He taught at Lucknow University (1967-76) and Visva Bharati (1976-80) before moving to the United States in 1980 (Snow Lion Publications 1986).

#### Conclusion

Thanks in large part to the work of Tibetans in exile and the support from successive Indian governments, there is no location more advantageous than India for studying Tibet and the Himalaya. Indian institutions — national- and state archives, and private collections in libraries and individual families — house

the richest material for this research. Linguistic and field expertise abound, as do opportunities for learning the Tibetan language.

In the end, the Himalaya is not, and never was, an insurmountable “natural barrier”—a sentry as Indian school children sing in sare jahaan se achchaxi— that separated India from its neighbours in the north and the east. It behoves us then, as Indian scholars, policymakers, and administrators, to approach our border regions, not as foreign and mythologised others, nor as sterile but strategically vital spaces, but as hosts to interconnected yet internally diverse ecologies, societies, and politics that crisscross many contemporary borders, and are often ensconced in a Tibetan and Buddhist cultural sensibility.

Let us broaden the mandate for Tibetology and write more of India into the story. Let us ask of it lessons about our shared histories, and not just about how best to counter an ‘other’ beyond the mountains.

#### **The world ignores threats from China, promotes the cause of self-determination of Tibetan people**

25 June 2024, Mizzima, Sun Lee

Ignoring Chinese threats, a high-level bipartisan U.S. delegation has visited Dharamsala in India to meet Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama and asserted that the Tibetans have the right to self-determination and should be allowed to practice their religion. Their visit came shortly after the U.S. House passed the Resolve Tibet Bill that recognizes the rights of the Tibetan people and calls for resolving the dispute between Tibet and China peacefully and in accordance with international law, through dialogue. To the chagrin of China, the delegation of the U.S. House of Representatives had among its members Nancy Pelosi, the former Speaker of the U.S. House. In 2022, ignoring threats from China, she visited Taiwan. Nancy Pelosi is a well-known disciple of the Dalai Lama and it is unlikely that threats from China will deter her from visiting the Buddhist spiritual leader.

Ignoring the ire of China, Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi has met members of the bipartisan group of American lawmakers after their meeting with the Dalai. At about the same time, the Canadian House of Commons unanimously passed a resolution supporting the right of self-determination of Tibet; asserting that the Tibetans, as a people and a nation, possess this fundamental right.

With all these developments coming within the span of about 10 days, Beijing has now realized to its dismay that the world will not succumb to its pressure and bullying tactic; nor will it accept the Chinese propaganda about the legitimacy of Chinese occupation of Tibet. Beijing has now been reduced to appealing to U. S. President Joe Biden not to sign the

Tibet Support Bill which is now on the latter's table and is waiting to be signed into law. In a climb down from its earlier stubborn position of refusing to talk to the Dalai Lama, China has called upon the latter to "to have complete reflection on and thoroughly correct its political propositions," without offering any explanation what these mean.

Beijing even had the audacity to threaten the U.S. lawmakers not to meet the Dalai Lama. "Our delegation received a letter from the Chinese Communist Party warning us not to come here. They repeated their false claim that Tibet is part of China since the 13th Century but we did not let the CCP intimidate us and we are here today," leader of the delegation U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee chair Michael McCaul has disclosed in a news conference in Dharamsala held under the aegis of the Tibetan government-in-exile which China dismisses as a mere political clique.

"The Tibetan people possess a distinct religion, culture and historic identity and they should have a say in their own future. They should be able to freely practice your religion and that is why we are here in defiance of the CCP warning," he said.

"They repeated their false claim that Tibet is part of China since the 13th Century but we did not let the CCP intimidate us," McCaul said. Thus the U.S. lawmakers who represent the people of America have upheld the historical reality that China had never been in full political control of Tibet, that the degree of this control has been a loose suzerainty which is far from sovereign rights, that on several occasions in the past Tibet has been independent of any Chinese control and that between 1912 and 1950 Tibet was an independent country. Thus, the Chinese annexation of Tibet in 1950 was illegal.

The Resolve Tibet Bill was passed in the U.S. House by an overwhelming majority of 391 to 26; with all the Democrats and most of the Republicans voting in its favour and only 26 Republicans voting against.

"The United States has never accepted that Tibet was part of China since ancient times as the CCP falsely claims," McCaul, who was one of the movers of the Bill, said. "This legislation clarified U.S. policy and highlights the unique language, religion and culture of the Tibetan people. It directs U.S. diplomacy to push back against Chinese propaganda, ensures Tibetans have a say in their own future and stresses on the need for dialogue between the CCP and other democratically elected leaders of Tibet. Any resolution must include the wishes and voices of the Tibetan people."

The motion adopted in the Canadian House of Commons has opposed China's systematic cultural assimilation of Tibetans and affirmed the rights of Tibetan people to freely choose their economic, social, cultural and religious policies without

interference from external powers; including the selection of the reincarnation of the 14th Dalai Lama. The text of the motion in the Canadian House asserts that "China is carrying out a policy of systematic cultural assimilation against Tibetans," that "Tibetans, as a people and a nation, can claim the right to self-determination, they are empowered to freely choose their economic, social, cultural and religious policies without interference from any external power" and that "this empowerment prohibits China from interfering in the choice of the next Tibetan spiritual leader, the eventual successor of the 14th Dalai Lama."

Thus the Canadian resolution is in tune with the present stand of the Dalai Lama of real autonomy for the Tibetan people; though the assertion of the right to self-determination implies political freedom as well. In this context, the meeting between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the delegation of the U.S. lawmakers carries a significant message of Indian support for the cause of the Tibetan people, say observers.

Indian support is most important for the world to advance the cause of the Tibetan people; India being the closest neighbour of Tibet and offering shelter to the largest number of Tibetan refugees in the world; nearly 100,000 of them. The Dalai Lama has been a guest of honour of India since 1959, with 'head of the state' status.

A strategic partnership between the U.S. and India is important to defeat the Chinese designs in the Tibet plateau, they say. "Together we can send a powerful message of deterrence to the Chinese Communist Party because when the world's two largest democracies stand together, freedom and liberty win over tyranny and oppression," McCaul said in a statement after the meeting.

### **Cyberthreats sponsored by Chinese Communist Party**

24 June 2024, The Washington Times, Sen. Marsha Blackburn and Rep. Bob Latta

Tens of millions of families and small businesses across the country use wireless routers as their primary access point to the internet. Many of these routers are susceptible to infiltration by foreign actors, including China, jeopardizing our national security and exposing our country to serious danger. Just last year, U.S. and Japanese officials revealed that BlackTech, a hacker group connected to the Chinese Communist Party, targeted routers at government agencies and corporations in the two countries to steal intellectual property, including from the defense, technology and electronics sectors.

In January, the Justice Department also reported that Chinese-sponsored hackers infected routers in the

U.S. with malware to target critical water, energy and transportation infrastructure – an attack that FBI Director Christopher Wray called a “pre-positioning to cause real-world harm to American citizens and communities in the event of conflict” between America and China.

The threat of cyberattacks is even greater with routers developed by Chinese companies. Because of strict laws in China that require companies to collaborate with the Communist Party, including by sharing users’ sensitive data, Chinese-developed routers are especially vulnerable to infiltration by state-backed hackers. This past January, China-linked hackers in Europe targeted home routers developed by the Chinese company TP-Link, whose products U.S. cybersecurity experts have repeatedly warned are susceptible to cyberattacks.

Despite these vulnerabilities, several federal agencies, including the Defense Department, have purchased TP-Link routers.

After years of complacency in Washington about China’s threat to our nation’s information networks, the Trump administration and Congress took bold action in 2020 to protect the American people with the passage of the Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act.

As a result of this crucial legislation, the Federal Communications Commission ultimately banned the sale and import of equipment from Chinese-owned telecommunications companies such as Huawei and ZTE, which U.S. law enforcement and intelligence agencies deem national security threats. As we speak, U.S. companies continue to rip and replace Chinese-made software and communications equipment.

While these efforts delivered real results to protect Americans, our nation continues to face threats of Chinese espionage and cyberattacks – and there are few larger potential vulnerabilities, if exploited, than wireless routers.

Make no mistake: Wireless routers with security vulnerabilities, especially those developed by Chinese companies, threaten the safety of every American.

Thankfully, momentum is growing in Congress to address this issue.

As the ranking member on the Senate Subcommittee on Consumer Protection, Product Safety and Data Security and the chairman of the House Subcommittee on Communications and Technology, we are spearheading the bipartisan Removing Our Unsecure Technologies to Ensure Reliability and Security Act, known as the ROUTERS Act.

This crucial legislation would require the Commerce Department to review the national security threat posed by any router that is designed, developed, manufactured or supplied by a company under the

jurisdiction of China, as well as U.S. adversaries Russia, Iran, North Korea, Cuba and Venezuela.

Depending on the study’s outcome, Congress could take further action to require the Commerce Department to designate dangerous routers as national security threats, allowing the FCC to halt their sale in America under the Trump-era Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act.

Given the grave threats to our national security, it should be no surprise that the House Energy and Commerce Committee recently approved the ROUTERS Act in a unanimous and bipartisan 43-0 vote.

As China works to undermine U.S. global leadership, it is essential that we protect our intellectual property, critical infrastructure and American citizens from the Chinese Communist Party’s malicious cyberattacks. With the ROUTERS Act, Congress has an incredible opportunity to help make that happen.

### **China must not choose the next Dalai Lama**

24 June 2024, The Japan Times, Brahma Chellaney

The U.S. and India should stop Beijing from hijacking the selection

As the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibet, visits the United States to receive medical treatment on his knees, concerns over who will succeed him have become acute. While Tibetans around the world pray that the 88-year-old Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, still has plenty of life ahead of him, China is eagerly awaiting his demise so that it can install a puppet successor.

Tibetans regard the Dalai Lama as the living incarnation of Buddha, with a total of 13 reincarnations since 1391. When one Dalai Lama dies, the search for the next one begins, with a council of senior disciples taking responsibility for identifying the figure based on signs and visions. But in recent years, the Chinese government has insisted that only it has the right to identify the next Dalai Lama.

This would not be the first time China selected a leader of Tibetan Buddhism. In 1995, it anointed its own Panchen Lama, whose spiritual authority is second only to that of the Dalai Lama, after abducting the actual Panchen Lama – a 6-year-old boy who had already been confirmed by the Dalai Lama. Almost three decades later, the real Panchen Lama is among the world’s longest-serving political prisoners.

China also appointed the Karmapa, Tibetan Buddhism’s third most important spiritual leader and the head of the Karma Kagyu sect. But in 1999, its appointee, Ogyen Trinley Dorje, fled to India. The

ease with which the 14-year-old Karmapa escaped China raised suspicions among Indians about his loyalties.

After imposing travel restrictions on him, India decided in 2018 to no longer recognize the China-anointed Karmapa as the legitimate head of his sect. Now, he and his rival Karmapa, Trinley Thaye Dorje, have issued a joint statement pledging to cooperatively resolve the leadership split in the Karma Kagyu sect.

But the Dalai Lama is China's white whale. The incumbent — who was identified as the Dalai Lama in 1937, at age 2 — has been a thorn in the side of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) since Beijing's 1951 annexation of Tibet. With his relentless espousal of nonviolence, the Dalai Lama, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, embodies Tibetan resistance to the Chinese occupation. (Had Tibet remained self-governing like Taiwan, it would be the world's tenth-largest country by area.)

In his past incarnations, the Dalai Lama was not only Tibet's spiritual leader, but also its political leader, making him a kind of cross between a pope and a president. But the Dalai Lama ceded his political role in 2011 to a Tibetan government-in-exile, which is democratically elected every five years by Tibetan refugees living in India and elsewhere.

Moreover, the Dalai Lama has declared that he might choose not to be reborn — a decision that would undermine the legitimacy of any Chinese-anointed successor. He knows that, for China, a Dalai Lama devoted to the CCP is much more useful than no Dalai Lama at all. He also knows that, while he has retained his mental acuity, his body is weakening. In 2016, he underwent radiation therapy for prostate cancer. He says he was "completely cured," but continues to struggle with his knees. Given his advanced age, more health problems are to be expected.

The Dalai Lama's frailty is one reason why his travel schedule has slowed considerably. But it is not the only one: Bowing to Chinese pressure, most countries — including European democracies and Asia's Buddhist states (except Japan) — are unwilling to grant him entry.

Fortunately, some countries have retained their backbones. The U.S. is hosting the Dalai Lama for knee treatment and India has been his home for more than 65 years. India has officially designated the Dalai Lama its "most esteemed and honored guest," while the Tibetan leader describes himself as a "son of India."

In fact, India is home to the vast majority of Tibetan exiles and has played a central role in helping to preserve Tibetan culture, including by supporting Tibetan-language schools. By contrast, China has

been working actively to destroy Tibetan culture and identity, especially since Chinese leader Xi Jinping has been in charge.

Meanwhile, China's appropriation of Tibetan natural resources has gone into overdrive, with consequences that extend far beyond the Tibetan Plateau. Resource-rich Tibet is a source of fresh water for more than one-fifth of the world's population and a global biodiversity hotspot. The plateau influences Asia's weather and monsoonal patterns, as well as the Northern Hemisphere's "atmospheric general circulation" — the system of winds that helps transport warm air from the equator toward higher latitudes, creating different climate zones.

It is imperative that the U.S. and India work together to foil China's plan to handpick the next Dalai Lama. Already, America's Tibetan Policy and Support Act, which took effect in 2020, says that "the wishes of the 14th Dalai Lama, including any written instructions, should play a determinative role in the selection, education, and veneration of a future 15th Dalai Lama." And it calls for sanctions on Chinese officials who interfere with Tibetan Buddhist succession practices.

But more must be done. For starters, U.S. President Joe Biden should take the opportunity presented by the Dalai Lama's knee treatment to fulfill a 2020 campaign promise to meet with the spiritual leader. More broadly, Washington should work together with India to devise a multilateral strategy to counter Xi's plan to capture the more than 600-year-old institution of the Dalai Lama.

This must include efforts to persuade the Dalai Lama to spell out, once and for all, the rules that must be followed to identify his successor.

### **Chinese military developments and national security challenges for India**

23 June 2024, Financial Express, Bhartendu Kumar Singh

The LAC that was 'relatively peaceful' until a decade ago, has metamorphosed into an active front with looming war threats.

A major national security challenge that the government would face in this tenure is the momentous developments in Chinese military preparedness affecting the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and the Indo-Pacific area. While China's military modernisation has been an ongoing process for the last few decades (and so has been India's defensive response), its pace has accelerated in recent times. The LAC that was 'relatively peaceful' until a decade ago, has metamorphosed into an active front with looming war threats. Unless deftly handled, the bilateral military power balance would

soon become too asymmetrical and may critically imperil the LAC sanctity.

Much of the current modernisation goals for the PLA were finalised in the 20th Party Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in October 2022. The military dimension of the Report to the Congress focused on 'intensifying and accelerating the PLA's modernisation goals'. Accordingly, by 2027, the Chinese Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA) is to aim towards finishing its first phase of modernisation process. This is the time when the PLA would have completed 100 years of its foundation. The second phase of military modernisation would complete by 2035. By 2049, China aims to metamorphose its PLA into a world-class armed force capable of out rightly taking on the US military muscle in the Indo-Pacific region.

Even while 2027 is still a couple of years ahead, we can already see many visible and demonstrative changes in countless aspects of the PLA's force modernisation. For instance, China has successfully completed the reorganisation of its PLA into integrated theater commands since 2016 and is running with an eight-year advantage. The Western Theater Command, headquartered at Chengdu, has been quite active through construction of roads, rails and new settlement colonies near the LAC. One only has to visit the Chinese Ministry of Defence website to get a first-hand glimpse of the day-to-day developments on military logistics and advancements, whether in Western Theater Command or elsewhere. While there are many sources of information on Chinese military developments, probably the most accurate reporting about Chinese military developments on an updated basis is published by the US Department of Defence. Called the Annual Report to the Congress on 'Military and security developments involving the People's Republic of China', the 2023 version brings out some major policy and logistics developments related to the PLA not covered succinctly elsewhere. For example, the report adequately exposes the offensive aspects of China's so-called 'active defence' policy. Similarly, since 2022, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) appears to have been increasingly using the term 'integrated national strategic systems and capabilities'. On the weapons front, China has moved quite ahead with deployment of hypersonic weapons. By 2027, China would have achieved substantial progress in the field of mechanisation, informatisation, and intelligentisation of its armed forces. China is also making commendable progress in many other areas that are going to affect its military modernization in the coming days. For instance, the Chinese realise that military innovation is the key to maintain an edge in military modernisation and dominate neighbouring rivals.

President Xi Jinping has launched an innovation-driven defence development strategy (IDDS). China is resorting less to 'reverse engineering' of foreign weapons as was the case in the past and has invested heavily in high tech weapons. Techno-nationalism has played a key role in the expansion and consolidation of its domestic military industrial complex (MIC). Similarly, China's progress in artificial intelligence and robotics is much better than many countries. It is gainfully deploying robots in mundane soldiering duties and counter-terrorism operations.

Apart from the conventional build-up of forces, China has also resorted to, in recent times, what Fiona S Cunningham of University of Pennsylvania calls as 'strategic substitution'. China is using information-age weapons such as cyber operations to enhance its strategic leverage and coercive powers. While China is using this as 'an increasingly capable instrument of state craft' against the US, India is not immune to Chinese subtle adventures. For example, it is said that Chinese cyber-attacks were behind the Mumbai power grid failure of March 2021. In February 2024, the Washington Post reported that Chinese intelligence and cyber-surveillance accessed 95.2 gigabytes of Indian immigration data. These are just representative examples. The actual quantum of attacks from the Chinese cyber hackers spans across different sectors, including financial markets.

In the coming days, the LAC itself would witness increased activities on the Chinese side. The Chinese PLA may increase the frequency and intensity of coercive and risky operations near the LAC. There could be more military exercises and force mobilisation in a teasing manner. Concurrently, China would try to wean away Bhutan through border agreement without involving India. It would also bring Nepal closer through project finalisation and financing of railways extension from the Tibet side to Kathmandu. Finally, we may see more espionage activities from the Chinese side into Indian territories!

The LAC would, therefore, remain an area of utmost national security concern to India. Unfortunately, strategic experts and military planners in India remain caught in a binary about national security challenges emanating from China. Against the long, real and perpetuating threat from the Chinese aggressive posturing on the LAC, we are often told about a larger threat emanating from China's increasing footsteps in the Bay of Bengal and the wider Indian Ocean region. While there is no doubt that the Chinese are making increasing maritime forays near India's southern waters, we are perhaps making the mistake of treating both the threats on the same level-playing platform. Outright confrontation



with China on the oceanic front will only mean more diversion of scarce defence logistics and resources. Fortunately, at the policy level, India's defensive preparations against Chinese military development near the LAC has been calibrated, thoughtful and on the right trajectory. The border infrastructure has improved with new roads and more are in offing! Realising that technology is the key to rise in great power status along with robust defence preparedness, India has been investing in military technology and innovation. However, getting inputs about China's military developments from western sources may not sub-serve our knowledge requirements. The focus of the Pentagon annual report on Chinese military developments, for example, is on the PLA's force mobilisation along the Taiwan Straits. These reports do not focus on LAC and touch them only tangentially. Thus, we may be certainly missing out on many important military developments across the LAC.

### **Tibet is back on the table**

23 June 2024, The New Indian Express, TK Vineeth

The Tibet issue was back in the headlines after the US Congress passed a bill that supports the Tibetan cause. The legislation, which calls for Beijing's re-engagement with Tibet's spiritual leader Dalai Lama to address the concerns of Tibetans, also authorises use of funds to counter China's 'disinformation campaign' on issues related to Tibet such as the region's history, demography, culture and customs, and high institutions including that of the Dalai Lama. The bipartisan bill, passed by the Congress early this month, is now on US President Joe Biden's table awaiting his signature to ratify it into law.

What's in the bill

The Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act, also known as the Resolve Tibet Act, is the third such piece of legislation on Tibet passed by the US Congress after the Tibetan Policy Act (TPA) of 2002, and the Tibetan Policy & Support Act (TPSA) of 2020. It unambiguously questions China's territorial claims over Tibet and seeks to redress the region's unresolved status. It notes that talks between Beijing and the Dalai Lama have been stalled since 2010 after the Chinese side imposed unreasonable conditions.

In its talks with China between 2002 and 2010, the Tibetan side only sought genuine autonomy in line with the middle path approached proposed by the Dalai Lama. However, the talks never reached their logical conclusion as China was not ready to give up its tight grip over the annexed region.

What sets the latest US legislation apart is that it underlines Tibetans' right to 'self determination' and identifies the large swathes of geographical areas

that were historically part of Tibet but were cut into pieces and merged with neighbouring Chinese provinces such as Sichuan and Yunnan after China's military invasion of the plateau in 1950. New Chinese provinces such as Qinghai were also created with the bulk of Tibet's land. Recognising the historical geography of Tibet is the most notable feature of the new bill as it precisely identifies the Chinese designs to disfigure the historical Tibet and seeks to highlight that by referring to the original geography of the region.

US paradigm shift

The US has for decades turned a blind on the Tibet issue so as not to offend China. The TPA of 2002, for example, termed Tibet a part of China. "The United States recognizes the Tibet Autonomous Region – hereinafter referred to as "Tibet" – to be part of the People's Republic of China. This long-standing policy is consistent with the view of the international community... Because we do not recognize Tibet as an independent state, the United States does not conduct official diplomatic relations with the Tibetan 'government-in-exile' in Dharamsala," the Act said. The ruse for this line was that the Dalai Lama wanted greater autonomy for Tibetans and not independence for Tibet. The bill didn't go beyond requesting China to have talks with the Tibetan side and listen to their concerns.

But with the dramatic shift in geopolitical dynamics, Washington woke up to the potential of the Tibet issue to keep an aggressive China on the defensive. The TPSA of 2020 authorised funds for NGOs working to help the Tibetan communities. More importantly, it sought a US consulate in Tibetan capital Lhasa. "The Department of State may not authorize any new Chinese consulates in the United States until a U.S. consulate has been established in Lhasa, Tibet," it said.

The bill also underscored Tibetans' right to select and venerate their own religious leaders. This was in response to China's diktat that the next Dalai Lama can't be chosen without its permission. With this, the TPSA opened the doors for the US to issue economic and visa sanctions against any Chinese officials who interfere with the succession of the Dalai Lama.

The 2024 bill is much stronger in terms of what it seeks to achieve. It calls for establishing a statutory definition of Tibet and clearly states that it will include areas in Chinese provinces outside the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) – a limited area which China established in 1965 to be treated as Tibet. "This bill defines Tibet to include the TAR and the Tibetan areas of the Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu, and Yunnan provinces," it says. The bill also states that it is US policy that the conflict between Tibet and China is unresolved and that Tibet's legal status remains to be determined in accordance with international law.

To drive home the point, a bipartisan US Congressional delegation visited Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama at Dharamsala in Himachal Pradesh last week and pledged support to the Tibetan cause. This is a huge departure from the 2002 legislation that said the US won't interact with the Tibetan government-in-exile.

During the visit, the US team, headed by House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaul and including former US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Paul, said China's claims over Tibet are untenable. To the chagrin of Beijing, both McCaul and Pelosi stated that Biden would soon sign the Resolve Tibet Act.

#### China's hard stand

China claims Tibet has been its part since ancient times, a proposition that doesn't have many takers. It invaded the plateau in 1950 with military power and formalised the annexation through an agreement signed between Lhasa and Beijing on May 23, 1951 under duress. According to L L Mehrotra, former secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, the Dalai Lama himself came to know of it four days after it was 'signed' when Radio Peking broadcast it on May 27, 1951. They did not even know its contents until then. "With PLA guns pointed at the Tibetans in Lhasa, an agreement was imposed on them on May 23, 1951—the infamous 17 Point Agreement under which the Tibetans were made to accept Tibet as a region of China and not only Chinese suzerainty over it but absolute control," Mehrotra says in his book 'India's Tibet Policy – An appraisal and options'.

China's stand on Tibet has only hardened over time. Earlier this year, Beijing said it could hold talks with the representatives of the Dalai Lama but not of the 'illegitimate' Tibetan government-in-exile based in India. However, the offer for talks was a non-starter because China outright ruled out any dialogue on the Dalai Lama's main demand – autonomy for Tibet. Beijing treats the Dalai Lama as a separatist, though the spiritual leader has clarified that his objective is not to seek political independence but autonomy and freedom in religious affairs that lie at the core of Tibet's identity.

Last week's US delegation visit to Dharamsala and the new legislation on Tibet evoked angry reaction from Beijing, which is nervous about rising international attention. Warning Biden against signing the latest piece of legislation, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian said it would provoke counter measures.

#### India's nuanced position

For India, Tibet is a sensitive issue as it has to balance its delicate relationship with China with which it has long-pending border disputes. India welcomed the Dalai Lama and a sizable Tibetan refugee population with open arms in 1959 when

they fled their homeland after a failed uprising against China. While India has historically supported the Tibetan cause, New Delhi's official position since Jawaharlal Nehru's time has been to accept Tibet as part of China.

India first accepted Tibet as a Chinese region in April 1954 when then PM Nehru signed the Panchsheel agreement with Chinese premier Zhou Enlai. The stand was further confirmed in December 1988 when then prime minister Rajiv Gandhi visited China and "reiterated that Tibet is an autonomous region of China". He also gave an undertaking to the Chinese that Tibetan refugees in India would not be allowed to "engage in political activities against China".

The Chinese got India to reinforce the two points again in June 2003 during the then PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee's Beijing trip. In what was seen as an oversight by the Indian side, Vajpayee's joint statement with the then Chinese premier Wen Jiabao used the legal term 'recognize' to describe India's position on Tibet.

"The Indian side recognizes that the Tibet Autonomous Region is part of the territory of the People's Republic of China and reiterates that it does not allow Tibetans to engage in anti-China political activities in India," the joint statement read. China used this statement to claim Tibet is a done deal.

While India hasn't sought to reverse its policy, New Delhi seems to have relaxed the curbs on the freedom of expression of Tibetans in India. When Chinese President Xi Jinping visited India in September 2014 to meet PM Narendra Modi, the Indian government allowed Tibetan exiles to stage protests on New Delhi's streets. Some activists even managed to make it to the vicinity of the summit site, sending alarm bells in Beijing.

A settlement in favour of the people of Tibet could work in India's favour as it will negate China's outlandish claims on Arunachal Pradesh, which Beijing refers to as South Tibet. It may also address China's disregard for the McMahon Line, the boundary between Tibet and India settled as part of the Simla Accord of 1914 signed by British India, Tibet and China, to some extent.

There are concerns if India openly supports the 'Free Tibet' movement, China can raise the Kashmir issue. In that sense, the American move on Tibet puts India in an unenviable position.

#### Lack of education helps Xi to stay in power

23 June 2024, The Sunday Guardian, Wang dan

When Xi Jinping visited France, he again made a book list. He gave a bunch of books to French President and Mrs Macron, including Chinese translations of French authors such as Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, Alexandre Dumas' *The Three*

Musketeers and *The Lady of the Camellias*, Victor Hugo's *Ninety Three*, Stendhal's *The Red and the Black*, Honoré de Balzac's *Le Père Goriot* etc. This is of course a way to bring the two countries closer together, and also shows Xi's love and understanding of French culture. Mrs Peng Liyuan, the wife of Xi Jinping, also said during the trip that she and Xi Jinping "read these books when we were young." When he was young Xi Jinping was sent to the countryside for labour reform during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), and he was a member of the "five black categories"—Chairman Mao's political classifications during the Cultural Revolution that ordained people in these groups class enemies: Landlords, Rich Farmers, Counter-revolutionaries, Bad Elements and Rightists. It is doubtful whether he had the time and energy to read so many masterpieces of world literature when he had to "carry 100 kilograms of wheat on his shoulders and walk 10 kilometers up the mountain," but we do not have any evidence to say that he did not, so let us leave it open to doubt for the moment. However, it is a fact that after he came to power, he liked to draw up book lists and talk about his extensive knowledge of books. I am also a reader, and I believe that most people in the world who like to read agree with my judgment: those who really like to read do not go around making lists of books and bragging to others about how many books they have read. If this is really the case, then the books have actually been read in vain. Therefore, those who go around making out book lists to show that they are knowledgeable are usually those who are less knowledgeable or even uneducated. The conclusion is: Xi Jinping is in fact a "poorly educated" person. I do not mean to look down on those who are less educated. My point is that being less educated is one of the reasons why Xi Jinping was chosen to be the successor of the ruling group of the Communist Party of China. I am afraid that outsiders do not quite understand this point, or they may find it inconceivable. But if you know the history of the Communist Party, you will know that this is a fact. Chen Boda was Mao Zedong's wordsmith, and the theoretical authority of the Communist Party of China, and his understanding of Mao Zedong was unrivaled in the Party. His son, Chen Xiaonong, published a book entitled "Chen Boda's Last Oral Memories" in Hong Kong in 2005, in which it was mentioned that Mao Zedong had made an internal speech about his successor before the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution, and when it came to the criteria for selecting his successor, he explicitly said, "He should be young, less educated, and politically conservative" (page 264). Of course, it is understandable that they should be young and politically conservative: the successor cannot be

someone who is old and does not stand up for the prevailing interests of the Communist Party. But the criterion of "someone who is less educated" is quite intriguing.

The reason he emphasized the need to be "less educated" illustrates his mistrust of and vigilance against "the educated." An educated person usually has the ability to think independently. Such an "educated person" may not only break

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the monopoly of totalitarian ideology, but also challenge official public opinions and propaganda, and it is certainly not an insurance policy for an authoritarian regime to have such a person as the successor to Communist Party leadership. It cannot be denied that Mao Zedong, who read omnivorously on the ancient art of emperors and kings, had his own unique way of selecting his successor.

The successors that Mao Zedong began to painstakingly groom after overthrowing his first chosen successors Liu Shaoqi, Lin Biao and other founding fathers, be it Wang Hongwen, who was directly promoted from factory worker to vice-chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, or Hua Guofeng, who was a mediocre and incompetent hack, all on close examination fit the characteristics of "young age, little education and politically conservative." The Communist Party superficially summed up the lessons of the Cultural Revolution, but at heart it still adheres to Mao Zedong's way of doing things. Chairman Mao's long-time secretary Li Rui once said, "the Chairman Mao problem remains unchanged."

Deng Xiaoping's chosen successors, Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, had some education, or at least had a lot of "educated" people around them, but they were all overthrown in the end. Jiang Zemin, although he likes to show off his knowledge of foreign languages and arts and culture, is far from being "educated." And Hu Jintao is famously uneducated, and reportedly only has story books from the former Soviet Union on his bookshelf. Obviously, although Mao Zedong is no longer with us, it is still a tradition within the Chinese Communist Party to make "little education" one of the criteria for selecting a successor. The reasoning behind this continuity is the same as that of Chairman Mao's thinking, that an educated person is not so reliable. Let us take a look at Xi Jinping. When he was selected as successor, did he fulfill the criteria of "young age, little education, and politically conservative"? All of them! Obviously, Xi Jinping was able to rise to the top and maintain his power until today because he truly meets the criteria set by Mao Zedong for the Communist Party's successor. The legitimacy of his rule within the Communist Party derives from this.

It is only with this understanding that we can see why Xi Jinping, with such a low level of knowledge and education, can sit firmly on the throne as the highest leader. Only by truly understanding the past history of the Chinese Communist Party can we understand the reality of the Communist Party today.

### **Effects Of Indo-China Political Tension In Global Framework – OpEd**

23 June 2024, Eurasia Review, Ambassador Kazi Anwarul Masud

Mayuri Banerjee a Research Analyst with the East Asia Centre at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA), New Delhi. Her research focus is on India-China relations. She primarily looks at the role of memory and trust in India-China relations after the 1962 war and Indian media's perception of China. In an article she traced the history of the Sino-Indian border dispute has a long and complex history. If one were to look for some key points one could mention: Aksai Chin: One of the disputed territories is Aksai Chin, which is administered by China but claimed by India. It lies at the intersection of Kashmir, Tibet, and Xinjiang. Aksai Chin is mostly uninhabited high-altitude wasteland, but it has significant pasture lands at the margins. McMahon Line: The other disputed territory is south of the McMahon Line, in an area formerly known as the North-East Frontier Agency (now Arunachal Pradesh). The McMahon Line was signed between British India and Tibet as part of the 1914 Simla Convention, but China disowns this agreement, stating that Tibet was not independent when it signed the Simla Convention.

1962 Sino-Indian War: The conflict escalated in 1962 when Chinese troops attacked Indian border posts in Ladakh in the west and crossed the McMahon Line in the east. The war resulted in significant casualties. There were border clashes in 1967 in the region of Sikkim, despite an agreed border. In 1987 and 2013, potential conflicts over the Line of Actual Control (LAC) were successfully de-escalated. Recent Tensions: Multiple skirmishes broke out in 2020, leading to dozens of deaths in June. Agreements signed in 1993 and 1996 aimed to address the boundary question, including confidence-building measures and defining the LAC. Various dispute resolutions have been established over the years. In summary, the India-China border dispute remains ongoing, with historical roots and periodic tensions. Diplomatic efforts continue to find a resolution to this complex issue. Assessing the success of Border Dispute Management Talks and Confidence-Building Measures. The success of the bilateral dialogue mechanisms and confidence-building measures

described above needs to be assessed according to three aspects; management of border conflict, addressing the bilateral trust deficit, and resolution of the border dispute. A cursory review of the state of affairs indicates that, in all three aspects, both countries have achieved minimal success. For instance, in the matter of border conflict management, the maintenance of peace and tranquility along the LAC has been one of the most important stated objectives. Although China and India have been able to avert a major 1962-style confrontation, the number of military incursions by China has risen sharply, from 334 in 2014 to 606 in 2019.

The Galwan Valley military standoff led to severe military clashes; and the stalemate continues. Simultaneously, local feuds between the armies have inclined toward more violence, that is from fist fights and throwing stones, the armies of the two sides have resorted to more violent measures including the use of clubs studded with nails or wrapped with metal barbed wire. These instances point toward a lack of local-level communication and understanding, which persists amid the backdrop of diplomatic proclamations of friendship and cooperation. Likewise, despite high level political and diplomatic exchanges and frequent meetings of the top leadership, the trust deficit between the two countries has only widened. There exists the perception of a considerable security threat on both sides as India and China have moved rapidly to upgrade their border infrastructure and military capabilities along the disputed border on the sidelines of the Special Representative Talks and Joint Working Group meetings. In recent years, a vigorous border infrastructure race has developed between the two countries, wherein both sides have engaged in building extensive road and railway connections on their respective sides of the border, upgrading military facilities, and increasing overall troop deployments for quick mobilization. This in turn has aggravated insecurities in both countries and is considered one of the primary reasons for the frequent border skirmishes along the LAC. In particular, the Doklam (2017) and Galwan Valley (2020) clashes were triggered by road-building activities undertaken by China and India, respectively. Apart from upgrading military infrastructure along the border, both sides have also invested heavily in modernizing their conventional and non-conventional combat forces as an indication of battle preparedness to the other. In view of increasing military capabilities, assertive behavior and intense distrust, the notion of peace along the LAC seems dependent on the political wisdom of their respective governments. Even after fifteen rounds of Joint Working Group meetings and

eighteen rounds of Special Representative Dialogues, the border dispute is far from being resolved. Even though the negotiation process follows a generous principle of package settlement through a sectoral approach, the two countries have failed to go beyond routine delegation meetings and joint declarations.

The ascent to power of Xi Jinping in China and Narendra Modi in India, known for their strong leadership and corporate style of politics, had raised hopes for a final settlement of the border dispute, but domestic political considerations and strategic threat perceptions continue to severely constrain the ability of these political leaders to undertake sweeping decisions to resolve the dispute. The border dispute undeniably remains one of the major issues impinging on Sino-Indian bilateral ties. Experts contend that there are multiple factors today which sustain the border dispute. The first is the geographical constitution of the disputed areas: The rugged, featureless terrain and extreme weather conditions make determination of the precise alignment challenging. Subsequently, implementation of border agreements on the ground also remains elusive. Second, there is asymmetry in the level of urgency for the settlement of the border dispute. In contrast to New Delhi's endeavors seeking a quick settlement, Beijing has staunchly resisted any fast-tracking of the resolution process, arguing that the border dispute is a complicated question and should be negotiated only when conditions are favorable.

The primary reason for this difference in approaches is that the disputed border does not pose a security threat to China, and therefore Beijing is willing to wait for a more beneficial resolution. In contrast, New Delhi sees the border dispute as source of instability and worries and that China would use the unresolved border to bully India. The third factor inhibiting the resolution of the border dispute is intense nationalism in both countries. For China, the border dispute is intrinsically linked to Tibet and the Dalai Lama, and since the CCP has always projected the Tibetan government-in-exile in a negative light, territorial concessions involving Tawang will not only endanger China's own rule in Tibet but will also be seen domestically as sign of weakness; a terrifying prospect for the Chinese leadership. As for India, no political party would be able to propose a territorial exchange with China without seriously jeopardizing its electoral prospects, as the memories of 1962 war continue to haunt the Indian national psyche. Lastly, along with the boundary dispute, new issues have begun to stir trouble in Sino-Indian bilateral ties. India's concerns regarding China's diversion of the Yarlung-Tsangpo/Brahmaputra river water, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, and China's

growing influence in South Asia have emerged as new irritants for Indian policy makers.

Similarly, Beijing too is annoyed by India's increasing proximity with Southeast Asian countries and its diplomatic-military exchanges with the United States, Japan, and Australia. These issues further erode political will in both countries and in this context territorial exchange by swap or political settlement appears a daunting task. As evinced by the recent Galwan Valley clashes, managing the border dispute is both a political and an economic exigency for India and China because any major confrontation between the two countries will not only hurt the long-term prospects for development of both, but will also have significant repercussions on Asian stability and prosperity. Therefore, the policy-making elites of both countries need to frame innovative solutions like creating soft borders through civilian, cultural, and economic exchanges, and involving local communities in managing the border. Such an approach can help reduce the number of military encounters between the two countries and create an enduring peace in the border region.

The two countries should also aim toward building strategic trust through open dialogue, exchange of information, and verification mechanisms along the disputed border. Enhancing military-to-military communication, technological collaboration and engagement on multilateral platforms remain indispensable toward building trust. Public perception is another key area that needs to be urgently addressed through civilian exchanges. This would go a long way toward dispelling stereotypes and negative perceptions. Track-II dialogue involving strategic-affairs experts and academics from the two countries could also be organized to identify new areas for cooperation. For the foreseeable future, the border dispute will remain a pressing challenge in Sino-Indian ties, however, it is in the national interest of both countries to prioritize their larger bilateral relationship, while at the same time erecting confidence-building measures and dialogue mechanisms to better preserve the benefits accruing from the relationship. The border dispute undeniably remains one of the major issues impinging on Sino-Indian bilateral ties.

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tracking of the resolution process, arguing that the border dispute is a complicated question and should be negotiated only when conditions are favorable. The primary reason for this difference in approaches is that the disputed border does not pose a security threat to China, and therefore Beijing is willing to wait for a more beneficial resolution. In contrast, New Delhi sees the border dispute as source of instability and worries and that China would use the unresolved border to bully India. The third factor inhibiting the resolution of the border dispute is intense nationalism in both countries.

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The famous newspaper *The Diplomat* in a report on the US containment of the Sino-Indian relations has reported that The United States and India have just completed a ministerial dialogue between the U.S. secretaries of state and defense, Antony Blinken and Lloyd Austin, and their Indian counterparts, Minister of External Affairs Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar and Minister of Defense Rajnath Singh. This "2+2 Dialogue" was preceded by a video conference between U.S. President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and both leaders said they looked forward to meeting again shortly in Tokyo. Although the "2+2" was nominally focused on international security and was the first to occur since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the world's two largest democracies paid relatively little attention to the largest international assault on democratic values since World War II and what Russia's assault means for international peace and security. In a Joint Statement remarkable for its 13-page length and the breadth of its coverage, only a short paragraph dealt with the situation in Ukraine. There was mention of a humanitarian crisis, a condemnation of civilian

deaths, a call for the cessation of hostilities, and lip service to the principles of the United Nations Charter, but nothing more.

India's hesitancy to work as a full partner of the U.S. in furthering international peace and security on the basis of India's own democratic values when it comes to Russia and Ukraine. This hesitancy can be more fully understood by examining Jaishankar's framework for U.S.-India relations. Jaishankar's views are of tremendous importance to the Modi government and to Modi himself. Not only has Jaishankar been the minister of external affairs since the start of Modi's second term, but he became foreign secretary soon after Modi began his first term as prime minister, an office to which Modi arose without extensive experience in international security matters. A thumbnail and easily accessible statement of Jaishankar's international framework can be found in his talk to the Atlantic Council on October 1, 2019. This framework is important not only because of the office held by Jaishankar, but also because it is largely a distillation of the views of many Indians, particularly those of India's traditional academic and governmental elites. Jaishankar holds a Ph.D. from Jawaharlal Nehru University and is personally and professionally connected to prominent Indian governmental circles. The Jaishankar doctrine is grounded firmly in history and in two analytic divides: East vs. West and India's political vs. non-political interests. As expressed in the Atlantic Council talk, the bedrock of his East vs. West analysis is "two centuries of national humiliation" during which "the West" extracted some "\$45 trillion" in value from India (as well as subjecting China to a single century of national humiliation). In this formulation, the U.S. is definitely a part of "the West" and India a part of the "the East." Thus, the U.S. presumably bears some responsibility for the two centuries of national humiliation experienced by India at the hands of the British Empire. This analysis leaves aside the fact that the U.S., like India, was a colony of the British Empire and fought two wars against the British for its independence. It had nothing to do with the "\$45 trillion" extracted by the British Empire from India, and yet this Indian colonial experience is somehow relevant to U.S.-India relations.

Unspoken is the concept that Russia and the Soviet Union were not and are not now part of "the West," but, like India, are part of "the East" and outside any responsibility for India's historic "two centuries of national humiliation." Make no mistake that Jaishankar's concept of "the West" is now centered on the United States. This concept evidently derives from U.S. leadership of a network of treaty obligations that were designed to constrain the Soviet Union and international communism. At one

point in his talk, Jaishankar references Japan and South Korea, and even all the OECD countries, as part of "the West." In this analysis, "the West" has become not a geographic designation but a political concept apparently growing out of the Cold War. Again, India is not a part of "the West." Adding to the historic estrangement caused by colonialism, the U.S., as the leader of "the West," has imposed on India a "Goldilocks" policy of both supporting India and suppressing India. According to Jaishankar, this is to ensure that India is neither too weak nor too strong but, like the porridge in the Goldilocks story, somewhere in between. Prime historical examples of this, according to Jaishankar, are the 1962 invasion by China, where the U.S. supported India, and the 1971 war for the independence of Bangladesh where the U.S. was not supportive. This historical interpretation of East vs. West fits snugly with the other major dichotomy of the Jaishankar doctrine, namely the political vs. non-political aspects of the East-West relationship.

A strength of the Jaishankar doctrine is that it allows for a full range of cooperation on "non-political" aspects of the U.S.-India relationship. There is a recognition that the United States has had a policy of strengthening India from an economic developmental perspective and has been a fount of growth for world development generally. Now that India has largely dismantled its top-down economic model, or "license raj," the way is open for full cooperation on all "non-political" fronts. However, when it comes to "political" endeavors, i.e. those having to do with international security and strategic matters, the aforementioned East vs. West analytic dichotomy requires that the relationship must be more circumscribed. The Cold War ended badly for India in the sense that the USSR and Russia were no longer the strong sources of support they had been up until the collapse of the Soviet Union. Still the political nature of the India-Russia relationship seems to require that India maintain a distance from the United States and the West where Russia is involved. This distancing is often referred to by Indian commentators as "strategic autonomy." A key component of this strategic autonomy seems to be resistance to outside requests, comments, or even questions concerning India's strategic or political choices. Apparently still influenced by what Jaishankar formulates as the two hundred years of national humiliation by the West, such entreaties may be viewed as infringements on strategic autonomy if not national sovereignty. To achieve full and equal partnership between the world's two largest democracies, the U.S. needs to do more in working with India to satisfy India's needs for arms and energy without bending to Russia. The 2+2 made continued progress on the arms front. Greater oil,

gas, atomic, and renewable energy support also seem to be making progress.

A full U.S.-India partnership requires that India adjust the analytic approach which contributes to India standing aside when it comes to opposing the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The old "East vs. West" dichotomy no longer applies to U.S.-India relations, if it ever did. Certainly, India and the U.S. are different, but these two great democracies have far more in common than India has with the traditional pillars of "the East" – Russia and China. This is particularly true when it comes to the fundamental value and rule of the post-World War II era: that nations must refrain from the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. Some may seek to justify the Russian invasion of Ukraine on the basis of U.S. transgressions of the past. This is simply a reiteration of the schoolboy amoral justification of "he did it too." Two wrongs still do not make a right and the rule of law requires that each situation be judged on its own merits. In the case of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the use of force is singular in its breach of the rules that have kept the planet from another world war over the past seventy years. The dichotomy between political and non-political interests is also in need of adjustment. India is no longer a new republic struggling to throw off the remnants of British colonialism and rightly sensitive to perceived restraints on its sovereignty. India is a great power. The U.S. needs to treat India like a great power, and India needs to act like one. Great powers do not take umbrage at requests or criticisms simply because they are from foreigners. Rather they evaluate such entreaties and make judgments as to what is in their interests in the present and the future. Great powers work with others to strengthen their own security even where it involves binding commitments. Reality is not divided into political and non-political spheres. In today's world some issues traditionally viewed as "non-political" are as important to national security as any traditionally "political" issues. The internet of things and the hacking of systems comes to mind. The opposite is also true. Numerous "political" issues from defense procurement to immigration have enormous "non-political" consequences.

The essential point is that strategic decisions should be premised on present and future interests, including fundamental values. The U.S. and India must make decisions based on present realities and future needs, not premised on an analysis of the superseded past. These decisions should not be bound by historical conceptions of East vs. West or political vs. non-political. The U.S. and India should recognize that present decisions are setting precedents. If the Russian use of death and destruction and nuclear threats in regard to Ukraine are successful, the use of

these tactics by authoritarian regimes such as China is sure to follow. This is a manifestation of the violent approach to international affairs that has plagued mankind throughout history and now again faces the U.S., India, and the world.

### **India Reiterates Tibet Position After US Delegation Visit – OpEd**

23 June 2024, Eurasia Review, Subir Bhaumik

Immediately after a visiting US delegation upped the ante on Tibet, India reiterated its stance on His Holiness' Dalai Lama, emphasising his "revered" status and the respect accorded to him by the Indian people.

"The Government of India's position on His Holiness the Dalai Lama is clear and consistent. He is a revered religious leader and is deeply respected by the people of India. His Holiness is accorded due courtesies and freedom to conduct his religious and spiritual activities," the Ministry of External Affairs official spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal told a press briefing.

Jaiswal's comments follow the visit of a seven-member US Congressional delegation which asserted that President Joe Biden will soon sign a bill on Tibet that has upset China. Jaiswal however refrained from commenting on the succession of the Dalai Lama, but highlighted the spiritual leader's significant role in India's cultural fabric.

"A seven-member US Congress delegation paid a visit to India from 16-20 June 2024. The bi-partisan delegation was led by Rep. Michael McCaul, Chairman of House Foreign Affairs Committee. They visited Dharamshala on 18-19 June," the MEA spokesperson said.

He said the delegation also called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and interacted with External Affairs minister S Jaishankar and Commerce & Industry minister Piyush Goyal.

"As regards the statements by the US delegation, I would refer you to the US side and it is for them to answer," he said.

In a strongly-worded statement on Chinese President Xi Jinping, former US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi – who is part of a US Congressional delegation – said on Wednesday that while the legacy of the Dalai Lama will live forever for compassion and tradition, the Chinese President will be gone and nobody will give him any credit.

Pelosi made these comments after meeting the Dalai Lama in Dharamshala. The US Congressional delegation is led by US House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaul and has members including Pelosi, who is now Speaker Emerita, and prominent US Congressional members

– Mariannette Miller, Gregory Meeks, Nicole Malliotakis, Jim McGovern, and Ami Bera.

While the Dalai Lama meets foreign diplomats and visitors, this delegation is one of the most high-powered delegations from the US in recent years. Pelosi has been at the forefront of challenging Beijing, as she had visited Taiwan in August 2022.

The delegation's visit comes after the US Congress last week passed a bill urging Beijing to re-engage with the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan leaders to peacefully resolve their dispute over the status and governance of Tibet.

Pelosi and McCaul told journalists in India that the government of President Joe Biden will surely implement the Tibet bill.

India recently hit back at China by renaming more than 30 places in Tibet. This was a riposte to Beijing which has named 60 places in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh with Chinese names in an attempt to back its claim on the Indian province China calls "Southern Tibet."

The Indian renaming of Tibetan places in effect as reopening the Tibet question because India has so far recognised Tibet as part of China.

### **Opening up the Tibet front?**

23 June 2024, Deccan Chronicle, Srikanth Kondapalli

China's recent aggression in every direction in its neighbourhood is leading to a storm building up for itself. Its massive and intrusive military build-up and exercises across the Taiwan Straits, South China Sea and on the borders with India are not only unnerving for the countries involved but are also causing them to push back.

The non-resolution of the border stand-off since 2020 has created an armed stalemate on India's borders. Another front, albeit a politico-diplomatic one, is opening on the Tibet issue with the US congressional delegation's visit to Dharamshala.

China upped the ante following the visit of Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan in August 2022 when she was Speaker of the US House of Representatives. China's military crossed the median line that separates it from Taiwan, and has kept up its intimidatory tactics ever since.

On April 8 this year, it conducted "combat readiness patrols" in response to US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy's visit to Taiwan. These Chinese intrusions have intensified after Taiwan's presidential elections earlier this year. Yet, it seems, Beijing's two-pronged approach – applying military pressure from outside and running influence operations inside Taiwan – are not working

China's heightened political rhetoric on 'One China', frequent military activities, attempts to diplomatically

isolate Taipei, or foment internal political struggles in Taiwan have raised concerns about potential miscalculation and accidents leading to an escalation in the Taiwan Straits.

Another potential conflict is emerging in the South China Sea between China and the Philippines at the Second Thomas Shoal. China claims 80 per cent of the whole region, despite The Hague tribunal quashing its claims in July 2016. On June 17, China's coastguard vessels rammed into a Filipino military boat, armed with a domestic legislation to seize any foreign personnel in the disputed seas.

The ensuing skirmish left a Filipino soldier with a severed finger and two vessels destroyed. The incident came close to what Philippine President Marcos has declared as a red line – any Filipino casualty. The US invoked the 1951 Mutual Defence Treaty with the Philippines, but tensions did not subside. Closer home, China has not accepted the olive branch extended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his remarks to Newsweek last month. On the other hand, it has been exerting military pressure on the borders and in India's neighbourhood, specifically in Maldives, Sri Lanka and Nepal. Despite 21 meetings at the military level for “disengagement and de-escalation” on the borders, three areas still remain contentious.

China is opening another front in Tibet. In August 2020, China's Communist Party began “sinicising Tibetan Buddhism” and enhanced Han Chinese intrusions. China built more than 600 “well-off society” villages on the borders with India, Nepal, Bhutan and was even preparing to do so in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir. Nearly one-third of these built-up structures came up on the path that the Dalai Lama took in 1959 while fleeing to India. It is an indication that Beijing is preparing to effect a transition to the 15th Dalai Lama. Beijing has announced that it will exercise a “golden urn” process of selecting the 15th Dalai Lama, a bid to cause schisms among Tibetans.

The bipartisan US congressional delegation's visit to Dharamshala on June 18-19 came in the light of these developments and was meant to apprise the Dalai Lama of the Resolve Tibet Act that the Biden administration is considering signing into law.

Among other things, the delegation suggested resumption of the stalled dialogue between China and Tibetan representatives, stopping Chinese disinformation about Tibetan history and culture and, intriguingly, “self-determination” for Tibet.

While US delegation visits to Dharamshala are not exactly new, considerable interest and publicity was generated both due to the “self-determination” comment and the delegation's meetings with PM Modi and External Affairs Minister Jaishankar. Since the Roosevelt administration in the early 1940s, the

US has considered Tibet a part of China (under the then Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek). The US continued to follow this policy even after China came under Communist rule, only raising human rights issues from time to time.

The Obama administration in its ‘G2’ phase with China downgraded the Tibet factor, signalled by Obama meeting the Dalai Lama in the Maple Room of the White House, meant for spiritual leaders, rather than in the Oval Room. Such obsequiousness toward China began to change with Obama's ‘Pivot to Asia’, a change that accelerated under the Trump and Biden administrations. While India is cautious of the vagaries of US policy toward Beijing, the pounding pressure that China is exerting on Delhi may yet be a factor in how the Modi government views the Tibet issue going forward.

### **Why India's ‘Tibet card’ against China is stronger and working like never before**

22 June 2024, First Post, Madhur Sharma

China is averse to any country's official engagement with the Dalai Lama, whom it calls a separatist over his demand for real autonomy for Tibet

In a rare visit, a delegation of American lawmakers visited Himachal Pradesh's Dharamshala this week to meet the Tibetan leader the Dalai Lama.

In a well-orchestrated convergence of mutual interests, the United States, the Tibetans in exile, and Indians with their nod to the visit came together to send a message to China. The message found its mark.

Shortly after the US delegation comprising House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaul and Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi began their engagements with Tibet's Government-in-Exile, the Embassy of China in India warned the United States to not “send the wrong signal”.

“We urge the US side to fully recognise the anti-China separatist nature of the Dalai group, honour the commitments the US has made to China on issues related to Xizang, stop sending the wrong signal to the world,” said the Chinese mission in a post on X (formerly Twitter).

The post used the Beijing-imposed name Xizang for Tibet as part of its practice of renaming minority-populated regions in China to undermine their history identity and culture.

The Dalai Lama arrived in India in 1959 along with a large number of his followers. He had fled for his life from Tibet's capital Lhasa following the failure of an uprising against the Chinese repression in the region. The Communist Party of China's (CPC) forces had invaded and captured Tibet in 1949-50. Since the Dalai Lama's arrival, China has denounced his

presence and has consistently sought to undermine the movement he and his fellow exiles have waged.

Following the engagements in Dharamshala, the US delegation led by McCaul met Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Minister of External Affairs S Jaishankar, and National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval on Thursday. It rested all doubts as to whether the visit had New Delhi's approval.

The convergence of India and the United States is part of the message to China that if you do not respect our sensibilities, we would not respect yours. It is not sudden but in the making since 2020 when China inexplicably plunged the bilateral relationship to its lowest since 1962 with a confrontation in Ladakh. For a long time before that, sections in the government and outside tracking China had questioned the rationale of respecting China's red lines with no reciprocity.

The India-China relationship has lacked mutual respect from the onset, says Tej Pratap Singh, a scholar of China at the Banaras Hindu University (BHU).

"In 1954, India and China signed the Panchsheel treaty. China still attacked India in 1962. Then, India unilaterally revived the relationship in 1976 by restoring ambassador-level ties and then Rajiv Gandhi made a historic visit to China in 1988. In 2003, Atal Bihari Vajpayee formalised the acceptance of the One China Policy. In all these years, China never offered any reciprocity despite all the concessions from India. China neither settled the border nor acknowledged historical agreements. Instead, it opened a new front in Sikkim and waded into the Kashmir issue," says Singh, Professor, Department of Political Science, BHU.

Ladakh stand-off a watershed moment for India-China ties

Despite the then-External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj telling her Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in 2014 that just as India accepted the One China Policy, India expected China to go by a One India Policy, the Modi government accommodated Chinese concerns for years.

Until 2020, Modi invested heavily in managing ties with China. India did not overtly engage with Taiwan or Tibetans. Modi's meeting with the Dalai Lama in 2014 was very low-profile and Tibetans' events were shifted from New Delhi to Dharamshala in 2018-19 as Modi reached out to Xi repeatedly. Two summits were held in China's Wuhan and Mamallapuram in Tamil Nadu – 'Wuhan Spirit' was the buzzword.

Even as India continued to try to accommodate China, there was no reciprocity. When Chinese President Xi Jinping first visited India in 2014, the visit overlapped with a Chinese military incursion in Ladakh. Then, in 2017, China waged a stand-off in Doklam at the India-China-Bhutan trijunction. China

also opened a fresh flashpoint at the Sikkim border that was otherwise considered settled.

Even that did not make India turn too hawkish. The shift only came in 2020 when China mounted incursions after incursions in Ladakh and Sikkim. The paradigm shift was cemented on June 15, 2020, when the Chinese killed at least 20 Indian soldiers in a clash in Galwan Valley in Ladakh's east.

Following the Ladakh stand-off, the Modi government blocked Chinese telecommunication firms like Huawei from the roll-out of the 5G network in the country. It blocked Chinese investments, mergers, and acquisitions, and clamped down on the Chinese companies operating in the country – Chinese apps were banned, loan apps were brought under the scanner, and companies like Vivo and Oppo were pushed to sell majority stakes of India units to Indian companies.

For the first time, India acknowledged the existence of the Special Frontier Force (SFF), one of the shadowiest Indian special forces rooted in the India-China conflict and staffed by Tibetans in exile in large numbers. The official engagement with the Tibetans also increased following the Ladakh stand-off.

In 2021, Modi publicly wished the Dalai Lama for the first time in many years and has continued to do so every year since. In the years since, the Indian military has facilitated the Dalai Lama's visit to Ladakh and flown him into the region –claimed by China bordering his homeland of Tibet– in military helicopters. Top officials like governors and chief ministers have met him and the Indian leaders have increasingly referred to the border with China as the India-Tibet border –which it actually is– instead of the India-China border.

During the Ladakh stand-off, videos were also released of Tibetans tying the 'khata' –the sacred white Tibetan sash– on vehicles of Indian Army and SFF that were carrying troops for deployment to the frontlines.

While the engagement with the Tibetans picked up pace, India also ramped up cautious engagement with Taiwan as China also became aggressive by the day regarding the self-ruled island and increased military provocations there.

Since 2020, there has been a recognition of the reality that India does have some levers that it can pull regarding China to signal that respect for sensibilities cannot be a one-way street, says Manoj Kewalramani, a China scholar at the Takshashila Institution and author of the book *Smokeless War: China's Quest for Global Primacy*.

"Since 2020, India has been telling China that we can indeed pull some levers on issues that concern you. The idea is that if you do not accept our concerns, we will not accept yours. The US



delegation's meeting with the Dalai Lama is also part of the signalling to China that if you worsen the relationship by ratcheting up disputes, we can also rake up stuff that you may otherwise consider settled. This may include giving foreign governments a platform to engage with the Tibetan 'separatist' movement," says Kewalramani.

While the post-2020 approach to China is indeed a paradigm shift, there is also an element of continuity. Even though India formally accepts the One China Policy, India has not iterated that since 2009. The idea is that One China will be only iterated if the other side iterates One India, as Swaraj told Yi in 2014.

Is India playing the 'Tibet Card' – again?

The commentary on Tibet ranges from it being a non-issue to it being one of the central issues in the India-China relationship. Kewalramani says it's a knob for New Delhi that it can turn up or down as per the situation.

"The real question is not if India is playing the Tibet card or not. The question is what's the endgame from turning up the knob now. Does New Delhi feel the Tibet issue gives it enough leverage? That does not seem likely. But turning up the knob now can definitely lead to annoyance and friction for China and undermining the Chinese narrative. That way, the moves regarding the Tibetans can be meaningful," says Kewalramani, a Chinese Studies Fellow and the Chairperson of the Indo-Pacific Studies Programme at the Takshashila Institution.

This time, India is not playing the card alone. It is joined by the United States. Even though the American interest in Tibet may look sudden and sceptics of the US foreign policy may flinch at the India-US convergence, neither of them is new.

Since the 1950s, the United States and India have been engaged on the issue of Tibet. Initially, the United States tried to rope in India to mount a united response to the Tibet question. The United States also supported Tibetan guerillas against the Communist regime of Beijing and, following the India-China War of 1962, helped India enlist Tibetans in the SFF and supported India militarily.

In her book *Fateful Triangle: How China Shaped U.S.-India Relations During the Cold War*, Tanvi Madan noted that while the United States was willing to address the Tibet issue in early 1950s, it was not willing to do it without India and was wary of spillovers.

"But, while Washington was willing to encourage Tibet's leaders and its autonomy in spirit, it was unwilling to act alone to provide military or financial assistance or appoint official representatives to Tibet. Acheson [US Secretary of State] maintained that India had the primary responsibility to help Tibet... Furthermore, like Britain and India, the US was

concerned about any spillover impact on the Korean situation – the reason why it would not promise a specific response to a potential Tibetan appeal to the UN," noted Madan, a Senior Fellow at the Center for Asia Policy Studies of the Brookings Institution.

The book also quoted the US Department of State saying at the time: "Tibet as a weapon for alerting GOI [Government of India] to the danger of attempting to appease any Communist Govt and, specifically, for manoeuvring GOI into a position where it will voluntarily adopt a policy of firmly resisting Chinese Communist pressure in south and east Asia."

As was the case in 1950-60s, the US outreach to India over Tibet is part of a broader geopolitical contest. While the contest was with the global Communism in the Cold War, the United States is now in competition with China – some see it as one of democracy versus autocracies.

"For the past few years, the United States has witnessed an increased focus on Tibet about real autonomy for the region. There is also a sense in the United States of an existential clash with China. This is what's leading to the increased India-US convergence on China and the moves regarding Tibet are part of the bigger response to rising and aggressive China," says Kewalramani.

Even as India and the United States appear to be playing the Tibet Card jointly, some critics question the utility and even the existence of such a card. Former Indian diplomat Phunchok Stobdan has argued that there has never been a Tibet card as India and the United States both accept the One China Policy, Tibet itself has accepted Chinese sovereignty, and the Dalai Lama's establishment is also eager to make a deal with China than waging an overt conflict.

In his book *The Great Game in Buddhist Himalayas: India and China's Quest for Strategic Dominance*, Stobdan further flagged that the US involvement brings harm instead of benefits. He wrote, "The Dalai Lama and the 'Tibet Card' are Cold War-era relics. The issue has been kept alive for almost six decades, mainly due to the games being played, some at the behest of Western powers. The Dalai Lama and Tibet 'cards' have not served any deterrent purposes for India; rather, they have prolonged mutual suspicion and hostility with China."

While the extent of the leverage the Tibet Card gives India is up for debate, Kewalramani tells Firstpost that the idea is to keep the wound open.

"If you keep the wound open, the Tibet question in this case, then who knows where it leads someday? Maybe, nothing may happen today, but who knows what the card might yield in the future? So, you don't put a lid on the issue," says Kewalramani.

India has upped the ante with China

When Modi and Jaishankar met the US Congressional delegation, the gloves came off. The speculation by some on social media that the delegation had gone rogue with their statements was settled and New Delhi's approval of the visit was for all to see.

Kewalramani says that India is playing a high-risk game now considering China too holds levers against India.

"Even as India has been shifting its policies regarding China since 2020, it has done so very carefully. India does not speak about Xinjiang. India is very cautious about Taiwan and has issued very cautious and few statements in recent years. So, India's actions with China are very calculated. These moves regarding Tibet with the United States, however, mark a shift to a high-risk approach," says Kewalramani.

Even as the United States is on the same page for now with India on Tibet, there are doubts in some quarters whether that's going to last. Singh, the China scholar at BHU, highlights that the United States backed India on China and Tibet in 1950-60s but it petered out by 1970 and the United States was on the other side entirely in 1970s.

"The US policy on Tibet has been patchy, but now that China is the main US adversary, which is also the case with India, the two countries may have much more lasting convergence than in the 1950-60s on Tibet as the Tibet Card can be part of the broader efforts to contain China," says Singh.

As far as the policy shift's risks are considered, Singh tells Firstpost that being risk-averse has not paid India over the years. He argues that the more anyone accommodates China, the more belligerent China becomes. Citing the case of the failed Western bet on bringing China into the World Trade Organization (WTO) and legitimising it internationally with the hope that it would liberalise the country, Singh says softness with China has never paid off.

"India has always been reactive with China. It has never been proactive. Even as there has been a shift in the past few years, India is still not properly proactive. But there is at least much more sharpness in the reactions now. The hope is that this will evolve into a proactive policy. As for the risks, you need to take risks. Otherwise, you don't even have a chance at making gains," says Singh.

## Awakening for Tibet

22 June 2024, Sri Lanka Guardian, N.S. Venkataraman

Let Not the World Conscience Remain Silent Anymore on The Plight of Tibetans.

Around 60 years ago, China forcibly entered Tibet and occupied the region. Until then, Tibet was a peaceful country where Tibetans lived according to high-value systems and Buddhist philosophy, with goodwill towards all. Tibet had no substantial army, and when China carried out the aggression and its troops entered Tibet, all Tibetans could do was peacefully protest. The merciless Chinese troops massacred thousands of Tibetans who were protesting. In this grim situation, the respected spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, had no choice but to leave Tibet and enter India with around 85,000 Tibetan followers.

During this period of stress, Tibet was largely abandoned to suffer by the rest of the world. The government of neighboring India should have protested against the Chinese invasion, but instead recognized the occupation of Tibet by China. At that time, many voices in India urged the government to protest, but it did not. All that the Government of India did was allow the Dalai Lama and his followers to stay in India as refugees. Over the last sixty years, the third generation of Tibetans mostly live as refugees in India.

Over the last sixty years, China has systematically plundered Tibet's mineral wealth, such as lithium, and water resources. The Chinese government has been sending native Chinese to settle in Tibet, aiming to destroy Tibetan culture and traditions. Several monasteries in Tibet have been destroyed.

This injustice against Tibet by China continues today. In the last six decades, China has shown its territorial greed by entering into war with India and occupying thousands of kilometers of Indian territory. The occupation of Tibet by China was clearly the first step in achieving this territorial expansion. China continues this practice of claiming the territories of other countries to this day, seemingly with impunity. In this context, it is heartening that the U.S. House of Representatives has passed the "Resolve Tibet Act," which calls on the Chinese government to engage with the Dalai Lama to restore Tibet's independence to Tibetans.

Subsequently, an influential group of U.S. lawmakers met with the Dalai Lama in Himachal Pradesh, India, exchanged views, and offered support to the Tibetan cause. They have also clearly warned the Chinese government that they will take steps to safeguard Tibet's sovereignty in the future.

As expected, the Chinese government has protested against these observations by U.S. lawmakers, claiming that Tibet is an internal matter for China.

What will happen next?

While U.S. lawmakers have taken steps to support the Tibetan cause, albeit after many decades, it is better late than never. The question now is whether other countries in the world, particularly Western democracies and thoughtful individuals in these regions, will voice their support for the initiative taken by U.S. lawmakers.

The ball is now clearly in the court of the Government of India to take the initiative forward and support the Tibetan cause. The question remains whether the Government of India will fulfill its responsibility towards an independent Tibet. It is notable that Indian Prime Minister Mr. Modi has not met with the Dalai Lama even once during his ten-year tenure as Prime Minister.

Recently, China has acted against India's interests in several international forums, clearly viewing India as a primary adversary.

Possibly, the Indian government does not want to antagonize the Chinese government to avoid military confrontation. If this is India's stance, it reflects a defeatist attitude lacking in courage and conviction. Millions of Indians sympathize with the Tibetan cause and want the Indian government to advocate for Tibet in international forums.

Many Tibetans have become refugees in various countries, later becoming citizens. They are primarily occupied with making a living and are unable to substantially contribute to their homeland's cause.

The initiative of U.S. lawmakers should gain momentum, and India can play a crucial role in advocating and strengthening the Tibetan cause, urging the world conscience, which has been largely silent regarding the plight of Tibetans, to speak out." This version maintains the essence of your message while enhancing readability and clarity.

### **What's behind India's hardening posture against China?**

22 June 2024, The Economic Times

There is a small but stark shift in India's approach to China in the past few weeks which indicates the Modi government in its third term might harden its posture against the neighbour with which relations have been hostage to heightened border disputes ever since skirmishes between Indian and Chinese forces along the border in 2020.

PM Modi is likely to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Kazakhstan in the first week of July where he might run into China's President Xi Jinping. Shortly before a possible meeting between the two leaders, India seems to be

hardening its posture against China. The two meetings between Modi and Xi after the Galwan clashes at the G20 Summit at Bali in 2022 and the BRICS Summit in South Africa a year later failed to yield any positive results. Thousands of troops remain deployed on either side of the Sino-india border .

India's 'no' to 'business as usual'

China is pressing India to restart direct passenger flights after a four-year halt, but New Delhi is resisting as a border dispute continues to weigh on ties between the two countries, Reuters has reported recently. Several times over the past year or so, China's government and airlines have asked India's civil aviation authorities to re-establish direct air links, two people with direct knowledge of the matter told Reuters, with one saying China considers this a "big issue".

"We hope the Indian side will work with China in the same direction for the early resumption of direct flights," China's Foreign Ministry told Reuters in a statement, adding that resuming flights would be in both countries' interests. But a senior Indian official familiar with India-China bilateral developments said of Beijing's desire to resume flights: "Unless there is peace and tranquility on the border, the rest of the relationship cannot move forward."

India is refusing to let the ties normalise with China without a resolution of the border disputes. Direct flights between India and China were halted four months after the pandemic broke out. Except for a smattering of covid repatriation flights, they have not resumed even though India lifted covid restrictions on international air routes a year later and China lifted all covid travel measures in early 2023.

Modi's Taiwan move

After results of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections were announced, Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te congratulated Modi on his third consecutive victory in the general elections and said he looks forward to expanding the "fast-growing" ties between the two nations. He further stressed expanding India-Taiwan collaboration on trade, technology and other sectors to contribute to peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific.

"My sincere congratulations to Prime Minister @narendramodi on his election victory. We look forward to enhancing the fast-growing Taiwan-India partnership, expanding our collaboration on trade, technology & other sectors to contribute to peace & prosperity in the IndoPacific," President Lai posted on X. Modi replied: "Thank you @ChingteLai for your warm message. I look forward to closer ties as we work towards mutually beneficial economic and technological partnership."

This formal exchange between the two leaders angered China which lodged a protest with India for Modi's acknowledgement of Taiwanese president's

congratulatory message. The Chinese foreign ministry urged India to resist Taiwan's "political calculations" and not do anything to violate the "one-China principle".

Under its "One China Policy", China opposes all forms of official interactions between Taiwan authorities and other countries, saying Taiwan is an inalienable part of Chinese territory. Like other countries which have diplomatic ties with China, India too follows the "One China Policy" even though there has been no public articulation of it since 2010. For China, PM Modi had crossed a red line by talking to the new Taiwanese president whom China views as a dangerous rebel.

**The tit-for-tat Tibet gameplay**

Nearly two weeks ago, there were reports of India planning to do something which can outrage China. India is planning to rename over two dozen places in China's Tibet Autonomous Region in a tit-for-tat move against China renaming places in Arunachal Pradesh, according to a report in the Diplomat.

The list of places to be renamed has been finalised by the Army's information warfare division and will be released soon, said the report. The new names are backed by extensive historical research and widely held opinions of the local residents, many of whom fiercely oppose the Chinese names.

The renaming campaign aims to push through an Indian counter-narrative on the border through regional and global media, anchored on both solid historical research and local residents' voices.

In the past, China has changed names of places in Arunachal Pradesh. In March, it renamed 30 places along the Line of Actual Control in the state, including 11 residential areas, 12 mountains, four rivers, one lake, one mountain pass, and a piece of land. It was the fourth time that China unilaterally renamed places in the state. India has repeatedly rejected China's move to rename places in Arunachal Pradesh, asserting that the state is an integral part of the country and that assigning "invented" names does not alter this reality.

A few days ago, India allowed a high-level US congressional delegation, including former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, to meet the Dalai Lama at his Indian home, a visit that was condemned in advance by China's government, which considers the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader a separatist. At the same time, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan was in India discussing security and technological cooperation.

The visit by the US congressional delegation came right after a bipartisan bill was passed by the US House of Representatives, seeking to push Beijing to hold dialogue with Tibetan leaders that has been stalled since 2010.

In what China would see as a further provocation, PM Modi met with the US Congressional delegation following their meeting with the Dalai Lama

**What's behind India's aggressive posture?**

While India's aggressive posturing against China, especially with regard to Tibet, points at an increasing coordination with the US, it also indicates India's move could reopen the Tibet issue. India's Taiwan and Tibet moves clearly show India's push against the "One China Policy". So far, India had restrained from openly challenging the policy but now it could be sending the message that if China is not mindful of India's territorial concerns, India too would no longer acknowledge China's sensitivities.

"India has once again indicated that it is willing to gradually ramp up pressure on issues like Tibet and Taiwan," Harsh Pant, an international relations professor at King's College London, has told Hong Kong-based daily South China Morning Post. He said that New Delhi had made it clear that unless Beijing recognized "India's concerns and sensitivities and respects Indian interests", it was not moving from that posture.

Michael Kugelman, director of the Wilson Centre's South Asia Institute, told SCMP that it seemed as though India was "trying to signal that it can use its relationship with the US as leverage". "It can show China that there are ways that it can push back," he added.

"India appears more risk tolerant now when it comes to how far it's willing to go with pushing the Tibet issue," Kugelman said.

Many think a less-than-expected mandate for PM Modi in the Lok Sabha elections will make his government averse to accommodating Chinese concerns because it could be seen as a sign of weakness by his voters.

### **China's name change spree in Xinjiang and Tibet continues unabated**

22 June 2024, First Post, Mahesh Rajan Debata

The sinister design by the Chinese authorities to change the names of places, cities, and townships is not limited to its provinces or territory alone; rather, it goes beyond the borders.

The Chinese Central government has not only been devising but also religiously implementing the policy to change the names of streets, villages, places, and townships in the country, especially in the minority-dominated areas in its western part. The Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) have borne the maximum brunt in this process.

For example, in Chinese academic parlance, Tibet has been described as Xijiang since 2023. This Chinese trick has two mottoes: firstly, China

deliberately attempts to dilute the culture of the minority people, or perhaps aims at stamping out ethno-religious or ethno-cultural identities of the minorities, particularly the Uyghurs and Tibetans; and secondly, it wants to expand the process of sinification by dint of imposing the overarching Chinese communist ideology on the minority people. In a joint report published recently by Human Rights Watch (HRW) and a Norway-based Uyghur organisation (Uyghur Help), the Chinese atrocities on Uyghur culture and identity have come to light time and again. According to the report, the Chinese Central Government has been "systematically changing hundreds of village names" bearing historical, religious, and cultural meanings for Uyghurs into new names that faithfully reflect the ideology of the Communist Party of China (CCP).

It is important to note herewith that the name-changing spree in Tibet and Xinjiang by the Chinese can be traced back to the end of the 2000s, particularly after the Tibet unrest in March 2008 and the Urumqi riots (5 July 2009) in XUAR. Along with the stern policy of "Strike Hard, Maximum Pressure" in both Tibet and Xinjiang, it led to massive securitisation and surveillance in both the restive regions in the later period.

The Chinese authorities have meted out excesses against Tibetans and Uyghurs. They slyly began one of the government-sponsored measures of "cultural erasure" of the Uyghurs and Tibetans as part of their sinification design. It has been an uphill task for these hapless minorities to maintain their centuries-old unique culture against 75 years of Chinese onslaught.

The HRW Report gives detailed information, elaborating that as many as 3,600 of a total of 25,000 villages in Xinjiang (almost 15 per cent of the total villages) have witnessed name change in the last one and a half decades (from 2009 to 2023). In 630 villages (nearly one-fifth of the total of 3,600 villages), the names bearing the religion, culture, and history of Uyghurs have witnessed change.

The popular Uyghur names, such as Mazar (shrine), Hoja (Sufi teacher), Meschit (mosque), Haniqa (Sufi meeting place), Gumbaz (dome), Orda (palace), Xelpe (Khalifa), Wap (Islamic Foundation), Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca), Dutar (an Uyghur music instrument) and Sultan (Emir), are now replaced with pejorative Chinese names such as Hongxing (Red Star), Qianjin (Forward), Hongqi (Red Flag), Youyi (Friendship), Guangming (Light), Bostan (Oasis), Hexie (harmony), Tuanjie (unity) and Xingfu (happiness).

It is found to be a classic case of sinification that Chinese authorities have been imposing on minority nationalities, especially against Uyghurs and Tibetans, since Qing rule. The process of sinification

has taken on a new tone and tenor since the communist takeover of Xinjiang in 1949. However, what is not reported in the media is the renaming of some famous streets in the capital, Urumqi, and Kashgar, as confirmed news reports are awaited.

Earlier, seven years ago, two reports were published. One was by Human Rights Watch—"China bans many Muslim baby names in Xinjiang" (April 24, 2017)—and the other was by Radio Free Asia—"Xinjiang's 'List of Forbidden Names' forces Uyghurs to change the names of children under 16"—which described how Chinese authorities at the local political committee in Tohula township of Karakash county in Khotan prefecture banned several Muslim names like Arafat, Saddam, Medina, Husein, Seypidin, Seypulla, Nesrulla, Shemsidin, and Mujahit (for boys under the age 16) and Muslime, Muhlise, Ayshe, Fatima, and Hediche (for girls under the age 16).

This measure was commensurate with the Chinese government's "Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Regulation on De-extremification" that was adopted unanimously at the 28th meeting of the Standing Committee of the Twelfth People's Congress for the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region on March 29, 2017.

In addition, the authorities gave an ultimatum of 72 hours to change the names and issued a diktat not to provide the Uyghur children bearing any of the banned names the much-needed hukou (household registration), which is a necessary condition to enrol tiny tots in public school and other social services in the minority areas. It is a brazen display of Chinese indifference towards the minority culture of a multicultural society like China. Besides, it perhaps spells out the spread of fear of the Chinese among the young and impressionable minds so that they will not raise their voice against the government in the future.

It is imperative to highlight here that this sinister design by the Chinese authorities to change the names of places, cities, and townships is not limited to its provinces or territory alone; rather, it goes beyond the borders. For instance, the Chinese government exhibited the audacity to rename as many as 62 villages in the Indian province of Arunachal Pradesh in four phases in the last half a dozen years. The People's Republic of China not only brazenly, forcefully, and aggressively claims the Indian province of Arunachal Pradesh as its integral part but has also renamed it Zangnan (South Tibet). The Indian news media and foreign media have aired the attempt by the Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs to change the names of six places in Arunachal Pradesh in 2017, 15 in 2021, 11 in 2023, and 30 in 2024, respectively. It exposes the mens rea of an alien, arrogant, and aggressive China



against its immediate neighbour (India), with whom it fought a war in 1962 and was involved in intimidation, intrusion, and internecine conflict all along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the last six decades.

### Resolve Tibet

22 June 2024, The Statesman

The visit by US lawmakers to meet the Dalai Lama in India marks a significant moment in the on-going Tibet-China dispute.

The visit by US lawmakers to meet the Dalai Lama in India marks a significant moment in the on-going Tibet-China dispute. This gesture, coupled with the "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Bill" ~ passed by the US Congress ~ signals a shift in US policy that could have profound implications for Sino-American relations and the future of Tibetan autonomy. For decades, the Dalai Lama has been a symbol of peaceful resistance and spiritual resilience. His exile from Tibet in 1959 and his subsequent life in India have highlighted the struggles of the Tibetan people under Chinese rule.

The meeting between the Dalai Lama and influential US lawmakers, including Mr Michael McCaul and Ms Nancy Pelosi, underscores a renewed commitment from Washington to support Tibetan rights and challenge Beijing's heavy-handed policies in the region. China's insistence on controlling the succession of the Dalai Lama illustrates its broader strategy of exerting influence over Tibetan Buddhism and suppressing any form of dissent. Beijing's stance that its atheist leaders should approve the Dalai Lama's successor is not only an affront to Tibetan spiritual traditions but also a clear attempt to legitimise its rule over Tibet. The Dalai Lama's suggestion that his successor might be found in India further complicates China's narrative and asserts Tibetan agency in spiritual matters.

The Resolve Tibet Bill is a legislative milestone that sends a clear message to Beijing that the international community, led by the United States, is no longer willing to passively accept China's dominance over Tibet. If President Joe Biden signs this bill into law, it would represent a significant departure from the longstanding US policy of recognising Tibet as part of China. Such a move would undoubtedly escalate tensions between the two superpowers, but it would also reaffirm America's commitment to human rights and self-determination. India's role in this geopolitical drama is also noteworthy. As the host country of the Dalai Lama and home to a substantial Tibetan exile community, India has a vested interest in the outcome of the Tibet-China dispute.

The strained relationship between India and China, particularly following the 2020 border clashes, adds another layer of complexity. Strengthening ties with the US and supporting the Tibetan cause aligns with India's strategic interests and its efforts to counterbalance China's growing influence in the region. This renewed focus on Tibet by US lawmakers could set a precedent for other countries to adopt similar policies, creating a broader coalition advocating for Tibetan rights. The global community's increased attention on Tibet might pressure Beijing to reconsider its hard-line approach and engage in meaningful negotiations with Tibetan leaders. However, it is crucial to recognise that the Dalai Lama has consistently advocated for genuine autonomy rather than outright independence for Tibet. This "middle way" approach seeks to preserve Tibet's cultural and religious identity while remaining within the framework of the Chinese state.

### China-US-India 'situationship' over Dalai Lama: Will reincarnation have geopolitical implications?

22 June 2024, News One, Deebashree Mohanty

The former Sikyong (political leader) of the Central Tibetan Administration Dr Lobsang Sangay said on Thursday that the reincarnation of the next Dalai Lama will impact geopolitics to a great extent, he also said that China will not have any role to play in the process of reincarnation, search and even training of the next Dalai Lama. So, what is the plan, and what is going to be India's role in it?

There is a lot of noise around the Dalai Lama these days. Apart from the fact that he will mark his 89th birthday on July 1, and that he has an impending trip to the US during the same time, there are murmurs that a reincarnation for the new Dalai Lama maybe on the anvil. Is this the real reason why the high-level US delegation led by former US Congress Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited the Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama in Dharamshala, resulting in some tensions in China? To top all these curious events, former Sikyong (political leader) of the Central Tibetan Administration, Dr Lobsang Sangay, sparked a controversy when he endorsed India as Tibet's closest ally and also mentioned the reincarnation of the new Dalai Lama and what would be China's role in this rebirth.

Who is the chosen one, and what geopolitical ramifications will this rebirth have? Sangay said we will get a clearer picture soon, but there will be no role of China in the process of rebirth, selection of the Lama and training. This is not a new development as the 14th Dalai Lama (whom China sees as a "dangerous separatist,") had in 2023, made an announcement in this regard saying that the new head of Tibetan Buddhism will be in Mongolia, a

position for which China wanted Mongolia to seek its consent. However, Chinese representatives have been quiet on the matter till so long.

What this announcement did was reiterate that China will have no role whatsoever in the process of the rebirth of the latest Dalai Lama. "The next Dalai Lama will not be born in China. His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama has already declared that. In response, the Chinese government launched a major campaign to counter that position. But it is clear that Beijing does not have any role to play in the reincarnation of the next Dalai Lama," he said, making an elaborate presentation on the idea of reincarnation and why it could have a major geopolitical implication.

The new Dalai Lama; endless possibilities

Why is China's interference a matter of concern for Tibet, Sangay pointed out that there are many Buddhist dominated countries in Asia and beyond and all these countries could end up being affected if the Chinese interfere with the process of finding a successor to the present Dalai Lama.

Earlier in June, the present Dalai Lama who resides in McLeodganj, met with the US lawmakers and discussed the process of reincarnation when McCaul in his remarks before the Tibetan community in Dharamshala declared that China is trying to interfere into the "succession" of the present Dalai Lama. Who is going to be the successor to the 14th Dalai Lama is a question that begs some explanation, although political activists have said it depends on whether Tibet opts for reincarnation or emanation. The 14th Dalai Lama, who has lived in exile, has floated the possibility of a non-traditional succession. He already ended the post's political powers in 2011 in favour of an elected Tibetan government-in-exile and has been keeping Beijing on its toes with his grand plans for the succession. He has alternatively suggested that his reincarnation could be a girl for the first time, or that he might be the last Dalai Lama. There is also the intriguing possibility of "emanation before death" in which case, Tibetans believe the Dalai Lama's spirit could transfer to an adult successor. With all these endless possibilities, it is anyone's guess who is going to take over from the present Dalai Lama but what the globe awaits is a lot of political upheaval during the process of such an eventuality.

China's stance on the new Dalai Lama: China has insisted that the successor to the present Dalai Lama will require its approval and that the successor will have to be found "within the country". They had cited historical reasons behind this claim. A point that was quickly dispensed with by Sangay who reminded that the fourth Dalai Lama Yonten Gyatso was born in 1589 in Mongolia and that the sixth Dalai Lama was born in Tawang in 1683, indicating

that there are historical precedents that the Dalai Lama was reincarnated on occasions outside of China.

US's support for Tibetan ideology: US lawmakers have time and again re-affirmed the support of the US for the Tibetan spiritual leader and his advocacy for Tibetan autonomy. The latest visit also reflected the interest of the US in human rights issues related to Tibet and the broader geopolitical context involving China. The US government has frequently criticized China's human rights record in Tibet, highlighting issues such as religious repression, cultural assimilation, and restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly. The Congress has passed several resolutions supporting the rights of the Tibetan people and recognising the Dalai Lama's leadership. Notably, the Tibet Policy Act of 2002 mandated support for Tibetan cultural preservation and established the position of a Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues within the US State Department.

India's stance on the reincarnation: India's interest in Dalai Lama stretches much beyond just border politics with its neighbour, China. We have spiritual and philosophically vested interests as well. The Dalai Lama is not only the tallest Buddhist leader in the world, for Buddhists, he is the personification of the Avalokitesvara and his reincarnation (or not) will determine whether the world can save Tibetan Buddhism from the Chinese Communist Party. India is home to the largest cohort of Tibetan refugees in the world. Hence Indian politicians sense that a post-Dalai Lama scenario should be guided by India, so as to reduce the possibility of extremism in the Tibetan ranks.

Since giving asylum to Dalai Lama, India has also revitalised its own Buddhist heritage – with over 200 monasteries and thousands of monks and a concerted attention to Buddhist conferences to provide platform for evolving Buddhist thought. It is imperative that India doesn't leave the future of Buddhism to either China or chance. Politically too, it's in India's interest to participate actively in the reincarnation. In fact, as India fights to stabilise the border conflict with China, its stand and actions on Tibet will be very important. Tibet is not Taiwan. It has rapidly been elevated – for geopolitical, cultural and ecological reasons – as one of India's more important interests. They all run through the Dalai Lama.

Is it going to be easy for all the three parties – China, US and India to reach a common consensus? That is a distant reality according to political pundits. But because China considers Dalai Lama's reincarnation as something very important not because they care about the Dalai Lama but about subduing Tibet, the real question (and challenge) is can India or the US stop China in its tracks?

## The Tibet Play

21 June 2024, Times of India

A bipartisan US delegation meeting the Dalai Lama in Dharamshala has brought back the Tibet issue to the front burner. Of course, China has objected to the visit. The delegation included former US House speaker Nancy Pelosi, who had also visited Taiwan in 2022 despite Beijing's protests. Biden is going to soon sign the Resolve Tibet Act, which calls on Beijing to negotiate with the Dalai Lama or his representatives. This puts India, the host country of the Tibetan govt-in-exile, in a decision spot.

**Question of future** | Given the Dalai Lama's advanced age, the matter of his inevitable succession assumes salience. The US delegation affirmed that Washington would not allow Beijing to interfere with Dalai Lama's succession. Meaning, it will not accept a Beijing-appointed Dalai Lama. India, however, has remained relatively quiet on the matter. But its opinion will matter for the future of the Tibetan movement. It must start thinking now.

**Moral imperative** | India is expected to continue its support to the Tibetan govt-in-exile and the more than 70,000 Tibetan refugees in the country even after this Dalai Lama. Tibetan refugees also constitute one of the most successful examples of rehabilitation in modern history. At a time China has even stopped referring to Tibet by name – using the Chinese term 'Xizang' instead – it's India that has emerged as the cultural home of Tibetans.

**Strategic imperative** | Plus, India-China relations are at a major low. China has repeatedly intruded into and occupied Indian territory. Both armies are eyeball-to-eyeball in the higher Himalayas. India has stopped referring to the 'One China' policy for years. And since China doesn't see India as an equal and treats the border dispute as a convenient political tool, New Delhi should have no hesitation in backing the Tibetan cause. India needs leverage. And the Tibet issue is a big one.

## What is the Resolve Tibet Act?

21 June 2024, CTA, Anagha Jayakumar

The Resolve Tibet Act passed by Congress on June 12 is a bold successor to the two acts preceding it. We explain.

The United States Congress on June 12 passed the Promoting a Resolution to Tibet-China Dispute Act, better known as the Resolve Tibet Act. The bipartisan legislation now awaits assent from President Joe Biden following which it will be ratified into law.

This act is the third notable piece of legislation that the US has taken regarding Tibet, following the Tibetan Policy Act or TPA (2002), and the Tibetan Policy & Support Act or the TPSA (2020). What are the provisions of the Resolve Tibet Act? How is it different from the previous laws passed by Congress? Key provisions

The Resolve Tibet Act authorises the use of funds to counter Chinese disinformation about Tibet "including disinformation about the history of Tibet, the Tibetan people, and Tibetan institutions, including that of the Dalai Lama."

The act also challenges the Chinese contention that Tibet has been a part of China since ancient times. It urges China to engage in meaningful and direct dialogue with the Dalai Lama or his representatives, as well as democratically elected leaders of the Tibetan community "without preconditions, to seek a settlement that resolves differences." Underlining the right of the Tibetan people to self-determination and human rights, the act makes a note of China's duty as a signatory of two covenants – the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – that advocate the same.

The Resolve Tibet Act seeks to recognise and address the multi-faceted socio-cultural identity of the Tibetan people, in particular their "distinct historical, cultural, religious, and linguistic identity." Finally, it amends the TPA to define the exact geographical areas part of the Tibetan Autonomous Region.

**Different from previous legislation**

The Resolve Tibet Act is a bold successor to the two acts which preceded it.

The TPA, the first of its kind explicitly concerning Tibet, took a cautious stance in defining American policy on Tibet. While it flagged the ill-treatment of Tibetans, unlike the 2024 act, it recognised China's claim that Tibet was an integral part of China.

The 2002 act encouraged the Chinese government to pursue dialogue with the Dalai Lama as a "constructive partner," but reiterated his lack of intent in pursuing sovereignty or independence for Tibet, stressing instead on his desire for greater autonomy for Tibetans in China. The TPA even clarified that the US government did not maintain any official relations with the Tibetan government-in-exile, led until 2011 by the Dalai Lama himself, and would only meet him in his capacity as a spiritual leader, and Nobel Laureate. The TPSA of 2020 pushed for constructive dialogue between the PRC and the Dalai Lama or his representatives, or democratically elected leaders of Tibet resulting in a "negotiated agreement", encouraging international support towards the same. The Resolve Tibet Act underlines the need for such talks to be pursued

without “preconditions” on the terms to seek a settlement that resolves differences.

The TPSA also stated that the matter of succession of the Dalai Lama was not of China’s concern and would best be left to Tibetan Buddhists.

### Why Tibet Matters?

21 June 2024, Tibetan Review

Tenzin Dorjee\* argues that Tibet matters not just to the Tibetan people for the preservation of their national identity and for upholding the integrity of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but also because it occupies a globally critical position as the ‘Roof of the World,’ ‘the Water Tower of Asia,’ and the ‘Third Pole,’ besides being the inheritors of the complete teachings of the Buddha, all of which China has set out to destroy.

Tibet is the “Roof of the World,” “the Water Tower of Asia,” and the “Third Pole.” Despite these facts, Tibet does not garner the same attention and concerns as Ukraine and the Middle East Crisis in today’s news. Understandably, the Ukraine and the Middle East Crisis are houses on fire, and Tibet is apparently not. However, while the world is duly concerned about and attending to the houses on fire, Red China tries to erase even the name ‘Tibet’. It now calls Tibet by its Chinese name ‘Xizang,’ with Tibet as such being no more. China forcibly expects the world to accept the Sinicized name for Tibet – ‘Xizang.’

Nevertheless, the fact remains that Tibet matters geopolitically and Tibet belongs to Tibetans, not Chinese. Arguably, Tibet matters from a social-ecological perspective. This article reflects on why Tibet matters, albeit the world may become apathetic and complacent. Tibet is the “Third Pole” with the world’s largest ice reserves besides the Arctic Circle and Antarctica; Tibet’s ice caps are melting faster than elsewhere. If global warming is of concern for survival reasons, Tibet certainly matters more than that reflected by our current state of thinking. Red China has systematically and forcibly uprooted Tibetan nomads from their pasturelands and mined Tibet’s minerals, including gold, uranium, copper, and other metals. These and innumerable other projects that solely benefits China – ‘the Great Motherland’ – have ravaged the ecology of Tibet. The victims are not only Tibet, Tibetans and Tibetan animals and birds, but also the world at large. Satellite images show the Tibetan mountains, including Mt. Kailash – my birthplace – holy to the Bon, Tibetan Buddhism, and Hindu faiths, are bare and unsightly as global temperatures keep swelling. Tibet is the Roof of the World; if the roof caves in, the world, too, will cave in. Saving Tibet is saving the world.

Air and water are essential for the survival and thriving of the human civilization. Tibet is the “Water Tower of Asia” – lifeline for almost 2 billion people living in the downstream countries, including China, India, Bangladesh, Vietnam, and Cambodia. Water, not oil, is the most basic necessity of life. The major rivers of Asia, including the Indus, Brahmaputra, Sutlej, Mekong, and Yangtze, originate in Tibet. China has built mega dams to harness Tibet’s waters and in times of war, it can cut off the water lifeline for India and other downstream countries. A prominent geostrategist, Brahma Chellaney, argues that water wars are waged among riparian neighbours in many parts of the world in his book *Water, Peace, and War: Confronting the Global Water Crisis* (2013) and China controls the major water sources of Asia in Tibet.

Recently, China donated 1,500 tonnes of Tibet’s Glacier Water to the Maldives while the downstream countries face draught issues. China is known for toxic loan diplomacy, pressuring loan-recipient countries to support its global expansion policies to unseat the U.S. global leadership. Now, China has started water-gifting diplomacy with Maldives which is expected to accept Chinese name “Xizang” instead of the established English name Tibet. Global warming and water crisis are likely to trigger the next geopolitical war in Asia. Our world cannot afford a Third or another global war, especially between the two giants in Asia – India and Red China. Tibet matters in saving Asia and the world at large.

Also, as long as faith and human rights matter, Tibet matters. Human rights are universal rights enshrined in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. These rights include the freedom of faith or religious belief, freedom of speech, and freedom to speak one’s mother tongue. China has enslaved the Tibetans, as is evident in the latest report of the Freedom of House (2024). The House rated Tibet -2/40 on political rights and 2/60 on civil rights, yielding an overall score of 0/100. Tibet is China’s North Korea regarding human rights and freedom.

According to Tibetan sociologist Dr. Gyal Lo, who has testified at various hearings, China has forcibly removed over 1 million Tibetan children from their homes and segregated them into Colonial Boarding Schools, where they have restricted the teaching of Tibetan language and forced the Chinese language on them instead. The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) in Washington, D.C., awarded a 2024 Medal to the Tibet Action Institute’s Lhadon Tethong and Dr. Gyal Lo for documenting China’s assimilation policies and ruthless colonial boarding school system in Tibet. This is only a recent manifestation of China’s systematic plan and action to erase Tibetan linguistic and cultural identity. NED

also honoured Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the political leader of Tibetans, with a 2024 medal for his service to sustaining and promoting Tibetan democracy in exile. The European Parliament has called on China to address this issue but dismissed its call. China feels the importance of being assertive and listens to no one but themselves.

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) and the State Department of the United States annually rated China as a Country of Particular Concern for systematically, continuously, and egregiously violating its citizens' freedom of religion and belief. China has persecuted Christians, Uyghurs, Buddhists, Falun Gong, and other Sinicized religions to serve the Communist Ideology and Power Control.

In Tibet, according to a new report, China has mandated the Buddhist Association of China (BAC) to implement President Xi's thoughts and strategies to Sinify or Sinicize Tibetan Buddhism. The Chinese leadership believes that Sinicizing Tibetan Buddhism will erase the Tibetan identity that is rooted in Buddhism. As a significant part of it, they formulated laws and policies to control the unique Tibetan reincarnation system. China has installed Gyaltsan Norbu as the 11th Panchen Lama, completely disappearing the real Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, recognized by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, for over thirty years. They feel so assured of their control of Panchen Lama's reincarnation that they intend to do the same with the next reincarnation of His Holiness, the Dalai Lama. But their plan will be a fiasco as His Holiness the Dalai Lama lives in India, and he will reincarnate in a free country if the Tibet-China conflict persists.

The United States has passed and implemented several laws, such as the Tibet Policy and Support Act and the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, to counteract China's plans and actions. A high-level U.S. Congressional delegation, including Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi, led by the US House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaul, has met with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, presented a copy of the recently passed Promoting Resolution to Tibet-China Dispute bill to him. It also met with the Tibetan Political Leader Sikyong Penpa Tsering and the Tibetan Parliament Speaker, Deputy Speaker, and members in Dharamsala, India, the seat of the Central Tibetan Administration. Along with everyone else, I urge President Biden to sign the bill as soon as possible and implement it earnestly. Notably, this would-be law requires the United States to counteract China's misinformation about the historically independent status of Tibet and to reject any installation by China of the next Dalai Lama, as Tibetans have the sole right to decide on their reincarnation system.

Last but not the least, Tibet matters because Tibetan Buddhism matters globally and locally. Tibet had remained isolated for centuries and preserved the Nalanda Tradition of Buddhism intact in the Tibetan language. It is now being restricted and sought to be erased in Tibet by Red China. India is the Guru and the Tibet is Chela or Disciple. Tibetan Buddhism traces its origin and lineage to the ancient Nalanda Monastic University in India. Undisputedly, the largest and complete collection of Buddhism now exists in the Tibetan language (which is invented, based on the Devanagari script of India): It includes 108 volumes of Sutras (Words of Buddha), over 200 volumes of Shastras (Indian Commentaries), and thousands of other volumes authored by Tibetan masters over the centuries. Guru-Chela relationship is the most sacred and ultimate relationship of all and India has graciously hosted Tibetan refugees for decades.

China aggressively claims Arunachal Pradesh as South Tibet and has named various locations with Sinicized Tibetan names. In a tit-for-tat response, India is going to decide to rename many places in Tibet proper. I urge India that now is the time to firmly and actively support resolving the Sino-Tibetan issues via peaceful negotiation (Ahimsa) between His Holiness the Dalai Lama or Tibetan political leadership and China. The United States will firmly stand with India on such actions.

Tibetans have re-established in exile in India many of their monastic universities, such as Sera, Drepung, Gaden, and Tashi Lhunpo, where monks systematically pursue Buddhism in the Nalanda Tradition, leading to the Geshe Lharampa Degree (Ph.D. equivalent) after twenty-five years of study and debate. The native Bon religion and the four major traditions of Tibetan Buddhism thrive in diaspora in India with their respective monasteries and study centres. Tibetan Buddhism and culture pervade the Himalayan regions of Ladakh, Spiti, and Kinnaur, Mongolia, and it has now spread to different parts of the world. Sinicizing Tibetan Buddhism will not work in the long run as Tibetan Buddhism has already spread far and wide and is not confined to the China-controlled Tibet.

Tibet matters globally and locally so long as the above reasons matter. Saving Tibet is saving Asia and the world at large.

### **South China Sea tensions force US and Beijing to talk more**

21 June 2024, BBC, Laura Bicker

Washington and Beijing are talking more regularly to avoid a conflict in the South China Sea despite their "contentious and competitive" relationship, the United States ambassador to China has told the BBC.



"Our militaries are operating in very close proximity to one another in the South China Sea and in the Taiwan Strait. You don't want to send the wrong signal," Nicholas Burns said in an interview in Beijing earlier this week.

The South China Sea has become a dangerous flashpoint, where Beijing's claims are ratcheting up tensions with Taiwan and Philippines, as well as their most powerful ally, the US.

Chinese and Philippine vessels have been playing a dicey cat-and-mouse game in the contested waters in recent months - the latest altercation this week allegedly involved Chinese coastguard personnel boarding a Philippine boat and attacking soldiers with swords and knives.

The US, which has stitched together military alliances from Manila to Tokyo, has repeatedly vowed to defend its allies' rights in the South China Sea.

This has further strained ties with China - the relationship was already reeling from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Chinese claims over self-governed Taiwan and a trade war.

Mr Burns said these were flashpoints that still "completely divided" the two sides, but it was important to try to "get people together" where possible.

"The Chinese have agreed to increase our military-to-military communications and that's really critical for us. You want to have communication because the last thing we want is an accident, a misunderstanding that leads to conflict," said the 68-year-old diplomat. While tensions have eased, the upcoming US presidential election has the potential to disrupt the relationship again.

"We've warned the Chinese not to involve themselves in our election in any way, shape or form," Mr Burns said, adding that the US was "very concerned" about the possibility.

Earlier this year FBI officials said China would likely continue its efforts to sow divisions and could help spread disinformation online.

The ambassador said the FBI also had evidence of "cyber aggression by Chinese authorities" against the US. Beijing has always denied accusations of state-sponsored cyber warfare and says it too is a victim of this type of crime.

Both Joe Biden and Donald Trump are vying to be tough on Beijing, a strategy they see as a vote-winner. In May, President Biden announced a raft of new tariffs on Chinese-made electric cars, solar panels and other goods. Few electric cars reach US shores, but Ambassador Burns denied that domestic politics had played a part in this decision.

He said this was an "economic move" designed to safeguard American jobs. Meanwhile, China has warned it may retaliate with tariffs of its own.

But there are some bright spots despite the rivalry.

Before sitting down for our interview, Mr Burns had a meeting with China's climate envoy as the world's two biggest polluters try to find ways to reduce harmful emissions.

Washington and Beijing are also holding what are described as "high-level talks" to prevent the drug fentanyl reaching US shores, which Mr Burns described as "critical".

Most of his meetings are at a ministerial level and audiences with President Xi are reserved for when senior US officials, such as Secretary of State Antony Blinken, visit.

Both sides have also vowed to work towards more "people-to-people" exchanges. This comes as the number of US students studying in China has fallen from around 15,000 in 2011 to 800.

Mr Xi hopes to open the door for 50,000 American students to come to China in the next five years. He said on a visit to San Francisco last November that it was the "ultimate wish of our two peoples for exchanges and cooperation".

But Ambassador Burns accused parts of the Chinese government of not taking these warm words seriously: "Since the San Francisco summit, there have been 61 separate incidents when the security forces or a government ministry have prevented Chinese citizens from participating in public diplomacy programmes at this house, at our embassy or they have prevented people from travelling to the US to participate in joint trips - so it has been very difficult for us to bring people together."

On the other side, Chinese students and academics have reported being unfairly targeted by US border officials. Beijing's embassy in Washington lodged a formal protest and accused US authorities of "unwarrantedly" interrogating, harassing, cancelling the visas of and even deporting several students from China with valid travel permits upon their arrival in the US.

China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs also described the allegation as "groundless".

"The US has been using national security as excuse for a long time, interfering normal people-to-people communications and exchanges between the countries, ongoing unwarranted harassment, questioning and repatriation of Chinese students and scholars to the U.S.. This has created a serious chilling effect," a spokesperson told the BBC.

Washington has also placed a "level 3" travel advisory on China urging visitors to "reconsider" their travel. Mr Burns denied this alert was contradictory to a US plea to "bring people together," but was rather a precaution.

"There are Americans imprisoned here who we believe are wrongfully detained, wrongfully prosecuted, I've been visiting these prisoners and we want them released." He said several Americans had

been subjected to “exit bans” by China and had their passports taken at the airport and could not leave.

China, in turn, has left the US off a list of countries that are exempt from visas for up to 15 days of travel - Australia is on the list after Beijing recently mended ties with Canberra.

That “people-to-people” contact – a relatively easy goal in an otherwise thorny relationship – is proving to be so difficult is perhaps a sign of the continuing lack of trust on both sides.

But the biggest fault line for now may well be the war in Ukraine.

The US seems to believe China could hold the key to halting Russia’s progress on the battlefield. And Ambassador Burns reiterated Washington’s message that Beijing’s support for Moscow’s invasion will not be tolerated.

“China is not neutral in this war,” he said. “China is showing its true colours. It’s supporting Russia, supporting Putin as he unleashes this barbaric war on Ukrainian civilians. We know what is being shipped by Chinese companies and we know the impact it is having on Russia’s ability to conduct this war.”

He said there were “tens of thousands” of Chinese companies supporting Moscow. “We have sanctioned a great number and we are prepared to do more if the government here does not pull back.”

His statements echo those made by the G7 in Italy last week, which claimed China’s support for Russia was “enabling” the war in Ukraine. They also threatened more sanctions to punish Chinese entities that they say are helping Russia circumvent Western embargoes.

Beijing has dismissed these warnings as “full of arrogance, prejudice and lies”.

Still, some would call this an improvement from 2022. Following then-Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan, an infuriated Beijing shut down all cabinet-level communication in Washington. Relations again nose-dived in early 2023 on the eve of a visit from Mr Blinken. He cancelled his trip after the US shot down a high-altitude Chinese balloon which flew across North American airspace.

Ties finally stabilised only in November last year when Mr Biden and Mr Xi met in San Francisco.

Mr Burns said his first two years in post were tough – there was little communication with Chinese officials. Now, he adds, relations are “relatively better” but he sees a tough road ahead: “This very difficult rivalry is going to be present for some time to come.”

## Exiled Tibet Leader Calls on World to Press China Into Talks

20 June 2024, Bloomberg, Sudhi Ranjan Sen and Dan Strumof

The head of Tibet’s government-in-exile encouraged countries to join the US in pressuring China to resume direct negotiations with Tibetan officials, calling recently passed legislation strengthening American support for overseas leaders of the region an important new tool.

Penpa Tsering, the prime minister of the government-in-exile, said back-channel discussions with the Chinese government have taken place since January of last year, but nothing concrete has emerged. Beijing and Tibetan officials held nine rounds of talks between 2002 and 2010 with no clear outcome. No formal discussions have been held since then.

“First thing would be to establish – reestablish contact,” he said during an interview with Bloomberg TV in the northern Indian town of Dharamshala, where his government has been based since 1960.

“We know that China respects only strength, not weakness, so we ask people or countries to stand up for the values of freedom and human dignity and democracy,” he added.

His comments follow a visit by a high-level US congressional delegation to Dharamshala led by House Foreign Affairs Chairman Michael McCaul and including former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. The bipartisan group of lawmakers arrived on Tuesday, holding talks with officials from the Central Tibetan Administration and meeting with the Dalai Lama, Tibet’s spiritual leader.

“The so-called Tibetan government-in-exile is an out and out separatist political group and an illegal organization in total violation of China’s constitution and laws,” Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said Thursday at a regular press briefing in Beijing. “The 14th Dalai Lama must thoroughly reflect on and completely correct his political propositions.” Earlier this month, the US Congress passed the Resolve Tibet Act, which strengthens Washington’s support for Tibet’s exiled leaders, including the Dalai Lama, and pushes for Beijing to negotiate with them. President Joe Biden is expected to sign the bill into law.

The Chinese government has condemned the act and the lawmakers’ visit. Beijing considers the Dalai Lama a separatist for his commitment to limited autonomy for the region of Tibet, which China annexed in the 1950s. The Dalai Lama and other monks later fled to India as refugees and set up a government-in-exile.

“We urge the US to clearly see the sensitivity and importance of Xizang-related issues, earnestly respect China’s core interests, honor its commitment on Xizang, refrain from having any forms of

engagement with the Dalai group and stop sending out to the world wrong signals," said Lin, using another word for the Tibetan region.

The issue remains a diplomatic sensitivity between India and China, which has at times accused New Delhi of conspiring with the US to undermine Beijing's authority in Tibet. Relations between the two soured after a 2020 border clash that left over 20 Indian soldiers dead. New Delhi and Washington have grown closer in the aftermath of that incident, with the congressional delegation's visit to Dharamashala coinciding with one from US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan to New Delhi for high-level talks.

The Chinese government has said the Dalai Lama can return only if he gives up any pretensions for an independent Tibet. The Dalai Lama and his supporters say they don't seek independence but instead greater autonomy within China's system, including an elected legislature and independent judicial system. Beijing rejects the claim as insincere.

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesman on Tuesday urged the US to "see the anti-China separatism nature" of the Dalai Lama and his followers.

In his comments to Bloomberg TV, Tsering called the Resolve Tibet Act "a new tool in our hands to reach out to other governments and see whether they can take similar positions." Tsering said recent back-channel communications with Beijing have taken place through interlocutors, and said re-establishment of official contact was a key next step.

He also addressed the question of who might follow the current Dalai Lama, saying that succession would be "purely religious and traditional."

No successor to the 88-year-old spiritual leader has been designated yet, but Beijing has started laying out the case for why it should appoint the next Dalai Lama instead of his exiled supporters in northern India.

That has heightened fears among followers of the Dalai Lama that, after his passing, there will be two claimants to the position: one selected by them and another by the Chinese government. Questions of who will replace the Dalai Lama are sensitive, pitting China against nations like the US, which has warned Beijing against interfering with the process.

On Monday, the monk told a small group of reporters in Dharamshala that he isn't yet thinking about his reincarnation.

## What is the Tibet-China Dispute Act passed by US Congress last week?

19 June 2024, Business Standard, Bhaswar Kumar



Dharamshala: Tibetan Spiritual Leader Dalai Lama With Former US House Of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi And Other Members Of The US Congressional Delegation After A Meeting At His Residence, In Dharamshala, June 19, 2024. (Photo: PTI)

A Bill that aims to counter China's position that it has controlled Tibet since 'ancient times' and to promote dialogue between Beijing and exiled Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, was passed by US lawmakers and went to President Joe Biden's desk last week.

The House of Representatives, the lower chamber of the US Congress, voted 391-26 on June 12 to approve the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act, which had passed the Senate, the upper chamber, last month.

A press release on the website of Jeff Merkley, the Democratic senator from the US state of Oregon who had introduced the Bill in the Senate, said that the US Congress had passed the "bipartisan Bill to enhance US support for Tibet and promote dialogue between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Dalai Lama towards a peaceful resolution of the long-standing dispute between Tibet and China".

The release added, "The Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act now goes to President Biden, who is expected to sign it into law."

What does the Bill aim to do?

In essence, the Bill aims to harden Washington's position on Tibet and pressure Beijing into resuming negotiations with the Dalai Lama.

No formal dialogue between Chinese and Tibetan authorities has happened since 2010.

The Bill aims to direct funds to counter what it describes as "disinformation" from China about Tibet's history, people and institutions.

The Bill also refutes Beijing's claim that Tibet has been part of China since ancient times. And, going a step further, it would make it official US policy that the dispute over Tibet's status is unresolved.

It would also make it policy that Tibet refers not only to the Tibet autonomous region, as defined by Beijing, but also Tibetan areas of the Chinese provinces of Qinghai, Gansu, Yunnan, and Sichuan. The Act aims to enhance US support for Tibet. It would empower US State Department officials to "actively and directly counter disinformation about Tibet from the Chinese government, rejecting false claims that Tibet has been part of China since 'ancient times'," said the release from Merkley's website.

The Act will also push for negotiations "without preconditions" between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama or his representatives or the democratically elected leaders of the Tibetan community.

Finally, it will also make it the US State Department's responsibility to "coordinate with other governments in multilateral efforts" towards the goal of "a negotiated agreement on Tibet".

CCP's status quo in Tibet 'not acceptable'

"The people of Tibet deserve to be in charge of their own future, and, today, Congress has voted to stand with Tibetans in their struggle for freedom and self-determination," said Merkley, co-chair of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, according to the release.

Merkley added that the Act would help "counter misinformation from the Chinese government about Tibet" and would push for "negotiations between the PRC and Tibet to end this longstanding dispute".

"I look forward to President Biden swiftly signing this Bill into law... the people of Tibet cannot wait any longer," said Merkley.

"Our bipartisan Bill will refresh US policy towards Tibet and push for negotiations that advance freedom for the Tibetan people and a peaceful resolution to the CCP's conflict with the Dalai Lama," said Indiana's Republican Senator Todd Young.

Young added that Congressional passage of the Bill "further demonstrates America's resolve that the CCP's status quo – both in Tibet and elsewhere – is not acceptable".

"Let the overwhelming passage of our strong, bipartisan Bill be a clear message to the Tibetan people: America stands with you on the side of human dignity, and we support you in your quest to secure the basic rights to which you are entitled under international law," said Democratic US Representative Jim McGovern, who is also a member of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China. "The PRC has systematically denied Tibetans the right to self-determination and continues to deliberately erase Tibetan religion, culture, and language. The ongoing oppression of the Tibetan people is a grave tragedy, and our Bill provides further tools that empower both America and the international

community to stand up for justice and peace," added McGovern.

What is China's position on Tibet?

China claims that Tibet has been under central Chinese rule for over 700 years.

However, Tibetan activists have argued that the region was self-governed for extended periods.

While the Dalai Lama has not recognised Beijing's historical claim over Tibet, he has also said that he does not seek political independence for the region.

In April, the Chinese foreign ministry said that any talks with the Dalai Lama would not address the question of Tibetan autonomy. Instead, any such talks would only concern his "personal future" or that of his close associates.

At present, the US State Department considers the Tibet autonomous region and other Tibetan areas to be a part of China.

However, Washington has not explicitly taken the position that Beijing's occupation of Tibet in the 1950s was in accordance with international law.

### The forced assimilation of Tibet

18 June 2024, Taipei Times, Khedroob Thondup

The situation in Tibet is complex and sensitive, with reports saying the Chinese government is attempting to assimilate Tibetan culture into the Han culture.

China's approach to education in Tibet has raised significant concerns regarding the forced assimilation of Tibetan children. About 1 million have reportedly been separated from their families and placed into government-run boarding schools.

The educational content of the schools revolve around the Han culture, with Mandarin as the medium of instruction. The system is seen as a large-scale program intended to assimilate Tibetans into Han culture.

The focus on Mandarin and Han cultural norms has resulted in Tibetan children losing proficiency in their native language and, consequently, the ability to communicate effectively with their elders, contributing to the erosion of their Tibetan identity.

The increase in boarding students is partly due to the closure of rural schools, which have been replaced by township or county-level institutions which primarily use Mandarin for teaching and communication, often requiring children to board.

The measures are part of what some experts describe as a policy of forced assimilation, which runs contrary to international human rights standards for education, linguistic and cultural rights, and freedom of religion or belief.

China's constitution states that citizens "enjoy freedom of religious belief," but limits protections to "normal religious activities" without defining what "normal" is. Regulations stipulate religious activity

must not harm national security and control all aspects of Tibetan Buddhism.

The Chinese Communist Party promotes "Sinicization" policies which aim to interpret religious ideas in accordance with its ideologies, and emphasize loyalty to the party and the state.

There have been reports of disappearances, arrests, torture, physical abuse and prolonged detentions without trials due to their religious practices. People have also reportedly died in custody or as a result of long-term illnesses and injuries sustained following beatings and mistreatment during incarceration.

The government has undertaken a large-scale campaign of "re-education" or "vocational training" in military-style camps to conduct forced political indoctrination, and to transform farmers and herders into laborers in other industries.

Authorities have also arrested writers, singers and artists for promoting Tibetan language and culture. Supporters of the Dalai Lama and other religious leaders could be arrested under China's anti-organized crime program.

These are challenges faced by Tibetans practicing their religion and maintaining their cultural identity. They reflect concerns raised by human rights organizations and independent experts regarding the preservation of Tibetan culture and identity.

### **China's massive attack against India: A looming possibility**

17 June 2024, ORF, Kartik Bommakanti

India might be deceiving itself by believing China will limit itself to "grey-zone operations" along the Sino-Indian border, avoiding all-out war. This assumption, while comforting, could be dangerous.

Now that the dust has settled with the conclusion of the 2024 parliamentary elections, it is time to take stock of India's ongoing boundary confrontation with the People's Republic of China (PRC). Notwithstanding Prime Minister Narendra Modi's conciliatory statement that India and China must restore peace and tranquillity on their contested boundary, all adversarial relationships, especially involving territorial disputes, hold the distinct possibility of culminating into a full-fledged war and the India-China relationship is no exception. The wider strategic community believes that a massive attack by the PRC against India will never happen. In fact, one former Indian envoy to the PRC observed recently: "So there is a pattern of aggressive behaviour [from China], of trying to change status quo [against India and in the South China Sea (SCS)] through salami slicing, incremental steps by staying short of an all-out military conflict and

changing ground realities." This statement by itself is not wrong, but salami slicing and incremental gains, which the PRC has already made against India, are among a menu of possibilities, which includes a massive attack and full-scale war. The difficulty with worst-case assumptions about the prospect of menacing adversary behaviour is that they mandate economic sacrifices that civilians do not want to make.

Unfortunately, the worst is possible, and India experienced this with the outbreak of the Sino-Indian War in 1962. After all, as Krishna Menon who was Defence Minister during the 1962 war ruefully observed: "...I make no secret of the fact that we were not prepared for a war [massive attack] against China...We expected negotiation and diplomacy to play their part [not war]." The run-up to the war also sowed civil-military tensions especially under the Indian Army Chief General Thimmaya to the extent that the latter, who was "acutely" aware of the China threat warned that the Nehru-led leadership was not paying attention to China's robust military strength and the distinct possibility that Beijing could attack massively. At most, the Nehru government saw only a "limited attack" as a possibility that India could counter with the defences it was preparing. History is instructive in the present challenge that China poses India. The ongoing confrontation between India and China is similar, but not identical to the one faced by Nehru's India in the run-up to the 1962 War. Before the onset of the 1962 conflict, Nehru was wedded to his own assumptions that the superpowers would restrain the Chinese which would be adequate to head off a Sino-Indian War. At best limited military measures both in capabilities and logistics from India's end would suffice, Nehru concluded. The leadership was also convinced that China would not want war with India because it would trigger a world war, which in turn rested on the assumption that India was too critical to the balance of power for the two Cold War superpowers—namely the United States (US) and the erstwhile Soviet Union. They believed that the Soviets would restrain the Chinese. A critical corollary reinforcing these assumptions for the Nehru-led Indian government was that the series of skirmishes along the Sino-Indian boundary such as the violent, yet limited clashes in geographic scope and force that occurred in Longju and Kongka Pass would be the shape of Chinese conduct obviating the need for India to robustly build-up its defences against a massive Chinese attack. It turned out to be a fatal error because the Nehru-led leadership fell victim to Chinese deception as it inferred too much from skirmishes in that it provided confirmation bias to Nehru's existing belief that China cannot want war along the contested Sino-Indian boundary and rested



on the assumption that these limited clashes would be the enduring pattern of Chinese military conduct along the disputed frontier.

Unfortunately, the worst is possible, and India experienced this with the outbreak of the Sino-Indian War in 1962.

These were the deeply held beliefs until the Chinese shattered them in October of 1962. In the Eastern sector of the boundary during the 1962 War or formerly called the Northeast Frontier Agency (NEFA), the People's Liberation Army (PLA) overran Indian Army defences to the point that they almost reached the outskirts of Guwahati. They also killed thousands of Indian soldiers and took several thousand Prisoners of War (POW). What saved the day for India in the Eastern sector or the erstwhile North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) and what is now called Arunachal Pradesh was the Chinese decision to withdraw their forces behind the McMahon Line unilaterally. In the Western sector of the boundary, the Indian Army performed better, because its defences and logistics capabilities were better built. These were the only two consolatory outcomes for India from that humiliating war. Otherwise, poor leadership at the national level, low spending on defence capabilities, poor command, low force morale among Indian troops and weak logistics combined to produce a disastrous military outcome, especially in the NEFA.

In the Eastern sector of the boundary during the 1962 War or formerly called the Northeast Frontier Agency (NEFA), the People's Liberation Army (PLA) overran Indian Army defences to the point that they almost reached the outskirts of Guwahati.

While India has improved significantly over the years in terms of logistics, airfields, a greater number of all-weather roads and capabilities for the IA, China's capabilities in the form of air defences, air bases, heliports and logistics along the Sino-Indian boundary and the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) has also improved considerably. There is a widespread consensus in India that a massive attack will not be executed by the PRC with the latter confining itself to the seizure of territory in Eastern Ladakh as what happened in April-May of 2020, the bloody Galwan clash that ensued the following month and the attempted seizure of Yangtse by the PLA in the eastern sector of the Sino-Indian boundary in December 2022. It rests on the rather quaint assumption that China has already made the territorial gains it intended to make against India in 2020 and at best a limited attack of some sort is likely, but not a massive attack—a view held by a wide swathe of Indian strategic establishment. It is entirely plausible that India might be falling prey to the same level of deception as before that China in contemporary parlance would restrict itself to “grey-

zone operations” or the odd skirmish and intrusion throughout the Sino-Indian boundary and will not pursue an all-out war or a substantial attack. This assumption may be psychologically comforting but potentially damaging. There is a widespread consensus in India that a massive attack will not be executed by the PRC with the latter confining itself to the seizure of territory in Eastern Ladakh as what happened in April-May of 2020, the bloody Galwan clash that ensued the following month and the attempted seizure of Yangtse by the PLA in the eastern sector of the Sino-Indian boundary in December 2022.

Spending on defence as the Interim Budget tabled before the Parliament vividly shows is simply inadequate to meet the shortfall in capabilities the Indian Armed Forces currently face. Constraints on military spending have been further exacerbated by supply bottlenecks due to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war with the IAF unable to spend the allocations made to the service in last year's full budget. In any potential Sino-Indian boundary war, the IAF will have a pivotal role to play and if the service is inadequately equipped due to military supply constraints, New Delhi will need to move away from reliance on Russian military hardware or weapons and spares. If anything, it lends more urgency to India's need to diversify away from Russia, because China could see an opportunity to launch a massive attack against India, due to India's dependence on Moscow for military supplies. Tacit or even explicit collusion between Beijing and Moscow could also crystallise if the former launched a massive attack against India as what happened in the 1962 Sino-Indian boundary war. India's dependence on Russian military hardware only compounds India's Russia supply problem. Even worse, there is still a presumption in India that an outright war triggered or caused by China will catalyse US to intervene on India's behalf. This is highly conditional. Again, history is instructive. Lest we forget, Washington intervened and extended military aid on behalf of India only after the Nehru-led government sought it in late October 1962. In the event of a Sino-Indian War today, it may happen if India solicits American military assistance or may not happen even after India seeks aid from the US. There is neither automaticity nor inevitability to the extension of American military aid to India because Washington retains the choice not to do so and may be compelled to demur due to its commitments to Israel, Ukraine and its East Asian allies in the Indo-Pacific. This will leave India confronting a militarily hostile and aggressive PRC entirely on its own making it imperative to augment India's conventional military strength. Therefore, taking American support for granted will, at a minimum be risky and at a

maximum dangerous, for New Delhi. The costs of leaving things to chance are prohibitive for New Delhi.

History provides illuminative value for the realities India confronts today against China. Now that the Modi government has been re-elected to a third term, it is time to prioritise defence spending, especially capital acquisitions, and for a broader defence roadmap to tackle the China challenge on the military front.

### **View: India must revive its Tibetan Buddhist links to show a mirror to China**

15 June 2024, Hindustan Times, Shishir Gupta

The Modi government has no intentions of renaming places in Tibet as a tit for tat to China. India has umbilical links with Tibet.

New Delhi: Four years ago on this day, the Gallant 20 led by brave 16 Bihar Commanding Officer Colonel B Santosh Babu repelled a PLA attack near Patrolling Point 14 in Galwan in East Ladakh, resulting in death of 20 Indian soldiers and an unspecified number of PLA personnel.

While many Indian soldiers lost their lives due to drowning in frozen Galwan river, the brief skirmish was a game changer as the Indian Army, shedding the 1962 loss, took on the aggressive PLA and ensured that Chinese did not disturb the status quo in Galwan by erecting a new post.

Apart from the PLA aggression in East Ladakh in May 2020, the Xi Jinping regime has launched full-fledged information warfare against India by renaming geographical entities in Arunachal Pradesh. In 2017, the Chinese released Mandarin version of six places in Arunachal Pradesh, 15 places in 2021 in second list, 11 more places in third list in 2021 and in March 2024, another 30 places were renamed by Xi Jinping regime as if to earmark their claims on the Indian border state.

While there were media reports of India planning to rename some 30 places in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) as a riposte to the Chinese exercise in Arunachal Pradesh, the Ministry of External Affairs is not aware of any such exercise.

Fact is that India does not need to do any renaming in Tibet to make its point to the Communist Party of China as the Indo-Tibetan plateau of Lamas has ancient links with India through Buddhism. Mount Kailash and Mansarovar Lake in Tibet are revered by both the Hindus and the Tibetan Buddhist alike with Hindus making pilgrimage to the abode of Lord Shiva for centuries.

Despite Chinese communists trying to impose atheism on the Tibetan and Chinese people at large,

Tibet Digest December - January 2024

Buddhism is growing in China by leaps and bounds. Fabulous Buddhist temples are being built all over China especially in Tibet so much so that priests and followers of the religion have given up on meat eating and turned vegetarians. Since Buddhism spread to Tibet through teachers in Nalanda in Bihar, all the major sutras are based in Sanskrit and hence chanted as such including ubiquitous "Om Mani Padme Hum." Hindu female deity 'Saraswati' resembles Manjushri, a Bodhisattva representing transcendent wisdom in Mahayana Buddhism. The list goes on and on. Suffice to say that India-Tibet links are civilizational and intertwined through the Nalanda-Lhasa link of the past centuries. After all, it was the Nalanda masters who taught Buddhism to their Tibetan counterparts, a fact acknowledged time and again by the 14th Dalai Lama.

Despite 74 years of brutal occupation by the Han Chinese, the Communist Party of China, much to its chagrin, finds Buddhism flourishing in Tibet and the chants of Sanskrit based sutras pervading the Indo-Tibetan plateau. India does not need to rename places in Tibet to emphasize on its historical relationship with the four sects of Tibetan Buddhism, it is reverberated in the mantras daily in the highlands and in the temples. It is time that India recognizes its past linkages and ancient tradition with Tibet. This alone will give jitters to the Xi Jinping regime.

### **Before signing bipartisan-Tibet-Bill, PrezBiden ought to know it is merely a token exercise. By Hem Raj Jain**

14 June 2024, Pakistan Christian Post

Tibet Bill is classic example of "Muddai Sust Gavah Chust" (Petitioner is lazy / disinterested but witnesses are serious / alert / interested) (2)- Prez Biden before signing Tibet Bill should demand (i)- proofs of Tibetan's STRUGGLE for freedom and self-determination (ii)- categorical statements of TGE / Dalai Lama declaring independence of Tibet (iii)- Expected role of the USA & Tibet-bordering-India in militarily helping this 'struggle' (3)- If the USA is really interested in independence of Tibet then it should commission US-Tibetan-Buddhism for this mission (4)- The USA will have to clarify Pakistan policy also because part of Tibet (in Ladakh) is with Pakistan.

The US Congress (in the present global scenario of Cold War-II where the USA is trying to contain & discipline China) may be thinking that the USA has unsettled China and has put it on defensive by passing bipartisan Tibet Bill which is waiting for the signatures of Prez Biden to become law (as reported at <https://mcgovern.house.gov/news/>

documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=400111) but the USA is living in its make believe world if it thinks so (about unsettling China and putting it on defensive by this Tibet Bill) for the reasons explained below:-

(1)- The commentary by Jim McGovern on Tibet Bill says that "The people of Tibet deserve to be in charge of their own future, and, today, Congress has voted to stand with Tibetans in their struggle for freedom and self-determination" but this is not supported by facts on ground. Rather, "Tibet Bill is classic example of "Muddai Sust Gavah Chust" (Petitioner is lazy / disinterested but witnesses are serious / alert / interested) because there is no armed struggle (which only matter in any independence struggle) by Tibetans for their independence.

2)- Hence Prez Biden before signing Tibet Bill should demand from the US-Congress (i)- The proofs of Tibetan's STRUGGLE for freedom and self-determination (ii)- The categorical statements of Tibet Government in Exile (the TGE at Dharamshala) / Dalai Lama declaring independence of Tibet especially given the fact that Dalai Lama in the past has been equivocal about independence of Tibet and has been saying that he is not for separation of Tibet from China (as mentioned in

<https://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/opinion-details/4376> about <https://www.hudson.org/human-rights/the-dalai-lama-is-an-anti-separatist-element> ) and (iii)- The expected role of the USA & Tibet bordering-India in militarily helping this 'struggle' (3)- If the USA is really interested in independence of Tibet then it should commission US-Tibetan-Buddhism for this mission as mentioned at <https://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/opinion-details/4376> otherwise this Tibet Bill is merely a token exercise or maximum a trial balloon to see how China reacts to it and will create more problems / confusion for Tibetans and for the larger world community.

(4)- The USA will have to clarify Pakistan policy also because part of Tibet ( Ladakh) is with Pakistan and India is already talking about recovering PoK militarily back from Pakistan.

Therefore Prez Biden should be objective before signing the said bipartisan-Tibet-Bill and should sign it only when Tibetans show any interest (worth the name on ground) in their independence.

### **Why China takes young Tibetans from their families**

13 June 2024, The Economist

Visiting a Tibetan region where children must attend Chinese-language boarding schools

An air of quiet piety hangs over Rongwo Monastery in the western province of Qinghai. The streets near this ancient complex draw pilgrims and Tibetan Buddhist monks in dark red robes. Local believers make circuits around the monastery's yellow walls, turning a line of wooden prayer-wheels as they walk. On a recent Monday afternoon, though, chattering schoolchildren thronged this sacred neighbourhood in the heart of Tongren, a small mountain city known to Tibetans as Rebkong. Youngsters in red scarves and uniform tracksuits bought fruit and snacks from market stalls, most without a parent in sight. Teenage high-schoolers and pupils half their age hauled small suitcases or sat in weary groups beside piles of schoolbags, bringing the bustle of a railway station to streets around the monastery.

Government policy explains the hundreds of unaccompanied minors filling Tongren's historic centre. This particular Monday was a public holiday for pupils across China, as the country marked the Dragon Boat Festival with a long weekend. But these youngsters were overwhelmingly ethnic Tibetans. As a result, on an overcast holiday afternoon they had already bid their families goodbye and were now heading back to one of Tongren's dozen or so boarding schools, in time for classes the next morning.

An ever-larger majority of Tibetan youths attend state-run boarding schools at the primary and secondary level, and in extreme cases pre-schools. That is true whether they live in the harshly policed Tibet Autonomous Region, or in the parts of historical Tibet that the Communist Party carved off and handed to the neighbouring provinces of Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan (these are run as "Tibetan autonomous prefectures"). At least 78% of Tibetan pupils board, according to official data collected by the Tibet Action Institute, an overseas campaign group.

Lessons in these schools marginalise Tibetan culture. Over the past few years Mandarin Chinese has replaced Tibetan as the medium of instruction, with Tibetan taught only as a language, alongside English. All pre-schools, including in ethnic areas, have used Mandarin since 2021, to "seize the key period of language learning in early childhood", as the education ministry puts it.

Authorities call boarding schools "very convenient" for Tibetan farmers' and herders' children who would otherwise face "long and arduous journeys to school". Officials insist that parents freely choose whether children board. In Qinghai, a rugged place with Han Chinese, Tibetan, Hui Muslim and Mongolian populations, the provincial government declared in 2018 that "in principle" children should board only when necessary, that they should not board until the fourth grade (ie, age 11), and that in

remote pastoral areas school policies should follow “the wishes of the masses”.

Tibetan exiles and activists challenge this narrative. They cite state-media reports boasting of motherly care given to four- and five-year-olds in Tibetan boarding schools. They describe parents being threatened with fines or with a denial of schooling later on if they do not send children to board. Many Tibetan families see Mandarin as a path to employment. But as recently as the early 2000s Qinghai officials pursued that goal in more humane ways. To reduce drop-out rates and raise exam scores they expanded bilingual education, hired Tibetan teachers and accredited schools run by monks. Not now. Private Tibetan schools have been closed and teachers sacked for teaching Tibetan beyond the curriculum. This has sparked parent protests, including near Tongren in 2020.

Chaguan travelled to Tongren to weigh claims that coercive assimilation is now the norm. While in Qinghai he was followed by up to five unmarked cars. Tibetan-speaking officers (one of whom flashed a police badge) filmed and eavesdropped on conversations. In Huangnaihui, a hilltop village near Tongren, an officer’s curt intervention silenced a school headmaster who had been asked how Tibetan parents view Chinese-language schooling.

Despite the officers’ efforts, holes appeared in the official narrative. Start with those pupils in Tongren. Though some stepped off long-distance buses, others turned out to be locals, undermining claims that Tibetan boarding-school construction is solely explained by the need to spare herders’ children from long journeys. Then consider two boarding schools in a river valley below Rongwo Monastery that serve Hui Muslim and Tibetan pupils, respectively. Hui pupils who live in Tongren do not have to board, but rules are different for Tibetan pupils, your columnist was told.

Building schools to forge souls

In a Tongren suburb stands the Nianduhu Township Boarding Primary School. Its gates are flanked by murals showing pupils saluting the national flag, the Great Wall of China and the slogans: “I will become a great Chinese person” and “The motherland in my heart”. The Tibetan-majority school is building dormitories. From the autumn 400 students will live in them, a local education official said. Asked about first- and second-graders, aged eight and nine, he replied that county authorities still need to decide whether those youngest pupils will board, but “the other students will all be boarding.” That includes children with families nearby.

Such policies reflect an assimilationist logic. In 2015 the State Council (China’s cabinet) called for faster boarding-school construction to fulfil “the goal that students of all ethnic minorities will study in a school,

live in a school and grow up in a school”. That serves a larger ambition: to “forge a strong sense of the community of the Chinese nation”. That is party-speak for promoting a single national identity to defend social stability and national security. Though clunky, the phrase is enshrined in the party constitution as a guide to ethnic work in the Xi Jinping era. If Tongren residents forget the slogan they need only look up. It is spelled out in big red characters on the hill opposite Rongwo Monastery.

### China’s Ambitious ‘5G-A’ Plans in Tibet: Strategic Implications for India

13 June 2024, The Diplomat, Tenzin Younten

China’s expansion of the “low-altitude economy” with cutting-edge tech has deep implications for its surveillance capabilities along the disputed border.

On May 21, China achieved significant progress toward the establishment of a “low-altitude economy” in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), with the successful functional verification of its first ever 5G-Advanced (5.5G) synaesthesia integrated base station in Lhoka (Shannan) Prefecture bordering the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. The 5G-A synaesthesia integrated base stations have been described by Huawei as a new revolutionary technology, along with passive IoT and endogenous intelligence, spurred by the 5G-A era.

China has developed the new 5G-A base stations to overcome the longstanding challenges faced by its traditional radars and cameras in terms of detecting and identifying small-sized drones operating within low-altitude airspace. These 5G-A base stations are equipped with comprehensive sensing capabilities that enable identification, real-time positioning, speed detection, and tracking of low-altitude unmanned aerial vehicles, ground vehicles, and other illegally intrusive targets. Following the completion of the first station, the China Mobile Tibet Company announced that its 5G-A base station has detection capabilities surpassing traditional radars. According to the company, the goal of these base stations in Tibet’s border areas is to build low-altitude sensing networks, thereby fostering the development of drone inspection and early warning systems.

On April 29, Huawei and China Tibet Mobile Company completed construction of another 5G-A base station on Mount Everest near the Indian border.

At the heart of Beijing’s broader strategic vision of establishing a “low-altitude economy” lies the construction of 5G-A synaesthesia integrated base stations, enhancing the network infrastructure and connectivity within low-altitude airspace. The use of 5G-A is a recent development in China, with 2024

being marked as the starting year for its commercialization. On June 6, over 35 Chinese cities including Beijing, Changchun, Harbin, Chengdu, and Tianjin, promoted the upgrade and evolution of existing 5G networks to 5G-A, while launching the "Joining Hands to Open a New Era of 5G-A" initiative.

The low-altitude economy refers to various economic activities occurring within the vertical airspace that extends from 1,000 to 4,000 meters above the ground where civil-manned and unmanned aircraft vehicles operate and promote the integrated development of related fields.

China's strategic vision for a "low-altitude economy" is enshrined in the "Implementation Plan for Innovative Application of General Aviation Equipment (2024-2030)" published on March 27 of this year. It describes China's overarching goal of achieving safe and efficient operation of low-altitude production and operation networks by 2030, setting a target for the low-altitude economy to be worth 1 trillion yuan that same year.

More significantly, the plan has also particularly placed 5G-A synaesthesia integrated technology as the cornerstone of the development of the low-altitude economy industry.

**5G-A Synaesthesia Integrated Bases as the Backbone of the Low-Altitude Economy**

The innovation of synaesthesia integrated technology in 5G-A has garnered great attention in China recently. 5G-A synaesthesia integrated technology combines multiple capabilities such as communications, imaging, and computing power, turning a regular communication network into a supercharged "radar," with high-precision and resolution perception capabilities.

The 5G-A synaesthesia integrated base stations are the fulcrum of the "low-altitude economy," as popularized with news headlines such as "5G-A enables the low-altitude economy to take off" by China National Radio (CNR) on May 22. CNR paraphrased Cao Lei, deputy director of the Wireless and Terminal Technology Research Institute of the China Academy of Mobile Communications, as saying that "based on 5G-A technology, a new low-altitude intelligent network infrastructure can be created that integrates 'communication, detection, navigation, and control,' providing businesses with low-altitude network information transmission, supplementary safety controls, and other services, enabling the vigorous development of the low-altitude economy."

China's Northeast Securities Co. also reiterated that "5G-A (5.5G) introduced integration sensing technology is expected to become the core communication technology for low-altitude economic air traffic control systems."

The 5G-A technology is not only superior to the 5G technology in terms of a tenfold increase in connectivity, speeds, and coverage but also provides a critical boost to managing unmanned aerial vehicles, thus revolutionizing industries focused on the low-altitude space. Tang Xue, vice president of ZTE, aptly articulated that 5G-A "isn't about faster internet; it represents a paradigm shift in the way we live, work, and play."

Therefore, these new 5G-A synaesthesia integrated bases in Tibet will be the catalyst to the establishment of a low-altitude network system, which will enhance communication, sensing, and computing services for drones operating in the low-altitude air spaces near the border areas.

**Strategic Implications for the China-India border dispute**

Yin Hao, an academician of the China Academy of Science, emphasized the need for a comprehensive monitoring service system for unmanned vehicles and drones during the "Wireless Sensory Integration Forum" on April 16. While speaking on the innovative directions of 5G-A, Yin highlighted the fact that cellular information networks can assist large-scale deployment of base stations with wireless sensing functions, enabling ubiquitous and continuous monitoring and tracking of low-altitude aerial vehicles.

The primary objective of the "low-altitude economy" is the commercialization of low-altitude airspace, which mainly includes drone delivery services, winged taxis for daily commutes, and drones or helicopters for tourism purposes. However, this emerging strategic industry also caters to the diverse needs of military players in the commercial, industrial, and civil sectors.

Notably, the world's first 5G-A 128TR synaesthesia base station equipped with maritime monitoring technology was just completed in March in Zhejiang province, showcasing its use for maritime security. Similarly, the construction of 5G-A base stations in Tibet's border areas holds major strategic benefits for China. The technology bolsters infrastructure and network systems surrounding drone operations for both civilian and military purposes. The 5G-A synaesthesia integrated base stations in Tibet are presumed to support China's border operations and management.

On April 16, a 5G-A base station in China's southwestern province of Yunnan was built for border monitoring. Afterward, Yunnan Mobile announced that this base caters to the needs of the Public Security Bureau, enhancing their border inspection and supervision tasks.

These bases can be used for military and security applications in border areas in multiple scenarios. First, these 5G-A base stations possess many



functions that could directly benefit the Chinese border defense forces or police including their capabilities for detection and monitoring, classification or identification, locating and tracking, alerting, drone support, reconnaissance, communication, and others. With these critical functions, the 5G-A synaesthesia integrated bases will significantly strengthen the management and monitoring capabilities of drones along the border.

Second, these base stations can bolster the PLA's anti-drone defense system and serve as an early warning system against drone intrusion in its border areas, as remarked by the China Tibet telecom company in Shannan prefecture.

Third, the roll-out of 5G-A enhances China's Smart Border Defense capabilities across the TAR's border areas, defined as using modern scientific and technological methods to conduct real-time, comprehensive, and accurate monitoring and control of national borders.

Thus, China's "low-altitude economy" is not only a major economic boost but also a significant push to form a long-term mechanism to ensure national security and stability in border areas. Moreover, the construction of 5G-A bases and the development of the low-altitude economy aligns with Beijing's broader goal of strengthening border defense by revitalizing and developing the border area.

#### Conclusion

Amid heightened border tensions between India and China, the construction and operationalization of the 5G-A synaesthesia integrated base under the broader "low-altitude economy" vision are directly linked to Beijing's strategic interest in bolstering border defense and security. These represent the latest developments in the ongoing drone race between India and China in the Himalayas.

China has already built 11,719 5G base stations in the TAR. A recent official announcement during the High-Quality Development Mobile Communications Forum indicated that the 5G network across China will be upgraded to 5G-A network. It implies that more 5G-A synaesthesia integrated base stations will be constructed in TAR. The 5G-A base stations and the development of the "low-altitude economy" have the potential to revolutionize the PLA's drone warfare and anti-drone defense systems in Tibet's border areas.

On the other side, the Indian military has also strengthened its defense against drone attacks and intrusions along its Himalayan border with the recent induction of laser-based Integrated Drone Detection and Interdiction Systems, capable of both "soft" and "hard" kills, including jamming and laser-based interception.

The TAR constitutes a portion of the historical geography of Tibet, with the traditional areas of

Tibet comprising almost the entirety of the Tibetan Plateau. Since the People's Republic of China's occupation of Tibet in the 1950s, China's economic policies in Tibet have always been closely tied to its strategic and military visions, encompassing infrastructure development, rural and urban construction projects, energy infrastructure projects, dams, and many more. The establishment of the "low-altitude economy" in the TAR represents Beijing's latest attempt to transform the region into a highly militarized zone and strengthen its preparedness for potential conflicts with adversaries. It is imperative to understand that 5G-A synaesthesia integrated bases in China are still in the developmental and testing stage. Some critics doubt the feasibility of such a grand vision of establishing a "low-altitude economy" in the Tibet Autonomous Region. In fact, there are many uncertainties and operational challenges facing China's plan in the harsh and rugged terrains and atmosphere of the Tibetan plateau. However, concerns regarding the expansion of the "low-altitude economy" in Tibet's border areas and its strategic ramification demand serious consideration and continuous monitoring.

#### Chinese armed forces have been upgrading. India must keep up

12 June 2024, The Indian Express, Anushka Saxena

The Information Age is enabling revolution in military affairs, and the PLA is adapting to new modes and methods of warfighting. Integrating these is key for India as well.

As part of the reforms in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) since 2015, China has focussed on preparing for combat keeping conditions of the "Information Age" in mind. It is doing so by integrating its services, arms and systems into a joint, network-centric fighting force. The PLA Western Theater Command (WTC) has played a proactive role in securing China's southern and southwestern borders, preparing for conventional and non-conventional warfighting, and acclimatising its personnel to the rough terrains and harsh altitudes of Xinjiang and Tibet. India is one of the principal operational directions in which the WTC is mandated to act. India needs to assess the WTC's operational structure, training mandates and warfighting priorities, especially the theatre's "multi-domain integrated joint operations" (MDIJO) efforts.

The WTC has focussed on three key factors. These include conducting combat training and preparedness exercises, getting acquainted with WTC's harsh terrain bordering India; and building air superiority and transportation capabilities.

The WTC invests significantly in combat training and simulation. Accounts of such exercises feature both its successes and failures. In August 2018, an anti-aircraft artillery unit of Xinjiang Military District (MD) conducted a live-fire exercise in the Tian Shan mountains to refine the troops' integrated combat capabilities. This was a test of the interplay between Command and Control (C2) and ground-based air defence units. The evaluation stage which assessed damage revealed that many anti-aircraft positions were in flames – indicating a failure on the surprise attack test. An assessment like this may give the Indian security apparatus clues as to the WTC's weaknesses and what it should focus on.

Given the tough terrains and complex environments, aerial dominance is central to the theatre's capabilities – and its biggest challenge. When pitted against India, an assessment of the ORBAT (order of battle) formulated by the Belfer Center indicates that as of 2020, the ground forces deployed on both sides are similar in numbers (over 2,05,000 troops), while Indian fighter jets outnumber Chinese – a 250 to 157 balance.

On ground-based air defence, four air defence brigades are attached each to the Xinjiang and Tibet Military Districts and the WTC 76th and 77th Group Armies. At the same time, the WTC air forces have their long-range surface-to-air missile installations. The WTC is enabling PLA ground and air forces to combine air defence systems. In light of this, India is investing in its own indigenous Very Short-Range Air Defence Systems (VSHORADS) and Man-Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS) to expand Army Air Defence (AAD) capabilities.

Over the years, anti-aircraft artillery units along with ground-to-air missile units, have become the backbone of the WTC's air defence capabilities. In May 2021, the Xinjiang MD engaged in six rounds of weapons acquisition. At the time, India and China were still recovering from the deadly Galwan Valley clashes of June 2020. The fifth and sixth rounds of acquisition focussed solely on aerial superiority, through the induction of the PHL-11 122 mm calibre self-propelled multiple rocket launcher system and the HQ-17A field air defence missile system.

The challenge of transportation is central to training in these terrains too. Given the "last-mile delivery requirements" of high-altitude zones specifically in the WTC, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) are adopted for transporting food and essentials to active personnel. This is in addition to the induction of the Xi'an Y-20 "Kunpeng" heavy-transport aircraft, which can fly winter gear to border troops stationed along the LAC in seven hours.

Evidence for the use of UAVs comes from a November 2020 drill conducted by the logistics departments of the PLA army and the Tibet MD,

where a drone delivery unit was required to transfer hot food, water, medicine and other urgent aid to personnel located at a base in the mountains, assuming that the manned mobile ground transportation unit was "blocked by enemy fire." According to the report, the success of the drone delivery unit was determined by how decisive drone operators were in making a comprehensive judgement on terrain, wind speed, temperature and other factors to ensure the unit's safe landing at the predetermined destination. The report promises that the PLA army logistics department is preparing to expand drone delivery to armament and ammunition supplies to active last-mile locations.

In an era where the Information Age is enabling revolution in military affairs (RMA), the PLA is adapting to new modes and methods of warfighting. Integrating these is key to the PLA's goal of becoming a "world-class force" by 2049. Over the next few years, it is only likely that the WTC will double down on such measures, creating a joint force capable of conducting successful combat operations. India, then, must continue to observe developments in the WTC and direct its efforts towards countering them.

With Rajnath Singh's re-appointment as India's defence minister, one of the priorities on his military modernisation agenda would be the creation of integrated theatre commands (ITCs) in the Indian armed forces. Even though there is no intended timeline for this yet, Singh has argued that in some countries, theaterisation has taken more than two decades to materialise. This is true in China's case if one considers the MR model a rung in the evolutionary ladder of theaterisation in the PLA. Now, as the point person for India's theaterisation, Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan has positioned the reform as India's response to jointness efforts in the PLA. Given that ITCs are intended to promote a joint culture and not a service-specific culture, Chauhan has expressed the belief that the reform will catapult India into a new era of combat preparedness. However, with the Chinese PLA many steps ahead of the Indian armed forces in this regard, a concrete delivery timeline and a larger, non-lapsable modernisation fund will be critical.

### **New Delhi's Tibet-Taiwan move: How India-China relations will fare under Modi 3.0**

12 June 2024, FirstPost, Sriparna Pathak

The tone China has set to the relationship through its actions, be it at the border, through grey zone warfare, or its support for Pakistan-sponsored terrorism, the bilateral ties between two Asian giants under Modi 3.0 will continue to be a rocky one, if not rockier.

As the dust settles on the Indian general elections and the world watches polls in other parts of the world, questions continue to emerge on what sort of India would emerge further under the third term of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The oath-taking ceremony of the new cabinet saw the retention of several ministers from Modi 2.0, including External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar. This signals continuity in India's foreign policy under Modi 3.0.

Even before the ministries had been announced, events affecting India's foreign policy, particularly with regards to China, had been taking place. Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te congratulated PM Modi on X, and PM Modi reciprocated the wishes, stating that he looks forward to closer ties as India and Taiwan work towards a mutually beneficial economic and technological partnership.

China flared up, and the spokesperson of the Chinese Embassy in India wrote on X that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China and that it is an "undeniable fact, a universal consensus of the international community, and a basic norm in international relations". The interesting part to note is that while world leaders took to X to wish PM Modi, China's President Xi Jinping did not send a personal note of congratulations, and the Chinese foreign ministry instead congratulated him, the BJP, and the National Democratic Alliance, adding that China looks forward to a "stable and healthy China-India relationship". China, along with the US, was among the last countries to wish PM Modi.

A few days earlier in May, when elections were ongoing, China released an old video of the Galwan Valley clash of 2020 at Pangong Tso finger 4. The clash is four years old, but the timing of the release raises suspicions about influencing the Indian electorate's choices regarding voting for a government that could not stand up to the Chinese People's Liberation Army, as portrayed in the video. Before the last phase of elections in India, Meta released its threat adversarial report, in which it stated that they had removed 37 Facebook accounts, 13 pages, five groups, and nine Instagram accounts for violating its policy against "coordinated inauthentic behaviour". The network originated in China and was running what has been called "Operation K", targeting the global Sikh community, including Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, Pakistan, the UK, and Nigeria. The purpose was to divide the Indian electorate and interfere in India's elections.

In April of this year, China released a list renaming 30 more places in Arunachal Pradesh. China also lodged a diplomatic protest with India over Prime Minister Modi's visit to Arunachal Pradesh, where he dedicated the Sela Tunnel to the nation, which is to

be built at an altitude of 13,000 feet. All this happened while India was either gearing up for elections or was in the thick of it.

Reportedly, India is set to rename 30 places in occupied Tibet, which China claims is called 'Xizang' and is currently a special administrative zone in China. China's behaviour in 2024 alone set the tone of the bilateral relationship. With its posturing, usage of disinformation during elections, and diplomatic flare-up immediately after elections, China has given a clear-cut message as to which direction it wants the relationship to flow in.

On June 8, on Chinese social media, another video with the narrative that the Chinese People's Liberation Army had thrashed the Indian Army was circulating in large numbers. However, neither country's government has reported any clashes so far in 2024. Grey zone warfare, which operates in the absence of hot conflict, is an integral aspect of China's three warfare strategies, which need to be factored in while analysing Sino-Indian relations and China's posturing towards India.

In June this year, think tanks from India and Taiwan held military simulations that focused on scenarios about the Taiwan Strait and the India-China border in 2035. This is also not something that Beijing would view with kindness. However, while India adheres to China's One China policy, it has active economic, technological, and civil society partnerships with Taiwan.

On the day of the swearing-in ceremony of the new cabinet, there was a terror attack in Reasi, in Jammu and Kashmir, in which nine victims on the bus carrying pilgrims succumbed to gunshot wounds. The Pakistan-supported The Resistance Front (TRF) has claimed responsibility for the terror attack. China has often blocked India's attempts at the United Nations to blacklist Pakistan-sponsored terrorists. In March this year, India stated that blocking evidence-based proposals in the UN Security Council to blacklist global terrorists without justification smacks of "double speak" in dealing with the scourge, which was a veiled reference to China that has put holds on multiple bids by India to sanction Pakistan-based terrorists. Given that India has yet again suffered Pakistan-sponsored terrorism, Modi 3.0 will further double down on Pakistan-based terrorism while facing fresh hurdles from China.

On June 11, India's EAM Jaishankar stated that the focus will be to resolve remaining issues along the India-China border and cross-border terror solutions with Pakistan. This is exactly in line with the party's election manifesto, which mentioned strengthening border defences.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, who retains his role in Modi 3.0, reaffirmed India's commitment to safeguarding its borders and strengthening defence

manufacturing and exports. He emphasised the priority of protecting India's integrity and sovereignty during Modi 3.0. The focus is clearly on China.

Given the events that have unfolded so far in the bilateral relationship and the tone China has set to the relationship through its actions, be it at the border, through its grey zone warfare, or through its support for Pakistan-sponsored terrorism, the relationship between India and China under Modi 3.0 will continue to be a rocky one, if not rockier. New Delhi needs to be prepared for fresh surprises from Beijing and prepare accordingly.

### **Why India Needs To Act Against China's Renaming Of Arunachal Spots: Intel Sources Explain | Exclusive**

11 June 2024, News18, Manoj Gupta

Amid the Centre's plan to rename 30 places in Tibet, top intelligence sources said: "If allowed to continue, it poses serious implications for the region...It will have a major impact in the next 20 years if we don't act and prove the facts."

China's bid to rename locations encircling the state of Arunachal Pradesh is a deliberate attempt to show territorial dominance and poses serious implications for the region, said top intelligence sources, amid the Centre's plan to rename 30 places in Tibet. China has changed the names of 126 villages since 2017.

India has been rejecting China's renaming of places in Arunachal, asserting that the state is an integral part of the country and assigning "invented" names does not alter this reality. Earlier in the day, CNN-News18 reported how the newly elected NDA government, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the renaming of 30 places in Tibet, in response to China's nomenclature aggression.

"While renaming by China won't change the reality, it suggests aggression plans. This is 'thread of beads' strategy, whereby it encircles the entire region, much like what has already happened in the Indo-Pacific where people use the term 'string of pearls'. Continuing with this can cause major tension in the region. If allowed to continue, it poses serious implications for the region...India's aim in changing names of spots in Tibet signals that Tibet, too, is a part of India. Even the locals there refer to the equation as Indo-Tibet relationship, not Indo-China," said sources.

"China's actions can alter history and future generations will have the same identity. This encroachment is in the mind space and in social media, which will majorly attack future generations. This is a deliberate attempt to show territorial dominance. It will have a major impact in the next 20 years if we don't act and prove the facts," they added.

Speaking at the South Gujarat Chamber of Commerce, Jaishankar had in April said, "If today I change the name of your house, will it become mine? Arunachal Pradesh was, is and will always be a state of India. Changing names does not have an effect. Our army is deployed there (Line of Actual Control)."

In April, the Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs released the fourth list of standardised geographical names in Zangnan, the Chinese name for Arunachal Pradesh which Beijing claims as part of south Tibet. According to state-run Global Times, the Chinese government posted 30 additional names for the region. The Chinese Civil Affairs Ministry released the first list of the standardised names of six places in Zangnan was released in 2017, while the second list of 15 places was issued in 2021, followed by another list with names for 11 places in 2023.

### **The Dalai Lama Is Landing in the Middle of the 2024 Election**

11 June 2024, MSN

In early September of 2020, Joe Biden, then the Democratic nominee for president, promised to put values—values held in contempt, he argued, by the man he would go on to defeat—at the center of American foreign policy. To act on his promise, he said, he would do something Donald Trump had neglected to do. "I'll meet with His Holiness the Dalai Lama," Biden said.

For American presidents, meeting the 14th Dalai Lama can bring tension and discord, because Communist Party leaders in Beijing consider Tibet to be a part of China. They consider any recognition of the Dalai Lama—a Mandela-level icon, a symbol of Tibet's will to survive, and also (by the way) a living Buddha, a bodhisattva, to his millions of followers—a terrible insult to Chinese sensitivities. (To be fair, Chinese leaders are omnidirectionally offended, by supporters of Taiwanese independence and Hong Kong democracy; by Christians and Uyghurs and Mongols; and by anyone else who threatens their Middle Kingdom sense of imperial entitlement.)

More than three years into his term, Biden has not made good on his promise, though he has a plausible excuse: The Dalai Lama is 88 years old and in declining health, and he seldom leaves his home in exile in Dharamsala, in the Himalayan foothills of India. But the Dalai Lama's age now provides a path for Biden to keep his promise: The bodhisattva has bad knees and has decided, after much procrastination, to come to New York this summer to investigate the possibility of replacement.

A visit by Biden to the Dalai Lama's hospital—or an after-surgery invitation to the White House—would signal continuing American concern over the

oppression of Tibet and Tibetans, as well as support for one of the most heroic and pacific humanitarian leaders of our age. Such a visit would also have the benefit of signaling to the Chinese government that a U.S. president makes decisions independent of Chinese Communist feelings. (American CEOs are particularly feeble at signaling such independence.) A call on the Dalai Lama couldn't possibly hurt Biden's standing among voters, especially considering the Dalai Lama's previous lack of interest in meeting with Trump when he was president. Five years ago, when I visited the Dalai Lama at his monastery in Manali, he told me that he did not look favorably on Trump's jingoistic "America First" rhetoric. "Everyone first," he said, laughing. "A much better idea."

The exact timing of his trip to the United States—his first in seven years—has not yet been decided, but it will follow another event of some significance: a visit later this month to Dharamsala by Representative Nancy Pelosi, the former speaker of the House, and a congressional delegation. Pelosi has championed the Tibetan cause for decades, and, to her credit, she is loathed by Beijing for her comprehensive criticism of China's human-rights record. In one of Pelosi's earliest meetings with the Dalai Lama, she was so ferocious in her criticism of China's human-rights abuses that the Dalai Lama said, impishly, "Now let us all pray so that we could rid Nancy of her negative attitudes." (Pelosi's trip has not yet been announced, and her spokesperson declined to comment, citing security concerns; news of the Dalai Lama's proposed visit this summer was confirmed to me by sources involved in planning the trip.)

The reemergence of the Dalai Lama into American politics in the months preceding the 2024 presidential election is good news for the unfortunate Tibetan cause, constantly steamrollered as it is by the raw deployment of Chinese power. In Dharamsala, the seat of the Tibetan government in exile, fear is ever present that the Dalai Lama's eventual demise will make even more marginal the cause of Tibetan cultural and political independence. (As is implied by his status as the 14th Dalai Lama, the discovery of a 15th Dalai Lama is likely, though he will be reincarnated, according to Tibetan Buddhist tradition, as a small child, not as someone ready for international diplomacy. And the Chinese government has its own plan to identify and elevate a quisling lama.)

Two months ago, I visited Dharamsala with, among others, Arthur Brooks, the Atlantic columnist and frequent writing collaborator of the Dalai Lama's. We both experienced a religious leader who, though hobbled by knee pain and slowed by age, was still lucid and eloquent on the great subjects of freedom

and happiness. I called Arthur today to ask him what he makes of this news.

"In a contentious election year, it's good to remind Americans of our core values as a people, and among those values are religious freedom and standing up for the dignity of all people around the world," he said. "His Holiness the Dalai Lama, as we saw in Dharamsala in April, still has the ability to remind people around the world of what is good and true. For a Tibetan monk, he has an uncanny gift for bringing out the best of what it means to be a person and an American. This is an opportunity that President Biden cannot and should not miss."

### **After Nepal, will China reopen Covid-closed Tibet-India border trade points?**

11 June 2024, Tibetan Review

After China reopened 14 border trade points between its occupied Tibet and Nepal on May 25 after a prolonged Covid-19 closure, those on the Indian side of the border in Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand state are feeling left out and have asked New Delhi to take up the issue with Beijing.

Indian traders in the area had been travelling to Tibet through the Lipulekh pass since 1992. The trade route was closed rather suddenly after the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2019, forcing Indian traders to return from the Taklakot mart in Tibet, leaving behind their woollen merchandise, reported [economictimes.com](https://economictimes.com) Jun 10.

Five years have passed but the route has not been opened, the report cited an organisation of Indian border traders in the district's Dharchula town as saying.

The report said the traders who belong to the Bhotia tribe started to raise their demand for reopening of the trade route through Lipulekh after China recently opened all 14 trade passes with Nepal.

"We have so far sent 22 applications to the government of India requesting it to take up with the Chinese authorities the reopening of the trade route through Lipulekh pass but have received no response so far," Jeewan Singh Rongkali, president of Bharat Tibetan Simant Vyapar Samiti, Dharchula, has said.

He has said Indian tribal traders from Dharchula alone had left trading items worth Rs 15 lakh in Taklakot Mart in Tibet at the time of the closure of border trade in 2019.

He has said over 450 Indian traders used to supply essential goods to residents of over 45 villages of western Tibet through this trade route since 1992.

"Out of over 1.5 crore trade annually, we have paid lakhs of rupees towards customs duty and other taxes to the government of India," Rongkali has said. He has expressed fears that the mart made for Indian traders in Gakkhu town of Taklakot could be



handed over to Nepalese traders, given the fact that China has not given permission to open passes along the India-China border.

### Why China should introspect and stop seeing India through Western lens

08 June 2024, First Post, Ambuj Sahu

The Chinese strategic worldview is most receptive to how the US thinks and acts. Thus, it has also seen India in the same light in the last three decades

On May 27, 2024, Global Times published an article on India-China cultural exchanges written by Liu Zongyi, a senior scholar on the Indian subcontinent at the Shanghai Institute of International Studies. Liu Lǎoshī (teacher in Chinese) argues that people-to-people exchanges between India and China have suffered due to the deteriorating state of bilateral ties. He also believes that India sees US-China rivalry as a strategic opportunity to “rise as a great power” and seeks to “please the US at the expense of China-India relations.”

According to him, “the regrettable situation in [bilateral ties], especially in terms of cultural and humanistic exchanges, is closely related to changes in India’s domestic politics [and] the rise of Hindu nationalism”. He goes one step further to criticise India’s civilisational worldview as a vishwaguru and accuses it of lacking “a tradition of real historical research and serious historical records”.

India’s critique, as per Liu Lǎoshī’s analysis, lies at three levels. Geopolitically, he dismisses India as a strategic appendage of the United States, unable to act in its own national interest. In domestic politics, he attributes right-wing populism and PM Modi’s Hindu nationalism to the pursuit of aggressive foreign policy. Civilisationally, he narrowly interprets the concept of vishwaguru as ‘world teacher’ and falls into the trap of buying Western narratives of Indian civilisation.

Though he calls China “open and inclusive” and “good at learning from other civilisations”, he forgets that India has been a shruti-smriti (listening-remembering) civilisation. His accusation of India’s lack of written historical research is surprising and reflects China’s civilisational closeness to seeing others in the image of self. However, he is not alone. Many Chinese academics in the last five years have taken similar lines in their analysis of India-China relations, especially since the border standoff in April 2020. Instead of blanket labelling them as propagandists of the CCP, it is important to point out that they risk groupthink in their own strategic analysis of India. They must realise that it is detrimental to India-China ties and the interests of both countries.

### Watching India with American Lens

After the Cold War, the dominance of the US was the single most significant factor in shaping China’s foreign policy. Strategists like Michael Pillsbury and Rush Doshi have provided detailed insights based on personal experiences and primary sources to show how China, after the 1990s, has sought to replace the US as the leading player in Asia. The Chinese strategic worldview is most receptive to how the US thinks and acts. Thus, it has also seen India in the same light in the last three decades.

Despite PM Vajpayee naming China as the reason behind India’s nuclearisation in 1998, China did not destabilise the Himalayan borders because it was still recovering from the Third Taiwan Straits Crisis and preparing the ground for the US-China Relations Act of 2000.

There were no strong objections from China to the India-US Civil Nuclear Deal (2008) because it could not risk antagonising the US amidst President Hu Jintao’s ‘Peaceful Rise’ narrative. Today, their Foreign Ministry Spokesperson reacts adversely to the smallest developments in the India-US relationship.

China’s aggressive inroads in the Indian subcontinent and the Belt and Road Initiative came only in the mid-2010s, when the Obama Administration had already decided to ‘Pivot to Asia.’ Significant border transgressions, such as Doklam (2017), coincide with President Trump’s disruptive approach to China, and the recent border standoffs occurred when US-China relations were in their worst phase. Contrary to the conventional logic of accommodating one adversary when competing with the other, China becomes hostile to the US and India simultaneously. It is a strong indication that China wears an American lens when dealing with India and sees it as a colluder with the US.

China is most hypocritical in its perceptions of India’s domestic policy and civilisational worldview. Responding to the West’s allegation of authoritarianism and human rights, Chinese leaders have echoed many times that countries have a right to decide their form of governance as per the needs of the people. China’s socialist system is a punching bag for the West and is often called oppressive and totalitarian. Until PM Modi suffered a setback in the 2024 general elections, India’s legitimate and democratically-elected government was also being undermined every other day by the Western media. It is duplicitous to see China extend similar treatment to India, a fellow non-Western country.

Under the Modi government, the Vishwaguru jibe is often used as a sarcastic dismissal of India’s global aspirations and quest for status. How can a mere \$2,500 per capita GDP have anything to teach and

offer the world? Irrespective of India's capacity to be a vishwaguru, the Chinese would find that one need not be a teacher in the orthodox sense to guide and learn only if they could remember their own heritage. Confucius once said, "If I am walking with two other men, each of them will serve as my teacher".

Like Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara delayed his own nirvana to help the other earthbound fellows attain the knowledge, India supplied COVID-19 vaccines to 101 countries at the cost of delaying the inoculation of its own masses. This vishwa bandhu zeal is not new. China should remember how even a colonised India sent a medical unit under Dwarkanath Kotnis to help the People's Liberation Army in the Second Sino-Japanese War of 1938. However, the Chinese civilisation is still traumatised by the Century of Humiliation and seeks retribution from the West, particularly the US.

The 'Three Shoulds' and One 'Must'

India's global aspirations are the international manifestation of Swami Vivekananda's words, "Strength is goodness, weakness is sin", because, in world politics, only material strength and diplomatic boldness are respected. No one should understand this better than China.

China should know that it has to live and co-exist with India, even if it drives the US away from Asia. Ancient civilisations thought not in years but in decades and centuries, so the following Three Should's would help China stabilise its relationship with India and attain a peaceful co-existence.

First, China should see its ties with India and the US separately. India is an autonomous power that does not subscribe to the ally-adversary dichotomy. It should also have the same regard for India's strategic space in the subcontinent as it expects the West to do so in Taiwan and East Asia.

Second, China should realise that, like all rising powers, India's recourse to nationalism reflects its global aspirations, fuelled by its economic prospects and aspirational youth. As it adopted Soviet-style Communism with Chinese characteristics, India would also infuse liberal democracy with its millennia-old values.

Third, as one of the two surviving ancient civilisations, China should see the Indian worldview to ensure its knowledge vacuum is not filled by superficial narratives advanced by vested interests in the West. It would only lead to strategic miscalculations and push India further away from China.

Before these 'Three Shoulds', there is 'One Must' that China needs to acknowledge if it genuinely seeks a rapprochement with India. China must realise that cultural and economic exchanges can only take place when countries do not threaten each other's

security and political stability. Therefore, maintaining peace and tranquillity at the borders is fundamental for any normalisation of India-China relations.

### **Mainstream media turns blind eye as UN visits Xinjiang, criticises US**

08 June 2024, Pearls and Irritations, Jerry Grey

Human Rights are big news again. There are murders in Gaza, there are restrictions in Ukraine, there are allegations of abuses in Iran and any other place that the US sees as an adversary but, one thing that isn't big news is that the United Nations has recently visited Xinjiang. So far, 100% of our mainstream media have ignored this news.

The UN Special Rapporteur, Dr Alena Douhan didn't find human rights abuses by Chinese authorities on Chinese minorities, what she found instead were abuses by the USA against Uyghurs, caused by illegal and unilateral sanctions. But that's a different story.

It isn't just in China where the US could be accused of committing crimes against humanity. It's in their own streets, cities and especially their prisons. In fact, the situation is so bad that, across the political spectrum, 71% of all Americans feel their country is headed in the wrong direction.

When we look closer, we see they are right. US poverty, according to their own census in January 2024 increased to 11.5% and that means 37.9 million people are living below the poverty line in the world's richest country. This reflects in perceptions about safety too. While the FBI and the Bureau of Justice both report that crime, particularly violent crime has fallen, they both also report that the perception of safety from those crimes has also fallen – what this means is that, even though the numbers show crime is down, the reality is that people don't believe it. And this is borne out by the fact that only 41% of violent crimes were even reported.

Crime in the USA, according to both the FBI and Department of Justice (DoJ) is down but according to Gallop and Pew Research, it's up. It's just not being reported anymore. The FBI and the DoJ both report that solving crime is down too yet prison populations are increasing. If crime and clear up rates are decreasing but convictions are increasing – something is wrong with the statistics; in 2022 the number of inmates rose by 2%.

Perhaps it's related to the slave labour they accuse China of, the USA has legally mandated forced labour in prisons through the 13th Amendment and now prison labour constitutes a huge contribution to the manufacturing of everything from breakfast cereals to the bombs dropping on Gaza.

Gun deaths are definitely not decreasing, the Gun Violence Archive reports 181 mass shootings in the USA up to 30th May, that's more than one a day with 44 deaths a day on average.

The Rand Organisation reported that forced labour and human trafficking into the USA, are both increasing. The number, they think, is up to 17,500 people a year. But that's not the worst of it, there are apparently 10.4 million people working illegally in the USA as undocumented labourers and since Biden took office, there have been over 2 million new workers arriving illegally every year. All the evidence suggests that many of these workers are underpaid. This is a form of human rights abuse not just for the illegal and undocumented workers but for the people who live in the region and are forced to accept lower incomes.

In four states, Colorado, Georgia, New Hampshire and Wisconsin, the minimum working age is 12, kids who ought to be in school can get out and get a job. There is only state, New Jersey, with a minimum working age of 16 and for all the rest the age is 14. Principle 5 of the 10 Principles of the United Nations Global Compact states that developed nations, and the US is one, should have no child under 13 in work at all and no child under 15 in anything other than "light work". Hazardous work should not be commenced until the child reaches 18. The US laws put them in breach of UN standards.

For a microcosm of what's wrong with income inequality in the USA, look no further than the Walmart organisation. They are the USA's largest employer and the owners, the Walton family are the USA's richest family with a combined wealth greater than Bezos or Musk. Yet when Bernie Sanders commissioned a report, it found that Walmart and Amazon contribute to the same problem. These massively rich individuals employ people who don't earn enough to live and need social security, Medicaid or food stamps to survive.

In other words, US taxpayers support people employed by the country's richest people. The Federal minimum wage has remained at \$7:25 since 2009. If that's not a human rights abuse, we need a new definition – but even this gets even worse – there are still 20 states that can pay as low as \$2:13 if the employee collects tips.

The Prindle Institute reports that failure to act on poverty is a human rights abuse, but when the UN went to the USA to check, they were ignored. Failure to act on gun control is a human rights abuse and this is a can that has been kicked along the road by the Biden Administration. They have increased background checks but not reduced the number of guns on the streets. Failure to offer due process and a fair trial with the presumption of innocence is a human rights abuse which has been ignored

by mandatory minimum sentencing standards introduced under Trump and continued under Biden. Failure to provide a safe environment for people to live and work, to commune in their neighbourhoods is a human rights abuse that the world can see just by switching on social media and taking a look at their tent cities and the drug addled streets.

While the US government points fingers, the UN points right back at them. The world is misinformed by US controlled or influenced media. US citizens are misled into believing their country is the arbiter of freedom and democracy. 71% of them have realised that their government is, in fact, the perpetrators of misery both at home and abroad.

### **CHINA-JAPAN-SOUTH KOREA TRILATERAL SUMMIT: WHY WAS THE CHANCE TO ADVOCATE FOR XINJIANG AND TIBET NOT TAKEN?**

07 June 2024, Anna Pepe, IARI

The China-Japan-South Korea trilateral summit was put on hold for four years. This year, the summit was finally convened, and the representatives of the three East Asian States met in Seoul on the 26th and the 27th of May. The highly anticipated summit took place in a surely competitive climate, as well as two weeks after Xi Jinping's tour of Europe and the Uyghurs and Tibetans' protests that accompanied it. This temporal proximity may have left observers to wonder whether the PRC controversial Xinjiang and Tibet policies would be among the themes of this year's summit, and who would take the chance to advocate for change. They were not, and no State did. Why?

In September 2023, after the ASEAN Plus Three (ASEAN Plus 3) summit in Jakarta, South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul stated that the Republic of Korea (ROK), Japan and the People's Republic of China (PRC)'s senior diplomats had agreed to resume trilateral dialogues at the "earliest convenient time". As reported by Japanese broadcaster TBS, ROK had suggested convening the China-Japan-South Korea trilateral summit already in December; however, the dates remained under discussion. The news attracted attention from both the regional and the international audience. The three States had not held the summit since its 2019 edition in Chengdu, China, due to restrictions to contain the spread of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19), and to the deterioration of ROK-Japanese relations.

In the last two months, new articles on the finalisation of plans for the two-days summit emerged, after Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's ritual offering at the controversial Yasukuni Shrine and PRC's response to Kishida's statements during his visit to the U.S. had foreshadowed a

turnaround. According to NikkeiAsia, Chinese Premier Li Qiang, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol were to attend it in South Korea (chair of this edition), presumably on the 26th and the 27th of May. Moreover, as stated by the Japanese Foreign Ministry, Tokyo had been arranging bilateral summits on the fringes of the China-Japan-South Korea trilateral summit.

RPC President Xi Jinping meanwhile returned from his week-long tour of Europe, five years after his last visit in 2019. Although the public's attention has been directed to understand whether Xi Jinping succeeded in restrengthening EU-PRC relations ahead of the EU Parliament elections (and to annihilate the threat of tariffs imposition on Chinese imports), there has been a second important effect of Xi Jinping's tour worth of mention: Uyghurs and Tibetans' protests in France and Hungary.

As French President Macron welcomed Xi Jinping on May 5, Uyghurs protested carrying placards against the Chinese crimes against their community. The protest, organised by the European Uyghur Institute, was partially sabotaged by a shouting group with Chinese flags. The French International News reported of Tibetans protesting Xi Jinping's visit as well, unfurling a large, white banner saying "Free Tibet. Dictator Xi Jinping, your time is up!" on a bridge as the President's motorcade passed, and then gathering in the afternoon in Republic Square and chanting "Long Live Tibet".

Tibetan protesters' plan to unroll a second banner, together with the Tibetan flag, on the Elisabeth Bridge in Budapest on May 6 was sabotaged by Chinese activists. The Tibetans protesters said the nearby Hungarian police did not intervene. Before Xi's arrival, Tibetans had already gathered to protest his visit to Hungary and to demand the cessation of human rights violations in Tibet; however, Xi's motorcade had avoided the protesting crowd by taking a secondary route.

The temporal proximity between Xi's tour and the China-Japan-South Korea trilateral summit may have left observers to wonder whether the PRC controversial Xinjiang and Tibet policies would have been among the themes of this year's summit. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk readdressed the issue two months ago, on the 55th session of the Human Rights Council, demanding to the Chinese government to implement the recommendations made by his Office and other human rights bodies in relation to "laws, policies and practises that violate fundamental rights, including in the Xinjiang and Tibet regions".

Among the summit participants, and at least in theoretical terms, Japan is the one that could have addressed the matter. We should indeed remember

that it was Japan that championed the acceptance of the controversial concept of "human security" by governments in the East Asian region, thanks to a promotional campaign to which Japanese leaders devoted considerable financial and human resources. The Japanese government has offered many assistance programs in human security name as part of the Overseas Development Assistance (ODA). It is worth mentioning the establishment of the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (TFHS) at the initiative of Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi in March 1999 as well. Certainly, acting as promoter of human security – albeit revisited – has enabled Japan to acquire a more prominent role on the international stage, independently of the U.S., and yet without jeopardising the friendship with the now decades-old ally or violating the 1947 Constitution. Moreover, we should remember at least four other, most recent events.

Soon after his election in February 2021, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said that Japan would not hesitate to criticise China's human rights record, and appointed Erkin Said, a high-ranking official, as his human rights advisor. In October 2022, Japan voted at the United Nations Human Rights Council in favour of a resolution calling for a debate on an August report from Michelle Bachelet, then U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, which detailed possible crimes against humanity targeting Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities. That effort fell short by only two votes.

In November, Kishida reiterated Japan's stance on human rights amidst a bilateral meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping; without however directly mentioning the Uyghurs or the Tibetans. In December 2022, Japan's upper house of Parliament, the House of Councillors, adopted a resolution to strengthen the Japanese government's commitment to the cause by monitoring the situation and implementing new relief policies. Shortly after, the PRC Foreign Ministry stated the resolution "ignores the facts, maliciously slanders China's human rights situation, seriously violates international law and basic norms governing international relations, grossly interferes in China's internal affairs, and is extremely egregious in nature".

Although the resolution does not explicitly condemn the PRC nor mention it by name, Uyghur activists warmly welcomed its adoption. Ahmatjan Litip, Secretary-General of the Japanese Uyghur Association, emphasised how the resolution constituted an important precedent in Japanese legislative tradition: "in its first such resolution which has just passed, and the word 'Uyghur' is in the title (...)". Moreover, on December 24, Japan announced it would not send its high-ranking officials to the Beijing Winter Games. The announcement came

after the U.S. decision to launch a diplomatic boycott of the Games citing “genocide and crimes against humanity” in Xinjiang; however, the government spokesman Hirokazu Matsuno affirmed Japan had defined its action plan on its own. Japan never labelled its decision a “diplomatic boycott”; as acknowledged by The New York Times journalist Victor Mather, this aligned the country “with the United States while avoiding an official snub of China, Japan’s largest trade partner.”

However, in practical terms, there are factors that need to be considered.

Over the past few years, the PRC has surely grown its presence in the South China Sea and the East China Sea, and Kishida and Yoon might have therefore thought that addressing such a sensitive theme would stir already turbulent waters. Moreover, Japan and ROK seized this summit to back the case for addressing the implications of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK)’s nuclear and missile development program. The PRC has been the DPRK’s top benefactor and, therefore, the most appropriate actor to (at least attempt to) persuade Kim Jong Un to desist from dangerous practices. Before the summit, Joseph DeTrani (U.S. special envoy for six-party denuclearization talks with North Korea from 2003 to 2006) said Seoul and Tokyo would “try to get China to convince North Korea to cease providing arms to Russia for its war in Ukraine” and “to use its leverage to halt ballistic missile launches.”

Lü Chao, an expert on the Korean peninsula issue at the Liaoning Academy of Social Sciences, correctly predicted the meeting would have promoted cooperation in diplomatic coordination, information communication, climate change, and logistics connectivity as well – perfectly in line with the leitmotif the founders of the CJK trilateralism wished for it to have. As remembered by Victor D. Cha and Marie Dumond, “the early roots of CJK trilateralism fell under the auspices of the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) format. Proposed by Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi, the leaders of the “plus three” countries held an informal breakfast meeting on the sidelines of the APT. Discussions revolved around various ways to promote collaboration across different sectors including trade, commerce, environment, and agriculture through joint research. Sensitive political and security issues remained off the table, although security cooperation did appear on the agenda on occasion.”

According to diplomatic observers, the PRC’s eagerness to participate in the trilateral summit was due to the need to protect its interests from the U.S.-led bloc. The PRC has already articulated its concerns about Japan and ROK’s renewed security cooperation with the United States. The summit

followed the August 2023 US-ROK-Japan summit at Camp David, where they agreed to strengthen their deterrence against DPRK threats and to defend a free and open Indo-Pacific against Chinese aggressions. DeTrani believed “China will ask that the ROK and Japan not to align with the U.S. against China, an issue that wasn’t on the table in 2019.” Therefore, any mention of the latest protests of PRC Xinjiang and Tibet policies, among others, might have been seen by China as a further sign of Japan’s alignment with the U.S., and sabotaged the summit and Japan and ROK’s plan to discuss higher-ranking issues on their common agenda.

Finally, matters-ranking aside, it is important to note that although Japan has shown interest in Xinjiang and Tibet situations, as we have seen its policies have never showed the necessary assertiveness to persuade observers it would have explicitly addressed the matter at the summit.

### **What do India’s neighbours expect from the new government?**

07 June 2024, Frontline

A break down of India’s most important regional ties and how they will likely evolve under a new coalition government.

India’s general election has delivered a surprise setback for Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which failed to win an outright majority and now needs the backing of its coalition partners to remain in power.

Over the past decade, Modi and the BJP have enjoyed authority and dominance over national politics. His third term as prime minister, however, will likely not be as smooth sailing as it was during the past decade, given the challenges of coalition politics. On foreign policy, though, the election outcome will not have much impact, experts have said.

Since Modi came to power in 2014, New Delhi has adopted “Neighborhood First” as a core component of India’s foreign policy, focusing on repairing and bolstering its ties with countries in the region.

Pakistan tensions remain

India’s most tense relationship is with its arch-rival and neighbour to the west, Pakistan. Many Pakistanis closely followed the Indian elections. “We are quite happy” to see Modi’s party lose its outright majority in parliament, Mushahid Hussain, a Pakistani senator and expert in foreign affairs said. “It will be a more chastened and somewhat weakened Modi now sitting in the PM office in Delhi,” he said, adding that Pakistan hopes to see “a more subdued Indian approach to Pakistan in terms of tone and rhetoric.”

Modi’s government has refused to engage with Pakistan over the past few years since accusing



Islamabad of cross-border terrorism. India and Pakistan have fought three wars and many skirmishes since both were carved out into two independent states in 1947, as British colonial rule of the subcontinent came to an end. Both claim the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir in full, but rule it in part. Relations between the two nuclear-armed neighbours have remained tense over the past few years." From Pakistan's perspective, one question will be whether Modi, who engaged in anti-Pakistan rhetoric in the election campaign, doubles down on it or backs away from it," said Madiha Afzal, a foreign policy expert at the Brookings Institution.

Maleeha Lodhi, Pakistan's former representative to the United Nations said that it's not a "favourable climate" for India-Pakistan re-engagement. "Pakistan expects little change, if any, from Modi's third term in power. Prospects for any normalisation of ties between India and Pakistan are at best uncertain," she said, adding that Islamabad "will adopt a wait-and-see policy."

China looms in the background

As Islamabad strengthens its friendship with Beijing, which in turn is pumping billions of dollars of Chinese money into Pakistan to build key infrastructure such as roads and ports, India remains wary of China's growing footprint and influence there. After the announcement of the election results, China congratulated Modi on his victory and called for "healthy and stable" bilateral relations.

Deep-seated mutual distrust has long characterised Sino-Indian relations, plagued by unresolved border disputes. Tensions remain high, with tens of thousands of Indian and Chinese soldiers massed on their disputed border since 2020, when a clash left 20 Indian troops and four Chinese soldiers dead.

Sana Hashmi, a China expert who previously worked as a consultant in India's Foreign Ministry, said there won't be any major improvement in India-China ties in the coming years. Without any Chinese concessions on the border issue, she said, New Delhi is unlikely to "turn mellow on its China policy".

Sri Lanka invited to Modi's swearing-in

The swearing-in ceremony for Modi's third term is expected to take place on June 8. New Delhi has invited the leaders of some of India's neighbours, including Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe, to the event, according to local media reports. Both Hasina and Wickremesinghe have said they will be in attendance, a leading daily reported on June 6.

In recent years, Sri Lanka has become an arena of geopolitical rivalry and maritime competition between India and China. The country is strategically located at the crossroads of busy shipping routes. India and Sri Lanka share not only close trade relations, but also ethnic and religious ties.

But Chinese attempts to gain sway in Colombo over the past decade have caused concern in New Delhi. "Even while colonial legacies have historically bound India and Sri Lanka together, current events highlight complex dynamics," said Anandhi Sasidharan, a former Sri Lankan minister, pointing to Sri Lanka's acute economic crisis, debt problems, and the related geopolitical implications.

Under Wickremesinghe, however, relations between Sri Lanka and India appear to have strengthened over the past couple of years. The outcome of the Indian elections won't have a major impact on ties with Sri Lanka, according to experts. "While Modi's party may lack a clear majority, signalling potential constraints on policy implementation, India's longstanding assistance to Sri Lanka remains steadfast," said Shihar Aneez, a journalist based in Colombo.

Building on strength with Bangladesh

India's relations with its eastern neighbour, Bangladesh, which have strengthened substantially over the past decade, will likely remain steady, said Bangladeshi officials and observers after the election results became clear. "Our deep friendly ties will continue," Bangladeshi Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud told journalists, adding that bilateral ties reached new heights under Modi and his Bangladeshi counterpart, Hasina.

The relationship between New Delhi and Dhaka is deeply entrenched and both share security and economic interests. "There won't be any significant policy changes regarding Bangladesh," said Touhid Hossain, a former Bangladeshi foreign secretary.

Ali Riaz, an expert on Bangladesh and professor at Illinois State University, echoed this view. "Nothing will deter Modi to continue his foreign policy objectives as the Indian establishment will continue supporting his government," he said. "There isn't much disagreement between the BJP and opposition parties on projecting India as an emerging global power."

### **Tibetan Participation in India's Elections: Past, Present, and Future**

07 June 2024, The Diplomat, Kalyani Yeola and Tenzing Dhamdul

Historically, Tibetans have been reluctant to claim Indian citizenship (and their right to vote) over fears of losing their distinct identity. That is changing.

India, the world's largest democracy, recently concluded its general elections, forming a new government once again led by the victorious Bharatiya Janata Party. Amid this democratic exercise, a significant development has emerged involving the Tibetan population that has sought

asylum in India since the occupation of their homeland by China.

In the latest general elections, a notable number of Tibetans participated in the seventh phase of voting in Himachal Pradesh on June 1, 2024. In this election, for the first time, a Tibetan settlement officer formally presented a list of pressing issues to the chief minister of Himachal Pradesh, Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, who visited Dharamshala to appeal to the exiled Tibetans to exercise their right to vote in India.

Furthermore, the two main national political parties of India, the BJP and the Indian National Congress (INC), had town hall meetings with Tibetans in Dharamshala in the lead up to the elections.

Historically, Tibetans have participated in Indian general elections primarily in the border regions adjacent to Tibet, including Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, and West Bengal. However, recent years have witnessed a rise in Tibetan voter participation across India. This increase can be attributed to a landmark decision and subsequent directives issued by the Election Commission of India. In 2014, the Election Commission's chief instructed all Indian states to include Tibetans and their descendants born in India in the electoral rolls. This directive aligned with the 2013 court order that granted Indian citizenship to Tibetan refugees born in India between January 26, 1950, and July 1, 1987.

However, in implementing the 2014 directive, the government of India effectively decoupled the right to vote from citizenship for Tibetans residing in India. The government mandated that Tibetans must legally apply for citizenship rather than claim it as a birthright. This policy highlights the complexity of the relationship between citizenship and voting rights for Tibetans in India.

#### Elections and Tibet

Since the establishment of the Tibetan government-in-exile (officially known as the Central Tibetan Administration) in Dharamshala on April 29, 1959 Tibetans have developed their own system of governance outside of their homeland. Following the 2001 reforms, Tibetans began directly electing their political leader, the Kalon Tripa (later known as Sikyong), thereby exercising their right to vote in exile.

Since then, Tibetans have held elections for their government-in-exile, achieving the unique accomplishment of having Tibetan voters from over 20 different countries participate in these elections. This form of democratic exercise is fundamentally distinct from the political system in occupied Tibet, which is currently governed by the Chinese Communist Party.

This history demonstrates that Tibetans in the diaspora, particularly those residing in India, are

well-acquainted with the electoral process and are not novices when it comes to participating in elections.

Despite their experience, there is concern within the Tibetan community regarding participation in India's voting exercises. Fears about losing their identity and culture are paramount among Tibetans, particularly since voting rights are largely tied to obtaining Indian citizenship, which would necessitate forfeiting their Residential Certificate (RC). The RC is a legal document provided to Tibetans by the government of India. Once Tibetans procure citizenship and a voter card, the RC becomes null and void and must be returned to the government.

Nevertheless, there has been a clear increase in the number of Tibetans participating in Indian general elections from 2014 to 2019 and the current 2024 elections. There are two major reasons for this trend. First, Tibetans migrating to other countries have begun acquiring citizenship in those nations (which, unlike India, do not provide an RC). Previously, there was a taboo against Tibetans in India procuring Indian citizenship, even if legally applicable. However, this has changed as Tibetans see their family members gaining more legal access, including political rights, in other countries they reside in by acquiring citizenship.

One Tibetan voter remarked to Phayul Media: "When prices of essentials increase and policy changes occur in India, we Tibetans living in India are also impacted. Hence, it is our right as well as duty to elect the right individual who will bring change and alleviate the problems we face."

Second, although India has provided Tibetans with several rights to sustain and rehabilitate themselves, there are limitations. These include restrictions on buying property and the ease of traveling abroad, especially using the Identity Certificate provided by the government of India to Tibetans in India for travel abroad (which even Indian immigration officers often do not recognize). Traveling to Nepal, the home of another large Tibetan community, by flight is only possible for Tibetans with citizenship or a voter card; even travel by bus and other means becomes problematic with security checks where they do not accept Identity Certificate.

A Tibetan who participated in the recently concluded general election stated, "I have relatives in Nepal and meeting them becomes a problem if I do not have proper travel documentation. This is where the voter card becomes crucial, as Nepal recognizes it, unlike our Identity Certificate, making travel hassle-free."

These issues have become more pressing as Tibetans have moved from merely sustaining themselves to prospering, necessitating the ability to travel abroad and buy property.

## Significance of Tibetan Participation in India's General Elections

Since being forced into exile in 1949, Tibetans have moved to different regions of the world and made significant contributions to their respective nations. Many have even started taking active political and administrative roles. Notable examples include Bhutla Karpoche, a member of the provincial parliament of Ontario (Canada); Aftab Karma Singh Pureval, the current mayor of Cincinnati (U.S.); and Namgyal Gangshontsang, the mayor of Oetwil am See (Switzerland), to name a few.

Furthermore, even if Tibetans are not able to be directly elected and involved in decision-making, their votes in countries like the United States have enabled them to effectively lobby legislatures to pass concrete bills and acts that support Tibet and the Tibetan people. Most recently, the Europe for Tibet campaign – led by various offices for Tibet, Tibet support groups, friends of Tibet, and Tibetans – in line with the ongoing European Union (EU) Parliament elections has been able to lobby and garner the support of more than 100 contesting candidates for Tibet.

Many Tibetans and observers believe that it is high time for Tibetans in India to legally claim their vote and push for their political, social, cultural, and educational rights. Although they do not possess the right to hold dual citizenship in India, they can participate in both the Tibetan government-in-exile (TGiE) elections and the Indian general elections. By making good use of this opportunity, Tibetans can lobby for their rights in India.

Conversely, India might contemplate instituting provisions for representing individuals of Tibetan origin within the Indian Parliament, drawing inspiration from the historical allocation of two reserved seats for the Anglo-Indian community. Considering the long-standing presence and contributions of Tibetans in India both before and after its independence, such a measure would be appropriate and just.

### Conclusion

Since the COVID-19 pandemic and the Galwan Valley clash between India and China, fewer Tibetans have been able to escape occupied Tibet and come to India, where the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government-in-exile are based. Migration is a phenomenon that has impacted everyone and, supplemented by legal and other constraints, Tibetans in India are also migrating to many developed countries. However, there has been an increase in Tibetans obtaining legal documents in India, including citizenship, and they have gradually become more vocal about their rights and duties. It is likely that Tibetan participation in subsequent general elections will continue to increase.

The Dalai Lama, whom many wish to see conferred the Bharat Ratna, and other Tibetans who have received Padma Shri and other awards, including for gallantry in defending the nation, have been integral to India's growth since its independence in 1947. Tibetans who have settled in India and many born here represent a national asset with their unique culture, heritage, and identity that must be preserved and allowed to flourish. These elements are vital for India to realize its vision of a "Viksit Bharat" (Developed India) by 2047 and to showcase to the world the principle of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" (The World Is One Family).

## 'Short of war,' China's gray zone strategy on Taiwan is gathering in intensity

06 June 2024, The Washington Post, Kevin Rudd

The West must strongly deter – without foreclosing a future reconciliation between Taipei and Beijing.

Kevin Rudd is Australia's ambassador to the United States and was previously prime minister and foreign minister. This is an edited extract of a speech delivered Thursday at the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies in Honolulu. The speech is a personal reflection in his capacity as a China scholar and not as an official representative of the Australian government.

The central question for our time, if we are to avoid war across the Taiwan Strait, is to understand how Chinese President Xi Jinping actually interprets the deterrence strategies of the United States, Taiwan itself, and U.S. allies and strategic partners.

What strategy is China now embarking upon, short of preparation for an actual invasion, to achieve its political objectives in relation to Taiwan? And what is the role of deterrence in responding to such a strategy?

The key to understanding Beijing's red line on Taiwan's political status is China's fear that Taiwan will become an independent state, and be recognized by the international community as such, thereby destroying the possibility of unification with the mainland.

This, in turn, is based on Beijing's insistence that any political dialogue between Taiwan and the mainland must be based on the "1992 Consensus" – an ambiguous arrangement broadly based on the principle of "one China," albeit with differing interpretations of what that means to each side.

Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), in government since 2016, has opposed the "one China" element within the 1992 Consensus. As a result, Beijing has rejected all official dialogue with Taiwanese administrations since the party came to power. The DPP has argued that Taiwan was already

independent and so had no need formally to declare it. Tsai Ing-wen, Taiwan's president from 2016 to 2024, took this concept further – continuing to reject the 1992 Consensus, while refining the Democratic Progressive Party's position on Taiwan's political status as one committed to "maintaining the status quo." This position has been reiterated by the new DPP president, William Lai, who took office last month.

But Beijing is increasingly making it plain to foreign interlocutors that this stance is not sufficient. Far from being relieved that the DPP has stepped back from the brink of any formal declaration of independence, Beijing is signaling loud and clear that its political objective remains forcing Taiwan into negotiations on its preferred "one country, two systems" model, which it has used for Hong Kong.

Beijing might well be in the process of concluding that Taiwan thinking of itself as *de facto* autonomous, with the international community on much the same page, will become further entrenched – and irreversible. As time begins to run out (from China's perspective), we will begin to see a change in Chinese strategy toward the "Taiwan problem." Indeed, we are already seeing it, with China increasingly availing itself of a multidimensional "gray zone" strategy over the past 18 months or so, a strategy aimed at applying new forms of pressure on Taiwanese and international public opinion to force Taipei to the negotiating table.

Prominent analysts have described the gray zone strategy as seeking "economic, military, diplomatic, or political gains without eliciting a costly and direct response from an opponent." Others have described it as a "short of war" approach – a combination of political, military, diplomatic, economic and cyber measures whose objective is to achieve a psychological, attitudinal and then behavioral change on the part of Taiwanese public and political opinion.

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These measures include intensifying political assaults by Beijing to delegitimize Taiwanese political leaders opposed to unification. They also involve military assets: naval, air, coast guard and other intrusions across the median line, across Taiwan's 24-mile contiguous zone and in and around Taiwan's offshore islands, are meant to show the Taiwanese that their administration is incapable of defending Taipei's claims to sovereignty. They also entail punitive economic measures (well short of a blockade) aimed at impeding Taiwanese trade, investment and other national income, to demonstrate to apolitical Taiwanese voters Taipei's vulnerability.

During her tenure, Tsai pointed to mounting cyber intrusions into Taiwan's economic and communications infrastructure, again with the intention of demonstrating to the Taiwanese people the acute vulnerability of their systems to an integrated cyberattack.

For China watchers, there are some similarities in Beijing's "short of war" strategies that have already been tried in the South and East China Seas, and those being tried on Taiwan. Japan has seen this with the intensity of People's Liberation Army Air Force sorties around Senkaku-Diaoyu Dao. We have also seen China assert nonlethal coercive actions in relation to the Second Thomas Shoal and the Philippines.

With Taiwan, however, there appears to be a growing intensity across the full range of gray zone activities. And those are likely to increase as the DPP settles in for another term and as Beijing's preferred political partner on Taiwan (Kuomintang, or KMT) looks at the prospect of a cumulative 12 years in opposition.

An embrace of gray zone agitation does not mean China has suspended its efforts to build the military capabilities necessary to take Taiwan by overwhelming military force. Those efforts continue.

And there is no inconsistency in China pursuing these two approaches in tandem. China's political strategy for unification with Taiwan has always had a fundamental military component. Indeed, these two approaches are entirely compatible if their cumulative effect is to reduce Taipei's deterrence and war-fighting capabilities, as well as its political, social and economic resilience.

Deterring China from launching military action against Taiwan is the cornerstone of a U.S. and allied strategy for preserving the status quo and the wider geostrategic stability of the Indo-Pacific region. The question that arises for all of us, however, is how to also deter China's emerging menu of measures that remain "short of war" and "short of invasion" but that share the same political objective, which is to force Taipei to capitulate.

Governments across the region and the world will increasingly be required to draw a clear linkage between identifiable gray zone actions on the one hand and a series of calibrated policy responses on the other. The alternative is no response at all – which presumably is Beijing's current expectation.

In the future, the Taiwanese might choose to engage in a fresh round of negotiations with Beijing on easing cross-strait tensions, new forms of economic cooperation and new approaches to the political relationship between them.

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Indeed, all our interests would be served by breaking the 1992 Consensus impasse so that effective

dialogue can recommence after nearly a decade of silence. Silence accentuates tension; talking can reduce it. As Winston Churchill famously reminded us, it's always better to "jaw-jaw than war-war."

But there is a difference between a voluntary, agreed approach to negotiations and a coerced one.

For Beijing, reassurance that Taipei and its international partners will sustain the status quo on Taiwan's future political status is essential for strategic stability. But with Xi's evident frustration at Taiwan's continuing autonomy, reassurance alone will not be sufficient.

It needs to be part of a much wider equation of integrated deterrence that will command all our efforts for the decade ahead if we are to successfully preserve the peace.

### **India to rename two dozen places in Tibet region under China as retaliation**

06 June 2024, The Northlines, Girish Linganna

India has initiated a retaliatory effort against China's renaming of locations in India's Arunachal Pradesh state. The Indian government intends to rename over two dozen places in China's Tibet Autonomous Region as a response.

According to The Diplomat, a media organization, they have obtained a comprehensive list of the places that will be renamed in China's Tibet Autonomous Region. Indian military sources have provided this list, and it is anticipated that the official release will take place once the new government assumes power in Delhi, following the formation of the new government.

Starting on June 8, Modi will serve his third term as Prime Minister with a smaller majority, necessitating reliance on coalition partners for governing. However, this reduced political space is unlikely to significantly affect foreign policy, as there is broad support across multiple political parties for Modi's objective of enhancing India's global influence and power.

New Delhi suspects that China's renaming of places in Arunachal Pradesh is an attempt to bolster Beijing's territorial claim on this large province in northeastern India, which China refers to as Zangnan or "southern Tibet." This move is seen as an effort to assert control over the region and consolidate China's influence.

According to The Diplomat, the Indian Army's information warfare division is believed to be responsible for the renaming of Tibetan places in Arunachal Pradesh. Additionally, with the support of renowned research institutes such as the Asiatic Society in Kolkata, the Indian Army has been actively disproving the legitimacy of the Chinese names by conducting thorough research. Their efforts aim to

counter China's narrative and provide accurate information regarding the region.

Under its logo, the Indian Army has shared detailed tweets that challenge China's renaming of seven places in Arunachal Pradesh. Furthermore, they are actively working to counter the renaming of all the other 30 or so places that the Chinese government has renamed. The tweets aim to provide accurate information and refute China's attempts to assert control over these regions.

India's military has recently compiled a list of over 30 places in Tibet that are set to be renamed. The objective behind this is to reclaim their ancient names in Indian languages, which are derived from historical records. This initiative aims to restore and recognize the historical significance of these places based on authentic sources.

According to sources, this list of renamed places in Tibet will soon be made public through various media platforms. This is part of a larger global campaign aimed at presenting a compelling counter-narrative to China's claims on India's Arunachal Pradesh state and other disputed border regions. The intention is to showcase India's perspective and challenge China's assertions by providing alternative viewpoints and historical evidence.

Military officials, who wished to remain anonymous, have stated that the new names given to these places are supported by thorough historical research. This signifies that considerable efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy and legitimacy of the chosen names.

According to an Ex IB officer, if India proceeds with the renaming campaign, it would essentially reopen the issue of Tibet. Although India has recognized Tibet as part of China following its forcible occupation by Beijing, the current Modi government shows a willingness to change its stance in order to counter China's aggressive actions. This shift in approach reflects India's efforts to challenge China's territorial claims and renaming initiatives, as reported by The Diplomat.

In recent weeks, the Indian Army has arranged numerous media trips to the contested border regions. During these visits, journalists were given the opportunity to interact with local residents who strongly dispute China's claims and assert that their allegiance has always been to India. These efforts aim to showcase the perspective of the locals and highlight their unwavering support for India's sovereignty over these areas.

An officer involved in the campaign, who preferred to remain anonymous, stated that the primary objective is to promote India's counter-narrative regarding the disputed border. This would be achieved by leveraging regional and global media platforms and emphasizing both comprehensive



historical research and the opinions of local residents. The aim is to establish a strong and credible narrative that supports India's perspective on the border issue.

In an apparent attempt to reinforce its territorial claim over Arunachal Pradesh, China renamed 30 locations along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in India's northeastern state in March. The Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs, responsible for naming administrative divisions, issued a list of "standardized" geographical names in Arunachal Pradesh, known as Zangnan in Beijing's terminology. This move by China was reported by the South China Morning Post, a Hong Kong-based newspaper.

China's renaming of locations in Arunachal Pradesh comprises a list that consists of 11 residential areas, 12 mountains, four rivers, one lake, one mountain pass, and a parcel of land. These new names are recorded in Chinese characters, Tibetan language, and pinyin, which is the Roman alphabet-based representation of Mandarin Chinese.

Quoting the Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs, the South China Morning Post reported that the renaming of geographical names in Zangnan (Arunachal Pradesh) was carried out in accordance with regulations defined by China's cabinet, the State Council. The ministry, in collaboration with other relevant departments, stated that they standardized certain geographical names in the region based on these provisions.

China's decision to rename places in Arunachal Pradesh is not new, as this marks the fourth instance of such a unilateral action by Beijing. In 2017, the first list of six standardized names for locations in Arunachal Pradesh was released, followed by a second list in 2021 featuring 15 place names. In 2023, a third list was published, containing names for 11 places. However, the most recent fourth list is particularly significant, as it introduces nearly the same number of new place names as the previous three lists combined.

India has consistently dismissed China's attempts to rename places in Arunachal Pradesh, affirming that the state is an intrinsic component of the nation. India maintains that the act of assigning "invented" names does not change the underlying reality of Arunachal Pradesh's status as an integral part of the country.

In 2023, the former spokesperson of India's External Affairs Ministry, Arindam Bagchi, expressed the country's response to the reports of China's renaming efforts. He straightforwardly rejected China's attempt, emphasizing that this was not the first time such actions were taken by China. India's outright rejection asserts its stance on the matter, asserting that it does not accept the validity or legitimacy of China's renaming endeavors.

Furthermore, in response to China's latest round of efforts to assert its claims on Arunachal Pradesh, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the region in March 2024. During his visit, he inaugurated the Sela Tunnel constructed at an elevation of 13,000 feet. Beijing responded by filing a diplomatic protest with India.

Addressing China's persistent claims on Arunachal Pradesh, India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar described them as "ludicrous" on March 23. He emphasized that the state was an inherent and natural part of India, firmly rejecting China's assertions.

Regarding the issue of Arunachal Pradesh, India's External Affairs Minister responded that it is not a new matter. He highlighted that China's claims and attempts to expand those claims are baseless and continue to be deemed as ludicrous. He made these remarks while addressing a question on the Arunachal issue during a lecture at the esteemed Institute of South Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore. The minister emphasized India's steadfast position regarding the region's status.

In addition, the External Affairs Minister reiterated India's clear and unwavering stance on the matter, noting that it has remained consistent over time. He acknowledged that the issue of Arunachal Pradesh would be an integral part of the ongoing boundary discussions between the two countries. This statement reflects India's commitment to address the matter within the context of bilateral dialogues. (IPA Service).

### **China 'Heats-Up' Indian Border With Civil-Military Fusion, Dual Use Villages To Assert Claims Near Disputed LAC**

05 June 2024, The Eurasian Times, Ritu Sharma

India's China problem has been festering for some time now. The new Indian government will have a task cut out for it to arrest the downward spiral of ties with China as Beijing has already begun upgrading its "xiaokang" (villages) along the 3,500-kilometer-long border with India. Experts see it as a "gray zone" tool from China's playbook to assert claims on disputed areas.

These villages have "military and dual-use infrastructure," and many are clustered along the eastern sector that borders Arunachal Pradesh, an Indian state that China covets and claims to be "South Tibet."

A no-patrol buffer zone was created around Patrolling Point-14 in Galwan Valley three weeks after the violent clash in which 20 Indian soldiers and an unspecified number of Chinese troops were killed on June 15, 2020. China, however, has recently

completed construction of a road from the north of Samzungling to the Galwan Valley, providing the PLA with a 15 km shorter alternate axis to rapidly build up troops in the area.

China has also tried to offset its air combat disadvantage at high altitudes by deploying its J-20 and J-10 fighters closer to the border.

The infrastructure building is indicative of China's efforts "to use gray zone tactics to advance its strategic and security interests in disputed areas while staying below the threshold of armed conflict."

"By building civilian villages, China can increase the population of remote border areas, adding legitimacy to its territorial claims. This simultaneously creates the necessary infrastructure to better support military and police forces, which, in turn, helps to protect local civilians from perceived threats across the border," an analysis by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) contends.

The analysis, done under the China Power Project, elucidates how these villages are located as close as just seven kilometers from the Line of Actual Control (LAC). The border village of Zhuangnan (庄南) has seen significant additions to military or paramilitary infrastructure in recent years.

Previously, satellite images showed a walled complex with at least eleven buildings in 2019. By 2020, some buildings will be demolished to pave for new ones. In 2022, barracks-like structures appeared along with a large building and a radome or communication tower. An image from December 31, 2023, showed the construction of new infrastructure for monitoring or logistics support purposes.

"The barracks, perimeter walls, and radome/communications tower located at these complexes indicate the likely presence of China's military, the People's Liberation Army (PLA). It is also possible these facilities are operated by the paramilitary People's Armed Police (PAP). Under China's Land Borders Law, these two forces share responsibility for defending China's borders from armed attacks or other encroachments," the commentary reads.

The location of these villages so close to the border indicates that it gives the Chinese Army and Para Military forces a "vantage point" for monitoring activities along the border.

Indian experts have been raising concerns over the massive infrastructure building on the Chinese side of the border.

Former Indian Army Chief General MM Naravane (retired) told the EurAsian Times: "China has been investing in creating infrastructure, especially roads and railways in border areas ostensibly for the benefit of local people. However, in the absence of any sizable local population to justify such investment, it is apparent that such developments are for military purposes."

Another village, Majiduncan, less than 10 km northwest of the disputed border, has seen many infrastructure additions over the past two years. Earlier, it had few buildings and a helipad, but by November 2023, images show that a huge building complex had emerged alongside two helipads and a paved network of roads.

"Given the region's mountainous terrain, helipads play a key role in facilitating the swift movement of people, equipment, and supplies in the area, especially during emergencies," the CSIS commentary reads.

#### Civil-Military Fusion To Assert Claims

The dual-use facilities align with China's Land Borders Law, which embeds border defense into the responsibilities of border area governments. The border villages are meant to strengthen the construction of defense infrastructure to maintain border security.

"This emphasis on leveraging civilian villages to support the military bears the hallmarks of China's "military-civil fusion" strategy, which aims to fuse China's economic and military development to support overall national objectives," the report reads.

China has also been constructing a new highway, G216, along the Ladakh region of India, which will allow the rapid mobilization of Chinese troops during a similar confrontation between the two countries on the LAC.

So far, China has only one highway, G219, in Ladakh. Earlier, the treacherous terrain in the region thwarted Beijing's plan for infrastructure development. But not anymore. The sole highway has been vulnerable to the Indian military. And now, China is close to eliminating its vulnerability by completing an alternate route known as the G216.

The CSIS analysis covers just four villages. In recent years, China has expanded and upgraded its civilian and military infrastructure in the area.

The Pentagon's 2023 Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China said that Beijing continued to develop military infrastructure along the LAC. "These improvements include underground storage facilities near Doklam, new roads in all three sectors of the LAC, new villages in disputed areas in neighboring Bhutan, a second bridge over Pangong Lake, a dual-purpose airport near the center sector, and multiple helipads," the report said.

With the adversarial ties between India and China showing signs of improvement, New Delhi has also started building strategic infrastructure on the border. India has been building tunnels, roads, and bridges on its side of the border for quick deployment of troops and weapons.

However, beyond infrastructure development, the new Indian government will need to focus on defense acquisition for its military to continue combating parity with China.

### **Decoding the role of Chinese Military Companies operating with the PLA Information Support Force (ISF): A Comprehensive Analysis of the Major Military Companies**

05 June 2024, Usanas Foundation, Tenzin Younten and Tenzin Sherap

The establishment of the PLA's Information Support Force (ISF) has significantly reshaped China's military-industrial complex, driving major Chinese military companies to the forefront of military informatization and Information Warfare. This paper delves into the critical roles of these companies within the PLA ISF's operational framework and their contributions to the development of an advanced, integrated military information network system capable of supporting China's strategic objectives in future warfare.

On April 19, the historic establishment of the PLA's Information Support Force (ISF) marked a new era in China's military Modernization, Informatization, and Intelligentization efforts.

The move, part of a broader military reform aimed at the rapid development of a highly informatized force, had an immediate and massive impact on Chinese military companies. These companies, key players in coordinating the construction and application of the military network information system, have seen a significant surge in their stock prices, reflecting their integral role in the nation's defense industrial base.

More than a month has passed since the PLA's last reform. The newly formed PLA ISF is poised to streamline and integrate key companies in the Military communication and information technology sectors, fostering enhanced coordination and a unified approach to military informatization and information warfare. Notably, there were four major impacts of the PLA ISF's establishment on China's Military Industrial complex:

1. The pivotal role of the Chinese military companies in the formation and operationalization of PLA ISF.
2. The Chinese companies engaged with the PLA ISF are poised to play a greater role in advancing the military informatization and building of the PLA's network information system.
3. PLA ISF is expected to drive rapid growth in military companies, particularly those within the information and technology sectors.

4. Creation of new employment opportunities for Chinese youths in the Military.

As published on the China Energy Network on May 21, 2024, Minsheng Securities released a research report on the computer industry, which pointed out that the military industry is facing a major turning point in military informatization and resonates with the four major impacts.

On May 22, Yuncaijing (云财经网), a leading financial trading research platform in China, reported a significant stock rise of industries within the military sector especially in the information and technology sectors following the PLA ISF's formation. The stocks of China's military industry giant including Jian Hi-Tech (300845), Guanxiang Technology (301213), Gaoling Information (688175), Guangha Communications (300711), Gaomeng New Materials (300200), Shipbuilding Emergency (300527) among many others all rose by a 20 percent. Simultaneously, many other industry giants such as Beijing Andawell Technology Co., Ltd, T(300581), Tianhe Defense (300397), Torch Electronic (603678), and Andaville(300719) stock experienced a 10 percent increase.

Other significant military companies recording stock rise include Zhongbing Red Arrow Co., Ltd. (000519), Fenghuo Electronics (000561), Aerospace Changfeng (600855), and Tianjin 712 Communication & Broadcasting Co Ltd (603712). This stock increase highlights investor confidence in the strategic importance and future profitability of companies aligned with the PLA ISF. By China's 7.2 percent increased defense budget announced this year, Zhiyan Consulting's forecast stated that China's expenditure for military information network-related companies is expected to exceed 250 billion yuan in 2025, and its total market size will exceed 160 billion yuan by 2027.

This document offers a comprehensive analysis of more than 70 prominent Chinese defense companies believed to be operating in cooperation with or under the PLA's Information Support Force. It outlines their involvement in information procurement, processing, transmission, and security, as well as their role in the production of military electronic components and simulation technologies. The paper is structured into two sections, covering the profiles of Chinese defense companies operating alongside the PLA's Information Support Force and the potential for substantial job creation in the military information technology sector for Chinese youth in the upcoming years.

Broadly, the recent establishment of the PLA's three new independent arms under a new force structure was a strategic requirement to achieve a fully modernized national defense and military force by 2035 and to become a world-class military by 2049.

The founding of the PLA's Information Support Force and integration of military companies within it adheres to the 2027 benchmark goal of integrated development of the Chinese military through mechanization, informatization, and intelligentization and fielding a combat-ready force with improved strategic capabilities to defend national sovereignty, security, and development interests. (Guangming Daily, 2020)

Chinese Military Companies' alignment with PLA's Information Support Force drives Military Informatization"

With the significant stock rise of key Military industries across China, the Chinese information and technological companies are steadfast to play a major role in the newly formed PLA ISF.

The wave of mergers and alignment of Chinese military industries with the PLA ISF is evident by their role in the construction and development of the military information network system and their subsequent contributions to the PLA ISF's operational framework. Some companies like Zhimingda (智明达), and Fenghuo Electronics (烽火电子) have made such connections more noticeable. On May 17, Zhimingda (688636.SH) stated on an investor platform, "The information support force is a relatively new military branch, and equipment in this field is being planned, and the company will actively participate in it". Similarly, On May 16, Fenghuo Electronics shared "the establishment of the information support force provides the company with opportunities to participate in the informatization construction of the army. The company will continue to promote business development and contribute more to the informatization of the army".

In recent years, under Xi's Central Military Commission and the Central Commission for Military-Civilian Fusion Development, China has systematically reorganized its science and technology enterprises to ensure that new innovations simultaneously advance economic and military development. With the recent strategic overhaul of PLA, the Chinese Military or Civilian companies in the domain of information and technology will operate directly or indirectly under the Chinese Information Support Force (ISF), making significant strides towards creating a world-class Informatized Military. Chinese President Xi Jinping called for the PLA to create a highly informatized force capable of dominating all networks and expanding the country's security and development interests. It is increasingly clear that Chinese military companies are leading the charge toward creating the PLA's Information Network System, also known as the "operational system of systems", enabling the PLA to acquire, transmit, process, and use information during a conflict to conduct

integrated joint military operations across the ground, maritime, air, space, cyberspace, and electromagnetic spectrum domains.

According to the People's Liberation Army Daily, Military Informatization refers to the continuous development process of widespread use of information technology in all fields of military construction based on mechanization. This includes building information networks and information systems, extensive acquisition, in-depth development and sharing of information resources, and promoting the overall transformation of the military.

Breakdown of major Chinese military companies operating within the PLA ISF's operational framework On the founding day of PLA ISF, President Xi Jinping underscored the significance of this new strategic branch of the military as a key pillar in coordinating the construction and application of the network information system.

As PLA ISF accelerates the process of military informatization and integration of all PLA four Service Branches and four independent Arms through the network information system to meet the needs to win future wars. China continues to prioritize C4I modernization (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, and Intelligence) that emphasizes the importance of rapid information collection, processing, and sharing and accelerated decision-making. Unlike the shadowy Strategic Support Force, PLA ISF aims to foster more effective coordination with its aligned industries by providing a clear and concise operational framework that is geared towards expediting the military informatization process and fortifying China's Information Warfare and Multi-Domain Precision Warfare (MDPW: 多域精确战) capabilities anchored in C4ISR.

In essence, the core objective of the newly formed PLA ISF is to construct the PLA's network information system sometimes called the "operational system of systems" through rapid military informatizations efforts. On May 4, PLA daily news commenting on the PLA ISF characterized Modern warfare as a confrontation or contest between systems, emphasizing the criticality of information warfare capabilities. The extensive lists of more than 70 military companies (not conclusive) supporting the core operations of the PLA Information Support Forces and the development of an integrated Military Network System across 6 different domains included:

1. Information Acquisition : 29 Major Military Companies working in this domain are manufacturers of Sonar, Infrared radiation, Radar, and Satellite, which are vital to the PLA ISF's information acquisition operations. These products have military applications spanning military detection, defense, attacks,

navigation, command and control system, and more.

2. Information Transmission: 15 major military companies support military information transmission, specializing in wireless communication, Broadband communication, and Quantum communication technologies.
3. Information Processing: 11 military companies support the information processing operations of the PLA's Information Support Force, encompassing Command and dispatch, data storage, and data management systems, forming the backbone for integrated joint military operations.
4. Information Security: 7 major companies contribute largely to the information security operations, specializing in quantum cryptography, software development, and Electronic pairing to protect military information and communication assets.
5. Military Electronic Components: 6 major military companies listed below are manufacturers of the Multilayer Chip Ceramic Capacitors, Tantalum capacitors, and other critical components used in electronic equipment and systems of the PLA ISF and the military.
6. Military Simulation: In 2020, the market size of China's military simulation industry was approximately 11.852 billion yuan, and it is expected that the industry market size will exceed 20 billion yuan by 2027. The three military companies listed are core providers of military simulation technologies, crucial to the military informatization operations undertaken by the PLA ISF.

In alignment with their increasing importance to the PLA ISF, the list of 72 major military companies under the PLA ISF has recorded a massive boost in investment and stock value in varying degrees.

Table 1 : Major Military or "Military-Civil fusion" Companies operating within PLA Information Support Force's Operational framework.

Source: This table is collated, translated and analyzed by the authors from Chinese sources including announcements, news, official statements, research analysis and reports.

Creation of new job opportunities for Chinese youths in the Military

After the People's Liberation Army (PLA) implemented its latest reform on April 19, one of the predominant topics of public discussion in China was the potential for significant job opportunities for Chinese youths in the forthcoming years. The focus of these opportunities is expected to center around

education and employment in the fields of cybersecurity, information technology, and aerospace.

The establishment of new independent arms such as the Information Support Force (PLA ISF), Military Aerospace Force (PLA MAF), and Cyber Force (PLACF) within a new force structure has led to the creation of more positions in PLA for the civilian to join as a military servicemen or either as civilian personnel. A major change in the PLA's civilian recruitment is inevitable. A Chinese news article on 28th April mentioned that "in the 2025 civilian recruitment positions to be released in October this year, we will also see a large number of new or expanded positions in the three types of units: military aerospace forces, cyberspace forces, and information support forces". Similarly, another News article in China reiterated that 2025 military civilian recruitment is expected to be the year with the largest number of recruitments and positions in recent years.

#### Conclusion

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) has a history of relying on both Military and Civilian companies in the information and technology sectors, in particular, their use in C4I (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, and Intelligence) operations and building joint combat capabilities. The alignment of over 70 major military companies within the PLA ISF's operational framework underscores their critical role in constructing and application of an integrated, highly informatized military network information system.

The Chinese military companies operating under the control of the People's Liberation Army's Informationization Support Force (PLA ISF) are a fundamental element of China's plan to attain a fully modernized military by 2035 and a globally competitive military by 2049. The ongoing advancement and assimilation of cutting-edge information technologies will play a critical role in achieving these strategic objectives, ensuring that China maintains a leading position in the realm of "information warfare".

#### China is Erasing the Memory of the Tiananmen Massacre. We Can't Let Them.

04 June 2024, US News, Sophie Richardson

It's long past time to hold Beijing accountable for human rights violations.

The woman's voice cracks as she calls for the souls of the dead to rest in peace. More than three decades since their loved ones were killed by Chinese security forces in the Tiananmen Square massacre of June 4,



1989, family members vowed in a recording last week to press on “until the day of justice arrives.”

On the 35th anniversary of the fatal crackdown on unarmed protesters, Chinese president and Communist Party leader Xi Jinping has silenced discussion in China of what happened in 1989. We can’t let him silence us too.

We must remember the students, workers, journalists and others who gathered peacefully in Beijing at a moment of political fluidity in April 1989, demanding free speech, economic reform, greater liberties and an end to corruption. As the protests grew, the government imposed martial law the following month. When protesters didn’t disperse, authorities killed hundreds or perhaps thousands of unarmed citizens in Beijing and other cities. We don’t know exact numbers because China suppressed them, hiding the death toll and scope of the nationwide crackdown.

Chinese leaders have had 35 years to face up to the past. Yet they steadfastly refuse to do so, presumably fearing that truth and accountability for Tiananmen – and for so many other violations of Chinese citizens’ basic human rights – will threaten their iron grip on power.

Unfortunately, democratic nations – including the United States – have allowed China’s economic and strategic importance on the world stage to take precedence, enabling impunity for the crimes of Tiananmen by failing to impose meaningful consequences on the Chinese government.

Issuing statements commemorating the crackdown, as the U.S. and others have done in the past, is a symbolic but insufficient gesture. China’s leaders have committed even worse human rights violations in the years since Tiananmen, including genocide against the minority Uighurs in western China, in part because they face few to no domestic or international consequences for doing so. Democracies need to demand the release of those wrongfully detained in China, and accountability for China’s crimes against humanity. One option would be establishing international tribunals to investigate these crimes.

There are 27 Chinese citizens serving sentences or under detention in mainland China and Hong Kong for their involvement in the protests or commemoration of 1989, according to the global Network of Chinese Human Rights Defenders; three other Tiananmen veterans were “persecuted to death” by authorities, including 2010 Nobel Peace laureate Liu Xiaobo.

In Hong Kong, once an island of free expression, 1 million people gathered in Victoria Park 35 years ago to protest the crackdown. For decades, tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of Hongkongers marked the event in an annual candlelight vigil at

Victoria Park – until those events were banned in 2020.

Xi’s efforts to control past, current and future critiques of the government aren’t limited to June 4, or confined to the country’s borders. When years of China’s draconian “zero-COVID” controls prompted peaceful protests in China, authorities squashed dissent. Peng Lifa, who hung a banner on a bridge in Beijing calling for an end to the lockdown and for democracy, was taken by police in October 2022 and hasn’t been heard from since. Other protesters held up blank pieces of paper across China in November 2022, but they too were persecuted and references to their efforts were censored.

Increasingly, commemorations of June 4 and other Chinese government assaults on human rights take place outside China. People will gather this year from Toronto to Tokyo. In Hong Kong, courageous individuals have attempted private remembrances or public acts, including publishing a newspaper with a blank front page ahead of June 4. As Beijing increasingly seeks to silence Chinese overseas, those who join these gatherings must be wary of state surveillance. At a Tiananmen commemoration in California last week, organizers obscured some participants’ identities, fearful of reprisals against those people and their family members still in China.

Even as Xi increases repression domestically and internationally, the Tiananmen Mothers have called for transparency and accountability regarding June 4, and for Chinese authorities to respect the rule of law.

The mothers’ photos of their children who died in 1989 are now faded, but they reflect the spirit of people inside and outside China bravely demanding respect for their human rights. Their actions should galvanize leaders of democracies into action. Even one more year of impunity for the Chinese Communist Party will have devastating consequences for human rights.

### **#9 Unlocking Tibet: In-Depth Mapping of Transport Infrastructure Through Geo-Spatial Analysis**

04 June 2024, Takshashila Geospatial Bulletin, Dr. Nithiyanandam Yogeswaran

#### **The Backstory**

China's ongoing efforts to overcome the significant barriers that impede movement between the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and other Chinese provinces are part of larger strategic goals. These barriers, including surging rivers, rugged mountain terrain, fragile ecosystems, and extreme climatic conditions, have been a part of Tibet's landscape for

centuries. The year 1959 marked a significant shift when the transportation of supplies from provinces like Yunnan, Sichuan, and Qinghai heavily relied on humans and livestock. Since then, Tibet's transport infrastructure has seen substantial growth. The total road network in TAR, which was 7,300 km in 1959, expanded to 120,000 km by 2021, a growth of 1543%. This development includes major highways that connect cities, towns, and rural areas within TAR. The integration of Tibet into the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2016, a global infrastructure development strategy, has further accelerated this infrastructure growth, profoundly transforming TAR's social and economic landscape.

Despite its sparsely populated mountainous terrain, constructing rail lines in Tibet has been a strategic imperative for China. The inauguration of Tibet's first rail line, the Qinghai-Tibet Railway, in 2006 was a significant milestone. This strategic vision is evident in that by 2020, Tibet will have only about 800 km of railway, a length comparable to that of Shanghai, despite Tibet being approximately 200 times larger in land area. However, this scenario is beginning to change. In 2021, China launched Tibet's first high-speed rail line, connecting the regional capital Lhasa with Nyingchi. This line significantly enhances the capability to transport civilians swiftly, as well as PLA troops and equipment, across the eastern part of Tibet, thereby bolstering China's logistical capabilities. The implications of these developments are underscored by notable railroads such as Qinghai-Tibet (2000 km) and Sichuan-Tibet Railway, which connects Tibet externally; meanwhile, Lhasa-Shigatse (253 km) and Lhasa-Nyingchi (435 km) are the major rail projects that network internally within Tibet, underscoring the importance of Tibet's transport infrastructure.

As per literature, in recent years, air infrastructure has been significantly enhanced alongside the expansion of road and rail networks. Between 2017 and 2022, five airports were upgraded, and four new airports were established. Additionally, nine heliports became operational, further strengthening the region's air connectivity.

Why it is essential to understand transport infrastructure?

Studying the expansion of roads and other transportation networks in Tibet is essential for India. Firstly, enhanced connectivity in TAR can significantly impact regional trade dynamics, facilitating faster and more efficient movement of goods between China and South Asia. The development of robust transport infrastructure in Tibet enhances China's logistical capabilities, affecting the strategic balance in the region. Improved roads and railways mean quicker mobilisation of military assets, a critical consideration for India given the long-standing

border disputes with China. Moreover, the environmental impacts of such infrastructure projects are significant. The fragile ecosystem of the Tibetan plateau, with its unique biodiversity and delicate balance, is susceptible to disturbances from large-scale construction activities. Understanding the environmental repercussions of these developments is vital for India, particularly concerning transboundary river systems originating in Tibet, which are lifelines for millions in South Asia. Lastly, the socio-economic transformation of Tibet, driven by improved infrastructure, can lead to demographic shifts and altered socio-political dynamics in the region, influencing Tibet's stability and potentially affecting neighbouring areas, including India. Therefore, a comprehensive study of the transportation network expansion in Tibet offers valuable insights into the broader implications for trade, security, environmental sustainability, and regional stability, all of which are paramount to India.

Road Infrastructure of Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR)

It is well-established that road infrastructure is crucial for various aspects, including a region's economic development. Figures 2 and 3 clearly illustrate that road networks have significantly expanded. When comparing maps from the pre-independence era to those of the present day, it is evident that the networks have rapidly extended both in length and breadth. This article will further explore whether this growth has primarily been in significant roads or if there has been a more extensive development of minor networks in the region.

Refer to Figure 2, which illustrates both minor and major roads. Specifically, the various categories of roads are detailed, with trunk and other significant roads depicted by blue lines. These trunk roads connect significant towns and critical areas along the border. Additionally, the figure shows minor roads, including tertiary and secondary roads extending across small villages and remote posts situated in regions closer to the border, remote villages in the valley, and rugged mountains.

While minor roads are crucial for last-mile connectivity, developing major roads is essential for significant progress. Let's delve into this topic through the maps (Figure 4 & 5). The maps illustrate the network of substantial roads established over the past few years. The total length of highways in Tibet spans close to 18,000 km. Among these, the G318, the longest highway in Tibet, connects Shanghai to Tibet. Other significant highways include G109, G219, G214, and the Sino-Nepal Friendship Highway (also part of G318). The connectivity of these highways is detailed in Figure 4.

In addition to the major trunk roads, the trunk link roads play a crucial role in connecting the primary

arteries with various regions. These can be considered secondary roads within the area, collectively spanning close to 14,000 kilometres across some of the most challenging terrains in the world. Different forms of minor roads extend further from these secondary roads, reaching villages and remote areas. Refer to Figure 5, which illustrates the significant and primary highway links. The types of roads are asphalt, concrete, gravel, paved, unpaved, and dirt.

#### Rail Network Infrastructure in Tibet

In late 1999, while other engineers were still figuring out how to make it work, Zhang Luxin, a renowned engineer with extensive experience in railway construction, proposed a new plan. His idea involved following the plateaus that stretch for hundreds of miles. Although the plateau is flat, it is situated at a high altitude and subjected to harsh weather and melting permafrost, making it a challenging route. Zhang argued that it is the best route because it has been used for other purposes. Since the 1970s, this path has been used for an oil pipeline and the route of the Qinghai-Tibet Highway. Many doubted Zhang's plan, believing workers could not survive the high altitudes. More than 644 kilometres of the railway would be built on permafrost, which remains frozen throughout the year. Some considered the technology for building on permafrost too new and risky. However, Zhang persuaded them that it was feasible. Officials approved the route from Golmud to Lhasa, and construction began. This project became one of the most challenging railway lines ever built, high up in the mountains. Today, we see numerous high-speed railways and long tunnels constructed with cutting-edge technology.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) includes several projects in Tibet that are also aimed at enhancing connectivity between China, Nepal, and Bhutan. Central to this effort is the development of the Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network. This network includes infrastructure projects such as the railway extension towards the Nepalese border at Gyirong, which aims to connect with the planned Kathmandu-Kerung railway. These rail and road links are expected to facilitate trade and transit between Tibet and Nepal, promoting economic integration and regional cooperation. Additionally, there are discussions about extending road connectivity from Tibet to Bhutan, which would further enhance regional connectivity under the BRI framework. These projects are part of China's broader strategy to strengthen economic ties and enhance logistical links in South Asia through Tibet.

The Tibet railway network, notably the Qinghai-Tibet Railway and its extensions, is both a challenging and impressive feat due to several unique factors. The

railway traverses some of the world's highest and most inhospitable terrains, with sections reaching over 5,000 metres, presenting significant engineering and human health challenges, such as altitude sickness and extreme weather conditions, including sub-zero temperatures and strong winds. Much of the railway is built on permafrost, requiring innovative engineering solutions to ensure stability, such as laying tracks on thick layers of rock and concrete to prevent the permafrost from melting and destabilising the tracks. Constructing the railway in a fragile ecosystem requires careful planning to minimise environmental impact. This includes building bridges over animal migration paths and using unique materials to reduce soil erosion. Transporting materials and machinery to such remote and high-altitude locations posed significant logistical challenges, and the workforce had to endure difficult living conditions. Ensuring a continuous supply of necessary materials was complex.

Despite these challenges, the Qinghai-Tibet Railway, completed in 2006, is a remarkable engineering achievement. It includes the Tanggula Pass, the world's highest railway pass at 5,072 metres, and the Fenghuoshan Tunnel, the highest railway tunnel in the world. Advanced technologies were employed to address the challenges of building on permafrost and high altitudes, such as cooling pipes and insulation layers to stabilise the ground and pressurised train cabins to ensure passenger comfort at high altitudes. The railway has significantly boosted the economy of Tibet, facilitating the transport of goods and people, improving access to remote areas, promoting tourism, and providing better connectivity for local populations. The extension of the railway network towards Nepal and potentially Bhutan demonstrates China's commitment to regional connectivity under the Belt and Road Initiative, aiming to enhance trade and economic integration between China and its South Asian neighbours.

#### Air Infrastructure of Tibet Autonomous Region

Air infrastructure is vital in Tibet, overcoming significant geographical and topographical challenges, including high altitudes, mountainous terrain, and harsh weather conditions that make ground transportation difficult. It provides a reliable alternative for moving people and goods efficiently, boosting tourism and facilitating trade. Strategically, air connectivity allows for the rapid deployment of troops and supplies, which is essential for border security. It also enhances accessibility to remote areas, ensuring the delivery of essential services and promoting cultural exchange and integration. Key airports like Lhasa Gonggar and investments from initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) are central to these efforts, highlighting air travel's

crucial role in Tibet's economic and social development.

The air infrastructure in Tibet has significantly improved over the years. Several old airports have been renewed, and new airstrips are being constructed. Additionally, many shorter airstrips and heliports have been strengthened.

In our previous research, we covered some of these developments. However, in this edition, we have found that the infrastructure has grown even more. For instance, the number of airstrips has increased from 9 to 13 in the last two years. Existing literature on the topic identified nine airstrips till 2022. Meanwhile, our current study has identified 13. The number of functional and non-functional helipads identified through open-source intelligence is significantly higher than previous research in the public domain.

As stated in earlier research, most airports and airstrips in the Region serve dual purposes, catering to tourism and civilian movement within the country and acting as military bases for the PLA's Air Force. Although the capacity for military operations at these airstrips is unclear, Tibet has several functional civilian airports, with Lhasa Gonggar International Airport being the largest and most important. Lhasa Gonggar Airport has a significant capacity to handle 9 million passengers annually. The airport's Terminal 3, which opened in 2021, contributes significantly to this capacity with 21 additional boarding gates and extensive facilities designed to accommodate high passenger volumes. Other notable airports in Tibet include Nyingchi Mainling Airport, Shigatse Peace Airport, Ngari Gunsa Airport, and Qamdo Bangda Airport. These airports form a network facilitating domestic and limited international travel, primarily connecting to major Chinese cities and Kathmandu in Nepal.

Overall connectivity: transportation nexus

Integrating Tibet's Road, air, and rail infrastructure creates a transformative nexus that significantly impacts tourism, economic activities, and military logistics. This comprehensive transportation network facilitates greater accessibility, enabling a surge in tourism by connecting remote areas with significant cities and international destinations. For instance, the Qinghai-Tibet Railway and newly expanded air routes have improved connectivity, boosted the number of tourists and contributed to the local economy.

Furthermore, the development of these infrastructures supports large-scale economic projects and civilian activities by enhancing the flow of goods and services, which is vital for Tibet's economic growth. The railways and highways, such as the Qinghai-Tibet and Sichuan-Tibet Highways, play a critical role

in the movement of both civilian and military personnel, underscoring their importance.

Overall, the enhanced transportation infrastructure in Tibet fosters regional economic development and tourism and strengthens the military's logistical capabilities, contributing to the area's stability and significance.

Nexus between Transportation network and PLA presence

Figures 10 and 11 illustrate the strategic distribution and connectivity of major PLA bases in Tibet. Figure 12 depicts the locations of these bases across the region, while Figure 13 highlights the comprehensive network of road, railway, and air infrastructures connecting them. This map underscores how transport infrastructures are designed with dual purposes, serving both civilian needs and military operations.

Settlement infrastructure and road connectivity

Figure 12 shows the distribution of major cities, small and medium towns, and villages within the Tibetan region. Some of these settlements are close to the borders shared with India and Bhutan.

Figure 13 highlights the connectivity of these settlements to major roads. This visualisation specifically showcases the significant roads, indicating a well-established network. It is important to note that this network includes paved and unpaved minor roads, serving multiple purposes. These minor roads provide crucial last-mile connectivity, linking remote posts and villages to the broader transportation system.

The complexity of the terrain

Tibet's terrain is complex, with vast plateaus, towering mountain ranges, and dramatic altitude variations, posing challenges for infrastructure development. The 3D map of Tibet Autonomous Region and other vital prefectures follows:

The maps (1414-18) show how challenging it is to find flat land for development in Tibet due to its rugged terrain. Few flat areas are suitable for construction, making land availability a significant challenge. Despite these obstacles, essential infrastructure projects, especially transportation, have been successfully established in the region. The images illustrate how even the most minor pieces of land are creatively used for various purposes, highlighting the region's resourcefulness in overcoming geographical constraints to develop essential infrastructure. This reflects the difficulties and achievements in adapting to Tibet's unique environment.

Tunnels and culverts in the complex terrain

In our study, we have mapped the locations of over 400 culverts and more than 600 spatial segments of tunnels in the region. The culverts are built primarily to allow water and debris passage over canals,

rivers, streams, and ditches. On the other hand, the tunnels are designed specifically for road and railway systems, forming integral components of transportation networks. Tunnels and culverts are essential for ensuring the efficient use of transportation infrastructure under all weather conditions. Additionally, the tunnels reduce travel times and improve access to strategically important areas, offering economic or military advantages.

Culverts play a critical role in maintaining transportation routes' structural integrity and functionality by preventing water accumulation and erosion, thereby mitigating potential damage to the infrastructure. Meanwhile, tunnels facilitate seamless traffic flow through challenging terrains, such as mountains and hills, enhancing connectivity and accessibility. This improved connectivity supports economic activities by providing quicker routes for transporting goods and services. It enhances the mobility of military forces, ensuring rapid deployment and logistical support in critical areas. Integrating these infrastructural elements demonstrates a sophisticated approach to overcoming geographical challenges and optimising the transportation network for multifaceted benefits.

#### Parting shot

The insights shared in this edition aim to provide foundational spatial information about the transport infrastructure of the Tibet Autonomous Region, showcasing its readiness for economic expansion, resource utilisation, and military fortification compared to neighbouring areas. The focus has been mapping the various types of existing infrastructure and the inherent complexities of Tibet's unique and challenging terrain.

This analysis highlights the significant progress made in constructing roads, railways, and air links in one of the world's most challenging regions. The vast plateaus and towering mountain ranges necessitate specialised construction techniques and meticulous planning. Developing such infrastructure is a technical achievement and a necessity, enhancing connectivity and fulfilling civilian and military needs.

Our research extends beyond this initial study. We are delving deeper into the remote sensing of infrastructure and the engineering methods employed in Tibet's transport systems. Understanding the composition and resilience of the materials used is crucial for assessing these constructions' long-term sustainability and durability in harsh environmental conditions.

Moreover, future editions will comprehensively analyse key transport hubs and their evolution. This will include detailed studies of major highways, railway lines, and airports, examining how their development has impacted regional growth and security dynamics. By mapping these elements, we

aim to provide a holistic view of how transport infrastructure supports broader socio-economic and strategic goals.

## INSTIGATION OF REBELLIONS IN TIBET

03 June 2024, Geopolitika, Shane Quinn

The land area called Tibet, in south-western China, is a vast and strategically important part of the Chinese nation, resting on the borders of India, Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar. The size of Tibet, if including most of the sparsely inhabited Tibetan Plateau as part of its territory, amounts to 970,000 square miles which is almost 4 times bigger than France.

The Chinese authorities, however, recognise the part of Tibet located on the western side of the plateau, and in 1965 the area was formally established as the Tibet Autonomous Region by Beijing. The Tibet Autonomous Region consists of 472,000 square miles which is still much larger than nearly every European country.

Tibet is the highest region on earth with an average altitude above sea level of nearly 4,400 metres. The overall temperature in winter remains below freezing. In the winter of 2018/2019, the coldest in Tibet for two decades, the average temperature was minus 4.3 degrees Celsius which was almost half a degree lower than in usual years.

Many Tibetans live outside of cities and towns. Sixty-nine percent of inhabitants in the central part of the Tibet Autonomous Region were living in rural areas by 2017. There they have farmed yaks and sheep on the high altitude, semi-arid grasslands and valleys, while they grow crops such as barley.

With the introduction by Beijing of healthcare programmes in Tibet since 1951, the average life expectancy of Tibetan residents has grown significantly. At the start of 2020 the typical life expectancy in Tibet was 70.6 years, whereas in 1950 it had only been 35.5 years. Because of its elevation and challenging land, the population of the Tibet Autonomous Region in 2022 consisted of a still modest 3.64 million people; but this is a population increase of around 15 percent since 2012.

Asia's biggest rivers can be traced to Tibet such as the Yangtze, the Mekong, and the Yellow, which are a vital water source for many people living in nations like China, India, Pakistan and Thailand.

In modern history Tibet was reintegrated to China just over 300 years ago. The Qing dynasty of China assumed control over the region in 1720, when Chinese soldiers that year defeated and expelled the Mongol forces of the Dzungar Khanate from Tibet. Yet the history of Tibet as being part of China dates much further back, to the mid-13th century, when the region was incorporated to China under the Yuan dynasty. China's authorities have strongly argued



that Tibet continued to be a Chinese territory during the Ming dynasty which lasted until 1644.

Over elapsing centuries one of the greatest challenges to China's control over Tibet occurred during the 1950s and 1960s, in the immediate years after the successful culmination of the Chinese revolution in 1949. The revolution re-established China's independence after many years of meddling in the country by the Western powers, such as from the United States.

After 1948 the US had "lost China to communism" and policies were undertaken in Washington to reinstate their authority over China, with territories like Tibet identified as target areas. The CIA and to a lesser extent the US military helped to instigate anti-Chinese insurrections in Tibet, such as occurred from 1956 in the Kham and Amdo areas in the eastern part of the Tibetan Plateau.

The CIA directly intervened in Tibet and following 1956 went so far as to fly hundreds of Tibetan militants to the US, where they underwent training by CIA personnel at a facility in the state of Colorado. This military training centre, called Camp Hale, was built for US mountain troops in 1942 and was positioned high up the Rocky Mountains. In the latter stages of World War II, some Wehrmacht troops captured by the US Army in North Africa were sent to Camp Hale where they were kept prisoner.

After completion of training at Camp Hale the "Tibetan freedom fighters" were flown in planes belonging to a CIA airline, called the Intermountain Aviation and Intermountain Airways, and also by the US Air Force, to a secret base for operations against China constructed in the town of Aspen, a Colorado skiing hotspot.

The failed 1959 rebellion in Tibet against Beijing's authority was most heavily encouraged by Washington. As early as May 1957 armed Tibetan groups were created with CIA support. The following year (June 1958) an anti-Chinese guerrilla army, the Chushi Gangdruk Volunteer Defense Force, was established and its members were subsequently armed and trained by the Americans. The 1959 rebellion was supported not only by the CIA but by intelligence agents from India and Nepal, countries that were staunch US allies at the time.

The 14th Dalai Lama, an influential religious leader who is alive today, managed to evade Chinese government troops in March 1959 during the insurrection. Through wearing a disguise, on 17 March he fled Tibet southwards to India having been escorted to the border by CIA-trained Tibetan militants. Beijing's soldiers were understandably enraged when they discovered the Dalai Lama was nowhere to be seen.

The Dalai Lama's older brother, Gyalo Thondup, also still living, had a leading role in the 1959 revolt.

Thondup was in contact with the Americans for years. He had visited Washington in 1951 and provided intelligence details and local knowledge about Tibet to senior American officials.

Thondup insisted the Dalai Lama was not told about CIA assistance to the Tibetans which is obviously untrue. US State Department documents, released in August 1998, outlined that the Dalai Lama himself received from the CIA \$180,000 every year from the late 1950s to 1974. This means the Dalai Lama was already being furnished with large amounts of American money at the time of the 1959 rebellion. The sum of \$180,000 in 1959 is currently worth almost \$2 million.

The Dalai Lama was previously receiving a financial allowance from the CIA dating to at least the early 1950s, and maybe as far back as 1949, at the end of the revolution. The CIA budget, relating to Tibet, was multiple times larger than the funds that were allocated for the British and US-led coup against the Iranian government of Mohammad Mossadegh in 1953.

The Dalai Lama has backed the unification of separatist groups in Tibet, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia, with the ultimate aim of these Chinese regions seceding altogether from China. The Dalai Lama said, "Geography, history and currently Chinese occupation is connecting our three peoples. I remain optimistic that the true aspirations of the peoples of East Turkestan [Xinjiang], Inner Mongolia and Tibet will be fulfilled in a not too distant future".

American media later acknowledged the covert CIA training of Tibetan militants in Colorado. The CIA was also involved in funding "Tibet Houses" in cities like New York and Geneva, while the CIA's budget extended to providing "educational opportunities" to Tibetans at Cornell University in New York, and supplying the insurgents with military equipment.

On 6 January 1960 for example, unmarked CIA aircraft flying over Tibet dropped to the militants below 650 pallets containing weapons, medical supplies, and food. In the weeks before that, CIA planes had dropped military hardware such as hundreds of American M1 Garand rifles, grenades, mortars, and machine guns.

Two more CIA air drops consisted of a further 1,170 M1 Garand rifles, 200 cases of ammunition for the rifles, and 20 cases of grenades. The M1 Garand was the firearm most commonly used by the US Army in World War II and the Korean War, but by 1957 the rifle was considered obsolete by the Americans.

Another CIA air drop in early 1960 amounting to 430 pallets, which contained weapons and other supplies, was sent to 4,000 Tibetan insurgents below. Their position was identified by China's military pilots and heavily bombed. Occasionally, Chinese

warplanes dropped leaflets ordering the militants to surrender and to ignore the Americans.

The Chinese aircraft often attacked enemy positions in the morning, at about noon, and then at around 3 pm or 4 pm. Fifteen warplanes would arrive in groups of five with each carrying between 15 to 20 bombs. Once the enemy forces were located, it was not a hard task for China's pilots to execute their combat mission. Across the Tibetan Plateau there is scarcely any cover in which to conceal men and equipment. For the Chinese airmen the most difficult job was finding the enemy due to the vastness of the land.

According to a retired CIA officer living in the eastern United States, the Americans wanted to inflict injury on the Chinese in Tibet, and were aware they would be unlikely to drive Beijing's divisions out of the area.

Tibetan guerrilla forces, with logistical support provided by the US, attacked China's lengthy supply lines in Tibet and attempted to tie down Chinese soldiers and make life difficult for them. These attacks, although they inflicted damage, could not succeed over time because of the greater size of China's military; and the fact that, compared to the enemy, Beijing's troops were also better equipped and had advanced weapons like the Chinese Type 56 assault rifle, which was first produced in 1956.

Control over the Tibetan Plateau is crucial for China. Robert Barnett, an author who focuses on Tibet, wrote that the Tibetan Plateau from a military viewpoint is important because it is made up of the high ground and central, south and east Asia converge around it.

From the late 1950s CIA training camps were set up in Nepal including close to Pokhara, Nepal's second biggest city, and in the district of Mustang, where Tibetan insurgents were trained by CIA operatives. There were at least 15 camps being used which were spread over Nepal, India, and inside China itself in Tibet.

By using Nepal and India as bases, the Americans were involving those two countries in the conflict against China. In the year 1964, the CIA spent \$500,000 (worth \$5 million today) on the guerrillas in Nepal; \$400,000 (\$4 million today) for the training of Tibetans in Colorado; \$225,000 (\$2.2 million today) on equipment, transportation and expenses; \$185,000 (\$1.8 million today) for flying to India the Tibetans trained in Colorado; \$125,000 (\$1.2 million today) for expenses, equipment and supplies to Tibetan reconnaissance teams, and on the storage of supplies, aircraft refuelling, agents' salaries, and formulation of traineeships for the network of agents in Tibet.

Moreover, the CIA in 1964 spent \$75,000 (\$744,000 today) on maintaining the Tibet Houses in

New York, Geneva, and other cities; \$45,000 (\$446,000 today) on "educational programmes" for 20 Tibetan youths; and the Dalai Lama of course received his annual \$180,000. The Dalai Lama's entourage stressed that he never spent any of the money on himself.

A security guard for the Dalai Lama, Lobsang Tsultrim, said that he was hired by the CIA in 1964 and had no qualms about it. The insurgents could be naive and were often unable to comprehend that the Americans were using them for their own strategic purposes. The Dalai Lama, regardless, admitted that the US military aid was "entirely political" in nature.

At the end of 1962 the Americans were granted access to an airfield beside New Delhi, India's capital city. From this airfield the Tibetan militants were flown to Colorado in groups of 40 or 50 men.

Upon finishing their training in the US they were returned to India by aircraft, and shortly thereafter north to Tibet where they jumped out of the planes and deployed their parachutes. Hundreds of other Tibetan insurgents were flown to the American-held islands of Okinawa and Guam where they received training in guerrilla warfare, and they were then sent back to Tibet to fight against the Chinese forces.

A joint CIA-Indian command centre was set up in New Delhi in the early 1960s, as relations between India and China continued to worsen during this period. The Dalai Lama's brother, Thondup, was forefront in directing US military aid through India's northern region of Darjeeling across the Indian-Chinese border into Tibet.

### India-China Nomenclature War Intensifies In The Himalayas – OpEd

03 June 2024, Eurasia Review, Subir Bhaumik and Pratyusha Mukherjee

India has intensified with China "a silent war" focussed on challenging China's renaming of places in India's Arunachal Pradesh state to strengthen its territorial claim on it.

The Indian Army's information warfare division, backed by celebrated research institutes like the British-era Asiatic Society based in Kolkata, have swung into action to counter the Chinese nomenclature offensive.

Already tweets by the Army have challenged the Chinese renaming of the seven places in Arunachal and efforts are on to put out counter each of 30 odd places renamed by the Chinese.

After a new government takes charge in Delhi, India may rename nearly 30 places in Tibet Autonomous Region of China, military officials said.

The new names will be backed by extensive historical research, they said.

These writers are in possession of the entire list of Tibetan places that India will rename.

"As and when that happens, it will be tantamount to India reopening the Tibetan question. So long India has accepted Tibet as part of China since it was forcibly occupied by Beijing, but now the Modi government seems prepared to change course to deflate the Chinese cartographical and nomenclature aggression," says former Intelligence Bureau officer Benu Ghosh, who served on the LAC for long years and pursued his mountaineering interests simultaneously.

The Indian Army has in recent weeks organised lots of media trips to these disputed border areas and got them to speak to locals who fiercely oppose Chinese claims and say they were always part of India.

"The ultimate target is to push through the Indian counter-narrative on the disputed border through regional and global media, anchored on both solid historical research and local residents voxpops," says an officer involved in the campaign, but did not wish to be identified.

In what is seen as a bid to assert its claim on Arunachal Pradesh, China renamed 30 places along the line of actual control (LAC) in India's northeastern state. The Chinese ministry of civil affairs, responsible for the establishment and naming of administrative divisions, released the fourth list of "standardised" geographical names in Arunachal Pradesh recently, which Beijing calls Zangnan, according to a Hong Kong-based daily.

This is the fourth time China has unilaterally renamed places in Arunachal Pradesh, having done it previously in 2017, 2021 and 2023.

The list of places renamed by China includes 11 residential areas, 12 mountains, four rivers, one lake, one mountain pass and a piece of land. The names have Chinese characters, Tibetan and pinyin, the Roman alphabet version of Mandarin Chinese.

"In accordance with the relevant provisions of the State Council [China's cabinet] on the management of geographical names, we in conjunction with the relevant departments have standardised some of the geographical names in Zangnan of China," South China Morning Post quoted the ministry as saying.

Beijing released the first list of the so-called standardised names of six places in Arunachal Pradesh in 2017, the second list of 15 places in 2021 followed by another list with names for 11 places in 2023.

India has repeatedly rejected China's move to rename places in Arunachal Pradesh, asserting that the state is an integral part of the country and assigning "invented" names does not alter this reality.

In 2023, then external affairs ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said: "We have seen such reports. This is not the first time China has made such an attempt. We reject this outright."

He added, "Arunachal Pradesh is, has been, and will always be an integral and inalienable part of India. Attempts to assign invented names will not alter this reality."

The recent statements by China to reassert its claims over the state started with Beijing lodging a diplomatic protest with India over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Arunachal Pradesh, where he dedicated to the nation the Sela Tunnel built at an altitude of 13,000 feet in Arunachal Pradesh.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on March 23 dismissed China's repeated claims on Arunachal Pradesh as "ludicrous" and that the frontier state was a "natural part of India".

"This is not a new issue. I mean, China has laid claim, it has expanded its claim. The claims are ludicrous to begin with and remain ludicrous today," he said in response to a question on the Arunachal issue after delivering a lecture at the prestigious Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS) of the National University of Singapore (NUS).

"So, I think we've been very clear, very consistent on this. And I think you know that is something which will be part of the boundary discussions which are taking place," he said.

### **Six decades later, scholar locates site of secret CIA-Tibet training camp**

03 June 2024, University of Colorado Boulder, Clint Taibott

Carole McGranahan, a CU Boulder anthropology professor who has long studied the Tibetan perspective of China's invasion and occupation of Tibet, joins the Tibetan community to commemorate the location on June 9 at Camp Hale, Colorado.

For decades, the CIA's training of Tibetan soldiers to fight Chinese invaders was a state secret, but even after the U.S. government formally acknowledged the CIA-Tibet effort, the exact location of the Tibetan camp remained a mystery.

With the dogged research of anthropologist Carole McGranahan, the precise location is now known. McGranahan, a University of Colorado Boulder anthropology professor who's been studying the Tibetan perspective on the resistance to China for more than three decades, will soon join Tibetans from Colorado and beyond to commemorate the camp, six decades after it was closed.

The memorial gathering, which is titled "Dumra/The Secret Garden-Commemorating the CIA-Tibet

Program at Camp Hale," will take place at noon on June 9 at Camp Hale National Monument.

Members of the Tibetan community from around the world and several members of parliament of the Dalai Lama's exile government in India are scheduled to attend, as is one of his cabinet ministers.

McGranahan said finding the training camp's actual location now is meaningful for two reasons. "One is that most of the veterans and retired (CIA) agents have passed," and the other is that the history of the operation had been suppressed and concealed for decades—a condition McGranahan calls "arrested history."

Tibetans, for instance, have been unable to "celebrate and honor these soldiers in a way that they deserved," she said. "This service, not just to Tibet but to the Dalai Lama, was the defining moment of their lives."

For the Tibetan community to know the actual location, she added, "is meaningful in a way that even as a scholar I hadn't fully appreciated."

Fraught history

McGranahan's work adds detail to the history of Tibet and China, which has long been fraught.

In 1949, Mao Zedong won the civil war in China, defeating Chiang Kai-shek. Mao, the first leader of the People's Republic of China, promised to "liberate" Tibet, which was then an independent country headed by the Dalai Lama, the country's political and spiritual leader.

Within a year, the Chinese army invaded Tibet and marched on the capital, Lhasa. For the next decade, the Dalai Lama and Tibet's government sought to negotiate—under military duress—with China. Meanwhile, Tibetan citizens facing Chinese invaders from the east began fighting back.

Initially, they fought with whatever they had from wherever they were. Later, the Tibetans formed a citizens' army called Chushi Gangdrug, whose mission was to defend the Dalai Lama, Tibet and Buddhism.

The Tibetans' resistance caught the attention of the United States. "This is during the Cold War, so this was roughly 1956, and the Tibetans were on their own, fighting communists," McGranahan noted.

The U.S. Department of State got involved, as did, secretly, the CIA, which launched a program to train Tibetan soldiers. That program landed in Colorado in 1958 at Camp Hale, near Vail, Colorado, the widely known training ground of the 10th Mountain Division fighters who served in World War II.

About 300 Tibetan soldiers were trained at Camp Hale from 1959-64. The CIA kept a tight lid on information about the program, and closely guarded entrance to and from the site. The camp closed in

1964, but the CIA continued to support the Tibetan resistance until 1973.

McGranahan began researching the Tibetan resistance in 1993, when she was working on her PhD in history and anthropology at the University of Michigan.

"One of the things I wanted to do was to understand and tell the story of the Tibetan resistance to China from the Tibetan perspective, because in the English language, it had been told almost exclusively as a story about the CIA," McGranahan noted recently. That approach clearly left out the Tibetan perspective, which, "frankly, to me, was more interesting and needed to be told," she said.

In her doctoral research, McGranahan interviewed more than 100 Tibetan veterans, including many who had trained at Camp Hale. She noted that the 300 Tibetans who were trained in Colorado were a small portion of the thousands of fighters in the Tibetan Chushi Gangdrug army.

Though she focused on the Tibetan perspective, she also interviewed about 10 retired CIA officers who had been stationed at Camp Hale. At the time, the CIA operation was still top secret. "Protocol didn't acknowledge the operation," she said. "There was nothing public about it."

That changed on Sept. 10, 2010, when the U.S. government installed a plaque at Camp Hale formally acknowledging that the CIA had trained Tibetan officers there.

One day prior, on Sept. 9, 2010, Duke University Press released McGranahan's book, *Arrested Histories: Tibet, the CIA, and Memories of a Forgotten War*.

The public announcement stemmed from the efforts of Ken Knaus, a retired CIA agent, who enlisted the help of former U.S. Sen. Mark Udall, D-Colo. Together with Roger McCarthy, Knaus had been in charge of the CIA-Tibet operation, and it had been the lifelong mission of both men to tell the story of the operation and to install a plaque at Camp Hale.

Searching for the garden

McGranahan, who describes herself as the group's "resident scholar," joined the dedication ceremony in 2010. After the ceremony, the Tibetan veterans and the CIA officers wanted to find the site of the CIA camp, which CIA officers called "The Ranch" and Tibetans called "Dumra," meaning garden.

But the group's desire to see the Dumra location was thwarted by the fact that the CIA had demolished and obscured any trace of the facilities. "The site was made to look as if nothing had been there," McGranahan observed.

"And to the dismay of the veterans on both sides, they could not find the camp," she added. "The very camp they had lived in, they couldn't find. This was very distressing to everyone."

It's also understandable. Camp Hale encompasses 53,804 acres, and landmarks that were clearly seen six decades ago could easily be obscured.

Last fall, McGranahan contacted a CU alumnus, Tracy Walters, who lives in the Vail Valley and who does a lot of hiking, camping and bike-riding through Camp Hale. She told him the story of the lost CIA training site, and he offered to help.

Using photos of the CIA site from the early 1960s and comparing them with satellite images, Walters determined where he thought the location was.

She and Walters visited the site in February, strapped on snowshoes to navigate the four feet of snow there, "and we snowshoed out, trying to match up the photographs of the camp with the current landscape, basically 60 years later," she said.

McGranahan emailed the photographs of the site, new and old, to the one still-living CIA officer, Bruce Walker, who had been stationed at the camp. "He wrote back immediately, 'Yes, that is the site, and I am the one who took those photographs you're holding up in the picture.'"

It turns out that U.S. Highway 24, which is near the CIA training site, was not heavily used in the early 60s, and the site couldn't be seen from the highway. Also, the CIA agents and Tibetan soldiers entered from Colorado Highway 91, near the Climax molybdenum mine at Fremont Pass.

Having found the location, McGranahan contacted members of Chushi Gangdrug or their descendants, who said, "We need to do a ceremony there." Former agent Walker, now 91, also plans to attend June 9.

McGranahan underscores the significance of identifying the precise location of this chapter of history:

"You can feel the resonance, the poignancy of it, of what it means to be on the place where there was a hope, there was a camaraderie, there was a commitment. Certain aspects of that did come to fruition, certainly the camaraderie, and there's a hope that remains."

China still controls Tibet, but the two groups—CIA agents and Tibetan fighters—remain committed to each other.

The June 9 ceremony is organized by the CU Department of Anthropology and Tibet Himalaya Initiative together with the Colorado Chushi Gangdrug and Vail Symposium. Co-sponsors for the event are the CU Boulder College of Arts and Sciences, the Departments of Communication, Ethnic Studies, Geography, History, Linguistics, Religious Studies and Sociology, the Center for the American West, the Center for Asian Studies, the Institute for Behavioral Science and the Museum of Natural History. It is also co-sponsored by Nova Guides, Polar Star Properties and 10th Mountain Whiskey

Additionally, on June 7 at the Vail Symposium, McGranahan, India-based filmmakers Tenzing Sonam and Ritu Sarin, and retired CIA officer Bruce Walker will present a research talk "Dumra at Camp Hale: The CIA's Tibetan Resistance Program" about the secret CIA training camp for Tibetan resistance soldiers at Camp Hale that operated from 1958-1964.

This presentation is the basis for a book they are co-authoring about Camp Hale's Tibetan history. Their presentation will be live-streamed.

### **With China willing to discuss 'Dalai Lama's future', Tibetan fate hangs in balance**

02 June 2024, FirstPost, Claude Arpi

Beijing has not called Dalai Lama a 'separatist' leader; instead, it has shown interest in discussing his 'personal future'

On May 24, Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed a public meeting in Mandi to support Bollywood actress and BJP candidate Kangana Ranaut. In the course of his speech, he mentioned Tibet, something he rarely does. According to a press release from the PMO, Modi asserted: "The Congress government was so timid that it was afraid to even mention the name of Dalai Lama Ji. I frequently engage in discussions with Dalai Lama Ji. He is a stalwart of our rich heritage. India is the land of Buddha, and the Modi government has been actively promoting this heritage."

The 'frequent discussions' are not in the public domain; we only know that from time to time, a phone call is made from Delhi to Dharamsala on the Dalai Lama's birthday.

This statement, however, raises the issue of Tibet, which seems to have been dormant for years.

The political head of Tibet's government-in-exile, Penpa Tsering, recently visited the United States and Canada. Everywhere, the Sikyong conveyed the urgent situation in Tibet "highlighting China's efforts to eradicate Tibet's distinct culture and identity and assimilate the Tibetan people".

During an encounter with the Tibetan Diaspora, Penpa Tsering noted that the priorities and policies of his government were to enhance the stability and efficiency of departments within the Central Tibetan Administration and implement the Dalai Lama's Middle Way policy.

He admitted that he was in contact with Beijing; according to Firstpost, the Sikyong stated: "We have had back-channel engagement since last year. But we have no immediate expectations from it. It has to be a long-term one." Penpa Tsering, however, insisted that the talks were "very informal".



PTI quoted him, saying, "I have my interlocutor who deals with people in Beijing. Then there are other elements also trying to reach out to us."

Beijing was quick to retort: "[We] will talk only with the representatives of the Dalai Lama and not the officials of the Tibetan government-in-exile."

The positive side was that Beijing did not call the Dalai Lama a separatist and instead said it was ready to discuss his "personal future".

This has been Beijing's position for the past four decades: the discussions can only be about the Dalai Lama's future.

#### The Future

This, however, raises the issue of the future of Tibet and the Tibetan people.

In the early 1980s, the Dalai Lama envisaged a Middle Path approach, probably based on the "One Country, Two Systems" slogan coined by Deng Xiaoping at the end of the 1970s.

The Tibetan leader elaborated his vision for the future in two documents, a Five-Point Peace Plan in 1987 in Washington, DC, and his Strasbourg Proposal in 1988.

The first of the five points was "transformation of the whole of Tibet into a zone of peace", a concept certainly appealing for India; another point was "respect for the Tibetan people's fundamental human rights and democratic freedoms".

The 'Zone of Peace' would soon be dropped, and the riots in Lhasa in 1989 and the subsequent imposition of martial law demonstrated the limits of the second. In his Strasbourg Proposal, the Dalai Lama spoke of "the whole of Tibet known as Cholkasum (U-Tsang, Kham and Amdo) should become a self-governing democratic political entity founded on law by agreement of the people for the common good and the protection of themselves and their environment, in association with the People's Republic of China".

This was before the events of Tiananmen Square; before June 1989, there were probably chances that China could join the concert of democratic nations and be a normal state.

Ten rounds of negotiations took place between the Dalai Lama's representatives (the CTA's representatives have always been banned in Beijing) between 2002 and 2010. This led nowhere.

#### China, a Great Power

Things have changed since then; China has become the second most important economic player in the world, while the situation within the Middle Kingdom has grimly deteriorated since 2012, at least in terms of individual liberty.

Today, after the recent events in Hong Kong and the military threats against the 'renegade island' (Taiwan), 'One Country, Two Systems' cannot be envisioned anymore. This makes the situation in Tibet

(and in Xinjiang, the other Chinese colony) more precarious than ever.

#### Taiwan

In February, a Chinese writer living in exile, Yuan Hongbing, revealed that China planned to use the Kuomintang's (KMT's) influence in Taiwan's legislature to boost its United Front strategy. Yuan said that the information came from a "princeling" (son of a Chinese revolutionary leader) whom Xi Jinping does not dare to challenge. According to Chinascope, a US website carrying information on the Mainland, "the CCP is not just using military intimidation to destabilise Taiwan; it is also using propaganda, the deployment of agents, and the expansion of the KMT's legislative power to override the Taiwanese administration."

Last week, Chinese military spokesperson senior Colonel Wu Qian told a press conference that China's reunification is an irreversible trend in history and that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is ready to take resolute actions to counter any "Taiwan independence".

Soon after Lai Ching-te took charge as Taiwan's president on May 20, the Chinese military warned Taiwan that "independence" would mean "war" and Beijing would thwart any foreign interference in support of "separatist activities" in the democratic-ruled island.

The recent military drills that followed were more to 'scare the chicken' than a rehearsal, as an 'influence' takeover will certainly be less costly and risky for Beijing. Yuan added that "the CCP's Taiwan policy has shifted from coercion and enticement to psychological warfare, aiming to demoralise Taiwanese."

#### Deterioration in Hong Kong

Around the same time, the BBC reported that a court in Hong Kong "found 14 pro-democracy activists guilty of subversion in the largest use yet of a China-imposed National Security Law. They included former lawmakers Leung Kwok-hung and Helena Wong, journalist-turned-campaigner Gwyneth Ho, and ordinary Hong Kongers who joined the mass protests of 2019, such as nurse Winnie Yu".

Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee took Beijing's side and declared that his government will do its "utmost to prevent, suppress, and impose punishment" for any activities "endangering national security".

#### Situation in Tibet

In Tibet, the situation is also rapidly deteriorating. A report by Human Rights Watch (HRW) noted, "Since 2016, the Chinese government has dramatically accelerated the relocation of rural villagers and herders in Tibet. The government says that these relocations—often to areas hundreds of kilometres away—are voluntary." The Chinese rationale was to

“improve people’s livelihoods and protect the ecological environment”.

Using over 1,000 official Chinese media articles between 2016 and 2023, as well as government publications and academic field studies, HRW said that China’s own media reports showed that participation in “whole-village relocation” programmes in Tibet is in fact compulsory. “In one case, 200 households out of 262 in the village did not initially want to relocate to a new location, which was nearly 1,000 kilometres away. In another village scheduled for relocation, all the residents except for a Chinese Communist Party activist initially disagreed with the plan to move the village,” said the report. HRW could not find a single case where a village scheduled for relocation was able to avoid being moved.

What is left of the ‘genuine autonomy’ the Dalai Lama was dreaming of in the 1980s? Probably not much today.

Another Report

The Washington-based International Campaign for Tibet reported in May that the Buddhist Association of China (BAC), a non-political organisation, “is becoming a key instrument in the Chinese Communist Party’s strategy to assimilate and transform Tibetan Buddhism, particularly in relation to the search for and recognition of reincarnate lamas”.

When it speaks of the ‘sinification of Buddhism’, Beijing is obviously thinking of the succession of the Dalai Lama.

Since President Xi Jinping’s announcement of his intent to sinify all the religions in China, the BAC has been “mandated as the tool to implement campaigns that will contribute to its fruition, particularly in connection with Tibetan Buddhism”.

Founded in 1953, the BAC’s charter was amended in 2020 to include “Sinification of Buddhism in China”, one of its objectives in order to “support the leadership of the Communist Party of China and the socialist system, study and implement Xi Jinping’s Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, and adhere to the direction of the Sinification of Buddhism in China”. During the recent Two Sessions held in Beijing in March 2024, Wang Huning, the Party’s chief ideologue, mentioned that the BAC “carried out 10 research and inspections in Tibet, Xinjiang, and Tibet-related counties in Sichuan Province on promoting the sinification of Tibetan Buddhism”.

In the present circumstances, hopes for a better tomorrow are presently limited.

One can only hope that when the Indian prime minister calls the Dalai Lama on July 6 to wish him on his 89th birthday, the Tibetan leader will be able to convince PM Modi that the fates of Tibet and India

are intimately linked, in particular as far as the boundary between them is concerned.

## May

### Modi Mentions Dalai Lama: Anticipation Builds for Possible Meeting

31 May 2024, FNVA, Tenzing Dhamdul

On 1st June 2024, a total of eight states, including the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, will go to the polls as part of the final phase (phase 7) in India’s General Elections. Amidst this, on 24th May, the incumbent Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, joined the Bharatiya Janata Party’s (BJP) campaign in Himachal Pradesh, taking part in a mega rally at Mandi.

In this rally, Narendra Modi stated, “I frequently talk with the Dalai Lama; the Dalai Lama is the being who guides our entire universe,” which, according to some, is an indication that Narendra Modi, may have some positive plans to Tibet with a meeting with His Holiness Dalai Lama seemingly in line. With several exit polls indicating that the BJP and its NDA alliance will once again form the government, some even go as far as mentioning that the incumbent Prime Minister would invite the Dalai Lama for his oath to office ceremony. Tibetans in the past have been invited, with the then Sikyong (President) and Kalon (Minister) of the Tibetan Government in Exile Lobsang Sangay la and Gyari Dolma la both attending the oath to office ceremony of 2014.

Narendra Modi has already met the Dalai Lama when he was the Chief Minister of Gujarat; however, he has yet to meet him since assuming the role of Prime Minister.

Since the BJP’s formation as a separate political party in the 1980s, it has had two Prime Ministers: Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Narendra Modi. The former frequently met with the Dalai Lama even during his tenure as Prime Minister of India. The Dalai Lama stated, “His eloquent support of the Tibetan people began in the late 1950s. Since then, he regularly took Indian governments to task in parliament, prompting them to take a stronger stand on Tibet,” highlighting the firm support that Atal Bihari Vajpayee had towards Tibet and the Tibetan people.

There are various movements and instances indicating that a possible meeting between Narendra Modi and the Dalai Lama is on the cards:

1. Narendra Modi and the Dalai Lama attended the same event last year; the Global Buddhist Summit organised by the International

Buddhist Confederation (IBC), with the former being the Chief Guest on the 1st Day and the latter being the Chief Guest on the 2nd Day. They were so close yet did not meet, most likely due to pressure from Beijing in my opinion. However, with India advancing and taking great strides forward, including positioning itself towards achieving Viksit Bharat by 2047, there will come a time when Beijing will not be able to pressure New Delhi anymore.

2. Furthermore, Narendra Modi has frequently been publicly wishing the Dalai Lama on his birthday through his social media handles in the last few years.
3. In December 2021, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), with its Sarsanghchalak Mohan Bhagwat and National Executive Indresh Kumar (founder of Bharat Tibbat Sahyog Manch), met the Dalai Lama at his residence in Dharamshala. Considering the strong and firm linkages between RSS and BJP, there is a high possibility of the BJP leadership including Narendra Modi also meeting the Dalai Lama.

The Indian National Congress (INC) the other national political party of India that has formed the government several time, has had its leaders including its Prime Ministers, meeting with the Dalai Lama. One can refer to FNVA's recent policy brief '2024 Election: Tibet in INC's Election Manifesto' for more detail on this.

With the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh going to the polls several notable Indian political leaders have arrived to Dharamshala and met the Dalai Lama recently. Many of them also had events with the Tibetan publics, where both the BJP and INC (from the NDA and India Alliance respectively) engaged with the Tibetans in Dharmshala in the lead up to the election.

### **Growing Repression in Tibet: A CECC Report Confirms**

29 May 2024, FNVA, Tenzin Tsultrim

The US Congressional-Executive Commission on China's (CECC) 2023 Annual Report highlights escalating repressions in Tibet, emphasising religious persecution, mass biometric surveillance, transnational repression and linguistic suppression. The report reveals intensified restrictions on Tibetan Buddhism, with severe measures to enforce the Sinicization of religious practices. Additionally, the collection of DNA samples from Tibetans, including monks, has augmented the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) surveillance capabilities. It also

underscores the forced assimilation of Tibetan children into Han Chinese culture through state-run colonial style boarding schools. Furthermore, the CCP's transnational repression efforts aim to silence Tibetan activism abroad, posing a threat to democratic values globally. Read more here.

### **From Tibet to Xizang: China's strategic moves**

26 May 2024, Deccan Herald, Gyanendra Keshri

Changes in education and infrastructure in Tibet are indicative of the Chinese government's strategies to solidify its position in the region

At No 8 Middle School in Lhasa, a 13-year-old girl, along with other students, is learning about the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the manufacturing of electronic devices. She speaks broken English, along with Tibetan and Mandarin.

"Our main focus is on skilling. Nearly half the time, students practice using different tools," says Caiyang Zhuoma, principal of the school. While more than a dozen distinct local dialects are spoken in the high plateau region, the focus at the boarding schools is on teaching Mandarin and English.

The transformation of education and infrastructure development is among the key strategies of the President Xi Jinping-led Chinese government to solidify its position in the Tibetan issue.

The name 'Tibet' has been dropped in official references. In all official communications, the region is now referred to in the Mandarin name, 'Xizang'.

It started with the release of a white paper in November 2023. The paper, titled 'CPC (Communist Party of China) Policies on the Governance of Xizang in the New Era: Approach and Achievements', outlines development in the region since President Jinping came to power in 2012. Now in all official communications, the region is referred to as 'Xizang Autonomous Region'.

While the Lobsang Sangay-led Tibetan government-in-exile has termed the move as "Sinicisation of Tibetan Buddhism", as per Chinese authorities, the name change is intended to strengthen national identity in the ethnic minority region.

Ren Wei, the Executive Vice Chairman of the People's Government of Xizang Autonomous Region, says the government fully guarantees the freedom of religious belief.

Wei points out that China is a multiethnic country, having 56 ethnic groups. Han is the largest ethnic group, accounting for around 92 per cent of the country's population. The remaining 55 ethnic groups, including Tibetan Buddhists and Muslims, are categorised as ethnic minorities.

As per China's national census data from 2020, Tibetans account for 86 per cent of the Xizang region's total population of 3.65 million. However,

between 2010 and 2020, the share of Tibetans in the population declined from 90.5 per cent to 86 per cent.

Reports suggest that there are concerted efforts from the Chinese government to encourage its majority Han population to work and live in the Tibet region. Consequently, there has been a sharp jump in the Han Chinese population in the region. As per official data, the share of Hans in the total population of the Xizang Autonomous Region jumped to 12.2 per cent in 2020 from 8.2 per cent in 2010.

The region hosts around 1,700 sites for Tibetan Buddhism activities, with nearly 46,000 Buddhist monks and nuns, as per data provided in the white paper.

Han Chinese are more urban, educated and mobile. Luxury cars and high-rise apartments in the capital city of Lhasa and Shigatse, the second-largest city in the region, demonstrate the changing demographics. High-rise apartments have come up on the outskirts of Lhasa city, especially along the Kyichu river, which is also known as the Lhasa river. "My dream is to have a house in any of these apartments," said a Tibetan, pointing to the high-rise apartments developed along the Kyichu river.

Those who opt to work in the Xizang Autonomous Region are paid substantially higher salaries when compared with other parts of China. In most cases, it is almost double. This acts as a major incentive for the Han Chinese population to relocate to the region, where oxygen level is only about 60 per cent of that at sea level.

A Chinese government employee, who did not want to be named, said the government pays higher salaries to those working in the Xizang Autonomous Region because the living conditions are tough. Low oxygen levels pose serious health concerns. The Tibetan plateau has an elevation of over 4,500 meters (14,800 ft) above sea level.

#### Belt and Road Initiative

Tibet acts as China's bridge to South Asia under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), President Xi Jinping's most ambitious foreign policy programme. Under this initiative, China has financed or proposes to finance billions of dollars of investment in roads, railways and other infrastructure in several countries in Asia, Africa and Europe. This includes India's neighbours Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh.

Tibet borders India, Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar in the Himalayas. The world's highest peak Mount Everest, which rises to 8,850 metres (29,035 feet) is on the Nepal-Tibet border. This makes Tibet immensely important from China's strategic point of view.

Due to its harsh and rugged terrain, Tibet is sparsely populated. In terms of area, Tibet is around two-thirds the size of India, while its population is just

around a quarter of Bengaluru's population. A majority of the population lives in cities like Lhasa and Shigatse. Historically, there have been very few people in Tibet living close to its border with India, Nepal and Bhutan. However, in recent years, China has built hundreds of villages in Tibet, close to the India and Bhutan borders.

Officially, such villages have been developed to provide better living conditions and alleviate poverty, but the location and population mix indicate that the main focus is strategic and military in nature. Reports suggest that some villages have been built on the disputed boundary with Bhutan. The population in such villages is a mix of Chinese troops and locals.

#### Border infrastructure

China has invested heavily in the development of roads, railways and other infrastructure along Tibet's border near Nepal, Bhutan and India. Gyirong Port on the Nepal-Tibet border is one of the key land routes to connect the northern and southern regions of the Himalayas. The Nepali side of the border is called Rasuwagadhi, which is around 160 km from the capital city, Kathmandu. From the Tibetan capital of Lhasa, the border is around 820 km. While on the Nepali side, the condition of the road is bad, to say the least, the Tibetan side has four to six-lane highways. There is a stark difference.

China plans to develop railways between Kathmandu and Shigatse, which is the seat of the Panchen Lama. Shigatse is already connected through high-speed trains with Lhasa. China's move is seen as a counter to India's projects to connect with Kathmandu through a cross-border railway via Raxaul in Bihar.

Nyingchi, which is on the Tibetan border close to Arunachal Pradesh, was recently connected to Lhasa by high-speed bullet train. Nyingchi airport, located along the Brahmaputra river is very close to the Indian border.

China has significantly ramped up its airport infrastructure in the Tibet region. It has an international airport named Lhasa Gonggar Airport, which is located around 60 km from Lhasa city. China aims to develop 30 airports in the Tibet region.

#### Village relocation

A large number of Tibetans living in rural areas have been moved to new settlements. The village resettlement process has been accelerated since 2016.

As per a white paper released by the Chinese government, since 2021, Xizang has built a total of 300 "beautiful and livable" villages and created and certified 505 "demonstration villages".

As per Chinese authorities, the relocation is voluntary and the main objective is poverty alleviation and raising the standard of living. However, a report by New York-based Human Rights Watch shows that

Chinese authorities have been using coercive tactics to mass relocate Tibetan villagers and herders in order to assimilate them into the majority Han Chinese society.

The report notes that most rural Tibetans have been impacted by Chinese government relocation or rehousing policies in the past two decades.

While such mass relocations of residents have been occurring elsewhere in poor rural areas in China, these drives risk causing a devastating impact on Tibetan communities.

Together with current Chinese government programmes to assimilate Tibetan schooling, culture and religion into those of the “Chinese nation,” these relocations of rural communities erode or cause major damage to Tibetan culture and ways of life, the report said.

### **Gen Sundarji gave a China strategy 4 decades ago. India failed to execute it at LAC in 2020**

23 May 2024, The Print, Lt Gen H S Panag (Retd)

It has been 25 years since General Krishnaswamy “Sundarji” Sundararajan faded away to Valhalla. He had a chequered and tumultuous tenure as the 13th Chief of the Army Staff and left behind a fiercely disputed and controversial legacy. He conceptualised, planned, and began the transformation of the Army to fight the wars envisaged for the next 15-20 years. Simultaneously, on all fronts, he was engaged in war-like confrontations with China in the north, Pakistan in the west and our own little Vietnam in Sri Lanka in the south.

Even his worst critics agree that no other General of the Indian Army possessed his intellectual depth, strategic perspective, and the will to transform. In his two years and four months’ tenure, he dragged the Army by its bootstraps into the 21st century.

Soon after taking over, General Sundarji wrote a vision paper with a 15-year perspective—Indian Army Perspective Plan 2000—virtually spelling out the contours of national security strategy, defence policy, and military strategy. He personally signed the document—the first, and so far, the last time by any service Chief. The paper unambiguously laid down the military strategy to cater to the threat from both Pakistan and China and the framework of the Army’s transformation required to execute it.

#### **Perspective Plan 2000**

The strategy against Pakistan was to create and maintain an “offensive deterrence” to destroy its military potential and seize large swathes of territory to impose political will. Against China, the strategy was to maintain a “dissuasive deterrence” due to the qualitative, quantitative, terrain and communications disadvantages. “Dissuasive deterrence” meant that

the Army will move from a depth defensive posture, followed since 1963, to a forward defensive posture on dominant terrain close to the LAC to safeguard our territory and give the Chinese a bloody nose. Tactical offensive was built into this strategy.

The government, without formal approval, supported Perspective Plan 2000 as far as Pakistan was concerned, but remained apprehensive about disturbing the status quo on the northern borders. Both by design and due to strategic circumstances, General Sundarji got a chance to test his military strategy simultaneously on both the fronts.

A major mechanised forces predominant exercise—Brasstacks (November 1986-March 1987)—to test the “offensive deterrence” against Pakistan was converted into a quasi war-like situation in the form of Operation Trident due to an apprehensive Pakistan’s counter moves and allegedly due to perception management by the Chief of Army Staff (COAS). In Operation Trident, objectives ranged from capturing Skardu, destroying mechanised forces, and capturing a large swathe of territory in the desert/semi-desert terrain of South Punjab bounded by rivers Indus and Sutlej apart from limited territorial gains all along the front.

On the northern front, near simultaneously with Brasstacks/Operation Trident, a minor intrusion by China in Sumdorong Chu river valley in June 1986 gave General Sundarji the opportunity to post haste adopt the forward posture and force a stalemate on China in the ensuing confrontation that lasted until mid-1987.

#### **Execution of “dissuasive deterrence” strategy**

Since 1962, our main defences were well in the depth on dominant terrain with a very large un-held buffer zone patrolled by the ITBP and Assam Rifles with effect from 1980. Little or no effort had been made to develop the roads in the buffer zone due to the fear of annoying the Chinese. The deployment of the PLA followed a similar pattern across the LAC, but with good communications for rapid deployment. The plan until 1986 was to delay the enemy in the extended forward zone and fight the main battle from well-prepared defensive positions up to which roads had been constructed. In 1983, the Cabinet Committee on Security had taken a decision to defend Tawang, but the same could not be fully executed due to tardy development of roads.

India had established an observation post in the Sumdorong Chu valley manned by the Special Service Bureau, in 1984. The post was vacated in the winter. The PLA claimed that it was on their side of the McMahon Line/LAC and preempted its occupation in June 1986. Despite India’s protests, the Chinese continued to deploy more troops and built permanent defences.



On the face of it, it seemed to be a localised incident with the Chinese seeking to reimpose their version of the ML/LAC. In reality, there was a bigger motive. India and China had been engaged in border negotiations since 1981. In the first four rounds of talks, from 1981 to 1983, the discussions focussed on evolving a framework for concrete negotiations wherein China wanted to swap its gains in Aksai Chin and Eastern Ladakh for giving up claims in the Northeast by accepting the McMahon Line as was its stand since 1959. India wanted a sector by sector approach to which China agreed in the fifth round in 1984.

However, in the sixth round in 1985, China took a U-turn and sought substantial concessions in the Northeast, which subsequently included the whole of then-North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) and now Arunachal Pradesh. With our defences in depth, it would have been a cakewalk for China to seize the entire Tawang Sector without a fight.

Keeping these factors in mind, General Sundarji seized the opportunity to implement the “dissuasive deterrence” strategy to occupy a forward posture in the whole of Tawang Sector. In September-October 1986, he ordered mobilisation and lifted a brigade by helicopters to Zimithang and quickly occupied the dominating Hathung La and Langrola Ridges, making the Chinese intrusion untenable if hostilities began. Precautionary deployment was carried out all along the front including Eastern Ladakh.

China was taken by surprise by India’s operational strategy and it mobilised 53 and 13 Army Groups (equivalent of a Corps each). Deng Xiaoping twice issued a warning to “teach India a lesson” in October 1986 and March 1987. The Indian government was alarmed by the bold operational strategy, which could have led to war. However, General Sundarji stood firm, reminding the government of its own 1983 CCS decision and the consequence of not adopting a forward posture to safeguard our territory. As a result, the dissuasive deterrence strategy got whole-hearted political support. Arunachal Pradesh was created in December 1986.

The confrontation continued throughout the winter and until May 1987 when the visit of the Indian foreign minister paved the way for disengagement, but final de-escalation took place only in 1995. General Sundarji gave the final shape to the “dissuasive deterrence” strategy and forward posture in 1987 by conducting Exercise Chequerboard apart from the ongoing Operation Falcon, for which 10 divisions were mobilised.

On the eve of his retirement in April 1988, he moved a combat group of mechanised forces to both Eastern Ladakh and North Sikkim, and left a blueprint for additional induction as the resources

became available to not only strengthen the dissuasive deterrence strategy but also take the battle to the Tibetan Plateau.

Did the ‘dissuasive deterrence’ fail in 2020?

A question often asked is, why did the dissuasive deterrence fail in 2020, resulting in the loss of 1,000 square km of territory and China re-securing the 1959 Claim Line for the first time since 1962? Unlike the Northeast, where the forward posture was on ridge lines dominating the ML/LAC, in Eastern Ladakh, vast frontage and disadvantageous terrain configuration of the LAC precluded deployment along the LAC and the forward posture per force had to be in relative depth on dominating terrain.

The key to the execution of the dissuasive deterrence was to keep the forward zone under fail safe surveillance and domination with mechanised forces predominant covering troops. Based on surveillance, contingency plans were required to preempt the PLA by securing areas on/across the LAC. The author had the privilege to induct and command the first combat group into Ladakh in July 1988 and conceptualise the employment of mechanised forces. All that happened in April-May 2020 was foreseen and planned for 32 years ago. For example, Sirijap, east of Finger 8, was a preemptive task for my Combat Group through an amphibious operation across the Pangong Tso lake. Also, there was a need to reorganise the forces in Ladakh into combined arms grouping in the form of Integrated Battle Groups with additional induction of mechanised forces.

What happened in 2020 was not a failure of the “dissuasive deterrence” strategy, rather it was the execution that failed. We started constructing roads in sensitive areas without precautionary forward deployment of combined arms units. Our surveillance and reconnaissance failed and allowed the PLA to achieve absolute surprise. Consequently, contingency plans could not be executed. The formations were not reorganised as combined arms groupings and the available mechanised forces were inadequate.

Even after the Galwan clash, when adequate forces were available, the riposte in form of a quid pro quo on/across the LAC was timid. Rather than secure the entire Kailash Range from Helmet to Changla Pass in the Indus Valley, it was restricted to a 30 km belt up to Rechin La.

The “dissuasive deterrence” strategy has withstood the test of time and remains our best bet to stalemate China albeit with necessary modifications.

## Global Watch | Seventeen-Point Agreement: A Story That Traces Origin of China's Betrayal of Tibet

22 May 2024, News18, Arun Anand

The Tibetan issue still remains alive with the support of the international Tibetan community. Their struggle against Chinese imperialism shows that China's goal of forceful assimilation of Tibet has yet not materialised fully.

Around 73 years ago, on 23 May, the 'Seventeen-Point Agreement' was signed between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Tibetan government headed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Claimed by China as the "Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet", this agreement officially established Chinese legitimacy over Tibet. However, the 1951 Seventeen-Point Agreement and the developments in its aftermath soon attracted controversy, exposing the Chinese government's imperialist intent and the start of what is currently known as the decades-old Tibetan issue, reflected in Tibetans' prolonged fight of protecting their identity and territorial autonomy.



China's annexation of Tibet has continued to trigger protests from Tibetans since the 1959 uprising. (Image: Reuters)

The Tibetan issue is essentially a conflict over history, for the Chinese and Tibetans have had contention regarding Tibet's sovereignty prior to the 1951 agreement. While the Chinese believe that Tibet did not possess any sovereignty when the Qing dynasty fell in 1912, the Tibetans are of the opinion that Tibet has always been a sovereign nation, with occasional suzerainty over it exercised by the Mongolian, Nepalese, Chinese and the British at different periods of time.

Notwithstanding the contention, the fact remains that the Seventeen-Point Agreement is the only agreement that the Chinese government has signed with any non-Han ethnic group. Which brings to the question, why did China enter into an agreement in 1951, if Tibet was already a sovereign part of China?

Traditionally, Tibet comprised three provinces – central Tibet (called Chamdo), Kham (in the south) and Amdo (in the northeast). The first attack on Tibetan sovereignty by the CCP took place in 1950, what came to be known as the Battle of Chamdo.

However, fearing Tibetan resistance, the Chinese quickly opted for negotiations to subjugate the entire Tibet under the garb of peaceful agreement. This resulted in the CCP-drafted Seventeen-Point Agreement in 1951, with Ngabo Ngawang Jigme, former Chamdo's governor-general, representing the Tibetan delegation.

These were salient points of the agreement: The agreement recognised Tibet as part of China (Point 1), with China being responsible for Tibet's external affairs (Point 14). Moreover, with the Tibetan government's assistance, the Chinese military was to enter Tibet and consolidate its national defences (Point 2). At the same time, Tibet's right to exercise autonomy was also recognised (Point 3). The CCP also guaranteed that the existing political system, functions, and powers of the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama would remain unaltered (Point 4), while the religious beliefs and customs of the Tibetan people would be respected and protected (Point 7). Internal reforms were to be implemented only after consultation with the Tibetan leaders (Point 11).

Thus, the Seventeen-Point Agreement states the liberation of Tibet from internal and external enemies, under the impression of a "one country, two systems". Negotiations and the final signing of the agreement took place in Beijing under the strict watch of the CCP, whereby the Tibetan delegation was not allowed to have any contact or discussion outside Beijing. The Chinese thus were able to push through their agendas by arm-twisting the Tibetan delegation. However, the façade of the Seventeen-Point agreement was short-lived and soon actions of the Chinese in Tibet brought forward a reality far from the one promised in the agreement.

CCP soon violated the terms of the agreement in an attempt to establish quick and complete control over the Tibetan region. The land reforms were introduced by the CCP in Tibet without consulting the Tibetan government, marginalising Tibetans in their own country. It included attacks on Tibetan culture and language, gave Chinese control over economic and natural resources and favoured Han Chinese immigration.

In 1956, the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region (PCTAR) was established by the CCP to make way for political authority to be transferred from the Tibetan government to a Chinese-created and controlled administration, thus violating the Seventeen-Point Agreement. These measures paved the way for growing discontent

among Tibetans, leading to the rise of Tibetan armed rebels.

It is recorded that between 1952-58, the Chinese Army crushed 966 such rebellions and killed about 10,000 Tibetans in Kanlho's northeastern region. By 1956, the rebellion against the Chinese began to gain full momentum in Kham and Amdo and further spread to U-Tsang and Lhasa. Despite the rebellion, the CCP went on to implement democratic reforms in eastern Tibet, gaining legal rights over Tibetan property. Another reform under the Commune System gave the Chinese direct access over Tibetan agricultural resources.

All these measures were a gross violation of the Seventeen-Point Agreement which ultimately led to the Tibetan Uprising of 1959 against Chinese occupation. To cull down the uprising, the Chinese undertook major military intervention, which forced the Dalai Lama to flee Tibet anticipating arrest by Chinese forces, and sought refuge in India. In India, the Dalai Lama repudiated the Seventeen-Point Agreement, claiming it to be signed by the Tibetan delegation under duress, without the knowledge of the Tibetan government.

Meanwhile, the Chinese annexation of Tibet was completed after the violent suppression of the 1959 Tibetan Uprising by the Chinese military. In China's White Paper on Tibet, it is claimed that it is in 1959, that "90 per cent of Tibetans were freed from serfdom." In 1965, the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) was established by Beijing, replacing the former Tibetan administration, marking the death of the Seventeen-Point Agreement. Thus began China's assimilationist policy in Tibet, endangering Tibetan autonomy guaranteed (by China) in the Seventeen-Point Agreement (Points 3,4,7 and 11).

Championed by Mao Zedong, the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) unleashed further brutality of the Chinese government, proving to be a disaster for Tibetan culture. During this time, Tibet became Beijing's test ground to implement Mao's calling to crush the four olds (thoughts, customs, habits and culture). Tibetan religious texts, flags and even photographs of the Dalai Lama were burned and Tibetan schools were shut down, essentially targeting Tibetan identity and traditions. Jokhang Temple's (Tibetan Buddhist's most sacred site) teaching courtyard was converted as a venue for "Struggle Sessions", a practice during the Cultural Revolution whereby people accused of being political rivals were subjected to public humiliation, abuse and torture.

Most people subjected to struggle sessions in Jokhang Temple were Tibetan monks, businessmen, landowners and those associated with the former Tibetan government. It is believed that at least 92,000 Tibetans subjected to China's "struggle

sessions" died or were driven to commit suicide, while 173,000 Tibetans died in various labour camp prisons. Moreover, the Tibetan monasteries were plundered and desecrated by the Red Guards. It is estimated that by the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, more than 6,000 monasteries in Tibet were destroyed. This remained as one of the early attempts by the Chinese government to eradicate Tibetan identity and culture, in its efforts to assimilate Tibetan identity into majoritarian Han culture.

China's annexation of Tibet has continued to trigger protests from Tibetans since the 1959 uprising. The Tibetans are relentlessly raising their voice for their independence that was unjustly snatched by the Chinese communist rule. This was reflected in the 1987 protests, the 2008 protest and the self-immolation protests witnessed from 2009-2012. At the same time, China continued with its draconian measures to suppress the Tibetan voice, reflected in its bilingual education policy aimed at erasing Tibetan identity, imposition of martial laws in 1989, strike hard campaign in 2009, or Sinicisation of Tibet policy in 2021.

However, the Tibetan issue still remains alive with the support of the international Tibetan community. Their struggle against Chinese imperialism shows that China's goal of forceful assimilation of Tibet has yet not materialised fully.

### **'Thread of Beads': China's Cartographic Aggression Against India**

21 May 2024, Domino Theory, Tenzing Dhamdul

China is renaming locations in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, as part of its strategic encroachment into Indian territory through occupied Tibet.

The wind caught me differently and the people were all welcoming wherever I went. They spoke Hindi rather than Mandarin and proudly identified themselves as Indians. This was Tawang,<sup>1</sup> a majestic district in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, bordering not only Tibet (occupied now by China) but also Bhutan. My visit to this region and China's recent actions, particularly the renaming of 30 locations in the region on March 30, 2024,<sup>2</sup> reignited my focus on Arunachal Pradesh, prompting me to collaborate with my friends Tenzin Sherap and Tenzin Younten on an issue brief to delve deeper into the matter.

Our research, published under the title "Thread of Beads: An analysis of China's renaming of 62 locations in the India state of Arunachal Pradesh since 2017,"<sup>3</sup> sheds light on the broader narrative and objectives underlying China's actions. By contesting and encroaching upon sovereign Indian

territory, China seeks to advance its “Chinese Dream,”<sup>4</sup> which it wants to fulfil by 2049, directly impinging upon “Viksit Bharat,”<sup>5</sup> India’s vision of becoming a developed nation by 2047. The timing of these actions, notably coinciding with India’s general and state elections, including elections in Arunachal Pradesh, raises suspicions regarding China’s motives, which have been highlighted by many China observers and researchers in India.<sup>6</sup>

The response from the Indian government,<sup>7</sup> the Indian media and other stakeholders has predominantly been dismissive and reactionary. While such responses are warranted, it is imperative to recognize the significance of these frequent and concerted actions, particularly in the context of China’s utilization of the “Three Warfares”<sup>8</sup> strategic framework, which was adopted around 2003. Despite India’s response, there is a palpable concern that China may be gaining ground in this form of engagement.

The Three Warfares are public opinion/media warfare, psychological warfare and legal warfare, also known as “lawfare.”

Our analysis has revealed China’s calculated efforts in weaving what we termed the “Thread of Beads” across the Northern Himalayan front of India. Analogous to the “String of Pearls”<sup>9</sup> strategic initiative in the Indo-Pacific region, China’s actions along its border with India are methodically conditioning the area for potential annexation. Of particular concern is the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, which our study has focused on. China claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of “South Tibet”<sup>10</sup> (Zangnan, 藏南), as seen in official Chinese maps. South Tibet spans over 90,000 km<sup>2</sup>, as per official Chinese documents, news outlets, social media platforms and other agencies,<sup>11</sup> all of which possess a wider reach than their Indian counterparts.

China’s territorial claims over regions in Arunachal Pradesh derive from its historical occupation of Tibet and Tibet’s erstwhile legitimate claims to certain regions of northern Arunachal Pradesh, including Tawang. However, Tibet’s claims were addressed through the 1914 Shimla Convention,<sup>12</sup> where the “McMahon Line”<sup>13</sup> was delineated and mutually agreed upon by then-independent Tibet and British India. Despite China’s participation in the convention, it refrained from signing the eventual agreement. Tibetans even now see Arunachal Pradesh as an inalienable part of India’s sovereign territory. In our issue brief we have proven this by the 2001 Tibet and Adjacent Areas under Communist China’s Occupation Map by Amnye Machen Institute: Tibetan Centre for Advanced Studies,<sup>14</sup> which clearly shows Arunachal Pradesh as part of India, aligning with Indian official records,

the Tibetan government in exile and widely cited by scholars in the field of Tibetan Studies.

Among the 62 locations recently renamed by China in Arunachal Pradesh, two sites hold major significant historical ties to the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibet:

1. Ugyenling (Wujianling, 烏間嶺)<sup>15</sup>: Designated as the birthplace of the sixth Dalai Lama, Tsyang Gyatso, this location holds profound spiritual and cultural importance in Tibetan Buddhism. The inclusion of Ugyenling in China’s official mapping efforts raises questions regarding China’s intentions and motivations in asserting control over areas with historical ties to Tibetan religious figures. Ugyenling was renamed Wujianling on April 13, 2017.
2. Hathung-La (Hadong Shankou, 哈東山口): This strategic ridge near Khinzemane Village holds particular significance due to its association with the Dalai Lama’s escape from Tibet in 1959. The village served as a pivotal point in the Dalai Lama’s journey to seek asylum in India, marking a momentous event in Tibetan history. The anecdote of the Dalai Lama planting his walking stick,<sup>16</sup> which later grew into the Holy Tree at Khinzemane, further adds to the site’s cultural and spiritual significance. It is noteworthy that China did not assert claims over this territory as part of its proclaimed “South Tibet” during the Dalai Lama’s escape in 1959.<sup>17</sup> Hathung-La was renamed Hadong Shankou on March 30, 2024.

Since 2017, China, under the Ministry of Civil Affairs, has been assigning standardized names to a total of 62 locations, along with the release of official maps depicting these locations. Our research indicates that these 62 locations are strategically positioned and can be categorized according to their geography or the district in which they are located:

Figure 1: Geographical features of the 62 locations renamed by China in Arunachal Pradesh since 2017

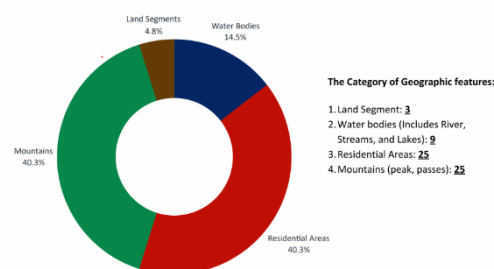


Image courtesy of the Foundation for Non-violent Alternatives (FNVA) and the Center for Contemporary Studies in Security and Technology (CCSST)



1. Geographically:
  - The 62 locations cover the geographic terrains of mountains, bodies of water, residential areas and land segments (地片).
  - Mountains and residential areas are associated with 25 locations each, totaling 50 out of the 62 locations. The targeting of mountains and residential areas is perhaps not surprising, given both would be crucial variables in an actual hot war.
2. District-wise:
  - There are 26 districts in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. The 62 renamed locations are located in 17 of these districts.
  - The majority of the renamed locations are in six districts: Papum Pare (the district inside which the capital city Itanagar is located, with Itanagar also having the special status of being a separate district); Tawang; Dibang Valley (the largest district in size and sharing some of the longest borders with Tibet); Upper Siang (borders Tibet); Upper Subansiri (borders Tibet); West Kameng (formerly Tawang was part of this district); and East Siang. More than six renamed locations are located in each of these districts. Seven renamed locations are in West Kameng and East Siang each.



Image courtesy of the Foundation for Non-violent Alternatives (FNVA) and the Center for Contemporary Studies in Security and Technology (CCSST)

China's modus operandi in its territorial expansionist agenda often begins with a standardized naming and mapping exercise, as evidenced by its past actions in Tibet and Bhutan. Through the gradual establishment of legitimacy over sovereign territories among its populace, China proceeds to illegally annex these areas. A striking example is the case of the Kula Kangri Peak area,<sup>18</sup> where China's persistent pressure, starting with standardized mapping and naming, eventually led to Bhutan conceding to Chinese claims.<sup>19</sup> This process underscores the significance of understanding

China's tactics in territorial disputes and their broader implications.

In Tibet, China, first under the Nationalist government, initiated its territorial assertions through the standardization of maps and names, laying the groundwork for subsequent illegal annexation. Through establishing a sense of legitimacy over Tibetan territories among its populace, China gradually expanded its control, with the Communist government ultimately invading Tibet in 1950.<sup>20</sup> The case of Tibet serves as a blueprint for China's approach to territorial expansion, highlighting the importance of standardized mapping exercises in advancing its geopolitical objectives.

The precedent set by China's actions in Tibet and Bhutan carries significant implications regarding the standardization of maps and names, which serves as a precursor to illegal annexation, highlighting the need for vigilant monitoring of China's territorial assertions. Moreover, the willingness of neighboring countries to concede to Chinese claims underscores the asymmetric power dynamics at play and the challenges faced by smaller nations in resisting Chinese influence.

However, India is certainly not Bhutan, or Tibet for that matter (the latter being officially part of China, with China only recognizing a portion of its territory based on the Shimla Convention, which it uses as per its convenience). India's heightened security measures and development of infrastructure in Arunachal Pradesh show it is taking China's cartographic aggression seriously. The recent inauguration of the Sela Pass tunnel<sup>21</sup> sparked strong condemnation from China. To give an idea of the scope of the strategic infrastructural development that has taken place on India's side of the border, on a previous visit, I found it hard to get a 4G signal. Now one can conduct entire video call sessions without issue. This, despite India's continued geographical challenges in the mountainous regions on its side of the border, which is less of an issue for China, as Tibet is largely a plateau.<sup>22</sup>

There is a clear push here from China, and with the exercises carried out in Tibet, we should remain cognisant of how effective China's Three Warfares framework and other policies have been, especially when it comes to renaming locations. Many identify Tibet and its major cities by "Standardized" Chinese names now, and China last year replaced the use of Tibet with Xizang on official documents.<sup>23</sup>

This may be the fate of locations in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, if India does not adopt a multifaceted approach that encompasses diplomatic, strategic and narrative countermeasures to safeguard its territorial integrity, national interests and the livelihoods of its people in the regions China covets.



## History, culture are foundations for understanding China's politics: renowned Spanish expert

20 May 2024, Global Times, Xie Wenting and Bai Yunyi



Xulio Rios Photo: Xie Wenting/Global Times

GT: In your opinion, what are the differences between Chinese modernization and Western modernization?

Rios: This is a complex comparison. In my view, the trajectory of modernization in China and the West has significant differences. The modernization of developed Western countries is largely built on the conquest and exploitation of other countries, while China's modernization is built on its own social and economic development.

There are also important differences in development models. China's economic model combines both market and planning elements. However, in many Western countries, we do not see this kind of integration. I believe that this both market-oriented and government-planned economic model has achieved positive results and remains effective.

One of the most important characteristics of the Chinese path to modernization is that it preserves true sovereignty. China makes decisions based on its own interests, and sets its own pace and model, rather than accepting externally imposed decisions. This is a completely different experience and produces different results.

GT: You have said in previous interviews that China has achieved its goals through its own development path and approach, and that many of China's experiences will undoubtedly be worth learning from. In which areas do you think China's experiences are worth learning from for other countries?

Rios: One of the most important lessons from the Chinese path to modernization for other countries is to think for themselves, make their own judgments on issues, and determine policies based on their overall interests rather than external evaluations or waiting for external guidance. I think this is a key point.

Besides, I believe it is necessary for many countries

to deeply analyze China's policies in various aspects, which may be applicable to some countries and not to others. I have noticed that some developing countries have established economic zones like China, some of which have been successful and some not so successful, due to differences in education levels, labor force, and capabilities in the public and private sectors.

However, undoubtedly, China's model can serve as a reference for many countries, which can then adjust according to their own circumstances.

Just as China has said, it cannot copy the models of other countries, nor does it want to impose its own model on other countries. Copying is not a good solution, but Chinese experiences such as strengthening the capacity of the public sector and re-examining collectivist values can serve as reference points for other countries.

GT: In your opinion, what has been the biggest misunderstanding about China by the West in recent years?

Rios: I think the biggest misunderstanding about China by the West in recent years is about China's strategic intentions. Some Westerners believe that China wants to revive its past glory, weaken the West, and put the West in a difficult situation.

Therefore, there is a great deal of disagreement about China's rise, with some believing that they must protect themselves from the threat of a powerful China. But for another part of the Western population, China represents an opportunity. They want to engage in dialogue and understand China's policies.

We cannot expect China, with highly developed productivity and technology, to exist in Asia in isolation. As its strength grows, it is logical for China's position on the global stage to rise. However, it will take more time for (Western countries) to adapt to this process and adjust their responses accordingly. But one thing is very clear: We cannot push China aside to manage this world.

## India needs to counter China's united front tactics

19 May 2024, Sunday Guardian, Khedroob Thondup

United front tactics involve the mobilization of various groups to serve a singular strategic interest.

In the complex geopolitical landscape of the 21st century, the art of statecraft has evolved beyond traditional diplomacy and military engagements. One of the most nuanced forms of this evolution is the concept of "united front" tactics—a strategy that China has been increasingly employing in its interactions with India.

At its core, united front tactics involve the mobilization of various groups to serve a singular strategic interest. For China, this translates into a multifaceted approach towards India, aiming to influence its political decisions, economic policies, and public opinion to align with Chinese interests. One of the most covert aspects of China's united front tactics is cyber warfare. Reports of cyberattacks on India's critical infrastructure, such as the power grid, have raised alarms about the silent invasion that could cripple a nation without a single soldier crossing its borders. These digital strikes are not just about immediate disruption; they are a psychological tool, instilling a sense of vulnerability within the Indian state.

China's strategy extends to influence operations that target the very fabric of Indian society. By cultivating relationships with influential individuals, think-tanks, and cultural organizations, China seeks to create a narrative conducive to its worldview. The Confucius Institutes, for example, have been at the centre of controversy, with allegations of them being a front for espionage and propaganda.

The battleground has shifted from physical territories to the cognitive realm. Disinformation campaigns and the manipulation of media narratives are part of China's arsenal to destabilize and confuse. The aim is to create a parallel reality where facts are malleable, and truth is what the Party deems it to be. China's united front work also includes soft power initiatives. Cultural exchange programs and outreach to the Indian diaspora are designed to foster a positive image of China, countering the negative press it often receives. These efforts are subtle yet powerful, as they shape perceptions over the long term.

The Doklam standoff and the clashes in the Galwan Valley are stark reminders of the military dimension of China's united front tactics. These confrontations serve a dual purpose: demonstrating China's military might and testing India's resolve. They are a physical manifestation of the psychological and political pressure exerted through other united front activities. India stands at a crossroads, facing a neighbour that wields united front tactics with strategic finesse. The challenge for India is to recognize these manoeuvres and counter them with a united front of its own—a coalition of democratic nations, robust cybersecurity measures, and a resilient civil society that can withstand the allure and assault of China's strategic chessboard.

As we navigate this era of new-age warfare, it is imperative for India and like-minded nations to develop a comprehensive understanding of united front tactics and devise counter-strategies that uphold their sovereignty and democratic values.

## The importance of being Tibet's 14th Dalai Lama

19 May 2024, Deccan Chronicle, Mohan Guruswamy

The 14th Dalai Lama (spiritual name: Jetsun Jamphel Ngawang Lobsang Yeshe Tenzin Gyatso), who was born on July 6, 1935, has been resident in India since 1959, and is the highest spiritual leader and most revered head of Tibetan Buddhism. When I had visited Tibet, it was common to see ordinary Tibetans discreetly wearing his medallion. It was also very common to see his pictures in most Tibetan-owned shops in Tibet, Yunnan and Qinghai. The Dalai Lama's ecclesiastical influence extends into India's border areas such as Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Ladakh. Despite a historical political identity entwined with China, Tibet has traditionally looked towards India for moral and spiritual sustenance. Tibet has had a long history of struggle with China and the present Dalai Lama is not the first one to seek refuge in India. The British had an active policy to create a buffer against China in the form of an independent Tibet. The Chinese Amban (plenipotentiary) in Lhasa watched the Younghusband expedition's exertions in Tibet passively and one immediate consequence of this was an assertion of Tibet's independence. After the establishment of the Republic of China with Sun Yat Sen as President on January 1, 1912, in April that year the 13th Dalai Lama declared the end of Tibet's relationship with China and expelled the Amban and all Chinese troops. Almost immediately after their civil war triumph in 1949, the Chinese Communists reasserted control over Tibet, which had by then enjoyed over four decades of independence. Since then, India has tried to head off the Tibet problem by accepting its annexation into the People's Republic of China. In the years since, the Chinese Communists tried to solve the Tibet problem by attempting to wipe out Tibetan nationalism and Buddhism with Mao's Communism. It didn't succeed. This policy has now been replaced by the creeping "Hanisation" and massive doses of economic development. These too have worked only partially for the Chinese, but they seemed to do better with this than with the Maoist iron hand.

Though Tibet is now relatively passive, it still remains a dry tinderbox and the Chinese dread the likelihood of any spark that may set off a fire. For India too, the policy has worked partially. Over 150,000 Tibetan refugees now live in India, and India has willy-nilly become the fulcrum of a worldwide struggle by the Tibetans to regain their nation. In short, the Tibet issue, though dormant now, is still very much alive and whether India likes it or not, it is being played out in its front yard. Central to this sustained struggle has been the international stature of the Dalai Lama,

who has become the symbol of many ideals and images. The mix of new age spiritualism, ethics, ecological values and politics has won for the Dalai Lama many influential and wealthy Western adherents to Tibetan Buddhism and supporters of Tibet's cause. Today, the tiny enclave of McLeodganj, a suburb of Dharamsala in Himachal Pradesh, is a magnet that draws large numbers of young Westerners seeking a new meaning to and purpose in life. It draws top political personalities like Nancy Pelosi, former Speaker of the US House of Representatives, and top Hollywood actors like Richard Gere and Uma Thurman. Both China and India must worry about a post-Dalai Lama period. Tibetans believe the Dalai Lama to be a living God. But he is also human and must die like all humans. He is now 88 years old, and time is certainly not on his side. As long as he is alive, he keeps the embers of Tibetan nationalism from conflagrating with the blanket of the new age Buddhism that he has woven. When this Dalai Lama is gone, the embers might just combust. The chosen leadership of the exiles will not go unchallenged. The Chinese Communists will almost certainly try to foist their own incarnation and will try to legitimise it with all the power available to them. It is unlikely that they will succeed, but it will certainly obfuscate the situation and preclude any future compromise on the issue of the spiritual leadership of the Tibetan Buddhists. While the spiritual leadership may be contested, it is almost inevitable that a new generation of Tibetan exiles will stake a claim for the temporal leadership of the Tibetan nationalist movement. If this is contested by the regency around the India-based incarnation, then we will almost certainly see a competition for the hearts and minds of young Tibetans and this will inevitably lead to more assertive postures as the different factions jockey for power. Such internal struggles often result in greater militancy, with India has its base. On the other hand, we may see a duality of leadership emerging among the Tibetan exiles, a spiritual leadership that tends to the soul and a militant leadership that leads the struggle for attainment of political goals. It is due to the Dalai Lama's foresight and sagacity that the contours of such a dual leadership is now emerging, with the second tallest Buddhist ecclesiastical figure, Ugen Thinley, the Karmapa (now in Germany), and the Sikyong (president) of the government-in-exile, Tempa Tshering. Both now enjoy much stature among émigré Tibetan groups and within Tibet. From the Indian perspective, the rise of an alternate religious leader in the interim would well prevent the splintering of the Tibetan Buddhist movement. The young Karmapa might well provide this. Geographically and ethnically, much of Ladakh is an extension of the Tibetan Changthang, and the main

language spoken is a Tibetan dialect. The Tawang tract in the other end was, till it was annexed by India in the early 1950s, under the temporal control of the Dalai Lama in Lhasa. We must not forget that the border dispute with China is in reality a border dispute with Tibet. It is another matter that if Tibet was truly independent, it would have been unable to assert its claims in the way that the Chinese did. The Chinese claims to "Tawang and surrounding areas" is largely based on a claim made by the present Dalai Lama in the late 1940s, when he wrote a letter to the government of newly independent India laying formal claim to it. Two decades from now, China will be an aging nation and hence it feels that it must make the best of the present opportunity. Its periodic aggressiveness with India has more to do with this, than any parcels of land. The transition of Tibetan leadership is a major consideration.

### Onus on India to exert pressure on China over Tibet

18 May 2024, Tribune India, Gen. Ashok Mehta



Takeover: The most worrying aspect of recent developments in Tibet is the depth and scale of Sinicisation of the region. istock

AFTER needling China for its unilateral breach of protocols and attempts to alter the status quo in eastern Ladakh, India went on to call China a bully and expressed hope – for the first time since 1962 – that the US would come to its aid against the Dragon (going by Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane's statement at the India-US Defence Summit in February). A few weeks ago, India reached out to the Philippines with a pledge to stand by it in its dispute with China in the South China Sea and sold it BrahMos missiles.

All this is quite something, but New Delhi has stopped short of talking about Tibet, even though Beijing has continued to rename in Mandarin several places in 'south Tibet' (parts of Arunachal Pradesh). The last time New Delhi upped the ante over Tibet was in 2010, when it stopped talking about the One China policy during parleys with Beijing. Of late,

former Chief of Army Staff Gen MM Naravane has spoken at public forums on Tibet's annexation and its demand for autonomy. The Forum for Non-Violent Alternatives (FNVA), an NGO, is espousing the Tibetan cause. It has several former government officials and veterans supporting it. Since 2008, it has issued policy papers, with the most recent in 2022: Resetting India's Tibet Policy. Prior to Independence, Gen Sir Francis Tuker, in his paper, Defence of India, had highlighted the strategic salience of Tibet and advised early occupation to pre-empt the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) from doing so. The rest is history.

On April 25 in Dharamsala, Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the political leader of the Central Tibetan Administration, repeated its longstanding demand for the return of the 11th Panchen Lama at a function to celebrate his 35th birthday. Panchen Lama, who was abducted by the Chinese government, has been missing for the past 29 years. Tsering informed journalists at the ceremony that the Tibetan government in exile had been engaged in back channel talks with Beijing since last year; dialogue being resumed after nine rounds ended in 2010. Tibetans are pitching for greater autonomy in sync with the Dalai Lama's Middle Way policy.

Promptly, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin, without refuting the back channel claim, reacted: "China does not legitimise government in exile at Dharamsala; the so-called Xizang (Chinese for Tibet) government in exile is totally against the Chinese constitution and laws and is illegal. No country has recognised it". He clarified that talks had been held with representatives of the Dalai Lama and not with the envoys of the government in exile. In February, the US House of Representatives had passed a Bill that would push China to resolve the outstanding Tibet-China dispute through talks with the Dalai Lama's envoys.

In response to the BJP seeking public suggestions for its election manifesto, the FNVA sent recommendations to the saffron party and the RSS — re-establishing India's diplomatic mission in Lhasa as a quid pro quo for additional Chinese missions/offices in India; no foreign interference in the succession of the 14th Dalai Lama; preservation of Tibetan Buddhism; and creating a joint India-China commission on the Brahmaputra river, similar to the one in the Indus Water Treaty Commission with Pakistan. Other recommendations were the restoration of pilgrimage routes to Kailash Mansarovar through Nathu La, commencing one from Demchok and reviving the routes via Nepal; and encouraging China to continue with an outcome-related dialogue with the Dalai Lama's representatives for early resolution of the Tibet-China dispute.

The ruling party has not bitten the bullet, though in the 1970s, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh had sought autonomy for Tibet in its manifesto.

The most worrying aspect of recent developments in Tibet is the depth and scale of Sinicisation of the region. Since President Xi Jinping took charge in 2013, China has been trying to erase Tibet's cultural identity of Tibetan Buddhism. A white paper issued in November 2022 titled CPC Policies on the Governance of Xizang in the New Era: Approach and Achievements is silent on the colonial boarding school system and massive relocation programme to diminish Tibetan culture. Around 8,00,000 children/youngsters in the age group of six to 18 years are being educated in Chinese in a highly politicised curriculum. Tibetans are forced to send their children to these schools in cities. If parents refuse, they are blacklisted, their welfare benefits are stopped and kids can't go to school ever. Their political indoctrination is systematic. Inter-marriage with Hans yields a reward of 20,000 yuan.

The military buildup is spectacular: six-lane highways, double-line railway to Shigatse from Lhasa and from Lhasa to Gormu. Of the seven million Tibetans, only around 8,000 have joined the PLA, but that will change with military conscription being ordered in the mainland. Reports suggest that over 2.3 lakh Han Chinese were settled in Tibet till 2020. The Tibetan population in Dharamsala is diminishing as Tibetans are unable to flee Tibet since Nepal has clamped down on free passage. A decade ago, 2,000 youth used to escape from Tibet every year. Now, it is just a trickle of six to eight persons. Last year, two women — Namkyi and Tsering Kyi — escaped from Tibet via Nepal and reached Dharamsala to narrate the grave human rights violations in their homeland.

At this rate, the Tibetan population in US could overtake the 66,000 Tibetans left in Dharamsala, and the government in exile might consider shifting there. The Central Tibetan Administration is frustrated with India for its silence on Tibet but extremely grateful for the sanctuary and hospitality. It is time for India to take a call on Tibet as Beijing digs deeper into Arunachal Pradesh and continues with Sinicisation of Tibet. China's latest warning was on the construction of the Sela tunnel and the planned deployment of an additional 10,000 troops opposite central Tibet. As China ratchets up its claim to south Tibet, India needs to gently open the Tibet front by urging Beijing to settle the Tibet-China differences and follow up with reopening its mission at Lhasa. After a hiatus of 18 months, China has sent an ambassador, Xu Feihong, who arrived in New Delhi recently. And with the election results next month, the new normal is going to change.



## China's 'virtual invasion' of India and the cultural genocide of Tibet

18 May, 2024, RFA, Marco Respinti and Aaron Rhodes

There is no border between India and the People's Republic of China (PRC). In the northwest and northeast, India adjoins Tibet. It is not necessary for your Indian interlocutor to be a die-hard nationalist to think this way.

As a matter of fact, this is what a large number of Indians have believed since 1949, when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) took power in Beijing. Their reasoning is that Tibet is a sovereign political entity occupied by the People's Republic of China, and that it should regain independence within its historical borders.

On the other hand, the CCP claims that Tibet has always been a part of China.

Powered by this claim, one of the weapons of the PRC's foreign offensive are geographical maps where boundary disputes are used as tools for sinicization of Tibet. In this pursuit, the CCP is indefatigable.

On March 30, the Ministry of Civil Affairs of the PRC committed its latest misappropriation of Indian toponyms, changing 30 placenames in the northeastern Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh.

Eleven residential areas, 12 mountains, four rivers, one lake, one mountain pass and a piece of land were given new Chinese names in simplified Chinese ideograms, Tibetan script and pinyin rendering as well as in the Roman alphabet.

Chinese names

For each of those places, geographical coordinates are also duly furnished as well as a high-resolution map. The CCP ceremoniously celebrated the event with all the technicalities needed to make it seem an important and legitimate operation..

The sinicization of toponyms in Arunachal Pradesh is only the latest offensive in an ongoing campaign that Beijing has launched in recent years.

The inaugural step of the campaign took place on April 13, 2017, when the ministry officialized the change of six place names. The second move was made official on Dec. 29, 2021, and it included the change of 15 toponyms. The third came on April 2, 2023, when 11 place names were sinicized as well.

It is noteworthy that the official announcement of the first change explicitly defines it as the "first batch," implying there was more to come. However, nowhere is it written that the new March 2024 fourth batch in this series should be constructed as being the last one.

It is a bit like playing a board game. None of the newly renamed real places in Arunachal Pradesh came under the PRC's sovereignty as a result of the

contrived Chinese maps, and the occupation of sovereign Indian territory that the new toponyms seem to indicate has not happened.

Chinese logic

But the CCP's move is consciously aiming to achieve a clear psychological effect – achieved by presenting the change of names as the direct consequence of a specific logic.

The territory that India calls Arunachal Pradesh doesn't exist as such, the CCP asserts. It is just a portion of the PRC's sovereign territory, it maintains. So, it concludes, place names can't be Indian and must be Chinese, and new maps must show this to the entire world.

The CCP's claim that Arunachal Pradesh doesn't exist is based on the view that the Indian state by that name is simply a part of Tibet, which, the CCP underlines, has always been an integral part of China.

According to CCP propaganda, that part of "China's Tibet" that Delhi Indianizes under the "fake" name of Arunachal Pradesh is simply a portion of Southern Tibet, or "Zangnan," as the Chinese regime calls it.

This assertion has been continuously perpetrated by the PRC since 1950, with the annexation and then military occupation of Tibet, which was in fact, a different, independent country.

Cultural genocide

The Chinese invasion of Tibet, completed with the Battle of Lhasa in 1959 and its suppression of Tibetan identity, harsh religious persecution and other serious encroachments on liberty amount to a cultural genocide, as Tibetan leaders in exile have repeatedly asserted.

Playing chess with the lives of millions of people has always been the policy of the Chinese regime in Tibet. This war of maps is rooted in the disputed border lines that separate India and PRC, where de facto, agreed-upon, and legal borders have not coincided since the time of British India.

This dispute was complicated by the emergence of a highly ideological and aggressive regime in China in 1949. The game of maps that the CCP plays is quite sophisticated: It alternates its claim that some Indian territories are Tibetan – therefore belonging to China – with the dismemberment of "ethnic Tibet."

Thus, the sinicizing of Arunachal Pradesh is a cynical attempt to legitimize the permanent subjugation of an entire people as a fait accompli confirmed by an international border.

This curtailment and disrespect of India's sovereignty shows that what the PRC wants, the PRC gets – even if it comes at the price of culturally and politically attacking a foreign nation.

For its part, India rebukes this aggression, repeating that any boundary dispute regarding Arunachal Pradesh or other bordering lines, these must be



discussed with Tibet, not the PRC – because Tibet is not the PRC, and will never be.

Totalitarian arrogance may pretend to change history and reality. It devastates societies, traditions and individual freedom, but it will ultimately fail.

### **Will China Succeed in Creating an Asian Security Order?**

18 May 2024, The Diplomat, Richard Ghiasy and Jagannath Panda

China's vision for the Asian security order has a strong emphasis on cooperative security, but Beijing, despite new initiatives, is not quite sure how to make it happen. From April 18-23 2024, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi made a three-nation tour of Cambodia, Indonesia, and Papua New Guinea. The trip is part of a packed diplomatic agenda that's been in motion since the start of the year which looks to consolidate China's status in Asia as the prime geoeconomic and geopolitical influencer.

Visits by leaders and other high-level officials, including from Russia, the Global South and rich European states like Germany, to China and by China's President Xi Jinping and high-level Chinese officials to various parts of the world, particularly in the Asia-Pacific, will test the waters for China's three world order-building projects: namely the Global Development Initiative (GDI), Global Security Initiative (GSI), and Global Civilization Initiative (GCI).



Credit: Depositphotos

Diplomatically, politically, and economically, China has already leapfrogged ahead of other regional giants, taking its place among the global superpowers. Yet, thus far, China has been lagging in building an effective Asian security order, one naturally centered on Chinese interests. Importantly, China appears to be very aware of the complexity of promoting and developing an Asian security order: that is to say, the institutions and principles that guide security relations between states.

Could the three new initiatives be the solution for an Asian security order?

A Pan-Asian "Processual" Chinese Vision?

To a degree, China has a vision for Asia's security order through its emergent GSI. Still, it is primarily processual, i.e., the process and principles of multilaterally achieving a (as-yet undetermined) security order rather than a set-in-stone vision for an Asian security order. This processual vision is pan-Asian, but China's rhetoric changes by region, reflecting regional realities.

There is, of course, no single Asian security order or architecture. Nor is there unanimity on the number of security orders in Asia, their scope, and their specifics. Therefore, one way to "dissect" the Asian security order is regional – even if these do not operate in silos. The five Asian regions – West (the Middle East), Central, South, Southeast, and East Asia – have dissimilar and varying degrees of security order.

China's geographic position in Asia grants it a unique (dis)advantage: China is positioned amid these five regions. If we include Afghanistan in West Asia, China is contiguous to all five Asian regions – the only Asian nation to which this applies. This gives China a stake and role in all of Asia's security orders, from landlocked Central Asia to the other four with their strong maritime dimensions.

How do these five regions figure in China's security ordering priorities?

Ranking Asia's Regions in China's Security Order

Distant as it sits from China, the West Asian security disorder does not amply affect China's security, and its substantial fossil fuel imports have seen little impact from regional armed conflict. Rather, Central Asia and its periphery have historically been a significant threat to China's security. Today that is no longer the case. Russia, the Central Asian states, and China have found a calm, predictable *modus vivendi* in a region with a wide range of mostly Russian-dominated security-ordering institutions.

Like West and Central Asia, Southeast Asia, too, lacks a resident great power. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a "soft-edged," non-threatening supranational body that touts its centrality and normative value, i.e., inclusive, cooperative, and multilateral security ordering norms. It is no threat to China. Yet, the geographic crux of the U.S.-led Indo-Pacific strategy sits right at Southeast Asia and its waters, and it is in this theater that China-U.S. contestation arguably plays out the strongest.

Unlike Southeast Asia, South Asia has a minimal security order, primarily due to the geopolitical rift at the heart of the region between the most prominent players, India and Pakistan. To thwart India's rise and to establish a more permanent role in the region

and the Indian Ocean –the site of crucial supply lines – China is quite actively engaged in the security ordering process in South Asia.

China is also unnerved by India's growing high-tech-oriented cooperation with the United States, as well as India's newly found resonance within the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (the Quad, comprising Australia, India, Japan, and the U.S.). China is especially averse to the Quad and looks at it as a Cold War-era relic (an "Asia-Pacific NATO").

Notwithstanding the diverse regions of interest, it is in East Asia, where the United States with its treaty alliances with Japan and South Korea has been holding strong, that China – the region's foremost resident leader – will be looking to reconfigure the Asian security order. Yet, it is also the most complex region in which to do so.

#### China's East Asian Paradox

Of the five regions, China has the most paradoxical relationship with the U.S.-led East Asian security order. When the U.S.-led West welcomed China to the Western liberal order in the 1970s, China acquiesced to U.S. security hegemony in the Asia-Pacific. As a result, China has been a significant beneficiary, perhaps the largest in Asia, of the primarily U.S.-led and sustained liberal international order.

Economically, this order powered the globalization that has driven much of China's modernization, and the increasingly more networked U.S.-led hub-and-spokes alliance system in the Asia-Pacific has helped keep the peace in China's maritime periphery so that it could prosper.

However, this is the flank from which the most consequential security threats emanate for China's core interests, increasingly driven by expanding Indo-Pacific strategies and actions, because China's primary urban and industrial centers lie at or near its eastern and southeastern shores. China, thus, has significant issues with the U.S. alliance system, which functions as security architecture through its firm mutual defense commitments.

However, these issues have been around since long before China (re)gained great power status. China already called for revisions in 1997 when, in a joint declaration with Russia, it called for greater multipolarity in the international order, touted Westphalian sovereignty and territorial integrity, spoke of a "new era," and opposed (U.S.-led) security alliances. China thus questioned the U.S. security role and collective security principles long before it had the capabilities to supplant Washington.

Changing Security Concepts: Will the GSI Gain Traction?

Importantly, it was also in 1997 that China proposed a "new" interpretation of security, "the New Security

Concept." This vision promoted "common security," in later concepts also referred to as "universal security" and increasingly as "indivisible and cooperative security" (the prior is a concept also endorsed by Russia but with 1970s European origins). The New Security Concept promoted the centrality of the United Nations and U.N. Charter, emphasizing multipolarity, multilateral security cooperation, dialogue, and diplomatic and economic cooperation over regional military blocs and military alliances (i.e. "collective security").

However, under Xi Jinping, China has increasingly promoted geographically more ambitious and marginally more specific security visions. These include the "New Asian Security Concept for New Progress in Security Cooperation" in 2014 and the 2017 "Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation" white paper, culminating in the broad-principles anchor concept of the GSI in 2022, and the updated 2023 version that calls for global input.

The GSI, an operational work in progress, delegitimizes the United States' collective and highly material security approach. Unlike the U.S. security order, the GSI links security with development and emphasizes non-traditional security issues. The GSI may shape perceptions and principles across Asia and the globe, particularly among those disillusioned with the U.S.-dominated international security order and those who want to avoid a destabilizing Sino-U.S. showdown. It may gain traction in Central and West Asia and parts of South and Southeast Asia, undermining the United States' role and vision for an Asian security order.

#### The Realities Behind China's Security Vision

Zooming out from the regional to the continental, in a sense, China is forced to adhere to an open-ended multilateralist vision for Asia's security order, for reasons of scope and geography, civilizational diversity, geopolitics, power balancing, and legitimacy. From a security lens, China needs to consider the role of 14 diverse land neighbors and a range of maritime neighbors.

These neighbors include three great/major powers (Russia, India, and Japan), four nuclear-armed states (Russia, India, Pakistan, and North Korea), a "recalcitrant" North Korea, a rising Vietnam, two great technological powers (Japan and South Korea), and the increasingly more-networked U.S. alliance system. From a maritime perspective, contrary to the United States, Europe, and India, China is "boxed in"

I security allies and partners.

Moreover, unlike Europe and the U.S. in their respective continents, China must deal with the wardens of four civilizations with distinct characteristics and aspirations: Hindu, Islamic, Orthodox, and Western through the U.S. presence

and influence – all spread over a gigantic terrestrial and maritime expanse.

In addition to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, there are regional flashpoints and territorial disputes, arms races, intense regional and extra-regional geopolitical rivalry, and an increasing range of non-traditional security threats. Furthermore, many actors, such as India and ASEAN, seek to absorb and dilute Chinese centrality in Asian security order-building through multilateralism.

China's Global South-Oriented Non-Western Forum Outreach: A Game Changer?

Operating in such a challenging environment, China creatively seeks to create a new Asian security order. One vital way has been to financially and geopolitically influence the Global South countries via outreach through non-Western-led forums such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), as well as through its widespread Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) – not just an infrastructure project but a geopolitical tool to undermine the U.S.-led order. Then there is the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), the pan-Asian security forum with the largest number of Asian participants, which China is looking to transform into a security-oriented multilateral platform. Notably, both CICA and the SCO have greater resonance in continental Asia.

These forums have indeed become the fulcrum of China's Global South wooing. The expansion of the SCO and BRICS, as well as the growing interest in being included in these forums (Argentina's rejection of the BRICS membership notwithstanding), is being heralded in the Chinese media as a sign of "political autonomy" for the developing world.

In the era of the receding multilateralism and resurgence of dormant wars (in Eastern Europe and West Asia, to name two), as well as the increasing importance of middle/smaller states to major powers, the argument is compelling enough. Moreover, China projects itself as a developing country – something Xi emphasized at the 2023 BRICS summit. To capitalize on the developmental aspects with continuous stress on building a "shared future for mankind" through solidifying bilateral relations is a part of this Chinese narrative. This was on display in Xi's recent visit to Europe, particularly to Serbia and Hungary, if not France.

There is a bit of a contradiction here, as Beijing's self-identification with the marginalized Global South is somewhat at odds with China's financial clout, which is what makes it an attractive partner. Nevertheless, could such a collaboration lead to an Asian security order?

It's unlikely, given Asia's sheer geographic size and the multitude of actors, large and small, including extra-regional actors such as the U.S., the EU, and the U.K. For example, throughout maritime Asia, China operates in a gray area between complicity with and resistance to the U.S.-led security order. The latter's perceived legitimacy by regional countries is robust going by the "exceptional durability" of the U.S. alliances/partnerships and its track record in sustaining a safe Asian maritime environment since the end of World War II.

Now, as the U.S. security architecture seeks to balance China, Beijing has struggled to undermine this legitimacy. Given China's claims over most of the South China Sea (now demarcated by a 10-dash line), incursions into disputed waters, and lack of experience in providing public security goods or security guarantees to other states, why would Asian states unreservedly give up a long-time security guarantor, the United States, for an untested China? As a result, China needs a sound strategic alternative to the status quo. Even then, China must accept a multipolar maritime Asia that includes the United States and other major powers, including Russia, India, and ASEAN. Beijing's open-ended and processual-oriented security visions reflect pragmatic awareness and acceptance of this reality. However, a plural Asia where external actors, such as the United States, play a limited role would be Xi's (and the Chinese Communist Party's) strongly preferred outcome.

In sum, even as China progressively enhances the institutional capacity and membership of preferred and near-exclusively Asian security platforms such as CICA and the SCO and conceptualizes newer forms of security initiatives and principles such as common security, it is to be seen to what degree its GSI reverberates among Asia's political and security elites. Xi's "Asia for Asians" call at CICA 2014 mostly fell on deaf ears, but we shouldn't automatically expect the same from the GSI.

### **China's Supposed "Change" in Policy Towards Chinese Overseas: Nothing to See Here**

17 May, 2024, Fulcrum, Leo Suryadinata

For decades, China sought to blur the distinction between foreign nationals of Chinese descent (huaren) and Chinese nationals living outside China (huaqiao). This was understandable, given Beijing's desire to tap on the former to pursue China's national interests. Recently, a senior Chinese official appeared to indicate, at least theoretically, that Beijing has had a change of heart. But there is more than meets the eye.

Liu Jianchao's remarks received a lot of mainstream Chinese media coverage that raised expectations of

a change in China's overall policy towards Chinese overseas. Liu, the Minister of the International Department of the Chinese Communist Party of China and a prospective foreign minister, touched on the topic during a Future China dialogue chaired by Lee Huay Leng, the Editor-in-Chief of the Chinese Media Group (which is owned by SPH Media).

At the dialogue, Lee enquired if China recognised that Southeast Asian Chinese regarded cultural identity (wenhua rentong) and political identity (zhengzhi rentong) differently. Liu answered that China understands that Southeast Asians of Chinese descent (often called huaren or huayi) possess separate identifications. Their political identification lies with the Southeast Asian country where they have acquired citizenship. Hence, the Southeast Asian country is their "fatherland" (zuguo). However, they possess some cultural identification with China as the country is their ancestral land (zujiguo). He stated that China views political loyalty as separated from cultural links. However, Liu noted that these ethnic Chinese can serve as a bridge between China and Southeast Asia. He added that there are Chinese nationals living overseas (huaqiao). These huaqiao possess both political and cultural loyalty to China. He noted that huaqiao should abide by the laws of the country they reside in and that their legal rights will be duly protected by China.

The discussion about the loyalty of Southeast Asian Chinese is significant due to the recent case of businessman Philip Chan, a Singapore citizen of 30 years who was classified as a "Politically Significant Person" because he was assessed by Singapore authorities to have shown susceptibility to being influenced by foreign actors, and willingness to advance their interests. In 2023, Chan was a "representative of overseas Chinese" at China's National People's Congress and had remarked to the Chinese media after the Congress that it is the responsibility of Chinese overseas "to tell China's story well" and serve the interests of China because their futures are linked to China. As a "Politically Significant Person", Chan would need to report the political donations he receives and explain his association with a foreign country. Indeed, with the rise of China, some huaren have identified with Beijing, forgetting their political loyalty to their adopted country.

Chan could be, as defined by Liu, playing the role of a bridge (qiaoliang). But it is not easy to be a bridge between a Southeast Asian state and China. Citizens of a Southeast Asian state can (and should) only serve the national interests of the country that they belong to. This national interest includes national security, territorial integrity, economic benefits and welfare of the people, and national values or

ideology. While the national interests of China and some Southeast Asian states can sometimes converge, they can also be in conflict at times. In the case of the latter, huaren should defend the interests of their Southeast Asian country.

"... under Xi, there appears to be a stronger momentum to appeal to Chinese overseas to support China. This is evidenced by the OCAO being placed under the United Front Work Department since 2018, the practice of inviting huaqiao and huaren to Chinese business association conventions, and the annual invitations to huaqiao and huaren as representative of overseas Chinese at China's Two Sessions parliamentary meetings."

Liu's reference to loyalty to citizenship-country – the country that huaren have adopted the nationality of – appears to differ from the policy introduced when Hu Jintao came to power. Hu sought to blur the distinction between huaren and huaqiao. Subsequently, the administration of Xi Jinping appealed to Chinese overseas in Southeast Asia and beyond to assist China economically and serve the national interests of China. To both Hu and Xi, Chinese overseas, regardless of their citizenship, are regarded as a part of the Chinese nation. This indicated that Beijing sought to blur the distinction between huaqiao and huaren.

There are many instances of such appeals. They can be found in this author's *The Rise of China and the Chinese Overseas*. In April 2012, Li Yinze, the chairman of the Beijing Branch Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (OCAO, or Qiaoban) delivered a speech at the Indonesian Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Jakarta, appealing to young Chinese Indonesians to learn Mandarin "to strengthen their identification with the Chinese Nation". He also noted that Chinese Indonesians should not be afraid as there is a strong China backing them. In September 2014, Qiu Yangping, the chairperson of OCAO, made a speech at the Indonesians of Chinese Descent Association (INTI) conveying a similar message. In June 2014, President Xi talked about a "Big Chinese Family" (zhonghua da jiating), thus including foreign citizens of Chinese descent (huaren) at the 7th Conference of World Federation of Huaqiao Huaren Associations.

While Mr Liu might appear to be taking a different line from Hu and Xi, Beijing's policy of blurring the distinction between huaqiao and huaren remains unchanged. In fact, under Xi, there appears to be a stronger momentum to appeal to Chinese overseas to support China. This is evidenced by the OCAO being placed under the United Front Work Department since 2018, the practice of inviting huaqiao and huaren to Chinese business association conventions, and the annual invitations to huaqiao and huaren as representatives of overseas Chinese at China's Two

Sessions parliamentary meetings. Most recently, the 2024 “Chinese New Year Gala Performance” (“四海同春”全球华侨华人春节大联欢) constituted an event that was specifically directed at huaqiao and huaren globally. In view of the above, Liu’s remarks should be seen in context. It does not constitute a change in China’s policy towards Chinese overseas. In fact, he was merely responding to a question with a politically correct answer.

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Editor’s Note: The term “overseas Chinese”, according to Professor Wang Gungwu, is the direct translation of huaqiao, referring to Chinese nationals who live outside China. Prof Wang suggests that “Chinese overseas” be used to refer to “all Chinese living abroad, both Chinese nationals and ethnic Chinese” (i.e. huaqiao and huaren, or foreign nationals of Chinese descent).

### **Xi Jinping’s strongman politics is China’s ‘new normal’**

17 May 2024, The Hill, Joshua Eisenman and Thomas S. Sexton

After Xi Jinping took power in China in 2012, he promptly began a series of purges and ideological crackdowns that have set the tone for his rule.

To some experts, this is only a temporary problem. According to them, Xi Jinping’s strongman politics represent a deviation from China’s long-term path of reform and opening up, a reference to the relatively liberal economic and political policies begun under Deng Xiaoping more than four decades ago. In this optimistic view it is possible, perhaps even likely, that the next Chinese leader will revert back to this policy. Because Xi cannot rule forever, they argue, more liberal-minded Chinese and foreigners can simply wait him out.

For instance, long-time China-watchers David Lampton and Thomas Finger maintain that Chinese politics has two distinct governance traditions: one that prioritizes “national and regime security over economic growth” and the other that prioritizes “the gains to be made through interdependence and openness.” In their telling, Xi Jinping “embraces the first,” while a future Chinese leader might well opt for the second.

The University of Hong Kong’s Jiwei Ci agrees that “there is no reason to believe that political affairs will not resume their ordinary course in a post-Xi China.” So does Robert Daly, the Kissinger Chair at the Wilson Center. He argues that Xi “represents a major strand in the Chinese braid — the nationalist, isolationist, paranoid, totalitarian strand. But there are other strands — including that of liberal internationalists — that are equally thick. They are just

not in the ascendancy right now.” He makes the case that “Chinese progressives have not gone away” and that “the pendulum will swing again.”

But the hope that Xi Jinping’s increasingly totalitarian China is likely to “swing” back toward liberalization after his eventual passing is almost certainly fool’s gold.

This is because what some see as different “strands” of governance are not as distinct as they might appear. It is worth remembering that party cadres overwhelmingly blessed Xi Jinping’s accession, not because they hoped he would liberalize the country, but because they wanted a strong leader to clean up their system.

Back in 2011 and 2012, corruption and rent-seeking were endemic, eating away at party legitimacy. As a result, a consensus emerged both within the Chinese Communist Party and among the populace that it was necessary to crack down on malfeasance, enhance party cohesion, reinvigorate ideology and reassert control over the economic sphere.

“The swift shift from collective leadership to strongman rule during Xi Jinping’s early years in office...was the result of a widely shared consensus among China’s ruling elite that the regime was facing a severe crisis that necessitated a return to such rule,” explains Nimrod Baranovitch. Indeed, as Yu Zeyuan of Singapore’s Lianhe Zaobao newspaper observes: “Xi seized on the people’s abhorrence of corruption, and with unprecedented boldness. This struck fear among the corrupt as well as his opponents within the party, and won him widespread praise.”

Simply put, the selection of a strongman was very much part of the plan, not a deviation from it.

It has also become a common refrain that Xi Jinping’s authoritarian governance is a departure from that of predecessors Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, who instead sought to balance power among competing voices. This argument presumes that China’s past leaders would not have preferred to have the type of unitary control that Xi now exercises. In fact, all three struggled with rancorous factional politics and power-sharing arrangements that obliged them to make concessions to rivals.

Throughout the 1980s, Deng Xiaoping’s cycles of economic and political openness and tightening were the result not of his preference for collaboration and compromise, but rather the necessity to navigate competing pressures from the rivalrous conservative and liberal members of his coalition. Hu Jintao was also compelled to balance between his “Youth League Faction” and Jiang Zemin’s powerful “Shanghai Faction.”

Indeed, these competing elements within the party did constrain executive decision making. But in Beijing, these limitations were widely seen as hurdles



16 May, 2024, Taipei Times

to, rather than aspects of, effective governance. There was also a profound sense of disappointment in China's leader at the time, Hu Jintao, who was regularly criticized for his "inaction." "China is nothing close to harmonious," Zhang Ming of Renmin University lamented as Hu was stepping down in 2012. Conflicts and contradictions have become worse. In fact it is reaching a crisis point."

Seen in this light, it is not Xi Jinping's desire to consolidate decision-making in his own hands that distinguishes him from his predecessors, but rather his success in exerting his authority over his unwieldy comrades.

Furthermore, the foundations of China's extensive internet controls — which Xi Jinping has built upon — were created in the early 2000s under Hu.

"Hu's regime...showed little tolerance towards political opposition, rounding up the most vocal dissidents and social activists, putting them in prison, under house arrest or making them disappear for weeks," as CNN reported back in 2012.

Under Hu, the party also kept traditional media outlets on a leash while expanding its supervision over the hundreds of millions of bloggers who were forced to register using their real names. Xi has invested in the social surveillance and control mechanisms established by his predecessors, who were hardly supporters of free expression.

Indeed, perhaps the most important reason to resist the siren song of unfounded optimism about China's future political trajectory is the unprecedented power and scale of the country's AI-driven techno-totalitarianism. China now has hundreds of millions of cameras linked to supercomputers that can identify persons of interest to the state in real time. These systems are now fully institutionalized and deeply integrated with the security state at every level.

It is hard to imagine how even the most liberal-minded future Chinese leader could uproot such a system. Rather, with each passing day, China's high-tech surveillance systems (from payment systems to ride hailing to shopping and food delivery) will collect ever more amounts and types of personal data. And if China remains a techno-totalitarian state, it cannot, by definition, become a more free and open society.

Rather than go "back to the future" after Xi (who may yet rule for decades), China is unlikely to liberalize. In the absence of a succession plan, the reins of power are most likely to end up in the hands of a Chinese version of Vladimir Putin — some currently anonymous apparatchik within the security state apparatus who understands how to wield power in the system.

Chinese President Xi Jinping (习近平) is attempting to create an alternative international world order to the US-dominated model. China has benefited hugely from the current order since former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping (邓小平) opened up its economy five decades ago.

Countries can be categorized as continental or maritime, and to a great degree this determines their optimum foreign policy. China is continental, as is Russia. The US initially followed a continental foreign policy, before it settled on a maritime model. The British empire was so successful because a tiny island kingdom built a formidable naval presence.

The US-dominated world order, stabilized by its maritime policy of ensuring unobstructed trade and shipping passage and therefore wealth creation, helped the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) achieve its impressive feat of lifting millions of Chinese out of poverty. Xi now appears to believe he can now move on in creating a new order he believes would benefit China in ways that the current model does not. This is one framework in which one can understand the apparently self-destructive approach that the CCP has taken under Xi.

Xi has just returned from a five-day trip to Europe, where he visited France, Serbia and Hungary, countries relatively friendly to China.

French President Emmanuel Macron's emphasis on European "strategic autonomy" coheres with Xi's vision of a multipolar world; Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic, and Hungarian President Tamas Sulyok and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban rolled out the red carpet. One could say the trip was successful, but there is a sense in which Xi was in damage limitation mode, mitigating the foreign policy missteps of the past few years that continue to alienate China from many European countries.

Xi has sought to achieve a network of trade connections and allies with his audacious Belt and Road Initiative. This has been successful to a degree, but has also created complications and cannot compete with the free flow of trade in the international order he seeks to replace.

Closer to home, Xi seems to be building a navy not to protect a maritime order, but to consolidate an extension of his continental holdings. Many believe his ambitions go beyond the annexation of Taiwan and control of the near coastal waters, and regional powers are on tenterhooks.

US academic Sarah Paine predicted six years ago in a speech to the Hudson Institute that this "territory grab" would lead to the formation of an opposing alliance system that would present the US with a

perfect opportunity to consolidate its own influence in the area.

Paine also said that no continental power in its right mind would consider opening up two fronts of conflict, and yet Xi has angered India to the west and allowed a US-affiliated opposing alliance to form in maritime neighbors to China's east.

The joint US-Philippines exercises that took place between April 22 and Wednesday last week is an indicator of such an alliance. France and Australia also took part in the exercises, but the list of 14 observers, including Brunei, Canada, Germany, the UK, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, would have been considering how they would deal with a crisis in the West Philippine Sea, which could easily spill into the Taiwan Strait.

Many of these countries would be expected to help the US and Philippines out due to the web of security alliances between them. Taiwan, too, would be expected to offer assistance, just as it would hope that the web of alliances would kick in should China attack Taiwan.

Xi seems to be willing to make things difficult for himself just to prove a point.

### **Himalaya in Dilemma**

16 May, 2024, Khabarhub, Binoj Basnyat

Just a month after India and the US concluded the 18th edition of their joint military exercise 'Yudh Abhyas' in the eastern Himalayas, held in Auli, Uttarakhand from November 16th to December 2nd, 2022, another clash occurred between Chinese and Indian forces in Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh, in the western Himalayas on December 9th, 2022.

This event once again underscores the significant strategic and geostrategic consequences for prominent world powers and the South Asian region. It reiterates Beijing and New Delhi's appeals and claims regarding borders, as well as the diplomatic stance of smaller nations on such occurrences, which steer long-term political, economic collaboration, and political-security cooperation.

The Himalayan region, covering a disputed border of 3,379 kilometers (2,100 miles) between China and India, constitutes the largest disputed border in the world.

China controls 38,000 sq km of territory that New Delhi also claims in the west, while to the east, India holds 90,000 sq km that Beijing claims as its own.

However, the far western Himalayan region bordering Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as the far eastern Himalayan region with Myanmar, remain relatively silent but not peaceful.

Power competition persists in the far west with China-Iran-Russia and in the eastern Himalayas with China-India spheres of influence.

The central sub-region bordering Bhutan and Nepal also experiences disputes, though they are not publicly acknowledged.

Interestingly, while political tensions simmer in Sino-Indo relations, economic ties have transcended, with China becoming India's top trading partner in FY2024 with USD 118.4 billion in two-way commerce, according to the Global Trade Research Initiative.

India's exports to China rose by 8.7 percent to USD 16.67 billion, while imports increased by 3.24 percent to USD 101.7 billion.

Conversely, exports to the US dipped slightly by 1.32 percent to USD 77.5 billion, and imports decreased by about 20 percent to USD 40.8 billion, whereas Washington was the top trading partner during 2022-23. In December 2022, the US Embassy in New Delhi tweeted that the joint military exercise reinforces commitment to the Indo-Pacific Region, improves interoperability, and takes the US-India partnership to new heights.

The Indian Army also mentioned the synergy between both armies.

Yudh Abhyas is conducted annually with the aim of exchanging best practices, tactics, techniques, and procedures between the armies.

The October 2021 exercise was conducted at Joint Base Elmendorf Richardson, Alaska.

South Asia, with almost two billion people, emerging powers, important shipping routes, and sensitive autonomous regions, is in a geopolitically imperative position in both maritime and continental realms.

It has expanding economic-political-security strategic paradigms, leading the region into the Indo-Pacific as a sub-region of disputation flanked by small and big powers.

The rivalry between Asia's biggest powers, China and India, reveals itself in many spheres, despite both being rising powers, nuclear-armed, with large populations and political ambitions as global players. New Normal in the Himalayas

End of the colonial period in South Asia in the mid-1940s, the annexation of Tibet in 1950 by China, India and Pakistan's long-running disputes over Jammu and Kashmir, and cross-border terrorism with a number of wars, ongoing conflicts, and military standoffs.

The 1962 war between China and India, in addition to the aspirations of China and India in shaping the imminent geostrategic environment, has been the basis for border disputes that could garner attention for domestic nationalist politics and external trepidations.

The mutually acceptable 2003 Agreement on the political parameters guiding principles for the settlement of India-China Boundary questions was signed on 11 April 2005 after five meetings of the Special Representatives, which were initiated in 1981.

Border incidents resurfaced in 2013, such as the Depsang incursion or Daulat Beg Oldi incident near the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

The 2014 standoff in the LAC, later withdrawn to pre-September positions after three weeks, even while President Xi Jinping was on a State visit to India, signed 12 bilateral agreements.

The year 2014 was declared as the Year of China-India Friendly Exchanges, issuing a Joint Statement on Building an Even Closer Partnership for Development.

In 2015, both were locked in confrontation in the Burtse area of the Depsang plains of Ladakh, where Indian troops destroyed a Chinese surveillance tower.

Though skirmishes were evident, four occurrences of strategic significance were evident that have plunged the Sino-Indian relationship.

In June 2017, a 73-day Doklam standoff of territory claimed by both Bhutan, an Indian ally, and China ended in August with the commitment of 1949 and replaced the 2007 "New Friendship Treaty" between Bhutan and India.

The 1959 Tibetan uprising and the 14th Dalai Lama's arrival in India inscribe the significance of the Bhutan-China border. Donglong, Doklam, is an area disputed between Bhutan and China located near the tri-junction with India.

Bhutan's border with Tibet has never been officially recognized nor demarcated. Bhutan withdrew its representative from Lhasa with the 17-point agreement between the Tibetan Government and the central government of the People's Republic of China.

China claims Doklam based on the 1890 "convention of Calcutta between Britain and China with acceptance from former Indian Prime Minister (PM) Jawaharlal Nehru and showing large parts of Bhutanese territory as part of China in the maps of 1958.

Bhutan stresses that it was neither a party nor was consulted before signing, though the boundary talks began in 1984 with an agreement reached in 1988 and 1998 to discourage the use of force and encourage adherence to peaceful means.

Xi Jinping and PM Modi reiterated on the sidelines that having a good relationship was in the interest of both nations with a 'forward-looking' approach and closer communication between defense and security personnel being a necessity during the 9th Brazil-

Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) summit in September 2017.

Second, the eastern Ladakh border standoff erupted in May 2020 in the Pangong Lake area followed by a clash in the Galwan Valley in June 2020.

In December 2022, the Tawang Sector in northeastern Arunachal Pradesh on the Line of Actual Control witnessed another clash between the Chinese and the Indian military, evidence of a serious military conflict between the two sides after four and a half decades.

Lastly, a 'new' map was brought to light by China in August 2023 claiming northeastern Arunachal Pradesh as well as the disputed Aksai Chin Plateau, which was dismissed by Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar.

Nepal has urged China to use Nepal's official map, in addition to revising the map that places Lipulekh, Kalapani, and Limpiyadhura as part of Indian territory.

The decision to print a new NRS 100 currency note with a map showing the territories of Lipulekh, Limpiyadhura, and Kalapani comes barely a few months after ruling Maoist Centre Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal forged a leftist alliance with the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist Leninist), along with a few other fringe parties, in the federal parliament.

India's Foreign Minister Jaishankar expressed dissatisfaction, labeling Nepal's move as unilateral.

He said, "Our position is clear, even if the map changes, the reality on the ground does not change."

The new normal is manifested with 'No War' and 'No Peace,' stressing the 'Five Fingers of Tibet,' attributed to Mao Zedong in his 1940 speech, as relevant to Chinese 21st-century foreign policy.

The founding chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, Mao, termed Bhutan and Nepal as China's tributary states on November 15, 1939.

Tibet is considered China's right-hand palm, with five fingers on its periphery: Ladakh, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, and the North-East Frontier Agency or Arunachal Pradesh.

Bhutan, Nepal, and Sikkim were claimed as suzerainty and asserted by the Chinese amban in Tibet in 1908, who wrote to the Nepalese authorities that Nepal and Tibet, "being united like brothers under the auspices of China, should work in harmony for mutual good," in the face of British opposition.

China's Strategic Opening Out

From 1950 to 1959 to 2013, a series of strategic proceedings occurred, ranging from annexation to attempts by the Government of Tibet to gain international recognition, efforts to modernize the military, military conflicts in the Chamdo area of western Kham, the Seventeen Point Agreement by

the government of Tibet under Chinese pressure, to the Tibet uprising and the announcement of the Belt and Road Initiative.

These demonstrate political aspirations to the south, west, and along the Himalayas, especially in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Tajikistan. With the foundation of the CCP and the 1978 economic reform, along with accessible geography, China has managed to transform into a new economic, military, and political power. A joint research report by a five-country think tank team, including the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China, released that China's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is estimated to surpass that of the US, with the country becoming the world's largest economy by around 2035. With the growth of its economy, China has emerged as a global actor.

South Asia has two strategic gateways, through the land, maritime, or both. Maldives and Sri Lanka are in the maritime region, while Afghanistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Myanmar are in the continental region, and Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Myanmar have both maritime and land routes. Geostrategic measures involve bilateral, trilateral, quadrilateral, multilateral, and global initiatives.

China provides economic assistance as a key creditor and in the form of grants. According to the World Bank's international debt report, developing countries owe about USD 180 billion.

Chinese loans to Pakistan rose from USD 7.6 billion in 2016 to USD 26.5 billion in 2022, accounting for 72 percent of the total external debt and 57 percent of debt repayment revenue.

Sri Lanka defaulted on its foreign loans, triggering massive turmoil, and bankruptcy rose from USD 4.6 billion in 2016 to USD 8.8 billion in 2022, accounting for 57 percent of the total external debt and 54 percent of debt repayment revenue.

Bangladesh's loan is USD 6 billion, Maldives' is USD 1.2 billion, and Nepal's is USD 0.26 billion.

Though small in figure, it accounts for 24 percent, 68 percent, and 27 percent of foreign liabilities, respectively.

Nepal's PM Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) has said that the process has been initiated to ask China to convert the Pokhara International Airport loan into a grant to ease the financial burden of the USD 215 million loan, out of the USD 305 million with 2-3 percent interest from the Export-Import Bank, with repayment in 25 years, while other international monetary institutions provide loans with interest rates ranging from 0.25-0.75 percent.

The Asian Development Bank and the 12-member Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries

(OPEC) for International Development contributed USD 37 million and USD 11 million, respectively.

An example is the arrival of Chinese experts in Kathmandu for a feasibility study of the China-Nepal cross-border railway in December 2022.

## Conclusion

Landlocked, sea-locked, and all countries in South Asia have choices with vulnerability and invincibility, while the two Asian giants' regional strategic interests are politically competing, economically cooperating, and militarily confronting in the Himalayas.

Deepening cooperation between India and the West, particularly the US, in addition to the US-led West with the rest, has made China feel on edge, and the risk of new outbreaks of fighting perseveres.

China's economic strength, political conviction, and military engagement have expanded in India's neighborhood with an all-weather relationship with Pakistan and regime-centered relationships with other South Asians, externally balancing India.

Xi's continuation for more years or decades after the removal of the two-term limit on the presidency, endorsed by the annual sitting of the National People's Congress in 2018, and the likelihood of Modi 3.0 with the elections taking place, will present a sterner test than the last decade, with heightened nationalism and geopolitical tensions.

Both Beijing and New Delhi appeal to Eastern governments of their preference in South Asia.

A political success will, in fact, serve to divide and fragment South Asian nations domestically.

This will function for the goodwill of the favoring power rather than addressing their strategic necessities and falling into the strategic trap.

Together with resuming dialogue and reopening communications between Xi and Modi and through existing mechanisms like the 1996 "mutual and Equal security" to reaffirm de-escalations in the Himalayan borders.

It is arduous when Beijing depicts the border situation as normal and New Delhi apprehensive.

At the same time, the small states in South Asia should strengthen state institutions, assemble a strong civil society that is besieged to contend with implication, create experts to match implications of geopolitical activism to policy, and augment local awareness of the extent of 'privileged detained' political status.

Nepal, as a vulnerable country facing special challenges as a buffer between the opening and the potency of big power politicking on one side and, on the other, domestic capacity to manage and palliate political-economic-diplomatic-security risks.

With vulnerability, Nepal should also engage in infrastructure development, connectivity in

international relations with minilateral and multilateral environments.

Bilateral undertakings will assist neutrality and will avoid being part of the upcoming global bipolarity between China, a communist nation, and the US, a democracy, and the risks that rivalry can pose.

This will navigate from plunging into the strategic trap in addition to strategic outreach and policy recommendations that manifest domestic political and economic reality as big powers' competition prevails in South Asia, questioning national credibility.

Nepal must build on with the traditional and customary practices, analyzing the domestic implication with India and other South Asian neighbors and at the same time secure opportunities with China and other donor nations, particularly the US-led West, in its strides to addressing the people's aspirations and national obligations with no compromise on national interest or falling into the geopolitical long game.

(The author is a Strategic Analyst, Major General (Retd) of the Nepali Army, and is associated with Rangsit University, Thailand).

### **China removes the PLASSF and establishes ISF: Implications for India**

15 May, 2024, ORF, Kartik Bommakanti

The People's Liberation Army Strategic Support (PLASSF) has been disbanded. In late 2015, the People's Republic of China (PRC) under President Xi Jinping announced the creation of the PLASSF along with Peoples Liberation Army Rocket Force (PLARF), which were two new services. The PLARF which was the erstwhile Second Artillery Force (SAF), in the latest shake-up, has not been dissolved and still retains command authority. In addition to these two new services, with now only the PLARF surviving, five Theatre Commands (TCs) were also set up in 2015-16. The PLASSF was a unified service that integrated the Chinese military's space, cyber, electronic, and psychological warfare capabilities and its replacement is the Information Support Force (ISF). Xi said that the new force would be "...a brand-new strategic arm of the PLA and a key underpinning of coordinated development and application of the network information system", which he added would help the People's Liberation Army (PLA) "...fight and win in modern warfare."

What brought about the dissolution of the PLASSF and its replacement—the Information Support Force (ISF)? Three general explanations are proffered. First is that the PLASSF was a strategic force that needed to be brought under greater oversight and control of the Central Military Control (CMC)—the top political and military decision-making body in the PRC led by President Xi Jinping. A second factor and a corollary

to this bureaucratic impediment was the inherent rigidity of the PLASSF to the extent that Theatre Commands (TCs) had to secure its approval for resources or assets which the PLASSF could block or delay because it enjoyed co-equal command status and authority with the TCs. In a nutshell, the shift is also due to the need for limiting excessive control. A third and final reason is the experience of the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, which has visibly demonstrated to the Chinese that flexibility in the release and the use of cyber-, electronic-, and space-borne resources more efficiently was a necessity, acting as compelling drivers behind the change for operational effectiveness in the battlespace.

The People's Liberation Army Cyberspace Force and Aerospace Force have been created, bringing the number of forces to four, which includes the People's Liberation Army Logistics Support Force (PLALSF) whose establishment predates the current transformation.

Whatever the ostensible reasons for the PLASSF's axing, the constituent elements of the newly established ISF are network information systems and communications support supplemented by potential network defence. ISF is primarily geared toward protecting and defending Chinese networks against external intrusions and attacks. Additionally, the People's Liberation Army Cyberspace Force and Aerospace Force have been created, bringing the number of forces to four, which includes the People's Liberation Army Logistics Support Force (PLALSF) whose establishment predates the current transformation. Now the TCs, which are crucial for the defence of Chinese territory and offensive operations including overseas missions, can avail the services of each of the arms more smoothly and efficiently. What is not evident is whether additional divisions have been instituted such as the separation of Cyber Warfare and Electronic Warfare (EW) and presumably the Cyber Force will be the new arm that oversees and pursues integrated CW-EW missions and whose resources the TCs can avail. The combined applications of CW-EW are likely to be more pronounced, especially in the context of what the Chinese call "intelligicised warfare" which will involve greater use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and automation in warfare.

#### **Implications for India**

The changes that we see today relate mostly to Command and Control (C2), and the TCs' easier access to the capabilities and resources which the erstwhile PLASSF controlled. If anything, the reshuffle is an effort to leverage cyber, EW, Space and counterspace capabilities for their effective application in multi-domain operations. Even prior to the latest rejig, the Chinese invested heavily in cyber



and space capabilities as the 2024 Chinese defence budget demonstrates, which witnessed an increase of 7.2 percent despite low Chinese economic growth. India should now be even more alert and prepared simply because the capabilities of the Chinese relevant to cyber weapons, EW, space and counterspace systems have received a significant amount of investment for the pursuit of joint operations and the dissolution of the PLASSF has nothing to do with Chinese capabilities in the space, cyber, and EW areas per se. They are not just geared for an invasion of Taiwan, the PRC's cyber, EW, space and counterspace capabilities can be used in a military contingency against India. Indeed, the Chinese quest to match and redress the gaps in their cyber and space capabilities against the Americans for a Taiwan invasion can easily be shifted to service the People's Liberation Army's Western Theatre Command (WTC) military operations for offensive and defensive missions vis-à-vis India, due to the "fungibility" of cyber, EW, space and counterspace assets. China's aim to match or even surpass the United States (US) has opened up a significant gap between China and India in the space and cyber domains.

India defeated the intrusion, but the lack of adequate Indian space assets was evident and it was able to defeat it because the US extended its superior space surveillance assets.

One of the most visible manifestations of this was the American assistance to India when Chinese forces attacked Yangtse in the Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh in December 2022. India defeated the intrusion, but the lack of adequate Indian space assets was evident and it was able to defeat it because the US extended its superior space surveillance assets. In the space domain, at a minimum, the space power differential is significant between India and China and reveals the extent to which Chinese space military assets are substitutable. The establishment of the ISF as well as a separate Cyber and Space force has other implications for India in that the TCs, especially the WTC, which is responsible for ground and air operations along the Sino-Indian boundary, can now access the newly established ISF, Cyber force and Aerospace force's resources more easily. To be sure, the WTC would have some organic cyber and EW assets, but the erstwhile PLASSF was too rigid in extending assistance to the TCs, which was one of the primary precipitants for the recent reorganisation. A further implication of the PRC's decision to subdivide the former PLASSF into separate forces is that it provides greater flexibility, demonstrating to Indian military planners that they need to consider how they deploy discrete assets connected to space, cyber, EW and psychological operations; where they overlap; and

where they serve as enablers and force multipliers for conventional military operations.

The Xi-led leadership's decision to disband the PLASSF should not be considered definitive, it could revive itself in another guise with possibly some of its functions amalgamated into a new service in the future.

AI is another area where India will need to pay greater attention given the Chinese commitment to "intelligicised warfare". AI can augment and render Chinese intelligence collection and cyberwarfare capabilities more effective. Last but not least, the Xi-led leadership's decision to disband the PLASSF should not be considered definitive, it could revive itself in another guise with possibly some of its functions amalgamated into a new service in the future. What is and should be instructive for Indian military planners and strategists in regard to the organisational changes implemented by the Chinese leadership is that it underlines the importance of experimentation, flexibility, and even adaptation, given what the PRC has witnessed through the recent military experience of others such as the Russians and Ukrainians in their ongoing war.

### **China doesn't need to invade to achieve Taiwanese unification**

13 May, 2024, The Hill, Dan Blumenthal and Fred Kagan

The U.S. faces the most challenging international security environment since the end of World War II.

The war in Ukraine rages even as war continues and threatens to expand in the Middle East. Meanwhile, the People's Republic of China continues to harass and intimidate its neighbors, and Washington is more acutely aware of the threat of a Chinese attack against Taiwan.

More attention to Taiwan's security is welcome, but the current public discourse remains too focused on the threat of a Chinese invasion of the island. Beijing still has other options to force unification short of invasion, including an escalation of its ongoing hybrid warfare campaign against Taiwan. U.S. policy is not well designed to deter or defeat such a strategy.

China is more likely to pursue a "short of war coercion campaign," as we call it, centered on political and economic warfare accompanied by limited kinetic action than an invasion of Taiwan for three main reasons:

First, annexing Taiwan by means short of war significantly limits possible damage to other Chinese grand strategic objectives. The People's Republic of China's long-term strategic goals are to continue to build-up what it calls its comprehensive national power and become the world's leading power. It

then aims to decisively reshape international politics and place itself at the center. Although Chinese leader Xi Jinping clearly believes that unifying Taiwan with the mainland is a key component of this grand strategy, he may be loath to risk China's march to geopolitical dominance by starting a full scale and likely global war.

Second, a short of war strategy centered on political warfare and limited kinetic action could be successful. Taiwan's most recent elections highlighted deep domestic political divisions, coinciding with a rise in skepticism of America's support. These sentiments are further reinforced by the fact that Taiwan remains internationally isolated. Taiwan status is *sui generis* in international affairs: it is a fully functioning nation-state not recognized by the international powers. This creates an opening for China's manipulation of Taiwan's understandable fears of abandonment.

Third, strategies short of war are consistent with Chinese strategic thinking and previous behavior. A number of Chinese warfighting concepts reference the utility of fighting wars using means beyond traditional applications of kinetic force. These concepts have been employed regularly in Chinese "gray zone operations" in the South and East China Seas and Taiwan Strait. Given their general success, China will likely intensify their employment in a campaign to annex Taiwan.

Our new report demonstrates that Beijing can realistically accomplish such a strategy. By adopting the mindset of Chinese strategic planners, we devised a plausible short of war coercion campaign that would let China establish political control over Taiwan without an invasion or overt military blockade.

The campaign we modeled ran for four years, from the inauguration of a new Taiwanese president through his first term. During this period, China would break the U.S.-Taiwan relationship, degrade the Taiwanese government's ability to govern, and significantly undermine the Taiwanese will to resist and U.S. desire to aid Taiwan.

We found that four years of constant Chinese air and naval incursions, a quasi-blockade, political warfare and manipulation, extensive cyber and physical sabotage of Taiwan's critical infrastructure, and deadly force on offshore islands would generate "cognitive overload" within the Taiwanese government and a sense of chaos throughout Taiwan's populace.

During the course of such a campaign, the U.S. would be inundated with Chinese information warfare and become convinced that Taiwan is not "worth" going to war over, especially following new economic deals with China. Those who are skeptical of China's ability to paralyze U.S. responses have

not been paying attention to Russia's political warfare against the U.S. since 2015, which almost led to a rupture with NATO over Ukraine. In particular, if China's campaign to inflict pain does not trigger any of the indicators and warnings of the invasion the U.S. is preparing for, the U.S. might well stay out of a Chinese coercive campaign.

In our notional campaign, after Taiwan is thrown into chaos and seemingly abandoned by its strongest ally. China then seizes the opportunity to offer "peace," promising to halt the coercion campaign and guarantee a level of autonomy in exchange for cooperation following guidelines dictated by Beijing. The Taiwanese government, despite having no desire to become part of China, chooses to end its people's suffering, agreeing to a plan that would eventually lead to the unification China desires.

The scenario outlined in our report does not represent our assessment of what we think will necessarily happen. Rather, it seeks to demonstrate that a short of war coercion scenario is realistic and highly dangerous.

There are several steps that the U.S., Taiwan, and regional allies can take to head off such a strategy. These governments must begin by clearly articulating Taiwan's sovereign rights under international law, thus combating Chinese lawfare campaigns justifying blockades and shipping inspections regimes as "internal matters."

The Taiwanese and U.S. governments should also cooperate to improve Taiwan's counter-influence and anti-subversion legal authorities and capabilities. This cooperation should extend to broader efforts to better prepare Taiwan to withstand blockades and blockade-like economic activities.

Finally, a U.S.-led coalition should impose political and economic costs to deter Chinese military intimidation efforts. For example, the answer to China's current air incursions over the Taiwan Strait should be both greater civil aviation cooperation between Taiwan and the international community and the integration of Taiwan into a regional air defense architecture. Beijing has many ways to successfully gain control of Taiwan, including intensifying its ongoing "gray zone" operations. China may seek to exploit Taiwanese vulnerabilities, primarily Taiwan's international isolation and lack of alliance relations, in a coordinated short of war coercion campaign that inflicts massive pain on Taiwanese society and prevents U.S. intervention.

By focusing on the means by which China is likely to intensify its coercion efforts, the U.S. can overcome them.

## China's sinicisation campaign puts Islamic expression on the line

13 May 2024, East Asia Forum, Hannah Theaker

China has been pursuing a 'sinicisation' policy to make Islam in China more 'Chinese', leading to transformations such as the removal of 'foreign' architectural features from mosques and the introduction of Chinese-language equivalents for Arabic 'halal' signs in restaurants. The gradual 'sinicisation' campaign led by President Xi Jinping is aimed at reducing foreign influence, by fostering an 'appropriately Chinese' formation of Islam and ensuring adherence to a state-defined level of 'Chineseness', with the ultimate goal of strengthening the supremacy of the Chinese Communist Party. The first images of Chinese mosques with their domes torn off began circulating in 2018. Soon, other news reports highlighted rare, isolated instances of public protest, in which Hui Muslims came out onto the streets to resist demolitions or forced renovations of their mosques.

Under a drive to remove aesthetic signs of the so-called 'three changes' – Arabisation, Saudization and pan-halalification – 'Arabic'-style mosques across the country have had their minarets shortened and domes removed, replaced with often incongruous pagoda-style roofs. Muslim restaurants have been required to remove their Arabic-language 'halal' signs and replace them with a Chinese-language equivalent. In early 2024, reporting by the Financial Times and a groundbreaking report by Human Rights Watch, have laid bare the nationwide scale of these renovations.

Such renovations are the most visible aspects of an unfolding campaign to secure the 'sinicisation' of Islam, a campaign intended to remove signs of foreign influence and ensure that Islam in China is appropriately 'Chinese in orientation'. The term 'sinicisation of religion' was first used by Xi Jinping in 2015, not long after the inauguration of the 2014 'Strike Hard Against Violent Terrorism' campaign in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

Following the country's ethnonational turn under President Xi Jinping, non-Han identities have been increasingly perceived as a potential threat to national stability and ethnic minorities and religious groups are policed for their adherence to a state-defined standard of 'Chineseness'.

The concept of 'sinicisation' and the idea that the 'sinicisation' of a particular group marks a level of civilisation has a long history in Chinese-language political discourse. But Xi's redeployment of the term needs to be understood in the context of recent state campaigns that have sought to explicitly link loyalty to the Party with being Chinese and a sharp move

toward assimilationist policies directed at non-Han ethnic and religious minorities.

In the rhetoric of the current campaign, Islam is implicitly a foreign religion. To be made safe, Islam must adapt to Chinese circumstances.

State narratives around the sinicisation of Islam suggest that an appropriately Chinese form of Islam had evolved over the long history of Islam in China. But in recent years, the infiltration of 'foreign forms of Islam' has caused an unacceptable deviation away from this old and appropriately sinicised Islam. The current campaign is justified as a course correction, necessary to safeguard the Chinese nation and the proper path of development, and to ensure that extremist tendencies are pre-emptively nipped in the bud.

The sinicisation of Islam is underpinned by similar logic to the mass repression and detention of Uyghurs and other Islamic minorities in Xinjiang, though the campaign has been less overtly coercive in its implementation. With the state definition of violent incidents in Xinjiang as acts of Islamic extremism and routine acts of Islamic observance by Uyghurs and other minorities seen as potential indicators of extremist tendencies, work to rectify Islamic observance across China has acquired a particular urgency.

Surveillance and detention of Muslims across Xinjiang has meant increased attention to Islamic communities elsewhere in China. It remains important to acknowledge that there have been no mass arrests to date and communities beyond Xinjiang retain some scope to practise their faith in a way that is impossible inside Xinjiang.

The scale and transformative intent underpinning the sinicisation campaign has been slow to emerge, partly as the policy has been implemented at different timelines in different regions.

The forced renovations of mosques have been accompanied by a series of interventions into the lives of mosque communities. This has ranged from measures to ensure that religious education is in line with 'socialism with Chinese characteristics', to bringing 'excellent traditional Chinese culture' into mosques and to revising translations of religious texts into Chinese. It has also entailed restrictions on teaching Arabic, controlling the appointments of religious professionals and tightened governance of mosques and the China Islamic Association.

While much less visible to the wider public, these changes have deep significance for affected communities – dictating how homes should look, how Islam should be taught and how believers should worship. Of particular concern to many are the restrictions on teaching children about Islam, which remains tightly intertwined with Hui heritage – a potentially existential threat to cultural transmission.

The nature of these interventions reveal that sincisation is about ensuring the supremacy of the Chinese Communist Party, Party ideology and a Party-backed vision of 'Chineseness'. It is about control, and, in pursuit of control, has gone far beyond the initial campaigns to remove aesthetic markers perceived as 'foreign'. The quiet closure of large numbers of mosques across Ningxia, justified in the name of reducing 'burden' on the communities supporting them, suggests that ultimately there is little place for religion or cultural plurality in Xi's vision for a modern Chinese community.

### China Threatens India's Hold Over Siachen, Kashmir As Beijing 'Creeps Into' Shaksgam Valley Using CPEC

13 May, 2024, Eurasian Times, Karan Sharma

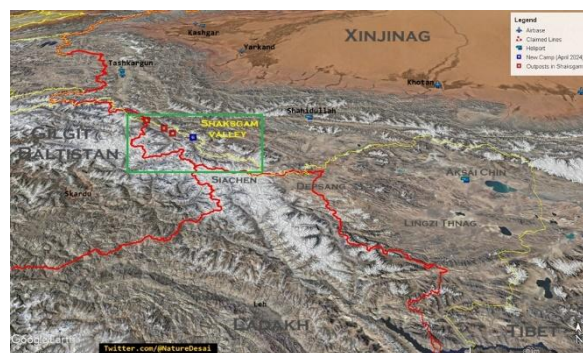
China's recent construction of a road in the Shaksgam Valley, a disputed region along the borders of the Chinese province of Xinjiang and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), has reignited tensions in the already volatile region.

The latest reports suggest that the Indian army is analyzing the strategic impact of the new road, which enters the lower Shaksgam valley from the Aghil Pass. The road infrastructure has been under development since June 2023, with construction efforts resuming in the summer of 2024.

Currently, its endpoint is a mere 30 miles from the Indian position over the Siachen Glacier. The Shaksgam Valley, part of the larger Trans-Karakoram tract, has been a contentious issue since its transfer by Pakistan to the People's Republic of China (PRC) under the 1963 Sino-Pakistan Agreement. This transfer, regarded by India as illegal, has fueled longstanding territorial disputes in the northern areas of PoK and Ladakh.

Today, the Trans-Karakoram tract has become a focal point of geopolitical significance, mainly due to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The CPEC, a flagship project under China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), aims to connect China's Xinjiang province to Pakistan's Gwadar Port through a network of energy, logistics, and transportation-related infrastructure projects.



Overview of the Shaksgam Valley relative to other important strategic areas in North Ladakh. Source: <https://twitter.com/NatureDesai>

However, the corridor passes through disputed territories of PoK, particularly Gilgit-Baltistan, which makes the Chinese-funded project unacceptable to India. This latest road construction in the lower Shaksgam Valley through the Aghil Pass has added another layer to the complex web of territorial disputes in Northern Ladakh.

The new road extending closer to the Siachen Glacier, a region of strategic importance for India due to its high altitude, which provides a dominant military position, directly challenges India's security interests in the India-Pakistan-China trisection near Siachen.

India has consistently opposed Chinese infrastructure projects in PoK, viewing them as a violation of its territorial integrity. The emergence of a second Chinese road intersection in the Karakoram, this time through the Aghil Pass in the Shaksgam Valley, represents a significant development; the pre-existing route in the PoK, i.e., National Highway 35/G-314 through the Khunjerab Pass, serves as a vital link of the CPEC, now constructing an alternative route through the Shaksgam Valley introduces a new dynamic.

There can be multiple potential objectives behind China's actions in Shaksgam, each carrying significant implications for India. One plausible objective behind China's activity in the Shaksgam Valley is to reduce its reliance on the Khunjerab Pass for the CPEC.

The existing route through the Khunjerab Pass, particularly the Karakoram Highway, is vulnerable to disruption during times of conflict, primarily due to the threat of an Indian aerial offensive.

By constructing an alternative route through the Shaksgam Valley, China aims to mitigate this vulnerability and ensure uninterrupted connectivity with Pakistan, thereby safeguarding its strategic interests.

Secondly, China's actions in the Shaksgam Valley can be interpreted as a move to assert its permanent claim over the territory. India has long contested the transfer of the Shaksgam Valley from Pakistan to



China in 1963; the recent infrastructure development in the region serves to solidify China's presence and signals to India that the transfer of the Shaksgam Valley was not merely symbolic.

Thirdly, China's activities in the Shaksgam Valley may also be aimed at neutralizing India's strategic advantage in the Karakoram and Trans-Karakoram tract, particularly due to the uninterrupted Indian presence over the Siachen Glacier since the Kargil conflict of 1999.

India's military presence in Siachen, occupying high-ground positions, has historically provided it with a strategic advantage in the Karakoram sector. By establishing infrastructure in the Shaksgam Valley, China seeks to counterbalance India's advantage and potentially pose challenges to its military posture in the area.

This reflects China's strategic calculus to recalibrate the balance of power along the disputed border regions, particularly in Northern Ladakh.



The roadhead in Lower Shaksgam: Source: <https://twitter.com/NatureDesai>

The implications of this development are concerning for India, as it brings twin threats in close proximity to the Siachen Glacier. With China now asserting its presence in the north of the valley and Pakistan maintaining its military presence to the west and south, India faces a complex security challenge that requires careful navigation and strategic planning.

While the current road is located in the lower Shaksgam Valley, further construction in the Upper Shaksgam Valley could bring Chinese posts and road infrastructure within 10 to 15 km of Siachen, posing a direct threat to India's position.

The situation is compounded by the ongoing conflict between India and China in the Depsang plains sector just to the East of Siachen, which has witnessed unprecedented mobilization by both sides since the Galwan conflict in June 2020.

As the conflict enters its fifth year, the potential for further escalation remains a cause for concern. In response to China's provocative actions in the Shaksgam Valley, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson, Randhir Jaiswal, has announced that India has lodged a formal protest with China.

Infrastructure construction in the Shaksgam Valley is not an isolated incident but part of a broader pattern of Chinese expansionism along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and its borders with neighboring countries.

Similar developments have been observed in regions such as Doklam near the India-Bhutan-China trijunction, Aksai Chin, and the Namka Chu Valley in Upper Tawang along the border of Arunachal Pradesh.

Indian strategist Brahma Chellaney has aptly characterized China's strategy as "salami-slicing," wherein it incrementally gains strategic advantages in contested areas without escalating conflicts into overt battles. This gradual but persistent approach allows China to expand its influence and alter the ground situation in its favor while avoiding significant pushback.

Moreover, recent comments by retiring Admiral John Aquilino, the former US Pacific commander, shed light on China's broader strategy of aggressive expansionism.

Admiral Aquilino has likened China's tactics to a "boiling frog" strategy, wherein it gradually raises the threshold of aggression until other nations fail to realize the critical point in a conflict. This strategy has been evident in the South China Sea, where China has incrementally militarized disputed islands and reefs, leading to heightened tensions with neighboring countries and the United States.

The situation in the Himalayan theater is no exception, as Chinese expansionist activities along the LAC demonstrate. The gradual but persistent development of military infrastructure poses a significant challenge to regional stability and security. India must remain vigilant and proactive in countering these threats, both diplomatically and militarily, to safeguard its interests and prevent further encroachments on its territory. In conclusion, China's actions in the Shaksgam Valley are part of a broader pattern of expansionism and strategic maneuvering in the region.

India's response must be robust and multifaceted, incorporating diplomatic protests, enhanced military preparedness, and closer engagement with regional partners to address the challenges of Chinese assertiveness effectively.

India must bolster its border security measures to prevent further Chinese encroachments and incursions. This may involve deploying additional troops and enhancing surveillance capabilities to deter any further attempts by China to alter the status quo.

India recently sent an additional 10,000 troops to the middle LAC sector of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand in March, just before the commencement of the national elections; this extra



strength is over and above the 50,000 troops deployed in 2021.

India can also explore applying sanctions targeting Chinese companies involved in infrastructure projects in disputed territories. By imposing economic costs on China, India can send a strong message that unilateral actions will not be tolerated.

Collaborative efforts with countries such as the United States, Japan, Australia, members of the QUAD and AUKUS can provide India with additional diplomatic leverage and intelligence support in countering Chinese aggression.

Reports of crucial American intelligence during the Galwan conflict with China strengthen the case for increased intelligence sharing and developing India's own intelligence infrastructure along the LAC and Tibet.

By adopting a comprehensive and proactive approach, India can effectively respond to Chinese transgressions in the border areas and safeguard its territorial integrity and national security interests. It is essential to send a clear message to China that any attempts to alter the status quo will be met with a robust and resolute response from India.

### **Chinese Foreign Agent was Behind New York Parade with Eric**

12 May, 2024, Newsweek, Didi Kirsten Tatlow

What has become an annual parade in mid-town Manhattan for Asian Americans was set up with the blessing of Mayor Eric Adams by the CEO of a company that is a registered foreign agent of China, according to documents obtained exclusively by Newsweek.

The findings raise new questions over Chinese influence operations in the United States, and particularly in New York, where Adams and some other top politicians have previously received campaign donations from members of groups linked to China's ruling Communist Party. Newsweek has reported on the extensive network of such groups in the U.S.

The annual Asian-American parade began in 2022 and will next take place on Manhattan's Sixth Avenue on May 19 as part of the city's "Asian-American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month".

The parade says it welcomes all Asian-Americans, but documents obtained by Newsweek show that organisers exclude groups they deem to be politically and religiously controversial – and critics of China's rulers believe that means them.

Tibetans, Taiwanese, Hong Kongers and others at odds with the Beijing leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) questioned how representative the parade was of the Asian-American

community. They had not been invited to take part, were not successful in applying, or didn't want to join as they felt unsafe, they said.

Among them was Frances Hui, founder of a community group called We The Hongkongers. She said that two weeks after applying all she had received was requests for more information, to which she had responded.

"It is obvious to me that they are trying to stall our application until they can find a way to reject us from participating," said Hui.

Hundreds of pages of emails obtained by Newsweek under a freedom of information request show the parade was set up in 2022 by Robin Mui, CEO of the Chinese-language media Sing Tao US, which was ordered by the Department of Justice to register under the Foreign Agents Registration Act in 2021. Working with Mui was Better Chinatown USA, a community organisation led by Steven Tin, the organizer of Lunar New Year events in Manhattan's Chinatown.

The parade was organized in conjunction with Adams, his Asian Affairs advisor Winnie Greco, an AAPI advisory team in the mayor's office, and other city officials.

### **Unravelling of Chinese spies' dirty work in Europe**

12 May 2024, Monitor

What you need to know:

Those who have closely watched activities of China's intelligence agents, say their key focus remains in acquiring information related to internal security, foreign and national security policymaking, scientific research, and technology.

After Sweden recently expelled a Chinese journalist on the charge of threatening the Nordic country's national security, Germany and the United Kingdom last week announced arresting six people on suspicion of spying for China. With such developments, a major question lying uppermost on everyone's mind is: Whether China is emerging as a spying superpower with Europe becoming a major hub of its espionage-related activities?

2. According to the Institute for Strategic Research, a Paris-based military think tank, China has a vast network of organisations, which include the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) and the Ministry of State Security (MSS) to carry out spying activities.

3. The French military's think tank said China's Ministry of Public Security's intelligence branch alone employs between 80,000 and 100,000 people, while the Ministry of State Security employs around 200,000 agents. However, the exact figure of agents hired by these Chinese ministries could be very high, Paul Charon, a China specialist at the

Institute for Strategic Research was quoted by The Japan Times as saying.

4. In 2020, investigations carried out by journalists Die Welt and La Stampa, based on sources from the European External Action Service (EEAS), uncovered the existence of an extensive network of Chinese intelligence agents in Brussels. At that time, there were as many as 250 Chinese intelligence officials in Brussels, making the city which hosts NATO headquarters and several European Union institutions, the capital of Chinese spies, said journalists Die Welt and La Stampa in their report in Bloomberg.

5. Those who have closely watched activities of China's intelligence agents, say their key focus remains in acquiring information related to internal security, foreign and national security policymaking, scientific research, and technology. To achieve their objective and purpose, these Chinese spies, as per experts, use various methods which include human intelligence, honey trapping, kompromat, signals intelligence and co-option of ethnic Chinese diaspora communities and associations.

6. Chinese spies' modus operandi is also different in comparison to intelligence agents from the US, Britain, Israel, and others. For example, Chinese intelligence agents recruit local officials, politicians, businessmen, academics, journalists, activists, and ethnic Chinese communities to seek information, influence policies or sabotage activities that are unfavourable to China.

7. This could be clearly seen in the case of Germany as one of the three people arrested by authorities last week for working as spies for China, belongs to the Alternative for Germany (AfD), a far-right party which is contesting elections for the European Parliament, scheduled for June this year. He has been identified as Jian G, a German national who, as per media reports, is working as an assistant for the AfD's candidate for the European Parliament elections, Maximilian Krah.

8. German prosecutors said Jian G, 43, who had dual German and Chinese citizenship passed on information about the European Parliament to Chinese intelligence. He is believed to have passed on information about negotiations and decisions made in the European parliament in January 2024. He is also suspected of spying on Chinese opposition leaders in Germany. Though details of his espionage activity are under the probe, the incident has rattled Germans. They fear he could have passed on several sensitive information to his handlers from China as he was working with Maximilian Krah since 2019, a BBC report said.

9. In 2023, Germany's security service, BfV issued an unusual warning, stating: "In recent years, China's state and party leadership has significantly

stepped up its efforts to obtain high-quality political information and to influence decision-making processes abroad." BfV has been warning publicly about the risk of trusting China since 2022, The New York Times said.

10. Arrest of German nationals for their spying activities, has proved such warnings by BfV true. Close on the heels of Jian G's arrest, two men and a woman were also detained in Germany on suspicion of their involvement in gaining information about the country's military technology.

11. However, of these three suspects, Thomas R worked as an agent for an employee of the MSS, the Chinese secret service, DW said. He allegedly obtained information about innovative technologies which could be used for military purposes, the German news outlet said. While the two others, both married couples, were arrested by German authorities as they worked very smartly to get information on the country's research on combat vessels.

12. The couple, Herwig F and Ina F, opened a front office in a German town called Dusseldorf and through it, contacted people working in the field of science and research. This way, the couple first completed a project on the operation of high-performance marine engines for use on combat ships. At the time of their arrest, as per DW, the suspects were in negotiations on other projects that could be of use for the PLA Navy.

13. These arrests took place a week after Olaf Scholz visited China. It was his second such visit since he became German Chancellor in 2021. In the West, Scholz's China visit received a fair amount of criticism as it occurred when the 27-member European Union was chalking out a comprehensive and consistent long-term "China strategy." It is all about the reduction of risks from economic dependencies on China. Germany has itself launched its China strategy in 2023.

14. But then experts give varied opinions on China's hyper intelligence gathering activities across Europe. Some say China's recent espionage activities in Germany, the UK, Netherlands, and Norway have shown that the East Asian country tries to penetrate deep into political sphere, technology companies and universities of the continent in order to manipulate its political processes through its leaders and electorate to bend them to a new world order that it has been working diligently to create.

15. Two British nationals who were arrested in March 2023 and formally charged last week with spying for China, included a former researcher for a prominent UK parliamentarian of the ruling Conservative Party. As per The Sunday Times, researcher Christopher Cash had access to several Conservative lawmakers.

16. The British Sunday newspaper report also said that the researcher had access to Security Minister Tom Tugendhat and Foreign Affairs Committee Chairwoman Alicia Kearns among others.

17. In March, as per Reuters, the British government summoned the Charge D' Affairs of the Chinese embassy in London after accusing Chinese hackers of stealing data from Britain's elections watchdog and carrying out a surveillance operation against lawmakers. But despite such clear-cut involvement of China in political manipulations in Britain and Germany, Beijing has denied any wrongdoing on its part. "As for the so-called Chinese spy cases, we have stressed multiple times that the so-called threat of Chinese spies is purely baseless. We firmly oppose groundless accusations and vilification against China," Wang Wenbin, China's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson, said.

18. This denial, however, cannot obfuscate the fact that Beijing has made Europe a hub of its espionage activities. On April 18, the Dutch military intelligence agency, MIVD said in its annual report that Chinese spies had targeted the Dutch semiconductor, aerospace and maritime industries. While the British Intelligence Chief recently maintained that in the UK alone, Chinese spies had approached more than 20,000 people for providing information through networking platforms such as LinkedIn. Similarly, Norway's intelligence service earlier in this year said Chinese spies operate all over the continent and are involved in political and industrial espionage. Recent arrests in Germany and the UK point to this fact.

### **How China's latest government overhaul is shaping up, and what it says about the Communist Party's priorities**

12 May, 2024, SCMP, William Zheng

- New bodies dedicated to issues such as financial risk and social stability are being established at a central and local level
- Shake-up is seen by some analysts as part of wider moves to strengthen the party's control over key policy areas and organs of government

Since taking the helm of the Communist Party in 2012, President Xi Jinping has constantly been overhauling China's massive system of state and party organs to reflect Beijing's shifting priorities.

In the latest restructuring plan, rolled out in the spring of 2023, Beijing moved to assert more direct party control over a wide range of key policy areas, including science and technology, the financial sector and social stability.

A year later, the nature and scale of the restructuring is starting to take shape as new agencies covering

these areas have been set up by central and local governments.

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Looking closely at their operations provides an opportunity not just to see how they operate in practice, but also helps shed more light on Beijing's policy priorities and the challenges it faces.

For example, the establishment of new financial regulatory bodies by both central and provincial governments highlights the sense of urgency around tackling financial risk, while the newly established National Data Administration will play a key role in China's plans to develop artificial intelligence by managing data resources.

The top Hong Kong and Macau policy office will also report directly to the party's Central Committee, rather than the State Council, the country's cabinet, to improve coordination with other branches of government as Beijing seeks to tighten its control over the city.

The overhaul is an "important part of the ruling Communist Party's effort to channel nationwide resource-to-technology self-reliance, while strengthening the party's control over financial and social risks", as it faces an increasingly hostile West, according to Alfred Wu, an associate professor with the National University of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy.

"In China's party and state-led governance model, setting up party commissions or government bureaus are usually the best way to influence the resource allocation on priorities as it is trying to shift the key economic growth engine from property to technology," he said.

"It is a painful and long process. China hopes to use the party-led finance model to pump more money into research and development, while keeping an eye on social stability because of higher unemployment."

The efforts to ensure stability extend all the way down to the grass roots, where social work departments – which have to handle petitions and grievances from the public – are being established at county level, the only new bodies to operate at such a low level.

While departments supervising economic matters only make sense on a larger scale, the opposite is true for social stability, according to Xie Maosong, a senior researcher at the National Institute of Strategic Studies at Tsinghua University.

"It has to reach the grass roots level to know what is wrong on the ground and take immediate action," said Xie.

At the central level, Beijing appointed Wu Hansheng, a veteran party administrator, as head of the Social Work Department in July 2023.

At a meeting in February, Wu and his lieutenants set out this year's key tasks, telling provincial social control teams to quickly formulate plans to find ways to better handle petitions and listen to grass-roots grievances and suggestions. They were also urged to deploy more staff to identify and defuse any potential social risks.

The central department is also tasked with asserting the party's leadership over various sectors of society, including industry federations and party branches in private companies. It also aims to extend the party's reach into the gig economy and among the growing number of self-employed people.

Most of the provincial officials who attended the event were the secretaries of local new economy and new social organisation work committees, which have been established since 2016 to extend the party's reach into the private sector and new internet industries, where the party previously had a limited reach.

A Zhejiang cadre said building a social organisation network across the country is still a work in progress. "We are still in the process of clarifying our new lines of reporting, finding duplicate functions and streamlining them. But the instruction from the top is very clear, get it done before the end of the year – and they won't accept excuses," he said.

The first new body to be established was the National Administration of Financial Regulation, which was set up in May last year – indicating the leadership's belief there is an urgent need for better oversight of the financial sector.

In March last year Beijing also said it would replace local financial regulatory bodies with the provincial outposts of the National Administration of Financial Regulation in a clear sign of Beijing's distrust of local governments when it comes to tackling the problem – especially since giving them free-rein over regulation is seen as a major source of corruption.

Most of the regional financial regulatory heads have been sent from central offices in Beijing.

As part of this drive another body, the Central Financial Work Commission, headed by Premier Li Qiang, was set up later in the year to design, coordinate and supervise financial policies for better stability and development.

A political scientist from Nanjing University said the leadership has grave concerns about financial risk and corruption, because the damage it can cause to ordinary people's lives is "nuclear grade".

"If you compare the damage from different sectors ... financial sector corruption is definitely going to lead the chart as they can influence the flow of or have access to the whole financial markets worth trillions of yuan.

"While other officials are taking bribes in thousands or millions of yuan, the financial sector's corruption

can easily reach billions, leaving big holes and major headaches in the system," he said.

He cited the case of Lai Xiaomin, the former chairman of Huarong, one of China's largest state-controlled asset management firms, who was executed in 2021 for taking almost 1.8 billion yuan (US\$277 million) worth of bribes – a crime the supreme court said had a "particularly severe" social impact.

The political scientist said the government shake-up showed "Beijing is very clear about this now. The financial sector shall not have its own agenda. It shall just serve its role of moving capital to where the party wants it to go".

Three regional officials involved in the overhaul said the new local financial bodies will only operate in provincial capitals and a handful of major cities.

"So in Guangdong, you will see a provincial financial regulatory bureau and two municipality level bureaus in Guangzhou, the provincial capital, and Shenzhen, a city under separate state planning. That is all," a Guangdong official said. An official in Guizhou concurred. "We will only have a provincial financial regulatory body and municipal financial regulator in our provincial capital Guiyang. Many cadres working in the financial area will be redeployed, especially those in smaller cities," he added.

An official involved in the institutional overhaul in Shanghai, China's financial and commercial centre, said the overhaul is aimed at removing the responsibility for developing markets from the municipal financial office to focus on regulation.

"The financial works office's job was to serve local governments and financial institutions, coordinate financial resources, help to obtain more credit to finance local development projects, and assist local companies to go public.

Now it is different. The central government's priority for us is to identify potential financial risks within our jurisdiction and manage them before it blows up," said the Shanghai official.

"It is not just changing the plate outside our office. It requires a drastic change in how we run the bureau, our mentality, how to regulate the interactions between officials and the financial institutions to avoid corruption etc. We are just embarking on it."

When it comes to data management the implementation at a provincial level is more patchy.

AI is seen as the next major area of competition between China and the US, and data is a vital resource for developing and training the technology.

After the launch of the National Data Administration, 20 out of the mainland's 31 provinces, regions and municipalities have so far set up their own data management offices to fit with Beijing's blueprint to

develop China's data infrastructure and integrate and share data resources.

The plan will see national hub nodes set up in some of the country's key economic hubs, such as the Yangtze and Pearl River Deltas as well as around Beijing, and in less populated areas including Inner Mongolia, Gansu and Ningxia.

Except for Ningxia, all other provinces and regions mentioned in the plan have already announced new data agencies, led by directors with professional backgrounds in computers and big data.

Some provinces – Shaanxi, Hebei, Inner Mongolia and Guangdong – have also included "government services" in the name of their data agencies, suggesting a clear expansion in their role to allow residents to have one-stop access to government services.

The most mysterious of the new party organs are those set up to coordinate scientific development, with little information being released about their operations across the country.

The Central Science and Technology Commission was set up to oversee the sector from the top, but the only public reference to this new party body is a statement on the Ministry of Science and Technology's website in July that said cadres had studied the outcome of its first meeting.

Unlike the other newly established party organs, even the leadership of this body is unknown, something analysts said may be a sign of China's concerns about scrutiny from the West and may even indicate it has links to the military.

"China needs to avoid attention from the West so that it can push forward its science and tech development agenda with relatively fewer obstacles and intervention," said Tsinghua's Xie,

He noted that China's ambitious tech development and talent attraction plans – such as the Made in China 2025 blueprint and Thousand Talent Plan – has been used by the West to track the new industries China is betting on and its international talent recruitment, so "staying low-key is the natural response".

Information about science bodies on the provincial levels is also very limited. As of the end of April, only Henan and Inner Mongolia had announced the establishment of their own science commissions, which were chaired by senior officials.

National University of Singapore's Wu said it is still too early to say if the overhaul is effective as such drastic organisational changes need time to clear up any confusion or internal disputes they may cause.

"Many companies take years to complete their merger and acquisition process, not to mention mega-Chinese party and state machines which have faced three major reshuffles since Xi came to power."

Xi's three rounds of institutional reform – announced in 2013, 2018 and last year – have all aimed to centralise power in the hands of party apparatchiks and streamline the ever-ballooning bureaucracy to improve its efficiency and effectiveness.

"Deciding on the organisational structure and the staffing are probably the easiest parts of the latest reshuffle. It can be done in two years. Going forward, the bigger challenge is for the new agencies to prove themselves," Wu said.

### China wants to control reincarnation of the next Dalai Lama

12 May, 2024, Sunday Guardian, Khedroob Thondup

By influencing the reincarnation process, China aims to assert its sovereignty over Tibet.

#### REINCARNATION

The Chinese government's interest in controlling the reincarnation of the next Dalai Lama, despite officially being an atheist state, is rooted in political and religious reasons. The Dalai Lama is a significant figure in Tibetan Buddhism and is traditionally believed to be reincarnated after death. The selection of his successor has historically been a religious process.

However, the Chinese government has sought to control this process for several reasons. By influencing the reincarnation process, China aims to assert its sovereignty over Tibet, which it annexed in 1951.

Controlling the selection of the next Dalai Lama allows China to mitigate any potential political unrest or movements for Tibetan independence.

China has imposed regulations that reincarnations must be recognized by the state and must be born within China's borders, which gives the government control over Tibetan Buddhism.

This control is also a way for the Chinese government to remove the influence of the current Dalai Lama, who lives in exile and is a global advocate for Tibetan rights and autonomy.

The Chinese authorities have even enshrined the right to appoint and recognize reincarnated lamas into Chinese law, setting a precedent for state control over religious practices.

The issue of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation is not just a religious matter but also a significant geopolitical issue, involving not only China and Tibet but also India, where the current Dalai Lama resides in exile. It's a complex interplay of religion, politics, and international relations.

#### BACK-CHANNEL TALKS

Back-channel communications with the Chinese government can be considered ineffective for several reasons, as highlighted by recent reports and



statements from officials involved in such discussions: Despite the existence of back-channel talks, there has been little to no progress in achieving their intended outcomes. For instance, the President of the Tibetan government-in-exile mentioned that while back-channel talks with China exist, they have not progressed enough to be discussed publicly.

There is a high level of suspicion and distrust from the Chinese side, which hampers open and constructive dialogue. The Chinese authorities are very cautious and suspicious, making it difficult to move the talks beyond a preliminary stage.

The Tibetan community has been advised to prepare for a long-term struggle, possibly extending over decades, indicating that there is no expectation of a quick resolution through these back channels. The talks are described as very informal, with no immediate expectations from them. This informal nature might contribute to the lack of concrete outcomes and the absence of a structured dialogue process.

There are internal challenges within the communities engaged in back-channel talks, such as the younger generation's restlessness due to the lack of progress. This internal unrest can affect the effectiveness of the talks.

External geopolitical factors, such as the relationship between India and China, can also influence the effectiveness of back-channel communications. The dynamics of these relationships can either highlight or overshadow the issues being discussed in the back channels.

These points suggest that while back-channel talks are a step towards dialogue, their effectiveness is limited by various factors, including political, social, and diplomatic complexities.

Khedroob Thondup is the son of Gyalo Thondup, elder brother of the Dalai Lama. Educated at St Stephens College, Delhi University and the University of San Francisco, Khedroob Thondup was Personal Assistant to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and accompanied him on his first trip in 1979 to the U.S. He was sent by the Dalai Lama to Beijing from 1980 till 1993 in dialogue talks. He interacted with Xi Jinping's father Xi Zhongxun and Hu Jintao. He is President of the Tibetan Refugee Self Help Centre, Darjeeling since 1987.

### **The escaped dissident still pursued decades on by China**

11 May, 2024, BBC, Gordon Corera

Three decades ago, Chinese dissidents were being smuggled out of the country in a secret operation called Yellow Bird - but as one of them tells the BBC, Beijing is still pursuing them.

June 1992: It was the middle of the night on the South China Sea, and a Chinese patrol vessel was approaching a boat en route from the Communist mainland to the then-British colony of Hong Kong.

As border troops came on board to talk to the crew, their voices could be heard by a group of people packed into a secret compartment below deck.

A few minutes earlier, when the patrol boat was spotted, these secret passengers had been given an urgent order.



Beijing 1989: Yan Xiong pictured during the Tiananmen Square protests

"I was told to hide," one of them, Yan Xiong, recalls. "Don't make any noise!"

Most of those hiding were economic migrants, hoping to find work in Hong Kong – but not Yan.

He was a political dissident, and if he was discovered, he would be in serious trouble.

Yan was being smuggled out of China as part of a secret operation code-named Yellow Bird.

The patrol eventually sailed away, and in the early hours Yan - who had never travelled in a boat before that night - arrived in Hong Kong.

After a hearty breakfast, he was taken to a detention centre. This was, he was told, for his own safety. Walking the streets could be dangerous.

Being in detention was not new to Yan. He had already spent 19 months in a Chinese prison for his part in 1989's Tiananmen Square protests. Students had called for greater democracy and freedom, but the Communist Party sent in tanks to crush them.

At the end of June 1989, the Chinese government said that 200 civilians and several dozen security personnel had died. Other estimates have ranged from hundreds to many thousands.

On his release, Yan had made his way to southern China where, in scenes that could have been taken from a spy film, he was sent from one public phone booth to another, to be put in touch with the people who could get him out.

He was not the only dissident to undertake this risky journey.

Speaking to the BBC for a new series, *Shadow War: China and the West*, Chaohua Wang recalls her escape.

Despite being number 14 on a list of the 21 most wanted people after the Tiananmen Square protests, she managed to evade capture, hiding in tiny rooms for months before heading south and becoming part of the Yellow Bird escape line.

"I was like a parcel moved from one [person] to another," she says.

"I didn't even know the name Yellow Bird for quite some years."

Yellow Bird may sound like a classic spy operation, and many believed that an intelligence service - MI6 or the CIA - had come up with the idea. But they had not.

In fact, it was a private enterprise undertaken by concerned groups of citizens in Hong Kong, motivated by a desire to help out those who were on the run. Among them were the local film and entertainment industry and (more usefully) organised crime, in the form of the triads.

"They [the triads] had a lot of Chinese police in their pockets," says Nigel Inkster, who at that time was an intelligence officer based in Hong Kong. This was what enabled them to move people out of hiding in Beijing and smuggle them across the border.

The UK and US only became involved when those people who arrived in Hong Kong needed to work out where to go next.

Yan remembers being visited by what he described as an "English gentleman" who never gave his name but helped him with the paperwork.

"It is better for you to go to America, not England," the man told him. Within days Yan was in Los Angeles. Chaohua Wang also ended up in the US.

Why not England?

Former officials have told the BBC the UK was reluctant to take in Tiananmen protesters because it was desperate to avoid upsetting China in the run-up to the 1997 handover of Hong Kong.

An agreement had been signed by the UK in 1984, but the events of Tiananmen Square five years later raised difficult questions about Hong Kong's future.

In 1992, a few weeks after Yan's arrival in the colony, the former Conservative cabinet minister Chris Patten became the last governor of Hong Kong. He says he was determined to embed greater democracy, in the hope it would endure after the handover, and he announced proposals for the democratic reform of Hong Kong's institutions, aimed at broadening the voting base in elections.

There was opposition to the reforms not just from China's leadership but also from those in London who did not want to antagonise Beijing.

"My main responsibility was to try to give people in Hong Kong the best chance of continuing to live in freedom and prosperity, and to do so after 1997," the former governor, now Lord Patten, tells me. He

says he also was aware of - but not involved in - Yellow Bird.

The reluctance to allow dissidents to come to the UK - and the anger in some quarters about Patten's reforms - speaks to a central question from the 1990s which still matters today: How far should the West go to avoid angering China and accommodate its rise, especially when it comes to values like human rights and democracy?

Yellow Bird ended on the rainy night in July 1997 when Hong Kong became sovereign Chinese territory. For a few years, the liberties that Patten had been trying to secure, held. But in the past decade, China - under Xi Jinping - has taken a more authoritarian turn and has tried to bring Hong Kong into line.

Yan took US citizenship and lived a model American life. He joined the US army and served in Iraq as a military chaplain.

He might have thought the hand of China's Communist Party could not reach him in his new home, but he was wrong.

In 2021, he decided to run for public office. He stood as a candidate in the Democratic primary for New York's 1st Congressional District.

Yan started noticing some odd occurrences during his campaign. Strange cars followed him and lurked outside where he was staying at three in the morning. At campaign events, people would try to block him from speaking.

He learned why when the FBI came to talk to him. A US private investigator had told them he had been approached by an individual in China, who had asked him to carry out surveillance on Yan. It seems the idea of a former Tiananmen protester entering US Congress was unacceptable.

"He had specifically told our private investigator that they needed to undermine the victim's candidacy," says FBI agent Jason Moritz.

The FBI were able to monitor events as the Chinese-based individual proposed the investigator dig up dirt on Yan. If he could not find any, he was instructed to make some up. If that did not work, beating him up or even staging a car accident was suggested.

"They want to smother and kill my campaign," Yan explains.

The person instructing the private investigator, the FBI assessed, was working on behalf of China's Ministry of State Security. They were indicted but could not be arrested because they were outside the US.

China has consistently denied claims of political interference. But this is not the only case where it is alleged to have become more assertive in tracking down those it considers dissidents in other countries. There have been claims of "overseas police stations"

in the UK and US and of individuals being pressured to return to China or be silent.

Yan's story reveals that as China has become more confident and controlling at home, it has also sought to extend its reach abroad. And that is increasingly causing friction over issues of espionage, surveillance and human rights.

Meanwhile, Yan's message to Western governments when dealing with China is simple: "They've got to be careful."

### What Xi Jinping Really Thinks

11 May, 2024, Time, Steve Tsang

Xi Jinping has changed China fundamentally. He has kept the same political system that Chairman Mao Zedong created when he founded the People's Republic of China in 1949. Mao governed China with "Mao Zedong Thought," which he introduced in 1945. Deng Xiaoping put that aside when he took power in 1978 and unleashed the "reform and opening up" era. The Dengist approach was in turn jettisoned with "Xi Jinping Thought" as the de facto state ideology in 2017. Xi is not attempting a Maoist restoration; he has ambitions even greater than Mao. At the core of Xi's vision is the fulfilment of the "China Dream of national rejuvenation" by 2050. But what does Xi Thought really entail? To understand this properly, we consulted all publicly available speeches, writings, and policies of Xi in the first comprehensive study of his ideology to explain how this supreme leader of one of the world's most important countries is upending both China and the world in profound ways.

Xi's ambition to strengthen his regime security, enhance the Chinese Communist Party's supremacy, and deliver his dream of national rejuvenation can be boiled down to two visions.

"One Country, One People, One Ideology, One Party, and One Leader"

The first vision is to create "one country, one people, one ideology, one party, and one leader." Xi's vision of "one country" requires every Chinese person to submit oneself to the greater good of China as interpreted by the Party. His vision of "one country" calls for the resolute defense of China's honor. This requires a forceful approach to tame China's restive peripheral regions, lest they become centrifugal forces. It also implies that Xi is serious about using force to take Taiwan or territories defined by the party-state as Chinese. He sees building the People's Liberation Army (PLA) into a, if not the, world-class military as essential to advancing his vision of "one country."

To create "one patriotic people," Xi Thought makes every Chinese person take on a politicized national identity and learn its tenets. Chinese heritage or

culture are made inseparable from political loyalty to the PRC, the CCP, and its top leader. Thus, the Maoist ideas of the mass line (making people believe whatever the Party does is in their best interest) and the United Front (the ultimate divide and rule methodology) have been reinvigorated. In Xi Thought, the extreme measures used are meant to "educate" and "level up" those Xi deems to have fallen astray, such as the Muslim Uyghurs, other minorities, Hong Kongers, and some private tech conglomerates, so that they can become full and useful members of the "one family" that is China. Xi wants to turn his "one people" into new socialist Chinese patriots. To this end, he invests in forging Xi Thought into the "one ideology" that enables them to think correctly. He believes that ideological indoctrination is not effective if it is not all-encompassing. That means standardizing not only people's thinking in political or historical matters but also how education and entertainment providers operate. For this reason, Xi uses technology adroitly, such as Xuexi qiangguo, the mobile app that promotes Xi Thought, to require Chinese citizens to learn Xi Thought and be monitored in how hard they are learning it on a daily basis. This is reinforced by the use of digital surveillance technologies to ensure no critical comments on Xi is allowed.

To bring Xi's vision for "one country," "one people," and "one ideology" into reality, Xi Thought reinvigorates and "upgrades" the CCP into the "one party" that can guide everyone, everywhere, and in all policy areas under himself as supreme leader. The "upgraded" CCP is a Leninist party that follows strict discipline, embraces centralized hierarchy, penetrates society effectively, and upholds Xi's leadership. Xi believes that these attributes can enable the Party, under his guidance, to lead everyone and everything in China. To cement his hold on power, Xi effectively prohibits any plan for succession, a major departure from recent Chinese leaders.

Making China "Great Again"

As Xi's global vision is guided by a "China First" principle, which in reality means putting the power and interest of the Party—and himself as its core leader—above all other considerations, it guides Chinese foreign policy to make the world safe for authoritarianism. A world unsafe for authoritarian states like Xi's China is one in which his government can fall victim to a "color revolution." This vision also includes the ambition to "modernize and transform" the U.S.-led rules-based international order into one that dovetails with China's interests and values. Xi Thought's other key foreign policy tenet, that Chinese diplomats and officials must proudly tell China's story well and demand others to pay due respect to China, underpins the advent of "wolf-warrior" diplomacy.

This combination has six main implications, not in order of importance.

First, despite China's craving for soft power, the Xi approach undermines China's capacity to enjoy soft power in the rich world. But the focus of Xi Thought on soft power is the less developed, less wealthy, and often undemocratic parts of the world. Its Sino-centric mentality that primes the Chinese people to feel superior to others, in line with Xi's tianxia worldview, where China was the "top civilization" power, is offensive to many. But the fundamentally transactional nature of Xi's approach—whether investments via the Belt and Road Initiative or support for authoritarian rulers abroad—make Beijing a valuable partner around the globe.

Second, while China under Xi Thought ultimately aims to make China the preeminent power in the world, it will not seek to replace the U.S. as the global hegemon. It implies that if the U.S. should withdraw from a leadership role in a region and China gets to fill the void, it will do so on its own terms and not pick up where the Washington may leave off. Under Xi, China will continue to advocate multipolarity as it weakens U.S. global hegemony, but it sees it as a stepping stone toward China's own unipolar moment, which Xi expects to achieve by the mid-century.

Third, putting China first also implies that China will take a more assertive approach toward its neighbors and the rest of the world. Under Xi Thought, China will adopt a tough line on territorial or maritime disputes, be it in the East China Sea, South China Sea, or China's western land borders. The only major exception is over the Russian Far East, which Tsarist Russia took from the Manchu Qing Empire in 1860. Xi's China claims the Manchu Empire as Chinese and will want this vast territory back but will hold off demanding it so that China can keep strategic partnership with Russia while it competes with the U.S. for global leadership. As a corollary to this assertive approach is a readiness to insist on China's extraterritorial reach. Under Xi, Chinese fugitives, including alleged corrupt former officials and dissidents, have been brought home to face "justice." Beijing has also pushed the Hong Kong State Security Law and enhanced the United Front work overseas.

Fourth, Xi Thought has a different view of globalization, where furthering it should only be pursued if it is beneficial to China. In policy terms, this translates into selective decoupling, as Xi seeks to strengthen China's economic strength through innovation by any means necessary and to reduce its economic vulnerability to potential Western sanctions. In terms of China's place in the global supply chain and economic integration, China will prioritize its domestic political needs ahead of the

global common good, as evidenced in how the "dynamic zero COVID" policy and its associated lockdowns have been implemented.

Fifth, under Xi Thought, the primary focus for China's foreign policy competition is the U.S. That means engaging in intense and often antagonistic competition with Washington. This includes inculcating hatred against the U.S. among China's population, and celebrating major U.S. foreign policy mistakes and its democratic mishaps. While it does not intend China to replace the U.S. as the global hegemon, it does ultimately require Beijing to displace Washington as the preeminent power and assert its leadership for the world.

Sixth, and most important of all to Xi Thought, is seizing Taiwan and integrating it into the PRC. There is no doubt that Xi prefers a peaceful solution over Taiwan, which can be achieved by Taipei surrendering and accepting "reunification" with China. Since that is unrealistic, Xi requires the PLA to stay prepared to use force. However Chinese control over Taiwan is to be achieved, it can only happen by China either deterring the U.S. from interfering in line with the American Taiwan Relations Act or being sufficiently defeated to back off. Either way, China prevailing over Taiwan against U.S. wishes will fundamentally change the global and Indo-Pacific power balance, and the U.S. will have conceded a key geopolitical sphere of dominance. A Chinese victory here will show the world that Xi's China Dream of national rejuvenation has been accomplished.

### **ཇ་དང་ཨ་མོ་ཤིང་བཞི་ལམ་དབང། My Destiny with Amdo**

#### **Ngaba: Generational Impeded Culture leading to Self-Immolation in Ngaba**

10 May 2024, FNVA, Rinzin Namgyal

**Abstract:** In the reverberating words of Barbara Demick, Ngaba stands as the formidable bastion of Tibetan resistance, epitomising a steadfast defiance against Chinese dominance. Embodied in the proverbial wisdom, "if there is a fire in Lhasa, the smoke will rise from Ngaba," lies the profound significance of this town nestled in Eastern Tibet. Within the tapestry of its history, Ngaba emerges as a focal point in the perpetual struggle against Chinese encroachment, marking the zenith of third epoch of resistance. My narrative intertwines with the essence of Amdo Ngaba, unearthing "Generational Impeded Culture" that culminate in the fervent protests saturating this region. Comparative scrutiny juxtaposes Ngaba's fervor with the broader spectrum of Tibetan resistance, illuminating its unparalleled fervour evident in self-immolations, demonstrations, and myriad forms of

dissent. Ngaba emerges as a crucible wherein the dialectics of heritage and modernity converge, forging a collective consciousness that pulsates with resilience. It is a saga of identity wrested from the clutches of assimilation, a testament to the indomitable spirit of a people entrenched in the sanctity of their cultural and national legacy against the Chinese occupation. Till date 65 cases of Tibetan Self-Immolating in the Ngaba County has been reported, recovered and recorded. (I was able to gain this valuable data through the help and assistance of TCHRD). Read more here.

### **Backdoor support of China fuels Nepal's cartographic aggression irks India**

**May 10 2024, Organiser**



The cabinet of Prachanda recently decided to include a map on its new banknotes that depicts portions of the Indian state of Uttarakhand as part of its territory. Nepal shares a border of over 1,850 km with five Indian states – Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand. The disputed areas include Lipulekh, Limpiyadhura, and Kalapani in the Rs 100 denomination bank notes. It is seen as a deliberate and provocative act by Nepal. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has stated that such unilateral measures are not going to change the reality on the ground. Together, the three disputed areas cover about 370 sq km. The strategic Lipulekh pass connects the Indian state of Uttarakhand with the Tibet region. The Kalapani area is strategically significant in South Asian diplomacy as it is at the tri-junction between India, China, and Nepal. Nepal has claimed that these areas belong to it. In 2020, India inaugurated the 80 kilometres road to facilitate pilgrims visiting Kailash-Mansarovar in Tibet in China, which is around 90 kilometres from the Lipulekh pass. Lipulekh is a strip of land on the northwestern edge of Nepal, lodged between Nepal, India, and Tibet. It is a far western point near Kalapani, a disputed border area between Nepal and India. The road has strategic value for India as it will be the first to provide connectivity to the Indian troops deployed on the Line of Actual Control with China in Uttarakhand.

The map was adopted by consensus in Nepal's Parliament four years ago. The Prime Ministers of India and Nepal have agreed to examine the border issue and settle it through diplomatic means and channel. Following Nepal's cabinet decision, Jaishankar said that discussions regarding the border issues are going on through established platforms. However, it appears that Nepal is not running at the same pace as India in this matter. Unlike in 2020, when the new map was adopted, the May 2 decision to put it on the currency note has met with scepticism and criticism.

The fissures in the bilateral relations of India and Nepal emerged when the well placed 2005-2014 relations between India and Nepal, when Nepal witnessed a transition in its secular and federal features vanished into thin air in 2015 after the Maoists flat refused the suggestion of New Delhi that Nepal's constitution should be delayed until the concerns of the Terai parties are addressed. The 134-day blockade of Nepal that began in 2015 created a major trust deficit against India. K.P. Sharma Ali who took over as PM of Nepal in 2015, quickly shifted his allegiance towards China. In 2018, Oli returned as PM again. In 2020, he built the consensus in Parliament for Nepal's new map that included the disputed regions. India strongly objected to such acts.

The said issue needs to be resolved with evidence and diplomatic routes. Notably, the cabinet decision on printing new notes has come in just two months after Oli's Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist) CPN (UML) joined the ruling coalition in Nepal. His party's manifesto clearly promises to bring the contested areas into Nepal. The country has slowly drifted apart from India, and China has moved in to fill the vacuum with investments, aid, and loans. China's charm offensive in Nepal might be veering the Himalayan country away from India. China considers Nepal a key partner in its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and wants to invest in Nepal's infrastructure as part of its grand plans to boost global trade. It has been reported that in 2022, China offered Nepal a Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network created by blasting tunnels through the mountainous Tibetan plateau under its flagship Belt and Road Initiative. But the project has been marred by delays over finance. China has already constructed Pokhara International Airport, but India continues to deny permission to fly overhead to flights heading to the Chinese-built airport. This means that the airport remains inactive. India has also squandered away its goodwill bank in the country, as its new recruitment scheme cut out the Nepalese Gurkhas from getting recruited in its Gurkha regiments. It has been nearly three



years, and not a single Nepali Gurkha has joined the Indian Army, denting century-old ties. There has been a change within Nepal as to how they compare the 2020 and 2024 issue. Unlike in 2020, when the new map adored by Nepal, there is no visible consensus on the current decision by putting up the map on the currency notes. It is being believed that the decision is perceived as unwise. Many in Nepal believe that the issue should be settled through diplomacy and dialogue without any cascading consequences, which compels India to play the hardball vis a vis the Himalayan country. The Nepalese government is however, taking it lightly and believes that it can improve its chances by shaking hands with China. As India is currently undergoing its national elections, the new government will have its work cut out to seriously recalibrate its approach towards its neighbourhood policies. Despite having in principle agreements on the resolution of the tedious border issues, both India and Nepal have to set a time-bound framework to fix the tangible issue of disputed territories and restore the non- tangible historical ties.

### Human rights organizations hold lecture tours at world-renowned universities to commemorate the 35th anniversary of the Tiananmen Massacre

09 May, 2024, VOA, Zhou Xingchen

Zhou Fengsuo, executive director of the human rights organization Human Rights in China, gave a speech at Stanford University on Tuesday (May 7), telling the story of the June 4th massacre that he personally experienced in Tiananmen Square 35 years ago, and telling the real history to the world, especially the younger generation. This is part of the "Tiananmen Square Student Protests and Democracy in China" series of lecture tours jointly organized by China Human Rights and Humanitarian China and student organizations from well-known universities around the world to commemorate the 35th anniversary of the 1989 student movement. After being invited to give lectures on the June 4th theme at Cambridge University, Georgia Free Students Union, Brown University, and Columbia University in April and May, Human Rights in China held a June 4th-themed lecture at Stanford University in the San Francisco Bay Area on May 7. speech. Zhou Fengsuo, executive director of Human Rights in China and co-founder of Humane China, delivered a speech titled "From the Tiananmen Student Movement, the Hong Kong Anti-Extradition Movement to the White Paper Movement - Chinese Student Movement and Chinese Democracy." Survivors of the Tiananmen Massacre told the truth and remembered history.

Zhou Fengsuo was one of the student leaders of the Tiananmen student movement and served as a standing committee member of the Beijing University Student Autonomy Federation. After the authorities suppressed the student movement, he was listed as one of the 21 backbone members of the Chinese Communist Party, wanted and imprisoned. As an eyewitness, Zhou Fengsuo recounted his experience in Tiananmen Square in 1989. He said: "The student protest group persisted in Tiananmen Square for 50 days. As a survivor, I want to tell the real history to the world. I like talking to young people, this is very important. Young people need to know the truth of history, we need Keep the truth and keep this fighting spirit going."



On May 7, 2024, Zhou Fengsuo, executive director of the human rights organization Human Rights in China, delivered a speech at Stanford University on the theme of "From the Tiananmen Student Movement, the Hong Kong Anti-Extradition Movement to the White Paper Movement-Chinese Student Movement and Chinese Democracy." (Photography by Zhou Xingchen)

Zhou Fengsuo's speech about "the students' protests have won the support of the people" was applauded by the audience.

He said: "The 1964 student movement was supported by all the Chinese people. In Beijing alone, more than 1 million people took to the streets to support the student protests, accounting for one-tenth of Beijing's population at the time. Not only in Beijing, citizens took to the streets to support students in

hundreds of cities in China. There were large-scale protests in Shanghai, Chengdu, Wuhan and other places. Almost every university has an independent student organization to organize protests, including CCTV and People's Daily. Many journalists, including daily newspapers, participated in the protest and covered the student demonstrations at the time."

The truth about June 4th is still shocking

People from all walks of life, including teachers and students from Stanford University, citizens of the San Francisco Bay Area, and members of local democracy and human rights organizations, participated in the lecture and subsequent discussion sessions. Tom, a student at Stanford University, is one of them.

He spoke about his feelings in an interview with VOA after the meeting.

"We had seen some information about the Tiananmen Massacre from the Internet. Although I rarely talk about the Tiananmen student movement with my friends and parents, we are very interested in the history of the Chinese democratic movement and hope to hear personal accounts from the Tiananmen protest students. Narration. Mr. Zhou Fengsuo's speech today gives us the opportunity to understand the real history, which is very good," he said.

Mobi, a graduate of Stanford University, was also happy to have the opportunity to hear the history of the June 4th incident from those who witnessed it.

After the lecture, he told America: "Although I have read some information about the June 4th Movement, I am still very happy to hear people who participated in the 1989 student movement speak about that period of history in person, because in 1989, I was very small, and for me, it was a very idealistic student democratic movement."

Ms. May, who came all the way from Fremont to Stanford University to hear Zhou Fengsuo's speech, told VOA that she was very shocked after listening to the speech.

She said: "From Mr. Zhou Fengsuo's speech, I learned for the first time that the youngest child among the June 4th victims was only three and a half years old! He also mentioned that after the Tiananmen Massacre, he saw more than 40 corpses at the entrance of Fuxing Hospital. The bodies of the victims. This time I saw with my own eyes the list of wanted students he brought to the speech, the bloody clothes in Tiananmen Square, and the photos of more than 100,000 people commemorating June 4th in Victoria Park in Hong Kong. These are all the CCP's suppression of students! The evidence of the movement and the massacre of unarmed students is so cruel!"

The 1989 Tiananmen Student Democratic Movement, also known as the 1989 Democracy Movement, the

1989 Student Movement, the Tiananmen Incident or the Tiananmen Massacre, refers to the massacre that began in mid-April 1989. Triggered by the commemoration of Hu Yaobang, Chinese college students launched a demonstration movement in Tiananmen Square that lasted for nearly two months. The students raised demands such as anti-corruption, freedom, and democracy. The student movement that started in Beijing soon swept many cities across the country, and college students from all over the country took to the streets to protest and demonstrate. From the evening of June 3 to the early morning of June 4, the Central Military Commission of the Communist Party of China ordered the Chinese People's Liberation Army, the Armed Police Force and the police to use force to clear the demonstration crowds in Beijing's Tiananmen Square. Many students and citizens were massacred. For the Tiananmen massacre. Immediately, the Chinese authorities issued a wanted order for the fugitive student movement leaders.



File photo: June Fourth witness Fang Zheng (in a wheelchair), from left: Wang Dan, Zhou Fengsuo, Li Xiaoming, Wu Renhua, Teng Biao and Wang Juntao in front of the Tank Man installation in front of the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall in Taipei.

Fang Zheng: It is very important to tell young people the truth about June 4th

Fang Zheng, president of the China Democracy Education Foundation, a pro-democracy organization in the San Francisco Bay Area, is another victim and survivor of the Tiananmen massacre. As a senior student at Beijing Institute of Physical Education, Fang Zheng held on to Tiananmen Square until the last moment. In the early morning of June 4, he withdrew from Tiananmen Square and walked to Liubukou. In order to save a female classmate, he was run over by a tank and his legs were broken.

Fang Zheng told Voice of America after the lecture at Stanford University that in the context of the CCP banning Chinese people from mentioning the 1989 student movement and arresting people commemorating the Tiananmen Massacre, survivors of the Tiananmen Massacre went on a lecture tour to world-renowned universities. , it is very important to tell and spread the truth about the Tiananmen Massacre to young people.

He said: "China Human Rights and Humanitarian

China have been committed to exposing China's human rights disasters and rescuing persecuted Chinese human rights defenders for many years. Zhou Fengsuo himself has been paying attention to China's domestic rights protection struggles for many years. He has intervened and spoken out on China's current human rights incidents. He is very suitable for communicating with young people who are concerned about Chinese democracy, from telling the history of China's democratic movement to discussing with young people how China can further develop democratic movements and carry out human rights causes in China now and in the future. , I believe there will be many sparks."

"Today's young people will play a leading role in the future of the world and China in ten and twenty years. They determine the future, and young people must be made aware of the crimes and tyranny of the CCP. It is very important for young people to have a correct understanding of the nature of the CCP," Fang Zheng emphasized.

Zhou Fengsuo: The June 4th clearance was a deliberate massacre.

Zhou Fengsuo emphasized during the interactive session with students: "The tank attack on Tiananmen from the evening of June 3 to the morning of June 4th was not an accident at all. The June 4th clearance was a deliberate massacre. "It was a carefully planned massacre carried out by the CCP army. Deng Xiaoping wanted to kill the protesting students and citizens and create fear in people's hearts so that the CCP could continue to govern smoothly and he could live in peace.

"In an interview with Voice of America after the meeting, he said that the massacre did not only occur in Beijing.

He said: "In the end, the CCP deployed 250,000 troops to suppress the protesting students and citizens in Tiananmen Square. But the massacre occurred not only in Beijing, but also in many other places. For example, Chengdu. One of the most revealing studies is about the Tiananmen Square massacre. Massacre, NPR reporter Louisa Lin wrote a book specifically confirming the large-scale killing of participants of the 1989 student movement by the Chinese Communist Army in Chengdu."

Zhou Fengsuo: He was moved by the interaction with the audience after the speech

This pro-democracy activist who has been committed to promoting human rights in China said that during the interactive sessions after the speeches at various universities, many audience members told him about their experiences in Tiananmen Square, which moved him very much.

"After I gave a speech at Cambridge University, a Uighur girl told me that when her father participated in the pro-democracy movement in China in 1989, he

wrote a slogan in support of democracy and freedom. At that time, he escaped censorship. But after Ten years later, this matter was discovered, and her parents were forced to flee to England, so she was finally born in England. This is a very representative story, showing that people of all nationalities were widely involved in it at that time. Participate. Ten years later, they are still being persecuted for this matter, which shows how afraid the CCP is of the 1989 student movement," Zhou Fengsuo said.

He said that during his speech, he would meet young students from China and feel the inspiration they received from the 1989 student movement. They are all eager to talk about what they want to do to bring about democratization in China, and many people will think of some very practical issues, such as how to organize in this difficult situation of network security and how to pay attention to China. political prisoners.

Zhou Fengsuo also mentioned that young people in the West are also very interested in the June 4th and Tiananmen movements.

He said: "This year, several young Americans said that what happened in 1989 changed their lives. They saw the problems of the Chinese Communist Party today and the harm caused by China's lack of democratization. They also felt more urgently that China We need democracy and freedom, and we also want to learn about another possibility in China through this incident in 1989, that is, how can China be democratized, and how should democratic countries deal with demons like the CCP now? I think these are very meaningful. "

Fang Zheng, chairman of the China Democracy Education Foundation, said that when the anti-extradition movement occurred in Hong Kong, one million Hong Kong people took to the streets to demonstrate, which proved that the people supported Hong Kong's social movements and democratic demands; even the events that will happen in China in 2022 are mainly young people. The protest movement on the streets and the white paper movement with the "anti-blockade" as its appeal also received widespread support from the Chinese people. Because of this, this democratic movement with a mass base achieved a basic victory, and finally ended with China The government ended the blockade, although the CCP arrested many young people involved in the White Paper Movement.

After the lecture, Zhou Fengsuo told VOA that Human Rights in China will hold lectures on the June Fourth student movement and Chinese democracy at well-known universities such as the University of Calgary in Canada, the University of London, and Sun Yat-sen University in Taiwan. In addition,

Humane China will also hold an exhibition of June Fourth cultural relics.

### From the bookshelf: 'The Political Thought of Xi Jinping'

13 May 2024, ASPI

At the Chinese Communist Party congress in October 2017, 'Xi Jinping thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era' was formally incorporated in the party constitution—alongside Mao Zedong thought, Deng Xiaoping theory, Jiang Zemin's 'important thought on the three represents' and Hu Jintao's 'scientific outlook on development'. In the CCP ideological hierarchy, 'thought' is at the top, followed by 'theory', while Jiang's 'three represents' and Hu's 'scientific outlook' are considered to be action manuals, lower on the scale. Labelling Xi's input to CCP ideology as 'thought' puts him on a par with Mao and ahead of Deng Xiaoping, at least in principle. But the length and clunkiness of the name of Xi's dogma, contrasting with the punchy title 'Mao Zedong thought', is generally seen to indicate that Xi is not yet in the same class as the great helmsman.

Is this significant? To the casual reader, Xi Jinping's written works and speeches might simply seem like disjointed pronouncements presented in the heavy jargon of the CCP. But do they in fact form a coherent body of work intended to guide Chinese decision makers, party cadres and the population at large? And can they serve as a guide for outsiders wishing to understand and predict the actions of China's leaders?

In the book *The Political Thought of Xi Jinping*, Steve Tsang and Olivia Cheung think they do. The authors ambitiously tackle the task of making Xi Jinping's thought accessible to the general reader. Tsang has published widely on Chinese politics and is director of the China Institute at the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London, where Cheung is a research fellow. Together they have reviewed the vast body of work that has emerged in Xi's name during his decade in power.

At the centre of Xi's thought lies the CCP, which in his view has been weakened over the years by factionalism, corruption and the separation of party from state instigated by Deng Xiaoping. Xi sees the state as subservient to the party, as simply the executor of party policies, and has systematically reversed Deng's political reforms and brought state organs firmly under party control.

Xi's ideological mission is to reinvigorate the CCP and consolidate China as a party-state. He wants to make the party great again. Pursuing this theme, the authors devote an entire chapter to 'The party leads everything', detailing how Xi has shifted control of all

major policy processes to the CCP and, ultimately, himself.

The authors review policy decisions and specific actions in the context of Xi's concern to maintain control, from economic policy, diplomacy and fighting corruption to reining in the rival youth league faction led by his predecessor Hu Jintao and the late Li Keqiang. Even the central bank's recent monetary policy decisions appear to be driven by Xi Jinping thought.

When the tennis star Peng Shuai in 2021 went on the social media platform Weibo to accuse former deputy premier Zhang Gaoli of sexual assault, many expected disciplinary action against Zhang. But censors quickly took down Peng's post, and she disappeared from view and later retracted the allegations and announced her early retirement. Zhang remained unscathed. The message was clear: the CCP could initiate disciplinary action against its members but would not entertain outside complaints.

A fascinating chapter on the 'socialist market economy' should set off alarm bells in corporate boardrooms. Xi favours state-owned enterprises, is wary of the private sector and has implemented a raft of measures to extend party control into the decision-making bodies of private companies, local and foreign. According to the authors, Xi will support private enterprises 'only if they prove themselves totally loyal to the Party and willing to serve China's interests as defined by the Party or himself.' The star pupil in this regard is the technology giant Huawei, a cutting-edge but steadfastly loyal business.

The chapter on a 'common destiny for humankind', again, bears careful reading by diplomats and defence specialists. As the authors see it, Xi's ultimate ambition is to restore the system of *tianxia* (all under heaven), with China as the central power, surrounded by vassal states and operating in a global environment that poses no threat to authoritarianism. Under this Sinocentric world view, divide-and-rule politics, wolf-warrior diplomacy and assertive efforts to undermine the liberal rules-based order can be expected to continue, while peaceful resolution of China's claims on Taiwan seems unlikely.

At the same time, the authors flag elements of hypocrisy. Xi's moves to stamp out corruption and factionalism were presented to the public as designed to reinvigorate the party. But equally clearly, they were intended to eliminate Xi's adversaries and rivals.

Will Xi Jinping's dogma eventually shed its awkward title, be renamed 'Xi Jinping thought' and be proclaimed the state ideology? Since this would put the ambitious Xi unequivocally on a par with chairman Mao, the authors consider it likely. But so far party elders have kept Xi waiting. The issue will



be high on China watchers' agenda during the 2027 party congress.

The Political thought of Xi Jinping is one of the first serious efforts to analyse Xi's political doctrine. As such, it is essential reading for anyone wishing to understand the underpinnings of Xi's actions, or to make an informed guess at his next moves.

### **China Must Cease Collective Punishments Targeting Families of Tibetan Human Rights Defenders**

09 May, 2024, TCHRD

In an interview with TCHRD, Namkyi, a 24-year-old former political prisoner, describes making the difficult decision to leave her family, and her daring escape across the border with her childhood friend and cousin sister Tsering Kyi, both of whom arrived in India last summer. Despite the punitive measures imposed by Chinese authorities, it was the suffering of her loved ones that weighed heaviest on her conscience. Namkyi detailed the prevailing culture of fear and oppression, where dissent was stifled and discouraged, leaving individuals like herself isolated in the struggle for justice.

On 21 October 2015, Namkyi, along with her sister, Tenzin Dolma, who were both 15 at the time, staged a peaceful protest carrying two large portraits of His Holiness the Dalai Lama while marching on the 'Martyrs Road' in Ngaba (Ch: Aba) County, Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. They called for "Freedom in Tibet" and the "Return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Kirti Rinpoche to Tibet".



Namkyi with her brother Gendun Phuntsok before her escape

Within 10 minutes a squad of between four and five Chinese Armed Police officers arrived and brought them to a detention centre. Both sisters endured rigorous and relentless interrogations, and experienced severe physical and psychological torment, including prolonged exposure to extreme heat, deprivation of sleep and inadequate food, and solitary confinement, as they awaited sentencing during a one-year pre-trial detention period.

Prior to her sentencing, Namkyi underwent intense political re-education sessions at the detention centre. Authorities frequently told her,

For one hour every week, they were given "political re-education" sessions. These sessions consisted of watching government TV news channels and sitting through lectures on Xi Jinping 'Thought', Chinese language and Chinese laws.

On 23 November 2016, the Trochu County People's Court handed down a three-year prison sentence to Namkyi and Tenzin Dolma, who faced charges of 'inciting separatism' in a closed-door trial. Despite being only 16 years old at the time, the court intentionally raised their age to 18. They were subsequently imprisoned in the Sichuan Province Women's Prison. During the initial three months of their imprisonment they were forced to endure mandatory military style training, 'political re-education', and forced to learn the Chinese constitution. They had to study for, and complete, an oral test on numerous Chinese documents, and underwent training for daily activities as prisoners. They were subjected to excessive hard labour for over 12 hours per day, where they had to make copper wires, cigarette boxes and wristwatches.

They were provided with extremely poor quality food, including watery rice porridge and uncooked meals, which compounded their already weakened physical state, making the rigorous mandatory military training exceptionally difficult. Namkyi recalls that despite requiring medical assistance, it was repeatedly denied.

On 21 October 2018, the sisters were released from prison following the completion of their sentences. However, they continued to be detained at the police station in Ngaba County for a week, as their family were required to submit a pledge letter for their release. Like many other Tibetan political prisoners in Tibet, their identity cards were blacklisted, as well as their family's household registration cards (Ch: Hukou) ; this was due to the involvement of Namkyi, Tenzin Dolma and their brother, Gendun Phuntsok, in political activism. Consequently, they were excluded from government welfare schemes, from which they had previously received a small amount of rice and



grains annually. Following their release, heightened surveillance and stringent monitoring severely restricted their ability to move freely and access vital service; they were denied medical examinations in hospitals. Their nieces and nephews also faced administrative obstacles when attempting to enrol in universities, a consequence of the Chinese government's practise of collective punishment. They were largely penalised due to their association with political prisoners, illustrating the unjust repercussions endured by families of Tibetan political prisoners.

In 2015, TCHRD reported the sentencing of Gendun Phuntsok, Nyamki's elder brother, and Lobsang Kelsang, two monks from Kirti monastery, after they participated in a peaceful protest in Ngaba County. The County People's Court in Tashi Ling (Ch: Li) County, Ngaba, sentenced Gendun Phuntsok to four years in prison and Lobsang Kelsang to three and a half years. Despite being 17 years old at the time, Gendun Phuntsok's age was falsely increased to 18 by Chinese authorities.

Gendun Phuntsok, was released from prison in 2019 after serving a four-year sentence; the news of his release only came to light following Namkyi's escape from Tibet. Upon release he was emaciated, and required extensive medical attention for injuries sustained during his imprisonment. Initially treated in Ngaba County, he was later transferred to Chengdu's Municipal People's Hospital, where it was discovered that he had suffered broken ribs and untreated tuberculosis in prison. His family members incurred medical expenses exceeding 10,000 Chinese Yuan, costs which were not covered by the Chinese government. To this day, he continues to endure chronic pain from the rib injuries inflicted during his time in Chinese custody.

Similarly, Lobsang Kelsang, who was sentenced at a similar time, was released in poor health conditions. Despite completing his prison term, he faced an additional six months imprisonment for allegedly reacting negatively to prison guards, which led to a prolonged period spent in harsh conditions in solitary confinement. Upon release his health was severely compromised, and he was on the brink of death. Numerous Tibetan political prisoners have attested to being denied adequate medical attention, a violation of both Chinese law and international standards, including the Convention against Torture, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners. The deliberate withholding of medical care as a means of further persecution against detainees and prisoners of conscience indicates a tacit endorsement of such practices by the Chinese government, forming a systemic pattern of abuse.

Namkyi, Tenzin Dolma, and Gendun Phuntsok hail from a nomadic family in Chugle Gabma Village,

Cha Township, Ngaba County. They are the children of Mrs. Rigkho and Mr. Tragya, also known as Tashi Gyatso. Nyamki fled Tibet to raise awareness about the hardships faced by Tibetans under Chinese oppression, and is urging the international community not to be swayed by the false narratives which are propagated by the Chinese government.

### **India's Spying Upsurge Can Complicate Security Ties With the West**

06 May 2024, The Diplomat, Mohamed Zeeshan

Espionage is standard fare for almost all global powers, but China and India stand out for their specific interests in their country's mammoth diaspora.

China and India might be seen as each other's geopolitical opponents, but last month, they were both at the receiving end of similar exposés in the great global espionage game.

In Britain and Germany, six individuals were arrested on charges of spying for Beijing. Among those arrested were a young aide to a prominent member of the British Parliament, and a German citizen of Chinese descent who worked for a far-right German member of the European Parliament. The accusations, authorities said, involved infiltrating the political establishment and attempting to influence the democratic process.

Meanwhile, in Australia, reports said that a few Indian spies had been removed from the country a few years ago after they were caught trying to steal sensitive defense secrets, obtain classified information on trade, and monitor the Indian diaspora.

Espionage is standard fare for almost all global powers, but China and India stand out for their specific interest in their country's mammoth diaspora. For years, China has spied on its own diaspora through various means. In the initial years, these efforts were largely driven by paranoia following the flight of dissidents as far back as after the Tiananmen Square protests. But in more recent years, Beijing has also cultivated neo-nationalist diaspora elements to do much more than merely spy on Chinese dissidents; members of the Chinese diaspora have been caught trying to infiltrate Western institutions and pilfer trade secrets, influence political decision-making, and obtain sensitive defense technology.

New Delhi is increasingly watching and learning.

India has long been dismayed that in the great power game, its economic influence is sorely lacking. In the last four decades, China has built an extraordinary trade footprint covering much of the world. In 2001, when China first acceded to the World Trade Organization, over 80 percent of

countries for whom data was available counted the U.S. as a larger trade partner than China. By 2018, the tables had flipped: two-thirds of the world was trading more with China than with the U.S. that year, according to Australia's Lowy Institute.

In 2022, China accounted for over 14 percent of the world's total export in goods. India's share was less than 2 percent.

Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has made a strong rhetorical push to correct this disparity. But India's weak integration in terms of trade and investment agreements, its relatively poor labor productivity, and continued infrastructure problems have kept that gulf wide. Instead, Modi made an intelligent calculation early on that India had to rely on a different, more potent asset to grow its global influence: its vast, highly-skilled, and politically influential diaspora.

Indians abroad make up the largest diaspora group in history: some 18 million people, according to the United Nations. Each year, they send back record sums of money in remittances — as much as \$125 billion in 2023 alone. They are also among the highest income-earning groups across much of the West, and occupy positions of high power across politics, business and the arts.

Very early in his term, Modi attempted to connect with the diaspora in ways that none of his predecessors had done — holding massive rally-like events in New York, Sydney, and elsewhere. That was at the time a conscious foreign policy effort. In 2015, Ram Madhav, then the general secretary of Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), explained: "[The diaspora] can be India's voice even while being loyal citizens in those countries. That is the long-term goal behind diaspora diplomacy. It is like the way the Jewish community looks out for Israel's interests in the United States."

Yet, as Hindu nationalism came to dominate the BJP's politics at home, the diaspora abroad became increasingly fragmented and incoherent. A 2020 survey of Indian Americans by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace found that as much as 69 percent of Hindus in the United States approve of Modi's performance as prime minister. Yet, only 20 percent of Muslims and 34 percent of Christians did.

Democrats in the survey were also less likely to approve of Modi and the BJP than Republicans, and that has also borne out on Capitol Hill. When Modi visited Washington for a state visit last year, a handful of progressive Democrats publicly protested and vowed to boycott his speech. Another group of lawmakers — led by Indian American Representative Pramila Jayapal — signed a public letter, pushing President Joe Biden to raise human rights issues with Modi.

In more recent times, New Delhi has found itself at odds with Sikhs in the West. That fault line has resulted in accusations in Canada and the U.S. that agents of the Modi government were involved in plotting and executing the assassination of Sikh separatist leaders.

These tensions are unlikely to go away easily. Both China and India see their diaspora as an extension of their own national security. Scuffles with dissidents at home engender scuffles with dissidents in the West. So far, the West's response to India has been starkly different from its response to China, but it also faces a different challenge. For years, Europe and Australia continued to seek economic cooperation with China despite these tensions. But those ties have since come crashing down after Beijing sought to leverage its trade profile to coerce the European Union and Australia.

With India, the West has sought to strengthen security ties, in large part to cultivate an ally that can counterbalance China in the Indo-Pacific. Those ties have involved not only the transfer of advanced defense technology, but also intelligence-sharing, training, and joint operations.

But can such security cooperation run in tandem with New Delhi's desire to expand its espionage operations in the West or monitor dissidents abroad? If the U.S. and its allies sense a risk that India may leverage its role in these information networks for purposes that aren't mutually acceptable, it may jeopardize India's security ties with the West.

### **What China is signaling by renaming regions**

05 May 2024, Taipei Times, Khendroob Thondup

In the intricate ballet of geopolitics, names signify more than mere identification: They embody history, culture and sovereignty. The recent decision by China to refer to Arunachal Pradesh as "Tsang Nan" or South Tibet, and to rename Tibet as "Xizang," is a strategic move that extends beyond cartography into the realm of diplomatic signaling.

This op-ed explores the implications of these actions and India's potential response.

Names are potent symbols in international relations, encapsulating the essence of a nation's stance on territorial disputes.

China's choice to rename regions within Indian territory is not merely a linguistic exercise, but a symbolic assertion of sovereignty.

Such actions are provocative, touching upon the sensitive chords of territorial integrity and national identity.

India's response, maintaining the use of the name "Tibet," is a reaffirmation of historical and cultural recognition.

By doing so, India not only challenges China's unilateral renaming, but also underscores its commitment to respecting the historical context of the region.

This stance is significant, as it reflects India's adherence to global norms and understanding, despite China's attempts to reshape international perceptions.

The term "Sinicization" denotes the process by which non-Chinese societies are influenced to adopt Chinese cultural, linguistic and societal norms.

In Tibet's case, this process is a deliberate effort by the Chinese government to integrate Tibetan culture into the broader Chinese cultural framework.

The renaming of Tibet to "Xizang" is a facet of these Sinicization efforts, aiming to solidify China's rule and dilute the Dalai Lama's influence and the global recognition of the Tibetan cause.

The international community, including governments and organizations, often weighs the historical and cultural context heavily when referring to regions.

Despite China's renaming efforts, many continue to use the term "Tibet," aligning with the established global understanding.

This collective stance is crucial, as it supports the cultural and religious identity of the Tibetan people against the tide of Sinicization.

The Indian government has firmly rejected China's attempts to rename places in Arunachal Pradesh, emphasizing that such actions do not alter the state's status as an integral part of India.

This rejection is a clear message to China and the international community that India stands firm on its territorial sovereignty.

India's potential reciprocation, refusing to accept the name "Xizang" and instead using "Tibet," is a powerful diplomatic gesture.

It is a declaration that India does not recognize the Sinicization of Tibet and supports the region's historical and cultural identity as they are known internationally.

The naming dispute between India and China over Tibet and Arunachal Pradesh is more than a war of words: It is a reflection of deeper geopolitical tensions and the struggle for cultural preservation.

India's stance, rooted in historical recognition and international law, serves as a bulwark against attempts to rewrite history and infringe upon rights of sovereignty.

As the situation evolves, the international community's role in upholding these principles becomes ever more critical, ensuring that names – and the identities they represent – remain respected on the global stage.

## Opinion | China Is Revamping Its Military, And India Must Not Take It Lightly

02 May 2024, NDTV, Harsh V. Pant

While India continues to be absorbed in its long-drawn elections, the rest of the world is moving ahead with its own priorities. Last week, Chinese President Xi Jinping undertook a comprehensive restructuring of his country's armed forces when he made a surprising decision to dissolve the Strategic Support Force (SSF), a military division he established in 2015 to merge various capabilities of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), including space, cyber, electronic, and psychological warfare.

In its stead, Xi introduced the Information Support Force, which he described as "a fresh strategic component of the PLA and a crucial support for the coordinated advancement and utilisation of the network information system". As a result of this revised framework, the PLA now comprises four primary branches: the ground forces, naval forces, air forces, and the rocket forces. Additionally, there are now four auxiliary units: three divisions derived from the SSF, and the Joint Logistic Support Force.

### Harnessing AI And Emerging Tech

While Xi himself underscored the importance of the move in enabling the Chinese military to effectively "engage and triumph in contemporary warfare", his extensive anti-corruption campaign within the PLA last year precipitated this restructuring. It implicated influential generals and caused significant disruption within the rocket force, a prestigious division responsible for managing China's rapidly expanding cache of nuclear and ballistic missiles. The restructuring strengthens Xi's direct oversight of the PLA's strategic capacities and emphasises China's aspirations to proficiently harness Artificial Intelligence and other emerging technologies in anticipation of what it terms the "intelligentised warfare" of tomorrow.

And this is critical for China as it continues to push its military to adapt to the changing strategic realities and the rapidly evolving nature of contemporary warfare. Over the past decade, Beijing has pursued a comprehensive modernisation of its military capabilities, aiming to transform the PLA into a formidable force capable of safeguarding its interests regionally and globally. This modernisation drive has encompassed various aspects, including technological advancement, organisational reform, and doctrinal evolution.

### Preparing For Modern Warfare

One of the focal points of China's military modernisation has been the development and acquisition of advanced weaponry and equipment. This includes the enhancement of its naval capabilities with the commissioning of aircraft

carriers, modernisation of its air force with next-generation fighter jets, and bolstering its missile forces with advanced ballistic and cruise missiles. Additionally, China has invested heavily in cyber and space capabilities, recognising their importance in modern warfare.

Moreover, organisational reforms have been instituted to streamline command structures, improve joint operations, and enhance the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the PLA. These reforms have included the establishment of new commands and theatre commands, as well as efforts to professionalise and modernise the military personnel. It goes without saying that China's military modernisation poses several significant consequences for India, both in terms of security dynamics and strategic calculations. Its enhanced military capabilities, particularly in areas such as naval expansion, missile development, and cyber warfare, could potentially tilt the balance of power in the region, thereby altering the strategic landscape vis-à-vis India. The military modernisation seems to have already emboldened Beijing to assert its territorial claims more strongly, potentially heightening the risk of border skirmishes and military confrontations between the two countries. This has exacerbated existing tensions and destabilised the region.

#### Why India Should Pay Attention

Furthermore, China's growing military prowess has implications for India's defence planning and security posture. New Delhi is compelled to invest more resources in its own military modernisation efforts to maintain a credible deterrent against potential Chinese aggression, which may require diverting resources away from other development priorities.

Over the last decade, India has embarked on a series of defence reforms aimed at modernising and enhancing the efficiency of its armed forces. One significant reform has been the promotion of indigenous defence manufacturing through initiatives like the "Make in India" programme. This initiative seeks to encourage domestic production of defence equipment, reducing reliance on imports and bolstering India's self-reliance in defence capabilities.

#### The 'Make In India' Initiative

Additionally, there has been a focus on streamlining defence procurement processes to expedite the acquisition of critical military hardware and technology. Measures such as the Defense Acquisition Procedure (DAP) and the Strategic Partnership Model aim to facilitate smoother procurement processes and encourage private sector participation in defence production. There have also been efforts to enhance defence infrastructure along India's borders, particularly in border areas with China.

This includes the development of roads, airfields, and other infrastructure to improve mobility and logistical support for the armed forces. Moreover, there has been an emphasis on promoting jointness and integration among the three branches of the Indian armed forces - the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force - to enhance operational synergy and effectiveness.

And yet there is a need for quicker reforms and broader restructuring. Indian debate on theatre commands is still in limbo, and rationalisation of the human resources and technology ratio is still at a nascent stage. China's recent moves are a wake-up call. Making Indian armed forces fit to fight 21st-century wars should be the topmost priority for any government that takes office in June.

### India is starting to split in two parts, What's Next?

01 May 2024, Ground Report, Wahid Bhat

Recent studies at the American Geophysical Union conference propose a seismic shift in India's geology. Rather than a sideways split, seismic data hints at a horizontal division in the Indian Continental Plate.

A recent study suggests that India's geological landscape is undergoing significant transformation, with indications that the Indian Continental Plate might be undergoing a horizontal split rather than a conventional sideways separation.

The analysis of seismic data gathered from southern Tibet, coupled with a reevaluation of previous research, has unveiled a striking portrayal of the immense geological forces at play beneath the Himalayas.

Seismic data reveals Himalayan geological forces. Presenting at the American Geophysical Union conference in San Francisco last December, researchers from institutions in the US and China unveiled findings suggesting a unique disintegration process within the Indian continental plate. As it interacts with the basement of the Eurasian tectonic plate, situated above it, the Indian plate undergoes a transformative process.

Contrary to prevailing models explaining the elevation of the Tibetan plateau and the formation of the Himalayan mountain range, this discovery offers a surprising compromise. Traditionally, these phenomena were attributed to a collision between the Indian and Eurasian crustal fragments. This collision, dating back approximately 60 million years, involved the Indian plate subducting beneath its northern neighbour, propelled by currents of molten rock within the mantle.

Scientists propose that the split is occurring in layers rather than the plate breaking into two distinct pieces. The formation of the Tibetan Plateau has

sparked considerable debate within the scientific community regarding its underlying causes.

According to a January 2024 study, the Indian tectonic plate is splitting into two layers, each about 100 kilometres (60 miles) thick, as it moves towards the Eurasian plate. This process, known as "delamination", is causing the landmass to decrease by 2 millimetres per year.

The study suggests that the plate is separating into higher and lower layers, with the elevated section contributing to Tibet's high peaks and the lower part submerging into the Earth's mantle.

India's plate undergoes horizontal split

A recent study suggests that India's geological landscape is undergoing significant transformation, with indications that the Indian Continental Plate might be undergoing a horizontal split rather than a conventional sideways separation. Scientists propose that the split is occurring in layers rather than the plate breaking into two distinct pieces.

"Levels of helium present in the Tibetan springs led us to draw our arguments," explained Simon Klemperer of Stanford University and co-authors on the study. "Our research revealed a pattern suggesting that the mantle was close enough to the Earth's surface for the rare helium-3 to emerge through the springs in northern Tibet," they added.

"In southern Tibet, the prevalence of Helium-4 indicates that the plate has not yet split there," stated Professor Douwe van Hinsbergen of Utrecht University in an interview with Science Magazine. Reflecting on the concept, he added,

"We didn't know continents could behave this way and that is, for solid earth science, pretty fundamental," Professor Douwe van Hinsbergen, who is not an author of the study said.

Research into the density of the mantle and crust indicates that the buoyant Indian continental plate should not sink easily, suggesting that submerged sections of the crust likely continue to grind along under the Eurasian plate rather than plunging into the depths of the mantle.

Indian plate distorts; land wrinkles, folds

Another theory proposes that the Indian plate may be undergoing distortion, causing some areas to wrinkle and fold while others dip and dive.

Diverse interpretations arise depending on the favoured evidence and data processing methods. In a study led by geophysicist Lin Liu from the Ocean University of China, researchers collected 'up-and-down' S-wave and shear-wave splitting data from 94 broadband seismic stations spanning southern Tibet. This data, combined with previously gathered 'back-and-forth' P-wave data, yielded a more nuanced understanding of the underlying dynamics.

Fabio Capitanio, a geodynamicist at Monash University, underscores the uncertainties surrounding

the process, noting the limited data available. 'It's just a snapshot,' he remarks. However, Capitanio acknowledges the significance of the research as a crucial step toward understanding the formation of our modern landscape. 'It's the type of work that we need to move [forward],' he asserts.

Professor Douwe van Hinsbergen, who highlights the novelty of the findings said, 'This is the first time that ... it's been caught in the act in a downgoing plate.' Scientists have long theorized about the possibility of tectonic plates unzipping, driven by the layered composition of buoyant crust and denser upper mantle rock.

Such a split occurs along the weak interface between these layers, a phenomenon previously studied in the interiors of thick continental plates and simulated in computer models.

Earthquake risks tied to ancient collisions

A more recent analysis, based on a different set of earthquake waves, indicates a tear along the western edge of the delaminated slab. According to Anne Meltzer, a seismologist at Lehigh University, almost every landmass on Earth, including the Himalayas, was formed from similar collisions. Understanding these collisions not only illuminates our current landscape but also helps us grasp the earthquake risks along ancient continental scars.

The study's implications are profound, extending beyond mountain formation to earthquake prediction. By gaining a clearer 3D insight into tectonic plate interactions, scientists can enhance understanding of Earth's surface changes and potentially improve seismic event forecasts.

Celal Sengor, a professor of geological engineering at Istanbul Technical University, who was not involved in this research, remarks, "India was going far too fast after it parted company with Africa-Madagascar and Australia. ... Its speed northward, concerning the rest of Eurasia, was faster than any plate motion we know today, or have inferred in the past across a single plate boundary. This paper not only has changed some of our ideas on the paleotectonics and paleogeography of the neo-Tethys but has given us a new model about what double subductions can do."

### Competition and conflict: On the U.S.-China relationship

01 May 2024, The Hindu

U.S. and China must manage their differences responsibly

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's marathon talks with top officials in China, which includes President Xi Jinping, have underscored the desire of the two countries to stabilise their relationship and



the resultant challenges. Mr. Blinken stressed that the U.S. would make sure that the competition between the world's two largest economies "doesn't veer into conflict". Mr. Xi said they should seek common ground "rather than engage in vicious competition". But the Blinken visit also exposed the structural fault lines in the Sino-American competition. He raised America's concerns about what he called China's "support for Russia's defence industry" and threatened actions if Beijing "doesn't address this problem". China slammed the "hypocrisy and irresponsibility" of the U.S., which just decided to send military aid worth \$61 billion to Ukraine and then made "groundless accusations" against normal economic and trade exchanges between China and Russia. China also attacked the U.S. policy towards Taiwan and the South China Sea and urged Washington to look at China's development "in a positive light".

Both the U.S. and China have mutual deep misgivings. U.S. National Defence Strategy documents name China as a "revisionist power" and a pacing technological and military challenger. The U.S. has imposed export controls to limit China's growth in strategic sectors, particularly semiconductors, and imposed high tariffs on Chinese goods. It has also doubled down on its support for Taiwan and bolstered defence cooperation with the Philippines, which has disputes with China in the South China Sea. Beijing has blamed the U.S. for South China Sea tensions and called Washington's support for Taiwan as an intervention in its internal affairs. While it is practically impossible to reset ties given these structural challenges, there are areas of cooperation as well. In November 2023, when Presidents Xi and Biden met in California, both sides decided to resume bilateral military-to-military communication, cooperate in addressing the risks of artificial intelligence and launch efforts to control the production of fentanyl. Tackling climate change and global food security are also areas of cooperation. A key lesson from the Cold War is that if competition between superpowers turns ugly, it could affect the world through proxy conflicts, economic wars and diplomatic crises. As the two most powerful countries, they should stay away from repeating history. Even if they are not able to resolve their ideological and geopolitical differences, they should build the guardrails that could prevent the competition from turning ugly and stay focused on the areas of cooperation, addressing the common challenges of the world.

## Where is the Panchen Lama? Will the CCP manipulate the Dalai Lama's Reincarnation?

01 May 2024, Tibet Policy Institute



On January 28, 1989, the 10th Panchen Lama (strangely) passed away at the Tashilhunpo Monastery in Shigatse. On May 14, 1995, His Holiness the Dalai Lama recognized Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as the 11th Panchen Lama. However, three days later, six-year-old Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, along with his family, was secretly abducted by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and their whereabouts remain unknown to this day.

Ye Xiaowen, then head of the CCP's Religious Affairs Bureau, once told Agya Rinpoche that, after the Dalai Lama announced the spirit child, the situation was really tense. They acted immediately, borrowed three airplanes from the Politburo Standing Committee, and hid the three spirit children in three separate locations, without anyone knowing.

The CCP indeed concealed their whereabouts very effectively so that no one would find them. Gedhun Choekyi Nyima has been missing since May 17, 1995, for 29 years now, and his fate remains a mystery. This year 2024, April 25 marked Gedhun Choekyi Nyima's 35th birthday.

Despite continuous international pressure to disclose the whereabouts of the Panchen Lama, the CCP maintains its stance, insisting that the so-called "reincarnated Panchen Lama" is simply an ordinary Chinese citizen leading a normal life. They claim that he and his family do not wish to be disturbed by the outside world.

One might wonder, what kind of "ordinary citizen" requires the entire might of a country to shield them from any outside interference? Not only have they been shielded, but all traces of his family, including his parents, have vanished without a trace, to such an extent that it sends chills down one's spine!

The Origins of the Reincarnation System of the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama.

65 years ago, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama fled Tibet in 1959. But why, in 1995, did the Dalai Lama in India endorse the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama? To understand this, we must delve into the origins of the reincarnation system between the Dalai

Lama and the Panchen Lama.

In the 14th century A.D., Gendun Chupa, the first Dalai Lama and a disciple of Tsongkhapa, the founder of the Gelugpa school, established the Tashilhunpo Monastery. Through scholarly debates, he defeated the foreigners who challenged him from India and thus, earned the title "Panchen Dakshinpo," meaning the Great Wise One, abbreviated as the Panchen Lama. This marked the origin of the title "Panchen." Gendun Chupa served as the first Dharm seat of Tashilhunpo Monastery, and "Panchen" became an exclusive title for the abbots of the monastery. After several successions, in the early 17th century, Lobsang Choegyal, a monk from Wensa Monastery, became the Zashlun Monastery Panchen.

In 1642, the Fifth Dalai Lama established the Gandenphodang regime, and the Dalai Lama system, rooted in the Gelugpa school, became the paramount authority in Tibetan politics and religion. Lobsang Chökyi, a revered teacher of the Fifth Dalai Lama, traced his lineage back to Khedrup Györgyi, another disciple of Tsongkhapa. Consequently, "Panchen" became an exclusive title for the abbots of Tashilhunpo Monastery, and the monastery became the permanent seat of the Panchen Lama.

Henceforth, the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama were referred to as "Gyawa Yabsai," which translates to "King of Buddha Teacher and Disciple." Tibetans often say, "the sky has the sun and the moon, the earth has the Buddha king, master, and disciple."

According to the highest reincarnation tradition of the Tsongkhapa Gelugpa Dharma lineage, when either the Dalai Lama or the Panchen Lama passes away, a search is conducted for the reincarnation of the deceased. If the living person is too young, or both the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama have passed away, the responsibility of finding the reincarnation falls upon the highest-ranking living monks. This custom has been established over a long history but was not always a requirement.

For instance, when the 14th Dalai Lama recognized a Lama from Sera Monastery as his reincarnation, the search group confirmed his identity immediately, without additional procedures. Similarly, after the passing of the Ninth Panchen Lama in 1937, the Kashag (Cabinet) and Dzong Rinpoche issued an order to find the reincarnation of the Tenth Panchen Lama through divination.

From a secular perspective, the Panchen Lama system is an extension of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation system. Without the Dalai Lama's position as the leader of Tibetan politics and religion, the Panchen Lama system would not have evolved.

The Chinese Communist Party abolishes the Dalai Lama's certified spiritual child and decides to draw lots from a golden bottle.

The Chinese Communist Party (CPC) reacted strongly to the Dalai Lama's certification of the Panchen Lama's reincarnation. They announced the abolition of this certification and decided to select a Panchen Lama who met their criteria by drawing lots from a golden vase.

On November 29, 1995, the CCP conducted a "golden vase lottery" at Dazhao Monastery in Lhasa, selecting Panchen Norbu. Both of Khensen Norbu's parents were members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which prohibits its members and their families from practicing religion. However, the Khensen Norbu family enjoyed certain privileges. The CCP was well aware that finding the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama would likely involve cooperation with the Dalai Lama. During a meeting of the panel responsible for selecting the reincarnated Panchen Lama, Yan Mingfu, then head of the Central United Front Work Department, and Luo Gan, Secretary General of the State Council, expressed their willingness to "communicate with the Dalai Lama" and even "adopt the Dalai Lama's views."

Gyalwa Dhondup, the Dalai Lama's second brother, wrote in his memoir "The Maker of the Kalundu" that Deng Xiaoping wanted the Dalai Lama to personally preside over the Panchen Lama's farewell ceremony after his passing. The authorities may have wanted to emphasize this point to increase the legitimacy of the Panchen's reincarnation.

According to Gyalwa Dhondup, during his visit to Beijing in 1994, a representative of the Panchen Lama's search team visited him, asking him to deliver a gift from the Dalai Lama and a letter from Chaza Rinpoche.

Why then did the CCP react so strongly when the Dalai Lama announced the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama? The atheist CCP, involved in Tibetan religious affairs, not only claimed the authority over reincarnation, which is traditionally outside its jurisdiction, but also detained Chagzar Rinpoche, who was originally appointed by the authorities as the deputy head of the Panchen Reincarnation Search Leading Group.

The CCP's sudden change in attitude can be best understood through Jiang Zemin, the then president of the CCP, who issued the directive that led to the "golden vase lottery" maneuver.

The Tibetan monk who was [exasperated] by the golden vase stick-withdrawal – Agya Rinpoche

In 1998, Agya Rinpoche, departed from the United States. In his autobiography, "Against All Odds," Rinpoche reveals that the Golden Bottle Lottery held at the Dazhao Monastery in Lhasa during the night

of 1995 was the final catalyst for his departure.

Who is Agya Lobsang Tubdan Rinpoche? He was recognized at the age of two by the 10th Panchen Lama as the 8th Agya Rinpoche, was one of the abbots of Kubum Monastery. Kubum Monastery, the birthplace of Tsongkhapa, the founder of the Gelugpa school, holds a significant place in Tibetan Buddhism. Agya Rinpoche is considered the reincarnation of Tsongkhapa's father, which bestows upon him a highly revered status.

Before his departure in 1998, the CCP appointed Rinpoche as the president of the China Buddhist Association and a member of the Standing Committee of the Central Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). Rinpoche was also the sutra teacher of the Panchen Gyaltsen Norbu, originally favored by the CCP. Ngagyar Rinpoche had personally witnessed the CCP's manipulation of the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama.

In "Against the Wind and the Water," Agya Rinpoche writes, "I was not surprised that the Dalai Lama announced the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Master; it was the attitude from above that surprised me."

In 1992, there was full cooperation between His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Chinese Communist Party. On September 27 of that year, two months after the Dalai Lama's announcement of the 17th Karmapa, the Chinese government recognized Ogyen Trinley Dorje as the reincarnation of the Karmapa. This led Tibetans to anticipate that the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama would follow a similar authentication process, fostering good cooperation between the CCP and the Dalai Lama.

On November 28, 1995, Agya Rinpoche and others were transported to Lhasa by a special CCP plane. On the night of the 29th, at around 2:00 a.m., the Golden Vase Lottery was held at the Da Zhao Monastery amidst a heavy military and police presence. The entire city of Lhasa was under a state of near-martial law. Agya Rinpoche exclaimed, "If the Golden Vase ceremony is so grand, why is there such a politically charged atmosphere?"

Rinpoche observed the entire process of the Golden Vase lottery at the Da Zhao Monastery and later wrote in his autobiography, "I expected the person to shake the vase until a sign emerged, but to my surprise, he merely touched the three signs briefly. Then, he selected one and handed it to the Central Special Envoy, Luo Gan, who nodded in approval. The Bohol Living Buddha then handed the sign to Jiangchun Lobu, who loudly declared Kyanzan Norbu of Gyari County as the winner."

Jiangcun Luobu announced that "Gyentse Norbu won the lottery." The names Jiangcun Luobu and Gyentse Norbu are written the same way in Tibetan,

which later became a topic of conversation among Tibetans, teasing the Chinese Communist Party for the apparent manipulation of the Panchen Lama reincarnation.

During the plane ride back to Beijing, Ye Xiaowen, then director of the CCP's Religious Affairs Bureau, candidly informed Agya Rinpoche and Jamyang Rinpoche, "It's just a formality. We filled it with a bit of cotton. Did you notice the signboard was slightly raised? We placed some cotton in the signboard bag to ensure it was slightly higher in the bottle, thus ensuring the chosen spiritual child would be the one we wanted."

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) uses the golden vase as a tool to manipulate the reincarnation of Tibetan monks.

Following the establishment of the Ganden Phojang regime in Tibet in 1642 and the Manchu Qing Empire in 1644, a relationship between the two sides was established. As a patron of the Gelugpa school of Tibetan Buddhism, in 1792, the Qianlong Emperor, suspecting misuse of the Tibetan reincarnation certification system for personal gain, sent a golden vase to be used in drawing lots for certifying the reincarnation of senior monks.

In China, drawing lots from a golden vase is equivalent to divination in monasteries and Taoist temples. In Tibet, a similar form of divination, dowsing, was originally practiced. The candidate's name is written on a slip of paper, wrapped in dough, and placed in a vessel. The vessel is then shaken to make the dough jump out, revealing the chosen individual. Thus, for Tibetans, the golden vase is not an exotic system but a substitute tool for traditional divination practices, catering to Tibetan culture and aesthetics.

Tibetan Buddhism recognizes the reincarnation of monks through various methods. The first is the reincarnation of the undead, where monks directly identify their reincarnation. The second is the reincarnation of a child with deep memories of their previous life, such as the Second and Fourteenth Dalai Lamas. The Fourteenth Dalai Lama recognized the lamas of Sera Monastery who came to find him, and the Dharma vessels of his previous life before being certified. The search party confirmed his identity as the Dalai Lama without further procedures. The third type involves a child leaving a prophecy or will in their previous life, as seen in the Karmapa reincarnation system. The fourth type occurs when a child lacks memories or a prophecy from their previous life. Tibetan monks and Dharma protectors divine to identify the reincarnated child. Other forms of divination, such as using three oranges, as done by the 13th Dalai Lama to find the 9th Panchen Lama, have also been practiced. Therefore, the golden vase divination, as a substitute

for traditional divination, is considered the least preferred option and is not mandatory.

In the case of CCP authorities, they tamper with the process by placing cotton in the bag, ensuring that the sign they want to choose is slightly higher in the bottle. Instead of allowing the sign to jump out naturally, they directly select the pre-determined sign from the golden vase. Learning from the feudal empire's practices, CCP officials use the so-called "golden vase" to assert control over the reincarnation system of Tibetan Buddhist monks, satisfying their desire for power and emulating imperial practices.

In 2007, the CCP government introduced the "Methods for Managing the Reincarnation of Living Buddhas in Tibetan Buddhism" claiming complete authority over reincarnation. According to this policy, without the Communist Party, there would be no recognition of reincarnated lamas. Only those approved and permitted by the CCP can be reincarnated, while dissenters are denied reincarnation. The Party asserts its supremacy over religion, allowing only those who pledge allegiance to the Party to have any freedom, while those who resist are suppressed.

For Tibetans, finding the reincarnation of a high lama is a significant endeavor, requiring the identification of a genuine reincarnated child, which is no small task. However, for CCP officials, a reincarnated child is merely a child, and any child will suffice. The CCP seeks a puppet Panchen Lama that it can manipulate, hence the selection of Khensang Norbu, whose parents are both members of the CCP, making him easier for the authorities to control.

In recent years, the CCP has organized the "Tibetan Buddhism Living Buddha Reincarnation Exhibition" in Tibet and conducted tens of thousands of lectures in Tibetan communities, colleges, and monasteries. These events assert the CCP's authority over reincarnation, promoting the "golden vase sign" as the most authoritative method. The CCP has also implemented the "Ten Prohibitions" in Tibet, explicitly stating its refusal to allow any unauthorized activities related to the death of the Dalai Lama. It is evident that the CCP has made extensive preparations.

By trampling on Tibetan religious traditions and defying the international community, the CCP has manipulated the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, using Gyentse Norbu as a political tool to indoctrinate Tibetans. The question of whether the authorities can continue to manipulate the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama to achieve their goal of completely eradicating Tibetan culture, and how to prevent such a plot, has become the most pressing challenge of our time.

PS: This is a roughly translated version of an article originally written in Chinese by the author -Phenthok. For any unclarity with the translation, please refer to the original article written in Chinese and published by Beijing Spring.

### Can Nepal get a lift from wooing by India and China to become a middle-income economy?

01 May 2024, SCMP

Nepal has drawn considerable foreign investment in recent years as it aims to become a middle-income country but its "dysfunctional" politics may curb its ambition amid strategic jostling between India and China, according to economists.

During a two-day investment summit in Kathmandu that concluded on Monday, representatives of India and China vied to draw closer to Nepal and strengthen their country's economic footprint in South Asia.

Potential investors pledged during the summit to inject as much as 9.13 billion Nepali rupees (US\$68.3 million) into the country, which is still navigating its transition from a centralised monarchy to a federal democratic republic under its 2015 Constitution, as well as an economic transformation from being less reliant on international aid to becoming a hub for global investments.

"Our unwavering commitment to liberal economic policies lays the foundation for a vibrant and investor-friendly business environment," said Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal.

"Nepal's strategic location, situated between emerging markets India and China, signifies it as an ideal investment destination," he told the summit during its opening on Sunday.

While India and China did not directly compete with each other to invest in the projects offered at the summit, their overlapping interests could be seen in the resulting deals that were announced.

Unsurprisingly, delegates from India and China formed the largest contingent among the 2,400 representatives from various countries who attended the summit. While India sent about 150 participants, China's delegation was twice as large.

At the summit's opening on Sunday, Beijing announced the exemption of visa fees for Nepali travellers starting on May 1. This is in addition to the start of commercial flights from two international airports in the Nepali cities of Pokhara and Lumbini.

The airports were built with Chinese funding totalling hundreds of millions of dollars. In contrast, India has hesitated to open up air routes to Nepal due to the two airports' link to Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative. "Air and road links and border checkpoints are progressing well. Feasibility studies of the cross-

border railway and cross-border transmission lines are moving forward. That's why today's summit holds a very special significance," said Luo Zhaohui, chairman of the state-run China International Development Cooperation Agency, during his address at the event.

Piyush Goyal, India's federal minister for commerce and industry, said in a speech at the event via a video call: "We will continue to expand our trading and business relationship. I urge Indian investors across the globe to invest in Nepal, to seize the opportunity, and become a part of emerging Nepal."

#### Tapping hydropower potential

Landlocked Nepal has been wooing foreign investors, primarily from its neighbours, in various sectors, particularly hydropower.

The impoverished South Asian country is home to eight of the world's largest mountain peaks, with dozens of rivers flowing from them, offering immense potential for harnessing hydropower.

While the country currently produces 3,200MW of hydropower, multiple large-scale projects with a combined capacity of 5,568MW are in the pipeline. India is heavily invested in Nepal's hydropower projects, while China is seeking to gain a foothold in the sector.

However, the Nepali government is hesitant to accept Chinese investment in hydropower due to concerns that India and Bangladesh – the only two markets for the electricity generated – may be reluctant to purchase power from China-linked projects, according to economists.

"From the Chinese side, there is considerable interest in hydropower and related projects. From the Indian side, buying energy for Chinese-invested projects is hesitant. Chinese investors will have a tough time selling this energy generation," said Jaya Jung Mahat, a policy economist with the Nepali Institute of Policy Research.

"Transporting energy to Chinese territories is challenging due to the high mountains between the countries. It's easier for Indian investors and the [Delhi] government can facilitate the purchase," Mahat added.

#### Stifling bureaucracy

Nepal's transition from a low-income nation to a middle-income nation can only succeed with the help of India and China, economists say.

"Nepal is transitioning from being a recipient of aid and development help to attracting investments. All countries are substituting aid with trade and investment," said Sujeeva Shakya, founder-chair of Nepal Economic Forum, a Kathmandu-based economic policy and research institution.

"We need US\$7 billion-US\$8 billion [in the coming years] to grow our economy at an accelerated pace.

We have 600,000 people entering the job market. Wherever the investment comes from, it doesn't make any difference," Shakya said.

Critics question, however, whether events like the summit can help improve Nepal's economic outlook unless its government undertakes measures to improve the country's political stability, cut red tape and develop a robust bureaucratic framework.

"The leadership, governance system, and population are divided along political party lines and have become toxic and dysfunctional," said Kedar Neupane, an economist at the Nepal Policy Institute think tank.

The country's leadership should address bureaucratic and policy hurdles to entice foreign investors, Neupane said.

"Successive governments in Nepal have failed to see things from a realistic economic perspective due to political divisions.

"This summit may not deliver significant new investments beyond some pledges ... other than serving as self-amusement for the organisers."

In response to the criticisms, Investment Board Nepal CEO Sushil Bhatta said the government was determined to tackle the difficulties that companies faced in doing business in the country, citing the recent introduction of new laws to remove investment bottlenecks.

He said: "The higher political leadership has expressed commitment for continued reforms in the investment regime

## April

### How Xi Jinping is consolidating his power by revamping Chinese military

30 April 2024, First Post

The turmoil in the organisational structure of China's military continues. The latest is the disbandment of one of the main forces that was formed less than a decade ago. On April 19, the PLA Strategic Support Force (PLASSF) was disbanded and three new forces were formed, viz, the Information Support Force (ISF), the Aerospace Force, and the Cyberspace Force, with the already established Joint Logistics Support Force forming the 'fourth arm'. The PLA is thus now reconfigured as "four services [army, navy, air force, and rocket forces] and four arms [ISF, aerospace, cyberspace, and joint logistics]"

Turmoil in the nearly 97-year-old China's military is not unknown, however. As it brought the Communist Party into power in 1949, the Red Army turned into the People's Liberation Army (PLA), which is



identified as the Communist Party's wing but known to bargain hard for privileges, defence budgets, representation, and participation in the decision-making bodies of the country.

Given its value as the "protector" of the party, the PLA sometimes showed its teeth or even threatened to slow down. In mid-1960s, it exhibited *shantouzhu* (mountain-topism)—sitting on the top of the mountain and out of the reach of the party's control mechanisms—in other words, becoming "independent".

In other times, it demanded its pound of flesh by filling up positions for the children of the Generals. Increasingly, it demanded higher defence allocations, specifically since the 1990s, making it the second largest spender in the world.

China's Communist Party is aware of the PLA's praetorian demands, leading to its gradual loss of power. Hence, the party has struck back periodically to keep the military confined to the barracks and assert its "absolute power".

Mao Zedong disbanded ranks and military grades in the mid-1960s. Deng Xiaoping accused the PLA of being "bloated, lax, and undisciplined" in 1979 and launched a programme for reorganising towards a "lean and mean" armed force. Deng disbanded over a million troops in the process, including Maoist elements.

Xi Jinping dismissed or even arrested several thousands of officers and soldiers in the name of curbing corruption, netting Jiang Zemin's proteges like Guo Boxiang, Xu Caihou, and others. Last year, China's defence minister, Li Shangfu, disappeared from public view, only to be replaced after several months by Deng Jun.

Rocket forces commander Li Yuchao, its commissar Xu Zhongbo, and its deputies Zhang Zhengzhong and Liu Guangbin as well were shown the door. PLASSF commander Ju Qiansheng went missing. The Aerospace department's officials, Liu Shiquan, Wu Yansheng, and Wang Changqing, were dismissed. Rampant corruption and dereliction of duty in PLA forces were seen as a threat to the civilian leadership under Xi and to the combat requirements.

Xi launched a major reorganisation of the PLA in December 2015 to "fight and win" future warfare based on China's core interests and acquiring regional and global hegemony. At the 19th Communist Party Congress, 2017, Xi ordered the PLA to become a "world class military" by 2049. The rump in the PLA is not tuned into these new requirements, leading to further reorganisations.

In pursuing global ambitions, Xi in December 2015 reorganised the PLA into five theatre commands, brought the four "General" departments (of staff, political, logistics and armaments) and the newly established PLASSF under the control of the General

Office of the Central Military Commission (CMC). Yet, the PLA doesn't seem to be matching Xi's ambitions of becoming an expeditionary force firmly under his control.

Xi realised a "world-class military" cannot be raised with so much inefficiency and corruption in the PLA forces. Moreover, some of these units also went beyond their brief, blackening the political leadership's face. The Chinese balloon incident in early 2023, which was shot by the United States, exposed PLASSF's vulnerabilities and command and control problems. Likewise, the Yuan Wang 5 surveillance ship incident at Hambantota alerted India to the PLASSF's ambitions to enter the Indian Ocean. China's information operations across the world depleted its soft power.

It is also realised that the ISF should be a separate force, directly under Xi, as the demands of information warfare increased recently after the Ukraine and Israel-Palestine-Iran crises and cannot be subsumed under the overall umbrella of the PLASSF. Also, despite extensive and threatening deployments in the Taiwan Strait since August 2022, the PLA forces, including the PLASSF, were unable to make a significant dent in the region. The Galwan incident with India also exposed China's limitations in information dominance and logistics support.

Xi Jinping's tenure as Chairman of the all-powerful CMC witnessed increasing turbulence for the PLA forces, in part due to his global ambitions and the inability of the PLA to adjust to such demands. While Xi attacked rampant corruption in the PLA, specifically targeting rival political factional officers loyal to Jiang Zemin, recently this campaign targeted his own appointees, highlighting vulnerabilities in civil-military relations.

The newly formed PLA ISF that was carved out of the PLASSF on April 19 has Bi Yi as the commander and Li Wei as political commissar. This reorganisation provides more for specialisation under the direct leadership of Xi. Given the lack of transparency in the PLA, it is hard to predict if further purges would be carried out in the "four services and four arms" of the PLA. The resulting uncertainty in the PLA is detrimental to peace and stability in China and beyond.

Prof. S. Kondapalli, the author, is Professor in Chinese Studies at JNU. Views expressed in the above piece are personal and solely those of the author. They do not necessarily reflect Firstpost's views.

## Are there really Chinese sleeper cells operating in the U.S.?

29 April 2024, PolitiFact

Is the Chinese Communist Party operating "sleeper cells" on American soil? That's what Rep. Elise Stefanik, R-N.Y., said in a recent social media post. Stefanik, who as House Republican Conference chair is the third-highest party official under Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., decried Chinese nationals crossing the U.S.-Mexico border in a March 17 post on X.

Stefanik, who has closely aligned herself with former President Donald Trump, went on to say in the post that "we know the #CCP (the Chinese Communist Party) has set up sleeper cells in our communities. Joe Biden is asleep at the wheel as a hostile foreign regime is waging war on our way of life."

PolitiFact reached out to Stefanik — a member of the House Armed Services and Intelligence committees — multiple times but never received a response. However, terrorism experts said whether her assertion is accurate depends on how one defines "sleeper cell."

We couldn't find any publicly available, official intelligence community definition of "sleeper cell," and we did not hear back from the CIA or the House Intelligence Committee. But the International Spy Museum, which has board members and advisers from the intelligence community, defines a "sleeper agent" as an "agent living as an ordinary citizen in a foreign country; acts only when a hostile situation develops."

This definition mirrors the image most Americans may have from pop culture: spies or terrorists who embed themselves in another country. These so-called sleeper agents pass themselves off as ordinary citizens as they await a call from their handlers — sometimes years later — with orders to undertake a mission such as sabotage or terrorism.

Experts told PolitiFact they are unaware of any efforts by China or its ruling Communist Party that fit this Hollywood version of a sleeper cell.

However, a looser definition of "sleeper cell" may fit a recent case of Chinese nationals who allegedly embedded themselves in Manhattan to operate an "illegal overseas police station," said Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, a terrorism expert who founded the security and technology firm Valens Global.

According to the Justice Department's April 2023 announcement of the charges, the effort was focused on intimidating Chinese dissidents. Like sleeper agents, the suspects worked undercover within an American community while doing the bidding of a foreign government.

But the case also presents differences with the popular conception of sleeper cells. The suspects allegedly targeted Chinese dissidents living in

America, not native-born Americans; their endgame does not appear to have been a terrorist act against the U.S.; and the suspects' anti-dissident operations may have been ongoing, rather than having to await orders for a specific mission.

The overseas police station example

The existence of these overseas police stations had been bubbling up for a few years prior to the arrests.

In September 2022, a Spanish human rights group, Safeguard Defenders, released a report alleging the existence of at least 54 secret Chinese police stations in 21 countries. In April 2023, U.S. media reports cited seven Chinese police stations in the U.S.: two in New York City, two in California, one in Minnesota, one in Nebraska and one in Texas.

That month, the U.S. arrested "Harry" Lu Jianwang, 61, of the Bronx, and Chen Jinping, 59, of Manhattan, on charges related to operating a Chinese police station in lower Manhattan's Chinatown neighborhood on behalf of a provincial branch of China's Ministry of Public Security.

The suspects were charged with "conspiring to act as agents of the (People's Republic of China's) government as well as obstructing justice by destroying evidence of their communications with" a Ministry of Public Security official, the Justice Department said in announcing the arrests.

"They were residents of New York City, they communicated with the Chinese Ministry of Public Security, they worked to establish this unofficial police station, they operated it clandestinely at the behest of the People's Republic of China, and it involved at least two people, which is the minimum for a 'cell,'" said Gartenstein-Ross, the terrorism expert. "That provides a number of aspects that would establish them as a sleeper cell."

The Chinese "police stations" don't fit other aspects of the popularly held definition

To the extent ordinary Americans have heard of sleeper cells, however, it's from pop culture — and such examples differ from the Chinese police stations.

The Chinese defendants don't appear to have been terrorists, unlike the sleeper cells from the 2005-2006 Showtime miniseries "Sleeper Cell" or another Showtime series, "Homeland."

In addition, the Chinese defendants appear to have been targeting Chinese dissidents, rather than natives of the country in which they embedded themselves. The latter was the modus operandi in the 1962 movie "The Manchurian Candidate" and the 2013-2018 FX series "The Americans."

It also appears that the two men arrested were pursuing their activities on an ongoing basis, rather than waiting for years to undertake a specific

mission, which is a key element of the Spy Museum definition.

Would China want to pursue a sleeper cell strategy against the United States?

Experts told PolitiFact that a Chinese-devised sleeper cell of the Hollywood variety seems far-fetched in today's environment. They said Stefanik's framing falls into the longstanding trope of a feared Chinese invasion.

"Stefanik is basically replicating old-school 'red scare' stuff, trying to provoke anti-China sentiment," said James J.F. Forest, the director of security studies at the University of Massachusetts-Lowell.

However, they added, other tactics seem more promising from the Chinese perspective. "A cyber-attack involving hackers that are already present and lurking in our networks is far more likely than a Chinese-directed terrorist campaign involving 'sleeper cells,'" Forest said. "That's not what China does, nor is it something they'd want or need to do." Suzanne Ogden, a professor emerita of political science at Northwestern University, agreed.

Ogden said China has "so many thousands of students in scholars and others in this country that they don't really need so-called sleeper cells. In the age of computers, they can find out everything they want to know without doing what sleeper cells used to do."

### **Why China disbanded once-touted Strategic Support Force: Implications for India**

29 April 2024, First Post

With the intermediary SSF now having been removed, President Xi Jinping will have more direct control of the information domain

As a part of the most touted major security structure reforms, Chinese President Xi Jinping created the Strategic Support Force (SSF) in December 2015. And now, on April 19, 2024, the SSF met its death knell in yet another restructuring of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The PLA now has three independent branches: the Information Support Force (ISF), the Cyberspace Force, and the Aerospace Force.

China is known for its lack of transparency. Whether this change has been done to enhance military operational capability or to exercise greater political oversight and direct control over various elements is being analysed. Could corruption have played a part in Xi's decision, is being speculated.

The Ukraine conflict has surely highlighted the importance of the logistics and information domains. Space and cyber are other very dominant operational domains. Aerospace force could mean the partial merging of air and space domains. It may

be recalled that China created the "Near Space Command" in November 2023.

Erstwhile SSF

The 2015 PLA reforms brought in major structural changes, including the formation of theatre commands. The then-newly created SSF was focused on space, counter-space, and information warfare capabilities. It was meant to improve the PLA's ability to fight what China calls "informatised conflicts" and to simultaneously enhance the PLA's power projection capabilities in space and cyberspace. SSF was designed to ease intelligence sharing and coordination with departments of the different branches.

The nearly 250,000 personnel force represented nearly 10 per cent of the military. The SSF was on par with the other military services and the PLA's five operational theatre commands. Later, the overall responsibility for national and joint military communication networks was also shifted to SSF control.

The SSF oversaw all units responsible for psychological warfare, information warfare, space warfare, cyberwarfare, and electronic warfare operations. With so many tasks, command and control were spread thin, and individual units were vying for resources. Also, the expertise required to command such a multifaceted force was complex.

The SSF consolidated all the PLA's space-based C4ISR systems. The conduct of strategic reconnaissance using the spy balloons flying in 'near space' was also part of the SSF domain. When the Chinese spy balloons shooting down became a public spectacle, Xi was reportedly unhappy with SSF. Splitting SSF will now allow more focus on each sector.

The SSF used to report directly to the all-powerful China's Military Commission (CMC), headed by President Xi Jinping. The SSF's previous mandate encompassed a wide array of responsibilities, potentially hindering operational effectiveness. It was therefore split within just a little more than eight years.

China's Military Commission and reduced layers

The CMC wanted to give independent focus and importance to information, cyber, and space domains as stand-alone forces. It is yet another pivotal step in PLA modernisation, what China now calls the "four services and four arms". The four services being the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Rocket Force, and the four arms include the Aerospace Force, the Cyberspace Force, the Information Support Force, and the Joint Logistic Support Force (JLSF). All these, in addition to the theatre commands, now report directly to the CMC, the top political party organ that oversees China's armed forces.

With the intermediary SSF now having been removed, Xi will have more direct control of the information domain. The new structure means the four forces plug into the PLA's joint operations system more easily due to fewer management layers. Operationally, the new structure is good for China's military. The SSF was as powerful as the PLA's five theatre commands. The current four support forces are now one level lower. The theatre commanders may have greater access to the support forces' assets without hierarchical complications. The four support forces, having become stand-alone, can now concentrate on their own specialised functionality with a reduced management layer.

The overall reform is much smaller in scale than what happened in 2015. The changeover will thus be smoother and faster. Clearly, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leadership places high priority on aggregating information and network operations.

#### Information Support Force

China emphasises that network information systems are the largest variable for improving the combat effectiveness of the military, as modern warfare is a confrontation between systems. The Information Support Force (ISF) will perhaps be responsible for the entire PLA's integrated computer architecture, including network information systems and communications support. The ISF will be responsible for command and control, information security, and intelligence dissemination. They will also coordinate the defence of their own cyber networks and be responsible for maintenance and repairs.

The military considers the information domain as important as the four traditional air, land, sea, and space domains. The ISF tasks are crucial for modern competitive warfare in contested domains. The ISF is China's answer to the US military's advanced network capabilities associated with Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2).

#### Cyberspace Force

The Cyberspace Force will be responsible for offensive cyber operations such as computer network attacks and active defence. Their mission will be to reinforce national cyber border defence, promptly detect and counter network intrusions, and maintain national cyber sovereignty and information security. The force will concentrate on intelligence collection. The Cyberspace Force could one day resemble the US Cyber Command, thus allowing for a more effective employment of resources and expertise.

China has also been imbibing lessons from Russian structures. Russia also has a Cyber Command that reports directly to the Ministry of Defence. They have many dedicated cyber units. Russia has been training for live electronic, cyber, and informational confrontation and undertaking counter-propaganda efforts. China's Cyberspace Force bears a certain

degree of resemblance to both US and Russian practices.

#### Aerospace Force

China has become a very significant space power and is fast catching up to the leader, the US. The Aerospace Force will take over SSF's Space Systems Department. The department managed backend systems for space-related affairs, but had overlaps with the Equipment Development Department and some elements within the Rocket Force and Air Force. Such overlapping organisational structures inevitably impeded operational efficiency. It was so much unlike the US' dedicated Space Force, which centralised all matters pertaining to space warfare. Xi Jinping may have possibly drawn inspiration from the US military's framework.

Now the Aerospace Force will supervise space operations and space launches and strengthen the capacity to safely enter, exit, and freely use space, albeit overtly for peaceful purposes. The Pentagon reports state that the PLA views space superiority, the ability to control the space-enabled information sphere, and the ability to deny adversaries their own space-based information gathering and communication capabilities as critical components of conducting modern warfare.

#### Indian defence reforms

As China pushes ahead with further military reforms, India too has made incremental changes. India set up the tri-service Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC) in 2001 and the Strategic Forces Command (SFC) in 2003. The Armed Forces Special Operations Division (AFSOD) integrated the Special Forces of the armed forces. In 2019, the Defence Cyber Agency (DCyA) and the Defence Space Agency (DSA) were created at the same time. These could one-day become full-fledged commands. There is an Integrated Defence Staff, and a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS).

The modalities for the formation of theatre commands are being worked out. The concept of Air Defence Command was deliberated and abandoned. The idea of integrated helicopter operations and integrated logistics is evolving. While some are exhibiting a high degree of urgency, it is best to take small but firm steps and hasten slowly. Information warfare and electronic warfare need greater importance. China's defence production capability is coming of age. They already have home-grown stealth fighter aircraft and large transport aircraft and are making stealth bombers. India is making strong efforts to increase indigenous defence production. However, the same needs a greater push, even if it is through partnerships for high-end technologies.

#### Conclusions and implications

China is busy consolidating and refining its military structures, this time with a special emphasis on battle-space information control in a multi-domain integrated joint operations environment. The structural changes are not cosmetic. The move is clearly a strategic response to evolving security challenges and technological advancements.

The reforms reflect the evolving nature of modern warfare and the imperative to enhance capabilities in emerging domains such as space, cyber, and information warfare. Xi is trying to align the PLA with global trends and potential adversaries' structures, giving higher importance to information, space, and cyber operations. PLA will have to once again engage in extensive training and exercises to stabilise the new structure. The new structure throws up unforeseen challenges to operational effectiveness.

Beijing competes with Washington for military primacy in the Western Pacific. It also wants to keep the Line of Actual Control with India alive to stem India's unprecedented economic growth. India has witnessed significant Chinese cyberattacks. The frequency of attacks increased manifold during the Galwan skirmish. China also has dedicated electronic warfare aircraft.

China's space launches are nearly 8-9 times more than India's. Chinese satellite communications, space-based intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), and its own global satellite navigation system, the BeiDou satellite navigation system, greatly support military operations. In modern warfare, victory hinges on information. PLA employs a much larger force, with many in civil clothing, for this purpose.

Xi has repeatedly asked the PLA to modernise its readiness structure for high-tech combat and structure the military to 'fight and win' future wars. They have made another major structural change within a decade of the last major military reform. The international military competition is undergoing historic changes. New and high-tech military technologies are advancing constantly. Long-range precision, intelligent, stealthy or unmanned weaponry and equipment will change the way we fight wars. The US and India have reasons to study and understand the implications of China's military restructuring. New Delhi must also look inward to accelerate India's own defence structural reforms.

### **The naming dispute between India & China**

28 April 2024, Sunday Guardian

By using Tibet, instead of the Chinese Xizang, India challenges China's unilateral renaming.

In the intricate ballet of geopolitics, names carry more than mere identification; they embody history,

culture, and sovereignty. The recent decision by China to refer to Arunachal Pradesh as Tsang Nan or South Tibet, and to rename Tibet as Xizang, is a strategic move that extends beyond cartography into the realm of diplomatic signalling. This op-ed explores the implications of these actions and India's potential response.

Names are potent symbols in international relations, encapsulating the essence of a nation's stance on territorial disputes. China's choice to rename regions within Indian territory is not merely a linguistic exercise but a symbolic assertion of sovereignty. Such actions are provocative, touching upon the sensitive chords of territorial integrity and national identity.

India's response, maintaining the use of the name "Tibet," is a reaffirmation of historical and cultural recognition. By doing so, India not only challenges China's unilateral renaming but also underscores its commitment to respecting the historical context of the region. This stance is significant, as it reflects India's adherence to global norms and understanding, despite China's attempts to reshape international perceptions.

The term "Sinicization" denotes the process by which non-Chinese societies are influenced to adopt Chinese cultural, linguistic, and societal norms.

In Tibet's case, this process is a deliberate effort by the Chinese government to integrate Tibetan culture into the broader Chinese cultural framework. The renaming of Tibet to "Xizang" is a facet of these Sinicization efforts, aiming to solidify China's rule and dilute the Dalai Lama's influence and the global recognition of the Tibetan cause.

The international community, including governments and organizations, often weighs the historical and cultural context heavily when referring to regions. Despite China's renaming efforts, many continue to use the term "Tibet," aligning with the established global understanding. This collective stance is crucial, as it supports the cultural and religious identity of the Tibetan people against the tide of Sinicization.

The Indian government has firmly rejected China's attempts to rename places in Arunachal Pradesh, emphasizing that such actions do not alter the state's status as an integral part of India. This rejection is a clear message to China and the international community that India stands firm on its territorial sovereignty. India's potential reciprocation, refusing to accept the name "Xizang" and instead using "Tibet," is a powerful diplomatic gesture. It is a declaration that India does not recognize the Sinicization of Tibet and supports the region's historical and cultural identity as known internationally. The naming dispute between India and China over Tibet and Arunachal Pradesh is more than a war of words; it is a reflection of deeper



geopolitical tensions and the struggle for cultural preservation. India's stance, rooted in historical recognition and international law, serves as a bulwark against attempts to rewrite history and infringe upon sovereign rights.

As the situation evolves, the international community's role in upholding these principles becomes ever more critical, ensuring that names—and the identities they represent—remain respected on the global stage.

### **Billions in US investment goes to Chinese firms linked to CCP military, human rights abuses**

28 April 2024, Fox Business

Billions of investment dollars are going from U.S. financial markets to Chinese companies that have been blacklisted by the U.S. government over links to Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) military modernization and human rights abuses, according to a new report.

The bipartisan House Select Committee on the Strategic Competition between the U.S. and the CCP released a report detailing how asset managers and index providers facilitated investment of more than \$6.5 billion to 63 companies in the People's Republic of China (PRC) that have been blacklisted or red-flagged by the U.S. government.

"These companies develop advanced fighter jets and nuclear weapons for the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and create technology used to perpetrate the ongoing genocide against the Uyghur people," the committee wrote. "What may surprise many Americans is that the activity by U.S. financial institutions described below is not illegal. It is time for Congress to act."

"Through the products of our own financial industry, Americans' hard-earned savings and retirement money are supporting the military modernization of a foreign adversary and the development of tools used by the CCP to violate human rights. Many investors have no idea," the bipartisan panel warned.

Under current law, U.S. government agencies maintain a variety of blacklists and red-flag lists that serve a range of purposes, from barring exports to covered foreign firms and blocking imports due to connections with the use of forced labor, to restricting purchases of equipment that poses a national security risk and more.

Most of these lists do not restrict U.S. asset managers or investors from investing in listed companies. One list that does restrict U.S. investment in listed firms, the Treasury Department's NS-CMIC list, blocks investment only in listed firms but excludes those companies' subsidiaries, allowing them to receive U.S. capital.

Index providers like MSCI, the world's leading index provider, have created indexes used by fund managers and other investors that seek to mirror financial markets like those in China. In that process, they have the option of excluding firms at their discretion, but may opt to include the broadest possible selection of companies in a given market or to rely on the most widely-used benchmark index.

Those indexes are then used by asset managers like BlackRock, Vanguard and others to create investment products like exchange-traded funds (ETFs) or mutual funds centered on that index.

For example, BlackRock, the world's largest asset manager, offers the iShares MSCI China ETF (ticker MCHI), which mirrors the MSCI China Index that covers about 85% of Chinese equities. The committee found that the ETF had assets under management (AUM) of about \$7.6 billion, of which about 3.01%, or \$230 million, is in Chinese firms flagged by U.S. government agencies.

BlackRock's iShares Core MSCI Emerging Markets ETF (ticker IEMG), which mirrors an MSCI index benchmarked to a number of emerging markets around the world including China, had about \$70.9 billion in AUM – of which 0.78%, or \$556 million, was in blacklisted or red-flagged Chinese firms per the committee's analysis.

Of the \$6.5 billion that the committee found invested in Chinese firms included on U.S. agencies' red-flag lists, nearly 59% was invested through asset managers Vanguard and BlackRock, which each accounted for about \$1.9 billion of the total.

"The existing regulations prohibiting investment in certain Chinese companies because of national security risks or human rights violations are insufficient," the committee wrote. "Congress must act to restrict U.S. investment in entities tied, directly or indirectly, to the PLA, critical technology sectors, or forced labor and genocide."

The committee recommended three policies for Congress to act on to address the shortcomings of U.S. restrictions on investment in certain Chinese companies, including:

- Restrict investment in companies blacklisted by the U.S. government, including subsidiaries, affiliates, parents and holding companies – including through the delisting of PRC companies covered by human rights sanctions or implicated in Uyghur forced labor.
- Require U.S. public companies to disclose key risks related to investments in PRC securities, including differences in shareholder rights.
- Ensure the U.S. financial system is resilient to PRC market uncertainty through increased disclosures to investors about risks associated with the PRC market.

"Short of such action, billions of dollars of Americans' life savings will continue funding the PRC's military and human rights abuses, including the Uyghur genocide," the committee said.

Financial firms respond

"The Committee and its report confirm BlackRock complies with applicable U.S. laws, this matter reflects the entire asset management industry, and that Congress and the Administration must work together to create clear rules of the road for U.S. investors," BlackRock told FOX Business in a statement. "Despite fully cooperating with the Committee for more than eight months, its report includes misleading assertions about index funds, including that they are 'funneling billions of dollars' to these entities."

"We are pleased that the Committee acknowledges that MSCI indexes comply with U.S. laws and regulations," MSCI told FOX Business in a statement. "An index is simply a mathematical calculation of the performance of the market. An index does not, and cannot, channel investments, and MSCI does not manage or recommend investments in any country or company."

"If Congress or other government bodies expand restrictions on investment in China as recommended by the Committee, MSCI will assess applicable changes to our indexes in accordance with our methodologies," MSCI added.

"Vanguard maintains robust policies and procedures to ensure compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, including the rigorous sanctions laws maintained by the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC)," Vanguard told FOX Business in a statement. "We stand ready to comply with any new regulations or compliance measures laid out by policymakers."

"Vanguard invests on behalf of 50 million individual investors and retirement savers, offering a wide array of investment options that can help investors meet different goals and objectives, including a range of funds to invest internationally. Our clients' investments in China are limited and primarily through U.S.-based passive index products that are designed to provide exposure to many diversified and developing economies around the globe," the company added.

## Xi's Imperial Ambitions Are Rooted in China's History

27 April 2024, Foreign Policy



Then-U.S. President Richard Nixon with Chinese Vice Premier Li Xiannian, looking out over the Great Wall, circa 1972. BETTMANN ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

When Richard Nixon defied expectations and went to China in 1972, Henry Kissinger, his national security advisor, packed the president's briefcase. Among Nixon's reading materials was *The Chinese Looking Glass*, a book by British journalist Dennis Bloodworth about understanding China on its own terms. In his opening pages, Bloodworth sets the stage by going back to the beginning: "The gaudy catalogue of China's disasters and dynastic glories, whose monumental scale has given the Chinese much of their character ... brings us to our true beginning." Kissinger, one of America's most consequential foreign-policy leaders in recent memory, clearly internalized the centrality of China's "true beginning." In his 2011 tome *On China*, Kissinger marveled at China's "singularity" and staying power. Indeed, even the hardest of hearts cannot help but be moved by the continuity of a civilization that predates the birth of Christ by hundreds, even thousands, of years.

Awe, however, is no substitute for knowledge. In the opening pages of *On China*, Kissinger writes of China's "splendid isolation" that cultivated "a satisfied empire with limited territorial ambition." The historical record, however, contradicts him. From the Qin dynasty's founding in 221 B.C. to the Qing's collapse in 1912 A.D., China's sovereign territory expanded by a factor of four. What began as a small nation bound in the fertile crescent of the Yangtze and Yellow rivers morphed into an imperial wrecking ball. In the words of Bloodworth, the very author Kissinger recommended to Nixon in 1972, "It would be absurd to pretend that the Chinese had never been greedy for ground—they started life in the valley of the Yellow River and ended by possessing a gigantic empire."

To be sure, China was not the aggressor in every war it fought. In antiquity, nomadic tribes regularly raided China's proto-dynasties. During the infamous Opium Wars of the 19th century, Western imperialist powers victimized and preyed upon China at gunpoint. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regularly refers to China's "Century of Humiliation," when European empires brutalized China and killed or wounded tens of thousands of Chinese men, women, and children. Indeed, the party has memorialized these grievances in a permanent exhibit of the National Museum of China, just steps away from Tiananmen Square.

For all of Beijing's legitimate and long-standing security concerns, however, the sheer scope of China's expansion is undeniable. Western leaders often deny or ignore it, usually at the behest and prodding of Chinese leaders. When Nixon finally gained an audience with Mao Zedong, he reassured the chairman, "We know China doesn't threaten the territory of the United States." Mao quickly corrected him: "Neither do we threaten Japan or South Korea." To which Nixon added, "Nor any country." Within the decade, Beijing invaded Vietnam.

At the time, Nixon's gambit was to split the Soviet bloc and drive a wedge between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China (PRC). Nixon and Kissinger saw the Sino-Soviet split and took stock of the PRC's trajectory: a growing population that, once harnessed, was poised to dominate the global economy. It was textbook realpolitik: cold, dispassionate tactics divorced from moralism. If Washington could turn the Soviet Union's junior partner, the West could significantly hamper Moscow's ability to project power into Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia.

During the final years of Nixon's life, his presidential speechwriter William Safire asked him about that fateful trip to Beijing in 1972. Had opening up to the PRC made Americans safer and China freer? According to Safire, "That old realist, who had played the China card to exploit the split in the Communist world, replied with some sadness that he was not as hopeful as he had once been: 'We may have created a Frankenstein.'" Over time, many in the United States have come to realize this predicament. Unfortunately, articulating that problem well has proved difficult.

During her brief stint as director of policy planning at the State Department in 2019, Kiron Skinner previewed the shop's keystone intellectual project: a strategy to counter China, in the spirit of George Kennan's "containment" strategy. At a public event in April 2019, Skinner tipped her hand and revealed her philosophy of U.S.-China competition: "This is a fight with a really different civilization and a different

ideology, and the United States hasn't had that before." She went on to add, incorrectly: "It's the first time that we will have a great-power competitor that is not Caucasian." Skinner received widespread criticism for these remarks and was soon after dismissed for unrelated issues.

Skinner's mistake was twofold. First, she simply got the history wrong and ignored imperial Japan in World War II. Of deeper consequence was her failure to explain what strategic culture actually is, why it matters, and how China's past shapes the CCP's behavior today. In fairness, these errors aren't unique to Skinner. Understanding Chinese history can be difficult for most Westerners. In some ways, it's difficult to think of two more different nations. The United States is less than three hundred years old.

China was unified more than two hundred years before Christ was born. Immigrants founded America. Denizens established China. The United States was born out of revolution against a colonial power. China came into being from a regional conflict of gigantic proportions. Favorable geography allowed America to grow economically and territorially on its own terms and at its own pace. China came into being surrounded by rival kingdoms and tribes on every side.

Americans turn to one source more than any other to make sense of these differences: *The Art of War*, by Sun Tzu. One of his more recognizable dictums, "All warfare is based on deception," has captured the imagination of many Western thinkers. Instead of investigating the history that informed Sun Tzu's counsel, however, many policymakers take the easier path of Orientalizing China. "China thinks in centuries, and America thinks in decades" is a well-worn trope. Another well-meaning but vapid cliché is, "America plays chess, but China plays Go."

These statements are often left untethered from history and offered as self-evident axioms. What's left are useless clichés that offer no actual understanding of why Chinese strategists advised cunning and deception, or how China's unique historical experiences informed military tactics. In the absence of curiosity, an impression easily forms of China as "the other," a mysterious, inscrutable competitor. A shallow understanding of Beijing's past leads to incomplete conclusions about its present behavior.

More often than not, policymakers find it easier to avoid China's history entirely. In late 2020, the policy planning office finished the 72-page report. It was a commendable attempt to reprise Kennan's strategic clarity, but China's dynastic strategic culture received a single page of attention.

Reducing strategic culture to vague racial differences helps no one except Chinese President Xi Jinping and his party henchmen. The CCP works to enmesh itself

with the Chinese people and regularly uses them as a rhetorical human shield. To criticize the CCP, according to the well-worn rhetorical trope of Beijing's diplomats, is to "hurt the feelings of 1.4 billion people." As a matter of course, Beijing uses this specious logic to construe anti-CCP policies as evidence of racism. Years before former U.S. President Donald Trump fell headlong into this trap with his careless rhetoric about the "Chinese virus" and "kung-flu," a young generation of China hawks had vowed to evade this pitfall.

Washington Post columnist Josh Rogin wrote about this resolve in his 2021 bestseller, *Chaos Under Heaven*, which documented the collective decision of Washington, D.C.-based China hands to blunt Beijing's attempts "to divide Americans by party or ethnicity, to divert attention from its actions." I was a regular member of those meetings and still believe America's leaders must differentiate the party from the Chinese people—not only out of respect for those who daily live under the CCP's jackboot, but also for the safety of Chinese Americans, who faced a rise of race-based crime in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. But, in doing so, America must avoid a separate trap: equating the party with China. China's history did not begin in 1949 when Mao and the CCP established the PRC. Nor did it start with China's "Century of Humiliation," when European imperialist powers forcibly opened China in the mid-19th century. Chinese civilization predates America and the West by orders of millennia. That context gives meaning to the party's contemporary behavior. The themes of greatness, fall, and restoration hidden in Xi's remarks in 2013 constitute the essence of Chinese history.

They are the four-act play of China's story, or "strategic culture"—without which it is impossible to understand the CCP's strategy today. Strategic culture explains how a country's unique experiences shape distinct national identities that translate into foreign policy. These three elements—story, identity, and policy—reinforce and shape one another. To be sure, the CCP has its own story, identity, and policies, but the party is one tributary in a long river. American leaders cannot prevail against the CCP without understanding the story and identity that belong to China.

From the start, China has been a civilizational juggernaut striving for political hegemony. China has often attempted to conceal this ambition with conciliatory diplomacy, but its neighbors know from experience the struggle to live—and survive—in the dragon's shadow. CCP diplomats often bully China's neighbors by claiming sovereignty over part or all of their territory "from time immemorial"—an inadvertent admission that the party is the latest crusader in a long line of imperialists. This struggle

that was once relegated to the nations of East Asia is now a challenge for every country in the world.

Beijing is approaching the world not to embrace it, but to rule it. The Western world has no excuse for missing this reality, and American politicians have badly misjudged Beijing for decades. Washington's China policy will continue to be a "two steps forward, one step back" affair until it reckons with the Middle Kingdom's penchant for imperialism.

This reality calls into question the unspoken objective of American policymakers: seeking a democratic China. For all their differences, both hawks and doves in the United States have framed the "China problem" as an ideological challenge. Proponents of engagement believed that economic contacts would necessarily lead to political reform, a belief rooted in liberal internationalism. Advocates of confrontation couch the CCP regime as the problem, which implies an ideological solution.

The one unchanging constant in America's China policy since Nixon's meeting with Mao in 1972 is the steady commitment to regime change, either by commerce or competition. The underlying belief in the universal power of democracy has proved intoxicating. "If we can just make them like us," the thinking goes, "we can turn an enemy into a friend." Perhaps this self-delusion is inevitable. America's national identity is steeped in beliefs about liberty, equality, and opportunity. But the CCP's heritage raises an uncomfortable question for the United States: Even if modern China were to become a democracy, would it cease to be the Middle Kingdom?

If the CCP collapsed and China followed Taiwan's path of economic and political liberalization, would it suddenly lose its appetite for hegemony? Maybe. Then again, perhaps simplifying Beijing's behavior to its current Communist Party overlords ignores thousands of years of China's own history, as well as the strategic culture that informs those decisions.

### **Suddenly, Chinese Spies Seem to Be Popping Up All Over Europe**

27 April 2024, NY Times

One of the men, a young Briton known for his hawkish views on China, worked as an aide to a prominent member of the British Parliament. Another, a German citizen of Chinese descent, was an assistant to a member of the European Parliament representing Germany's far right.

While from different countries and seemingly divergent backgrounds and outlooks, both men became ensnared this week in accusations of espionage on behalf of China — and a widening pushback in Europe against malign Chinese influence in politics and commerce. In all, six people in three

separate cases have been charged this week in Europe with spying for China: two in Britain and four in Germany.

On Friday, as the two Britons made an initial court appearance in London, the U.S. secretary of state, Antony J. Blinken, met in Beijing with China's leader, Xi Jinping, in the latest effort by the two rivals to keep communications open even as disputes escalate over trade, national security and geopolitical frictions. The espionage cases in Britain and Germany, the first of their kind in two countries that once cultivated warm relations with Beijing, served as eye-catching exclamation points in Europe's long, often anguished breakup with China.

Shortly after British and German officials announced that six of their citizens had been charged with espionage, the Dutch and Polish authorities on Wednesday raided the offices of a Chinese security equipment supplier as part of a crackdown by the European Union on what it sees as unfair trading practices.

It was the first time that the bloc's executive arm, the European Commission, had used a new anti-foreign subsidy law to order a raid on a Chinese company.

In early April, Sweden expelled a Chinese journalist who had been a resident of the country for two decades, saying the reporter posed a threat to national security.

After years of regular tiffs over trade followed by reconciliation, Europe "has lost patience with China," said Ivana Karaskova, a Czech researcher at the Association for International Affairs, an independent research group in Prague, who until last month served as an adviser to the European Commission on China.

China still has steadfast friends in the European Union, notably Hungary, she added, in "the multidimensional chess game" between the world's two largest economies after the United States. But Europe, Ms. Karaskova said, has moved from a position of "total denial" in some quarters over the danger posed by Chinese espionage and influence operations to "take a less naïve view, and wants to defend European interests vis-à-vis China."

Accusations this week that China was using spies to burrow into and influence the democratic process in Germany and Britain caused particular alarm, as they suggested a push to expand beyond already well-known, business-related subterfuge into covert political meddling, something previously seen as a largely Russian specialty.

But, according to China experts, those accusations and the flurry of charges this week indicated not so much that Beijing was ramping up espionage but that European countries had stepped up their response.

"Countries have been forced to get real," said Martin Thorley, a British China expert and author of

"All That Glistens," a forthcoming book detailing how what London trumpeted a decade ago as a "golden era" of Sino-British friendship during the premiership of David Cameron made it easy for China to suborn politicians and businesspeople. The "golden era" has been widely mocked as a "golden error."

Mr. Cameron, who is now Britain's foreign secretary, has in recent months become an outspoken critic of China. "A lot of the facts changed," he said during a visit to Washington in December, declaring that China had become "an epoch-defining challenge." His change of heart mirrors a wider shift across much of Europe in attitudes to a rising superpower that long counted on European countries, particularly Germany, to push back against what it denounces as "anti-China hype" emanating from Washington. Germany's security service has been warning publicly about the risk of trusting China since 2022, when, shortly after Russia started its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the head of its domestic intelligence agency, Thomas Haldenwang, told Parliament, "Russia is the storm, China is climate change." The agency, known by its German acronym, BfV, said in an unusual public warning last summer, "In recent years, China's state and party leadership has significantly stepped up its efforts to obtain high-quality political information and to influence decision-making processes abroad."

Germany's political leadership, however, has until this week been far more equivocal. Chancellor Olaf Scholz recently made a state visit to China, Germany's biggest trading partner, to discuss trade and market access.

But Germany's interior minister this week gave a blunt assessment of China's activities. "We are aware of the considerable danger posed by Chinese espionage to business, industry and science," the minister, Nancy Faeser, said. "We are looking very closely at these risks and threats and have issued clear warnings and raised awareness so that protective measures are increased everywhere."

China's foreign ministry responded by dismissing the accusations as a groundless "slander and smear against China," demanding that Germany "stop malicious hype" and "halt anti-China political dramas."

Mareike Ohlberg, a China expert and a senior fellow at the German Marshall Fund in Berlin, said that "for a long time China was spared big public warnings." Now, she said, the German authorities are "more willing to call things out, or no longer have the patience not to call things out."

Three of the four people arrested in Germany this week, a husband and wife and one other man, appear to have been involved in economic espionage using a company called Innovative



Dragon to pass on sensitive information about German marine propulsion systems – of great value to a superpower interested in building up its navy. They also used the company to buy a high-powered, dual-use laser, which they exported to China without permission.

The fourth person, in what prosecutors called “an especially severe case,” was Jian Guo, a Chinese-German man who has been accused of working for China’s Ministry of State Security. His regular job was as an assistant to Maximilian Krah, a member of the European Parliament for the far-right party Alternative for Germany – a rising political force friendly to China and Russia – and its top candidate for elections in June.

Since then, the public prosecutor in Dresden has begun a “pre-investigation” into how much Mr. Krah knew of his employee’s ties to China. On Wednesday, his party decided to keep supporting Mr. Krah’s bid for re-election to the European Parliament but disinvited him from campaign stops.



Maximilian Krah, a member of the European Parliament, spoke to reporters in Berlin on Wednesday after an aide was arrested in what prosecutors called “an especially severe case” of espionage. Credit Fabrizio Bensch/Reuters

When Mr. Xi travels to Europe next month, he will skip Germany and Britain and instead visit Hungary and Serbia, China’s last two staunch allies on the continent, and France.

Mr. Thurley, the British author, said the spying cases had sounded the alarm over Chinese activities but were only a small part of efforts by China to gain influence and information. More important than traditional espionage, he said, is China’s use of a “latent network” of people who do not work directly for the Ministry of State Security but who, for commercial and other reasons, are vulnerable to pressure from the Chinese Communist Party and its myriad offshoots.

“This has been bad for a while and has been left far too long,” he said.

The two men accused in London of espionage for China, Christopher Cash, 29, and Christopher Berry,

32, were arrested in March last year but released on bail and were not named publicly until they were charged this week.

Mr. Cash was a parliamentary researcher with links to the governing Conservative Party and a former director of the China Research Group, a body that often takes a hard-line view on China and hosts podcasts with critics of Chinese interference.

His former colleagues include Alicia Kearns, a member of the governing Conservative Party who heads Parliament’s influential Foreign Affairs Committee, and her predecessor in that role, Tom Tugendhat, who is now the security minister.

In a statement this week, London’s Metropolitan Police said Mr. Cash and Mr. Berry were charged with violating the Official Secrets Act and had provided information “intended to be, directly or indirectly, useful to an enemy.” It added, “The foreign state to which the above charges relate is China.”

“It took a hell of a long time to wake up, but we finally see some movement,” said Peter Humphrey, a British citizen whom China accused of illegally obtaining personal information while doing due-diligence work for the pharmaceuticals company GlaxoSmithKline, and who spent two years in a Shanghai jail with his wife.

He was in jail suffering from cancer when Mr. Cameron visited the city in 2013 with a delegation of British businesspeople. “It was sickening,” recalled Mr. Humphrey, an external research fellow at Harvard’s Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies. “Nobody in the higher levels of the British government,” he said, “wanted to hear a bad word about China because of business interests.”

### The story of one of Buddhism’s most revered figures, long missing, explained

26 April 2024, RFA

The young boy who was abducted as a 6-year-old turned 35 this week.

What he does, where he lives or even if he’s still alive isn’t known, thanks to the reticence of the Chinese government, which kidnapped him along with his family and his teacher 29 years ago.

Beijing leaders, ever wary of potential rivals for the Communist Party’s authority, viewed the boy, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, as a possible threat.

Days earlier the Dalai Lama had named him the 11th reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, the second-highest spiritual leader in the largest sect of Tibetan Buddhism.

Tibetan leaders marked his birthday this week with a celebration held in absentia, and reiterated long-

standing requests to Beijing to reveal Gedhun Choekyi Nyima's fate.

Who is the Panchen Lama?

The word "Panchen" is based on a Sanskrit word for "Great Scholar." Traditionally the Panchen Lama has played a leading role in Tibetan Buddhist scholarship as the leader of the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in Shigatse, the second largest city in Tibet, which has been controlled by China since 1951.

Buddhists believe that the Dalai Lama is a physical representation of Avalokiteshvara, the Buddha of compassion, and the Panchen Lama of Amitabha, the Buddha of infinite light.

The two lamas share a special spiritual relationship, with each recognizing the other's successive reincarnations and serving as the other's teacher.

Tibetan Buddhists believe that the reincarnations of the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama are revealed through a series of tests as judged by prominent religious leaders.

The Panchen Lama's most important responsibility includes finding and recognizing the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama in the event of his passing, one reason why China wants a Panchen Lama under its control.

What happened to the Panchen Lama?

On May 14, 1995, the exiled Dalai Lama recognized Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as the Panchen Lama, the 11th reincarnation of his predecessor.

This angered Chinese authorities, who rejected the choice.

Three days later the boy, his family and his teacher were abducted. They have remained missing ever since.

For over 29 years, Tibetans, global leaders, and rights groups have called on the Chinese government to reveal their whereabouts, to no avail.

Who is the Beijing-appointed Panchen Lama?

Shortly after the abduction of the Dalai Lama-appointed Panchen Lama, Beijing installed another boy, Gyaltzen (in Chinese, Gyaincain) Norbu, as their own candidate in his place.

However, the Chinese government-appointed Panchen Lama remains unpopular with Tibetans both in exile and at home and is perceived as a "political tool" for Beijing.

Ordinary Tibetans and monks in monasteries traditionally loyal to the Dalai Lama have been reluctant to acknowledge or receive him, and during his visits to Tibet, Beijing has in the past handed out small monetary incentives for people who receive his blessing.

Significance of the Panchen Lama's role

China's appointment of Gyaincain Norbu as Panchen Lama underscores Beijing's attempts to interfere in the selection of the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama when he passes, and gain control and legitimacy

among Tibetans, both inside Tibet and in exile, say experts.

The move is also seen as China's attempts to acquire more influence over Buddhism not only inside occasionally restive Tibet but throughout the Himalayan region. Beijing has increasingly looked to leverage religion as a soft power diplomacy tool across various Buddhist nations.

In 2007, the Chinese government decreed that China would begin overseeing the recognition of all reincarnate Tibetan lamas, or "Living Buddhas," including the next incarnation of the Dalai Lama, for which China plans to use its own Beijing-appointed Panchen Lama to sign off on.

Edited by Kalden Lodoe and Jim Snyder.

### Significance of passage of Resolve Tibet bill'

25 April 2024, Taipei Times

The passage of the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act, also known as the Resolve Tibet bill, by the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on Tuesday last week, to be sent to the US Senate for a vote, marks a pivotal moment in international relations, one that could significantly influence the geopolitical landscape of Asia, particularly affecting India's stance on Tibet.

This act, which has garnered substantial bipartisan support, underscores the unresolved conflict between Tibet and China, and asserts that Tibet's legal status is to be determined in accordance with international law. For India, the act serves as a reaffirmation of US support for the Tibetan cause, mirroring India's longstanding position of providing asylum to the Tibetan government-in-exile and the Dalai Lama. This alignment between US policy and India's historical stance could bolster New Delhi's diplomatic leverage in its negotiations with China, especially concerning border disputes and regional sovereignty.

The act's emphasis on the unresolved status of Tibet – a region that shares an extensive and contested border with India – might prompt a recalibration of diplomatic relations in the region. It could lead to increased solidarity among nations that recognize the significance of a peaceful resolution to the Tibet-China conflict, potentially forming a united front that advocates for the rights of the Tibetan people.

By advocating for dialogue and a peaceful resolution to the Tibet-China conflict, the act aligns with India's interests in maintaining regional stability. India's proximity to Tibet and the historical ties between the two regions mean that any escalation of tensions could have direct implications for India's security and its efforts to maintain peace along its borders.

The act's provisions to counter disinformation about Tibet could indirectly support India's narrative against unfounded territorial claims by China. By

authorizing actions to counter such disinformation, the act not only defends the historical and cultural identity of Tibet, but also reinforces India's sovereignty over regions like Arunachal Pradesh, which China claims as South Tibet (藏南).

The emphasis on resolving the Tibet issue in accordance with international law might inspire similar approaches to other disputed territories. This could be advantageous for India, which has consistently advocated for a rules-based international order to address its border disputes with neighboring countries.

While the Resolve Tibet bill is a significant step, its true impact would depend on the subsequent actions taken by the US and other international players. The responses from China and India would also play a crucial role in shaping the future of the region. The situation remains dynamic, and the geopolitical implications would continue to unfold over time. As the world watches, the act could serve as a catalyst for change, promoting the rights of the Tibetan people and encouraging a peaceful resolution to one of the longest-standing conflicts in Asia.

Khedroob Thondup is a former member of the Tibetan parliament in exile.

### China's Alternative Order

23 April 2024, Foreign Affairs

By now, Chinese President Xi Jinping's ambition to remake the world is undeniable. He wants to dissolve Washington's network of alliances and purge what he dismisses as "Western" values from international bodies. He wants to knock the U.S. dollar off its pedestal and eliminate Washington's chokehold over critical technology. In his new multipolar order, global institutions and norms will be underpinned by Chinese notions of common security and economic development, Chinese values of state-determined political rights, and Chinese technology. China will no longer have to fight for leadership. Its centrality will be guaranteed.

To hear Xi tell it, this world is within reach. At the Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs last December, he boasted that Beijing was (in the words of a government press release) a "confident, self-reliant, open and inclusive major country," one that had created the world's "largest platform for international cooperation" and led the way in "reforming the international system." He asserted that his conception for the global order—a "community with a shared future for mankind"—had evolved from a "Chinese initiative" to an "international consensus," to be realized through the implementation of four Chinese programs: the Belt and Road Initiative, the Global Development

Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative.

Outside China, such brash, self-congratulatory proclamations are generally disregarded or dismissed—including by American officials, who have tended to discount the appeal of Beijing's strategy. It is easy to see why: a large number of China's plans appear to be failing or backfiring. Many of China's neighbors are drawing closer to Washington, and its economy is faltering. The country's confrontational "Wolf Warrior" style of diplomacy may have pleased Xi, but it won China few friends overseas. And polls indicate that Beijing is broadly unpopular worldwide: A 2023 Pew Research Center study, for example, surveyed attitudes toward China and the United States in 24 countries on six continents. It found that only 28 percent of respondents had a favorable opinion of Beijing, and just 23 percent said China contributes to global peace. Nearly 60 percent of respondents, by contrast, had a positive view of the United States, and 61 percent said Washington contributes to peace and stability.

But Xi's vision is far more formidable than it seems. China's proposals would give power to the many countries that have been frustrated and sidelined by the present order, but it would still afford the states Washington currently favors with valuable international roles. Beijing's initiatives are backed by a comprehensive, well-resourced, and disciplined operational strategy—one that features outreach to governments and people in seemingly every country. These techniques have gained Beijing newfound support, particularly in some multilateral organizations and from nondemocracies. China is succeeding in making itself an agent of welcome change while portraying the United States as the defender of a status quo that few particularly like.

Rather than dismissing Beijing's playbook, U.S. policymakers should learn from it. To win what will be a long-term competition, the United States must seize the mantle of change that China has claimed. Washington needs to articulate and push forward its own vision for a transformed international system and the U.S. role within that system—one that is inclusive of countries at different economic levels and with different political systems. Like China, the United States needs to invest deeply in the technological, military, and diplomatic foundations that enable both security at home and leadership abroad. Yet as the country commits to that competition, U.S. policymakers must understand that near-term stabilization of the bilateral relationship advances rather than hinders ultimate U.S. objectives. They should build on last year's summit between President Joe Biden and Xi, curtailing inflammatory anti-Chinese rhetoric and creating a more functional diplomatic relationship. That way, the United States

can focus on the more important task: winning the long-term game.

#### I CAN SEE CLEARLY NOW

Beijing's playbook begins with a well-defined vision of a transformed world order. The Chinese government wants a system built not just on multipolarity but also on absolute sovereignty; security rooted in international consensus and the UN Charter; state-determined human rights based on each country's circumstances; development as the "master key" to all solutions; the end of U.S. dollar dominance; and a pledge to leave no country and no one behind. This vision, in Beijing's telling, stands in stark contrast to the system the United States supports. In a 2023 report, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed Washington was "clinging to the Cold War mentality" and "piecing together small blocs through its alliance system" to "create division in the region, stoke confrontation and undermine peace." The United States, the report continued, interferes "in the internal affairs of other countries," uses the dollar's status as the international reserve currency to coerce "other countries into serving America's political and economic strategy," and seeks to "deter other countries' scientific, technological and economic development." Finally, the ministry argued, the United States advances "cultural hegemony." The "real weapons in U.S. cultural expansion," it declared, were the "production lines of Mattel Company and Coca-Cola."

Beijing claims that its vision, by contrast, advances the interests of the majority of the world's people. China is center stage, but every country, including the United States, has a role to play. At the 2024 Munich Security Conference in February, for example, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that China and the United States are responsible for global strategic stability. China and Russia, meanwhile, represent the exploration of a new model for major-country relations. China and the European Union are the world's two major markets and civilizations and should resist establishing blocs based on ideology. And China, as what Wang called the "largest developing country," promotes solidarity and cooperation with the global South to increase its representation in global affairs.

China's vision is designed to be compelling for nearly all countries. Those that are not democracies will have their choices validated. Those that are democracies but not major powers will gain a greater voice in the international system and a bigger share of the benefits of globalization. Even the major democratic powers can reflect on whether the current system is adequate for meeting today's challenges or whether China has something better to offer. Observers in the United States and elsewhere

may roll their eyes at the grandiose phrasing, but they do so at their peril: dissatisfaction with the current international order has created a global audience more amenable to China's proposals than might have existed not long ago.

#### FOUR PILLARS

For over two decades, China has referred to a "new security concept" that embraces norms such as common security, system diversity, and multipolarity. But in recent years, China believes it has acquired the capability to advance its vision. To that end, during his first decade in power, Xi released three distinct global programs: the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013, the Global Development Initiative (GDI) in 2021, and the Global Security Initiative (GSI) in 2022. Each contributes in some way to furthering both the transformation of the international system and China's centrality within it.

The BRI was initially a platform for Beijing to address the hard infrastructure needs of emerging and middle-income economies while making use of the Chinese construction industry's overcapacity. It has since expanded to become an engine of Beijing's geostrategy: embedding China's digital, health, and clean technology ecosystems globally; promoting its development model; expanding the reach of its military and police forces; and advancing the use of its currency.

The GDI focuses on global development more broadly, and it places China squarely in the driver's seat. Often working with the UN, it supports small-scale projects that address poverty alleviation, digital connectivity, climate change, and health and food security. It advances Beijing's preference for economic development as a foundation for human rights. One government document on the program, for instance, accuses other countries of the "marginalization of development issues by emphasizing human rights and democracy."

Beijing has positioned the GSI as a system for, as several Chinese scholars have put it, providing "Chinese wisdom and Chinese solutions" to promote "world peace and tranquility." In Xi's words, the GSI advocates that countries "reject the Cold War mentality, oppose unilateralism, and say no to group politics and bloc confrontation." The better course, according to Xi, entails building a "balanced, effective and sustainable security architecture" that resolves differences between countries through dialogue and consultation and that upholds noninterference in others' internal affairs. Behind the rhetoric, the GSI is designed to end U.S. alliance systems, establish security as a precondition for development, and promote absolute sovereignty and indivisible security—or the notion that one state's safety should not come at the expense of others'. China and Russia have used this notion to justify

Russia's invasion of Ukraine, suggesting that Moscow's attack was needed to stop an expanding NATO from threatening Russia.

But Xi's strategy has taken flight only in the past year, with the release of the Global Civilization Initiative in May 2023. The GCI advances the idea that countries with different civilizations and levels of development will have different political and economic models. It asserts that states determine rights and that no one country or model has a mandate to control the discourse of human rights. As former Foreign Minister Qin Gang put it: "There is no one-size-fits-all model in the protection of human rights." Thus, Greece, with its philosophical and cultural traditions and level of development, may have a different conception and practice of human rights than China does. Both are equally valid.

Chinese leaders are working hard to get countries and international institutions to buy into their world vision. Their strategy is multilevel: striking deals with individual countries, integrating their initiatives or components of them into multilateral organizations, and embedding their proposals into global governance institutions. The BRI is the model for this approach. Around 150 countries have become members of the program, which openly advocates for the values that frame China's vision—such as the primacy of development, sovereignty, state-directed political rights, and common security. This bilateral dealmaking has been accompanied by Chinese officials' efforts to link the BRI to other regional development efforts, such as the Master Plan on Connectivity 2025 created by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

China has also successfully embedded the BRI in more than two dozen UN agencies and programs. It has worked particularly diligently to align the BRI and the UN's high-profile 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which has been headed by a Chinese official for over a decade, produced a report on the BRI's support for the agenda. The report was partially funded by the UN Peace and Development Trust Fund, which, in turn, was initially established by a \$200 million Chinese pledge. Such support undoubtedly contributes to the enthusiasm many senior UN officials, including the secretary-general, have shown for the BRI.

Progress on the GDI, GSI, and GCI has understandably been more nascent. Thus far, only a handful of leaders from countries such as Serbia, South Africa, South Sudan, and Venezuela have offered rhetorical support for the GCI's notion that the diversity of civilizations and development paths should be respected—and by extension, for China's vision for an order that does not give primacy to the values of liberal democracies.

The GDI has gained more international support than the GCI. After Xi announced the project before the UN General Assembly, China developed a "Group of Friends of the GDI" that now boasts more than 70 countries. The GDI has advanced 50 projects and pledged 100,000 training opportunities for officials and experts from other countries to travel to China and study its systems. These training opportunities are designed to promote China's advanced technologies, its management experiences, and its development model. China has also succeeded in formally linking the GDI to the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and held GDI-related seminars with the UN Office for South-South Cooperation. Beijing, in other words, is weaving the program into the fabric of the international governmental system.

The GSI has achieved even greater rhetorical buy-in. According to China's Foreign Ministry, more than 100 countries, regional organizations, and international organizations have supported the GSI, and Chinese officials have encouraged the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), ASEAN, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to adopt the concept. At the SCO's September 2022 meeting, China advanced the GSI and received support from all the members except India and Tajikistan.

#### MASS APPEAL

China, in contrast with the United States, invests heavily in the diplomatic resources necessary to market its initiatives. It has more embassies and representative offices around the globe than any other country, and Chinese diplomats frequently speak at conferences and publish a stream of articles about China's various initiatives in local news outlets. This diplomatic apparatus is supported by equally sprawling Chinese media networks. China's international news network, CGTN, has twice as many overseas bureaus as CNN, and Xinhua, the official Chinese news service, has over 180 bureaus globally. Although Chinese media are often perceived in the West as little more than crude propaganda tools, they can advance a positive image of China and its leadership. In a study published in 2024, a team of international scholars surveyed more than 6,000 respondents in 19 countries to see whether China or the United States was more effective at selling its political and economic model and its role as a global leader. At baseline, participants overwhelmingly preferred the United States—83 percent of the interviewees preferred the U.S. political model, 70 percent preferred the U.S. economic model, and 78 percent preferred U.S. leadership. But when they were exposed to Chinese media messaging—whether only to China's or to Chinese and U.S. government



messaging in a head-to-head competition—participants preferred the Chinese models to those of the United States.

Beijing also draws heavily on the strength of state-owned companies and the country's private sector to promote its objectives. China's technology firms, for instance, not only provide digital connectivity to a variety of countries; they also enable states to emulate elements of Beijing's political model. According to Freedom House, representatives from 36 countries have participated in Chinese government training sessions on how to control media and information on the Internet. In Zambia, adopting a "China way" for Internet governance—as a former government minister described it—resulted in the imprisonment of several Zambians for criticizing the president online. German Council on Foreign Relations experts revealed that Huawei middleboxes blocked websites in 17 countries. The more states adopt Chinese norms and technologies that suppress political and civil liberties, the more Beijing can undermine the current international system's embrace of universal human rights.

In addition, Xi has enhanced the role of China's security apparatus as a diplomatic tool. China's People's Liberation Army is conducting exercises with a growing number of countries and offering training to militaries throughout the developing world. Last year, for example, China brought more than 100 senior military officials from almost 50 African countries and the African Union to Beijing for the third China-Africa Peace and Security Forum. China and the African participants agreed to hold more joint military exercises, and they embraced the BRI and the GSI, alongside the African Union's Agenda 2063 development plan, as a way to pursue economic development, promote peace, and ensure stability on the continent. Together, these arrangements help create the collaborative security system China wants: one that's based on Beijing.

China has boosted its strategy by being both patient and opportunistic. Beijing provides massive resources for its initiatives, reassuring other countries of its long-term support and enabling Chinese officials to act quickly when opportunities arise. For example, Beijing first announced a version of the Health Silk Road in 2015, but it garnered little attention. In 2020, however, China used the COVID-19 pandemic to breathe new life into the project. Xi delivered a major address before the World Health Assembly promoting China as a hub for medical resources. Beijing paired Chinese provinces with different countries and had the former send personal protective equipment and medical professionals to the latter. China also used the pandemic to push Chinese digital health technologies and traditional

Chinese medicine—a priority for Xi—as ways to treat the virus.

More recently, China has used Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the resulting Western sanctions to push de-dollarizing the global economy. China's trade with Russia is now mostly settled in renminbi, and Beijing is working through the BRI and multilateral organizations, such as the BRICS (which 34 countries have expressed interest in joining), to advance de-dollarization. As Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva said during a 2023 visit to China, "Every night I ask myself why al

l countries have to base their trade on the dollar. Why can't we do trade based on our own currencies?"

#### THE PAYOFF

Beijing has clearly made progress in gaining rhetorical buy-in from other countries, as well as from UN organizations and officials. But in terms of effecting actual change on the ground, garnering support from other countries' citizens, and influencing the reform of international institutions, China's record is more mixed.

The GDI, for its part, is well on its way. A two-year progress report produced by the Xinhua News Agency's think tank indicated that 20 percent of the GDI's initial 50 cooperation programs had been completed, and an additional 200 had been proposed. Some projects are highly local and long term, but others will have a greater immediate impact, such as a wind power project in Kazakhstan that will meet the energy needs of more than one million households.

Despite the relative nascence of the GSI, Wang, China's foreign minister, quickly claimed that the Beijing-brokered 2023 rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia was an example of the GSI's principle of promoting dialogue. China has had less success, however, using GSI principles in its attempts to resolve the war in Ukraine and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Moreover, some countries have expressed concern that the GSI is a kind of military alliance. Despite being an early beneficiary of GDI projects, for example, Nepal has resisted multiple Chinese entreaties to join the GSI because it does not want to be part of any security alliance.

The BRI has transformed the geostrategic and economic landscape throughout much of Africa, Southeast Asia, and, increasingly, Latin America. Huawei, for example, provides 70 percent of all the components in Africa's 4G telecommunications infrastructure. In addition, China's 2023 BRI investments have increased from 2022. There are signs, however, that the BRI's influence may be plateauing. Italy, the biggest economy in the initiative (aside from China itself), withdrew in December, and only 23 leaders attended the 2023 Belt and Road

Forum, compared with 37 in 2019. China's financing for the BRI has fallen sharply since its peak in 2016, and many BRI recipient countries are struggling to repay Beijing's loans.

Public opinion polls paint a similarly mixed picture. The Pew poll indicated that middle-income economies, particularly in Africa and Latin America, are more likely to have positive views of China and its contributions to stability than higher-income economies in Asia and Europe. But even in these regions, popular views of China are far from uniformly positive.

A 2023 survey of 1,308 elites in ASEAN states, for instance, reveals that although China is considered the most influential economic and security actor in the region, majorities in every country, except Brunei, express concern over China's rising influence. Pluralities or majorities in seven of ten countries do not believe that the GSI will benefit their region. And when asked whether they would align with China or with the United States if forced to choose, majorities in seven of ten ASEAN countries selected the United States.

Afrobarometer's 2019 and 2020 surveys suggest China has a more positive reputation in Africa: 63 percent of Africans polled in 34 countries believe China is a positive external influence. But only 22 percent believe China is the best model for future development, and approval of China's model declined from the 2014 and 2015 surveys.

A 2021 survey of 336 opinion leaders from 23 countries in Latin America was similarly telling. Although 78 percent of respondents believe China's overall influence in the region is high, only 35 percent have a good or very good opinion of China. (Respondents have similar opinions about the United States.) There was support for engagement with China on trade and foreign direct investment but minimal support for engagement on multilateral cooperation, international security, and human rights. Finally, support for China and Chinese-backed initiatives in the United Nations is mixed. For example, a detailed study of China's Digital Silk Road investment in Africa found that although eight African DSR members supported China's New IP proposal for increasing state control over the Internet, more African DSR members did not write in support of it. And the February 2023 vote to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine—in which 141 countries voted in favor, seven voted against, and 32, including China and all other members of the SCO except Russia, abstained—suggests widespread rejection of the GSI's principle of indivisible security. Nonetheless, China won the support of 25 of the 31 emerging and middle-income countries (not including itself) in the UN Human Rights Council in a successful bid to prevent debate on Beijing's treatment of its

Uyghur minority population. It was only the second time in the council's history that a debate has been blocked.

#### FIGHTING FIRE WITH FIRE

Support for China's efforts may appear shallow among many segments of the international community. But China's leaders express great confidence in their transformative vision, and there is significant momentum behind the basic principles and policies proposed in the GDI, GSI, and GCI among members of BRICS and the SCO, as well as among nondemocracies and African countries. China's wins within bigger organizations—such as the UN—may seem minor, but they are accumulating, giving Beijing substantial authority inside major institutions that many emerging and middle-income economies value. And Beijing has a formidable operational strategy for achieving its desired transformation, along with the capability to coordinate policy at multiple levels of government over a long period.

Part of why Beijing's efforts are catching on is that the present, U.S.-led system is unpopular in much of the world. It does not have a good record of meeting global challenges such as pandemics, climate change, debt crises, or food shortages—all of which disproportionately affect the planet's most vulnerable people. Many countries believe that the United Nations and its institutions, including the Security Council, do not adequately reflect the world's distribution of power. The international system has also not proved capable of resolving long-standing conflicts or preventing new ones. And the United States is increasingly viewed as operating outside the very institutions and norms it helped create: deploying widespread sanctions without Security Council approval, helping weaken international bodies such as the World Trade Organization, and, during the Trump administration, withdrawing from global agreements. Finally, Washington's periodic framing of the world system as one divided between autocracies and democracies alienates many countries, including some democratic ones.

Even if its vision is not fully realized, unless the world has a credible alternative, China can take advantage of this dissatisfaction to make significant progress in materially degrading the current international system. The uphill battle the United States has waged to persuade countries to avoid Huawei telecommunications equipment is an important lesson in addressing a problem before it arises. It would be far more difficult to overturn a global order that has devalued universal human rights in favor of state-determined rights, significantly de-dollarized the financial system, widely embedded state-controlled technology systems, and deconstructed U.S.-led military alliances.

The United States should therefore move aggressively to position itself as a force for system change. It should take a page from China's playbook and be opportunistic—seeking strategic advantage as China's economy is faltering and its political system is under stress. It should acknowledge that, as Xi has repeatedly said, there are changes in the world “the likes of which we haven't seen for 100 years” but make clear that these shifts do not signal the decline of the United States. Instead, they are in line with Washington's own dynamic vision for the future.

The vision should begin by advancing an economic and technological revolution that will transform the world's digital, energy, agricultural, and health landscapes in ways that are inclusive and contribute to shared global prosperity. This will require new norms and institutions that integrate emerging and middle-income economies into resilient and diversified global supply chains, innovation networks, clean manufacturing ecosystems, and information and data governance regimes. Washington should promote a global conversation on its vision of technologically advanced change rooted in high standards, the rule of law, transparency, official accountability, and sustainability—norms of shared good governance that are not ideologically laden. Such a discussion would likely be widely popular, just as China's focus on the imperative of development holds broad appeal.

Washington has put in place some of the building blocks of this vision through the U.S.-EU Trade and Technology Council, the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, and the Partnership for Global Infrastructure Investment. Largely left out of the equation, however, are precisely the states most open to China's vision of transformation—most members of the BRICS, the SCO, and nondemocratic emerging and middle-income economies. Together with these countries, Washington should explore regional arrangements akin to those it has established with its Asian and European partners. More countries should be brought into the networks Washington is establishing to build stronger supply chains, such as those created by the CHIPS and Science Act. And countries such as Cambodia and Laos, left out of relevant existing arrangements such as the Indo-Pacific framework, should be given a path to membership. This would expand the United States' development footprint, allowing it to provide a development trajectory that is different from Beijing's BRI and GDI and—unlike China's initiatives—offers participating countries an opportunity to help develop the rules of the road.

Artificial intelligence presents a unique opportunity for the United States to signal a new, more inclusive approach. As its full applications become appreciated, AI will require new international norms

and potentially new institutions to harness its positive effects and limit its negative ones. The United States, which is the world's leading AI innovator, should engage up front with countries other than its traditional allies and partners to develop regulations. Joint U.S.-EU efforts regarding skills training for the next generation of AI jobs, for example, should be expanded to include the global majority. The United States can also support engagement between its robust private sector and civil society organizations and their counterparts in other countries—a multistakeholder approach that China, with its “head of state” style of diplomacy, typically eschews.

This effort will require Washington to draw more effectively on the U.S. private sector and civil society—much as China has worked its state-owned enterprises and private sector into the BRI and GDI—by fostering vibrant, state-initiated but business-and-civil-society-driven international partnerships. In most of the world, including Africa and Latin America, the United States is a larger and more desired source of foreign direct investment and assistance than China. And Washington has left untapped a significant alignment of interests between its strategic goals and the economic objectives of the private sector, such as creating political and economic environments abroad that enable U.S. companies to flourish. Because American companies and foundations are private actors, however, the benefits of their investments do not redound to the U.S. government. Institutionalizing public-private partnerships can better link U.S. objectives with the strength of the American private sector and help ensure that initiatives are not cast aside during political transitions in Washington. The work of private foundations in the United States—which invest billions of dollars in emerging economies and middle-income countries—should similarly be amplified by American officials and lifted up through partnerships with Washington.

More inclusive global governance also requires that Washington consider potential tradeoffs as other countries' economies and militaries grow relative to those of the United States. In the near term, for example, a clearer delineation of the limits of U.S. sanctions policy could help slow the momentum behind Beijing's de-dollarization effort. But Washington should use this time to assess the viability of the dollar's dominance over the longer term and consider what steps, if any, U.S. officials should take to try to preserve it. Washington's vision may also need to incorporate reforms to the current alliance system. The hard realities of China's growing military prowess and its economic support for Russia during the latter's war against Ukraine make clear that Washington and its allies must think anew about the security structures necessary to manage a world in

which Beijing and its like-minded partners operate as soft, and potentially hard, military allies.

As with China, the United States needs to spend more on the foundations of its competitiveness and national security to succeed over the long term. Although defensive policies are often necessary, they grant only short-term protections. This means Washington must staff up to match Beijing's foreign policy apparatus. Around 30 U.S. embassies and missions have no sitting U.S. ambassador; each of these slots must be filled. The United States has taken the first steps to enhance its economic competitiveness with programs such as the Inflation Reduction Act and the CHIPS and Science Act, but it needs sustained investment in research and development and advanced manufacturing. It also needs to adopt immigration policies that attract and retain top talent from around the world. And Washington needs to recommit to investing in the foundations of its long-term military capabilities and modernization. Without bipartisan support for the basic building blocks of American competitiveness and global leadership, Beijing will continue to make headway in changing the global order.

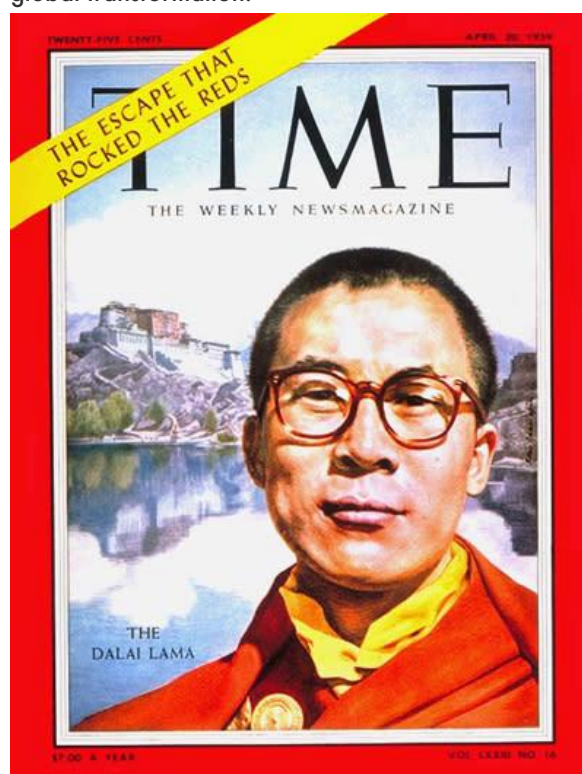
Finally, to avoid unnecessary friction, the United States should continue to stabilize the U.S.-Chinese relationship by defining new areas for cooperation, expanding civil society engagement, tamping down needless hostile rhetoric, strategically managing its Taiwan policy, and developing a clear message on the economic tools it uses to protect U.S. economic and national security. This will enable the United States to maintain relations with those in China who are concerned about their country's current trajectory, as well as give Washington room to focus on building up its economic and military capabilities while moving forward with its own global vision.

China is right: the international system does need reform. But the foundations for that reform are best found in the openness, transparency, rule of law, and official accountability that are the hallmarks of the world's market democracies. The global innovation and creativity necessary to solve the world's challenges thrive best in open societies. Transparency, the rule of law, and official accountability are the foundation of healthy, sustained global economic growth. And the current system of alliances, although insufficient to ensure global peace and security, has helped prevent war from breaking out among the world's great powers for more than 70 years. China has not yet managed to convince a majority of the planet's people that its intentions and capabilities are the ones needed to shape the twenty-first century. But it is up to the United States and its allies and partners to create an affirmative and compelling alternative.

## Why the Dalai Lama's Message Still Resonates Today

23 April 2024, AoL

In addition to co-founding TIME—96 years ago this week—Henry Luce is most famous for articulating his vision of the American Century. And while that vision takes its name from the U.S., its real focus—closely informed by his formative years abroad in China as the son of missionaries—was the shape of the world. Today, TIME continues to take measure of the world by providing our readers unparalleled access to its most influential figures. Since November 2017, led by International Editor Dan Stewart, TIME has published 15 interviews with leaders and leaders-to-be guiding their nations through this extraordinary period of global transformation.



The Apr. 20, 1959, cover of TIME | Cover Credit: BORIS CHALIAPIN

These include conversations with the leaders of France, Saudi Arabia, New Zealand, Colombia, Argentina, Thailand, Italy, Brazil ("I am not a troglodyte!" Jair Bolsonaro volunteered during his time with us), Armenia, Pakistan, Iraq, Austria (the world's youngest head of government), Malaysia (the world's oldest) and of course the U.S. For this week's issue, Shanghai-based correspondent Charlie Campbell traveled to Dharamsala, in the Indian Himalayas, for a conversation with the spiritual leader of one of the world's most secluded peoples, the Tibetans. Even as China continues to isolate him and attempts to co-opt Buddhism for its own purposes, Charlie says, "The Dalai Lama didn't show

an iota of bitterness, not to the Chinese government, nor the British or Americans who abandoned Tibet, nor anyone else." Charlie's story is accompanied by Ruven Afanador's intimate photographs taken in and around the Dalai Lama's private residence, and you can watch video of the interview [here](#). This is in fact the third time the Dalai Lama has been on the cover of TIME. The first was in 1959, the year the Dalai Lama, then 23, fled Tibet disguised as a soldier. In 2008, the great travel writer and TIME contributor Pico Iyer profiled him again as China cracked down on Tibetan freedom demonstrations ahead of the Beijing Olympics. The Buddhist message of interdependence is a powerful one for today, when so many of our challenges are global and yet so much of our globe is deeply fragmented. "The Dalai Lama came across as a kind, genuine, fun-loving person," says Charlie, who has interviewed the leaders of the Philippines, South Korea and Thailand, among others. "He's one of a kind."

### **Beyond Borders: China's attempts to censor global Academia**

22 April 2024, Human Rights Foundation

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is dedicated to perfecting its global narrative, employing a combination of coercion and co-optation tactics to shape public discourse both within China and abroad. As part of its strategy, Beijing has increasingly intimidated global academia, targeting both individual scholars and higher education institutions. This includes Beijing's regulation of academic activities through government-funded programs and informal networks and the erosion of the academic institutions' autonomy by promoting financial dependency.

**Infiltrating Academia: Students and Scholars**

A key player in this strategy is the United Front Work Department (UFWD), a CCP agency focused on influence operations and intelligence activities. Central to its mission is the orchestration of China's work abroad, aimed at establishing a global network to influence local politics, economics, diaspora communities, and academia. The UFWD has a significant presence within global academia, seeking to ensure that critical voices are either co-opted or coerced into silence.

In 2015, Chinese dictator Xi Jinping acknowledged overseas Chinese students as a new key focus of UFWD's overseas operations, recognizing them as valuable assets for managing foreign discourse. Xi's approach requires these students to align their personal aspirations with the overarching vision of the "Chinese Dream," urging them to acquire knowledge abroad that benefits the regime and

"serve their nation" both abroad and upon their return.

**CCP-Sponsored Scholarships**

The China Scholarship Council (CSC) is one of many scholarship providers in China. It distributes funding to thousands of Chinese students pursuing studies abroad and international students studying in China each year. Overseen by the UFWD, the CSC operates as a nonprofit organization affiliated with China's Ministry of Education.

Under the CSC scholarship, students are obligated to adhere to CCP directives. Scrutiny of the CSC intensified after Swedish media revealed the loyalty pledge recipients were required to sign. Applicants are explicitly required to endorse the CCP's leadership, comply with Xi's "Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era," undergo an assessment of their political ideology, and accept the "guidance and management" of Chinese diplomats, including declaring allegiance to the CCP and maintaining regular contact with the embassy. Should students fail to comply or engage in actions deemed detrimental to national interests, they and their families may face penalties.

Despite the lack of academic independence inherent in CSC scholarships, fully funded CSC doctoral students are financially attractive to universities abroad. For instance, in the Netherlands, while CSC scholarships cover recipients' tuition and living expenses, the universities receive bonuses from the Dutch Government for each successfully defended PhD dissertation.

Amid criticism, CSC recipients have defended their scholarship requirements, stating that these are common in contracts in China and only have "symbolic meaning."

**Military Linked Research**

Universities have also expressed concern over research supporting the Chinese military, as evidenced by several well-known universities in Sweden, Germany, Denmark, and the US cutting ties with such government-funded programs.

Under Xi's strategy of "Military-Civil Fusion" (MCF), the CCP has made substantial investments in science and technology to realize a "world-class" military by 2050. This doctrine, directly overseen by Xi, mandates that independent research, including by Chinese science and technology enterprises, must serve to advance China's economic and military development.

As part of this effort, China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) sends thousands of military personnel for educational exchange abroad before returning to China's military system – called "picking flowers in foreign lands to make honey in China" (异国采花中华酿蜜).



In the Netherlands, more than 90 Chinese military scientists have studied as PhD students over the past decade, most returning to China's military system afterward. Some students confirmed that their purpose was to learn groundbreaking science and technology to serve their military.

Deutsche Welle's research reveals that 26 prominent Chinese researchers in Germany – in fields such as mathematics, computer science, natural sciences, and technology – were employed at elite universities with close ties to the Chinese military. Twenty-two returned to China through the Thousand Talents Plan (TTP)<sup>1</sup>, the CCP's flagship talent recruitment program aimed at top scientists in fields relevant to MCF. A 2022 investigation found that nearly 3,000 scientific publications were collaborations between European researchers and military universities in China.

Scientists sent by Chinese military-affiliated universities, whether for short-term exchanges, PhD studies, or collaborative research, typically specialize in fields crucial to the MCF scheme, such as artificial intelligence, computer vision, and quantum research. One such military affiliate is the National University of Defense Technology (NUDT), China's top military institution, operating under the Central Military Commission chaired by Xi Jinping. NUDT has an extensive overseas network, dedicating significant resources to Chinese military missions and involvement in Chinese espionage activities abroad.

In 2019, a Chinese spy who defected revealed that NUDT's "intelligence center" had provided him with a fake passport for a mission in Taiwan aimed at interfering with elections. In 2020, a federal arrest warrant was issued for NUDT researcher Yanqing Ye for falsely identifying herself as a "student" and concealing her ongoing military service at NUDT. While at Boston University, Ye was an active PLA lieutenant, carrying out missions with access to US military websites and documents.

China has dedicated significant efforts and resources to improving its military technology, and partnerships with foreign universities are considered instrumental to that progress. Xi does not view these collaborations as bona fide academic projects but as information that can be used and weaponized to further national interests. As Xi stated in 2013, "science has no borders, but scientists have a motherland." Consequently, it can be challenging for researchers to ascertain whether their collaborative research and innovations are being shared with and used by the Chinese military to perpetuate atrocities such as the Uyghur genocide.

#### Intimidating Foreign Academics

While the CCP exploits the research of Chinese students abroad through government-funded programs, Chinese diplomats also suppress foreign scholars and their research. One notable case is

New Zealand professor Anne-Marie Brady. Brady faced written threats and break-ins at her home and office for her report analyzing China's political influence activities in Western democracies.

Such tactics have escalated in aggression, leading to scholars facing visa denials, frozen assets, and even sanctions for their academic endeavors. For example, European scholars Jo Smith Finley, Björn Jerdén, and Adrian Zenz were sanctioned for their scholarly activities and for engaging in public discourse on China and their human rights violations in the Uyghur Region.

Chinese embassies and consulates are also involved in hostile behavior to muzzle academics. Political historian and director of the SOAS China Institute in London, Professor Steve Tsang, faced pressure from university administrators to refrain from criticizing Xi or CCP policies publicly. The Chinese embassy in London even summoned Tsang to cancel invitations to Taiwanese politicians to speak at the school. Pressure from Beijing allegedly resulted in the closure of the School of Chinese Studies at Nottingham University in 2016.

Similarly, in 2021, the Chinese embassy in Washington, D.C., pressured officials of the US National Academy of Sciences twice to disinvite the Dalai Lama and Taiwanese Nobel Prize recipient Lee Yuan-Tseh during the Nobel Prize Summit, which, when ignored, resulted in two apparent cyberattacks. The Chinese government has attempted to censor Lee on multiple occasions, including the embassy in Brazil's attempt to prevent his attendance at the Rio+20 meeting in 2011.

#### Informal Informant Networks on Campus

In China, university students are encouraged to monitor and report their professors and fellow students if they engage in academic activities that contradict the official discourse of the CCP. University professors face the risk of suspension or other disciplinary actions for teaching subjects deemed sensitive, particularly those prohibited in Doc. 9 – a widely circulated secret document that prohibits universities from teaching topics such as constitutionalism, the separation of powers, and Western notions of human rights. Students have been reportedly punished for participating in anti-COVID "white-paper" demonstrations or distributing rainbow flags on campus, often after being reported by their peers.

Practices of peer-to-peer surveillance extend beyond China's border to campuses abroad, where the CCP leverages its overseas informal networks of Chinese students and student unions, such as Chinese Students and Scholars Associations (CSSA), to spy on academic activities on foreign campuses.

CSSAs, under the control of the United Front Work Department, is the official organization for overseas

Chinese students and scholars. The CSSA network comprises party loyalists dedicated to fulfilling Xi's call of "studying abroad to serve the country." Members are encouraged to monitor and report on individuals and events critical of China's domestic policies. Despite presenting as non-political student-led organizations, CSSAs have a history of reporting and harassing individuals and activities on campus. At UChicago, the local CSSA requested to cancel Nathan Law's speech, the UC San Diego CSSA prevented the Dalai Lama from giving a commencement address, and the president the CSSA's Egypt chapter reportedly interrogated Uyghur students about their Islamic practices on behalf of Chinese and Egyptian authorities. CSSA members even facilitated a crackdown of over 200 Uyghur students, who were subsequently deported and arrested.

CSSAs are also committed to promoting the Chinese narrative within their respective universities, publicly censoring discourse on sensitive topics such as Hong Kong, Tibet, Taiwan, and the Uyghur Region. In 2021, representatives of the Bristol CSSA requested the removal of the Flag of East Turkestan from a cultural event poster titled "Oppressive Regime Series – Focus on Xinjiang," falsely claiming it represented a terrorist group. After the organizer complied with the removal, CSSA representatives pushed for the deletion of the word "oppressive" from the event title, citing a lack of factual evidence to support characterizing the Chinese regime as such.

Additionally, CSSAs receive direct instructions from Chinese Embassies and diplomats. The former chairwoman of the Durham CSSA in the UK claimed that the Chinese Embassy required her to "intervene" in a university lecture titled "China's Threat to the West." The president of the Durham Union, who hosted a similar debate, also confirmed receiving numerous messages opposing the event, followed by a threatening call from the Chinese embassy warning of potential trade repercussions for the UK if the debate proceeded.

Chinese embassies and consulates also exert pressure and control over individual students, requiring them to monitor and report campus activities – an extension of China's domestic peer-to-peer reporting culture. Certain Chinese students, already primed with nationalist sentiment from their domestic education, naturally follow the embassy's guidance of their own volition. However, those who refuse to cooperate face consequences; they become targets alongside other students whose views contradict the official Chinese narrative. If identified by their classmates, photographed, or reported to Chinese law enforcement, they and their families in China may even face harassment and threats, including physical violence and cyberbullying.

In 2019, a student photographed a Chinese student in Edinburgh holding a sign supporting free elections in Hong Kong and condemning police violence. Upon his return to Chengdu, China, the photos were posted on Chinese social media with the caption "Brothers from Chengdu, beat him to death," which garnered 10,000 shares. Another student at the University of Minnesota was sentenced to jail for posting cartoon images of Lawrence Limburger and Winnie the Pooh, a character used to mock Xi. He was accused of denigrating the national leader's image and creating a negative social impact.

University professors also fall prey to this reporting scheme, facing pressure from Chinese students regarding anything that deviates from CCP orthodoxy. Professors have been coerced into apologizing for referring to Taiwan as an independent country or displaying maps of the China-India border that may trigger Chinese students in the class. In extreme cases, certain modules have been removed from university programs, as when University College London professor Michelle Shipworth was banned from teaching a course due to complaints from Chinese students about her lecture mentioning China's modern slavery index.

#### Ensnaring Institutions: Global Universities

The growing reliance on Chinese students' tuition fees and funding from the Chinese government is raising concerns about Western universities' acquiescence to telling China's story on the Chinese dictatorship's terms.

In leading British universities, approximately 25% of tuition fee income comes from Chinese students, not accounting for additional state and military-sponsored funding. For example, Jesus College of Cambridge University receives large amounts of funding from both the Chinese government and the Beijing-affiliate and UK-banned Chinese telecom company Huawei.

Within Cambridge University, the Chong Hua professorship in development studies is funded and controlled by Wen Ruchun, the daughter of former Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao. Peter Nolan, a professor from Jesus College and current Chong Hua Chair, also has deep ties to the CCP and a record of discouraging student discussions on controversial topics such as Uyghur human rights and the Hong Kong democracy movement. Nolan also leads Jesus College's China Forum, which has drawn scrutiny due to its charity link with the Cambridge China Development Trust, where Nolan is a trustee. This trust organizes annual China Executive Leadership Programs, sponsored by CCP's Central Committee, with previous participants including executive members of the Party Committee and officials from the UFD.

China increasingly infringes upon global academic discourse. In 2021, Fudan University signed a memorandum of understanding with the Hungarian government to establish an international campus in Budapest. This was met with widespread opposition due to concerns about increased Chinese influence in Europe. The university, previously one of China's most liberal institutions, also saw its academic freedom hampered when the CCP removed the phrase "freedom of thought" and included a pledge to follow CCP leadership in its university charter.

Satellite campuses of Western universities in China, such as NYU Shanghai, are even more vulnerable to CCP censorship and influence. NYU terminated its fellowship with pro-democracy activist Chen Guangcheng in anticipation of the inauguration of its Shanghai campus and adopted self-censorship by adding "patriotic education" courses to its curriculum to adhere to Chinese academic norms.

#### Resorting to Self-Censorship

This chilling effect results in international students and Chinese students who support pro-democracy efforts alike becoming targets of retaliation. Often the first to succumb to self-censorship, many Chinese students carefully curate their academic activities, from course selection to research topics, to avoid scrutiny. Many instances of self-censorship and harassment go undocumented, which in turn contributes to universities' failure to address issues associated with diminishing academic freedoms on campuses.

Additionally, many China experts grapple with navigating academic freedom and CCP pressures, as many of their research subjects can easily be perceived as too sensitive. Many tread cautiously, refraining from overly critical discourse to maintain access and funding while also resisting the complete adoption of the official Chinese dictatorship narrative to preserve academic integrity.

Some universities have become increasingly vigilant, scrutinizing lectures and even terminology deemed politically sensitive. One notable example is a North American university's Asian Studies department, which revised its guidelines to categorize topics like "Tibetan independence" and "Hinduism from a critical perspective" as sensitive terms.

The delicate balancing act adopted by scholars and institutions underscores the far-reaching influence of the Chinese regime's assertiveness and the urgent need for a robust defense of academic freedom globally.

#### Conclusion

As signs of pushback, the US has reduced the number of Confucius Institutes (CIs), and the UK banned over 1,000 Chinese researchers who were a risk to national security from working in the UK, signaling a recognition of the CCP's transnational repression of global academia. However, Beijing's

influence persists. The intricate web is stitched together by the enticement of Chinese money, Beijing's intimidation and fear tactics, and the reluctance of many Western institutions to acknowledge the severity of the situation. The lack of reporting and protection mechanisms may leave international Chinese students and faculty vulnerable to CCP coercion and co-optation, forcing them to self-censor to avoid potential trouble. It is crucial not to indiscriminately ostracize all students and researchers associated with China. Universities should instead adopt individualized approaches when assessing if the student is a victim of or complicit in Beijing's transnational repression. A comprehensive investigation is also necessary to identify the risks associated with collaborative research involving Chinese researchers and to ground cooperation in transparency and integrity. Universities must also prioritize ethical due diligence while minimizing financial reliance on Chinese funding, thereby safeguarding academic autonomy and integrity.

1 In 2018, due to heightened scrutiny and investigations into TTP with regards to intellectual property theft, the relevant units are required to refrain from publicly mentioning the term TTP (千人计划), and by 2020, the term was completely blocked from Chinese online discourse. However, it was quietly reintroduced in 2023 under the new name of "Enlightenment Plan" (启明计划).

### We must be free or die

19 April 2024, Tibetan Review

Phuntsog Wangyal\* argues that loyalty to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the desire for freedom are not incompatible, that clamouring for Tibet's independence is not only a matter of political freedom in consonance with our democratic system but also a realistic aspiration, while our experience of the 17-Point Agreement shows that trusting China to respect the terms of any middle way policy deal, even if possible, may be a wishful thinking.

Freedom, democracy and independence are huge issues for which many people have fought and died. Democracy means that a choice of leadership is given to the people (as in the USA and UK) where people argue, debate and formulate policies and then vote to decide which policies have the greatest public support – unlike in North Korea or China where there is only one leader and one party.

In the system of democracy which His Holiness has introduced for the Tibetan people there should be a choice between candidates with different policies. To glorify one person and one set of policies is a

contradiction of what His Holiness proposed. To suggest that raising the question of independence for Tibet is a greater threat than that imposed by the Communist Party of China is absurd.

In my opinion His Holiness would view current discussion about independence as a sign of growing maturity in political consciousness rather than as something negative which must be objected to. At the time of His Holiness's announcing the Strasbourg Statement in the European Parliament I was one of a number of people who disagreed with the statement. At the time I was a volunteer working at the Tibet Office in Zurich and I had the honour of personally speaking with His Holiness and expressing my reservations. His Holiness was kind enough to listen and did not object to my arguments or see them as a sign of disloyalty. Moreover, he suggested that I was free to continue to express my views on the importance of struggling for independence. Later I issued a written statement and Jonathan Mirsky – a renowned journalist on China affairs – interviewed me and published the interview in The Observer newspaper.

Similarly, far from scorning Jamyang Norbu for his pro-independence views, His Holiness graciously met him and stated that it was vitally important “that we unearth historical evidence of Tibet’s independence and make it known, not only to the world but also to the Chinese”. His Holiness added that “without proof of independence, Umaylam (the Middle Way) policy would be like a beggar begging for food”.

Extreme statements like saying “those Tibetans struggling for independence are more dangerous than the Communist Chinese” are absurd and are nothing more than a cowardly attempt to undermine those who have the courage to fight for freedom, democracy and independence. It is unfortunate that such claims seem to come from people close to His Holiness who seem to view every effort for freedom as hostile to His Holiness. This is a shameful distortion and manipulation of the truth. While His Holiness has a personal view of what is spiritually desirable, he has never suggested that the Tibetan people should slavishly follow his every thought. His Holiness withdrew from active politics in 2011, hoping that his people would take more responsibility for political decisions – as happens in other countries. Throughout the democracies of the world a distinction is made between the spiritual life and the political life. Spiritual life deals with life as we ideally wish it to be; political life deals with harsh realities and includes argument, compromise and bargaining.

The Tibetan people’s urge to return to a Tibet that is free and independent has remained unchanged, despite decades of attempts to eradicate or assimilate their way of life into that of a communist

and irreligious state. This has been demonstrated over the years by actions such as raising the fist and the Tibetan national flag in defiance, shouting slogans like “Free Tibet” and “China Out” and opposing the CCP by resisting their rule and facing dangers of torture, imprisonment and even sacrificing their lives – as in the cases of self-immolations and many others.

I have personal experience of visiting Tibet many times, from Dartsedo in the east to Ngari in the west, and over a period of more than 28 years. I have witnessed again and again with admiration the Tibetan people’s loyalty to His Holiness AND their determination to be free from living under Chinese communist control. Loyalty to His Holiness and the desire for freedom are not incompatible. Tibetans everywhere are loyal to His Holiness as their religious leader but they also want political freedom. Despite theoretical claims by the communist powers that we are all equal, we all know that the Chinese have always treated Tibetans as second-class citizens. Our way of life, our religion and family values and traditions have been turned upside down, and false accusations, arbitrary detention, torture and the execution of completely innocent Tibetans continue to this day. Tibetans in Tibet do not trust the communist party to be fair and impartial or to treat us as equals and for those of us lucky enough to live in the free world to go on believing that if we give up our struggle, the CCP will somehow miraculously change and grant us the freedom to live our own lives is pie in the sky. It is not going to happen.

The free world has over decades witnessed the Tibetan people’s courage and is sympathetic to Tibet’s right to determine its own future. His Holiness also has time and again expressed his admiration for the Tibetan people’s courage and determination “not to give up”. We must not play into the hands of the CCP and fall into the jaws of the Chinese dragon. Deception and creating confusion are China’s most effective tools for destroying its enemies – they were used to win over the Nationalists in the past and are currently being used to win over the Taiwanese.

This is not the time to talk about different views held by different sections of our community and to score points in insignificant arguments. Our division helps only the CCP. The REAL issue is that the people of Tibet are clearly deeply unhappy and are suffering under the rule of the CCP which disregards their wishes to preserve their language and culture, to preserve their religious heritage and natural environment and resources, and to protect their children from communist propaganda which has the intention ultimately to erase our distinctive culture. It is our duty – and especially the duty of those Tibetans who live in the free world – to preserve our culture for the benefit of the whole world.

Submitting to the aggressor has led us in the past to submit to signing the 17-point Agreement in exchange for the promise not to change the Dalai Lama's status. It led us to agree not to raise the question of "Independence" in the hope of being able to break the deadlock in negotiations over our status. In both cases the CCP reneged on its promises and left us looking weaker and incompetent. Our confusion benefits only the CCP.

The Tibetan government and the people must find a common long-term goal in seeking complete independence. We must find a strategy to unify the Tibetan community in order to sustain our Tibetan culture and way of life. The struggle for independence is challenging and may be long, but there is nothing that cannot be achieved if we are prepared to endure hardship and move forward together. There are some who say that China with its population advantage of more than a billion is too powerful to challenge but size is not everything as Vietnam, East Timor and Bhutan illustrate. There is a saying that "Little folks have felled great oaks" – meaning that small numbers of people – IF UNITED AND DETERMINED – can cause great trees to fall.

It is time also for us to remember the law of impermanence. Nothing remains the same forever. The great British Empire on which the sun never set has ended; the seemingly all-powerful Soviet Union disintegrated after 70 years; and more recently feared dictators like Saddam Hussain and Colonel Gaddafi were overthrown. We are witnessing gradual changes in China. The economy of the CCP is failing; countries once befriended by China now see China as an enemy to be wary of; and the Chinese people no longer have trust in their own government. The writing is on the wall that the CCP leaders are losing the confidence of their own people as the crack in the communist system grows wider. Light will shine after the passing of the darkness of night and truth will ultimately prevail over the forces of evil. Blessed are those who fight for the freedom of their homeland; blessed are those who unite with their fellowmen in resisting aggression. Now is not the time to squabble but to unite.

—

\* Phuntsog Wangyal is a former representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and a former member of Tibetan Parliament in Exile

### **Reform and opening up are not dead', but today's China 'looks risky': veteran observer David Lampton**

22 April 2024, SCMP

- China watcher since the times of Deng Xiaoping says current tightness of political

system is likely to continue for the foreseeable future

- 'No government in its right mind' would want China's collapse, but what it and the US want from each other unlikely to happen 'any time soon', he warns

For the Open Questions series of interviews with global opinion leaders, Sylvie Zhuang speaks to David Lampton, former president of US non-profit organisation the National Committee on US-China Relations. Lampton is a professor emeritus at Johns Hopkins-SAIS and author of many books and articles on China. His most recent book is *Living US-China Relations: From Cold War to Cold War*. Lampton first visited China in 1976 as part of a National Academy of Sciences Group on steroid chemistry and three years later returned with then health, education, and welfare secretary Joseph Califano, when Califano signed the US-China bilateral agreements on health and education.

Read the previous instalment in the series, with James Heimowitz, [here](#).

Professor, you have been watching China since it entered the Deng Xiaoping era of "reform and opening up", which remains a core and relevant slogan for the Communist Party today. So is the reform drive today different from the one we knew in the Deng era?

It strikes me that while the name "reform and opening up" has continued, the actual content of reform and opening up is [now] rather different. The scope of the reforms themselves is much narrower and the internal decision-making system more tightly controlled, less collective, and more top down.

The earlier reform was more spontaneous combustion. The world was optimistic and very supportive of China. In the earlier reform stage, when China was small and making big strides, the outside world was patient. China was playing a modest economic and security role globally. The People's Republic of China (PRC) was making big strides, trying to overcome the dysfunction of the Cultural Revolution era.

But now, China is big and the reform-oriented changes are relatively smaller, and the West is much more impatient because what China does greatly affects the outside world. Most dramatically, China's foreign policy has greater affinity for nations much of the West finds problematic – Russia, Iran and North Korea.

Many have said the so-called reform is dead despite Beijing's pledge to stick to reform and opening up. What are your thoughts on this? Could you share a bit about your friendship with the Deng family? Do you see the legacy of Deng's reform and opening up continuing in China in the years to come?



Reform and opening up are not dead, because reform and opening are the nature of this world of security, economic, ecological, and social interconnectivity, and because each generation must find its own way to address the challenges. I think it is appropriate for China to move reforms forward step by step, but my sense is that the current tightness of the political system is likely to continue for the indefinite future.

Deng Xiaoping reflected his personal experience in the Cultural Revolution and earlier experience in Europe, and all this was reflected in the manner in which he promoted his policies. Then, president Jiang Zemin came along and not only reflected his experience in the Soviet Union but also his exposure to Western-style thinking in his youth when he grew up in China's southeastern city of Yangzhou, one of the most open and economically advanced cities of his era.

President Xi Jinping had his own experience in the Cultural Revolution and that has shaped domestic policy and the current era. Each of those eras has reflected the experience of the top leader and certainly those around him.

Though I never personally met Deng, I had a feel for him conveyed to me by his family members whom I did know. He brought his experiences in the West as a young man to the needs of China in his time. I think his thinking is very relevant to today.

Then is China a peaking power as some say?

To talk about peaking power means China has reached the top of its power curve and now it's plateauing or heading downhill, the implication being that the US and like-minded countries and societies will gain in power, relatively. I think that's a precarious idea. I'm pretty sure it's not even true, but it certainly is a dangerous assumption if it leads to incautious behaviour by either side.

If you were an ambitious business executive, would there be a difference between thinking about investing in China during the Deng-era reforms and now?

Well, to put it simply, businessmen are now risk-averse and China looks risky to them, and this is true to some extent of Chinese businesspeople as well.

This is partly because their investments need to be bigger now than before and therefore they are more cautious. But, businesspeople also feel less certain about China's political direction and the health of its foreign relations.

Also, countries around China have improved their societies and economies, like Vietnam, India and Malaysia. Some of them have lower labour costs and look more stable, presenting more attractive investment options for new, marginal investment.

Also, US-China relations are going downhill, so US investment in China when a US administration has poor

economic performance, people begin to lose confidence in that administration. In that sense, China's Communist Party, as the ruling party, will see its popularity and sense of legitimacy necessarily affected by poor economic performance.

There was a period under presidents Jiang Zemin and then Hu Jintao where the party was not very intrusive with respect to foreign business. But now, the party exerts more control and is more present in foreign enterprises. So what is seen by foreigners is the increasing presence and interference of the party in economic decision-making.

Many in the party are not businesspeople. They are concerned about other things like political stability and foreign subversion, while foreign businesses worry about the party just getting too involved in business decisions. Some business executives feel personal insecurity in contemplating travel to China.

President Xi began an unprecedented third term last year. Consequently, an unavoidable question is what is Beijing's succession plan, if any. What kind of signals should we watch for in order to understand whether Beijing is preparing the way for the next No 1? And what risks might arise if the rules around succession continue to be kept under wraps?

Any individual political leader, like Xi Jinping, may or may not have a succession plan in their own mind – I don't know what he and those surrounding him may have in mind.

But, for a system to be stable, the population and the broader elite need to know and buy into the succession procedure, and different political groups need to know what the process for succession is. If it isn't a plan based in a law and in the constitution, when the great leader leaves, the default process is political struggle.

China is viewed as riskier, and business wants to diversify its sources of supply. On balance, I would say business is less optimistic and sees significant opportunities for new investment elsewhere.

What role does China's economic growth play in justifying the legitimacy of the ruling Communist Party? Some argue that the current shape of the Chinese economy is a result of the party's lack of capacity and some say it is a lack of willingness to prioritise the economy. Will this undermine the party's power?

Economic performance affects the legitimacy of all governments, not just the Chinese Communist Party.

People, abroad or at home, cannot have confidence in the outcome of a power struggle. You may just look at China's history and look at the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, and it seems to me that you either have law and constitutionalism and transparent mechanisms or you have power struggle.

So if you have to ask whether there is a succession plan, there is no succession plan.

Just saying the Politburo Standing Committee will decide, is not really a succession plan. And the third plenum has not happened yet. Where did the third plenum go? If you don't know where the third plenum went, you surely don't know how things are operating.

The world pays attention to the internal stability and predictability of major powers. So as China becomes more important to the world, the world cares more about what happens in the PRC. Big powers have a special obligation to manage their politics in ways the rest of the world finds stabilising and to guarantee orderly succession.

Ironically, the United States now presents its own challenges in this respect, for the first time in more than 160 years.

In the past 10 years, China is considered to have become tougher towards the US-led West and tougher on national security and economic self-reliance. Would you say the trend represents the will of the entire party elite or is dictated by a small circle of the top leadership? Is there still an influential reformist camp within the Communist Party as some say?

Addressing this question is necessarily speculative. I've had some Chinese tell me that China's leaders are divided into two blocks – two irreconcilable blocks.

One set of opinions tends to want China to boldly move forward in reform – and not just reform of economics, but also to loosen party control and improve relations along China's periphery and with the West more broadly. Another big group says that given the hostility of the US, instability in the world, and the economic problems facing China, control needs to be enhanced and national security needs to be the overriding priority. There's the basic question in Chinese politics: which set of policies promotes stability? I think there's a division.

Some people think more reform will enhance security. Others think more reform and loosening increases dangers and instability. I think that's the fundamental question the system is debating.

It appears that the group around Xi Jinping is quite solid in supporting the current policy. However, we know that in recent major international meetings Premier Li Qiang doesn't seem to be so visible to outsiders.

We observe elite appearances because there's so little transparency; we pay great attention to who we see, how often we see them, and what they say. We also pay attention when ministers of defence or ministers of foreign affairs just vanish with no explanation. We ask, "Why is that?"

On US-China ties, many say relations have sunk to the lowest point in recent years and you have labelled the current era as the "second Cold War". In your view, what structural conflicts between the two systems account for this cold war and make it seem inevitable?

I do not use the word "inevitable", because I believe in human agency as it relates to policy and politics. But I do believe that the US and China, and their allies and partners, have entered a period reasonably characterised as a cold war – that is not to say [I can forecast] how "cold" it becomes, how long it will last, or what its outcomes may be. There is lots of uncertainty.

In the first Cold War, we had no trade, no students going back and forth, and no tourists, among many other things. So there currently is much more connection in this cold war. But that is misleading if that is all you look at.

The current period is like the first Cold War in several important respects: ideology is becoming important again; the US talks about the struggle between autocracy and democracy as we used to during the first Cold War.

Once you use an ideological vocabulary, you are then in effect saying that you want China to change its system. Well, no country will change its system because somebody else wants them to. The dichotomy between autocracy and democracy is not a good basis for productive US-China relations.

Once again, alliance behaviours have become important. Washington is building new partnership organisations and China is doing this with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Brics, and the "no limits" partnership with Russia. And most obvious of all are the rapidly growing military spending and arms, cyber, and space races.

So what would be the possible scenarios, or what would a victory look like for the US side? Would the US aim for a Soviet-style collapse of China? What would a victory look like from the Chinese perspective?

I think no government in its right mind would hope for China's collapse, because that would be a tragedy for the Chinese people and a tragedy for Asia and the whole world. China is a major engine of the global economy and a major determinant of the globe's ecological future. Just look at the last pandemic, the Covid-19 pandemic. China produced medical devices that the rest of the world couldn't produce enough of. If China were to collapse, where would all the refugees go?

To predict or seek "collapse" in either of our societies is to contemplate unimaginable costs for ourselves and the world beyond. In this sense "victory" is an illusion.

I think for most people, they would like to see China evolve in a more reform-oriented way and at a faster pace, and also with less closeness to Russia when Moscow is invading its neighbours.

Further, I think China's neighbours wish for it to become more respectful of their maritime and other boundaries, or at least shelve disputes and curtail claim advancement. I think China wants Washington to act in conformity with its long-standing one-China policy, not drift towards a "one China, one Taiwan" policy. That's probably the single most important thing. China also would like to see the US and countries along China's periphery not so closely cooperating militarily.

But the point is, all of these things don't look very likely to happen any time soon. Xi has seen Putin more than any other major power leader, and the leaders of Japan, Philippines, and the United States just convened in Washington.

Could you share with us the state of China studies in the US now, and how the field has changed in the past few years? You have mentioned before that younger China watchers are being driven to employ different methodologies to understand the country. Are they relying less on first-hand interviews and field research now? I also learned from a previous interview of yours that you love to study China from the "inside out" – by talking to ordinary people, as well as leaders at various levels. Is that the case for the younger generation of China watchers as well?

I think many of today's younger China scholars would like to study China more from the inside out, but, frankly, that is becoming less possible. Consequently, China scholars must diversify their methods. Beginning in the late 1970s and the early 80s, China became increasingly open to foreign scholars coming and studying, not only in libraries, but also getting out in the field and talking to people that are not all central government people.

I think we learned a lot and this openness gave China more influence and made people more empathetic to China. We could understand some of the problems China had, and still has.

With the decline of strategic trust and all the talk about spies in both of our countries, it's become more difficult for foreign scholars, particularly Americans, to do field research in China. Archives like the foreign ministry archive are now not open to foreign scholars, but used to be.

When I was younger, I met most of China's presidents, chairmen, general secretaries, and premiers. Basically, we had great access. Now, young China scholars want to have that degree of access but they don't have it. And, I should also say, the US government is similarly restricting Chinese access to our officials for Chinese researchers. So, younger American scholars are relying more on

documents, data sets, cyber and remote sensing tools, interviews in third locations, and they increasingly go to Taiwan for language study and research.

The more people experience China from the inside, the better our understanding will be. In the 1950s through the 60s and into the early 70s, most China scholars had to go to Taiwan or Hong Kong because those were the only places where they could even talk to Chinese refugees.

Well, you don't get a very good picture of a country by talking only to people who left; you also want to talk to people who stayed in [mainland] China. So, China's current policy is making it harder for outsiders to have an objective view of China.

China has been rivalling the US on different fronts, like tech, science, trade and arms development. How would you assess China's influence in terms of its hard power and soft power? What are its main strengths and weaknesses?

A country's hard power is very difficult to judge. Is it measured by how many nuclear bombs it possesses? If we have 1,400 nuclear warheads and China has 500, are we more than twice as powerful as China? If China has more troops than the US, is China more powerful than America?

For example, the US has lots of military power in the vicinity of Taiwan, but the US must project its power over vast distances, far from home. It has basing agreements with neighbours closer to China, but what kind of access may Washington have if conflict arises? So, even in the Taiwan Strait, it's not all totally clear who's stronger and who is weaker. Such uncertainties are the soil in which the odds of miscalculation grow.

On soft power – both sides are reducing direct access to each other's scholars – and media – as mentioned above, with the curtailment being much more severe on the Chinese side than with respect to efforts by Washington.

There still are around 300,000 Chinese students and scholars in the US while there are about 400 Americans studying and researching in China. Chinese language training is, to some extent, moving to Taiwan, though there still are important joint Sino-American programmes and institutions operating in China.

The US media doesn't have many people in China any more. Some are now reporting on [mainland] China from Taiwan.

I have always felt that a China that opens itself gains in power and influence. I hope both our countries will renew the science and technology umbrella agreement that Deng Xiaoping and president Jimmy Carter signed in 1979.

The US is in its election year, with some anticipating a Trump return. If Donald Trump actually makes it

back to the White House, what impact do you think that will have on US-China relations, and what changes would he bring to Washington's China policy?

I believe that it is not possible to, at this moment, predict the outcome of the US general election in November 2024. I do believe that each side in the American contest for the presidency will react and speak with less moderation this year than in non-election years. It, therefore, is important that each side be especially watchful and prudent.

And then there is the fact that Trump, as a personality, brings a degree of unpredictability to decisions unseen in our history. Anybody who hopes for a Trump return must be ready to contemplate very dangerous instability in bilateral relations, not to mention broader American foreign policy.

There's a think tank in Washington called the Heritage Foundation that appears to be empowered by Trump to develop policies for the new administration if he wins. The Foundation has put out a long study (set of recommendations) for Trump to implement in a hypothetical Trump administration.

You don't need to speculate if he is planning to escalate the trade war with China – he's talked about raising tariffs across the board by a very high percentage if he is elected.

Also, I think trade conflict and less free trade will happen regardless of who gets elected here – the US is spending tens of billions of dollars to rapidly expand the capability of our silicon chip production to compete with China and its industrial policy subsidies. Likewise, China is deepening its industrial policy and the US is greatly accelerating its own industrial policies. This will continue whether you have Trump or [Joe] Biden.

Having said all this, to those who value a more pacific and constructive future, there are no certainties, but the prospects for improvement would be far greater under a second Biden administration. But, even that road will be bumpy, requiring the wisest and most diligent efforts of both nations.

Some US-China trade and military talks have been revived. Xi and Biden spoke on the phone earlier this month. To what extent do you think this can help to diminish the distrust between the two countries? What are their limitations? What could China and the US do to reduce distrust and, realistically speaking, which would be the easiest step to begin with?

I think it's almost always better to talk than not to talk, so I applaud our two presidents speaking to each other. While talk is good, it also is essential to address the sources of distrust. Enhancing confidence also requires concrete and constructive actions by both sides in important areas.

It's my sense that neither side is willing to address the most important concerns of the other. For instance,

will the US be restrained in weapons transfers and foreign military sales and financing to Taipei? Will Washington suddenly start sending high-capacity chips to China? Is Beijing likely to say bye-bye to the "no limits" partnership with Russia, putting military pressure on Taiwan, and purchasing Iranian oil? I don't think so.

Operative guidance for the relationship for the next year should above all be the doctor's code – "First, do no harm".

Beyond that, I would like to see some modest steps such as opening our closed consulates in Houston and Chengdu, restarting the Fulbright Program, and signing a revived Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement for a full five-year term, not just another six-month extension. Forging more strategically ambitious cooperation, such as working to address the Gaza humanitarian fiasco in the United Nations, would be very helpful.

## **More and More Chinese Citizens Lose Trust in CCP Leadership**

16 April 2024, Catalyst

A few years ago, in 2021, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) celebrated the centennial of its founding. It is the legacy of one of the most daunting world powers. While bursts of fireworks marked this celebration, a shadow of fear lingers over the people of China.

Today, China is ruled by an authoritarian government, and more and more citizens are losing faith in their leaders. The Party seeks to silence any dissidents, and it censors any information considered harmful to its endeavors. Despite this milieu, the people of China seem to be increasingly pro-democracy and anti-party despite the hazards of such convictions.

The CCP seeks to establish cultural and ideological control over the world's largest population. Anything resembling distrust or protest of the Party is quickly stamped out. Under the guise of COVID-19 safety precautions, the government banned public demonstrations in Hong Kong to commemorate the Tiananmen Square Massacre, according to historian Andy B. Liu. The Tiananmen incident, one of the most controversial events in modern Chinese history, was formerly openly commemorated in the city.

In spring 1989, demonstrators flooded Beijing's Tiananmen Square. They demanded democratic norms, calling out the injustices of media censorship, restrictions on freedom of assembly, and the stifling of other liberties. On June 4th, troops opened fire on the civilians. The death toll has always been a point of contention. Several hundred, possibly several thousand, lost their lives.

The very things the Tiananmen demonstrators protested were used to cover up the story: censorship and regulation of public assembly. Decades have passed, but the tactics remain unchanged. Citizens' motives to protest remain also.

In 2020, the people of Hong Kong came together for an annual pro-democracy rally, defying government regulations to not hold public gatherings exceeding 50 people. Beijing stepped in and arrested numerous demonstrators.

Taiwan, although de facto independent, shares significant cultural heritage with the mainland as well as current economic ties. Taiwan's trust in the CCP, however, is growing fairly slim. At a rally, Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen stated, "We don't want Hong Kong-style peace. We want dignified peace." Such sentiment echoes the region's general reaction to China's 2020 crackdown.

That year, the well-known Chinese real-estate developer Ren Zhiqiang, who criticized the Party and called Xi "a clown who had no clothes," was imprisoned for an 18-year sentence. It's dangerous to speak out against China's leaders, but citizens continue to do so. We just don't see too many of them for too long. Zhiqiang was an outlier in that he was widely heard before his arrest and disappearance from public view. Alluding to Vladimir Putin's public and ultimately lethal imprisonment of political rival, Aleksei A. Navalny, the New York Times columnist Li Yuan alleges there are thousands of similar cases in China hidden from public knowledge.

In 2022, demonstrators protesting COVID-19 local lockdown policies took to the streets of China's capital and other cities. They held blank sheets of paper, a metaphor for the country's widespread censorship and the near illegality of political protest. The gatherings quickly became focused on broader liberties, calling for the practice of democratic principles. Some protesters eventually called for the removal of President Xi. AP called the movement "the most direct challenge to the Communist Party's authority in decades."

Not only are inconvenient opinions in the public square discouraged, but what citizens communicate and consume via the media gets censored by the state or its affiliates. In China, the press is not just "the fourth estate" in name only. The media—what comes in and what goes out—is heavily filtered by the government.

Practically any media viewed by the Chinese public has been influenced by the Party. The Central Propaganda Department, an organization of the CCP, coordinates with its affiliates, to monitor all publicly available content.

The government forbids talking about the Tiananmen Square Massacre in the media or other forums,

especially when it conflicts with the official story. For years, there's been a desire to use the Internet liberally, demonstrated by Chinese citizens having begun to find ways to work around the far-reaching censorship.

Over 500 critical documents divulging the procedures of Chinese state-affiliated tech company i-Soon were leaked to GitHub in March. These show an extensive hacking scheme of monitoring and "harassing dissidents who publicly criticize the Chinese government." Although the source of the leak is supposedly dissatisfied with i-Soon's policies, the unknown whistleblower could be an unhappy employee or someone upset with the way i-Soon's tech gets used.

The London-based Chinese journalist Xinran, who has devoted years to unearthing the hidden history of postwar China, says, "The surveillance of ordinary people is now commonplace. Xi's China has become like 1984."

From an outside perspective, the CCP's hold over Chinese citizens seems to be failing under the strain of its ever-tightening grip.

### **Xi Jinping's meeting with former Taiwanese president: Understanding Cross-strait dynamics**

16 April 2024, First Post

China's President Xi Jinping met with Taiwan's visiting former President Ma Ying-jeou in Beijing on April 10, 2024. This is their second meeting after they met in Singapore in November 2015, when Ma was the President of Taiwan.

Wang Huning (the top-most politburo standing committee member in charge of the Taiwan issue), Cai Qi, and other senior officials attended the meeting.

From April 1 to 11, Ma was leading 20 young people from the Taiwan region to the Chinese mainland for talks. The meeting at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing was the first time that a Chinese leader has met a former president of Taiwan on Chinese soil. Ma is considered more friendly to China than the current Taiwanese president, Tsai Ing-wen.

This meeting is seen as an effort by China to influence Taiwan's politics. Ma visited Fujian, Xian, and other places. Last year, Ma visited China just before Taiwan went for presidential elections in January of this year but did not meet Xi.

Ma was Taiwan's president from 2008 to 2016. In May 2008, Ma declared "no unification, no independence, and no use of force" and subsequently broadened economic ties and signed accords on direct postal, shipping, and air links. In 2010, chairman of Beijing's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait Chen Yunlin visited Taiwan,



making him the highest-ranking Chinese official to visit Taiwan. Chen addressed Taiwan's president as "Mr Ma".

Ma also opened Taiwan for group tours from China. Initially capped at 300 visitors a day, the numbers quickly soared to 1.6 million mainlanders in 2011 (the total by 2011 was 7 million). This tourism led to \$3 billion in Taiwan's economy, an amount equal to 0.72 per cent of the island's gross domestic product. Ma proposed in June 2010 an Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) with China—a sort of free trade area proposal. Ma also expressed his opinion about joining the proposed Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), although China had not viewed this with enthusiasm. ECFA led to massive opposition in Taiwan, mainly led by the youth, who spearheaded the Sun Flower Movement by occupying the Premier and other offices in Taipei. Their main accusation was that the ECFA is detrimental to Taiwan's economy and that no oversight committee has been proposed for evaluating the ECFA.

In September 2010, Ma cobbled up confidence-building measures (CBMs) in the military field with China. In October 2011, Ma proposed a peace agreement with China through a referendum process. All of these pro-China measures by Ma endeared him to the Chinese leadership, even though they backfired with the Taiwanese citizens.

While not addressing the current Chinese intimidating military exercises near Taiwan, Xi stated in his meeting with Ma's entourage that "external interference cannot hold back the historical trend of national reunification."

Further, Xi said: "All Chinese on both sides of the Strait should firmly oppose any separatist moves of secessionists on the island and interference by external forces, firmly safeguard the common home of the Chinese nation, and work together to pursue a bright future for peaceful reunification. The future of the Chinese nation should be firmly held in the hands of the Chinese people."

Xi stressed in his speech that unification with Taiwan is part of the rejuvenation project. The speech is aimed at countering the United States, Japan, and other countries support for Taiwan as well as criticising the "independent" forces within Taiwan.

The current ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) is seen as moving towards independence, even though in the DPP's two terms from 2000 to 2008 and 2016 until now, it has desisted declaring itself independent.

The DPP also rejected the '1992 consensus' between Kuomintang (KMT), of which Ma was the Chairman, and China's Communist Party (CCP). According to this, Taiwan and China belong to 'one China'. China has said acceptance of the consensus is a

precondition for resuming public dialogue with Taiwan. This is not acceptable to the current ruling DPP in Taiwan.

The DPP says that while the KMT lost its war to the CCP in 1949, it fled to Taiwan and practiced authoritarian leadership until 1986. A decade later, the first elections in Taiwan threw an altogether different generation that stresses Taiwan identity. Indeed, according to a National Chengchi University Election Study Center survey conducted in 2023, only 1.2 per cent of Taiwanese support unification with China.

A Pew Research Centre poll released earlier this year found that 67 per cent identify as primarily Taiwanese, while 28 per cent consider themselves primarily Taiwanese and Chinese, and only 3 per cent consider themselves primarily Chinese.

Identity in Taiwan is tied to politics. Those who consider themselves primarily Taiwanese are most likely to align themselves with the ruling DPP. Ma is thus trying to enhance the segment that supports the unification process.

The visit of Ma at this juncture is interesting. First, Lai Ching-te, the current Vice President and President-elect in January this year, will be taking the oath of office in May, and hence the timing of Ma's visit to China is interesting. Lai's party, the DPP, has lost the majority in the Legislative Yuan by a thin margin, and Ma's KMT party could stall crucial legislation in the future.

Second, Japan's Prime Minister Kishida and Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos are in the United States meeting President Biden. They possibly discussed China's invasion scenarios of Taiwan, and possibly both will coordinate the security situation in the Taiwan Straits.

By meeting Ma at this juncture, Xi is also conveying a message of influencing cross-Strait dynamics. It is also interesting that the second Ma-Xi meeting comes on the 45th anniversary of the signing of the US Taiwan Relations Act into law, requiring Washington to take steps to help the island defend itself, including through arms sales, despite Beijing's vocal opposition.

Third, an official KMT delegation is due to visit China in June, even though specific dates are not notified. This suggests that the KMT itself is in a huddle, given the Taiwanese predicament on the unification issue.

Fourth, Xi addressing select Taiwanese youth is also intended to carry the CCP propaganda into Taiwan and build a pro-China constituency, even though Ma returned home without any assurances from Xi that intimidating military exercises would be discontinued. Prof. S. Kondapalli, the author is Professor in Chinese Studies at JNU. Views expressed in the above piece are personal and solely that of the author. They do not necessarily reflect Firstpost's views.

## What Would Modi's Third Term Mean for India-China Relations?

15 April 2024, Geopolitical Monitor

India will hold its 18th general election on April 18, 2024, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are poised to win a third term. Similar to his first and second terms, a significant amount of historical and contemporary political and economic baggage will burden Modi's third term and his relations with China. While his anticipated election victory would likely result in the continuation of complex India-China issues and tensions from his previous years as prime minister, Modi appears to have a stable but delicate relationship with China to manage.

### Competing perspectives of Modi

The vast majority of Chinese internet users have a positive view of India's leader, calling him 'Immortal Modi' or 'Modi Laoxian' ('不朽的莫迪'). Based on data from the popular microblogging platform Weibo (China's version of Twitter), which has more than 598 million active monthly users, many Chinese people also think that Modi is crucial to preserving the balance of power in the world.

Competing perspectives of Western-style liberal democracy and China's political model commonly, though unfairly and inaccurately, portray the former as the stable foundation of a well-functioning society, whereas the latter, marked by ardent nationalism and a supreme leader, is viewed as volatile. Weibo users' comments shed light on their perceptions of democracy as a fundamentally unstable political system beset by internal conflicts, corruption, and misrepresentation. Indeed, they frequently dismiss the concept of democracy as a whole process. Many Chinese people believe that larger nations, even ones that claim to be democratic, tend to adopt authoritarian characteristics.

Western media often express this erroneous belief when reporting on political developments in India. During Modi's tenure, debates about the essence of Indian democracy have shifted, which is consistent with Chinese perspectives on the democratic system in general but not on India's democratic system specifically. This lively but partisan debate, not confined to academia, centers on the purported new chapter in Indian history, where Modi's leadership has distanced the nation from the fundamental principles of democracy, minority rights, and executive accountability.

Nitasha Kaul, a well-known Modi critic, writes for the Australian Institute of International Affairs that 'the Modi myth proffers the idea of a paternal, ascetic, and efficient leader at the helm of a civilizational

resurgence of India as a "Vishwa Guru" (world leader).' In 2021, Jostein Jakobsen and Kenneth Bo Nielsen of The Centre for Development and the Environment at the University of Oslo added India under Modi to their list of 'authoritarian, populist, and right-wing regimes.' In 2023, The Guardian published an article calling Modi's government 'autocratic' and 'illiberal.' Similarly, a Financial Times piece from the same year highlighted Modi's alleged 'authoritarian streak' as a major concern for the West.

However, China's recent mention of Modi contrasts sharply with the much-embellished portrayal of India during his tenure. On 2 January 2024, Zhang Jiadong, the director of the Centre for South Asian Studies at Fudan University in Shanghai, expressed his admiration for Modi, his economic and foreign policy, and his 'Bharat narrative'. Zhang claimed that India has become more proactive and self-assured on a national and international level. His remarks were published by the state-run newspaper Global Times. Coming from the Chinese government, these statements might seem unconventional, but when considering India's efforts to create a multi-aligned system in international affairs and the Western disapproval of India following the West's unsuccessful attempts to steer Modi towards Western alignment, they have geopolitical relevance, particularly regarding China's relationship with India under Modi.

Though he and his party greatly benefit India, Modi now poses a challenge to governments, intellectuals, and people of Western and Indian ancestry who support Congress. India has a strong governance framework, making it difficult for a single person or political party to attain widespread popularity. For the past nearly 23 years, he has served as Prime Minister of India and Gujarat State Chief Minister, owing to his and his party's perseverance and nationalist, India-focused agenda, not because he is a despot or authoritarian. People understand how regional and global environments are degrading and changing, as well as where India should rank as a developed country on the world map. They are electing him and his party to govern India (or Bharat). Furthermore, the Supreme Court, as the pinnacle body in India's robust judicial structure, keeps a watchful eye and is well-equipped to deal with any violations of democratic institutions by any person or entity.

The BJP/Modi government at the helm is now well-positioned to bolster India's economic standing without yielding to any internal or regional pressures. A landslide victory in the upcoming election may allow Modi and his right-wing nationalist government to reshape India into a Hindu nation, with the goal of

amending the Constitution to dilute the problematic principles of secularism and socialism while curbing illegal immigration and ethnic separatism, as well as addressing the challenges posed by rising Islamism. In countering Islamism and terrorism in India, the emphasis is on confronting the activities of a subset of extremist Sunni Muslims. This group, while not substantially contributing to the broader Indian society, is increasingly mobilizing for communal interests, becoming susceptible to the influence of a transnational Islamist agenda and global caliphate bogey. Any potential Modi-led government plan will include a comprehensive approach to addressing the dangers posed by these dynamics while also ensuring national security and social harmony. These objectives broadly align with Beijing's policies in the context of Chinese society.

#### Tensions

Although most Chinese people have a positive perception of and interest in the Indian prime minister, the relationship between China and India has been tense for many years, creating an environment conducive to the emergence of new and escalating conflicts between the two countries.

Since his initial election in 2014, China has warmly welcomed Modi, and both parties are optimistic about a new era of India-China relations under the BJP. The first encounter between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Modi took place in Fortaleza, Brazil, ahead of the 6th BRICS Summit that same year. Xi conveyed to Modi that China and India are long-term strategic and collaborative allies rather than adversaries, underscoring their common goal of 'national rejuvenation' and asserting that cooperation is the most efficient way to achieve it. Despite their outward amicability, India and China continue to have geopolitical conflicts.

The India-China border dispute, which began in May 2020, has been a frequent topic of discussion between Xi and Modi. Furthermore, there have been ongoing clashes and instances of Chinese aggression along the 4,057 km Line of Actual Control (LAC), a notional boundary, particularly in the Ladakh region. China and India have had territorial disputes along their shared border since the countries' modern beginnings. Both nations engaged in a bloody conflict over this issue in 1962, but it was the only one. However, violent incidents have increased in recent years. Modi, in his third term, cannot ignore or avoid the negative consequences of the current situation for India-China relations. India and China's reluctance to withdraw along the LAC reflects their postures and aspirations on their respective home fronts, as well as on the international stage, where they both desire to expand their influence as emerging global powers.

#### The Tibet question

Given the intricacies of historical tensions and Chinese provocations, heightened by the Tibet 'issue', handling toxic border relations is bound to be tough. The Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, who will be 88 in July, and, more importantly, the future Dalai Lama, are major issues in both India and China. India's stance on Tibet is mainly spiritual, with Tibet's geographical location leaving ample leeway for potentially significant political consequences. India has the largest number of Tibetan refugees, and the Dalai Lama issue will have an impact on the country. Given India's rebirth of Buddhism, the country's next and future prime ministers will take a more active position in any Buddhist-related matters, particularly those involving China.

India has yet to make significant use of the Tibet card in its political dealings with China; nevertheless, on March 9, 2024, Modi paid an official visit to Arunachal Pradesh, India's Tibet-border state, where he announced, among other efforts, the important Sela Tunnel Project. Beijing claims the state is part of its territory, Southern Tibet (藏南地区), and calls India's claims 'ridiculous.' For China, Tibet represents the 'three evils' of terrorism, separatism (or 'splittism'), and religious extremism. Under Xi, China is aggressively reinforcing its security in Tibet through increasing militarization, surveillance, and other actions. Both countries have dramatically increased Tibet's geopolitical, cultural, and ecological significance, making it crucial to both.

#### Cooperation and conflicting conditions

India and China are economically interdependent, and both are important components of a multipolar, multi-aligned world system. The border dispute is still a major worry, especially in light of the fact that both countries have lost soldiers in armed battles. Nonetheless, the prospect of cooperation holds significance, particularly considering the plethora of opportunities for relationship-building and pursuing shared interests. Climate change is one such common problem, necessitating collaboration to decarbonize energy systems and diversify energy sources, while others include addressing security problems in a rapidly changing global environment. At COP28, India and China failed to endorse a promise to triple renewable energy sources by 2030, despite a pledge to transition away from fossil fuels. This highlights the paradoxical nature of power rivalry in international relations and between the two most populous countries, led by Modi and Xi, respectively. One of Xi's biggest challenges is the continuing deflationary pressures caused by rising property prices and diminishing construction output. In contrast, if Modi wins, he will inherit a stable rupee and surging Indian markets. India and China have differing inflation rates, but India is in a favorable economic position, and Modi would inherit India's

rising economy and foreign investment opportunities. Overall, India's economy is strong and steady. India's and China's economic positions can have an anchoring effect, limiting or increasing their political capacity and leaders' influence. Inflammatory or aggressive acts by Xi or Modi would have economic consequences for both, potentially causing additional political turbulence on their respective domestic fronts and increasing economic troubles in an already volatile global context. Neither leader will want this. India-China relations are unique in nature. And, while Modi and Xi have shown open political affection and promised to address common concerns, the two countries, each with over a billion people, are geopolitical rivals with the ability to influence global affairs in both positive and negative ways. As has been the case in recent years, India-China relations will continue to be stable yet sensitive despite their historical, contemporary, and probable future challenges.

### **We need a strategy, not retorts, to deal with China**

14 April 2024, Deccan Herald

A spokesperson of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mao Ning, "noted" Prime Minister Narendra Modi's comments on India-China relations and said that "sound and stable China-India relations serve the common interests of both sides." His comments were in response to Modi's comment calling for the two countries to "urgently address the prolonged situation on our borders" because "Stable and peaceful relations between India and China are important for not just our two countries but the entire region and the world." The Chinese spokesperson's response conveniently sought to downplay the border issue, saying, "the boundary question does not represent the entirety of China-India relations." This while Beijing indulges in the shenanigan of giving Chinese names to nearly 30 places in Arunachal Pradesh in its continuing bid to claim the entire state as part of its part of its territory. China has eyed Arunachal Pradesh ever since Chairman Mao made his infamous assertion that Tibet was the right palm of China, and Ladakh, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA), including Arunachal Pradesh, its five fingers. Killing thousands of Tibetans, Mao's Communist China annexed Tibet, giving credence to his agenda of 'reclaiming the Middle Kingdom.' Xi Jinping, who has broken with China's Deng Xiaoping line of leaders and returned to a Maoist idea of China, wants to 'rejuvenate' the country by regaining territories that it lost due to imperial intervention since 1840.

After taking over Tibet, during a mass meeting in Lhasa in July 1959, Chinese Lt-Gen Zhang Guohua had said: "The Bhutanese, Sikkimese and Ladakhis form a united family in Tibet. They have always been subject to Tibet and to the great motherland of China. They must once again be united and taught the Communist doctrine." Alarmed, Bhutan closed its border with China and shut off all trade and diplomatic contacts with Beijing (then Peking). It also established formal defence arrangements with India. It was the annexation of Tibet and Xinjiang province that brought China to the borders of India, Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Mongolia. Besides being China's largest political unit in area, Xinjiang has linked China back to the ancient Silk Route, becoming a gateway for Xi Jinping's signature project, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and given China ownership over Kashgar, the junction of the Southern Xinjiang Railway Project, which is the gateway to Afghanistan, Iran, Central Asia and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) ending at Gwadar in the Indian Ocean. The Doklam stand-off precipitated by the People's Liberation Army at the trijunction of India-Bhutan-China in 2017 was a clear indication of Xi's idea of 'rejuvenation'. Some have suggested that we fight China's bid to name-and-claim our territory by renaming Chinese towns with Indian names. That would be a juvenile reaction, to say the least, and a naïve way of dealing with China's long-term strategy. Delhi should revisit its 'One China' policy on Taiwan as well as step up support for the Free Tibet movement. We must declare Xinjiang a 'disputed territory' and demand that its majority Uighur population be allowed to determine its status free of Beijing's coercion and oppression. The West, meanwhile, should wash off the China gleam in its eyes, which continues to persist despite the heightening fear of China's aggressive turn, shed its double standards, and wake up to the realities of regional geopolitical dynamics. It is, after all, already reaping what it sowed in building up the Chinese economy. Does it want to burn its fingers anymore?

The key to dealing with China's revanchism and hegemonic ambitions is to put a brake on its economy. The West's mindless outsourcing of all manufacturing to China for decades allowed the latter to become the world's second-largest economy. Now, the West must put the genie back in the bottle. Irrespective of who wins the US presidential elections in November, Washington will have to further tighten the economic screws on Beijing. Europe, too, will have to do the same and step back from the unsustainable trade relations the countries of the European Union have developed with Beijing. European car-makers, for instance, will have to

redraw their strategies and supply chains if they are to protect their industry, especially in the face of China's aggression in the electric vehicle markets. It is in these realities that India and the West must seek opportunities to together meet the China challenge. On the one hand, New Delhi will have to strengthen its own defence industrial capabilities and keep China at bay on its own. On the other, it has to step up the effort to pull western capital, technology and manufacturing to its soil.

### **China had a 'special place' in PM Modi's heart, now it's a thorn in his side**

13 April 2024, The Economic Times

Narendra Modi once looked up to China. As a business-friendly Indian state leader, he traveled there repeatedly to attract investment and see how his country could learn from its neighbor's economic transformation. China, he said, has a "special place in my heart." Chinese officials cheered on his march to national power as that of "a political star."

But not long after Modi became prime minister in 2014, China made clear that the relationship would not be so easy. Just as he was celebrating his 63rd birthday by hosting China's leader, Xi Jinping – even sitting on a swing with him at a riverside park – hundreds of Chinese troops were intruding on India's territory in the Himalayas, igniting a weeklong standoff.

A decade later, ties between the world's two most populous nations are almost completely broken. Continued border incursions flared into a ferocious clash in 2020 that threatened to lead to all-out war. Modi, a strongman who controls every lever of power in India and has expanded its relations with many other countries, appears uncharacteristically powerless in the face of the rupture with China.

As Modi seeks a third term in an election that begins Friday, the tensions weigh heavily on the overarching narrative of his campaign: that he is making India a major global power and, by extension, restoring national pride. Far from the 2,100-mile border, along every avenue where India seeks to expand, China looms as a fierce competitor.

In India's own backyard in South Asia, China has used its vast resources – the fruits of economic reforms introduced decades before India's – to challenge Indian preeminence, courting partners through infrastructure deals and gaining access to strategic ports.

More broadly, China and India are vying to lead the developing nations of the so-called global south. When India hosted the Group of 20 summit last year, using it to showcase its support of poorer countries, Xi skipped the event. China has also been a major

roadblock in India's campaign to gain a coveted permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council.

"Today, you encounter an India which perhaps you had never seen before, in many senses," said Nirupama Menon Rao, a former Indian ambassador to China and the United States. "I think the Chinese are increasingly aware of it, and they would still like to pull us down, to create barriers."

India's estrangement with China has provided an opening for Western nations to expand defense and economic ties with New Delhi, a distressing development for Beijing.

India signed a series of deals with the United States last year to strengthen military cooperation. India has also drawn closer to the other two members of the so-called Quad, Australia and Japan, as the group works to counter China's projection of power. In addition, India sees an opportunity as the United States and Europe look for alternatives to China as a place to make their products. One early success has been sharply increased production of iPhones in India.

But even with these openings, China continues to expose Indian insecurities. The Chinese economy is about five times the size of India's, and China remains India's second-biggest trade partner (after the United States), exporting about six times as much to India as it imports. China spends more than three times what India does on its military, giving its forces a significant advantage across land, sea and air.

The Indian military, which has long struggled to modernize, is now forced to be conflict-ready on two fronts, with China to India's east and archrival Pakistan to its west.

Tens of thousands of troops from both India and China remain on a war footing high in the Himalayas four years after the deadly skirmishes broke out in the disputed Eastern Ladakh region, where both countries have been building up their military presence. Nearly two dozen rounds of negotiations have failed to bring disengagement.

Although the political opposition has tried to paint Modi as weak in the face of Chinese encroachment, the border incursions are unlikely to hurt him much politically, given the lack of news coverage from a largely sympathetic Indian media.

Still, Modi has had to prioritize billions of dollars for border infrastructure and military upgrades as India still struggles to cover the basic needs of its 1.4 billion people. His government is drawing up plans to repopulate hundreds of border villages as a second line of defense against the constant threat of Chinese encroachment.

S. Jaishankar, Modi's external affairs minister, admitted recently that there were "no easy answers" to the dilemma posed by India's aggressive neighbor.



"They are changing, we are changing," Jaishankar said. "How do we find an equilibrium?"

In a book published in 2020, just as he had taken over as Modi's trusted foreign policy architect, Jaishankar wrote that the tensions between the United States and China set "the global backdrop" for India's choices in a "world of all against all." India's ambitions as a major power, he wrote, would require a juggling act: "engage America, manage China, cultivate Europe, reassure Russia."

India's rise as a large, growing economy has allowed it to hold its ground – working with any partner it can benefit from – in a polarized and uncertain world.

Even as India has expanded defense ties with the United States and doubled bilateral trade over the past decade, to about \$130 billion in goods alone, it has resisted American pressure to reconsider its strong relations with Russia. India has deepened connections with Europe and the Middle East, too; trade with the United Arab Emirates alone has reached \$85 billion.

While India remains wary of becoming a pawn in the West's fight with Beijing, and has not forgotten its frosty history with the United States, China has become an unavoidable focus after being a secondary threat for much of modern Indian history. India's socialist founding prime minister was accommodating of communist China, but the bonhomie was shattered by a monthlong war in 1962 that left thousands dead. The relationship began to normalize in the 1980s even as incursions continued, and open channels of communication kept tensions down and elevated trade.

"It was a different China," said Rao, the former top diplomat.

The situation changed in the years before Modi took office, she said. As its economy soared, China began flexing its muscles – investing heavily in its Belt and Road infrastructure initiative, which India saw as threatening its security and spheres of influence, and moving more aggressively on its borders and in the Indian Ocean.

Still, Modi, blacklisted by the United States when he was a state leader over his alleged role in religious riots, continued to extend a hand to Beijing. As prime minister, he did not allow the embarrassment of the Chinese incursion in 2014 to dampen his red-carpet welcome to Xi. His subtle message – a warning that "a little toothache can paralyze the entire body" – carried the hope that Xi would come around.

That hope ended with the deadly 2020 clash in Eastern Ladakh. Now, it is clear that New Delhi is resigned to a long-term threat from China, a shift evident in Modi's push for road and tunnel construction in border areas to support a large troop presence.

Over the past five years, more than 2,200 miles of roads have been built along the border. In the Kashmir region, over 2,000 workers have been busy for three years digging a high-altitude tunnel that will improve connectivity to Ladakh.

When the tunnel project, which will cost more than \$850 million, is completed, it will ensure that traffic moves year round, and reduce travel time by hours.

"For four months, the supplies to the Indian army were cut off because the road would get closed," said Harpal Singh, the project head. "After this tunnel is complete, that will not happen again."

Modi's government is also trying to revive hundreds of villages along the border to fortify defenses.

Through a program called Vibrant Villages, the government is working to develop infrastructure, extend services and nurture tourism in the hope of reversing the economic migration that created "ghost villages."

"What India could have done in the last 20 years, they have to do now in two," said Sonam Murup, a retired Indian army officer from Ladakh, referring to infrastructure development in his area.

"Our situation is much better now," he said. "But when you look toward the Chinese side, you can see villages full of lights."

This article originally appeared in The New York Times.

### India-China border dispute: Beyond the hype, the reality of the LAC

13 April 2024, Indian Express

Online strap: Talk of land loss in eastern Ladakh is gross exaggeration. Indian forces gave a fitting response to premeditated Chinese aggression in 2020. New government must continue to work on de-escalation

The clamour of considerable land being lost to China in eastern Ladakh is political hyperbole – an agenda-driven narrative to bolster electoral prospects on national security grounds. The issue was raised in August last year by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi but no studies or expertise are available to verify such claims.

Ladakh certainly has been and will continue to remain a serious flashpoint. There are no borders here except a 1,597 km-long Line of Actual Control (LAC), a notional demarcation separating India and China since 1962. Even the LAC is not well defined. Both countries have differing perceptions. The patrolling is done till 65 earmarked Patrol Points (PPs) stretching from Karakoram to Chumur. The recent dispute points occurred at PP9, 10, 11, 12, 12A and 13 in Depsang, PP14 in Galwan, PP15 and

PP16 in Hot Springs/ Chang Chenmo, and PP17 and 17A in Gogra.

#### Chushul-Pangong Sector

In the Chushul-Pangong sector, the situation in the Sirijap range on the north bank of Pangong, where Finger series 1 to 8 jut out, is stable. In May 2020, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) entered the Finger 3-4 area to prevent Indian troops from patrolling. After the disengagement agreement in February 2021, the status quo prior to May 2020 is being restored.

#### Kailash Range

In the Kailash range, the PLA's provocative move in early September 2020 to capture Nyanlung Yokma/ Gongma or the Kailash Heights, at an altitude of 15,000 feet located between Pangong Tso and Spanggur Gap, was foiled by the Indian Army in a major pre-emptive strategic manoeuvring. Peace was restored after both sides agreed to disengage from north and south Pangong Tso in February 2021.

#### Chang Chenmo Valley

PLA's intrusions in Galwan Valley, Changlung Nalla, Hot Springs and Kongrung Nalla of Chang Chenmo Valley, where it had created area denial for Indian troops, are also relatively peaceful now. Both sides agreed to disengage in June 2020.

The situation in the Gogra-Hot Springs area remained volatile until September 8, 2022, when both sides agreed to disengage. There are no forward deployments in this area though a buffer zone is being created with new patrolling norms. All temporary structures have been dismantled. However, the situation in the PP15 area remains tense as China is still adamant about restoring the pre-April 2020 position.

#### Depsang and Demchok

Currently, only Depsang and Demchok remain points of friction, predating the 2020 stand-off. Since 2009, the PLA has frequently made offensive moves from Track Junction Nallah to the south at Burtse/Depsang Plains. In 2011, PLA built a 30 km road from Raki Nallah to cut into the Depsang Plains. In 2013, Burtse became a flashpoint when the PLA set up remote camps 18-19 km inside Indian Territory, preventing Indian patrolling from PP10, PP11, PP12 and PP13. The Shyam Saran Report of August 2013 made a chilling revelation of India having lost 640 sq km area due to "area denial" by the PLA.

Since 2019, the PLA has blocked the Bottleneck area, restricting India's patrolling limits to PP10 and PP11. The Chinese road construction along Jeevan Nallah towards the south, adjacent to our Murgo post, could potentially cut off the Indian supply line to the DBO at Murgo, like in the case of Galwan. Experts suggest that the Chinese are in control of 600-800 sq km of the southern half of Depsang Plains. The situation here remains complicated and

deadlocked. Therefore, complete disengagement has been elusive.

In Demchok, the PLA has been violating LAC at Charding-Nilung Nallah (CNN) junction since 2018, obstructing Indian patrolling to that point. The dispute is stalemated.

As for Ladakhi Changpas losing grazing ground, their movements were restricted along the LAC because of heavy militarisation by the Chinese as well as Indian armies. India has shored up its defences, inducting several reinforcements, including artillery brigades, after the 2013 Depsang episode.

#### Infrastructure upgrades

One cannot overlook the fact that infrastructure in eastern Ladakh has been ramped up in recent years. Earlier, the Chinese bullied and coerced India because of the latter's lax attitude and grabbed a chunk of Ladakh territory between the 1960s and 1990s. The situation has changed now. India had stepped up construction activities under the UPA government but the projects were mired in corruption and scams. The BJP government has fast-tracked the connectivity projects, including the 260 km long Shyok-DBO road that was completed on a war footing. DBO can be reached from Dorbuk in eight hours now, which gives Indian troops a major advantage in the difficult terrain.

India's growing dominance in far-flung areas has been one of the key factors that forced the PLA to react differently, accusing India of transgressions on the LAC and provoking the Galwan stand-off in 2020.

Our aviation infrastructure has also been upgraded after reactivating all the abandoned Advanced Landing Grounds (ALGs) at DBO, Fukche, and Nyoma. The Nyoma ALG is being upgraded into a full-fledged airfield capable of operating cargo as well as fighter jets. This will boost the security of eastern Ladakh apart from the economic development of the Changthang region.

#### Fitting response to Chinese aggression

In all, one cannot deny that the Indian forces gave a fitting response to premeditated Chinese aggression and denied China a strategic victory in 2020. Beijing has been made to realise the cost of engaging in misadventures.

Certainly, the LAC situation remains in a stalemate, although the 21st round of Corps Commander-level meetings was held in February to reduce tension in the region.

The accusation of losing massive areas, therefore, is a gross exaggeration. Technically, there has been no intrusion on our side of the LAC. The discrepancies have occurred only in the grey-zone patrolling areas due to differences in LAC perception. Both sides should grasp fresh opportunities to revive the stalled

process of clarifying the LAC after the new government is formed in New Delhi.

### Ian Explains: Xi Jinping's nationalist agenda is rebuilding walls around China

12 April 2024, Gzeromedia



[Youtube Link](#)

It's been a rough few years for China's economy. Between harsh "Zero Covid" policies that shut China off from the rest of the world and major Communist Party crackdowns on private sector industries, the country is in desperate need of an economic jolt. So President Xi Jinping has been on an international charm offensive outside China, hoping to attract foreign investment. But if you look inside China, Xi's vision is one of extreme nationalist messaging and centralized control that's hurting his message abroad.

On Ian Explains, Ian Bremmer breaks down how Xi Jinping is turning China inwards at a time when it can't afford to close itself off. Since assuming the presidency in 2012, Xi has consolidated power within the Communist Party to become China's most dominant ruler since Chairman Mao Zedong. Under Xi's watch, China has rolled back democratic rights in Hong Kong, implemented crackdowns on the powerful tech, finance, and real estate sectors, restricted English in schools, and even expanded the definition of espionage so broadly that basic interactions with foreigners are viewed as suspect. President Xi's nationalist vision has become so dominant that it's written into the Constitution and official history of the People's Republic. But will that vision make China hostile to the very ideas that fueled its economic transformation in the first place?

### The Hot Peace Between China and India

12 April 2024, The Diplomat



Karni Sena supporters shout slogans during a protest against China in Ahmedabad, India, June 24, 2020.

Credit: AP Photo/Ajit Solanki

Despite flashes of actual conflict along their border, and New Delhi's increased outreach to the West, relations between China and India have never completely broken down.

Relations between China and Japan have often been characterized as a "cold peace." As such, they have been stormy enough to create a massive rejection of China in Japan's public opinion, and a solidification of the Japan-U.S. alliance, which entered a new stage with Prime Minister Kishida Fumio's state visit to the United States this week. Yet, economic relations have always been strong, with a degree of dependence of Japanese firms on China, and a Chinese reliance on Japan's market as well.

Not so with India. Flashes of actual conflict have happened, none as protracted as the triple challenge from China over Ladakh, Sikkim, and, indirectly, Arunachal Pradesh, since 2020. Soldiers from both sides have died in combat. China has built a network of bunkers, tunnels and fortified villages. India has mobilized 100,000 soldiers close to the front line and worked on its own logistical infrastructure.

Even a visit by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Arunachal Pradesh, a region that has been India's since the British drew up the McMahon line in 1914, is enough to incur the ire of the Chinese government. Beijing always reminds India that it claims the state as Chinese land, as successive governments in Beijing never accepted the 1914 delimitation.

Therefore, this is at best a hot peace. India's public opinion has gone the way of Japan's, and New Delhi has increasingly turned westward – toward the United States, France, and others such as Israel – to supplement its aging Russian armament connection.

Yet, relations between China and India have never completely broken down. Certainly, India has taken steps to limit the China risk in its infrastructure and society – banning China from ports and rail construction, prohibiting Chinese apps, keeping

Chinese telecoms out of Indian procurement, and rebuffing plans for massive BYD and Great Wall Motors automobile investments. This does not apply, however, to the overall trade and investment relationship.

Bilateral trade passed \$136 billion in the fiscal year ending on March 31, 2022, with a huge and rising deficit of \$100 billion for India. In fact, Indian exports crashed while China's sales to India continued their rise. And certainly BYD is happy to sell on the Indian market the cars it cannot build locally. Indian officials claim to be open to Chinese investments, hinting in January 2024 at Davos that the openness may increase as the border becomes quiet.

The potential long-term gains for either China or India are not clear. China seems to take a line from the ancient fable where the fox, unable to reach attractive grapes, proclaimed that "they were too sour anyway." China's India experts and the *Global Times*, the mouthpiece for foreign consumption, proclaim that India is "a graveyard for investment" and hype the known complexity of doing business there.

Some non-Chinese analysts argue that China's belligerent behavior, on three border theaters, has pushed India to further embrace a quasi-alliance with the United States, and a very strong strategic partnership with France that implies less conditionality on weapon procurement. But this is a result that Xi Jinping's China has produced all over Asia. China does not seem to take actual notice of such developments as the Quad, AUKUS, a rising Japanese military budget, or the Indo-Pacific designs of Europeans that leave China aside.

Xi's China believes in the slow erosion of will in democracies, and that factor seems to weigh more than the present power balance. China's new defense budget increase of 7.2 percent is significant. While the real economy certainly is growing at less than 5 percent, with slow price deflation, it is a banner year for Chinese military procurement. Considering its 450 ships, with increased projection across the Indian Ocean, and a large base in Djibouti, China is becoming strategically pre-eminent against all except the United States Navy, and even there, it can hope to match it in the near future.

The situation on the border is maybe even more critical for India for several reasons. First, China's tactics of erosion, with fake withdrawals followed by consolidation, have created facts on the ground that will be hard to erase.

Second, it can be argued that for several years after March 2020, China had even more room to move forward. The imbalance of power between Chinese and Indian ground forces is even more flagrant than those of their navies. India's military, hampered by

long and weak logistical lines, could have indeed been defeated even further. A humiliation of this magnitude would have been a catastrophe for a government that is dependent on popular votes, with an opposition ready to pounce. A patient player who calculates his risks, Xi Jinping did not push his advantage that far.

Slowly but surely, India is working to reduce its vulnerability behind the border. This is the basic argument behind its own armament drive, whether it is Made in India or procured from the West. Modi has also had to factor in the continuing dependence, even if dwindling, on Russian weapons and munitions.

All of the above has dictated India's diplomatic response and posture to the challenges from China, while paying some homage to India's history of neutralism. As India's Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar skillfully put it, his concept of "multi-alignment" reflects a desire to combine the benefits of Western support while remaining open to other partners – including Russia, and potentially with China should the opportunity for negotiations arise. The relationship with France, also preoccupied with "strategic autonomy" and seeking to be "a power for equilibrium," has been made easier by this thread that the two countries have in common.

Multi-alignment also preserves the chances for India to exercise influence over the so-called Global South. There is no shortage of countries, including India, that tend to view the Russian war on Ukraine as "a conflict among Europeans." But, conversely, there is not a long list of nations ready to side with India over China in a conflict over the Himalayas.

In fact, India hardly requests direct diplomatic support for its position over the border issue. Clearly, it wants to preserve at all costs its freedom of maneuver, and prefers to rely on concrete deals with suitable partners. Yet, on significant issues such as Gaza and the Red Sea, India has disengaged from vocal partners such as South Africa and made a notable contribution to restoring freedom of navigation. And it has most recently diminished its purchases of Russian oil, reportedly refusing to switch to payments in renminbi.

In a sign of its intensifying bid with Asian allies to collectively contain China's aggressive attitude, the Biden administration, apparently on its own initiative, has formally declared for the first time its recognition of Arunachal Pradesh as an Indian territory, and simultaneously its opposition to any unilateral move or incursion beyond the Line of Actual Control (LAC). Even prone to doubts on the longevity of such statements in a volatile American political climate, this is an achievement for India's diplomacy. Faced with a dire situation in the Himalayas, seeking

support while maintaining the appearance of a balancing diplomacy on many issues, India is now pulling through these difficulties on the eve of a national election. Barring any strategic surprise from China, it should find itself stronger after this stage.

India's predicament of confrontation with China creates growing convergence with the European Union and its member states. Economic security issues, such as the diversification of supply chains or the risks of economic coercion, clearly bring Europe and India closer. Uncertainties regarding Xi Jinping's China, its use of military power, and the extent to which it will directly challenge the international security order are clearly shared concerns in Europe and India. How to turn this shared risk assessment into real opportunities – the untapped potential question – is a pressing issue for EU-India relations. This article was originally published as the introduction to China Trends 19, the quarterly publication of the Asia Program at Institut Montaigne. Institut Montaigne is a nonprofit, independent think tank based in Paris, France.

### **China's Cartographic Antics Signal the Logic of an Expanded Alliance With India**

12 April 2024, NY Sun

Feature, for starters, what is happening along the borders of Arunachal Pradesh.

Communist China's recent renaming of 30 areas in India's Arunachal Pradesh is the latest example of its efforts to assert territorial claims by creating facts on the ground. This marks the third such move since 2017, with 11 areas having been renamed last year. India's foreign minister has described the Sino-Indian border, along which Arunachal Pradesh lies, as "very tense and dangerous." Washington, meanwhile, continues to court Beijing.

Its response to China's advances has also amounted to little more than diplomatic thoughts and prayers. The episode marks the latest example of the Biden Administration's flawed strategy of engaging China at the expense of America's strategic allies, like India, key to containing it. Then again, too, Washington's recent flurry of diplomatic overtures to Beijing, much like those prior, raises doubts as to whether containment is even the aim.

China refers to Arunachal Pradesh as "Zangnan" and insists it is part of Tibet. It insists, too, that the renaming by its Ministry of Civil Affairs is "a legitimate move and China's sovereign right" to safeguard against "place names in foreign languages that may harm China's territorial claims." Though outwardly farcical, Beijing's renaming tactic is part of a broader suite of greyzone warfare tactics it deploys against India and around the world.

Last year, it renamed eight Russian cities along its border with Russia. Along its 2,100-mile-long disputed border with India, known as the Line of Actual Control, Beijing has accelerated construction of military installations and villages since the 2020 clashes. The villages are akin to the artificial islands it has erected in the South China Sea. In Tibet, and to further fortify its claims, China has resettled about 250,000 Tibetans to the villages.

Some Tibetans serve as plain-clothes border patrols alongside Chinese security and military units. Unlike the Indian army, which usually conducts its patrols a few miles short of the actual control line, Chinese forces tend to patrol up to their claimed border and within Indian territory. So India last year lost access to 26 of its 65 patrolling points, effectively ceding territory to Beijing. Few beyond New Delhi appear to have noticed.

Some 200,000 Chinese troops are deployed at the border. China's presence also includes airbases, transport infrastructure, reinforced troop shelters, and weapons-storage facilities. India has responded in kind. Last month, it relocated 10,000 troops from its western border to its Chinese frontier in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, adding to the already 50,000-plus troops guarding the LAC. It has also increased its weapons imports.

Following last summer's meeting between President Biden and Prime Minister Modi it seemed that a growing share of India's weapons imports would come from America. Some have, yet not enough to suggest closer cooperation. The last substantive exchange between Messrs. Biden and Modi was at September's G-20 Summit. Meanwhile, Washington has berated New Delhi for ostensible rights violations and ties with Russia.

Russia is no chum, yet pressuring New Delhi to pivot from Moscow misunderstands its Atmanirbhar Bharat – self-reliance – doctrine. Caravans of American dignitaries to Beijing also do little to convince India of our diplomatic loyalties. As do Washington's overtures to Pakistan. This is worrying. First, the threat of renewed armed conflict along the Sino-Indian border cannot be discounted. Talks to cool tensions have largely failed.

After nearly five years of military build-up, with thousands of Chinese troops deployed in harsh conditions along the frontier, Mr. Xi also faces the challenge of solving the crisis without losing face. This makes negotiated settlement unlikely. Empty pronouncements of concern by Washington are also ineffective deterrents against Beijing's expansionist aims. If tensions rise, this could destabilize Asia in ways unmanageable by America.

The threats to our national security would be great. The second consideration ties closely to the first. India is a key ally in the effort not only to contain,



but prevail over, China. Last month, its navy deployed eight submarines in the Indian Ocean in a show of force against Beijing, and as part of ongoing efforts to stymie China's aims of linking its holdings in the South China Sea with its African interests via the Indian Ocean.

There, as along the Sino-Indian border, Beijing fabricates false narratives to advance its territorial aims. India has proven willing, and increasingly able, to counter such efforts. Yet it cannot do so if it will be in a hot border war with Beijing. It also cannot do so alone. The logic is for Washington to grasp that India is a critical ally and pivot its foreign ties accordingly. A firm stance against China's cartographic antics would be a good start.

### **China-India-US power balance at stake in 2 elections**

11 April 2024, Asia Times

Two elections this year may shift the triangular balance of power among China, India and the US. Indian prime minister Narendra Modi is expected to be returned to power after the Indian elections, which run from April 19 to June 1. Modi has woven a close relationship with Donald Trump, who is seeking re-election as US president in November.

Modi established a strong relationship with Trump during his first presidency. Both men have strong nationalistic credentials, possess larger-than-life personas and focus on immigration policies. If both Trump and Modi ascend to power, India-US ties are likely to be stronger than ever.

Meanwhile, the China-US relationship is not doing well. Trump's tariffs that continued throughout Biden's presidency may be ramped up if Trump returns to the White House. In an interview with Fox News' Sunday Morning Futures, Trump announced that if he is re-elected, tariffs on Chinese goods will exceed 60%.

But that's not all. Trump intends to reduce US dependency on the Chinese economy further by phasing out all essential Chinese imports within four years,

banning US firms that outsource to China from obtaining federal contracts and preventing Chinese firms from owning key infrastructure in the energy, technology and agricultural sectors.

Moreover, since Trump had banned US firms from investing in Chinese companies that might compromise US security during his first presidency, it is likely that he would do the same during his second administration.

As the Chinese economy weakens and the youth unemployment rate remains high at 14.9%, China needs foreign funds to stimulate its ailing economy

and increase exports. Unfortunately for Beijing, not only would Trump's agenda undermine China's economic recovery but US prohibitions of American tech firms from investing in China would also batter Beijing's ambitions of becoming a world leader in artificial intelligence by 2030.

#### **Rise of India**

Even though Trump intends to slap a baseline tariff of 10% on all imports, the high tariffs levied on Chinese imports present huge trading opportunities for India. As the US economy becomes increasingly disengaged from the Chinese economy, US firms will look to diversify their supply chains by sourcing goods elsewhere.

India is poised to be China's alternative for three reasons:

- One, India has a thriving manufacturing industry with government support.
- Two, there are many relatively youthful workers in the country who can support the industry.
- Three, the US sees India as less of a security risk than China.

Furthering ties with the US would be well received by Delhi given how Beijing's influence within south Asia has risen under the Belt and Road Initiative, China's scheme to create a global trade network.

The US has always been keen on nurturing India as a "counterbalance to China" and it seeks to contain China's influence through the security group the Quad, whose four members are the US, India, Japan and Australia.

#### **The tariff problem**

In January 2018 Trump began an unprecedented trade war against China by imposing a 25% tariff on Chinese imports. Beijing retaliated by imposing its own tariffs on US goods, and Sino-US ties spiralled downhill culminating in the 2019 recalls of Chinese giant pandas from the San Diego zoo in California (a hugely symbolic gesture by the Chinese government).

The tariffs, which tax Chinese imports, were supposed to protect American interests. But as the US economy relies heavily on Chinese imports, US consumers and firms have had to pay more for goods. By 2019, Trump's tariffs cost the US an estimated 300,000 jobs. The US economy shrank, and in 2020 the tariffs cost the US a whopping US\$316 billion.

Beijing is worried about a second Trump administration. Since 2018, China has sought to minimize the impact of Trump's trade war by adopting a policy of self-reliance. This meant a reduction of China's imports of inputs of production into the high tech, electric and automotive industries. However, China's ability to minimize its dependence on the international community is highly limited. The

Chinese leadership knows this, and pundits speculate that a main reason why Xi attended the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting in San Francisco was to repair ties with the West and attract much needed foreign investment into China.

The Taiwan problem

In 2012, Trump tweeted an iconic phrase from the Chinese classic Sun Tzu's Art of War: "The Supreme Art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting." But if he had read the rest of Sun Tzu's work, he would be aware of the following: "When you surround an army, leave an outlet free. Do not press a desperate foe too hard."

Trump should realize that Washington's increased aggression towards China may only undermine Taiwan's security. For a while, Beijing's desire to unify with Taiwan was largely a nationalistic exercise aimed at legitimizing the "one China policy". But the need to acquire Taiwan has gone beyond historical fervor to economic desire, given the island state's advancement in semiconductor technology, and China's current economic woes.

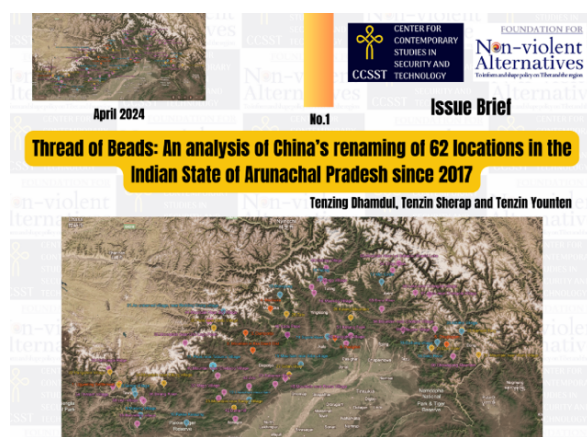
Artificial intelligence is important because it will confer major economic, technological, and military benefits to China. And if China wishes to be the world's AI leader by 2030, it needs to get its hands on semiconductor chips. If China can't access that through trade, it may acquire this technology forcefully by invading Taiwan.

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### Thread of Beads: An analysis of China's renaming of 62 locations in the Indian State of Arunachal Pradesh since 2017

10 April 2024, FNVA



The issue brief delves into the contentious matter of China's renaming of 62 locations in Arunachal Pradesh, India, which has escalated tensions

between the two countries. This renaming, culminating in the release of an official map of South Tibet (Zangnan) by the Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs on March 30, 2024, marks the latest development in a series of exercises aimed at asserting Chinese influence in the region.

The document highlights the significance of this renaming exercise within the broader context of Indo-China relations, drawing parallels to China's strategic moves in the Indo-Pacific region, where it has established a "String of Pearls" to extend its influence. By standardising names and issuing official maps, China seeks to solidify its territorial claims and potentially pave the way for future administrative control.

Referred to as the 'Thread of Beads', this renaming strategy underscores China's systematic efforts to encroach upon Indian sovereignty and establish a foothold in Arunachal Pradesh. This has been accompanied by longstanding tensions, including the issuance of stapled visas to residents of Arunachal Pradesh by China, indicating a pattern of provocations and challenges to India's territorial integrity.

The brief outlines how China's actions have far-reaching implications for India's national security and its long-term development goals, particularly the vision for Viksit Bharat (2047). By propagating narratives about the alleged illegality of Indian occupation in South Tibet, Chinese media exacerbates tensions and increases the likelihood of confrontation in the region.

Drawing from open-source materials, including official communications from Beijing and trending Chinese articles, the brief provides insights into the motivations behind China's renaming endeavours. Satellite imagery and official Indian government data are used to analyse the impact of these exercises on the ground, highlighting trends and patterns across the four renaming exercises conducted by China. With the case study of Tibet and Bhutan carried in understanding how China carries out these exercises to eventually annex and even occupy sovereign territory.

In conclusion, the issue brief underscores the gravity of China's renaming efforts in Arunachal Pradesh and their broader implications for regional stability and India-China relations. It calls for a nuanced understanding of China's long-term strategic objectives and emphasizes the need for proactive measures to safeguard India's territorial integrity and national security interests.

## Going Back in time: When China was clueless about McMahon Line

09 April 2024, First Post

You have probably never heard the name of Maj Gen Li Jue, a senior officer of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) posted in Tibet in the early 1950s. He was instrumental in what became the turning point of the Communists' occupation of the Tibetan plateau, i.e. the construction of the Sichuan-Tibet and the Qinghai-Tibet highways.

As the Commander of the First Army's General Logistics Department based in Lanzhou, Gen Li was responsible for what a few years ago, President Xi Jinping called: "A Miracle in Highway Construction." It allowed China to get its supplies from the mainland instead of from India (particularly the rice supply). The two roads built by Gen Li, under the 18th Army, were inaugurated on 24 December, 1954.

When the Dalai Lama came back from Beijing after a visit in 1954-55, Maj Gen Li Jue accompanied the Tibetan leader as Intelligence Chief.

A year later, Gen Li was again in Lhasa on the occasion of the establishment of the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region; but instead of attending the functions presided over by Marshal Chen Yi, he suddenly left on an inspection tour of some areas north of the McMahon. China then knew little about Tibet's southern borders.

This was noticed by the Indian Consul General in Lhasa, PN Menon (incidentally father of the former NSA Shiv Shankar Menon), who wrote to Apa Pant, the Political Officer in Sikkim responsible for Tibet: "Li may well have been the high ranking Chinese military officer who carried out an inspection of the Tibet-Bhutan Frontier as mentioned by Chibber."

Maj SL Chhiber, then Indian Trade Agent in Gyantse, was keeping track of the important Chinese officials visiting Southern Tibet. The Indian officials in Tibet also knew that Gen Li had also visited other areas north of the McMahon line too.

Why is China raising the issue of 'Southern Tibet' now?

This came back to mind when I read that for the fourth time, China has 'renamed' places in Arunachal Pradesh. A few months back, China had changed the names of 11 places in Arunachal Pradesh. The first renamed place was then Pangchen, an important location near the McMahon Line, north of Tawang.

This time too, the first renamed place was Hathong-la, the plateau facing the Thagla ridge of 1962 war memory. Why Hathong-la? China is probably not too pleased with the many articles/programmes which recently appeared in the Indian media celebrating the 65th anniversary of the arrival of Dalai Lama in India near this very spot.

Among the other names changed is Mago, the constituency of Chief Minister Pema Khandu (he has just been reelected unopposed). Also to be noted rivers such as the Kameng and the Subansiri and several spots near the disputed Fish Tails in the east of the State, have been 'renamed'.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar rightly said: "If today I change the name of your house, will it become mine? Arunachal Pradesh was, is and will always be a state of India. Changing names does not have an effect."

The point remains that for years China did not even know about the McMahon Line.

Where is the border?

To understand China's poor knowledge of Tibet Southern borders, it is necessary to go back to the Bandung Conference in 1955. An apparently moderate Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai managed to convince a credulous Indian prime minister about the 'sincerity' of the new Chinese Communist rulers. Writing about his encounter with Zhou at the Conference, Nehru said: "When asked if he wanted to push communism into Tibet, Chou En-lai [Zhou Enlai] laughed and said that there could be no such question as Tibet was very far indeed from communism. It would be thoroughly impracticable to try to establish a communist regime in Tibet and the Chinese Government had no such wish."

A few days later, the Indian prime minister told his foreign secretary about a remark of the Chinese Premier on the McMahon Line: "Although [Zhou] thought that this line, established by British imperialists, was not fair, nevertheless, because it was an accomplished fact and because of the friendly relations which existed between China and the countries concerned, namely, India and Burma, the Chinese Government were of the opinion that they should give recognition to this McMahon Line."

Zhou knows nothing about the border

At the end of 1956, as India prepared to celebrate the 2,500th anniversary of the birth of Buddha, Communist China was extremely nervous; eastern Tibet was on fire with the Khampa rebellion, while central Tibet was slowly getting contaminated by the revolt. After months of prevarication, Beijing finally allowed the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama to visit India for the celebrations. A febrile Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai came to Delhi thrice to ensure that the Dalai Lama returned to Tibet.

During one of his encounters with Nehru, Zhou admitted that India knew more about Tibet's history than China. "For example, I knew nothing about McMahon Line until recently when we came to study the border problem after the liberation of China," he said.

Zhou added that though people like him never knew about the McMahon Line till recently, the Kuomintang regime had referred to it.

Zhou also spoke of a 'secret' pact between British India and Tibet at the time of the Simla conference in 1914 when the Tibetans sat on an equal footing with the Chinese and British India between October 1913 and July 1914.

Five years later, in April 1960, Zhou Enlai visited Delhi and had long talks with Nehru. He also had two informal encounters with Indian Defence Minister VK Krishna Menon, during which Zhou stated that China would never change its position in the Western Sector (Aksai Chin), but was open for the rest of the border. Zhou was testing the ground for a 'swap'. India would acknowledge Aksai Chin as Chinese and Beijing would recognise the North East Frontier Agency (today's Arunachal Pradesh) as Indian. China's position on NEFA was not rigid.

Another Chinese source

An unpublished Chinese document entitled "China's reaction to Indian occupation of the territory to the south of McMahon Line, 1952-54" mentions the situation on the borders soon after the arrival of the PLA on the plateau: "Undoubtedly, Indian occupation of the McMahon line [in February 1951] officially placed the McMahon line issue before the Chinese government. As the records point out, the key problem was that the Chinese government did not release any comment nor show any resistance."

This refers to the expedition of Maj Bob Khathing in Tawang in February 1951. While Lhasa informed Delhi about the Khathing expedition, Beijing was not. The Chinese paper comments further: "Although during this period, New Delhi agreed that China enjoyed suzerainty over Tibet, [at the same time] India treated Tawang as a local problem ...This kind of a puzzling silence from the side of the Chinese government could only be interpreted as China permitting India to expand its territories to the McMahon line. ...It was only in 1959, when India started to cross the McMahon line [in Khenzimane?] that China expressed its objection [for the first time]." In 1951, China had not protested simply because Beijing did not know about the McMahon Line. The paper then quotes Nehru, who 20 April, 1960, during a talk with Zhou Enlai, said, "We are pained that, if the Chinese government did not agree with us, they should have expressed their objections to us. They did not say anything for 9 years."

Today, Beijing says that the area belongs to them since immemorial times in which case why didn't China express some objection after India extended its administration upto the McMahon line?

The Chinese Paper answers: "According to Chinese sources, China had adopted a policy of temporarily overlooking some issues which they intended to solve

later as just after the formation of new China, there were many things waiting to be done; China was resisting America and helping North Korea. China had to first take care of peace within the country and liberate Tibet. So they did not have time to spare for dealing with the border issues with India. They were not very alert about the Indian incursions ...India made full use of this opportunity and captured Tawang."

But the truth is that before the 1956 visit of Gen Li, China had very little knowledge about Tibet's border with India, though "they were consulting the local Tibetan government to get a clear idea about its border with India and the 1914 Simla pact [the McMahon Line]."

Today, Beijing says that the entire area has always been theirs.

However, the present claim on the state is clearly an afterthought. It should be treated as such and the Arunachal Pradesh chief minister is right in saying that his state only has a border with Tibet, with no one else.

### **Why we must take seriously China's mastery and misuse of AI espionage**

09 April 2024, First Post

In William Gibson's science fiction novel *Neuromancer*, artificial intelligence is depicted as being used for espionage and to manipulate international relations. The novel revolves around a washed-up computer hacker hired by a mysterious employer to pull off the ultimate hack. In the process, he encounters AIs that manipulate individuals and events to serve their ends, subtly influencing global power structures.

While we haven't reached the dystopian future of AI depicted in '*Neuromancer*', where artificial intelligence becomes a direct threat to human existence, the world is witnessing the early stages of AI's potential for harm. Countries have begun to harness AI for espionage, sowing discord in foreign nations and inciting political unrest. These actions mark the subtle beginnings of AI's potential to manipulate and destabilise international relations, and China is at the forefront of this. This week's Microsoft Threat Intelligence report starkly illustrates this trend. It details how China has been actively using AI-generated content to exacerbate divisions within the US, Asia Pacific region. (including Japan, Taiwan and South Korea), and even in India. With AI, disinformation can be more effectively tailored and disseminated to stir conflicts, influence public opinion, and even tamper with the democratic process.

As noted in the report, with upcoming elections in India, South Korea, and the United States, there is a

significant concern that Chinese, and to some extent North Korean, cyber and influence operations will intensify. These actors will likely leverage AI capabilities to target the electoral processes, aiming to weaken trust in democratic institutions and influence election outcomes.

Chinese state-sponsored hackers increasingly employ sophisticated AI-powered tools to enhance their cyber espionage capabilities, targeting critical infrastructure, government agencies, and private companies. These advanced persistent threats (APTs) exploit vulnerabilities in networks and systems to gain unauthorised access, exfiltrate sensitive data, and potentially disrupt essential services. Moreover, China's cyber actors are adept at using AI algorithms to analyse vast amounts of stolen data, identify high-value targets, and craft highly personalised and convincing phishing attacks.

China-based espionage groups are intensifying geopolitical tensions in the South China Sea through sophisticated cyber espionage activities targeting strategic partners and rivals alike. These groups, identified by Microsoft Threat Intelligence as Gingham Typhoon, Flax Typhoon, Granite Typhoon, and Raspberry Typhoon, have been actively engaging in cyber operations that reflect China's broad strategic objectives in the region. Gingham Typhoon, in particular, has been the most active actor, targeting international organisations, government entities, and the IT sector across nearly every South Pacific Island country.

This includes complex phishing campaigns aimed at vocal critics of the Chinese government as well as diplomatic allies of China, highlighting the dual goals of extending global influence and gathering intelligence. The espionage efforts are not limited to political and military targets but also encompass economic partners, as seen in the large-scale targeting of multinational organisations in Papua New Guinea, a nation benefiting from China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects.

Moreover, the focus of these espionage activities extends to entities related to the South China Sea, where China-based threat actors opportunistically compromised government and telecommunications victims within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). This targeting behaviour is particularly pronounced in the context of US military drills in the region, with Raspberry Typhoon successfully targeting military and executive entities in Indonesia and a Malaysian maritime system ahead of a multilateral naval exercise involving Indonesia, China, and the United States.

Similarly, Flax Typhoon targeted entities related to US-Philippines military exercises, while Granite Typhoon compromised telecommunication entities

across Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Cambodia, and Taiwan.

Chinese espionage groups, such as Storm-0062 and Volt Typhoon, have notably escalated tensions in the United States through targeted cyber activities against military and critical infrastructure sectors. Storm-0062's focus on aerospace, defence, and natural resources, coupled with Volt Typhoon's infiltration of critical infrastructure networks, reflects a strategic effort to undermine US national security. These actions not only compromise the integrity of vital sectors but also raise alarm about the potential access these groups have to sensitive information, thereby stoking fears and mistrust within the US defence community and beyond.

In Taiwan, the influence operations led by Storm-1376, a Chinese Communist Party-linked actor, have injected additional strain into already tense cross-strait relations. By utilizing advanced AI to fabricate endorsements and spread disinformation during critical election periods, these actors have sought to manipulate public perception and political dynamics in Taiwan. The deployment of AI-generated content, including fake endorsements and misleading narratives, represents a sophisticated escalation in the tactics used to influence Taiwan's political landscape, exacerbating tensions between Taiwan and China.

Japan and South Korea have also been targets of Chinese influence operations, with Storm-1376 amplifying controversies and stoking discord within and between these nations. In Japan, the group spread fear and misinformation regarding the disposal of Fukushima's treated radioactive wastewater, challenging scientific assessments and sowing doubt about the safety and intentions behind the disposal. Similarly, in South Korea, the group capitalised on environmental and diplomatic concerns, using localised content to amplify protests and criticisms against the Japanese government. These actions not only exacerbate regional tensions but also aim to undermine trust in governmental and international regulatory bodies.

Moreover, the spread of conspiratorial narratives, such as the claim that the U.S. government used a "weather weapon" in Hawaii, alongside aggressive messaging campaigns in South Korea and misinformation surrounding the Kentucky train derailment, illustrates a broader strategy by Chinese espionage groups. By exploiting and amplifying regional and domestic issues, these groups aim to foster distrust, deepen societal divisions, and weaken the coherence and international standing of the United States, Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea. This multifaceted approach to stoking tensions reveals a complex and persistent threat that these nations must



address collectively to safeguard their security and democratic processes.

To enhance the technical sophistication of India's response to AI-driven cyber espionage, NTRO could leverage state-of-the-art machine learning models and anomaly detection algorithms to improve threat detection capabilities. By adopting deep learning techniques, such as convolutional neural networks (CNNs) and recurrent neural networks (RNNs), for analysing network traffic and user behaviour, NTRO can identify subtle patterns indicative of malicious activities that traditional systems might overlook. These advanced models can be trained on vast datasets of cyber incidents to accurately predict and detect espionage activities. Furthermore, the integration of adversarial machine learning can help NTRO's systems to anticipate and counteract evasion tactics employed by AI-powered cyber threats.

DARPA's initiatives, like the CHASE program, utilise big data analytics and machine learning to automate the detection of cyber threats on a large scale. NTRO can adopt similar methodologies, employing scalable data processing platforms and real-time analytics to continuously monitor and analyse cyber threats. This approach would enable the rapid identification of anomalous behaviours and potential cyber espionage activities, facilitating preemptive actions against such threats.

To tackle AI-generated disinformation, techniques like digital watermarking and blockchain can be employed to authenticate content and trace its origin. Advanced AI detection tools, which analyse inconsistencies in image or audio files, can be used to spot and flag deepfakes and synthetic media. These tools often utilise feature extraction methods and classification algorithms to differentiate between genuine and manipulated content. Developing and implementing these AI-driven detection tools requires a collaborative effort between government agencies, academia, and the tech industry to continuously refine algorithms and adapt to evolving disinformation tactics.

To address the challenge of AI-generated content, platforms where such content is shared must take on greater responsibility and adopt more robust measures. This necessitates a multi-layered approach involving technical, regulatory, and collaborative strategies to ensure the integrity and trustworthiness of the information disseminated. Technically, platforms need to implement advanced detection systems that can identify AI-generated content with high accuracy.

These systems should leverage the latest advancements in machine learning, such as natural language processing (NLP) and image recognition algorithms, to analyse and detect patterns or anomalies characteristic of synthetic media. For

instance, employing deep learning techniques like Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) can help discern between real and AI-generated images or videos by detecting subtle discrepancies that are typically invisible to the human eye. Regulations should make platforms more responsible for the content being disseminated. Further, there is a need for more collaboration between academia, platforms and government technical intelligence agencies to deal with AI-generated content.

Ironically, one should invoke Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* here. "Know the enemy and know yourself, and you can fight a hundred battles without disaster," Sun Tzu wrote, signifying the importance of understanding both the capabilities of AI and the tactics of adversaries like China. To combat AI-induced espionage and division, nations must embody Sun Tzu's principles by developing a deep knowledge of AI's potential for both creation and deception, ensuring preparedness for any cyber threats. Similar to Sun Tzu's emphasis on planning and adaptation, strategic foresight must guide the defence against these cyber incursions.

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### **The Emerging Great Game Chinese, Indian and American Engagement in South Asia**

08 April 2024, Stimson

When it comes to great power competition, Nepal and Bangladesh are often overlooked. This paper dives in and asks three questions: What are the emerging forms of great power competition in the region? Is there evidence that the great powers are responding to each other's actions in the region, or is one power leading while the others play catch up? How are the targeted states responding to this outreach? Using both English and Chinese open-source information and in-depth interviews with academics, journalists, think tank experts, and government and embassy officials, this paper argues that states like Nepal and Bangladesh are also strategic players that are navigating Chinese, American, and Indian interests in South Asia.

#### **Executive Summary**

In 2023, the Nepalese city of Pokhara found itself at the center of the emerging great power competition between China, India, and the United States. In June, the Chinese ambassador to Nepal, Chen Song, called the new Chinese-constructed airport in Pokhara a "new chapter" in Belt and Road cooperation. The only problem with this statement

was that the Nepalese government did not consider the airport part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).<sup>1</sup> Speaking before the House of Representatives, Nepal's Foreign Minister NP Saud stated, "Not a single project in Nepal under the BRI has been executed."<sup>2</sup> This anecdote speaks to some of the confusion and competition surrounding Beijing's expanding presence in South Asia, which aligns with its reenergized "peripheral diplomacy" that President Xi Jinping has reportedly elevated to a status above ties with great powers like the United States.<sup>3</sup> Thus, China has been trying to ramp up its economic, diplomatic, and security influence in a region that has not been at the forefront of its outreach over the past several decades. This engagement is also driven to an extent by China's rivalry with India.<sup>4</sup>

China's increasing foothold in the infrastructure, energy, and trade flows of the subcontinent and its involvement in domestic politics of the region is causing unease in New Delhi and, to a lesser extent, in Washington. For New Delhi, the structural shift in the power dynamics in South Asia driven by China's increasing presence and influence in the region and more recently, violence along its disputed border with Beijing, have heightened concerns of Chinese encirclement. From Washington's perspective, South Asia is not the primary or even secondary zone of competition in the U.S.-Sino rivalry. However, countering Beijing's influence and assisting New Delhi in providing alternatives to China is ultimately part of Washington's National Security Strategy of "outcompeting China,<sup>5</sup>" and is congruent with its Indo-Pacific Strategy.

Focusing on events since the official inauguration of the BRI in 2013, this paper examines how China, the United States, and India are competing for hard power in the political, economic, and security realms. Specifically, it focuses on events since the official inauguration of the BRI in 2013. Importantly, the author takes into account the evolution of the BRI and analyzes what has been termed as the "BRI 2.0."<sup>6</sup> This research focuses on the less scrutinized cases of Nepal and Bangladesh, with references to other South Asian states, and is driven by three questions: What are the emerging forms of great power competition in the region? Is there evidence that the great powers are responding to each other's actions in the region, or is one power leading while the others play catch up? How are the targeted states responding to this outreach? The author relies on three main approaches to investigate these questions and analyze whether targeted states are extracting benefits from all powers playing against each other or developing effective strategies to pursue their interests. First, is utilizing open-source information in English, such as publicly available data and scholarly and think tank publications.

Second, the analysis is reinforced by the author's in-depth interviews with academics, journalists, think tank experts, as well as government and embassy officials, conducted in Nepal, Bangladesh, and Washington D.C. in May and June of 2022, and in New Delhi in May and November of 2023. The third and final approach includes a detailed examination of open-source Chinese-language sources.

This paper puts forth several key arguments regarding Chinese, Indian, and American engagement and balance of power dynamics in South Asia. First, Beijing's activities in the region are causing a new form of great power competition between China and India, but also increasingly between the United States and China, even though Washington is primarily a peripheral power in the region. The U.S.-India relationship is also experiencing some tension as both try to navigate their own cooperation in the region. Second, regional states see the competition as an opportunity for economic development as well as a way to reduce an overreliance on India. The elites, in particular, view it as a vehicle to advance their own interests. Third, there are significant limitations for targeted states to fully realize their

potential to benefit from this competition. Finally, Beijing appears to be overemphasizing the role and importance of local elites. When these elites lose power, Beijing is left scrambling to play catch up. This study begins with the case of Nepal and then goes over the case of Bangladesh. It ends with policy recommendations for the United States, India, and targeted regional states on how to better maneuver in this evolving competition. This is especially relevant as both the United States and India will undergo elections in 2024.

#### The Case of Nepal

In recent times, Nepal has experienced significant political upheaval due to its near-constant leadership transitions, with 13 governments in the last 16 years.<sup>7</sup> While India is concerned about Chinese ambitions in Nepal and is working to counter Chinese influence, China frequently hedges its bets on certain elites whose time in power is ephemeral. More recently, Washington has significantly expanded its influence by increasing its foreign assistance in the country. For example, according to the U.S. government, during 2018-2022, Washington provided Nepal with, on average, \$159,844,274 per year in foreign assistance. This amount skyrocketed to at least \$618,626,906 in 2023.<sup>8</sup>

The dominant perspective in Nepal is that it has spent much of the past 75 years under different forms of Indian hegemony.<sup>9</sup> This has taken many forms, ranging from Nehru's insistence that India's security interests triumph over Nepal's<sup>10</sup> to three de-facto Indian economic blockades of Nepal in 1962, 1988,

and 2015.<sup>11</sup> The most recent blockade arose out of a dispute over a new Nepalese constitution. New Delhi responded by sealing off the border with Nepal in 2015, which caused acute shortages of goods and fuel in Nepal.<sup>12</sup> The economic blockade had a profound effect on Nepalis, who were still reeling from a massive earthquake in April that same year.<sup>13</sup> Importantly, this blockade took place under a different geostrategic context, with China actively courting Nepal's leadership and playing the crucial role of an alternative to India.

Analysts see the blockade as a turning point in Nepal's relations with India, which catalyzed Nepal's engagement with China.<sup>14</sup> Beijing's role as a counter to New Delhi is still in its early stages, but various actions from the Chinese government have elicited responses from both New Delhi and, more recently, Washington. On the issue of Tibet, for decades, Beijing has been concerned about unsubstantiated allegations of Nepal being used by the U.S. as a base to foment instability in Tibet.<sup>15</sup> In fact, in the most recent meeting between Xi and Nepalese Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal in September 2023, Nepal did not agree to sign an extradition treaty with China that would force Nepal to turn over Tibetan refugees residing in Nepal.<sup>16</sup>

#### A RAIL LINK TO CHINA?

Beijing's response to India's 2015 de-facto blockade was a critical juncture in their evolving great power rivalry in Nepal. In September 2015, just as the blockade was gaining traction, China, in a symbolic gesture, signed a protocol providing Nepal access to ports along its east coast, giving Sino-Nepalese relations a huge boost.<sup>17</sup> Former Nepalese Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli visited China in 2016 and announced that a cross-border railway project would start "as soon as possible," and in May 2017, Nepal joined the BRI.<sup>18</sup> Xi's 2019 visit to Nepal also raised hopes of greater connectivity between China and Nepal. Xi stated that Nepal would be transformed from "a landlocked country to a land-linked country."<sup>19</sup> In March 2022, China's foreign minister signed an agreement on a railway technical study with Nepal's Ministry of Finance.<sup>20</sup> More recently, Beijing has provided a grant of \$300 million for a feasibility study, although the projected cost of a rail line is now estimated to have increased from \$3 billion to \$8 billion.<sup>21</sup>

The proposed railway link from Tibet to Nepal has raised concerns in India about China encroaching into India's sphere of influence. Critically, while constituencies in the Nepalese government want China to build a railway, there is near universal agreement within Nepal's policy and scholarly communities that the railway project will never happen.<sup>22</sup> The technical aspects are huge—the 121-kilometer link from Gyirong to Kathmandu would

require 80 kilometers of bridges and 10 kilometers of tunnels in a geographic zone that is highly susceptible to seismic activity, making it an engineering nightmare that is not economically viable. The issue of who would fund the proposed railway is also controversial. According to Nepalese policy experts, Kathmandu wants the project funded through Chinese grants. One of Nepal's most respected China analysts stated: "Nepal is looking for a free railway... and this puts China in an uncomfortable position"<sup>23</sup> While Nepal has signed up for the BRI and the two countries have held various meetings on the initiative, as of January 2024, out of nine BRI projects not a single one had been implemented because Nepal wants grants and not loans, and Kathmandu has different expectations from the relationship than China.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, despite Chinese talk of allowing Nepal to access Chinese ports, seven years after this offer was made, not a single shipment to Nepal has transited Chinese ports.<sup>25</sup>

Beijing also seeks to forge strong ties with elites in Nepal and has not paid adequate attention to grassroots movements and civil society, leading some Chinese analysts to argue that China needs to learn from the U.S. by paying attention to nongovernmental and community organizations.<sup>26</sup> Such investment in elites is very helpful when one's ally is in power, but it also means that China has had to hit reset multiple times when one of its preferred leaders loses power through the democratic process. Such a situation occurred in 2021 when Oli was removed from power.<sup>27</sup> Oli was widely seen as anti-India and pro-China. His replacement, Sher Bahadur Deuba, was viewed as much more pro-U.S. and India. According to a western diplomat based in Kathmandu, under Oli, "the USA was stiff-armed and Nepal fell to China. Nepal was a pro-China puppet in its voting at the UN. After the new government was formed in July 2021, Nepal went from a puppet to an irritant in China's belly."<sup>28</sup> It is important to note that the December 2022 election of Dahal may change the strategic dynamic once again in Nepal. While Beijing appeared to be happy that he won the election,<sup>29</sup> the events of 2023 were not exactly a clear victory for Beijing.

The BRI is widely perceived to be Xi's signature foreign policy initiative/legacy, thus a lack of progress on it in Nepal is a political embarrassment. The Chinese government has pressured every Nepalese delegation that visits China to show progress on the BRI, and the Chinese embassy in Kathmandu has pushed Nepali leaders to do the same. However, no progress has been made on any projects.<sup>30</sup> In a public embarrassment to Beijing, China falsely claimed that the newly completed Pokhara international airport was the BRI's flagship

project in Nepal. In fact, Nepal has rejected this claim, partly due to pressure from New Delhi. Furthermore, the Indian government has also blocked international flights from India to the airport.<sup>31</sup> After Dahal's visit to China in September 2023, Nepali officials released a 40-point briefing, which did not mention the BRI. Of equal importance, two of the BRI's nine supposed projects in Nepal, the Tamor Hydroelectricity Project and the Phukot Karnali Hydroelectric Project, were awarded to Indian companies when Dahal visited India in June 2023.<sup>32</sup>

#### DELHI'S RESPONSE TO BEIJING

There is a widespread perception among Nepal's policy community that India is a domineering neighbor. However, China's increasing activities in Nepal may change that in the near future because of New Delhi's fear of Kathmandu becoming too pro-Beijing. India does not have the financial ability to compete with China in Nepal, but it does have critical geographic leverage to influence Nepal in a way that China lacks. Any meaningful connectivity between China and Nepal must traverse the world's highest mountain range, the Himalayas. In the indefinite future, China is not a realistic alternative for Nepalese imports and exports. India assists Nepal in the running of the 25-kilometer Janakpur to Jainagar rail line on the Indian border, and once news broke about the possible Chinese rail line to Tibet, New Delhi proposed a line to Kathmandu through the flat lands and not the mountains, which would be much easier to construct.<sup>33</sup> Ironically, by upgrading Chinese-built electrical lines that transmit excess power to India, New Delhi is also benefiting from Chinese projects in Nepal.<sup>34</sup>

#### ENTER WASHINGTON

Nepal is far from occupying center stage in U.S. foreign policy. However, given its geographic location, over the past 70 years it has played a small, but important role in American policy toward China. While Washington utilized Nepal's location during the Cold War, more recently Nepal has become a regional player in the emerging triangular rivalry among China, India and the U.S. The American Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) provided a USD 500 million grant program that is designed to build and reinforce Nepalese infrastructure by helping to maintain roads, provide electricity, and increase economic development.<sup>35</sup> It was signed in 2017 but only ratified in February 2022 due to some local opposition.<sup>36</sup> While the MCC is designed to help Nepal develop, it has been perceived by Beijing as an anti-China initiative. One Chinese commentator stated that the MCC is an attempt by Washington to "kidnap Nepal,"<sup>37</sup> while others believe it is an example of American hegemony in South Asia.<sup>38</sup>

There is wide agreement in the Chinese South Asian expert community that the MCC is part of the Indo-Pacific strategy and that Nepal was coerced into joining it.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, there is widespread belief in the Nepalese policy and the western diplomatic communities that China was behind a strong and successful propaganda campaign to discredit the MCC. One western diplomat noted: "from 2017-2018, China was winning the info-war, the U.S was not aggressive enough in this forum."<sup>40</sup> However, the biggest policy takeaway from the MCC debate is that it was finally ratified because of the change in leadership in Kathmandu as the previous government under Oli was not willing to approve it. The key lesson from the MCC is that given its geographic location, Nepal has options when it comes to dealing with its neighbors and the U.S. With Washington closing the development assistance gap with China (the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation financing of private sector projects has increased in recent years by 15-fold<sup>41</sup>) there will likely be more projects available to Nepal.

#### IS NEPAL PLAYING THE GAME?

Overall, it is critical to note that from Kathmandu's perspective, China represents a great opportunity. The main policy challenge for Nepal is a critical lack of state capacity and knowledge of China that would allow Nepal to better leverage its ties with its northern neighbor. Multiple Nepalese interviewees argued that Nepal lacks the ability to deal with China. According to several of Nepal's leading China specialists, there is not a single Mandarin speaker in the entire Nepalese government, nor is there "any interest in the diplomatic corps to study China."<sup>42</sup> Another analyst pointed out that "Nepal does not even have the ability to play the China card." Nepalese journalist Amish Raj Mulmi, one of Nepal's top China experts, sums up Nepal's China challenge as follows: "While Beijing has secured its interests in Nepal, Kathmandu has failed to see beyond the 'China Card.' It has not improved its capacity to negotiate better deals. Above all, Nepal has not been able to extricate itself from the aid-beneficiary mentality and come up with a strategy that can take advantage of China's economic and infrastructural progress on its own terms."<sup>43</sup>

How much leverage does Nepal have over the great powers? China is deeply concerned with Tibetan refugees in Nepal, and Beijing has expressed concern about how Kathmandu has dealt with them.<sup>44</sup> Some Chinese commentators have argued that Nepalese politicians are "playing with fire" by "handing over their country to the U.S.," thus apparently jeopardizing the "peace and stability of the region."<sup>45</sup> Interviews revealed that the Nepalese government has not effectively used its potential leverage to play China against the other powers or,

more importantly, to use Beijing's concerns as additional leverage to push forward various Nepalese goals. The cozying up to Beijing in 2015 has not produced a firm commitment to build a rail line to Tibet. With the constant changes of government and with new leaders vacillating between New Delhi and Beijing, it is extremely difficult for Kathmandu to effectively develop and operationalize a clear and sustained policy response to any of the three great powers. Nepalese leaders are clearly aware of Indian hegemony in Nepal, but the constant game of musical chairs in leadership positions in Nepal greatly reduces room for maneuver and the ability to play powers off each other.

The prospects of Nepal taking a "non-aligned" approach to great power competition are tempting, however changes of leadership occur too frequently for any real policy to be successfully carried out and institutionalized. Kathmandu's ability to pursue a non-aligned approach would likely be challenged both by India, which has historically exercised a form of hegemony over Nepal, and increasingly by China. Remarking on Chinese interference in Nepal's internal affairs, Tien-Sze Fang of Taiwan's National Tsing Hua University, writing in a Chinese-language publication, stated that "Hou Yanqi, Chinese Ambassador to Nepal, often uses her online beauty image to create a friendly atmosphere through social media. However, she also actively intervened in the political disputes within the Nepal Communist Party in an attempt to mediate conflicts and ensure that the pro-China government can remain in power."<sup>46</sup> While the Chinese attempt failed, it is likely that neither of Nepal's enormous neighbors would sit by passively as Kathmandu took a clear and sustained neutral stance.

#### The Case of Bangladesh

Over the past decade, Bangladesh has found itself an increasingly important actor in the evolving great power rivalry between China and India. Both Beijing and New Delhi have pledged billions of dollars in aid and loans to Dhaka, much of which is focused on developing infrastructure in Bangladesh. And the state is well-placed to take advantage of great power competition to diversify its options for economic investment and infrastructure development.

For Bangladesh, which is almost entirely surrounded by India, the ability to have an alternative to New Delhi as a source of development and military aid is not only good politics, but also essential for the country's future.<sup>47</sup> As is the case in Nepal, citizens in Bangladesh harbor a deep sense of resentment toward what they perceive as Indian bullying. While India played the critical role in the formation of Bangladesh in 1971, and relations have been relatively positive over the past decade, lingering

tension remains. For example, hundreds of Bangladeshis are killed each year by India border patrols, which contributes to a general sense of resentment of India in Bangladesh.

Anu Anwar, a fellow at the Fairbank Center at Harvard University, sums up the negative feelings by stating, "Bangladesh often feels threatened by India, while China takes care to respect Bangladeshi sensitivities."<sup>48</sup> The bombshell comment made by Amit Shah, then the President of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) (and now the Indian Minister of Home Affairs), calling Bangladeshi migrants in India "termites" was a public relations disaster.<sup>49</sup> The Citizenship Amendment Act of 2019, which made it possible for non-Muslim refugees from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan to become Indian citizens, was similarly viewed as discriminatory against Muslims.<sup>50</sup> In the words of a former Indian Ambassador, this comment was "deeply offensive" to Bangladesh, and while it suited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's domestic agenda, it damaged India's reputation in the region.<sup>51</sup> Besides the occasional friction between New Delhi and Dhaka, Bangladesh is of much greater strategic importance to India than it is to Beijing or Washington. Events in Bangladesh, such as infrastructure projects or water security issues, have a direct impact on India, but little impact on Beijing or Washington although interest is growing in both capitals.

#### DHAKA'S DESIRE FOR BALANCE

A good starting point to examine great power competition in Bangladesh is 2016, when Dhaka signed onto the BRI. Of greater importance, Xi visited the country and signed 27 agreements worth \$24 billion, bringing the total amount of Chinese investment in the country to \$38 billion, a sum that is equivalent to roughly 10 percent of Bangladesh's annual GDP.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, China is the only country that Bangladesh has a defense cooperation agreement with, and Beijing is also Dhaka's largest supplier of arms.<sup>53</sup> In fact, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, from 2018-2022, the last year data is available, China provided Bangladesh with 73 percent of the value of their arms imports.<sup>54</sup>

As will be discussed below, many of these proposed Chinese projects have not materialized, but New Delhi did respond directly to China's \$24 billion financial package to Dhaka. India provided a \$5 billion line of credit to Bangladesh in 2017, the largest ever credit line offered by India to any country. The credit was designed to "wean away Dhaka from China" and is allocated towards the construction of infrastructure projects.<sup>55</sup> Interestingly, concerns over Dhaka's embrace of Beijing caused New Delhi to solve its territorial dispute with Dhaka in 2015 when 162 pieces of land were exchanged on



both sides of the border.<sup>56</sup> Overall, India has provided nearly \$8 billion in lines of credit to Bangladesh. While much of this is tied to improving connectivity between India and Bangladesh, C. Raja Mohan, a senior fellow at the Asia Society Policy Institute in New Delhi, argues that the Modi government feels that India “needs to do something” about the geopolitical competition with Beijing.<sup>57</sup>

Great power competition also manifested itself in the proposed Chinese port deal at Sonadia, where China had been lobbying Bangladesh for decades to construct a port. In 2016, India, Japan, and the United States put pressure on Dhaka to cancel the Chinese project and in its place a Japanese port project in Matarbari, which is close to Sonadia, was announced.<sup>58</sup> The apparent reason for cancellation was lobbying by the United States, India and Japan, who were concerned that the port would provide China with an advantage in the emerging maritime rivalry in the Indian Ocean.<sup>59</sup> More recently, New Delhi and Beijing have both been funding the port of Mongla in Bangladesh, the second largest in the country. After it was revealed in December 2022 that New Delhi had selected Egis as the project management consultant for the port upgrade, Beijing confirmed that it was also willing to fund the port. Rear Admiral Mohammad Musa, the Chairman of the Mongla Port, stated that the two projects were in different sections of the port and would not “collide with each other.”<sup>60</sup> Munshi Foyez Ahmed, a former Bangladeshi Ambassador to China, acknowledged the competition between India and China in Bangladesh, and pointed out that Bangladesh needs to manage the competition carefully.<sup>61</sup>

While some Indian infrastructure projects in Bangladesh are designed to counter Chinese initiatives, not all can be attributed to a tit-for-tat rivalry model.<sup>62</sup> India has long sought access for its northeastern states to Bangladeshi ports instead of the port of Kolkata in West Bengal. Such access was halted as a result of the 1965 war with Pakistan, and the alternative route is time- and energy-intensive. For example, goods traveling from Agartala, the capital of Tripura, to Kolkata must pass through Guwahati, which takes over 30 hours for the 1,600-kilometer journey. Transit through Dhaka can reduce the time to 10 hours for the 550 kilometer trip.<sup>63</sup> To help solve this challenge, the Maitri Setu (“Friendship Bridge”) on the Feni river was inaugurated by Modi in 2021. The bridge will significantly enhance connectivity between Bangladesh and India’s northeast.<sup>64</sup> Joint infrastructure projects also extend to energy projects. The 1320-megawatt Maitree Super Thermal Power Station, scheduled to be Bangladesh’s largest and valued at \$1.5 billion, is being set up by a joint venture between India’s NTPC

Limited (formerly known as National Thermal Power Corporation) and the Bangladesh Power Development Board.<sup>65</sup>

#### CHINA REPLACING INDIA?

It is tempting to view China’s replacement of India as the dominant power in South Asia as a forgone conclusion. However, so far, this is not correct. Six years after the initial announcement, the often-quoted number of \$24 or \$38 billion that China supposedly earmarked for Bangladesh has not materialized.<sup>66</sup> In addition to these challenges, there is very little, if any, transparency of the projects in Bangladesh. One of Bangladesh’s leading China scholars stated that “nobody knows how many BRI projects are actually being implemented.” Another expert stated that only one-third of projects are actually being implemented, while a western diplomat pointed out that Bangladesh came up with a large wish list of projects and then shopped it around in order to be less reliant on one state.<sup>67</sup> In an echo of the challenges of state capacity in Nepal, multiple interviewees pointed out that Bangladesh lacks the ability to properly implement many of the infrastructure projects that they are requesting. Another said that “Bangladeshi foreign policy is ad hoc and has no real agency. It just goes from deal to deal and it all depends on the Prime Minister whose goal is to stay in power...the Prime Minister prefers big ticket items that can be completed before elections and look good on television.”<sup>68</sup>

Chinese analysts are aware of the geopolitical competition being played out in Bangladesh. Fudan University’s Lin Minwang argues that China needs Bangladesh strategically in order to hedge against strategic containment.<sup>69</sup> Other Chinese commentators have argued that India believes that China will attempt to replace India’s dominance in South Asia and that China’s deepening of ties in South Asia has minimized and even excluded India’s influence in the region.<sup>70</sup> One Chinese project that does merit a quick note is the Padma Bridge. In 2012, the World Bank pulled out of this important infrastructure project citing problems with corruption.<sup>71</sup> However, from 2019 and 2021, Beijing provided Sheikh Hasina’s government \$2.3 billion per year in official development assistance and other official flows. This funding was critical in finishing the Padma Bridge, as well as other projects including power plants, and the elevated highway in Dhaka. Critically for Sheikh Hasina, who was re-elected in the controversial January 2024 general election, the Padma Bridge is in her home district.<sup>72</sup>

Beijing has not hesitated to pressure Dhaka when it feels its interests are under threat. Beijing warned Dhaka to avoid joining the Quad consisting of Japan, India, Australia, and the United States (even though no offer was made to Dhaka to join.) China’s

ambassador to Bangladesh Li Jiming reportedly stated “obviously it will not be a good idea for Bangladesh to participate in this small club of four (Quad) because it will substantially damage our bilateral relationship.” Bangladesh’s Foreign Minister, Dr. AK Abdul called the ambassador’s comment “very unfortunate” and “aggressive.”<sup>73</sup> With this example aside, New Delhi and Washington would do well to realize that for many in Dhaka China still represents an opportunity.

#### WASHINGTON’S HITS AND MISSES

A final note is warranted on the high-level American visits to Bangladesh in January 2023 and the peculiar Chinese response. On January 7, Eileen Laubacher, the senior director for South Asia at the National Security Council, arrived in Bangladesh for a four-day visit, where she met with senior Bangladeshi officials including the foreign minister.<sup>74</sup> She was followed by Donald Lu, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, who visited Bangladesh from January 12-15.<sup>75</sup> Oddly enough, in the early morning hours of January 10, Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang landed at Dhaka for what the Chinese Foreign Ministry called a “technical stop” where he met with the Bangladeshi foreign minister.<sup>76</sup>

Washington’s challenge with its dealings with Bangladesh are for the time being less about worrying about what Beijing is up to in the country and more about how American leaders should approach an increasingly autocratic leadership in Dhaka. In 2021, the Biden Administration did not invite Bangladesh to its democracy summit. While this may have played well in certain sectors in Washington, the Chinese envoy to Bangladesh, Li Jiming, came out in support of Dhaka.<sup>77</sup> Also in December 2021, the U.S. Treasury Department slapped sanctions on the Rapid Action Battalion (Bangladesh’s elite paramilitary force) for serious human rights violations.<sup>78</sup> In addition, Washington increased pressure on Dhaka in September 2023, when it began to impose sanctions against individuals believed to be involved in undermining the then upcoming 2024 election.<sup>79</sup> Directly addressing American criticisms over the declining level of democracy in Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina stated that it does not matter if someone does not go on a 20-hour flight crossing the Atlantic Ocean and “that there are other countries and other continents in the world, we will make friends with those continents crossing other oceans.”<sup>80</sup> These comments demonstrate the challenge U.S. leaders face when balancing American values with states that are drifting away from democratic institutions and norms. Publicly scolding Dhaka over its deteriorating levels of democracy will only play into the hands of Beijing. Furthermore, while Washington harbors concerns

about the increasing autocratic nature of governance in Dhaka, New Delhi sees the regime as providing regional stability and limiting Beijing’s influence in the country. There are also concerns in India that, with its recent pressure on Dhaka, Washington may take a more forward-leaning approach to policy in Bangladesh that could generate friction with New Delhi’s preferred approach.<sup>81</sup>

Ultimately, Bangladesh is attempting to “spread projects around to different countries” <sup>82</sup> and is more concerned with giving each great power a piece of the pie, as opposed to playing each power of the other. Foreign Minister Dr. AK Abdul Momen articulated the delicate diplomacy Bangladesh was conducting between the great powers when he stated that maintaining good ties with global powers such as the United States and China is a “challenging” task. More importantly, he stated that the “U.S., China might have their own problems...that is their headache, not ours. We want to maintain good relations with both.”<sup>82</sup>

#### Recommendations and Conclusion

The two cases highlighted in this paper point to an evolving great power competition in South Asia. The drivers of this competition are complex and decisionmakers need to be careful in assigning too much weight to one or two politically convenient explanations. For example, China’s controversial involvement in Sri Lanka is not just about security and competition with India, it also involves substantial commercial opportunities for Chinese entities. The widely held perception that China is engaging in “debt trap diplomacy” has been discredited by some western analysts and scholars who have taken the time to carefully analyze the data and draw conclusions. For instance, the Lowy Institute points out that Beijing is not responsible for Sri Lanka’s economic crisis and finds that Eurobonds account for the largest proportion (36 percent) of Sri Lanka’s sovereign debt, while China’s share is between 10-20 percent.<sup>83</sup>

Washington and New Delhi need to be aware that the BRI is a complicated, contradictory, and in many ways self-defeating Chinese initiative. It lacks cohesion and suffers from enormous bureaucratic infighting, a paucity of reliable data, and perhaps most importantly a profound lack of understanding of the countries where it is spending hundreds of billions of dollars. The idea that the BRI is a well-oiled machine based on solid evidence and a coherent grand strategy is false. Professor Zhao Suisheng, an expert on the BRI, argues that the BRI is poorly coordinated and is fragmented. He sees the BRI as being politically driven with resulting projects not always financially viable.<sup>84</sup> By 2018, the Chinese government started to become aware that many BRI projects were at the risk of becoming white elephants

or were not economically viable for political, economic, or security reasons (or all three combined). A critical challenge for Beijing then and now is a sheer lack of area experts on countries with major BRI projects. Importantly, we are now encountering the “BRI 2.0.” China has learned many valuable lessons from its initial mistakes and is quickly changing course. For example, Beijing is completely altering its lending process and is rapidly decreasing the role of policy banks, relying more on commercial banks. Perhaps of greater importance, Beijing is now outsourcing risk management to foreign lending institutions such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.<sup>85</sup> This new approach should significantly reduce the waste and redundancies in many of previous BRI projects. It is critical for policymakers in the United States and India to realize that the smaller South Asian states see China as an opportunity in multiple domains. Attempts to force them to distance themselves from Beijing will likely fail and may actually be counterproductive. South Asia suffers from significant infrastructure shortfalls, and Chinese loans and grants are seen as essential to improving living conditions and livelihoods in the region. China has deep pockets and is willing to finance infrastructure projects that may not be profitable but are nevertheless critical for a state’s development and provide rent-seeking opportunities for corrupt elites. The non-democratic nature of China enables its leaders to spend money on BRI projects, but Washington needs to be aware that these projects may fail or never materialize. Instead of competing project-for-project or dollar-for-dollar with Beijing, what American leaders can do instead is to finance projects in these countries that are economically viable or help reinforce state capacity.

In particular, U.S. policymakers could consider the following courses of action:

Expand the Regional China Officer Program to smaller states in South Asia: Washington needs to rapidly build up its Regional China Officer Program (RCO), which posts China-focused U.S. foreign services officers in key states around the globe. As of early 2024, there were no RCOs based in Nepal or Bangladesh. Specifically, the RCO can examine Chinese financial, security, political and social activities and both share them with American partners and engage local authorities. This will help to increase transparency.

Develop state capacity in smaller South Asian states: The BRI suffers from an enormous lack of transparency on the part of both China and targeted countries. Washington should work with in-country bureaucrats and high-level officials as well as civil society groups and local media to encourage transparency on such issues. Additional funding

should be made available to bring NGO leaders and local journalists to the U.S. for extended training sessions and even degree programs. The focus should be on areas, such as technical and legal assistance, where the long-term value of institutions and rule of law are emphasized. This is not in China’s playbook and it is an enormous asset that the U.S. has in its arsenal.

Continue host country engagement across the political spectrum: The U.S. needs to play the long-game and continue to engage in host country civil society. In many states, China places too much emphasis on individual leaders who are removed from office or are defeated at the ballot box. This is a strategic liability for Beijing that Washington and New Delhi can capitalize on by allowing China to score own goals. By focusing on civil society, Washington can capitalize on its soft power appeal in Bangladesh, especially of American universities and the U.S. as an export market.

Overall, great power competition in South Asia is in its infancy. Now that China has emerged from its Covid-19 self-isolation and is reworking the BRI, its interests in the region will continue to expand, thus causing concern in New Delhi about Chinese ambitions in the region. India is also watching the United States as it engages with Nepal and Bangladesh in ways that are not always in India’s interests, causing tensions in the U.S.-India bilateral relationship. Regardless of whether we are now witnessing “Peak China,” if BRI 2.0 is able to avoid the mistakes of I 1.0, it will be a much more formidable force for both India and the U.S. to navigate.

### New Chinese Gray Zone Warfare Against India

06 April 2024, Kashmir Observer



Indian army soldiers at the Indo-China border in Bumla/ PTI

The Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh grabbed headlines in the last few weeks over Chinese protestation against PM Modi’s visit to the state on March 11 and again on March 25 in response to Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar

rebuffing Beijing's claims as ludicrous. Following closely on this recent tussle, Beijing on March 28 commemorated the 'Democratic Reform Day' in Xizang (Mandarin term for Tibet) which marked the 65th anniversary of Tibet's 'liberation from earlier feudal serfdom'. What is of significance is that the above mentioned celebrations were held in the newly built Xiaokang (well-off) villages constructed along the borders of India and Bhutan. This action, in the light of recent events including the India- China border stand-off since 2020 and negotiations over settling the Sino- Bhutanese boundary (with implications for India), can be seen as a grey zone warfare tactic by Beijing.

Grey zone warfare broadly refers to the methods of indirect warfare or competition between nation states which lie in the area between peace and full-scale war. It includes a vast array of option such as economic coercion, blockade of vital supplies, cyberwarfare, disinformation, and narrative building and influencing campaigns. China is no stranger to such warfare given its pre-eminence in ancient Sinic military treatises such as The Art of War and the application of such tactics against India and Taiwan. With respect to the Chinese celebrations above, the first aspect to note is the location i.e. the Xiaokang villages. These villages, numbering around 628, have been built along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) straddling the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and the Indian territories of Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh under the ostensible purpose of poverty alleviation and development in border areas; however, it is alleged that they are dual-use in nature and has been built with the purpose of stationing PLA troops and equipment. In addition to the LAC, these villages have also been constructed along the disputed Sino- Bhutan boundary in the backdrop of negotiations between Beijing and Thimphu. More worrying for India is the fact that such villages have also cropped up in the strategically sensitive Doklam tri-junction which has the potential implications for the Siliguri Corridor connecting the Indian mainland to its North-Eastern region. It is also to be underlined that Doklam is one of the main areas of dispute between Bhutan and China and of strategic importance for India which saw a tense 73 days standoff between New Delhi and Beijing in 2017.

In terms of grey zone warfare, the celebrations in the villages situated along the above disputed areas were meant to substantiate China's claims over the latter and in a way, normalise the occupancy of the same. Moreover, the celebration of the Democratic Reform Day provides an occasion for Beijing to highlight the 'development and prosperity' of these villages and thereby buttress its claims towards the seemingly non-military character and aims of the settlements. At the same time, the timing of the

celebrations immediately following the Chinese response to Indian to the rebuttal on Arunachal Pradesh are also aimed at reinforcing and reiterating Beijing's claim over the region which it refers to as Zangnan or southern Tibet. In addition, the emphasis on 'continuous, rapid development' of the border as well as announcement of 'promoting frontier prosperity, reinforcing border defence, border security, and the happiness of border residents' can be seen as an apparent jibe aimed at recent Indian attempts at strengthening border infrastructure along the LAC including the recently inaugurated all-weather Sela Tunnel reaching the strategic region of Tawang which drew the Chinese uneasiness on 9 March. Similar messages have also been conveyed through celebrations in villages to Bhutan and indirectly to India by holding events in villages at the Yadong county situated in the tri-junction.

What should India do?

Along with the current efforts at addressing the infrastructure deficit along the border, India should learn and adopt similar tactics of grey zone warfare. For starters, there should be frequent visits by the Prime Minister and other Central Ministers to Tawang— a region coveted by China both for its strategic location as well as its importance in Tibetan Buddhism. Such regular visits would help in reinforcing the already evident Indian sovereignty over not just Tawang, but the entire state of Arunachal Pradesh. This would also serve as a corrective to the earlier administration's stance of not undertaking frequent high-profile visits to Tawang during official tours of the state of Arunachal Pradesh due to apprehension over Chinese actions. Along with this, such high-level delegation including the PM should actively take part in the Statehood Day celebrations of Arunachal Pradesh on 20th February every year to further buttress the above action. Along with the implementation of the Vibrant Village Programme aimed at bolstering the development of remote villages along the LAC, in a way similar to the Chinese celebrations, India too should regularly highlight the achievements and development of these areas to not only stem the migration from these areas but also counter Chinese attempts at psychological warfare.

On the diplomatic front, India should use its current international weight and multiple partnerships to influence its partners to issue statements similar to the US reiterating Indian sovereignty over Arunachal Pradesh while condemning baseless Chinese irridentist claims. In this regard, New Delhi can reach out to countries like Philippines whose sovereignty claims in the South China Sea (SCS) has been supported by India including calls to adhere to the 2016 ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration on the same. Similarly, India can seek out other partners

such as Japan and Vietnam to do the same in exchange for stronger support to their claims in the SCS and other benefits.

Narrative constitutes a vital stratagem of grey zone warfare which China has never shied away from using. In response to its narrative of historical control over Xizang (Tibet) since time immemorial, India should invest its cultural resources in developing its own narrative highlighting the historical, religious and cultural links between Tibet and the Indian subcontinent as well as recognising the existence of separate Tibetan kingdom and culture militarily occupied and annexed by the People's Republic of China in 1950. In addition, as a response to the commemoration of 28 March, the Government of India can participate in the official events organised by the Tibetan Government in Exile such as the annual anniversary of the Tibetan Uprising of 1959 on 10 March and unofficial presence during Tibetan Independence Day celebrations on 13 February, thereby highlighting the violent history of the Chinese occupation often brushed under the carpet. Moreover, the proposal of granting Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award to His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama should also be considered along with allowing the latter to make frequent visits to the historic Tawang monastery— an important seat of Tibetan Buddhism which would also bolster the legacy and connection of India with the same. At the same time, as a rebuff to the usage of terms like Xizang and Zangnan, India should use the term Tibet to refer to the region and should even skilfully utilize the term 'Indo-Tibetan border' to refer to the LAC in unofficial responses as done by certain quarters of the government in 2020. Consideration should also be given to counter-measures such as re-naming places in Tibet as a signal of stronger Indian assertiveness.

With regard to Bhutan, while India has increased its outreach and level of support to the country, New Delhi also should also strive to increase the level of its commitment and re-assurance to backing Bhutan's claims including supporting Thimphu's voice in the international fora. Such strong support would not only help India's own strategic concerns but also raise its standing in its near and extended neighbourhood as a trusted and reliable partner vis-a-vis China. New Delhi should especially try to channelise robust assistance towards aiding Bhutan in developing its own border areas with China and its military capabilities. Such efforts would perhaps encourage Thimphu to emulate similar grey zone tactics as mentioned above on its own accord.

As outlined by Dr S Jaishankar in his book *Why Bharat Matters* the crux of the positive development of the Sino- Indian ties lie in 'three mutuals- mutual respect, mutual sensitivity and mutual interests'. A

cursory glance at the history of the ties since 1950 will show that while New Delhi has adhered to the three 'mutuals', Beijing has and continues to violate them till date. Hence, it is time, to employ the same tactics from China's own playbook to make As outlined by Dr S Jaishankar in his book *Why Bharat Matters* the crux of the positive development of the Sino- Indian ties lie in 'three mutuals- mutual respect, mutual sensitivity and mutual interests'. A cursory glance at the history of the ties since 1950 will show that while New Delhi has adhered to the three 'mutuals', Beijing has and continues to violate them till date. Hence, it is time, to employ the same tactics from China's own playbook to make Beijing realise that 'it would get as hard as it gives' which should hopefully make it curtail its ambitions and exhibit responsible behaviour.

### The China-India-US Imbroglia

05 April 2024, Anuttama Banerji, Inkstick

The relations between these powers are fraught and entangled.

Earlier this week, US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping had a phone call in which they discussed several contentious issues including fighting narcotics production, China's support of Russia during the war in Ukraine, the conflict in the Middle East, the Houthi rebels attacks on commercial vessels, and the Taiwan conflict. The call followed Xi's meeting with US business leaders last week, when the Chinese premier attempted to bolster investment in China, and Xi's visit to the United States in November 2023. The various dialogues show the building rapprochement between the two countries following earlier tensions exacerbated by Nancy Pelosi's 2022 visit to Taiwan, and the Chinese spy balloon episode.

These engagements resumed at a time when Biden canceled a planned visit to India's Republic Day celebrations along with the postponed QUAD summit. The US has also continued to adopt a stern outlook over India's involvement in the assassination bid against Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, a US national and Sikh separatist.

Considering these developments, it can be argued that the US and China are making a formal attempt to "manage" their ties in such a way that cooperation coexists with conflict in the Indo-Pacific, and that the US relationship with India — despite continued momentum in defense ties — requires a fair bit of course correction. Moreover, these developments suggest that despite the US viewing India as a strategic bulwark against China, the India-US bilateral partnership cannot rely on countering the perceptible Chinese threat in the Indo-Pacific alone. India will have to focus on both traditional



and non-traditional security areas like space, Artificial Intelligence, and technology to strengthen its enduring partnership with the US.

#### The China-India-US Imbroglio

Over the last decade, India and the United States have emerged as close allies in South Asia and the Indo-Pacific as China has attempted to change the “rules based international order” while expanding its naval and maritime influence in the South China Sea and the Indo-Pacific. China’s actions have brought India and the US closer. In 2016 the US designated India a “Major Defense Partner” and has continued to facilitate military sales, calling the country “vital” for a “shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific.”

The strengthening US-India ties came when Chinese incursions increased considerably on India’s border especially in the crises in Doklam in 2017 and Galwan in 2020. The two sides have also signed the four foundational agreements in recent years that the US deem essential to conduct defense trade with any partner or ally country. India also recently bought MQ 9B drones and the F-414 engines – crown jewels of American technology – to manage the Chinese threat along its terrestrial and maritime borders and improve Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities.

However, while the US is keen to assist India in balancing the Chinese threats, the US is reticent for the crisis to escalate to a war that could involve them. Just as the US is assessing the extent of support India could offer in a potential Taiwan contingency, India too is keen to evaluate the level of reciprocal support that the US could offer in the event of a crisis with China on its borders.

This dilemma is at the heart of the India-US bilateral relationship today. In Foggy Bottom and Raisina Hill, both sides ponder the nature of reciprocal support that either could get in the advent of a real conflict.

#### Moving Ahead: Advantage China?

In light of these uncertainties, the US will attempt to manage its relationship with China and build its ties with India simultaneously. India will have to remain cognizant of this fact as it also plays a balancing game: navigating its ties with both the US and Russia in a bid to maintain its strategic autonomy and remain “multi-aligned.” The US, meanwhile, will attempt to wean India away from Russia despite India’s age-old partnership with Moscow that has seen the latter supporting India on contentious issues like Kashmir at the United Nations.

Interestingly, in this imbroglio, China will have the advantage, at least in the short term.

China will continue to call the shots vis-à-vis its ties with Washington as the Biden administration would like to have a modicum of better ties with Beijing to present to its domestic electorate before the

upcoming 2024 elections. Biden’s call to assist China in its economic recovery and the US’s wish to keep its strategic diplomatic engagements through economic integration at multiple levels with the Chinese attest to this fact.

India will have to closely watch the unfurling events as Beijing and Washington engage each other. While a tight embrace between the US and China is unlikely considering the plethora of unresolved issues – ranging from Taiwan to the freedom of navigation and overflight, trade wars, semiconductors, access to resources, and human rights abuses on the part of the Chinese continue to limit the scope of the relationship – the US’s conciliatory approach towards China may harm Indian interests.

China is India’s next-door neighbor and India faces an imminent threat from the Chinese.

India and China are geopolitical rivals and China has increased its footprint in India’s strategic backyard of South Asia in recent years. In this regard, among many controversial projects.

#### Managing China’s Influence

China is pursuing the “String of Pearls” Project in the region – with the Chinese building bases with potential for dual-use in strategic ports like Gwadar, Pakistan, Hambantota, Sri Lanka, and Chittagong, Bangladesh among others potentially encircling India. China’s all-weather partnership with Pakistan has made the latter a supplicant state under China’s Belt and Road Initiative. Sri Lanka, India’s southern neighbor, is also entrapped in debt diplomacy after it leased out the port of Hambantota to China for 99 years. Moreover, the strategically important island of Maldives has also extended its security partnership with China, with Beijing offering “non-lethal” military weapons to Malé.

India is therefore keen to manage China’s growing influence in South Asia and potentially views Washington as an ally in this endeavor.

China will continue balancing its multiple relationships while pursuing its goals: engaging the US while supporting Russia in the ongoing war with Ukraine, and pushing for India to acquiesce to the idea of a China-led South Asia – all of which falls under the umbrella of Tianxia, the vision of a Chinese world order.

#### Intricate Entanglement

India will have to be a careful observer of these developments as it keeps the cash on defense sales flowing while addressing the US’s concerns associated with the Pannun assassination attempt. Although the India-US relationship has broadened and deepened in recent years with the growing defense ties, the structural impediments remain as India continues to navigate the US regulatory measures like International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR).

While the India-US relationship extends from the “seas to the stars,” India will have to get the basics right to ensure that enduring ties with New Delhi continue to receive bipartisan support in Washington and so that Washington’s attempted rapprochement with Beijing does not isolate New Delhi. While engagement at the bilateral level will remain the crux of the relationship, India could potentially strengthen its position within multilateral fora like the QUAD, I2U2, and the Combined Maritime Forces through support to US initiatives to enable more US support vis-à-vis China. India’s handling of the pirates in the Red Sea is an example of India stepping up to deal with mutually relevant concerns. To ensure more convergence with the US in the maritime domain, India could also join Operation Prosperity Guardian, the US-led multinational coalition designed to fight the Houthi rebels. Overall, the dance between the US, China, and India remains an intricate entanglement, and no one wants to trip. Geopolitical considerations will continue to dominate the political thinking and decision-making of these nations in the years to come.

### **China’s Unquenched Territorial Greed: What Is The Limit? – OpEd**

04 April 2024, Eurasia Review

Many discerning observers around the world, who are taking a closer look at China’s claims on the territory of other countries, inevitably could conclude that China’s territorial greed today is similar to that of Adolf Hitler’s, which ultimately caused World War II.

Occupation of Tibet. Several decades back, China aggressively entered Tibet, overpowered the Tibetans who resisted its aggression and mercilessly massacred a large number of them. Today, China is sitting pretty with full control over the Tibet region and is hiding that country with an “iron curtain” from the eyes of the world. Outside China and probably within China, most people do not know what is really happening in Tibet at present.

After the onslaught on Tibet, with no worthwhile protest from other countries about China’s act of aggression, China appears to have convinced itself that it can have its way to satisfy its territorial greed by occupying other regions at its will.

Threat to invade Taiwan

China claims that Taiwan should be part of it, though there is no justification for this. Taiwan emerged as separate region after a civil war, and if China claims that Taiwan should belong to it, then Taiwan too can have equal claim to China territories.

On several occasions, China has threatened to invade Taiwan. However, unlike in the case of Tibet when China’s aggression virtually went

unchallenged, the Taiwan region has the support of Western countries. This has prevented China from militarily operating against Taiwan, even as China’s territorial greed persists.

South China Sea / Senkaku Islands

The South China Sea is an area where China claims its sovereignty and is rejecting the claims of other countries including the Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan. China-Philippines tensions are now rising around a flash point in the South China Sea, due to China’s aggressive posture.

There is territorial dispute regarding the Senkaku Islands between Japan China and Taiwan. It is now claimed by China that the Senkaku Islands belong to it and there is considerable tension in the region due to China’s claim and aggressive postures. China is not ready to discuss the issue and arrive at an amicable solution.

Occupation of Indian territory

China launched a war against India in the 1962 and is now holding thousands of hectares of Indian territory as its own, which was occupied by China during the war. Frequently, China is creating issues in the border with India and skirmishes between Chinese and Indian soldiers are becoming frequent.

Claim on India’s Arunachal Pradesh

China now claims that Arunachal Pradesh in India should belong to China and is doing everything to stress its claim, short of going for a full-fledged war with India

Recently, China released a fourth list of thirty new names of various places in Arunachal Pradesh, amid China’s stepped up assertions in recent weeks to re-emphasise its claim over the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh.

The Chinese Civil Affairs Ministry released the first list of the standardised names of six places in “Zangnan” (the name given by China for Arunachal Pradesh ) in 2017. The second list of 15 places was issued in 2021, followed by another list with names for 11 places in 2023.

The naming of places in India’s Arunachal Pradesh by China indicates the height of arrogance of that government and its confidence that it can do anything against other countries and get away with it.

Obviously, the unquenched territorial greed of China makes it behave with such aggressive postures against other countries.

Stranglehold over Pakistan

By tempting and persuading Pakistan to implement the economic corridor project, China has extended huge loans to Pakistan to implement such projects, even as China knows that Pakistan will never be able to repay the loans and accrued interest in the foreseeable future. Thus, Pakistan has now become highly dependent on China and is indebted to it.

In the process, China has taken control of the Gwadar port in Pakistan and is creating access to transport material from the port to China. Obviously, China will never let go of its vice like grip over Pakistan in future

Take over Hambantota port in Sri Lanka

Like what China has done in Pakistan, it has extended a huge loan to Sri Lanka and implemented projects in Sri Lanka, which benefited Chinese industries and the economy of China, more than that of Sri Lanka.

With Sri Lanka is facing a debt trap, China has taken over Hambantota port on 99 year lease from Sri Lanka in lieu of the loan that Sri Lanka received from China.

A 99 year lease is a very long period and the ground reality is that China will never give up its grip over the Hambantota port, which area ultimately may become an extended territory of China for all practical purposes.

What could be the ultimate limit of China's greed?

It is generally said that greed has no limits as such. That said, the ultimate limit of greed could happen, when the level of greed makes an individual or a group or a country to overreach in satisfying its unquenched greed. Such a scenario would cause a huge resistance from the people in the affected regions, creating an insurmountable problem for the entity with the unquenched greed.

The British empire, which expanded the territory under its control in different continents for several centuries, ultimately lost all such territories and remains as just one of many nations in the world now. Its past glory is now a matter of distant memory. China should derive the right lessons from the experience of the British empire and allow other countries to live in peace.

### **Arunachal Pradesh Again: Why China Keeps Coining New Names For Places In Other Countries**

01 April 2024, ETV Bharat

For the fourth time since 2017, China has released a new list of names for places and sites in the northeast Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, in what is the latest manifestation of Beijing's claims over territories in other countries.

The latest list released by China's Ministry of Civil Affairs contains new names for 30 places and sites in Arunachal Pradesh. These include 11 residential areas, 12 mountains, four rivers, one lake, one mountain pass and a piece of land. All the names have been given in Chinese characters, Tibetan, and Pinyin, the Roman alphabet version of Mandarin Chinese, the South China Morning Post reported.

China first released a list of new names for six places in Arunachal Pradesh in 2017. This was followed by a

second list of 15 places in 2021, and then a third list of names for 11 places in 2023. China refers to Arunachal Pradesh as Zangnan or south Tibet, a territory Beijing claims to be a part of the Tibet Autonomous Region. In Mandarin Chinese, Zang refers to Tibet and "nan" means south.

India is not the only country where China has coined new names for places and sites. One notable example of China renaming places in other countries is its actions in the South China Sea. China has asserted territorial claims over various islands, reefs, and shoals in the region, many of which are also claimed by other countries such as Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and Taiwan. Despite international disputes over sovereignty, China has renamed several features in the South China Sea.

China has renamed several features within the Paracel Islands, known as the Xisha Islands in Chinese. For example, Woody Island, which is also claimed by Vietnam, has been given the Chinese name Yongxing Island.

Similarly, China has renamed features within the Spratly Islands, known as the Nansha Islands in Chinese. For instance, Fiery Cross Reef, claimed by China, the Philippines, and Vietnam, has been given the Chinese name Yongshu Reef. China refers to Scarborough Shoal, which is also claimed by the Philippines, as Huangyan Island in Chinese. China's renaming of this feature reflects its claim of historical sovereignty over the area.

In the East China Sea, a group of uninhabited islands referred to as Senkaku Islands in Japanese, are called Diaoyu Islands in Chinese. It is worth mentioning here that China has released the latest list of new names for places and sites in Arunachal Pradesh, following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the northeastern state last month. During the course of his visit, Modi inaugurated the Sela Tunnel at an altitude of 13,000 feet to provide all-weather connectivity to strategically-located Tawang. The tunnel is also expected to ensure better movement of troops along the frontier region.

As expected, China protested Modi's visit to Arunachal Pradesh, which New Delhi immediately dismissed. "We reject the comments made by the Chinese side regarding the visit of the Prime Minister to Arunachal Pradesh," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal had said in response to media queries regarding the comments from the Chinese side.

"Indian leaders visit Arunachal Pradesh from time to time, as they visit other states of India. Objecting to such visits or India's developmental projects does not stand to reason," Jaiswal said. According to MS Pratibha, Associate Fellow at the East Asia Centre in the Manohar Parrikar Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, China resorts to this tactic of coining

new names for places in other countries whenever it feels that its sovereignty is being challenged.

"This is something they generally do in Chinese maps to show to their people that these places are part of China's territory," Pratibha told ETV Bharat. India and China have had a longstanding territorial dispute over Arunachal Pradesh, with both sides periodically asserting their claims. China's renaming of locations in Arunachal Pradesh is seen as a means to bolster its territorial claim and challenge India's sovereignty in the region.

China's claims to Arunachal Pradesh are based on historical assertions of sovereignty, including references to past governance structures and cultural ties. By renaming places in the region with Chinese names, Beijing aims to reinforce the narrative of historical control over the area. This tactic is part of a broader effort to reshape historical narratives in support of its territorial claims.

Arunachal Pradesh holds strategic significance due to its proximity to the Line of Actual Control (LAC), the de facto border between India and China. Control over this region provides geopolitical advantages, including access to natural resources, strategic military positioning, and influence over neighbouring states. China's renaming of locations in Arunachal Pradesh is thus intertwined with its broader geopolitical ambitions in the region.

Renaming places and sites is a symbolic way for China to assert control and influence over Arunachal Pradesh. By imposing Chinese names on these locations, Beijing seeks to shape perceptions and establish a sense of authority over the region, both domestically and internationally. This tactic is part of a broader strategy of psychological warfare aimed at undermining India's claims and reinforcing China's dominance.

According to Pratibha, China's release of the latest list of new names for locations in Arunachal Pradesh might be because Beijing felt that it needs to give a proportionate response to Modi's visit. "There are a variety of ways in which way they respond," she said. "This is one way. However, it does not change the fact that Arunachal Pradesh is Indian territory."

### **India Stands To Lose Strategic Leverage Against China As Exiled Tibetans Leave Settlements – OpEd**

01 April 2024, Saurabh Sen, Eurasia Review

Tibetans exiled in India are leaving their settlements in droves. Over time, these settlements had become platforms that nurtured Tibet's political aspirations while protecting the Tibetan identity. Since 2014, however, there has been a sharp reduction in the number of exiled Tibetans living in these settlements.

Heightened security along Nepal-Tibet border made it almost impossible for Tibetans to come to India. Also, a large number of Tibetans in these settlements, especially the youth, moved away in search of work and better living. With India happy to maintain status quo, these settlements can become unviable, denying it a strategic leverage against China.

Home away from home

After the 14th Dalai Lama escaped from China in 1959 with 80,000 followers, India sheltered them in designated settlements. There were three categories: agriculture-based, handicraft/industry-based and scattered settlements. In order to set these up, India leased land to the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). Till about 2010, the number of Tibetans exiled in settlements boiled over, forcing them to scatter all over India.

During 2011 Indian Census – the last census conducted – 182,685 persons reported Tibetan as their mother tongue. The number included exiled Tibetans as well as those who were Indian citizens. This figure reflected a 114.22 percent increase compared to the previous decade. Indian media, quoting government officials, reported the number of Tibetan refugees to be around 150,000 during the same time. In the 2004-2014 decade, CTA received between 4000 and 5,000 Tibetans each year at Dharamsala. These were Tibetans coming for pilgrimage, for admission into monasteries, schools, meeting relatives; and of course, the major part of the traffic was to receive an audience from His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

However, there was sharp reduction in the number of refugees in the next decade, more specifically, between 2011 and 2022 – a trend corroborated by CTA officials. According to data collected by the (CTA) in 2022, there were 72,000 Tibetan refugees living in India, either in 39 settlements or scattered all over the country. The number now exiled in India is less than the number that accompanied the Dalai Lama.

There are two reasons behind this: heightened security at the Nepal-China (Tibet) border has made it almost impossible for Tibetans to come to India. The flow has now shrunk to 100-200 annually. Massive halls constructed at Dharamsala to welcome refugees have been converted to training centres. Moreover, a large number of Tibetans, especially the youth, are deserting the settlements in search of work and better living. In addition to migrating to other parts of India, they are going abroad, USA being a favourite destination. According to CTA estimates, 15 years back, there were 5,000–7,000 Tibetans in America. But now the number is close to 15,000. Nearly 5,000 Tibetans live in New York city itself. Faced with this exodus, it has become a challenge to accurately estimate the

number of exiled Tibetans in Indian settlements. "We could not even locate individuals or families living outside the settlements," said a senior official of the CTA Home Department.

Dwindling numbers make the settlements vulnerable to local pressures

The CTA South Division has 15,000 acre of prime land leased to it by the local state government of Karnataka, spread over five agricultural settlements. With Tibetans moving out, more and more of this land either remains uncultivated for years, or are being informally sub-leased to local operators for contractual farming.

There have been instances when real estate developers (propped up by politicians across all parties) have tried to grab these unused land, prompting local administrators to step in and sort out the matter. CTA leadership has been counselling Tibetan refugee cultivators to respect the law of the land and not sub-lease settlement land. CTA is advocating a review of India's 2014 Rehabilitation Policy to ensure a pan-India rehabilitation SOP.

Settlements fight Chinese onslaught on Tibetan identity

In the past 60-plus years, these settlements not only enabled exiled Tibetans to pursue their political goals, but most importantly also helped them preserve their cultural, linguistic and religious identities, even as refugees imbibed India's diverse local culture. Unless Tibetans, more specifically the youth, do not come and stay in India, their long term political goals may become impossible to achieve. Jigmei Tsultrim, CTA's Chief Representative, South Division, explained: "If the Tibetan communities get fragmented in a foreign land, there is a risk of these fragments getting absorbed and lost. So we are encouraging the Tibetan youths in exile to think in terms of their longer interest in serving in the settlements."

Preservation of Tibetan identity has become a key weapon to fight China's state-sponsored Sinicization drive. Other than prohibitive and discriminatory fees and inadequate facilities in rural areas, Chinese authorities have shut down local schools in Tibet and forcibly taken away children to boarding schools located between 1,000 and 2,000 km away from their homes. In these schools, nearly 100,000 Tibetan children are being taught the official Chinese curriculum in Mandarin as well as the positive aspects of Chinese Communist Party and administration, in the process, eradicating Tibetan language, culture and heritage.

Tsultrim said CTA was fighting this Chinese onslaught by encouraging Tibetans exiles to return to Tibet so that they can tell people back home that Tibetans are no longer aspiring for complete independence from China, but to live within the

framework of the People's Republic of China. Young and senior monks who study in different monasteries in Indian settlements are encouraged to go back and serve their respective monasteries in Tibet. In return, Tibetans would like the Chinese government to guarantee autonomy of Tibetan culture, language, religion and other rights so that their distinct identity is protected.

India's attitude on exiled Tibetans: no escalation

India's position over Tibetan settlements needs to be understood in the context of its bilateral relation with China as well as in the context of Asia's emerging geopolitical narrative (where India is gradually getting surrounded by hostile neighbours with pro-China tilt).

Maintaining status quo with settlements rather than leveraging Tibet – with US support – to provoke China appears to be India's strategy at the moment.

According to a member of India's National Security Advisory Board, India is not interested in provoking China before 2028 by stoking the Tibet issue. Nor is it prepared to surrender its strategic leverage against China which Tibet provides. The current thinking within India's security establishment is that by 2028 (prior to the 2029 parliamentary elections), it will be in a position to resist China in case of a full-blown war. Till that happens, India is happy to restrict its hostility against China to the level of low-level border skirmishes with Tibetan settlements left to grapple with their own issues locally.

### **China's Advancing Efforts to Influence the U.S. Election Raise Alarms**

01 April 2024, NY Times

ICovert Chinese accounts are masquerading online as American supporters of former President Donald J. Trump, promoting conspiracy theories, stoking domestic divisions and attacking President Biden ahead of the election in November, according to researchers and government officials.

The accounts signal a potential tactical shift in how Beijing aims to influence American politics, with more of a willingness to target specific candidates and parties, including Mr. Biden.

In an echo of Russia's influence campaign before the 2016 election, China appears to be trying to harness partisan divisions to undermine the Biden administration's policies, despite recent efforts by the two countries to lower the temperature in their relations.

Some of the Chinese accounts impersonate fervent Trump fans, including one on X that purported to be "a father, husband and son" who was "MAGA all the way!!" The accounts mocked Mr. Biden's age and shared fake images of him in a prison jumpsuit, or claimed that Mr. Biden was a Satanist pedophile



while promoting Mr. Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan.

"I've never seen anything along those lines at all before," said Elise Thomas, a senior analyst at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, a nonprofit research organization that uncovered a small group of the fake accounts posing as Trump supporters.

Ms. Thomas and other researchers have linked the new activity to a long-running network of accounts connected with the Chinese government known as Spamouflage. Several of the accounts they detailed previously posted pro-Beijing content in Mandarin — only to resurface in recent months under the guise of real Americans writing in English.

In a separate project, the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a research organization in Washington, identified 170 inauthentic pages and accounts on Facebook that have also pushed anti-American messages, including pointed attacks on Mr. Biden.

The effort has more successfully attracted actual users' attention and become more difficult for researchers to identify than previous Chinese efforts to influence public opinion in the United States. Though researchers say the overall political tilt of the campaign remains unclear, it has raised the possibility that China's government is calculating that a second Trump presidency, despite his sometimes hostile statements against the country, might be preferable to a second Biden term.

China's activity has already raised alarms inside the American government.

In February, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence reported that China was expanding its influence campaigns to "sow doubts about U.S. leadership, undermine democracy and extend Beijing's influence." The report expressed concern that Beijing could use increasingly sophisticated methods to try to influence the American election "to sideline critics of China."

Liu Pengyu, the spokesman for the Chinese Embassy in Washington, said in a statement that the presidential election was "the domestic affair of the United States" and that "China is committed to the principle of noninterference."

Relations Between China and the U.S.

Yellen's Visit: Despite a warm welcome on Janet Yellen's second trip to China as Treasury secretary, it was evident that the level of trust between Washington and Beijing does not run deep.

Biden-Xi Call: President Biden spoke with Xi Jinping, China's leader, in a call that was aimed at addressing a variety of combative and cooperative issues, as the United States grapples with wars and other global crises.

Influencing the U.S. Election: Covert Chinese accounts are masquerading online as American

supporters of Donald Trump, signaling a potential tactical shift in how Beijing aims to influence U.S. politics.

Mounting Space Threats: The United States and China are locked in a new race over a fundamental resource: time.

"Claims about China influencing U.S. presidential elections are completely fabricated," he added.

Ms. Thomas, who has studied China's information operations for years, said the new effort suggested a more subtle and sophisticated approach than previous campaigns. It was the first time, she said, that she had encountered Chinese accounts posing so persuasively as Trump-supporting Americans while managing to attract genuine engagement.

"The worry has always been, what if one day they wake up and are effective?" she said. "Potentially, this could be the beginning of them waking up and being effective."

Online disinformation experts are looking ahead to the months before the November election with growing anxiety.

Intelligence assessments show Russia using increasingly subtle influence tactics in the United States to spread its case for isolationism as its war against Ukraine continues. Mock news sites are targeting Americans with Russian propaganda.

Efforts to beat back false narratives and conspiracy theories — already a difficult task — must now also contend with waning moderation efforts at social media platforms, political pushback, fast-advancing artificial intelligence technology and broad information fatigue.

Until now, China's efforts to advance its ideology in the West struggled to gain traction, first as it pushed its official propaganda about the superiority of its culture and economy and later as it began denigrating democracy and stoking anti-American sentiment.

In the 2022 midterm elections, the cybersecurity firm Mandiant reported that Dragonbridge, an influence campaign linked to China, tried to discourage Americans from voting while highlighting U.S. political polarization. That campaign, which experimented with fake American personas posting content in the first person, was poorly executed and largely overlooked online, researchers said.

The recent campaigns connected to China have sought to exploit the divisions already apparent in American politics, joining the divisive debate over issues such as gay rights, immigration and crime mainly from a right-wing perspective.

In February, according to the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, a Chinese-linked account on X calling itself a Western name alongside a "MAGA 2024" reference shared a video from RT, the Russian television network controlled by the Kremlin, to claim

that Mr. Biden and the Central Intelligence Agency had sent a neo-Nazi gangster to fight in Ukraine. (That narrative was debunked by the investigative group Bellingcat.)

The next day the post received an enormous boost when Alex Jones, the podcaster known for spreading false claims and conspiracy theories, shared it on the platform with his 2.2 million followers.

The account with the “MAGA 2024” reference had taken steps to appear authentic, describing itself as being run by a 43-year-old Trump supporter in Los Angeles. But it used a profile photo lifted from a Danish man’s travel blog, the institute’s report on the accounts said. Although the account opened 14 years ago, its first publicly visible post was last April. In that post, the account attempted, without evidence, to link Mr. Biden to Jeffrey Epstein, the disgraced financier and registered sex offender.

At least four other similar accounts are also operating, Ms. Thomas said, all of them with ties to China. One account paid for a subscription on X, which offers perks like better promotion and a blue check mark that was, before Elon Musk bought the platform, a sign of verification conferred to users whose identities had been verified. Like the other accounts, it shared pro-Trump and anti-Biden claims, including the QAnon conspiracy theory and baseless election fraud accusations.

The posts included exhortations to “be strong ourselves, not smear China and create rumors,” awkward phrases like “how dare?” instead of “how dare you?” and signs that the user’s web browser had been set to Mandarin.

One of the accounts seemed to slip up in May when it responded to another post in Mandarin; another was posting primarily in Mandarin until last spring, when it briefly went silent before resurfacing with all-English content. The accounts denounced efforts by American lawmakers to ban the popular TikTok app, which is owned by the Chinese company ByteDance, as a form of “true authoritarianism” orchestrated by Israel and as a tool for Mr. Biden to undermine China.

The accounts sometimes amplified or repeated content from the Chinese influence campaign Spamouflage, which was first identified in 2019 and linked to an arm of the Ministry of Public Security. It once posted content almost exclusively in Chinese to attack the Communist Party’s critics and protesters in Hong Kong.

It has pivoted in recent years to focus on the United States, portraying the country as overwhelmed by chaos. By 2020, it was posting in English and criticizing American foreign policy, as well as domestic issues in the United States, including its response to Covid-19 and natural disasters, like the wildfires in Hawaii last year.

China, which has denied interfering in other countries’ internal affairs, now appears to be building a network of accounts across many platforms to put to use in November. “This is reminiscent of Russia’s style of operations, but the difference is more the intensity of this operation,” said Margot Fulde-Hardy, a former analyst at Viginum, the government agency in France that combats disinformation online.

In the past, many Spamouflage accounts followed one another, posted sloppily in several languages and simultaneously blitzed social media users with identical messages across multiple platforms.

The newer accounts are trickier to find because they are trying to build an organic following and appear to be controlled by humans rather than automated bots. One of the accounts on X also had linked profiles on Instagram and Threads, creating an appearance of authenticity.

Meta, which owns Instagram and Threads, last year removed thousands of inauthentic accounts linked to Spamouflage on Facebook and others on Instagram. It called one network it had removed “the largest known cross-platform influence operation to date.” Hundreds of related accounts remained on other platforms, including TikTok, X, LiveJournal and Blogspot, Meta said.

The Foundation for Defense of Democracies documented a new coordinated group of Chinese accounts linked to a Facebook page with 3,000 followers called the War of Somethings. The report underscores the persistence of China’s efforts despite Meta’s repeated efforts to take down Spamouflage accounts.

“What we’re seeing,” said Max Lesser, a senior analyst with the foundation, “is the campaign just continues, undeterred.”

### **De-Risking’s Blind Spot: China’s Targeting of Global Civil Society**

01 April 2024, The Diplomat

“De-risking” has become the buzzword in China policy circles since G-7 leaders endorsed the concept in May of last year. The task of reevaluating the complicated global supply chain with the People’s Republic of China (PRC) has catapulted to the top of elites’ minds from Washington to Brussels to Tokyo. However, this laser focus on vulnerabilities in the economic relationship with China ignores a critical blind spot: the vulnerability of democratic societies and their non-governmental sectors.

Chinese Communist Party (CCP)-affiliated entities have pierced – and in some cases, subsidized – civil society groups around the world. Universities, researchers, media outlets, overseas Chinese, and a variety of non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

grapple consistently with the impact of the PRC's tactics of censorship, propaganda, transnational repression, and bribery.

Whereas governments can craft laws and regulatory processes enacting safeguards to de-risk their economies from China, civil society's very existence in functioning democracies depends on government not regulating it. Without new civil society-led initiatives and better efforts by democratic governments to protect the space for non-governmental actors from the CCP's pressure, policymakers will find these critical drivers of democratization neutered and, in some cases, working at cross-purposes. Any de-risking strategy toward China without a focus on protecting civil society will fall short.

Document No. 9's Decade-long, Global Ripple Effect on Civil Society

To better understand the CCP's vision for the role of civil society in democracies, one should simply look at what the CCP says it wants for it. One year after Xi Jinping's ascent to the post of general secretary in 2012, the CCP General Office issued secret Document No. 9 to all Party members. The edict comprehensively repudiated the legitimacy of civil society, media, and the market of ideas and organizations that might in any way "oppose the Party's theory or political line."

As just two examples of this repudiation, take media and the knowledge sector (universities, research institutions, and think tanks), both critical sources of freedom of expression and government accountability. Document No. 9 stated that "the media and publishing system must be subject to the Party's discipline," and "be infused with the spirit of the Party," in order to guard against "overseas media and reactionary publications."

China is now home to one of the world's most restrictive media environments and its most sophisticated system of censorship. Within the knowledge sector of universities and research institutions, the Party sees "ideology as an intense struggle" requiring Party members to "seize their leadership authority and dominance" in promulgating Xi Jinping Thought. The Party's decades-long campaign to bring universities and ideological elites under its control reached a milestone in January as university "Party cells" have now merged with presidents' offices in order to ensure that the CCP's ideology remains the dominant strand of thinking on Chinese college campuses.

A decade since Document No. 9's issuance and its establishment in 2017 of an autocratic overseas NGO law, that same ideology and approach within China has gone global. The ripple effects of the CCP's intensified crackdown on civil society at home are now reaching the shores of nations and non-

governmental sectors eager to benefit from engagement with China.

In a June 2021 speech to the Politburo, Xi reaffirmed Document No. 9's application to the Chinese party-state's engagement in the world, pointing to the "system of internal and external propaganda" that should "build a media cluster with international influence." The Party's "struggle on the ideological battlefield" is part and parcel of its efforts to, in Xi's words, "expand the circle of international public opinion friends who know China and who are friendly with China."

The CCP's position that non-governmental entities – with some exceptions in the business realm – simply have little to no legitimacy holds enormous implications for independent civil society beyond China's borders.

Globally, Party-controlled radio, news, social media companies, and TV outlets have massively expanded into new global markets and have struck licensing, content-sharing, and advertising agreements to influence foreign narratives about China. Leveraging these arrangements, Chinese embassies have coordinated harassment and pressure campaigns against outlets that publish news or opinions disfavored by the Chinese government. Freedom House's deeply researched Beijing Global Media Influence report found these types of highly repressive tactics in 16 of the 30 countries they surveyed.

Even in the relatively open society of Brazil, a content partnership with the PRC's CCTV and a 24-hour cable news channel, Bandnews TV, led journalists to censor themselves on China-related topics and more positively framing China's engagement in Brazil and Latin America.

Within the knowledge sector of many democracies, China studies programs across Latin America, Africa, and Asia are propped up by China's Ministry of Education or other Party-affiliated entities. After the closure of many Confucius Institutes in Western societies, some simply re-branded themselves under a new Party-directed initiative. Even on foreign university campuses, the CCP's capacity to compel Chinese diaspora members and researchers have for many made "living outside of China feel like living inside of China." These subsidization and intimidation techniques create pervasive self-censorship, where what is not said by public intellectuals can far outnumber what is said about the PRC.

The CCP's ongoing pressure campaign against civil society goes well beyond university and media officials. Its global campaign of transnational repression against Chinese citizens who speak out is rooted in Document No. 9's labeling of "internal dissidents as anti-government forces." Its squashing of any Chinese political party not under the CCP

umbrella has manifested globally in its rapid expansion of CCP-led political party exchanges with parties of all ideologies and its training on one-Party rule of African politicians and diplomats at a new facility in Tanzania.

#### Civil Society's Power and Independence

As the world sees time and time again during natural disasters, non-government organizations are often the first to arrive on the scene. Governments can't (and shouldn't) do everything on their own. Civil society, on the other hand, can be fast, entrepreneurial, and responsive. Its suite of activists, protest movements, investigative journalists, academics, and opposition groups can prevent – and have prevented – autocratization when illiberal leaders or parties rise to power.

A strong non-governmental sector and the accountability and scrutiny of government decisions is a competitive advantage for democracies. When left largely unregulated by the state, they remain that way. A media organization under pressure from or co-opted by a government or ruling party won't hold that government accountable. A university unable to elevate voices that dissent to the prevailing views of a government will simply choose not to elevate them – or at worse, silence them. Civil society's power is in its independence, providing it credibility in the public sphere and sensitivity to citizen needs and shifting public opinion.

Government support to civil society is best implemented by, first and foremost, protecting their space to operate. Free and independent media needs an enabling environment of laws and regulations to ensure media can thrive, journalists are protected, and news gathering rights are upheld. Universities and research institutions need measures to ensure their intellectual freedom, spaces to educate the public, and – if needed – funding unencumbered by control over their political views.

#### De-Risking Civil Society from CCP Pressure

In a healthy democracy, the autonomy that civil society enjoys from government regulation presents unique challenges in combating pressure on the non-governmental sector coming from outside a country's borders.

As with China's trade and economic ties, Chinese entities' engagement in nearly every country's society is inevitable. Decoupling Chinese media, universities, students, and NGOs from the world is not only untenable, but probably counter-productive toward other critical aims, like maintaining democratic freedoms of expression, association, and the press. The current U.S. debate over TikTok is a microcosm of the range of available policy options. Do you allow a CCP-influenced social media platform to operate openly in your free society? Or do you cut your society off from the platform entirely,

including from all of the benign aspects of it? Or is there a middle ground that properly balances risk, values, and opportunity?

Civil society in democracies finds itself at a similar crossroads of options, and at a particularly vulnerable moment. The rate of China's engagement with the world over the past two decades has outpaced the ability of governments, civil society, and businesses to adapt and prove the resilience of their democratic models. These vulnerable societies need effective, democracy-affirming strategies to de-risk themselves from the PRC's malign, authoritarian impacts in their non-governmental spaces.

These strategies for resilience go above and beyond traditional mechanisms and roles used to beat back authoritarian drifts. They involve cross-sectoral collaboration within civil society and with government entities, assertive messaging and exposure campaigns about these vulnerabilities, and intense competition with China's overseas investments in non-governmental sectors by funders, the business sector, and democracy support groups.

More than a decade ago, the CCP took direct aim at Chinese civil society, striking a near-fatal blow, after which it then began targeting civil society abroad. Civil society, government, and other stakeholders now face the urgent need to shield themselves and prove the resilience of their democratic societies to this authoritarian pressure.

#### The CCP's Performing Arts Troupes in the U.S.

01 April 2024, China Scope

Chinascope has obtained a list of shows by Chinese performing-arts troupes in the U.S. between 2011 and 2019. Despite being incomplete, the list accounts for nearly 600 shows on U.S. soil. Additional data show that Beijing has been sponsoring performing-arts tours in the U.S. with political focus dating back to at least 2004.

The Chinese government has devoted significant resources to enabling these touring troupes to perform abroad, and the focus in sponsoring these shows is obvious, with a heavy political emphasis. These performing tours do not merely represent civil or cultural exchange; they are part of a substantial game played out by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) on foreign soil, aiming to build soft power influence and eliminate space for alternative voices.

One example concerns the prestigious Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., which hosted performances by at least 68 Beijing-sponsored groups during the period from 2011 to 2019. Moreover, in the single month of October 2005, the Kennedy Center saw shows by 13 different Beijing-sponsored groups, some of which put on multiple performances. Shows during this month included the

National Ballet of China, the China National Acrobatic Group, the Beijing People's Arts Theater and the Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra.

Other examples include New York City, where 41 such troupes visited during the period from 2011 to 2019. California, which has a high concentration of Chinese diaspora and where the Chinese consulate is influential, saw 220 visits during the same period. During the period from 2004 to 2006, the San Francisco Bay area specifically saw at least 24 visits by Beijing-sponsored performance troupes.

Productions have included shows by professional as well as children's theater groups, martial arts demonstrations, film screenings, musical shows ranging from solo pianists to national-caliber orchestral groups, acrobatic and circus performances, professional dance troupes, ethnic performing arts groups, and more. Such touring paused between 2020 and 2022 due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, resuming in 2023. While nations of the free world see arts exchanges as a means of building friendship, sharing inspiration, and promoting cultural understanding, Beijing's efforts clearly go beyond such noble objectives. The CCP has been employing art exchange as a weapon of influence in soft power competition. Through persistent, massive, inconspicuous-looking art exchange and touring theater operations, Beijing has aimed to gradually shape civil discourse and expand communist influence in the United States as well as in other countries across the globe.

#### The CCP's "Culture Going Abroad" Strategy

While such performances appear innocuous when considered independently, they paint a clear picture when viewed collectively: the CCP is sending performance troupes to penetrate live entertainment markets in U.S. and across the world.

This is not empty talk – the CCP has long used tools of culture, including the performing arts, as means of influence and propaganda. As Mao Zedong once said, "Culture not only reflects but can also guide political fighting and economic struggle." {1} It was in this vein that Mao launched the infamous Chinese Cultural Revolution, wielding such tools to take down his political rival Liu Shaoqi (the CCP's second-most prominent leader at the time).

When the CCP uses culture and the arts as tools of influence, it does so differently depending on whether its target audience is within China's borders or abroad. To achieve its goals domestically, the CCP develops "red songs" and "red arts," aiming to indoctrinate the mainland-Chinese audience. This means, for example, injecting lyrics that praise the "mother-party" into popular Chinese folk music, using imagery to depict the iron fist of the proletariat striking at capitalists, or using ballet performances to tell stories about landlords exploiting peasants so as

to stir up public hatred against the landlord class as a whole. Meanwhile, when operating internationally, the CCP performs soft power infiltration by exporting communist art under the banner of Chinese Culture.

The CCP first introduced this concept of "Culture Going Abroad" (文化走出去) in the mid-1990s, and the idea was officially adopted as part of the CCP's core strategy at the Sixth Plenum of the 17th Party Congress on October 18, 2011. In detail, the adopted strategy consists of the following directives: Develop multi-channel, multi-format, and multi-level cultural exchanges.

Innovate overseas propaganda methods and "enhance international discourse power."

Implement the "Culture Going Abroad" project.

Strengthen the development of overseas Chinese Cultural Centers and Confucius Institutes.

Establish mechanisms of cultural exchange.

Create a mechanism of cultural exchange for youth in other countries and set up Chinese culture international promotion awards and international-level cultural awards. {2}

Many CCP researchers have justified or praised this strategy of soft power competition, emphasizing how culture plays a subtle yet pivotal role in shaping thoughts and "is the highest form of conquest." {3} Beijing has implemented government policies and devoted tremendous efforts to making the "Culture Going Abroad" strategy a success. {4} {5} As a result, Chinese performing arts troupes, ranging from the Peking Opera to acrobatics groups, from national-level to small-time troupes, have frequented theaters in the U.S. as well as in other countries.

One example of praise for this strategy came from China News Service (CNS), the second-largest state news agency in China. CNS, which is under the purview of the CCP's United Front Department, published an article in July of 2023 saying that the Anhui Huangmei Drama Theater had traveled to the U.S. as well as nearly 20 other countries, calling the group "a leading 'Culture Going Abroad' performance troupe." The article also declared, "With the blessing of Anhui Province's 'Culture Going Abroad' strategy, Huangmei opera (one of China's five major opera genres) has not only appeared on the world stage but has also taken root in many countries and regions." {6}

#### Logistics, Coordination, and Recruitment

The CCP is not just focusing on the biggest cities and states in the U.S.; it has been targeting the entire country. During the period from 2011 through 2019, we have records of Chinese performance troupes visiting at least 44 U.S. states (including Washington, DC). Given what we know about the CCP's pattern of political maneuvering, and given that the data we've obtained are incomplete, we can extrapolate that Chinese troupes have likely visited all fifty states



in the U.S., demonstrating an attempt at sub-state level cultural infiltration.

Beijing's strategy for scheduling performances in every corner of the U.S. has been as follows: the national-level and highest-caliber troupes are sent to large cities and top venues, while small-time troupes, e.g. provincial- or municipal-level groups and more entertainment-natured performances, are sent to smaller cities. For example, the Jiangxi Art Troupe, invited by the Chinese Consulate in Chicago, went to Ames, Iowa; Shaanxi Provincial Art Troupe went to Minneapolis, Minnesota; and the Acrobats of China troupe went to Butte, Montana.

Chinese Consulates and other diplomatic and soft-power outlets have played a role in promoting and facilitating performances by Chinese groups in the U.S. For example, one of the first post-COVID Chinese performances in the U.S. was the dance drama "Mulan" by the China Arts and Entertainment Group (CAEG) at the Kennedy Center between September 29th and October 1st of 2023. The Chinese Embassy in the United States gave a high-profile endorsement to the show. The Embassy even co-hosted a debut-day reception with the CAEG, and the Chinese Ambassador delivered remarks. According to the Kennedy Center's website, CAEG is dedicated to spreading Chinese performing arts worldwide and "since its inception in 2009, has presented works at venues across the globe, including Lincoln Center in New York; The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.; and performance venues in Australia, New Zealand, UK, Germany, Italy, and throughout Europe." {7}

Beijing has also tried to recruit foreign performing arts venues to its cause, founding a "Silk Road International Theater Alliance" to rope in the world's top-tier theaters. CCP news outlet People's Daily recently reported that "in October 2016, under the guidance of the former Ministry of Culture, the Silk Road International Theatre Alliance was formed. As of today, the alliance has 155 member units from 45 countries and regions, including 83 overseas members and 72 domestic members. Since its establishment, the alliance has played an active role in information exchange, personnel exchanges, and collaboration in performance production among theatre members. It has fostered long-term, deepened cooperation in the field of performing arts with countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative." {8}

Why Do These Performances Matter?

Some living in free nations may wonder: why should we care about Beijing's "Culture Going Abroad" campaign?

These Beijing-sponsored shows are of concern because the CCP is not a "normal" government. It attaches political, diplomatic, and ideological strings

to art exchanges. One well-known example is the now-infamous Confucius Institute Initiative. Twenty years ago, when China began establishing Confucius Institutes at schools throughout the world, how many foresaw that such a language exchange program would be used as a trojan horse for propaganda? Since inception, the Confucius Institutes have been used to "tell the China story," suppress dissidents, isolate Taiwan and Tibet, and dictate to Western universities what they can and cannot say about China.

However innocent they may appear on the surface, these Beijing-sponsored cultural exchanges and performances betray a definite clandestine agenda:

1. The performances present the benevolence and beauty of the Chinese people and of Chinese culture, aiming to give the impression that the CCP too is benevolent and that it poses no harm to the world.
2. The "red" propaganda embedded in these performances can subtly impact the Western audience, leading them to believe that the CCP has benefited the Chinese by bringing them a better life.
3. Through cultural exchange, the CCP connects with potentially influential politicians as well as the cultural elite at the federal, state, and local levels; these individuals are the primary targets of the CCP's united front work.
4. Just as Beijing has engaged in worldwide dumping of "made-in-China" goods, lowering prices and driving out competition, the CCP aims to monopolize the world's theaters. This means squeezing out any non-CCP voices – especially voices that have a different but true story to tell about the history of China or the CCP.

Of course, the individual performers comprising many such Chinese touring troupes may be unaware of the extent of the CCP's ambitions. Nevertheless, the CCP is devoting significant resources to make such a grand infiltration effort possible. It has been covering costs, providing logistical and promotional support, and pulling strings to secure visas and performance venues as appropriate. Let us not forget that the CCP's goal is to propagate its ideology to every corner of the globe, either surreptitiously or by force. It follows the doctrine of "unrestricted war," actively working to permeate all aspects of society, both physical and abstract. The realms of information, culture, ideology, public opinion, and normative morality are all battlegrounds in its fight to consolidate power. The performances of the Chinese troupes can be downloaded here.

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## March

### The United States should seek engagement without provocation of China

31 March 2024, East Asia Forum

No foreign policy challenge is more important, or difficult, than finding a way to simultaneously deter and engage China without provoking unwanted behaviours. Achieving this requires understanding the perceptions and priorities shaping Beijing's actions.

Despite China's worsening economic problems and waning international trust, the March 2024 session of the National People's Congress has reaffirmed Beijing's determination to stick with policies fuelling domestic discontent and alienating foreign partners. The reasons are structural, not simply strong-man egoism. Policies in China are tightly interconnected, reflect hard-to-change perceptions, reinforced by bureaucratic and personal interests. Changing one facet requires changing the entire policy package. For now, that package prioritises domestic stability and security over economic growth.

Beijing has fallen into an old mindset that sacrifices growth to reduce vulnerability to external and internal threats that leaders believe endanger the regime and China's future. This is not good for China, the United States or the world. Washington cannot achieve immediate or fundamental changes in China's behaviour but ill-considered actions can make things worse. The best we currently can achieve is wary coexistence, careful management to reduce dangers, and keeping the way open for a better day.

The current bilateral framework of big power politics and competition is harmful to both countries and to efforts to address global challenges. It is vital to acknowledge that US policy is one of the drivers of Chinese behaviour. The United States should strive for a minimally provocative deterrent posture. The United States should adopt policies that make clear that it hopes for the material progress of China in a cooperative framework and that it will support any resolution of cross-strait relations peacefully agreed to by the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

Eventually, the United States and China will adjust their policies toward mutual accommodation, but this could be well into the future and impose high costs on both nations in the interim.

Whenever that new day arrives, it will involve three parallel developments. First, Chinese acceptance that the United States is in Asia to stay. Second, US acceptance that the internal governance of China is a domestic choice of Chinese citizens, not a US change objective. Third, both countries deciding that cooperation to address global challenges is more important than each using the other to justify costly, contested or expedient policies.

Currently, prospects for such a meeting of the minds are poor. Leaders in both countries are firming up their internal support by depicting the other as an existential threat. China has blundered by aligning with the world's worst actors – from Russia to North Korea and Iran – while the United States has erred by driving Beijing further in the wrong direction.

Since at least the 19th century, China has pursued national security and economic modernisation through selective engagement with the West, seeking to acquire technologies that would strengthen China without endangering the domestic system which its elites were determined to preserve. China's twin goals of economic modernisation and internal stability are inextricably linked and always pursued in tandem, but circumstances and leadership calculations episodically change the weight given to each objective.

Over the centuries, China's policy options have coalesced into one of two comprehensive policy bundles. The historically dominant policy bundle prioritises national and regime security over

economic growth and is deeply suspicious of outside interference. In such phases China imposes more restrictions on foreign trade, investment, civil society and religion. There is increased emphasis on strong-man rule and ideological indoctrination. This is the China we face today.

Conversely, in periods in which internal stability seems more assured and the West is seen as a positive force in economic modernisation, China prioritises the gains to be made through interdependence and openness. Former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping embodied this second policy bundle and President Xi Jinping embraces the first.

Until a better day arrives, US strategy needs to hold open the door to the second Chinese policy package, while limiting the damage that the current first policy package does to core US interests. The biggest move the United States could make to influence Chinese behaviour in constructive ways is to get its own governance and economic house in order. Speaking loudly, while carrying a small stick, is provocative.

The United States must avoid setting its strategic goals in a way that implies it is trying to keep China eternally weak, divided and isolated, or that regime change is the US goal written in invisible ink. Statements from officials such as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs, Ely Ratner, suggesting that even peaceful cross-Strait reunification is strategically unacceptable to Washington, undermines the basis for normalisation achieved in 1979.

Washington should restate the long-held US position that the use of force in the Taiwan Strait is unacceptable, that the United States is not opposed to peaceful reunification and that ties between the United States and Taiwan are unofficial. One Taiwan, One China is not US policy. Washington needs to stop nibbling around the edges of the One China Policy.

The Xi regime is acting as much out of insecurity as it is strength. It also is acting from the belief that the United States is overstretched internationally and divided internally. Washington's route forward, particularly in the 2024 presidential election year, is to make it clear that US foreign policy goals are not antithetical to the legitimate aspirations of the Chinese people. For its part, Beijing must realise it has blundered in choosing team Russia, Iran and North Korea over countries that fuelled its rise during the four-plus decades of engagement. Beijing needs to get back to a policy of reassurance rather than muscle flexing.

## Tibetan culture, livelihoods are being damned in Xi Jinping's China

31 March 2024, First Post

In eastern Tibet, local Tibetans have resisted non-violently in the face of an imminent displacement from their ancestral land as China continues with its insatiable exploitation of Tibetan rivers with dams and diversions

Browsing through the pages of 'China's Tibet'—Beijing's primary propaganda magazine on Tibet—one is likely to get an artist's impression of a utopian Tibet—free and galloping like a wild stallion on the path of development.

However, in reality, through these colourful pictures and self-praising language, a chauvinist colonial Beijing masquerades itself as the only agent of liberation and modernisation for the very people it has occupied and colonised.

From time to time, Tibetans break this glassy shroud for the same Beijing to see the disgracefulness of its behaviour under the intoxication of its naked power.

This time, it is in Dege, in eastern Tibet, where local Tibetans have resisted non-violently in the face of an imminent displacement from their ancestral land as China continues with its insatiable exploitation of Tibetan rivers with dams and diversions.

China has planned to build a series of 13 dams on the Driчу River (Ch: Jinsha) on the upper reaches of the Yangtze River in eastern Tibet. These dams will, directly or indirectly, affect Tibetans living in Jomda in the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region, Yulshul in Qinghai, Dege, Markham, Bathang, Serphu, and Derong in Sichuan, and Dechen in Yunnan. All these sites selected for dam construction are areas where local Tibetans have lived for thousands of years as the Driчу River mothered their civilisation and sustained their lives.

Among them, the under-construction Kamtok (Gangtuo) hydropower station (229 metres) in Dege is the main reservoir for the South-to-North Water Diversion project to divert water from the Yangtze to the Yellow River. This dam is about to demolish at least two villages and six Buddhist monasteries, including the famous Wontoe monastery, whose murals date back to the 14th century.

In addition to their cultural values, these Buddhist monasteries and murals are even more precious in the context of the fact that more than 6,000 Tibetan monasteries and temples suffered destruction during the Chinese invasion in the 1950s and later the Cultural Revolution (1966–76).

Those monasteries that survived the ravages of both Chinese military and cultural violence hold special meaning for the Tibetans as cultural heritages that

maintain historical and civilizational continuity for a people that continues to face cultural suppression.

The recent public gathering in front of the Dege county government on February 14 took place after the local Tibetans tried almost all the available legal means to prevent an illegal and unjust displacement looming over their villages and monasteries. We can see, in the videos from the scene, Tibetans, including monks and women, literally begging the officials with their thumbs raised to halt the dam construction.

In Tibetan culture, to request someone with one's thumb(s) represents extreme humility to the point of self-humiliation. By using the most humble body language, the local people appealed to the human conscience of Chinese authorities to recognise the magnitude of the devastation that they were about to wreck on the local Tibetans. Many held the Chinese flag in their hands to show their desperation rather than defiance.

However, the manner in which Chinese authorities cracked down on the peaceful Tibetan petitioners, with mass arrests, beatings, and phone confiscations, reflects their colonial mindset. Many had to be hospitalised. A large armed police force is deployed for further suppression, as if there were an armed revolt.

The geographical area threatened by the dam is not some desolate region but a thriving fertile river valley that supports both nomadic and farming activities for the local people. Given the limited arable areas available on the high and dry Tibetan plateau, such fertile river valleys are too priceless to be wasted for a dam whose advantages are questionable and disadvantages are real and long-lasting—both for the people in the affected area and those downstream in China.

The narrative of hydropower stations as clean sources of energy whitewashes the reality of their negative impacts on the whole ecosystem. Often, their construction begins with the mutilation of mountains, the strangulation of rivers, the drowning of vegetation to death, and the mass displacement of vulnerable communities.

Speaking of displacement, who gets displaced for a dam is not merely a question of engineering necessity but power relations, like who is more displaceable in the eyes of dam builders by weighing the political and economic resources of a given community to defend their fundamental interests.

In today's occupied Tibet, the existing political system makes Tibetans the most displaceable, if not disposable, people in the eyes of Beijing. For effective control and surveillance, China has transferred thousands of Tibetans, particularly nomads and farmers, from their ancestral lands to government relocation sites in the name of environmental protection or poverty alleviation.

Relocation, no matter how thoughtful, will never restore what the local people are about to lose—their land and way of life. But for China, it's made clear that the livelihood or cultural heritage of Tibetans is cheaper than a 229-metre-high dam.

In a fundamental sense, terms like relocation or resettlement not only fail to appreciate but also underestimate the whole experience of violence, trauma, and humiliation that the people facing displacement have to suffer—to say nothing of their material loss and physical difficulties.

The displacement of the Tibetans from their lands is a form of colonial dispossession to disempower them, thereby making their ability to earn a living conditional on their political and ideological subservience to colonial Beijing. It is to control their thoughts and behaviour with a rice bowl.

After being kicked out of their villages and monasteries, the Tibetans in Dege, besides being colonial subjects, will become refugees in their own homeland like thousands of other Tibetans displaced from their ancestral lands under different pretexts.

Once built, these dams will stand as monuments to China's colonial subjugation of Tibetan people and their land rather than representing modernisation or development.

**Communist China had a good run — but the Party is over**

30 March 2024, New York Post



Outside the Chinese Parliament in Beijing, the centerpoint of China's decades of communist rule and economic expansion – the former now beginning to strangle the latter.

China had a good run, but it is now over.

You know it's over when 65 million homes — one-fifth of the nation's total — lie vacant and real-estate prices have collapsed to 2018 levels.

Tens of millions of Chinese plunked down their life savings for an apartment in a high-rise that they will never live in because the builder went bankrupt, leaving the building an uninhabitable empty shell.

You know it's over when China's "official" youth unemployment rate reaches double digits, while its

Ministry of Finance reports a 16% drop in personal income tax collected year over year.

Given how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) toys with statistics, the real numbers must be much, much worse.

Finally, you know China's boom days are over when both capital and people are heading for the exits.

Five hundred billion dollars may have fled the country in 2023 alone and the hemorrhaging continues.

And as far as the human exodus is concerned, look no further than our own southern border.

The Chinese are now the fastest growing demographic attempting to enter the US, with 37,000 apprehended during the last year alone, not counting an unknown number of "gotaways."

While spies and saboteurs are surely among them – the CCP would be foolish not to take advantage of our open border in this way – the vast majority are simply seeking a refuge where their lives and property will no longer be at risk.

How has mighty China, which was supposed to dominate the 21st century, come to this?

The Trump tariffs—imposed in 2018 and still in place today – set China back on its heels. And the COVID debacle deepened China's economic malaise.

But most of the wounds have been self-inflicted.

The Chinese economy is suffering from a kind of death by a thousand cuts perpetrated by the policies of Xi Jinping, a man who models himself on one of the most monomaniacal – and deadly – communist leaders in human history.

There is, one might say, a specter haunting China. It is the specter of Mao Zedong – channeled by his latter-day clone, Xi Jinping.

It wasn't that long ago that former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping, viewing the serial disasters that Chairman Mao's Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution had created, decided that a little private property might not be a bad thing.

He dissolved the communes, encouraged people to go into business for themselves and opened up China to the West.

The result of removing the dead hand of the state was explosive growth.

The Chinese people pulled themselves up by their bootstraps and fueled decades of double-digit economic expansion, along with a new generation of wealth creators.

But then along came Xi Jinping,

Soon after assuming office in 2012, he gave a secret speech to senior leaders in which – sounding like every other communist from Karl Marx on – he predicted "the eventual demise of capitalism and the ultimate victory of socialism."

Many observers, both in China and abroad, dismissed this as mere rhetoric.

Why would anyone in their right mind recklessly tinker with, much less abandon, a successful economic policy that has produced over three decades of mostly double-digit economic growth for China?

Yet, in communism's latest triumph of ideology over experience, Xi is once again driving the Chinese people down the socialist road to ruin.

Xi had to move slowly at first.

He assured China's wealth creators that he had no problem with people getting rich – as long as they used their wealth to serve the Party's interests.

Then, to make sure they did, he sent political commissars to watch over them.

Every major non-state-owned company in China was ordered to add a CCP representative to its board.

The effect was to place a target on the backs of the wealthy. It wasn't long before the more ambitious among those CCP overseers decided that the best way to ensure that the rich used their wealth to serve the Party's interest was to steal it from them.

Taking their cues from Xi's increasing hostility toward private enterprise, government officials at all levels began arresting, imprisoning, executing, and even "suiciding" hundreds of Chinese billionaires and CEOs. China's wealthiest woman, Whitney Duan, was snatched from her Beijing apartment by the security forces in 2017 and has yet to reappear.

In the minds of rapacious Communist officials, the best way to eliminate capitalism has always been to simply eliminate the capitalists themselves.

Not surprisingly, the Chinese economy has been on the skids ever since.

In one sense, Xi is merely doing what all good communists do when they get in a position of power: they choke the life out of the economy—and out of any person who gets in the way.

We know how this tale ends.

Whenever a Chairman Mao or a President Xi decides that producing tyranny is more important than producing the goods – as they all do sooner or later – economic collapse follows.

When that day arrives, the Chinese people should not expect sympathy from Xi.

After all, they got none from his mentor either, when Mao's own foray into collectivist folly ended in famine.

As tens of millions of his countrymen were starving to death in the early sixties, Mao simply shrugged: "Deaths have benefits, they fertilize the ground."



## Opinion: A Gullible Singer And a Few Questions

25 March 2024, Bhuchung D. Sonam, Phayul



Switzerland based Tibetan musician Dechen Shak Dagsay (Photo/Instagram)

About a week ago, a minor-league Swiss-based Tibetan singer named Dechen Shak-Dagsay attended an event organised in Geneva by the China Society for Human Rights – one of many propaganda fronts of the Chinese Communist Party – during which she said that “the Tibetan language is spoken all over the place [Lhasa]” and thanked China “for giving our young generation in Tibet such a unique opportunity to excel in their studies, and each one becomes a precious gem, shining from the roof of the world.”

In a subsequent video clarification after harsh reactions from the exile Tibetans, Shak-Dagsay said that “we have shouted for sixty years, which only widened the gap between Tibetans inside and those of us in exile” and that “Tibetan language, culture and everything is so well maintained there [in Tibet].” Commenting on China’s colonial boarding schools, she said that “China spends huge money on this ... [and that] exile Tibetans should never oppose it.”

An in-depth report on China’s colonial boarding school by the Tibetan Action Institute found out that about a million Tibetan students in occupied Tibet are coerced into state-run schools, which “function as sites for re-molding children into Chinese nationals loyal to the CCP,” and are “removed from their families and communities, students must study primarily in Chinese, are barred from practicing their religion, and are subjected to political indoctrination.”

Dr Gya Lo, educational sociologist and a leading expert on China’s assimilation and education policies in Tibet, writes in an op-ed in The New York Times that within a few months of being admitted into one such school in northeastern Tibet, his young grandnieces started to distance themselves from their Tibetan identity and spoke “only Mandarin to each other and remained silent during our family dinner. They had become strangers in their own home.” Dr Gyal has testified on this issue at the UN Human

Rights’ Summit, the Canadian House of Commons and other global forums.

China’s ongoing colonial boarding schools are widely covered in the international media, including the BBC, Foreign Affairs and others which led the European Parliament to pass a resolution condemning these schools stating that “80 % of Tibetan children, totalling around one million, have been separated from their families by this system, which aims to forcibly assimilate them culturally, religiously and linguistically into the Han majority.” The US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, said that his country “is taking steps to impose visa restrictions on PRC officials for the forcible assimilations of Tibetan children in government-run boarding schools.”

In this year’s 10th March Tibetan National Uprising Day speech, President Penpa Tsering of the exile government said that “the ongoing forced assimilation of nearly one million Tibetan children in Chinese state-run colonial style boarding schools and promotion of Chinese language in a large number of kindergartens established across Tibet not only deny Tibetan children the right to learn and use their own language, they are also cut off from their way of thinking, custom and belief, which is giving rise to a generation affected by forced assimilation.”

Many Tibetans have harshly responded on social media to Shak-Dagsay’s groundless and unjustifiable comments by calling her “a Chinese stooge”, “a running dog” and “a Chinese spy”, which is widely off the mark. Shak-Dagsay does not have qualities to be an agent. She is simply a gullible woman who fell for shrewd Chinese propaganda. She was bamboozled into motor-mouthing ready-made half-truths about Tibet and puffery to China because she was given an opportunity to sing in Lhasa and was taken for an officially-vetted tour to spruced up places and schools.

Shak-Dagsay has since issued a reluctant two-sentence apology of a sort to the Tibetans. But the damage is done. China for the moment achieved its mission and got what it wanted:

1) An endorsement from an exile Tibetan to legitimizes its occupation of Tibet and its genocidal policies leading to the destruction of Tibet’s natural environment, self-immolation of 157 Tibetans, jailing of artists and intellectuals, including Go Sherab Gyatso and Gegjom, and corralling of over a million Tibetan children into colonial boarding schools.

2) To cause distrust and disharmony among the Tibetans, which have been clear from angry tirades and invectives thrown at the elderly singer, and a distrust that one of us could do such a thing. These are things that we do not want at all.

What is clear from Shak-Dagsay’s incident is that decades of relentless Chinese disinformation

campaigning is working. The timing of this occurrence also seems calculated since the exile parliament is in session to discuss on the long-due charter amendments, and Shak-Dagsay's instance could steal the focus. Judging by the amount of financial and human resources that China pour into its propaganda apparatus, Shak-Dagsay won't be the last exile Tibetan to be conned into its web of lies.

This urgently calls us to rethink, recalibrate, reenergise and restrategise our moves. We also need to ask ourselves how did an exile Tibetan who lives in one of the most democratic countries in the world fall prey to Communist propaganda? Are we not telling our stories good enough? Are we not informing our citizens well enough about democracy and rule of law? What does it say about our communication channels?

Pointing our fingers at Shak-Dagsay – and badmouthing her – may give us a temporary ventilation to our anger, but it won't solve the fundamental problem. We need to do so much more.

### **As China prepares to invade Taiwan, US forces are about to combat-test a vital weapon**

24 March 2024, Telegraph

Building giant steel Lego as Chinese missiles rain down

The main mission of the US Army flotilla now sailing toward Gaza is to build a floating pier that will help ships offload desperately-needed humanitarian aid. But the task force also serves a secondary purpose: it's practice for a critical combat operation – one that could help US forces to roll back Chinese advances in the event of a war over Taiwan.

The Joint Logistics Over-the-Shore pier system, or JLOTS, is a Lego-like suite of floating metal piers and ramps that can connect virtually any ship to virtually any beach. While the Pentagon is sending five 273-foot US Army landing craft to begin building the pier, the final components will sail aboard the 951-foot transport ship Roy A Benavidez, which belongs to the US Navy-administered Ready Reserve Force.

It could take weeks to ship the pier components and days to assemble them. But once the pier is ready, it should be able to move – from sea to shore – 2,000,000 meals per day, according to the Pentagon.

The Pentagon has deployed JLOTS before, perhaps most notably to Haiti following the devastating earthquake in that country in 2010. But it has never deployed it in a major war.

That could change – and soon – if China makes good on decades of threats and launches an invasion of Taiwan. If the People's Liberation Army succeeds

in occupying Taiwan's island strongholds in the Taiwan Strait as a prelude to landing on Taiwan itself, counterattacking US forces could face a serious dilemma: how to land their own people and equipment in what amounts to a counter-invasion of mainland Taiwan and its island outposts.

Historically, US forces would force their way ashore aboard US Navy amphibious ships. But the US fleet has lost faith in its traditional amphibious capability as enemy beach-defenses stiffen with increasingly deadly anti-ship missiles. Lately, the US Navy has been decommissioning amphibious ships faster than it commissions them.

But JLOTS endures. And it gives the Pentagon options.

"JLOTS is a critical joint capability that enables US forces to enter a land area from sea despite insufficient port infrastructure," Joseph Tereniak, a US Army officer, wrote recently.

It's not that Taiwan doesn't have great ports: it does. But if Chinese forces control those ports as US and allied forces counterattack, the Americans and their allies will need some other way of moving heavy equipment over the beaches. "Potential adversaries will attempt to deny access to fixed ports," US Army officer Tom Clady wrote in 2013. "Seabasing provides a viable alternative to project forces."

The problem with JLOTS, of course, is that it's a big floating target that takes days to set up and, even when it's working perfectly, is a delicate piece of maritime clockwork. The speed at which soldiers and sailors can build the pier – and rebuild the pier in the event of an enemy attack – could make the difference between victory and defeat.

Back in 1996, a naval official named Harold Workman warned of a "lack of training, and therefore diminished proficiency levels," that could doom JLOTS ops in wartime. It's not clear that, nearly 30 years later, the US Army and US Navy have solved the training problem. JLOTS just doesn't get used very often in a truly stressful environment.

Gaza is nothing if not a stressful environment, with Israeli forces relentlessly bombarding cities and towns and even hospitals and Iran-backed militants – including the Houthis in Yemen – lobbing drones and missiles at commercial and naval vessels in the region.

US president Joe Biden announced the Gaza pier operation during his annual state-of-the-union address to the US Congress on March 7.

"I'm directing the US military to lead an emergency mission to establish a temporary pier in the Mediterranean on the Gaza coast that can receive large ships carrying food, water, medicine and temporary shelters," Biden said.

"No US boots will be on the ground," Biden added. They'll only be on the pier.

Increasingly impatient with Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Biden is counting on the US Army's logistics fleet not only to save Gazan lives, but also to signal his – and America's – opposition to continuing Israeli aggression. As a bonus, the fleet will be practicing a unique military skill: the construction of a temporary port.

"This temporary pier would enable a massive increase in the amount of humanitarian assistance getting into Gaza every day," Biden said.

It would be crass to think of the coming humanitarian JLOTS deployment primarily as practice for war. But it would also be naive to pretend American soldiers and sailors won't benefit from building a pier from scratch in a war zone. Even if that war doesn't directly involve US troops.

Those Americans just might be ordered to build the pier again in the waters around Taiwan, while Chinese missiles rain down.

### **Xi's China deserves a diplomatic surgical strike by India on Tibet**

24 March 2024, Vijay Kranti, Organiser

Having seen PM Modi's aggressive and decisive response to Pakistan's Uri and Pulwama acts, the Indian people are disappointed at a docile, timid and verbose response to China's insult on issues related to India's Arunachal Pradesh. India now needs to hit at the fountain head of China's aggression its illegal occupation of Tibet

Beijing's aggressive reaction against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to India's north-eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh for the inauguration of a strategically important road tunnel at Sela Pass on March 9 was no less intense and bullying than China's earlier reactions on similar occasions in the past. Hence, it was not very surprising, though shocking, for the common Indians. But what is surprising is the defensive response of the Modi government that had otherwise earned a different image and expectations after India's aggressive and decisive response to Pakistan in Balakot and across the LOC in Jammu & Kashmir.

New Delhi's verbose and oft-repeated reaction to China's aggressive and humiliating assertion has disappointed those who are watching India's foreign policy achieve new heights under the Modi government. They see it as just a replay of what is generally termed a docile, timid and self-evasive 'Nehruvian' response, which BJP and its leaders have always scoffed at. Trying to dismiss China's claims over Arunachal Pradesh, the MEA statement from New Delhi on March 12 looks like a copy-past exercise. This time, it reads that China's claims "will not change the reality that the State of Arunachal

Pradesh was, is, and will always be an integral and inalienable part of India". In his media briefing, the Indian spokesman once again tried to assure the nation by saying, "The Chinese side has been made aware of this consistent position on several occasions."

This MEA's statement is in no way different from what it had said when Beijing challenged all similar visits by other Indian leaders like Home Minister Amit Shah in April 2023, PM Dr. Manmohan Singh in October 2009, USA's New Delhi-based Ambassador's visit in November 2023; Dalai Lama's visit in April 2017 or China's other humiliating acts like assigning Chinese names to more than 11 Indian cities and towns of Arunachal in 2017 and 2023. In July last year, China again issued stapled visas to Indian athletes from Arunachal and Jammu & Kashmir for participation in the Asian Games, saying that it does not recognize J&K as a part of India and that the Arunachal visitors don't need a Chinese visa as they are 'Chinese' citizens.

An ordinary Indian today has come to realize that Xi Jinping's ever-increasing assertion on claiming Arunachal as a 'part of China' and his open challenge to the authority and right of the Indian PM even against entering a State of his own country amounts to a far more aggressive act than Pakistan's open support to separatism and terrorist acts at Pathankot, Uri and Pulwama.

Looking back into the history of India-China relations, one will be amused to notice that neither the tendency of Chinese aggression and advances on Indian soil has changed over the past seven decades, nor there is a change in India's defensive and half-hearted, rather apologetic tone against the Chinese manoeuvres. For example, soon after occupying Tibet in 1950-51, China quietly grabbed about 38,000 sq km of Indian land of Aksai Chin in upper Ladakh. When the Indian Foreign Secretary brought this to the notice of PM Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, he was furious. He instructed the FS to send a strong letter of protest to Peking (i.e. today's 'Beijing'). However, only a few hours later, Nehru called him back and asked him to hold it, saying he would talk to Chinese PM Zou Enlai.

But it never happened. It was only in September 1957, when China inaugurated the 1200 km long stretch of G-219 highway through Aksai Chin and invited the Indian Ambassador in Peking to attend the ceremony, that the Nehru Government got furious. Even then, the official reaction from New Delhi was limited to the question: how did Chinese labour enter this Indian region without an Indian visa?

In the next five years, China developed Tibet into a military foothold and used the Tibetan land as its launch pad to attack an unprepared and

unsuspecting India in October 1962. However, despite suffering a humiliating defeat in this attack from China, India has perpetually failed to realize that it is only illegally occupying Tibet, which is the real fountainhead of all aggression and territorial troubles for India from Beijing rulers. Indian security agencies have confirmed once and again that China has been using the occupied Tibetan land for training, sheltering and supplying arms, money and drugs to a host of anti-India terrorist and separatist groups like the Naxalites, Nagas, Mizos etc.

The latest Chinese danger, looming large from across the Indo-Tibetan borders, is President Xi Jinping's campaign to occupy the religious institution of reincarnation of Tibetan Buddhism. His real aim is to install the next, i.e., the 15th Dalai Lama, as a Chinese puppet after the demise of the current ageing 14th Dalai Lama. This exiled religious ruler of Tibet has been living in India since 1959, when China violently crushed the Tibetan people's uprising against its colonial rule, and the 25-year-old Dalai Lama had to escape to India to save his life. Understanding the fallout of this move of Xi Jinping, the US Congress, despite a serious clash of opinion and policies among the warring Democrats and Republicans, has passed a near-unanimous bipartisan constitutional amendment which makes it obligatory for all future Presidents and governments of the USA to take effective action against Chinese government to stop it from usurping the institution of Dalai Lama.

Unfortunately, total silence and indifference on the part of New Delhi make one believe that the Indian Government is oblivious to the severe consequences of Xi's designs for India's national integrity and sovereignty. The fact remains that the supreme religious root-temples and root-Gurus of almost all Buddhist traditions of Indian Himalayas, Nepal and Bhutan today lie inside Chinese occupied Tibet. A situation in which a puppet Dalai Lama and other incarnate root Gurus would act on Beijing's diktats holds seeds of imminent havoc falling upon the entire 4000-long Himalayan belt for all these three countries. This single development can convert today's Ladakh, Himachal, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal from India's 'first line of defence' to porous floodgates of sabotage and rebellion against India's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

This surely calls for a qualitative change in the Indian Government's approach towards the Dalai Lama and the overall issue of Tibet. Sadly, right from the day the Chinese PLA marched into Tibet in 1950 to walk over to India's borders and subsequent signing away of Tibet by New Delhi as 'China's Autonomous Region' through its much-hyped 'Panchsheel' Agreement of 1954, all Indian governments have been handling Dalai Lama and the issue of occupied

Tibet as a liability rather than an asset in their dealings with Beijing. With consistent use of Tibet as an anti-India launch pad and Xi's claims on Arunachal as 'Southern Tibet', New Delhi must have by now realized that the natural source of trouble from China for India is the former's colonial control and presence in Tibet. Unless India starts contesting and challenging China's illegal occupation of Tibet, New Delhi cannot hope for any end to the Chinese aggression.

It may not be easy for India to take any military action against today's mighty and rogue China. But the policymakers in New Delhi can surely use some fine surgical tools of diplomacy and international politics by taking some decisive baby steps like standing by the Dalai Lama on the issue of his reincarnation, honouring him with India's highest civilian award, 'Bharat Ratna' (as in the cases of other foreigners like Mother Teresa, Nelson Mandela and Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan); and bestowing a more respectful status to Dalai Lama's Dharamshala 'Central Tibetan Administration' as compared to its present 'NGO' like status in India. Taken one after another in a staggered manner, such steps are bound to force Xi and his communist establishment to shift from their aggressive gear to a defensive one. But that can happen only if the Modi government decides to show the courage of undertaking a diplomatic surgical strike in the same way as it did on the war front with Pakistan in Balakot and Uri.

### **Why is China provoking India over Arunachal Pradesh?**

21 March 2024, Hindustan Times

China, under Xi Jinping, has gone downhill economically as well as politically with its BRI brand losing sheen by the day.

New Delhi: Chinese reiteration of its unfounded cartographical claims over Arunachal Pradesh in the wake of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the border state this month is part of Beijing's plan to keep scent marking its territorial claims as also deliberately provoking India.

While the Modi government has verbally retaliated to Chinese uncalled-for statements on Arunachal Pradesh, the fundamental objective is to draw Bharat into a verbal match and keep the comatose issue alive. The fact is China under Xi Jinping has gone downhill economically as well as politically with its BRI brand losing sheen by the day as countries like Italy have walked out of the Communist debt trap. By contrast, India has grown under PM Modi economically and politically with Bharat on the way to acquiring the global heft needed to tackle coercive powers like China.

20 March 2024, First Post

However, India has learnt to play the Chinese on their own game. The Modi government also repeats the standardized text in response to Chinese ad-nauseam claims over Arunachal Pradesh and parts of East Ladakh. Gone are the days when India would get hassled by oft-repeated Chinese statements and the Modi government is assiduously engaging allies in South East Asia with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in the Philippines on March 25 and profile of Taiwan increasing in India. US leadership may be in confusion over 'One China' policy but India has not uttered the magic words for Chinese for the past decade even as it continues to engage the Tibetan leadership in exile as well as openly supporting freedom of navigation in the South China Sea.

The Chinese provocation also is designed to provide fodder to the Indian opposition who themselves are trying to egg on the Modi government to take on the PLA for political rather than any nationalistic reasons. The Indian military border infrastructure all along the 3488 km LAC has taken a jump for the best under the Modi regime and classified efforts are also being made to ensure that the Indian troops never run out of ammunition and artillery in the worst-case scenario.

The real reason is that the Chinese economic bubble has burst because of the stock market decline. There are credible reports that the Communist state has intervened in the stock market in excess of RMB 400 billion, which is the second highest after their intervention in 2015 stock market collapse. In 2015, they had intervened to the extent of RMB 900 billion to revive its spiraling stock market. The current BRI debt is close to a trillion US dollars with countries like client state Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Venezuela, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Angola, Laos in no position to repay Beijing and being forced to part with state equity to repay the very high interest loans. The only other option is for Communist to take a haircut on these bad debts or give a loan waiver. But the latter is not possible as China projected growth this year is five percent with US political leadership slowly waking up to Beijing's coercion even as Europe is still playing the fence sitter.

The best way for India to deal with Chinese stuck record on Arunachal Pradesh is to have its own repudiation of Beijing's claim on an audio loop.

India has reiterated that it remains unconcerned about China's objections, protests and criticism. It will not normalise ties till the situation reverts to pre-April 2020

At the Express Adda last week, External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar, answering a question posed by Zhou Yongsheng, political counsellor at the Chinese embassy in New Delhi, mentioned, "I think it's in our common interest that we should not have that many forces on the LAC, it's in our common interest that we should observe agreements that we have. And today, it's not just in common interest, I believe it's in China's interest as well."

He added, "I'm still very much committed to finding a fair, reasonable outcome (to the standoff at the LAC). But one which is respectful of agreements, which recognises the LAC, and doesn't seek to change the status quo." Jaishankar stuck firmly to the Indian stance that unless the border is resolved, relations cannot be normal, while mentioning that the situation was 'very tense and dangerous.'

The Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson, Wang Wenbin, responded to Beijing's standard approach, by stating, "China has stressed multiple times that the boundary question does not represent the entirety of China-India relations, and should be placed appropriately in bilateral relations and managed properly." The standoff in Ladakh continues since the Chinese intrusion in the summer of 2020.

A day prior, the Chinese had lodged a diplomatic protest over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Arunachal Pradesh to inaugurate the Sela Tunnel. In the protest it reiterated its claims to the region and mentioned that 'such moves will only complicate the unresolved boundary question'. India rejected the claim by responding that Arunachal Pradesh 'was, is, and will always be an integral and inalienable part of India'.

The same day Rs6,621 crore were sanctioned for the construction of the planned frontier highway in Arunachal Pradesh. This is expected to enhance connectivity to border areas as well as foster socio-economic growth. In 2014, once this project was announced, China objected by stating, "Before the border problem is solved, we hope the Indian side will not take any action that could further complicate the relevant issue, so as to preserve the current situation of peace and stability in the border area."

When India conducted its Agni-5 MIRV (Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicle) test in the Bay of Bengal last week, China moved its research vessel, Xian Yang Hong 01, to monitor it. The vessel



was deployed in international waters off the Vizag coast, under surveillance of the Indian navy.

The Chinese government mouthpiece, The Global Times, commented that the test indicates that 'India's main hypothetical enemy is China, with its goal of having missile coverage over China to enhance deterrence capabilities.' Its assessment was true. It also linked the test to Prime Minister Modi's visit to Arunachal.

Around the same time, The Global Times, in an opinion piece, hit out against India's policies towards Chinese mobile manufacturers. The government had demanded that Chinese mobile companies be transparent and accountable to Indian laws. To ensure this they must have 'Indian management, Indian distributors and local contract manufacturers.' The Chinese media termed the Indian action as 'trade protectionism.'

However, The Global Times ignored the fact that Indian directives were intended to curb illegal practices of Chinese companies. In December 2021, income tax authorities raided the offices of Xiaomi and OPPO, both Chinese companies, for violating rules and evading taxes. Earlier, Chinese firms running mobile loan applications and transport businesses were raided. The Minister of State for Electronics and IT, Rajeev Chandrashekar, had stated in the Rajya Sabha, in July last year, that Chinese smartphone makers including OPPO, Xiaomi and Vivo have been 'found evading taxes worth Rs 9000 Crores.'

In October 2023, the Enforcement Directorate arrested four executives of Chinese smartphone maker Vivo, including one Chinese national, in relation to a pending case of money laundering. Chinese companies had assumed that they could act against Indian laws because of diplomatic protection from their government. Government scrutiny of Chinese firms increased post Galwan. Chinese mobile companies currently control almost 70 per cent of the market in India.

The Chinese protesting high-level visits to Arunachal Pradesh are nothing new nor unexpected. It had resorted to criticising the prime minister's visit in February 2019 also. It had also objected when the US Ambassador, Richard Verma, visited the state in October 2016. Beijing had then warned Washington, mentioning, 'We urge the United States to stop getting involved in the China-India territorial dispute and do more to benefit this region's peace and tranquillity.'

In 2019, when the then US Ambassador, Kenneth Juster, visited Arunachal Pradesh, the US state department commented, "The Tawang visit highlights resolute US support for Indian sovereignty and commitment to local partnerships." This irked the Chinese. Beijing repeated its objections even when

the current US ambassador, Eric Garcetti, visited the state in November last year.

It had opposed the visit of the Dalai Lama in both 2009 and 2017. In 2017, the Chinese spokesperson stated, "India, in disregard to China's concerns, obstinately arranged the Dalai Lama's visit to the disputed part of the eastern part of the China-India border, causing serious damage to China's interests and China-India relations." In every case, India countered the Chinese claiming Arunachal Pradesh belongs to India. Chinese objections are ignored and counters issued as a matter of routine.

The competition for regional dominance continues between the two nations. When the Chinese satellite tracking vessel, Yuan Wang 5, docked in Sri Lanka, despite Indian protests, in August 2022, it was received by pro-China Sri Lankan lawmakers as also the Chinese ambassador to Colombo. The Chinese ambassador even published an article on the docking in a local daily. The intent was to display diplomatic victory.

This year, when India pushed Sri Lanka to not permit the Chinese research vessel from docking, New Delhi considered it a diplomatic win. When it was granted permission to dock in Male, The Global Times stated, "The diplomatic actions India previously took to pressure Sri Lanka against the Chinese research vessel seem unlikely to work with the Muizzu government."

India's engagements with Taiwan are on the rise, which is bound to irk China. Apart from inking an agreement to move Indian workers to Taiwan and honouring their Foxconn Group's CEO and Chairman, Young Liu, with a Padma Bhushan, the government is establishing semiconductor plants in collaboration with Taiwan. Laying the foundation stone, the prime minister stated, "Leaders from Taiwan have also joined us in today's programme virtually." Unofficially, India is dumping the one-China policy.

India has reiterated that it remains unconcerned about China's objections, protests and criticism. It will not normalise ties till the situation reverts to pre-April 2020. China has understood Indian intent, and also noted its confidence in countering them. India will not bend, will China?

**There will be no 'short, sharp' war. A fight between the US and China would likely go on for years.**

19 March 2024, Atlantic Council

Everyone loves a short, sharp war. They end on time, are won decisively, and provide tight narrative completion for the stories we want to tell.

Among military commanders, planners, and theorists, this often manifests itself in the quest for the decisive

battle—one that will inflict such a stunning defeat on the enemy that its will to fight is broken, forcing enemy leadership to sue for peace or otherwise accept terms of surrender. In naval warfare, Alfred Thayer Mahan embodied this ideal in his prescription to mass one's superior fleet against an adversary's inferior fleet, seek and win decisive battles, and thereby win command of the sea.

This bias is borne out in modern US war games, in which players command opposing armed forces in simulated warfare. Usually sponsored by military commands or think tanks, such games generally open with a compressed "road to war," or a backstory and the conditions under which the notional war begins. The players—usually a mix of military officers, officials, policymakers, and think tankers—"fight" a highly kinetic scenario at the opening stage of a conflict. While a war game might theoretically play out over a longer period, time constraints in the real world typically compel game sponsors and facilitators to end these games in a short period, often in a few days or a little over a week. Conclusions are then made based off of the snapshot provided by this brief gameplay. The results inform commanders and policymakers as they approve war plans and military investments.

In the United States, war-game results might, for example, inform prioritization of weapons procurement by the Office of the Secretary of Defense or the enthusiasm for Congress to invest in security infrastructure across the Indo-Pacific. Recently, an unclassified Center for Strategic and International Studies war game played out a scenario in which the United States fought China and won—albeit at great cost. While informative, this game focused largely on a short, decisive fight in and around Taiwan and the first island chain.

The same trend is borne out in the literary genre of "useful fiction." Recent novels such as *Ghost Fleet* and *White Sun War* depict wars fought primarily between the United States and China. Almost always in such works, the war is brought to a satisfying conclusion over a relatively short time frame. In part, this is a function of the commercial format, which almost certainly inclines authors toward tidy endings to satisfy publishers and readers alike. But the novels' popularity among military readers and their placement on official military service reading lists also reveal a predilection in the US military to think in terms of quick wars with decisive outcomes.

But wars between great powers are rarely short and sharp. They are more often long, grueling slogs of attrition that tend to expand horizontally, ensnaring other regions in their wake. Of course, it is possible that a US-China conflict over Taiwan could be an exception, that it could be brief and limited instead

of protracted and wide-spread, but it's irresponsible to assume such an outcome given history.

For the French and the British, the American Revolutionary War was but a single theater of war in what was then the latest episode of an enduring conflict that spanned the globe. At the outset of World War I, popular opinion in Britain, among other belligerents, held that the war would be "over by Christmas," only for that nation and the world to endure four long years of slaughter. Imperial Japan launched its surprise attack on Pearl Harbor based on the assessment that it would convince the United States to cede to Japan its interests in the Pacific. Instead, Japan found itself fighting for years on the strategic defensive, until the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki forced Japan's unconditional surrender.

Examples abound, but the historical record repeats this simple but critical theme: Great powers rarely settle military conflicts with other great powers in a neat, tidy fashion. Yet despite career requirements to attend professional schools where military history is at the heart of the curriculum, military planners continue to chase the unicorns of decisive battles and short wars. Cathal Nolan documents this phenomenon, and reveals its hollowness, in his masterful *The Allure of Battle*.

But if one were to write the novel that more precisely illustrates the long, global grind that a war between the United States and China would entail, it might appear something like this:

The opening pages showcase the trends of modern war games and novels, where naval combatants, fifth-generation aircraft, missile forces, and non-kinetic effects wreak havoc in the war's opening days, crippling the air and naval power of the belligerents. Thousands upon thousands are killed in this first stage of the conflict. But the war expands horizontally, with China, Russia, and North Korea aligned against the United States, Taiwan, Japan, the Philippines, Australia, South Korea, and others. Fighting occurs in multiple theaters within United States Indo-Pacific Command and beyond, including a massive conflagration on the Korean peninsula. Soon, the ability to hurl precision munitions back and forth culminates as expenditure rapidly outpaces production capacity and as US fuel stocks in the Pacific dwindle. With pressure increasing and options decreasing, tactical nuclear weapons are employed on the battlefield . . . and yet the war drives on.

Thus would end the first chapter. The reader turns the page, which says: "Three years later."

And with some skillfully placed exposition, the author reveals the massive changes that have occurred across society as belligerents commit to a long, bloody war. Nations have fully mobilized their economies to support what is now an existential war.

Drafts and conscription are made mandatory to fill and maintain the ranks of multiple field armies, amphibious corps, fleets, and air forces. The war is not limited to the first island chain, but has multiple theaters that span the globe and escalates horizontally, with simultaneous conflicts drawing in additional belligerents. Emergency powers are universally invoked by executive branches, curtailing liberties in even the historically freest societies. The threat of nuclear holocaust is ever-present, and continuous fighting through tactical nuclear exchanges shatters previous conceptions of escalation management.

While these are logical conclusions should a US-China war occur, they usually take a backseat in policy analysis, strategic thinking, and operational planning, eclipsed again and again by a hyperfocus on a limited conflict in and around Taiwan. Committing the preponderance of security studies to the first phases of a global war of attrition is short-sighted, like a chess player who studies openings but fails to study the mid-game or its closing. None of this is easy, of course. Large-scale war disrupts societies and technology in profound and often unexpected ways. But because of this feature and not in spite of it, US policymakers and military leaders must rigorously study and plan for a broad range of implications of a years-long war with China.

### **With new national security legislation, China shows it will never loosen its grip on Hong Kong**

19 March 2024, VOX

21 years ago, half a million Hong Kongers took to the streets to stop Article 23. This month, Beijing finally won.

On Tuesday, the government of Hong Kong passed the latest of a series of increasingly draconian national security laws. This one will target espionage, treason, and foreign political interference — all of which are fuzzily defined at best — and those found guilty of violating some of its tenets could be sentenced to life imprisonment.

This might sound niche or even well-intentioned; doesn't the US have its own fears about foreign political interference in its elections? But this isn't really about national security. It is, as Human Rights Watch put it, "Beijing's latest effort to transform Hong Kong from a free society to an oppressed one where people live in fear."

That effort has been underway at varying speeds since Hong Kong was returned to Beijing's control in 1997. Despite complaints from foreign governments, from what remains of Hong Kong civil society, and even from the city's increasingly

beleaguered international business community, that effort is now all but complete.

For Hong Kong's 7.4 million citizens, the multiyear fight to maintain some semblance of self-government and political rights is basically over. There is no news here.

But the name of this new legislation — Article 23 — will jog the memory of anyone who has lived in or observed Hong Kong over the past quarter-century. It's a name that was once a symbol of Hong Kongers' refusal to submit to Beijing's will and their willingness to take to the streets to fight for their liberty.

The backstory of Hong Kong's Article 23

Article 23 is found in Hong Kong's Basic Law, a city constitution of sorts worked out between Beijing and the British government in the years leading up to Hong Kong's return to Chinese rule. It states, among other things, that Hong Kong's government will "enact laws on its own to prohibit any act of treason, secession, sedition, subversion against the Central People's Government" in Beijing.

It wasn't until nearly six years after the 1997 handover that Hong Kong's government, with more than a little nudging from Beijing, made a serious effort to pass a law that would fulfill Article 23. Legislation was drafted in February 2003 that, among other provisions, would have allowed the Hong Kong government to ban any organization if it had links to organizations banned in China for national security reasons.

That alarmed pro-democracy groups in Hong Kong, where hundreds of thousands of people from China had found refuge following the Chinese Communist Party's takeover of the mainland in 1949, as well as the city's vibrant Christian churches, which feared being forced out of existence.

But there were fears that went beyond the text of the legislation.

The relationship between Hong Kong and China after the former's return was defined by the phrase "one country, two systems." Formulated by former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping, who had a knack for pithy political expressions, this meant in practice that Hong Kong would be largely left to run under its own system of laws — including general civil liberties like freedom of speech and press — while acknowledging that ultimately, Hong Kong was part of the Chinese state.

So Hong Kongers were always on the lookout for signs that "two systems" were becoming one. The introduction of Article 23 legislation in 2003 was that sign.

Still, what could they do about it? The British — who, let's not forget, had never allowed Hong Kong anything like full democracy — were long gone. They might be a Special Administrative Region and have

their own passports, but they were part of the People's Republic of China. And in any case, Hong Kong was a city built on trade, not politics. Its business was business.

Then came July 1, 2003.

The march – and what came after

On what was a brutally hot day even for a Hong Kong summer, as many as 500,000 Hong Kongers took to the streets to oppose the Article 23 legislation. It was the largest such protest in the city since hundreds of thousands had marched against the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989.

I was there, walking among the marchers as a young reporter for Time magazine. It was a cross-section of the Hong Kong I knew – young families, elderly men and women who had once come from the mainland themselves, teenagers at their first protest. They were angry about the Article 23 legislation, about the way their government had mismanaged the SARS outbreak earlier that year, and about the dwindling opportunities for good jobs and decent housing.

But what I remember was the pride present in the crowd. They were proud of their identity as Hong Kongers, as a people with a distinct language, a distinct culture, and, yes, distinct rights. They took to the streets because they would not allow that identity and those rights to be taken from them without a fight.

And they won, at least temporarily. The Article 23 legislation was eventually shelved.

But not forever. By the 2010s, with the less pragmatic and more autocratic Xi Jinping leading China, Beijing began to squeeze. Legislation was introduced to bring "moral and national education" to Hong Kong's curriculum, code for Beijing's view of history, and what limited representation existed in the city's legislature was further constrained.

At every turn, Hong Kongers returned to the streets in protest, most famously in the "Umbrella Revolution" of 2014. They won some battles and became a symbol of the global fight for democracy. But it was a war they couldn't win.

Xi Jinping had no interest in two systems – only his. And with every year, the room for free expression was further curtailed until there was no room at all. The new Article 23 legislation merely confirms that fact.

For one day, though, in July 2003 – and on many days that would follow – Hong Kongers showed what it was to act on freedom.

### **In the busy waters between China and Taiwan, the de facto border is being tested**

19 March 2024, The Guardian

Around Kinmen, "Beijing has been careful to avoid looking excessively provocative even while using the

incident to try to undermine Taiwan's authority," says Amanda Hsiao, a Taiwan-based senior China analyst at the International Crisis Group.

"The use of law enforcement patrols as a means of signalling displeasure is likely to continue, but Beijing may also choose to dial the frequency and intensity of those patrols up or down in response to events".

Last week the director-general of Taiwan's National Security Bureau, Tsai Ming-ye, told parliament that China was running "joint combat readiness patrols" on average every seven to 10 days in an effort to normalise the activity.

The end of the 'silent agreement'

On Kinmen, residents are relaxed, and dismiss the recent furore as bad faith parties "internationalising" a tragic accident. Attitudes towards cross-strait relations and national identity are different to those on Taiwan's main island. "The geographical economy and culture mean these two areas are always close," says independent local councillor Tung Sen-po.

Kinmen is home to more than 140,000 people. It is a quiet, semi-rural community, with visible signs of thousands of years of culture and hundreds of being a military staging base or frontline to multiple conflicts. The economy once relied on the thousands of soldiers stationed there during and after the Chinese civil war, but has since pivoted to tourism and production of a local liquor, kaoliang. In 2020 it was Taiwan's fifth-richest county in terms of median income.

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The primary worries among Kinmen people are about the tourism economy, and the ongoing restrictions on bilateral travel and trade privileges between their island and Xiamen, which were suspended during the pandemic and only partially restored.

Still, there are some concerns that tensions after the capsized vessel will deter tourists. A taxi driver and hotelier both thought fewer domestic visitors have come since the capsized incident. A couple from Taiwan's main island, surnamed Qiu and Li, say they were worried while planning their visit, but felt reassured once they arrived.

Some residents are concerned about maritime enforcement. At a fish market in Jincheng township, vendors say some fishing crew and tour boats are nervous to head offshore since Chinese patrols ramped up.

"They are worried about safety, and we are also afraid of conflict," says Zhang, a seafood seller.

"We don't think there is any hostility because [fishing crews] sometimes trade at sea, [but] the problem of smuggling is very serious, and sometimes the marine patrols will take care of it, but there are few of us and a lot of them."

In the past, China and Taiwan have cooperated on illegal activity in the strait but the future is now complicated.

Raymond Kuo, a political scientist at the Rand Corporation, says the standoff increases the risk of misunderstandings and accidents.

"Not just between Chinese and Taiwanese enforcement agencies, but also between those agencies and civilians in the area," he says.

"Whose rules and orders should they follow? What if they receive contradictory instructions? This disagreement in enforcement jurisdictions also creates opportunities for illegal activity."

Chinese negotiators left Kinmen weeks ago without an agreement on compensation. Taiwan's Ocean Affairs Council minister, Kuan Bi-ling, has apologised for poor evidence-collecting by Taiwan's coast guard, and expressed regret and condolences over the deaths. But Taiwan's investigation is ongoing, and further information would not be released until it was completed, she said.

On Wednesday last week,, Chen Binhua, spokesperson for China's Taiwan Affairs Office, accused Taipei of stalling, and threatened further countermeasures.

Less than 24 hours later, at least two Chinese fishers were killed in another capsized vessel, this time a registered fishing vessel near Dongding, Kinmen's southernmost island. It was inside the prohibited waters, but the cause wasn't clear. Chinese and Taiwanese authorities conducted the search and rescue, suggesting that at least for now, some cooperation is continuing.

But so are the increased patrols. Over the weekend, four Chinese coastguard vessels entered Kinmen's waters on consecutive days, causing confusion among Taiwanese officials who had just sent help to the capsized vessel.

Tung says the "silent agreement" on the border is gone now, but hopes the two sides can formalise it during negotiations.

Lu too is hopeful that the two sides can move on, and Kinmen's unique position between the two can return to friendlier times.

"The incident could have been minimised in the first place, but now it has become an international issue," he says.

### Developments that rattled China in a fortnight

18 March 2024, The New Indian Express

Interesting developments in the domain of Sino-Indian relations took place almost simultaneously last fortnight. The relationship has not been in the best of states since May 2020, when the East Ladakh standoff commenced between the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the Indian Army and resulted in some serious clashes at Galwan on June 15, 2020. The relationship seemed to dive only further south.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently inaugurated the Sela Tunnel, which has been bored at a cost of ₹825 crore and is 1.5 km long at a height of 3,000 metres, well below the height of 4,200 metres at which the Sela Pass exists. The Chinese seemed to have their age-old objection about the visit of any dignitary to Arunachal Pradesh, which they claim as their territory called Southern Tibet (or Zangnam). For the Indian PM, it was perhaps a carefully thought-out measure to assert sovereignty and project a sense of strategic confidence in the face of repeated psychological warfare. The completion of the tunnel in an area it calls its own is itself objected to by the PLA. Little does China and its official media, The Global Times, say about the entire corridor it has constructed through Gilgit-Baltistan, an area legitimately belonging to India.

Militarily, the Sela tunnel acts as a force multiplier in the speedy deployment of troops to hot war locations in the Kameng division of Arunachal Pradesh, one of the regions where the PLA and the Indian Army clashed during the Sino-Indian border war in 1962. With all-weather rapid induction of troops, the tunnel



provides a psychological boost for India's military commanders who have always had to fret over the optimum size of deployment for winter and the quantum of winter stocking of supplies and ammunition.

For the layman, it needs to be understood that on the PLA side beyond the Bumla pass north of Tawang, the Tibetan plateau opens out into rolling plains, making logistics and reinforcements the least of its problems. Almost on the same lines, Eastern Ladakh also bears for the Indian Army the challenge of the Ladakh range from Leh to the battle areas. Srinagar and Pathankot have a problem of winter connectivity to Leh through the Himalayan and the Zaskar ranges. For the PLA, Indian infrastructure development should be worrisome, but India is only doing what the PLA did 20-30 years ago and continues to do. It should also be aware that permanent locations with habitat and storage have come up in important places all along the LAC, converting it almost akin to the LoC, which is manned very densely by the Indian Army to prevent any loss of territory.

The other development is in the field of future weaponry. India tested the Made-in-India Agni-5 missile with multiple independently targetable reentry vehicle (MIRV) technology. MIRVs consist of several reentry vehicles, each equipped to carry multiple warheads (2-10) that can be designated for various targets, spaced hundreds of kilometres apart. Alternatively, multiple warheads can target a single location.

This is different from other missile technologies, where a single missile carries only one warhead and targets only a single location. Under Project Divyastra, this is a classic Indian achievement. Only the five big powers possess this capability, which is complex enough to let the warheads be decoys for the adversary's anti-ballistic missiles, or cause far greater destruction through delivery of nuclear munitions to multiple targets several kilometres apart. While the US MIRV capability exists at 12,000-15,000 km, it is not just the long range but the achievement of complex technologies of reentry and multiple targeting that gives greater nuclear deterrence capability to India in a calibrated way. Although Pakistan is reported to be developing a similar capability, India's progress is not aimed at any one adversary but a broad future range of contingencies where the possession of such capability provides inherent deterrence.

Some interesting outcomes appear evident from the successful India MIRV launch. Firstly, with the MIRV range at 5,000 km (with perhaps more to come) China's Global Times quotes Qian Feng, a director of one of its research departments, as saying, "It particularly shows that India's main hypothetical

enemy is China, with its goal of having missile coverage over China to enhance deterrence capabilities." What China, its leadership and military hierarchy have to realise is that India, too, is developing at a fast rate and gaining greater confidence as its economy, research and development, technology and human parameters all improve. This is natural for any nation to aspire for.

India is fully perceptive that China does not wish to see India grow and become an alternative pole in Asia. Understanding the inevitability of India's growth, China wishes to scuttle whatever it can to delay the achievement of India's aspiration. The actions China commenced in April-May 2020 in Ladakh have been followed by a tirade of hostility to force India to commit itself far more to its strategic security. It continues to include a mix of various measures to keep India on the defensive; the most recent being the placement of spy vessels of the PLA Navy in the vicinity of India's maritime zone to obtain data from Indian technology tests such as the MIRV. Terming 10,000 Indian troops in Eastern Ladakh, under various stages of re-orbating, as increments on the LAC, when these troops have remained deployed here since April-May 2020, is also unfortunate.

What China needs to realise is that keeping Sino-Indian relations in the grey zone of 'friend, adversary, partner or collaborator' is not helpful to either nation. In a competitive world, with a young population and dynamic human capital, India has all the potential to grow beyond the threshold of a middle power; events such as landmark technological achievements will continuously contribute to China's unfortunate perceptions, and the scope for that will increase manifold with more progress. It probably fears this happening before it has achieved its own threshold objectives, such as the re-integration of all its perceived former territories. Being a potential superpower too, it's not easy to let go of perceptions. Can India do anything more to ease misperception and intent? It will give us more leeway for rapid growth and perhaps even collaboration. Time to think.

### **Upholding one-China principle an unstoppable historical trend**

18 March 2024, People's Daily Online

The separatist activities for "Taiwan independence" are the most destructive elements to the peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, said Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi when answering questions from Chinese and foreign media about China's foreign policy and external relations recently.

To truly safeguard cross-Strait peace, the world must unequivocally oppose "Taiwan independence." The stronger the commitment to the one-China principle is, the greater the guarantee for the peace across the Strait will be, said Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee.

This solemn stance on the Taiwan-related issues made by the Chinese government has given a serious warning to the "Taiwan independence" separatist forces and external forces behind them, once again sending a powerful message that the historical trend of upholding the one-China principle is unstoppable. Taiwan is China's Taiwan. The elections in Taiwan held this January are just local elections in one part of China. The result does not change, even in the slightest terms, the basic fact that Taiwan is part of China. Nor does it change the historical trend of Taiwan's return to the motherland.

Since the elections ended, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokespersons promptly shared the reaction of the international community to the elections. In just a few days, more than 100 countries and international organizations have reaffirmed their commitment to the one-China principle and their support for China in safeguarding its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Serbia said in a statement that Serbia, in accordance with its consistent policy and advocacy for adherence to the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, supports the one-China principle, that it does not recognize the statehood of Taiwan.

The Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade reaffirmed Hungary's commitment to the one-China principle in the country's foreign policy.

Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda, Prime Minister of Nepal, said Nepal opposes "Taiwan independence," never allows others to use Nepal's territory to engage in any activities that harm China's interests, and opposes any interference in the internal affairs of other countries.

The spokesperson of the Russian Foreign Ministry Maria Zakharova said that the Russian side opposes any form of Taiwan's independence, and called on all outside forces to refrain from provocative actions undermining regional stability and international security.

The Syrian Foreign Ministry said that Taiwan is an inalienable part of the People's Republic of China, and any election or action carried out in Taiwan should not affect this fact.

Leaders of the Maldives, Sierra Leone and other countries issued joint press communiques or joint statements with the Chinese side during their visits to China, reaffirming their commitment to the one-China principle, opposition to external interference in

China's internal affairs, and support of all efforts made by China to achieve national reunification.

These voices of justice and peace reflect the broad consensus of the international community in firmly upholding the UN Charter and the basic norms governing international relations, and embody the trend of the times and of history.

The one-China principle is what underpins peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. Whatever changes take place in Taiwan, the basic fact that there is only one China in the world and Taiwan is part of China will not change; the Chinese government's position of upholding the one-China principle and opposing "Taiwan independence" separatism, "two Chinas" and "one China, one Taiwan" will not change; and the international community's prevailing consensus on upholding the one-China principle and long-standing and overwhelming adherence to this principle will not change.

A few countries, out of geopolitical considerations and ideological confrontation, have chosen to stand in opposition to the vast majority of countries in the international community, obscuring and hollowing out the one-China principle. While paying lip service to not supporting "Taiwan independence," they announce arms sales to Taiwan and collude with the "Taiwan independence" separatist forces.

The Democratic Progressive Party authority has obstinately adhered to the separatist position of "Taiwan independence" and refused to recognize the one-China principle and the 1992 Consensus. It made provocations in pursuit of "independence" in collusion with external forces. Such acts of undermining the one-China principle are despicable and deplorable. These are the root causes of the tensions across the Taiwan Strait.

The Chinese government and people have a clear stance on such plots and tricks. Whoever engages in "Taiwan independence" on the island will be held accountable by history. Whoever in the world connives at and supports "Taiwan independence" will get burned for playing with fire and taste the bitter fruit of their own doing.

Standing up for the one-China principle is the right thing to do. It has the overwhelming support of the international community and represents the prevailing trend of the world. A total of 183 countries have established diplomatic relations with China based on the one-China principle. Taiwan's number of so-called "diplomatic allies" has been reduced to 12, and these countries only account for less than 0.3 percent of the world's population. It's obvious to see which one represents the mainstream and the general trend.

On Jan. 15 this year, the day after the elections in Taiwan concluded, the Nauru government announced its recognition of the one-China principle

and severed the so-called "diplomatic relations" with the Taiwan authorities. The country said it is willing to resume diplomatic relations with China.

On Jan. 24, China and Nauru signed a joint communique on the resumption of diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level. Nauru's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Lionel Aingimea said during his visit to China that the one-China principle is an irresistible trend in the world.

It is believed that more members of the international community will see the historical trend and choose to establish or resume diplomatic relations with China. The international community's prevailing consensus on upholding the one-China principle will become more solid. The Chinese people's just cause of opposing "Taiwan independence" separatism and external interference and striving for national reunification will win more understanding and support.

Some day, there will be a family photo of the whole international community in which all members uphold the one-China principle. It is only a matter of time.

### **The 2nd session of the 14th NPC: The Government Work Report and Key Takeaways for Inner Mongolia, Tibet and Xinjiang**

18 March 2024, Rinzin Namgyal, FNVA

The commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the National People's Congress (NPC) stands as a pivotal juncture in the evolution of China's political framework. Despite enduring perceptions characterizing the NPC as a mere rubber stamp institution, its historical trajectory reveals a substantive legacy of consequential deliberations. Premier Li Qiang's delivery of the government work report during the second session of the 14th NPC underscores this significance, as it serves to delineate key policy initiatives and priorities of the state. Furthermore, scholarly attention is merited towards the NPC's policy directives concerning ethnic minority regions, indicative of China's persistent endeavors towards societal cohesion through assimilative measures. Such analyses contribute to a nuanced understanding of the NPC's multifaceted role within China's political landscape and its implications for governance dynamics.

Government Work Report:

Premier Li Qiang's presentation of the government work report on March 5th served as a focal point for highlighting a spectrum of policy measures. Significantly, the event was preceded by a pre-report seminar wherein insights from eight experts were solicited and incorporated.

Key highlights include:

1. The establishment of a GDP growth target for 2024 at approximately 5 percent, signaling a strategic trajectory for economic expansion.
  2. Facilitation of over 12 million employment opportunities within urban sectors, aligning with objectives to bolster labor market vitality and sustain socioeconomic stability.
  3. Implementation of targeted fiscal measures, including the issuance of special-purpose bonds for local government projects and ultra-long special treasury bonds, to optimize financing mechanisms and support infrastructural development endeavors.
  4. Introduction of the AI Plus initiative alongside a concerted drive to foster innovation in disruptive technologies, underscoring commitments to technological advancement and competitive positioning in global markets.
  5. Adoption of comprehensive measures to invigorate consumer spending and catalyze domestic demand, pivotal for fortifying economic resilience and ensuring sustained growth momentum.
  6. Affirmation of national treatment principles for foreign-funded enterprises and active participation in international trade agreements, indicative of a steadfast commitment to fostering a conducive business environment and deepening global economic integration.
  7. Implementation of targeted risk mitigation strategies to address challenges pertaining to property markets, local government debt dynamics, and the resilience of financial institutions, aiming to safeguard financial stability and mitigate systemic vulnerabilities.
  8. Prioritization of the energy revolution agenda alongside resolute opposition to external interference, reflecting a strategic imperative to enhance energy security and safeguard national sovereignty in economic decision-making.
- Ethnic Minority Regions:
- Ethnic minority regions are divided into cultivated (Shufan) and uncultivated (Shengfan) areas, with historical perceptions of hierarchies.
- The plenary sessions for Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet shed light on regional policies:
1. In Inner Mongolia, the strategic objective is the integration of ethnic minority communities within the broader societal framework, concurrently prioritizing stability initiatives and countering separatist tendencies.
  2. Xinjiang maintains a trajectory of assimilationist policies, with a particular emphasis on the Sinicization of Islam, coupled with efforts aimed at sustaining social cohesion and stability.
  3. Tibet's policy emphasis lies on fostering peace, stability, and development, notwithstanding environmental preservation challenges and the

imperative of safeguarding cultural heritage amidst modernization efforts.

#### Observations and Analysis:

The proceedings of the National People's Congress (NPC) and plenary sessions elucidate a sustained pursuit of assimilationist policies within ethnic minority regions. Guided by the leadership and ideological framework espoused by Xi Jinping, these initiatives prompt inquiries into their alignment with constitutional precepts and laws pertaining to ethnic autonomy. Notably, deliberations underscore the government's concerted attention towards rural revitalization, modernization, and the pursuit of high-quality development as central tenets of governance priorities.

#### Conclusion:

The convening of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) second session underscores China's steadfast dedication to fostering economic growth and ensuring stability.

Nevertheless, the deliberations on policies concerning ethnic minority regions illuminate persistent complexities in reconciling assimilation endeavors with imperatives of cultural preservation and legal autonomy. A nuanced comprehension of these intricate dynamics offers valuable insights into the prospective trajectory of China's ethnic policies and their implications for the nation's socio-political landscape.

### **Economic diplomacy: Charting the course for China-U.S. relationship**

18 March 2024, CGTN

In the ever-evolving landscape of global commerce, few relationships carry as much weight as that between China and the United States. Despite apparent economic tensions between the two countries, stemming primarily from Washington's polarized politics and its policy of treating China as a rival, recent diplomatic efforts signify an ongoing commitment to keeping channels of communication open.

"The Americans have woken up and realized that China is a great power, which was inevitable - if China was successful economically, it would become a great power. And they find this very, very difficult to handle," remarked Martin Wolf, Chief Economics Commentator at the Financial Times, at a roundtable organized by the Beijing-based Center for China and Globalization (CCG) in the Chinese capital last month.

"The bottom line is we should take politics out of commerce... If there's a national security issue, let's deal with that. If there's no national security issue, let's leave it at that," emphasized Eric Zheng, President of AmCham Shanghai, speaking exclusively

with CGTN. "If it's a commercial issue then let the market decide," he added.

The recent visit of an American business delegation to China, led by Suzanne Clark, President and CEO of the influential U.S. Chamber of Commerce, underscored the importance of maintaining dialogue and pursuing economic diplomacy. Clark's meetings with top Chinese officials, including Premier Li Qiang, emphasized the "extremely important" nature of China-U.S. relations.

"I think all of us want an outcome where the world's two largest economies can coexist in a way that isn't defined by zero-sum metrics," Clark had earlier said. "We want to create a framework...where we can compete on a level playing field, confront challenges in the relationship, and cooperate on big global priorities."

Clark's visit was welcomed by the American business community in China. "It's good to have somebody like Ms. Clark visiting China so that she could demonstrate to the audience back home in the U.S. that engagement (and) commercial relationship with China is important," Zheng stressed.

Despite the apparent China-U.S. tensions, a large number of American companies remain upbeat on China as a business and investment destination, as revealed in the latest report by the American Chamber of Commerce in China (AmCham China) released last month. Another report by AmCham South China found that 90 percent of American companies have achieved profitability in China, reflecting a high return on investment (ROI).

"We represent U.S. companies in China, so we certainly see the commercial benefits from that angle," Zheng noted. "When you talk about manufacturing, and certainly China has become a major manufacturing base exporting affordable products to the U.S. So, from a manufacturing standpoint, global supply chain standpoint, these two countries have benefited from this relationship. And from a consumption standpoint, certainly China is a huge market, not only for China itself but also for foreign companies," he elaborated.

However, despite striking a positive chord in Beijing and recognizing the significance of China-U.S. economic relations, Clark's own views continue to defend American protectionism, as gauged from her remarks at the 13th annual China Business Conference in Washington D.C. last year.

"The U.S. Chamber supports targeted and responsible steps to restrict Chinese access to sensitive technologies that could be used to undermine America's national security, including export controls, technology restrictions, and scrutiny of outbound investment," Clark said at the conference, however clarifying that "not every economic interaction with China poses a national

security risk" and that "there is still a vast area of commercial opportunity where the two countries can and should engage productively."

This sentiment is mirrored in the Biden administration's strategy of "decoupling" or adopting a "small yard, high fence" approach that seeks to restrict economic engagement with China, particularly in high-tech sectors like artificial intelligence (AI) and semiconductor development. Premier Li Qiang pointed out the detrimental effects of this approach to the visiting American business delegation led by Clark.

Wolf offers a slightly different perspective. "When [U.S. National Security Advisor] Jake Sullivan says, 'We are trying to build a high fence but with a small yard,' I think he means it... They don't want open-ended conflict with China. They want a deal which narrows things... they want trade to continue and they want to be able to do deals with China on very important joint interests like climate which this administration believes in and other things."

The American business community in China recognizes the importance of maintaining robust economic relations between the two countries. "Decoupling is not a feasible option given the extensive commercial and cultural integration between the U.S. and China over the past four decades. Finding ways to work together remains in the best interests of both countries," concluded Zheng.

Despite the complexities and challenges, the economic relationship between China and the U.S. remains indispensable on the global stage. As we navigate through this intricate landscape, it's evident that constructive dialogue and cooperation are vital for both nations. While tensions may persist, the mutual benefits of collaboration far outweigh the alternatives, reinforcing the necessity of economic diplomacy in charting the course for China-U.S. relations.

### **Rahul Sankrityayan's Tibet connect debunks false Chinese narrative**

17 March 2024, Firstpost

During the annual 'Two Meetings' in Beijing, it was announced that China's defence budget for 2024 would be \$231.36 billion, an increase of 7.2 per cent from the previous year (about thrice the size of the Indian defence budget); it is a large increase, especially when one knows that official figures are only a fraction of the actual spending by the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

Li Jie, a Beijing-based naval expert, told the Chinese Communist Party mouthpiece *The Global Times*: "By 2027, the Chinese military will have the ability to effectively deal with threats brought by hegemonism

and power politics in the western Pacific region, including issues relating to the Taiwan question and the South China Sea, as well as border tensions between China and India."

It is clear that the increase in the Chinese budget is targeting not only Taiwan, the 'rebel island', but also India.

In these circumstances, it is necessary for Delhi to think 'out of the box'.

One of the many alternatives is to supplement military preparedness with 'Historical Warfare'; this would not cost much to the exchequer and would help refocus and motivate the defence forces on the border.

It would also put the boundary question in its proper historical perspective; for millennia, Northern India has been contiguous to Tibet, an independent nation till the end of the 1950s, not to China; the same is true for Eastern Turkestan (now called Xinjiang).

In this context, I recently became acquainted with the fascinating life of Mahapandita Rahul Sankrityayan, one of the greatest Indian scholars who wrote some 130 books.

He was a great wandering scholar, spending 45 years of his life away from home on Asian and Western roads.

Rahul Ji, as he was known by his followers, was born Kedarnath Pandey to an Orthodox Hindu Brahmin family in Pandha village of Azamgarh district in Uttar Pradesh on April 9, 1893. He was the eldest child of six siblings. Though he only received a formal education up to grade eight (in Urdu language in his village), Sankrityayan later mastered some 34 languages.

His maternal grandfather, Ram Sharan Pathak, an ex-soldier, with his innumerable tales of valour and adventure, planted the seed of love for travelling in him; already at the age of 9, he ran away from home 'to see the world' and only after having visited Calcutta and Varanasi did he return to complete his middle school.

One of his biographers wrote: "Sankrityayan's life, work, and ideas were steeped in and spread through many cultures, disciplines, and geographies. Born in a Sanatani Brahmin family, he lived variously the life of a Vaishnava sadhu, an Arya Samaji polemicist, a Buddhist monk, an antiquarian and scholar of Buddhism, a political activist jailed for anti-colonial speeches (1920 and 1923-1925) and beaten up by the henchmen of landlords in a peasant movement in Bihar (1939), a self-professed communist, a progressive writer, a novelist, a historian, a biographer, a language activist, a linguist, lexicographer, and so forth."

Sankrityayan indeed lived multiple lives in one, always ready to change his worldview while remaining profoundly human.



From 1914 till 1930, he lived as a Vaishnava sannyasi; in 1939, Rahul Ji converted to Buddhism; this did not stop him from participating in the freedom movement, and between the years 1936 and 1944, he was actively involved in the peasant movement. During this period, he spent 29 months in jail (1940–42) for being a member of the Communist Party of India.

When free, he extensively travelled to Sri Lanka, the Soviet Union, the Far East, Central Asia, Iran, Afghanistan, and Western Europe.

Sankrityayan's four visits to Tibet are fascinating as they are a vibrant proof of the century-old linkages between India and Tibet (a fact denied by Communist China today) and a proof that Tibet is truly a child of Indian civilisation (as the Dalai Lama likes to put it).

It is important in the present tense context of Sino-Indian relations to not forget this.

During his trips to Tibet, this polymath managed to bring back to their land of origin some 1,619 valuable manuscripts and thankha paintings; he employed 16 mules to bring the precious loads to Bihar, where they are today kept in a special section of the Patna Museum.

In Tibet, Rahul Ji met his Tibetan 'counterpart', probably the greatest Tibetan scholar of the first part of the 20th century, Gendun Choepel. Rahul Ji called him 'Geshe' ('Kalyanamitra' in Sanskrit) or 'Brother in the Dharma'. In Tibet, Geshe denoted a high degree of knowledge and was equivalent to a PhD in Buddhist studies.

The Mahapandita recounted: "My first meeting with Geshe took place in Lhasa. He was a disciple of Geshe Sherab, the most learned pandit of Drepung, the largest monastery in Tibet. Geshe Sherab was an authority on philosophy; thus, his disciple would also be a student of the same subject."

However, Gedun was not only a student of philosophy; he was also a poet and had mastered traditional and modern Tibetan painting: "As a talented artist, he could live a comfortable life in Lhasa. However, Geshe never aspired to a comfortable life."

Like Rahul Ji, Gedun was a wanderer, an adventurer, with an insatiable thirst for knowledge, always wanting to acquire more knowledge.

Sankrityayan recalled: "[In 1934] I realised that his depth of classical learning combined with his artistic background would be invaluable to me in the search for ancient MSS [manuscripts]... On his part, he wanted to accompany me to India and see and learn more. We became friends from that time onwards."

Thus started the search for the lost manuscripts of Nalanda and the other great viharas of Northern India; the two pandits wanted to rediscover the centuries-old linkage between India and Tibet.

They first visited the ancient monasteries north of Lhasa, then they went to Reting monastery, established in the 11th century: "Tibet has a scanty rainfall, and at the time of our arrival, richly painted thangkas had been hung out for an airing. Geshe's heart leapt at the sight. They were of Indian workmanship, and it is also possible that they had been brought from India." They copied them.

In his memoirs, Rahul Ji noted: "My Tibetan journeys were a combination of bitter-sweet experiences—the bitterness as extreme as the sweet. Sometimes, animals to carry us and our goods were as readily provided as a householder's hospitality. Sometimes, though we ourselves were willing to walk, we could not hire porters, and it was difficult to get a yard of space to rest ourselves."

His following visit to Tibet was a great success: "I saw many dozens of ancient Sanskrit MMS. I was able to photograph many of them and copy down many by hand."

The day of May 25, 1936, was memorable: "We were informed by Dolma Phodrang [one of the temples in Sakya monastery] that they had received the key to Chakpe Lhakhang... I had very little expectation that I would find a Sanskrit manuscript there. After arriving, I turned to the left and found the first stockroom. The door and doorframe seemed centuries old. Who knows how many years of dust must have been collected? On one occasion, dust spread so profusely that the whole stockroom was blanketed as if in smoke."

The Mahapandita continued his exploration: "We waited a little and then moved in. There was also enough dust on the floor to make footprints. We found hundreds of scriptures there, some wrapped in cloth, while others had been left uncovered. Among them, we found scriptures as old as seven and eight hundred years. These were the texts that had been written and read by great ancient Tibetan masters and scholars. They were precious jewels of Tibetan literature and history." They had found the lost manuscripts.

Rahul Ji continued to explore the room: "I was searching for palm leaf manuscripts in Sanskrit. After browsing here and there, I found one which was not wrapped in cloth. One, two, three, four... I found twenty manuscripts in all. I opened one and began to look at it. I was overjoyed."

This discovery symbolises the age-old relationship between Tibet and India.

Today, it is important to remember these ancient linkages (there are many others), which bear testimony to the deep connections between the people of India and Tibet.

If these connections could be revived in any way, it could completely change the perspective of the conflict with China and Beijing's erroneous narrative

for the border 'dispute'. In the meantime, Beijing should be reminded that Tibet has been (and is still geographically) India's northern neighbour. And real heroes like Mahapandita or Geshe should not be forgotten; on the contrary, they should be honoured, and a young generation of historians should be encouraged to boldly follow in the footsteps of the wandering scholars.

### **Tibetans in Exile – Raising Voices for a Distant Homeland**

13 March 2024, Vision Times

Tibetans in Calgary spoke out against human rights violations in China on the 65th anniversary of the 1959 Tibetan Uprising.

CALGARY, Alberta — Tenzin Tsepel's dearest dream is to see the Potala Palace with her own eyes. She enjoys watching YouTube videos of tourists visiting the massive fortress in Lhasa, the Tibetan capital. She grew up in southern India, like thousands of Tibetans who fled their homeland after it was occupied by Communist China in 1950. Her grandparents followed the Dalai Lama on foot across the Himalayas, escaping persecution after the Tibetan uprising of March 10, 1959.

"To me, [Tibet] feels like home. But at the same time, I feel like it's a home that was stolen from me, and I was raised mountains away from my homeland," Tsepel said.

On March 10, 2024, in an annual event followed by Tibetans worldwide, Tsepel marched with other members of the community in Calgary to commemorate the 65th Tibetan National Uprising Day.

As customary, they held a two-hour static protest in front of the People's Republic of China (PRC) Consulate to denounce the CCP's human rights abuses.

On the same day, Tibetans in Toronto joined with supporters for a protest rally that saw 1,900 participants, including members of the Chinese democracy movement, gather before the city's PRC consulate.

Sheng Xue, vice chairperson of the Federation for a Democratic China, gave a speech at the Toronto event praising the Tibetans' continued resistance to the CCP and urged others to help end communist tyranny in China.

"China has constructed dams along [Tibet's major] rivers, not only harming aquatic life, but also destroying and flooding local villages and displacing Tibetans," Tsepel said.

She added that the regime "has also made efforts to forcibly separate Tibetan children, over one million – that is three quarters of the Tibetan children

population in Tibet – to place [them] in colonial boarding schools."

Tsepel compared the CCP's boarding schools in Tibet with the Indian residential schools in Canada's history.

"These children are now not only indoctrinated, but they are forbidden from speaking our own language, from practicing our culture and religion," she said. "You can imagine the profound intergenerational trauma."

During the 20th century, Tibet exercised independent rule despite being a sovereign part of the Chinese republic. In 1949, the legal Chinese government was toppled by communist armies, who established a repressive totalitarian regime.

According to the U.S. Department of State, human rights abuses in Tibet under communist rule include unlawful or arbitrary killings and arrests, disappearances, torture, and cases of cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment, such as transformation through re-education and rape of Buddhist girls and nuns.

The CCP claims that its occupation has brought Tibet prosperity and emancipation, calling the region's Buddhist culture a "feudal serfdom" that was transformed into a progressive and civilized "socialist system," as mentioned in an article by state-run paper the Global Times.

In an emailed response to a Vision Times reporter, the PRC Consulate in Calgary did not directly comment on the protest, but stressed that "Xizang has been an integral part of Chinese territory since ancient times," using the Mandarin Chinese name for Tibet. It also appended the PRC's white papers on the subject in its response.

According to Tibetan estimates, 1.2 million Tibetans have died as a result of the Communist Party's tyranny, including at least 85,000 who perished during and following the 1959 uprising that led to the Dalai Lama's flight. A report by the UN Refugee Agency found that Chinese regime authorities burned sacred Tibetan texts and destroyed more than 6,000 monasteries in Tibet during the Cultural Revolution.

The consulate's response ignored the human rights abuses ongoing in Tibet, and repeated the Party's claims of having led the region down a "bright road of unity, progress and development."

Apart from Tibetans and Tibetan Buddhism, the CCP has endeavored to destroy or subvert all religious faith in China. Independent Christians, Muslims, and practitioners of the Falun Gong spiritual practice have been subject to decades of harsh persecution ranging from fines to being harvested alive for their organs.

"In recent years, the Tibetan issue has almost been cast aside," said Dorjee Parsur, co-president of Students for a Free Tibet at the University of Calgary.

"Since we march every year, we want to make sure that people remember that major events are still occurring in Tibet."

Dorjee, born in Calgary, says he's proud of his culture and identity, and stressed the importance of Buddhism for Tibetan culture.

"I think that it [Buddhism] makes me a better person in general," he said. "We believe that the merits of our good actions will result in good favor, and I believe that good will eventually triumph over evil."

As for Tenzin, she dreams of visiting the town where her grandparents were born and raised.

"I do want to be able to go to my country, see the landscape, see the mountains and [feel] the air," she said. "I feel like it'll bring me to tears, really."

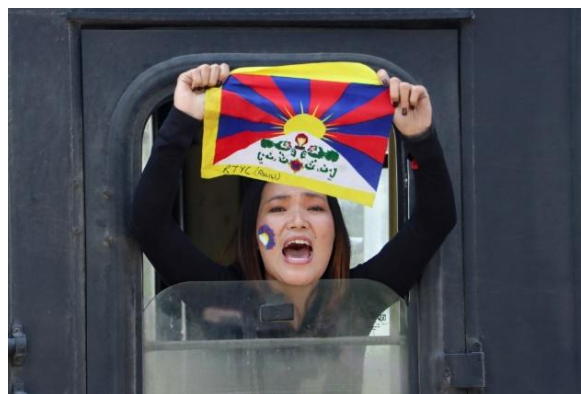
### **Exposing China's Human Rights Charade Under Xi Jinping: Insights From China's Fourth U.N. Universal Periodic Review and Beyond**

13 March 2024, Tenzing Dhamdul, Domino Theory

I first heard of the United Nations Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review in detail during the International Tibet Youth Forum held at Dharamshala, where it was introduced to us by a member of the Tibet Justice Center. This, along with my eventual participation in the Asia Regional Meeting in Tokyo organized by the International Tibet Network, equipped me to participate in the India Advocacy Week in December 2023. The week was a coalition of organizations working for Tibet, namely the International Tibet Network, Students for a Free Tibet, the Tibetan Youth Congress, the National Democratic Party of Tibet, the Foundation for Non-Violent Alternatives, and the Voluntary Tibet Advocacy Group. During this event, we met and engaged with Indian parliamentarians, highlighting that China's fourth review was about to take place.

The Universal Periodic Review is a three-hour examination of a U.N. member's human rights record conducted by all other U.N. member states. This review mechanism was established in March 2006 by U.N. General Assembly resolution 60/251 with the aim of promoting and protecting human rights in every country. Since the first periodic review in 2008, all 193 member states have each been reviewed three times. The review process is currently in its fourth cycle, which began in November 2022.

The People's Republic of China underwent its fourth review on January 23, 2024 at the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva. More than 21 U.N. member states raised questions and brought recommendations, shedding light on, among other abuses, the gross violations of human rights in Tibet.



A Tibetan activist stages a protest at the Chinese embassy in New Delhi on March 11, a day after the 65th Tibetan National Uprising Day against the Chinese occupation of Tibet. (Photo: AFP)

When it comes to Tibet, there was a twofold increase in the number of member nations calling out China on its human rights record compared to China's third review in 2018. Member states that raised concerns about Tibet, shedding light on, among other abuses, the gross violations of human rights in Tibet, included the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, France, Lithuania, Japan, Sweden, Norway, Austria, Switzerland, Poland, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Ireland, Montenegro, New Zealand, Canada, Denmark, Belgium and Estonia.

Even Pakistan, a close strategic ally of China, called for China to "further intensify international cultural and religious exchanges, especially through more visits to Xinjiang and Tibet."

Thinley Chukki, the official representative of the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration at the Tibet Bureau in Geneva, stated that, "The colonial boarding school system, which targets the very culture and identity of Tibetans in occupied Tibet, was exposed and brought to light by many of these states, and hearing them speak on it was profound." However, she was dismayed to hear blatant lies uttered by the Chinese representatives when addressing their human rights report to the U.N. floor. The Chinese representatives said these boarding schools were established because Tibetans lived far from their schools, when the truth is that the Chinese systematically shut down schools near Tibetans and intentionally established these boarding schools – where the main language of instruction is Mandarin – to separate young Tibetans from their families and culture, thereby cutting them off from their traditional roots.

The Chinese representatives were well prepared, as they are aware of the gross violations of human rights their country commits. Some of the tactics they utilized in the lead-up and post Universal Periodic Review included:

1. Hosting their own side events both before and after review sessions, both of which praised China's human rights track record, with some participants and speakers calling out the West for the double standards it sets. On January 22, a side event titled "Putting Development at the Center of the Agenda: Safeguarding Economic, Social and Cultural Rights" took place in Geneva. On January 24, another side event titled "Human Rights and Chinese Modernization" was organized by Beijing's China Society of Human Rights Studies. Writing in Bitter Winter regarding the latter event, Tenzin Youten, in his article "China's Own Propaganda Side Event at the U.N. Human Rights Council," states that "all the representatives belong to China-based institutes, established and funded by the Chinese government," with none of these experts reporting on the Tibetan uprisings of 2008 and the Uyghurs uprisings of 2009.
2. Utilizing available diplomatic might, especially when it comes to nations of the Global South. This tactic was uncovered by Reuters, which saw diplomatic notes sent by Chinese missions to countries reading, "I would kindly request your delegation to render valuable support to China and make constructive recommendations in the interactive dialogue... taking into account the friendly relations and cooperation between our two countries."
3. The tried and tested intimidation tactic of bringing a large delegation to occupy seats at the review session, which numbered more than 40 diplomats, complimented by a considerable number of Chinese NGOs known as GONGOs, or government-organized NGOs. This tactic was previously reported on by Kunchok Dolma Yakha, Special Appointee for Human Rights at the Tibet Bureau in Geneva, who mentioned that in 2018, during China's third review, her colleague Kalden Tsomo from the Tibet Bureau was screamed at by a Chinese woman to hand over seats Kalden had saved for her Tibetan colleagues. Kalden told the woman she was familiar with these intimidation tactics.
4. Publishing their own narratives in Chinese-owned media. This can be seen from an article titled "U.N. Human Rights Council UPR Working Group adopts Recommendations made to China," published by Xinhua News Agency on January 27, which did not mention any of the Universal Periodic Review Working Group's for China questions and recommendations but instead painted a rosy picture of the session. Similarly, a video taken

from Xinhua was uploaded to YouTube on January 28, 2024 titled "China delivers good performance in UN Periodic Review of Human Rights," by the channel China Human Rights. In the video, Chen Xu (陳旭), China's ambassador to the U.N. Office in Geneva, speaking with the news anchor, said China's Achievements in human rights won international acclaim.

Even with such gaslighting tactics, China lost face in front of an international audience when it came to its gross violations of human rights. There is a clear trend one can notice here, and that is even with China's growing power and influence in the world, nations are gradually coming together and questioning the Chinese Communist Party more strongly than ever. This has become increasingly obvious since Xi Jinping became China's leader, with the suppression of freedoms in Hong Kong, its use of debt traps, and the militarization of islands in the South China Sea.

Further igniting the flames of protest in the Tibetan diasporic community were the arrests of more than 1,000 Tibetans, including monks, for protesting against the construction of a dam expected to destroy six monasteries and forcefully relocate two villages in Dege County, in Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. The recently concluded Ninth International Conference of Tibet Support Groups held in Brussels came out with a statement against this crackdown in Tibet, highlighting the clear and evident duress in Tibet.

One now awaits the verdict of the U.N. report on China's human rights, which is set to be adopted in either June or July. It remains to be seen whether it will recognize these and other ongoing human rights violations occurring in China.

### **'Tibet's path to freedom mirrors challenges faced by Palestine, Ukraine'**

10 March 2024, The Sunday Guardian

Tenzin Tsundue is a leading Tibetan activist and a writer. While speaking to The Sunday Guardian on the occasion of the 65th anniversary of the Tibetan uprising, Tsundue reflects on Tibet's struggle for independence, comparing it to global movements like Palestine and Ukraine. He highlights Tibet's historical bid for independence in 1913 and the 1959 uprising against Chinese rule, resulting in over a million deaths and cultural destruction. Tsundue talks about China's systematic suppression of Tibetan culture, including population influx and language restrictions. While acknowledging India's support for Tibet, he calls for a more active international involvement. Edited excerpts.



Q: March 10 marks the 65th anniversary of the Tibetan Uprising which is perhaps the most significant event that Tibet witnessed since 1900 apart from declaring its independence from China in 1913 (proclamation of independence in 1913), an independence that lasted till 1950. My question to you is whether that brief time period of independence is now a part of history which is unlikely to be witnessed again? Given the military and diplomatic might that China now enjoys, do you believe that another uprising can happen?

A: The Tibetan National Uprising of 10 March 1959 marked the Tibetan people's unrest all across Tibet against the Chinese invasion that slowly occupied Tibet in every sense. This uprising raised a robust Tibetan national resistance across three provinces of Tibet, and also resulted in His Holiness' exile into India. China took twenty years to crush this wave of resistance, and by early 1980s, over a million Tibetans had been killed (one sixth of Tibetan population), more than six thousand monasteries destroyed and the treasures of the monasteries looted by Chinese communist leaders. Tibet was not the only victim of Chinese expansionism. East Turkestan, Southern Mongolia and Manchuria had been invaded and occupied. All of these four occupied countries today make 60% of China's 9.6 million KM<sup>2</sup>.

I am happy you mentioned the thirteenth Dalai Lama's Proclamation of Independence of Tibet of 1913. This gives me the opportunity to explain how this modern day China-Tibet conflict started. The 1911 Chinese war of Independence, Xinhai Revolution was overthrowing the 250 years of Manchu occupation as the foreigner rule and the first independent government was Republic of China with Dr Sun Yat Sen as the first Chinese President. In the enthusiasm, the Chinese freedom fighters were attempting to occupy neighbouring countries as an inheritance of power. When the Chinese war reached certain parts of Tibet, the 13th Dalai Lama escaped to India, but the Chinese were thwarted by the Tibetan army. Returning to Tibet, the Dalai Lama initiated legal reforms to draw Tibet out of backwardness and isolation.

That year in 1913, Tibet signed a treaty with Mongolia where the two neighbouring countries recognized each other's independence (we must

remind Mongolia this). And the next year Tibet signed the McMahon Treaty on 24 March 1914, which India recognizes even today as Tibet's ceding of Tawang Region (Arunachal Pradesh) to British India in lieu of British India's promise to intervene in demarcating the borders between Tibet and China.

Today, freedom struggles are no longer unilateral efforts but multi-interest geopolitics; Ukraine and Palestine are good examples right in front of us. Revolutions rise in those moments of hope when people are beaten to despair and are left with nothing to lose. Xi Jinping's insecurity, international isolation of China are windows of hope for us, but ultimately the stringent measures in Tibet will push Tibetans towards another uprising.

Q: The uprising had brought the global focus on the human rights violations and the suppression of cultural and religious freedoms by the Chinese government in Tibet. How would you describe the situation in Tibet now?

A: In 1959, when the issue of Tibet was raised, small countries like El Salvador, Malaya, Ireland, Malta, Nicaragua, Thailand and Philippines spoke up for Tibet in the United Nations. The People's Republic of China was not even a member of the UN. It was the time when Taiwan's Republic of China represented the One China policy. Three resolutions were passed in the UN, 1959, 1961 and 1965 that condemned China's atrocities in Tibet and recommended the right to self-determination for Tibet. Today, even though China wields a veto power in the UN, we are still able to shame China on its disastrous human rights records. And we are not alone. We have freedom fighters from East Turkestan, Southern Mongolia and Manchuria with us in doing this. Even the Chinese democracy activists from China and Hong Kong join us, Taiwan too.

Tibet's second uprising of 2008 at the time of Beijing Olympics was a defining moment in the history of the Tibetan freedom movement. That year the uprising spread all across the Tibetan Plateau like forest fire, mostly led by anonymous youngsters. That year, we lost more than 500 Tibetans to Chinese bullets, thousands wounded and more than 10,000 arrested, some of whom are still in jail today.

The international community's dependence on China trade and supply chains has tremendously raised pressure on mining in Tibet. China has been bombing Tibetan mountains and pasturelands to mine natural resources. China has been mining among others, lithium, gold, copper and rare-earths from Tibet and in the process rough swept Tibetan nomads and farmers from their ancestral lands and resettled them into "reservation" type artificial villages. The natural resources from Tibet and other occupied countries go into making cheap Made-in-China



products, and countries around the world have benefited at the cost of Tibet.

This makes me believe that there is international community's complicity in China's occupation of Tibet. But the culture of consumerism in globalization has made consumers blind and apathetic to the sources of their profits. I have asked intellectuals, politicians, and the media in western countries to do more for Tibet because they have far too long benefited at the cost of Tibet.

Rivers from Tibet that feed more than one and half billion people in South and South East Asian countries and also China are being further dammed and parts of river and electricity diverted to power the industries in China. The recent case of Tibetan protest against further damming of the Yangtze River in Dege region in South Eastern Tibet is a case in point. Monks and nuns have been beaten during the peaceful protest, and over a thousand Tibetans have been arrested.

Q: A major concern in the international community regarding Tibet is the influx of Han Chinese migrants into Tibet that has led to dilution of Tibetan's culture. Can you elaborate on that?

A: The last time I studied population influx in Tibet was China's 2011 census where I saw the Tibetan population was one point less than six million, but the Chinese population in Tibet was standing at 13 million. The 2021 census was opaque and confusing. The statistics didn't spell out racial proportions.

We are concerned about the homogenizing machinery that is Sinicizing culture, language and race in the occupied countries. Not only are inter-racial marriages encouraged, cultural practices like Buddhist pilgrimages, celebration of Buddhist festivals are discouraged, observation of Ramadan is banned in East Turkestan, Muslim women banned from wearing burqas and men from sporting beards.

Since three years, teaching Tibetan language in Tibet has been shut out of the system. Government run boarding schools do not teach Tibetan in China's "bilingual policy". Colonial boarding schools are turning Tibetan children into Chinese.

Racial profiling mechanisms in Tibet include DNA sampling. The Chinese government has been collecting DNA samples from children as young as six years old. Such scrutiny has shocked the world.

Q: India has—despite voices from certain quarters to not accommodate the Tibetan exiles as it would anger China—continued to stand with the Tibetan people for years now. How do the young members of the community see this relationship between India and Tibetan people?

A: Let me start by saying I am not a believer in charity in politics. Policies are driven by short or long term self-interest. As a Tibetan born in India, I believe Tibet attaches soft power value for now when India is

not able to assert her full power against China's expansionist aggression in the Himalayas.

But India's relationship with China has been undulating from warm and cold, and now "abnormal" as Minister of External Affairs, S. Jaishankar reiterates again and again.

Younger generation Tibetans feel our relationship must go beyond "gratitude" and practically participate in dealing with China. Uprisings in Tibet and revolution within China can truly change the dynamics. There is no military solution between the two Asian giants.

Q: Don't you think that the Tibetan freedom movement is more active on social media and international forums but has become subdued on the ground?

A: It's the first time we are able to speak and be heard, even as we experiment vocalizing on social media platforms. Tibet has been always written about by others, today we are able to write our story ourselves, speak our mind in foreign languages and be there where our voices never reached. For the first time we have 80,000 Tibetans who are citizens of different countries in the world and they are able to demand governments to take action, pass resolutions. The new generation of Tibet is making this happen on platforms that our parents never had. The "ground" for us is no longer the street where our slogans were seldom heard, the ground has changed; it's the media, parliament, academia, think-tanks, public debates, and conferences where old notions are thrashed out and new narratives are created.

Q: The Dalai Lama is the most prominent voice of the Tibetan movement. Why has the movement not been able to produce any other prominent face of the movement who is as commonly recognized as the Dalai Lama? Would you ascribe it to the policies followed by China at domestic and at the global level?

A: The fact that we have such a Dalai Lama is everything. We have one person among us who is the most respected and revered living person in the entire world among business tycoons, presidents, dictators and saints. But, we must also work towards leadership in the post Dalai Lama scenario, and it's not easy. You must understand it's been only 65 years since we emerged from isolation and experimented with democracy. The fact that we not only survived, but thrived as a refugee community is a huge success. And this is made possible due to India's humanitarian support.

I believe as long as the US, India and all other countries affected by the dictatorial regime run by the Chinese Communist Party fight this evil, this will naturally support freedom for Tibet and democracy in China.

Q: What can countries like India and the United States do more to strengthen the Tibetan movement?

A: The United States' global supremacy is being challenged and India's Himalayan territorial integrity is being challenged, and the common adversary i.e. China is making these countries natural allies. In the long run they will realize that the only way to deal with China is work with the people of China's occupied countries who have been fighting China for 75 years. Even the US and India were friends with China at one point of time. We have suffered every possible torture and trauma as a people and nation, and yet survived.

Q: You are a prominent member of the Tibetan exile community. How does it feel to be in exile and look forward and wait for something that perhaps might never happen?

A: "Tenzin, what's your chance?" friends often ask me out of sympathy and sometimes mockingly, even the "educated" ones interrogated me. Once, I was even told "Go back if you want to protest". I had gone to Tibet to fight. Got arrested, beaten, jailed and later thrown out saying "You are born in India. You are Indian. Get out."

I understand. When China seems to have overwhelming power with menacing weapons, money and dictating terms on half of the world on business, people cannot imagine a free Tibet. But what has blighted the world's imagination: money and weapons are exactly the same "power" that is causing China their agony in recent years and now. Increasingly the world over the definition of "development" has become unilateral—material growth.

My answer: "यार, गांधी से भी कभी पूछा गया होगा, यार तेरा भी कोई चांस है?" Gandhi too must have been asked the same question: "Gandhi, do you stand any chance?" Looking at the British Empire ruling two thirds of the world and arrogantly saying "The sun never sets on the British Empire". Today, the entire UK can fit inside Rajasthan, one of the states of India. Empires come and go. India took 200 years and the Jews, 2000.

In 70 years of Chinese occupation, China has changed into the world's industry and the only religion left in China is money. We fight with nonviolence and His Holiness the Dalai Lama is our leader. Our country may not be free today, but we are. And one who has freedom in the heart will remain free. Of course, Tibet will be free.

## How exiled Tibetans keep alive the culture of a homeland most have never dared visit

10 March 2024, Hong Kong Free Press

Tibetans will on March 10 mark the 65th anniversary of the 1959 uprising against Chinese forces that led to their spiritual leader the Dalai Lama fleeing into exile, followed by tens of thousands of compatriots.

From teaching centuries-old crafts to cataloguing their language, exiled Tibetans guard the cultural identity of a homeland most have neither seen nor dare visit, and where they say Beijing is eradicating their heritage.

Crouched over a minutely detailed devotional "thangka" painting depicting Buddha, artist Lobsang Tenzin teaches students in northern India.

"It is important to keep the traditions of our history," said the 49-year-old, dipping a needle-thin brush into rich blue paint made from crushed lapis lazuli as six young Tibetan trainees watch.

"These skills were nearly lost, but we pass on the skills by teaching young artists."

Tibetans will on March 10 mark the 65th anniversary of the 1959 uprising against Chinese forces that led to their spiritual leader the Dalai Lama fleeing into exile, followed by tens of thousands of compatriots.

Inside Tibet, the chaos of China's 1966-76 Cultural Revolution left temples razed and monasteries reduced to ruins, destruction that continued in the decades that followed.

Today, activists decry what they say are Beijing's determined efforts to erase what is left of Tibet's cultural and religious identity.

Lhadon Tethong, head of the Tibet Action Institute, condemns what she calls "cultural genocide" — including Beijing's sharp restrictions on Tibetan language, with children "indoctrinated" at state-run boarding schools.

Beijing, which maintains "Tibet is part of China", fiercely rejects the accusations.

Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning this week said that people in Tibet are "living a happy life", in response to UN rights chief Volker Turk's assertion that China was violating fundamental rights.

Tibet enjoys "social stability, economic growth, solidarity among all ethnic groups and harmony among various religious beliefs", she said.

'Former glory'

Tibet scholar Robert Barnett, from SOAS University of London, called Beijing a "foreign ruler deciding what's best for a people whose culture it barely knows".

"There is a gradual whittling away of a culture and a history," Barnett said.

"It is a process where you gradually eliminate all the elements of a history, a people, culture and of a society that are inconvenient to the new rulers."

Tibetan authorities say there are 130,000 Tibetan exiles, many in India and Nepal but also in more than 25 countries worldwide – just a fraction of the seven million living under China's control.

As the decades pass, that makes the preservation of cultural identity even more challenging.

Tenzin studied and now teaches at the Norbulingka Institute, a social enterprise centre training more than 300 men and women in painting, embroidery, weaving and woodcarving.

The complex of red and green Tibetan-style buildings, close to the Dalai Lama's base in India's Himalayan hill town of Dharamsala, was launched in 1995 to employ highly skilled artisans eking out a living with repair jobs.

"After the great masters came to India, they ended up doing odd jobs, trying to build their lives in a new country," said Tsultrim Dorjee, a senior manager at the institute.

"The institute helped them use their skills... the goal was to return Tibetan art to its former glory."

Others take a more modern approach, like 29-year-old artist Tashi Nyima, with his bright cartoon-style canvases that nonetheless still reflect his people's heritage and political battles.

Born and brought up in Dharamsala, where red-robed monks and nuns crowd streets alongside Tibetans in baseball caps and jeans, Nyima said younger generations struggle with a "very mixed identity".

But he remains committed to the cause.

"I've always believed that Tibet will be free one day," he said, in front of his painting of a shackled monk.

"If I didn't have this belief in me, I wouldn't have done these kinds of works – I would have just stopped."

'Long haul'

Another battle is keeping the language alive.

While Google Translate offers 133 languages, Tibetan is not among them – but exiles in 2022 released their own 223-volume dictionary, available online.

"Once the language is preserved, then everything falls in place," said Dorji Damdul, director of Tibet House in New Delhi, founded by the Dalai Lama to promote his people's heritage.

"Language is like the medium through which all the flow of culture and philosophy happens."

But young Tibetans in India are increasingly seeking opportunities in Europe and North America.

Damdul, born in India in 1968 and a former translator for the Dalai Lama, admits that keeping an identity alive is a "major challenge".

"In Tibet, assimilation by force happens with the communist Chinese," said the Buddhist scholar. "In the West, natural assimilation can happen because it's too free."

Tibet's Dharamsala-based government in exile says it is looking to keep the increasingly scattered community connected, including via online conferences teaching younger generations about their history.

"If they understand Tibet a little more, they could be the best advocates," said Penpa Tsering, elected as the government's sikyong, or leader, by Tibetans worldwide.

"Even though we are physically distant, we are mentally close together."

Tsering's administration oversees more than 60 Tibetan language schools in India and Nepal and supports nearly 300 monasteries and nunneries.

"We are here for the long haul," said Tsering. "Don't think that we'll vanish just like that."

### Reassessing Tibet's Plight in the 21st Century

09 March 2024, Financial Express

Tibet has a recorded history dating back to the year 602 when the central Tibetan states were united under the leadership of Namri Songsten.

We have many other examples of Chinese occupation in its different neighbouring regions, from Xinjiang to Hong Kong. However, it all started with Tibet, which became a test case for the Chinese idea of the world where oppression and a pervasive police state have become the new normal. It is also critical to understand that Tibet's plight has become so typical in our daily lives that it has no global momentum like other struggles against oppression in general. Tibet existed as an independent state from 1912 to 1951 until the People's Republic of China annexed the roof of the world and made it an experimental ground for totalitarian practices.

#### A Brief History of Tibet

Tibet has a recorded history dating back to the year 602 when the central Tibetan states were united under the leadership of Namri Songsten. It was also the time when Lhasa became the capital. From the year 602 to 842, it is called the imperial age in Tibetan history. During these long 200 years' time, Chinese and Tibetans have had many border conflicts, which ended with the China-Tibet Peace Treaty of Year 821, where it was established that Tibet is an independent entity. The treaty famously mentions, "Tibetans shall be happy in Tibet, and Chinese shall be happy in China". From 1240 to 1250, Mongols invaded Tibet from Central Asia. However, as Mongol Prince Godan Khan met Tibetan lama Sakya Pandita, the lama became the

spiritual leader of the prince, and it yielded significant autonomy for Tibet, and Buddhism spread across Inner and Central Asia.

From 1270 to 1350, there was a priest-patron relationship between Mongols and Tibetans. It is also essential to mention that during the Mongol rule too, Tibet was separated from China, which was also occupied by Mongols. In 1370, the Mongol empire in China fell to the ethnic Han Chinese. However, Tibet had already broken its ties with Mongols and did not pay any tributes to the Ming rulers of China. A crucial turning point in the Tibetan nation occurred when Mongol ruler Altan Khan gave the title Dalai Lama to Sonam Gyatso, then leader of the Gelugpa school of Buddhism. In return, the Dalai Lama announced Altan Khan as a reincarnation of Kublai Khan. It gave legitimacy to Altan Khan's rule. This event is now a normal priest-patron relationship, but if translated through the Western understanding, it is an example of how the Church (Tibetan monks) gave legitimacy to the State (Mongols in Central Asian highlands).

Things suddenly got haywire for Tibet when, at the start of the 18th century, Dzungar Mongol tribes invaded the nation. To quell the invasion, the Chinese Qing Emperor sent his military, but he took advantage of the volatile situation of Tibet, annexed the Kham and Amdo area, and called Tibet a tributary state. Qing dynasty's influence was not only limited to Tibet but also felt in other neighbouring countries of China, such as Korea, Vietnam, Mongolia, and Nepal.

The reign of the fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso, also known as 'the Great Fifth', marked the unification of Tibet. He created a religious state in Tibet and did not become a subservient to the Ming Chinese empire. It was during the fifth Dalai Lama's reign that the legendary Potala Palace was built. In the subservient time, the hold of Ming China over Tibet started eroding, and as the 13th Dalai Lama described it, it was more of a 'patron and priest' rather than an Empire and subject.

In 1912, the Ming empire in China collapsed, paving the way for the Republic of China. Tibet also reaffirmed its independence from the titular rule of China and expelled the Chinese troops from Lhasa. While reaffirming the independence, the Dalai Lama said, 'we are a small, religious and independent nation'. In 1914, the Shimla treaty occurred between British India, Tibet and China. It gave secular control of Qinghai to China, and the rest of Tibet was considered independent. The refusal to sign this treaty by China made Tibet go under the British Indian fold, where all the Tibetan communications with China happened with the British mediation. After the death of the 13th Dalai Lama, the nationalist government in China led by Kuomintang

ratified the current 14th Dalai Lama and a representative from the government of China named General Wu Zhongxin was there at the ceremony. This event has been widely documented in the international media.

During the height of World War II, Tibet established its foreign office and sent congratulatory missions to China and India. A letter given by the Tibetan Mission in China addressed to Chiang Kai-shek maintained that 'We shall continue to maintain the independence of Tibet as a nation ruled by the successive Dalai Lamas through an authentic religious - political rule'. In 1947, when India organised the Asian Relations Conference, Tibet sent its delegation to New Delhi.

#### Tibet's Annexation by China and Aftermath

In 1949, the Communist Party of China won the civil war and started one-party rule in mainland China. Tibet became the culprit of the first geopolitical ambitions of an expansionist China. In seizing the control of Tibet, China called it a 'peaceful liberation from feudalistic serfdom'. However, it is still unclear how the Dalai Lama's rule was a 'feudalistic serfdom'. In October 1950, about 40,000 Chinese troops invaded Tibet, which had virtually no military in its possession. Details of the Chinese invasion of Tibet reached its hinterland around 1952, which was the connectivity status in Tibet. Any rational person in their right mind could ask how it was serfdom if there was no connectivity between the ruler and subject present.

In 1951, under unstable circumstances, the 17-Point Agreement was signed between China and Tibet, and it was maintained that China 'would not alter the existing political system in Tibet'. After agreeing on all this on paper, the Chinese maintained repression in Tibet, causing Lhasa to become the Tibetan refugee home. On March 10th 1959, which is commonly known as Tibetan Uprising Day, around 300,000 Tibetans gathered around the Potala Palace, where the Dalai Lama resides, fearful that Chinese authorities may assassinate the Dalai Lama. Heavy Chinese artillery fires compelled the Dalai Lama to go into exile. March of 1959 in Tibet was flooded with bloodshed, and it was just a trailer of what was coming for the nation.

In the coming decade, Mao applied all the policies of mainland China to Tibet, in which hundreds of thousands of Tibetans died, particularly during the Cultural Revolution. Geographically, Tibet is around the size of Western Europe. China first made one of its three provinces, U-Tsang, as the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) and kept the other two provinces under its direct control. However, the region defined as 'autonomous' was not autonomous at all, and Tibet's representation in the CPC administration of TAR is negligible. If Tibet had been

independent, it would have been the world's 10th-largest state.

Since the last 60 years of rule by China, there have been multiple kinds of repression faced by the Tibetan people. The living embodiment of their faith in different Buddhist Monasteries has been destroyed. In 1995, six-year-old Gendun Choekyi Nyima, who was recognised as the 11th Panchen Dalai, was imprisoned by China. He became the world's youngest political prisoner. China has tried creating an alternative 'patriotic re-education campaign' aimed at assimilating Tibetans into the Chinese fold.

At the start of the 21st century, Tibetans have used self-immolation as a way of protest. There have been over 135 self-immolation incidents in Tibet. In 2012, around 80 such incidents were counted. Interestingly, it was also the year when Xi Jinping was about to assume Chinese leadership.

March 10th every year marks the anniversary of the Tibetan uprising worldwide, where Tibetans protest against the repressions of the Chinese regime. However, the Chinese regime has used brute force to destroy the faith-based civilization. China has signed extradition agreements with countries like Nepal for the dissenting Tibetan refugees. Today Tibet is a live example of a panopticon where no information goes outside. March 10th every year marks a dent in the history of different movements that Tibetan story of survival is alive.

## **Tibetan Soldiers in the Chinese Army. 2. "Tibetans Are Useful but the CCP Doesn't Trust Them"**

09 March 2024, Bitter Winter

Second part of "Bitter Winter" exclusive report on Tibetans enlisted in Beijing's People's Liberation Army. There are various reasons why China recruits them.

Tibetans are recruited in the People's Liberation Army (PLA), China's military force. Why? The proximate cause is that, wanting to strengthen its military presence around the "Line of Actual Control" (LAC) at the contested border with India, the Chinese regime encountered difficulties in acclimatizing its usual troops at those extreme environments. Han Chinese are accustomed to the average mainland China weather conditions, which are milder. Additionally, the PLA noted the prowess of the Vishesh Seema Bal, the Special Frontier Force of India, many of whom are Tibetan refugees and Gurkhas, during the Indian Army's operations on August 29-30, 2020, that secured the high peaks of the Kailash ranges of the Trans-Himalaya. Extending over China, India and Nepal in parallel to the Himalayas, this is a strategic area in the western part

of the Tibetan Plateau, which is included only partially in the TAR.

But there is also a remote, deeper cause for drafting Tibetans into the PLA. One of the main theatres of collision during the Spring and Summer 2020 confrontation between China and India was the Galwan Valley, in Ladakh. In the face of that, the Chinese regime felt the urgency to strengthen Tibetans' loyalty and keep surveillance over their families, the second goal being very often the tool to obtain the first. Thus, Beijing directed the PLA's senior commanders to enlist at least one soldier from each Tibetan family. This ideally reminds the "home-stay" program imposed by the CCP to Uyghurs in the XUAR. In that case, over a million party officials invaded Uyghur families as "guests," while in the TAR "guests" are taken from families to serve party officials: in both cases, the regime brutally interferes with households in name of its capillary control over its citizens.

Another fact proves it. The never forgotten seriousness of the Galwan Valley incident pushed the political and military authorities also to coerce around 20 fighters from the Enbo Fight Club (EFC) to form the Plateau Resistance Tibetan Mastiffs, based in Lhasa and stationing in the Tibetan plateau. EFC, known for mixed martial arts, is a gym located in Chengdu, the capital city of the Chinese province of Sichuan. It was founded in 2001 by a Chinese ethnic Tibetan citizen and retired army police officer. It often does charitable work for impoverished families.

But the PLA is employing the EFC fighters to provide hand-to-hand combat training to soldiers in the region. This reflects the regime's efforts to address its perceived security concerns in the area, yet what may seem a normal employment of local resources—including civilians, a decision that Beijing has been now implementing for a while—is instead another form of oppression. In fact, information gathered by "Bitter Winter" from Tibetan informants makes it evident that those EFC fighters were induced into joining the military only after threats against their families. However, their decision to join led—our sources report—to severe backlash from their own community. Consequently, they suffered a loss of financial and emotional support from fellow Tibetans. In fact, these individuals, once celebrated and supported by Tibetans both within and outside the TAR, have been later facing ostracism and scorn. Criticism and disdain towards them become pronounced—our informants told us—, particularly on DouYin, a popular Chinese social media platform, where Tibetans have begun labelling them as "Chinese dogs," a deeply derogatory term in Tibetan culture.



Now, what is glaringly missing in this scenario is a distinct Tibetan regiment within the PLA structures. This underscores Beijing's apprehensions regarding Tibetans. Sources reported to "Bitter Winter" that the Chinese government has been heard saying it will never provide arms and ammunition to them since it fears that, once equipped with weapons, Tibetans may also retaliate against the regime.

Furthermore, the 2008 protests against the PRC's persecution that took place across all the Tibet plateau and caused tens of victims, to which almost 160 confirmed cases of self-immolations followed, only increased the CCP's fears. It is evident from several of its policies. For example, China is aggressively constructing and upgrading numerous airports and heliports in the western regions of the TAR and the XUAR. This infrastructure development started in 2017 but was reinforced after the 2020 LAC incident, accompanied by the enhancement of roads, railways, and other logistic capabilities, which facilitate swifter troop movements and weapon deployment for the PLA.

Also, the establishment of new and improved airports around the LAC is expected to stimulate economic growth and tourism by connecting these areas more closely with the PRC's major commercial and political hubs—as far as all this fits and benefits the regime's astute way to totalitarianism "with Chinese characteristics," i.e. controlled, scrutinized, and spied liberty.

The Chinese dual-use approach, serving both military facilities and granting more securitization devices, has been well described by the Washington, D.C.-based Center for Strategic & International Studies's "ChinaPower" observatory. Nonetheless, the overarching strategy of the PRC, driven by internal insecurities and external geopolitical considerations, had already been detected in 2016 by Tsering Topgyal, Assistant Professor of International Relations at the Department of Politics and International Studies of the University of Birmingham, the UK, in his book "China and Tibet: Perils of Insecurity."

Beijing's profound sense of unsafety, he argued, fueled by its perception of sociopolitical vulnerability, significantly influences its policies regarding Tibet's religious, linguistic, educational, and economic spheres. The regime's refusal to acknowledge the existence of a "Tibet Issue" and its rejection of proposals for real Tibetan autonomy stem from fears of undermining its nation-building endeavors. Years have passed since, but this "Chinese complex" over Tibet (and Xinjiang, that its non-Han inhabitants call East Turkestan) has only increased with the unfolding and progress of the Xi Jinping-era.

Since President Xi's rise to top power at the highest level of the CCP and the state, respectively in 2012 and 2013, secured virtually forever through the

removal of the two-term limit on the presidency in 2018, the Communist nomenklatura in Beijing has in fact constantly grown in its deep concerns about instability and the purported potential for "separatist" movements using "terrorist" tactics in both the TAR and the XUAR. All the efforts to increase the already extensive surveillance measures and massive control over the populations of those two regions especially aim in fact at suppressing their ethnic non-Han components on a scale that has become paroxysmal and at a pace justified only by—unjustifiable panic.

### **Tibetan Soldiers in the Chinese Army. 1. The Context**

08 March 2024, Bitter Winter

"Bitter Winter" exclusive report on Tibetans enlisted in the Chinese People's Liberation Army. But first, we should understand the area's geography and geopolitics.

The People's Republic of China (PRC) is constantly at war with its citizens, its neighbors, and yes, the entire world. Ideological in nature, revolutionary in means and goals, aggressive always, its war is waged at many levels and employs different weapons. Some of them plays on the chords of the subconscious, the emotional, and the imaginative, shrewdly mixing intimidation, propaganda, and a strategic pressure on the collective self of societies. In this respect, several of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) techniques can be compared to the functioning of the levers that have been famously described by French anthropologist and sociologist Gustave Le Bon (1841–1931) in his 1895 book "Psychologie des foules"—published in English as "The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind"—and the exploitation of the mechanisms addressed by American journalist and social commentator Vance Packard (1914–1996) in his 1957 book "The Hidden Persuaders."

The CCP attempts to both impress and intimidate "ad intra" and "ad extra" alternates boasting shows of strength and arrogant assertions of "faits accomplis." In this peculiar art of war, geography plays a key role. University of Pisa's Marco Tangheroni (1946–2004)—an Italian specialist of navigation and trade in the Mediterranean sea during the Middle Ages—taught that the dynamics of human civilizations become clearer when the study of history is organically connected to that of geography. This consideration is also reported—by way of a real life anecdote—in the introduction to a posthumous collection of essays by Tangheroni, penned by Italian social commentator Giovanni Cantoni (1938–2020), who himself underlined another important truth

through a maxim: if your history is wrong, your politics will be wrong as well.

Anti-communist as they were, Tangheroni and Cantoni would not be surprised to see the CCP among their most diligent pupils. In fact, communists do always do their homework, never stopping elaborating and manipulating. And while it should be a fatigue to daily reinvent the wheel of Chinese history, modern and ancient, the CCP gladly and constantly plays also with geography. Both fabricated history and geography are in fact used by the Chinese leadership and apparatchiks to tame facts, twisting them into a surrealistic new version of the world shaped by ideology, where cultures, religions, and ethnic identities are customized and orchestrated to build and maintain a political consensus that both produces and praises the final aim of Sinicization. Recently, "Bitter Winter" had the occasion to reflect upon the imposition of a fake semantization of that concept that the CCP uses to perform its totalitarian goal.

The CCP's frequent re-designing of the PRC's both national and regional borders on the world map is a case in point, normally justified by Beijing with supposedly strategic necessities, but mainly performed just to exhibit muscles. The latest-and surely not the last-unilateral redefinition of the national boundaries of the country came on August 28, 2023, with the publication of the 2023 edition of the "China Standard Map" by the PRC's Ministry of Natural Resources. Of course, this provoked outraged reactions by India, Malaysia, Vietnam, the Philippines, and the Republic of China (Taiwan) for the arbitrary annexations of parts of or all their territories to Chinese sovereignty, but it is interesting to note that Moscow didn't protest for the similar and illegitimate appropriation of territories belonging to the Russian Federation. We would probably not go astray if we imagine that this silence is probably due to the new alliance between the PRC and Russia, somewhat sealed also by Beijing's simultaneous mute concession to some of Moscow's territorial claims.

A constant major center of local geopolitical controversy is the border between PRC and India that is called "Line of Actual Control" (LAC). It separates PRC's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (XUAR) and Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) in the north from India's Ladakh union territory, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh states in the south, along the Himalayas. On that gigantic mountain range, the borders between PRC in the north, and Nepal and Bhutan in the south make the India-China boundary discontinuous. The LAC is roughly divided into three sectors, the western between India's Ladakh and PRC's XUAR and TAR being the most disputed of several contested bordering areas.

Totally informal, the LAC was designed as a de facto compromise following the cease-fire that froze the Sino-Indian War of 1962. In 1993, the two Asian countries agreed to respect it, yet there are neither official maps nor clear demarcations of lands; and so disputes continue.

Therefore, on occasions soldiers from the People's Liberation Army (PLA), or the PRC's armed force, cross the LAC and ignite new open contentions. In 1963, the Publications Division of the Government of India in New Delhi published a pamphlet, entitled "China Aggression in Maps" (now available online at the web site of French journalist, sinologist and Tibetologist Claude Arpi), to document the problem, which of course continued well after that year.

The most recent and serious of those military altercations took place in 2020, starting on May 5 (and factually dragging as late as January-February 2021), along all the three sectors of the LAC, but with particular intensity in the west, in the valley of Galwan. This is a river that flows from Aksai Chin into Ladakh, the first being occupied by the PRC but claimed by India as part of the latter. There, the clash between the armed forces of Beijing and New Delhi peaked in a physical brawl that resulted in casualties on June 15-16, 2020, bringing military buildup on both sides and more territorial disagreements, mainly the claimed, reported occupation by the PRC of about 2,000 square kms of Indian territory in eastern Ladakh that haven't been returned yet.

Some may wonder how it comes that two regional and world giants can shed blood for a handful of square kilometers in what "Bloomberg" media outlet efficaciously described as "a freezing high-altitude desert," "a mostly uninhabited terrain" where, "during winter months," "temperatures can drop to 40 degrees below zero." The principal reason is that a substantial part of politics is made of liturgies, rites, and symbols, national sovereignty being one of the most importantly perceived. Another is the strategic role played by boundary areas: for example, the PRC has no intention to give easily up Aksai Chin, a desert area with no natural resources that nonetheless preciously connects the XUAR and the TAR. A third, very pragmatic, reason is that for the CCP all is a good occasion and tool to tighten control on its citizens and impose its power.

The Spring and Summer 2020 battle on the roof of the world-a low intensity conflict, but highly rated by both sides-caused widespread international reactions and a broad press coverage, but there is another aspect of its aftermath that goes little noticed. After the skirmishes, the Chinese regime initiated the military recruitment of Tibetans in the PLA to bolster its standing presence in the area, i.e. maintain the

occupation of Indian territories as part of its strategic long-term deployment plans.

### Reincarnation and realpolitik keeps Dalai Lama's succession in dilemma

08 March 2024, The Hindu

As Tibetans mark on Sunday the 65th anniversary of the failed uprising against Chinese forces that led to the 88-year-old spiritual leader fleeing into exile in India, the question of who will succeed him is in sharp focus.

Esoteric questions of reincarnation rarely have real-world political consequences, but many fear the search for a successor to Tibet's Dalai Lama could inflame regional rivalries.

The 88-year-old spiritual leader, Tenzin Gyatso, has shown no indication of serious health issues, and has said that his dreams suggest he could live until he is 113.

But as Tibetans mark on Sunday the 65th anniversary of the failed uprising against Chinese forces that led to him fleeing into exile in India, the question of who will succeed their ageing leader is in sharp focus.

Tibetan activists are keenly aware that his death will mark a major setback in his push for more autonomy for the Himalayan region.

It would deprive the cause of a Nobel Prize winner whose moral teachings and idiosyncratic humour have made him one of the world's most popular religious leaders.

Many expect China will name a successor.

That raises the likelihood of rival nominations for the six-century-old post, including one chosen by exiled Tibetans based in India, a regional rival of China.

Tensions between the world's two most populous countries have already flared after a deadly Himalayan border clash in 2020.

Here, AFP explains how realpolitik may impact the question of reincarnation.

Reincarnation or emanation?

While the bodies of previous Dalai Lamas have been entombed in stupa burial mounds, Tibetans believe their soul carries on, living in a new being.

Tibetan monks traditionally choose the Dalai Lama through a ritualistic search that can take years, seeking telltale signs a child is the reincarnation of a spiritual leader first born in 1391.

The 14th Dalai Lama, who has lived in exile in the northern Indian town of Dharamsala since the failed uprising in 1959, has floated the possibility of a non-traditional succession. He already ended the post's political powers in 2011 in favour of an elected Tibetan government-in-exile.

Keeping Beijing on its toes, he has alternatively suggested that his reincarnation could be a girl for the first time, or that he might be the last Dalai Lama. Instead of reincarnation – whereby the soul returns in a newborn – there is also the intriguing possibility of "emanation before death".

In that case, Tibetans believe the Dalai Lama's spirit could transfer to an adult successor.

autonomy for his Tibetan homeland. | Photo Credit: AP

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Instead of reincarnation – whereby the soul returns in a newborn – there is also the intriguing possibility of "emanation before death".

In that case, Tibetans believe the Dalai Lama's spirit could transfer to an adult successor.

"It is possible for the Lama to appoint a successor who is either his disciple or someone young who is to be recognised as his emanation," the Dalai Lama said in 2011.

What will China do?

China's officially atheist government has called the Dalai Lama a separatist.

In 1995, Beijing detained a child that the Dalai Lama had recognised as the Panchen Lama – another influential religious figure.

China, meanwhile, selected another child to become the Panchen Lama.

Rights groups have described the boy who was detained as the world's youngest political prisoner, and his whereabouts remain unknown.

The Dalai Lama is determined his successor will not face the same fate.

"No recognition or acceptance should be given to a candidate chosen for political ends by anyone, including those in the People's Republic of China," he warned in 2011.

"It is particularly inappropriate for Chinese communists who explicitly reject even the idea of past and future lives... to meddle in the system of reincarnation," he added.

He has also preemptively dismissed suggestions his successor's name must be plucked from a "Golden Urn" – which Beijing controls – by saying its use "lacked any spiritual quality".

India, meanwhile, which has long-hosted tens of thousands of Tibetan exiles, would be expected to continue its support and back a successor approved in the process set out by the Dalai Lama.

But that could raise tensions between the neighbouring powers, who have already clashed in contested border areas, including Ladakh, home to a sizeable Tibetan population.

What has the Dalai Lama said?

The Dalai Lama has promised to write a "predictive letter" for monks to follow around his 90th birthday in July 2025.

He has said responsibility for choosing any successor will "rest primarily" on his Gaden Phodrang Trust, a Zurich-headquartered foundation.

But he has also suggested he may be the last Dalai Lama.

"If I die before Tibetans regain their freedom, it is only logical to assume that I will be born outside Tibet," he wrote in his autobiography, "Freedom in Exile".

"Of course, it could be that by then my people will have no use for a Dalai Lama, in which case they will not bother to search for me," he added.

"So I might take rebirth as an insect, or an animal – whatever would be of most value to the largest number of sentient beings."

## Exiled Tibetans Guard Heritage From 'Cultural Genocide'

07 March 2024, Barron's

From teaching centuries-old crafts to cataloguing their language, exiled Tibetans guard the cultural identity of a homeland most have neither seen nor dare visit, and where they say Beijing is eradicating their heritage.

Crouched over a minutely detailed devotional "thangka" painting depicting Buddha, artist Lobsang Tenzin teaches students in northern India.

"It is important to keep the traditions of our history," said the 49-year-old, dipping a needle-thin brush into rich blue paint made from crushed lapis lazuli as six young Tibetan trainees watch.

"These skills were nearly lost, but we pass on the skills by teaching young artists."

Tibetans will on March 10 mark the 65th anniversary of the 1959 uprising against Chinese forces that led to their spiritual leader the Dalai Lama fleeing into exile, followed by tens of thousands of compatriots.

Inside Tibet, the chaos of China's 1966-76 Cultural Revolution left temples razed and monasteries reduced to ruins, destruction that continued in the decades that followed.

Today, activists decry what they say are Beijing's determined efforts to erase what is left of Tibet's cultural and religious identity.

Lhadon Tethong, head of the Tibet Action Institute, condemns what she calls "cultural genocide" – including Beijing's sharp restrictions on Tibetan language, with children "indoctrinated" at state-run boarding schools.

Beijing, which maintains "Tibet is part of China", fiercely rejects the accusations.

Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning this week said that people in Tibet are "living a happy life", in response to UN rights chief Volker Turk's assertion that China was violating fundamental rights.

Tibet enjoys "social stability, economic growth, solidarity among all ethnic groups and harmony among various religious beliefs", she said.

Tibet scholar Robert Barnett, from SOAS University of London, called Beijing a "foreign ruler deciding what's best for a people whose culture it barely knows".

"There is a gradual whittling away of a culture and a history," Barnett said.

"It is a process where you gradually eliminate all the elements of a history, a people, culture and of a society that are inconvenient to the new rulers."

Tibetan authorities say there are 130,000 Tibetan exiles, many in India and Nepal but also in more than 25 countries worldwide – just a fraction of the seven million living under China's control.

As the decades pass, that makes the preservation of cultural identity even more challenging.

Tenzin studied and now teaches at the Norbulingka Institute, a social enterprise centre training more than 300 men and women in painting, embroidery, weaving and woodcarving.

The complex of red and green Tibetan-style buildings, close to the Dalai Lama's base in India's Himalayan hill town of Dharamsala, was launched in 1995 to employ highly skilled artisans eking out a living with repair jobs.

"After the great masters came to India, they ended up doing odd jobs, trying to build their lives in a new country," said Tsultrim Dorjee, a senior manager at the institute.

"The institute helped them use their skills... the goal was to return Tibetan art to its former glory."

Others take a more modern approach, like 29-year-old artist Tashi Nyima, with his bright cartoon-style canvases that nonetheless still reflect his people's heritage and political battles.

Born and brought up in Dharamsala, where red-robed monks and nuns crowd streets alongside Tibetans in baseball caps and jeans, Nyima said younger generations struggle with a "very mixed identity".

But he remains committed to the cause.

"I've always believed that Tibet will be free one day," he said, in front of his painting of a shackled monk.

"If I didn't have this belief in me, I wouldn't have done these kinds of works – I would have just stopped."

Another battle is keeping the language alive.

While Google Translate offers 133 languages, Tibetan is not among them – but exiles in 2022 released their own 223-volume dictionary, available online.

"Once the language is preserved, then everything falls in place," said Dorji Damdul, director of Tibet House in New Delhi, founded by the Dalai Lama to promote his people's heritage.

"Language is like the medium through which all the flow of culture and philosophy happens."

But young Tibetans in India are increasingly seeking opportunities in Europe and North America.

Damdul, born in India in 1968 and a former translator for the Dalai Lama, admits that keeping an identity alive is a "major challenge".

"In Tibet, assimilation by force happens with the communist Chinese," said the Buddhist scholar. "In

the West, natural assimilation can happen because it's too free."

Tibet's Dharamsala-based government in exile says it is looking to keep the increasingly scattered community connected, including via online conferences teaching younger generations about their history.

"If they understand Tibet a little more, they could be the best advocates," said Penpa Tsering, elected as the government's sikyong, or leader, by Tibetans worldwide.

"Even though we are physically distant, we are mentally close together."

Tsering's administration oversees more than 60 Tibetan language schools in India and Nepal and supports nearly 300 monasteries and nunneries.

"We are here for the long haul," said Tsering. "Don't think that we'll vanish just like that."

### **Tibetans fear for future as they recall failed uprising against China**

07 March 2024, The Hindu

Tibet has alternated over the centuries between independence and control by China



Buddhist monks walk down a street in McLeodganj near Dharamsala. While once thousands fled to India annually, fewer than a dozen escaped last year, Tibet's exiled government says. File | Photo Credit: AFP

The Dalai Lama, wrapped in red and yellow robes, urged chanting monks and nuns in his latest public prayers to help heal the world with their "compassionate heart".

"Being a good human being is everybody's responsibility," he said, weeks ahead of Sunday's commemorations of the failed Tibetan uprising against China that saw him flee into exile in neighbouring India.

"I urge all of you to strive towards it."

The 88-year-old Buddhist leader says he has decades yet to live, but Tibetans who have followed him abroad are bracing for an inevitable future without him.

China says Tibet is an integral part of the country, and many exiled Tibetans fear Beijing will name a



rival successor to the Dalai Lama, bolstering control over a land it poured troops into in 1950.

Tibet has alternated over the centuries between independence and control by China, which says it "peacefully liberated" the rugged plateau and brought infrastructure and education.

But Tsultrim, a sprightly 95-year-old Tibetan former CIA-backed guerilla, offers a warning from the past.

He recalls how he took up a gun when Tibetans rose up against Chinese forces 65 years ago on March 10, 1959, in a revolt whose crushing forced the Dalai Lama across snowy Himalayan passes into India.

Tens of thousands followed.

"We were asked to rise up to resist the invading Chinese army and to escort the Dalai Lama to exile," Tsultrim told AFP, dressed in a black puffer jacket, still with a soldier-like manner with close-cut grey hair and a strong handshake.

Today, he is among the last of a generation to remember what he calls a "free Tibet", and tells younger Tibetans not to trust Beijing.

"Before Tibet lost its independence, we were herders and farmers," said Tsultrim, who uses only one name and is based in the Dalai Lama's adopted hometown of Dharamsala in northern India.

"Life was good, and our living was good... We had nothing to do with money, the herders sold meat and butter and farmers sold grains."

The past

Tsultrim later joined Tibetan insurgents based in Nepal's mountainous kingdom of Mustang in 1960, trained and supplied with rifles and radios by the CIA.

For more than a decade they snuck into Tibet to lay ambushes, including blowing up Chinese army trucks.

"We were volunteers with our own horse, and carried our own rifle and food," he said. "We kept waging war."

Washington used the 2,000-strong force as a covert Cold War proxy.

But after the CIA cut funding, and the Dalai Lama in 1974 urged fighters to lay down arms and follow his call for a peaceful solution, Tsultrim left for India.

After working as a farm labourer for decades, he retired to an old people's home near where his leader lives.

"I came to see the Dalai Lama before dying," he said.

His comrade Ngodup Palden, 90, clings to a fading dream.

He became a paratrooper in India's special Tibetan force for 24 years, seeing combat in the China-India war of 1962.

"Before we lost our country, we lived a comfortable life," he said, staring out at the snow-capped Himalayan peaks that divide him from his homeland.

"It is my hope to return to a free Tibet during my lifetime," he said, prayer beads clicking through his fingers.

"I have some hope in my heart, to be back in my homeland, my happy homeland."

The present

Those coming from Tibet today say Palden's hope is fantasy.

While once thousands fled to India annually, fewer than a dozen escaped last year, Tibet's exiled government says.

Activists say Tibetans' movements in their homeland are monitored, and that many fear arrest or retaliation against relatives should they make it out.

"I feel like a bird that has been caged for a long time and is now free to flap its wings and fly," said 37-year-old Tsering Dawa, a former bank manager from Tibet's main city Lhasa.

He abandoned his middle-class life in 2020 fearing re-arrest after contacting journalists about China's "vocational training centres".

U.N. experts say the centres are used to "undermine Tibetan religious, linguistic and cultural identity" — charges Beijing denies.

Dawa said he had been detained without trial in 2015 for nearly a year after messaging an exile group to report passport restrictions for Tibetans.

He said his detention included a brutal beating and interrogation that pushed him to "the brink of insanity".

"I told my mother that if we stay in Tibet, we are bound to die," he said, warning her she would be punished if he left without her.

"If we leave, there is a 50% chance of making it."

With routes across the mountains to Nepal barred by China's security forces, he packed a bag and posed with his 68-year-old mother as "tourists heading on holiday".

Swallowing their terror, they smiled and snapped photographs at Lhasa airport, starting a journey that would eventually bring them to India.

In his cramped one-bedroom apartment he described leaving behind 600,000 yuan (\$83,000) in his account, two houses and a car.

"The reason I got out was because of my willingness to sacrifice it all."

The future

Younger generations who grew up in exile fear threats ahead.

"China is hell-bent on appointing their own Dalai Lama once he passes away," said Tenzin Dawa, a 31-year-old activist.

Born in India, she heads the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy.

She worries that the younger generations have lost hope of seeing their ancestral home.

"We grew up stateless in India... and, we never know what might happen when His Holiness the Dalai Lama passes away," she said.

"That's why we're seeing a lot of emigration of Tibetans to Europe and North America."

Tens of thousands of Tibetans have left India since 2011, according to Indian government figures.

"It is a big concern," the activist added. "The younger generations, it is they who have to carry on the movement."

### **The Dalai Lama: Tibet's Spiritual Leader, Bane Of Beijing**

07 March 2024, Barron's

The Dalai Lama, the charismatic Buddhist spiritual leader celebrated worldwide for his tireless campaign for greater autonomy for his Tibetan homeland, has been a thorn in China's side for decades.

Tenzin Gyatso, who describes himself as a "simple Buddhist monk", became the face of the Tibetan cause as he crisscrossed the globe, mixing with royalty, politicians and celebrities.

The 88-year-old, with his famous beaming smile, has become a global symbol of peace whose message transcends religion, regarded by his many supporters as a visionary in the vein of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King.

The Dalai Lama was just 23 when he fled the Tibetan capital Lhasa in fear for his life after Chinese troops crushed an uprising that began on March 10, 1959 – 65 years ago this Sunday.

It took him 13 days to trek across the Himalayas to the Indian border. He has never returned.

His life in exile has centred around the northern Indian hill-town of Dharamsala, home to thousands of fellow Tibetans who maintain traditional customs, even though many have never set foot in their ancestral homeland.

In Dharamsala, he set up a government-in-exile and launched a campaign to reclaim Tibet, evolving to embrace a "middle way" -- relinquishing independence for greater autonomy.

In 1989 he won the Nobel Peace Prize for his bid to "seek reconciliation despite brutal violations".

The award catapulted him into the global spotlight, courted by world leaders and Hollywood stars.

In his maroon robes, simple sandals and wide-rimmed spectacles, the Dalai Lama made an unlikely celebrity.

But his sense of mischief – he once announced he would like to reincarnate as an attractive blonde – and infectious chuckle proved irresistible, and made him a darling of the world's media.

The Chinese government, however, has remained impervious to his charm, branding him a separatist and a "wolf in a monk's robe".

Tibet has alternated over the centuries between independence and control by China, and Beijing says the region is an integral part of the country.

The Dalai Lama wants greater autonomy for his people, including the right to worship freely and to preserve their culture, which many Tibetans say has been crushed under Chinese rule.

Formal negotiations with Beijing broke down in 2010. A year later, the Dalai Lama retired from politics to make way for a new leader elected by exiled Tibetans around the world.

Born into a farming family in the Tibetan village of Taksar on July 6, 1935, he was chosen as the 14th incarnation of Tibetan Buddhism's supreme religious leader at the age of two.

He was given the name Jetsun Jamphel Ngawang Lobsang Yeshe Tenzin Gyatso – Holy Lord, Gentle Glory, Compassionate Defender of the Faith and Ocean of Wisdom – and taken to Lhasa's 1,000-room Potala Palace to be trained to become the leader of his people.

He indulged a precocious scientific curiosity, playing with a watch sent to him by US president Franklin Roosevelt and repairing cars, one of which he crashed into a palace gate.

But his childhood ended abruptly at age 15 when he was hastily enthroned as head of state after the Chinese army invaded Tibet in 1950.

Nine years later, as Chinese troops crushed a popular uprising, he escaped to India.

When told the Dalai Lama had fled, Chinese leader Mao Zedong reportedly said: "In that case, we have lost the battle."

He was welcomed by India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, who offered Dharamsala as a base for him and thousands of fellow Tibetan refugees.

Throughout the Dalai Lama's life, he has been treated as an honoured guest in India – an official policy stance that has been a source of tension with Beijing.

It is unclear how, or even whether, his successor will be named, with his predecessors chosen by monks according to ancient Buddhist traditions.

He has alternatively suggested the next Dalai Lama could be a girl, that his spirit could transfer to an adult successor, or that he could even be the last in the line – and that he might be reincarnated as an animal or an insect instead.

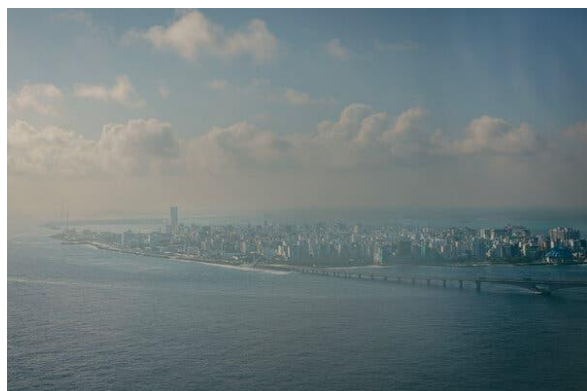
But he has always been clear on one point – that any successor named by China would not be credible.

"No recognition or acceptance should be given to a candidate chosen for political ends by anyone,

including those in the People's Republic of China," he has said.

### **The Maldives Is a Tiny Paradise. Why Are China and India Fighting Over It?**

05 March 2024, The New York Times



Malé, the capital and most populous city of the Maldives.

Asia's two giants are crowding the island nation with building projects, tossing its newborn democracy to and fro.

Between a few flecks of coral in the Indian Ocean, a ribbon of highway more than a mile long swoops up from the blue. Since 2018, the China-Maldives Friendship Bridge has connected this archipelago's hyper-dense capital, Malé, and the international airport — expanded by Chinese companies — one island to the east.

But China is not alone in chasing friendship with the Maldives. A 20-minute walk across the capital, next to Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital, an even longer sea bridge will link Malé with islands to the west. This one is being built by Indian workers, with money from India.

The Maldives, a tiny tourism-dependent country of 500,000 people, barely registers as a blip alongside India and China, the world's most populous nations. Yet every blip counts in the two giants' competition for influence across South Asia, and that has set the Maldives on a zigzagging course between them.

India, at the heart of the vast region, has long been its most powerful economic and military force. Still, China has made significant inroads with its much larger financial resources, signing infrastructure deals and securing access to ports in countries surrounding India.

The Maldives' location makes it a strategic priority for both of Asia's superpowers. China needs a military presence on the Arabian Sea to safeguard its access to oil from the Persian Gulf. And India, which has been clashing with China along their Himalayan border, wants to make sure that the Maldives, its island neighbor, doesn't become too cozy with Beijing.

In January, India found itself in a sudden blowup with the Maldives over a perceived threat to the islands' tourism lifeblood. But the great-power competition across the Maldives' sky-blue lagoons has yet to reach a boil. Gains and losses are marked more by the tilts of the Maldives' own politicians — more pro-India at some points, more pro-China at others — and, most of all, by the money that both sides spend to win Maldivian hearts and minds.

From his high-rise office looking out over Malé's marina, Mohamed Saeed, the Maldives' minister of economic development and trade, puts his country's needs in stark terms. Its economy is now worth about \$6.5 billion a year, of which \$6 billion is earned by tourism, and most of the rest by fishing tuna. The goal is to make it a \$12 billion economy within the next five years.

The Maldives discovered tourist dollars in 1972, and it now draws more than a million visitors a year to the "water villas" that branch out from wooden boardwalks and define its high-end resorts.

The country became a democracy only in 2008, with the election of a charismatic young leader, Mohamed Nasheed. The current president, Mohamed Muizzu, was elected five months ago, in the latest swing of the pendulum between India and China. Mr. Muizzu took office after campaigning on an "India Out" platform, which called for expelling about 80 Indian military personnel stationed across the Maldives to provide support.

Mr. Saeed, a Muizzu appointee, was also a cabinet minister during the last "pro-China" government, when the China-Maldives Friendship Bridge was opened. He oversaw a free-trade agreement with China. But these days he sticks to the line that Mr. Muizzu's government is pursuing only a "pro-Maldives" policy.

There is no preference for China, he says — "we extend our invitation of free trade to all countries," because "we would like to get the best value for our tuna."

Pursuing cordial relations with China and India simultaneously might seem the wisest course. But that became more difficult, said Mimrah Ghafoor, a writer and former career diplomat, as both countries stepped up their influence campaigns just as the Maldives was making its transition to democracy.

China has the deeper pockets, with development banks that dwarf India's. But, Mr. Ghafoor noted, if China "has mostly carrots," India "has both carrots and the stick." That is because the Maldives depends on its near neighbor in times of intense need.

Mr. Ghafoor rattled off a list of crises in which Indian help proved indispensable, from fighting back a coup launched from Sri Lanka in 1988 to rescue work after the tsunami of 2004 to a delivery of 1,200 tons of freshwater by airplane and tanker during a shortage

in 2014 – a time when the Maldives was led by a China-leaning president.

Beyond money and geography, there is another important difference between India and China as competitors, one that was illustrated during the Maldives' flare-up with India earlier this year.

Three junior ministers attacked India's prime minister, Narendra Modi, on social media after he had promoted his country's own paradisaal atoll, an even smaller and far less developed archipelago called Lakshadweep. These "India Out" Maldivians inferred a threat to their economy. In the much louder backlash, nationalistic Indians urged a boycott of the islands.

The disruption to relations offered a contrast with China, which exerts supreme message control. That gives it the ability to negotiate effectively with smaller countries behind closed doors. Beijing may be less comfortable with the Maldives' new democracy than New Delhi is, but it has navigated relations just as adeptly.

One fierce democracy advocate, Eva Abdulla, a high-ranking member of Parliament, is proudly pro-India. But mostly she is anti-oscillation.

"Flip-flopping on foreign policy is clearly not good for us," she said. Not in terms of security, and "it doesn't allow for any kind of stability in development projects."

Ms. Abdulla, a cousin of Mr. Nasheed, the former president, argues that there are many reasons to stand by India as a partner. She mentions their cultural affinities, as South Asian democracies. Along with hospitals and schools on the far-flung islands, India funds things like a cultural center in Malé, to promote yoga and Indian dance.

Mr. Modi's pro-Hindu policies at home rub many the wrong way in the Maldives, which is supposedly a 100 percent Muslim society. Even so, "we can't afford a fistfight with India," Ms. Abdulla said. On this, she and the president, Mr. Muizzu, whose parties will be battling each other in parliamentary elections in April, agree.

Mr. Muizzu has stepped up his calls for a generic Maldivian nationalism, in favor of the islands' own language and its Islamic values, while steering clear of an anti-India tone. He has reluctantly made good on his promise to expel the Indian military personnel, but India has not quit its development projects.

One of the most visible is a giant expansion of an airport on the island of Hanimaadhoo, an hour's flight north from Malé. It is home to one of the planes used by the Indian airmen. And it is the kind of project that makes some Maldivians fear that their sovereign territory is being prepared as a potential battleground in somebody else's war.

Hanimaadhoo, population 2,664, hardly seems to need the extra runways being built by an Indian firm.

Nor do the little-touristed islands nearby. Yet digging machines are at work 24 hours a day, in effect re-engineering the delicate island to make it capable of landing enormous aircraft. A similar airport, built by Indians at the opposite end of the country, makes Hanimaadhoo seem like part of a pattern.

Maldivians are not the only ones to think that. An Indian laborer at the site named Ranjit said he thought it was obvious why India needed to build a military-ready facility here. "China is coming," he said. "Don't you see the Chinese ships getting ready?"

On Feb. 22, the Xiang Yang Hong 03, officially a Chinese research vessel, pulled into Malé. The Maldives' government said it was just a port call. But as with the Indian airport projects, the ship left an air of ambiguity about possible military uses in its wake.

### Book Review: Echoes from the Forgotten Mountains

04 March 2024, Vijay Kranti, Phayul

Jamyang Norbu's book 'ECHOES FROM FORGOTTEN MOUNTAINS : TIBET IN WAR AND PEACE' is a monumental documentation of the brave armed fight of Tibetan people against a powerful and ruthless colonial power. It is going to stay as one of the most detailed and authentic monographs on this subject for coming generations of Tibetans, students and researchers

Dominance of Buddhism and Dalai Lama in most of popular narratives on Tibet has led to a common belief that occupation of Tibet by China in 1950-51 was a cake walk. Chinese systematic and concerted propaganda about presenting the colonial grabbing of Tibet as 'peaceful liberation' too has made many outsiders believe further that Tibetan people's faith in Buddhism and Dalai Lama's commitment to non-violence had converted Tibet into a land of the timid and the Tibetan masses as indifferent people who had neither the desire nor capacity to push back the Chinese communist aggression. Hence the destiny of Tibet to live with the curse of colonial occupation for over seven decades now.

This popular but unfounded belief about Tibet needed an authentic, explosive and monumental book like "Echoes From Forgotten Mountains" (891 pages) to shatter it into pieces. This book, written by famous Tibetan writer and researcher Jamyang Norbu, successfully brings out the self-respecting, brave and heroic facet of Tibetan people who vigorously fought, though vainly, against a far better placed Chinese Communist Party and its People's Liberation Army (PLA) which outweighed the ceremonial Tibetan army enormously in terms of equipment, manpower, fighting experience and,

more than everything else, the strategic wisdom of the national leadership. There have been surely some books, focused on Tibet's armed resistance against the Chinese occupation – some by the CIA operatives and other outsiders who had authentic knowledge of Tibetan guerrilla operations( e.g. Roger McCarthy's 'Tears of the Lotus'; Conboy and Morrison's 'The CIA's Secret War in Tibet'; Mikel Dunham's 'Buddha's Warriors'; Carole McGranahan's 'Arrested Histories'; and John Kenneth Knaus' 'Orphans of the Cold War'). And then there was an eight volume autobiographic 'Resistance' by Lhamo Tsering who himself was among the top ranking leaders of Tibet's most fearsome guerrilla force 'Chu Shi Gangdruk.' But Jamyang's book is unique in many ways. The strongest point of this book is that it is based on Jamyang Norbu's years long research of all available material on the Tibetan resistance movement and his one to one personal meetings with surviving Tibetan soldiers, guerrilla fighters, secret agents, peasants, merchants and even some surviving beggars who were either direct participants or were firsthand witnesses to many important developments or their close associates and family members.

Jamyang being himself a Tibetan guerrilla soldier of 'Chu Shi Gangdruk', now defunct but has been the most respected national guerrilla freedom army of Tibet between 1950s and mid 1970s, and a highly acclaimed political commentator, historian, novelist and a popular playwright is among the most suitable Tibetans to write on the subject of this book. His earlier books like 'Illusion and Reality', 'Buying the Dragon's Teeth', 'Shadow Tibet' and 'Don't Stop the Revolution' have been received quite well both by Tibetan as well as non-Tibetan scholars on China and Tibet. His novel 'The Mandala of Sherlock Holmes' won the Crossword Book Award in 2000 and has been translated in over a dozen languages.

And more than all this, Jamyang is a unique Tibetan writer among the Tibetan diaspora who has inspired and educated all three generations of opinion leaders and ordinary Tibetans over past seven decades through his forceful theatre and writings. Within my limits of knowledge of Tibetan society over past five decades I can say that Jamyang leads the class of Tibetan thinkers and opinion leaders who, like Lhasang Tsering, Karma Choephel, Karma Yeshe, Tenzin Tsundue or the brave Tsering Woesser from inside Chinese occupied Tibet, have kept the fire of national independence alive. Their job has been surely not easy in the face of serious disagreement and opposition from the highly influential and powerful section of the exile Tibetan establishment who have formally given up the demand for national independence ('Rangzen') in return for 'genuine autonomy' for Tibet within the Chinese constitution.

This is one more reason which is going to make this book popular among the pro-'Rangzen' section of Tibetans in exile and those living inside Chinese occupied Tibet. Jamyang's popularity among this section of Tibetan society reflects from the Beijing-based Tibetan poet and blogger (Ms.) Tsering Woesser who has described him as the "Lu Xun of Tibet".

Jamyang has liberally used his personal life story and the history of his own family to make this massive narration interesting, authentic and easy to understand the story of Tibetan armed resistance. Jamyang's courage to present his perspective of history to his audience makes his voice stand out in the cacophony of present day Tibetan society which stands divided along a deep trench between its Rangzen and the Umaylam (middle path of rapprochement with China) factions. One example is his description of the events of 1950 which led to Chinese PLA's first major and key victory in the eastern Tibet. While the Tibetan Kashag (Cabinet of Dalai Lama's exile government) paid glowing tributes to its former minister colleague Ngabo Ngawang Jigme on his death in Beijing as an active collaborator of China in 2009, Jamyang has exposed his role as a coward and traitor Governor of the Tibetan region. In this context it is interesting to remember that on Ngabo's death the Chinese government officially described him as "a great patriot, renowned social activist, good son of Tibetan people, outstanding leader of China's ethnic work and a close friend of CPC." Surprisingly, the Kashag in Dharamshala also issued an official tribute which referred to Ngabo as "Honest and Patriotic who always spoke truth even under the most trying and difficult circumstances". Jamyang writes in details (page-81/82) how keen was Ngabo to surrender his brave and ready to fight 2,500 Tibetan soldiers including the Tibetan commander General Muja before just one hundred 'exhausted' PLA soldiers. Jamyang's narration includes his interviews with Robert Ford (1923-2013), the only radio operator of the Tibetan government and the only foreigner living permanently in Tibet when China's PLA attacked and occupied a big part of Eastern Tibet. Quoting Ford he writes, "When Muja finally came out of the monastery, he was angry and grim-faced. He told Ford that Nagabo had ordered him to surrender. He apologized to Ford for delaying him and ordered his men to make camp. Then Muja, Ford and the 2,500 soldiers of the Tibetan army of Chamdo waited haplessly before the walls of Drugu Monastery till eventually ... one hundred exhausted PLA troops from the Ngamda crossroad arrived, and Ngabo was finally able to surrender."

The book also presents Jamyang's eye for details and his narration of very simple and obvious looking



things to make his story interesting and informative. For example, he describes striking similarities of architecture and other characteristics between various towns at the entry points to Tibet even if they were located hundreds of kilometers apart from each other. His observations about such similarities between Kalimpong and Darjeeling from Bengal direction; Gangtok from Sikkim side; Dartsedo (Kangding) from Sichuan and Satham Lijiang from Yunnan are interesting.

The variety and quality of a good number of old and historic photos included in the book add extra glamour and value to it. For example, vintage photos from Jamyang's own family album; many historic personalities and scholars related to Tibet; heroes of Tibetan battles and public uprisings against the invading PLA; prominent guerrilla fighters of Chu-Shi-Gangdruk; real photos of Chinese atrocities during the Cultural Revolution; and photos of Chinese, Tibetan, British and Japanese spies make it a rich collection. However, nearly complete set of photos of the CIA-trained Tibetan guerrilla fighter paratroopers who were secretly air dropped in Tibet make this book unique and a collectors' pride.

Another set of visuals which help the reader in grasping the story of Tibetan resistance against the PLA are the maps included in the book. Some maps which deserve to be preserved by the reader include a detailed map of Tibet of 1950s showing location of all major towns and cities; routes connecting Tibet to Gangtok and Darjeeling; a large map depicting routes and directions of Chinese advance and Tibetan fighters' retreat in early 1950s; the routes taken by Chu-Shi-Gangdruk's founder commander and the supreme hero of Tibetan guerrilla resistance Andrug Gonpo Tashi right from Paksho in the East to Nyemo and Shigatse in the West; and, of course, the map of Mustang guerrilla bases in Nepal showing the location of each of the 16 Company camps of Chu-Shi-Gangdruk.

What makes Jamyang unpopular among the Tibet's exiled establishment is his frankness and courage to speak up his mind on sensitive issues. This book highlights this aspect of his personality at many places. And all this comes from his enthusiasm about conducting his own studies and research. A major part of his book is based on his personal and detailed interviews, spread over many years, with numerous individuals who were first hand witness to Tibet's war with China. His description of the daring role of many Tibetan women fighters like Gyari Dorje Yudon of Nyarong, Ani (Nun) Pachen Lemdatsang of Gonjo and Lhalu sonam Deki as well brave political leaders like Ani (Nun) Glingshar, Gurten Kunsang, Dolma Chonzom, Sampho Ngudup Wangmo and Lobsang Dekyong reflect the

widespread anger and opposition to the Chinese colonial rule in Tibet.

Ford told Jamyang about his discussions with General Karchung of Tibetan army who had faced first attack of PLA on 7 Oct 1950 at Riwoche and later was in Chinese captivity along with Ford. Quoting from his long interviews with Ford, Jamyang points out that there was only one radio receiver at Ford's command when PLA entered Tibet. If Tibetan army had one more radio at Riwoche and another at Markham then the history of Tibet would have been different. "In just, possibly, a week or so, the many high passes in that region would have become snowbound..... Chinese would have had to force their pack animals and porters through the many snowbound passes to Chamdo, and that would unquestionably have led to a disaster (for PLA)...."

In the chapter titled 'Requiem' Jamyang has, like a surgeon, finely analyzed the reasons behind the defeat of Tibetan army and guerrilla warriors at the hands of invading PLA. He writes, "The organization of the Tibetan army was indeed archaic. The individual Tibetan soldier was not as well trained, certainly not as well equipped as his European, American or Chinese counterpart. But he had native toughness, courage and amor patriae. No Tibetan soldier threw down his weapon and fled at the first sign of the enemy. Even when defeated he gave a good account of himself....." While describing the valor and fighting spirit of the Tibetan warriors Jamyang also points out some weak points too. At one point the book says, "....When (Tibetan people's) troops went to the front line, they took their families with them. With (General) Muja's men now came as many women and children, with all their household goods and personal belongings piled up on yaks and mules...."

The formal Tibetan army was defeated on the Eastern front in the very first Chinese attack in October 1950. This defeat was quick and decisive against an enormous, well equipped and experienced PLA as the Tibetan army not only lacked drastically on its manpower front but also because of utter paucity of necessary training, equipment. Moreover, it was near total absence of planning, vision or desire on the part of Lhasa government to have and maintain a good national army. The role of Ngapo Ngawang Jigme, the Tibetan governor of the region, who was already known for his pro-China tilt and who decided to not only to surrender to the PLA but also ordered blasting of entire Tibetan armory which proved as the proverbial last straw for the Tibetan side. His decision not only deprived the willing Tibetan soldiers to fight back but it also closed door on the arms and ammunition reaching those soldiers and lay people who had decided to carry on the fight. But thanks to the self-respecting and

fighting spirit of the ordinary Tibetans, especially those from the frontline provinces of Kham and Amdo, entire responsibility of armed resistance against the occupying PLA across Tibet for coming decades was shouldered by groups of local chieftains, ordinary citizens, Lamas and Nuns.

Jamyang's book is a systematic, the most voluminous one so far and commendable documentation of this struggle which, unfortunately, could not keep up against a giant and shrewd opponent. He has presented a detailed history of various stages and forms of Tibetan armed struggle through stories and deeds of individual freedom fighters belonging to various big and small groups across Tibet. However, a good part of the book is dedicated to the Chu-Shi-Gangdruk (i.e. 'Four Rivers Six Ranges') which was a volunteer guerrilla force lead by legendry Andrug Gampo Tashi, the most fearsome, brave and highly respected fighter of modern Tibetan history. The book tells the force's story right from its formation as a volunteer army and later its adoption by American secret service CIA for training at Colorado's secret Camp-Hale and subsequent armed operations inside Tibet. Unfortunately the US and CIA's support lasted only until the US government started its love affair with Mao's China in 1970s. CIA's sudden decision to pull out its hands from under the guerrilla force and leaving it unprotected only to be massacred jointly by the Nepal's Royal Nepal Army and the Chinese PLA in mid 1970s.

In addition to telling stories of many individual Tibetan guerrilla soldiers Jamyang has also interviewed many of CIA's American trainers and the coordinators who were involved in training the Tibetans in handling arms and ammunition, running battery less transmitters, secret coding of wireless messages and air dropping of arms and paratroopers deep inside Tibet. He has also described the role of Dalai Lama's two elder brothers Taktser Rinpoche and Gyalo Thundup in the CIA operations.

Jamyang describes in good details how Taktser Rinpoche personally stayed at Colorado and was provided a special house at the Camp Hale as he played an important role in the training of Tibetan guerrillas. Gyalo Thundup's role, true to his nature and specializations was focused on liaison with the US government and, as described by Mikel Dunham in his CIA focused book 'Buddha's Warriors', was involved in managing the American CIA funds for Chu-Shi-Gangdruk. In their later years Taktser Rinpoche finally joined California University as a professor and remained a vocal and strong supporter of the idea of complete freedom (i.e. 'Rangzen') for Tibet till his last breath. However, Gyalo Thundup has been living in his so many avatars which include his close and controversial

association with Beijing that has led to convincing Dalai Lama to shift his goal from 'Rangzen' to the 'Middle Way Approach' (MWA) which means accepting Tibet as a part of China under Chinese constitution in exchange for 'genuine autonomy' for Tibet. It is not surprising that Jamyang as one of the most vocal proponents of 'Rangzen' and strongest opponents of the MWA has invited all kinds of reactions, including opposition and condemnation, from many Tibetan quarters including the exile Tibetan establishment in Dharamshala. I am amused to note that while he has given details about the valor and the role played by many less known individual participants of Tibetan armed struggle, Gyalo Thundup is conspicuous by his near total absence from this voluminous book despite latter's prominent role in the CIA sponsored armed guerrilla war.

A good section of the book is focused at the aggressive conduct of the Chinese Communist Party and the PLA after occupation of Tibet. He has probed and described in details how ordinary Tibetan people including monks, nuns and nomads across Tibet opposed and resisted the Chinese imposition of the communist system in the guise of 'Democratic Reforms'. He also describes the 1959 Lhasa-Uprising of Tibetan people against Chinese rule which finally prompted Dalai Lama to secretly escape from Tibet to India.

The fact remains that the armed struggle of helpless and friendless Tibetan people failed to match Chinese power machine over past seven decades. In the face of millions of new Han settlers across Tibet, a massive machine of soldiers, policemen, informers and a sophisticated digital surveillance system has left no space for an armed resistance inside today's Tibet. But the unending stream of self-immolation by Tibetan people which has seen over 150 young boys and girls, monks and nuns making the supreme sacrifice over recent years to give voice to the Tibetan people's refusal to accept China's rule and dominance over their country is an unambiguous indication of Tibet and Tibetans' resolve for freedom. It may not be easy to comment on all issues covered in this 891-page book in a single review but one can say for sure that this book is a monumental documentation of the brave armed fight of Tibetan people against a powerful and ruthless colonial power. On the strength of my, whatsoever limited, knowledge and understanding of Tibet and the people of Tibet over past five decades I can safely predict that this book is going to prove one of the most detailed and authentic monographs of Tibetan people's armed struggle and their desire for national independence.

## Unsettled LAC is Xi's pressure point on India to stay away from West

01 March 2024, The Hindustan Times

It seems that China is in no mood to resolve its dispute with India. On February 19, the India-China Corps Commanders met at Chushul-Moldo border point to discuss disengagement, relocation and de-escalation in eastern Ladakh.

It has been four years since the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) transgressed over Galwan, Gogra Hot Springs, Pangong Tso Lake and had accretion of forces at Depsang Plain as well as Charding Nala Junction in Demchok. Even after four years, the disengagement has not been complete, what to talk of relocation or de-escalation.

Even now, the Chinese have packed up nearly 50,000 troops along with rocket systems, missiles and fighters on a standby in the hinterland in Tibet. Even on February 19, both the Indian and Chinese sides couldn't get past each other. The Chinese used the transgressions in East Ladakh to pressurise the Narendra Modi government.

China wary of India's ties with West?

It is a million dollar question of which one can only speculate the answers. It is quite evident that the Chinese will use the non-resolution of Line of Actual Control (LAC) to pressurise India not to go to the West. It is a clear cut pressure point that the Chinese are using the QUAD to translate into an alliance much bigger than a talk shop.

The Chinese also want to use this to ensure that the Indian borders never remain stable and India is always on the tenterhooks due to its huge army, latest advanced weapon systems and numerically high presence in eastern Ladakh.

This is happening despite the government making it very clear that the normalisation of bilateral ties with China only go through the settlement and de-escalation on the LAC, which is 3,488 kilometres long. Currently, the Chinese PLA is packed up in Ladakh, the eastern sector along Arunachal Pradesh and across Sikkim.

Even before Xi Jinping became the Chinese president for the third time in October 2022, the Chinese sent six combined armed brigade, virtually a division strength each, along the Arunachal and Sikkim borders. Those combined armed brigades are still there. As of now, the LAC is packed up with Chinese forces, who are doing all kinds of military upgradation all along the LAC.

How India is responding to China?

The Indian side has also responded in a similar fashion. It has ensured that the Chinese challenge does not go without riposte. The problem is, over the past four years, things are not at all moving. The

India-China trade is still heavily in favour of China, the trade deficit being more than \$100 billion.

The Chinese want to settle the border on their own terms. It means you impose the 1959 line, proposed by then Chinese premier Chou en Lai on East Ladakh and you give up on Arunachal Pradesh or what they call as South Tibet.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi tried to reach out to China in 2018 at Wuhan and in 2019 at Chennai, trying to sort out the border. He tried to sort out with Xi Jinping the resolution of the boundary issue. But the Chinese responded by a transgression in May 2020.

As PM Modi told one of his senior officers, "I wanted to give support of 140 crore Indians to President Xi Jinping but he was more interested in 140 square kilometres of land".

## Peace At Border Must For Improvement Of Ties With China: S Jaishankar

02 March 2024, NDTV

China must adhere to border management pacts and there has to be peace and tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) for improvement in Sino-India ties, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar asserted on Saturday amid the lingering military face-off in eastern Ladakh.

In an interactive session at a think-tank, he highlighted how the Modi government has been focusing on boosting the border infrastructure and that there has to be an equilibrium eventually in the relations between India and China.

In an oblique reference to governments in the past, Mr Jaishankar, replying to a broad question on dealing with China, said India did not use international relationships as effectively as it could have in the past.

In this context, Mr Jaishankar identified development of national power as very crucial.

"Powers rise, powers stand their ground, powers build equilibrium; not by fancy statements and clever debates. They have to do hard work of governance, putting the resources, push the system, deliver on the ground, monitor it, supervise it and have relationships which will contribute to it," he said.

The Indian and Chinese troops are locked in an over three-and-half-year confrontation in certain friction points in eastern Ladakh even as the two sides completed disengagement from several areas following extensive diplomatic and military talks.

The external affairs minister underlined the need for India to build deep national strength including in areas of technology and supply chains to effectively face challenges from China.

"It is a combination of all of this but the bottomline is there has to be an equilibrium and there has to be peace and tranquillity in the border areas and there has to be adherence to the agreements which were arrived at," Mr Jaishankar said at the Ananta Aspen Centre.

"Because if you do not adhere to the agreements, tell me how you would have even the basic understanding and going forward, if there isn't peace and tranquillity at the border, how can any society look at other forms of cooperation when the border is disturbed or violent," he said.

"And there has to eventually be an equilibrium, I am convinced it will. I am convinced we have to work hard for that equilibrium," he said.

Mr Jaishankar said the Modi government has significantly enhanced the border infrastructure in the last 10 years.

As a result of a series of military and diplomatic talks, the two sides completed the disengagement process in 2021 on the north and south banks of the Pangong lake and in the Gogra area.

### **Is turbulent the new normal in Sino-Indian relations?**

02 March 2024, Observer Research Foundation

On India's part, it has stood up to the China challenge on several fronts.

At the 2024 iteration of Raisina Dialogue, Asia's premier conference on geopolitics, China featured prominently in the discussions, given that there has been a tense standoff at the border between the Indian and Chinese armies for nearly four years. The clashes between the two armies in Galwan in 2020, which resulted in fatalities of on both sides, is an important turning point in the relations between the two Asian powers. Foreign minister S Jaishankar deconstructed China's approach in dealing with India. He said that while China tried to change the status quo at the border in the process violating the agreements to which it is a signatory, it was trying to stymie India's bid to get a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. The minister alluded to China deploying mind games to resolve border issues with India, but that the breakthrough would come about only if other powers were kept at bay. Underlining India's response to these developments, Jaishankar stated that India would not let a competitor curtail its policy choices, and that his government would look to make use of the international system for the best outcome.

The reason for such a pessimistic assessment of the ties between the two nations is that the clashes in Galwan have been followed by China trying to

change the status quo on the ground at different points along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

The Indian government has termed relations between the two nations as "abnormal" and also pinned the breakdown of trust between the two nations on China's aggressive action at the border. The reason for such a pessimistic assessment of the ties between the two nations is that the clashes in Galwan have been followed by China trying to change the status quo on the ground at different points along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). In addition to the military coercion, China has resorted to mind games, which Jaishankar alluded to. China unilaterally renamed towns in Arunachal Pradesh, to which it lays claims. It also publicised a map recently showing large parts of Indian territory as part of China. The cartographic onslaught is also backed by a massive build-up of People's Liberation Army (PLA) soldiers along the border, and China creating enormous infrastructure—both civilian and military—to improve the staying power of its military. Twenty-one rounds of talks between the two militaries that have been conducted has led to resolution at some friction points, but overall troop deployment remains a cause for concern.

On India's part, it has stood up to the China challenge on several fronts. First, it has matched China's troop deployment at the border, there has also been a fillip to the development of infrastructure facilities at the border. Second, India has taken the lead in banning cellphone apps on national security grounds, and there has been curbs on infusion of Chinese capital and investment into India.

The government's approach has received public approbation. ORF's Foreign Policy survey 2023 found out that an overwhelming 83% of the respondents interviewed in urban India gave a thumbs-up to India's foreign policy. There is little constituency for peace with China since nearly 80% of those surveyed cite China's aggression at the border being responsible for the trust deficit. More so, because many of these respondents see India's seat at the UN Security Council (that China has sought to block) as a key priority. On the bright side, more than three-fourths of the respondents see India's G20 Presidency and the Quad as appropriate fora to pursue India's interests, with the same number putting great store in Australia, Japan, and the US (Quad members) as leading partners in the near future.

Leveraging the international system

Thus, faced with the China challenge, India has crafted a foreign policy that seeks greater engagement with the world. A case in point is India's G20 presidency under which more than 100 countries were invited to a 'Voice of Global South' summit, taking up issues of food and energy security,

fast-tracking reforms of global financial to seek better representation to developing nations. The other central piece of this proactive foreign policy was India's increasing engagement with the Quad, which Jaishankar described as India's riposte to those who seek to veto her policy choices. Speaking at the Quad Think Tank Forum on Feb 24, the minister highlighted nascent capacity-building initiatives that were helping policy-makers in the Indo-Pacific region better evaluate infrastructure projects on viability and sustainability criterion. Such efforts underscore Quad's commitment to the region reeling from the impact of China's debt-trap diplomacy in the wake of the Belt and Road Initiative.

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At the same time, China's belligerence through different means continues unabated. An important aspect of China's aggression and expansionism has been the deployment of grey-zone warfare, in which a nation uses strategies to pursue its aims, but that may not invoke a strong military response from the other side. For example, China has built 'xiaokang' villages near the Indian border in a bid to bolster its territorial claims, and now there are reports that these are being populated with settlers.

During the Raisina conclave, India's Chief of Defence Staff Anil Chauhan drew attention to China's use of such strategies to hobble rivals. If the 2010s put strains on India-China ties due to land-based incursions, then the coming decades may see increased strife in the maritime and cyberspace spheres as well.

While China considers the South China Sea as its lake, it has stated that the Indian Ocean is not India's ocean. There have been reports of Chinese research vessels trawling the Indian ocean to collate and build a repository of data, which may give its submarines an edge in navigating in this region.

The Indian establishment will also have to be alert to increased efforts by Chinese state and non-state actors who will try to infiltrate the cybersecurity domain to steal data that may have national security ramifications. It's a turbulent road ahead for Sino-Indian ties.

### **Money, power and the peril of courting Chinese nationalism**

02 March 2024, Aljazeera

In January, a Chinese ultranationalist vlogger – video blogger – came across red circular stickers on the glass doors of a shopping mall in Nanjing featuring the words: "Happy 2024."

The vlogger claimed that what appeared to be innocent New Year decorations were, in fact, nationalistic Japanese motifs since the red circles resembled the rising red sun in Japan's national flag. "This is Nanjing, not Tokyo! Why are you putting up junk like this?" he snarled at a manager at the mall. Local police subsequently got involved and ordered staff at the mall to take down the decorations and gave the mall's management an official warning. "It is the most ridiculous thing I have ever heard," 33-year-old noodle shop owner Alice Lu from Shanghai told Al Jazeera.

"If red circles are not allowed then there is no end to the things that must be removed," Lu said.

Following the standard set by the local police in Nanjing, users on Chinese social media were quick to highlight the absurdity of all the red circular objects that would need to be banned, including the logo of China's telecommunications giant Huawei, posters of China's first Communist leader, Mao Zedong, featuring a rising sun in the background, and even traffic lights.

The fiasco drew in China's state-run CCTV which chastised the vlogger in an article on its Weibo account, calling his actions "detrimental to individuals, companies and society as a whole".

Shaoyu Yuan, a scholar of Chinese studies at Rutgers University in the United States, said CCTV's comments demonstrated an attempt by the Chinese government to maintain state control over the narrative surrounding nationalism.

"They want to ensure that nationalism serves as a unifying force rather than being misused," Yuan told Al Jazeera.

Steering patriotism

Under the rule of Chinese President Xi Jinping, fervent patriotic sentiment has been encouraged among the public for years.

Xi said in June that "love of our country, the feeling of devotion and sense of attachment to our motherland is a duty and responsibility of every Chinese", and that "the essence of patriotism is loving the country, the Party and socialism all at the same time".

The importance of state-defined patriotism was highlighted at the beginning of January when a new "patriotic education law" came into effect in China with the stated aim of instilling "love of the country and the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP)".

During Xi's presidency, that patriotic fervour has been projected outward from China by its "wolf warrior" diplomats, including former foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian who famously floated the idea that the US military was responsible for the COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan.

Zhao also posted a fabricated image depicting an Australian soldier holding a bloody knife to the



throat of an Afghan child in 2020, at a time when relations between Australia and China were in free fall.

While the CCP promotes its own version of patriotism, it also moderates nationalistic output at times, too.

Incessant bashing of the US online is a common pastime among active Chinese nationalists. But leading up to a highly anticipated summit between President Xi and US President Joe Biden in November, China's media and nationalist commentators suddenly dialled down their anti-US rhetoric.

Beijing adjusts the volume on nationalistic rhetoric to serve its interests, according to Yuan, engaging in a balancing act of patriotic sentiment when necessary.

"While nationalism is encouraged as a means of fostering a strong national identity and loyalty, its excesses can lead to extremism and undermine international diplomacy, social harmony and public order," Yuan said.

**Nationalism turns violent**

Lu from Shanghai said the Nanjing incident was an example of how the promotion of intense patriotic feelings in China has led to a toxic environment – particularly when it comes to Japan-related topics.

"It is a bit scary actually how anti-Japanese feelings can make some people react in China," she said.

Chinese modern nationalism directed at Japan is deeply influenced by historical conflicts, most notably the events of the Second Sino-Japanese War during World War II, Yuan said.

"These have left a lasting imprint on the Chinese collective memory, fuelling sentiments of resentment and vigilance towards Japan," he said.

Anti-Japanese sentiment was on display in 2022 when a known cosplayer was approached by police in Suzhou, a city not far from Shanghai, as she was taking pictures of herself on the street wearing a Japanese kimono. Before being taken away, a police officer was recorded shouting at the woman: "If you came here wearing hanfu (traditional Chinese clothing), I wouldn't say this, but you are wearing a kimono as a Chinese. You are Chinese!"

A few days after the arrest, CCTV launched a social media topic promoting the wearing of hanfu-style clothing.

The Suzhou incident pales in comparison, however, to August 2012 when a dispute in the East China Sea over control of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, which are administered by Tokyo but claimed by Beijing, led to large anti-Japanese protests across urban China.

While protests are often swiftly broken up by the Chinese authorities, the anti-Japanese demonstrations in several cities saw no interference, and from there they turned increasingly violent.

In the central Chinese city of Xi'an, a Chinese man in a Japanese car was pulled out of his vehicle and severely beaten, sustaining life-changing injuries.

The government-controlled People's Daily subsequently said in an editorial that it did not condone the violence, but attempted to explain it as a sign of Chinese people's patriotism.

By the time police intervened and restored order at the end of September, Japanese shops, companies and restaurants had been vandalised and China-Japan relations were bruised.

Sales representative Simon Wan, 36, remembers the demonstrations in Beijing devolving into riots at that time.

"From our apartment window, we saw people smash my father's Toyota (a Japanese car brand) which was parked on the street below," he told Al Jazeera.

"My family and me stayed indoors most of the time those days to avoid trouble. It was quite frightening."

Wan believes that the government does not want to see a repeat of the anti-Japan riots in 2012.

"So, I think they reacted to the nationalistic vlogger in Nanjing because they wanted to avoid any kind of escalation," he said.

When ultranationalist fervour leads to property damage or becomes counterproductive to China's diplomatic goals, it goes too far, according to Yuan, at which point the Chinese authorities will seek to contain it – as in Nanjing.

**Making patriotism pay**

The vlogger in Nanjing was not just chastised for being too nationalistic, however. He was pilloried for using patriotism to turn a profit from his video blogs.

"Patriotism is not a business," CCTV stated in its rebuke of the vlogger.

But, patriotism can in fact be a lucrative business for many nationalistic bloggers and vloggers on Chinese social media.

According to Yuan, there are many ways to monetise patriotism for people such as Hu Xijin, a public figure and commentator who has leveraged his nationalistic stance to amass significant followings on social media.

"This business aspect of patriotism involves not only direct profits from social media platforms through advertisements and sponsored content but also endorsements and partnerships with brands that wish to align themselves with patriotic sentiments," he said.

Chinese social media accounts with more than a million followers can earn their owners a few hundred thousand dollars a year, while nationalistic commentators such as Hu Xijin have tens of millions of followers. But as the vlogger in Nanjing discovered, the attention garnered by nationalistic tropes does not guarantee fame and fortune, and can instead lead to infamy and misfortune.

In 2022, blogger Sima Nan had his social media accounts across Chinese platforms blocked after he engaged in a war of words with China's tech firm Lenovo during which time it was revealed that he was a homeowner in the US state of California, despite his overt anti-Americanism.

Another nationalist, Kong Qingdong, was banned from Weibo in 2022 for undisclosed reasons. Kong was also temporarily banned in 2012 after he had sparked a public outcry when he referred to Hongkongers as "dogs" and other slurs.

"Navigating the waters of nationalistic content creation in China can be as perilous as it is profitable," Yuan said.

"While the Chinese government often supports and promotes nationalistic sentiment that aligns with its policies and image, there are red lines that cannot be crossed, and content creators who venture too far, misinterpret the government's stance or criticise its policies – even under the guise of nationalism – can find themselves facing swift repercussions," he said.

Adding to the peril, China's red lines are fluid and can quickly change depending on the situation.

The sudden shift in nationalistic rhetoric leading up to the Biden-Xi summit in November is an example of such a rapid change.

"A nationalistic stance that aligns with the government's current diplomatic posture might be encouraged at one time but could become problematic if diplomatic priorities shift and the stance is no longer deemed appropriate," Yuan explained.

Such fluidity is an element of the CCP's balancing act regarding nationalism.

"It (the CCP) aims to promote a strong sense of national identity and pride among its citizens while avoiding the pitfalls of hypernationalism that could lead to xenophobia, regional tensions, or internal dissent," Yuan added.

"Additionally, the Chinese government has always sought to prevent any single voice or group from becoming so influential in nationalist discourse that it could challenge the authority of the Communist Party or create factions within society."

Looking back on his experience during the anti-Japan riots in 2012, Wan, the sales rep from Beijing, said he worried that the government's promotion of patriotism and tolerance towards nationalism would endanger Chinese society in the long run.

"I think President Xi told American President Biden a few years ago that those who play with fire will get burned," he said.

"I think that is also the case for anyone in China that plays too much with the flames of nationalism."

## **China bolsters military recruitment aimed at sharpening its military power: A warning for its neighbours**

01 March 2024, Times of India

China has been intensifying its military recruitment efforts to strengthen and modernize its armed forces under Xi's leadership, with a significant boost in the past year. The PRC is recruiting not only its former officers but also highly skilled foreign veterans and technically qualified students. Alongside, State-owned Enterprises (SOE) and private companies are raising their volunteer armies.

Several steps have been taken since last year. First, the PLA's newly amended recruitment guidelines, which took effect on May 1, 2023, stated that conscription would be focused on preparations for war, and priority would be on recruiting highly skilled personnel, including retired personnel. It also included scope for wider mobilisation of the population in the event of war, including the recruitment of women to active service, as well as previously demobilised soldiers, who may return to their old posts and rank "if they meet the requirements." This regulation, which has 74 articles in 11 chapters, focuses on recruiting more "high-calibre soldiers, standardising and optimising conscription procedures, and improving the system's efficiency." The State Council and the Central Military Commission have been given powers to adjust the methods and requirements of recruitment to enlist citizens to active service.

Second, China revised the retirement age for top reservist commanders, raising it from 55 to 60 to retain skilled professionals longer.

Third, the regulations prioritise university graduates with special skills or knowledge, particularly in science and engineering, for induction into combat forces.

Fourth, China is using foreign highly skilled veterans for training its trainers. In September 2023, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Charles Brown warned airmen and allies that China's PLA "wants to exploit your knowledge and skill to fill gaps in their military capability." He further stated that "foreign companies are targeting and recruiting US and NATO-trained military talent." China's recruiting efforts include contracts that seem "too good to be true," or that are scant on details about the customer. According to US officials, these job offers come from a mix of privately owned companies backed by China and those directly contracted by the Chinese government. Targets include pilots, maintainers, air operations centre personnel, and a variety of other technical experts from across multiple occupations who could provide insight into US and NATO air tactics, techniques, and procedures. China is also

using US veterans to train air force officers in third countries. In June 2023 the Department of Commerce placed the Test Flying Academy of South Africa on an export control list because it was facilitating training and technical support to the PLA using a former US military member.

Fifth, China has directed the State-owned and private companies to set up their volunteer armies. Since last year, at least 16 major Chinese firms, including a privately-owned dairy giant (Yili group), have established fighting forces. These units, known as the People's Armed Forces Departments, are composed of civilians who retain their regular jobs. They act as a reserve and auxiliary force for China's military. Yili's private army unit is under the management of the PLA garrison in Inner Mongolia and the Communist Party committee of the regional government, indicating the linkages between private armies with the PLA. These armies are to be deployed within the country. However, the Chinese definition of its area includes the disputed regions in its periphery, and therefore the possibility of their deployment there cannot be ruled out. These can be used to maintain social disorders within the country. China faces problems in Tibet, Xinjiang, and Hongkong as well as labour protests. The number of labour strikes and demonstrations surged to 1,794 in 2023, more than doubling from 2022, when only 830 cases were recorded. China is crushing the dissidence with a strong hand. Crucially, as these units work under the PLA, they can help the Communist Party more effectively quell incidents of social unrest.

How China views these private armies is significant. Wu Qian, a Chinese defence ministry spokesperson, stated that the aim to raise PAFDs was part of China's whole-nation approach to national defence and that the militias are available for everything from a large-scale mobilisation to the response to a natural disaster.

Overall, China's recruitment efforts could significantly bolster its military strength. There are more than 2 million active personnel. The People's Armed Police (1 million) adds to China's current standing army, while there are some 8 million professional reserves under the age of 45 who have already served. Experts suggest that with a potential reservoir of 10 million students and regional reserves, national mobilization could produce an army of around 30 million in varying states of training and readiness. Even if this figure is exaggerated, the realistic figure could be around 10 million personnel including technical men.

This large force could impact China's approach to regional disputes, potentially leading to increased assertiveness and use of force, as seen in its actions in areas like Taiwan, the South China Sea, and along

the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with India. It has scant regard for international law and it uses manufactured historical facts to pursue expansionism. While internal problems can be dealt with by the private armies, the regular forces can be deployed in the disputed areas. China's aggressiveness is seen as a new normal. Xi has often stated that the use of force against Taiwan cannot be ruled out. However, this high number of troops is not required for Taiwan, hence they could have different objectives. Chinese militias are already being used in artificial islands, turning them into its forward military bases. Along the LAC, China has created villages where trained personnel can be housed and used for encroachment into the Indian side. Besides, China can use technical units for more aggressive influence operations aimed at weaponising the public mind. India and other neighbours having territorial disputes with China should take precautionary counter-measures.

### Make in India can dial up Chinese characteristics

01 March 2024, Reuters

India's ambition to become a factory to the world can use a helping hand from China. The South Asian country wants to triple electronics exports to \$300 billion, opens new tab in about three years, but its firms lack the expertise to manufacture parts like display screens and camera modules - areas dominated by suppliers from the People's Republic. Convincing them to set up factories in India will be tricky, but not impossible.

India has had a decent start so far. It became a net exporter of mobile phones in 2020 after introducing hefty import taxes, which forced handset makers including China's Xiaomi (1810.HK), opens new tab to move production to the country. As a result, and following a long push to force companies to Make-in-India, local value addition, or the share of locally-sourced components, jumped, opens new tab to 17% from just 6% between 2016 and 2018, according Counterpoint research. Taiwanese firms Foxconn (2317.TW), opens new tab and Pegatron (4938.TW), opens new tab are also assembling iPhones in the country; JPMorgan analysts reckon India might produce one in four iPhones by 2025.

Most of that, however, is in low-value manufacturing like smartphone assembly and producing batteries and chargers. To compare, Vietnam's local value addition is 24%, largely thanks to investments from the \$28 billion Shenzhen-listed Luxshare Precision Industry (002475.SZ), opens new tab and Beijing-based BOE Technology (000725.SZ), opens new tab, a top maker of TV and smartphone screens.

Wooing those firms has been a thorny issue for India because of strained political relations with its

neighbour. More than a dozen Chinese suppliers including Luxshare received initial approvals to set up, opens new tab local factories over a year ago, according to Bloomberg. But progress appears to have stalled.

New Delhi is now mulling removing barriers to Chinese investments, provided the two countries' shared border remains peaceful. It also recently cut import duties on some smartphone components, though they are still much higher than in Mexico and Southeast Asia. India's deputy IT minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar recently warned in a government document seen by Reuters that the country must "act fast" to lure global companies with lower tariffs, or risk losing out to Southeast Asia and elsewhere.

In exchange for investment and expertise, Chinese firms would have better access to a thriving smartphone market. That is expected to triple to \$90 billion by 2032, according to Morgan Stanley. Foreign brands operating retail stores in the country, like Apple (AAPL.O), opens new tab, have to source at least 30% of the product's value locally.

India' economy is growing fast and consistently beating market expectations; GDP expanded 8.4% in the December quarter from a year earlier, official data released on Thursday showed. Foreign direct investment is lagging, however. That could hobble the dream to create jobs through manufacturing. India has had good reason to hold back the red carpet treatment on investments for a country nibbling at its border but Make in India can use some Chinese characteristics.

India risks losing out to China and Vietnam as it seeks to become a major smartphone export hub and must "act fast" to lure global companies with lower tariffs, deputy IT minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar said in government documents seen by Reuters, the news agency reported on Feb. 13.

"India has high production cost due to highest tariffs amongst key manufacturing destinations," wrote Chandrasekhar in the documents. A Jan. 3 letter and a confidential presentation drafted by Chandrasekhar was sent to the Finance Minister, Reuters added.

"The geopolitical realignment is forcing supply chains to shift out of China ... We must act now, or they will shift to Vietnam, Mexico and Thailand."

## February

### China says Hong Kong's 'one country, two systems' is permanent

28 February 2024, The Japan Times

Beijing's point person to Hong Kong said the city's special governing formula will remain a "permanent structure," the South China Morning Post reported, as the Chinese official sought to boost confidence in the Asian finance hub.

Xia Baolong, who leads the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, on Monday said the "one country, two systems" principle helps set Hong Kong apart from mainland Chinese cities, the Post said. The newspaper cited an unidentified attendee of a meeting between the Chinese official and about 40 local and foreign business chambers.

Hong Kong is guaranteed a high degree of autonomy until at least 2047 under a political arrangement enshrined in the city's constitution, but Beijing's political crackdown has eroded rights once seen as fundamental to its success. Prominent observers including former Morgan Stanley Asia chair Stephen Roach have called on Beijing to commit to the model to revive growth in the city.

Xia has embarked on a weeklong inspection trip in Hong Kong as the city is pushing to enact a domestic security law. The proposal has raised concern among the finance community about potential chilling effect on open discussion of economic and policy issues.

In his meeting with business representatives, Xia highlighted the city's judicial system, stock market, large presence of international banks and proficiency in English among its distinct advantages, the official was reported as saying, citing an attendee.

His reported remarks add to Chinese top leaders' previous vow to maintain Hong Kong's semiautonomous status. President Xi Jinping said in July 2022 of the "one country, two systems" policy: "There is no reason for us to change such a good policy, and we must adhere to it in the long run."

Chamber representatives discussed topics including Hong Kong's integration with mainland China and the proposed security bill known as Article 23 during their 90 minute meeting with Xia, the city's Chief Executive John Lee told reporters Monday.

Xia's trip comes at a crucial time for Hong Kong's political and economic future. The city briefly lost its place to India as the world's fourth-largest stock market earlier this year as global capital poured out of China.

In 2020, Beijing tightened its grip over Hong Kong by imposing a broad national security law, a move that followed historic and sometimes violent protests in the former British colony. The crackdown on civil

liberties, coupled with strict Covid curbs, has prompted thousands of residents to leave Hong Kong in recent years, leading to a talent drain on the financial sector that's a linchpin of the city.

Lee last month unveiled a broad plan to pass the city's own security legislation, which offers vague definitions of issues like state secrets and espionage. The one-month consultation period on the Article 23 bill ends Wednesday, when the city is also set to unveil its annual budget.

"They basically said that they understood the reason for it, and they supported it, because in their country, they have similar laws, and they don't have any effect on their consideration and confidence in Hong Kong," Lee said of foreign chambers' comments on Article 23 during the media session. "In fact, a few even said that, with the stability ensured, then there is a good foundation for development."

### **Expanding Forced Labor in Xinjiang: New Report Exposes CCP's Growing Atrocities Against Uyghurs**

27 February 2024, BNN

Unveil the escalating forced labor practices against Uyghurs in Xinjiang, marking a grim advancement in the Chinese Communist Party's human rights violations. Explore the transition from re-education camps to the 'Poverty Alleviation Through Labor Transfer' program, and the international response to combat these harrowing discoveries.

A recent investigation by Adrian Zenz for The Jamestown Foundation unveils the escalating forced labor practices against Uyghurs in Xinjiang, marking a grim advancement in the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) human rights violations. This intensification is part of a systematic attempt to control, assimilate, and erase Uyghur culture through what is now the largest state-imposed forced labor system in the world.

From Re-Education to Forced Labor

The transition from notorious re-education camps to the 'Poverty Alleviation Through Labor Transfer' program represents a strategic shift by the CCP to make forced labor operations less detectable while extending their impact. Adrian Zenz's rigorous analysis indicates a sinister plan to transfer a significantly higher number of Uyghur workers to other provinces in 2023, under the guise of economic development and poverty reduction. This move not only intends to dilute the Uyghur presence in Xinjiang but also subjects them to severe exploitation and cultural erasure.

International Response and Legislative Actions

In response to these harrowing discoveries, the United States has taken a firm stance through legislative measures, notably the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, aiming to block imports of

Tibet Digest December - January 2024

goods produced with forced labor in Xinjiang. Furthermore, the recent passage of the Uyghur Policy Act by the House of Representatives underscores a growing international commitment to combatting the CCP's human rights abuses, providing a glimmer of hope for Uyghur activists seeking justice and the cessation of forced labor practices.

Looking Forward: Implications and Challenges

The revelations brought to light by Zenz's research pose significant challenges for global trade relations and the ethical responsibilities of multinational corporations. The persistent efforts by the CCP to obscure the true nature and scale of forced labor in Xinjiang necessitate vigilant and coordinated international action. As the world grapples with these findings, the fate of the Uyghur community hangs in the balance, prompting a crucial reflection on the moral imperatives that govern global economic and political engagements.

As the international community continues to digest the implications of these findings, the spotlight on Xinjiang's forced labor camps serves as a stark reminder of the ongoing human rights crisis. The pursuit of justice for the Uyghurs remains a critical test of the world's commitment to human dignity and freedom.

### **Leadership Psychology of China's Xi Jinping**

26 February 2024, The Diplomat

The Diplomat author Mercy Kuo regularly engages subject-matter experts, policy practitioners, and strategic thinkers across the globe for their diverse insights into U.S. Asia policy. This conversation with Dr. Kenneth Dekleva – professor of Psychiatry and director of Psychiatry-Medicine Integration at UT Southwestern Medical Center, Dallas, Texas; senior fellow at the George H.W. Bush Foundation for US-China Relations; and previously regional medical officer/psychiatrist with the U.S. Dept. of State from 2002-2016 – is the 403rd in "The Trans-Pacific View Insight Series." The views expressed in this interview are entirely his own and do not represent the views of the U.S. government, the U.S. Department of State, or UT Southwestern Medical Center.

Compare and contrast Xi Jinping's past and present leadership psychology.

Xi Jinping has been president of China for over a decade, and as one of the most powerful leaders in the world today, his decisions have profound consequences for economic security, stability, and world peace. An understanding of Xi's leadership psychology is critical in understanding his response to crises, his negotiating style, and how he can be expected to meet China's economic and political challenges over the next decade.



Xi is rational, ruthless, and resilient. He is a formidable adversary and is often underestimated, including by various components of the U.S. intelligence community, who have in his case often confused status and ideological biases with ability. His successes embody his ability to wed his remarkable personal narrative with that of aspirational objectives for China, such as the Chinese Dream of Great Rejuvenation, drawing upon a combination of Chinese nationalist and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) themes.

Diplomats, business leaders, and dignitaries who have met with Xi have described him as polite, restrained, and a good listener. The comments of giants such as the late Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and the late U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger are instructive. Lee, who had met every previous Chinese leader, including Mao, stated, "I would put him in Nelson Mandela's class of persons. A person with enormous emotional stability who does not allow his personal misfortunes to affect his judgment. In other words, he is impressive." In July 2011, Kissinger described Xi as "more assertive, there is a significant presence when he enters a room. His generation has been steeled by suffering."

Identify Xi's decision-making blind spots.

Xi is a true believer, believing in the CCP's primacy, and in China's potential for greatness and rejuvenation. Xi has repeatedly stated that "the East is rising, and the West is in decline." Xi's exceptionalism, while linked to his personal and political self-confidence, represents a potential blind spot.

Having visited America on numerous occasions since 1985, Xi has to appreciate America's exceptionalism and greatness. But Xi likely misses America's resilience, a different part of its exceptionalism. It's an easy mistake, when America remains politically, socially, and economically divided, inward-facing, and weary after two decades of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Had Xi visited America in 1979, he would have seen a country equally beset by – in President Carter's words – "malaise," stagflation, and political/military decline. But the election of President Reagan changed all that. Xi ignores such facts at his peril.

And as Xi ages into a third (and possibly a fourth) five-year term, the risk exists that he will, like many aging, autocratic leaders, exhibit a larger degree of cognitive rigidity in his decision-making.

Xi, beholden to Marxist dialectical reasoning, is seen as rigid and ideological – an easy bias to see. But doing so misses Xi's pragmatism. Xi's shift in course after COVID lockdowns and his recent appeals to the private sector, as China struggles with rising youth unemployment, high levels of debt, and sluggish

growth, highlight his flexibility. Diplomatically, Xi has recently shifted his language, course, and tone in reducing tensions with America, where relations had fallen to new lows. This was dramatically seen in his November 2023 speech – which received a standing ovation – to hundreds of American business executives in San Francisco.

In uncertain areas such as economic slowdowns, response to COVID, foreign relations, trade, crises (e.g., the spy balloon incident of 2023), and China's role in diplomacy involving Russia, North Korea, Ukraine, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel, Xi has navigated more cautiously, even patiently, while shifting tactics to align his and China's national interests within the ancient Chinese paradigm of shi, outlined by Professor David Shin as "the alignment of forces, the propensity of things, or the potential born of disposition."

Examine Xi Jinping's leadership interactions and dynamics with global leaders.

Xi has met with Russia's President Putin 42 times since coming to power in 2012. Xi has spoken of their closeness, referring to him as a "dear friend," and highlighting their "deepening trust" and a "deep friendship." During the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, both leaders cited their "no limits friendship." Many external observers have read more deeply into this friendship than it warrants. I'd suggest that it's more uneven and unequal, where Xi (and China) is the stronger of the two partners.

Xi's relationship with North Korea's Chairman Kim Jong Un is also intriguing. While China and North Korea have been – in the words of Mao – "as close as lips and teeth" – this has not always been the case since Xi came to power. He and Kim only first met during 2018 and 2019, before and after Kim's historic Singapore summit with President Trump. Both visuals and readouts of their meetings hinted at a growing closeness, but for both, a pragmatic one, as China needs a politically stable North Korea as a strategic buffer vis-à-vis South Korea, and North Korea is deeply reliant on China economically.

Xi's self-confidence comes across most notably in his interactions with many other foreign leaders, choosing when to meet, whom to meet, and how to meet with them, in the service of his and China's national interests. This has emerged in his interactions with leaders at the 2022 SCO Summit, the 2022 BRICS Summit, and his recent meetings with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, European Council President Charles Michel, Germany's Olaf Scholz, France's Emmanuel Macron, and numerous American business and political dignitaries, including the late Henry Kissinger, Bill Gates, Elon Musk, Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen, Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo,

Governor of California Gavin Newsom, and Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

Analyze Xi Jinping's calculus toward China's approach to Taiwan.

Will Xi invade Taiwan? Xi has repeatedly stated that reunification will occur, peacefully or otherwise, and yet he – not a disruptor per se – is unlikely to make an impulsive or irrational decision to invade Taiwan. If a red line were crossed, and Taiwan declared independence, Xi could be forced to act militarily, as well as diplomatically, economically, and politically.

A possible scenario involves China further isolating Taiwan, using a whole gamut of government approaches, including air defense patrols, naval blockades, espionage, China Coast Guard patrols, cyberattacks, political/economic pressure, diplomatic pressure, and legal measures. Russia's war setbacks in Ukraine may have chastened Xi, but Ukraine's failed counteroffensive and loss of fiscal year 2024 U.S. congressional funding due to U.S. domestic political changes may further embolden Xi.

Assess how Xi's leadership style could define China's future direction.

Xi remains a confident, powerful leader, who has achieved immense successes, including continuing to lift hundreds of millions of Chinese out of poverty, a significant achievement and component of Xi's Dream of Chinese Great Rejuvenation. During his February 2023 visit to Moscow, in parting with President Putin, Xi stated that global power dynamics are shifting, in an evolving multipolar world, and that "together we should push forward changes that have not happened for 100 years." Xi's response to such challenges will define both his and China's legacy during the 21st century.

Understanding Xi's leadership style, political psychology, and governance outcomes is critical as a rising China asserts itself in Asia, the Global South, and the Middle East, and increasingly counters America's stature, influence, and global power.

### **New Report: Uyghur Forced Labor Increased in 2023**

26 February 2024, Bitter Winter

Under personal instructions from Xi Jinping, Uyghurs continue to be victims of forced "labor transfers" inside and outside Xinjiang. The aim is not economic only.

"Bitter Winter" is often caught in social media controversies where naïve netizens or, more often, CCP trolls argue that all is well in Xinjiang and that Uyghurs are coercively moved to other provinces for forced labor is something that might have happened in isolated incidents in the past but is no longer happening now.

A new report has now been published, which documents that Uyghur forced labor is increasing rather than decreasing. It will not persuade the trolls but perhaps will raise some doubts in the minds of the naïve fellow travelers.

Researcher extraordinaire Adrian Zenz's new report is about "Forced Labor in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region: Assessing the Continuation of Coercive Labor Transfers in 2023 and Early 2024." Quoting mostly documents from the CCP itself, Zenz reports that in 2023 the authorities set a goal of increasing transfer of Uyghur workers to other provinces by 38%. As it often happens in China if bureaucrats want to avoid the risk of being demoted or worse, the quota was not only achieved but exceeded.

"Labor transfer" is a label covering two different Xinjiang realities. It indicates both the forced transfer of workers from agriculture and other jobs they had freely chosen to mandatory factory work. This includes work at factories by Uyghurs detained in "transformation through education" camps, renamed in official documents "Vocational Skills Education and Training Centers." From there, inmates are bussed to the forced workplaces. The second reality is the "Poverty Alleviation" through "Pairing Assistance" connecting Xinjiang to other regions and provinces where Uyghur workers are transferred.

Concerning the first project, "by the third quarter of 2023, the XUAR had already exceeded its entire 2022 labor transfer volume of 3.03 million person-times. State media announced the transfer of 3.05 million person-times rural surplus laborers between January and September, surpassing the state-mandated quota by 10.9 percent." Let me repeat that all these data come from official CCP sources.

As for the second project, Xi Jinping in person when he came to Xinjiang in August 2023 told local CCP cadres that "the Pairing Assistance program that links eastern Chinese provinces with ethnic regions in Xinjiang for cross-provincial labor transfers needed to be strengthened." One strategy used for this is that "land use rights, covering up to 90 percent of land in some areas, are being transferred away from local farmers to state-run cooperatives, forcing the local population into wage labor through coercive labor transfers."

Forced labor transfer to other provinces does not serve the purpose of boosting the latter's economy with slave labor only. In the South of the region, "labor transfers are part of state efforts to 'optimize' (i.e. reduce) the Uyghur population ratio in southern Xinjiang, in order to 'end the dominance of the Uyghur ethnic group' in their own homeland." These policies, the report says, "continued through

early 2024,” and there are plans to increase the quotas this year and in 2025.

“In short, coercive labor mobilization continues unabated.” “Uyghur forced labor is becoming both more prevalent and more insidious.” What the West can do is ask its own companies, guided by the recent Volkswagen scandals, not to employ Uyghur slave labors, and sanction those that do.

### Red China Isn't 'Back' Under Xi Jinping. It Never Went Away

26 February 2024, Time

About a year ago, former Prime Minister of Australia and sinologist Kevin Rudd wrote that Red China is “back.” If only Beijing could come to its senses and return to the policy of “Reform and Opening Up” it pursued so successfully for 40 years, he argued. But Rudd, like many others, has based a pious hope on a faulty analysis, one which goes as follows: Deng Xiaoping and his followers abandoned Marxism the moment Mao Zedong died in 1976 to transform an insulated country reeling from the chaos of the Cultural Revolution into the world's second-largest economy.

The key term is obviously “reform.” For decades, a motley crew of foreign politicians, entrepreneurs, and experts have told us that “Reform and Opening Up” meant a move from the planned economy to a capitalist one. And in the wake of economic reform, they have assured us that political reform would inevitably follow, turning China into a responsible stakeholder if not a thriving democracy. There were major economic reforms but the political shift never happened. None of these fortune-tellers had bothered to genuinely read the country's constitution, listen to its leaders, or understand its past.

One common view is that since every one of China's leaders after Mao was a victim of the Cultural Revolution (Deng was purged three times; Xi Jinping was sent into exile in the countryside at the age of 15), they understood all too well the danger of power wielded by a capricious hand. But the opposite is true. After Mao launched the Cultural Revolution in the summer of 1966, he first allowed select students called Red Guards, then the population at large, to ferret out and denounce every party member who might have harbored misgivings about his leadership and the revolution at large. “Bombard the Headquarters,” he urged his followers. The result was a social explosion on an unprecedented scale. Party officials recoiled in horror, many of them hauled to denunciation meetings, paraded through the streets, demeaned, tortured, occasionally locked up and the key thrown away. Mao used the people to purge the party of real and suspected enemies, but then in 1968 used

the army to purge the people in turn, making sure no one was left standing to challenge him. After his death, the leadership was determined never to allow ordinary people to criticize the party again.

Deng, who had long warned against “bourgeois liberalization,” codified that approach in 1982 with the Four Cardinal Principles in the constitution. These four principles boil down to two core values: keep to the socialist road, and uphold the leadership of the party, or, in two words, Marxism-Leninism. The Four Cardinal Principles have been regularly invoked by every leader to this very day.

Although Deng wanted his country to “Open Up,” by which he meant that foreign capital and technology should be welcomed, he regularly launched campaigns against “spiritual pollution” from abroad. It was not merely an old man railing against long hair, jeans, and pop songs. Like Mao, Deng was all too well aware of the concept of “peaceful evolution,” first formulated in 1957 by John Foster Dulles. The Secretary of State proposed that the U.S. and its allies use peaceful means, including loans, commerce, and the arts, to accelerate the transition toward democracy of countries in the Soviet orbit, thereby shortening the life span of communism. This is precisely what happened in Poland as people voted themselves out of communism on June 4, 1989, the very same day Deng sent 200 tanks and some 100,000 soldiers to grind the democracy movement into the dust at Tiananmen Square.

Even before the Soviet Union disintegrated a few years later, Jiang Zemin, Deng's chosen successor, placed the party on high alert against efforts by the “capitalist camp” to infiltrate and undermine the party through “the plot of peaceful evolution.” The alleged conspiracy remains, to this day, the Chinese regime's greatest fear, feeding paranoia and ill-will in a country that has arguably benefited from more good-will than any other in the world. Everything, from stamping out Mickey Mouse under Jiang and Winnie the Pooh under Xi is seen as a devious plan to bring down the communist party. Every time a Bill Clinton or a George Bush suggested in Beijing that with economic reform, political change was not far on the horizon, they were providing the leadership with all the evidence it needed to confirm their view that sinister foreign powers were trying to overthrow the Chinese government.

Even the economic reforms are overstated. Mao wreaked havoc on the economy with the Cultural Revolution. It had to be rebuilt over decades. But in a one-party state, politics is always in command. The vision pursued by the regime was to invigorate the socialist economy, not to completely abandon it. The radical collectivization of the past was left behind, but the Marxist principle of state ownership over the means of production, including land, capital, labour,

energy and raw materials, was largely maintained. When, in 1992, Deng proposed leasing land to attract more foreign investment, he called it "Capitalist Tools in Socialist Hands": why fear the capitalist dollar when the state controlled everything? After 2000, Jiang made sure powerful party committees were set up even in private enterprises, making the distinction between private and public ownership all but meaningless. Control over the means of production is precisely what has allowed China to provide chosen enterprises with endless subsidies and a seemingly inexhaustible line of cheap credit. That has made sure that no country could compete the moment access to the World Trade Organization was granted in 2001.

In 1987, China's then-Premier Zhao Ziyang met the 75-year-old Erich Honecker in Berlin. The party leader of East Germany expressed his earnest concern over the nature of China's "Reform and Opening Up." Zhao explained that the policy was temporary only: in the future, once its living standards had been raised, the population would acknowledge the superiority of socialism, at which point the "scope for liberalization will be reduced further and further." A few months later, at the Party Congress in Beijing, he explained that "we will never copy the separation of powers and the multi-party system of the West." It was an uncanny prediction. East Germany has long since vanished, but Red China never went away.

### **How does India's military measure up against China and Pakistan?**

23 February 2024, FirstPost

Global Firepower in its 2024 index put India's military in fourth place and China's at third on its top ten list. Pakistan, meanwhile, was at number 9. Indian Army chief Manoj Pande has said the army is ready and capable of dealing with 'any situation' along the border

India and China this week held yet another round of high-level military talks over the border row in Eastern Ladakh.

While there was no breakthrough in the 21st round of talks at the Chushul-Moldo border point, both sides did agree to maintain 'peace and tranquillity.'

Meanwhile, defence secretary Giridhar Aramane on Wednesday said India is standing up to a 'bully' in a very "determined fashion."

"India is giving a face off to our neighbour in almost all the fronts we have with them, wherever there is a mountain pass, we are stationed there... and wherever there is a road we have to be there. So that way we are there standing against a bully in a very determined fashion," he said.

Indian Army Chief General Manoj Pande last month called the situation along the LAC in eastern Ladakh is "stable" but "sensitive."

He said Indian troops are maintaining a "very high state" of operational preparedness to effectively deal with any eventualities.

But how strong is the Indian military? How does it measure up against China and its traditional rival Pakistan?

Let's take a closer look:

The Global Firepower Index

The Global Firepower, which rates the world's nations on military strength, in January released its 2024 index.

The company uses over 60 factors including military equipment, financial stability, geographic location and resources to determine a country's 'Power Index' score.

It assigns a value to a country's military firepower.

The firm says that while its perfect score of 0.000 is unattainable, the smaller the value assigned to a country the more powerful is its ability to fight a conventional war.

"Our formula allows for smaller, more technologically-advanced, nations to compete with larger, lesser-developed powers and special modifiers, in the form of bonuses and penalties, are applied to further refine the list which is compiled annually," the firm states on its website.

So how did the India, China and Pakistan fare?

The Global Firepower Ranks Index 2024 put India in fourth place on its top ten list with a value of 0.1023 China, meanwhile, placed one spot ahead of India at rank three with a value of 0.0706.

Pakistan was at number nine at a value of 0.1711.

The top two countries on the list are the United States and Russia with values of 0.0699 and 0.0702 respectively.

Bhutan was dead last with an assigned value of 6.3704.

Manpower

Now, let's examine the armed forces of all three nations – beginning with the manpower

China can call upon 2,035,000 active personnel, while India has 144,55,550 active duty personnel.

Pakistan, meanwhile, has just 600,000 personnel.

China has just 510,000 reserves, while India has 1,155,000 reserves.

Pakistan, interestingly has 550,000 reserves – more than China.

It is important to note that China and India are the top two most populated nations in the world with 1.4 and 1.2 billion people respectively.

Pakistan, by comparison, has around 250 million.

So naturally, China and India have a larger population to draw from.

When it comes to the paramilitary, India is ahead with 2,527,000 troops.

China has just 625,000 paramilitary personnel, while Pakistan has 500,000 paramilitary troops.

India has, of course fought wars, with both China and Pakistan.

The India-China border conflict erupted on 5 May, 2020, following a violent clash in the Pangong lake area.

The ties between the two countries nosedived significantly following the fierce clash in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 that marked the most serious military conflict between the two sides in decades.

But army chief Pande has signalled that India is prepared for anything.

"The army is ready and capable of dealing with any situation along the northern borders (with China). We have taken several concrete measures to develop our capabilities in those areas," Pande said.

#### Budget

When it comes to the money spent on defence, China is ahead with a budget of \$224 billion.

India, meanwhile, has a budget of \$73.8 billion.

Of course, even China's declared budget must be taken with a pinch of salt.

The Times of India quoted Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) as reckoning China's military budget was four times more than the figures they gave out in 2002.

The US Department of Defence thinks its real military budget might be around 1.1 to 2 times more than what it gives out in its official reports.

Pakistan, by comparison, has a paltry defence budget of \$6.34 billion.

#### Air Force

When it comes to the air forces of all three nations, it is again China that comes out on top.

Beijing has 3,304 aircraft, while India and Pakistan have 2,296 aircraft and 1,434 aircraft respectively.

It is to be noted that while India is attempting to beef up its air force and phase out aging crafts, deliveries of fighter jets and other equipment takes time.

#### Tanks

China has 5,000 tanks, while India is not far behind with 4,614 tanks.

Pakistan has only 3,742 tanks.

China has 174,300 armoured vehicles, while India has 1,51,248 armoured vehicles.

Pakistan lags far behind here with just 50,523 armoured vehicles.

China leads the pack when it comes to self-propelled artillery with 3,850 systems.

Pakistan, surprisingly, has 752 such systems while India has just 140 systems.

This is even more surprising given India's history when Bofors guns played a vital role in winning India the Kargil war.

#### Naval power

When it comes to the naval power, it is China that emerges on top yet again.

While China has 730 vessels in its fleet, India has 294 vessels.

Pakistan has just 114 vessels.

China and India both have two aircraft carriers each – the INS Vikramaditya and INS Vikrant for India – while Pakistan has zero aircraft carriers.

Interestingly, China until recently was considered a 'Green-water Navy' – that is one that had operational capabilities limited to its own region.

However, China has since built the world's largest fleet and has other countries including Australia the United States – which is a 'Blue-water Navy' – worried about Beijing's expansionist ambitions.

CNN quoted FDD senior fellow Craig Singleton as saying, "It's a question of when – not if – China will secure its next overseas military outpost," he said.

This comes in the backdrop of China's continued threats to force a reunification with Taiwan – which Xi Jinping has described as 'inevitable'.

But defence minister Rajnath Singh in February sounded a warning.

Rajnath said that India is maintaining a sustained presence in the strategic waters to ensure safety and security of all cargo vessels and it will not shrink from countering any threat that undermines collective well-being of the region.

"It is our steadfast resolve to be the first responder and the preferred security partner in the Indian Ocean Region, and for the peace, stability and prosperity of the wider Indo-Pacific," he added.

Singh said India will continue to play the role of a 'Vishwa Mitra' (friend of the world) in forging meaningful partnerships with an aim to make the world a truly "connected and equitable habitat".

#### Claude Arpi | China playing new border games close to Mt Kailash

23 February 2024, Deccan Chronicle

Western Tibet has a rich historical background, particularly in proximity to Mount Kailash, near the trijunction between India, Nepal and Tibet. It is the case of Purang/Taklakot and a place called Toyo, located a few kilometres away, which have gone down in history for the epic battle between the Dogras of Gen. Zorawar Singh and the Tibetans troops. In December 1841, the Dogra troops, who had just conquered Western Tibet (known as Ngari), were defeated by the Tibetans – and also by the winter.

The great Tibetan historian, Tsepon Shakabpa, thus described the battle of Taklakot/Toyo: "The Tibetan government quickly dispatched Ü Dapön [Gen.] Shedra Wangchuk Gyelpo and the Ü Tsang [Central



Tibet] militia under the leadership of Cabinet minister Pellhün; when they arrived in Ngari, one regiment of the foreign army [the Dogras] was stationed at Rutok [near Pangong-tso], another was at Trashigang [near Demchok on the Ladakh border], and a third was at Rupshö [in Ladakh]. Secret preparations were made for the Tibetan troops to confront each [Dogra] unit. Zorawar Singh and the most seasoned [Dogra] troops, who were stationed at Taklakhar [Taklakot] Castle [in fact in Toyo] were confronted... In the eleventh month [December 1841], during the coldest weather of the year, the Tibetan troops attacked from all directions simultaneously."

The fate of Zorawar Singh and his troops were sealed, according to Shakabpa: "Three days after the fighting began, heavy snow fell. Thus, the Sikh troops who were at Taklakot became frozen solid. Trembling under their difficulties, the Sikhs were attacked by the Tibetans in terrible hand-to-hand fighting... While Zorawar Singh was riding his horse, rushing back and forth, he was recognized by a Yasor called Mikmar. He threw a spear and Zorawar Singh fell from his horse. Leaping off of his own horse, Mikmar cut Singh's head off and carried it into the middle of the Tibetan camp. This was seen by the Sikh [Dogra] soldiers, and they fled in whatever way they could."

A few months later, Maharaja Gulab Singh smashed the Tibetan forces trying to invade Ladakh. Dapön Zurkhang and Dapön Pelzhi were captured and taken to Leh, where a peace treaty was signed between the Dogras and the Tibetans, confirming once more the traditional border between Ladakh and Tibet. The tomb of Zorawar Singh still exists in Toyo, which has recently come in the news, but for different reasons.

An article in the Chinese media mentions a newly-built village in Toyo: "China continues to promote the improvement of the rural living environment, paying close attention to greening [the area], beautification and [water] purification; the changes in Toyo are a concrete manifestation of the Ngari region's efforts to build a beautiful and livable countryside." During the past three years, in Western Tibet alone, a total of 31 projects have been implemented to build liveable, "industrial" and beautiful villages, a local Communist Party cadre explains; in his jargon that it will be: "in accordance with the principles of beautiful leisure villages, happy and liveable villages, clean and tidy villages." But why a new village in Toyo? Says Newsweek: "China appears to have completed the construction of a new dam in the country's southwestern border regions, a project that could have far-reaching strategic implications for its southern neighbours India and Nepal." Built on the Mapcha Tsangpo (or Peacock river, also known as Ghaghara or Saryu in India and Karnali in Nepal), it

is a perennial source of fresh water supply to the downstream populations. What is strange is that the existence of this hydropower plant, located close to the Indian border, has not appeared in any published Chinese plan earlier. Though satellite imagery only shows a medium river-of-the-river dam, without a large reservoir, India downstream should be concerned. But there is more. A new airport is coming up a couple of kilometres north of the hydropower plant and the "model" village. In June 2018, the Civil Aviation Administration of China had announced that Tibet would soon have three new airports. The Chinese-language press had given some information about the location of these three airports: one was to be located in Lhuntse, north of Arunachal Pradesh, the second was north of a border post with Nepal and the last in Purang. Chinese website seetao.com explained: "These three airports can be used for civilian use in peacetime, military aircraft training on the plateau; direct military use in wartime, holding military operations, will be able to play a very important role." Though many in India had forgotten about this announcement, the airport is now functional; on November 10, 2023, videos of the newly-built airfield appeared on the Chinese social media. These three developments (model village, hydropower station and airport) should be seen as one, undoubtedly all are for dual (civil and military) use. A separate occurrence needs to be noticed: the closure of the Kailash Yatra to Indian pilgrims. The 6,638-metre-tall diamond-shaped mountain is considered to be the abode of Lord Shiva and also one of the most sacred places in the Jain, Buddhist and Bon religions. For centuries, pilgrims from India have visited the holy site; since the 1990s, they could cross into Tibet via Lipulekh Pass in Pithoragarh district and later enter Tibet via Nathu-la in Sikkim. After the Doklam incident in 2017, the Indian yatris were not allowed to use these routes anymore. As Beijing ignored Kathmandu's request to permit the aerial sightseeing of Mount Kailash, Nepali tour operators decided to offer the yatris an alternative and a large number of devotees started using the Nepal route from Simikot to Purang by chartered helicopters; unfortunately, the scheme was subsequently closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. After the scheme reopened for Nepalis in 2022, the Chinese authorities did not allow Indian visitors to fly to Purang, though last year alone, Nepali tour operators received over 50,000 bookings from Indian pilgrims for the sacred pilgrimage. According to the Kathmandu Post, a new alternative has been found: a flight could remain in Nepalese territory and have a "remote" darshan of the sacred mountain: "Shree Airlines operated a first-of-its-kind aerial pilgrimage tour of the holy places, making the

pilgrims' dream come true without a Chinese visa" – explained a communiqué last week. It is clear that China does not want Indians to have a real darshan of the holy mountain, or even come close to the place where Zorawar Singh is buried; and these latest developments in the area explain why.

### **Tibet border closure hits family reunions, local trade**

23 February 2024, The Kathmandu Post

According to Chheten Sherpa Lama, Nepali side tried their best to reopen the border, but to no avail. Temba and his wife Paten Sherpa, permanent residents of Olangchungola in ward 7 of Phaktanglung Rural Municipality, live in an animal shed near Sinjema lake. They raise yaks in the highlands and also provide food and accommodation for visitors. They have three children who study in Phungling, the district headquarters of Taplejung, and in Kathmandu.

The Sherpa couple has been tending to animals in the isolated pasture, situated around 47,700 metres above sea level, just a few hours walk from the nearest human settlement. Their shed is close to the Tiptala Bhanjyang, near the Nepal-China border in Taplejung. There is Riu settlement of Dinggye County of Tibet, an autonomous region of China, just across the border. Riu, which is 35 km from the Nepal-China border, is Paten's maternal home. While it takes around five hours on foot to reach the Nepal-China border from Sherpa's shed, by bus it takes one hour. "But I have not been able to visit my maternal home for the past four years. The way to my maternal village is inaccessible as the Nepal-China border remains closed for a long time," complained Paten.

The Chinese government closed Tiptala Bhanjyang border point amid a coronavirus threat in January, 2020. Due to the protracted border closure, hundreds of locals in the northern villages of Taplejung have been unable to meet their relatives in Tibet for four years now.

Bhujung and Bhomo Sherpa of Mauwatar in Olangchungola have a similar ordeal like that of Temba and Paten. Bhomo, who was born in Tibet, married Bhujung of Bhotkhola Rural Municipality in Sankhuwasabha district. The couple later migrated to Mauwatar and began rearing yaks. They are happy with the income they earn from rearing animals, which supports their livelihood and three children's education. However, Bhomo has one complaint—the border has become a barrier preventing her from meeting her parents in Tibet.

Temba and Bhujung would frequently visit Tibetan markets for trade, transporting various goods on yaks. During their visits, they formed connections with Tibetan girls, whom they eventually brought

back as life partners. "We never imagined that the border would close some day leaving us unable to visit our relatives," said Bhujung.

The Chinese authorities installed a telephone repeater tower near the Nepal-China border. But it is not useful for the Nepali side. Nepalis living near the border have to trek down to Olangchungola to make a phone call. Although there is a 2G network of Nepal Telecom in Olangchungola, it does not support online communication platforms like WhatsApp and Viber.

"We have to walk for five to seven hours just to make a phone call to my maternal relatives in Riu. It would take me less time to reach my maternal home than to get to Olangchungola. But the closed border is a barrier in my way," said Paten, who is in her mid-forties.

Tsering Kipa, who has been living in Olangchungola with her husband Dandu Sherpa, is in her early seventies. She has a strong desire to reunite with her maternal family in Tibet. Her husband Dandu also shares her longing and wants to support her. But their wish to visit their relatives in Tibet will remain unfulfilled unless the Chinese authorities reopen the border.

According to Chheten Sherpa Lama, ward chairman of ward 7 of Phaktanglung Rural Municipality, there are at least 18 women in Olangchungola and Yangma settlements who have their maternal homes in Tibet. He said that many Tibetan women married to Nepali men from Ghunsa, Phale, Mikkakhola among other settlements as well.

Chheten claimed Nepali side tried their best to reopen the border, but to no avail. According to him, the chief of Dinggye County telephoned him in September last year and informed that the border would reopen soon. Accordingly, the then chief district officer of Taplejung Goma Devi Chemjong distributed border identity cards to the people living in northern villages bordering Tibet.

"We have discussions with the representatives of the county. They tell us that the border will reopen once they get permission from the centre (Beijing). The government of Nepal should talk to the central government of China," said Chheten.

Trans-border trade and animal husbandry have been hugely affected by the border closure. People living near the Nepal-China border rely on Tibet for their daily essential commodities, as the area has yet to be connected to the national road network. Tibet also serves as a major market for them to sell a variety of products including medicinal herbs and domesticated animals.

## Feature story: Is the migration of exile Tibetans to the west a boon or bane?

23 February 2024, Phayul

The Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1959 forced approximately 80,000 Tibetans to seek refuge in India, Nepal, and Bhutan. Decades later, a demographic survey conducted by the Tibetan government in exile known officially as the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) in 2009 reported a Tibetan exile population of 1,28,014; 94,203 in India, 13,514 in Nepal, 1,298 in Bhutan, and 18,999 elsewhere. Over the past decade, this geographic distribution of the Tibetan diaspora has undergone significant changes. In 2020, a study conducted by the 15th Kashag titled "Baseline Study of the Tibetan Diaspora Community Outside South Asia" indicated that approximately half of the Tibetan population now resides outside the traditional exile communities in South East Asia, with 36,098 in North America and 26,379 in Europe, Australasia, and Far East Asia. In the subsequent four years, these numbers are likely to have increased in the population of Tibetans outside South East Asia.

In recent years, a noticeable increase in migration has been observed, especially among youths and middle-aged Tibetans. The primary driver of this trend is financial stability and employment opportunities, compelling many of them to resettle in the West as a significant portion of Tibetan households are engaged in traditional agriculture or seasonal sweater business. With only a small percentage involved in individual businesses or unregistered units, many Tibetan youths migrate in search of better employment opportunities.

The incumbent President Penpa Tsering, during his 2023 speech in Minnesota, openly acknowledged the diminishing presence of youths in Tibetan settlements in India. He stated, "It is the fault of the Tibetan government in exile that we cannot provide the youth jobs that fit their education qualifications in the settlements," attributing the migration to the inability to offer suitable employment. Consequently, the diminishing youth population in settlements has set off a chain reaction, resulting in a decrease in the number of children."

It is worth noting that the CTA has played a pivotal role in facilitating the migration of Tibetans to Western countries. While assigning blame can be complex and multifaceted, many argue that the CTA bears partial responsibility for the challenges faced due to the decline in the Tibetan population in the Indian subcontinent.

### State-sponsored schemes

The decades in exile saw a significant challenge in terms of livelihood and rehabilitation for the Tibetans with chunk of the community still receiving fresh batches of Tibetans refugees. Between 1989 to until

early 2000s, Tibetan refugees under a relatively relaxed border continued to flock into India with an average of 3000-4000 Tibetans every year.

This influx bolstered the number of Tibetans in the refugee settlements, schools as well as monastic institutions, that fostered the preservation of Tibet's unique culture and religion.

While this increased the number of the diaspora community, challenges emerged as to the standard of living, livelihood challenges and the overall economic condition of the Tibetans in exile. With those conditions in play, the exile Tibetan government sought every help including foreign aid to make the lives of Tibetans better. Beginning in the early 1960's the exile government sent batches of Tibetans to the west under humanitarian schemes sponsored by foreign countries.

The history of migration from India to the West began in the early 1960s after Tibetans resettled in South Asian countries. In 1963 the Swiss government welcomed 1,000 Tibetan refugees, marking the country's first non-European refugees. Today, more than 8,000 Tibetans are living in Switzerland. In 1971, the Tibetan Refugee Program led to the resettlement of 228 in Canada. In 1972, nearly a thousand Tibetans settled in Dee Why, Sydney, Australia, especially former Tibetan political prisoners and their families. This trend continues today, with several Tibetan political prisoners and their families resettling in Australia. In 1990, 1,000 Tibetan refugees from India immigrated to the U.S. under the resettlement program. The latest mass migration was in 2013, resettling 1,000 Tibetan refugees to Canada. According to the findings of Francoise Robin, a Tibet specialist at France's National Institute of Eastern Languages and Civilisation, approximately 8,000 Tibetans currently reside in the country.

The Tibetan Demographic Survey of 2009 estimated that over 9,309 individuals moved to the West during the period 1998-2009. By 2024, nearly half of the Tibetans in exile reside in foreign countries, highlighting the continuous flow of Tibetans seeking refuge and opportunities abroad. The number of exile Tibetans who have migrated to the west through these schemes have doubled or more as immediate families and relatives of these state sponsored schemes have also moved to the west through family reunion visas as well as spouse visas.

### Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy 2014

The Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy (TRP) 2014, formalised by the Government of India on October 20, 2014, in consultation with the Tibetan government in exile, to address issues related to the land occupied by Tibetans in various settlements across India, due to the absence of proper land lease document. The policy states that state

governments should sign a lease document for the land occupied by Tibetan refugees. This lease is to be granted for a period of 20 years, or until it is revoked or cancelled. This provision offers a level of security and tenure to Tibetan refugees who may have been occupying land without formal documentation. Other key aspects of the TRP 2014 are the extension of various state and central government schemes and provisions, as well as improvements in infrastructure facilities within Tibetan settlements.

One of the policy's emphasis was on the formalisation of land lease agreements, granting land use rights to Tibetans, and extending central and state benefits for various development schemes. A research paper authored by Tenzin Choedon titled 'Rehabilitation or a Temporal Adjustment: An Assessment of the Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy, 2014' however, argues that the policy's primary concentration on resolving land-related issues resulted in relatively less attention being given to the implementation of other developmental schemes.

Contrary to the expectations of the CTA, only five states in India, namely Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, and Sikkim, have adopted the Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy (TRP) 2014. Speaking to Phayul, Choedon said, "The limited adoption of the TRP 2014 in only five states in India can be attributed to various factors, and resistance may indeed exist in states that did not adopt it. There isn't a singular factor that could explain the reluctance of some states to adopt the policy; each state has its unique political, economic, and social dynamics that must be considered. For instance, examining the relationship between local residents and Tibetans in a specific state is crucial. The dynamics of the relationship between Dharamshala locals and Tibetans may differ significantly from that between Tibetans and local residents in Uttarakhand."

The provisions outlined in the policy have faced criticism for their perceived lack of clear deliverables, both in written documentation and practical implementation. Notably, the policy fails to address the challenges faced by Tibetans regarding property ownership or leasing in their names. Additionally, it does not provide any guidance or mention government job opportunities for the Tibetan community. Perhaps most crucially, the policy does not offer clarity on the legal status of Tibetans under the Indian constitution, leaving their legal standing uncertain. This lack of clarity on the legal status of Tibetan refugees, persisting for more than sixty years in exile, coupled with the challenges faced by Tibetans in their daily lives that are significantly influenced by their legal identity, stands out as a major factor contributing to the mass migration of

Tibetans to the West. The uncertainty surrounding their legal standing has likely played a pivotal role in shaping the decisions of many Tibetan refugees to seek better opportunities and stability in Western countries.

The implementation of the TRP 2014 has given rise to questions, whether it genuinely serves as a 'rehabilitation policy' for Tibetans in India or is it intended more as a preventive measure, considering its consultation with the CTA, particularly in issues like the migration of Tibetans to the West. "The adoption of the policy is the result of a mutual agreement between the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), aimed at resolving the persistent land disputes among Tibetan settlements with various institutional bodies and their local residents. Furthermore, the policy aims to consolidate Tibetans in these settlements by providing them access to various schemes while securing the "temporariness" of the exile community. In the past decade, there has been a significant increase in the population migrating abroad or to urban areas, coupled with a decline in childbirth. This demographic shift raises concerns within the CTA regarding its primary goal of protecting Tibetans and preserving their culture in exile. Therefore, the TRP is framed not only as a means of rehabilitation but also as a preventive measure to address the challenges posed by the migration of Tibetans, particularly to the West," Choedon opined.

#### Impact on the institutions

The migration trend of Tibetans from South Asian countries to others has presented multifaceted challenges for the Tibetan government in exile, impacting the sustenance of educational institutions, Tibetan settlements, and overall sustenance of the government itself.

The migration of Tibetans has had a substantial impact on Tibetan schools in exile, as highlighted by Sikyong in his May speech in Shimla. The data from the Department of Education indicated a significant decline in the number of Tibetan students over the years. In 2012, there were reportedly over 20,000 Tibetan students, but by 2022, this number had diminished to 9,700.

The Sikyong identified several factors contributing to this decline. Firstly, there has been a decrease in the arrival of Tibetan children from inside Tibet. Secondly, the migration of Tibetan youths to Western countries emerged as a significant factor impacting the student population. Finally, a low birth rate within the Tibetan community was identified as the third reason for the diminishing student numbers.

President Penpa Tsering, in his address at the 16th Annual School Heads' Meeting of Sambhota Tibetan Schools Society (STSS) in Dharamshala in January

2024, disclosed the number of monasteries under CTA to be 292 monasteries. The total monastic population residing in these monastic institutions stands at approximately 39,000. Notably, only 29% of these monks are of Tibetan descent. The majority, comprising 69.5% hail from the Himalayan region, while the remaining 1.5% are from Mongolia and various other countries. The number of Tibetans enrolling in monasteries have reduced multifold over the years.

While the decline in schools and monasteries cannot be attributed only to migration to the west, it is arguably a major factor.

Geshe Lhakdor, the Director of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (LTWA), in his speech at Manjushri, a Dharamshala-based organisation in January 2024, highlighted the growing trend of migration of Tibetan youth to the West, pointing out how it poses a threat to the preservation of the Tibetan language and culture. Additionally, he noted that Tibetan children in the West have fewer resources available to them for learning the Tibetan language and culture. This, he said, could potentially impact the continuity and depth of Tibetan cultural and linguistic traditions among the younger generation in the diaspora.

In India, compact communities have appeared to be a medium to reinvigorate Tibetan identity, primarily through schools, monastic institutions, and cultural centers. Recognizing this significance, a major initiative has been undertaken by the 16th Kashag (Cabinet) known as the 'Building Back Compact Communities' (BBCC) program. The BBCC program reflects a commitment to address the challenges posed by the dispersal of Tibetan communities. The initiative is likely to focus on rebuilding, strengthening, and revitalising the core elements that contribute to the cohesiveness of compact communities, including efforts to enhance educational institutions, preserve cultural heritage, and sustain monastic traditions.

#### A new frontiers

The mass migration of Tibetans from India to foreign countries has catalyzed the emergence of a global Tibetan diaspora, scattered across different nations. This dispersion has given rise to a network of impassioned individuals committed to advocating for the rights and freedom of Tibetans. These diaspora communities have evolved into focal points for organizing advocacy efforts and elevating awareness about the Tibetan cause. The migration has additionally empowered Tibetans to participate in political activism and lobbying endeavors in foreign nations, enabling them to influence policies both locally and nationally in support of their cause. This active involvement in politics further contributes

to garnering political backing for the Tibetan cause on the international stage.

Chemi Lhamo, a Tibetan-Canadian human rights activist and Campaigns Director at Students for Free Tibet, told Phayul, "Migration of Tibetans to foreign countries provides a unique opportunity for the next generation of Tibetan advocacy as more Tibetans will bear hyphenated identities in the ever-changing political world. The advocacy work done in respective nations as a Tibetan vs. a Tibetan citizen of the respective country is drastically different with various access to spaces such as a meeting with your member of parliament (MP) as a constituent vs a meeting request for a conflict on the other side of the world".

In the global context, Lhamo sees the potential for Tibetans equipped with knowledge of their host nations and accepted degrees to bring Tibet to the international stage through diverse avenues. However, she underscores the need for balancing this promising network and opportunity with the preservation of the Tibetan identity, maintaining relationships with the current host nation, India, and ensuring the continued engagement of youth in the Tibetan freedom movement.

When asked about changes in the dynamics of Tibetan advocacy due to resettlement in various foreign countries, Lhamo cites a tangible example. "During the last China's UPR, 9 states mentioned Tibet and this year last week in Geneva, 21 states mentioned Tibet and made 24 recommendations. This is one example that is a direct result of Tibetans resettling in various foreign countries and lobbying their respective governments, taking up space in the international world and representing Tibet". Lhamo also envisions a turning point, where Tibetan activists are not solely advocates for Tibet but are increasingly recognized as leaders in broader global movements, including the environmental movement and the fight for democracy against authoritarianism. Lobby days and activism by Tibetan youth, including those born in the west have significantly increased the vigor and bite of both activism and advocacy abroad, the exploits of which the CTA relies and bets on.

Delving into a more practical level, financial and living standards of Tibetans in the West and their families in the Indian subcontinent, have improved over the years due to migration. Thousands of Tibetans have migrated from South East Asia to other countries in search of employment and financial stability. Tamding Dolma, a naturalized French citizen who migrated to France from India a decade ago, shared that her decision to move was primarily driven by her family's financial difficulties and lack of employment opportunities in India. When questioned about the financial support she provides to her family



in India, she explained that her migration to France was instrumental in alleviating the financial constraints her family faced. Subsequently, both her brother and sister also migrated to France.

Tamdin told Phayul that over the past decade she and her siblings have been successful in stabilizing the financial condition of their family in India. Despite inherent challenges of moving to and adjusting in a foreign country, she believes that the decision to migrate has proven to be financially beneficial not only for them but also for others in similar situations. Migration has contributed to the dissemination of Tibetan culture and religion globally. Tibetan Buddhism, once confined to the Himalayas, has now spread worldwide, with Tibetan Buddhist monks and prayer flags becoming common sights. Emily Yeh's research on the 'Tibetan Diaspora in the US' suggests that the emigration of Tibetans in recent decades has played a crucial role in popularizing Tibetan Buddhism globally.

#### Legitimacy of the CTA

The migration of Tibetans to the West perhaps most significantly poses threats to the legitimacy of the Tibetan government in exile based in Dharamshala. The diminishing population of the Tibetan community in India has the potential to reshape the demographic makeup of compact Tibetan communities, specifically influencing the leadership and administrative capacities of the CTA.

The subject of migration was touted to be a challenge by majority of the Sikyong candidates during the campaign of the last general election of CTA in 2021. Key presidential candidates including the incumbent Sikyong Penpa Tsering highlighted the issue of migration on their campaign trail.

With the demographic distribution of exile Tibetans nearing half in the Indian subcontinent and the other half in the west, the question of CTA's legitimacy, at least in the few decades, many say, will come into question. The CTA has significant jurisdiction and clout in CTA administered settlements and schools in India only and not in the west. While the Tibetans in the west have a deep affinity with the CTA and its leadership, the absence of physical spaces and improper administration channels in the west has undermined the CTA's reach in the west.

The CTA faces challenges in administering scattered Tibetan communities in countries in the West, as it lacks jurisdiction similar to its role in India. This circumstance raises administrative issues, as highlighted by challenges encountered during the latest demographic survey conducted in 2022 by the present administration under the leadership of President Penpa Tsering. The survey was deemed "inconclusive" and "unsuccessful." "We have received around 66,000 forms from the India-Nepal-Bhutan population census. However, we are yet to

receive numbers from some schools and also yet to consider the number of men enrolled in the army," the Additional Secretary from the Department of Home, Dawa Tsultrim told Phayul earlier. Notably, the survey identified a gap of 4,000 forms during online filing. A spokesperson acknowledged this discrepancy, stating, "We are currently looking to solve this discrepancy in the number of forms we have received. But perhaps Tibetans from the West could have submitted forms through their respective settlements but since their Green Book is listed abroad, it could have complicated their entries."

The development is a stark reminder that CTA's jurisdiction and clout faces a number of problems particularly when the target demographic is spread sparsely in western countries.

The bigger challenge, however, is the decreasing number of Tibetans in CTA administered refugee settlements, schools and monasteries in India where, observers feel that in the next one or two decades, the problem could exponentially become evident with CTA's legitimacy coming into question with the number of Tibetans.

In an interview with Phayul, Sikyong Penpa Tsering acknowledged the rapid increase in Tibetan migration, expressing an understanding that this trend is likely to continue over time. He elaborated on his recent official visit to France and other countries, highlighting his engagement with Tibetans in these regions. Sikyong Penpa Tsering emphasised his commitment, as outlined in his campaign manifesto, to bridge the emotional gap arising from the physical distance among Tibetan communities.

Addressing this concern, Sikyong Penpa Tsering told Phayul that adapting to new realities is crucial to maintaining legitimacy. "The idea is that if Tibetans in the West can sustain themselves, it might be beneficial to allow them to grow independently, especially when continuous financial support might become unsustainable over time. The sustainability of various initiatives, such as weekend Tibetan classes is an effort made by Tibetan associations and individuals in the West. They are managing well with support from the Department of Education, textbooks, and their own endeavours. This emphasis is on fostering a mindset that allows these initiatives to grow organically, minimising reliance on external assistance," he said.

"The evolving demographic and social changes within the Tibetan diaspora highlights the importance of legislators and leadership actively listening to the voices of the people, considering the significant demographic shifts and social transformations. There is a growing need to adapt representation structures to align with the aspirations and needs of the community," he told Phayul.

## **Indian Army Prepares For A Tough Summer On China Border – OpEd**

22 February 2024, Eurasia Review

The Indian Army says it is preparing in full earnest to counter anticipated Chinese incursions and “other forms of aggression” along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) that intelligence reports have indicated as likely to take place in the summer of 2024 on or before the Indian parliament polls.

Senior military intelligence officials told Eurasia Review that Army Chief Gen Manoj Pande has decided to “combatise” its Central Command, which so far largely provided reserves for the frontline fighting formations in the Western, Northern and Eastern commands.

In US, he was provided with detailed and quality technical-signal intelligence and satellite feeds on Chinese military movements in Tibet and neighbouring provinces, they said.

On Wednesday, Indian defence secretary Giridhar Aramane described China as a “bully” and thanked the US for support to face up to its northern neighbour.

Speaking at the Indus-X summit, Aramane did not rule out “a recurrence of the May 2020 situation” (when Indian and Chinese forces suffered casualties in violent clashes on the Ladakh border) and said US support was critical for India in such a situation.

“One thing which helped us very quickly is the intelligence, the situational awareness which the US equipment and the US government helped us with,” Aramane said. “So that is one single most important area.”

The defence secretary said the strong resolve that both India and the US support each other in the face of a common threat is going to be of much importance.

Military sources said the Indian army is raising a new Corps under the Central Command for deployment in the Central sector of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China that falls between Ladakh (under 14 Corps) and Siliguri corridor (under 33 Corps).

This corps will now have its own additional artillery, aviation and engineer brigades along with other elements. So far the Central Command was largely an administrative Command.

The military officials said that Headquarters Uttar Bharat (HQ UB), the administrative formation under the Central Command, is being converted into a full-fledged corps called the 18 Corps with one division and three independent brigades under it to take care of that part of the LAC, which falls between the Leh-based 14 Corps, under the Northern Command, and North Bengal’s Sukna-based 33 Corps, under the Eastern Command.

India has pumped in close to 68,000 additional troops and associated equipment in Eastern Ladakh,

deployment was also strengthened along the LAC in the central sectors as well as the Eastern Command.

As part of the changes, the HQ UB, which only had one brigade under it along with some Scout Battalions, got a total of three brigades as the LAC heated up. The new ones included Joshimath-based 9 (Independent) Mountain Brigade, Pithoragarh-based 119 Brigade and the Pooh-based 136 Brigade.

The Dehradun based 14 Division, which was earlier under the Western Command, was also brought under HQ UB.

With the raising of the 18 Corps, the Army will now have a total of seven corps dedicated to guarding the borders with China, up from the earlier five.

Besides the 18 Corps, the LAC also got an additional strike corps since 2020 after Mathura-based 1 Strike Corps was reoriented to the border with China from that with Pakistan, as part of the larger changes in deployment.

The Central Command is operationally responsible for the defence of the central sector along the LAC and the international Border with Nepal – stretching across the four states of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

It is also home to 13 Category ‘A’ training establishments, 18 regimental centres and a large number of logistics establishments.

Military sources said these training establishments are likely to be moved to the Southern Command where the army is less likely to face operational challenges and might just beef up naval amphibian operations, for which it might raise four battalions of Marines on lines of UK’s Royal Marines.

## **Book Review: ‘Women In Tibet: Past And Present’**

22 February 2024, Feminism in India

Women in Tibet: Past and Present, edited by Janet Gyatso and Hanna Havnevik, offers a thorough examination of Tibetan women’s lives, covering their history, challenges, and achievements. This anthology sheds light on often overlooked narratives, emphasising women’s resilience, agency, and societal contributions. It explores the complexities of Tibetan women’s experiences over time, revealing evolving socio-cultural dynamics and their impact on women’s roles and aspirations.

Beginning with an exploration of women’s roles in the traditional society of Tibet, the anthology draws from historical sources such as ancient texts and inscriptions from the Tibetan empire era. Authors in this section analyse gender relations, family structures, and religious practices, providing nuanced insights into historical experiences.

In the latter part of the book, attention turns to contemporary challenges faced by women in Tibet, examined through ethnographic research and field interviews. This section explores how modern

political changes, migration, and globalisation have affected Tibetan women. It highlights their struggles to preserve cultural heritage amidst rapid change, with personal narratives illustrating resilience and determination. These stories emphasise women's empowerment, pursuit of education, and activism, showcasing their ability to enact positive change in their communities.

Throughout the chapters, a consistent theme revolves around the methodological challenges associated with studying 'Tibetan women'. The authors discuss the inherent selectivity in reporting, the various historical perspectives on women's status within Tibetan society, and the recurring instances of deviations from established norms. It's noted that the category of women doesn't align precisely with the fluid gender norms that exist, and caution is repeatedly emphasised regarding the perils of overgeneralisation. These perils are not solely due to indigenous and physical disparities but also because of the evolving conceptions of womanhood and personhood, regardless of gender, throughout Tibetan history.

As the analysis progresses, the focus expands to include recurring motifs such as religion and spirituality, with a particular emphasis on the portrayal of women's bodies across multiple chapters. The evolution of the function and significance attributed to women's bodies is observed, transitioning from primarily serving as conduits for family lineage perpetuation in ancient Tibetan society to becoming significant centers of political expression in contemporary Tibetan culture. This transformation is closely intertwined with another theme present in the anthology: the women's endeavor to reclaim their Tibetan identity and culture while asserting their voices amidst political challenges

The body of the Tibetan woman as a site of reproduction

The Genealogy of the imperial household offers a fascinating glimpse into the intricate dynamics of women's roles in historical Tibet. It predominantly lists consorts who bore heirs, prompting speculation about whether a consort's fame was solely tied to her ability to produce male heirs for the throne (p.46). This raises questions about the overlooked consorts who played vital roles in the imperial court regardless of childbirth. Empresses, even if they bore heirs, were seldom mentioned in historical records, indicating their relative visibility compared to other consorts and wives, whose recognition often came posthumously. Additionally, sisters and daughters of emperors were mentioned only upon marriage, suggesting their significance depended on being entrusted to another man's care, often unrelated.

In a similar breath of thought, the Annals too shed light on the differentiation in forms of address amongst the various female members of the imperial household on the basis of their utility, with mothers to heirs of the throne being honored as 'yum' (mother) or 'chi' (grandmother) or sometimes even the high-ranking title of 'mangmoje' signifying their role as the sovereign lady of many. Furthermore, the hierarchical structure of the imperial household, with titles like 'empress' applied to various women, including the principal consort and imperial princesses, underscores the complexity of women's roles and ranks. This intricate web of titles and roles reflects the intricate nature of women's positions within the imperial court, each title representing a different facet of their significance in the historical narrative

The body of the Tibetan woman as a symbol of disruption

In Tibetan society, traditional gender roles require young men to pursue monastic life, while young women are expected to enter patrilocal marriages (p.263). These roles are rooted in the belief that women possess limited mental capacities compared to men, implying their perceived inferiority in emotional regulation, bodily control, and focused thinking (ibid). This division reinforces women as foundational support for male endeavors and forms spatial distinctions, placing the female body in the profane realm and the male mind in the sacred sphere.

However, young women, especially from economically disadvantaged areas, started showing interest in nunhood to escape household burdens and labor (p.277). This trend grew where arranged marriages and women's heavy farm work became societal norms (ibid). Voluntary celibacy and opting out of motherhood provided autonomy for vulnerable women facing state birth control measures.

As Charlene Mackley argues, nuns challenge established gender norms in Tibetan society, especially with the state enforcing childbirth quotas and the encroachment of Han and Muslim Chinese settlements, diminishing male authority (p.283). The androgynous appearance of young nuns highlights the contrast between marriage and procreation in a society where both are scarce. Despite leading celibate lives, nuns often faced scandalous gossip, silently enduring societal representations of their ritually marked bodies (p.284). Their rejection of traditional gender roles made them central in opposing evolving gender practices, seen as perplexing and multifaceted (ibid). This gossip attributed to nuns a significant, unintentional influence in disrupting the gender binary foundation of Tibetan social structures. Consequently, nuns'

bodies symbolise a society in transition, caught between tradition and transformation

The body of the Tibetan woman as a site of political resistance

In the struggle against the Chinese state, Tibetan women have found their bodies to be powerful tools of political defiance, transcending individual incidents like forced abortion and sterilisation to embody deeply personal resistance (p.362). Negative experiences, such as betrayal or witnessing abuse, often manifest physically or mentally, highlighting the strong link between psychological and somatic well-being across different backgrounds, including urban and rural women, educated and uneducated, and various historical periods.

In Lhasa's prisons, women's bodies become focal points of conflict and resistance, particularly evident in the accounts of incarcerated nuns who endured imprisonment from a young age (p.334). As public spaces shrink, women's bodies become contested terrain, symbolising cultural identity and group cohesion through concise, emotionally charged rituals reflecting Tibetan values.

Tibetan nuns have significantly reshaped protest into a non-violent act, intertwining it with ritual, religion, and femininity (p.333). Through methods like singing, hunger strikes, and prayers in prison, they demonstrated that these actions are deeply internalised and aligned with Tibetan Buddhist principles. Their non-violent strategies effectively portrayed the state as an oppressive force to the international community, challenging the state's narrative of authority and masculinity (p.337). These acts of resistance affirmed cultural identity and countered physical manifestations of political oppression.

Beyond nuns, the state also utilises the female form to assert control, as seen in the case of correctional officials at Drapchi prison who banned nuns from cutting their hair, turning the body into a stage for political displays once again

The shortcomings of the book

While commendable, the book on Tibetan women lacks depth in certain areas. It could have provided a more thorough analysis of the historical and cultural factors influencing Tibetan women's status, offering deeper insights into socio-political dynamics and traditional customs. Additionally, while addressing challenges faced by Tibetan women, it could have explored key issues like education, healthcare, and employment opportunities in greater detail to provide a nuanced understanding of their struggles.

Moreover, the book primarily focuses on Tibetan women's narratives within Tibetan society, overlooking their interactions and contributions on a broader scale. Exploring their engagement with the

international community, experiences of Tibetan women in exile, and involvement in global feminist movements would have offered a more holistic perspective.

Lastly, while touching upon external forces like the Chinese occupation and modernisation, the book lacks a critical analysis of their impact on Tibetan women's lives. A deeper examination of the complexities and specific challenges faced by Tibetan women in the contemporary political climate would have enriched the discussion.

Before this book's publication, scholarship on Tibetan women largely focused on autobiographies of prominent figures like Ama Adhe (The Voice that Remembers: A Tibetan Woman's Inspiring Story of Survival) or narratives of nuns and female mystics in Tibetan Buddhism (Women of Wisdom, Lady of the Lotus-Born: The Life and Enlightenment of Yeshe Tsogyal). These accounts overlooked the experiences of ordinary Tibetan women, creating a gap in understanding. Women in Tibet: Past and Present fills this void by presenting diverse stories of Tibetan women from various backgrounds and time periods.

This collection not only contributes to academic discourse but also engages policymakers, activists, and the general public in discussions about gender in Tibetan society. It encourages further research and advocacy for Tibetan women's rights on a global scale. Additionally, it has empowered formerly incarcerated Tibetan women to step forward and share their firsthand narratives of experiences as prisoners, as seen in recent publications like Tibet in Chains: The Stories of Nine Tibetan Nuns. In conclusion, Women in Tibet: Past and Present is a significant milestone in Tibetan women's studies, highlighting their struggles and accomplishments while promoting inclusivity and equity for the future.

### **A window of opportunity for Western companies to quit Xinjiang**

22 February 2024, Financial Times

When Volkswagen decided more than a decade ago to build a plant in China's Xinjiang region with Chinese partner, SAIC, the aim was not primarily to sell cars to the local market. It was also to appease Chinese authorities who demanded the joint €170mn investment in return for approving VW's plans to expand in Guangdong, as someone acquainted with the discussions over the plant recently told me. Now the German auto group is learning the hard way that politically-driven investments have the potential to become hefty financial and reputational risks. The company has been disqualified by Germany's Union Investment for its sustainable funds after media published claims that forced labour had been used by the joint venture to build a test track in the

region.

Forced labour has been a feature of the government's crackdown on the mainly Muslim Uyghur population and other minorities. Human rights groups have estimated that more than 1mn Uyghurs and other Muslims were detained over a period of several years, while thousands have been reported to have been transferred out of the region to work in factories, some supplying global brands. After Handelsblatt published the allegations on the test track, VW announced that it was reviewing the future of its partnership there. VW's review came just days after BASF revealed it would sell stakes in two Xinjiang chemical plants following separate allegations of human rights abuses involving its joint venture partner. Is it just coincidence that, after years of refusing to disinvest for fear of angering Chinese authorities, two of Germany's biggest industrial companies are now willing to brave a political backlash by calling into question the future of their investments there? Not likely, according to several people with long experience of working in China. Each company has specific reasons, but it may also be that a rare window of opportunity has opened to exit uncomfortable investments in China – at least for those companies still publicly demonstrating their commitment to the country. This week Beijing reported that in 2023 China attracted the lowest level of foreign direct investment for 30 years. Investor confidence has been shaken by trade tensions with the US, slowing economic growth, a continuing property crisis and industrial overcapacity. In response, the government wants to revive growth by winning foreign investors back. So punishing two of the country's biggest foreign investors for reviewing or selling insignificant investments in Xinjiang would be the wrong signal to send, says Max Zenglein, chief economist at China consultancy Merics. VW is pouring €5bn into China's electric vehicle sector, while BASF is spending €10bn on a state of the art chemical plant. "This is a very opportune time to get out," Zenglein says. "This is a chance for companies to stop saying nothing is going on in Xinjiang." One executive who has lived and worked in China for more than 20 years also believes that for VW and BASF, at least, the timing is propitious. China "wants the foreign investment. Officials are very explicit about the economic challenge . . . Do you really want to punish those guys that are still pouring money into the economy when everyone is running for the exit?" Meanwhile, it is clear that western regulations demanding clean supply chains are beginning to bite, he adds. Ensuring traceability is difficult in most parts of the world, but particularly in China. VW found this out to great cost. Thousands of its cars have been held up in US customs because the company unwittingly

violated the Uyghur Forced Labour Prevention Act when a small supplier used tiny components from Xinjiang. In Germany, companies found to have violated the country's new supply chain laws, which also ban forced labour, face fines of up to 2 per cent of global turnover. Beijing may hotly deny allegations of human rights violations in Xinjiang. But it also wants foreign investment. Perhaps that means that VW and BASF can finally extricate themselves from Xinjiang without a political backlash. If so, that would be good for their shareholders. It may also encourage other companies to move faster to quit the region. But the departure of two such high profile names could also mean less access to international working conditions, and less scrutiny of operations. "It feels bad," the executive said. "No one there will care any more if there is forced labour."

### **China, Xi Jinping and the making of 'one people, one ideology'**

20 February 2024, Financial Times

It is rare that disagreements among China's political elite are reflected or even hinted at in public. So the high drama that unfolded between Xi Jinping, Beijing's authoritarian leader, and Hu Jintao, his predecessor, in front of the world's television cameras in 2022 rated as communist box office. Xi and Hu were sitting next to each other before the massed ranks of deputies at the 20th Congress of the Chinese Communist party, a convocation so important that it is held only once every five years. Xi had used the congress to secure a third term as head of the party, a distinction that effectively meant he was set up to become China's "leader for life". But something was amiss. At the closing ceremony, Hu reached to take a red folder in front of him. Another Chinese official slid it out of his grasp. Xi then signalled to an orderly who grabbed Hu under an armpit and escorted him from the auditorium. On the way out, Hu touched the shoulder of Li Keqiang, China's premier, a former protégé, but the premier offered him only the merest of acknowledgments. As Hu was hustled out, none of a seated row of top officials even so much as turned to wish him well. They stared straight ahead, studiously ignoring his humiliation.

This chilling episode is one of many analysed in a probing new book by Steve Tsang and Olivia Cheung, two respected sinologists at Soas University of London. Over seven chapters, it dissects what must have a claim to be the most important yet least understood political philosophy of our age. The Political Thought of Xi Jinping jettisons a vogue for China books with sensationalist titles (Danger Zone, Destined for War, When China Rules the World and so on) but offers a valuable service. Patient scholarship is deployed to slash through a jungle of



jargon and impenetrable doublespeak until shafts of light shine through. Understanding what is truly meant by Xi's "community with a shared future for humankind", "Chinese Dream", "dual circulation" and several other slogans is part of the demystifying process. But the ultimate conclusion of Tsang and Cheung could not be more stark. "In short, Xi's vision puts the Party led by himself front and centre to forge a single powerful country with all its people united in the ambition of restoring China to its 'historic' place as the centre of the world," they write. Thus, all of Xi's circumlocutions end with a single ambition – "One Country, One People, One Ideology, One Party and One Leader". Anything or anybody who gets in the way – as Hu apparently did that day – is dealt with. The reason that Hu was prevented from opening the red folder, Tsang and Cheung say, is that the dossier inside would have revealed that his protégé, Hu Chunhua, had failed to secure promotion to the politburo. With this move, Xi was amputating his predecessor's power base. Another book that seeks to demystify the world's second superpower is China's World View by David Daokui Li, one of China's most high-profile academics and founding dean of the Schwarzman College at Tsinghua University in Beijing. Li has also served as an influential adviser to China's central bank. Given his status as an insider, readers might expect a recitation of CCP talking points. But this thought-provoking book is far more nuanced, honest and at times critical of China's reality. Written in the vein of a tutorial for interested foreign observers, Li's book seeks to explain how China really works, with chapters on the central government, local governments, corruption, the environment and other aspects of the national polity. Li's view of Xi is much more favourable than that of Tsang and Cheung. At times, he lets slip fascinating vignettes: Xi's first wife, Ke Lingling, sought to divorce him, wanting to emigrate to the UK. "For one year, every week he would make phone calls to the UK to persuade her to come back," Li writes. Ke did not heed his entreaties and the couple divorced in 1982. Li portrays Xi as a detail-orientated leader with a thirst for first-hand knowledge. In a meeting that Li attended, Xi is quoted as saying: "I want to taste the steam bun myself. I don't want other people to chew it for me." One big challenge that Xi faces, according to Li, is that as people become better educated – with over 50 per cent of young people attending college – they are increasingly argumentative and expressive. "Obviously, no Chinese leaders confronted such an issue until now," he writes. In the chapter on local governments, he is similarly frank. He tells the story of a highly capable local official named Chen, who knew that "superb job performance would not be enough to secure a promotion". Chen chose to bribe

a powerful political mentor who himself was later sentenced to life in prison for taking "huge bribes". Chen went down in the fallout, confessing to bribery and ending up in jail. The reader is left with a sense of how difficult China's governance model makes it for local officials to remain uncorrupted. But Li remains optimistic, seeing a future reminiscent of Singapore, in which officials are paid so handsomely that the incentive to be corrupt is diminished. The final chapter in his book argues that the rise of China is unlikely to cause a war – either hot or cold – with the US. Li's argument rests on an assertion that China's emergence will provide economic opportunities for most people in the world, more public goods in the form of advances in science and technology, and a more effective fight against climate change. This may be true but only up to a point. The much less appealing reality for many in the west is that as Chinese industries climb the value chain, they are eating away at the market share of the west's most vaunted corporations. Politicians in Washington, Brussels, Berlin and elsewhere are growing increasingly concerned that China's rise will not enhance the west but hollow it out. And that, to borrow Tsang and Cheung's vision, will embolden China's ambition of seizing a place at the centre of world affairs.

### **Echoes From Forgotten Mountains: Tibet In War & Peace**

19 February 2024, Rising Kashmir

The history of mankind since its earliest recorded versions in as many languages as thinkable has been fraught with internecine conflicts for reasons ranging from an insatiable lust for land, women or hoisting one's views on others by means that may not be commensurate with a civilized world. Unfortunately even to this day and date the same mentality is being extended by a powerful community or nation on a weaker side throwing international consideration and propriety to dogs. From present day Ukraine and Armenia to Israel –Palestine the year of 2023 is no different from the era of late 1940s or early 1950s when the Chinese Juggernaut steamrolled into the so called 'Roof of the world' (Tibet) crushing in one go one of the most peaceful loving people inhabiting this planet of ours.

This 75 year old struggle of Tibetans against the People's Republic of China seems to have been stymied by an evil combination resulting of 'iron curtaining' of information emanating from that hapless region as also a systematic sinicization by the CCP (Chinese communist party). Be that as it may, a plethora of excellent books written from a firsthand account of happenings have been tumbling out of this iron curtain to afford a peep into one of

the most highly surveillance-hit occupied territories of the world i.e. Tibet. The latest book to join this bandwagon of expose on Tibet is 'Echoes from forgotten mountains: Tibet in war and peace' penned by none other than the irresistible Tibetan resistance fighter cum author of repute and an independence activist 'Jamyang Norbu'. A Kalimpongborn Tibetan having joined the resistance movement in the 1970s who has been highly critical of meekness of the Exile government towards Chinese high handedness since long, despite fickle American support combined with a world of indifference; Jamyang Norbu is a 'one man army' out to tear into the Chinese perfidy with all his might at his command.

Though in the past, dime a dozen books of repute on Tibetan affairs have hit the reader's stands, but nothing comes closer even by a whisker to this book when told with such power and insight that can only ride on the shoulders of an excellent writer like Jamyang Norbu. Ever since he began writing historical plays for the 'Tibetan institute of performing arts' in the 1970s, Norbu realized that to document Tibetan history and culture was to resist against its erasure. Over the years he became one of the sharpest chroniclers of his people, doggedly tracking archival material and persuading Tibetans to tell their stories.

This masterpiece of book is neatly divided into 40 chapters with some of the titles taking a reader on to a roller coaster ride itself of Tibetan struggle from its very inception stage- 'The ghosts of Chamdo, Seventeen point swindle, Requiem, Nest of spies, March winds, A crane from Lithang, wind and wildfire, The man whose luck dried up, The golden throne or Four rivers six ranges to name a few. Norbu's book is a detailed and accurate record of the Tibetan resistance against communist china from the first few months of 1950, when Tibet was invaded by communist china. The intrepid writer that Norbu is, takes a reader on a journey that is lost in time and space, conjuring up the lush green forests of Markham, Lhasa's bustling Banakshneighbourhood, the meadows of Lithang, the besieged fortress of Tsethang, the mountain hold out of Mustang in northern Nepal etc. In these places, countless Tibetans rich and poor, monks and lay people, devout Buddhists, and devoted skeptics, oracles and intellectuals, men, women, children and the elderly, aristocrats and commoners, Lhasa urbanites and steppe nomads lived, fought, died and hoped.

Norbu tells a reader of 'Yunru Pun', the unassuming tribal chief who led the 1955 Lithang uprising that were the first embers in a rebellion which would reverberate the entire eastern Tibet before spreading its arch of fire towards Lhasa; of Phagpa, the lord Chamberlain who Norbu suspects masterminded the great escape of Dalai Lama from Lhasa in 1959; of

ChushiGangdruk's death -defying 'Long ride north' through the desolate Changtang plateau, the PLA hot on their heels, a mirror image of Mao's long march; of Trinlay, the nun who thrown out of her monastery by the 'Red guards' became 'Nyemo Achi' the leader of the rebel army of the Gods as Tibet buckled under the cultural revolution.

A discerning reader will find to his delight that this seminal book in particular embellishes two main protagonists who are the main anvils around which this entire narrative of Tibetan struggle weaves its web. First personality to cast his mesmerizing effect on the readers is 'Bhusang, the man whose luck dried up' and Norbu himself. The first born into a peasant family chafing under aristocratic overlords; the second, to one such aristocratic clan but forced into semi-exile in India long before Chinese annexation. 'Bhusang' a rookie doctor in Lhasa when it rebelled against china in 1959 joined the CIA-trained operatives sent to Tibet to help the resistance. India-raised Norbu was witness to these echoes of doomed struggles, opting to join what remained of it in northern Nepal before going to France to see if Paris's support of Tibet would be more tangible than Washington's. Both men saw their dreams turn to dust. Captured by the PLA, Bhusang spent years in Chinese jails, labour camps finding upon release that his wife had remarried and his children had starved to death. He left the country he had fought for, and where nothing was left for him to further dream on. Norbu after resistance's demise turned to writing and activism. Such were the vicissitudes of life that were the hallmark of the numerous Tibetan resistance fighters that are recreated in all their complexity, richness and defiance which a reader would find this book unstoppable once he leaves through its various pages.

Tibet has been in the news recently, which is significant because on 23 August 2023 Beijing released the 2023 edition of the 'Standard map of china' which included Taiwan, the South China Sea, Arunachal Pradesh and the Aksai chin as Chinese territories. A few days later Xinhua news agency reported that president Xi Jinping in a letter addressed to 2023 'Forum on the development of Xizang' had validated the change of name of India's northern neighbor from Tibet to Xizang. The forum itself was called: 'new era, New Xizang, New journey: New chapter in Xizang's high quality development and human rights protection. The ultimate culmination of a long travel of sinicization of Tibet.

With India too locking horns with its bête noire in the high plateau of Tibet and the Galwan clash too fresh in the psyche of the country, this masterpiece of book on Tibet couldn't have come at a better time.

In these circumstances, the publication of 'Echoes

from forgotten mountains—Tibet in war and peace’ is reminding us of about what exactly happened to Tibet in the bygone era and still continuing too in all its ferocity.

### **Hong Kong’s economy needs reinvention to become more than just China’s superconnector after a lost half decade**

18 February 2024, South China Morning Post

The Hong Kong economy has had a lost half decade. It shrank in two of the last five years; 3.2 per cent GDP growth last year did not make up for the 3.5 per cent contraction in 2022. Growth in the coming years may continue to be sluggish as the mainland Chinese economy grapples with high levels of debt – especially in property – excess capacity and insufficient demand, deflationary pressures, and a persistent decline in asset values.

Hong Kong’s economic woes should trigger a deep rethink of what it needs to do to maintain its relevance in a global economy that has changed dramatically since the global financial crisis of 2008-2009, changes accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The evidence of the last 26 years points to an inescapable conclusion: even if being a superconnector to the mainland is a necessary condition of Hong Kong’s growth and prosperity, it is not a sufficient one. The city should strive to be much more than just a superconnector of mainland China. Three arguments support this conclusion.

Hong Kong’s superconnector status hasn’t helped it outperform other Asian hubs

First, despite being the superconnector for China – the world’s fastest-growing economy over the last three decades – Hong Kong’s growth has lagged behind Singapore’s by a considerable margin. As recently as 2003, Hong Kong’s GDP per capita of about US\$26,000 was roughly the same as Singapore’s. Today, Singapore’s GDP per capita, at over US\$82,000, is nearly 70 per cent higher than Hong Kong’s despite mainland China growing much faster than Southeast Asia during the last three decades.

Clearly, Singapore’s superior performance was not just because it was the superconnector of Southeast Asia. Instead, Singapore established itself as a key node in global value chains in a number of high value-added industries – electronics, petrochemicals, pharmaceuticals and biotech, and precision engineering to name a few. By contrast, Hong Kong’s economy has become too specialised in a few highly correlated services – finance and insurance, real estate, trade and logistics, business services and

tourism – and is too reliant on growth in the mainland.

Defenders of Hong Kong’s model say that compared with Singapore, it is more productive because it is more market-driven, less dependent on government interventions, and therefore less vulnerable to governmental mistakes and corruption. About three decades ago, economists such as Alwyn Young argued that Hong Kong’s growth model was more sustainable than Singapore’s because whereas growth in Hong Kong was led by total factor productivity (TFP, a measure of innovation), growth in Singapore was driven mainly by factor accumulation (perspiration rather than inspiration).

Young’s predictions have not come to pass. There is little evidence in the last 30 years to indicate that Hong Kong’s economy has had higher TFP growth or is more innovative than Singapore’s. Meanwhile, as the Hong Kong economy became ever more specialised and reliant on the mainland, its gains in efficiency may have been outweighed by the loss of diversity and resilience.

Being a superconnector has reduced Hong Kong’s economic diversity

The literature on regional integration is largely positive: economies grow faster when they integrate with larger markets. But the literature also highlights some risks for smaller economies – risks that Hong Kong should always have been alert to. For instance, firms and talent may leave for better opportunities in larger, faster-growing markets. The manufacturing sector may be hollowed out, and the loss of manufacturing reduces opportunities for technology learning and upgrading.

In addition to these risks of integration, Hong Kong has also given up a vital tool of macroeconomic stabilisation – monetary policy – because of its pegged exchange rate.

Rather than enable it to enjoy the best of both worlds, being a superconnector combined with the US dollar peg may have consigned Hong Kong to the worst of both worlds in the last two years. China’s structural problems have meant there has been no post-Covid rebound, while the US dollar peg has deprived Hong Kong of the ability to lower interest rates or the exchange rate to support the economy.

Looking ahead, interest rates in the United States are likely to be reduced this year; this would relieve the pressure on the Hong Kong dollar and allow interest rates in Hong Kong to come down to levels more suited to its context. But Hong Kong’s excessive reliance on growth in the mainland will not be reduced any time soon. With GDP growth in China likely to slow to 3-4 per cent in the next 10 years, one would have to be blindly optimistic to believe

that growth in Hong Kong would not be adversely affected.

It has also reduced Hong Kong's policy space and undermined its international character

The Covid-19 pandemic forced Hong Kong to choose between its connections with the mainland and its connections with the rest of the world. Rightly or wrong, it prioritised the former over the latter. But because China's zero-Covid policy was increasingly misaligned and out-of-sync with global norms and practices, Hong Kong found itself isolated and perceived as "just another Chinese city".

More so than the National Security Law, zero-Covid did considerable harm to Hong Kong's reputation as an international city. It also showed how maladaptive the Hong Kong government had become. As the virus evolved to become more transmissible and less deadly, and as the rest of the world outside China adapted to live with the virus, Hong Kong's persistence with draconian zero-Covid restrictions – even after Covid-19 had become endemic in the city in early 2022 – showed the rest of the world that policymaking in Hong Kong had become less pragmatic and scientific.

Zero-Covid also produced disastrous consequences for Hong Kong: it neither saved lives nor protected the economy. Compared with other jurisdictions in East Asia, Hong Kong has had more excess deaths during the pandemic, even as it delayed its economic recovery unnecessarily.

Zero-Covid also inflicted more trauma on Hong Kong's economy than the National Security Law did. At the height of zero-Covid madness in early 2022, tens of thousands of professionals in the business and financial sectors left Hong Kong – many to Singapore. And the trauma continues, not least because the Hong Kong government has not convened an independent inquiry on its handling of Covid-19, without which the authorities will not have the opportunity to learn from their mistakes, businesses will persist in their belief that the quality of policymaking has deteriorated, and residents will remain sceptical and cynical of the government – deepening Hong Kong's existential crisis.

Avoiding stasis and blind optimism

In many of the Hong Kong government's public pronouncements, there is a tendency to blame external factors for Hong Kong's problems – high interest rates in the US, geopolitical tensions, Western efforts to contain China – while disregarding or downplaying domestic factors such as China's slowdown, Hong Kong's US dollar peg, and zero-Covid. While these stories may be understandable from a political communication perspective, they hurt Hong Kong more in the long run.

First, these narratives do not do the Hong Kong people or the economy any favours. They create the impression that all of Hong Kong's problems are created by outsiders or enemies abroad. Not only does this damage Hong Kong's standing as an international city, it also does not help Hongkongers understand the complex challenges the city faces in a less globalised, more polarised world. These narratives create simplistic, binary, and ultimately false, stories that Hong Kong is caught in a battle between East and West, between good and evil. In so doing, they polarise society even more.

Second, these narratives give the authorities a crutch and an excuse not to engage in a deeper, self-critical reflection of what Hong Kong needs to do to stay relevant. Why bother to change if we can easily scapegoat the West or blame others for Hong Kong's problems?

Third, these narratives are often based on blindly optimistic predictions of China's rise, and of the West's decline. While this is a possibility, it is by no means guaranteed no matter how sincerely or strongly we hold these beliefs. They also promote excessive optimism in the face of our problems and failings. While optimism is usually a good mental disposition, we should avoid the denialism, defensiveness, and self-delusion that the writer Lu Xun described so well in *The True Story of Ah Q*.

Rather, Hong Kong's policymakers should seize the opportunity that the current economic malaise offers to engage in a far-reaching exercise on how the Hong Kong economy should be adapted, even reinvented, for the future. Doing so would not only signal to the world that Hong Kong has every intention to remain an essential node of the global economy, it would also give Hongkongers more reason to be confident in Hong Kong's future.

### Xi Jinping's Succession Dilemma

17 February 2024, Asia Society

The most intellectually honest answer to the question of who will succeed Xi Jinping as China's paramount leader is simply, "We don't know."

Xi's succession is the ultimate "known unknown" of Chinese politics. We do not know when Xi will leave office. We do not know how Xi will leave office. We do not know whether Xi will handpick a political heir. We do not even know how a successor would be chosen if Xi does not designate one.

This opacity is concerning. China is arguably the world's second most powerful country. Xi's role as general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) gives him a central role in economic, diplomatic, and military decisions that reverberate across the globe.

Would a new leader embrace or reject Xi's legacy? Governments and businesses everywhere have a stake in his replacement's preferences on political control, market reform, U.S.-China relations, and territorial ambition regarding Taiwan and the South China Sea. But it is hard to speculate about the future of such issues without any insight into the nature of Xi's departure or how his successor would be selected.

Still, the absence of clear foresight does not mean we should just throw up our hands and not think about Xi's succession. Peering into a future largely devoid of information makes it even more important to identify and evaluate the evidence that does exist. Such evidence does not tell us what will happen with Xi's succession. But it does allow us to engage in informed conjecture about what might happen. The evidence includes Xi's political behavior over his first 11 years in power, the history of succession politics in the CCP and other Leninist governing parties, and a handful of Party-state regulations.

This evidence leads to three conjectures: First, Xi is unlikely to anoint a successor, or at least not a strong successor, well in advance. Second, the ultimate outcome of Xi's succession is unlikely to be orderly or predictable, because of contending political networks and manipulable Party regulations. Third, the policy outcomes of Xi's succession will depend on China's situation when he leaves office, although some continuities are probable regardless of Xi's performance.

#### Xi is Unlikely to Anoint a Successor Far in Advance

There are many ways Xi could leave office, including a voluntary resignation, an elite rebellion, a military coup, or a sudden illness — with huge potential for variation within each scenario. Several possibilities are discussed by Richard McGregor and Jude Blanchette in their stellar article *After Xi: Future Scenarios for Leadership Succession in Post-Xi Jinping Era*.

Xi will likely rule China until he "goes to meet Marx," as the saying goes. Xi had acquired enough power to ignore the nascent precedent saying he should indicate a successor at the 19th Party Congress in 2017. The next year, he amended the state constitution to remove term limits on his concurrent role as head of state, allowing him to rule for life as president as well as head of the Party and the military. In 2022, at age 69, Xi ignored previous norms that said leaders aged 68 or older should retire from the Politburo.

Xi is unlikely to voluntarily name a successor, let alone hand over power, anytime soon. Doing so could weaken his authority, exacerbate divisions within his network of supporters, and eventually threaten his political legacy and personal safety. And right now, Xi's power — especially his centralized

control of personnel, ideology, security services, and the military — makes it very difficult for any rivals to organize against him, even if his policies become unpopular.

Elite rebellion is not impossible. Research conducted by Milan Svolik shows that two-thirds of deposed authoritarians fall to inside challengers. Yuhua Wang finds that almost 60% of Chinese emperors who did not exit office by natural death were murdered, deposed, forced to abdicate, or forced to commit suicide by regime elites. A conceivable trigger for Xi would be an economic depression or military misadventure, or if he began purging his closest allies.

Naming a successor could undermine Xi's authority. Once Xi announces the next paramount leader, he could become a lame duck as the political elite begin to softly cultivate ties with and take more political cues from the successor. Even if that person did nothing but follow Xi's orders, there would effectively be more than one power center in the Party. The successor would also provide a focal point that would make it somewhat less difficult for Party insiders to rally against Xi's leadership in any moment of crisis.

Choosing a successor could also weaken Xi's political support. Xi would probably choose a close political ally to advance his political project. But that choice would mean not choosing others, which could alienate top lieutenants who are overlooked. It could also empower lower-ranking officials with close ties to the designated heir, while disempowering those without such ties. Such fractures could weaken Xi's ability to mobilize the Party elite to implement his decisions. If Xi were to try to overcome this problem by nominating an outside candidate, all his close allies might feel vulnerable, and together they could undermine the successor — and, by extension, Xi himself.

Finally, handing power to a successor could threaten Xi's legacy. Xi could retain formidable informal influence after retirement, but he appears to prefer the security of formal office, having worked assiduously to institutionalize the powers of the general secretary and ban the informal "old person" politics practiced by Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin. Leaving office would also render Xi vulnerable to the hidden preferences and political talents of his successor (indeed, few glimpsed Xi's true colors before he became leader and began displaying the extent of his personal ambition and political skill). His anti-corruption campaign and ideological crackdowns have made him many enemies, and Xi may fear for his freedom and safety, or at least for the longevity of his policy priorities. More fundamentally, Xi seems to see himself as a man of destiny, a true believer in the Party's mission



of national rejuvenation and his own ability to achieve that goal. One look at U.S. politics is enough to see that politicians everywhere have egos and like to stick around.

But there are good reasons for Xi to have a plan, or multiple plans ...

We cannot see into Xi's mind, and any succession plan that currently exists would be one of his most closely guarded political secrets. In his excellent book *Party of One: The Rise of Xi Jinping and China's Superpower Future*, Chun Han Wong makes the most persuasive counterargument that an orderly succession is in the cards. Wong contends that "Xi's ability to engineer a smooth succession could determine whether his vision of a rejuvenated China will survive him." If Xi can install a strong successor who will continue his policy agenda and protect his family, that could avoid a power struggle that risks dividing the Party, harming the country, and undermining Xi's legacy. Xi would surely like to do this, but the political price could be prohibitive.

Party history offers little precedent that would appeal to Xi in this regard. Mao Zedong launched the Cultural Revolution in part to attack his heir apparent, Liu Shaoqi, for undermining Maoist economic policy. Lin Biao, the next designated successor, died in a plane crash as he attempted to flee Beijing after his son hatched a plot to assassinate Mao. Deng Xiaoping purged his first two protégés, Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, for wavering in their commitment to Party dominance, and then he had to force Jiang Zemin to re-embrace economic reform with his 1992 "Southern Tour." And Xi must surely see how Jiang's support for his own rise ended up severely curtailing Jiang's political influence.

The pitfalls outlined above will likely discourage Xi from naming a replacement anytime soon, even to the detriment of his longer-term legacy. The likeliest precedent for Xi's succession would therefore be that of Mao to Hua Guofeng. Following Lin Biao's death in 1971, Mao eyed Wang Hongwen as his successor, then changed his mind and eventually tapped Hua Guofeng five months before dying in September 1976. Hua was plucked from relative obscurity but barely lasted two years as paramount leader until Deng outmaneuvered him (although both sought to revise Maoist policies).

This history illuminates another confounding variable in succession prognostications: Xi might change his mind, perhaps even multiple times, about whether to appoint a successor and who it ought to be. As Xi ages, he could increasingly cultivate political heirs, and he will likely have to delegate more duties to subordinates. But the very hint of Xi's retirement would be a seismic shock to elite politics, and the reaction of perceived allies and adversaries will

influence his thinking. If he feels uneasy or threatened, he could cancel his plans. Likewise, even if a successor is decided, if Xi comes to doubt their loyalty or competence, that designation may not last. Xi's Succession is Unlikely to be Orderly or Predictable

Xi's successor is unlikely to be as powerful, regardless of how the succession occurs. The later a successor is appointed prior to Xi's departure, the weaker they are likely to be. If Xi appoints no successor, different networks of Xi followers are likely to struggle over the top job.

Much of this uncertainty stems from the Party's lack of clear succession mechanisms. Mao tapped Hua, Deng ousted Hua, Deng elevated Jiang, Deng anointed Hu, and then Jiang supported Xi. It is backroom politics through and through.

Xi's selection as Hu's heir apparent after the 17th Party Congress in 2007 was reportedly helped by his victory over Li Keqiang in a straw poll of senior officials. But Xi ended intra-Party voting after 2012 in favor of choosing new leadership lineups through elite interviews.

If Xi picks a successor, he will likely go through the motions of an orchestrated but seemingly rigorous selection process to bolster the legitimacy of the chosen cadre. He could also embed the choice in authoritative Party documents and make other leaders declare their assent, making it more difficult (or at least more awkward) to turn on the successor.

If Xi experiences a sudden health incident, there is no way to know what would happen next. Article 23 of the Party charter simply states that the general secretary is elected by a plenum of the Central Committee and must be drawn from the ranks of the Politburo Standing Committee (PSC). Xi's successor would likely, but not necessarily, be a current PSC member, because a plenum could technically add a new member and then make that person the general secretary.

But how would the Central Committee even convene a plenum without a general secretary? The Party Charter says that the Politburo is responsible for convening plenums, but it is the general secretary who is responsible for convening the Politburo. This legal conundrum lays bare the importance of informal power in determining political outcomes in Beijing.

History can be a guide to the future ...

The best account of the transition from Mao to Hua to Deng is Joseph Torigian's book *Prestige, Manipulation, and Coercion*, the title of which sets out the three key factors that matter for succession struggles in Leninist one-party regimes.

First, the importance of prestige means that victory often depends more on interpersonal authority than policy differences or economic interests. If we apply

this theory to the case study of Xi's succession, we can examine the different networks that connect senior leaders below Xi.

Two potential rival networks of Xi loyalists seem to be emerging. The first is a group of officials connected to Fujian Province who either got to know Xi when he was a local leader there from 1985 to 2002 or worked with him there afterward, including Xi's chief of staff Cai Qi and new economic czar He Lifeng. The second is a group of officials with similar ties through Zhejiang Province, where Xi was leader from 2002 to 2007. Atop this group is Li Qiang, who, as premier, leads the work of the ministries in the State Council. However, we know little of the personal relationships between top leaders or the possible coherence of such networks without Xi. And, the longer Xi rules, the more of his longtime associates will retire into "Party elder" status and vie for post-Xi political influence with emerging "seventh generation" leaders born in the 1970s.

Second, victory depends on coercion. That is, gaining the support or control of the military, police, intelligence services, and other security-related ministries to enforce the succession. For Xi's succession, we might look at which networks of Xi followers appear well placed to leverage China's centers of coercive power.

One could argue that the Fujian network is best placed to deploy coercion. It likely includes top security official Chen Wenqing and Minister of Public Security Wang Xiaohong, as well as newly empowered Central Military Commission (CMC) Vice Chairman He Weidong and his fellow CMC member Miao Hua. Cai Qi's remit includes the Central Guard Bureau, which is responsible for the security of Party leaders. Chen Yixin, the minister of state security and a close colleague of Xi and Li Qiang in Zhejiang, could emerge as a rival powerbroker.

The third key factor, manipulation, means victory depends more on the ability to control the process of selection rather than playing to a defined "selectorate." However, while rules can be bent or even ignored, the appearance of legality, legitimacy, and stability is still important.

If Xi were to depart suddenly, who could best manipulate the process of selection? The situation would be extremely fluid, but a case can be made that Cai Qi – or someone in his position in the future – would play a role. Cai has an unusually central role in managing internal Party affairs as a PSC member who leads both the Central Secretariat and the General Office of the Central Committee. He would likely be the first senior leader to learn of any developments regarding Xi's health or decision-making.

The Party charter produces the legal conundrum discussed earlier, but Article 23 also establishes the Central Secretariat as the working body of the Politburo. In the absence of a general secretary, Cai could argue for a generous interpretation of this article that allows the Central Secretariat to call a Politburo meeting that then convenes a plenum.

An aspiring leader would not need universal support to pull this off. According to Article 25 of the Central Committee Work Regulations (which the General Office has the authority to interpret), only a majority of Politburo members must be present to hold a meeting. So, 13 Politburo members could convene a plenum. Article 24 says that a majority of Central Committee members then need to be present to hold a plenum. That is 103 members. Just half of those members are then needed to pass a decision. Thus, following the Party's own rules, one would theoretically need the support of only 52 Central Committee members to appoint a new general secretary. (This minimum condition assumes that the 52 Central Committee members include 13 Politburo members.)

However, executing such a plan would require many other things to go one's way, including control of the propaganda system, support from the military and security services, and rivals too weak or disorganized to challenge the move. Moreover, any new leader would prefer to come to power with the façade of unanimous support within the Party.

Another wildcard could be the vice president. Article 84 of the state constitution says that if the presidency becomes vacant, then the vice president becomes president. While the largely ceremonial presidency is easily the least important of Xi's three main roles, the new officeholder would hold constitutional powers to promulgate laws, appoint state leaders, grant special pardons, declare a state of emergency, and even declare war and issue mobilization orders.

However, the constitution says that the president exercises these powers "pursuant to decisions of the National People's Congress and the National People's Congress Standing Committee [NPCSC]." Still, an accidental president could still try to affect the succession process by blocking government action. If they collaborated with a powerful NPCSC chairman, they could use lawfare, new appointments, or emergency decrees to gain more leverage.

These thought exercises are not concrete forecasts, however, and they are most valuable as illustrations of the uncertainty and unpredictability of succession politics within the Party, especially if there is a sudden succession crisis or a move to depose an anointed yet unpopular successor.

Post-Succession Policies Will Depend on Xi's Level of Success

The history of succession politics in China points to the third major conjecture about Xi's succession. That history suggests the Party is more likely to continue Xi's policy agenda if China is on a positive trajectory when he leaves office, and more likely to depart from Xi's legacy if China is experiencing significant difficulties.

For example, strong elite and popular support for change emerged following Mao's passing in 1976 in a society traumatized by the chaos of the Cultural Revolution and the disaster of the Great Leap Forward. Hua Guofeng and then Deng Xiaoping embraced political loosening and economic reform.

Similarly, when Xi succeeded Hu in 2012, there was widespread social discontent with weak leadership, rampant corruption, and lax regulation, and Party insiders were alarmed by the disunity evident in the Bo Xilai scandal. A mood of crisis arguably helped Xi consolidate power.

It is impossible to say what China will look like by the time Xi's successor is determined. While pessimism is rising, and the country's growth trajectory will notably underperform its world-beating past, it is far from certain that China is destined for crisis or even for stagnation.

What is least likely to change after Xi is the continuation of CCP rule. The officials around Xi, whether they like him or not, have a vested interest in perpetuating the system that has defined their lives and careers. Not even the Cultural Revolution could convince cadres otherwise. Of course, Xi's departure would open a window for social protests, but the Party could probably still deploy its forbidding internal security forces to suppress dissent.

A successor will almost certainly owe much to Xi. They may lean into Xi's legacy to burnish their own legitimacy, at least at first, necessitating continued veneration for Xi Jinping Thought even if it is repurposed to advance different policy objectives, much as Deng did with Mao's legacy.

A successor is unlikely to enjoy Xi's same concentration of political authority, which would mean more power sharing, perhaps among different networks of Xi supporters. This could create a somewhat looser ideological environment with more room for policy debates and more decentralized governance. In that environment, Chinese society could become somewhat more open and tolerant.

An intriguing consideration that is leading some analysts to take a more optimistic view of China's political future is generational change – that is, future leaders may have different values, and so may govern differently. Research by Wei Shan and Juan Chen finds that young Chinese are more individualistic, more desiring of self-expression, and less compliant with authority figures. But they are also less likely to prefer democracy as a form of

governance, probably because of propaganda, patriotic education, and growing political dysfunction in many democracies. Fundamentally, however, the study of generations cannot fully explain how an individual will respond to their times. Many people assumed that Xi's personal traumas during the Cultural Revolution and his professional experiences in the Reform and Opening era would make him a relatively liberal leader. They were wrong.

Economic policy is more fertile ground for anyone wishing to depart from Xi's legacy. Even senior policymakers today know that China's economy is facing unprecedented challenges, and Xi's preferences for security and control are affecting its performance.

After Xi, an elite consensus could conceivably emerge around shifting course on the economy and moving toward more market-oriented policy settings, stronger support for the private sector, greater openness to foreign firms, and new approaches such as household stimulus packages.

Foreign policy is less likely to change than economic policy. U.S.-China strategic competition increasingly resembles something like a new Cold War, wherein both Beijing and Washington view competition with the other as a foreign policy priority. This strategic dynamic would make it politically and practically difficult for any new leader to engineer a structural rapprochement with the United States, although they may pursue détente while Beijing seeks to address domestic challenges (like the path that Xi is currently pursuing with the United States).

However, a new leader could also feel the need for a show of force to boost their political status and prove their control of the military. Torigian shows how Deng did this by invading Vietnam in 1979; Xi arguably did something similar by leading China's response to the Diaoyu/Senkaku crisis in late 2012.

Xi's succession is unlikely to precipitate an extreme scenario like an invasion or blockade of Taiwan. But it raises the possibility of Chinese military actions, such as Sino-Indian border incursions, island reclamation in the South China Sea, or massive military exercises around Taiwan.

#### Conclusion

Predicting the future is hard. Foreign Policy published an article in 2017 claiming that Xi had already chosen his successor: Chen Min'er. Seven years later, Chen is not even on the PSC. Likewise, there is little chance that we can guess the precise process and result of China's next succession.

But analyzing the history, regulations, and structure of Chinese politics suggests we can have a higher degree of confidence in some more general projections. Xi is unlikely to anoint a successor anytime soon and may never settle on a durable plan. Whether a plan exists or not, the process will

probably be influenced by personal rivalries, political machinations, and the security apparatus. Policy shifts will depend on China's situation at the time.

And Xi could rule for a long time yet. He would be 84 years old at the 23rd Party Congress in 2037. If Joe Biden wins the U.S. presidential election in 2024, he would be 86 at the end of his second term. Deng was 87 when he embarked on his landmark Southern Tour in 1992.

What is the likely impact if Xi effectively rules for life? Politics would become progressively less stable, as other leaders maneuver against each other in case of a sudden succession crisis. Decision-making could become increasingly personalistic and volatile. Policy would probably continue to emphasize national security, adopt state-heavy solutions to economic problems, and play into strategic competition with the United States and its allies and partners.

That assessment sounds bleak, but we should also remember the possibility of change. Julian Gewirtz has written of the need to avoid "historical determinism" about China's future. The uncertainties highlighted here underscore the dangers of assuming that China will always be like it is today.

After all, history is driven by a combination of individual leaders, institutional structures, economic constraints, social pressures, and international relations, all of which interact in ways that are fundamentally dynamic and difficult to foresee. Xi's legacy may endure with minor tweaks. Or China could see even stronger militarism, instability, and repression under its next leader. But there is also a chance that a new general secretary will move the Party toward more tolerant politics and more open markets.

While a wide range of succession scenarios are possible, one thing is clear: all of them have enormous geopolitical implications. Given the stakes, and despite the many uncertainties, the imperative to monitor and assess Xi's succession is more powerful than ever.

### **Tibet's Enduring Struggle: A Tale of Resilience and Hope**

17 February 2024, RTV

A poignant tale of Tibet's embattled history, intertwining themes of resilience, cultural erosion, and geopolitical power play. Delve into the controversial saga of Tibetan sovereignty, spanning seven decades and leaving an indelible mark on the global conscience.

A tale of an embattled land, a story that intertwines history, politics, and human resilience. The occupation of Tibet by China is a narrative shrouded in controversy, a saga that has spanned over seven decades, leaving an indelible mark on the global conscience.

### **The Sovereignty Question: Treaties and Declarations**

The roots of the Tibetan conflict trace back to the early 20th century. In 1913, the 13th Dalai Lama declared Tibet's independence following the fall of the Qing dynasty. This declaration was further solidified by the Simla Convention of 1914, a tripartite treaty between Britain, Tibet, and China, which recognized Tibet as an independent state. However, China's refusal to accept the treaty's terms and the subsequent political turmoil in China cast a shadow over Tibet's sovereignty.

Under the reign of the 13th Dalai Lama, Tibet embarked on a journey of modernization, establishing its first postal service, minting its own currency, and introducing modern education. These strides towards self-governance were met with resistance from China, culminating in the invasion of Tibet by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in 1951.

### **The Post-1950 Aggression: Exile, Persecution, and Erosion of Identity**

The Chinese occupation of Tibet marked a dark chapter in its history. The PLA's aggressive policies led to mass exile, with the current Dalai Lama seeking refuge in India in 1959. The ensuing decades saw the systematic erosion of Tibetan cultural identity, as China flooded the region with Chinese settlers, a move widely viewed as a strategy to Sinicize the Tibetans.

The Tibetan language, religious practices, and customs were suppressed, leading to what many term as cultural genocide. The situation escalated in the late 1980s and early 1990s, with widespread protests against Chinese rule resulting in brutal crackdowns and mass arrests.

### **The Water Factor: A Crucial Resource and its Geopolitical Implications**

The Tibetan occupation is driven by more than just the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) desire for obedience. The Tibetan Plateau, often referred to as the 'third pole' due to its numerous glaciers, is the source of several major Asian rivers, including the Yellow and Yangtze. China's massive water problems, including pollution and mismanagement, have made control of Tibetan water resources crucial for the CCP's domestic power.

Moreover, the occupation has significant geopolitical implications. By controlling the water supply to Southeast Asia, India, and Pakistan, China potentially weaponizes it against these countries. This strategic leverage has become a critical point of contention in the region's political landscape.

As we stand in 2024, the Tibetan struggle for sovereignty continues, a testament to the resilience of a people fighting to preserve their culture and identity. The occupation of Tibet serves as a stark reminder of the complex interplay of politics, power,

and resources in shaping the world's geopolitical landscape.

In the grand tapestry of human history, the Tibetan narrative is a poignant thread, a tale of resilience and hope amidst adversity. As journalists, it is our responsibility to shed light on such stories, to ensure that the voices of the oppressed are heard, and the actions of the powerful are scrutinized.

### **Why Pakistan's unstable coalition won't faze China, IMF: 'everyone understands army is in charge'**

16 February 2024, South China Morning Post

Pakistan's coalition government formed after a deeply controversial election is not expected to last, analysts said, but major creditors such as China and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) will stay the course on current ties despite concerns over further instability.

After the February 8 polls, the country's powerful military-led establishment herded together six political parties to form the next government – an arrangement observers say is likely to unravel long before its five-year term is up.

"There are plenty of reasons to think this government won't last long," said Michael Kugelman, director of the South Asia Institute at the Wilson Centre, a Washington-based think tank.

There is friction between the two biggest partners in the incoming coalition – the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) of three-time former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and ex-president Asif Ali Zardari's Pakistan People's Party (PPP).

The new government would also be under intense pressure from jailed ex-leader Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, which backed independent candidates comprising the single largest grouping in the National Assembly.

Despite being imprisoned, the former cricket star could still upset the applecart by ordering the PTI to boycott parliament, or by confronting the new government and its military overseers with violent public protests against reportedly widespread electoral fraud.

Few Pakistani governments have served out their full terms and no prime minister ever has. Honeymoons have often given way to "ugly divorces" between the civilian and military leaderships, Kugelman noted.

Additionally, the new multiparty coalition will be "unwieldy and weak, and led by parties that don't get along".

"This could all doom it to failure," he warned.

However, Kugelman said while Pakistan needed renewed, multi-year financial help from the IMF to prevent it from defaulting on its international debt

and trade payments – like Sri Lanka did in 2022 – the prospects for a new deal "won't be damaged by the election controversies" as long as the Washington-based lender "believes Islamabad is committed to seeing through economic reforms".

During the new coalition's first few weeks in power, the civilian and military leaderships are "likely to be of one mind in supporting reforms, though for political reasons, [it] may drag its feet and resist new austerity measures".

For both political and economic reasons, the government and military will have a "strong incentive" to "ensure unrest over widespread electoral fraud is limited", Kugelman said.

According to veteran Pakistani political journalist Nusrat Javed, the leaders of the PML-N and PPP only agreed to join hands under duress from the military establishment.

"They were given an ultimatum to either agree on a candidate for prime minister by Wednesday or have one foisted upon them," he said in a recent television appearance.

Late on Tuesday, they chose deputy PML-N leader Shehbaz Sharif, who led a similar coalition government that replaced Khan's PTI administration after a vote of no-confidence in April 2022 and held office until last October.

"In the end, Pakistan's establishment got exactly what it wanted: a weak coalition led by the military's preferred parties, and susceptible to the military's influence," Kugelman said.

If Shehbaz does head the next Pakistani government, "that could give it a lifeline", given that he historically has had good relations with the military, Kugelman added. But a pliant leader "may not be enough" to ensure the government's survival, according to Kugelman, especially if the coalition becomes increasingly strained.

General understanding

While concerned by the prospect of greater instability, the IMF and foreign investors are not likely to be fazed by Pakistan's domestic political shenanigans, analysts say.

The IMF is "well aware who's in charge, and based on what we have seen during the last six months, it appears they don't have any issues with that set-up", said Mattias Martinsson, chief investment officer of Tundra Fonder, a Swedish asset management firm focused on frontier and emerging markets.

"Given where we are, in terms of sentiment and valuations, I think there are very few foreign investors that were expecting anything other than what now appears to be the outcome," he said. "Everyone understands that the army is in charge. Whoever formally represents them carries less significance."



Financial markets are “cynical, and reward stability and predictability”. It appears the market has “got that in some form, thus I expect an improvement from here”, albeit from extremely low levels, Martinsson added.

The Pakistani military’s stern oversight will also be reassuring to the country’s other major creditors China, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), analysts said.

Although greatly concerned by the legitimacy and longevity of the new Pakistani government, they are expected to continue supporting it with financial assistance and through strategic investments.

China “wants a strong, cohesive and stable Pakistan which can best partner with it as a reliable ally in South Asia”, said Mustafa Hyder, executive director of the Pakistan-China Institute in Islamabad.

“A Pakistan with fault lines is a Pakistan that China would definitely be concerned about” because it would mean further inconsistency of policies and instability.

“It would mean a not-as-robust partnership because of Pakistan’s potentially fractured domestic body-politic,” Hyder said.

But he added that “the question mark” about the sustainability and longevity of the incoming government “should not impede China’s perspective on supporting Pakistan”, financially or otherwise, because its relationship “is with the state of Pakistan”.

Irrespective of whichever government is in Islamabad, there “is a clear consensus” in Pakistan, both in the civil and in the military leadership, “on our relationship with China”, according to Hyder.

This special relationship is expected to persuade Beijing “to be forthcoming about reinvigorating” the multibillion-dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), an envisioned US\$60 billion programme of President Xi Jinping’s Belt and Road Initiative.

China has financed and built about US\$28 billion of mostly power generation and infrastructure projects under CPEC since 2016. They were instrumental in overcoming Pakistan’s massive power shortages and improving overland connectivity between the Chinese-operated port of Gwadar on Pakistan’s western Indian Ocean coast and the Xinjiang region. Hyder said Beijing would be encouraged by the expected reappointment as prime minister of Shahbaz, who “has been a force-multiplier for CPEC” since the programme was launched.

#### Concerns in the Middle East

Like China, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are “undoubtedly somewhat unnerved by the tumultuous and controversial election with its dubious results”, said Hussein Ibish, a senior resident scholar of the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington.

The disputed Pakistan election result “leaves too much room for instability” among Pakistan’s civilian political class and government “for the tastes of its stability and security-minded Gulf Arab allies”.

Pakistan has long-standing agreements with Saudi Arabia and several of its neighbours to militarily intervene if its territorial integrity were to be endangered by any foreign power.

Ibish said the Gulf monarchies were “highly supportive” of the regional and global status quo, and “do not welcome unrest, particularly in a vital nuclear power” in the Indian Ocean basin, which was also a leading trade partner for them.

Pakistan and India possess formidable nuclear arsenals of similar size.

But anxiety about Pakistani politics “is nothing new” to the Gulf Arab states, he said.

Instead, there is a sense among them that if the situation in Pakistan “really do start to go off the rails”, a return to military rule is “always a distinct possibility”.

That would “not necessarily be unwelcome” in Gulf Arab countries that prefer “stable and predictable autocrats over the chaos” produced by polarised and corrupt democratic civilian systems such as Pakistan’s, Ibish said.

So their concerns about the longevity of the incoming Sharif-led coalition government “won’t necessarily” make Riyadh and Abu Dhabi reluctant to extend further financial assistance to Islamabad, or to go ahead with planned strategic investments in Pakistan’s state-owned firms coming up for privatisation.

“That the Pakistani military has served as a backstop against utter chaos, and presumably would do so again if need be, serves as a reassuring idea” that suggests investments even directly within Pakistan itself “will not be fundamentally threatened or altogether lost”, Ibish said.

Financial assistance “may be smiled upon” by the Gulf Arab states “as a way of helping to stabilise Pakistan”, which will be in their interests, he said.

“Much depends on Pakistan’s policies as well as perceived stability,” said Ibish. “If Pakistan continues to act as a largely helpful player, it can expect ongoing support at a fairly high level, at least comparable to recent levels.”

The regional impact of Pakistan’s muddled election would be modest, analysts said.

Foreign policy is in the military’s ambit so Pakistan’s approach to its neighbours after the next government comes to power will be “tethered more to what the army wants to do than to what the new civilian leadership wants to do”, according to Kugelman.

India is currently focused on its general election in May and “not at all interested” in outreach to

Pakistan, no matter who leads the next government in Islamabad, he added.

Likewise, Pakistan's border tensions with Afghanistan and Iran "won't be impacted" by the election.

Still, the next Pakistani government will have "a major challenge on its hands" trying to manage those tensions even while dealing with severe economic stress and fending off pressure from a PTI-led opposition, Kugelman said.

## Uyghurs Continue to Oppose "Genocide Tours" to Xinjiang

16 February 2024, Bitter Winter

I met Rushan Abbas, the founder and executive director of Campaign for Uyghurs, at the admirable International Religious Freedom Summit in Washington DC, where she and I were both speakers. We discussed developments in Xinjiang (which its non-Han-Chinese inhabitants prefer to call East Turkistan) and how Chinese propaganda is at work to deny the genocide that is happening there. Different kinds of "useful idiots" are mobilized internationally. Others in the West, however, are not necessarily moved by ideology. They simply found a way of making money out of a genocide.

Abbas criticized in particular the "genocide tourism" promoted by travel companies in the U.S., Europe, and Australia, denounced by two reports of the Uyghur Human Rights Projects (UHRP), published respectively in August 2023 and January 2024. While some travel companies have direct links to pro-Chinese lobbies and organizations, others do not. They are just interested in selling for significant money "unique travel experiences" to their customers. Abbas told me that this is a subtle, yet extremely dangerous way of manipulating the Western public opinion and normalizing the genocide.



Massimo Introvigne and Rushan Abbas at the 2024 International Religious Freedom Summit in Washington DC.

The UHRP second report analyzes and names eighteen European travel companies from France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, and the Netherlands, in addition to another ten tour

operators from the UK, the U.S., and Australia listed in the first report. There is nothing "adventurous" in the trips they propose. They are carefully monitored by the Chinese authorities, and organized in cooperation with them. Destroyed mosques and Islamic cemeteries are carefully avoided.

Tourists are told that they will become familiar with the ancient Uyghur identity, with the implication that China is not repressing it. This is, however, a lie. "The Uyghur identity on display in East Turkistan," states the first UHRP report, "is that which has been permitted by the Chinese state. What the Chinese state has left of public expressions of Uyghur identity has remained for commodification and exploitation not only by visitors on tours from overseas, but also domestic tourists. By visiting these simulacra of Uyghurness, the travel company and visitor on an organized tour are complicit in the denial of the Uyghur people to define their own identity. In addition, tourism is a primary means with which the Chinese state territorializes and securitizes East Turkistan. The tourist presence coerces Uyghurs to perform a revisioned version of their culture, history, and religion as the security apparatus of the state maintains this fictional depiction."

A special scandal of the "genocide tours" is that some of them lead tourists to visit "the homes of Uyghur families," carefully selected by the regime. These are visits, says the second UHRP report, "which families are in no position to refuse given the environment of securitization and state control. This represents a significant violation of privacy and perpetuates the surveillance programs that have been carried out in Uyghur homes. As an example, the French travel company Hasamélis, as part of its La Route de la Soie Chinoise tour, offers dinner in Turpan with a Uyghur family in their home. Other companies offering home visits include EMS Voyage [France], Shiraz Travel Tours [Italy], and Viatgi [Spain]."

Taking tourists to visit "Uyghur family homes" in a context of genocide may not be so much different from a travel agency who would have offered tours to Nazi Germany to visit the homes of more or less genuine Jewish families, which would have assured the naive visitors that all was well for the Jews there.



Cover of the first UHRP report.

"By bringing tourists to East Turkistan, these travel companies are implicitly supporting the normalization of genocidal Chinese government policies aimed at eradicating the Uyghur identity, further denying the Uyghur people the ability to define 'Uyghurness' for themselves," the UHRP concludes. "UHRP is clear in its message: we are urging international travel companies in North America, Europe, and Australia to cease profiteering from genocide. We do not advocate for a ban on [individual] travel to East Turkistan, leaving the decision to visit the region to the conscience of the individual traveler. We recommend travel companies and trade associations call for an end to tours to East Turkistan and to increase due diligence processes and human rights compliance in line with international standards. Travel companies have the opportunity to turn from selling 'Genocide Tours' to becoming Uyghur allies through publicly canceling tours and condemning China's crimes against humanity."

### **Explained: China's 'Xiaokang' border defence villages along the LAC, now being occupied**

15 February 2024, The Indian Express

The Chinese people have started occupying several of the country's model 'Xiaokang' border defence villages, along its border with India's northeastern region.

Since 2019, China has been building villages along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), which separates India and China, but they were unoccupied until a few months ago.

Some villages along the LAC, and opposite the Lohit Valley and the Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh, are now being occupied by residents, The Indian Express has learnt from officials.

What are these Xiaokang border defence villages?

China has been constructing 628 such Xiaokang or "well-off villages" along India's borders with the Tibet Autonomous Region for over five years now. These have been constructed all along the LAC, including the Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh borders.

The structures include mostly double-storey, large and spacious buildings. The construction for most of these planned villages has already been completed, as per officials.

The exact purposes of these villages have remained unclear, but they were understood to be dual-use infrastructure — can be used both for civil and military purposes — and have thus been a concern from a defence perspective. The strategic community looks at it as a way to assert Chinese claims over certain areas along the LAC.

Notably, the exact extent of the LAC has been a source of contention between the two countries for years. India considers it to be 3,488 km long, while China says it is around 2,000 km.

Has any law been introduced concerning these villages?

A new law on China's land borders was brought into effect from January 1, 2022. The law was passed in 2021 by the Standing Committee of China's National People's Congress (which is China's rubber-stamp Parliament), for the "protection and exploitation of the country's land border areas".

China's official news agency Xinhua stated: "The law also stipulates that the state shall take measures to strengthen border defense, support economic and social development as well as opening-up in border areas, improve public services and infrastructure in such areas, encourage and support people's life and work there, and promote coordination between border defense and social, economic development in border areas".

Thus, this border law covers the border defence villages programme.

How is India responding to it?

The Indian government announced the Vibrant Villages Programme in 2022 to develop its border villages into modern villages with all amenities and as tourist attractions. The programme builds on the existing Border Area Development Programme (BADP) under the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.

Under the programme, India plans to develop 663 border villages into modern villages in the first phase. Of them, at least 17 such border villages along the borders with China in Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, have been selected for development as a pilot project.

In Arunachal Pradesh, villages in the eastern part of the state and the Tawang region have been identified such as Zemithang, Taksing, Chayang Tajo, Tuting and Kibithu.

What other infrastructure is being developed by China along India's northeast?

China has been constantly building infrastructure all along the LAC, including in Arunachal Pradesh's Tawang region and the Siang Valley.

This includes the construction of new roads and bridges to improve connectivity through the passes. China has also been constructing houses and other infrastructure in Bhutanese territory.

India has also focused on strengthening its border infrastructure and improving forward connectivity with the construction of new roads, bridges, and helipads. There has also been a push to develop alternate routes to the LAC and improve inter-valley connectivity in the northeast.

## Why China Isn't Blowing Up Over the Deaths of Fishermen That Taiwanese Forces Chased Away

15 February 2024, Time

Two Chinese fishermen drowned off the coast of Kinmen, a group of islands that sit just six miles from mainland China, after being chased by Taiwanese maritime forces on Wednesday—marking what Taiwan's Coast Guard Administration says is the first of its actions to have caused deaths. But China's response to the tragedy, which some suggested could be used to escalate tensions already simmering around the island's sovereignty, has been uncharacteristically restrained.

A Taiwanese coast guard statement Wednesday said the unnamed, mainland-China-registered boat had crossed a maritime border and failed to stop for inspection, instead speeding away from its patrol. The fishing boat capsized during the pursuit and four of its crew members fell into the sea, two of whom were rescued while the other two lost consciousness and died.

China was not happy. Zhu Fenglian, spokesperson for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council in Beijing, condemned Taiwan for "such a vicious incident," which also, China noted, happened during Lunar New Year celebrations. Zhu blamed Taiwan's Democratic People's Party—which is pro-independence and recently won another presidential term leading the island—alleging that its officials have long mistreated fishermen from the mainland and forcefully and dangerously seized mainland fishing boats, a pattern it claims led to the recent deaths.

"We warn the relevant parties in Taiwan to respect the historical fact that fishermen from both sides of the Taiwan Strait operate in the traditional fishing areas of the Taiwan Strait and ensure the personal safety of mainland fishermen, effectively preventing the recurrence of such incidents," said Zhu.

Taiwan's coast guard said that fishing boats, such as the one in question this week, that have "no name, no ship certificate, and no ship registration" are "a common concern of cross-strait collaborative law enforcement," Taiwan's government-owned Central News Agency reported.

"We deeply regret that the mainland crew refused to cooperate with our law enforcement work and this unfortunate incident occurred," Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council said in a statement on Thursday.

The deaths sparked outrage among the Chinese public. On Weibo, posts about the incident have garnered over 50 million views. In particular, some social media users are taking the chance to air nationalist sentiments, calling for retaliation against Taiwan, which Chinese authorities have long claimed—sometimes with threats of violence—as part of China.

"This is blatant provocation," one Weibo user wrote, in a post that has garnered over 1,500 likes. "If it's not possible to attack Taiwan now, it's not difficult to severely punish Taiwan's for its evil deeds, given our current strength."

China's official reaction, however, has been relatively "muted" considering the incident concerns Taiwan, Benjamin Ho, coordinator of the China Programme at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore, tells TIME. And despite the clamor, he says, China is unlikely to escalate the matter.

Chin-Hao Huang, author of *Power and Restraint in China's Rise* and associate professor of political science at the National University of Singapore, tells TIME that one reason why China's response has been somewhat tempered may be due to a "tacit recognition" of the illegal actions of the fishing boat.

"In terms of legality, it is clear who's in the wrong here—who actually trespassed and operated a vessel without the proper registration," he says. "There's an understanding and recognition too, from the Chinese side, that you can't really press this case further because there's no legal grounding for them to issue a tough and harsh statement."

Ho also cautions that fishermen casualties would not rank high in China's priorities. "It's probably not going to rank as heavily as if a Chinese jet would be shot down, or even a drone," he says.

Taiwan has a history of apprehending fishermen from the mainland entering its waters. In September 2023, the Taiwanese Coast Guard detained the crew of a fishing vessel spotted 16 nautical miles off Hua Islet, Taiwan's westernmost islet. Fishing vessels and fishermen have historically been used by Chinese authorities as a way to solidify Beijing's claims to disputed waters, especially in the South China Sea.

While the Taiwan Strait has long been home to political tensions, fatalities resulting from the ongoing territorial rows are virtually unheard of. A pair of deadly maritime disasters involving Taiwanese authorities and mainland Chinese fishermen made headlines in 1990, when a fishing boat repatriating 50 illegal Chinese immigrants back to the mainland was hit by a Taiwanese naval vessel at sea, killing 21 on board the boat; that came just weeks after 25 Chinese immigrants died of suffocation while being repatriated to mainland China, after Taiwanese authorities forced them into boat cabins that were then sealed shut.

Already strained relations between China and Taiwan were thrown into greater uncertainty after the DPP's William Lai Ching-te won the presidency in Taiwan's January election. While it remains too early to tell if Beijing will up its belligerence against the island it claims as its own, the level of restraint it has shown this week may offer a glimpse into a



broader strategy going forward that may prioritize diplomacy over conflict.

"In the grand scheme of things," says Huang, "I think maybe, in Beijing's calculations, this shouldn't torpedo the larger effort China may have to ... encourage Taiwan to return to more functional collaboration."

### **Tibetan Legacy: Under the Dragon's Gaze**

15 February 2024, Bharat Shakti

Tibetan history is a roller-coaster ride, with Tibet at some stages dominating the region while at others being subjected to foreign rule and even a protectorate status. Currently, it's undergoing a focused and systematic Sinicization attempt, with Beijing bent upon ensuring that these proud people lose their identity and get absorbed in the Chinese cultural milieu. The following piece provides an insight into the Chinese design of the ongoing assimilation campaign.

At Strategic Crossroads

Perched atop the "Roof of the World," Tibet's strategic significance stems from its unique geo-cultural position. Nestled between the vast emptiness of the erstwhile Soviet Union to the west and the burgeoning empires of India and China to the south and north, it has acted as a cultural sponge, absorbing and transmitting influences for millennia. This constant ebb and flow – Buddhist philosophies from India, artistic styles from China, nomadic traditions from the steppes – has woven a rich tapestry into the very fabric of Tibetan identity. Yet, its strategic allure has also brought political turmoil as empires vied for control of this critical Himalayan gateway, shaping not just its borders but also the complex interplay of cultures that defines Tibet's enduring legacy.

Glorious History

Tibet's history sparkles with periods of immense political, military and cultural brilliance, starting with the reign of Songtsen Gampo in the 7th century. His vision saw the unification of disparate Tibetan tribes, laying the foundation for a vast empire. Through strategic marriages and military prowess, he extended Tibetan influence from the Caspian Sea to the borders of China, controlling the silk route and thereby establishing a golden age for Tibet. In 763, Tibetan forces briefly held sway in Xian, the capital of the great Tang Empire of China and placed an emperor of their own choice on the Chinese throne. The first ever treaty between the Chinese and Tibetans was signed in 783 which fixed the boundary between the two at the eastern edge of the present-day Gansu province.

Bon and Buddhist traditions flourished, with the latter finding its expression in the iconic Jokhang Temple and the Potala Palace, architectural wonders that continue to awe. This era also witnessed the adoption of a written script, solidifying Tibetan identity and paving the way for a literary renaissance. This golden age resonated for centuries, leaving an indelible mark on the Tibetan psyche and shaping its unique cultural identity.

Mongol and the Chinese Influence

However, Tibet could not sustain its glory beyond the 12th century due to internal power struggles and external threats that constantly marred the Tibetan landscape. In 1207, the Tibetans acquiesced to the Mongols, who subsequently appointed the Sakya head lama (later christened Dalai Lama) as their Viceroy in Lhasa. In 1279, with the establishment of the Mongol Yuan dynasty in China, Tibet became a part of the Mongolian empire and remained so for about a century. Tibet regained its independence as the Ming dynasty came to power in China. Later, the Dzungar Mongols gained ascendancy in Tibet, and it took the Chinese Qing dynasty to intervene militarily in 1718-19 to oust them.

Claiming this as a "conquest" of Tibet, the Qing placed two residents with a body of troops at Lhasa. The Dalai Lama was established in a position of full temporal power and ruled Tibet as a Qing "protectorate". Although internally, Tibet continued to enjoy almost full autonomy as Chinese law, language, and writing systems were not applied in Tibet. This arrangement continued well into the 20th century; barring a few hostile incidents between the Chinese and the Tibetans, the arrangement ran well.

A Pawn in the Great Game

The British, who understood the strategic importance of Tibet, more so given the increasing rivalry with the Russians to exercise control over Central Asia, tried to establish diplomatic and business relations with Tibet. However, China did not allow the British overtures to succeed. The British finally launched the "Younghusband Expedition" in 1904, which resulted in directly signing a treaty with the Tibetans. This treaty was followed by the signing of the Sino-British convention in 1906 regarding the status of Tibet. The British brokered another tripartite treaty in 1914, the "Shimla Convention", to mediate the growing dispute between China and Tibet and to define the India-Tibet border. The Chinese reluctantly joined the convention and initiated the draft but refused to sign the final version, which they refused to acknowledge to date.

The Nationalist Government of China, which succeeded the Qing Empire, also claimed sovereignty over Tibet, Mongolia, and Sinkiang. Nevertheless, Article 120 of its constitution, drafted



in 1949, stated, "The self-government system of Tibet shall be safeguarded".

As the communists came to power after defeating the nationalists, they launched an invasion to "liberate" Tibet in October 1950, forcing the Dalai Lama to succumb and sign a treaty. This treaty, signed in May 1951, also agreed to respect the status quo regarding Tibet.

#### Systematic Sinicization

Immediately after the occupation of Tibet, the Chinese Communist Party members, government officials, and masses of Chinese immigrants started coming into Tibet. They slowly began impacting politics, religion, language and economics. The Tibetans resented this trend and caused the "Khampa Rebellion" of 1958, followed by a declaration of independence by the Tibetans, repudiating the 1951 agreement. This uprising was put down with a heavy hand, and the Dalai Lama fled to India, ceding the political space to the communists.

The "Cultural Revolution", like in other parts of China, had a disastrous impact on Tibet wherein thousands of ordinary people and monks were imprisoned, almost all the monasteries and temples closed or destroyed, and a system of communes introduced, which affected the very core of Tibetan society, religion, and economy.

Since then, China has been making immense effort to integrate Tibetan culture and society with that of China, thereby raising serious concerns about the erosion of Tibetan language, religion, and identity. While Tibetan remains an official language, Mandarin now dominates education and administration. Similarly, religious practices face limitations as monasteries are subject to increased surveillance.

#### Uncertain Future

Beijing's current stance offers little hope for concessions on Tibetan autonomy, be it administrative or religious, as promised in the past. The Chinese government, under Xi Jinping's leadership, seems unwilling even to engage in dialogue with the Dalai Lama, whom all Tibetans recognise as their spiritual and temporal leader. This hardening stance has only intensified efforts to assimilate Tibet into the fabric of China.

These stark realities cast a long and uncertain shadow on the future of Tibet. Concerns loom large, particularly regarding selecting the Dalai Lama's successor and the ongoing assimilation campaign. The coming years will be pivotal as a crucible determining whether Tibet's rich legacy endures. Can the unwavering spirit of its people, its dedication to cultural preservation, and the steadfast support of the international community stand firm in the face of these looming uncertainties? Only time will tell.

## Why China Wants to Be Asia's Only UN Security Council Member

15 February 2024, NewsWeek

China's stance on being the sole Asian representative in the United Nations Security Council has come into sharper focus following Russia's robust endorsement of India's bid for permanent membership earlier this month.

The Russian ambassador to India, Denis Alipov, has extended support to New Delhi's aspiration to the UNSC permanent seat, saying Saturday in an interview with Russian state media outlet, Russia Today: "We are of the view that India as a permanent member of the Security Council could make a significant contribution to promoting balance as well as an agenda focused on the interests of the world majority, primarily the countries of the Global South."

With Russia's backing, India's bid now faces opposition solely from China within the five permanent members group, highlighting Beijing's determination to remain the exclusive Asian power within it. But India's candidature could also face opposition from other non-permanent members of the UNSC.

This development occurs against the backdrop of heightened tensions and rivalry between China and India, both vying for leadership within the developing world. New Delhi increasingly considers Beijing a challenge to its geopolitical interests, while the former has developed close ties with Washington. China and India have clashed over their border dispute in the Eastern Ladakh region since June 2020. The ongoing border stand-off, now in its fourth year, continues to bear down on their bilateral relationship.

India's Minister of External Affairs, Dr Subramanyam Jaishankar, said in Perth, Australia, that India will certainly achieve the target of joining the UNSC as a permanent member, India's new agency, The Press Trust of India, reported on February 10.

"We will get there. I am 100 percent certain we will get there. But I will also tell you that honestly, we will not get it easily because the world is full of competition," Jaishankar said.

The process for reforming the U.N. Security Council is stringent, requiring the support of at least nine of its 15 members and the acquiescence of all five permanent members: Britain, China, France, Russia, and the United States.

Analysts suggest that China's opposition is rooted in its ambition to be the singular Asian representative among the council's permanent members.

Ashok Kantha, India's former ambassador to China from 2014 to 2016, told Newsweek that Beijing has made efforts to thwart New Delhi's candidature to the coveted UNSC while giving passive assurances.

Newsweek reached out to China's embassy in New Delhi for comment.

"However, in practice, we have found that China has actively obstructed any restructuring of the UNSC and our efforts run into the Great Wall of China's opposition. We have interpreted the Chinese behavior as the lack of support for the rise of India and its aspirations, notwithstanding formal assurances to the contrary," Kantha said.

"China is not inclined to share the space with another developing country and would like to preserve its status as the only non-western country that is a permanent member of the UNSC."

Kanti Bajpai, a professor and Wilmar chair of Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore, told Newsweek that China may try to build consensus among other middle powers to stall India's quest for a UNSC seat.

"China will certainly invoke the middle powers argument. Namely, there is a range of middle powers that would not support India, Japan, and Germany, and until there is more consensus, it would be inappropriate to admit these three powers as permanent members," Bajpai said.

"Singapore is very cautious and will not break with the rest of ASEAN on this. A lot, therefore, depends on key players in ASEAN. For Singapore, that means Indonesia and Malaysia. New Delhi has not paid much attention to the region after Modi's first term and has done quite a lot of things to annoy it (including not joining RCEP)," he added.

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a free trade agreement among the nations in the Indo-Pacific, which New Delhi decided to sit out despite prolonged negotiations to join the trading bloc.

Chinese state media have said the United States' proposed reforms to the UNSC, including India's seat at the table, are driven by geopolitical interests rather than genuine calls for reforming the body.

"Japan and India are the two poles of Washington's China-targeted "Indo-Pacific" strategy, Germany is the center of Europe to deal with Russia, and Brazil is the No 1 country in the US' backyard of Latin America. It can be said that this is largely a deployment against China and Russia," an op-ed by Chinese state media outlet China Daily said last year. Despite Moscow's support for New Delhi, China's opposition to India's seat is unlikely to change. The challenges to Security Council reform are manifold, including the formidable task of amending the U.N. Charter, which experts believe will be challenging to achieve.

In the broader debate over Security Council reform, various countries and regional blocs have proposed modifications to make the body more representative and regionally balanced.

Nations such as Italy, Argentina, the Republic of Korea, Mexico, and Pakistan, alongside the African Union, have also expressed interest in reform plans or sought to become permanent members, according to the China Daily op-ed. However, these proposals have not garnered the necessary support from key players, including the United States, the publication said.

"China will certainly urge these countries to oppose Indian membership or, at the very least, it will argue that these countries are not comfortable with Indian membership and that, therefore, India does not deserve a seat," Bajpai told Newsweek while commenting on other countries aspiring to take up UNSC seat.

"China would also use its influence in the Global South to oppose India. India's recent loss in UNESCO to Pakistan shows that India's support in the Global South may, in any case, be shaky. China will exploit this," he added.

### Why global firms are looking to exit China's Xinjiang

15 February 2024, Times of India

China on Thursday urged companies not to be "blinded by lies" over its human rights record in Xinjiang, after German automaker Volkswagen said it was discussing the future of its activities in the troubled region.

In a statement sent to AFP, Beijing's foreign ministry said allegations of abuses in the region were "entirely a lie concocted with the aim of destabilising Xinjiang" and urged firms "to distinguish right from wrong and not be blinded by lies".

Volkswagen cars blocked by US customs

German automaker Volkswagen has said that several of its models had been refused entry into the United States, after it emerged that a Chinese-made component may have breached labour laws.

"We are working to rectify a delay in delivering certain Volkswagen Group vehicles from ports to dealers due to a customs issue," Volkswagen said in a statement.

The trouble related to a "small electronic component", which was "in the process of being replaced", Volkswagen said.

The part, said to be from "western China", was found to be in breach of US anti-forced labour laws, according to a report by the Financial Times.

Ban on imports

The US has banned most imports from Xinjiang, in western China, unless companies offer verifiable proof that production did not involve forced labour.

Rights campaigners have for years accused Beijing of a brutal crackdown against the Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang, including through

forced labour and detention camps. Beijing denies the allegations of abuse.

The issue of forced labour is acutely sensitive for Volkswagen, which has long been plagued by questions over its factory in the region, operated by its local partner SAIC.

Xinjiang is home to numerous factories that supply multinational companies, including big-name Western brands.

### How America is failing to break up with China

13 February 2024, The Hindustan Times

WHEN IT COMES to tracing the geography of global supply chains, few companies provide a better map than Foxconn, the world's largest contract manufacturer. This year the Taiwanese giant has built or expanded factories in India, Mexico, Thailand and Vietnam. The Chinese production sites once loved by Western companies are firmly out of fashion. Souring relations between the governments in Washington and Beijing have made businesses increasingly fretful about geopolitical risks. As a consequence, in the first half of the year, America traded more with Mexico and Canada than it did with China for the first time in almost two decades. The map of global trade is being redrawn.

At first glance, this is almost exactly as desired by America's policymakers. Under first Donald Trump and then Joe Biden, officials have put in place an array of tariffs, rules and subsidies. The latest arrived on August 9th: an executive order introducing screening for outbound investment, and banning some investment into Chinese quantum computing, artificial-intelligence projects and advanced chips. America wants to weaken China's grip on sensitive industries and, in a motivation that mostly goes unspoken, prepare for a possible invasion of Taiwan by its adversary. This attempt to "de-risk" trade with China is the cornerstone of the White House's foreign policy. Yet despite extensive efforts, and the reshaping of trade seemingly evident in headline statistics, much of the apparent de-risking is not what it appears.

Instead of being slashed, trade links between America and China are enduring—just in more tangled forms. The American government's preferred trading partners include countries such as India, Mexico, Taiwan and Vietnam, in which it hopes to spur the "friendshoring" of production to replace imports that would have come from China. And trade with these allies is rising fast: just 51% of American imports from "low-cost" Asian countries came from China last year, down from 66% when the Trump administration's first tariffs were introduced five years

ago, according to Kearney, a consultancy. The problem is that trade between America's allies and China is also rising, suggesting that they are often acting as packaging hubs for what, in effect, remain Chinese goods. This flow of products means that, although America may not be buying as much directly from China as before, the two countries' economies still rely on each other.

For evidence, look at the countries that benefit from reduced direct Chinese trade with America. Research by Caroline Freund of the University of California, San Diego and co-authors investigates this dynamic. It finds that countries which had the strongest trade relationships with China in a given industry have been the greatest beneficiaries of the redirection of trade, suggesting deep Chinese supply chains still matter enormously to America. This is even truer in categories that include the advanced manufacturing products where American officials are keenest to limit China's presence. When it comes to these goods, the share of American imports arriving from China declined by 14 percentage points between 2017 and 2022, whereas those from Taiwan and Vietnam—countries that import heavily from China—gained the greatest market share. In short, Chinese activity is still vital to the production of even the most sensitive products.

Exactly how the rerouting works in practice differs across countries and industries. A few products can be sourced only in China. These include some processed rare earths and metals where Chinese companies dominate entire industries, such as the gallium used in chip production and the lithium processed for electric-vehicle batteries. Sometimes exports to America and the rest of the West from their allies are nothing more than Chinese products that have been repackaged to avoid tariffs. Most often, though, inputs are simply mechanical or electrical parts that could be found elsewhere at greater cost by an assiduous importer, but are cheaper and more plentiful in China.

Pass the parcel

All three types of phoney decoupling can be found in China's backyard. The latest official data, published in 2018, concerning exports by the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), a regional club, show that 7% by value were actually attributable to some form of production in China—a figure that is probably an underestimate, given how difficult it is to disentangle trade. Fresher data suggest that China has only grown in importance since then. The country has increased its share of exports to the bloc in 69 of 97 product categories monitored by ASEAN. Electronic exports, the largest category, which covers everything from batteries and industrial furnaces to hair clippers, have exploded. In the first six months of the year, Chinese sales of these goods in

Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam rose to \$49bn, up by 80% compared with five years ago. There is a similar pattern in foreign direct investment, where Chinese spending in crucial Southeast Asian countries has overtaken America's. Factories farther afield are also humming with Chinese activity, perhaps most notably in the car industry. In Mexico the National Association of Autopart Makers, a lobby group, has reported that last year 40% of nearshoring investment came from sites moving to the country from China. A rich supply of intermediate goods is duly following. In the past year, Chinese companies exported \$300m a month in parts to Mexico, more than twice the amount they managed five years ago. In central and eastern Europe, where the car industry has boomed in recent years, phoney decoupling is even more conspicuous. In 2018 China provided just 3% of automotive parts brought into the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Romania. Since then, Chinese imports have surged, thanks to the rapid adoption of electric vehicles, where the country increasingly dominates production. China now provides 10% of all car parts imported into central and eastern Europe, more than any other country outside the EU. Tighter trade links between America's allies and China are the paradoxical result of America's desire for weaker ones. Firms panicked by worsening relations across the Pacific are pursuing "China plus one" strategies, keeping some production in the world's second-largest economy, while moving the rest to countries, such as Vietnam, that are friendlier to Uncle Sam. Yet American demand for final products from allies also boosts demand for Chinese intermediate inputs, and produces incentives for Chinese firms to operate and export from alternative places. Although Apple, the world's largest company by market capitalisation, has moved production outside China in recent years, this comes with a caveat: much of the production still relies on Chinese companies. The tech giant lists 25 producers in Vietnam on its official suppliers list. Nine are from mainland China.

Tighter trade links between America's allies and China are the paradoxical result of America's desire for weaker ones. Firms panicked by worsening relations across the Pacific are pursuing "China plus one" strategies, keeping some production in the world's second-largest economy, while moving the rest to countries, such as Vietnam, that are friendlier to Uncle Sam. Yet American demand for final products from allies also boosts demand for Chinese intermediate inputs, and produces incentives for Chinese firms to operate and export from alternative places. Although Apple, the world's largest company by market capitalisation, has moved production outside China in recent years, this comes with a

caveat: much of the production still relies on Chinese companies. The tech giant lists 25 producers in Vietnam on its official suppliers list. Nine are from mainland China.

Given that most countries are desperate for the investment and employment that trade brings, America has been unable to convince its allies to reduce China's role in their supply chains. Many are content to play both sides—receiving Chinese investment and intermediate goods, and exporting finished products to America and the rest of the West. Ironically, then, the process driving America and China apart in trade and investment may actually be forging stronger financial and commercial connections between China and America's allies. Needless to say, that is not what President Biden had in mind.

Correction (February 8th 2024): The chart in this article has been updated to show the correct value for India.

### **China Pulls Taliban Out Of Isolation; Beijing Eyes Afghanistan's Mines To Dominate Smartphone, EV Market?**

13 February 2024, The EurAsian Times

A report in India's News18 on December 23, 2022, published an interesting news: China needs Afghanistan's lithium and copper mines to dominate the supply chains of components needed to make electric vehicle batteries and smartphones.

A week before that news was broken, Wang Yi, the Chinese foreign minister, had visited Kabul to meet with Taliban foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi. This was the first highest-level meeting between China and the Taliban regime after the Taliban had toppled the elected government in Kabul.

As a goodwill gesture, Wang Yi had invited Muttaqi to the third meeting of foreign ministers of Afghanistan's neighbors on March 30 and 31 in Tunxi, Anhui.

Since 2021, China has been in close touch with the Taliban and has been eyeing her lithium and copper mines. It is not only Afghanistan but the mineral deposits across the world are also what China has been looking for, the Financial Times reported,

The paper adds, "The meeting will possibly begin with the investment of the Chinese into mines in Afghanistan," as stated by Ahmad Munib Rasa, a political analyst who was talking to TOLO News.

One of the world's biggest copper deposits is located at Mes Aynak, south-east of Kabul. According to the Financial Times, the copper deposits also came under discussion between Muttaqi and Wang Yi during their talks in Beijing.

Chinese delegations are also reported to have visited Nangarhar and Laghman provinces of Afghanistan to examine accessibility to other minerals.

## Acceptance & Contradiction

A quick survey of Sino-Taliban relations reveals that China had been considerate and sympathetic towards the Afghan Taliban from the day it ousted the elected government in Kabul.

Many rumors associated with Chinese expansionist designs in the Muslim-dominated countries in the Gulf and the Middle East were making rounds. These rumors intensified with the hotchpotch withdrawal of the US and NATO armed forces from Afghanistan after nearly three decades of fighting.

It appears that China has not given terrorism the extraordinary importance that countries like India, Japan, or South Korea have. When China twice vetoed the majority resolutions in the Security Council designating the Pakistani perpetrators of the Mumbai carnage, the entire world was stunned by how China openly patronized terrorism anywhere if it harmed the interests of other countries not friendly to China.

Significantly, casting aside the cloak of ambiguity, Chinese President Xi Jinping took a bold step and, on January 29, 2024, in an official ceremony, accepted the credentials of the envoy to Beijing from Taliban-governed Afghanistan.

Ambassadors from 41 countries, including Afghanistan, presented their credentials to the Chinese President in the said ceremony. In December 2023, Afghan ambassador Bilal Karimi had met Wang Yi, the Chinese foreign minister.

Last year, China had imposed conditions for formally recognizing the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. It had stated that before complete diplomatic relations, the Afghan Taliban must undergo reform.

Beijing had categorically said that to obtain full diplomatic recognition, the government in Kabul would need to enact political changes, enhance security, and repair ties with its neighbors. Both nations were continuing their diplomatic relations and hosting each other's diplomats at the same time.

China had also said that while Afghanistan should not be kept outside the international community, the Taliban needed to live up to the expectations of the outside world.

The curious thing is that reports of atrocities perpetrated on innocent citizens, especially the women in Afghanistan under the Taliban, are regularly pouring in. Though the Taliban had promised to show due respect to human rights and, in particular, the rights of women, this does not seem to have been translated into practice.

How then did Beijing suddenly change its resolve remains a mystery. The simple explanation is that national interest has an overwhelming weight against human rights and public commitments.

At the same time, China has repeatedly declared that it respects Afghanistan's national sovereignty and its

choices. It has also said it does not meddle in Afghanistan's domestic affairs.

Non-interference assurance by China is certainly in response to the commitment made by the Taliban that they will not allow their land to be used for militancy against another country.

This is an important commitment, but how long will Beijing stick to it is difficult to say. Nevertheless, as long as the threat of Uyghur Islamic uprising in Xinjiang remains a political scenario in the Eastern part of China, she would very much welcome the Taliban, promising not to allow their land to be used for militancy in another country.

In the recent past, a rumor was making circles that some Uyghur fundamentalist youth are receiving training in terror somewhere in Nangarhar, the northeastern part of Afghanistan.

It has to be noted that one of the conditions which Beijing has stipulated for recognition of Afghanistan was that, among other things, Kabul should mend its relations with its neighbours.

As of today, Pakistan is the only neighbor of Afghanistan with which relations are soured. Imposing this condition means that China wants to take Pakistan also into the loop so that Pakistan-based jihadists desist from propagating the Islamic resurgence movement among the Pakistan-based diehard jihadist-terrorist organizations.

## Indo-Afghan Relations

China has taken the lead in giving formal recognition to the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Not only that, it has also said that "Afghanistan should not be kept at a distance from the international community."

This subtly points the finger towards the US and its allies, who have imposed sanctions on Afghanistan for violation of human rights. With China's recognition of Afghanistan, it is obvious that a large number of Asian and African countries would follow suit.

India is foremost among the Asian countries and also among the democracies in the world, which will have to think twice about how her close relations with the Taliban regime must be shaped.

India has age-old relations with Afghanistan. Our history, including the history of the colonial period, is intertwined with that of the Afghans. Independent India has always extended the hand of friendship to the Afghans and supported their case at all international forums.

Thousands of Afghan students are studying in technical and professional institutions in India, and many of them receive scholarships from the Government of India. India is the foremost country that has assisted Afghanistan in building vital infrastructure like roads, buildings, bridges, dams, cinema halls, secretariat, etc.



India provides medical facilities to Afghan patients coming to India for treatment. India exported wheat to Afghanistan when there was a scarcity of food grains. India is a partner in the Chahbahar project, which will connect Chahbahar with Kabul by railway undertaken by India.

The Taliban government is conscious of India's support and friendship. Though India has not formally recognized the Taliban so far, the nature of relations that India has with the Taliban shows that the two governments have developed an understanding between them.

India was among ten regional countries that participated in a meeting of diplomatic representatives convened by the Taliban set up in Kabul on January 31. It reflects the growing engagement with a regime not officially recognized by New Delhi.

India's participation at the meeting of diplomatic representatives convened by the Taliban setup reflects the growing engagement with a regime that isn't officially recognized by New Delhi.

The Regional Cooperation Initiative meeting, which was addressed by Taliban acting foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, was also attended by diplomats from Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Turkey and Indonesia. Russia was represented by its special representative for Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov.

There was no official word from Indian officials on the meeting, which came days after the Indian embassy in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) invited the acting Afghan envoy, Badru'd Din Haqqani, to the Republic Day celebrations in Abu Dhabi.

Hafiz Zia Ahmad, deputy spokesman of the Taliban foreign ministry, quoted the Indian representative who attended the meeting as saying that New Delhi backs all initiatives focused on the stability of Afghanistan.

"India actively takes part in international and regional initiatives regarding Afghanistan and supports every effort leading to the stability and the development of Afghanistan," Ahmad quoted the Indian representative as saying in a post on X.

In this background, it is logical that India also takes initiatives purporting formal recognition of Afghanistan's sovereignty. It would not be a figment of imagination to presume that Beijing's hasty step of recognizing Taliban Afghanistan could have happened because the Chinese may have gotten wind of how Afghanistan was coming closer to India. Though the philosophy of seeking friendship with Afghanistan by the two rival giants of India is markedly dissimilar, China feels that India's heavy footfall in Afghanistan could pose a serious challenge to her B&R Initiative in this Asian region.

## China 'Pushes the Boundaries' with its expanding borders

13 February 2024, The Economic Times

Beijing: In late 2021, Chairman Xi Jinping famously told President Joe Biden, "Aggression or hegemony is not in the blood of the Chinese nation. Since the founding of the people's republic, China has never started a single war or conflict, and has never taken one inch of land from other countries." However, such a claim is demonstrably false, as China recklessly pushes forward its boundaries on land and at sea.

Including Bhutan and India, along their shared rugged, mountainous frontier, China is pushing forward wherever it can to forge a fait accompli on the ground. It is doing the same with illegal territorial claims in the South China Sea and attempting the same in Japan's Senkaku Islands.

The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in the USA provided an assessment of new People's Liberation Army (PLA) infrastructure near the Indian border. It noted, "China is currently undertaking a major expansion of its infrastructure that is enhancing its ability to project military power along its western frontier" in both Tibet and Xinjiang. The CSIS report revealed China is constructing or upgrading dozens of airports and heliports, supplemented by new roads, rail and other infrastructure that enhance PLA logistics by permitting greater quantities of troops, weapons and supplies to be shuttled closer to the frontier.

It added, "The pace of development in the region accelerated following standoffs and skirmishes between China and India along disputed portions of their border in 2017 and 2020." The 2017 reference is to the Doklam Plateau, where PLA engineers attempted to build a road. Even more serious was the outbreak of bloody violence at Galwan Valley in Eastern Ladakh in 2020.

In the rugged and unforgiving high-altitude terrain of Tibet and Xinjiang, airports and heliports grow exponentially in importance. They are vital for moving personnel and equipment into the area, plus they serve as launch pads for reconnaissance assets and potentially strike missions.

CSIS assessed: "The airpower buildup taking place on China's western frontier is sweeping in scale. Based on analysis of satellite imagery and other open-source material, China Power has identified 37 airports and heliports within Tibet and Xinjiang that have been newly constructed or upgraded since 2017 ... At least 22 of these are identifiable as military or dual-use facilities, or are expected to be once they are completed. The pace of this activity sped up significantly in 2020. That year alone, China began constructing seven new air facilities and initiated upgrades at seven others."

Much of the construction is occurring in Tibet. All five existing dual-use airports have received new terminals, hangars, aprons and runways since 2017, while four new airports have been constructed less than 60km from the Indian border. For example, Lhuntse, Ngari-Burang and Shigatse Tingri Airports fill glaring gaps in the PLA's coverage. The dual-use Shigatse Peace Airport is the closest to Doklam, and it has received a large underground facility that has at least three entrances.

CSIS added: "The PLA is also significantly scaling up its ability to conduct helicopter-based operations through the construction of at least five new heliports in Tibet, and the upgrading of two heliports. These heliports, which are operated by PLA Army aviation units, are dotted throughout Tibet, stretching from Rutog County in the west to Nyingchi City in the east. The addition of these heliports stands to significantly enhance PLA operations in the mountainous region, since helicopters are capable of manoeuvring in ways that aeroplanes and ground equipment cannot."

As for Xinjiang, at least 15 airports have been upgraded since 2017, seven of which are military or dual-use. One example is Hotan, 240km from the Indian border. It has a new runway, additional tarmacked areas and an expanded air defense complex.

Three new airports have started construction in Xinjiang since 2019, including Tashkorgan near the border junction with Pakistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

Nonetheless, CSIS explained: "Despite the military benefits that China's investments in the region have brought, the PLA faces several notable disadvantages compared to India. Much of China's side of the border is situated on the highest portions of the Tibetan Plateau, which is often described as the 'roof of the world', owing to its high elevation. Twenty of China's airports and heliports within Xinjiang and Tibet are located more than 3,000m above sea level..."

Such altitudes present massive operational challenges for the PLA. Thin air affects the performance of aircraft taking off, which in turn requires longer runways and aircraft may not be able to carry full weapon, cargo or fuel loads. Cold and harsh weather adds its own challenges too.

Official Chinese figures reveal that Tibet's highway system grew 51 per cent from 2015-20 to a total of 11,820km. In the same period, Xinjiang's highway network grew from 17,830km to 20,920km. As well as enhancing economic development, these roads assist the PLA in moving supplies. For instance, at least eight roads stretching from the G219 highway towards the Indian border are being constructed. The PLA would be able to use them to quickly reposition

troops if another Galwan Valley confrontation occurred, for example.

Completed in 2021 and reducing travel time by eight hours, another new road connects Nyingchi to Medog County in eastern Tibet. Nyingchi hosts the headquarters of the PLA's 52nd and 53rd Combined Light Infantry Brigades, showing how critical such new routes are in spreading the influence of the PLA.

Xinjiang's rail network has grown quickly too, from 5,900km in 2015 to 7,800km in 2020. New lines help connect military bases and airports. However, Tibet's topography makes the creation of new railways very difficult, and the region boasts only 800km of tracks. Nevertheless, the first high-speed railway from Lhasa to Nyingchi opened in 2021 and, soon after it opened, it carried PLA personnel to an exercise area.

China's "salami slicing" tactics, used so successfully in the South China Sea, are a reliable indication of how China is acting in other border areas too. One victim is Bhutan, with Beijing using such tactics against it for years. Afterwards, China attempts to formalize its theft of land by engaging in negotiations, but this type of bullying has negatively impacted bilateral negotiations. China lays claim to 269km<sup>2</sup> of Bhutanese territory in Doklam in the west, 495km<sup>2</sup> of the sacred Buddhist area of the Beyul Khenpajong in the north, and 650km<sup>2</sup> of the Sakteng wildlife sanctuary in the east.

China has trespassed the Bhutan border and rapidly constructed settlements such as Gyalaphug village. Sudha Ramachandran, writing for the Jamestown Foundation think-tank in the USA, noted: "Beijing appears to be robustly altering the status quo on the ground along its border with Bhutan. Recent satellite images reveal the staggering pace at which the PRC is building townships along a river valley in Beyul Khenpajong located in territory it claims in northcentral Bhutan." Currently, the settlement contains more than 200 structures, including roads, hydropower stations, communication facilities and military/security outposts built over the past decade. China has faced little pushback from Bhutan, exacerbated by the difficulty in accessing the area from the Bhutan side.

A 1998 agreement was supposed to see both countries "refrain from taking any unilateral action to change the status quo of the boundary," but Chinese words are as cheap as the paper they are written on. The PLA is particularly enraptured with the tri-junction border at Doklam, as dominating this area would improve China's military position versus India. Ramachandran said, "The rationale behind Beijing's land grab is not entirely clear. Unlike Doklam, which is near India and where the PRC has also pressed ahead to alter the situation on the ground through

construction of roads and bunkers, control over Beyul Khenpajong would have no strategic value in the event of an India-China war." Regardless, "Parallel to changing the status quo on the ground in its favor with its infrastructure-building activity, China is keen to enhance its economic and other presence in Bhutan. This would help the PRC to create a favorable environment for itself while increasing its leverage."

When it comes to China's outrageous maritime territorial claims and bullying at sea, state media and government channels are spouting increasingly ridiculous messages. For example, the Global Times tabloid tweeted on 27 January that the China Coast Guard (CCG) had expelled "Japanese vessels near the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, which are an inherent part of China's territory, and CCG vessels carry out maritime rights protection and law enforcement activities in China's jurisdictional waters in accordance with the law. We urge the Japanese side to immediately cease all illegal activities in this area and ensure that similar incidents do not occur again." Such statements are figments of China's imagination. Beijing has also succeeded in antagonizing the Philippines, causing Manila to become more strenuous in its criticism of blatant Chinese interference. After Manila stated it would modernize military facilities in its northernmost province of Batanes, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin warned the Philippines to "tread carefully and don't play with fire".

Subsequently, a Philippine Department of National Defense press statement issued on 10 February sternly warned China: "The Defense Department stresses that Batanes is Philippine territory, and China has no business warning the Philippines about what it does within its own territory. China's pronouncements and acts are the main reasons for its low credibility with the Filipino people. China should refrain from engaging in provocative rhetoric and activities if it truly wants to earn the widespread trust and respect that it is trying so hard to gain but has, so far, been unable to."

Chinese encroachment has caused growing resentment from countries like the Philippines and Japan, and its 2020 gambit against India in Eastern Ladakh in mid- 2020 resulted in awakening Indian ire too. China has refused to return to the April 2020 status quo in Ladakh, despite numerous talks and disengagement of troops from friction points. The PLA carved out for itself important buffer zones, largely from Indian territory and causing Delhi to lose control of areas it formerly patrolled, which is precisely how Chinese salami slicing proceeds. Once the PLA has gained a foothold, it is impossible to dislodge it.

Both China and India worked hard to strengthen their respective infrastructure after the Eastern Ladakh confrontation, and it is estimated both sides keep around 50,000 troops in Ladakh. In October 2021, China began constructing a new road and 300m- long bridge over the strategically important Pangong Lake so soldiers can move quickly to either side of the lake and areas adjacent to the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Construction of a bigger and wider bridge started in 2022, which would even allow armored vehicles to cross. In a conflict, bridges are vulnerable; however, in scenarios beneath that, bridges are an important logistical tool for the PLA.

To the west of these bridges, the PLA established what is believed to be a permanent divisional-level headquarters and garrison, just 6km from the LAC. Settled permanently from mid-2020, the camp expanded throughout 2021.

As well as revetments and a company's worth of armored vehicles, there are shelters presumably for artillery and antiaircraft systems. It functions as a node connecting troops at Pangong with the Western Theater Command headquarters. After work began in August 2021, a second radome was constructed on a mountain peak north of the lake, about 6km from the headquarters facility. Such construction efforts show that China has no intention of retreating; rather, it is deepening its foothold.

A report published last year by the Indo-Pacific Security Program of the Center for a New American Security, concluded: "While the Chinese and Indian militaries have since pulled back forces from the most contentious standoff sites where the 2020 build-up occurred and established temporary buffer zones, both sides retain high numbers of troops forward deployed along the disputed frontier, and there are several flashpoints that could erupt into another border crisis at any time ... With both China and India enhancing infrastructure and introducing new and advanced weapons systems on their sides of the disputed border, combined with forward deployments and heightened lack of trust, the chances for continued standoffs that could erupt into local or even full-blown conflict remain high."

The same is true everywhere that China is blatantly pushing forward with coercive or stealthy methods. Unless victims strenuously stick up for themselves, China is only emboldened to continue such illegal moves to enlarge its territory. In a sense, Xi was right - no, China "has never taken one inch of land from other countries" - for it has helped outside to hundreds of square miles instead. (ANI).

## China Is Winning the Battle for the Red Sea, America Has Retired as World Policeman

13 February 2024, The Heritage Foundation

Hardly for the first time, remote Arab tribesmen are reshaping the world. Piratical attacks on international shipping by Yemen-based Houthi rebels have created a significant security crisis in the Red Sea. The world's largest shipping lines have been forced to suspend transit through the Red Sea and thus the Suez Canal. And with nearly a third of global container traffic typically flowing through Suez, this has seriously disrupted world trade. Yet the most enduring impact of the crisis may be on the geopolitical balance between two great powers, each many thousands of kilometres away from the scorching sands of the Arabian Peninsula: China and the United States.

As the world's largest trading nation, China has much at stake in the Red Sea. Europe is China's top trade partner, and more than 60% of that trade by value usually flows through the Suez Canal. With that route disrupted, cargo vessels are diverting around Africa's Cape of Good Hope, adding up to two weeks in additional travel time and vastly increasing shipping costs. By 25 January, the average cost of shipping a 40-foot container from Shanghai to Genoa spiked to \$6,365, an increase of 464% from two months earlier. Insurance rates have also skyrocketed. What's more, Chinese companies have in recent years poured billions of dollars' worth of investment into assets in the region, such as the 20% stake in the East Port Said container terminal of the Suez Canal that is now owned by Chinese state shipping giant COSCO. At a time when China's growth rate is already struggling, the crisis risks imposing a serious further drag on its economy.

Apparently perceiving this vulnerability, Washington has tried to use it as leverage to convince Beijing to help end the crisis. China is the top economic and geopolitical backer of Iran, which in turn backs the Houthis, using them as a proxy to needle Israel, the United States and its allies. Some officials in Washington are convinced that, if it really wanted to, Beijing could quickly pressure Tehran into ending the Houthi attacks. Biden administration officials have "repeatedly raised the matter with top Chinese officials in the past three months", according to the Financial Times, and U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan recently flew to Thailand to directly plead the administration's case in a meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

>>> Don't Hand China a Victory in the Pacific

This diplomatic effort seems to have failed. Aside from a tepid public statement calling on "all relevant parties" to "ensure the safety of navigation in the Red Sea", Beijing appears to have made no move

whatsoever to remedy the situation. Instead, it called on Washington to "avoid adding fuel to the fire" in the Middle East. The attacks continue.

Some in Washington are pouting. Rep. Jake Auchincloss (D-Massachusetts), for instance, slammed China in a Congressional hearing in late January for being "not only missing in action as a purported upholder of international commerce and rules, but... in fact actively undermining the potential for a peaceful resolution to this issue". This failure to intervene was just "another example of the malign and malicious attempts at global leadership from the Chinese Communist Party".

But Auchincloss and others of like mind in Washington should perhaps be careful what they wish for. For decades—indeed, arguably for the better part of two centuries—it has been the United States that has served as the world's "upholder of international commerce and rules". In fact, it was a determination to protect the flow of maritime commerce from pirates that induced the young United States into its first foreign intervention, the Barbary Wars of 1801 and 1815, and permanently forged its identity as an international actor. If the nation were truly to become and remain a merchant republic that meant that it must, as then-President Thomas Jefferson declared, "superintend the safety of our commerce" through "the resources of our own strength and bravery in every sea".

Two centuries later, the U.S. Navy was still operating under the slogan of "A Global Force for Good". Which is to say that the whole image—and reality—of America as a superpower largely rests, like the British Empire before it, on its ability to secure global trade. If there is any remaining shred of the "Pax Americana" on which the whole recent era of globalization was built, this is it.

It is in this context that Washington officials ought to consider what it would mean if Beijing were to listen to their pleas and actually take over America's role as a security provider. If the nations of the world were to begin turning to China for "global leadership" rather than the United States whenever their merchant ships were in need of protection, it would decisively mark the transition from an American century to a Chinese one, much as Britain once yielded the seas to its former colony. Washington should count itself lucky that Beijing has so far declined to try out for the role.

Meanwhile, America's own effort to perform its old job of securing the sea lanes has proved little more than a fiasco. With the U.S. Navy severely undermanned and overstretched around the globe, it attempted to assemble "Operation Prosperity Guardian", a multinational coalition of forces under its command meant to patrol the Red Sea. But this effort functionally collapsed almost

immediately when France, Italy and Spain—all of whom Washington prematurely announced would be members—declined to participate, saying they wouldn't accept U.S. command. No Middle Eastern countries other than Bahrain signed up either. In a throwback to yesteryear, navies are instead each going solo and escorting the vessels sailing under their own flags and titles. What we are seeing, then, is a true breakdown in the "international order"—in the sense of there being any order—that was once imposed by American power. We are returning to an older, more typical world in which there is no world policeman, and everyone is obliged to protect their own national interests.

The Chinese are well prepared to capitalize on this situation. Although COSCO has for now also abandoned the Red Sea route, other smaller Chinese shippers have spotted commercial opportunity and leapt to fill the gap. China United Lines (CULines), for example, has rushed to start up a "Red Sea Express" service linking Saudi Arabia's Jeddah to Chinese ports. They are able to do so because the Houthis seem to be under strict orders to try to avoid attacking China-linked vessels. Ships still running the straits into the Red Sea now regularly make sure to prominently display Chinese flags and use their satellite identification data to announce that they have Chinese owners, or even just Chinese crew members. The number of vessels transiting the area while preemptively broadcasting that they carry Chinese crew has surged from less than two per day to more than 30 in late January. Apparently this is the magic talisman to keep pirates at bay—though China's navy has at least three warships in the area to escort its vessels, should it prove insufficient.

The reason Beijing seems so relaxed about the crisis is obvious: this is a situation in which China wins either way. Either the threat continues but shipping is safer for Chinese vessels than for others, in which case sailing under the protection of the red and gold flag may become a coveted competitive advantage, or Beijing finally tells Iran to knock it off, in which case China becomes the principal beneficiary of the security vacuum left by the United States. Both outcomes would be geopolitical coups. No wonder China is willing to accept a little short-term economic pain as the situation plays out.

Meanwhile, the crisis also provides China with a real justification for continuing to rapidly build out a "blue water" navy able to project power far from its own shores. As it happens, this is the same justification traditionally been offered by the United States: that, in the absence of security and stability, it needs the ability to protect global sea lanes and the lives of its citizens abroad. The military base China built in Djibouti in 2016 to enable the deployment of its

warships across the Indian Ocean and around the Horn of Africa now looks prudent.

This is how the "world order" has always been shaped and reshaped: by nations and empires acting abroad to protect their own interests—or progressively failing to do so while others move to fill the void. The crisis in the Red Sea is therefore both symbolically and practically meaningful. Unless the United States and its allies can get their act together, we may look back on this as a moment when a vast geopolitical shift was revealed for all to see. As for everyone else, it's likely that the crisis will serve as a sign that the time to prepare for the harsh realities of a far more "multipolar", less globalized world has by now well and truly arrived.

### Xi Jinping's never-ending hunt for corruption in the Communist Party

12 February 2024, BBC

As the latest phase of Xi Jinping's anti-corruption crackdown cuts through high-level banking and the elite nuclear rocket force, some have questioned when it might end.

The short answer: it won't.

It has become a central plank of the system of governance for China's leader.

And, because the anti-corruption drive has been used to remove anyone with even the slightest hint of a tendency to divert from his way of doing things, Mr Xi is sometimes characterised as an out-of-control Stalin-like figure purging left, right and centre without good cause.

But there are those who do not see it that way.

"Xi might be paranoid about high-level corruption, but his fear is not delusional," says Andrew Wedeman, head of China Studies at Georgia State University.

"The corruption he fears is certainly real. It is likely also true, of course, that Mr Xi has capitalised on the crackdown to gain political advantage".

Under Chairman Mao, the philosophy was that corruption could be controlled by fostering a love of the Party.

Then, during the Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin eras, the idea took hold that, if you gave people a better living, they'd have less motivation to act corruptly.

By the time Hu Jintao was in charge, most Chinese people had a much better life but there were those who wanted more and were prepared to use unscrupulous means to get it, again boosting fraud on a widespread scale.

Now it feels like Chairman Xi has gone all the way back to Mao's way of doing things, putting a huge emphasis on Party loyalty to fix the problem.



And it is via the Party that these campaigns are launched, with investigations revolving around alleged breaches of its own regulations. It's effectively a matter of organised politics with the Party running probes however it wants.

'People simply disappear'

It can do this because most people with high-level positions in Chinese society are Communist Party members - whether in financial institutions, sporting organisations, government departments or universities.

But once a member, you are at risk of falling foul of Party discipline charges which are at times very vague and even relate to questions of personal morality and bringing the Party into disrepute.

During this process, the teams from the feared Anti-Corruption Commission simply make people disappear.

In theory, their families are supposed to be informed before they're taken away for questioning in secret locations, but there's no guarantee this will happen.

One day you simply stop being seen in public and the next it is assumed you are being interrogated for an indefinite period, with no legal representation or outside accountability.

And, while this is supposed to be cleaning up economic interaction so it will run more smoothly, the crackdown could well be having the opposite effect.

"It's reducing incentive to be creative, entrepreneurial and risk-taking, which had been the driving force of [China's] economic growth since 1979," political scientist Lynette Ong from the University of Toronto told the BBC.

You'll hear the expression "lying flat" used a lot in the China of today. It sometimes refers to those in their 20s dropping out of the "rat race", while living at their parents' home and whiling away the hours playing video games with no great ambition in life because they can't see a positive future.

But it's also being used to describe officials in state-owned enterprises or the private sector who are just doing enough work to keep their jobs, nothing more, nothing less. They see it as too risky to stand out by pushing for innovation or appearing too ambitious.

"Xi wants officials to be clean and hardworking," says Deng Yuwen, who was once editor of the influential Communist Party newspaper *The Study Times*.

"But with Xi focussing on corruption, they'll just 'lay flat'. Mr Xi, of course, doesn't want to allow this and is demanding that they work hard lest their corruption be exposed. But the crackdown has gone on for over 10 years now and officials have become used to it. If you chase me to do work, I'll put in a bit more effort. If you stop using the whip on me, I'll just take it easy for a while and 'lay flat'".

Big money, vast bribes

But the high-profile take-downs in recent months in the finance sector are a different matter, homing in on senior executives who are accused of being very active for the wrong reasons. Among those implicated for allegedly taking vast bribes are former chairs of major banks and one time regulators. More than 100 finance sector officials have been punished over the past year.

"Too many officials have been involved in financial corruption over many decades. It's impossible to clean this up in one or two years," says Mr Deng. "Banking was the big target last year. It will also be that this year and the same for the coming year as well".

According to Prof Wedeman, "We ought to expect a lot of high-stakes corruption in the banking sector because, after all, the banks are where the big money is".

However, if banking is where the money is in China it is with the military that ultimate power resides.

The People's Liberation Army is not the country's army, it is the Party's army and it keeps it in absolute control.

So the purge of generals running the nuclear rocket force as well as that of the Defence Minister, Li Shangfu, has shown just how serious China's corruption battle has become - with unscrupulous procurement processes reportedly pushing faulty gear all the way into the nuclear arsenal.

"We're not only talking about embezzling funds or getting kickbacks, but also subpar military equipment being purchased and potentially used by the People's Liberation Army," Alex Payette, the CEO of Montreal-based geopolitics consultancy Cerciis said. Alfred Wu from Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy says corruption in the rocket force would have hit Mr Xi hard.

"He had very high hopes for the rocket force," Prof Wu told the BBC. "If I have a very strong rocket force then, in the future, if I have a war with Taiwan, it can be absolutely instrumental."

Does he think that reorganising this crucial part of the People's Liberation Army could actually delay any move to take Taiwan by force?

"Of course, of course!"

Yet analysts observing the anti-corruption crackdown in China have identified a gaping flaw in Mr Xi's approach in the form of a complete absence of any systemic changes which could tackle these problems in the long run.

"The Party, despite its efforts to develop its regulatory apparatus and discipline inspection rules, etc, has failed to curb corruption. Insofar as the Party remains the sole structure to access state resources, it cannot curb infrastructural corruption," said Prof Payette.

Some other countries have introduced genuinely independent anti-corruption bodies, increased transparency, improved the rule of law and empowered an independent media to report on corruption. China has done none of those things.

Instead, the Communist Party polices itself. What's left is a never-ending search for bad apples without a strategy to stop them going off in the first place.

In addition to this, according to Prof Wedeman, social attitudes also need to change drastically: "Reducing and controlling corruption requires not just changes in laws, regulations and oversight but deeper changes in the culture of officialdom and the socialisation of new generations for whom corruption and bending the rules are no longer standard and acceptable practices."

Mr Xi's sweeping anti-corruption drive has also potentially made some officials frightened to speak out, especially those close to him who are supposed to be giving him frank and fearless advice.

For many, this became apparent after three years of the Covid crisis, when the rest of the world had re-opened but China remained closed and heavily restricted even with the economy tanking.

"No doubt there are smart people around him," adds Prof Ong, "But his insistence on zero-Covid until massive protests broke out suggests to me that those who understand economics don't really have his ears".

Other China watchers fear Mr Xi has surrounded himself with "yes men".

"At this point, Xi is not looking for frank advice. He is looking for loyalty," says Prof Payette.

"Xi seems to have fallen prey to being constantly praised by cadres who only seek to be promoted. Looking at early Party history, he should have known that Party cadres engage in flattery to avoid being purged and gain access to the upper echelons of the Party-state apparatus."

To an extent there is a belief that all officials are corrupt (whether they be the high-level "tigers" or the "flies" on the lower rungs) and that those who have been singled out are, for whatever reason, a threat to Mr Xi.

It is estimated that five million people have been punished in various ways during the crackdown, with some receiving warnings or fines with others getting heavy prison sentences or even the death penalty.

But rather than fostering a belief that the country is being well governed, many believe it is also trashing the Party's reputation amongst the general public.

As Professor Wedeman put it, "I suspect that more than 10 years of the crackdown and a seemingly endless parade of 'caged tigers' has most likely deepened public cynicism.

"Quite simply, if you spend a decade waging a 'life and death' battle with tigers and - 10 years into the

hunt - you are bagging as many as you bagged when you started hunting, it strongly suggests you are not hunting them to extinction and might not have even significantly reduced their numbers."

## India Says It Stopped China's Attempt to Repeat 1962 Border War

12 February 2024, NewsWeek

India's home-affairs minister said China tried to bring about a repeat of the 1962 war between the countries during a 2020 border conflict, but New Delhi successfully stood up to Beijing's aggression.

In a rare move, Amit Shah made the comments in Lok Sabha, India's lower house of parliament, while taking stock of New Delhi's performance during the Covid pandemic and discussing other related issues. China and India fought a bloody war in 1962 over the disputed 2,100-mile Line of Actual Control (LAC), which has since shaped the bilateral relationship between two countries with vast populations and hugely important economies.

Since 2020, the two sides have been locked in an intense border stand-off in the Eastern Ladakh region, with thousands of soldiers from both countries still stationed in the frigid Himalayan area. The soldiers exchanged blows on June 15, 2020, when 20 Indian soldiers and at least four Chinese soldiers died.

"During this period, when the COVID pandemic was raging, China showed its real face, like in 1962. We stood firmly to it and didn't lose an inch of land," Shah said in parliament on Saturday.

The U.S. increasingly considers New Delhi a bulwark against Beijing's aggressive stance against neighbors in the Indo-Pacific. The U.S. State Department recently approved the sale of 31 MQ-9 Reaper drones to India, which are likely to be deployed along the border with China to improve surveillance of the contested boundary, Reuters reported on February 1.

India is seeking a restoration of the status that existed before April 2020, when the People's Liberation Army soldiers were deployed in forward positions along the LAC.

Meanwhile, Beijing has downplayed the ongoing tensions between the countries by calling on New Delhi to look at the broader bilateral relationship while putting the current phase of border tensions aside.

"It is unwise and inappropriate for the Indian side to link the boundary issue with overall relations. This approach is against the two countries' shared interests," Col. Wu Qian, a spokesperson for China's defense ministry, recently told reporters in Beijing.

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India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in June 2020 that China hadn't taken any territory as the controversy over its incursion into territory held by New Delhi continues.

"Neither have they intruded into our border, nor has any post been taken over by them (China). Twenty of our jawans (soldiers) were martyred, but those who dared Bharat Mata, they were taught a lesson," Modi said, according to the Hindustan Times on June 19, 2020.

### **China's increasing political influence in the south Pacific has sparked an international response**

12 February 2024, Hindustan Times

China's increasing political influence in the south Pacific has sparked an international response

Bradford (UK), Feb 12 (The Conversation) Taiwan elected Lai Ching-te, also known as William Lai, to be its next president on January 13. His election marks the continuation of a government that promotes an independent Taiwan.

Just two days later, the Pacific nation of Nauru severed ties with Taiwan and transferred its diplomatic allegiance to Beijing. More recently, on January 27, Tuvalu's pro-Taiwan prime minister, Kausea Natano, lost his seat in the nation's general election.

Natano's finance minister, Seve Paeniu, who is aiming for the prime ministership himself, was returned to his seat. In his campaign, Paeniu pledged to review Tuvalu's relationships with China and Taiwan. These examples indicate China's growing influence in the south Pacific, a region that the world's major powers are competing for influence over. But why is the region significant? And how are these major powers exerting their influence there?

Preventing recognition of Taiwan

Taiwan has been governed independently since 1949. But Beijing believes it should be reunited with the rest of China. It is not an option for states to diplomatically recognise both China and Taiwan – China forces them to choose. For decades, the Chinese government has used a combination of carrots and sticks to pressure such states into transferring diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China.

China has, for example, imposed significant political, diplomatic and economic sanctions on countries that continue to formally recognise Taiwan. In 2022, China curbed imports from Lithuania to punish the country for allowing Taiwan to open a de facto embassy in the country.

But China also offers states – and their governing elites – economic and political incentives for withdrawing diplomatic recognition of Taiwan. It has, in the past, used its influence in the UN and other international organisations to block assistance or elect specific people to international positions.

Nauru's change of diplomatic position, and the political debate unfolding in Tuvalu, should be understood as part of China's longstanding effort to prevent and reduce recognition of Taiwan as a sovereign state.

But they are a significant step forward for China. Nauru has a leading position in the Pacific Islands Forum – the main political decision-making body for the region – so the country's change of stance could lead to wider formal diplomatic changes in the south Pacific.

China, of course, has legitimate economic and political interests in the south Pacific too. It is a vital export market for natural resources from Pacific island states and is a key source of incoming tourism. According to Chinese statistics, total trade volume between China and Pacific island states grew from USD153 million to USD 5.3 billion between 1992 and 2021.

Competing for influence

Nauru's decision is another diplomatic setback for Taiwan, which is now formally recognised by just 11 countries. However, this is not in itself a serious concern for the US, Australia and their allies. They all formally recognise China, while at the same time maintain close, informal links with Taiwan. Their focus is on trying to limit the depth of Chinese political and economic influence over Pacific island states and elsewhere in the Asia-Pacific region.

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In 2022, China put forward a proposal for a diplomatic, economic and security agreement with the region. The agreement was, however, later abandoned due to resistance from some Pacific island nations at the urging of the US and Australia.

US strategy in the south Pacific

When president, Donald Trump launched a number of deals with Pacific islands, including Nauru, Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, Palau and Micronesia.

However, Trump's strategy for a "free and open Indo-Pacific" had limited success. This was not only due to his confrontational posture towards China, but also to his threatening and protectionist "America first" rhetoric.

Joe Biden's comparatively measured diplomacy has seen more success.

In 2022, the Biden administration announced its "Pacific partnership strategy". The initiative included a commitment of US\$810 million in development aid across the Pacific island region.

And in May 2023, the US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, stated that he would work with Congress to provide over USD 7.2 billion to support the region. Since then, the US has recognised the Cook Islands and Niue as independent, sovereign nations, increased its diplomatic footprint in the region and has committed strongly to work with the Pacific Islands Forum to promote a "democratic, resilient and prosperous Pacific islands region".

The shift of diplomatic ties from Taiwan to China does not mean that Pacific island nations want to reduce their ties with the west. But the US, Australia and their allies will need to invest a lot more in diplomatic, economic and security assistance if they want to counter China's growing influence there.

### **The New Regulations for Religions in Xinjiang: Part of a Wider Campaign Against Religion**

08 February 2024, Bitter Winter

China's Xinjiang Province, home to predominantly Muslim ethnic groups, will come under a new set of regulations on February 1, whose translation was published by "Bitter Winter" on January 8, significantly restricting religious expression. This move tightens government control over religious practices and is part of a wider campaign to control religion in

the region. Notably, all new places of worship must now adhere to "Chinese characteristics and style," potentially altering the architectural and cultural identity of religious sites. This legislation coincides with ongoing efforts to regulate religious gatherings and online content, raising concerns about the erosion of religious freedom in Xinjiang.

Human Rights Watch raised concerns about these regulations. The revisions aim to "Sinicize" religion in the region, aligning with President Xi Jinping's policy since 2016 to bring religious practices and places of worship in line with Han Chinese culture and Communist Party ideology. These new regulations seem to be an extension of national restrictions on religion implemented since 2014, further tightening control over the Uyghurs' religious freedoms.

The Chinese government has been accused of widespread human rights abuses against Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang since 2017. These include mass detentions without trial, torture, disappearances, constant surveillance, religious and cultural persecution, family separations, forced labour, sexual violence, and forced sterilizations. Human Rights Watch and the UN have both concluded that these actions constitute "crimes against humanity." While some re-education camps seem to have closed, hundreds of thousands remain imprisoned, and Uyghurs abroad struggle to contact their families. Despite international condemnation, China's policies aimed at assimilating Uyghurs through force appear to be going through fresh rounds of intensification.

Human Rights Watch condemned these developments as an attempt to suppress Uyghur culture and force religious practices to align with Communist Party ideology. Non-compliance risks imprisonment, raising concerns about the future of religious freedom in the region.

In 2014, the authorities revised religious regulations, expanding control over Uyghurs' online religious activities and restricting clothing deemed "extremist." It was accompanied by the launch of the "Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Terrorism," which intensified in 2017 and resulted in horrific human rights abuses. The campaign criminalized everyday expressions of faith, punishing people for possessing digital Quran recordings or simply having a beard, effectively targeting Uyghurs based on their religious identity and cultural practices.

The new 2024 regulations in China impose significant restrictions on all religious practices and places of worship. They mandate that religions align with "core values of socialism" and embrace the government's initiative to "Sinicize" religions, essentially making them conform to Chinese culture and Communist Party ideology (article 5). Even the architecture of religious buildings is tightly controlled, demanding

they reflect “Chinese characteristics and style” (article 26). Building, expanding, or altering any place of worship now requires navigating a more complex and stricter approval process with additional conditions for even applying (articles 20, 22, and 25).



A Buddhist temple and a Chinese-developed industrial area in Xinjiang. AI-generated elaboration of a Chinese poster.

While controlling the external aspects of religious spaces like size and location is important under “Sinicization,” Human Rights Watch warns that the policy goes deeper. It compels places of worship to scrutinize their own teachings and doctrines, searching for aspects that align with “social harmony” and goals of “contemporary China’s development.” This analysis must be conducted through the lens of “excellent traditional Chinese culture,” essentially forcing religious beliefs to conform to the Communist Party’s ideology. In effect, religious venues under “Sinicization” become tools for promoting the Party’s values to the public.

The new regulations effectively place religious practice under direct government supervision. A new dedicated chapter grants authorities control over what and how religion is taught. Only government-approved groups can provide religious education (article 13). Even religious schools must adhere to “Chinese characteristics,” which means raising “patriotic religious talents” and interpreting scriptures according to government guidelines (articles 14 & 15). Further restrictions limit religious establishments, requiring them to report and obtain permission for both religious training (article 18) and large gatherings (article 42). This effectively centralizes and regulates religious education under government supervision.

The new laws reach beyond mosque control, tightening its grip on the religion through the China Islamic Association. This government-sanctioned body now holds exclusive authority over organizing the Hajj pilgrimage, excluding non-member mosques and individuals. Religious leaders are tasked with promoting “patriotism” and schools must incorporate Chinese values like praising socialism and using Mandarin. Critics see this as an attempt to legitimize actions in Xinjiang, particularly towards the Uyghur

minority, by presenting them as efforts to integrate Islam with Chinese identity.

The new rules also allow local Communist Party representatives or cadres in villages and neighborhoods to monitor society, particularly for religious activities deemed illegal. This includes reporting “illegal religious organizations, preachers, activities,” or any religious influence on local affairs. Critics see this as increased repression, especially in regions like Xinjiang and Tibet, and point to its similarity with President Xi Jinping’s “mass mobilization” approach to governance and control. This approach, often described by Chinese media as inspired by Mao Zedong’s Fengqiao experience, empowers lower-level authorities to actively monitor and report on potential issues.

The Chinese government’s actions in Xinjiang, including mass detention, cultural suppression, and forced labour, have been widely condemned by international rights groups and Western governments, with some even accusing them of constituting genocide. A 2022 UN report found “serious human rights violations” that might amount to crimes against humanity. While China denies any wrongdoing, claiming its policies aim to combat extremism and terrorism, local activists fear lasting harm. As new restrictive laws come into effect, Bekzat Maksutkhan, an activist representing ethnic Kazakhs impacted by the crackdown, worries this marks the official legalization of previous repressive actions and further erosion of religious rights in the region.

China’s communist government, officially atheist since its founding in 1949, has a history of controlling religion. While past laws aimed to govern religious practices, particularly in Xinjiang, new legislation represents a major shift. Experts see this not just as a demand for control, but as a push for religions to adhere to specific “Chinese characteristics and style” in architecture, customs, and even personal aspects like clothing and ceremonies. For Muslims, these regulations dictate that religion shouldn’t influence cultural practices and require newly built or renovated religious sites to adopt a distinctly Chinese aesthetic.

The Chinese government exerts increasing pressure on religions they perceive as foreign, especially Islam and Christianity. While officially allowing worship in approved churches, authorities have demolished unregistered ones and removed religious symbols. Buddhism, particularly the majority Han branch, faces less scrutiny, but Tibet’s Buddhist traditions are harshly suppressed. The government aims to weaken support for the Dalai Lama and assimilate Tibetans through forced assimilation campaigns and the destruction of religious sites. This “Sinicization” approach aims to sever ties between these religions



and their global communities, making them subservient to the Communist Party and devoid of political influence. This strategy mirrors the treatment of Islam in Xinjiang, where authorities strive to control religious expression and promote a state-approved version of Islam.

There has been some criticism of China's highhandedness from outside, to no avail. For years, concerns have been raised about Chinese authorities altering or demolishing mosques in Xinjiang. A 2020 report documented widespread changes, with two-thirds of mosques impacted since 2017, coinciding with a broader crackdown. Now, a 2023 report reveals this campaign has expanded beyond Xinjiang, targeting other regions under a policy called "consolidation." This involves removing traditional Islamic features like domes and minarets, replacing them with Chinese designs to achieve a more unified aesthetic. While Beijing rarely comments, state media has even praised such alterations as preserving heritage, raising questions about the true motives behind this policy.

In conclusion, China's 2024 religious regulations in Xinjiang signal an alarming intensification of Uyghur repression. The legislation, aligning with President Xi Jinping's Sinicization policy, imposes unprecedented control over religious practices, extending beyond mosques to influence education, large gatherings, and even the architecture of places of worship. The Sinicization agenda, forcibly assimilating Uyghurs into Han Chinese culture, erodes religious freedom and imposes Communist Party ideology. International condemnation and accusations of crimes against humanity seem ineffectual as China's authoritarian measures expand beyond Xinjiang, threatening not only Uyghur culture but also the global communities of various religions. The regulations starkly underscore China's unyielding commitment to subjugate religious identity under state control.

### China and the Question of Tibet

05 February 2024, Indian Defence Review

Since China's invasion of Tibet in 1951, Beijing's propaganda machinery has been striving to maintain its precipitancy improving the legitimacy of its claims on Tibet. In the process, China has tried to wipe the Tibetan identity by replacing it with the Han Chinese identity through elimination of Tibetan icons, symbols, history, language and culture.

The Tibetan government in exile in India and its supporters around the world struggle to spread awareness on Tibet while having to counter the China set narratives.

On 25 January 2024, a hearing was held on the 'Legal Status of Tibet' by the Estonian Parliament. The hearing was chaired by MP Juku-Kalle Raid, Chair of the Parliamentary Support Group for Tibet and a member of the Foreign Affairs Commission.

There were 35 parliamentarians, journalists, academicians and Tibet supporters who were present at the hearing.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering, Representative Sonam Frasi from the Office of Tibet, London, Professor Hon-Shiang Lau and Dr Michael van Walt van Praag were also present at the hearing.

Sikyong stated the historical context of Tibet and Tibet's stance for a Middle-Way Approach. He also stressed on the importance of rectification of the historical information proving Tibet's independence before its invasion by the People Republic of China (PRC).

According to Prof Lau, there was sufficient and substantial evidence of Chinese Imperial records proving clearly that all the past Imperial dynasties in China, such as the Ming and Qing, considered Tibet as an independent nation and never a part of China. This was reaffirmed by Dr Michael van Walt van Praag's presentation which portrayed the perspective from a legal stance. He further explained, since the historic records from time of antiquity legitimize the Tibet's claim, it is easy to comprehend why China is persistent with its trading partner nations to declare 'Tibet as an internal issue of China'.

This would provide the necessary justification for denying Tibetans their right to self-determination.

On 29 January 2024, Sikyong Penpa visited with the members of the Latvian Parliamentary Support Group for Tibet to discuss the conditions in Tibet, international support for Tibet, and to seek a concrete action at the Latvian Parliament to acknowledge the legitimacy of Tibet.

Despite the support shown in Latvia, there was no formal statement made by the Latvian Government on PRC's human rights violations at the Universal Periodic Review on China last week.

The Tibetan delegation also visited Vilnius, Lithuania on Jan 30th 2024 to advocate Tibet's historically independent status and the threat from President Xi Jinping's Government in China.

Additionally, it is important to mention that most Baltic States, though in solidarity with Ukrainians in regards to the Ukraine-Russia war, still prefer to continue their business with Russia.

While the Tibetans strive to prove the legitimacy of their state, it is yet to be determined as to how far the Baltic States would extend their favour to Tibet when there remains a doubt in regards to their actions in regards to Ukraine with a certain inclination to China as well.

## Chinese Subjugation of the Tibetan Snow Lion (Background)

On March 10, 1959, thousands of Tibetan citizens assembled around the Potala Palace in Lhasa owing to the imminent threat from the communist Chinese government to abduct and assassinate their leader, Dalai Lama. It was apparent that, with the previously existing Sino-Tibetan tensions, the disgruntled feelings of the Tibetans would soon shape into a national movement.

What initially started as peaceful protests fast transformed into an uprising against the Chinese government, leading to the massacre of many Tibetans who resisted the oppression from China. Since that fateful day, March 10 has been marked as the single most important – albeit one of the most tragic days – in the history of Tibet. It is also referred to as Tibetan Martyrs' Day, honouring all those who sacrificed their lives for their nation. By 2009, there were hundreds of reports of Tibetan self-immolation in protest against Chinese occupation.

On March 11th 2023, a huge protest was organized by expatriate Tibetans in front of the Chinese Embassy in Vienna, Austria. The demonstration consisted of more than 150 Tibetans protesting against the atrocities and human rights violations committed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in Tibet, while anti-China pamphlets were also distributed.

In February 2018, China's public security bureau in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) released a notice to the public to cooperate with the government and inform the authorities of any activities pertaining to the "underworld forces". Most of the illegal activities mentioned were pertaining to a large number of cultural, traditional and informal activities related to the Tibetans. Preservation of language, dispute mediation or even initiative for environment preservation were viewed as initiatives to secretly support the Dalai Lama or an effort to mobilize a Tibetan freedom movement. All restrictions were implemented to curtail Tibetan human rights. In a notice issued by Nagchu county in TAR, a reward of 100,000 yuan (US\$ 15,600) was announced for any tip-off or information in regard to the illegal activities outlined in the notice.

### Cultural, linguistic and religious assimilation

In 2022, the Chinese government demolished the 99 feet Buddhist statue of Padmasambhava. In the same year, reports of demolition of two more Buddhist statues was reported. It is understood, the action to destroy the icons and statues of Buddhism is China's ploy to stomp out anything Tibetan and infringe on their right to religious freedom.

Post the destruction of the Buddhist statues, comparisons were made between Taliban and the Chinese, who in the past were responsible for the

destruction of the 15th century Buddha statues in Afghanistan.

Considering all things Tibetan were illegal by the CCP, several Tibetans by default have been considered to be in violation of Chinese law.

As a member of the UN, China has accepted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As such, its own crackdown on Uyghurs and the Tibetans displays a disregard for international law and human life. The first wave of the Chinese repression targeted the individuals connected with demonstrations or dispelling any anti-China information. This was followed by tightened and more rigid security in various areas of TAR, where stationing CCP cadres in every village or monastery would conduct and aid further house-to-house surveillance.

In 2014, "Document 9", an internal CCP briefing paper, was circulated that stated that the civil advocates in the society were plotting to overthrow the CCP leadership. It would prove to be a threat to the political authority of the CCP. Since the circulation, CCP has found justified reasoning in introducing more addendums to the restrictions on non-governmental activities nationwide.

China's consistent effort to create cultural, linguistic and religious assimilation under Xi Jinping's "one ethnic nation" spells the demise of the Tibetan and Uyghur identities. In the process, many Tibetans, Uyghurs and other minorities are separated from their families to receive instructions in Chinese medium in state-run institutions or schools, which function as boarding schools. These institutions function primarily to integrate non-Chinese ethnicities into the dominant Han culture, thereby diminishing gradually the influence of their original identities. It is apparent that by denying the children the knowledge of their heritage, culture and language, the Chinese aim to commit cultural genocide. With no strong ties or loyalties to one's origins, regions like TAR or Xinjiang could be controlled more effectively by China, as no group would be willing or able to oppose.

UN Human rights experts have also expressed serious concern about the cases of harassment, enforced disappearances, arbitrary prosecution, and detention of lawyers, women rights activists, and human rights activists with regard to China's crackdown. This also includes China's mass surveillance in the Xinjiang region, entrenched censorship and consolidation of anti-terrorism and sedition law, which is also now applicable to Hongkong.

In 2022, on basis of the reports from the US Department of Treasury, the US announced sanctions on two Chinese officials, Wu Yingje and Zhang Hongbo, for alleged human rights violations in the Tibetan Autonomous Region. In December 2022, the

US Senate advanced the Tibet-China conflict Resolution Act, displaying its interest in resolving the Sino-Tibet conflict. The bill calls for a resolution to the conflict and has acknowledged the Tibetan right to self-determination. Senators Todd Young (Republican-Indiana) and Patrick Leahy (Democrat-Vermont) together introduced this bipartisan bill, while recognizing that CCP's motivations in the TAR were "self-serving" with failed negotiations due to CCP's refusal to cater to any Tibetan interest. The US in its resolve to support Tibet, has dissolved the so-called "Tibet Question" narrative i.e. whether Tibet was ever a part of China as claimed by the Chinese. While the American support in favour of Tibet may come as a humanitarian effort, strategically it also provides the US with the opportunity to discredit and limit the growing Chinese influence. This move was welcomed by the Dalai Lama's office of Tibet in Washington D.C.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering from the office of Central Tibetan Administration in India also viewed the decision as a positive step. The Chinese foreign ministry, in a rebuttal to the US, applied sanctions on two American citizens and called US accusations baseless and interference in Chinese internal affairs. In June 2022, the leaders at G7, in relation to China addressed matters in regards to China's commitment to democracy in Hong Kong, calling Beijing's actions "non-transparent and market-distorting interventions" in the economy, and also conveyed their concern over the human rights violations in Tibet and Xinjiang. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was also an invitee at the meeting.

While China views the 14th Dalai Lama as a separatist, India has consistently maintained its stand to honour him as an esteemed guest of India. Since 1959, India continues to be home to the Dalai Lama and thousands of Tibetan exiles who struggle to fight for the homeland they left behind.

China's strategy of Sinicization of Tibet is the very reason why one would question the need for the Sinicization of entities that are already Chinese. The question remains, with the traction building against the treatment meted out by China for Tibet, will the Dragon continue its subjugation of the Snow Lion as the world continues to watch.

## January

### China Continues to Pose a Challenge to India's Security and Economy

30 January 2024, Daily Excelsior

India's External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar may disagree, but the country has failed to use its import trade muscle to improve its diplomatic relations with China. His recent statement on Sino-India relations at a gathering in Nagpur earlier this month that "a strife-torn border and good business can't go together" lacks clarity and goes against the factual position with regard to the country's growing imports from China despite the latter's growing military postures along India's land and maritime borders. The trade with China has been practically one-sided with India importing more and more from China and exporting less and less due to rigorous Chinese restrictions. India has failed to react. India continues to feed China and its economy with billions of dollars of imports every year helping the Chinese industry and trade keep millions of their people employed at India's cost. This is irrespective of increasing Chinese military threats along India's borders.

Even the highly aggressive Chinese armed attacks along the Sino-Indian border, including Pangong Lake site in Ladakh and the Tibet autonomous region, the Galwan river valley and near the border of Sikkim in 2020 did not lead to India's import cut from China. India imported goods worth US\$65 billion from China during 2020-21. In fact, for reasons best known to the Indian government, imports from China have reached record levels under the Narendra Modi government. During the last 10 years China has substantially raised its military and trade muscles in the broader South Asia region covering all countries surrounding India. They include Iran, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Myanmar. The new Maldives government has already established close military and diplomatic relationships with China. The latter is also in the process of getting Bhutan, a close ally of India, under its fold.

India's latest loss of influence over its tiny neighbour, Maldives, to China should add to its diplomatic concern. Newly elected Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu asked the government of India on 14th January to vacate its military presence by 15th March, this year. Incidentally, only 88 Indian military personnel are currently in Maldives assisting the country with maritime security and disaster relief efforts. While the deteriorated India-Maldives relations over the last 10 years do call for framing of

an effective maritime doctrine by India, Jaishankar must explain why India lost its diplomatic grip over Sri Lanka and the Maldives to China and why does India continue to feed the Chinese economy with billions of dollars-worth imports every year. Clearly, India's SAGAR diplomacy, launched at Mauritius in 2015 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has failed to restrict China's growing influence in the Indian Ocean region. The SAGAR initiative stands for 'Security and Growth for All in the Region.'

After the Narendra Modi government came to power, imports from China zoomed from \$60.41 billion in 2014-15 to \$94.57 billion in 2021-22. The trade deficit with China, which was around only 1.48 billion in 2004-05 increased to \$36.21 billion in 2013-14. The bilateral trade climbed to \$135.98 billion in 2022 while the country's trade deficit with China crossed the \$100-billion mark. The Modi government must explain this unusual trade bonhomie with China, which poses a real threat to India's security and geographical integrity. China is being allowed to dump goods at will – from banned synthetic kite flying strings which are responsible for periodically slitting the throats of the public to high-end electronics and cyber crime devices, including card games. Suffice it to say that China's share in India's imports is alarmingly high. Lately, India is even importing automobiles, including passenger cars from Chinese manufacturers. Among the major Chinese electric vehicle manufacturing companies currently active in India are: BYD Auto, SAIC Motor, Great Wall Motors, Changan Automobile, Jinko Solar and Shenzhen Wuzhoulong Motors.

Thus, the Indian foreign minister's statement with regard to linking the boundary and trade relations with China would appear to be of little consequence. China continues to hurt India's defence and economy concerns with impunity. Contrary to the claim that India's global stature has vastly improved under the present government, the support for anti-India Khalistani terrorists in Canada and the US speaks volume of such statements. Despite India's rising wealth and economy in terms of the gross domestic product (GDP), the world's most populous country is far from being considered as a global economic power. The economy continues to be highly import based despite the prime minister's 'Make-in-India' initiative. The Modi government's well-perceived attempt failed to achieve the desired objective in the absence of a strong China-focused import policy.

Maybe, after the coming Lok Sabha elections, the new government should ponder over the reason for India's growing dependence on China for the supply of such a wide range of products as simple nail cutters and umbrellas to electronics, pharmaceutical intermediates and automobiles. The new government should take drastic measures – tariff and non-tariff –

to severely cut down imports from China and use trade as a diplomatic tool to deal with China. The government should not fall for cheap 'Bharat narrative' put up subtly in state-run Chinese media, praising India's significant strides in the spheres of economic, social governance and foreign policy under Prime Minister Modi. The article in Global Times might have been carried in anticipation of Narendra Modi-led Bharatiya Janata Party's return to power for a third term. It is possible that China has taken Jaishankar's trade-security linkage threat seriously. (IPA Service)

### China Introduces Strict Rules In Xinjiang On Islam, Other Religions

30 January 2024, Radio Free Europe

In a move set to tighten government control over practicing religion in China's western Xinjiang Province, the Muslim-majority region will introduce a set of regulations that – among other things – will require all new places of worship to reflect "Chinese characteristics and style."

The sweeping legislation will come into force on February 1 as part of a broader multiyear campaign aimed at controlling religion in Xinjiang, which is home to mainly Muslim ethnic groups such as Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and Hui (aka Dungans).

As part of the new set of "regulations on religious affairs," all new mosques, churches, and other religious buildings must reflect Chinese design elements and any renovations to extant layouts will require approval from Xinjiang's regional authorities. Additional measures include controls on "large-scale" religious gatherings – which will require approval from the local government at least one month in advance – and that religious content posted online must be screened by the regional government.

The rules also say for the first time that interpretations of religious doctrine must "meet the requirements of contemporary China's development and China's outstanding traditional culture," a move that experts warn could further cement an ongoing crackdown against Uyghur and minority rights in the region.

"The move is significant, as it's about cutting off China's religions from international networks and communities and keeping them socially and politically isolated under the watch of the Chinese Communist Party," Bradley Jardine, managing director of the Oxus Society for Central Asian Affairs, told RFE/RL.

China has been accused of systemic human rights violations in Xinjiang, including launching a dragnet that sent more than 1 million Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and other Muslim minorities to detention camps and prisons.

A growing body of evidence – including firsthand testimony and leaked official Chinese government documents – support the accusations, which range from forced labor to sexual abuse, forced sterilization, and erasing Uyghur cultural and religious identity, including the tearing down of mosques and other religious sites.

These actions have drawn accusations of genocide from international rights groups and several Western governments. In 2022, a UN report found China was committing "serious human rights violations" in Xinjiang that may amount to crimes against humanity. China has denied any human rights abuses in the region and says that its policies in Xinjiang are designed to counter extremism and terrorism.

Against this backdrop, local activists are worried about the lasting effects of these policies as the new rules come into force.

"Religious rights have long been restricted in Xinjiang," Bekzat Maksutkhan, the director of Naghyz Atazhurt, an unregistered organization in Kazakhstan focused on ethnic Kazakhs affected by the crackdown in Xinjiang, told RFE/RL. "But this law is the legalization of all those previous actions."

„What Does The New Law Mean?

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the communist government's atheistic ideology has led to consistent efforts to suppress and control religion inside the country.

But while previous legislation has governed religious practices inside Xinjiang, experts say that the new legislation marks a significant escalation, demanding not just control but a specific reflection of "Chinese characteristics and style" in religious buildings and customs.

According to the regulations set out for Muslims, religion should not interfere in "clothing, weddings, funerals, and other ethnic customs" and "religious activity sites that are newly built or renovated, expanded, or rebuilt should reflect Chinese characteristics and style in terms of architecture, sculptures, paintings, and decorations."

Claims of Chinese authorities altering or pulling down mosques in Xinjiang are not new, with a 2020 report from the Australian Strategic Policy Institute documenting the destruction and renovation of mosques in Xinjiang, finding two-thirds were changed, mostly since 2017, when Beijing accelerated its crackdown and expanded its camp system.

A 2023 report by the watchdog group Human Rights Watch used public documents, satellite images, and witness testimony to show that the Chinese government had expanded its campaign of closing and altering mosques to regions other than Xinjiang, as part of an official policy known as "consolidation." As part of this, local authorities have removed

architectural features of mosques – such as Arabic-style domes and minarets – replacing them with traditional Chinese designs to make them look more "Chinese."

Authorities in Beijing have rarely commented on this policy, but a June 2022 report by the Chinese state news outlet CCTV praised the removal of such architectural features as "protecting traditional heritage."

The new regulations look to formalize and build on these policies.

Beyond the rules on mosques, the law looks to expand the authority of the Islamic Association of China, the official government supervisory organ for Islam. The state body will now be the only organization that can organize activities related to the hajj, the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, and only mosques and individuals that are members of the association will be allowed to participate.

The law also calls on religious leaders to transmit a "patriotic" spirit to followers and stipulates that religious schools should instill Chinese characteristics, such as praising socialism and using Mandarin Chinese, in their teachings.

"China is trying to justify its crimes in Xinjiang to the world and the international community to make their crimes appear legitimate," Yerbol Dauletbek, the head of Atazhurt Eriktileri, another organization in Kazakhstan that helps ethnic Kazakhs, told RFE/RL. "This law is one of them."

Why China Targets Religion

The ruling Chinese Communist Party has viewed religion as a form of foreign influence that could undermine its authority and has looked to control and suppress all major religions in the country.

China's overall policy has been called "Sinicization," which requires religious groups to align their doctrines, customs, and morality with Chinese culture. The government also has strict rules for all religions, with provisions in its national law saying that it is illegal for minors 18 years or younger to attend religious services or celebrations or be taught about religion in any way.

Government pressure has been particularly targeted toward religions that Beijing views as foreign, such as Islam and Christianity – both Protestantism and Catholicism.

Authorities have in the past removed crosses from churches and had others demolished.

Christianity in China is also governed by several sets of rules. Christians are allowed to worship in "official churches" registered with supervisory government agencies, although millions of Christians in China still worship in underground churches.

Since Xi Jinping became leader of the Communist Party in 2012, Beijing has tightened control over Christian activities outside of registered venues,



shutting down churches that refuse to register and arresting prominent church leaders.

Buddhism – particularly Han Buddhism, the most widespread branch practiced in China – has been treated more leniently by Chinese authorities, but the government has cracked down on Buddhists in Tibet. Beijing has tried to cement allegiances there and discourage support for the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan Buddhist leader living in exile in India. Chinese officials have also been accused of carrying out "political reeducation" campaigns, separating children from their families, and have torn down thousands of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, monuments, and statues.

A similar approach to that practiced on Buddhism in Tibet has also been applied to Islam in Xinjiang.

When Xi last visited the region in August, he called on officials there to conserve "hard-won social stability" and to "more deeply promote the Sinicization of Islam and effectively control illegal religious activities."

"When we say Sinicization, the broad core is aimed at cutting [these] world religions off from the world," Jardine said. "And [instead] keeping them locally grounded, tied to the Communist Party, and politically neutralized."

### **Why Chinese spy balloons are back in force over Taiwan**

29 January 2024, The Hill

China is stepping up a campaign to coerce and intimidate Taiwan, sending batches of spy balloons over the self-governing island nation that flouted Beijing's warning with the election of a pro-U.S. president earlier this month.

The spy balloons flew into Taiwanese airspace almost daily before and after Taiwan's Jan. 13 presidential elections, part of what analysts see as a new effort to weaken Taiwanese independence.

On this side of the Pacific, the flyovers were a reminder of China's spy balloon that floated over the U.S. mainland last year and blew up relations between Washington and Beijing for months. Beijing claimed at the time the dirigible was a wayward weather balloon – a claim made all the more far-fetched given the calculated use of the surveillance balloons over Taiwan.

Kristen Gunness, a senior policy researcher at the RAND Corporation, views China's aerial actions as an "extension" of the air and maritime pressure campaign and a "signal about increased surveillance," but she argued the tension is unlikely to escalate any further.

"Balloons are a big deal, but it's not enough of one to be able to – especially if Taiwan isn't doing

anything about it – to provoke a conflict or crisis," she said.

However, experts are seriously worried about China eventually taking more aggressive action against the island, which it considers historically part of the mainland – especially after Taiwan's voters delivered a blow to Beijing.

U.S. Adm. John Aquilino, the commander of Indo-Pacific Command, predicted China would step up its aggression following the election.

"When something occurs that they don't like, they tend to take actions," he said at a Pacific Forum conference event this month after the Taiwan elections.

U.S. officials have warned that rather than invade, China is likely to increase pressure on Taiwan for now. Washington has issued a warning that any military action may come in 2027, the year Chinese leader Xi Jinping has said his forces should be ready.

A new report from the Center for Strategic and International Studies showed most experts believe a "soft quarantine" or a blockade of Taiwan is more likely than an invasion, though that scenario could escalate into a military conflict.

Gunness said China is dealing with domestic issues, including a tanking economy, that makes action unlikely this year or in the immediate future unless there is a major, unforeseen escalation like Taiwan declaring independence.

"China may just stay the course for a while because it doesn't want to rock the boat with the U.S.," she said. "That said, I do think that China will continue ... what it's been doing, which is basically conduct air and maritime operations around Taiwan to show that they can control the maritime and airspace."

Chinese spy balloons seized the world's attention last year when one flew over the continental U.S. in February for days before an American fighter jet shot it out of the sky and into the Atlantic Ocean.

The bulbous, white balloon weighed some 2,000 pounds and was 200 feet tall – with a payload that included antennas and surveillance equipment. The U.S. cast doubt on Beijing's explanation that it was a weather balloon gone adrift.

China has used the spy balloons for years to spy on the U.S., Japan, Taiwan and other nations in a program the U.S. says is global in scope.

But the latest efforts in Taiwan have seen China deploy a particularly large number of spy balloons, with sometimes up to six balloons flying into Taiwanese airspace in one day, according to Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense.

China already has eyes and ears over Taiwan and the balloons are unlikely to be practically useful for surveillance.

Instead, the balloons are part of a Chinese tactic to diminish Taiwanese independence, said Ho-fung Hung, a political economy professor and East Asia expert at Johns Hopkins University.

"They are basically trying to squeeze the airspace and then blur the line between Taiwan and mainland China as much as possible to establish a kind of status quo in which this kind of integration between Taiwan and China is no longer concrete or clear," he said.

"They are creating a status quo in which there's no clear boundary anymore."

In the past few days, the balloons stopped flying over Taiwan as frequently, but they also stopped in mid-January before picking up again.

The flyovers occur along with China sending aircraft into Taiwanese airspace in regular intrusions that have occurred for years.

The Institute for the Study of War warned in a Thursday analysis that China will try to "normalize using balloons in tandem with other aerial and naval" violations of Taiwanese territory "to wear down Taiwan's threat awareness."

President-elect Lai Ching-te's victory in the elections this month is a loss to China, which had backed a candidate seeking closer Beijing ties with the Kuomintang (KMT) party.

Lai is the current vice president in the administration of Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen, and its Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) has now won a historic third consecutive term.

While Lai once talked of declaring independence, he became more measured during his campaign, saying the status quo works because Taiwan operates independently anyway.

Lai said in his victory speech that Taiwan opened a "new chapter" in its democracy.

"We are telling the international community that between democracy and authoritarianism, we will stand on the side of democracy," he said.

But the election was not a total loss for China; the opposing KMT party won a majority in the Parliament.

President Biden and China's Xi discussed Taiwan during a November meeting in San Francisco and agreed to restore military communications. The leaders of the two world superpowers did not make a breakthrough or resolve existing tensions, with Xi reportedly telling Biden that China will reunify with Taiwan.

Robert York, the director for regional affairs at the Pacific Forum, said the U.S. and China "fundamentally" remain at odds over key issues such as Taiwan, but the countries remain in a "reprieve" since the Biden-Xi meet.

"The Taiwan elections have not caused a significant downturn in those relations as of yet," he said, "but

the [Chinese Communist Party], Xi Jinping, they've been quite clear that their position on Taiwan has not changed."

The U.S. sent an unofficial delegation to Taipei after Lai's victory and two U.S. lawmakers traveled to the island nation this week.

The spate of balloon launches is unlikely to push the U.S. or Taiwan to any action. Taipei scrambles aircraft when China intrudes over Taiwanese airspace but chooses not to engage to avoid provoking Beijing.

Col. Wang Chia-chun, the deputy head of Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense, said earlier this month it was not worth shooting down the balloons because it would be "exactly what the Chinese want," according to remarks shared by national news agency Focus Taiwan.

Another military spokesperson said Taiwan would only respond with force to the balloons if they posed a major threat.

The U.S. has informal relations with Taiwan and would not engage with regular Chinese incursions, though it has sent destroyer ships through international waters of the Taiwan strait in defiance to China, including one this week.

Even if China continues intimidating Taiwan with the balloons, Taipei will be focused on building out its defenses, said York from the Pacific Forum.

"Striking one of the balloons or actually confronting one of the Chinese planes or vessels that interferes in their space is probably not worth the risk," he said.

"The only thing Taiwan really can do is to continue to shore up its defenses, such as continuing to lengthen its mandatory service, and also beginning to make preparations for defenses on the island."

### **15 months on, China may appoint ambassador to India**

29 January 2024, Times of India

New Delhi: After going 15 months without an ambassador in India, China may finally be ready to appoint its next envoy, as Sino-Indian ties remain plagued by border issues, not least the delayed completion of the disengagement and de-escalation process in eastern Ladakh.

It is learnt that senior diplomat Xu Feihong, who has served as ambassador to Afghanistan, is China's pick to head its mission here.

Xu has also been China's ambassador to Romania and is currently posted as assistant minister for foreign affairs.

The formalities for the appointment of the new envoy are still not complete though and it's far from clear when he will actually take office.

China's previous ambassador to India, Sun Weidong, had left in Oct 2022. The delay in the appointment of the new ambassador has come in the middle of the most turbulent phase in bilateral relations in decades, sparked by the 2020 Galwan clashes and Beijing's reluctance, as India has repeatedly emphasised, to heed bilateral agreements for border peace and tranquillity. However, while the border situation still remains abnormal with heavy deployment by both sides, no violent confrontation has been reported in recent months.

While India will be happy to receive the ambassador, it's unlikely to make any significant or immediate difference to the current state of relationship, especially as India heads to polls. The government has continued to maintain that ties can't be normalised till China fully addresses the situation in eastern Ladakh, which resulted from the 2020 military standoff, and foreign minister S Jaishankar said in an interview to TOI earlier this month that India must show perseverance and endurance on China. He added that beyond the boundary issue, it's even about how India is perceived as a strategic entity. In its military and diplomatic talks with China to fully resolve the standoff in eastern Ladakh, India's position has been that the relationship can progress only by maintaining peace and tranquillity at the border.

China says the border issue should not be linked to bilateral relations and points to the fact that the two sides have achieved disengagement at four places in eastern Ladakh. However, there are other places like Depsang and Demchok where the stalemate is yet to be broken. Both sides have held 20 rounds of corps commander-level meeting to resolve the standoff, with focus now on resolution of the remaining issues and maintenance of peace on the ground in the interim.

### **A New Great Game: China, India, and the Dalai Lama**

29 January 2024, Jalis Akhtar Nasiri, Bitter Winter

Beijing is challenging India's historical connection with Buddhism, presenting it as an "ancient Chinese religion." Its aim is political, its disregard for human rights is obvious.



The Dalai Lama with U.S. Undersecretary of State and Special Coordinator for Tibetan issues Uzra Zeya in July 2023 in New Delhi. Credits.

The Panchen Lama, traditionally the second-highest leader in Tibetan Buddhism, holds immense spiritual and political power. However, this role has become entangled in a political struggle between the Dalai Lama and the Chinese government. Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, recognized by the Dalai Lama as the 11th Panchen Lama, was abducted by the Chinese government in 1995 at the age of six. In his place, the Chinese government appointed Gyaltsen Norbu, who lacks legitimacy among Tibetans and serves more as a political mouthpiece for the Communist Party. Tibetans view Gyaltsen Norbu as a puppet, isolated and controlled by the Chinese authorities. He promotes Sinicization and communist ideology, urging Tibetans to assimilate into Chinese culture and accept the Party's rule. This, naturally, draws ridicule and fuels non-acceptance, highlighting the failure of the Chinese government to gain true legitimacy in Tibet.

It is now well known that for the last few years China has begun framing Buddhism as an "ancient Chinese religion" and is granting its citizens a certain freedom to practice it. This move holds potential benefits for both domestic and international spheres. Within China, the promotion of government-controlled Buddhism is seen as a tool for promoting social stability, particularly in restive areas like the Tibet Autonomous Region and other Tibetan communities. By emphasizing shared cultural heritage, the government hopes to ease tensions and foster cohesion. Beyond its borders, China seeks to leverage its growing role in Buddhism to gain influence in neighbouring regions. By establishing itself as a key patron and influencer of powerful Buddhist organizations, China aims to bolster its soft power and expand its geopolitical reach.

India, the birthplace of Buddhism, sees the religion through a different lens. India embraces Buddhism as a tool for both diplomacy and cultural preservation. On the one hand, India uses Buddhism to build stronger ties with its Southeast Asian neighbours who share the faith. On the other, India offers a safe haven for Tibetan Buddhists fleeing religious

persecution and sees the preservation of their traditions as an important duty. So, India recognizes its potential to foster both international relationships and the well-being of its diverse citizenry.

The future of Tibetan Buddhism and China's control over Tibet hinge on the selection of the next Dalai Lama. The current Dalai Lama, aging and nearing the end of his life, remains a symbol of Tibetan religious and political aspirations, contested by China who considers Tibet its own. Historically, Tibetan leaders resisted Chinese authority, while China, pointing to their past influence, asserts dominance. China desperately needs the Dalai Lama to return and recognize their rule. Failing that, they aim to appoint their own Dalai Lama, controlling the Tibetan religious hierarchy and solidifying their grip on the region. This, however, risks further unrest and resentment, as centuries of tension have not softened Tibetan resistance to Chinese control.

China's project is to challenge India's historical connection to Buddhism and control the narrative around the Dalai Lama. India has consistently treated the Dalai Lama as a revered guest, recently underscoring this regard with birthday wishes from Prime Minister Modi. This action resonates deeply, as India and Tibet share a centuries-old Buddhist bond. This historical link is further strengthened by Tibetan culture's deep roots in Indian philosophy and practices, including the concept of reincarnation and the meticulous selection of the Dalai Lama.

However, this historical harmony was disrupted in 1949 when China invaded Tibet. India swiftly condemned the invasion and recognized Tibet's independence, citing its established institutions and deep cultural ties to India. China's subsequent aggression, both internally and towards India in 1962, aimed to erase Buddhist traditions and assert regional dominance. Ultimately, the Dalai Lama's escape to India in 1959 and India's acknowledgement of Tibet's stifled autonomy cemented the complex, intertwined history between Buddhism, India, and China.

Geshe Lhakdor, a respected Tibetan Buddhist scholar, argues that China's attempts to lead the Buddhist world through spectacles like "World Buddhist Conferences" are a smokescreen. Their real motive is to legitimize their control over Tibet by installing their handpicked Panchen Lama, Gyaltsen Norbu, as the supreme Buddhist leader. This effort has backfired. The world recognizes Norbu as a puppet, parroting Chinese propaganda. China's obsession with this charade stems from its need to justify its brutal occupation of Tibet, marked by forced disappearances, torture, and suppression of Tibetan culture. The plight of the Panchen Lama embodies both China's oppression and Tibet's resistance. Under Chinese rule, the traditional role

and spiritual heritage of the Panchen Lama face an existential threat. Norbu's subservience to the Chinese government is a hollow symbol of their failed attempt to control Tibetan Buddhism.

China's disregard for human rights extends far beyond Tibet. Despite being a major world power, it fails to uphold international law and treaties, silencing dissent and oppressing minorities like Uyghurs and Mongolians. This refusal to respect basic human dignity and engage in international scrutiny exposes China's true agenda.

The Uyghurs are a Turkic people with a rich history dating back thousands of years. They have established various kingdoms and empires, but for decades have faced challenges maintaining their independence. After several attempts at autonomy in the 20th century, China established the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in 1955. While initially peaceful, Uyghur grievances regarding immigration, cultural erasure, and economic disenfranchisement have intensified in recent years. Since 2017, China has faced accusations of mass detention, forced labour, and other human rights violations against Uyghurs, sparking international condemnation and concerns of genocide. Despite China's claims of normalcy, independent evidence suggests continued oppression and hardship for the Uyghur Muslim population in Xinjiang.

Similarly, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has implemented a policy mandating Mandarin Chinese as the medium of instruction in Inner Mongolia, replacing the region's native Mongolian in core subjects like language, politics, and history. This move sparked significant protests, with hundreds of ethnic Mongolians facing arrests or forced resignations from public office for expressing dissent. Beyond suppressing peaceful demonstrations, the CCP's policy blatantly contradicts its own laws, which encourage minority language education.

This push for Mandarin assimilation mirrors similar tactics used against other ethnicities like Uyghurs and Tibetans, raising concerns about cultural suppression and forced national unification. Chimeddorj, a local professor, poignantly summarizes the grave implications: "If our language is wiped out, we as a distinct people will also cease to exist." The CCP's actions highlight a broader pattern of cracking down on minority cultures and religions in the name of social stability and national unity, raising troubling questions about human rights and cultural preservation in China.

The world must remain vigilant. The Panchen Lama controversy is a microcosm of a larger struggle for human rights and cultural preservation. Only through unwavering Tibetan resistance and

international solidarity can Tibet achieve justice and self-determination.

In conclusion, China's manipulation of Tibetan Buddhism, epitomized by the Panchen Lama controversy, exposes a broader struggle involving human rights violations and cultural suppression. The abduction of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and the imposition of Gyaltsen Norbu illustrate China's attempts to control Tibet's spiritual heritage. This strategic manoeuvring extends beyond Tibet, as seen in the Uyghur and Mongolian regions. The Dalai Lama's pivotal role in the power play signifies a geopolitical tussle between China and India, challenging historical ties. Geshe Lhakdor's critique unveils China's deceptive leadership in the Buddhist world, revealing a smokescreen to legitimize control. The world must remain vigilant, recognizing the urgency for human rights and cultural preservation, urging solidarity to counter China's oppressive narrative and ensure justice for Tibet and beyond.

### **Atheist China should have no say in Dalai Lama's reincarnation**

29 January 2024, Tsewang Gyalpo Arya, The Japan Times

Beijing has staked a claim to the leader's succession by distorting history



Celebrations mark the Dalai Lama's 80th birthday in Dharamsala, India, in July 2015. The question of who will succeed the Tibetan leader, Tenzin Gyatso, now 88, looms large.

Since the occupation of Tibet in 1950, the Chinese Communist Party has persistently distorted historical facts to interfere in Tibetan religious matters.

This includes the process to select the reincarnation of the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, who is now 88 years old and whose international popularity has kept his people's plight alive on the global stage. Buddhists believe that an enlightened being and highly accomplished master may consciously propose to be reborn for the benefit of others. In Tibet, this is

known as tulku and the system is deeply embedded in its religious culture. Among the many reincarnated masters respected and revered by Tibetans, the Dalai Lama is the highest spiritual leader, or lama.

To gain total control over this foundational pillar of Tibetan culture and interfere in the reincarnation process, China issued Order No. 5 in 2007 and, last year, Order No. 19. These laws are a gross violation of Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 36 of the Chinese Constitution, which protect religious freedom.

The CCP is avowedly atheist and possesses no belief in the concept of life after death. "Religion is poison," Mao Zedong said during one of his early meetings with the 14th Dalai Lama, in the 1950s. Soon after, China started destroying a total of over 6,000 monasteries and nunneries throughout Tibet. The destruction of statues of the Buddha, closure of the Larung Gar and Yachen Gar monastic centers in 2016 and 2019 respectively, and demolition of Drago Monastery's school in 2021 are but a few instances of continued religious persecution.

The world is also aware of the disappearance of the 11th Panchen Lama, one of the top Tibetan religious figures, and how China installed its own puppet replacement in 1995 – and how it is forcing Tibetans to venerate this false leader.

It is preposterous for China to claim authority over the selection of monks. Through official decrees and proclamations, and a series of articles in the Global Times, a CCP mouthpiece, China has affirmed authority over the reincarnation system, staking this claim in ancient practices. "Titles are understood in traditional Chinese law as 'imperial commendations,' that is, 'honorary titles' granted by the Central Government of China to the leaders of religious sects," according to the Global Times. However, such assertions are based on a distorted reading of history.

Firstly, most of these titles were given during the time of Yuan (1271-1368) and Qing (1644-1912) rule. As both dynasties were not Chinese, the connotation of a Chinese central government is wrong and out of context: China was then a territory occupied by the Mongol Yuan and, subsequently, Manchu Qing.

The Dalai Lama's reincarnation system dates back to the 14th and 15th centuries, when the 2nd Dalai Lama, Gedun Gyatso – the reincarnation of the 1st Dalai Lama, Gedun Drupa – was born in 1475. This system has continued all the way to the current Tibetan Buddhist leader and China's claim that it has controlled the process since ancient times is a lie.

The title of dalai lama was not conferred, for the first time, on Sonam Gyatso, the 3rd Dalai Lama, by an emperor of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) that ruled China at the time. It was Altan Khan, the Mongol king, who – after receiving teachings from Sonam



Gyatso — gave him the title dalai, meaning "ocean of wisdom," in 1578. The spiritual leader, in turn, offered the title dharma raja, or "religious king," to Altan Khan. This goes to show that the offering of honorary titles was not a unilateral imposition, but a bilateral process, meant as a gesture of goodwill and diplomatic courtesy, in this case between the Tibetan master and Mongol ruler.

It was in 1792, when Tibet sought the help of the Qing rulers to drive out the invading Gurkha force of Nepal, that the Manchu emperor wrote a set of regulations in 29 points for the effective administration of Tibet. It was suggested that the selection of the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama's reincarnations should be done by drawing names from a "golden urn." But this came more in the form of advice than a decree and, except for the selection of the 11th Dalai Lama in the mid-19th century, this method was never used.

China has recently asserted that reincarnated living Buddhas should be found within the country, selected using the golden urn and receive approval from the central government — implying that all those outside Tibet are disqualified. But tulku can be reborn anywhere; it is up to the individual to decide. There have been many reincarnated lamas in India, Nepal, Mongolia, Bhutan and other countries. For example, the 4th Dalai Lama was born in Mongolia and the sixth in India.

Before departing this world, high lamas leave hints with close associates or a designated committee as to where their reincarnations should be found. The committee then looks for a child born in the region indicated and, after studying and conducting tests on the prospective lama, the reincarnation is confirmed. This process involves traditional religious rituals, including consultations with deities.

In a statement from September 2011, the 14th Dalai Lama made clear that his reincarnation is his choice and that nobody has the right to interfere in it. The purpose of reincarnation is to continue spiritual work for the benefit of the masses, he affirmed, so if his successor were to be born in a region where freedoms are restricted, the very purpose of reincarnation would be lost. The Dalai Lama's reincarnation will, therefore, be found in a free country.

In 2019, representatives from the international Tibetan community and heads of Tibetan religious schools met in Dharamsala, India — home to the Tibetan government in exile — and unanimously asked China to stay out of the reincarnation issue. Similar statements have come from Tibetan groups in Japan, India, Vietnam and Europe.

The United States government made clear in its 2020 Tibet Policy and Support Act that any interference

from China will be confronted at the international level.

Instead of intimidation and threats, a warmer approach from Beijing would do better to win over people's hearts. As for the selection of the 15th Dalai Lama, only respect for and understanding of Tibetans' beliefs will lead to real harmony. In contrast, continued meddling in their spiritual domain will further distance them from Beijing.

### **Beware of Thermo Fisher's Net**

28 January 2024, Tibetan Review

Palden Sonam\* argues that the American company Thermo Fisher Scientific's recent statement that it had stopped the sale of its DNA-based human identification technology in Tibet Autonomous Region, though a symbolic victory to the campaigners, will have little effect since China can still bring it in by other means.

The American company Thermo Fisher Scientific recently issued a statement that it had halted sale of its DNA-based human identification technology in the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). This was the result of an active campaign by rights organisations like Students for a Free Tibet as the Chinese authorities have been misusing the technology for mass DNA collection from Tibetans for surveillance and control. It is a symbolic victory.

However, given the superficiality of Thermo Fisher's statement, there is little cause for reassurance — indeed much less to celebrate. This is, of course, not to minimize the efforts of those who campaigned for it to hold Thermo Fisher accountable for its complicity in the pervasive repression of Tibetan people. In fact, it is their peaceful pressure that led Thermo Fisher to make such a statement even though it does not appear to change the availability of its DNA toolkits for Chinese security agents in occupied Tibet owing to several factors.

First, in its statement, Thermo Fisher mentioned that it stopped the sale of its products in the TAR, which includes only the western part of Tibet. It excluded Kham and Amdo regions of Tibet where, similar numbers, if not more, Tibetans live. This means that Chinese authorities can continue to collect DNA from Tibetans living in the Tibetan territories divided and ruled within different Chinese provinces like Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu and Yunnan using Thermo Fisher's technology. Beijing's drive to build a mass DNA database of Tibetans is not confined to those living in the TAR but also includes Tibetan in other Tibetan regions beyond TAR.

Second, even if Thermo Fisher paused selling its DNA testing kits in TAR, this does not preclude it from transferring the same technology to it through other Chinese regions. Past record of the company fails to

allow much room for hope that this will not happen. All these years, the company turned a blind eye while China used its technology in Xinjiang and Tibet to build mass DNA databases for aggressive surveillance of Uighurs and Tibetans. It was only under public pressure from human rights groups and investors that it began to show some signs of uneasiness about its deals with China.

Third, Beijing and Thermo Fisher speak different languages but the meaning is the same – the former said that rumours of its DNA collection drive in Tibet is a “groundless accusation” while the latter stated that its toolkits are not misused. At least the impression they tried to create is that no mass DNA collection has been done by Chinese authorities in TAR, and, therefore, no misuse of Thermo Fisher technology took place, contrary to credible evidence found by internationally respected organisations like Human Rights Watch, Citizen Lab, and others.

Fourth, in this context, Thermo Fisher’s brief statement is more an attempt to save its brand image rather than an acknowledgement of its failure to prevent the misuse of its technology for human rights abuses. In order to defend itself, it also has to defend China. This is evident from its statement that “our sales of this technology in Tibet Autonomous Region are consistent with routine forensic investigation in an area of this size.” This claim, however, does not corroborate with research findings on the issue. The scale of the mass DNA collection drive in Tibetan regions go beyond the scope of normal criminal investigation – from targeting children as young as five to women and Buddhist monks.

Fifth, Thermo Fisher also added that its biotechnology is used for purposes ranging “from tracking down criminals, to stopping human trafficking and freeing the unjustly accused”. However, a company as resourceful as Thermo Fisher knows that the greatest threat to the life and liberty of Tibetan people today does not come from some underground criminal gangster groups but the totalitarian Chinese state and its repressive colonial rule.

The question is, what meaningful differences does the Chinese security establishment having possession of the Thermo Fisher technology make to those unjustly imprisoned, detained or disappeared Tibetan political prisoners or their families? Will the people of Tibet ever find out about the status and whereabouts of the Panchen Lama, who has remained kidnapped by Beijing since 1995 when he was only six years old? For that matter, will the niece of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche – who lives now in the US, ever know under what circumstances her uncle – a Buddhist leader, died in Chinese jail in 2015? As recently as on January 15, Tsedon, a Tibetan college student, died in Chinese police custody in Nyemo

county (TAR) after being detained by Chinese security agents in December for unknown reasons and her family was denied her body. Will her family ever know how she died in the hands of Chinese security agents?

The answer, Thermo Fisher knows best, is a big NO. The colonial power in Tibet seeks hi-tech tools like DNA testing kits more to control an occupied nation rather than to curb crime. DNA databases are a part of a digital totalitarian system in Tibet and, the supply of Thermo Fisher’s technology contributes to the efficiency of the same repressive system that violates the rights and dignity of the Tibetan people. It is clear that Thermo Fisher’s statement seemed to be more a strategy to dodge public criticism of its dealings with the Chinese security bureau in Tibet than an expression of its sincerity to rectify its past failures or wrongs. It is a public relations net thrown by Thermo Fisher in which those concerned are expected to jump and sing: “Oh! Thermo Fisher has done a great job.”

We need, therefore, to be aware of this shrewd net, lest we too end up as another thread in its cast net that shrouds the reality. The reality of a nexus between a totalitarian colonial regime pushing for the maximum intrusive surveillance against an occupied people and a multinational corporation whose motive is to milk the maximum profits, even if it means at the cost of other people’s freedom and human rights, needs to be exposed.

### **China is preparing for ‘history warfare’ that India must counter**

27 January 2024, Uday India

Recently, news circulated that after the Galwan incident, which claimed the lives of 20 Indian soldiers and some 40 Chinese soldiers in June 2020, new clashes would have taken place between India and China on the Line of Actual Control (LAC). This probably explains why External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar often mentions that relations between the two Asian giants are ‘not normal’.

Clashes would have taken at least twice on the LAC during the past three years, China would have attempted to violently attack some Indian Army checkpoints (probably not in Ladakh) between September 2021 and November 2022.

General Manoj Pande, the Chief of Army Staff, himself stated that the situation on the border with China was ‘stable, yet sensitive’.

While these incidents need to be taken seriously (and they are, by the Indian Army), they show the limits of the Chinese ability to militarily create mischief on the northern border.

Opening New Fronts

In this context, there is no doubt that Xi Jinping's regime will try to open new fronts, perhaps not so visible, but which could lead to serious consequences if India is caught napping.

One of these is what could be called 'History Warfare', through which Communist China will try to prove that it has always occupied the Tibetan plateau and that the borders areas (whether Tibet or Xinjiang) have always been under Chinese possession.

Earlier this month, The Global Times, the mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party asserted: "Half-decade-long frontier archaeology yields major discoveries, reveals diverse yet united Chinese civilization."

The article says that in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, nearly 80 archaeological projects were taken up between 2019 and 2023.

Why is Chinese control suddenly projected far from the historical frontiers of the Middle Kingdom (represented by the Great Wall of China); the answer is clear, all these areas are part of China since immemorial times: "archaeological projects in Xinjiang, along with other discoveries made in North China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Southwest China's Yunnan Province, and other parts of the country, have contributed greatly to the enrichment of the current research landscape of China's frontier archaeology."

A new term has come into being 'frontier archaeology'; in fact a China Frontier Archaeology Symposium was recently held in Beijing; its declared objective was "to facilitate discussions about future topics in Chinese archaeology."

Ethnic cultural diversity

The Symposium looked into questions such as 'ethnic cultural diversity' or 'ancient Silk Road cultural exchanges'. A 'frontier' archaeologist, Chen Hurong told The Global Times that this reflects "the unique value of frontier archaeology. ...Compared with many inland archaeological projects, frontier histories can often vividly depict ancient China's exchanges with other cultures."

Another Chinese 'expert' affirmed that apart from Xinjiang and Xizang autonomous regions, northern China is also the birthplace of many 'frontier sites'. Note that 'Xizang' is the new name for 'Tibet', a century-old nation which no longer has a name of its own.

According to Party's mouthpiece: "Extending the Chinese frontier archaeological landscape to Southwest China's Xizang [Tibet] Autonomous Region, more than 10 research sites have been investigated in the last five years including the Nwya Devu and Sang Kar Gang sites."

The Nwya Devu (Nyadeu in Tibetan) is an archaeological site located in the eastern

Changthang region of Nagchu Prefecture, at the altitude of 4,600 m (15,092 ft) above sea level. It is the highest known archaeological site from the Paleolithic area; it is supposed offer evidence for one of the earliest known presences of humans at high-altitude ...around 40,000-30,000 BP (before present era).

The conclusion of the research will undoubtedly be that Tibetans are 'Chinese' since 30,000 or more years, and the 1950 invasion was simply a forced 'return to the motherland'.

Another site has witnessed extensive excavations by the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research (ITP); called Sang Kar Gang, it is located near Lhasa, the Tibetan capital: "Over 1,000 stone artifacts were unearthed, providing crucial materials for the understanding of the earliest human migration into the central Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, their routes and survival strategies."

This highly-political research explores "the process of early human adaptation to the plateau is also crucial to gaining a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the formation and evolution of modern populations in Xizang." Adaption from where? The answer is obviously from China.

Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia are also being excavated to show the extent of the Chinese influence, millennia ago.

To link it with contemporary China, The Global Times is not shy to admit: "Many cross-cultural frontier archaeological projects conducive to the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) have been launched."

The Situation on the Indian Side

On the Indian side, not much has been done to confront the History Warfare onslaught.

However, The Times of India recently reported a study claiming that natives of Ladakh clearly share their genetic heritage with India and Tibet, not China: "The research asserts that the three lakh natives of the region are a genetic mix of 60% from India and Western Eurasia and 40% from Tibet." The conclusions of the research were published in the international magazine 'Research Reports' in the US. This is good news.

The research team comprised DNA sequencing experts from Benares Hindu University's zoology department, led by Prof Gyaneshwar Chaubey, experts in archaeology as well as some Ladakhi scholars, including Padma Shri Dr Tsering Norbu (a retired Ladakhi surgeon), Dr Sonam Splanzin (the first woman Ladakhi archaeologist) and Dr Stanzen. The team studied 122 samples (98 females and 24 males), all belonging to the Bot tribe, from two places in Central Ladakh.

Prof Chaubey explained: "Ladakh is the highest inhabited region of India and has unique

biodiversity. With a population of nearly 3 lakh people, Ladakh is an example of long-term human occupation going back at least to the Paleolithic period."

It was earlier unknown whether genetic and archaeological diversity in the mountainous region has developed indigenously or resulted from gene flow from distinct geographic regions.

The interesting conclusion of the research is that the genetic component of the samples is completely different from the ancestry of China.

#### Trans-Himalayan Archeology

Another attempt to explore the past has been conducted by archeologist Vinod Nautiyal and his team; according to them: "The Trans-Himalayan region, which runs parallel to the main Himalayan Range and south of the Tibetan Plateau, has not been explored extensively because of its rough terrain. Early work reported human burials from Leh in Jammu and Kashmir but the most significant evidence comes from Malari in Uttarakhand where a cave burial culture dated c. 200–100 BC has been identified."

They admit that in contrast "across the Himalayas in Mustang, western Nepal, a large number of multi-storey caves used both for burial and habitat ion between c. 1200 BC and AD 1500 have been excavated."

They quoted the Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh which boasts of only two sites which can provide information on human burial; these burials have been dated speculatively to c. 2500–200 BC: "Neither of these sites, nor the human remains, have been subject to any archaeological or further scientific investigation," they admit.

It is a fact that not much has so far been written about the migration and the trans-Himalayan relations.

Similarly, the Franco-Indian Archaeological Mission in Ladakh (Mission Archéologique Franco-Indienne au Ladakh, or MAFIL) was created in 2012. It was founded as a joint venture with the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

Their objective is to show in an irrefutable manner, that Buddhism was present in Ladakh in the last quarter of the first millennium AD and maybe as early as the middle of the first millennium. The only material evidence comes from rare rock inscriptions. This is important, but it lacks the trans-Himalayan aspect.

More importantly, studies need to be conducted on the ancient kingdom of Zhangzhung; it could document the intense activities and contacts between Northern India, the Tibetan plateau and Central Asia, while these remained minimal with China.

A friend who has done extensive archeology in Spiti, recently wrote to me: "I am looking at mineral

resource data for western Tibetan Plateau, as of the 2nd Millennium BCE. I have managed to convince myself that the Indus Valley Civilization (IVC) used Ladakh, Zaskar and Spiti as well as Ngari as sources for minerals and other raw resources in the Bronze Age. ...Gold, silver, copper, iron, lead and precious stones (eg, sapphires, turquoise, crystals, agate, steatite) would have been traded; but also wool, animal skins, and timber products. The IVC could have exchanged these items with finished metal objects."

This is worth digging into further to counter China in this new form of warfare.

### China's Preference for Hard Power Is Creating Major Headaches for Beijing

26 January 2024, The Diplomat

Taiwan's election result points to a broader trend: China is failing to use soft power effectively, and paying the reputational price.

The Taiwanese presidential election on January 13, won by Vice President Lai Ching-te (or William Lai) of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), was hardly welcomed by China. The Chinese government had actively opposed the DPP. It has been accused, not for the first time, of electoral interference in favor of its preferred candidates.

After the election, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said in a statement, "Whatever changes take place in Taiwan, the basic fact that there is only one China in the world and Taiwan is part of China will not change." The statement reiterated the One China principle and re-affirmed Beijing's opposition to "'Taiwan independence' separatism." Punctuating its position, Beijing condemned foreign leaders who extended congratulations to Lai, and welcomed Nauru into an official relationship as the Pacific island state severed ties with Taiwan just two days after the election.

While the response of the Chinese Foreign Ministry was expected and Nauru's de-recognition of Taiwan not unexpected, the Taiwanese election points toward a larger problem with Chinese foreign policy over the past decade. Broadly speaking, there has been a shift away from a relatively sanguine view of China's peaceful rise, where Beijing's power and influence was perceived as a common good across the international community, to a more nuanced and cynical perception of Chinese objectives.

The first perception is firmly associated with the discourse regarding China's peaceful rise and the idea of "responsible power" as exemplified by President Hu Jintao's call in 2005 for "common security and prosperity" and a "harmonious world" at the plenary meeting of the United Nations

Summit. From this perspective, China's increased influence and material power would benefit the globe and provide a non-Western perspective and economic heft to tilt the international political economy more toward the Global South. But that image has fractured amid China's increasing willingness to use its material power to pursue its own interests – to the detriment of both individual states and the international order.

Much of this change in perception has occurred since the adoption of a more assertive “wolf warrior” foreign policy and diplomatic language, which has been materially and rhetorically committed to opposing liberal values and democratic institutions in favor of a more robust defense of Chinese values, China's territorial claims, and the extension of Chinese material power. Concens deepened with the use of China's trade and investment prominence to “punish” states, such as Australia and Lithuania, that pursue policies or hold viewpoints that China considers unacceptable.

In some instances, this has generated a dangerous cycle of mutual recriminations as politicians in other states have focused on Beijing's actions and rhetoric to sustain their own power based on insular nationalist tropes and appeals. As such, China has been more and more confronted by the United States, the European Union, United Kingdom, and other states across a range of areas. China has had border clashes with India and is the target of recalibrations in the defense policies of Australia, Japan, and the Philippines. Still other states are openly attempting to lessen their dependence on Chinese trade and investment.

This is not to say that Chinese foreign policy has been unsuccessful over the past decade. The Belt and Road Initiative, despite criticisms, has generated goodwill and has left a wide swathe of beneficial infrastructure while creating numerous opportunities across large areas of Africa and Southeast Asia. China has extended and deepened its presence and control over the South China Sea. Outside of the West, China has largely sidelined human rights concerns regarding Xinjiang, Tibet, and Hong Kong while supporting authoritarian regimes such as Myanmar.

Beijing has extended its presence into the Indian Ocean (through outreach to the Maldives and Sri Lanka) and the South Pacific (through a defense agreement with Solomon Islands). It has extended its influence in areas such as Latin America, the Sahel and the Pacific, enabling smaller states the opportunity to counterbalance the previous colonial powers, which have been able to maintain their sphere of influence over the areas. China is an indispensable player in addressing global problems such as climate change and biodiversity loss.

In short, it has become a superpower, its actions and omissions to act impacting the international system in a variety of ways.

Yet the costs and significant pushback from other states undermine the long-term viability of Chinese foreign policy objectives and instruments. Three recent policies have particularly set back China's influence: Its full-throated extension of mainland authority into Hong Kong in the face of pro-democracy protests in 2019-20, its support of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2021, and its weaponization of trade.

First, China's blunt assertion of control over Hong Kong undermined Chinese credibility in regards to treaty obligations and rule of law. It also significantly altered political, economic and social perceptions of the Taiwan situation both inside and outside the island.

Second, China's rhetorical support of the Russian invasion of Ukraine has been a dramatic departure from Beijing's traditional insistence on state sovereignty and “non-interference” as the underlying principles of its foreign policy. Chinese support of Russia magnifies and re-vivifies the former “sphere of influence” politics as an accepted method of international politics; Russia has made no attempt to hide its desire to regain its sphere of influence in Eastern Europe as a war objective. This conception of international order, with a diminished role for international law, leaves smaller states more at the mercy of larger states. As such, states across the Asia-Pacific (especially those with territorial disputes with China) have increasingly sought outside allies and armed might to counter perceived Chinese intentions, fueling a security dilemma and additional insecurity in the region.

Third, China's willingness to use its economic power to “punish” states has alarmed foreign governments. China implemented tariffs on a variety of Australian exports after Canberra called for a WHO investigation into the source of COVID-19. Beijing went further in the case of Lithuania, which opened a new Taiwanese representative office, not only banning exports from the country but threatening to ban products from third countries that sourced intermediate parts from Lithuania. These cases illustrated the risks some states might suffer amid large trade and investment asymmetries with China.

Power and influence – both in terms of hard power, such as military or economic might, and soft power, such as cultural attractiveness – is exercised in many ways across the international system. The mistake that Chinese policymakers have made in the past decade is they have tended to rely too much on “hard” power as a tool to achieve their desired foreign policy objectives. Instead, China must



embrace soft power approaches and cultural attractiveness if it is going to continue its peaceful rise.

This has not been lost on Chinese policymakers. President Xi Jinping has embraced the historical narratives of the Chinese civilization, highlighting peaceful trade across the Silk Road and maritime Asia as well as shared colonial humiliations as a way to open a window of mutual interests with developing states. Yet, the notion of soft power must not simply be rhetorical. In the Asia-Pacific, the proffered narrative has too often resulted in Chinese policymakers substituting the realization of Beijing's international objectives as a universal "pan-Asian" good – a tendency shared with other nations such as the United States – instead of acknowledging the cacophonous diversity and different interests found within and across each Asia-Pacific state.

More importantly, the effective use of soft power must also include a willingness to compromise and re-articulate core interests in the face of opposition by other states or the international community. This use of soft power necessarily involves political choices. And these political choices, while difficult, are open to Chinese policymakers. Unfortunately, some policies and political positions, such as Taiwan unification or Chinese sovereignty over the South China Sea have been promulgated and advertised with a high level of rhetorical content and commitment by the Chinese leadership. These types of policy commitments can create a "legitimacy trap" for policymakers and be more resistant to changes in material circumstances or compromise, as they tend to become bound up in the legitimacy of the regime or individual leader. This can privilege continued adherence to inappropriate and costly policies or political positions.

The Taiwanese election is an example of such a problem. Since the changes in Hong Kong, Taiwanese people have felt less and less attraction to China. This is hardly surprising, as Beijing insists on the same "One Country, Two Systems" formula used in Hong Kong as its overarching goal for Taiwan. At the same time, the DPP, as a governing party, has softened its independence rhetoric to embrace the "status quo."

Yet Chinese policymakers have been unable to adjust to these new changes, leaving them unable to harness the cultural affinities that exist between Taiwan and the mainland. Instead, Chinese leaders have doubled down on the rhetoric and policy frameworks that undermine any effective application of soft power or seek compromise. This has enflamed nationalism, both in China and across the region, and raises the potential that Chinese policymakers may be "trapped" by their own rhetoric into actions that may lead to violence.

While one cannot doubt the intensity of Chinese feeling over Taiwan, in other parts of the world such as Northern Ireland, Sudan/South Sudan and the former Yugoslavia, the parties have put aside their emotions and made arrangements that over time can provide the possibility for better lives and new approaches to ethnic and political conflict. A more generous approach, and a more inclusive and less insular approach to foreign policy, would better serve Chinese and regional interests.

### **US company must stop supplying China's regime with DNA surveillance tech**

25 January 2024, The Hill

The U.S. biomedical company Thermo Fisher Scientific announced on Jan. 5 that it will no longer sell human DNA identification technology to the Chinese police in the Tibet Autonomous Region. In 2019, it had made a similar decision to halt the sale of these products in Xinjiang, the northwestern region where the Chinese government's persecution of ethnic Uyghurs amounts to a crime against humanity. Helping to protect the rights of Tibetans and Uyghurs in China is essential, and Thermo Fisher's decisions are important and welcome. But they fall short of what is needed, given the gravity of abuses. And within China, the problem of mass DNA surveillance goes beyond these two regions.

Thermo Fisher's announcement sidesteps a key question: What about sales of its technology to Chinese police in other parts of the country?

In the past seven years, Human Rights Watch has documented that mass collection and cataloging of people's DNA form a part of the Chinese police's countrywide mass surveillance systems, which involves the use of facial and voice recognition technology, big data platforms, among other technologies. These technologies have empowered the Chinese government to maintain a vice-like grip on a complex society, from cities to its most remote borderlands, hunting down dissidents and neutralizing protests.

In 2017, Human Rights Watch exposed how the Chinese government was forcing ordinary people unconnected to crime throughout China to have their blood drawn and DNA samples taken. Without people's consent, the police put this genetic information into nationally searchable databases, which may now contain more than 140 million DNA profiles or 10 percent of China's population. The scale of such genomic surveillance is unprecedented in the world.

We also noted that Uyghurs in Xinjiang were being targeted in particular by the authorities for mass DNA surveillance schemes.

Human Rights Watch wrote to Thermo Fisher at that time about its findings. Thermo Fisher said then that “it is not possible” for the company to monitor the use of all its products, but that “we do expect all our customers to act in accordance with appropriate regulations and industry-standard best practices.” Thermo Fisher took no apparent action then and did not reply to a follow-up letter.

That year, the Chinese government ratcheted-up abuses against Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang. In addition to Orwellian surveillance, the authorities carried out mass arbitrary detention in political education camps and prisons, forced labor, forced separations of families, sexual and reproductive abuses, and cultural persecution. These widespread and systematic abuses amounted to crimes against humanity. After two years of growing attention to these abuses, along with tireless campaigning by Uyghur activists and U.S. congressional pressure, Thermo Fisher stopped sales to Xinjiang police in 2019.

However, as Human Rights Watch pointed out to the company, mass DNA collection is not limited to Xinjiang. In 2022, Human Rights Watch and Citizen Lab independently documented such abusive DNA collection in Tibet. Thermo Fisher’s recent announcement that it would halt sales to Tibet was “based on a number of factors” that it did not specify.

By now, companies operating in China know or should know that the Chinese police’s deployment of technology for mass surveillance is a national project, and so stopping sales only to certain parts of China is far from adequate. In 2020, a report by the think tank Australian Strategic Policy Institute showed that Chinese police were building a male DNA database that would allow it to identify all men in the country, and that Thermo Fisher had played a key role in supplying technology to this chilling surveillance program.

One way to make sure Thermo Fisher’s equipment is used only for legitimate purposes would be for the company to put in place a rigorous human rights due diligence process. This would include independent auditing, to monitor all its clients in China, and making the audit findings public.

Until then, the company should halt all sales of human DNA identification products to China’s police, judiciary, and all forensic genetics labs. The company has not responded to Human Rights Watch regarding why it has not yet done so.

The U.S. Department of Commerce, which has since 2022 been empowered to impose export controls on U.S. technology for use by foreign “military, security, or intelligence services,” should also expand these controls to include key emerging technologies, including human DNA identification technology, as

several members of Congress have repeatedly demanded.

Given the Chinese government’s dubious global leadership in innovating surveillance methods and systems, the next steps by companies like Thermo Fisher in China will invariably affect human rights around the world.

### Opinion: Will Lai Ching-te move away from Tsai Ing-wen, The Tibet Question in Taiwan’s New Era

25 January 2024, Phayul



Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen flanked by Vice-President William Lai and his running mate Hsiao Bi-khim at a campaign rally in New Taipei City on election eve. (Photo/Reuters)

On May 20th, 2024, Lai Ching-te of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) will be sworn in as the 8th President of the Republic of China (Taiwan) in a ceremony that will be closely watched not just by its allies, but more importantly by the almost Sauron like fiery Eye of Beijing. The DPP’s third consecutive presidential victory and fifth overall elicited a wave of positive acknowledgment from other “separatists’ factions”, a favored term of Beijing, including the Tibetan exile leadership, East Turkistan supporters, and Hong Kong advocates. The Dalai Lama’s congratulatory message for Lai underscored the importance of Taiwan’s “exercise of democracy” as “a source of encouragement for all of us who aspire to live in freedom and dignity”. On his X account (formerly Twitter), the President of the Central Tibetan Administration, Penpa Tsering, drew a parallel between the Tibetan exile polity and Taiwan, stating that “As a democracy in exile, Tibetans profoundly admire the spirit of self-determination exemplified by the people of Taiwan”.

Taiwanese and Tibetans are connected through the practice of Buddhism, and a small community of Tibetans and Tibetan monks reside in Taiwan, albeit with legal issues surrounding their residency. Politically, the two have always been entwined vis-à-vis their relations with the PRC. In her X post, the outgoing President of Taiwan, Tsai Ing-wen, expressed gratitude to the Dalai Lama for his

recognition of “the importance of our exercise of democracy in Taiwan to freedom and dignity worldwide”. Both Taiwan and Tibet pose a security problem for China precisely because they challenge Beijing’s perception of its sovereignty and legitimacy to rule. The late Prof. Dawa Norbu noted that the Communist Party of China sees several similarities between Taiwan and Tibet in terms of the past and present issues that inform its vicious diatribe against the two. The DPP’s first presidential victory in 2000 was built upon the emergence of a wave of native Taiwanese nationalism replacing the then-ruling Kuomintang party that continued to talk about a unified “China” albeit with a different leadership. Both the incumbent President, Tsai Ing-wen, and the newly elected President on January 13, Lai Ching-te, belong to the generation of Taiwanese born in Taiwan with a strong sense of Taiwanese national identity. Under such historical and present circumstances of an increasingly assertive Taiwanese identity and interests, separate from China, and an apparent blossoming relationship between Tibetans in exile and Taiwan, one would be predisposed to believe that the Tibet issue will be prominently figured in these changing realities of Taiwanese socio-politics, leading to significant progress in Tibet – Taiwan relations.

Despite such optimistic assumptions for the future, the reality remains that for Taiwan’s leadership, whether it be the DPP or Kuomintang, the cross-straits relationship has always been prioritized over its support for the Tibetan National Movement (or even the Hong Kong or East Turkistan movements), and while its civil society has fostered and shared platforms with the latter, such transnational solidarity has been absent from Taipei’s public statements or actions. It is no wonder that while Tsai Ing-wen gushes over the Dalai Lama’s support for Taiwan’s exercise of democracy, she never contemplated meeting the Tibetan leader even once during her eight years in office, despite repeated requests to do so from Tibetans and sections of Taiwanese society. While former Presidents Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian met the Dalai Lama in 1997 and 2001 respectively, Tsai’s refusal to follow in their footsteps disappointed many who believed her presidency would signal a shift from the conciliatory approach towards Beijing of her predecessor Ma Ying-jeou with regards to the Tibet issue. Ironically the Dalai Lama’s third visit to Taiwan in 2009 occurred during Ma Ying-jeou’s Presidential tenure, a KMT stalwart and a favorite of the CCP. When Tsai succeeded him as a DPP leader, with a perceived image of a staunch bulwark against Beijing, the Dalai Lama’s visa to visit Taiwan in order to attend the 2019 Taiwan International Religious Freedom Forum and on the

request of many other supporters was denied. Although her government denied even having received a visa application, RFA’s interviews with participants of the forum confirmed that the Dalai Lama was invited but he was unable to attend due to interventions of Taiwan’s Mainland Affairs Council. In my interview with the then Representative of Taipei’s Tibet Office and the current Director of the Tibet Policy Institute, Dawa Tsering, he revealed that prior to the Dalai Lama’s scheduled visit, his office received numerous correspondence from various channels imploring the Office of Tibet and thus the Dalai Lama to refrain from applying for the Taiwan visa in order to avoid antagonizing and suffering retaliation from Beijing. After much deliberations with the Dalai Lama, it was decided to comply with their requests. There was no public statement of rejection of the Dalai Lama’s proposed visit, and the Taiwan government maintained the position that they hadn’t received any application, a claim that was devoid of the actual context in which the decision was made.

The Tibet-Taiwan-China triangular relationship is commonly understood as a complex nexus, and that complexity and stagnancy persist even if China is ‘taken’ out of the equation, despite the impossibility of doing so in reality. Since the occupation of Tibet and the establishment of the Tibetan exile community in India and Nepal, the ROC, under Kuomintang, continued to maintain secretive relations with Tibetans inside and outside Tibet, and a rising antagonistic relationship with the Tibetan exile leadership, particularly with regards to the activities of the ROC’s Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission (MTAC). It was the visit of the Dalai Lama to Taipei in 1997 that signaled a significant warming and shift in these relations, which was followed by two other visits in 2001 and 2009. Although the controversial vocational training program, run by the MTAC, for Tibetans from India to Taiwan, ended in 1999, following the visit of the Dalai Lama several Tibetans have moved to Taiwan either as part of individual ventures or for religious purposes. The institutionalization of this relationship was formalized in the establishment of the Office of Tibet in Taipei, immediately following the visit of the Dalai Lama in 1997.

However, Tibet and Tibetans continue to be obscured in the public perception of Taiwanese social and political demographic, whether it be due to the overwhelming presence of the cross-strait tension or the “government’s restriction of information on Tibet” [1]. During my year-long stay in Taiwan in 2017 as a Research Fellow, I encountered a similar reaction from the Taiwanese students, and general populace with regards to Tibet. I was rather amused by their wonder of seeing a Tibetan who was not a monk. On

further pressing them on the matter, they spoke about how in their school textbooks, Tibetans were portrayed as individuals who lived on high mountains, with dark sun burnt skin and rosy cheeks. Their incredulous surprise on seeing a Tibetan woman who did not fit this mold was shocking, to say the least, displaying a severe lack of awareness of Tibet and Tibetans, which was compounded by the existence of such racial stereotypes. It would be too simplistic to condense it down to a mere lack of engagement at the policy level, but the reality remains that outside of Buddhism, Tibet, and Tibetans have not received a nuanced and realistic focus at various levels of Taiwanese society.

Was Tibet an independent country before its occupation by Communist China? Does it have the right to be one in the future? These questions lie at the core of the Tibet – Taiwan relationship. I spoke at the Geneva Forum in 2023, on the “One China” narrative in International Relations, and how Beijing’s push for its discourse with limited international resistance adds to its legitimacy and diplomatic muscle. Nicole Su, the Director General of the Taipei Cultural and Economic Delegation in Geneva, wholeheartedly agreed with this observation, and the continuing presence of Taiwan’s representatives in such CTA-led forums speaks to the mutual interests that bind the two. Sikyong Penpa Tsering of the CTA, in his 2021 meeting with the Taiwanese Representative to India, Baoshuan Ger, highlighted the mutual interest and concerns of the Tibetan and Taiwanese people.

However, this “camaraderie” does not reappear in the Taiwanese government’s official position on Tibet. Taiwan and Tibet “stand together” when it comes to opposing China but on a governmental level there has never been any indication of any support for Tibet’s “core issue” which is freedom from Communist occupation or the official position of the CTA i.e. genuine autonomy under the Middle Way Approach. Both the ROC and PRC claim Tibet as part of China, and while the KMT and the CCP have disagreed vehemently over the governance of China, both have not supported any change in Tibet’s present occupied status.[2] The DPP, unlike the KMT, has moved away from any vestigial ambitions of replacing the CCP as China’s government and has solely focused on governing Taiwan as a separate entity from the PRC. However, it has continued to maintain its silence on Tibet, and its political future to avoid antagonizing its cross-straits neighbor. This absence of reciprocity on its “mutual interest” with Tibetans is a major limitation in any hope of translating the relationship into a position of potential strength.

Such limitations have been materialized in the striking difference of support or acknowledgment of Tibet and Tibetans between the political leadership in Taipei and Taiwan’s Civil Society. While the engagement and solidarity between Tibetan exile society and Taiwan’s NGOs have increased in recent years (such as the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy and a few DPP legislative members), the same cannot be said for the Taiwanese political leadership. During Tsai-Ing Wen’s presidency, the Dalai Lama did not make a single visit to the country, despite its strong Buddhist population. While Tsai refused to meet the Tibetan and global leader as Taiwan’s President, she did not harbor such reservations during her meeting with the Dalai Lama in 2009 when she was still rising in the ranks of her party and Taiwan’s political leadership. She has even participated in Tibet support rallies, but that level of support was drastically reduced once she became President.

Tibet and the Tibetan issue receive solidarity not just from Taiwan’s NGOs, but also through its political sector, but that is limited to the lower rungs of the latter. It remains to be seen whether Lai Ching-te will seek to either emulate Tsai Ing-wen, the President of the Republic of China, or Tsai Ing-wen before her rise to the Presidency. Dawa Tsering, during our interview, noted that Lai Ching – te during his time as Mayor of Tainan City, visited the Office of Tibet to express gratitude for the Dalai Lama’s aid for the earthquake that devastated his city. His Vice President-elect, Hsiao Bi-khim, has frequently participated in Free Tibet rallies and served as Vice-Chair of the Taiwanese Parliamentary Group for Tibet when she was a Member of Parliament. Similar to Tsai-Ing wen’s ‘promotion’ from a DPP member to President, it would be too much of a stretch of one’s hope for Taiwan, under the new leadership of Lai and Hsiao, to acknowledge Tibet’s inherent right to determine its future. However, the Taiwanese Government’s policies vis-à-vis its allies not just Tibetans, but also Hong Kongers, Uyghurs, and Mongolians will be a litmus test of its mettle against Beijing’s aggressive demands for integration.

### **The PLA is in crisis. That won’t stop China invading Taiwan**

25 January 2023, The Telegraph

Xi Jinping’s purge of corrupt officers suggests his army is in crisis, but he can’t resist the momentum towards war.

Over the last four years, there have been a series of clashes between the ground forces of the People’s Liberation Army and India’s defenders in the

Himalayas. Despite substantial logistical and other material advantages, Chinese soldiers have performed poorly in combat.

The ground forces are unlikely to lead actions against the likely targets of Taiwan, the Philippines, or Japan, but the unexpectedly bad performance in the Himalayas raises a critical question: can the world's largest military, China's PLA, win wars?

As an initial matter, it's evident that the leadership of the Chinese military is in turmoil.

Turmoil is the almost inevitable result of the PLA reporting to the Communist Party of China, through the Party's Central Military Commission. Its status as a party army means the Chinese officer corps is even less professional than counterparts in most other countries.

The political masters of the PLA have been especially vigilant in exerting control after Marshall Lin Biao's attempted coup against Mao Zedong in 1971. "The Party commands the gun," Mao's phrase, or similar statements are often seen in official pronouncements. There are, as in many militaries in communist states, two reporting lines in China, and the political one is more important than the military chain of command. Politics are now consuming China's senior officers. Hong Kong's South China Morning Post reported at the end of last month that five current or former commanders of the Rocket Force were removed from both the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and from China's top legislative body itself.

Last year, the top two officers of the Rocket Force, which controls almost all of China's nuclear weapons, were replaced. At least 70 in that branch have disappeared in recent months. There are reports that early last July, prior to the mass firings, the chief of the Rocket Force's Third Department committed suicide, by hanging.

At the same time, it appears Xi Jinping is generally purging officers opposed to war. Former air force general Liu Yazhou, a prominent military thinker, received a death sentence in February 2022 – revealed only last year – reportedly for outspoken opposition to an invasion of Taiwan.

Apparently, the chiefs of the largest state military contractors have their heads on the chopping block too. Three of them were removed from China's top advisory organ, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, in December.

And then there is the recent case of the last defense minister, General Li Shangfu. He was last seen in public August 29 and was formally sacked October 24. His replacement was named only on December 29. The long and unexplained intervals suggest a long period of internal wrangling.

The official explanation of events in the past months is that Xi Jinping is ridding the military of "corrupt" officers. Yes, the officers removed are undoubtedly corrupt, but so are many if not most of the remaining generals and admirals. In general, "corruption" campaigns in Communist China – especially those directed against senior figures – are straight-out political purges.

What's going on in the Rocket Force? There are various theories. Xi Jinping could be installing officers who he believes will obey his orders to launch; Xi's handpicked men are being purged by his opponents; or Xi is becoming paranoid and, Stalin-like, is replacing his own people at a fast clip. There are no good implications for any of these theories.

James Fanell, co-author of the upcoming *Embracing Communist China: America's Greatest Strategic Failure*, told *The Telegraph* that the PLA is fit to fight, pointing out, among other things, that the Rocket Force has been successfully firing missiles at various targets like Taiwan and moving ships off Hainan Island. "For decades," he said, "the US intelligence community and Defense Department have consistently underestimated the capabilities of the People's Liberation Army and its intentions, whether denying the Chinese navy would pursue aircraft carriers 30 years ago or today's assertions that the PLA is not combat capable because of so-called 'purges' of officers."

So do all the disappearances, removals, and firings affect the ability of the PLA to go to war?

Short answer: We can only guess. Outsiders have less and less visibility inside the Chinese regime as it closes itself off from the rest of the world. Common sense, however, says the rapid replacement of officers has to be degrading readiness. At this moment, generals and admirals are undoubtedly paying at least as much attention to their personal enemies in their own ranks as to China's.

This churning – there are hints that the turnover will continue at least for another half year – suggests Xi Jinping is not confident that the military is ready to fight. This is not to say, however, that China will not end up in a war.

"China will surely be reunified, and all Chinese on both sides of the Taiwan Strait should be bound by a common sense of purpose and share in the glory of the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation," Xi declared in a paragraph that appears to list what will happen this year. Whatever his actual intentions, China's aggressive leader is creating markers by which his many – and growing number of – political enemies will judge him by. There seems to be an irresistible momentum to war inside the Chinese regime.

For many, great-power conflict is inconceivable. That, however, brings to mind Enoch Powell. Said the



British politician, "History is littered with wars which everybody knew would never happen."

### **China is 'risky' for supply chains and India a favored destination for U.S. firms, survey shows**

24 January 2024, CNBC

U.S. firms are increasingly viewing China as a risky bet for their supply chains — neighbor India is set to benefit as companies look elsewhere to set shop.

As many as 61% of the 500 executive-level U.S. managers surveyed by UK market research firm OnePoll said they would pick India over China if both countries could manufacture the same materials, while 56% preferred India to serve their supply chain needs within the next five years over China.

The survey showed that 59% of the respondents found it "somewhat risky" or "very risky" to source materials from China, compared with 39% for India.

At least a quarter of the executives who participated in the independent, third-party survey, commissioned by marketplace India Index in December, do not currently import from either China or India.

"Companies are seeing India as a long-term investment strategy as opposed to a short-term pivot to avoid tariffs," said Samir Kapadia, CEO of India Index and managing principal at Vogel Group, in an exclusive interview with CNBC.

Warming ties between the U.S. and India, spearheaded by President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with the former's "friendshoring" policy aimed at encouraging U.S. companies to diversify away from China have also made India an attractive alternative.

The relationship between the two countries entered a new chapter with Modi's state visit to the White House in June where a slew of deals on large collaborations in defense, technology and supply chain diversification were signed.

"The U.S. and China continue to sit in rather chilling air. Whereas there is a constant stream of iterations, conversations, dialogues and agreements between U.S. and India," Kapadia said.

India has seen a flurry of announcements about investments into the country in the recent past.

Earlier this month, Maruti Suzuki, announced that it would invest \$4.2 billion to build a second factory in the country. Vietnamese electric auto maker VinFast also said in January that it aims to spend around \$2 billion to set up a factory in India.

Risks still remain

Despite the optimism, U.S. firms are still cautious of India's supply chain capabilities.

The survey showed that 55% of the respondents found quality assurance was a "medium risk" they might face if they have factories in India.

In September, Apple supplier Pegatron had to temporarily cease operations at its factory in the Chengalpattu area near Chennai after a fire broke out.

Delivery risk (48%) and IP theft (48%) were also a worry for U.S. firms looking at India.

Other firms looking to fully or partially move their supply chains to India may not be able to duplicate Apple's fast presence in the country, warned Amitendu Palit, senior research fellow and research lead of trade and economics at the Institute of South Asian Studies.

"What Apple has done will not be able to be done immediately and as quickly by many other companies. Apple has the capacity to create an ecosystem much faster than other companies, so time must be factored in," Palit told CNBC in a Zoom interview.

Both Palit and Kapadia agreed that completely shifting supply chains away from China will not be possible.

"I don't think China will ever be taken out of the equation," Kapadia said. "The reality is that China will always be a cornerstone of U.S. supply chain strategy."

Investments into China still remain robust and it is still the "second choice" for investments after the U.S., said Raymund Chao, Asia-Pacific and China chairman at PwC.

Vietnam the next best bet?

Similar to India, Vietnam has been also been option on investors' minds when adopting a "China plus one" strategy.

The optimism in the Vietnamese market led to a more than 14% surge in foreign direct investments last year compared with 2022.

According to LSEG data, \$29 billion in foreign direct investments were pledged to Vietnam from January to November last year.

But Vietnam will not be able to achieve what India can, Kapadia pointed out, explaining that the world's most populous country has access to "a very large customer base that Vietnam doesn't offer."

"Companies are not making these decisions for cost arbitrage. They're making these decisions for cost savings and access to markets. You're not going to see that same sort of benefit in just shifting to Vietnam," he added.

### **Fewer Westerners in China is bad for China — but worse for the West**

24 January 2024, South China Morning Post

In his regular column in the Post, David Dodwell sometimes refers to a time in his youth when he serendipitously went to Pakistan and taught in a

tribal area there in 1968. It was a life-changing event for him.

I've heard similar stories. One is from a former student. Decades ago, he briefly taught English in a remote area in Nepal and that also had a profound impact on his life. He admitted he was not qualified to teach, and thought at the time the area was so poor in so many ways that English seemed the last thing those students needed.

I also met English teachers in China many years ago, employed solely because they were from the West. They acknowledged they weren't good at teaching but all loved the experience. Most did not plan to teach for long. After one or two years, they moved on to other places and careers.

These stories used to be about personal experience and growth. But the recent development of Westerners leaving China puts those in a different perspective. Perhaps a shift in soft power dynamics between China and the West is happening right before our eyes?

For a long time, the West represented a superior culture in its scientific advancement, economic strength and enlightenment ideals. The English language has an undisputed dominance worldwide. All these factors enabled people like Dodwell to go to less developed places as volunteers or backpackers, take a temporary teaching job, and then move on, whereas the reverse is unimaginable. Although only briefly, they embraced a tougher living environment, interacted with local people and made new friends. Whether they realised it or not, this sojourn made them goodwill grass-roots ambassadors of the West, bringing different concepts and cultural practices to people much less privileged. China was once such a backward place, and it has received its share of grass-roots ambassadors since it opened up to the West in 1979. Gradually, the number of qualified teachers increased, as well as professionals and college students. Some brought their families. Consciously or not, they all exerted a constant and cumulative soft influence.

Unfortunately, the number of these grass-roots ambassadors has declined. There was an exodus during the coronavirus pandemic due to a combination of factors, such as travel restrictions, geopolitical tensions and a weak economy. Although people are coming back, the number is low compared to the pre-pandemic level.

The most dramatic drop is in the number of American students in Chinese universities – a 98 per cent fall from 11,639 in the 2018-19 academic year to 211 in 2021-22.

People believe the dwindling number of Westerners is bad for China. It is. But it is also bad for the West, if not worse. With people retreating from China, the West is losing its most effective goodwill grass-roots

influence there, and its understanding and experience of China will be poorer.

In contrast, China's influence in the West is growing in terms of its grass-roots ambassadors and their understanding of the West. It is most evident in Chinese students abroad.

The number of students going to Western universities kept increasing until it was disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic. Compared to the fall of American students in China, the fall of Chinese students in the US was much smaller. And after travel restrictions lifted, the number of Chinese students going to European universities picked up.

It is also indicative to look at the rate of students who return to China. From 1980-2000, about one third of Chinese students returned to China. The rate increased to 80 per cent between 2016 and 2019. In addition, some star researchers made huge headlines when they returned to China to work. All these suggest China is no longer that backward place people fled from for better economic or academic opportunities.

Judging from these trends, it seems to me that China is doing much better than the West in nurturing its soft power. If the West wants to catch up, it needs to put more people back on the ground.

President Xi Jinping recently said China would invite 50,000 young Americans to join exchange and study programmes over the next five years to improve China-US relations.

The US can take advantage of this initiative, use it to increase its own grass-roots influence, and leave the rest to serendipity.

### **India-China Border Issue: Stable Yet Sensitive – Analysis**

24 January 2024, Eurasia Review

The Sino-Indian standoff since 2020 has had a lasting negative effect on not only their diplomatic relations but also the management of their 4,057 km Line of Actual Control (LAC). Speaking to the media on the eve of Army Day, which falls on 15 January, Indian Army chief Gen. Manoj Pande spoke of the situation being "stable but sensitive."

On the other hand, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar told a meeting in Nagpur recently that unless there was a solution on the border where the forces were "face-to-face", you cannot "expect the rest of the relations will go on in a normal manner."

The narrative that India and China have been having repeated rounds of talks at the diplomatic and military levels to resolve the eastern Ladakh situation created by the Chinese actions on the LAC in 2020 is more complicated than it appears. Reports now suggest that even while the two sides continue their dialogue, tensions along the LAC remain high with

attempts by the Chinese to ingress into new areas while the Indian side proactively counters them. The LAC, which is a notional line not drawn on any agreed map, was peaceful and stable on account of a series of bilateral agreements between the two sides signed in the last 30 years, however, since 2020, when some 20 Indian jawans and four People's Liberation Army (PLA) personnel died in the clash in Galwan, not only has the border management been destabilised, but it is unclear as to which measures have kept the peace remain in force and which are no longer tenable. Fortunately, one key agreement—that of not using guns within two kilometres of the LAC remains in place, else, the Sino-Indian situation could have been much worse.

Last week, an intriguing report stated that the Indian Army has taken down videos of investiture ceremonies of the Western and Central Army commanders from YouTube because the citation of some awardees revealed how "live" the LAC has been since 2020.

This is apparent from the accounts that have been pieced together from the now deleted videos where soldiers have received gallantry awards for dealing with the situation in the period September 2021–November 2022. As such, it does not cover the major incident at Yangtse, northeast of Tawang, that transpired on 9 December 2022 when 300 Chinese soldiers tried to overwhelm Indian positions. Both sides used clubs studded with nails which led to injuries to dozens of the Indian Army and PLA personnel.

Just where on the 4,057-km LAC the incidents took place is not clear—or deliberately withheld for security purposes. A soldier may get an award in a particular sector, but the investiture takes place in the Army Command he is serving at the time. On 7 January 2022, several PLA personnel tried to swarm an Indian post in Shankar Tekri, reportedly on the Himachal-Ladakh border. Sepoy Raman Singh and his colleagues in the 8th Sikh Light Infantry (LI) managed to best the Chinese and push them away, seizing their guns.

In September 2022, Lt Col Yogesh Kumar Sati of the 31 Armoured Division elements of which are located in Ladakh carried out a task as part of Operation Snow Leopard (the name of the Indian military response to the Chinese actions in the summer of 2020). He was able to avoid detection and completed the mission successfully. The details of the operation have been withheld.

In November 2022, more than 50 PLA personnel tried to capture the Atari Post, and Naib Subedar Baldev Singh led his men to take them on and injured over 15 Chinese personnel. In the process, Singh himself was injured.

The date of the third operation has been withheld, but it relates to an award to Lt Col Pushmeet Singh of the 19 J&K Rifles for conducting a patrol that prevented a major standoff with the PLA. The situation was de-escalated through two days of talks between the Indian and the Chinese sides.

The last award mentioned is to Major Sourav Kumar of 15th Kumaon who carried out multiple covert missions into Chinese-held territory and established a covert surveillance post for the defence of the Siliguri Corridor. This was under Operation Dorji. Hav. Pradeep Kumar Singh was given a Sena Medal (gallantry) for establishing the covert post in Chinese territory for surveillance purposes.

India and China have so far held Corps-Commander level to resolve the situation in Eastern Ladakh, with the last round being held in October 2023. Through most of 2020, the Army and the government claimed that the Chinese established blockades in three places—Kugrang Nala, Gogra post and the north bank of Pangong Tso, they did not acknowledge the more serious ones at the Depsang Bulge and Charding Nala.

The PLA also massed troops near the LAC in violation of existing agreements. India responded with a counter-mobilisation and placed its forces atop the Kailash range overlooking the Chinese positions in Spanggur Tso.

Through the military-level talks, blockades at three places have been removed and the area under contention has been designated as a "no patrol zone." But two important places remain to be dealt with—the Depsang Bulge and the Charding Nala near Demchok.

Laxness on the part of Indian security forces resulted in India losing access to 30 out of the 65 patrolling points in Ladakh as a result of the 2020 moves by China. Now several of them have been converted into no-patrol zones through mutual consent. However, the most affected area arising from the 2020 blockade is the Depsang Bulge where agreement seems to be eluding the two sides.

The current situation is not only "sensitive" as the Army Chief has noted, but also unstable. Both sides are clearly viewing the LAC from the point of view of obtaining military advantage along it. While the prohibition on the use of guns still seems to be observed, we don't know how they view the other confidence-building measures. For one thing, the soldiers are armed and you never know in which circumstances they could be used leading to greater casualties and a deeper crisis.

The Chinese may have gained the first-mover advantage in eastern Ladakh, but the Indian Army now seems to be determined to ensure that it is not taken by surprise again. And as the investiture

accounts suggest, they are adopting a proactive posture against the Chinese.

All this is happening even as the two sides are building up on both sides of the LAC. The Indian side is concentrating on its communications link, while the Chinese have built permanent billets, ammunition dumps, and helipads. This is not a situation conducive to either stability or peace. The entire confidence-building measures regime has collapsed, but to rebuild it requires trust, and for that, as the Indian side insists, there must be a return to the status quo ante in eastern Ladakh followed by an entirely new set of diplomatic negotiations.

### How China's Government Keeps Inadvertently Hurting Its Own Economy

24 January 2024, Time

China did not have a good 2023. Official statistics released this month showed that the world's second-largest economy—which analysts had projected would bounce back after its strict COVID-19 prevention measures were lifted in December 2022—underperformed in just about every economic indicator. For what it's worth, GDP growth was at 5.2%, a bit higher than expected, but even that figure is widely distrusted given the country's staggering youth unemployment, real estate crisis, disappointing stock market, and general local malaise last year.

To resuscitate the flailing economy, President Xi Jinping's administration has introduced a slew of new initiatives in 2024, including measures to attract foreign investors and stimulate domestic consumption. But acting as a seemingly ever-present counterweight to China's economic rise is a parallel set of ambitious policies by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) meant to improve or protect Chinese society, which have in recent years tended to come with some undesired knock-on effects.

In a particularly embarrassing case, China's attempt to crackdown on young people's addiction to gaming last month fuelled speculations of impending curbs on China's largest gaming companies and rattled the stock market so much that one day later, authorities hurriedly vowed to revise the draft regulations they had just introduced.

Ambitious goals like these, outlined by departments across the government to align with Xi's vision of an ideal society, find themselves increasingly at odds with the government's push to revive China's faltering economy.

Recognizing the problem, last week, the director of the National Development and Reform Commission's Department of National Economy, Yuan Da, said at a press briefing that "the importance of

strengthening policy coordination has become further highlighted," and he vowed that his agency would do a better job of reviewing proposals for "non-economic policies" to check that they don't "have a shrinking inhibitory impact on the economy."

It's not going to be an easy balance to strike. "Now the government has multiple objectives to pursue," Adam Y. Liu, assistant professor at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy in Singapore tells TIME. "When you have clear multiple objectives, sometimes these objectives are not necessarily in sync with each other."

Liu believes the persistent policy clashes boil down to the overcentralization of power and the desire, by local officials who enforce such policies, to appear faithful to the whims of China's top leader, no matter the economic costs.

"It's really more about showing your loyalty. Sometimes, even if it doesn't make any economic sense, it makes a lot of political sense to do economically senseless things."

Here are some of the ways in which China has inadvertently harmed its own economy in pursuit of non-economic priorities.

#### Gaming

In December, the National Press and Publication Administration (NPPA), which regulates China's gaming sector, announced a set of draft regulations aimed at curbing online games, including setting spending limits and banning games from rewarding players who log in every day—the latest in a series of curbs on the gaming industry in recent years as authorities have sought to tackle gaming and smartphone addiction among youth.

But the crackdown, which gained traction in 2021, has come with serious economic fallout in China's multibillion dollar gaming industry, which saw its total revenue shrink for the first time in 2022. The draft regulations announced last month also sparked panic among investors who worried about another tech crackdown reminiscent of the one in 2021. Shortly after the rules were announced, shares plunged for China's two biggest gaming companies, Tencent and NetEase, which saw nearly \$80 billion erased from their combined value.

Authorities scrambled to contain the panic. The NPPA issued a statement one day later vowing to "revise and improve" its draft rules. Authorities also quickly approved 105 domestic games, in what state media outlet Global Times reported was a signal of support for the country's gaming industry. In early January, the chief of the CCP's propaganda department, which oversees the NPPA, was removed, Reuters reported.

#### Anti-corruption

Xi's aggressive campaign against corruption has become one of the hallmarks of his presidency, punishing 4.7 million officials over the last decade as China's top leaders vow to purge corrupt personnel across the rungs of its bureaucracy no matter if they're "tigers" or "flies." The campaign is showing no signs of slowing, with Xi announcing this month that the corruption cleanup will be deepened across key industries such as finance, pharmaceuticals, and infrastructure.

While authorities argue that the zealous effort to stamp out corruption is for the good of China's economy, experts have long warned that it is coming at a hefty cost, discouraging officials from embarking on new projects for fear of being deemed corrupt and hurting investor confidence in the sectors that are being targeted. China's anti-graft campaign has led to massive fallouts across its economy, from the get-go: an estimate by Bank of America Merrill Lynch in 2014 put its cost at \$100 billion; and just last year, a crackdown on corruption in China's healthcare sector wiped \$142 billion from the market value of healthcare stocks.

#### Anti-espionage

Amid increasing political friction with the U.S., China in July implemented a new anti-espionage law that sought to limit foreign consultancies over fears of them giving out state secrets. But with how broadly worded the law was, it effectively muzzled business advisers tasked with providing due diligence information and intel to foreign companies hoping to invest in the country and worsened an already fraught business environment.

While the effect of the law has yet to be fully measured, it was implemented amid a bad foreign investment baseline. Commerce ministry data shows that actual utilized new foreign direct investment for 2023 was 1.1 trillion yuan (\$155 billion), 8% lower than in 2022, despite consistent messaging from China's premier and economic champion Li Qiang that the country is open for business.

"Anyone who is looking to invest in there has to be a little worried," said JPMorgan & Chase CEO Jamie Dimon in an interview with CNBC at Davos 2024. "The risk/reward changed dramatically."

#### Zero-COVID

Once lauded as the most efficient infection containment strategy at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, China's zero-COVID policy—known for its widespread lockdowns, population-wide quarantines, and mass testing regimes—became its own bane after the Xi administration refused to make adjustments, even as the virus became endemic globally.

At one point, the measures made it difficult for families to secure food supply and hampered responses to fires and other emergencies. Some

residents were forcibly quarantined, and protests broke out in several cities over residents' inability to work due to the rigid health policy. Dissatisfaction reached its peak in November 2022, with protesters on the streets calling for an end to zero-COVID in a rare moment of popular political dissent in China.

A stunning reversal came in December 2022, when the Xi administration suddenly dropped all its restrictions. But the economic effects of years of lockdown endured, especially the depreciated consumer and business sentiment.

#### Private education

Private tutoring firms in China became especially popular at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the \$150-billion industry capitalizes on teens' hopes to achieve success in the annual gaokao (national university admissions tests) in June, the Xi administration believed it also exploited parents' anxieties that only a child with a university degree can be successful in life.

In June 2021, the government suddenly banned for-profit tutoring, even barring them from advertising their services to a degree. But the ban, which was meant to cut down on child-rearing costs amid a record-low birth rate as well as to police the ballooning profits of education firms, forced many private education companies into the red. China's largest education company laid off as much as 60,000 personnel in light of the overhaul, adding to an already swelling unemployed population.

The ban was also ultimately unsuccessful in stopping for-profit tutoring: a black market of private tutors emerged, pandering to parent's desperation to improve their children's gaokao test scores, with much more exorbitant prices.

### What Taiwan's Election Tells Us About China and 2024

23 January 2024, The Heritage Foundation

On January 13, Taiwan's voters chose a new president and legislators. China pulled out all the stops to try to intimidate and entice voters into selecting its preferred candidates. This campaign included violating Taiwanese airspace, financing pro-Beijing social media, promoting misinformation and conspiracy theories, paying for lavish trips for Taiwanese officials to China, and applying economic pressure.

It didn't work. Lai Ching-te of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) was elected the island's next president and will be inaugurated in May. Lai was Beijing's least-favorite candidate, due to his history of advocating for Taiwan independence and the DPP's refusal to accept China's preconditions for dialogue. However, Lai won with a plurality of just 40.1% of



the vote and only succeeded because the opposition vote was split between two challengers.

It is hard to know to what extent China's efforts influenced voter decisions. Each of the three parties that fielded presidential candidates has a strong support base independent of Beijing's actions. Nor does Beijing's preference for a given candidate necessarily make that candidate illegitimate. Each of Taiwan's mainstream political parties seeks to preserve the status-quo, and none of them support unification with China.

Yet, Beijing's efforts to influence Taiwan's elections and other political processes are real, and they aren't going to abate anytime soon. They are part of a decades-long campaign to delegitimize and isolate Taiwan and make Beijing's one-China principle a reality: "There is but one China in the world, Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory, and the Government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legal government representing the whole of China."

Beijing has vowed to impose unification by force if necessary. But it prefers to play the long game.

For instance, dating back decades, Beijing has conducted an increasingly aggressive campaign to isolate Taiwan and impede its participation in international organizations.

China was one of the original 51 member states of the United Nations. Due to its participation in the alliance of victors of World War II, China was awarded a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council when the organization was founded in 1945. In the first few decades of the U.N., China was represented by the Republic of China. Shortly after the U.N. was founded, the Chinese Communist Party gained momentum in the civil war and controlled the entire Chinese mainland, with ROC forces retreating to Taiwan.

In the early 1950s, the CCP-controlled PRC initiated a prolonged diplomatic campaign to take over the representation of China in the U.N. and other international organizations. This effort culminated with the adoption of U.N. General Assembly Resolution 2758, which recognized the PRC as "the only legitimate representatives of China to the United Nations."

Since then, with rare exceptions, Beijing has opposed Taiwan's participation in international organizations and has applied diplomatic and economic pressure to convince other governments to sever diplomatic ties with Taiwan and oppose its participation in international organizations. In 2023, Honduras became the latest government to sever ties with Taiwan, leaving only 13 governments that recognize Taiwan.

Across the U.N. system, China has now succeeded in ostracizing Taiwan. For instance, Taiwan is not able

to participate as an observer in any meetings of the U.N. or its specialized agencies despite the many equities that Taiwan has in matters considered by those organizations.

This effort has gone to ridiculous and petty lengths. For instance, Beijing has strong-armed the U.N. to deny private citizens access to U.N. headquarters or register for U.N. conferences if they have Taiwanese passports. Additionally, it has blocked applications from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) seeking consultative status with the U.N. unless they "explicitly recognize Tibet and Taiwan as integral parts of Chinese territory."

Beijing's efforts are a direct assault on the rights of the Taiwanese people who overwhelmingly wish to preserve the status quo of de-facto sovereignty under a democratic system that is fully separate from Beijing.

The U.S. understands and rejects this illegitimate campaign. When the U.S. recognized Beijing in 1979, it also announced that it opposes any unilateral change to Taiwan's status and would support Taiwan's ability to defend itself from forced unification with China. This position has enjoyed broad bipartisan support since the passage of the TRA and U.S. policy was articulated under the Reagan Administration in its Six Assurances to Taiwan.

In the past few years, Congress has passed legislation clarifying that U.S. policy is to advocate for Taiwan's participation in international organizations and instructing the administration to implement a strategy to counter efforts by Beijing to undermine support for Taiwan internationally, including its participation in international organizations.

This policy is based on U.S. interests, as Taiwan is generally supportive of American policy in these organizations. But more fundamentally, it is based on the belief that 23 million people deserve a voice in the international system—a voice that is currently silenced at the behest of Beijing.

Taiwanese democracy is vital and worth defending—and demonstrates that the Chinese people are perfectly capable of having a free system of government when given the opportunity. This was not only the case in the election that took place Saturday. It will continue to be true in the years ahead.

### **Activists Decry Tibet 'Cultural Genocide' Ahead Of China Rights Review**

22 January 2024, Barron's

Activists accused China of seeking to "erase" Tibetan cultural and religious identities, urging a review of

Beijing's rights record at the UN on Tuesday to focus on its "cultural genocide" in the region.

United Nations experts and activists estimate that more than a million Tibetan children between the ages of three and 18 have been separated from their families and placed in a network of residential boarding schools.

"That represents nearly 80 percent of Tibetan school-aged children," said Lhadon Tethong, head of the Tibet Action Institute.

Beijing has defended the boarding school system as respectful to cultural rights, and insisted it is needed especially in remote, high-altitude and scarcely-populated areas, where children often need to travel long distances to get to school.

But a group of independent UN experts last year warned that the system "appears to act as a mandatory large-scale programme intended to assimilate Tibetans into majority Han culture, contrary to international human rights standards".

In the schools, the children face "very intensive indoctrination", Tethong told AFP, adding that they often come out barely able to communicate in Tibetan and voicing criticism of Tibetan traditions.

"It is a case of cultural genocide, a clear-cut case," she said.

She and other advocates for Tibetan rights took part in an event at the UN in Geneva on Monday ahead of a review of China's rights record on Tuesday.

Beijing will be undergoing a so-called Universal Periodic Review (UPR) – an examination all 193 UN member states must face every four to five years to assess their human rights record.

A civil liberties crackdown, Hong Kong's draconian national security law and repression in Xinjiang are among concerns expected to be raised.

The Tibetan advocates appealed Monday for countries not to forget about the situation in Tibet, where they accuse Beijing of a worsening crackdown and efforts to erase the cultural and religious identity. "We have seen a worsening of rights in China, especially in Tibet," Thinlay Chukki, a representative of Tibet's spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, told Monday's gathering.

Tibet has alternated over the centuries between independence and control by China, which says it "peacefully liberated" the rugged plateau in 1951 and brought infrastructure and education to the previously underdeveloped region.

But many exiled Tibetans accuse China's ruling Communist Party of repression and eroding their culture.

And the network of residential boarding schools was the main tool for erasing Tibetan culture, according to Tethong.

She said the system was similar to the colonial boarding schools in Canada and the United States.

While the Canadian and US schools aimed from the late 19th century to forcibly assimilate Indigenous children to "white and Christian" culture, she said that in China "we're talking about political indoctrination".

"It's not just stripping the kids of their traditional identity, language and culture and religion, but it's really trying to imprint on them this sort of hyper-nationalist Chinese identity with this Communist Party as its foundation."

She said it was important to shine a spotlight on what was happening, urging countries to raise the issue during China's UPR.

"This is the opportunity to put the Chinese government on notice... that the system is known and that it is wrong," she said.

Governments, she said, must "call for the Chinese government to stop this very obvious campaign of assimilation... of elimination of Tibetan children's identity and culture through the school system."

AFP has sought a comment from the Chinese mission in Geneva.

### **When China ceded Hong Kong to the British in 1841 — and how its impact is felt till date**

21 January 2024, Indian Express

The Qing ruler ceded Hong Kong, at the time home to a dozen or so fishing villages, to the British during the First Opium War on January 20, 1841. That fateful day continues to shape Hong Kong's present. Here's a look at the history.

Hong Kong was ceded to the British by the Chinese on January 20, 1841. This development has shaped Hong Kong's history over the following 183 years – and will continue to do so into the foreseeable future. How? To answer this, we take a look at a brief history of Hong Kong.

**The British get Hong Kong**

European powers began trading with China in the 16th century. Their favourite commodity? Tea – a beverage the British would soon become addicted to. While the British loved Chinese tea, they did not have anything to trade with China in return. Thus, Britain's favourite beverage soon became a drain on its bullion reserves.

**The British get Hong Kong**

European powers began trading with China in the 16th century. Their favourite commodity? Tea – a beverage the British would soon become addicted to. While the British loved Chinese tea, they did not have anything to trade with China in return. Thus, Britain's favourite beverage soon became a drain on its bullion reserves.

By the late 18th century, the British came up with a solution – opium. They began flooding China with the drug produced in the East India Company's

possessions on the Gangetic plain. Britain's trade imbalance was thus fixed, but at the cost of eating away the very fabric of Chinese society.

Even as the malaise of addiction spread in China, the ruling Qing dynasty was unable to stop the flow of opium. Things came to a head in 1839, after the Emperor found his own son dazed under the influence of opium. A vicious crackdown was ordered, and soon began the First Opium War

The British, who claimed to be "protecting free trade", humiliated the weak Qing armies in a series of defeats. In 1841, the Qing were forced to sign the Treaty of Chuenpi, officially ceding the island of Hong Kong to the British (it was already a base for British merchants since the early 1820s). A year later, the British would end hostilities after signing the Treaty of Nanking, which gave them increased access to Chinese ports and an effective-free hand to sell opium. China's "century of humiliation" had just begun.

Hong Kong becomes a thriving port city

In 1841, Hong Kong was home to only a few thousand people, mostly from fishing communities. But the British soon realised its commercial and strategic value – Hong Kong boasted of a deep, fairly sheltered harbour, possessing east and west entrances, and lying on the main trade routes of the region. As British commercial activity in the Far East increased with help of the concessions received in the Treaty of Nanking, so did Hong Kong's importance. The island would soon attract all kinds of people from the mainland, from those seeking economic opportunities, to those escaping conflict. By 1860, the island's population was touching 1.2 lakhs. That year, the British signed the Treaty of Peking, ending the Second Opium War. The defeated Chinese were forced to hand over more territory, including the Kowloon Peninsula and the Stonecutter's Island to the victors.

Finally, in 1898, the British negotiated a lease of the "New Territories", in which they would receive control of Hong Kong and a total of 235 islands for a period of 99 years. By this time, Hong Kong's population had touched 3 lakhs. At the turn of the 20th century, Hong Kong was one of the most important port cities in the world.

British hand Hong Kong back

After being occupied by the Japanese from 1941-45, the island fell back into the hands of the British. Now despite a wave of decolonisation that would soon spell the end of the British Empire, the British had no intention of leaving Hong Kong, especially after the Communist takeover in China under Mao.

For Mao and the Communists, this was an enduring symbol of the 'century of humiliation' faced by China in the hands of Europeans. Nonetheless, fearing a larger conflict with the West, Mao desisted from

sending in an invading party into the island, and chose instead to wait it out. The Communist supported labour movements and strikes inside the city in the 1950s and '60s.

China, however, would institute economic reforms in 1977, fundamentally altering its relationship with the West. In 1984, the Sino-British Joint Declaration was signed by British PM Margaret Thatcher and Chinese Communist Party Chairman Deng Xiaoping – it was agreed that the British would hand over all its territories in and around Hong Kong in 1997, and govern using Deng's principle of 'one country, two systems'.

But, the people of Hong Kong were not all pleased. However, the people of Hong Kong, many of whom had grown accustomed to western political freedoms and economic ways, were not all happy. In the years preceding the handover, a record number of Hong Kong residents, especially the most affluent classes, emigrated abroad, while many who stayed back continued to oppose reunification.

China's actions post the handover have not assuaged fears. Throughout the 2000s and 2010s, Hong Kong saw wave after wave of protests, with residents fighting to preserve the promised autonomy. They complain that Beijing, bit by bit, continues to chip away at the 'one country, two systems' concept, which promised them significant autonomy within the Chinese state.

Protests heated up in 2019 and 2020, as Beijing introduced new laws which would allow mainland security agencies to operate in Hong Kong, allow for extradition of citizens from the island to the mainland, and increase its police powers over the island.

For an increasingly assertive Chinese state, the goal of 'one country' takes precedence over the promise of 'two systems'. For many in Hong Kong, however, there is little to gain from this.

## What next for China and Taiwan?

21 January 2024, The Sunday Guardian

Since President Xi Jinping has made the unification of Taiwan a historical necessity and a part and parcel of his great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, the use of force remains a real possibility.

In the recently concluded general elections in Taiwan held on 13 January 2024, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) gained the highest votes and will form the government in a few months. In a triangular contest, the DPP candidate, Lai Ching-te defeated Hou Yu-ih of the Kuomintang (KMT) and former Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je of the new political outfit Taiwan People's Party (TPP). On the 13th evening, when results were announced, ChenBinhua,

a spokesperson for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, was quick to denounce 23 January the victory of Lai, when he said the DPP “cannot represent the mainstream public opinion” in Taiwan. Earlier on 30 December 2023, Chen had pronounced Lai as the “saboteur of cross-strait peace.” On 14 January, Wang Yi, the State Councillor and Foreign Minister of China during his visit to Egypt warned that “Whoever wants to pursue ‘Taiwan independence’ is dividing China’s territory and will be severely punished by history and law.” Even though Nauru severed its diplomatic relations with Taiwan, global congratulations poured in for Lai and some major powers such as the US, UK and Japan openly congratulated Lai, drawing Beijing’s ire.

What could be expected next? Since mainland China has pronounced this election as a choice between war and peace, the victory of Lai-Hsiao team is bound to face bigger challenges in the form of military, economic, and psychological coercion. Wang Wenbin, the spokes person of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs remarked on the eve of Taiwan elections

that “Taiwan independence” and peace across the Taiwan Strait are incompatible as fire and water (水火不容).

“Taiwan independence”, he said, means “war and is a dead end.” Two distinctive things that have emerged from this election are—the indigenisation and externalisation of the “Republic of China” (RoC), and both are mutually inclusive from a Taiwanese perspective.

As regards the indigenisation, the DPP, the KMT and the TPP without exception have indigenised themselves, especially the KMT that has its origins in the mainland.

The candidature of Hou Yu-ih in this election is an example, for the Party have realised that without localisation it would be difficult to oust the DPP that has very strong roots in Taiwan and is free from the “mainland complex.” No wonder former president Ma Ying-jeou’s call for having trust in Xi Jinping has fallen on deaf ears in the Island. The RoC, rather than

“reclaiming the mainland”, is Lai Ching-te limited to governing Taiwan.

Rather all political parties in Taiwan have reached a consensus that the present status quo need to be maintained, and that the declaration of independence is a misnomer. The so-called “externalization” of the RoC is visible in the wake of China’s diplomatic and military assertiveness and geopolitical churning in the Indo-Pacific and beyond. Nauru snapping

diplomatic ties with the RoC is an indicator that Taiwan would not be able to stop the small republics

embracing the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Therefore, the new strategy, rather continuation of the Tsai Ing-wen’s “letting the small go and embracing the big powers” strategy would be the new normal. This, in other words, is China’s Achilles’ heel for two major reasons.

One, the externalization of the RoC and the response it receives from major powers undermines the “One China Policy”. Two, it also draws a parallel between the authoritarian PRC and the democratic Taiwan. In other words, the 113-year-old republic, that has survived till date and is ruled from Taiwan gains prominence, if not legitimacy, and emboldens countries around the world to look at the Taiwan question from a different perspective. Since the PRC considers itself the only legitimate entity to rule China, any attempt by countries to legitimize the RoC would be dealt with appropriately, including the use of force. Moreover, since President Xi Jinping has made the unification of Taiwan a historical necessity and a part and parcel of his great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation,

the use of force remains a real possibility. Given the predicament of the DPP in the Executive Yuan, the mainland is expected to continue its United Front work in the “relevant political parties” for the “cause of the national unification” and better cross Strait exchanges, as pronounced by Chen Binhua, when Lai was declared winner on 13 January. The Lai-Xiao duo, while toeing former President Tsai’s political line, though may adopt a more pragmatic approach to deal with mainland China, however, much would also be dictated by

the state of US-China relations.

The Biden administration has adopted an unusually tough posturing against China, even committing to use military force. This posturing may change if Donald Trump makes a comeback. Remember him saying Nancy Pelosi “always creating trouble” when she visited Taiwan in 2022? Nonetheless, “One China Policy” of the US would continue. As regards, the India-Taiwan ties, these are likely to maintain an upward trajectory in fields such as trade and investment, education and culture. But India is unlikely to change its “One China Policy” in the near future, even if there are sections in India calling for revisiting the same in the face of the prolonged military standoff between India and China in the Western Sector.

### 100 years since death of Lenin marked by silence from China’s Communist Party. Why?

21 January 2024, South China Morning Post

For the centenary of the death of Karl Marx in 1983, China issued a special set of commemorative stamps.

In 2018, for the 200th anniversary of the birth of the German thinker and founder of communism, Chinese President Xi Jinping presided over a memorial meeting, one of a host of state-led events held to mark the occasion.

Sunday marks 100 years since the death of Vladimir Lenin. However, there will be no official commemoration for the man who founded the Soviet Union and put Marxism into practice before leaving a controversial legacy for the world.

Marxist-Leninism has been enshrined in the charter of the Chinese Communist Party as a guiding principle, along with the ideologies of successive communist leaders since the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949.

However, unlike during the times of founding leader Mao Zedong, commemorations of Lenin appear to have fallen off the agenda for Chinese propaganda officials.

Yuan Yuhua, a self-taught leftist scholar and academic lecturer, said Lenin and the 1917 October Revolution – which inspired the founding of the Chinese Communist Party four years later – had been played down in recent years.

A mainland political scientist who declined to be named put the different treatment down to the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union, and the controversies around Leninism.

Blots on Lenin's legacy include the massacre of political rivals – the 1918-1922 "Red Terror" carried out by his Bolshevik party, famines during the early 1920s and 30s, as well as atrocities during the totalitarian rule of his successor, Joseph Stalin.

"Even Russian leaders reviewed Leninism after the collapse of the USSR [Union of Soviet Socialist Republics] in the late 1980s. In the following years, China was busy with market reform and opening up to the outside world, therefore Lenin was not a point of emphasis on the agenda for government propaganda," the political scientist said.

Thousands of Lenin statues around the world have also been pulled down since the fall of the Soviet Union, among the most famous being the mass removals in Ukraine in the past decade.

While Russian President Vladimir Putin has delivered sharp criticisms of Lenin, his statements about the founder of the Russian Communist Party have been inconsistent. He has also rejected calls to bury Lenin's body, which remains on display in Moscow's Red Square.

A website that documents remaining Lenin statues said there were about 6,000 left worldwide as of 2021, with four of them in mainland China.

Alfred Wu, an associate professor at the National University of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, said while official commemorations

might be lacking, Leninism was ingrained in the political fibre of China's ruling party.

"Leninism is in the DNA of the Communist Party of China. Examples are the structure of the party and the party-state," he said.

Leninism dictates that the communist party, as the "vanguard party", should establish a single-party socialist state called the "dictatorship of the proletariat".

In the party state, every aspect – from political, economic and social, to cultural and intellectual life – would be regulated strictly by the communist party.

In the 1990s and 2000s, the Chinese Communist Party, while resolute in maintaining single-party rule, tried to delegate the responsibilities of actual policy formulation and implementation to the government and focus more on giving general directions.

This trend was reversed under Xi, who has merged party organs and government departments in a massive restructuring since the 19th national party congress in 2017.

The political scientist who declined to be named said the restructuring indicated a return to Leninism. "The party-state of recent years stems from Leninism," the analyst said.

Leninism also influenced Sun Yat-sen and the early days of the Kuomintang (KMT), which was set up in 1912 according to the structure of a Leninist state, Wu said.

The KMT retreated to Taiwan in 1949 after losing to the communists in a civil war. It upheld single-party rule in its early decades, until it lifted martial law and legalised opposition parties in the 1980s.

In mainland China, while Lenin is still a familiar name for many young people as someone they know from school textbooks, there is not much interest in him or his legacy.

Jade Song, 27, an employee of a public institute in southern Guangdong province, said her impression of Lenin was more from politics and history classes in school.

"When his name is mentioned, words like 'proletarian revolution' and soviet come to mind, as well as the impression of him as a revolutionary pioneer, a spiritual leader, and a figure who had a great impact on China. Also, he is usually mentioned along with Marxism," she said.

But topics related to Lenin were rarely raised among friends, she added. "So I feel that many people, like me, still mainly learned about him from textbooks and only have simple impressions but not deep understanding of his thoughts."

To Beijing university student Wu Yuening, Lenin is a complex historical figure criticised for his political repression. But "the history books present him more in a positive way as a revolutionary and theorist", the 19-year-old said.



Yuan, the leftist scholar, said young people in China showed more interest in Mao than Lenin.

"So many young people have flocked to Shaoshan [the birthplace of Mao] to commemorate the 130th anniversary of his birth [last December]. Young people pay more attention to Mao."

### **What's at stake for China as border tensions flare between Iran and Pakistan?**

20 January 2024, South China Morning Post

China is expected to step up its engagement to protect its interests in Iran and Pakistan after the two countries mounted tit-for-tat attacks in each other's border areas this week, analysts say.

But the attacks – the latest episode in a turbulent area at the centre of an independence movement that also involves part of Afghanistan – are unlikely to descend into broader conflict, they say.

Two children died on Tuesday night when Iran fired on two targets in Balochistan province in Pakistan, according to Pakistani authorities.

Tehran said it was targeting Jaish al-Adl, a Sunni separatist group that operates mostly in Iran's Sistan and Baluchestan province bordering Pakistan, where the ethnic Baloch are people seeking independence. Pakistan hit back on Thursday, killing nine people – including three children – in a border village in Sistan and Baluchistan province, Iran said.

Islamabad said it too was targeting rebel armed groups hiding in Iran.

The strikes triggered a series of diplomatic protests between the two sides.

China, a close partner of both countries, said it was following the situation closely and would like to play "a constructive role" in easing tensions.

The ministry urged Tehran and Islamabad to "remain calm and exercise restraint" and avoid escalation of the tension.

Abdul Basit, an associate research fellow at Singapore's S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, said the stakes for China were high in both countries.

"Tensions between Islamabad and Tehran are detrimental to Beijing's economic and geopolitical interests, while a stable Iran-Pakistan-Afghanistan region opens several opportunities for China to expand into Central Asia and beyond," Basit said.

"China still maintains a low-key approach in the Iran-Pakistan tensions. But through backchannel contacts, China will play a more proactive role in bringing tensions ... to a close."

As China's "iron brother", Islamabad has a close partnership with Beijing, with cooperation ranging from economic investment to defence.

Pakistan is the largest buyer of China's weapons. Nearly 54 per cent of China's major arms export

between 2018 and 2022 went to the nation, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

Pakistan is also home to dozens of projects related to the multibillion-dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a centrepiece of China's Belt and Road Initiative.

The corridor is part of Beijing's efforts to connect its far west Xinjiang to the Arabian Sea and key components are in Balochistan, one of Pakistan's poorest provinces.

But the Balochistan Liberation Army, a separatist insurgent group based in the province, has attacked Chinese infrastructure and personnel in protest against Chinese construction in the area.

China and Iran are also forging stronger relations, with the two countries signing an agreement in 2021 reportedly covering areas from investment to defence.

Despite sanctions imposed by the US, China's oil imports from Iran jumped 48 per cent year on year in the first half of 2023, making Iran its third-largest oil supplier.

Tehran also sees Beijing as an escape route from international isolation. Last year, China helped broker a peace deal between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and Tehran became a member of the Beijing-led Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in July.

This year, Iran will officially join Brics, an association of five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

Zhu Yongbiao, from the school of politics and international relations at Lanzhou University, said that maintaining border security, especially curbing the rise of separatist forces in the region, was crucial for China for economic and political reasons.

"[A stable border situation] will be beneficial for China in terms of belt and road project construction. Meanwhile, if the conflict escalates, the degradation of the security environment may affect China's western border, which [China] does not want to happen," he said.

Zhu said Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan often accused each other of harbouring terrorist organisations and further escalation would affect Afghanistan.

China is looking to Taliban-controlled Kabul for help to contain the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, which Beijing blames for violence and ethnic tensions in Xinjiang.

Iran and Pakistan are also two crucial partners for China in its counterterrorism efforts in the region. Last year, China began regular anti-terror talks with Pakistan and Iran "to tackle the cross-border movement of terrorists", the first dialogue of its kind with Iran and Pakistan.

Meanwhile, since Iran and Pakistan are both members of the SCO, an escalation may undermine Beijing's ambition to lead the Global South, according to Zhu.

"The SCO's major responsibility is to maintain cooperation on security. If two of its members clash, that will seriously affect the SCO's reliability and its capability, which is bad for Beijing," Zhu said.

Basit said tensions between Iran and Pakistan were not expected to escalate and both countries could use diplomatic channels to resolve the situation, especially as Pakistan headed into a general election next month, and Iran faced greater security challenges over conflicts in the Middle East from Gaza to the Red Sea.

Zhu added that the border clashes between Pakistan and Iran had continued for a long time and the two countries had plenty of experience in de-escalation.

### **Managing Regional Rivalries and Extraregional Interests as a Buffer State: The Nepalese Case Study**

19 January 2024, Georgetown Journal of International Affairs

Given India and China's contentious relations, smaller states in South Asia, such as Nepal, face challenging geopolitical realities. Nepal seeks to maintain amicable ties with both of its powerful neighbors, but the limits of being a small state in the region push it towards greater international participation to not be held prisoner by either India or China.

As a small landlocked country between India and China, Nepal has long been considered a buffer state—a small country sandwiched between larger rival powers—with its challenging geography in the Himalayan mountain range lending to this conceptualization. Nepal has sought to maintain close ties with India and China. However, China and India's economic rise as well as their border disputes have challenged Nepal's ability to walk the diplomatic tightrope. As China has increased its presence in Nepal, India has sought to respond through infrastructure investment in the country. China's continued attempts to exert political and economic influence in South Asia have alarmed New Delhi, which has historically considered the region within its security umbrella. In 2016, Nepalese Prime Minister Prachanda framed Nepal's role as a "dynamic bridge" between India and China and called to maintain equidistance. To avoid being beholden to Indian and Chinese interests, Nepal has committed to multilateralism in international politics and engagement with non-regional and international actors. It has actively participated in the United Nations (UN) and built relationships with the United

States and Europe. Thus, Nepal seeks to maintain its state agency despite being a small state in a geopolitical context heavily influenced by India and China.

#### **Nepal's Challenge**

Nepal has strong cultural, linguistic, and religious ties with India. The two countries' leaders often emphasize the civilizational and religious links between the world's only two Hindu-majority countries. China has sought closer ties with Nepal since the 2008 riots in the Tibetan Autonomous Region and the subsequent pressure to stabilize its restive frontier provinces. Since then, China has ramped up its trade and investment ties with Nepal, accounting for 14 percent of Nepal's international trade in 2022. Chinese investments are vital for infrastructure development in Nepal, which has long sought international investors. For example, in January 2023, Pokhara International Airport started operations after being constructed by China CAMC Engineering, a Chinese state-owned enterprise. The international airport was built at an estimated cost of \$216 million. These developments are a major concern for India given its history of cooperation with Nepal. Growing Chinese investments have invoked fears of a reduction in Indian influence, which have occasionally sparked tensions between India and Nepal.

Maintaining amicable relations with both of its neighbors remains a challenge for Nepal. Since opening its borders to international tourism in 1951, Nepal's foreign policymakers have carefully navigated its international relationships. Today, the country faces major challenges tied to changing political dynamics and power capabilities in the region. The country's foreign policy must address the security concerns of both of its neighbors, as Sino-Indian tensions continue to simmer with the powers' latest major border clash occurring in 2022. Nepal has also accrued considerable debt due to investments from Chinese state-owned enterprises; some fear that Nepal could have a similar fate as Sri Lanka due to extensive debt from infrastructure development. Nevertheless, Nepal's main challenge remains to manage its equidistant approach towards India and China amidst increased pressure from both powers.

#### **Non-regional Engagement as a Foreign Policy Strategy**

Nepal has long pursued engagement with non-regional actors to strengthen its political agency. Having joined the UN in 1955, Nepal has been active in UN peacekeeping missions and, as of August 2023, is the second largest contributor of the UN's troops and police. In addition, Nepal has historically been enthusiastic about joining international normative conventions. For

example, it is the first country in South Asia to abolish the death penalty. Nepal is also the only South Asian party to the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which seeks to abolish the death penalty globally. Furthermore, Nepal participates in regional and international organizations and explicitly supports UN principles in its foreign policy principles. Accordingly, it was also the first country in South Asia to decriminalize homosexuality in 2007, enshrine protections for LGBTQI rights in its constitution in 2015, and legalize same-sex marriages in 2023. Nepal also maintains strong ties with numerous European actors, such as the European Union, in promoting international development.

In line with its goal of engaging with non-regional actors, Nepal has built strong relations with the United States. In 2017, Nepal's government signed a \$500 million grant agreement under the US-led Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), mostly geared towards infrastructure development in Nepal. In February 2022, debates about the implementation of the MCC prompted protests in Nepal against increasing the US presence in the country. Chinese officials also lobbied against the MCC and claimed that the MCC represented coercive diplomacy. Despite these protests, Nepal and the United States agreed that the MCC would enter into force on August 30, 2023. The MCC presented Nepal with the opportunity to bolster its infrastructure, particularly in the energy sector. The grant included funds for constructing transmission lines to deliver energy from the country's hydroelectricity dams, which are projected to produce 12,000 megawatts of power by 2030. Some argue that the MCC constituted a US response to Nepal joining the China-led Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Strategic concerns abound in China regarding this development, reflecting how Nepalese relations with China may suffer if Nepal pursues further US engagement. Nevertheless, the MCC presents Nepal with an opportunity for infrastructure investment while bolstering ties with an extra-regional power—preventing India and China from “boxing in” Nepali diplomatic relations.

Nepal building ties with European and American development partners seeks to ensure that Nepal's foreign policy does not revolve around regional powers India and China. Seeking extra-regional partnerships and committing to international normative frameworks not only help attain some of Nepal's development needs but also diversify its foreign relations. While this approach may not fully overcome Nepal's geopolitical contentions, it reinforces the country's commitment to multilateralism

and international norms to expand its agency in international politics.

#### Managing the Challenge

Nepal finds itself increasingly under pressure from India, as China increases its influence in the country. The challenge for Nepal remains to manage ties with its neighbors amidst closer US-India ties and increasing Sino-US contentions. The MCC demonstrates that Nepal has garnered attention from the United States. US investment may strain Nepal's relations with China, as Sino-US tensions become more pronounced. The country has consistently shown a keen interest in maintaining its agency by engaging in international politics and partnering with Western powers.

To manage the dynamic geopolitical changes in the region, Nepal must continue its equidistant approach vis-à-vis India and China. However, other regional ties would also help Nepal maintain its geopolitical agency. Nepal could improve its regional engagement by bolstering regional connectivity through the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).

Concurrently, Nepal's efforts in strengthening ties with extra-regional powers should continue. This approach may allow Nepal to garner international prestige while not sacrificing the country's limited resources and capabilities. Nepal should also maintain its close development partnership with European actors and the United States. Such relations are essential for both the country's material development and the diversification of Nepal's diplomatic and strategic ties. Nepal should also reiterate its commitments to international multilateral efforts by supporting UN peacekeeping missions, LGBTQI rights, women's rights, multilateralism, and non-violent conflict resolution. Nepal could further promote its agency internationally through initiatives among other landlocked developing countries in the UN. Such ties would likely prevent Nepal from being geopolitically boxed in the region. Thus, despite its limited capabilities and resources, Nepal can partake in regional and international initiatives and strengthen its international presence.

### The Futile Legacy of Mao Zedong

19 January 2024, Foreign Policy

Just after Christmas, the People's Republic of China's increasingly authoritarian leader-for-life Xi Jinping celebrated Mao Zedong's 130th birthday. Xi led the Politburo's Standing Committee in a requiem in the Great Hall of the People for the infamous Red Emperor, the greatest mass murderer in modern if not all human history. The members thrice bowed before the grand killer's statue and remembered his “achievements.”

Mao's thoughts are a "spiritual treasure" and would "guide our actions in the long term," Xi said. The Chinese people must "work to enable our party to adhere to its original mission ... maintain vitality and vigor, and ensure that our party never degenerates, never changes its color, and never loses its flavor." Under Mao, Xi said earlier last year, the Chinese Communist Party developed a "brand new form of human civilization."

Ironically, by strengthening his arbitrary rule, Xi is actually making an eventual counterreaction more likely. Ever-tightening repression poisons the entire system. Fear exiles honesty and accountability in policymaking, leading to more and bigger mistakes, including at the top. State centralization and politicization are reversing the very forces that spurred economic growth. The determination to indoctrinate as well as regulate already has spawned antagonistic youth movements that challenge authority. Political stability is likely to be only temporary; when Xi passes from the scene, the succession fight is likely to be more bitter and fraught.

Not everyone agrees with Xi. On a recent trip to China, I met an academic colleague who expressed profound pessimism, which he said many intellectuals and others shared. In the past, he observed, they at least could look forward to some change every five or 10 years, when a new party general secretary (and president) was chosen.

But no longer. Not only is Xi president for life, but the party is also rapidly reverting back to the habits of the Maoist era.

Yet Xi was not alone in reveling in the supposed achievements of the Great Helmsman. Mao's birthplace in the southern Hunan province, which I've visited, has long been a major tourist destination. Today, it may be the one place in China where a dissident can covertly promote revolution. As a Nikkei report on the anniversary observance noted, "The younger attendees on Tuesday seemed particularly inclined to chant slogans considered more extreme in their rhetoric. Those included such slogans adopted by China's Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution as 'No crime in revolution!' and 'To rebel is justified!'"

However, as Xi concentrates his power, I wonder who these young visitors think they're rebelling against.

Right now, Xi's power seems unshakeable. But so did Mao's during his lifetime. Almost immediately after he died, policies began to change—and had shifted on the ground even beforehand. Within a decade or two, the country was almost unrecognizable.

Some of the devotion to Mao was real, and he retains some fervent fans. When I visited his impressive mausoleum in Tiananmen Square a few

years ago, the lines were long. Many people bought flowers from vendors before entering to set before Mao's massive bronze statue in the entryway. Some visitors seemed genuinely overcome with emotion. However, capitalism ultimately triumphed: On exiting, everyone passed by stalls marketing overpriced Mao tchotchke.

That the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) continues to cling to Mao to maintain its revolutionary credentials is embarrassing, but hardly surprising. Mao remains one of China's most recognizable symbols. His portrait hangs on the Gate of Heavenly Peace on Tiananmen Square's northern edge. His mausoleum dominates the space and is much more impressive than Vladimir Lenin's dark and dank resting place. And Mao's face adorns China's currency.

All this was built on a pile of corpses. The CCP consolidated power with campaigns against so-called counterrevolutionaries, landlords, and other enemies, killing 5 million or so Chinese. In 1950, Mao made the decision to enter the Korean War to save North Korean leader Kim Il Sung. Some 200,000 Chinese soldiers died, along with untold thousands killed by them in a war prolonged by two-and-a-half years. In 1956, Mao initiated the Hundred Flowers Campaign or Movement, in which he encouraged the people to speak freely. Apparently shocked after receiving criticisms rather than encomiums, he responded with the Anti-Rightist Movement, in which millions were killed.

In 1958, Mao's fertile mind came up with his worst idea yet: the so-called Great Leap Forward, simultaneously collectivizing farming and decentralizing manufacturing. Estimates of total deaths vary widely, but perhaps the most comprehensive account came from a party member and Xinhua reporter. Yang Jisheng figured: "[T]he Great Famine brought about 36 million unnatural deaths, and a shortfall of 40 million births."

Mao's final flight into pure madness was the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The murderous mix of party purge, civil war, and social collapse may have caused as many as 2 million deaths.

Mao's death was almost as consequential as his life. Pragmatic revolutionary Deng Xiaoping won the resulting power struggle and moved China down the course of economic reform. However, Deng, like Mao, rejected political liberalization and orchestrated the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, which was followed by purging millions of party members.

The CCP recognized that Mao had made mistakes, but it was unable to let go of the legacy of the national founding father altogether. Mao was still 70 percent right, the official verdict decided. (Contrast the Soviet Union's Nikita Khrushchev, who was able

to take Joseph Stalin's legacy down entirely, in part because Lenin provided a convenient alternative state founder.)

Even after Tiananmen, China remained far freer than under Mao. However, that was then. In almost every way, Xi has shoved his nation backward.

Independent journalists and human rights lawyers are gone. Internet controls are tighter. Repression of churches is more intense. Academic exchanges are more limited. Controls over Tibetans, Uyghurs, and Hong Kongers have metastasized. Companies host party cells. Business is being made to serve the CCP.

And Xi has greatly strengthened party and personal control and uses both propaganda and coercion to insist that everyone thinks like him. He has tried to control history, presenting an idyllic version of the party's bloody past. There is a burgeoning personality cult, though it seems perfunctory, lacking the ardor and intensity that more often surrounded Mao, at least during the latter's life.

An important problem with Xi's retreat to Maoism is the absence of Mao. Give the latter his due: Charismatic and driven from the start, he took a weak and divided movement from defeat to triumph and cast off centuries of Western and Japanese imperialism. In contrast, Xi is a colorless apparatchik who carefully ascended a party structure created by others. He wants Mao's control without having earned, brutally and bloodily, Mao's power.

Opposition exists but is futile. Wall Street Journal reporter Lingling Wei reported on a meeting at which a forlorn liberal administrator who had worked on stock market reform "signaled me to a corner of the venue. ... 'The whole thing about getting listed companies to set up party committees,' he said, 'is a reversal of what we had tried to do.' Then he walked away without saying anything else." Indeed, China may be slipping back toward the Soviet Union in terms of political sentiment, if not economic achievement. People are still much better off than before, but a sense of ennui, even despair, afflicts those who desire personal freedom to enjoy their material bounty and personal opportunity to shape the social order around them. Xi, like Leonid Brezhnev, insists that soulless apparatchiks are the center of society.

It appears to be the fate of every nation that the worst will get on top, sometimes. However, as Friedrich Hayek predicted, they will do so more often in communist systems.

China is proving the rule. There was Mao. Now there is Xi. With Xi celebrating Mao, hopefully there won't be another.

## With an Eye Toward India, China Bolsters Military Infrastructure Development in Tibet

19 January 2024, The Diplomat

A new 80 billion yuan investment in TAR infrastructure is part of Beijing's long-term strategic design for handling internal and external threats.

On January 11, China announced an 80 billion yuan (\$11.2 billion) investment to boost key infrastructure such as airports, railways, and highways in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) by the year 2035. This was disclosed through a government work report released after the second meeting of the 12th People's Congress of the Autonomous Region..

Besides China's expansionist policies, the massive infrastructure buildup in TAR is being driven by both external and internal threats, as Tibetans continue to resist Chinese domination. These massive strategic investments not only substantiate India's growing concerns but also vindicate claims from the Tibetan diaspora that infrastructure developments in Tibet are a major instrument of repression, primarily serving Beijing's strategic and expansionist designs.

Strategically, this major announcement fits within the broader objective of Beijing's aim to establish a highly effective and expansive three-dimensional transportation network in the Tibet Autonomous Region, connecting it with other regions in China and also with other countries in South Asia. Beijing's long-term infrastructure plan also solidifies its military's ground and logistic network and air infrastructure, boosting the realization of the Chinese People Liberation Army's strategic layout of the Tibet Military Region (TMR) by 2035.

The People's Liberation Army was restructured into theater commands in 2016. The Western Theater Command (WTC) consists of the Tibet Military Region, Xinjiang Military Region, 76th and 77th Group Army, and is primarily tasked with addressing security threats stemming from India, especially along the disputed Sino-Indian border.

The PLA's strategic plan for the Tibet Military Region aims to internally connect all the PLA units under the WTC stationed within TMR and externally connect with other forces under other theater commands. Infrastructure developments within the TAR are part of this strategic vision.

According to the TAR's government work report, the 80 billion yuan will go toward three sectors: air, rail, and roads. In terms of air transport, the plan calls for 10 new general airports and 47 temporary take-off and landing points. For railways, the funding will go toward the Tibet section of the Sichuan-Tibet Railway, electrification renovation projects for the Bomi-Ranwu section of the Yunnan-Tibet Railway, and electrification renovation projects for the Gela section of the Qinghai-Tibet Railway. Three road projects are



identified: construction of the Medog to Chayu section of National Highway G219, an upgrade and renovation of National Highway G318, and opening of the entire Lhasa-Shigatse (Lashi) Expressway to traffic.

These projects are in keeping with the 14th Five Year Plan of Tibet Autonomous Region, released in 2021. The plan laid out Beijing's long-term objective (through 2035) of strengthening TAR's transportation and logistics infrastructure system by building a comprehensive, three-dimensional transportation network based on railways, high-grade highways, and airports.

Critically, the national development plans enshrined in the 14th Five Year Plan were designed along the lines of China's military development strategy, as remarked by Xi Jinping's speech to the PLA and Armed Police Force in 2020. Fan Xiaojun, the political commissar of the Northern Theater Command, also stated that the purpose of the 14th Five Year Plan is for military construction and preparation for war to integrate peacetime and wartime support systems.

The Aviation Development Plan in TAR

The People's Government of TAR work report released on January 11 specifically mentioned that the major allocation of 80 billion yuan will prioritize the construction of 10 new general airports and 47 temporary take-off and landing points in 2024. The construction of 10 new general airports is part of the General Aviation Development Plan of Tibet Autonomous Region (2021-2035), which aims to construct 59 new general airports, seven new transport airports, and 200 aprons in TAR by 2035. Beijing's long-term aviation development plan has clear military orientations, with the major aim of building military air infrastructure. The General Aviation Development Plan of TAR states that the construction of airports in the border areas of the region will be prioritized to form the "national security barriers" providing strong support for the military force. As shown in the following table, the 59 planned general airports are strategically placed in the counties of TAR along the China-India border. Moreover, the General Aviation Development Plan of TAR has clearly stated the planned airports will actively engage in military flight activities under the public services classification, including national defense stability maintenance, emergency rescue missions, border defense and surveillance, and short-distance transportation.

After the completion of general airport construction, the PLA's Army Aviation Brigades of Tibet Military Region and other aviation units of the Western Theater Command will play a key role in mobilization and spearheading PLA's military operations along the India-China borders.

The Railways and Roadways Development Plan in TAR

The rest of the 80 billion yuan investment will be allotted to accelerate the completion of major rail and road development projects in the Tibet Autonomous Region. The railways and roadways are expected to strengthen the PLA's ground and logistical network in TAR.

The main focus of the railway projects in TAR this year will be to fast-track the construction of the TAR section of the Sichuan-Tibet Railway and to start electrification renovation projects for the Bomi-Ranwu section of Yunnan-Tibet Railway and Gela Section of the Qinghai-Tibet Railway.

These railway projects have clear military implications for India. Internally, the rail network will connect all the Western Theater Command's units within TAR, and externally it connects the WTC with other theater commands. The ramping up of construction of the Sichuan-Tibet and renovation of the Qinghai-Tibet railway will strengthen the connectivity and logistic network between the Tibet Military Region with the PLA units under the 76th and 77th Group Army, stationed in Sichuan and Qinghai province.

The renovation of the Bomi-Ranwu section of the Yunnan-Tibet Railway will facilitate the connection of all critical areas of Tibet along the borders from Xinjiang toward Lhasa and Nyingchi to all the major cities of Yunnan province. Yunnan is the home to major PLA brigades under the 75th Group Army of the Southern Theater Command, including the infantry, artillery, air defense, and armored brigades stationed across cities like Dali, Kunming, Kaiyuan, and Lancang, etc.

Suyash Desai has argued that the Bomi-Ranwu section of the Yunnan-Tibet Railway will allow rapid mobilization of these PLA units under the 75th Group Army stationed in Yunnan on the India-China border in TAR during possible future military clashes. Critically, the Yunnan-Tibet Railway will also be used by PLA Rocket Force units stationed in Yunnan, such as the 96824 Unit stationed in the Xiaoshiba District of Kunming.

The underlined railway projects come under China's major railway planning document, the Tibet Autonomous Region 14th Five-Year Plan Mid- and Long-term Railway Network Plan. Overall, the plan envisions building a railway network of about 5,948 kilometers running through all the border areas of TAR, connecting all prefectures and 55 counties of TAR internally and externally with all nearby provinces such as Sichuan, Gansu, Qinghai, Yunnan, and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, and ultimately with the main railway network across China by 2035.

As per the railway construction projects under the Mid- and Long-term Railway Network Plan, the layout of the railway network was designed to first and foremost connect all the border areas of TAR, including the India-China border, via new and planned railways. Again, this effort will accommodate the PLA's strategic design, as exemplified by the construction and expansion of the Yunnan-Tibet Railway, Xinjiang-Tibet Railway, Sichuan-Tibet Railway, and Qinghai-Tibet Railway. China's mammoth railway construction plans in TAR are set to be completed in 2035, which includes 10 major projects to build new railway lines, three major reconstruction and expansion projects, and one new railway branch line.

The comprehensive three-dimensional transportation network in TAR would be incomplete without the roadway plans as funded under the 80 billion yuan announced on January 11. In 2024, road projects such as the Shiquanhe Town to Kunsha Airport section of highway G4218, the Medog to Chayu section of highway G219, and the upgrade and renovation of highway G318, and opening of the Lhasa-Shigatse (Lashi) Expressway will be rapidly accelerated with the planned investment.

Roadway development in TAR is also part of broader Beijing's plan, as outlined in the Fifth National Highway Network Plan issued in July 2022.

Implications for India and Beyond

After the infamous Galwan Valley clash with India in 2020, the Chinese army has attempted to capture numerous Indian military border posts, leading to continuous violent clashes, as per the latest reports. Examples of China's military excursions against the Indian Army since the Galwan clash include PLA soldiers attacking the Indian Army post in Shankar Tekri along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) on January 7, 2022. Another clash ensued when about 50 PLA soldiers tried to cross the LAC at Atari Post on November 27, 2022. All these events are worrying, given the potential for such clashes to escalate into a broader war.

Regardless of the ongoing border peace talks between India and China, the disputed border region remains the most conflict-prone area and a key flashpoint in Asia, where "politics, proximity, and paranoia" raise the possibility of escalation. By 2035, after all the military infrastructure and construction in TAR laid down in the long-term plan are completed, Beijing will be more than prepared to launch a massive military operation against neighboring countries along its western frontier.

The recent ramping up of the construction of military infrastructure is part of Beijing's aim to gain an absolute advantage against Indian forces along the border and will massively strengthen the PLA's transportation, logistical capabilities, and overall

combat readiness in TAR. Therefore, infrastructure development plans under the 14th Five Year Plan for Tibet Autonomous Region have major strategic implication not only for India and its neighbors but also for the international order.

## Unmasking Global Corruption: A Tale of China, America, and Nepal

17 January 2024, BNN

Global corruption is exposed in the US and China, Europe grapples with political instability due to corruption scandals, while China restructures its military amid fears of a Taiwan invasion. Nepal's political future hangs in the balance.

In a world dominated by power and money, the corrosive tendrils of corruption seep into the upper echelons of both American and Chinese societies. The recent public disclosure of trial documents related to the infamous Jeffrey Epstein has shone a glaring spotlight on the rot within the American elite. Meanwhile, on the other side of the globe, the Communist Party of China's Central Committee has also opened its closets to reveal a grim reality. Over the past decade, more than 1.6 million Party officials have been investigated for corruption. Despite this stark revelation, the Communist Party has pledged to embark on a 'self-revolution' to tackle this systemic issue.

Corruption: A Global Challenge

The cancer of corruption is not limited to these global superpowers. Across the Atlantic, in the heart of Europe, several high-profile individuals and officials are entangled in corruption scandals. From Albania to Russia, Portugal to the European Parliament, the scandals span the spectrum of power abuse, cash-for-influence networks, and even interference with EU Sakharov Prize nominations. This widespread corruption has triggered political instability and fuelled opposition against ruling parties.

Portugal's Prime Minister Antonio Costa recently stepped down unexpectedly in the wake of revelations about an investigation into potential government corruption. The shockwaves of his resignation are yet to settle, with the future of his Socialist Party hanging in the balance.

China's Military Restructuring

As the world grapples with corruption, China's President Xi Jinping is undertaking a major restructuring of the country's military. The move, seen as an attempt to replace any generals hesitant about engaging in warfare, has raised the specter of a possible invasion of Taiwan. Xi's military reforms, which include overhauling Beijing's military forces and improving military-civilian cooperation, have intensified focus on Taiwan, a self-ruled island that China claims as its territory.

## The Political Landscape of Nepal

While the world's superpowers grapple with corruption and military ambitions, the political landscape of Nepal is caught in a critical crossroads. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the global trend leaned towards the US as a model. However, Nepal stood as a stark contrast with a Marxist socialist party rising to power. Despite this, recent acceptance of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) terms by Nepal's ruling party suggests a leaning toward American influence. This raises important questions about the party's socialist credentials and the country's future direction.

### **Tibetan issues not in focus, but repression persists – exiled former leader**

16 January 2023, Greek City Times

The plight of Tibet has become less discussed internationally but repression continues and China is applying what it did there to other regions, a former head of the Tibetan government-in-exile said on Saturday.

China seized control of Tibet in 1950 in what it describes as a “peaceful liberation” from feudalistic serfdom. International human rights groups and exiles routinely condemn what they call China’s oppressive rule in Tibetan areas.

Speaking to Reuters during a visit to Taiwan to observe the island’s elections, Lobsang Sangay, the leader of the India-based Central Tibetan Administration until 2021, said Tibet had somewhat fallen off the international agenda.

“I think Tibet is not current,” said Sangay, who remains an influential figure in the exile community and close to exiled spiritual leader and Nobel laureate the Dalai Lama, who he met with in India just before arriving in Taipei.

Tibet went through mass protests in 2008 before Beijing held the Olympics, and then a series of self-immolations by Tibetans in protest against Chinese rule, but then what China was doing to Uyghurs in Xinjiang followed by the security crackdown in Hong Kong took more attention, he added. “On the one hand, yes, there is less coverage about Tibet. That doesn’t mean the situation in Tibet is less serious,” Sangay said. China’s Foreign Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment. China does not recognise the exiled government, and has defended its rule in Tibet as bringing much needed development to what was a backward and feudal society. Sangay said other ethnic minorities in China had very similar experiences to the Tibetans.

“I always say, if you close your eyes and listen to a Mongolian speaking, a Uyghur speaking, a Tibetan speaking, the situation is very similar.” In the 1990s and early 2000s problems in Tibet were viewed as

an “isolated, more peripheral issue”, and people who visited China thought engagement would make the country “more like us”, Sangay said. “But when it happened to the Uyghurs, to Hong Kong and potentially Taiwan, people thought hey, this is a system you are dealing with. This is an expansionist power.”

### **China’s perspective on ties with Pakistan and CPEC’s prospects**

16 January 2024, Hindustan Times

This year marks a decade since the announcement of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). This brief analyses Chinese-language literature to understand the country’s current stance on Pakistan and the CPEC. Two trends emerge. First, China appears to be facing a dilemma over Pakistan. While the Chinese government wants the CPEC to be successful, China’s strategic community now shows little optimism on the initiative. Second, contrary to the common perception that a crisis-hit and weak Pakistan will be more firmly entrenched in the Chinese sphere of influence, Islamabad now has few backers in Beijing. China is keen for Pakistan to work on its internal stability and to creatively engage multiple stakeholders, particularly India and the US, to help successfully implement the CPEC and its larger geostrategic goals.

In recent months, Pakistan has been grappling with what some analysts have referred to as a “polycrisis” – an “existential” economic crisis, an intense political conflict between the government and opposition leader Imran Khan, and a drastically deteriorating security situation. Pakistan has sought assistance from “friendly countries” and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to stabilise its economy and strengthen its ability to pull through the ongoing crisis. While Pakistan did secure an initial approval from the IMF for a \$3 billion loan programme on 30 June 2023, mere hours before the IMF agreement expired, overall, this time, international assistance for the country has been somewhat less forthcoming. Most notable was China’s ambivalence to a faltering Pakistan, despite being the country’s largest creditor, and having the ability to restructure its debt and reverse its economic free fall. Despite the rhetoric of an ‘iron-clad, all-weather friendship’ between Beijing and Islamabad, of Pakistan being the fulcrum of China’s South Asia policy, and of the \$60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) being the cornerstone of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China chose a ‘wait and watch’ policy on the Pakistan situation, often even suggesting the US is to blame for Pakistan’s current plight. At one point, even Pakistan’s strategic circles—which are rarely critical of China—began to question why Beijing was

not doing more to help Islamabad. Significantly, China's current reticence comes on the back of reported cuts to the CPEC budget (by a substantial 56%) in 2022.

Amid this backdrop, this brief examines Chinese resources—the discourse in the Chinese-language media, discussions on the Chinese internet, and writings by Chinese academics and scholars—to understand the current dynamics of China-Pakistan relations.

### **Feature story: The continuing saga of housing for Tibetan Exiles in India**

16 January 2024, Phayul

The issue of housing for Tibetan exiles in India persists as a complex challenge, despite concerted efforts from multiple stakeholders, including the Indian government, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), and associated religious leaders. While the larger chunk of Tibetan exiles in India have been accommodated in established and compact settlements, a number of Tibetan exiles still linger in a limbo of extended uncertainty. The responsibility to help those who are without housing facilities rests with the exile Tibetan government, known officially as the Central Tibetan Administration. However, the weight of blame does not rest entirely on the administration.

The affected group notably include newly arrived Tibetans and members of scattered Tibetan settlements, who, despite arriving early in India, do not have homes of their own. This disparity in housing provision stands stark against the backdrop of 35 established Tibetan settlements in India, 12 in Nepal, and 7 in Bhutan, which serve as vital anchors of the community.

#### **History and present initiatives**

The genesis of the housing issue can be traced back to the aftermath of China's occupation of Tibet in 1959, compelling over 80,000 Tibetans to seek refuge outside Tibet. The Dalai Lama and the Government in exile took on the arduous task of rehabilitating these displaced refugees. Tibetan refugee settlements were established in collaboration with India, Nepal, and Bhutan, with the aim to preserve Tibetan socio-cultural values within cohesive communities.

Despite the establishment of these settlements, a considerable number of Tibetans continue to live outside these established communities, presenting a persistent challenge. To address this disparity, the Department of Home, Central Tibetan Administration, under the 16th Kashag, launched the "Building Back Compact Communities" (BBCC) project, also known as "Shipoe Leyshi" in Tibetan.

The primary objective of this initiative is to provide housing facilities to Tibetan exiles lacking permanent residences, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and stability within the diaspora. The last administration led by former President Dr. Lobsang Sangay has also undertaken projects to provide housing, in new compact communities in Bir, Bylakuppe, Dickyiling where many households were provided housing. Successive administrations over the course of the last few decades have also pushed forward with their own initiatives to solve the problem of housing.

The current administration, in an official notice from the Department of Home on October 18, 2023, revealed that 655 households, primarily comprising recently arrived Tibetans from Tibet, applied for housing allotment. Additionally, a subsequent notification on April 28, 2023, urged homeless Tibetan households to register, resulting in 992 new household names, including 354 newly arrived Tibetan households and 638 scattered Tibetan households. As of now, a total of 1,647 households have registered for the project.

#### **The plan ahead**

The 1,647 households consist of Tibetan exiles from various locations across India, including Bangalore, Mundgod, Lugsam, Kollegal, Ladakh, Tengang, Shillong, Bir Dege, Bir BTS, Shimla, Dharamshala, Kullu, Mandi, Sunder Nagar, Rewalsar, Gangtok, Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Sonada, Dehradun, Harbertpur, and Hunsur, encompassing 2,661 family members.

The CTA plans to rehabilitate these households by carving out chunks of land in existing Tibetan settlements of Odisha (Phuntsokling), Mainpat in Chhattisgarh state (Phendheling), and in Mundgod (Doeguling), Bylakuppe (Chokor), Hunsur (Rabgyaling), Kollegal (Dhondenling), Bylakuppe (Lugsam Samdupling), Bylakuppe (Dicki Larsoe) in South Indian states of Karnataka. They were given the deadline of November 10 to complete the form and select at least two preferred settlements as options from the lot.

Upon finalizing the preferred choice of settlements, the CTA will provide a plot of land as well as financial assistance to construct the houses. Families choosing Mundgod (Doeguling) and Bylakuppe (Dicki Larsoe) will receive 5 lakh rupees from the CTA, while those opting for Hunsur (Rabgyaling) and Kollegal (Dhondenling) will receive 7.5 lakh rupees. Those choosing Bylakuppe (Lugsam Samdupling) will receive 2.5 lakh rupees, and families selecting Odisha (Phuntsokling) and Mainpat in Chhattisgarh state (Phendheling) will have the entire houses built for them by the CTA.

Deputy Secretary of the Department of Home, Ngudup Wooser, speaking to Phayul revealed that

the project began some time ago. However, limited participation in the form-filling stage has slowed the project's progress and that the project is currently stuck in its early stages. When the households finalize their preferred settlement choices, the department will then coordinate with settlements to identify available land in those settlements. The entire project is expected to take between 2 to 4 years.

This initiative aligns with the incumbent Sikyong Penpa Tsering's speech in Shimla on May 11, 2023, where he highlighted that the growing trend of migration of young Tibetans from India to foreign countries, has led to a decline in school enrollment and settlement population. The present Kashag plans to revitalize settlements and schools by resettling the people who lack permanent residence in areas with available land and housing.

President Tsering said that his project serves two purposes; one of providing housing to the houseless Tibetans but also strengthening the existing Tibetan settlements and repopulating the settlements which have been depleted by varying factors like migration to the west, declining birth rate as well as little to no new refugees from Tibet.

#### Voices from the ground

The ongoing project by the current administration as well as those initiated by the previous administration under former President Dr. Lobsang Sangay is not immune to criticism, with questions over viability, practicality and quality of finished projects.

Challenges of livelihood is a persistent talking point in the larger context of the relocation project. Phuntsok, a third-generation resident of Rangzen Camp in Shimla, shared his concerns about the proposed relocation project impacting the approximately 60 households in his scattered Tibetan settlement in Shimla. The community originally settled in the region decades ago when Tibetan refugees were involved in road construction for a livelihood and later set up small businesses along the encampment. Phuntsok emphasized the economic challenges that they would face if they were to relocate to the new settlements, as the families in their camp are currently engaged in business activities in Shimla during the summer.

He explained that the Himachal government had instructed them to vacate the land, promising an alternative plot in Shimla. Despite their legal stay-order, Phuntsok expressed confusion about the future, questioning whether they would have the opportunity to register for housing once the Himachal government fulfils its commitment to allot plots near Shimla, especially if they participate in the housing scheme under the Tibetan government.

CTA official Ngudup Woesser told Phayul that efforts by the administration to acquire land for households in legally contested areas like Shimla, Dharamshala,

among others have not been successful and that the department cannot assist individuals who wish to remain in these contested areas. The President of the CTA, Penpa Tsering has said on several occasions that houseless Tibetans can avail the benefits of housing while also being engaged in businesses and livelihoods elsewhere so that households can use the housing during the time when they are not engaged in their seasonal businesses. He stressed that his administration will exercise "leniency" in that regard, in contrast to his predecessor.

Another grievance towards the project is the size of the houses, particularly those allotted in the projects initiated by the previous Kashag. Dekyi Yangzom, leader of newly inaugurated Mundgod Camp 10, a project that was initiated by the previous administration and completed a few months ago, told Phayul that the problems are faced by the small families due to the size of the houses. The housing for bigger families consisting of more than two family members is spacious and good but the housing for childless families and single people are small, with only one room, kitchen and bathroom. Out of 40 houses, 24 are 300 sq. ft, which were distributed to a single person or a family with two members, whereas the remaining 16 are 600 sq. ft, which were distributed to families with more than two members.

She, however, added that we are grateful to the Tibetan government for allotting them the houses but said that with the money spent on that scale, the finished product could have been more user-friendly in terms of space. Questions however linger over whether expectations for more spacious and better housing are legitimate or overly expectant of the administration whose capability to deploy funds are dependent on availability of funds as well as the approval of the parliament.

#### What is the way forward?

The Project "Building Back Compact Communities" to provide land and housing to houseless households has a host of challenges primarily stemming from the absence of common ground between the CTA and the beneficiaries. The beneficiaries must have realistic expectations from the administration on what help the CTA can provide, considering the limited funds as well as the number of people seeking help. Since government projects are for the masses, each unit cannot be tailor fitted to the needs of individuals.

On the administration's part, the key agenda should be scoping the ground realities and understanding the needs of the beneficiaries so that the funds deployed translate into fulfilling the aspiration of the target group, and avoiding grievances in the future. Projects must be drafted in consultation with stakeholders, especially when it is for the rehabilitation of the mass.



## Taiwan's president-elect Lai Ching-te: How China, US and Russia reacted to his election

13 January 2024, Live Mint

Taiwan elections 2024: Lai Ching-te, candidate of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP), won the Taiwan election held on Saturday, January 13. Both China and the United States reacted sharply to the latest polls as the DPP secured unprecedented third consecutive term in the nation.

Taiwan's election took place at a time of growing geopolitical tensions between Beijing and Washington. China claims Taiwan as its own. But Lai's party rejects China's territorial claims. It is speculated that Taiwan's president-elect Lai Ching-te may have to deal with the ire of China which has repeatedly denounced him as a "dangerous separatist".

Taiwan elections: How China reacted to Lai Ching-te's victory?

China said on Saturday "reunification" with Taiwan was still "inevitable" after president-elect Lai Ching-te won the pivotal election on the self-ruled island, AFP reported. The election "will not impede the inevitable trend of China's reunification", Beijing's Taiwan Affairs Office spokesperson Chen Binhua said in a statement published by state news agency Xinhua.

The spokesperson was quoted as saying that the vote "will not change the basic landscape and development trend of cross-strait relations". He said Beijing "firmly oppose(s) the separatist activities aimed at 'Taiwan independence' as well as foreign interference". Chen Binhua said the results did not "represent mainstream public opinion on the island" of 23 million people.

China strongly opposes Lai. In Beijing's view, Lai, 64, is a separatist and "troublemaker through and through" for comments he first made in 2017 as premier about being a "worker" for Taiwan's formal independence - a red line for Beijing.

How US reacted

The US, which is Taiwan's main military partner, said it does "not support independence" of Taiwan. "We do not support independence..." US President Joe Biden was quoted by Reuters as saying when asked for reaction to Saturday's elections.

Earlier, the US had pledged support for whichever government emerges. In a show of support for the government, Biden plans to dispatch an unofficial delegation to the self-governed island, according to a senior Biden administration official.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken congratulated Lai Ching-te on his victory and said the US "is committed to maintaining cross-strait peace and stability, and the peaceful resolution of differences, free from coercion and pressure." He said the US looks forward to working with Lai and leaders of all

parties in Taiwan to advance their "longstanding unofficial relationship, consistent with the US one China policy."

The United States is Taiwan's most important international backer and arms supplier despite the lack of formal diplomatic ties with the island.

How Russia reacted

Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman said Russia's position on Taiwan is unchanged and that the country considers it an integral part of China, TASS reported.

## Sino-Indian Border Infrastructure In The Indian Defense Ministry's Year End Review – Analysis

14 January 2024, Eurasia Review

The Indian Ministry of Defense released its Year End Review 2023 a few days ago. The review provides a state of play on areas under its purview including defense production and exports, major defense acquisitions, border infrastructure, and individual service updates from the Indian army, navy and air force. Much of what India is attempting to do in the defense realm has to do with China and its growing military prowess. However, a look at past year-end reviews demonstrates that it is not always so overt in doing so. In this regard, the Year End Review for 2020 was an exception, as there was a special emphasis on China's aggressive behavior. The review came only a few months after the Galwan clash, in which India lost 20 soldiers, so this is maybe not so surprising. But since then, it appears that India has gone on to do a more general review that scans all the major developments concerning the Indian Ministry of Defense.

Even though there was no specific mention of China in this year's review, the construction of border infrastructure along the India-China border is accelerating and there is a detailed appraisal of the current status in the review. This is important given that India and China are still locked in a conflict with a total of around 150,000 troops standing by on both sides of the border. Many commentators have suggested that it was the infrastructure race that led to the Chinese actions in 2020.

Upgraded infrastructure comes with enormous benefits, from better trade to commercial prospects. It's also a critical enabler for applying military power. In the case of India and China, there has been an evident military imbalance as far as defense platforms, military units, and the physical infrastructure. China's focus on building modern state-of-the-art infrastructure across the border and in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) has had an important bearing in terms of its ability to get troops to the border. The extensive road network in Tibet as well as the rail links that China has developed in

these areas have facilitated troop mobilization by road and rail in a short time span. Further, China's establishment of oil and logistic depots all along the border areas says a lot about the advanced infrastructure capabilities that China has put in place, which in turn put India at a significant disadvantage. The Indian side continues to face limitations when it comes to troop mobility and logistics supply to forward areas because of the relatively poorer state of infrastructure on its side of the border. Infrastructure development on the Indian side has picked up pace in recent years, but the Indian military still faces many constraints. In October, in a study on the state of the Sino-Indian border infrastructure John Swartz provided a detailed account of the improvements to date. Swartz writes that "the increased number of tunnels and bridges also signals far more investment, operational capacity, and technical capability, while independently adding to the quality of the road system." He added that as far as air forces are concerned, India has enjoyed topography-induced "strategic advantage" (which allows India to launch aircraft at full capacity) and therefore even with a smaller budget, India's position is not badly placed. However, the rail connectivity in the border areas presents a rather bleak picture, with Swartz arguing that there exists "a large asymmetry."

The 2023 review notes that the Indian Defense Minister dedicated a total of 118 infrastructure projects led by the Border Roads Organization (BRO), although this is across the country and not limited to Sino-Indian border areas alone. In September, the minister unveiled 90 projects across 11 states and union territories. Of the 90 projects, a large number of them belong to the Sino-Indian border areas including 36 in Arunachal Pradesh; 26 in Ladakh; 11 in Jammu & Kashmir; five in Mizoram; three in Himachal Pradesh; two each in Sikkim, Uttarakhand and West Bengal and one in Nagaland. Across different sectors along the Sino-Indian border, notable projects included the Nechiphu Tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh; as well as two airfields, two helipads, 22 roads and 63 bridges. In January 2023, 28 infrastructure projects were kicked off at an event at Siyom Bridge on Along-Yingkiong road in Arunachal Pradesh. These projects included 22 bridges, including Siyom bridge; three roads and three other projects in seven border states or union territories of the Northern and North-Eastern regions, comprising of eight projects in Ladakh; five in Arunachal Pradesh; four in Jammu and Kashmir; three each in Sikkim, Punjab and Uttarakhand and two in Rajasthan. The review claimed that the BRO was able to complete these strategically vital projects in record time, most of them within a single working season using the best available technology.

As for the scale of work, the review stated that 601 kms of roads have been finished during the year. The review added that extensive work has been done "on India-China Border Roads and all other Op-Critical Roads along the Northern Borders." This includes critical roads such as Nimu-Padam Darcha road, Gunji-Kutti-Jolingkong road, Balipara-Chardwar-Tawang road, TCC-Taking road, TCC-Maza road that are proceeding at an accelerated pace. Some of the major road projects that are at varying stages of work, with some nearing completion in the coming months include: Raqni-Ustad-Pharkiyani Gali road and Srinagar-Baramulla-Uri road in Jammu and Kashmir; alternate connecting road to DBO road in Ladakh as well as the Chushul-Dungti-Fukche-Demchok road; and in Uttarakhand, the Gunji-Kutti-Jollingkong road, a road in the Ghatibagarh-Lakhanpur-Lipulekh Pass, and Nyu Sobla-Tidang road. The government also set up three telemedicine nodes, including two in Ladakh and one in Mizoram this year. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Home Affairs has approved the construction of four roads, a total of 255 kms, in Arunachal Pradesh under Project Arunank.

As for tunnels, the BRO has undertaken work on 20 tunnels, 10 of which are under construction and 10 in the planning stage. The BRO will soon begin working on the 4.1 km Shinku La Tunnel on the Nimu-Padam-Darcha road in Ladakh, with aims to complete it by December 2025, according to Union Minister Anurag Thakur who detailed the Cabinet decision. When completed, this will be the highest tunnel in the world at an altitude of 15,855 ft, and will provide better connectivity irrespective of weather to the border areas around Ladakh. Another important tunnel project currently underway is the Sela tunnel on Balipara-Chariduar-Tawang Road in Arunachal Pradesh which involves two tunnels of twin tube configuration.

The review notes that this can reduce the travel distance by more than 8 kms and bring down travel time by an hour, and most importantly it will establish all-weather connectivity to Tawang. This tunnel, when completed, will possibly break another record in terms of being the longest bi-lane highway tunnel in the world at an altitude of 13,800 feet. There is also the 260-meter Kandi Tunnel in Jammu and Kashmir, strengthening connectivity between Jammu and Poonch that was completed in October. Some of the key bridges in the border areas include a permanent bridge over the Shyok River in Ladakh which was completed in March. During the year, a total of 3,179 meters of bridges were developed.

All of this has been possible with better financial allocation and a sharper focus from the government following on from the increasingly adversarial nature of ties between India and China. According to the

review, the BRO's budget has come to "a record high of Rs 12,340 crore in FY 2022-23 with a 100% jump in the funds allocated under GS Capital Head over the preceding two years which now stands at Rs 5,000 crore."

Given the state of bilateral relations between India and China, New Delhi is doubling down on its efforts regarding strategic border infrastructure. In fact, since the Galwan conflict began in the summer of 2020, infrastructure development has received a strategic push to get troops and military supplies positioned near border areas. India's push comes in the wake of China's two-decade-long push from the late 1980s to construct state-of-the-art infrastructure across Tibet and the Sino-Indian border areas. India's defensive approach to infrastructure development changed only in the late 2000s after seeing China's modern road and railway networks and what they meant in the context of the Sino-Indian border conflict.

### **China Failed to Sway Taiwan's Election. What Happens Now?**

13 January 2024, New York Times

China's leader, Xi Jinping, has tied his country's great power status to a singular promise: unifying the motherland with Taiwan, which the Chinese Communist Party sees as sacred, lost territory. A few weeks ago, Mr. Xi called this a "historical inevitability."

But Taiwan's election on Saturday, handing the presidency to a party that promotes the island's separate identity for the third time in a row, confirmed that this boisterous democracy has moved even further away from China and its dream of unification.

After a campaign of festival-like rallies, where huge crowds shouted, danced and waved matching flags, Taiwan's voters ignored China's warnings that a vote for the Democratic Progressive Party was a vote for war. They made that choice anyway.

Lai Ching-te, a former doctor and the current vice president, who Beijing sees as a staunch separatist, will be Taiwan's next leader. It's an act of self-governed defiance that proved what many already knew: Beijing's arm-twisting of Taiwan — economically and with military harassment at sea and in the air — has only strengthened the island's desire to protect its de facto independence and move beyond China's giant shadow.

"The more hard-line, tougher approach hasn't worked," said Susan Shirk, a research professor at the University of California, San Diego, and the author of "Overreach: How China Derailed Its Peaceful Rise." "That's the reality of Taiwanese politics."

That evolution, cultural and political, comes with risks. Mr. Lai's victory forces Mr. Xi to face a lack of progress. And while China's full response will play out over months or years, China's Taiwan affairs office said Saturday night that the election cannot change the direction of cross-strait relations, effectively ensuring that the dynamic of brinkmanship and stress will continue and most likely intensify.

China and the United States have made Taiwan a test of competing sensitivities and visions. To Beijing, the island is a remnant of its civil war that the United States has no business meddling with. To Washington, it is the first line of defense for global stability, a democracy of 23 million people and the microprocessor factory for the world.

The gargantuan stakes add gravity to every word or policy that Mr. Lai or his party might deliver now and after his inauguration in May. With Taiwan's sense of self and China's expectations in conflict, Mr. Xi is not expected to sit idly by.

Before the election, in editorials and official comments, Chinese officials painted Mr. Lai as a villain, calling him a stubborn "Taiwan independence worker," a "destroyer of cross-strait peace" and potentially the "creator of a dangerous war."

During the campaign, Mr. Lai, 64, a veteran politician respected by supporters for his quiet determination, said that Taiwan did not need formal independence. In a news conference after his victory, he said he would seek a balanced approach to cross-strait relations including "cooperation with China," following the path of his predecessor, Tsai Ing-wen.

But there is little chance of China changing its opinion.

"Lai Ching-te is an impulsive and politically biased figure, so we cannot rule out the possibility that unpredictable and unknown developments may occur during his tenure," said Zhu Songling, a professor of Taiwan studies at Beijing Union University.

"I'm afraid it's very dangerous," he added, noting that Mr. Xi's views on Taiwan were clear. That includes his insistence that force can be used if necessary.

Western scholars of Chinese politics are not much more optimistic.

"The next four years will be anything but stable in U.S.-China and cross-strait relations," said Evan S. Medeiros, a professor of Asian studies at Georgetown University.

Like other analysts, he said to expect a familiar suite of pressure tactics.

At the very least, China will keep trying to manipulate Taiwan's politics with disinformation, threats and economic incentives. Chinese officials have also hinted they could target trade, eliminating more tariff concessions.

Expanded military drills are another possibility. Chinese fighter jets, drones and ships already encroach on Taiwan almost daily.

Beijing has also shown that it will keep prodding Washington to pressure Taiwan and to cut military support. Messages of alarm are becoming a common feature of U.S.-China diplomacy.

In Washington, on the eve of Taiwan's election, Liu Jianchao, the head of the Chinese Communist Party's international department, met with Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken. The United States said Mr. Blinken "reiterated the importance of maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait."

Mr. Liu, based on other official statements, most likely warned the United States not to intervene "in the Taiwan region" — a complaint sparked by an announcement that a delegation of former officials would head to Taipei after the election. Such visits have followed past elections. China's Foreign Ministry condemned "the American side's brazen chattering."

There are no plans in Washington to go silent, however, or constrain cooperation. Quite the opposite. Last year, the Biden administration announced \$345 million in military aid for Taiwan, with weapons drawn from American stockpiles. Bills in Congress would also tighten economic ties to Taiwan, easing tax policy and laying a foundation for economic sanctions against China if it attacks.

Having worked with the Americans as vice president, Mr. Lai can move faster, analysts said, possibly into more sensitive areas.

The United States could increase collaboration on cybersecurity, strengthening communication networks to a point that blurs the line with (or prepares for) intelligence sharing. It could seek to place military logistics equipment on the island — a strategy the Pentagon is introducing throughout the region.

It is also an open secret that American military advisers, mostly retired officers, have a growing presence in Taiwan. Some Taiwanese officials call them "English teachers." Under Mr. Lai, many more could be on the way.

"Beijing has been turning a blind eye, so the question is: What size of that presence will cross the Rubicon?" said Wen-ti Sung, a political scientist at the Australian National University's Taiwan Studies Program. He added: "Hopefully each additional step will not be seen as overtly provocative to elicit or justify a massive Chinese reaction."

War, of course, is not inevitable. It may be less likely right now, when China is busy with a dismal economy and the United States with wars in Europe and the Middle East.

Some analysts also hope that Mr. Xi will find a way to claim victory in the election and step back from

antagonism. With a third-party candidate, Ko Wen-je, winning 26 percent of the vote with a vague focus on a middle path in China relations, Mr. Lai won with just 40 percent.

"It's in China's national interest to expand the path of peaceful integration so they won't have to fight," Professor Shirk said. "There are a lot of people watching this interaction and Beijing's reaction — all the investors are watching it too."

In Taiwan, however, there may be little Mr. Xi can do to polish China's image. In recent surveys, less than 10 percent of Taiwanese respondents considered China trustworthy.

"We have seen too many examples of what Xi did to Hong Kong and how he treated his people," said Cheng Ting-bin, 56, a teacher in Taipei who voted for Mr. Lai.

Most Taiwanese see their future elsewhere. On Saturday, many said they hoped the government could leverage the powerful semiconductor industry to build connections to Southeast Asia and Europe.

During the campaign, any identification with China seemed to have been erased. Though Taiwan's official name is the Republic of China, a holdover from when Chinese nationalists fled there, R.O.C. references were hard to find. At Mr. Lai's rallies, supporters wore shimmering green jackets with "Team Taiwan" written in English across the back.

Even the Nationalist Party, known for favoring closer ties with Beijing, emphasized deterrence, the status quo and Taiwanese identity. Its candidate, Hou Yu-ih, spoke with such a strong Taiwanese accent that Mandarin speakers unfamiliar with local inflections had a hard time understanding him.

In many ways, the election was less of a referendum on China policy than usual. Cost-of-living issues became more dominant in part because the candidates' platforms on foreign affairs all aligned with what most people said they wanted: a stronger military, closer ties with the democratic world, and a commitment to the status quo that avoids provoking Beijing but also seeks to tiptoe out of its orbit.

"What we want is just to preserve our way of life," said Alen Hsu, 65, a retiree who said his father had come from China and his son serves in the Taiwanese Air Force.

"China," he added, "simply cannot be trusted."

### **China: Guidelines Instruct Religions How to Implement the New Patriotic Education Law**

12 January 2024, Bitter Winter

The key statute on domestic indoctrination is in force since January 1. Now religions are told how they should enforce it. We offer a full English translation of the Guidelines.

On January 4, 2004, the 25th meeting of the National Joint Conference of Religious Groups was held at the China Islamic Association. The five authorized religions issued Guidelines on how the Patriotic Education Law should be implemented by religious communities, making them even more than before mouthpieces for the Party's propaganda. As the Guidelines state, believers should understand that in China "the state is greater than religion, and the state law is greater than religious rules."

We offer a full English translation of the Guidelines.

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The "Patriotic Education Law of the People's Republic of China" is our country's first law on the theme of patriotism. The formulation and implementation of the Patriotic Education Law, and the promotion and protection of patriotic education in the new era through the rule of law, are of great and far-reaching significance for inheriting and carrying forward the national spirit, gathering the people's strength, promoting the construction of a strong country and national rejuvenation. To conscientiously study, publicize, and implement the Patriotic Education Law, inherit and carry forward the spirit of patriotism in our country's religious circles, and enhance the national awareness, civic awareness, rule of law awareness, and patriotic sentiments of religious clergy and religious believers, we issue the following directives:

Adhere to the principles of patriotism, love for the party and love for socialism. Strengthen patriotic education and deeply understand that without the Chinese Communist Party, there would be no New China, there would be no socialism with Chinese characteristics, it would be impossible to realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and there would be no good possibility of a healthy life for the various religions in our country today, and no happy life for the vast number of religious believers. Our country's religious circles must learn, think, and practice Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, especially General Secretary Xi Jinping's important expositions on religious work, firmly support the "two establishments" and resolutely achieve the "two safeguards" to safeguard national unity and peace. We should focus on national unity, understand the idea of building a socialist modern country in a comprehensive way, and realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation as a distinct theme, strengthen ideological guidance, cultural cultivation, educational guidance, and practical cultivation, build a solid sense of the Chinese nation's community, and continuously enhance our respect for the great motherland, the identity of the Chinese nation, Chinese culture, the Chinese Communist Party, and socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Adhere to and carry forward the fine tradition of patriotism. Our country's religious circles have a long and profound tradition of patriotism. Buddhism advocates "dignifying the land, benefiting and loving people," Taoism insists on "helping the world and benefiting people, protecting the country and loving the people," Islam advocates "patriotism is part of faith," Catholicism emphasizes that "patriotism is a commandment of God," and [Protestant] Christianity requires that "a good Christian should be a good citizen." These are the enduring spiritual riches of our country's religious circles. We must deeply explore the patriotic values contained in Chinese religious thought, actively publicize the glorious history of the unity and struggle of our country's religious circles under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, and tell vivid stories of patriotism, love of religion, and dedication to society with heart and soul, so that patriotism can become the firm belief, spiritual strength, and conscious action of religious clergy and religious believers.

Persist in filling up our country's religion with excellent traditional Chinese culture. Strengthen cultural self-confidence, inherit and develop China's excellent traditional culture, carry forward socialist core values, strengthen religious ideological construction, deeply explore the content of the teachings and canons that are conducive to social harmony, the progress of the times, and healthy civilization, and make adjustments to the teachings and canons so that they are in line with the development and progress of contemporary Chinese requirements and in line with the official interpretation of China's excellent traditional culture, and promote the deepening and solidification of the Sinicization of religion in our country. Strengthen the study and use of the country's common spoken and written language by religious circles in the process of interpreting and preaching scriptures, organize religious clergy and religious believers to recite Chinese classics, and carry out learning and experience activities for China's excellent traditional culture. Celebrate the Spring Festival, Lantern Festival, Qingming Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, and other important festivals together. Through colorful folk cultural activities, we can experience traditional culture and enhance our feelings for our country.

Continue to carry out patriotic education and practice patriotic activities. Make full use of commemorations of major national historical events, national public memorial ceremonies, patriotic education bases, etc. to carry out extensive patriotic education and inspire patriotism among religious clergy and religious believers. Continue to carry out education on the history of the Party, the history of the New China, the history of reform and opening



up, the history of socialist development, the history of the development of the Chinese nation, and education on the theme of loving the Party, patriotism, and socialism, and further promote the "Four Advances" activities at religious venues. Integrate patriotism throughout the entire process of education and teaching in religious schools and into various subjects and teaching materials.

Adhere to comprehensive and strict governance of religions, strengthen the self-construction of religious groups, and establish a good image of patriotism and love of religion in the religious community. Carry out publicity and education on the socialist rule of law, and guide religious clergy and religious believers to firmly establish the awareness that the state is greater than religion, the state law is greater than religious rules, and the people are citizens first. Relying on magazines, websites, public accounts, etc. sponsored by religious circles, we will produce, broadcast, and publish excellent works on patriotic themes, set up special columns, strengthen publicity and reporting, sing the main theme of patriotism, and strive to comprehensively promote the construction of a strong country and the great cause of national rejuvenation. We will contribute wisdom and strength.

China Buddhist Association

China Daoist Association

China Islamic Association

Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association

Catholic Bishops Conference of China

Three-Self Patriotic Movement

China Christian Association

National Association of Chinese Young Men Christian Associations

National Association of Young Women's Christian Association of China

### **China's external propaganda on Tibet: Erasing Tibet to 'tell a good Chinese story'**

11 January 2024, International Campaign for Tibet

China's Tibet policy has been a subject of international scrutiny ever since its invasion and subsequent occupation of Tibet in 1959. The Chinese government knows that there is a political problem in Tibet. But rather than resolve it, one of its approaches is to falsify the situation and employ various methods to control the narrative around Tibet, aiming to reshape its portrayal in global discourse. This report examines China's recent external propaganda efforts concerning Tibet, highlighting the objectives and the tactics.

China's external propaganda efforts regarding Tibet have been a complex and multifaceted undertaking, spanning decades and utilizing diverse channels and strategies. In the first four decades following the

establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, China suffered significant damage to its international image. Mao Zedong's invasion of Tibet, China's conflicts with neighboring nations, the calamitous Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution all inflicted immense harm on China's reputation in the global community.

Deng Xiaoping, who succeeded Mao, introduced market reforms aimed at altering China's trajectory, but the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989, occurring under his rule, further tarnished China's image, the repercussions of which persist to this day. Subsequent leaders, including Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, intensified China's external propaganda activities to rehabilitate and enhance the country's international standing, portraying China as a peaceful and developing nation.

Accordingly, Beijing took specific steps to impact the international perception of its conduct in Tibet. In 1993 a secret two-day "Conference on the Work of the External Propaganda on the Question of Tibet" was held in Beijing by the Chinese government to review its strategy. From leaked documents of the meeting, which the International Campaign for Tibet had obtained and subsequently published,[1] it was clear that the foremost concern of the Chinese government was how to address the challenge of the loss of the propaganda war internationally over Tibet. One document of the meeting talked of how "the distorted propaganda and attacks of the Dalai Cliques and international enemy forces still enjoy a large market in the world".[2] The meeting recommended that among other things, "Multi-level and different forms of vivid and lively propaganda should be carried out regarding sovereignty and human rights record. Its aim is to promote the further understanding on the part of the overseas people of the question of Tibet so as to eliminate the impact created by the Dalai Clique and the international enemy forces through their distortions and attacks against us ... and to win the support and sympathy of the overseas people for us".[3]

Many recommendations made at the Beijing meeting were incorporated into decisions of the 1994 Third Forum on Work in Tibet. The Third Tibet Work Forum marked an official end to moderate policies and a dramatic increase in political repression. The situation in Tibet following this meeting saw tighter internal security, longer prison sentences for political activism, increased control over monasteries and nunneries, intensified political education in schools and more detentions. The forum identified the influence of the Dalai Lama and the "Dalai clique" as the root of Tibet's instability. Officials at the third work forum described the Tibetan independence movement as a snake, and their attempts to "cut off the serpent's head" led to restrictions of the spread

of Buddhism and a political campaign to destroy the religious as well as the political standing of the Dalai Lama.[4]

Comprehending the international community's sympathy for the Tibetan cause, during Jiang Zemin's term, dialogue was restarted in 2002 between his officials and the Dalai Lama's envoys. This was continued under Hu Jintao and extended into the years leading up to the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics, finally ending in 2010. Some China watchers are of the view that the talks with the Dalai Lama's envoys were merely a pretense, aimed at temporarily alleviating international criticism of China's actions in Tibet until the conclusion of the Olympics.

Since 2008, human rights in Tibet have deteriorated greatly. Tibetans' ability to engage in religious activities, move and associate freely, express concerns, access information and enjoy due process is severely curtailed. Their right to enjoy a healthy environment, access resources to achieve an adequate livelihood and access Tibetan-medium language education is also restricted.

The pivotal year of 2008 marked Beijing's decisive move to accelerate its efforts to control the narrative surrounding Tibet. This strategy included a dual approach, to curtail the outflow of stories depicting its atrocities and to propagate its own narrative on Tibet. There was thus a policy aimed at halting the exodus of Tibetan refugees from Tibet, partly to halt the dissemination of their accounts of Chinese atrocities.

In 2009 there were strategic substantial investments (approximately US \$7.25 billion, according to Professor Anne-Marie Brady of the University of Canterbury) for "big propaganda" (Chinese: da waixuan) to bolster international news coverage on China and enhance its global presence.[5] This dual strategy, aimed at curbing the dissemination of Tibetan accounts while actively promoting China's perspective, has remained in effect for the past 15 years, showcasing Beijing's persistent efforts to control the discourse on Tibet.

External propaganda in Xi Jinping era

Xi Jinping emphasized early in his tenure the importance of external propaganda in shaping China's global image and narrative. On Aug. 19, 2013, during his address to the National Propaganda and Ideology Work Conference, Xi advocated for "innovation" in China's external propaganda efforts, promoting the idea of effectively "telling China's story." [6]

Xi highlighted the necessity for meticulous and adept external propaganda, urging innovative methods that blended Chinese and external elements to effectively communicate China's narrative. He emphasized the importance of creating new

concepts, categories and expressions to articulate China's perspective and voice on the global stage.

Taking advantage of Chinese investments launched in 2009 to strengthen international news coverage and global presence, Xi's directives to pursue innovative external propaganda have led China's external communication efforts to unprecedented levels of assertiveness and ambition. Leveraging advancements in information technology and bolstered by the nation's growing confidence in its national power, these efforts signify a significant evolution in China's approach to global propaganda on Tibet.

Rebranding Tibet as 'Xizang'

The latest development in the propaganda strategy is the attempt to impose the Chinese term "Xizang" in place of "Tibet" to the international community. Capitalizing on the turmoil caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, China quietly and strategically introduced a new policy around fall 2021. Amid the pandemic, the Chinese party-state aimed to eliminate Tibet's name from global discourse, with the sinister objective to replace it with the Sinified term "Xizang." Over the past two years, since the policy's discreet inception, it has become evident that China's propaganda attempts to erase the name "Tibet" are being systematically, gradually and incrementally implemented on the global stage. This effort is part of China's external propaganda strategy to present a favorable narrative of the country under the theme to "tell a good Chinese story."

China employs a strategic linguistic approach aimed at substituting the term "Tibet" with "Xizang," a Sinified term, in order to reduce the international recognition of Tibet as a distinct entity. This policy, introduced during the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic in fall 2021 by the Chinese Communist Party Propaganda Department, was quietly implemented without significant public attention. [7] Reflecting on the two years since its launch, it is evident that the rebranding strategy of Tibet as Xizang is gradual, deliberate and incremental.

The initial introduction of propaganda portraying Tibet as Xizang can be traced to the tabloid Global Times, owned by the state media organization People's Daily.[8] In recent times, Xinhua and People's Daily have started using it. Even when the term Tibet is utilized, these Chinese state media entities are sure to append "China's Tibet" to emphasize their preferred propaganda phrase.[9]

The intermittent use of the term "China's Tibet" is expected to persist in the short to medium term, eventually transitioning gradually toward China's preferred propaganda term "Xizang" in the long run. Recognizing Tibet as a widely recognized global name, the Chinese party-state anticipates that its external propaganda strategy for Tibet will require

time to succeed. Paradoxically, despite its intent and available resources, the Chinese party-state faces the challenge of imprinting its preferred term when very few outside China are familiar with the term Xizang. China's past efforts in rebranding Tibet as Xizang had failed, but the current unfolding strategy seems to be more confident and better planned than in the past.

#### Propaganda forums on Tibet

The concerted effort to officially and internationally promote the term Xizang gained momentum in 2023. Initially the push unfolded gradually through state or party-affiliated media channels and external propagandists aiming to normalize "Xizang" usage.

One particularly prominent platform for this propaganda was the 7th Forum on the Development of Tibet, which reconvened on May 23, 2023, after a hiatus since 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The forum's title and theme reveal its propagandistic nature. Officially titled "2023 Forum on the Development of Xizang, China: New Era, New Xizang, New Journey-New Chapter in Xizang's High-Quality Development and Human Rights Protection," the forum marked a deliberate attempt to replace the internationally recognized name "Tibet" with "Xizang" in English-language discourse.

[10] This strategic shift is evident when compared to the titles of the previous six forums, which were all titled "Forum on the Development of Tibet, China."

The pivotal moment arrived in October 2023 when China began to officially use "Xizang" for Tibet in the English rendition of Foreign Minister Wang Yi's remarks during the third "Trans-Himalaya Forum for International Cooperation" held in Tibet.

[11] Notably the event saw the participation of officials from over a dozen countries, several of which share borders with Tibet. All reference to Tibet in his opening speech at the forum on Oct. 5 was given as "Xizang," including calling the Qinghai-Tibet plateau the "Qinghai-Xizang plateau." This rendition of Wang's speech adds weight to his pronouncement of the external orientation of China's propaganda work to Sinify Tibet's global image and erase the internationally recognized term "Tibet" in diplomatic discourse.

The orchestration of such events falls under the purview of the State Council Information Office (SCIO), also known as the CCP Central Office of Foreign Propaganda, an institution established in 1991 with the primary aim of countering international backlash following the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989.

SCIO has remained consistently engaged in propagating the Chinese narrative on Tibet. It orchestrated a series of 'Forums on the Development of Tibet,' with the first event in the series held in the Austrian capital of Vienna in 2007. The second was

held in the Italian capital Rome in 2009, and the third was held in the Greek capital of Athens in 2011. Since the fourth forum, which was held in the Tibetan capital Lhasa in 2014 (the fifth and sixth were also in Lhasa in 2016 and 2019, the seventh in Beijing in 2023), the Tibet Autonomous Region has also been named as a co-organizer. This could be a deliberate move to lend official credence to the TAR's government, aligning its participation with the overarching narrative orchestrated by Beijing. Incidentally, the seventh forum held in May 2023 had "Xizang" replacing Tibet in the English version of documents.

#### Propaganda through conferences

Multiple conferences with an international orientation were also orchestrated throughout 2023 in addition to the above-mentioned forum. One such event was the "7th Beijing International Tibetology Symposium," themed "Prosperity and Development of Tibetology and an Open Tibet," held on August 14, which sought to manipulate academic platforms for political agendas to push China's narrative for the foreign audience.[12]

Presented as a scholarly exchange co-hosted by United Front entities, including the China Association for the Preservation and Development of Tibetan Culture, the conference underscored China's tight control over academic dialogue and genuine mutual learning. It served to legitimize the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) approach in Tibet and promoted a state-centric narrative on Tibet. Activities and awards for "Research on the Relationship between Tibet and the Central Government since the Yuan Dynasty (Volume 1 and 2)" exemplified this effort to push forward historical propaganda.

Through the format of an interview to Chinese state media, Li Decheng, deputy director-general of the China Tibetology Research Center, further advanced the state narrative on Tibetan Buddhism's reincarnation practice. On Aug. 16, 2023, during the 7th Beijing International Symposium on Tibetology, Li launched a pointed attack on the 14th Dalai Lama, asserting that the recognition of the Dalai Lamas is the prerogative of the Chinese government and not the 14th Dalai Lama himself. According to Li, religious affairs are part of Chinese state affairs, and the management of religious affairs should be in accordance with state-promulgated laws.[13]

An editorial published in the United Front News WeChat account soon after the symposium reinforced China's strategy of dominance in Tibetology, touting its achievement in suppressing Tibetology in Western academia. The editorial framed academic progress as a competition between China and the West on Tibet. Oversimplifying the multifaceted nature of Tibetology and dismissing critical scholarly work, it alleged that Western

scholars have ulterior motives in their research efforts to control the narrative on Tibetology and the pursuit of truth.

The Chinese party-state also convened a first “Tibet Chinese National Community Awareness Forum” at the InterContinental Lhasa Paradise, owned by the InterContinental Hotels and Resorts group, in Lhasa on Sept. 18, 2023.[14] The forum, whose theme was “Creating the Soul of China and Co-Creating a Model District,” brought together a total of 420 delegates, primarily Chinese academics, from all over China to share ideas to “better strengthen national unity and safeguard the reunification of the motherland in Tibet.”[15] State media highlighted numerous Chinese academics specializing in supplying ethnic policy ideas toward creating a Chinese nation.

#### Discrediting the Dalai Lama

For many around the world, Tibet and the Dalai Lama are inseparable. Almost three decades ago, the Chinese party-state made a deliberate decision to target the Dalai Lama. In July 1994, during the CCP’s Third National Forum on Work in Tibet held in Beijing, a vehement campaign against the Dalai Lama was initiated. Party documents, using aggressive and crude language, likened the Tibet issue to a serpent, with the Dalai Lama portrayed as its head. According to these documents, “The focal point in our region’s fight to oppose splittism is to oppose the Dalai clique. As the saying goes, to kill a serpent, we must first cut off its head. If we don’t do that, we cannot succeed in the struggle against splittism.”[16]

This aggressive campaign against the Dalai Lama, launched in 1994, persists to this day. In Tibet, the party has prohibited Tibetans from displaying his photograph, routinely condemns the Dalai Lama during party meetings and mandates that Tibetan job applicants express no affinity toward him.

On the global stage, the Chinese party-state, in its external propaganda, frequently refers to the Dalai Lama as a “wolf in sheep’s clothing,” a puppet of the CIA, a former serf master or even a demon. While the global community widely admires the Dalai Lama for his efforts in promoting peace and human unity, the CCP has incessantly pursued its campaign over the years to discredit and vilify him, aiming to neutralize the Tibet issue.

The CCP policy to discredit the Dalai Lama persists. In April 2023, leveraging the susceptibility of global media to sensationalism, shadow propagandists from China orchestrated a smear campaign against the Dalai Lama. They distorted an innocent interaction between the Dalai Lama and an Indian boy at a public event, falsely framing it as an act of pedophilia.[17] By editing and manipulating an official video recording of the public gathering, these

propagandists fabricated and disseminated a narrative depicting the Dalai Lama as a pedophile.

The Chinese authorities took further leverage of global media reports on the distorted projection of the Dalai Lama with the boy for propaganda against the Dalai Lama for the Chinese audience. Writing under the name of the “Human Rights Research Institute of Southwest University of Political Science and Law” to gain credibility, the domestic audience was provided a compilation of negative reports carried by global media against the Dalai Lama. [18] The report carries offensive and defensive arguments over the incident to drive home the Chinese Communist Party’s propaganda goal of demonizing the Dalai Lama.

Misusing modern technology for information control  
The Chinese government extensively employs censorship and information manipulation to suppress critical information regarding Tibet’s political situation, human rights violations and cultural suppression. It utilizes modern information technology not to address societal issues but rather for censorship and surveillance purposes.

Contrary to the optimistic view of modern information technology as a solution to human problems, the Chinese government has embraced these advancements for controlling information and surveillance. The CCP’s utilization of information technology for repression is extensively documented. As global technological advancements move toward artificial intelligence in 2024, there’s little doubt that the Chinese government will harness this technology to further suppress dissent under the guise of “innovative management.”

The Chinese government has tightened its control over the flow of firsthand accounts from Tibet by imposing stricter border controls to prevent Tibetans from sharing their experiences of CCP governance.

The year 2008 marked a significant shift in controlling the exodus of Tibetan refugees. Beijing’s focus on bolstering its international image shifted gears after the successful staging of the Summer Olympics. In the months preceding the Olympics, widespread uprisings against Chinese governance erupted in Tibet.[19] In response to these events and in alignment with its strategy to enhance China’s global image following the Olympics, the Chinese party-state initiated various measures to stem the outflow of Tibetans.

The annual average of approximately 2,500 Tibetan refugees escaping through the mountains saw a notable decline in 2008. While 2,338 Tibetan refugees crossed the border in 2007, this number plummeted by 75% in 2008, with only 588 making the journey. This policy aimed at halting the flight of Tibetan refugees has seen remarkable success, with a sharp decline to merely five arrivals in 2022. The

Chinese government's stringent measures have yielded near-perfect success in stemming the flow of Tibetan refugees and their narratives.

By turning Tibet into a highly securitized enclave and effectively curtailing the flow of firsthand accounts from the region, the Chinese party-state hopes it has successfully cleared obstacles to amplify its external propaganda on Tibet.

Propaganda tactics: Vetted foreign media tour

China's stringent control over access to Tibet remains extensively documented, and journalists are particular targets of this strategy.[20] Journalists, only a select few, are only provided access after being meticulously vetted to align with the Chinese Communist Party's narrative, and they constitute the exclusive group permitted entry through state-organized and managed tours. This carefully curated access serves a dual purpose: to counter international criticisms and to craft a favorable image of Chinese governance, positioning it as a model for the global community.[21] China has persistently sought to influence countries in the Global South, advocating for its vision of "people-centered" development and the concept of "harmonious development between human beings and nature."

An illustrative example of this orchestrated narrative presentation was the program by the China International Press Exchange Center for some 30 journalists in Tibet. From Oct. 3 to 8, 2023 they facilitated the visit of these journalists from 20 countries to Nyingtri and Lhasa in Tibet, as part of "telling the real story of Tibet." [22] Notably, the journalists were from countries such as Pakistan, Nepal, Belarus, Ethiopia, Chile, Vanuatu, Timor-Leste, Malaysia, Kyrgyzstan, and Georgia—predominantly underdeveloped or developing nations, often sharing similar political ideologies, and frequently recipients of Chinese aid and loans.

Echoing China's propaganda: diplomatic tours and state-controlled narratives

China is known to be leveraging its diplomatic channels and economic influence to exert pressure on international organizations, governments and corporations to conform to its prescribed narrative on Tibet. Utilizing its position as a global power, the Chinese government orchestrates tours to Tibet for selected foreign diplomats, primarily from developing countries, to amplify its external propaganda on Tibet. These carefully curated tours showcase a sanitized version of Tibet, devoid of the stark realities of human rights abuses, cultural suppression and environmental degradation.

In August and September 2023, a delegation of 11 Geneva-based foreign diplomats from developing countries, including Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua, Pakistan and Belarus, visited Tibet at the invitation of China's Foreign Ministry. Ambassador Khalil

Hashemi, the permanent representative of Pakistan (he has since been appointed as the Pakistani Ambassador to China), led the group.[23]

During their visit, the diplomats were met by Yan Jinhai, deputy secretary of the Party Committee and chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Region. Chinese state media reported that Yan extolled Tibet's "achievements" in economic development, living standards, national unity, cultural preservation and ecological efforts under the leadership of the CCP.

Despite the international community's persistent concerns about the human rights situation in Tibet, the delegation ignored these issues and instead echoed the CCP's propaganda.

A similar group of foreign diplomats, primarily from developing countries, was taken on a tour of Tibet in May 2023, just before the forum on the development of Tibet. Chinese state media extensively quoted these delegates, presenting their glowing affirmations as validation of Beijing's narrative on Tibet.[24]

For instance, the ambassador of the Philippines to China praised China for ensuring that "local [Tibetan] students can learn new things, but also while preserving their own culture, their own language."

Similarly, the ambassador of Nepal to China lauded China's Belt and Road Initiative for promoting connectivity and enterprise structural development.

Both these ambassadors echoed Chinese propaganda at the expense of the reality of the situation in Tibet.

Foreign propagandists in service

Under Xi Jinping, Communist China is increasingly resorting to tactics reminiscent of its early revolutionary days. One such tactic involves cultivating an international image using foreign influencers. Historically, figures like American journalists Edgar Snow and Anna Louise Strong were instrumental in allowing the party-state to communicate the merits of the communist model to the world. In the contemporary era, where social media wields greater influence than traditional media within specific audience segments, the party-state has actively been engaged in recruiting foreign influencers to disseminate its propaganda through digital channels.

These foreign social media influencers amplify or defend the CCP's messages to global audiences. While their impact within Tibet, particularly among Tibetans themselves, remains minimal, they serve the party's interests by bolstering its legitimacy among Chinese citizens and by advocating for and disseminating the party's narrative on Tibet abroad.

A recent report by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) outlines that the CCP-state has orchestrated an extensive network of international individuals who propagate its online propaganda



and narratives on China, aiming to portray itself as a respectable adherent to global norms and regulations.[25] This effort includes the establishment of multilingual influencer studios, engagement with international students in Chinese universities and competitions incentivizing creators to advocate for the CCP's perspective.

According to ASPI, Beijing has recruited over 120 international influencers willing to align their content with the CCP's narratives, endorsing its values, policies and ideology. These influencers are instrumental in bolstering the party's credibility among Chinese audiences and amplifying its propaganda on the global stage. Some influencers, seeking increased popularity and revenue, have discovered that aligning with Chinese nationalism through promoting CCP propaganda can expedite their success, exploiting algorithms of mainstream social media platforms that prioritize consistent and trending content. The report further highlights the prevalence of content generated by Chinese state media and foreign influencers dominating searches related to contentious topics like Tibet and Xinjiang, utilizing social media algorithms favoring frequent posting of new material.

ASPI underscores that while these influencers aren't directly instructed by state media, they are motivated by rewards, inducements and limitations. The report cautions that the proliferation of foreign influencers advocating for the CCP will complicate the discernment between genuine, factual content and propagandistic material, posing challenges for social media platforms, foreign governments and individuals seeking to distinguish between the two.

Examining the content shared by foreign influencers on the topic of Tibet, it emerges that their primary goal is to defend the Chinese government against worldwide criticisms, while presenting themselves as neutral and independent observers or "journalists" unaffiliated with China.

Screenshots of a sample of collected postings below serve as compelling evidence of the agenda of the foreign influencers. Their strategic dissemination includes promoting the contentious replacement of the universally recognized name "Tibet" with the Chinese-imposed term "Xizang," aligning with China's persistent endeavor to control the narrative surrounding Tibet. They advocate for China's boarding schools designed for Tibetan children, positioning these institutions as progressive avenues for education and socio-cultural integration.

They staunchly amplify China's specific political narratives, particularly emphasizing and justifying the Chinese government's stances on pre-1959 Tibetan governance and societal structures. A notable aspect of their dissemination involves echoing the state's portrayal of Tibetans, often

presenting them in a perpetual state of joyfulness, frequently depicted engaging in traditional dances, while endorsing China's "ethnic minority policy" as a model of "inclusive" governance.

Furthermore, they actively participate in smear campaigns targeting the Dalai Lama, leveraging manipulated video clips from public events to malign him. They also echo the Chinese party-state's depiction of Tibetans as a community stuck in a backward cultural paradigm, citing their nomadic and herding practices as detrimental to the environment. Paradoxically, they advocate for China's "Green China" initiatives, arguing for the displacement of herders while defending China's polluting factories as essential economic engines.

Additionally, they echo China's narrative of ushering modernization and economic progress into Tibet, predominantly highlighting the expansion of the railway network and the surge in tourism without questioning the negative impacts of these on Tibet and Tibetans, which include whether or not they come at the cost of eroding the unique cultural identity and sustainable practices of the Tibetan people.

Outreach through Tibetans in exile

Understanding the impact of the Tibetans in exile on the international community's approach to Tibet, Tibetans in exile were particularly discussed in the 1993 propaganda strategy conference. In his opening remarks, Zeng Jian-hui said, "We should reinforce our propaganda to Tibetans living abroad. There are hundreds of thousands of Tibetans living abroad. These people form the basis of the Dalai Clique. We should try to win them over through our propaganda and our actual work with them, so as to weaken the force of the Dalai Clique." [26] Zeng further suggested the way to do this was "by using their feeling for their homeland."

Accordingly, the Chinese authorities have been making efforts, including through officials of the CCP's United Front Work Department posted in some of the Chinese embassies in Australia, Belgium, Canada, India, Nepal, Switzerland, and the United States, in wooing Tibetans in exile. A main method adopted is provide incentives for them to return to Tibet, or the offer of travel to Tibet. On Dec. 8, 2023 five returned Tibetans in Tingye (Dinggye) in western Tibet were provided with 2500 Yuan each by the county's United Front (which issued a press release on it) for attending a symposium to discuss affairs of Tibetans who returned to the county.

At the end of August this year, a meeting was held in Beijing on the issue of "returned Tibetans." [27] A United Front report on the meeting claimed to have "strengthened the power of friendship" (with Tibetans in exile) and that in the past five years it has "established regular contacts with overseas Chinese

in India, Nepal, Australia, the United States, Switzerland and other countries and regions where Tibetan [and] overseas Chinese live in large numbers, effectively expanding the circle of friends of the Overseas Chinese Federation.” The report further said that it has been “guiding them [Tibetans in exile] to tell the story of Tibet well, spread the voice of Tibet well.”

Indeed, 2023 saw Chinese authorities allowing a select few Tibetans from India and the West to visit their homeland, after a gap of several years. More interestingly, unlike in the past, sources say that these Tibetans experienced lesser restrictions and were in fact encouraged to speak out about their experience on their return to their respective places. According to sources, the United Front arranged for group tours by Tibetans abroad to their homeland.

#### Conclusion

China’s ambitious long march to bolster its international image was accelerated 15 years ago. In the period following the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics, which symbolized China’s emergence as a global power, the strategy to manage the Tibet issue on the international stage commenced by halting the exodus of Tibetan refugees from Tibet and initiating external propaganda on Tibet through China’s “big propaganda” media investments to propagate its own narrative on China’s rise and sovereignty over Tibet.

The Chinese government employed diverse methods to control the discourse surrounding Tibet, aiming to redefine its global portrayal. With confidence in its status as an economic powerhouse, China became increasingly assertive in its external propaganda, displaying meticulous planning and execution unlike its past efforts.

Amid the global preoccupation with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Chinese party-state quietly launched a renewed policy to replace the universally recognized term Tibet with the Sinified term Xizang in fall 2021. Two years into the implementation, it’s evident that the strategy to replace “Tibet” with “Xizang” is deliberate, gradual and incremental.

In 2023, China aggressively pushed this policy on the international stage through orchestrated propaganda forums on Tibet, targeting diplomats and journalists, especially from developing countries. The year also witnessed a sophisticated smear campaign against the Dalai Lama, a culmination of nearly 30 years of efforts to vilify him, projecting false accusations on a global scale.

China’s external propaganda on Tibet appears set to intensify in the coming years as part of its long-term plan to erase Tibet’s identity and discredit the Dalai Lama globally. With no end in sight to Xi Jinping’s rule and his directive to “tell a good Chinese story,”

China’s external propaganda on Tibet is expected to continue incrementally.

However, the positive impact hoped for by the Chinese party-state from its external propaganda on Tibet remains doubtful. China’s image problem seems to persist from 15 years ago when it sought to alter its international image. Despite the party’s claims of victory, doubts persist within China regarding the effectiveness of its efforts. The COVID-19 pandemic and China’s lack of transparency in external propaganda have seemingly damaged China’s international image, potentially returning it to its starting point from 15 years ago.

If the situation of the Tibetan people is as good as the Chinese government claims, it should have nothing to fear in providing access to Tibet to independent observers, journalists and diplomats. If it seriously believes the people of Tibet have benefited greatly under its rule, it should allow them freedom of movement and expression so that they can travel and make this case themselves.

#### The Taiwan that China wants is vanishing

10 January 2024, BBC News

There was a time when the beneficent smile of a dictator greeted you everywhere in Taiwan.

It’s a far rarer sight now as more and more of those likenesses, which once exceeded 40,000, are removed.

Some 200-odd statues have been stashed away in a riverside park south of the capital Taipei. Here, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek is standing, sitting, in marshal’s uniform, in scholars’ robes, astride a stallion, surrounded by adoring children, and in his dotage leaning on a walking stick.

A democratic Taiwan no longer seems to have room for its erstwhile ruler.

The island’s burgeoning identity is once again being tested as Taiwan votes in a new government on Saturday. And with each election, China is more troubled by the assertion of a Taiwanese identity - one that thwarts the chances of what it calls “peaceful reunification” with the mainland.

Chiang fled China in 1949, escaping impending defeat in the civil war at the hands of Mao Zedong’s communist forces. He came to Taiwan, which became the Republic of China and remains so to this day. The mainland, ruled by Mao and the Chinese Communist Party, became the People’s Republic of China. Both claimed the other’s territory. Neither Chiang, nor Mao, conceived of Taiwan as a separate place with a separate people. But that is what it has become.

Unlike Taiwan, China’s claims never waned. But almost everything else has changed on either side of the 100-mile strait. China has become richer, stronger and an unmistakable threat.

Taiwan has become a democracy and is in the middle of yet another election where its ties with Beijing are being tested. No matter the result of Saturday's vote, its freedom is a danger to the Chinese Communist Party's hopes of unification.

There are still those who see themselves, like Chiang, as Chinese - they look to China with admiration and even longing. On the other side are those who feel deeply Taiwanese. They see Beijing as yet another colonising foreign power, like Chiang and the Japanese before him.

There are also 600,000 or so indigenous peoples who trace their ancestry back thousands of years. And then there is a younger, ambivalent generation that is wary of questions about identity. They feel Taiwanese but see no need for Taiwan to declare independence.

They want peace with China, they want to do business with it but they have no desire to ever be part of it.

"I am Taiwanese. But I believe in the Republic of China," says a woman in her 50s, wrapped in tinsel and Christmas lights, much like Elton John.

This is an uncommon response at an election rally for the Kuomintang or KMT, the party Chiang led until his death in 1975. And this is their heartland - Taoyuan County - where tens of thousands have turned out to see their presidential candidate, Ho Yu-ih.

The KMT is proposing peace and dialogue with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), its old nemesis. Taiwan, it says, can prosper only when it talks to Beijing.

"We should be friends with the mainland," the woman says, laughing. "We can make money together!"

Her name is impossible to hear over the deafening sound of patriotic rock.

There is a huge roar of approval as Chiang Wan-an, the great-grandson of Chiang Kai-shek and a rising star in the KMT, comes on to the stage.

"I like him very much, he's very handsome," says the woman in the tinsel. "I hope he will be president one day!"

The crowd is overwhelmingly those in their 50s or 60s, traditional KMT supporters with family or business ties to the mainland.

"I am Chinese. Taiwan is just a small island. Look at China!" says one man in his 50s, excited about China's recent spate of space launches. "Of course we should reunify - not now maybe, but one day we must reunify."

There are few young people in the crowd - those who are don't seem to be drawn to the KMT's legacy.

"I'm not voting for the party, I'm voting for the candidate," says Lin Chen-ze. "I am Taiwanese, but I want peace. The [ruling] Democratic Progressive

Party has been in power for eight years, it's time for a change, and Hou Yu-ih is a good man. He is honest and efficient."

The answers to a decades-old question - Do you see yourself as Chinese or Taiwanese? - are getting mixed up. For Beijing that is alarming. For Taiwan's political parties, it is a delicate, new dance, where ideological certainties are being quietly shelved.

"It's not right what they've done to these statues," says Fan Hsun-chung, a sprightly 94-year-old veteran, as he walks through the park full of Chiang's statues. Fan was 18 in 1947 when he left his home in Sichuan, deep in the mountains of southwest China, to join Chiang's army. In early 1949, as the Chinese civil war turned dramatically against them, Fan's unit was shipped to Taiwan to prepare for its use as a bastion.

Six months later Chiang, his government and a defeated army of close to a million men followed.

Fan thought he would return home soon. But after Mao took power, he couldn't go home, or even write home. "So, I waited and waited, for decades."

He didn't see his hometown - far up a tributary of the mighty Yangtze river - until 1990. By then his family was long dead, many of them persecuted by the Communist Party for his actions as a "counter-revolutionary". His mother and older brother, he learned, had starved to death during Mao's industrialisation drive, which had triggered a famine. Despite his seven decades in Taiwan, Fan says he never stopped feeling Chinese: "When we came here our country did not perish; we are still the Republic of China. Taiwan is a province, one of the smallest of more than 30 provinces."

Not far from here is where Chiang himself lies in unquiet rest: inside a black marble sarcophagus, still unburied nearly half a century after his death.

"We were fighting for the unification of China," Fan says. "We wanted China to be strong, unified and independent. That was our dream."

For Chiang, Taiwan was only a stronghold from which to lick his wounds and pursue dreams of reconquering China. The man and his dream may be long dead, but his imprint is obvious.

Walk the streets of Taipei and you are surrounded by names from a bygone era in China: Nanjing East Road, Bei-ping North Road, Chang-an West Road. The language used for education and commerce is Mandarin, a dialect from northern China

Taipei is a city of wheat noodles and dumplings, again northern fare. There are also plenty of excellent Shanghainese restaurants: a legacy of the exodus of much of that city's business elite as the communists took power.

But Chiang's legacy came at a huge cost. Any expressions of Taiwanese political identity were ruthlessly crushed. Many thousands were tortured,

imprisoned and executed under Chiang, whose personality cult rivalled that of Mao, Stalin or Kim Il Sung. The period entered the history books as the White Terror.

The KMT and the CCP are "like identical twins with the same mindset", says 86-year-old John Chen, a political activist. "They both have this idea that we are all part of Greater China."

Chen is walking through the cell block of an old military detention centre on the south side of Taipei - a place he knows all too well.

In 1969, a military court tried and jailed him here. He had been married three weeks. He spent the next 10 years in Jing Mei, one of Taipei's most feared prisons. His crime: taking part in a pro-Taiwan independence group while in medical school in Japan.

He shared the cramped cell with six other inmates. They had no bunks, only a squat toilet in the corner and a tap and a bucket to wash. They sweltered in the summer and froze in the winter. They were allowed out for exercise for just 15 minutes a day.

Chen, who was born under Japanese rule, speaks fluent Japanese, and admits to feeling more affinity with the ways of Japan than with those of mainland China.

"I don't consider myself Chinese. I am Taiwanese," he says.

Chen is among the many millions - the majority of the island - whose families emigrated from China. They largely came from Fujian in several waves starting in the early 1600s. They speak Taiwanese, a version of southern Fujian dialect, as different from Mandarin as English is from Portuguese.

To him, "Taiwan is already independent" and the future is bright.

"One day the Chinese Communist Party will collapse. And when it does, we can fully join the international community."

He dismisses Beijing's claims that Taiwan is part of China because they share a common culture and language.

"Where does that leave Tibet or Xinjiang? And if the Chinese nation is built on being Chinese or speaking Chinese, what about Singapore?"

The era of military rule is long over, and monuments across Taiwan commemorate the White Terror.

But Beijing's persistent claims, some argue, are making a bristling, younger generation rethink how they see themselves.

Lōa Ēng-hōa began learning Taiwanese about five years ago. Now he only speaks in Taiwanese, or English, but refuses to speak in Mandarin.

To him it is the language of a colonial oppressor. He likens it to British people being forced to speak Italian because England was once part of the Roman Empire.

"When I was at elementary school, we would gather each morning and sing the [Republic of China] national anthem. And there were always some lazy students who didn't bother singing, and I would shout at them 'don't you love your country!' I really thought I was Chinese."

He says it was only when he went to work in Australia and saw how it was dealing with its turbulent history, that he began to awaken to his identity.

Under KMT rule, school children were forbidden from speaking Taiwanese and punished if they did. Taiwanese parents made their children speak Mandarin, even at home, believing that it would help them get into university or find a good job.

Lōa says Taiwanese may not be banned but the "ideological dominance" of Mandarin persists.

"And the most important thing is that we are still denied the right to be educated in Taiwanese - 80% of people are ethnically Taiwanese, but we don't have the right to be educated in our own language. How ridiculous is that?"

For young people like him, the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which once called for Taiwanese independence and whose success grew out of anti-Beijing sentiment, is not going far enough. The DPP was once a ragtag outfit that struggled to win local elections and parliamentary seats. Taiwanese was the language of its rallies. Now, it's the party of power. It has ruled for 16 years in total, including the last eight.

Now its young supporters speak fluent English and are passionate about the environment and LGBTQ rights, more so than any urgent need for formal Taiwan independence.

At a recent rally in Taipei, the DPP's vice-presidential candidate, Hsiao Bi-khim made her first big public address. Young and charismatic, she was a big hit with the crowd.

In Beijing, she is loathed: born in Japan to an American mother and Taiwanese father, Hsiao's most recent job was as Taiwan's de-facto ambassador to the United States. China's state media has been busy spreading rumours that she can barely speak Mandarin, which is untrue.

But China fears the rise of politicians like Hsiao, who have almost no family ties to the mainland, and see Taiwan as closer to Tokyo and Washington than Beijing.

Beyond the DPP, this is the first election where all three presidential candidates are of Taiwanese descent. None are from families that came to Taiwan with Chiang in 1949. The KMT's Hou is the son of a market trader from southern Taiwan who climbed through the ranks of the police force to head the national investigation bureau.

Today, the DPP no longer talks about the need for formal independence and the KMT speaks of dialogue with Beijing, but sidesteps the subject of unification, or whether Taiwan is part of China.

Both are now embracing Taiwan's peculiar "status quo"- it elects its own leaders, but it is not considered a country.

At the KMT rally, the woman in tinsel summed it up bluntly: "This is the mountain protecting us. Without the Republic of China [status], Taiwan is finished. Taiwan can't be independent. Independence means war."

This is what experts call "strategic ambiguity". So far it has satisfied everyone, including Beijing. But that is not how people define who they are.

"We are all Taiwanese today regardless of where our grandparents came from. We inter-marry and mix Taiwanese and Mandarin when we speak to each other," say a group of hikers on a trail near Taipei.

When they travel abroad, they say they are from Taiwan. "We do not want people to think we are from China."

That is a problem for Beijing - because they are deciding what they want to be.

And that runs counter to the CCP's message - a unified China under the rule of the Communist Party. It's a message that has been delivered to Tibetans, Uyghurs, Mongols - and Hong Kong.

Not everyone feels Taiwanese, or exclusively Taiwanese, but more and more young people seem to lean this way, polls suggest.

Even in this new Taiwan, Chiang's family name counts. Many here say they would like to see the KMT nominate his great-grandson in 2028. And Hsiao has been touted as a contender for the DPP.

Either could win, but the challenge for China is that the Taiwanese will decide.

Young voters say all they care about is peace: "I have two younger brothers and I am very worried they will end up fighting in a war with China," says 21-year-old Shen Lu at the KMT rally.

Like their most powerful allies, few Taiwanese talk of independence because that feels impractical, even impossible. But peace has become a refrain for keeping what they have - whatever they might choose to call it.

"I am Taiwanese but the most important thing for my generation is peace," Shen says. "I don't want unification. I want the situation to stay as it is now. We should keep it like this forever."

## China's Colonial Boarding Schools In Tibet And The Danger They Represent

09 January 2024, StratNewsGlobal

NEW DELHI: At the United Nations, the tables are being cleared for the Universal Periodic Review, a roughly quadrennial process where member states human rights situation comes under scrutiny. It could be a particularly troubling time for China given its discord with the West, that could see more countries taking a close look at Beijing's human rights practices.

Some of these relate to China's education policies in Tibet that Dr Gyal Lo, a Canada-based Tibetan sociologist describes as "colonial". In an interview with StratNews Global, he said that after closely studying the education system, he was able to draw some conclusions.

"While teachers are teaching, students are learning and schools are running, yet our society is not making any progress. So, what is wrong with our education system. We analysed the curriculum and the education policy and I was the first to academically describe China's school system in Tibet as colonial boarding schools", he said.

The system he said, draws from China's education policy that has two aspects: one hidden and the other that is "on the table".

"When you read what's on the table, there's no problem, but it's in the implementation of the document on the ground that the double game is played. One should closely watch how it is implemented, since it is done in a way they want."

Gyal Lo says the hidden policy is what matters here for this is what has been at play for over six decades. The hidden policy limits instruction in Tibetan language, culture and tradition to about 20%. Earlier it was more but since Xi Jinping took over in 2008, the approach has changed.

"They want one culture, one nation one language. So, there's no space for our culture and language. This is I think is China's top ideological conspiracy being practiced over many decades in Tibetan society. Our school system produces cheap labour. They have weaponised the school system to turn four generations of Tibetans into cheap labour."

The Chinese of course deny any wrongdoing in Tibet and when pressed, resort to circumlocution. For instance, they claim that the number of students in boarding schools is low, and only cite the case of the Tibet Autonomous Region, which is sparsely populated. But Dr Gyal Lo points to the other regions of Tibet the Chinese prefer not to talk about: Utsang, Amdo and Kham populated by 2/3rds of ethnic Tibetans.

Key questions put to the Chinese rarely elicit a reply, or if they do, it is usually a lie, he says. At the same



time, he feels the UN is the best place to put pressure on China to clean up its act in Tibet. The Chinese tend to listen to those who are rich and powerful while ignoring the weak.

This has implications for India. If Tibetan language and culture are safeguarded and allowed to be practiced, India is safe given the knowledge and awareness each culture has of the other. But if the colonial boarding schools become the norm in Tibet, with its focus on Sinicizing Tibetans, then Tibetans thinking like Chinese will only deepen India's insecurity.

### **China's Public Image Actually Getting Worse**

09 January 2024, CFR

As I noted in a Discussion Paper two years ago, China's global public image has become highly negative in the Xi Jinping era due to growing authoritarianism at home, a souring economy that puts a dent in the idea of a China model for other states, hyper-assertive diplomacy with neighbors, and China's increasingly close economic and political links to Russia. Indeed, China and Russia recently passed \$200 billion in bilateral trade and the upswing shows no sign of letting up, as China has become one of the main places Russia can obtain a wide range of goods.

Recent polling by the Pew Research Center, which has historically closely tracked global views of both China and the United States, suggests that China's public image globally remains poor, and is possibly getting worse. According to Pew, virtually all of the twenty-four countries surveyed, which include wealthy democracies and developing countries, currently have more favorable views of the United States than of China. (Exceptions were Kenya, which had slightly more favorable views of China, and Nigeria.) Most countries also had far more confidence in U.S. President Joe Biden than in Chinese leader Xi Jinping, a dent in Xi's desire to re-emerge on the world stage and, seemingly, play a greater leadership role again after several years of virtual isolation at home.

Despite this, China's overwhelming economic presence in Southeast Asia and the lack of a coherent U.S. counter-strategy, as the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework has mostly crumbled, has made China far more powerful than it was even a few years ago in its near region. States like the Philippines and Singapore and, depending on the presidential election coming up, Indonesia, may be turning more to the U.S. for defense cooperation, but increasingly regional polling is showing that Southeast Asian countries see China as the dominant influence. Even in Vietnam, which built a closer partnership with the United States this year, that

partnership was followed up by Vietnam solidifying ties with China, showing that China remains one of its most important partners.

China's poor global image, and the ways in which it has frightened neighbors with its assertive diplomacy and actions in regional waters do still provide an opportunity for the United States. But Washington needs to respond not only with defense cooperation but with a regional economic strategy that, supported by Japan and other key partners, can have greater relevance for South and Southeast Asian countries.

### **The China factor seemingly less significant in Taiwan's 2024 presidential election**

07 January 2024, East Asia Forum

On 13 January 2024, Taiwanese citizens will elect their next president and members of the Legislative Yuan. The incumbent President Tsai Ing-wen of the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) is not running due to term limits.

Two opposition parties attempted to form an alliance to unseat the ruling DPP. But the plan fell apart due to disagreements over who would head the ticket as presidential candidate. With the subsequent withdrawal of Terry Gou – the billionaire founder of tech giant Foxconn – from the presidential race, Taiwan's 2024 presidential election is effectively a three-way race.

The main contenders are Lai Ching-te of the ruling DPP, Hou Yu-ih of the opposition party, the Kuomintang (KMT), and Ko Wen-je, chair and founder of the minor Taiwan People's Party (TPP).

The DPP's Lai has strong pro-independence credentials and currently serves as Taiwan's vice president. He has been leading in the polls since July. As the mayor of New Taipei City, the KMT's Hou is not a particularly dynamic or forceful candidate and has little experience at the national and international levels. He has endorsed the 1992 Consensus – which implies that both Taiwan and the Chinese mainland belong to one China without specifying what 'China' means. But Hou is perceived as feeble in his commitment to this cross-strait policy that is important to KMT heavyweights like former president Ma Ying-jeou.

Ko of the TPP is a medical doctor turned politician who recently completed his second term as mayor of Taipei. He positions himself as an anti-establishment outsider, and his straight-talk and terse soundbites are well-received among young voters who resent the traditional political divide between the 'pan-Blue' and 'pan-Green' political camps headed respectively by the KMT and DPP. To brand himself as an alternative 'third force', Ko emphasises that his

cross-strait policy would be guided by the principles of 'deterrence and communication'.

Though the 'China factor' remains the key political cleavage in society, and the most important factor affecting citizens' electoral behaviour, it has not been as big of a campaign issue in the 2024 elections as in the 2020 polls.

Chinese President Xi Jinping's 2019 policy address on a 'Taiwan plan' and Beijing's subsequent repressive responses to the Hong Kong protests provided an opportunity for President Tsai Ing-Wen to burnish her image as a defender of Taiwan's sovereignty and democracy. The China factor revived her flagging electoral prospects and led to her landslide victory in the 2020 election.

Instead of amplifying Beijing's threats, Tsai now downplays them even though Chinese leaders have intensified their military pressure. DPP leaders seem to worry that the KMT's narrative that the upcoming election is a choice between war and peace may negatively impact Lai's chance of winning.

The Lai campaign has rarely discussed Chinese military threats other than countering the KMT's narrative by framing the election as a choice between democracy and autocracy. To ease citizens' concerns that another DPP administration would invite a violent response from Beijing, Lai has moderated his pro-independence positions and emphasised that he would continue Tsai's cautious approach towards the relationship between Taiwan and China.

Believing that cross-strait exchanges can bring economic and political dividends to Taiwan, engagement with China has always been the KMT's cross-strait policy. This may explain why Hou has proposed to revive the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement, opposition to which culminated in massive 2014 protests known as the Sunflower Movement. But the engagement proposition may be difficult to sell considering that less than 40 per cent of Taiwanese citizens now support the 1992 Consensus – a decline of more than 20 per cent since 2019.

With Taiwanese living under constant military threat for several decades, Beijing's persistent pressure has become a nuisance that invites resentment. As a result, the 'war and peace' narrative has yet to resonate with voters. This is not to say that Taiwan's citizens do not worry about the China threat. But pocketbook issues – including stagnant wages, a shortage of affordable housing and meagre career prospects – appear to attract more attention, particularly among the younger generation.

Although the 'China factor' appears to have been overshadowed by the economy in the 2024 presidential campaign, Beijing has still inserted itself

in the process, knowing that Lai's victory would mean Taipei continuing its policy of demonstrating the island's independent and separate status in the international community.

Attempting to influence electoral outcomes, Chinese leaders have continued their military pressure on Taiwan and magnified the 'war and peace' narrative. It was reported that the Chinese government has also been spreading disinformation to discredit DPP candidates, and it has applied a new round of economic coercion measures on Taipei. After Xi Jinping repeated the message that China's 'reunification' with Taiwan is inevitable, a senior mainland official warned the island's citizens to make a 'correct choice' in the upcoming elections.

Beijing's efforts so far have yet to sway public opinion. Lai continues his lead in the polls, as contenders of the other two parties trail behind. Past experience has shown that the Chinese government's threats and overt endorsements almost always invited opposite outcomes. In addition to contributing to President Tsai's landslide victory in the 2020 election, Beijing's hard-line policies also backfired in the 1996 and 2000 presidential elections as candidates of whom Chinese leaders disapproved got elected.

Most Taiwanese have no desire to be part of China. Beijing's repressive responses to Hong Kongers' quest for democracy have further alarmed many on the island. All indications show that that Chinese leaders will continue their uncompromising policy toward Taiwan – and the history of tense and chilly cross-strait relations under DPP leadership may repeat itself should Lai win the election on 13 January.

### **Dark realities of Xinjiang: Tough test for Uighurs**

07 January 2024, The Pioneer

As reports of China's alleged human rights abuses in Xinjiang surface, a storm of international outrage erupts. Diplomats, politicians, and human rights organisations decry the treatment of Uighurs, accusing China of systematic oppression, torture, and brainwashing. Despite the global outcry and sanctions, China remains defiant, raising questions about the UN's ability to hold the authoritative regime accountable.

The recent reports of China attempting to sell the Xinjiang story to diplomats, politicians, and journalists from friendly nations are eliciting strong protests from various quarters. Many of these visitors have witnessed and experienced outright violations of the basic freedoms of Uighur and other ethnic Muslims in Xinjiang Province.

China is maintaining several "re-education camps" or "vocational training centres" in Xinjiang. The purpose

of establishing such camps is to deradicalise the locals in response to the growing Islamophobia in the region. Additionally, the Chinese Government asserts that these centres aim to improve labour skills and alleviate poverty in the province. Local officials strongly believe that these efforts are genuinely beneficial and contribute to restoring social stability, harmony, and prosperity to Xinjiang.

However, the reality is exceedingly harsh. Uighurs are enduring pain and untold misery. China is vehemently suppressing the Uighurs in Xinjiang Province, solely aiming to curb separatist tendencies among the people in this volatile region. This is Beijing's official explanation for the extensive security and surveillance measures imposed throughout Xinjiang. Beijing has been incarcerating millions of Uighurs in these re-education camps, subjecting them to systematic brainwashing, torture, and other degrading treatments. In 2021, Agnes Callamard, the Secretary-General of Amnesty International, accused Chinese authorities of creating "a dystopian hellscape on a staggering scale".

The Uighurs find themselves at a cultural and historical crossroad, facing a severe test for survival under the Communist rule from Beijing. Nearly 12 million Uighurs reside in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR), as it is officially known in China, located in the northwest and serving as a crossroads between Central Asia and East Asia.

Last year, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited the far-western province and emphasised the need to maintain "hard-earned social stability" in the region. He conveyed to officials in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) that Beijing intends to persist with its counterterrorism policies there. It serves as a litmus test for China, requiring a delicate balance between its global expansion agenda and the need to ensure domestic stability throughout the mainland and its overseas territories, including Hong Kong, Macau, and the South China Sea (SCS).

The UN has already accused China of serious human rights violations in Xinjiang. A long-awaited report, published in 2022 by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on the XUAR, rightly pointed out that China is engaged in "serious human rights violations against the Uighurs" and other predominantly Muslim communities in the province. Beijing vigorously attempted to prevent the release of the Xinjiang report, but it was eventually made public by the UN human rights body just before the retirement of Human Rights Commissioner Michelle Bachelet. She visited Xinjiang in May of that year, and only after her visit was the highly sensitive report brought to the public's attention.

However, for the Communist Party apparatchiks and its top leaders, this report was dismissed as nothing

more than a "farce" orchestrated by Western powers.

Global human rights agencies, such as Human Rights Watch (HRW), assert that China is committing crimes against humanity in Xinjiang. Following the release of the report, Chinese officials maintained their abusive "strike hard policies", resulting in the suppression of fundamental freedoms for Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims. HRW strongly argues that UN member states should not remain silent in the face of such crimes against humanity. Additionally, HRW urges concerned governments to:

A. Work toward the successful adoption of a UN Resolution to investigate instances of crimes against humanity and hold those responsible accountable.

B. Improve efforts to document individuals who are detained, imprisoned, and forcibly disappeared, and make attempts to reunite families.

C. Impose targeted sanctions on Chinese officials implicated in serious abuses in Xinjiang.

D. Consider pursuing criminal cases under the concept of "universal jurisdiction," allowing a country's domestic judicial system to investigate and prosecute certain grave crimes, such as torture, even if they were not committed on its territory.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) also contends that the current Human Rights Commissioner, Volker Turk, should act on the recommendations of the report from his office, previously provided by his predecessor. It is time to hold accountable those responsible for committing heinous crimes against the Uighurs and other minorities in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR).

The pivotal question is whether the UN, in general, and the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), in particular, have the mandate to hold China accountable for massive human rights abuses in Xinjiang over the years. It is deemed impractical for any international agency, including the International Court of Justice (ICJ), to compel an authoritative regime like Xi's to cease human rights violations in Xinjiang. While sanctions have already been imposed by various nations, including the US, the UK, Canada, and the European Union (EU), on Chinese officials alleged to be involved in rights violations against the Uighurs and other Muslim minority groups in 2021, it is essential to note that this marked the first coordinated sanctions by EU Members against China since the historic Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989. In response, China retaliated with almost equivalent sanctions against some EU politicians and officials.

Back in 2020, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) joined over 300 other NGOs in urging the UN to establish a specific mechanism for systematically monitoring and reporting on instances of human rights abuses by China.

Notably, this collective call was followed by a similar appeal from 50 UN experts. Both groups emphasised China's systematic human rights abuses in Hong Kong, Tibet, and particularly in Xinjiang. They also highlighted the Communist nation's efforts to conceal information about the deadly COVID-19 pandemic and its continued attacks on those defending human rights. The joint letter expressed deep concern about China's global network of censorship, threats, surveillance, and blatant violations of UN processes.

Beijing, leveraging its newfound power status driven by economic clout, wolf warrior diplomacy, and growing military strength, employs tactics to deny NGOs accreditation, attack UN experts, and undermine country resolutions at the UN Human Rights Council. These actions signal the authoritative Communist regime's attempt to establish its own system within the current West-led global governance paradigm, potentially shifting it to a China-led one in the future. This has prompted the West, especially the US, to initiate multiple confrontations with China, ranging from trade to information wars in recent times.

China perceives these sanctions as a threat to its sovereignty. Beijing dismisses such sanctions as based on lies, disinformation, disregard for facts, and distortions. Consequently, China uses these sanctions to tighten its policing and surveillance tactics, particularly in controlling the Uighur Muslims.

For the Uighurs, changing the status quo is an uphill task. The only plausible solution lies in generating global awareness through the efforts of human rights agencies, rights activists, the UN and its special organs, and concerned nations, shedding light on the atrocities committed against the Uighurs and other small Muslim groups in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR).

China must adhere to all international norms, allowing UN agencies to investigate the atrocities against the Uighurs. Beijing should not forget that it is an integral part of the international system and community.

Its scant regard for international norms, coupled with attempts to impose an authoritarian system over its people and allies, is disturbing.

This approach is not how China can counter the US and other emerging powers. President Xi must first set his own house in order before pointing fingers at others.

Denying basic freedoms to the Uighurs and other Muslim minority groups is unacceptable. They are Chinese people and deserve the same rights as other Chinese citizens.

Their religion should not be treated as a barrier to enjoying the universal human rights enshrined in the UN Human Rights Charter. While it is crucial to

contain radical and separatist tendencies among the Uighurs, punishing the entire Uighur and Muslim groups collectively is not the solution.

### **Vicious circle of Chinese propaganda: Will 'emperor' Xi remember what happened to his father?**

06 January 2024, FirstPost

Since years, China has entered in a vicious circle. To hide its shortcomings, Beijing plays more and more on two issues: Monitoring the Internet and social media within the country, and increasing its propaganda inside and outside the Middle Kingdom. Remember June 2020, after the Galwan incident, Beijing first announced that the Chinese Army had not suffered any casualty (it was later revised to four soldiers killed), while it was known that at least 40 to 45 Chinese soldiers had died during the battle with the Indian troops.

Of course, no one ever mentioned that it was Xi Jinping's birthday, but the propaganda took over: Qi Fabao, a regiment commander who was wounded during the confrontation, was decorated for his 'bravery', became a national hero and a torch bearer at the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics; later, he even received a double promotion in the Xinjiang Military District. The high pitched propaganda for the new 'hero' helped hide the real number of casualties.

### **Will Hong Kong's National Security Law safeguard or harm its citizens?**

06 January 2024, East Asia Forum

In October 2023, Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu announced that the government would table its own local national security legislation, with the China-imposed National Security Law (NSL) remaining in effect during the process.

The local legislation aims to fulfil Article 23 of the Basic Law, which guarantees the 'one country, two systems' framework by prohibiting acts that, in the government's eyes, threaten the regime security of the Central People's Government. The legislation allows the government to criminalise activities that have been accepted in Hong Kong for long, such as building ties between local and foreign political organisations or bodies, which might undermine the Central People's Government. Since Hong Kong's sovereignty transfer to China in 1997, the government has not succeeded in enacting a law that fulfils Article 23's requirements. The first attempt at such legislation occurred in 2002 but ended with the government withdrawing the bill after more than 500,000 citizens protested against it.

In 2020, China imposed a national security law on Hong Kong following city-wide protests in 2019 that led to a landslide victory for pro-democracy parties in local elections. Between 2020 and 2023, the NSL's implementation has cracked down on most of the pro-democracy activists and organisations. The Hong Kong government has weaponised the courts to detain more than 100 leading opposition figures without trial.

The NSL covers four offences – secession, subversion, acts of terrorism and colluding with foreign forces. The offences of secession and subversion overlap with the seven offences outlined in Article 23 of the Basic Law. The local government can potentially address the other five crimes set out in Article 23 – treason, sedition, theft of state secrets, prohibition of foreign political organisations from conducting political activities in Hong Kong and prohibition of local political groups from establishing ties with foreign political organisations or bodies – in the new legislation.

Since the NSL was imposed, local authorities have revived the colonial-era sedition law of the Crimes Ordinance to arrest activists and journalists. There are also pre-existing laws related to offences of treason and theft of state secrets in Hong Kong.

It is very likely that the Article 23 legislation will aim to reorganise and expand pre-existing criminal offences under the umbrella of the local national security legislation. The government could extend the sentences for existing offences like sedition and broaden their applicability to enhance their social and political control.

Another possible reason for the eagerness of the local government to push for the legislation is to align with the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) 'safeguarding national security' policy agenda in the mainland. As the CCP is eager to incorporate an anti-espionage campaign into the 'safeguarding national security' framework, Hong Kong government officials have also repeatedly stressed their intention to incorporate anti-spy measures into the Article 23 legislation.

Religious organisations could be the foremost group affected by the new law. Article 23 of the Basic Law does not clearly define offences related to establishing ties between local political groups and foreign political organisations. There is ambiguity in the meaning of 'political groups' and how the Hong Kong government interprets it.

In 2002, when the government introduced the legislative bill of Article 23, religious groups, particularly the Catholic Church and its former bishop of Hong Kong Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun, raised concerns on whether their ties with the Vatican would constitute an offence. There was apprehension that the Church would be forced to cut ties with the

Vatican – like in the mainland – resulting in a loss of their freedom to worship and to have succeeding bishops appointed by the Holy See.

The government's response in 2002 frightened the religious clergy and believers, pushing them to become core supporters of the anti-Article 23 movement. If the new legislation replicates the vague terms such as 'political groups' and 'establishing ties with foreign political organisations or bodies' found in the Basic Law, religious organisations are inevitably at risk.

The Chinese authorities have prosecuted underground Catholic prelates in the mainland loyal to the Vatican to implement the policy agenda of 'sinicisation of religion'. Given the Chinese government's hostile stance towards foreign religious groups, the Hong Kong government has the incentive to tighten religious freedom to please Beijing.

Global corporations would also be affected by the new legislation. The recent conviction and lengthy jail sentence of a Japanese national on espionage charges shows how overseas companies in the mainland are vulnerable to national security imperatives. The Hong Kong government's commitment to incorporating anti-espionage offences in the new bill may prompt foreign businesses to draw parallels with the mainland's history of targeting foreign business groups.

The Hong Kong government has employed many techniques in the NSL to restrict the ability of independent courts to handle national security cases. The presiding judges in such cases are handpicked by the Chief Executive. Jury trials have been eliminated and pre-trial deprivation of liberty has become a norm. The criminal defence counsel is assigned by the government instead of being the choice of the defendants. Following legislation enacted pursuant to an 'interpretation' by Beijing of Hong Kong's constitution, overseas lawyers have almost no chance to represent their clients in national security trials in Hong Kong.

The degradation of judicial independence in Hong Kong has already incentivised many global investors to move their offices elsewhere, like Singapore. The new national security legislation might only further drive international business groups away from recognising Hong Kong as a low-risk hub for investment.

## China's Election Interference in Taiwan Explained

04 January 2024, NewsWeek

As Taiwan prepares for its eighth presidential election since democratization, the island is facing increasingly varied and sophisticated attempts by China to influence the outcome of the contest.



The poll on January 13 will determine who becomes only the fifth directly elected president of the nation of 23 million people since 1996.

Voters will also have a say in which party controls the legislature, shaping the course of the island's two most important relationships: China, which has framed the contest as a choice between peace and war, and the United States, Taiwan's largest security provider and advocate on the world stage.

Joseph Wu, Taiwan's foreign minister, urged international vigilance against Beijing's efforts to interfere in its electoral process. In an interview with *The Economist* published Wednesday, Wu said Taiwan was on the front line of Chinese authoritarian expansionism.

The following are both conventional and innovative ways China has sought to sway Taiwanese public opinion in the current election cycle.

#### Economic Warfare

Weaponizing two-way trade across the Taiwan Strait has been one of China's favorite tactics to squeeze Taiwan in recent years.

On December 15, China's Commerce Ministry listed more than 2,000 "trade barriers" it said the Taiwanese government had placed on Chinese products. The ministry has hinted at retaliation, fueling suspicion Beijing was waiting for the right moment to hurt Taipei's ruling Democratic Progressive Party among its traditional support base in the island's agricultural heartland ahead of the elections.

On December 27, Beijing said it would enact trade sanctions if the DPP continued to support "Taiwan independence," over which China's leaders have previously said they would go to war. President Tsai Ing-wen, first elected in 2016, has maintained that Taiwan is already a sovereign country, ruling out a declaration of *de jure* independence.

In 2021, China began to introduce a series of bans on Taiwanese agricultural products due to the alleged discovery of pests or harmful chemicals. Pineapples, sugar apples and groupers were among the banned produce, although it resumed shipments of the latter two in 2023.

In August last year, China suspended imports of Taiwan-grown mangoes, again citing pests. It was a political move, coming days after Taiwan's Vice President Lai Ching-te—now the presidential front runner—made brief stops in New York and San Francisco.

China claimed the transits violated the U.S.'s "one China" policy, under which Washington and Taipei maintain no formal diplomatic relations. The White House disagreed.

#### Military intimidation

In his resolute New Year's Eve address, Chinese leader Xi Jinping declared that Taiwan, which Beijing

views as part of China's territory—will "surely be unified" with the mainland.

Since 2020, the Chinese People's Liberation Army has conducted several high-profile exercises near the island, simulating an amphibious invasion of Taiwan and a future blockade.

The superpower has also sent numerous warplanes and warships across the median line of the Taiwan Strait and into Taiwan's surrounding airspace, in near-daily maneuvers analysts believe amount to a form of psychological warfare.

Beijing "seeks to erode the confidence of the Taiwanese people in their ability to defend their way of life," Bonnie Glaser, managing director of the Indo-Pacific Program at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, previously told *Newsweek*.

#### Perks in China

Prosecutors in Taiwan are cracking down on local officials suspected of accepting bribes in the form of paid visits to China, typically involving all-expenses-paid guided tours, accommodation and meals—offered in exchange for their support for pro-Beijing policies at home.

Taiwanese media reported last month that at least eight local officials in the central city of Taichung had been detained and their phones and other evidence seized. Authorities said accepting China's "hospitality" violated the Anti-Infiltration Act of 2019, introduced to "prevent external forces from infiltrating Taiwan's democracy."

In addition, Taiwanese authorities have questioned than more than three dozen neighborhood chiefs about suspected paid trips offered to them and their families ahead of the elections.

#### Pressure on Expats

Taiwanese expatriates living in China are believed to be under pressure to support the main opposition Kuomintang party, which is traditionally viewed as being on friendlier terms with the Chinese government than is the ruling DPP.

A Taiwanese businessman living in China allegedly asked other businesspeople from Taiwan to each donate a minimum of \$330 to the KMT, according to a report on Monday by the *Taipei Times* newspaper. Posting in a private social media chat group, the businessman is said to have instructed individual donors to provide their names and other personal information, raising concerns that they might be subject to reprisal if they chose not to give money to China's preferred party.

"It is Beijing's way of saying: 'If you want to do business in China, you have to donate to the KMT and vote for the KMT,'" the report cited one DPP legislator as saying.

An association representing Taiwanese business groups in China has denied the allegations.

#### Digital Influence

"Taiwanese society has become an important experimental field for China's influence operations," Wang Chan-Hsi, an associate researcher at Taiwan's top military think tank, the Institute for National Defense and Security Research, told Newsweek.

The disruption in people-to-people exchanges caused by COVID-19 pandemic led Beijing to hone digital means of infiltrating Taiwanese society, combining them with traditional methods and united front work.

In addition, Russia's information operations following its invasion of Ukraine in 2022 also bolstered China's understanding cognitive warfare, Wang said. In August that year, Taiwan created an information policy-making Ministry of Digital Affairs to regulate cybersecurity.

Among the concerning trends is the rise of deepfakes, images in which a person's appearance or words have been digitally altered with the aid of artificial intelligence and machine learning.

The technology—now more accessible than ever through open-source software—has opened up another front in election interference, serving the dual purpose of harming the image of China's political opponents in Taiwan while consuming the finite resources of local law enforcement, Wang said. In August, the minor opposition Taiwan People's Party filed a report with the island's Investigation Bureau over an allegedly altered "crude and egregious" audio recording of party founder and presidential nominee Ko Wen-je, who was purportedly criticizing Lai's controversial U.S. layovers.

On Wednesday, DPP lawmaker Lo Chih-cheng said he had been the victim of deepfake pornography that was making the rounds online.

#### Social Media Disinformation

China's influence operations are increasingly capitalizing on the algorithms of social media platforms like YouTube, Facebook and TikTok to disseminate a plethora of short videos filled with messaging that favors the Chinese Communist Party, according to Wang of INDSR.

This content is fine-tuned to specific demographics, such as older voters who, according to Princeton University researchers, are more susceptible to disinformation, as well as younger viewers whose political identity has not yet solidified.

In addition, Chinese agents use online platforms to give financial backing to collaborators in Taiwan and to encourage internet celebrities to peddle pro-China narratives in exchange for cash, Wang said. These hard-to-trace money flows are more difficult for the Taiwanese government to counter.

Tim Niven, research lead for the Taipei-based NGO Doublethink Lab, told Newsweek that the influence operations targeting Taiwan were trending more

toward "amplifying local collaborators and extreme pro-China voices."

Attacks and other forms of propaganda that clearly originate in China were "less effective and carry the risk of attribution," he said.

In one example last February, fake quotes attributed to U.S. President Joe Biden, who was purportedly plotting the "destruction of Taiwan," were picked up by a pro-Beijing Taiwanese influencer and former KMT legislator, who shared it on Facebook.

The false statement proceeded to go viral on Chinese media before being "laundered" by media companies in Taiwan, Niven said, in a classic example of a disinformation loop.

The remaining days before the election could witness "more dramatic cases," he said. "The closer these things happen to election day, the more effective they are likely to be, and the less time government and civil society have to investigate and respond."

Last month, social media analytics firm Graphika said it had uncovered a large-scale, coordinated effort to manipulate political debate online ahead of Taiwan's elections.

Its investigation identified more than 800 "inauthentic" Facebook profiles and 13 Facebook pages sharing content framed to support the opposition KMT. Graphika acknowledged, however, that it was unable to pinpoint the source.

#### Two key military appointments from China's naval ranks reflects Xi's territorial ambitions, analysts say

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When Xi Jinping named Adm. Dong Jun as China's defense minister last week, it marked the first time a naval officer has been elevated to that position, and analysts say it gives a clear indication of the Chinese leader's priorities – Taiwan tops among them.

Dong's experience, both as head of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) as well as operational assignments in the Chinese military's Eastern and Southern theater commands, gives him an "unprecedented background" in the defense minister position, according to a report from the China Maritime Studies Institute (CMSI) at the US Naval War College in Rhode Island.

His resumé "reflects serious joint and naval focus under Xi with growing potential applications to disputed sovereignty claims in the East and South China Seas – none more important than Taiwan," CMSI analysts Andrew Erickson and Christopher Sharman wrote in their report.

Carl Schuster, a former director of operations at the US Pacific Command's Joint Intelligence Center, said Dong "has international, joint and extensive naval experience in the two theaters that have been in the

forefront of leader Xi Jinping's most aggressive assertions of Chinese territorial claims."

Xi, who has made taking control of Taiwan a cornerstone of his broader goal to "rejuvenate" China to a place of power and stature globally, said last month that the "reunification" of Taiwan with China is "inevitable."

China's Communist Party claims Taiwan as its own territory, despite never having controlled it. Chinese officials say they aim for peaceful "reunification" but have not ruled out using force to take control of the island.

China's military has ramped up diplomatic, economic and military pressure on Taiwan under Xi.

Chinese jets now frequently cross into Taiwan's air defense identification zone as well as over the unofficial, but until recently largely adhered to, "median line" that runs down the Taiwan Strait.

Crossings of the median line by Chinese warships have also become much more frequent.

Beijing is engaged in other sovereignty disputes, too, with Japan over the Senkaku Islands – which China calls the Diaoyus – in the East China Sea and with a handful of governments over contested reefs, shoals and islands in the South China Sea, almost all of which Beijing claims as its territory.

Though the defense minister position in China is a largely ceremonial role, serving as the public face of military diplomacy with other countries, Erickson and Sharman said Dong, with his experience, will make "a potent interlocutor with foreign counterparts."

Possible Asian flashpoints

Tensions are heating up around the region, and diplomacy is becoming ever more vital amid hardening stances and unpredictable events.

A presidential election in Taiwan this month could have huge ramifications on the island's relations with China – and tensions across the Taiwan Strait.

In the South China Sea, the China Coast Guard has been in more aggressive encounters with Philippine vessels trying to resupply a Philippine military outpost on disputed Second Thomas Shoal.

And in the Senkaku chain, which is controlled by Japan but claimed by China, more than 100 China Coast Guard and other vessels are entering Japan's contiguous zone around the islands monthly, according to statistics provided by Japan's Foreign Ministry in December.

Meanwhile late last year, Beijing reopened a key military communication line with Washington that had gone dormant after the visit of then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan in 2022.

As both the Philippines and Japan are US mutual defense treaty allies – and as Washington is obligated to support Taiwan's self-defense – Dong's abilities to speak with US counterparts to avoid any

military escalation in all three areas could be vital to peace.

But if hostilities did break out, Dong could be an important adviser to commander-in-chief Xi, the analysts said.

"Admiral Dong, one of the PLA's most experienced joint commanders, has deep expertise at the operational level of war," Erickson and Sharman wrote.

Schuster notes Dong's years of experience in the Southern Theater Command, encompassing the South China Sea, including as deputy commander of all PLA forces in the Southern Theater and commander of the PLA Navy units there.

He was also deputy commander of the East Sea Fleet, which operates in the East China Sea and the Taiwan Strait, Schuster said.

That shows Dong embodies "Xi's priority on experiences that may be critical to his plans for the South China Sea and Taiwan," Schuster said.

And it wasn't just Dong who Xi appointed last week that points to the Chinese leader's priorities, the analysts said.

A focus on submarines

Days before Xi elevated Dong to defense minister, he appointed Adm. Hu Zhongming as overall commander of the PLA Navy.

Hu, a career submarine officer with operational and command experience in the South China Sea, is considered by analysts to be a sensible choice for the role.

Submarines are one key area where the PLA Navy is widely regarded to be behind its potential adversary the US Navy.

In general, Chinese submarines are considered to be louder and easier to track than their American counterparts.

"The US still dominates war under the seas," Paul Dibb, an emeritus professor of strategic studies at the Australian National University, wrote on the website of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute in December.

"For example, China's strategic nuclear submarines (SSBNs) do not provide Beijing with an assured nuclear second-strike force because they are very vulnerable to US attack submarines (SSNs)," he wrote.

China is also considered to be behind the US in anti-submarine warfare, but has been investing in improvements in recent years, according to Schuster. Hu would seem to be the perfect person to make improvements to the PLA's submarine forces, said Alessio Patalano, professor of war and strategy at King's College in London.

"As a submariner with considerable experience in managing risks and improving training, Admiral Hu will make sure that China's most important strategic

capability is brought up to the highest standards,” Patalano said.

Hu’s command experience includes two instances in which he is credited with averting what could have been catastrophic events, which led him to develop training procedures designed to prevent repeat occurrences, according to reports in state-run Chinese media.

The analysts highlighted Hu’s experience as a theater commander, supervising PLA forces over broad regions.

“Multi-fleet experience gives Admiral Hu unique insights into each fleet’s strengths and weaknesses that will enable him to provide organizational and training improvements to ensure PLAN readiness, as well as to offer uniquely tailored guidance for PLAN operational and tactical improvements,” Sharman and Erickson wrote.

Favoring the navy

While Xi filled two positions within China’s military hierarchy, those appointments came as nine military figures were removed from their positions in the National People’s Congress, China’s rubber stamp legislature – a rare move that signaled a wider purge in the PLA.

And the analysts pointed out that before Dong’s appointment, the defense minister position had been vacant for two months, since Li Shangfu was removed from the role without explanation following an extended absence from public view.

Xi has been on a decade-long drive to crackdown on corruption in China’s military ranks so the dismissal of the nine military figures, in particular, is fueling speculation about their potential alleged involvement in corruption.

No charges have been announced, but the affiliations of the nine dismissed officials gives some clues into what might be happening in China.

Only one of the nine was from the navy. Most were from the PLA Rocket Force, which is responsible for the China’s land-based nuclear and conventional missiles.

In the tightly controlled hierarchy of the Chinese Communist Party, the signposting is clear, Patalano said.

“The appointment of two naval officers at these key posts, especially defense minister, strongly suggests two things: the navy is regarded as the most loyal service to Xi; and it’s also the one that combines technical and professional knowledge with the aims of keeping China projecting power in its immediate periphery.”